

PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY LINCOLN

THE OLD SCHOOL HOUSE, STOW. ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Site Code: OSHS03
NGR: SK 8837 8203.
Planning Ref. M02/P/0422
Accession No. 2003.18



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Report prepared for Fisher Hollingworth Architects.
by
Alex Brett

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln)
61 High Street
Newton on Trent
Lincoln
LN1 2JP
Tel. & Fax. 01777 228155

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Contents

	Summary	
1.0	Introduction	1
2.0	Site location and description	1
3.0	Planning background	1
4.0	Archaeological and historical background	1
5.0	Methodology	2
6.0	Results	2
7.0	Discussion and conclusions	2
8.0	Effectiveness of methodology	3
9.0	Acknowledgements	3
10.0	References	3
11.0	Site archive	3

Illustrations

Fig. 1	Site location (1:2,500, insert at 1:500)
Fig. 2	Foundation plan showing features recorded
Fig. 3	North facing section showing pit [005]
Fig. 4	East facing section showing pit [007]

Appendices

Appendix 1	Colour plates
Appendix 2	List of archaeological contexts
Appendix 3	Pottery archive

Summary

- *A programme of archaeological observation and recording took place following the initial groundworks for an extension to The Old School House, Stow, Lincolnshire.*
- *Two pits were exposed in the new foundation trenches, and the fills of these features suggested that they were used primarily for the disposal of domestic waste in the 12th century.*
- *No other archaeological features were exposed.*

1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) was commissioned by Fisher Hollingsworth Architects to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the construction of a two-storey extension at The Old School House, Stow, Lincolnshire. This work was undertaken to fulfil the objectives of an agreed archaeological mitigation strategy that was based on the recommendations of the Assistant Built Environment Officer of Lincolnshire County Council, (advising West Lindsey District Council). This approach complies with the requirements of *Archaeology and Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16*, Dept. of Environment (1990); *Management of Archaeological Projects*, EH (1991); *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*, IFA (1994) and the LCC document *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: A Manual of Archaeological Practice*, 1998.

2.0 Site location and description

Stow is in the administrative district of West Lindsey, approximately 10km south-east of Gainsborough and 13.5km north-west of Lincoln. The development site lies towards the east of the settlement, to the west of School Lane. It was a former vegetable garden, covering an area of approximately 30.5 m², bordered by buildings to the south, and domestic gardens to the other three sides.

The local geology consists of drift sand deposits over Jurassic or Cretaceous clay or mudstone, (S.S.E.W. 1983). The National Grid Reference for the centre of the site is SK 8837 8203, and its mean elevation is approximately 15m OD.

3.0 Planning background

Full planning consent was granted for an extension to the rear of existing structures. This was subject to the completion of an archaeological recording brief, the nature of which was defined in a document 'Specification For An Archaeological Watching Brief: The Old School House, Stow, Lincolnshire' (Allen 2003).

The planning reference for this project is M02/P/0422.

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

Anglo Saxon charters first make mention of Stow (*mynster æt Sancte MARIAN stowe*) in 1053 – 1055, indicating a Late Saxon origin to the settlement. The place name comes from the Old English, meaning a 'holy place', and at the time of the Domesday Survey, 1086, the principal landowner was Gilbert of Ghent.

The parish church of St. Mary's, which is one of the most monumental early parish churches of England, lies less than 100m to the west of the development. It comprises both Anglo-Saxon and Norman elements, and appears to have been founded in the early 11th century. The church was refounded and reendowed c.1054 by Lofric and Godiva, with the encouragement of Bishop Wulfwig, as a Minster with the bishop at its head. The church at Stow was the most important Episcopal church in the county

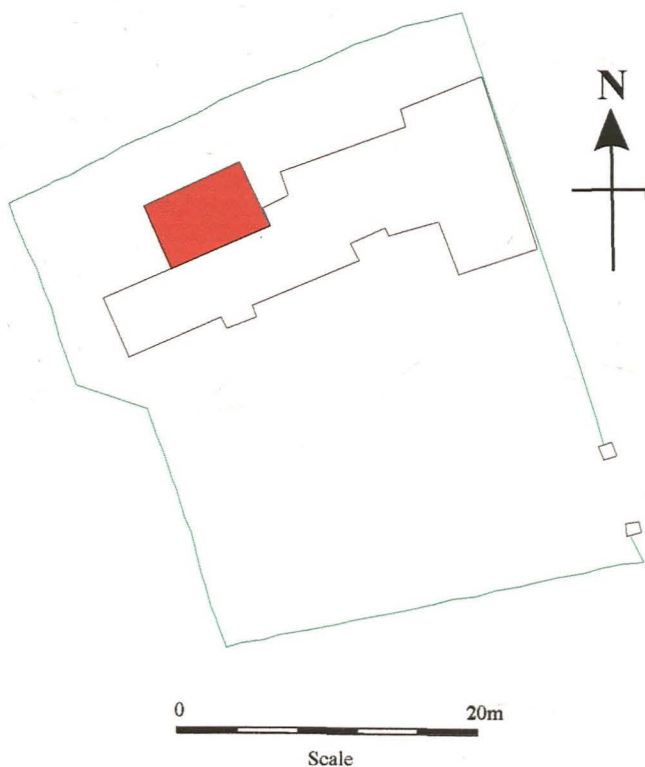
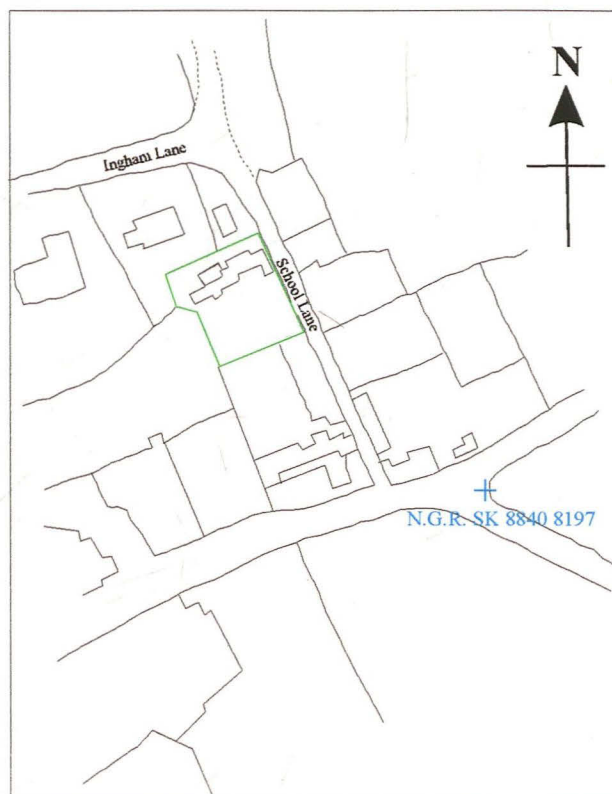


Fig. 1 : Site location. Shows Stow town centre (top 1:2,500) with site outline in green. Bottom plan shows site with location of proposed extension in red (1:500). For plan of foundation trench see fig. 2.

From drawings provided by FISHER HOLLINGSWORTH architects

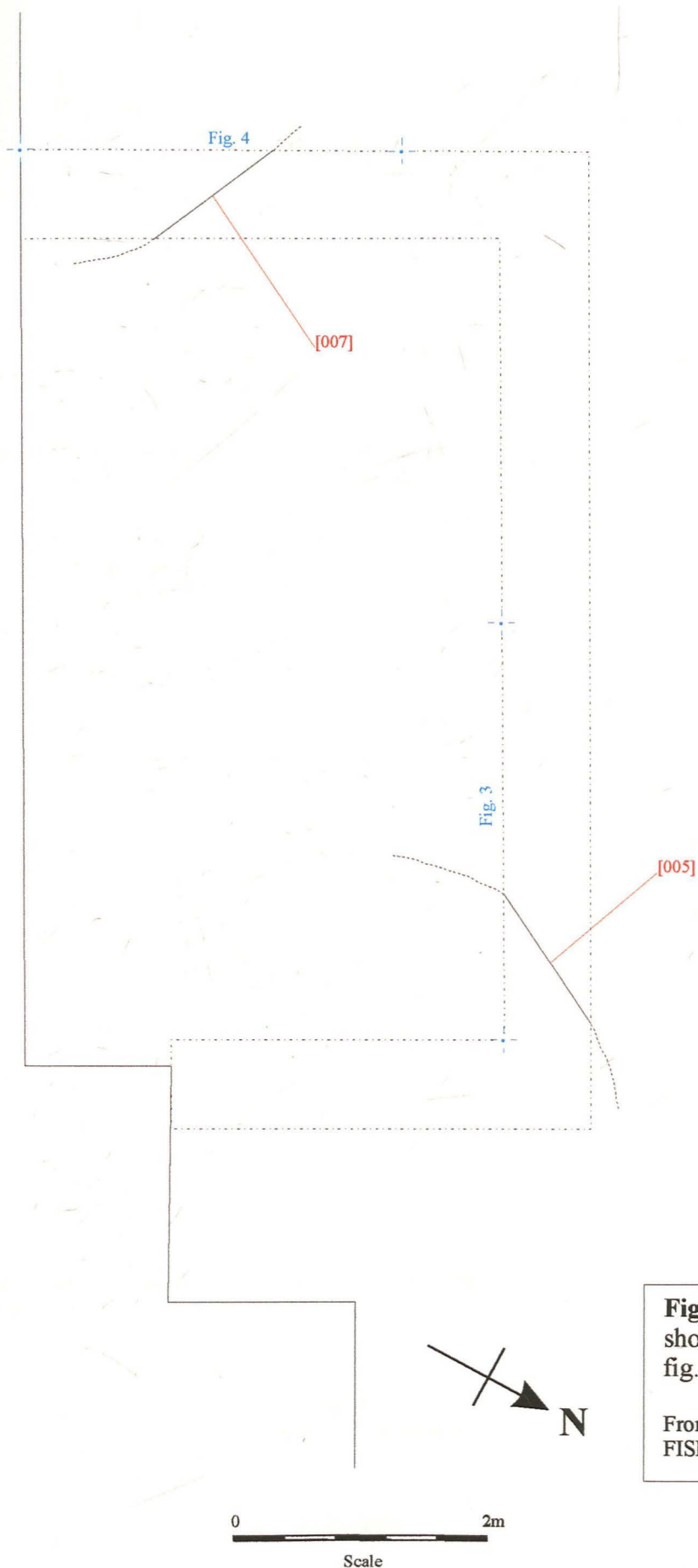


Fig. 2 : Outline of foundation trench showing location of features and fig.s 3 & 4. 1:50

From drawing provided by
FISHER HOLLINGSWORTH architects

and would have provided a focus for settlement; a position it lost when Bishop Remigius moved his see to Lincoln in 1072, (Owen, 1971). In 1091 Remigius refounded the church, bringing monks with him from Eynsham. His successor returned the monks to Eynsham, and the church reverted to the parish church it is today.

5.0 Methodology

A single visit was made to the site by the author on January 21st 2003, when it was noted that approximately 75% of the footings had been excavated. The remainder of the excavations were monitored, and all exposed section faces were cleaned and examined for traces of archaeological activity.

Any archaeological features exposed were investigated to determine their shape and orientation, and to attempt to recover datable finds. They were also drawn in plan and section and recorded on pro-forma context record sheets. A photographic record of all archaeological features was maintained.

6.0 Results

The uppermost material was a dark grey clayey topsoil, 0.25 to 0.35m thick. This incorporated a modern brick soak-away which drained water from the roof of the house to south.

Beneath the topsoil, a large pit was exposed in the northern corner of the foundation cut (see fig.s 2 & 3): pit [005] was well defined with a flattish base, sloping downwards to the southeast. Its upper fill (003) was mid grey silty clay with gravel and limestone inclusions. Charcoal, burnt earth and C.B.M. were also observed in this deposit, as was a single small fragment of animal bone, which was not retained. A sherd of mid to mid/late 12th century pottery was also recovered. The lower fill (004) was darker and siltier and it contained charcoal flecks, oyster shell and occasional burnt stone. A fragment of 12th century pottery was recovered from this deposit.

A second pit, [007], was exposed in the south corner of the foundation trench (see fig.s 2 & 4). This had a shallower profile than [005], with a regular level base. Its fill (006) was dark grey-brown towards the base, with oyster shell, C.B.M., charcoal flecks and burnt earth inclusions. The upper fill was a cleaner yellow-brown clay, which appeared to be a purposeful backfill, derived from the local natural soils. No pottery was recovered from this feature.

Both pits were cut into (002), a layer of yellowish clay containing frequent angular gravel inclusions. This, in turn, was over (008), a layer of clean yellowish brown clay with no inclusions. These two materials were interpreted as natural deposits,

7.0 Discussion and conclusions

The archaeological remains observed on this site comprised two large pits. The

limited inspection and examination that was occasioned demonstrated that both features contained charcoal, burnt earth, oyster shell and animal bone, and one pit contained 12th century pottery sherds. These artefacts are indicative of domestic activity and suggest that the pits were used to dispose of refuse; perhaps from dwellings that were situated on the site prior to construction of the 19th century School House.

8.0 Effectiveness of methodology

The methodology employed allowed a comprehensive inspection to be made of all section faces, with minimal disruption to the client. Only a limited range of dating evidence was recovered from archaeological contexts due to the fact that these contexts had been disturbed by the development in advance of monitoring.

9.0 Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Fisher Hollingsworth Architects for commissioning this investigation, and the ground-workers for cooperation on site.

10.0 References

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Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983, *Soils of England and Wales Sheet 4, Eastern England*. Soil Survey of England and Wales.

11.0 Site archive

An archive consisting of written, drawn, photographic and object elements is in preparation and will be deposited at the Lincoln City and County museum within six months of the completion of this report.

Access can be gained to the archive by quoting the L.C.C. Museum accession number 2003.18.

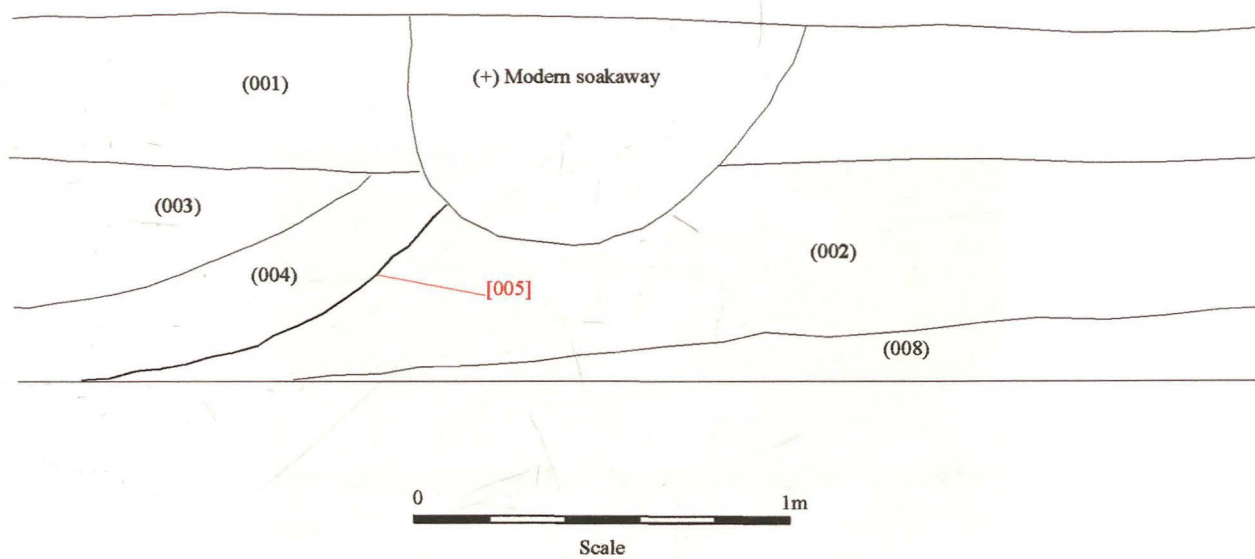


Fig. 3 : North facing section showing pit [005]. 1:20

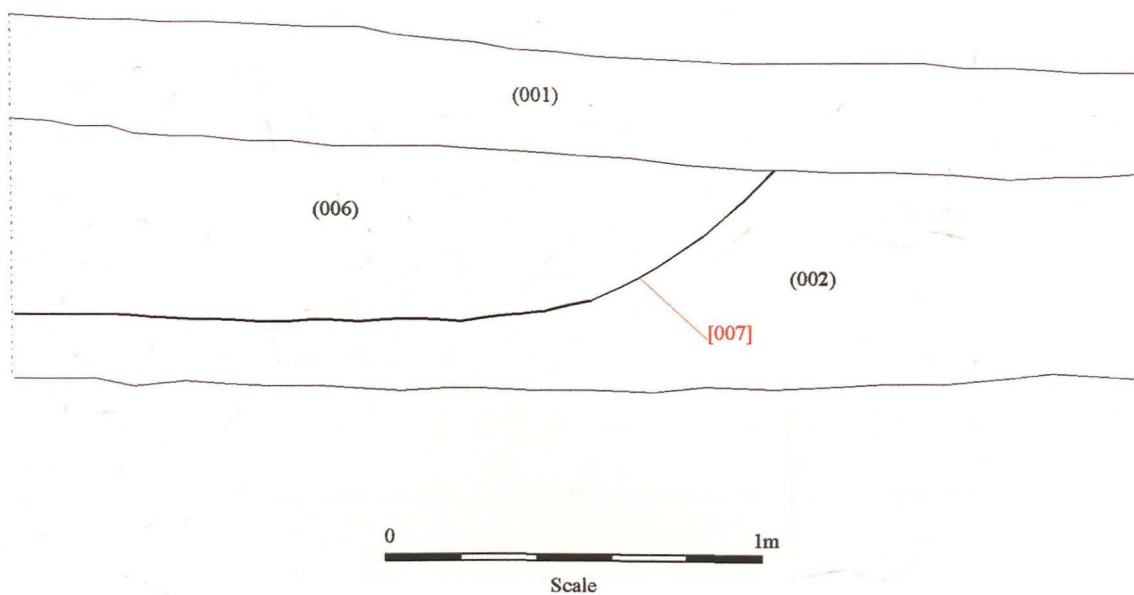
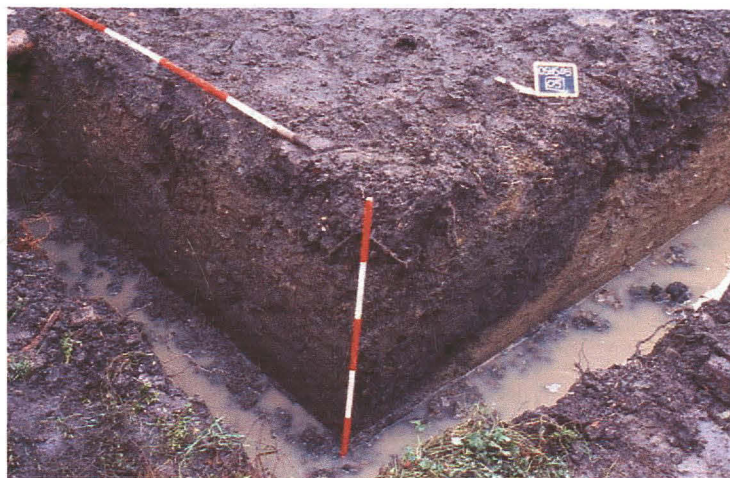


Fig. 4 : East facing section showing pit [007]. 1:20

Appendix 1. Colour plates



Pl. 1 : View looking south, showing pit [005]. Note darker basal fill.



Pl. 1 : View looking southwest, showing pit [007].

Appendix 2. Context summary list

CONTEXT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
001	Dark grey topsoil.
002	Light yellow clay natural. Gravel inclusions.
003	Fill of [005]. Domestic dumping.
004	Fill of [005]. Domestic dumping.
005	Large rubbish pit.
006	Fill of [007]. Basal portion is domestic dump, below back filling.
007	Larges rubbish pit.
008	Clean clay natural.

Appendix 3. Pottery Archive (OSHS 03)

Jane Young

context	cname	full name	sub fabric	form type	sherds	weight	part	description	date
003	NSP	Nottingham Splashed ware	fine/sandy	jug	1	3	BS		mid to mid/late 12th
004	EMX	Non-local Early Medieval	OX/R/OX;med shell & quartz & fe	bowl/jar	1	14	base	soot ext & int base	12th fabrics