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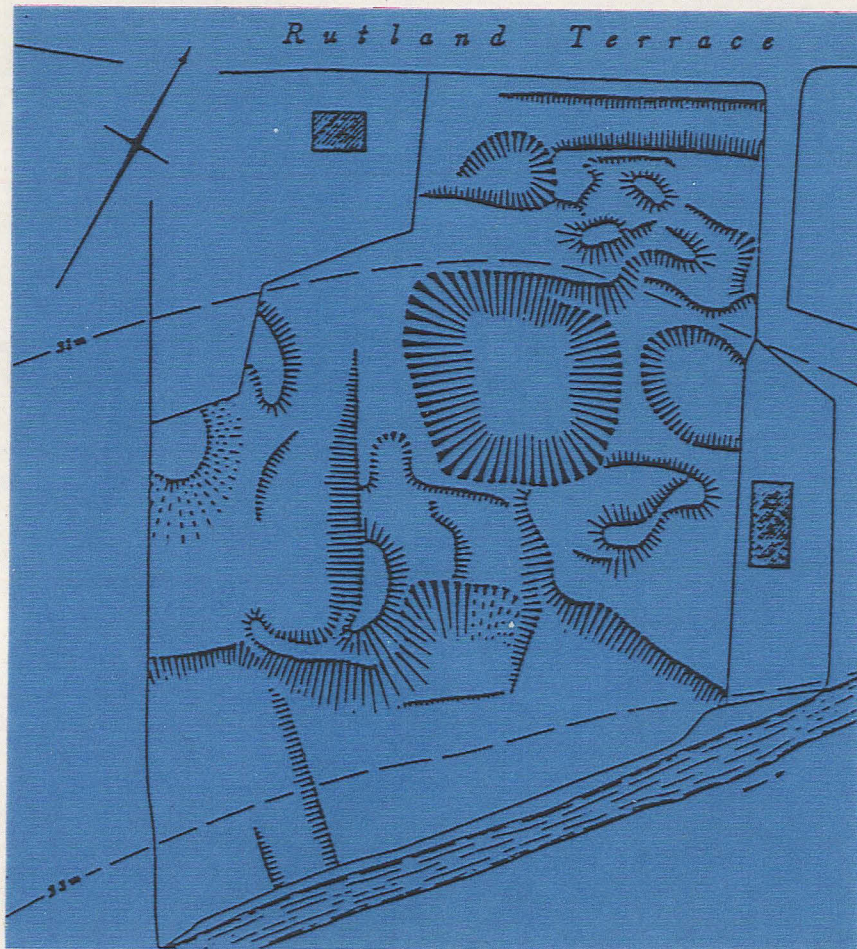
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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# AUSTIN FRIARS' LANE, STAMFORD LINCOLNSHIRE



PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

AUSTIN FRIARS' LANE, STAMFORD

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

FOR

ANGLIAN WATER SERVICES LTD.

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## 1. ABSTRACT

Stamford is a town with great archaeological potential. Although much has been achieved in the town in recording its past, much requires to be done. The opportunity, therefore, to examine a part of a monastic site where little was known was readily grasped. In the event, through circumstances which could not have been foreseen, that which might have been recorded had already been destroyed with the exception of the foundations of a stone wall whose date could not be adduced.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

Pre-Construct Archaeology was invited by Anglian Water Services Limited to Conduct a Watching Brief on the Austin Friars' Lane Sewer Link, Stamford. The construction of the Sewer Link lasted from 11 to 21 April, 1994, a period of 10 days although the Watching Brief finished on the ninth day.

### 3. LOCATION OF THE SEWER LINK

(see Fig.2 - Site Plan)

The purpose of the Sewer Link was to relieve the backing-up of waste material and particularly as it affected Corner Cottage, Austin Friars' Lane. To implement this relief it was necessary to construct a new manhole and chamber alongside and in conjunction with two existing manholes and chambers at the north-west end of Austin Friars' Lane. From this new manhole a 150mm sewer pipe was laid a distance of approximately 50m to the south-east end of Austin Friars' Lane to an existing sewage chamber. The route of the new sewer was on the western edge of Austin Friars' Lane, alongside or within a few cm of the pavement (Pl. 1). The only exception to this route was at the north-west end where the pipe work was taken from the manhole more or less in the middle of the road and, similarly, at the manhole at the south-east end where, again, the sewer pipe was diverted away from its proximity with the pavement to the centre of the road.

#### 4. REASONS FOR THE WATCHING BRIEF

##### 4.1 The Planning Background

4.1.i South Kesteven District Council's Local Plan contains two statements relevant to the watching brief for the sewer link in Austin Friars' Lane, Stamford: a. *Planning permission will not normally be given for development which would destroy or adversely affect the historic value and setting of scheduled monuments and sites of major archaeological importance.....*

and b. *In areas where development proposals affect other known sites of archaeological significance, or sites where there is an indication that archaeological material may exist, the District Council will include conditions to allow archaeological investigation to take place prior to development.....* (South Kesteven Local Plan, 1992, 79-80). Both statements are expanded upon in the accompanying texts.

4.1.ii There are various acts and guidelines which are helpful to developers and, in particular, appropriate to Anglian Water's sewer link in Austin Friars' Lane, Stamford. Chief among these documents are: *The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1970; The National Heritage Act 1983; The General Development Order 1988; and Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG 16) on Archaeology and Planning 1990*. The latter, especially, is most useful in its application to the planning background.

##### 4.2 The Archaeological Background.

4.2.i Austin Friars' Lane takes its name from a monastic establishment the remains of which can be observed as irregularly shaped mounds in a grass field a few yards to the west of the lane (Pl. 2). There are no previously recorded archaeological finds from the vicinity of the lane or the gardens but, bearing in mind the proximity of the known site of the friary, the chances of locating evidence of the eastern extent of the buildings were relatively high.

## 5. GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY OF THE IMMEDIATE AREA

### 5.1. The Geology

The solid geology of the Stamford area consists mainly of beds of Lincolnshire Limestone, the most characteristic of the Oolites of the County. It is often more than 30m thick, thinning out as it enters Northamptonshire. The earliest part of the Limestone is represented by the Collyweston slate of south-east Leicestershire and the southernmost tip of Lincolnshire, an area immediately around and including Stamford. Often, the Limestone is close to the surface and is usually beneath shallow, medium to heavy loamy soils, which are calcareous in nature and contain weathered rock debris.

### 5.2 The Topography

Austin Friars' Lane slopes considerably from north-west to south-east, from its junction with St Peter's Street to Freeman's Cottages, where the lane turns sharply to the south-west for a short length after which it is continued as a raised footpath, known as Melancholy Walk (Pl. 1). The slope has a fall of about 4.3m in a distance of 50m (the length of the sewer link) and is typical of many of the valleys to be seen in this type of limestone countryside. Melancholy Walk, together with that short length of Austin Friars' Lane on the same alignment, lie on the south side of the Mill Stream (an arm of the River Welland) which was the source of power for Kings Mill situated to the east of here.

However, a better topographical description of Austin Friars, Stamford was written in 1846 (Burton, 13-4). "This Friary was situated opposite Rutland Terrace..... The west front was 80 yards long, the south front 10yards; the chapel on the north side 40 yards long, and 20 yards wide, - the latter from the westward ranging along the cloisters which are said to have been of the same length and breadth..... The west front was faced by a beautiful garden, commanding a delightful view of the valley of the Welland and the stately woods of Easton."



## 6. Background - Sites of known archaeological significance

The town of Stamford has a fairly well documented history and archaeology; by contrast, the site of the Austin Friars on the western edge of the town is not so well known.

For a summary of Stamford's past, a useful account is to be found in *The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire* (Pevsner and Harris, 685-8). A longer, more detailed description is contained in *The Town of Stamford* (RCHM, 1977). For the purpose of this report, it might be appropriate to quote a short passage from Pevsner and Harris: "...there is little evidence of Roman occupation at Stamford. In the C9 it became an important Anglo-Scandinavian centre. In the C10 it was won back from the Danes by King Edward the Elder, who established a subsidiary settlement s of the river (now St Martin's) and probably built the first bridge. By the late C10 it was one of the Five Boroughs of the Danelaw and had a market and a mint. The industry of the Middle Ages was based on cloth, on iron-working, and on pottery. At the time of the Domesday Survey Stamford had a market, a fair, and at least four churches..... At the end of the Middle Ages the town had fourteen parish churches, of which five and the parts of two more survive. There were two Benedictine houses..... four friaries, and at least one monastic hall of residence. One medieval hospital survives, but of the friaries only one fragment of the Greyfriars is preserved... The Blackfriars.... were s of St Leonard's Street, the Whitefriars.... w of the Greyfriars, the Austin Friars.... s of St Peter's Street opposite Rutland Terrace."

From this quotation it can be seen that from the ninth century Stamford had assumed a position of some wealth and importance in the burgeoning years before the Norman Conquest. After this time, the town's prosperity continued to flourish giving rise to the emphasis on ecclesiastical foundations. Among these foundations was the Austin (or Augustinian) Friary of which little is known, although it was relatively close to the castle, a pottery (which spanned the centuries before and after the Conquest) and the mill.

As Pevsner and Harris state, there is no evidence of Roman occupation in Stamford itself, although there is a Roman town and military camp close by at Great Casterton. Equally, evidence of pre-Roman activity is scanty, the only exception to this is the possibility of 'A pre-Roman trackway of some considerable importance..... along the eastern edge of the limestone escarpment, traceable perhaps from Stamford northwards.' (Whitwell, 63).

In more specific terms, the Austin Friars, or Augustinian Friars, were part of a formal arrangement of three major institutions - the canons regular, The Order of Premontre, and the Dominicans or Order of Friars Preachers. The rule also provided for those groups of canons who constituted the male side of mixed institutions, like the English Order of Sempringham (Lawrence, 1984, 165). The rule of St Augustine has a long history, but was 'rediscovered' in the West in the eleventh century and quickly influenced all subsequent thinking about monastic life in Europe, coming to England by about 1100 (Lawrence, 1984, 165-9). Eventually, the various establishments of St Augustine numbered almost 300 in this country, the largest number of any order. Austin Friars, Stamford, was only a small part of this large and widespread rule.

The site of the Austin Friary, Stamford, is relatively small but, nonetheless, important as it reflects a part of the medieval community at that time, and the influence which such a religious house might have on the town. The summary of the history of the site is best quoted directly from the Royal Commission's *The Town Of Stamford* (RCHM, 1977, 31):

"Site of Austin Friary.... lies on the W. of the town, opposite Rutland Terrace, on land sloping S. to the R. Welland. The site was first occupied by a house of the Friars of the Sack, though little is known of its history.... This house was probably suppressed with the rest of the Order in 1317, and in 1341 the land was granted to the Austin Friars. In 1342 Robert de Wodehous had a licence to build and found a house for 12 friars, and at least part of the church there had been built by 1345.... By 1538, when the friary was dissolved, there were only six friars, and the buildings were soon destroyed.

The site was excavated in 1712 and a record of the plan then recovered was made.... The buildings appear to have been arranged around a central courtyard but no satisfactory reconstruction is possible....during the excavations human bones and glazed tiles were discovered... 'the stone pillars and windows, which have been dug up in the ruins, render the structure very magnificent' (quoting a separate source)."

It can be seen from the quotation above that little is known of the site, neither its size nor its extent. The opportunity, therefore, to find out more, no matter how little, was accepted with enthusiasm.

## 7. OBJECTIVES OF THE WATCHING BRIEF

In general terms, all archaeological remains should be seen as finite, and a non-renewable source (PPG 16; see also The Planning Background 4.1 above). Ideally, it is necessary for archaeologists to be able to discuss projects with potential developers before any earthmoving work commences. The policy which Anglian Water Services Limited has adopted with regard to conservation is laudable, and particularly so when much of the work is outside the control of Planning Acts. With this well founded policy it is possible to formulate a practical programme of Archaeological investigation before the start of any groundwork. The sewer link in Austin Friars' Lane, Stamford presented such a chance and a brief was written by the County Archaeologist in which areas of potential threat were stated to Anglian Water. These areas are given on Anglian Water's working drawings for all those engaged on the sewer link.

## 8. REQUIREMENTS FOR WORK

8.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology, as the chosen archaeological contractors for the work, undertook to comply with the requirements of PPG 16, to observe the standards suggested by the Institute of Field Archaeologists with regard to the watching briefs, and to adhere to the County Archaeologist's brief. In this way, not only were those areas of archaeological importance, designated as such by the County Archaeologist, observed, but also the entire length of the sewer link was inspected. The work included the examination of subsoil for archaeological features and their recording in plan when these occurred, and the observation of natural deposits, again recording details wherever necessary. Nevertheless, as mentioned in 1 above, time did not always allow for this criterion to be resolved to the ultimate.

8.2 After completion of the fieldwork, Pre-Construct Archaeology arranged with the City and County Museum, Lincoln for the long term storage of all artifacts, and the deposition of the site archive, together with a copy of the report commissioned by Anglian Water Services Limited, the report to comply with the recommendations listed in paragraph 7.1.3 in the County Archaeologist's brief.

8.3 The Site Code used by Pre-Construct Archaeology is ST 94 and the Archive Number for reference at the City and County Museum Lincoln is 45.94.

## 9. RESULTS OF THE WATCHING BRIEF

It can be seen from 7. *OBJECTIVES OF THE WATCHING BRIEF* that hopes of finding positive archaeology from the excavation trench for the sewer link were high. In the event, however, it should be stated straightaway that the location of a 12 inch sewer immediately to the west of the proposed sewer link dashed those hopes (Pl. 3). The 12 inch sewer was unrecorded; in other words it came as a complete surprise to both Anglian Water and archaeologists alike. This sewer was at about the same depth as the new sewer link and below or slightly to the west of, and running parallel with the footpath. Thus, the original construction trench for the unrecorded sewer had already destroyed any archaeology which there might have been. A further sewer also ran parallel with the footpath and no more than 1m east of the unrecorded sewer; often the gap was much less than 1m between the two. Into this gap was to be inserted the new sewer link.

Although a constant watch was kept on the excavation for the new sewer link nothing of any archaeological merit was found. The only exception to this was that the layer beneath the modern road surface for a width of about 20cm consisted of cobbling, presumably the vestigial remains of an earlier road surface of indeterminate date. The only reliable fact to be established about the cobbles is that they were almost certainly earlier than the 12 inch, unrecorded sewer; it appeared that the excavation for this sewer had destroyed the cobbling.

A lateral trench connecting the manhole of Corner Cottage with the new sewer link was excavated as the final stage of work. This trench cut across Austin Friars' Lane at the junction with Austin Street. In so doing the foundation of a wall was uncovered. This foundation appeared to continue the wall which runs along the east side of Austin Friars' Lane (and is the west wall of Corner Cottage at this end of the lane). Recording the size and dimensions of the foundation were severely hampered - as indeed was the work of excavating the lateral trench - by the various service trenches which are in this part of Austin Friars' Lane: 4 gas mains, a water main, BT cables, a sewer, an electricity cable being among them. Most of these services occurred either above or directly alongside the buried foundation

which also had above it a thick layer of concrete. Furthermore, in excavating the lateral trench, the JCB badly damaged the wall so that no clear dimensions were obtainable. In these circumstances, the chances of making any systematic record of the foundation were almost impossible. All that can be said is that the wall seemed to be wider than the above ground wall of Corner Cottage and that some of the stone recovered from the foundation was ashlar and, therefore, possibly re-used from the Friary.

## 10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Pre-Construct Archaeology would like to thank Anglian Water Services Limited for the opportunity to conduct the watching brief and for taking an interest in the work as it progressed. In particular, the site engineer, Emma Jones, gave every assistance to facilitate the work and P-CA is grateful for her assistance. Thanks are also due to the staff of the City and County Museum, Lincoln who made their records and time freely available. None of the work could have gone ahead without the co-operation of the workmen on site who were more than willing to help whenever the need arose.





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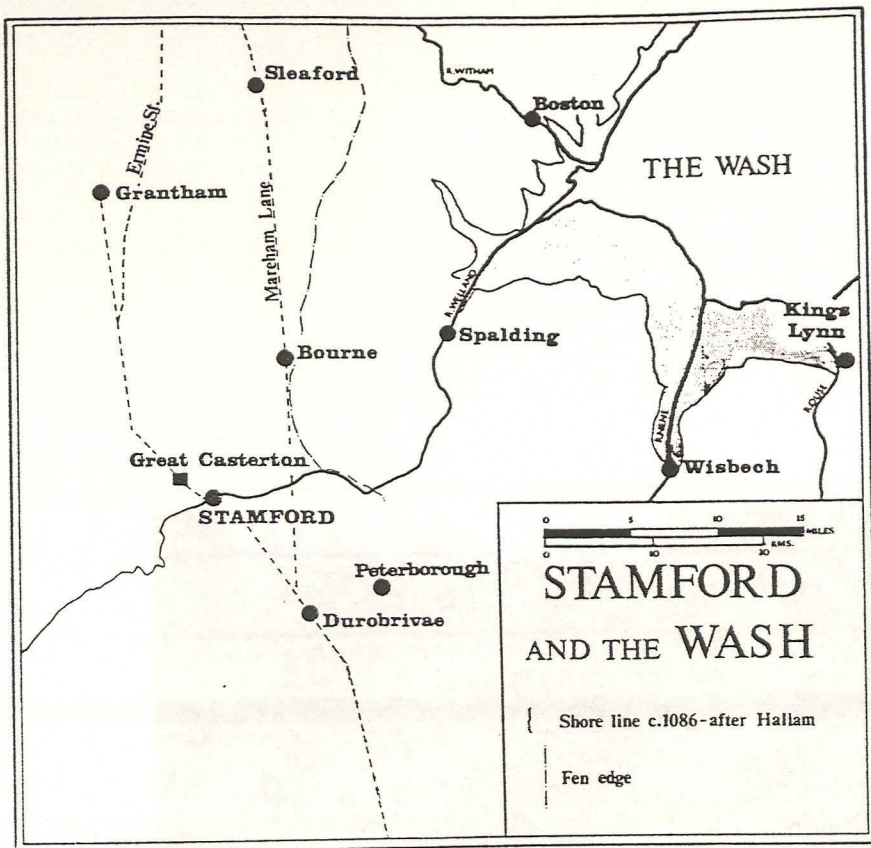


Fig 1. Location Map.

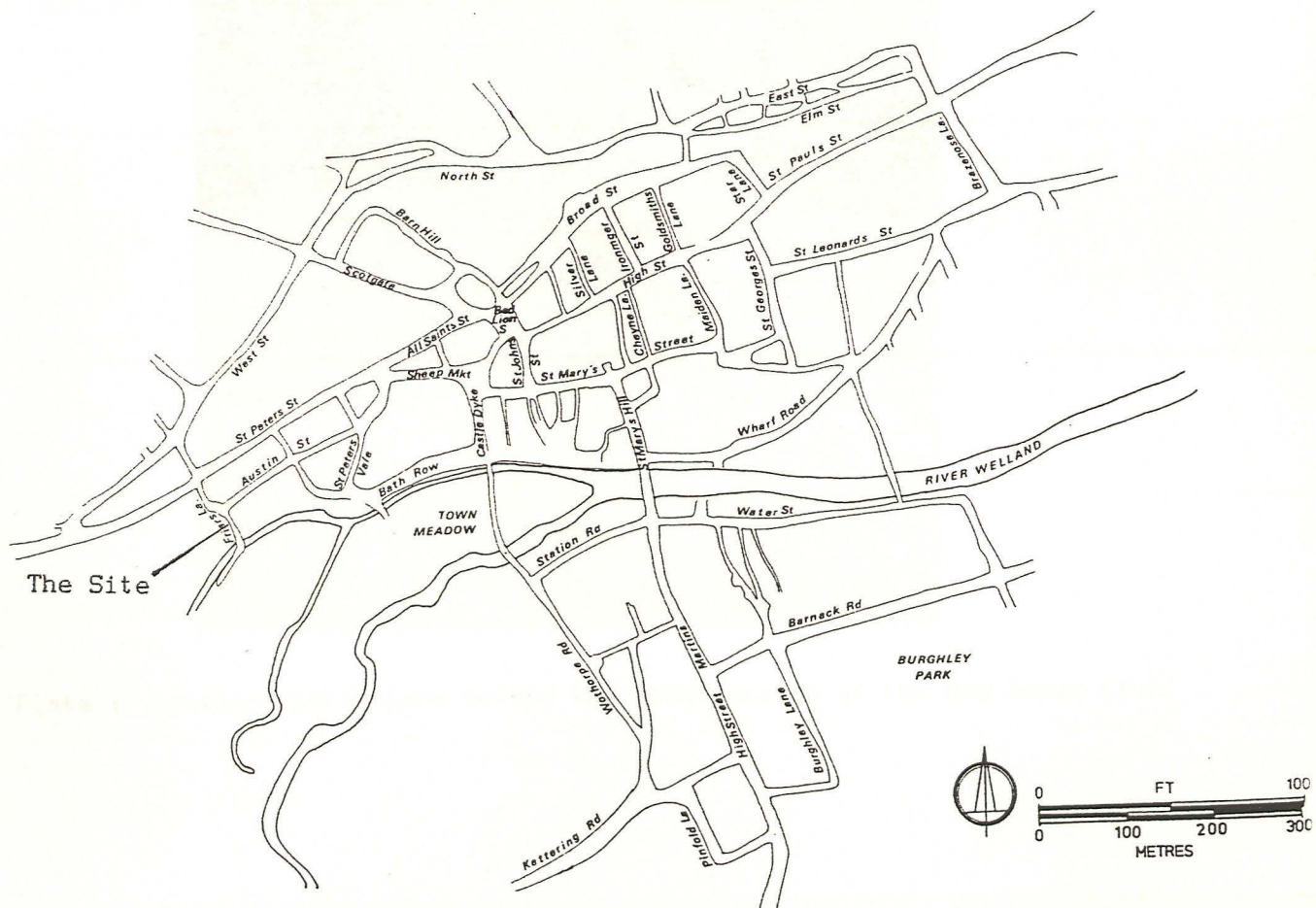


Fig 2. Site Plan.

(Both Drawings Taken from Mahany et al, 1982, pp 2 & 14)



Plate 1. Austin Friars' Lane Before the Construction of the New Sewer Link.



Plate 2. General View of Austin Friary, April 1994.

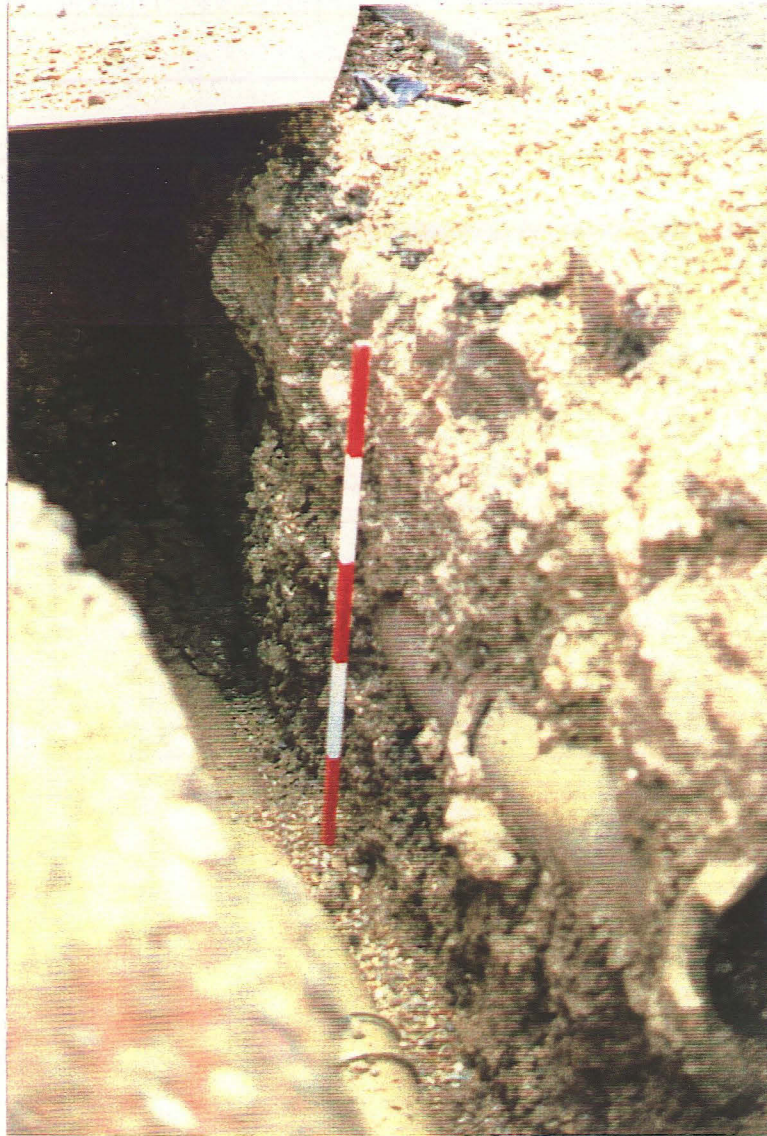


Plate 4. Location of the Early Sewer to the West of the Sewer Link Trench.