

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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BRANSTON CHURCH HALL,
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PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY (LINCOLN)

Site Code: BCH 95
CCM Accession Number 208.95

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20/2/05

BRANSTON CHURCH HALL

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

FOR

MANTON AND BARTLE ARCHITECTS

BY

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December 1995

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1.0 Non-Technical Summary

A planning application was submitted to North Kesteven District Council to construct an easterly extension to Branston Church Hall, Branston, Lincolnshire. Permission was granted, subject to a condition requiring archaeological observation and recording during earth-removal (a standard watching brief).

For the most part, the site was devoid of significant archaeological deposits, though it should be noted that the ground level within the area of development was reduced by almost 1.0m - when the existing church hall was built. Two post-medieval building phases were recorded during the brief.

2.0 Introduction

An archaeological watching brief took place between December 12th - 13th, 1995 during construction trenching for an extension to Branston Church hall (Fig.'s 1 and 2). The works were commissioned by Manton and Bartle Architects on behalf of the Church Council and were centred on a project specification, dated November 22nd, 1995.

The archaeological data base (the County Sites and Monuments record) does not contain site-specific information, though the site is located in the heart of the medieval settlement, approximately 50.0m south-east of All Saints Church.

The central national grid reference is TF 502180 367260.

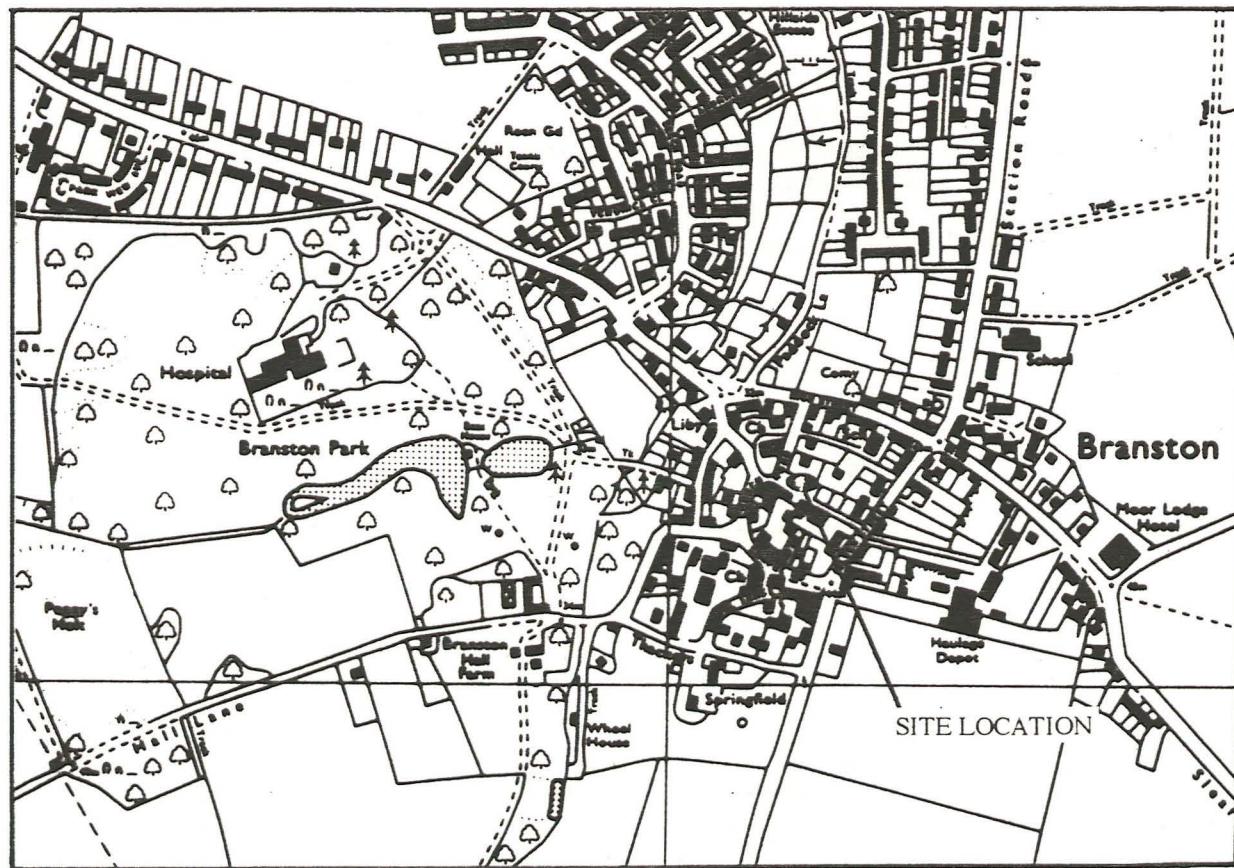


Fig. 1 1:10,000 site location

3.0 Planning background

An application was submitted for development (application 13 / 461 / 1995). Planning permission was granted, subject to the undertaking of an archaeological watching brief. A project brief, outlining the scope of the archaeological requirement, was issued by the (then) Community Archaeologist on 21/7/1995, and a project specification was prepared by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln).

Prior to development, the site was used as a small recreational area. Its boundaries are the hall itself on the west side, property boundaries to the north, a public footpath to the south and an area of small trees to the east, where the division was marked by a low, unattractive retaining wall. The Church Hall is a plain structure, rather typical of early to mid 1970's architecture.

4.0 Geology and topography

The site lies in an area of undivided (Jurassic) Lincolnshire limestone and Jurassic clay (British Geological Survey Sheet 114). Branston village is sited on land approximately 40 - 50m OD. To the west, the limestone rises towards the Lincoln cliff; to the east, the ground level falls towards Potterhanworth Fen.

5.0 Archaeological and historical background

The County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) incorporates information which demonstrates that the area surrounding the modern settlement was densely occupied during the prehistoric periods, particularly in the area of Branston Booths/Branston Fen. Finds include small artefacts, recorded as 'chance discoveries' as well as dug-out prehistoric boats, which have been recovered from fen deposits.

A potentially large Romano-British settlement has been noted c. 1.0km west of the medieval/modern settlement. At TF 005 669, an inscription was recovered, which must have derived from an elaborate funerary monument (Whitwell 1992, 132). Translated, the inscription reads "In this estate (lie buried the bones) of Aurelia Concessa, a very holy girl". It is possible the site was dominated by a villa or similar such establishment. The Roman Car Dyke is located approximately 5.0km east of the medieval settlement in Branston Booths.

The earliest evidence of post-Roman settlement is preserved within the fabric of All Saints Church, a short distance north-west of the development site. Today, the church is a complex structure of several building phases, though the south-west quoin of the nave shows unmistakable long and short work of Saxon date (Pevsner and Harris 1988, 179). The church (and one priest) is recorded in the Domesday Book, as were four mills and three fisheries (Morris 1986).

The name Branston derives from *Branztune* (1086), which probably means 'farmstead of a man called Branta (Mills 1993).

6.0 Aims

The principal aims of the watching brief at the church hall site were to ensure that any archaeological features or artefactual remains exposed or retrieved during groundworks were recorded and interpreted to standards accepted by the Heritage Officer for North Kesteven. A project Specification, based on these objectives, was jointly agreed between Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln), the (then) Community Archaeologist and the Client.

7.0 Methodology

A continuous watching brief was maintained over a period of two days. Topsoil was removed using a Bobcat excavator and trenching was achieved using a small machine with actor arm, fitted with a 0.6m wide bucket.

All soil removal was monitored as part of the brief, with exposed soil surfaces being intermittently cleaned and inspected for archaeological deposits. A general narrative was maintained and context information was entered on watching brief report sheets. Archaeological features were plotted on a drawing provided by the client, and photographs were taken at regular intervals.

Subsequent to field inspection, an ordered site archive was prepared, which will be deposited at the City and County Museum, Lincoln within six months. A short statement will be published in the local county journal, *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology*.

Recording and excavation was undertaken by C. Palmer-Brown.

8.0 Results

Groundwork involved the partial removal of a north-south retaining wall which marked the east boundary to the hall garden (the wall, which measured c. 1.0m in height, was apparently built in the mid-1980's as part of a Community Project). The exposed section face was cut-back by approximately 1.0m: this largely involved the removal of loose soil and limestone rubble which had been used to fill a void on the east side of the wall (ie its construction trench). On the north side of this section, two post-medieval walls were exposed: one made from stone, the other of brick.

The stone wall, [01], lay at the extreme north end of the section, and it continued northwards beyond the area investigated. A length approximately 2.3m was exposed within the cutting, which survived to four courses and measured c. 0.5m in height. It was made from crudely-dressed limestone blocks, bonded with soft lime mortar. Only its west face was exposed and this was partially concealed behind a veneer of wall plaster. The plaster was in fact secondary to the wall - it was part-destroyed and incorporated within a later brick-built structure. Embedded in the lower face of the stone wall was a single sherd of later post-medieval white china.

The later structure was represented by a well-preserved, short stretch (1.8m) of brick work, [02]; a westerly return of which lay on its south side. The brickwork survived to a height of 0.8m, and was bonded with lime-based mortar. The exposed west face was part-covered behind a veneer of plaster - identical to that on wall [01]. Cleaning at basal level (between the two walls) revealed a line of plaster which connected the walls; thereby suggesting that the stone wall had been part-demolished and incorporated as part of the later build.

The brick wall section was butted by a small, discreet area of red quarry tiles, [03] (each tile 18cm x 18cm x 4cm) and, in places, the basal line of plaster described above was also butted by fragments of tiles. The tiles themselves were bedded on a thin deposit of lime mortar. Further patches of tile flooring were observed within the actual new building plot, though the movement of machinery precluded detailed inspection in this area.

Prior to the cutting of foundation trenches, the area of the hall extension was stripped of its topsoil (which was apparently imported from Bardney when the (now largely demolished) retaining wall was built in the 1980's). The removal of this exposed an homogenous surface of degraded (?frost-shattered) limestone brash.

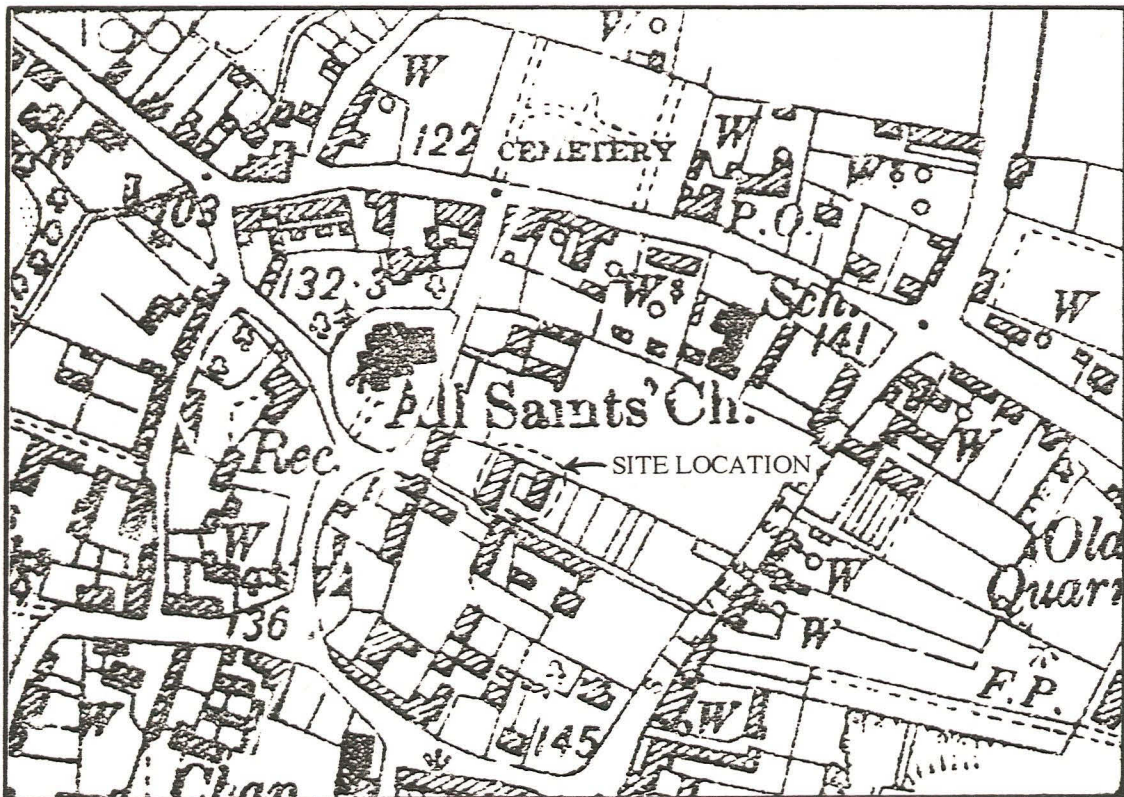
Construction trenching commenced on the south side of the plot and progressed northwards. The density of the parent bedrock meant that progress was slow. No archaeological features had been cut through the bedrock.

Construction trenches measured approximately 60cm in width and were excavated to a depth c. 35 - 40cm beneath the top of the limestone. The watching brief was terminated upon the completion of construction trenching.

9.0 Conclusions

It is concluded that no significant archaeological deposits were disturbed during the recording brief, though post-medieval structural deposits were exposed in a north-south section face - the east limit of the development. these features have not been destroyed.

The Ordnance Survey 2nd edition (surveyed 1886, revised 1904) shows that the site of the present church hall/garden was occupied by buildings, and it is suggested that features exposed during the present watching brief belonged to these structures. Unfortunately, the latest edition of the Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 does not include the present church hall, rendering further identification difficult.



Extract, 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey

10.0 Acknowledgements

On behalf of Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln), sincere thanks are expressed to the commissioning Clients, Manton and Bartle Architects, and to A Barker & Son (building contractors). Thanks also to staff at the County Sites and Monuments Record for allowing access to parish records.

11.0 Appendices

11.1 Colour photographs

11.2 Information derived from the County Sites and Monuments Record

11.3 Site Archive

11.4 References

11.1 Colour photographs



Photo. 1 General view of features exposed in cut-back east section, looking east

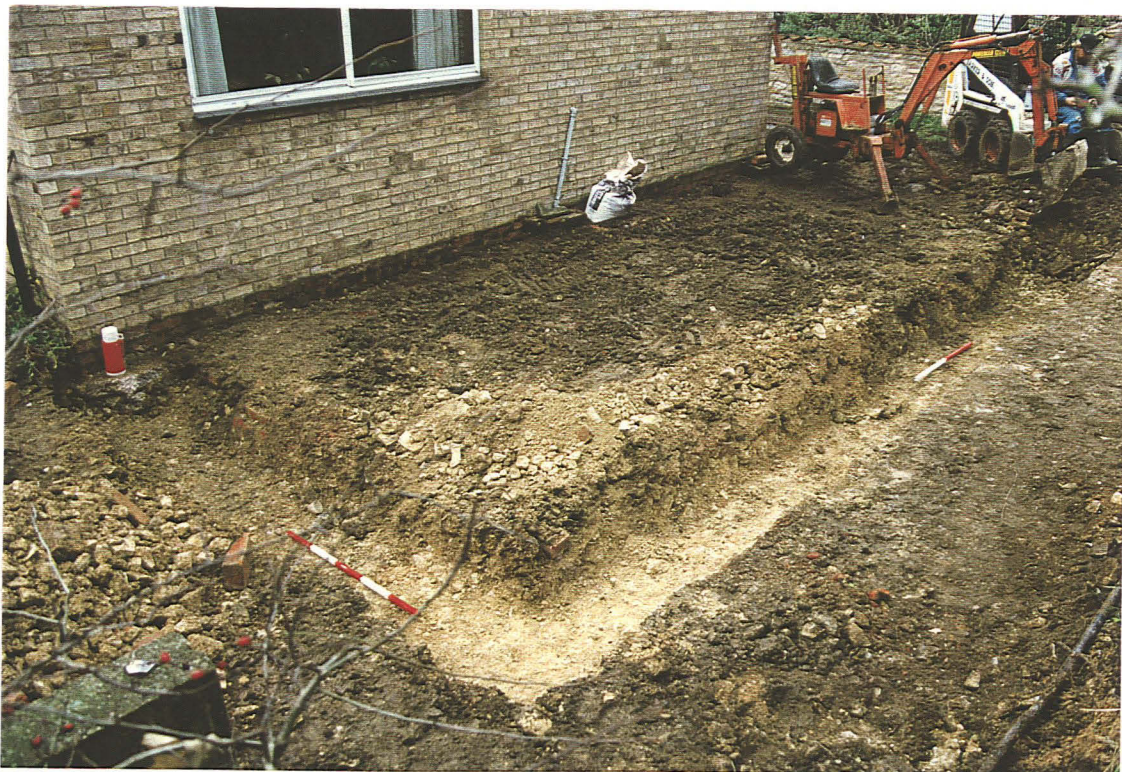


Photo. 2 General view of construction trenches for Church Hall extension, looking north-west

11.2 Information derived from the County Sites and Monuments Record

Ref.	NGR	Description
AC	??	Unprovenanced dug-out boat; not adequately recorded
AF	??	Unprovenanced dug-out boat; Branston Fen, 1845. Ends apparently chopped by workmen
A	TF 0126 6782	Leaf-shaped arrowhead (1941)
E	TF 0251 6816	Iron spearhead (1958): ?Anglo-Saxon
F	TF 005 669	Roman inscription, late C2nd/C3rd pottery + building materials
G	TF 008 655	Extensive scatter of Romano-British pottery (C3rd/C4th) + 'building stones'
I	TF 008 658	Leaf-shaped arrowhead
O	TF 012 653	Medieval pottery + roof tile (1966)
S	TF 015 677	Silver penny, Edward III
W	TF 0203 6688	Polished stone axe (found before 1974)
Y	TF 0234 6793	Medieval bronze horse pendant with lion and fleur de lys decoration; c. 1330 - 1400 (1974)
AD	TF 0215 6740	Negative watching brief result (1977)
AF	TF 0202 6720	Jetton of Hans Schultes of Nuremberg; C16th
AG	TF 0212 6730	All Saints Church: Anglo-Saxon work in south-west corner of nave; late Saxon tower with Norman arcading

11.3 Site Archive

The basic site archive comprises the following:

x2 watching brief daily log sheets, x1 A4 sheet of notes (narrative)

x1 colour print film

x1 1:100 development plan (incorporating location/alignment of archaeological features)

Misc. notes and correspondence

Primary records are currently with Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln), though the paper and physical archive will be deposited with the City and County Museum within 6 months of completion of this report, together with a more detailed archive list.

11.4 References

British Geological Survey; 1:50,000 survey sheet 114

Mills, A D 1993, *English Place-Names*

Morris, J (Ed.) *Domesday Book; Lincolnshire*

Pevsner, N and Harris, J 1988 *The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire*

Whitwell, JB 1992 Roman Lincolnshire (Revised Edition) *Hist. of Lincoln, Vol. II*