NEW UNION WHARF, STEWART STREET, CUBITT TOWN, LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS E14 3JU: PHASE 2 ENABLING WORKS – ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF ON A NEW SERVICE TRENCH

SITE CODE: NUW 13

REPORT NO: R11944

PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

New Union Wharf, Stewart Street, Cubitt Town, London Borough of Tower Hamlets E14 3JU: Phase 2 Enabling Works – Archaeological Watching Brief on a new Service Trench

Central National Grid Reference: TQ 38420 79494

Local Planning Authority: London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Planning Application No.: PA/12/00360

Written and Researched by Phil Frickers

Project Manager: Helen Hawkins MCIfA

Commissioning Client: Hill Partnerships

PCA Report Number: R11944

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DOCUMENT VERIFICATION

Site Name

New Union Wharf, Stewart Street, Cubitt Town, London Borough of Tower Hamlets E14 3JU

Type of project

WATCHING BRIEF

Quality Control

Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited Project Code			K3741
	Name & Title	Signature	Date
Text Prepared by:	P Frickers		12.01.2015
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Project Manager Sign-off:	H Hawkins		13.01.2015

Revision No.	Date	Checked	Approved

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1 ABSTRACT

1.1 This report details the results of the archaeological monitoring of the excavation of a new service trench on land at New Union Wharf, Stewart Street, Cubitt Town, London Borough of Tower Hamlets E14 3JU. The work was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, and was commissioned by Hill Partnerships. The service trench excavated measured 58 metres east-west by 1.60 metres north-south and was up to 1.90m deep below current ground level. Site levels ranged from 2.64m OD at the west end of the trench to 4.97m OD at the east end.

1.2 Natural deposits comprising a stiff light brown alluvium were found at the extreme east end of the trench at a depth of 1.50m below ground level, c. 3.50m OD. In the rest of the trench natural deposits were not reached.

1.3 Above the natural deposits were levelling layers associated with the construction of a factory of mid Victorian date on the site. Along with sewerage runs relating to that factory, truncated walls composed of yellow stock bricks were also found.

1.4 Above more levelling layers were workshop walls, floor slabs and a large fuel tank relating to a more recent factory, probably dating to the late 19th century.

1.5 When the present housing estate was built in the 1980s the more recent factory was partially demolished and then 'sealed in' in a method typical of that time. At this date, apart from two major foundations, little truncation took place.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited has was commissioned by Hill Partnerships to carry out an archaeological watching brief on enabling works on land at New Union Wharf, Stewart Street, Cubitt Town, London Borough of Tower Hamlets E14 3JU (Figure 1). The work was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Hawkins 2014).

2.2 The site comprises five phases. Phase 1 has been completed. As part of the Phase 2 enabling works a major new service trench was required in the northern part of the site. The excavation of this trench was monitored by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited (Figure 2).

2.3 PCA had previously carried out archaeological monitoring works on geotechnical investigations across the five phases (PCA 2013), prior to the determination of the planning application, in order to inform the Environmental Statement for the site. This watching brief was carried out under the site code NUW13.

2.4 The site is located on the west bank of the River Thames and is bounded to the west by Stewart Street, to the north by Capstan Square and to the south by New Union Close. The site covers an area of c. 1.7 hectares and is centred at NGR TQ 38420 79494. The service trench itself ran west to east and was positioned along the north side of River Barge Close. The excavated trench measured just over 58 metres in length by 1.6m in width and ranged in depth from 1.20 to 1.90m.

2.5 A further nine metres of this trench at the eastern end was not excavated as it was employed as a stock yard at the time of excavation in December 2014.

2.6 The works were carried out between 10th and 17th December 2014. The monitoring of the service trench was carried out by Phil Frickers and the project was managed by Helen Hawkins, both of Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited.

2.7 The completed archive comprising written, drawn and photographic records will be deposited with the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC).

2.8 The service trench watching brief continued to utilise the site code NUW 13.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 The general aims and objectives of the watching brief, as outlined in the WSI (Hawkins2014) were as follows:

- What is the nature, depth, survival and date of any archaeological deposits on the site?
- Is there any evidence for prehistoric remains?
- Is there any evidence for remains relating to the ship building industry or the Blackwall Iron Works?
- What has been the impact on the site by previous development?

4 GEOGRAPHY AND TOPOGRAPHY

4.1 The following geological and topographical background summarises an archaeological desk based assessment undertaken for the site by Hyder Consulting (UK) Limited (Hyder 2012).

4.2 Geology

4.2.1 The solid geology of the site is of the Lambeth Group. The superficial geology is comprised of alluvial deposits.

4.3 Topography

4.3.1 The topography of the area where the service trench was carried out was clearly man made. The area rose in a series of tarmac and concrete covered terraces from west to east. The topography of the site was to be artificial and the result of the area being covered in a significant depth of made-ground in order to make it suitable for development, particularly towards the river. In the area of the service trench excavated, Ordnance Depth values rose from 2.64m OD at the west end to 5.18m OD at the east end, adjacent to the river.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Unless referenced otherwise, the following archaeological and historical background is extracted from the Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment undertaken for the site by Hyder Consulting (UK) Limited (Hyder 2012).

5.2 Prehistoric

5.2.1 The Isle of Dogs is thought to have been largely covered in water during the prehistoric period, with occupation concentrated of small areas of high ground linked with wooden trackways. However no finds dating to this period are recorded within the site.

5.2.2 The site is located within an area of archaeological priority that is thought to contain remains from the prehistoric period through to the post-medieval period. The land is at, or only slightly above the high tide level. As a consequence it almost exclusively consist of rivers silts with the exception of the very western end of the area where sand occurs. The river edge would have varied widely as the sea level rose and fell over the millennia. The last cycle of sea level eroded much of the earlier sand deposits that had formed the original earlier bank. Research elsewhere along the Thames foreshore has demonstrated that prehistoric material recovered is likely to have come from eroded in situ archaeological contexts rather than having been discarded away from occupation or working areas.

5.2.3 A watching brief carried out to the west of the site at East Ferry Road identified various Holocene deposits; the sequence was interrupted by a period of erosion represented by a stream channel. A subsequent period of regression led to the deposit of (undated) peat. All later deposits were modern. This indicates the potential for prehistoric and Roman remains to be preserved beneath the modern deposits. It also indicates the potential for earlier Holocene remains to have been eroded away in places.

5.2.4 Within the study area (500m radius from the site boundary) during the Bronze Age the area within the Isle of Dogs was likely to have been a rich wetland environment. There is evidence that people constructed trackways and platforms so they could access this environment in order to exploit it. A preserved wooden trackway or platform was recorded on the Isle of Dogs at Atlas Warf to the south of the site.

5.3 Roman

5.3.1 In the Roman period, London developed as an urban centre and later became the provincial capital at the centre of Roman Britain's communication system. The main centre of occupation in the Roman period was located to the north of the River Thames some 6km to the west of the site.

5.3.2 No archaeological assets dating to this period are recorded within the site and little Roman evidence is recorded from the Isle of Dogs, except for one site recorded at Westferry Road. This site was occupied from the 1st century AD on with the main use being the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. No structures were recorded at this site but the presence of gullies and pits suggest occupation and there is evidence that the site extended further outside the area of excavation to the east. It is likely that rising water levels led to the abandonment of the site.

5.4 Early Medieval

5.4.1 Rising water levels at the end of the Roman period meant that the site and the whole of the Isle of Dogs was submerged by water. This inundation of water led to the deposition of a great depth of alluvium. Alluvium can reach thicknesses of 2m across the Isle of Dogs. Documentary evidence shows land reclamation from the Saxon period onwards.

5.4.2 No archaeological assets are recorded from this period either within the site or the surrounding area (500m radius from site boundary). This may be due to the area being under water.

5.5 Medieval

5.5.1 Before development the land at the Isle of Dogs was marsh, lying several feet below water level. Protected from flooding by a bank or wall, it was drained by large ditches discharging into the River Thames through sluice gates. The bank was made of earth, or earth and chalk, possibly with a timber core in places. The wall varied in size and shape. In the narrowest parts, where it was more than 15ft high, the flat top was about 18ft across; slopes to both river and marsh gave an overall width of up to 150ft.

5.6 Post-Medieval

5.6.1 It was not until the late post-medieval period that the Isle of Dogs saw intensive development when it became the focus of industrial activity associated with the nearby docks. Most of the archaeological assets recorded within the study area date to this period.

5.6.2 The construction of the West India Docks in 1802, to the north of the site, meant that the area became an important centre for trade. The East India Docks were subsequently opened in 1806, followed by Millwall Dock in 1868. A range of warehouses associated with the Millwall Docks are recorded within the study area. In 1812 the Poplar and Greenwich Ferry Roads Company was set up to supply a horse-ferry between Greenwich and the Isle of Dogs, and to make toll-roads to the ferry on each part of the river, including two on the north side (now Westferry and East Ferry Roads). The ferry roads opened up the Isle of Dogs for further development.

5.6.3 William Cubitt saw potential in the eastern area of the Isle of Dogs in the early 1840s, which is how the eastern area of the Isle of Dogs got its name, Cubitt Town. William Cubitt was responsible for the development of the housing and amenities of the area from the 1840s to the 1850s. Development consisted, mainly of houses to support the growing population of workers in the local docks, shipbuilding yards and factories.

5.6.4 The presence of the docks made the area an important centre for trade, and shipbuilding (including docks and wharves) became prominent within the study area during this period. This is demonstrated through cartographic and documentary evidence as well as a number of archaeological evaluations carried out at the Pier Head Site at the South West India Dock Entrance. These evaluations identified a backfilled dock full of debris from ship repair and breaking. By the 1860s large shipyards were flourishing in Millwall and Cubitt Town.

5.6.5 Cartographic analysis shows that in 1869 two ship building yards were located within the site. The Yarrow shipbuilding yard was first established in 1865 (Al Naib/ Carr, 1989) on the southern part of the site and flourished after surviving the financial crash of 1866 and appears on the 1898 OS map. The Blackwall Iron Works occupied the rest of the site at this time. The history of Yarrow ship building yard is of some significance in the context of 19th century ship building.

5.6.6 Between 1868 and 1875 350 steam launches were built there. The yard produced important boats such as the Llala built in 1870 for Captain Young of the Royal Navy to sail on Lake Nyassa in Africa. This boat was instrumental in ending the slave trade in East Africa. Towards the end of the 19th century the yard developed a speciality for building fast torpedo boats for a number of navies (Al Naib/ Carr, 1989). In 1906 Yarrow moved his yard from London to Scotstoun on the River Clyde influenced by the cheaper coal and steel available there. After this time the Yarrow Company became one of the world's leading builders of destroyers.

5.7 Modern

5.7.1 In the Modern period the area around the site continued to grow. Cartographic evidence shows New Union Wharf and Ovex Wharf were built on the site by 1950. However, generally industry on the Isle of Dogs in the 20th century has been characterised by the deterioration of premises from prestige manufacturing to nondescript light industry, wharfage and warehousing, down to scrap dealing and use as depots. A common feature has been multiple occupations of premises originally used by a single concern.

5.7.2 The shipbuilding yards to the south of the site which had been called London Yard changed to a jam factory of early 20th century OS maps. This is evidence of the area shifting from shipbuilding to trade in the early 20th century.

5.7.3 The site was developed into a housing estate in the 1980s. The area around the site is now characterised by large modern buildings and industrial works.

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

6.1 The archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of a service trench along the north edge of the site.

6.2 This trench was excavated by a 360° rubber tracked 8 ton digger. The trench measured 58m in length and c. 1.60m in width and varied in depth between 1.20m and 1.90m. Excavation was with a toothless bucket, excavating in 100mm spits. The spoil was taken away by dumper and later removed from site.

6.3 The machine excavation was monitored by a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist. Sketch sections were drawn and measured, descriptions of ground noted and photographs taken. The trench was surveyed to show its OD profile.

6.4 All relevant health and safety legislation, CDM and COSHH regulations and codes of practice were respected.

7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

7.1 Natural

7.1.1 The earliest stratigraphic deposit encountered during the watching brief was a stiff light brown alluvium [22] found at the extreme east end of the trench. This context had inclusions of charcoal within it but was otherwise clean, and was interpreted as *in situ* alluvium rather than redeposited material, in spite of its level of 3.50m OD.

7.2 Mid Victorian Factory

7.2.1 Sitting upon the alluvium at the eastern end of the trench and forming the base over the rest of the trench were various deposits of brownish black sandy silt [27], [37], [55], [56], [61], [67] and [72] containing clinker, fragments of slag, slate and bricks. In places these contexts could be up to 0.90m thick and had levels ranging between c. 3.30m and 2.30m OD. The observed base of this material was as low as 1.20m OD at the western end but had more normal values of 2.50m to 2.80m OD throughout the rest of the trench. Above those contexts, over the southern portion of the trench, were layers of a similar type, Layers [26] and [54]. These layers were between 0.20m and 0.40m thick and had been compacted. Layers [26] and [54] were located at 2.60m OD. Into this material had been inserted a number of early sewer pipes including [41] and foundations of yellow stock brick [38], [60], [68] and [78] and concrete [29],[43] and [66].

7.2.2 It would seem therefore a large scale levelling of the area took place, using probably locally derived discarded industrial waste. The top of this material was then compacted probably using a steam roller and used as the working surface for the construction of the Victorian factory and sewers and structural foundations inserted.

7.2.3 The Yarrow shipyard on the south part of the site was moved to the site in 1898; this was at a time of boom for shipbuilding and associated activities on the Isle of Dogs. It is likely these structures are of a similar period and the size of the yellow stock bricks would tend towards the same date (Dr. K. Hayward, pers comm).

7.3 Later Victorian Factory

7.3.1 Later at the end of the life of the Victorian factory the upstanding walls were truncated and a number of dump layers [51], [52] and [53] were used to level and raise the area, particularly at the western end for redevelopment. These layers were found at levels between 3.30m and 2.60m OD.

7.3.2 Upon this platform a new factory was constructed. An Insurance map of 1900 (Goad 1900) shows there to have been a series of structures in the area of the service trench at that time. Excavation revealed pairs of contemporary walls composed of light red bricks with yellow flecks [58] and [59], [62] and [63], [69] and [70] sitting upon associated concrete floor slabs [50], [64] and [71]. The rooms were small, c. 2.0m across internally and the walls one stretcher in width. These therefore were of light partition construction and what might be expected of industrial workshops.

7.3.3 Another similar partition wall [79] was found 15 metres from the west end of the trench, showing the workshops covered a substantial area.

7.3.4 At the eastern end of the excavated trench a substantial brick wall [73] with a concrete foundation base [76] was seen. Beyond this to the east the sequence was different, with alluvium beneath. This may be a remnant of the Folly Wall shown as a boundary on 19th century maps.

7.3.5 Centrally along the trench a brick and concrete structure [44] was uncovered. The bricks here were used as an internal facing and were similar to that in the walls mentioned above. The structure was covered by a roof of concrete [46] with iron band reinforcement. Excavation was extended to the south at this point and the room was found to be 3.80m east-west by 2.20m north-south internally. It had been backfilled with sand [45] which upon examination was found to be similar to that used as bedding for the present roadway. This therefore probably happened very recently, during the construction of the present estate.

7.3.6 Upon removal of some of the sand a large cylindrical iron tank [48] was seen to be positioned centrally within the room. This tank measured 3.10m in length and had a diameter of 1.20m. It was full of water but was probably a fuel tank previously.

7.3.7 Towards the west end of the trench near to the outside access of the factory was a heavy duty industrial yard surface [24] composed of a type of granite sett. This was contemporary with the previous structures above and properly laid on a bedding of sand [25].

7.3.8 The Yarrow shipyard on the southern part of the site moved its main activities to Scotland in 1906. This surely would have had an impact on the surrounding area so it would seem unlikely the later factory would date after this event, perhaps more relating to another boom period in the 1890s. The bricks would seem to tie in with this date (Dr. K. Hayward, pers comm).

7.4 Modern

7.4.1 After the main period of shipbuilding had finished around the time of the First World War, factories in the area were put to other uses in a climate of slow decline. Several of the rooms had disuse layers [49] and [57] showing for a period the factory lay derelict, perhaps following World War II.

7.4.2 In a small area towards the east end of the trench a partial attempt took place to demolish the last factory. The concrete floor slab [64] was partly broken and large fragments of concrete slab were visible in the overlying modern backfill. Elsewhere to the west and east the factory walls survived intact, rising in height from 0.45m for wall [79] centrally to 0.80m for wall [70] at the eastern end. The rooms had been partially demolished and were then backfilled with modern material. In places the factory walls directly supported the overlying concrete slabs of the modern roadway. The policy in the 1980s was to cap areas of contamination rather than remove them and this appears to be what has happened in this area.

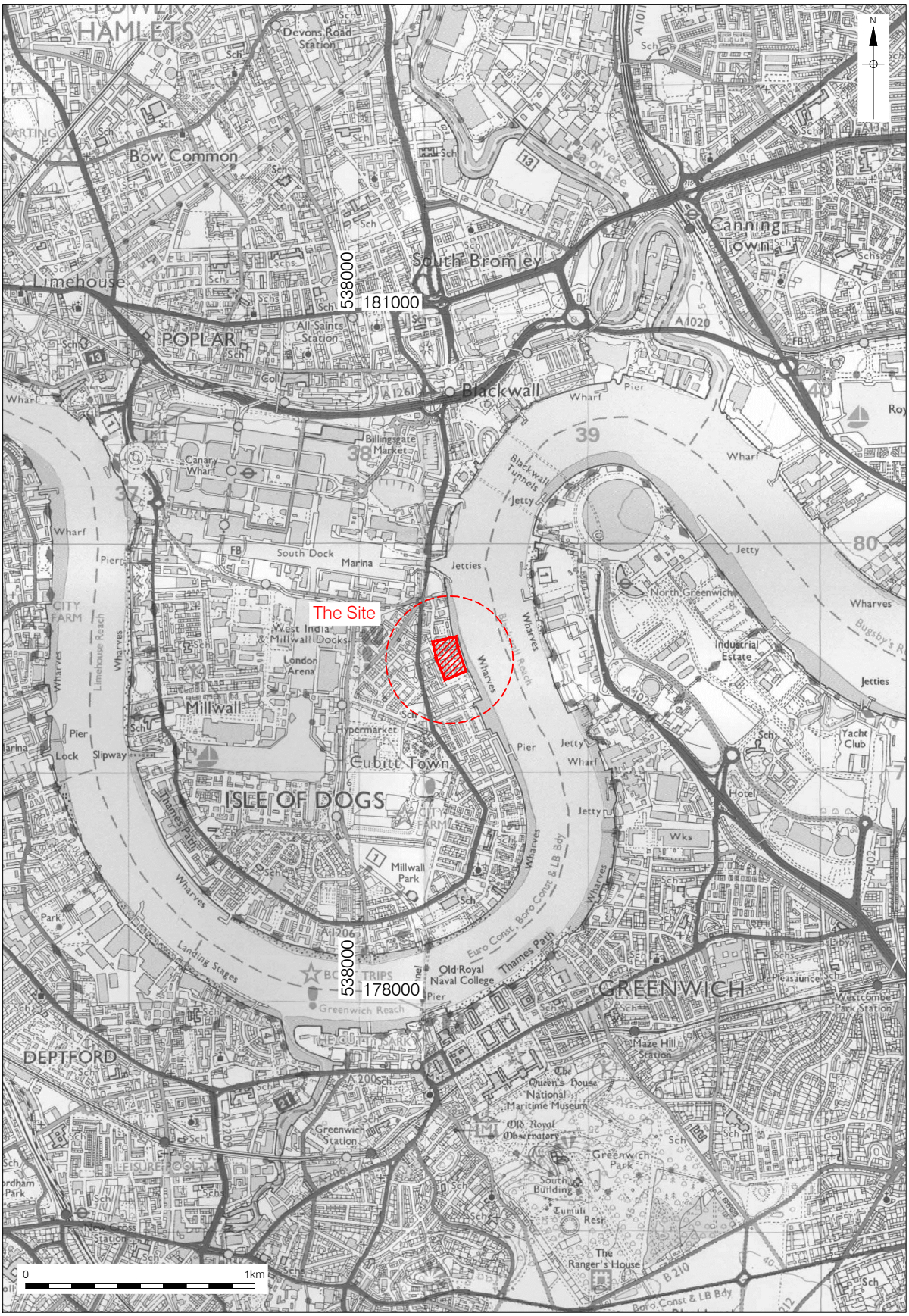
8 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Natural alluvium survives to a high level at the east end, however it is possible that it is of a later formation than the prehsitoric alluvium found in the area, based on its Ordnance level.

8.1.1 The mid Victorian factory was built on a deep raft of reused industrial material. The lowest level this was seen at was 1.20m OD on the extreme west of the site, although more normal levels were between 2.50m and 2.80m OD. It is possible that there has been truncation of underlying soft archaeology to provide a secure base for that construction.

8.1.2 The later Victorian factory was again constructed on a raft of material and efforts to level the area concentrated on raising the eastern half of the site

8.1.3 There were attempts to demolish the later factory, evidenced by some fragments of broken concrete slab in section. The rooms were demolished to a manageable level, backfilled and then used as part of the foundation support for the car parkof the present estate. It is likely therefore that away from the standing structures there will be similar survival of previous archaeological horizons including any slipways relating to the shipyards.



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01/05/13 HB, updated 13/01/2015 AMB

Figure 1
Site Location
1:25,000 at A4

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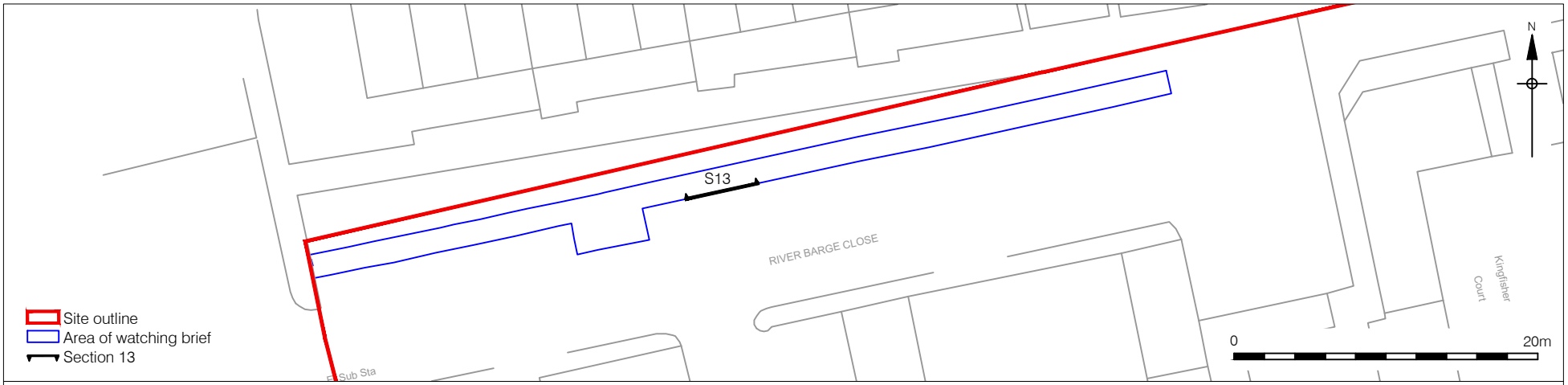
14/01/15 AMB

Figure 2
Area of Watching Brief
1:800 at A4



S13: North Facing Section of Service Trench

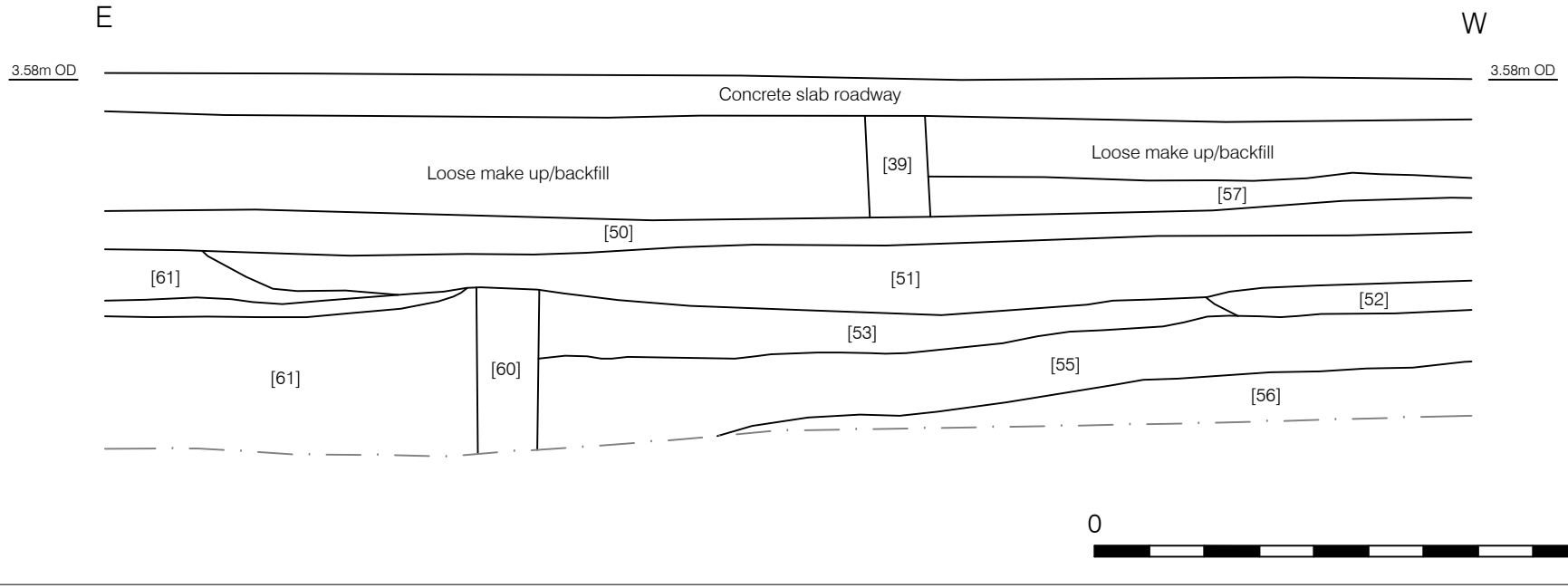


Figure 3
Representative Section 13
Plan 1:400, Section 1:25 at A4

Plate 1 Part of service trench showing north facing section

Plate 2 Part of service trench showing north facing section

Plate 3 Service trench showing large metal fuel tank

9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS E14 3JU: WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION FOR

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF ON PHASE 2 ENABLING WORKS UNPUBLISHED CLIENT

REPORT

Hyder 2012, *East Thames Group, New Union Wharf, Environmental Impact Assessment, Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment*. Draft Client Report.

10 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

10.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to express their thanks to Dean Miller on behalf of the Hill Partnerships for commissioning this archaeological investigation.

10.2 The author would like to Helen Hawkins for her project management and editing of this report. Thanks to Adela Murray-Brown for the illustrations and also to Steve Pallister for his assistance on site.

APPENDIX 1: OASIS REPORT

OASIS ID: preconst1-199223

Project details

Project name	New Union Wharf Phase II Enabling works Service Trench Watching Brief
Short description of the project	A service trench 58m in length by 1.6m in width running west to east along the northern edge of the site was excavated as part of the Phase II Enabling works. The watching brief was part of continuing work on this project. Two 19th factories were revealed in the trench. Natural deposits, comprising alluvium, were only found at the extreme east end of the trench
Project dates	Start: 10-12-2014 End: 17-12-2014
Previous/future work	Yes / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	NUW13 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Residential 1 - General Residential
Monument type	19TH CENTURY FACTORIES Post Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Test Pits"
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 TOWER HAMLETS POPLAR New Union Wharf, Stewart Street, Cubitt Town
Postcode	E14 3JU

Study area	1.70 Hectares
Site coordinates	TQ 38420 79494 51.4969139686 -0.00569315409834 51 29 48 N 000 00 20 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 2.64m Max: 4.97m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited
Project brief originator	Adam Single
Project design originator	Helen Hawkins
Project director/manager	Helen Hawkins
Project supervisor	Phil Frickers
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Hill Partnerships

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Archive ID	NUW13
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Survey"
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Archive ID	NUW13
Paper Contents	"none"

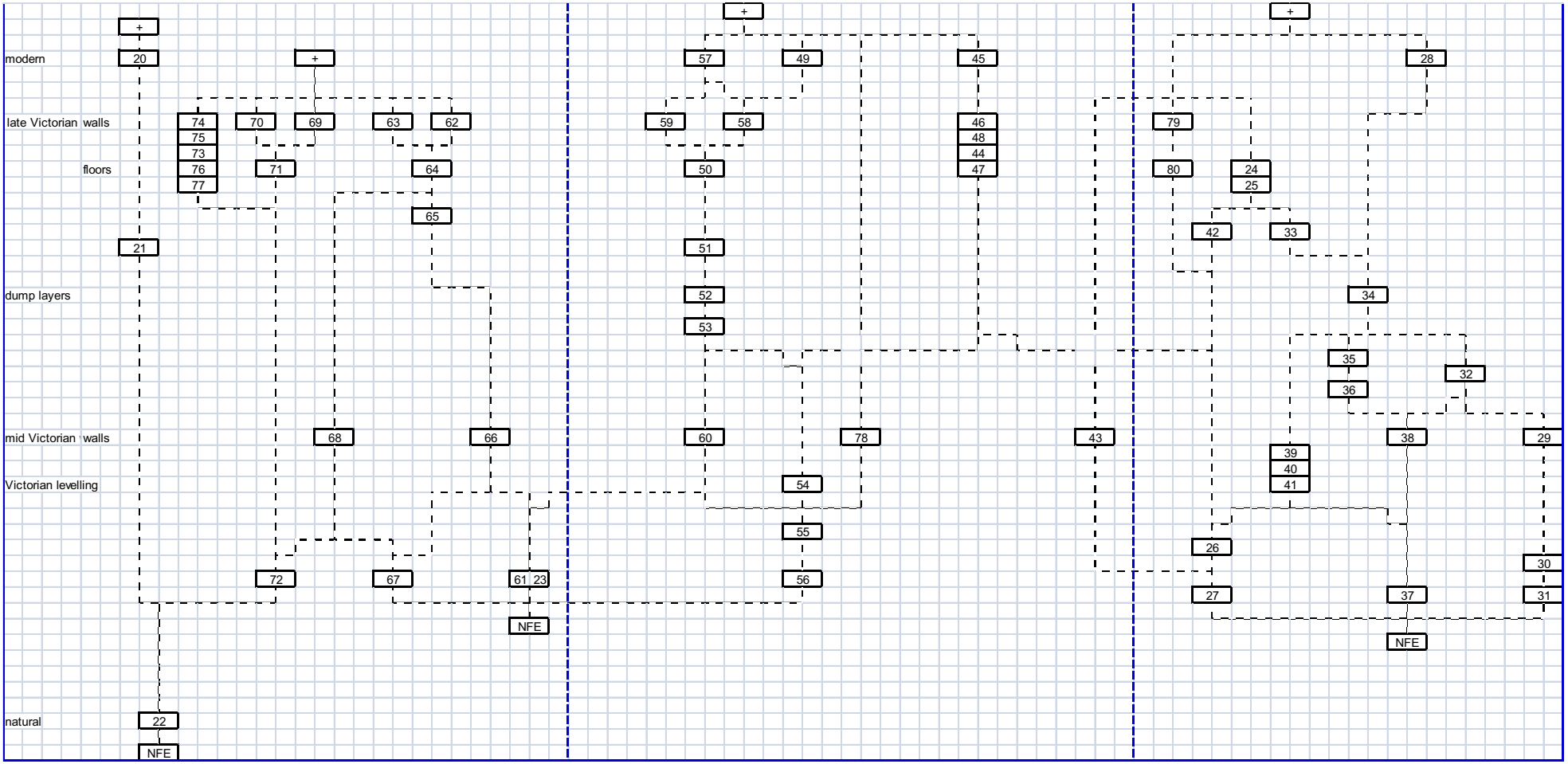
Paper Media available	"Drawing","Plan","Report","Section","Unpublished Text"
Project bibliography 1	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	New Union Wharf, Stewart Street, Cubitt Town, London Borough of Tower Hamlets E14 3JU: Phase 2 Enabling Works - A Report on the monitoring of a service trench
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Frickers, P
Date	2015
Issuer or publisher	PCA
Place of issue or publication	Brockley
Description	A4 blue cover

Appendix 2: Context Register

Context	Type	Comments
20	Layer	Dump Layer
21	Layer	Dump Layer
22	Layer	Natural
23	Layer	Dump Layer
24	Masonry	Yard Surface
25	Layer	Bedding for (24)
26	Layer	Compacted Levelling
27	Layer	Victorian Levelling
28	Layer	Modern disuse layers
29	Masonry	Concrete Foundation
30	Layer	Victorian Levelling
31	Layer	Demolition Material
32	Layer	Machine Trench
33	Layer	Levelling for 24
34	Layer	Dump Layer
35	Layer	Demolition Material
36	Layer	Demolition Material
37	Layer	Victorian Levelling
38	Masonry	Victorian Brick Foundation
39	Fill	Backfill of [41]
40	Fill	Concrete Foundation
41	Cut	Sewer Cut
42	Layer	Levelling for [24]
43	Masonry	Victorian Wall Foundation
44	Masonry	Concrete Walls
45	Fill	Backfilled Sand
46	Masonry	Concrete Roof
47	Cut	Cut to Diesel Tank Room
48	Object	Iron Diesel Tank
49	Layer	Disuse Layer
50	Masonry	Concrete Floor Slab
51	Layer	Dump Layer
52	Layer	Demolition Layer
53	Layer	Dump Layer
54	Layer	Compacted Levelling
55	Layer	Victorian Levelling
56	Layer	Victorian Levelling
57	Layer	Disuse Layer
58	Masonry	Workshop Wall
59	Masonry	Workshop Wall
60	Masonry	Victorian Wall Foundation

Context	Type	Comments
61	Layer	Victorian Levelling
62	Masonry	Workshop Wall
63	Masonry	Workshop Wall
64	Masonry	Conctrete Floor Slab
65	Layer	Concrete Make Up
66	Masonry	Victorian Concrete Foundation
67	Layer	Victorian Levelling
68	Masonry	Modern Brick Foundation
69	Masonry	Workshop Wall
70	Masonry	Workshop Wall
71	Masonry	Concrete Floor Slab
72	Layer	Victorian Levelling
73	Masonry	Modern Brick Wall
74	Fill	Backfill of [77]
75	Fill	Backfill of [77]
76	Masonry	Modern Concrete Foundation
77	Cut	Cut to Wall [73]
78	Masonry	Victorian Wall Foundation
79	Masonry	Workshop Wall
80	Masonry	Concrete Floor Slab

Appendix 3: Site Matrix



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