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STEEP HILL, EXCHEQUERGATE AND MINSTER YARD, GAS MAINS RENEWAL Archaeological Recording

By K Wragg

CLAU ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT NO: 90

Report to British Gas Plc

March 1994

Prepared by

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING

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Fig.2 South facing section (typical of site) - scale 1:10

CLAU Report No 90: Steep Hill, Exchequergate & Minster Yard Gas Mains Renewal

STEEP HILL, EXCHEQUERGATE AND MINSTER YARD, LINCOLN: GAS MAINS RENEWAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING

Introduction

This project was prompted by proposals by British Gas Plc. to improve and update the gas supply network between Minster Yard and Steep Hill (see Fig.1). The City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit was commissioned to provide an intermittent watching brief in conjunction with all groundwork, in order to obtain a record of any archaeological information uncovered during trenching.

It was the clients' intention to restrict excavation, where practical, to previously disturbed areas, with extensive use being made of pipe-bursting and moled pipe insertion methods. It was still possible, however, that archaeological remains would be revealed during excavation for the working areas necessary to carry out such operations, and this was particularly important in the areas around the Cathedral, where burials have been encountered on several previous occasions.

The information in this document is presented with the proviso that further data may yet emerge. The Unit, its members and employees cannot, therefore, be held responsible for any loss, delay or damage, material or otherwise, arising out of this report. The document has been prepared in accordance with the terms of the Unit's Articles of Association, the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, and *The Management of Archaeological Projects* 2 (English Heritage, 1991).

Background

The areas affected by this project lie within one of the most archaeologically important parts of the City, with well preserved remains dating from the Roman and Medieval periods present throughout.

Previous discoveries in the individual areas of the project can be summarised as follows:

Minster Yard - Remains uncovered during investigations along the south side of the Cathedral during 1984 included part of the east wall of the Roman City, which was used as a base for the later 12th century expansion of the Cathedral, instigated by St.Hugh.

At least ten burials were also discovered at the south side of the Cathedral in 1984 belonging to the Cathedral graveyard which appears to have been in use from the mid 13th to the 18th century. More recently, during Anglian Water trenching across Minster Yard to the west of the Cathedral (work which ran concurrently with this project), a further twenty-three inhumations were recorded, again belonging to the Cathedral burial ground, at depths of between 500mm and 1300mm below the present ground surface.

Further evidence of ancient occupation has been recorded at the Deanery and around Greestone Place,, with Roman pottery and part of a tessellated mosaic floor seen in 1977 at the first location, and part of a Post-Medieval stone- lined well and demolition debris thought to originate from the Medieval church of St.Margaret uncovered at the latter.

Exchequergate - Roman remains including fragments of mosaic pavement and "opus signinum" (a type of concrete using crushed tile) floor surfaces have been revealed to the west of the Exchequergate arch, together with part of the original sewer network and the basement rooms of a large townhouse. Finds from the Medieval period have also been recorded, including substantial stone foundations thought to belong to the west gate of the Cathedral Close Wall, a stone well, and at least one burial.

Steep Hill - At the lower end of Steep Hill the remains of two Roman buildings, complete with tessellated floors were discovered during excavations in 1974, while in 1987 a metalled street surface sealed by the floor of a late Roman building was recorded. The 1974 investigation also revealed the remains of 11/12th century stone buildings, 14th century timber and stone structures, part of a 15th century alley (oriented E-W) and later 16th-18th century tenements.

At the northern end of the hill further remains of the Roman sewer system have been seen together with adjacent buildings and mosaics. The Medieval period is also well represented in this area, and indeed along the entire length of Steep Hill, by several existing houses including the "Norman House" and "Jews' House".

Results

As was always likely with a project involving the re-use of existing pipe runs, little new archaeological information was uncovered during trenching. Without exception new excavation was contained within the previously disturbed ground associated with the original gas supply network, with little revealed of even the original trench sections.

The general ground make-up across the areas of the project was simply a layer of modern trench fill, featuring earth, limestone pieces, brick/tile, concrete and other modern inclusions. This sealed the original gas supply pipes, and was in turn overlain by the various modern carriageway surfaces, and their associated bedding/foundations present along the route, ranging from Yorkstone sets along Minster Yard, Castle Hill and Steep Hill, to tarmacadam along Pottergate.

Conclusions

While the results from this particular project were somewhat disappointing from an archaeological point of view, they were not totally unexpected given the nature of the installation techniques used. It is important that the negative results of this project are not viewed in isolation, without regard to the special circumstances relating to the groundwork methodology, leading to a false impression of a lack of stratified archaeological deposits in the areas covered by this scheme. Such deposits and remains are still extant in these locations, as illustrated by the discoveries revealed during concurrent excavation undertaken by Anglian Water Services Limited, especially in Minster Yard.

Acknowledgements

The C.L.A.U. would like to thank British Gas Plc., and all its employees involved in this project, for their support and assistance in all aspects of this scheme, and wishes to applaud the company's positive approach to conservation matters. CLAU Report No 90: Steep Hill, Exchequergate & Minster Yard Gas Mains Renewal

ARCHIVE DEPOSITION

The archive consists of:

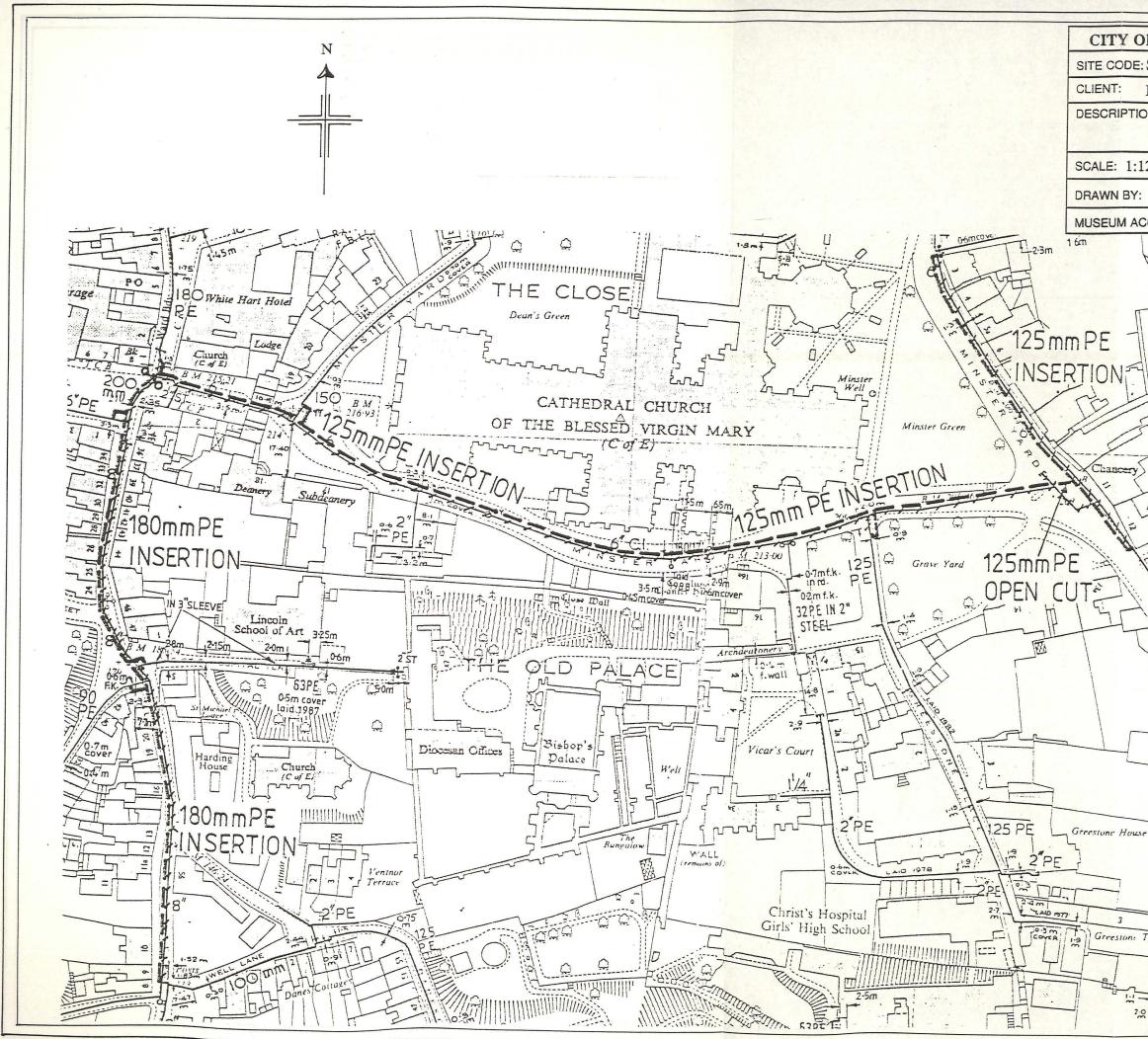
- No. Description
- 1 Site diary

- 1 Report
- 2 Scale drawings
- 1 set Photographic records Colour slides

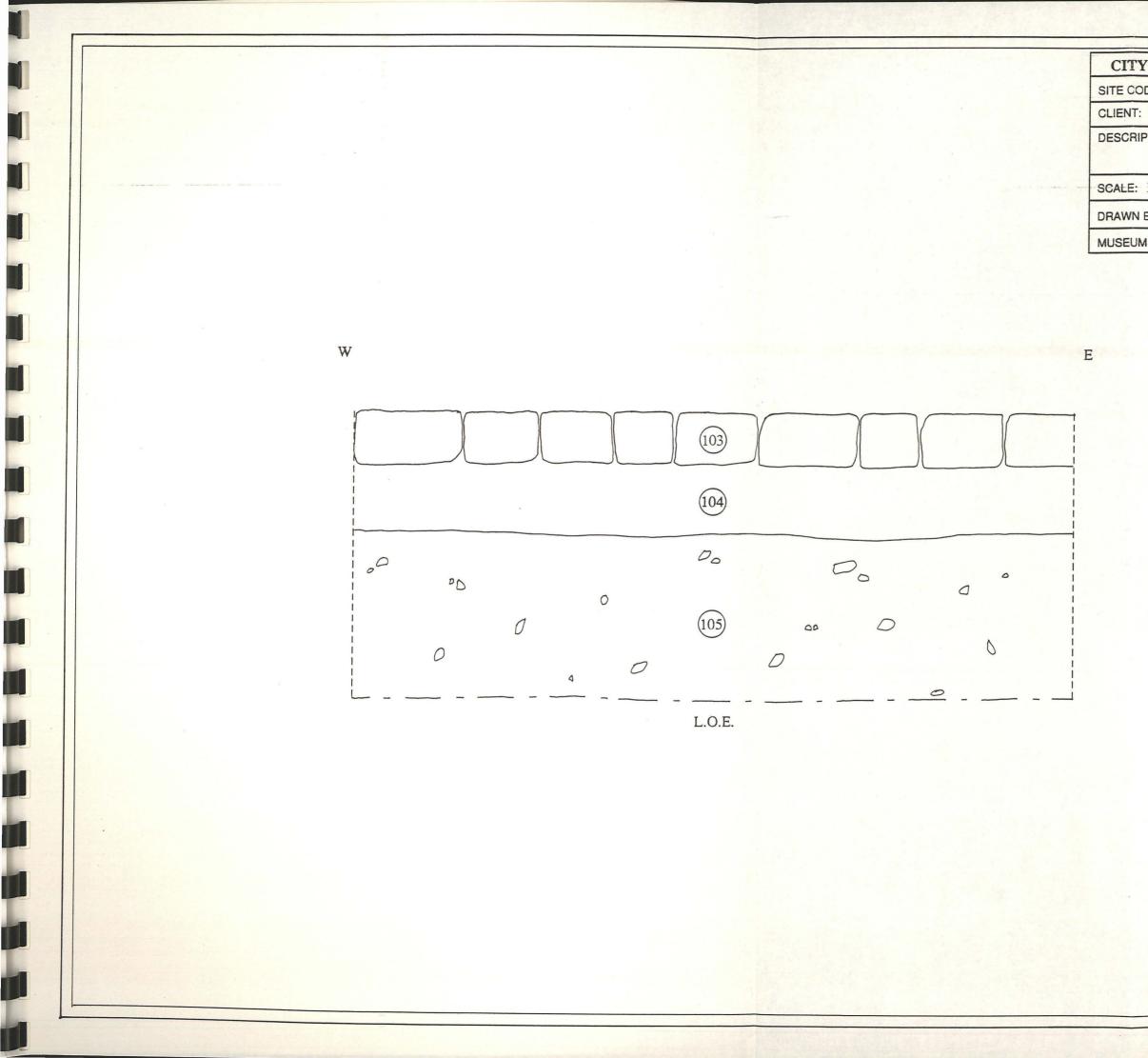
The primary archive material, as detailed above, is currently held by :

The City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit, Charlotte House, The Lawn, Union Road, Lincoln, Lincolnshire, LN1 3BL.

It is intended that transfer to the City and County Museum, Friars Lane, Lincoln, in accordance with current published requirements, will be undertaken within approximately six months of completion of this project.



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