

**An Archaeological Evaluation at 15 Artillery Passage, Tower Hamlets, E1  
7LJ**

**Site Code: APS 07**

**Central National Grid Reference: TQ 3348 8165**

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Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, August 2007**

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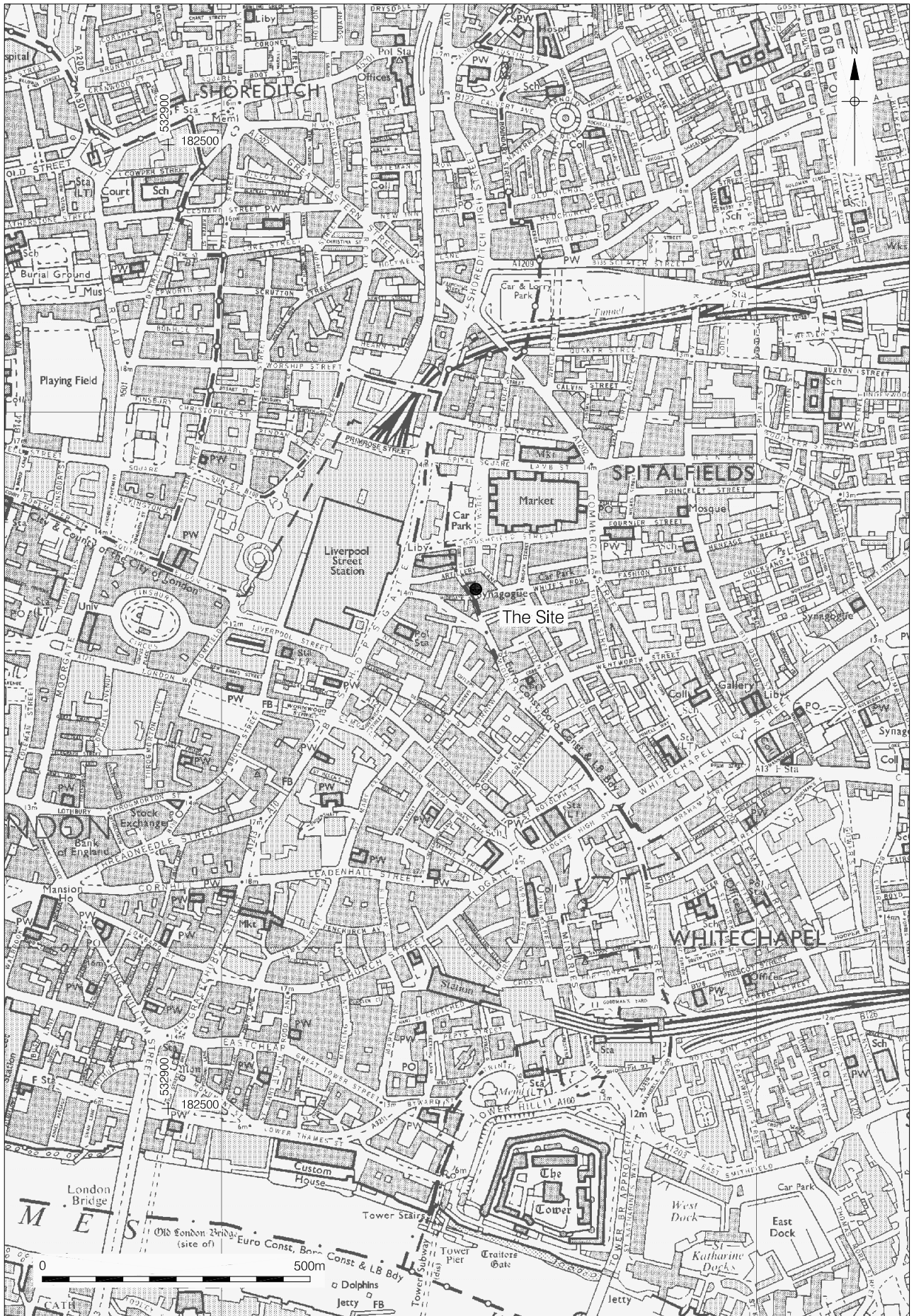
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# 1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results of an archaeological watching brief at 15 Artillery Passage, E1 7LJ, undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd on behalf of Gifford Ltd. The project was managed by Tim Bradley and supervised by Des O'Donoghue, both of Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd, and took place between the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of July 2007.
- 1.2 Four test pits were opened during the evaluation. A concrete slab covered the entire site at the time of excavation.
- 1.3 Mid/light brown sandy clay formed the lowest deposit within Test Pits 1,2 & 3, which were located in the basement of the building. These layers contained anthropogenic material dated to the 15<sup>th</sup> century and are likely to be make-up deposits. Cut into these lower deposits were two large probable rubbish pits, the earliest being 17<sup>th</sup>-century in date, the latter dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A small pit and a concrete footing are likely to be 19<sup>th</sup>-century in date, with 15<sup>th</sup>-century pottery found within the cut for the concrete footing being residual. A concrete slab basement floor sealed the three test pits.
- 1.4 Test Pit 4, excavated in the higher courtyard area of the property, recorded 19<sup>th</sup>-century made ground with extensive demolition rubble sealed by a concrete slab.

## **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd at 15 Artillery Passage, E1 7LJ, in advance of redevelopment. The watching brief was conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> July 2007 on behalf of Gifford Ltd.
- 2.2 The site is bounded to the south by Artillery Passage, to the east by Parliament Court, to the west by property number 16 and to the north by Sandy's Row Synagogue.
- 2.3 Four geotechnical test pits were excavated across site to depths of 1.00m. The test pits were excavated to enable Terra Firma Ground Investigation Ltd to establish the depth and type of the party wall foundations, the slab thickness and soil make up. The test pits were recorded by PCA as an archaeological watching brief.
- 2.4 The project was project managed by Tim Bradley and supervised by the author.
- 2.5 The National Grid Reference of the site is TQ 3348 8165.
- 2.6 The site was given the code APS 07.



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Figure 1  
Site Location  
1:10,000 at A4



Figure 2  
 Test Pit Locations  
 1:250 at A4

### **3 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

- 3.1 The site lies in an area of Langley Silt (brickearth) a deposit laid down by wind and possible river action towards the end of the last Ice Age about 26,000 to 13,000 BC (Douglas, 2005). The untruncated level of brickearth is around 10.50 to 11.00m OD. A gravel deposit of the Thames known as the Taplow terrace overlies the brickearth. This was cut and deposited by the river between about 120,000 and 26,000 BC.
  
- 3.2 The level of Taplow gravels is about 10.02 to 10.76m OD. The area is fairly flat, with a slight slope to the south, towards the Thames. Natural horizons were not encountered during the geotechnical watching brief.

## **4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

4.1.1 The following historical background is based on research carried out by Douglas, 2005.

### **4.2 PREHISTORIC**

4.2.1 Apart from a few residual prehistoric lithics recovered from excavations at 250 Bishopsgate, little prehistoric evidence has been recovered from immediate area.

### **4.3 ROMAN**

4.3.1 The site lies to the east Ermine Street, a major Roman road that connects the suburb of Southwark, north across London Bridge through Londinium and on through Bishopsgate to the north.

4.3.2 Roman cemetery areas have been discovered adjacent to the main roads leading east, west, north, northeast and south from the City. The northern cemetery lay on either side of Ermine Street where over the years more than 150 burials and cremations have been uncovered. Roman burials have been found at 5-13 Spital Square, at Spital Square, Lamb St (SQU94), at 35 Spital Square (SSA01), at 12-14 Folgate Street (FLG 82), at 31-37 Northon Folgate (BGB98), Stothard Place (STO 86), 282-294 Bishopsgate (BOS 87), at 250 Bishopsgate (STE 95), at 192-200 Bishopsgate (BHS 87), at 280 Bishopsgate (SRP98) and at 201 Bishopsgate (BGB98). In addition, ditches and brickearth quarries have been found in the surrounding area, as well as funerary ceramics at the Central Foundation Girl's School, Spital Square (SPT 85), and 6-13 Spital Square (SPI91).

### **4.4 MEDIEVAL**

4.4.1 The Priory and Hospital of St. Mary-without-Bishopsgate was founded in c. AD 1197. The initial precinct centred on a small area around Spital Square. This was substantially increased in 1235 and the establishment was re-founded. A new church and infirmary were built and stretched west to east from the modern-day streets of Bishopsgate to Nantes Passage and south to north from Artillery Passage to Fleur-de-lis Street.



- 4.4.2 The site considered in this report lies in the outer precinct of The Priory and Hospital of St. Mary-without-Bishopsgate, which was to the south of the inner precinct around modern Spital Square. Documentary evidence shows that the Priory was acquiring farming crofts and strips south of the inner precinct in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and these acquisitions became the area of the outer precinct by about AD 1270. Plots (surrounded by ditches) used for pits, rubbish disposal, growing crops, were observed during preliminary excavations at 250 Bishopsgate (STE 94). Other plots contained timber structures and stone buildings. Parts of the cemetery of the Priory and Hospital of St Mary Spital have also been identified at Spital Square (SPT82, SPT85, SPI91, and SPM96). Large quantities of 12<sup>th</sup>- and early 13<sup>th</sup>-century animal bone and substantial evidence of primary butchery waste were found, indicating butchery work or dumping of animal waste in the area.
- 4.4.3 The site lies within and outside the southeast corner of the outer precinct. The earthen bank boundary was found at the Spitalfield Residential (SQU 94) excavation just to the north.

## **4.5 POST-MEDIEVAL**

- 4.5.1 The outer precinct, with what are described as “new brick walls” were leased to the Honourable Artillery Company in AD 1538 and also used by ‘Gunnery of the Tower’. Evidence from excavations at 250 Bishopsgate (STE 95) suggests that the area was used for growing plants and also for artillery practice with numerous musket balls and pieces of shot recovered. A firing range lay on the east side of the Artillery Ground with a butt to the north and a gun platform to the south. The Artillery Ground was sold off for housing development and closed in AD 1682
- 4.5.2 Houses fronting onto the newly laid out Crispin Street backed onto the Artillery Ground wall to the west. The houses at the junction of Crispin Street and Artillery Lane, included a Town Hall for the increasingly populated area of Spitalfields, a row of Almshouses for the poor and several private houses.
- 4.5.3 By the 18<sup>th</sup> century many of the modern streets had been laid out and new houses constructed.

4.5.4 In 1868 the Convent of Mercy and Night Refuge moved into their present imposing building in Crispin Street from their original location at Providence Row in Finsbury Square .

## 5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 The test pits were excavated to enable Terra Firma Ground Investigation Ltd to establish the depth and type of the party wall foundations, the slab thickness and the soil make up. These were observed as an archaeological watching brief.
- 5.2 Four geotechnical test pits were excavated across site. Three test pits – TP1, TP2 & TP3 – were located in the basement of the property. A fourth test pit – TP4 – was excavated in the courtyard at the rear of the property.
- 5.3 A concrete slab was present throughout both the basement floor and courtyard. The test pits were initially excavated by the geotechnical contractor using a hand pneumatic drill. Once the concrete slabs had been penetrated, the remainder of the test pits were dug by hand (shovel) until the required depth of 1m was reached. All excavation was conducted under the supervision of the attendant archaeologist.
- 5.4 A representative sample section was cleaned and recorded in each trench. The base of each trench was also hand-cleaned before recording.
- 5.5 All recording systems used during the watching brief were fully compatible with those most widely used elsewhere in London, *i.e.* 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 1:20 or 1:50 and the sections at 1:10. A digital photographic record of the investigations was also prepared. The height of deposits and features was measured relative to the top of the concrete slab through which the test pits were excavated.
- 5.6 A temporary bench mark was transferred to the site from an Ordnance Survey bench mark located on the northwest corner of Christ Church on the intersection of Fournier Street and Commercial Street with a value of 15.35 m OD.

## **6 SUMMARY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE**

### **6.1 Test Pit 1 (Figures 3 & 4)**

This test pit was located centrally alongside the western wall of the basement area. Hand-auguring by Terra Firma following excavation of the test pit encountered a soft-to-firm mid brown sandy clay with occasional fine gravel at 1.3m below the top of the concrete slab. This was interpreted as Terrace Gravel (Mark Bradley, Terra Firma pers. comm.) and was recorded at a height of 10.41m OD. Between 1.3m and 1.1m below the top of the slab a similar, but apparently reworked, deposit incorporating small fragments of ceramic building material (cbm) was recorded by hand-auguring at a highest level of 10.60m OD. The earliest deposit observed in the test pit itself was described archaeologically as a mid-light brown sandy clay layer [5]. This had the appearance of redeposited brickearth and contained moderate fragments, occasional mortar fragments, moderate shell and animal bone. This deposit extended from the trench base 1.00m below basement level, to 0.07m below the top of the slab with a thickness of 0.93m and a highest level of 11.56m OD. Similarity between this description and that of the deeper layer observed by the geotechnical contractor during hand-auguring, suggests that the two records are of a single deposit. The few pottery sherds from this layer suggest a 15<sup>th</sup>-century date for the deposit. It is likely that this deposit was made ground, although it could be a deep subsoil layer.

Layer [5] was cut by concrete footing [2], which may support a later buttress just to the northwest. This footing overlay fill [3] and contained a few residual 15<sup>th</sup>-century pottery sherds.

### **6.2 Test Pit 2 (Figures 3 & 4)**

Test Pit 2 was located in the centre of the northern wall of the basement area. The earliest deposit recorded was a mid-light greyish brown sandy clay [14]. This layer had a higher clay content and was greyer in appearance than context [5] in TP 1, but was likely to be a variation in the same deposit. This layer extended from the trench base at 1.00m below the basement slab to 0.75m below the basement slab, with a thickness of 0.25m and a highest level of 11.13m OD. This layer was likely to be of the same date and use as context [5] in TP 1.

Sealing [14] was deposit [12]. This is likely to be the fill of a rubbish pit (a similar feature was observed in TP3 to the south but this was cut to a different depth and is of a later date) and although only the base was visible, this was likely to be a distinct feature [13].

This pit fill [12] contained a moderate amount of 17<sup>th</sup>-century pottery sherds. Also observed within the fill were moderate cbm fragments and moderate mortar fragments. The pit base was 0.75m below the top of the basement concrete slab, up to 0.07m below the basement slab, with a depth of 0.68m and a highest level of 11.73m OD.

Overlying the pit was the rough brick corbel footing of the basement northern wall. This was cut by a small pit [10], which extended 0.35m east-west and 0.15m south from the northern limit of excavation. No dating evidence was found within this pit but it is later than the brick corbel (19<sup>th</sup> century?). The base of pit [10] was 0.45m below the top of basement concrete slab, with the highest level recorded at 0.05m below, with a depth of 0.40m.

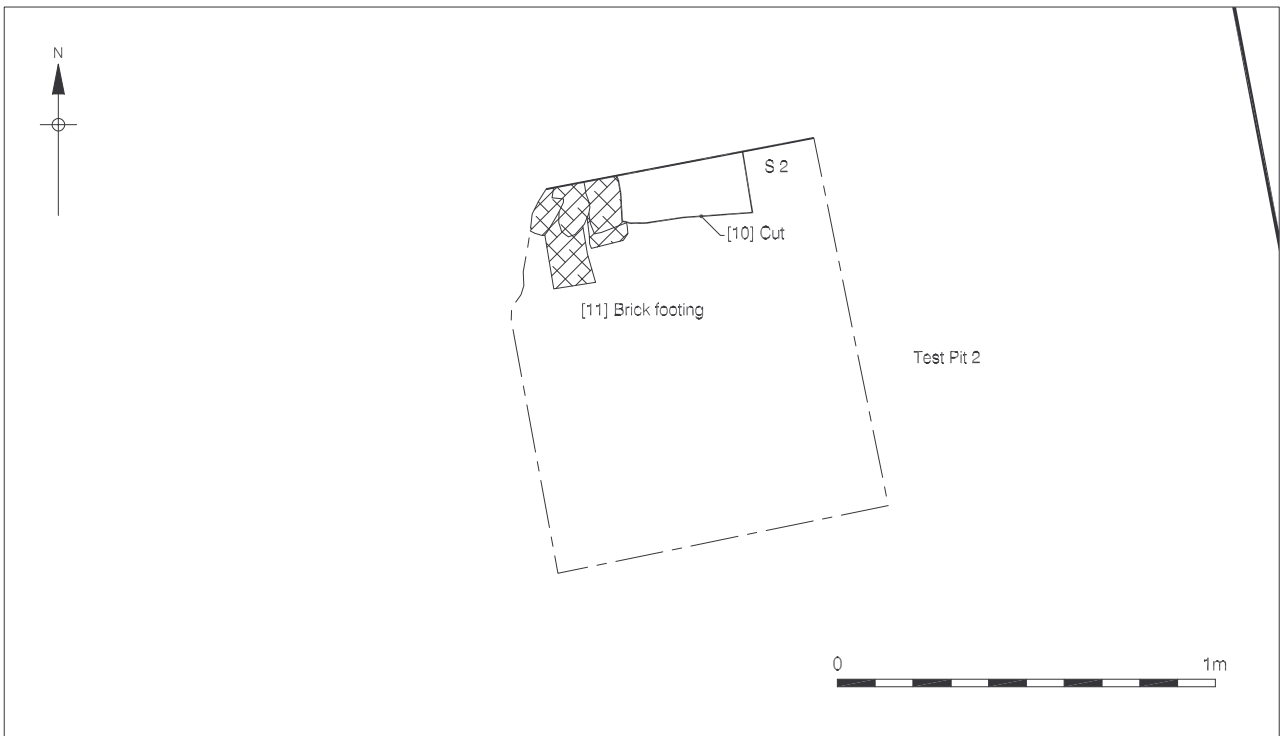
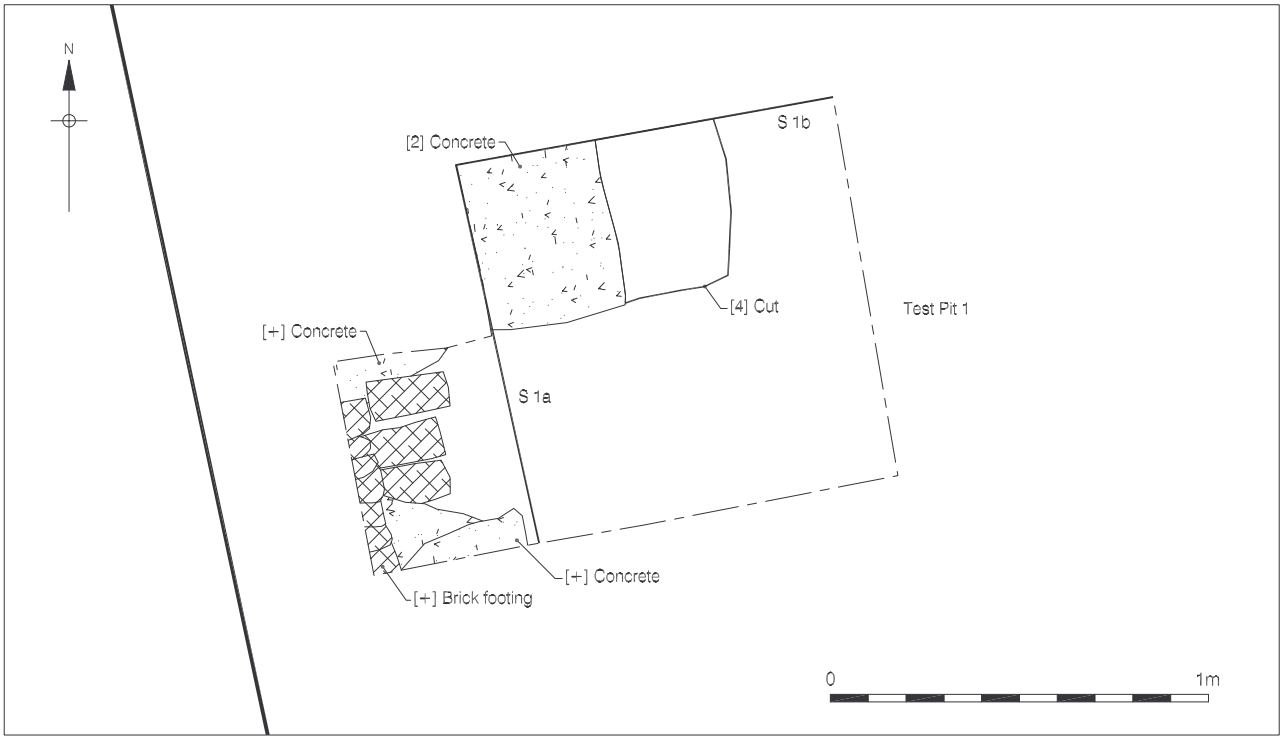
### **6.3 Test Pit 3 (Figure 4)**

Test Pit 3 was located 1.8m north of the southern wall within the basement. At the base of the test pit, from 1.01m below the top of the concrete slab up to 0.99m below (10.79m OD), was layer [8]. This had the appearance of brickearth and was very similar in appearance to context [5] recorded in TP 1 to the northwest and is likely to be the same layer. No dating evidence was recovered within the 0.02m of exposed material but it is likely to be the same as 15<sup>th</sup>-century layer [5], and is probably a make up layer also (alternatively it could be a subsoil layer).

Cutting this layer was a probable rubbish pit [7]. This contained very frequent shell, frequent animal bone, frequent mortar fragments and moderate pottery sherds dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The sides of the feature were not seen within the test pit but the base was recorded at 0.99m below the top of the concrete slab and the feature extended up to 0.14m below, with a depth of 0.85m and a highest level of 11.64m OD.

### **6.4 Test Pit 4 (Figure 4)**

Test Pit 4 was located in the centre of the courtyard at the rear of the property where the ground surface was approximately 0.50m above ground floor level within the building. From the base of the test pit at 1.00m below the top of the courtyard concrete slab was layer [15]. This deposit contained a large amount of building rubble. Finds recovered included pottery sherds dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, occasional clay pipe fragments and occasional glass. Capping this layer was the concrete slab, which was 0.14m thick with a highest level of 14.50m OD.



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Figure 3  
Test Pit Details  
1:20 at A4

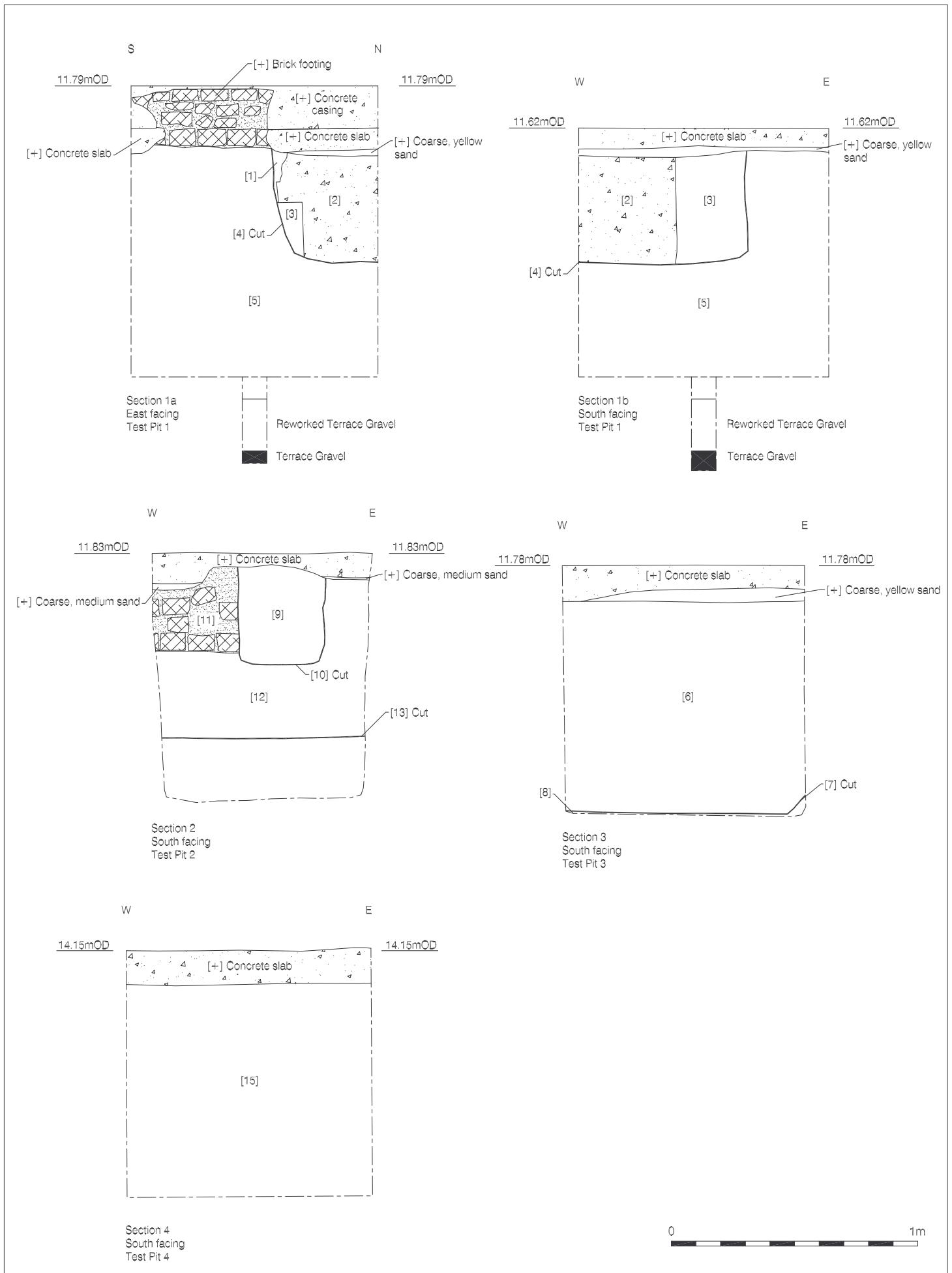


Figure 4  
Sections  
1:20 at A4

## 7 INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The earliest deposit observed during the investigations was a soft-to-firm mid brown sandy clay with occasional fine gravel, exposed during hand auguring through the base of Test Pit 1. This deposit was interpreted by the geotechnical team as Terrace Gravel. This height for the terrace deposits reflects previously recorded levels in the area, with Taplow gravels recorded in the vicinity at heights of between 10.02 and 10.76m OD. Between 1.3m and 1.1m below the top of the slab a similar, but apparently reworked, deposit incorporating small fragments of ceramic building material (cbm) was recorded by hand-auguring at a highest level of 10.60m OD.
- 7.2 Made ground underlay the extent of the site within the fully excavated basement test pits (1,2 & 3). This apparently redeposited brickearth deposit contained pottery of 15<sup>th</sup>-century date. This layer is likely to have been brought in from elsewhere although it is also possible that this is a reworked subsoil horizon, possibly the same as the reworked deposit recorded in the hand augur cores.
- 7.3 Two large rubbish pits were observed to truncate the redeposited brickearth layer. To the north within Test Pit 2, pottery dated the large pit to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This pit had a slightly different soil make up from the rubbish pit found to the south, which dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The later pit had much more frequent shell and animal bone which is likely to represent 19<sup>th</sup>-century domestic refuse.
- 7.4 Within Test Pit 2 a small pit truncated a rough brick corbel supporting the northern wall, above the 17<sup>th</sup>-century rubbish pit. No dating evidence was recovered but as this truncates the brick corbel it is likely to be of 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup>-century date.
- 7.5 In the courtyard, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century make-up layer was found to underlie the concrete footing. This layer contained a high percentage of building rubble, and was capped by the courtyard surface.



## **8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 8.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Phil Emery of Gifford Ltd for Commissioning the watching brief, and Andy Shelley of Gifford Ltd for monitoring the fieldwork.
  
- 8.2 The author would like to thank Tim Bradley for his project management and editing, Dave Harris for the illustrations and Terra Firma Ground Investigation Ltd for their assistance on site.

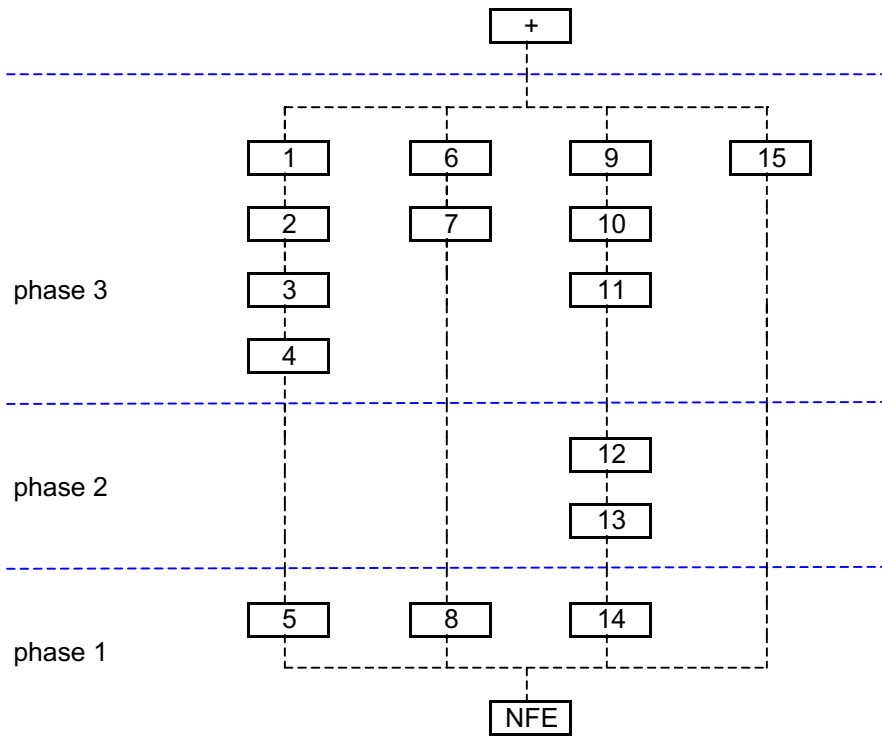
## 9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Douglas, Alistair. 2005 *Phased Summary and Assessment Document of the Excavations at Artillery Lane, London Borough of Tower Hamlets*. Pre-Construct Archaeology Unpublished Report

Site Code	Context No.	Plan	Section / Elevation	Type	Description	Date	Phase	Photo Number
APS 07	1	N/A	S-1	Fill	Dark brown, silty clay	19th century	3	
APS 07	2	Post Ex;TP1/2	S-1	Masonry	Concrete Footing	19th century	3	
APS 07	3	N/A	S-1	Fill	Dark brown, silty clay	Residual 15th century	3	
APS 07	4	TP1/2	S-1	Cut	Cut for concrete footing (2)	19th century	3	
APS 07	5	N/A	S-1	Fill	Mid-light brown sandy clay make up	15th century	1	
APS 07	6	N/A	S-3	Cut	Mid-dark brown sandy clay, fill of [7]	19th century	3	
APS 07	7	N/A	S-3	Layer	Rubish pit	19th century	3	
APS 07	8	N/A	S-3	Fill	Mid-light brown sandy clay make up	16th century	1	
APS 07	9	N/A	S-2	Cut	Loose dark brown silty sand, fill of [10]	19th? century	3	
APS 07	10	TP1/2	S-2	Layer	Small pit	19th? century	3	
APS 07	11	Post Ex;TP1/2	S-2	Masonry	Brick foundation ?	19th? century	3	
APS 07	12	N/A	S-2	Cut	Mid brown silty clay, fill of [13]	17th century	2	
APS 07	13	N/A	S-2	Layer	Rubish pit	17th century	2	
APS 07	14	N/A	S-2	Layer	Mid-Light greyish brown sandy clay	15th century	1	
APS 07	15	N/A	S-4	Fill	Mid brownish grey clayey sand levelling layer	19th century	3	

**APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX**

## APPENDIX 2: MATRIX



## APPENDIX 3 OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: ENGLAND

OASIS ID: preconst1-29286

### Project details

Project name	An archaeological watching brief at 15 Artillery Passage, Tower Hamlets, E1 7LJ
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief of geotechnical test pits was carried out at 15 Artillery Passage, Tower Hamlets, E1 7LJ. 15th-century made ground was the lowest recorded deposit within all three test pits within the basement. This was brickearth in appearance and could alternatively be a sub soil horizon. Truncating the lowest recorded level are two rubbish pits, one of 17th-century date, the later being 19th century. A likely 19th-century concrete footing cuts the brickearth layer to the west and a late pit truncates a 18th/19th-century corbal footing to the north. All are sealed by a concrete slab. In the courtyard outside, made ground with a high proportion of building rubble, was sealed by the courtyard concrete slab.
Project dates	Start: 23-07-2007 End: 24-07-2007
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	APS 07 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 3 - Retailing

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON TOWER HAMLETS STEPNEY 15 Artillery Passage
Postcode	E1 7LJ
Study area	69.27 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 3348 8165 51.5174816190 -0.07600681254550 51 31 02 N 000 04 33 W Point

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	Gifford Ltd
Project design originator	Tim Bradley
Project director/manager	Tim Bradley
Project supervisor	Des O'Donoghue
Type of sponsor/funding body	Gifford Ltd

### Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	An Archaeological Watching Brief at 15 Artillery Passage, Tower Hamlets, E1 7LJ
Author(s)/Editor(s)	O'Donoghue,D
Date	2007
Issuer or publisher	Pre-Construct Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	London
Description	A4 Document

Entered by	Des O'Donoghue (mrmond@breathe.com)
Entered on	27 July 2007