

**An Archaeological Evaluation on Land to the Rear of 27 & 29 Balham
High Road, Balham, London Borough of Wandsworth.**

Site Code: BJW 07

Central National Grid Reference: TQ 2875 7368

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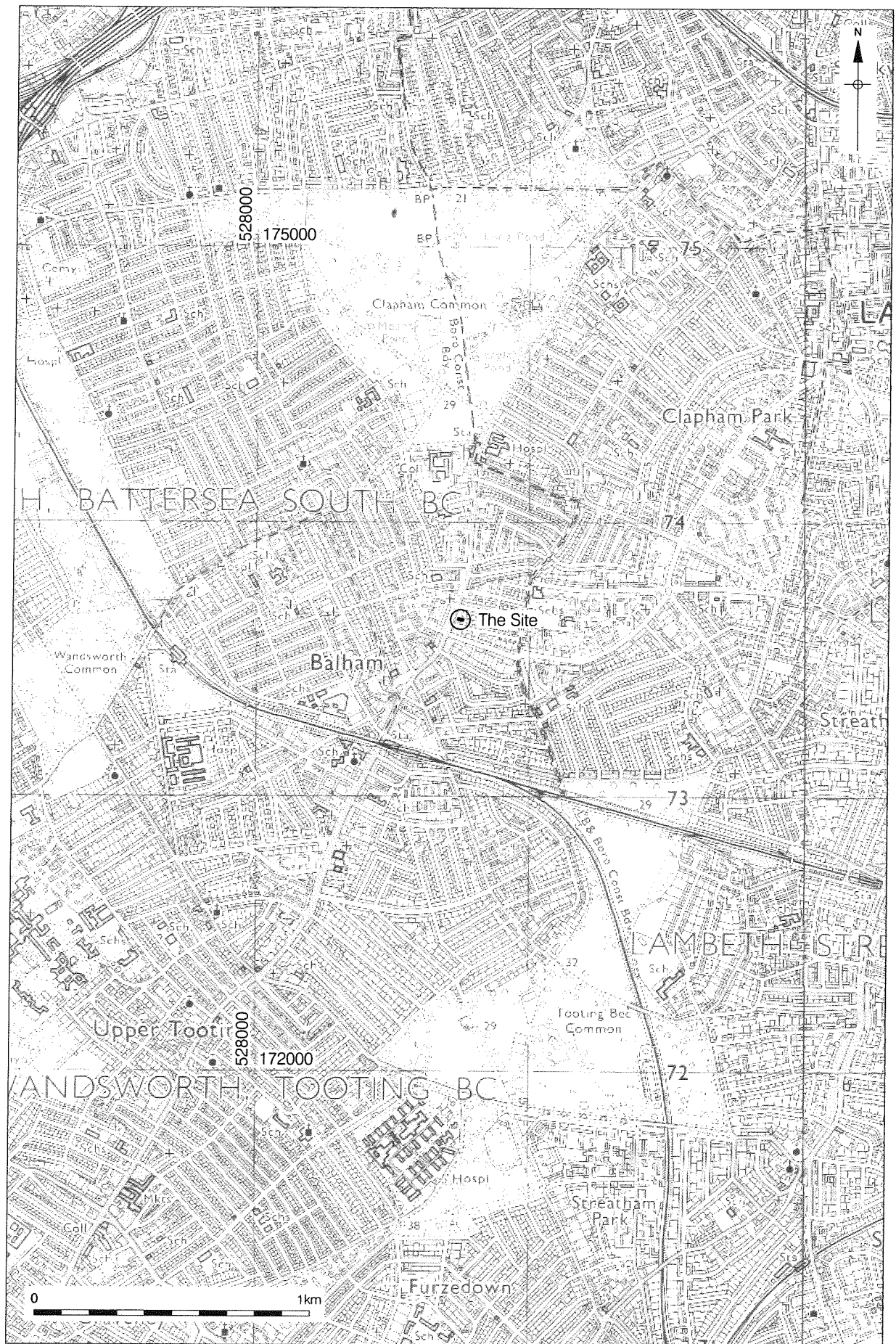
1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken on land to the rear of 27 & 29 Balham High Road, Balham, London Borough of Wandsworth. The evaluation was commissioned by Dunward Properties in advance of proposed redevelopment of the land and took place between the 24th and 26th of January 2007. The site was located on the eastern side of Balham High Road to the south of Ravenswood Road and to the north of Balham New Road.
- 1.2 An evaluation comprising two trenches measuring approximately 10 x 1.8m had originally been required by the Local Planning Authority due to the proximity of the site to both an Archaeological Priority Area and to a Roman road (Stane Street). Both of the trenches were to be excavated within a standing warehouse structure to the rear of 27 & 29 Balham High Road with Trench 1 being aligned north-south and Trench 2 being aligned east-west. However, due to the restricted space available within the warehouse in terms of storing spoil and providing adequate access and egress, only one trench could be excavated. This was aligned east-west with a north-south return at the western end.
- 1.3 The trench was sealed by concrete and make-up forming the hard standing for the warehouse floor. Once this concrete had been broken out and removed a sequence emerged of made ground overlying the natural river terrace gravels. One of these made ground horizons was found to contain a sherd of 17th – 18th century pottery.
- 1.4 No archaeological remains were encountered with the only evidence of human activity prior to the 20th century arriving in the form of the 17th – 18th century pot sherd recovered from layer [1]. With no further evidence of cultural material retrieved it was unclear as to whether or not this pottery was preserved *in situ* or whether it existed in a residual form.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report details the results and working methods of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. on land at the rear of 27 & 29 Balham High Road, Balham, London Borough of Wandsworth. The evaluation took place between the 24th and 26th of January 2007.
- 2.2 The single 'L' shaped trench excavated was located within a standing warehouse structure to the rear of 27 & 29 Balham High Road. This warehouse had existed as a storage area for an HSS Hire shop formerly located at 29 Balham High Road which was unoccupied at the time of the evaluation. The site was bounded to the north by the rear of 27 Balham High Road and an alleyway, to the west by the shop front of 29 Balham High Road, to the south by buildings to the rear of 31 Balham High Road and to the east by further buildings located between Ravenswood Road and Balham New Road.
- 2.3 A detailed specification for the evaluation was included within the Written Scheme of Investigation¹ and was prepared prior to the fieldwork.
- 2.4 The National Grid Reference of the site is TQ 2875 7368.
- 2.5 The site was given the code BJW 07.
- 2.6 The project was monitored for the client by Duncan Watson of Dunward Properties Ltd and for the local planning authority by Diane Walls of the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service (GLAAS). The site was project managed by Gary Brown and supervised by the author, Alexis Haslam.

¹ Brown, G. 2006. 'Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation of Land to the Rear of 27 & 29 Balham High Road, Balham, London Borough of Wandsworth' Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd unpublished report.



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Figure 1
Site Location at A4
1:20,000

3 Planning Background

- 3.1 The proposed development of the site consists of mixed commercial (ground floor) with residential above.
- 3.2 In 1990 the Department of the Environment issued Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG16) 'Archaeology and Planning', providing guidance for planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on the preservation and investigation of archaeological remains.
- 3.3 In short, government policies provide a framework which:
- Protect Scheduled Ancient Monuments
 - Protect the settings of these sites
 - Protect nationally important un-scheduled ancient monuments
 - Has a presumption in favour of *in situ* preservation
 - In appropriate circumstances, requires adequate information (from field evaluation) to enable informed decisions
 - Provides for the excavation and investigation of sites not important enough to merit *in situ* preservation
- 3.4 In considering any proposal for development, the local planning authority will be mindful of the policy framework set by government guidance, in this instance PPG16, of existing development plan policy and of other material considerations.
- 3.5 The site is proximate (although not within) an archaeological priority area as defined in the London Borough of Wandsworth Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The archaeological study aims to satisfy the objectives of the London Borough of Wandsworth, which fully recognises the importance of the buried heritage for which they are custodians. The following policies towards archaeology are contained within the UDP:

Policy TBE 14

Where development involving ground disturbance is proposed in Archaeological Priority Areas, the Council will require developers to make provision for archaeological investigation. Normally the submission of an archaeological evaluation report will be requested prior to determination. Archaeological investigation may also be required elsewhere in sites of archaeological potential.

Policy TBE 15

In appropriate cases, the Council may also require preservation *in situ*, or excavation. The recording and publication of results will normally be required.

3.6 Condition 7 of the draft planning consent states:

‘No development shall take place until archaeological investigations have been undertaken upon the site by an investigation body to be nominated by the council. The investigations shall be carried out in accordance with a detailed scheme to be approved in advance by the local planning authority in order that the archaeological remains that may exist on the site can be investigated’

4 GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 4.1 British Geological Survey Sheet 270 (South London – 1:50,000 series for England and Wales) shows the underlying geology of the site to comprise of River Terrace Gravels. These gravels were observed at the base of Trench 1 at between 21.71 and 21.89m AOD.
- 4.2 The study site was located at a height of 22.74m AOD within the warehouse itself. The building (29 Balham High Road) was slightly raised to the rear, standing at 22.23m AOD outside the shop front on Balham High Road.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

5.1 The approximate timescales used in this report are:

Prehistoric

Palaeolithic	450,000 – 12,000 BC
Mesolithic	12,000 – 4,000 BC
Neolithic	4,000 – 1,800 BC
Bronze Age	1,800 – 600 BC
Iron Age	600 BC – AD 43

Historic

Roman	AD 43 – 410
Saxon / Early Medieval	AD 410 – 1066
Medieval	AD 1066 – 1485
Post-Medieval	AD 1486 – 1799
Modern	AD 1800 - Present

5.2 **Prehistoric**

Several prehistoric finds have been discovered within the local vicinity. A Palaeolithic hand axe was found in the general Balham area and some lithic remains were recovered at Lochinver Street. Excavations at St James's Hospital revealed a prehistoric stream and finds including a Mesolithic scraper, a Neolithic ovate flint implement and a Neolithic scraper.

5.3 **Roman**

The Roman road of Stane Street (which ran from Chichester to London) is recorded as running along the present day line of Tooting High Street, Upper Tooting Road, Balham High Road and Balham Hill. A layer of disturbed mortared flint and gravel has previously been recorded on Balham High Road and has been interpreted as possibly forming part of this Roman road. Another road has also been located on Tooting Bec Common. A Roman pavement together with some Roman bricks were recorded as situated under a house on Park Hill Estate (some distance to the south of the study site) which may have formed part of a small Roman villa. An unconfirmed Roman burial ground is also reputedly situated within a copse of hawthorn on Tooting Bec Common.

5.4 **Saxon and Medieval**

Balham was not mentioned in the estate charter of AD 693, but it is mentioned in its revision of AD 957. The name has Saxon roots, which may refer to a meeting place. The estate of Balham is recorded in the Domesday Book as being occupied by a 'squatter', whilst during the Medieval period it was divided into three separate holdings. One was held by the Abbey of Bec, one by Bermondsey Abbey and the smallest of the three being held privately. Excavations at 74-80 Upper Tooting Road

(some distance to the south of the study site) revealed an 11th – 12th century refuse pit along with possible boundary ditches and a clay extraction pit dated AD 1270 – 1350.

5.5 **Post-Medieval**

Up until the mid to late 18th century the area of Balham lay within agricultural land. By the end of the century a number of houses had been built along Balham High Road and in 1856 the railway station was opened. By the turn of the century Balham had effectively changed from a country village and become part of London's growing urban sprawl. Within the locality of the study site excavations at 219-221 Balham High Road revealed an 18th century pit containing tin glazed pottery and clay pipe stems whilst a post-medieval ditch and 18th century boundary ditch, cess pit and foundation and posthole were discovered at 74-80 Upper Tooting Road.

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 6.1 In accordance with the written scheme of investigation, an evaluation trench was excavated in order to determine the location, form, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development.
- 6.2 The trench, 'L' shaped in plan, was opened up with the use of a 360° mechanical excavator using a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket and breaker. All machining was monitored by the archaeologist, checking for archaeological deposits and features through the made ground and onto the natural River Terrace Gravels. All machining was preceded by scanning for live services using a CAT scanner.
- 6.3 The trench was hand cleaned, examined and recorded in both plan and section.
- 6.4 The single context system was used for recording, developed out of the Department of Urban Archaeology Site Manual, now published by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS 1994). Plans were recorded on a scale of 1:20, and sections were recorded at a scale of 1:10.
- 6.5 The trench was tied into the site boundary. A Temporary Bench Mark (TBM) was established on the site and was taken from a Bench Mark on the northern corner of Dalton House (value 24.63m AOD) located on the north side of the junction of Balham High Road and Yukon Road. The TBM had a value of 22.74m AOD.
- 6.6 Several health and safety issues were considered in order to undertake the evaluation safely. Due to the fact that excavation was to take place within a confined building, efforts had to be made to ensure a supply of clean air and to remove both concrete dust and carbon monoxide from within the warehouse. This was achieved through the use of both mains powered ventilation equipment and a gas monitor designed to measure carbon monoxide levels.
- 6.7 The evaluation trench measured 7.66m from east to west and up to 4.78m from north to south at the western end.

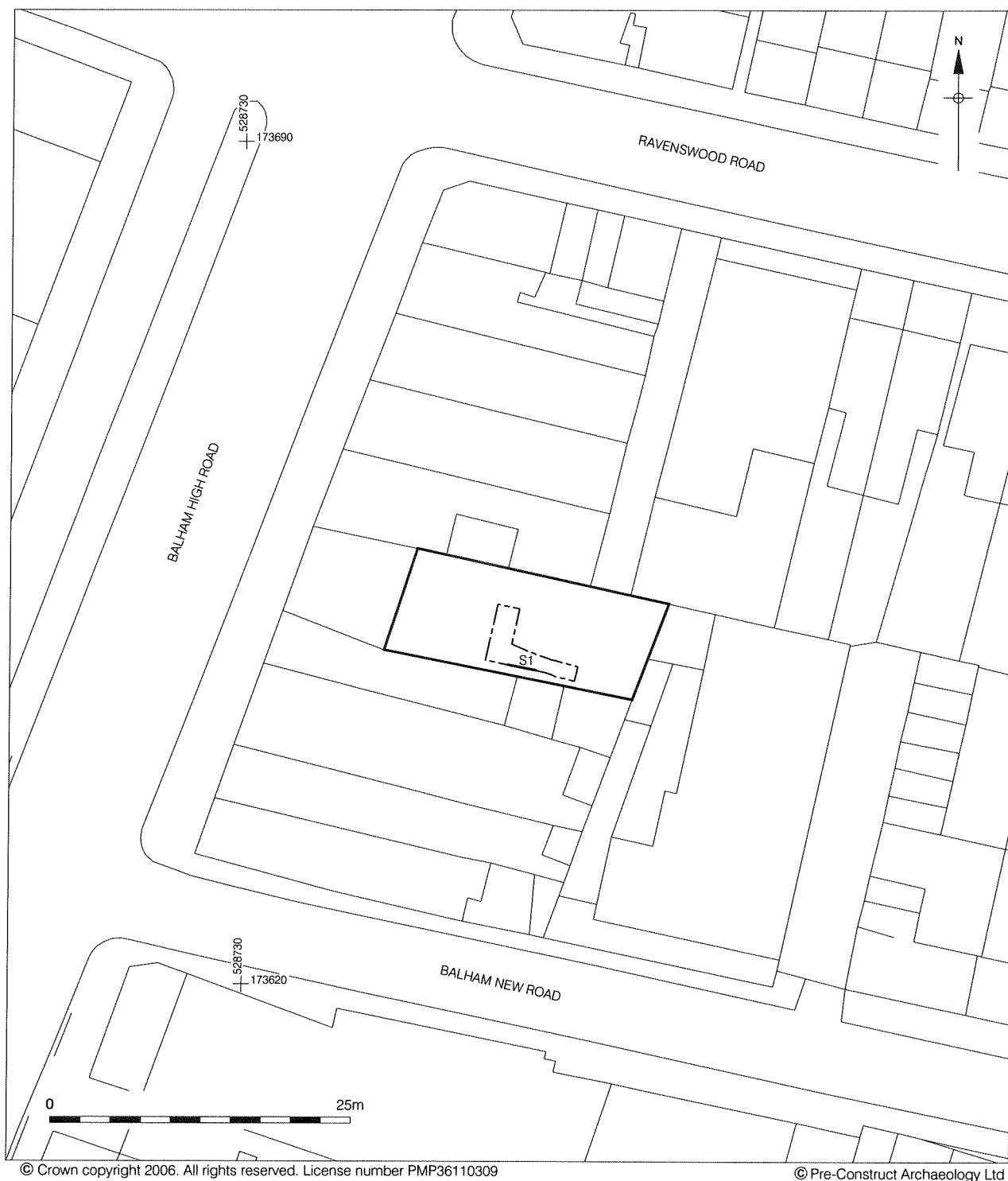


Figure 2
Site Location
1:500 at A4

7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL PHASE DISCUSSION

- 7.1 In total the single evaluation trench ('L' shaped in plan) measured 7.66m from east to west and 4.78m from north to south at the western end. The east-west aligned segment was up to 1.8m wide, whilst the north-south aligned segment was up to 1.84m wide. Due to the presence of a disused modern drain in the north-south segment, this area could not be fully reduced. The machine was unable to remove the concrete encased pipe. However, although the same drain was also observed in the east-west aligned segment, the space afforded to the machine here meant that the pipe could be taken out and the trench was machined down to the natural horizons.

7.2 Phase 1 – Natural

The earliest deposits encountered at the base of the trench consisted of the River Terrace Gravels [3]. These were recorded as loose to compact natural sandy gravels, dark grey to yellowish red in colour. They were not fully excavated, but recorded at between 21.71m AOD and 21.89m AOD.

Sealing [3] was a layer of plastic to sticky light yellowish brown silty clay [2]. This deposit appeared to be fairly clean, and for this reason is believed to have existed as some form of natural head deposit. It was up to 0.25m thick at a highest level of 22.21m AOD.

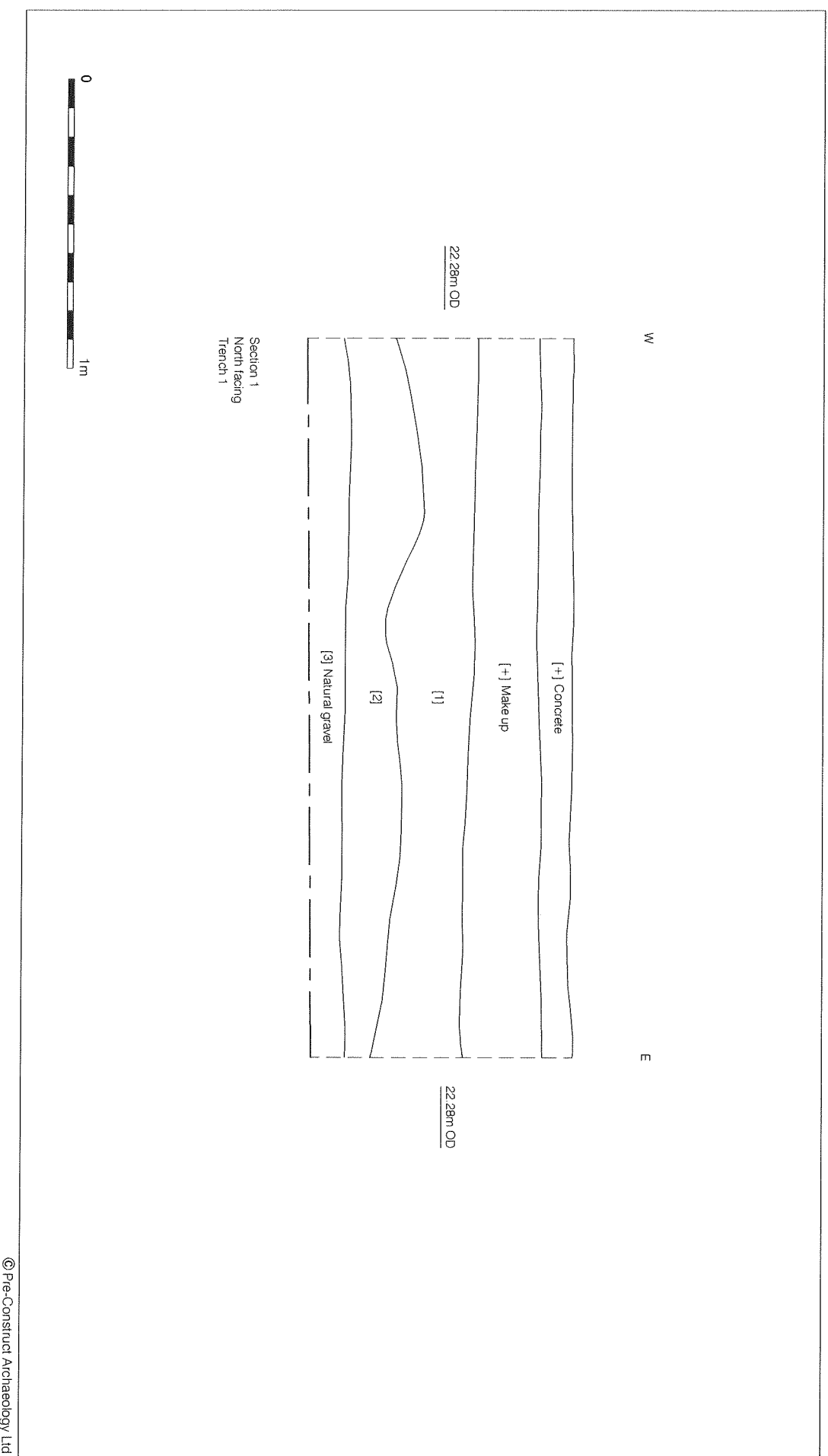
7.3 Phase 2 – Post-Medieval.

Overlying [2] was [1] which was described as a plastic, dark grey sandy silty clay with inclusions of small sub angular gravels and occasional flecks of CBM. The precise nature of this horizon was unclear. It was up to 0.30m thick at 22.40m AOD but it could not be ascertained as to whether or not it had been deliberately dumped during the post-medieval period or at a later date. One sherd of 17th to 18th century pottery was recovered from this layer and for this reason it has been placed within the post-medieval period. However, it is quite possible that this sherd was residual and had been imported from elsewhere during an episode of ground raising and levelling.

7.4 Phase 3 – Modern.

Sealing [1] as a layer of rubble make up [+] which was up to 0.27m thick at 22.62m AOD. A small English Stoneware dairy jug was recovered from this layer and was stamped with the initials 'P.M.' The vessel was complete apart from a broken handle

and has been dated to between the 19th and 20th centuries. Overlying the rubble make-up was modern concrete [+] which was up to 0.11m thick at 22.73m AOD.



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Figure 3
Section 1
1:20 at A4

8 INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 One of the principal objectives of the archaeological evaluation was to determine the presence or absence of archaeological activity of any period. Although not located directly within an Archaeological Priority Area, the proximity of a Roman road (Stane Street) to the site meant that there was an archaeological potential and an evaluation was required.
- 8.2 The only evidence of human activity pre-dating the 19th century took the form of one single sherd of pottery dated to between the 17th and 18th centuries. This fragment came from a layer which has tentatively been ascribed to the post-medieval period. However, the precise nature of this horizon could not be specifically determined, and in this way the sherd of pot may simply have been residual and imported from elsewhere during an episode of ground raising or levelling. No evidence for either the Roman road of Stane Street or any potentially associated contemporary roadside activities were revealed.
- 8.3 Other than context [1], this evaluation has confirmed that there are no archaeological deposits and features predating the 19th century on the site.
- 8.4 The natural on the site was discovered to be River Terrace Gravels. These were in turn overlain by a thin head deposit in the form of a plastic, light yellow brown silty clay.

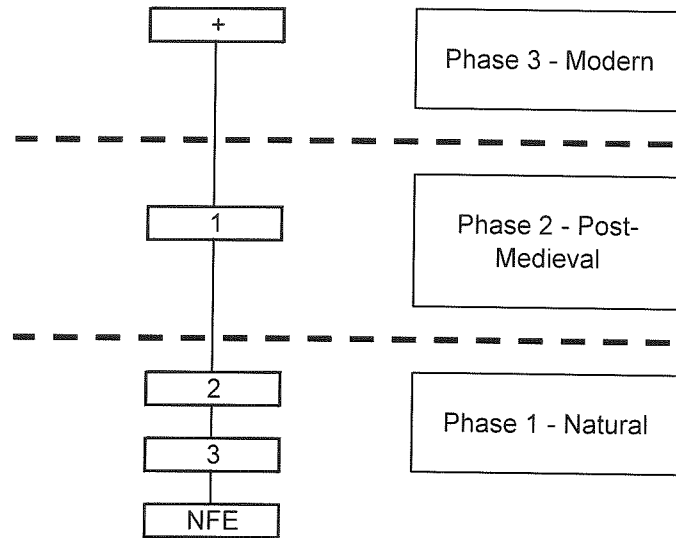
9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology would like to thank Duncan Watson for commissioning the work on behalf of Dunward Properties Ltd. Thanks also to Diane Walls of the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service (GLAAS) for monitoring the site on behalf of the Local Planning Authority.
- 9.2 The author would also like to thank Will Johnston for all of his assistance on site; Dave Harris for the illustrations; Lisa Lonsdale for technical and logistical support and both Gary Brown and Jon Butler for their project management and editing.

APPENDIX 1 - CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Site Code	Context No.	Plan	Section	Type	Description	Date	Phase	Photo no.
BJW 07	1	Tr. 1	1	Deposit	Natural Gravels	Natural	1	Digi. 2-5, 8-12
BJW 07	2	N/A	1	Deposit	Natural Head Deposit	Natural	1	N/A
BJW 07	3	Tr. 1	1	Deposit	Made Ground	Post-Medieval	2	Digi. 6-7, 13-15

APPENDIX 2 – SITE MATRIX



APPENDIX 3 – OASIS FORM

1.1. OASIS ID: preconst1-23159

Project details

Project name	Land to the Rear of 27 and 29 Balham High Road, Balham, London Borough of Wandsworth
Short description of the project	An archaeological evaluation took place between the 24th and 26th of January within a warehouse to the rear of 29 Balham High Road. This warehouse had previously been used as a storage area for an HSS Hire Shop. The evaluation revealed very little evidence of archaeological activity prior to the 19th century. One layer of made ground was tentatively ascribed to the post-medieval period due to the presence of a single sherd of 17th to 18th century pottery. This layer directly overlay a horizon of natural clay which sealed the River Terrace Gravels. Modern concrete formed the warehouse floor.
Project dates	Start: 24-01-2007 End: 26-01-2007
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	BJW 07 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 2 - In use as a building
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON WANDSWORTH WANDSWORTH Land to the rear of 27 and 29 Balham High Road, Balham, London Borough of Wandsworth
Postcode	SW12
Study area	200.00 Square metres

Site coordinates TQ 2875 7368 51.4469490912 -0.147052649576 51 26 49 N 000 08 49 W Point

Height OD Min: 21.71m Max: 21.89m

Project creators

Name of Organisation Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd

Project brief originator Pre-Construct Archaeology

Project design originator Gary Brown

Project director/manager Gary Brown

Project supervisor Alexis Haslam

Type of sponsor/funding body Developer

Name of sponsor/funding body Dunward Properties Ltd

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient LAARC

Physical Contents 'Ceramics'

Digital Archive recipient LAARC

Digital Contents 'Ceramics', 'Stratigraphic'

Digital Media available 'Text'

Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Contents	'Ceramics','Stratigraphic'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Diary','Drawing','Matrices','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section','Unpublished Text'
Project bibliography 1	
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