

LONDON (LD)
City of London.

HNSWB
428/98

Northill Properties Limited

117-119 Houndsditch, London EC3

Archaeological Impact Assessment

NGR TQ 3341 8137

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

November 1998

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Prepared by: Duncan Wood

Date: November 1998

Checked by: *R. Williams*

Date: *13/11/1998*

Approved by: *R. Williams*

Date: *13/11/1998*

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LIST OF 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	1
2	AIMS AND METHODOLOGY	3
3	RESULTS	3
3.1	Test pit 1	3
3.2	Test pit 2	3
3.3	Test pit 3	4
3.4	Test pits 4-6	4
3.5	Test pit 7	4
4	ASSESSMENT OF THE RESULTS	4
4.1	Statement of reliability.....	4
4.2	Assessment of quantity	4
4.3	Conclusion.....	5
5	PROPOSAL FOR FURTHER GROUNDWORK	5
6	IMPACT ASSESSMENT	5
7	STATEMENT OF POTENTIAL	6

Bibliography and references

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory

List of Figures

- Fig. 1 Site location map
- Fig. 2 Agas map of London
- Fig. 3 Ogilby and Morgan's map of London
- Fig. 4 Horwood plan of London
- Fig. 5 OS Progression
- Fig. 6 Test pit locations
- Fig. 7 Sections
- Fig. 8 Areas of impact

SUMMARY

The Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out an archaeological watching brief at 117-119 Houndsditch on behalf of Northhill Properties Limited and the Raptor Group of Companies. The work consisted of 7 test pits. The monitoring was carried out to assess the archaeological potential of the site with regard to an extension and renovations of the existing building, which would include strengthening the foundations. The watching brief recovered poorly preserved truncated disarticulated human remains. There were no other features of archaeological significance. This report interprets the results of the watching brief and assesses the impact of future groundwork proposals.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

In September 1998 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a watching brief at 117-119 Houndsditch on behalf of Northhill Properties Limited. OAU were contracted to produce a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for approval by Kathryn Stubbs of the Corporation of London. The Corporation of London required a watching brief on all groundworks. The results would be incorporated into this *Archaeological Impact Assessment*. The development site lies outside the medieval city (NGR TQ 3341 8137) and covers an area of *c* 250 m².

1.2 Geology and Topography

The site lies to the north of Houndsditch on river terrace gravels overlain by brickearth. The gravels and brickearth survive at varying levels between 10.1 m OD and 11.9 m OD. The roadway level to the north of the site lies at *c* 14.8 m OD. The area to the north of the existing basement was covered by *c* 3 m of made ground.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

The study area lies just outside the line of the Roman and medieval city wall between Bishopsgate and Aldgate and within the line of the city ditch. The ditch was a major defensive feature excavated between AD 195 and AD 220. It was originally 'V' shaped with a shallow gully cut in the base. The adjacent countryside was exploited for food production, but it was probably farmed by residents of Londinium, who returned to the city when the day's work was complete. The main evidence for farm houses lies further out into the outer boroughs of Greater London. Further reinforcement of the city wall in the later fourth century led to erection of some 20 semi-circular bastions on the eastern side of the city defences. This led to the construction of a wider shallow ditch with a flat base.

It was the Roman custom, enforced by law, to dispose of their dead outside the inhabited area, often near the roads. Two of the main cemeteries were located to the north of Bishopsgate and to the east of Aldgate. Excavations within 350 m of the development site at the corner of Mansell Street and Alie Street identified in excess of 100 inhumations and cremations.

The ditch was excavated in the 13th century and periodically re-dug and cleaned until the 16th century. The area to the north of the city wall was open ground consisting of garden plots and agricultural land. The 16th century Agas map of London (Fig. 2) shows that the Houndsditch street frontage was occupied but the area to the north was still open fields. By 1678 the city ditch had been filled (Ogilby and Morgan, Fig. 3). The backfilling of the ditch is believed to have followed shortly after the great fire of London in 1666. The Horwood map of 1799 (Fig. 4) shows a series of small tenement buildings on the site. An analysis of the Ordnance Survey (OS) maps (Fig. 5) up to 1916 shows little change in the pattern of housing. The first significant change was identified on the 1952 survey drawing. Instead of a series of tenements, 115-119 Houndsditch was amalgamated into a single property. It should be also be noted that there is no obvious bomb damage in the area. The 1959 survey shows an identical pattern except that the area of 119 Houndsditch is depicted as a ruin. This would suggest that a number of properties were being rebuilt. The 1970 survey shows 117-119 as a single building. The small tenements to the back of the property have been destroyed.

The area around Houndsditch itself has produced significant archaeological evidence. A study of the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (GLSMR) produced 268 sites within a 300 m radius of the site. There are several known sites with archaeological finds in the immediate vicinity of the development site (see Fig. 1):

- (i) SMR reference: 042507, Site code: CCT90. Excavations and watching briefs at 20-26 Cutler Street and 123-125 Houndsditch (NGR TQ 3344 8138) were undertaken by the Department of Urban Archaeology. The work identified three phases of occupation:

The earliest deposits were Roman quarry pits, probably for gravel extraction. A 'mortar' burial was identified within one of the pits. The preservation of the bones was poor; only the thorax (ribs and spine) survived. Medieval cess and quarry pits often truncated the Roman deposits. Many of these contained human bone. These were mostly re-deposited Roman remains disturbed by the later pitting but some of the remains appeared to have been deliberately re-interred. Christian reburial was not uncommon in the medieval period. Post-medieval activity was evidenced by industrial waste *i.e.* slag, brick, crucibles and several moulds. Natural geology was identified at 10.1 m OD.

- (ii) SMR reference: 041936, Site code: HSD89. Excavations at 58-60 Houndsditch (NGR TQ 3332 8140) revealed eight burials of late Roman date. These comprised seven adults and one child. The bodies were extended and orientated in different directions. These lay directly in front of the Roman city wall and partly in the backfilled ditch.
- (iii) SMR reference: 041594, Site code: OPS88. Excavations at 158-164 Bishopsgate (NGR TQ 3330 8154) revealed a sequence of Roman quarry pits and gravel surfaces. These were possible tracks connecting with the line of the Ermine Street Roman road. Medieval remains were typically domestic rubbish pits truncating a dark soil, suggesting nearby occupation.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of the project was to preserve by record the presence, extent, condition, character and date of any archaeological remains which were to be removed during the excavation of the geo-technical test pits. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

The number of test pits excavated during the assessment was significantly increased during the works programme. This was due to the presence of a more complex system of foundations for the existing building than was previously expected at the proposal stage. The proposed borehole outside the building's footprint was abandoned due to a lack of comprehensive service data.

Contractors excavated the geo-technical pits (Fig.6) under archaeological supervision. OAU personnel excavated any features of archaeological significance. The concrete and hard core basement slab was removed using a mechanical breaker; all subsequent excavation was by hand. The work was designed to be as non-intrusive as possible.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Test pit 1 (Fig. 7)

Test pit 1 was located in the north-east corner of the basement (Fig. 6) and measured 2.5 m x 0.8 m and 1.6 m deep. The natural geology consisted of Thames gravels (107) overlain by a 1.2 m thick orange clayey sand (brickearth, 106) to a level of 11.5 m OD. Overlying the brickearth was a 0.3 m wide layer of dark grey brown silty clay (105) with a 10% inclusion of pea-grit. The deposit contained fragments of disarticulated human bone. Layer 105 was truncated to the south and west by the foundation cut (103) for a concrete beam (104). The beam was 1.2 m deep and measured 0.8 m in diameter before continuing into the southern section. The area to the north of deposit 105 was covered in fragmented concrete. This was interpreted as spillage during the construction of the present building. A 0.2 m thick layer (102) of brick and mortar hardcore overlay the foundation beam. A 0.2 m thick deposit (101) of reinforced concrete sealed the hardcore.

3.2 Test pit 2 (Fig. 7)

Test pit 2 measured 1.2 m x 1.4 m and was 1.8 m deep. It was located 0.8 m west of the eastern retaining wall (Fig. 6). The natural geology was truncated by a linear cut (203) aligned roughly north to south. The cut was 0.5 wide and truncated the brickearth (205) and gravel (206) to a depth of 1.4 m (10.1 m OD). The cut did not predate the foundation of the existing building and may relate to a similar feature identified in test pit 3. A mixture of green and brown sand and clay silts (204) filled cut 203. The cut was overlain by a 0.2 m thick layer of brick hardcore (202) and sealed by reinforced concrete (201) to 11.9 m OD.

3.3 Test pit 3

Test pit 3 was located in the basement, adjacent to the eastern wall (Fig. 6) and measured 1.2 m x 1.0 m and 1.2 m deep. A cut (303) for an offset foundation slab truncated the natural geology (306) 0.4 m from present ground surface. The cut had vertical sides and was 0.3 m wide. The foundations (305) were a mixture of brick and concrete and butted against the wall of the existing building. The construction cut (303) was then backfilled with bricks, mortar, fragmented concrete and redeposited brickearth (304) to a level of 11.5 m OD. A 0.2 m thick layer of hardcore (302) and a layer of reinforced concrete (301) overlay the construction cut.

3.4 Test pits 4-6

Test pits 4-6 were located within the basement (Fig. 6). The geology consisted of brickearth overlain by hardcore and reinforced concrete. No archaeological sensitive material was recovered from these test pits.

3.5 Test pit 7

Test pit 7 was excavated at present roadway level (14.8 m OD) and measured 2.5 m x 0.8 m. It was excavated to a depth of 2.95 m. The eastern edge of the excavation was defined by the exterior of the basement (704). Modern service pipes truncated the western (705) and southern baulks (706). Natural geology (707) was identified at a depth of 2.88 m (11.92 m OD). The natural brickearth was overlain by a redeposited dark grey brown silty clay (703) with inclusions of pea grit, brick and plastic. The deposit was 2.48 m thick. The remaining fill consisted of brick hard core (702) and tarmac (701).

4 ASSESSMENT OF THE RESULTS

4.1 Statement of reliability

The test pits were only excavated to investigate the existing building's foundations. These areas were obviously of limited archaeological potential due to the presence of foundations. No investigation took place outside the areas impacted by the concrete foundation beams. Therefore a substantial area has not been assessed.

4.2 Assessment of quantity

The only context of archaeological significance was located within test pit 1 directly below the basement slab floor. This contained fragments of human bone. An analysis of the bone supported the conclusion that the context was not an *in-situ* deposit but was the result of disturbance or truncation.

4.3 Conclusion

The results of the investigation suggest that very limited archaeologically deposits survive within the area of the development. The cut features identified in test pits 2 and 3 (203, 303) were interpreted as part of the construction of the existing building. They appear to be part of the construction cut for an offset foundation that runs down the eastern wall of the existing building. The basement slab lies on concrete beams (identified in test pits 1-3) which truncate the natural brickearth to the level of the underlying gravel terrace. The results of test pit 7 suggest that the area immediately to the north of the site had been truncated by the construction of the existing building and associated services. No evidence survives of the previous buildings on the site. This would suggest that the basement of 117-119 Houndsditch has heavily truncated any possible medieval and post-medieval remains that may have survived at higher levels cutting the natural brickearth. This truncation may be responsible for the survival of human bone fragments directly below the basement slab in test pit 1

5 PROPOSAL FOR FURTHER GROUNDWORK (Fig. 8)

The existing basement will be extended to the north to a depth of 2 m below the existing basement floor as shown on the original planning application. Additional work includes the removal of the existing floor slab and the excavation of new trenches for foundation beams. The new excavations will range in depth from 1 m to 1.4 m below floor slab level. With reference to Figure 8:

- The blue shaded areas which indicated excavation to 2.0 m below basement slab level would form the main pad foundations.
- The red shaded areas which show excavation to 1.4 m below the existing basement floor will form the balancing or tie back beams to the columns adjacent to the boundary walls.
- The yellow shaded area which indicated excavation to 1.0 m below the existing basement floor will form part of the raft to the new basement extension.

The impact area has significantly changed since the initial proposal. The inclusion of areas of impact inside the existing basement are for additional 'balancing' or 'tie back' beams for the foundations of the basement extension. It is understood from Train & Kemp (Consulting Engineers) that this is a fairly common practice, although this issue may be reviewed with the engineer's and architects. The alterations have been instigated by any archaeological concerns. It should be noted that these proposals are based on the best available information. There is scope for alterations to the design should the further works produce engineering or archaeological concerns.

6 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The area to the north of 117-119 Houndsditch appears to have been disturbed by the construction of the existing property and the surrounding buildings. Medieval and post-medieval material was identified in contexts 204 and 703. The contexts represented modern dumped deposits that contained 20th century material. As the assemblage did not relate to the date of the context it was therefore of little archaeological significance and observed but not retained. Test pit 7 identified that the backfilled material directly overlay the natural geology. This suggests that the survival of *in-situ* Roman and medieval stratigraphy would be limited, although the restricted area of investigation should be taken into account. The only retained finds were fragments of human bone from test pit 1.

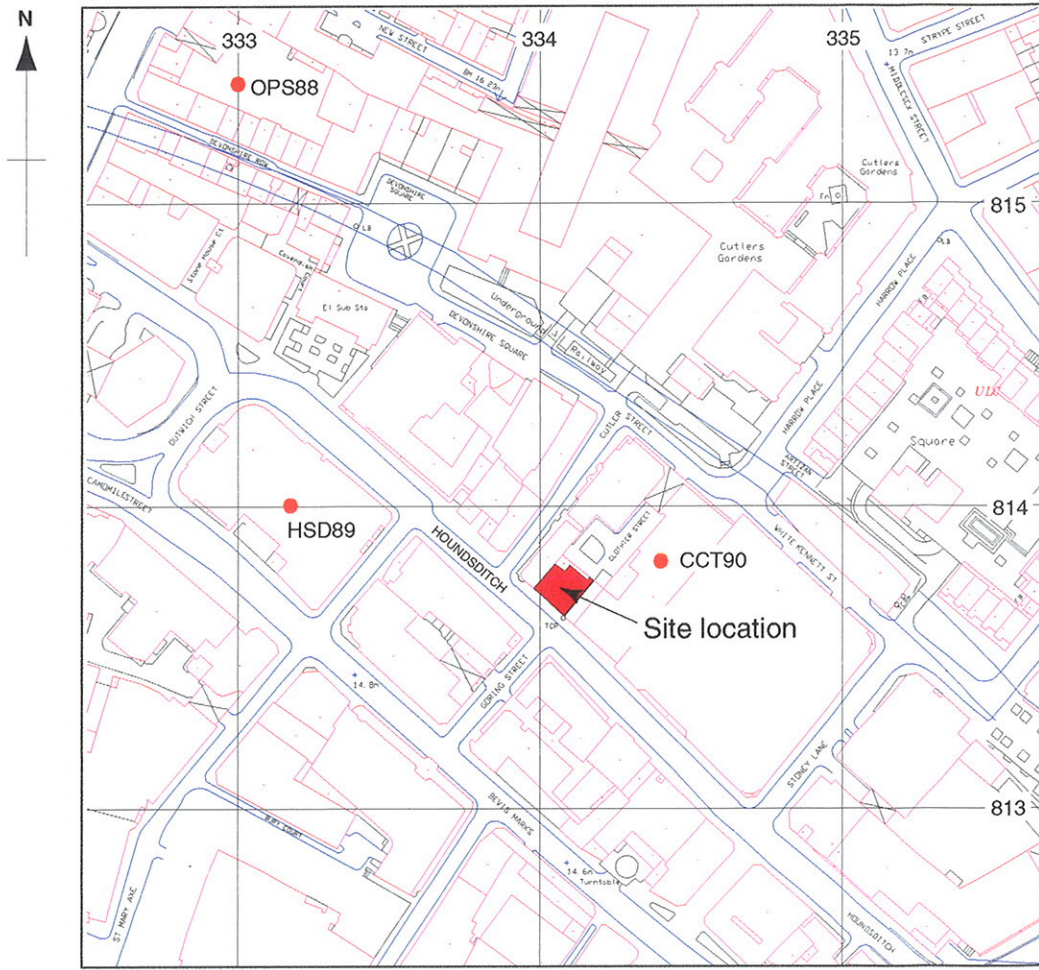
The human remains comprised: 2 large fragments of skull (male); 1 fragment of pelvis (female); 1 humerus and one femur. The condition of the bone was very poor. The truncation of the deposits, the presence of disarticulated male and female remains and the close proximity of known Roman and medieval remains suggests that the bones are not situated within a grave cut but were disturbed during the construction of the original building. However, as two of the main cemeteries were located to the north of Bishopsgate and to the east of Aldgate the presence of further human remains should be considered as part of the future works.

7 STATEMENT OF POTENTIAL

The archaeological evaluation has concluded that the site of 117-119 Houndsditch is of limited archaeological potential. This conclusion was drawn from the paucity of archaeological remains and the demonstrated presence of development on the site throughout the post-medieval period. As the basement slab directly overlies the natural geology, monitoring (watching brief) of the removal of the floor slab would identify any surviving deposits prior to the excavation of the proposed foundations (Section 6). The survival of limited archaeological deposits beneath the slab floor cannot be precluded. The area to the north of the existing basement is of slightly higher potential. The area was not as intensely investigated as the existing basement. However, it should be noted that the area to the north of the site was identified as having been the subject of several phases of renovation since the 18th century (see Section 1.3). The existing roadway also shows evidence of several services that would have truncated any surviving medieval or post-medieval contexts. The possibility of surviving archaeological material within the new impact area could be dealt with through a condition within a monitoring programme that allowed for further archaeological excavation or adjustments in the proposed locations of the foundations as stated by Train & Kemp.

Bibliography and references

- Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992 *Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual*. (First edition, August 1992)



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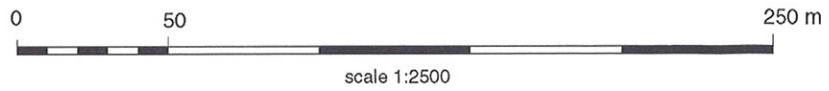


Figure 1: Site location

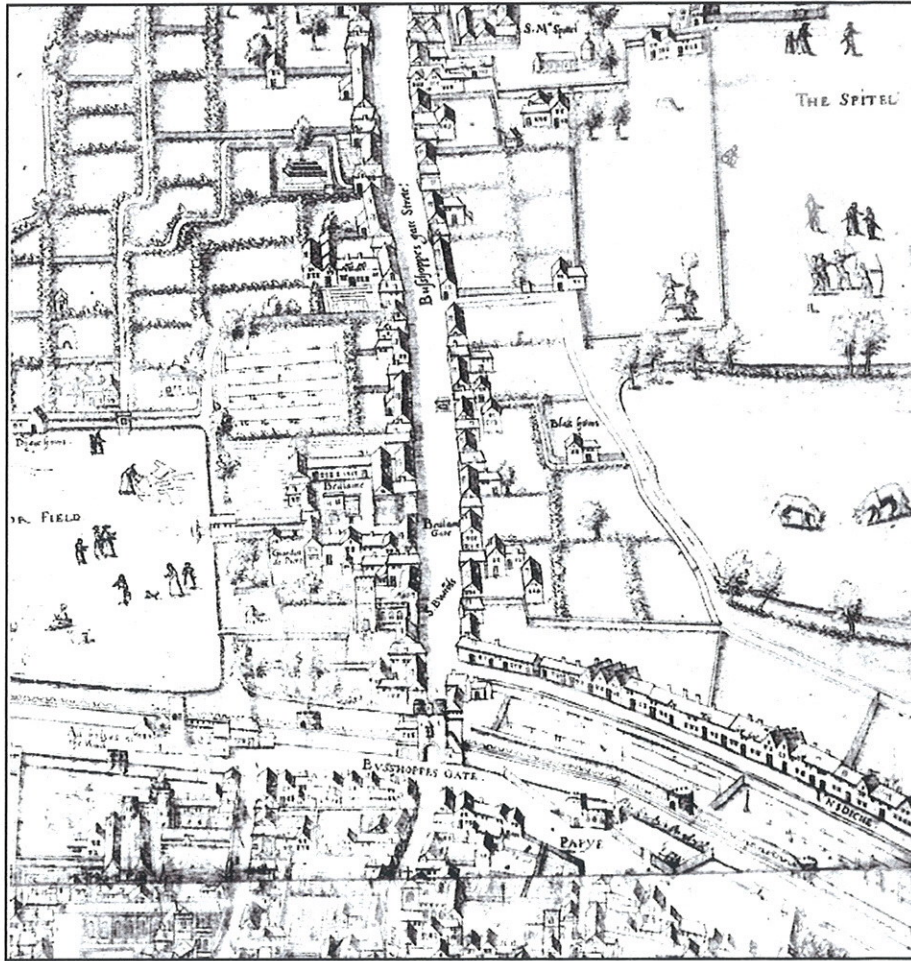


Figure 2: Agas map of London showing the Houndsditch street frontage and city ditch

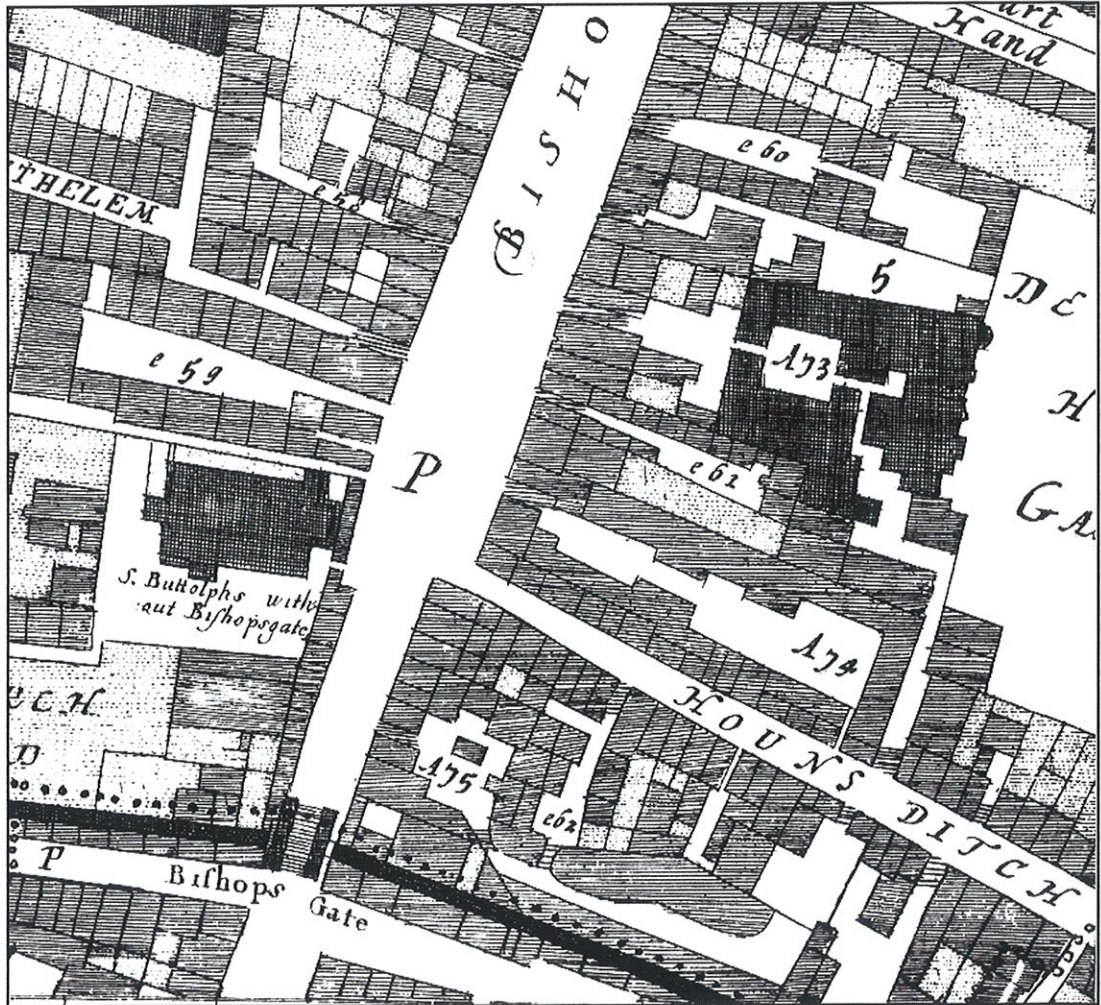


Figure 3: Ogilby and Morgan's map of London showing a backfilled ditch and developed street frontage

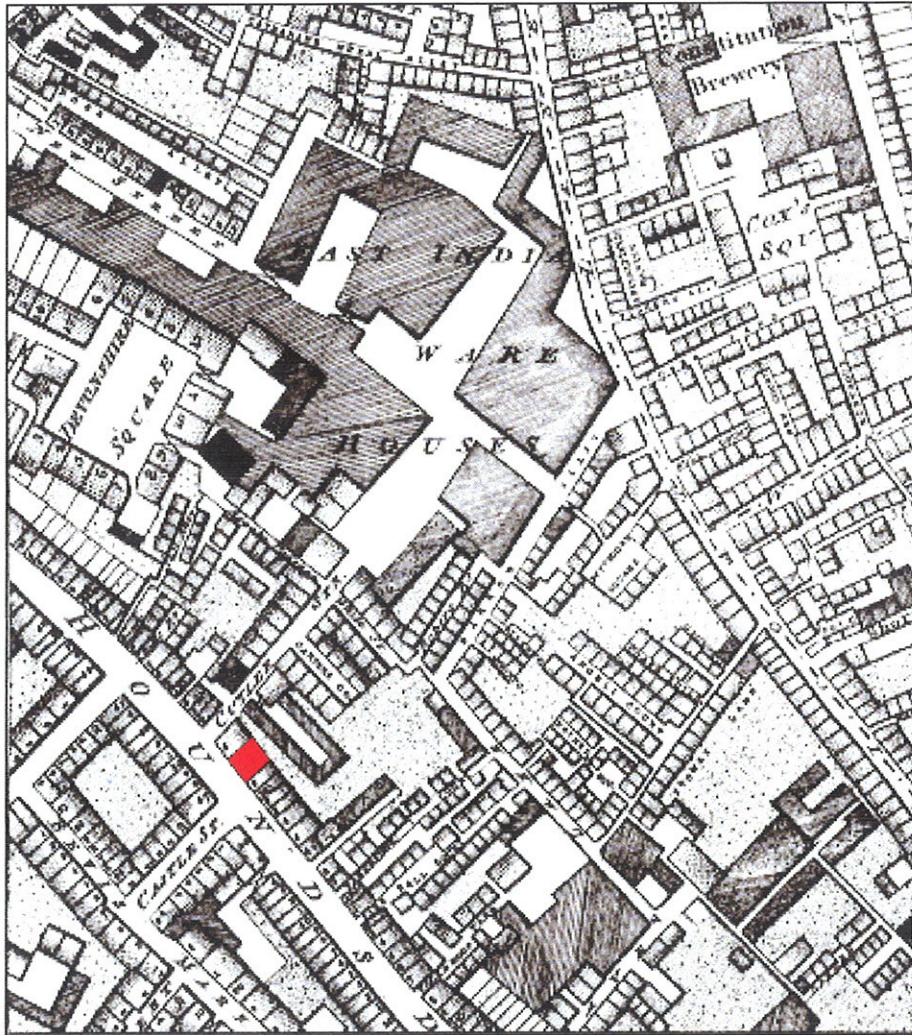
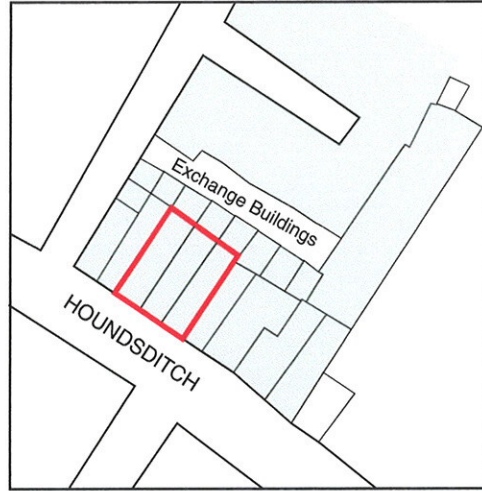


Figure 4: Horwood map of 1799 showing the development of the area around Houndsditch

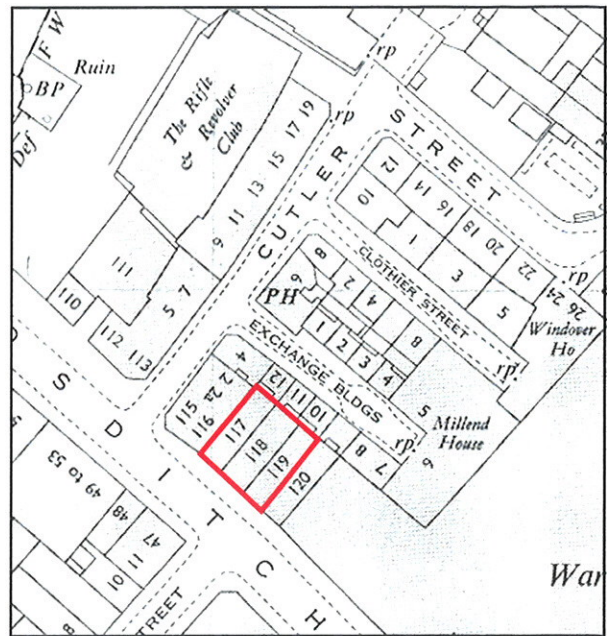
1875



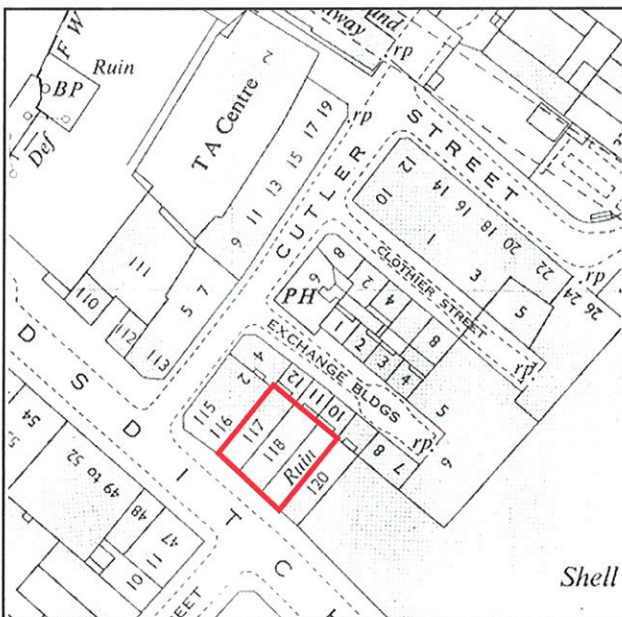
1916



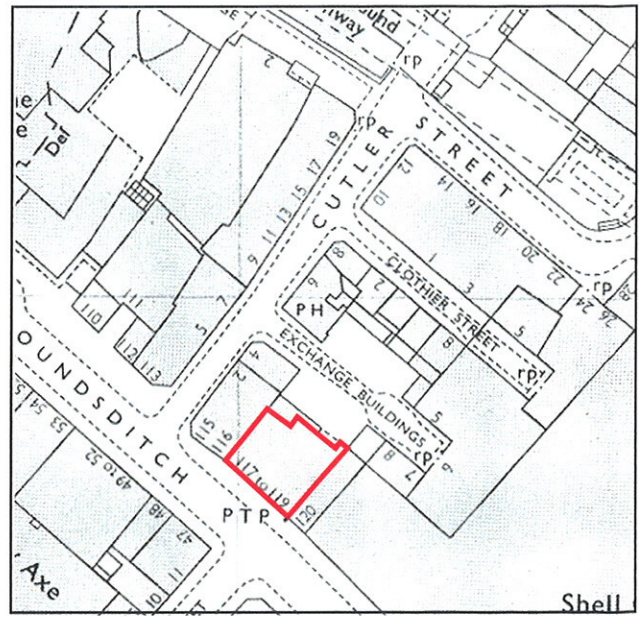
1952



1959



1970



scale 1:1250

Figure 5: Ordnance Survey maps showing the development around the site of 117 - 119 Houndsditch

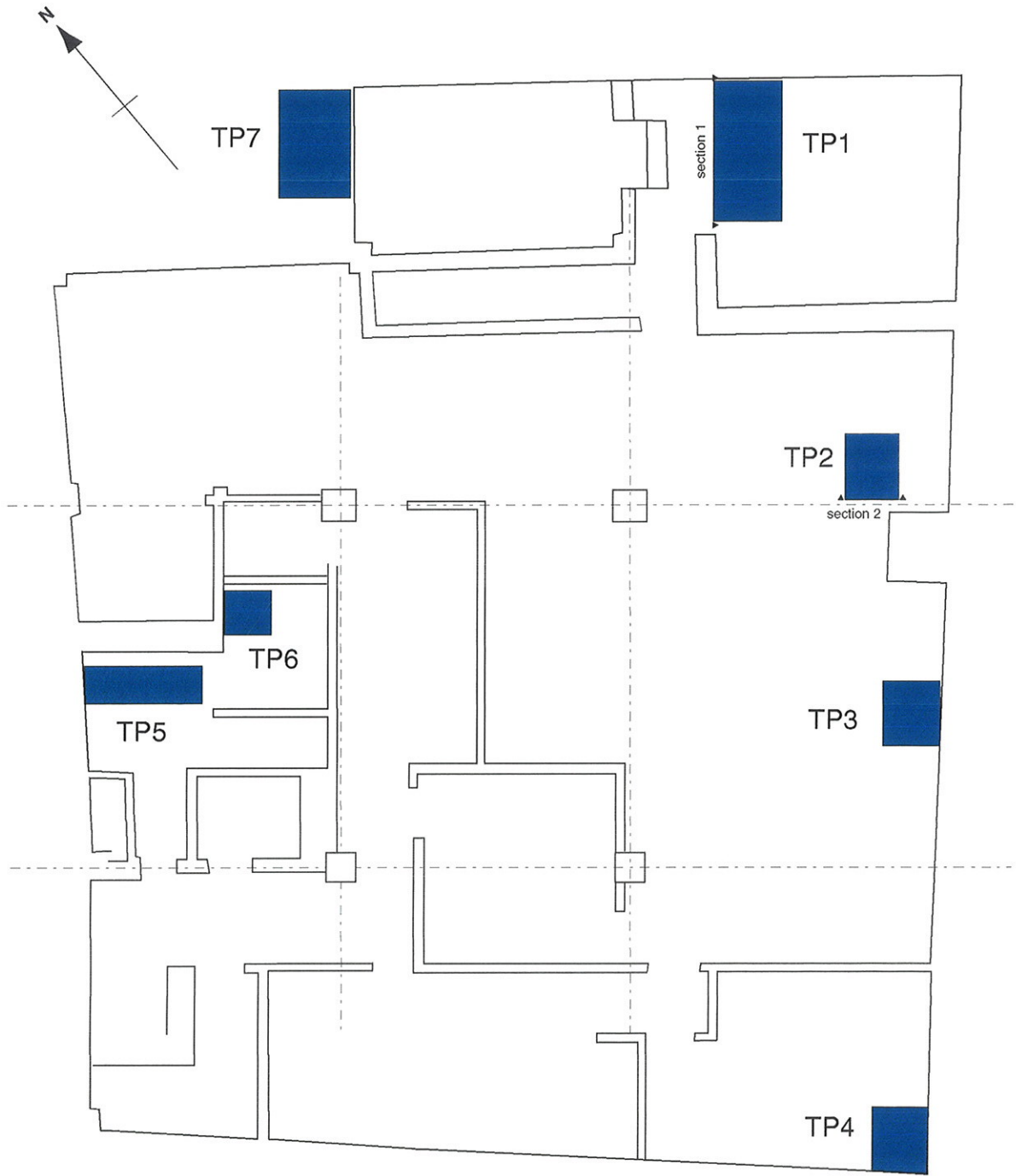


Figure 6: Test pit location plan

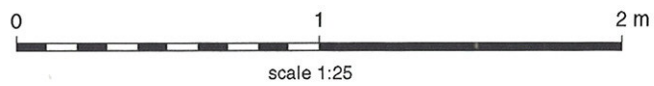
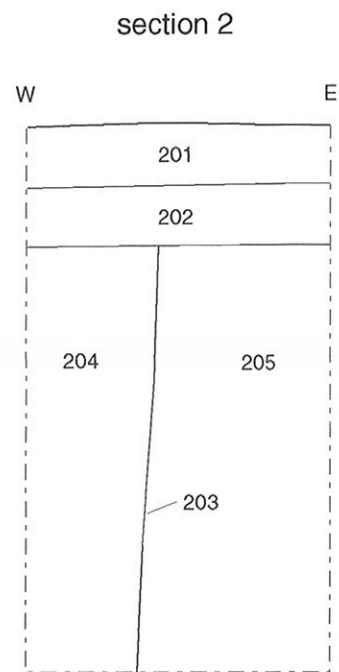
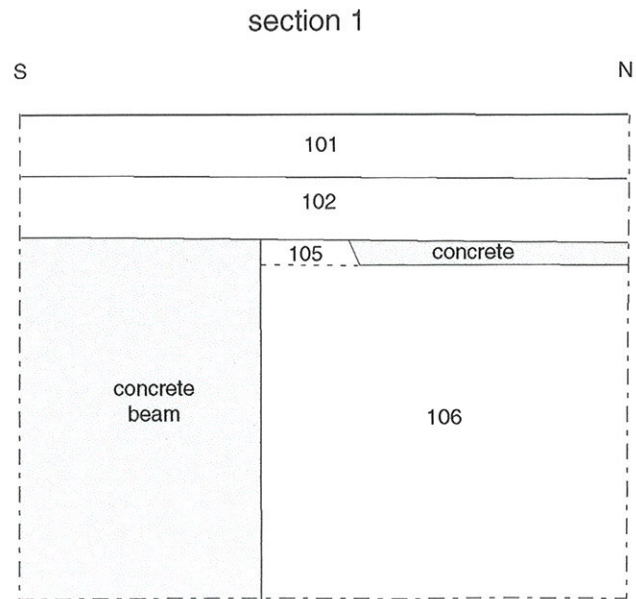


Figure 7: sections



Figure 8: Areas of Impact

Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctxt</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Thick. (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>
001						
	101	Layer		0.2	Concrete	No
	102	Layer		0.2	Hardcore	No
	103	Cut	See 104		Foundation cut	No
	104	Structure	0.8	1.2	Foundation beam	No
	105	Layer	0.3	0.08	Silty clay	Yes, Human remains
	106	Layer		1.2	Brickearth	No
	107	Layer		0.05+	Gravel	No
002						
	201	Layer		0.2	Concrete	No
	202	Layer		0.2	Hardcore	No
	203	Cut	See 204		Foundation cut	No
	204	Fill	0.5	1.4	Fill of 203	No
	205	Layer		1.1	Brickearth	No
	206	Layer		0.1+	Gravel	No
003						
	301	Layer		0.2	Concrete	No
	302	Layer		0.2	Hardcore	No
	303	Cut	0.3	0.8	Foundation cut	No
	304	Fill	0.3	0.7	Fill of 303	No
	305	Structure	0.3	0.1	Offset Foundation	No
	306	Layer		0.8+	Brickearth	No

004						
	401	Layer		0.2	Concrete	No
	402	Layer		0.2	Hardcore	No
	403	Layer		0.4+	Brickearth	No
005						
	501	Layer		0.2	Concrete	No
	502	Layer		0.2	Hardcore	No
	503	Layer		0.8+	Brickearth	No
006						
	601	Layer		0.2	Concrete	No
	602	Layer		0.2	Hardcore	No
	603	Layer		1.0+	Brickearth	No
007						
	701	Layer		0.2	Tarmac	No
	702	Layer		0.2	Hardcore	No
	703	Layer		2.48	Backfill	No
	704	Structure		2.95	Basement wall	No
	705	Service		1.2	Sewer / drain	No
	706	Service		2.95	Sewer / drain	No
	707	Layer		0.07+	Brickearth	No

GLSMR/RCHME NMR ARCHAEOLOGICAL FORM

1) TYPE OF RECORDING

Watching brief

Other (please specify)

2) LOCATION

Borough: City of London

Site address: 117-119 Houndsditch, London EC3

Site Name: 117-119 Houndsditch

Site Code: HNS98

Nat. grid Refs: centre of site: NGR TQ 3341 8137

Limits of site: a) b)

c) d)

3) ORGANISATION

Name of archaeological unit/company/society: Oxford Archaeological Unit

Address: Oxford Archaeological Unit

Janus House, Osney Mead

Oxford OX2 0ES

Site director/supervisor: Duncan Wood

Project manager: Duncan Wood

Funded by: Northhill Properties Limited

4) DURATION

Date fieldwork started: September 1998

Date finished: 24/10/98

Fieldwork previously notified? NO

Fieldwork will continue? NOT KNOWN

5) PERIODS REPRESENTED

Palaeolithic

Roman

Mesolithic

Saxon (pre-AD 1066)

Neolithic

Medieval (AD 1066-1485)

Bronze Age

Post-Medieval - Yes

Iron Age

Unknown - Yes

- 6) PERIOD SUMMARIES Use headings for each period (ROMAN; MEDIEVAL; etc.), and additional sheets if necessary.

Post-Medieval

Fragments of post-medieval wares were recovered but only from areas truncated by 20th century development. These were identified but not retained.

Unknown

Fragments of undated human remains – Roman or Medieval

7) NATURAL (state if not preserved; please DO NOT LEAVE BLANK)

Type: Brickearth and Thames Gravel

Height above Ordnance datum: c 10.1 m OD (Terrace Gravel)

11.5 m OD (Brickearth)

8) LOCATION OF ARCHIVES

a) Please indicate those categories still in your possession:

Notes-Yes Plans-Yes PHotos NGtives
SLides Correspondence-Yes MScripts (unpub reports, etc)

b) All will be deposited in the following museum, records office etc:

Museum of London when it re-opens

c) Approximate year of transfer: No date has been forwarded by MoL

d) Location of any copies: Microfiche

e) Has a security copy of the archive been made?: YES

8) LOCATION OF FINDS

a) In our possession? : ALL

b) All will be deposited with the following museum: Museum of London

c) Approximate year of transfer: See Above

10) BIBLIOGRAPHY

Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992 *Oxford Archaeological Unit Field manual*, (First
edition, August 1992)

SIGNED: 

DATE: 13/10/1998

NAME (Block capitals): Duncan Wood



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