

An Archaeological Watching Brief at 50-52 Brushfield Street, London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Site Code: BFZ 05

Central National Grid Reference: TQ 3354 8175

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1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the background and findings of an intermittent archaeological watching brief undertaken at 52 Brushfield St; London, E1 6AG (Fig.1) from the 4th to 18th July 2005.
- 1.2 The work comprised an extension to an existing cellar to enlarge café facilities.
- 1.3 The ground reduction revealed a sequence of deposits dating from the early post medieval period to the late 20th Century. There was no evidence of Roman cemetery remains.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited between the 4th to 18th July 2005, on ground reduction carried out at 50 Brushfield St; London, E1 6AG National Grid Reference TQ 3354 8175.
- 2.2 The ground reduction involved the extension of an existing cellar beneath the standing structure. Initial ground reduction works had commenced prior to the involvement of archaeologists. These unobserved works included the excavation of underpinning trenches along three existing walls and excavation of all deposits from the southern part of the site.
- 2.2 GLAAS, on behalf of LB Tower Hamlets, organised the watching brief on behalf of the client, Peter Sinden. The ground reduction work was monitored in order to ascertain the extent of archaeological strata within the study area, it being located within a known area of archaeological sensitivity.
- 2.3 The work was commissioned by Peter Sinden. The author undertook the watching brief and was project managed by Gary Brown.
- 2.4 The site code is BFZ 05



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Figure 1
Site Location
1:20,000

3 PLANNING BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The subject site is located in an area of archaeological sensitivity and this is reflected in it being included in an Archaeological Priority Area as defined in the borough's UDP.
- 3.2 The watching brief was a planning condition applied by the borough and administered by the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service on their behalf. Mr Sinden commissioned Pre-Construct Archaeology to undertake the intermittent watching brief. The work undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology conformed to the Guidance Notes produced by the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service, and to the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.
- 3.3 The purpose of the investigation was to identify, record and retrieve (as far as possible) archaeological remains that may have been uncovered in the course of the ground reduction.

4 GEOLOGICAL AND TOPOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The site lies in an area of Langley Silt (Brickearth) a deposit laid down by wind and possible river action towards the end of the last ice age, about 26,000 – 13,000 BC. To the south at Crispin Street the untruncated level of the brickearth is between 10.50-11.00m OD. The Brickearth overlies a gravel deposit known as the Taplow Terrace. This was cut and deposited by the Thames between about 120,000 and 26,000 BC.
- 4.2 The levels of the Taplow gravels is about 10.02 – 10.76m OD. The area is fairly flat although there is a slight slope to the south towards the Thames. The site is located approximately 1300m north of the present course of the Thames.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prehistoric

- 5.1 Little prehistoric evidence has been recovered from immediate area surrounding the site. However, a few prehistoric lithics although residual, have been recovered from excavations at 250 Bishopsgate¹.

Roman

- 5.2 The site lies to the east Ermine Street, a major Roman road that connected the southern suburb of Southwark across London Bridge to Londinium and through Bishopsgate to the north.
- 5.3 Roman law forbade the burial of dead within the City walls and cemetery areas have been discovered adjacent to the main roads leading east, west, north, northeast and south from the City. The northern cemetery lay on either side of Ermine Street where over the years at least 150 burials and cremations have been uncovered² and probably more than 200. Although many of these finds were discovered during the construction of the railways in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Various published and unpublished Museum of London excavations exist³. Roman burials have been found at 5-13 Spital Square (in 1935), at Spital Square, Lamb St (SQU94), at 35 Spital Square (SSA01), at 12-14 Folgate Street (FLG 82), at 31-37 Northon Folgate (BGB98), Stothard Place (STO 86), 282-294 Bishopsgate (BOS 87), at 250 Bishopsgate (STE 95), at 192-200 Bishopsgate (BHS 87), at 280 Bishopsgate (SRP98), 201 Bishopsgate (BGB98) and more recently at Providence Row, Artillery Lane (CPN1 01). Several additional excavations, though lacking graves, demonstrated the presence of ditches and brickearth quarries of Roman date as well as funerary ceramics, such as at the Central Foundation Girl's School, Spital Square (SPT 85), and 6-13 Spital Square (SPI91).

Medieval

- 5.4 In c. AD 1197 a group of London merchants founded the Priory and Hospital of St. Mary-without-Bishopsgate on land purchased from the Bishop of London. The initial precinct was a small area centred around Spital Square but this was substantially increased in 1235 when the establishment was re-founded. A new church and infirmary were built and the precincts stretched from west to east from the modern-day streets of Bishopsgate to

¹ Holder 1997, 8

² Barber & Bowsher 1992, 3; Swift 2003, 8

³ Hall 1996, 73

Nantes Passage and from south to north from Artillery Passage to Fleur-de-lis Street⁴.
The subject site lay outside of the precinct.

16th century

- 5.5 In AD 1538 Henry VIII dissolved the monastic houses of England and Wales and their communities were turned out, the lands sold off and the religious buildings destroyed. After the Dissolution the former inner precinct of the Priory and Hospital eventually came under the ownership of Stephen Vaughan⁵.
- 5.6 The outer precinct, with what are described as “new brick walls” was almost immediately leased to the Honourable Artillery Company in AD 1538 and also used by ‘Gunners of the Tower’. The subject site lay outside of the Artillery Ground and was located in an area of open ground.

17-18th century

- 5.7 Prior to the 17th century Brushfield Street had, successively, been known as Union Street and Paternoster Row. The southern part of the street east of Crispin Street was constructed in ca. 1672 and the north in ca. 1685. The area west of Crispin Street, i.e. the subject site, was built in ca. 1784-85.
- 5.8 12 By the 18th century many of the modern streets had been laid out and new houses constructed. The new Spitalfields suburb became home for a rapidly expanding population, which included large numbers of Huguenot refugees who fled France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1682. The market at Spitalfields, founded in 1682, grew into one of London’s major produce markets⁶.

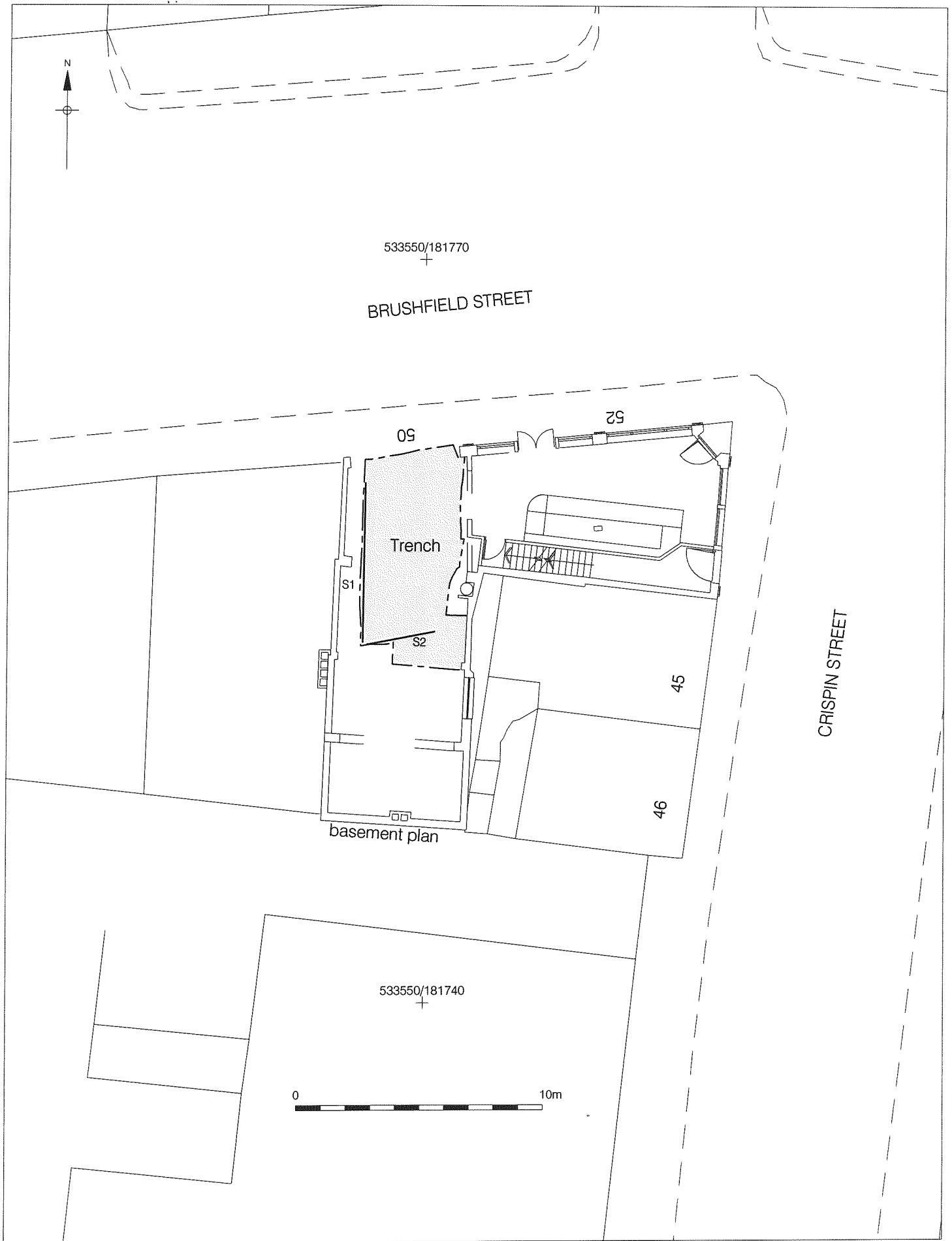
⁴ Ibid, 11

⁵ Ibid, 13

⁶ Holder 1997, 18

6 METHODOLOGY

- 6.1 The ground reduction work was carried out to create a new cellar for use as a restaurant. Initial ground reduction works had commenced prior to the arrival of the archaeological team. These unobserved works included the excavation of underpinning trenches and mass ground reduction along the southern part of the site
- 6.2 The area subsequently observed covered an area measuring approximately c. 5m east - west by 9m north -south and about 3.6m in depth.
- 6.3 Due to site constraints the working methodology involved the gradual ground reduction by hand under intermittent archaeological supervision and direction. The occasional use of a mechanical grab was also made. The material was removed in spits of varying depth through anthropogenic deposits. Because of logistical reasons the work initially progressed laterally c. 1m at a time.
- 6.4 Other constraints meant that the attendant archaeologist only visited the site for a maximum of 2 hours per day. During this time the attendant archaeologist made any necessary records of the exposed strata in plan and section, and discussed with the site foreman what works would be undertaken during the rest of the working day.
- 6.5 The majority of material excavated was observed in plan and section before excavation, some was observed during hand excavation and all materials excavated with the mechanical grab were observed during removal. Significant archaeological features were hand excavated by the attendant archaeologist. All features and deposits were recorded on to pro forma recording sheets.
- 6.6 Artefacts were recovered as excavation preceded, both by the author and by ground workers. These form part of the permanent archive.



7 ARCHEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

7.1 Caveat

Due both to the methodology of excavation, that is the lateral excavation across a 'face' or section of deposits and the intermittent archaeological cover, some relationships may only be approximate.

7.2 Phase 1 - Natural

7.2.1 The earliest deposit recorded was a reddish – yellow sandy clayey gravel, [19], part of the natural terrace deposits of the area.

7.2.2 The natural gravels were overlain by a deposit of firm, light orangey brown silty clay [3]. This was interpreted as a natural alluvial brickearth deposit. This deposit was almost entirely truncated by underpinning works already undertaken during the course of the development.

7.2.3 There was no evidence for prehistoric or Roman activity at the site.

7.3 Phase 2 – 17th Century

7.3.1 The brickearth was overlain by a light grey silty clay layer [2], from which pottery dated 1670 - 1690 were recovered. This layer appears to have been the 'worked' sub-soil, ie, brickearth, partially altered by natural weathering, bio-turbation and probable agricultural / garden activity. The archaeological materials appear to be domestic in origin.

7.3.2 Overlying the light grey deposit was a much darker silty clay deposit [1]. This contained domestic ceramic materials largely dating from the late 17th century. This deposit probably represents agricultural or garden topsoil much altered by the natural and human processes outlined above. Some domestic dumping probably also occurred in this period.

7.3.3 Cutting into [2] was the base of a large sub rectangle pit [11]. In plan it measured 2.3m x 3.2m. The cut had vertical sides and a flat base, both of which were lined with timber planks [12, 15 & 16] and posts [13 & 14]. Within the feature was a matrix of peaty organic silt [10] from which domestic pottery (circa 1630-1680) and ceramic tobacco pipes (circa 1680) and some animal bones were recovered. It is probable that the feature represented the truncated base of a cess or waste pit or possibly a water cistern. The date of the materials seem to indicate it was in use at the very end of the 17th century and it is

probably concurrent with the site being part of the back yard of a property facing onto Crispin Street, since re-orientated and now known as 52 Brushfield St.

7.3.5 Subsequently the feature was recut [9], and contained a single fill, [7]. It was composed of dark silty sand containing a variety of domestic waste. A late 18th century date is likely for its deposition.

7.3.6 A north - south orientated wall [4] had been erected on the western side of the site, overlying context 1. This may be part of courtyard / tenement structures shown erected on the site by 1676.

7.4 **Phase 3 - 19th Century**

7.4.1 Sealing the majority of the exposed features was a thick deposit (up to 1.8m) of moderately compact blackish dark grey silty sand [7]. The deposit contained frequent artefacts of a domestic nature including pottery, cbm, glass and animal bone. This deposit was repeatedly cut into, and disturbed by, excavations associated with 19th to late 20th century drains and 'coal-hole' like structures. Consequently materials recovered from this context have a wide date range (circa 1800 -1880).

7.4.2 The domestic dumping layer [7] was also truncated to the east by a stairwell [5] constructed to access the cellar of 52 Brushfield St; probably in the late 19th century.

7.5 **Phase 4 - 20th Century**

7.5.1 A reinforced concrete slab was laid during this period, making an open plan shop entrance, with a shop floor flush with the pavement outside.

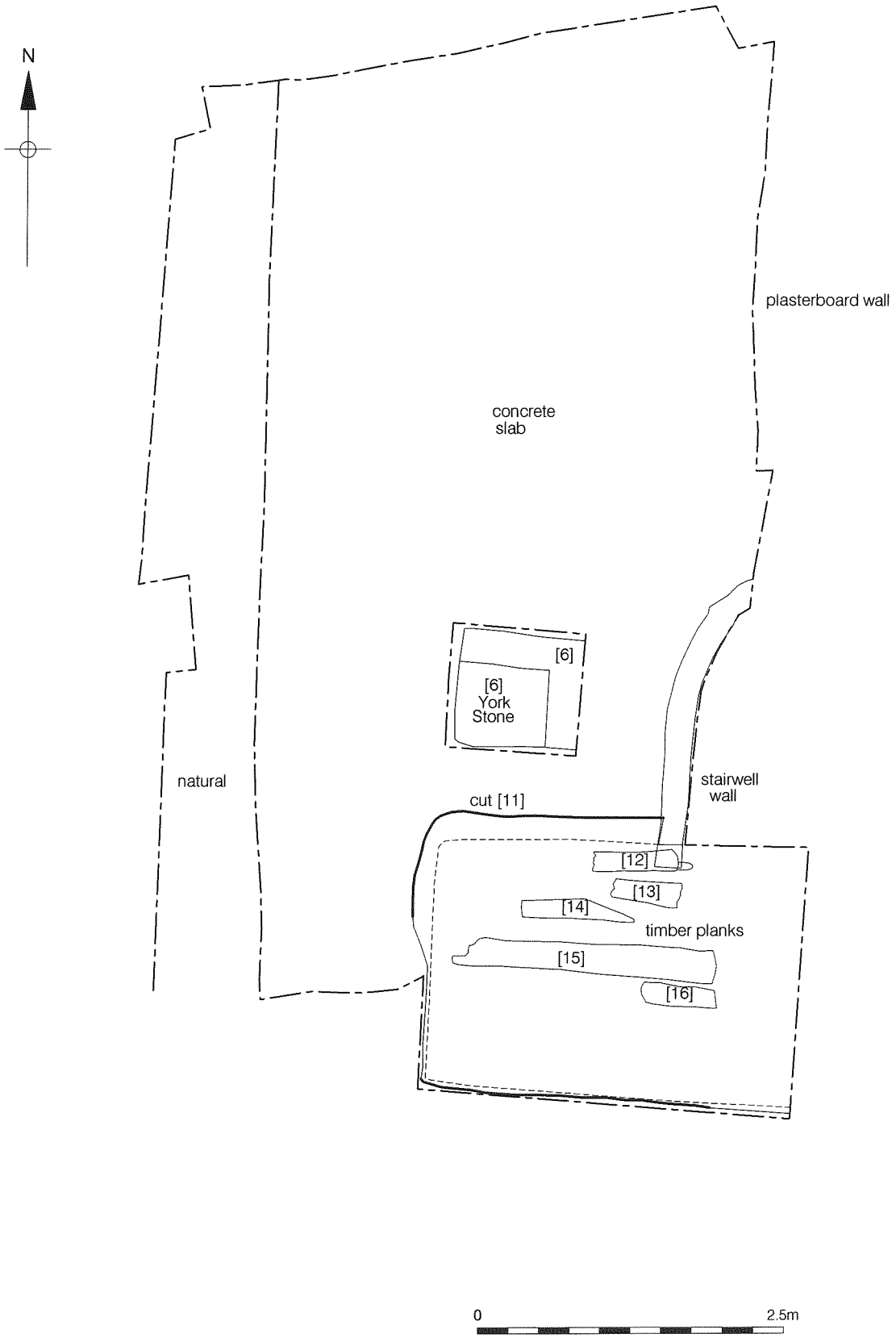
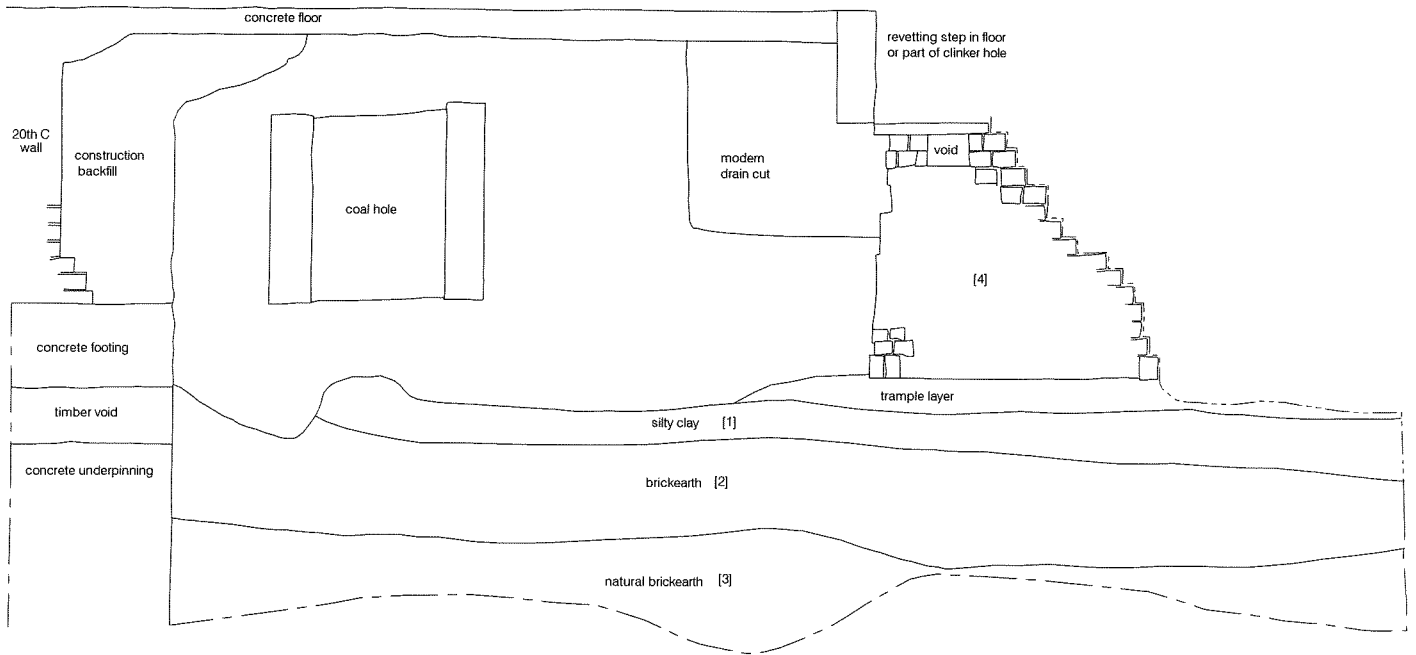
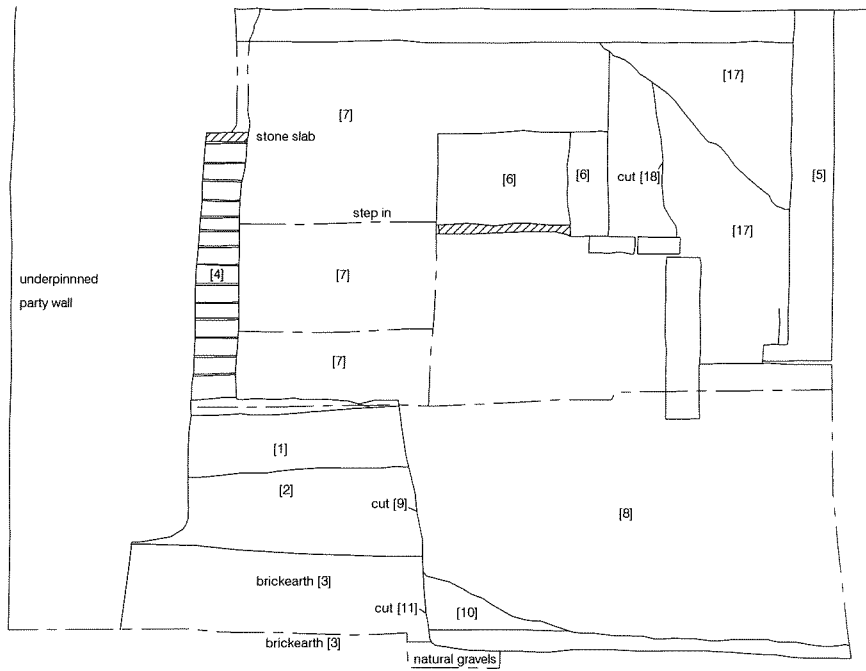


Figure 3
Plan of features
1:50



Section 1
West facing



Section 2
South facing



Figure 4
Sections 1 and 2
1:40

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX

Context number	Type	Description
1	Layer	firm mid dark brown silty clay
2	Layer	firm light brownish grey
3	Layer	firm light orangy brown sandy silty clay
4	Masonry	west facing yellowish red brick cellar wall, silty clay mortar
5	Masonry	east facing red brick stairwell wall, hard white cement mortar
6	Masonry	coal hole wall light, greyish white mortar
7	Layer	mod. compact blackish dark grey silty sand
8	Fill	mod. compact blackish dark grey silty sand
9	Cut	rectangular steep sided pit with concave base
10	Fill	spongy mid brown slightly clayey peat, fibrous texture
11	Cut	rectangular steep sided pit with flat base
12	Timber	E-W horizontally laid plank
13	Timber	E-W horizontally laid post
14	Timber	E-W horizontally laid post
15	Timber	E-W horizontally laid plank
16	Timber	E-W horizontally laid plank
17	Fill	loose dark grey to red silty sand and large ceramic tile frags.
18	Cut	linear v. steeply sloping wall construction trench
19	Layer	reddish yellow sandy clay gravels

APPENDIX 2 FINDS CATALOGUE AND SPOT DATING LIST

Compiled by Chris Jarrett

Abbreviations: Fragment count (FC), Sherd/shard count (SC), Large artiodactyl (LARS), Small artiodactyl (SARS).

Context [1]

Pottery, spot date: 1630-1700

Fabric	Form	SC	Date range	Comments
London-area early post-medieval redware (PMRE)	Jar	1	1480-1600	Rim
Surrey/Hampshire border whiteware with clear (yellow) glaze (BORDY)	Chamber pot	6	1550-1700	Rims and bases, two vessels, one sooted.
post-medieval black-glazed ware (PMBL)		2	1580-1700	Body sherds
post-medieval fine redware (PMFR)	Dish	1	1580-1700	Rim sherd, base sherd
Surrey/Hampshire border redware (RBOR)	? Pipkin	1	1580-1800	Base sherd, ext. Sooted.
Staffordshire-type redware (STRE)	Dish, divided	2	1600-1800	Base sherd and division
tin-glazed ware with mid 17th-century geometrical or polychrome designs (TGW D)	Albarello	2	1630-1680	Base sherd, purple cable on white
Metropolitan slipware (METS)	Dish	3	1630-1700	Rim to base
Tin-glazed ware, plain white (TGW C)	Porringer	1	1630-1800	Lug
Total		19		

Clay tobacco pipe, spot date: 1580-1800

Part	FC	Comments
Stem	2	

Ceramic building material, spot date: c.1666-18th century.

Form	Date	FC	Comments
Brick	1480-1666	1	Abraded
Pan tile	17th-18thC	1	
Brick	c.1666-18th C	1	
Peg-tile	Post-medieval	1	
Total		4	

Glass, spot date: 17th-18th century

Glass colour	Form	Date	SC	Comments
Blue			1	? Cullet
Clear	Vessel	?18th/19th C.	1	Body
Light blue	Bottle	17th/18th C.	1	Neck
Total			3	

Animal bone

Species	Bone type	FC	Comments
Cattle (<i>Bos</i>)	Humerus	5	
LARS	Rib	2	
Pig (<i>Sus</i>)	Tusk	1	
Sheep/goat (<i>Ovis/Capra</i>)	Lower mandible	1	
Sheep/goat (<i>Ovis/Capra</i>)	Pelvis	1	
Total		10	

Context [2]

Pottery, spot date: 1670-1690

Fabric	Form	Date	SC	Comments
Dutch red earthenware (DUTR)	Cauldron	1300-1650	2	Rim sherd, handle, 16th c.
Surrey/Hampshire border, green-glazed (BORDG)		1550-1700	1	Base sherd
Frechen stoneware (FREC)	Jug rounded	1550-1700	2	Base sherd
Post-medieval black-glazed ware (PMBL)		1580-1700	1	Body sherd
Tin-glazed ware with 'Chinamen in grasses' decoration (TGW F)	Plate	1670-1690	1	Rim sherd
Total			7	

Clay tobacco pipe, spot date: 1680-1710

Part	Bowl type	Date	FC	Comments
Stem			3	
Bowl	AO22	1680-1710	1	
Total			4	

Ceramic building material, spot date: c.1480-1666

Form	Date	FC	Comments
Brick	c. 1480-1666	1	
Floor tile	Post-medieval	1	Sooted
Total		2	

Metal

Metal	Form	FC	Comments
Lead	Window cane	2	

Animal bone

Species	Bone type	<i>Fragment count</i>	Comments
Cow/horse	Humerus	2	
Horse (<i>equus</i>)	Lower mandible	1	
LARS	Rib	2	
SARS	Humerus	2	
SARS	Rib	1	
Sheep/goat (<i>Ovis/Capra</i>)	Lower mandible	1	
Sheep/goat (<i>Ovis/Capra</i>)	Scapula	3	
Total		13	

Context [7]

Pottery, spot date: 1800-1880

Fabric	Form	Date	SC	Comments
Dutch tin-glazed ware (DTGW)	Dish	1500-1600	1	Rim sherd, Wanli panels, late 17th C.
Surrey/Hampshire border whiteware (BORD)	Chamber pot	1550-1700	1	Handle
Surrey/Hampshire border redware (RBOR)	Chamber pot	1580-1800	2	Rim sherd
Tin-glazed ware with mid 17th-century geometrical or polychrome designs (TGW D)	Charger	1630-1800	1	Base sherd, footring, grape and floral design.
Tin-glazed ware with plain white-glaze (TGW C)	Chamber pot	1630-1900	1	Shoulder
Combed slipware (formerly COSL)	Dish	1660-1870	1	Body sherd
London stoneware (LONS)	Ink bottle	1670-1900	1	Complete, adhered to large fragment of mortar.
Creamware with developed pale glaze (CREA DEV)	Ointment pot	1760-1880	1	Base sherd, rounded internal profile.
Creamware with developed pale glaze (CREA DEV)	Plate	1760-1880	3	Rim sherd, queen's shape
Creamware with developed pale glaze (CREA DEV)	Sauce boat	1760-1880	1	Rim sherd and pouring lip
Transfer-printed ware (TPW)	Dish, oval	1780-1900	2	Rim sherd, Wild Rose border.
Transfer-printed ware (TPW)	Plate	1780-1900	6	Rim and base sherds with Asiatic pheasant, Eton

				College and Willow pattern designs.
Refined white earthenware (REFW)	Jar: small cylindrical	1800-1900	6	Two vessels. Rim to base. Stamped on the base 'Malling Newcastle'
Total			27	

Ceramic building material, spot date: 18th century

Fabric	Form	Date	FC Comments
English tin-glazed ware (TGW)	Wall tile	18th C.	1 Corner, figurative design

Glass, spot date: 1862+

Glass colour	Form	Date	FC Comments
Dark green	Wine bottle, onion type	17th C.	1 Base sherd
Clear	Bottle, Codd-type	1862+	1 Complete with marble and rubber washer, moulded central panel of growing daisy-type flower, 'H. J. JONES 67 CABLE ST E TRADE MARK', on the side of the base 'ALBION'.
Light blue	Bottle, cylindrical	18th/19th C.	1 Rim and shoulder, storage vessel
Clear	Phial, cylindrical	19 th C.	1 Near complete
Clear	Rummer	19 th C.	1 Base, stem and part of the bowl
Clear	Vessel	Late 19th C.	1 Wall sherd decorated with curving ribs and a hole surrounded by raised dots.
Total			7

Context [8]

Pottery, spot date: 1580-1650

Fabric	Form	Date	SC Comments
Midlands orange ware (MORAN)	Butter pot	1480-1650	1 Base sherd
Surrey/Hampshire border redware (RBOR)	Bowl, flared	1580-1800	1 Base sherd
Total			2

Clay tobacco pipe

Part	FC Comments
STEM	2

Animal bone

Species	Bone type	FC Comments
LARS	Rib	2
SARS	Rib	3
Sheep/goat (<i>Ovis/Capra</i>)	Pelvis	3
Total		8

Context [10]

Ceramic building material, spot date: Post-medieval

Form	Date	FC Comments
Tile	Post-medieval	1

Clay tobacco pipe, spot date: c.1680

Part	Bowl type	Date	FC Comments
Stem			5
Bowl	AO15	1660-1680	2
Bowl	AO18	1660-1680	8
Bowl	AO22	1680-1710	1
Total			16

Pottery, spot date: 1630-1680

Fabric	Form	Date	SC	Comments
Surrey/Hampshire border whiteware with olive glaze (BORDO)		1550-1700	1	Base sherd, ext. Sooted.
Frechen stoneware (FREC)	Jug	1550-1700	1	
London-area post-medieval redware (PMR)	Brazier	1580-1900	1	Rim sherd, piercings below and int. Sooted.
London-area post-medieval redware (PMR)	Jar, small rounded	1580-1900	3	Rim and base, sooted.
Tin-glazed ware with mid 17th-century geometrical or polychrome designs (TGW D)	Charger	1630-1680	1	Base sherd
Metropolitan slipware (METS)	Dish	1630-1700	1	Base sherd
Total			8	

Animal bone

Species	Bone type	FC	Comments
Cattle (<i>Bos</i>)	Rib	1	

Cattle (<i>Bos</i>)	Vertebrae	1
SARS	Rib	1
<hr/>		
Total		3
<hr/>		

APPENDIX 1: OASIS FORM

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM

[List of Projects](#) | [New project](#) | [Change your details](#) | [HER coverage](#) | [Log out](#)

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OASIS ID: preconst1-10263

Project details

Project name	50-52 Brushfield Street
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief on the extension to an existing cellar to enlarge café facilities revealed a sequence of deposits dating from the late 17th century to the late 20th Century. No evidence of Prehistoric or Roman activity was observed.
Project dates	Start: 04-07-2005 End: 18-07-2005
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	BFZ05 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 3 - Retailing
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON TOWER HAMLETS TOWER HAMLETS 50-52 Brushfield Street
Postcode	E1 6AG
Study area	45.00 Square metres
National grid reference	TQ 3354 8174 Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service
Project design originator	David Divers
Project director/manager	Gary Brown
Project supervisor	Aidan Turner
Sponsor or funding body	Peter Sinden

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	LAARC
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Physical Contents 'Animal Bones','Ceramics','Glass','Metal'
 Digital Archive recipient LAARC
 Digital Contents 'Animal Bones','Ceramics','Glass','Metal','Stratigraphic'
 Digital Media available 'Database','Spreadsheets','Text'
 Paper Archive recipient LAARC
 Paper Contents 'Animal Bones','Ceramics','Glass','Metal','Stratigraphic'
 Paper Media available 'Context sheet','Drawing','Matrices','Plan','Report'

**Project
 bibliography 1**

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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