A project, being defined as a “temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result,” (Project Management Institute 2012, 8) within the world of archaeology refers to the realisation of archaeological research. Temporary projects are the main, if not the only, work a commercial unit will undertake due to the nature of developer-funded archaeology as a result of PPG16 and NPPF which introduced and subsequently entrenched the ‘polluter pays’ policy in regards to heritage and development (HM Government 1990, 2012). This essay seeks to evaluate the success of a particular project regarding the process of conducting the project and the delivery of a final product. The project chosen for this discussion is a site located in London at 48 Church Street, West Ham and was excavated by L-P: Archaeology (now a part of MOLA) in early 2008 (Dufton and Williams 2009, 8); this project was managed using MAP2 (Dufton and Williams 2009, para.1.9).

In regards to project design the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) provides a good summary of existing archaeological and historical knowledge, however this summary is based entirely on what was written in the Desk-Based Assessment (Hunt 2008, 7) and no further research or fact-checking was undertaken. Although this would generally be considered an inadequate response the DBA was conducted by Museum of London Archaeological Services (MOLAS – now MOLA) who, at the very least in this specific instance, are diligent in their approach to archaeological research. They consulted a variety of sources including the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (SMR; now the Greater London Historic Environment Record – GLHER), Newham Archive, and the British Library alongside others for relevant documentary evidence. Although presently Local Planning Authorities are required to “maintain or have access to a historic environment record” (HM Government 2021, para.192), this was not the case when both the pre-application archaeological research and the subsequent fieldwork was carried out. At the time this project was carried out the transformation from SMR to HER’s had begun, however it was still in its early phases (Gilman 2004, 14) and in London the HER did not yet exist and the SMR was responsible solely for the mapping and cataloguing of known archaeological sites and find spots, and statutorily listed buildings (English Heritage 1999) meaning that non-designated heritage assets, namely buildings, or other such unknown or unreported archaeological assets or events may not have

been identified. Due to this any archaeological background for the site is limited by what has been officially recorded and may not be reflective of the true archaeological potential of the site. However, as MOLA had almost a monopoly over archaeological contracts within the Greater London Area they have a good understanding of archaeology and archaeological investigative work within the area and have used their previous work around this site to inform their assessment of archaeological potential within their DBA (MOLAS 2006, para.2.1.3). Overall, the WSI included an adequate summary of the known archaeology in the surrounding area and the likelihood of archaeology being present within the site boundary.

In line with the recommendations set forth in MAP2 (Andrews 1991, para.4.8), the WSI included the identification of research questions that cover a broad range of periods and themes which, furthermore, included revised aims and objectives from the evaluation of the site and also included several aspects highlighted in the Research Framework for Archaeology London (Hunt 2008, para.6.1). The research framework sets out a series of priorities for archaeological research conducted in the Greater London Area, separated by period and overarching theme (Nixon *et al.* (Eds) 2002, 8). Generally, it appears that the project design has identified relevant aims and objectives for the project, several of which are directly correlated with those set out within the research framework; one such aim promoted as a Medieval priority, was targeted at visualising what London (and the surrounding area which would later become London) would have looked like to the inhabitants and visitors (Hunt 2008, para.6.5.7; Nixon *et al.* (Eds) 2002, 59). Although the research design has identified several questions, many of these seem overambitious for a commercial unit, and do appear to go above the original scope of the project. One such example is “Studying rural housing before 1400 and the impact of the Black Death” (Hunt 2008, para.6.5.8; Nixon *et al.* (Eds) 2002, 63). In order to fully answer this question a London-wide research project would have been needed to be carried out, and while it is true that this site could have contributed to answering this question, beyond an assessment and analysis of the evidence for housing on this site in particular, the client would not have funded that research. Overall, the WSI set out both clear and specific aims and objectives based on the known archaeology of the site and surrounding area as well as what had been deemed an archaeological priority for London within the research

framework and provided a contextualised research design; although other aims and objectives could have been included, some of those that had been included were extensive and overambitious for the scope of the project and would have been more suited to a London-wide research project rather than a commercial one.

In terms of methodology, the project design states that an open area excavation would be carried out with all features being investigated and recorded, with all finds being collected including unstratified finds from spoil heaps. This methodology includes both written and digital recording of archaeological features. The chosen methodology is appropriate for the research questions stated in the research design for several reasons. The first is that it enables the features to be fully exposed (within the confines of the site boundary) and recorded in plan in order to further inform the excavation strategy. Recording the features in plan, whether pre-excavation or post-excavation, also contributes to some of the aims in the research design, namely those regarding the layout, nature, character and distribution of medieval and post-medieval structures and related features (Hunt 2008, sec.6). For the excavation and recording of archaeological features and the subsequent assessment and analysis of the finds collected, the methodology is appropriate for achieving the other aims and objectives set out in the project design. Overall, the methodology as set out in the WSI has been appropriately selected to achieve the research questions.

The WSI has provided a reasonable level of mitigation regarding potential issues with the implementation of the proposed excavation strategy. One such example of this is that the archaeology was presumed to be deeper than 1.95m meaning that in order to excavate the archaeology safely a 2m strip surrounding the site was left out of the excavation area so that the area could be stepped (Hunt 2008, para.7.9-7.10). In addition to this, paragraph 7.10 (Hunt 2008) states that should it be revealed that significant archaeology continues into this 2m barrier, a meeting will be called to discuss options regarding excavating this barrier. While this was proved to not be necessary it was a possibility, and as such this clause in the WSI implemented the mechanism as to how this decision could have been carried out if required. On the other hand, the WSI sets out the three distinct areas of excavation as an absolute,

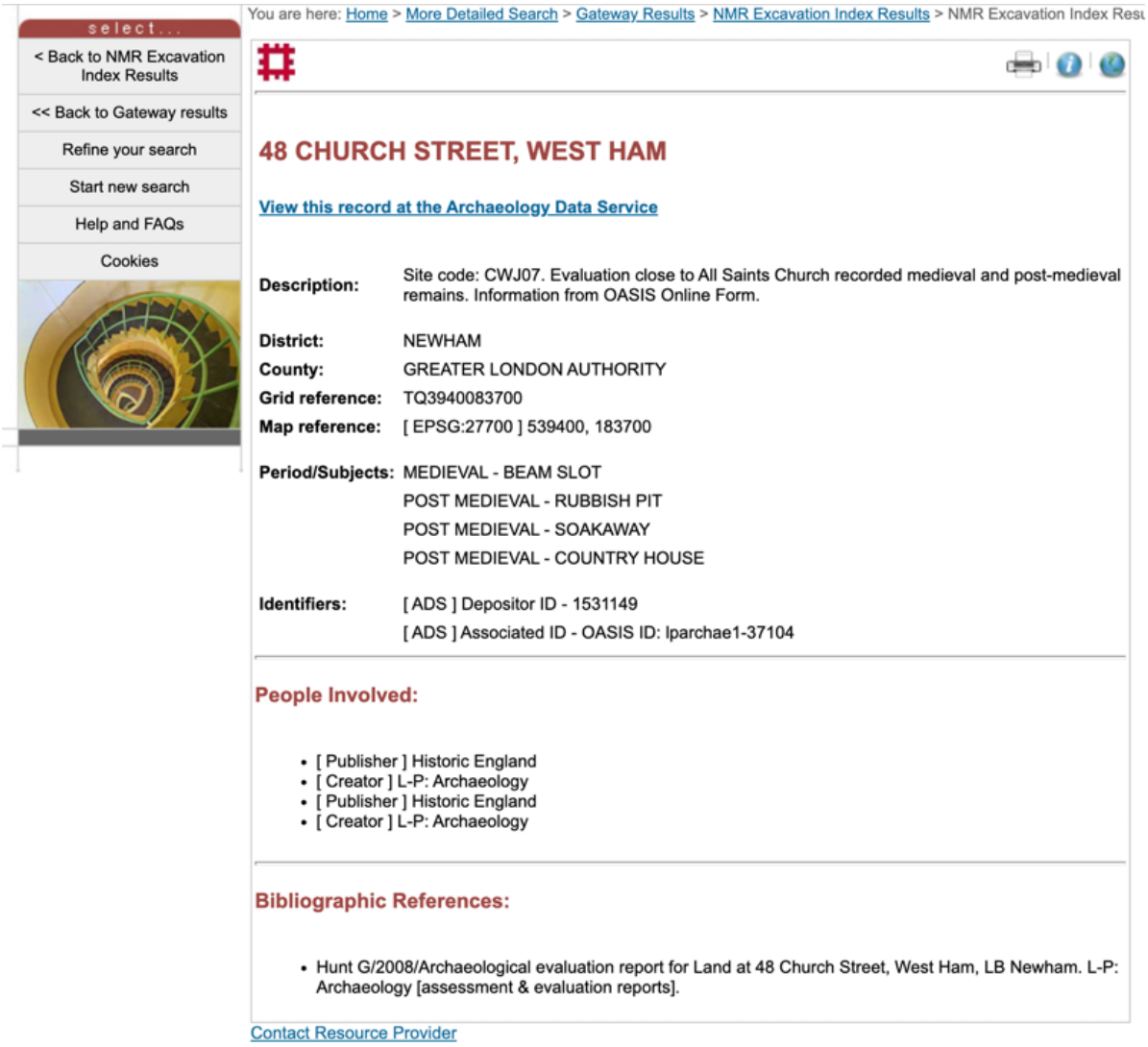
which while this is usually the case as this area has to be approved by the planning archaeologist, turned out to not be the case for this project; the WSI left no mechanism as to how to go about changing this; though communications between the project manager and the client appear to suggest that the decision to change the areas of excavation in order to facilitate continuous access of plant machinery were left to the archaeological unit and did not involve English Heritage (acting on behalf of GLAAS) nor the client (Dufton 2008a). On the whole, the WSI had certain measures in place to accommodate for any issues or changes in approach, however some things were not accounted for, leading to the archaeologists on site to make a decision regarding the zones being excavated without consulting the client or the planning archaeologist.

In terms of dissemination and archiving, the assessment report has been submitted to the client; this report is a clear summary of the results of the excavation alongside specialist assessment of the artefacts and ecofacts collected from the site, and corresponds to the intended content set out in the WSI (Hunt 2008, sec.11.3; Dufton and Williams 2009), including a description of the aims and objectives set forth in the WSI. The report goes through each original research aim and assess the potential of the site to answer the questions set forth in the project design, including those where there is little to no potential for further study (Dufton and Williams 2009, sec.19). One problem with this report, however, is that it does not address how the project has answered these questions; it merely points out that these questions could be answered if further study were to be conducted. In terms of project management, particularly that of MAP2, it can be said that the project has not in fact achieved the goals it set out to do as the project had not actually attempted to answer these questions; the finds assessments were focused primarily on what the objects were (pottery fabric, form, genus and species of animal, flint objects for example), and how old they were rather than an assessment or analysis into how they were used or how they contributed to or answered the specified research questions (Dufton and Williams 2009, secs7–15, 17–18). The finds assessments and analyses for this site were carried out by external specialists and as they were not sent a copy of the project design, or a list of the research questions (Anderson 2008; Dufton 2008c, 2008d, 2008f; Russ 2008), they wouldn’t have been able to access these

documents; without these, only a standardised approach to the assessment and analysis could have been applied irrespective of the intent to answer the questions set forth in the research design. Overall, it cannot be said that the project answered all of the research questions it set out to answer; the sheer number of questions that the project sought to answer were overambitious and many of them were quite broad and would involve assessing assemblages from several sites and compiling the data to analyse patterns which would have been beyond the original scope of the project and the client likely would not have been willing to fund this.

As mentioned previously, the assessment report was completed and handed to the client, alongside an Updated Project Design (UPD; (Dufton 2009b) to complete the archaeological condition on the planning application, however the project archive has yet to be deposited with the appropriate museum/depositing body[1], in this case the Museum of London's Archaeological and Archive Research Centre (LAARC), despite this having been one of the recommendations set forth in the UPD (Dufton 2009a, sec.3.2). The UPD set out an analysis stage of post-excavation work which would conclude with publication in the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society (LAMAS) journal, however per communications between the project manager and the client most the of the finds analysis was carried out in the assessment phase in an attempt to streamline the analysis and publication stage (Dufton 2008b, 2008e). While the project has not yet been published or archived, it has been added to the HER (see Figures 1 and 2); it was originally added to the SMR and NMR (National Monument Record) Excavation Index which was later transferred to the GLHER in the National Record of the Historic Environment to Historic Environment transfer, a project run and funded by Historic England (Historic England). As a result of this, it cannot be said that the project has achieved a suitable outcome in terms of publication and archiving[2].

[1] Though this is in progress and is expected to occur in May.
[2] Though a LAMAS publication is currently in progress, and the deposition of the archive is set to take place this May.



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48 CHURCH STREET, WEST HAM

View this record at the Archaeology Data Service

Description: Site code: CWJ07. Evaluation close to All Saints Church recorded medieval and post-medieval remains. Information from OASIS Online Form.

District: NEWHAM
County: GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY
Grid reference: TQ3940083700
Map reference: [EPSG:27700] 539400, 183700

Period/Subjects: MEDIEVAL - BEAM SLOT
POST MEDIEVAL - RUBBISH PIT
POST MEDIEVAL - SOAKAWAY
POST MEDIEVAL - COUNTRY HOUSE

Identifiers: [ADS] Depositor ID - 1531149
[ADS] Associated ID - OASIS ID: lparchae1-37104

People Involved:

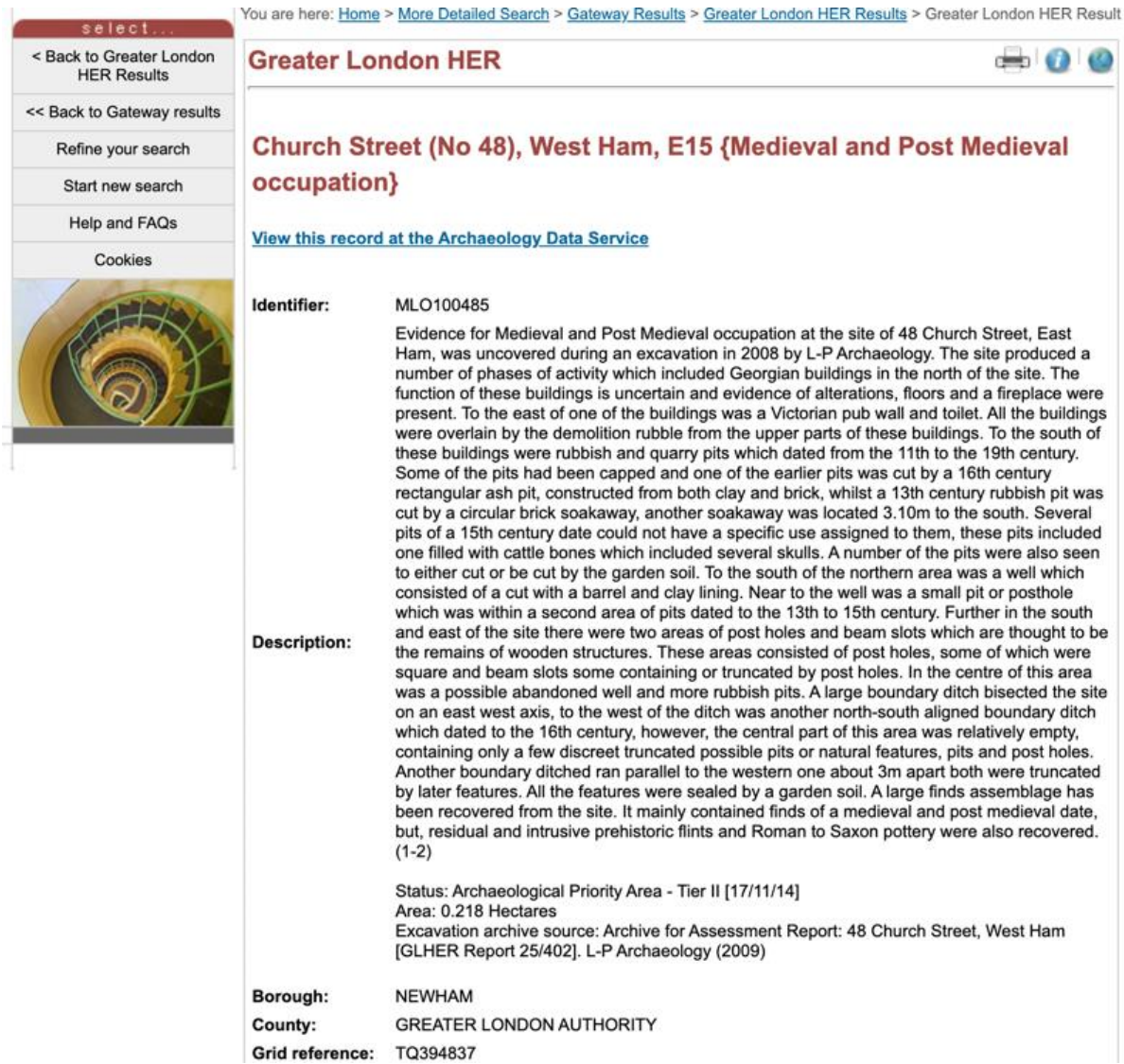
- [Publisher] Historic England
- [Creator] L-P: Archaeology
- [Publisher] Historic England
- [Creator] L-P: Archaeology

Bibliographic References:

- Hunt G/2008/Archaeological evaluation report for Land at 48 Church Street, West Ham, LB Newham. L-P: Archaeology [assessment & evaluation reports].

Contact Resource Provider

Figure 1 - A screenshot of the HER entry for the excavation itself (Anon)



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You are here: Home > More Detailed Search > Gateway Results > Greater London HER Results > Greater London HER Result

Greater London HER

Church Street (No 48), West Ham, E15 {Medieval and Post Medieval occupation}

View this record at the Archaeology Data Service

Identifier: MLO100485

Description: Evidence for Medieval and Post Medieval occupation at the site of 48 Church Street, East Ham, was uncovered during an excavation in 2008 by L-P Archaeology. The site produced a number of phases of activity which included Georgian buildings in the north of the site. The function of these buildings is uncertain and evidence of alterations, floors and a fireplace were present. To the east of one of the buildings was a Victorian pub wall and toilet. All the buildings were overlain by the demolition rubble from the upper parts of these buildings. To the south of these buildings were rubbish and quarry pits which dated from the 11th to the 19th century. Some of the pits had been capped and one of the earlier pits was cut by a 16th century rectangular ash pit, constructed from both clay and brick, whilst a 13th century rubbish pit was cut by a circular brick soakaway, another soakaway was located 3.10m to the south. Several pits of a 15th century date could not have a specific use assigned to them, these pits included one filled with cattle bones which included several skulls. A number of the pits were also seen to either cut or be cut by the garden soil. To the south of the northern area was a well which consisted of a cut with a barrel and clay lining. Near to the well was a small pit or posthole which was within a second area of pits dated to the 13th to 15th century. Further in the south and east of the site there were two areas of post holes and beam slots which are thought to be the remains of wooden structures. These areas consisted of post holes, some of which were square and beam slots some containing or truncated by post holes. In the centre of this area was a possible abandoned well and more rubbish pits. A large boundary ditch bisected the site on an east west axis, to the west of the ditch was another north-south aligned boundary ditch which dated to the 16th century, however, the central part of this area was relatively empty, containing only a few discreet truncated possible pits or natural features, pits and post holes. Another boundary ditched ran parallel to the western one about 3m apart both were truncated by later features. All the features were sealed by a garden soil. A large finds assemblage has been recovered from the site. It mainly contained finds of a medieval and post medieval date, but, residual and intrusive prehistoric flints and Roman to Saxon pottery were also recovered. (1-2)

Status: Archaeological Priority Area - Tier II [17/11/14]
Area: 0.218 Hectares
Excavation archive source: Archive for Assessment Report: 48 Church Street, West Ham [GLHER Report 25/402]. L-P Archaeology (2009)

Borough: NEWHAM

County: GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

Grid reference: TQ394837

Figure 2 - A screenshot of the HER entry for the results of the excavation (Anon)

In conclusion, the project had been a moderate success. In terms of the original scope for the fieldwork and the subsequent report the project has been a success; the fieldwork was completed on time and the report presented the findings in a clear and concise manner. While the project has been moderately successful there are areas where it has been less successful; in essence the project had been overambitious in the research questions it sought to answer and then could not deliver these answers within the scope of the project. While the project has been submitted to the HER, the report has not been uploaded onto the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) which was not a part of the original scope of the project but is good practice in the current day, nor has the archive been deposited with LAARC which is a clear indication of a complete project. If I were the planning archaeologist for this site, I would be pleased the fieldwork had been completed and the relevant reports

submitted to sign off on the conditions for planning permission, though I would not be impressed with the length of time between the fieldwork being completed and the archive being deposited.

Total Word Count: 2169

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