AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL

WATCHING BRIEF AT

BOONE'S CHAPEL,

LEE HIGH ROAD,

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

NOVEMBER 2006

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WATCHING BRIEF

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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT BOONE'S CHAPEL, LEE HIGH ROAD, LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

Site Code: BCZ 06

Central National Grid Reference: TQ 3932 7524

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1 ABSTRACT

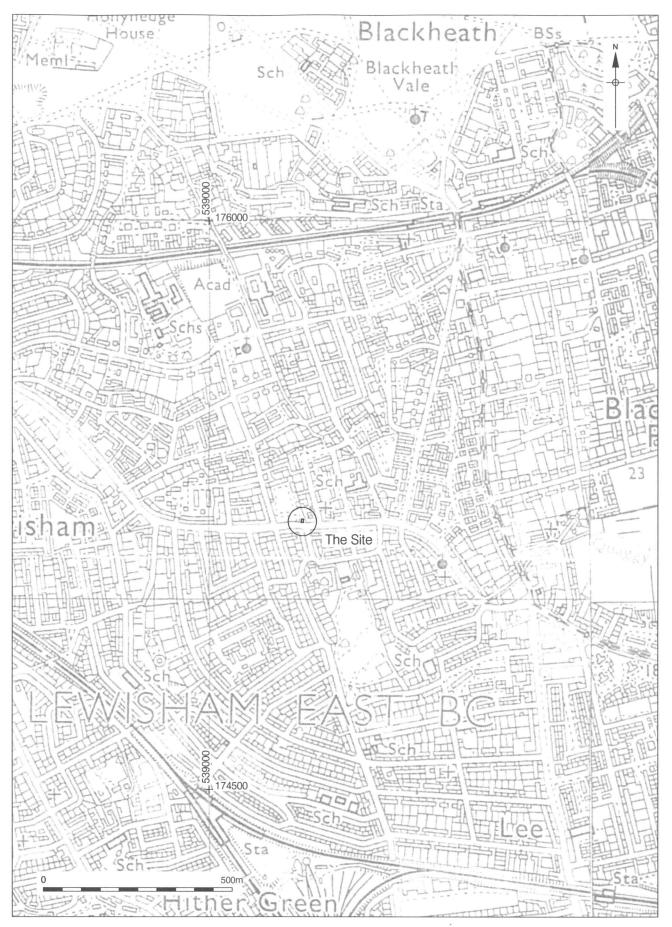
- 1.1 This report details the results and working methods of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited at Boone's Chapel, Lee High Road, London Borough of Lewisham. The central National Grid Reference for the site is TQ 3932 7524, and the watching brief was undertaken between the 26th and 27th October 2006. The work was commissioned by research design architecture ltd on behalf of the Blackheath Historic Buildings Trust.
- 1.2 Before the archaeological watching brief, three geotechnical test pits were dug in preparation for redevelopment of the building. During the excavation of one of these, a brick crypt structure was found within the window bay of the chapel. As a result of this, a watching brief was undertaken to ascertain the existence of any further archaeological remains within the chapel, and the extent and construction of the crypt.
- 1.3 No discrete archaeological deposits or features were discovered in the main body of the chapel, the composition of the ground beneath the flagstones being made ground dating from the original construction of the chapel with only a few modern intrusions. The geotechnical test pits and archaeological test pit in the vicinity of the window bay enabled the extent and construction of the crypt to be recorded.
- 1.4 Boone's Chapel was constructed in 1683 under the patronage of Christopher Boone.
 Upon his death in 1686 the crypt was constructed at the north end of the chapel into which he and later his wife, Mary, were interred.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. on the site of Boone's Chapel, Lee High Road, London Borough of Lewisham (Figure 1) between the 26th October 2006 and 27th October 2006. The work was commissioned by research design architecture ltd on behalf of the Blackheath Historic Buildings Trust.
- 2.2 The site was located inside Boone's Chapel on the north side of Lee High Road between Brandram Road to the west and Boone Street to the east (Figure 1). Prior to the archaeological watching brief, three geotechnical pits were dug to investigate the structures foundations as part of the enabling works. During the course of excavating the northernmost of these, a void was noticed within the window bay through which could be seen at least two coffins within a crypt. Research by the client revealed that these were the remains of Christopher Boone (d. 1686) and his wife Mary Boone (d. 1722).
- 2.3 Following discussions between Mark Stevenson of English Heritage, Charlie Mackeith of research design architecture ltd. and Chris Mayo of Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd., a Method Statement (Mayo 2006) was prepared by which an archaeological watching brief would be conducted to investigate the extent of the revealed crypt, and whether further archaeological remains survive within the chapel.
- 2.4 The watching brief monitored the removal of floor slabs within the chapel and investigated underlying stratigraphy. This was undertaken over two archaeological test pits that intersected at their approximate mid-point, a triangular test pit at the north end of the chapel and an extension of a geotechnical test pit in the north-east corner of the chapel. Additionally the geotechnical test pits at the south-east corner of the chapel was recorded (Figure 2).
- 2.5 The watching brief was project managed for Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. by Chris Mayo and carried out by James Young Langthorne. The site was monitored by the Archaeological Advisor to the London Borough of Lewisham, Mark Stevenson of English Heritage.
- 2.6 The completed archive comprising written, drawn and photographic records will be stored by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. until their eventual deposition in the Museum of London. However the client will be making an application to retain a piece

of clay tobacco pipe found during the course of work for display within the refurbished chapel.

2.7 The site was given the code BCZ 06.



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3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Prehistoric

3.1.1 A number of prehistoric artefacts have been discovered in the Lewisham area, such as the Mesolithic flakes, antler pick, reindeer horn, and three Bronze Age axe heads found in the vicinity of Thurston Road (Askew 1992). However none of these were recovered in association with defined features and it is likely that they have been removed from their original position through river action. Therefore there is no known location for any form of prehistoric settlement in the area.

3.2 Roman

3.2.1 The Borough of Lewisham is very approximately defined by the presence of Roman roads. But other than residual deposits, for example 1st/2nd century pottery sherds found on Lewisham Road and Connington Road (Stabler 2001), there appears to have been little Roman activity in the area.

3.3 Saxon

- 3.3.1 During the Saxon period the central area of Lewisham was first truly settled, roughly in the vicinity of St Mary's parish church. The parishes of Lewisham and Lee (the division between the two follows the Quaggy tributary at this point in time) are both listed in the Domesday Survey and although Lee was smaller it held an equal pedigree to Lewisham.
- 3.3.2 Lee was assessed as having land workable by four plough-teams, as well as five acres of meadow and some woodlands. The population of the manor was given as sixteen households which were probably concentrated near to solid ground at Lee Green. An expanding Saxon community utilised the waterways that ran through Lewisham (such as the Ravensbourne) for transport and industry in addition to water supplies. An example of this would be the Riverdale, one of the earliest water mills in the area, which was found near Molesworth Street (Stabler 2001).

3.4 Medieval

3.4.1 Lewisham and Lee developed gradually in the medieval period. As the land was slowly cleared for agricultural purposes so too the industry on the waterways

- blossomed. Mills were developed for the corn, flour, leather, silk, tanning, and steel industries along the riverbanks.
- 3.4.2 Beyond the limits of the gradually spreading settlement the surrounding lands were devoted to cultivation and animal husbandry and were subject to frequent flooding if they were too near to the banks of the Quaggy or the Ravensbourne river.

3.5 Post-Medieval

- 3.5.1 Boone's Chapel occupies the south-east corner of the Merchant Taylor's Company's almshouses site that faces onto Lee High Road.
- 3.5.2 The original almshouses and chapel were commissioned by Christopher Boone, a local benefactor and member of the Merchant Taylor's Company. While Sir Christopher Wren, a fellow member of the Merchant Taylor's Company, was contracted to undertake the task the work was probably carried out by Robert Hooke, now most famous for Hooke's Law. The chapel was built in 1683.
- 3.5.3 Previous information on the site refers to two burials within the chapel both called Mary, although not Mary Boone who was the wife of Christopher Boone (Mitchell and Hughes, 1886).
- 3.5.4 The original row of almshouse that abutted the chapel were demolished in 1875 at which point the chapel was converted into a reading room. After 1945 and the end of the second World War the chapel fell into disuse and is currently in a derelict state.
- 3.5.5 Prior to the commencement of the archaeological work described in this report the area marked out as a geotechnical test pit within the window bay at the north end of the chapel revealed a void beneath the former altar. Within this void two coffins could be clearly discerned interred within a brick barrel-vaulted crypt. A breastplate bearing the name "Christopher Boone" was affixed to one of the coffins. Boone died in 1686. Although the other coffin had no clear markings identifying its occupant it has been assumed that it is Christopher Boone's wife Mary Boone. Mary Boone is referred to in the St. Margaret's Lee parish register records as having been buried on 5.3.1721 (although the date has subsequently been adjusted to 1722) in "a coffin lined with velvet in her chapel". The chapel referred to was originally considered to be one in old St. Margaret's due to the only burials in Boone's Chapel referred to in documentation being the other two Marys mentioned above. However it now seems clear that she was interred with her husband.

4 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

4.1 Geology

- 4.1.1 The solid geology of the area consists of Upper Chalk overlain by Thanet sand. These are sealed by the Lambeth Group of Woolwich and Reading Beds, and higher up the sequence by the sandy and clayey gravels of the Kempton Park Gravel formation (ECOS environmental, 2000).
- 4.1.2 Due to the limited nature of the ground reduction at Boone's Chapel natural strata were not reached

4.2 Topography

- 4.2.1 The site lies 1.76km to the south of the present bank of the River Thames, Identified as Enderby's Wharf on the Greenwich Reach of the Thames.
- 4.2.2 The site also lies in close proximity to the Quaggy, a tributary of the river Ravensbourne, which lies approximately 250m directly to the south of the site.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY (see Figure 2)

- During a meeting on the 19th October between Charlie Mackeith of research design architecture ltd. and Chris Mayo of Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd., the areas for archaeological investigation by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. were agreed upon. This was then submitted to and approved by Mark Stevenson of English Heritage.
- Flagstones designated in the method statement (Mayo 2006) were removed by hand at the north end of the chapel immediately to the south of the crypt and along two intersecting lines in the interior of the chapel. The underlying makeup ground was then removed by hand to an approximate depth of 0.10m-0.15m. The areas were then cleaned by hand and the underlying strata examined and recorded. It was decided to keep the original designations of the geotechnical test pits, B1(a), B1(b), and B2, while the new archaeological trenches referred to above were designated 3, 4, and 5.
- 5.3 Test Pit B1(a) extended 2.50m east-west and 0.90m north-south. After the void under the altar was discovered this test pit was abandoned.
- Test Pit B1(b) in the north-east corner of the site was extended by hand to the west and then recorded. This test pit extended 4.00m east-west and 0.70m north-south (max. width). It reached a depth of 1.49m at its deepest point.
- 5.5 Test Pit B2 extended 1.96m east-west and 1.40m north-south (max. width). It reached a depth of 0.45m at its deepest point.
- 5.6 Test Pit 3, which was triangular in shape, extended 3.38m east-west and 1.90m north-south at its apices. It reached a depth of 0.31m.
- 5.7 Test Pit 4, which ran diagonally NE-SW across the floor in the main body of the chapel, extended 6.12m NE-SW and 0.46m NW-SE (max. width). It reached a depth of 0.28m.
- 5.8 Test Pit 5, which ran diagonally NW-SE across the floor in the main body of the chapel and amalgamated Test Pit B2 at its SE end, extended 6.10m NW-SE and 0.46m NE-SW (max. width). It reached a depth of 0.29m.
- 5.9 All deposits were recorded on pro forma context sheets, trench plans being drawn at a scale of 1:20 and features of archaeological interest at 1:20. The locations of the

trenches were surveyed by hand from fixed landmarks in the chapel. A photographic record was also kept of all the trenches in digital format, black and white print and colour slide. Finds were collected according to standard retrieval methods. All recording was performed according to the guidelines set out by the Museum of London.

5.10 All levels within the trenches were approximated from a spot height on Lee High Road outside the chapel of 16.10m OD.

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

6.1 Phase 1: Chapel Construction

- 6.1.1 Two of the deeper test pits recorded during the watching brief were adjacent to the walls of the chapel, yet neither contained any sign of a construction cut for the chapel walls. These are supposedly of great depth; research has suggested they extend to 8 feet below the internal floor level (pers comm, Charlie Mackeith). Access to the chapel itself from a side door is via a set of steps onto a raised platform, suggesting that the internal floor level is artificially high. That no construction cut for the structure was visible internally in Test Pits B1(b) and B2 is proof of this. The foundations of the building would have been dug from external ground level and then the internal chapel area raised by the importation of made ground.
- 6.1.2 Within the chapel were seen a series of made ground deposits which had been laid as bedding for the internal floor surface. The made ground deposits ([2], [5], [7], [8], [9], [14] and [15]) were observed in all test pits and had a maximum combined thickness of 1.0m (contexts [8] and [9] in Test Pit B1(b)). They generally comprised a sandy-silt matrix with pea grit, ceramic building material and mortar fragments. A piece of clay tobacco pipe recovered from context [9] is dated from 1660-1680. The made ground was recorded at a maximum height of 15.83m OD in Test Pit 5.
- 6.1.3 Within one of the layers of made ground [2] / [15] occasional fragments of disarticulated bone were found, including a single piece of human scapula. Given that the provenance of these made ground layers is unknown the archaeological value of the bone is limited.

6.2 Phase 2: Crypt Construction

6.2.1 Within Test Pit 3 a sub-rectangular construction cut [4] was clearly visible truncating the made ground layers. The cut measured 3.00m E-W by 2.38m N-S and at was least 1.40m deep. Within the cut was brick crypt [11], a free-standing structure which abutted the walls of the chapels' window bay on the north, east and west sides. The east and west walls of the crypt were seen to be 0.24m thick, while the southern wall was thicker at 0.34m. The crypt had maximum dimensions of 1.61m N-S by 2.57m E-W by 1.34m deep, to a brick floor level at 14.58m OD. The floor comprised bricks laid on their bed. The upper and interior surfaces of the crypts' walls had been rendered with lime mortar.

- 6.2.2 The gaps between the limits of the construction cut [4] and the walls of the crypt [11] had been backfilled with a loose, friable light-mid grey/brown sandy silt which has frequent pea grit and occasional brick fragment inclusions [3].
- 6.2.3 The portion of the crypt that lies within the window bay is sealed by a barrel-vault roof [10]. This roof is constructed of red brick in a gently curved arch, which varies in height from 16.03m OD at its eastern and western edges to 16.09m OD at its midpoint. It measures 2.35m E-W by 0.97m N-S by 0.23m thick. The upper surface has been rendered with a fairly thick coat (20mm) of lime mortar. Its coursing is unclear although the hole created during enabling works shows that the bricks at its midpoint are vertical rather than horizontal. Like the walls of the crypt the roof appears to abut the walls of the chapel rather than being part of the original design for the window bay. This proves that the crypt was a later addition to the chapel upon the death of Christopher Boone in 1686, a free standing structure that necessitated alterations to the base of the window bay and the floor of the chapel just beyond it to the south.
- 6.2.4 The hole opened up during enabling works allowed at least two coffins to be seen within the crypt (Figure 7). The northern coffin, bearing the breastplate with "Christopher Boone" visible, appears to have collapsed and various parts of the skeleton are visible including a portion of the skull. The southern coffin is more complete, has a double row of coffin studs on its lid and may be lead-lined. The coffins are approximately 1.80m in length and 0.60m wide, about average sized for a coffin of the late 17th to early 18th centuries. The crypt appears to be approximately 1.50m deep from the top of the roof [10].
- 6.2.5 It has been concluded from the size of the crypt that the structure was intended to house at least Christopher's wife Mary upon her death and possibly other relations as well. In order to facilitate this only the northern part was sealed by the barrel-vault roof [10], the southern part probably being covered with planking that could easily be removed upon the occasion of another burial.

6.3 Phase 3: Crypt Alteration

6.3.1 At Mary Boone's death in 1722 she was interred next to her husband. Immediately following this, a blocking wall [12] was built inside the crypt to the south of her coffin. Constructed of red brick in a stretcher course, it measured 2.00m E-W by 0.31m N-S by 1.34m high. The external surface of the wall was bowed outwards as it followed the contours of the coffin within the crypt (Figure 8), proving its construction after the

insertion of the coffin. The external and upper surface of this wall was rendered with lime mortar.

6.3.2 After the construction of the partition wall [12] the unused part of the crypt to the south was backfilled with a loose mid yellow/brown sand with occasional brick and mortar fragment inclusions [6].

6.4 Phase 4: Floor Reinstatement

6.4.1 Beneath of the chapel floor was seen a layer of levelling sand [1] and [13] which was deposited as bedding for the flagstones. With a thickness varying from 50mm to 70mm, this was felt to be a later phase of activity probably necessitated by the problems of subsidence which affect the chapel today.

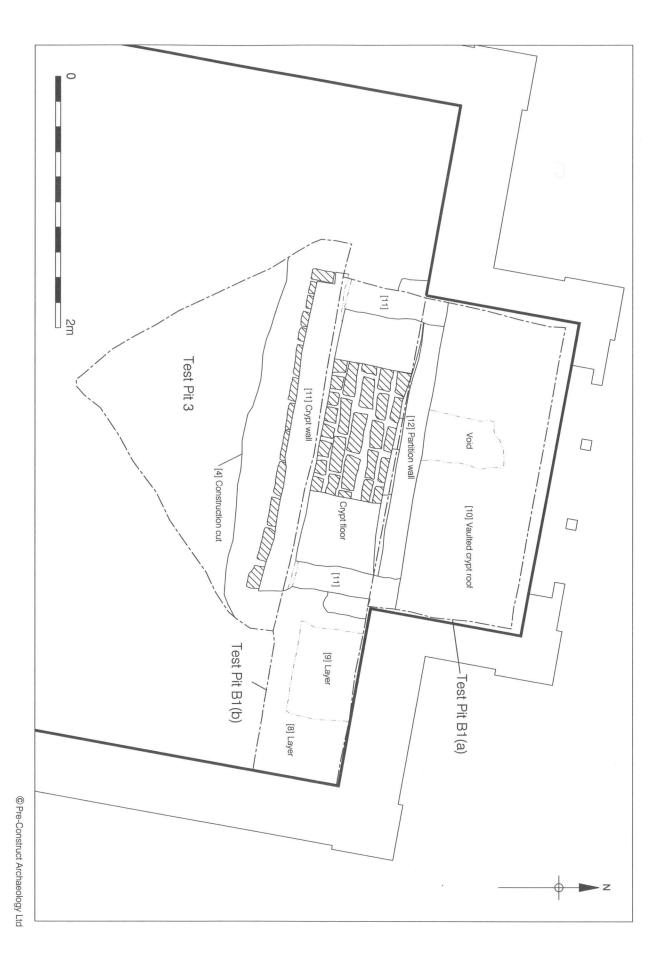


Figure 3 Test Pits B1(a), B1(b) & 3 1:30 at A4

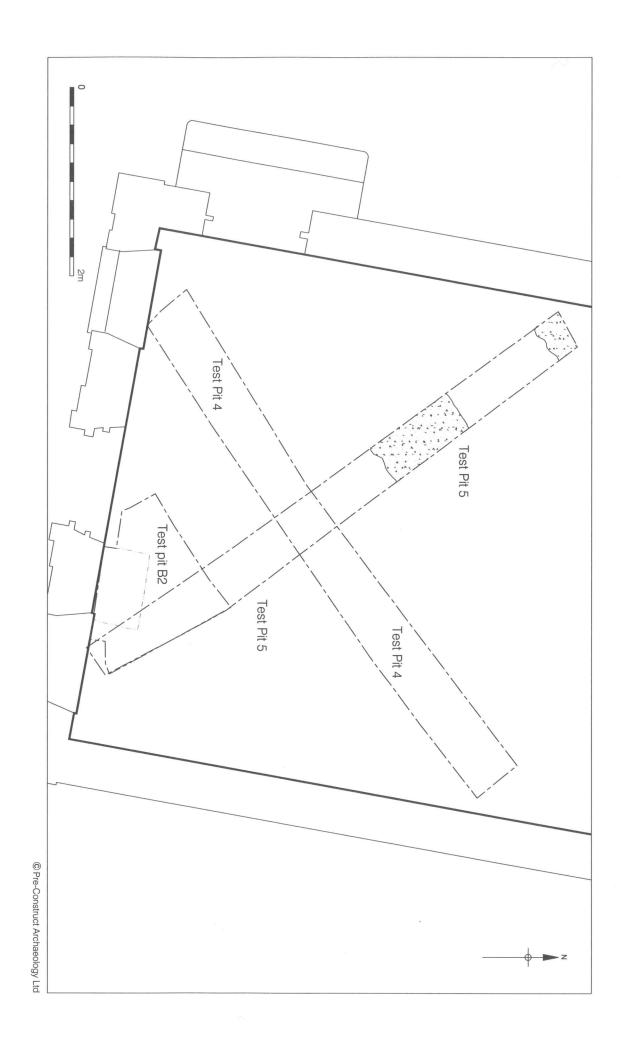


Figure 5: North facing view inside the chapel.

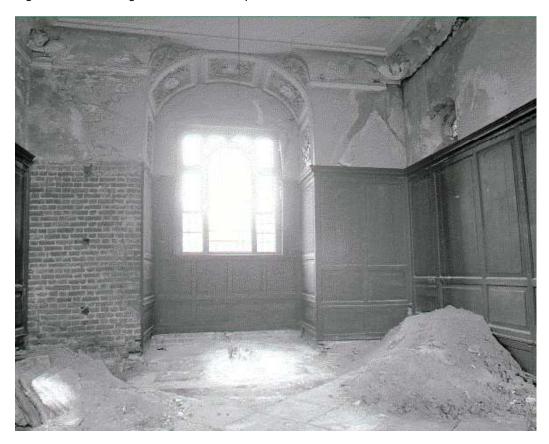


Figure 6: North facing view of crypt (1m scale).



Figure 7: View inside crypt.



Figure 8: South facing view of blocking wall [12] looking down into the unused southern part of the crypt (0.5m scale).



7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 Two key question were asked of this watching brief:
 - 1) To establish the extent and nature of construction of the crypt in the northern window bay of the chapel.
 - 2) To establish whether other archaeological remains survive beneath the existing flagstones within the chapel.
- 7.2 It can be concluded from Test Pits B1(a), B1(b), and 3 that the crypt was a later addition to the chapel. A construction cut for the crypt can be seen cutting the original makeup layers, (5) and (8), that form the interior floor of the chapel. The walls of the crypt (11) and its barrel-vault roof (10) are not directly built into the brickwork of the chapel walls but form a skin into which the remains of Christopher Boone were interred in 1686. The area of the crypt not enclosed by the barrel-vault roof would then have been sealed, possibly with planking, until being reopened to admit Mary Boone in 1722. At this point a blocking wall (12) was constructed sealing the coffins in the northern part of the tomb while the southern portion was backfilled with sand.
- 7.3 Test Pits B1(b), B2, 3, 4,and 5 demonstrate that the floor of the chapel is bedded upon a series of layers of made ground: (2), (5), (7), (8), (9), (15). This made ground was deposited after the construction of the chapel walls in order to create a floor surface that would have been higher than the level of the road in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The made ground was likely to have been imported from another district and therefore the articulated human scapula found is of unknown provenance. The made ground was seen to be over 1.00m thick in Test Pit B1(b).
- 7.4 No other grave cuts or archaeological features were seen in any of the test pits.
- 7.5 The evidence would suggest that no further features of archaeological interest will be impacted upon during the planned ground reduction of 450mm within Boone's Chapel.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- 9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank Charlie MacKeith of research design architecture ltd for commissioning the work on behalf of the Blackheath Historic Buildings Trust who kindly funded it. We would also like to thank Mark Stevenson of GLAAS for monitoring the project.
- 9.2 The author would like to thank Chris Mayo for project managing the watching brief and editing the present report, Cheryl Blundy for photographing the site, and David Harris for the illustrations.

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

SITE	CONTEXT	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
BCZ 06	1	Layer	Levelling Sand
BCZ 06	2	Layer	Made Ground
BCZ 06	3	Fill	Backfill in Cons. Cut [4]
BCZ 06	4	Cut	Construction Cut for (11)
BCZ 06	5	Deposit	Clay Made Ground
BCZ 06	6	Fill	Sandy Backfill in (11)
BCZ 06	7	Layer	Made Ground
BCZ 06	8	Layer	Made Ground
BCZ 06	9	Layer	Made Ground
BCZ 06	10	Masonry	Barrel-Vault Roof of (11)
BCZ 06	11	Masonry	Crypt
BCZ 06	12	Masonry	Partition Wall in (11)
BCZ 06	13	Layer	Levelling Sand/Mortar
BCZ 06	14	Layer	Made Ground
BCZ 06	15	Layer	Made Ground

APPENDIX 2: OASIS REPORT FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-19996

Project details

Project name A Watching Brief at Boone's Chapel, Lee High Road, London

borough of Lewisham

Short description of

the project .

During the excavation of three geotechnical test pits within Boone's Chapel a brick barrel-vault crypt was found containing at least two

coffins. One of the coffins bore a breastplate with the name

Project dates Start: 26-10-2006 End: 27-10-2006

Previous/future

work

No / Not known

Any associated project reference

codes

BCZ 06 - Sitecode

Type of project Field evaluation

Site status None

Current Land use Other 2 - In use as a building

Monument type BARREL-VAULT CRYPT Post Medieval

Monument type MADE GROUND Post Medieval

Significant Finds CLAY TOBACCO PIPE Post Medieval

Methods & techniques

'Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure','Test Pits'

Development type Building refurbishment/repairs/restoration

Prompt Discovery of barrel-vault crypt within chapel

Position in the planning process

Not known / Not recorded

Project location

Country England

Site location GREATER LONDON LEWISHAM LEWISHAM AND

BLACKHEATH Boone's Chapel, Lee High Road, London borough

of Lewisham

Postcode SE13

Study area 45.00 Square metres

Site coordinates TQ 3932 7524 51.4584616325 0.00558714364608 51 27 30 N 000

00 20 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd Project brief originator research design architecture Itd

Project design originator

Chris Mayo

Project

Chris Mayo

director/manager

James Young Langthorne Project supervisor

Project archives

Physical Archive

Exists?

No

Digital Archive

recipient

LAARC

BCZ 06 Digital Archive ID **Digital Contents** 'none'

Digital Media available 'Images raster / digital photography'

Paper Archive

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LAARC

Paper Contents 'none'

Paper Media available 'Context sheet', 'Map', 'Matrices', 'Photograph', 'Plan', 'Report'

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