143 MARE STREET LONDON BOROUGH OF HACKNEY



ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



PCA REPORT NO: R11437

SITE CODE: MRE13

MAY 2013



PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

DOCUMENT VERIFICATION

143 MARE STREET LONDON BOROUGH OF HACKNEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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143 Mare Street, Hackney, London E8 3RH An Archaeological Evaluation

Site Code: MRE13

Central NGR: TQ 3488 8404

Local Planning Authority: London Borough of Hackney

Commissioning Client: CgMs Consulting

Written/Researched by: Paw Jorgensen

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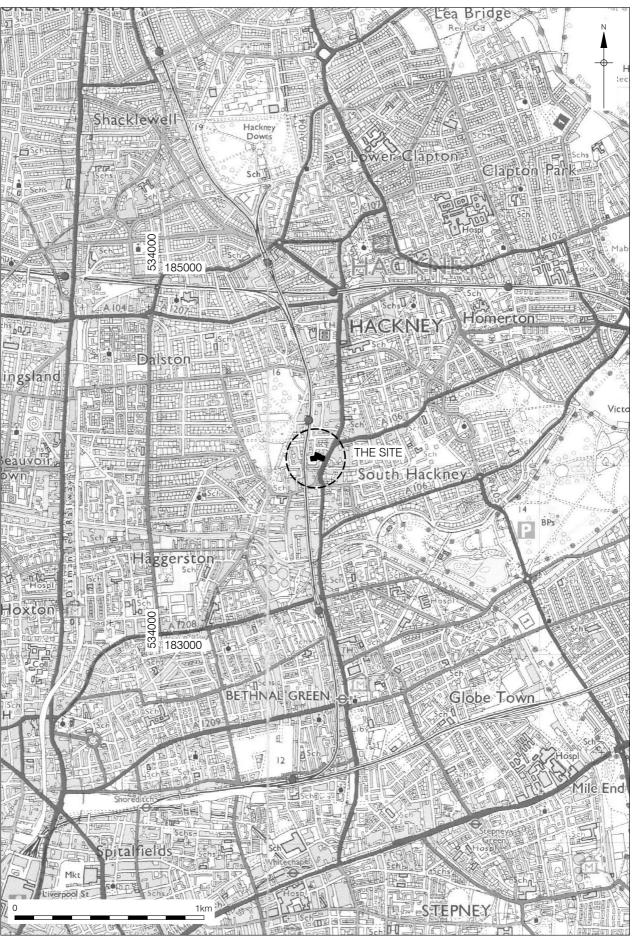
ABSTRACT

Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd has been commissioned by CgMs Consulting to undertake the excavation of three (2.5m x 2.5m) archaeological test pits at 143 Mare Street, Hackney, London, E8 3RH (centred on NGR ref: TQ 3488 8404). The work was carried out on 18th and 19th May 2013. This report details the findings and working methods of the test pit evaluation of the site.

The principal purpose of the evaluation was to determine if the graves within the graveyard of the 19th century Baptist Chapel had been removed upon the closure of the graveyard in 1904. Natural sandy silt 'brickearth' was encountered at the base of all of the test pits. This was overlain by 19th century ground levelling deposits through which three graves were cut. No features predating the 19th century were observed in either test pit.

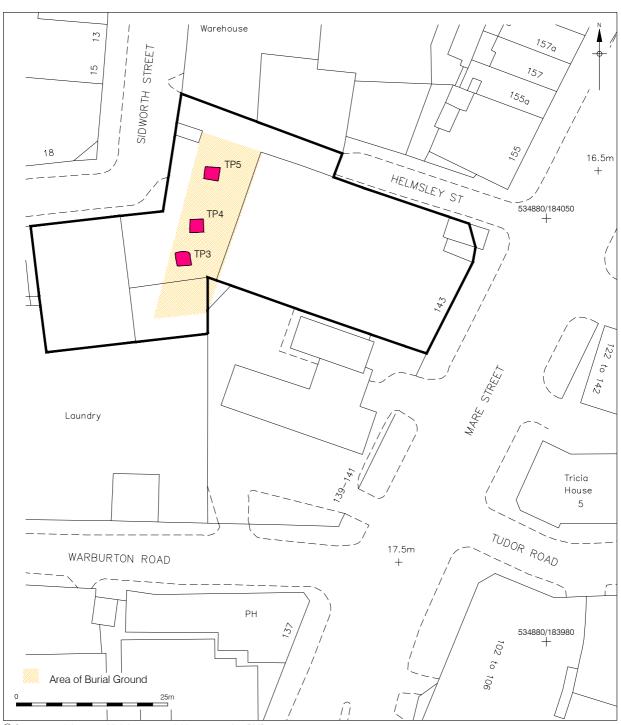
1 INTRODUCTION

- On 18th and 19th of May 2013 Pre-Construct Archaeology carried out the excavation of three archaeological test pits measuring 2.5m x 2.5m in plan. All three were excavated to the top of the natural 'brickearth'. The work was commissioned by Richard Meager of CgMs Consulting and was monitored by Adam Single, the Archaeological Advisor to the London Borough of Hackney. Paw Jorgensen of Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd supervised the work on site and authored this report under the project management of Tim Bradley, also of Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. The work was undertaken in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation for the work (Meager 2013)
- 1.2 Prior to this phase of work a Desk Based Assessment determining the archaeological potential for the site was produced by Richard Meager of CgMs Consulting (Meager 2013).
- 1.3 The site is located within an Archaeological Priority Zone as defined by the London Borough of Hackney.
- 1.4 This fieldwork follows on from a first phase of evaluation of the Baptist Chapel area on the adjacent site of 139-141 Mare Street (which is the subject of a separate planning application). Upon completion of all phases of the work the resultant archive will be deposited with the Museum of London LAARC under the site code MRE13.



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2 BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

2.1 Site Location

- 2.1.1 The study site is located at 143 Mare Street, Hackney, London and is bordered to the east by Mare Street, to the south by commercial properties. Helmsley Street and Sidworth Street delimit the site to the north while the latter also forms part of the west boundary. The remainder of the western boundary is formed by commercial properties.
- 2.1.2 Currently two large warehouse type buildings in use as a taxi garage occupy the majority of the site. These are separated by a narrow 'L' shaped strip of ground along Sidworth Street.

2.2 Geology

2.2.1 The British Geological Survey shows the Hackney Gravel Member forming the drift geology underlying the site. This Hackney Gravel Member is described in the BGS Lexicon of Named Rock units as comprising "sand and gravel, locally with lenses of silt, clay or peat" which averages between 6m and 10m in thickness (British Geological Survey 2013). In parts of Hackney the terrace gravels are overlain by a think covering of 'brickearth', which may occur at the study site (Meager 2013). Underlying this, the bedrock geology shown by the British Geological Survey to underlie the site comprises London Clay (British Geological Survey 2013).

2.3 Topography

2.3.1 The natural topography of the study site is not visually evident due to levelling of the site prior to building. However, spot heights shown throughout the area on historic OS Survey maps indicate that the ground within the site sloped down towards the north or northeast. This was confirmed by the current evaluation.

2.4 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 2.4.1 The following is a brief summary of the archaeological and historical background of the site as detailed in a Desk Based Assessment prepared for the study site by Richard Meager of CgMs Consulting (2013).
- 2.4.2 Geologically the site is situated over the Hackney Gravel formation, which has proved to be one of the richest sources of Palaeolithic material in the country. Significant flint assemblages were observed during basement excavations and brickearth/gravel extraction during the late 19th century. Activity in the area seems to have waned during the Mesolithic and evidence for human activity in the immediate area of the site during the Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age is absent altogether. There is also a lack of evidence for activity within the area during the Roman and Saxon periods. Mare Street immediately east of the site and Hackney Road to the northeast are thought to be of medieval origin and Archaeological evidence for activity in the area during the medieval

period include the remains of a possible manor house, a timber revetted stream, a well and horticultural soils. By the end of the 16th century settlement along Mare Street had developed and by the time of John Rocque's 1745 survey buildings facing Mare Street are shown within the eastern part of the site.

- 2.4.3 Development of the area continued throughout the 18th century and in 1812 the Mare Street Baptist Chapel was built on the study site. A small burial ground covering existed to the west of the chapel. This is believed to have been in use from at least 1823 to c. 1882 or 1888 although it was not formally closed until 1904.
- 2.4.4 In addition to the chapel the 1838 South Hackney Tithe map shows terraced houses in the western part of the study site. These were facing Helmsley Street (now Sidworth Street) running along the northern boundary of the site. The chapel is thought to have been rebuilt between 1855 and 1856 after it was destroyed by fire in 1854. Sometime after 1870 but before 1898 a vestry was added onto the southwest corner of the chapel.
- 2.4.5 Both the Baptist chapel and the buildings occupying western part of the study site suffered severe bomb damage during World War II when a V2 rocket exploded on the site in February 1945. The 1948 Ordnance Survey shows the site clear of buildings with the exception of the ruin of the chapel in the eastern half of the site.
- 2.4.6 By the time of the 1989 OS Survey two warehouse type structures were constructed in the eastern and western parts of the site. These are likely to be the buildings still present within the study site.

2.5 Planning Background

- 2.5.1 The archaeological evaluation of the site is being undertaken as a predetermination exercise in order to determine if the burial ground of the Mare Street Baptist Chapel extended to the south of the former Chapel building.
- 2.5.2 In March 2012, The Department for Local Communities and Local Government published the *National Planning Policy Framework* (replacing *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment*). Chapter 12, "Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment", provides guidance for planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on the conservation preservation and investigation of Heritage Assets.
- 2.5.3 In considering any proposal for development, the planning authority will be mindful of the policy framework set by the above government guidance, by current Development Plan policy and by other material considerations.
- 2.5.4 The relevant Strategic Development Plan framework is provided by 'The London Plan' (July 2011). The relevant local policy is provided by the London Borough of Hackney's Core Strategy, adopted in 2010. It contains the following policy statement regarding the Historic Environment:

Core Strategy Policy 25: Historic Environment

All development should make a positive contribution to the character of Hackney's historic and built environment. This includes identifying, conserving and enhancing the historic significance of the borough's designated heritage assets, their setting and where appropriate the wider historic environment.

2.6 Original Objectives

- To establish the presence or otherwise of prehistoric, Roman, Medieval, Posy-Medieval and Modern Activity, and to define the date and nature of such activity.
- All three test pits are targeted with particular reference to the potential for human remains relating to the early nineteenth century Baptist Chapel burial ground.
- Evaluate the likely impact of past land use and development.
- To provide sufficient information to construct an archaeological mitigation strategy.

2.7 Archaeological Methodology

- 2.7.1 Three test pits measuring 2.5m by 2.5m in plan were excavated to the top of the natural gravel. All three test pits were located within the open area between the existing buildings and within the projected confines of the former graveyard. Each trench was broken out and excavation was then carried out in 100mm spits by a JCB fitted with a flat-bladed grading bucket. All excavation work was carried out under archaeological supervision.
- 2.7.2 When excavation was completed the sides and base of the test pits were cleaned and archaeological features explored by hand. A representative portion of the spoil was sieved in order to determine if coffin fittings and/or disarticulated human remains were present within the archaeological deposits. In addition a metal detector was used periodically in order to determine the presence of coffin furniture and fittings. Despite this, no disarticulated human remains were encountered in the 19th century levelling deposit or within the fill of the grave cuts excavated.
- 2.7.3 Archaeological deposit and feature descriptions were recorded on pro-forma context sheets comparable to those used elsewhere in the Greater London area and a plan and representative section of each test pit was drawn on polyester based drafting film (permatrace) at a scale of 1:10 for sections and 1:20 for plans. In addition to this all significant features were photographed using a high resolution digital camera.
- 2.7.4 The excavation of the three test pits were undertaken under good weather and lighting conditions and through dry soils. There were no visual and/or olfactory evidence for contaminants in the soil although protective gloves were worn as a precaution.
- 2.7.5 In order to prevent unauthorised access to the excavation areas these were barriered off using orange netlon fencing. Upon completion the test pits were backfilled by machine.
- 2.7.6 Human remains encountered during the evaluation were recorded and left in situ.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

3.1 Phase 1: Natural

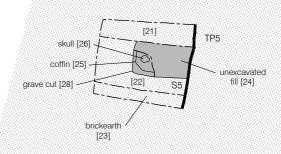
3.1.1 The earliest deposit reached during the evaluation was a layer of naturally deposited 'brickearth' seen in all three trenches. This comprised soft yellowish brown to yellowish red sandy silt with occasional sub-rounded pebbles. The deposit was recorded as [17] in Test Pit 3 and as [34] and [23] in Test Pits 4 and 5 respectively. In Test Pit 3 in the southern part of the site the deposit was encountered at a maximum height of 16.93m OD, and from here it appeared to slope down slightly towards the north where it was recorded at 16.45m OD in Test Pit 5 and to the west to 16.33m OD. Test Pits excavated at 139-141 Mare Street just south of the study site recorded 'brickearth' at a height of 16.61m OD.

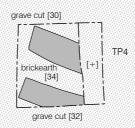
3.2 Phase 2: 19th Century

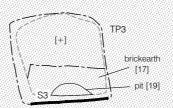
- 3.2.1 In Test Pit 5 the 'brickearth' was sealed by a 0.18m thick subsoil deposit, [22], extending across the entire trench. This was first seen at a height of 16.61m OD in the southern part of the trench from which point it sloped down towards the north where it was first encountered at 16.48m OD. The deposit comprised mid-yellowish brown to mid-brown firm sandy silt with moderately frequent sub-rounded pebbles and flecks of ceramic building material. This deposit was only seen in Test Pit 5.
- 3.2.2 The 'brickearth' in Test Pits 3 and 4, and the subsoil in Test Pit 5 were sealed by a thick dump layer recorded variably as [20], [21] and [33]. This occurred at 17.41m-17.45m OD in Test Pits 4 and 5 and at 17.15m OD in Test Pit 3, although here it seemed to have been truncated by later activity. The deposit comprised dark greyish brown very mixed hard sandy gravelly silt with moderately frequent ceramic building material fragments and charcoal flecks as well as occasional crushed lime mortar patches.
- In Test Pits 4 and 5 the dump layer was cut by three east-west aligned grave cuts, [28], [30] and [32]. Grave cut [28] was located in the western part of Test Pit 5 and was only partially contained within the trench. It was first seen at a height of 17.43m OD. The portion of the cut within the trench measured 0.82m north-south by 1.52m east-west and was excavated to a depth of 0.96m. Contained within the cut were the very badly degraded remains of a wooden coffin, [25]. Only the western end of the coffin was exposed and here the timber had almost entirely decomposed and only a few fragments survived around the iron coffin nails and tacks. The coffin was first seen at 16.57m OD. Inside the coffin, at a maximum height of 16.47m OD was skeleton [26], which, like the coffin, was also only partially exposed. Only the cranium, mandible and the top three cervical vertebrae were exposed in order to determine whether the remains were articulated or disarticulated. The remains were photographed, recorded and then left *in situ*.

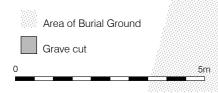
- 3.2.4 Sealing the skeletal remains was a deposit of dark greyish brown friable sandy silt, [27], containing moderately frequent ceramic building material flecks and fragments. This deposit was only seen within the coffin. Overlying this, and filling the entire grave cut was a mottled yellowish brown to yellowish red to dark greyish brown loose silty sand, [24], with frequent gravel lenses and occasional charcoal flecks and brick fragments.
- 3.2.5 In Test Pit 4 two rectangular east-west aligned cuts, [30] and [32], which were assumed to be grave cuts. Due to the restricted nature of the test pit it was not possible to safely excavate the cuts in full and it could therefore not be confirmed that these contained human remains. However, based on their shape, size and alignment and their location within a known burial ground it can be assumed that these are indeed grave cuts.
- 3.2.6 Both of these cuts were first seen at 17.45m OD and were excavated to 15.53m OD. Cut [30] measured 0.70m north-south by 1.50m east-west and extended beyond the eastern limit of the trench while [32] measured 0.60m north-south by 1.68m east-west and extended beyond the southern and eastern limits of the trench. The cuts both had vertical sides with a sharp break of slope at the top and both were filled with mid-yellowish grey friable gravelly sandy clay, [29] and [31], with moderately frequent ceramic building material fragments and crushed lime mortar patches and occasional charcoal flecks.
- 3.2.7 In Test Pit 3 the dumped deposit was, at a height of 17.15m OD, cut in the southern part of the trench by a pit, [19], measuring 0.84m north-south by 1.59m east-west by 0.84m in depth, which extended south beyond the confines of the trench. The sides of the pit were steep, almost vertical with a sharp break of slope at the top. Filling the pit was a dark grey firm sandy silt deposit, [18], with frequent ceramic building material fragments as well as frequent patches of yellowish brown sandy silt crushed lime mortar and occasional gravel lenses and pockets of redeposited 'brickearth'. To the north the pit had been truncated by a large patch of concrete, presumably concealing a service.
- 3.2.8 Sealing the grave cuts in Test Pits 4 and 5 was a layer of crushed brick forming the bedding for the current concrete surface extending across this part of the site. In Test Pit 3 two successive concrete slabs were encountered, the lower of which sealed the concrete encased service truncating pit [19].



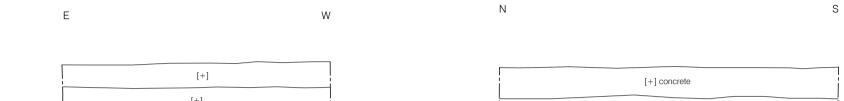


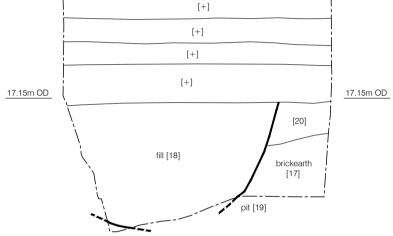




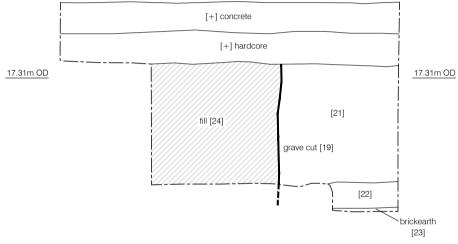


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Section 5 West facing TP5



4 INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSION

4.1 Phase 1: Natural

- 4.1.1 The 'brickearth' deposit encountered in all three test pits occurred at a height consistent with the 'brickearth' observed in test pits carried out at the adjacent property to the south. It was recorded at a highest point in Test Pit 3 in the southern portion of the site where it was encountered at 16.94m OD. From here the top of the 'brickearth' sloped down towards the north where it was recorded in Test Pit 5 at 16.45m OD. While this natural slope is not evident in the current topography of the site and the surrounding area it can be noted from late 19th century maps. The 1870 Ordnance Survey shows a spot height of 57.9 feet (17.65m) to the southeast of the site and 55.7 feet (16.98m) to the northeast.
- 4.1.2 While subsoil only sealed the 'brickearth' in the northernmost test pit it seems likely that the natural deposits had not been significantly truncated. This is evident from comparing the 19th century topographic data with the observed height and slope of the 'brickearth' deposit.

4.2 Phase 2: 19th Century

- 4.2.1 The thick dumped deposit encountered in all three test pits is likely a result of levelling of the site in preparation for the construction of the Mare Street Baptist Chapel in 1812, or less likely the rebuilding of the chapel in 1855-6. During the archaeological evaluation one grave and an additional two probable graves were uncovered. These cut into the levelling layer, thus proving that they post-date the levelling of the site prior to the construction of the chapel. What is not known is whether the levelling of the site occurred when the original chapel was constructed in 1812 or whether it occurred during the 1855-6 rebuilding. The first known burial to have taken place in the graveyard was in 1823 and the last was in 1882 or 1888. Because burials occurred both before and after the chapel was rebuilt it is not possible to determine (from the fact that the graves post-date the levelling) which phase of construction the levelling of the site was related to.
- 4.2.2 In Test Pit 3 a large cut truncated the levelling layer in the southern part of the trench. At this point it is uncertain what function the pit served. The chapel suffered bomb damage on a number of occasions during WWII although on each occasion the damage was repaired until a V2 rocket struck the western part of the site in February 1945. The V2 strike completely destroyed the western side of the chapel and after this no attempts appear to have been made to repair the damage. It is possible that the pit in Test Pit 3 is associated with the clearance of the rubble from the site after one of the bomb strikes.

4.3 Original Objectives

4.3.1 To establish the presence or otherwise of prehistoric, Roman, Medieval, Posy-Medieval and Modern Activity, and to define the date and nature of such activity.

- 4.3.2 The earliest evidence for activity within the site dates to the 19th century and is related to the raising and levelling of the ground either in preparation for the building of the chapel in 1812 or the rebuilding of the chapel in 1855-6. Cartographic and other documentary evidence show that the area to the west of the chapel was in use as a graveyard from approximately 1823 to 1882 or 1888. The excavation of the test pits confirmed the presence of graves within two of the trenches.
- 4.3.3 All three test pits are targeted with particular reference to the potential for human remains relating to the early nineteenth century Baptist Chapel burial ground.
- 4.3.4 Human remains were encountered in Test Pit 5 in the northern part of the study site. Two additional cuts, which are likely to represent grave cuts based on their shape, position, alignment and size, were seen in Test Pit 3. Unfortunately these could not be fully excavated safely due to the restricted size of the trench and the location of the cuts within it. It was therefore not possible to confirm the presence of human remains within these two cuts. Despite a representative amount of the grave cut fills and the 19th century levelling deposits being sieved no disarticulated human remains were seen. In addition to this no coffin fittings or fixtures were present within the grave backfills.
- 4.3.5 Evaluate the likely impact of past land use and development.
- 4.3.6 In Test Pits 3 and 4 the natural 'brickearth' was overlain directly by a 19th century levelling layer. This suggests that past activity has caused some truncation to the natural topography within the site. However, in Test Pit 5 the 'brickearth' was overlain by a subsoil horizon indicating that truncation, in this area at least, had been slight.
- 4.3.7 Late 19th century Ordnance Survey maps show the surrounding area to slope down from south to north with spot heights to the southeast and northeast of the site as 17.65m and 16.98m respectively. The gradient of this slope is roughly equivalent to the gradient of the top of the 'brickearth' deposit within the study site. This perhaps indicates that the impact to the natural topography across the site was limited until the ground was raised and levelled prior to the construction or rebuilding of the chapel.
- 4.3.8 To provide sufficient information to construct an archaeological mitigation strategy.
- 4.3.9 The excavation of the three test pits has demonstrated that human remains are present within the confines of the former graveyard. It has also shown that the damage caused by a number of bomb strikes in the vicinity, including the impact of a V2 rocket which destroyed the west part of the chapel did not cause significant damage to the buried archaeological resource within this portion of the site. While archaeological deposits survive within the site it should be noted that none of the deposits encountered appear to predate the 19th century. It is also worth noting that the 19th century grave cuts uncovered were cut into the natural 'brickearth'. If this is true for all of the burials it can be expected that the 354 estimated burials (suggested by the burial records) will have had a significant impact to any earlier archaeological deposits and features that might have been present within the site. It is also interesting to note that on the basis of the results of

the evaluation test pits, the density of the grave cuts recorded in the three test pits may not be indicative of a total number of burials as high as the 354 suggested by the burial records within the confines of the projected burial ground.

5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- 5.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Richard Meager of CgMs Consulting for commissioning the work on behalf of their client, Findon Homes Ltd. Thanks are also extended to Adam Single of the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service for monitoring the work on behalf of the London Borough of Hackney.
- 5.2 The author would like to thank Tim Bradley for his project management and for editing this report, Ireneo Grosso for his assistance on site and Hayley Baxter for preparing the illustrations.

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Mare Street Hackney London E8. CgMs Consulting unpublished report

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PLATES



Plate 1: Test Pit 3 overview, facing south, 1m scale



Plate 2: Test Pit 4 overview showing grave cuts [30] and [32], facing south, 1m scale

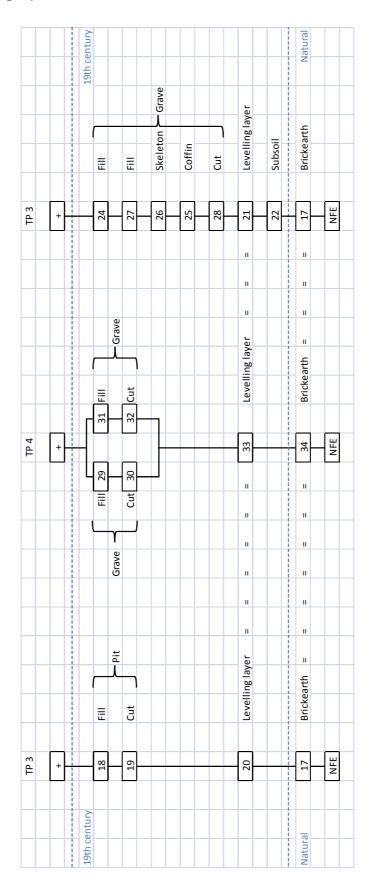


Plate 3: Test Pit 3 overview showing skeleton [26] within grave cut [28], facing west

Appendix 1: Context Index

Site Code	Context	Trench	Plan	Section	Туре	Description	Details	Prov Date	Phase
MRE 13	17	TP 3	TP3	S.3	Layer	Brickearth	Natural		1
MRE 13	18	TP 3	TP3	S.3	Deposit	Fill of [19]	Fill	19th	2
MRE 13	19	TP 3	TP3	S.3	Cut	Pit	Cut	19th	2
MRE 13	20	TP 3		S.3	Layer	Dump layer	Dump	19th	2
MRE 13	21	TP 5	TP5	S.5	Layer	Dump layer	Dump	19th	2
MRE 13	22	TP 5	TP5	S.5	Layer	Subsoil	Subsoil	19th	2
MRE 13	23	TP 5	TP5	S.5	Layer	Brickearth	Natural		1
MRE 13	24	TP 5	TP5	S.5	Deposit	Fill of [28]	Fill	19th	2
MRE 13	25	TP 5	TP5		Coffin	Coffin containing (26)	Coffin	19th	2
MRE 13	26	TP 5	TP5		Skeleton	Skeleton	Skeleton	19th	2
MRE 13	27	TP 5	TP5		Deposit	Fill inside (25)	Fill	19th	2
MRE 13	28	TP 5	TP5	S.5	Cut	Grave cut	Grave	19th	2
MRE 13	29	TP 4	TP4	S.4	Deposit	Fill of [30]	Fill	19th	2
MRE 13	30	TP 4	TP4	S.4	Cut	Grave cut	Grave	19th	2
MRE 13	31	TP 4	TP4		Deposit	Fill of [32]	Fill	19th	2
MRE 13	32	TP 4	TP4		Cut	Grave cut	Grave	19th	2
MRE 13	33	TP 4		S.4	Layer	Dump layer	Dump	19th	2
MRE 13	34	TP 4	TP4	S.4	Layer	Brickearth	Natural		1

Appendix 2: Strategraphic Matrix



Appendix 3: OASIS Form

OASIS ID: preconst1-151241

Project details

Project name 143 Mare Street, Hackney, London

Short description of the Three test pits were excavated by Pre-Construct Archaeology within the

project

confines of the graveyard of the former Mare Street Baptist Chapel. Excavation of the test pits revealed natural 'brickearth' overlain by a shallow subsoil horizon. During the 19th century natural slope on which the site is located was levelled by raising the ground ahead of the construction of the chapel in 1812 or its rebuilding in 1855-6. Three grave shafts had been cut into the levelling deposit. The chapel was damaged on several occasions during WWII by bomb strikes in the vicinity. In February 1945, the chapel was partially destroyed when a V2 rocket exploded nearby. Despite this, no evidence for below ground damage was seen in any of the excavated trenches.

Project dates Start: 18-05-2013 End: 19-05-2013

No / Yes Previous/future work

Any associated project

reference codes

MRE 13 - Sitecode

Type of project Field evaluation

Site status Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area

Current Land use Industry and Commerce 1 - Industrial

GRAVES Post Medieval Monument type

Monument type PIT Post Medieval

Significant Finds **POTTERY Post Medieval**

Methods & techniques "Targeted Trenches"

Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.) Development type

Planning condition **Prompt**

Position in the planning Pre-application

process

Project location

Country England

Site location **GREATER LONDON HACKNEY HACKNEY 143 Mare Street**

Postcode **E8 3RH**

Site coordinates TQ 3488 8404 51 0 51 32 19 N 000 03 17 W Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 16.00m Max: 17.00m

Project creators

Name of Organisation Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd

Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service Project brief originator

Project design

originator

Richard Meager

Project Tim Bradley director/manager

Project supervisor Paw Jorgensen Developer Type of

sponsor/funding body

Name of Findon Homes Limited

sponsor/funding body

Project archives

Physical Archive

LAARC

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Physical Contents "Ceramics" **Digital Archive LAARC**

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