

LIFWS  
959/97 (LO)

RAPTOR GROUP OF COMPANIES

**27-28 Lincoln's Inn Fields  
-Holborn, WC2  
London Borough of Camden**

NGR TQ 3082 8150

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT  
JULY 1997

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## SUMMARY

*A watching brief on test-pits at 27-28 Lincoln's Inn Fields was carried out by the Oxford Archaeological Unit on behalf of the Raptor Group of Companies on the 5th and 6th of June 1997, prior to their purchase of the building, and on the 5th of August, subsequent to their purchase.*

*Archaeological deposits with good dating evidence were recovered. The deposits appear to post-date 1700, when the north side of Lincoln's Inn Fields was redeveloped. Trenches excavated elsewhere on the site were below modern ground level in nineteenth and twentieth century basements, and no significant archaeological deposits were encountered in these two trenches.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at 27-28 Lincoln's Inn Fields (Fig.1) in the London Borough of Camden on behalf of the Raptor Group of Companies in June and August 1997.
- 1.2 Three trial pits were excavated within the building. Two trial pits were excavated in the nineteenth and twentieth century basements below modern ground level. A single trial pit (Trench 3) to the rear of the property exposed preserved archaeology. This comprised a quantity of early 17th-century pottery in rubbish pits or garden soil. The size of the room, the quantity of spoil excavated and the presence of a concrete floor and a manhole precluded the opening of a large trial pit. The restricted size of the trial-pit therefore prevented the precise interpretation of the lower deposits.
- 1.3 The proposed redevelopment overlies an important historical area of early 17th-century redevelopment just outside the City of London.

## 2 HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The term Prehistoric covers a vast period of time, from about 400,000 BC when people first arrived in the London area, until the arrival of the Roman army in AD 43. During this period the river Thames would have provided a habitat rich in potential for fishing and fowling; with the fertile alluvial deposits on the slopes above underlying gravels, it was a well-drained land good for hunting, gathering and later, agriculture. (Merriman, 1990).
- 2.2 There is no evidence to suggest that there was any substantial pre-Roman settlement in the area and finds from this period are rare, often having been removed by later activity. However, recent excavations have shown that prehistoric settlements were scattered all over the Greater London area (Shofield and Dyson 1980) and the Holborn area has produced evidence of Prehistoric activity. Finds of handaxes from the earliest, Palaeolithic, period have been reported from Holborn and Chancery Lane and a Mesolithic flint artefact was reported from Holborn Hill in 1870.

- 2.3 The town's economic and topographic development was arrested by the devastating Boudiccan revolt of AD 60 but, once recovery was under way, replanning and rebuilding took place on a grand scale. Earlier timber buildings were replaced with stone, and by the early 2nd century *Londinium*, which had become the centre of the province, boasted many grand public buildings, monuments, baths, temples, a governor's palace, a fort, an amphitheatre and an international port. Expansion peaked during the first half of the 2nd century, with the town spreading west to cover an area of approximately one square mile and, around AD 200, the whole area was enclosed by a massive city wall. From the mid-4th century *Londinium*'s stability appears to have weakened, largely as a result of political unrest within the Roman Empire and the intensifying threat of barbarian aggression. It was at this time that a riverside wall was constructed, and the landward defences strengthened.
- 2.4 During the Roman period it was illegal for burials to be sited within towns and consequently it was common practice for Roman cemeteries to be located along the main roads outside the towns, often accompanied by temples or shrines (Merrifield 1969). Extra-mural burials are reported from the area: 'several Roman cremations' were reported in 1922 as having been found with a large quantity of artefacts, possibly from a rubbish deposit, in Fetter Lane, to the east of the proposed development site; further cremations were found just to the east of the development site at Southampton Buildings.
- 2.5 Little is known of the Holborn area in the Roman period. Margary (1967, 57-8) has suggested that both Fleet Street and Holborn may be able to demonstrate Roman origins. Holborn may have formed the first section of the Roman road from Newgate to Silchester, Berks: this road has been fairly definitely identified from Oxford Street westward although its eastward alignment is still speculative. Similarly the Strand, known as Akeman Street during the Saxon period, has been identified as forming part of the main westward route from Ludgate to the Roman settlement at Westminster and thence further west, although whether this alignment followed the modern line of Fleet Street is also speculative.
- 2.6 Decades of archaeological excavation within the City of London had failed to produce evidence of urban settlement following the end of the Roman occupation in the early 5th century AD (Shofield and Dyson 1980). During the early 5th century increased barbarian attacks and internal political divisions led to the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, resulting in the end of Roman rule in Britain. *Londinium*'s administration and urban economy collapsed completely, buildings were deserted, and dark earth, thought to indicate agricultural activity, built up all over the city.
- 2.7 It was not until the distribution of chance pottery finds around the Strand area was studied (Vince 1984) that it became evident that it was here that the Saxon town of *Lundenwic* was to be found. The presence of the town is first attested to by coins minted in AD 630 inscribed LONDUNIV, and by 731 it had grown to such an extent that Bede described it as 'an emporium of many people coming by land and sea' (Biddle 1984).

- 2.8 It is possible that the settlement originated as a small, seasonally occupied market place, centred on the Strand and the edge of the river (Cowie and Whitehead 1989). Recent excavations have shown that, by the end of the 7th century, it had grown to cover an area of 60 hectares or more.
- 2.9 Little Saxon material has been recovered from this area and no identifiably Saxon levels have been encountered during any of the excavations in the vicinity of the site. The church of St Andrew, Holborn which lies c. 600 m to the east of the proposed development site is first mentioned in AD 959 (Vince, 1990: 62) suggesting that the area may have contained some Late Saxon settlement although so far, little evidence for this has been recovered.
- 2.10 The development site lies outside the medieval city walls, which generally follow the line of the Roman walls, and is positioned between the two main roads out of London to the west. Both Fleet Street and Holborn can probably demonstrate Saxon, if not Roman, (see above 2.4-5) foundations and development began to spring up along these two roads from at least the twelfth century onwards. By 1128 the Knights Templars had settled in Holborn on a site at the northern end of what was to become Chancery Lane, (which they are generally credited as having laid out in the 1160s). The early Templar foundation comprised a round church (The Old Temple) and churchyard as well as houses, stables and gardens. In 1161 they sold this land and the houses to the Bishops of Lincoln and moved south to the site of the New Temple, off Fleet Street.
- 2.11 Although the area became increasingly popular as the site of large out-of-town houses, often for Bishops and Priors, the development site itself is to be situated either in fields or at the back of house-plots. Map evidence does not allow a greater degree of precision. Ralph Neville, Bishop of Chichester and Chancellor to Henry III acquired land to the east and west of Chancery Lane in 1226 (although his house, which was located on the west side of the street on the site of what is now Lincoln's Inn, is only first mentioned in 1291) and the Bishop of Ely constructed a large house, Ely Place, to the north of Holborn between 1286-90. Henry III had established a House for converted Jews here in 1231.
- 2.12 A further stimulus to development came in 1234 when Henry III ordered schools of Law within the city to be closed. This forced an exodus of lawyers and their students beyond the City walls conveniently close to the Treasury and Exchequer, which by this time had become established in the New Temple. This led to the establishment of the Inns of Chancery, the medieval and later Inns or colleges of lawyers which grew up along the Strand and Holborn. By 1300 the three principal north-south roads (Chancery Lane, Fetter Lane and Shoe Lane) between Holborn and the Strand had become established. Nevertheless, it is likely that much of the land at the rear of the properties lining the road at this time were still undeveloped gardens and fields. Excavations to the east of the proposed development, in what would appear to have been the gardens of Barnard's Inn, revealed a layer of deep garden soil which sealed the Roman deposits and remained untouched until the construction of houses on the site in the 17th century.

- 2.13 The site was probably still undeveloped as late as the end of the sixteenth century and this is suggested on Elizabethan maps of the area such as Agas (1562) and Braun and Hogenberg (1572) (Fig. 2), which show development along Holborn, Fleet Street, Chancery Lane and Fetter Lane with the area at the rear of the properties still as either open fields or gardens.
- 2.14 Stow, in his 1600 Survey of London states that the land between Fetter Lane and Chancery Lane is 'builded through with many fayre houses' (1961 edition, Vol II, 26) which is certainly visible by the time of the next detailed maps of the area (Hollar, 1658; Newcourt and Faithorne, 1658) (Figs 3a & 3b). In the early 17th century William Newton of Bedfordshire purchased the fields to the west of Lincoln's Inn with the intention of developing the area, which had previously consisted of smaller and meaner houses than exist now. Between 1629 and 1643 he obtained the property and the appropriate licences to construct houses for his Lincoln's Inn Fields development.
- 2.15 By the mid-17th century the entire area around Lincoln's Inn Fields is shown as developed. A contrast exists between Newcourt and Faithorne (1658) and Hollar's map (1658) - the latter (Fig. 3a) shows the development site standing apart prior to the creation of Whetstone Park. In the Hollar map Nos. 27/28 and neighbouring No. 29, are the only developed properties in the north-east corner of Lincoln's Inn Fields.
- 2.16 The earliest houses are on the west side of Lincoln's Inn Fields. These were mostly built by 1641, along what is referred to as West Row (Morgan, 1682) (Fig. 4) or Arch Row (Horwood, 1799) (Fig. 5). The north side of Lincoln's Inn Fields, Newman's Row (Morgan, 1682) or Holborn Row (Horwood, 1799) was laid out anew from the early 18th century. This followed the demolition of properties visible on Morgan's 1682 map of London (Fig. 4). The erection of these properties had followed the Great Fire in 1666, when Holborn was targeted as an area ripe for development, as it had not been physically affected by the Great Fire.
- 2.17 Leakes' 1667 Survey of London immediately after the Great Fire displayed the quantity of property affected by the Fire which raged up to Fetter Lane. By and large it left properties to the west unaffected. Although some houses in Fetter Lane and to the west were pulled down to prevent the fire spreading, Leakes' map indicates that the properties occupying the development site were unaffected.
- 2.18 The post-1658 map sources indicate that the development site was at the heart of increasing urbanisation outside of the City. Little has changed in the way of property boundaries though the size of the buildings within plots has increased.

### 3 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 OAU was approached by the Raptor Group of Companies to assess whether there was preserved archaeology on the development site. An archaeologist was required to oversee excavation carried out by contractors to the Raptor

Group of Companies. This work was carried out by hand. In all trenches York Stone flags or floorboards were lifted and, where appropriate, concrete was broken; subsequent excavation was carried out under full archaeological supervision.

- 3.2 Contexts were defined, plans and sections were drawn, and spoil heaps examined according to OAU procedure (Wilkinson, 1990). Trenches were of varying size (see Section 4).

## 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

- 4.1 Three trenches were excavated. Trench 1 was located in the rear basement of the building; trench 2 was also located in a basement; and trench 3 was located in a room to the rear of the building, looking on to Whetstone Park.

### Trench 1 (Fig. 6)

- 4.2 Trench 1 was situated well within the natural gravel (103) below ground level. The hole excavated by the contractors measured 1.30 m by 2.30 m. Excavated to investigate the subsoil, the trench uncovered a nineteenth century pit (105) cut into the gravel, measuring 1.30 m by 1.45 m. The pit was backfilled with a dirty gravel (104) containing broken bottles and ceramic building material (CBM). The pit was at least 1.5 m deep. This was overlain by a layer of bedding (102), a greyish brown silty clay containing CBM. Overlying the bedding were York Stone flags.

### Trench 2 (Fig. 6)

- 4.3 Trench 2 was measured 1.50 m by 2 m and was excavated to the concrete (203) at a depth of 0.30 m below the current floor surface. On the concrete floor low walls in honeycomb bond (202) were laid. These walls supported the York Stone flags (201) of the floor.

### Trench 3 (Figs. 7 & 8)

- 4.4 Trench 3 measured 0.80 m by 1.6 m (Fig. 7) at the top and c. 0.30 m by 0.20 m at the bottom; it was excavated to a depth of 2.25 m (Fig. 8). At this depth excavation uncovered a mid-brown silty sand (315) containing 30% subangular flints. Despite the difficulty in excavating this deposit, as a result of the confined excavation conditions, this layer was confidently interpreted as natural. There was an absence of both pottery and charcoal, which might indicate archaeological activity, in the deposit.
- 4.5 This silty sand (315) was overlain by a dark grey-brown sandy silt (314), 0.28 m thick. This deposit contained larger, but fewer, subangular flints than 315, and had the appearance of a natural deposit, in the order of a naturally accumulated sub-soil, as in this deposit there was also an absence of pottery and charcoal.
- 4.6 Overlying 314 was the first of the 18th-century garden deposits. A dark grey sandy silt (313), 0.18 m thick, was observed and contained small quantities of remains. Oyster shell (2%), CBM (2%) and charcoal (1%) constituted the archaeological activity in the layer. A similar, though more loose and more

substantial (0.40 m thick), deposit (312) overlay 313. This deposit was notable for the increased quantity of charcoal and CBM, as well as lensing within the deposit - this is suggestive of small-scale localised dumping of household and garden refuse.

- 4.7 This dark grey-brown sandy silt (312) was overlain by a blackish-brown sandy loam deposit (308). This layer is best described as a garden soil, though the necessarily small size of the trench does not preclude it being the fill of a pit. A quantity of post-medieval pottery and bone was recovered during excavation, the majority of which came from the sealed context (308) which, from the pottery evidence, can be assigned a date at the turn of the eighteenth century.
- 4.8 Overlying the garden soil was a deposit (307) which contained some of the blackish brown sandy loam mixed with the probably redeposited silty clays and sands (306) above 307. This deposit (307) was 0.15 m thick and may represent an interface between 308 and 306. The overlying deposit (306) was a blackish brown heterogeneous layer, 0.17 m thick, composed of silty clays and sands containing 20% mixed unsorted gravels and CBM.
- 4.9 Above 306 was a more homogeneous deposit of silty clay (305), also containing CBM, though in far greater quantities (c. 40%), over which lay a lens of sandy ballast (304). The combined thickness of these two deposits was 0.20 m thick, though the maximum thickness of 305 was also 0.20 m.
- 4.10 Cutting the pre-20th century deposits was flat-based, vertically sided construction cut (309). Within this cut a brick structure (311) had been erected and subsequently had concrete (310) poured over it after having been partially backfilled by 303, a thick deposit of hardcore, 0.32 m thick, containing CBM and plaster. This deposit was sealed by a concrete floor (302), 0.06 m thick, which was overlain by a wooden floor.

## 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 When discussing the street names around Lincoln's Inn Fields, it has proved more straight-forward to use those on Morgan's map of 1682, rather than to use each mapper's own street-names, even if this be anachronistic.
- 5.2 The sixteenth-century map of Braun and Hogenbers (1572) shows Lincoln's Inn Fields bounded to the south and west by Drury Lane, to the east by Lincoln's Inn and to the north by buildings fronting onto Holborn. Lincoln's Inn Fields were open in the late 16th century. The fields were still undeveloped when William Newton obtained his licence in 1641, although development surrounded them. Excavation did not recover any evidence associated with the use of Lincoln's Inn Fields as a suburban field-system.
- 5.3 Newton's development of the fields in this large area can be best understood by looking at Hollar (1658) and Newcourt and Faithorne (1658), whose maps predate the Great Fire. Both maps show an already very densely occupied suburb, whereas less than a century before, the area north of Covent Garden was



fields and Holborn was the north-east edge of the city. Both maps also show a differing degree of development on the north side of Lincoln's Inn Fields. Hollar's map shows the development site standing alone apart from the house on the corner of Lincoln's Inn Fields and Great Turnstile. Newcourt and Faithorne's map shows Newman's Row as a terraced development.

- 5.4 Morgan's post-Great Fire map (1682) shows Lincoln's Inn Fields both in plan and in 'bird's eye': the shape of the land-plots and the size of the buildings are indicated in plan on Portugal Row and West Row; whereas Newman's Row is depicted as an unruly mob of rooflines and scattered doors and windows in 'bird's-eye'. It may well be that the more piecemeal development which seems to characterise Newman's Row is recorded cartographically, if only inadvertently. Certainly there are no houses of great intrinsic architectural merit to rival Lindsey House or Newcastle House - as on West Row. Rather, Newman's Row would appear to have been untouched by Newton's development.
- 5.5 Observations carried out in the test-pits revealed post-medieval deposits in one area (Trench 3) at the rear of the building. The pottery recovered from these deposits comes from either garden soil or from pits. The precise nature of these deposits remains somewhat uncertain but the former would appear to be the most likely hypothesis.
- 5.6 The pottery in these deposits dates to the beginning of the great eighteenth-century construction boom in London, which is best evidenced along Newman's Row by the current No. 1 Lincoln's Inn Fields. All the other buildings along Newman's Row are later than the material sealed below the rear of 27 Lincoln's Inn Fields.
- 5.7 The presence of stratified deposits with datable material suggested the possibility of preservation of archaeology in this localised area to be high. As noted above in regard to Barnards Inn (2.12); there is a precedence of the preservation of earlier remains below 18th-century deposits elsewhere in the surrounding area.
- 5.8 The deposits recovered during excavation can therefore be associated with the buildings shown on the Horwood map with certainty, and possibly those on the Morgan map, also. However the limited extent of the trial pits cannot reliably confirm the absence of earlier archaeological deposits across the site.

Gwilym Williams  
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July/August, 1997

# Appendix A

## Bibliography and List of Sources Consulted

### Archive Sources

English Heritage List of Scheduled Ancient Monuments: Greater London, dated 31st March 1994. Checked to ensure that no additional Scheduled Monuments had been added as at 21st June 1996.

Greater London Sites and Monuments Record.

National Monuments Record held by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England at Swindon.

Historic maps and documents held by the OAU, Bodleian Library (Oxford), Greater London Record Office and the Guildhall Library.

Unpublished Archaeological Excavation Records held by the Museum of London Archives Service.

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and Hibbert, C
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### Map Sources

- 'Agas' map of London (c.1553)
- Braun and Hogenberg's Map of London (1572)
- Hollar's map of London (1658)
- Newcourt and Faithorne's map of London (1658)
- Leake's Survey of London after the Great Fire (1667)
- Ogilby and Morgan's Map of London (1682)
- Horwood's Map of London (1799-1819)

## Appendix B

### Table of Contexts

Context	Type	Dimensions	Thickness	Comment	Findings
101	layer	all of room	0.06-0.10m	York Stone Paving	no
102	layer	all of room	0.20m	bedding for 102	no
103	deposit	all of room	unknown	natural gravel	no
104	fill	1.45x1.30m	1.5m	fill of 105	not retained
105	cut	1.45x1.30m	1.5m	pit	no
201	layer	all of room	0.06-0.10m	York Stone Paving	no
202	structure	all of room	0.30m	low brick wall in honeycomb bond	no
203	layer	all of room	unknown	concrete floor	no
301	layer	all of room	0.015-0.02	floorboards	no
302	layer	all of room	0.06-0.08m	concrete floor	no
303	fill/layer	present in all sections	0.30m	modern hardcore	not retained
304	layer	0.65m (E-W)	0.01-0.08m	ballast	no
305	layer	all sections	0.11-0.20m	ballast & CBM	not retained
306	layer	all sections	0.17m	dumping	not retained
307	layer	all sections	0.15m	interface	yes; 18th cent pottery
308	layer	all sections	0.15m (obs)/ 0.45m+	garden soil/ possible pit fill	yes; 18th cent pottery
309	cut	0.80x0.60m+	0.80m	construction cut for 311	no
310	deposit	not recorded	0.60m	concrete deposit	no
311	structure	0.80x0.60m	0.80m	water or sewage junction	no
312	layer	1.20x0.40m	0.40m	garden soil	no
313	layer	not recorded	0.18m	garden soil	no
314	layer	not recorded	0.28m	natural subsoil	no
315	layer	not recorded	0.05m+	natural	no

## Appendix C

### Post-Medieval pottery from Lincoln's Inn Fields, WC2, London, (LIF97)

By Nigel Jeffries

The pottery assemblage from Lincoln's Inn Fields comprised 18 sherds with a total weight of 583 grammes. The assemblage was quantified using Museum of London post-Roman fabric and form codes to ensure consistency with published works in the city.

CONTEXT	NO	WT	MOLAS	FORM	WAREDATE	T.P.Q
307	1	17	PMR		c. 1580-1800	c. 1701 +
307	1	153	TGW G	CHARG	c. 1701-1711	c. 1701 +
308	1	19	BORDG		c. 1550-1700	c. 1700 +
308	1	7	BORDY		c. 1550-1700	c. 1700 +
308	3	30	FREC		c. 1550-1700	c. 1700 +
308	1	66	LONS	MUG	c. 1670-1900	c. 1700 +
308	1	34	PMR	PIP	c. 1580-1800	c. 1700 +
308	1	46	PMR		c. 1580-1800	c. 1700 +
308	1	77	PMBL	TYG	c. 1580-1700	c. 1700 +
308	1	30	SUND	DISH	c. 1700-1800	c. 1700 +
308	3	22	TGW ?		c. 1613-1800	c. 1700 +
308	1	27	TGW D	CHARG	c. 1630-1680	c. 1700 +
308	3	55	TGW A	CHARG	c. 1612-1650	c. 1700 +
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>583</b>				

The fabrics are all common finds in London and its environs and represent a typical 18th century group from the city (Orton and Pearce, 1984; Blinkhorn and Jeffries, forthcoming). Their general sources can be grouped into three categories: Firstly, the wares produced in and around the capital, including red earthenwares (PMR), London stoneware (LONS) and Tin-glazed earthenwares (TGW). The last-named category is divided into ten economic and art-historical groups based on the evidence from the excavations at Southwark and Lambeth (Orton, 1988). The second group is English imports, which includes Border wares (BORD), post-medieval black-glazed earthenwares (PMBL) and Sunderland coarseware (SUND). Thirdly, there are the small quantities of Frechen stoneware from Germany, which represents the foreign imports category.

The range of wares present suggests that there was little activity at the site before the post-medieval period. The presence of clay pipe in both contexts confirms the pottery dating of no earlier than c. 1630-40+. The small size of the assemblage means that it can provide little other than a chronology and an insight into the range of pottery in use at the time.

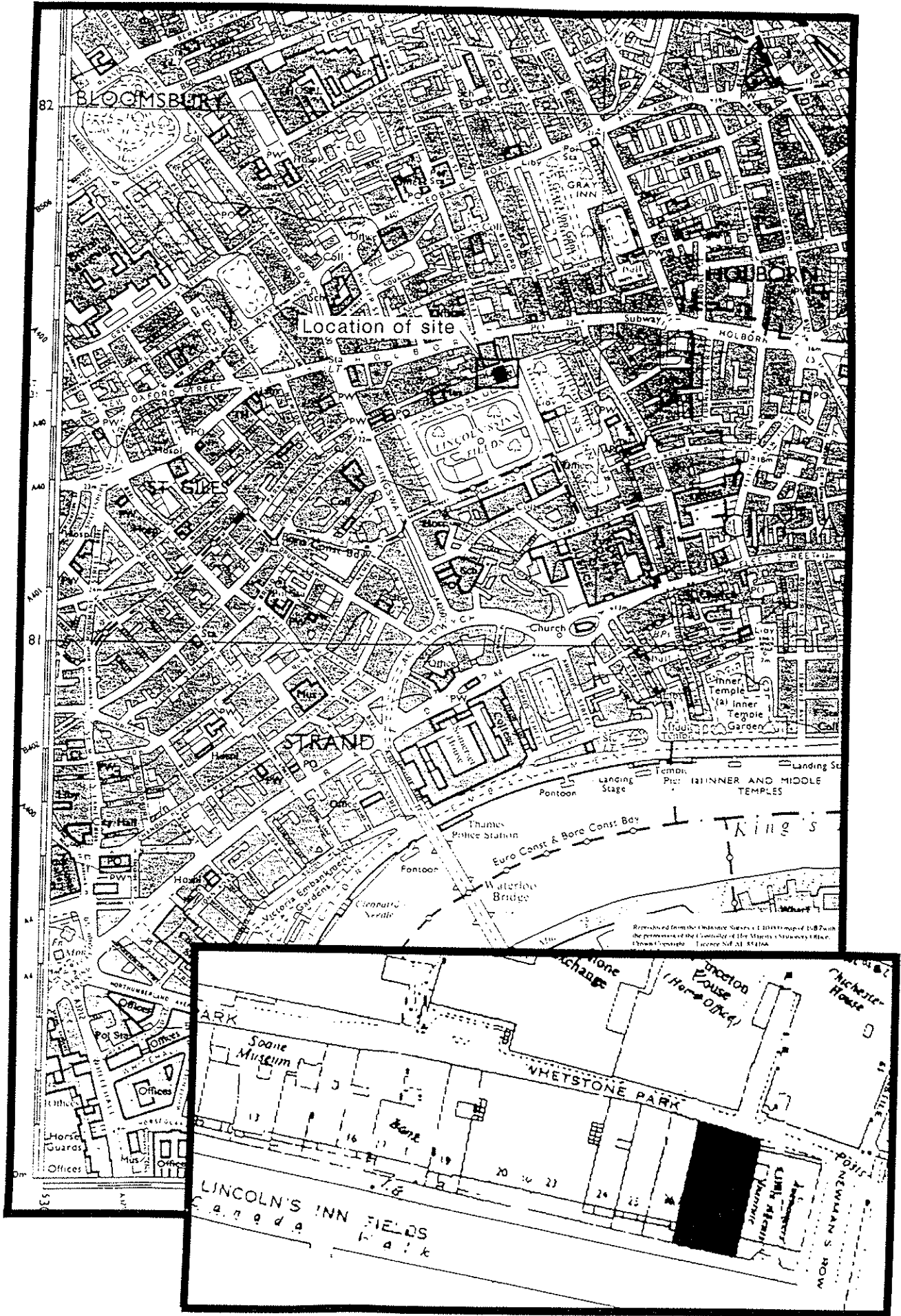
### Bibliography

Blinkhorn, P and Jeffries, N, forthcoming

Post-Roman pottery from the Tower of London Environs scheme

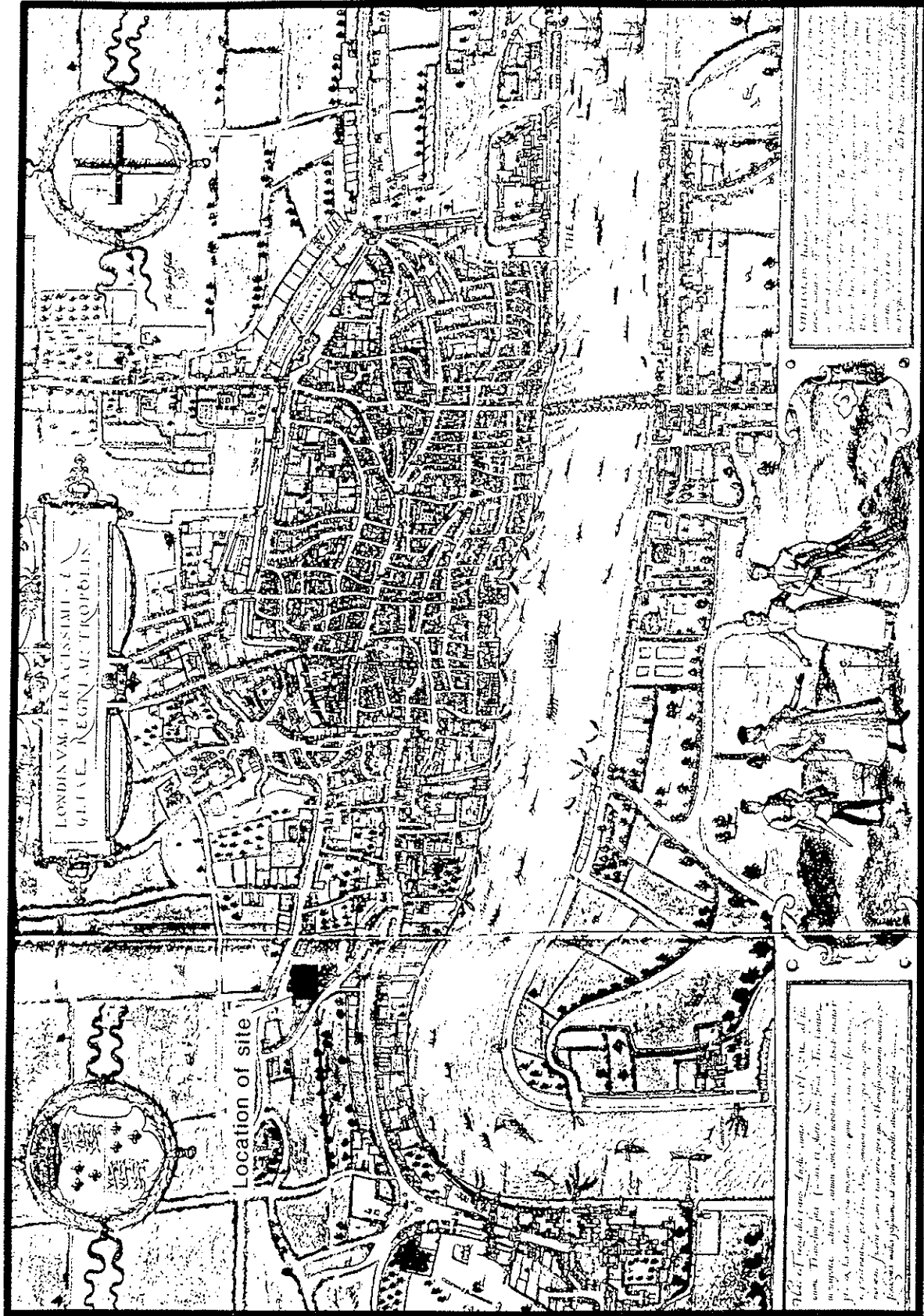
Orton, CR, and Pearce, JE, 1984

Post-Roman pottery in Excavations in Southwark and Lambeth, 1973-9 London & Middlesex Archaeol Soc Monog 3, 295-362



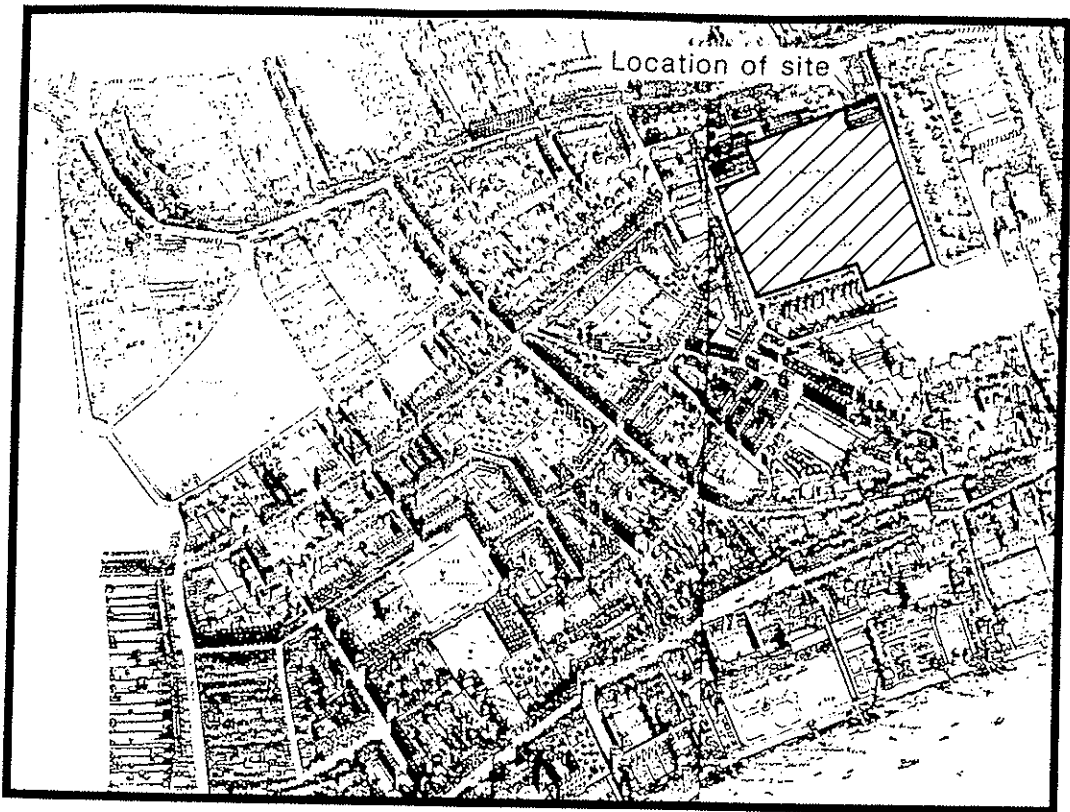
Site location plan

figure 1



Location of site: Braun and Hogenberg, 1572

figure 2



Hollar, 1658

figure 3a

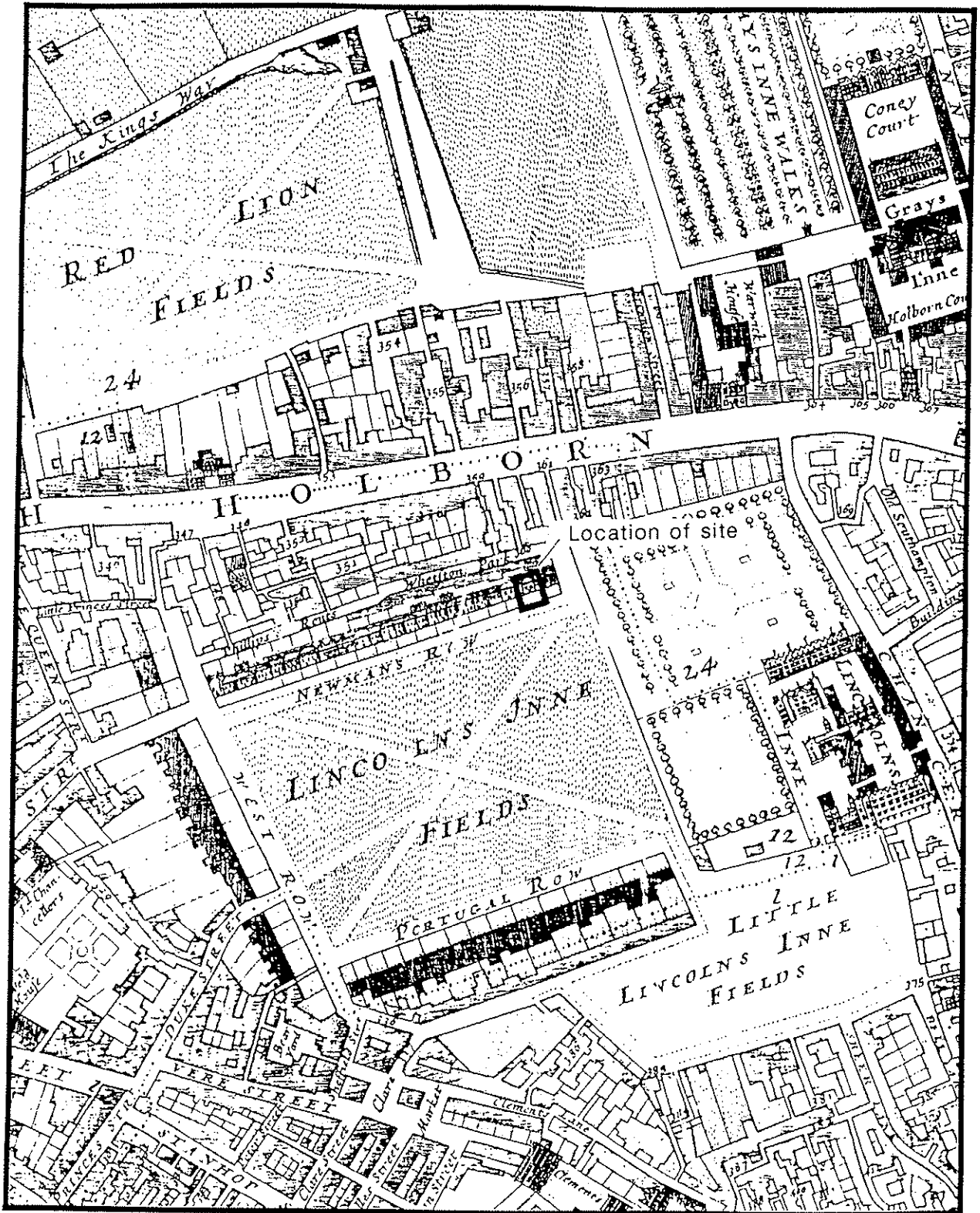


Newcourt & Faithorne, 1658

figure 3b

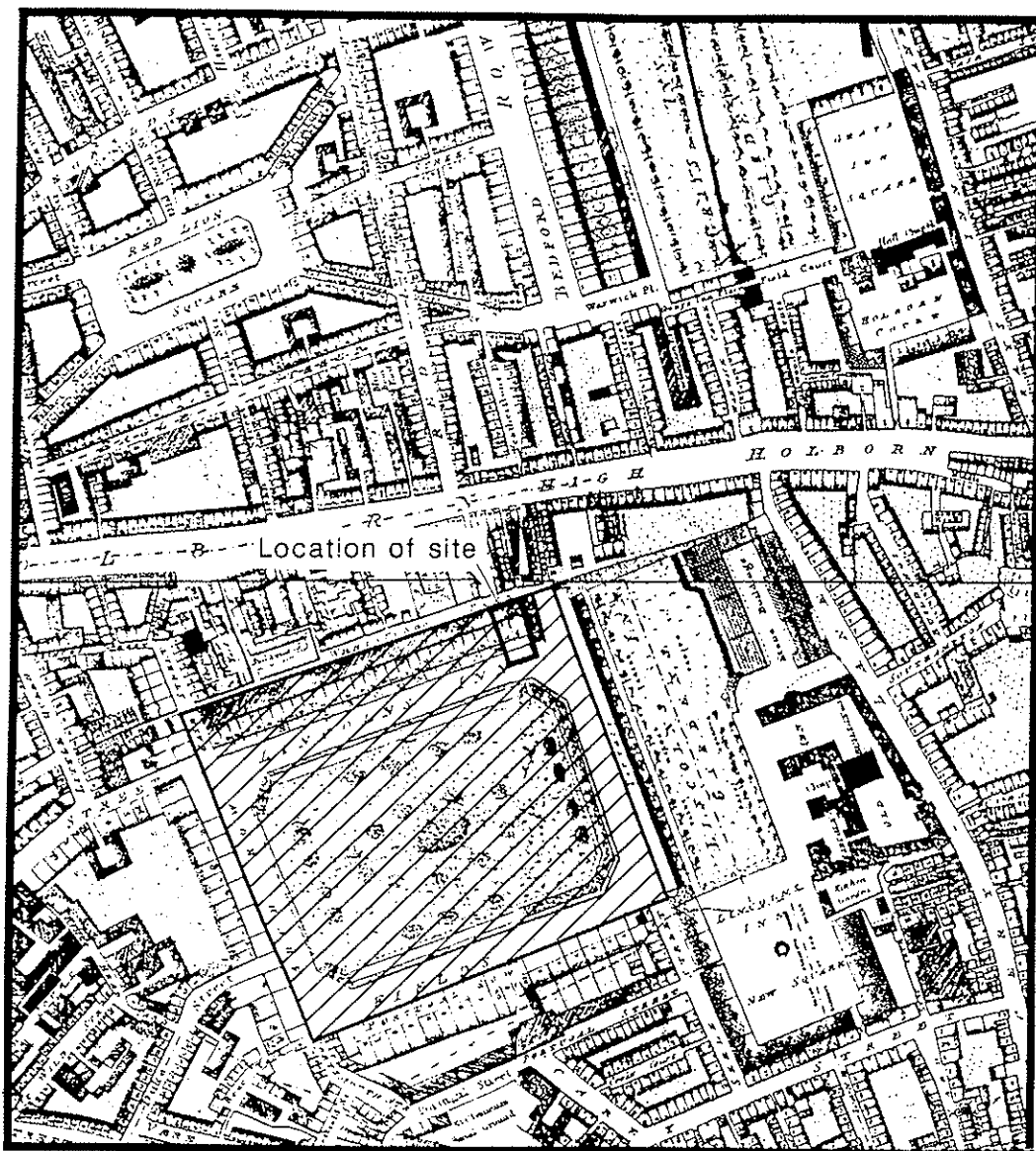
Location of site





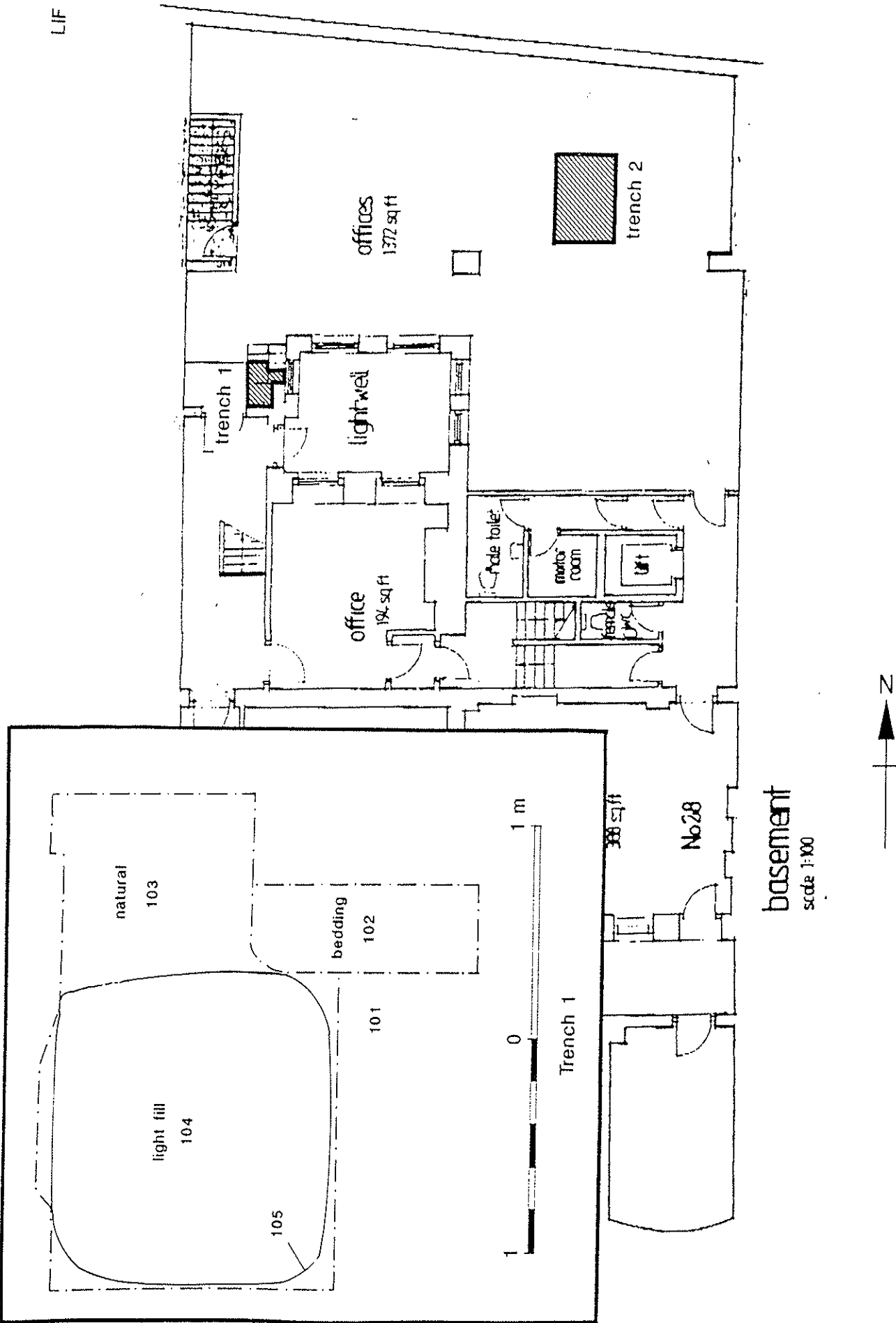
Morgan, 1682

figure 4

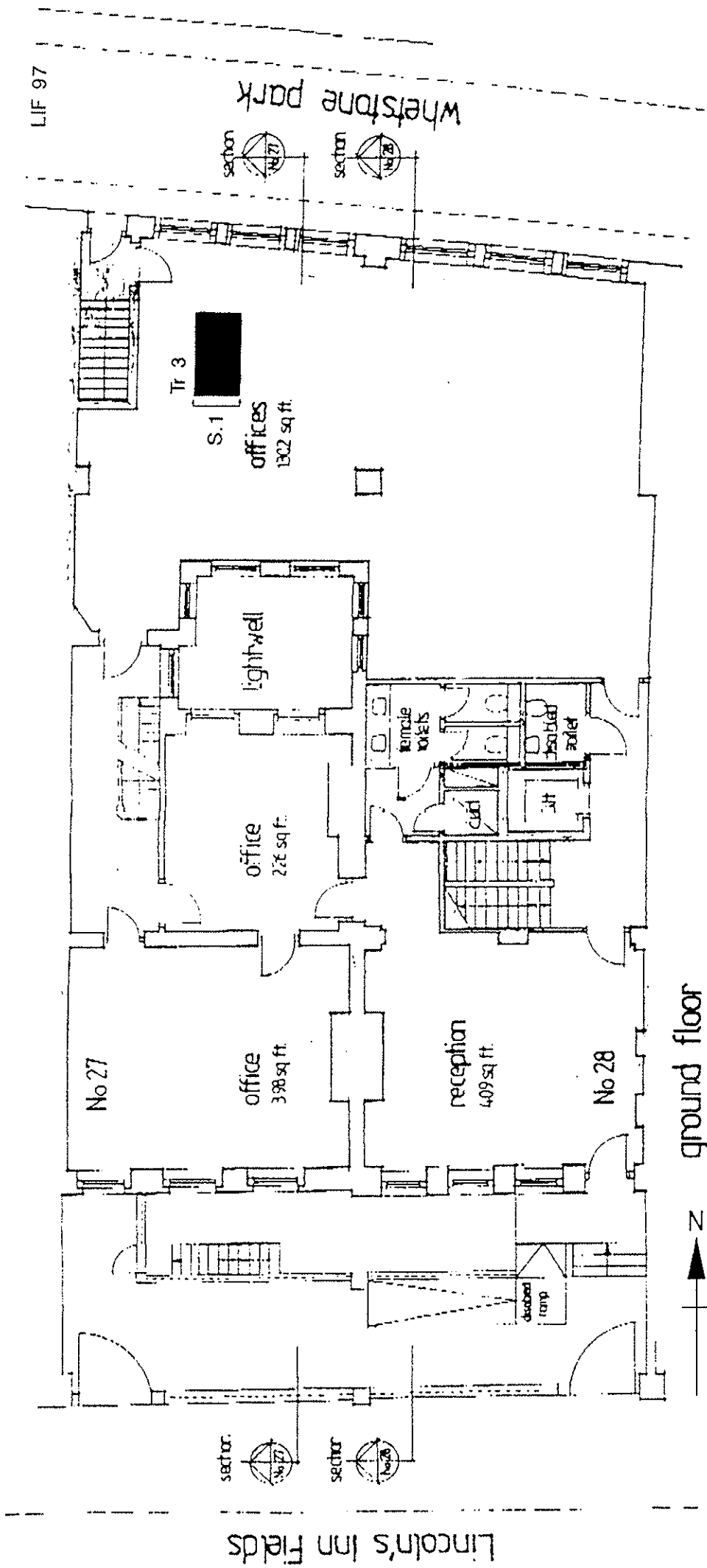


Location of site: Horwood, 1799-1819

figure 5

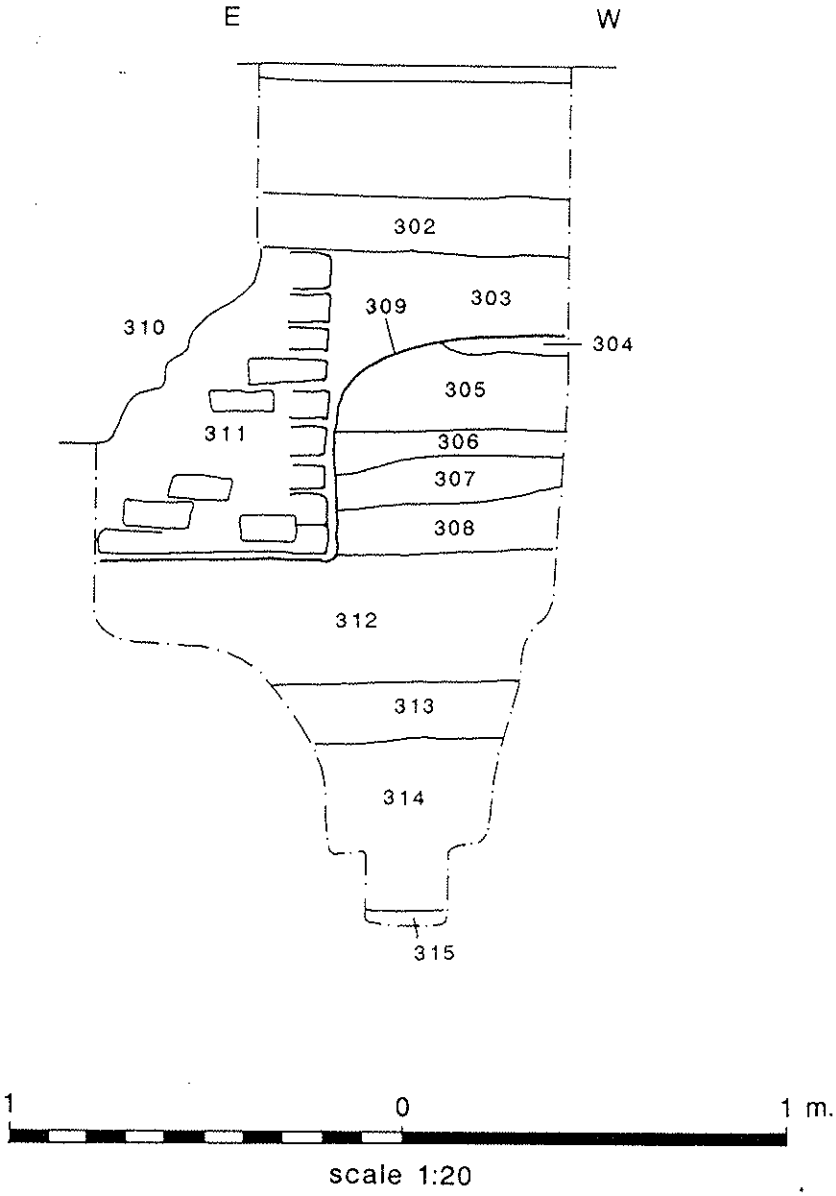


Trench 1 location (showing Trench 2) and feature plan



Trench 3 location and section

figure 7



Trench 3 section

figure 8