



VALENCE HOUSE London RM8

London Borough of Barking & Dagenham

Report on archaeological evaluation and community excavation

May 2022



**Digging Dagenham: A Youth Community Excavation and Open Day
at Valence House Museum and Archive
Becontree Ave
Dagenham
RM8 3HT**

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Report on a community excavation (an archaeological evaluation) and open day

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Summary

This report presents the results of Digging Dagenham: a community dig (an archaeological evaluation) and open day at Valence House Museum and Archive, Becontree Ave, Dagenham RM8 3HT from 6th-9th April 2022. This report has been commissioned from MOLA by Benjamin Sanderson, Thames Chase, on behalf of the client Land of the Fanns (a project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund).

MOLA prepared the site and then a trench measuring c 5m by 5m was excavated by local community volunteers, 17 children and young people aged 9-21 from Carers of Barking and Dagenham, under the close supervision of MOLA archaeologists.

Once the topsoil and subsoil were removed, a late 19th- or early 20th- century ceramic drain was uncovered. It is possible that this was put in by the May family to bring water into the basement washrooms, or during early 20th-century redevelopment works at Valence House. Young community volunteers particularly enjoyed excavating this feature and removed three sections to see if the drain contained any artefacts. A section of the drain now features in Valence House's Young Carers' Dig Museum, currently on display in the Valence House tearoom.

A robber trench was also recorded, which had removed much of an earlier brick foundation. A small part of the wall remained in situ as it was constructed of well-bonded red bricks dating from c. 1750 to 1900 AD, however the broken half bricks in the wall may suggest they had been reused. The wall foundation was not substantial so would have only supported a small one-story building or an external wall. It is possible that it is part of the ornamental walled gardens identified by Nick Holder of Archaeohistory's research and shown on his 1770 reconstruction plan. As with the drain, the young volunteers were responsible for excavating this wall and assisting with its recording.

Both the drain and the robber trench cut into earlier clay and gravel layers, up to 0.4m thick, that likely represent the driveway to the house, and which can be seen on earlier OS maps.

The volunteers assisted with the excavation of a small sondage to better understand the site's stratigraphy. The sondage was later extended by MOLA archaeologists using a machine. This revealed that underlying the clay and gravel layer there were at least 0.60m of earlier surfaces which may relate to construction phases of Valence House. Pottery recovered dated to 1480-1650.

As part of the community dig programme, volunteers took part in onsite processing (spoil sifting and finds washing), metal detecting, artefact curation and interpretation, clay craft (pottery making), and explored the Valence House Museum and its archaeological galleries. MOLA specialists in communications, photography, and geomatics (surveying) also visited, spoke to, and worked with the volunteers to record the site. This provided a much broader introduction to other archaeological disciplines beyond field excavation.

On Saturday 9th April, over 200 visitors from the wider community attended a free open day at Valence House Museum and Archive. In addition to activities organised by Valence House, visitors were able to see the community dig site, speak with MOLA staff about the archaeology of Valence House, see the finds that had been uncovered and curated by the young volunteers, and uncover and handle finds from MOLA's simulated dig boxes.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Project outline and background

- 1.1.1 An archaeological youth community excavation was carried out by MOLA at Valence House Museum and Archive ('the site') between 4th and 8th of April 2022 (see Fig 1) as part of the Land of the Fanns project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The aim of the 'Community Dig' was to get young people involved in the archaeology of the Land of the Fanns region outside of formal education and so this event took place during the school holidays and in association with a local youth group.
- 1.1.2 On Saturday 9th April, MOLA took part in an open day event at Valence House. This provided an opportunity for the local community to meet and speak with MOLA archaeologists, to see the archaeological site and a display of finds from the excavation; to learn about the history and archaeology of Valence House; to explore dig boxes with hands-on artefact handling; and to view a mini museum curated by the young volunteers.
- 1.1.3 A detailed description of the archaeology and history of the site was prepared by Nick Holder from *Archaeohistory* in July 2020 (Holder 2020).

1.2 Planning and legislative framework

- 1.2.1 This community dig is outside of the planning process and system. Ruth Taylor, MOLA's Engagement Project Manager, notified Adam Single of the GLAAS of the plans and confirmed that GLAAS had no formal requirements (email received from Adam Single (09/12/21). This report will be submitted to Historic England for their information.

2 Topographical and historical background

2.1 Topography

- 2.1.1 The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham is situated on the north bank of the River Thames, to the east of London.
- 2.1.2 In most cases the geology of the borough consists of London Clay overlain by Thames gravels, overlain by alluvium (clay and silt, with some peat), and capped by modern made ground.
- 2.1.3 The level area of garden surrounding Valence House is c 15m above Ordnance Datum. This sits upon a natural geology of London Clay, Hackney Gravels and Ilford silt brickearth.

2.2 Archaeology

MOLA are grateful to the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham and Nick Holder of *Archaeohistory* for providing additional archaeological background.

Prehistoric

- 2.2.1 The earliest prehistoric material reported from the vicinity of the subject site is a Neolithic flint axe recorded approximately 500m to the north. A Bronze Age palstave was found during gravel extraction about 1km north of the site and further to the south, by the Thames, remnants of Bronze Age wooden tracks across the marshes have been uncovered. However, no significant traces of prehistoric settlement have been reported from the 1km study area centred on the site.

Roman

- 2.2.2 The main Roman road from London to Colchester ran SW to NE approximately 1.5km north of the site. Three Roman pots were discovered during the construction of the Becontree Estate about 500m south of the site, but it is not known if they were within a domestic or funerary context. The subject site may have lain within a managed landscape but there are no indications of any significant settlement nearby.

Saxon

- 2.2.3 Apart from place name evidence, there is no indication of Saxon settlement within the 1km study area.

Medieval and post-medieval

- 2.2.4 Valence House is a timber-framed, two-winged house, largely 17th century in date (Historic England listing). The house contains earlier elements including 14th- or 15th-century timber framing in part of the main north wing. Documentary evidence shows that the house – or an earlier version of the house – existed by the 13th century. The earliest reference to Valence House dates from the 1250s or 1260s when Gilbert Hakun sold the house and land to Sir Hugh de Dyve.
- 2.2.5 In historic terms, the house was a moated manor house: the seat of a local gentry family who exercised social influence and some judicial power over the surrounding land and people. The moat is therefore a significant part of the site: it proclaimed the

- social status of the inhabitants, living in their 'mini-castle'. The house evolved from a moated manor site to a tenanted farm.
- 2.2.6 During the centuries of expansion and renovation works, the orientation of the house was reversed to give the current south-facing outlook, with the entrance over a causeway in the south-east of the moat. One of the aims of the GPR survey was to detect evidence for earlier wings of the house. Surviving details in the 15th-century core of the building suggest that there may have been a wing running southwards from the central part of the building. Architectural and cartographic evidence suggest that the 17th-century west wing was once longer and broader.
- 2.2.7 In 1920, the house and land were bought by the London County Council; the last tenants, the May family, left the farm. The Valence estate was redeveloped in the 1920s as part of the Becontree housing estate, while the house became the town hall for the new Dagenham Urban District Council. The eastern end of Valence House was heavily altered and extended in 1929. During the 20th century, the moated manor house site was gradually redeveloped with workshops, a library, and light industrial buildings. The current layout is the result of an improvement scheme carried out by the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham in the early 2000s.
- 2.2.8 In the mid-20th century, the borough librarian, JG O'Leary, undertook extensive research on the history of the site, published in his *The Book of Dagenham* (1964) and in his contribution to the 1966 volume of the *Victoria County History Essex* series. In 1991-2, architectural historians from English Heritage monitored refurbishment work at the house.
- 2.2.9 Research turned to the moat and grounds of the house in the first decade of the 21st century when the borough was planning construction of a new visitor centre in the Valence House grounds, just to the south of the house. The archaeological organisation MoLAS (Museum of London Archaeology Service) excavated archaeological trial pits in 2007 and monitored the construction works on the new visitor centre and the refurbishment works in the house in 2009 (MOL 2010).
- 2.2.10 The archaeological evidence from the 2007 trial trenches and pits show that some historic moat fills survive in the base of the backfilled western arm of the moat. In 2009, the archaeologists monitored the construction works on the visitor centre and recorded some edges of the original moat to the south of the house and early 20th-century gravel backfill material within the moat. The southern arm of the moat appeared to have been scoured before backfilling with gravel in the 1920s, presumably to create solid ground conditions for the construction works in the new municipal depot: no historic fills were observed in this section of the moat. The original width of the southern arm of the moat was 14.2m (measured north-south across the moat), slightly wider than the c 12m illustrated on the 1918 Ordnance Survey map.
- 2.2.11 In 2020, MOLA carried out geoarchaeological works associated with the northern moat (MOLA 2020), followed by a Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey in 2021 (MOLA 2021) which was used to inform the design of this community dig.

3 Evaluation methodology

3.1 Archaeological methodology

- 3.1.1 The design of the archaeological works was informed by MOLA's recent GPR survey (2021) and in discussion with the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.
- 3.1.2 The works were designed as an archaeological evaluation (MOLA 2022).
- 3.1.3 One trench measuring c 5m by 5m was excavated. Archaeological works were carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2022).
- 3.1.4 The trench was located on site in a safe location c 2m away from identified services to the east, north, and west, and subsequently tied to the OS grid by MOLA Geomatics using a total station.
- 3.1.5 On the 4th-5th April 2022, the topsoil and subsoil were removed by a machine monitored by a MOLA supervisor. For safety reasons, volunteers were not present when plant was operating on site.
- 3.1.6 From the 6th-8th April 2022, MOLA archaeologists and young volunteers from Carers of Barking and Dagenham excavated the trench using hand tools.
- 3.1.7 Where referenced in this report (e.g., '13.45m OD'), levels relate to OS Ordnance Datum and were calculated by measurement from a nearby spot height provided to us by MOLA surveyors.

3.2 Recording methodology

- 3.2.1 A written and drawn record of all archaeological deposits encountered was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2022).

3.3 Site archive

Number of trench record sheets	1
Number of overall location plans	1
Number of Context (SU) sheets	15
Number of photographs	22
Number of Plan sheets	2
Number of Sections	1

3.4 Volunteer recruitment and engagement methodology

- 3.4.1 In December 2021, the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham introduced MOLA to Future Youth Zone (FYZ) Barking and Dagenham and their members were invited to participate in the community excavation.
- 3.4.2 Initially participants aged 16-25 were invited, however after discussion with FYZ and in consultation with MOLA's Operations and Health and Safety teams and Designated Safeguarding Lead it was decided that, to be more inclusive, younger individuals could also participate if they were accompanied by a responsible adult and had parent/carer consent. Vulnerable young adults (aged under 25) with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) could also attend with a responsible adult.
- 3.4.3 FYZ input identified that 3 x 1 day of 'archaeologist for a day' taster courses would

better suit the needs of their members and would allow for up to 18-24 individuals to participate (6-8 young attendees each day).

- 3.4.4 In early March 2022, MOLA were notified that FYZ no longer had the capacity to be able to participate in the excavation and instead contact was made with the Young Carers of Barking and Dagenham.
- 3.4.5 Carron Cumberbatch, Young Carers Information and Support Worker at Carers of Barking and Dagenham was instrumental in securing the young people's involvement, parental/carer permissions and medical information, and a responsible adult to attend each day.
- 3.4.6 To remove barriers to accessibility, MOLA organised travel to and from the site for the youth group through a local minibus company and supplied lunches and snacks.
- 3.4.7 The dig took place during the first week of the school Easter holidays.
- 3.4.8 MOLA individually risked assessed each young person on site and secured a minimum ratio of 1 adult to every 2 or 3 children at all times. All MOLA field and engagement staff on-site received up to date Enhanced DBS checks and all MOLA staff followed MOLA Safeguarding Policy (MOLA 2021).
- 3.4.9 Young people aged 10 and above were able to excavate in the trench. Younger children carried out alternate activities, including on-site finds processing.

4 Archaeological results of the evaluation

For the trench plan and section see Fig 1 Fig 2 and Fig 6.

4.1 Trench 1

Location	North of Valence House
Dimensions	5m by 5m by 0.40m (sondage to 1.30m)
Modern ground level	14.81mOD
Base of modern turf	14.60mOD
Depth of archaeological stratigraphy above natural (if any)	1.30m
Level of base of lowest features or deposits observed	13.50mOD
Top of surviving natural observed at	N/A
Level of base of trench	14.20m OD in general, sondage 13.50m OD



Photo 1 Trench location to the north of Valence House, showing wall [6] (left of photo) and drain [2] (right of photo). Scale 1m.

- 4.1.1 Topsoil covered the entire trench, with a maximum thickness of 0.20m. A thin band of lighter material was seen at the base and interpreted as subsoil. The topsoil was highest in the west at 14.81m OD, sloping to the east at 14.51m OD.
- 4.1.2 Beneath this was the cut [4] and backfill [2] for a late 19th or early 20th century ceramic drain [2] with extended the full width of the trench running north south. The drain laid with a slight downhill gradient away from the house, 14.32m OD in the south

and 14.30m OD in the north, although the difference could have been a result of ground settling.

- 4.1.3 The drain was cut into a compact gravel and clay layer ([10] & [11]). The layer was mixed sand gravel and brickearth, with layers of more compacted gravel towards the surface. The surface was at 14.45m OD in the west and 14.10m OD in the east of the trench.
- 4.1.4 Also truncating this layer was a robber trench [8] which had removed parts of an earlier brick foundation. The fill [9] was a brown, grey silty gravel with frequent broken brick and tile fragments. A small part of the brick foundation [6] was in situ in a small cut [7], and was constructed of well bonded red bricks dating from c 1550 to 1700 AD. The bricks measured 230mm by 110mm by 65mm. Broken half bricks were used in the wall, suggesting the construction may be later in date. The foundation was only two brick wide, and only one course remained with a thick bedding of mortar underneath. The top of the wall was at 14.20m OD, 0.60m BGL. The wall foundation was not substantial so would have only supported a small one story building or and external wall. These features were excavated and recorded during the community excavation.
- 4.1.5 The GPR report identified a potential wall (Feature K; MOLA 2021) (see Fig 3) which has now been confirmed. The figure in this report shows the GPR results georeferenced to the wall in the trench, for its original location please see the original report (MOLA 2021).



Photo 2 Wall foundation [6]. Scale 0.2m.

- 4.1.6 A machine sondage was dug into the centre of the trench to better understand the stratigraphy below these features (Fig 6). It revealed the clay and gravel layer ([10] & [11]) was up to 0.40m deep and appeared to be a levelling layer of mixed clay and gravel with patches of compacted gravel on top. This possibly represents the driveway

seen on the early 20th century OS maps.

- 4.1.7 In places there were patches of a compacted green or yellow clay ([12], [14] & [15]) which could have represented a surface. These were recorded at 14.20m OD in the north sloping to 14m OD in the south.
- 4.1.8 Below this was at least 0.60m (base not reached for safety reasons) of grey silty clay [13], surface at 13.90m OD. A thin lens of darker grey alluvial type material was recorded within the layer. The deposit contained frequent large pieces of red brick and peg tile, and very occasional pieces of pottery, one green glazed and dating to 1480-1650. This deposit was not fully understood, however may relate to construction phases of Valence House. TP3 was excavated c 50m to the west of this trench during the geoarchaeological work in 2020. This work also identified a silty clay with CBM extending between 13.90m OD and 13.30m OD.



Photo 3 Machine excavated sondage, facing north. Scale 0.5m.

4.2 The post-medieval pottery by Nigel Jeffries

- 4.2.1 The post-medieval pottery was hand collected from Trench 1 in context [13] and consists of one sherd (SC) from one vessel (ENV) with a weight of 23 grams. This material has been identified using London's medieval and later type-series and was therefore recorded on the Oracle CDE database, using standard Museum of London codes for fabric, form and decoration. The numerical data comprises sherd count (SC), estimated number of vessels (ENV), estimated vessel equivalents (EVES) and weight (see Orton, Tyers and Vince, 1993, 167–181, about these specific methods of quantification).
- 4.2.2 The descriptions for the fabrics are referenced from MOLA's online resource library

(Medieval and post-medieval pottery codes (MOLA accessed May 2022) with the terminology for the forms or vessel-types represented is defined by the Medieval Pottery Research Group's 1998 Guide to the Classification of Medieval Ceramic Forms. Reporting and cataloguing otherwise follows the minimum standards laid out in the 2001 Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Post-Roman Ceramics.

- 4.2.3 The pottery has been retained and will be archived in Valence House Museum and Archive in the London Borough of Dagenham.
- 4.2.4 The one sherd of pottery is of a fabric and form of a post-medieval in date and points to an 15th to 17th-century date for [13].

Context	Earliest date	Latest date	Assemblage size
[13]	1480	1650	S

Table 1 Pottery by context, date and size from VNC21

- 4.2.5 [13]: This deposit in Trench 1 yielded a London area post-medieval slipped red ware with a clear yellow glaze (PMSRY) carinated dish with a flanged and collared rim (Nenk 1999). This example represents one of the more commonly found fabrics and forms recovered from sites in the capital and its immediate environs, reflecting everyday usage.

4.3 The Ceramic Building Material by Han Li

- 4.3.1 The building material from the site has been recorded on paper by fabric and form using the standard recording forms and added to the Oracle database. This has involved fabric analysis undertaken with a x10 binocular microscope. The fabric codes used are further described in MOLA's resource library (Medieval and post-medieval ceramic building materials fabric dating codes).
- 4.3.2 The materials were analysed in accordance with MOLA's Building Material Sampling Strategy which also includes guidance on retention (Betts 2014).

Category	Description
Building material	Five pieces of post-Medieval roof tiles Two pieces of post-Medieval bricks.

Table 2 Building material from VNC21

- 4.3.3 There are five peg tiles found in context [9]. The tiles are of MOLA fabric (2276). These peg tiles date from 1480–1800+ and have fine moulding sand on the bottom and side of the tiles. There are four nail holes and part nail holes visible on the tiles; the diameter of the nail holes is 14-15mm. The colour of the mortar used on the tiles is cream white, which suggests pre-Great Fire date. However, there were two specs of coal or charcoal identified in the mortar of one tile. Charcoal or coal in mortar is usually an indication of post-1666 use.
- 4.3.4 There are two MOLA fabric (3032) bricks found in context [6]. These bricks were brought in after the Great Fire of London and were used up to c.1900. One brick has a fairly deep frog. Fairly deep frogs in post-Great Fire bricks usually dates from 1750–1900. Both bricks have mortar in the fabrics and have been reused after they were broken.

4.4 The site as a whole

- 4.4.1 The trench has shown there are undisturbed archaeological deposits to the north of Valence House. Although no evidence of medieval or earlier post-medieval buildings identified by Nick Holder in his 2020 report were identified, a previously unknown later 17th – 18th century wall was recorded. Overlaying the wall onto Nick's plans (see Fig 4 and Fig 5) reveals this wall may have been part of the ornamental walled gardens established in the 18th century to the east of the house. The clay and gravel (contexts [12], [14] & [15]) could represent surfaces associated with the garden.
- 4.4.2 The location of the trench was restricted by a known power cable running northwest to southeast along the eastern edge; a known telecommunication cable running northeast to southwest along the northern edge; a previously unknown service running northwest to southeast along the western edge of the trench and the house to the south. As such the trench could not be located over the area identified as possibly containing the 14th-century stable block, and it would not be possible to follow the identified wall or deposits further without first isolating the services.
- 4.4.3 The trench also confirmed the GPR interpretation of features below the ground (see Fig 3), giving confidence to utilising the GPR results for any future work. It is possibly the location of the GPR results may need adjusting, as the wall is more likely to be one of the straight lines of Feature K. As such the figure in this report shows the GPR results moved 1.5m to the east, for the original location please see the original report (MOLA 2021).
- 4.4.4 The lower deposits first seen in TP3 during the 2020 geoarchaeological work, and seen in this trench, confirm earlier activity and the potential for the survival of earlier features or structures.

5 Results of the community engagement

5.1 The 'Archaeologist for a day' course

- 5.1.1 The day ran from 9.30am-2.30pm with a break for lunch. Attendees received a briefing at the start of each morning and afternoon session and a debrief at the end of each day.
- 5.1.2 The course was designed to introduce young people from local communities to archaeological skills, techniques, and disciplines.
- 5.1.3 Daily activities varied in response to weather, MOLA visitors to site, and the archaeology uncovered:

Session	Wednesday 06/04/22	Thursday 07/04/22	Friday 08/04/22
AM	Digging	Tour of Valence House Museum including Dagenham Idol. Clay work (making pottery inspired by museum visit). Visit from MOLA Communications Team.	Visit from MOLA field photographer Visit from MOLA surveyors Site recording Digging
PM	Digging Finds processing (finds washing, spoil sieving) Metal detecting	Digging Finds processing (finds washing, spoil sieving). Metal detecting Visit from MOLA Communications Team.	Artefact curation and display Digging
Number of attendees	9 young people aged 9-16	7 young people aged 9-16 and 1 vulnerable young adult aged 21	4 young people aged 9-16 (returnees from earlier in the week)

Table 3 Activities undertaken by the participants

- 5.1.4 Before entering the trench, the participants were given a briefing on the health and safety aspects of the work (the site rules) and instructed on the safe use of the tools and equipment they would be working with.



Photo 4 Participants receiving a site briefing

- 5.1.5 As well as excavating the trench using hand tools, attendees assisted with the recording of archaeological features, processed finds (finds washing), sifted spoil and used a metal detector to recover further artefacts.



Photo 5 Participants excavating the trench



Photo 6 On-site finds processing

- 5.1.6 The storm in the afternoon of Wednesday 6th resulted in the trench being unsafe to work in on Thursday morning. Whilst the trench dried out, the opportunity was taken to reflect on the feedback from Wednesday and restructure the course delivery to better accommodate participants' needs.
- 5.1.7 A tour of Valence House Museum was organised to see other archaeological finds, including the Dagenham Idol, from the Land of the Fanns project area. Here the participants also compared earlier reconstruction plans and models of Valence House with the current building and site to identify how it had changed over time.



Photo 7 Participants observing the earliest wall of Valence House

- 5.1.8 Following the museum visit, attendees were encouraged to recreate a prehistoric pot using air drying clay, and a few took the opportunity to be more creative!



Photo 8 Re-creating prehistoric pots, and other creations

- 5.1.9 The participants were able to meet MOLA specialists in communications, photography, and geomatics (surveyors) and were given the opportunity to see what they did and how that fitted in with recording and telling the story of the site.



Photo 9 Participants engaging with MOLA Geomatics specialists

5.1.10 On Friday 8th April, attendees revisited Valence House and were encouraged to note how the museum presented and captioned its displays. They then wrote their own captions and interpretation for archaeological finds for display during the Open Day. Valence House Museum then transferred this display to cabinets in the tearoom to create a very special Young Carers' dig museum!

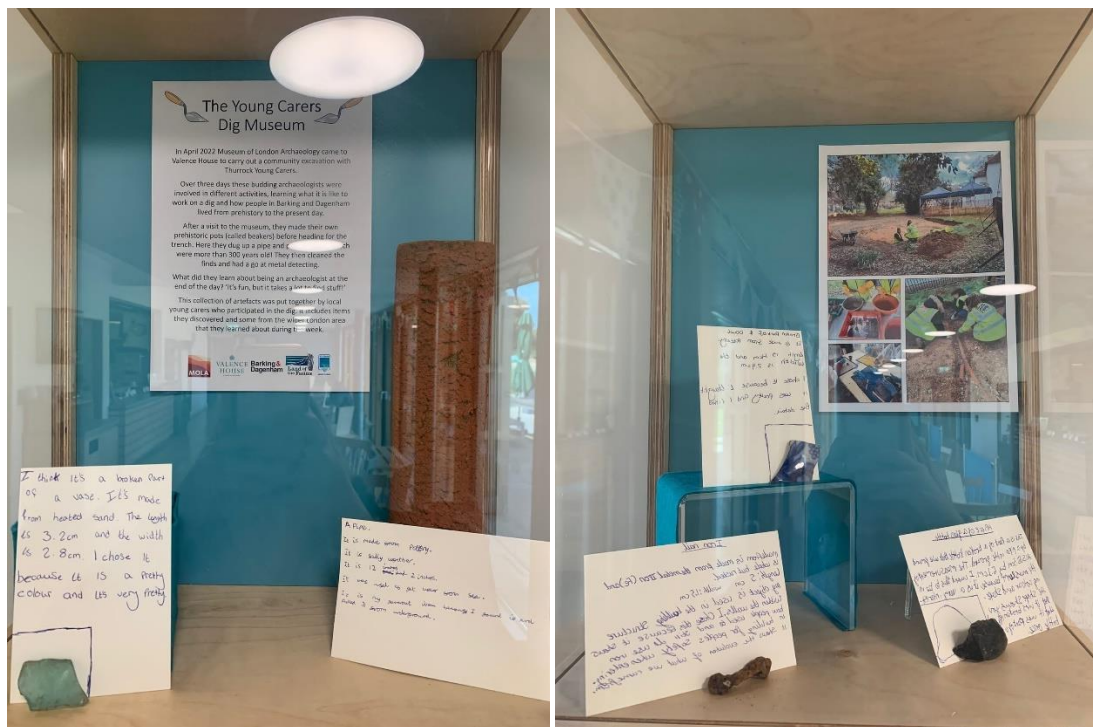


Photo 10 The Young Carers' Dig Museum in the Valence House tearoom.

5.2 Digital Engagement

- 5.2.1 For safeguarding reasons, MOLA elected not to promote the dig until it was almost complete. Instead, a social media post on the dig and a banner were used to promote the Community Open Day on Saturday 9th April 2022.

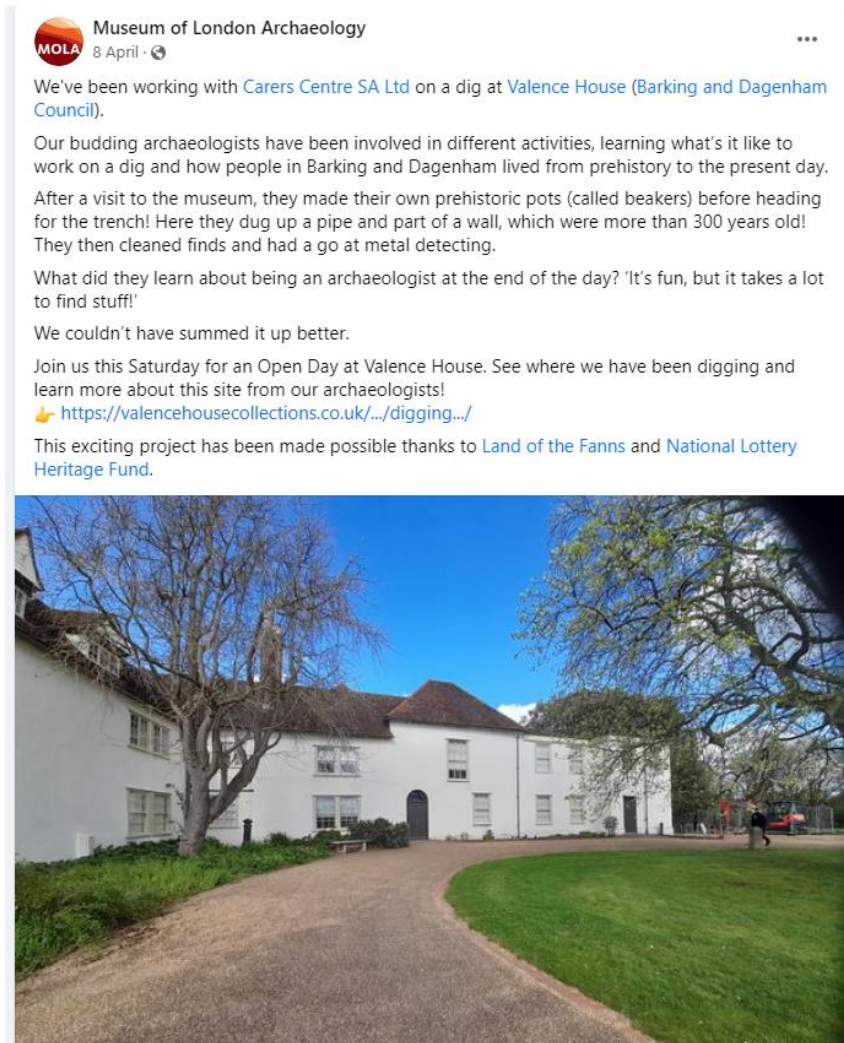


Photo 11 A screenshot of the post on MOLA social media to promote the dig and the open day

- 5.2.2 The Facebook post reached 10,630 people, had 896 engagements, 57 likes and was shared 21 times.
- 5.2.3 The twitter post received 6,296 impressions, 147 engagements, 27 likes and 13 retweets.

5.3 Community Open Day

- 5.3.1 MOLA participated in a free community open day hosted by Valence House Museum and Archive on Saturday 9th April from 10.00am – 16.00pm. Three MOLA members of staff were in attendance, as well as Benjamin Sanderson on behalf of Land of the Fanns.
- 5.3.2 This was an engaging opportunity for visitors from the local community to develop an understanding of what an archaeologist does, to see an archaeological excavation and

how the evidence uncovered shows how their local area has developed through time.

5.3.3 As the event was outside, there was no limit on the number of people that could attend the event. Over 200 people from local communities, including families, visited. Verbal qualitative feedback was captured throughout the event.

5.3.4 Some of the family visitors to the open day were home-schooling their children, which also meant that the open day further supported the project's aim to reach young people outside of formal education.



Photo 12 A MOLA archaeologist explaining the discoveries of the excavation to visitors



Photo 13 A display of some of the finds from the excavation



Photo 14 A young visitor excavating a Dig Box

6 Archaeological and community engagement significance and impact

6.1 Answering archaeological research aims

- 6.1.1 The archaeological objective of the community excavation was to confirm the extent, nature and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits or structures to the north of Valence House and to further investigate features identified in the GPR survey (MOLA 2021).
- 6.1.2 The assessment of significance of any surviving remains is undertaken in the context of the wider archaeological research priorities for London. These are set out in the Museum of London's 'A research framework for Greater London' (MOL, 2002).
- 6.1.3 A number of broad objectives and research questions have been identified for this community dig evaluation:

Archaeological fieldwork objectives:

- *Can feature B from the GPR survey (MOLA 2021) be identified?*
No. Due to services the trench could not be located over this feature.
- *Can features F from the GPR survey (MOLA 2021) be identified?*
With the current georeferencing of the GPR survey the trench was located over part of feature F; however, nothing was identified in the trench. If the GPR results are moved to the east, it is possible Feature F is the ceramic drain identified in the trench.
- *What evidence is there for earlier phases of Valence House?*
Earlier structures possibly associated with the ornamental gardens were identified.
- *Can structural remains be identified?*
Yes, structural remains were identified in the form of the fragment of wall foundation in the southeast corner of the trench. Bricks from this foundation date from 1750-1900.
- *What are the earliest deposits identified?*
The thick silty clay layer is the earliest deposit observed and is dated by pottery to between the 15th and 17th century.
- *What are the latest deposits identified?*
The latest deposits identified were the gravel surface and ceramic drain, both likely from the early 20th century.

6.2 General discussion of archaeological potential

- 6.2.1 The trench has shown a high potential for archaeological deposits and structures to survive to the north of Valence House. Although the trench could not be located over the potential 14th century-building, the trench did show there are earlier surviving structures and deposits.

6.3 Archaeological significance

- 6.3.1 The archaeology at Valence House is of high local significance. The evidence will enhance the interpretation and understanding of the house. It is also very significant

to the local population, as evidenced by over 200 people attending the community open day on Saturday 9th April 2022.

6.4 Evaluation of the community dig

- 6.4.1 16 young people aged 9-16 and 1 vulnerable adult (aged under 25) from Barking and Dagenham participated in the community dig. 4 attendees also elected to return for the Friday sessions too and several of the attendees on Wednesday had wished to return on the Thursday but there was no space. 6 of the participants had recognised Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) themselves as well as acting as carers for family members.
- 6.4.2 During each morning briefing, over a drink and a biscuit or two, participants recorded on a post-it note how they were feeling (including drawing a face) and what they were looking forward to that day or what they wanted to get out of the day (qualitative feedback). At the end of the day, they re-evaluated how they were feeling, what they enjoyed, and how their experience could have been improved (qualitative feedback). Their responsible adult also answered qualitative evaluation questions at the end of the day (Appendix 1).

Feedback from the young volunteers

Start of day	
What are you looking forward to / excited about?	How are you feeling?
I would like to find something from WW1 or 2 if not find something that's old	Happy
To find fossils that are connected to some histories and to have fun	Happy
I want to find stuff	Tired
Learn more about archaeology; understand what archaeology is; find things with value; being able to keep something of value	
I want to find fossils that have something to do with interesting things	Excited
I am here because I want to find stuff	Sad because I am tired and it's too early and I find out we are washing
I want to find something	Tired
I want to find some gold coins	Neither happy or sad
I want to find fossils and things from WW1 and WW2	Neither happy or sad
Old house	
I would like to learn about the past	Happy
	Happy
Learn about the history	
I would like to be interested in looking at the house and digging up the trench	Good

I want to find out how long has all the buildings been there	Worried
When was this museum made	Sleep
	Happy

Table 4 Feedback from the young volunteers at the start of the day

- 6.4.3 Not all of the participants answered all of the questions, but overall themes can be identified.
- 6.4.4 At the start of the day the participants were keen to learn more about archaeology, the past, and were interested in the age of the house and keen to get digging to find something.
- 6.4.5 Most were happy and a few were tired having stayed up late the evening before. One individual also noted they were sad to hear they would be “washing”. This inspired MOLA staff to reflect on the terminology they used to remove associations with domestic tasks, e.g. rather than ‘cleaning’ the trench, on days 2 and 3 the participants ‘scraped’ the trench to get it ready for a photograph. One individual noted they were worried and extra effort was made to make them feel welcome, included, and to ensure they understood what they would be doing.

End of day		
What did you find hard?	What did you enjoy?	Is there something you would change to make the course better?
Digging	Metal detecting	
Getting clay to the head	Pipe digging; sieving	Nothing
I found digging hard	I enjoyed washing stones	Change, get different jobs
Digging continuously and sieving	I enjoyed finding pieces of pottery	Moving onto different things after digging
The digging was difficult	I enjoyed metal detecting	
I found digging hard	Enjoyed a lot was washing up	Get different jobs
I didn't like to dig	I enjoyed washing up	I don't want to dig
Sieving	Uncovering the pipes	throwing my clay (from site) away
Digging was hard	Enjoyed washing up	Want to change sieving
	Cleaning	Perfect place
	I loved the digging	
	I loved the cleaning	I wish I could have gone on the wall
	Digging	
	I enjoyed for going to digging	

	I liked doing the cleaning of the pottery and I also liked the moulding the pots	
	I liked that we got to find red stones	More time to find interesting things
	I liked the red stones and the museum	

Table 5 Feedback from the young volunteers at the end of the day

- 6.4.6 During the visit to Valence House on day 2, it was discovered only 2 of the 8 attendees had visited Valence House Museum before.
- 6.4.7 At the end of the day the participants had found the digging to be the hardest part, with one individual saying the sifting of the spoil.
- 6.4.8 Interestingly, most of the participants also noted that digging – finding the drain, the wall, and uncovering finds – was what they most enjoyed. The processing (washing) was also popular – even with the individual who had been sad about it in the morning, and two people enjoyed metal detecting.
- 6.4.9 Things that could be changed would be more rotation to different jobs (tasks), the opportunity to dig in different areas and having “*more time to find interesting things*”.

Feedback from the responsible adults (group leaders) in attendance

- *What did the young people gain from today’s activities?*
“An opportunity to get out of the house, be messy and have fun away from their caring role. The young people got to know each other better and spend time with each other. They also learnt a lot about archaeology and an interesting term called “object biology”.”
“The young people gained a chance to get involved in something different – they were able to talk to people with great knowledge and ask questions about the work they are doing. Working in a team and following instructions is a life skill”
- *What did you gain from today’s activities?*
“I learnt a lot about archaeology and the impact it has in today’s society”
“Some basic knowledge regarding archaeology!! An interest in what is going on in the local area”
- *How could we improve the content and/or delivery of the activities?*
“The young people did get exhausted and restless toward the end, perhaps digging in different locations”
“Everything was delivered for the age of the young people. Everyone was friendly and willing to answer questions. Made welcome and nothing was too much trouble”
- *Any other thoughts?*
“This was a great experience and hopefully the young people will be inspired to try new things and take every possible opportunity offered.”

- 6.4.10 One of the young attendees finds it challenging to speak to adults but asked MOLA staff for more clay for their pot recreation and then asked to work on the spoil sifting activity later in the day. A responsible adult noted that this was the most communicative she had known them to be (pers. comm 2022).

6.5 Answering community engagement research aims

Community engagement objective

- *Can representative youth audiences from the Land of the Fanns project area aged 11+ be encouraged to take part in archaeological engagement outside of formal education (e.g., via youth clubs rather than secondary schools)?*

- 6.5.1 Yes, 16 local young people aged 9-16 and 1 vulnerable adult (aged under 25) from Youth Carers of Barking and Dagenham participated in the community dig. This took place outside of formal education, during the school holidays. 6 of the participants had recognised Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- 6.5.2 Visitors to the open day also included older teenagers and those completing their A-Levels who welcomed the opportunity to speak with the archaeologists. Local families who home educated their children also attended the community open day.
- 6.5.3 The excavation, finds, museum displays, and visiting MOLA specialists provided opportunities for the young participants to connect with professionals in an open, welcoming, and relaxed environment. As well as engaging young people in Land of the Fanns archaeology, this project also built confidence and life skills amongst community dig attendees. As a responsible adult from Young Carers of Barking and Dagenham noted,
- 'This was a great experience and hopefully the young people will be inspired to try new things and take every possible opportunity offered.'*

7 Community engagement lessons learnt

7.1 Audiences and promotion

- 7.1.1 The community excavation succeeded in reaching and engaging its target audience. However, the late withdrawal of a youth group partner was very challenging, and it was ultimately thanks to the efforts and hard work of Carron Cumberbatch from Young Carers of Barking and Dagenham that available spaces were filled at late notice. For future projects, MOLA would recommend working with at least 2 youth group partner organisations.
- 7.1.2 MOLA worked closely with youth partners to design the engagement programme and remove barriers to participation, such as organising and funding group transport to and from the site and providing lunches and snacks. This approach is highly recommended.
- 7.1.3 Friday 8th April was the least attended session as many participants from earlier in the week had alternative activities booked, e.g. a football day at school, so this slot could have been offered to other youth groups. However, the 4 attendees on the Friday did benefit from a ratio of 1 adult: 1 young person (see 7.2.1).
- 7.1.4 Feedback received during the open day indicated other community and youth groups, e.g., Girl Guiding and the Scouts Association, would also have been interested in being involved with the excavation.
- 7.1.5 The open day attracted mainly family visitors from the local community who had seen local promotion by Valence House or the banner put up by MOLA during the excavation. They enjoyed the opportunity to access the finds, to hear about the archaeology uncovered, and what this revealed about the history of Valence House.
- 7.1.6 However, wider or earlier promotion of the open day event may have engaged more of the new, under-represented, and diverse audiences that had been involved with the actual community excavation.

7.2 Placing the community dig into context

- 7.2.1 Feedback from the excavation indicates that young people particularly enjoyed the opportunity to try out a wide range of tasks from different archaeological disciplines. This was much easier to achieve on the final day (Friday 8th April) when there were fewer participants and a higher adult to child ratio (1 adult :1 or 2 young people). This suggests that a maximum group size of 6 would work better at other similar-sized community digs.
- 7.2.2 The opportunity for young people to visit the Valence House Museum before working on the excavation was invaluable: it gave participants a background to what archaeology is, an understanding of the local area's history, and a much better sense of what to expect on the site.
- 7.2.3 Having both MOLA and Valence House present to speak with visitors during the open day meant that the new archaeological discoveries could be tied in with historical research into the building's history.
- 7.2.4 The dig boxes and the display of finds from the excavation at the open day complimented the other activities hosted by Valence House staff and volunteers and created a well-rounded experience and opportunity for learning about archaeology for the visitors.

7.3 Promote further sense of place

- 7.3.1 The open day provided an opportunity for local people- those who lived or studied near the site- to develop their knowledge of their local area and to identify and share personal and direct links to the site through anecdotes and stories.
- 7.3.2 Many of the young visitors to the open day event were interested in history and were pleased to learn about careers and opportunities in the heritage sector.
- 7.3.3 Visitors also included children who were being home schooled, who would not have been able to engage with the archaeology or findings of the excavation had it only been offered through local schools/formal education.
- 7.3.4 Prior to the community dig few of the young people had visited Valence House Museum previously. The installation of the Young Carers' Dig Museum in the Valence House tearoom gives an exceptional legacy to the project and encourages the participants to return with friends and family to discuss what they did, creating links which will last beyond this project.

8 Acknowledgements

- 8.1.1 The authors would like to thank the team at Valence House and the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (Lisa Rigg, Leeanne Westwood, and Mark Watson) but particularly Stacy Hickling for supporting the excavation and the volunteers during their visit, and to Carron Cumberbatch and the Young Carers of Barking and Dagenham for all their hard work and enthusiasm. Also, to Benjamin Sanderson, Land of the Fanns, for supporting and funding the project. Thanks also go to Adam Single of Historic England for their advice and support. Thanks to Nick Holder for his in-depth historical and archaeological desk-based investigation made available to MOLA prior to the onsite works. The authors would also like to thank the MOLA team who worked on this project: Ruth Taylor, Stacey Hackner, Francesca Bologna, Mark Burch, Alessandra Riva, Maggie Cox and Will Stapleton, and finally, thanks to the MOLA specialists: Han Li and Nigel Jefferies.

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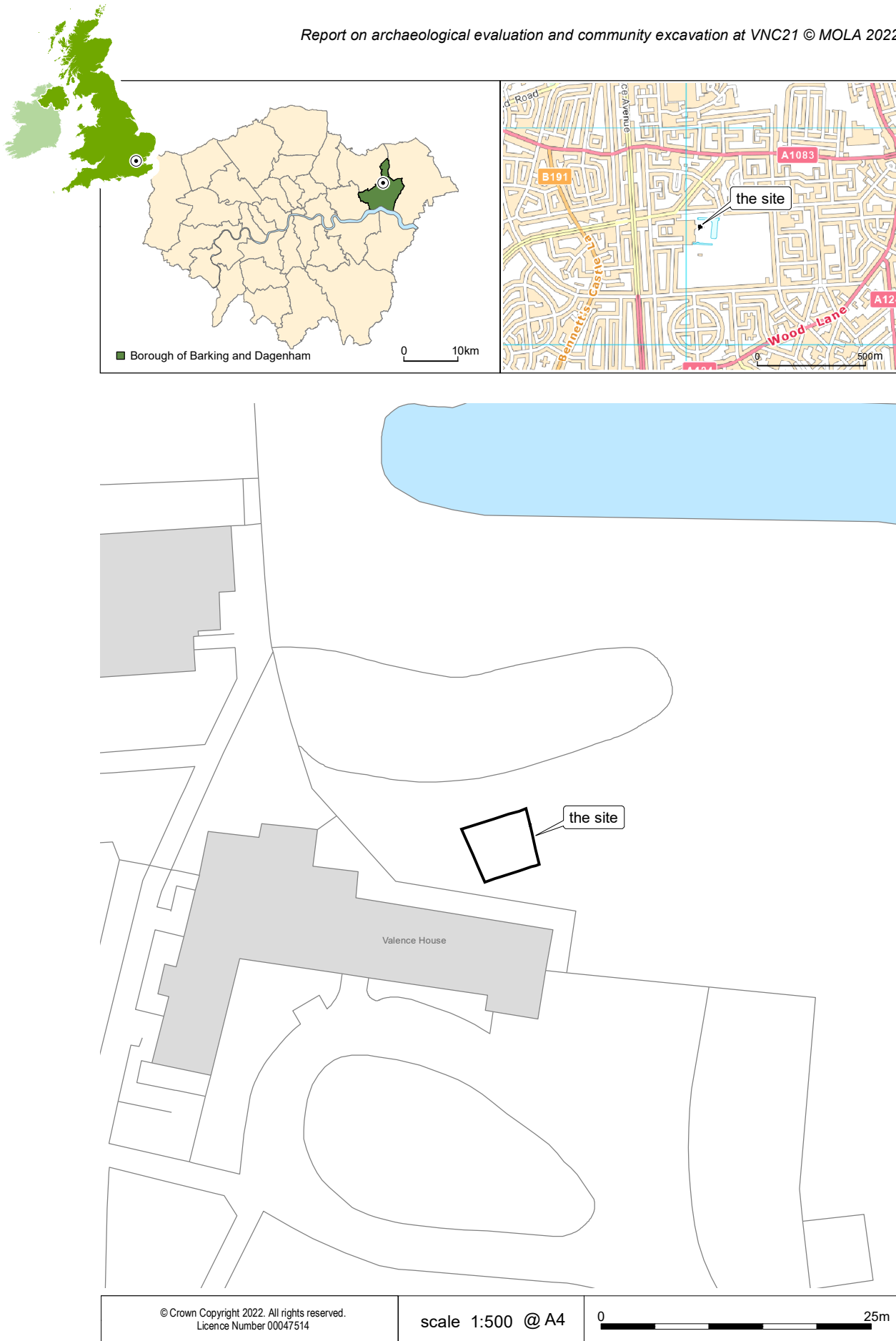


Fig 1 Site location

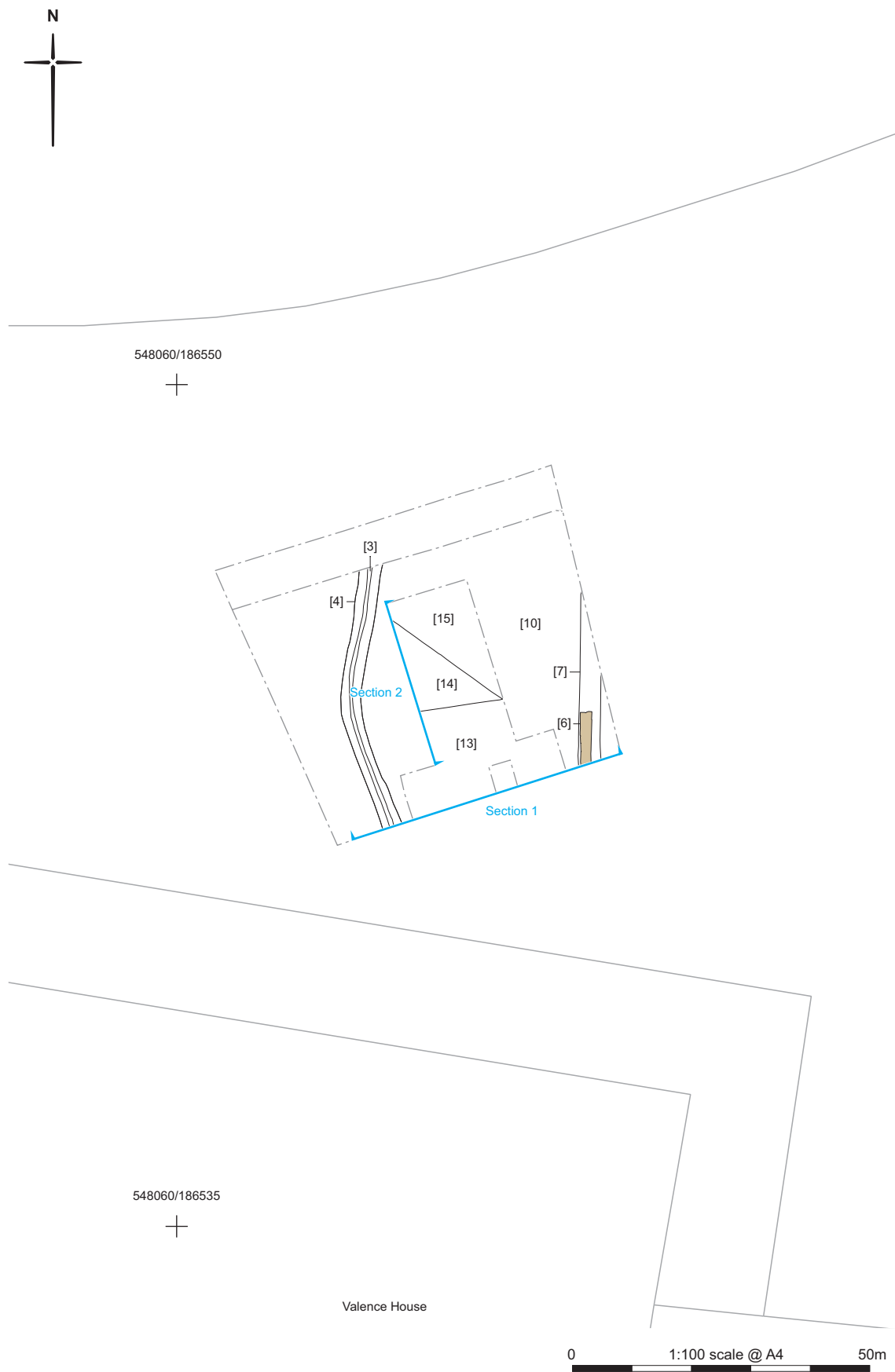


Fig 2 Trench location and plan



Fig 3 Features in the trench overlaid onto the GPR results

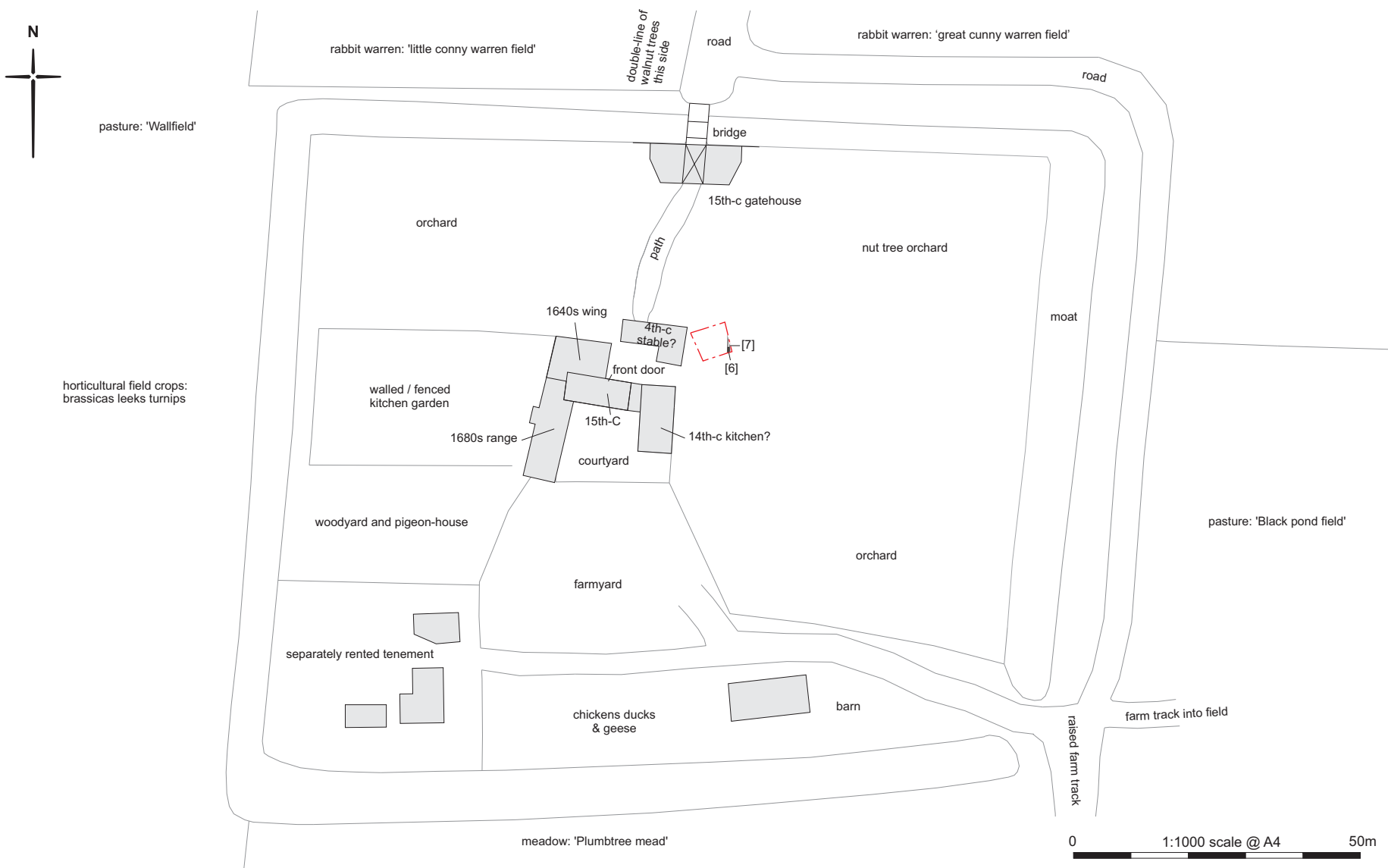


Fig 4 Wall location overlaid onto Nick Holder's 1690 reconstruction

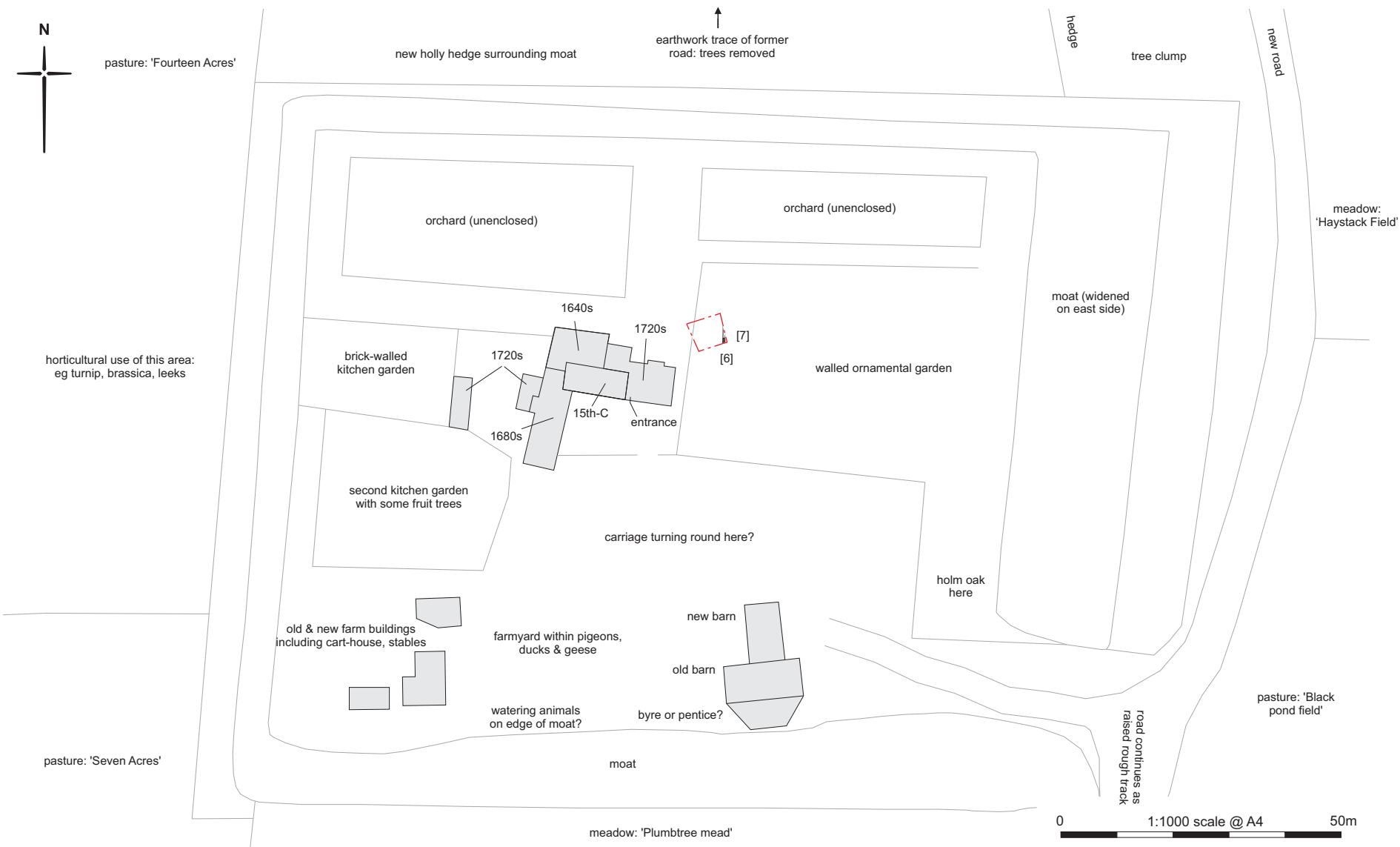


Fig 5 Wall location overlaid onto Nick Holder's 1770 reconstruction

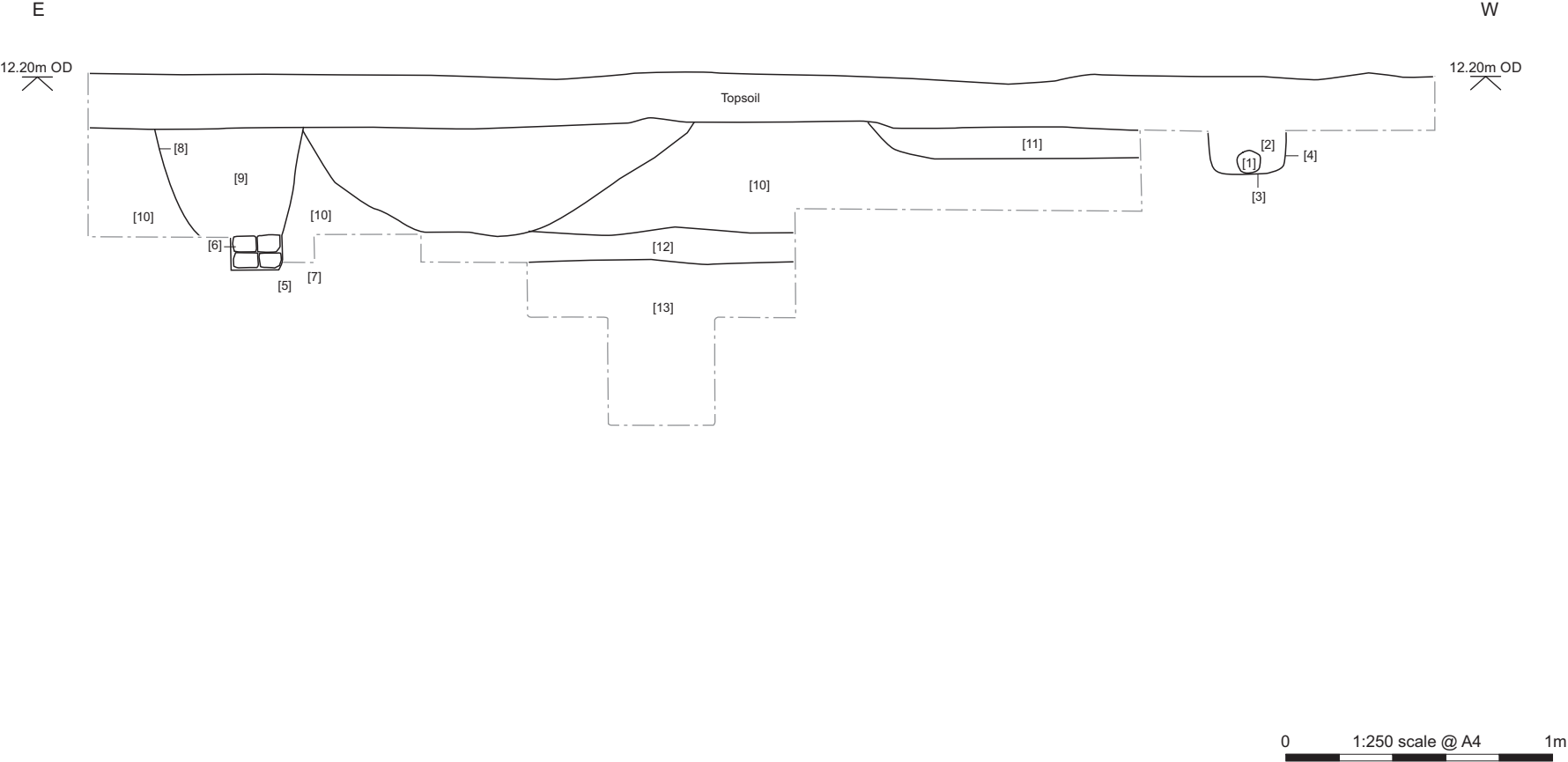


Fig 6 North facing section of the archaeological trench

10 OASIS archaeological report form

Summary for molas1-506429

OASIS ID (UID)	molas1-506429
Project Name	Evaluation and community excavation at Valence House
Sitename	
Activity type	Evaluation
Project Identifier(s)	VNC21
Planning Id	
Reason For Investigation	Community led
Organisation Responsible for work	MOLA
Project Dates	04-Apr-2022 - 09-Apr-2022
Location	Valence House NGR : TQ 48113 86530 LL : 51.55821, 0.135173 12 Fig : 548113,186530
Administrative Areas	Country : England County : Greater London District : Barking and Dagenham Parish : Barking and Dagenham, unparished area
Project Methodology	one trench was excavated by a group from a local community group
Project Results	
Keywords	
Funder	
HER	
Person Responsible for work	Jessica, Bryan
HER Identifiers	
Archives	

Appendix 1 Event feedback form

MOLA would really appreciate your feedback on today's activities: the archaeology of Valence House

Date: 06/04/22 to 08/04/22

Participants: Carers of Barking and Dagenham

1) What did the young people gain from today's activities?

2) What did you gain from today's activities?

3) How could we improve the content and/or delivery of the activities?

4) Any other thoughts?

Thank you for your time and feedback.