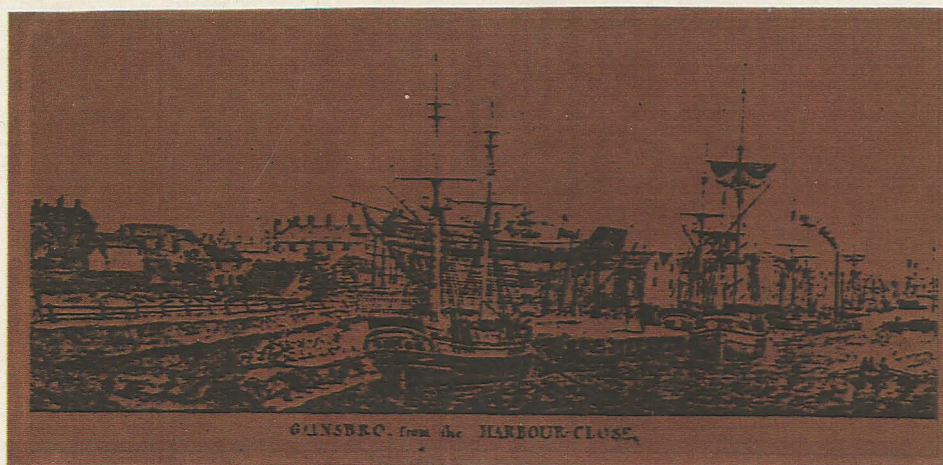


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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

BRIDGE STREET, GAINSBOROUGH, LINCOLNSHIRE



PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

Site Code: GBS94
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COUNTY COUNCIL
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BRIDGE STREET, GAINSBOROUGH

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

FOR

ANGLIAN WATER SERVICES LTD.

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CONTENTS

1.0 Abstract

2.0 Introduction

3.0 Location and Description

4.0 Purpose of the Watching Brief

5.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

6.0 Methods

7.0 Results

8.0 Conclusions

9.0 Acknowledgements

10.0 References

11.0 Appendices

Appendix 1. Relevant entries recorded in the Sites and Monuments Record, Lincoln

Appendix 2. Historical Maps

1.0 ABSTRACT

An intermittent archaeological watching brief was maintained during water main replacement on the east side of Bridge Street, Gainsborough, between Thornton Street and Chapel Staith. A total of nine site visits took place during August and September 1994 and, on each occasion, no important archaeological remains were observed or recorded. Most of the route was extensively disturbed in the post-medieval and modern periods, thereby masking/obliterating general archaeological potential.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Anglian Water Services Ltd. have been undertaking widespread water main replacement programmes in Gainsborough. One of these programmes was to affect the south-west side of the town, where trenching was to take place on the east side of Bridge Street to a depth approximately 1.0m beneath the present ground surface. Previous archaeological remains have been noted in this area; there was a possibility, therefore, that the scheme would expose further remains and hitherto unidentified resources.

Working closely with the County Archaeological Officer, Anglian Water Services Ltd. agreed to finance a low-level watching brief so that any archaeological deposits disturbed during trenching could be recorded, interpreted, and entered in the Sites and Monuments Record.

3.0 LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

Gainsborough is sited in north-west Lincolnshire on the east side of the River Trent (SK 820 900). On the west side of the town, close to the river, the land lies little above sea level. Further east, however, the undulating ground surface rises to between 35 and 40 metres above sea level.

The solid geology comprises lower Jurassic Lias clays, though these lie masked beneath boulder clay deposits of Pleistocene origin. The proximity of the River Trent to the present site will have modified geological structure and formation further.

4.0 PURPOSE OF THE WATCHING BRIEF

"An archaeological watching brief is defined as a programme of observation and investigation conducted during the destruction of archaeological deposits, resulting in the preparation of a report and ordered archive" (Institute of Field Archaeologists draft on Standard guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs, 1993).

The County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) contains information which demonstrates that important archaeological remains lie in the vicinity of the route chosen for the new water main. Anglian Water Services Ltd., in recognising the importance of buried resources, and in liaison with the County Archaeological Officer, agreed that a low-level programme of archaeological observation and recording should take place as part of the works, with a view to effectively preserving threatened remains by record. Such records would be incorporated within the SMR and used themselves as part of the cultural resource management tool.

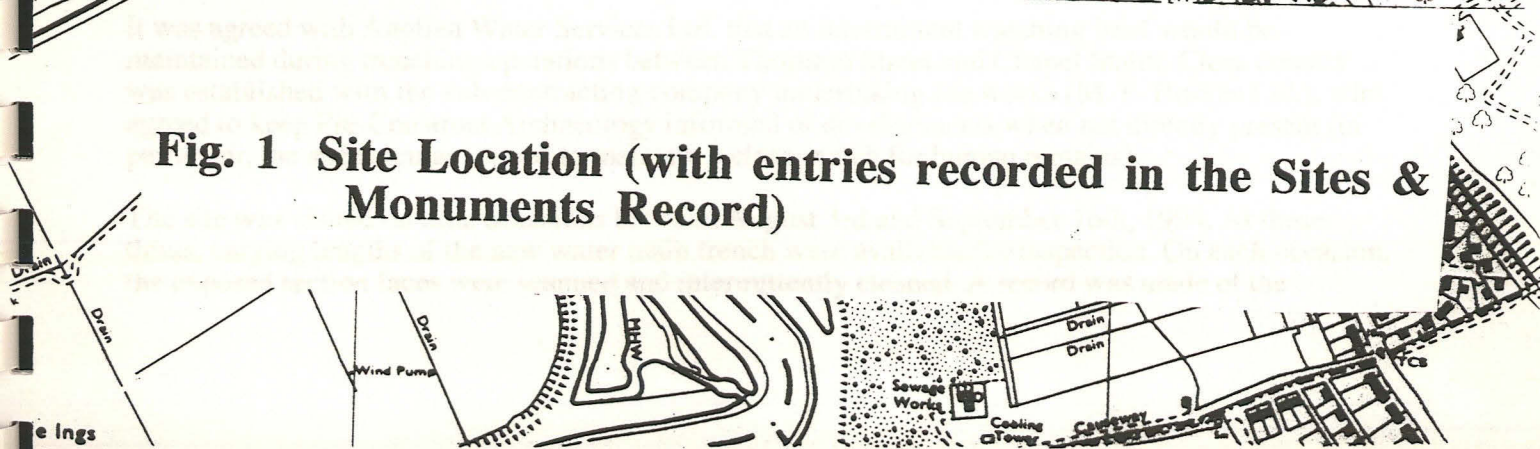


Fig. 1 Site Location (with entries recorded in the Sites & Monuments Record)

5.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Gainsborough today is a largely uninspiring, rather depressed-looking market town, spoiled by more than its fair share of poor planning decisions that have taken place since at least the 1960's.

From the late C17th to mid-C19th, Gainsborough was a flourishing inland river port, trading between the sea port at Hull and the many industrial towns of the Midlands. Its prosperity (and its population) declined after 1849, the year in which the railway began to serve the region and, hence, redirect trade along quicker and more efficient corridors (Pevsner and Harris, 1989).

Gainsborough is recorded as a settlement called *Gainsburg* in the Domesday Book of 1086 (Mills, 1993), meaning 'stronghold of a man called *Gegn* (OE name + burgh). At the time of the survey, the population was a mere seventy five persons (Pevsner and Harris, 1989). The medieval settlement appears to have been centred on the parish church, its C15th hall (otherwise known as Gainsborough Old Hall) and the market place.

The Old Hall, perhaps the only historical building worth travelling for, was constructed during the earlier part of the C15th and is a fine example of sympathetic later medieval use of brick and timber. It was burnt down by the Lancastrian army in 1470, whereupon it was wholly or partly rebuilt.

All Saints Church, lying north-east of the Old Hall, probably dates as far back as at least the later C12th (Mee, 1970), though much of the fabric seen today is Georgian: the west tower has been dated to within the C15th.

Very little of Gainsborough's historic past has been documented by systematic archaeological excavation, though recent discoveries suggest that the general vicinity was important from at least the earliest historical periods, if not earlier: coins found near the town hint at the possibility that staithes were placed along the River Trent from as early as the late Iron Age (May, 1984).

At Thonock, on the north-east fringe of the town, important Romano-British settlement remains were recently discovered (unpublished). In the same general area, is a post-Conquest castle, once believed to be a "Danish Camp" but now known to be a mote and bailey (Mee, 1970).

Of greater direct relevance, perhaps, to the route chosen for the new water main is the proximity of human remains which have been observed, but not adequately recorded, on more than one occasion in the Bridge Street/Silver Street area of town. In 1969, two complete skeletons were discovered beneath the pavement in Silver Street, and in 1989 further bodies were reported in the same area, though none were examined *in situ*.

The proximity of a chapel may be inferred by the name 'Chapel Staith, a short route which links Silver Street/Bridge Street with the River Trent. In this area, it was felt possible that the edge of the cemetery would be located during trenching for the new water main, and that further bodies, if disturbed by the development, would be adequately recorded, thereby providing a better context for the earlier discoveries.

6.0 METHODS

It was agreed with Anglian Water Services Ltd. that an intermittent watching brief would be maintained during trenching operations between Thornton Street and Chapel Staith. Close contact was established with the sub-contracting company undertaking the works (M. P. Burkes Ltd.), who agreed to keep Pre-Construct Archaeology informed of developments when not directly present (in particular, the site foreman agreed to maintain a close-watch for human remains).

The site was visited on nine occasions between August 3rd and September 16th, 1994. At these times, varying lengths of the new water main trench were available for inspection. On each occasion, the exposed section faces were scanned and intermittently cleaned. A record was made of the

stratigraphic sequences observed and the location of each section of exposed trench was recorded on standard 1:2500 maps. Occasional photographs were taken, though none of these has any direct archaeological relevance.

The new water main trench measured 0.5m in width and was excavated to a depth usually c. 1.0m below the modern (tarmac) surface.

Prior to the commencement of field work, relevant sections of the Sites and Monuments Record were inspected, as were maps held by the Lincolnshire Archives Office.

7.0 RESULTS

As noted at the beginning of this report, the watching brief proved entirely non-productive: not because the area is archaeologically sterile; more that the east side of the road area has, in most instances, been excavated on too many occasions. Almost every exposure was dominated by the backfill of post-medieval or modern intrusions (cellars, water, gas, electricity and sewer trenches). Indeed, the volume of live services created severe problems for the team appointed to undertake the trenching.

Occasionally, natural sands interleaving with silts were observed in the bases of trenches at points between 1.0 and 1.2m beneath the modern road surface. These were assumed to have formed as a result of flooding (by the Trent). Above these deposits, however, the sequence was disturbed at all times by late intrusive features: a number of cellars were recorded, backfilled with brick rubble.

The second edition Ordnance Survey (1921) indicates that, at the time the map was produced, buildings on the east side of Bridge Street extended as far west as possible, leaving no room for paved areas (Appendix 2). It would appear that, since that time, the road has been widened, taking-in areas which were formerly occupied by cellars - hence the findings during the present watching brief.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

The archaeological watching brief which took place between Thornton Street and Chapel Staith, Gainsborough did not identify any significant archaeological deposits. Had such deposits ever been present, they would certainly have been largely removed on the east side of Bridge Street; by the cellars of post-medieval/modern building frontages and by contemporary and subsequent service trenches. As such, it is the opinion of the writer that further road-based archaeological investigations in this area **may** not yield results.

9.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere thanks are expressed to Paul Hickey of Anglian Water Services for inviting Pre-Construct Archaeology to undertake the above works. Thanks also go to Naomi Field (Lindsey Archaeological Services) for providing information which is not currently in the public domain.

10.0 REFERENCES

May J, 1984 'The Major Settlements of the Later Iron Age in Lincolnshire' in Field & White (Eds) *A Prospect of Lincolnshire*, 18 - 22

Mee A, 1970 *The Kings England: Lincolnshire*, 138 - 141

Mills AD, 1993 *English Place-Names* (Oxford), 140

Pevsner N & Harris J, 1989 *The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire*, 293 - 302

11.0 APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Relevant entries recorded in the Sites and Monuments Record, City and County Museum, Lincoln

| SMR Code | Grid Ref. | Description |
|----------|--------------------------------|---|
| (O) | SK 8144 9011 | All Saints Church: C15th tower, largely rebuilt in 1745 |
| (T) | SK 813 899 | Large rim sherd, green glazed (med.) pottery with handle. In electricity trench on Parnell St., c. 100 yds south of the Old Hall (1966) |
| (Z) | SK 8132 8982 | Hanns Krauwinckel Jetton of L. C16th; dug-up at Trent-Side Gardens in 1976 |
| (P) | SK 814 898 | Two human skeletons found in sand c. 3'6" below pavement in Silver Street, near 'Krazy Nuts' supermarket (1969) |
| (W) | SK 8135 8945 / SK 8133 8960 | 10 late Neolithic scrapers, 1 Neolithic Knife + 2 flake knives, 1 battered ?hammerstone. Found just to N. & S. of moated site (actually in Beckingham Parish) |
| (?) | SK 8148 9025 | Alms Houses, founded 1495 by Thomas, first Lord Burgh of Gainsborough. It stood at or near Albert Square |

Appendix 2. Historical Maps

