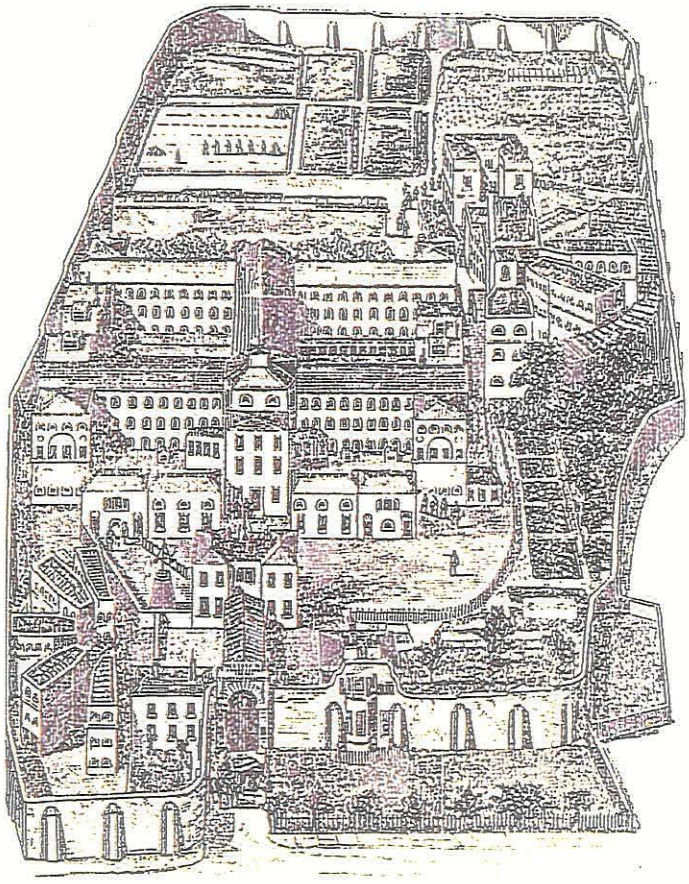
MOUNT PLEASANT POST OFFICE,
Mount Pleasant, WC1
London Borough of Islington

An Archaeological Investigation



Museum of London Archaeology Service
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museum of LONDON

MOUNT PLEASANT POST OFFICE,
Mount Pleasant, WC1
London Borough of Islington

An Archaeological Investigation

SITE CODE : MPO92
TQ : 31015 82375

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Cover Illustration: View of the Cold Fields prison, later referred to as the Middlesex House of Correction.

INTRODUCTION

Between 27 May and 9 July 1993 an archaeological evaluation was carried out at Mount Pleasant Post Office by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (Molas), (Fig 1). The site is located on the 1:1250 OS map at TQ 31015-82375. Reasons for the evaluation were due to proposed re-development of the site for the Post Office. The main contractors were VAT Watkins Limited. This work followed a desk top assessment of the site carried out by MoLas, [Drummond Murray 1992].

The site evaluation was carried out at the request of London Borough of Islington who granted planning permission, which included a condition that archaeological investigation should take place prior to development.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The archaeological and historical background of the surrounding area has been covered in the site assessment, (Drummond Murray,92,7). However, within this document, some comments on the cultural periods have been considered.

Prehistoric, Roman & Saxon:

No evidence for these periods were recorded across the site. Reasons for this are uncertain, but may reflect a general lack of settlement or other forms of activities in and around this area.

Medieval:

No direct evidence for medieval activity was recorded across the site. However, in the surrounding general area, both documentary and archaeological evidence suggests that there was a large amount of probable medieval rural activity carried out along the eastern and western edge of the Fleet river valley.

Post medieval:

The earliest map of the general area (Agas c1553, see Drummond Murray 92: Fig 3), demonstrates that in 1553, the area covered by the site was an open river valley in a rural landscape and to the west of a roughly north-south aligned track, that may form the precursor of Farringdon street. However, the general area surrounding the site was slowly being heavily developed by rural and urban development, (see Drummond Murray 92: Mount Pleasant and its historical context).

Across the western side of the site, the earliest building development appears to be the Coldbath Fields Prison, also known as the Middlesex House of Correction. This was a large brick building, constructed in 1794, after the Fleet river had been channelled and the valley partly back-filled with mixed dumps and general building demolition.

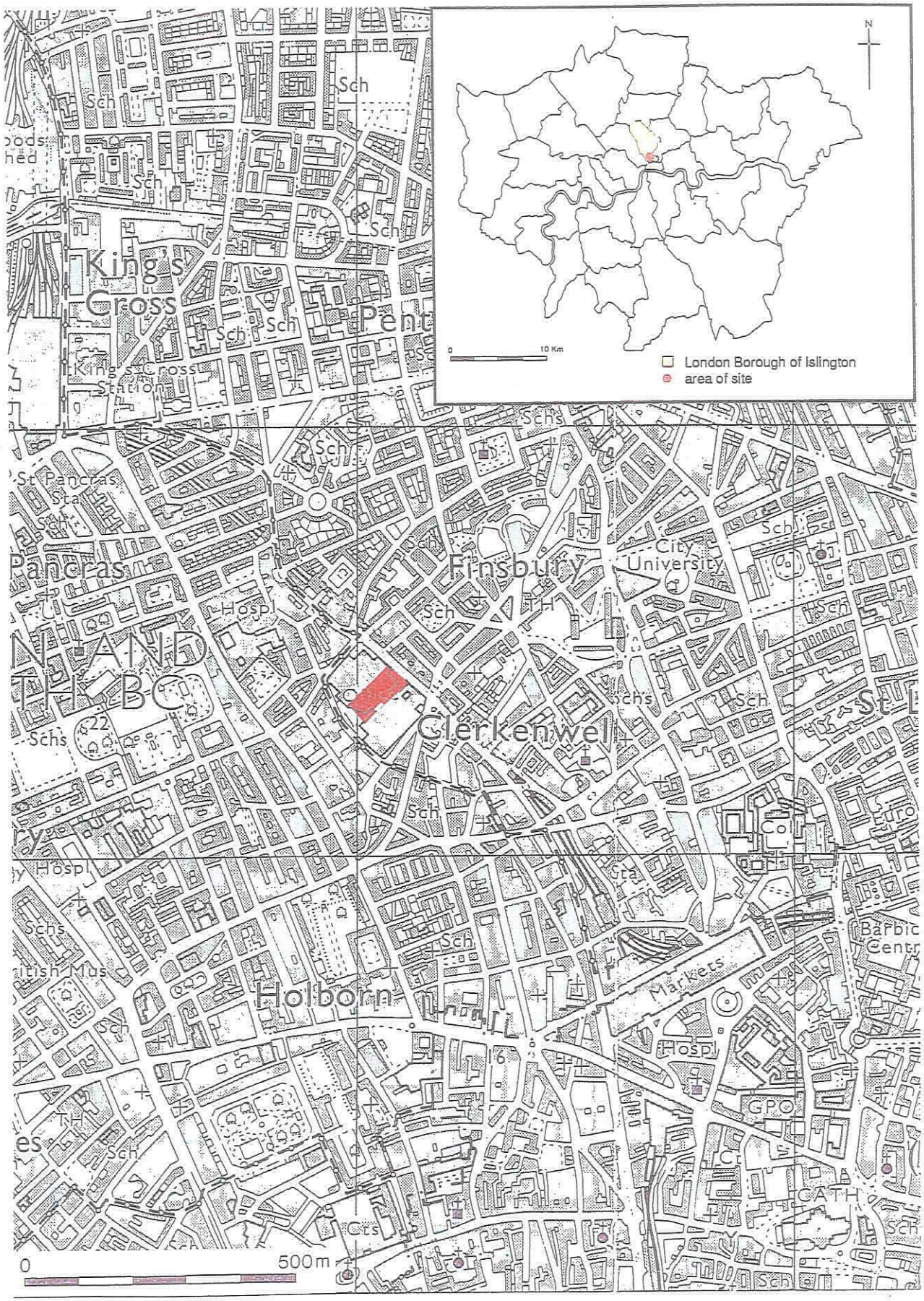


Fig 1, Map showing location of development

Modern:

After the prison building was demolished c1889, the whole area was heavily truncated by construction of the Mount Pleasant Post Office Building, c1929.

SUMMARY OF SITE OBSERVATIONS

During observations along the western side of the site a series of structural and other features were located that represented at least 7 groups of site wide activities.

The earliest sequence formed natural London clay deposition. Over the eastern side of the site, the whole area was heavily truncated to London clay by the later GPO buildings. However, further west the area sloped down westwards into a valley area. This originally formed part of the river Fleet valley system.

Above the lower western valley was observed a large alluvial silt deposition. This suggested that the river valley was gradually silting up across its eastern flood plain and deeper western part of the river bed. In some areas, the silt deposition was in excess of 1.20m thick. Across parts of the silt deposition along the southern side of the site, there is some evidence to suggest that the river silts were banking up against a southern obstruction. This may indicate that the river was meandering east and west across its flood plain as it flowed down towards the river Thames. On a map of the Fleet river course published in 1875 (Fig 4), its meandering plan is clearly shown around the area of the site. Also on the map of 1875, it is clear that a small channel links into the Fleet valley somewhere across the south western side of the valley close to the site. Although this channel would not have been visible along the eastern side of the river valley, its location shows that the valley formed a complex river valley system with feeder streams running into the main river, rather that a single north-south aligned river flow.

At some point after river silts were deposited, areas along the eastern bank of the river may have been subjected to random and systematic dumping. The earliest dumps consisted of mixed grey silts and mixed cultural fragments such as pot shards, shell, animal bone etc, soft red brick-mortar building materials, and possible ash-cinders industrial? waste deposits. Later, large areas of the river valley observed across the site were backfilled and levelled over by large dumps of mixed silts, fragments of soft red brick-tile, mortar and other types of building materials. Generally, these dumps filled this part of the river valley to a depth of approximately 3.50m-4.00m, and level height of 14.19m-14.30m OD.

Cut into the river dumps along the southern side of area A was observed a number of external load bearing and internal soft red brick walls and foundations, laid within a large east-west aligned trench. This construction probably formed

part of a large east-west aligned sub walls and foundations for a corridor wing within the Middlesex House of Correction prison building.

BACKGROUND TO THE EVALUATION

Methodology

Test Pit (TP) Location & Analyses:

During the archaeological planning stage of the development, the site was split into three distinct areas A,C and D (Fig 2). These were based on a critical programme of demolition and construction dictated by developers and contractors, so that the building construction programme could be completed in area A by October-November 1993. Due to pressure of development and excessive depth of archaeological deposits across area A, the evaluation and subsequent watching brief were built into the building programme, and continued while this area was being developed. However, areas C and D were not critical to the developers-contractors work programme until after area A was completed. This meant that the evaluation and subsequent watching brief could be carried out unhindered by serious pressure of building development.

Within the mixed building programme, archaeological evaluation of areas A,C and D was required before any construction work could start. To this end, a series of 12 evaluation test pits (referred to as TP) (Fig 2) were excavated within agreed locations across areas A,C and D. Most of these pits were located within the proposed groundwork area of the new development. Once the trial pits were laid out by VAT Watkins engineers, they were excavated by mechanical excavator, in most instances to natural geology. Although size of the trial pits varied slightly, on average they were between 1.60m and 2.00m square, and up to 2.30m deep.

Due to the location of a large 2.10m thick concrete and brick rubble raft across much of the site, two mechanical excavators were used during excavation of the pits. One was employed to break out the concrete raft and other obstructions, the other to clear loose debris.

Across areas C and D, where much of the site was heavily truncated, the excavator cut into the underlying London clay to an average depth of between 0.40m and 1.20m, from an average level height of 14.50m-14.70m OD. This was done to test that the underlying clay was of natural origin, and not re-deposited.

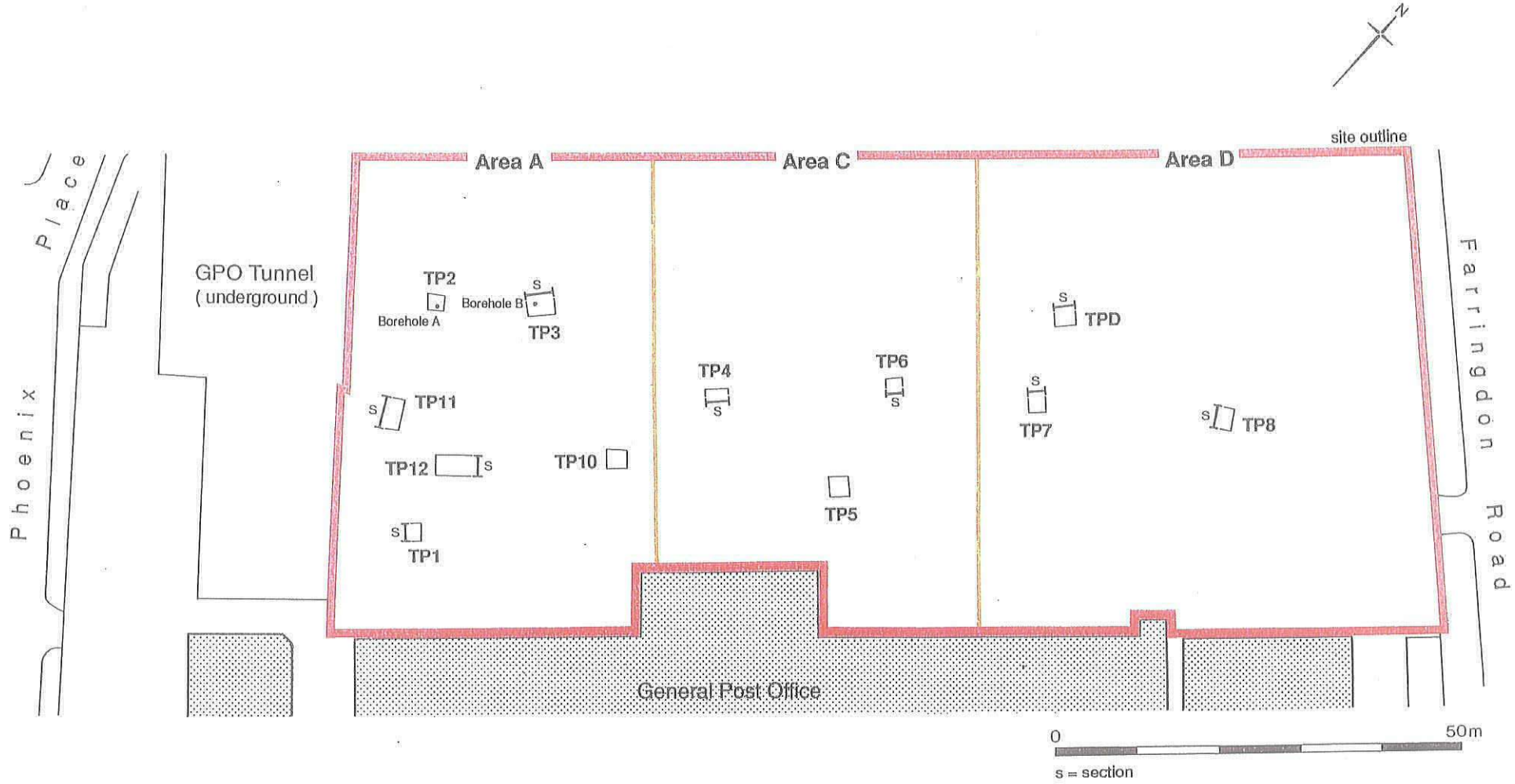


Fig 2, Location of Test Pits (TP) across area A,C and D excavated during the evaluation stage of the site. Note also borehole A & B across area A

Problems, Area A:

Across area A, due to a deeper stratigraphic sequence, a slightly different strategy was adopted. Here 4 test pits were investigated. Although these were excavated in the same manner and encountered the same obstructions as those recorded in areas C and D, depths in area A were between 2.50m and 4.00m.

Auger Work, Area A:

Within TP2 and 3 (Fig 2), it was decided that these pits were safe enough to use a powered auger. Due to their location across suspected underlying river silts, it was possible to retrieve a archaeo/enviro/geological core sample through this part of the site, to a depth of approximately 3.50m. This was achieved by excavating TP2 and 3 to the top of the archaeological sequence, approximately 2.30m (12.65m-12.80m OD), using a mechanical excavator. This created two pits approximately 2.00m square and 2.30m deep. Once established, the auger cores were sunk from the base of the pits to an approximate depth of 3.00m-3.50m. Although the upper deposits proved soft and easy to penetrate, once the auger went into the lower gravels and London clays below river silt deposits, the core became difficult to extract. This was due to compression of the core by water and hard packed waterlogged clays etc below approximately the 2.50m-3.00m level point.

From the core samples, two good vertical sections through archaeological dumps and river laid deposits and natural geological features were retrieved. These provided detailed environmental profiles through this part of the river valley, and have been studied by the environmental department of MoLas.

Test Pit Location Plan:

Once the test pits were excavated, they were planned by three point triangulation from known reference locations around the building area. Although in some areas this proved difficult due to building being demolished at the same time, it was not possible to establish a fixed archaeological grid system across site. This was mainly due to the on-going demolition work taking out all the fixed reference points, but also because the site was cluttered with heavy plant and equipment such as mechanical excavators, tipper lorries etc, that would have continually run over and destroyed all fixed reference points.

Drawn-Written Records:

Within the test pits, all deposits were recorded using the established Molas written recording system. This included recording all encountered archaeological and environmental deposits on relevant context record sheets, drawing at least one vertical section/profile through site stratigraphy within each pit, constructing a working matrix and sampling relevant environmental deposits for further analysis etc.

Due to difficulties of access in some deep and dangerous pits particularly across area A, two types of drawn section were carried out. In some areas, it was only possible to draw measured sketch sections with fixed level heights from the surface. However, in several pits it was possible to safely draw conventional line-tape and level height sections, within the trench. Although these sections may vary slightly in detail and accuracy, both types provided reasonable profiles through the site sequence, that, when compared with each other, show common features that dominated area A.

Builders Pits (BP), Location & Analysis:

After completion and preliminary analysis of the test pit evaluation stage, it was clear that areas C and D were heavily truncated into natural London clay, and would require only limited observations during later building work. However, across area A where the river valley sloped down to the west, evaluation sections clearly demonstrated that below the concrete slab, archaeological stratigraphy survived to a depth of 3.50-4.00m from a level height of between 14.10m to 14.30m OD. As this area was located in the critical first stage of the building development, an extensive watching-brief on all builders groundworks was planned into the development.

The watching-brief monitored all builders test and other pits, excavated by mechanical excavator to establish the type and depth of underlying stratigraphy. In all, 30 builders pits (BP) (Fig 3) were excavated to various depths across areas A,C and D, and in some cases overlapped with the underlying test pits. As these pits were often deep narrow unshored excavations that were quickly filled with concrete, they were mainly recorded as a series of detailed measured sketch sections, supplemented with level heights.

SITE LEVELS

During the evaluation and watching-brief stages, all test and builders pits were tied into a temporary OS TBM on site of 15.30m OD. This bench mark was transferred to site from the fixed TBM value 18.45m OD located on the south western corner of Pakenham Street, via a 6 point traverse using a fixed colonnated dumpy level. To test the accuracy of the temporary bench mark, the traverse was checked back to the bench mark.

At a later stage during the watching-brief the site was placed on the OS grid system by the MoLas surveyor, so that it could be entered into a graphic autocad system in order to fix a computerised evaluation-watching brief location plan into the OS. This work was helped by the architects-planners of Watkins Gray International who very kindly provided Molas with a copy of their computer OS disk of the site.

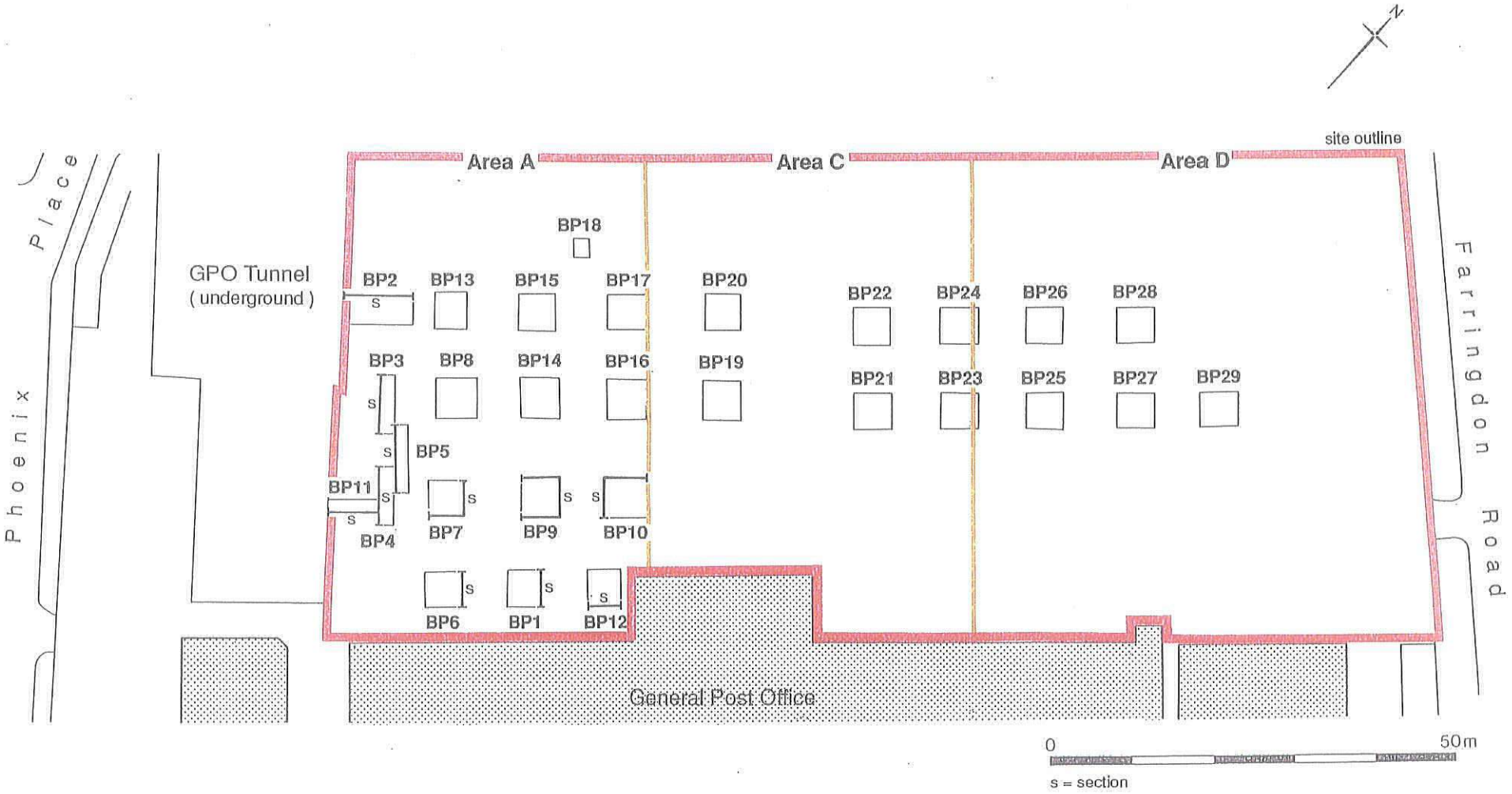


Fig 3, Location of Builders Pits (BP) across area A,C and D

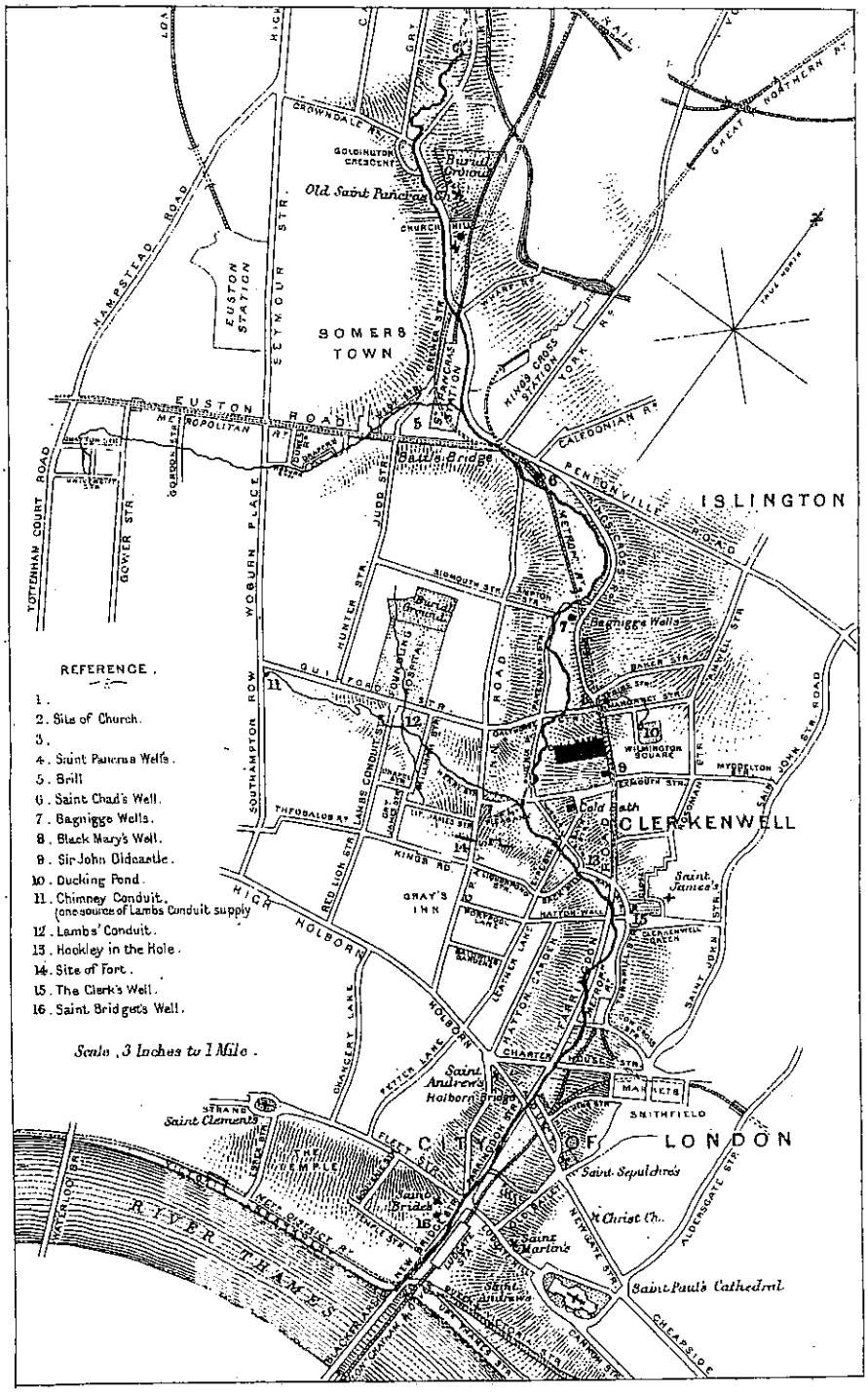


Fig 4, Map of the course of the River Fleet, published 1875

METHOD OF POST EXCAVATION ANALYSIS USED IN THIS REPORT

Introduction:

Once the evaluation and watching-brief stages were completed, the site paper archive consisted of 147 context sheets, 1 test and builders pits location plan, 26 sections and a note book. These records mostly consist of section based information.

Section Analysis:

From each test and builders pit, the drawn sections provided a vertical profile. From this a matrix was constructed that broadly reflects how many groups of natural or human activities such as occupation or building development existed across the pit prior to modern development.

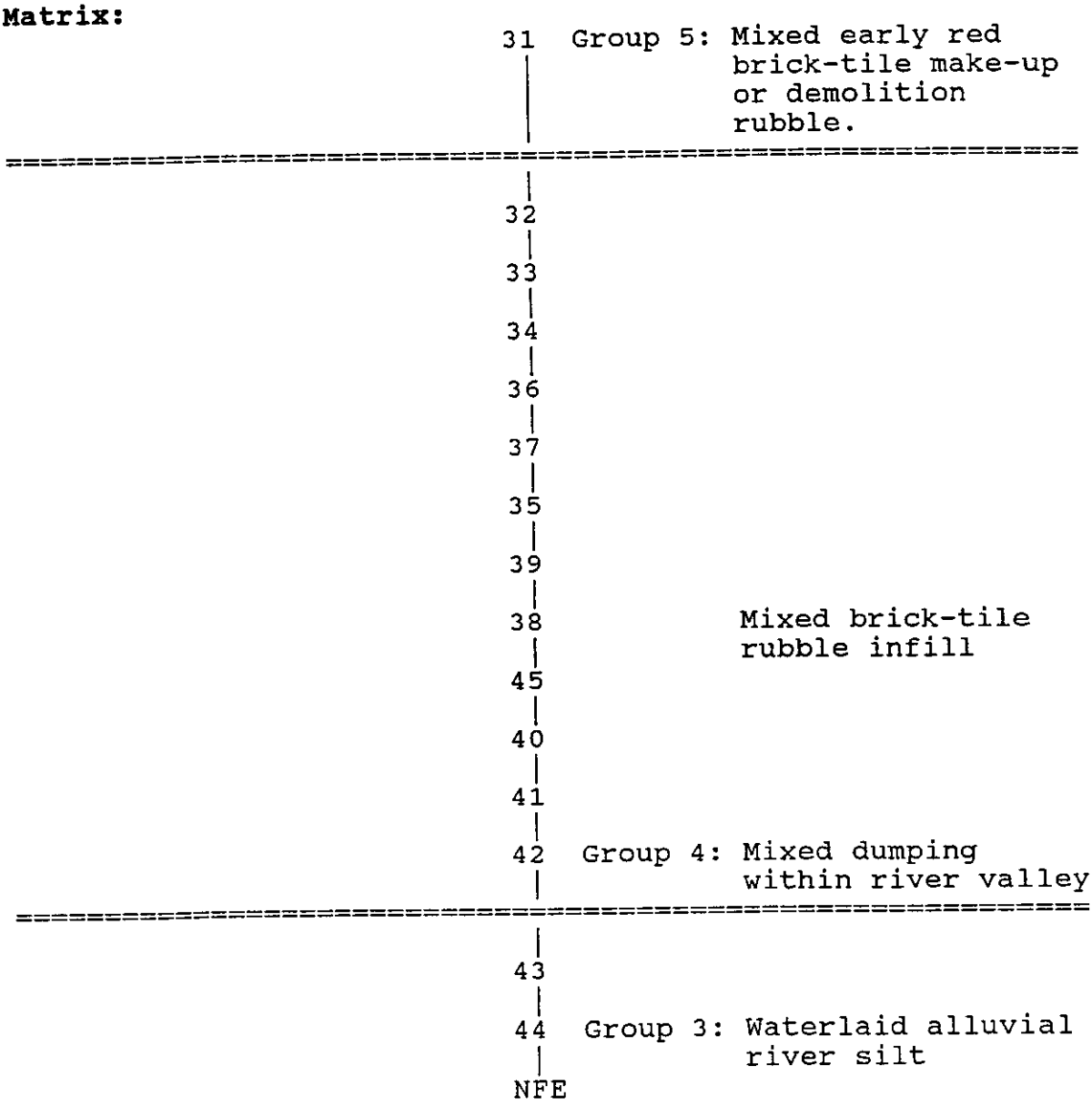
After all the pit sections had been analysed, it was possible to spatially divide the whole site up into a series of groups that demonstrates how it broadly developed over time. Although due to the diverse nature of the test and builders pits this form of analysis can only give a general view of past events, it was possible to isolate at least 7 groups of activities.

Within the results section of this report, each test and builders pit has been considered separately. This section consists of a matrix sequence that has split the stratigraphy up into clear groups, and is followed by the context description and pit-based group discussion. Once all the test and builder pits have been discussed as isolated strands of the site sequence, during the later site synthesis stage the groups are discussed on a wider basis.

RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION

TP1, AREA A

Matrix:



Context description:

[31] Loose, demolition rubble. Light grey-brown sand -lime mortar (80%), brick and mortar fragments (10%), mid grey-brown silt (10%). Occasional fragments of peg tile. Level height 14.40m OD.

[32] Loose, decayed organic rubbish. Dark grey brown silt (90%), fine sand (10%), some gravel pebbles. No inclusions observed. Level height 14.00m OD.

[33] Moderately compacted, dump. Dark grey-brown silt (60%), fine sand (30%), mixed chalk rubble, red brick fragments, flint cobbles (10%), frequent gravel pebbles. Level height 14.00m OD.

[34] Loose, burnt dump. Pale grey wood ash (90%), sand-mortar (10%), Frequent fragments of charcoal flecks, fragments of peg tile. Level height 13.80m OD.

[35] Loose, burnt dump. Dark grey brown silt (90%), fine sand (10%). Frequent flecks of charcoal. Level height 13.70m OD.

[36] Moderately compacted, burnt dump. Dark grey brown silt (90%), fine sand (10%), some gravel pebbles. Occasional fragments of brick, peg tile. Level height 13.70m OD.

[37] Loose, mortar dump. Mixed cream-pale brown sand -lime mortar (90%), lumps of red brick and peg tile (10%), moderate gravel pebbles. Level height 13.70m OD.

[38] Moderately compacted, dump-fill. Mottled dark grey brown silt (80%), sand (20%), some gravel pebbles. Occasional fragments of peg tiles. Level height 13.70m OD.

[39] Loose to moderately compacted, dump. Cream-pale grey brown sand-lime mortar (70%), lumps of mortar-brick (20%). Level height 13.60m OD.

[40] Moderately compacted, cess stained dump. Olive green silt (70%), clay (30%), moderate gravel pebbles. Moderate fragments of oyster shell. Level height 13.40m OD.

[41] Loose to moderately compacted, demolition dump. Light grey brown sand-mortar (60%), fragments of cream fine mortar, peg tile, red brick (40%). Level height 13.37m OD.

[42] Moderately compacted, organic rubbish-industrial waste?. Dark grey brown silt (80%), ash-cinders (20%). Occasional flecks of charcoal. Level height 13.25m OD.

[43] Moderately compacted, waterlaid river silt. Dark grey-brown silt (90%), fine sand (10%), some gravel pebbles. Occasional fragments of oyster shell. Level height 13.10m OD.

[44] Moderately compacted, waterlaid river silt. Damp, dark grey black silt (90%), fine sand (10%), some gravel pebbles. Occasional fragments of oyster shell. Level height 12.60m OD.

[45] Moderately compacted, organic rubbish dump. Dark grey brown silt (80%), fine sand (20%), some large lenses of brown clay, gravel pebbles. No inclusions observed. Level height 13.25m OD.

Discussion:

TP1 (Fig 2), was excavated by mechanical excavator on the south-eastern side of the site, and was approximately 1.60m east-west, 2.40m north-south, and 2.50m deep. Within the trial pit, the north, south, east and western sections all provided a good stratigraphic sequence down to the river-laid alluvial silt deposits. However, due to very wet weather conditions and time limits, only the western section was recorded (Fig 5), and it was impossible to take the trial pit any deeper.

From the stratigraphic sequence observed in TP1, it is clear that generally across the south-western side of the site, an island of undisturbed archaeological stratigraphy survived, approximately 14.00m east-west, 7.00m north-south and up to 3.00m deep.

Group 3:

At the base of the western section of TP1 was observed part of a large deposit of pure dark grey-black waterlaid alluvial silt [44] (Fig 5), at least 0.80m thick, and approximate level height of 12.60m OD. From the general make-up of this silt, it seemed to slope down from south to north approximately 15 degrees, and was originally of a water saturated silt-mud consistency. This is suggested because in the upper southern side of the deposit was observed a silt wave feature. This is where a later hard deposit from [43] has compressed down into the surface of underlying water saturated silt [44], forcing part of it to squeeze up over the top of the later deposit in a wave like profile (Fig 5).

Above silt [44], was observed a similar dark grey brown alluvial silt deposit [43], approximately 0.50m deep, at 13.00m OD. Silt [44] sloped down more steeply than underlying silt [44], approximately 30 degrees, but its consistency appeared less waterlogged. This indicates that once underlying silt [44] was compressed down and sealed by later silt [43], and then the underlying water table sank to below silt [43] (Fig 5).

The location and south to north downward slope of alluvial silts [43,44] indicates that these were alluvial sediments that settled or washed up against an underlying bank which also spread down from south to north. This possibly suggests that across this area the eastern bank of the river

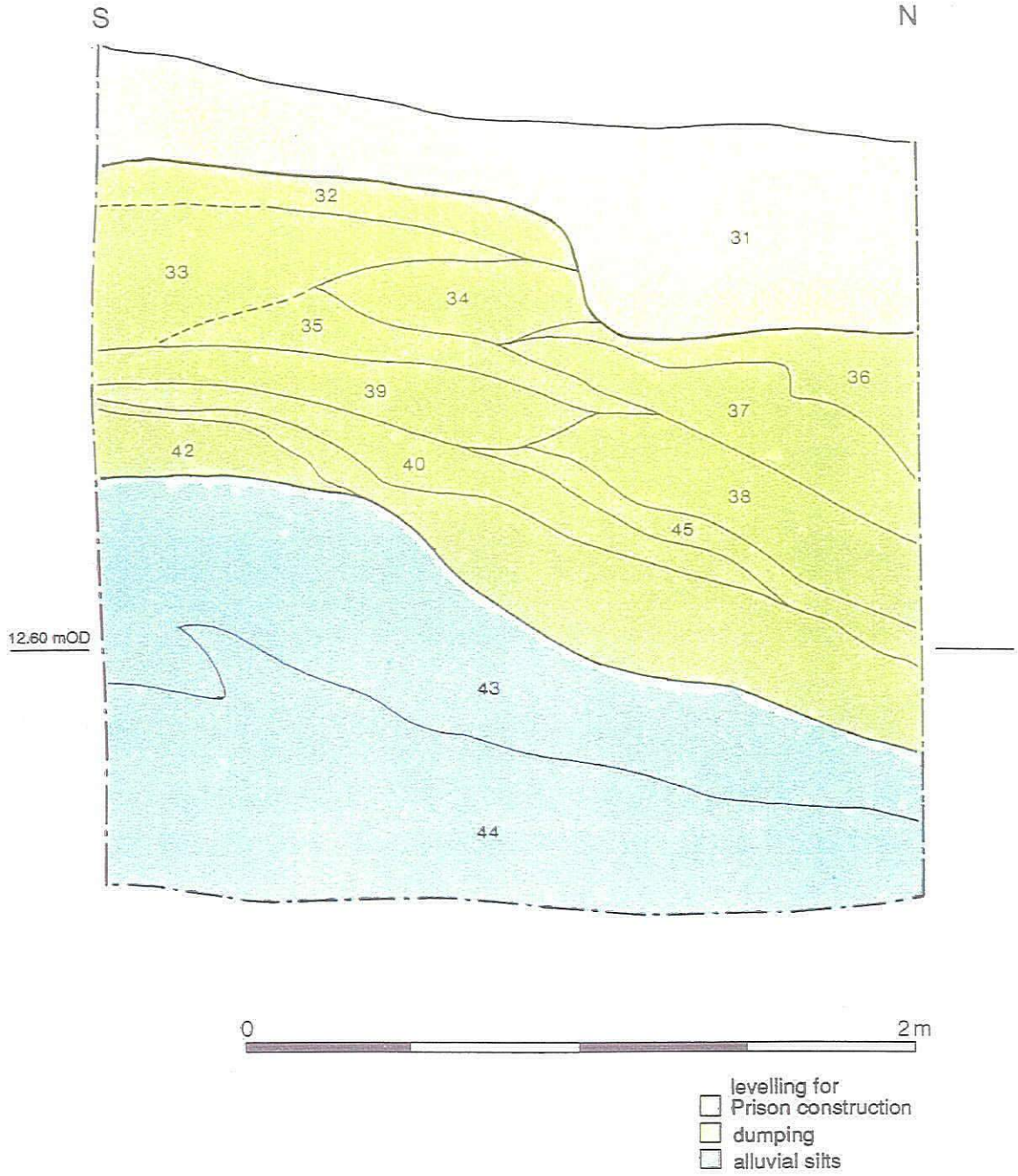


Fig 5, East facing section of TP1. Shows lower south-north sloping line of river laid alluvial silt [43,44] and later river dumps

was probably turning around from north-south to north east-south west in a meandering plan across the south-western side of the site.

Within silt [44] was observed a few inclusions, such as whole fragments of oyster shell. Silt [43] produced a number of cultural inclusions, such as a metal knife blade, fragments of clay pipe bowls and stems, shards of 18 century pottery, animal bone etc. From these it is clear that most were probably deliberately deposited into the river and dumped from the eastern river edge into alluvial silt [43] when the river was still in use.

Group 4:

At some time after river silt [43] was deposited, this part of the river bed was backfilled using a series of large and small dumps from a variety of sources (Fig 5). Generally, these all appear to slope down from south to north, suggesting perhaps that this part of the river valley was backfilled from its southern bank. This tends to reinforce the earlier suggestion that silts [44] and [43] were banking up against a meandering river bank located across the south-western side of the site.

The dump sequence across this area seems to have been fairly complex, and it is uncertain whether it represents part of a massive single deposition, or something carried out piece-meal over a long period of time. From available evidence, it appears that the sequence started across the southern side of the test pit with a fairly small horizontal spread of mixed grey brown organic rubbish and industrial? waste such as ash and cinders [42]. This hugged the northern interface between later deposits and the sharply sloping underlying silts [43]. It may suggest that deposit [42] could have formed part of a tip or river in-fill sequence connected with development along the southern edge of the river.

Above deposit [42], it is certain that the systematic river in-filling began. This sequence started with the deposition of grey-brown sand-mortar, red bricks and peg tile [41], that spread down from the southern side at an approximate angle of 30 degrees south to north (Fig 5). This was later sealed by a thin deposit of mixed olive green silt-clay-cess stained material [40], grey-brown organic material [45], mottled grey-brown mixed silt and sand [38], cream and pale grey brown sandy mortar and red bricks [39], grey brown silty sand [35], cream pale brown sand and red brick-peg tile [37], grey brown sandy silt and organic material [36], pale grey mixed wood, ash and sandy mortar [34], grey brown silty sand and chalk rubble [33], grey brown silty fine sand and organic material [32]. All these varied in size and extent, but appeared to have been deposited from south to north, with several of the primary deposits slumping heavily downwards on the northern side. They also appear to consist of mixtures of demolition materials that included quantities of soft red

brick, peg tile and mortar fragments. This sequence also included mixed silts, sand and organic cess type materials.

The location of both mixed building and cess materials across this part of the river valley, tends to suggest that the infilling of the area consisted of both deliberate building rubble deposition, together with more random deposition of general household-domestic debris such as fire cinders, charcoal, cess materials etc. It suggests that perhaps prior to the major infilling of the river valley which began in the 18 century, this part of the river valley was already being used as a dumping ground for both industrial and domestic waste, possibly from the properties that fronted the eastern edge of the river valley. To a certain extent, the archaeological evidence backs up historical records that claimed that parts of the river Fleet were being used as an open sewer and general rubbish tip.

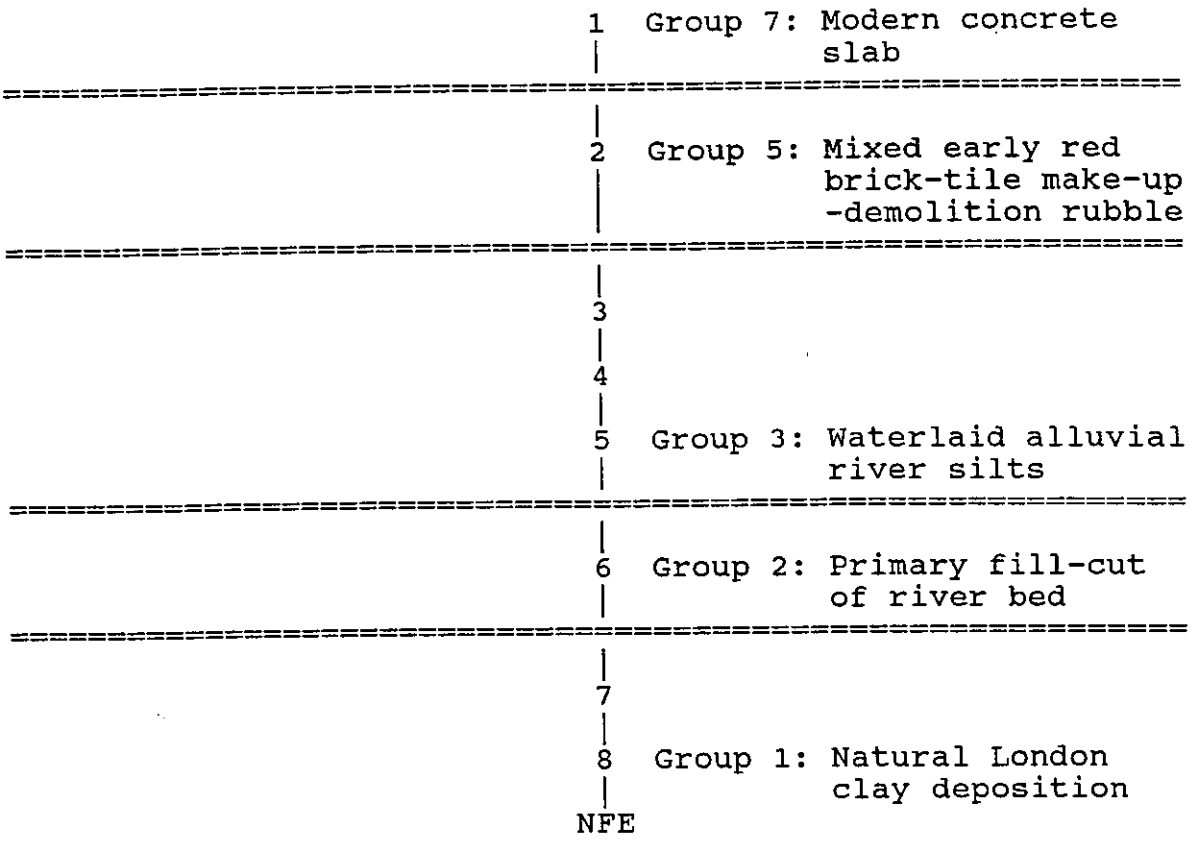
Group 5:

At some point after the deposition of [32], the general area was sealed by a large roughly horizontal dump of mixed grey brown silt, mixed sand-lime mortar, soft red brick and peg tile fragments, mortar [31] (Fig 5). Although [31] was heavily truncated by later building activities, it survived across this area approximately 0.60m-0.70m in depth and level height of 14.50m OD. Generally this dump differed from others used in the general river sequence, because these dumps were mixed and sloped down from south to north, [31] and consisted of almost pure demolition materials and grey silts. Also it appeared to have been levelled out roughly horizontally across the general area, filling in the underlying hollows.

Although some of the building materials observed in [31] were similar to those recorded in the underlying river infill dumps, such as [41,39,38,37,36,34,33], its location in the stratigraphic sequence across the trial pit strongly indicates that it formed part of a building demolition, rather than building make-up.

TP2, BOREHOLE A, AREA A

Matrix:



Context description:

[1] Mixed modern concrete slab, brick rubble and soil/silt make-up. Level height 14.63m OD.

[2] Moderately compacted, demolition rubble. Dark greyish-brown-black fine-medium sand (50%), silt (30%). Fragments of broken peg tiles, chalk rubble, red brick. Level height 12.69m OD.

[3] Fairly compacted, waterlaid river silt. Dry, dark grey-black silt. Moderate fragments and flecks of red brick, red tile, coal, mortar. Level height 11.23m OD.

[4] Fairly loose, waterlaid river silt. Waterlogged, mid-dark grey mottled silt (90%), tan clay (10%). Moderate small rounded-irregular pebbles located towards base of deposit. No inclusions observed. Level height 10.84m OD.

[5] Fairly loose, waterlaid river silt. Waterlogged, light grey silt (70%), fine sand (20%), tan clay (10%) increasing towards base of deposit. No inclusions observed. Level height 10.47m OD.

[6] Fairly loose, waterlaid river silt. Waterlogged, mixed light tan clay (40%), light grey silt (50%), fine-medium sand (10%). No inclusions observed. Level height 10.12m OD.

[7] Very compacted, weathered London clay. Dry, stiff mid grey-tan mottled clay. No inclusions observed. Level height 9.66m.

[8] Very compacted, unweathered London clay. Dry, stiff light light-mid grey clay. No inclusions observed. Level height 9.06m OD.

Discussion:

TP2 (Fig 2) was excavated approximately 1.60m square and 2.30m deep, by mechanical excavator. From the 2.30m level, an auger core was sunk to a level of approximately 8.00m OD, and environmental-geological samples of all deposits taken.

On section, the core gave a vertical profile of approximately 6.80m through surviving archaeological stratigraphy and natural deposits.

Group 1:

At the base of the core sample, was observed a slab of unweathered pure grey clay [8], at least 0.90m deep. Total depth of this deposit was not established, but its compacted state, colour and lack of cultural inclusions suggests that it formed part of the natural London clay geological horizon. Above deposit [8] was observed a similar, but mottled grey-tan clay [7], approximately 0.60m deep. This also probably formed part of a natural London clay deposition. However, the mottled appearance suggested that the surface of the London clay was exposed possibly as part of the eastern edge of the river valley, and weathered heavily.

Group 2:

Above weathered London clay [7], was observed a mixture of London clay and grey silts [6], approximately 0.50m thick, with no cultural inclusions evident. Although interpretation of this deposit is difficult, due to its make-up and location between lower natural London clay and later river silts, it is possible that this deposit formed part of a primary river sediment once the river had cut into natural London clay.

Group 3:

Once London clay-grey silts [6], were deposited, a series of mixed alluvial river silts [3,4,5] were laid to a depth of approximately 1.20m. At the base of this sequence was located a mixed deposit of waterlogged light grey sandy silt-clay [5], later sealed by grey mottled silt [4] and grey black silt [3]. From the core sample, it seems that all these silts were fairly pure, and lacked cultural inclusions.

Within alluvial silt [4], at approximately 10.80m OD, groundwater was located. As this level was within suggested river silt deposits, it may represent the natural water table across the western half of the site, rather than an artificial water table, created by leaking water pipes or rising rain-groundwater.

Group 5:

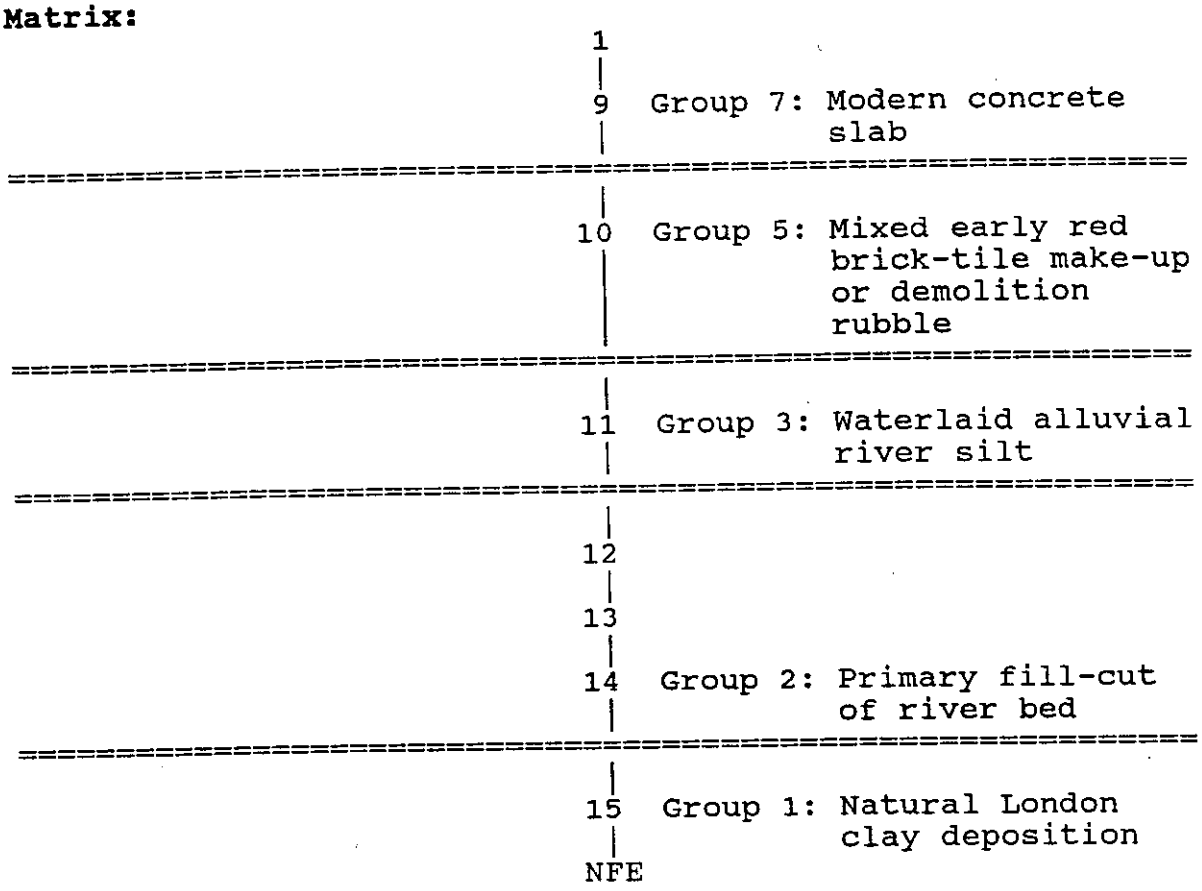
Compressed into the surface of alluvial silt [3], was observed a large dump of grey-brown-black silt-sand with mixed soft red bricks-and red tile, general building rubble, post-medieval pot fabrics, clay pipe fragments etc [2]. As the dump was laid directly above earlier silts, it probably formed part of either a large make-up or demolition deposit connected with building development, once the river course had been diverted.

Group 7:

Intruding deeply into dump [2], was observed part of a large concrete slab [1], approximately 2.30m thick. This concrete probably formed part of the original GPO building development, and its later alterations.

TP3, BOREHOLE B, AREA A

Matrix:



Context description:

[11] Moderately compacted, waterlaid silt. Damp, dark grey silt (90%), sand (10%), with frequent gravels. Level height 12.49m OD.

[12] Compacted, waterlaid silt. Wet, mid brown-tan clay (50%), sand-pebbles (50%). No inclusions observed. Level height 12.23m OD.

[13] Compacted, weathered London clay. Wet, brown-light grey clay (50%), sand-gravels (30%), mid tan clayey brickearth or weathered clay (20%). No inclusions observed. Level height 11.50m OD.

[14] Compacted, waterlaid river silt Wet, light yellow brown sand-gravels (80%), clay (20%). No inclusions observed. Level height 11.04m OD.

[15] Compacted, London clay. Mottled mid brown-light grey clay, some small pebbles. No inclusions observed. Level height 10.00m OD.

Discussion:

TP3 (Fig 2) was excavated approximately 1.60m square and 2.10m deep, by mechanical excavator. From this level an auger core was sunk to a level of approximately 9.50m OD, and environmental-geological samples of all deposits taken.

On section, the core gave a vertical profile of approximately 3.10m.

Group 1:

At the base of the core sample, was observed a deposit of mottled brown-grey pure London clay [15], at least 0.50m deep. Although the total depth of this deposit was not established, its compacted state, mottled colour and lack of cultural inclusions suggests that it formed part of a weathered clay surface. The mottled surface may indicate that at some point in time, the clay was exposed possibly as part of the eastern edge of the river valley.

Group 2:

Above weathered London clay [15], was observed a mixture of totally waterlogged yellow brown sandy gravel and clay [14], mottled brown grey clayey sand and gravel [13] and brown tan clayey sand and pebbles [12], with no visible cultural inclusions.

From the core sample, there were clear stratigraphic soil horizons located. However, their make-up was so similar, it is probable that they all formed part of the same natural deposition process, as either a single event, or spread over a long period of time. Whatever the case, this natural was at least 2.20m deep.

The type and depth of these deposits [12,13,14], and their location close to the suggested eastern edge of the river valley, may indicate that they formed part of a continual erosion along the eastern river valley, that slowly built up within the river bed itself. The erosion hypothesis is reinforced by the excessive depth of this deposition.

Group 3:

Above the primary silts [12], was observed a thin truncated deposit of very damp grey silt-sand alluvial silt [11], at least 0.20m deep, approximately 12.50m OD. From the core sample, it appeared that this deposit was fairly pure and lacked cultural inclusions.

Group 5:

Above alluvial silt [11], was observed the remains of a deposit of grey-brown silt-sand, with mixed soft red bricks, red peg and pan tiles, fragments of chalk, cobble stones, flag stones, mortar, clay pipe bowls and stems and pot shards. Although truncated, this was located at approximately 12.80m-12.90m OD, and 0.30m thick. As the deposit was laid directly above earlier silt deposition, it probably formed part of

either a large make-up or demolition dump connected with building development, once the river course had been diverted.

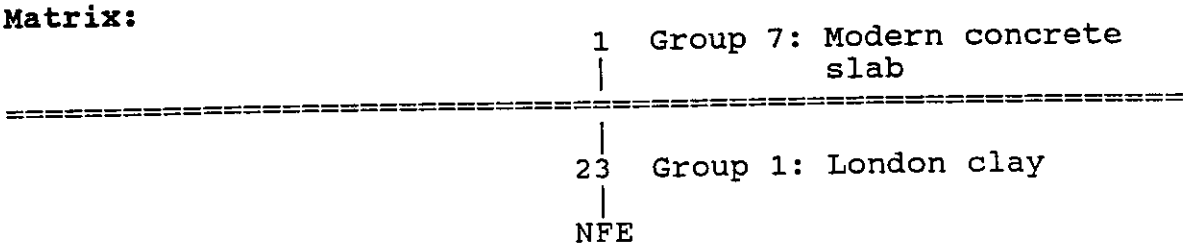
Group 7:

Truncated heavily into dump [10], was observed part of a large concrete slab [9,1], approximately 1.90m thick. Here, two separate concrete slabs were located. The lower slab [9] was approximately 1.15m thick, and may have formed part of the original GPO building. Above this was laid a large deposit of mixed modern red and yellow stock bricks and mortar rubble make-up approximately 0.70m. This was later sealed by the modern slab.

What the later rubble dump and floor slab represented is uncertain, but it may form part of a later re-build within the existing GPO building.

TP4, AREA C

Matrix:



Contexts description:

[23] Compacted, London clay. Mottled mid brown-light grey clay. No inclusions observed. Level height 13.36m OD.

Discussion:

TP4 was located in the centre, across the southern part of the site (Fig 2). The pit was excavated by machine approximately 1.60m north-south, 2.20m east-west, and a depth of 2.90m.

Group 1:

Within the TP was observed a heavily truncated deposit of mixed mottled brown-grey clay [23] (Fig 6). Although depth of the London clay was not established, at approximately 12.60m OD the lower pure grey clay merged with a more mixed mottled grey-brown clay. This may indicate that the upper area of the London clay was exposed to the elements for some time prior to construction of the later concrete slab. Due to the depth and the lack of any cultural inclusions, it is probable that this clay formed part of the natural London clay deposition across the general area, rather than a redeposited dump.

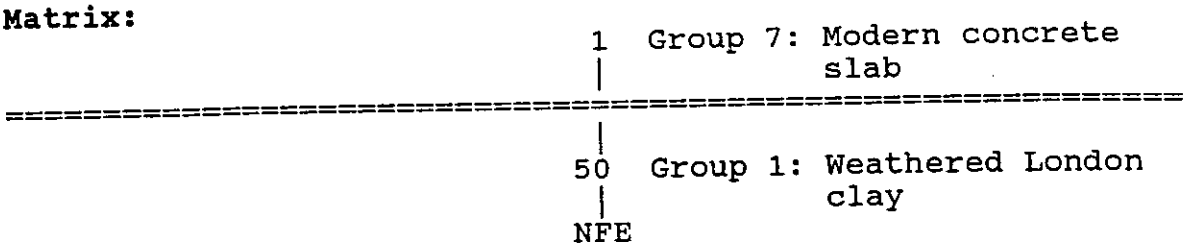
Group 7:

Above London clay [23], was observed a large concrete slab [1], to a depth of approximately 1.40m. This truncated heavily into natural London clay [23] to a depth of 13.36m OD.

The concrete consisted of a lower horizontal slab approximately 0.80m thick, later covered by a mixed red and yellow stock brick rubble make-up, 0.60m thick. Above the make-up was located a thin levelling course and a flagstone floor. From the section it appeared that the lower concrete slab probably formed part of a large horizontal concrete raft of the GPO building, that truncated heavily the lower London clay [23]. At some point after this was constructed, there was probably some internal re-development of the GPO floor make-up and slab.

TP5, AREA C

Matrix:



Contexts description:

[50] Compacted, weathered London clay. light-mid grey pure clay. No inclusions observed. Level height 13.35m OD.

Discussion:

TP5 was located across the south central part of the site, in an area of deep modern truncation, (Fig 2). This pit was excavated by machine, approximately 1.60m square and 1.80m deep.

Group 1:

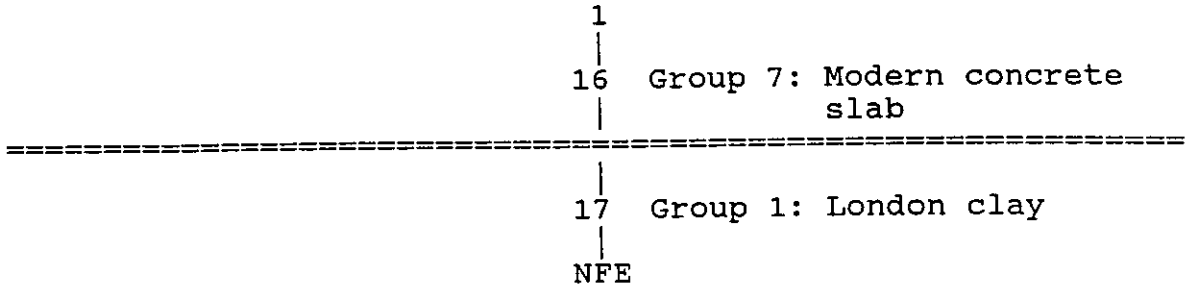
In TP5, modern concrete slab heavily truncated the natural grey London clay [50] to a depth of 13.35m OD. At the interface between modern concrete and the London clay was observed a thin layer of mottled brown-grey London clay. This indicated that prior to construction of this concrete slab, the London clay may have remained open for some time.

Group 7:

Consisted of a large concrete slab, approximately 2.00m thick.

TP6, AREA D

Matrix:



Context description:

[16] Concrete slab and brick rubble. Level height 14.66m OD.

[17] Moderately compacted, London clay. Mid grey clay with some flecks of silt. No inclusions observed. Level height 13.18m OD.

Discussion:

TP6 was located in the central part of the site, in an area of deep modern truncation, (Fig 2). The pit was excavated by machine, approximately 1.60m square, 1.80m deep.

Group 1:

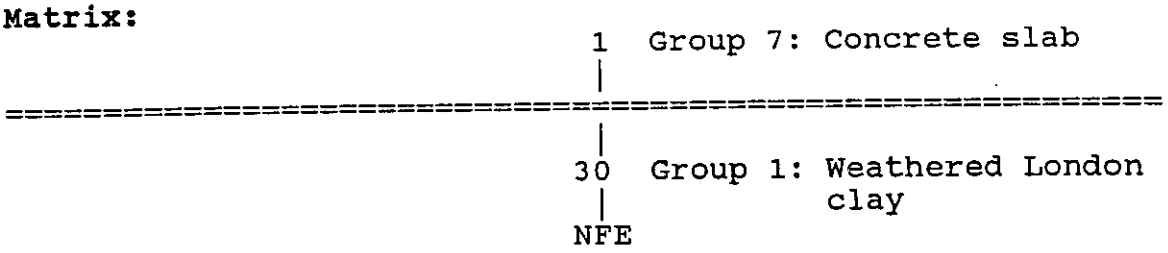
In TP6, a modern concrete slab [1] and [16], heavily truncated the natural grey London clay [17] to a depth of 13.18m OD.

Group 7:

The modern slab across this area was approximately 1.80m thick. This consisted of a lower softer mixed brick rubble-concrete core, later covered by concrete.

TP7, AREA D

Matrix:



Context description:

[30] Compacted, weathered London clay. Mid grey clay. No inclusions observed. Level height 13.26m OD.

Discussion:

TP7 was located across the central part of the site, in an area of deep modern truncation, (Fig 2). The pit was excavated by machine, approximately 1.60m square, 1.80m deep.

Group 1:

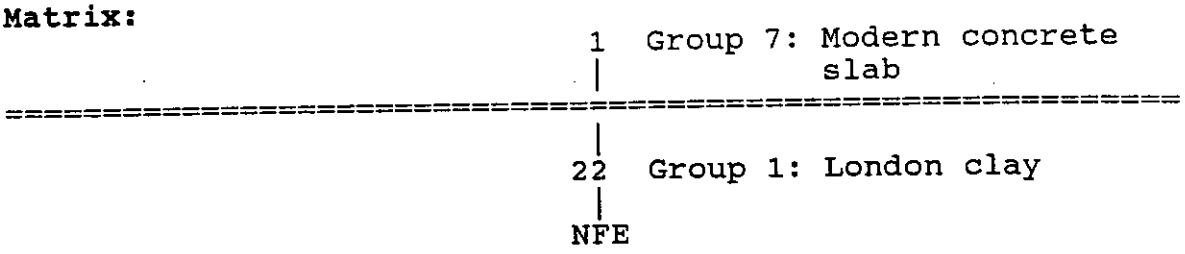
The modern concrete slab [1] heavily truncated the natural grey London clay [30] to a depth of 13.26m OD (Fig 7).

Group 7:

Modern slab across this area was approximately 1.60m-1.70m thick. This consisted of a lower concrete (1.00m thick), later covered by a brick rubble make-up (0.60m) and York stone floor surface.

TP8, AREA D

Matrix:



Context description:

[22] Moderately compacted, London clay. Light to mid-blue grey clay. No inclusions observed. Level height 13.19m OD.

Discussion:

TP8 was located on the eastern side of the site, in an area of deep modern truncation, (Fig 2). The pit was excavated by machine approximately 1.60m square, 1.80m deep.

Group 1:

In TP8, modern concrete slab [1] heavily truncated the natural grey London clay [22] to a depth of 13.18m OD.

Group 7:

Modern slab across this area was approximately 1.60m thick. This consisted of a lower concrete 1.00m thick, later covered by loose brick rubble and soil 0.50m, and York stone paving slabs.

TP9, (Not excavated), Area D

Located on extreme south eastern side of development, in area of underground road, still in use by the GPO.

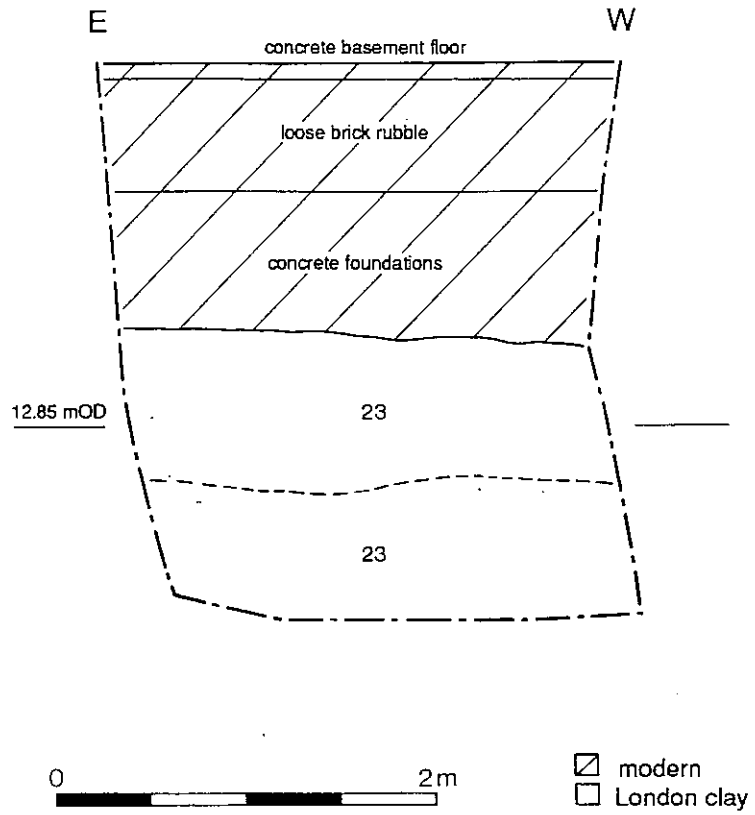


Fig 6, North facing section of TP4. Shows modern concrete slab truncating deep into natural London clay across area C

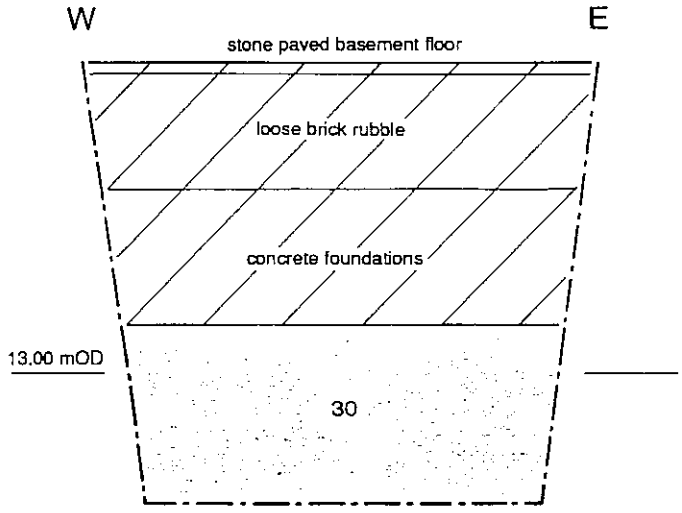
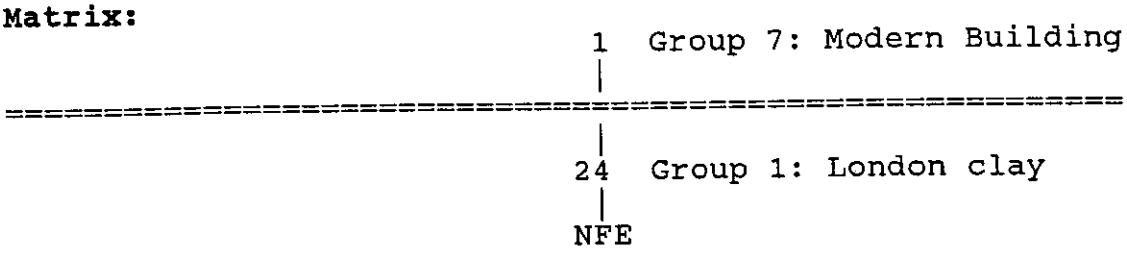


Fig 7, South facing section of TP7. Shows modern concrete truncating deeply into natural London clay across area D

TP10, AREA A

Matrix:



Context description:

[24] Compacted, London clay. Mottled mid brown-light grey clay. No inclusions observed. Level height 11.96m OD.

Discussion:

TP10 was located across the central part of the site, in an area of deep modern truncation (Fig 2). The pit was excavated by machine, approximately 1.60m-1.80m square, 2.00m-2.30m deep.

Group 1:

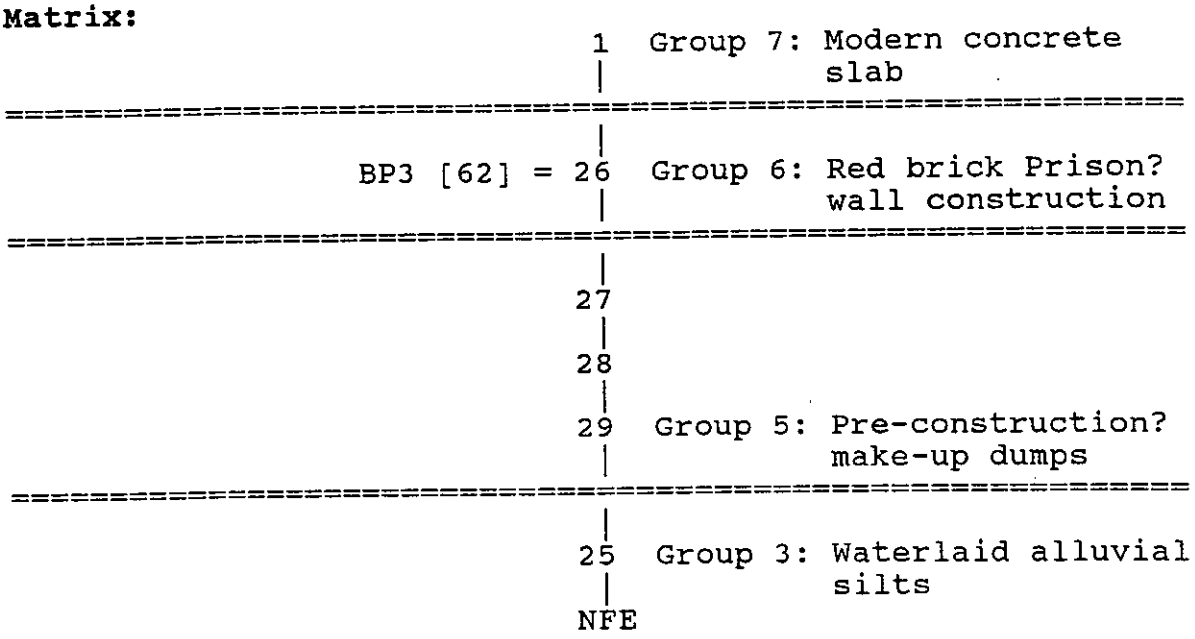
In TP10, modern GPO building box foundation structure [1], heavily truncated into natural grey London clay [24] to a depth of 12.96m OD.

Group 7:

Below box foundation [1], was observed part of a heavily truncated mottled London clay [24]. As only the surface of this clay was located, its depth was not established. However, it was heavily waterlogged, and appeared to lack any cultural inclusions.

TP11, AREA A

Matrix:



Context description:

[25] Moderately compacted, waterlaid river silt. Mid-grey silt (70%), clay (30%), moderate flecks of black silts, gravel pebbles. No inclusions located. Level height 11.16m OD.

[26] Red brick foundation-wall, aligned east-west. Consisted of red bricks approximately 224mm x 228mm x 103mm. Bricks slightly frogged in upper face, laid in alternate header-header and stretcher-stretcher fashion, on horizontal beds of hard off white chalk-charcoal fleck mortar. Foundation-wall at least 1.10m wide, vertical face and 3.50m deep. No inclusions observed. Level height 13.75m OD.

[27] Loose, dump-layer. Light grey-brown silt-sand (90%), brick fragments (10%). No inclusions observed. Level height 12.70m OD.

[28] Loose, dump-layer. Mid grey-brown silt-sand (80%), brick fragments (20%). No inclusions observed. Level height 12.70m OD.

[29] Loose, dump-layer. Mid grey-brown silt-sand (90%), mixed rubble and pebbles (10%). No inclusions observed. Level height 11.70m OD.

Discussion:

TP11 was located across the western side of the site, in the MoLas watching-brief area on the contractors excavation, and was approximately 2.00m x 4.00m x 4.00m deep (Fig 2). This

formed an extra test pit, sunk by the contractors to show depth and type of river silt deposits across this area.

Group 3:

At the base of the test pit, approximately 10.50m OD, was observed the top of a mixed grey alluvial silt and clay [25] (Fig 8). In some area, the silts produced evidence of small organic materials: fragments of wood planking, timber posts, fragments of leather.

Group 5:

Across the western, southern and part of the eastern sides of TP11, above alluvial silts [25], was observed a sequence of mixed dump deposits. Stratigraphically, this started at the base with a horizontally laid grey-brown silt-sand-brick fragments [29], later sealed by further deposits of variable grey-brown silt-sand-brick fragments [28,27]. Although these deposits were clearly defined on section, it is probable that they all represented part of the same sequence.

At the top of the sequence, deposit [27] was heavily truncated by the later modern concrete slab [1]. This cut-off point destroyed all stratigraphic relationships between suggested make-up dump [27] and the upper levels of wall [26]. This meant that it is not possible to stratigraphically link [27] and wall [26]. But it is assumed that deposit [27] represented part of the make-up for the wall or floor construction, rather than part of the buildings demolition.

Group 6:

Above the make-up deposits, were observed the remains of an east-west aligned red brick foundation [26] that probably formed part of wall [62], BP3. Within the confines of the test pit, it was clear that in plan foundation [26] was approximately 1.10m wide, vertically faced for a depth of 3.25m to the foundation base, and ran east-west across the area. On the eastern side of the test pit, the foundation turned sharply northwards approximately 90 degrees. On this side, it is uncertain whether foundation [26] abutted the north-south foundation, or both walls were built as one unit.

The construction of the foundation [26] below wall [62] consisted of horizontally laid alternate header-header and stretcher-stretcher courses, laid on thin hard beds of off white lime mortar, with flecks of white chalk and charcoal. This method of construction was located throughout the whole foundation width.

Along the northern and southern sides of foundation [26] the face was well built with reasonable pointed mortar courses. This suggested that it was not close trench built, but constructed instead in a wide construction trench. Although within the western section, there was no evidence for the foundation cut, it is possible that originally the cut was very wide and deep. This would mean that potentially the

suggested make-up dumps [29,28,27] located around the foundation could also be backfills within its trench. If this is the case, then any original foundation cut could have been in excess of 3.00m wide north-south.

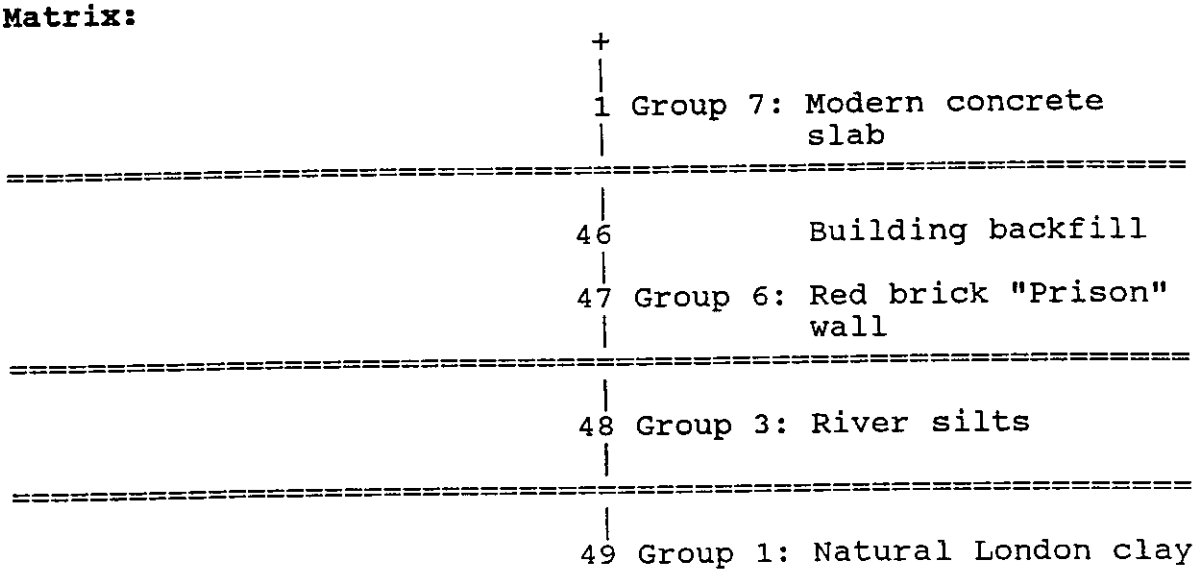
Group 7:

Above the truncated top of the foundation, was observed a fairly horizontal slab of modern concrete, later sealed by a large dump of mixed red-yellow stock bricks and general building rubble. This in turn was sealed by a thin horizontal make-up and flagstones [1].

The floor evidence supports the suggestion that once the original GPO building was constructed, a series of internal alterations were carried out within the building.

TP12, AREA A

Matrix:



Context description:

[46] Loose to moderately compacted, soil and demolition dump. Dark grey brown sand-silt, mixed with brick rubble. Frequent fragments of mortar, peg tile, chalk rubble.

[47] Red brick foundation-wall, aligned east-west. Consisted of red bricks approximately 229mm x 103mm x 70mm. Bricks slightly frogged in upper face, laid in alternate header-header and stretcher-stretcher fashion, on horizontal beds of hard off white and pale grey sand-lime chalk -charcoal mortar. Mortar in lower portion of foundation or wall of crumbly pale grey nature. Foundation or wall at least 1.10m wide, vertical face and approximately 3.50m deep. At base, observed fragments of stepped foundation on north side. No inclusions observed. Level height 13.20m OD.

[48] Moderately compacted, waterlaid river silt. Damp, mid grey silt (60%), clay (40%). Occasional flecks of black charcoal? or organic material. Level height 11.60m.

[49] Compacted, very wet, weathered London clay. Mottled light-mid brown pure clay. No inclusions observed. Level height 11.00m OD.

Discussion:

TP12 was located across the western side of the site, in the area of the MoLas watching brief, and was approximately 2.00m x 6.00m x 3.50m deep, (Fig 2). This was an extra test

pit, sunk by contractors to show the depth and type of river silt deposits across this area.

Group 1:

At the base of the pit at approximately 11.00m OD, was observed a fairly horizontal deposit of very wet light brown clay [48] (Fig 9). Although depth was not established, it was located for at least 0.20m, and showed no evidence for cultural inclusions. From the depth and type of deposit, it is probable that [48] formed part of the natural geology below, or part of its interface with the river-bed. The latter information is favoured by the location of the watertable at an approximate level of 10.80m OD.

Group 2:

Directly above natural deposit [49], was observed a fairly large horizontal deposit of grey silt-clay [48], to a depth of 0.40m, (Fig 9). The location of this deposit along the line of the watertable suggested that it could have formed part of the interface between the natural geology and the river-bed, or the primary river fill. However, if the latter is the case, it differs sharply from dark grey river silt found in other pits across this area within group 3.

Group 6:

Across the southern side of the pit was observed part of a large east-west aligned soft red brick wall and its associated foundation [47], (Fig 9). On the west-facing section, this wall was at least 1.10m wide. On its northern side, the wall consisted of a vertical face, at least 1.80m deep, and consisted of horizontally laid unfrogged red bricks, laid in alternate header-header and stretcher-stretcher courses.

On the northern side of wall [47], the courses were laid ashlar faced with pointed mortar joints. This suggests that the wall was constructed within a large open trench and not in a foundation cut.

Below wall [47], was observed part of a shallow stepped foundation, at least 1.30m wide, and 0.40m deep. Although the foundation was only located on the northern side, four steps were found. These were approximately 0.10m wide, and constructed from soft red bricks similar to and laid in the same way as wall courses [47]. This gave an overall foundation step out of approximately 0.20m. The foundation appeared to have been constructed directly above silt/clay [48]. There was no evidence to suggest that the foundation was cut into underlying deposit [48], nor laid on any form of timber foundation.

After wall [47] was constructed, its northern side was backfilled with a mixed building rubble and silt dump [46]. This probably formed part of the mixed rubble and silt

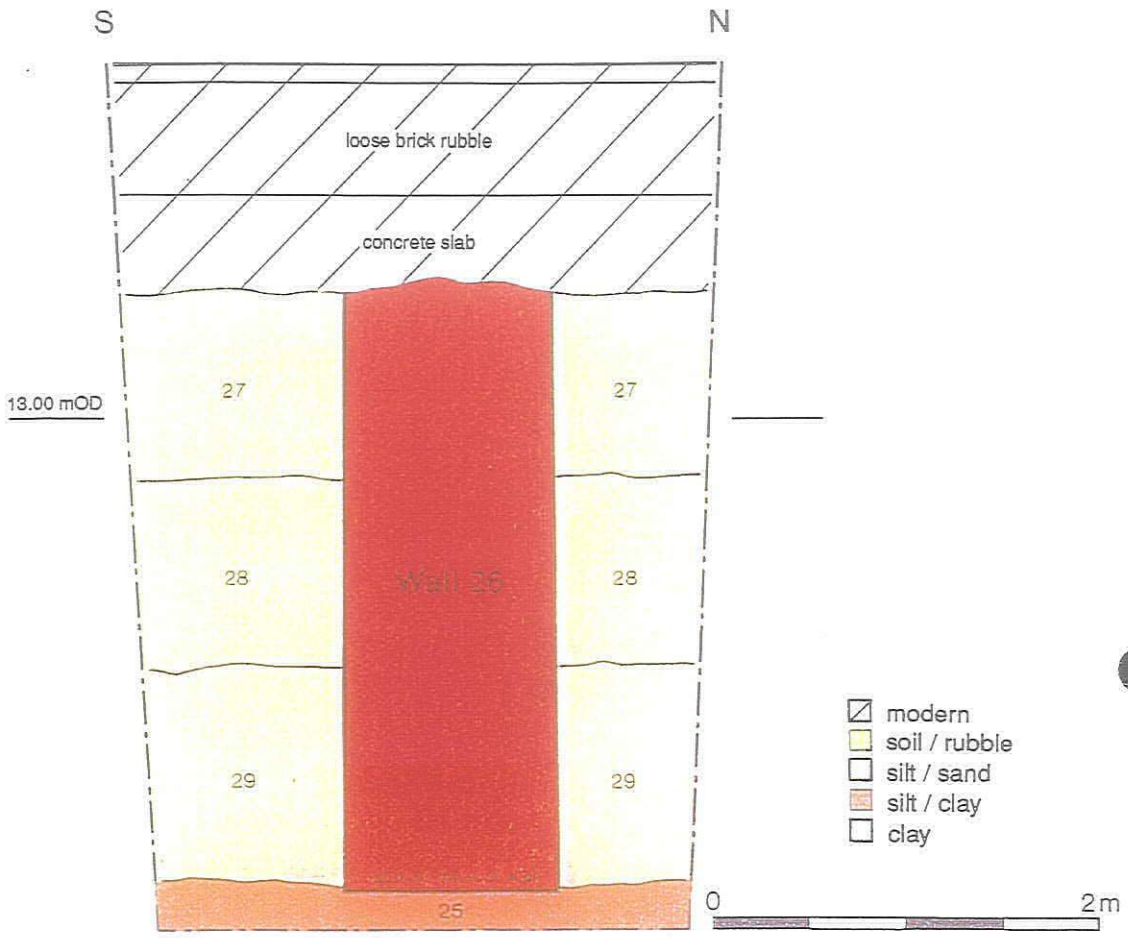


Fig 8, East facing section of TP11. Shows east-west aligned soft red brick prison wall [26], within later backfilled construction trench

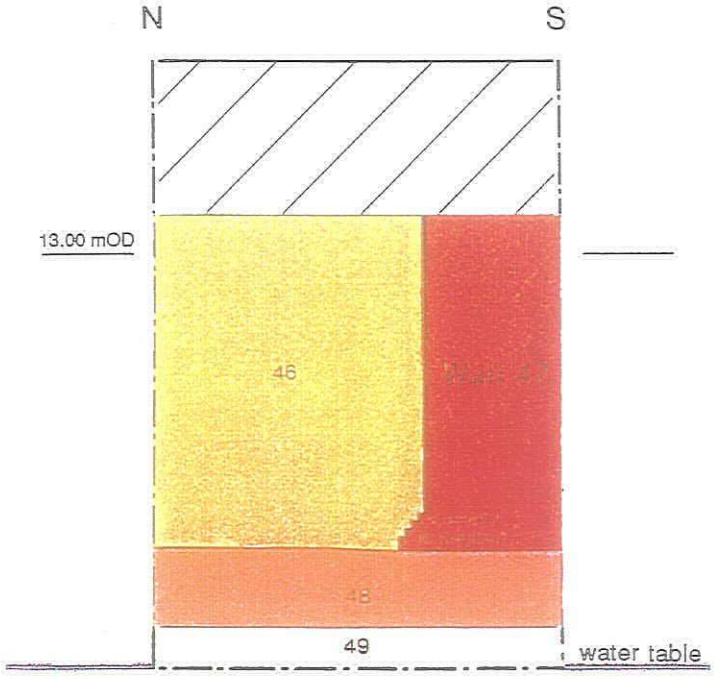


Fig 9, West facing section of TP12. Shows north side of east-west aligned soft red brick load bearing prison wall [47] and its stepped foundation within a large backfilled foundation trench

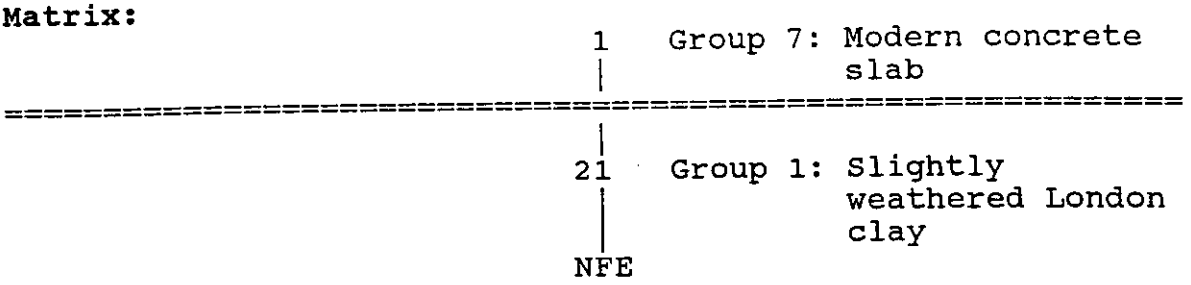
infill dumps observed within the building across other parts of the site.

Group 7:

At some point after the demolition of wall [47], the area was covered by a large concrete slab.

TPD, AREA D

Matrix:



Contexts description:

[21] Moderately compacted, London clay. Light-mid grey clay, some grey silt. No inclusions observed. Level height 13.34m OD.

Discussion:

TPD was located across the eastern side of the site, in an area of deep modern truncation, (Fig 2). This pit was excavated by machine, approximately 1.60m-1.80m square, 1.80m deep.

Group 1:

The modern concrete slab heavily truncated the natural grey London clay [21] to a depth of 13.34m OD.

Group 7:

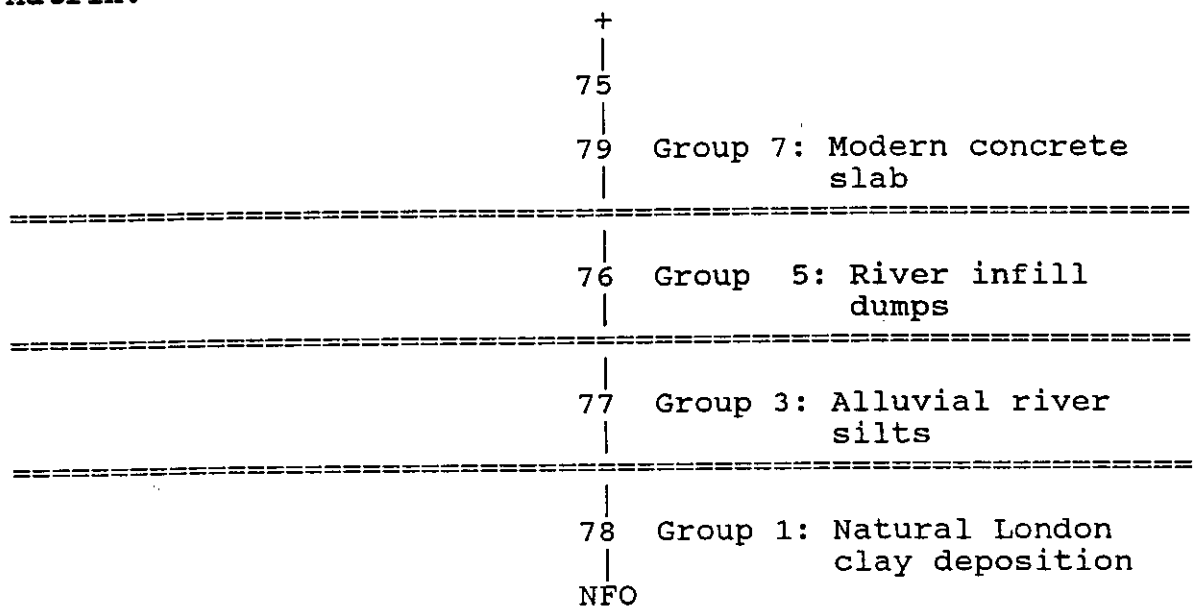
The modern floor surface across this area was approximately 1.60m thick. This consisted of a lower concrete slab (0.95m thick). later covered by loose brick rubble and soil (0.50-60m) and upper York stone paving slabs.

WATCHING BRIEF OBSERVATIONS

Between 12 7 93 and 2 9 93, a watching brief was carried out within 31 builders pits across all areas of the site. However, as a large number of archaeological deposits were located during the evaluation stage across western area A, much of the subsequent watching brief activities concentrated on this area.

BP1, AREA A

Matrix:



Context description:

[75] Modern concrete slab, approximately 0.30m deep.

[76] Compacted, mixed grey brown soil, occasional fragments of red brick-tile. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth approximately 3.00m

[77] Moderately compacted, wet, pure light-mid blue grey silt, horizontally laid alluvial silt. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth approximately 1.00m.

[78] Compacted, natural London blue grey clay. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth not established, at least 1.50m.

[79] Modern concrete vertical pile, observed across northern side. Depth at least 5.00m.

Discussion:

BP1 was located on the southern side of the site within watching brief area A, (Fig 3). The pit was approximately 4.00m square and 5.00m deep. Only modern intrusions were

observed on the north, south and eastern sections. However, on the western section, archaeological stratigraphy was located.

Group 1:
At the base of the pit was observed part of a large horizontal deposit of probable natural London clay [78]. Although depth was not established, the clay was recorded for at least 1.00m deep.

Group 3:
Above [78], was observed a roughly horizontal deposit of grey alluvial silts [77], approximately 1.00m thick. This deposit probably formed part of the in-situ deposited river silts that crossed the western side of the site.

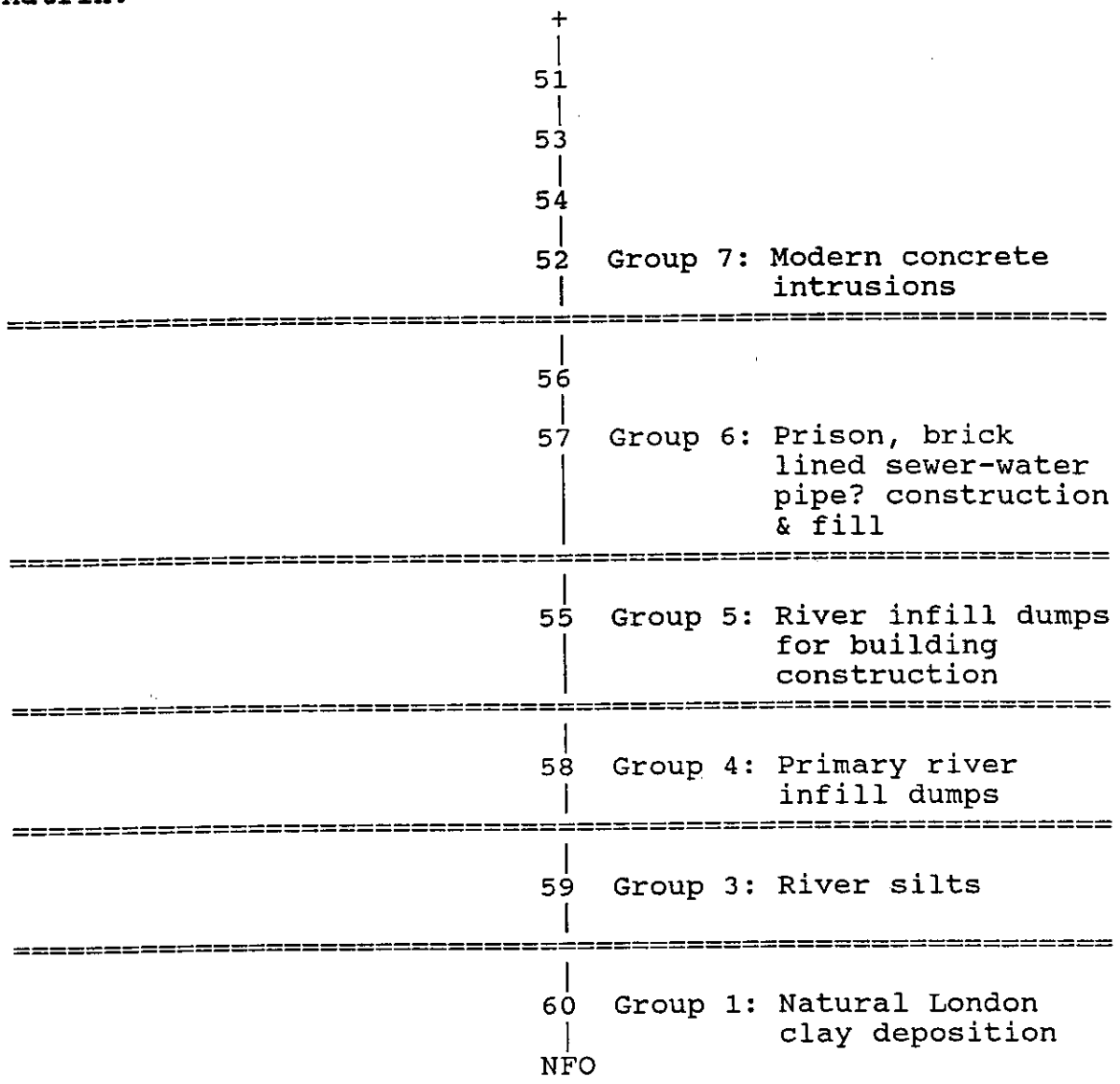
Group 5:
At some point after the river silt [77] was deposited, a large dump of mixed grey brown soil [76] apparently sealed it to a depth of approximately 3.10m. This probably formed part of a major river dumping and levelling programme. Within [76] were observed traces of red brick and other types of building materials.

Generally, the dumping located across this pit was not the same as that observed further north. This suggests that these deposits varied considerably and were based on what was available. However, this variation may also suggest that [76] was deposited over a long period of time, and could represent external garden soil build-up.

Group 7:
Above dump [76], was observed part of a large vertical concrete pile [79] along the northern side of the pit. This was sealed by a fairly thick horizontal concrete slab [75].

BP2, AREA A

Matrix:



Context description:

[51] Modern concrete slab, 0.20m-0.40m thick.

[52] Mixed red brick rubble-mortar-silt make-up dumps.

[53] Concrete and mixed rubble fill surrounding horizontal cast iron pipe. Fill of modern pipe trench.

[54] North-south aligned, linear pipe trench cut. Parallel edges approximately 1.20m apart, vertical sides, depth at least 2.40m. Base flat.

[55] Compacted, mixed fragments of soft red brick, tile, mortar, grey green silt river dumping. Laid in tip lenses, sloped down west to east in bands, approximately 0.10m-0.30m thick. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth at least 1.50m.

[56] Moderately compacted, mixed fairly pure dark grey brown silt. No inclusions observed. Depth at least 2.10m.

[57] Series of hard fired unfrogged red bricks approximately 0.23m x 0.10m x 0.06m. laid at base on edge and vertically up the western side, two abreast. Bricks laid in staggered fashion, between thin beds of hard off white-grey chalk-charcoal fleck mortar. At top of wall although heavily truncated, was observed some evidence for a semi-circular sprung red brick arch. Structure appeared to form part of the western vertical side, base and semi circular head of a brick sewer or water pipe, aligned roughly north-south.

[58] Moderately compacted, mixed, mid dark grey-brown silt river dumping?. Laid in tip lenses, sloped down from west to east. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth at least 1.20m.

[59] Loose, wet, mid dark grey fine alluvial river silts. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth at least 1.40m, sloped down slightly east-west.

[60] Compacted, mid grey-blue natural London clay deposition. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth not established, but at 0.40m.

Discussion

BP2 was located on the north-western side of the site within watching brief area A, (Fig 3). The pit was approximately 8.00m x 2.00m x 5.00m deep. Although the west and east sections only produced modern intrusions, the northern and southern sections provided a good east-west aligned cross section through this part of the river bed and later stratigraphy.

Group 1:

At the base of the pit was observed part of a natural grey-blue London clay deposit [60], at an approximate level of 10.00m-10.30m OD (Fig 10), and depth of at least 0.40m. Although [60] appeared to slightly slope from east to west, this may have been caused by a general scouring of the clay surface by water action.

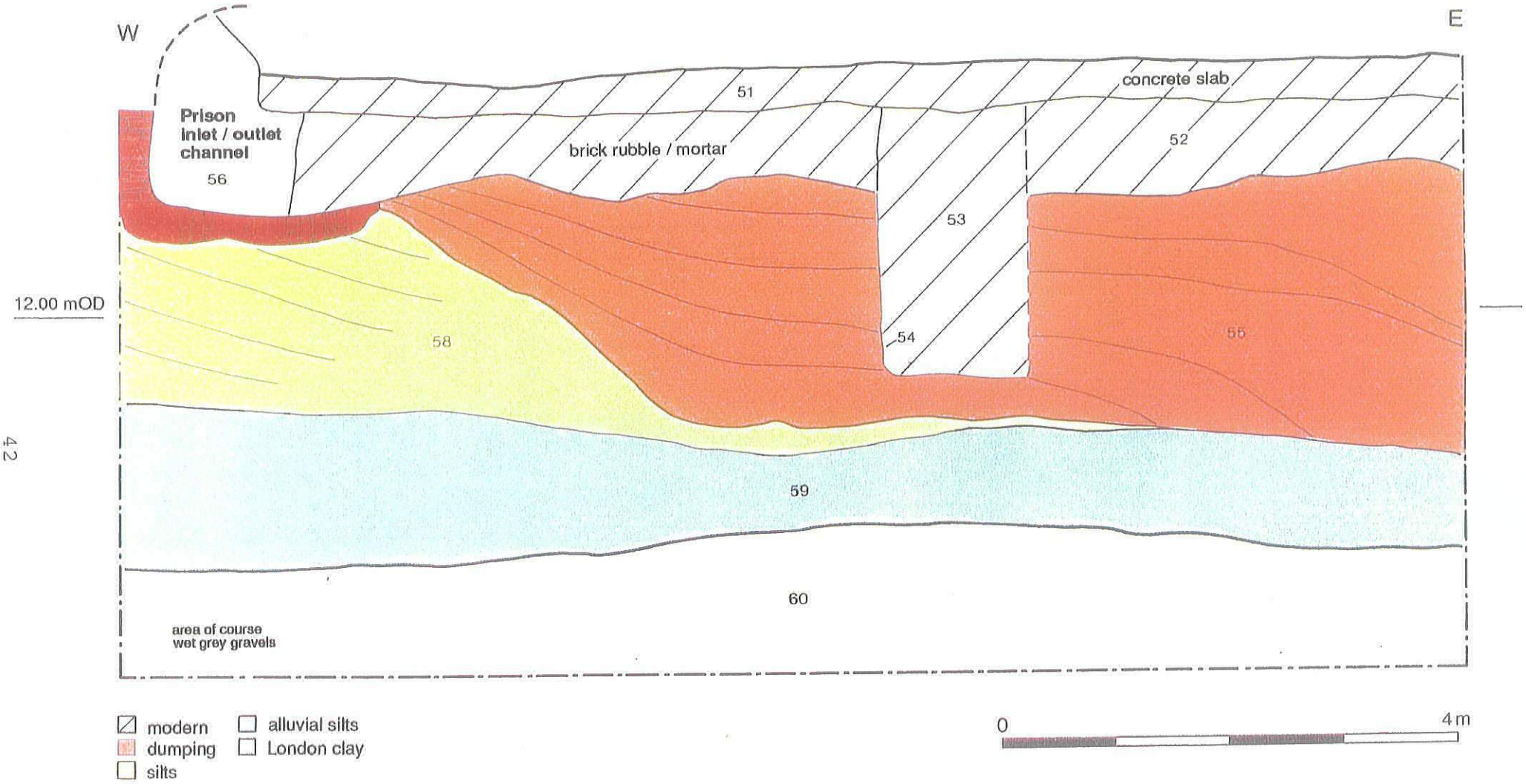


Fig 10, South facing section of BP2. Shows western silt [58] and dumps [55] sealing London clay [60 and its silts [59]. Note also shows north-south aligned water inlet-outlet channel [56,57] of prison building

Group 3:

Above natural clay [60] was observed a large deposit of very wet dark grey alluvial river silt [59], at approximate level height of 10.80m-11.20m OD, (Fig 10). Generally, river silt [59] varied in thickness from east (0.80m) to west (1.20m). Although it only sloped slightly west to east, its variation in depth filled the underlying scouring created in the surface of natural clay [60].

Within the lower western part of river silt [59] was observed a large compacted spread of wet coarse grey gravels. Why this spread was located only across this side is uncertain, but it may relate to either river movement and entrapment of river gravels across this part of the river bed, or erosion from part of the eastern river bank.

Group 4:

At some point after large scale deposition of river silt [59], was observed part of a large scale mixed sequence of dump-infill [58] of the river bed, (Fig 10). Although heavily truncated, dump [58] was located at approximately 13.00m OD, and sloped steeply down from west to east. This shows that across the western part of the river bed, the dump-infill was deposited from the western side of the river valley.

At the base of the sequence was observed a large dump of dark grey brown silt [58] approximately 1.80m thick at the western side, but lensed out towards the east. This was laid as a series of tip lenses with an average thickness around 0.40m-0.50m. Dump [58] consisted of fairly pure silts, that produced little cultural inclusions.

Above silt dump [58], was observed a large dump of mixed building materials [55] to a depth of approximately 1.80m. This dump was also deposited from the western side, and consisted of a series of thick lenses of mixed red brick, tile, mortar and green-grey silt. Further east, this sequence continued, with each lens of dump [55] progressing eastwards until the river bed area was filled to approximately 13.20m OD.

Group 5:

On the western side of the pit above dumping [55,58], was observed the heavily truncated remains of a red brick floor approximately 2.10m east-west, associated with a western vertical red brick wall [57] approximately 1.20m high, (Fig 10). The floor consisted of soft red bricks laid in staggered joint courses on edge between vertical beds of hard grey-white mortar. The floor seems to have been laid in a shallow hollow that may have been part of a foundation cut. The surface of the brick floor appeared dish shaped.

On the western side of the floor, its construction appeared to curve round to form a vertical western wall. This wall was constructed from similar bricks, laid horizontally

but in the same way as the floor construction. In the upper levels of the western wall were located traces for a brick springer that spread eastwards. This may form part of a semi circular brick vault.

Within the structure was observed a fairly uniform fill of pure dark grey brown silt [56], with no evidence for cultural inclusions.

From its location, construction and fill, it is probable that brick structure [57] formed part of a large north-south aligned brick water or sewer? inlet-outlet system. During its lifetime, the sewer? probably gradually silted up with [56].

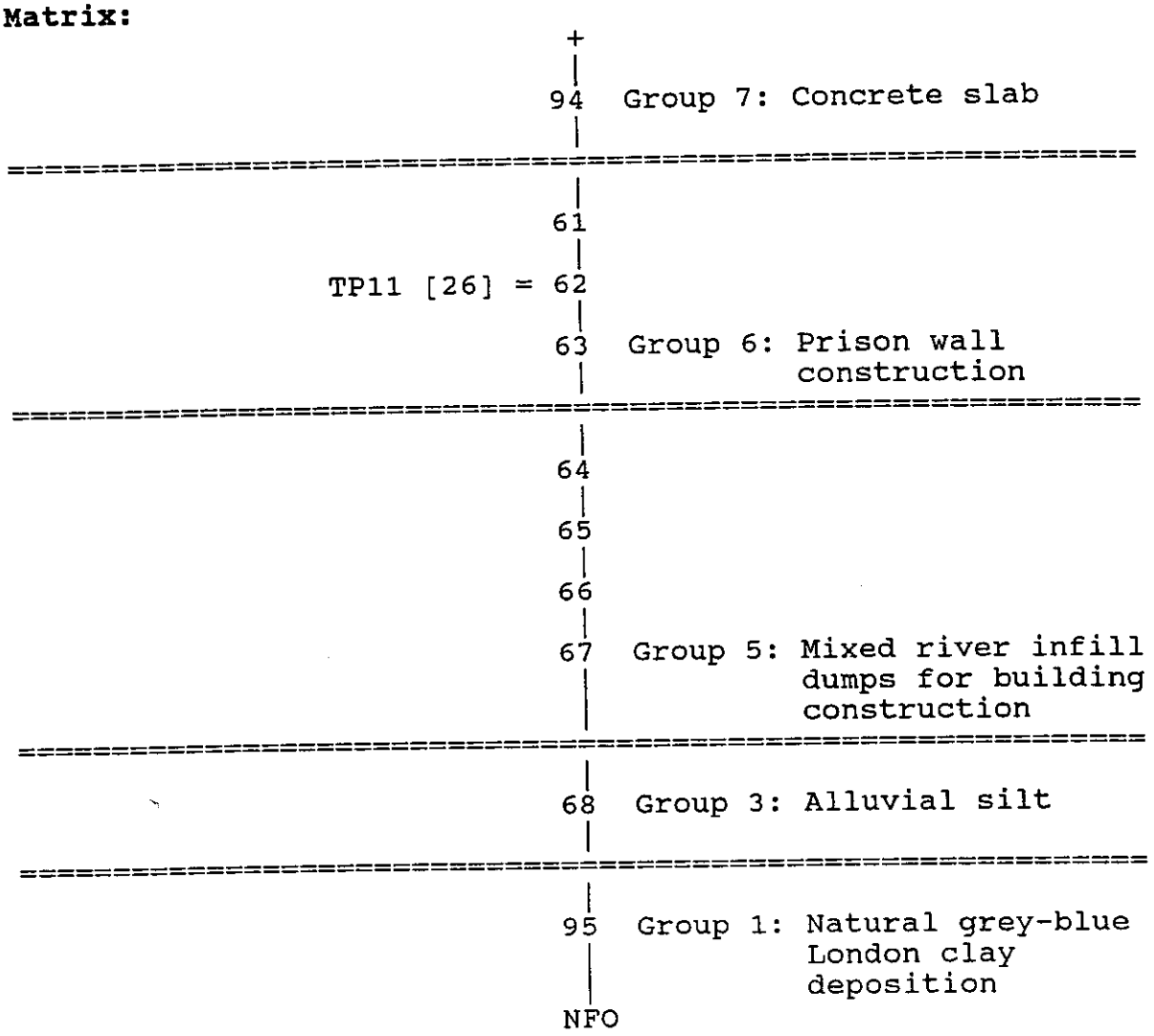
Group 7:

During construction of the modern building across this area, all underlying features were heavily truncated, and part of western wall [57] incorporated into the modern GPO tunnel, (Fig 10).

The modern building sequence started with a large mixed brick rubble make-up [52], approximately 0.50m-0.60m thick. In the central part of the pit the make-up was cut by a north-south aligned concrete pipe trench [54] and its associated fill [53]. Once this was constructed, the whole area was covered by a large horizontal concrete slab [51].

BP3, AREA A

Matrix:



Context descriptions:

[61] Moderately compacted, mixed dark brown sandy silt, small fragments of red brick, tile, mortar lenses. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth at least 3.50m.

[62] Part of large east-west aligned load bearing wall, approximately 1.10m wide north-south, depth 3.60m. Consisted of a series of hard fired unfrogged red bricks approximately 0.23m x 0.10m x 0.06m, laid in horizontal courses on beds of hard off white light grey chalk and charcoal fleck mortar. On northern and southern sides wall faces ashlar, with good straight mortar joints. Base of wall straight with flat base.

[63] Part of large east-west aligned foundation cut. Vertical face observed only on northern side,

consisted of steep sided face aligned east-west, 3.50m deep. Base appeared flat, extended at least 4.50m wide north-south.

[64] Moderately compacted, dark grey silt. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth at least 2.00m. Located roughly horizontal across northern side of area.

[65] Fairly compacted, mixed mortar with frequent fragments of tile. Depth at least 0.20m-0.30m. Located roughly horizontal across northern side of area.

[66] Compacted, mixed brown sand, silt, small fragments of red brick, tile, mortar dumping. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth at least 0.10m-0.40m. Sloped down slightly north-south.

[67] Moderately compacted, mid-dark grey silt. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth 0.50m-1.00m.

[68] Moderately compacted, very wet mid-dark grey alluvial silt. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth 1.10m.

[94] Modern concrete slab. Depth at least 0.80m-2.10m

[95] Compacted, wet blue grey London clay. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth not established, but at least 0.40m deep.

Discussion:

BP3 was located on the western side of the site within watching brief area A, (Fig 3). The pit was approximately 8.00m x 1.00m x 4.70m deep. Although the east, north and south sections only produced modern intrusions, the west section provided a good north-south profile through this part of the river bed and its later archaeological stratigraphy.

Group 1:

At the base of the pit were observed traces of a roughly horizontal deposit of blue grey London clay [95] at approximately 9.70m OD, (Fig 11). Although only limited observations of this deposit were possible, it appeared to have been very wet along its interface with later river silt deposits.

Group 3:

Above natural [95], was observed part of a large deep deposit of very wet dark grey alluvial silt [68] at approximately 10.60m OD, (Fig 11). This deposit appeared roughly horizontal, but sloped slightly down towards the southern side. The location of the pit and depth of silt [68] strongly suggests that this deposit was within the deepest

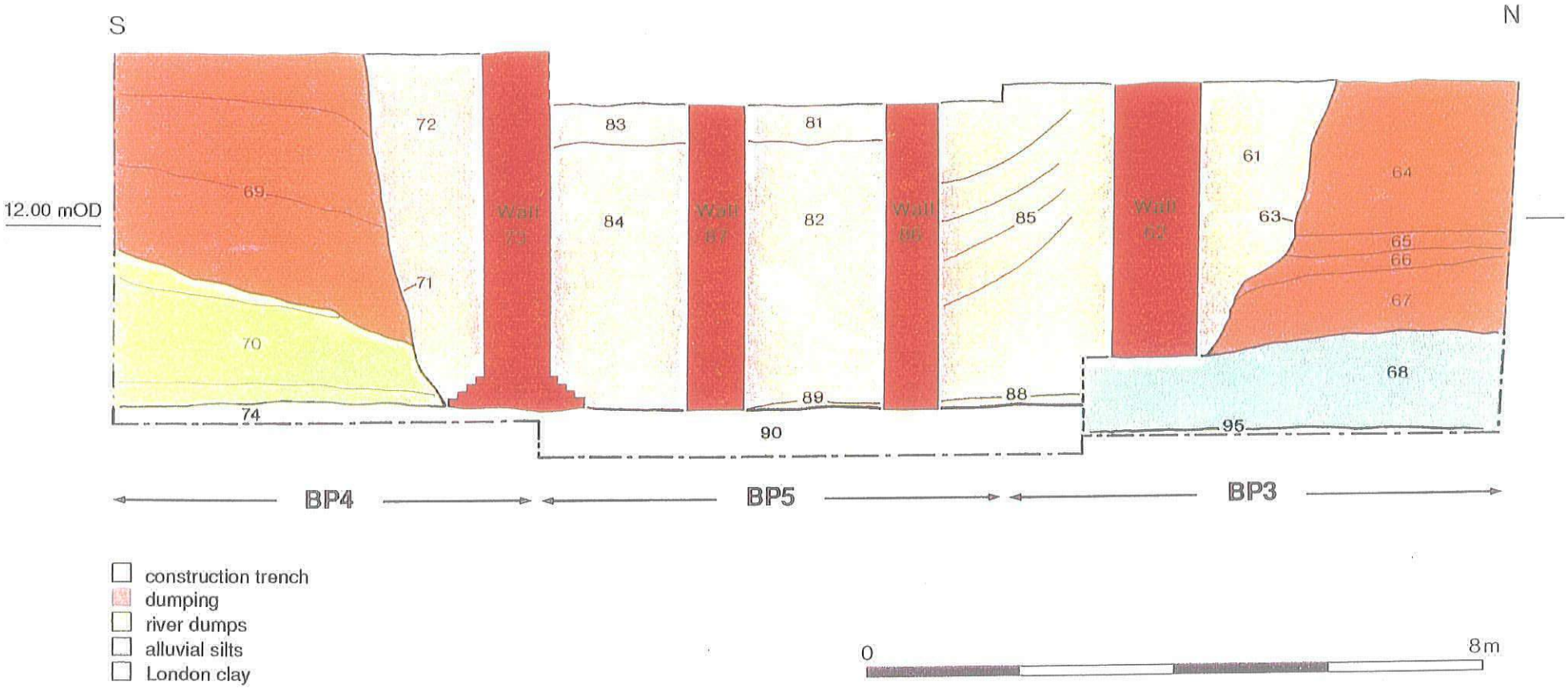


Fig 11, East facing composite section from BP3,4,5. Shows construction of soft red brick prison walls within its open construction trench

area of the river bed, and represented settlement over a long period of time.

Group 5:

On the northern side of the BP above river silt [68], was observed a series of silt and building material make-ups that probably formed part of later dumping-infill within the river bed, (Fig 11).

The sequence started with a fairly thick horizontal deposit of compacted dark grey silt [67]. This was approximately 0.90m thick, and levelled the river bed up to 11.80m OD. Above [67], were two horizontal dumps. This started with a thin spread of brown sand, silt and red brick building fragments [66], approximately 0.10m-0.30m thick and sloped slightly north-south. Later, [66] was covered by a compacted horizontal deposit of mixed mortar-tile fragments. After the deposition of [66] and [65], the area was sealed by a roughly horizontally laid compacted dark grey silt. This was approximately 2.00m deep, and levelled up the river bed to approximately 14.19m OD.

Generally, deposits [64,65,66,67] formed part of the river bed infill dump. However, no steeply angled tip lines were observed through the sequence. This may suggest that across the area, dumping may have started from the eastern side of the river bank, and slowly progressed westwards out into the river valley.

Group 6:

Across the central part of the BP was observed the northern edge of a large steep foundation cut [63] aligned roughly east-west, (Fig 11). This probably compared with wall [26] in TP11. This appeared to have cut down to the top of the river silt [68] and levelled off to form a fairly flat base.

Within the northern side of cut [63], a large east-west aligned wall [62] was constructed. Wall [62] was built from horizontal courses of red bricks, laid on horizontal beds of hard white mortar. The wall was approximately 0.95m wide, and consisted of ashlar faced edges, with smooth mortar joints.

It is clear that wall [62] sat directly on river silt [68] as a square block, with no evidence for foundation courses or horizontal timber foundation plates.

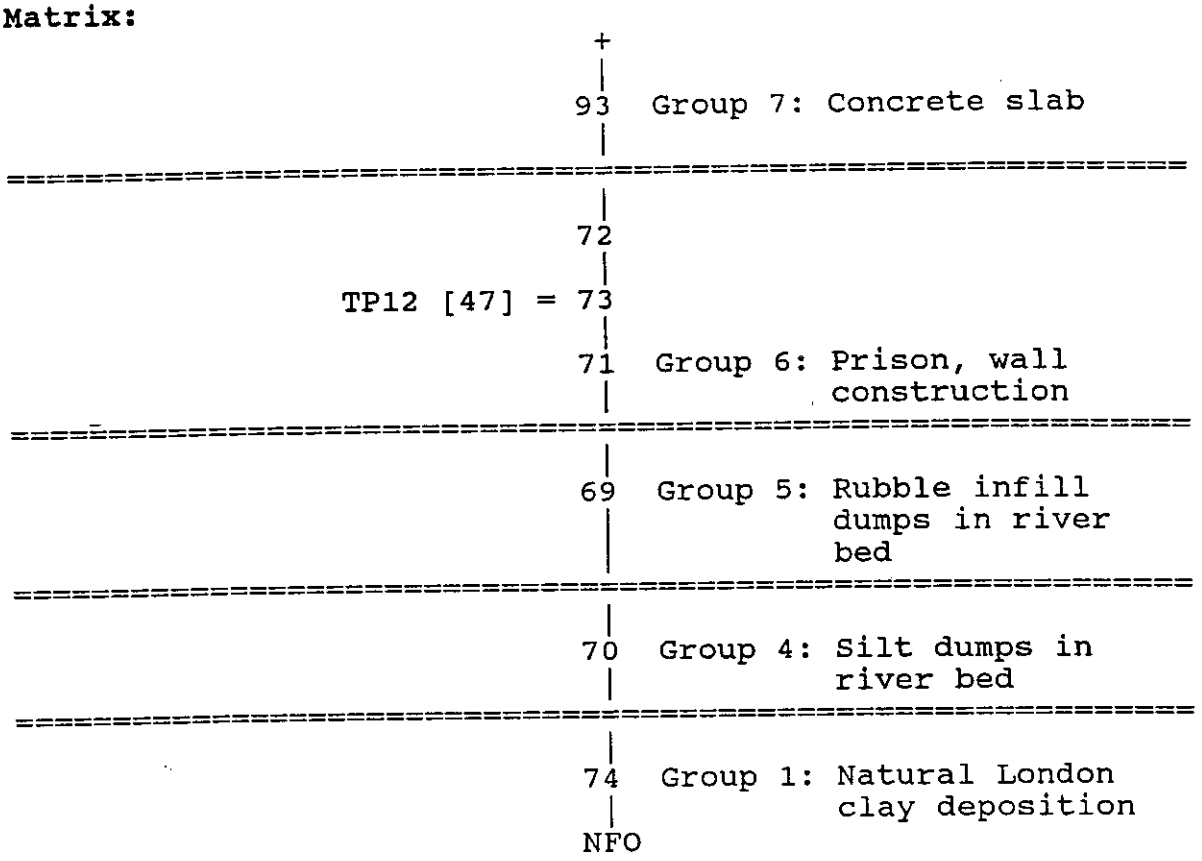
Once the wall was constructed, the foundation cut was backfilled with a large uniform fill of mixed dark brown sandy silt and mixed building materials [61]. This fill was approximately 3.60m deep, and levelled up the general area to at least 14.19m OD.

Group 7:

At some point after demolition of the brick building, the area surrounding the BP was heavily truncated, and sealed by a horizontal concrete slab [94], (Fig 11).

BP4, AREA A

Matrix:



Context description:

[69] Compacted, mixed dumps of sand-silt, red brick and tile rubble dumping. Sloped down from south to north. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth at least 2.10m.

[70] Moderately compacted, mixed dark brown grey-black silt dumping. Sloped down from south to north. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth at least 1.70m.

[71] East west aligned linear foundation cut. Southern side near vertical face, depth 4.60m. Base observed to north, appeared flat.

[72] Compacted, mid-brown silt-sand, whole and small fragments of red brick-tile, mortar foundation backfill. Depth at least 4.60m.

[73] Part of east-west aligned red brick wall. Consisted of red bricks, approximately 0.23m x 0.10m 0.06m, laid in horizontal courses, on beds of hard off-white light-grey chalk-charcoal fleck mortar. Depth of wall 4.60m. Wall on northern and southern sides was ashlar faced, with straight

mortar joints. At base observed stepped foundation in similar brick construction. At least 6-7 step courses observed, spreading foundation width to 1.90m.

[74] Very compacted, mixed grey brown clay, some small coarse pebbles. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth not established, but at least 0.40m.

[93] Modern concrete slab, approximately 0.90m-2.00m.

Discussion:

BP4 was located on the south western side of the site within watching brief area A, (Fig 3). The pit was approximately 8.00m x 1.00m x 5.00m deep. Although the east, north and south sections produced mostly modern intrusions and later dump deposits, the western side provided a good north-south section through this part of the river bed and its later archaeological stratigraphy.

Group 1:

At the base of the pit was observed part of a horizontally laid natural blue grey London clay [74] deposit, (Fig 11). This was traced for a depth of at least 0.12m, and located at a level height of approximately 9.80m OD. Although only limited observations of this deposit were possible, [74] appeared to be very wet along its interface with later river dumps [70].

Group 4:

Directly above natural clay [74], was located a dump of mixed dark brown grey-black silt [70], (Fig 11). Overall, it was observed to a depth of 2.00m, and average level height of approximately 11.60. OD. However, generally it was split up into a series of roughly horizontal lenses of slightly different silt deposits, that averaged in depth between 0.12m-0.25m thick. The upper lenses seemed to gradually slope down from south to north.

It is possible that [70] overlay part of an earlier river silt deposition, but due to limitations of observation, it was not possible to firmly establish this. However, it was clear that traces of a possible underlying silt were excavated by machine as part of the upper dump sequence.

Group 5:

After river silt [70] were laid, a series of mixed sand-silt, red brick and tile rubble [69], (Fig 11) were deposited above it. Although [69] was observed for an overall depth of 3.40m and level height of 14.17m OD., it was split up into a series of lenses between 0.30m and 0.60m thick, and gradually sloped down from south to north.

Group 6:

Cut into [70] on the northern side of the pit, was observed part of a large steep to vertical sided cut [71], aligned east-west, (Fig 11). This cut formed that southern side of a large foundation cut into natural clay [74].

Once cut [71] was excavated, along its southern side a large load bearing brick wall and foundation [73] was constructed. Wall [73] was 1.00m wide, survived to a height of 5.00m, and was constructed from horizontal courses of soft red bricks, laid in staggered stretcher-stretcher and header-header courses on beds of hard off white-light grey chalk and charcoal mortar. On the northern and southern sides, the walls were ashlar faced, with smooth mortar joints. This suggests that the wall was constructed free standing within the foundation cut.

At the base of wall [73], was observed part of a stepped foundation. This consisted of a series of red brick courses similar to the later wall, laid in a series of 6 one brick width stepped courses, approximately 0.10m wide. This gave an overall foundation width of approximately 1.60m wide north-south by 0.70m high. The brick foundation was constructed directly above natural clay [74], and showed no evidence for underlying horizontal timber raft supports.

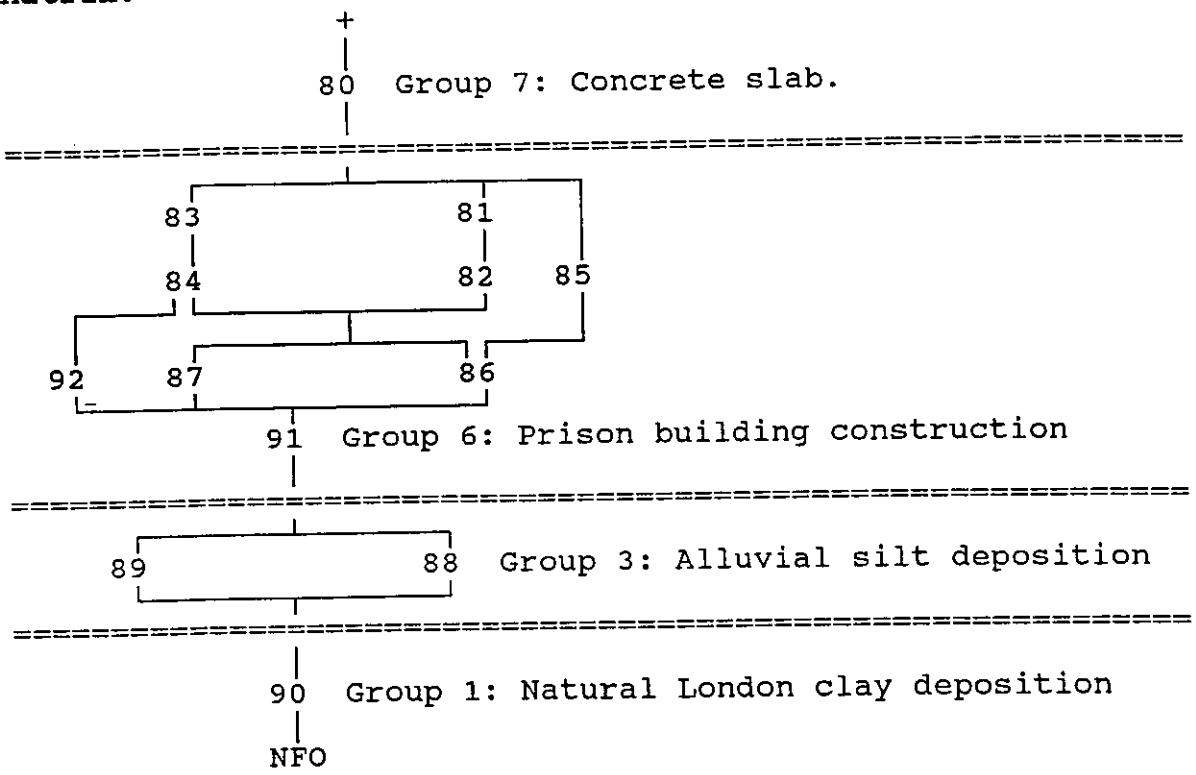
Once foundation-wall [73] was constructed, the general area within foundation trench [71] was backfilled with mixed dumps of mid brown silt-sand, red brick fragments and mortar, to a depth of at least 4.90m.

Group 7:

Once wall [73] was demolished, the whole area was covered by a large concrete slab [93], to an approximate depth of 0.90m-2.00m, (Fig 11).

BP5, AREA A

Matrix:



Context description:

[80] Modern concrete slab, depth between 0.50m-2.00m.

[81] Loose, mixed fragments of red brick-tile-mortar dump. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth at 0.40m.

[82] Compacted, mixed mid grey silt, some fragments of red brick, tile, mortar dump. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth at least 3.50m.

[83] Loose, mixed fragments of red brick-tile-mortar dump. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth at 0.40m.

[84] Compacted, mixed mid grey silt, some fragments of red brick, tile, mortar dump. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth at least 3.50m.

[85] Moderately compacted, mixed fragments of red brick, tile, mortar dumping, laid in steep lenses north to south. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth 4.00m.

[86] East-west aligned red brick wall. Consisted of horizontal courses of soft unfrogged red bricks, approximately 0.22m x 0.10m x 0.06m, laid on beds of hard off white-light grey chalk and charcoal fleck mortar. Wall approximately 0.70m wide north-south, 4.30m deep. North and south wall face ashlar, with straight mortar joints. Wall and foundation courses same, ashlar, not stepped.

[87] East-west aligned red brick wall. Consisted of horizontal courses of soft unfrogged red bricks, approximately 0.22m x 0.10m x 0.06m, laid on beds of hard off white light grey chalk and charcoal fleck mortar. Wall approximately 0.70m wide north-south, 4.30m deep. North and south wall face ashlar, with straight mortar joints. Wall and foundation courses same, ashlar, not stepped.

[88] Moderately compacted, mid grey alluvial silt. No inclusions observed. Depth at least 0.10m to north, tapering down on southern side. North-south extent observed at least 1.50m.

[89] Moderately compacted, mid grey alluvial silt. No inclusions observed. Depth on western side at least 0.10m to north, tapering down to south. Further east, depth increased to a horizontal alluvial spread approximately 1.00m deep. North -south extent observed at least 1.50m.

[90] Very compacted, blue grey natural London clay. No inclusions observed. Depth not established, but at least 0.80m.

[91] Part of large east-west aligned foundation cut. North and south cut sides not observed, but probably parallel, at least 7.20m apart. Depth 5.00m. Base flat.

[92] East-west aligned red brick wall. Consisted of horizontal courses of soft unfrogged red bricks, approximately 0.22m x 0.10m x 0.06m, laid on beds of hard off white-light grey chalk and charcoal fleck mortar. Width of wall not established, but probably part of a large load bearing wall at least 1.10m wide north-south, 4.30m deep. North and south wall face ashlar, with straight mortar joints. On northern base of wall, series of stepped foundation courses observed, approximately 0.50m out from the wall line.

Discussion:

BP5 was located on the western side of the site in the central area within watching brief A, (Fig 3). The pit was approximately 8.00m x 1.00m x 4.80m deep. Although the east,

north and south sections mostly produced modern intrusions and later dumps, the western section provided a good north-south aligned profile through this part of the river bed and its later stratigraphy.

Group 1:

At the base of the pit was observed part of a horizontally laid natural blue grey London clay [90] deposit, (Fig 11). Although [90] was only located at the base of the pit, it was traced for a depth of 0.50m-0.60m, and level height of approximately 9.90m OD. Only limited observations of the deposit were possible, but [91] appeared very wet along the interface with later river silts [88].

Group 3:

Above London clay [90], was observed a very thin horizontal spread of very wet mid grey alluvial silt [88], (Fig 11). Generally, it appears that silt [88] was very heavily truncated by later building construction, but survived for a depth of approximately 0.05m-0.10m at a level height of 10.00m OD. However, enough of the river silt survived to suggest that it was still in-situ. This demonstrated that to construct the later red brick building, there was a deliberate policy during construction of the foundation trench to excavate down to underlying London clay and remove most of the soft river silt deposits.

Group 6:

Along the surface of natural clay [90] and river silt [88], was observed traces of a horizontal cut that formed the base of a large foundation cut [91], (Fig 11). This cut was at least 8.00m long north-south, located at an approximate depth of 9.80m OD.

Within the southern side of cut [91] was observed the northern face of red brick wall and foundation [73], already located in pit 4.

To the north (approximately 2.00m), was located vertical foundation-wall [87], approximately 0.90m wide. This wall was truncated at 13.58m OD, but survived to a height of 4.00m. Wall [87] was constructed from horizontal courses of soft red bricks, laid in staggered stretcher-stretcher and header-header fashion, on beds of hard off white-light grey chalk and charcoal fleck mortar. On the northern and southern sides, the wall was ashlar faced, with smooth mortar joints.

Further north (approximately 2.00m), another wall [86] was observed to the same height and width as wall [87]. Wall [86] was of the same width, and constructed using similar materials, and in a similar fashion to wall [87].

Walls [87] and [86] were constructed directly on London clay surface [90]. No evidence for a foundation cut or underlying timber raft supports were located.

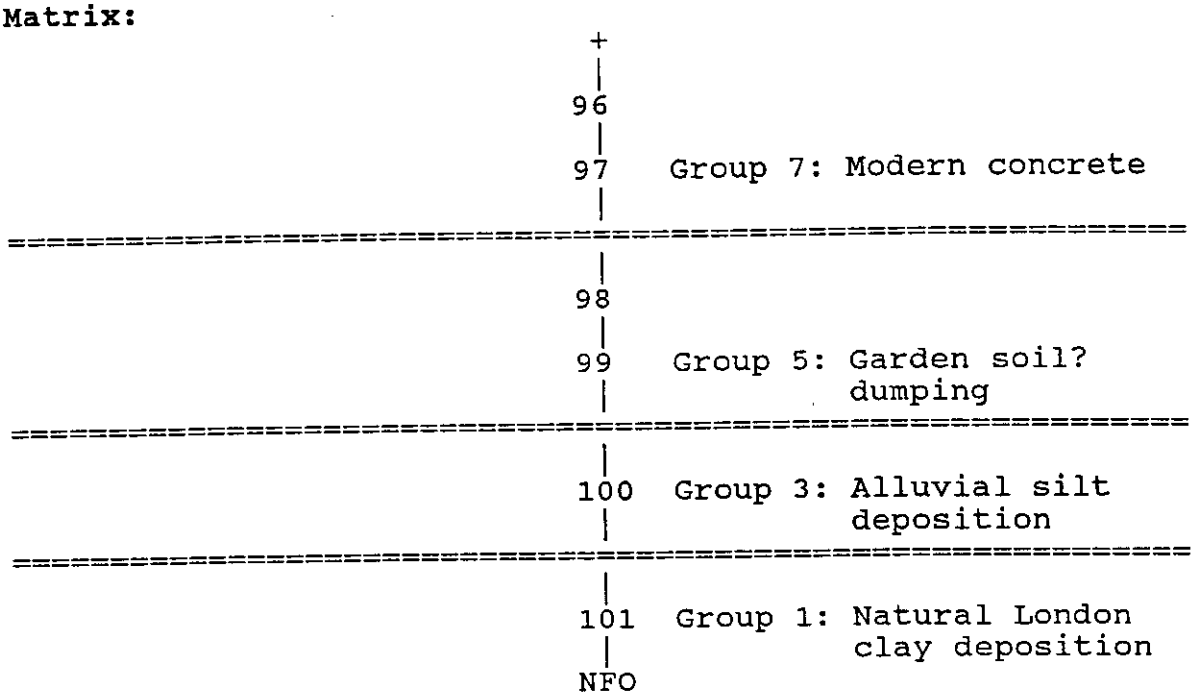
Once walls [86,87] were constructed, voids between the walls were backfilled with mixed grey silts and fragments of red brick, tile and mortar [82,84] and [85]. Within [82] and [85], the fills were fairly uniform, and levelled the void to a depth of 3.50m, and level height of 13.25m OD. Above these, were observed thinner horizontal deposits [81,83], composed of loose fragments of red brick, tile, mortar, approximately 0.40m-0.50m thick. North of wall [86], fill [85] was also located. However, across this area it appeared to slope steeply down from north to south in a series of lenses of mixed building materials. This suggested that unlike the central areas between wall [86] and [87], where the voids were uniformly backfilled, the northern side beyond wall [86] the void was backfilled using a number of different deposits from the northern side of the building.

Group 7:

Once the red brick building went out of use, the area was covered by a large mixed concrete and rubble slab, between 0.50m and 2.00m thick, (Fig 11).

BP6, AREA A

Matrix:



Context description:

[96] Modern concrete slab, between 0.50m-2.00m thick.

[97] Modern concrete vertical pile, extent north-south at least 2.00m, depth at least 5.00m.

[98] Compacted, mixed horizontal dump of red brick-tile fragments, mortar, grey silt. No cultural inclusions observed. Extent north-south at least 2.00m, depth 0.40m.

[99] Moderately compacted, grey brown silt. No cultural inclusions observed. Extent at least 2.00m north -south, depth 2.50m.

[100] Moderately compacted, very wet thin horizontal band of light-mid grey alluvial river silt. No cultural inclusions observed. North-south extent at least 2.00m, depth 0.30m.

[101] Very compacted, light-mid grey blue London clay. No cultural inclusions observed. Extent north -south at least 2.00m, depth not established, but observed for 0.40m.

Discussion:

BP6 was located on the south-western side of the site within watching brief area A, (Fig 3). The pit was approximately 4.00m square and 5.00m deep. Although the north, south and west section were heavily disturbed, the east

section provided a good north-south aligned profile of this part of the river bed and its later stratigraphy.

Group 1:

At the base along the north-eastern side of the pit was located part of a large horizontal deposition of ligh-mid grey blue London clay [101]. Although observations were limited, clay [101] was horizontal and seen to a depth of approximately 0.90m-1.00m.

Group 3:

Above natural clay [101], was observed a thick deposit of very wet light-mid grey alluvial silt [100]. At the surface, it appeared that silt [100] was fairly horizontal, and produced no evidence for cultural inclusions.

Group 5:

At some later stage, alluvial silt [100] was sealed by a large dump of fairly uniform grey brown silt [99], approximately 2.60m thick. Whether this represented river infill is uncertain. However [99] is similar to other pure river infill located across this part of the site, and it did directly seal earlier river silt deposition [100].

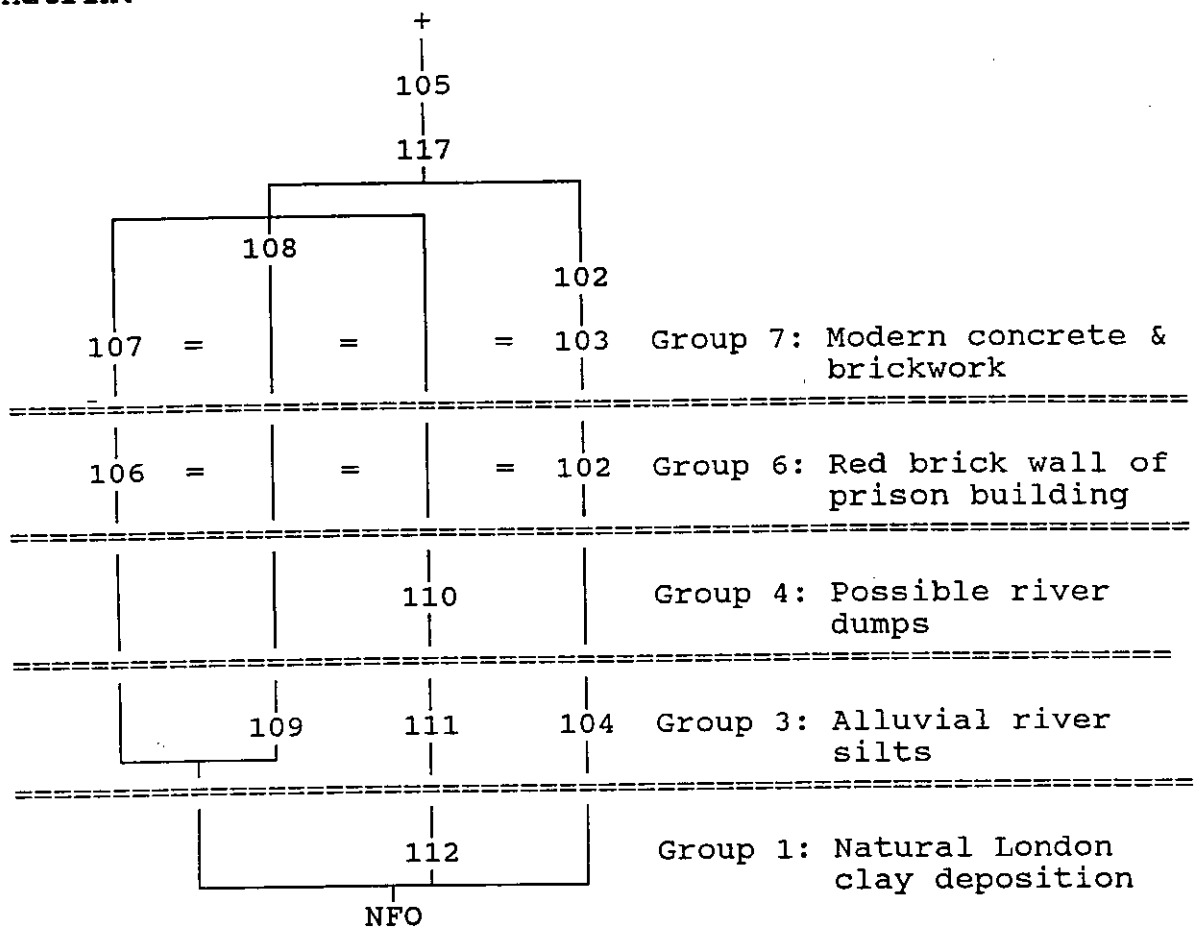
Above [99] was observed a thinner truncated deposit of mixed fragments of red brick, tile, mortar and grey silt, approximately 0.30m thick.

Group 7:

At some later stage, the suggested river infill dumps [98,99] were heavily truncated by modern concrete intrusions. Directly above [99] was observed part of a large horizontal concrete slab, and on the northern side of the pit a large vertical concrete pile [97] was sunk down through underlying deposits.

BP7, AREA A

Matrix:



Context description:

[102] Series of red bricks, laid horizontally across area, to depth of approximately 0.50m-0.75m. Bricks laid on edge, two abreast, between vertical beds of hard off white-light grey chalk-charcoal fleck mortar. Reason uncertain, possibly part of floor, shallow foundation?.

[103] Modern concrete slab, at least 0.50m thick.

[104] Compacted, wet, horizontally laid, mid-dark grey alluvial river silt. No cultural inclusions observed. Extent at least 1.80m east-west, depth 1.00m.

[105] Modern concrete slab, between 1.80m-2.00m deep.

[106] East-west aligned red brick wall. Consisted of horizontal courses of soft unfrogged red bricks, approximately 0.22m x 0.10m x 0.06m, laid on beds of hard off white-light grey chalk and charcoal fleck mortar. Width of wall not established, but

probably part of a large load bearing wall. Depth observed 3.50m. Probable, north and south faces ashlar, with straight mortar joints.

[107] Part of modern vertical concrete pile. At least 0.50m wide north-south, depth 3.50m.

[108] Modern concrete fill of soil pipe trench cut.

[109] Moderately compacted, wet, horizontally laid mid -dark grey alluvial river laid silt. No cultural inclusions observed. Extent at least 1.80m north -south, depth 0.60m.

[110] Disturbed dumping, type not recorded.

[111] Compacted, mid-dark grey river laid alluvial silt. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth at least 1.00m.

[112] Compacted, grey blue natural London clay. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth at least 0.30m.

[117] Modern mixed concrete rubble make-up dump, approximately 1.50m-2.00m thick.

Discussion:

BP7 was located on the south western side within watching brief area A, (Fig 3). The pit was approximately 4.00m square and 4.80m deep. Generally, this area was heavily disturbed, but sections along the east and north faces provided a good profile through the river bed and its later stratigraphy.

Group 1:

Across the base of the pit was observed a blue grey London clay [112], that probably represented natural deposition across this area. Although level heights were not established, clay [112] was located for a depth of approximately 0.20m.

Group 3:

Directly above London clay [112] deposition was observed a fairly thick wet deposit of dark grey alluvial river silt [104,109,111]. These deposits varied in depth due to later truncation, but appeared to average between 0.65m and 1.60m. This suggests that originally depth of the river silt must have been in access of 1.60m.

Group 4:

Within the north section of the pit was observed a large dump or fill [110], located directly above alluvial river silt [111]. Although observations of this dump was limited, it was approximately 3.50m deep. This indicates that [110] may have

formed part of the general river infilling located across other parts of area A.

Group 6:

On the north-eastern side of the pit was observed part of a wall [102,106], aligned east-west across the site.

Wall [102,106] was constructed from horizontal courses of soft red bricks laid in staggered stretcher-stretcher and header-header courses on beds of hard off white-light grey chalk and charcoal mortar. Although wall width was not established, it depth was at least 3.50m, and appeared to have been constructed directly above London clay [112].

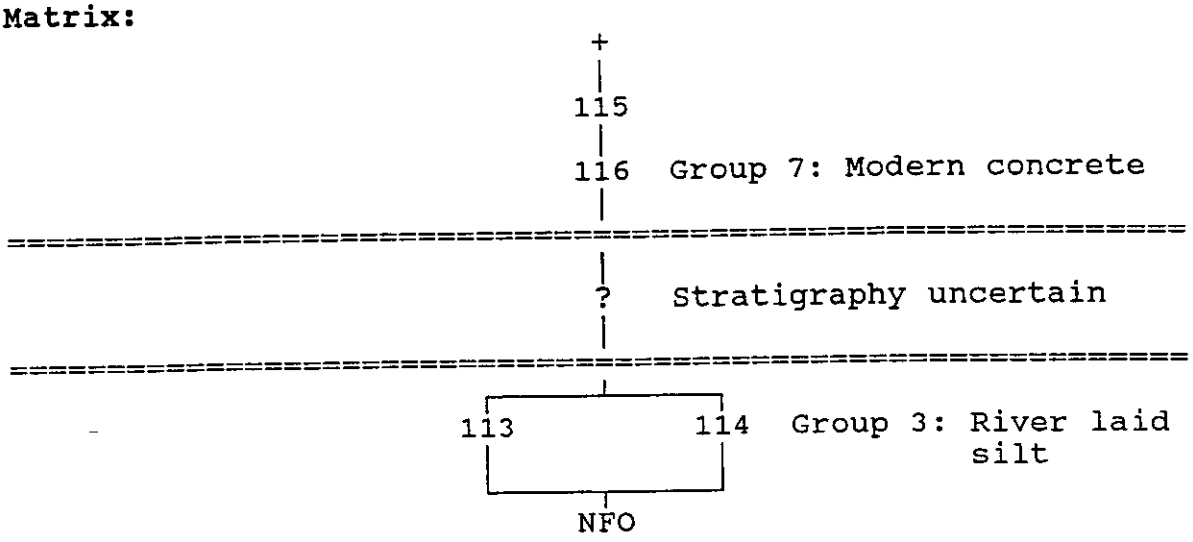
Group 7:

At a later stage, this area was heavily truncated by a series of modern concrete features. The sequence started across the centre of the pit with a large concrete slab [103,107], aligned east-west. Generally, it seemed that concrete [103,107] cut the pit in half.

To the south of concrete [103,107] was observed part of an east-west aligned modern service pipe and concrete fill [108]. Once constructed, the area was sealed by a large concrete slab [105], laid on a mixed concrete rubble make-up.

BP8, AREA A

Matrix:



Context description:

[113] Mixed gravel-sand, no description.

[114] Mixed dark grey black silt-clay. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth not observed.

[115] Disturbed dumping. No description recorded, but probably part of mixed red brick, tile, silt. No cultural inclusions observed. Depth not established.

[116] Modern concrete slab, depth not recorded.

Discussion:

BP8 was located on the south western side of watching brief area A, (Fig 3). The pit was approximately 6.00m x 1.00m x 4.80m deep. Due to heavy modern truncation, very little stratigraphy was located. However, some comment on stratigraphy can be made.

Group 3:

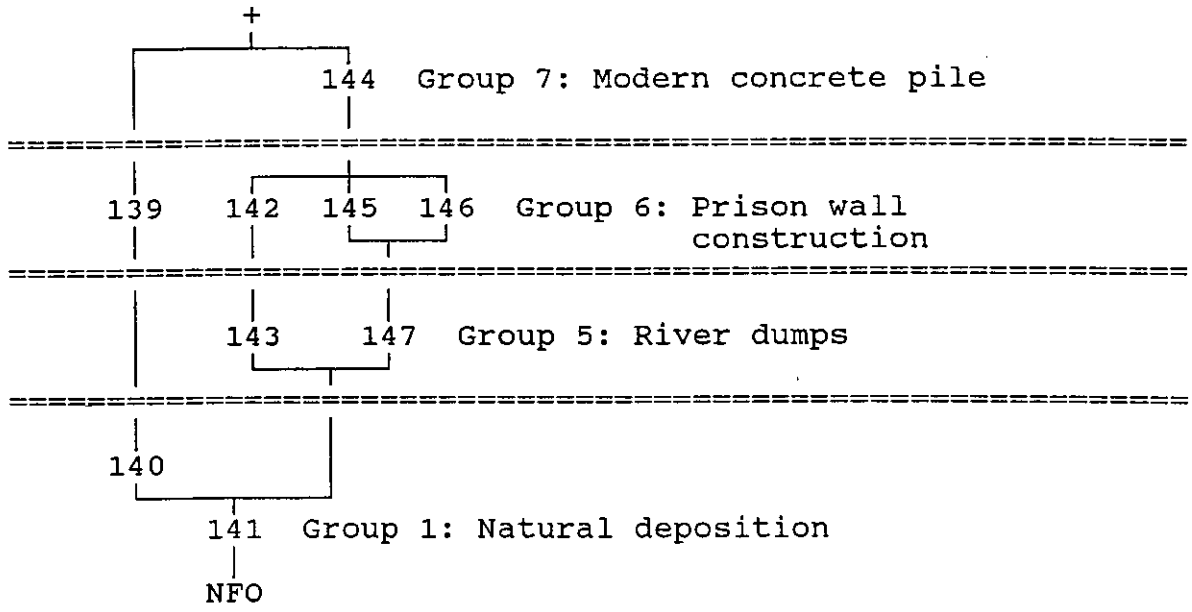
Within the base of the pit was observed part of a dark grey black alluvial silt-clay deposit [114] along the eastern side of the pit. Further west, silt [114] appeared to border along the eastern side of a mixed tan clay-gravel deposit. The location of these two deposits at the same level and their general location within area A may suggest that within the base of the pit the contractors excavator scraped the pit base at two levels. This exposed both the upper alluvial silt [113] and underlying clay-gravel deposits at the same time.

Above deposits [113,114] later stratigraphy was not located due to modern building construction.

Group 7:
At the top of the pit, the area was sealed by part of a large concrete slab [116].

BP9, AREA A

Matrix:



Context description:

[139] Soft red brick wall, horizontally coursed, laid on beds of off white and light grey chalk and charcoal fleck mortar. Aligned east-west. Extent observed 4.00m east-west, depth 1.50.

[140] Compacted, coarse yellow orange gravels and sand, Surface horizontal 1.50m east-west, base sloped down 0.50m east-west.

[141] Compacted, brown grey clay. Extent covered whole pit area 3.90m x 4.60m. Depth not established, but at least 1.50m. No inclusions observed.

[142] Soft red brick wall, horizontally coursed, laid on beds of off white and light grey chalk and charcoal fleck mortar. Aligned east-west. Extent 1.50m wide north-south, depth 1.30m.

[143] Compacted, mixed dark grey silt, Truncated, but at least 1.20m wide north-south, 0.80m deep. No inclusions observed.

[144] Modern vertical concrete pile. Extent at least 2.00m north-south, 3.00m deep.

[145] Soft red brick wall, horizontally coursed, laid on beds of off white and light grey chalk and charcoal fleck mortar. Aligned north-south. Extent at least 0.40m, depth 1.40m. At base of wall observed truncated remains of stepped foundation on west side.

[146] Soft red brick wall, horizontally coursed, laid on beds of off white and light grey chalk and charcoal fleck mortar. Aligned north-south. Extent 1.90m north-south, depth 1.60m. At base of wall observed truncated remains of stepped foundation on west side.

[147] Compacted, dark grey brown silt dump. Fragments of red brick and other building debris. Truncated but at least 2.50m east-west, depth 1.40m.

Discussion:

BP9 was located on the southern side of watching brief area A, (Fig 3). The pit was approximately 4.60m x 3.90m x 3.00m deep. Within the pit archaeological stratigraphy was recorded on the north, south and east sections.

Group 1:

Within the base of the pit was observed a large deposit of brown grey clay [141]. Although heavily truncated, on the north, south and east sections, this survived to a height of at least 1.50m. From its type and location, [141] probably formed part of the natural clay geology. If this was the case however, its colour differed from natural blue grey London clay observed across other parts of the site.

Along the north-western corner of the pit, the clay sloped down gradually towards the west side. This was later filled by a mixed compacted coarse yellow-orange sand and gravel deposit to a depth of approximately 0.50m.

From the location, make-up and slope of [140], the deposit probably formed part of the upper eastern terrace of the river valley. However, if this was the case, all evidence for later river silt build-up against the eastern gravel terrace was totally cut away by later building development across this part of the site.

Group 5:

Above natural deposition [141] were observed two areas of mixed silt dumps [143] and [147], These were heavily truncated, but survived as isolated islands of archaeological stratigraphy, sandwiched between later building development. On the eastern side was located a small deposit [143], that consisted of mixed dark grey silt, but lacked cultural or building fragment inclusions. Further south, a later deposit of dark grey brown silt [147] was observed at least 0.80m-1.40m thick and included mixed fragments of red brick and other forms of building debris.

As dumps [143,147] were heavily truncated, firm conclusions for the purpose were not established. However, from their general location, make-up and inclusions, it is possible that they represented part of either the river bed

infill or eastern river edge levelling prior to later building construction.

Group 6:

Cut into [143,147] were observed a series of brick structures that probably form part of the prison building. This sequence was located across three areas separated by modern concrete intrusions.

Although heavily truncated, to the north part of a east-west aligned soft red brick wall [139] was located laid in horizontal courses on beds of hard off white-light grey chalk and charcoal fleck mortar. No evidence for a foundation was traced, but wall [139] was laid directly above natural gravel-sand [140].

Further east, part of a east-west aligned soft red brick wall [142] was laid on horizontal beds of hard off white-light grey chalk and charcoal fleck mortar. This wall also lacked evidence for a foundation, and was built directly above natural clay [141].

Further south, the remains of two walls aligned north-south [145,146] where found. Wall [146] consisted of a soft red brick laid horizontally on beds of hard off white-light grey chalk and charcoal fleck mortar. Evidence was limited, but wall [146] was approximately 1.40m wide, with a stepped red brick foundation down its western side that widened the wall base to 1.90m. It is possible that wall [146] was constructed in a shallow foundation cut approximately 0.04m deep. However as the underlying deposit consisted of natural clay [141], it is equally possible that the foundation cut was caused by long term vertical compression of wall [146] down into a soft underlying natural clay.

To the west of wall [146], was observed a parallel red brick wall [145] aligned north-south. This was of a similar construction to [146] and showed limited evidence for a stepped foundation down its eastern side.

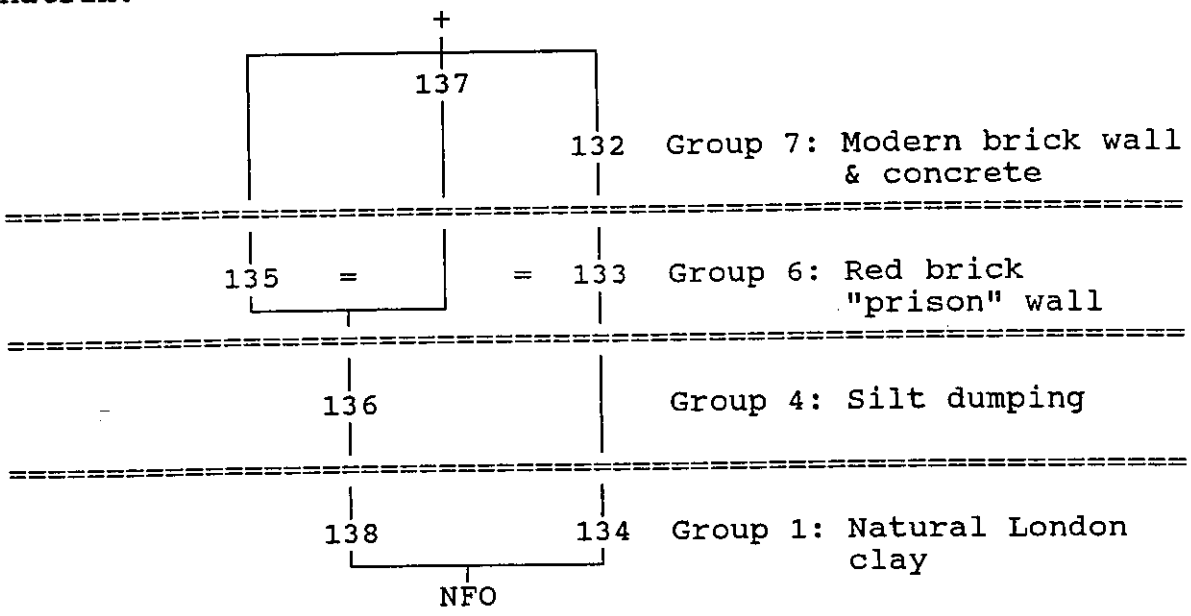
When walls [142,145,146] are considered in plan, it clear that three independent walls are present that may come together along the northern side of wall [139]. The ground-plan started with an east-west aligned wall [139] to the north, that linked into two north-south aligned junction walls [146] and [145] to the south.

Group 7:

At some point after walls [139,142,145,146,] were demolished, the north-western corner of the area was truncated by a large vertical concrete pile [144], later sealed by a concrete slab.

BP10, AREA A

Matrix:



Context description:

[132] Modern brick wall, at least 1.40m deep.

[133] Heavily truncated red brick wall, approximately 0.65m.

[134] Very compacted, light-mid grey blue London clay. No cultural inclusions observed. Extent observed at least 0.90m deep.

[135] Soft red brick wall, approximately 1.40m deep. Consisted of soft red bricks, laid on beds of hard off white-grey charcoal and white chalk fleck mortar.

[136] Compacted, dark grey silt. Depth observed at least 1.40m. No cultural inclusions observed.

[137] Modern concrete pile. Truncated deep into natural clay.

[138] Mixed compacted brown-grey London clay. Depth at least 1.80m. No inclusions observed.

Discussion:

BP10 was located on the south-eastern side of watching brief area A, (Fig 3). The pit was approximately 4.60m square and depth of 4.80m. Heavy modern truncation along the eastern and southern side restricted observation. However, along the northern and western sides some aspects of the stratigraphy can be considered.

Group 1:

At the base of the pit was observed part of a light-mid grey natural London clay deposit. This sequence started along the north section with a fairly horizontal deposition [134], approximately 0.85m thick, and sealed by a later red brick wall. Further west, natural grey clay [138] continued to approximately 1.90m. This indicated that originally the natural clay deposition was located to a fairly high level across this area.

Group 4:

Along the western side above London clay was observed a small island of dark grey silt [136]. Although heavily truncated by later construction, silt [136] survived to a depth of approximately 1.40m, and located directly above London clay [138]. This suggests that silt [136] may have formed part of a river infill dump as observed elsewhere across site.

Group 6:

Within the pit was observed two red brick constructions [133] and [135] that were probably linked and formed part of the prison building. However, these walls were separated by a large modern concrete pile.

On the south-western side was observed part of a brick wall [135], constructed from soft red bricks, laid in mixed stretcher-stretcher and header-header courses on beds of hard off white-grey charcoal and chalk fleck mortar. The wall appeared to have been at least 1.80m wide, and constructed directly over London clay [138], with no real evidence for a foundation or foundation cut.

Further north, was observed part of a heavily truncated east-west aligned red brick wall [133]. The wall was constructed from soft red bricks laid in staggered stretcher-stretcher and header-header courses on beds of hard off white-light grey charcoal and chalk fleck mortar. This wall was constructed directly above London clay [134], and survived to a height of 0.95m.

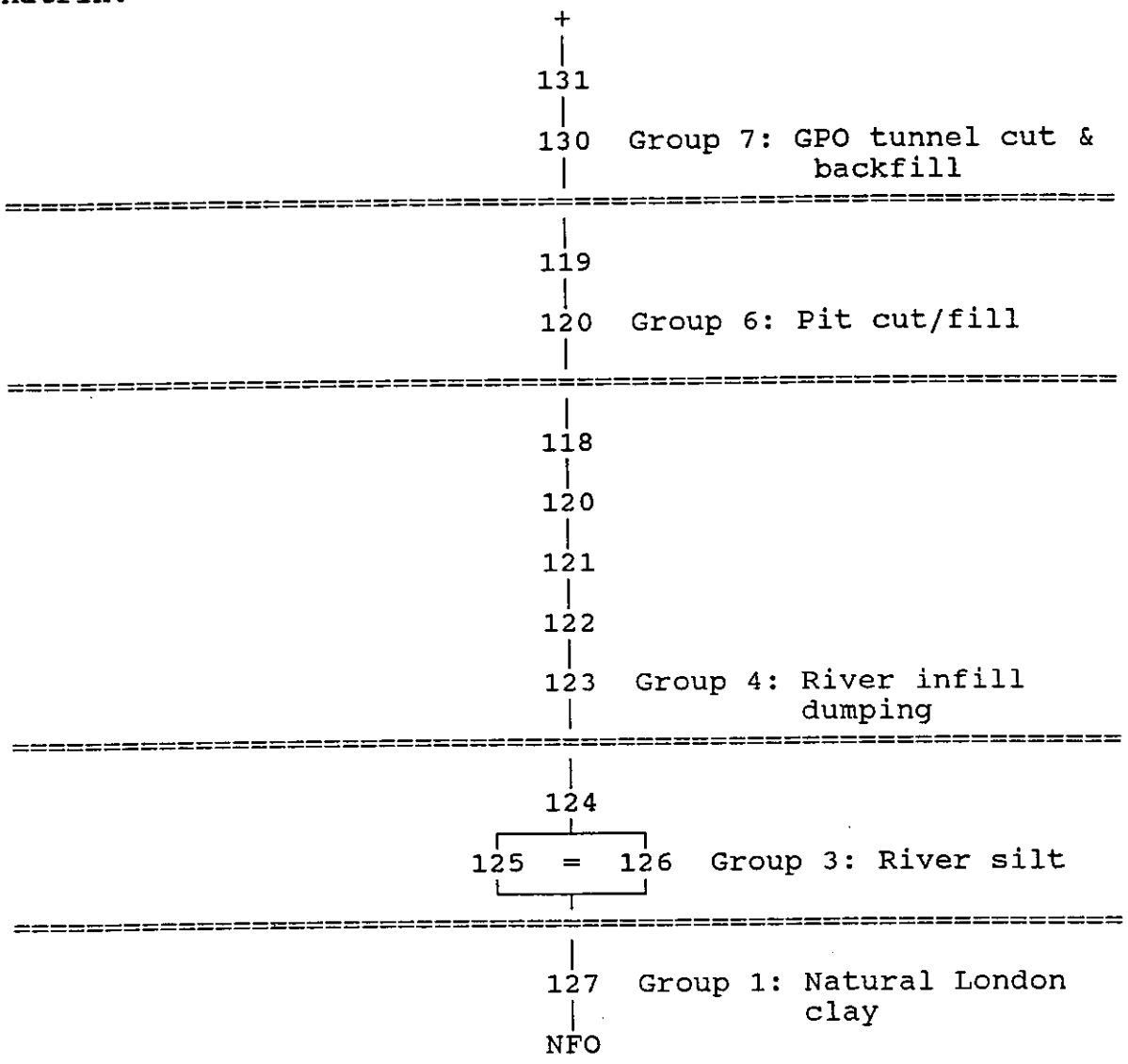
Group 7:

At some point after the demolition of red brick walls [133,136], the area was sealed by a series of modern concrete and brick structures. On the north-western side of the pit, the whole area was heavily cut by the insertion of a large vertical concrete pile [137].

Further north, part of a large modern hard red flitton brick wall [132] was constructed on the same alignment directly above earlier red brick wall [133]. This suggests that modern wall [132] made use of the earlier one [133] as part of its foundation construction.

BP11, AREA A

Matrix:



Context description:

[118] Moderately compacted, light to mid brown sand (20%), clay (60%), silt (20%), with some small pebble. Sloped down steeply west-east. Depth at least 0.50m. Moderate fragments of tile, oyster shell.

[119] Moderately compacted, brown/yellow sand fill. Depth 0.50m, width east-west 0.60m. Occasional fragments of red brick, chalk, tile, charcoal.

[120] Moderately compacted, pale yellow grey bands of mortar. Sloped down steeply west-east. Depth at least 0.20m. Moderate fragments of red brick, tile and sand.

[121] Very compacted, grey brown silt (60%), sand (40%), some small pebbles. Sloped steeply west-east. Depth at least 0.10m. Occasional fragments of red tile and glass, charcoal flecks, white chalk flecks, oyster and whelk shell, clay pipe.

[122] Very compacted, grey brown silt (0.60%), sand (0.40m), some small angular pebbles. Slight slope east-west. Depth at least 0.30m. Fragments of red brick and tile, oyster shell, clay pipe.

[123] Compacted, light-mid green silty sand, some small pebbles. Steep slope west-east. Depth at least 0.07m. Fragments of red brick and tile.

[124] Moderately compacted, sticky wet dark grey (50%), black (50%) silt, smaller proportions of fine sand and light-mid grey clay. Slight slope east -west and dish shaped. Depth at least 0.80m. Occasional fragments of red brick, large cow -horse? bone, pot shards, oyster shell, fragments of wire.

[125] Very compacted, slightly mottled dark-mid grey brown clay, with some fine sand and water worn pebbles. Depth at least 0.65m. Occasional fragments of tile, charcoal flecks, pot shards.

[126] Very compacted, thin lens of mixed small river worn pebbles, laid horizontally. No inclusions observed.

[127] Very compacted, wet, blue grey London clay. Sloped slightly west-east. Depth at least 0.30m. No inclusions observed.

[128] Small possible pit? cut, approximately 0.60m east -west. Cut edge along east side steep, approximately 0.60m. West edge truncated by later cut. Base dish shaped.

[130] Part of large north-south aligned cut, at least 3.50m wide east-west. East edge steep, 2.50m deep, West edge not observed. Base flat.

[131] Moderately compacted, yellow brown mixed fragments of brick, tile, stone rubble backfill. At least 3.50m deep, 3.00m wide east-west.

Discussion:

BP11 was located on the south-eastern side of watching brief area A, (Fig 3). The pit was approximately 6.00m x 1.50m x 4.00m deep. By agreement with the site developers, this pit was deliberately excavated as part of the watching brief programme so that we could produced a detailed east-west

aligned section across the river bed and its later stratigraphy. The pit also allowed an opportunity for taking a series of vertical column and other samples through the alluvial river silt and underlying natural deposits.

Group 1:
Within the base of the pit, was observed part of a roughly horizontal deposit of wet blue grey London clay [127], (Fig 12). Although limited, this deposit was located to a depth of approximately 0.20m, and the eastern side sloped down slightly towards the west-east.

Group 3:
Above natural [127], the eastern half of the pit showed evidence for alluvial river silts [125,124], (Fig 12). Although heavily truncated to the west by a large modern cut, generally two types of silts were observed, that seemed to slope down slightly east-west.

Directly above natural [127], was located a slightly mottled mid-dark grey silt [125], between 0.40m and 0.80m thick, that lacked evidence for cultural inclusions. Within the upper part of this deposit, was observed a thin horizontal spread of small mixed river worn pebbles [126], that may have been caused by river action after alluvial silt [125] was deposited.

At a later stage, silt [125] was sealed by a wet dark grey black silt [124] with small lenses of mid grey clay-silt. Deposit [124] was observed for a depth between 0.60m-0.80m, and included fragments of ceramic, animal bone and other organic inclusions.

Group 4:
At some point after alluvial silt [124] was deposited, this part of the river bed was directly sealed by a series of river infill dumps (Fig 12). Although heavily truncated on the western side by a modern pit, the sequence consisted of a light green silty sand, laid directly above alluvial silt [124]. This was sealed by a mixed series of silt, sand mixed building materials and mortar deposits [123],[122],[121], [120] and [118]. Although these did not include the mass of building materials recorded in other river infills across site, they probably formed part of the same general dump sequence that sealed this part of the river bed.

Group 6:
Cut into the top of [118], was observed part of a small pit cut [128], (Fig 12). The pit was heavily truncated by a large modern pit cut along its western side, but the eastern side consisted of a steep sided and flat based pit.

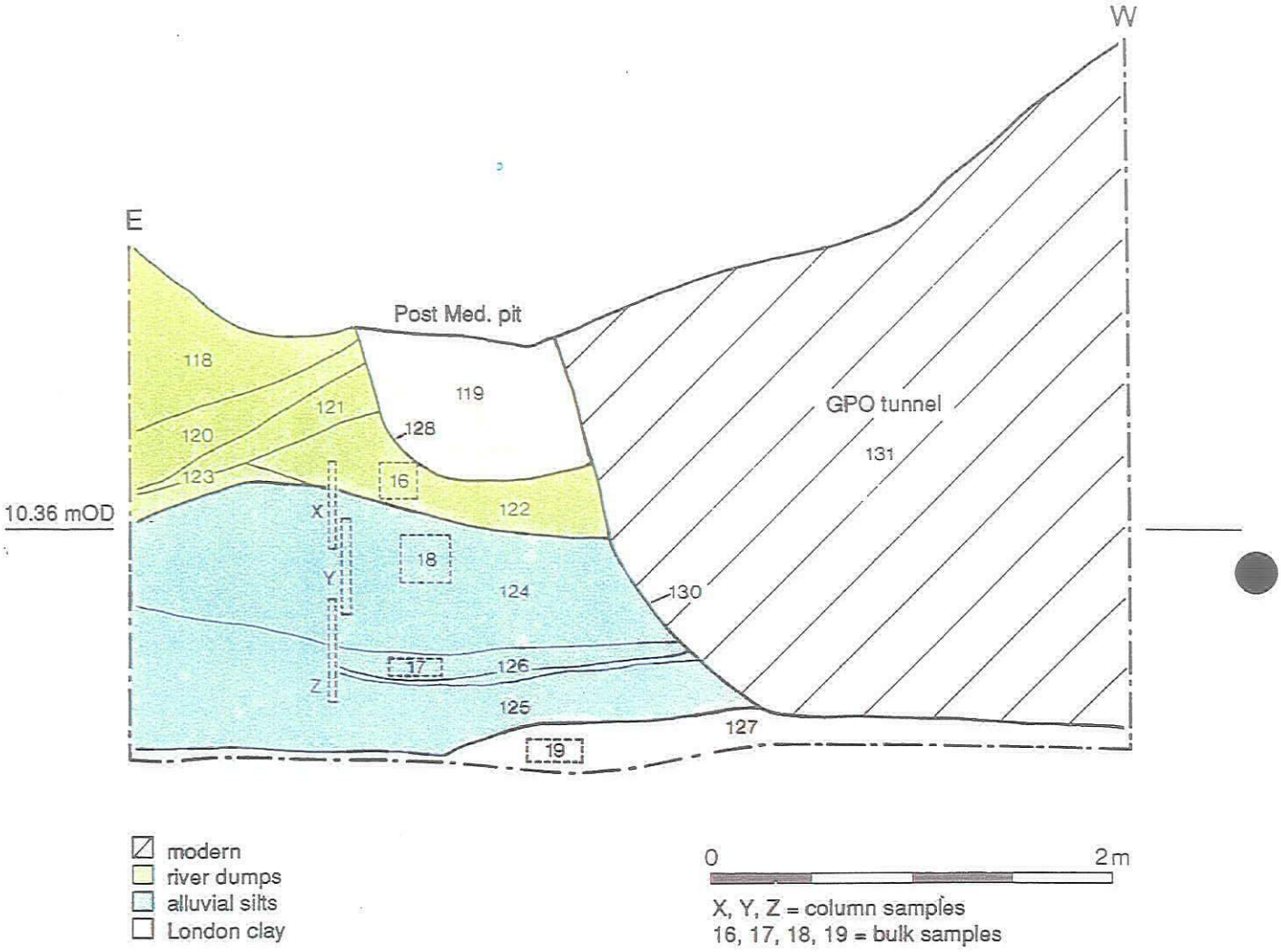


Fig 12, North facing section from BP11. Shows alluvial silt build-up [124,125,126] above natural [127]. Note also later river dumps [118,120,121,122,123]

The purpose of pit [118] was not established, but it was later filled by a fairly uniform brown yellow sand and red brick fragments [119].

Group 7:

On the western side of pit [128], was observed part of a large cut, that removed all archaeological stratigraphy down to natural London clay [127], (Fig 12). This consisted of a steep eastern side and flat base cut [130], and probably formed part of the eastern construction cut for the modern north-south aligned GPO tunnel. Within cut [130] was located a fairly uniform backfill [131] of mixed yellow stock and red brick fragments, stone and general builders rubble.

BP (12-29), AREA C & D

Across areas C and D, a large number of Builders Pits were excavated in regular rows and monitored by MoLas (Fig 3). Generally, these pits were approximately 4.60m to 5.00m square, and between 3.00m-3.50m deep. All the pits produced evidence of at least a 2.00m thick slab of modern concrete laid directly over a heavily truncated blue grey London clay. Results from these observations confirmed a similar sequence located across areas C and D during the site evaluation stage, This suggests that the whole of the eastern side of the site was excavated down to natural deposits during construction of the modern Post Office building.

On the south-eastern side of the site within the Atrium area of the standing building, a series of Builders Pits were excavated. Although the pits varied in size and depth, they all produced a similar sequence of concrete laid directly above blue grey London clay, already demonstrated across area C and D. This confirms that the whole of the southern side of the GPO building had removed all archaeological stratigraphy down to the grey-blue London clay level up to the Rosebery Avenue Farringdon Road junction.

CULTURAL INCLUSIONS

Collection Strategy:

Due to the nature of the evaluation and subsequent watching brief stages across site, all test and builders pits were excavated by contractors, using JCB and other machines. This meant that all later archaeological work within each pit consisted of stratigraphic and spoil heap observations as they were being excavated, and later recording of sections and plans, if the pit proved informative. This form of recording however, means that cultural inclusions such as pot shards, building materials, animal bones etc are excavated out of their stratified location, and therefore provide limited information for dating individual deposits. However, as finds in their own right, some cultural inclusions such as pottery etc can provide a large amount of information relating to vessel-fabric type, form, manufacture and distribution within the London area and beyond. Although the information is limited to the pottery vessel etc, this form of analysis helps to build up a corpus of various types of cultural materials that can be used in the identification and study of similar materials from other sites.

As the evaluation and builders pits were excavated, observations around the spoil heaps produced a small amount of interesting pot shards and other finds. These finds were taken as samples for further post excavation analysis. Within the pits as sections were recorded, a small number of stratified pot shards were retrieved and sampled for further study.

Within the environmental samples taken, a number of stratified finds were recorded during the environmental processing stage. As these were taken from in-situ deposits, their use as a potential dating mechanism are more important.

Cultural Inclusions, Results

Pottery:

A total of 32 pottery shards were examined. This broke down into 12 shards collected from site observations and 20 sherds from sieved environmental samples.

All the observed pottery ranged from 17th-19th century in date, but most appears to have been discarded between 1700-1780/1800. The most common vessels observed were kitchen wares such as jars, bowls and cooking vessels. However a few table wares are present. These include a Staffordshire salt-glazed tankard, one/two tin-glazed bowls and a tin-glazed porringer with unusually well formed and robust handle, that may have been made in a factory in Bristol.

Animal Bone:

During site evaluation and watching brief stages a large number of animal bone fragments were visible in the excavated

spoil dumps. However, due to their unstratified excavation, no attempt was made at sampling these bones.

As part of the environmental sampling across site, due to its stratified nature, a small sample of animal bone fragments were collected. These were later sieved out as part of the environmental sampling process. Although the sample range is limited, the animals were mainly representative of domestic species probably deposited by people who lived along the eastern side of the Fleet river valley.

Within the alluvial silts and later river infill dumps, a range of domestic animals such as cow, sheep/goat and chicken were evident. The bone fragments range from mandible with teeth, skull fragments, cervical vertebra to axis vertebra etc.

Some of the cow and sheep/goat bone fragments showed signs of butchery cuts and burning evidence that possibly derived from food preparation.

Apart from clearly domestic animal bones, a number of rabbit bone fragments were located. These consisted of molar and other teeth fragments, phalange and pelvis bones. Whether these represent specially bred or wild rabbits was not established.

ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

Environmental strategy:

As the site was situated across the Fleet river valley, prior to the evaluation stage it was certain that at least the western half of the site would be dominated by very wet alluvial river silt deposits. However, as this area of the river valley had not been observed in any great detail, the extent and depth of the river valley deposits were unknown. This situation meant that during the site's archaeological evaluation and watching brief stages, an environmental analysis of the river deposits was built into the strategy to determine possible sedimentological and environmental development along this part of the river Fleet.

During the evaluation and watching brief stages, a large number of environmental samples were taken from various part of area A. These were taken as either core samples, or directly from the section face.

Within the evaluation stage, two core sample A and B were driven down across area A in TP2 and TP3. From the cores, it was clear that these samples provided a good vertical stratified sequence from later dumps down to earliest alluvial and natural grey clay deposition.

During later stages of the evaluation and watching brief across area A, the environmental information observed in core samples A and B was backed up by a series of bulk samples taken from sections within pits TP3, BP11.

In the later watching brief along the south-western side of area A, several pits BP3,4,5,11 provided an opportunity for further environmental study. This evidence was best represented in BP12 (Fig 3,12). Here, contractors were proposing to excavate a large trench approximately 21.00m x 10.00m x 3.50m-4.00m deep down through archaeological stratigraphy to the top of natural grey London clay deposits. At the request of MoLas staff it was agreed that this pit would be excavated in a series of stepped stages, so that we could safely record and sample an east-west section through river silt deposits. Although most of this area was heavily truncated by later construction for the modern north-south GPO tunnel that bordered the site to the west, one small area across the extreme south-western side of the pit provided an excellent section through natural and river silt deposits together with its later infill dump sequence (Fig 12). From the potential for environmental evidence observed on this section, it was decided that the best form of sampling strategy was to take a series of overlapping vertical columns backed up by larger bulk samples dug out of the section side at selected points through the strata. With this method, it was expected that the column samples would provide evidence for stratified pollen and other small environmental materials within the deposits, while the larger bulk samples would act

as a back-up for the column samples, and provide evidence for larger fragments of environmental materials.

Environmental Samples, Results

From the range of environmental samples taken across site, the results can be split into two areas based on their collection strategies. In this report these categories have been referred to as **Column Sample Evidence** and **Environmental Plant Evidence.**

Column Sample Evidence:

This group relates to column samples taken in BP11 through the alluvial silt deposits, and provides information for sedimentary and alluvial silt make-up of the deposits across the river valley and any evidence for pollen accumulation.

Across BP11, three monolith column samples were taken through alluvial silt deposits [122,124,125]. During environmental analysis of the samples, a total of 8 sedimentological layers were noticed with boundaries in many cases matching the deposits observed on the site section. This sequence provided some evidence for sedimentary succession across this area; however no evidence for pollen was observed.

At the base of the column sequence, it appears that alluvial deposit [125] was laid in a series of fine silt grade sediments, probably due to water action. However, because of the lack of grain sorting, it is doubtful that this deposit was laid as part of a flowing stream or river action. It is more likely that the deposit was laid during slow water, marsh, river edge or pond action.

Above [125], the analysis of deposits [124,123] suggested that they were made up from several smaller lenses not observed on section. Generally all these deposits consisted of courser angular sediments that included angular and sub-angular fragments of pebble and cultural materials, and limited evidence for root and small animal burrowing. This suggests that deposits [124,125] did not represent any type of fluvial environment.

Sandwiched between deposits [124] and [125] was observed a small fluvial deposit that indicates a return to slow water action. What this represented from the sample was uncertain, but periodical flooding across the marsh-river edge or puddle silting could have caused this event.

From the identification of a fluvial deposit [123] later sealed by a series of sedimentary deposits that encompassed [124,123], it clear that this analysis generally backed up the original archaeological interpretation which suggested that deposits [124,125] probably derived from primary river in-fill dumping above alluvial river silt deposition.

Environmental Plant Evidence:

This group concerns the general range of core and bulk samples collected during the evaluation and watching brief stages of the project. These samples were analysed in the conventional way by the Siraf wet sieve flotation method and by detailed study of the environmental residue. This method provided a range of flora and fauna materials located within the alluvial deposits, but is not sensitive enough to provide information about the pollen distribution or the geological and flood deposit build-up across the river valley. However, enough survived to show that a range of different types of plants were located: from river edge-flood plain marsh to open area waste land species and plant remains connected with the varied diet and industrial activities from people who probably lived along the eastern edge of the Fleet valley.

During the site investigation, a total of 19 environmental samples were collected which in the main have been dated to the medieval and post-medieval periods.

The majority of the samples were collected from silts, sandy gravels, clays and admixtures of all three. These deposits were potentially water-lain, being in close vicinity to the river Fleet. Other deposits formed sediments that made up the natural London clay.

At least 15 of the 19 samples contained variable quantities of waterlogged plant remains that were located in anaerobic clays. This may suggests that the plant remains were not intrusive species, but reflected a true representation of some of the indigenous plant located across this area. However, within any sample the survival of plant remains is based on the differential preservation of more robust seeds over more fragile ones.

Generally, the most frequent plant remains reflected aquatic/marshland habitats. However, a number of potential economic plant species were also recovered particularly from BP11.

Freshwater aquatic plants which live in waterlogged soil or partly or wholly submerged in water included the most frequent species: the crowfoots (Ranunculus subgen. Batrachium). These species are found in shallow water for at least part of the year, and are characteristic of open water habitats and occasionally on muddy substrata. Celery leaved crowfoot (Ranunculus sceleratus) was observed in two samples. This species is common in or by slow streams, ditches and shallow ponds of mineral rich water over a muddy bottom.

Another well represented aquatic species observed in several samples was water plaintain (Alisma sq.), which also grows on muddy substrata beside slow-flowing rivers, ponds, ditches and canals or in damp ground or shallow water.

One sample produced evidence for a small number of submerged freshwater aquatic algae, stonewort (Chara spp.). Stoneworts are usually found in calcareous water.

Bankside/wateredge plants and marsh and wet grassland species were well represented in eleven samples by seeds of sedges (Carex spp.) and rush (Juncus spp.). The rushes are indicative of an open fairly undisturbed habitat and form an intermediate zone between an aquatic habitat and moist land, irregularly flooded possibly only once a year, although this may be of prolonged duration.

In addition to these characteristic wetland plants, there was a range of seeds, mainly in low quantities that belonged to plants associated with a wide range of habitats such as cultivated ground, waste places, grassland, woodland environments. These species included stinging nettle (Urtica dioica), thistle (Sonchus spp.) and elder (Sambucus nigra).

A number of potential economic plants were also recovered mainly from one sample in BP11. These species included waterlogged seeds of food plants such as blackberry/raspberry, grape (Vitis vinifera), hazel (Corylus avellana), cherry (Prunus avium) and a number of plants associated with industrial and commercial activities such as hop (Humulus lupulus) used in brewing, hemp (Cannabis sativa) for oil and fibres and a large number of weld/dyer's rocket (Reseda luteola) used in the dyeing industry.

Carbonised plant remains were also identified. These included one legume seed and charred seeds of stinking mayweed (Anthemis cotula), a characteristic arable weed, which may be indicative of human activity taking place close by the river edge.

SITE SYNTHESIS & CONCLUSIONS

From archaeological analysis of the site during evaluation and watching brief stages, it was clear that all surviving archaeological stratigraphy was only observed across the western side in area A where the deeper flood plain and river valley was located. This river valley forms part of the Fleet valley system, shown by documentary and topographical evidence (Fig 4) to have travelled across the site.

Although the site was only analysed by limited observations within a series of test and builders pits, from the site sequence at least 7 clear groups of natural and man-made site development were isolated. These represented events from the geological formation of the area to the archaeological development of the site up to the present day.

NATURAL DEPOSITION, GROUPS 1-3

Group 1:

Across site, natural deposits were observed within 9 test and 11 builders pits. Over eastern areas C and D, natural consisted of a very compacted slab of uniform blue grey London clay, located to an observed depth of at least 1.50m.

Generally, the natural clay was of a uniform colour and texture. However, in some area at the interface point between the clay surface and base of the concrete, colour and texture of the clay changed to a brownish grey. Why this should have happened is uncertain, but it may be the result of oxidation once the surface of the clay was exposed to the air, possibly during construction of the modern GPO building.

As the natural London clay travelled west towards the eastern edge of the river valley, in some areas the clay dramatically changed in colour and texture to a compacted light-mid brown grey clay. This was particularly observed on the south-western side of the site in BP9 and BP10. Here, brown clay was located to a depth of at least 1.40m. Along the north western corner of BP9, it seemed that the brown clay sloped down steeply towards the western side, with the slope later sealed by a mixed gravel-sand deposit. Further north within TP3, limited observations showed that a similar light brown clay and sand deposit survived along the eastern side of the TP. This clay also appeared to slope gradually down towards the western side. Above the north-western side of this deposit was also located a mixed sand gravel surface.

The location of a west facing slope within TP3 and BP9 is interesting because it is situated along the line where large deposits of alluvial grey silts were observed in pits to the west. This suggests that the western clay slope may have formed part of the eastern river edge and later gravel-sand flood plain deposits (Fig 13).

Further confirmation of the eastern river edge was shown during a series of borehole observations, excavated beyond the north-western side of the site prior to construction of the present GPO building in c1929 (Borehole report,c1929). Here, a series of east-west and north-south aligned boreholes went down through what was considered at the time to be made-ground located directly above natural gravels and clay deposits. As these observations seemed to have been related to level heights taken from the GPO buildings floor make-up surface, it was not possible to compare them to level heights carried out during the MPO92 project. However, from analysis of the 1929 borehole depths, it is clear that there is a gradual slope of natural topography from east to west (Fig 13).

Observations beyond the western side of the present site and the 1929 GPO building along Rosebery Avenue and Phoenix Street, clearly demonstrate that the general topography slopes down steeply from east to west. Though this area was heavily developed during recent times, the eastern edge of the river valley can be seen from the south-western corner of the present GPO building.

From topographical evidence located west of the site and the eastern river edge recorded across site, it is probable that this area formed part of the upper eastern flood plain and river edge of the Fleet valley.

Group 2:

Within the base of TP2 & 3 (area A) was located a mixture of probable natural blue grey London clay and grey black alluvial silts, that lacked any cultural or building debris inclusions. From their location, the deposits were situated within the eastern side of the river bed, directly above in-situ natural clay deposits.

Observations of the deposits were limited, and so it was not possible to establish what they represented. However, they may form part of a primary river silt deposition where alluvial grey river silts were intermixed with fragments of the underlying eroded natural grey London clay dragged up during water action.

Group 3:

Within 4 test and 8 builders pits across area A was observed a large deposit of alluvial mid-dark grey river silt (Fig 13). Although this silt was heavily truncated, it survived to a depth of at least 1.20m-1.40m. In some area along the south-western side of the site, depth of river silt increased to an average of 1.60m. From its location, it appears that generally the river silts bordered the rise in underlying geology observed along the eastern side in group 1 clay. This suggests that this part of the site formed the interface between the shallow eastern flood plain and river edge and the higher eastern gravel-sand foreshore deposits.

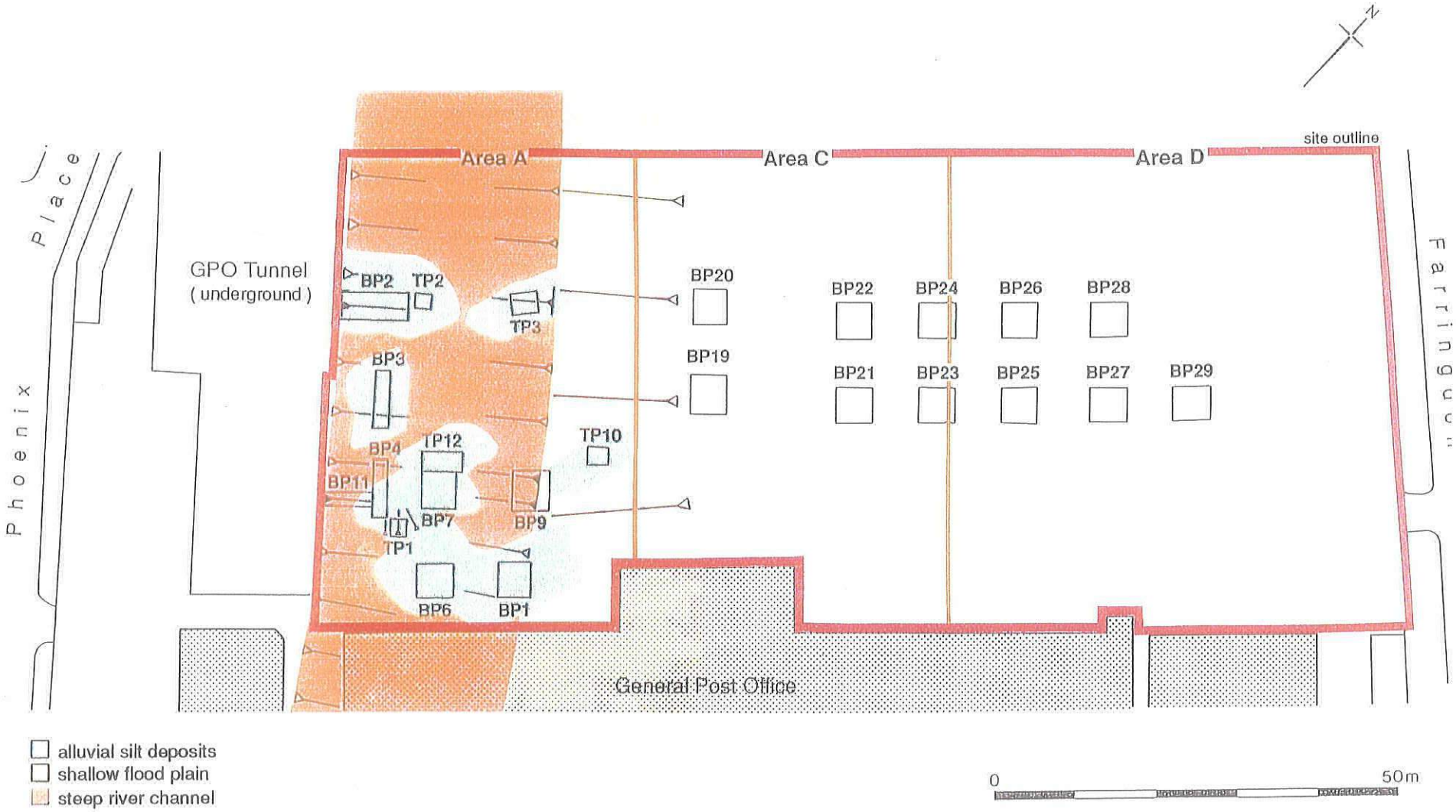


Fig 13, Plan of alluvial river silt deposits across area A. Also shows evidence for eastern edge of river valley, and its eastern slope under the present GPO building

The depth of alluvial silt observed across this area probably represented a gradual build-up of river laid deposits. Within the silt make-up, site observations showed no evidence that the silt was laid in a laminated form based on the rise and fall of the river or periodic flooding along its eastern river edge. However, environmental column analysis carried out on the alluvial silt sampled in BP11 (see environmental column sample evidence) indicated that such laminations or gradual build up of alluvial silt deposition may have occurred in some form (Wilkinson 93). As BP11 is located along the western edge of the site, this gradual build-up of alluvial silt deposit may suggest that the area of the river bed covered by the site formed a shallow edge or flood plain with the wider and deeper channel located further west where the river edge sloped dramatically downwards. This hypothesis is strengthened by the range of aquatic and other forms of marsh type plants (see environmental plant evidence) located within environmental samples taken from BP11 and other pits across site (Giorgi 1993).

Generally within the alluvial silt deposit were observed a range of mixed cultural materials such as pot sherds, animal bone, leather fragments, different forms of oyster and whelk shells. Although some of these may have derived from materials deposited by water action from upstream, a large number were probably deposited as the result of domestic or industrial dumping from the eastern river edge.

The cultural materials were located at various levels within the river silt. Those located close to the surface may represent later deposition. However, due to the fluid nature of the river silt, it is possible that many fragments were moved around and gradually settled into the lower parts of the river silt.

On the southern side in TP1 (Fig 5,13), was observed a small area of river silt deposit that spread down from south to north against the general flow of the river. Reasons for this was not established. However, such deposition may have been caused by an obstruction to the south beyond TP1, with river silt banking up against this to the north. This situation may have caused the eastern edge of the river to meander westwards at this point. Certainly meandering of the river Fleet has been demonstrated across other parts of the river valley (Fig 4). Whatever the case, at a later stage once the soft river silt banked up along this side, its slope was enhanced by compression from the later river infil dump sequence.

PRIMARY RIVER DUMPING, GROUP 4

At some point after alluvial river silt was deposited, TP1 and BP2,4,10 and 11 produced evidence for primary river dumps that spread down from the eastern side of the river valley. Across the southern side of the site, TP1 (Fig 5) and BP4 (Fig 11) showed evidence of mixed mid-dark grey silt,

located to a depth of between 0.30m-0.60m. Although these produced no real evidence for lensing, they were probably deposited from the eastern edge of the river valley.

Across the western side of the site in BP2, a similar dump of mixed mid-dark grey silt was located with regular shallow tip lensing lines (Fig 10). Although this was observed on the extreme north-western side of the section, it survived to a height of approximately 1.60m, and spread downward from west to east for approximately 9.59m. This strongly indicates that the dump was deposited from the western side of the river valley. However, as the river valley spread down dramatically beyond the western limits of the site, any primary river infill dumping across this area must have been carried out from the eastern side of the river valley. Therefore the location of west to east tip-lines within primary silt of BP2 must indicate that a promontory was created across part of the site that spread out into the river valley from the eastern edge. During such a construction, dumping could have been carried out from both the eastern edge of the valley and further west above the promontory. This would have created the west to east tip line sequence observed within BP2.

On the southern side of area A within TP1 (Fig 5,13) was observed part of a mixed dump sequence that spread down from south to north (Fig 5). Although several similar forms of dumping were located, it is uncertain whether these represented one sequence or several spread out over a long period of time. However, as they were located directly above alluvial silts and sloped down from south to north, it is probable that by this time the eastern side of the river bed had heavily silted up and the river changed its course slightly towards the south-west.

From the primary dumping observed above alluvial river silts, a number of cultural inclusions were observed. These ranged from domestic pottery fragments, shell, animal bone through to ash, cinders and other forms of burnt materials. This suggests that the types of materials deposited varied considerably from general and industrial waste to silts and other types of soils.

How the south-north dump sequence fits into the eastern and western dumping located across the suggested promontory area was not established on site. However, it is clear that these were similar in make-up, so it is possible that they all represented part of the same dumping programme.

Although some of the deposition located in BP2 has been interpreted as part of a promontory construction, whether this was created by a deliberate act of river infill, land reclamation, or by a haphazard dump process from people who lived along the eastern edge of the river valley is difficult to establish. Documentary evidence from the medieval period onwards, suggests that parts of the Fleet valley were used as

a general tip for all sorts of domestic, industrial and other forms of waste materials. To a certain extent, this evidence is backed up by the quantity of cultural and industrial materials found intermixed with the silt dumps across site.

RIVER BED INFILL & LEVELLING, GROUP 5

Location:

At some point after deposition of primary silts across various parts of the river valley, a series of dumps was observed in TP1,2,3 and BP1,2,4,6,9,13. Although evidence varied considerably due to later truncation, their overall scale and depth suggested that the dumps formed part of a deliberate river valley in-fill and land levelling sequence (Fig 14).

From observations, excavations and documentary evidence along various parts of the Fleet valley to the south of the site, it appears that during the later part of the post-medieval period there was a deliberate policy to channel the river Fleet into an underground culvert and fill in large areas of the Fleet river valley for later building development. To the south around the Holborn area, the Fleet river was channelled into culverts that ran directly under modern Farringdon street and the valley levelled up to modern street level.

Further north around the Mount Pleasant area, topographical studies have shown that although the river was channelled, the valley was not totally filled. This can be best seen looking west across the site where the ground slopes down sharply into the valley. Although the area is now heavily developed, the valley infill process seems to have been a more haphazard affair, where dumping was related to the construction of large terraces along the eastern side of the valley for later building development. This form of haphazard infill process across the Mount Pleasant area probably related to the fact that unlike the Holborn area, the area surrounding the Mount Pleasant site was still largely a rural setting well after the prison construction.

Types of Dumps:

From tip lines located on the eastern and western sides of area A, it was clear that the river infill and land levelling process was carried out from the eastern and western sides of the site (Fig 14).

On the eastern side within TP3, dumping consisted of a series of mixed silt and red brick-tile and mortar rubble, laid directly above river silts. Here, they were heavily truncated, but gradually sloped down into the western side of the river valley.

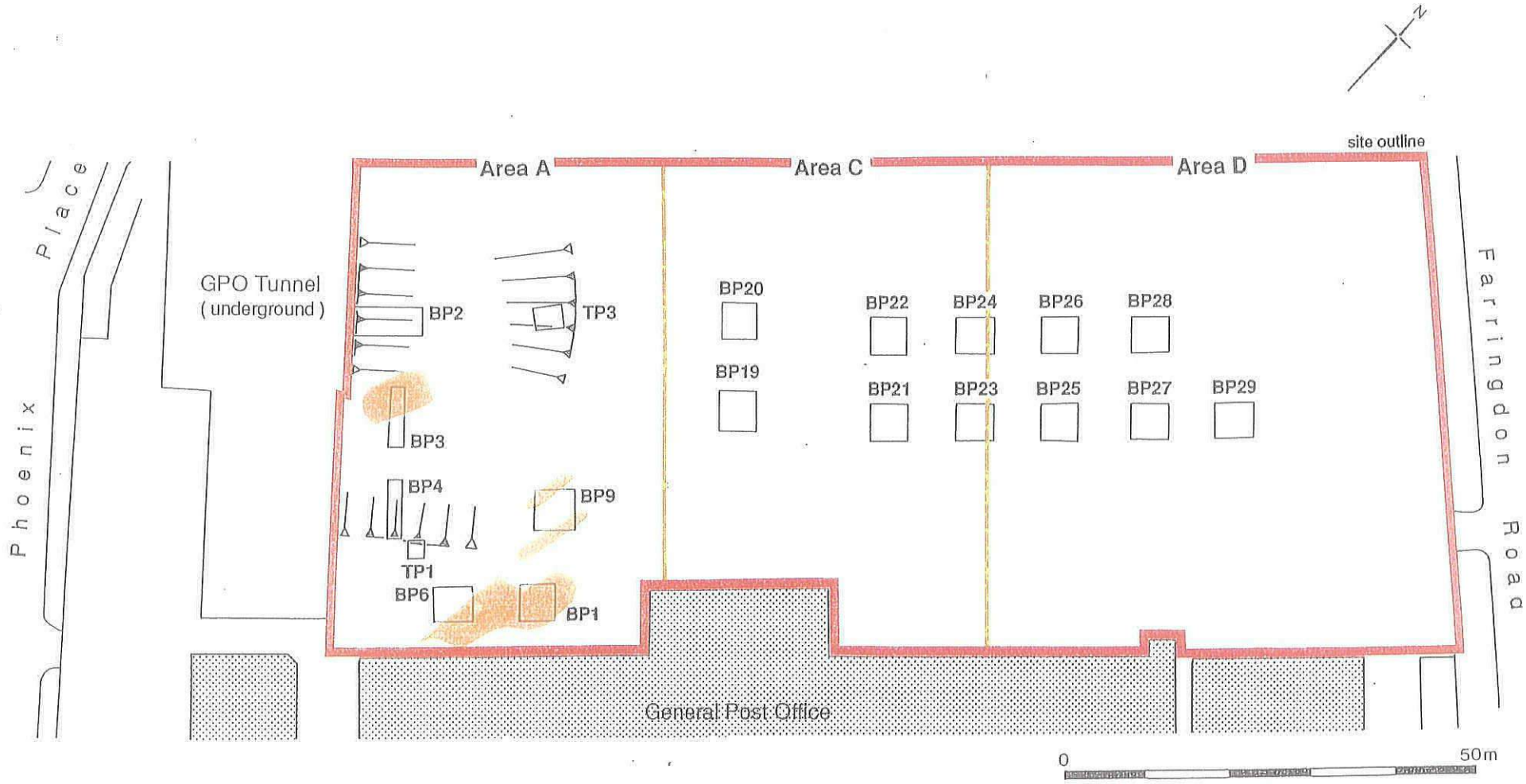


Fig 14, Plan of major land infill dumps located above the river bed. Note change in alignment across southern dumps from east-west to south-north

Further west within BP2 (Fig 10), evidence for river infill dumping was more dramatic. Across this side the dumping process of mixed soft red brick, tile, mortar fragments in grey green silt was split up by a series of shallow to steep tip-lines that separated out the various stages of the deposition. Although heavily truncated by modern features, this sequence was observed for a depth of 2.40m-2.60m, and sealed the earlier dumping of mixed grey silts, (Group 4).

Dump Alignments:

To the south in BP4 (Fig 11), similar large dumps of mixed soft red brick-tile fragments and grey silt-sand (approximately 2.70m deep) were located sloping down from south to north. The alignment of this sequence dramatically altered from other dumps observed to the north.

Dumps observed in TP3 and BP2 were aligned from the eastern and western side of the river valley. This suggested that any land in-fill sequence may have took place from a large promontory or terraced area that protruded from the eastern side of the river valley. This was constructed directly above an earlier promontory created from mixed grey silt and cultural materials in group 4.

Within BP4, the dump sequence turned round from south to north. This suggested that dump was deposited above the central part of the river-bed, once the bulk of the river edge dumps had filled this part of the river valley. A similar situation was also observed in TP1 (Fig 5). This may indicate that within BP1,4 dumps were deposited close to the completion stage of the river infill phase.

Spatial Nature & Reason for Dumping:

Within the river valley infill sequence, it was clear that generally similar types of soft red brick and mortar rubble materials were used as shown in TP3 and BP2,4. This may suggest that large areas of the river infill deposits could have derived from the same source, if not the same demolition project.

Location of similar dumps across a wide area of the site also suggests that across this part of the Fleet river valley the dumping strategy formed part of a planned rather than random programme. The reason for this was not firmly established across site, but it may relate to the construction of the later Middlesex House of Correction in 1794.

RED BRICK PRISON? BUILDING DEVELOPMENT

Location & Design:

Across area A was observed a large number of soft red brick walls and foundations. Generally, when all these were plotted onto a plan, they formed part of a large east-west aligned building. Within this building range, a series of

internal divisions and external offset walls connected with the building were located (Fig 15).

From its linear design and construction, the building probably formed one of the east-west aligned corridor wings of the Middlesex House of Correction prison, (Fig 17).

Building Survival:

Across the western edge of the site, construction of the modern GPO tunnel destroyed all evidence for the prison building west of area A.

Further east in area A, evidence for the prison building only survived to the eastern edge of the river valley where the deep river stratigraphy dictated that a deeper foundation construction was required. Here, walls and foundations for the prison building survived to a height of 2.50m-3.00m.

East of area A the higher level of natural London clay probably meant that foundations of the prison building were not so deep. However as this area was heavily truncated by the construction of a 2.00m thick concrete slab for the modern GPO building to approximately 13.00m-13.30m OD, all evidence for the earlier prison building was destroyed.

Prison? Building Construction:

At some point after the major river valley infill dumps of group 5, it is clear that the prison building was constructed. Whether group 5 dumps formed part of the land preparation stage for the prison building was not established. However, as this dump was located directly below the prison construction and appeared to have been constructed as promontory from the eastern side of the valley, it is possible that both the later group 5 dumping and the prison construction formed part of the same project.

From BP3-5 (Fig 11) however, it was clear that the trench sides for the prison wall construction cut down through the earlier river dumps of group 4-5, so that the underlying soft grey river silts could be removed. This allowed the prison foundation courses to sit directly on the natural clay deposits of (group 1).

If the promontory and prison construction stages were connected, it would have been more logical to remove the river silts across this area and construct the free standing walls prior to filling in this part of the valley. If this scenario is correct, it may suggest that the mixed brick rubble river dump of group 5 was deposited some time prior to construction of the prison building. This implies that any land preparation and construction phases of the prison building were split into a series of un-coordinated events.

Foundation Layout & Construction:

Along the southern side of area A, the ground-plan for an east-west aligned corridor building was observed (Fig 15). From foundation and lower wall construction of this building, it probably formed part of a two-three storey linear structure (Fig 17), that spread east-west across the site. Within area A, most evidence for this building was observed in a large east-west aligned construction trench, (Fig 11).

In a series of north-south aligned sections across area A, it was clear that the building range was constructed within a wide trench approximately 14.00m wide north-south, at least 40.00m east-west and 3.50m-3.75m deep, (Fig 11,15). This trench cut down through earlier river infill dumps (groups 4-5) and alluvial silt deposits (group 2-3), to reach the surface of natural London clay, (group 1). From sections through the linear trench, it appears that trench sides were not shored, but revetted back at a steep angle (Fig 11).

Overall, the trench width gave a wide working area within which foundations and lower wall courses were constructed. However, as the southern side of the trench was constructed directly through the river bed silt deposits, it is clear from modern observations that this area still produced a large amount of ground water, that percolated down between the natural clay and later river silt deposits, even after the river Fleet had been channelled into a culvert. This situation probably meant that originally the builders must have had to overcome severe water seepage problems within the trench before they could construct the linear building. How they achieved this was not established, but it may have revolved around the construction of lower sump pits at set points within the linear trench that could be manually emptied. In this way, the trench could be kept fairly dry. Another method could have used a steam engine water pump.

Along the southern and northern sides of the trench were constructed two east-west aligned parallel large load bearing walls, approximately 6.50m apart (Fig 11,15). These walls were built from horizontally coursed soft red bricks, laid in mixed header-header and stretcher-stretcher courses on beds of hard light grey-white chalk and charcoal fleck mortar. Within BP4, the southern wall was approximately 1.10m wide, and constructed above a stepped brick foundation, 1.60m wide and 0.50m in height, that sat directly on natural London clay.

Further north in PB3, a similar aligned red brick wall, approximately 1.10m wide was observed along the northern side of the trench. However here, the foundation was of a vertical face type, that sat directly above a horizontal spread of alluvial river silt. Why the northern load bearing wall differed in foundation construction from the southern wall was not established, but it may relate to difference in load bearing potential required across the two walls, or

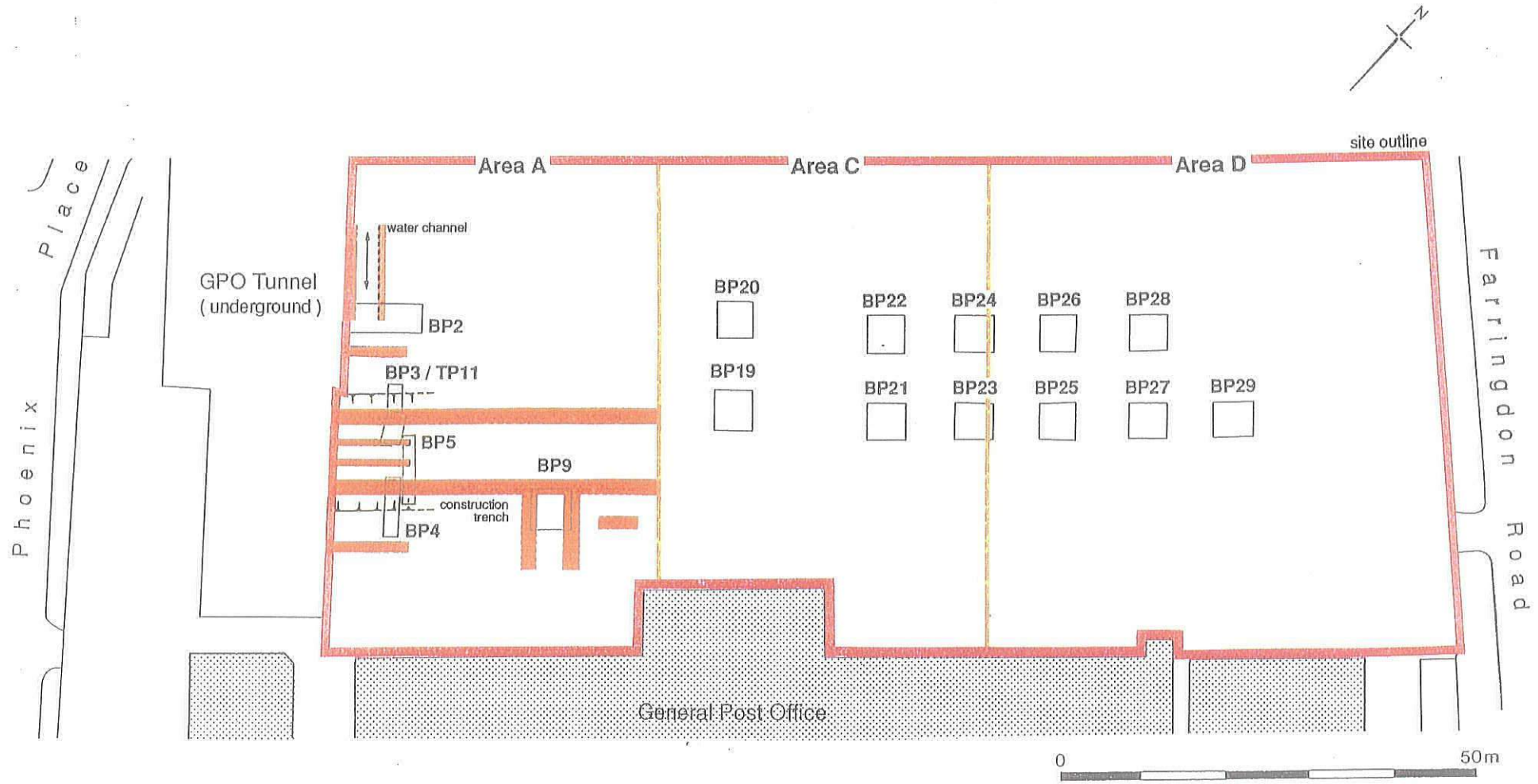


Fig 15, Plan of east-west aligned prison building. Shows walls-foundations built in wide construction trench. Note north-south aligned water inlet-outlet channel to north of building

alternatively limitations of observation across this area.

Once the load bearing southern and northern walls were constructed within the trench, PB3,4,5 clearly demonstrated that the general area between these walls was divided up internally by the construction of two east-west aligned parallel walls (Fig 11,15). These internal walls divided the area into three roughly equal compartments, approximately 1.80m-2.00m apart. Generally, the division walls used similar bricks and followed the same construction pattern as that observed on outer load bearing walls. However, wall widths were only 0.70m-0.80m, and constructed without foundations, directly above natural London clay.

Generally, it appears that all the walls observed within the trench were constructed with fairly smooth ashlar brick faces and mortar beds, (Fig 11). This shows that all the walls were built in a free standing position, to a height of at least 3.50m before any contemporary ground level could have existed. In some areas along the western side of the site against the modern GPO tunnel, truncated remains of these walls were incorporated into the later tunnel structure. Here, the original red brick walls survived to approximately 4.00m-4.50m in height (Fig 11). Location of these massive walls supports a letter published in the Gentlemen's Magazine of 1796 which claims **"The spot on which it (the prison) is erected having been naturally swampy and long used for a public lay stall, it was prudent to lay the foundations so deep, and pile it so severely, that it is supposed there are as many bricks laid underground as appears to sight".**

Once the walls were constructed, it is clear that the trench sides and internal compartments between the walls were systematically backfilled with mixed silts and general building rubble to a depth of at least 3.50m (Fig 11). Within the internal compartments, backfills were horizontally laid and packed tightly, rather than randomly dumped. However, from the northern PB5 and southern PB4 edges of the trench (Fig 11), backfill was tipped, and survived as a series of tip lenses.

South of the linear building were observed several wall fragments. These were either parallel to, or form part of a north-south aligned junctions, built against the southern external wall. Although observations were limited, it is possible that these wall fragments formed parts of outer structural features to the south of the linear building (Fig 15). Some limited observations across this southern wall group suggested that they were not constructed in deep foundation trenches, but often built from the surface of the later river dump. This was particularly noticed in the east-west aligned wall observed across the extreme south-western side of the site. Here, the wall followed a similar construction method as that located in the linear building. However, this wall was only 0.90m-1.00m wide, and was built directly onto the dump

surface. The implications of this suggest that its lack of suitable foundation meant that it formed part of a single storey out-building, rather than part of the main complex.

Further east, a similar situation was observed on the two north-south aligned wall junctions that abutted the southern side of the linear building (Fig 15).

Along the northern side of the trench, a small east-west aligned red brick wall of similar construction appeared to run parallel to the trench (Fig 15). This wall was approximately 0.80m-0.90m wide, and observed for a height of 0.50m and length of 1.20m. Like those located to the south, the northern wall probably formed part of an outlying single storey structure, built along the northern edge of the linear building.

Floor & Floor Make-up:

Across the upper part of the surviving linear building, no evidence for internal floor surfaces building survived. However within the upper part of the linear building across BP5, was observed the remains of a horizontally laid dump of mixed soft red brick rubble and general building materials, to a depth of approximately 0.30m (Fig 11). Although this may form part of the general backfill sequence within the building, its make-up differed sharply from the underlying backfill between the walls. As these dumps were located close to the present land surface, such a change may indicate that their nature was of a floor make-up rather than a general dump type.

EVIDENCE FOR PRISON? WATER OR WASTE SERVICES CONSTRUCTION

Location:

Along the north-western side of the site was observed part of a probable north-south aligned water inlet or sewer-drain outlet channel, (Fig 10,15). Although observations were limited, fragments of this structure survived because it was built into the eastern side of the GPO tunnel that bordered the western edge of the site.

Construction:

Aspects of construction were limited due to later truncation, but a small area of the western wall and base of the channel was located (Fig 10). The western wall consisted of a series of soft red bricks, laid on horizontal beds of hard off white-grey chalk and charcoal fleck mortar, similar to that observed within the main building development.

Although limited, width of the western brick wall was around 0.40m-0.50m, and survived for a height of 1.20m.

At the upper eastern wall edge, there were some indications to suggest that the internal fill and part of the wall started to curve round towards the east. This may suggest

that the upper part of the wall formed part of a springer for a semi-circular or segmented vault roof.

At the base of the wall, the red brick courses turned round towards the east, and were horizontally laid for at least 2.20m. The bricks were laid on edge on vertical beds of mortar. Along the top of the horizontal brick face, its edge was slightly dish shaped across the central side of the base. However, it is uncertain whether this formed part of the construction, or was caused by post construction water erosion.

Beneath the horizontal brick structure, there are some indications to suggest that it was constructed within a shallow cut, sunk into river silts (group 4). But due to softness of the underlying silts, it is possible that this cut may have been created by weight compression of the water filled channel, rather that a deliberate construction.

Channel Fill:

Within the brick lined channel was observed an almost pure dark grey brown silt, that totally filled the internal area of the channel, (Fig 10).

Due to difficulties in getting close to this area, it was not possible to sample the silt. However, the silt probably formed a gradual water laid process within the brick lined channel.

Reasons for the Channel:

The location and north-south alignment of the channel (Fig 15) suggested that it was originally situated underground in an open area 90 degrees to the southern linear building.

From its alignment, it is possible that originally the channel linked into the southern building, and acted as either a water inlet or waste outlet, that went beyond the northern limits of the site.

From the size and construction technique employed on this structure, it is clear that it formed one of the main service channels into the building, and not a secondary channel.

How long this channel was in use for was not established. However, from the total fill of sedimentary silts observed within the channel, it was probably in use for a long period of time.

TYPE OF PRISON? BUILDING DEVELOPMENT

The construction evidence from area A has provided a glimpse into how Georgian builders overcame massive engineering and structural problems to construct the Prison? building across this part of the Fleet valley and its unstable river bed geology. Within the original desktop assessment (Ref Drummond Murray 92), the only reference made on the

construction of the prison building was that the builders appeared to have encountered serious problems during construction of the prison foundations.

Across a number of contemporary buildings of this period such problems could have been overcome by the use of deeply driven vertical timber piles, sunk directly under the foundation of the building. Other methods would have used either vertical brick or rubble mortar-concrete piles. However, from the site evidence, it is clear that construction of the linear building across the southern side of the site employed a different technique. Here, a large linear trench was cut down through the river dumps to reach the underlying compacted London clay. Within this trench both external and internal foundation-walls of the building were constructed in a free standing style directly above the London clay, using ashlar brick faced construction.

This form of construction divided the internal area of the foundations up into a series of cellular compartments that were later systematically backfilled to a height of at least 3.50m before any floor surface could have been considered. Once constructed and backfilled, this form of sub-structure provided a very strong foundation above which the superstructure of the building was constructed.

Why the foundation pattern below the linear building should change from south to north is less certain. Along the southern side, it was clear that the external load bearing wall was constructed above a standard stepped foundation. However, under the parallel northern external load bearing wall, its foundation and primary wall courses were similar in design to those observed across the internal partition walls. Also along the northern side, the external wall seems to have been constructed directly above a dump of alluvial silt dump.

Such inconsistency in construction technique may have lead to structural problems within the superstructure of the building, However, if this was the case, no evidence for such problems was located in the surviving north wall.

LOCATION OF EXCAVATED PRISON? BUILDING

From the ground plan (Fig 15) located in the original site desktop (Drummond Murray 1992), it seems that the site was situated across the central part of the Middlesex House of Correction prison building.

From the prison ground-plan, it is clear that a range of different buildings were located across the eastern and western parts of the present site. Although most of the eastern side of the site was truncated, the remaining western area of the brick building survived as an east-west aligned strip building, with possible outer building ranges to the north and south. This indicates that any building

superstructure must generally followed the same pattern as the substructure walls and foundations.

Across the development, two areas present themselves where such east-west aligned linear buildings could have occurred. On the prison ground-plan, these are located where the east-west aligned corridor and cell areas are situated (Fig 16,17). Here, the ground-plan of the two east-west aligned external load bearing walls and internal area mirrors the trench cut and wall construction located across BP3-5 (Fig 11).

It is also clear from the prison ground-plan, that north and south of this corridor building were located open yard areas. This is also reflected in observations made to the north and south of the linear building. However, from the excavated ground-plan, there is clear evidence for outer ranges of walls, that may form part of later additions to the corridor building. If this was the case, the observed fragments of outer walls may have formed elements of later additions to the primary building pattern.

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