

EXCAVATION

Museum of London archaeologists have been responsible for digging one of the largest and most complex deeply stratified 'sites' in Europe: the historic centre of London, today covering the City, Westminster, Southwark and parts of the surrounding boroughs. MoLAS has also excavated many hundreds of sites scattered across the Greater London area and varying widely in type. Taken together, these experiences have helped MoLAS to develop robust and tested excavation techniques that are widely recognised as the industry standard, now adopted elsewhere in Britain and in many other countries. These are formulated and set out in the Museum of London's Archaeological Site Manual (3rd edn, 1994).

MoLAS carries out more than 100 excavations in an average year, from small-scale trenching within standing buildings to large open-area excavations. Projects range from urban redevelopments to rural, greenfield sites and infrastructure work. Consultation between MoLAS and the client is continuous from the planning stage onwards, with excavation integrated into the detailed design of the development wherever possible. In some circumstances – where prior assessment suggests the probability of significant archaeological remains is low or investigation of part of the site has been completed – a **watching brief** during construction or other work may be carried out.

The field team is led by Senior Archaeologists with extensive experience of directing a wide range of urban and rural projects in challenging construction conditions and within strict timescales and budgets. A team of experienced archaeologists is supplemented by additional staff during busy periods. On-site advice is provided by a wide range of in-house experts, and site visits can be quickly arranged with finds and environmental staff from Specialist Services and outside institutions, to ensure that excavation strategies are constantly reviewed and updated. Projects reflect national and local archaeological research priorities and are tightly focused on evolving research aims. This ensures that resources are tightly targeted and work is only undertaken where it will contribute directly to the identified outcomes.

MoLAS also provides specialist **forensic** archaeological excavation skills and has been providing a range of services to the Metropolitan Police for several years. Drawing on the experienced field team, MoLAS has now expanded its forensic work beyond London. Over the past few years support has been provided to several police forces, ranging from expert advice to the police and in court, carrying out area searches, excavation of human remains, bone identification and skeletal analysis. The forensic team also provides training for the police in archaeological techniques and for our own archaeologists in police forensic procedures.