

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT
2 - 4 HIGH STREET, BOSTON**

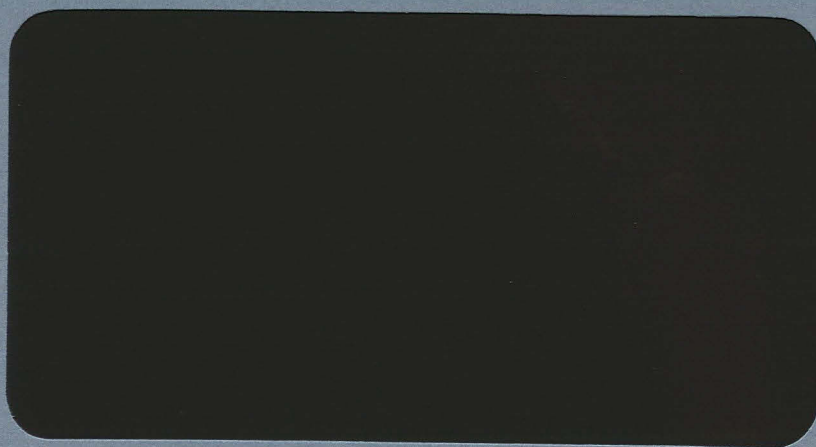
Site Code: HSB98
LCNCC Acc No. 43.98
NGR TF 3277 4398
Planning Ref. BO6/0170/97

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Report prepared for Mountains Building Contractors by
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February 1998

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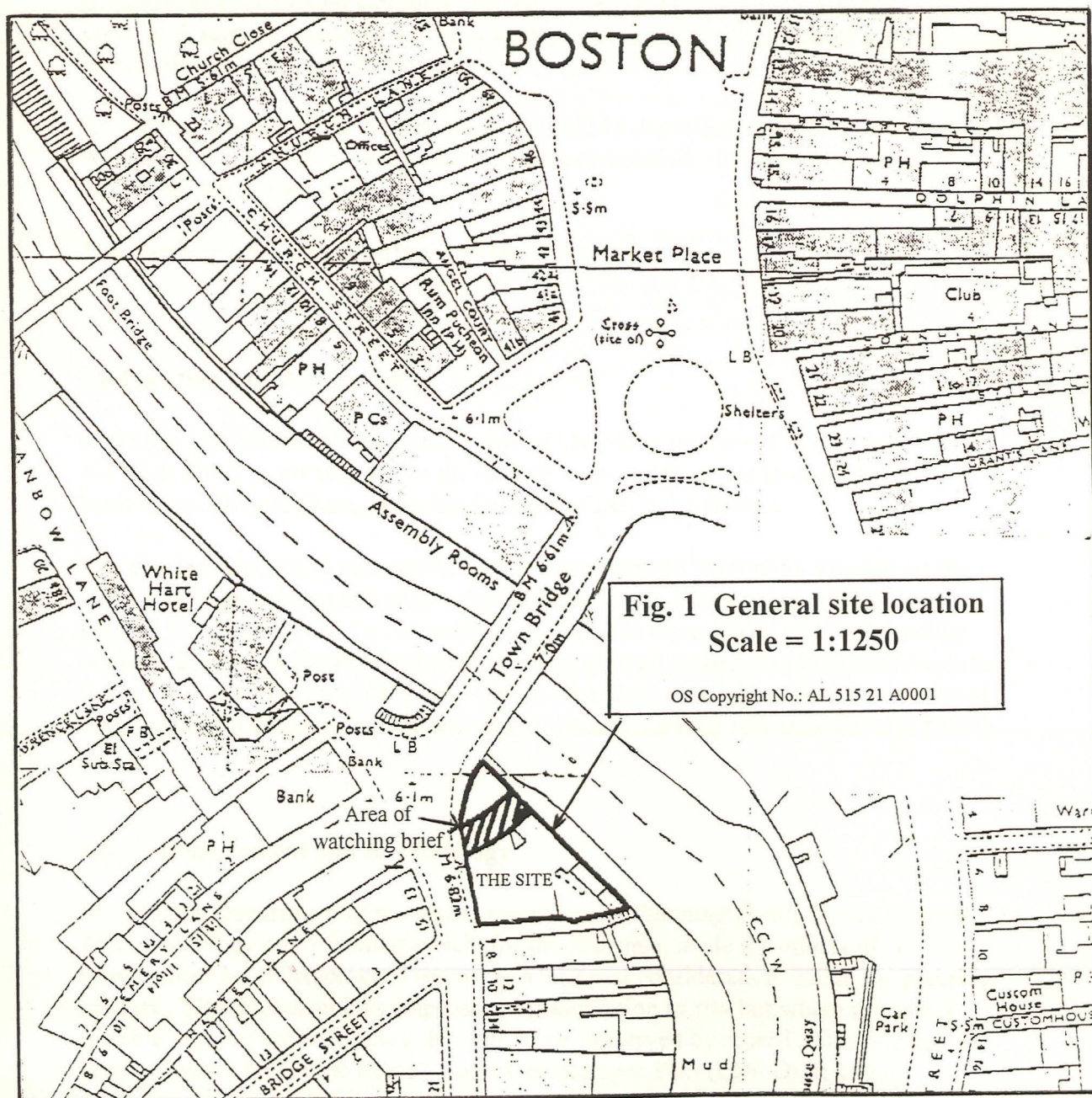
Fig. 1 1: 1250 site location

Fig. 2 General plan of raft foundation, incorporating archaeological deposits exposed

Fig. 3 South-facing section drawing through cellar backfill deposits

Summary

- * *Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) were commissioned by Mountains Building Contractors Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks for a conservatory extension at 2-4 High Street, Boston, Lincolnshire.*
- * *The groundworks associated with the development resulted in the exposure of no significant archaeological remains, and the area of investigation had been significantly reduced by cellars of 19th century design. These cellars had been backfilled in modern times.*



1.0 Introduction

From the 23rd to 28th of January 1998 an archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the construction of a new conservatory adjacent to the public house at 2-4 High Street, Boston, Lincolnshire. The site lies on the west bank of the River Witham, immediately east of High Street.

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) were commissioned by Mountains Building Contractors Ltd to carry out a programme of archaeological observation and recording on all groundworks; to satisfy the requirements of a project brief issued by the Community Archaeologist for Boston Borough Council.

Copies of this report, which details the results of the watching brief, will be deposited with the clients, the County Sites and Monuments Record, the Community Archaeologist for Boston Borough Council, and the City and county Museum, Lincoln. A summary account will be submitted to the editor of the county journal *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology*.

An ordered site archive is in preparation and will be deposited at the City and County Museum, Lincoln within six months of project completion: thereby satisfying all aspects of the project brief.

The watching brief was undertaken by the writer.

2.0 Location and description

Boston is approximately 45km south-east of Lincoln in the fens of south Lincolnshire. 2-4 High Street is situated within the historic centre of medieval Boston on the west bank of the River Witham, immediately south of the Town Bridge.

The development site, a rectangular unit of approximately 96.0m², is situated on the north side of an existing and refurbished building range. Planning permission was granted for the erection of a conservatory on the side elevation of an existing public house at 2 - 4 High Street. The permission was granted subject to a condition requiring that an archaeological watching brief should take place on all groundworks associated with the construction of the conservatory structure (planning reference BO6/0170/97).

3.0 Requirement and methodology

In 1990, the Department of the Environment issued *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16, Archaeology and Planning* which, for the first time, made the effects of development on archaeological resources a 'material consideration' within the planning process. This document lays emphasis on preservation *in situ* but where this is not possible requires archaeological deposits to be 'preserved by record'. This principle has been embraced within the Boston Local Development Plan (LDP Draft 1993).

The Community Archaeologist (acting on behalf of the Borough Council) issued a project brief requiring that an archaeological scheme of works should be undertaken during development. The level of recording deemed appropriate on this occasion was an archaeological watching brief. This has been defined as follows:

'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, 1994 'Standard Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs').

Archaeological monitoring comprised the following elements:

- (i) Observation during foundation trenching, followed by inspection of section and plan surfaces for archaeological features/deposits.
- (ii) Recording of archaeological features and limited excavation to determine, where possible, the date, nature and extent of deposits.

Recording was undertaken using Watching Brief Record Sheets, supplemented with scale drawings (usually at 1:20) where possible, and a comprehensive photographic archive. Observation points were plotted on location plans and overlays which were provided by the clients.

The site was monitored over a four-day period (January 23, 26, 27 and 28).

Soil reduction was carried out using a JCB with back actor, fitted with a 1.2m bucket. The raft footprint was excavated to a depth between 0.9 and 0.95m below modern ground surface.

3.1 Archaeology in Boston and the Local Development Plan (LDP)

Boston Borough Council acknowledges the significance of archaeological remains and has included within its LDP (Draft 1993) conditions regarding the protection or otherwise of buried deposits in association with the granting of planning permission (Sections C 11-13). The LDP states:

"One important factor to be taken into consideration in evaluating development proposals is the impact on archaeological deposits".

The Borough also recognises that, in cases where a site "contains archaeological deposits of particular importance, it will normally be expected that those deposits should remain undisturbed by development"....."However where the development proposal is clearly of greater value to the community than the

preservation of archaeological remains, or where minor proposals will involve minimal damage, planning permission may be granted. When planning permission is granted it may be necessary to safeguard the archaeological interest".

The Boston LDP mirrors advice contained in the Department of the Environment document, *Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology and Planning (PPG16)*. This identifies the need for early consultation in the planning process to determine the impact of construction schemes upon buried archaeological deposits.

4.0 Archaeological and historic background

Relatively few finds of prehistoric date have been recovered from the area of modern Boston, although Holocene deposits of alluvium and silt have, in some areas, masked archaeological horizons and settlements which developed during dry phases. For the Roman period, the archaeological record is similarly sparse, although occasionally artefactual remains are dragged to the surface during deep excavations and, in some areas (eg Fishtoft), settlement remains are found closer to the surface; where sub-surface islands or elevations lie beneath late glacial and subsequent deposits. In connection with the current investigation, Romano-British deposits were recorded during an evaluation in 1996 (Palmer-Brown 1996).

Until recently, there was little direct evidence of human occupation in the Boston area between the end of the Roman period (c. AD500) and the commencement of settlement in the Anglo-Scandinavian period (late ninth/early tenth century). However, in 1995, two eighth century sunken featured buildings (or *Grubenhauser*) were discovered at St Nicholas School, approximately 700m east of the present site. These features were sited on the edge of a roddon (an in-filled creek standing proud of the surrounding landscape) which may have offered protection in an environment which was otherwise hostile to agricultural communities (Palmer-Brown 1996).

By the thirteenth century, the port of Boston was second in importance only to London: in the decade 1279 - 89, for example, Boston paid customs duties one third more than those in London (Pevsner and Harris 1988, 153).

Following the Norman Conquest, economic growth in Boston was stimulated by the introduction of organised trade fairs in the fees of Skirbeck and Wyberton under the direction of Alan Rufus, the Earl of Richmond. In France, these markets were well-established but, for Boston, this was a new phenomenon.

Like all prosperous medieval towns, Boston attracted the settlement of friars: the Dominican, Franciscan and Carmelite orders. Of these, only the Whitefriars or Carmelites built their religious house on the west side of the river (approximately 40m south of the development site).

Despite the archaeological significance associated with this area of Boston, there have been no detailed archaeological excavations on the immediate west side of the River Witham.

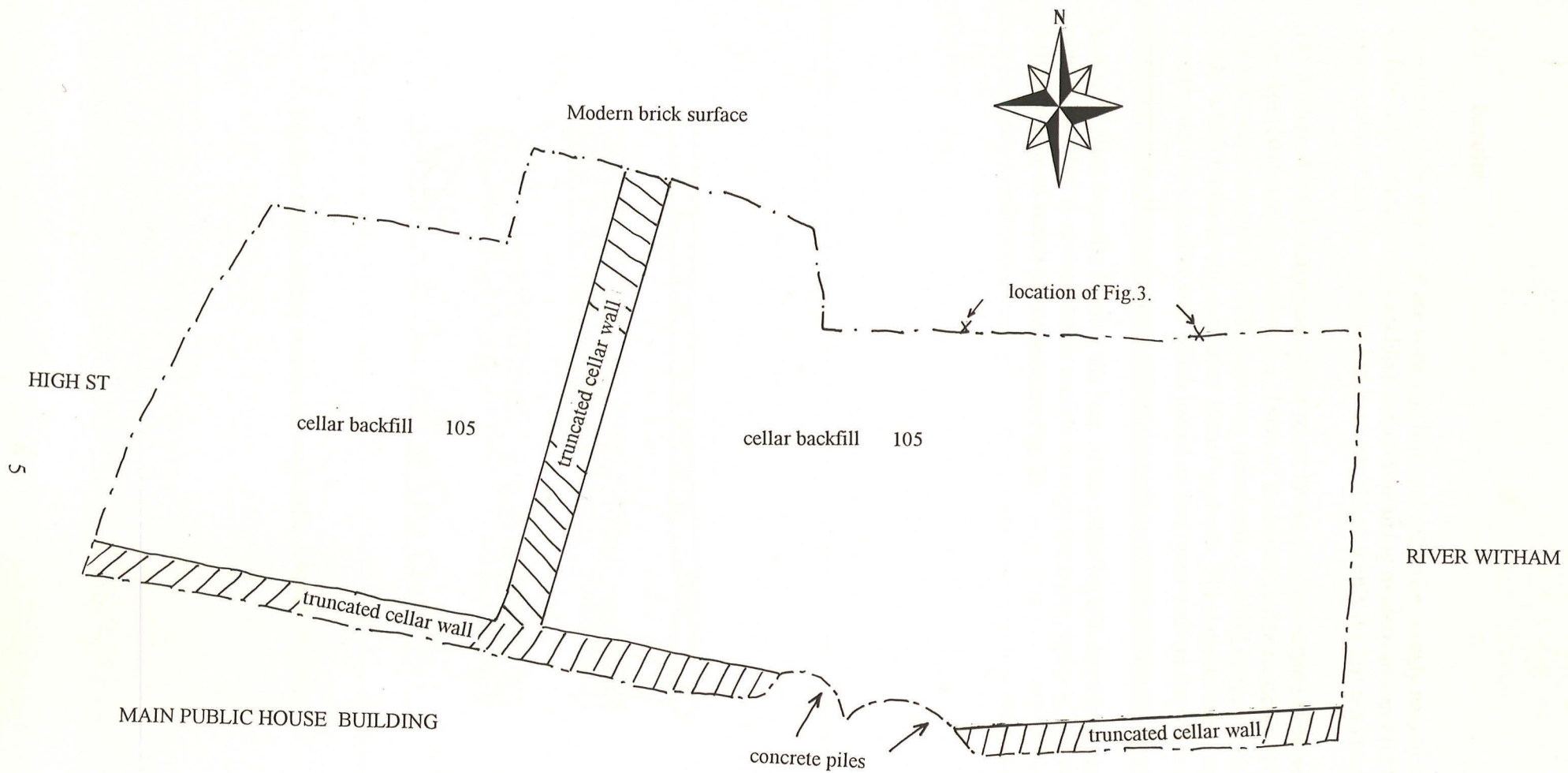


Fig. 2. = Plan of deposits exposed within raft foundations.

5.0 Results

In summary, the results of the watching brief proved to be entirely negative. The sub-surface was dominated by backfilled cellars containing modern soil and rubble (the Site Agent claimed that these cellars had been backfilled within the last ten years).

The modern surface comprised a layer of set bricks (100) overlying reinforced concrete (101), which rested over c. 18cm of limestone rubble hardcore (102). These deposits were removed by JCB, exposing mixed cellar backfill deposits (103), (104), (105), which (collectively) measured 50cm+ in depth. The deposits were separated by a north-south brick cellar wall which joined an east-west wall on the south side of the excavation (Fig. 2).

Soil and rubble deposits forming the bulk of the cellar backfill contained modern drink cans and bottles. A representative section through the stratigraphy is indicated on Fig. 3 (the location of which can be seen on Fig. 2).

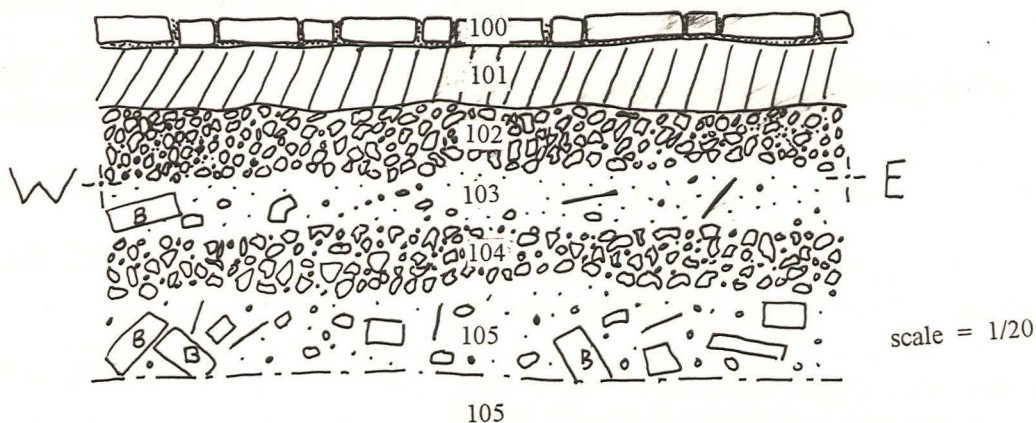


Fig.3. = South facing section through cellar backfill deposits.

6.0 Conclusions and discussion

The watching brief has resulted in the exposure of no significant archaeological, artefactual or ecofactual data, even though the site is located within the heart of the medieval settlement.

In the high medieval period, the site lay within a zone known as the Fair of Holland - an extension to the Fair of Richmond, but on the west bank of the river (Owen 1984, 43). Thus, it would appear that the site was within the very heart of the early medieval trading centre. Recent excavations on the east bank of the river at South Square (unpublished) have demonstrated the exceptionally high potential of waterfront sites in Boston but, on this occasion, any archaeology present has simply been removed/destroyed as a result of relatively modern developments.

7.0 Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks are expressed to the commissioning clients, Mountains Buildings Contractors Ltd. for appointing Pre-Construct Archaeology to undertake the brief.

8.0 References

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9.0 Appendices

9.1 List of archaeological contexts

9.2 Colour photographs

Appendix 9.1 List of archaeological contexts

Context	Description
[100]	Modern brick surface; depth c. 8cm
[101]	Reinforced concrete below brick surface; depth c. 17cm
[102]	Layer of modern limestone hardcore beneath concrete; depth c. 15cm
[103]	Deposit of demolition debris containing brick, tile and mortar; depth c. 23cm
[104]	Deposit of mixed hardcore and rubble below [103]; depth c. 21cm
[105]	Deposit of demolition backfill containing brick, tile, plastic and glass; depth 30cm+ (limit of excavation)

Appendix 2 Colour photographs



P1. General view of foundation footprint during machining, looking west



P2. Representative portion of south section face showing modern cellar backfill