

BRIDGWATER

WEST QUAY 1973

Grid Ref ST 300373

A trench for a new sewerage scheme was dug, 2 metres wide and 3 to 4 metres deep, along West Quay from a point 200 metres South of the Transporter Bridge to a point in line with the North side of the Town Bridge.

This area of the town is of historical and archaeological importance. It was hoped that the trench works might throw some light on medieval and 18th century structures on the West bank of the river.

The Castle, built by William de Briwere circa 1210, bordered the river on the West bank in this area. The Water Gate of the Castle, (see Map Fig. 1.) is now 13 metres from the Quay wall. If, however, outworks or landing places had existed, built out into the river, traces might be revealed.

A bridge existed (Ref. Bridgwater Borough Documents, translated by Dilks) in 1355. Records also refer to a 'bridge started by Lord de Briwere' and to Trivett's contribution to the cost of a bridge in the reign of Richard II. The three arched bridge with the Trivett Arms was demolished in 1795. An iron bridge followed this, in turn replaced by the present bridge in 1883.

It is not known whether the early bridge ' begun by Briwere' was on or near the site of the present bridge, or, as suggested by Jarman, somewhat to the North.

The Chandos papers and letters refer to the construction of a ' New Quay' during the building of Castle Street and Chandos Street c. 1720.

With the help and cooperation of the Bridgwater Borough Engineer's Department and the Contractors, it was possible for members of the Archaeological Society to measure and photograph interesting features which came to light as the trench proceeded. The Society would like to express its grateful thanks for this assistance.

The observation and recording was conditioned by :

- (1) The 'Cut and Cover' method of trenching.
- (2) The immediate removal of spoil to a tip at Saltlands.
- (3) The depth and unconsolidated nature of the soil, which necessitated the shuttering of trench walls as soon as possible after excavation.

A number of stone structures were, however, observed and the position of these is shown on Fig. (1). Descriptions of the features, under the Map numbers, are given below,

Site 1.

An area of deep grey mud, depth not revealed, extended from the North end of the trench to a point roughly in the centre of the junction of Chandos Street and West Quay. The Contractors reported lias stones, apparently forming a flight of steps, opposite 'The Lions' House. Borings made, in 1972, 30 metres West of the present river bank, just North of 'The Lions', indicate that, at some previous date, water with a

gravel bottom at 8 metres, existed in this area; abraded sherds of Romano-British and unglazed medieval pot were found in the gravel.

Pottery was found in the mud fill of the trench :-
 Fragments of a dish with yellow glaze and brown trailed slip ornament, Midlands or Derbyshire manufacture, 18th Century, Fig. 2.
 Fragment of chamber pot and bottle top of blue and grey ornamented Westerwald German Stoneware, 17/18 Century. Figs 3 and 4.
 Chamber pot of Delft ware with grey/blue tin glaze and brown metallic overglaze; possibly Spanish make, 17th Century. Fig 5.
 Fragments of dishes with brown and yellow stripes, typical of Bristol and Midlands 18th Century manufacture, were also found.

Site 2

A wall, 60 cms wide, of hard, red, clamp-fired brick, possibly of early 18th century date, was observed to run East/West down the centre of Chandos Street and across West Quay. This wall was capped with flat slabs of Ham stone, and its top was 80 cms below present road level at the Quay. The bottom of the trench (3 metres) did not expose the base of this wall. The bricks were bound with yellowish mortar.

This brick wall, apparently a retaining wall, with a flat top, may have formed part of Lord Chandos' 'New Quay' (Reference correspondence in Chandos Papers, Feb. 1727 re 'Newman's Quay')

Site 3.

Abutting the brick wall on the North side and running in the same direction towards the river, a brick built drain or culvert, 60 cms across and 40 cms deep, lay approximately 1 metre below the road surface. The type of brick used indicated a late 18th or early 19th Century date. Mud, apparently river mud, lay below the drain and between the brick wall (Site 2) and the stone wall (Site 4) described below.

Site 4.

A wall, 1.5 metres wide, constructed of undressed lias stone, with white mortar, crossed the trench, and turned direction to the South to run parallel with the Quay. The base of the wall was below the bottom of the trench, the top was 1.7 metres below road surface. This wall was separated from the brick wall (Site 2) by 80 cms of mud.

To the South and West of stone wall (4) was reddish made-up ground.

Site 5.

A wall of blue lias ran parallel to the sewer trench for 10 metres. It was, apparently, between the sewer trench and the present Quay wall. The base of this wall, 3.30 metres down, rested on soft alluvial mud. The top was 1.2 metres below road level.

12451

12452

Site 6.

A 4 metres wide wall of blue lias crossed the trench. The base of this wall was not exposed. The top was 60 cms below present road level. 12453.

Site 7.

A mass of mortared sandstone and Ham stone, 2 metres wide, bonded with hard pink mortar, may have been the footing for a crane. It was 4 metres wide and 35 cms below the road. No date can be assigned to this feature. An existing crane is situated at point(9). 12454

Site 8.

A wall, 1.20 metres wide, of poor quality undressed lias stone and sandstone, with sandy mortar, crossed the trench. The top was 2 metres below the road surface. The base of the wall was not exposed. 12455

Site 10.

A wall constructed of lias and red sandstone, with pinkish mortar, very hard and durable, crossed the trench, its top approx. 1 metre down. 12456

Site 11.

A wall of dressed sandstone, 1.20 metres wide, on a foundation of blue lias, was capped with Ham stone. It crossed the trench at right angles. The mortar was hard and grey. Stones sticking out from the side of the wall may have formed steps. The top of the wall was 2 metres below present road level; the base was not exposed. The wall may have been a quay or retaining wall of medieval date, but no dating evidence was found. 12457

Site 12.

A wall of lias stone, faced with dressed sandstone, ran parallel to the sewer trench between the trench and the present Quay wall (on the same alignment as wall 5) for a distance of 30 metres. The top, covered with flat stones, was 30 cms below road level. 12458

Site 13.

The base of a wall of red sandstone was observed, crossing the trench at 3.5 metres depth. Slabs of blue lias stone (up to 1 metre square) were lying at the base of the trench at 4 metres depth, below the base of this wall. 12459

Site 14.

A double wall of red lias stone, each side 25 cms thick, with a fill 1 metre thick of red earth, crossed the trench towards the river. This was probably a drain, date unknown.

4.

Site 15

A 5 metre stretch of large, well laid lias blocks ran along the river side of the trench on the same alignment as walls (5) and (12). The top of this wall was covered by 30 cms of red marl and 1 metre modern fill. The base was seen at 3.2 metres. Grey mud was observed on the landward side of this wall.

12460

Site 16.

A wall, 1.2 metres wide, made of large lias stones, with sandy mortar, crossed the trench. The base was still unexposed at 4 metres depth. The top was 1 metre below road level.

12461

Site 17

A wall of lias, on the same alignment as walls (5), (12), and (15), ran for a distance of 20 metres along the trench, between the trench and the Quay wall.

12462

Site 18.

At the south end of the trench, a mass of solid lias masonry, 4 metres wide and at 2 metres depth, may have formed the footings or supports for a previous bridge, or part of the Outworks of the Castle.

12463

Spoil from the trench was taken to the Corporation Depot at Saltlands. From this Depot, Clay pipes, dated to 1789, were recovered (Fig. 6) (Clay Pipes found in Bridgwater will be the subject of a separate Report).

Also found in the spoil were :

A bronze coin (farthing) of Charles II.

The rim of a bowl in pink fabric, with matt black glaze outside and greenish brown glaze and yellow trailed slip inside, 18th century (Fig 7)

The base of a bowl in pink sandy fabric, black burnished outside, with yellow splashed green glaze inside; 18th century, (Fig 8)

A sherd of Donvatt pottery with lead glaze, trailed slip and clear yellow overglaze; 18th century, (Fig 9).

A fragment of Delft Ware with blue leaf decoration (16/17th century)

No medieval pottery was recovered from the trench. The walls could not be dated. However, those walls with sandy mortar, (Sites 8 and 16), the wall and lias slabs at low level (Site 13) and the mass of masonry at Site 18 may be medieval work relating to the outworks or quay of the Castle. The walls with Dressed lias and Hon stone may be 18th century work in connection with Lord Vhandos' development of the Castle Street area and extension of the Quay in the early 18th Century. The materials may have come from the demolished Castle.

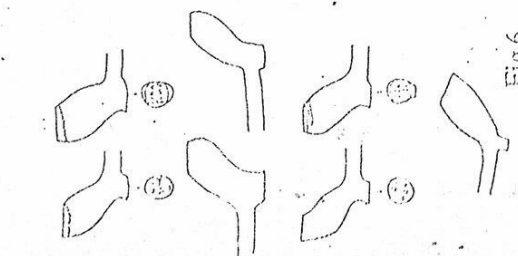


Fig 6

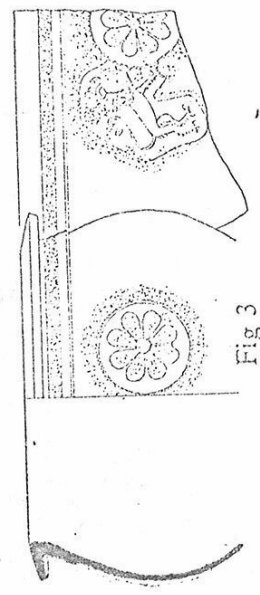


Fig 3



Fig 9

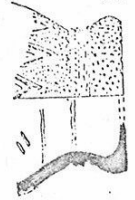


Fig 4

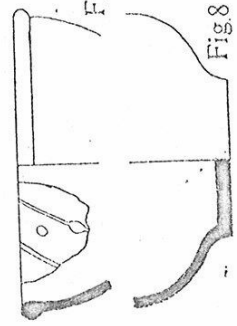


Fig 7

Fig 8

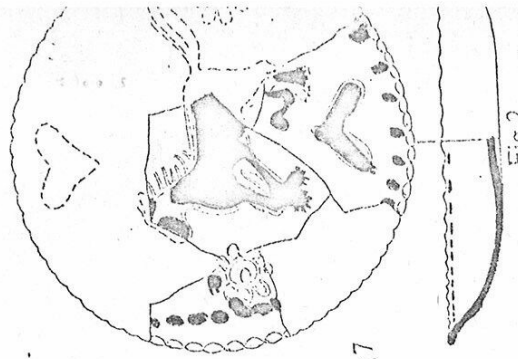


Fig 2

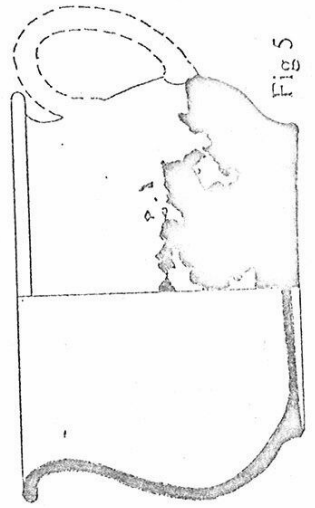


Fig 5



FIG. 1.

WEST QUAY SEWER TRENCH - 1973 - BRIDGWATER

RIVER PARRETT

