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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

**Wigford House, Brayford Wharf, Lincoln  
Archaeological Evaluation**

**LCNCC Accn No.: 2003.321  
Site Code: WHBW03  
NGR SK: 97347 71015  
Planning Application: 2003/0269/F**

heritage

**Report  
for**

**Thornton Firkin**

**by**

**Richard Pullen MA PIFA**

**LAS Report No. 702**

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Conservation  
Services  
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**Wigford House, Brayford North, Lincoln**  
**Archaeological Evaluation**  
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Planning Application: 2003/0269/F

**Summary**

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land to the rear of Wigford House, off Brayford Wharf East, Lincoln. The evaluation consisted of the hand excavation of two trenches, both of which were c.2.50m in length by 2.00m wide. The stratigraphic make-up of the site consisted of paving slabs and compacted modern make-up material overlying 19<sup>th</sup> century building foundations and surfaces. Due to the considerable amount of modern disturbance in the two trenches, a third smaller trench was excavated. In the third area, an undisturbed dark silt layer was noted beneath the industrial remains at a depth of c.0.80m below the present ground surface. Pottery sherds dating from the early post-medieval period were recovered from this layer. A small area of similar, but undated, material was noted in trench 2.*

*The results of the archaeological evaluation show undisturbed waterlogged silts below 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial remains across most of the site. These silts and any deposits appearing below them must be considered to have a high potential for archaeological and or organic preservation. No foundation plan for the final development is currently available, but the probability of encountering unidentified archaeological remains on the site is high and any intrusive groundworks below c.0.80m will almost certainly have a detrimental impact upon the archaeological record.*

**Introduction**

In September 2003, Lindsey Archaeological Services (LAS) were commissioned by Thornton Firkin to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land at the rear of Wigford House, Brayford North, Lincoln. The evaluation was undertaken between the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> September 2003 in accordance with a brief prepared by the City Archaeologist and the general requirements set out in the *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook* published by the Archaeology Section, Lincolnshire County Council (July 2003).

**Site Location and Description**

Wigford House lies to the west of an NCP multi-story car park and on the east side of Brayford Wharf East directly adjacent to the Lincoln-Newark railway line. The evaluation area is located on the south side of Wigford House between the arms of the H of the existing main building. The site lies at around 5.40m A.O.D. and consists of a paved patio area approximately 19.00m by 12.50m interspersed with small flower beds (Pls 1, 2).



### **Planning Background**

A scheme to convert Wigford House into residential apartments has been submitted to Lincoln City Council, planning application number 2003/0269/F. Due to the strong possibility for the survival of archaeological remains in the area, an archaeological evaluation was requested by Lincoln City Council prior to determination of the application.

The site lies within Conservation Area No. 6 (West Parade and Brayford).

### **Archaeological and Historical Background**

The site is situated on the eastern edge of the Brayford Pool close to the point where the River Witham enters the pool from the south. The land bordering the pool is underlain by variable depths of organic, silt and sandy sediments that have built up over the last 7000 years retaining a palaeoenvironmental history of Lincoln and the Brayford. This pool was in the past much larger than today, and radiocarbon dates indicate that the sediments span a time period from the Mesolithic to the medieval period. The water level in the basin has risen continually throughout prehistory and more recent times, with the resultant burial and sealing of the earlier organic sediments.

Little is known about the origins of the pre-Roman settlement at Lincoln but the natural confluence of the Rivers Till and Witham at the Brayford Pool could have been a focus for prehistoric settlement. Environmental analysis of peat deposits and sediments have provided some indications of conditions which have prevailed over time and how they were influenced by human activity. To the east of the Brayford Pool, ephemeral traces of Late Iron Age activity has been recorded at the site of Holmes Grain Warehouse (Steane *et al* 2001, 104).

The Roman name for Lincoln (*Lindum*) is thought to have derived from Celtic name for the Brayford Pool but early occupation evidence has remained elusive in this part of the city, with evidence being concentrated on top of the limestone ridge where the early fort was constructed. In 1982 excavations on the site of the offices of the Lincolnshire Echo, south of the railway line, revealed a sequence of waterfront activity from the Roman period onwards. The site lies 50m south of the point where the river opens out into the Brayford Pool. A narrow east-west section c.55m long, starting some 20m east of the present river channel was recorded which revealed that in the pre-Roman and early Roman periods the east bank of the River Witham lay at least 75m east of its present position but in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century the river bank was advanced westward by at least 22m westwards by consolidation of the bank with timber stakes and the dumping of refuse behind at a height of c.3.75m OD. Further reclamation westwards continued into the 4<sup>th</sup> century (Steane *et al.* 2001, 78).

Water levels are known to have risen in the Witham basin between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries which created a stagnant river with many pools (Wilkinson 1987, 54). Investigations in 1985 on the south side of St Benedict's Square, where the Roman river's edge was discovered, showed that in the Saxon period the area had flooded but dumping to reclaim the ground took place in the early-mid 10<sup>th</sup>

century on top of which were a series of wattle fences, perhaps part of the consolidation programme, at a height of c. 4.5m O.D.

Evidence was found in 1972 for a possible medieval stone jetty at Dickinson's Mill, now the block of flats, north of the General Building, some 25m east of the modern edge of the Brayford at a level of 3.5m O.D. (Steane *et al.* 2001, 95). In 1982 the excavations on the site of the new Lincolnshire Echo offices revealed that the river margin was moving slowly westward with the 12<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup> century river bank lying some 9m west of the 10-11<sup>th</sup> century bank.

The possibility that evidence for earlier waterfront may be revealed on the Wigford House site was considered to be high.

### **Aims and Objectives**

The aims of the evaluation were to;

- provide information on the depth and quality, below the modern surface, of surviving archaeological deposits, which would be affected by any proposed groundwork.
- provide information which will allow for the assessment of the possible scale of development impact on any remains and other information which might influence development design so that such impact can be avoided or minimised
- provide information that will allow the local planning authority to reconcile development proposals with their policy of preserving archaeological remains.
- provide site-specific information which (if necessary) would allow for the design and integration of timing and funding of any further archaeological work (or mitigation strategy) that may be required in advance of, or during, any subsequent development programme.
- produce a project archive for deposition with the City and County Museum.
- provide information for accession to the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) and the Lincoln Urban Archaeological Database.

### **Method**

Three trenches were positioned in order to avoid known drainage services identified running east west across the site. Trenches 1 and 2 were c.2.00m x 2.50m; Trench 3 was 1.10m x 0.50m. The trenches were all hand excavated and back filled by Richard Pullen and Pat Daniel from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> September 2003. Excavation stopped at the first archaeological horizon or the natural geology, as was appropriate. Subsequent feature excavation was undertaken by hand and all features/stratigraphy



were recorded by single context, scale drawing and photographic record. A temporary benchmark of 19.93m was established on site, taken from an Ordnance Survey benchmark of 18.00m A.O.D located on Wigford Way to the west of the site.

## Results

### Trench 1

The concrete paving slabs and compacted make-up material **100** were removed to reveal a granite cobbled surface **101** covering roughly half of the trench. The remaining half consisted of compacted sharp sand **102** that ran underneath the cobbles (Pl. 3). The cobbles and the sand layer were removed by hand. At 0.50m below the present ground surface concrete **103** was encountered (Pl. 4). Concrete layer **103** could not be broken using hand tools and the confined location of the site made access for machines or compressors impossible, consequently, further work on Trench 1 was abandoned at this point.

### Trench 2

The concrete paving slabs and compacted make-up material **200** were removed to reveal a substantial red brick structural fragment **202** that covered almost half of the trench. The remaining half consisted of various layers of modern demolition material in a dark grey/brown sandy silt matrix **203** (Pl. 5). Structural fragment **202** had stepped foundations and continued to a depth in excess of the trenches final depth of 1.20m below the present ground surface (Pl. 6, 7). Modern demolition layers **203** also continued to a depth in excess of 1.20m below the present ground surface. A small area of soft dark grey/brown silt **204** was observed in the base of the trench. A small 0.40m x 0.40m sondage was excavated into this deposit which had a depth in excess of 0.50m. Six fragments of roof tile were retrieved from this layer, which could only be dated to the period between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### Trench 3

Due to the abandonment of Trench 1, the City Archaeological Officer, Michael Jones requested that a small test pit should be excavated away from the cobbled surface and the foundation fragments encountered in Trenches 1 and 2. The third trench was positioned further towards the west of the site in one of the small gardens interspersed within the paved area. The stratigraphy of Trench 3 consisted generally of modern make-up **300** overlying 19<sup>th</sup> century demolition debris **301**, similar to that previously encountered in Trenches 1 and 2. A thin layer of sharp sand **302** was observed lying directly beneath **301**. Two pottery sherds (one medieval, one 18<sup>th</sup> century in date) and a sherd medieval roof tile were found. The deepest deposit noted in Trench 3 appeared at around 0.80m below the current ground surface and was a very dark grey/brown silt **303**, very similar to **204** noted in the base of Trench 2 (Pl. 8).

## Discussion

Evaluation of the limited available area has established that much of the area has been heavily disturbed by 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings to a depth of c. 0.80m. The undisturbed silt deposits encountered



below this depth appear to be late medieval/early post-medieval in date and may seal earlier remains at a greater depth.

The substantial stepped brick building foundations noted in Trench 1 probably relate to Seely's Mill built in 1839 and demolished in 1970. Seely's Mill, later to be known as Holmes Grain Warehouse, was an imposing red brick building standing seven stories in height. Stepped foundations of the considerable width encountered during the recent excavation would not be unusual for such a large building constructed on waterlogged silts. The cobbled area noted in Trench 2 probably represents an exterior surface linked either to the warehouse itself or the railway to the south.

### **Conclusion**

Although only a very small area was investigated, the results of the archaeological evaluation show apparently undisturbed waterlogged silts lying below 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial remains across most of the site. While no evidence for any waterfront structures was found this is not surprising given the small area available for evaluation. However, the silts and any deposits appearing below them must be considered to have a high potential for archaeological and organic preservation.

No foundation plan for the final development is currently available, but the probability of encountering unidentified archaeological remains on the site seems high and any intrusive groundworks below c.0.80m will almost certainly impact upon the archaeological record.

Richard Pullen MA PIFA  
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November 14<sup>th</sup> 2003

### **References**

- Steane, K. *et al.* 2001 *The Archaeology of Wigford and the Brayford Pool*. Lincoln Archaeological Studies 2.
- Wilkinson, T.J. 1987. 'Palaeoenvironments of the upper Witham fen: a preliminary view', *Fenland Research* 4, 52-6.

### **Contents of Site Archive**

- 13 context sheets
- 2 sheets of drawings containing 3 plans and 6 sections
- Colour Photographs from LAS film No. 03/107 (negs 00-37) and 03/115 (negs 18-27)
- 1 box of finds including pottery, brick and animal bone



**APPENDIX 1**



## APPENDIX 1

## Wigford House, Lincoln (WHBW 03)

## Context Summary

Context	Type	Description
100	Layer	Modern paving and compacted hardcore
101	Structure	Granite cobble sets
102	Layer	Compacted sharp builders sand
103	Layer	Concrete
200	Layer	Modern paving and compacted hardcore
201	Layer	Dark grey/brown modern rubble + soil
202	Structure	19 <sup>th</sup> century bonded red brick wall
203	Fill	Various layers of modern/19 <sup>th</sup> century rubble
204	Layer	Dark grey/brown silty clay
300	Layer	Modern paving and compacted hardcore
301	Layer	Modern demolition rubble + soil
302	Layer	Compacted builders sharp sand
303	Layer	Dark grey/brown silty clay



**APPENDIX 2**

# Pottery Archive WHBW03

Jane Young

context	cname	full name	form type	sherds	vessels	weight	decoration	part	date
300	LSW2	13th to 14th century Lincoln Glazed Ware	jug	1	1	8		BS	
300	LSW1/2	12th-13th century Lincoln Glazed ware	jug	1	1	8		BS	
300	BL	Black-glazed wares	jug ?	1	1	4		BS	17th to 18th
300	STSL	Staffordshire/Bristol slipware	large press mould dish	1	1	83	notched rim;trailed & moulded dec	rim	
301	SWSG	Staffordshire White Saltglazed stoneware	plate	3	1	14		rim to base	
301	ENGS	Unspecified English Stoneware	bottle	1	1	17		BS	
302	LSW3	14th to 15th century Lincoln Glazed Ware	jug	1	1	10		BS	
302	STSL	Staffordshire/Bristol slipware	press mould dish	1	1	6	trailed & combed dec	BS	



# Tile Archive WHBW03

Jane Young

<b>context</b>	<b>cname</b>	<b>full name</b>	<b>fabric</b>	<b>frags</b>	<b>weight</b>	<b>description</b>	<b>date</b>
204	PNR	Peg, nib or ridge tile	1	4	295	medieval flat roofer	13th to 14th
204	PNR	Peg, nib or ridge tile	LSWA	1	60	no surfaces;medieval flat roofer	12th to 15th
204	PNR	Peg, nib or ridge tile	7	1	45	medieval flat roofer	12th to 13th
301	GPNR	Glazed peg, nib or ridge	poor fabric	1	48	reduced glaze;medieval flat roofer	13th
302	PNR	Peg, nib or ridge tile	1	1	160	corner;mortar;medieval flat roofer	13th to 16th
302	PNR	Peg, nib or ridge tile	1	1	60	medieval flat roofer	13th to 16th

# Dating Archive WHBW03

Jane Young

<b>context</b>	<b>date</b>	<b>earliest horizon</b>	<b>latest horizon</b>	<b>comments</b>
204	13th to 16th	MH4	PMH2	tile only
300	18th	PMH8	PMH9	
301	late 18th to 20th	EMH	EMH	
302	18th	PMH8	PMH9	date on single sherd



**THE FIGURES**





Fig. 1 Location of Wigford House, Lincoln (C based on the 2000 1:25000 Ordnance Survey Explorer map Sheet 272. © Crown Copyright, reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Licence No.AL 100002165).



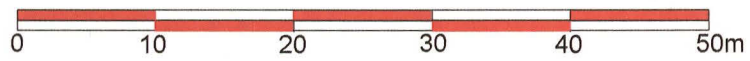
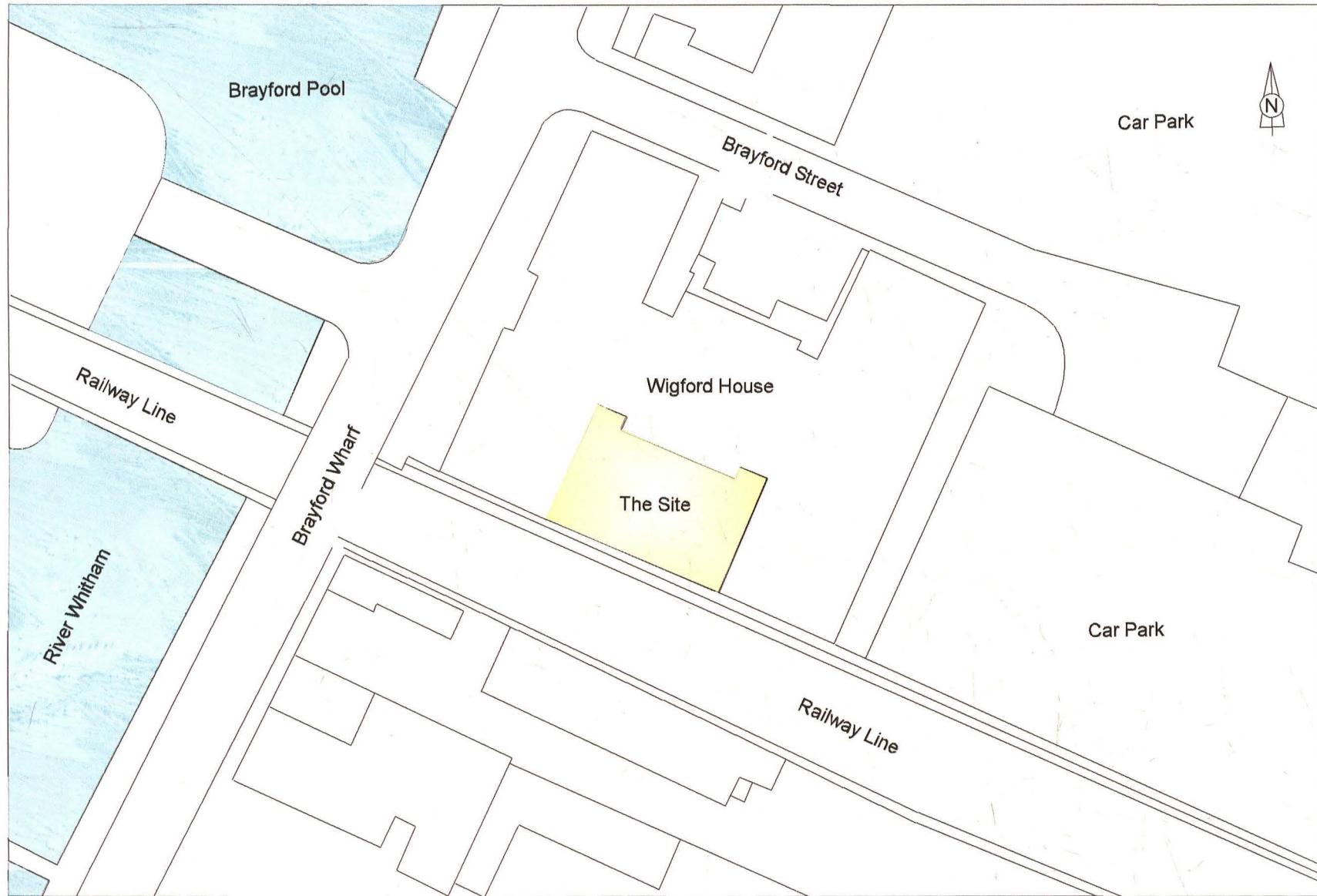


Fig. 2 Site Location Plan

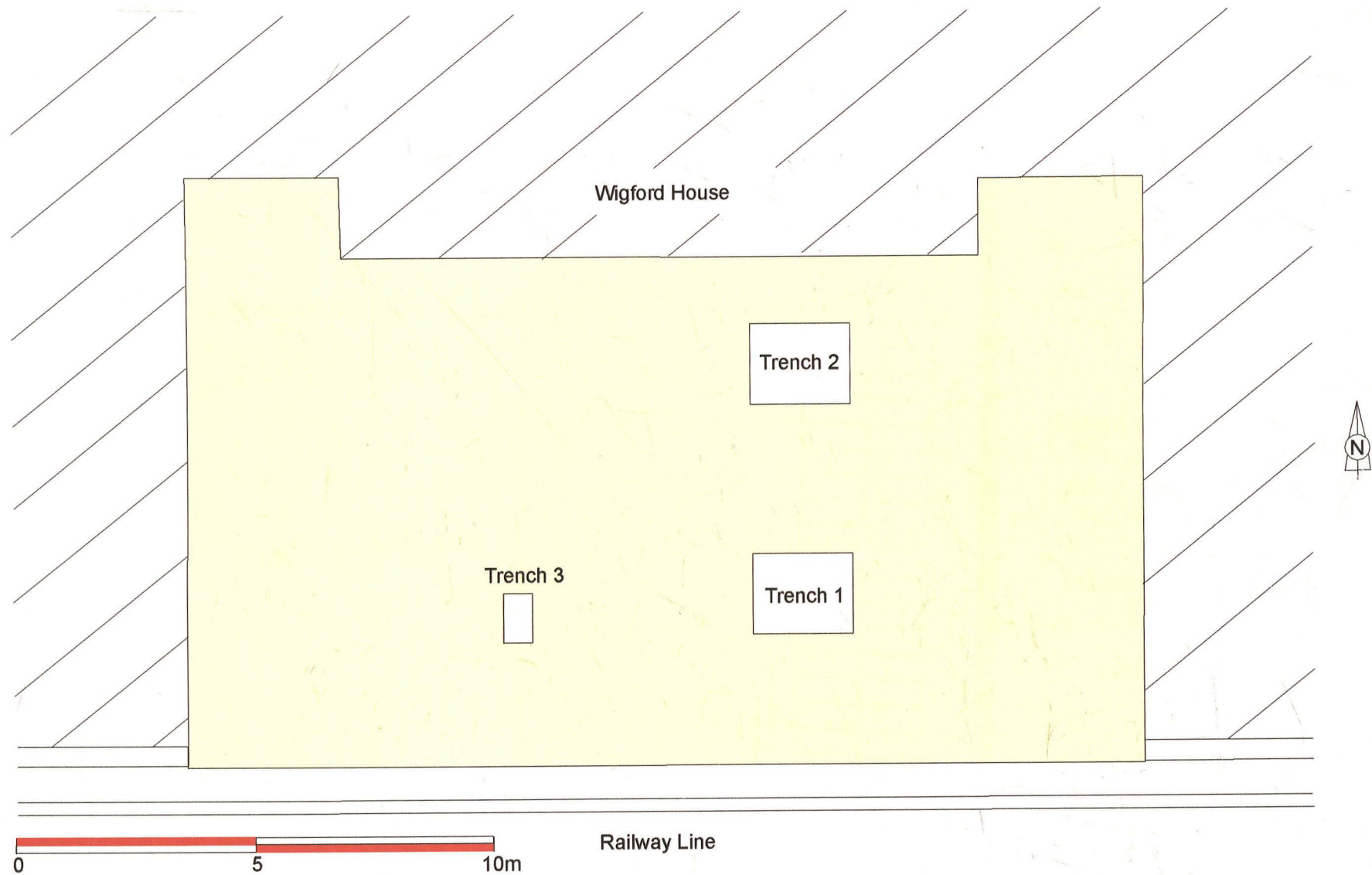
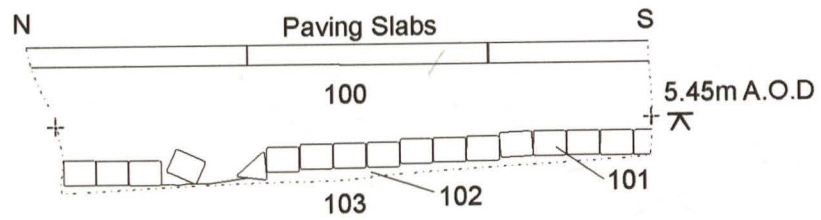
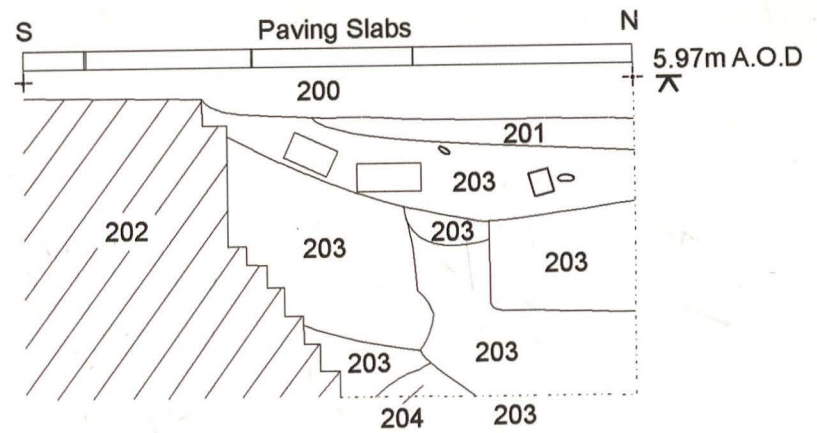
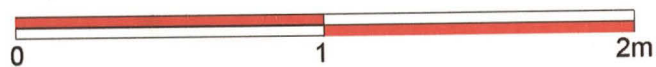
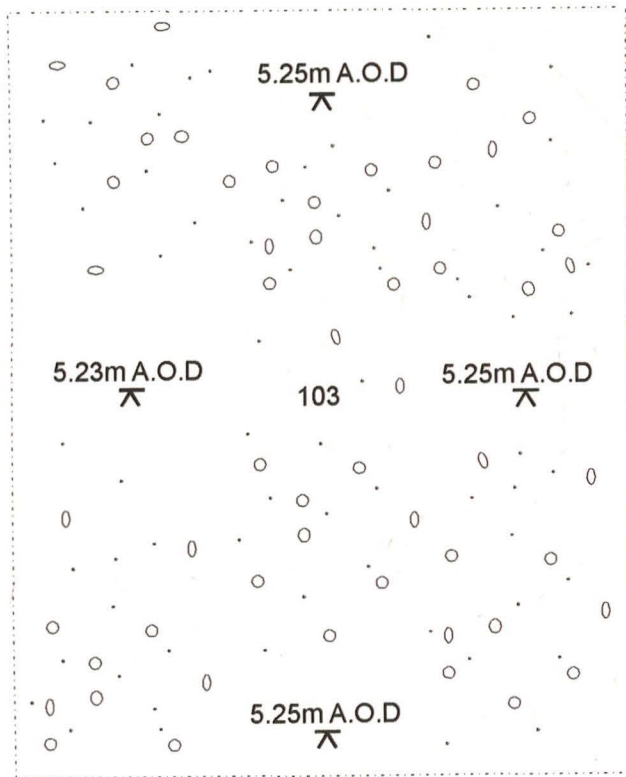


Fig. 3 Trench Location Plan





Trench 1



Trench 2

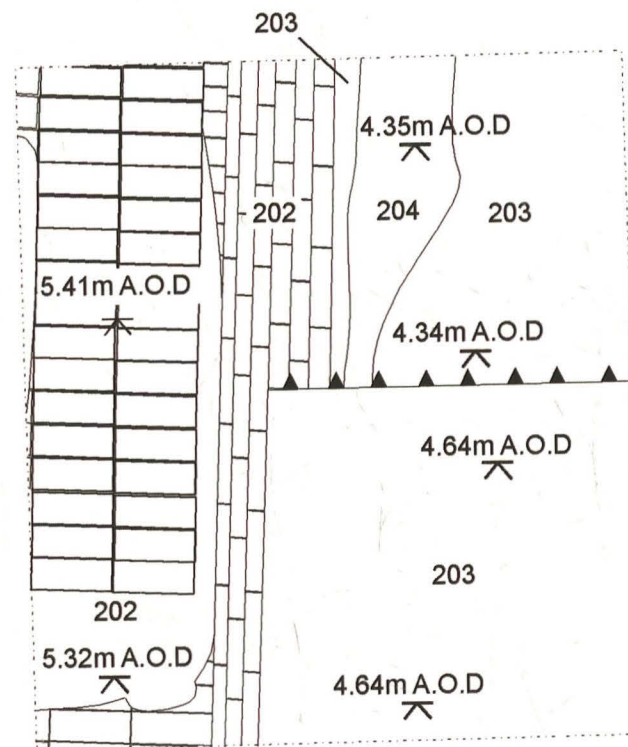


Fig. 4 Plans and sections for Trenches 1 and 2

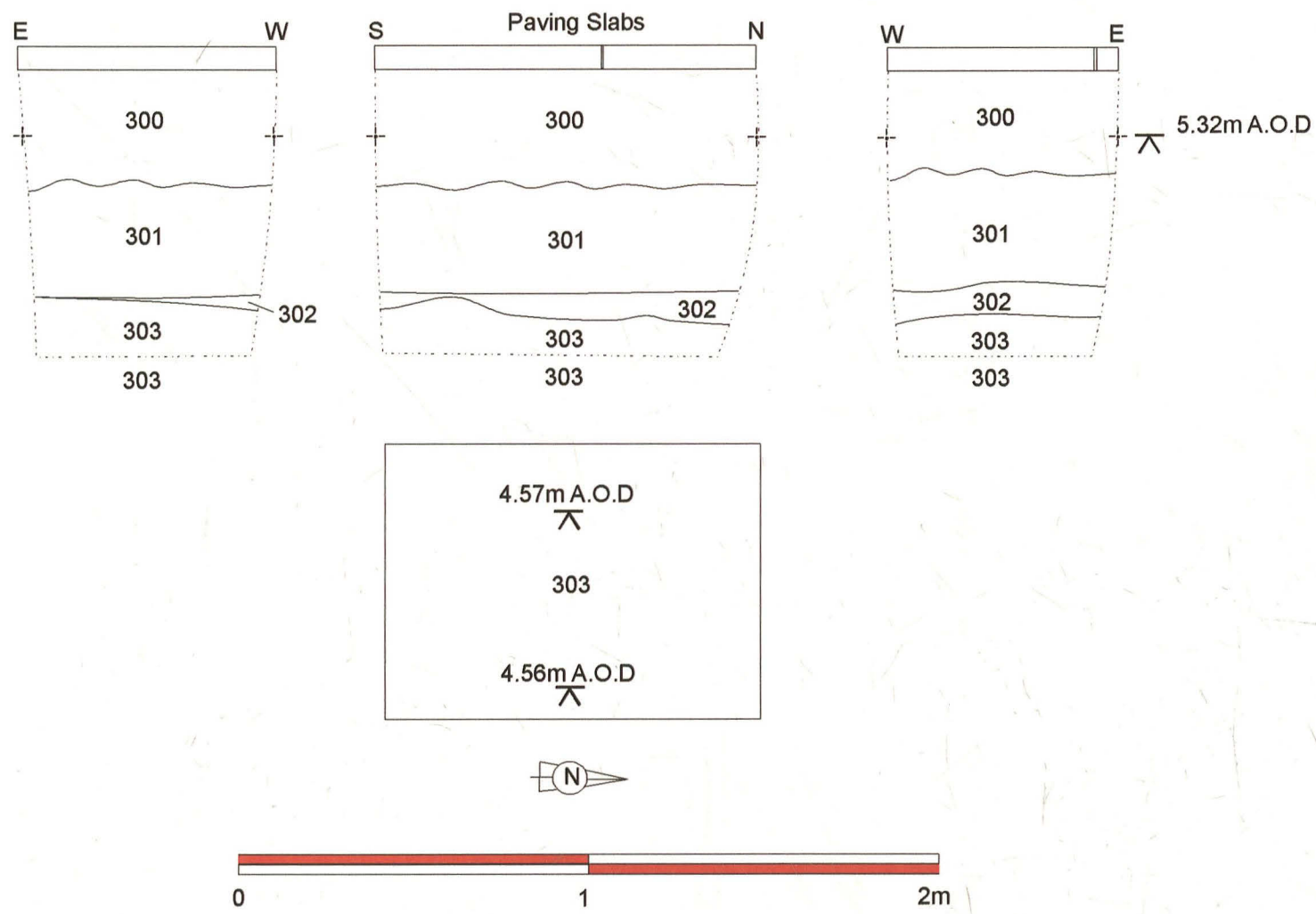


Fig. 5 Plan and section for trench 3



**THE PLATES**





Pl. 1 General view of the site looking north east prior to excavation



Pl. 1 General view of the site looking south east





Pl.3 Trench 1 cobbled surface 101. Scales 1m and 0.50m



Pl. 4 Trench 1 concrete layer 103. Scales 1m and 0.50m





Pl. 5 Trench 2 top of 19th century demolition layers. Scales 1m and 0.50m



Pl.6 Trench 2 Looking west across the stepped foundations 202. Scales 1m and 0.50m.





Pl. 7 Trench 2, foundations 202 looking north Scales 1m and 0.50m.



Pl. 8 Trench 3, showing sequence of deposits. Scale 1m .