



Union Wharf,
Orchard Place, Leamouth E14,
London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Report on Archaeological Evaluation





**UNION WHARF, ORCHARD PLACE, LEAMOUTH E14,
LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

REPORT ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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**UNION WHARF, ORCHARD PLACE, LEAMOUTH E14,
LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS****REPORT ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION****Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned to carry out an archaeological evaluation at Union Wharf, Orchard Place, Leamouth E14 in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets centred on NGR Ref 539372, 180732. The work was carried out in support of a planning application for the redevelopment of the Site. The application, if approved, would result in the partial demolition of a buried listed dock on the Site. The evaluation was carried out to provide evidence that the buried dock is not, as is listed, an ashlar lined structure built in the 1860s, but is a reinforced concrete structure as recorded as being built in 1948-49. The evaluation duly provides this evidence, and demonstrates that none of the original structure survives.

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LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

REPORT ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned by Martin Simms of Ballymore Properties Ltd (the Client). Wessex Archaeology would like to thank David Divers, of English Heritage Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS), and Andrew Hargreaves, the English Heritage Historic Buildings Inspector for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, for monitoring the project.

The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Lawrence Pontin and Nick Truckle. The fieldwork was undertaken by Cornelius Barton, who also compiled this report with illustrations by Kitty Brandon.

UNION WHARF, ORCHARD PLACE, LEAMOUTH E14, LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

REPORT ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of Document

1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Ballymore Properties Ltd (The Client) to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Union Wharf, Orchard Place, Leamouth E14 in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets centred on NGR Ref 539372/180732 (hereafter 'the Site') (**Figure 1**).

1.2 Planning Background

1.2.1 Ballymore Properties Ltd have made an application to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets for planning permission for the demolition of all existing buildings on the Site and redevelopment to provide for residential, business, retail, financial and professional uses (applications PA/06/01343, PA/06/01344 and PA/06/01345).

1.2.2 The application, if approved, would result in the partial demolition of a buried listed dry-dock on the Site (LBS No. 441688). Specifically, this would involve excavation to a depth in excess of five metres below present ground level, to provide underground car parking. These works would remove the main body of the dry-dock but would leave the original 19th century iron caisson and part of the front dock wall intact.

1.2.3 The evaluation was carried out to provide evidence that the buried dock is not, as is listed, an ashlar lined structure built in the 1860s, but is a reinforced concrete structure, recorded as being built in 1903 and subsequently rebuilt 1948-49 (Davis 1949).

1.2.4 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Wessex Archaeology (WA 2007) and approved by David Divers of GLAAS.

1.3 Site Description

1.3.1 The Site comprises a sub-rectangular parcel of land covering an area of c. 0.7 ha on the southern arm of the Leamouth Peninsula on the north bank of the River Thames. Orchard Place forms the site's boundary to the north. Trinity Buoy Wharf is directly east and Orchard Wharf is to the west.

1.3.2 The Site is currently vacant comprising warehousing on its eastern and western periphery with a central area of hard standing.

2 GEOLOGICAL AND TOPOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Geology

2.1.1 The underlying geology within the Site has been identified as Holocene alluvium overlying Eocene London Clay eroded by former courses of the rivers Thames and Lea (British Geological Survey 1994, Sheet 256, North London).

2.2 Topography

2.2.1 The Site is generally flat and lies at a height of approximately 3.7m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 A Desk Based Assessment in support of the present planning application has been submitted to English Heritage and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (Wessex Archaeology, 2006). In summary the history of the buried dock is as follows:

3.1.2 Subsequent to 1830 an existing slipway and saw pits owned by the shipbuilders Snook & Company converted to a tidal fitting out basin. By 1844 it was taken over and became Green's Lower Yard and by 1848 it was converted to a dry dock. An iron caisson was added in 1860-1 and this is believed to be the one that survives to this day. A survey of 1865 described the dock as 272 ft long, 55ft wide 20ft deep, with timber sides and base and a circular brick head. In 1886 the premises were renamed as the Orchard Dry Dock, and in 1892 it became the East India Dry Dock under the ownership of the London Graving Dock Company, who installed steam cranes, lowered the dock and installed a new concrete floor.

3.1.3 In 1903 the dry dock was lengthened and widened, and the timber side-walls were replaced by mass concrete gravity walls (see **Figure 2**). These consisted of reinforced concrete haunching anchored by a line of raking piles and tie rods to the east, and by a line of box piles and tie rods to the west (Wessex Archaeology 2006).

3.1.4 The dock was severely damaged by a bomb blast during World War II and was repaired and rebuilt by the Ministry of Public works during 1948-9, keeping a similar design to that used in 1903 but replacing and strengthening the walls. A plan and report issued by the Dock and Harbour Authority (Davis 1949) implies that this new form of construction had entirely replaced the old facing. The Site was acquired by Shell Tankers Ltd in 1971, and the dock was subsequently infilled and covered by a concrete apron, and the site used as an equipment storage facility.

3.2 Listed Building Status

- 3.2.1 The dock is described in the Lists of Buildings of special architectural and historic interest as being “ashlar lined” (english.heritage.org.uk) and is accorded Grade II listed status (LBS No. 441688). This record appeared to conflict with the description of the dock in Davis (1949).

3.3 Previous Archaeological Work

- 3.3.1 There has been no archaeological work carried out on the dock. Observations were made on a geotechnical trench undertaken in July 2004 (see **Figure 1, Trench 3**) on the dock which revealed an area of truncated modern reinforced concrete dock wall on its north west side to depth of 2m beneath present ground surface (Appendix 8, Alan Baxter Associates 2006).

4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 The aim of the evaluation was to establish further, as far as reasonably possible, the extent of the replacement of former versions of the dock with that as redesigned and built in 1948-9.

5 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

5.1 Fieldwork

- 5.1.1 All evaluation work was conducted in compliance with the WSI (WA 2007), which follows standards outlined in the Institute of Field Archaeologist's Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (2001).
- 5.1.2 All archaeological deposits were recorded by means of Wessex Archaeology's pro forma recording sheets. A photographic record was made by means of black and white prints, colour slides and digital images. Plans were drawn at a scale of 1:20 or 1:50.

5.2 Finds Collection and Retention

- 5.2.1 No artefactual material was recovered from the trial trenches. Material observed in the upcast from the trenches was of twentieth century origin.

5.3 The Archive

- 5.3.1 The completed project archive will be prepared in accordance with the guidelines outlined in Appendix 3 of Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage 1991) and in accordance with the guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long term storage (UKIC 1990). The archive from the project will be deposited with the Museum of London under MOL Site Code UWF07.

6 RESULTS

Trench 1

- 6.1 Both the concrete haunching and the top of the box piling from the 1945 reconstruction were visible (see **Figures 2, 3 and Plates 1 & 2**). No remains of the original structure were present. The trench was dug to a depth of 4.5m, at which point the sides became unstable due to incoming water.

Trench 2

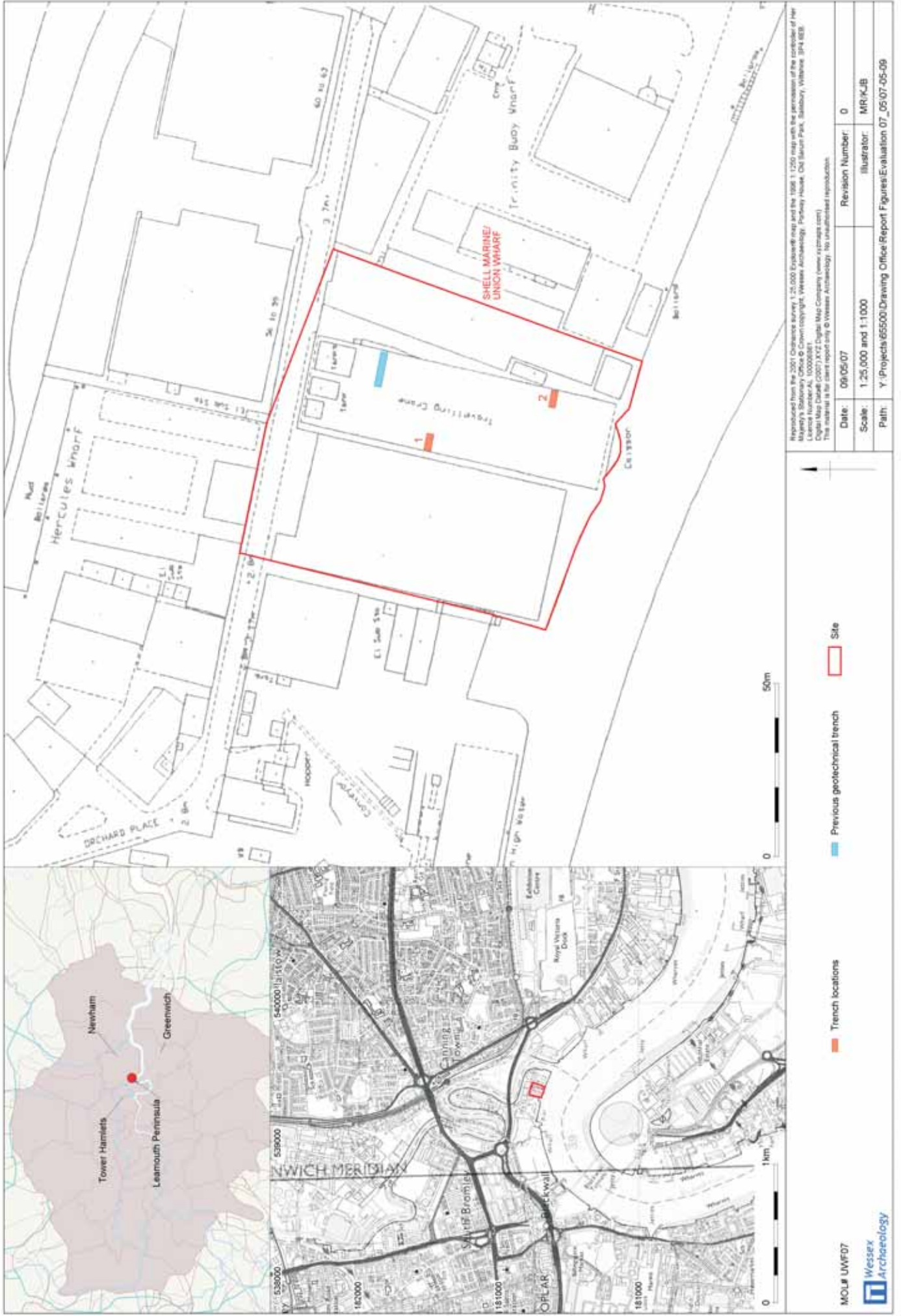
- 6.2 Again the concrete haunching and the top of the rake piles were visible, as were several of the anchoring steel ties (See **Figure 4 and Plates 3 & 4**). As in trench 1, none of the original structure remained behind the mass concrete walls. The trench was dug to a depth of 6m before becoming unstable.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 It appears that no part of the original dock wall remains, with any of the original structure which may have survived the rebuilding in 1903 having been entirely replaced by modern concrete during the reconstruction in 1948.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Davis, F. W., 1949 *The East and West India Graving Docks- An Account of their Post-War Reconstruction* in The Dock and Harbour Authority No.348 Vol XXX
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Plan showing Wessex Archaeology's trench locations and previous geotechnical trench

EAST INDIA CRAVING DOCK—REPAIRS

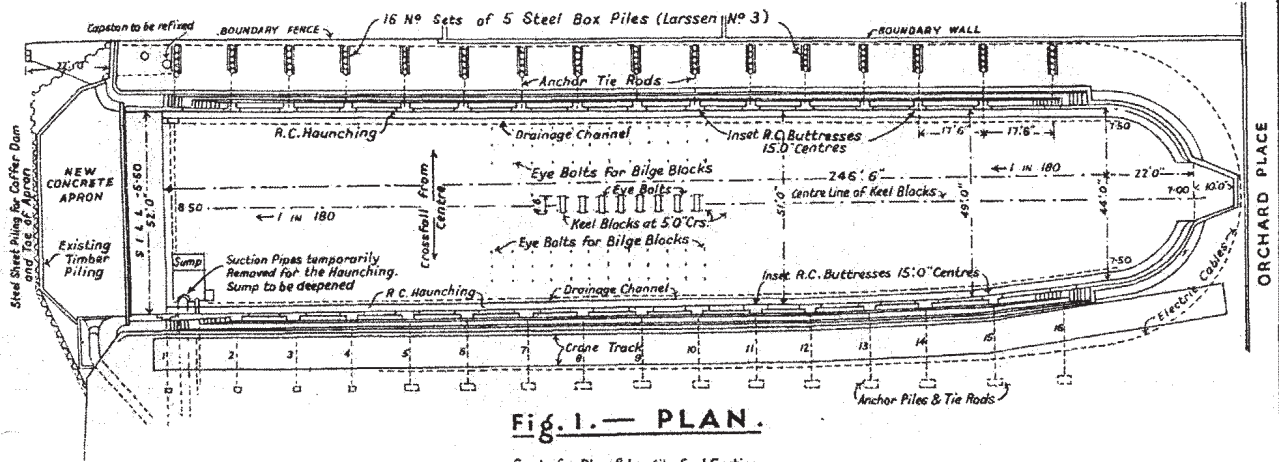


Fig. 1.— PLAN.

Scale for Plan & Longitudinal Section
 Feet 10 5 0 10 20 30 40 50 100 150 Feet

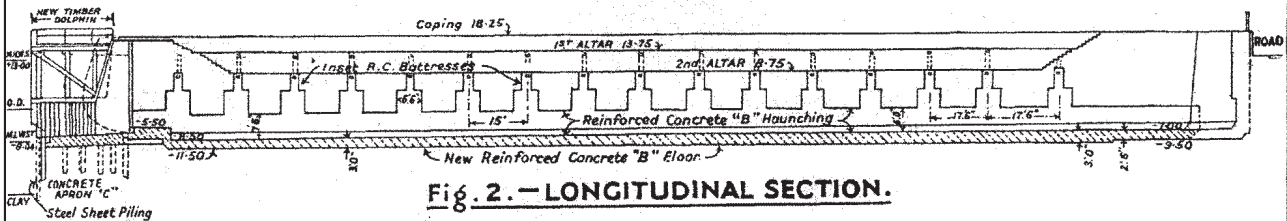


Fig. 2.— LONGITUDINAL SECTION.

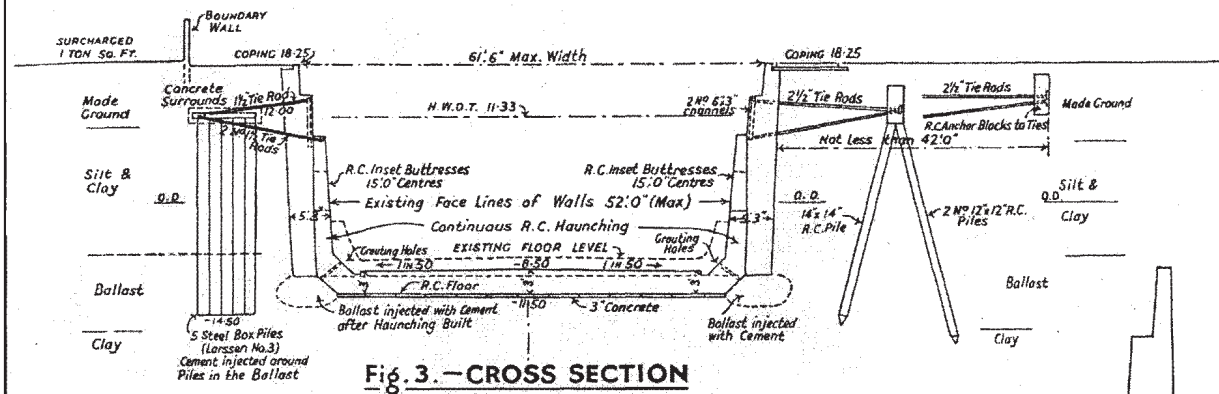
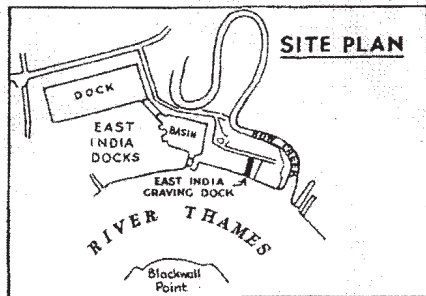


Fig. 3.— CROSS SECTION

Scale for Cross Section
 Feet 10 5 0 10 20 30 40 50 Feet



Scale for Section thro. Floor & Buttress

Feet 5 4 3 2 1 0 5 10 15 20 25 Feet

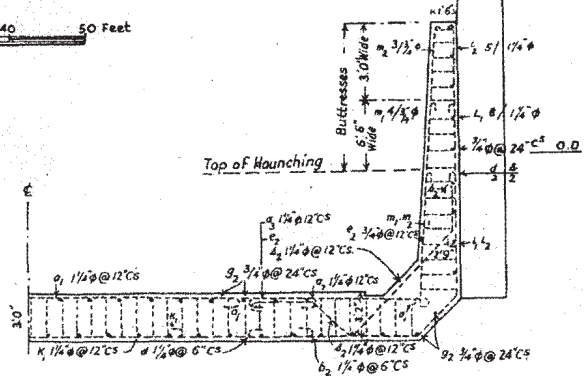
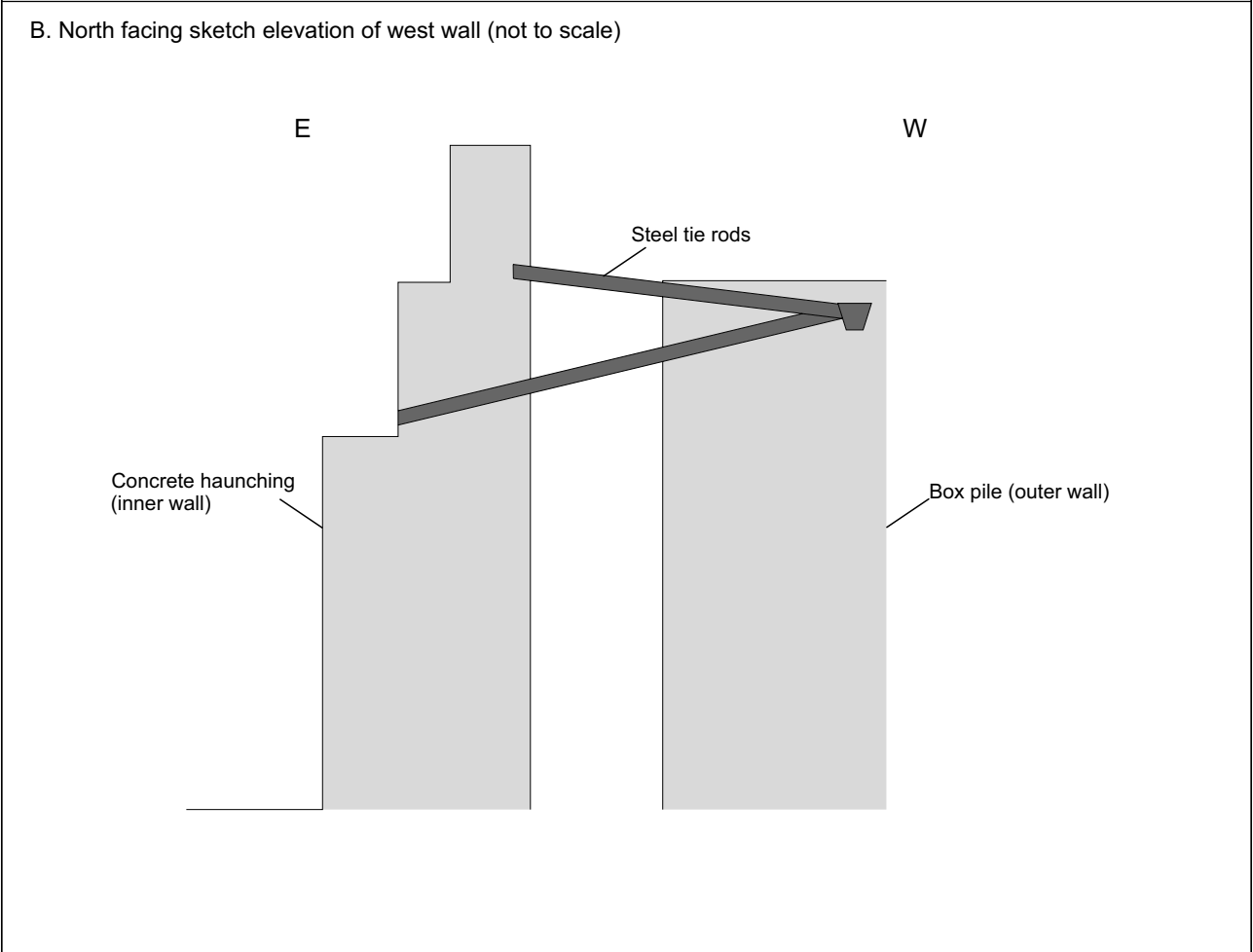
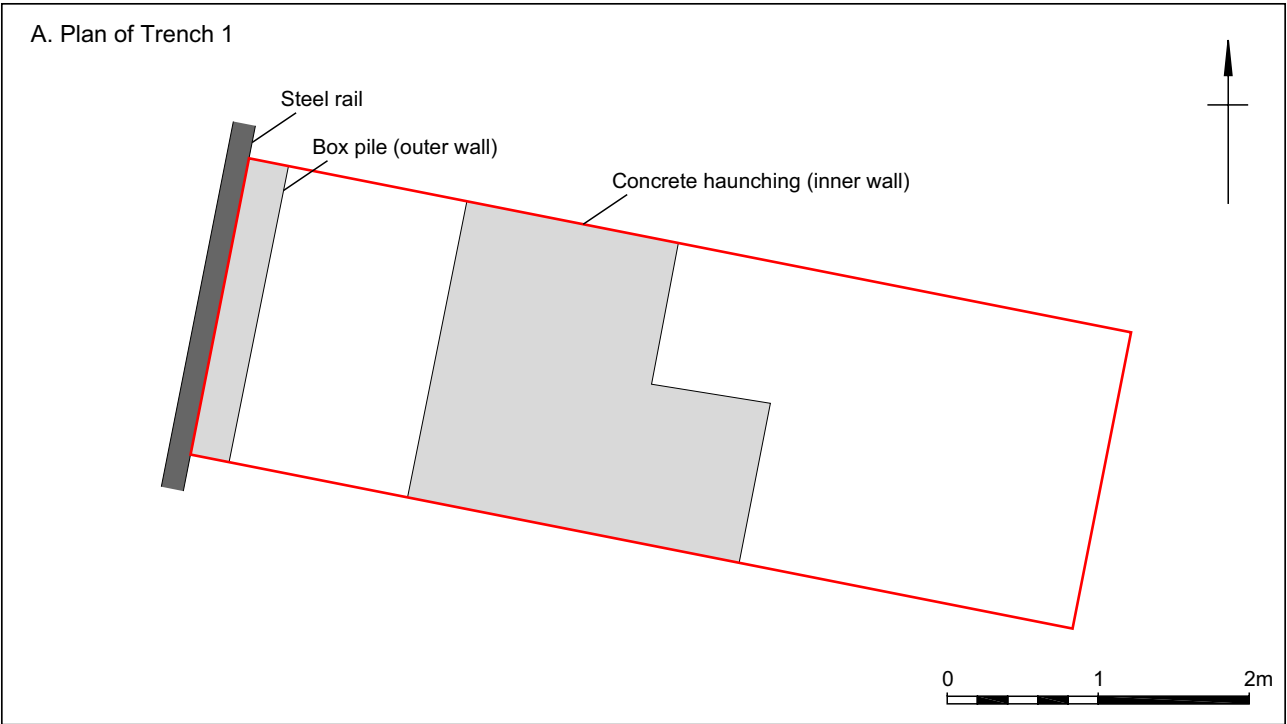



Fig. 4.— SECTION THRO. FLOOR & BUTTRESS.

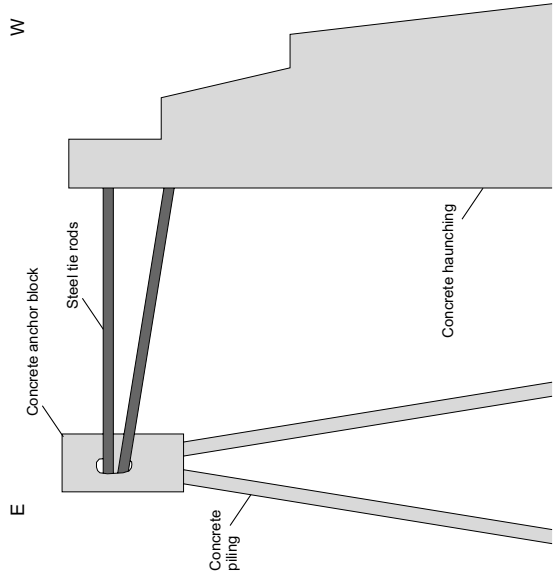


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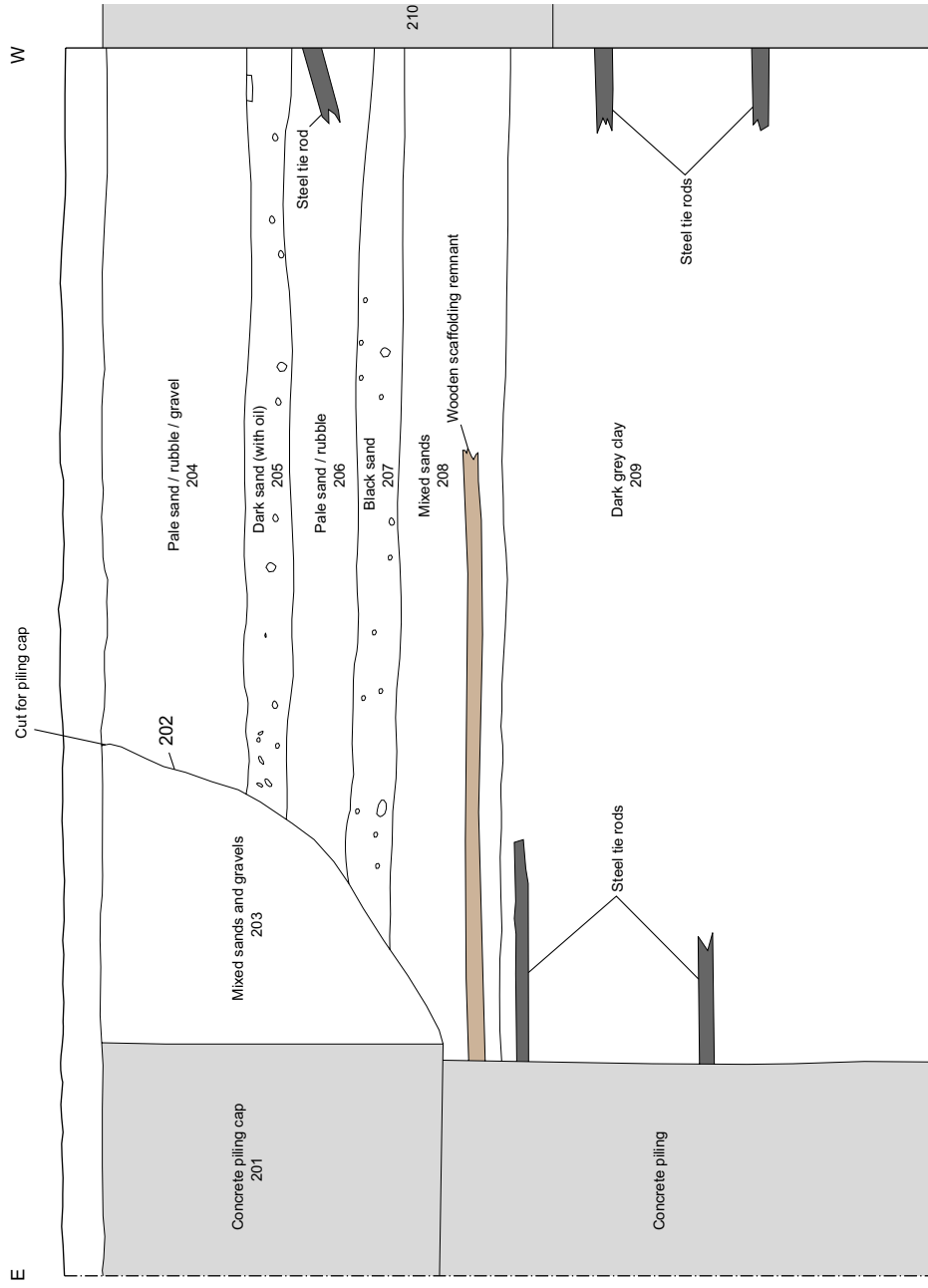
Trench 1 plan and sketch section through west wall

Figure 3

A. North facing sketch elevation of east wall (not to scale)



B. Trench 2 north facing elevation



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Sketch section through east wall and Trench 2 north elevation

Figure 4



Plate 1. Trench 1 concrete haunching from the west



Plate 2. Trench 1 concrete haunching from the north east


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Plate 3. Trench 2 from the north showing piling



Plate 4. Trench 2 from the east showing haunching with tie rods



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