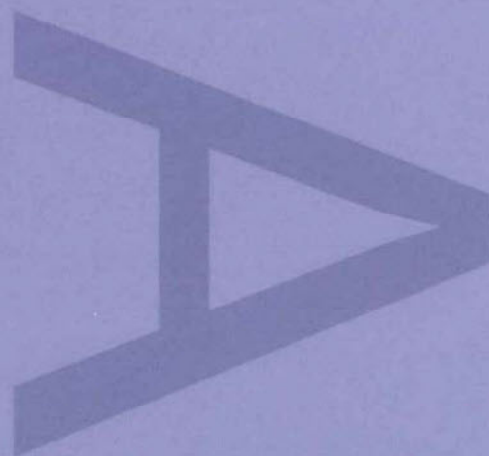
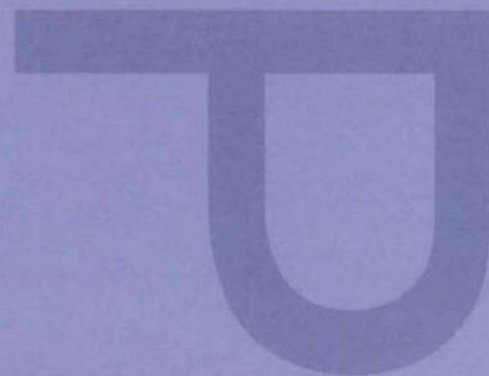


**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF AT 87-95
CURTAIN ROAD, LONDON
BOROUGH OF HACKNEY, EC2A**



JUNE 2009

PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

DOCUMENT VERIFICATION

Site Name

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Type of project

Watching Brief

Quality Control

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**An Archaeological Watching Brief at 87-95 Curtain Road, London
Borough of Hackney EC2A**

Site Code: CTJ 09

Central National Grid Reference: TQ 3325 8244

**Written and Researched by Ireneo Grosso
Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, June 2009**

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June 2009**

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1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results and working methods of an archaeological watching brief conducted on a geotechnical site investigation at 87-95 Curtain Road, Shoreditch, London Borough of Hackney. The site is centred at National Grid Reference TQ 3325 8244.

- 1.2 The watching brief found evidence for flood plain gravel, which forms a terrace of higher ground overlooking the River Thames, in turn sealed by natural brickearth. Undated re-deposited brickearth and post-medieval layers/fills predating the construction of the existing building were observed within the basement. These layers/fills can be speculated to belong to the N-S return of the ditch surrounding Holywell Priory located just to the east of the study site which survived as a boundary feature well into the 18th century. Natural deposits were not encountered elsewhere on site and the remainder of the deposits within the monitored test pits constituted concrete slabs, made ground and backfills. These were associated with the construction of the foundation and floors of the existing buildings which currently occupy the site.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at 87-95 Curtain Road, Shoreditch, London Borough of Hackney between 25th May and 2nd June 2009 (Fig. 1). The watching brief monitored the excavation of 6 geotechnical test pits in advance of the redevelopment of the existing building.
- 2.2 The work was commissioned by Milk on behalf of Pilgrim Trustee Services Ltd. The watching brief was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd, project managed by Peter Moore and supervised by Ireneo Grosso. A WSI¹ was prepared by Peter Moore and approved by David Divers, English Heritage (GLAAS).
- 2.3 The site is located within an Archaeological Priority Area as defined in the London Borough of Hackney UDP and lies on the western boundary of the medieval Priory of Saint John the Baptist (Holywell Priory). The western and northern boundary of the priory were defined by a ditch which was extent into at least the 18th century, the medieval origin of which has been proven by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited on a site on the northern side of Bateman's Row.²
- 2.4 The study site is bound by Curtain Road to the east, by Burbage House to the south and southwest, by Mills Court to the west and by 97 Curtain Road to the north.
- 2.4 The completed archive comprising written and drawn records will be deposited at the Museum of London under the site code CTJ09.

¹ P. Moore, "Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief, at 87-95 Curtain Road, London Borough of Hackney EC2A", Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited unpublished report, May 2009.

² D. Mulligan, "An Archaeological Watching Brief at 22-24 Bateman's Row, Shoreditch, London Borough of Hackney EC2", Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited unpublished report, July 2008.

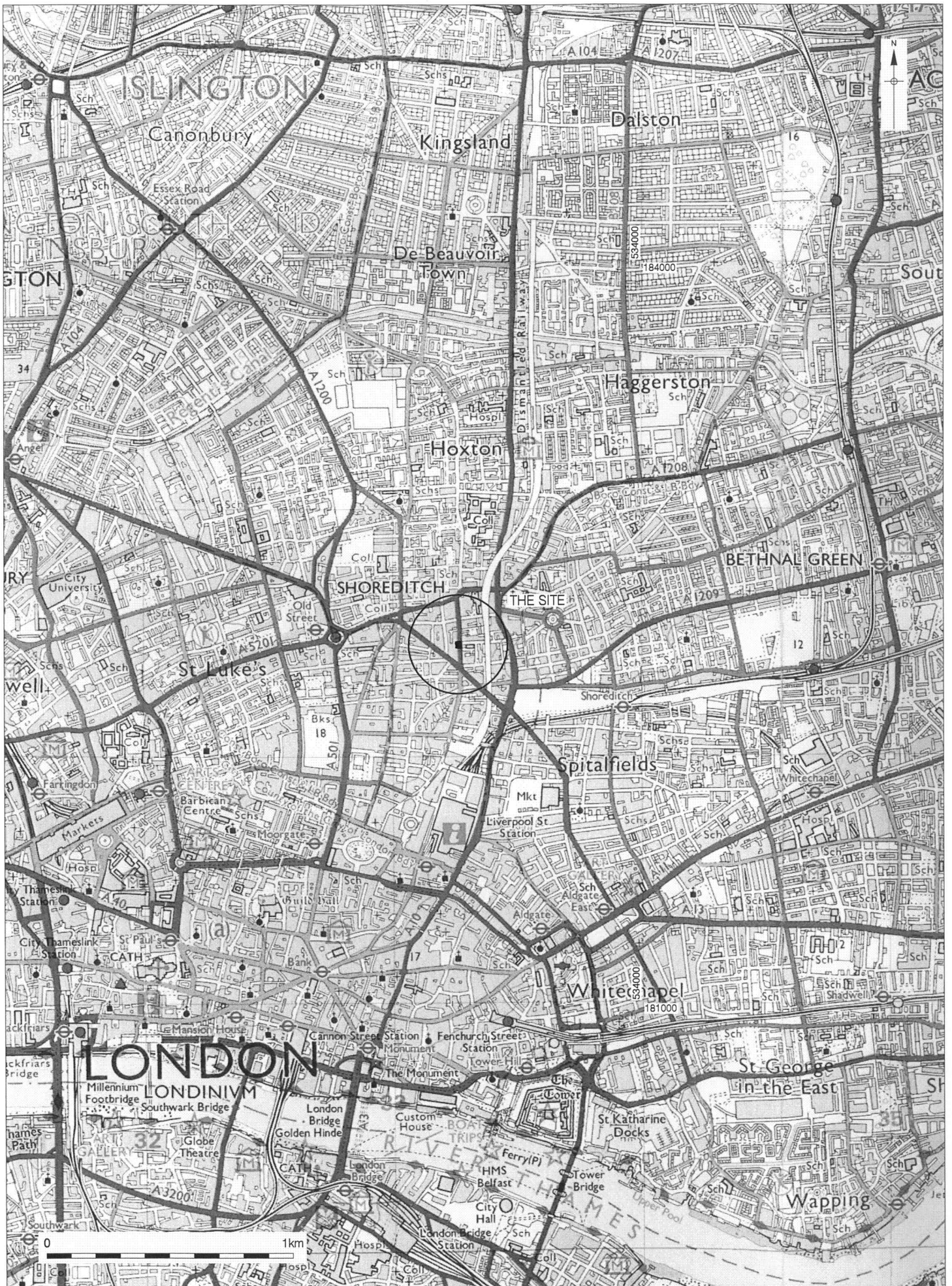


Figure 1
 Site Location
 1:20,000 at A4



Figure 2
Trench Location
1:200 at A4

3 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 3.1 The site lies on flood plain gravel, which forms a terrace of higher ground overlooking the River Thames. The geological survey indicates that the terrace gravel is capped by naturally deposited brickearth.
- 3.2 Two buildings occupy the site. The northern building incorporates a basement with a floor level at 12.75m OD, surrounded on three sides by a raised platform at 13.35m OD. The southern building has a floor level at the eastern entrance of 15.30m OD but the rest of the building has a raised floor with a level of 16.14m OD.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 The site is situated within the Archaeological Priority Zone centred on Shoreditch and the upper branches of the Walbrook Stream. Pre-Construct Archaeology prepared an Archaeological Desktop Assessment for a site at New Inn Yard Shoreditch, just south of the study site.³ The following discussion draws heavily from that report.

4.2 Prehistoric

4.2.1 The source of the Walbrook stream has long been associated with the area around Holywell Road, directly south of the study site, running down Curtain Road into the City.

4.2.2 Very little prehistoric material has been recorded in the vicinity of the study site. A chipped flint tranchet axe (SMR ref: 080011/00/00) was recorded at Great Eastern Street, but overall, evidence for the prehistoric period in the area is lacking.

4.3 Roman

4.3.1 The site lies to the west of the supposed route of Ermine Street, the main route heading north out of London. Ermine Street is believed to follow the line of Shoreditch High Street and Kingsland Road.

4.3.2 Excavations by the DGLA in 1989 between Holywell Lane and New Inn Yard identified Roman activity including 2nd and 4th century, very well preserved Roman pottery and pieces of tegula. This may suggest the presence of a building in the near vicinity of the site.

4.4 Saxon

4.4.1 The name Shoreditch is derived from the Saxon *Scoredich* which has been interpreted as “ditch of Sceorf “or ditch leading to the [Thames] shore. However no Saxon finds or settlement have yet been identified in this area. A series of clay deposits sealing Roman activity were noted in the 1989 excavation and were presumed to be of this period, although a lack of finds supports this.

4.5 Medieval

³ H. Clough, “An Archaeological Desktop Assessment of Land at New Inn Broadway, Shoreditch, London Borough of Hackney”, Pre-Construct Archaeology unpublished report 2003.

- 4.5.1 The earliest reference to *Scoredich* is c. 1148 and properly refers to a drainage ditch leading down to the Thames.
- 4.5.2 The most important site in medieval Shoreditch was the Priory of St John the Baptist or usually known as Holywell Priory. The priory was founded between 1133 and 1162 by Robert Fitz Generan and became the richest community of Augustinian nuns in England. The original priory site was three acres in size and included the Prioress's pasture, known as the curtain, to the south of Holywell Lane. The main part of the priory was located north of Holywell Lane and south of Bateman's Row. The southern part of the site was excavated by the DGLA in 1989. The excavations (SMR ref: 080141/00/0) revealed at least three phases of building on the site 2.50m below the current ground level. The excavation identified the south isle of the church, a series of small chapels and possibly the south transept. Many of the walls had been robbed-out, but some remained extant to c. 1m high, including one wall that contained a possible reliquary niche. Two burials within the interior of the church were identified, as were 15th century decorated floor tiles still in situ. The boundary wall of the priory was located south of the excavation, running near to and parallel with Holywell Lane.
- 4.5.3 The western and northern boundaries of the priory were defined by a ditch which is illustrated on Horwood's 1813 map of the area and on a 1927 representation of the 1540's priory. An archaeological investigation by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited⁴ at 22-24 Bateman's Row (i.e. the northern side of the road) found a medieval cut circa 7.5m wide which, although quite wide, is believed to be part of the ditch surrounding the priory as it contained pottery sherds dating between 1140-1300. It is therefore likely that the corresponding southern ditch return will be situated along the western side of Curtain Road, i.e. within the subject site.

4.6 Post-Medieval

- 4.6.1 In the 16th century, the southern part of the priory site was leased to Thomas, Earl of Rutland, who constructed a mansion, some of which was identified in the 1989 excavation. However this mansion is not believed to extend to the west of the priory precinct, where the study site is located.
- 4.6.2 The priory was demolished during the Dissolution but the gatehouse survived and was later demolished c 1800. The 1989 excavations discovered a layer of demolition rubble which sealed most of the priory structures. Finds from this layer included

twisted window leads, broken moulded masonry and floor tiles. Two large pits were found, containing organic material and finds dated to the 16th century. These pits were likely to have been dug after the Dissolution.

- 4.6.3 During the Tudor period the population of London increased in size and greater occupation of the suburbs inevitably took place. The area around Shoreditch became inhabited by the poor, and expanded rapidly throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. Shoreditch and Hoxton were notorious for their taverns and theatres in this period.
- 4.6.4 In 1576 a theatre was constructed within the priory site by a local man James Burbage, and its location at the junction of Curtain Road and New Inn Yard, and its construction of timber in an octagonal shape has very recently been confirmed by an archaeological investigation by MoLA.⁵ This was demolished and rebuilt on the south bank where it became known as the Globe.
- 4.6.5 A second theatre, The Curtain, was built nearby in 1577 located near to the junction of Curtain Road and Hewlett Street. Shakespeare acted here and it is believed that *Romeo and Juliet* was first performed here. The Curtain fell into disuse by 1625, and was destroyed by the great fire of London in 1666.
- 4.6.6. The 1989 priory excavation found a thick layer of garden or agricultural soil dated to the 17th century, sealed the demolition material of the dissolution date. Cut into this layer were 18th century basements and cesspits indicative of the development of slums in the area during this period.
- 4.6.7 Horwood's 1813 map shows the presence of a building on the western side of the ditch in the location of the subject site.
- 4.6.8 By 1851 Shoreditch was inhabited by 109,000 people and the area was renowned for its overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. The arrival of the railway in 1872 passing east of the study site is still in use today.
- 4.6.9 Slum clearance began in the 1920s and 30s. The area was heavily bombed during the Second World War, it was not until after this period that the area was extensively redeveloped

⁴ D Mulligan, "An Archaeological Watching Brief at 22-24 Bateman's Row, Shoreditch, London Borough of Hackney EC2", Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited unpublished report, July 2008.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 The watching brief monitored the excavation of 6 test pits within the footprint of the properties at 87-95 Curtain Road, Shoreditch, London Borough of Hackney (Fig. 2). The Test Pits were required to assess the depths of the foundation of the existing buildings.

5.2 Following the breaking of the concrete floor the test pits were excavated by hand. Test Pit 4 was abandoned because of the difficulties in removing the encountered reinforced concrete.

5.3 The test pits dimensions were:

Test Pit 1	1.64m north to south, 0.64m east to west and 0.86m deep
Test Pit 2	0.70m north to south, 2.00m east to west and 1.85m deep
Test Pit 3	0.70m north to south, 1.30m east to west and 0.57m deep
Test Pit 4	1.70m north to south, 1.08m east to west and 0.20m deep
Test Pit 5	0.90m north to south, 1.50m east to west and 1.70m deep
Test Pit 6	0.60m north to south, 1.10m east to west and 1.50m deep

5.4 The test pits were scanned for services by the contractor prior to the commencement of the ground works. An archaeologist was in attendance throughout the removal of all below ground deposits.

5.5 The site was given the code CTJ09.

⁵ <http://www.museumoflondonarchaeology.org.uk/English/News/Current/the+theatre.htm>

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

6.1 Test Pit 1 (Fig.3)

- 6.1.1 Test Pit 1, located near the north east corner of the basement, was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.86m below concrete floor surface and encountered a naturally deposited brickearth horizon [9] at 12.51m OD, about 0.08m thick but not fully excavated.
- 6.1.2 Sealing the natural brickearth was a 0.20m thick re-deposited brickearth layer/fill [8], with occasional charcoal flecks, found at 12.71m OD. This re-deposited brickearth was sealed in turn by a 0.35m thick, moderately compacted, dark brown sandy organic clayey layer/fill [7], at 13.04m OD containing sherds of post-medieval flowerpot dating between 1660 and 1900, London post-medieval Redware dating between 15580 and 1900 and Essex Fine post-medieval Redware dating between 1580 and 1700.
- 6.1.3 The remainder of the test pit comprised 0.62m of concrete foundation for the eastern wall of the basement which truncated [7] to the west at 13.04m OD and by 0.35m thick modern made ground and concrete floor at 13.35m OD which represented the ground surface in the vicinity of the test pit.

6.2 Test Pit 2

- 6.2.1 Test Pit 2, located against the northern wall of the basement, was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.85m from concrete floor surface and encountered a naturally deposited brickearth [12] at 12.58m OD which in turn sealed the flood plain sandy gravel horizon.
- 6.2.2 Sealing the natural horizon [12] was a 0.16m thick re-deposited brickearth layer/fill [11] with occasional charcoal flecks at 12.73m OD, which was sealed at 13.13m OD by a 0.40m thick, moderately compacted, dark brown sandy organic clayey layer/fill [10]. This context contained occasional animal bone fragments, post-medieval pottery sherds (Black Glazeware, Midlands Purpleware and London area Redware) dating between 1480 and 1900, and clay tobacco pipe stems dating between 1580 and 1780.
- 6.2.3 The remainder of the test pit was occupied by a concrete foundation for the northern wall of the basement, measuring 1.20m E-W and 0.65m N-S and 1.50m thick (not

fully excavated), which truncated context [10] at 13.12m. The construction cut for the concrete foundation was topped by a modern deposit and in turn sealed by a 0.25m thick modern concrete floor at 13.35m OD.

6.3 Test Pit 3

6.3.1 Test Pit 3, located just south of the staircase leading to the basement in the NW corner of the site, was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.57m from concrete floor level and encountered a 0.20m thick layer of very firm and compacted sandy gravelly clay [13] at 12.38m OD. No finds were recovered from this layer. While only a limited amount of the context was excavated, and the lighting was poor, if compared with the sequence and levels of the stratigraphy observed in Test Pits 1 and 2, this layer is very likely to represent the interface between the bottom of the natural brickearth and the underlying natural sandy gravel flood plain horizon, i.e. below the archaeological horizon.

6.3.2 Context [13] was truncated at 12.38m OD by the modern concrete foundation for the western wall of the basement. The modern levelling layer at 12.51m OD and the modern concrete floor at 12.75m OD sealed the modern concrete foundation.

6.4 Test Pit 4

6.4.1 Test Pit 4, located south of the basement and against the western wall of the present building, was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.20m from concrete floor level at 16.14m OD but was abandoned because of the difficulty in breaking through the very thick reinforced concrete in this part of the site.

6.5 Test Pit 5

6.5.1 Test Pit 5, located against the southern wall of the southern property, which separates the study site from Burbage House to the south, was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.70m from concrete floor level. At 14.44m OD it encountered the late post-medieval concrete foundation [6] for the existing southern property wall. The concrete foundation was sealed at 14.75m OD by a 0.28m thick backfill [4], containing fragments of post-medieval pottery (Developed Creamware) datable between 1760 and 1830 and clay tobacco pipe stems datable between 1580 and 1910.

6.5.2 The modern foundation [6] was later modified when footing [5], abutting [6] to the east, was constructed. Construction cut [3] truncated backfill [4] at 14.75m OD and contained brick footings [5] and backfill [2] at 15.34m OD and at 14.75m OD respectively. Backfill [2] was sealed at 15.04m OD by a 0.32m thick layer [1], associated with the floor surface predating the modern concrete floor, which is the result of the redevelopment of the properties during the 1950s.

6.5.3 The remainder of the test pit comprised 0.86m thick modern made ground deposit found at 15.74m OD, for the construction of the raised 1950s floor at 16.14m OD which is part of the present property.

6.6 Test Pit 6

6.6.1 Test Pit 6, located near the SE corner of the site and just next to the south entrance of the site, was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.50m from concrete floor level. Mixed lumps of concrete and other late post-medieval demolition material was observed at 14.49m OD which in turn was sealed by modern demolition rubble mixed with clay at 15.05m OD. The existing concrete floor at 15.30m OD sealed the sequence of late post-medieval and modern deposits.

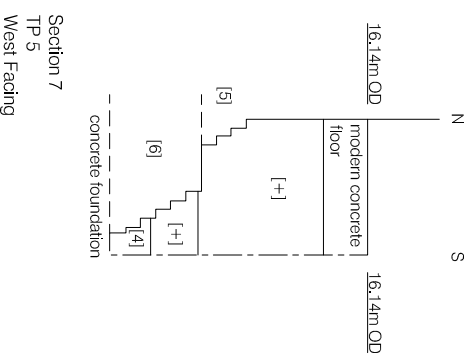
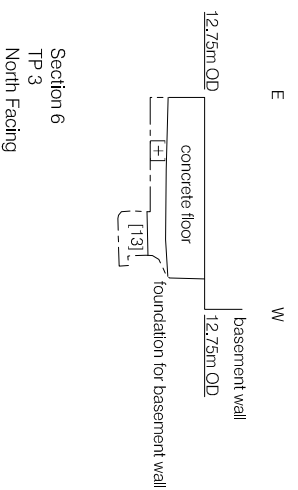
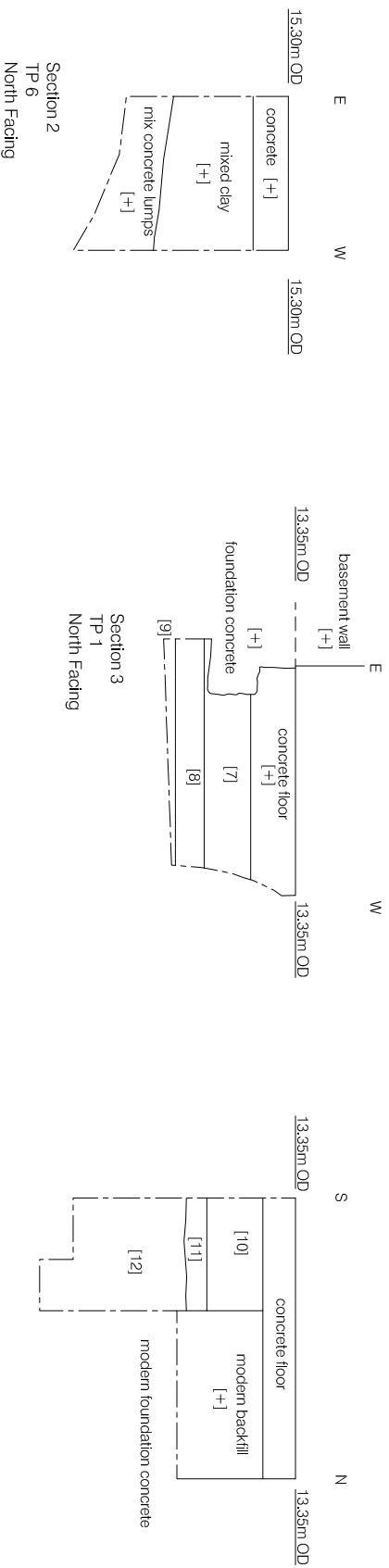


Figure 3
Sections 2 - 4 and 6 & 7
1:50 at A4

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The site consisted of two buildings along Curtain Road. The northern building had a basement with an elevated “bench” around the north, east and south walls, in which post-medieval archaeological deposits were encountered and the top of natural was found at 12.51-8m OD. The floor level of the reduced central area was at 12.75m OD and the top of the natural there was at 12.35m OD (in Test Pit 3) showing the considerable truncation of all deposits down to and into natural.
- 7.2 The natural deposits consisted of brickearth overlying the flood plain sandy gravel horizon. The post-medieval deposits, possibly dated to the late 17th century, consisted of a redeposited brickearth and darker soil horizon. While the limited area of investigation meant that no cut was observed in the test pits, their levels were consistent with the levels of the lower fills belonging to the E-W part of the medieval boundary ditch of Holywell Priory recorded during the watching brief at 22-24 Bateman’s Row⁶, situated a short distance to the east. Consequentially it can be speculated that they belong to either a post-medieval re-cut of the original medieval boundary ditch surrounding Holywell Priory, or to a later post-medieval cut feature.
- 7.3 Outside the footprint of the basement the test pits were too shallow and small to observe the deposits pre-dating the construction of the current building, though it was observed that post-medieval artefacts were present in the backfill of a construction trench.
- 7.4 No evidence of basements predating the construction of the existing southern building has yet been found.

⁶ D Mulligan, “An Archaeological Watching Brief at 22-24 Bateman’s Row, Shoreditch, London Borough of Hackney EC2”, Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited unpublished report, July 2008.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Clough, H. 2003, "An Archaeological Desktop Assessment of Land at New Inn Broadway, Shoreditch, London Borough of Hackney", Pre-Construct Archaeology unpublished report.

Moore, P. 2009, "Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief, at 87-95 Curtain Road, London Borough of Hackney EC2A", Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited unpublished report.

Mulligan, D. 2008, "An Archaeological Watching Brief at 22-24 Bateman's Row, Shoreditch, London Borough of Hackney EC2", Pre-Construct Archaeology unpublished report.

<http://www.museumoflondonarchaeology.org.uk/English/News/Current/the+theatre.htm>

9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank Stephen Foster, Milk, for commissioning the work, Pilgrim Trustee Services Ltd for funding it and David Divers for his monitoring and advice. We would also like to thank the staff and occupants of the buildings, especially Garfield and Liam, for their welcome and tolerance.
- 9.2 The author would like to thank Aidan Turner for his help on site, Jenny Simonson for the illustrations, Chris Jarrett for the pottery spot dating and Peter Moore for his project management and editing.

Appendix 1: Context Index

Trench No.	Context No.	Plan	Section / Elevation	Type	Description	Date	Highest Level	Lowest Level
TP 5	1		1, 7	Fill	Post-medieval backfill of construction cut for foundations (5) and (6)	28/05/2009	15.04m OD	14.97m OD
TP 5	2		1	Fill	Post-medieval backfill of construction cut [3] for foundation (5)	28/05/2009	14.78m OD	14.75m OD
TP 5	3		1	Cut	Construction cut for wall (5) and backfill (2)	28/05/2009	14.75m OD	14.46m OD
TP 5	4		1, 7	Fill	Post-medieval backfill of construction cut for foundations (6)	28/05/2009	14.75m OD	14.70m OD
TP 5	5	Plan location TP 5	7	Masonry	Post-medieval foundation	28/05/2009	15.34m OD	
TP 5	6	Plan location TP 5	7	Masonry	Post-medieval foundation	28/05/2009	15.04m OD	14.44m OD
TP 1	7		3	Fill/Layer	Post-medieval layer/fill of ditch	01/06/2009	13.04m OD	12.99m OD
TP 1	8		3	Fill/Layer	Post-medieval layer/fill of ditch	01/06/2009	12.71m OD	12.70m OD
TP 1	9		3	Layer	Natural brickearth	01/06/2009	12.51m OD	12.49m OD
TP 2	10		4, 5	Fill/Layer	Post-medieval layer/fill of ditch, same as (7)	02/06/2009	13.13m OD	13.11m OD
TP 2	11		4, 5	Fill/Layer	Post-medieval layer/fill of ditch, same as (7)	02/06/2009	12.73m OD	12.71m OD
TP 2	12		4,5	Layer	Natural brickearth and sandy gravel	02/06/2009	12.58m OD	12.56m OD
TP 3	13		6	Layer	Re-deposited sandy clay	02/06/2009	12.38m OD	12.37m OD

Appendix 2: 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

1.2 OASIS ID: preconst1-60853

Project details

Project name 87-95 Curtain Road, London Borough of Hackney EC2A

Short description of the project An archaeological watching brief was conducted on a geotechnical site investigation at 87-95 Curtain Road, Shoreditch, London Borough of Hackney. The site is centred at National Grid Reference TQ 3325 8244. The watching brief found evidence for flood plain gravel, which forms a terrace of higher ground overlooking the River Thames, in turn sealed by natural brickearth. Re-deposited brickearth and post-medieval layers/fills predating the construction of the existing building were observed within the basement, and may date to the late 17th century. These layers/fills can be speculated to belong to a recut of the N-S return of the ditch surrounding Holywell Priory located just to the east of the study site which survived as a boundary feature well into the 18th century. Natural deposits were not encountered elsewhere on site and the remainder of the deposits within the monitored test pits constituted concrete slabs, made ground and backfills. These were associated with the construction of the foundation and floors of the existing buildings which currently occupy the site.

Project dates Start: 25-05-2009 End: 02-06-2009

Previous/future work No / Yes

Any associated project reference codes CTJ09 - Sitecode

Type of project Recording project

Site status Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area

Current Land use Industry and Commerce 2 - Offices

Monument type DITCH FILLS Post Medieval

Significant Finds POTTERY Post Medieval

Significant Finds CLAY TOBACCO PIPE Post Medieval

Investigation type 'Watching Brief'

Prompt Voluntary/self-interest

Project location

Country England

Site location GREATER LONDON HACKNEY HACKNEY 87-95 Curtain Road

Postcode EC2A

Study area 750.00 Square metres

Site coordinates TQ 3325 8244 51.5246360886 -0.07902124598930 51 31 28 N 000 04 44 W Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 12.38m Max: 12.58m

Project creators

Name of Organisation Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd

Project brief originator Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd

Project design originator Peter Moore

Project director/manager Peter Moore

Project supervisor Ireneo Grosso

Type of sponsor/funding body Developer

Name of sponsor/funding body Pilgrim Trustee Services Limited

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient LAARC

Physical Contents 'Ceramics'

Digital Archive recipient LAARC

Digital Contents	'Stratigraphic'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Spreadsheets','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Contents	'Stratigraphic'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Correspondence','Map','Matrices','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section','Unpublished Text'

Project bibliography 1

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2 OASIS:

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