



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**AT**

**ST GEORGE'S CHURCH RUINS,**

**GRAND DEPOT ROAD,**

**WOOLWICH**

**NGR TQ 43361 78283**

*On behalf of*

*Heritage of London Trust Operations*

**MARCH 2018**

**REPORT FOR** Heritage of London Trust Operations  
c/o Manifest Design Workshop Ltd  
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Eynsham  
Oxfordshire

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## **SUMMARY**

*This document represents an investigation of the potential for archaeological remains on land at St George's Church ruins Grand Depot Road, Woolwich, London (TQ 43361 78283). The excavation of two small trenches partially revealed the brick foundations of the church but both trenches were devoid of any further archaeology.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)**

The site lies on the east side of Grand Depot Road, Woolwich (TQ 43361 78283). It lies between 40m and 45m AOD and the geology is Stanmore Gravel Formation.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

The Royal Borough of Greenwich has granted listed building consent for **Installation of new decorative security gates behind central arch of west end and new railings and gates to side porches, new steps and paving (17/2584/L)**. Due to the potential of the site to contain archaeological and historic remains conditions have been attached:

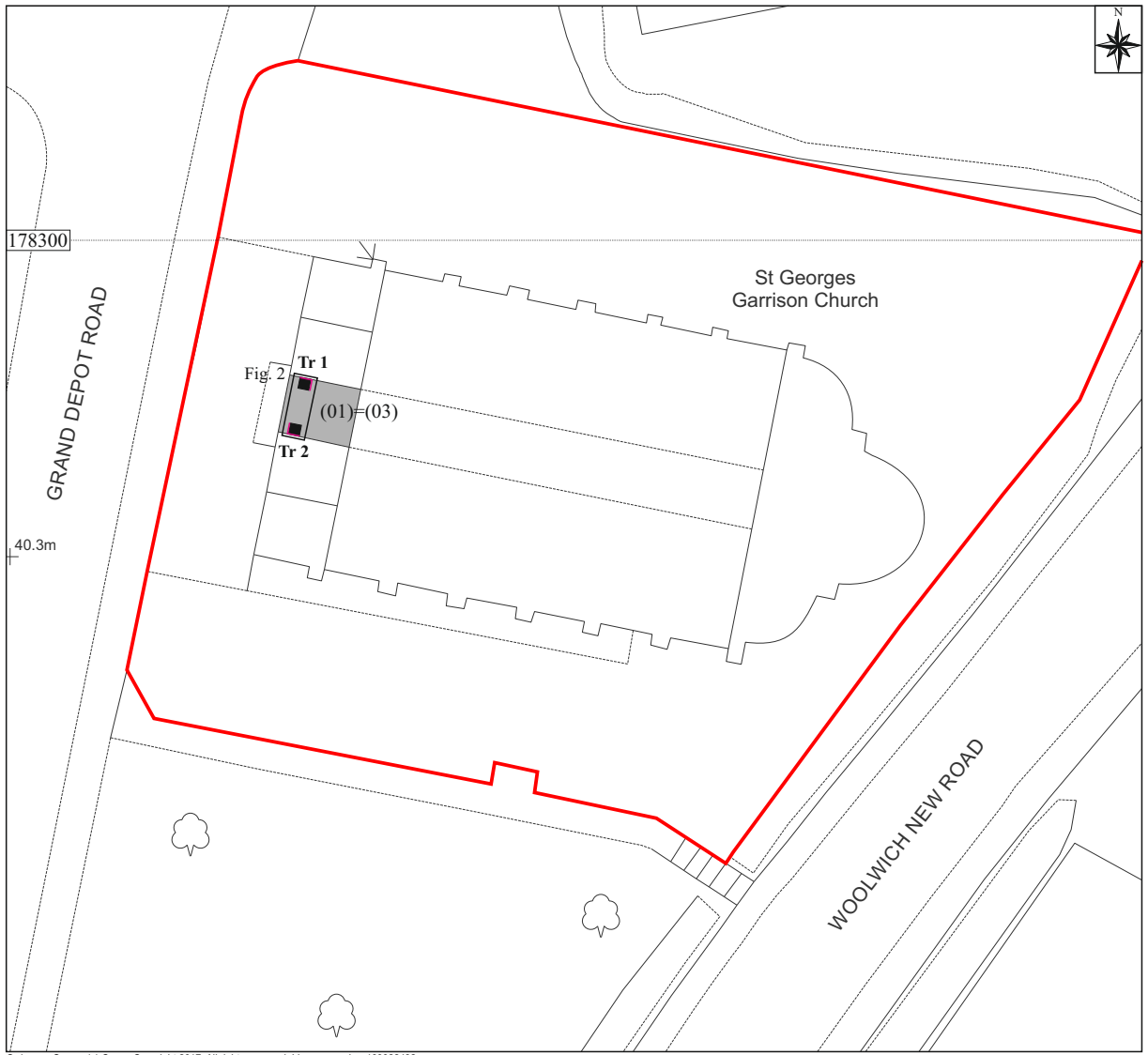
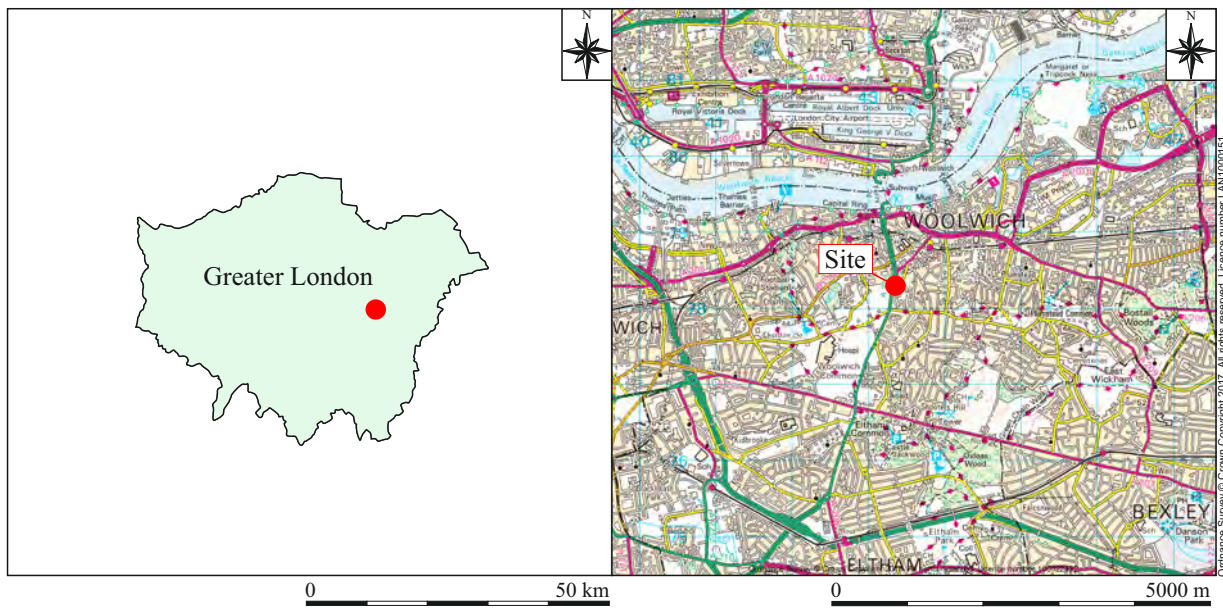
#### ***Condition 4***

##### ***Watching Brief***

*i) No works shall commence on site until the applicant has prepared a Watching Brief which includes the proactive engagement with the development groundworks to permit investigation and recording of features of archaeological interest which are revealed. ii) The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved Watching Brief with no amendments without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority.*

##### ***Reason 4***

*For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning, to ensure that the development is implemented in accordance with the approved plans and ensure compliance with Policies 7.4, 7.6 and 7.8 of the London Plan (2016), Policies DH1, DH3, DH(h), DH(i), DH(m) of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies (2014) and the Woolwich Common Conservation Area Appraisal (2014).*



Key  Site boundary  Monitored area  Test pit

Figure 1: Site location

**Condition 5**  
**Historic Features**

*i) Any hidden historic features, which are revealed during the course of works shall be retained in situ and work suspended in the relevant area of the building. The Council as local planning authority notified immediately.*

*ii) Works shall not recommence until details of the retention and/or proper recording of the historic features has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.*

**Reason 5**

*For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning, to ensure that the development is implemented in accordance with the approved plans and ensure compliance with Policies 7.4, 7.6 and 7.8 of the London Plan (2016), Policies DH1, DH3, DH(h), DH(i), DH(m) of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies (2014) and the Woolwich Common Conservation Area Appraisal (2014).*

This was in line with NPPF and Local Planning policies.

**1.2 Historical and Archaeological Background****The Church**

The Garrison Church of St George was built between 1862 and 1863 on the orders of Lord Sidney Herbert, Secretary of State for War, and designed by Thomas Henry Wyatt with assistance from his younger brother, Matthew Digby Wyatt. The builders were George Smith and Co. of Pimlico, and the church is a good example of the patterned brick work, typical of the Victorian period. Development in technology in Victorian England led to the manufacturing of bricks which had previously been handmade, producing stronger, more regular bricks, available in a range of colours.

The interior was richly decorated with mosaics thought to be based on those in the Roman and Byzantine monuments in Ravenna, Italy. The surviving mosaics: St George and the Dragon, and those around the chancel arches, were probably made in Venice in the workshop of Antonio Salviati, and installed by London based contractors, Burke & Co.

The mosaic of St George and the Dragon forms part of Victoria Cross memorial, which also includes marble tablets inscribed with the names of members of the Royal Artillery decorated in conflicts from the Crimean War to the middle of World War II. The cost of the memorial was met through subscriptions in 1915. The chancel mosaics were installed later. On completion commentators celebrated the interior for its use of iron work. Iron corbels survive today.

Originally there were five tall stained glass windows in the semi-circular apse-memorials to the fallen artillery officers made by Lavers and Barraud. William Wailes designed at least one of the windows, and another was a memorial to Lord Herbert.

On 13th July 1944 a flying bomb landed on the Church, causing a fire and gutting much of the interior. The church was also bombed during the First World War- the rose window was blown out, and stained glass lost.

In 1952 a re-building scheme was considered, with designs produced by Kenneth Lindy, but the widening of Grand Depot Road in the early 1960s scuppered plans. In 1970 the upper parts of the walls were demolished and the Church became a memorial garden with a corrugated roof placed over the east end to protect the mosaics and historic fabric.

The site was identified as a Building at Risk by Historic England, then English Heritage, in 2000. It remains 'at risk' today. The Church remains consecrated and at least four services take place every year.

In 2011 ownership of the Church was transferred from Defence Estates to the Heritage of London Trust Operations. The site is now largely managed by borough residents who have formed the Woolwich Garrison Church Trust. Services are still held at the Church for soldiers of the Kings Troop and Royal Horse Artillery based at Woolwich Barracks, and the Station Commander advises on operations and collaborates on events.

The above information has been taken from the St George's Garrison Church's website (St George's Garrison Church, Woolwich, London 2018).

The foundation walls of a church room that was added to the north wall of the church in 1902-1903 were recorded during a watching brief at the site (ELO16303, ELO16304: TQ 43350 78280). Additional walls recorded to the south of the church were the remains of a flight of stairs up to the south doorway of the church. An engineering test pit was excavated against the exterior wall of the church (ELO14036: TQ 43377 78285). The footings of the wall were stepped and no construction cut was seen, indicating that the overlying subsoil was associated with landscaping and levelling works that postdating construction of the church.

### Roman

Sherds of Romano-British pottery were discovered in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century 360m to the north of the site at the junction of John Wilson St. with Wellington St. (MLO2086: TQ 4331 7864)

### Medieval

During an earlier watching brief at the site a 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century tile-built kiln was recorded (ELO16303, ELO16304: TQ 43350 78280). The kiln, a nearby pit and a further tile-built structure contained fragments of green-glazed London-type ware in both its decorated and undecorated forms, suggesting that the kiln was one of the few known centres for the production for this type of pottery.

### Post-Medieval

A late 19<sup>th</sup> century power station was located 50m to the east of the site, demolished in 1979 (MLO2125: TQ 43400 78300).

A gravel pit first recorded in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century on OS 1st Edition mapping is located 270m to the south west of the site (MLO72875: TQ 43600 78200). An additional gravel pits is shown on mapping 450m to the south west (MLO72876: TQ 43650 78000).

A series of 19<sup>th</sup> century walls related to the military history of the area have been recorded. A 30m length of brick built wall associated with the former Grand Depot Barracks was recorded during archaeological work in 2008, 390m to the north; this was thought to be the northern boundary wall of the barracks (MLO98700: TQ 43438 78672); additional lengths were recorded 40m to the south west of MLO98700 (MLO98702: TQ 43389 78624) and 100m to the north east (MLO98703: TQ 43557 78746). A 50m length of the Royal Engineers Barracks was recorded running parallel to MLO98703 (MLO98699: TQ 43557 78742). A wall foundation thought to be associated to the Grand Depot Barracks was recorded during a watching brief 330m to the north of the site (MLO105367: TQ 43451 78606). During a watching brief at the Royal Artillery Barracks, located 250m to the north west, a number of features dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century were recorded; these included brick walls and a series of cannons thought to have been used as bollards (MLO105367: TQ 43451 78606).

The above archaeological background has been taken from the Greater London Historic Environment Record.

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To make a record of any significant archaeological remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or reveal archaeological and historic remains.
  - To record any further evidence related to the medieval kiln and associated features.

In particular:

- To record any evidence that is revealed relating to the church.

## **3 STRATEGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS), the archaeological advisors to the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014).



### 3.2 Methodology

Where archaeological horizons were encountered they were cleaned by hand and excavated appropriately. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was also produced.

The resultant spoil from the works was visually scanned, especially for finds relating to the medieval period onwards.

Two hand excavated trenches (Fig. 1), 0.7m wide, 0.7m long and 0.9m deep were excavated within the entrance to the church for the installation of new decorative security gates. The trenches were excavated through a disturbed ground layer that underlay the flagstone floor which had been lifted.

## 4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in brackets ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material, while numbers in bold indicate structural features.

Both trenches 1 and 2 (Figs. 1 & 2) contained the same sequence of deposits: layer (01) in trench 1 and (03) in trench 2 was a +0.9m thick layer of a grey / brown silty sand with frequent gravel inclusions, identified as a disturbed ground that contained large amounts of 20<sup>th</sup> Century debris.

These deposits abutted the lower brick wall / foundation **02** in trench 1 and **04** in trench 2. Foundation wall **02=04** consisted of a continuation of the brickwork above the former floor-line and extended beyond both trench depths. They consisted of yellowish buff bricks measuring 220x100mm, with a thickness of 70mm, arranged in Flemish bond and roughly bonded with mortar.

No further archaeological deposits were encountered within the trenches.

## 5 FINDS

20<sup>th</sup> Century debris was noted within layer (01)=(03); this included fragments of brick, tile and metal, none of which was retained.

## 6 DISCUSSION

Both trenches 1 and 2 revealed the continuation of the existing brick built church walls, extending down to a foundation depth of more than 0.9m below the existing ground surface. Abutting the walls was a layer of 20<sup>th</sup> Century disturbed ground. Both trenches were devoid of any further archaeological horizons.

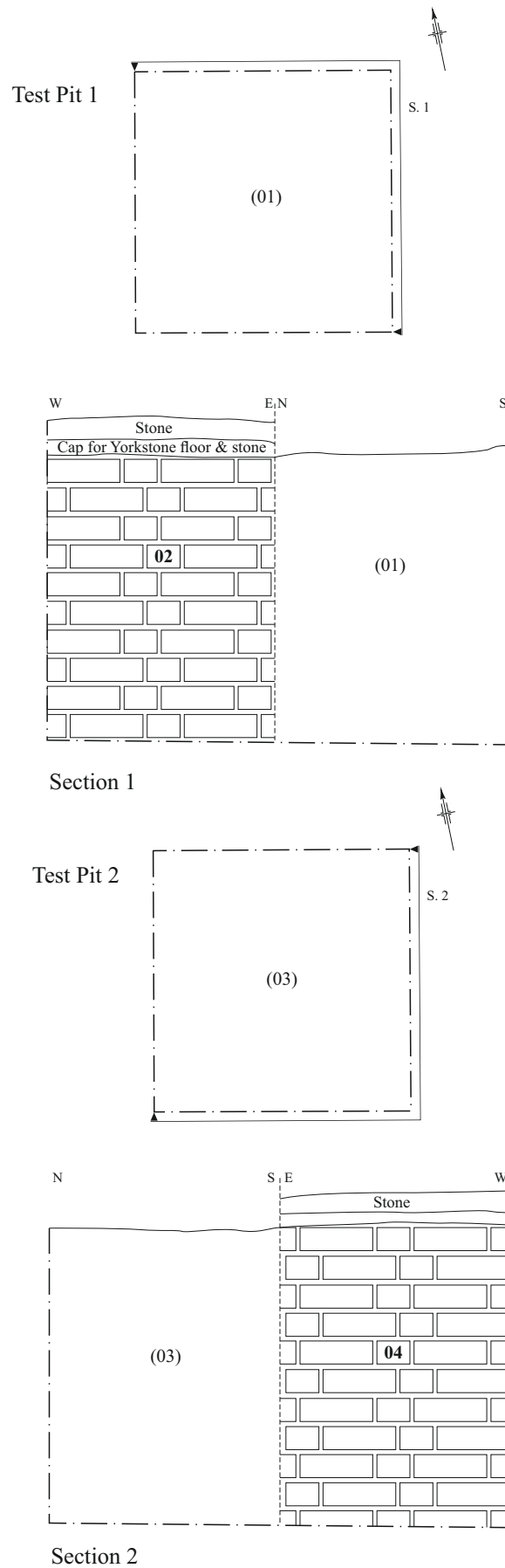


Figure 2: Test pits with sections



Figure 2. Trenches 1 and 2 sections



Plate 1. Trench 1



Plate 2. Trenches 1 and 2

## 7 ARCHIVE

### Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

#### Paper record

The project brief  
Written scheme of investigation  
The project report  
The primary site record

#### Physical record

None

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to The Museum of London when the museum starts accepting archives.

## 8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

John Moore Heritage Services, 2018 *St George's Church Ruins, Grand Depot Road, Woolwich Archaeological Watching Brief Written Scheme of Investigation*. (Unpublished client report)

St George's Garrison Church, Woolwich, London.. 2018. *History of the Church*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.stgeorgeswoolwich.org/history/history-of-the-church>. [Accessed 14 March 2018].

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**OASIS ID: johnmoor1-312529**

### Project details

Project name	ST GEORGE'S CHURCH RUINS, GRAND DEPOT ROAD, WOOLWICH
Short description of the project	An investigation of the potential for archaeological remains on land at St George's Church ruins Grand Depot Road, Woolwich, London (TQ 43361 78283) was carried out in February 2018. The excavation of two small trenches partially revealed the brick foundations of the church but both trenches were devoid of any further archaeology.
Project dates	Start: 22-02-2018 End: 22-02-2018
Previous/future work	Not known / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	GDO18 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	3885 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	17/2584/L - Planning Application No.
Any associated project reference codes	johnmoor1-312529 - OASIS form ID
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 15 - Other
Monument type	WALL Modern
Significant Finds	BRICK Modern
Significant Finds	TILE Modern
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON GREENWICH WOOLWICH St George's Church, Woolwich
Postcode	SE18 6XJ

Study area	1.62 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 43361 78283 51.484796675704 0.06495428822 51 29 05 N 000 03 53 E Point
Lat/Long Datum	Unknown

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	John Moore Heritage Services
Project brief originator	Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service
Project design originator	JMHS
Project director/manager	John Moore
Project supervisor	Stephen Leech
Type of sponsor/funding body	Trust
Name of sponsor/funding body	Heritage of London Trust Operations

### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive Exists?	No
Paper Archive recipient	Museum of London
Paper Archive ID	GDO18
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic","other"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Drawing","Photograph","Report"
Entered by	Simona Denis ( <a href="mailto:admin@jmheritageservices.co.uk">admin@jmheritageservices.co.uk</a> )
Entered on	23 March 2018

## OASIS:

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