

DOCUMENT VERIFICATION

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Type of project

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Text Prepared by:	Stuart Watson		18/1/08
Graphics Prepared by:	Hayley Baxter		21/1/08
Graphics Checked by:	Peter Moore	<i>Peter Moore</i>	28/1/08
Project Manager Sign-off:	Peter Moore	<i>Peter Moore</i>	28/1/08

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

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at 52 Weston Street, Bermondsey,  
London Borough of Southwark, SE1.**

**Site Code: WNU 07**

**Central National Grid Reference: TQ 3300 7990**

**Written by Stuart Watson**

**Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, January 2008**

**Project Manager: Peter Moore**

**Commissioning Client: CgMs Consulting**

**Contractor:**

**Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited**

**Unit 54**

**Brockley Cross Business Centre**

**96 Endwell Road**

**Brockley**

**London**

**SE4 2PD**

**Tel: 020 7732 3925**

**Fax: 020 7732 7896**

**E-mail: [pmoore@pre-construct.com](mailto:pmoore@pre-construct.com)**

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

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# 1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results and working methods of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited on land at 52 Weston Street, Bermondsey, London Borough of Southwark, S.E. 1
- 1.2 The archaeological work consisted of monitoring and recording the ground reduction of the site prior to the development of a six-story building.
- 1.3 The site, which has been a vacant plot since the Second World War, had the current ground level reduced by approximately 0.40m overall. A deeper excavation (c.1.50m below ground level) took place in the central part of the site to allow for the removal of 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century cellar walls that had previously been observed during an archaeological evaluation in March 2007.
- 1.4 The watching brief was intended to observe and record any natural alluvial deposits associated with the palaeo-landscape. However, due to the limited excavation depths attained, no natural deposits were observed.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 An Archaeological Watching Brief was conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. at 52 Weston Street, Bermondsey, London Borough of Southwark, S.E.1. The archaeological work was undertaken during the ground reduction of the site prior to construction of a new six-story building.
- 2.2 The investigation was conducted between the 16<sup>th</sup> November and the 29<sup>th</sup> November 2007 and was commissioned by Richard Meager, CgMs Consulting, on behalf of Barratt and Barratt Ltd.
- 2.3 The site is located at 52 Weston Street, Bermondsey, London Borough of Southwark, SE1 and is bounded to the west by Weston Street, to the north by 50 Weston Street, to the east by the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of La Salette and St. Joseph and to the south by 56 Weston Street.
- 2.4 All levels were calculated from a temporary benchmark established at the eastern boundary of the site during an earlier archaeological evaluation conducted by Archaeology South-East in March 2007<sup>1</sup>, and this had a value of 4.50 m OD.
- 2.5 The National Grid Reference of the site centre is TQ 3300 7990.
- 2.6 The site continued with the site code allocated during the previous archaeological investigation: WNU 07.
- 2.7 The watching brief was supervised by Stuart Watson and the project was managed by Peter Moore for Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited.

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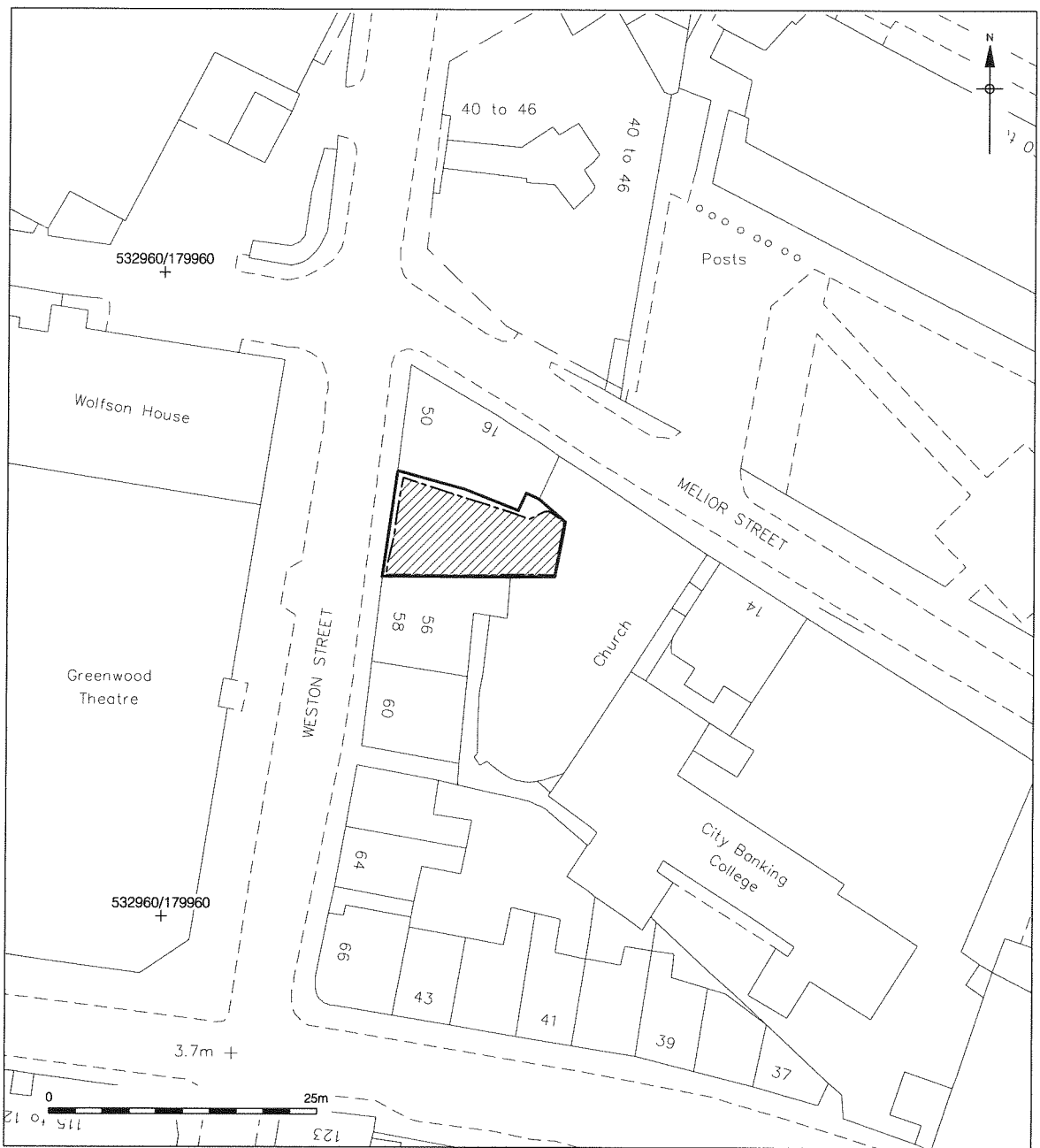
<sup>1</sup> Sygrave, J. March 2007.



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Figure 1  
 Site Location  
 1:12,500 at A4



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Figure 2  
Trench Location  
1:625 at A4

### 3 BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The site has been subject to a previous archaeological investigation<sup>2</sup> during which alluvial deposits were observed. However, due to site conditions no extensive investigation of this layer could be conducted and it was recommended that a further investigation, in the form of a watching brief, took place during the ground reduction phase of the site.
- 3.2 The presence of alluvial deposits, and the absence of gravel or sands, suggests that the study site was located on marginal mudflats rather than on sand and gravel islands<sup>3</sup>, which was later reclaimed during the early post-medieval period.
- 3.3 Therefore the primary research objective was to identify alluvial deposits associated with the palaeo-landscape and, where encountered, to obtain monolith (column) and bulk samples for dating purposes and environmental analysis.

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<sup>2</sup> Sygrave, J. March 2007

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 10.



## 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The archaeological and historical background of the site has been fully documented in both the Desk Based Assessment report<sup>4</sup> and the Archaeological Evaluation report<sup>5</sup> and as such, only a brief summary of the relevant archaeological and historical background is included in this section.
- 4.2 The palaeo-topography of the Bermondsey area is well established<sup>6</sup>, consisting of sand and gravel islands surrounded by mudflats and braided river channels as tributaries of the River Thames. Therefore, given a sufficient depth of excavation, there was a high potential to encounter alluvial deposits from the prehistoric period to the early post-medieval period when drainage and land reclamation became effective.

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<sup>4</sup> Meager, R. February 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Sygrave, J. March 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Allen et al 2005, Meager 2007.

## 5 METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 The fieldwork was designed to recover monolith and bulk samples from alluvial deposits known to underlie the site, as well as to assess the presence or absence of significant archaeological remains. The original plan for the groundworks involved deeper excavations for the instillation of a lift shaft, which would have had the potential to expose the alluvium. However, this plan was revised during the watching brief with the abandonment of the lift shaft and consequently only a shallower ground reduction was undertaken.
- 5.2 The site measured approximately 9.00m north-south by 17.00m east-west, and the total excavated area was 153.00m<sup>2</sup>.
- 5.3 Overall the site was reduced by c. 0.85m by a 360° 13 tonne mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision. A central area of the site was further reduced under archaeological supervision to a depth of 1.20m below ground level to remove 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century cellar wall foundations.
- 5.4 The works were monitored and recorded by an attendant archaeologist from Pre-Construct Archaeology limited.
- 5.5 All archaeological features (stratigraphical layers, cuts, fills, structures) were recorded in plan at a scale of 1:50 and in section at a scale of 1:20. All written data was entered on *pro-forma* sheets following standard recording methods, and a photographic record using a digital camera was made as appropriate.
- 5.6 Levels were calculated from a temporary benchmark established during the previous archaeological works<sup>7</sup> (value: 4.50m OD).
- 5.7 The work was undertaken following English Heritage (GLAAS) guidelines.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Sygrave, J. March 2007.

<sup>8</sup> English Heritage, GLAAS. 1998

## 6 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

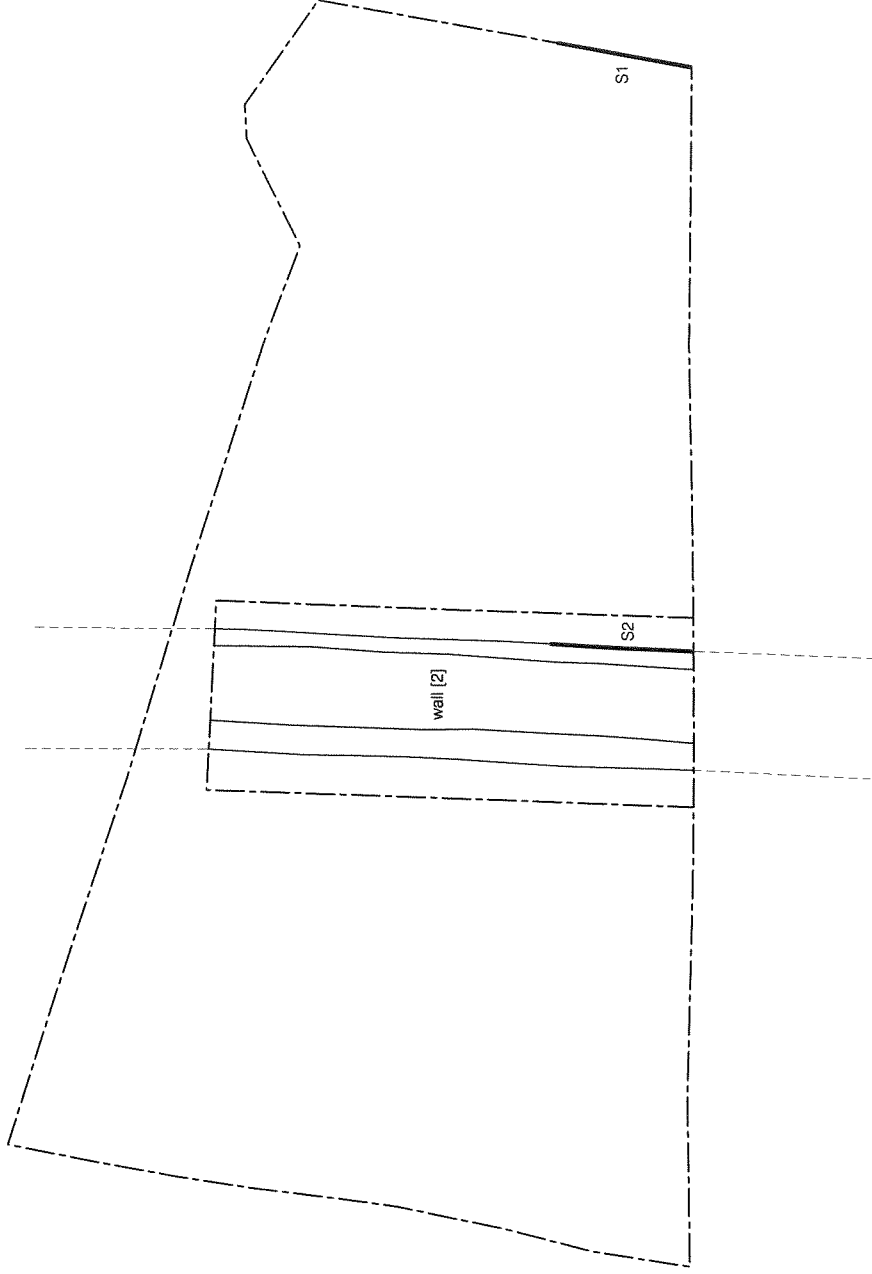
- 6.1 The British Geological Survey 1:50,000 Series Sheet 270(South London) indicates that alluvial deposits consisting of sand, silt and clay underlie the site. Due to the limited depth of the excavation (max. 1.20m below the current ground level) no natural formation levels were reached.
- 6.2 The site is generally level and the current ground level is at a height of between c. 4.56 m OD to the west of the site and c.4.50m OD, to the east.

## 7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

- 7.1 Only archaeological features relating to the post-medieval period were identified in the area excavated. These consisted of 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century cellar wall foundations and are likely to be the same feature as observed and recorded during an earlier archaeological evaluation in March 2007.<sup>9</sup>
- 7.2 The lowest deposit attained was layer [1], a dark greyish black silty-sand, with frequent ceramic building material fragments as inclusions. Only the top of it (encountered at c. 3.20m OD) was exposed during the excavation and it is interpreted as 19<sup>th</sup> century made ground.
- 7.3 In the central part of the site two parallel brick walls, aligned north-south, with an associated concrete floor [2] were built onto layer [1]. These represent a 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century cellar constructed of mixed orange-red and yellow stock brick, in English bond. The top of this feature was at 4.00mOD and the base at 3.20mOD.
- 7.4 Sealing the cellar was layer [3], a loose rubble layer, consisting of very frequent ceramic building material fragments. It was approximately 0.40m thick, with a top level at 4.00mOD and basal level at c.3.60mOD. It is interpreted to part of the backfill material used to level the site after bombing in World War II destroyed the 19<sup>th</sup> century building.
- 7.5 The above features were sealed by a modern concrete slab, which extended across the site. The slab, 0.10m thick, is presumed to be a levelling slab covering the wartime bomb damage debris. This in turn was sealed by a modern make up layer (0.40m thick) of rubble topped by a thin layer of tarmac, forming the current ground level at c. 4.50mOD.

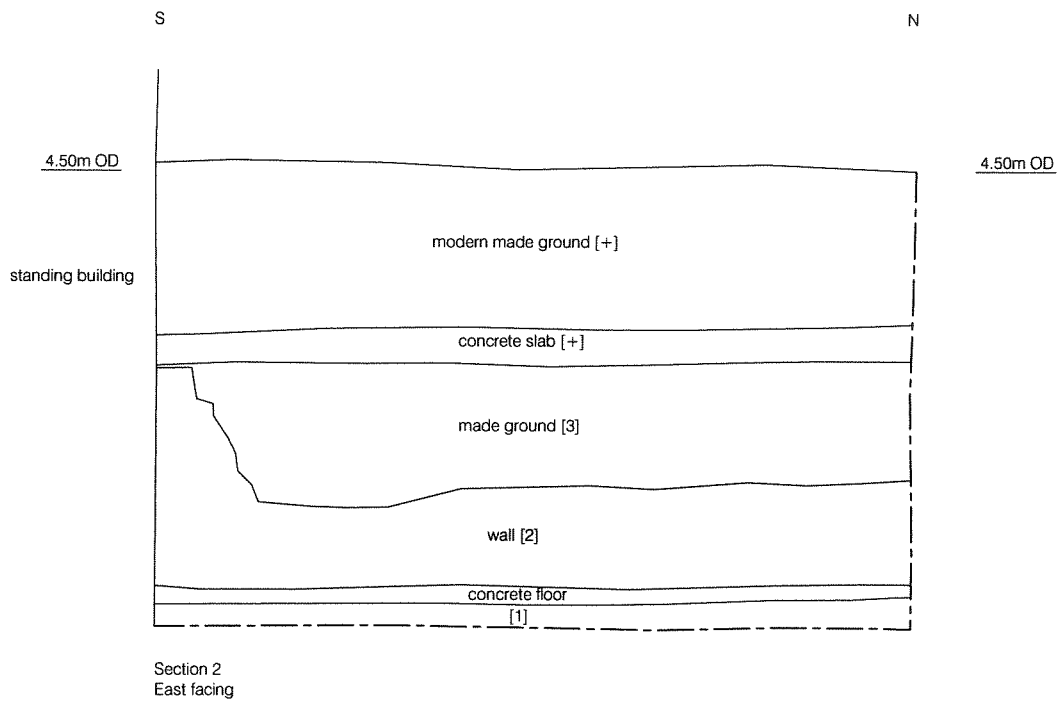
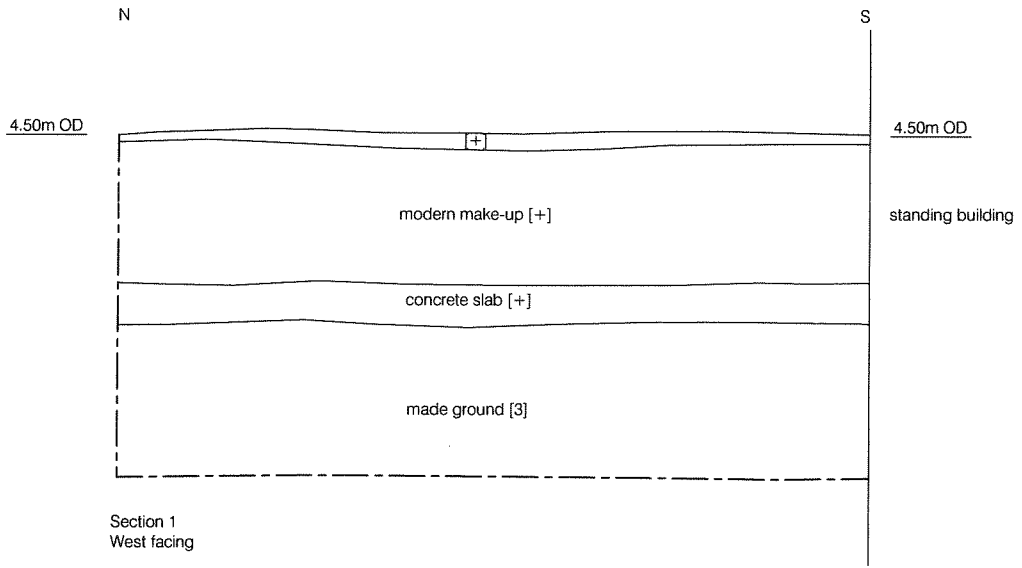
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<sup>9</sup> Sygrave, J. March 2007.



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Figure 3  
Trench plan  
1:100 at A4



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Figure 4  
Sections 1 & 2  
1:20 at A4

## 8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The original plan for the groundworks involved the excavation of a lift shaft in the centre of the site. This would have necessitated deep excavations, which would have had the potential to expose alluvial deposits. However, the plan to install a lift shaft was abandoned and excavations were limited to removing obstructions prior to foundation piling. These proved not to be deep enough to expose any natural deposits and consequently no sampling was undertaken.

## 9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank Richard Meager, CgMs Consulting, for commissioning the work. The author would also like to thank of the contractors of Barratt and Barratt Ltd for their assistance on site, Hayley Baxter for the CAD illustrations and Peter Moore undertook the project management and editing.



## 10 BIBLIOGRAPHY

English Heritage Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service, 1998: *Archaeological Guidance Papers: 1 Written Schemes of Investigation; 2 Desk-Based Assessments; 3 Standards and Practices in Archaeological Fieldwork in London; Archaeological Reports; 5 Evaluations.*

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Sygrave, J. March 2007: *Land at 52 Weston Street, London SE1. An Archaeological Evaluation Report.* Archaeology South-East. Ditchling, E.Sussex. Unpublished report.

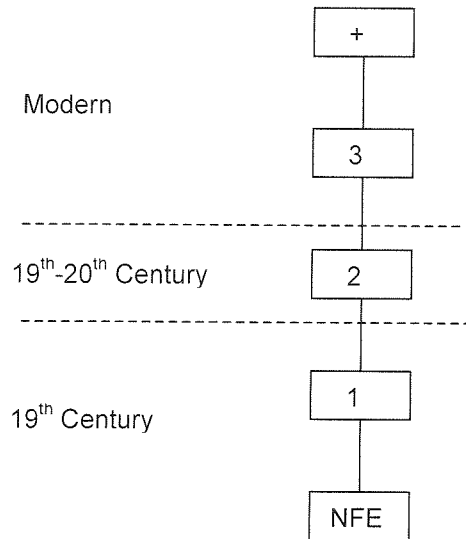
### **Cartographic sources.**

British Geological Survey. 1:50 000 Series, England and Wales Sheet 270 (South London) 1998.

## APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context	Type	Description
1	Layer	19 <sup>th</sup> century made ground 19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> century cellar walls and
2	Masonry	concrete floor
3	Layer	Post-med. levelling layer

## APPENDIX 2: MATRIX



## APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

### 1 OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: ENGLAND

[List of Projects](#) | [Search Projects](#) | [New project](#) | [Change your details](#) | [HER coverage](#) | [Change country](#) | [Log out](#)

1.1.1 Printable version

OASIS ID: preconst1-35934

#### Project details

Project name	Archaeological Watching Brief, 52 Weston Street, London SE1
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief at vacant land at 52 Weston Street, Bermondsey, London SE1, which found the remains of a 19th century cellar.
Project dates	Start: 23-11-2007 End: 30-11-2007
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	WNU 07 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed

Monument type	CELLAR Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	'Targeted Trenches','Visual Inspection'
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON SOUTHWARK BERMONDSEY ROTHERHITHE AND SOUTHWARK 52 Weston Street, London SE1
Postcode	SE1
Study area	153.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 330 799 51.5018670701 -0.08358164215050 51 30 06 N 000 05 00 W Point
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd

Project brief  
originator CgMs Consultants Ltd

Project design  
originator Richard Meager

Project  
director/manager Peter Moore

Project supervisor Stuart Watson

Type of  
sponsor/funding  
body Developer

Name of  
sponsor/funding  
body Barratt and Barratt Ltd

#### Project archives

Physical Archive  
Exists? No

Digital Archive  
recipient LAARC

Digital Contents 'Stratigraphic'

Digital Media  
available 'Spreadsheets', 'Text'

Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Contents	'Stratigraphic'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet', 'Matrices', 'Photograph', 'Plan', 'Section', 'Unpublished Text'
Project bibliography 1	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	An Archaeological Watching Brief at 52 Weston Street Bermondsey, London Borough of Southwark, SE1
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