

**Rolls House and Arnold House, 4 – 6 Breams Buildings, City of London:  
An Archaeological Evaluation**

**Site Code: RLH 01  
Central National Grid Reference: TQ 3125 8132**

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March 2005**

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March 2005**

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## 1 ABSTRACT

This report details the background and findings from an archaeological field evaluation at Rolls Buildings and Breams Buildings, Fetter Lane, City of London EC4 (Fig 1), from the 7<sup>th</sup> February to 11<sup>th</sup> February 2005.

The evaluation was to comprise three trial pits in the basement of 8 Breams Buildings and six trial pits around the exterior of Rolls House and Arnold House (Fig 2). Previous watching briefs on the excavation of four trial pits and two boreholes found no archaeological deposits, while a third borehole found a deposit of peat.

The six exterior trial pits were not excavated due to the presence of live services, whilst the three basement trial pits revealed the presence of natural clayey sand and a series of post-medieval features.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> February 2005, on nine trial pits, 2m x 2m, situated at Rolls House and Arnold House, at Rolls Buildings and 4 – 8 Breams Buildings, Fetter Lane, London EC4, National Grid Reference TQ 3125 8132 (Fig 1). However due to the presence of live services the 6 exterior pits were not excavated.
- 2.2 The trial pits aimed to ascertain the extent of archaeological evidence within the study area. They were excavated in advance of proposed redevelopment and to meet the requirements of Policy Planning Guidance 16 and the London Unitary Development Plan.
- 2.3 An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment was written by Paul Chadwick of CgMs Consulting (Chadwick 2001) and a Method Statement for the Archaeological Evaluation was written by Peter Moore of PCA (Moore, 2004). The work was commissioned by Paul Chadwick, CgMs Consulting on behalf of Delancey Arnold Company. The evaluation was undertaken by the author, and was project managed by Peter Moore.
- 2.4 Previous watching briefs (McClellan 2001, Boyer 2004, Maher 2005) on four trial pits and 3 boreholes revealed no archaeological deposits whilst a third borehole found a deposit of peat.
- 2.5 The site code is RLH 01.



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Figure 1  
Site Location  
1:10,000

### **3 PLANNING BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The evaluation undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology aimed to gather further information on the ground conditions in specific areas, and if possible, to extrapolate stratigraphic horizons to other parts of the site, in order to assist design mitigation measures to accompany the redevelopment of the site for which planning permission has recently been granted.

## **4 GEOLOGICAL AND TOPOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND**

4.1 The geological and topographical background of the site and surrounding area has been detailed within an Archaeological Desk Based Assessment written by Paul Chadwick of CgMs, this report will summarise the information.

### **4.2 Geology**

4.2.1 The site is underlain by London Clay, above this lies a series of gravel terraces, which is capped by Brickearth.

4.2.2 In the vicinity of the site, the gravel terrace is classified as the Taplow / Mucking Terrace and is generally at approximately 11m to 15m OD.

4.2.3 The Brickearth capping the gravels is about 2m thick. However, it has frequently been truncated by quarrying, prehistoric and Roman agriculture and the construction of modern basemented buildings.

4.2.4 To the east of the study site, the thickness and extent of terrace gravel and Brickearth deposits have been modified by erosion from the River Fleet and its tributary streams (Chadwick 2001).

### **4.3 Topography**

4.3.1 The topography of the area suggests that it occupies part of a gently sloping gravel/brickearth terrace. At the junction of Breams Buildings and Fetter Lane the level is 17.9m OD. This level is constant to the west and to the south the level steadily drops to 13m OD on Fleet Street and to the north it rises to 18.5m at Holborn. To the east the level drops to 12m OD on Shoe Lane.

4.3.2 Past observations of the underlying gravels suggest that a tributary valley of the River Fleet extends into this area, and recent excavations have confirmed that a water feature, perhaps a fishpond, within a shallow valley occurs nearby (Chadwick 2001).

4.3.3 The upper surface of the garden at the front of Arnold House slopes from 18.18mOD in the north to 17.98m OD in the south.

## **5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **5.1 Prehistoric**

5.1.1 There is no evidence for prehistoric occupation or artefactual evidence from the study site. However, excavations in the City of London regularly recover prehistoric artefactual remains.

### **5.2 Roman**

5.2.1 The site lies outside the walls of the Roman City of *Londinium* and it is unlikely that core settlement or roads of this period are present. Recent research suggests that it is unlikely that cemetery remains are present either. However quarry pits associated with brickearth and gravel extraction may be present.

### **5.3 Saxon – Medieval**

5.3.1 Neither Saxon nor early Medieval structural or artefactual evidence are likely to be present as the site was thought to be open fields during this period.

### **5.4 Post Medieval**

5.4.1 During the Elizabethan period the area around the study site underwent a period of urbanisation due to increased prosperity.

5.4.2 By the mid 1600's the Holborn area was characterised by slums. During the Great Fire of London the buildings around Fetter Lane were blown up to provide fire breaks. Since then subsequent buildings have been demolished and built on the area of the site.

5.4.3 It is likely that much archaeological strata has been impacted upon by previous development of the site and existing buildings contain single or double basements (G. Brown 2001).



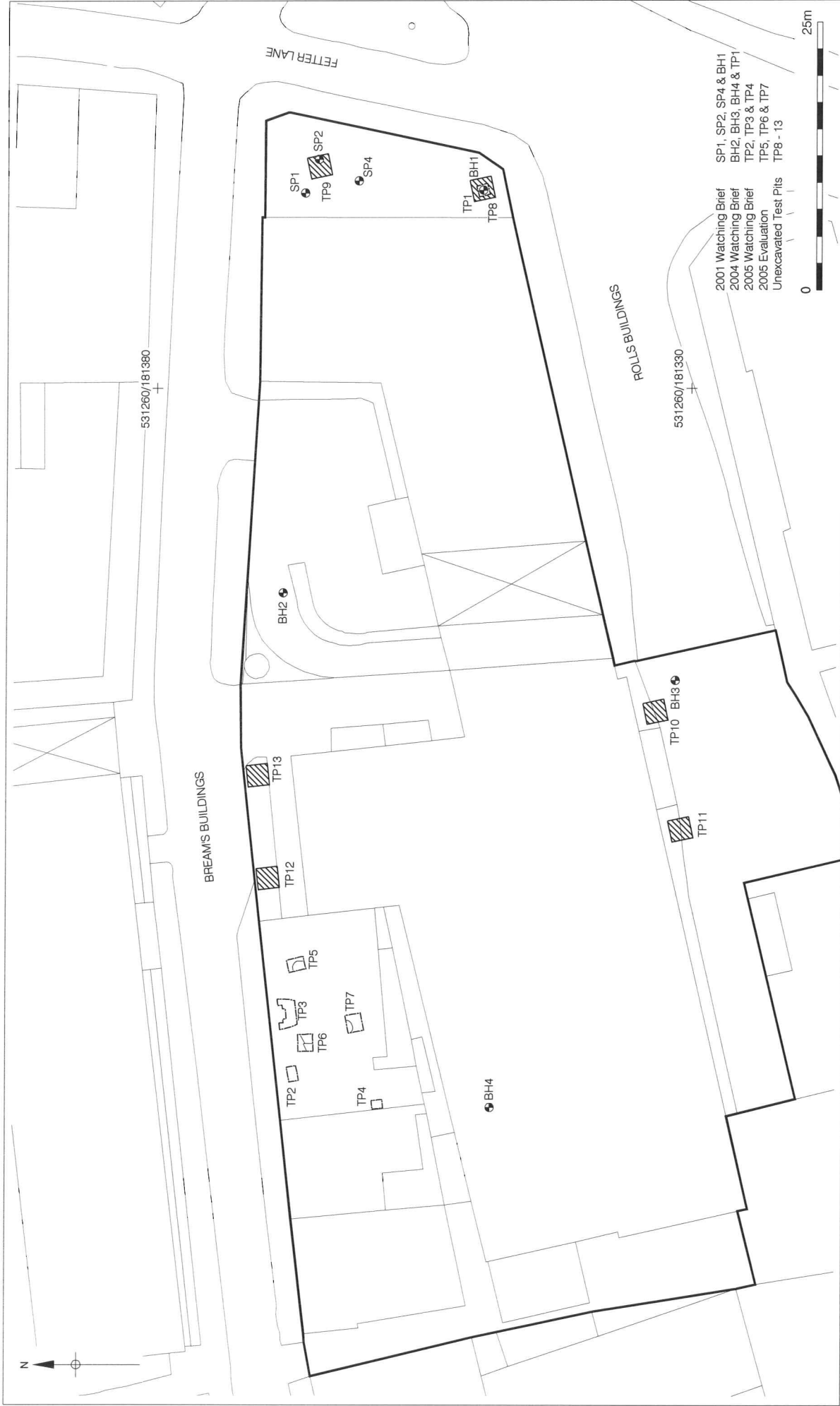


Figure 2  
 Test Pit, Borehole and Starter Pit Location  
 1:500

## **6 OBJECTIVES**

- 6.1 To establish whether, within the footprint of the gardens, the ground has been impacted upon by 18<sup>th</sup> century or later basement cellars.
- 6.2 If so, to determine whether any archaeological strata has survived below the cellar/basement levels.
- 6.3 To sample and assess the palaeo-environmental potential of the peat deposit south of Rolls Building.
- 6.4 If possible to ascertain the nature of Roman land uses at the site.
- 6.5 If possible to ascertain the nature of Saxon and early medieval land uses at the site.
- 6.6 If possible to ascertain the nature of later medieval and post-medieval land uses at the site.
- 6.7 To define the levels of truncation within the Breams Building and that of 19<sup>th</sup> century basements now outside the standing footprint.

## 7 METHODOLOGY

- 7.1 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the Method Statement (Moore, 2004).
- 7.2 Trial pits 5, 6 and 7 (2m x 2m) were excavated in the basement of Breams Building. Trail pits 8 to 13 could not be excavated due to the presence of live services (Fig. 2).
- 7.3 Concrete in the designated area of excavation was broken out by jackhammer under archaeological supervision.
- 7.4 All faces of the trial pits that required examination or recording were cleaned using appropriate hand tools. All investigation of archaeological levels was done by hand.
- 7.5 For each trial pit a photographic record was made (colour and black & white), a plan was drawn at 1:20, a section was drawn at 1:10, and context descriptions recorded on pro-forma sheets.
- 7.6 All trial pits were located to ordnance survey data and a datum of 16.65m OD was established on the concrete floor of the basement in Breams Buildings.

## **8 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE**

### **8.1 Trial Pit 5**

- 8.1.1 The earliest deposit observed was natural clayey sand at a level 16.25mOD (Fig 3).
- 8.1.2 Cutting this on the north and east of the trial pit was a near vertically sided feature, 1.29m deep and a minimum width of 0.74m. The primary fill [7] a dark grey brown sandy silt with a thickness of 130mm, this contained pottery sherds spot dated to between 1480 and 1550. The secondary fill [6] had a thickness of 290mm and was found to contain pottery with dates between 1550 and 1600. The remaining fills [1], [3], [4] and [5] were all found to contain pottery dated between 1480 and 1600. A clay pipe dated to between 1610 and 1640 was retrieved from context [1] and a slab of Purbeck Marble 0.52m x 340mm x 80mm was retrieved. A thin deposit of whitish grey sandy silt [2] was observed between [1] and [3] this contained no finds.

### **8.2 Trial Pit 6**

- 8.2.1 Natural clayey sand [15] was the earliest deposit observed, at 16.15mOD (Fig 4).
- 8.2.2 Cutting this the northern edge of a near vertical sided feature [14] was observed between 16.15mOD and 14.84mOD extending beyond the southern limit of excavation of the trial pit. The primary fill [13] was found to contain post-medieval pottery sherds spot dated to between 1480 and 1550. Fills [10], [11] and [12] were all found to contain post-medieval pottery these were dated to between 1480 and 1600.

### **8.3 Trial Pit 7**

- 8.3.1 Natural sandy gravels [29] were observed at 16.15mOD (Fig 5).
- 8.3.2 Cutting this a heavily truncated feature [28] was observed between 16.15mOD and 14.59mOD. A dark grey brown sandy silt deposit [27], 260mm deep, was the primary fill. Overlying this were fills [25] and [26], pottery sherds spot dated to between 1480 and 1600 were retrieved from [26].
- 8.3.3 Tertiary fill [25], a dark grey brown silty sand was found to be cut by feature [24] between 16.15mOD and 14.57mOD, in the south of the trial pit. Deposit [22], 150mm deep, was the primary fill, overlying this were fills [18], [19], [20] and [21]. Pottery dated to between 1480 and 1600 was retrieved from [18] and [21]. Animal bone was recovered in [21].

8.3.4 Feature [17] was observed between 16.15mOD and 15.50mOD cutting deposit [18] in the north of the trial pit. This was filled by [16], a light to mid grey brown silty sand, containing post-medieval pottery dated to between 1480 and 1550.

#### 8.4 Trial Pits 8,9,10,11,12,13

8.4.1 Not excavated due to live services

#### 8.5 Trench Summary

| Trial Pits | Boreholes | Features Recorded   |
|------------|-----------|---|
| 1          |           | None  |
|            | 2         | None  |
|            | 3         | post-medieval peat deposit observed at 14.74mOD               |
|            | 4         | None  |
| 2          |           | None  |
| 3          |           | None  |
| 4          |           | None  |
| 5          |           | post-medieval cut [8] observed at 16.25mOD                    |
| 6          |           | post-medieval cut [14] observed at 16.15mOD                   |
| 7          |           | post-medieval cuts [17], [24], [28] were observed at 16.15mOD |
| 8          |           | not excavated   |
| 9          |           | not excavated   |
| 10         |           | not excavated   |
| 11         |           | not excavated   |
| 12         |           | not excavated   |
| 13         |           | not excavated   |

## 9 CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 Natural clayey sand and sandy gravels were encountered 16.25mOD and 14.48mOD.
- 9.2 A series of post-medieval features, most likely 16<sup>th</sup> century gravel extraction pits, were found below the basement of 8 Brems Buildings. To the south of the buildings a peat deposit with post-medieval pottery was observed.
- 9.3 No other archaeological deposits were observed outside the building. This is most likely truncation by modern basements (see trench summary).

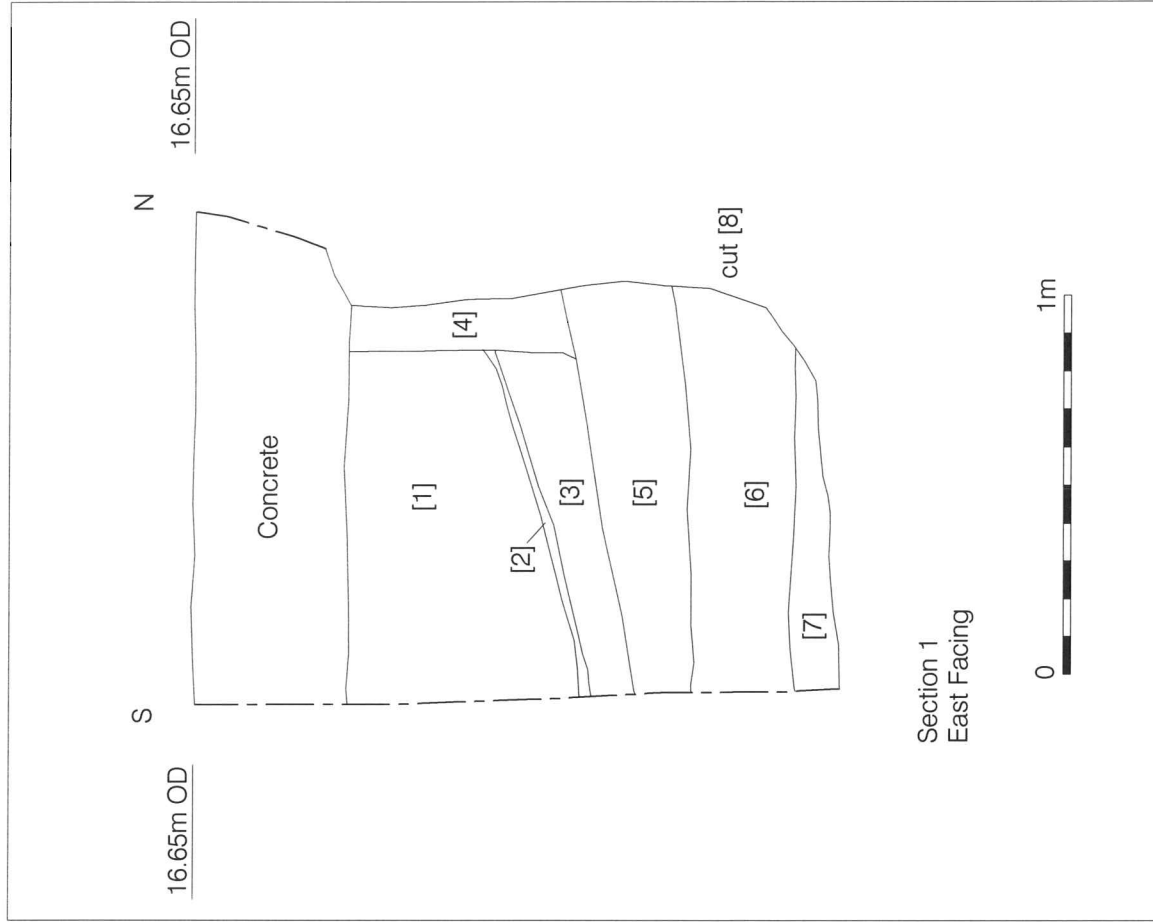
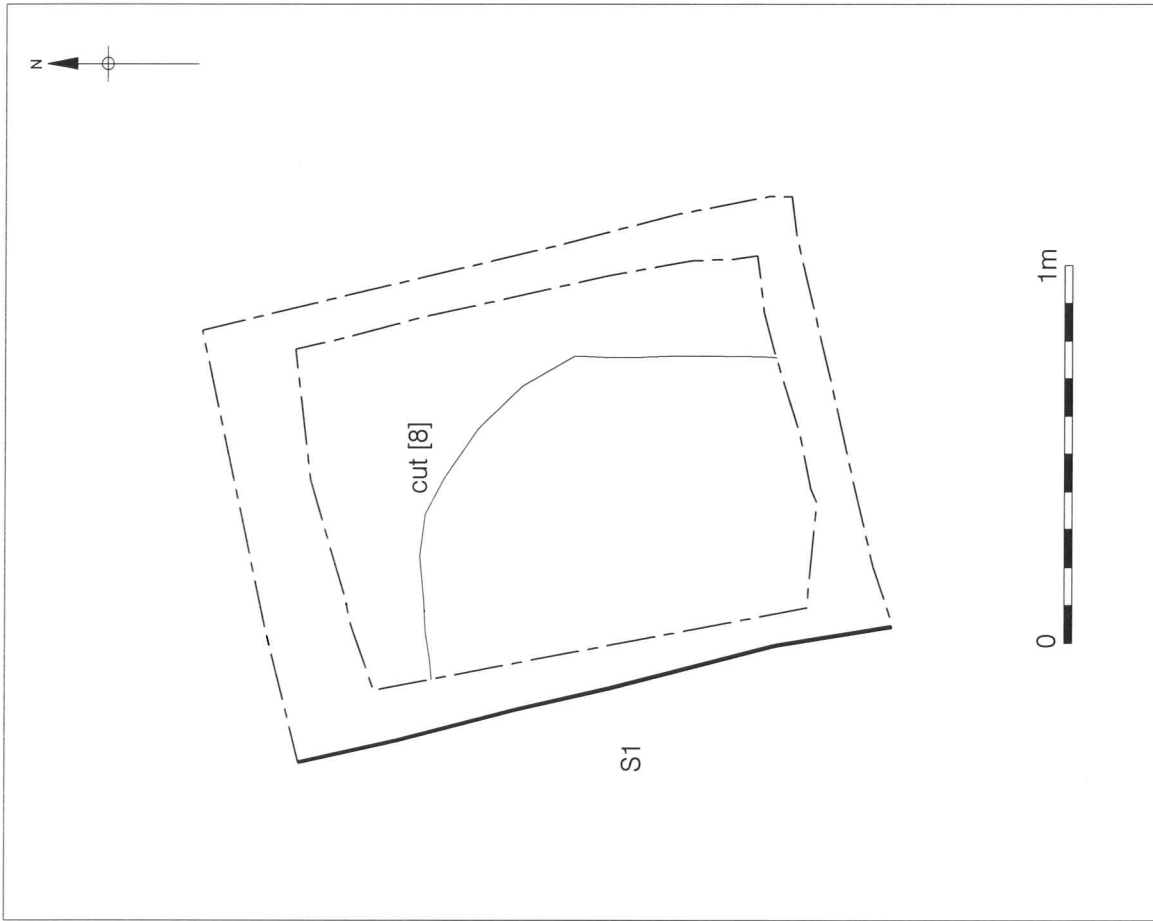


Figure 3  
 Test Pit 5: plan and section  
 1:20

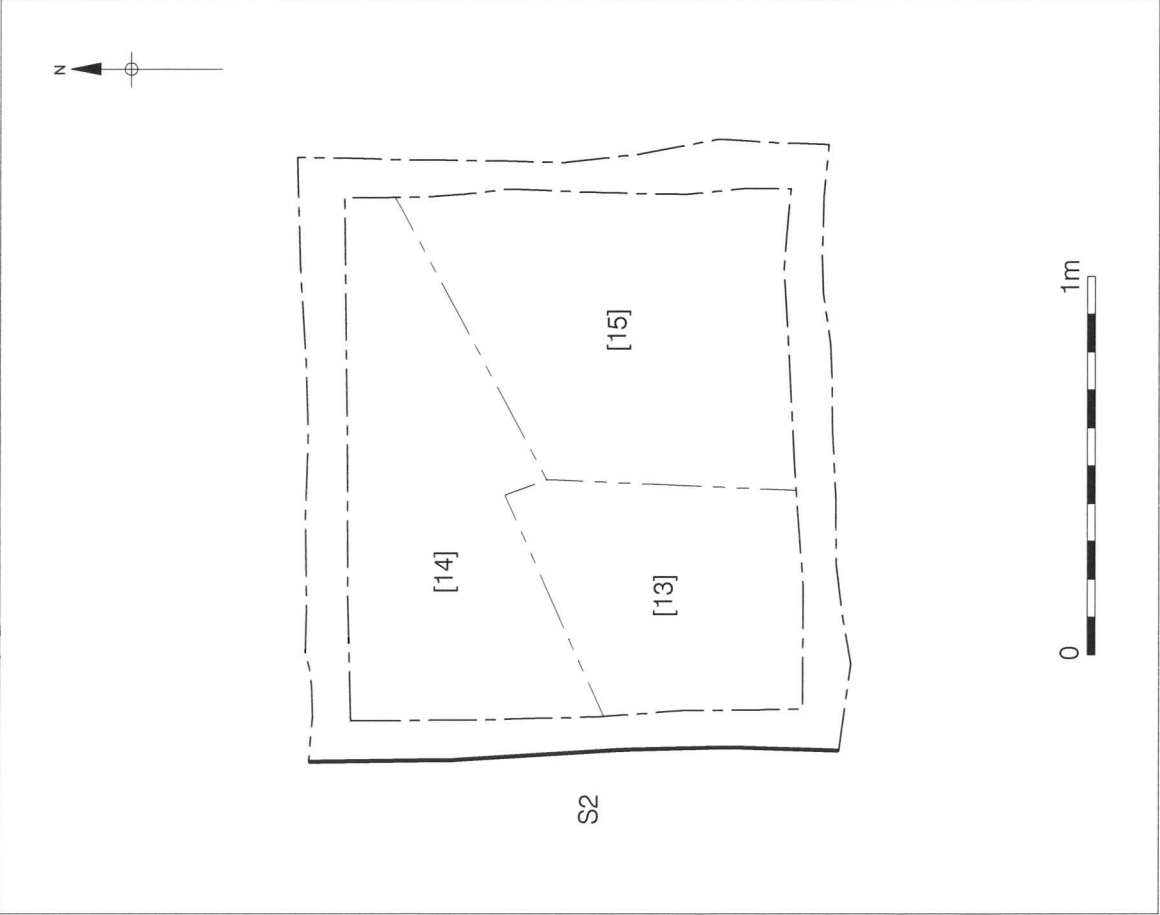
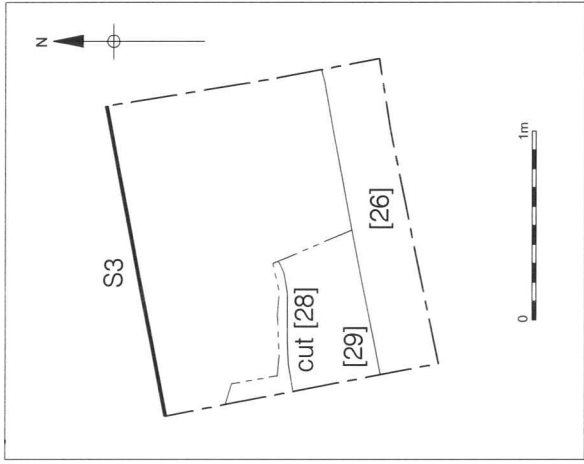
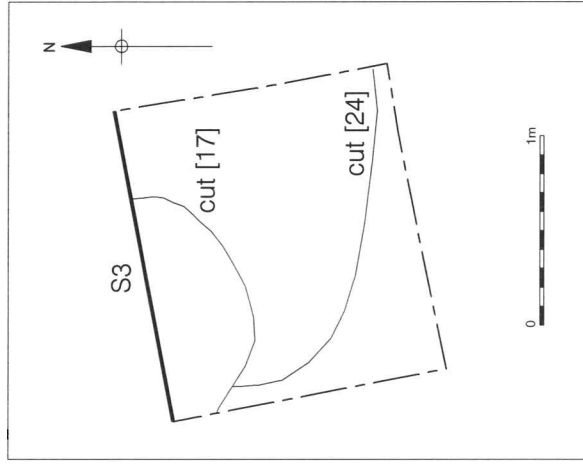


Figure 4  
 Test Pit 6: plan and section  
 1:20





Phase 1 of Test Pit 7



Phase 2 of Test Pit 7

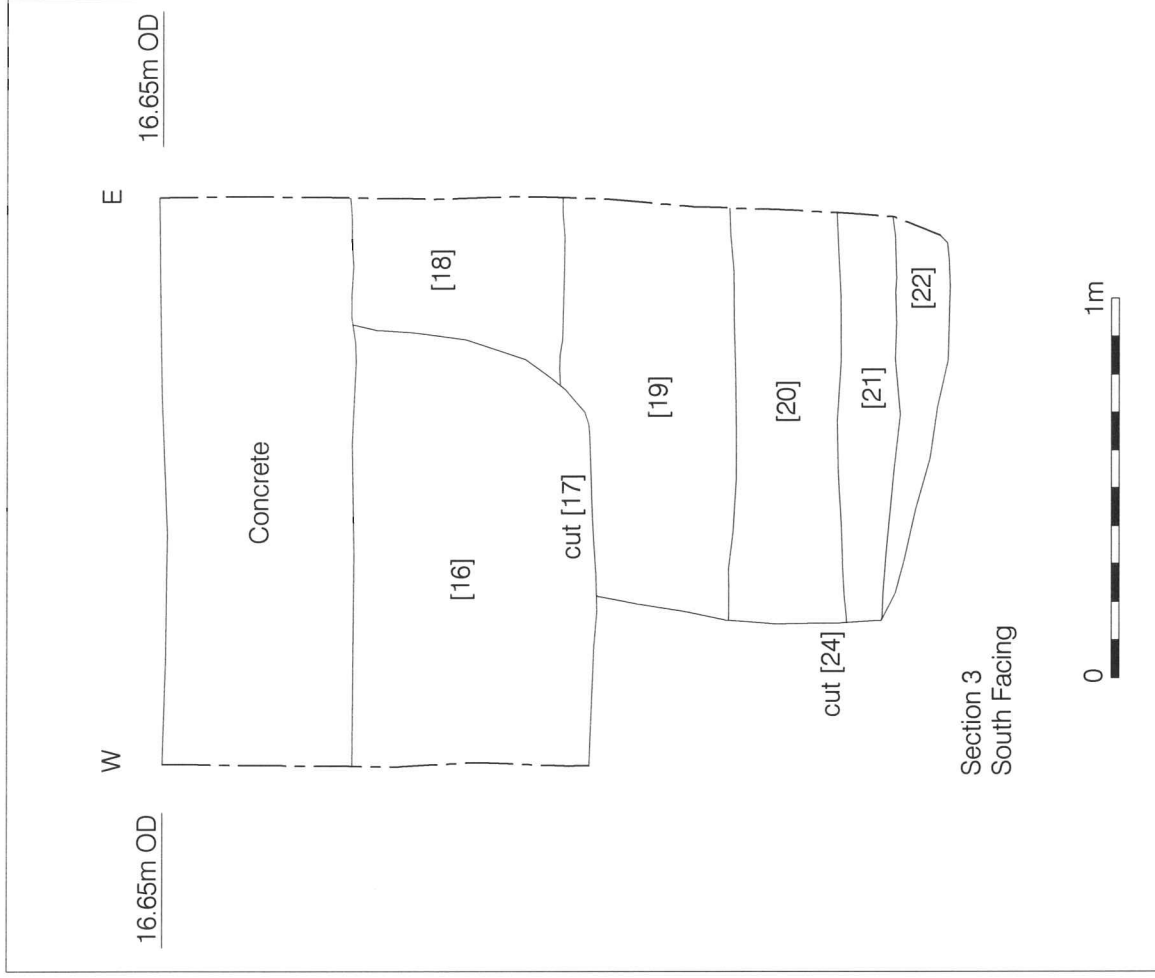


Figure 5  
Test Pit 7: plans and section  
1:40 / 1:20

## **10 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 10.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology and the author would like to thank Delancy Arnold Company for funding the watching brief, Paul Chadwick of CgMs Consulting for the desk based assessment and commissioning PCA to monitor the works. The author would like to thank Peter Moore for project management and Adrian Nash for the illustrations.

## 11 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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**APPENDIX 1 OASIS FORM**

# OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM

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## Printable version

**OASIS ID: preconst1-7383**

### Project details

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Project name                     | Rolls House and Arnold House 4-6 Breams Buildings, London |
| Short description of the project | Archaeological Evaluation                                 |
| Project dates                    | Start: 07-02-2005 End: 11-02-2005                         |
| Previous/future work             | Yes / Not known   |
| Type of project                  | Field evaluation  |
| Site status                      | Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI)                   |
| Current Land use                 | Other 2 - In use as a building                            |
| Monument type                    | PITS Post Medieval  |
| Significant Finds                | POTTERY Post Medieval                                     |
| Methods & techniques             | 'Test Pits'   |
| Development type                 | Urban commercial (e.g. offices, shops, banks, 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 CITY OF LONDON CITY OF LONDON Rolls House and Arnold House, 4-6 Breams Buildings, City of London |
| Postcode                | EC4   |
| Study area              | 12 Square metres  |
| National grid reference | TQ 3125 8132 Point  |
| Height OD               | Min: 16.15m Max: 16.25m   |

### Project creators

|                           |                               |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Name of Organisation      | Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd |
| Project brief originator  | CgMs Consultants Ltd          |
| Project design originator | Peter Moore                   |
| Project director/manager  | Peter Moore                   |
| Project supervisor        | Shane Maher                   |
| Sponsor or funding body   | Delancey Arnold Company       |

### Project archives

|                            |       |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Physical Archive recipient | LAARC |
|----------------------------|-------|

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Physical Contents         | 'Ceramics'  |
| Physical Archive Exists?  | Yes   |
| Digital Archive recipient | LAARC   |
| Digital Contents          | 'Ceramics','Stratigraphic','Survey'                                 |
| Digital Media available   | 'Survey'  |
| Digital Archive Exists?   | Yes   |
| Paper Archive recipient   | LAARC   |
| Paper Contents            | 'Ceramics','Stratigraphic','Survey'                                 |
| Paper Media available     | 'Context sheet','Map','Plan','Section','Survey ','Unpublished Text' |
| Paper Archive Exists?     | Yes   |

**Project bibliography**

1

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Publication type              | Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)  |
| Title                         | Rolls House and Arnold House, 4-6 Breems Buildings, City of London: An Archaeological Evaluation |
| Author(s)/Editor(s)           | Shane Maher  |
| Date                          | 2005   |
| Issuer or publisher           | Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited  |
| Place of issue or publication | London   |
| Description                   | Bound unpublished report   |
| Entered by                    | Peter Moore (pmoore@pre-construct.com)   |
| Entered on                    | 18 March 2005  |

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## APPENDIX 2 CONTEXT INDEX

| Context Number | Type  | Description                   | Test Pit |
|----------------|-------|-------------------------------|----------|
| 1              | Fill  | Fill of [8]                   | 5        |
| 2              | Fill  | Fill of [8]                   | 5        |
| 3              | Fill  | Fill of [8]                   | 5        |
| 4              | Fill  | Fill of [8]                   | 5        |
| 5              | Fill  | Fill of [8]                   | 5        |
| 6              | Fill  | Fill of [8]                   | 5        |
| 7              | Fill  | Fill of [8]                   | 5        |
| 8              | Cut   | Pit                           | 5        |
| 9              | Layer | Natural                       | 5        |
| 10             | Fill  | Fill of [14]                  | 6        |
| 11             | Fill  | ] Fill of [14]                | 6        |
| 12             | Fill  | Fill of [14]                  | 6        |
| 13             | Fill  | Fill of [14]                  | 6        |
| 14             | Cut   | Pit / Ditch                   | 6        |
| 15             | Layer | Natural                       | 6        |
| 16             | Fill  | Fill of [17]                  | 7        |
| 17             | Cut   | Pit                           | 7        |
| 18             | Fill  | Fill of [20]                  | 7        |
| 19             | Fill  | Fill of [20]                  | 7        |
| 20             | Fill  | Field boundary/drainage ditch | 7        |
| 21             | Fill  | Fill of [22]                  | 7        |
| 22             | Cut   | Possible cursus ditch         | 7        |
| 23             | Void  |                               | 7        |
| 24             | Cut   | pit                           | 7        |
| 25             | Fill  | Fill of 28                    | 7        |
| 26             | Fill  | Fill of 28                    | 7        |
| 27             | Fill  | Fill of 28                    | 7        |
| 28             | Cut   | Pit                           | 7        |
| 29             | Layer | Natural                       | 7        |



## APPENDIX 3 MATRIX

