

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF LAND AT  
SALTERSFORD WATER TREATMENT WORKS,  
GREAT NORTH ROAD, LITTLE PONTON,  
LINCOLNSHIRE**



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L19275

neg.

Archaeological Contractors & Consultancy Services

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF LAND AT  
SALTERSFORD WATER TREATMENT WORKS,  
GREAT NORTH ROAD, LITTLE PONTON,  
LINCOLNSHIRE**

**Site Code: SWW97**

**Lincoln City & County Museum Accession Number: 190.97**

**NGR: centring on SK 9252 3334**

Report prepared by Rebecca Casa MA  
and Mark Wood BA MA

**June 1998**

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**Lincolnshire County  
Archaeology Society**

**COMMISSIONED BY**

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## 1.0 SUMMARY

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Map showing the location of the site in relation to Grantham and the River Trent.

Figure 2 Location of Site in relation to Grantham

Map showing the location of the site in relation to Grantham and the River Trent.

Figure 3 Trench Location Plan

Map showing the location of the trench in relation to the site and the River Trent.

Figure 4 Trench I: north-facing section

Diagram illustrating the north-facing section of Trench I, showing the stratigraphy and features.

The site was located in a field just south of the River Trent, approximately 1.5 km from Grantham. The site is situated on a slight rise in the ground, with the River Trent to the east and a minor stream to the west. The site is bounded by a fence to the north and a hedge to the south.

The site is a rectangular area, approximately 10m by 15m, with a slight slope from the north towards the south. The ground surface is relatively flat, with some minor variations in height. The site is surrounded by a fence to the north and a hedge to the south.

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Please note that no written references are made to the findings of the independent general archaeological investigations that have taken place on the majority of the site. This is due to the fact that the information is not available to the author.

## **1.0: SUMMARY**

In August 1997, Professional Independent Services for Archaeology Limited (PISA) carried out an archaeological evaluation on behalf of Anglian Water Services Ltd., on land at Saltersford, situated to the south of the town of Grantham in Lincolnshire. The proposed development of the site by Anglian Water, entailing the construction of new storage facilities at their Saltersford Water Treatment Works, gave rise to the evaluation given the potential for encountering archaeological remains.

A number of previous excavations have taken place in the vicinity of the development site and these have produced material and features dating in the main to the Neolithic, Roman and Saxon periods. The site is also situated in proximity to the prehistoric trackway and subsequent Roman road known as 'SALTERS WAY'. A known Roman settlement (probably called *Causennae*) existed in the area where the latter road forded the River Witham. In spite of the richness of such known archaeological remains in the area, no evidence for land-use prior to the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century was recovered from the two linear evaluation trenches excavated. However, an ancient course of the River Witham (i.e. a palaeochannel) was evident in both trenches. Today, the modern course of the River Witham is situated some 60m to the east of the proposed development area.

## **2.0: INTRODUCTION**

On August 7<sup>th</sup> 1997, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land at Saltersford Water Treatment Works, adjacent to the old Great North Road, in the parish of Little Ponton, South Kesteven District, Lincolnshire, in advance of the proposed development.

The work was commissioned by Anglian Water Services Ltd and carried out by PISA in accordance with a Project Brief (Stevens 1997) set by the South Kesteven District Council Community Archaeologist (hereinafter SKDCCA). The evaluation was originally scheduled to be of two days duration. However, as no archaeological remains were encountered, the evaluation was completed within one working day.

Please note that no direct reference is made to the findings of the individual previous archaeological investigations that have taken place in the vicinity of the site. This is

due to the fact that no archaeological evidence was encountered in the present evaluation.

### **3.0: PLANNING BACKGROUND**

The proposed development of the site entails the construction of new storage facilities as detailed in planning application n° SK97188/53/9 and described in section 3.1 of the SKDCCA's brief (Stevens 1997).

A pre-determination archaeological evaluation was requested in view of the possibility of there being archaeological remains present on the site and given the known archaeological remains in the vicinity (Cf. sections 4.1 and 5.1 of the SKDCCA's brief [and see below section 4.3]).

### **4.0: SITE BACKGROUND**

#### **4.1: Site Location (Figs. 1 & 2)**

The site, located at NGR SK 9252 3334, is triangular in shape enclosing an area some 20 x 20 x 12m and is situated in the extreme north-western corner of the Saltersford Water Works on the east side of the old course of the Great North Road (now the B1174) and immediately to the west of the River Witham, at the junction of the parishes of Little Ponton & Stroxton, South Kesteven District, Lincolnshire (Fig. 2).

In relation to Grantham, the site is some 1.5 km to the south-east of the railway station and about 1km to the north-east of Little Ponton village (Fig. 2).

#### **4.2: Topography & Geology**

At the time of the evaluation the site comprised an area of grassed open space (at an elevation of approximately 60m OD) with a slight incline from west to east towards the floor of the valley formed by the River Witham. The site is bounded on its northern and western sides by the perimeter fence of the Water Works. To the east and south is an area of tarmac hard-standing on which small concrete pens are situated and which contain gravel and stone associated with the Water Works.

The geology of the site comprises sandy soils and riverine silts overlying the Jurassic limestone of the South Lincolnshire Wolds.

### **4.3: Archaeological Background**

A number of finds and previous archaeological investigations are recorded in the Lincolnshire County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) as having been made and taken place in the area of the Saltersford Water Works. The archaeological remains represented are essentially Prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon in date and are all situated in the vicinity of the Water Works.

For the Prehistoric period, SMR 33895 represents an undated ring-ditch shown as a crop mark on aerial photographs. Apart from a Neolithic Hut, stray finds of Prehistoric date include a Bronze Age flint arrowhead (SMR 33988) and Iron Age 'Scored Ware' pottery (SMR 30510).

The 'Salters Way' from which Saltersford takes its name was originally a Prehistoric trackway and subsequently a Roman Road. A ford on the River Witham caused the foundation and development of a substantial Romano-British settlement at Saltersford (SMR 30508; probably equating with 'Causennae' mentioned in the Antonine Itinerary). In addition to roads and buildings of the Roman period, evidence for industrial (e.g. a bronze ingot, SMR 33989) and agricultural activity as well as associated domestic material have also been found along with a cemetery (Stevens 1997, section 4.1).

The Saxon period is also represented by funerary remains and stray finds including pottery (SMR 30509).

### **5.0: AIMS AND METHODOLOGY**

Given the frequency of archaeological remains discovered in previous archaeological works as well as other known finds in the area, the overall objective of the present evaluation was to determine the presence/absence and character of potential archaeological remains within the proposed development site.

The trenching strategy was designed to provide the best possible coverage in sample terms across the investigation area and took into consideration constraints imposed by the presence of existing manholes and associated underground pipes. Therefore, two trenches (referred to as T I and T II below) were located in the northern portion of the development site (Fig. 3) and these were excavated to the level of natural deposits by means of a mechanical excavator provided with a 1.5m wide toothless ditching bucket; the latter machine being provided by the Client.

The principal natural deposits encountered in T I were individually described and referred to by letters of the alphabet (see Appendix 1). Portions of the same trench were stratigraphically recorded by means of a section drawing at a scale of 1:10 (Fig. 4). T II was not recorded given the similarity of deposits with those encountered in T I. Moreover, the section through the palaeochannel of the River Witham (the only feature revealed during the evaluation) was clearer in T I. This is because the latter trench was oriented at right angles across the palaeochannel whereas T II cut through its western portion diagonally.

Due to the absence of any archaeological evidence, no further recording was considered necessary.

## 6.0: RESULTS

### 6.1: Trench I (Figs. 3 & 4)

T I (10m x 1.5m) was located in the north-western corner of the site, at a distance of some 2m from (and parallel with) the west-east oriented fence-line which bounds the site to the north. The removal of the topsoil to a depth of 150-200 mm revealed a very disturbed layer of subsoil 150mm thick. The topsoil appeared to be of recent formation, possibly resulting from the partial levelling of the area as was suggested by the presence of gravel which was mainly concentrated in the western portion of the trench.

Beneath the topsoil, the subsoil was characterised by the presence of limestone slabs and clay which are interpreted as the remains of 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century Water Works. At a depth of approximately 700mm, the upper portion of the palaeochannel of the River Witham was encountered (see Fig. 4). This palaeochannel, oriented on a north-south alignment, cut through clay/silt natural deposits and was filled by a series of clay/silt layers. The percentage of silt in these layers increased in relation to depth, becoming the predominant soil component towards the base of the trench. The excavation of the trench also revealed the western portion of the bank associated with the palaeochannel and it corresponded with the point of the present maximum ground level (i.e. the top of the gentle incline of the site oriented west to east towards the present course of the river Witham [see Appendix 2 for the levels]).

The depth of the trench ranged from 1.10m in the west to 1.20m in the east.

### **6.2: Trench II (Fig. 3)**

T II (10m x 1.5m) was located 4m to the south of T I on a north/north-east - south/south-west alignment. The removal of the topsoil to a uniform depth of approximately 180mm revealed the subsoil beneath. The thickness of the latter ranged from 130mm in the northern portion of the trench to 150mm in the southern portion. The trench was excavated to a minimum depth of 1.05m in the north and a maximum depth of 1.20m in the south.

Overall, T II revealed a broad correlation in terms of deposits with those found in T I. The contrast between the bank and the upper fills of the channel emerged very clearly in plan and confirmed what had already been observed in T. I; described above in section 6.1.

## **7.0: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION**

On the basis of the nature of the deposits encountered during the evaluation and from the analysis of their stratigraphic relationships, the following four phases have been identified (see Appendix I):

- Phase I: natural deposits pre-dating the palaeochannel
- Phase II: natural deposits associated with the palaeochannel
- Phase III: natural deposits post-dating the palaeochannel
- Phase IV: modern deposits

Notwithstanding the limitations that two small evaluation trenches impose in assessing an area's archaeological potential, the lack of recognisable archaeological remains can be taken as true and therefore represents overall negative evidence for human activity in the area under investigation. Modern interference does not entirely account for the absence of archaeological features, as is shown in T I where disturbance only affected the layer of subsoil immediately below the recently formed topsoil. This is even more clearly discernible in T II where the natural deposits did not appear to have been subject to modern interference.

The lack of features in the investigation area is apparently due to the presence of the ancient course of the River Witham; in relation to which the trenches were excavated across (i.e. T I) and along (i.e. T II) a portion of the bank and the bed itself of the palaeochannel. The complete absence of any artefacts in the palaeochannel (either

unstratified, lost or discarded ones) is perhaps more surprising in view of the known archaeological activity in the vicinity.

In view of the lack of dating material from the trenches it is not possible to establish whether the palaeochannel was still active or had already started to silt-up at the time of the first evidence for human activity recorded elsewhere in the Saltersford area. The lack of finds from the investigation site contrasts with the evidence for occupation further to the north where the river acted as a focal point in the landscape. A settlement developed there in Roman times (if not earlier) in what must have been, by comparison, a more suitable location (i.e. around the ford).

In conclusion, although no archaeological remains were encountered during the course of the evaluation, useful additional information has been added to the SMR in the form of negative evidence.

## 8.0: REFERENCES

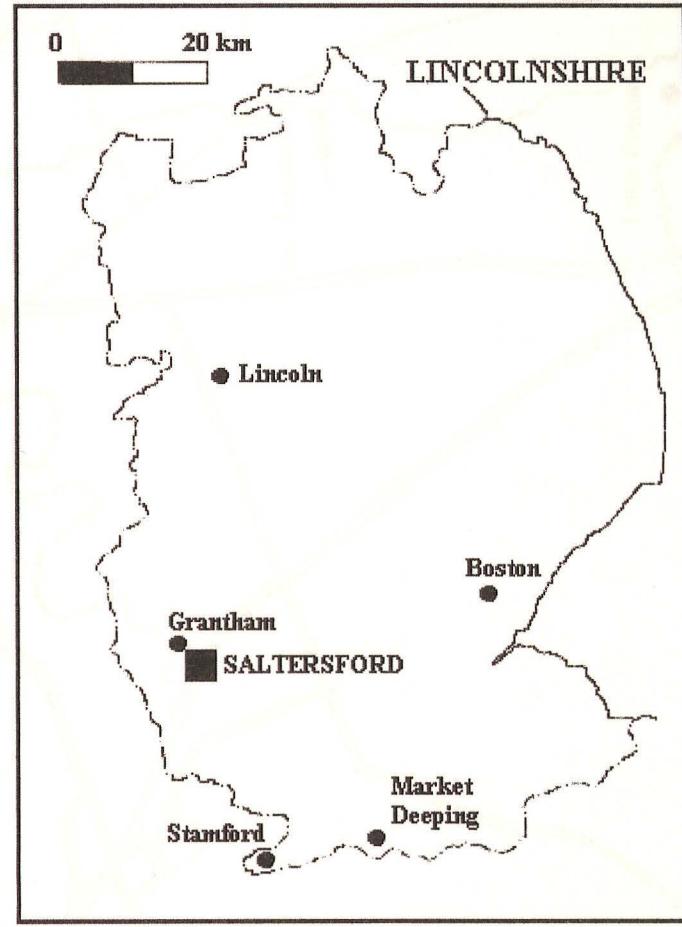
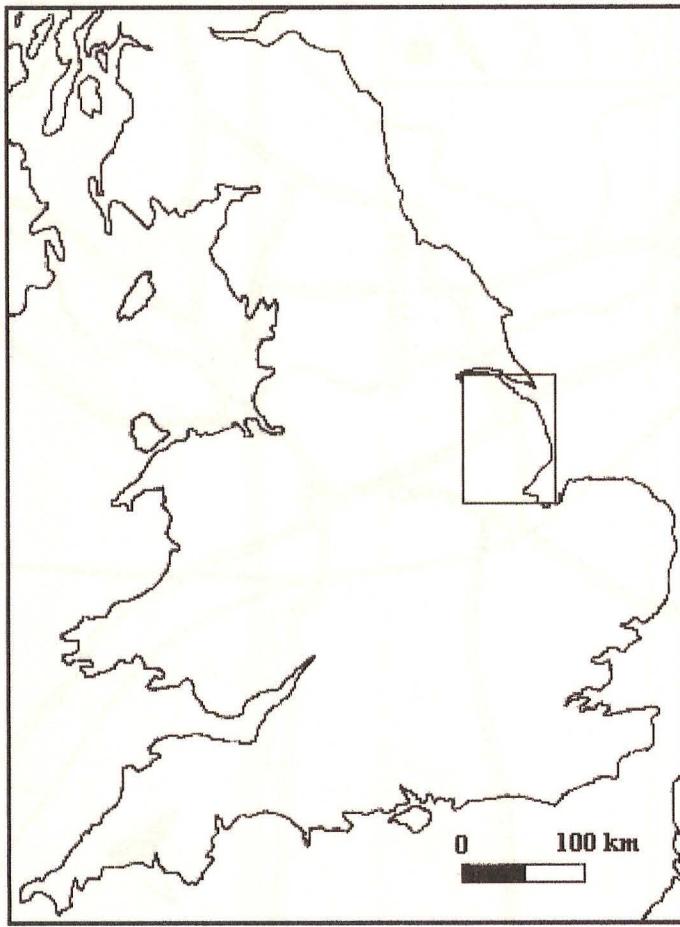
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| English Heritage | 1991 <i>Management of Archaeological Projects</i> , (2nd edition, revised)<br>HBMC, London.  |
| Stevens, J.      | July 1997 Archaeological Project Brief: Evaluation of land at<br>Saltersford Water Treatment Works, Great North Road, Little<br>Ponton, SKDC.                                      |
| Wood, M.         | August 1997 Archaeological Project Design Specification for<br>an Evaluation of Land at Saltersford Water Treatment Works,<br>Great North Road, Little Ponton, Lincolnshire, PISA. |

## **9.0: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

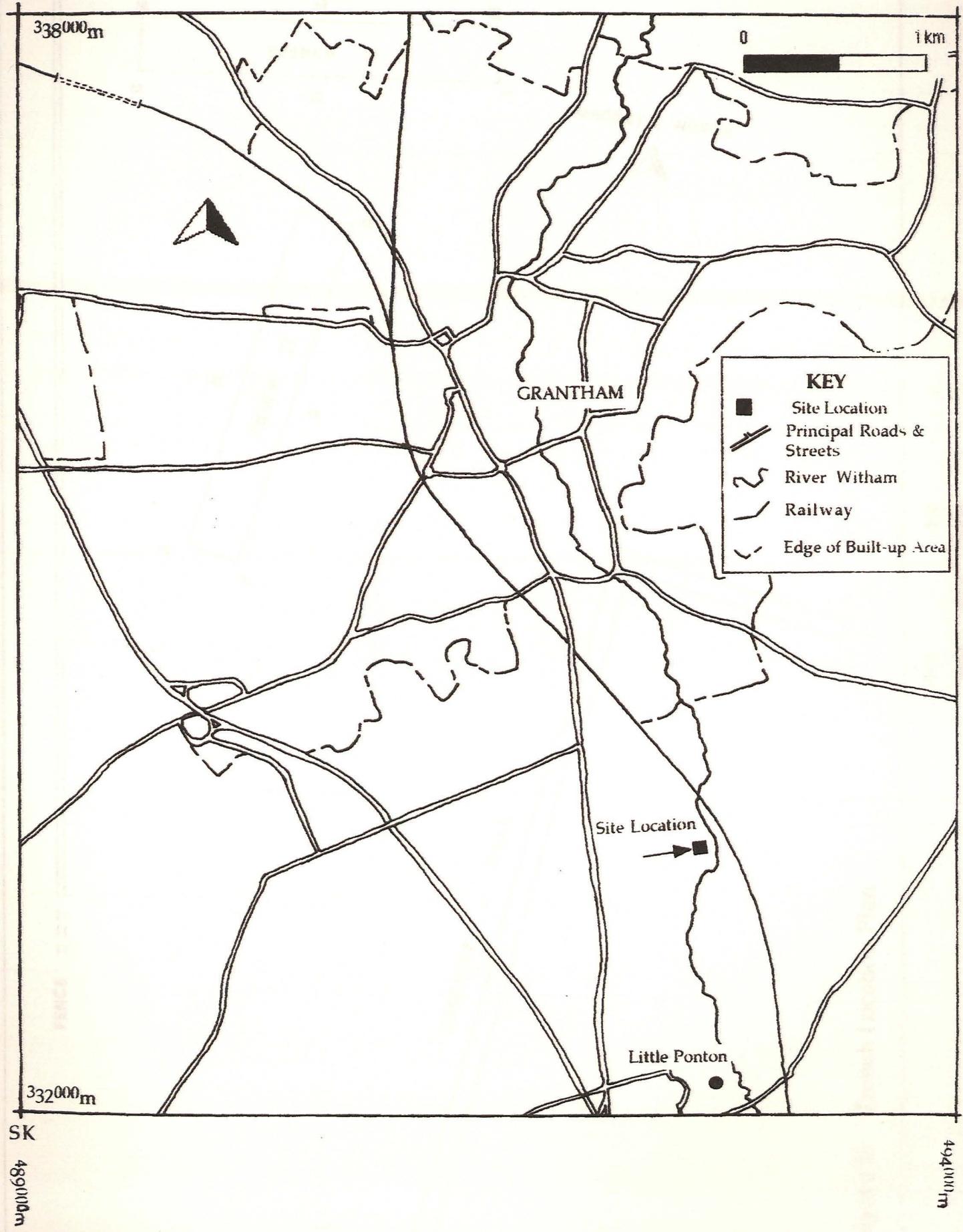
PISA should like to thank the following individuals in respect of this project.

Mr. Ian Richardson of Anglian Water for commissioning and funding the work as well as for providing the survey levels. Jenny Stevens (SKDCCA), Mark Bennet and Sarah Grundy of the Lincolnshire County Council Archaeology Section (SMR access and information).

Figure 1: General Location Plan



**Figure 2: Location of Site in relation to Grantham**



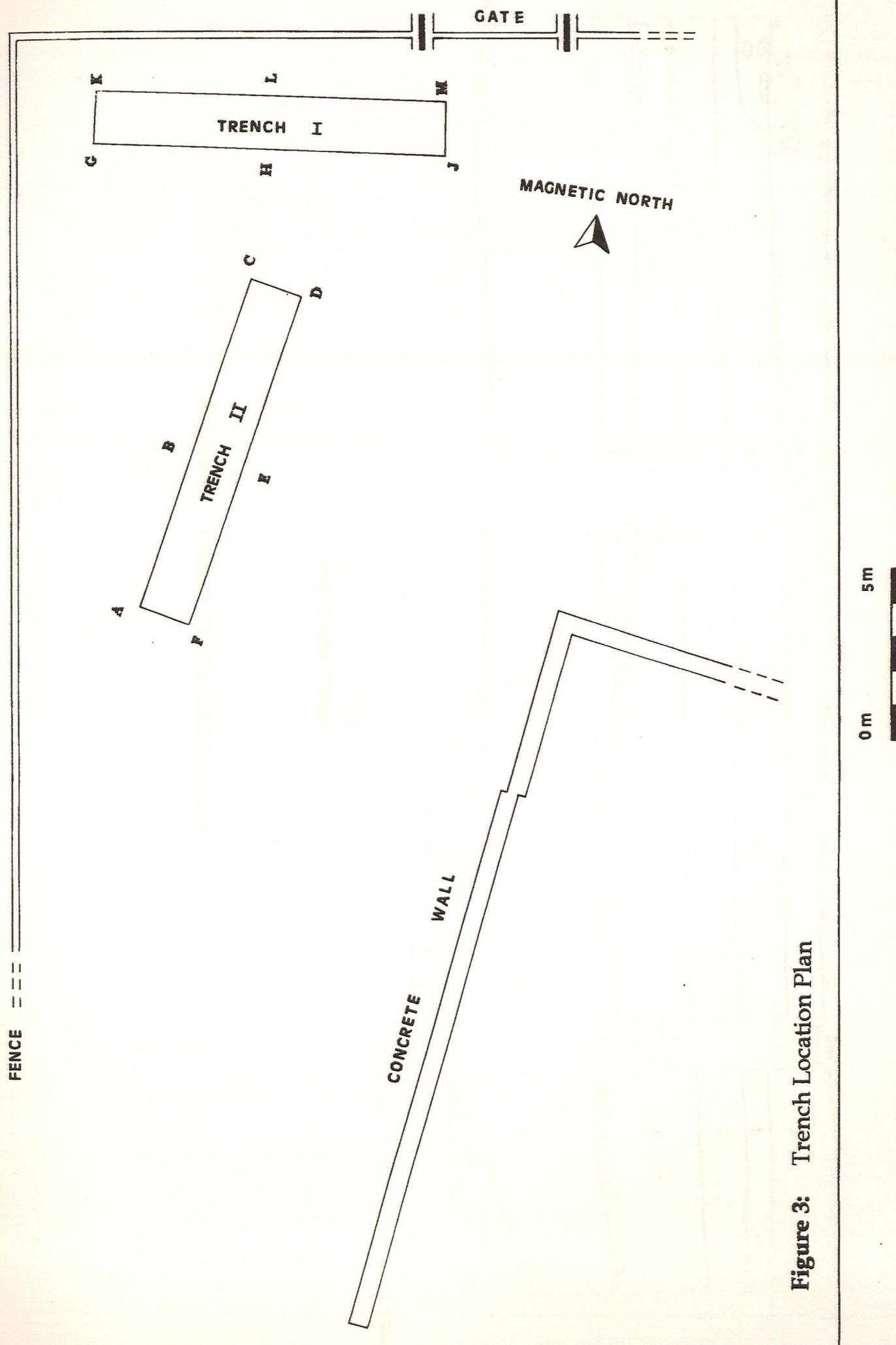
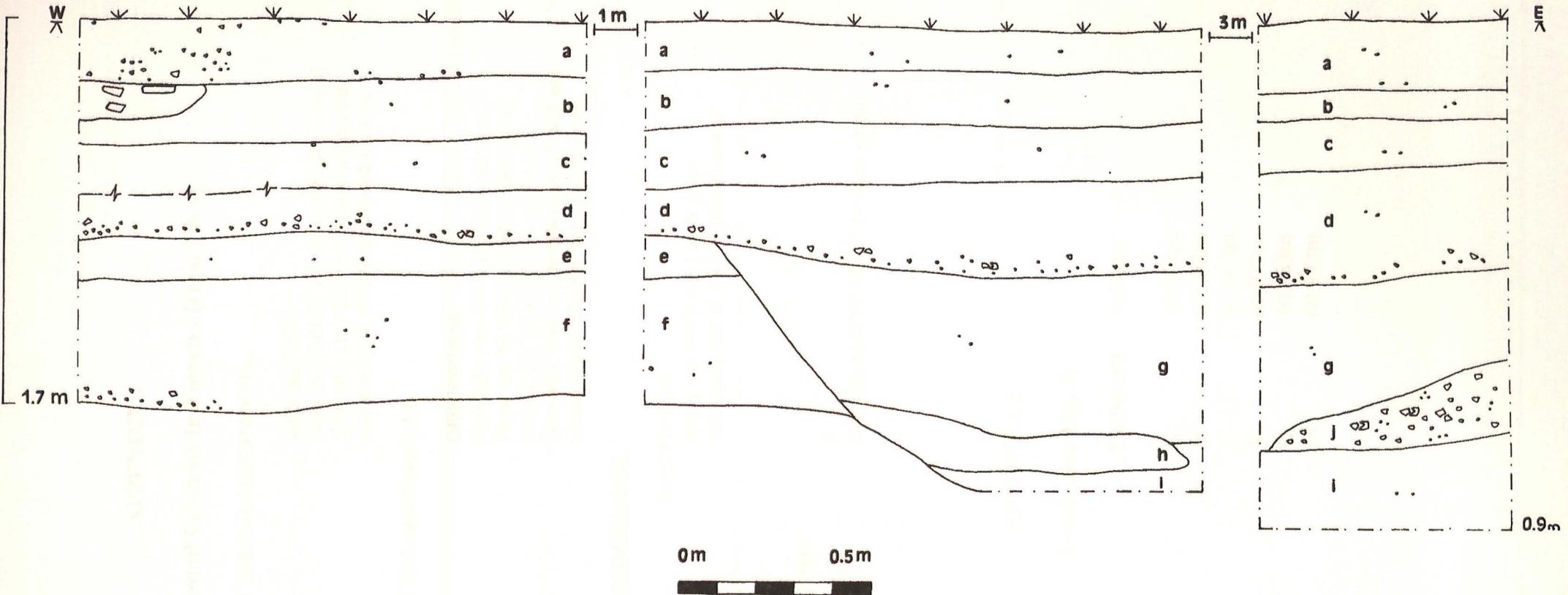


Figure 3: Trench Location Plan



**Figure 4:** Trench I: north-facing section

## APPENDIX 1

### Summary Description of Contexts in Trench I (Figs. 3 & 4)

#### NATURAL DEPOSITS PRE-DATING THE PALAEOCHANNEL.

DEPOSIT	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
e	Deposit	Firm clay/silt 10 YR 4/4 (yellowish brown)
f	Deposit	Firm silty clay with occasional small-mid size gravel 10 YR 5/4 (yellowish brown)

#### DEPOSITS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PALAEOCHANNEL

DEPOSIT	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
g	Deposit	Firm silty clay 10YR 4/3-4 (dark brown)
h	Deposit/Lens	Firm clay 10 YR 5/4 (yellowish brown)
i	Deposit	Soft silt 7.5 YR 4/4 (dark red brown)
j	Deposit/Lens	Firm silty clay and frequent small-mid size round gravel 10YR 4/3-4 (dark brown)

#### DEPOSITS POST-DATING THE PALAEOCHANNEL

DEPOSIT	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
c	Deposit	Sandy silt 10 YR 4/1 ( dark grey)
d	Deposit	Soft sandy silt 10 YR 4/3 (dark brown)

#### MODERN DEPOSITS

DEPOSIT	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
a	Topsoil	/
b	Subsoil	Soft silty sand 10 YR 4/1 (v. dark grey)

## APPENDIX 2

### Levels (see Fig. 3)

TRENCH II	LEVELS	TRENCH I	LEVELS
A	60.793m	G	60.993m
B	60.853m	H	60.773m
C	60.833m	J	60.563m
D	60.723m	K	60.978m
E	60.778m	L	60.853m
F	60.843m	M	60.693m

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **The Archive**

This report constitutes the primary paper record and will be deposited with the Lincoln City & County Museum in 1998; other archive material is presently located at:

P.I.S.A. Ltd.,  
8 Fountain Court,  
Main Street,  
Ufford,  
Lincolnshire,  
PE9 3BJ

The archive also consists of the following items:

- 1 scale drawing (inserted in the report).
- 1 list with description of contexts in Trench I (T I) (inserted in the report).
- 1 list of levels associated with Trench I (T I) and Trench II (T II) (inserted in the report).

Lincoln City & County Museum Accession No.:190.97  
PISA project code: SWW97