

7-15 Fleet Street Hare Court London



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Oxford Archaeology

September 2003

Client: BBF Architecture

Issue N^o: Draft
OA Job N^o: 1982
NGR: TQ 3105 8105

Client Name: BBF Architecture

Client Ref No:

Document Title: 7 - 15 Fleet Street, Hare Court, London

Document Type: Watching Brief

Issue Number: 1

National Grid Reference: TQ 3105 8105
Planning Reference:

OA Job Number: JN
Site Code: FSC 03
Invoice Code: FSCWB
Receiving Museum: Museum of London
Museum Accession No: Awaiting

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Date: 23rd September 2003

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Date: 24th September 2003

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Document File Location H:\PROJECTS\London LO\Corporation of London\New
Folder\client.doc
Graphics File Location Server10*OAUpubs\FSC03*AH**
Illustrated by Amy Tiffany Hemingway

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NGR: TQ 3105 8105

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

On 27th of August 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at 7-15 Fleet Street, Hare Court, London. (NGR: TQ 3105 8105). The work was commissioned by BBF Architecture in advance of the excavation of a footing for a new flight of external steps at the rear of Hare Court. The watching brief revealed a succession of layers of made ground all dating between the mid 18th to late 19th centuries. A 19th century brick culvert and associated soakaway were also exposed., but no earlier archaeological features were observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 On 27th of August 2003, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at 7-15 Fleet Street, Hare Court, London. The work was commissioned by BBF Architecture in respect of a planning application for excavation of footings for a new flight of steps at the rear of Hare Court. (Planning Application No. N/A)
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken in accordance with a previous project brief set by Catherine Stubbs of the Corporation of London.
- 1.1.3 OA operated under the aegis of a previous Written Scheme of Investigation (OA 2001a) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the watching brief.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 This development site is located within Farringdon Ward, c 50m inside the west boundary of the City and is approximately at 13.0m AOD. It is situated at the west end of Fleet Street on it's south side, and is bounded to the north by Fleet Street, to the east by Nos. 1-3 Middle Temple Lane, to the west by Inner Temple Lane and by Hare court to the south. (NGR: TQ 3105 8105)
- 1.2.2 Fleet Street extends along the edge of a relatively flat east-west gravel terrace. To the south the land slopes away to the north edge of the River Thames, some 200m distant. The River would have been nearer the site, and the slope would have been more pronounced in the Roman and Medieval periods.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background was prepared for an earlier watching brief on the same site (OAU, 2001, *7-15 Fleet Street, London Refurbishment Project*) and is summarised below.
- 1.3.2 The site lies c 600m east of the former limits of the Roman and Medieval cities and is some 50m west from the suggested limits of middle Saxon *Londonwic*.

- 1.3.3 Locally little evidence of Paleolithic activity has been found. Some 34 sites within the City have revealed prehistoric remains; isolated Mesolithic and Iron Age finds have been found within 40m of the College of Arms.
- 1.3.4 The Roman town of *Londinium* was founded between AD 43 and AD 60. Two main east-west roads were built, flanked by important timber buildings. Expansion peaked during the first half of the second century, with the town spreading west to cover an area of approximately one square mile and, around AD 200, the whole was enclosed by a massive city wall. A riverside wall was constructed in the mid 4th century, and the landward defences strengthened.
- 1.3.5 Very little is known of the city during the Saxon/Germanic settlement, though it seems that the Roman town was deserted. Recent excavations indicate that by the 8th century London's commercial centre (*Lundonwic*), had migrated to the area around the Strand, to the west of the Roman town. During the 9th and 10th centuries London's commercial centre was again located within the city walls, probably as a defensive measure against the Vikings, who succeeded in occupying London between 872 and 886AD before being ousted by King Alfred and his forces. By the 13th century the walled city had again become firmly established as a major international trading centre, it was densely populated and much of the modern street plan had crystallised.
- 1.3.6 From the Medieval period the area linking Westminster to the city, along the Strand towards Fleet Street became lined with palaces and houses of courtiers and rich merchants, and those serving their needs. The current building occupies one of these tenements although it dates from the 19th century.
- 1.3.7 The watching brief carried out within 7-15 Fleet Street revealed deposits relating to the phases of construction of the buildings from the mid 18th century to 20th century.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 Staff from Wallis provide details about the excavation works and are thanked for their co-operation during the watching brief.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The foundation was hand excavated with an OA supervisor in attendance.
- 2.2.2 The archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:20 and the sections drawn at a scale of 1:20. The completed foundation and the sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the

work was made Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Fieldwork Manual* (OAU, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 A layer of a coarse silty material (1) was exposed after removal of the stone slabs that sealed the site. This layer, which contained examples of late 19th century finds, formed the base for the slabs. Upon removal of this layer the edge of a cut/trench (7) for a brick culvert (6) was exposed, extending north-south across the trench. (Fig.3 plan of foundation). Also exposed was the top of a mixed sand and gravel material, (2, Fig.3, section of trench).
- 3.1.2 This layer contained many fragments of brick and tile as well as much mortar flecks. This was probably a tip line of demolition debris used to level the site.
- 3.1.3 The culvert (6) was roughly constructed with a square "tube" of lime mortared bricks that ended in a loose arrangement of demolition debris including fragments of salt glazed sewer pipe. This was probably the remains of a soakaway and associated feeder culvert
- 3.1.4 Cut by the culvert trench and sealed by the demolition debris was a series of layers of made up ground (layers 3, 4 and 5). The uppermost of these layers was 3, a friable dark grey silt containing a few small water worn pebbles and chalk flecking. This may represent an imported soil, possibly material dredged from the Thames.
- 3.1.5 Below this was another layer of made ground, (4). This was of similar dark greyish brown friable silt, again probably imported (or dredged) material. The layer of made ground, (5), exposed in the base of the trench, was a mixture of silts and demolition debris, again probably imported.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Finds from the archaeological deposits were hand recovered and were bagged by context.
- 3.2.2 Finds revealed during the work included examples of complete handmade bricks dating to the late 17th and 18th century as well as fragments of glass from "onion" bottles, dating from the mid 17th to 18th century. Examples of clay pipe bowls dating from the 1640s and 1680s were also found. The many fragments of ceramics recovered ranged from green glazed stoneware (c 16th / 17th century) up to brown glazed earthenware, 17th-19th century. These finds were equally distributed between the three layers of made ground and do not represent a chronological sequence.
- 3.2.3 Due to the quantity of brick and tile recovered these were evaluated on site and descriptions and representative dimensions recorded on the context sheets, but were not retained.
- 3.2.4 The finds recovered represent the time period between the 17th and 19th centuries with no residual earlier finds being observed. The only possible earlier date represented is

through the green glazed stoneware sherd which at the earliest is 16th century and is more reasonably dated to the 17th century.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 The limited depth of excavation was such that no deposits suitable for paleo-environmental sampling were encountered.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The excavation exposed the upper 0.6m part of a thick (probable at least 2 m deep) sequence of deposits and in consequence only the most recent activities have been observed. The nature of the deposits, being made ground, suggests that they relate to the construction of the building and its environs and may possibly represent the material cast out during excavation of the buildings cellars.
- 4.1.2 The cut off date for the finds (19th century) also implies that these deposits relate to the building.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>
1	Layer	0.12m	-	-	Base for paving slabs	Pottery, Glass, Brick, Tile, Cast Iron
2	Layer	0.15m	-	-	Levelling layer of demolition debris	Brick, Tile
3	Layer	0.18m	-	-	Layer of made ground	Pottery, Glass, Brick, Tile, Clay Pipe
4	Layer	0.28m	-	-	Layer of made ground	Pottery, Glass, Brick, Tile, Clay Pipe
5	Layer	0.15m plus	-	-	Layer of made ground	Pottery, Glass, Brick, Tile, Clay Pipe
6	Structure	-	0.3m	0.4m	Roughly constructed brick culvert	Brick, Salt Glazed Sewer Pipe
7	Cut	0.5m	0.32m	-	Cut for culvert	-

APPENDIX 2 REFERENCES

- OAU, 2001a *7-15 Fleet Street, London Refurbishment Project*. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief during groundwork
- OAU, 2001b *7-15 Fleet Street, London*. Archaeological Evaluation Report
- OAU, 1992 *OA Fieldwork Manual (ed. D. Wilkinson)*

Appendix 3 GLSMR/RCHME NMR Archaeological Report Form

1) TYPE OF RECORDING

Watching Brief

2) LOCATION

Borough: City of London

Site address: 7-15 Fleet Street, London

Site Name: 7-15 Fleet Street, Hare Court

Site Code: FSC 03

Nat. grid Refs: TQ 3105 8120 centre of site:

3) ORGANISATION

Name of archaeological unit/company/society: Oxford Archaeology

Address: Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 OES

Site supervisor : Mike Sims Project manager: Jonathan Hiller

Funded by: BBF Architecture

4) DURATION

Date fieldwork started 27/08/03 Date finished: 27/08/03

Fieldwork previously notified? YES

Fieldwork will continue? NO

5) PERIODS REPRESENTED

Late post-medieval

6) PERIOD SUMMARIES

A series of layers of made ground relating to the construction of the existing building, containing only post medieval dated finds.

7) NATURAL

Type: Not exposed during excavation

Height above Ordnance datum: N/A

8) LOCATION OF ARCHIVES Presently located at Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford,
OX2 OES

- a) Please provide an estimate of the quantity of material in your possession for the following categories:

Notes 15	Plans 3	Photos	Ngtives 15
Slides 15	Correspondence	MScripts (unpub reports, etc)	
Bulk finds 1.5kg	Small finds 0	Soil samples 0	
Other			

- b) The archive has been prepared and stored in accordance with MGC standards and will be deposited in the following location: Museum of London
- c) Has a security copy of the archive been made?: YES

10) BIBLIOGRAPHY

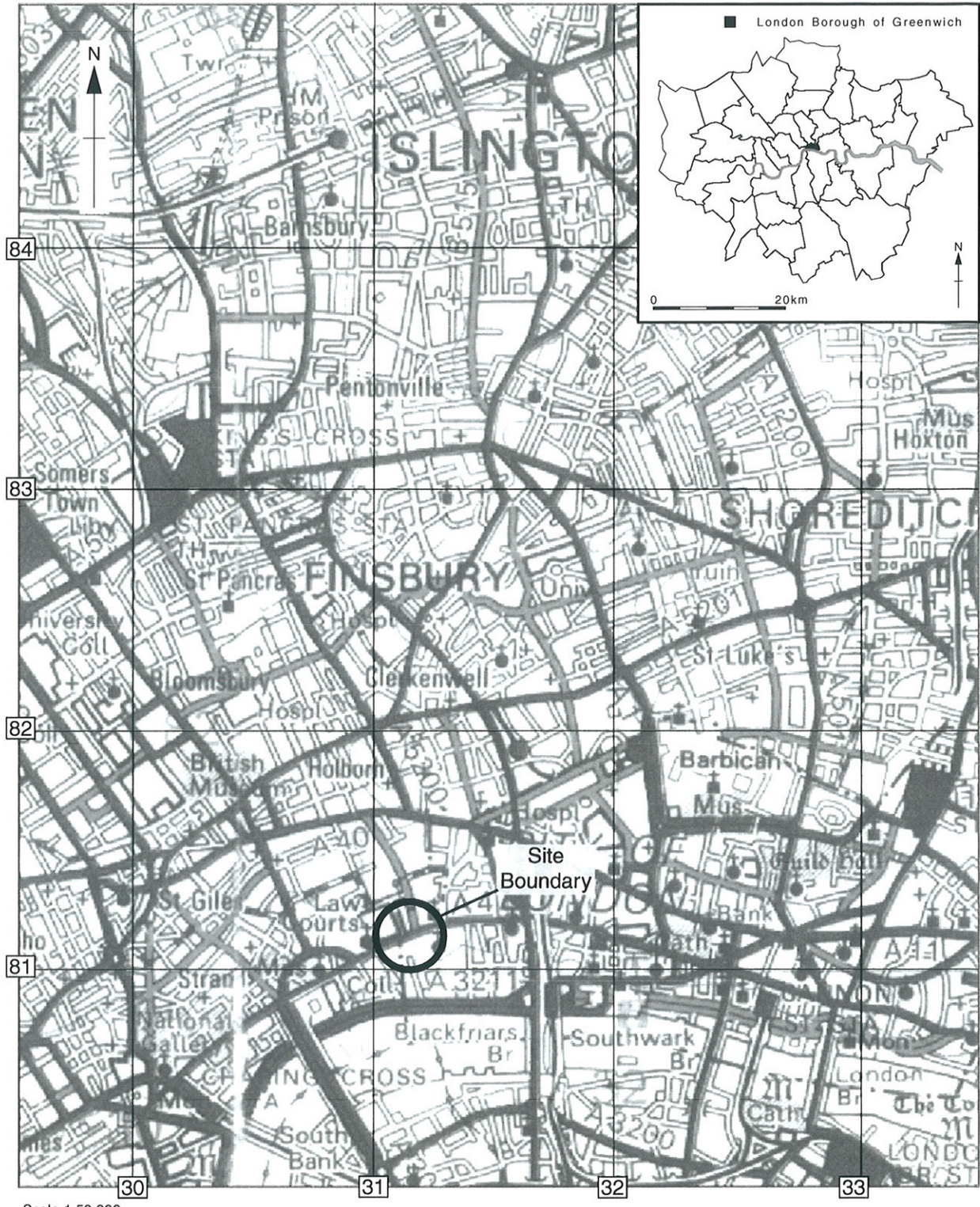
SEE

Appendix 2 References

SIGNED: 

DATE: 1st September 2003

NAME : JON HILLER



Scale 1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: Excavation works during the watching brief

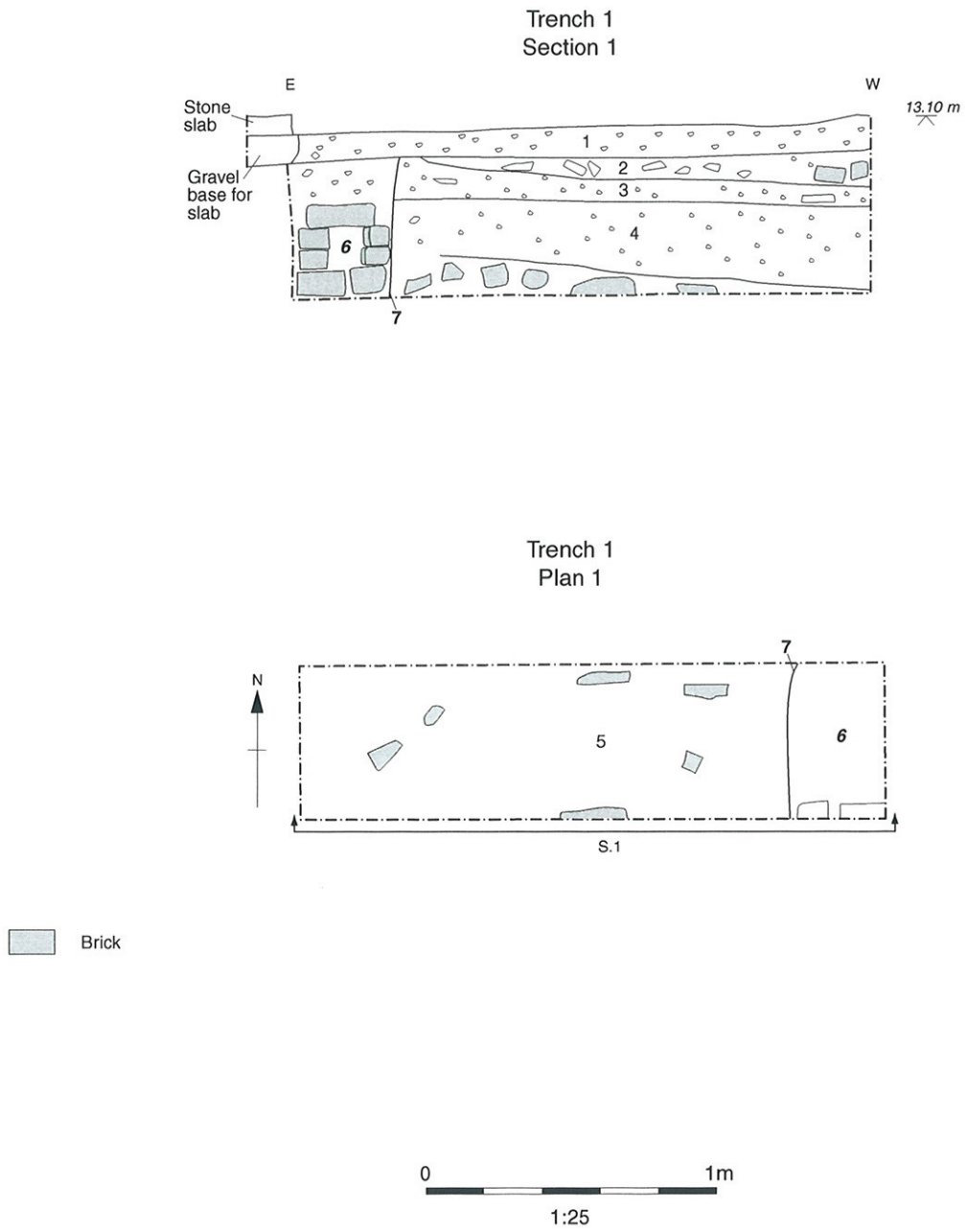


Figure 3: Plan and section of completed foundation trench



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