



Woodford County High School, 17th July 2019

Archaeological Test Pit Investigation

by the West Essex Archaeological Group (WEAG)

Site code WFR19

London Borough of Waltham Forest

By Lee Joyce and Colin Mann

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Site Name: Woodford County High School, High Road, Woodford Green, IG8 9LA

London Borough of Waltham Forest (note that the school entrance is in the London Borough of Redbridge)

Date of Investigation: 17th July 2019

National Grid Ref: TQ 3982 9173

Site Code: WFR19

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Archive Receiving Body: Museum of London, 46 Eagle Wharf Road, London, N1 7ED

Note: The “archive” consists solely of digital records, comprising this report in PDF format, photographs of the finds in JPG format, context records in PDF format, and records of pit locations and levels in PDF format. The paper versions of the records have been retained by WEAG, and the physical finds will be retained by Woodford County High School. Delivery of the finds to the School has been delayed by the Covid pandemic.

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Summary

The West Essex Archaeological Group (WEAG) conducted a one-day test pit excavation event in July 2019, at the Woodford County High School (WCHS). The test pits were located in the London Borough of Waltham Forest, though the school entrance is in the London Borough of Redbridge. This followed a similar event in 2018.

The fieldwork was carried out at the request of the school, and the purpose of the events was to enable groups of pupils to have a short experience of archaeological investigation. They were, in effect, "Community Archaeology" events.

Six test pits, each 1m x 1m, had been opened in 2018 on a level, grassed area to the west of the school buildings. The site was chosen for its convenient location on the school site, rather than for its specific archaeological potential. The test pits were positioned to test anomalies recorded by the geophysical survey in 2018. The six test pits had been back-filled at the end of the 2018 investigation. Three of the pits were re-opened in the latest investigation, and excavated to a lower level.

In the time available, none of the test pits were dug beyond a depth of 40cm. Only made ground was recorded and no levels of natural deposits were reached.

As in the 2018 investigation, most of the finds were assessed as being from the 20th Century, with some re-deposition of earlier artefacts dated from the 17th to the 19th Centuries. None of the finds were judged to be significant at a local, national or international level.

The event was highly successful in its own terms, with around 30 enthusiastic pupils gaining a good first introduction to archaeology.

1 Introduction

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 An archaeological investigation was conducted by the West Essex Archaeological Group (WEAG) at Woodford County High School (WCHS) on 17th July 2019.

1.1.2 The investigation can best be described as a short “Community Archaeology” event. It followed a similar event in 2018. Both the 2018 and 2019 events were held on a “Co-Curricular Day” at the school, at which groups of pupils carried out a variety of activities, including a short experience of archaeological excavation on their school site. The school had invited WEAG to organise the archaeological excavation. In 2018, six test pits were opened on a convenient location on the school site. These were back-filled at the end of the event. In 2019, three of the original test pits were re-opened, and excavated to a lower level. Two groups of pupils of around 15 pupils per group spent around one and half hours per group on this investigation, under the supervision of members of WEAG.

1.1.3 The site of the investigation had been chosen primarily for ease of movement of pupils between one activity on the Co-Curricular Day and another. Another consideration was the need for WEAG to be able to move equipment onto the site at the start of the day and out again at the end of the day. A flat grassy open site 30m x 13.5m near to the back (west side) of the main school buildings was chosen for its convenience. The flat grassy area can be seen in Figure 1 below, taken from the school website in February 2020. The area extends from the left of the picture, about two-thirds down, across towards the right of the picture.



Figure 1. Location of the Site.

1.1.4 Before the test pit investigation in 2018, a geophysical survey of the grassy area was conducted using Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR). The results of this were used to choose locations for the test pits within the grassy area. In 2018 six test pits were opened, each 1m x 1m. In 2019, three of the test pits were re-opened.

1.1.5 An aerial view of the location of the test pit area is shown in Figure 2 below.



Figure 2. Location of the Site, satellite view.

Source: Google Maps, accessed on 9th October 2018. The orientation of the sides of the Figure is North-South (North at the top). The black rectangle shows the approximate test pit area. The red markers show the positions of reference points for locating the test pit area by triangulation. The blue marker shows the reference point for establishing site levels in relation to known heights above Ordnance Datum (OD) in The Charter Road.

1.1.6 The exact location of the test pit area, also used for the 2018 geophysical survey, is shown in Figure 3 below.

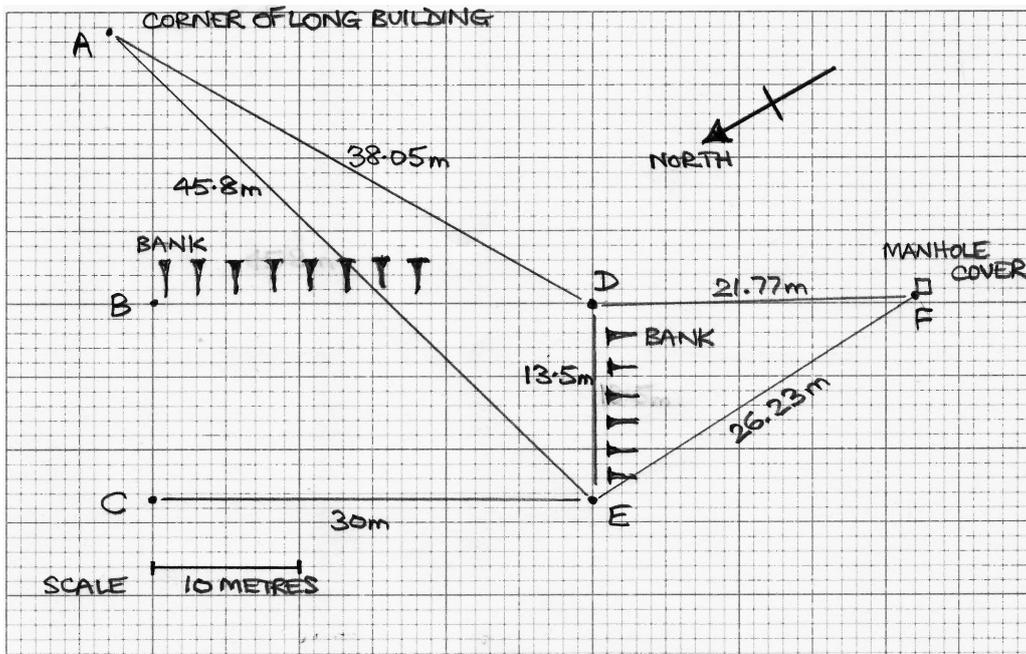


Figure 3. The points A and F are shown in red in Figure 2. The black rectangle in Figure 2, which is the test pit area, is the rectangle BDEC in Figure 3.

1.1.7 The 2018 test pit locations are shown in Figure 4 below, measured from the south-west corner of the rectangle (E). The test pits for pupils were numbered from 1 to 5. An additional test pit named "Pit S" was opened to give school staff the opportunity to exercise their excavation skills, separate from the pupils. The test pits that were re-opened in 2019 are circled in red.

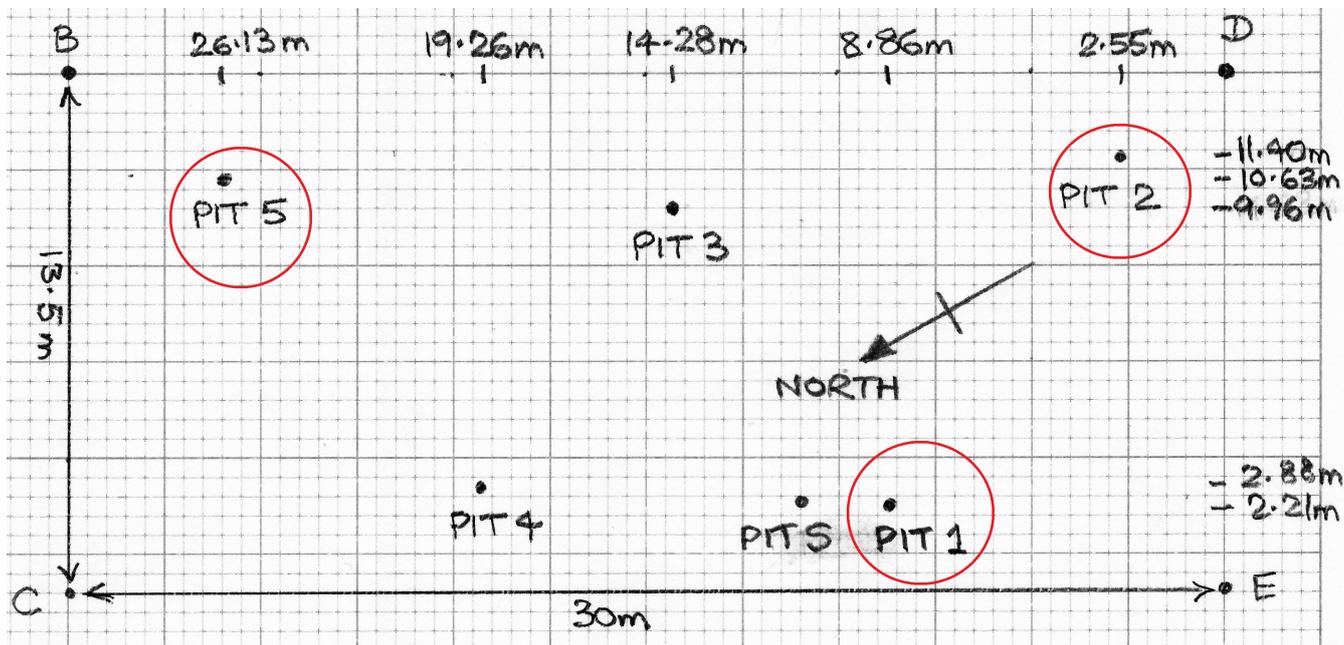


Figure 4. The rectangle BDEC is the same as in Figure 3, and in the same orientation, but drawn to a larger scale.

1.1.8 WCHS is in the London Borough of Redbridge. The boundary between the London Boroughs of Redbridge and Waltham Forest runs through the school site, from north-east to south-west. The entrances to the school site along the High Road in Woodford Green lie in the London Borough of Redbridge, but the majority of the buildings on the site lie within the boundary of the London Borough of Waltham Forest. The excavation site itself is located wholly within the London Borough of Waltham Forest.

1.1.9 The 2019 site archive will be held by the Museum of London. The "archive" consists solely of digital records, comprising this report in PDF format, photographs of the finds in JPG format, context records in PDF format, and records of pit locations and levels in PDF format. The paper versions of the records have been retained by WEAG, and the physical finds will be retained by Woodford County High School. The return of finds to the School has been delayed by the Covid pandemic.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The British Geological Survey Sheet 257 (Romford 1996) shows that the underlying geology of the site consists of London Clay overlain by the drift glacial gravel deposits. [Source: Pre-Construct Archaeology report 2006].

1.2.2 The test pit area is a level grassy area at a height of about 60m OD, as shown in Figure 2.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The school site lies at what was the eastern boundary of the medieval Manor of Higham Bensted in the west of Essex, close to Woodford Row, now known as Woodford Green. The original manor house had been on the western side of the manor.

1.3.2 After a change of manor ownership in 1764, a new house was constructed in 1768, on what is now the school site.

1.3.3 There does not seem to be any written or cartographic evidence of residential or agricultural buildings on the site prior to 1768, though the eastern boundary of the site was close to Woodford Row and the old north-south route along the ridge between the valleys of the River Lea and the River Roding, through Epping Forest, followed roughly by the modern High Road.

1.3.4 In 1793 a new owner invited Humphry Repton to redesign the house and its surrounding park.

1.3.5 In 1919 the house and its immediately surrounding grounds were acquired for use by the Woodford County High School, which has remained there until the present.

1.3.6 Further detail of the history of the site can be found in the publication *Highams* by the Walthamstow Historical Society, from which the above summary has been drawn.

1.3.7 The test pit area lies to the west of the original 1768 house, and slightly to the south of it, on ground which slopes down to the west, overlooking what would originally have been parkland. A map drawn by Humphry Repton suggests that the test pit area may lie within what had been a Kitchen Garden before Repton's alterations. Later maps do not show any built structures in this area, though photographs from the 1920s suggest that garden terraces may have extended southwards into it. [Sources: *Highams* by the Walthamstow Historical Society; *Old Ordnance Survey Maps*, 1914 and 1915, Godfrey A.].

1.4 Acknowledgements

1.4.1 WEAG is grateful to the Headteacher, Staff and Pupils of the WCHS for inviting them to organise the 2019 excavation event, and for their hospitality on the day. Particular thanks go to Suzanne Dawson and Iain Saxton of the school Staff, who played a major part in the planning and execution of the event. WEAG is also grateful to its own members who helped with the excavation event itself, with rapidly transporting equipment into and out of the site, and with post-excavation work including photography, examination and analysis of finds, and production of this report.

2 Aims and Methodology

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The main objective of this archaeological event was to give pupils of WCHS a short experience of participating in an excavation, to stimulate an interest in archaeology. There was no specific archaeological question that was under investigation. The test pit area had been chosen as much as anything else for its convenient location, rather than its archaeological potential. Nevertheless, WEAG sought as far as possible to conduct the entire process in a thorough manner, including recording what was found and creating this report.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 On 12th June 2018 a geophysical survey of the test pit area (rectangle BDEC in Figure 3) had been conducted using GPR.

2.2.2 On 17th July 2018, excavation of six test pits had been carried out by hand-trowelling, with the occasional use of mattocks. In the time available, none of the test pits were excavated to a depth of more than 30cm. Those six test pits were back-filled at the end of the day. On 17th July 2019, three of the original test pits were re-opened. The back-fill was removed, and excavation continued, again by hand-trowelling, with the occasional use of mattocks. None of the three test pits were excavated to a depth of more than 40cm. All finds were retained for later examination, apart from some brick, clinker, mortar and pebbles.

2.2.3 Archaeological features and deposits were recorded using WEAG's *pro-forma* sheets. Test pit locations and positions of important finds were recorded at appropriate scales and colour photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits. No section drawings were made as there was insufficient time, and there were no interesting features to record given the shallow nature of the pits. Where possible, and subject to the time available, school pupils were invited to participate in the recording process. Other records were made by WEAG members in the intervals between one group of pupils leaving and the next arriving. At the end of the day the test pits were backfilled again, and the turf re-laid.

2.2.4 No environmental sampling was undertaken.

2.2.5 The site conditions in July 2019 were dry.

3 Results

3.1 Test Pits

3.1.1 None of the three re-opened pits were excavated to a depth of more than 40cm. Excavation stopped when time ran out. Nothing was found that could be described as natural geology. No London Clay or overlying gravel was found at these depths.

3.1.2 In 2018, all of the pits had contained clinker. The 2019 excavation showed more clearly that in all of three re-opened pits, the clinker formed a layer starting on average about 11cm below the current ground surface, and on average about 2cm deep. It is suggested that the clinker layer, and variations in its thickness and depth, might explain many of the patterns that appeared in the results of the 2018 geophysical survey.

3.1.3 In 2018 the matrix within the pits had been a compacted dark brown clayey soil, with a large number of inclusions of brick, glass, clinker, pebbles and a small number of other inclusions such as pottery fragments. Many of the inclusions suggested secondary or tertiary deposition processes associated with horticulture and landscaping. A half-penny coin, dated 1974 and found in Pit 2, had suggested a late 20th Century date for the most recent landscaping event. None of the pottery fragments were complete forms, suggesting re-deposition of older material. Random older items were found amongst more modern items, such as a 2cm fragment of 19th Century clay tobacco pipe stem near the top of Pit 1, and a large lower half of a bovis/cattle femur near the top of Pit 2.

3.1.4 In 2019, it was found that below depths of around 30cm the matrix within the pits continued to be a compacted dark brown clayey soil, but that inclusions were less frequent. Inclusions continued to suggest secondary or tertiary deposition processes, with, for example, a plastic pencil sharpener from the second half of the 20th Century being found in the same context as another fragment of the stem of a clay tobacco pipe.

3.1.5 In each of the test pits, the sections showed a clear stratification, as shown in the photograph of pit 5 (Figure 5 below). A similar stratification to pit 5 was seen in pits 1 and 2. In pit 1, excavator's notes show successive layers below the grass comprising: topsoil with an average depth of 11cm; a clinker layer with an average depth of 2cm; a layer of clay with brick and pebble inclusions with an average depth of 10cm; followed by redeposited clay.



Figure 5. (Left) Photograph of pit 5 (Right) Close-up of the section at the top of the photograph.

3.2 Finds Assessment

3.2.1 An assessment of the finds, by Lee Joyce, was created as a separate report. For ease of access, it has been added to this report as Appendix B.

4 Discussion and Conclusions

4.1 Conclusion

4.1.1 Given the flat nature of the site, its size (just over 30m long and 13.5m wide), and the presence of clinker in the soil, one possible interpretation for what was found is that this was a former lawn tennis court, perhaps created in the late 20th Century, but no evidence for this has been found so far by school staff looking in the school records. Obviously many other interpretations are possible, such as a terrace arising from garden landscaping.

4.1.2 Given that the excavation did not reach deposits that could be described as “natural”, it is impossible to say whether lower levels of this site might contain evidence of earlier use of the site, such as the possibility of the site being included within the former Kitchen Garden noted on Humphry Repton's plan.

4.1.3 The whole assemblage of finds from the 2018 and 2019 investigations suggests typical domestic activity and supports a late-20th century date for the made ground in which it was found.

4.2 Significance

4.2.1 The pottery that was found in 2018 and 2019 has negligible significance at a local, national or international level. Likewise, the assemblages of glass, metalwork, brick, tile, tobacco pipe, shell, bone, and other finds have negligible significance at a local, national or international level.

4.3 Recommendations

4.3.1 In archaeological terms, this site is a low priority for further investigation.

4.3.2 However, the site proved to be a very convenient place to allow school pupils unfamiliar with archaeology to practice basic excavation skills, with enough finds to maintain their interest, and WEAG would be happy to organise future similar activities there if WCHS wanted to run them.

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Appendix B: Assessment of Finds

B.1.1. An assessment of the finds, by Lee Joyce, was created as a separate report. For ease of access, it has been appended to this report.



17th July



Woodford County High School (WFR18)

17th July 2019

West Essex Archaeological Group



Finds Assessment

Lee Joyce

Pottery assessment Woodford 2019

Introduction

A small sized assemblage of 52 pottery sherds was recovered from the site. The material is fragmentary and no complete profiles are represented. A few of the sherds show evidence of abrasion and show secondary and tertiary deposition processes and were probably subject to horticultural or landscaping processes. Despite the fragmentary nature of the pottery some forms could be identified. Pottery was recovered from 4 contexts and individual deposits produced small groups of pottery (the largest 18 sherds in context 2/4).

All the pottery was examined macroscopically and microscopically using a binocular microscope (x20), and recorded in an Excel 2013 database, by fabric, form, decoration, sherd count and estimated number of vessels. The classification of the pottery form & fabric types is according to Cunningham's typology (Cunningham 1985, 1-4) the standard reference work for Essex. All the material is post-medieval in date and is discussed by types and its distribution.

THE POTTERY TYPES

Staffordshire-type white stoneware (Fabric 47) This has a fine white fabric with a neutral salt glaze. Vessels were made to a high quality and were either wheelthrown (hollow-wares) and subsequently turned on a lathe or were made in moulds (mostly flatwares). White stoneware of this type was made in Staffordshire from the first quarter of the 18th century until the last quarter. Cotter 2001, 252

Post-medieval red earthenwares (Fabric 40) Fabric 40' is a general term embracing a variety of post medieval red earthenwares produced at many localities throughout Essex. Chronologically and technologically it is the successor to the sandier medieval red earthenwares found in Essex (Fabric 21). In general, it has a uniform orange-red fabric with fairly fine sand tempering and its unglazed surfaces have a smooth feel. It is very commonly glazed, either with a uniform clear lead glaze (showing brown or greenish-brown over the fabric), or less commonly with a black glaze or, even more rarely, with a brown mottled or iron-streaked glaze. Cotter 2001, 189

Chinese porcelain (Fabric 48A) Imported in large numbers from the late 17thc

Refined white earthenware (Fabric 48D) As defined here, this refers to refined white-bodied earthenwares with a neutral glaze and whose forms are clearly recognisable as the products of highly standardised or mechanised industries. It is thus something of a catch-all category, although in effect it consists almost entirely of 19th and 20th century tablewares, Cotter 2001, 305

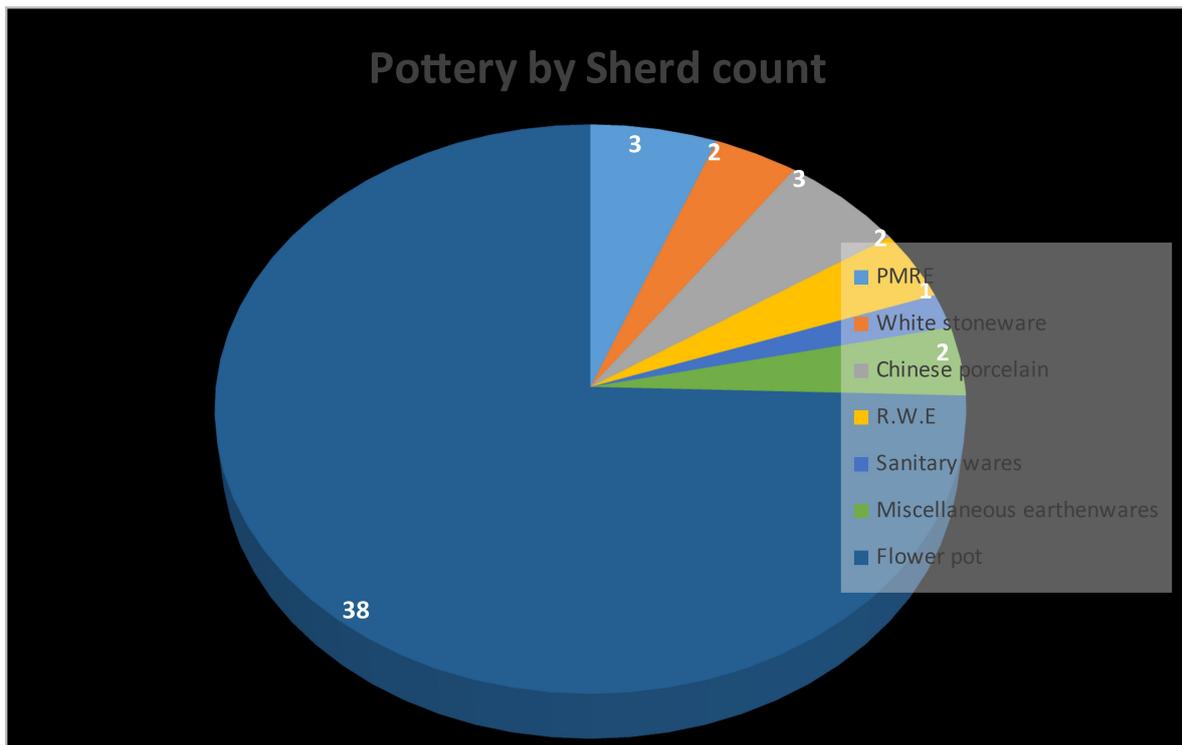
Sanitary wares (Fabric 48V) These come from sanitary applications, such as water closets, in vitreous white earthenware. The fabric is basically similar to Fabric 48D, and some water closets (as in the Gladstone Museum, Stoke-on-Trent) may have transferprinted

decoration although those from the excavations are plain. Cotter 2001, 255

Miscellaneous earthenwares (Fabric 48X)

As defined here, this refers to refined white-bodied earthenwares that is burnt so cannot be more closely defined

Modern flowerpot (Fabric 51B) the ubiquitous 19th-/20th century flowerpot of easily recognisable form. Cotter 2001, 255



Discussion

The vast majority of the pottery 74% is horticultural flower pots, with only 26% representing domestic pottery. This is a very similar profile to that produced by the previous excavation which had 75% flowerpot and 25% domestic pottery. Joyce, L. and Mann, C. 2019, 18

The majority of the pottery is of a late date & fairly standard type & does little to illuminate the grandeur of the house in former times.

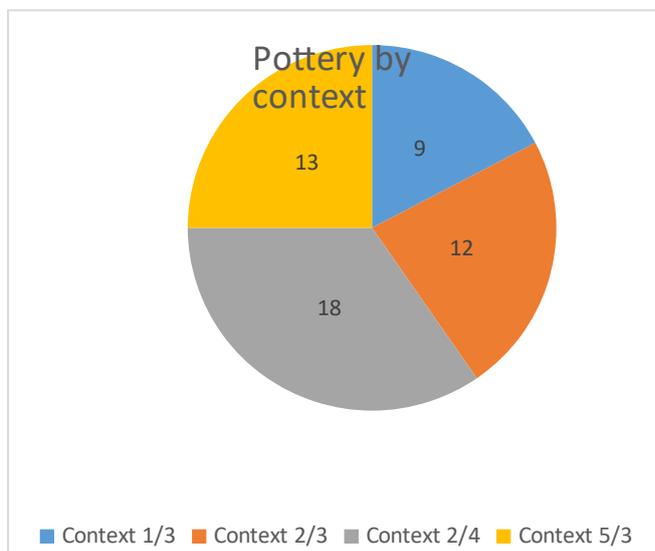
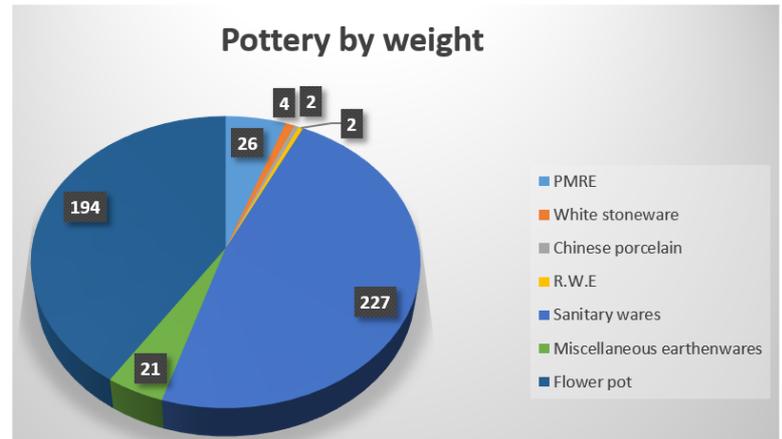
The only earlier & higher status pieces being the 2 sherds of fabric 47 White stoneware. The PMRE although it can date from as early as the late 16thC, the form represented here by three joining rim sherds from context 2/3 is later and is probably a 19thC horticultural vessel.

Fabric	Context	Pottery By sherd count				Total	%
		1/3	2/3	2/4	5/3		
40	PMRE	0	3	0	0	3	6
47	White stoneware	2	0	0	0	2	4
48A	Chinese porcelain	1	2	0	0	3	6
48D	R.W.E	1	1	0	0	2	4
48V	Sanitary wares	0	0	1	0	1	2
48X	Miscellaneous earthenwares	0	1	2	0	2	4
51B	Flower pot	5	5	15	13	38	74
	Total	9	12	18	13	52	100

Significance, potential & recommendations for further work

The pottery has no significance at a local, national or international level. The pottery types are common to the London & surrounding areas during the post-medieval period and reflect mostly Horticultural & some domestic activities. The only potential of the pottery is to date the context it was found in. There are no recommendations for further work.

Fabric	Context	Pottery By weight				Total	%
		1/3	2/3	2/4	5/3		
40	PMRE	0	26	0	0	26	6
47	White stoneware	4	0	0	0	4	1
48A	Chinese porcelain	1	1	0	0	2	Less than 1
48D	R.W.E	1	1	0	0	2	Less than 1
48V	Sanitary wares	0	0	227	0	227	48
48X	Miscellaneous earthenwares	0	5	16	0	21	4
51B	Flower pot	23	24	79	68	194	41
	Total weight in grams	29	57	322	68	476	100



Small Finds

Glass

An entirely modern assemblage of both window & vessel glass are present all dating to 19th-20thC. 26 sherds of window glass from 2 contexts 14 from 1/3 & 12 from 2/4. 9 sherds of vessel glass from 4 contexts are represented.

1/3. 1pc wine bottle, 1pc white lamp glass.

2/3. 1pc brown vessel glass.

2/4. 1pc green bottle glass, 1pc clear bottle base with the letters ..GFO..

5/3. 1pc clear vessel & 1pc green vessel glass, 2pcs red (lamp?) glass.

This assemblage is too small to provide any conclusions.

The assemblage has no significance at a local, national or international level & there are no recommendations for further work.

Metalwork

The metalwork comprises 1pc Iron nail Wgt.7g from 2/3.
2pc iron nail Wgt.15g & 1 unidentifiable iron object Wgt.85g from 2/4.
2pc of clinker Wgt.5g from 5/3.

Significance, potential & recommendations for further work

This assemblage is too small to provide any conclusions & offers no dating evidence.

The assemblage has no significance at a local, national or international level & there are no recommendations for further work.

The clay tobacco pipe (CTP)

Three Fragment of pipe stem dated to the 19thC were recovered. Two joining fragments from 5/3 and one from 2/4.

Significance, potential & recommendations for further work

This assemblage is too small to provide any conclusions & offers no dating evidence.

The assemblage has no significance at a local, national or international level & there are no recommendations for further work.

Shell & Bone

A single oyster shell valve from 2/4.

A fragment of long bone, & the proximal end of Bos (cattle) Femur with a single butchery mark were recovered from 2/4.

Significance, potential & recommendations for further work

This assemblage is too small to provide any conclusions & offers no dating evidence.

The assemblage has no significance at a local, national or international level & there are no recommendations for further work.

Brick and tile

All brick & tile was recorded using MOLA's Medieval and post-medieval ceramic building materials fabrics: dating. July 2007: Medieval and post-medieval brick and drain fabrics dating. July 2007

Four large land drain fragments Wt. 157g were recovered from context 1/3. 1pc of extruded circular land drain Orange Sandy fabrics with abundant quartz grains, with iron oxide and occasional silty inclusions.

Wt.112 from context 2/4.

Two brick fragments from 2/3 Floor-tile, 1 pc 3035 Kent yellow 'stock' brick 1770-1940 Wt. 12g and 1pc 3220 Machine made brick 1850-1950 Wt.343g. Three further brick fragments were recovered from 2/4 1pc was burnt Wt.52g including a small amount of attached mortar, 1pc unburnt Wt. 6g. These are only loosely datable to the later post-medieval period (post 1800) MOLA 3274. 1pc 3220 Machine made brick 1850-1950 Wt.145g

A single piece of Post-medieval Ceramic roof tile recorded in contexts 2/3 Wt. 48g MOLA 3062.

Significance, potential & recommendations for further work

This assemblage is too small to provide any conclusions & offers no dating evidence.

The assemblage has no significance at a local, national or international level & there are no recommendations for further work.

Other

This category consists of all other finds not categorised above.

Six pcs of slate including 4pcs from 1/3 one with a nail hole Wt.46g. 2pc Wt.40g from 2/4 would have been used as a roofing material.

3 pcs of mortar 1pc from context 3/1 Wt.19g and 2pc from 2/4 Wt.80g

1pc of coal from context 1/3 Wt. <1g, 3pc of coal 2/4 Wt.1g

2pc of building stone Wt.258g in context 2/3

1pc burnt flint wt.12g in context 2/4

Two objects that do reflect the building's long use as a school are, a slate pencil from context 2/3 and dated to the early 20thC and a plastic pencil sharpener from 5/3 and datable to the late 20th-early 21stC.

Significance, potential & recommendations for further work

The assemblage although small does provide some objects associated with the buildings most recent use as a school & offers good dating evidence.

The assemblage has no significance at national or international level. However the nature of the finds may at a local level be of some interest, especially to the school itself. There are no recommendations for further work.

Conclusion

“No sign of the Repton or other earlier garden features survive at the depth excavated, only 20thC deposit were encountered this almost certainly relates to early 20thC landscaping. (See. Hawkins, N 2006, Pg15.) Joyce, L. and Mann, C. 2019, this was the conclusions drawn from the previous excavation and the current excavation only re-enforces that conclusions.

Trench	Context	Spot date
1	3	20thC
2	3	20thC
2	4	20thC
5	3	20thC

Abbreviations

C.B.M Ceramic Building Material
C.T.P. Clay Tobacco Pipe
R.W.E Refined white earthenware
P.M.R.E Post-medieval red earthenware

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Archive The site records, finds, associated papers and digital archive is to be returned to Woodford County High school for Girls, with copies of the report sent to the local Museum & another retained for the WEAG Archive. This is a minimum standard it is also suggested that copies be placed with ADS, Oasis & all other interested bodies.

[End of report]