

DOCUMENT VERIFICATION

49-51 BRICK LANE,
LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Quality Control

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**An Archaeological Evaluation at 49-51 Brick Lane,
London Borough of Tower Hamlets**

Central National Grid Reference: TQ 3385 8177

Site Code: SSP 09

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Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd, March 2009

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CONTENTS

1	Abstract.....	3
2	Introduction.....	4
3	Planning Background.....	7
4	Geology And Topography.....	8
5	Archaeological And Historical Background.....	9
6	Archaeological Methodology.....	10
7	The Archaeological Sequence.....	11
8	Interpretation And Conclusions.....	14
9	Acknowledgments.....	16
10	Bibliography.....	17

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Context Index.....	18
Appendix 2: Site Matrix.....	19
Appendix 3: OASIS Form.....	20

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Site Location.....	5
Figure 2: Trench Location And Trench Plan.....	6
Figure 3: Sections 1 & 2.....	13

1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd at 49-51 Brick Lane, London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The central National Grid Reference for this site is TQ 3385 8177. The field evaluation was undertaken on 12th February 2009, and the commissioning client was Milan Babic Architects.
- 1.2 The evaluation consisted of one trench located to the rear of the Seven Stars Public House, designed to investigate the sites' archaeological potential in advance of construction work. An evaluation was deemed necessary for the site by David Divers of English Heritage, Archaeology Advisor to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, in response to an archaeological planning condition.
- 1.3 The earliest deposit encountered was an undated layer of silty clay containing fragments of ceramic building material and recorded at 3.6m BGL, 11.20m OD. This was overlain by thick deposits of undated made ground which may be filling quarry pits from the local brick industry in the early post-medieval period. This possible activity was sealed by an 18th century horizon of soil and a drain, a remnant of the contemporary development of the area.
- 1.4 No evidence for human burials were recorded at the site. A single piece of human *humerus* was found, although this was disarticulated and within a heavily disturbed context. The maximum depth reached by the evaluation was below the level at which *in situ* brickearth deposits may be expected in the area.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd on 12th February 2009, in advance of proposed development to the rear of the Seven Stars Public House, 49-51 Brick Lane, London Borough of Tower Hamlets (Figure 1).
- 2.2 The commissioning client was Milan Babic Architects, and the evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd under the supervision of Phil Frickers and the project management of Chris Mayo. The evaluation was monitored on behalf of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets by David Divers of English Heritage.
- 2.3 The evaluation followed a written scheme of investigation (Moore 2009) following a recommendation by David Divers of English Heritage that the site be treated to an archaeological evaluation on the basis of the potential for Roman Burials and Saxon and post-medieval occupation.
- 2.4 The completed archive comprising written, drawn and photographic records will be deposited with the London Archaeology Archive Resource Centre (LAARC) under the site code SSP 09.



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Figure 1
 Site Location
 1:20,000 at A4



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Figure 2
Trench Location and Trench Plan
1:200 at A4

3 PLANNING BACKGROUND

3.1 Archaeology in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and the Unitary Development Plan

- 3.1.1 The study aims to satisfy the objectives of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, which fully recognises the importance of the buried heritage for which they are the custodians. The Borough's 'Unitary Development Plan' (UDP) (adopted on the 2nd December 1998) contains policy statements in respect of protecting the buried archaeological resource.
- 3.1.2 The proposed development of the site is subject to the Council's Archaeology Policy, outlined in Chapter 2 of the UDP:

ARCHAEOLOGY AND ANCIENT MONUMENTS

DEV42 Development, which adversely affects nationally important archaeological remains, including scheduled ancient monuments, will not normally be permitted.

DEV43 Development which affects any locally important archaeological site or remains, including industrial archaeology, may be permitted depending upon:

- The importance of the archaeological remains;
- The need for the development; and
- Measures proposed for the protection, enhancement and preservation of the site and the interpretation and presentation of the remains to the public.

DEV44 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.

DEV45 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:

- 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;
- 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;
- 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;
- 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 (DEV44) and finds in the original location, or for removing them to a suitable place of safekeeping.

- 3.1.3 There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the development site, and the site is not located within any archaeology Priority Areas as defined in the adopted UDP.

4 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 4.1 According to the British Geological Survey of Great Britain and Wales (sheet 256) (2006), the natural geology of the site consists of London Clay overlain by Langley Silts, commonly referred to as 'brickearth'.
- 4.2 The site lies approximately 1.4km north of the River Thames with ground level at c.15.00m OD on land which is generally flat.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 5.1 The site is located in an area which is well known for its Roman use, at which time the main cemetery for *Londinium* was located along Ermine Street and the Colchester Road (Margary 1957). Extensive excavations around the Christ Church, Spitalfields (Molleson & Cox 1993) and Spitalfields (Barber & Bowsher 2000) itself have revealed large parts of the cemetery.
- 5.2 In the 12th century the area contained the Priory of St Mary's Spital, at the time the largest hospital in London (Molleson & Cox 1993, 113). Brick Lane itself is named after the quarrying of brickearth which took place in the vicinity in the 16th and 17th centuries (Molleson & Cox 1993, 114).
- 5.3 Following the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s, the area became increasingly developed residentially and began a period of substantial population growth which continued into the 20th century.

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 6.1 The written scheme of investigation for the work (Moore 2009) proposed the excavation of one trench measuring 10m by 2m. This was located in the position shown in the Written Scheme of Investigation and scanned for services. The trench was then broken out under archaeological supervision by JCB. The same machine then excavated the trench to a maximum depth of 1.3m using a flat-bladed ditching bucket.
- 6.2 Additionally, and within a part of the trench bereft of archaeological features, the JCB was used to excavate a sondage through the exposed made ground deposits to investigate the underlying stratigraphy. This was monitored by an archaeologist and used a flat-bladed ditching bucket. It continued to the full-reach of the machine, a further 2.7m (4.0m BGL).
- 6.3 Upon the observance of archaeological deposits the trench was cleaned by hand and archaeological features identified, recorded and investigated.
- 6.4 All deposits were recorded on pro forma context sheets. A trench plan was drawn at a scale of 1:20 and the sections at a scale of 1:10. Co-ordinates for the trench baseline and trench itself were attained by triangulating off corner points of the yard behind the public house, which were located on an OS baseplan. A photographic record was also kept of the trench in digital format.
- 6.5 A temporary benchmark was set up on the site at the height of 14.90m OD, which was transferred from a spot height of 15.14 m OD located on the frontage of 47 Brick Lane.

7 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

7.1 Phase 1: Undated Made Ground Deposits (Figures 2 & 3)

- 7.1.1 The earliest deposit seen during after excavation of the sondage within Trench 1 (Figure 2) was light-yellowish brown slightly sandy clay [12]. This context was seen to contain small flecks of ceramic building material (CBM), which may indicate that undisturbed natural is close beneath (the layer was at least 0.15m thick). The deposit was encountered at a maximum height of 11.20m OD.
- 7.1.2 Overlying deposit [12] was a thick (1.4m) layer of dark red-brown silty clay [11] containing occasional CBM fragments. It was recorded at an upper height of 12.60m OD and is interpreted as made ground.
- 7.1.3 Overlying deposit [11] was another thick (1.0m) layer of light brown clayey silt [10] containing moderate CBM fragments. It was recorded at an upper height of 13.60m OD and is interpreted as made ground.

7.2 Phase 2: 18th Century Soil Horizon and Occupation (Figures 2 & 3)

- 7.2.1 In the base of the evaluation trench and overlying [10] was a dark greyish green sandy silt [3]. This context had been disturbed by later activity. It is interpreted as a post-medieval soil horizon based on occasional pottery sherds within in. The layer was recorded at an upper height of 13.65m OD and was approximately 0.3m thick.
- 7.2.2 Layer [3] was sealed by another layer [2] of very mixed material: friable, dark grey in colour and comprising sand-clay-silt with a number of artefacts as follows:

Artefact type	Date range
Clay Tobacco Pipe	1700-40
Trumpet Bowled Wine Glass	c 1750
Pottery	1710-60
Animal Bone (cow, sheep and chicken)	n/a

A disarticulated piece of human *humerus* was also found within the context. Layer [2] was 0.88m thick and recorded at an upper height of 14.53m OD. The context is interpreted as ground formed by the reworking of a series of post-medieval rubbish pits, therefore accounting for the mixed nature of the material.

- 7.2.3 Within layer [2] were observed two distinct lenses of material [8] and [9]. Context [8] was a layer of rubble which was greenish grey in colour, loose and made of CBM,

mortar fragments and silt. It was approximately 0.1m thick and recorded at an upper height of approximately 14.0m OD. The layer was interpreted as a demolition dump. Context [9] comprised loose CBM and mortar fragments within a lens at an upper height of 13.90m OD. Both of these lenses sloped from east to west, away from Brick Lane, and it was considered that they may indicate earlier demolished structures existing on the sites' Brick Lane frontage.

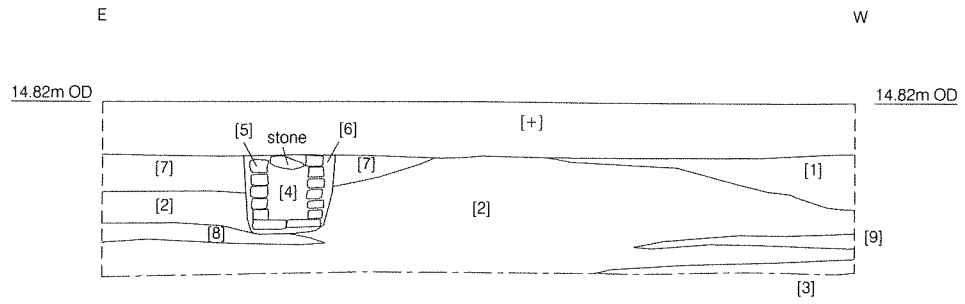
7.2.4 Overlying layer [2] were two distinct layers of material [1] and [7]. Context [1] was a loose-moderate dark grey silt, clay and CBM layer with the latter forming 80% of the matrix. It was 0.38m thick at an upper height of 14.53m OD. Context [7] was a loose yellow-grey mix of CBM and mortar, up to 0.25m thick at an upper height of 14.50m OD. Both of these layers represent demolition dumps.

7.2.5 Cut into layer [7] and aligned N-S was a brick drain [5] built within a construction trench [6]. The drain was six courses high with a brick base, built in a stretcher bond and was 0.48m deep by 0.5m wide. The feature was clearly an external land drain and therefore could mark the rear of property boundaries originally facing onto Brick Lane. The materials used in the drain are classified as follows:

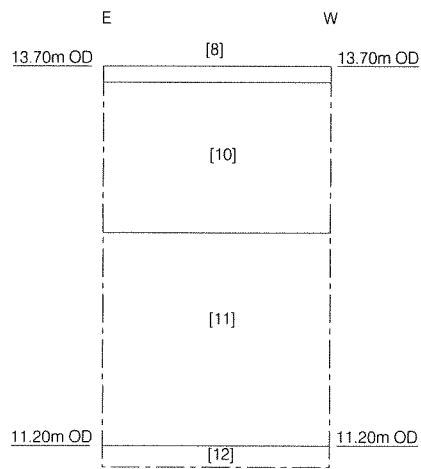
<i>Artefact type</i>	<i>Date range</i>
Brick (fabric 3032 nr 3033)	1670-1725
Floor tile (fabric 3047)	Late 17th century onwards

7.3 Phase 3: Modern

7.3.1 Layers [1] and [7] and drain [5] were sealed beneath concrete hard-standing [+] which forms the current surface of the site, at 14.82m OD.



Section 1
North Facing



Section 2
North Facing

0 2m
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Figure 3
Sections 1 and 2
1:50 at A4

8 INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Interpretation

- 9.1.1 The evaluation trench did not encounter true natural during the works owing to the limitations which could be reached by machine; however the lowest deposits encountered, a sandy clay containing occasional CBM fragments, was thought to have been close to the natural strata. The deposit was found at 11.20m OD, 3.62m BGL.
- 9.1.2 Overlying the above were layers of undated homogenous made ground which served to raise ground level by 2.5m. Whilst the evaluation did not expose any such features, it is possible that these layers were filling voids left by any number of quarry pits which were known to be present in the area from the early post-medieval period.
- 9.1.3 The upper stratigraphy of the site was marked by post-medieval usage, primarily a horizon of heavily reworked soil which was thought to be formed by a series of rubbish pitting which had then been dug over. Lenses of demolition rubble were seen within the layer, and such deposits also sealed it. This could be indicative of processes of site clearance throughout the post-medieval period, as properties perhaps fronting Brick Lane itself were demolished. At the top of the sequence was found a N-S aligned brick drain at a distance of approximately 38m from Brick Lane. The drain was an external feature and may have marked an earlier property boundary. All of these contexts are securely of 18th century date.

9.2 Conclusions

- 9.2.1 It has been clearly shown by the evaluation that archaeological deposits from the post-medieval and early modern periods are present on the site. These deposits suggest processes of ground levelling and raising, along with earlier site clearance. Although unconfirmed from this work, it is possible that the undated layers of homogenous material were actually filling the quarry pits known to have been operational in the area.
- 9.2.2 The only cut feature found during the evaluation was a drain dating to the 18th century. This was atop a horizon of 18th century soil.
- 9.2.3 No evidence was found during the evaluation for human burials. A single piece of possible human arm bone was found but from a disturbed context. The lowest height

reached in Trench 1 (11.20m OD) is below the level at which *in situ* brickearth deposits, into which known Roman and later burials were cut as found during work at the eastern edge of Spitalfields Market – which was above 12.0m OD (pers comm. C. Thomas, MoLA).

- 9.2.4 Based on the above results, and the fact that the proposed development at the site is a non-basemented piled building, Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd does not consider that the site warrants further work of an archaeological nature.

9 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- 9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Milan Babic Architects for commissioning and funding the evaluation and David Divers of English Heritage for monitoring the work on behalf of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.
- 9.2 The author would like to thank Chris Mayo for project managing the site and editing this report, Lisa Lonsdale for logistical support and Matt Harrison for his assistance on site.

10 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Molleson, T. and Cox, M. 1993 *The Spitalfields Project. Volume 2: the anthropology*. CBA Research Report 86
- Moore, P. 2009 'Written Scheme of Investigation For An Archaeological Evaluation At 49-51 Brick Lane, London Borough Of Tower Hamlets', unpub rep for Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX

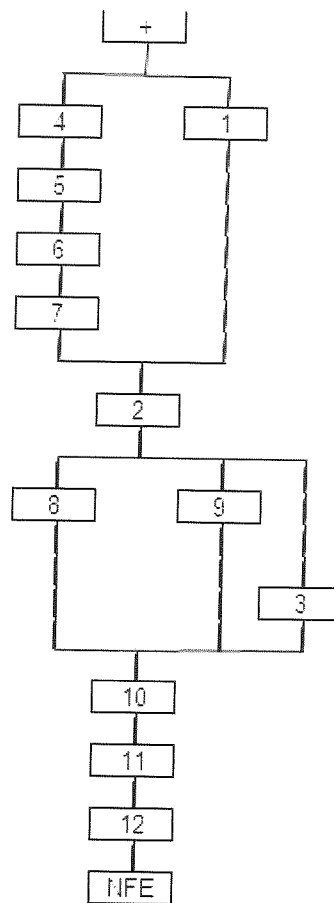
Site Code	Context	Trench	Type	Description	Max OD height	Phase	Section No	Photo
SSP09	1	1	Deposit	Demolition dump	14.53m	2	1	Y
SSP09	2	1	Deposit	Post-Medieval made ground	14.53m	2	1	Y
SSP09	3	1	Deposit	Post-Medieval soils	13.65m	2	1	Y
SSP09	4	1	Fill	Fill of drain [5]	14.50m	2	1	Y
SSP09	5	1	Masonry	Brick Drain	14.50m	2	1	Y
SSP09	6	1	Cut	Cut for brick drain	14.50m	2	1	Y
SSP09	7	1	Deposit	Demolition dump	14.50m	2	1	Y
SSP09	8	1	Deposit	Demolition dump	14.00m	2	2	Y
SSP09	9	1	Deposit	Demolition dump	13.90m	2	1	Y
SSP09	10	1	Deposit	Made Ground	13.60m	1	2	Y
SSP09	11	1	Deposit	Made Ground	12.60m	1	2	Y
SSP09	12	1	Deposit	Made Ground	11.20m	1	2	Y

APPENDIX 2: SITE MATRIX

Phase 3
Modern

Phase 2
18th Century Occupation

Phase 1
Undated Made Ground



APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-56825

Project details

Project name	49-51 Brick Lane
Short description of the project	An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd at 49-51 Brick Lane, London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The central National Grid Reference for this site is TQ 3385 8177. The field evaluation was undertaken on 12th February 2009, and the commissioning client was Milan Babic Architects. The evaluation consisted of one trench located to the rear of the Seven Stars Public House, designed to investigate the sites' archaeological potential in advance of construction work. An evaluation was deemed necessary for the site by David Divers of English Heritage, Archaeology Advisor to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, in response to an archaeological planning condition. The earliest deposit encountered was an undated layer of silty slay containing fragments of ceramic building material and recorded at 3.6m BGL, 11.20m OD. This was overlain by thick deposits of undated made ground which may be filling quarry pits from the local brick industry in the early post-medieval period. This possible activity was sealed by an 18th century horizon of soil and a drain, a remnant of the contemporary development of the area. No evidence for human burials were recorded at the site. A single piece of human humerus was found, although this was disarticulated and within a heavily disturbed context. The maximum depth reached by the evaluation was below the level at which in situ brickearth deposits may be expected in the area.
Project dates	Start: 12-02-2009 End: 12-02-2009
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	SSP 09 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed
Monument type	DRAIN Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval
Significant Finds	CBM Post Medieval
Significant Finds	CTP Post Medieval
Significant Finds	ANIMAL BONE Post Medieval
Significant Finds	GLASS Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	'Targeted Trenches'
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	Planning condition

Position in the planning process After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country England

Site location GREATER LONDON TOWER HAMLETS BETHNAL GREEN 49-51
Brick Lane

Postcode E1 6PR

Study area 516.00 Square metres

Site coordinates TQ 3385 8177 51.5184723552 -0.07063125897060 51 31 06 N 000
04 14 W Point

Lat/Long Datum (other) 14.82m

Project creators

Name of Organisation Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd

Project brief originator English Heritage

Project design originator Peter Moore

Project director/manager Chris Mayo

Project supervisor Phil Frickers

Type of sponsor/funding body Architectural Practice

Name of sponsor/funding body Milan Babic Architects

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient LAARC

Physical Contents 'Animal Bones', 'Ceramics', 'Glass', 'Human Bones'

Digital Archive recipient LAARC

Digital Contents 'Stratigraphic'

Digital Media available 'Images raster / digital photography', 'Images vector', 'Spreadsheets', 'Text'

Paper Archive recipient LAARC

Paper Contents 'Stratigraphic'

Paper Media available 'Context sheet', 'Miscellaneous Material', 'Notebook - Excavation', 'Research', 'General Notes', 'Plan', 'Section'

Project bibliography

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

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