

DOCUMENT VERIFICATION

EXECUTION SITE, TOWER GREEN
TOWER OF LONDON
LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

EXCAVATION

Quality Control

Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited			K1105
	Name & Title	Signature	Date
Text Prepared by:	Stuart Watson		June 2006
Graphics Prepared by:	Adrian Nash		June 2006
Graphics Checked by:	Josephine Brown	<i>J. Brown</i>	June 2006
Project Manager Sign-off:	Jon Butler	<i>JB pp. G. Brown</i>	June 2006

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Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Unit 54
Brockley Cross Business Centre
96 Endwell Road
London
SE4 2PD

**The Results of an Investigation at the Execution Site, Tower Green,
Tower of London, London EC3, London Borough of Tower Hamlets**

Site Code: TOL 101

Central National Grid Reference: TQ 3356 8057

**Written by Stuart Watson
Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, May 2006**

Project Manager: Jon Butler

Commissioning Client: Historic Royal Palaces

**Contractor:
Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited
Unit 54
Brockley Cross Business Centre
96 Endwell Road
Brockley
London
SE4 2PD**

**Tel: 020 7732 3925
Fax: 020 7732 7896
E-mail: jbutler@pre-construct.com
Web: www.pre-construct.com**

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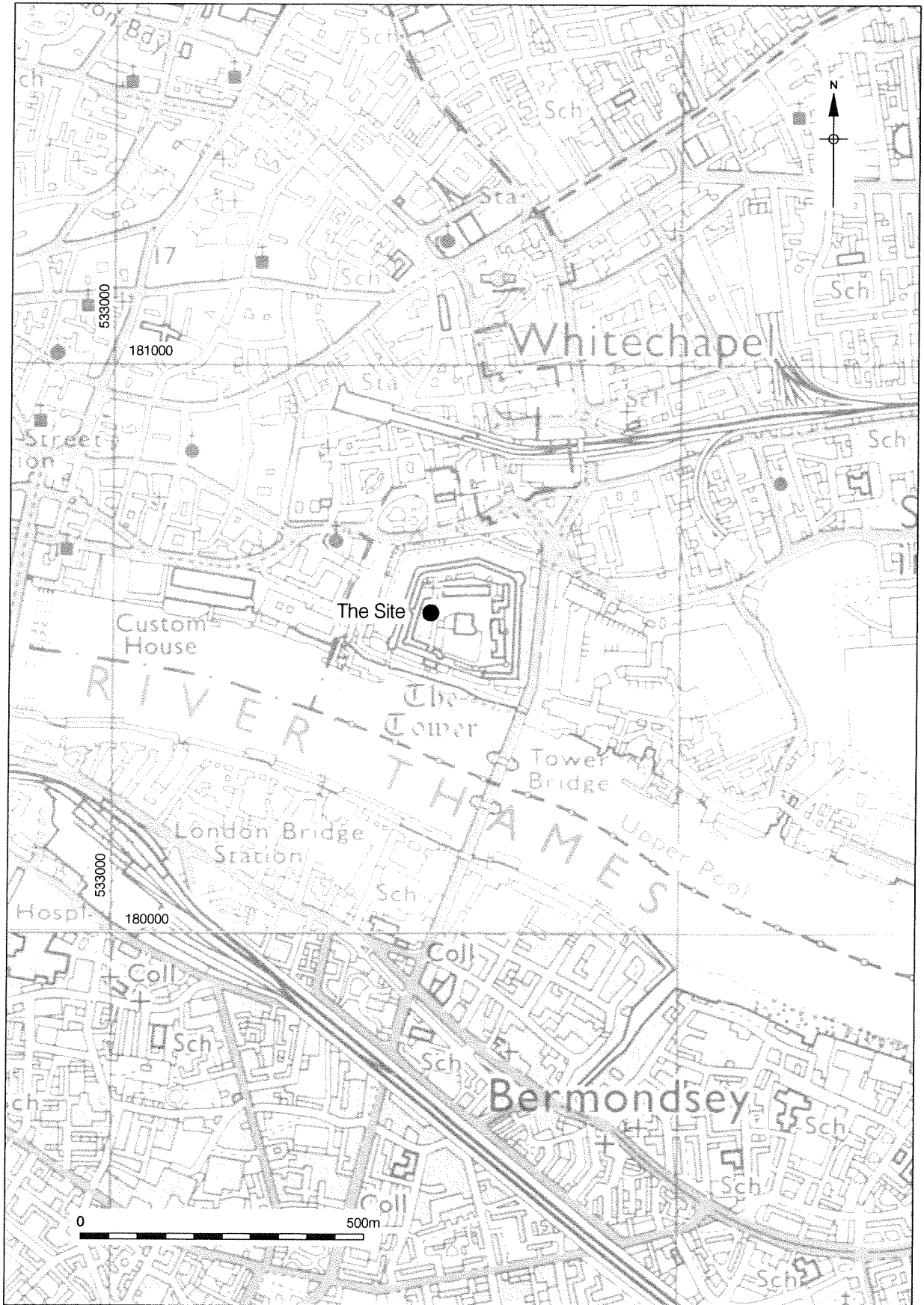
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1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results and working methods of an archaeological investigation undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited at the Execution Site, Tower Green, Tower of London, London Borough of Tower Hamlets.
- 1.2 The archaeological work was implemented in advance of the proposed development of a new sculpture to commemorate the historic victims of executions traditionally carried out on this location.
- 1.3 One trench was excavated, encompassing the traditional location of the execution site, on Tower Green, and previously marked with a plaque. The site lies approximately twenty-three metres south of the Chapel Royal of St Peter ad Vincula, within the curtilage of the Tower of London.

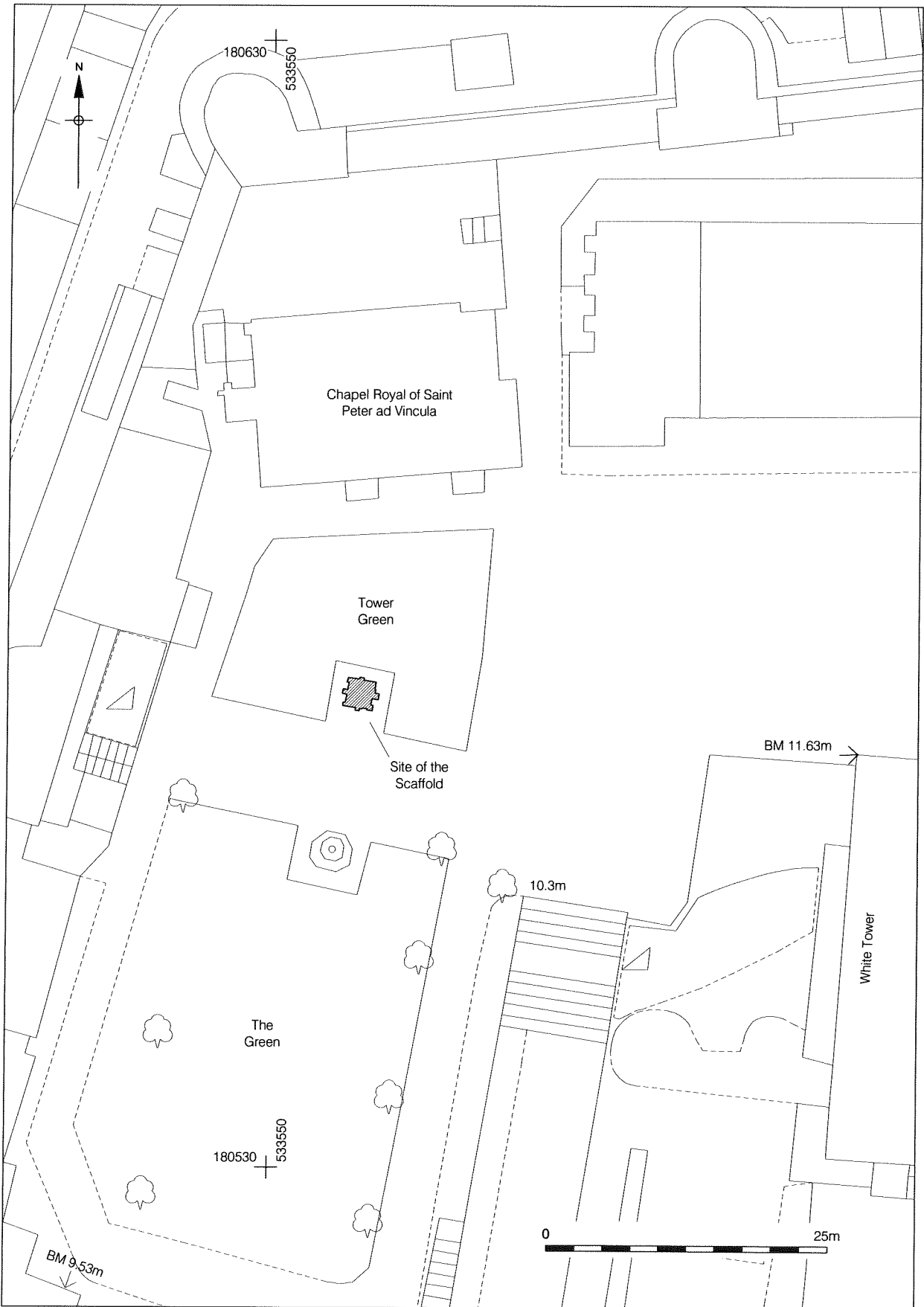
2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 An archaeological investigation was conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. at the Execution Site, Tower Green, Tower of London, London EC3, (Figure 1), in advance of a proposed development of a new sculptural memorial to commemorate the historic victims of execution that took place on this site.
- 2.2 The investigation was conducted between the 18th May and 22nd May 2006 and was commissioned by Historic Royal Palaces.
- 2.3 The investigation consisted of one trench, dug by hand to a total depth of only c. 0.65m and was undertaken at the traditional site of executions at the Tower of London. Excavation revealed the brick built plinth of the original memorial, construction of which was ordered by Queen Victoria in the 1860s.
- 2.4 All levels were taken from an Ordnance Survey benchmark, located on the northwest corner of the White Tower, Tower of London and had a value of 11.63 mOD.
- 2.5 The National Grid Reference of the site centre is TQ 3356 8057.
- 2.6 The site was given the unique code TOL 101.
- 2.7 Stuart Watson and Jon Butler, assisted by Guy Seddon, supervised the investigation. The project was managed by Jon Butler for Pre-Construct Archaeology.



Reproduced from Ordnance Survey 1:25 000 Data © Crown Copyright 1987

Figure 1
Site Location
1:10 000



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Figure 2
Trench Location
1:500

3 PLANNING BACKGROUND AND RESEACH OBJECTIVES

3.1 Background

3.1.1 The Tower of London is a World Heritage Site and a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Greater London No. 10).

3.1.2 Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent was granted for the erection of a glass, granite and stainless steel sculpture on a concrete foundation 3.55m in diameter and to a depth of c. 0.50m.

3.2 Research Objectives

3.2.1 The following Research Questions were addressed by the investigation:

- Is there any evidence of features or structures pre-dating the cemetery of the medieval chapel of St Peter ad Vincula?
- Is there any evidence of human remains associated with the cemetery associated with the chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula? If so what date are the surviving burials?
- Is there any evidence of structures or features associated with the 16th and 17th century New and Old Main Guard buildings?
- Is there any evidence of later structure or features?
- Can any artefacts, residual or not, be identified to phases of occupation of the Tower of London?

3.3 The archaeological works were inspected and monitored Jane Spooner, curator of the Tower of London and by Dr. Rory O'Donnell, Historic Building Inspector, English Heritage.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 An archaeological Method Statement (Butler, 2005) was compiled prior to the commencement of the excavation, and the results of an evaluation, also by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Holden, 2006), to the southwest of the excavation trench, are both referred to in this report, as is material from other sources.

4.2 Background

4.2.1 The investigation site is located on Tower Green to the south of the Chapel Royal of St. Peter ad Vincula. The site itself is located on the old burial ground of the chapel. The first chapel was erected on the site in c. 1110. The chapel was ringed by the Inner Curtain Wall and included within the Tower precincts during the 1240s refortification of the Tower. The present chapel is a heavily restored version of the building constructed by Henry VIII in the 16th century. The medieval burial ground extended to the south and east of the chapel and continued in use until the 19th century, when it was incorporated into Tower Green. In the 16th and 17th centuries buildings known as the New and Old Main Guard were built to the northeast and southwest of the site of the Execution area.

4.2.2 The Tower has been subject to numerous archaeological investigations. In 1975 a Tudor brick floor and a 17th century brick soakaway on the site of the old Main Guard were revealed to the east of the Beauchamp Tower in Tower Green (Parnell, 1979). During the installation of the inner ring main, Human remains were found on the site of the old burial ground (OAU, 1995).

4.2.3 The Execution site, also known as "Site of Scaffold" is most famous for the executions of, amongst others, Anne Boleyn (1536) and Lady Jane Grey (1554). However, it is unlikely that all the executions took place on this exact spot, as an execution scaffold was a temporary structure, erected in a convenient place. A topographical watercolour from 1817 shows an unmarked area in front of the Chapel of St. Peter's, marking the site of Anne Boleyn's execution, and an engraving from 1743 shows three soldiers of the Blackwatch regiment being shot in front of the chapel. The conclusion is that this general area, adjacent to the chapel, and within the burial ground was the traditional site of execution, rather than the precise spot marked today.

4.2.4 The history of the "Site of Scaffold" dates back to Queen Victoria. After a visit to the Tower in 1860, the Queen asked to see the site of the execution of Anne Boleyn. The following year the Queen was shown a roped off area as the execution site. This site was probably chosen as it was in the traditional execution area within the Tower, and was in front of the Chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula, where Anne lies buried. The site gained in significance and stature when Queen Victoria commanded that the site she had seen in 1861 be railed off, paved and a block of granite with a memorial tablet be installed. An estimate (totalling £6) and a letter commissioning these works (appendix 2) are dated to 30th October and 13th November 1861 respectively, locating the site as "Where Queen Anne Boleyn was beheaded" (PRO 1919). This work seems to have been completed in 1866. All of these features have been renewed over the years, and the proposed new memorial is the latest incarnation. Thus, over time, this spot has become known as the exact location where several famous historical figures were executed. In reality, this site could best be described as the 'traditional' location.

5 METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 The fieldwork was designed to assess the presence or absence of significant archaeological remains.
- 5.2 One trench was excavated, totalling 6.84m² at its base. Its final dimensions were 4.96m north to south by 5.24m east to west.
- 5.3 Contractors from the Tower of London removed the cobbled surface overlying the site and broke out the concrete sub-base under archaeological supervision. Collectively these modern layers measured 0.34m in thickness. Field staff of Pre-Construct Archaeology continued the excavation by hand to the final excavation depth of 0.65m from the current ground level.
- 5.4 All archaeological features (stratigraphical layers, cuts, fills, structures) were recorded in plan and in section using standard recording methods. A photographic record using 35mm colour transparencies, back and white print film and digital mediums was also made as appropriate.
- 5.5 All levels were taken directly from the Ordnance Survey Benchmark, located on the northwest corner of the White Tower, Tower of London (value 11.63m OD). Due to its proximity to the trench it was unnecessary to establish a temporary benchmark.
- 5.6 The work was undertaken following English Heritage (GLAAS) guidelines (English Heritage 1998).
- 5.7 Following the completion of the archaeological investigation, the trench remained open, as the trench will form the location of the foundation of the proposed memorial.

6 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 6.1 The British Geological Survey 1:50,000 Series Sheet 256 (North London) indicates that the site is likely to be underlain by Quaternary Post-diversionary Thames River Deposits, known as 'Taplow Gravel'. However, due to the limited depth of the excavation (0.65m below the current ground level) no natural formation levels were reached.

- 6.2 The site is located within the complex of the Tower of London. The Tower itself is located on the northern bank of the River Thames, in a dominant position overlooking the river. The current ground level at the execution site is at a height of approximately 10.75m OD.

7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

7.1 Summary

- 7.1.1 Only archaeological features relating to the post-medieval period was identified in the trench excavated.
- 7.1.2 The trench measured 4.96m north-south by 5.25m east-west, and cut from a height between 10.71m OD and 10.75m OD.
- 7.1.3 The lowest deposit, [6] was a dark reddish brown sand/clay/silt at a level of between 10.07m OD and 10.09m OD and is likely to represent a post-medieval levelling layer. Built on top of [6] was a brick plinth (see below) which was abutted by two further ground-raising layers. The first, comprising demolition rubble [5], contained a few shards of 19th century pottery and a shard of medieval pottery, Coarse Border Ware (CBW), dated to between 1270-1500. Context [5] is similar in colour and composition to the layer above, [4] which contained pottery dated 1830-1900.
- 7.1.4 Built on top of [6] was a 19th century brick built plinth [7], that measured between 0.77m and 0.82m north to south by between 0.84m and 0.86m east to west. Its depth is 0.60m. The value of the level at the top of the structure was 10.67m OD, and at the base 10.07m OD. Its most probable function was as the plinth base to the original Victorian monument marking the site of execution on Tower Green. Comprising of six courses of bricks, the lowest five are 19th century Yellow London 'Stock' brick (fabric 3035) measuring 224mm by 100mm by 65mm The top course of bricks are older, consisting of Purple Post-Great Fire bricks (fabric 3034/3032), measuring 221mm by 105mm by 63mm These are most probably re-used, perhaps as a decorative top to the plinth. However the top of the plinth is almost completely covered by a mid grey cement render, which is most likely to represent the bonding material for a granite base which originally lay on top of the plinth.
- 7.1.5 Abutting up to the plinth was a layer of loose building debris [5]. The value of the level at the top of the layer was between 10.37m OD and 10.34m OD, and was c. 0.32m thick. The layer was composed of brick fragments, slate roof tile fragments, mortar, fire back fragments, as well as occasional fragments of worked stone. This material is consistent with being 19th century demolition debris. Most of the finds came from this layer, including 18th and 19th century fragments of pottery, including shards of 18th

century Tin-glaze, re-fired white earthenware and 19th century flowerpot fragments. A date of post 1820 is suggested by the presence of shards of yellow ware pottery.

- 7.1.6 The ceramic building material recovered gives a date range of between 17th and 19th centuries, and includes Post medieval coursed peg tile fragments, fragments of London stock brick, fragments of stock moulded brick (late 18th to 19th century), as well as fragments of unfrogged (fabric 3033) brick, pre 1800-1850. This layer also contained two fragments of worked stone of medieval (possibly Norman) date. One fragment, of Reigate Green Stone shows evidence of a series of parallel tool marks.
- 7.1.7 Two small finds (sf.) were recovered from layer [5]. One was of domed military button of copper alloy with iron backing (sf. 1). On the face of the button a Queen Victoria crown and part of a Royal cipher are visible (perhaps two entwined 'R's). The button has a diameter of 25mm. It is complete but corroded. Also from context [5] was an object of octagonal-cut thick lead sheet with a rectangular hole in the centre (sf. 2), and measured 35mm by 35mm with a 16mm by 16mm hole. It is possible that this object is some form of weight; more elaborate button and buckle-like lead objects of a similar size were used as weights to hold down skirts and curtains in the 18th to early 20th centuries (Bailey 2004).
- 7.1.8 Context [5] contained fragments of 19th glass and clay pipe stems and several bone fragments were recovered, including; a partial skull of a small mammal, the leg bones of sheep, one showing butcher marks to its end.
- 7.1.9 One human bone was recovered from context [5], a clavicle, or collarbone, and from its smallish size it appears to be that of an adolescent.
- 7.1.10 In conclusion this context is consistent with being a 19th century layer of demolished building debris, and possibly represents a levelling layer to raise the height of what became Tower Green, over the medieval burial ground.
- 7.1.11 Sealing layer [5] was a layer of mid reddish brown sand/silt/clay [4]. This context is very similar to context [6]. At between 0.03m and 0.05m thick, the value of the levels are at between 10.40m OD and 10.38m OD and probably represent a flat levelling layer on top of the brick rubble below. No finds were observed in this context and the layer abutted up to the brick plinth [7].
- 7.1.12 The deposits and plinth were sealed by granite setts.

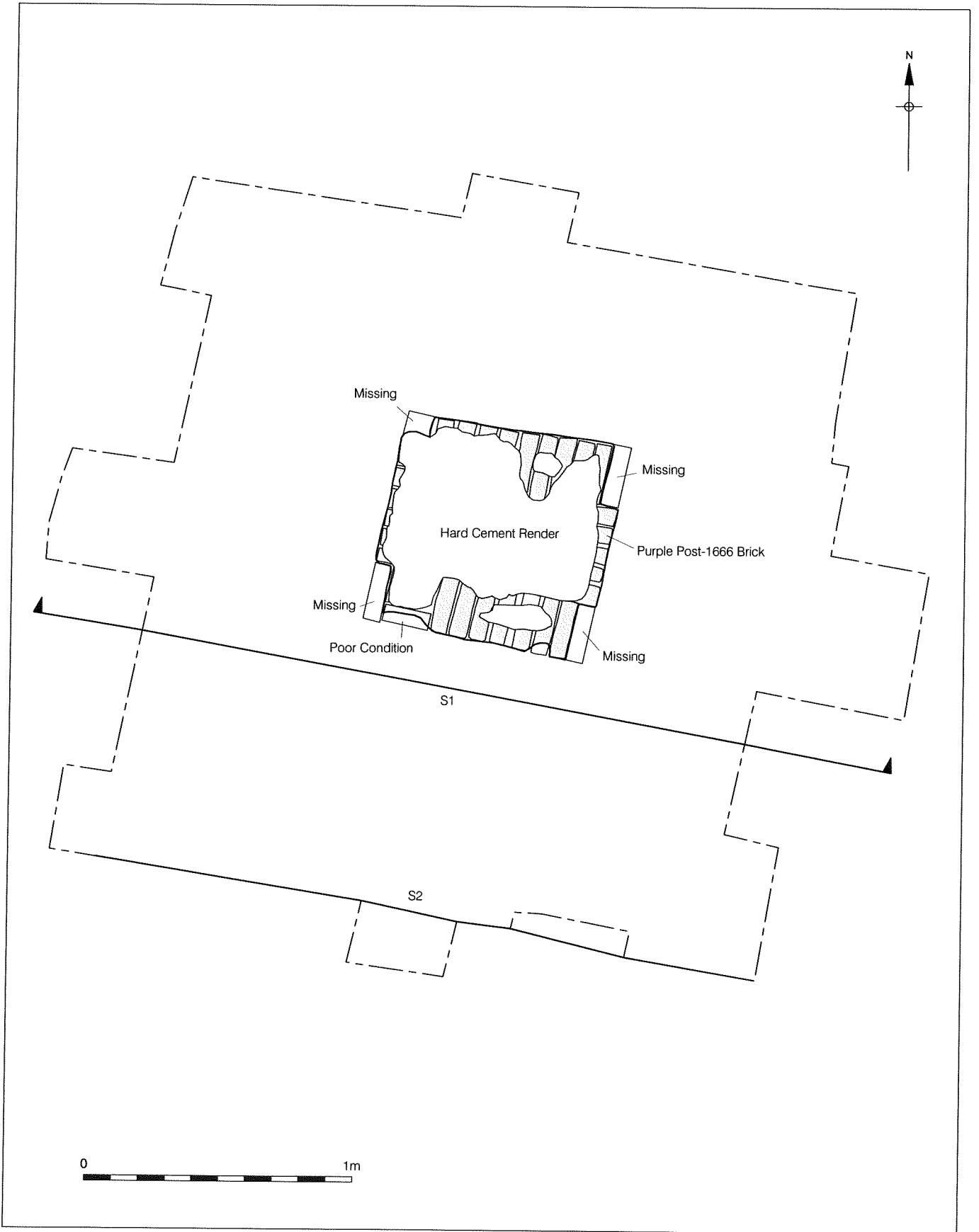


Figure 3
Plan of Victorian Plinth [7]
1:20

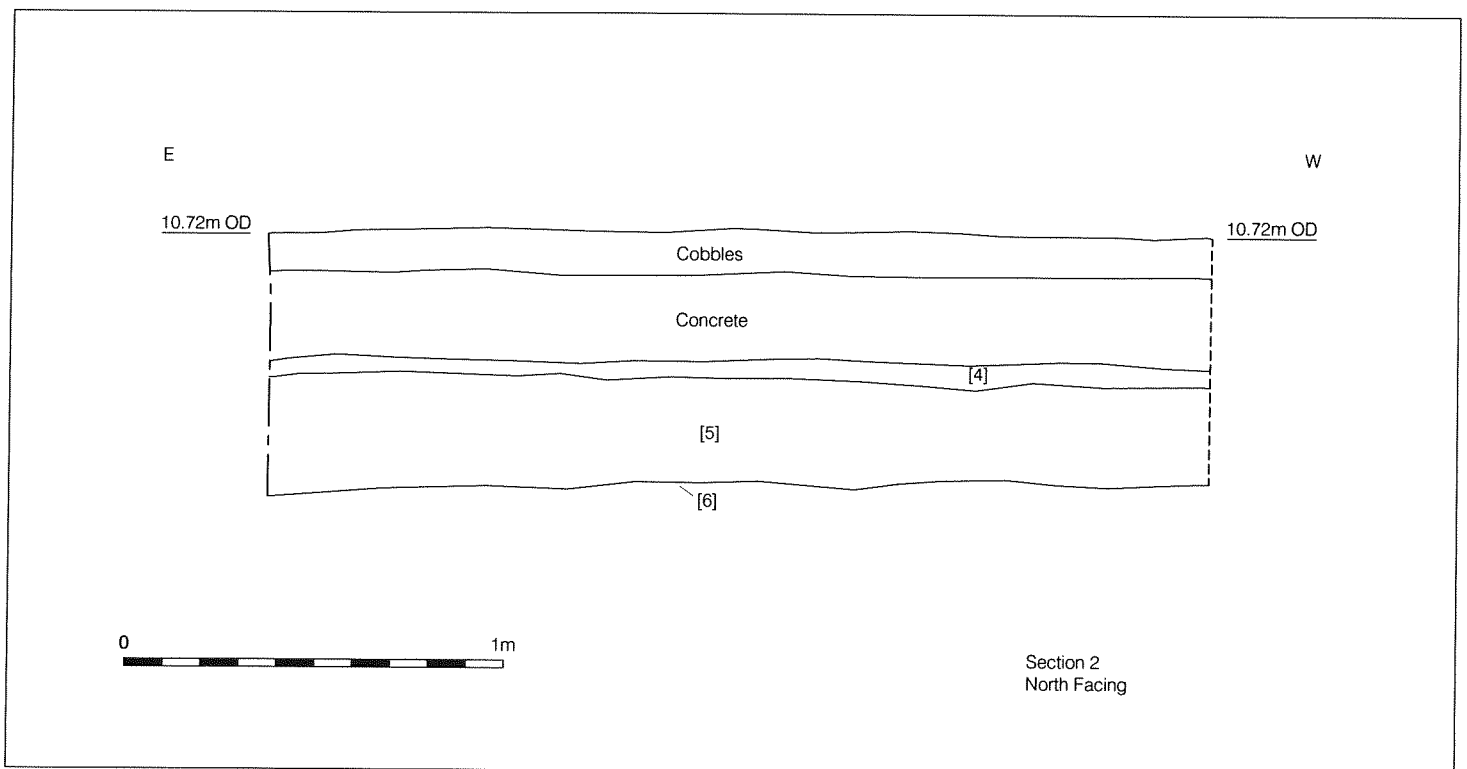
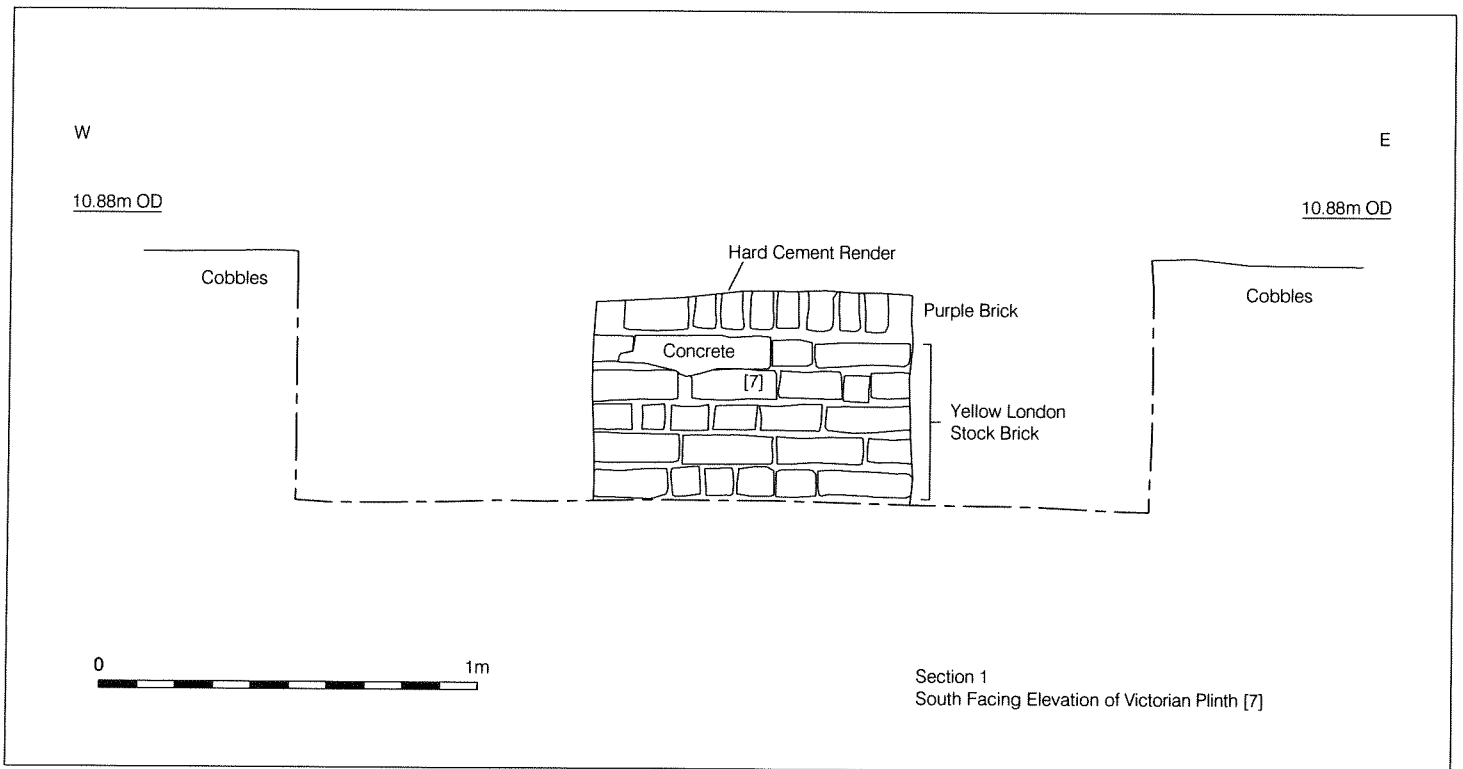


Figure 4
Sections 1 and 2
1:20

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 No evidence was found for any features or structures pre-dating the medieval cemetery of the chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula. There is some evidence of human remains, possibly associated with the cemetery of the chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula, but this consists of a single clavicle, disarticulated, from context [5], a 19th century layer and therefore not proven conclusively.
- 8.2 No evidence was observed of structures or features associated with the 16th and 17th century New and Old Main Guard buildings.
- 8.3 There is evidence of later structures or features. A 19th century brick plinth was observed and recorded within the trench. It is most likely that this is the base of the original Victorian memorial tablet, as commanded to be placed here by Queen Victoria in 1861, and installed by c. 1866. It was primarily placed here to commemorate the execution of Anne Boleyn, but has since become a memorial to all those executed on or near this spot throughout the Tower of London's history. The location has great significance as a symbolic site, and as such it seems likely that this, the remains of the original Victorian monument, may be preserved in situ, and incorporated into the new memorial that will be constructed in the summer of 2006, and will occupy this same spot.
- 8.4 Some artefacts may be identified to phases of occupation of the Tower of London. Fragments of medieval worked stone (possibly Norman) from context [5] date to the earliest phase of the Tower, and the recovery of a 19th century military button (sf1), also from context [5,] are a reminder of the Towers role as a military fortress.

9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank Historic Royal Palaces, in particular Ms. Jane Spooner, Curator of the Tower of London, for commissioning the work and Dr Rory O'Donnell, Historic Buildings Inspector for English Heritage for monitoring the investigation. The author would like to thank the excavation team of Jon Butler and Guy Seddon. I would also like to thank Berni Sudds and Chris Jarrett for their rapid analysis of the pottery and ceramic building materials and Marit Gaimster for her equally rapid analysis of the small finds. Adrian Nash produced the drawings and Jon Butler undertook the project management and editing.

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British Geological Survey. 1:50 000 Series, England and Wales Sheet 256. North London Solid and Drift Geology. Map.

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context	Type	Description
4	Layer	Post-medieval levelling layer
5	Layer	Building demolition layer
6	Layer	Post-medieval levelling layer
7	Masonry	19 th C brick plinth

APPENDIX 2: PHOTOGRAPHS AND HISTORIC DOCUMENTS

Treasury Chambers

13th November 1861

Sir,

With reference to your Report of the 7th Instant, I am directed by the Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury to authorize you to incur an expenditure of £6, in placing a stone and inscription on the spot in the Tower of London where Queen Anne Boleyn was beheaded.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant.

(signature illegible)

The First Commissioner of Works.

Tower of London

Estimate

30th Oct 1861

To provide and fix on the site of the ancient scaffold a wrought block of granite with engraved plate inserted in ditto to mark the spot on which Queen Anne Boleyn was beheaded.

£6-/-

(signature illegible)

APPENDIX 2: PHOTOGRAPHS



View looking north east. Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. field staff recording Victorian plinth, context [7].



View looking north. Scale 1m. Victorian plinth, context [7] in trench 1.

APPENDIX 3:

DISCUSSION OF A POSSIBLE CHALK MOULD FRAGMENT FOUND AT THE EXECUTION SITE, TOWER OF LONDON. (TOL101)

John Brown

Excavation of the backfill [5] surrounding the brick plinth base contained ceramic building material fragments including brick, pan- and peg- roof tile and stoneware drainpipe/sanitary ware fragments. The material was suggestive of a mid-19th century date from the deposit, and was on the whole unremarkable for the area and period.

However one fragment of a chalk mould was recovered that bears further discussion. The fragment is roughly triangular in section, with the long face containing an ovoid depression and two short slots at opposite ends of the long axis (fig. 1). The depression is marked out on the chalk face with pencil marks forming a 'cross-hair' pattern. The depression is 60mm on the long axis by 43mm on the short axis and approximately 27mm deep at its centre. The slots are both c.15mm in length, 5mm wide, and 5mm deep. The shape appears to have been carved by hand.

At the junction of the other two faces, in line with the first depression, is another circular depression c.35mm diameter and approximately 30mm deep (fig. 2). These two faces are not as well finished as the long face, and the circular depression may have been intended to position the fragment in place as part of something else, perhaps a mould.

The two short slots either side of the ovoid may also represent a mould, perhaps the feed channels for casting liquid into the ovoid shape. One suggestion for interpretation is for shot casting, but this seems unlikely due to the ovoid shape and the fact that such moulds tended to be designed to cast several shots at once. Typically for smaller shot casting, a succession of depressions formed a bead-effect strip of shots that were then snipped off individually afterwards. If the fragment does represent part of a mould there would possibly be some residue retained, and none is visible.

Another possible function is that the depression served as a 'mortise' to locate another fragment of stone, or other material, and helped to hold separate pieces in place to form a composite piece of masonry or architectural feature. Such locating holes, with corresponding nibs on opposing pieces, have been observed by the author in composite plaster moulds for ceramic architectural and sanitary fittings excavated at the Doulton Drainpipe factory, Lambeth Bridge House.

There remains the possibility that the fragment bears no relation to activities in the Tower, as it may be from material brought into the site from elsewhere for ground raising. Certainly the remainder of the assemblage is indicative of this type of activity.

Figure 1: Long face with ovoid depression (scale in cm)



Figure 2: Short faces with ovoid depression (scale in cm)



APPENDIX 4: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-15360

Project details

Project name	Execution Site, Tower Green, Tower of London
Short description of the project	And evaluation and excavation was undertaken prior to the construction of a new commemorative sculpture on the site of the scaffold on Tower Green, Tower of London. A brick built plinth of 19th century date was revealed that is likely to be the original Victorian memorial.
Project dates	Start: 18-05-2006 End: 22-05-2006
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Associated project reference codes	TOL 101 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Scheduled Monument (SM)
Current Land use	Community Service 2 - Leisure and recreational buildings
Monument type	COMMEMORATIVE MONUMENT Post Medieval
Significant Finds	HUMAN BONE Post Medieval
Investigation type	'Full excavation'
Prompt	Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON TOWER HAMLETS TOWER HAMLETS Execution Site, Tower Green, Tower of London
Postcode	EC3
Study area	6.84 Square metres
NGR	TQ 3356 8057 Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	Historic Royal Palaces
Project design originator	Jon Butler
Project director/manager	Jon Butler
Project supervisor	Stuart Watson
Funding body	Historic Royal Palaces

Project bibliography

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Results of an Excavation at the Execution Site, Tower Green, Tower of London, London EC3, London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Watson, S
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Issuer or publisher	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
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