

NAU Archaeology

Report No. 1184

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at Fountain Lane,
Boston, Lincolnshire**

FLB 06

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BAU 1223

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Location: Fountain Lane, Boston, Lincolnshire
District: East Lincolnshire
Grid Ref: TF 327 442
Site Code: FLB06
Museum Accession No: LCNCC :2006.105
Date of fieldwork: 9th and 17th May 2006
OASIS No.: 20935

Summary

An Archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken by NAU Archaeology at Fountain Lane, Boston, Lincolnshire. Modern service trenches had disturbed much of the area examined but some structural remains were recorded in the form of red brick/ lime mortar foundations of a probable nineteenth century date located on the street frontage of Fountain Lane.

1.0 Introduction

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by NAU Archaeology at Fountain Lane, Boston, Lincolnshire, in order to observe and record any archaeological features/deposits unearthed during groundworks taking place there.

The purpose of the works was to install two Pumped Non Return Valves into existing sewer pipes in order to alleviate sewage flooding to the surrounding properties. The work entailed the excavation of two trenches to locate the respective pipes, the fitting of the valves and the construction of manholes in the trenches to allow future access. It was envisaged that the dimensions of the trenches would be approximately 1.5m², with a depth of up to 1.5m, depending at what depth the sewer pipes were located.

Lincolnshire County Archaeology identified the location of the scheme as being within an area of high archaeological potential and therefore Dr. Beryl Lott, Principal Archaeologist at Lincolnshire County Council, recommended that a watching brief was undertaken on all groundworks associated with the scheme.

The fieldwork and report were commissioned by Anglian Water and the contractor carrying out the work was Barhale Construction plc. The site archive is currently held by the City and County Museum, Lincoln, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

2.0 Planning Background

An Environmental Screening Programme was prepared by Jo Everitt (Biodiversity & Heritage Compliance Planner) on behalf of Anglian Water with regard to the Fountain Lane DG5 scheme (Everitt 2006). The sections of the document relevant to the scheme are summarised below.

“Interest Identified: Although the archaeological and environmental consultees have only made specific comments about certain areas of this scheme it should be remembered that this is based on the available information. If any conservation or archaeological points of interest are encountered elsewhere please contact me

(Jo Everitt) ASAP. If an archaeological contractor is on site discoveries can be communicated directly to them.”

“Summary of Interest, Nature Conservation: English Nature (EN) were not consulted as there are no Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Area (SPA) or Ramsar sites within 1km of ... (the) route.” Due to the fact that the scheme was within an urban area Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust were not consulted.

The document then goes on to talk about legislation and procedures to be aware of in the event of encountering wild birds or bats on site. None were encountered.

“Summary of Interest, Archaeology: English Heritage (EH) were not consulted as there are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) within 1km of (the) route.”

3.0 Geology and Topography

The broad, low-lying valley of the River Whitham extends inland from the fenland basin to Lincoln for a distance of c. 30km. It has a surface altitude of generally less than 2.50m OD and is bordered by various deposits of river gravel and boulder clay (Robson *et al.* 1974, 2). The valley itself broadens out from about 0.50km wide near Washingborough, east of Lincoln, to in excess of 10km at the basin. Extensive brackish/marine sedimentation has infilled the valley floor. This, in turn, has been overlain by peat, much of which has been lost towards the southern end of the valley through wastage.

The south-eastern Whitham valley parishes occupy predominantly marine alluvial soils which lie adjacent to ancient river terraces on the eastern side of the valley. These terraces consist mainly of sands and gravels. Essentially, the town of Boston lies more in the Fen basin than the Whitham valley. Soils here are alluvial, largely marine in origin, and are dominated by a silty roddon which is in excess of 1km wide and represents a prehistoric course of the Whitham.

The site at Fountain Lane lies at approximately 5.0m OD on a very gentle east-to-west slope down towards the River Whitham, which lies approximately 150m to the south-west. The site is situated close to the modern town centre; the market place is located some 100m to the south-east.

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

The town of Boston, Lincolnshire, began as the port of St Botolph shortly after the Norman Conquest. In 1203 the citizens were granted a charter by King John. At an unknown time the town on the east bank of the River Whitham was ditched and walled, and in 1285 the walls were repaired. The site with which this report is concerned is situated a few metres within the area enclosed by the wall and ditch complex. The ditch, which is known as the ‘Bar Ditch’, has been located on several occasions. Excavations at Fydell House (TF 3285 4387) by P. Mayes, and also east of the Odeon Cinema, yielded a large range of pottery dating from the 11th century onwards. In all the cuttings made both wall and ditch were found on the expected line although no proof was found that the wall was ever defensive. There are no surface indications of the town wall, gates or ditch. The conduited ditch is now subterranean apart from a concrete emergence spout at TF 32947 43561 and a concrete outlet at TF 32463 44417. Further work and observation during removal

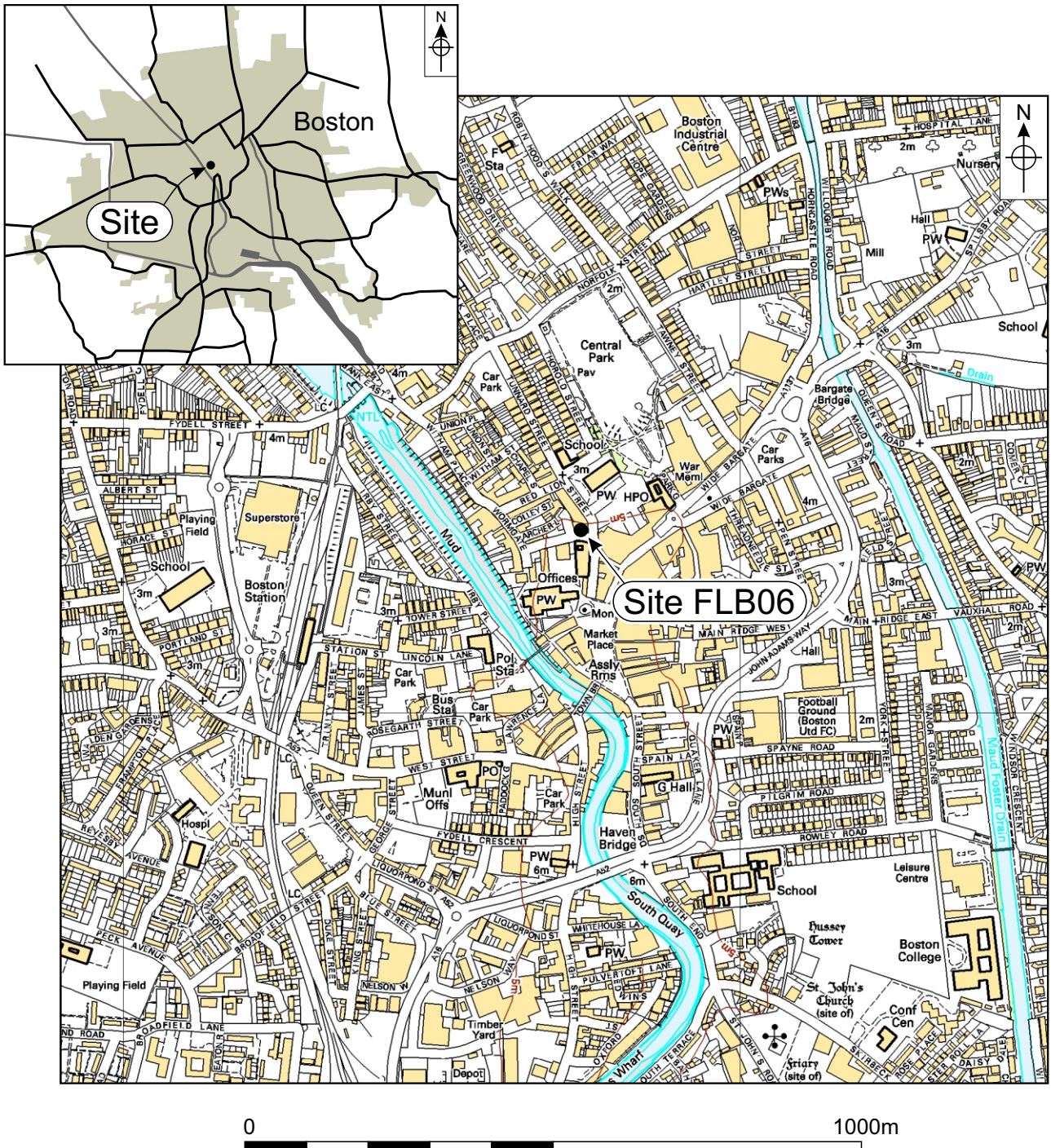


Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:10,000

Local Authority No.100019340

Fig. 1 is based upon the Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 map with the permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office © Crown Copyright 'Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings' Norfolk County Council, County Hall, Norwich (05/01/05). **Reference copy: no further copies to be made.**

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of brickwork for a new drain under the ring road in July 1976 revealed massive ashlar lining of the ditch partly supported on piles. Large quantities of medieval and post-medieval pottery were found, including Saintonge Polychrome. Leather dagger sheaths and a number of shoes were also retrieved (White 1976).

Situated approximately 100m to the south of Fountain Lane is St Botolphs church. With a steeple 82.8m (272 feet) high, St Botolphs is a giant among English parish

churches. Apparently begun in 1309, the church can most easily be described as decorated and perpendicular, in that the steeple of the church is perpendicular and the body decorated (Pevsner and Harris 1964). During excavations at the junction of Fountain Lane and Wormgate, some 100m to the west of this site, medieval remains were observed. The earliest phase of construction on the site was a timber structure with wattle and daub walls, which could be as early as the 12th century. The next phase of occupation is represented by a series of related archaeological features which were probably structural, although the nature of the structure could not be determined without further excavation. A cloak brooch and a gold buckle dating to the late 12th to the 14th century were recovered from this layer. The latest phase of medieval activity was a structure with an internal hearth, perhaps built by a religious order during the 14th century. Pottery was also recovered from these layers (Trust for Lincolnshire Archaeology 1989; SMR 13327)

Excavations also conducted at the junction of Fountain Lane and Wormgate (SMR 13328) revealed the remains of a 17th-century, or earlier, timber-framed building. This building stood until the 1960s and contained an internal well. The neck of a Bellarmine jug was also recovered (Trust for Lincolnshire Archaeology 1989).

The above examples of medieval and post-medieval activity in the immediate vicinity of the watching brief carried out at Fountain Lane are only a representative sample of the wealth of remains and finds which have been located in the area. When these are taken in conjunction with the large number of listed buildings in the locality, dating from the medieval period through to the 19th century, there was real potential for the discovery of further remains of archaeological significance at Fountain Lane.

5.0 Methodology

The objective of this watching brief was to record any archaeological evidence revealed during works associated with the excavation of two small trenches to facilitate the installation of two Pumped Non Return Valves.

The brief required that an archaeologist be on site to monitor all groundworks associated with the scheme.

The two trenches (to be referred to as Trenches 1 and 2) were excavated on separate occasions (9th May 2006 and 17th May 2006 respectively) as work on the first trench (Trench 1) had to be completed before work could begin on Trench 2. The contractors began by marking out the location/position of Trench 1 before breaking out the concrete slab hardstanding with a pneumatic drill. The contractors then began to reduce the trench by hand and at a depth of approximately 0.40m below current ground surface the sewer pipe, aligned north-west to south-east, was located. At approximately the same depth an electrical power cable was uncovered in the north-western corner of the trench. This was carefully avoided by the excavators. The trench was reduced by a further 0.20m to allow fitting of the valve to the sewer pipe (0.60m below current ground level).

The excavation of Trench 2 was a very similar operation. On this occasion the sewer pipe, aligned north-to-south, was located at a depth of 0.30m, although this trench was also reduced to a depth of 0.60m. Again, an electricity power cable was found

to be running east-to-west at the southern end of the trench, as was an earlier ceramic sewer pipe.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using the NAU *pro forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales

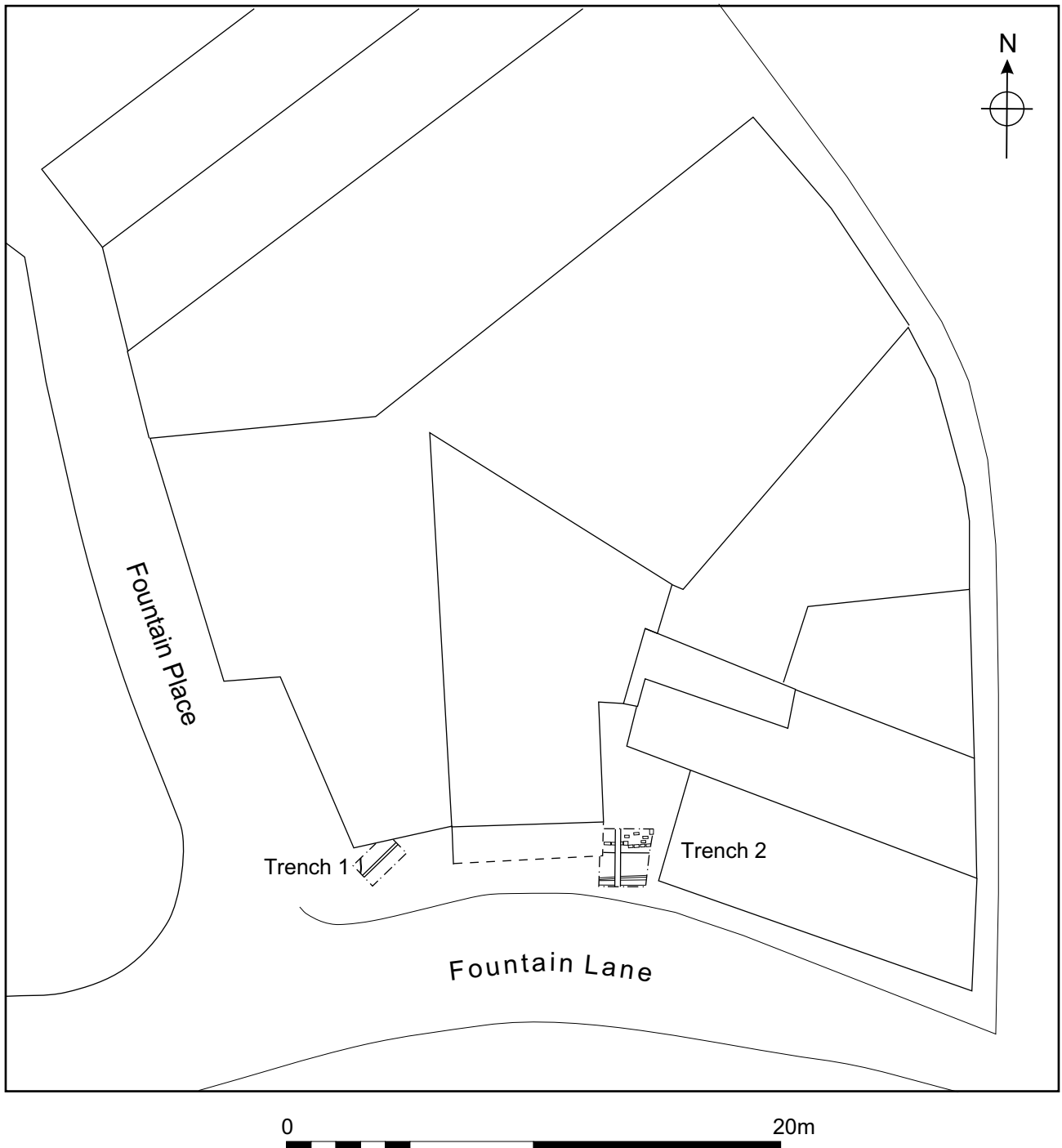


Figure 2. Trench location. Scale 1:250

and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

Due to the lack of suitable deposits, no environmental samples were taken.

Site conditions were good, with parking available nearby affording easy access to the site. The weather was cool but dry.

6.0 Results

6.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was rectangular in plan and measured 1.90m in length and 1.15m in width; it was excavated to a uniform depth of 0.60m. The long axis of the trench was aligned north-east to south-west and extended at an oblique angle from near to the western end of the frontage of a brick-built building dating to c. 1960. This building is currently in use as a fitness centre (Fig. 3). The trench was sealed by a concrete slab hardstanding which had an average thickness of 0.12m. This was removed to reveal a sandy 'Hoggin' [01] (a modern material used as backfill or levelling). This material extended almost to the base of the trench. Beneath this material was a brownish-grey clay silt containing frequent fragments of ceramic building material (chiefly brick) and pieces of lime mortar [02]. The deposit also contained gravel and fragments of decaying wood. This deposit was the material used to backfill the original cut made when the sewer pipe was installed and consisted of a mixture of modern gravel and Victorian demolition rubble which had been redeposited when the trench was backfilled. The material through which the sewer trench had been cut was only visible in the north-west-facing section of the trench (Fig. 4) and consisted of a mixture of a brownish-grey clay silt with frequent red brick/mortar rubble [09]. Structural remains were evident in trench 1 in the form of six courses of red brick walling bonded with a lime mortar [04 and 05]. The walling was visible in sections 1 and 2 and was orientated west-to-east (parallel to the street frontage) with a 90-degree return in the south-west corner of the trench which headed north for 0.40m before being truncated by the sewer pipe cut [08]. The brickwork appeared to be of 19th-century date and probably functioned either as footings for a building of that date or possibly part of a backfilled cellar.

6.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was sub-rectangular in plan and measured 1.50m from north to south and an average of 1.30m from east to west. It was excavated to a uniform depth of 0.60m. The trench was situated at the south-east corner of the fitness centre adjacent to the current street frontage (Fig. 5). On removal of the concrete paving slabs which sealed the trench a sandy Hoggin of varying depth was revealed, similar to that encountered in Trench 1. The Hoggin had been used to backfill an electricity cable trench running from east to west at the southern end of the trench and as a makeup/bedding layer for the modern paving slabs. The primary backfill deposit of the cable trench was identical to that seen in Trench 1 [02]. On removal of the Hoggin the modern plastic sewer pipe to be fitted with a valve was located and was found to be housed in a protective brick-built structure which had to be removed in order to access the pipe. Structural remains built from similar materials to those

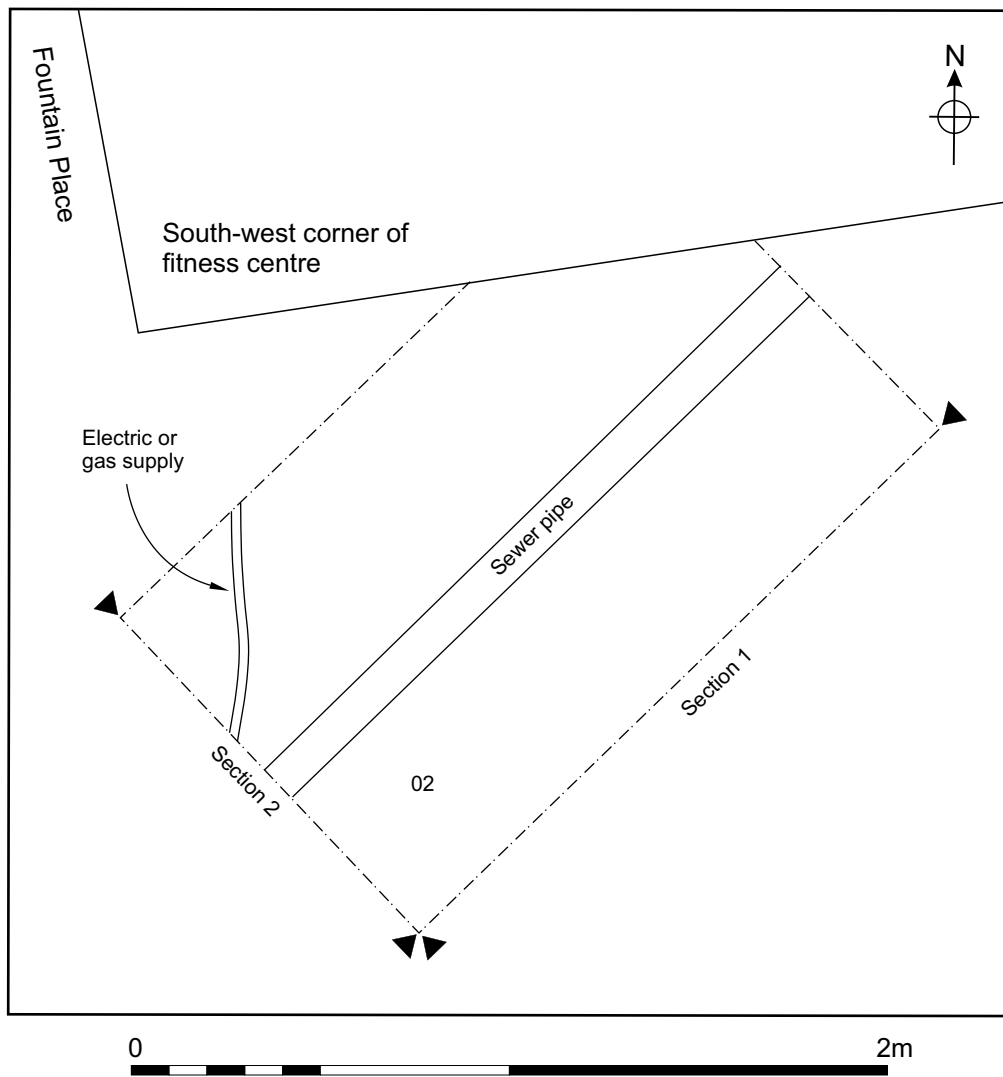


Figure 3. Plan of Trench 1. Scale 1:20

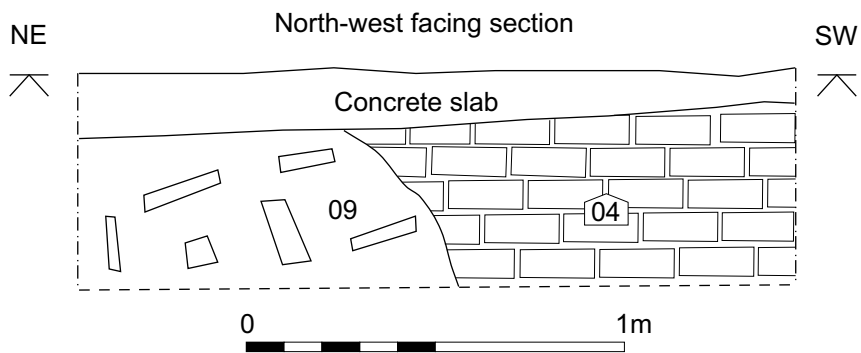


Figure 4. Section 1. Scale 1:20

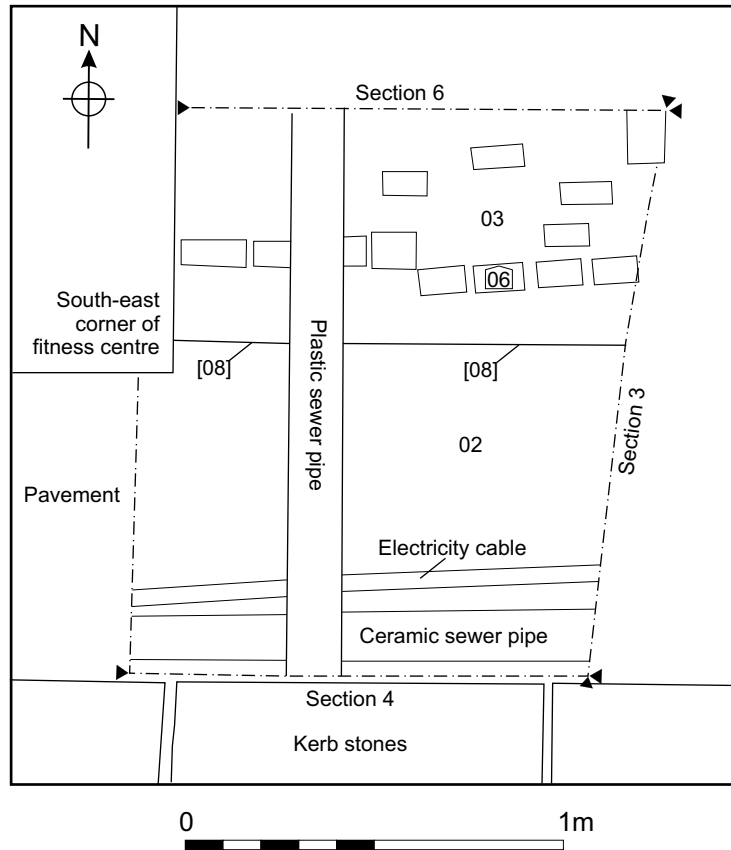


Figure 5. Plan of Trench 2. Scale 1:20

encountered in Trench 1 (red brick bonded with lime mortar) were present in the north-east corner of Trench 2 (Fig. 6). The structure consisted of the southern end of a neatly constructed wall, aligned north-to-south, which extended beyond the limit of excavation to the north [07]. This was abutted by a roughly constructed feature of red brick and lime mortar [06] orientated east-to-west and approximately parallel to the present street frontage. The feature extended beyond the limit of excavation to the east and was truncated by the concrete footing of the fitness centre to the west. A deposit consisting of dark brownish-grey silt containing red brick rubble and lenses of ash and cinders [03] was observed in the south-facing section (section 6; see Fig. 5) and in plan in the northern portion of the trench. The brick fragments present in the deposit were of a similar type to those used in the construction of walls [06]

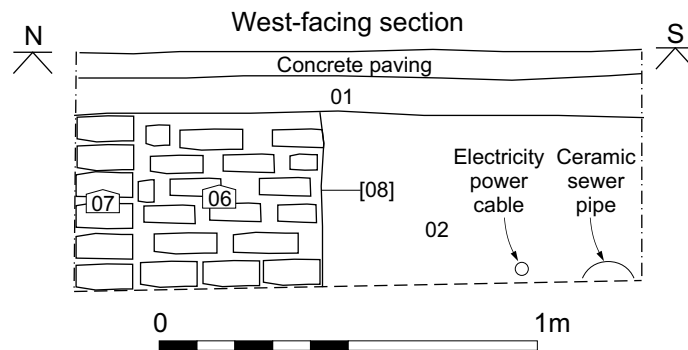


Figure 6. Section 3. Scale 1:20

and [07]. This deposit was interpreted as being demolition material which had been utilised as backfill/levelling when the structure associated with walls [06] and [07] was demolished prior to the construction of the fitness centre in the 1960s. A number of glass shards and a fragment of clay pipe were recovered from this context.

7.0 The Finds

By Lucy Talbot

Clay Pipe

The site produced a single fragment of post-medieval clay tobacco pipe stem (0.002kg).

Glass

Eight shards of post-medieval bottle glass were recovered from the site.

8.0 Conclusions

It is evident from the results section of this report that the excavations carried out during the works were chiefly a re-excitation of existing relatively modern service trenches which had destroyed any archaeological features or deposits once present. The relatively shallow depth at which the sewer pipes were encountered precluded any opportunity to examine any undisturbed deposits which may exist below 0.60m below current ground surface. Although the limited scope of the excavations make any definite interpretation of the structural remains difficult it would seem probable that they represent the truncated foundations of a building which occupied the site previous to the c. 1960s structure presently standing there. The orientation of the remains suggests that the building may well have respected the current



Plate 1. General site shot, looking north-west



Plate 2. North-west facing section, Trench 1



Plate 3. West facing section, Trench 2

street frontage. Although efforts have been made to ascertain the exact age and nature of the building a personal communication from a local man stating that it was formerly the site of a motor vehicle repair garage named 'Cuthberts', of 19th-century date, is all that could be gleaned.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Jenny Young Boston Borough's Archaeological Advisor and Edward Lewis of Conservation services, Lincolnshire County Council, for providing HER information. The finds were processed by Lucy Talbot of Norfolk Landscape Archaeology. The report was illustrated and produced by Julie Curl and edited by Sarah Harrison.

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Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
01	Deposit	Sandy Hoggin	Modern
02	Deposit	Clay silt backfill	Modern
03	Deposit	Ashy demolition rubble	19th century
04	Deposit	E-W brick foundation	19th century
05	Deposit	N-S brick foundation	19th century
06	Deposit	E-W brick foundation	19th century
07	Deposit	N-S brick foundation	19th century
08	Cut	Service trench	Modern
09	Deposit	Brick rubble demolition material	19th century

Appendix 1b: OASIS feature summary table

Period	Feature type	Quantity
Post-medieval (1540 to 1900AD)	Foundation wall	4
	Deposit	2
Modern (1900 to 2050 AD)	Deposit	2

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Quantity	Weight (kg)	Period
03	Clay Pipe	1	0.002	Post-medieval
03	Glass - bottle	8	-	Post-medieval

Appendix 2b: NHER finds summary table

Period	Material	Quantity
Post-medieval (1540 to 1900AD)	Bottle Glass	8 shards
	Clay Pipe	1 fragment

