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Archaeological Assessment at  
Ferry House Farm, Low Barlings,  
Lincolnshire.

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**Non-technical summary**

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An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at the back of Ferry House Farm, Low Barlings, in advance of extension of the farmhouse. The evaluation included the excavation of two short trenches (A and B) on either side of the garage.

The evaluation found no evidence for archaeological remains on the site, but concluded that recent landscaping and topsoil stripping of the area has removed all potential archaeological features. Therefore, any impact of the proposed work on the archaeological resource is absent. Further archaeological assessment, watching brief or excavation is not recommended either in advance or during the proposed development.

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**Preliminaries**

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## 1. Introduction:

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- 1.1 The Centre for Wetland Archaeology was commissioned by Mr. I. Fleetwood to carry out an evaluation of the area of a proposed house extension at Ferry House Farm, Low Barlings, Lincoln (TF08877340). This was undertaken to assess the feasibility of the extension prior to submitting a planning application. TF0887873605
- 1.2 A brief was provided by the Archaeology Section, Lincolnshire County Council. Specifications for the schedule of works (CWA/SER/Ferry House/97-1) were approved on the 18.12.97 and work was carried out on the 6.01.98. This evaluation was designed to determine the character, areal extent and state of preservation of the archaeological resource in relation to the proposed development in order to assist in the planning process.

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## 2. Background:

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- 2.1. The proposed development comprises an extension to the rear of Ferry House Farm encompassing an area of garden and in parts covered by a garage and a Nissan hut. The site is adjacent to the scheduled ancient monument, county number 103, of Barlings Abbey and the house itself is a grade II listed building. The site of the proposed extension has been partially landscaped. The site is located at a height of approximately 7 m OD.
- 2.2. The site is close to Barlings Eau and the River Witham. The abbey is located on undifferentiated river terrace sand and gravel surrounded by alluvium.
- 2.3. The Premonstratensian Abbey at Barlings was founded in 1154 by Ralf de Haia and began with an initial community of 13 monks. Continued patronage by the aforementioned benefactor and a steady stream of others ensured a sustained growth so that by 1376 the size of the community had more than doubled, numbering an abbot, prior, sub-prior, 25 monks, five *conversi* and eight clerks. It remained at this level of occupation until its dissolution in 1537 (Everson *et al* 1991, Knowles and Hadcock 1953).
- 2.4 During the early 17th century the land fell into the hands of the Wray family of Glentworth and Sir Christopher Wray built a house for his wife, who lived there after his death in 1646 until her death in 1660. The house was soon abandoned and passed through the hands of several owners and may have been

landscaped during the 18th century (Everson *et al* 1991, Knowles and Hadcock 1953).

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### **3. The Evaluation:**

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- 3.1 Two test-pits were excavated along the line of the proposed extension (Figure 1). As outlined in the specification for the works, these were excavated by a mechanical excavator with a toothless bucket under direct supervision. This was carried out in spits until the first archaeological layer was encountered or to a maximum depth of 1 m. Trench A was excavated to this maximum depth but trench B was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.9 m due to flooding at the base of the trench. The trenches were cleaned and recorded by hand.

#### **Trench A**

- 3.2 Trench A was located to the east of Ferry House Farm, to the rear of the property, running north-south (Figure 2). The southern end of the trench is located 0.6 m to the north of the garage hard standing, running northwards for 5 m with a width of 1.5 m. This follows the northern section of the eastern edge of the proposed development line.
- 3.3 The trench is dissected by cut 003. The deposits to the south of this cut comprise an uppermost layer (001) with a maximum thickness of 0.4 m. This horizon is a dark brown sandy clay soil containing large quantities of rubble, mortar, stone and brick, and also modern debris. At the southern most end of the trench 001 overlies the truncated natural subsoil 008. This consists of an orangey-grey compact clay which dips gradually in a northwards direction. Where the clay dips, sandwiched between this clay and the upper layer 001 is a horizon of orange brown sandy clay with crushed stones and gravels (007). This may represent a demolition deposit dumped on top of the natural at this location and is truncated by later deposits (001).
- 3.4 To the north of cut 003, the lower layers follow a similar sequence to those recorded to the south of the cut. At the base is the dipping natural clay 012, which is overlain by a thin layer (011) comprising a dark grey sandy clay matrix with wood charcoal (maximum thickness 50 mm). This is subsequently overlain by 010, a similar orange brown sandy clay with crushed stone and gravel as seen at the southern end of the trench. All of these basal deposits are continuing to dip downwards, presumably following the natural topography of

the area. Abutting 010 is a layer of green-grey silty clay 009. This layer and 010 are both truncated by layer 005 which is similar in composition to layer 001 in the northern part of the trench. 005 is overlain by layer 004 which is a grey-brown sandy silt soil with an increased percentage of modern inclusions when compared with contexts 001 and 005. This horizon may be associated with the laying of an oil pipe for the central heating system of the house.

- 3.5 The cut 003 was only seen in section but reaches from the modern ground surface. The cut contains two fills and was not bottomed in the trench. The uppermost fill 002, consists of a grey brown sandy clay soil with bricks, stones and mortar and a field drain running through the cut. Below this is 006 which is indistinguishable from 002 apart from the presence of several large sandstone blocks placed in the bottom. These are unmortared and loose but were placed in the cut rather than dumped. One possible interpretation of this feature is as a soak way, directing water away from the house. Another example of this lies to the north of trench A following the same alignment eastwards from the house and the modern position of the house guttering. Further suggestions for this feature include a robber trench with the stones forming the remains of wall foundations.
- 3.6 In trench A the slope of the natural subsoil has been identified, overlain by two thin horizons of demolition debris and abutted by possible redeposited alluvium or natural from the nearby river. At some time in the more recent past this sequence has been truncated and levelled, and then redeposited material has been used to level the site. Through this sequence 003 has been cut. At the base of the excavated sequence in this cut, a selection of large sandstone blocks were lain, possibly acting as a soak way, a function that was continued later with the addition of a land drain near the surface of the trench. The stones may also indicated a possible foundation for a feature such as a garden wall or house extension but no pottery was located within the cut to date the feature.

### **Trench B**

- 3.7 Trench B was located 1.6 m to the south of the garage, in a northeast-southwest direction for 2.6 m with a maximum width of 2.5 m (Figure 3). This covers the area to the south east of the proposed development. The depositional sequence comprised a modern topsoil (013) of a dark brown sandy silt soil with small deposits of brick and stone, to a depth of 0.5 m below the modern ground level.

- 3.8 The topsoil overlies a layer of a grey brown clay silt (014) with frequent rubble and brick inclusions. This deposit is similar in composition to layers 001 and 005 in Trench A. 014 reaches a maximum depth of 0.7 m and overlies a yellowish grey sandy clay deposit (015) with sandstone rubble inclusions. This was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.9 m until the water level in the trench made further excavation unsafe. No man-made features were recorded in this trench and made up/disturbed deposits were recovered throughout.

### Summary

- 3.9 The depositional sequences recovered from trenches A and B have been shown to comprise a series of disturbed and redeposited layers. The natural, dipping, subsurface clay has apparently been truncated and levelled. Redeposited on the top of this is a mixed sequence of modern dumped material. No datable artefactual material was recovered during the evaluation. The only feature identified within the excavated area was the cut 003 within trench A. This is interpreted as a wholly recent feature.
- 3.10 The truncation and levelling at the site has most likely removed any medieval period deposits from the area of the proposed extension. The dipping of the subsurface strata also suggests that this was at the edge of the higher ground upon which the abbey was located and that this slope dips down to the flood plain of Barlings Eau and the River Witham.

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### **4. Conclusions:**

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- 4.1 The evaluations carried out at Ferry House Farm, Low Barlings have shown a lack of medieval features across the area of the proposed development. Although the initial brief received from Lincoln County Council mentioned the partial landscaping of the area, it is possible that the total area covered by the development has been affected. This landscaping may have been carried out only recently as the previous owners are reported to have owned a plant hire business. Further, recent re-working of the site is evident as the Nissan hut and garage are on a higher ground surface than the surrounding garden. This also suggests that topsoil stripping may have been carried out prior to the present occupancy of the site.

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**5. Context Summary:**

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**Trench A**

001	Upper dumped deposit	Dark brownny grey sandy clay	
002	Upper fill of 003	Dark brown sandy clay	
003	Cut		
004	Upper dumped deposit	Grey brown sandy silt	
005	Dumped deposit	Dark brownny grey sandy clay	
006	Lower fill of 003	Dark brown sandy clay with sandstone blocks to the base	
007	Deposit	Orange brown sandy clay with gravel	same as 010
008	Natural clay	Orangey grey clay	same as 012
009	Redeposited clay	Green grey silty clay	
010	Deposit	Orange brown sandy clay with gravel	same as 007
011	Charcoal layer	Dark grey sandy clay with wood charcoal	
012	Natural clay	Orangey grey clay	same as 008

**Trench B**

013	Topsoil	Dark grey brown sandy silt	
014	Dumped deposit	Light grey brown clay silt	
015	Deposit	Yellowish grey sandy clay	

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Everson P.L., C.C. Taylor & C.J. Dunn 1991. *Change and Continuity: Rural settlements in North-West Lincolnshire*. London: RCHME.

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7. Figures:

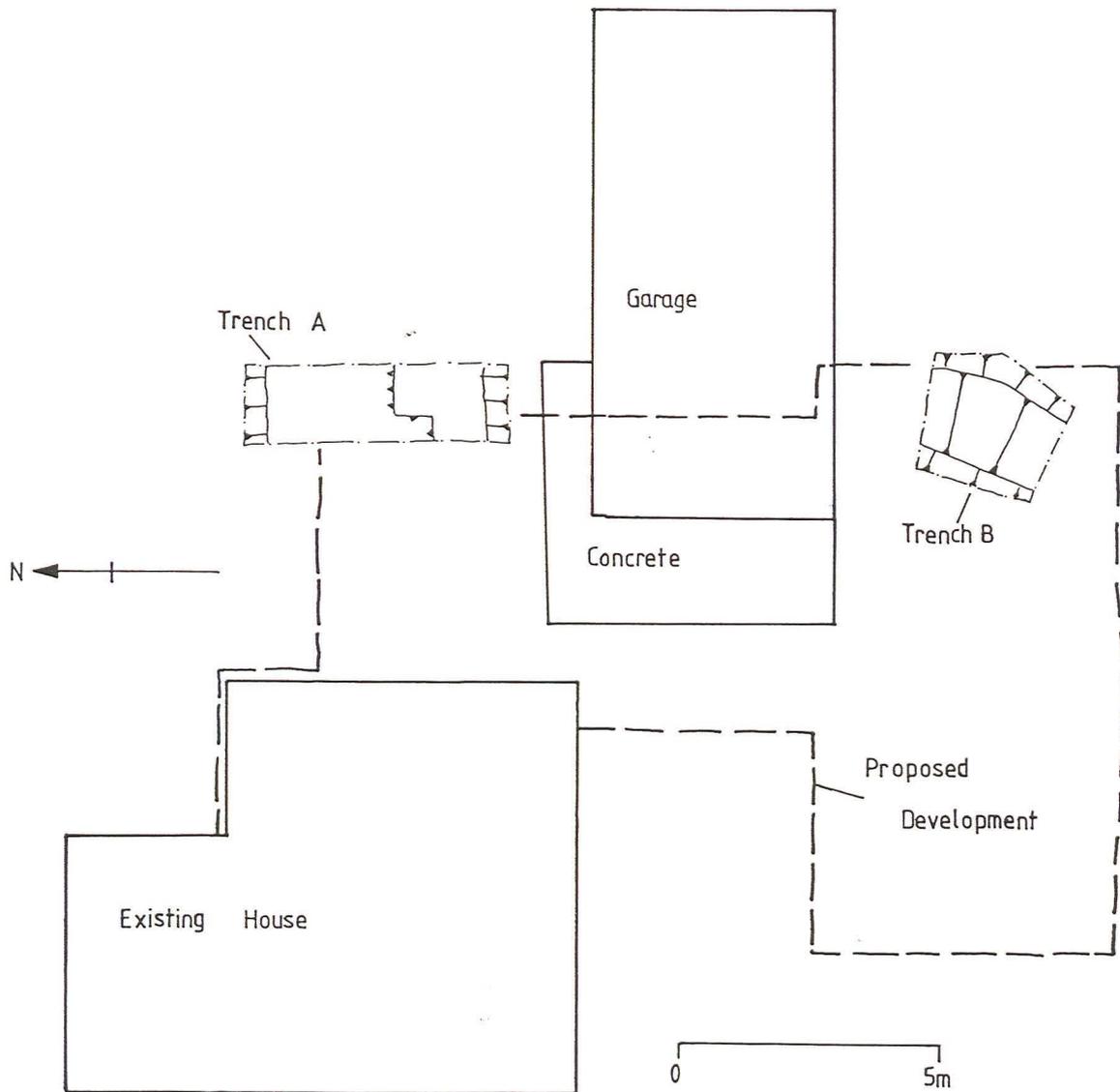


Figure 1. Location plan showing the position of the trenches and the area of the proposed development.

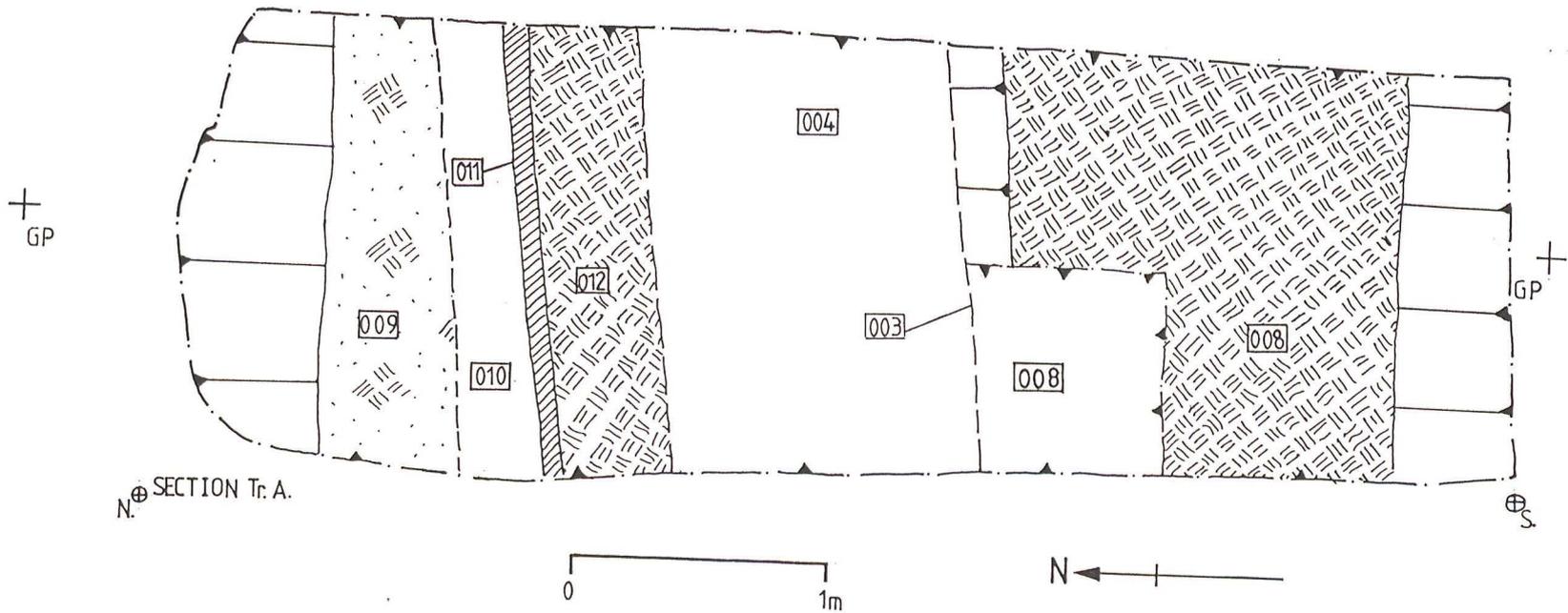
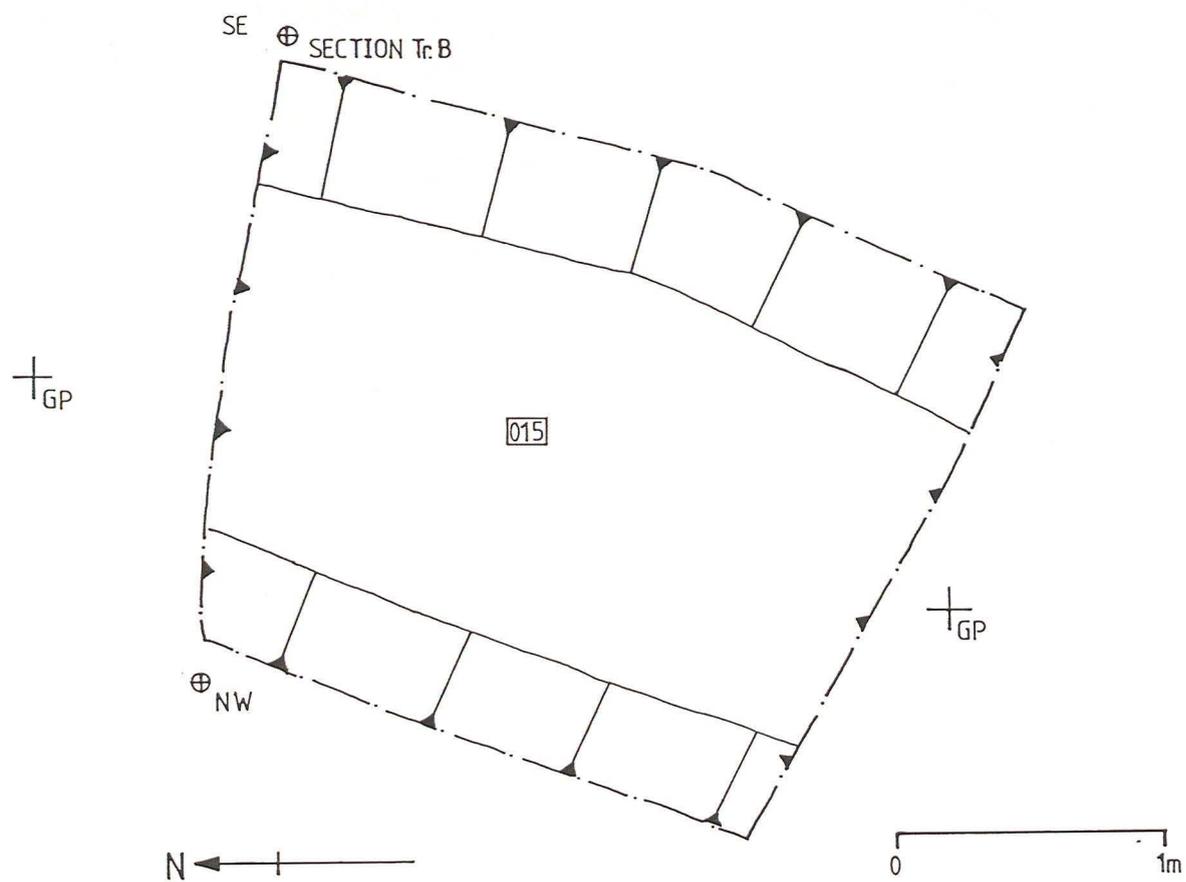
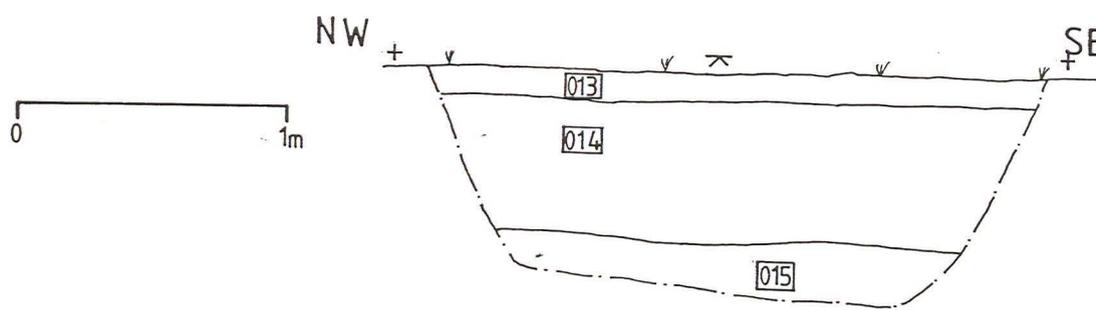


Figure 2. Plan and section of Trench A.



PLAN, TRENCH B.



SOUTH FACING SECTION TRENCH B

Figure 3. Plan and section of Trench B.



Trench A



Trench B

Figure 4: Plates showing the sections in Trench A and B.