

DOCUMENT VERIFICATION

LAND AT BOW CHURCH,
LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

GEOTECHNICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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**An Archaeological Watching Brief of Geotechnical Investigations on
Land at Bow Church, London Borough of Tower Hamlets**

Site Code: BQW 06

Central National Grid Reference: TQ 3762 8294

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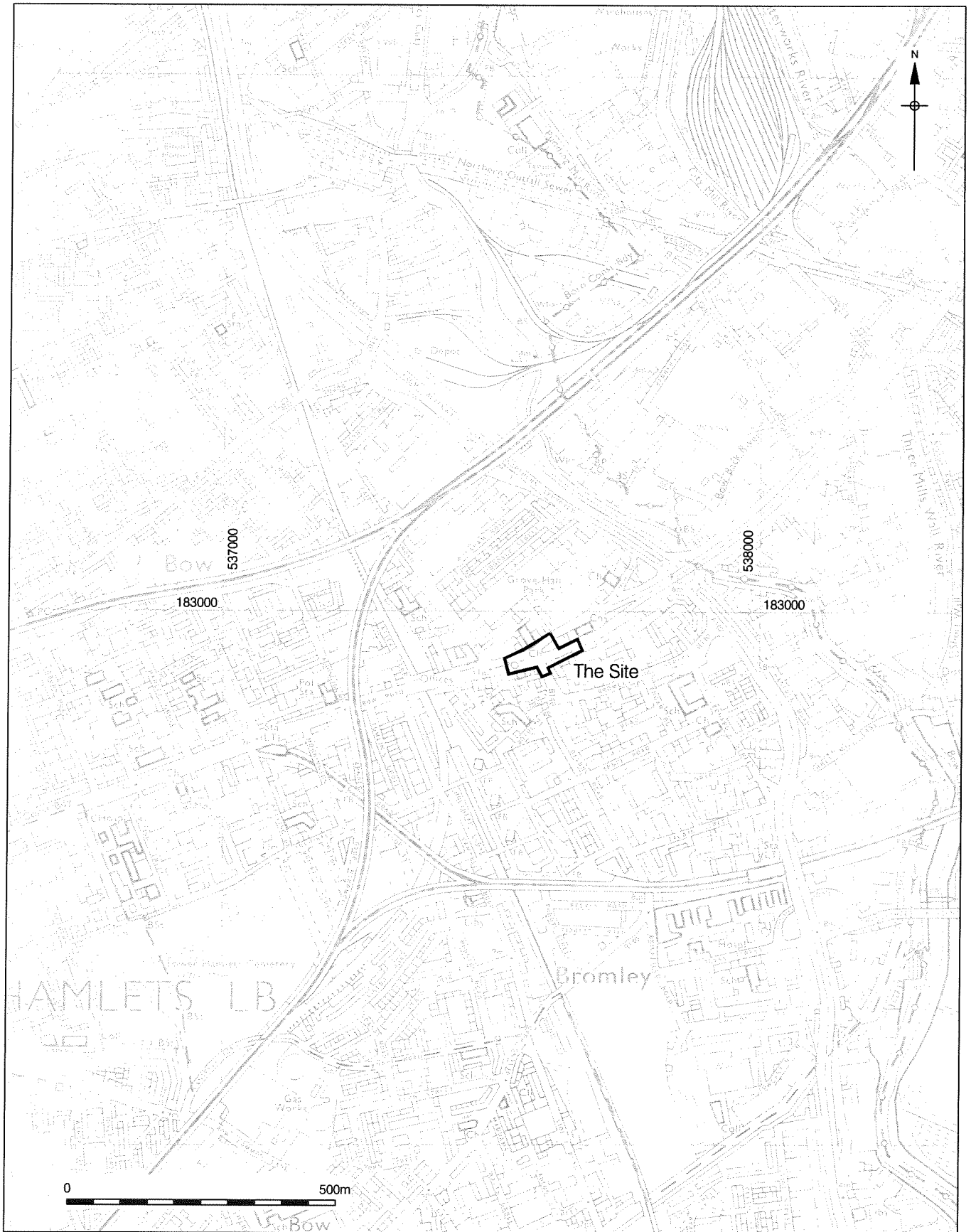
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1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results of an archaeological watching brief commissioned by Adams and Sutherland of a geotechnical investigation at land at Bow Church, London Borough of Tower Hamlets (Figure 1). The site is centred on National Grid Reference TQ 3762 8294.
- 1.2 The watching brief monitored the excavation of 8 geotechnical pits and 1 bore hole, in advance of the redevelopment of disused public conveniences and the relocation of a statue of William Gladstone. The watching brief took place between the 24th and 27th July 2006 and was monitored by Mark Chesterman of Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd.
- 1.3 Pre-Construct Archaeology have previously undertaken a Desk-Based assessment of the site (Barefoot and Holden 2006). This concluded that the site had a low potential for prehistoric to Saxon remains, a low to moderate potential for medieval remains and a moderate potential for post-medieval remains.
- 1.4 Natural deposits were seen in one test pit and the borehole. In the other test pits, remains were limited to 19th – 20th century made ground or surfaces. In Test Pit 3, however, a metallised surface was revealed which may be the remains of a post medieval precursor to Bow Road.

2 INTRODUCTION

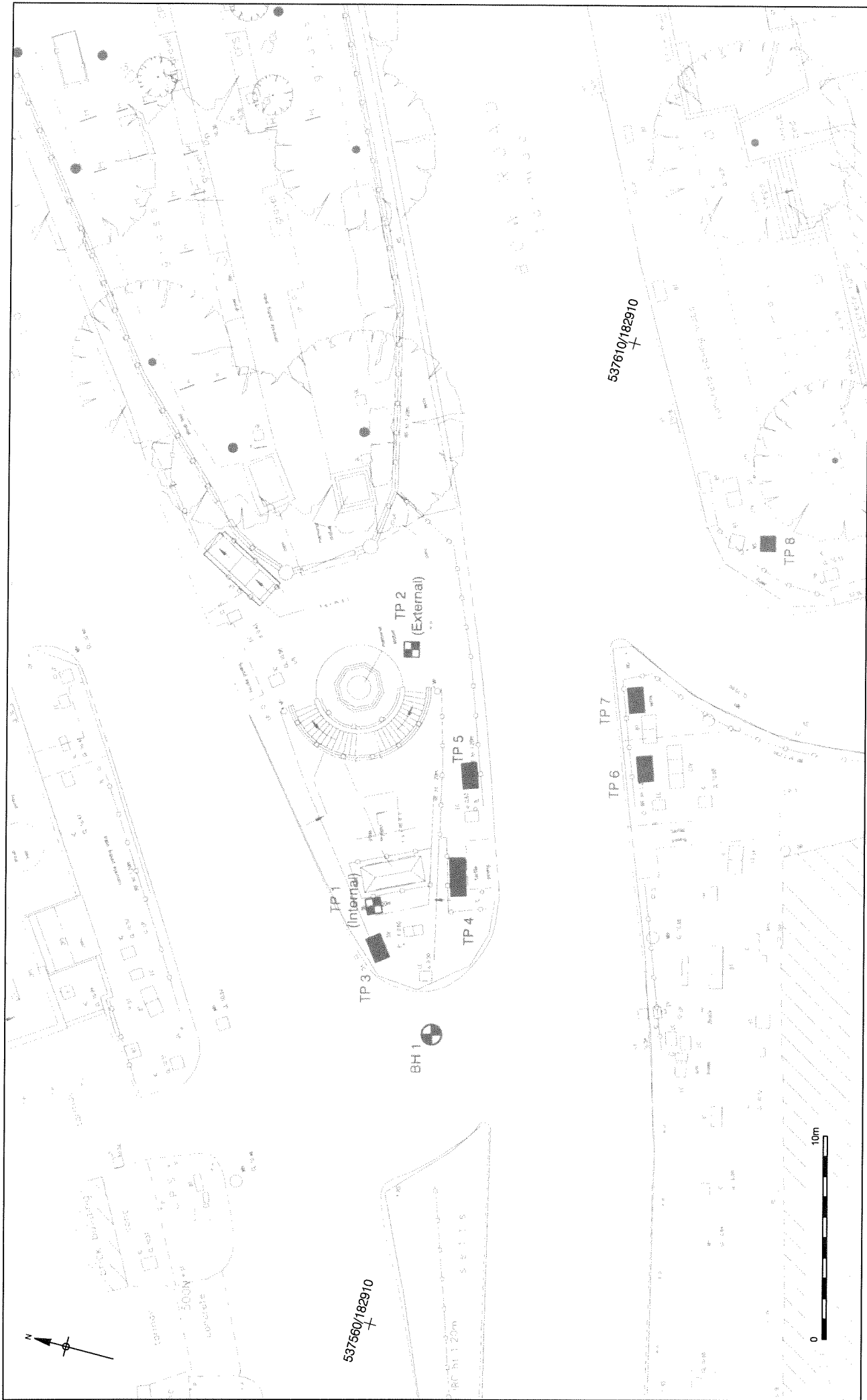
- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. on a geotechnical investigation at land at Bow Church, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, between 24th and 27th July 2006. The work was commissioned by Adams and Sutherland, prior to the redevelopment of the site. The fieldwork was supervised by the author, project managed by Chris Mayo and monitored by David Divers of GLAAS.
- 2.2 The site is situated on an island within Bow Road centred at TQ 3762 8294 and covers an area of approximately 7,700m²; however the area of maximum potential impact is limited to 273m². The site is bounded by Bow Road to the north and south and the precinct of St Mary at Bow Church to the east. A statue of William Gladstone, which carries listed status, is located within the site. Some exterior elements of Bow Church are also protected (Barefoot and Holden 2006, 7).
- 2.3 The project consisted of the monitoring of 8 geotechnical pits and 1 bore hole, and followed a specification set out in an approved Method Statement (Mayo 2006).
- 2.4 The completed archive comprising written and drawn records will be deposited at the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC) under the site code BQW 06.



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Figure 1
 Site location
 1:10 000 at A4



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 Figure 2
 Trial pit and borehole location
 1:400 at A4 (landscape)

3 GEOLOGICAL, ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The British Geological Survey indicates that the site is likely to be underlain by alluvium lying over River Terrace Gravels, comprising the Kempton Park and Taplow Gravels, which are above the London Clay (Barefoot and Holden 2006, 16).

3.2 The current ground surface is relatively flat at a height of approximately 11m OD.

3.3 Prehistoric

3.3.1 Directly to the east of the site, the River Lea would have been an important feature of the prehistoric landscape providing a sustainable source of food and transportation, although there is limited evidence for human activity in the area during the prehistoric period. Neolithic findspots are located to the east of the site and evidence for Neolithic and Bronze Age activity has been found to the northwest (Barefoot and Holden 2006, 18).

3.4 Roman

3.4.1 Roman activity in the Bow area is well known although there is limited evidence for this period within the close vicinity of the site (Barefoot and Holden 2006, 19).

3.5 Saxon and Medieval

3.5.1 Bow Bridge, to the east of the site, was built in c. 1300 and is the oldest stone arch bridge in the country; it also indicates the age by which Bow Road was in existence. Bow Church was built in 1311 (Barefoot and Holden 2006, 19).

3.6 Post-Medieval

3.6.1 A map of 1703 shows the position of the site at the edge of Bow Church with Bow Road bifurcating around it, and indeed this scenario is maintained throughout the post-medieval period. The site has always been located outside of the confines of the graveyard for the church. The local area was urbanised throughout the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries (Barefoot and Holden 2006, 19-21).

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The watching brief followed a method statement (Mayo 2006) designed to monitor all groundworks and ensure that any archaeological remains were recorded and interpreted. The geotechnical trial pits were broken and excavated by hand under archaeological supervision.
- 4.2 The geotechnical investigation comprised eight test-pits and one borehole (Table 1). These were located on the island around the statue of Gladstone and the public conveniences, and to the south of the site on the junction of Bow Road and Devons Road (Figure 2). Of the test-pits, one was located inside the disused male toilets. Others were designed to investigate existing services.

Test Pit number	Length (m)	Width (m)	Max Depth (m)
1	1.0	1.0	0.95
2	1.0	1.0	1.0
3	2.0	1.0	1.10
4	3.0	1.0	0.95
5	2.0	1.0	-
6	2.0	1.0	1.10
7	2.0	1.0	1.0
8	1.0	1.0	1.0
BH 1	Approx 150mm diameter		10.0

Table 1: approximate Geotechnical Test Pit dimensions

- 4.3 All material excavated was observed and stratigraphic changes and features were recorded.
- 4.4 Site levels were calculated from spot heights indicated on an architectural plan of the site.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE BY TEST PIT

5.1 Test Pit 1

5.1.1 Test Pit 1, located inside the subterranean male toilets, was not fully excavated due to the thickness of the concrete slab (c0.95m) which forms the structures' base. However, a core drilled through the concrete revealed dark yellowish brown natural gravels [16] beneath the concrete at an upper height of c6.41m OD.

5.2 Test Pit 2

5.2.1 Test Pit 2, located to the southeast of the statue of Gladstone, was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.0m. At the base of the pit was context [3], an unexcavated layer of dark greyish black sandy clay. Above this was a layer of compacted dark greyish brown sandy gravel [2]. With a thickness of 0.16m, it contained post-medieval ceramics dating from the 18th to 19th centuries. It was recorded at 9.74m OD.

5.2.2 A layer of light greyish brown mortar and rubble deposit [1] was next in the sequence – probably a levelling or demolition layer for the concrete and rubble forming the ground surface above. Layer [1] was c0.08m thick, while the ground surface was 0.87m thick.

5.3 Test Pit 3 (Figure 3)

5.3.1 Test Pit 3, at the northwest corner of the island site, was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.10m. The earliest deposit in the pit was a metalled surface [5] comprised of small rounded stones, 10-50mm in size, in a compact and dark yellowish brown clay matrix. Context [5] was recorded at an upper height of 9.52m OD and was at least 60mm thick. No dating material was recovered from the surface, yet it is most likely that it represents a post-medieval precursor to the existing Bow Road.

5.3.2 The surface was sealed by a compacted dark greyish brown sandy gravel deposit [4], which was 0.66m thick at an upper height of 10.18m OD. Concrete forming the current ground surface finished the sequence, and therefore it is possible that deposit [4] represents modern 'hoggin'. A modern drain and lamppost were also observed within Test Pit 3, truncating as far as context [5] at its' base.

5.4 Test Pit 4

5.4.1 Test Pit 4, on the south side of the island, was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.95m. At the base was a layer [6] of compacted dark greyish brown sandy gravel. It was at least 0.40m thick to an upper height of 10.01m OD and contained no datable material. The test pit was sealed by concrete forming the current ground surface, 0.55m thick.

5.5 Test Pit 5

5.5.1 Test Pit 5, on the south side of the island, was abandoned due to the presence of reinforced concrete.

5.6 Test Pit 6

5.6.1 Test Pit 6, on south side of Bow Road, was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.10m. The lowest deposit in the sequence, at a height of 9.68m OD, was a compacted dark greyish brown sandy gravel [7], at least 0.20m thick. The layer was undated.

5.6.2 Above [7] was a sequence of 19th – 20th century surfaces. These comprised two series of cobble sets, concrete bedding and a layer of Tarmac. They had a total thickness of 0.90m.

5.7 Test Pit 7

5.7.1 Test Pit 7, on south side of Bow Road, was excavated to a maximum depth of c1.00m. At its base was layer of compacted dark greyish brown sandy gravel [8], at least 0.20m thick and at an upper height of 9.78m OD. The layer was undated.

5.7.2 Above [8] was a sequence of 19th – 20th century surfaces. These comprised two series of cobble sets on concrete bedding. They had a total thickness of 0.80m.

5.8 Test Pit 8

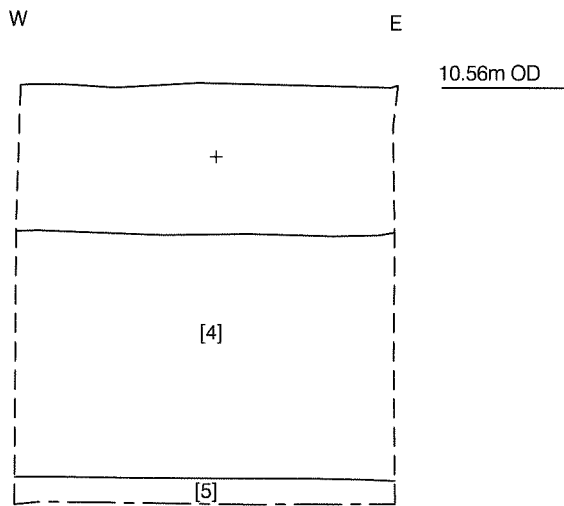
5.8.1 Test Pit 8, on the corner of Bow Road and Devons Road, was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.0m. At the base of the test pit was a layer [9] of compacted dark greyish brown to black silty sand containing 50% brick and tile fragments, suggesting a 19th – 20th century date. This likely represents a demolition deposit. It was 0.74m thick at an upper height of 10.07m OD.

5.8.2 The pit was sealed by a layer of concrete flagstones, 0.06m thick, which formed the current pavement surface. These were bedded on a 0.20m thick layer of concrete.

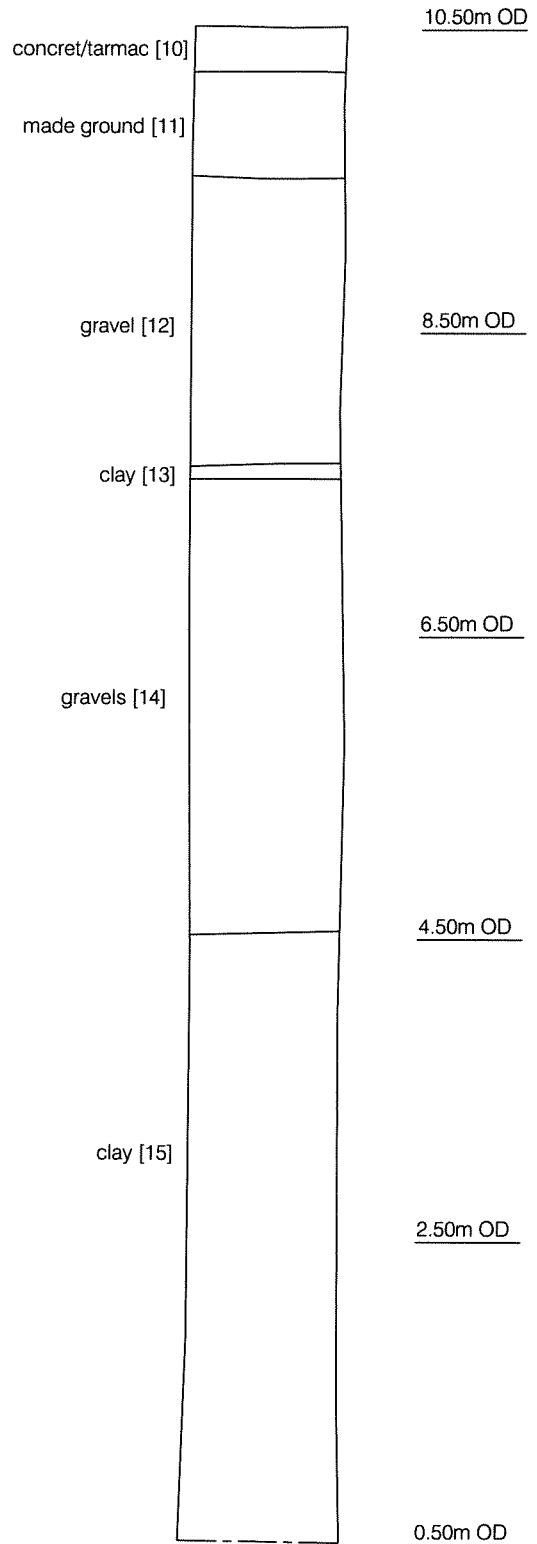
5.9 Borehole 1 (Figure 3)

5.9.1 Borehole 1 was bored to a maximum depth of 10.0m from ground level (10.50m OD), to the west of the island site. It revealed a sequence of stiff grey clay [15] between 6.0m and 10.0m BGL, dark yellowish brown flint gravels [14] between 3.0m and 6.0m BGL, sealed by a thin layer of alluvial clay [13] between 2.9m and 3.0m BGL (7.60m OD).

5.9.2 Above the clay was a layer of dark greyish brown sandy gravel [12] between 1.0m and 2.9m BGL, then made ground formed of rubble [11] between 0.3m and 1.0m BGL. Tarmac and concrete [10] completed the borehole. No archaeological finds were found in these deposits.



Section 3
 TP 3, south facing
 1:20



Section 9 Borehole 1
 1:50



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Figure 3
 Sections from TP3 and BH1
 1:20 and 1:50 at A4

6 INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The watching brief recorded the complete natural sequence of the site in Borehole 1, as suggested in the Desk-Based Assessment (Barefoot and Holden 2006, 16). This was London Clay overlain by River Terrace Gravels. A thin band of alluvial clay was then sealed by further gravels which were also picked up in Test Pit 1.
- 6.2 No features or artefacts of pre-medieval date were observed during the watching brief.
- 6.3 A metallised surface observed in Test Pit 3 at 9.52m OD is likely to be a post medieval manifestation of Bow Road. The likelihood of such remains being present at the site was noted in the Desk-Based Assessment (Barefoot and Holden 2006, 33). The lack of datable material hindered the refinement of the age of the surface. However it may be significant that the height of the surface is lower than the current ground level in Bow Church (c10.38m OD). That the current ground level of the church is lower than that in the area of the site is due to ground raising (seen from the layers in Test Pits 2, 6, 7 and 8). Yet the metallised surface is lower than the church, suggesting that it may be earlier than the current church; Bow Church and its environs were last significantly altered in the middle of the 19th century (Barefoot and Holden 2006, 20-21).
- 6.4 Later 19th and 20th century activity on the site was exhibited by a brick drain and a lamppost base in Test Pit 3, and various concrete, cobble and tarmac surfaces found in some of the test pits.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barefoot, I. and Holden, S. 2006 'An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment of Land at Bow Church, London Borough of Tower Hamlets', unpub rep for Pre-Construct Archaeology

Mayo, C. 2006 'A Method Statement For an Archaeological Watching Brief on Geotechnical Pits and Boreholes at Land at Bow Church, London Borough of Tower Hamlets', unpub rep for Pre-Construct Archaeology

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 8.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank Graeme Sutherland of Adams and Sutherland for commissioning the work and kindly funding it. Thanks also to David Divers of GLAAS for monitoring the project, and Jeremy Coulton of Peter Brett Associates for assistance.
- 8.2 The author would like to thank Josephine Brown for the illustrations and Chris Mayo for project management and editing.

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX

Context Number	Test Pit	Description	Type
1	2	Layer	Levelling / Demolition layer
2	2	Layer	Sandy gravel layer
3	2	Layer	Black sandy clay layer
4	3	Layer	Compact sandy gravel
5	3	Surface	Metalled surface
6	4	Layer	Compact sandy gravel
7	6	Layer	Compact sandy gravel
8	7	Layer	Compact sandy gravel
9	8	Layer	Compact silty Clay
10	BH 1	Layer	Tarmac / Concrete
11	BH 1	Layer	Made Ground
12	BH 1	Natural	Gravels
13	BH 1	Natural	Alluvial clay
14	BH 1	Natural	Gravels
15	BH 1	Natural	London Clay (?)
16	1	Natural	Gravels

APPENDIX 2: OASIS REPORT FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-18289

Project details

Project name	Watching Brief of Geotechnical Investigations on Land at Bow Church, London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was commissioned by Adams and Sutherland of a geotechnical investigation at land at Bow Church, London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The site is centred on National Grid Reference TQ 3762 8294. The watching brief monitored the excavation of 8 geotechnical pits and 1 bore hole, in advance of the redevelopment of disused public conveniences and the relocation of a statue of William Gladstone. The watching brief took place between the 24th and 27th July 2006 and was monitored by Mark Chesterman of Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. Pre-Construct Archaeology have previously undertaken a Desk-Based assessment of the site (Barefoot and Holden 2006). This concluded that the site had a low potential for prehistoric to Saxon remains, a low to moderate potential for medieval remains and a moderate potential for post-medieval remains. Natural deposits were seen in one test pit and the borehole. In the other test pits, remains were limited to 19th / 20th century made ground or surfaces. In Test Pit 3, however, a metallised surface was revealed which may be the remains of a post medieval precursor to Bow Road.
Project dates	Start: 24-07-2006 End: 27-07-2006
Previous/future work	Yes / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	BQW06 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status (other)	Archaeological Priority Area
Current Land use	Other 11 - Thoroughfare
Significant Finds	ROAD SURFACE Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	'Test Pits'
Development type	Amenity area (e.g. public open space)
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	Pre-application
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON TOWER HAMLETS BOW Land at Bow Church, London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Postcode	E3
Study area	7700.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 3762 8294 51.5280792219 -0.01586637015510 51 31 41 N 000 00 57 W Point
Height OD	Min: 6.41m Max: 7.60m

Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	Pre-Construct Archaeology
Project design originator	Chris Mayo
Project director/manager	Chris Mayo
Project supervisor	Mark Chesterman
Type of sponsor/funding body	Adams and Sutherland
Name of sponsor/funding body	Adams and Sutherland
Project archives	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Physical Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Contents	'Stratigraphic'
Digital Media available	'Images vector','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Contents	'Stratigraphic'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Miscellaneous Material','Section'
Project bibliography 1	
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