

**An Archaeological Watching Brief At 25-29 Worship Street London EC2,
London Borough of Islington**

Site Code WPT07

Central National Grid Reference: TQ 3306 8208

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Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, March 2008**

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March 2008**

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DOCUMENT VERIFICATION





Site Name

25-29 Worship Street, London Borough of Islington

Type of project

Archaeological Watching Brief

Quality Control

Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited Project Code			K1672
	Name & Title	Signature	Date
Text Prepared by:	Denise Mulligan		18/12/07
Graphics Prepared by:	Hayley Baxter		18/12/07
Graphics Checked by:	Helen Clough		20/01/08
Project Manager Sign-off:	Helen Clough		20/01/08

Revision No.	Date	Checked	Approved
1 GLAAS comments	26/3/08	HC	HC

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1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results and working methods of an archaeological watching brief conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (PCA), on land at 25-29 Worship Street London EC 2, London Borough of Islington.
- 1.2 The watching brief was carried out between 3rd December 2007 and 10th December 2007. The watching brief monitored the excavation of two trenches. Both trenches were located in the basement of the extant building.
- 1.3 Trench 1 was located to the south of the site, and was excavated for the purpose of installing a lift shaft.
- 1.4 On the western side of Trench 1, a small area of natural brick-earth survived intact below the concrete floor slab. No features were observed cutting this layer and no dating evidence was recovered from this layer, which had occasional root disturbance.
- 1.5 Trench 2 was located to the north of Trench 1 and was excavated for the purpose of replacing outdated services. The basement floor was constructed of a 0.40m thick concrete slab and was at a level of 14.35m OD.
- 1.6 The watching brief found evidence in Trench 2 of a well, dating to the mid 17th century. The well truncated a series of dumped deposits dating to the late 16th century. A post medieval domestic rubbish pit was also identified and dated to the late 15th – early 16th century. The pit cut is likely to have been horizontally truncated by the construction of the basement.
- 1.7 No natural gravels were reached in either of the trenches as the project levels were reached before impact.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd on land at 25-29 Worship Street London EC 2, London Borough of Islington (Figure 1).
- 2.2 The work was conducted between 3rd and 10th December 2007. P.R.S. Architects/Balfour Beatty Refurbishment commissioned the work in advance of proposed refurbishment of the site.
- 2.3 The work was undertaken following a method statement prepared by Helen Clough of Pre-Construct Archaeology who also project managed the site. The site was monitored by Diane Walls (Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS)) and supervised by the author.
- 2.4 The site was located at 25 -29 Worship Street. The work was carried out within the basement of the existing four storey 19th century building.
- 2.5 The site was centred on national grid reference TQ 3306 8208.
- 2.6 The site was given the site code WPT 07.

3 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 3.1 The underlying geology of the study site comprises London Clay overlain by Terrace Gravels which are sealed by a light brown clay silt deposit (brickearth).
- 3.2 The site was occupied by a four-story 19th century building. The ground floor was raised above street level and the building had a basement with a concrete floor, which was flat and even, located at a level of 14.35m OD.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 The site is situated within an Archaeological Priority Zone as defined in the London Borough of Islington's Unitary Development Plan. It is not located within or close to a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

4.2 Previous archaeological work carried out by MoLAS at 19-23 Worship Street and at 43-51 Worship Street recovered artefacts from dumped deposits on the sites, representing post-medieval land reclamation. Finds from the sites included 16th century pottery and leather shoes. Evidence for two water courses dated to the medieval and post medieval period were recorded on the sites.

Prehistoric

4.3 No evidence for Prehistoric activity was observed on the study site. This may possibly be as a result of the project level, which was not deep enough to impact on these deposits.

Roman

4.4 No evidence for Roman activity was observed on the site. The study site is close to, but outside of the Roman city walls, which lie to the south of the study site. The site was probably open marshland during the Roman period.

Saxon

4.5 No evidence for Saxon activity was located within the study site and it is generally accepted that the main activity centre for this period in London is located around the Covent Garden area.

Medieval

4.6 The study site lay outside of the medieval city walls, however the absence of structures in the near vicinity of the site but with the presence of medieval watercourse suggests the land was being drained and may have been waterlogged in winter and unsuitable for habitation. In 1415, the Mayor, Thomas Falconer built a gate at Moorgate¹, to the south-west of the site, suggesting that the area outside the gate was open moorland.

Post Medieval

4.7 The region of Moorfields and Finsbury, south of the study site, was drained in 1527, and was later laid out (some time between 1603 and 1625) in pleasant walks. The area was first built on after the Great Fire of London².

¹ Old and New London 1878

² *ibid.*

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 The watching brief followed a methodology specified in the Written Scheme of Investigation³ for the site. All archaeological deposits and features encountered were recorded using the appropriate format in plan and section
- 5.2 In general the aim of the watching brief was to determine as far as is reasonably possible the location extent, date, character, condition significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by any construction works. The watching brief also set out to clarify the nature and extent of existing disturbance and intrusions. These conditions were successfully reached in the areas investigated during the watching brief.
- 5.3 The concrete floor in the basement, which was at a level of 14.35m OD, was cut using a stone grinder to give a straight edge to the areas for reduction. The concrete was then broken out using a breaker attached to a remote controlled machine. This type of machine was used because of restrictions to access in the basement. A flat bladed bucket attached to the same machine then excavated the areas to be investigated.
- 5.4 Trench 1 was roughly triangular in shape (Figure 2). This trench, which was excavated for the installation of services, had three drainage runs, A, B and C which were reduced by hand to a depth of 0.30m below the concrete and 0.70m below the existing floor level.
- 5.5 Trench 2, excavated for the installation of a new lift shaft, measured 4.30m north-south by 5.30m east-west (Figure 2), and was reduced using a flat bladed bucket to a depth of 1.70m below the slab level.

³ Clough 2007

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

- 6.1 In both trenches the earliest deposit [9] was a natural brick earth, which was observed in Section 2 (Figure 4). No dating was recovered and root disturbance was observed in this layer, which may have been horizontally truncated by the construction of the basement
- 6.2 This natural brickearth [9] was cut by [7] (Figure 3, 4) a possible pit of undefined use, which had a grey clay fill [4], with frequent charcoal flecks, from which no dating evidence was recovered. Only the western side of this feature was visible as it was truncated to the east by [6] a cut seen in Section 2 of a post-medieval domestic rubbish pit.
- 6.3 An early post-medieval pit [6] was filled by [5] (Figure 3, 4) which contained domestic refuse and pottery sherds dating from the late 15th century to the early 16th century. Also included in the fill was a large amount of marine shell including cockle, mussel and whelk, with oyster shell being the most prevalent. Butchered animal bone was also present along with one piece of worked antler bone, identified as red deer.
- 6.4 The three drain runs A, B and C in Trench 2 (Figure 3) truncated post-medieval dumped deposits. The dumped deposits dated from 1550 to 1650 and probably represent the reclamation of marshy land at this time. Three fragments of textile were recovered from drain run B; these may be the remains of a shoe lining or perhaps part of a garment (see Appendix 4).
- 6.5 A well [3] was also recorded in Trench 2 (Figure 3). The well was constructed using red hand made half bat bricks of mid 17th century date. Pottery recovered from the fills of the well ([1] and [2]) was also of mid 17th century date. The presence of the well suggests that the area was settled and inhabited by this period.
- 6.6 In Trench 1 the earliest and only archaeological deposit observed was a layer of natural brick earth [9] located in the western section. No features were seen cutting this layer and no dating evidence was recovered from this layer. The other three sides of the trench were truncated by concrete pile foundations to the project level. The base of the trench still had a layer of modern concrete when the project level was reached.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The watching brief was successful in fulfilling the requirements set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation. The watching brief recorded natural brickearth in both trenches, which had been horizontally truncated by the construction of the basement. The highest level recorded for the brickearth was at 13.95m OD which was 0.40m below the basement floor level.
- 7.2 Cutting the brickearth in Trench 2 were two pits, one undated; the other filled with domestic refuse and dated to the early 16th century. A series of mid 16th century dumped deposits were also recorded in Trench 2 which were cut by a well dating to the early 17th century. This evidence seems to support other archaeological works carried out in the near vicinity of the study site, which recorded a series of 16th century dumped deposits. The dumped deposits may have occurred as a result of a ground consolidation exercise during the 16th century in order to allow construction on a previously marshy area. .
- 7.3 Trench 1 revealed the natural brickearth was truncated to a depth of 1.70m below the basement floor level. No evidence for any pre 16th century structures or cut features was recorded on the study site.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Clough H 2007 *Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief at 25-29 Worship Street, London EC2, London Borough of Islington* PCA unpublished report

Old and New London Volume 2 (1887) *Moorfields and Finsbury*

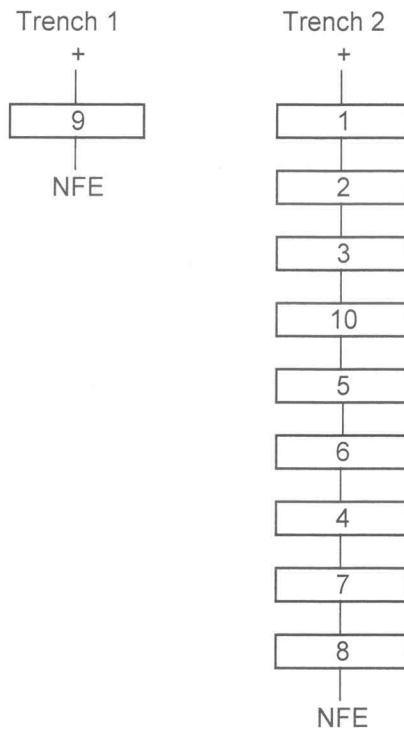
9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 9.1 The author would like to thank PRS Architects who commissioned the work, Helen Clough who project managed the site and edited the report and Hayley Baxter for the drawings. Thanks also to Shane Maher who carried out the first part of the watching brief.

Appendix.1 Context Index

SITE CODE	CONTEXT	TYPE	TRENCH	DATE	COMMENTS
WPT 07	1	FILL	TR 2	04/12/2007	FILL OF WELL
WPT 07	2	FILL	TR 2	04/12/2007	FILL OF WELL
WPT 07	3	MASONRY	TR 2	04/12/2007	POST MEDIEVAL WELL
WPT 07	4	FILL	TR 2	05/12/2007	FILL OF CUT [7]
WPT 07	5	FILL	TR 2	06/12/2007	FILL OF CUT [6]
WPT 07	6	CUT	TR 2	07/12/2007	CUT OF PIT
WPT 07	7	CUT	TR 2	08/12/2007	CUT OF PIT
WPT 07	8	LAYER	TR 2	09/12/2007	NATURAL BRICKEARTH
WPT 07	9	LAYER	TR 1	10/12/2007	NATURAL BRICKEARTH

Appendix 2 Site Matrix



Appendix 3 OASIS Form

OASIS ID: preconst1-36415

Project details

Project name	An Archaeological watching brief at 25 29 Worship Street London EC2
Short description of the project	The watching brief recorded natural brickearth in both trenches, which had been horizontally truncated by the construction of the basement. The highest level recorded for the brickearth was at 13.95m OD which was 0.40m below the basement floor level. Cutting the brickearth in Trench 2 were two pits, one undated; the other filled with domestic refuse and dated to the early 16th century. A series of mid 16th century dumped deposits were also recorded in Trench 2 which were cut by a well dating to the early 17th century. This evidence seems to support other archaeological works carried out in the near vicinity of the study site, which recorded a series of 16th century dumped deposits. The dumped deposits may have occurred as a result of a ground consolidation exercise during the 16th century in order to allow construction on a previously marshy area. Trench 1 revealed the natural brickearth was truncated to a depth of 1.70m below the basement floor level. No evidence for any pre 16th century structures or cut features was recorded on the study site.
Project dates	Start: 03-12-2007 End: 10-12-2007
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	WPT 07 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 2 - Offices
Monument type	PIT Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY SHARDS, CERANIC BUILDING MATERIAL , TEXTILE , ANIMAL BONE , Post Medieval
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON ISLINGTON FINSBURY 25-29 Worship Street
Postcode	EC 2
Study area	678.60 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 32915 82118 51.5218212581 -0.083969317457 51 31 18 N 000 05 02 W Point
Height OD	Min: 12.65m Max: 13.95m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	GLAAS
Project design originator	Helen Clough
Project director/manager	Helen Clough
Project supervisor	Denise Mulligan
Type of sponsor/funding body	PRS Architects/Balfour Beatty

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	LAARC
Physical Contents	'Animal Bones','Ceramics','Textiles'
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC

Paper Archive recipient LAARC

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title An Archaeological Watching Brief at 25-29 Worship Street, London Borough of Islington

Author(s)/Editor(s) Mulligan D

Date 2008

Issuer or publisher Pre-Construct Archaeology

Place of issue or publication London

Entered by Helen Clough (hclough@pre-construct.com)

Entered on 17 January 2008

Appendix 4

THE TEXTILE PIECES AND LEATHER OFFCUT

By Märit Gaimster

Three pieces of textile and a small piece of leather offcut were retrieved from Trench C. No closer dating was possible for these finds; however, pottery from all three trenches date the deposits from the 16th and through to the 18th centuries.

The textile consists of two cut pieces with stitching and a further offcut with one straight corner and no traces of stitching visible. The stitched pieces are suggestive of the lining of a shoe, but may also be part of clothing such as the shoulder of a sleeve and an elbow patch (Plate 1 and 2). All three pieces of textile are of plain tabby-woven wool, now stained brown. They will be air-dried for archive deposition.

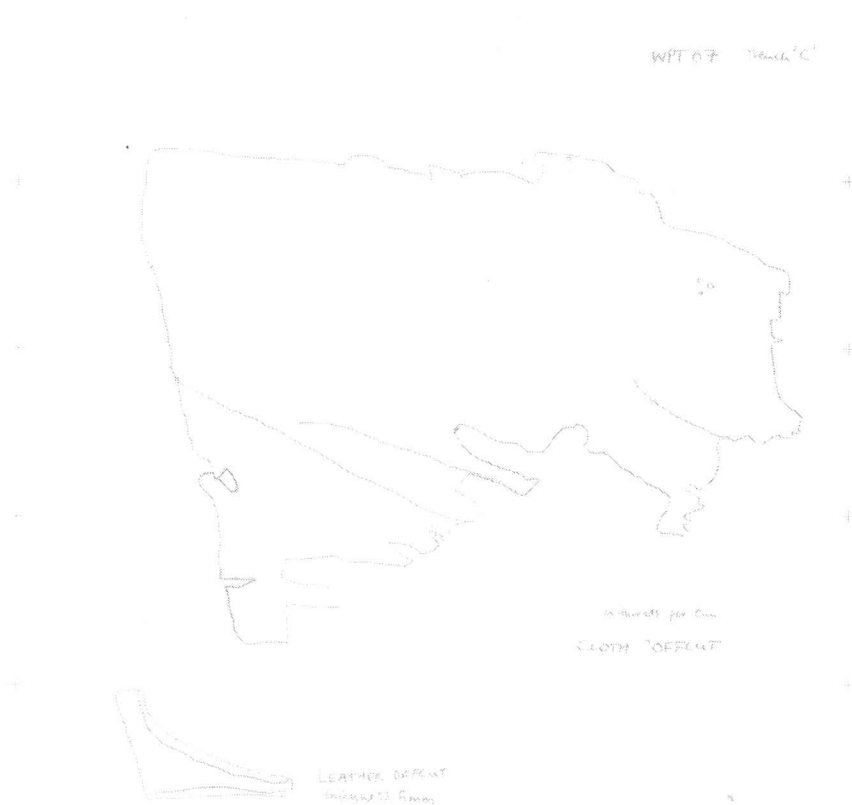


Plate 1

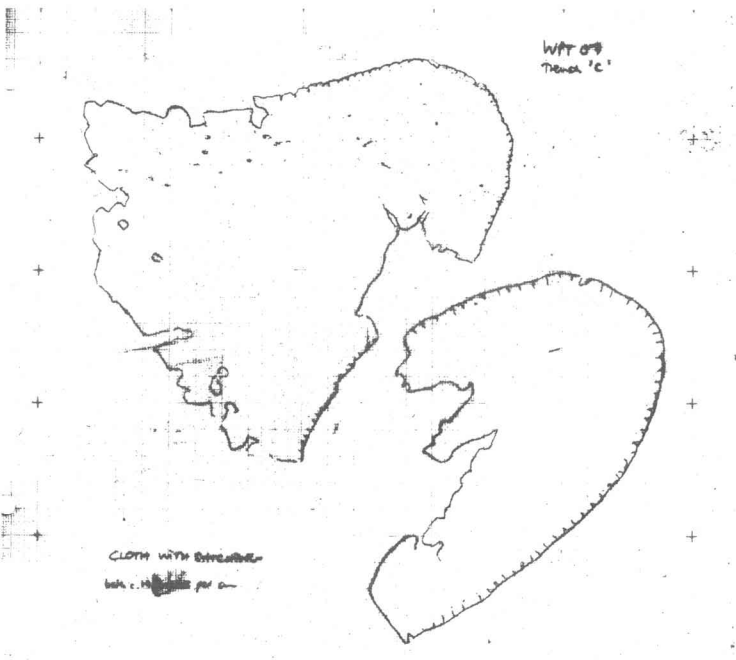


Plate 2

Appendix 5 Finds Reports

Pottery Assessment

Chris Jarrett PCA

Introduction

The excavation produced a total of twelve sherds of pottery dating to the early post-medieval period which were recovered from one context. The condition of the material is fragmentary but forms were possible to identify. The material is not abraded and so was probably deposited soon after breakage. The pottery was classified according to Museum of London standard codes.

Pottery types

Mid Saxon

Coarse Ipswich-type ware (IPSC), 730-850, one sherd.
Sandstone, quartz and sparse shelly limestone (SSLA), 600-850, one sherd.

Post-medieval

Early Surrey-Hampshire border whiteware with yellow-glaze (EBORDY), 1480-1550, one sherd, form: bowl; rounded

London-area early post-medieval redware (PMRE), 1480-1600, nine sherds, forms: bowl: carinated type 1, rounded, jug.

London-area post-medieval slipped redware with clear (yellow) glaze (PMSRY), 1480-1600, two sherds, forms: bowl; carinated and rounded.

Distribution

The majority of the pottery is unstratified in Drain Run B

Trench 2

Two sherds of pottery were recovered from fill [5] of pit [7], both as sherds of jugs in early post-medieval redware (PMRE) and date the context to between 1480-1600.

Significance, potential and recommendations for further work

The early post-medieval pottery types follow the ceramic profile for the London area and have no significance at a local, national or international level. The main potential of the pottery is to date the features it was found in. It does not require illustration. There are no further research questions or recommendations for other work.

The animal bones collected from the watching brief at 25-29 Worship Street, Islington (WPT07)

Kevin Rielly PCA March 2008

Seven animal bones were recovered from this site, including 6 from the late 15th to early 16th century fill [5] of a pit and the remaining fragment from the mid 17th century fill [1] of a well. Both features appear to predate the development of this general area, just north of Moorfields, which took place following the Great Fire. The earlier collection featured almost as many species as bones, with a fragment of worked red deer antler, a pig humerus, a cattle tibia, sheep femur, goose tibia, dog tibia and a cattle-size rib. The cattle tibia had been heavily chopped, providing a 15cm section of the midshaft possibly representing a stewbone. This same bone had been stained blue on one side. The dog limb bone was complete, allowing for the calculation of a shoulder height (following Harcourt 1974) of 380.8mm. Finally, the single bone from the later feature is a cattle-size rib. These small collections clearly represent minor dumps of domestic food waste, with the inclusion of a single item of antler working waste.

References

Harcourt, R A, 1974 'The dog in prehistoric and early historic Britain.' *J Archaeol Science* 1, 151-75

Summary of Ceramic Building Material WPT07**Kevin Hayward Pre-Construct Archaeology March 2008****Introduction**

Four examples of ceramic building material from two contexts [3; 5] (total weight 4.7kg) were examined using the London system of classification with a fabric number allocated to each object.

**Fabric and Form
Brick***3032nr3033*

Two complete bricks [3] were comparable to the transitional fabric *3032nr3033* which is red/purple in colour with very small black clinker inclusions. These hand (stock) moulded unfrosted bricks have a restrictive date range of 1664-1725 and showed no sign of reuse. The brown mortar is typical of early post-medieval without.

Roof Tile*2276; 3090*

Represented by one peg tile fabric *2276* (1480-1900) and curved (possible pan) tile *3090* (1200-1800) from [5]. If the curved fabric is a pan tile then a date from between 1630-1800 seems likely.

Distribution

Context	Fabric	Form	Size	Date range of material		Latest dated material	
3	<i>3032nr3033</i>	Unfrosted Stock Moulded Brick	2	1664	1725	1664	1725
5	<i>2276</i>	Peg Tile	1	1480	1900	1480	1900
5	<i>3006</i>	Curved (possible pan tile)	1	1200	1800	1480	1900

Conclusion

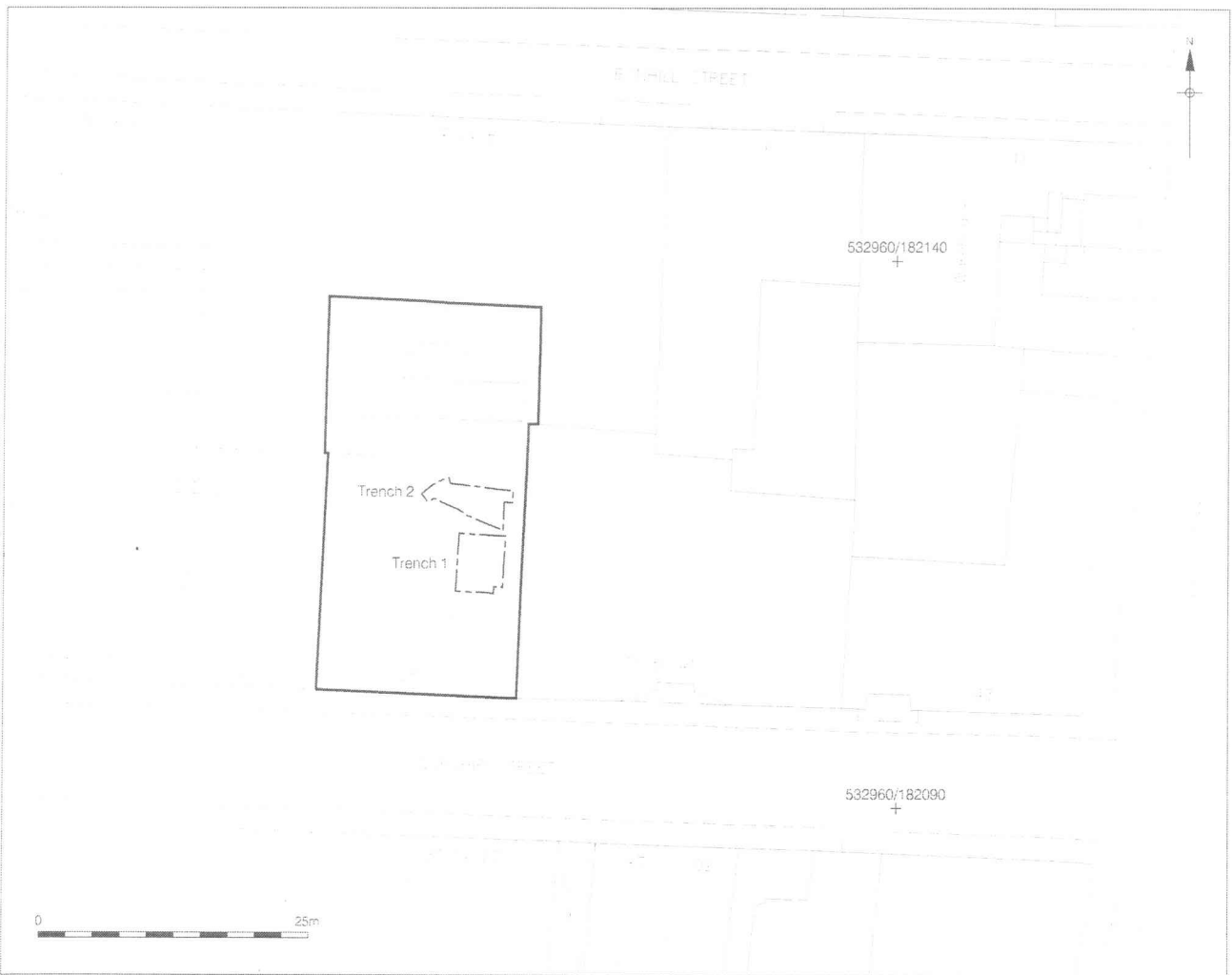
The presence of two complete *3032nr3033* bricks places context [3] neatly within 1664 and 1725. The tile from [5] could be anytime between 1480 and 1900.



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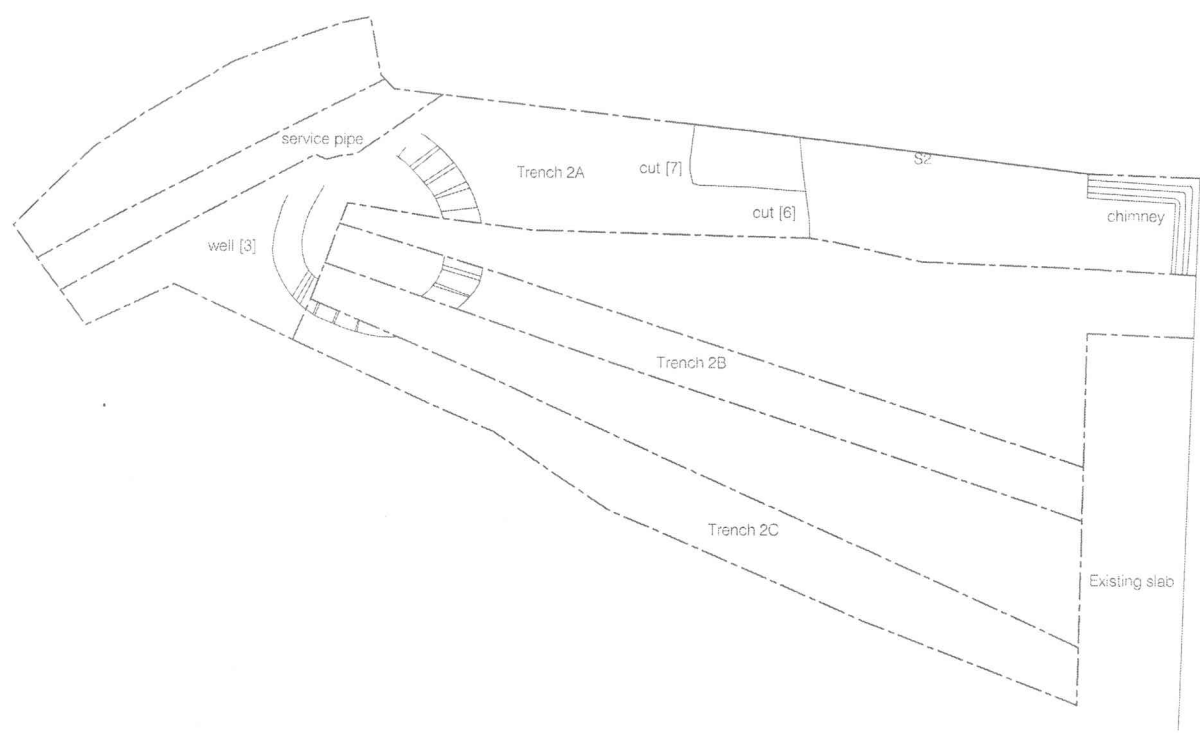
Figure 1
 Site Location
 1:20,000 at A4



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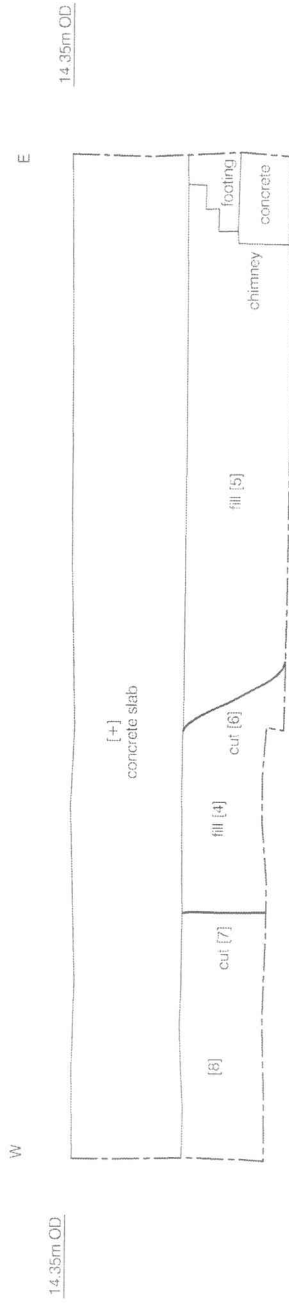
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Figure 2
Trench Location
1:625 at A4



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Figure 3
Plan of Trench 2
1:50 at A4



Section 2
South facing
Trench 2



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Figure 4
Section 2
1:25 at A4