

**Excavations on Wormgate ~~Street~~, Boston, Lincolnshire**Introduction

A single evaluation trench, located at the junction of Fountain Lane and Wormgate ~~Street~~, was excavated by the Trust for Lincolnshire Archaeology between the 8th and 19th May 1989. The excavation was funded by donations appealed for and collected by the Speedwell Group of Boston, and it took place on land owned and being developed by Messrs Ringrose and Co., Solicitors.

Aims and Methodology

There were several reasons for expecting preserved archaeological deposits on the Wormgate site. (i) Wormgate is situated on the highest ground in Boston. (ii) Wormgate is documented as being a street in the Middle Ages. (iii) The actual area to be excavated had a seventeenth century <sup>or earlier</sup> <sup>timber framed</sup> building on it until the late 1960's when it was demolished.

Taking these factors into consideration, the aims of the excavation were multiple. Primarily, we wished to determine the presence of archaeological deposits and ascertain their date and state of preservation. The trench was located in a position to maximise the amount of information obtainable, and minimise the risk of excavating out a cellar. Unfortunately, because of concrete bollarding and for safety reasons, the trench could not be located nearer to either Wormgate Street or Fountain Lane, and so no frontages of buildings onto either Fountain Lane or Wormgate Street could be detected.

The single trench was placed on an east-west axis and measured approximately 7.5m x 3.5m. Excavation was by machine to a depth of approximately 1.30m (3.98 OD) and then by hand to its deepest level of approximately 2.00m (3.11 OD). Archaeological features were excavated and cleaned by trowel. All major sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10, while the plans were drawn at 1:20. Each layer was recorded on a context sheet and the site was photographed at every stage of its development. Pits and postholes were half sectioned along a north-south axis, with the eastern fill removed. Where possible, the resulting section was

drawn and the feature itself was planned. Sections, plans and photographs, as well as archive material, are deposited at the offices of the Trust for Lincolnshire Archaeology, 28 Boston Road, Sleaford, Lincolnshire.

### Detailed Results

The hardcore and asphalt surface layers over the site were machined off to reveal several layers of brick, sand and rubble dumping. These extended to a depth of 1.00m in the west and the east of the trench; below these layers were silts undisturbed by modern activity. At this level, several archaeological features were detected. In the west of the trench, a cut limestone block, with an associated timber slot, was revealed (127, 128 respectively). This tied in stratigraphically with other features on the site. In the north facing section a portion of brickwork was revealed. Twelve courses high and based on rubble foundation, this feature (099) represented the outside wall of a back basement. To the west of 099 was a series of limestone blocks (103), which represented the central load bearing wall of the latest structure on site. Not only were features 127, 128, 099 and 103 part of the same building, but they were also linked to a well (097). The well was of the cistern type, narrow at the top and belling out as it got deeper. Built of red brick held together by lime mortar, the fill of the construction trench (095) was of a heavy impermeable clay (096) which acted to stop water seepage from the well. The fill of the construction trench (096) yielded a find dating the building represented by 127, 128, 099, 103, 097. The find comprised the neck of a Belarmine jar or flask, produced in Germany during the seventeenth century.

Below the basement wall of (099) was a large, limestone wall, running north-south across the site. This wall (116) joined another substantial stone wall (104) which was, revealed in the north facing section after a section collapse. While wall (104) only appeared protruding from the section, wall (116) was constructed from faced limestone blocks on the outside, with rubble filler (117) in the centre of the wall, all resting on paving slab-like limestone footings (114). There was evidence of wall subsidence as the footings had 'kicked' up.

This must have been due to two factors; (i) the size and weight of the wall (0.65m across); and (ii) the nature of the silt upon which it was built (a clear slump and compaction of the silts immediately below wall (116) could be seen in a lower section).

Probably associated with this phase of building was hearth 110, in the north east corner of the trench. This hearth was built of red tiles, laid on edge, and was circular in shape. The tiles formed a tight external boundary to tiling in the centre of the hearth which had been less carefully laid. A layer of ash and detritus, 087, sealed the layer 109/054, through which wall 196 cut and partially rested. This layer (087) probably represents ash brushed from hearth 110. Also associated with layer 087, was burning layer 111, both of which butted, but they too were partially sealed by wall 116.

Further excavation, both through the wall and to levels below it, revealed that originally 116 had rested in a wide construction trench, and that the footings had rested on stakes and wattling, to minimise subsidence. The Monumental size of walls 116 and 104 coupled with their construction style suggest a building of some pretension. The solid stone walls 104, 116, represent part of a this structure, probably constructed during the fourteenth century. The area to the east of wall 116, was internal to the structure and contained the tile hearth 110.

At levels beneath this late medieval building, one, or possibly two, timber buildings were detected. The first and most tenuous of these was found in a slit trench in the western part of the excavation, and in the north and south facing sections of the excavation. These slit trenches measured 1.0m x 3.60m in the west, and 1.00m in the east, so the view of the lower lying archaeology was highly constricted. In the western slit trench a large post hole, 207, overlain and sealed by layer 109/054 beneath wall 116, was seen. Its dimensions measured 0.35m across x 0.40m deep. It was most likely associated with timber slot and post 297 206, as well as the dark linear feature 201 which had preserved wood incorporated into its matrix. A series of stakeholes, 194, 215, 216, 195, are probably also associated with this structural phase (if that is

indeed what is represented). A linear feature, stratigraphically equivalent to 207, was detected in the sections of the eastern slit trench.

This group of features, all cutting silts, was stratigraphically earlier than the large C14 stone walls. However, no coherent pattern was presented, and though certainly structural features, exactly what sort of structure they represent is at the moment impossible to say. Finds from these layers included a silver cloak brooch, a gold belt buckle and scraps of lead. A provisional date for this phase of activity on site, may be thirteenth to fourteenth century, but without further archaeological excavation this dating is tenuous and purely speculative.

The most striking evidence for a timber building phase came from the lowest levels of the eastern slit trench. Here, preserved wood, stakes and timber slots were in evidence, as well as wattle walling. A large, preserved timber beam (172), held in place by an array of timber stakes and posts (212, 211, 176, 174) was surrounded by other timber stakes on its north west (180, 179, 178, 177, 175). This may have formed part of an internal division within a larger timber structure. Wattle walling was woven between the stakes around timber beam (172) and between the stakes leading from beam 172 to the east (170, 159, 167, 168, 163, 162, 161, 160, 157). Other wattle was detected in the south facing section and could be associated with timber slot 164. The large timber post 182, could have acted as a structural support, and is associated with beam 172, while timber slot 187 and associated stakeholes (184, 185, 186) may have represented some timber construction within the larger timber house. Any provisional date for this timber phase of building work is speculative, due to the small area uncovered. Therefore no real attempt to reconstruct either the building's size or orientation can be made. However, this phase of building on the Wormgate site may be as early as twelfth century. From associated contexts preserved daub and scraps of slag from lead working were found.

#### Detailed Discussion of Results

From the evaluation excavation on Wormgate Street, several

important and unexpected phases of occupation have been discovered. These can be broadly broken down into four chronological phases.

Phase I At the lowest level of the excavations a timber structure was detected, the exact proportions and orientation of which, cannot at the moment be determined. This structure had wattle and daub walls and could date from as early as the twelfth century A.D. Pulse induction metre surveying certainly showed deposits containing archaeological material below the level to which we excavated.

Phase II A series of related archaeological features, probably structural, lay stratigraphically higher than the first phase timber structure. However, no coherent sense could be made of them, and in order to fully understand this phase, a larger area needs to be opened up. From contexts relating to this phase, a cloak brooch and gold buckle were found. Provisional dating of this phase is difficult at the time of writing, other than in a relative sense, and it could span from the late twelfth century at earliest, to the fourteenth century.

Phase III Represented by the solid walls 104 and 106, this phase is easier to date from fragments of pottery found incorporated within the walls. A substantial structure with internal hearth perhaps built by a religious order, during the fourteenth century, represents the penultimate phase of occupation on this site.

Phase IV A timber framed seventeenth century building, still standing until the late 1960's and containing an internal well, which built over and partly cut, the Phase 3 walls.

A picture of intensive occupation on the Wormgate site has emerged, though the view has only been through a small window. Further open area excavation to the north, south and west will no doubt expand this

picture and reveal more of the phases, so that they can be more fully understood.

Reuben Thorpe, May 1989

Acknowledgements

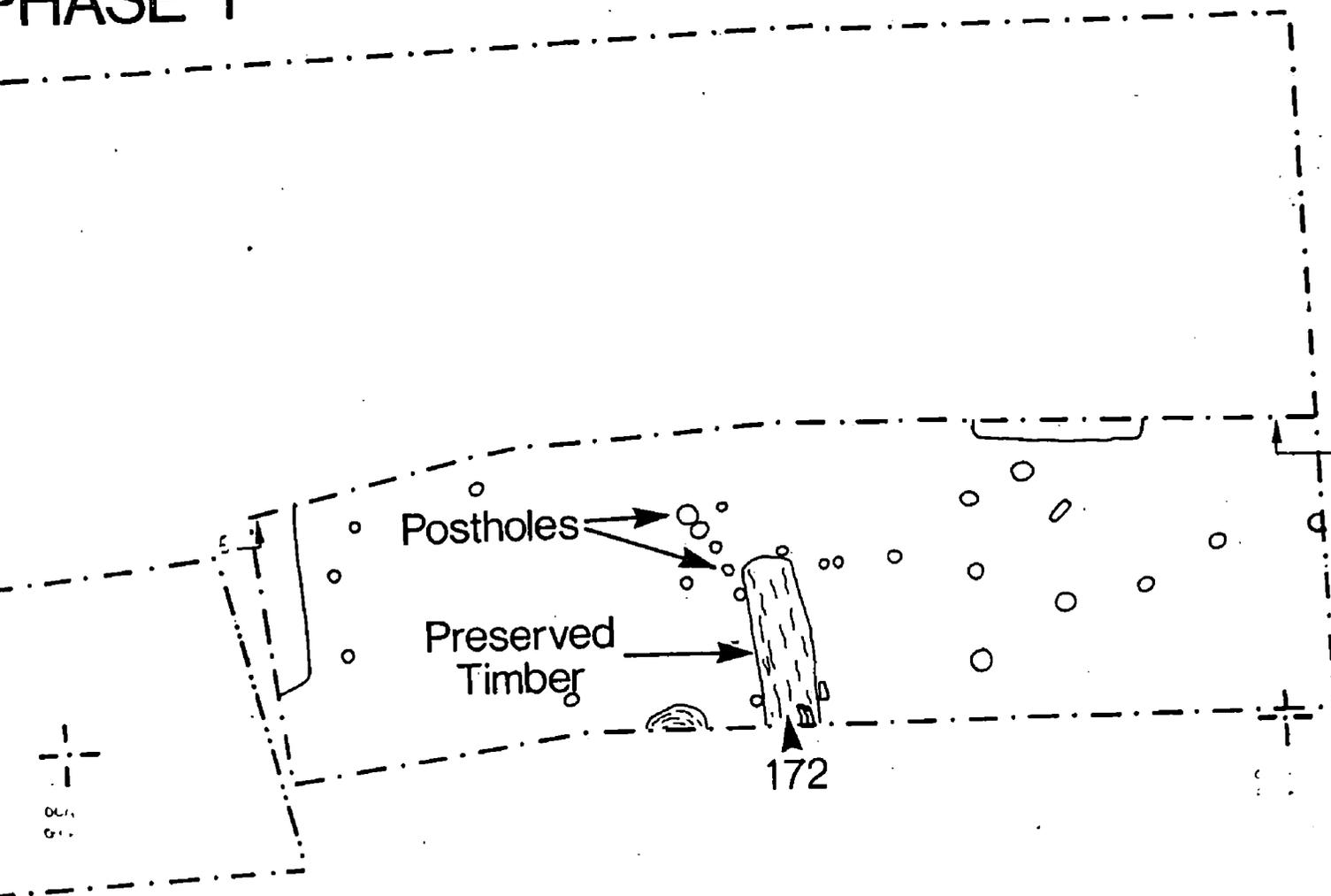
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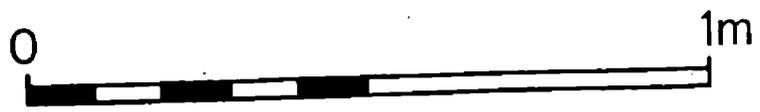
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# BOSTON WORMGATE EVALUATION 1989 PHASE 1



DL  
G.L.



# BOSTON WORMGATE EVALUATION 1989: PHASE 3

