

Biosolids Dryer Tilbury Essex



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



April 2006

client logo

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Biosolids Dryer, Tilbury, Essex

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**CONTENTS**

Summary.....	1
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Location and scope of work	1
1.2 Geology and topography	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background.....	2
2 Project Aims and Methodology.....	3
2.1 Aims	3
2.2 Methodology	3
3 Results	3
3.1 Description of deposits.....	3
3.2 Biosolids Dryer.....	4
3.3 RTO Building.....	5
3.4 Batch and Blending Tanks	5
3.5 Cofferdam.....	6
3.6 LSR Tanks.....	6
3.7 Weigh Bridge	7
3.8 Administration Building.....	7
3.9 Cake Import Unit.....	7
3.10 Drainage/Sewage Trenches	8
4 Discussion and Conclusions.....	8
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory	10
Appendix 2 Environmental and Economic Data.....	11
Appendix 3 Bibliography and References	13
Appendix 4 Summary of Site Details.....	14

LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 Site location
Fig. 2 Site plan with trench locations
Fig. 3 Plan 101 & Section 103
Fig. 4 Sections 101 & 102

SUMMARY

Between November 2005 and March 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief at Anglian Water's water treatment works, Tilbury, Essex at the site of their Biosolids Dryer project (NGR TQ 6600 7570). The work was commissioned by Atkins Heritage on behalf of Anglian Water in advance of the construction of a Biosolids Dryer. The Watching Brief revealed made ground on top of a peat layer and alluvial deposits. Archaeological features were encountered. These consisted of the remains of wall foundations and fence posts, most probably associated with the farm that occupied this site prior to the construction of the water treatment works.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between November 2005 and March 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Tilbury Water Treatment Works, Tilbury, Essex on the Biosolids Dryer project (NGR TQ 6600 7570). The work was commissioned by Atkins Heritage in respect of a planning application for a Biosolids Dryer (Planning Application No. 05/00473/FENV).
- 1.1.2 In 2003 Atkins Heritage was commissioned to undertake a Cultural Heritage Assessment (Atkins 2005) of the proposed development on behalf of Anglian Water as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment. This assessment highlighted the potential for archaeology to exist below ground, following the results of a watching brief undertaken during geotechnical investigations in May 2004 (CAU 2004). In light of these results the Historic Environment Management Team (HEM) for Essex County Council required a watching brief to be in place during the programme of groundworks to monitor and record any archaeology that would have been impacted by the proposed development.
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA 2005).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located less than 1 km south-east of the modern outskirts of Tilbury, immediately to the north-east of Tilbury Fort and south of the West Tilbury Marshes (NGR TQ 6600 7570).
- 1.2.2 The site of the development is situated on low lying ground on the north bank of the river Thames, 2 m above sea level. The geology comprises River Terrace Gravels overlain by alluvial deposits, peat and made ground.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 A detailed account of the archaeological and historic background to the development area has previously been produced as part of a Cultural Heritage Assessment (Atkins, 2005), a summary of which is produced below.
- 1.3.2 The earliest recorded archaeological evidence from the site is dated to the Palaeolithic period (*c* 40000 BC to 6000 BC). This was a possible Palaeolithic flint artefact of unknown function (EHCR 1784).
- 1.3.3 The only other prehistoric find known to have originated within the development area was a Neolithic (*c* 4000 BC to 2300 BC) flint axe (EHCR 1808).
- 1.3.4 Evidence relating to activity in the Bronze Age (*c* 2300 BC to 700 BC) was recovered during a watching brief carried out in 2004 during a geotechnical investigation, which discovered peat deposits surviving below ground level. The watching brief concluded that there was potential for the survival of Bronze Age remains and palaeo-environmental deposits from the level of the peat horizon. A palaeo-channel was also recorded during the fieldwork (CAU 2004).
- 1.3.5 Evidence from the Roman period (*c* AD 43 to AD 410) includes finds of Romano-British and continental Roman pottery sherds and a nearby Roman road and causeway at Tilbury Fort.
- 1.3.6 No evidence relating to the Anglo-Saxon period is known within the development site. However, during the medieval and post-medieval periods (*c* 1066 to 1901) the development site underwent the greatest period of change. The earliest recorded entry in the Essex Heritage Conservation Record (EHCR) for this period is the Tilbury medieval sea wall (EHCR 1827). Tilbury Fort (SAM 26309) was built subsequently in 1539, when it became one to the five Henrican blockhouses constructed. The far larger and more complex fort and battery, designed by De Gomme in the late 17th century succeeded this, and which effectively removed the original blockhouse.
- 1.3.7 In the late 19th and early 20th century alterations to the fort were undertaken, with the addition of gun emplacements and a World War II pillbox. These now form part of the scheduled monument. The Officers Mess within the fort is also a Grade II* Listed building. Further World War II defences are recorded along the river frontage and close to the development site.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the extent, date, character, quality, significance and state of preservation of any archaeological remains found within the site. In particular, evidence of land management/defences associated with the fort and prehistoric activity anticipated at the level of the peat horizon.
- 2.1.2 To assess the ecofactual and palaeo-environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features from within the site.
- 2.1.3 To preserve by record any archaeological remains (if present) that the development may remove or damage within the impacted area.
- 2.1.4 To make available the results of the archaeological watching brief.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The excavation of all service trenches and piling pits were carried out by mechanical excavator under archaeological observation and the underlying surface was examined for archaeological features at formation level. A site plan was drawn at a scale of 1:250 and sample sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All deposits and sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures detailed in the OA *Fieldwork Manual* (OAU 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The area around the Biosolids Dryer development is covered by a layer of made ground (101,107 and 116) to a depth of around 0.25 m although towards the north of the site the depth of the made ground reaches 0.31 m (Trench 8). Beneath the made ground a layer of peat was observed (108, 110, 117 and 118) and was often 0.26 m thick, however, to the north of the site this peat layer had been truncated by made ground and service trenches. Alluvial deposits underlying the peat were commonly mid to dark brown in colour although towards the north east of the site the colour was a darker brown/grey. At the bottom of Trench 2 at a depth of approximately 1.4 m a layer of blue/grey clay was exposed, most likely natural London Clay.
- 3.1.2 The area to the south of the Biosolids Dryer Building, where deep sewage/drainage trenches (Trenches 29 to 33) were laid, consisted of a layer of topsoil overlying mid brown /grey clay alluvium under which blue/grey London Clay was exposed at a depth of around 1.9 m. No peat layer was observed in any of the trenches within this area.

3.2 Biosolids Dryer

- 3.2.1 This area is the location of the main Biosolids Dryer Building (Fig. 2) and occupied the central location within the site. However, the concrete working surface (blinding) had already been laid prior to the commencement of the watching brief and work had already begun on the excavation of gullies around the perimeter of the building and pile pits along the edge. This meant that the observation of any possible archaeological features in this area was limited to the proposed service trenches.
- 3.2.2 A series of service trenches were to be dug through the concrete blinding in order to lay drainage pipes (Trenches 1 to 9) although Trenches 5 and 7 were drainage channels running north to south along the length of the Dryer Building and contained no pipes. Trenches 5 and 7 were approximately 400 mm deep and about 1 m wide. Trench 7 was only dug into made ground and consequently did not expose the natural peat layer that may have lain beneath. Trench 5 was excavated down into the peat layer, however, no archaeological features were encountered.
- 3.2.3 The remaining trenches (1 to 4, 6 & 8 to 9) were excavated to accommodate drainpipes down to an average depth of about 1.5 m. Trenches 1 to 4 were excavated in the south-west area of the Dryer Building and were made up of a layer of peat (104, 108, 110, 117 & 118) overlying brown/grey alluvial clay deposits (105, 111 & 119) and at around 1.6 m blue/grey clay (112) could be seen. No significant archaeological features were seen in these trenches although within Trench 3 a cassy deposit (109) could be seen in the section (Fig. 4, Section 101). This has been interpreted as a dump of waste material, probably Victorian in date (Appendix 2). The remaining trenches (6, 8 & 9) were excavated at the north-eastern end of the Biosolids Dryer. In places the peat layer had disappeared due to ground reduction. Mainly the layers comprised dark grey/black peat overlying a mid to dark brown/grey alluvial layer. London clay was observed below 1.4 m. A series of service pipes and cables ran across the width of Trenches 6 & 8 making the sides of the trenches very unstable and subject to collapse. No archaeological features were visible within these trenches.
- 3.2.4 Together with the service trenches, two other features were dug during the period of the watching brief on the Biosolids Dryer Building. These were two pits dug around piles at the south-west and north-east corners of the Dryer Building. Base Pit 2, in the north-east corner, was 1.1 m deep and 3.3 m x 3.3 m in diameter and was dug through made ground, peat and alluvial clay, no archaeological features were visible within this feature. Base Pit 3, situated at the south-western corner was also 3.3 m x 3.3 m and 1.05 m deep and was also dug through made ground (116), peat (117 & 118) and alluvial clay (119). Within the peat layers (117) and (118) a cassy layer was observed running along the entire section (Fig. 4, Section 102).
- 3.2.5 Adjacent to the northern edge of the Biosolids Building a 6.2 m x 4.2 m area was excavated to a depth of 1.5 m (Trench 21). This feature is part of the proposed

'Product Storage Unit' (Fig. 2). The feature was dug through a layer of made ground directly overlying a dark brown/grey alluvial layer. No archaeology was observed.

3.3 RTO Building

- 3.3.1 Immediately to the south of the Biosolids Building, a large area of ground 16.5 m x 16.5 m was reduced in preparation for the laying of concrete blinding for the RTO building (Fig. 2). The ground was only reduced into made ground levels and did not impact natural peat or alluvial layers and likewise any archaeological features. One drainage trench running north-south was dug through the concrete blinding (Trench 10). The trench was 10 m long and 600 mm wide and was dug to a depth of 1.1 m at the northern end rising to 840 mm towards the southern end. The trench was dug through both a peat layer and into mid brown alluvial layer. No archaeological features were exposed.
- 3.3.2 To the east of the RTO building slab another area of ground, 30.5 m x 20 m was reduced into the made ground in order to accommodate both an RTO stack and a gas engine. Again the reduction of the ground surface did not impact natural deposits and did not reveal any archaeological features or structures.

3.4 Batch and Blending Tanks

- 3.4.1 An area of about 35 m x 32 m was reduced in preparation for the construction of two Blending Tanks and two Batch Tanks (Fig. 2). The area was reduced through existing made ground down to a level where natural alluvium began to appear, however, no archaeology was discovered.
- 3.4.2 During the reduction of the ground level around the area of the western Batch Tank partial remains of wall foundations (122) (Fig. 3, Plan 101 & Section 103) were uncovered running east-west. The foundations were 0.6 m wide and 4 m long. The depth of the foundations were 0.18 m, 0.13 m of which were below the top of the alluvium. The foundations were made up of large river pebbles with a lime mortar bond.
- 3.4.3 Immediately to the west of the wall foundation the remains of four wooden posts representing a fence line could be seen running at a right angle, north-south for approximately 7.7 m. Two more fence posts running for 3.8 m could be seen one metre away running parallel to the first set of posts representing a second fence line. These fences were associated with the foundations in that they would have most likely formed some type of enclosure. Directly to the east of the eastern Blending Tank the bottom two courses of a yellow stock brick wall were uncovered (Structure 122) cut into the alluvium. These bricks dimensions were 230 mm x 110 mm x 70 mm and of a pale yellow colour, common to this area in the latter half of the 18th century and into the 19th century. There was no bond between these bricks and this may be due to the fact that these courses were laid within the cut to provide a base for a wall that sat on top (Fig.3, Section 103 & Plan 101). The wall itself was 3.8 m

long and 480 mm wide and probably represents the remains of Marsh Farm, which occupied this area prior to the construction of the water treatment works.

3.4.4 Trenches were dug around the central piles of each of the tanks (Trenches 13, 15 & 18) to a depth of 700 mm and approximately 2.5 m x 2.5 m in diameter. The trenches cut through concrete blinding and into a brown/grey alluvial layer. No archaeological features were uncovered, however, within the alluvial clays in Trench 13 part of a tree branch was recovered although no tool marks were observed. The branch was not found within any type of archaeological feature and therefore can only provide us with palaeo-environmental evidence for this area.

3.4.5 Two trenches were excavated running roughly north-south from the southern edge of the two Blending Tanks (Trenches 14 & 16) and were 350 mm deep and 620 mm wide. Trench 14 was 5 m long and Trench 16 was 6 m long. These trenches cut through the concrete blinding and into brown/grey alluvial deposits. Trench 19 was excavated north-east by south-west, from the northern edge of Trench 18 and was 6 m long by 700 mm wide and 350 mm deep. This trench cut through the concrete blinding and into brown/grey alluvial deposits. No archaeology was observed in any of these trenches.

3.5 Cofferdam

3.5.1 To the east of the eastern Blending Tank a 7.8 m x 11.5 m trench was excavated down to a depth of 3.8 m (Trench 20) (Fig. 2). The trench was dug within an area that had been heavily truncated, evidenced by the fact that the peat layer, seen in other areas of the site, had all but gone, being replaced by made ground 300 mm to 400 mm thick. Beneath the made ground was approximately 2.5 m of brown/grey alluvium. The deposit then changed to a blue/grey clay alluvium, probably London Clay. Due to the use of sheet metal shoring prior to excavation, therefore none of the deposits could be seen in section during excavation and therefore no archaeological deposits or features were observed.

3.5.2 No archaeology could be observed during the excavation of this trench.

3.6 LSR Tanks

3.6.1 To the east of the Batch and Blending Tanks the ground was reduced by approximately 350 mm to accommodate two small LSR Tanks (Fig. 2). This involved the removal of three concrete plinths, one of which was about 1.5 m thick, and several old cables and pipes. This meant that the area in which the tanks were to be constructed had been heavily truncated by services and very little of the natural alluvium remained.

3.6.2 Two sump trenches were dug around the centre piles of the two tanks (Trenches 23 & 24). Trench 23 was 3.8 m x 3 m and 900 mm deep and situated at the centre of the eastern LSR tank. Most of this trench cut through old service trenches and therefore not much of the natural alluvium remained. A service trench (Trench 25) 5.2 m long,

700 mm wide and 700 mm deep was excavated from the southern edge of Trench 23 running north-south. This trench cut through several service trenches, however some brown/grey natural alluvium survived at the northern end of the trench but no archaeology was observed.

Trench 24 was dug around the central piles of the western LSR tank and was 3.6 m x 3.5 m in diameter and 800 mm deep. Most of this trench cut through old service trenches and very little natural remained. A service trench (Trench 26) 5 m long, 700 mm wide and 700 mm deep was excavated at the southern edge of Trench 24 running north-south. Trench 26 cut through mainly made ground with only a small amount of natural deposits visible at the southern edge of the trench. No archaeology could be observed at either the reduced level or within the trenches.

3.7 Weigh Bridge

3.7.1 To the south of the RTO building the ground was reduced in preparation for the construction of a weigh bridge (Fig. 2). The ground was reduced by approximately 250 mm to just below the made ground into the natural. This natural deposit was primarily brown/grey alluvium, which had been heavily truncated by a former orchard and several electrical service trenches.

Beam slots running north-west by south-east were dug across the width of the area of reduced ground (Trenches 27 & 28). Both trenches were 5 m long and 2 m wide, although Trench 27 was 500 mm deep while Trench 28 was 540 mm deep. These trenches cut through a brown grey alluvial deposit and modern service trenches. No archaeology could be seen at either the natural ground level or within the trenches.

3.8 Administration Building

3.8.1 Made ground immediately to the north-east of the weigh bridge was reduced in preparation of the construction of the Administration Building (Fig. 2). This reduction was undertaken in two phases. The first phase involved the reduction of the north-west end of the building area to a depth of approximately 250 mm below ground level, along with the excavation of a 2 m wide beam slot around the perimeter of the proposed building, also at a depth of 250 mm below ground level. The second phase involved the reduction of the remaining ground surface, however this only impacted existing made ground level.

3.8.2 Two wooden posts were observed at the south-eastern end of this area. Both posts were about 380 mm x 200 mm and 2 m apart, they appear to have been burnt. These fence or gate posts were likely to have been associated with farm buildings, the remains of which were found towards the northern end of the site.

3.9 Cake Import Unit

3.9.1 To the south of the LSR Tanks a large trench (Trench 22) measuring 11.7 m x 10.8 m was excavated to a depth of 3 m. This trench was excavated to accommodate the Cake Import Unit (Fig. 2) and was dug through approximately 400 mm of concrete and made ground, which formed the roadway. Underneath the made ground was a layer of brown/grey clay alluvium, 1.5 m deep, overlying blue/grey London Clay which went down by a further 1.1 m.

Prior to the excavation of this trench, sheet metal shoring was inserted around the proposed edges of this feature, preventing observation of deposits in section. Only in plan was it possible to monitor the excavations. The northern end of this trench was almost completely truncated by service trenches containing pipes and electricity cables, which would have destroyed any surviving archaeology.

3.10 Drainage/Sewage Trenches

3.10.1 To the south of the main Biosolids Dryer Building a course of deep drainage trenches were dug. These are to extend into the area of the main biosolids dryer building and around all associated buildings and tanks.

3.10.2 These trenches were 3 m deep and were excavated to accommodate sewage/drainage pipes. Most of the pipes were dug in areas where the ground surface had been heavily truncated, either as a result of the building works, earlier service trenches or existing roadways.

To the south of the Biosolids Dryer was a grassed area. The trenches (Trenches 29 to 33) excavated in this area were 3 m deep and 1.6 m wide and were dug through an upper layer of topsoil, 300 mm deep, a layer of mid brown/grey clay alluvium, roughly 1.5 m deep and into a layer of blue/grey London Clay. Although the ground was virtually free of services no archaeology was observed in any of the trenches.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 Topsoil and most of the subsoil existing within this site had previously been removed during initial ground remediation works. This was carried out prior to the watching brief and no archaeological features or structures were therefore observed at this stage.

4.1.2 The only evidence of activity within the site was a series of fence lines and foundations associated with the post-medieval farm known to have occupied the site prior to the construction of the Water Treatment works. These were discovered during the excavation for the Batch and Blending Tanks and the Administration Block.

4.1.3 Environmental analysis of the two bulk samples taken from the suspected areas of burning (contexts 109 & 114) revealed that these were infact waterlogged cess deposits of modern date. This was concluded due to the inclusion of glass beads of a possible Victorian date within these samples (see Appendix 2).

- 4.1.4 Apart from remains of the farm, no deposits of archaeological interest or potential were revealed during the course of the watching brief.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>
100	Layer	0.10m	C21st	-	Concrete	-
101	Layer	0.12m	C21st	-	Made ground	-
102	Layer	0.09m	Natural	-	Top/sub soil	-
103	Layer	0.21m	Natural	-	Peat	-
104	Layer	0.05m	Natural	-	Peat	-
105	Layer	-	Natural	-	Alluvial	-
106	Layer	0.10m	C21st	-	Concrete	-
107	Layer	0.23m	C21st	-	Made ground	-
108	Layer	0.12m	Natural	-	Peat	-
109	Fill	0.05m	-	-	Cessy layer	-
110	Layer	0.05m	Natural	-	Peat	-
111	Layer	1.00m	Natural	-	Alluvial	-
112	Layer	-	Natural	-	Alluvial	-
113	Cut	0.05m	-	-	Cess	-
114	Layer	0.08m	-	-	Cessy layer	-
115	Layer	0.15m	C21st	-	Concrete	-
116	Layer	0.25m	C21st	-	Made ground	-
117	Layer	0.06m	Natural	-	Peat	-
118	Layer	0.10m	Natural	-	Peat	-
119	Layer	-	Natural	-	Alluvial	-
120	Cut	0.18m	C19/20th	-	Cut for wall	-
121	Fill	0.10m	C19/20th	-	Fill of wall cut	-
122	Wall	0.15m	C19/20th	-	Wall	-

APPENDIX 2 ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC DATA

By *Seren Griffiths (OA)*

1. Methodology

Two bulk samples of 10 litres were taken as part of the watching brief at Tilbury Biosolids Dryer. The samples were taken from a layer which was suspected to be a peaty horizon for an assessment of the plant macroscopic remains, small bones and artefacts. The samples were processed by flotation using a modified Siraf-type machine, the flot being collected onto a 250 micron mesh. The remaining material was then wet sieved through a column for the recovery of small bones and artefacts. The flots and residues were air-dried and the flots scanned under a binocular microscope at Oxford Archaeology. The residues were sorted for bones and artefacts down to 4 mm and the remaining material retained. Initially assessment was undertaken at Oxford Archaeology by Seren Griffiths.

2. Results

Plant Remains

Both the samples produced reasonably large flots of 140 and 65 ml. Sample 1 (context 109) contained some charcoal but no other charred plant remains. No other charred plant remains were recovered from either sample. Significant quantities of uncharred seeds from edible species were present in both samples, this included blackberry/dewberry/raspberry (*Rubus* sp.(p.)) type seeds in both samples and ?grape (*Vicus*) seeds in sample 2 (context 114).

Sieved finds

A range of artefactual evidence was recovered from both samples. These included fish bones from both samples, a number of glass beads from sample 1 (context 109), and an iron object from sample 2 (context 114).

3. Discussion

The samples do not appear to originate from the peat. The soil, while rich in organic matter, did not have a humified appearance. The preservation of non-charred plant remains suggests preservation by waterlogging or the presence of significant quantities of modern plant matter. The inclusion in the deposits of small animal bone, fish scale and a range of dietary seeds suggests a layer of human refuse probably preserved by the semi-waterlogged conditions encountered on the floodplain. The presence of ?cereal bran and small animal bones, including fish scales might suggest that this might be a cess deposit, though there is no evidence of mineralisation. The presence of a buckler (a spine) from a Thornback ray fish suggests that the assemblage includes food waste, which would not pass through the digestive tract. The retrieval of glass beads indicates a fairly recent, or possibly a Victorian date for the assemblage.

Table 1- a summary of the charred plant remains

Sample No	Context No	Flot vol (ml)	Type of context	Charcoal	Grain	Chaff	Weeds	Other charred	Molluscs	Volume floated (litres)	Notes
2	114	65	Unphased deposit				++++ (inc <i>Rubus</i> spp, <i>Vitis</i> sp)			10	+small bones, ++fish bone, egg shell, glass
1	108	140	Unphased deposit	++			+++++ (inc <i>Rubus</i> spp.)			10	+coal, +fish scale, +++fish bones, ?cereal bran. Buckler from a Thornback ray. Glass beads

Key: +=present (up to 5 items), ++=frequent (5-25), +++=common (25-100) ++++=abundant (>100)

APPENDIX 3 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Atkins, 2005 *Tilbury Biosolids Dryer: Cultural Heritage Assessment*

Brown and Glazebrook, 2000 *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties 2 - Research Agenda and Strategy* (East Anglian Archaeology)

CAU, 2004 *Tilbury Biosolids Dryer, Essex, Archaeological Observations of Geotechnical Test Pits and Boreholes*

IFA, 2001 *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

OA, 2000 *OA Environmental Guidelines for Sampling*

OA, 2005 *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

OAU, 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson)

APPENDIX 4 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Biosolids Dryer, Tilbury, Essex

Site code: TIBID05

Grid reference: TQ 6600 7570

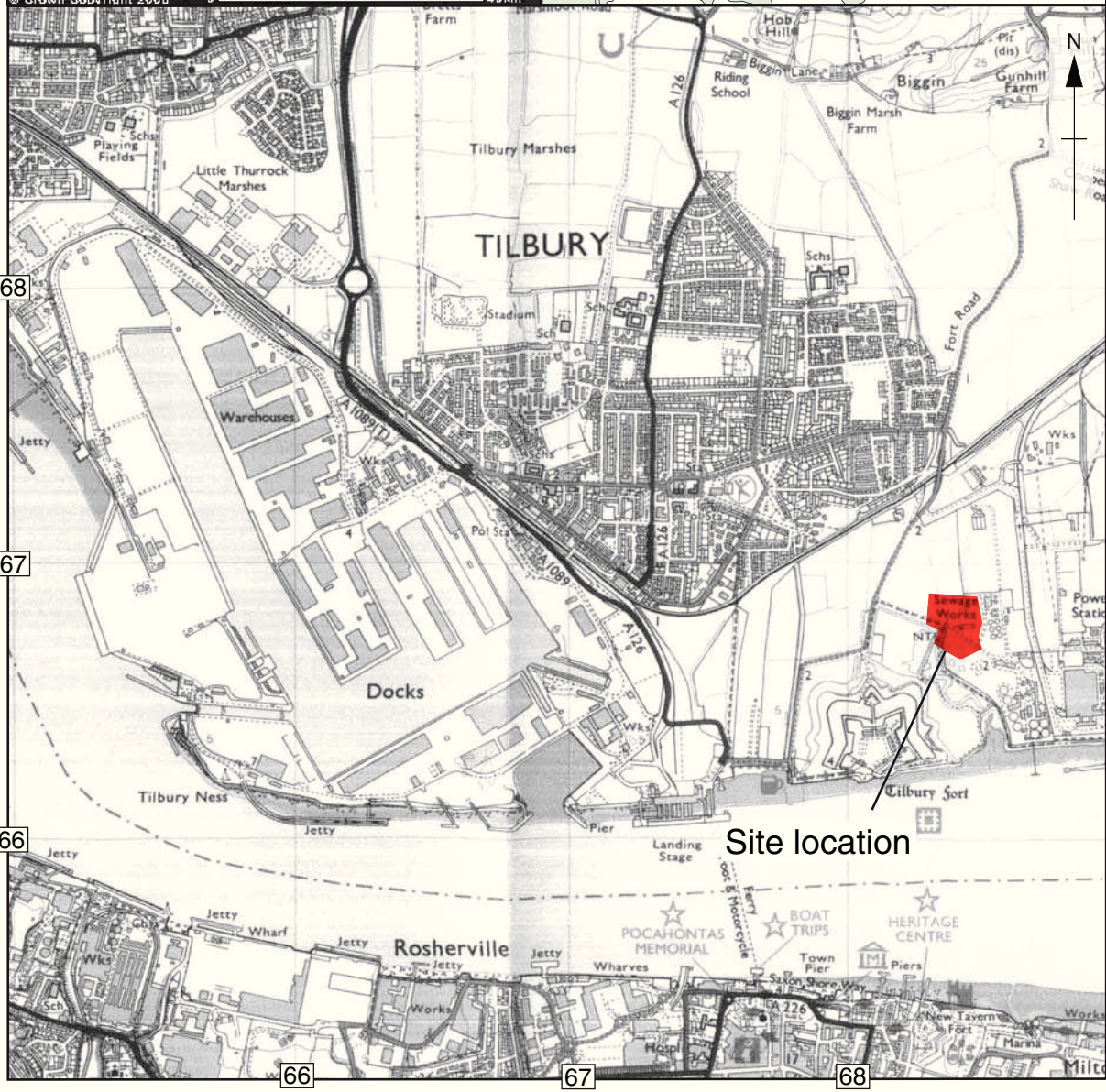
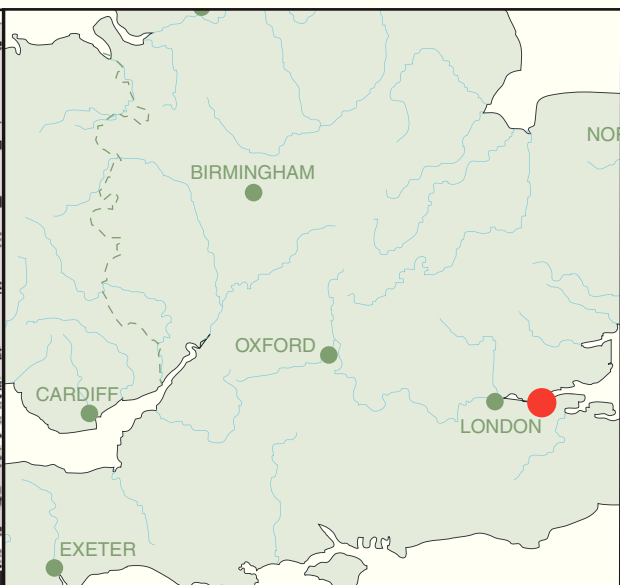
Type of Mitigation: Archaeological Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 7/11/2005 to 17/03/2006

Summary of results: No significant archaeological features or deposits beyond the remains of the known previous Marsh Farm were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Thurrock Museum in due course (TBC).

Server: go: /oumpub: L_r_thu_z: *TIBID05*TIBIDWB*Tilbury Biosolids Dryer*HC*2,1,03,06



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

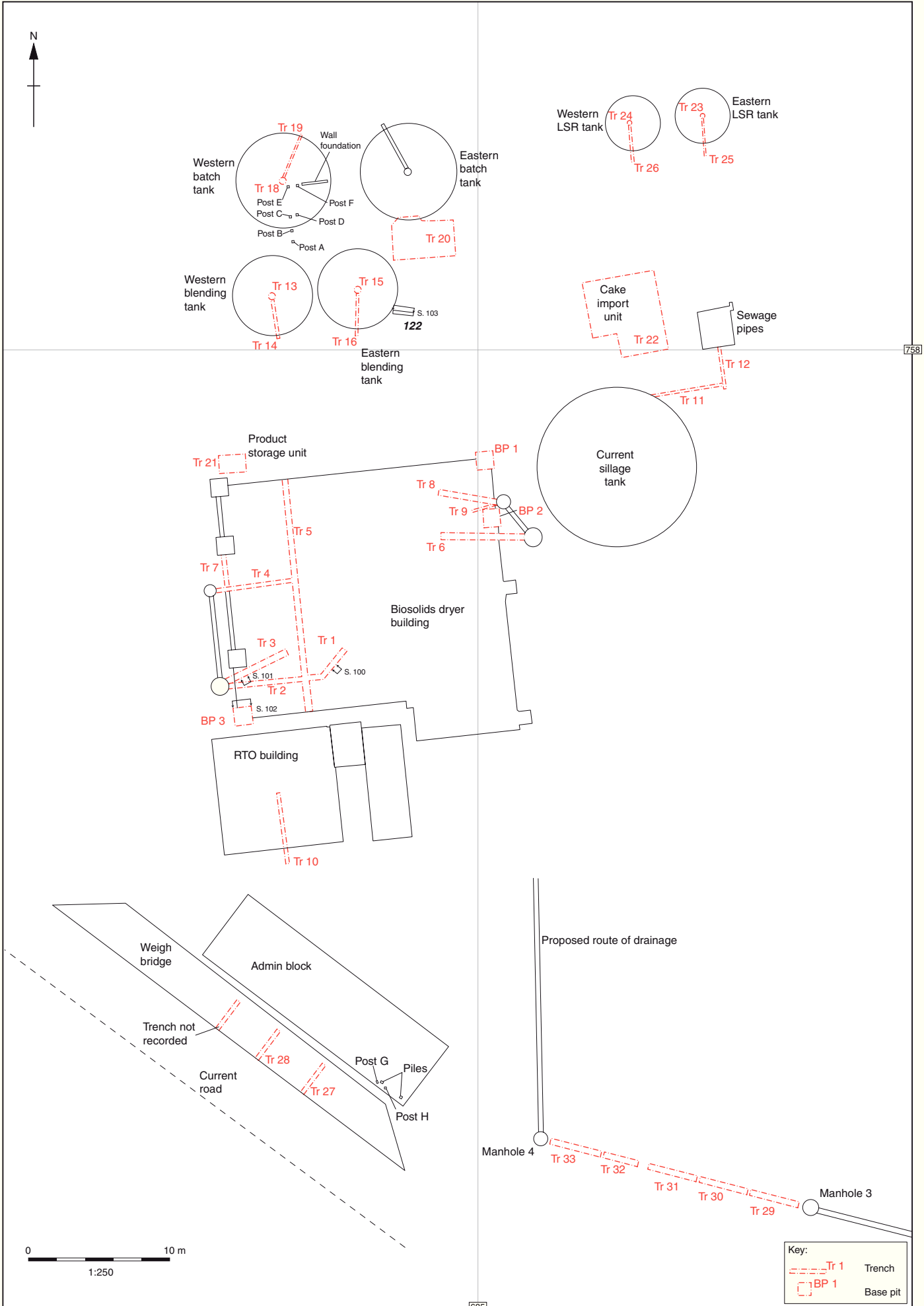


Figure 2: Site plan with Trench locations

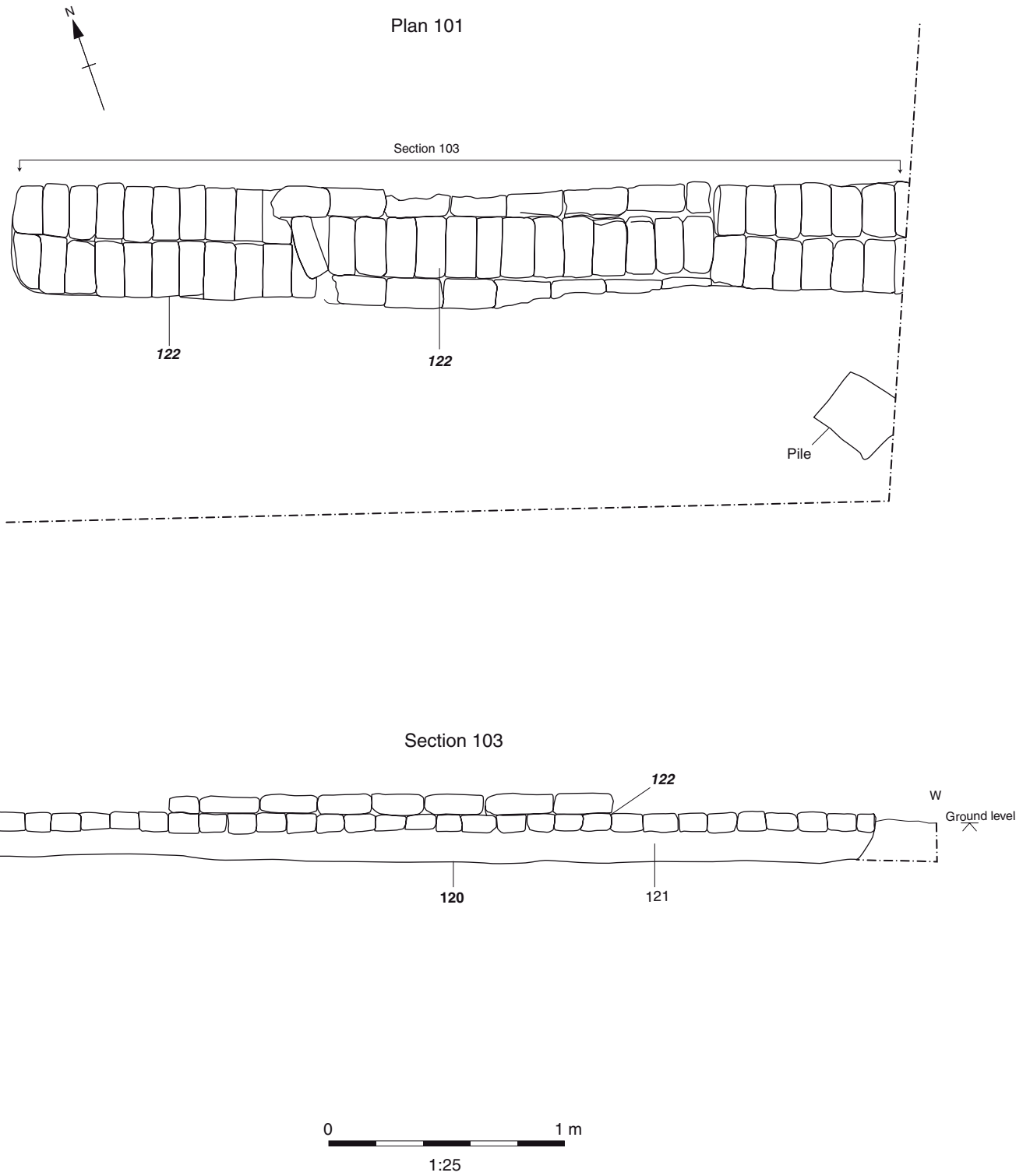
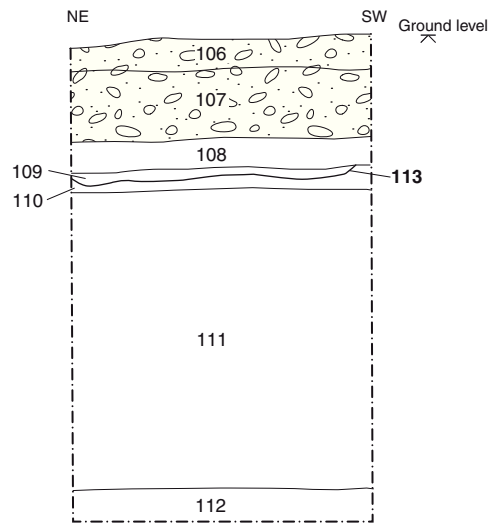


Figure 3: Plan 101, Section 103

Section 101



Section 102

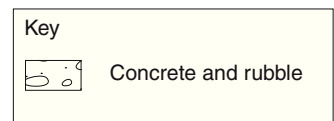
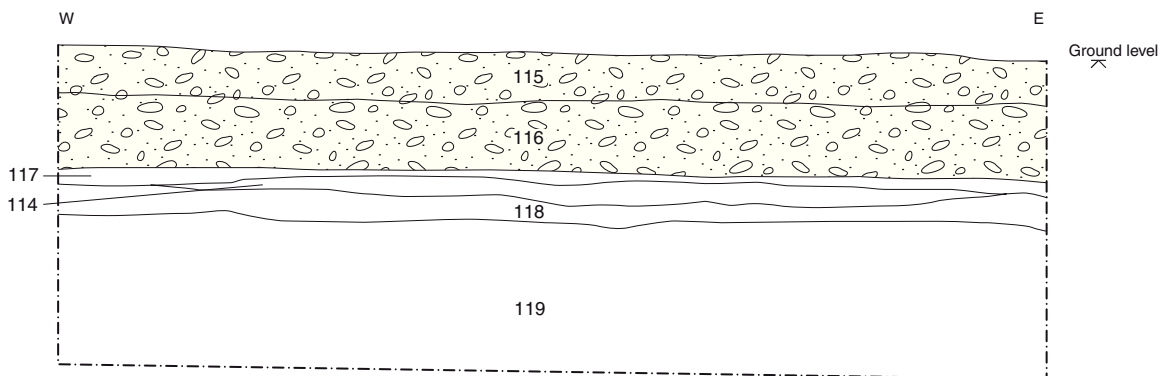


Figure 4: Sections 101 and 102