

571 – 573 ROMAN ROAD,  
LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS  
  
WATCHING BRIEF

Quality Control

Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited			K1367
	Name & Title	Signature	Date
Text Prepared by:	Denise Mulligan		January 2007
Graphics Prepared by:	Dave Harris		January 2007
Graphics Checked by:	Josephine Brown	<i>PPCA</i>	January 2007
Project Manager Sign-off:	Chris Mayo	<i>CM</i>	January 2007

Revision No.	Date	Checked	Approved

Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd  
Unit 54  
Brockley Cross Business Centre  
96 Endwell Road  
London  
SE4 2PD

# **An Archaeological Watching Brief at 571 573 Roman Road, London Borough of Tower Hamlets**

**Site Code: RRZ07**

**Central National Grid Reference: TQ 367834**

**Written and Researched by Denise Mulligan**

**Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, February 2007**

**Project Manager: Chris Mayo**

**Commissioning Client: Massey Group**

**Contractor:**

**Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited  
Unit 54 Brockley Cross Business Centre  
96 Endwell Road  
Brockley  
London  
SE4 2PD**

**Tel: 020 7732 3925**

**Fax: 020 7639 9588**

**Email: [cmayo@pre-construct.com](mailto:cmayo@pre-construct.com)**

**Website: [www.pre-construct.com](http://www.pre-construct.com)**

**© Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited  
February 2007**

© The material contained herein is and remains the sole property of Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited and is not for publication to third parties without prior consent. Whilst every effort has been made to provide detailed and accurate information, Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited cannot be held responsible for errors or inaccuracies herein contained.

## CONTENTS

1	ABSTRACT .....	3
2	INTRODUCTION .....	4
3	PLANNING BACKGROUND .....	7
4	GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY .....	10
5	ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .....	11
6	ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY .....	14
7	ARCHAEOLOGICAL PHASE DISCUSSION .....	15
8	INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS .....	17
9	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	18
10	BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	19

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX .....	20
APPENDIX 2: SITE MATRIX .....	21
APPENDIX 3: OASIS REPORT FORM .....	22

## ILLUSTRATIONS

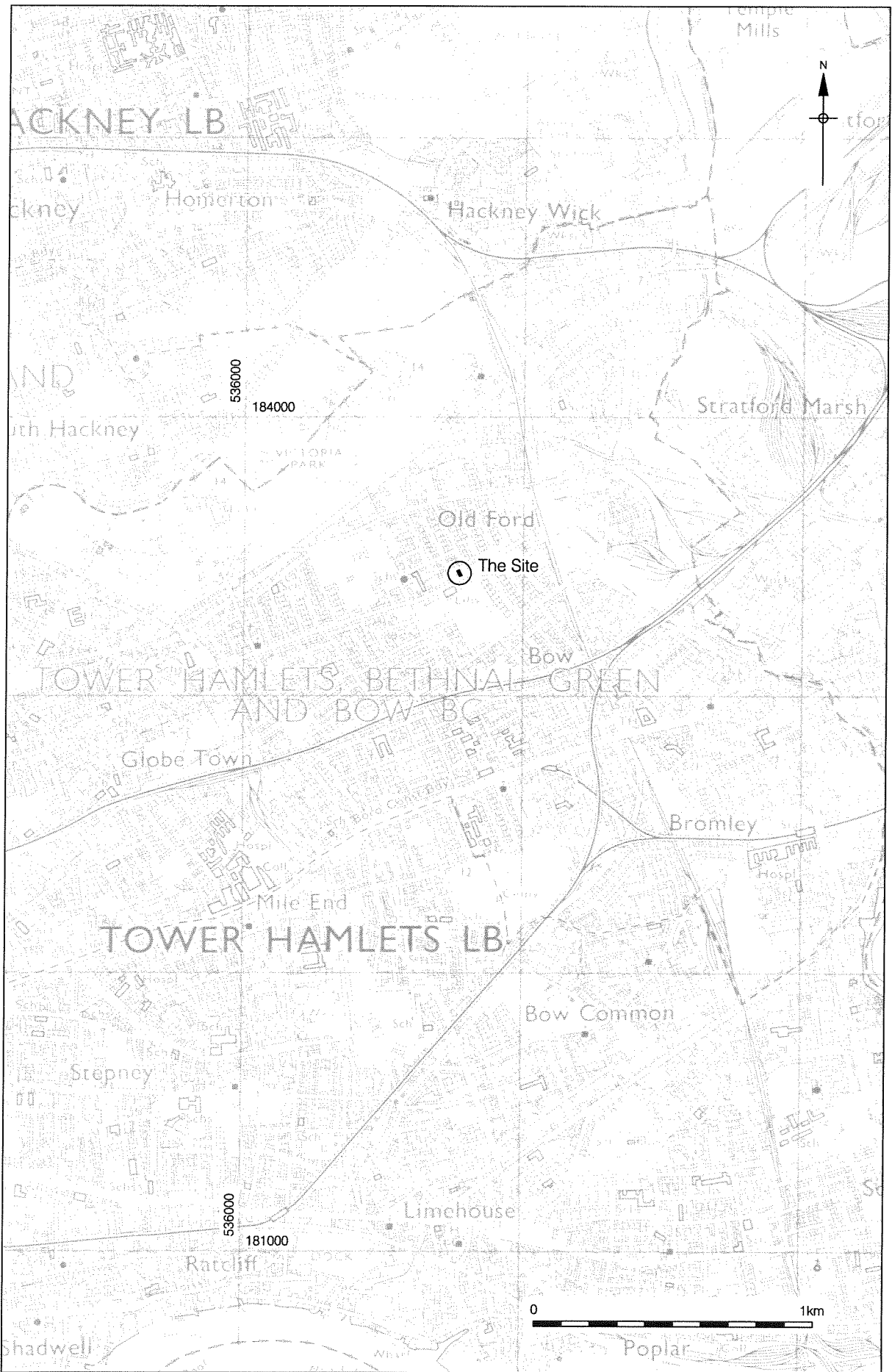
FIGURE 1: SITE LOCATION .....	5
FIGURE 2: TRENCH LOCATION .....	6
FIGURE 3: SECTIONS .....	16

## **1 ABSTRACT**

- 1.1 This report details the results of an archaeological watching brief at 571-573 Roman Road, London Borough of Tower Hamlets (Figure 1). The work was commissioned by Rosie Cann of the Massey Group, and took place between 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> January 2007.
- 1.2 The development site is positioned to the rear of the existing property at 571-573 Roman Road. Previous use had left the area of the site as a concreted external yard. The watching brief monitored the excavation of a series of foundation trenches by machine across the area of the site.
- 1.3 The trenches contained terrace gravel overlain by natural sand, sealed by a 19<sup>th</sup> century garden soil, which had been truncated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by drainage trenches.
- 1.4 No archaeological deposits or features pre-dating the 19th century were encountered during the watching brief.

## **2 INTRODUCTION**

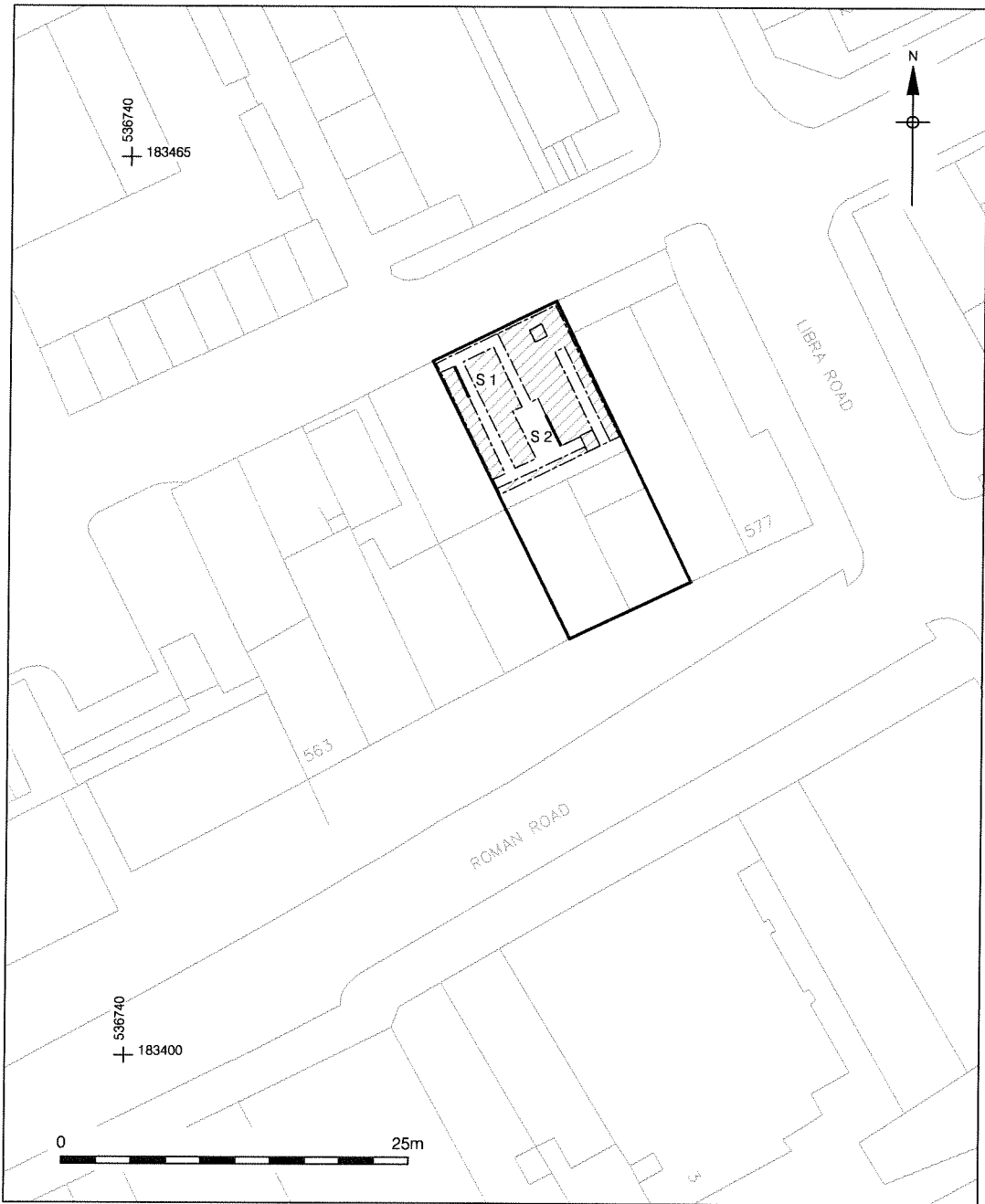
- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. on land at the rear of 571-573 Roman Road, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, in advance of a proposed redevelopment of the site for residential properties (Figure 1). The watching brief took place between 22nd and 25<sup>th</sup> January 2007, and was commissioned by Rosie Cann of the Massey Group.
- 2.2 The site was located on land to the rear of shop frontages with upper residential properties at 571-573 Roman Road, London Borough of Tower Hamlets. It is bound to the north by a small access road leading to Libra Mansions, to the east and west by existing buildings and to the south by the rear of shops fronting onto Roman Road.
- 2.3 The central National Grid Reference of the site is TQ 367834
- 2.4 The site was given the code RRZ07.
- 2.5 The project was monitored by David Divers on behalf of the LB Tower Hamlets, project managed by Chris Mayo and supervised by the author.



Reproduced from Ordnance Survey 1:25,000. Crown Copyright 1987.

© Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd

Figure 1  
 Site Location  
 1:20 000 at A4



© Crown copyright 2006. All rights reserved. License number PMP36110309

© Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd


 Unexcavated areas

Figure 2  
Trench Location  
1:500 At a4

### 3 PLANNING BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In November 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.
- 3.2 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
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 The London Borough of Tower Hamlets Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (adopted 2003) includes several clauses in relation to archaeological practice within the Borough. This includes the following:
- DEV 40: Developments that adversely affects a scheduled monument will normally be refused.
  - DEV 41: Planning powers will be used to protect and preserve the archaeological heritage including the industrial heritage of the borough. Interpretation and presentation to the public will also be sought.
  - DEV 42: The permanent preservation of remains in the original location will normally be required. Suitable design, land use and site management to achieve this will be encouraged.
  - DEV 43: Proposals involving ground works in Areas of Archaeological Importance or Potential, shown on the proposals map, or on individual sites notified to the Council by English Heritage or the Museum of London will be subject to the following requirements:
    1. Applicants will need, as part of their submission, to demonstrate that the archaeological implications of the development have been



- assessed using the professional advice of an approved archaeological consultant;
2. Appropriate planning conditions will be attached to planning permissions to ensure that investigation, excavation and recording takes place by an approved archaeological organisation before excavation commences; and;
  3. In appropriate cases, planning agreements will be sought to ensure that adequate opportunities are afforded for the archaeological investigation of sites, before or during demolition and suitable provision is made for preserving remains and finds in the original location or for removing them to a place of safe keeping.
- 3.5 One of the principal sources of archaeological evidence is the development of sites, a source of evidence for this history from Roman times to the recent industrial past, but this evidence is easily destroyed in the development process. Archaeological remains are an important resource therefore wishes to ensure that development involving groundworks in areas that may contain archaeological remains makes early and specified allowance for the investigation of the archaeological potential of the site before groundworks for the development are allowed to proceed. The neighbourhoods' first priority will be to seek and maintain any finds and remains in situ.
- 3.4 The Neighbourhoods are concerned to see that sites that may be of interest are properly investigated and records made of any finds before development takes place. It is important the borough's archaeological heritage is made accessible to the public as an educational, recreational and tourist resource. The neighbourhoods will therefore support and promote measures which protect and conserve sites and which will allow the public access to the sites with archaeological remains to the extent that this is compatible with the protection of the remains.
- 3.5 The Neighbourhoods will seek professional archaeological advice as appropriate and expect applicants to do the same when proposing development that could affect archaeological remains. It is important that developers have properly assessed and planned for the implications of their proposals in terms of scheduling time for the investigations to be carried out on the site. Proposals for investigations should be built into the development programme at an early stage in the process.
- 3.6 Archaeologically important areas are found throughout the Borough. There are also records of numerous finds that may indicate areas of potential. The Neighbourhoods will consult with English Heritage and the Museum of London in the designation of

areas of archaeological importance and will consult them about any areas of potential. Proposals that fall within these areas will be subject to policy DEV 40-43.

- 3.7 Pre-Construct Archaeology has carried out a succession of excavations, evaluations and watching briefs in the Parnell Road and Lefevre Walk area over the last ten years. These have demonstrated the wealth of the archaeological resource of the area and considerably enhanced the archaeological community's understanding of the status of the Roman settlement at Old Ford.
- 3.8 The site is in an area classified as an 'Area of Particular Archaeological Importance' in the Tower Hamlets Unitary Development Plan.

## **4 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

### **4.1 Geology**

4.1.1 The underlying geology of the site comprises natural terrace gravel.

### **4.2 Topography**

4.2.1 The site is flat, at a level of 12.80m. The existing course of the River Lea runs north-south approximately 750m east of the site.

## 5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### 5.1 Prehistoric

- 5.1.1 Evidence for prehistoric land use in Bow was uncovered at Lefevre Walk Estate<sup>1, 2, 3</sup> and at 91-93 Parnell Road<sup>4</sup>, situated to the east of the site. A number of scatters of residual lithics have also been found in the vicinity of the site, suggesting Palaeolithic, possible Late Mesolithic/Early Neolithic, Neolithic/Early Bronze Age and Middle to Late Bronze Age activity<sup>5</sup>.
- 5.1.2 Work on the Lefevre Walk Estate revealed several Neolithic and Middle to Late Bronze Age pits and possible field boundaries. Some possible Middle to Late Bronze Age votive offerings were also recovered from the site<sup>6</sup>. Evidence of late Bronze Age occupation has also been found at 91-93 Parnell Road<sup>7</sup>. Several sherds of handmade pottery, dated to the Late Bronze to Early Iron Age and several fragments of burnt flint were recovered from Bow North Youth Centre on Parnell Road. Several undated features, themselves truncated by Iron Age pits, were the earliest examples of human activity on the site. Residual prehistoric worked flints were also recovered from Iron Age ditches<sup>8</sup>.
- 5.1.3 Ceramics recovered from 91-93 Parnell Road suggest that the site was occupied during the Late Iron Age c. 50BC – AD50<sup>9</sup>. A possible Iron Age roundhouse was excavated at Lefevre Walk Estate<sup>10</sup>. Evidence for ritual and settlement activity was also observed, along with field boundaries dating to the Late Iron Age<sup>11</sup>. Further evidence for Iron Age occupation nearby was observed during excavations at Bow North Youth Centre, where several ditches and possible drainage gullies containing Iron Age pottery sherds were recorded, along with a later Iron Age hearth and metal working evidence<sup>12</sup>.

### 5.2 Roman

---

<sup>1</sup> Taylor-Wilson, R., 1995  
<sup>2</sup> Douglas, A., 1999  
<sup>3</sup> Mayo, C., 2001  
<sup>4</sup> Taylor-Wilson, R., 1996  
<sup>5</sup> Mayo, C., 2001  
<sup>6</sup> Douglas, A., 1999  
<sup>7</sup> Taylor-Wilson, R., 1995  
<sup>8</sup> Leary, J., 2005  
<sup>9</sup> *ibid*  
<sup>10</sup> Taylor-Wilson, R., 1996  
<sup>11</sup> Douglas, A., 1999  
<sup>12</sup> Leary, J., 2005

- 5.2.1 The site is located to the immediate north of the London to Colchester Roman road as conjectured by local discoveries. A 65m stretch of the road was revealed during excavations at Lefevre Walk Estate<sup>13</sup>. At 91-93 Parnell Road, a further stretch was excavated. Several boundary ditches, predominantly at right angles to the line of the road, were recorded and dated to the last century of Roman occupation<sup>14</sup>.
- 5.2.2 A number of clay and timber buildings, bounded by property ditches, were recorded at Lefevre Walk Phase 2. Field boundary ditches, fence lines, deep pitting and a possible sump were also recorded<sup>15</sup>. Further evidence of Roman occupation in the area was recovered during an excavation at Lefevre Walk Phase 3, which consisted of a number of postholes, pits and a clay and timber structure<sup>16</sup>. Fragmentary remains of roadside clay and timber buildings and a small inhumation cemetery were recorded at Lefevre Walk Estate<sup>17</sup>. Pits and deposits, which may have been connected to the roadside settlement, were also recorded at Parnell Road<sup>18</sup>.

### 5.3 Medieval

- 5.3.1 Some evidence of medieval occupation has been recorded in the vicinity of the site. A handful of medieval potsherds were recovered from both Lefevre Walk Estate<sup>19</sup> and Parnell Road<sup>20</sup>. Two medieval pits were recorded during excavations at Lefevre Walk Phase 3<sup>21</sup>.
- 5.3.2 Several medieval buildings, which may have fronted Old Ford Road, were observed at Lefevre Walk Phase 2, along with possible brickearth quarrying pits and field drainage ditches. A layer of medieval plough soil also covered part of the site<sup>22</sup>.
- 5.3.3 A medieval ditch was recorded at Ruston Street to the north<sup>23</sup>.
- 5.3.4 Despite the probable decline in use of the Old Ford crossing over the River Lea during the medieval period, a fulling mill was built in the area in the 13th century, as was a large dye house circa 1500<sup>24</sup>.

### 5.4 Post-Medieval

---

<sup>13</sup> Taylor-Wilson, R., 1996

<sup>14</sup> Taylor-Wilson, R., 1995

<sup>15</sup> Douglas, A., 1999

<sup>16</sup> Mayo, C., 2001

<sup>17</sup> Taylor-Wilson, R., 1996

<sup>18</sup> Taylor-Wilson, R., 1995

<sup>19</sup> Douglas, A., 1999

<sup>20</sup> Taylor-Wilson, R., 1995

<sup>21</sup> Mayo, C., 2001

<sup>22</sup> Douglas, A., 1999

<sup>23</sup> Mayo, C., 2001

<sup>24</sup> Weinreb, B and Hibbert, C, 1988, 559

- 5.4.1 At the start of the 18th century, farming and market gardening is thought to have been predominate. Excavations at Lefevre Walk and Bow North Youth Centre corroborated this. A number of field boundaries (deep ditches, fences and possibly hedgerows) and probable agricultural soils were recorded during Lefevre Walk Phase 2<sup>25</sup>, and a number of possible field drainage gullies or channels were recorded during Lefevre Walk Phase 3<sup>26</sup>. A thick agricultural soil, dated to the medieval / post-medieval period, was observed at Bow North Youth Centre<sup>27</sup>.
- 5.4.2 By the end of the 19th century the area had been transformed into an industrial suburb of London, with poor housing. Work at Lefevre Walk revealed a Victorian sewer associated with this housing, along with rubbish pits and garden features<sup>28</sup>. A 19th century service trench or industrial feature was observed at Bow North Youth Centre<sup>29</sup>.

---

<sup>25</sup> Douglas, A., 1999

<sup>26</sup> Mayo, C., 2001

<sup>27</sup> Leary, J., 2005

<sup>28</sup> Douglas, A., 1999

<sup>29</sup> Leary, J., 2005

## 6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 6.1 The watching brief followed a site specific method statement<sup>30</sup> which had been approved by David Divers of English Heritage, designed to monitor the excavation by machine of groundbeam foundation trenches at the site.
- 6.2 The trenches were excavated using a mini-digger under archaeological supervision, fitted with a flat-bladed ditching bucket. Excavation by machine was undertaken in spits and continued through the modern made ground until natural gravel was reached.
- 6.3 Trenches were excavated to a width of 0.75m and at a depth of 1.30m below ground level (Figure 2). Levels were taken from spot heights at 563 Roman Road to the southwest of the site. By this method, existing ground level at the site was at approximately 12.80m OD.
- 6.4 All recording systems adopted during the investigation were fully compatible with those most widely used elsewhere in London, that is those developed out of the Department of Urban Archaeology Site Manual, now published by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS 1994). Individual descriptions of all archaeological strata and features excavated and exposed were entered onto pro-forma recording sheets. All plans and sections of archaeological deposits were recorded on polyester based drawing film, the plans being drawn at a scale of 1:50 and the sections at 1:10. The OD height of all principal strata were calculated and indicated on the appropriate plans and sections. A full photographic record of the investigations was also prepared, using digital images.
- 6.5 The trenches were surveyed in by hand and tied into the Ordnance Survey grid.

---

<sup>30</sup> Brown, G 2006

## **7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL PHASE DISCUSSION**

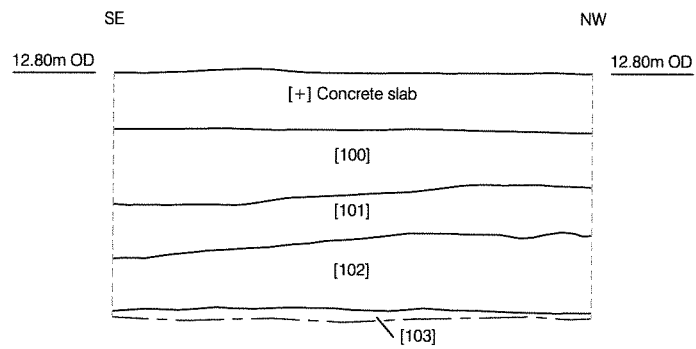
### **7.1 Phase 1: Natural Gravels and Sand**

7.1.1 The earliest deposit encountered was layer [102], natural terrace gravel. The gravel was a firm to compact deposit, mid yellow-brown in colour, at a level of 11.95m OD. The gravel covered the entire base of the trenches. Sealing the gravel was layer [101], a deposit of loose, mid yellow-brown sandy-silt with reddish-brown sandy-silt lenses. It was observed throughout the trenches, the top of the deposit being at a level of 12.20m OD and between 0.60m and 0.80m in thickness

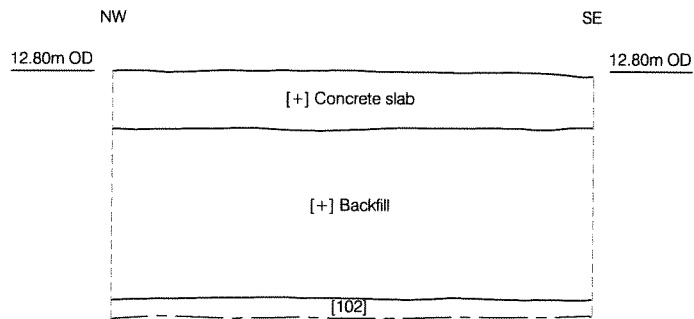
### **7.2 Phase 2: 19<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

7.2.1 Sealing the natural sand was layer [100], a 300mm thick layer of made ground observed across the site. This contained late 19th to early 20th century artefacts including potsherds, and clay building material, mainly in the form of frogged and unfrogged red brick. This layer had been truncated in the eastern part of the site by 20<sup>th</sup> century manhole structures and associated drains within cut [104] These intrusions impacted on the under lying gravel terrace and the backfill [103] of the cut was observed to a height of 11.60m OD. The impact of these intrusions has destroyed the possibility of finding any archeological remains on the eastern side of the site.





Section 1  
Northeast facing



Section 2  
Southwest facing



Figure 3  
Sections  
1:40 at A4

## **8 INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 8.1 One of the principal objectives of the archaeological watching brief was to determine the presence or absence of archaeological activity of any period. No archaeological features from any period were observed.
- 8.2 The earliest datable evidence of human activity at the site dated to the 19th century, and consisted of a garden soil horizon which had been heavily truncated in the eastern part of the site by drainage systems, beyond the natural gravels and sands. The garden soil may have been associated with the market gardening that took place in the area during the post-medieval period.
- 8.3 The watching brief has confirmed that there are no significant archaeological deposits or features on the site.

## **9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Rosie Cann of the Massey Group for commissioning and kindly funding the the work. We would also like to thank David Divers of English Heritage who monitored the work on behalf of the LPA.
- 9.2 The author would like to thank Dave Harris for the illustrations and Chris Mayo for his project management and editing. Thanks also to Gary Brown for providing all the relevant background material. Thanks to Luckings for providing assistance and welfare facilities on site.

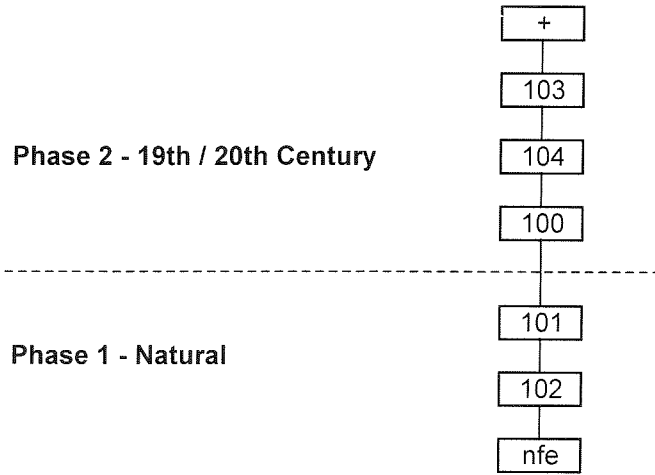
## 10 BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Brown, G. 2006 'Project Design For An Archaeological Watching Brief At 571-573 Roman Road Old Ford London Borough Of Tower Hamlets', Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd, unpub rep
- Douglas, A. 1999 'Phased Summary and Assessment Document of the Excavations at Lefevre Walk Phase 2, in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets', Pre-Construct Archaeology, unpublished report.
- Leary, J. 2005 'Bow North Youth Centre, Parnell Road, London Borough of Tower Hamlets', Pre-Construct Archaeology, unpublished report.
- Mayo, C. 2001 'An Archaeological Evaluation at Lefevre Walk Phase 3, London Borough of Tower Hamlets' Pre-Construct Archaeology, unpublished report.
- Mayo, C., 2006 Method Statement for an Archaeological Evaluation at 445-447 Roman Road, London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Pre-Construct Archaeology, unpublished report.
- Taylor-Wilson, R. 1995 'An Archaeological Excavation at 91-93 Parnell Road, Old Ford, E3, An Interim Report', Pre-Construct Archaeology, unpublished report.
- Taylor-Wilson, R. 1996 'An Archaeological Excavation at Lefevre Walk Estate, Old Ford, E3, An Interim Report (Volumes 1 & 2)', Pre-Construct Archaeology, unpublished report.
- Weinreb, B. and Hibbert, C. (eds) 1988 *London Encyclopedia*, London

**APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX**

Site Code	Context No.	Plan	Section / Elevation	Type	Description	Date	Phase	Photos No.
RRZ07	100	100	1	layer	dark brown /black silt/sand/clay, garden soil	19th century	2	100/2727
RRZ07	101	101	1	layer	natural sand	natural	1	west1
RRZ07	102	102	1	layer	natural terrace gravel	natural	1	100/2708
RRZ07	103			backfill	backfill of cut for drains	20th century	2	100/2727
RRZ07	104	104		cut	construction cut for drain	20th century	2	100/2711

## APPENDIX 2: SITE MATRIX



## APPENDIX 3: OASIS REPORT FORM

**OASIS ID: preconst1-23604**

### Project details

Project name	571-573 Roman Road, London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was conducted at 571-573 Roman Road, London Borough of Tower Hamlets between 22nd and 25th January 2007. The development site is positioned to the rear of the existing property at 571-573 Roman Road. Previous use had left the area of the site as a concreted external yard. The watching brief monitored the excavation of a series of foundation trenches by machine across the area of the site. The trenches contained terrace gravel overlain by natural sand, sealed by a 19th century garden soil, which had been truncated in the 20th century by drainage trenches. No archaeological deposits or features pre-dating the 19th century were encountered during the watching brief.
Project dates	Start: 22-01-2007 End: 25-01-2007
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	RRZ 07 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Other 13 - Waste ground
Methods & techniques	'Targeted 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 TOWER HAMLETS BOW 571-573 Roman Road, London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Postcode	E9
Study area	95.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 367 834 51.5324372920 -0.02894340264850 51 31 56 N 000 01 44 W Point
Height OD	Min: 12.19m Max: 12.20m

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	Pre-Construct Archaeology
Project design	Gary Brown

originator	
Project director/manager	Chris Mayo
Project supervisor	Denise Mulligan
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Massey Group
Project archives	
Physical Archive recipient	LAARC
Physical Contents	'Ceramics'
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Contents	'Stratigraphic'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Images vector','Spreadsheets','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Contents	'Stratigraphic'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Correspondence','Miscellaneous Material','Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes','Plan','Section'
Project bibliography 1	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	An Archaeological Watching Brief at 571 573 Roman Road, London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Mulligan, D
Date	2007
Issuer or publisher	Pre-Construct Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	London
Description	A4 document
Entered by	Archivist (archive@pre-construct.com)
Entered on	7 February 2007