

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF GEOTECHNICAL
INVESTIGATIONS ON LAND AT 25 – 29 HARPER ROAD,
SOUTHWARK, SE1**

Central National Grid Reference: TQ 27950 66850

Planning Ref: 15/AP/3886

Site Code: HRE16

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Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, July 2016

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CONTENTS

1	ABSTRACT	2
2	INTRODUCTION	3
3	PLANNING BACKGROUND	6
4	GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY	7
5	ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	8
6	METHODOLOGY	10
7	THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE	11
8	RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND CONCLUSIONS	12
9	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	14
10	BIBLIOGRAPHY	14
	PLATES	15
	APPENDICES	
	APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX	17
	APPENDIX 2: SITE MATRIX	18
	APPENDIX 3: OASIS DATA ENTRY FORM	19

1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological monitoring of geotechnical investigations conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited at 25 – 29 Harper Road, Southwark, SE1. The site is located within the London Borough of Southwark and is centred at National Grid Reference TQ 27950 66850.
- 1.2 Following the Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited (Bradley 2016), archaeological monitoring was conducted between the 13th and 18th July 2016 prior to the re-development of the existing former Sorting Office and former Court building into 64 residential units. The monitoring exercise comprised two geotechnical boreholes (BH 1 & 2), the results of which are to be used in preparing further archaeological strategy.
- 1.3 Due to the nature of the exercise, observation of the archaeological deposits was limited to observing the borehole arisings. The earliest evidence of human activity on the site was a 1.17m thick deposit containing a single sherd of Roman pottery and ceramic building material in BH2, which was sealed by modern concrete. BH1 showed localised truncation down to the natural deposits.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 An archaeological monitoring exercise was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited at 25 – 29 Harper Road, Southwark, SE1 between 13th and 18th July 2016. The site is located within the London Borough of Southwark and is centred at National Grid Reference TQ 27950 66850 (Figure 1).
- 2.2 The site is a rectangular plot situated to the north-west of the junction between Harper Road and Swan Street. It is bounded to the north by residential units and to the west by retail units fronting Borough High Street.
- 2.3 An archaeological desk-based assessment has been prepared for the site (CgMs 2015) to accompany the planning submission. The site is located within an Archaeological Priority Zone, as designated by Southwark Council. The site is also located immediately to the east of Borough High Street which follows the line of a major Roman road, Watling Street, constructed along the edge of the high ground in the mid 1st century AD.
- 2.4 The archaeological exercise was conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited under the supervision of Guy Seddon and the project management of Tim Bradley. This report was written by Guy Seddon. The archaeological work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of Acorn (Trinity Square) Limited.
- 2.5 The monitoring investigation comprised of boreholes BH1 and BH2 (Figure 2), BH1 being sited towards the south of the site on the pavement outside the former sorting office with BH2 positioned in a courtyard between the sorting office and the court house.
- 2.6 The site was assigned the unique site code HRE16, issued by the Museum of London. The completed archive comprising written, drawn and photographic records will, upon completion of the project, be deposited with the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC) under that code.

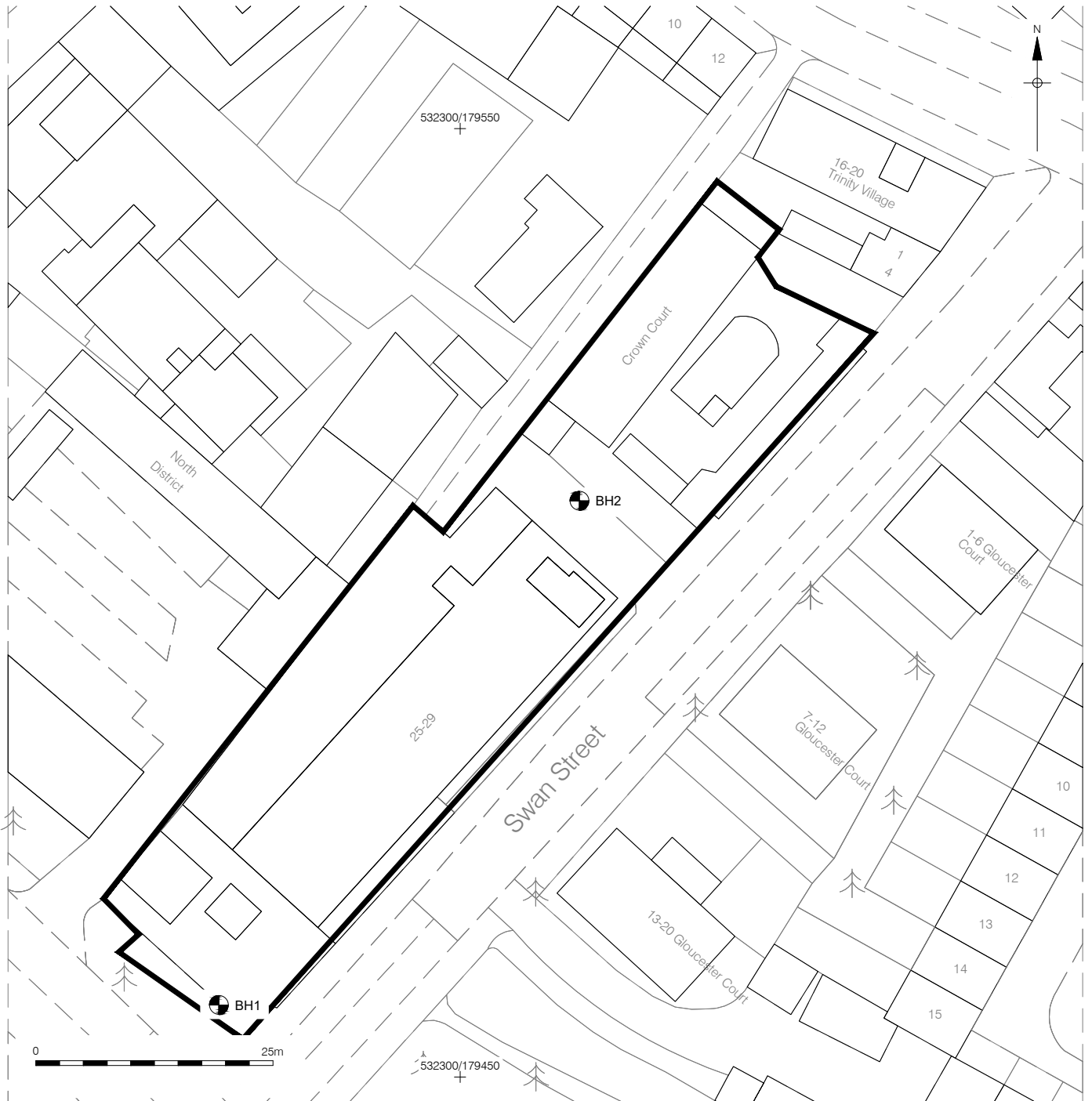


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Figure 1
Site Location
1:20,000 at A4



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Figure 2
 Detailed Site Location
 1:625 at A4

3 PLANNING BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was adopted on March 27 2012. The NPPF constitutes guidance for local planning authorities and decision-takers both in drawing up plans and as a material consideration in determining applications. Chapter 12 of the NPPF concerns the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment.
- 3.2 In considering any proposal for development, including allocations in emerging development plans, the local planning authority will be mindful of the policy framework set by government guidance, existing development plan policy and of other material considerations.
- 3.3 Additional relevant planning strategy framework is provided by The London Plan, which was updated in 2015.

Archaeology in the London Borough of Southwark

- 3.4 The London Borough of Southwark Unitary Development Plan (UPD) was adopted in July 2007. The Plan contains the following policy which has been saved until the adoption of the Local Development Framework:

POLICY 3.19 – ARCHAEOLOGY

- 3.5 This work aims to satisfy the objectives of the London Borough of Southwark which fully recognises the importance of the buried heritage for which it is the custodian. Relevant policy statements for the protection of the buried archaeological resource within the borough can be reviewed within Policy 3.19.
- 3.6 Planning permission has been granted (15/AP/3886) for the demolition of the existing former Sorting Office and former Court building and redevelopment to provide 64 residential units. The following condition relating to archaeology has been attached to the planning permission:

Condition 6:

Before any work hereby authorised begins, the applicant shall secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason

In order that the archaeological operations are undertaken to an acceptable standard and that legitimate archaeological interest in the site is satisfied in accordance with Strategic Policy 12 - Design and Conservation of The Core Strategy 2011, Saved Policy 3.19 Archaeology of the Southwark Plan 2007 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

- 3.7 This report details the results of the first phase of archaeological investigation undertaken on the site, completed in accordance with the above archaeological condition.

4 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

4.1 Geology

- 4.1.1 The solid geology of the study site is shown by the Institute of Geological Sciences (IGS 1979) as London Clay deposits forming the London Basin. Overlying the London Clay is a series of gravel terraces deposited during periods of glacial and inter-glacial conditions.
- 4.1.2 Further detail is provided by British Geological Survey Sheet 270 (South London: 1998) which shows the site to be underlain by deposits of Kempton Park Gravels, defined as 'Post-diversionary Thames River Terrace Deposits: gravel, sandy and clayey in part'. Kempton Park Gravels have been categorised as part of the Devensian Stage, the last glacial stage of the British Pleistocene epoch.

4.2 Topography

- 4.2.1 The study site is level with a spotheight of 4.2m OD situated at the junction of Trinity Street and Trio Place immediately to the north of the study site.
- 4.2.2 The natural topography of the Southwark area is one of low gravel islands or eyots, separated by low-lying areas and braided stream channels, which were periodically flooded. Episodes of Holocene transgression and regression of the Thames have led to the deposition of alluvial silts and clays interspersed with episodes of local peat formation, particularly in riverside locations (Allen et al 2005: 73; Ridgeway, 2002). Such periodic inundation and regression continued until substantial reclamation programmes were implemented from the early Post Medieval period onwards. The study site itself is thought to have lain towards the northern edge of the gravel terrace, c.160m south of the southernmost river channel.
- 4.2.3 No naturally occurring watercourses or standing bodies of water are known to exist within the immediate vicinity of the study site.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

An archaeological desk based assessment has been prepared for the site by CgMs Consulting (CgMs 2015A), and was followed by an addendum to that document, produced following a site meeting between CgMs Consulting and Southwark Council in December 2015 (CgMs 2015B). The following represents a summary of the conclusions regarding the archaeological potential, as presented in those reports:

- 5.1 The bulk of the recorded archaeological finds within the study area search radius are of Roman date.
- 5.2 An evaluation at 137 Great Suffolk Street to the northwest of the study site revealed a boundary/drainage ditch containing late Roman pottery. A ditch containing second/third century pottery was identified at Dickens Square to the southeast of the site. Features including linear foundations, surfaces and pits were identified at 289 Borough High Street to the north of the site. A ditch and gully were identified at Brockham Street/Harper Street to the southeast of the study site. Sandy earth interpreted as cultivation soil identified at 244-246 Borough High Street (TQ 3234 7967) and 275-287 Borough High Street (TQ3236 7965), contained Roman material. Roman deposits including a line of small postholes, a sub-circular pit and later deposits including a ditch were identified at 28-30 Trinity Street to the east of the site (TQ 32467 79399).
- 5.3 The site of a Roman cemetery was identified at 28-30 Trinity Street to the east of the study site, with over 44 burials, dating from the second century to the early fifth century AD (TQ32483 79425; TQ32477 79423). At Harper Road to the south and southeast of the study site, funerary remains have been identified (TQ3230 7940), including a possible cremation urn (TQ32225 79425), and a lamp, recorded as derived from a burial (TQ3235 7936). An inhumation with an associated vase was found at Trinity Church Square to the east of the site in 1825-6 (TQ3240 7945). Burial remains were also identified during evaluations at 52-56 Lant Street to the north of the site (TQ3226 7971).
- 5.4 Artefactual findspots within the study area search radius comprise finds including a pair of folding beam scales and a bone hairpin from 240-246 Borough High Street to the north of the site (TQ3235 7968). Many objects including lamps, brooches, pins etc. were identified at the site of Newington Causeway Sessions House to the southwest, probably as grave goods (TQ 3220 7940). Samian ware has been identified at Borough High Street to the northwest (TQ 3230 7962); coins were found at Kings Place to the northwest (TQ 3224 7953) and at Trinity Street to the northeast (TQ 3237 7965). Peat deposits with Roman pottery was identified at

Dickens Square to the southeast (TQ 3238 7935). Residual pottery and ceramic building material has been identified at 282-302 Borough High Street to the northwest (TQ 3225 7960), and at 69-84 Borough Road to the west of the site (TQ 3208 7946).

- 5.5 The finds discussed above demonstrate that the study site probably lay within the periphery of known areas of Roman settlement and activity in Southwark. The study site can therefore be considered likely to have an archaeological potential for the Roman period, with a perceived lesser potential for the later prehistoric, medieval, post-medieval and modern periods. Map evidence indicates that the site has been occupied by buildings from the nineteenth century onwards.

6 METHODOLOGY

- 6.1 The geotechnical exercise aimed to address the following broad and primary objectives:
- Assess the level of truncation from the existing and previous building foundations and modern activity on the site;
 - Assess the interface of the soil deposits with the natural drift geology for archaeological features;
 - Assess the underlying deposits for evidence of archaeological horizons;
 - Assess the site for prehistoric, Roman, medieval and post-medieval archaeology.
- 1.2 The proposed methodology of the archaeological evaluation was detailed in the site specific Written Scheme of Investigation (Bradley 2016), approved by the London Borough of Southwark.
- 1.3 The starter pits were excavated by hand by the geotechnical contractor. All investigations were undertaken by the geotechnical contractor.
- 1.4 All starter pit/borehole locations were CAT scanned by a trained individual prior to excavation and rescanned as necessary during excavation.
- 1.5 During the insertion of the boreholes themselves, the attending archaeologist monitored excavation through all deposits to the level of the geological sub-strata. Records were made onto *pro-forma* borehole recording sheets.
- 1.6 A full photographic record was made during the archaeological investigation, comprising digital photographs.
- 1.7 The complete archive produced during the evaluation, comprising written, drawn, photographic records and artefacts will be deposited with LAARC, identified by site code HRE16.

7 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

7.1 Phase1: Natural Deposits

7.1.1 The earliest deposits encountered were natural sands and gravels of the Kempton Park Gravel formation. This was recorded as [2] at a height of c. 1.54m OD, in BH2 and [3] at c. 1.16m OD in BH1.

7.2 Phase 2: Roman

7.2.1 Overlying the natural deposits in BH2, at a height of c. 2.71m OD, was a 1.17m thick layer, recorded as [1].

7.2.2 The layer comprised dark brownish grey clayey sand with occasional inclusions of small sub-rounded and sub-angular stones. It also contained a single fragment of micaceous sandy greyware pottery and ceramic building material of undiagnostic form, both dating to the Roman period.

7.3 Modern

7.3.2 Overlying deposit [3] in BH1 and [1] in BH2 were modern deposits of made ground sealed by concrete making the current ground surface (approximately 4.20m OD)..

Context No.	Trench	Type	Description	Thickn ess	Height (mOD)	Date	Phase
1	BH2	Layer	Dark brownish grey clayey sand	1.17m	2.71	Roman	2
2	BH2	Layer	Mid brownish yellow sandy gravels	0.30m +	1.54	Natural	1
3	BH1	Layer	Mid brownish yellow sandy gravels	0.30m +	1.16	Natural	1

8 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Research Objectives

8.1.1 The following research objectives were contained within the Written Scheme of Investigation for the evaluation.

Assess the level of truncation from the existing and previous building foundations and modern activity on the site.

8.1.2 In the area of BH1, on the pavement to the south of the study site, the archaeological horizon was completely truncated by modern activity. Comparing the height of the natural in BH1, (at 1.16m OD) to that in BH2, (at 1.54m OD) there is a difference of 0.38m, suggesting that the natural deposits have also been truncated in the area of BH1. Due to the nature of the investigation, the extent of this truncation could not be ascertained, although it may well be only localised, for example within the backfill of a service trench running along Harper Road.

8.1.3 Within BH2 the modern deposits directly overlay the Phase 2 layer [1] which included Roman finds. This suggests that within the location of BH2 the later archaeological horizon had been subjected to horizontal truncation, although a sequence of 1.17m of potential Roman archaeological deposits survived. As with BH1 though, the extent of any truncation could not be determined due to the 'key hole' nature of the investigation.

Assess the interface of the soil deposits with the natural drift geology for archaeological features.

8.1.4 The interface of the soil deposits with the natural drift geology could not be assessed for archaeological features in any detail due to the inherent constraints of boreholes.

Assess the underlying deposits for evidence of archaeological horizons.

8.1.5 In the area of BH2 a probable Roman deposit was recorded with a thickness of 1.17m. The thickness of this deposit suggests that it may represent more than a single archaeological layer, and could indicate that the borehole was positioned over a feature such as a pit or a ditch.

8.1.6 The presence of the Roman deposit also suggests that the natural horizon, and any potential earlier features, remains intact in this area of the site.

8.1.7 In BH1 there were no preserved archaeological horizons. However, as stated in 8.1.3, the extent of the truncation could not be assessed and may be very localised.

Assess the site for prehistoric, Roman, medieval and post-medieval archaeology.

- 8.1.8 No evidence for either post-medieval or medieval archaeology was recorded during the monitoring of the boreholes.
- 8.1.9 Deposits of a probable Roman date were observed within BH2. In view of the levels of known Roman activity within immediate vicinity of the study site, this is not surprising, and demonstrates the continuation of Roman activity into the area of the site.
- 8.1.10 The archaeological monitoring also suggested that within the area of the site the potential prehistoric horizon, at the interface of the natural deposits, was preserved, however no features or finds from the pre-Roman period were recorded.

8.2 Conclusions

- 8.2.1 The borehole watching brief has provided important information on the soil profile within the area of the site, particularly within the area of BH2.
- 8.1.3 Although limited due to the nature of the borehole investigation, the archaeological exercise did suggest the survival of Roman deposits and preserved natural horizons within the boundary of the site.
- 8.2.3 The presence of a preserved natural horizon also raises the possibility of prehistoric finds and features within the site boundary.
- 8.2.4 Once the project is deemed complete and this report approved by the London Borough of Southwark, the completed archive comprising all site records from the this and any later phases of fieldwork will be deposited by PCA with LAARC under site code HRE16. Until then the archive comprising all paper, digital and artefactual material will be stored at PCA's headquarters in Brockley, London.
- 8.1.4 The results of this archaeological investigation will be published as an entry in the *London Archaeologist* 'Round Up'.

9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank Richard Meager of CgMs Consulting for commissioning the fieldwork.

The author would like to thank Tim Bradley for project management and editing this report, Chris Jarrett and Amparo Valcarcel for spot dates and Ray Murphy for the CAD illustrations.

10 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Plates



Plate 1: BH1, Working Shot.



Plate 2: BH1, Head Pit



Plate 3: BH2, Working Shot

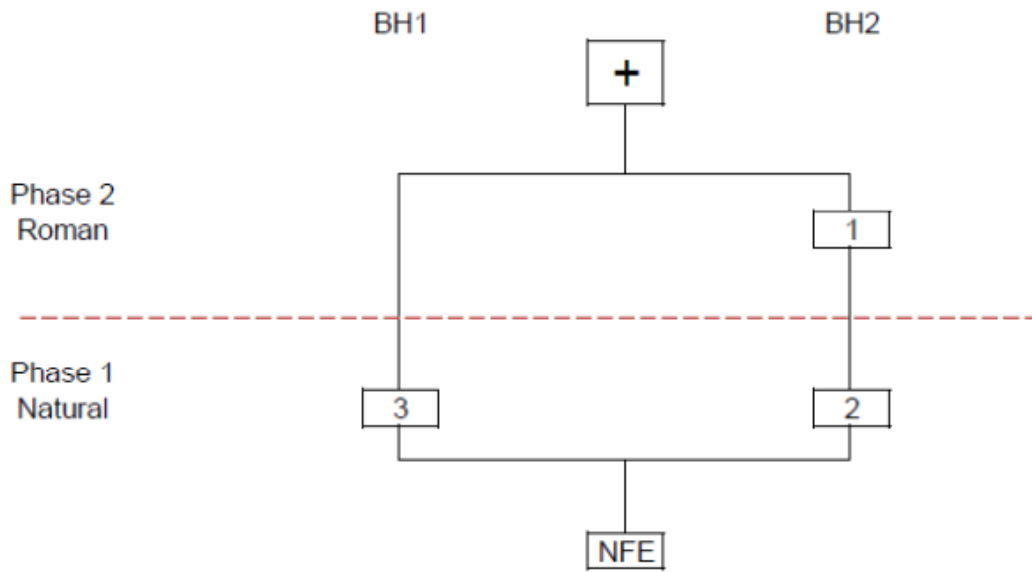


Plate 4: BH2, Head Pit

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX

Context No.	Trench	Type	Description	Date	Phase
1	BH2	Layer	Dark brownish grey clayey sand	Roman	2
2	BH2	Layer	Mid brownish yellow gravelly sand	Nat	1
3	BH1	Layer	Mid brownish yellow gravelly sand	Nat	1

APPENDIX 2: SITE MATRIX



APPENDIX 3: OASIS DATA ENTRY FORM

Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Monitoring of Geotechnical Investigations on Land at 25 - 29 Harper Road, Southwark, SE1
Short description of the project	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd were commissioned to carry out an archaeological monitoring of geotechnical investigations at 25 - 29 Harper Road, Southwark, SE1. The exercise took place between 13th and 18th July 2016 prior to the re-development of the existing former Sorting Office and former Court building into 64 residential units. The monitoring exercise comprised two geotechnical boreholes (BH 1 and 2), the results of which are to be used in preparing further archaeological strategy. Due to the nature of the exercise, observation of the archaeological deposits was limited; the earliest evidence of human activity on the site was a 1.17m thick deposit containing Roman pottery and ceramic building material in BH2, which was sealed by modern concrete. BH1 showed localised truncation down to the natural deposits.
Project dates	Start: 13-07-2016 End: 18-07-2016
Previous/future work	No / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	HRE16 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI)
Current Land use	Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed
Monument type	LAYER Roman
Significant Finds	CBM Roman
Significant Finds	POTTERY Roman
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON SOUTHWARK SOUTHWARK 25 - 29 Harper Road, Southwark
Postcode	SE1
Study area	2190 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 27950 66850 51.38574288295 -0.161025402097 51 23 08 N 000 09 39 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 1.16m Max: 1.52m

Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited
Project brief originator	Richard Meager
Project design originator	Tim Bradley
Project director/manager	Tim Bradley
Project supervisor	Guy Seddon
Type of sponsor/funding body	Consultancy
Name of sponsor/funding body	CgMs Consulting
Project archives	
Physical Archive recipient	LAARC
Physical Contents	"Animal Bones","Ceramics"
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Digital Media available	"Images vector","Spreadsheets","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Matrices","Photograph","Report","Unpublished Text"
Project bibliography 1	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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