



AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL AUDIT AND RESOURCE ASSESSMENT
OF HISTORIC BURIAL GROUNDS IN GREATER LONDON
PART A: AUDIT OF MODERN ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS
UNDERTAKEN SINCE 1980

Allen Archaeology Limited
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Executive Summary

- This report outlines the results of a desk-based audit of archaeological interventions which have taken place since 1980 and resulted in the recovery of a sample of more than 100 individuals dated 1066–1900. This forms the first part of a three-stage review of London burial grounds.
- A number of difficulties were encountered during data collation, primarily due to variance between different sources.
- A total of 51 sites comprising over 35,000 burials were identified, dating from 1117 to 1940 with a significant bias towards the 18th and 19th centuries. The spatial distribution shows a significant bias towards inner London. Almost half of the excavated burials have been reburied and a third curated. Half of the sites where information was available had been attended by (or cleared by) a commercial exhumation company.
- The sample is predominantly Christian and represents high, low and mixed status groups.
- Nineteen sites are currently unpublished.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 - The management of historic burial grounds is a significant issue for archaeologists, owners and developers. This regional project, set within the context of national guidance, was initiated to enhance the Greater London Historic Environment Record (GLHER) and provide an up-to-date evidence base for recognising and articulating the archaeological significance of historic burial grounds.
- 1.2 - Burial grounds represent a significant time and cost risk to developers, a risk which becomes more difficult to manage the later the issue is recognised. This critical evaluation of the nature and representativeness of the existing dataset aims to provide a tool to aid in archaeological decision making and risk management.
- 1.3 - The project consists of a three-stage, rapid resource assessment of the burial grounds of Greater London. Part A consists of a desk-based audit of archaeological interventions which have taken place since 1980 and resulted in the recovery of a sample of ≥ 100 individuals dated 1066–1900. This report should be read in conjunction with those for Parts B and C to provide a comprehensive overview.
- 1.4 - This report was revised following receipt of comments from the team at Historic England and feedback received at a seminar held at the Museum of London on 26th May 2015.

2.0 Objectives

- To provide an audited gazetteer of all large (≥ 100 individuals suitable for analysis), modern (since 1980), archaeological investigations of historic burial grounds in Greater London
- To assess current coverage in terms of chronology and social/economic/cultural diversity and identify gaps in the record
- To consider whether assemblages have been adequately analysed and published, or are likely to be in the foreseeable future
- To identify whether assemblages have been retained in museum storage or have been reburied

2.1 - The project start-up meeting identified the following additional questions for consideration:

- How has sampling been applied in the past?
- How valid or otherwise was it?
- How much of the cemetery did work impact on?
- What were the circumstances of excavation?

3.0 Methods

3.1 GLHER information was kindly provided by Stuart Cakebread who undertook a search based on the terms 'cemetery' and 'burial ground'.

- 3.2 - A review of information from the GLHER, and its supporting burial excavations spreadsheet (colloquially known as the Book of the Dead) was enhanced by an online literature search in order to collate information from relevant published and internet sources. The additional information was further enhanced by directly contacting the contractors who undertook this work and asking for further details of the sites in question, particularly those which remain as yet unpublished.
- 3.3 - The additional data provided was selected with the intention of providing information to enable a better understanding of past sampling strategies and of the outcomes of any subsequent research, with the aim of facilitating future risk mitigation and to aid with the formulation of an outline research strategy (Part C). Establishing burial density was considered of particular importance for managing risk. The contacted contractors provided much additional information in this respect. Where this was not available, information was calculated from the description and site plans provided in published and grey literature sources.
- 3.4 - Online and historic map searches were carried out to identify cemetery names for interventions where this information was not provided.
- 3.5 - Ms Rekha Gohil of the Ministry of Justice was contacted to determine if the Coroner department held any additional information on sample sizes or destination of remains. She was able to provide site extent plans for three sites: Wesley's Chapel and Leysian Mission, 49 City Road and Mare Street Baptist Chapel, Hackney (both involving small interventions) and Royal London Hospital, Whitechapel.
- 3.6 - Jelena Bekvalac of the Museum of London Centre for Human Bioarchaeology (CHB) reviewed a list of those sites where the number of individuals excavated remained ambiguous and was able to provide additional information on five sites, establishing that the samples recovered were too small for the purposes of this audit.
- 3.7 - It was assumed that interventions recorded as watching briefs in the GLHER and 'Book of the Dead' did not recover more than 100 individuals and therefore they were excluded from further investigation.
- 3.8 - Data sources consulted were:
- GLHER
 - LAARC on-line catalogue – by keywords burials, skeleton, inhumation for the medieval and post-medieval periods
 - Archaeology Data Service grey literature and archives libraries
 - BABA0 annual reviews – nine years of roundups on excavations and osteological research available on line at www.babao.org.uk
 - MOLA excavation data (authors own records)
 - OA post-medieval excavation data (authors own records)
 - 'Book of the Dead'
 - Individual church websites

- www.british-history.ac.uk
- Coroners Division of the Ministry of Justice
- Contractor grey literature and publications on-line libraries (MOLA, OA, Cotswold, PCA)
- Pastscape

4.0 Issues Encountered

- 4.1 - The comparison of different sources has demonstrated that one burial ground may go by many aliases, presenting difficulties for the collation and correlation of data.
- 4.2 - There is (sometimes extreme) variance in the numbers of burials cited in different sources and it is often unclear what the count refers to (graves, individuals, number recorded on site or in post-excavation, or a minimum number of individuals including disarticulated remains).
- 4.3 - The site code MIN86 incorporates two burial grounds: St Mary Graces and East Smithfield Black Death burial ground, and separating information on the two is difficult as researchers have not always differentiated.
- 4.4 - The search of the LAARC online catalogue identified a number of potential difficulties for future data collation. No distinction is made between human and animal 'burial'. It is not possible to search for burials of specific date i.e. results for a search for medieval burial may return sites which include a Roman burial and medieval ditch.
- 4.5 - It is possible to use the number of bulk finds records held by the LAARC as proxy for skeleton numbers i.e. if only 48 contexts are recorded there cannot be >100 burials. However, a search for 'human bone' returns only 19 records, from just 4 sites and 'human remains' adds just a few more. This does not seem to reflect the data which can be obtained when a site is individually searched.
- 4.6 - Any search carried out needs to include the term 'grave(s)' not just burial though searches may bring up results which include words within a word (e.g. 'grave' in 'gravels')

5.0 Results

- 5.1 - A total of **51 sites** comprising over 35,000 burials were identified. Only those interventions individually producing samples >100 have been included, for example, omitted from the group, sites LAH88 and LHN89 may together constitute more than 100 burials from Holy Trinity Priory or St Katherine Cree, Leadenhall Street.
- 5.2 - Data is provided in a separate Excel spreadsheet using site code as the primary key, as all archaeological interventions can be uniquely identified in this way. Associated monument and event numbers are listed, as are site codes which produced fewer than 100 burials but which involve areas of the same cemetery as a site which produced a larger sample.
- 5.3 - The project brief defined large interventions as those producing 100 or more skeletons suitable for osteological analyses. Generally speaking, osteological assemblages will go through a process of rapid assessment where very basic demographic and health data are

collected, followed by detailed analyses to agreed standards. Not all excavated material will go through this two stage process and, as the level of analysis possible will vary based on not only the preservation of the remains but also on the resources available for such analyses, the total number of individuals at each phase have been provided wherever possible. If only the number analysed were used as selection criteria, subsampling based on available resources could have excluded groups or have biased the interpretation of their significance. This is perhaps best exemplified by the excavation of the internationally significant medieval assemblage from St. Mary Spital (SRP98). Over 10,000 individuals were excavated and the majority are curated and available for further research, but a subsample of only 5,387 was analysed.

- 5.4 - In some instances the number of individuals analysed and/or assessed is unknown as no published or on-line reference to the work has been found. This may be because work is currently ongoing or that study has not progressed following excavation. As such assemblages may remain available for future study, and have the potential to make a significant contribution, they have been included in the dataset. In a number of instances this includes excavations which took place in the 1980s and for which post-excavation work was not undertaken at the time, but which are deposited in the archive.
- 5.5 - The spatial distribution shows a significant bias towards inner London and Southwark, with smaller numbers of sites further out in west London. No large sites are present in the northern or eastern area of outer London (Figure 4). When numbers of burials are examined, there is a clear focus on populations in modern Tower Hamlets, Westminster, Islington and Camden (Figure 1). The numbers of burials assessed and analysed follow a similar pattern but also show that there remains a significant potential for further work. They should be viewed with the caveat that data was not available for all sites and it should also be noted that in some instances the number of burials analysed outweighs those which were assessed, as this stage of work was not carried out.

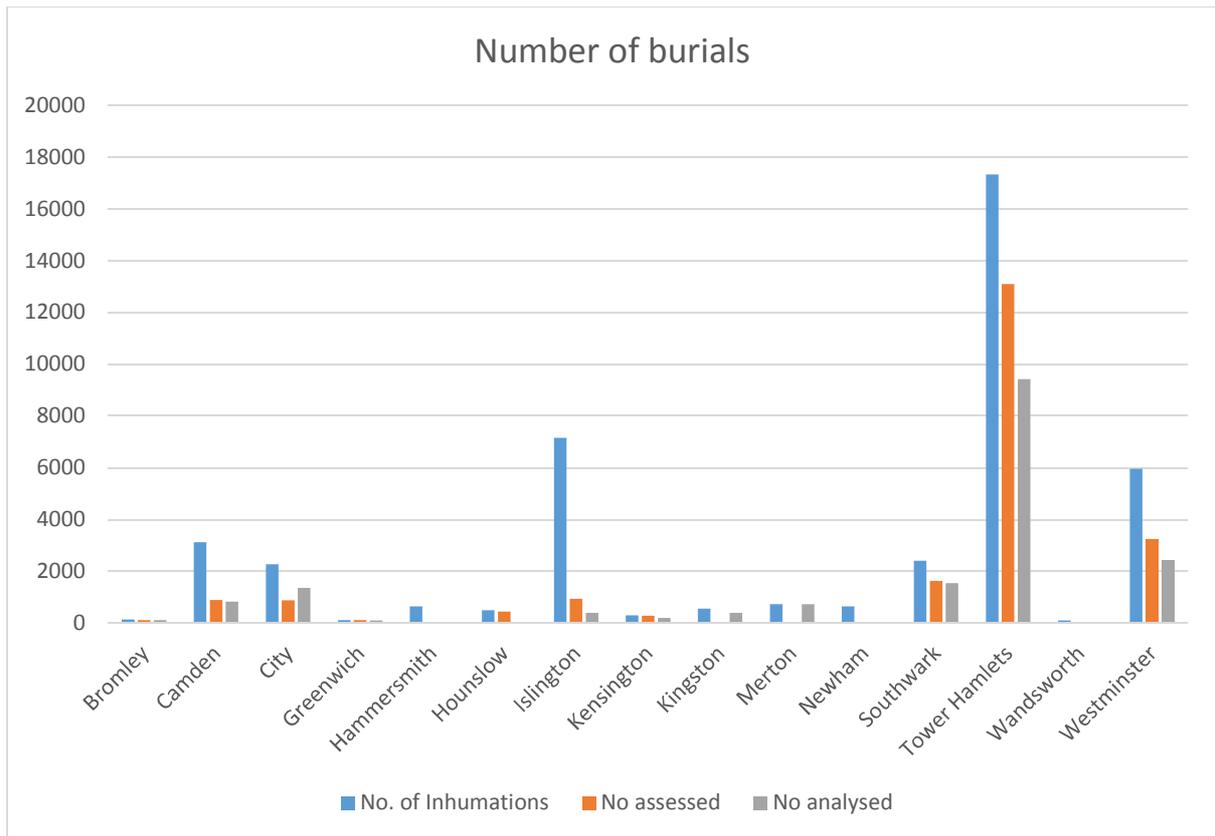


Figure 1: Number of burials by borough

5.6 - Of the 45 sites for which current location could be ascertained, 45% have been reburied or interred within church buildings and a third have been curated predominantly at the Museum of London Centre for Human Bioarchaeology (CHB)(Figure 2).

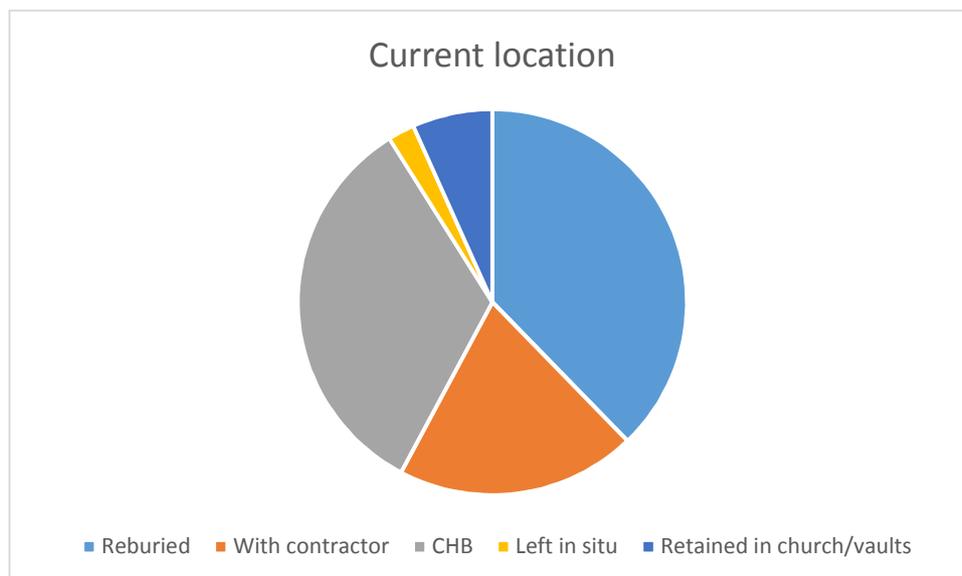


Figure 2: Current location of skeletal assemblages from sites >100 individuals (where known)

5.7 - Half of the 36 sites where information was available had been attended by (or cleared by) a commercial exhumation company.

5.8 - Nineteen sites are not currently published.

5.9 - From the collated data it is not possible to ascertain any overarching pattern to the decision to retain or reburial. Though there is a bias towards the reburial of later (18th and 19th century) groups as the dataset is also biased towards this time period it is not possible to determine if this is a genuine bias and reflects an ethical or legal decision that more recent burials should be more often reinterred.

5.10 - Burial density information could be calculated for 20 sites and gives a range of 12.6 individuals per m² for St Thomas' Hospital (NLB91) through to <0.1 per m² at St Botolph, Aldgate (RMI05). The results should be treated with some caution as site dimensions were calculated from plans for some interventions and for others were taken from a variety of different sources, but they represent an average (mean) of 2.7 individuals per m² with a median value of 2.0 per m² (Figure 3).

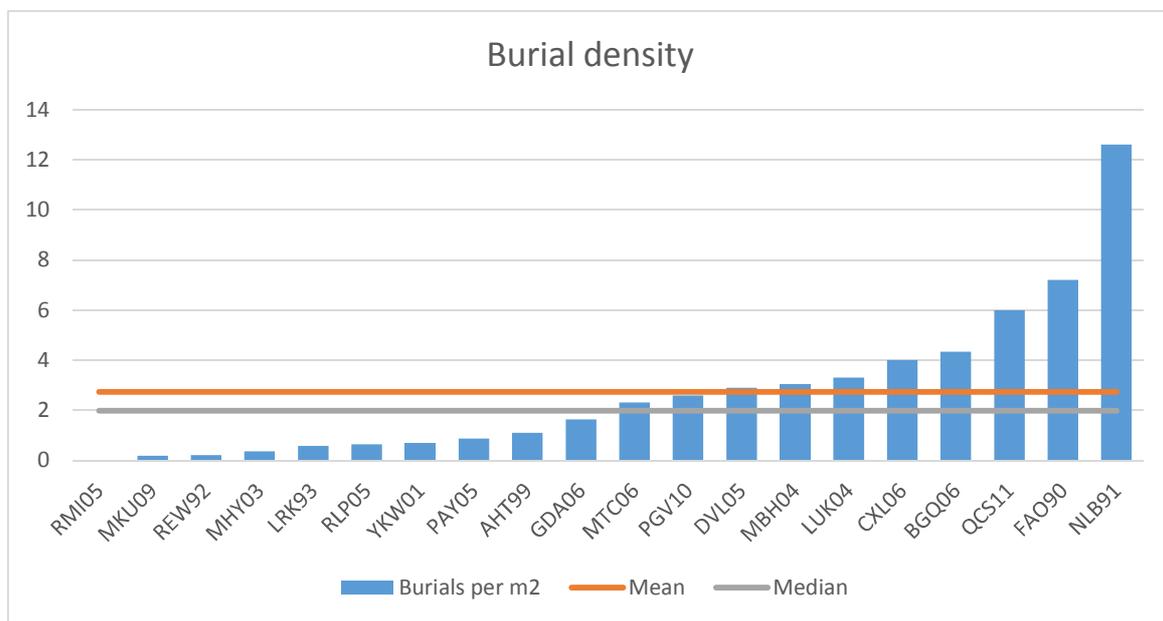


Figure 3: Burial density

5.11 - The sample spans dates from the 10th to 20th centuries with a specific date range of 1117 to 1940. Well-dated sites (i.e. those which are not simply categorised as medieval or post-medieval) show a significant bias towards the 18th and 19th centuries (Table 1).

Site Code	No. analysed	Denomination	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th
MPY86	738	Christian (Augustinian)											
BA84	201	Christian (Cluniac)											
SRP98	5387	Christian (Augustinian)											
SGY05	-	Christian											
MIN86	820	Christian (Cistercian)											
HW-SL83	unknown	Christian (Cistercian)											
NLB91	193	Christian											
XSM10	ongoing	Christian											
LSS85	ongoing	Christian											
RMI05	88	Christian											

Site Code	No. analysed	Denomination	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th
BGQ06	ongoing	Christian											
GLS01	unknown	Christian											
LRK93	360	Quaker											
MAN82	89	Non-conformist											
MSR08	1825	Christian											
OCU00	198	Christian											
MBH04	301	Christian											
HHS14	ongoing	Christian											
CXL06	254	Private (non-denominational)											
FAO90	544	Christian											
PGN12	300	Christian											
AHT99	325	Christian											
YKW01	715	Christian											
CAS84	968	Christian											
KWK99	104	Christian											
OLR00	164	Christian											
REW92	148	Christian											
BBM02	111	Christian											
PAY05	416	Baptist											
DVL05	483	Private (non-denominational)											
RLP05	259	Christian											
PQC09	ongoing	Christian											
GDA06	239	Non-conformist											
PGV10	959	Private (Unconsecrated)											
LUK04	704	Catholic											
SMC11	316	Christian											
MHY03	none	Jesuit											
MKU09	36	Christian											

Table 1: Date range of the well-dated excavated samples

5.12 - The majority of burials were defined as Christian (Church of England). Those from other denominations or religious groups (Quaker, Catholic, Baptist etc.) numbered just over 1500 individuals, whilst there are just over 3200 burials which were non-denominational or from unconsecrated burial grounds. The sample represents high, low and mixed status groups.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 - As much of the data is currently collated from information provided to the LAARC on deposition and before that in the annual fieldwork round-ups, it is recommended that a template be provided to contractors to include basic cemetery statistics (number size, methods used). Contractors and depositing archives should also be encouraged to collate and make public information on any additional (non-developer funded) research carried out on assemblages which they hold.

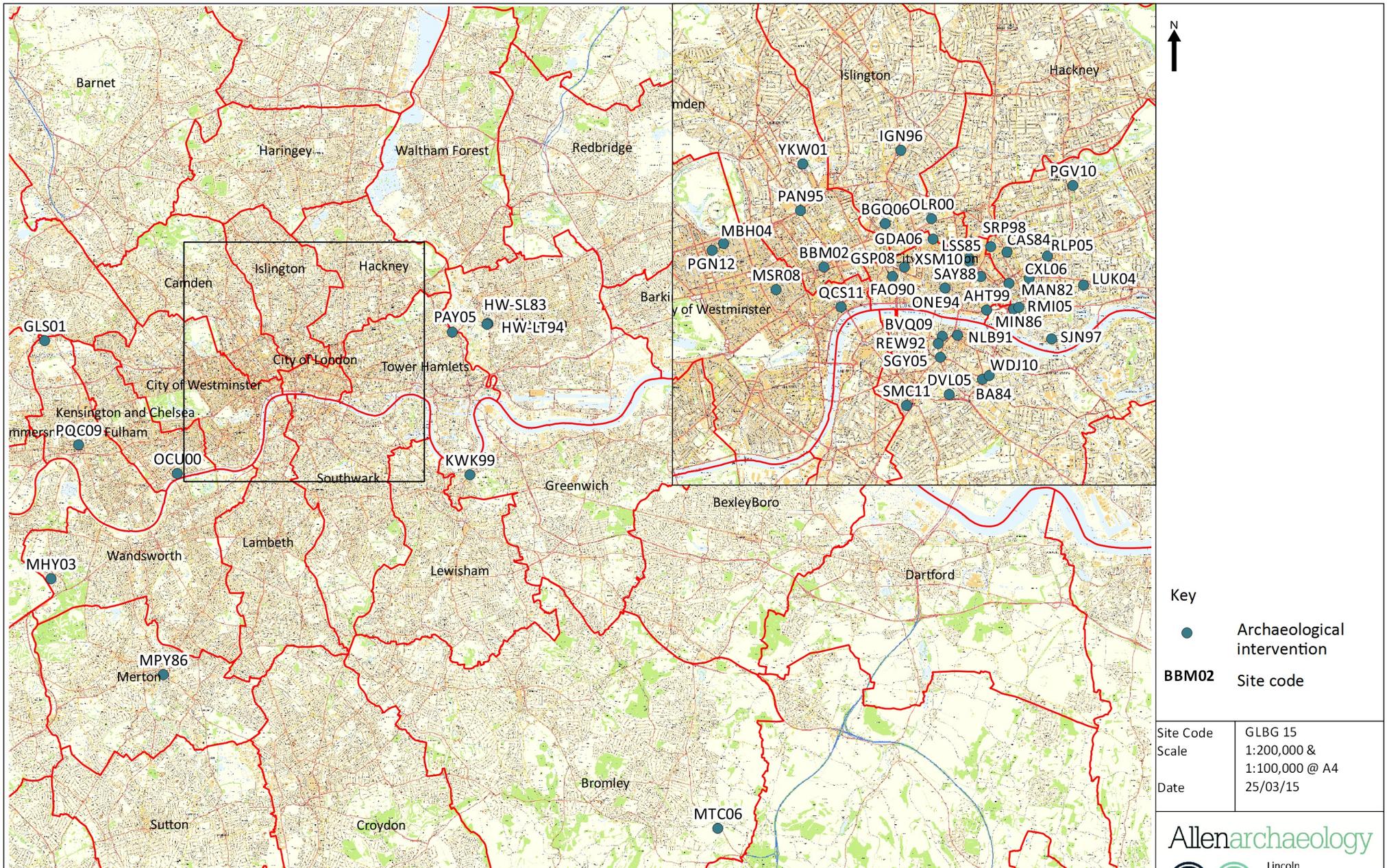
- 6.2 - It was not possible to consult additional sources of research information (i.e. university websites and e-theses, academia.edu) within the scope of the project. This should be considered as a possible future project to enable the compilation of a reference bibliography for London burial archaeology.
- 6.3 - Based on the evidence collated, a review of sampling methodologies, for both excavation and post-excavation, their advantages and shortcomings is also recommended.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 - There are significant temporal gaps in the current evidence. There are few sizable early medieval samples and populations from the period between the Dissolution and the end of the 17th century remain under-represented. This includes archaeological evidence of the Great Plague of 1665–6.
- 7.2 - There remains a lack of information on female ecclesiastical establishments (nunneries): excavations at Holywell Priory (HLW06) and Syon Park (SY04) have both produced samples of <50 individuals and tentative evidence for an ability to identify nuns through evidence of religious clothing (staining from pins associated with headdresses).
- 7.3 - Although there have been several recent excavations of Baptist groups of which Bow (PAY05/BBP07) is the largest, there remains a dearth of Dissenters with excavations at the City Bunhill Burial ground (GDA06) providing the largest group. Evidence is often little more than anecdotal, for example the watching brief carried out at EWERST87, which recorded Dissenter burials that had been reinterred when railway arches were built over a known 17th–18th century Quaker burial ground in 1864, or the presumed 18th century burial ground at Mansell Street (MAN82). No Jewish populations have been examined to date, and it appears that there have been no archaeological interventions in such other than watching briefs to enable the rapid reinterment of human remains.
- 7.4 - There are significant spatial gaps in the available evidence: we know little about marginal settlements and parishes, particularly in earlier periods.

8.0 Acknowledgements

- 8.1 - Allen Archaeology Ltd wish to thank Sandy Kidd of Historic England for commissioning this audit. Particular thanks are due to Stuart Cakebread and Sarah-Jane Hathaway of the GLHER and to David Gordon, who collated the original version of 'the Book of the Dead' upon which this study has drawn. This audit could not have been completed without the help of Jelena Bekvalac (Museum of London), Jo Buckberry (University of Bradford), Gary Burks (City of London Cemetery), Chris Constable (London Borough of Southwark), Louise Fowler (MOLA), Rekha Gohil (Coroners Division of the Ministry of Justice), Geoffrey Hunter (Church of England), Rachel Ives (AOC), Louise Loe (Oxford Archaeology), Jaqueline McKinley (Wessex Archaeology), Frank Meddens (Pre-Construct Archaeology), Adrian Miles (MOLA), Martin Smith (Bournemouth University), Lucy Sibun (ASE), Melissa Valentine (AOC) and Don Walker (MOLA).



Key

- Archaeological intervention

BBM02 Site code

Site Code	GLBG 15
Scale	1:200,000 & 1:100,000 @ A4
Date	25/03/15

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Figure 4: Location of archaeological interventions since 1980, producing 100 or more articulated burials dated 1066–1900



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