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Archaeological Evaluation  
at  
24 and 28-30 Strait Bargate, Boston  
Lincolnshire  
by  
Heritage Lincolnshire  
on behalf of  
Land Securities Properties Ltd.

## **SUMMARY**

Between the 30th March and 10th April, 1992, an archaeological evaluation, in advance of redevelopment, was undertaken by Heritage Lincolnshire, at Nos 24 and 28-30 Strait Bargate, Boston, on behalf of Land Securities Properties Limited.

Five exploratory trenches were excavated to determine the date, depth, survival and nature of archaeological deposits present on the site.

The results of the evaluation revealed deposits from 0.50m below modern ground level to a depth in excess of 2.50m. Late, post-medieval activity has destroyed some of the archaeological deposits.

It would appear that during the medieval period occupation was principally situated to the very front of Strait Bargate, which possibly sat upon a natural rise. Further to the west (away from the frontage), the archaeological levels drop rapidly to an area of marshland.

During the post-medieval period, land to the west was reclaimed and the ground level raised.

Post 1700 occupation saw the construction of brick buildings on the Strait Bargate frontage and the excavation of rubbish pits to their rear.

Further buildings, possibly re-using existing boundaries and foundations, were constructed at the beginning of the Victorian period, including the excavation of cellars below and in the rear garden of No. 24 Strait Bargate.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Between the 30th March and the 10th of April, 1992, an archaeological evaluation, in advance of redevelopment, was undertaken by Heritage Lincolnshire, at Nos 24 and 28-30, Strait Bargate, Boston, Lincolnshire, (N.G.R. TF32854430) on behalf of Land Securities Properties Limited.

## **BACKGROUND**

The origins of Boston are unclear and little is known of its pre-medieval occupation. During the 12th century the town of Boston grew and reached its greatest prosperity around 1250-1300, when, with the importance of its port, it developed trade links throughout the country and across western Europe.

During the medieval period the town was enclosed by the Barditch, a watercourse which defended and delineated the limits of the town and later served as a sewer. The area under evaluation lies just outside the Barditch. Recent excavations to the north of the evaluation area revealed evidence of 13th-14th century development. Prior to this work it was thought that development outside of the Barditch did not begin until the 16th century. One of the major objectives of this evaluation was to establish the date at which occupation outside the Barditch began.

## **PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK**

Excavations in 1989 to the north-west of the site, on Red Lion Street, revealed medieval archaeology at a depth of c. 2.00m, overlain by post-medieval land levelling deposits. To the east of the site, excavations undertaken at Poultry Yard, Wide Bargate, next to the New England Hotel, also revealed medieval occupation at a depth of c. 2.00m similarly overlain by evidence of post-medieval land levelling.

FIG.1 GENERAL LOCATION

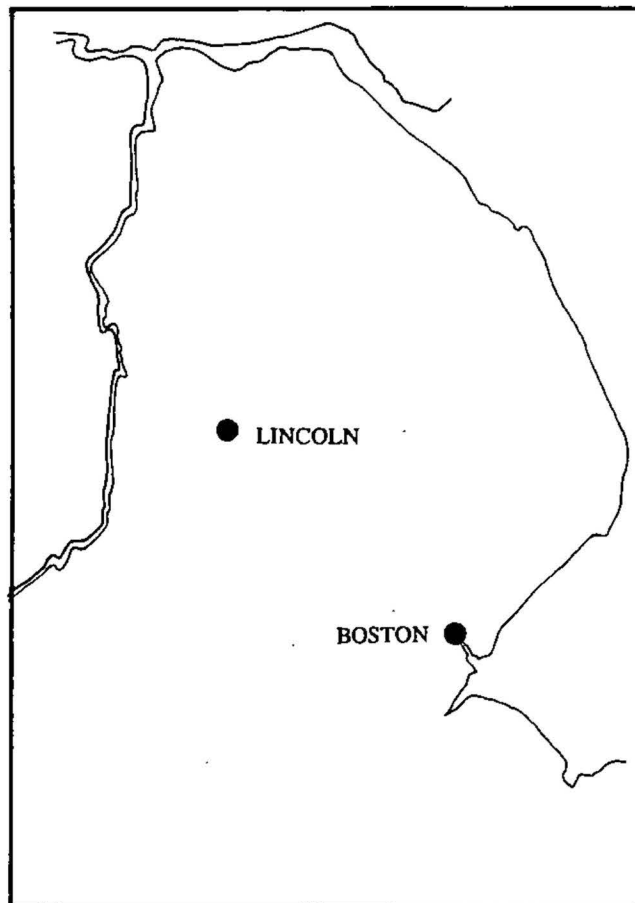
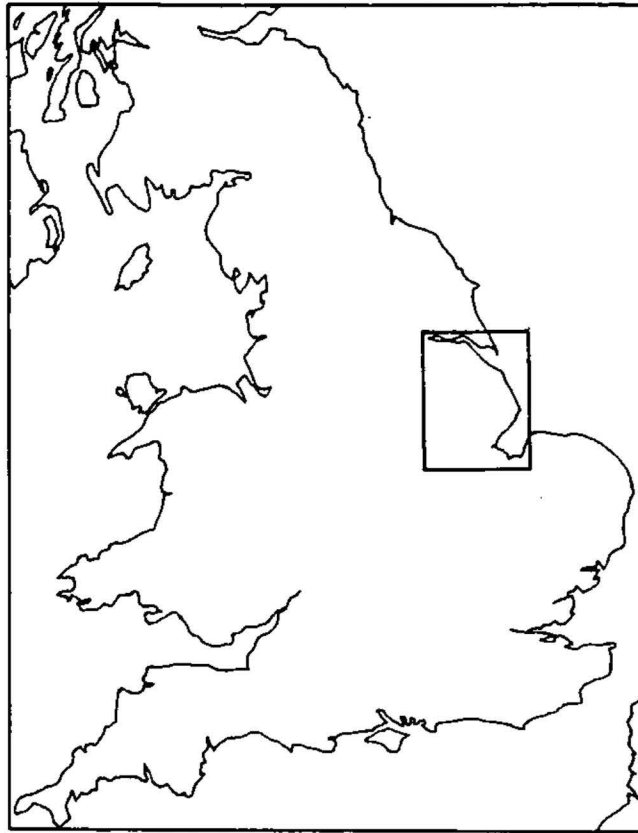


FIG.2 SITE LOCATION PLAN



## **EVALUATION STRATEGY (Fig. 3)**

Five exploratory trenches were established in positions designed to determine the date, survival, depth and nature of archaeological deposits within the area of re-development.

Trench 1 was situated within No. 24 Strait Bargate, at the front of the shop, against the south wall. This trench was 4.00m in length and 3.00m wide, aligned north-south.

Trench 2 lay 11m to the west of Trench 1, against the south wall of the building. The trench was 3.50m x 3.00m, aligned north-south.

Trench 3 lay within Nos 28-30, Strait Bargate. It was 1.00m x 3.00m, aligned east-west.

Trench 4, again lay within Nos. 28-30, Strait Bargate. It was 3.00m x 2.50m aligned east-west.

Trench 5 was situated in the rear garden of No. 24 Strait Bargate, close to the western boundary and was 5.00m x 3.00m, aligned east-west.

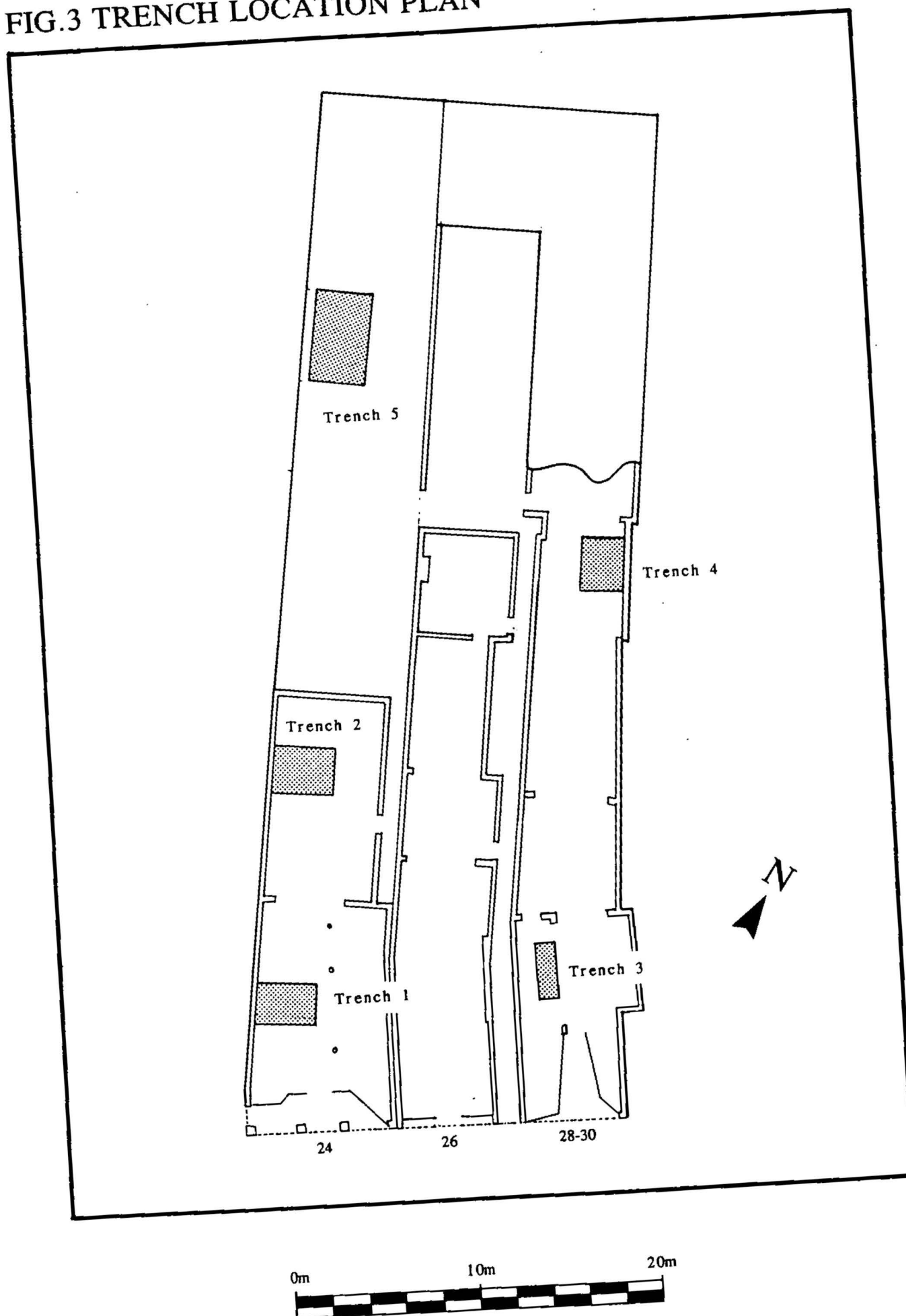
All of the trenches were excavated by hand, apart from Trench 5 which was excavated by machine. A single context recording system was employed whereby each archaeological feature or layer was recorded individually and given its own unique number. The records consist of a written description of each feature and layer, 1:20 scale plans, 1:10 scale section drawings and a comprehensive photographic record. All levels referred to in the text are O.D.

## **EVALUATION RESULTS**

Prior to the commencement of the evaluation the concrete floor, which formed the modern ground surface within both buildings, was removed.

The removal of the floor within No. 24 Strait Bargate revealed the existence of a cellar which had destroyed all archaeological deposits, to a depth of 2.00m, for the whole length, and the majority of the width, of the building. There was no cellar beneath the floor of Nos 28-30.

FIG.3 TRENCH LOCATION PLAN





### TRENCH 1 (Fig. 4)

Following the discovery of the cellar within No. 24, it was decided to remove a 1.10m portion of the east cellar wall and to record the section revealed.

The earliest deposits observed, at a depth of 4.85m O.D., were silty/clays possibly formed during flooding and/or reclamation of land in the medieval period. Present within these silts at 4.99m O.D., were thin, horizontal lenses of dark silt, suggestive of occupation. No finds were recovered to enable the dating of these lenses. Further accumulations of silt and clay deposits sealed these lenses. Cuts were visible within the silt deposits at 5.26m and, 5.44m O.D. The intrusions represented by these cuts were uninterpretable due to the limited area available, and no dating evidence was recovered.

An occupation horizon, indicated by the presence of a single stake-hole at 5.64m O.D. cutting into the latest of the deposits, was recorded. Sealing this horizon was a thick deposit of building debris, presumably contemporary with the construction of the cellar. The building debris was overlain by the present floor level.

### TRENCH 2

The brick floor of the basement was removed to establish whether archaeological deposits were present below. A trench 2.00m x 1.30m was excavated to a depth of c. 1.20m., 3.77m O.D.

The deposits recorded within Trench 2 were of two types: organic peat (plant remains) and river silt. The deposits exposed sloped slightly down towards the north (towards the river), and appeared to represent successive periods of plant growth and flooding in a shallow water or marshy environment. The deposits contained 14th century pottery sherds and well preserved leather off-cuts (the latter preserved due to the waterlogged conditions). A north-south post alignment at 3.39m O.D., cutting into one of the organic deposits, was recorded but not removed. The timbers forming the alignment were squared stakes c. 60mm x 60mm. The line of timbers may represent an attempt at ground reclamation and further investigation would be necessary to determine whether this is the case. Subsequent accumulations of peat and silt deposits covered these timbers.

# FIG.4 TRENCH 1 WEST FACING SECTION

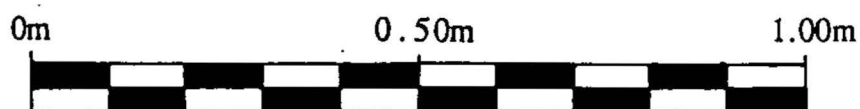
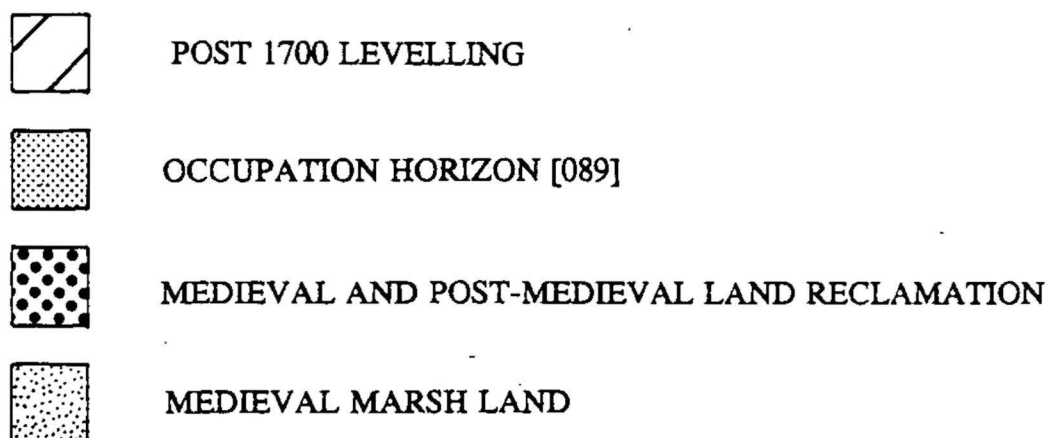
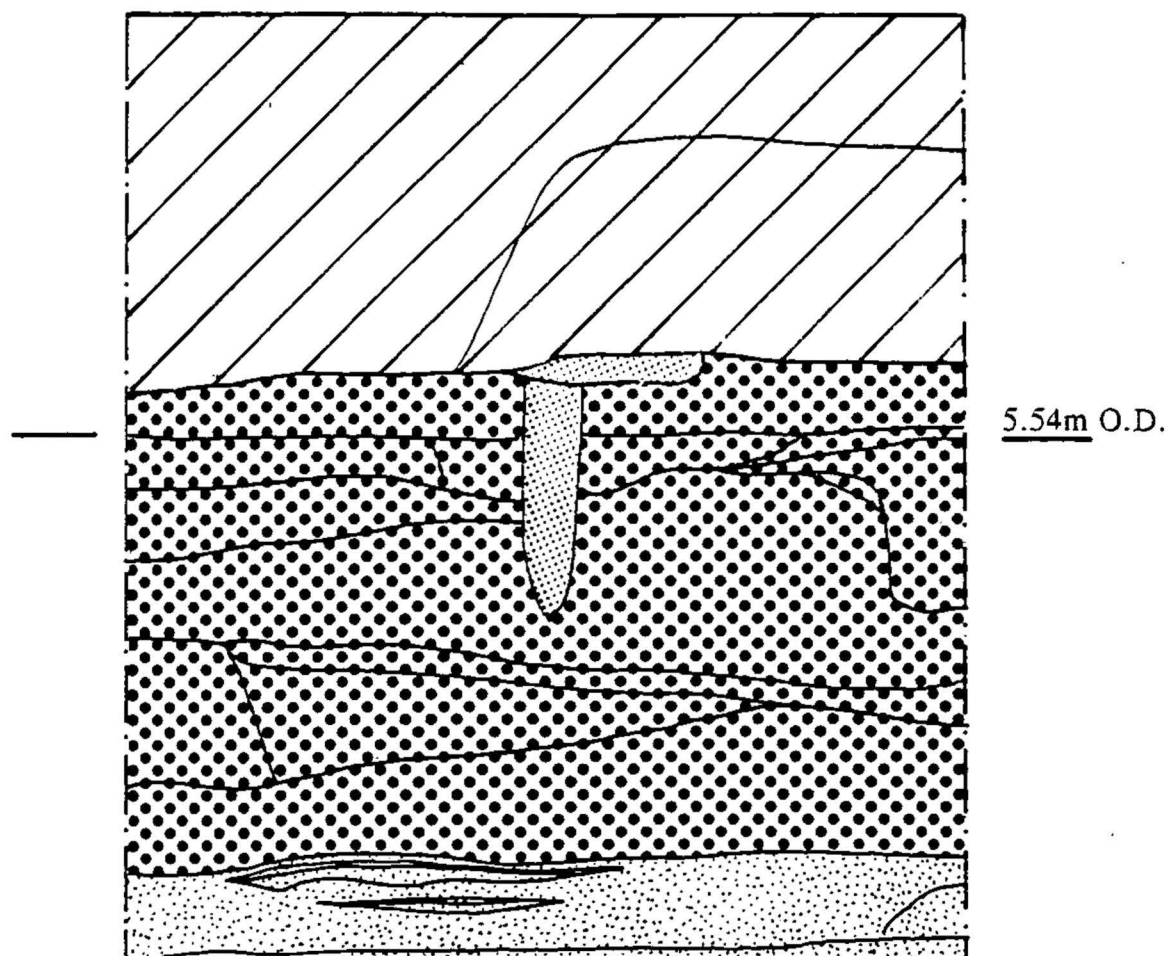
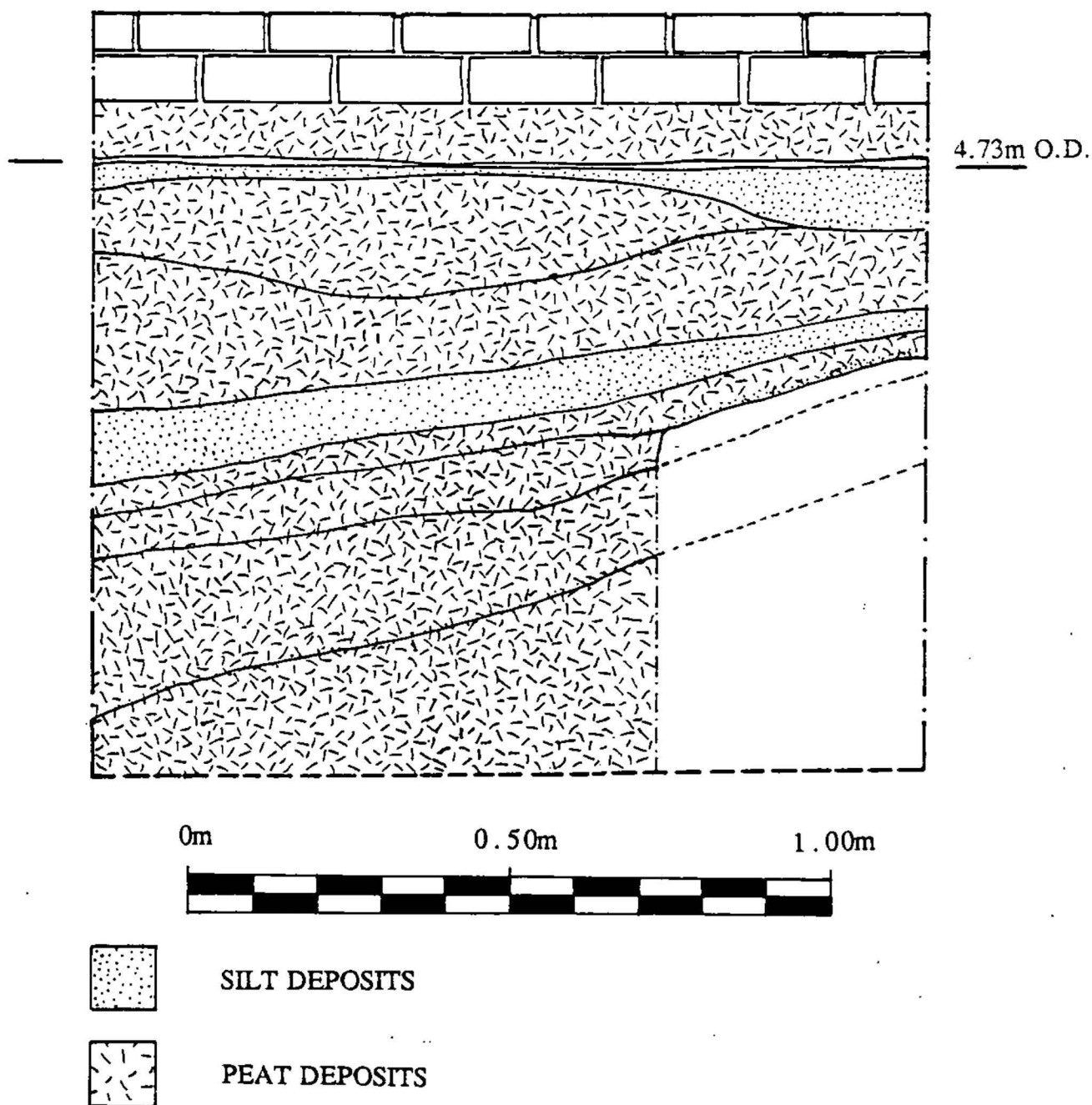


FIG. 5 TRENCH 2 WEST FACING  
SECTION



The peat and silt deposits were cut into, on their eastern side, by a north-south aligned drain. The drain, constructed from brick and capped with a large, flat limestone slab, was only partially exposed and was not fully recorded or excavated as it was still carrying water. Lying directly on top of the drain, and probably contemporary with it, was the brick cellar floor (at 4.97m O.D.) Both the drain and the cellar are thought to be 19th century in date.

### TRENCH 3

Trench 3 was situated adjacent to the south wall of Nos 28-30 Strait Bargate. Initially 3.00m x 4.00m, the trench was reduced to 3.00m x 1.00m when it was discovered that the south wall of Nos 28-30 had no foundations. The trench was excavated to a depth of c. 1.40m, (3.73m O.D.).

The earliest deposit recorded was a clay/silt into which was cut a single post-hole. A series of deposits, interpreted as dump/levelling and containing 14th century pottery sherds sealed, the post-hole. Cut into the latest of these deposits, at 4.30m O.D., was an east-west alignment of small, c. 20mm diameter stakes, associated with occupation layers in the form of thin bands of dark silt. Sealing this phase of occupation was a possible floor make-up layer, covered by the remains of a clay floor, with several square-cut post-holes, (4.35m O.D.) forming part of a structure fronting onto Strait Bargate. Finds from the post-holes suggest a 17th century date. This phase of occupation was in turn sealed by layers of silty clay in which were recorded lenses of mortar at 4.80m O.D. suggesting possible occupation levels. These deposits were overlain by the concrete forming the present day shop floor (5.15m O.D.).

### TRENCH 4

Trench 4 was situated against the north wall and approximately 20m west of Trench 3. The trench was excavated to a depth of c. 1.20m, (3.92m O.D.).

The earliest deposit recorded was a clay/silt, containing no finds and hence undated. It was sealed by a series of horizontal, ash, clay and silt deposits containing pottery of 14th

FIG. 6 TRENCH 3

A - STAKE ALIGNMENT

B - POST ALIGNMENT

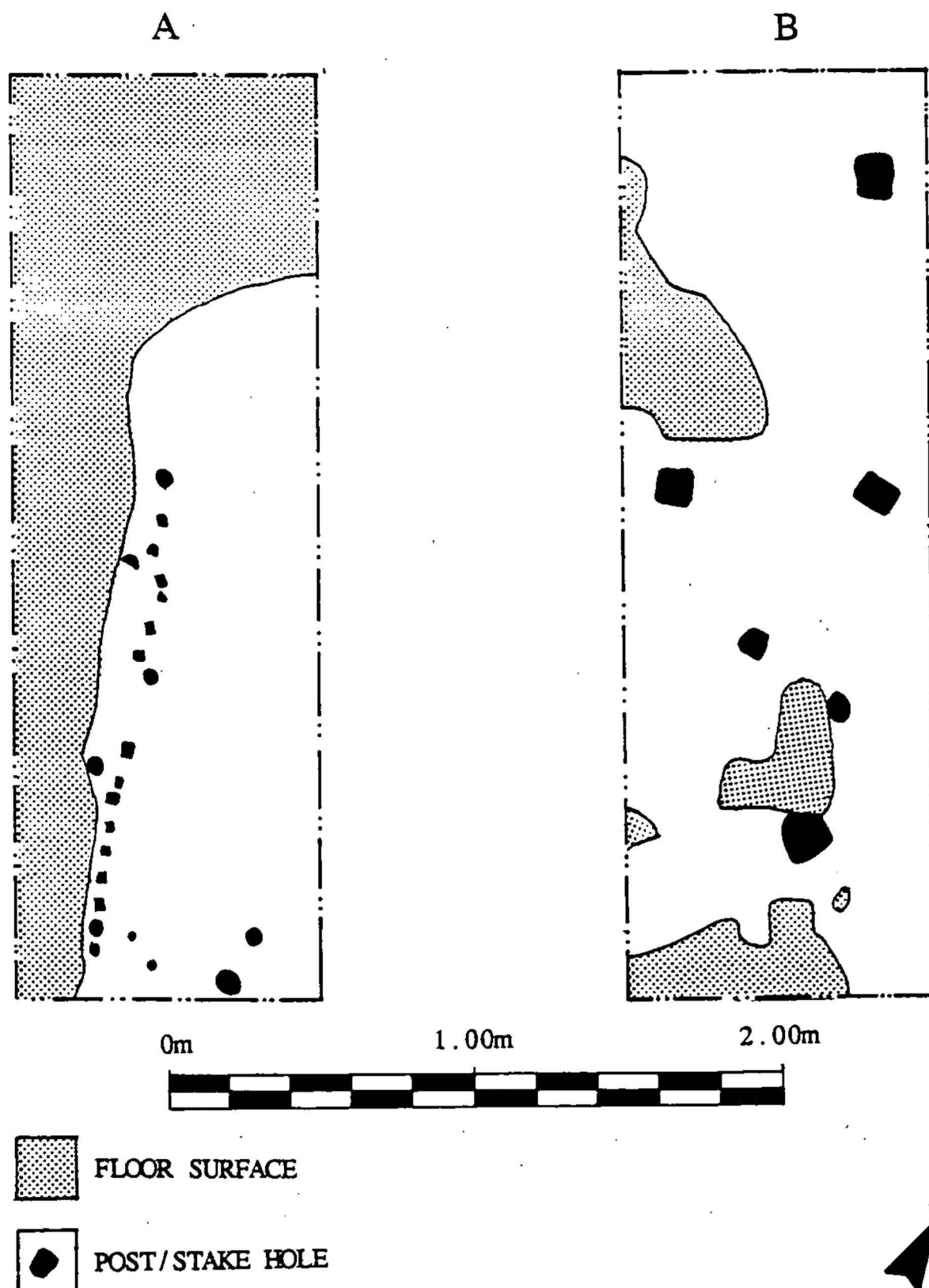
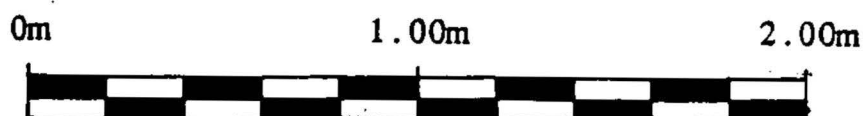
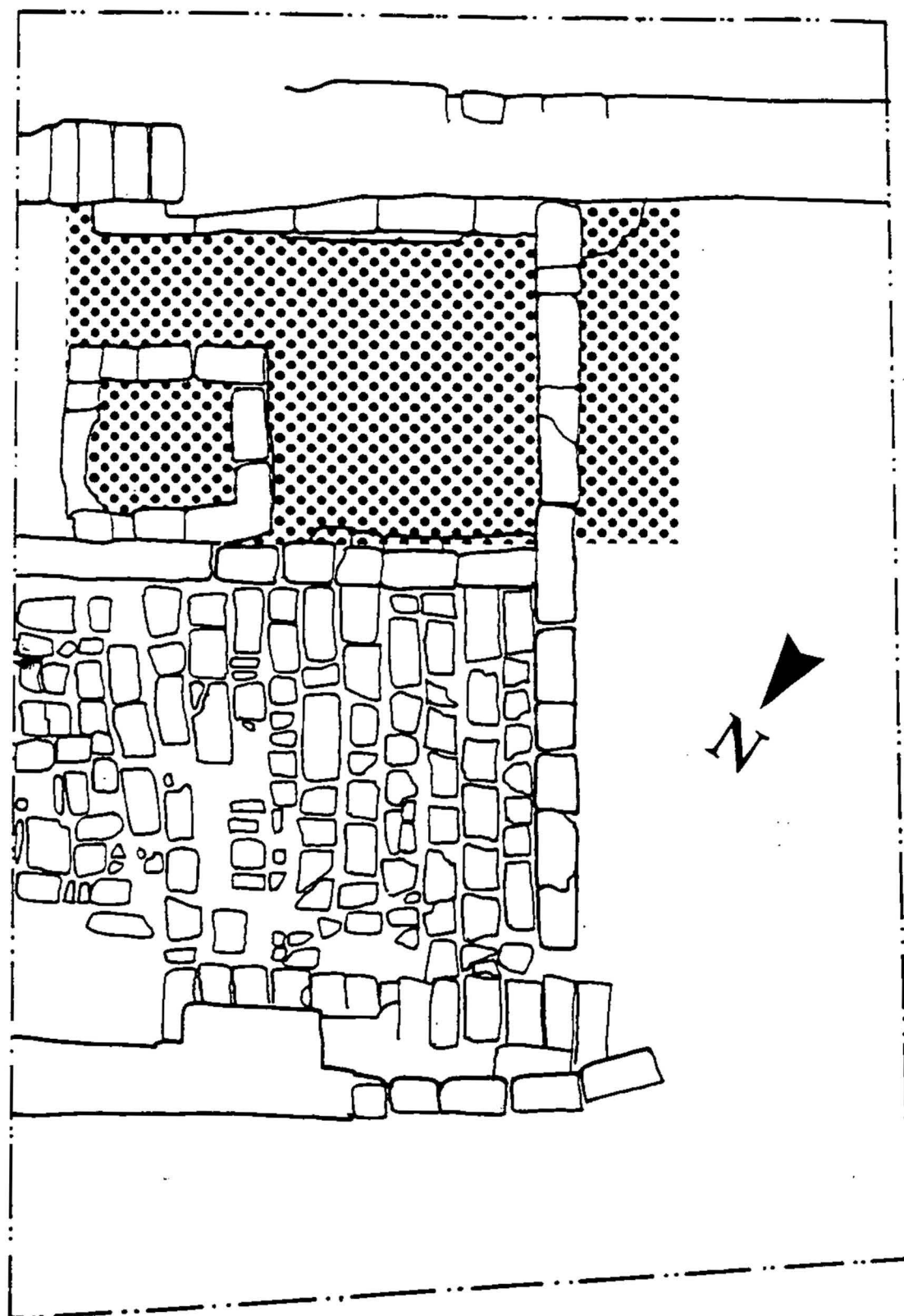


FIG. 7

TRENCH 4 PLAN OF BUILDING



LOCATION OF WATER TANK

to 17th century date. These deposits were heavily truncated, within the evaluation area, by a series of intercutting pits of pre-Victorian date filled with building debris and pottery. The pits were sealed by the foundation, floor and wall remains of a Victorian building lying at 5.00m O.D., aligned north-south. Two rooms of the building were present within the evaluation area. One was probably a coal store, as the brick floor of the room was stained black with coal dust. The second room had an earthen floor below which was a brick built, bitumen lined, water storage tank with a vaulted roof, 2.10m x 1.10m x 2.00m deep. A square access hole, formed from brick, was present at its north-west corner, presumably to allow water to be drawn from the tank.

The Victorian features were covered by a layer of building debris, presumably the remains of the structure. The present concrete floor surface of the shop (5.12m O.D.) had been founded on the building debris.

#### TRENCH 5

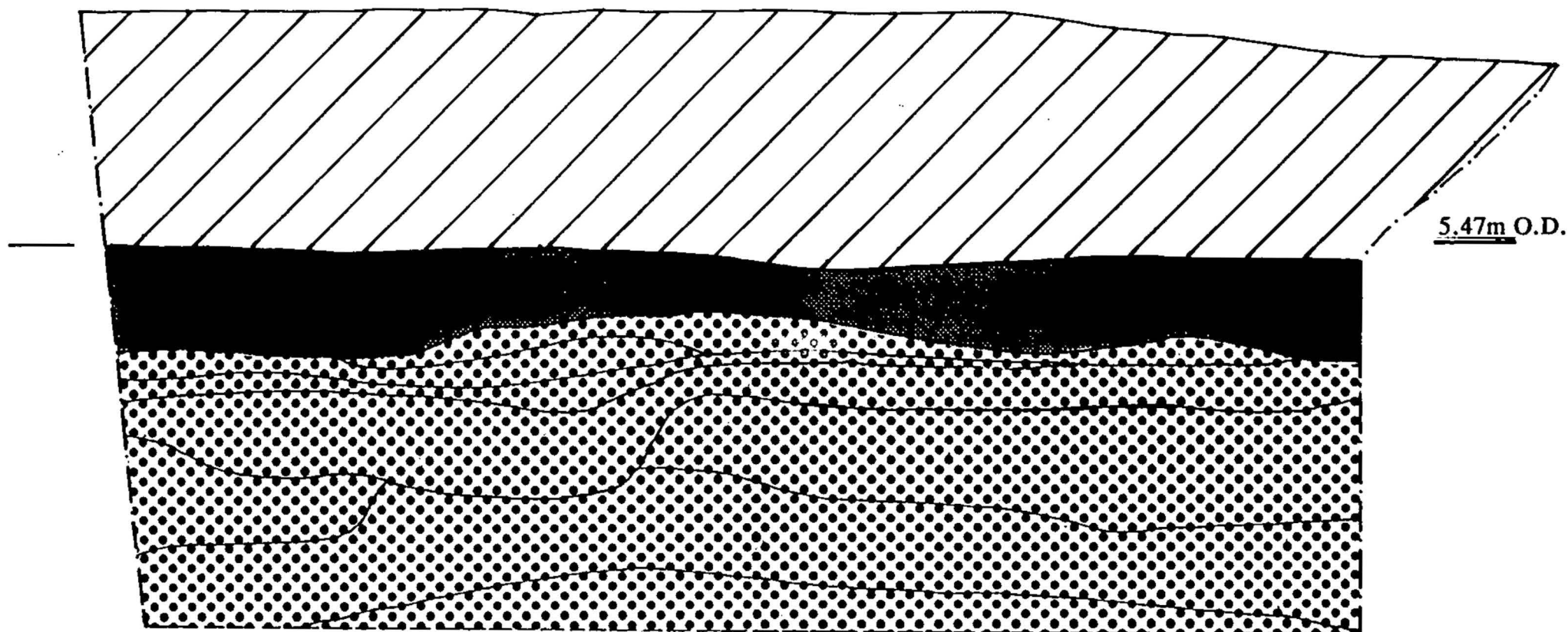
Trench 5 was situated in the rear garden of No. 24 Strait Bargate, halfway along its southern boundary.

A machine-excavated trench 3.00m x 5.00m aligned east-west was excavated. This first trench located the cellar of a Victorian building filled with debris. The depth and extent of the cellar was established before it was back-filled and a second trench excavated to the north. The cellar was c. 5.00m north-south and 3.00m east-west, with an overall depth of 2.00m. A second trench was excavated to the west of the first.

The earliest deposits recorded in the sections, exposed at a depth of 4.10m O.D., were sands and silts suggestive of flood deposits similar to those encountered in Trench 2. They were sealed by dump/levelling layers containing 14th-18th century material. A buried soil at 5.40m O.D., covered these dump/levelling deposits and was in turn sealed by c. 1.00m of building debris (top - 6.20m O.D.), presumably contemporary with the destruction of the building associated with the cellar to the east of the trench.



FIG.8 TRENCH 5 EAST FACING SECTION



POST 1700 LEVELLING



BURIED SOIL [082]



MEDIEVAL AND POST-MEDIEVAL LAND RECLAMATION

0m

1.00m

2.00m





## CONCLUSIONS

From the information retrieved during the evaluation it appears that there are three main phases of occupation on the site:

### Phase One:

The earliest layers encountered, present within both Trenches 2 and 5, are c. 14th century in date. The deposits contain large quantities of pottery and bone, and due to the waterlogged nature of the deposits, both leather and wooden artifacts have been recovered in a very good state of preservation. Deposits reminiscent of medieval occupation in the form of post/stake holes and associated occupation deposits, were also present in Trench 3, but no secure dating evidence was recovered.

It would appear that during the medieval period, occupation lay close to the present day frontage of Strait Bargate. The recorded evidence points to the existence of timber structures (recorded in Trench 3), probably on the same alignment as the post-medieval buildings. The scale and form that these structures took cannot be determined due to the small size of the area investigated, although the thin occupation deposits associated with the structures do suggest human occupation. To the rear of the structures the ground level drops away sharply into an area of shallow water and/or marshy ground, into which waste material was discarded. The timbers recorded within Trench 2 may represent an early attempt to stabilise the marshy area.

### Phase Two:

The second phase of occupation dates from the 14th-17th centuries and was visible within Trenches 1 and 3, and at the base of Trench 4. Occupation deposits are present and further excavation would determine their form.

At some time during this phase attempts were made to reclaim the land to the west by dumping large quantities of material to raise the ground surface. This dumping is most prominent within the sections recorded in Trench 5.

### Phase Three:

The third, and latest, phase of occupation present within Trenches 1, 4 and 5, was post 1700 in date. Occupation in this phase was recorded in the form of pits, presumably located to the rear of a building dating to c. 1700, fronting onto Strait Bargate, and the recording of the subsequent construction of Victorian buildings, some with cellars and out-buildings to the rear, along the present line of the frontage of Strait Bargate.

The cellars located inside 24 Strait Bargate have destroyed most of the archaeological deposits, however, the evaluation has shown that the archaeological deposits become deeper towards the western edge of the site and consequently only the later, second and third, phases of occupation have been destroyed.

It is, as yet, not known whether a cellar is present under No. 26 Strait Bargate as this area was not available for evaluation.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The main objectives of any further excavation would be the examination of the medieval occupation deposits. From the evidence currently available it can be assumed that material to a depth of c. 0.50m at the frontage of Strait Bargate and material to a depth of c. 1.20m to the rear of the proposed development, could be removed, without the loss of evidence of occupation during the medieval period. However, if any part of the foundations or service trenches of the re-development are to exceed these depths, Heritage Lincolnshire recommends that a programme of archaeological excavation should be undertaken in these areas' prior to the start of construction in order to 'preserve by record' the archaeological deposits that will otherwise be destroyed.

The objectives of such work would be:-

1. To establish the extent and nature of medieval occupation along the frontage of Strait Bargate.
2. To establish the sequence, dating and development of the reclamation of marshland to the rear of the medieval buildings.

LINCOLNSHIRE SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD : REPORT FORM 1

Site name: 30 STRAIT BARGATE, BOSTON, LINCOLNSHIRE

Site code: BSB 92

Date of project: MARCH-APRIL 1991

Organisation: HERITAGE LINCOLNSHIRE

Evaluation/Watching Brief/Excav:full/Excav:part/Other: EVALUATION

Reason for fieldwork: EVALUATION PRIOR TO PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT WORKS

Do you recommend further work? YES

If so, why? MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL DEPOSITS WILL BE DESTROYED IF MORE THAN 0.5m - 1.20m (DEPENDENT UPON AREA) IS REMOVED

What form should this work take? EXCAVATION

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Parish: BOSTON

Grid ref.: TF 328544300  
(8 figure centroid)(State Units)

Area of site: c 1040m<sup>2</sup> total area. c 34m<sup>2</sup> evaluated

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Period: MEDIEVAL (1066-1485), POST-MEDIEVAL (1485-1914)

Features/finds: MEDIEVAL: WATERLOGGED DUMPED DEPOSITS: STAKE AND POST ALIGNMENTS: FLOOR LAYERS: LAND RECLAMATION DEPOSITS.

POST-MEDIEVAL: DUMPED DEPOSITS; CELLARS.

Post-ex and publication proposals:

Report by: MIKE JARVIS, HERITAGE LINCOLNSHIRE

Date: MAY-JUNE, 1992

Is the above information confidential? NO

Continue over as necessary

## APPENDIX 1

Pottery data for selected contexts.

Context	Trench	Contents	Latest Date
009	3	1 Base sherd of uncertain origin	14th century
010	3	10 Medieval sherds including Toynton ware sherd c.1300 1 Midland Yellow 1 Cistercian/black 1 ridge tile	17th century
015	2	5 Potter Hanworth sherds 10 medieval sherds 5 flat roof tiles	14th century 14th century
023	2	1 pipkin handle 7 medieval sherds ? Lincoln sherd	14th century
025	2	4 medieval sherds all discoloured 1 fired clay fragment	unknown
060	4	3 Dutch type 1 Nottingham stoneware	17th century onwards
062	4	1 dripping dish 4 medieval sherds	14th century early
063	4	4 medieval sherds stone roof slates	unknown
120	5	1 Toynton kiln number 3 1 "sausage" from ridge tile	14th century