

**An Archaeological Evaluation at 21-23 Durham Row, London Borough of
Tower Hamlets, E1**

Site Code: DRW04

Central National Grid Reference: TQ 3600 8165

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1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results and working methods of an archaeological evaluation undertaken in advance of the development of the site for residential buildings fronting Durham Row by Mr Sahim Hayatt (fig.1). The site is centred at National Grid Reference TQ 3600 8165 and on the 29th November 2004 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd undertook the field evaluation.
- 1.2 The evaluation consisted of one trench measuring 10.00m x 2.00m and orientated on a north-south axis parallel to the western boundary of the site (fig.2).
- 1.3 The evaluation trench was reduced until natural gravels and sands were encountered. A heavily indurated brickearth layer sealed the natural horizon within which no cultural material or later truncations were apparent. A substantial garden soil of early 19th century date sealed the brickearth horizon. The remainder of the trench consisted of a heavily mixed layer of 19th/20th century made ground.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 An archaeological field evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd on the 29th November 2004. The site address is 21-23 Durham Row, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, E1 (fig.1).
- 2.2 The commissioning client was Mr Sahim Hayatt and the field evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd under the supervision of Joanna Taylor and the project management of Gary Brown.
- 2.3 The site is defined to the north by the Durham Row, to the east by residential buildings, to the south by factories and to the west by St Dunstan and All Saints Church Yard. The ground surface of the site currently consists of a heavily mixed 19th/20th century made-ground deposit.
- 2.4 A temporary benchmark was transferred from the Ordnance Survey Bench Mark situated on the south face of Solent House located to the east of the site on Whitehorse Road (9.65m OD).
- 2.5 The completed archive comprising written, drawn and photographic records and artefactual material will be deposited at the Museum of London under the site code DRW04.

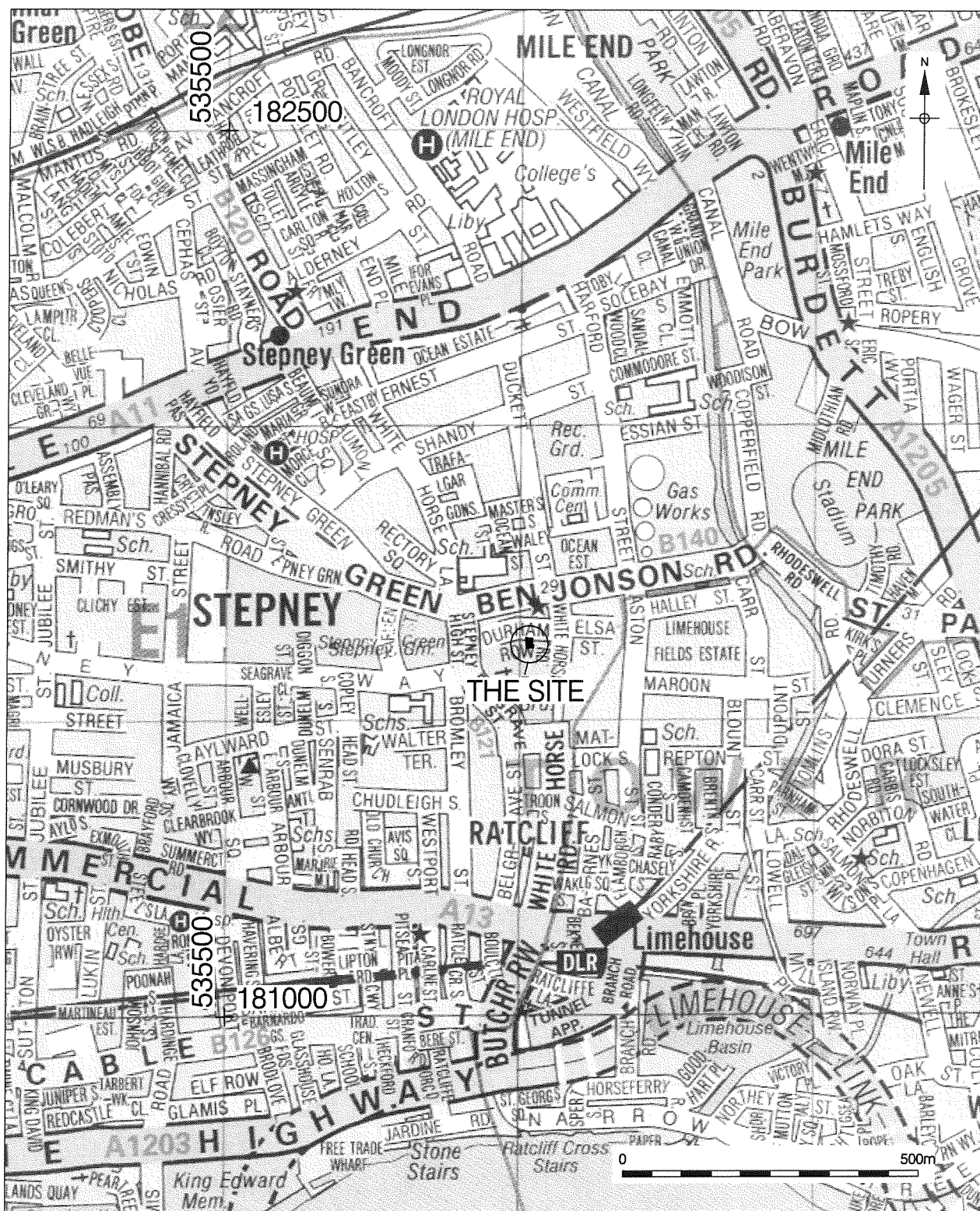


Figure 1
Site Location
1:10,000



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Figure 2
Trench Location
1:500

3 PLANNING BACKGROUND

3.1 The site is located in an area classified as an area of archaeological importance in the Tower Hamlets Unitary Development Plan. Whilst the site does not contain, nor is adjacent to, a Scheduled Ancient Monuments it is in close proximity to St. Dunstan and All Saints Church, Stepney. Given the archaeological potential of the site Mr R. Whytehead of English Heritage's GLASS recommended that the site be subject to an archaeological evaluation.

3.2 Tower Hamlets has strong commitments to its archaeological heritage and its policy statements are reproduced below:

DEV 40 Developments that adversely affects a scheduled monument will normally be refused.

DEV 41 Planning powers will be used to protect and preserve the archaeological heritage including the industrial heritage of the borough. Interpretation and presentation to the public will also be sought.

DEV 42 The permanent preservation of remains in the original location will normally be required. Suitable design, land use and site management to achieve this will be encouraged.

DEV 43 Proposals involving ground works in Areas of Archaeological Importance or Potential, shown on the proposals map, or on individual sites notified to the Council by English Heritage or the Museum of London will be subject to the following requirements:

- 1. Applicants will need, as part of their submission, to demonstrate that the archaeological implications of the development have been assessed, using the professional advice of an approved archaeological consultant.**
- 2. Appropriate planning conditions will be attached to planning permissions to ensure that investigation, excavation and recording takes place by an approved archaeological organisation before excavation commences; and**
- 3. In appropriate cases, planning agreements will be sought to ensure that adequate opportunities are afforded for the archaeological investigation of sites, before or during demolition and suitable provision is made for preserving remains and finds in the original location or for removing them to a place of safe keeping.**

4 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 4.1 The site is located on naturally deposited sandy river terrace gravels overlain by a silty brickearth type deposit.¹
- 4.2 The ground surface of the study site is at a height of c.9.50m OD and is located on a gradual slope in the topography of the area. The Church of St Dunstan and All Saints to the south-west is to be found at a height of c.10.00m OD and the land to the north of the site is at a height of c. 9.00m.

¹ Keith-Lucas, 2004

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 5.1 Although Roman remains are known in Stepney the name itself refers to the Saxon settlement of 'Stebba's Landing Place'. The name was originally associated with Ratcliff ½ mile to the south but came to be applied to the high land where St Dunstan and All Saints Church now stands and the study site is situated.²
- 5.2 The original church is thought to have been built in wood but was rebuilt in stone in the 10th century. The church was dedicated to St Dunstan, then the Bishop of London and remained the only church in Stepney until the 13th century. The church was consequently rebuilt again in the 15th century.³
- 5.3 The church is surrounded by seven acres of churchyard⁴ and the proximity of the study site to the graveyard may suggest that the site once formed part of the Church precinct. The graveyard was extended to its present size in the 17th century when 6,583 people died from the plague in an 18th month period.⁵ Documentary evidence from the time suggests that the northern area of the St Dunstan and All Saints churchyard was initially used for the plague victims with burials 'within seaventeene yards of the church wall' prohibited.⁶
- 5.4 From documentary evidence it is unclear as to when the study site was first developed however it is known that until the mid 20th century the site was occupied by a 19th century building that once formed the western terminus of a terrace of houses facing north on to Durham Row.⁷ The buildings that still stand today were built with shop fronts and it is probable that 21-23 Durham Row was originally the same.

² Weinreb & Hibbert, 1983

³ ibid

⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org>

⁵ <http://homepages.gold.ac.uk>

⁶ <http://website.lineon.net> (a)

⁷ <http://www.London-footprints.co.uk>

6 METHODOLOGY

- 6.1 The evaluation consisted of one trench located parallel to the western boundary of the site. (fig.2).
- 6.2 The evaluation trench measured 10.00m north-south by 2.00m east-west and had a maximum depth of 1.15m maximum depth.
- 6.3 The positions of services were checked by the client and c.0.50m of 20th century made-ground was stripped from the site before the evaluation trench was located and excavation commenced.
- 6.4 A mechanical excavator was supplied by the client and all mechanical excavation of the trench was undertaken under archaeological supervision.
- 6.5 Mechanical excavation continued through undifferentiated deposits in spits of no greater than 200mm until natural deposits were encountered. Had significant archaeological deposits been encountered during the excavation of the trench mechanical excavation of the identified deposit would have ceased.
- 6.6 Following fill clearance, all faces of the trench that required examination were cleaned using appropriate hand tools.
- 6.7 Recording on site was undertaken using the single context recording system as specified in the Museum of London Site Manual. A plan of the trench was drawn at a scale of 1:50 and a representative section at a scale of 1:10. Contexts were numbered sequentially and recorded on *pro-forma* context sheets.
- 6.8 The site was given the code DRW04
- 6.9 Security fencing was not required on site as the evaluation trench was backfilled by the client on the same day.

7 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

- 7.1 The evaluation trench was aligned north-south, measuring 10.00m x 2.00m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.15m (figs.2 & 3).
- 7.2 The earliest deposit recorded in this trench was a firm brownish yellow natural sand layer [4] encountered at a height of 8.37m OD. The layer was sealed by a compact yet friable, yellowish brown, natural sandy gravel layer [3] encountered at a height of 8.17m OD.
- 7.3 Sealing the natural deposits was a brownish orange sandy brickearth layer [2] encountered at 8.47m OD. The layer contained no cultural material to suggest it had been archaeologically deposited and no later intrusions were seen to have impacted on the horizon.
- 7.4 Sealing the brickearth deposit was a post-medieval garden-soil [1] encountered at 8.92m OD. The layer was a greyish brown sandy silt containing moderate pot, clay pipe, CBM fragments and charcoal flecks. The retrieved finds suggest the date of deposit to be the early 19th century.
- 7.5 The remainder of the trench was comprised of 19th/20th century made ground encountered at a height of 9.17m OD. The deposit was present across the entire site though it had largely been machined away prior to the excavation of the evaluation trench.

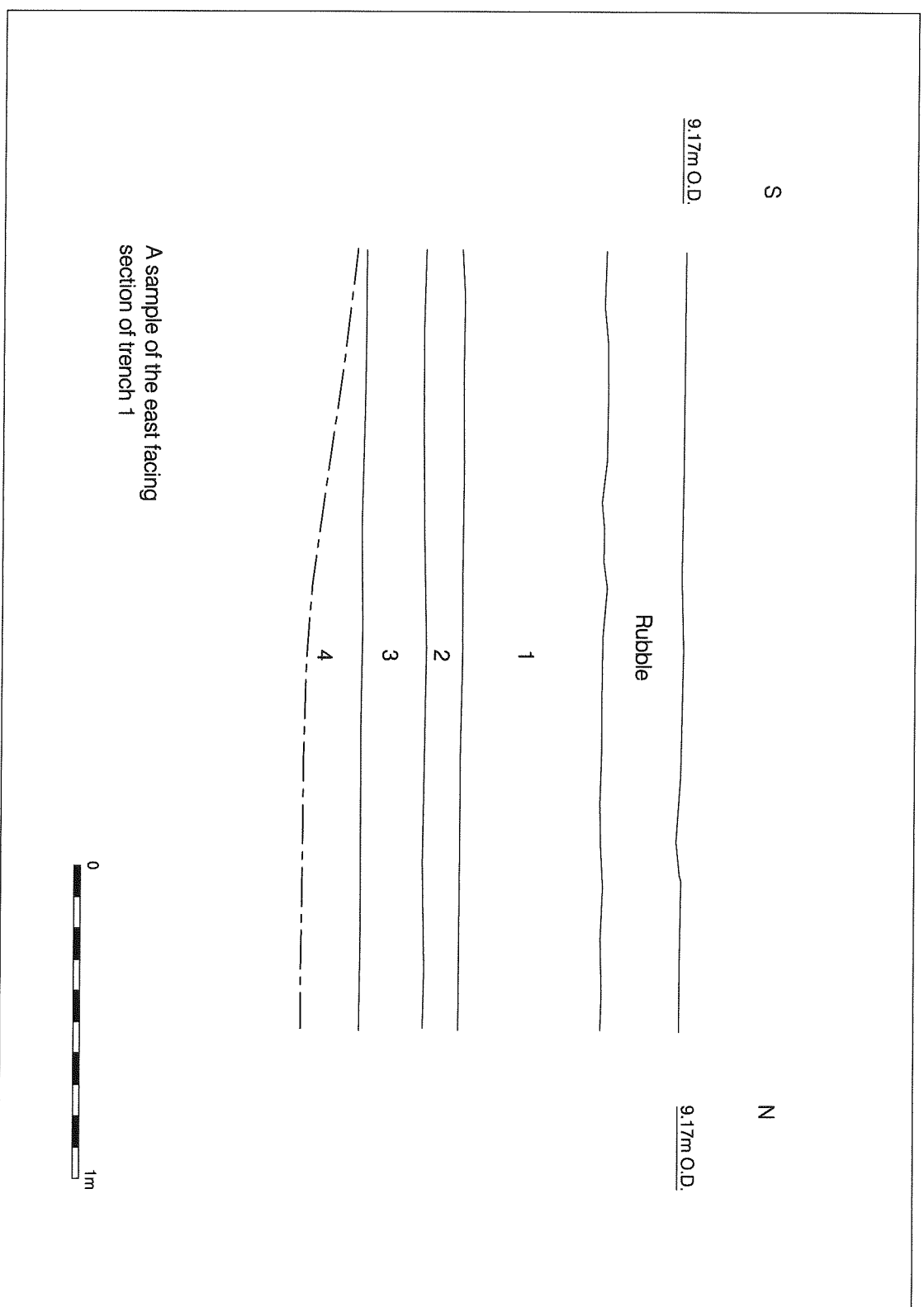


Figure 3
Section 1
1:20

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 Whilst the archaeological evaluation encountered naturally deposited gravels and sands the limited nature of the evaluation has restricted further comment on the natural topography. However the current surface topography of the area surrounding the site may suggest that the study site is situated on a gentle south to north slope in the natural geology.
- 8.2 Sealing the natural gravel horizon was an indurated brickearth layer that contained no cultural material. The absence of cultural material suggests that the layer was most probably naturally deposited.
- 8.3 The archaeological evaluation revealed no evidence of prehistoric or Roman activity. Whilst this may be a consequence of horizontal truncation in later periods the absence of cut features of this date suggest prehistoric and Roman features and deposits do not exist on site.
- 8.4 In addition the archaeological excavation found no evidence to suggest the presence of Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval archaeology on site. Whilst St Dunstan and All Saints Church is located immediately to the south-west of the site the absence of deposits dating to these periods suggest that the site was undeveloped and, at most, on the fringes of the church yard during these periods.
- 8.5 A garden-soil dated to the first quarter of the 19th century suggests that the site remained undeveloped at this time. The 19th/20th century made ground that sealed this deposit is most probably associated with the construction and demolition of the Victorian terraced house that once occupied the site.

9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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<http://www.London-footprints.co.uk> "Stepney & Limehouse Walk"

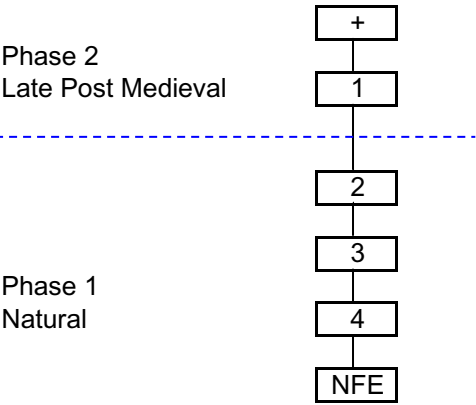
10 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 10.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank Mr Sahim Hayatt for commissioning the work and David Divers of English Heritage for his advice on site.
- 10.2 The author would like to thank Neil Hawkins for his assistance throughout the evaluation. The author would also like to thank Hayley Baxter for the illustrations and Chris Jarrett for the pottery assessment. Furthermore, the author would like to thank Gary Brown for his project management and editing.

Appendix 1: CONTEXT REGISTER

Site	Context	Plan	Section	Phase	Type	Description	Level
Code	Number	Number	Number				
DRW04	1		1	2	Layer	Garden-soil	8.92
DRW04	2		1	1	Layer	Brickearth	8.47
DRW04	3	Tr1	1	1	Layer	Natural Gravel	8.37
DRW04	4	Tr1	1	1	Layer	Natural Sand	8.17

Appendix 2: Matrix



Appendix 3: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-5246

Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Evaluation at 21-23 Durham Row, London Borough of Tower, E1
Short description of the project	The archaeological evaluation consisted of one trench which was machine excavated until natural gravels and sands were encountered. A heavily indurated brickearth layer sealed the natural horizon within which no cultural material or later truncations were apparent. A substantial garden soil of early 19th century date sealed the brickearth horizon. The remainder of the trench consisted of a heavily mixed layer of 19th/20th century made ground associated with the construction and demolition of the Victorian building that once occupied the site.
Project dates	Start: 29-11-2004 End: 29-11-2004
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	DRW04 - Museum accession ID
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI)
Current Land use	Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed
Monument type	LAYER Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	'Sample Trenches'
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Position in the planning process	Not known / Not recorded
Project location	
Country	England

Site location	GREATER LONDON TOWER HAMLETS STEPNEY 21-23 Durham Row
Postcode	E1
Study area	100 Square metres
National grid reference	TQ 3600 8165 Point
Height OD	Min: 8.33m Max: 8.37m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service
Project design originator	David Divers / Gary Brown
Project director/manager	Gary Brown
Project supervisor	Joanna Taylor
Sponsor or funding body	Mr Sahim Hayatt

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	A forthcoming report
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