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**Report on Watching Brief Observations**  
during works associated with the redevelopment  
of the Wickham Hall student residences  
at  
Bishop Grosseteste University,  
Lincoln, Lincolnshire, LN1 3DY



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OS Grid Ref: SK 497860 372925  
Site Code: BGWH13  
Museum Accession Number: LCNCC: 2012.186

School of Humanities  
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BGU Archaeological Report Number: WB03

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## **1. Introduction**

This document reports on watching brief observations made during the ground-works activity associated with the demolition and rebuilding of Wickham Hall on the Bishop Grosseteste University campus. The document describes observations made of the archaeological stratification at the site and provides an interpretation with reference to archaeological and historical context.

The site is near to a known Roman (mid 2<sup>nd</sup> to late 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries) and medieval (late 11<sup>th</sup> to early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries) roadside settlement (approx. 175m to the south-west). The site appears to have remained as an open agricultural space until the 1920s. At that time the forerunner of the current University extended its occupation of the site westward to encompass this parcel of land after which it was utilised as a playing field. In the 1960s the current buildings – student halls of residence and adjacent two-story house/offices – were constructed. The current buildings are located in the central area of the proposed development project with the surrounding area currently landscaped to lawn with a number of mature trees the majority of which will be retained.

A number of previous archaeological investigations have taken place on the University College campus including amateur excavations in the 1930s and 1970s, followed by professional excavations and watching briefs associated with extensions to the Principal's House in 1997 and 2009, the construction of an extension to the library building in 1995 and 2011, and the reconstruction of the 'BG Futures' building in 2010-11. Additionally research excavations and investigations have taken place within the south-western part of the campus 2009-2012.



**Fig.1:** General site location indicated in red (scale 1:25,000)

## 2. Site location and description

The site centres on National Grid Reference SK 497860 372925 and has a surface height of between +60.00m and +61.00m OD (see Fig. 1). The site lies on the Jurassic limestone plateau above the escarpment known as the Lincoln Edge. The geological map ‘Lincoln’ sheet 114 (scale 1:50,000) indicates that the site is located on the solid geology of the Crossi Bed of the Lincolnshire Limestone, now known as the Lincolnshire Limestone Formation.

### **3. Planning background**

Bishop Grosseteste University obtained planning permission (reference 2012/0397/F) from Lincoln City Council for the demolition and redevelopment of the existing student hall of residence (Wickham Hall) and 121 Longdales Road. The footprint of the new building occupies an area of approximately 2000m<sup>2</sup> and is centred at SK 497860 372925. The watching brief was undertaken to comply with a condition attached to the permission which required the developer to submit details of a programme of archaeological works for the approval of the council prior to development commencing. A watching brief was proposed and approved as a suitable means of mitigation by Lincoln City Council. This is consistent with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

### **4. Archaeological and historical background**

The site lies in an archaeologically sensitive location on the Jurassic limestone plateau north of the Lincoln Gap, northeast of the *Jurassic Way* prehistoric ridgeway across the limestone uplands (Jones *et al.* 2003, 29).

A legionary fortress, was established on the southern edge of the plateau by c.61-66 AD, possibly in replacement of an earlier fort believed to have been erected at the base of the Lincoln Gap, around c.50 AD, whatever the origins of the fortress it is clear that a legionary presence was established at Lincoln within 20 years of the conquest of 43 AD (Jones *et al.* 2003, 38). The present site is clearly a significant distance to the north of the area enclosed by the fortress wall and ditch.

The Roman road now known as Ermine Street was constructed north of the fortress during the military period and is believed to run approximately 130m to the west of the present site beneath modern Newport and Riseholme Road. Little is known of occupation on the plateau beyond the fortress during the military period, although first century artefact assemblages indicate settlement both to the west of the fortress at the Lawn and to the north, alongside Ermine Street, in the area of Bishop Grosseteste University. The presence of early ceramics at Bishop Grosseteste University suggests that at least some occupation occurred north of the gate during the legionary period (Jones *et al.* 2003, 47). The ceramics concerned include: Legionary-type ware, pink micaceous ware, native tradition grit-tempered and shell tempered wares, and first century Samian ware from South Gaul (Wragg. 1997).

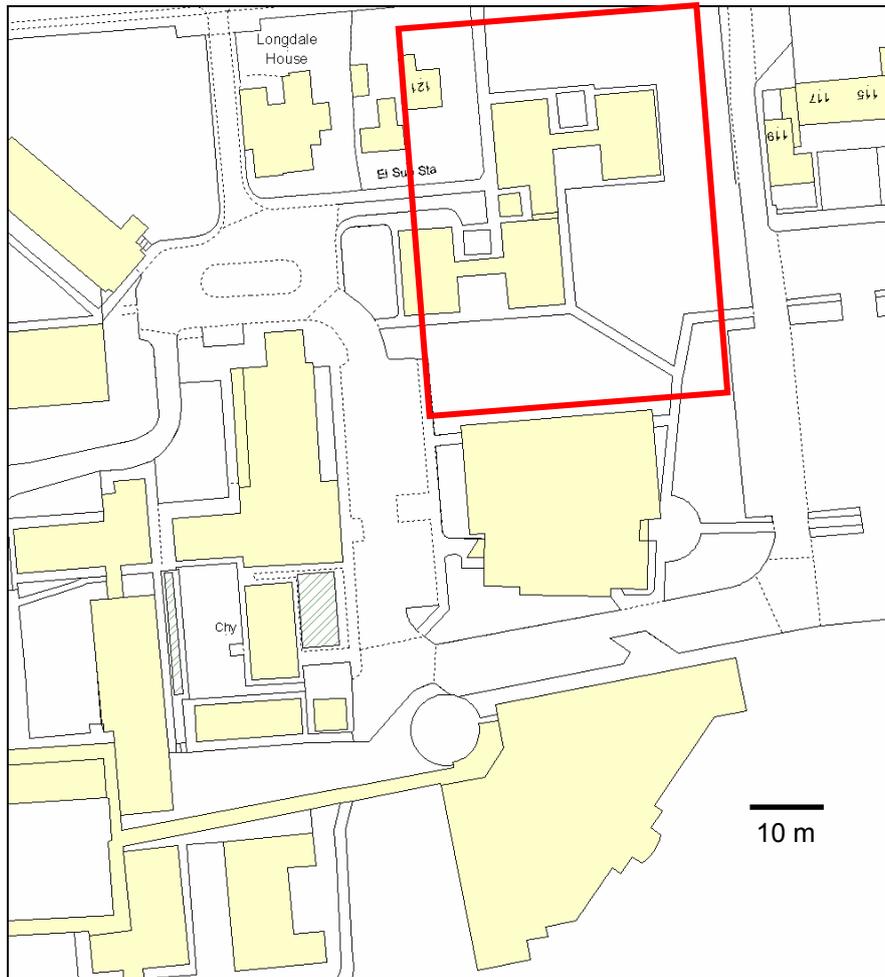
The fortress was converted into the *colonia* of *Lindum* towards the end of the first century AD and developed into one of the most important cities in Roman Britain; becoming the capital of the province of *Britannia Secunda* at the end of the third century (Jones *et al.* 2003, 124-5). The Newport Arch, the surviving north gate of the *colonia*, stands 700m south of the current site and evidence of extra-mural settlement and extensive cemeteries have been recorded spreading northwards along both sides of Ermine Street. Recent observations on the west side of Newport, at the site of the old Territorial Army barracks directly opposite Bishop Grosseteste University, produced evidence for both cremation and inhumation burials of Roman date.

Romano-British building remains were also found immediately to the east of the Roman road and the present site during earlier building work at Bishop Grosseteste University and were interpreted as most probably farm buildings, representing the diffusion of the suburb into the agricultural hinterland (Jones *et al.* 2003, 96; Wragg, 1997). A further interpretation may encompass their function in relation to the road and hence may indicate a use relating to servicing travellers into and out of the city (Spence, 2014). Further from the road and hence more relevant to the current site a single inhumation and ditches dated to the Roman period were recorded during work at the Principal's House some 150m to the south-west (CLAU, 1997).

During the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries the Newport suburb was established either side of a narrow market place, *Newport Green*, which developed along the side of Ermine Street. Earthwork defences were later constructed around the suburb, which was granted a market charter in 1330 (Jones *et al.* 2003, 227). These earthworks are projected to have run east-west close to the northern limit of the Bishop Grosseteste University campus and to have returned southwards some 100m to the east of the centre line of Newport and hence approximately 50m to the west of the current site. The excavations undertaken on the campus during the 1990s and between 2010–2012 revealed evidence for the construction of a short sequence of timber and stone buildings fronting onto Ermine street. This phase of occupation was dated from the late 11<sup>th</sup> to early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries (Wragg, 1997; Spence, 2013). These buildings may have represented a small nucleus of extra-mural settlement focused upon the church of St John in Newport which was located some 225m to the south-west of the present site and whose graveyard is now known to have reached to the eastern side of the present highway (NETM10). In 1428 the population of the area was recorded by diocesan collectors as depleted, they noted no more than ten inhabitants (families) occupying both Newport parishes. The church of St John in Newport was dismantled in the 1540s after further population decline and disuse, the parish becoming amalgamated with St Nicholas (Hill, 1965, 56). Little further archaeological evidence for activity in this area has been recorded before

the modern period. Of note however was the observation of a large quarry pit of eighteenth century date some 50 metres west of the current site (McDaid, 2007).

A succession of ten maps dating from 1817 to 1868, clearly show that, although property boundaries had encroached, the layout of the former market place was respected until well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with buildings on both sides set back from a single straight street, the present Newport (Mills and Wheeler 2004 and Jones *et al.* 2003, 226). These maps and subsequent Ordnance Survey editions show the current site as an open agricultural space, possibly pasture, until the 1920s when the University extended its occupation of the site to the east to encompass this parcel of land, which was then used as a playing field. In the early 1960s a tennis court was constructed to the south of the area. In the 1960s the current buildings — Wickham Hall and no.121 Longdales Road — were constructed. The buildings occupy the western and central part of the development area while the surrounding space is currently landscaped to lawn with several mature trees. The current eastern property boundary of the University campus in this immediate area respects a field boundary of at least early 19<sup>th</sup> century date.



**Fig. 2:** Location plan showing the general area of the development marked in red (scale 1:1,250)

## 5. Methodology

All excavation, record keeping, finds processing, conservation and archiving complied with the relevant Chartered Institute for Archaeologists standards and guidance, and the recommendations of Lincolnshire County Council as set out in the *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook* (2012). Watching brief principles in particular are governed by the *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (CIfA, 2008). The watching brief was directed by Craig Spence (MCIfA), with the assistance of two other qualified and experienced professional archaeologists who undertook field and finds recording respectively.

All excavation of archaeological deposits was undertaken by hand using appropriate tools. Whenever appropriate the excavation recording system employed a 'single context' approach to recording and planning (see Spence 1990 and Spence 2010). All vertical measurements relate to Ordnance Datum using localised survey data. A photographic record was compiled during the course of the watching brief activity.

All finds were manually collected. No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered.

Post-excavation analysis of the written and drawn record, and report production, was funded by Bishop Grosseteste University. The principal investigator for post-excavation analysis was Dr Craig Spence BSc MA PhD FSA MCIfA.

The recording, processing and post-excavation analysis of finds was compliant with the *Standard and Guidance for the Collection, Documentation, Conservation and Research of Archaeological Materials* (IfA 2001) and the *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook* (LCC 2012). Given the number of finds recovered it was possible for all finds processing to be conducted during the period of the work. The finds processing was supervised by suitably qualified person and was supported by the community/student group 'Lincoln Archaeology Group for Excavation and Research'.

Dating evidence was obtained by means of post-excavation ceramic analysis. (Ceramic analysis was undertaken by Zoe Tomlinson with advice from Jane Young medieval/post-medieval ceramics specialist, see appendix 3).

## **6. Results**

The project comprised two phases; with the first phase of ground works requiring the removal of an area of soil and sub-soil some 20x30m in dimension. The second phase required the removal of an area some 50x25m which included an extensive area occupied by the present Wickham Hall building which required demolition. The Phase 1 area was generally undisturbed by modern activity, although a small number of drainage trenches cut across part of the area. Whilst the foundation design called for multiple 1500mm square concrete pads (approximately 250 in number) the ground works contractor chose to strip the entire site down 900mm to approximately +59.10m OD. Wherever the subsoil was found to be disturbed by tree roots (whether removed or retained trees) foundations were sunk a further 200-300mm into the natural Limestone Brash.

Phase 1 observations began on 22 January 2013, following a two week delay to the commencement of ground works due to adverse weather conditions. Observations of the main period of Phase 1 ground removal continued for five working days until 28 January 2013, although further observations of ancillary works took place intermittently between Phase 1 and 2. Phase 2 observations began during the week commencing 25 February 2013. Observations were made during demolition and ground reduction works through to mid-March 2013.

*Phase 1 Results:*

The undisturbed topsoil deposit was found to extend across the site to a depth of approximately 300-400mm this was undifferentiated dark brown loamy soil [1] (context number). The subsoil beneath this deposit comprised a layer of mid-yellow brown mixed silty clay with occasional small and medium fragments of limestone [2]. This deposit had a depth of between 200-300mm. Beneath that deposit was the natural Limestone Brash which contained frequent large fragments of limestone and was moderately compacted [3].

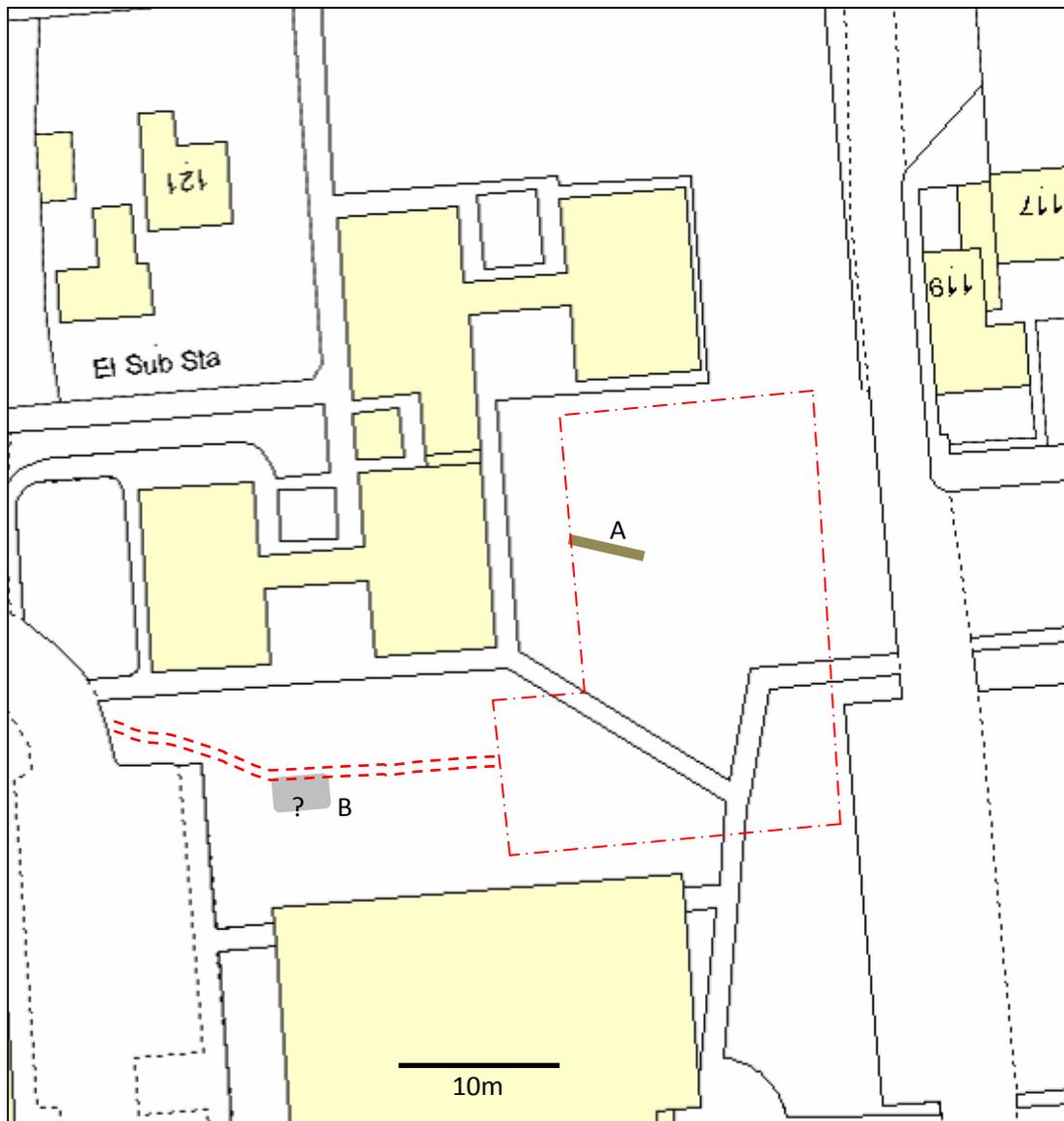
Feature 'A' comprised a linear ditch orientated NWW by SEE, it was observed to be extant for approximately 3000mm and was approximately 700mm in width at its upper level although this merged imperceptibly into the overlying soil deposit [1]. At its base, which was concave to flat in shape, the feature was approximately 250mm wide. The cut had an approximate depth of 600-700mm and intruded into the upper surface of the Limestone Brash by some 100mm [5]. The cut was filled with dark grey brown sandy silt (30/70) [4]. This feature was observed during the main period of Phase 1 ground reduction.

Feature 'B' was observed in a narrow service trench dug through the topsoil and some 200mm into the natural Limestone subsoil running east-west in the open space between Nelson Hall<sup>1</sup> and the Sports Centre. The feature comprised a large pit or quarry cut, the northern edge of which was removed by the digging of the service trench and was some 11.80m north of the Sports Centre. The sides of the cut were steeply sloping to vertical [7]. The cut extended below the base of the service trench, however at the cut's western side three or four large limestone fragments formed a jumbled fill with large voids. The depth of the cut was recorded as at least 1.20 m by measuring into one of the voids. The remainder of the fill

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<sup>1</sup> The foundation footprint of Nelson Hall was later repurposed to accommodate the new/current 'Refectory' building

was dark grey brown loose sandy silt (30/70) with a large lens of grey sandy clay (20/80) with frequent medium frags of charcoal toward the eastern side of the feature [6].

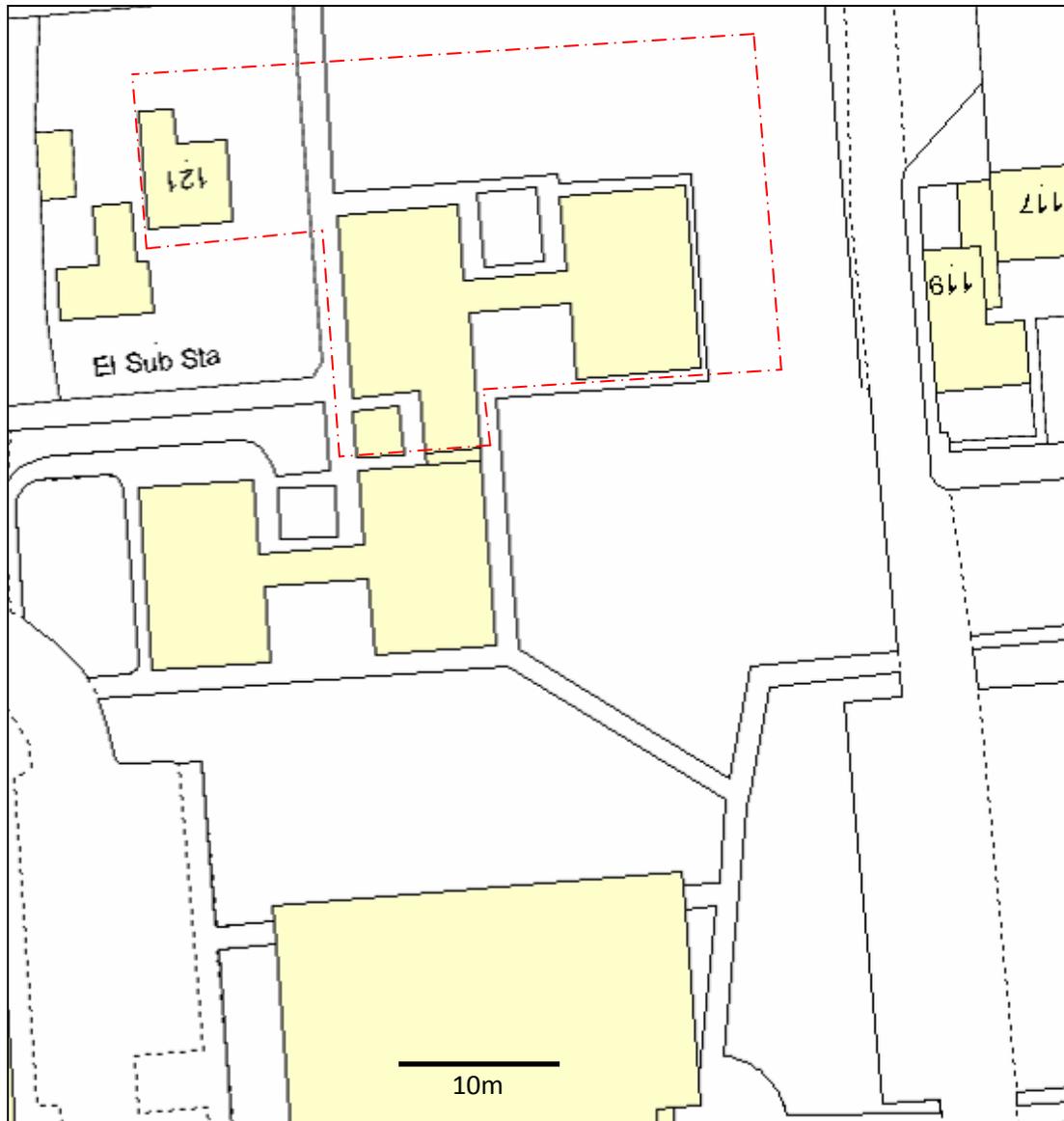


**Fig. 3:** General location of Phase 1 observations (scale 1:500)

*Phase 2 Results:*

Observations were made of general machine clearance and the excavation/re-excavation of various drainage and service trenches across the area indicated in Fig.4. The area was notable for the amount of modern disturbance encountered. The depth of topsoil (dark brown loamy soil [1]) was broadly noted as 300-400mm across the area, overlaying uniformly level limestone brash [3] (there was very little evidence for any significant sub-soil deposits

possible a result of the widespread modern disturbance of the area). The surface of the natural geological deposits across this area was approximately + 59.45 – 59.55 m.O.D.



**Fig. 4:** General location of Phase 2 observations (scale 1:500)

## 7. Discussion and conclusions

The observations made during the watching brief identified two substantive archaeological features. Additionally the area toward the north of the site was confirmed as being very disturbed by later modern intrusive activity. Additionally no archaeological features were observed to intrusively cut through the underlying natural deposit. Feature A toward the eastern part of the site appeared to represent a shallow linear ditch, possibly a boundary

alignment, although the NWW by SEE orientation does not sit well with other known later boundaries. Alternatively this could represent the base of a field-drain. The feature was dated to the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> century with reference to a single ceramic sherd. Feature B toward the western side of the site appeared to represent a large and deep backfilled quarry pit, although of unknown extents. The feature was dated to the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> century with reference to a single ceramic sherd. Both features and a lack of other intrusive activity suggest the area was beyond the roadside influence of Ermine Street during the Roman period and was likely to have been agricultural land during the medieval and later phases of activity.

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**Appendix 1: List of Archaeological Context Descriptions**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1	Deposit	Dark brown loamy soil	Topsoil
2	Deposit	Mid-yellow brown mixed silty clay with occasional small and medium fragments of limestone	Subsoil
3	Deposit	Moderately compact 'Limestone Brash' containing frequent large fragments of limestone	Natural geological deposit
4	Deposit	Dark grey brown sandy silt (30/70)	Ditch fill/deposit within [5]
5	Cut	Linear cut orientated NWW by SEE, length approximately 3000mm; approximately 700mm wide at its upper level; the base was concave to flat in profile, and approximately 250mm wide. Approximate depth of 600-700mm. Filled by [4]	Possible boundary(?) ditch or base of a field-drain(?)
6	Deposit	Large limestone fragments (with numerous voids) set irregularly within a matrix of dark grey brown loose sandy silt (30/70), large lens of grey sandy clay (20/80) with frequent medium frags of charcoal toward the eastern side of the deposit	Backfill of quarry(?) pit[7]
7	Cut	Unexcavated - Sides steeply sloping to vertical, northern edge approximately linear east-west and 3.50 m in width, depth at least 1.20 m. Extended to an unknown distance to the south. Filled by [6]	Probable quarry(?) pit

## Appendix 2: Photographs



**Plate 1:** General view of site in the area south of Wickham Hall during ground reduction and prior to demolition, looking east (shows surface of sub-soil [2] with numerous modern intrusive cuts for drainage and service trenches).



**Plate 2:** Feature A showing in base of ground reduction trench looking south.

### Appendix 3: Finds Report



An Assessment of the finds from the Watching Brief  
Observations during works associated with the  
redevelopment of the Wickham Hall student residences  
at  
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## Introduction

This report covers the finds retrieved from the watching brief associated with the demolition and rebuilding of an existing structure known as Wickham Hall on the Bishop Grosseteste University campus

During the Watching Brief two pieces of ceramic material were retrieved. These are both from different vessels and were from two different contexts [4] and [6]. Both pieces are post-medieval.

## Archaeological Background

The site is near to (175m to the south-west) of a known Roman (mid 2nd to late 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries) and medieval (late 11th to early 14th centuries) roadside settlement. The site appears to have remained as an open agricultural space until the 1920s when the University College extended its occupation of the site to the west to encompass this parcel of land after which it was utilised as a playing field. In the 1960s the current buildings – student halls of residence and adjacent two-story house/offices – were constructed. The watching brief site is on the northern edge of the campus close to Longdales Road.

## Catalogue

Context Number	Weight	Type	Description	Date
4	8g	PEARL	Part of a square shaped Pearl Ware handle with five hand painted black stripes, oval in section.	C18 – C19
6	10g	ENGS	Body sherd of English stoneware, probably a jar. Typical brown glaze on external surface and yellow/brown on internal surface.	C19 – C20

## Conclusion

Only two finds were retrieved during the investigation. The Pearl Ware handle was retrieved from context [4] (feature A.), which is the fill of a ditch. The English Stoneware sherd was retrieved from context [6] (feature B), which was the fill of a large pit/quarry. They are both modern and date from the C18 to C20. They are typical of other assemblages from the BGU archaeological investigations. (See Young, 2012; BGLX11)

## Recommendations for further work

The finds are typical of this site and do not have any further research value, no further work is recommended.

## Retention

It is recommended that the finds are discarded being post-medieval and having no further research potential.

## Bibliography

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