

**LAND OFF FRANCIS STREET,  
LINCOLN**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF  
REPORT**

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Report prepared for  
Mr N Oliver

by

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### Summary

- A programme of archaeological observation and recording took place on land off Francis Street, Lincoln, where the groundworks for a residential development threatened to disturb archaeological remains.
- Although no significant archaeological features were observed, one human long bone and a sherd from a Romano-British fine ware pottery vessel were recovered from modern deposits. This may indicate the disturbance of burials on or near the site.

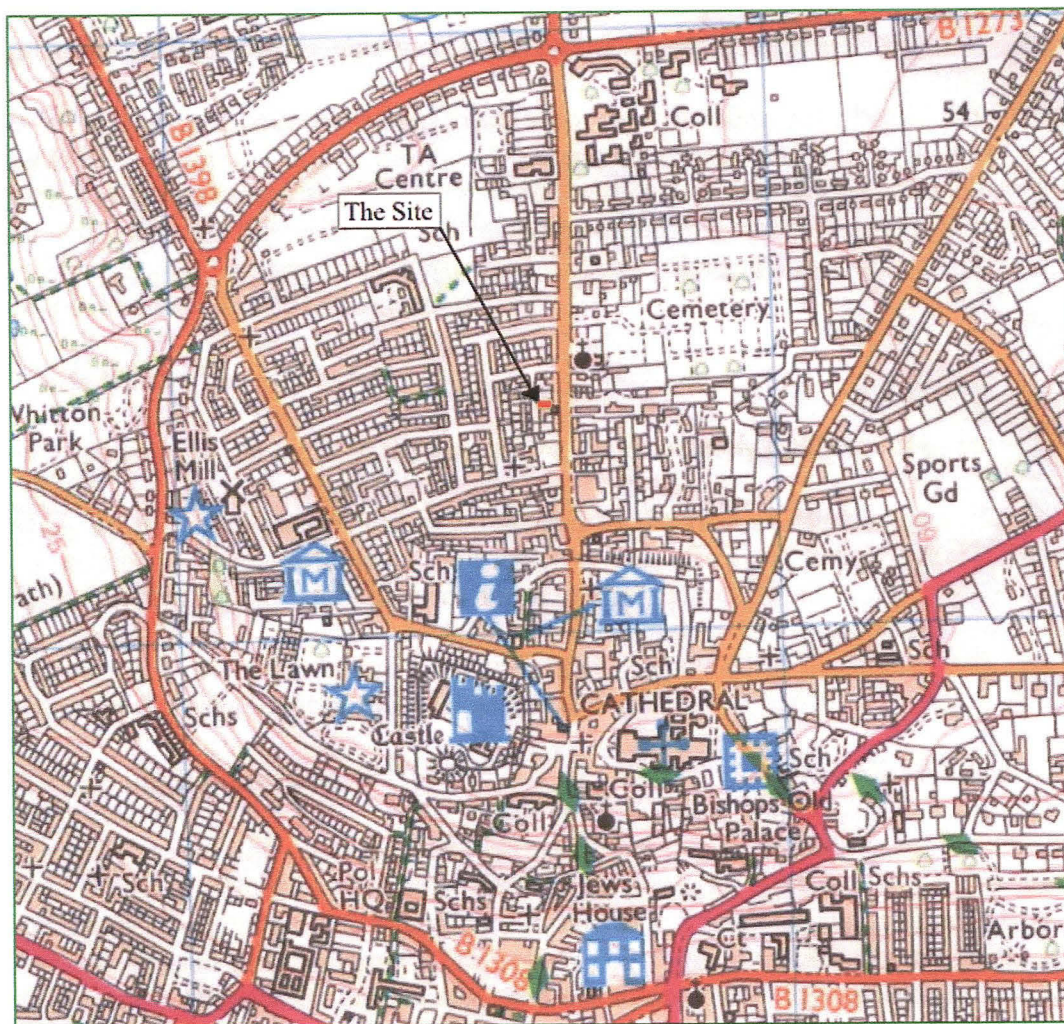


Fig. 1. Map showing general location of site within Lincoln.  
(Scale 1:25000)



## **1.0 Introduction**

Mr N Oliver commissioned Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) to undertake a programme of archaeological observation and recording on land situated on the north side of Queen Street in Lincoln, Lincolnshire. These works were undertaken to fulfil the objectives of a formal project brief issued by Lincoln City Council. This complies with the recommendations 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 (1999) and the LCC document *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: A Manual of Archaeological Practice*, 1998.

The full archaeological programme took place on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2004.

Copies of this report have been deposited with the commissioning body, the City Archaeologist, and the County Sites and Monuments Record for Lincolnshire. A summary will be submitted to the editor of the county journal, *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology*; and this will feature as a short note in due course. Reports will also be deposited at the City and County Museum, Lincoln, along with an ordered project archive for long term storage and curation.

## **2.0 Site location and description**

The site is situated to the north of the city centre, approximately 600m north of the

Cathedral, on the east side of Francis Street and to the rear of 41, Newport. To its north is number 43 Newport and to the south is a post office and former bakery. The site is flat, sub-rectangular, and measures approximately 10m x 30m.

The geology of the area comprises undivided Lincolnshire limestone with no overlying drift deposits. (British Geological Survey, 1973).

## **3.0 Planning background**

Full planning permission was granted for the construction of two semi-detached dwellings on land off Francis Street, to the rear of Newport. This was subject to the undertaking of a watching brief during all groundworks. To fulfil this condition, Mr N Oliver commissioned Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) to carry out a programme of archaeological observation and recording in accordance with the recommendations of the Lincoln City Council Archaeologist. The results of this programme are documented in this report.

The Lincoln City Council planning reference for this development is 2003/0990/F



#### 4.0 Archaeological and historical background

Excluding occasional prehistoric artefactual remains, there is little clear evidence of any sustained settlement activity within the environs of Lincoln until the later Iron Age. One site, lying approximately 100m to the east of the Brayford Pool, has in recent years revealed substantial quantities of Late Pre-Roman Iron Age pottery, and associated structural features, suggesting that a major settlement may have existed in the Brayford East area, occupying a raised bank of sand and gravel.

The Roman geographer Ptolemy suggests that, in the Iron Age, much of Lincolnshire and the East Midlands belonged to a people called the *Corieltauvi*, who had two major centres: at *Rhage* and *Lindon*, these places being equated with the Roman towns of *Ratae* (Leicester) and *Lindum Colonia* (Lincoln) (Todd, 1991). The name also derives from pre-Roman times, the stem *lindo-* meaning a lake or pool, no doubt relating to what must have been a much larger Brayford Pool.

Following the initial invasion of Britain in AD43, what became Lincoln was soon to be under the control of the Roman army. By AD47, a frontier had been established from the Humber to the River Exe in south-west Britain, with Legio IX *Hispana* subduing the northern reaches of this area (Whitwell, 1992). They soon established a presence at Lincoln, controlling the Witham and the gap in the limestone edge through which it passed, and consolidating the tribal territory of the *Corieltauvi* (Jones, 2002).

In the late 1<sup>st</sup> century, Lincoln became a *colonia*; a major administrative centre, established to provide retired legionaries with land and property (Jones, 2002). This made extensive use of the walls and internal layout of the abandoned fortress. At this time civilian settlements sprang up outside the defensive walls, especially along the Roman roads that fed the town, including Newport, the thoroughfare which the site currently fronts on to, which follows the line of the Roman Ermine street. At this time and up to the end of the Romano-British period, the area was also used as a cemetery.

In the post-Roman era, an influx of Danish settlers in the 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> centuries gave the city an impetus for growth and a market sprang up in the Newport area which survived until the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. The city also served as a mint from the later 9<sup>th</sup> century, one of the largest in England by the early 11<sup>th</sup> century (Jones 1993, Sawyer 1998).

By the Norman Conquest, Lincoln was a thriving, densely occupied community of around 12,000 people (Sawyer, 1998) which extended along the former Roman road and it is probable that the development site was occupied by housing throughout the medieval period. The wealth of the early medieval town was based largely on the production and export of cloth, and wool from the vast flocks of sheep that were grazed on the expansive heaths outside of the city. In 1367, however, the Wool Staple was transferred to Boston, which, combined with the expansion of the Flemish cloth trade in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and the advent of the Black Death in 1347, caused Lincoln to enter a period of decline (Jones, 1993). This problem was compounded by excessive taxation during the Hundred Years War (Hill, 1965).



Gradual revival and repopulation of the city did not begin until the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, a process rapidly accelerated by the arrival of the railway in 1846. This allowed the growth of a large heavy engineering industry throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, (Kemp, 1993) which resulted in the establishment of working class terraced housing estates in the area, and the site was occupied by part of a row of 6 houses called (Nix's row).

A number of archaeological investigations have taken place close to the site. Results have proven largely negative, often with substantial 'made-ground' or cellars destroying any potential archaeology.

## 5.0 Methodology

The groundworks were monitored by Rachel Gardner and Will Munford on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2004.

A JCB fitted with a 0.9m wide smooth bucket was used to excavate the house footings, and this work was continuously monitored by P.C.A. The archaeological work involved the monitoring of foundation trench excavations and the observation of all exposed surfaces within them. These investigations resulted in the production of written descriptions of the deposits observed, colour photographs of ongoing works, and scale section drawings and site plan.

## 6.0 Results (Figs 2 and 3)

The uppermost and principal deposit exposed, (001) was approximately 1.5m deep and consisted of a dark grey clayey sand containing a myriad of modern rubble. This included china, glass and metal, redundant pipes and tree roots. A human femur and a single sherd of Roman Samian ware were also recovered. The sherd is a fragment from the base of a dish, made at La Graufesenque in South Gaul, the exact form being unknown. The quality and high gloss of the glaze and fabric suggests this could be of pre-Flavian date, i.e. pre- A.D.70, although a more conservative date would be Neronian-Vespasian, i.e. A.D. 54-80.

(001) was sporadically interrupted by modern structural deposits. In the south east corner, for example, it was truncated by a column of bricks, recorded as (004), to a depth of approximately 1.40m. To the south of (004), three stratified layers consisting of rubble, limestone and cinders, capped by a large slab of limestone, were recorded.

(001) extended to the base of the foundation trenches throughout, except in the south east corner, where it overlay the fill of a depression in the natural strata. This was a mid-yellowish brown sandy clay of friable consistency which was approximately 0.80m deep; recorded as layer (002).

A layer of crudely shaped limestone blocks was revealed as the groundworks reached the frontage with Francis Street. These varied in size and appeared to have been deliberately set directly beneath the tarmac of the raised footpath of Francis Street.



## **7.0 Conclusions.**

The site has been affected by developments in the modern era; to the extent that its entire soil matrix appears to consist of 'made ground' in the form of layer (001), which is inundated with modern material, structural deposits and redundant services. This scenario is common to urban environments. The structural elements such as (004) probably represent the remnants of cellar walls from houses that once stood in the aforementioned Nix's Row. The associated deposits of rubble and limestone to the south of (004) are likely to represent the collapse of such structures.

The layer of stone blocks observed beneath the tarmac of the footpath of Francis Street is probably extends across the street as a foundation for the footpath and street. It is likely to have been set as part of street improvements associated with the construction of Nix's Row in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although it could have been laid at the same time as the tarmac.

The recovery of a human femur and a residual sherd of Roman pottery be of significance. It is not unusual to find residual pottery sherds in modern urban deposits. However the fact that the pottery is Samain, an imported fine ware from Roman Gaul, and that it was found a short distance from a human long bone could indicate that a Roman grave has been disturbed in the vicinity of this development in the modern period. In fact, the disturbance and destruction of Roman inhumations and cremation deposits in the area has been noted since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, (Jones 2002). The dating of the sherd to the late 1<sup>st</sup> century AD suggests that it could derive from a grave dating from the period when Lincoln was dominated by a Legionary fortress.

## **8.0 Effectiveness methodology**

The methodology employed allowed a full inspection to be made of the sections of all of the foundation trenches, with minimal disruption to the primary scheme, and a full record to be made of the deposits encountered.

## **9.0 Acknowledgements**

The authors would like to thank Mr N Oliver for commissioning this report, and to Mr Oliver and Mr M Jacklin for assistance during the watching brief itself, and for providing some of the drawings used during the preparation of this account.

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## 11.0 Site Archive

The site archive [documentary] for this project is in preparation and will be deposited at the Lincoln City and County Museum and the Lincolnshire Archives Office [documentary] within six months. Access may be granted by quoting the global accession number 2004.141



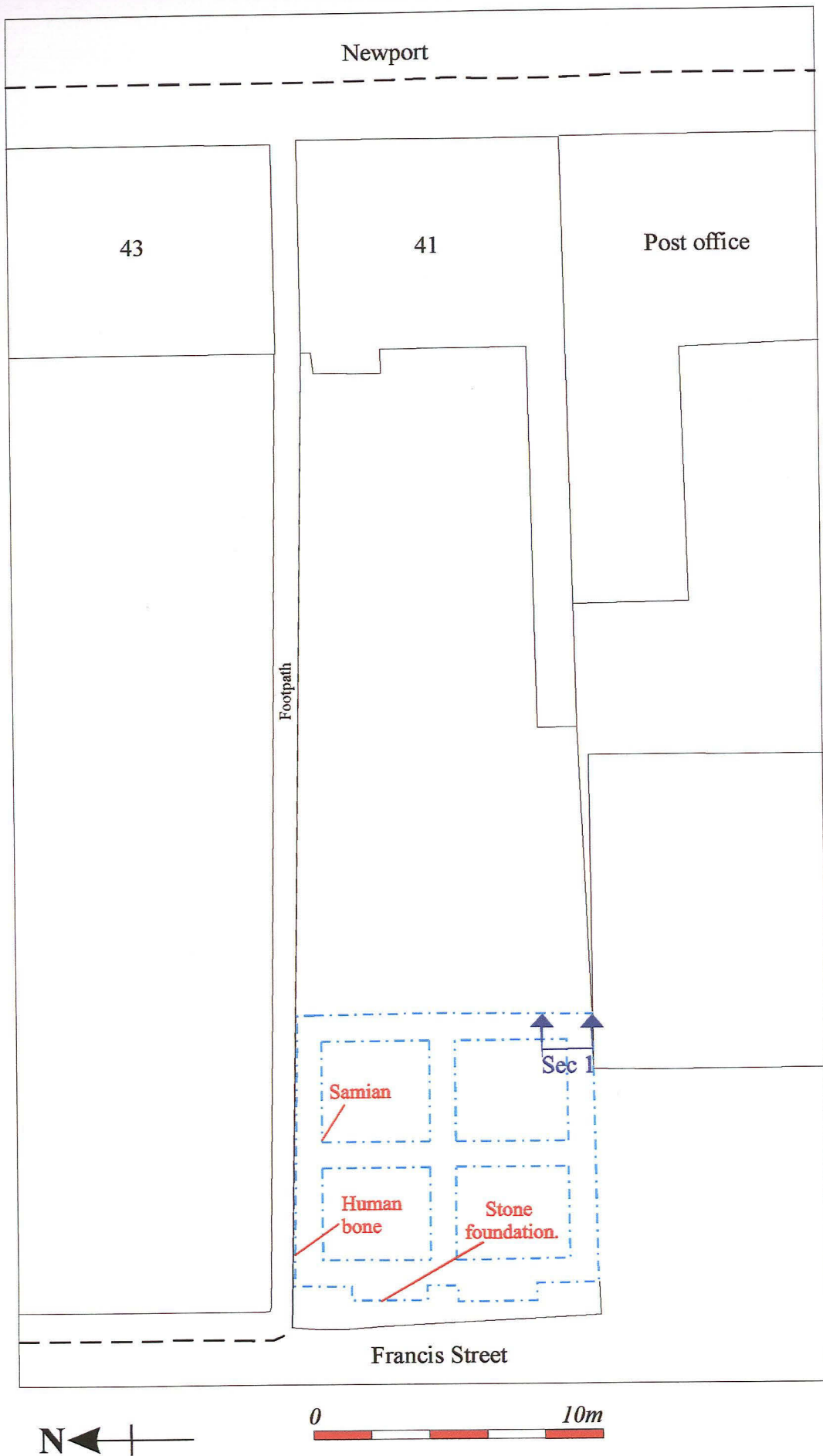


Fig. 2. Site map showing groundworks monitored during the watching brief in blue, the position of archaeological finds in red and the position of the drawn section in dark blue. (Scale 1:200)



Figure 3: Sample section 1 (scale 1:20)



**Appendix 1. Colour slides**



**Pl.1** Excavations ongoing on the site.



**Pl.2** The site looking East.



**Pl.3** Collapsed modern structure in area of sample section



**Pl.4** The probable foundation layer beneath the pavement to the west of the site. Looking West.

## Appendix 2

# REPORT 164 ON POTTERY FROM AN EVALUATION AT FRANCIS STREET, LINCOLN, LAFS04

for PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

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May 2004

The Roman finds amounted to a single sherd, weighing 3g, from made up ground, context 001.

This has been archived according to the guidelines laid down for the minimum archive by *The Study Group for Roman Pottery*.

The sherd is a fragment from the base of a dish, made at La Graufesenque in South Gaul, the exact form being unknown. The quality and high gloss of the glaze and fabric suggests this could be of pre-Flavian date, pre- AD70, although a more conservative date would be Neronian-Vespasian, A.D. 54-80.

The find of a fragment of human bone on the site is relevant. The site lies to the north of the legionary fortress in an area known to have had a Roman cemetery, which contained cremations, and is therefore likely to have been in use in the early Roman period, probably as early as the occupation of the legionary fortress (Jones et al 2003, 108 ff). This would be consistent with the date of this sherd.

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