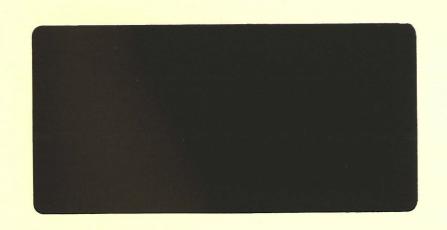
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
OF DEVELOPMENT ON LAND AT
RED LION STREET,
BICKER,
LINCOLNSHIRE
(BLR 98)



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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF OF DEVELOPMENT ON LAND AT RED LION STREET, BICKER, LINCOLNSHIRE (BLR 98)

Work Undertaken For Mr R. Grundy

Report Compiled by Paul Cope-Faulkner BA (Hons) AIFA

May 2000

Planning Application No: B04/0069/96 National Grid Reference: TF 225 374 City and County Museum Accession No: 165.98

A.P.S. Report No. 77/00



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1. SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during development at Red Lion Street, Bicker, Lincolnshire.

The development site lies at the head of Bicker Haven, formerly an inlet to the sea, around which an extensive salt-making industry was established. Bicker came to prominence as a salt-making centre and even utilised the Haven as a small port during the early medieval period. Evidence for salt-making has been found during two archaeological investigations in the immediate vicinity.

A medieval pit cut into alluvium was the earliest feature identified above which a subsoil had formed. Later features comprise two pits. Three sherds of medieval pottery were recovered along with fish and animal bone and mollusc shells.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Definition of a Watching Brief

A watching brief is defined as 'a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons within a specified area or site on land or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed' (IFA, 1997).

2.2 Planning Background

On the 2nd July 1998 an archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of footing for a new house with attached garage at Red Lion Street, Bicker, Lincolnshire. This archaeological monitoring was required as a condition of planning permission for the development, application

number B04/0069/96

Archaeological Project Services was commissioned by Mr R. Grundy to undertake the archaeological watching brief in accordance with the requirements of the project specification (Appendix 1).

2.3 Topography and Geology

Bicker is situated 12km southwest of Boston and 17km southeast of Sleaford, in Boston District, Lincolnshire (Fig. 1).

The proposed development is located 400m to the south of Bicker village centre as defined by the parish church of St. Swithin (Fig. 2). Situated at a height of c. 4m OD on land to the south of Red Lion Street the proposed development encompasses some 200 square metres. Local topography is relatively flat, typical of the fen landscape of this part of the country.

Local soils are predominately of the Romney Series, coarse silty gleyic brown calcareous alluvial soils developed on roddons in the reclaimed marshlands. However, where medieval salt making has occurred the soils often become more silty and contain ash and charcoal (Robson 1990, 26). Beneath these deposits is a solid geology of Jurassic clays.

2.4 Archaeological Setting

Evidence for prehistoric activity in the Bicker region is likely to be scarce as the contemporary land surface lay several metres below subsequent flood deposits.

During the Romano-British period the former marshland stabilized enabling settlement, agricultural and salt making activities. An important Roman thoroughfare, the Salter's Way, is believed to have originated near Donington and continued west to Grantham and beyond

(Margary 1973, 223). Romano-British pottery has been found within the village c. 200m northeast of the church. A settlement, probably dating to this period, has been identified from aerial photographs to the northwest of the village.

During the Saxon period (5th -9th centuries) more land was reclaimed from the sea and by the 10th and 11th centuries, Bicker had developed into a sizeable settlement centred around a church. Anglo-Saxon worked stones have been noted in the medieval fabric of St. Swithin's church that may relate to an earlier church, the present church dating to the 11th and 12th centuries (Pevsner and Harris 1989, 142).

Bicker is first mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. Referred to as 'Bichere' the name is from the old Scandinavian bijkiarr meaning 'the village marsh' (Ekwall 1974, 41). The Domesday book records that Bicker had a church and a total of 23 salt-pans. The land was owned by the Archbishop of York, Count Allen, Countess Judith and Guy of Craon with smaller parcels of land owned by Colegrim and others (Foster and Longely 1976).

Bicker lay at the east end of Bicker Haven, an ancient estuary that discharged into The Wash. The Haven became an important centre for the production of salt and was utilized as a small port. Salterns were an important part of the local economy and were highly valued as renders to the local Lords were quite high. The industry attracted interest from as far afield as Owston Abbey in Leicestershire which owned part of the salt operation in Bicker and nearby Donnington (Hallam 1965).

To the southeast of the village large mounds are apparent in the landscape and represent medieval salterns that once lined Bicker Haven. More of these mounds existed

between Bicker and the neighbouring village of Donnington and were recorded during the construction of the Bicker bypass (Healey 1988, 44).

Pits and drainage ditches containing pottery of 13th century date have been identified adjacent to the present development area (B04/027). A silt deposit sealing these features was interpreted as a flooding episode that had occurred during the 13th century. More pits and ditches were subsequently cut into this material (Cope-Faulkner 1994). An archaeological evaluation of the land south of the present investigation area revealed further ditches and gullies as well as quantities of waste material, possibly from salt extraction (Dymond 1996).

3. AIMS

The aim of the watching brief was to complete a record, both written and photographic, of any archaeological contexts or artefacts exposed during the groundworks of the development.

4. METHOD

The groundworks consisted of the excavation of a number of strip footings by machine. In addition a number of trenches for services were also excavated. These excavations were monitored by Archaeological Project Services.

The depth and thickness of each deposit was measured from the ground surface. Each deposit or feature was allocated a unique reference number (Context Number) with an individual written description. A list of all contexts appears as Appendix 2. Sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10 and annotated sketch plans were produced. A photographic

record was compiled, depicting the setting of the site and the nature of recorded features and deposits.

Finds recovered from excavated deposits were examined and a period date assigned where possible (Appendix 3). Records of the deposits and features recognised during the watching brief were also examined. Phasing was assigned based on artefact dating and the nature of the deposits and recognisable relationships between them.

5. RESULTS

Following post-excavation analysis, two phases were identified;

Phase 1 Medieval deposits

Phase 2 Post-medieval to Modern deposits

Archaeological contexts are listed below and described. The numbers in the brackets are the context numbers assigned in the field.

Phase 1 Medieval deposits

The earliest deposit recorded at the base of all trenches was a greyish brown silty sand (005) that was thicker than 0.24m. This deposit is of alluvial origin.

Cut into the alluvium along the southern edge of the site was a flat based feature (004), probably a pit. This was 1.3m wide and c. 0.3m deep and contained a lower fill of mollusc shells with dark grey silt (003). The upper fill was indistinguishable from the alluvium into which the pit had been cut.

Phase 2 Post-medieval to modern deposits

Sealing the medieval deposits was a 0.29m thick layer of light greyish brown clayey silt (002). By association with previously excavated deposits in the vicinity, this layer

has been identified as post-medieval alluvium that has subsequently been transformed into subsoil.

Cut into the subsoil was a feature measuring 1.3m wide and 0.6m deep (007). This was filled with dark grey brown clayey silt (006). No function could be determined for this feature.

Sealing the site was a 0.34m thick topsoil of dark greyish brown silty sand (001). Possibly cut into the topsoil was a modern refuse pit (009) filled with grey silty sand and brick rubble (008).

6. DISCUSSION

The medieval deposits (Phase 1) are represented by alluvium and a pit. The alluvium has been identified in previous investigations along Red Lion Street and has tentatively been dated to the 6th century (pers. comm. James Rackham), although later finds have been found within this deposit (Cope-Faulkner 1997, 4). Pits have also been recorded in these previous investigations.

The post-medieval (Phase 2) alluvial deposit has also been identified previously and has been transformed through agricultural activity on the site. A pit cut through this layer produced no artefactual material and, therefore, remains undated.

Few finds were retrieved during this investigation and include three medieval pottery sherds from Stamford and Bourne, animal and fish bone and mollusc shells. All finds were retrieved from the medieval pit.

7. CONCLUSION

Archaeological monitoring at Red Lion

Street, Bicker were undertaken as the site fell within an area of known archaeological remains, notably medieval occupation and industrial activity.

A similar sequence of deposits was encountered to that previously identified in the vicinity. They comprise medieval alluvial deposits and refuse pit and post-medieval subsoil and pits.

Few finds were retrieved from the site and comprise three sherds of medieval pottery, animal bones and mollusc shells

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Project Services would like to acknowledge the assistance of Mr R. Grundy who commissioned the fieldwork and post-excavation analysis. The work was coordinated by Gary Taylor and this report was edited by Tom Lane. Susan Smith, the Community Archaeologist for Boston Borough Council, permitted examination of the relevant parish files maintained by the Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire.

9. PERSONNEL

Project Coordinator: Gary Taylor Site Supervisors: Martin Griffiths Finds Processing: Denise Buckley

Illustration: Rachael Hall

Photographic Reproduction: Sue Unsworth Post-Excavation Analysts: Paul Cope-

Faulkner, Gary Taylor

10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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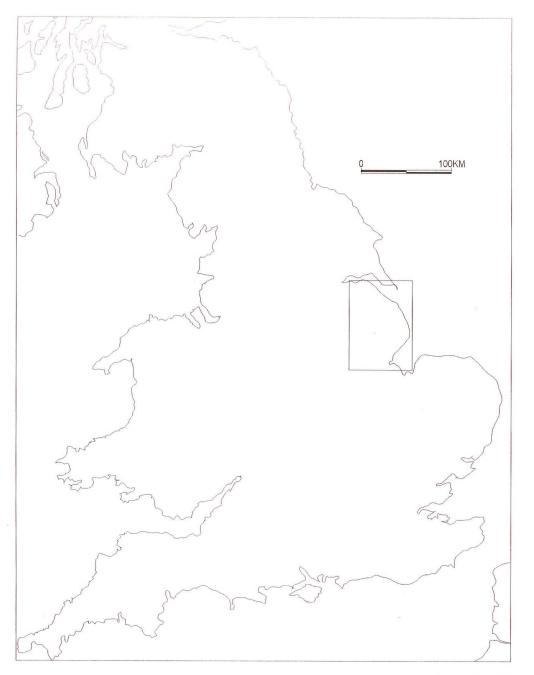
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11. ABBREVIATIONS

APS Archaeological Project Services

IFA Institute of Field Archaeologists



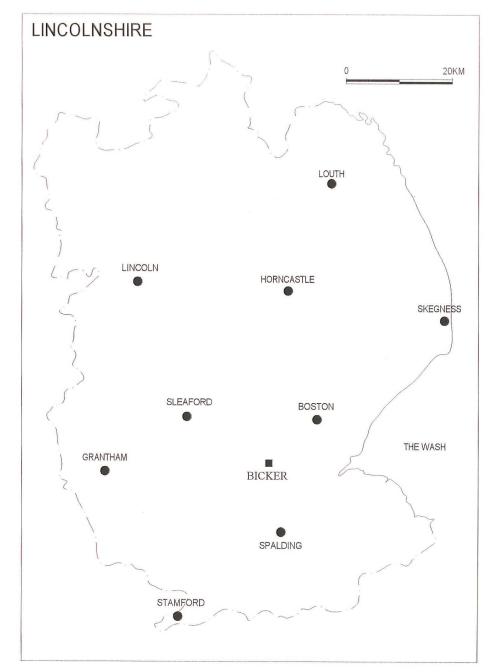


Figure 1 - General location map

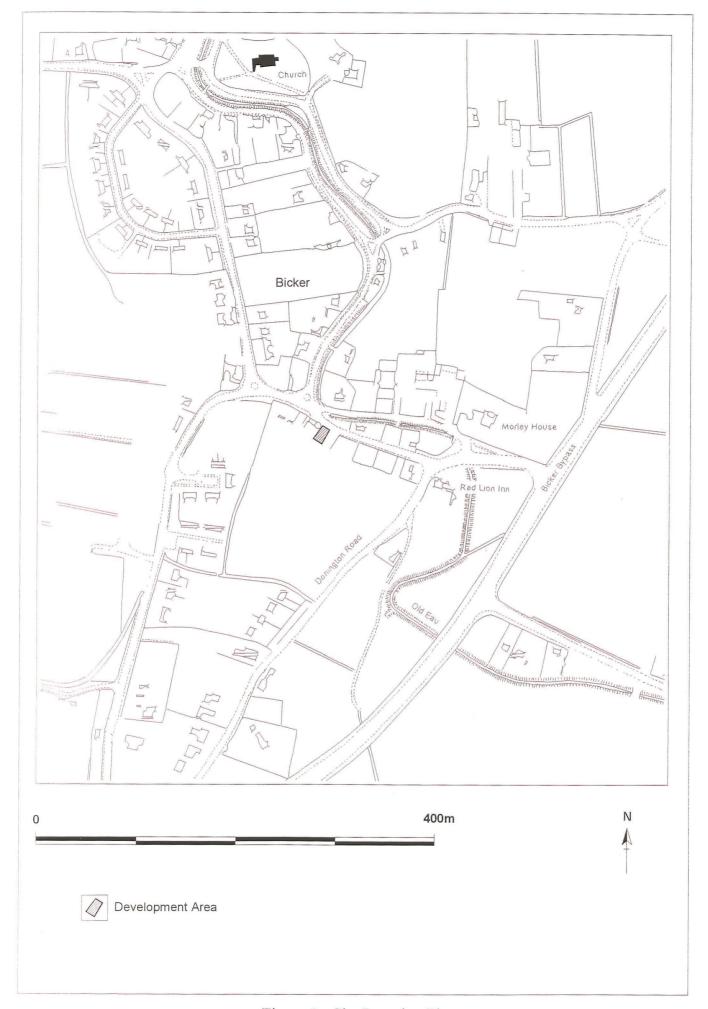


Figure 2 - Site Location Plan

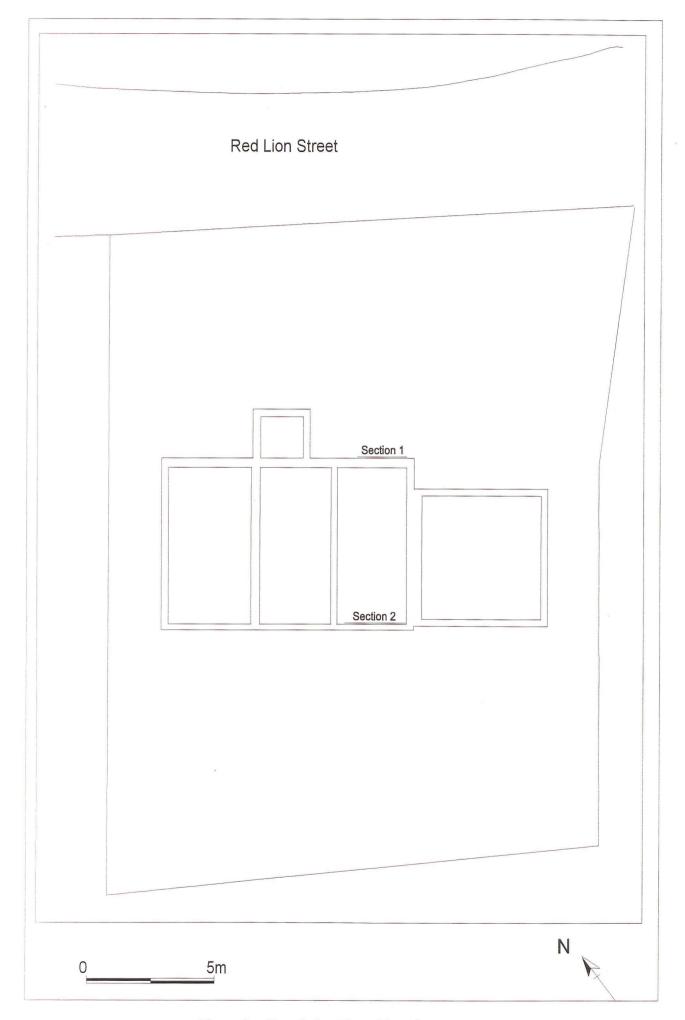


Figure 3 - Foundation Plan of Development

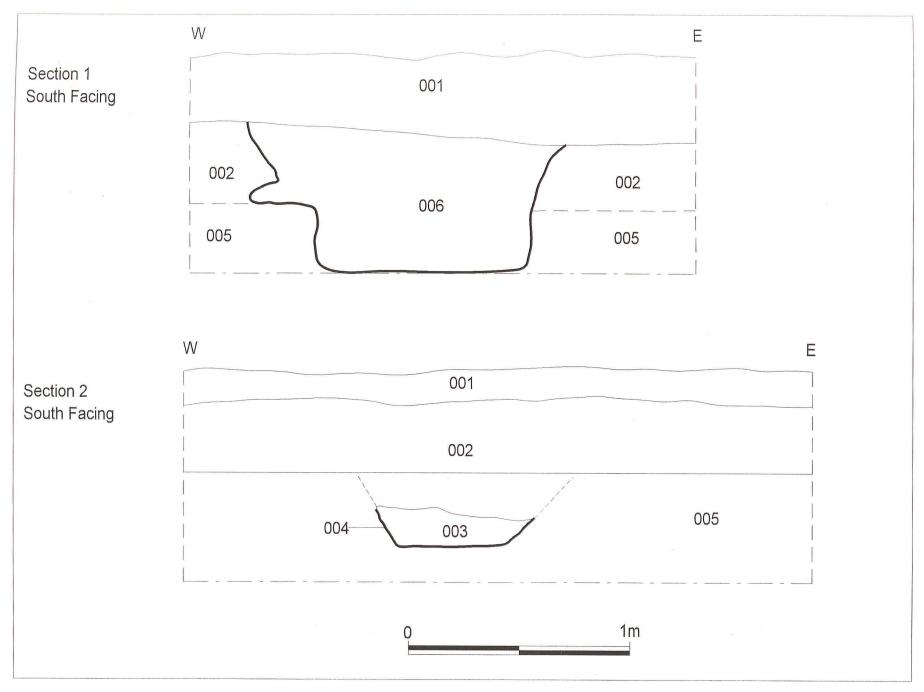


Figure 4 - Sections 1 and 2



Plate 1 - General view of the site, looking southeast



Plate 2 - Section 2, showing the medieval pit, looking north

LAND AT SYCAMORE HOUSE, RED LION STREET, BICKER, LINCOLNSHIRE - SPECIFICATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

1. SUMMARY

- a. A watching brief is required during residential development at Sycamore House, Red Lion Street, Bicker, Lincolnshire.
- b. Bicker was a Domesday settlement and has produced late Saxon pottery; it was important as a trading community in the early medieval and was also important for its production of salt. Previous work in the vicinity of the development area has revealed archaeological remains dating to the 13th century together with finds and other material which suggest a salt making site nearby.
- c. The watching brief will be undertaken during groundworks associated with the development. The archaeological features exposed will be recorded in writing, graphically and photographically.
- d. On completion of the fieldwork a report will be prepared detailing the findings of the work. The report will consist of a narrative supported by illustrations and photographs.

2. INTRODUCTION

- a. This document comprises a specification for an archaeological watching brief during the construction of three dwellings on land at Sycamore House, Red Lion Street, Bicker, near Boston. The site is located at national grid reference TF 2252 3747, and is shown on Figure 1.
- b. This document contains the following parts:
 - i. Overview.
 - Stages of work and methodologies.
 - iii. List of specialists.
 - iv. Programme of works and staffing structure of the project.

3. SITE LOCATION

a. Boston is situated in the south Lincolnshire Fens, approximately 45km southeast of Lincoln and 7km from the coast of the Wash. The village of Bicker is located approximately 10km to the southwest of Boston and lies within the administrative district of Boston. The two sites are located on either side of Sycamore House on Red Lion Street at national grid reference TF 2252 3747.

4. PLANNING BACKGROUND

a. Planning permission (application number B04/0069/96) for the construction of three dwellings has been granted by Boston Borough Council, subject to a condition for an archaeological watching brief to be undertaken during the development.

5. SOILS AND TOPOGRAPHY

5.1 The local topography is relatively flat and the site lies at approximately 4m OD. Soils in the area are predominantly of the Romney series, coarse silty gleyic brown calcareous alluvial soils over calcareous or sandy silt loams. These deposits overlie Jurassic clays.

6. THE ARCHAEOLOGY

a. Bicker was a Domesday settlement and has produced late Saxon pottery. During the early medieval

period Bicker was an important trading centre due to its position on the Bicker Haven which silted up in the late medieval period. Bicker was also important for its production of salt and the shores of the haven are lined with salt making sites.

- b. Rubbish pits and boundary or drainage ditches of 13th century date were revealed during an archaeological watching brief just to the east of the proposed development. Other finds included building material and slag suggesting that there may be a salt processing site nearby (Archaeological Project Services 1994).
- c. An archaeological evaluation of land immediately to the south of the proposed development revealed ditches and gullies representing medieval and post-medieval boundaries. Industrial material was also recovered which may have been associated with salt-making (Archaeological Project Services 1996).

7. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- a. The aims of the watching brief will be:
 - i. To record the archaeological features exposed during the excavation of the foundation trenches and other areas of ground disturbance.
- b. The objectives of the watching brief will be to:
 - i. Determine the form and function of the archaeological features encountered;
 - ii. Determine the spatial arrangement of the archaeological features encountered;
 - iii. As far as practicable, recover dating evidence from the archaeological features, and
 - iv. Establish the sequence of the archaeological remains present on the site.

8. SITE OPERATIONS

a. General considerations

- i. All work will be undertaken following statutory Health and Safety requirements in operation at the time of the watching brief.
- ii. The work will be undertaken according to the relevant codes of practice issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists.
- iii. Any and all artefacts found during the investigation and thought to be 'treasure', as defined by the Treasure Act 1997, will be removed from site to a secure store and promptly reported to the appropriate coroner's office.

b. Methodology

- i. The watching brief will be undertaken during the groundworks phase of development, and includes the archaeological monitoring of all phases of soil movement.
- ii. The section of the trench will be observed regularly to identify and record archaeological features that are exposed and to record changes in the geological conditions. The section drawings of the trenches will be recorded at a scale of 1:10. Should features be recorded in plan these will be drawn at a scale of 1:20. Written descriptions detailing the nature of the deposits, features and fills encountered will be compiled on Archaeological Project Services pro-forma record sheets.
- iii. Any finds recovered will be bagged and labelled for later analysis.
- iv. Throughout the watching brief a photographic record consisting of colour prints will be compiled. The photographic record will consist of:

- (1) The site during work to show specific stages, and the layout of the archaeology within the trench.
- (2) groups of features where their relationship is important
- v. Should human remains be located the appropriate Home Office licence will be obtained before their removal. In addition, the Local Environmental Health Department and the police will be informed.

9. POST-EXCAVATION

a. Stage 1

- i. On completion of site operations, the records and schedules produced during the watching brief will be checked and ordered to ensure that they form a uniform sequence forming a level II archive. A stratigraphic matrix of the archaeological deposits and features present on the site will be prepared. All photographic material will be catalogued: the colour slides will be labelled, the labelling referring to schedules identifying the subject/s photographed.
- ii. All finds recovered during the field work will be washed, marked and packaged according to the deposit from which they were recovered. Any finds requiring specialist treatment and conservation will be sent to the Conservation Laboratory at the City and County Museum, Lincoln.

b. Stage 2

- Detailed examination of the stratigraphic matrix to enable the determination of the various phases of activity on the site.
- ii. Finds will be sent to specialists for identification and dating.

c. Stage 3

- i. On completion of stage 2, a report detailing the findings of the watching brief will be prepared.
- ii. This will consist of:
 - (1) A non-technical summary of the results of the investigation.
 - (2) A description of the archaeological setting of the watching brief.
 - (3) Description of the topography of the site.
 - (4) Description of the methodologies used during the watching brief.
 - (5) A text describing the findings of the watching brief.
 - (6) A consideration of the local, regional and national context of the watching brief findings.
 - (7) Plans of the archaeological features exposed. If a sequence of archaeological deposits is encountered, separate plans for each phase will be produced.
 - (8) Sections of the archaeological features.
 - (9) Interpretation of the archaeological features exposed, and their chronology and setting within the surrounding landscape.

- (10) Specialist reports on the finds from the site.
- (11) Appropriate photographs of the site and specific archaeological features.

10. REPORT DEPOSITION

a. Copies of the report will be sent to the client, the Community Archaeologist, Boston Borough Council and to the County Sites and Monuments Record.

11. ARCHIVE

a. The documentation and records generated during the watching brief will be sorted and ordered into the format acceptable to the City and County Museum, Lincoln. This will be undertaken following the requirements of the document titled *Conditions for the Acceptance of Project Archives* for long term storage and curation.

12. PUBLICATION

a. A report of the findings of the watching brief will be published in Heritage Lincolnshire's Annual Report and a note presented to the editor of the journal of the Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology. If appropriate, notes on the findings will be submitted to the appropriate national journals: *Britannia* for discoveries of Roman date, and *Medieval Archaeology* and the journal of the *Medieval Settlement Research Group* for findings of medieval or later date.

13. CURATORIAL RESPONSIBILITY

a. Curatorial responsibility for the archaeological work undertaken on the site lies with the Community Archaeologist, Boston Borough Council. They will be given seven days notice in writing before the commencement of the project.

14. VARIATIONS

a. Variations to the proposed scheme of works will only be made following written confirmation of acceptance from the Community Archaeologist, Boston Borough Council.

15. PROGRAMME OF WORKS AND STAFFING LEVELS

- a. The watching brief will be integrated with the programme of construction and is dependent on the developers' work programme. It is therefore not possible to specify the person-hours for the archaeological site work.
- b. An archaeological supervisor with experience of watching briefs will undertake the work.
- c. Post-excavation analysis and report production will be undertaken by the archaeological supervisor, or a post-excavation analyst as appropriate, with assistance from a finds supervisor, illustrator and external specialists. It is expected that each fieldwork day (equal to one man-day) will require a post-excavation day (equal to one-and-a-half man-days) for completion of the analysis and report. If the fieldwork lasts longer than about six days then there will be an economy of scale with the post-excavation analysis.

16. SPECIALISTS TO BE USED DURING THE PROJECT

a. The following organisations/persons will, in principal and if necessary, be used as subcontractors to provide the relevant specialist work and reports in respect of any objects or material recovered during the investigation that require their expert knowledge and input. Engagement of any particular specialist subcontractor is also dependent on their availability and ability to meet programming requirements.

Task

Body to be undertaking the work

Conservation

Conservation Laboratory, City and County Museum, Lincoln.

Pottery Analysis Prehistoric: Dr D Knight, Trent and Peak Archaeological Trust

Roman: B Davies, City of Lincoln Archaeological Unit, Lincoln.

Anglo-Saxon: J Young, City of Lincoln Archaeological Unit,

Lincoln.

Medieval and later: H Healey, independent archaeologist

Other Artefacts J Cowgill, independent specialist.

Human Remains Analysis R Gowland, Independent specialists.

Animal Remains Analysis Environmental Archaeology Consultancy

Environmental Analysis Environmental Archaeology Consultancy

17. **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Archaeological Project Services, 1994 Archaeological Watching Brief of a Development at Red Lion Street, Bicker, Lincolnshire, unpublished report

Archaeological Project Services, 1996 Archaeological Evaluation on land west of Donington Road and south of Red Lion Street, Bicker, Lincolnshire (BDR96), unpublished report

CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

No.	Description	Interpretation
001	Dark greyish brown silty sand, up to 0.34m thick	Topsoil
002	Light greyish brown clayey silt, up to 0.29m thick	Subsoil
003	Mollusc shells with dark grey silt	Fill of (004)
004	Flat-based cut, c. 1.3m wide, >0.3m deep	Refuse pit
005	Light greyish brown silty sand, 0.24m thick	Subsoil
006	Very dark grey brown sandy clayey silt	Fill of (007)
007	Flat based, partially vertical-sided cut, 1.3m wide, 0.6m deep	?Tree planting hole/test pit/ drain?
008	Dark brownish grey silty sand with modern brick fragments	Fill of (009)
009	Cut, c. 1.5m long, c. 0.5m deep	?Pit

THE FINDS

James Rackham, Hilary Healey MPhil and Gary Taylor MA

Provenance

All of the material was recovered from a pit.

All the identifiable pottery is relatively local, derived from kilns at Stamford, 35km to the southwest of Bicker, and Bourne, 20km to the southwest.

Range

The range of material is detailed in the following tables;

Table 1: The Pottery and other artefacts

Context	Description	Latest Date
003	1x Stamford ware, 10 th -13 th century	12 th -14 th century
	1x ?Bourne A, 12 th -14 th century	
	1x unidentified sherd, medieval	

Table 2: The Animal Bone

Context	Description
003	1x sheep-size vertebra
	3x unidentified bone fragments
	2 x marine fish vertebra, one burnt

Table 3: The Mollusc shell

Context	Description
003 1x cockle shell	
	4x periwinkle shells
	1x Tellin shell
	1x bag of shell fragments weighing 165g; virtually all mussel, with rare cockle pieces and tellins

The tellin is probably *Tellina tenuis* da Costa. All tellins are burrowers and occur on sandy shores (McMillan 1973, 91). All of the mollusc types are coastal. Many of the mussel shells are too small to be considered as food residues and this, together with the mixed nature of the assemblage, suggests that the shells represent discard following possible dredging for shellfish, in particular, mussels. A very similar pit, containing abundant, mixed shell fragments and dated to the 13th -14th century, has previously been found immediately to the west (Cope-Faulkner 1997).

Condition

Although the mussel shell is fragile, with much of it only surviving as small flaky pieces, the other shells and artefacts are in good condition and present no long-term storage problems. Archive storage of the material is by material class.

Documentation

Archaeological investigations have been undertaken and reported in Bicker previously, including at other sites on Red Lion Street (Archaeological Project Services 1994; 1996; Cope-Faulkner 1997). Records of archaeological remains and finds identified in the Bicker area are maintained in the files of the Boston Community Archaeologist and the County Sites and Monuments Record.

Potential

In general, the assemblage has moderate potential and suggests the presence of medieval activity, involving shellfish processing on, or in close proximity to, the site in the medieval period. The limited quantity of artefacts would indicate that the site was not inhabited during this period of mollusc processing.

References

Archaeological Project Services, 1994 Archaeological Watching Brief of a development at Red Lion Street, Bicker, Lincolnshire

Archaeological Project Services, 1996 Archaeological Watching Brief on Land west of Donington Road and south of Red Lion Street, Bicker, Lincolnshirre (BDR96)

Cope-Faulkner, P., 1997 Archaeological Watching Brief of development on Land at Red Lion Street, Bicker, Lincolnshirre (BRL97), Archaeological Project Services report 36/97

McMillan, N. F., 1973 British Shells

GLOSSARY

Context

An archaeological context represents a distinct archaeological event or process. For example, the action of digging a pit creates a context (the cut) as does the process of its subsequent backfill (the fill). Each context encountered during an archaeological investigation is allocated a unique number by the archaeologist and a record sheet detailing the description and interpretations of the context (the context sheet) is created and placed in the site archive. Context numbers are identified within the report text by brackets, e.g.(004).

Cut

A cut refers to the physical action of digging a posthole, pit, ditch, foundation trench, *etc.* Once the fills of these features are removed during an archaeological investigation the original 'cut' is therefore exposed and subsequently recorded.

Fill

Once a feature has been dug it begins to silt up (either slowly or rapidly) or it can be back-filled manually. The soil(s) which become contained by the 'cut' are referred to as its fill(s).

Layer

A layer is a term to describe an accumulation of soil or other material that is not contained within a cut.

Medieval

The Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1066-1500.

Post-medieval

The period following the Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1500-1800.

Romano-British

Pertaining to the period dating from AD 43-410 when the Romans occupied Britain.

Saltern

Salt producing site typified by ash, derived from fuel needed to evaporate sea water, and briquetage.

Saxon

Pertaining to the period dating from AD 410-1066 when England was largely settled by tribes from northern Germany

THE ARCHIVE

The archive consists of:

- 9 Context records
- 1 Scale drawings
- 1 Context record sheet
- 1 Section record sheet
- 1 Photographic record sheet
- 1 Stratigraphic matrix
- 1 Box of finds
- 1 Processed environmental samples

All primary records and finds are currently kept at:

Archaeological Project Services The Old School Cameron Street Heckington Sleaford Lincolnshire NG34 9RW

The ultimate destination of the project archive is:

Lincolnshire City and County Museum 12 Friars Lane Lincoln LN2 1HQ

The archive will be deposited in accordance with the document titled *Conditions for the Acceptance of Project Archives*, produced by the Lincolnshire City and County Museum.

Lincolnshire City and County Council Museum Accession Number:

165.98

Archaeological Project Services Site Code:

BRL 98

The discussion and comments provided in this report are based on the archaeology revealed during the site investigations. Other archaeological finds and features may exist on the development site but away from the areas exposed during the course of this fieldwork. *Archaeological Project Services* cannot confirm that those areas unexposed are free from archaeology nor that any archaeology present there is of a similar character to that revealed during the current investigation.

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