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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT
LAND ADJACENT TO JOHNSON'S WAREHOUSE
BOSTON,
LINCOLNSHIRE**

TF 3274 4380

Work Undertaken For
Boston Borough Council

August 1995

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1. SUMMARY

A watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of test pits on land adjacent to Johnson's Warehouse, Boston, Lincolnshire.

Thirteen pits were excavated and examined. The earliest activity identified on the site was post-medieval (A.D. 1500-1900) and comprised a foundation layer of masonry, external floor layers, coal deposits from a coal yard and cellars from a ketchup factory. These were sealed by demolition deposits which in turn were cut through by the foundation trench for a sheet pile wall constructed during the mid 1950s to prevent erosion of the river bank. Dumping of refuse deposits occurred on the site after this date.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

Archaeological Project Services were commissioned by Boston Borough Council to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of geotechnical pits on land adjacent to Johnson's Warehouse, South Square, Boston, Lincolnshire. This work was carried out in advance of a planning application to develop the site. The work was undertaken in accordance with a brief set by the Community Archaeologist for Boston District Council.

2.2 Topography and Geology

Boston is situated 45km southeast of Lincoln and approximately 7km from the northwest coast of The Wash, among the fens of south Lincolnshire. Bisected by the River Witham, the town is located in Boston District, Lincolnshire (Fig. 1). Situated on the east bank of the river the site is located on vacant land and is

bounded by the River Witham to the west, the Haven Bridge to the south, South Square to the east and the former Johnson's Warehouse to the north. Centred on National Grid Reference TF 32744380, the land covers approximately 0.3 hectares.

Local soils are the Tanvats Association typical alluvial gley soils (Hodge *et al.* 1984, 319) and Wisbech Association calcareous alluvial gley soils developed in marine alluvium (*ibid.* 361). Beneath this marine alluvium is glacial drift that was deposited in a geological basin between the Lincolnshire Wolds and the East Anglian Heights (Harden 1978, 5). These glacial deposits in turn overlie a solid geology of Jurassic clays.

2.3 Archaeological Setting

The site is located in an area of archaeological activity dating from the medieval period. Located c. 160m east of the investigation area, oriented north-south is the early medieval town's defensive ditch and sewer, the Barditch (B05/001), built during the 12th-13th centuries. Medieval and post-medieval pottery has been retrieved approximately 60m east of the site (B05/062), and an excavation 150m to the northwest exposed a brick cistern containing pottery of 12th to 16th century date (B05/067). An archaeological excavation undertaken c. 100m northeast of the site recorded a well, a metalled surface and residual medieval and post-medieval pottery (B05/058). Approximately 150m west of the area medieval masonry deposits were recorded during an archaeological watching brief (B05/082).

Established during the late 13th to early 14th centuries and located c. 150m west of the site are the remains of a Carmelite friary, the full extent of which is unknown

(B05/013). An archaeological excavation undertaken c. 120m to the east recorded a possible medieval mortar floor, the remains of a medieval building and retrieved pottery dating to the 13th and 14th centuries (B05/033). Finds of the same date have been retrieved from an area located 200m to the southeast (B05/034). Situated approximately 160m northeast of the site are the remains of a refectory from a Dominican friary constructed c. A.D. 1300 (B05/005). Located northwest of this, the Arbour Club has portions of these remains (arcades and doors) incorporated into its structure (B05/077). The main focus of the friary was located just to the southwest of the Arbour Club (B05/032). Located c. 160m to the southeast are the remains of a 13th century Franciscan friary, the full extent of which is unknown (B05/009)

Two timber-framed hall houses built during the 15th century are located c. 150m northwest (B05/074) and 120m northwest (B05/075) of the study area. Situated c. 135m southeast of the site is Haven House, a 17th century timber framed house (B05/070).

Situated immediately south of the site post-medieval pottery has been retrieved (B05/043), and approximately 100m to the north is an 18th century warehouse with a vaulted brick cellar (B05/071).

Approximately 220m southwest of the site inhumations of unknown date were recovered during works in 1988 (B05/039).

A map of 1741 (Molyneux and Wright, 1974, 14), inscribed by Hall, shows the area occupied by warehouses. The layout of these buildings did not alter until the late 19th century when an Ordnance Survey plan of 1887 (*ibid.*, 22), shows extensions to parts of the buildings previously

depicted, and also the absence of some of the smaller structures.

3. AIMS

The aims of the watching brief were to locate and record archaeological deposits, if present, and to determine their date, function and origin.

4. METHODS

Thirteen geotechnical pits were excavated, partially to determine the location of the river wall tie rods. Consequently, the distribution of these pits is biased towards the river wall (see Fig. 3). Where possible, the sides of the pits were cleaned and examined to identify any archaeological features. Each archaeological deposit or feature revealed was allocated a unique reference number with an individual written description. A photographic record was compiled and sections were drawn at scales of 1:10 and 1:20. Locations of drawn sections appear on Fig. 3.

5. ANALYSIS

Records of the deposits identified in the evaluation were examined. Phasing was assigned based on the nature of the deposits and recognisable relationships between them. A stratigraphic matrix of all identified deposits was produced and phased. A total of four phases were identified during the watching brief:

- Phase 1 Natural deposits
- Phase 2 Post-medieval deposits
- Phase 3 Mid 20th century deposits
- Phase 4 Later 20th century deposits

5.1 Phase 1 Natural Deposits

A layer of blue grey clay with orange mottles was identified in pits 1 (context 2),

3 (context 12), 4 (17), 6 (31) and 11 (39). This layer has been interpreted as an alluvial deposit. Overlying this in geotechnical pit 4 was a layer of brown silty clay (16), 0.5m thick, interpreted as river alluvium. Located in the base of pit 5 was a layer of brown clay (26), 1.2m thick (as exposed). This deposit has been interpreted as an alluvial layer, possibly a variation of 16.

5.2 Phase 2 Post-medieval deposits

Comprising the limit of excavation in pit 2, and constituting its west and north faces was a brick wall (6). This has been interpreted as a cellar. Associated with this wall and contained by it, and forming the base of the pit, were several timbers (5). These have been interpreted as a floor. Overlying 5, and filling the remainder of the pit was a layer of brown sandy silty clay with brick rubble (4), 3.2m thick, interpreted as a layer of redeposited soil functioning as a backfill.

Sealing the natural deposit in pit 3 was a layer of dolerite and millstone grit cobbles (11), 0.7m thick. This layer has been interpreted as a foundation, providing support above the unstable alluvial deposits. This was overlaid by a layer of brick rubble (10), 0.45m thick, interpreted as dumped refuse intended to raise the ground surface, which in turn was overlaid by a layer of demolition rubble (9), 0.75m thick.

Overlying the alluvium 16 in pit 4 was a layer of black coal dust (15), 0.3m thick. This layer has been interpreted as an industrial floor. Sealing 15 was a layer of brick rubble (14), 0.5m thick. This has been interpreted as dumped refuse intended to raise the ground surface and is probably the same deposit as 10 above. Sealing 14 was a layer of mixed demolition rubble (13), interpreted as a dumped deposit

intended to raise the ground surface.

Above the alluvial deposit 26 in pit 5 was a layer of plaster rubble and ash (25), 0.1m thick. This has been interpreted as redeposited rubbish, possibly intended to provide a temporary surface. Sealing 25 was a layer of brown clay (24), 0.2m thick, interpreted as a make-up layer. Resting upon 24 was a layer of plaster (23), 0.1m thick, interpreted as a floor surface. Overlying 23 was a layer of brown sandy silty clay (22), 5cm thick. This deposit has been interpreted as a dumped deposit intended to raise the ground surface. Above 22 was a layer of grey black ash and coal (21), interpreted as a dump, possibly forming a temporary ground surface. Overlying 21 was a layer of grey brown sandy silty clay (20), 0.1m thick. This has been interpreted as redeposited soil functioning as a make-up layer. Resting upon 20 was a layer of bricks (19), 0.1m thick, interpreted as a floor. Sealing the brick floor was a layer of demolition rubble (18), 0.5m thick, that has been interpreted as a dumped deposit intended to raise the ground surface, and is either contemporary with or the same as deposit 9 in pit 3 (see above).

Constituting the earliest deposit in pit 7 was a layer of black clay (33), 0.3m thick. This layer has been interpreted as clay that has been contaminated by coal dust, probably originating from the same source as 15 in pit 4.

5.3 Phase 3 mid-20th century deposits

Overlying the natural deposit in pit 1 was a layer of concrete (3). This has been interpreted as a hard standing surface of unknown function.

Overlying deposit 3 and truncating deposits 14, 31, 33 and 39 was a cut feature (44) extending the length of the

study area adjacent to the River Witham. This feature has been interpreted as the trench dug when the sheet pile wall (to prevent erosion of the river bank) was constructed. Located in geotechnical pits 1, 6, 7, 11, and comprising the entire fill of pits 8, 9, 10, 12 and 13 was a layer of brown silty sandy clay (1, 30, 32, 38, 34, 40, 41, 42 and 43 respectively), up to 2.5m thick. This has been interpreted as a dumped deposit backfilling trench 44.

5.4 Phase 4 Later 20th century deposits

Located in pit 3 were two layers of black tarmac (8 and 7) 0.12m and 9cm thick respectively. These constitute the present ground surface within the centre of the investigation area.

Of uncertain relationship to the backfill of 44, but probably later than it, located in, and comprising the west facing side of pit 6 were the remnants of a brick wall (45). This has been interpreted as a cellar. Presumably overlying the wall, was a layer of mixed demolition rubble (29), 0.4m thick, sealed by a layer of brick rubble (28), 0.1m thick, which in turn was overlaid by a layer of topsoil containing frequent quantities of demolition rubble (27), 0.6m thick. Each of these deposits are interpreted as dumps, intended to raise the ground surface.

Situated in pit 11, of uncertain relationship to the backfill of 44, but probably later than it were the remnants of a brick wall (46). This has been interpreted as a cellar. Apparently overlying the wall, was a layer of mortar, brick dust and ash (37), 0.2m thick, that was sealed by a 0.2m thick layer of ash (36), which in turn was sealed by a deposit of brown sandy silty clay containing frequent quantities of fragmented ceramic building material (35), 0.7m thick. Each of these deposits are

interpreted as dumps, intended to raise the ground surface.

6. DISCUSSION

Natural deposits of blue grey clay with orange mottles occur across the site (2, 12, 17, 31 and 39). These are overlaid within two of the geotechnical pits by layers of alluvium (16 and 26) which may represent the same deposit.

Overlying these are post-medieval and modern deposits associated with the development of the riverside for industrial and mercantile purposes.

Located within pit 3 was a layer of stone cobbles (11). This layer, devoid of any soil matrix, may represent an attempt to establish a stable, solid surface over the underlying alluvial layers, to minimise the danger of subsidence.

Situated in the northeastern part of the site in pit 5, away from the riverside, is a deposit of plaster and ash (25), overlaid by brown clay. Together these deposits comprise make-up layers for a plaster floor (23). Assuming this area of the site was not cleared through truncation and removal of earlier deposits, these layers represent the earliest *in situ* structural evidence for industrial/mercantile activity. Overlying this floor surface were dumped soil, ash and coal (20, 21 and 22), deposited preparatory to laying a brick floor (19). The absence of any demolition rubble within these dumped layers suggests either that the brick floor belongs to the same building as the plaster floor, or that both surfaces were external and merely represent modifications to an existing layout.

Located in the western part of the investigation area was a layer of coal dust. This accumulated whilst the area was

utilised as a coal yard during the latter part of the 19th century. Located just north of this deposit in pit 7 was a layer of black clay, stained by contamination by coal dust from the yard.

Located in pit 2 was a timber floor and a brick wall. Although a timber floor within a cellar is unusual, it is possible that there exists a waterproof layer (e.g. clay) beneath it. Alternatively, the floor may have been designed to store a particular commodity. The wall and the floor may be associated with the brick structures located in pits 6 and 11 (45 and 46 respectively), and together may comprise the remnants of the cellars of a ketchup factory, which is the last building known to have occupied the site.

Overlying the stone cobble layer (pit 3), the coal dust layer (pit 4), the brick floor (pit 5) and infilling the cellar (pit 6), are dumped layers containing demolition rubble. These deposits probably represent destruction of the buildings with which the floor layers, walls and refuse deposits were associated.

Located in pit 1 is the surface of a deposit of concrete (3). Although of indeterminate function, it is possible that this surface may be associated with one of the warehouses that previously occupied the site.

Observed in pits 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13, and truncating deposits 33, 14 and overlying 3, was a trench (44) dug when the sheet pile wall was constructed to prevent erosion of the riverbank during the mid to late 1950s.

Subsequent to these works being completed the trench was backfilled by a deposit of brown silty sandy clay (1, 30, 32, 34, 38, 40, 41, 42 and 43). This deposit comprises the ground surface in

the areas occupied by pits 1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 13. The ground surface of the areas occupied by pits 2 and 5 is formed by the dumped deposits filling the cellar and over the brick floor respectively.

Located in pits 6 and 11, overlying the backfill of the trench dug when the sheet pile wall was constructed, are dumped deposits comprising demolition debris. These deposits represent dumping to raise the ground surface.

7. EFFECTIVENESS OF TECHNIQUES

The methods and strategies employed in the investigation proved to be effective in establishing the presence of post-medieval and modern archaeological remains.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The watching brief identified the presence of natural alluvial deposits which had been accumulating until the beginning of the post-medieval period (A.D. 1500).

The earliest archaeological deposits take the form of a layer of masonry, intended to stabilise the soft ground surface which was composed of alluvial layers. Although no evidence for post-medieval building foundations was identified, there is evidence for floor layers and dumped deposits located in the northeastern part of the site. These represent the earliest evidence for *in situ* industrial/mercantile activity. The sequence of layers suggests that they were deposited within the same building. This compliments the cartographic evidence which depicts a single building occupying the investigation area until the last century.

During the late 1800s part of the site appears to have been utilised as a coal yard. This is reflected in deposits of coal

dust, which accumulated whilst the coal was in storage, and in the clay deposit that was stained black, almost certainly through contamination from coal dust from the yard, located in the northwest corner of the site.

The site was last utilised as a ketchup factory, and possible evidence for this takes the form of walls and a timber floor, interpreted as cellars, in pits 2, 6 and 11.

Overlying the masonry deposit, the coal layer, the brick floor and infilling the cellar(s) are deposits rich in demolition rubble. This suggests that the building(s) on the site had been demolished and the land subsequently landscaped with the debris.

During the mid 1950s, a trench was excavated through the investigation area, and the present steel sheet pile wall was constructed, and stabilised using steel tie rods anchored by concrete blocks set back from it.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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10. PERSONNEL

Project Manager: Steve Haynes
Site Supervisor: Kate Hughes
Illustration: Denise Buckley and Mark

Dymond
Post-excavation analyst: Mark Dymond

11. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Hodge, C.A.H, Burton, R.G.O., Corbett, W.M., Evans, R., and Seale, R.S., 1984 *Soils and their use in Eastern England*, Soil Survey of England and Wales 13

Molyneux, F.H. and Wright, N.R., 1974 *An Atlas of Boston*. History of Boston Series 10

12. ABBREVIATIONS

Numbers prefixed with 'B' are the primary reference numbers used by the Boston District Community Archaeologist.

Appendix 1
Context Summary

Context	Description	Interpretation	Pit
1	Brown sandy silty clay	Fill of 44	1
2	Blue grey clay with orange mottles	Natural deposit	1
3	Concrete	Unknown	1
4	Brown sandy silty clay with brick rubble	Redeposited soil layer	2
5	Timber planks	Floor	2
6	Brick wall	Cellar wall	2
7	Black tarmac	Present ground surface	3
8	Black tarmac	Make-up layer for 7	3
9	Fragmented brick, mortar and concrete	Redeposited demolition rubble	3
10	Brick rubble	Redeposited demolition rubble	3
11	Dolerite and Millstone grit cobbles	Foundation/stabilisation layer	3
12	Blue grey clay with orange mottles	Natural deposit	3
13	Fragmented brick, mortar and concrete	Redeposited demolition rubble	4
14	Brick rubble	Redeposited demolition rubble	4
15	Black coal dust	Redeposited coal/ground surface	4
16	Brown silty clay	River alluvium (variation of 26)	4
17	Blue grey clay	River alluvium	4
18	Fragmented brick, mortar and concrete	Redeposited demolition rubble	5
19	Bricks	Floor	5
20	Grey brown sandy silty clay	Redeposited soil	5

Context	Description	Interpretation	Pit
21	Ash and coal	Redeposited ash and coal/ground surface	5
22	Grey brown sandy silty clay	Redeposited soil	5
23	Plaster	Floor	5
24	Brown clay	Make-up layer	5
25	Plaster rubble and ash	Redeposited material/ground surface	5
26	Brown clay	River alluvium (variation of 16)	5
27	Brown topsoil	Redeposited soil	6
28	Brick rubble	Redeposited demolition rubble/floor surface	6
29	Fragmented brick, mortar and concrete	Redeposited demolition rubble	6
30	Brown sandy silty clay	Fill of 44	6
31	Blue grey clay with orange mottles	Natural deposit	6
32	Brown sandy silty clay	Fill of 44	7
33	Black clay	Contaminated clay	7
34	Brown sandy silty clay	Fill of 44	8
35	Brown sandy silty clay	Redeposited soil	9
36	Ash	Redeposited ash	9
37	Mortar, brick dust and ash	Redeposited material	9
38	Brown silty clay	Fill of 44	11
39	Blue grey clay with orange mottles	Natural deposit	9
40	No record	Fill of 44	9
41	No record	Fill of 44	10
42	No record	Fill of 44	12
43	No record	Fill of 44	13
44	Linear cut feature	Trench for construction of sheet pile wall adjacent to river bank	1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

Context	Description	Interpretation	Pit
45	Bricks	Cellar wall	6
46	Bricks	Cellar wall	9

Appendix 2

The Archive

The archive consists of:

46	Context records
9	Scale drawings
26	Photographic records
1	Stratigraphic matrix

All primary records are currently kept at:

Archaeological Project Services
The Old School
Cameron Street
Heckington
Lincolnshire
NG34 9RW

City and County Museum, Lincoln Accession Number: 65:95
Archaeological Project Services project code: WHS95

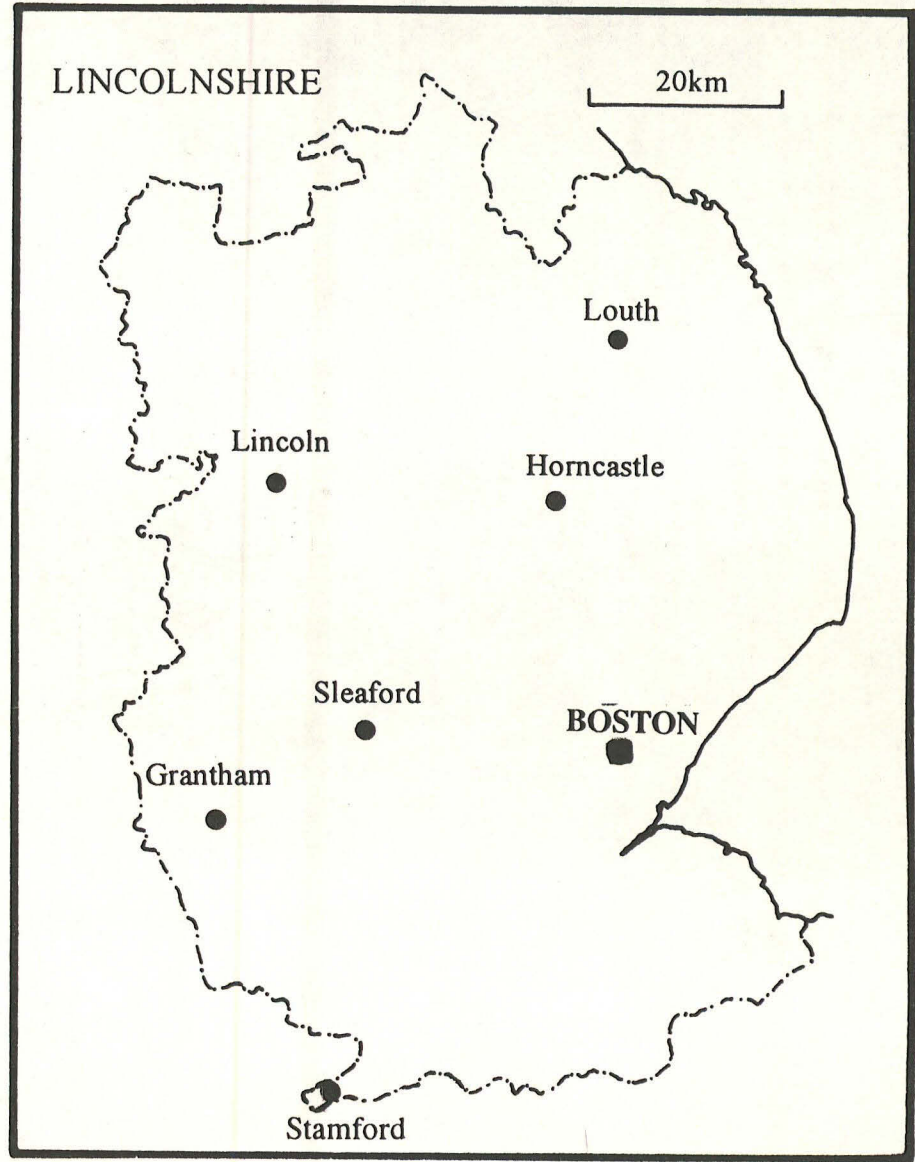
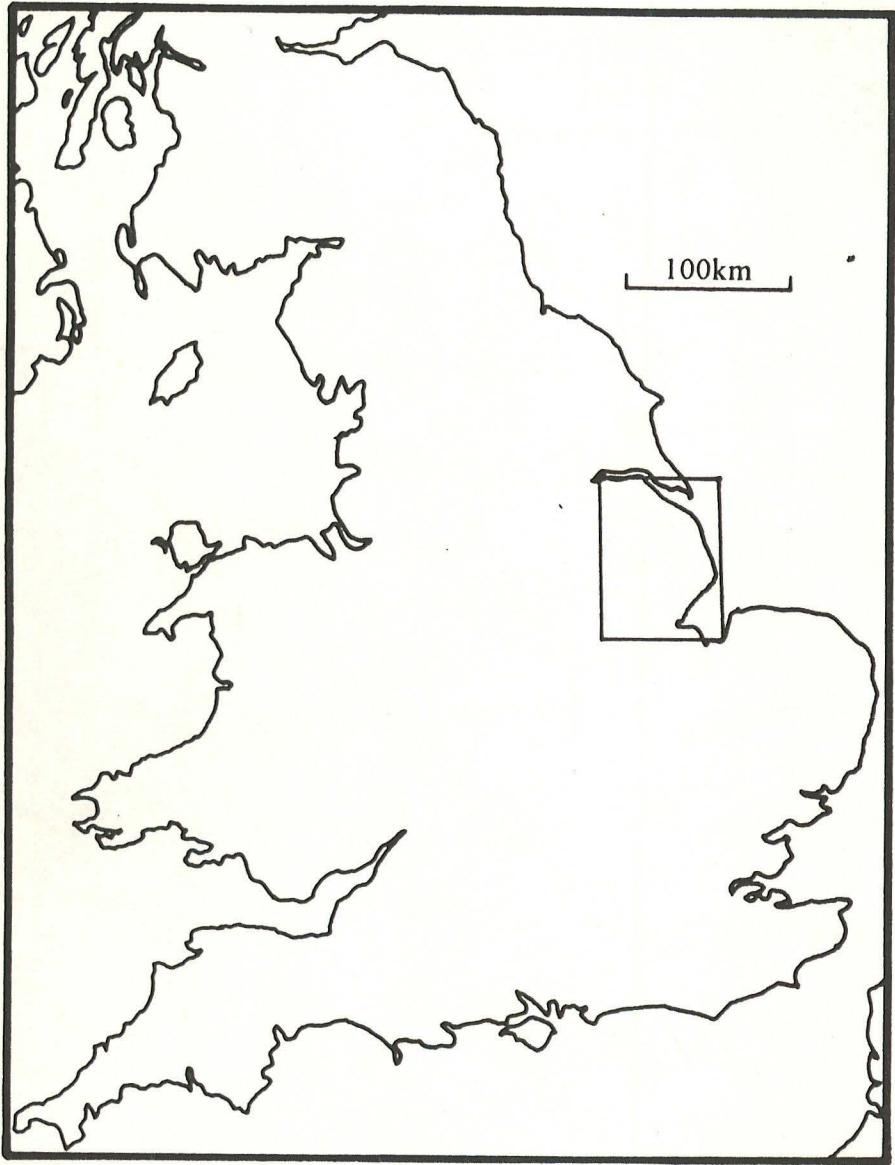
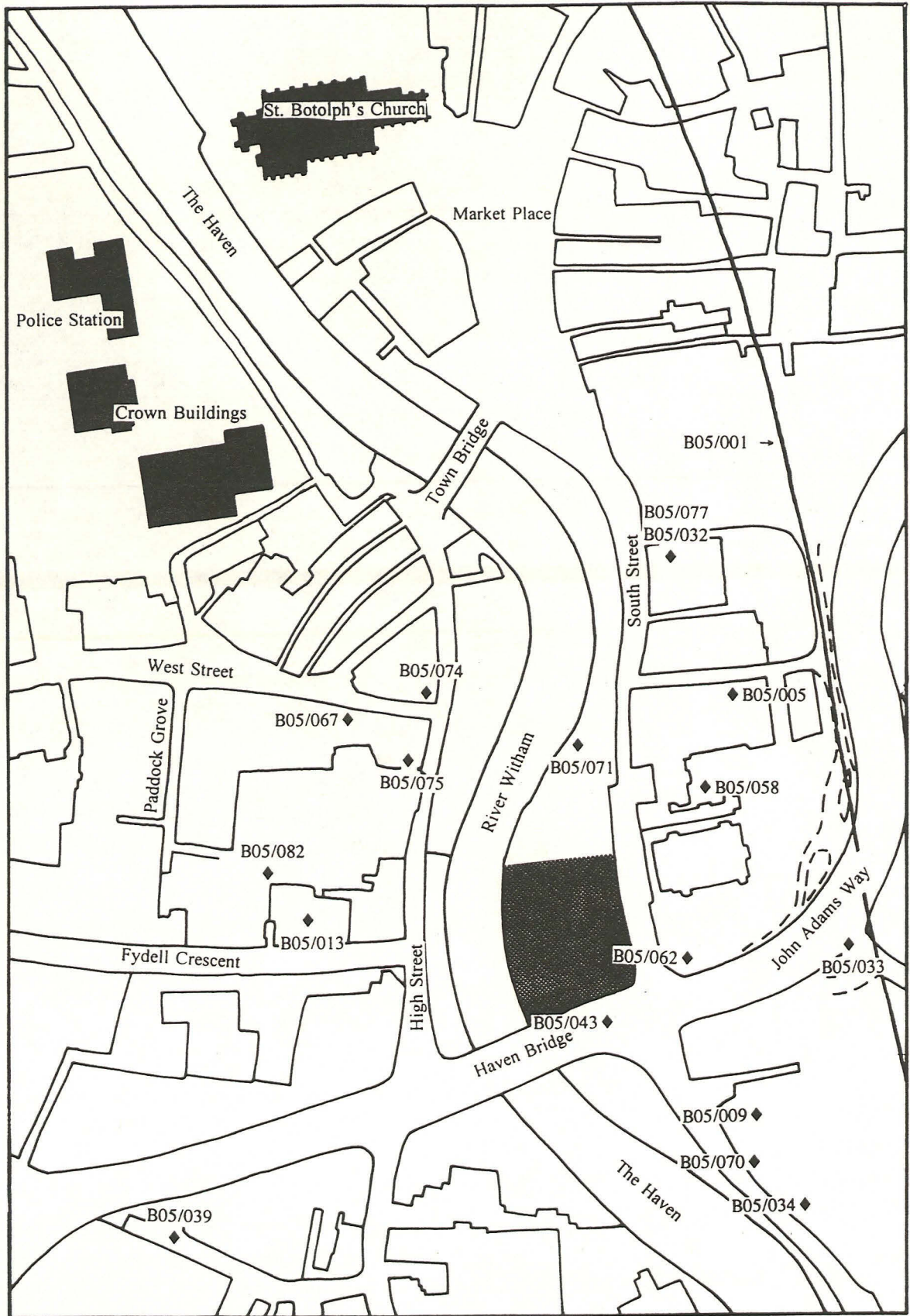


Fig. 1 General Location Plan

Fig. 2 Site Location Plan



■ Investigation Area

Fig. 3 Location of Geotechnical Pits

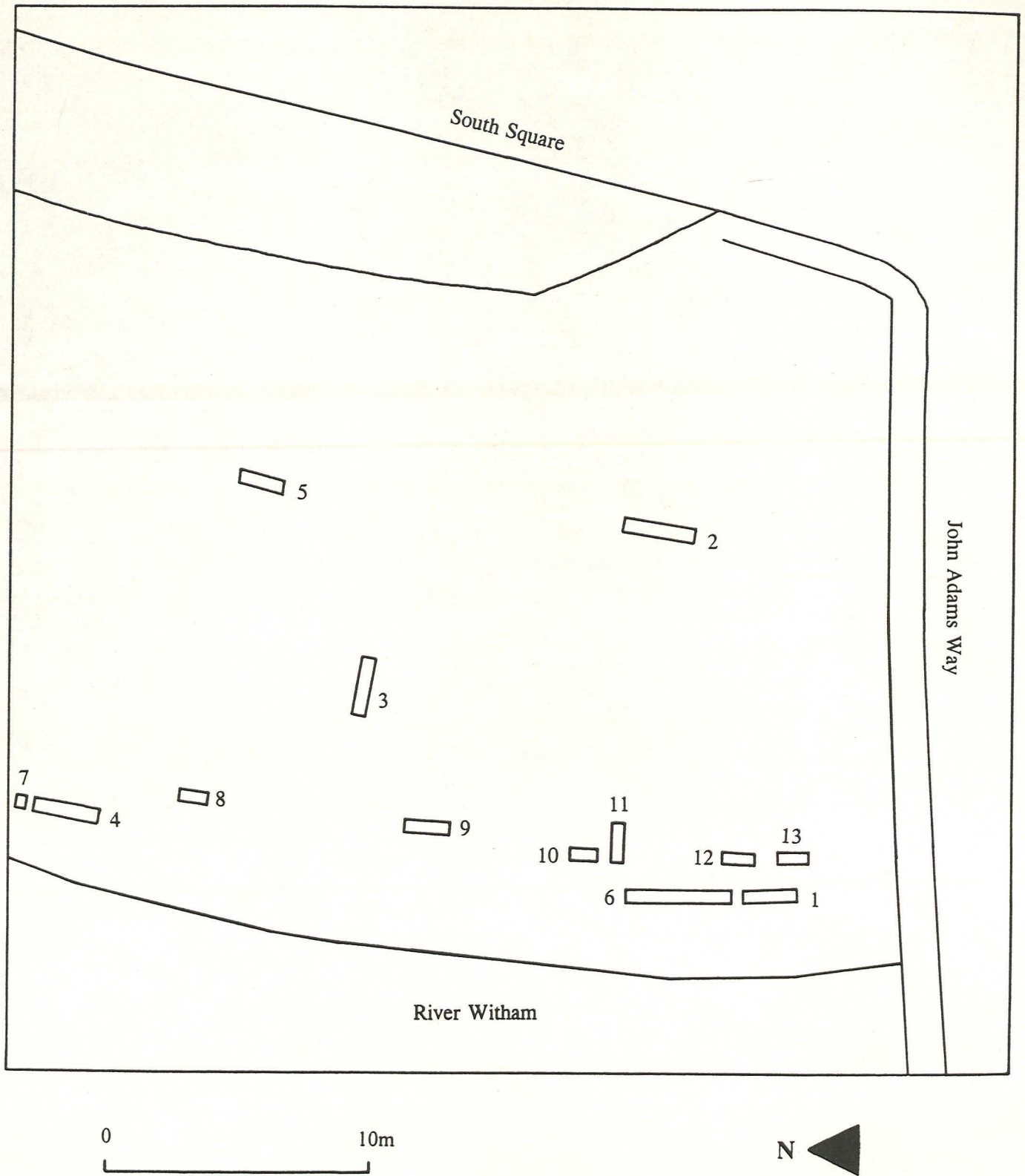


Fig. 4 Representative Sections of Geotechnical Pits 1 - 5

