

Basement Construction



Falcon were employed as a specialist contractor to carry out piling, underpinning and excavation works to form a new basement to an existing terrace of cottages in Blanch Lane, South Mimms.

The work was carried out at the rear of the terrace where there was limited access available. Falcon initially installed two rows of 300mm diameter augered piles which later formed retaining walls once ground levels had been reduced by excavation. The existing rear wall, part of the right flank wall and several internal walls were then underpinned to support the building itself during construction of the basement and to form an internal stairwell.

During the construction of the underpinning in the original kitchen to the right hand cottage, Falcon's operatives were shocked to come across a wooden box which contained what was instantly recognised as human remains. Because the coffin had been located internally, it was relatively intact, but disintegrated during excavation due to the moist ground conditions. The discovery prompted an initial 'scene of the crime' reaction by the local police, although it was quickly established that the remains were over a hundred years old and therefore did not warrant further investigation by them.



Underpinning Basement

Basement Construction



The property owner investigated by means of local and national records and archives, and found that her house was built on the site of an 18th Century Quaker meeting point. Quakers were persecuted for their beliefs and were not allowed to be laid to rest in local churchyards, so were buried at their meeting places.



Completed Basement

Having made the gruesome discovery, Falcon operatives went on to uncover ten more coffins in various stages of decay, buried six feet below ground, all containing human remains. The remains were carefully excavated and set aside by the building contractor for subsequent reburial

elsewhere. In all it is thought that thirty skeletons were removed from the excavations.

Once the media interest had passed, Falcon were able to successfully complete the underpinning works and commence excavation of the areas

enclosed by the underpinning and piled walls so that the new basement over an area of around 60 sq.metres could be constructed. Despite the delays caused by the discovery, Falcon were able to complete the works within the time frame required by the main contractor.