

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AND BUILDING
RECORDING AT HALL OF SOCIETY OF GRAY'S INN,
9 SOUTH SQUARE, GRAY'S INN ROAD WC1R 5ET,
LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN**

Site Code: GYN06

Central National Grid Reference: NGR 531027 181730

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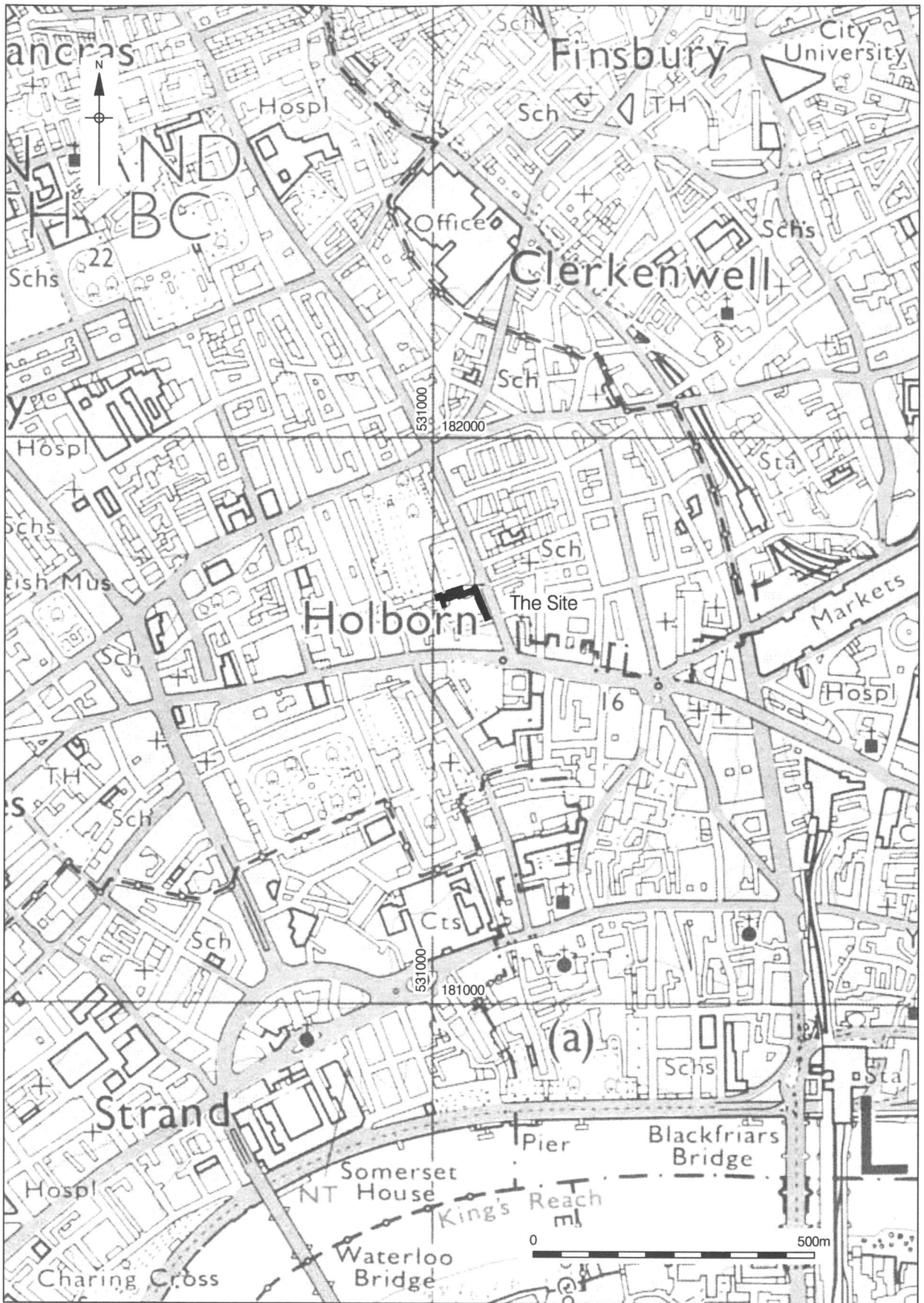
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1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results and working methods of an archaeological watching brief and building recording undertaken at the Hall of Society of Gray's Inn, 9 South Square, Gray's Inn Road, London Borough of Camden. The work was in advance of construction of a lift for improved access (Fig.1). The site is centred at National Grid Reference NGR 531027 181730. Carmel Chin of GVA Grimley LLP commissioned the project on behalf of The Honourable Society of Gray's Inn and Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd undertook the watching brief between the 7th and the 11th August 2006.
- 1.2 Trench 1 represented the breaking-out of a concrete slab using hand tools to accommodate footings for a lift mechanism. Alterations to the standing structure of the building were also undertaken to improve access to the lift shaft and this was treated as a building recording exercise for which a photographic record only was required. The sub-contractors Diacutt Ltd. undertook all breaking-out work under the direction of the principal contractors Pexhurst Interiors Ltd.
- 1.3 No archaeological deposits were observed during the ground works, although a small area of gravel was revealed underlying the concrete slab in Trench 1 that may represent natural gravels of the Lynch Hill Formation.
- 1.4 The building is accorded Grade I status and has at its core a 16th century Hall, however alterations to the basement wall, previously thought to contain brickwork of possible Tudor date, revealed only modern brickwork of c. 1950's date.

2 INTRODUCTION

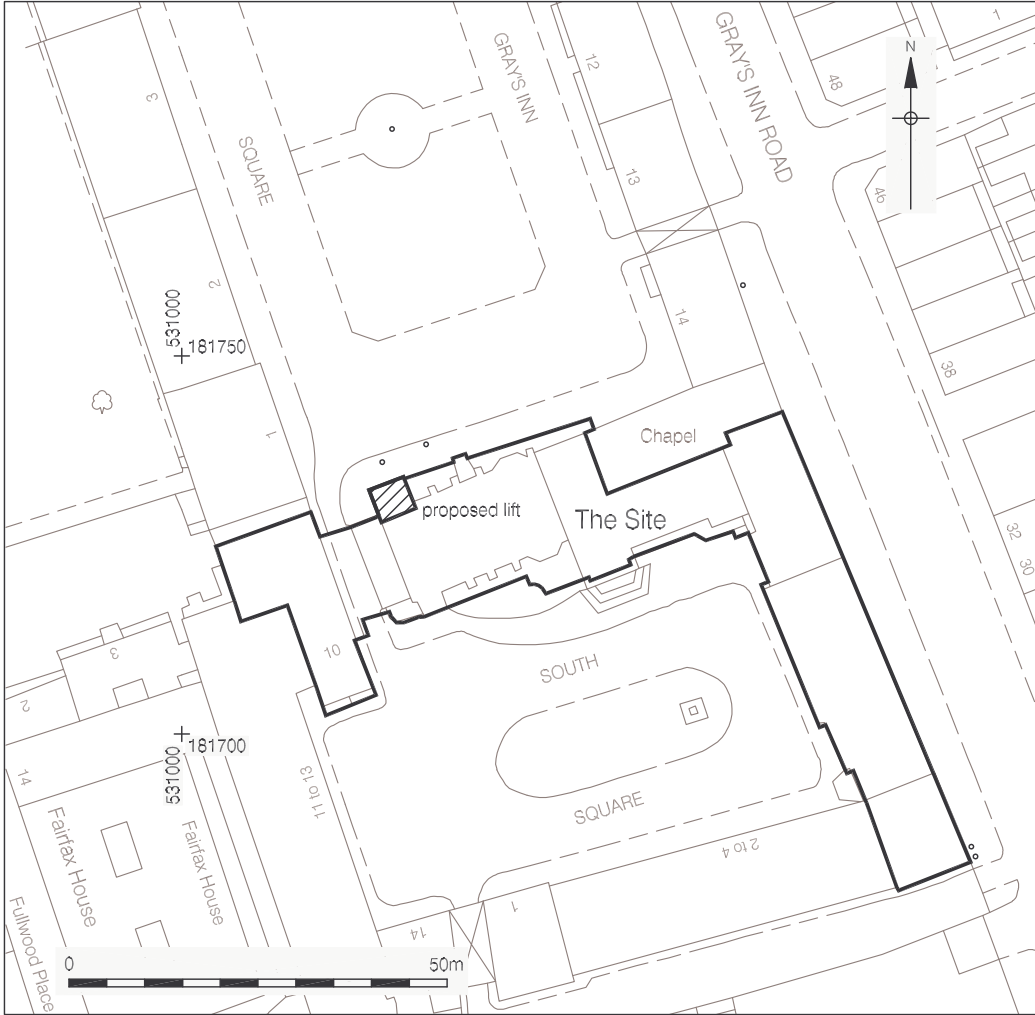
- 2.1 This report details the results and working methods of an archaeological watching brief and building recording undertaken at the Hall of Society of Gray's Inn, 9 South Square, Gray's Inn Road, London Borough of Camden (fig 1). The work was in advance of construction of a lift for improved access. The site is centred at National Grid Reference NGR 531027 181730. The site lies within a courtyard complex of two squares, Gray's Inn Square to the north and South Square to the south. The hall is located in the central dividing range of buildings between the two squares and is formally registered as no. 9 South Square. The complex is bounded by Theobald's Road to the North, High Holborn to the south, and Gray's Inn road to the east.
- 2.2 The Hall of Society of Gray's Inn is Grade 1 listed and lies within a registered Historic Park and Garden. It is also within an Archaeological Priority Area as defined by the Unitary Development Plan for the borough of Camden.
- 2.3 Carmel Chin of GVA Grimley LLP commissioned the project on behalf of The Honourable Society of Gray's Inn and Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd undertook the watching brief between the 7th and the 11th August 2006. The fieldwork was conducted under the supervision of John Brown and the project management of Tim Bradley (PCA).
- 2.4 A watching brief was undertaken from the 7th to the 11th of August, prior to the construction of the lift in the east side of the basement room. The watching brief focused on the ground reduction for the lift, and the building recording element focused on the photographic recording of chamfering to the west side of the entrance in the south wall.
- 2.5 The completed archive comprising written, drawn and photographic records will be deposited at the London Archaeological Archive Resource Centre under the site code GYN06.



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Figure 1
 Site Location
 1:10 000



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Figure 2
Detailed Site Location
1:1000

3 PLANNING BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The Hall of Society of Gray's Inn is Grade 1 listed and lies within the Grade II registered Historic Park and Garden of Gray's Inn. It is also within an Archaeological Priority Area (APA: 2 London Suburbs) as defined by the Unitary Development Plan for the borough of Camden.
- 3.2 In 2005 Museum of London Archaeological Service (MoLAS) carried out an archaeological desk-based assessment of the site prior to fieldwork in accordance with guidance set out in PPG's 15 and 16¹. The assessment was completed in order to support the Listed Building Consent application for the construction of a lift-shaft within the historic building. Listed building consent was subsequently granted for alterations to the south basement wall of the annexe, and for ground reduction of the concrete slab, under archaeological supervision.
- 3.3 Prior to the watching brief an investigative test pit was cut into the concrete slab close to the north wall of the basement (Test Pit 1), although no archaeological features were observed at this depth. A further investigative slot was cut into the plasterwork on the south wall and the revealed brickwork was interpreted as potentially of Tudor date². Test Pit 1 was still open when Pre-Construct Archaeology attended the site
- 3.4 The method statement produced by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. ³ sought to address the following Research Questions::
- Locate, define, record and date any surviving archaeological deposits, features or finds on the site
 - Establish if there is any evidence for prehistoric, Roman, Saxon or medieval deep cut features below the basement slab
 - Establish if there is any evidence for the medieval manor house thought from historical sources
 - Establish if there is any evidence for structural alterations/earlier phases of construction to the 16th century Hall
 - What is the date and phasing of encountered historic brickwork?
- 3.5 The method statement followed the methodology set out in: *'Archaeological Guidance Paper 3 Standards and Practices in Archaeological Fieldwork in*

¹ Baldwin E, 2005

² *ibid*, 30

³ PCA 2006

London'; 'Archaeological Guidance Paper 4: Archaeological Reports';
'Archaeological Guidance Paper 5: Evaluations'. Historic Building Recording was
undertaken according to the guidelines laid out in *Understanding historic buildings;
a guide to good recording practice* (English Heritage 2006).

4 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 4.1 The geological history of the area is covered in depth in the desk-based assessment⁴. The following is a brief summary.
- 4.2 The geology of the London area consists of Tertiary deposits of London Clay overlain by Quaternary fluvial deposits of the river Thames forming gravel terraces. Those gravels beneath the area of the site belong to the Lynch Hill Terrace. Above this are alluvial deposits, coupled with Aeolian or wind-blown sandy brickearths deposited after the most recent glaciation c10,000 years ago.
- 4.3 The surrounding natural topography slopes from east-west, downwards towards the River Fleet valley in the east, and more gradually southwards towards the River Thames.
- 4.4 In previous archaeological investigations within a 500m radius of the site, truncated natural gravels have been observed at heights of 21.40m OD – 22.0m OD to the north of and between 16.50m OD and 17.03m OD to the south⁵.

⁴ Baldwin 2005

⁵ ibid, 16

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 5.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site was covered in depth in the desk-based assessment⁶. It is summarised here.
- 5.2 The area immediately surrounding the site is not well known for the prehistoric period although occasional findspots indicate activity from the Palaeolithic onwards, particularly at the southern edge of the borough of Camden.
- 5.3 In the Roman period the site was located just outside of the city of Londinium, between the suspected line of two Roman roads, under High Holborn/Oxford Street to the south and Theobalds Road to the north. Several finds associated with roadside burials have been found in the vicinity reflecting typical Roman burial practices (Roman law required the dead to be buried outside city perimeters). However little evidence for an extensive cemetery, or for concentrated domestic settlement in the vicinity of the site, currently exists.
- 5.4 The Roman road along High Holborn/Oxford Street continued in use in the Saxon period and by the 10th century a settlement had developed in the area of the Fleet crossing to the south east of the site. In 1130 boundaries were set up to mark the edge of the city limits, one of which was located at the corner of Gray's Inn Road and Holborn.
- 5.5 During the medieval period the lands of Gray's Inn lay within the Parish of St Andrews Holborn. A large manor house ('the ancient manor of Murpoole') stood on or adjacent to the site of the present Hall and Chapel Block. The land was first described as an 'Inn' in 1370, and it is speculated that it became an Inn of Court soon after this. The area was further developed throughout the medieval period.
- 5.6 The original hall was constructed prior to 1556, and the gardens were formalised by 1676; the current form of the hall with its buttresses was standing by this time⁷.
- 5.7 Gray's Inn was badly damaged by enemy action during the Blitz: the hall was gutted by fire and a number of tenement blocks destroyed. The Hall was restored in the early 1950's.

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ *ibid*, 20

6 METHODOLOGY

- 6.1 Trench 1 represented the breaking out of concrete slab by specialist contractors in the eastern half of the basement extension, which was then recorded archaeologically. Test Pit 1, originally recorded by MoLAS, was also investigated by way of a comparison.
- 6.2 A temporary benchmark with a value of 17.64m OD was established on the top of the concrete slab from having been extrapolated from levels on the architects' drawings located in the exterior light well to the east of the basement extension.
- 6.3 All investigation of archaeological levels was by hand, with cleaning, examination and recording in both plan and section.
- 6.4 Recording on site was undertaken using the single context recording system as specified in the Museum of London Site Manual (MoLAS 2004). Plans were drawn at a scale of 1:20, and representative sections at a scale of 1:10. Contexts were numbered sequentially and recorded on *pro-forma* context sheets.
- 6.5 For the building recording the area of the south wall of the annexe basement was recorded photographically after some of the opening-up and prior to the removal of any brickwork. The revealed masonry in the standing building was photographed following the alterations and the bricks were examined onsite to determine fabric types. A written description forms part of this report.
- 6.6 The site was given the code GYN06.

7 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

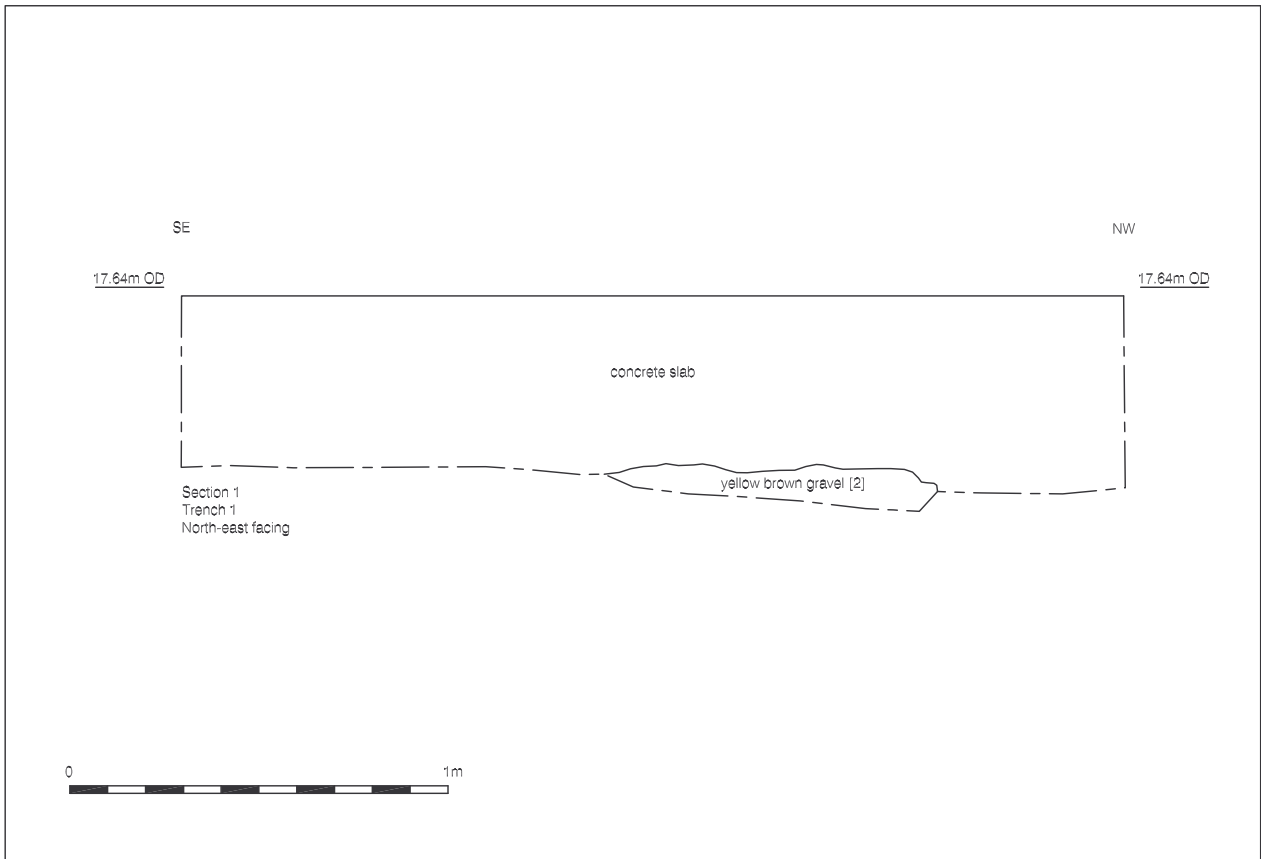
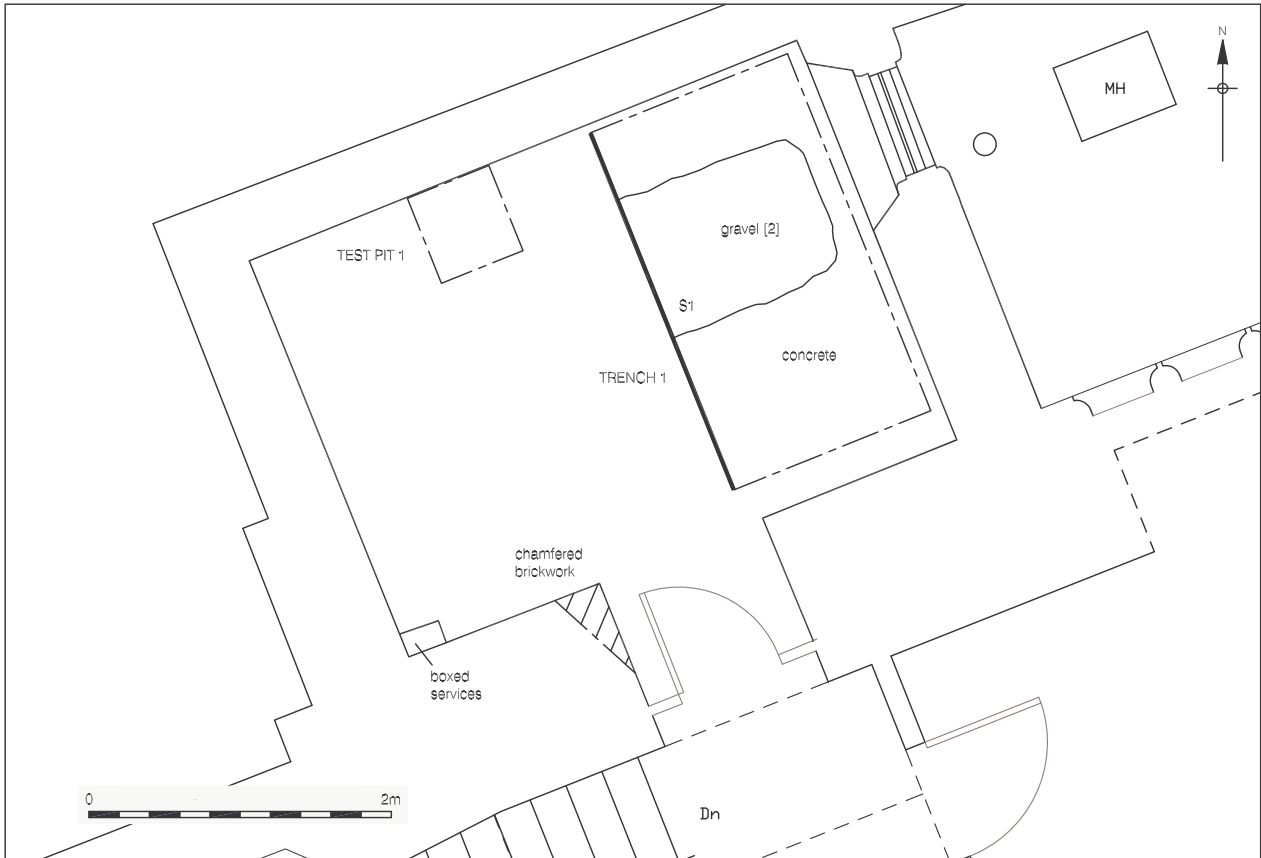
7.1 PHASE 1 – NATURAL GRAVELS

7.1.1 The earliest deposit encountered was a loose greyish-yellow to yellowish-brown sandy gravel [01] identified in a small pocket at the southern edge of Test Pit 1, at a height of c17.17m OD (fig 3). This layer was thought to be equivalent to the dark yellowish-brown sandy gravelly deposit [02] observed in Trench 1, at a height of 17.14 to 17.17m OD (figs 3 & 6). It was interpreted as an interface between the later building activity and the undisturbed terrace gravels proper.

7.2 Phase 2 – Mid 20th century features

7.2.1 Trench 1 (figs. 3, 6) showed no evidence of surviving archaeology and was largely obscured with the remainder of the concrete slab laid down during the construction of the basement annexe.

7.2.2 Following the stripping back of the wallplaster and cement render (fig. 7), the south wall of the basement was revealed. It consisted of purple-red, machine-pressed Fletton bricks (Museum of London fabric 3038), bonded with Portland cement mortar, which proved to be extremely hard. The area of wall to be chamfered was broken out to reveal similar brickwork, suggesting the core of the wall consisted of Fletton bricks of mass-construction. However the angle was relatively shallow given the thickness of the basement wall, and the core itself was not revealed (figs. 8 & 9).



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Figure 3
Plan and Section 1
1:50 / 1:20



Figure 4: South Basement Wall after opening up (view SW)

Figure 5: South basement wall after alteration (view SW)

Figure 6: Detail of brick fabrics revealed (view SW)

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The archaeological watching brief revealed evidence of possible natural river terrace gravels, presumably from the Lynch Hill Formation. These represented the earliest observed levels in the archaeological sequence, and given the height of the natural topography in the surrounding area they would have been truncated at the level recorded (17.14m OD – 17.00m OD). Any archaeological features in the overlying brickearth have therefore been removed in the vicinity of the site. There is a minor possibility that the gravel was not natural but represents the use of builders' 'hoggin' as bedding for the concrete slab, but this seems unlikely given the presence of suitable natural gravels already in the vicinity.
- 8.2 It seems likely that the south wall of the basement extension was added or entirely rebuilt in the 1950's, as machine-pressed Fletton bricks and Portland cement were used in its' construction. Similar bricks used in the west wall of the basement showed stamps for the London Brick Company indicating the earliest date of construction to be the late 19th century. No evidence was visible for the reuse of earlier foundations relating to the Tudor Hall or earlier structures such as the medieval manor house.
- 8.3 It is recommended that this report form an archive record of the works, but there is very little significance in the remains revealed by the opening up of Trench 1 and the south basement wall, and it does not merit further analysis or publication.

9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Baldwin, E, 2005, 'Hall of Society of Gray's Inn, 9 South Square W1CR 5ET: Archaeological impact assessment & Standing building assessment' Unpubl. MoLAS Archive report.

Bradley, T, 2006, 'Archaeological Watching Brief & Building Recording at Gray's Inn, London Borough of Camden: Method Statement' Unpubl. PCA Ltd. Archive report.

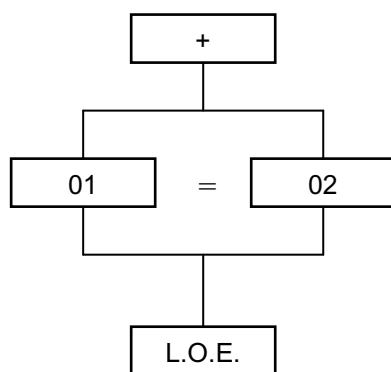
10 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 10.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology would like to thank Carmel Chin of GVA Grimley LLP for commissioning the project and Diane Walls of GLAAS for monitoring the work.
- 10.2 The author would like to thank Pexhurst Interiors Ltd for onsite assistance, and Adrian Nash for preparing the site plans and illustrations.

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX

CONTEXT	PLAN	SECTION	PHOTO	PHASE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	LEVEL (m OD)
01	T1 Multi		N	1	Layer	Greyish-Yellowish Brown sandy gravel	17.17
02	T1 Multi	S1	Y	1	Layer	Greyish-Yellowish Brown sandy gravel	17.17

APPENDIX 2: MATRIX



APPENDIX 3: OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-17856

Project details

Project name	9 South Square Gray's Inn
Short description of the project	A watching brief and building recording undertaken in the basement of the Hall of Society, 9 South Square Gray's Inn
Project dates	Start: 07-08-2006 End: 11-08-2006
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Type of project	Building Recording
Site status	Listed Building
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Site status	English Heritage List of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest
Current Land use	Other 2 - In use as a building
Monument type	HALL Post Medieval
Monument type	HALL Modern
Prompt	Listed Building Consent

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON CAMDEN HOLBORN Hall of Society of Gray's Inn (9 South Square)
Postcode	WC1R 5ET
Study area	5.00 Square metres
National grid reference	TQ 31027 81730 Point
Height OD	Min: 17.14m Max: 17.17m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	GVA Grimley LLP
Project design originator	Tim Bradley
Project director/manager	Chris Mayo
Project supervisor	John Brown
Sponsor or funding body	GVA Grimley LLP

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Archive ID	GYN06
Digital Contents	'Stratigraphic','Survey'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Survey','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Archive ID	GYN06
Paper Contents	'Stratigraphic','Survey'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Diary','Drawing','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section','Survey'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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