

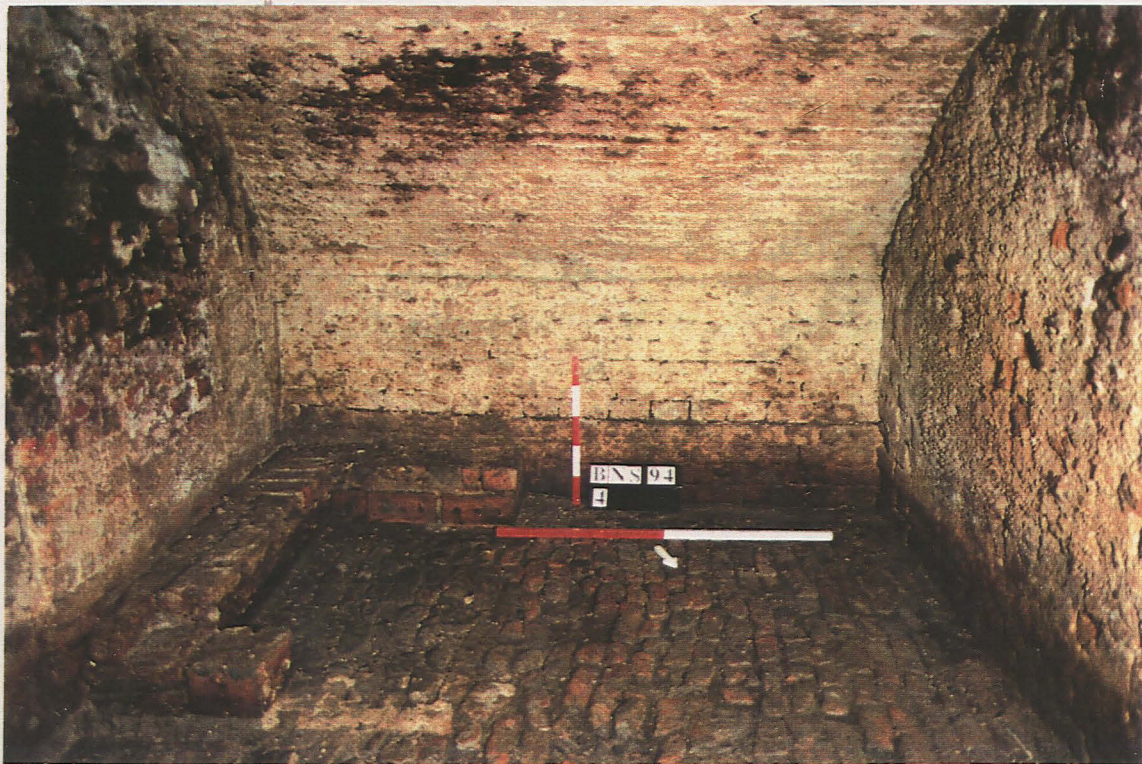
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AND SURVEY REPORT

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3 NEW STREET, BOSTON
LINCOLNSHIRE



PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

Site Code: BNS 94
CCM Accession Number 108.94

3 NEW STREET, BOSTON

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AND SURVEY
REPORT

FOR

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(on behalf of TURNSTONE ESTATES LTD)

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1.0 Non-Technical Summary

A planning application was submitted to Boston Borough Council to erect commercial premises on the site of the former Boston Blitz, 3 New Street. Permission to redevelop was granted, subject to conditions requiring a scheme of archaeological investigation.

An initial desk top study (Archaeological Projects Services) outlined the archaeological and historical framework to be attached to the scheme and, subsequent to the completion of that study, an intrusive phase of investigation took place in the summer of 1994 (Pre-Construct Archaeology).

The site evaluation suggested that sensitive archaeological remains would lie at depths in excess of 1.2m and, as such, would not be adversely threatened by redevelopment, provided that appropriate construction techniques were employed (ie piling in conjunction with shallow foundation trenches).

The Boston Community Archaeologist (subsequent to assessment and evaluation) issued a brief requiring a programme of observation and recording during construction, as well as a detailed survey of vaulted cellars which lay beneath the former Boston Blitz public house: aspects of the cellars pre-dated the existing structure and were vulnerable to total destruction during redevelopment.

An intermittent recording brief established the presence of a substantial stone wall, aligned parallel with the traditional medieval town defence, the Barditch. The cellar survey produced a detailed structural record of a basement which pre-dated the foundation of New Street.

2.0 Introduction

Chaplin & Farrant, acting on behalf of Turnstone Estates Ltd. commissioned Pre-Construct Archaeology to undertake a programme of archaeological recording and observation at 3 New Street, Boston in advance of, and during, redevelopment. The site of the former Boston Blitz will house a new retail store which is currently under construction.

The site, which measures approximately 0.8 hectares in area, lies on the east side of the River Witham, approximately 100m north of St Botolph's church. It is bound on its north side by Woolworths store, on its west side by Oldrids, on its east side by Dixons, and on its south side by New Street.

The central national grid reference is TF 32794427.

Fig. 1 Site location



3.0 Planning background

A pre-determination evaluation was undertaken in response to an outline planning application, submitted to Boston Borough Council on behalf of Turnstone Estates Ltd (ref. B05/0037/94). Prior to evaluation, a desk-based study was undertaken by Archaeological Projects Services as a means of assessing all existing historical and archaeological data (Sites and Monuments Record, cartographic sources, aerial photographs etc).

The application was for the construction of a retail store following the demolition of a public house which had previously occupied the site.

4.0 Geology and topography

Boston lies approximately 45km south-east of Lincoln within the Lincolnshire Fens, c. 7km from the north-west coast of the Wash. The River Witham bisects the town; the redevelopment site lying on its east side at a point approximately 5.0m OD.

Local soils comprise Tanvats Association alluvial gley clays (Hodge et al 1984) and Wisbech Association calcareous gley soils, developed in marine alluvium. The solid geology consists of Jurassic clay.

5.0 Archaeological and historical background

As a town and port, Boston emerged during the early 11th century, greatly encouraged, no doubt, by the geographical and topographical advantages afforded by this chosen location (Owen, 1984): the early settlement may have developed largely by chance, encouraged by the numerous small creeks around the Wash which gave access to major settlements such as Lincoln via the River Witham. Such access was no doubt attractive to foreign traders, eager to seek-out new markets and resources. Unfortunately, the nature of pre-Conquest settlement at Boston is not well documented, archaeologically or historically.

Following the Norman Conquest, Boston began to expand, encouraged by the establishment of organised trade fairs, a theme common in contemporary France, and one applied in Boston under the careful management of Alan Rufus, the Earl of Richmond.

The centre of the fair founded by Rufus was on the east side of the River Witham in Richmond Fee, close to St Botolphs church, though it also extended to the west bank (the fair of Holland was sited in the Fee of Creoun, opposite the church).

During the 12th century, a 'defensive' ditch, the Barditch, was dug on the east side of the Witham to connect Depol with Skirbeck, both of which encompassed natural defences of their own. The exact date of this work is not documented; the earliest historical reference being 1160 (Bagley, 1986). One assumes the ditch to have 'contained' the bulk of the town on the east side of the Witham at about this time though there are records which demonstrate the presence of properties in close proximity to the earthwork and, by the early 13th century, a number of properties lay beyond it.

The 13th century was something of a 'golden age' for Boston. It is not surprising, therefore, when

we learn that, at this time, its population had exceeded the scope of a 'defensive' circuit which may have been built less than a century earlier.

By the early 15th century, the importance of Boston began to decline, no-doubt encouraged by the effects of the Black Death of 1349 and the deterioration of the Witham (Dover 1972, 30).

As the name implies, New Street was not a medieval foundation. It was created at some time between 1741 and 1803, as defined by the cartographic works of Robert Hall (Plan of the Borough and Port of Boston) and A Map of the Town of Boston East in the County of Lincoln, published in 1803. Nevertheless, the site under consideration is located immediately within the Barditch, c.25m north-west of a medieval gateway (Bar Gate).

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology in July 1994. A single trench measuring 9.5m x 4.2m was positioned on the north-west side of the site, where excavation took place to depths greater than 2.0m below the modern ground surface (Brown 1994). A series of later medieval ground raising/dump deposits were investigated, truncated by post-medieval pits. On the north side of the trench, the south edge of a substantial east-west ditch was exposed. The excavator thought it possible that this was the Barditch, which was anticipated on the north side of the redevelopment site. However, the alignment of the Barditch is reasonably well-established and is more likely to have been orientated north-west to south-east.

6.0 Aims

The purpose of the post-evaluation phase of work at New Street was:

- a) to make an inspection of the brick-vaulted cellars (following dewatering) and undertake a programme of photographic and drawn recording
- b) to undertake a watching brief during the excavation of a foundation trench for a lift well associated with the new development, and to record any archaeological remains exposed by the groundworks
- c) to undertake any additional archaeological work, whether limited excavation or a watching brief, as dictated by the piling scheme.

7.0 Methodology

Recording of the vaulted cellar took place prior to demolition. A team of two archaeologists, assisted by an intermittent third member, undertook a detailed programme of photography and recording over a four day period. Selective wall elevations were drawn at a scale of 1:20, as was the entire ground plan (which was also drawn at 1:100). Standard pro-forma context sheets were used to describe the fabric and stratigraphic relationships within the structure.

Prior to the survey, almost all of one day was required to dewater the cellar area, the floor of which lay submerged beneath up to 50cm of semi-stagnant water.

The watching brief was restricted to only two site visits, as ground disturbance was expected to be restricted to within uppermost metre, even in the area of the lift well. One very deep cutting was excavated, however, on the north-east side of the site where a substantial stone wall was exposed (below). Again, standard pro-forma context sheets were used, supplemented with drawing and photography as necessary.

8.0 Results

8.1 Description of the vaulted cellar

A 1:100 plan of the entire redevelopment site was supplied by Chaplin & Farrant (Drawing 2383/101) and used as a basis for all archaeological recording (Fig. 2). It incorporated a basic survey of the basement area, though it did not constitute an accurate ground plan, probably due to the levels of water which precluded full entry without dewatering.

The entire basement plan was first drawn at 1:100 and incorporated into drawing 2383/101. A detailed 1:20 ground plan of the vaulted cellar was then prepared (Fig. 3).

Entry to the cellar area was made via an external rectangular opening, located on the north side of the building. This gave access to a modern-looking basement which had been used to store beer (empty kegs were floating, as was a great deal more detritus). An opening in the east corner of the basement gave access to a brick-built vaulted chamber; clearly a much earlier build.

The brick-vaulted chamber was orientated broadly east-west. Its full length was not determined as there existed a substantial mortar blocking, [10], which originated c.6.0m west of the chamber entry point. It was positioned almost parallel with New Street, suggesting the blocking took place during construction of the 'new' road (ie New Street). Set within the mortar core were three vertical timbers which, at the time the survey was undertaken, were thought to be expansion joints. It seems more likely, however, that they were in fact props, used to support the roof structure when the west side of the chamber was being demolished to make way for New Street (the blocking and chamber end now underlies the east edge of the street).

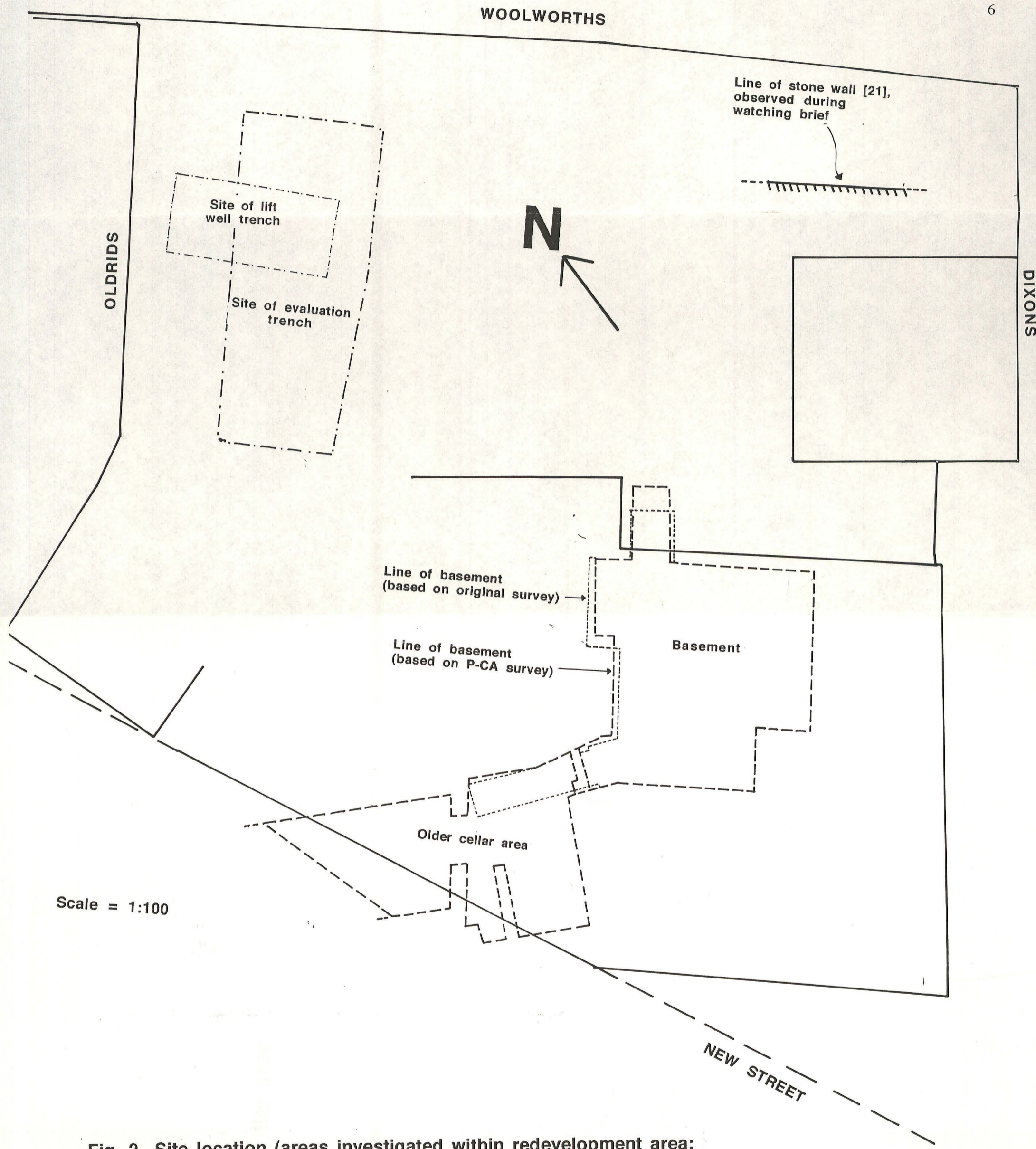
The vaulted area was divided into two unequal bays by a cross-wall [7] which incorporated an offset doorway (Fig. 5). A flagged pathway [18] originated at the cellar entrance and extended the full length of the chamber, as far as the blocking. One of the flag stones had been lifted close to the blocking, exposing a brick-lined well-head, [11]. Above the well-head, a crude electronic pump was mounted which, presumably, was used to keep the area dry in recent times.

Most of the cellar floor was made from soil-bonded bricks set on edge ([16], [19], [20]), usually arranged perpendicular to the cellar length. The surface of the floor was worn and uneven, creating a pleasing atmosphere.

There were a number of elevated features, of secondary construction to the principal building, which were sited about the periphery of the chamber. In the west bay (west of the partition wall [7]), both of the chamber walls were butted by elevated brick-built platforms. The more southerly of these, [9], comprised three courses of brickwork, intermingled with flat tiles. A similar feature was recorded on the north side of the chamber, [12]. It too was of secondary construction. Both 'platforms' may have been used to store containers of beer.

On the south-west side of the east bay, a half-wall, [5] had been inserted against (perpendicular to) the south wall [4], creating an area bound by walls [4], [5] and [7]. Separating walls [4] and [7] was an irregular buttress-type feature, [6] (photo. 3). It appeared to be of the same build as [7], though was secondary to the principal wall [4]. Its purpose was not determined.

In the centre of the easternmost wall elevation [Fig. 4], a blocked entrance [2] was clearly visible (photo. 8). This was an earlier (perhaps original) entrance to the chamber - making the flagged pathway, [18], which led from the modern doorway, of secondary construction. Adjacent to the blocking, on the south-east side, was a low, brick-built, structure, [3], which was also a secondary build. The bricks were modern in appearance and it is likely the structure demarcated a storage area, perhaps associated with the recently destroyed Boston Blitz public house.



Scale = 1:100

Fig. 2 Site location (areas investigated within redevelopment area; based on drawing 2383/101)

Fig. 3 1:20 plan of vaulted cellar area

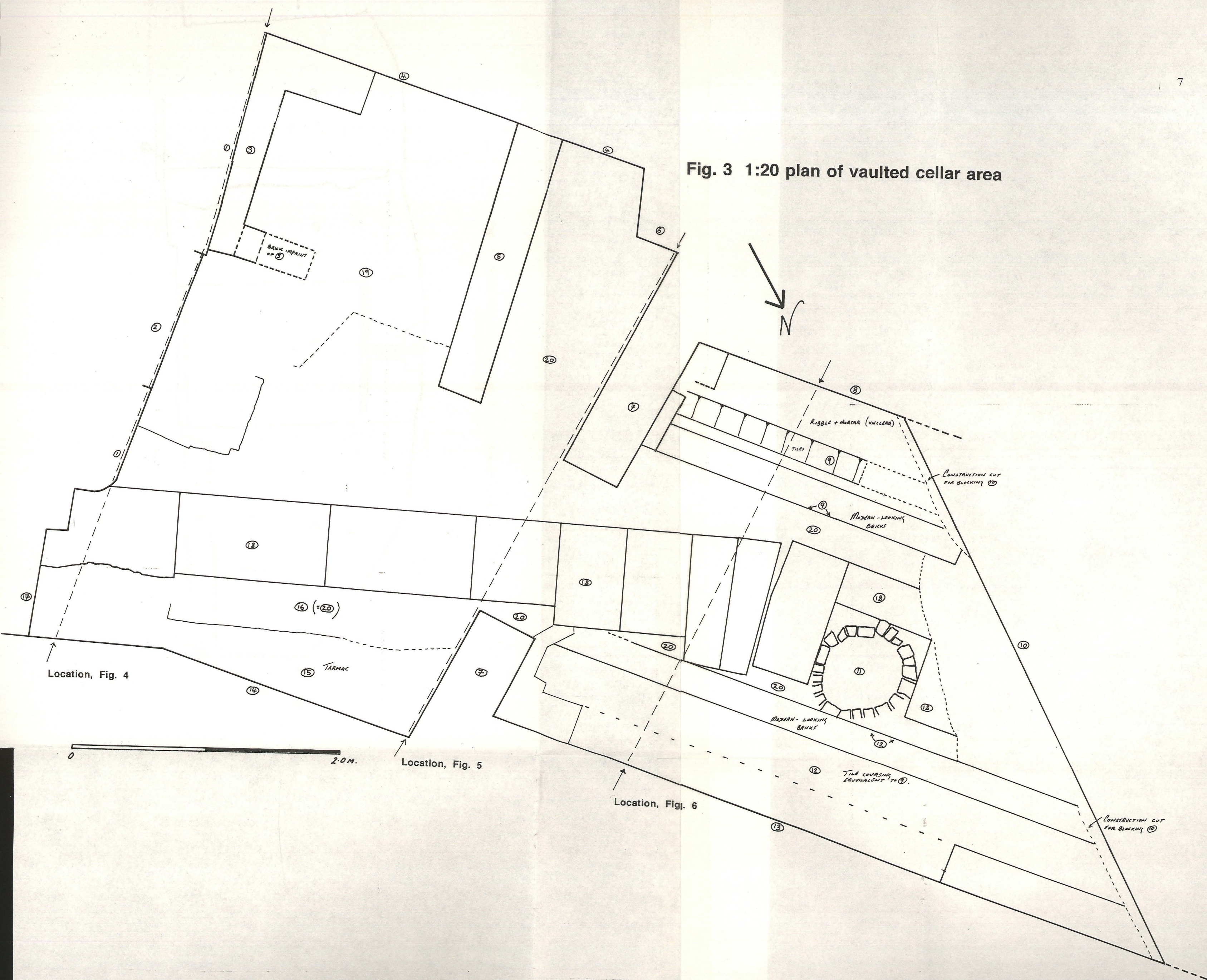


Fig. 4 1:20 elevation, east side of vaulted cellar
(location on Fig. 3)

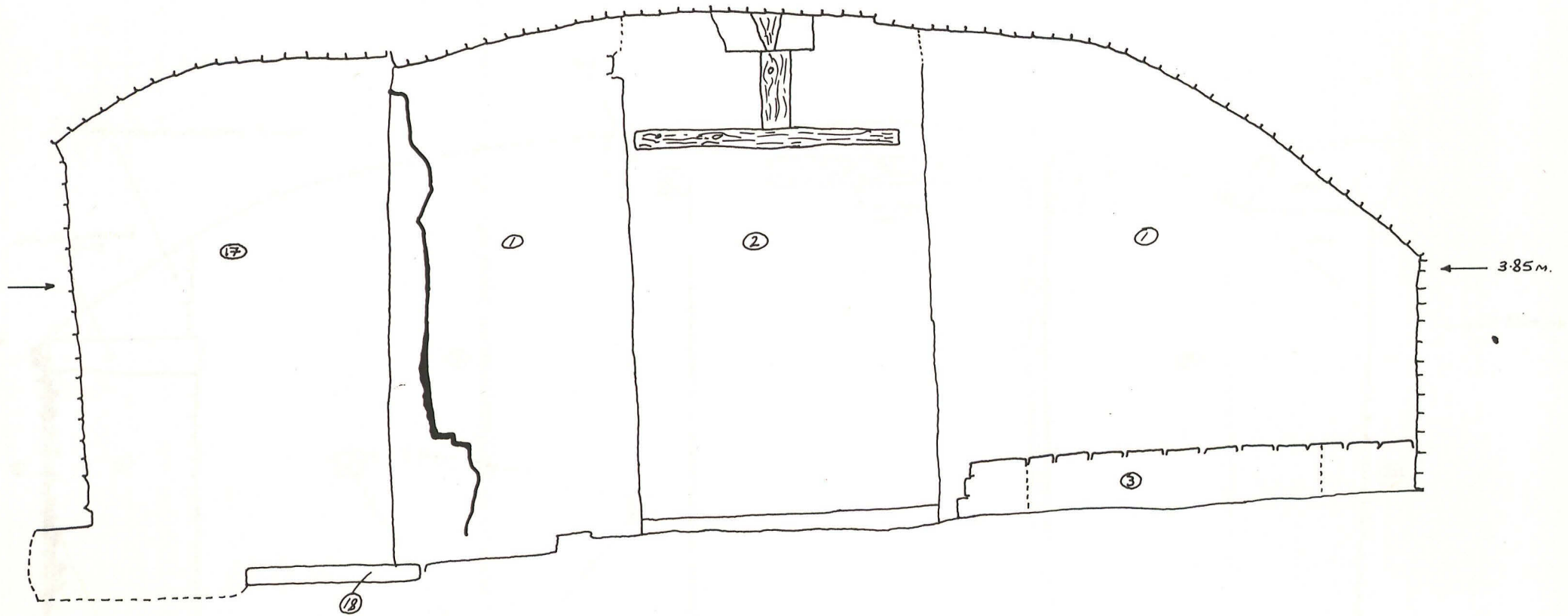


Fig. 5 1:20 elevation across wall [7]
(location on Fig. 3)

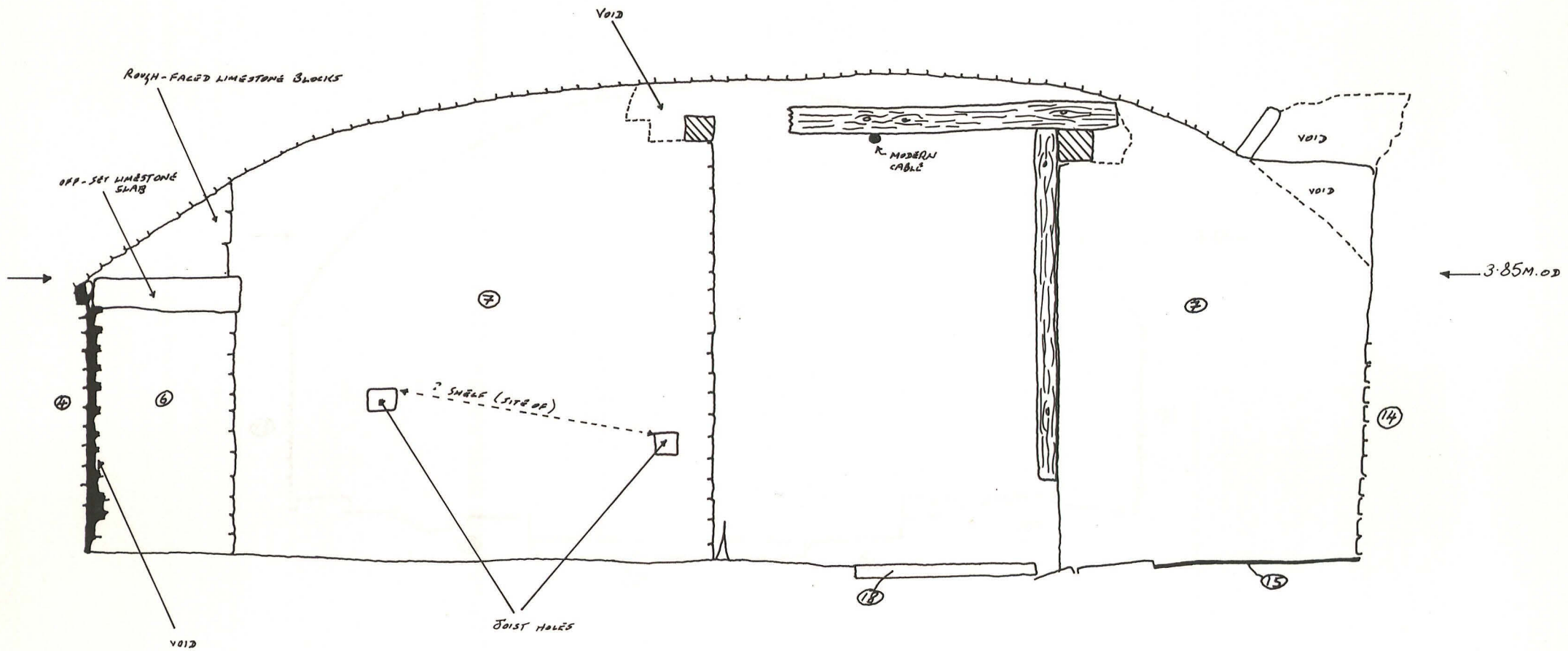
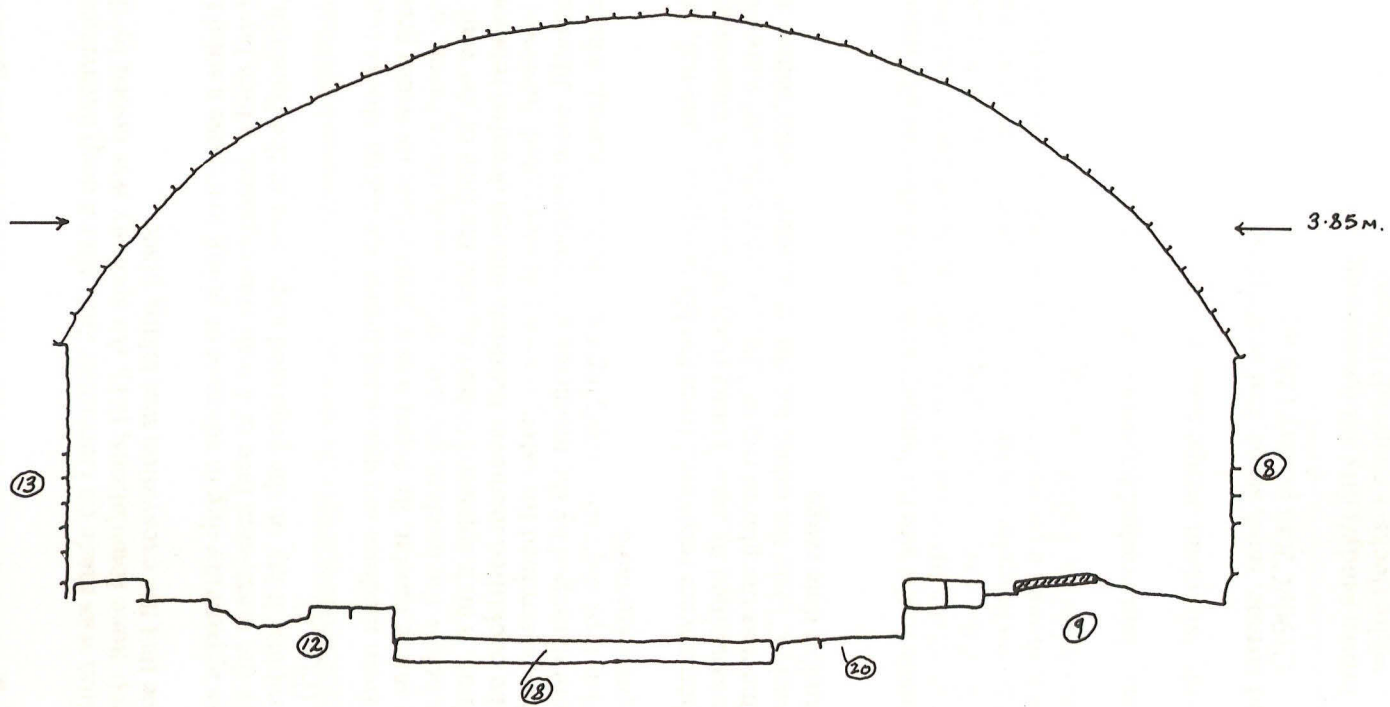


Fig. 6 1:20 elevation through west side of vaulted cellar
(location on Fig. 3)



8.2 Descriptive account of the watching brief

Following completion of the above survey, the site was inspected on two further occasions, when ground disturbance threatened to affect deposits of archaeological interest. The site manager was made aware of the project brief in advance of redevelopment and was instructed to inform Pre-Construct Archaeology on each occasion where excavation to depths greater than 1.0m was expected to take place.

The first site inspection was made on December 2nd, after a deep excavation in the east corner of the site had revealed deep stone foundations, [21]. An apology was issued by the site manager for not giving advance notice that the excavation was taking place.

The deep cutting was apparently dug in advance of piling to expose a solid feature that was located during probing. Only the north-east face of a wall was exposed, which lay beneath c. 40cm of modern demolition rubble. It lay on the projected alignment of the Barditch, and was traced for a distance of c. 4.0m (Fig. 2).

The wall was made from medium to large-sized limestone ashlar blocks (up to 1.0m in length), bonded with yellow sandy mortar. Its depth was at least 3.0m: its width greater than 70cm. At a point approximately 2.0m below the modern ground surface, distinctive black, organic, deposits were cut through by the machine, which appeared to butt against the face of the wall - it was assumed these deposits lay within the backfilled medieval Barditch, though detailed relationships between structure and soils could not be determined for safety reasons. It was noted, however, that the matrices on each side of the wall (where damaged by the mechanical excavator) were different: on the north side, there were extensive rubbish-type deposits (implying rapid accumulation), whereas, on the south side, cleaner brown soils predominated.

Two large pottery sherds were recovered from the black organic material, presumed to lie within the Barditch. They were examined by Jane Young (City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit) and entered onto the Unit database. One was the glazed rim of Lincoln-type splashed ware bowl (LS1), dating between the mid-C12th and early C13th; the other, the rim of a South Lincolnshire shelly-ware vessel (SLST), which may be of a similar date range.

A second visit was made to the site on January 11th, 1995 after the site manager informed Pre-Construct Archaeology that a lift foundation trench was being excavated (Fig. 2). The trench was cut on the north-west side of the site, incorporating a proportion of the earlier evaluation trench. The maximum depth of this rectangular cutting was 1.2m. Superficially, it appeared that only modern deposits were affected, though a proportion of one section face was cleaned, recorded and photographed. This revealed the following sequence:

Recently-laid crushed limestone rubble (50cm)
/
Recently-laid clean orange sand (12cm)
/
Mixed tarmac, sand, stone, soil containing
C19th/C20th pottery (25cm)
/
Grey-brown sandy/gritty silt (containing
white flecks + charcoal) (25cm)
/
Base of cutting

No further archaeological recording was deemed appropriate. At the time of this second site visit, a foundation ring-beam had been laid following piling. The piling was not monitored as there was no possibility to observe archaeological remains during this process. Foundation trenches for the ring-beam foundation (which were photographed) did not penetrate deeper than 0.5m.

9.0 Conclusions

The brick-vaulted cellar on the site of No. 3 New Street must have been blocked when the new road was constructed, some time between 1741 and 1803, though a date for the construction of the cellar itself has not been determined. Brick measurements were taken during the survey, though, in the absence of a comparative database for Boston, they are unlikely to be of any immediate value (on the long-term, it is suggested that a research programme designed to establish a chronological framework for the Boston brick industry is worth considering).

Brick sizes were discussed with MV Clark of Lindsey Archaeological Services, who has been compiling an archive of brick measurements for sites in the Lincoln area. Although he was unable to provide specific information, it was suggested that the bricks which made up the New Street cellar could date from any time after the C16th.

Documentary sources refer to a number of post-medieval public houses which would have lain close to (or on) the present site. In 1564, reference is made to a large public house, 'The Bell' on the north side of Strait Bargate, close to its junction with Wide Bargate (Thompson 1856, 203-6). Two other public houses which are referred to are the Red Lion Tavern in Bargate (recorded as an inn 'Hospitum' in 1515, when it belonged to St Mary's Guild) and the Falcon: in 1611, the latter possessed a frontage and gateway on Strait Bargate (*ibid*).

The stone wall exposed on the north-east side of the site could be part of one of the buildings indicated on Robert Hall's 1741 map of Boston. This shows a very long building range extending in a north-westerly direction off Strait Bargate. The make-up of the wall would imply a high-status structure (?monastic). Large foundations have been frequently disturbed in Fountain Lane, a short distance north-west of New Street. Fountain Lane, which is first mentioned in 1562, took its name from Fountains Abbey (*ibid*).

Initially, it was speculated that the stone wall exposed in the recent watching brief was in fact a town wall. However, evidence that Boston actually possessed a town wall is slight (J. Bonnor, pers. comm.), and it is difficult to explain the absence of the wall in the trench excavated Pre-Construct Archaeology during a recent evaluation.

10.0 Acknowledgements

On behalf of Pre-Construct Archaeology, thanks are expressed to Mr R. Hallett (Chaplin & Farrant Ltd), the Commissioning Client, and to Turnstone Estates Ltd. Thanks go also to Jim Bonnor, the Community Archaeologist for Boston, and to Jane Young (City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit).

11.0 Appendices

11.1 List of contexts

11.2 Colour photographs

11.3 Site Archive

11.4 Historical maps

11.5 References

11.1 List of contexts

Context	Description
[1]	North-south (main) supporting wall, east side of vaulted cellar: stretchers bonded with soft yellow mortar, heavily coated with whitewash + soot-like deposits. Very distorted; butted by [3] and [2]
[2]	Rough-built blocking of doorway within [1]. Strange configuration at top, comprising thin timber lintel below vertical + horizontal timber. ?Original access
[3]	Raised brick platform built over floor [19], butting walls [1] and [4]. Only three courses high
[4]	South wall of east bay, brick-vaulted cellar; butted by cross wall [5]
[5]	North-south 'half-wall' confined to south side of east bay. Constructed after principal arched structure. Butted by floor [19], butts wall [4]
[6]	Small, brick-built, buttress-like feature, situated between walls [5] and [7], butted against (and same height as) main north wall [4]
[7]	North-south wall (broken by access); divides east from west bays. Made from bricks bonded with soft dirty mortar, largely covered with whitewash
[8]	South wall of west chamber; made from brick stretchers bonded with dirty mortar. Slight ledge at top of wall where met by base of vaulting. Butted by [10], butts [7]
[9]	Raised brick stand on south side of west bay: horizontal bricks, intermingled with flat tiles, bonded with soft dirty mortar. Butts [7] and [8], cut by [10]
[10]	Blocking of west side of west bay. Hard grey concrete, interspersed with three upright timbers. Extends between main walls, ceiling and floor
[11]	Brick-lined well-head. Originally sealed beneath [18]
[12]	Raised brick platform, 2 - 3 courses of brickwork mixed with flat tiles, bonded with dirty mortar + soil. Damaged. ?Beer barrel stand
[13]	North wall, west bay; low supporting wall, very decayed at base. [12] and [13] probably later. Comprises stretchers bonded with dirty yellow mortar, heavily coated with whitewash
[14]	North wall of east bay. Not straight; kinks near to modern access. Made from stretchers, bonding almost absent (ie decayed)
[15]	Area of modern tarmac in north-west corner of east bay
[16]	Brick patching of floor surface on north side of path [20], east bay. Modern

- [17] Modern access to vaulted cellar; hatched doorway, north-east side of east bay
- [18] Well-laid east-west flagged pathway extending through both bays. Butted by brick floor, continues beneath blocking [10]. Possibly laid at the same time as the brick floor
- [19] Floor surface made from side-mounted stretchers, orientated north-south. Butts [1], [2], [4], [5] + flagged path [18]. Slopes from south to north, east bay
- [20] Same as [19], mainly in west bay (uneven brick floor)
- [21] Watching brief. Well-constructed stone wall, orientated N/W - S/E. Located in deep excavation, north-east corner of redevelopment area. Comprises well-faced, large ashlar blocks (up to 1.0m in length) bonded with yellow sandy mortar. At least 3.0m in depth, lying c. 30cm below modern ground surface. In base of cutting, black organic deposits probably = Barditch backfill, but stratigraphic relationships between wall and fill could not be determined.



Photo. 1 Looking east from west bay, with cross-wall [7] in foreground

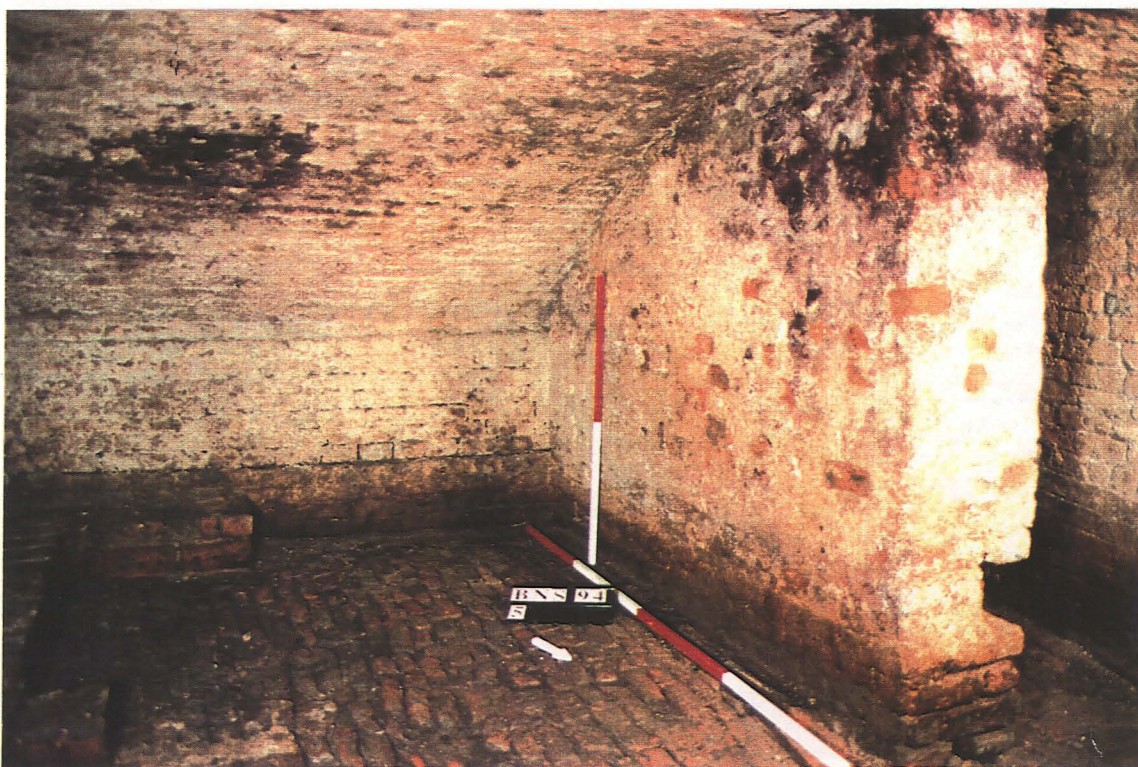


Photo. 2 Looking south-west at cross-wall [5], with brick floor [19] in foreground and raised feature [3] on left side of frame



Photo. 3 Looking south-west into small bay demarcated by cross-walls [5] and [7]. Buttress-type feature [6] in right hand corner



Photo. 4 Looking south at wall elevation [8], with raised brick/tile feature [9] in foreground

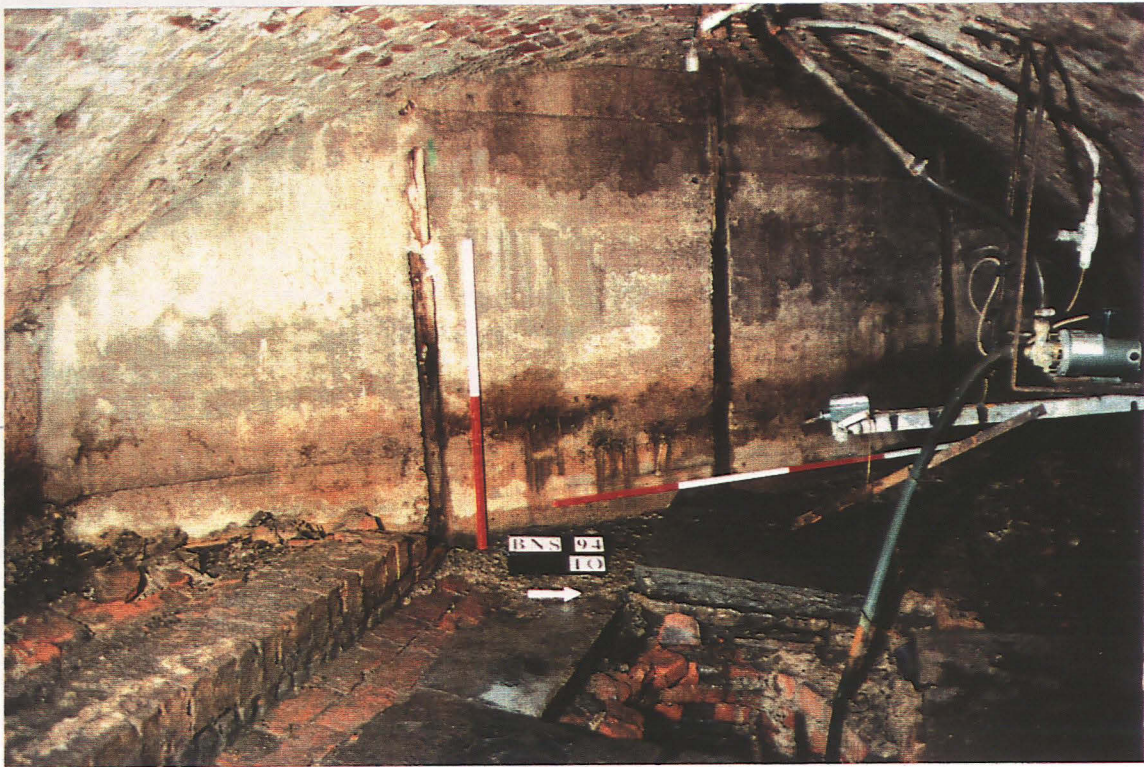


Photo. 5 Looking west at concrete blocking [10], with well-head [11] and pump in foreground

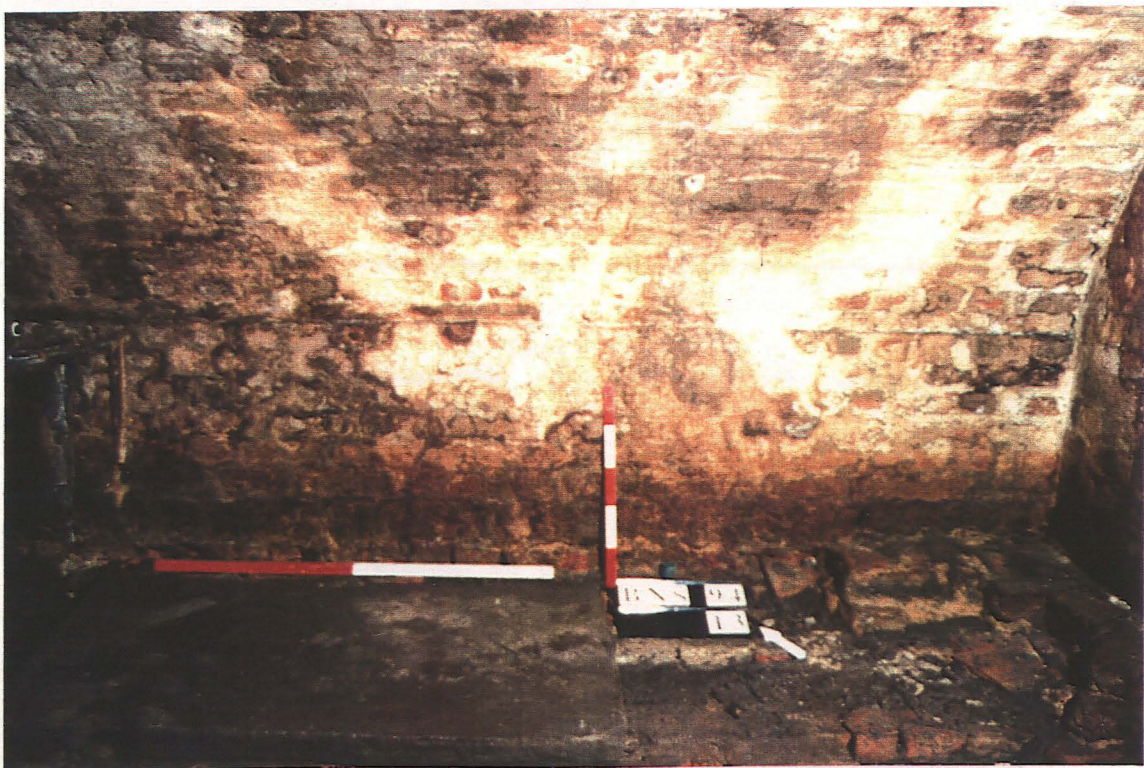


Photo. 6 Looking north-east at wall elevation [13], with raised brick/tile feature (and disturbed stone flag) [12] in foreground



Photo. 7 Looking south-west at brick floor [19] (foreground) and wall elevation [4] (background)



Photo. 8 Looking south-east at south-east elevation of vaulted cellar; incorporating wall [1] and original (blocked) doorway [2]



Photo. 9 View of cellar blocking [10] after demolition, looking west



Photo. 10 View of stone wall [21], as exposed in contractors trench, looking south

11.3 Site Archives

The site archive associated with the survey and watching brief aspects of the project have been integrated with the wider site archive for BNS 94. Specifically, the watching brief aspect comprises the following:

Twenty one context record sheets

x3 colour print films, x2 colour slide film

x5 scale drawings (plans and elevations)

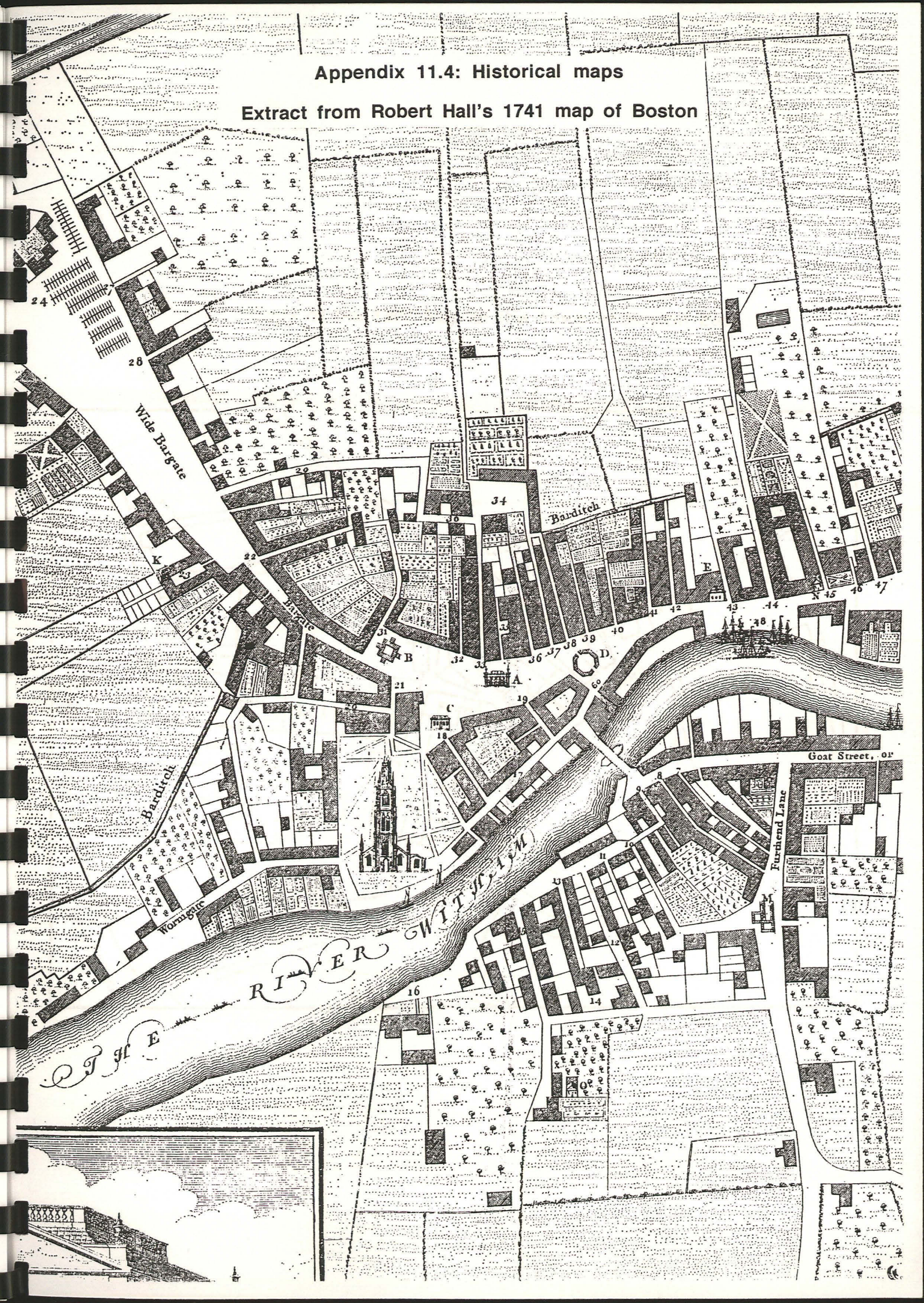
x1 bag of finds

Misc. notes

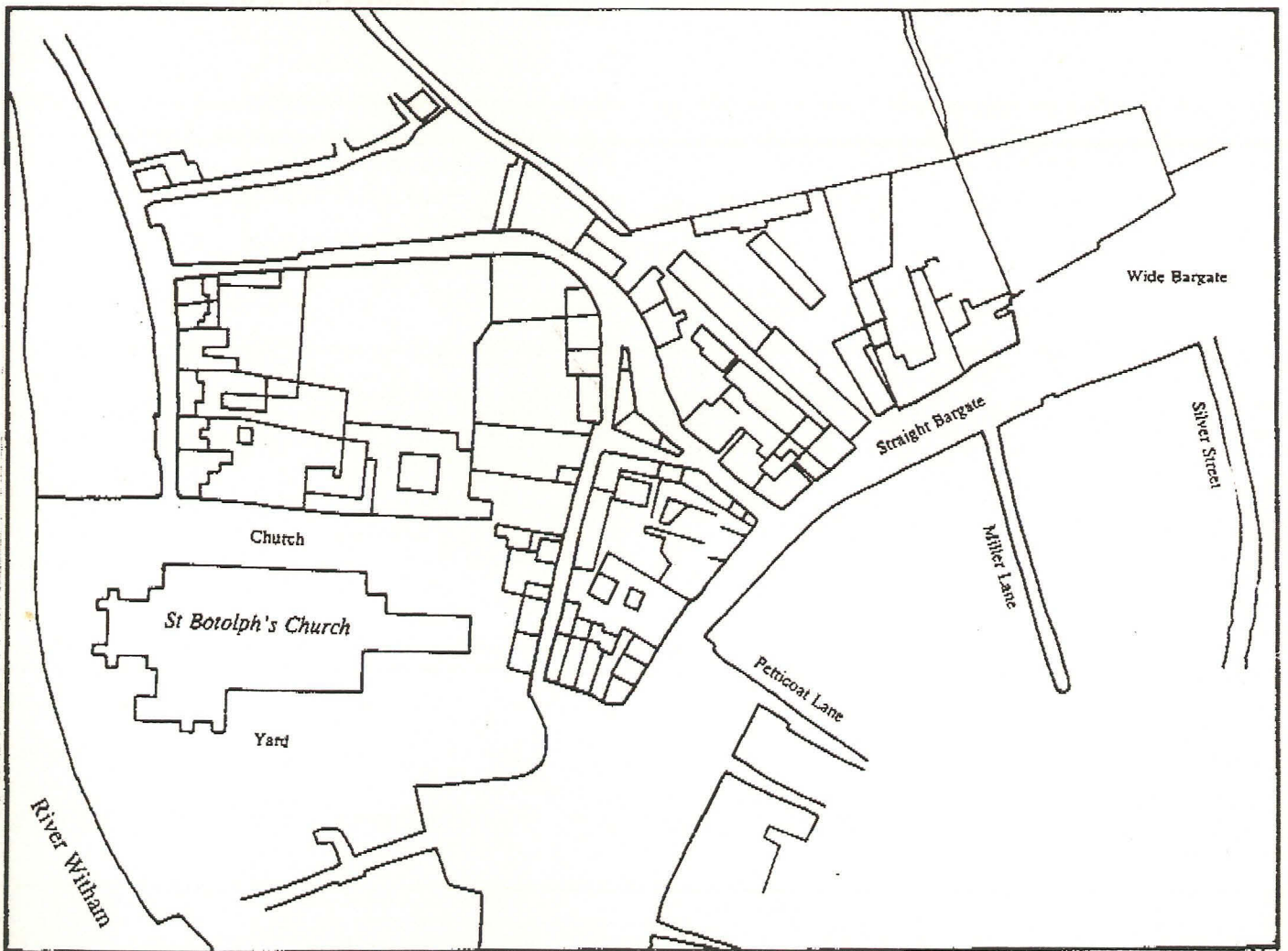
Primary records are currently with Pre-Construct Archaeology, though the paper and physical archive will be deposited with the City and County Museum within 1 year of completion of this report, together with a more detailed archive list.

Appendix 11.4: Historical maps

Extract from Robert Hall's 1741 map of Boston



Copy of the 1803 Map of the Town of Boston East



11.5 References

- Archaeological Projects Services, 1994 Unpublished Desk Top Assessment, New Street, Boston
- Bagley, GS 1986 *Boston: Its Story and People*
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- Thompson, P 1856 *The History and Antiquities of Boston* (London)