
**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MONITORING EXERCISE**

**ST JOSEPH'S CHURCH
SLADE GREEN
LONDON BOROUGH OF
BEXLEY**

SEPTEMBER 2006

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SLADE GREEN
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**LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:
BEXLEY COUNCIL**

SITE CENTRED AT: TQ 516 765

SEPTEMBER 2006

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at St Joseph's Church, Slade Green,
London Borough of Bexley**

Site Code: JBR 06

Central National Grid Reference: TQ 516 765

Written and Researched by Tony Baxter

Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, September 2006

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CONTENTS

1	ABSTRACT	3
2	INTRODUCTION	4
3	GEOLOGICAL, ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	7
4	ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY	8
5	ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE	9
6	INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS	11
7	BIBLIOGRAPHY	12
8	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	13

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX	14
APPENDIX 2: OASIS REPORT FORM	15

ILLUSTRATIONS

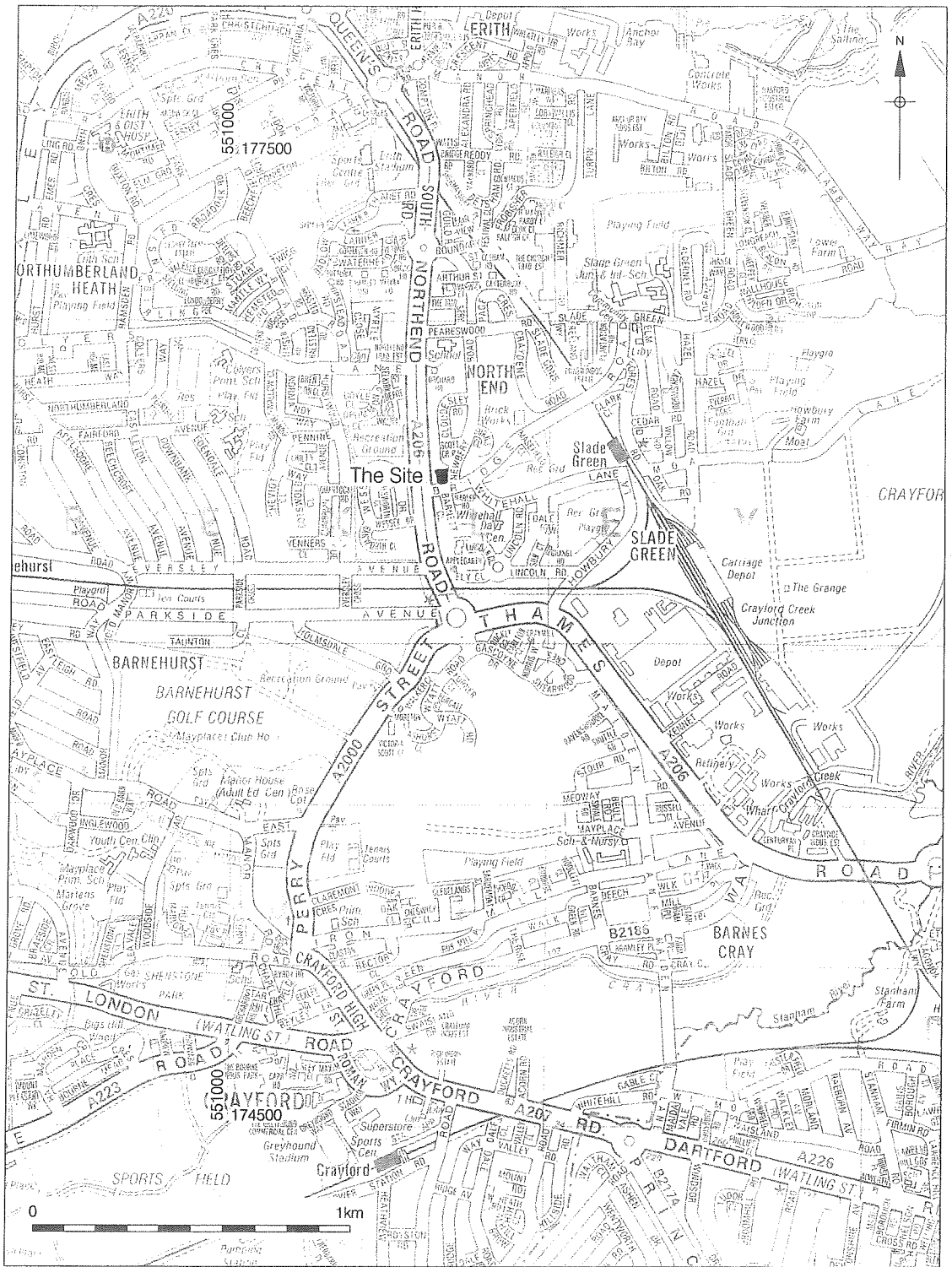
FIGURE 1: SITE LOCATION	5
FIGURE 2: AREAS COVERED BY WATCHING BRIEF	6
FIGURE 3: SECTIONS	10

1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results of an archaeological watching brief commissioned by CgMs Consulting at land at St Joseph's Church, Slade Green, London Borough of Bexley (Figure 1). The site is centred on National Grid Reference TQ 516 765.
- 1.2 The watching brief monitored the excavation of 3 soakaway and manhole trenches and ground reduction across the entire site, in advance of the redevelopment of the site once occupied by St Joseph's Church. The watching brief took place between the 11th and 14th September 2006 and was monitored by Tony Baxter of Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd.
- 1.3 An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (Darton 2006a) completed before the watching brief concluded that the site had a moderate potential for the early prehistoric periods, a low potential for the later prehistoric periods and a moderate potential for the Roman period. It also concluded that there was a low potential for archaeology from the Saxon to post-medieval periods.
- 1.4 The watching brief revealed the geological sequence of the site to be clay overlain by Taplow Gravels and brickearth. Bioturbation and features from the use of the site as an orchard had heavily disturbed the brickearth. Topsoil finished the sequence.

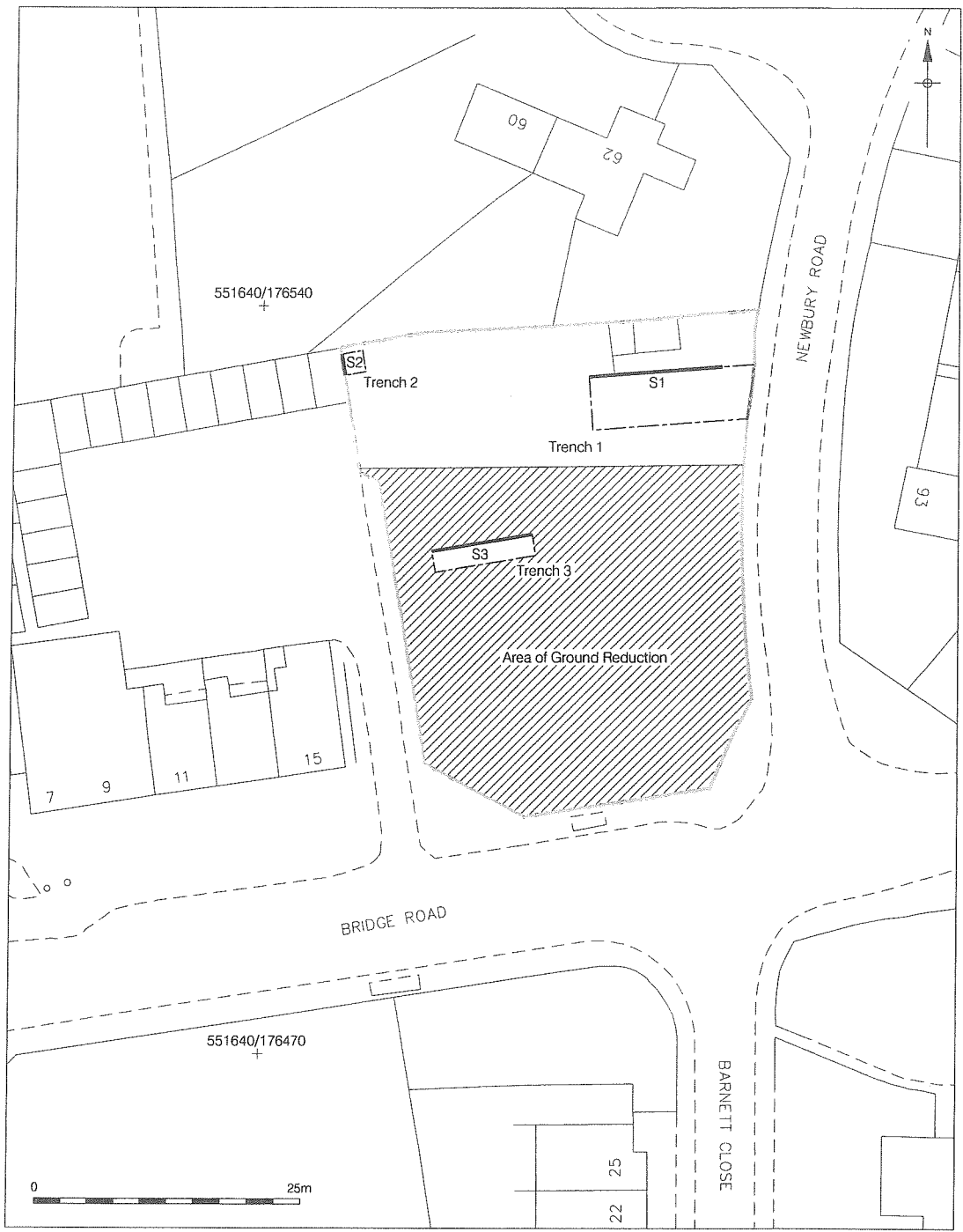
2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. on ground works at land at St Joseph's Church, London Borough of Bexley, between 11th and 14th September 2006. The work was commissioned by Lorraine Darton of CgMs Consulting, prior to the redevelopment of the site. The fieldwork was supervised by the author, project managed by Chris Mayo and monitored by the London Borough of Bexley and Mark Stevenson of English Heritage.
- 2.2 The site is situated on land formerly occupied by St Joseph's Church centred at TQ 516 765. The site is bounded by Bridge Road to the south, Newbery Road to the east, commercial properties to the west and the rear of properties fronting Scott Crescent to the north.
- 2.3 The watching brief monitored a program of ground reduction across the site and then the excavation of three deep trenches. The work followed a specification prepared by CgMs Consulting (Darton 2006b). A Desk Based Assessment of the site had previously been undertaken (Darton 2006a).
- 2.4 The completed archive comprising written and drawn records will be deposited at Bexley Museum, Hall Place under the site code JBR 06.



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Figure 1
 Site Location
 1:20,000



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Figure 2
Trench Location
1:625

3 GEOLOGICAL, ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The drift geology of the site is Crayford Silt (Brickearth) overlying Taplow Terrace Gravels (Darton 2006a).

3.2 The current ground surface rises gently from east to west, between approximately 13m OD and 14m OD.

3.3 Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic

3.3.1 The site is located on brickearth close to the Rivers Darent and Thames, which has led to the suggestion that it may have been attracted human activity during these periods. The location of the site is one of the few to have survived a spate of local brickearth quarrying in the post-medieval period, and therefore it is of increased importance. Numerous findspots of the early prehistoric periods have been made within close proximity of the site (Darton 2006a).

3.4 Bronze and Iron Ages

3.4.1 During these periods activity seems to be concentrated to the southwest. The site probably lay as pasture during these times (Darton 2006a).

3.5 Roman

3.5.1 Roman activity is known in the area, including a possible cemetery. To the southeast of the site, a Neolithic flint mine or denehole was found to have been used as a Roman rubbish dump containing not less than 250 vessels (Darton 2006a).

3.6 Saxon and Medieval

3.6.1 Investigations to the southwest have revealed medieval field systems, while occupation was probably concentrated to the north around Erith. The site is likely to have been agricultural land at these times (Darton 2006a).

3.7 Post-Medieval

3.7.1 The site is first shown cartographically in the 18th century as open land. By the 19th century, it was part of an orchard which existed until the early 20th century (Darton 2006a).

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The watching brief followed a specification (Darton 2006b) designed to monitor all groundworks and ensure that any archaeological remains were recorded and interpreted. Ground reduction across the site to the level of natural strata and deeper service trenches (soakaways and manholes) were excavated by a machine fitted with a toothless grading bucket under archaeological supervision.
- 4.2 The area of ground reduction was concentrated across the southern two-thirds of the site. Three deeper trenches were also monitored; one within the area of ground reduction and two in the northern third of the site. These were labelled Trenches 1 to 3 (Figure 2) and had the following dimensions:

Trench	Max width	Max length	Max depth
1	5.0m	16.0m	0.90m
2	2.0m	2.0m	c1.75m
3	2.0m	10.0m	3.10m

Table 1: Dimensions of Trenches 1-3

- 4.3 All material excavated was observed and stratigraphic changes and features were recorded.
- 4.4 Site levels were calculated from a temporary benchmark installed by the on-site contractors.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

5.1 Phase 1: Natural

- 5.1.1 The earliest geological deposit recorded on site was in Trench 3. It was a stiff mid to light green clay with frequent orangey sand marbling [7], being at least 0.40m thick and between 10.77m OD and 11.17m OD in height. It was sealed by a loose light whitish yellow fine sand [6] with a thickness of 1.10m and upper heights between 11.57m OD and 12.20m OD.
- 5.1.2 Above layer [6] was a light to mid yellow orange sand [5] with occasional orange gravel patches. It had a maximum thickness of 1.65m and was recorded at OD heights of between 13.40m and 12.73m OD. The upper geological deposit in Trench 3 was a compact mid brown orange gravel with moderate light yellow sandy striations [4] – the Taplow Gravels. This was up to 1.15m thick and recorded at heights ranging from 13.77m OD and 13.61m OD. It was also seen in Trenches 1 and 2, where it was recorded as context [3] between 12.90m OD and 14.05m OD.
- 5.1.3 Seen across the site was a deposit of brickearth [2]. This was a firm mid to light brown yellow silt sand [2], with a maximum thickness of 0.67m and recorded at heights between 13.25m OD and 14.32m OD. The brickearth was seen to be heavily disturbed by bioturbation: the result of the sites' use as an orchard. This had led to the intrusion of small artefacts within the layer, such as small pieces of burnt flint and a heavily abraded piece of fired clay. It was not possible to date this find (L. Rayner pers. comm., September 2006).

5.2 Phase 2: Post-Medieval Activity

- 5.2.1 The ground reduction revealed several features relating to the sites' use as an orchard in the late 19th and early 20th century. A number of them were half-sectioned to reveal a circular shape and even profile. It was noted that there was a concentration of these features to the east of the site.
- 5.2.2 Across the site, the natural ground was sealed by a layer of mid brown grey silt sand [1]. It was approximately 0.20m thick and recorded at heights between 13.45m OD and 14.57m OD. This reworked 'topsoil' deposit probably represents the 19th – 20th century horticultural activity indicated by cartographic sources (Darton 2006a).

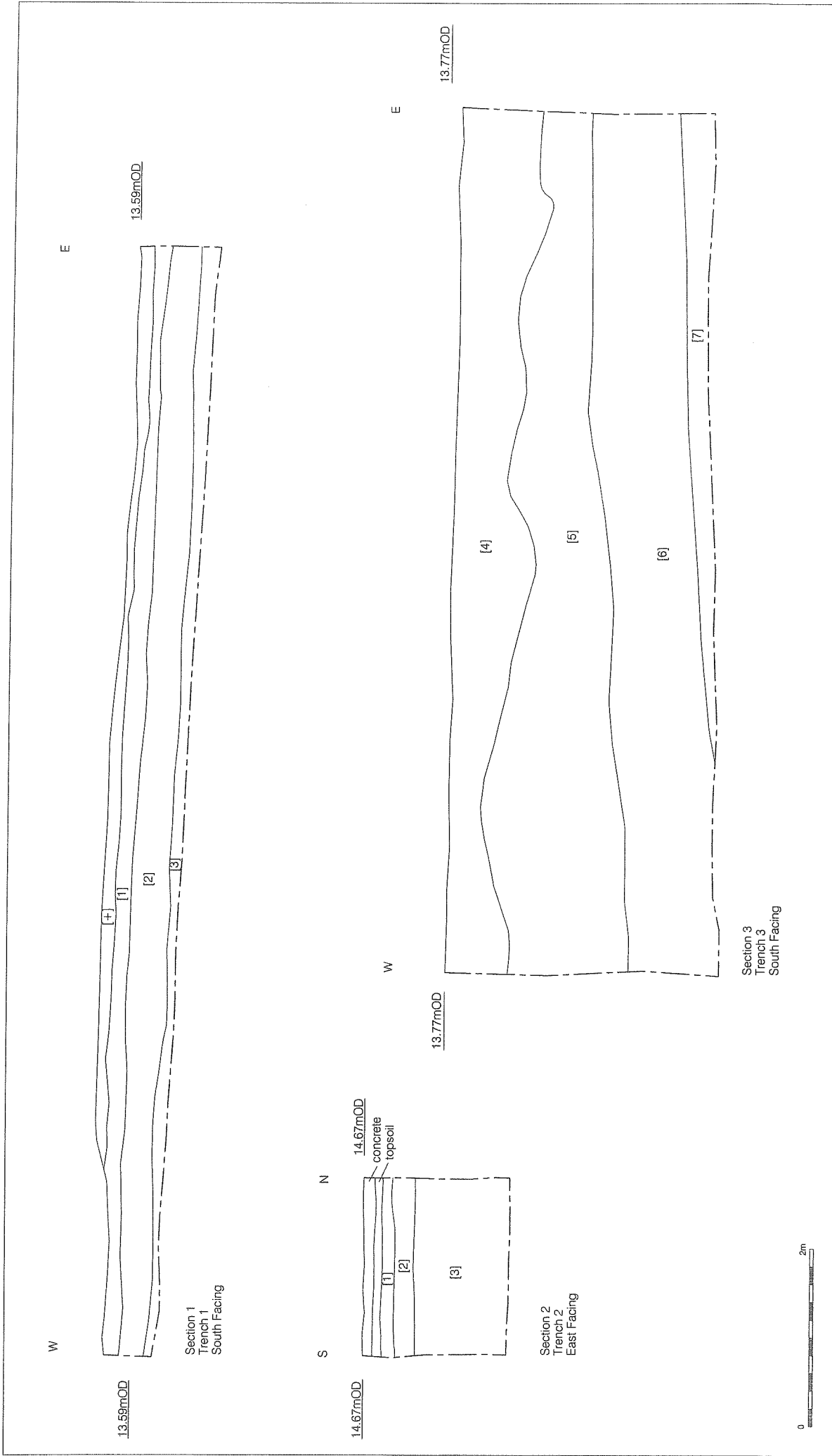


Figure 3
Sections 1, 2 & 3
1:60

6 INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The watching brief revealed the natural stratigraphic sequence to conform to that indicated by the desk-based assessment: clay overlain by Taplow Gravel, then brickearth. Inspection of the surface of the gravels, where possible, revealed no evidence of human activity.
- 6.2 The brickearth had been heavily disturbed by bioturbation, resulting from the use of the site as an orchard in the late 19th and 20th century. In places distinct horticultural features were visible, noticeably to the east side of the site. From within areas of heavy bioturbation some artefacts were recovered: an undatable piece of fired clay and two pieces of burnt flint.
- 6.3 No features of pre-post-medieval date were observed during the watching brief.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Darton, L

- 2006a 'Archaeological Desk Based Assessment: St Joseph's Church, Bridge Road, Slade Green, London Borough of Bexley', in Darton 2006b
- 2006b 'Revised Specification for an Archaeological Monitoring Exercise: St Joseph's Church, Bridge Road, Slade Green, London Borough of Bexley', unpub rep for CgMs Consulting

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 8.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank Lorraine Darton of CgMs Consulting for commissioning the work on behalf of P.J.Mullan & Sons Ltd. Thanks to the London Borough of Bexley and Mark Stevenson of GLAAS for monitoring the project.

- 8.2 The author would like to thank Hayley Baxter for the illustrations, Louise Rayner for looking at the possible pot and Chris Mayo for project management and editing.

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX

Context Number	Trench / Area	Description	Type
1	All	Layer	Topsoil / horticultural soil
2	All	Natural	Brickearth
3	All	Natural	Taplow Gravels
4	All	Natural	Taplow Gravels
5	3	Natural	Gravel – sand
6	3	Natural	Sand
7	3	Natural	Clay

APPENDIX 2: OASIS REPORT FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-18611

Project details

Project name An Archaeological Watching Brief at St Joseph's Church, Slade Green, London Borough of Bexley

Short description of the project An archaeological watching brief by Pre-Construct Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting at land at St Joseph's Church, Slade Green, London Borough of Bexley. The site is centred on National Grid Reference TQ 516 765. The watching brief monitored the excavation of 3 trenches and ground reduction across the entire site, in advance of the redevelopment of the site once occupied by St Joseph's Church. The watching brief took place between the 11th and 14th September 2006 and was monitored by Tony Baxter of Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. The watching brief revealed the geological sequence of the site to be clay overlain by Taplow Gravels and brickearth. Bioturbation and features from the use of the site as an orchard had heavily disturbed the brickearth. Topsoil finished the sequence.

Project dates Start: 11-09-2006 End: 14-09-2006

Previous/future work Yes / No

Any associated project reference codes JBR06 - Sitecode

Type of project Field evaluation

Site status None

Current Land use Other 13 - Waste ground

Methods & techniques 'Sample Trenches', 'Visual Inspection'

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

Prompt Planning condition

Position in the planning process After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country England

Site location GREATER LONDON BEXLEY ERITH St Joseph's Church, Slade Green

Postcode DA8

Study area 1540.00 Square metres

Site coordinates TQ 516 765 51.4666204826 0.182772588596 51 27 59 N 000 10 57 E Point

Height OD Min: 13.25m Max: 14.32m

Project outcome

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	CgMs Consulting
Project design originator	Lorraine Darton
Project director/manager	Chris Mayo
Project supervisor	Anthony Baxter
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	P.J.Mullan & Sons Ltd
Project publisher	
Physical Archive recipient	Bexley Museum, Hall Place
Physical Contents	'other'
Digital Archive recipient	Bexley Museum, Hall Place
Digital Contents	'Stratigraphic'
Digital Media available	'Images vector','Spreadsheets','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Bexley Museum, Hall Place
Paper Contents	'Stratigraphic'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes','Plan','Section'
Project title/monograph title	
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