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Competing for the past: the London 2012 Olympic Games, archaeology and the 'wasteland'

Jonathan Gardner

> *Regeneration which wipes out or ignores the past is at best unwise.*
> Neville Gabie, artist in residence at the London 2012 Olympic Games[1]

Between 2005 and 2009 a large programme of archaeological fieldwork was carried out in Stratford, East London, on what would become the main site of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games (today called the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, but for brevity referred to here as 'the Olympic Park'; Fig.3.1). This fieldwork presented an opportunity to consider a large spatial and temporal slice through the east of London (see Powell 2012a). However, I suggest in this chapter that this work also offered the developers of the Games, the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA), another opportunity: a means of publicly legitimising and contextualising the rapid changes that the mega event would enact in Stratford. I argue that the results of these archaeological investigations came to be seen as the acceptable past of this site, while more recent uses and occupations were, in the main, denigrated or ignored by organisers and parts of the media. Such an approach is most apparent in the description of the pre-event site as an 'industrial wasteland', a place seemingly without use and without occupants (for example Neather 2014; Cameron in ODA 2011, 5; Atkins 2012, 9; LLDC 2017, para.2).

Below I compare press releases and media reports related to the archaeological fieldwork of the Games project with 'unofficial' documentation of the site's more recent past produced by photographers and activists. The aim of making a comparison such as this is, firstly, to show

Figure 3.1   The Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park today (Stratford, East London). Photograph courtesy of the author.

how, through dissemination of archaeological results, the ancient past was foregrounded and instrumentalised by the ODA and other Games supporters to legitimise the forthcoming changes in Stratford. I demonstrate that such a focus on the more distant past necessitated a partial denial of other stakeholders – namely, the occupants of the site prior to 2007 when the Games' construction began. These people appear to be missing from the project's history, their places of work, residence or leisure being labelled, and then rendered physically through compulsory purchase and demolition, a 'wasteland'. The archaeological process and its dissemination and repetition appear to have been a part of this legitimising process. Ultimately this discussion is intended to blur the boundary between what is to be valued as archaeology and what is to be considered 'waste' in the context of large-scale urban regeneration, and indeed the uses and ethics of heritage in development projects.

The mega event

Following Roche, I define 'mega events' as large-scale, globally-oriented, cultural spectacles that 'have dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance' (Roche 2000, 1), and that usually operate for only a few weeks or months. Today's most commonly recognised

mega events are the FIFA World Cup and the modern Olympic/Paralympic Games, though this term was originally associated with events such as the Great Exhibitions (for example, London 1851) and World's Fairs (see Gold and Gold 2005).

This chapter draws upon my broader research into how the materials of the past are inextricably linked with legitimising discourses connected to London's history of mega event hosting, and how these event sites' histories are mediated for a variety of purposes (for example, Gardner forthcoming a). In this case a 're-excavation' of the Olympic Park's past is particularly important as the area changes further in an ongoing 20-year 'legacy' programme – set to include the building of thousands of new homes, a campus of University College London (UCL East), an outpost of the V&A (V&A East) and numerous office developments.

The importance of the past to such mega events, whether related to exhibitions or sporting activities, cannot be understated (Gardner forthcoming a; 2018). At a material level, the past activities of a host site often condition its suitability for hosting a mega event. Frequently these are liminal urban zones or industrial areas (for example, Strohmayer 2013). This suitability also relies on the discursive construction and reification of a landscape or neighbourhood – change must be seen to be desirable and possible, and the past or existing landscapes must be 'cast out' or contrasted with that which is to come (Doron 2000). Such representations have a powerful role in helping to shape how we conceptualise and use spaces (Eade 2000, 4–9), whether through recounting the findings of archaeologists or some other means such as oral history or photography.

McAtackney and Ryzewksi note that '[a]rchaeology has always had the potential to show how interpreting material realities can reveal different and even deliberately obfuscated narratives of recent history […]' (McAtackney and Ryzewski 2017, 20). Following this, I suggest that a contemporary archaeology of London 2012 cannot only consider its official programme of archaeological excavation, but also must map how these findings interact with, or are contradicted by, other traces or narratives. Hence this chapter's comparative focus and my interest in the discursive construction of 'the past' in the support or contestation of this mega event.

This research draws methodologically upon a form of 'critical discourse analysis' – analysing publicly available texts and other media for keywords, themes and their interrelationships which help to constitute value claims about particular subjects (see Wu and Hu 2015; Waterton et al. 2006). Press releases and other public statements produced by

archaeologists, the Games' organisers and others in relation to the Olympic Park can be productively compared for the claims they make about the nature of the past here (see Shoup 2006 for another example).[2] The traces of this place's past and their selective recording, destruction and promotion have created a diversity of 'heritage discourses', not all officially sanctioned, which continue to influence the Games' legacy today.

Previous work

To date, little archaeological or heritage-based research has been carried out in relation to the modern Olympic Games or mega events more generally (see however Nordin 2011; Penrose 2012; Hamilakis 2007, chapter 1; Graff 2012). Importantly for this study, Angela Piccini has shown – through a contemporary archaeological examination of the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games – that the artistic and cultural programmes of such spectacles ('official' and otherwise) highlight their political and material incongruities. She further argues that such an approach, in 'presencing absenced pasts', draws attention to alternative viewpoints and histories that are all too readily dismissed by organisers (Piccini 2012, 300).

A vast literature exists on the hosting of mega events more generally (see Gold and Gold 2005). Of most importance here are those works discussing the discursive and semiotic content of their displays and performances, given mega events' emphasis on the role of imagined national pasts or distant civilisations with regards to legitimising narratives (for example, Gillooly 2007; Jolivette 2009; Silk 2015; Moser 2012). Once again, however, little of this work is overtly attuned to how heritage or archaeology intersects with mega event development itself, a lacuna which the present work seeks to address.

With regards to the London 2012 Olympic Games, a large number of works have been written from a more straightforwardly historical point of view or related to planning and sociological issues (for example, Poynter and MacRury 2009; Cohen 2013; Bernstock 2014). In these works the past of Stratford is seen as an important factor in the hosting of the Games, and is often connected to the economic marginalisation and deprivation the area continues to face. Thus, though not articulated as 'heritage', these authors recognise the burden of the past in this place and appreciate that a *tabula rasa* model of development is 'misguided at best', as Gabie's quote at the beginning of this chapter acknowledges.

The context of the 2012 bid

Arguments are often made that Olympic Games are nakedly neoliberal land-grabs disguised as cultural programming, and, with regard to London 2012, issues such as the sell-off of public assets or sponsorship and tax deals may support this view (Sherwin 2011; Boykoff 2013, 85). However, given the vast amount of state funding the project received, this was not a straightforward corporate sell-off; it was even described as 'a massive Keynesian boost to the economy' by then Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt in 2012 (quoted in Boykoff 2013, 81).

The primary motivation for hosting the Games was ostensibly one of regenerating the East End and attracting investment to what had become, since the closure of London's docks from the 1960s onwards, one of the most economically depressed areas in the UK.

The effect of the bid (London winning against Paris on 6 July 2005), and the subsequent formation of the Olympic Delivery Authority, was ultimately to transform a huge area of the East End (and sites elsewhere), to build an entirely new set of stadia and facilities for the Games and to lay the foundations for legacy development. This relied upon removal of the Stratford site's existing businesses and residents. They were removed from the development area through a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) served in late 2005 and enforced on 2 July 2007 (Davies et al. 2017, 192).[3]

There remain serious questions around whether mega events enacted through such processes can really achieve an equitable 'regeneration' and truly empower local communities (Cohen and Watt 2017) – and indeed whether cultural mega projects can 'cure' urban ills more generally (for example, Butler 2007). I will return to this below, but pause for now to explore briefly the concept of 'wasteland'.

Wasted

What makes a wasteland? In the case of London 2012 the language used to describe its Stratford site by its developers and much of the media seems to refer to a literal 'waste of space': terms such as 'scarred' and 'underdeveloped', used by the ODA in pre-Games documents, especially emphasise this (Armitt in 2011, 20; 2007a, 4). However, a place that becomes labelled as wasteland is rarely considered as such until it is politically expedient to do so. I would argue that the apparent marginality of places such as Stratford's Olympic site, geographical or otherwise,

exists for a reason. They were (and are) important as sites of productivity, employment, low-cost housing, utilities and places of leisure (see Clifford 2008; Davis 2009). Below I demonstrate that this labelling also denies the history of such activities and the importance of their relationship to the wider city, replacing complexity with simplicity and teleology, and in this case seems to emphasise and value a distant archaeological past rather than the more recent history of the site.

The wasteland is not simply transformed through repetition of how recent past uses of the area were unacceptable, but also through acts of 'mitigation', both archaeological and otherwise (for instance environmental decontamination), of the stuff of the past. A material and human absence must be created, in order to produce space for 'regeneration' to occur. This happened in Stratford through compulsory purchase and also, I would suggest, through officially sanctioned archaeological work, whereby only certain traces of the past were recorded while others were forgotten. This erasure was then further enacted through demolition of buildings and re-landscaping to create the new Olympic Park. Lastly, I suggest the promotion and discussion of these processes of removal themselves also served as a means of underpinning the regeneration narrative. Such processes enabled the ODA to demonstrate that they cared about the past enough to treat it with respect (i.e. showing that they 'saved' archaeology – despite this being a standard requirement on almost all UK development projects). It is to this archaeological process that I now turn.

Digging the wasteland

Archaeologists (Fig.3.2) who took part in the excavations for the Olympic and Paralympic Games – one of the largest archaeological programmes London has ever seen – worked on 122 evaluation trenches and 8 larger excavations, alongside geoarchaeologists and buildings specialists (Powell 2012a). This work targeted known archaeological locations as well as sampling an overall percentage of the Olympic Park area. It was carried out as a part of a planning condition, the developers being required to mitigate damage to archaeological and heritage resources (ODA 2007b). Though simplified for brevity here, the project was funded by the developer (i.e. the ODA). The mitigation was specified by the government's heritage monitor (English Heritage – now Historic England), managed by heritage consultants (see Atkins n.d.); the work was then tendered for and carried out by contract archaeology companies.

Figure 3.2   The author drawing an excavated rowing boat in December 2007. This site now lies beneath the main Olympic Stadium (the London Stadium). Photograph © Maggie Cox/MOLA 2007.

The fieldwork, running mainly through 2007–8, recovered and recorded material from prehistory to the present. Notable sites included a small settlement and field systems encompassing successive uses from the Middle Bronze Age to Late Iron Age, a succession of mill buildings dating from the late sixteenth century onwards and sealed by a late Victorian street, an early nineteenth-century reused ship's boat and an anti-aircraft gun emplacement from the Second World War, among many other discoveries (see Powell 2012a). Rather than discuss these findings in depth here, I instead now turn to how they arguably played a role in legitimising the transformation that the mega event brought to this area.

The past as PR

I contend here that the presentation of the archaeological past, and publicity about the fieldwork programme itself – albeit a small part of the total Games preparations – were useful from a public relations standpoint for the ODA and the government in their promotion of the mega event. Beyond simply fulfilling their planning legislation obligations, the evidence of the past was carefully deployed by the developers to contextualise and support the massive changes being made to the area.

Due to the nature of contractor-client relationships in commercial archaeology, generally speaking mediation of archaeological findings on large projects is handled by the client or their representatives (for example, consultants) rather than archaeologists themselves. As a consequence, it is often the case that archaeologists do not have full control over how their results are presented. The use of archaeology for PR, by state-led projects in particular, is well documented. It often serves a variety of functions, from emphasising national identity to encouraging tourism (for example, Silberman 2007), obfuscation of the politicised nature of developments or the encouragement of 'cultural continuity' (Shoup 2006, 239). While I do not of course imply any dishonesty or inaccuracy related to archaeological works on the Games project, nonetheless, as we will see, the traces of the past can have a multitude of uses in the present and not only for archaeological interpretation.

Below I have analysed a series of press releases published by the ODA discussing the archaeological work. In doing so, I explore how the interpretation of the past was utilised to add support to what might otherwise have been seen as an expensive and disruptive mega project. These are compared with the mediation of these findings by others (such as news outlets), prior to a consideration of alternative histories of the site from the recent past in the next section.

In analysis of these press releases certain themes emerge. The first is a progressive, narrative-driven discourse highlighting the physical remains excavated. This was in keeping with the ODA's 'Demolish. Dig. Design.' mantra (Fig.3.3), where the past is cared for and studied, but ultimately removed for the event to take place.

The first press release related to archaeology appeared on 28 November 2007. Entitled *Archaeological Work on Games Site finds Evidence of the First Londoners and Romans*, it told us how 'the first Londoners … lived in thatched circular mud huts on the site that will boast a Zaha Hadid designed Aquatics Centre' and, following descriptions of ancient ceramics, that 'The Aquatics Centre will be beside the river, which is currently being widened by eight metres as part of a programme to restore the ancient waterways of the Lower Lea Valley' (ODA 2007c). Of most interest here is the ODA's emphasis on this idea of 'first Londoners', and the conscious linking of this with the developments taking place with the Aquatics Centre.[4]

This linking of past and present is repeated in a later release about the same site from March 2008, which noted that 'archaeologists have uncovered the skeletons of early Eastenders buried in graves dating

Figure 3.3 'Demolish, Dig. Design.': a hoarding from the Olympic Park in 2007. Photograph by Gordon Joly (cropped). CC BY-SA 2.0 2007. Available from: https://flic.kr/p/4aSaur.

back to the Iron Age on the London 2012 Olympic Park'. Tessa Jowell (then Olympics Minister) is here quoted as saying: 'The "big dig" on the Olympic Park offers a unique opportunity to witness and understand the fascinating history of this part of east London from ancient to modern' (ODA 2008a). In such language these releases attempt to connect these mid-Iron Age people and the development taking place for the Games. I return to this shortly, but first consider a few more examples.

Another thread seems to be the use of the past to show that rapid and large-scale transformation here was natural and legitimate, based on the history of the area. The ODA's then chief executive notes, also in the initial press release, that the Olympic development is 'a story of change and transformation dating back centuries' (2007c). This view is subsequently repeated by one of the lead archaeologists on the project:

> [...] the change represented by the construction of the Olympics is absolutely in keeping with all the change that's happened in the Lea Valley beforehand – it's just happening in a shorter time period.
> (ODA 2009a 0:1:52)

In such mediation one sometimes gets the sense that the archaeology is useful to the ODA insofar as it legitimises their plans and does not interfere with construction, rather than primarily as a source of information about the past. Another frequent theme in such documents is the repetition of the idea that archaeologists were 'given the opportunity' to work on the site, suggesting magnanimity on the ODA's part; for instance, 'The ODA invited [archaeologists] to look for evidence [...]' (2008b). This appears somewhat misleading, given that the archaeological companies involved were not 'invited' onto to the site, but were involved in a standard process of competitive tendering for the work that the developer was required to carry out, as with any other construction project.

Let us consider a few other sources, starting with the primary heritage consultancy on the project, Atkins Global. In a statement entitled *Digging Olympic Gold* (Atkins n.d.), describing the cultural heritage investigations carried out under their management during the preparations for London 2012, they note that:

> Used effectively, archaeology can help to avoid damage to potentially significant finds and make sure that everyone – from developers to the local community – views a project favourably from the start and long after the work is done.

Later they also suggest that rather than act as a 'barrier' to developers, a project such as London 2012 'demonstrates how archaeologists can [...] turn what might be a negative into long-lasting positives'. (Atkins n.d.)

Such statements show that London 2012's developers and their representatives were aware of the potential for archaeology to be employed as a means of reducing perceived negative impacts associated with the development, rather than solely being a requirement for planning or opportunity of scientific enquiry.

Dissemination of the results of the Olympic archaeological programme was also assisted by extensive media interest. Articles appeared regularly in mainstream outlets (for example, Brown 2006; Brooke 2008; BBC 2009; *Daily Mail* 2009), again using tropes of 'gold' and 'East Enders', sometimes alongside the words 'wasteland' or similar to label the more recent past. Archaeological magazines also took note of the developments. *Current Archaeology*, having advertised the piece on its front cover as *The first East Enders: 10,000 year tale of stinky Stratford*, concluded their 2000-word article with:

> Once the Victorian industry declined, there was little left to recommend the region, making it the perfect dumping ground for bombed-out building rubble and other landfill. It is only now the Olympic Park has opened a new chapter in the Lea's history that the site has been revitalised.
>
> (Symonds 2012)

Clearly such coverage tends to use archaeological findings rather simplistically. Buried treasure and ancient bodies are common tropes, some of which tend to be encouraged by archaeologists themselves (Ascherson 2004). Rather than focus on inaccuracy or authenticity (see chapters in Clack and Brittain 2007), it is worth asking what the effect of such repetition and translation achieved in the case of London 2012.

I suggest that the archaeology presented by the ODA and others, was not simply useful as a tool or method of 'mitigation' of the pre-Park landscape, but also, more importantly, 'as a socio-political actor in itself', generating effects which went beyond headlines (Zorzin 2015, 117). As Atkins' statement above shows, it would appear that developers realise that the past can be useful as a form of public relations management and that archaeological knowledge, and the value claims it enacts, can operate as a commodity (though not necessarily monetarily based). An archaeological perspective is valued for what it tells us about the past – but *also* for what it permits in the present and in the future (Moshenska 2010; Gestrich 2011; Gardner forthcoming b; Haber 2015). Archaeological labour granted the ODA both a means of 'meeting their local authority requirements' (Atkins n.d.) and an opportunity to show that they cared about their responsibilities as developers. As a means of legitimising the project, this tied in with a discourse of improvement and, especially, 'legacy', foregrounded by the UK government. In 2009 the ODA's chairman wrote in another press release that:

> Archaeologists and local people have had the opportunity to learn more about the development of Lower Lea Valley and the people that have lived here for thousands of years before it is transformed for future generations.
>
> (ODA 2009b)

Thus the past (or at least most of it) was arguably seen as a resource for the new development and figuratively linked to the future. This foregrounding of a particular narrative of what the past was like here – i.e. mainly presented as archaeology and very much 'over' – was reliant on an 'other', much more negative vision of more recent times, the late

twentieth-century 'wasteland'. Rightly we should ask: was the wasteland really 'wasted'? If not, what then was the nature of this recent past? How was *it* presented outside of ODA public relations or mainstream media?

Re-populating the wasteland

This other past, the recent 'prehistory' of the Olympic Park (i.e. the late twentieth and early twenty-first-century period prior to July 2007 when Games construction began apace), has until recently gone mostly undiscussed, with the wasteland narrative still prevalent today (see, for example, public comments on Burrows 2017). Rather than reproduce more press releases, I instead turn to those who demonstrated that the site was anything but empty in the run-up to the Games' development. I suggest that the activities taking place here can be seen to be as much a part of the heritage of this landscape as the archaeological discoveries discussed above.

A recent publication entitled *Dispersal*, by Davies et al., combines photography, ethnography and mapping (Davies et al. 2017). It provides a reminder of just how diverse the activities in the pre-Olympic zone were up until 2007 (Fig.3.4). The *Dispersal* archive, documenting 70 businesses (out of over 280, employing in total more than 5000 people prior to 2007), was created and presented by photographers Marion Davies and Debra Rapp. Their intention was to 'document a visual history of a place and community that was about to vanish' (Davies et al. 2017, 33). As Davies points out, the work also aimed to question 'how it [the area] was represented […] as a defunct and decaying wasteland in east London, somewhere that was "ripe for redevelopment"' (Davies et al. 2017, 1).[5]

Their work shows that the 'industrial heritage' of the Lea Valley and Stratford was anything but consigned to history. In meeting galvanisers, belt makers, set designers, salmon smokers, car repairers and many others, they showed that the site was still economically active and far from 'defunct'. The reasons for the success of these latest businesses were intermingled with the history of the landscape: the growth of London required marginal places such as Stratford to function. Relatively cheap land, access to water, railways and then roads, and a prevailing westerly wind meant that certain industries could set up here and flourish. These latest occupants featured in *Dispersal* continued to serve the city, despite the area's supposed post-industriality. Yet it was this social and spatial marginality that also made the area especially vulnerable to redevelopment (see also Strohmayer 2013).
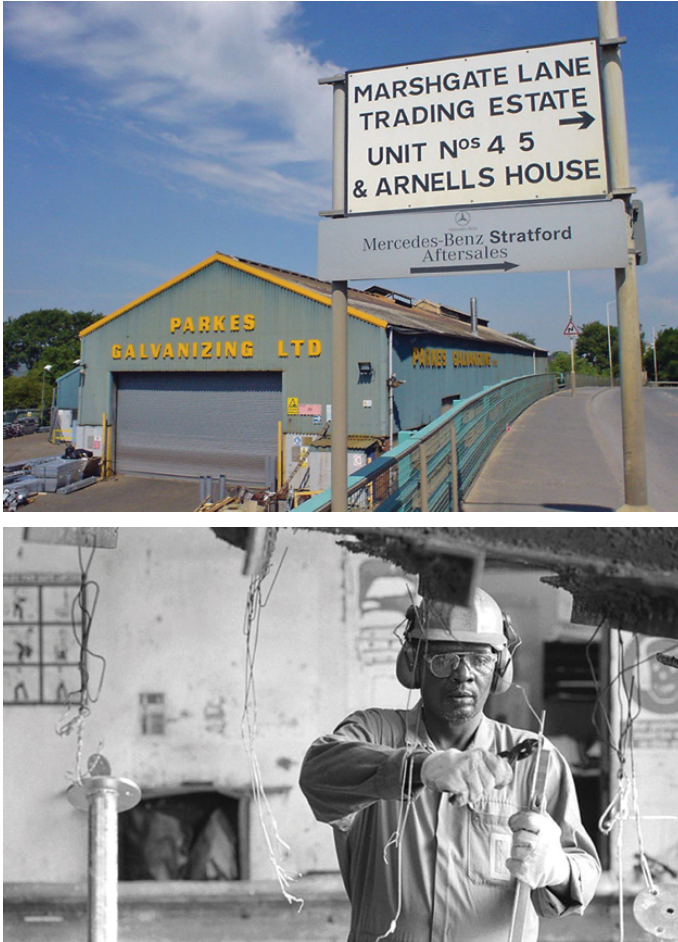
Figure 3.4 (above): Parkes Galvanizing Ltd. This 50-year-old enterprise had to leave the Park for the construction of the main Stadium. Photograph by Diamond Geezer (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0) Diamond Geezer 2006. Retrieved from: https://flic.kr/p/23JXZd; (below): An operative working within Parkes prior to 2007, photographed as part of the *Dispersal* project. Photograph © Marion Davies 2019.

In his foreword to *Dispersal,* photographer Mike Seaborne notes that there was a near-total failure of 'official' archaeology in the Games project to record these businesses and indeed the lives intertwined with this place. Without the *Dispersal* photographers and Juliet Davis' associated research, he suggests that they 'would have been effectively written out of the story'

(in Davies et al. 2017, viii). This calls into question what form archaeo-logical/heritage investigations (for example, Powell 2012b, foreword) should have taken here, especially with Seaborne's suggestion that the area's more recent heritage was missed by the official programme of work. Standing buildings research did occur on modern structures, for example the electricity pylons of the area, as part of the official archaeological programme (Dwyer 2007), and an oral history recording of a small subset of former workers in the wider area was undertaken (ECH 2010). However, little work appears to have been undertaken to engage with the thousands of workers or hundreds of residents who were required to move out for the Games.

Dispersal was not the only means by which the activities of the area's recent past were documented. For example, a dedicated network of activists campaigned for those who had to leave their homes to make way for the event – again often drawing upon what might be seen as heritage discourses, drawing attention to their longevity of occupation and an autochthonic connection to the area, but also a close sense of community. In some cases this took the form of overt anti-Olympic activism, with the dogged action of websites such as *gamesmonitor.com*, who highlighted issues ranging from the CPO, job losses, security and the contamination of the Park. This website and others now also act as a record of what has changed in the Park area, and indeed as an archive of efforts to resist such change and document it. A tradition of activism also survives today in ongoing campaigns such as *Save Hackney Wick* (*http://savehack-neywick.org/*), where artists and residents on the fringes of the Olympic Park resist demolition and evictions.

Another group displaced by the Games' development was the Manor Garden Allotments Society, who campaigned to save their plots of land close to the Olympic Velodrome site. Understandably they made much of their close connection with land they had occupied since the 1920s in their campaign against removal (Life Island 2014), which was ultimately unsuccessful. Such a place, though small-scale and less likely to generate newspaper headlines than prehistoric villages or buried boats, should arguably have been recognised as part of a living heritage tradition. The allotments, having transformed an originally marginal marshy site adjacent to a landfill, were somewhere valued and treasured; they were explicitly recognised by users as heritage (MGS 2016). Despite this, however, they seem to have been left untroubled by official archaeological investigations and were removed in late 2007. Traces of this heritage were recorded only through the efforts of individuals such as photographer Peter Marshall (Fig.3.5) and the members of the Society

Figure 3.5   The Manor Garden Allotments in early 2007. Photograph © 2007 Peter Marshall, mylondondiary.co.uk.

(who eventually moved to a new site provided by the Games' developers outside the Park boundaries).

Like the work of Davies and Rapp, such efforts, and those of others who documented acts of resistance and other recent heritage of the area (for example, Husni-Bey 2012; Dixon in Gabie 2012, 125), stand as an alternative archaeology of the recent past here, challenging the idea that this was an empty wasteland.

Discussion: the valuation of the past

The 'official' presentation of the past of the Olympic Park by its developers suggests that any notion of this place's historical value appears to stop after the Second World War. As discussed above, the period from 1945 to 2012 saw further changes in the area, reducing it in the views of some to a spatial and temporal 'wasteland'. This suggests a powerful value-judgement at play and, in the language of the mega event, that the past was something to be carefully 'mitigated' or managed. Mitigation in this sense was not only to protect *some* of said past's material remains through archaeological fieldwork, but also to legitimise the removal of traces of more recent activity. Why though was this recent past not seen as a form of heritage by the project?

A partial answer may be simply that the favouring of certain periods by the ODA was a result of contract archaeology's reliance on UK legislative heritage frameworks and guidance by monitoring bodies such as Historic England (named English Heritage at the time of the project) in the run-up to the Games specifying the mitigation work. The emphasis in such guidance's language is of the relative 'significance' of sites or buildings, and thus the level of 'intervention' (recording or preservation) they require (English Heritage 2008, MOLAS 2002). Such frameworks tend to consider the recent past as less significant than more distant eras, usually based on a principle of scarcity, and have rarely fully addressed considerations such as intangible heritage value to users in the present. Although the programme of works at the Olympic Park was understandably guided by these approaches (ODA 2007b), the likes of recording the mid-to-late twentieth-century electricity pylons mentioned above show there is considerable variation in the interpretation of 'value' as defined by such guidance (though ultimately these were not included in the Games published monograph, see Dwyer 2007). It nonetheless seems that these relatively 'safe' approaches to the past influenced the ODA's dissemination strategy. That said, however, this is clearly not the whole story of why only more distant periods were discussed positively with regards to the Park's past, nor should the representativeness of such frameworks be accepted without question.

If this was simply an issue of relative research priorities by heritage monitoring bodies, archaeological consultants or contractors, then one has to ask why there was still this need to cast the more recent past negatively as a wasteland. Some of this denigration would seem to be due to the need to present the mega event as a progressive 'public good' despite the cost to the taxpayer (which could easily be contrasted with the relative poverty of its host area) and, by 2009, the beginnings of fiscal austerity and growing unemployment (Zimbalist 2015, 109). I would suggest progress here relied upon a narrative of the 'cleaning up' and 'improvement' of the East End, described as 'regeneration'.

In this conception it seems the still extant industrial past jarred with post-industrial and neoliberal visions of what inner London was 'meant' to be like (i.e. its economy to be based around service industries such as finance rather than traditional industry; Eade 2000, 133–4). Along with this need for post-industrialism, the low-cost housing, allotments and the 'patchwork' of uses of the pre-Olympic site seemingly did not fit with these more future-oriented visions of the city. Arguably this vision of the area as requiring 'transformation' and regeneration also relates to the historical denigration of the 'East End' as a slum or wilderness more

generally by the capital's wealthier and more politically powerful West End (Cohen 2013, chapter 1; Eade 2000).

Thus the duality in the use of the past here can be seen as 'pharmakonic': both 'poison' and 'cure', 'treasure' or 'trash'; residing in indeterminacy, flickering between the need to excavate or bury (Butler 2011; Derrida 1981). The past at the Olympic Park at times presented the 'opportunity' to create knowledge about history and to establish a sense of place for the new Park, at least in its archaeological manifestations. This relatively 'ancient past' was presented in stark contrast to negative visions of the site's 'recent past': as messy, piecemeal and anachronistic, jarring with what was seen to be a necessary change for regeneration (Cohen 2013, 210). Archaeology was arguably useful as an opportunity for good public relations for the organisers in that it could be related to a narrative of continuous change and improvement. This discourse seemed to suggest that the likes of industrial employment in this area was now naturally 'over', an activity only legitimate when considered in the past, rather than one which had ongoing historical continuity and that remained active in the present (see Gardner 2013).

Haber notes that the expert knowledge and claims to truth that professional archaeology makes in a development context often occurs at the expense of the living communities and living heritage in the place being transformed (Haber 2015, 105). This may have occurred, even if inadvertently, in Stratford's case. This is not to single out for criticism the archaeologists, consultants or others for a lack of attention to living communities, especially given the circumstances of a major project like this – strict control over dissemination, and tight constraints on budget and time – but it *is* to argue that a major opportunity may have been missed here. Those forced to move from the site could have been included to a much greater degree as part of the heritage investigations carried out here, rather than having their homes, businesses, and spaces of leisure consigned to a wasteland. This is not to say archaeologists could have stopped demolition or compulsory purchase orders, or necessarily been able to change the narrative of the ODA. However, I would suggest that heritage professionals could have better supported those who challenged and resisted the 'wasteland' narrative through demonstrating that the people dwelling and working here up until 2007 had their own connection to the area's history and heritage that was also worthy of recognition.

It is rare for individual archaeologists to speak out against a development or to overtly discuss the ethics of working on a particular project. This is for a variety of compelling reasons, including the precarious nature of employment, the risk of losing repeat work and so forth. In

some rare cases, however, archaeologists have actively sided with those opposed to what they felt to be unsustainable or unethical forms of development, most notably on dam projects (for example, Ronayne 2006; Kleinitz and Näser 2013). While this may be unlikely to happen in a UK context, a much stronger engagement with the discussion of ethics in the commercial sector is required. I would suggest that archaeologists *should* be questioning the narrative of such large projects, to advocate for more engagement with those who these schemes displace and to attempt to regain some control of the messages or narratives associated with their findings. Archaeological work can be a form of profit-making enterprise and contract archaeologists are not simply victims of power: they are, at times, complicit in its operation (Haber 2015; Hutchings and Salle 2015; Gardner forthcoming b).

In the case of London 2012, a more socially engaged archaeology could have shown that the industrial and social history the archaeologists documented so well up until the mid-twentieth century was not only dead and buried in the wasteland, but that the landscape they picked through had, until only a few months before, been a place of work for thousands and a home for hundreds more. In essence, their explorations could have been viewed not simply as an 'opportunity' to excavate London's rich past, but also to highlight its diverse present. As we are now the mega event's legacy period, with the development of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park continuing apace, we are presented – in the establishment of institutions such as UCL East and V&A East here – with an opportunity to begin to redress this imbalance.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Gabie 2012, 125.
2. The opinions of the author are solely his own. They do not reflect the position of any archaeological company he has previously worked for, nor any other entity or individual involved with the Olympic Project. All information discussed in this chapter regarding the archaeological works programme is derived from material in the public domain which can be found by following the links in the references.

3. CPO is also known as 'eminent domain'.
4. The term 'Londoner' is something of a misnomer as London was not founded until the AD 50s and was then some 6 km to the southwest. While 'East Ender' is geographically more accurate, it may also be a couple of centuries premature.
5. Davis' research on this process of dispersal of existing businesses is presented with the photographs in the same volume: Davies et al. 2017.

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