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BOSTON GENERAL HOSPITAL
DESK-TOP ASSESSMENT
MARCH 1994



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**DESK-TOP ASSESSMENT FOR THE
PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION AT
BOSTON GENERAL HOSPITAL,
BOSTON,
LINCOLNSHIRE**

Work Undertaken For
Meldrum Lee and Gillatt

March 1994

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1. SUMMARY

A desk-top assessment was undertaken to determine the archaeological implications of proposed development at the General Hospital site, Boston, Lincolnshire. Several archaeological sites and findspots are located in the vicinity of the hospital. Evidence for prehistoric activity in the area is virtually absent. A Romano-British occupation site is located 300m northeast of the General Hospital.

Located outside the boundary of the medieval town, numerous ecclesiastical establishments surround the proposed development site. However, none of these are likely to fall within the investigation area.

Docks of sixteenth century and later date were located on the river frontage in the immediate vicinity of, and possibly on, the investigation area.

An early nineteenth century jail was located in the northern limit of the proposed development area. Foundation remains encountered in a geotechnical trial pit may relate to this structure.

Assessed as locally important, the sixteenth century docks in the area may retain structural evidence of their use. Additionally, these 'docks' and inlets may contain ancient environmental remains. Approximately one third of the proposed development area has ground conditions considered to be appropriate for geophysical survey.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Planning Background

Archaeological Project Services were commissioned by Meldrum Lee and Gillatt,

on behalf of de Montfort Housing Society Ltd, to undertake a desk-top assessment of the General Hospital site, Boston, Lincolnshire. This was to determine the archaeological implications of proposed development at the site, as detailed in planning application B05/0028/94. This archaeological assessment was undertaken in accordance with a brief set by the Community Archaeologist for Boston Borough Council.

2.2 Topography and Geology

Boston is situated 45km southeast of Lincoln and approximately 7km from the northwest coast of the Wash, among the fens of south Lincolnshire. Bisected by the River Witham, the town is located in Boston District, Lincolnshire (Fig. 1). Situated on the east bank of the Witham, the proposed development site is on ground that is slightly higher than the surrounding area, the river looping around this relative elevation.

The hospital site is located at a height of c. 6m OD, three quarters of a kilometre south of the town centre defined by St. Botolph's parish church. Centred on National Grid Reference TF32904340, the General Hospital site covers approximately 2.9 hectares (Fig. 2).

Local soils are the Tanvats Association typical alluvial gley soils (Hodge *et al.* 1984, 319) and Wisbech Association calcareous alluvial gley soils developed in marine alluvium (*ibid*, 361). Beneath this marine alluvium is glacial drift that was deposited in a geological basin between the Lincolnshire Wolds and the East Anglian Heights (Harden 1978, 5). These glacial deposits in turn overlie a solid geology of Jurassic clays.

3. AIMS

The aims of the desk-top assessment were to locate and, if present, evaluate any archaeological sites in the vicinity of the proposed development area. Such location and assessment of significance would permit the formulation of an appropriate response to integrate the needs of the archaeology with the proposed development programme.

4. METHODS

Compilation of the archaeological and historical data relevant to the area of the proposed development site involved examination of all appropriate primary and secondary sources available. These have included:

- historical documents, held in Lincolnshire Archives
- enclosure, tithe, parish and other maps and plans, held in Lincolnshire Archives
- recent and old Ordnance Survey maps
- the County Sites and Monuments Record
- the files of the Boston District Community Archaeologist
- aerial photographs
- archaeological books and journals

Information obtained in the literature and cartographic examination was supplemented by a walk-over survey of the proposed construction site. This walk-over survey investigated the present land use and condition; the extent of hardstanding and other firm surfaces; the presence, or otherwise, of dumped materials; and the appropriateness for geophysical survey. Results of the archival and field examinations were committed to scale plans of the area.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Historical data

Boston is not mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. However, the same survey recorded two churches and two fisheries in Skirbeck, which parish lies a little east of the present investigation area (Foster and Longley 1976, 69). One of these churches, St Botulph's, from which Boston took its name, was given to St. Mary's Abbey, York, in 1089. In 1130, Boston received its first mention when it was referred to as 'Botulvestan' (Dover 1972, 1).

Scandinavian influence in the vicinity of the proposed development area is indicated by the major place-name Skirbeck - 'shining brook', from Old Scandinavian *skiri* and *bekkr* (Ekwall 1974, 425). Minor place-name detail emphasises this Scandinavian link. The area presently occupied by the hospital was, in 1562, called the Holms (Thompson 1856, 247) - 'island', from Old Scandinavian *holmr* (Ekwall 1974, 246). Boston is a contraction of *Botulvestan* - 'Botulph's stone'. However, Old English *stan* may have meant 'stone house', in which case the place-name probably means 'Botulph's stone church' (ibid, 54).

5.2 Cartographic Data

Boston General Hospital is situated on the southern side of Boston township, adjacent to the River Witham. Appropriate maps for the vicinity were examined.

Dating from 1675, Ogilby's Itinerary, for the route between London and Boston, presents a schematised view of the area. No buildings are recorded in the area of the present hospital, though two windmills are depicted at the southern edge of the river loop, approximately 500m from the present investigation area.

Robert Hall's *Plan of the Borough and Port of Boston*, dating from 1741, provides a large scale record of the area (Fig. 3). Most of the land skirted by the river was depicted as fields free of buildings. Field boundaries appeared to define the block of land presently occupied by the hospital. A windmill, called Wrangle's Mill, was recorded just south of the investigation area. A bowling green was located immediately north of the hospital and, just to the northeast, was the Work House, surrounded by gardens and allotments.

A Plan of the Harbour and Part of the Town of Boston, published in 1811, records an area of ship yards and river inlets by the southwest corner of the General Hospital site (Fig. 4). Published in 1822, the *Map and Chart of the River Witham and Boston Harbour* reveals similar creeks on this east bank of the river (Fig. 5).

The first edition of the one-inch Ordnance Survey map, dating from 1824, shows the area as mostly open ground. Buildings are recorded alongside St John's Road, immediately north of the hospital site. A windmill, probably the same as that depicted on Hall's 1741 plan, lies to the south.

Bryant's *Map of the County of Lincoln* (1828) portrays a jail crossing the northern part of the proposed development site, though the rest of the area appears as open ground.

Dating from 1829, John Wood's *Plan of Boston and Environs* records the river inlets shown on earlier maps and also identifies the jail in the northern part of the present hospital site (Fig. 6).

Ordnance Survey maps of 1887 and 1951 record the construction and general expansion of the hospital. These maps also

reveal that the jail that previously occupied part of the site had been removed, and that the area south of the hospital had been converted for use as recreation grounds and swimming baths.

5.3 Aerial Photograph Data

Aerial photographs published or transcribed in secondary sources were examined for evidence of archaeological remains.

Boston General Hospital, and the surrounding area, is recorded on published aerial photographs (Start 1993, 94, 95). These photographs record open ground immediately south, and to the east, of the hospital precinct (Fig. 7). However, no cropmarks or earthworks are evident in the vicinity of the present investigation area.

5.4 Archaeological Data

Records of archaeological sites and finds held in the Lincolnshire County Sites and Monuments Record and the files of the Boston District Community Archaeologist were consulted. Other, secondary, sources were also examined. Details of archaeological and historical remains falling within half a kilometre of the proposed development area are collated here and committed to Fig. 2.

County Sites and Monuments Record

<u>Reference Code</u>	<u>Description</u>
10029	Hussey Tower, built c. 1450. Fifteenth century pottery
12661	Site of St Anne's Cross, mentioned between 1564-1712; removed 1729
12666	Roman coins in Boston Museum, possibly from Hussey Tower area

12668	Wooden pipes	B05/034	Excavations: 5 trenches; ditch with late 13th/early 14th century finds; pit/ditch with 14th century pot; 18th century brick footings
12671	Wooden pipes		
12674	Neolithic stone axe		
12681	Romano-British pot, jet or shale pendant; medieval pot		
12687	Site of St. Anne's Church	B05/035	Excavations: 4 trenches; activity associated with manor house, quarrying and boundary/drainage; imported pot, features pre-16th century
12690	St John's Church, site of. Post-medieval artefacts		
12691	St John Baptist hospital; row of houses formerly called 'The Hospital House'		
12695	Site of Augustinian friary, 1317 - 1539	B05/041	Burials, part of large cemetery of Greyfriars
12703	Steelyard's or Custom House, 16th century	B05/043	Post-Medieval pot and clay pipe
12974	Romano-British, Medieval and Post-Medieval pot	B05/046	Romano-British coins
P	Late Medieval pottery, including imported vase; off-cuts of leather shoe soles: at depth of c. 8 feet (well below wooden pipes)	B05/047	Romano-British pottery; Medieval and Post-Medieval pot
AH	16th-17th century pot kiln; imported pot. Earlier find of skeletons from same area.	B05/055	Medieval pot; wooden pipes
AK	Documentary evidence for late 12th century pot kiln, (TF34SW unlocated)	B05/062	Excavation: Medieval and Post-Medieval pot

Boston Community Archaeologist's Files

<u>Reference Code</u>	<u>Description</u>
B05/001	Bar Ditch, pre-1200
B05/007	Hussey Tower, remains of Hussey Hall, built c. 1450
B05/008	Hospital; St John's Church, c. 1200 - 1538
B05/009	Site of Franciscan friary, earliest reference 1268
B05/025	Neolithic greenstone axe
B05/033	Excavation: Medieval building, 13th/14th century pottery; post-medieval structures

Between 1567 and 1717, references occur to St John's Bridge. This was located where the Bar Ditch falls into the river, just north of the present investigation site. St John's Row, probably identifiable with the similarly named road, is referred to in 1635 and again in 1640 when it contained eleven tenements. In 1655, a workhouse on the row is mentioned (Thompson 1856, 241; 244).

In 1674, two jetties were put down at the Steel-yard, the site of which is located immediately north of the present investigation area. Within the northern confines of the hospital site, a jail was erected in 1818, and demolished in 1853. Previously called the holms, the general area of the proposed development was, in 1564, referred to as the Docks Pasture. This name derived from docks, of little value (one renting for 12¹/₂ pence annually in 1602), which ran in from the river (*ibid*, 247).

Located just south of the investigation area was a small circular elevation, the site of a mill mentioned in the fifteenth century. This collapsed in 1534, but was subsequently rebuilt (*ibid*, 248).

5.5 Trial hole Data

A series of six trial holes were excavated to assess deposit conditions across the general hospital grounds (Fig. 8). In trial hole 1, towards the northern limit of the site, beneath a topsoil and fill that persisted up to 2m in depth, a brick and stone foundation was revealed approximately 1.7m below ground level. Although tentatively identified as part of the river defences, it is more probable that these remains formed part of the early 19th century jail depicted in this location on maps (see above).

Four of the remaining five trial holes passed through topsoil and thick deposits of silt before encountering clays. In test pits 2 (towards the northeast), 4 (to the south) and 6 (on the west), these were dark blue and peaty clays, probably deposited in standing water. A dark blue silt with peat inclusions was also revealed in trench 6. Located adjacent to the hospital building, trial hole 3 passed through rubble fill that continued to 1.6m depth, before encountering silts (Peter Cole Consultants 1993).

5.6 Walk-over Survey

In mid-February 1994, a walk-over survey of the General Hospital site was undertaken. Visibility was fair, the area being snow covered.

Date stones and similar markers on the standing buildings were noted. The condition of the standing structures, which are located in the southern part of the Boston town Conservation Area, was

briefly examined. Most of the hospital and ancillary buildings appeared vandalised. Both cellars were under water, and semi-subterranean pipe ducts were observed. Powdery, flaking asbestos was recognised in these ducts.

Above the main entrance to the hospital is the date 1874. East of this, on the same north-facing wall, is a white marble plaque inscribed:

Erected
By Public
Subscription
1887 The Jubilee
Year of Queen
Victoria's Reign

West of the main entrance, above a window on the same wall, is the date 1905. A detached ancillary building directly north of the main hospital structure possesses a date stone of 1934.

Hard surfacing, including roads, paths and carparks, was plotted (Fig. 8). Heaped demolition debris was also recognised, the extent and location of this material being committed to plan. It was considered that, where topsoil or garden deposits existed, conditions were probably appropriate for magnetometry and resistivity survey.

6. DISCUSSION

Evidence of prehistoric activity in the area is restricted to the discovery of a neolithic stone axe at a point *c.* 200m to the northwest of the proposed development site, on the opposite side of the river.

It has been postulated that a maritime supply route to Lincoln, using the Witham, would have required a military safeguard at the outfall of the river, in the vicinity of Boston. Such a fort has been suggested, though there is no firm evidence for the

location of such an establishment (Whitwell 1970, 12-13). However, a Romano-British occupation site, indicated by a spread of artefacts, is located approximately 300m northeast of the General Hospital.

Significantly greater evidence of use of the area in the medieval period is provided by sites, findspots and structures of this date. The present investigation area lies just outside the southern end of the medieval town, defined by the Bar Ditch. Ecclesiastical foundations dominated this area. St John's Church lay just to the east of the general hospital site, and St John Baptist hospital is presumed to be located in the vicinity of the church.

A number of other religious foundations were established in the area during the medieval period. Less than 200m east of the general hospital is the postulated site of the Augustinian Friary. However, it should be noted that this location is contested and an alternative site within the Bar Ditch has been postulated (Harden 1978, 25). A Franciscan Friary was situated c. 250m north of the proposed development area, though the exact location is unknown. Burials, part of the large cemetery of this friary, have been found in the same area. On the west side of the river, immediately opposite the present investigation site, is the site of the church of St Anne in the eponymous lane, and St Anne's Cross, which stood at the entrance to the lane. There is, however, no evidence to indicate that any of these religious foundations fell within the area of proposed development.

From the late medieval period onwards, the area was used for riverine trade and vessel repair activities. Just north of the hospital site was the Steel yard or Custom House, first mentioned in 1585. Cartographic evidence records ship yards immediately south of the proposed development area,

with further inlets apparently entering the General Hospital site. These are probably identifiable with docks documented in the sixteenth century. Of little value, these 'docks' were probably natural creeks up which boats could be taken for repairs. No evidence for any structural aspects of these docks has been obtained in the documentary search. Environmental remains may, however, survive by virtue of waterlogging in these channels. In relation to this, organic deposits have been identified by trial pitting in the area.

Foundations were encountered by the trial pitting. These possibly relate to the early nineteenth century jail recorded, both cartographically and in documents, as being located on the site.

Hardstanding and buildings cover about two-thirds of the proposed development area. Ground conditions that are probably suitable for geophysical survey exist across the remainder of the site. Cellaring of the hospital structures, albeit restricted in extent, will have removed archaeological deposits. Asbestos in the pipe ducts poses a restriction on any proposed future archaeological work in the hospital buildings.

7. ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

For assessment of significance the *Secretary of State's criteria for scheduling ancient monuments* has been used (DoE 1990, Annex 4; see Appendix 2).

Period:

Medieval religious activity is recorded in the vicinity of the proposed development. Such establishments and features are amongst the major characterisers of the medieval period in Europe. Post-Medieval docks, as identified in the general area, are

a phenomenon that typify lowland and water frontage areas of the period.

Rarity:

Remains of Medieval ecclesiastical establishments, as identified in the area of investigation, are not in themselves uncommon, though they may possess rare or unusual features. Evidence of small-scale Post-Medieval docks is not common, their remains frequently being removed by, or subsumed beneath, late docks and ship yards. Individual elements of such docks may be quite rare.

Documentation:

Records of archaeological sites and finds made in the Boston area are kept in the Lincolnshire County Sites and Monuments Record and the files of the Boston Borough Community Archaeologist. Synopses or syntheses of the historical and archaeological evidence has previously been produced.

Group value:

By virtue of their clustering in this general area, the group value of the Medieval religious foundations is moderately high. Association with other, varied sites of contemporary date in the area confers moderately high group value on the Post-Medieval docks. Evidence of multi-period exploitation of the landscape enhances the group value still further.

Survival/Condition:

Limited post-medieval development has occurred on the site, consequently buried deposits are likely to be well preserved. Further, cellaring is restricted in extent. No previous archaeological intervention has been made into the site to assess the level of deposit survival. However, geotechnical test pits revealed that modern disturbance generally did not exceed 0.5m deep.

Palaeoenvironmental material is known to

survive at depth on the site.

Fragility/Vulnerability:

As the proposed development will impact the investigation area, possibly into natural strata, any and all archaeological deposits present on the site are extremely vulnerable.

Diversity:

Moderately high period and functional diversity is indicated by the industrial activity of Post-Medieval date, represented by the docks and nearby windmill, and the religious activity of the Medieval period, defined by the friaries and churches.

Some further period diversity is provided by the Romano-British site to the northeast.

Potential:

Potential is high that the Post-Medieval docks, identified immediately south of the General Hospital site, may spread into the area of proposed development. Very limited potential exists for any of the adjacent Medieval religious foundations, or the Romano-British settlement to the northeast extending into the investigation area.

Palaeoenvironmental material may survive within the dock channels in the area.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The concentrations of archaeological finds and observations represent occupation and use of this area of Boston in the past.

Prehistoric activity is virtually unknown in the area. However, artefacts suggest that a Romano-British settlement is located 300m northeast of the hospital. Although beyond the medieval boundary of the town defined by the Bar Ditch, the investigation site is

situated in an area dominated by medieval religious foundations, including several friaries and churches. However, it is unlikely that any of these ecclesiastical establishments impinged upon the proposed development area. Immediately south of the hospital was a medieval windmill.

Of medieval and later date, small docks, possibly natural inlets, were located on the river frontage. Probably identifiable with the ship yards and creeks depicted on early 19th century maps, these may extend into the hospital area. Palaeoenvironmental material may survive in these channels, and has been identified in trial holes. A 16th century Custom House was situated adjacent to the hospital site on the north. An early 19th century jail previously occupied the northern part of the present investigation area.

No artefacts were recognised or recovered on the walk-over survey. About one third of the proposed development area has ground conditions appropriate for geophysical examination. Damage, due to cellaring, of any archaeological deposits present on site is limited in extent.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Council.

10. REFERENCES

All of the following sources were consulted in the data-gathering exercise. However, as some references duplicated information available in others, not all of them have been specifically referred to in the text.

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primary reference numbers used by the Lincolnshire Sites and Monuments Record, Archaeology Section, Lincolnshire County Council.

Numbers prefixed by 'B' are the reference codes used by the Community Archaeologist for Boston Borough Council.

11. ABBREVIATIONS

Numbers prefixed with 'SMR' are the

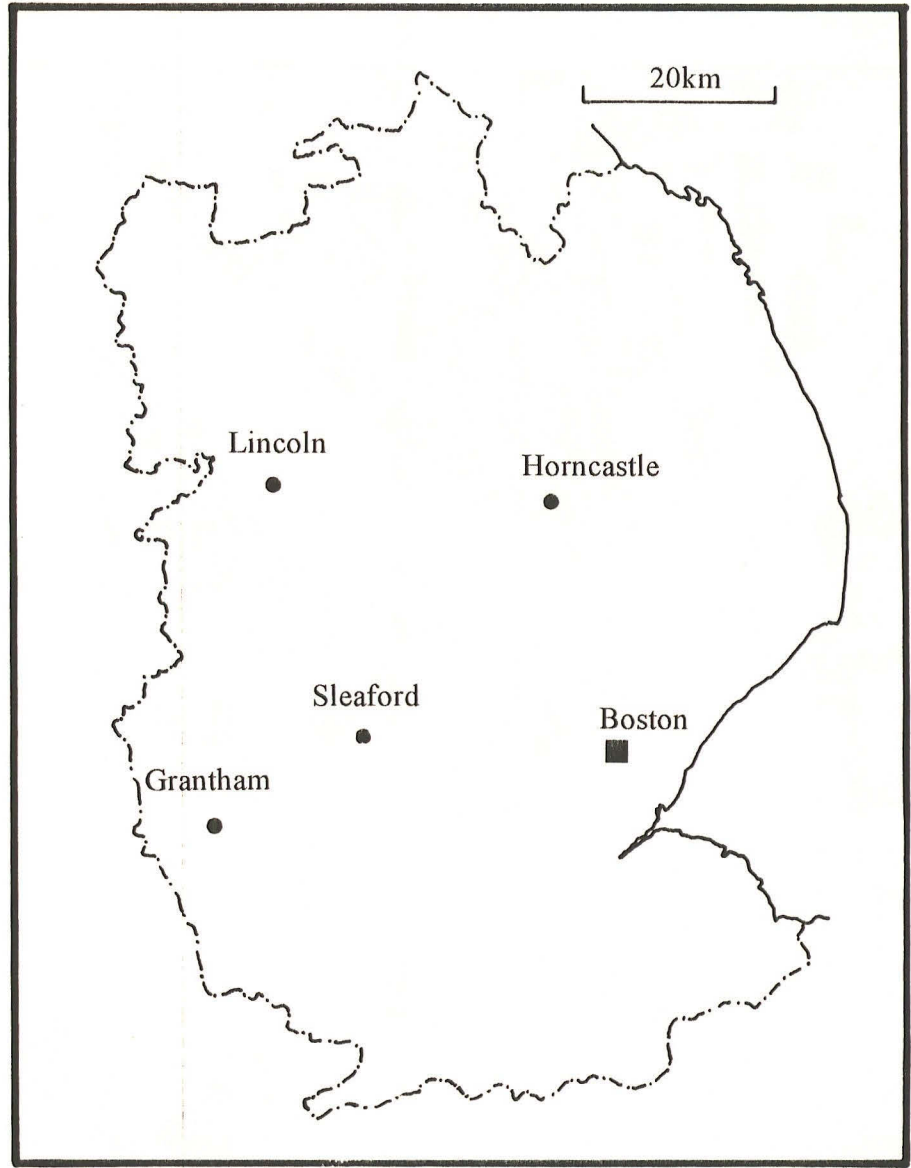
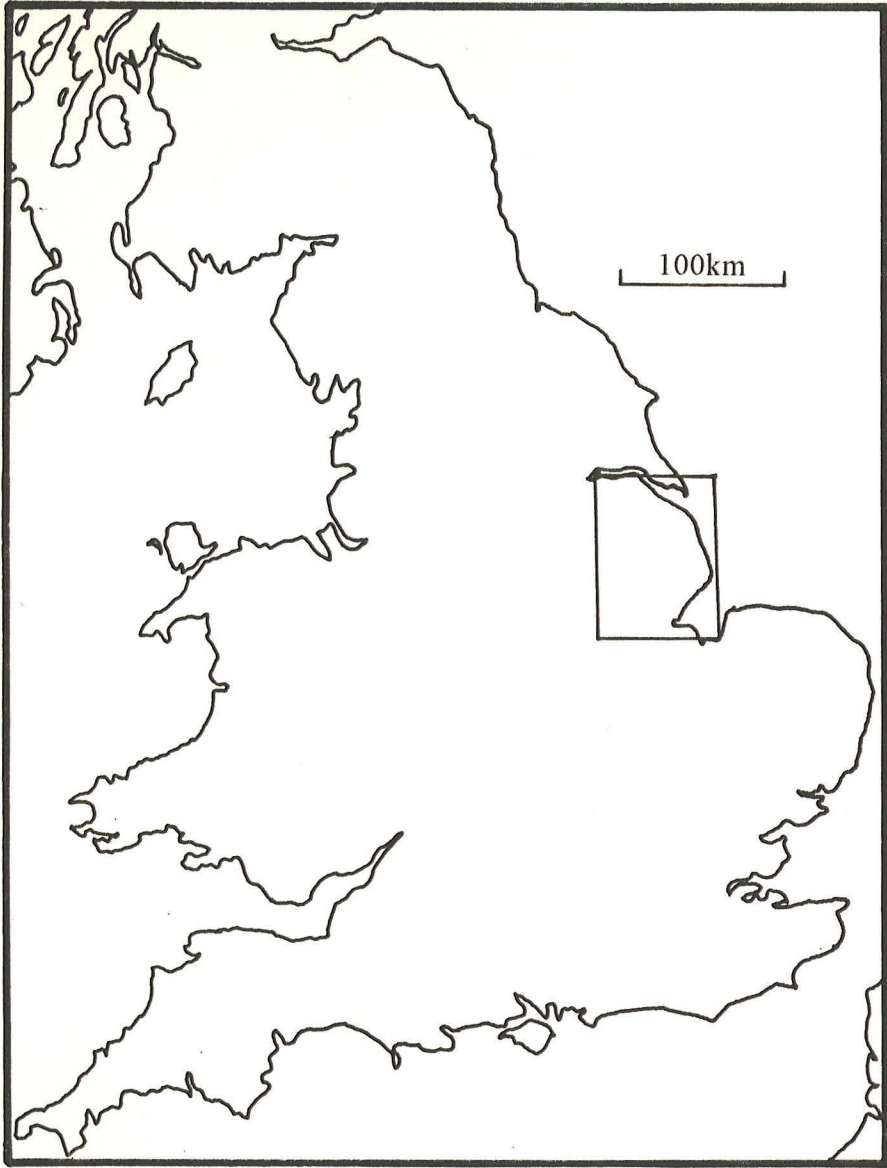


Fig. 1 GENERAL LOCATION PLAN

Fig. 2 SITE LOCATION PLAN,
WITH ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND FINDS

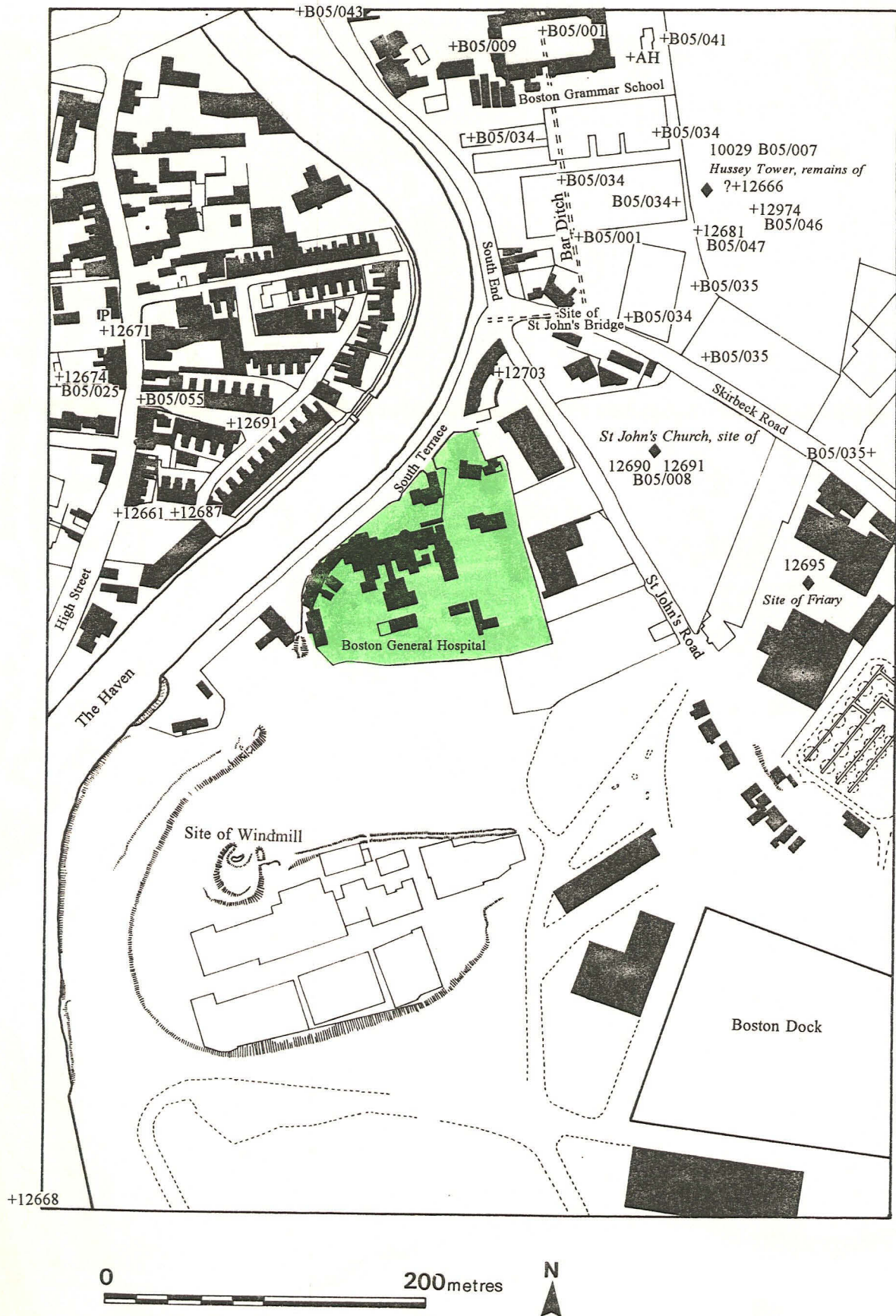


Fig. 3 Extract of Hall's 1741 Plan of Boston, Showing Area of Investigation

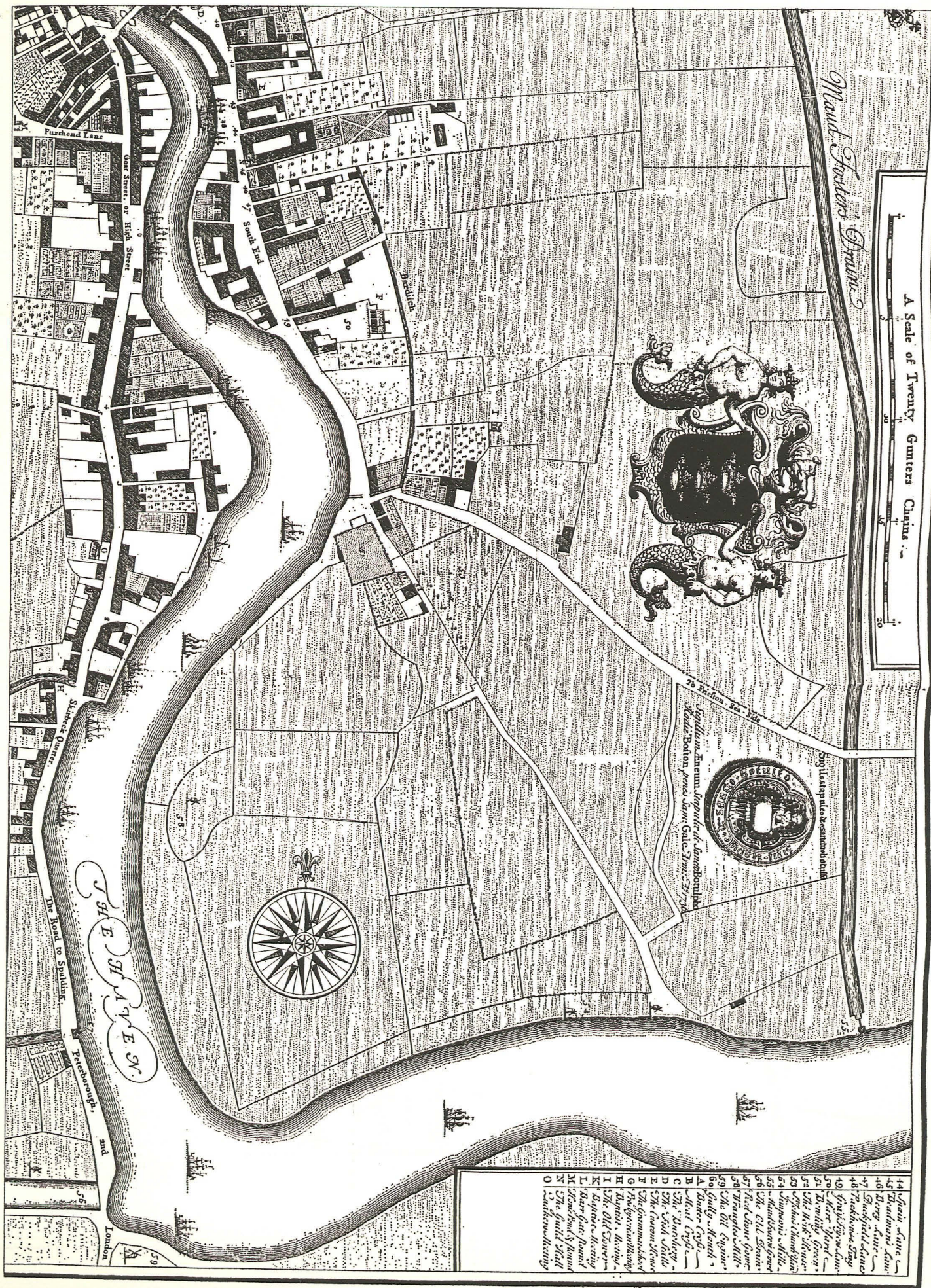


Fig. 5 Copy of 1822 Chart of the River Witham and Boston Harbour, Showing River Inlets by Area of Investigation

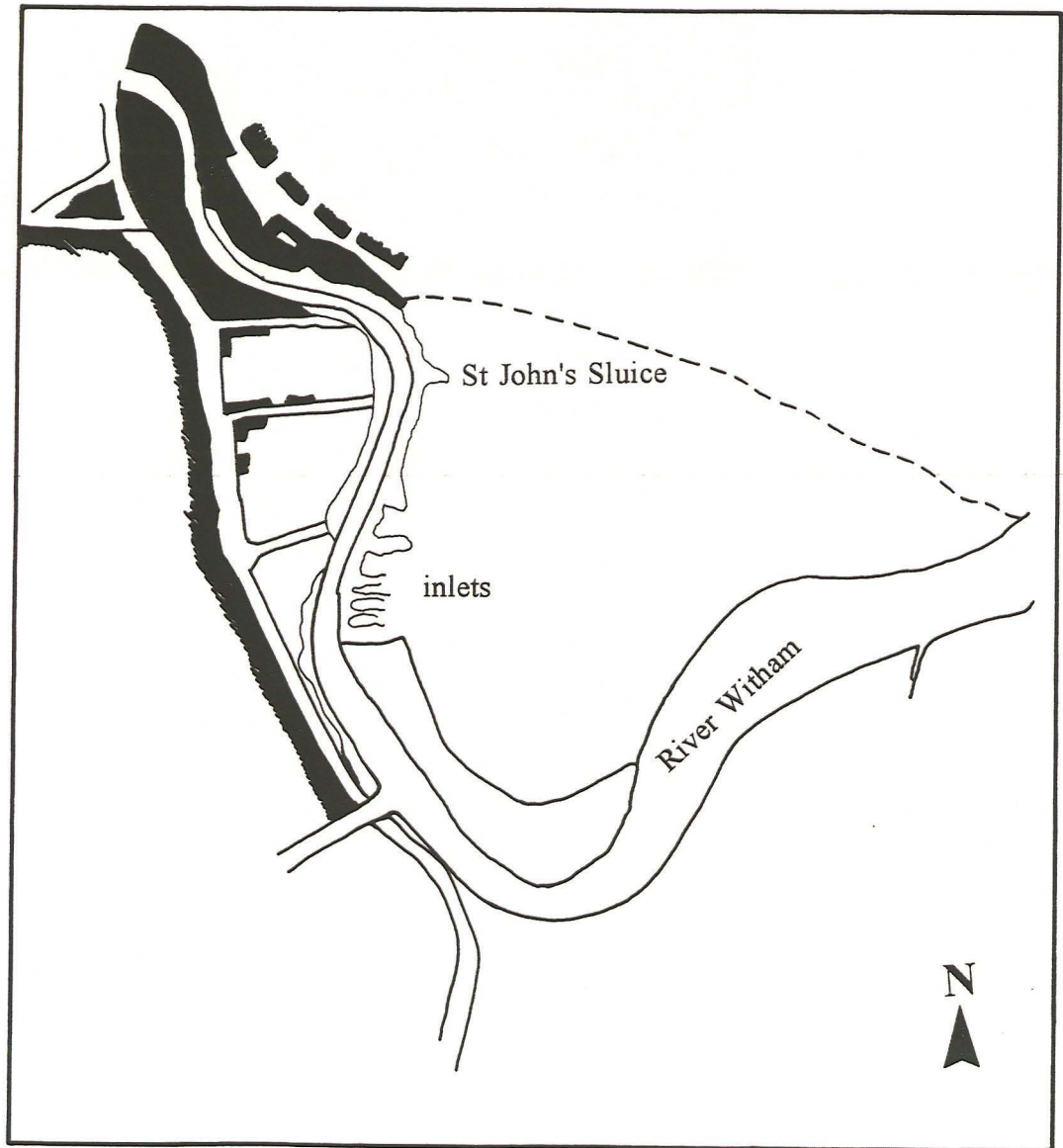


Fig. 6 Extract of Wood's 1829 Plan of Boston, Showing the Jail and River Inlets

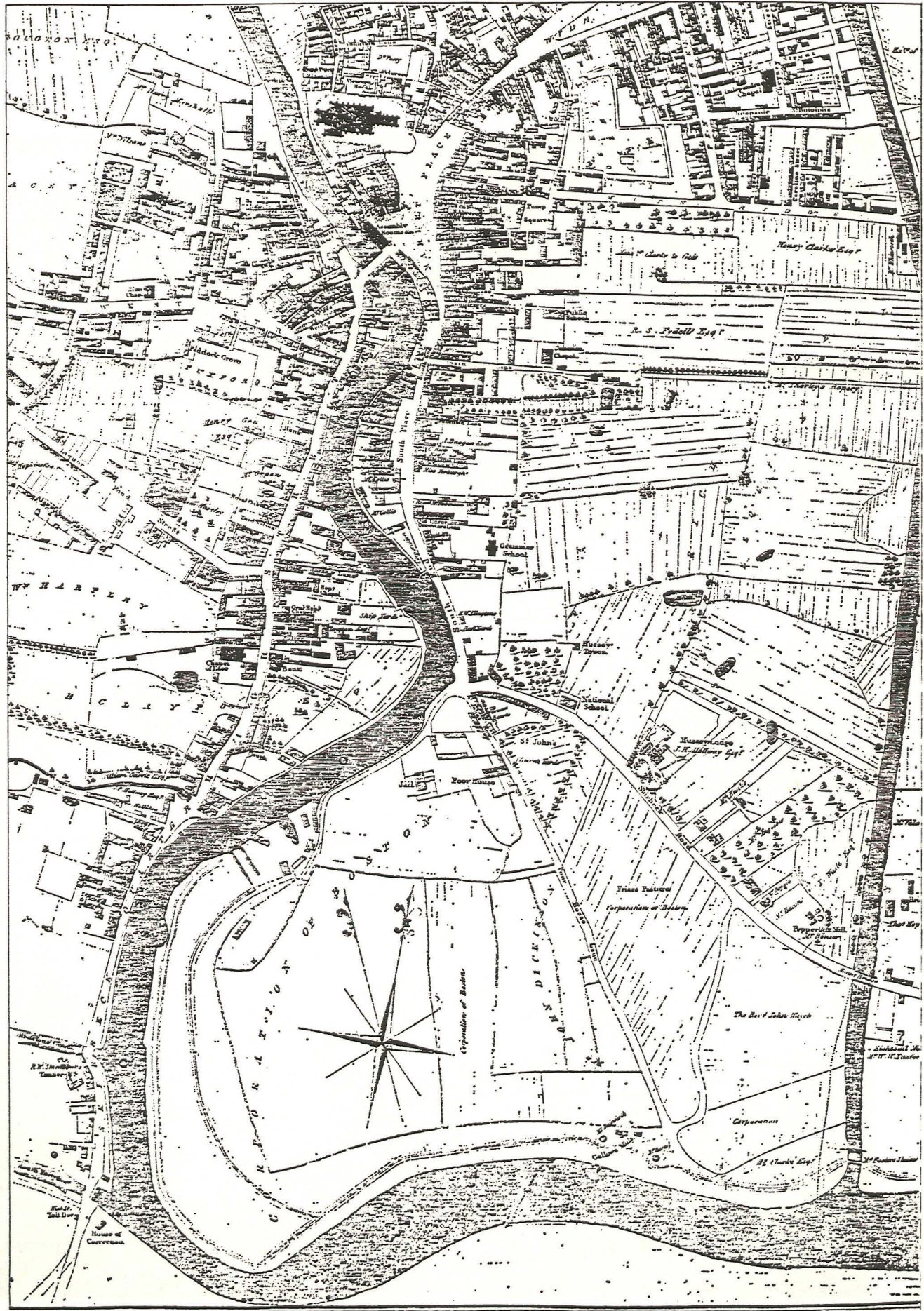
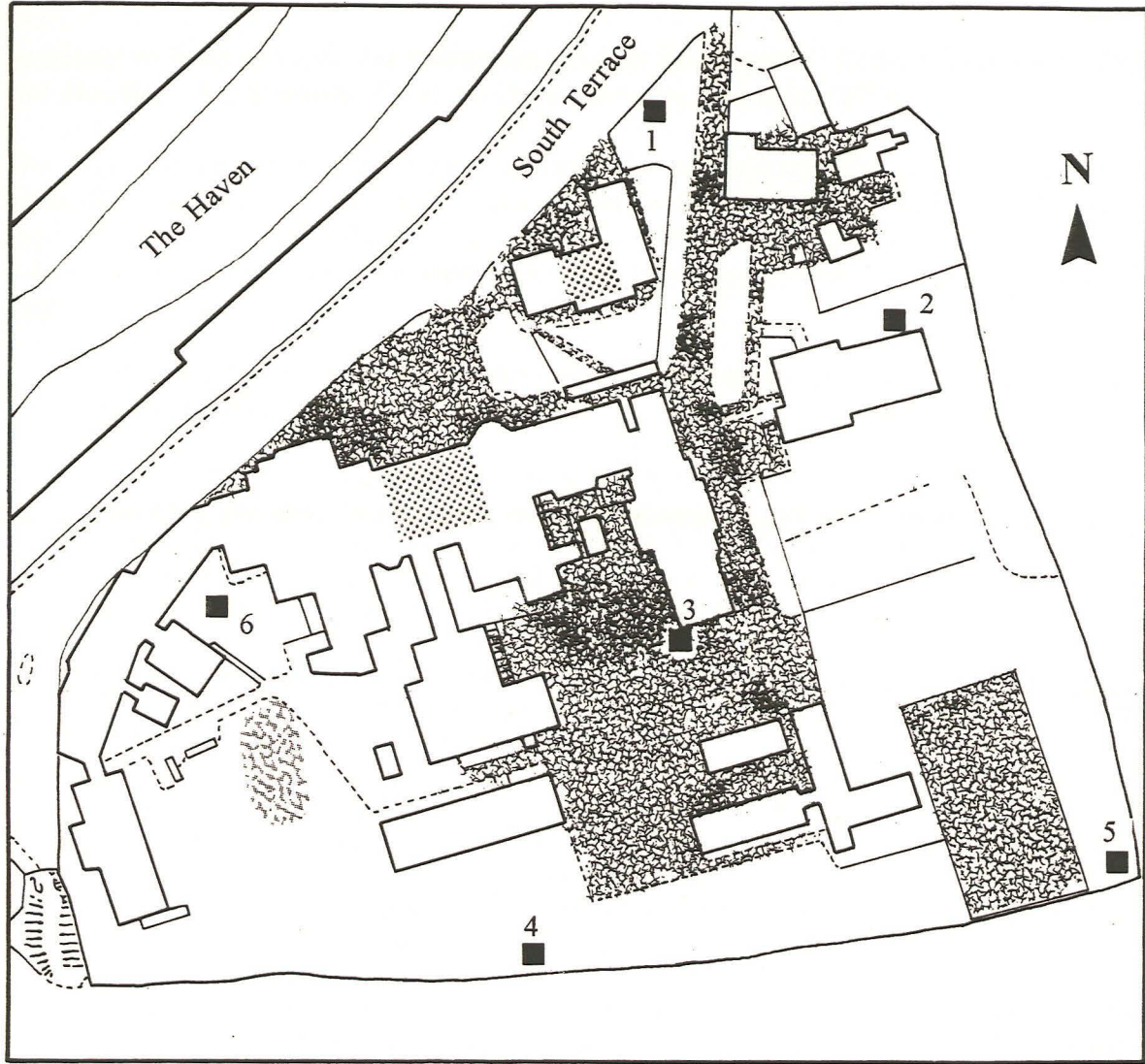





Fig. 7 Aerial View of Boston Docks, Showing Boston Hospital



Fig. 8 Site Plan,
Showing Hardstanding, Cellars and Bore holes



- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| ■ | Bore Holes (not to scale) |  | Hardstanding |
|  | Heaped Demolition Debris |  | Cellars |

Appendix 1

Secretary of State's criteria for scheduling Ancient Monuments - Extract from *Archaeology and Planning* DoE Planning Policy Guidance note 16, November 1990

The following criteria (which are not in any order of ranking), are used for assessing the national importance of an ancient monument and considering whether scheduling is appropriate. The criteria should not however be regarded as definitive; rather they are indicators which contribute to a wider judgement based on the individual circumstances of a case.

i *Period*: all types of monuments that characterise a category or period should be considered for preservation.

ii *Rarity*: there are some monument categories which in certain periods are so scarce that all surviving examples which retain some archaeological potential should be preserved. In general, however, a selection must be made which portrays the typical and commonplace as well as the rare. This process should take account of all aspects of the distribution of a particular class of monument, both in a national and regional context.

iii *Documentation*: the significance of a monument may be enhanced by the existence of records of previous investigation or, in the case of more recent monuments, by the supporting evidence of contemporary written records.

iv *Group value*: the value of a single monument (such as a field system) may be greatly enhanced by its association with related contemporary monuments (such as a settlement or cemetery) or with monuments of different periods. In some cases, it is preferable to protect the complete group of monuments, including associated and adjacent land, rather than to protect isolated monuments within the group.

v *Survival/Condition*: the survival of a monument's archaeological potential both above and below ground is a particularly important consideration and should be assessed in relation to its present condition and surviving features.

vi *Fragility/Vulnerability*: highly important archaeological evidence from some field monuments can be destroyed by a single ploughing or unsympathetic treatment; vulnerable monuments of this nature would particularly benefit from the statutory protection that scheduling confers. There are also existing standing structures of particular form or complexity whose value can again be severely reduced by neglect or careless treatment and which are similarly well suited by scheduled monument protection, even if these structures are already listed buildings.

vii *Diversity*: some monuments may be selected for scheduling because they possess a combination of high quality features, others because of a single important attribute.

viii *Potential*: on occasion, the nature of the evidence cannot be specified precisely but it may still be possible to document reasons anticipating its existence and importance and so to demonstrate the justification for scheduling. This is usually confined to sites rather than upstanding monuments.