

LAND AT HERON QUAY,  
LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS, E14

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Quality Control

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**An Archaeological Watching Brief on Land At Heron Quay,  
London Borough of Tower Hamlets, E14**

**Site Code: HQD 07**

**Central National Grid Reference: TQ 3720 8010**

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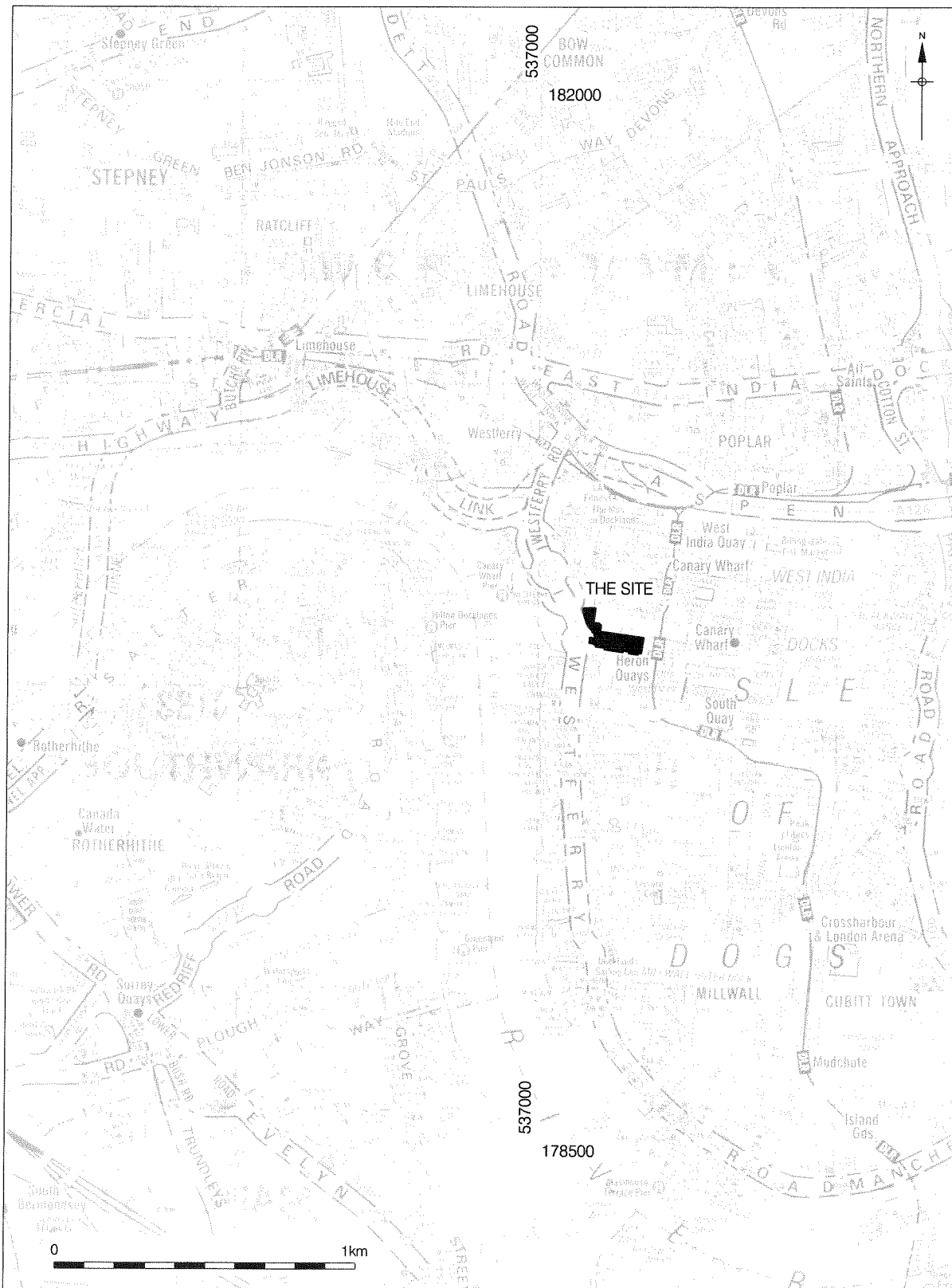
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## **1 ABSTRACT**

- 1.1 This report details the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken during geotechnical trial pitting at Heron Quays on the Isle of Dogs, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, E14. The project was commissioned by Concept and Pre-Construct Archaeology undertook the fieldwork between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> September 2007.
- 1.2 The site investigation included three trial pits and six boreholes, of which the trial pits were archaeologically monitored. The three were located as shown on Figure 2.
- 1.3 The watching brief recorded modern surfaces and made ground deposits in all trial pits, with alluvial silts and sands in only one. Natural stratigraphy was not encountered in any trial pit.

## **2 INTRODUCTION**

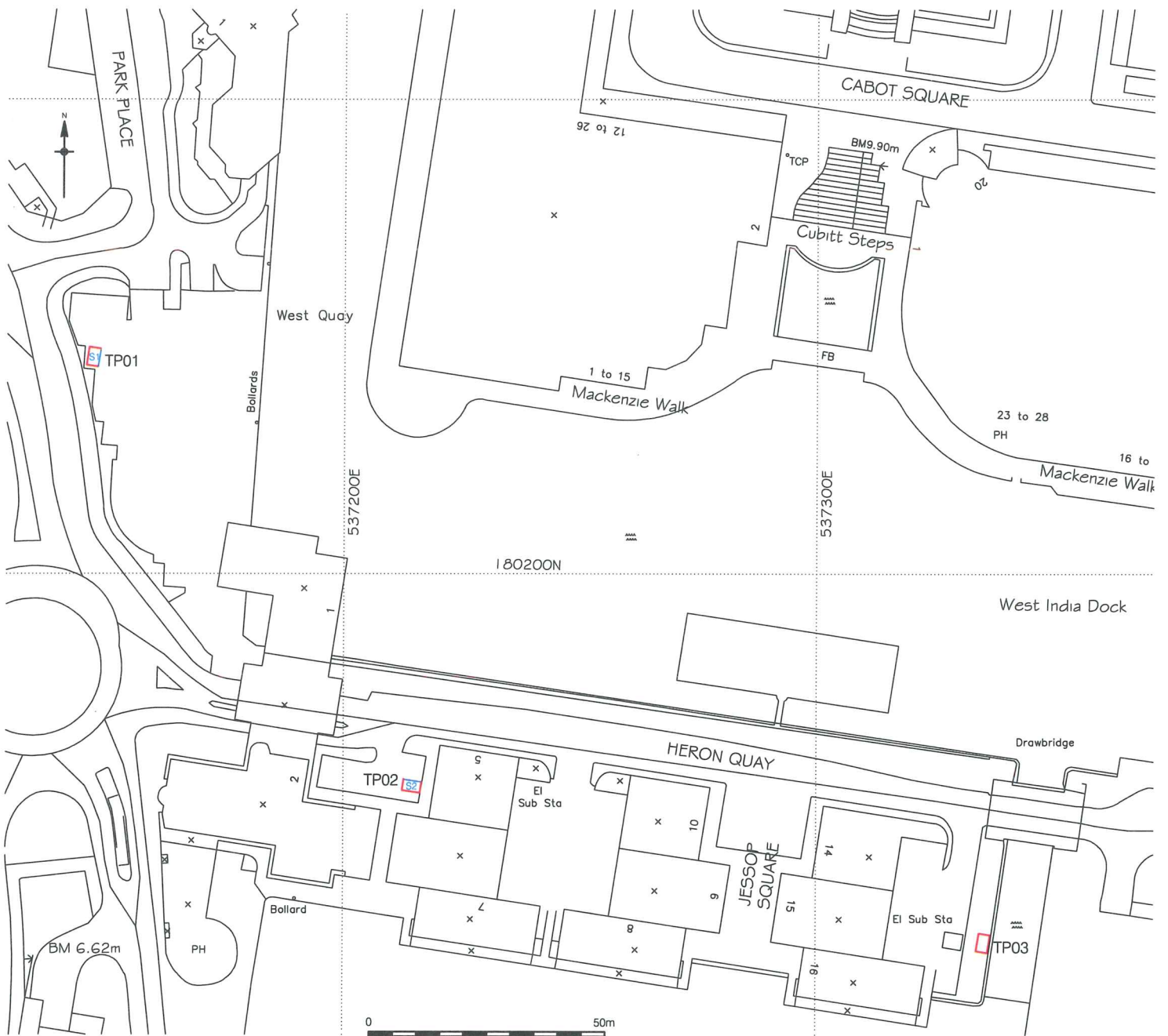
- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited during an engineering site investigation at Heron Quay, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, E14 between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> September 2007. The excavation of three trial pits was monitored. The work was commissioned by Concept. The site was project managed for Pre-Construct Archaeology by Chris Mayo and supervised by the author.
- 2.2 The site area is bounded by the West India Docks to the south, the Canary Wharf complex to the north, commercial buildings to the east and land fronting the Thames to the west. The trial pits were located as shown in figure 2.
- 2.3 The central National Grid Reference of the area under investigation is TQ 3720 8010. The site was assigned the unique code HQD 07.
- 2.4 The watching brief recorded modern surfaces and made ground deposits in all trial pits, with alluvial silts and sands in only one. Natural stratigraphy was not encountered in any trial pit.



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Figure 1  
Site Location  
1:20,000 at A4



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Figure 2  
Test pit locations  
1:1,250 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 considering any planning application for development, the local planning authority is bound by the policy framework set by government guidance, in this instance PPG16, by current Structure and Local Plan policy and by other material.
- 3.3 The relevant Development Plan framework is provided by the Adopted Unitary Development Plan (1998) for Tower Hamlets. The adopted Plan states:

#### ARCHAEOLOGY AND ANCIENT MONUMENTS

##### DEV 42:

DEVELOPMENT WHICH ADVERSELY AFFECTS NATIONALLY IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS, INCLUDING SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS, WILL NOT NORMALLY BE PERMITTED.

##### DEV 43:

DEVELOPMENT WHICH AFFECTS ANY LOCALLY IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE OR REMAINS, INCLUDING INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY, MAY BE PERMITTED DEPENDING UPON:

- 1) THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS;
- 2) THE NEED FOR DEVELOPMENT; AND
- 3) MEASURES PROPOSED FOR THE PROTECTION, ENHANCEMENT AND PRESERVATION OF THE SITE AND THE INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION OF THE REMAINS TO THE PUBLIC.

##### DEV 44:

THE PERMANENT PRESERVATION IN SITU OF NATIONALLY IMPORTANT REMAINS WILL NORMALLY BE REQUIRED. PRESERVATION OF OTHER REMAINS WILL BE A PREFERENCE, SUBJECT TO THE IMPORTANCE OF THE REMAINS AND THE NEED FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE. WHERE PRESERVATION IS NOT APPROPRIATE, EXCAVATION AND RECORDING MAY BE REQUIRED. DEVELOPMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES SHOULD ADOPT SUITABLE DESIGN, LAND USE AND SITE MANAGEMENT TO ACHIEVE THESE ENDS.

##### DEV 45:

PROPOSALS INVOLVING GROUND WORKS IN AREAS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OR POTENTIAL, SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, OR CONCERNING INDIVIDUAL SITES NOTIFIED TO THE COUNCIL BY ENGLISH HERITAGE OR THE MUSEUM OF LONDON WILL BE SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING REQUIREMENTS:

- 1) WITHIN AREAS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE APPLICANTS WILL NEED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE DEVELOPMENT HAVE BEEN PROPERLY ASSESSED, A WRITTEN ASSESSMENT (ARCHAEOLOGICAL STATEMENT) BASED ON THE PROFESSIONAL ADVICE OF AN APPROVED ARCHAEOLOGY CONSULTANT OR ORGANISATION SHOULD BE SUBMITTED AS PART OF THE DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED FOR A COMPLETE PLANNING APPLICATION.
- 2) WITHIN AREAS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE, THE COUNCIL MAY REQUEST, WHERE DEVELOPMENT IS LIKELY TO AFFECT IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS, THAT AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION OF THE SITE IS CARRIED OUT BEFORE ANY DECISION IS MADE ON THE PLANNING APPLICATION;
- 3) WHERE THE PRESERVATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS IN SITU IS NOT APPROPRIATE, THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO ENSURE THAT NO



DEVELOPMENT TAKES PLACE ON THE SITE UNTIL ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION, EXCAVATION AND RECORDING HAS TAKEN PLACE BY AN APPROVED ARCHAEOLOGICAL ORGANISATION;

4) IN APPROPRIATE CASES THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO ENSURE THAT ADEQUATE OPPORTUNITIES ARE AFFORDED FOR THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF SITES, BEFORE AND DURING DEMOLITION AND DEVELOPMENT. SUITABLE PROVISION SHOULD BE MADE FOR IN SITU PRESERVATION OF REMAINS (DEV 44) AND FINDS IN THE ORIGINAL LOCATION, OR FOR REMOVING THEM TO A SUITABLE PLACE OF SAFE KEEPING.

5.62 Tower Hamlets has a long and rich history. Archeological remains are an important source of evidence of this history from Roman times to the recent industrial past. One of the principle sources of archaeological evidence is the development of sites, but this evidence is easily destroyed in the development process. The Council therefore wishes to ensure that development involving groundworks in areas which may contain archeological remains makes early and specified allowance for the investigation of the archaeological potential of the site before groundworks for the development is allowed to proceed. The Council's preference will be to seek and maintain any finds and remains in situ. The Council will seek the guidance of English Heritage and the Museum of London in determining the importance of archaeological remains.

5.63 The Council is concerned to see that sites which 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 Council will therefore support and promote measures which protect and conserve sites and which will allow the public access to sites with archaeological remains to the extent that this is compatible with the protection of the remains.

5.64 The Council will seek professional archaeological advice from English Heritage or a professionally qualified archaeological organisation or consultant as appropriate and expect applicants to do the same when proposing development which 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 and resources for investigations to be carried out of the site. Proposals for investigation should be built into the development programme at an early stage in the process. Supplementary Planning Guidance on Archaeology and Development, outlines the preferred procedure for investigation before development takes place. An archaeological assessment is normally a desktop evaluation of existing information on the development site, commissioned from a professional archaeological body or consultant. Sources may include historic maps, written sources, previous finds, archaeological fieldwork and geographical surveys. An archaeological evaluation is in contrast field based, but, as distinct from a full archaeological excavation, is normally a small scale and rapid operation, entailing ground survey and limited trial trenching. It should, nevertheless, be carried out by a professionally qualified archaeological organisation or individual. An evaluation of this kind helps to define the character and extent of surviving archaeological remains in the area of a proposed development, and thus to indicate the weight that ought to be attached to their preservation.

5.65 Archeologically important areas are found throughout the Borough as shown on the Proposals Map. There are also records of numerous finds which may indicate areas of potential. The Council 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 which fall within these areas will be subject to policy DEV 42 to 66.

- 3.4 The relevant local development framework is provided by the Core Strategy and Development Control Submission Document (November 2006). This document states:

CON4: ARCHAEOLOGY AND ANCIENT MONUMENTS

1.THE COUNCIL WILL REQUIRE NATIONALLY IMPORTANT REMAINS TO BE PRESERVED PERMANENTLY IN SITU, SUBJECT TO CONSULTATION WITH ENGLISH HERITAGE.

2.ALL DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS AFFECTING SITES OF KNOWN ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST, OR LOCATED IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRIORITY AREAS, WILL BE REQUIRED TO SUBMIT AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

OR, IF NECESSARY, A FIELD EVALUATION AS PART OF THE PLANNING APPLICATION.

3.THE COUNCIL WILL REQUIRE ANY INVESTIGATION TO BE CARRIED OUT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGISTS AND DEVELOPERS LIASON CODE OF PRACTICE.

- 3.5 The subject site does not lie within an archaeological priority area.
- 3.6 The subject site lies within Conservation Area 19, 'West India Docks' as designated by the local authority.

## **4 GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The British Geological Survey map 270 of the area (1:50,000 series) indicates that the subject site is underlain by alluvium overlying gravels and then Woolwich and Reading Beds.
- 4.2 The site is roughly flat, with ground level at approximately 5.30m OD.

## **5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

- 5.1 Prior to the first attempts to reclaim land and maintain the riverbank, the area around the site was a low lying and marshy riverside environment. Evidence for prehistoric activity on adjacent sites however, suggests that the area was not entirely inhospitable during this period. Flint artefacts have been found at two neighbouring sites, which suggests that exploitation of the riverfront occurred in the prehistoric period. Peat has formed during a number of marine regressions, notably during the Bronze Age, and these deposits may contain evidence of human activity up to the post medieval period.
- 5.2 Reclamation of land may have begun in the Saxon period. Documentary evidence for riverbank maintenance dates as early as 1298, which indicates that the process was begun before this date. The Isle of Dogs throughout the medieval period was pasturage, with no permanent settlements being recorded.
- 5.3 In 1660 a section of the river wall was breached, and a large part of the Isle of Dogs flooded. Further inland, around a large floodwater incursion called the Great Gut, or Poplar Gut, new flood defences were constructed.
- 5.4 The foreshore formed by the Breach was used for laying up timber until 1707, when a large site was reclaimed for a shipbuilding yard, called the Breach Dockyard. This comprised two timber-lined docks, two building slips and a mast and timber laying dock in the remnants of the Breach to the south.
- 5.5 In 1818 the dockyard lease was transferred, and a new phase of land reclamation and development began. The dockyard immediately west of the site became known as the Union Docks. The docks were enlarged and new ones constructed. These stayed in use until 1925 when the dockyard was closed. All of these were backfilled in the 1930s and the Union Dry Dock was constructed on the same site as the Lower Dry Dock.

## 6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 6.1 The excavation of three trial pits were undertaken by Concept Site Investigations and monitored by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. The TPs were part of a wider scheme of geotechnical investigation that included 6 other boreholes. The TP locations were marked out by the groundwork contractors in accordance with the proposed scheme of investigation and verified by representatives from Concept and Arup. The trial pits were broken and machine excavated by the contractors, using a toothless ditching bucket.
- 6.2 The attendant archaeologist monitored all ground-reduction so that any archaeological deposits could be excavated and recorded stratigraphically.
- 6.3 The dimensions of the trial pits were as follows:
- |      |   |
|------|---|
| TP01 | 3.40m (N-S) x 1.00m (E-W) x 2.90m (depth) |
| TP02 | 0.90m (N-S) x 3.10m (E-W) x 2.90m (depth) |
| TP03 | 3.15m (N-S) x 1.00m (E-W) x 1.10m (depth) |
- 6.4 Individual descriptions of all archaeological strata and features excavated and / or exposed were entered onto pro-forma recording sheets. All plans and sections of archaeological deposits were recorded on polyester based drawing film, the plans and sections being drawn at a scale of 1:20.

## 7 SUMMARY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE BY TRIAL PIT

### 7.1 TP01

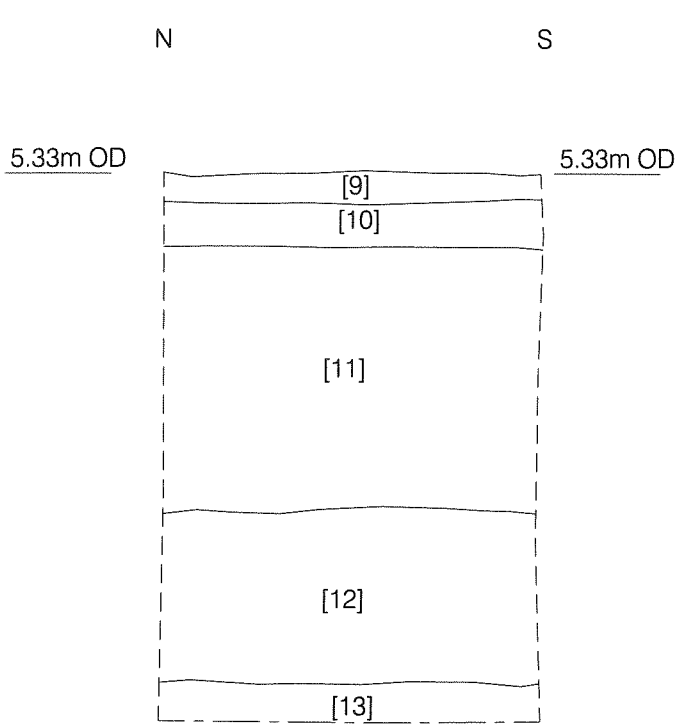
Context Number	Context Description	Height (m OD)	Thickness (m)
9	Tarmac	5.33	0.15
	20 <sup>th</sup> century surface		
10	Hoggin	5.18	0.25
	Gravel bedding for [9]		
11	Made ground	4.93	1.40
	Grey-brown sandy silt - 20 <sup>th</sup> century made ground		
12	Made ground	3.53	0.90
	Grey-brown sandy gravel silt - 20 <sup>th</sup> century made ground		
13	Alluvial sand / silt	2.63	>0.20
	Dark grey clayey sand / silt – alluvium		

### 7.2 TP02

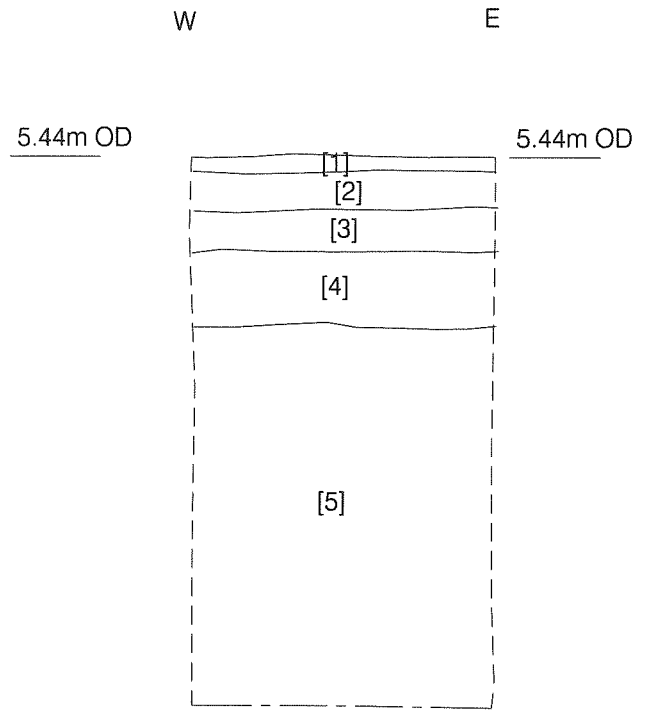
Context Number	Context Description	Height (m OD)	Thickness (m)
1	Brick Surface	5.44	0.08
	20 <sup>th</sup> century brick surface		
2	Bedding layer	5.36	0.20
	Coarse sand bedding for [1]		
3	Made ground	5.21	0.22
	Grey sandy gravel – 20 <sup>th</sup> century made ground		
4	Made ground	4.94	0.40
	Grey sandy silt - 20 <sup>th</sup> century made ground		
5	Made ground	4.54	>2.00
	Mid-brown yellow sandy gravel – made ground		

### 7.3 TP03

Context Number	Context Description	Height (m OD)	Thickness (m)
6	Brick surface	5.57	0.06
	20 <sup>th</sup> century brick surface		
7	Hoggin	5.51	0.09
	Coarse sand bedding for [6]		
8	Made ground	5.42	>0.95
	Mid grey-brown sand silt – 20 <sup>th</sup> century made ground		



Section 1  
TP1 West facing



Section 2  
TP2 South facing



## **8 INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 8.1 The watching brief was intended to identify and record archaeological material during geotechnical trial pitting in advance of redevelopment of the area. The principal objective was to determine the presence or otherwise of any archaeological activity on site.
- 8.2 The watching brief recorded episodes of ground reclamation and levelling of varying depths that are likely to have been the result of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century restructuring of the area. In one trial pit, TP 1, alluvially deposited sands and silts were recorded.
- 8.3 The watching brief did not record any significant evidence of archaeological activity. However, caution must be applied as the work only recorded three trial pits spread across a wide area. Recent work by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd during groundworks associated with the redevelopment of land at Canary Wharf Riverside South, to the northwest of the site, has recorded similar sequences of made ground containing 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century remains of docks and associated structures, above foreshore deposits.



## **9 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

- 9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank Milan Dedic of Concept for commissioning the work on behalf of Arup.
- 9.2 The author would like to thank Josephine Brown for the illustrations, the Concept and Arup representatives for their help throughout the project and Chris Mayo for his project management and editing.

## 10 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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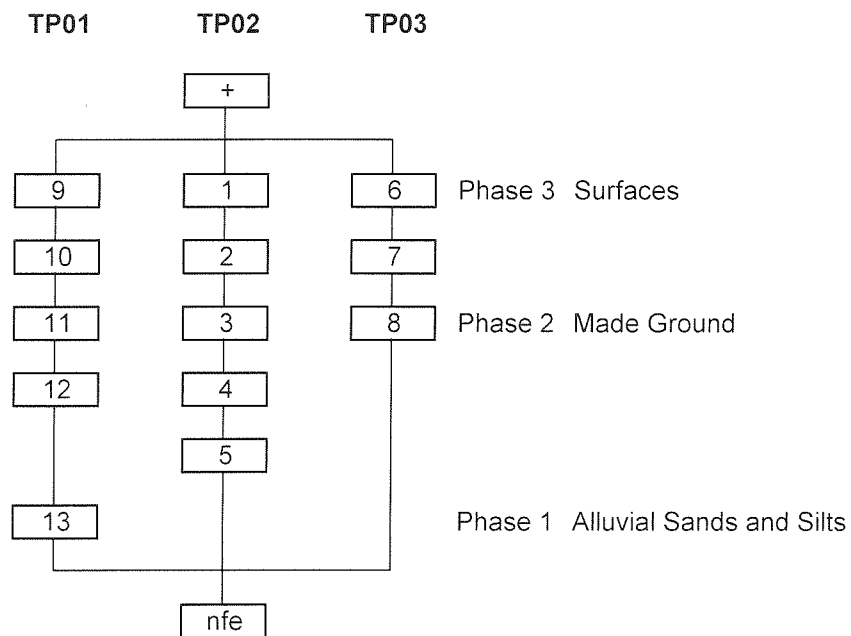
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## APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX

Site Code	Context Number	Trench	Plan Number	Section Number	Phase	Type	Description	Highest
HQD 07	1	TP02		2	3	Surface	Brick surface	5.44
HQD 07	2	TP02		2	3	Layer	Sand Bedding	5.36
HQD 07	3	TP02		2	2	Layer	Sandy gravel: made ground	5.21
HQD 07	4	TP02		2	2	Layer	Pink sandy gravel: made ground	4.94
HQD 07	5	TP02	TP02	2	2	Layer	Brown sandy silt: made ground	4.54
HQD 07	6	TP03		3	3	Surface	Brick surface	5.57
HQD 07	7	TP03	TP03	3	3	Layer	Sand Bedding	5.51
HQD 07	8	TP03	TP03	3	2	Layer	Sandy silt/gravel: made ground	5.42
HQD 07	9	TP01		1	3	Surface	Tarmac Surface	5.33
HQD 07	10	TP01		1	3	Layer	Gravel Bedding	5.18
HQD 07	11	TP01		1	2	Layer	Made Ground	4.93
HQD 07	12	TP01		1	2	Layer	Made Ground	3.53
HQD 07	13	TP01	TP01	1	1	Layer	Alluvial silts and sands	2.63

## APPENDIX 2: SITE MATRIX



## APPENDIX 3: OASIS REPORT FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-32116

### Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Watching Brief on Land At Heron Quay, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, E14
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during geotechnical trial pitting at Heron Quays on the Isle of Dogs, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, E14. The project was commissioned by Concept and Pre-Construct Archaeology undertook the fieldwork between the 1st and 4th September 2007. The site investigation included three trial pits and six boreholes, of which the trial pits were archaeologically monitored. The watching brief recorded modern surfaces and made ground deposits in all trial pits, with alluvial silts and sands in only one. Natural stratigraphy was not encountered in any trial pit.
Project dates	Start: 01-09-2007 End: 04-09-2007
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	HQD07 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Conservation Area
Current Land use	Other 11 - Thoroughfare
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON TOWER HAMLETS POPLAR Land At Heron Quay, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, E14
Postcode	E14
Study area	9400.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 3720 8010 51.5026582902 -0.02302348195930 51 30 09 N 000 01 22 W Point

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	unknown
Project design originator	Chris Mayo
Project director/manager	Chris Mayo
Project supervisor	Amelia Fairman
Type of sponsor/funding body	Private company
Name of sponsor/funding body	Concept

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Contents	'Stratigraphic'
Digital Media available	'Images vector','Spreadsheets','Survey','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Contents	'Stratigraphic'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Matrices','Miscellaneous Material','Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes','Photograph','Plan','Section'

Project bibliography

1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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