

Gunby Hall Icehouse Pond, Gunby, Spilsby, Lincolnshire
Archaeological Watching Brief
National Trust



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Archaeological Watching Brief**

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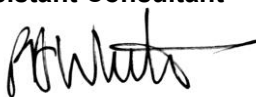
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Non-technical Summary

Ecus Ltd was commissioned by the National Trust to carry out archaeological monitoring during works at the Icehouse Pond at Gunby Hall, Gunby, Spilsby, Lincolnshire centred on NGR 546511 36662. The archaeological monitoring was undertaken between 02/12/13 and 03/12/13.

The works comprised the excavation of a walk around the Icehouse Pond, locating and tracing the course of an earlier walk identified around the pond during previous archaeological test pitting. Where the former walk had been lost to the pond through erosion, a new walk was formed along a parallel alignment.

Topsoil stripping was monitored over a continuous strip from a gate to the northwest of the Icehouse Pond, around the pond to the west, south and east, and to a gate to the northeast of the pond. The strip was typically no more than 0.2 m in depth or 1.8 m in width.

The archaeological monitoring was able to locate and record the location of the original path material along a large proportion of its historic route around the pond. The condition of the path was ephemeral, typically comprising a thin layer of chalk which had largely compacted into the subsoil. Large sections to the south had been lost to the pond through bank erosion.

The path was re-established along the historic walk wherever practical, with a new route created parallel to the pond to the south, and from the eastern drain to a gate in the northeast boundary fence.

Evidence was also observed around the pond indicating the potential for remains of structures possible associated with the now lost ice house and other associated structures.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 Ecus Ltd was commissioned by the National Trust to carry out archaeological monitoring of groundworks at the Icehouse Pond at Gunby Hall, Gunby, Spilsby, Lincolnshire (Figure 1) centred on NGR 546511 36662 (hereafter 'the site'). The archaeological monitoring was undertaken on the site between 02/12/13 and 03/12/13.
- 1.1.2 The works at the site comprised the excavation for a new path around the Icehouse Pond, locating and tracing the course of an earlier established walk which had been identified during previous archaeological test pitting. Where the line of the former walk had been lost to the pond through erosion, a new path was formed along a parallel alignment.
- 1.1.3 The work was conducted in accordance with a written scheme of investigation prepared for the previous phase of works (Wessex Archaeology 2013a), and in compliance with the standards outlined in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (IfA 2008).

1.2 Location, Topography, Geology

- 1.2.1 The site is located within the Grade II Registered Park and Garden of Gunby Hall (NHLE 1000979). Gunby Hall occupies a rural location c 2 km north-west of Skegness, close to the village of Burgh le Marsh. The site is situated 250 m southwest of the Hall within an area of ornamental planting in a long thin early nineteenth century boundary plantation known as The Belt which encloses the park to north and west. To the south of the site lies Gunby Lane whilst to the north there is grazed farmland forming part of the park.
- 1.2.2 The site is situated between approximately 21-25 m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology of the site comprises mudstone and limestone of the Roach Formation (British Geology Survey online viewer 1:50,000).

1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 1.3.1 The history of the park at Gunby Hall has been researched in detail for the *Gunby Hall Parkland Management Plan* (Debois Landscape Survey Group 2012). Details from this report, concerning the Icehouse Pond, are summarised below.
- 1.3.2 The Icehouse Pond is speculated to have been dug in the late 1690s to supply bricks for the construction of the hall and stables and, had originally been a fish pond and a stock pond (*ibid.* 80). This origin is based on references in Peregrine's Book of Trees of 1812 in which are recorded a number of alterations to the gardens and woodland. Peregrine also records that he had enlarged the pond in 1807, from which time the current form of the pond is attributed.
- 1.3.3 Historic maps of the estate do not reliably depict the Icehouse Pond. Although a pond appears to be depicted at the site of the Icehouse Pond on the 1819 OSD map, it is not illustrated on the Gunby Tithe Map of 1837. By the production of the first edition Ordnance Survey map in 1889 the pond was depicted along its current lines, with a circular walk leading around it, a small

central square island, a small building on its southwest corner, and a slightly larger structure to the northeast.

- 1.3.4 The icehouse was likely constructed between 1813 and 1820, from when the pond was referred to as the Icehouse Pond. The location of the icehouse is not recorded, although the parkland plan suggests a mound to the southeast of the pond, which coincides with the structure on the 1889 Ordnance Survey map, may mark its location (*ibid.* 81).
- 1.3.5 The pond is illustrated on the 1906 Ordnance Survey map as having been marshy along its northern edge, suggesting it was silting up, whilst the structures depicted on the earlier map were no longer evident.
- 1.3.6 Research into the park indicated a former purposeful line of visibility to the spire of Great Steeping Church, which would have historically been visible from the hall through a gap in the boundary woodland belt at the point of the pond (*ibid.* 38).

2. Methodology

2.1 Aims and Objectives

- 2.1.1 The overall aim of the work was to re-establish the former Icehouse Pond walk around the east, west and southern sides of the pond. The walk was to be connected into existing gates within a fence bounding the area to the north. The line of the historic path along the northern side of the pond was not re-established due to the presence of a badger sett.
- 2.1.2 The aim of the archaeological monitoring was to provide further information concerning the presence/absence, date, nature and extent of the walk, and to allow it to be recreated as faithfully to the original route as possible. Where the line of the historic path was found to have fallen into the pond due to erosion of the banks, a new route was formed.

2.2 Fieldwork Methodology

- 2.2.1 Topsoil stripping was monitored over a continuous strip from a gate to the northwest of the Icehouse Pond, around the pond to the west, south and east, and to a gate to the northeast of the pond. The strip was typically no more than 0.2 m in depth or 1.8 m in width.
- 2.2.2 All archaeological features and deposits encountered were reordered using *pro forma* recording sheets. Photographs were taken of the general site conditions, location of the trench, and details of archaeological deposits to produce a photographic record consisting of digital images in jpeg format.
- 2.2.3 The site was planned by hand taking distances from known points and comparing to Ordnance Survey. Levels were transferred from the OS benchmark on St Peter's Church using a Leica Jogger 24.
- 2.2.4 Strategies for the recovery of artefacts, environment samples and human remains were included in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2013). No environmental samples were taken and no human remains were encountered.

3. Results

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The following section presents the results of the archaeological monitoring. The context descriptions for recorded archaeological deposits are reproduced in Appendix 1 of this report. Where referenced in the text, context numbers are indicated in bold text. The trench and extent of the revealed path are depicted on Figure 2, and the locations of the plates are shown on Figure 3.

3.1.2 No artefacts were observed during the course of work.

3.2 General Site-wide Stratigraphy

3.2.1 Topsoil **100** across the site was observed to comprise dark humic silty-clay, typically of 0.2 m in depth, overlying mid brown silty-clay subsoil **101** with a slight yellow hue in places. The remains of the pathway walk **102** are described in more detail below. Stiff grey clay **103** was encountered beneath the subsoil beyond the south-western corner of the pond (Plate 1), although the natural substrate was not encountered elsewhere.



Plate 1: Representative section through the walk to the southwest of the pond

3.3 The Walk

3.3.1 The remains of the path were encountered around a large proportion of the pond, although substantial areas to the south and east had evidently been lost to the pond through erosion (Plate 2).

3.3.2 Where encountered, the remains of the walk **102** comprised unsorted crushed angular to sub-angular chalk of less than <0.1 m, having dispersed and subsided into the topsoil and underlying subsoil through natural processes. The chalk deposit was around 1.2 m at its widest, although more often survived to around half that width, and 0.03 to 0.07 cm in depth. The walk often comprised a fairly well defined outside edge, with the pond-side edge more diffuse. This was potentially due to historic erosion from the path, although on the western side of the pond this coincided with an ephemeral cut suggesting the walk had been cut into the topsoil to produce a level surface.

- 3.3.3 The surface of the path was found at differing depths across the site. Beside trees and on the slope to the overspill to the east, the chalk was visible on the surface, having been exposed by root-action or erosion. West of the pond the path lay below a low bank, possibly derived from dredging of the pond, and soil erosion had covered it with up to a depth of 0.15 m. Where the path survived on the southern side of the pond it was covered by alluvial born soils, likely from overtopping episodes from the pond.
- 3.3.4 The junction between the western and northern sides of the walk was encountered (Plate 3), indicating that the crushed chalk surface had likely continued along the northern side. The western walk continued beyond the junction to the north, although appeared to end 8.0 m short of the current gateway (Plate 4). Whilst it was possible the shortfall to the gate represented the former edge of the woodland, the soil in the area was very loose and appeared to have been disturbed by a recent tree-throw and subsequent animal burrowing within the softened ground. However, little chalk was observed within the deposit to indicate the latter.
- 3.3.5 To the east of the pond the path appeared to follow the slope down on the southern side of the drain, although much of it had evidently eroded, and it was not possible to ascertain how it negotiated the ditch (Plate 5).
- 3.3.6 Deposits of broken up brick rubble were encountered at the gates in the northern boundary fence. These were evidently modern deposits to solidify the footpaths where they are liable to becoming boggy, although the brick on examination was of post-medieval date.

3.4 Overspills and Drains

- 3.4.1 The walk was excavated to a slightly greater depth to the southwest of the pond in order to investigate the potential presence of a drain from the pond to a ditch beside Gunby Lane. This potential had been indicated by the presence of fragments of land drain on the ponds edge, and the opinion of the estate farmer. The area was excavated to a depth of 0.4 m into context **103**, but no cut or indication for a drain was encountered.
- 3.4.2 A ditch extended from the eastern side of the pond, curved towards the south along the edge of The Belt (Plate 5). Tracing the ditch it appeared to have been purposefully filled in south of the survey area. During the course of the work the ditch was scraped out at its western end, showing it to contain a depth of silt **104** that extended below the ponds current water level. The function of this ditch was problematic, with levels not clearly indicating whether it was an outlet, or inlet originally draining marshy land to the southeast.

3.5 Structures

- 3.5.1 The upper course of a brick wall **106** was partially exposed between the excavated area and the southeast corner of the pond (Plate 6). This may have related to the structure depicted in the area on the 1889 OS map. A set of steps **105** are situated to the north of the excavated area. The steps comprised five brick treads laid on edge descending from the southeast to the northwest (Plate 7). In addition situated towards the centre of the pond there was a small island of broken brick of unknown function (Figure 2).



Plate 2: Photo showing path **102** on the edge of the pond to the southeast, looking east



Plate 3: Junction of path **102** between the western and northern parts. Photo looking east along the north bank



Plate 4: View looking across the pond to the eastern drain



Plate 5: Excavation of west bank path looking north to north western field gate



Plate 6: Exposed upper course of brick structure at the southeast corner of the pond



Plate 7: Exposed brick steps running east from the northeast corner of the pond

4. Conclusion

4.1 Discussion

- 4.1.1 The archaeological monitoring was able to locate and record the location of the Icehouse Pond walk around a large proportion of its historic route. The condition of the path was ephemeral, typically comprising a thin layer of chalk which had largely subsided into the subsoil. Large sections to the south had also been lost through bank erosion to the pond.
- 4.1.2 The path was re-established along the historic walk wherever practical, with a new route created parallel to the pond to the south, and from the eastern drain to a gate in the northeast boundary fence.
- 4.1.3 Evidence was also observed within the wider area indicating potential for remains of structures possibly associated with the now lost ice house and associated structures.

5. Archive

5.1 Preparation and Deposition

- 5.1.1 The complete project archive will be prepared and arrangements for the deposition of the Archive on completion of the project will be made in accordance with Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage (UKIC 1990).
- 5.1.2 The archive is currently held at ECUS Ltd office under the project code 4582, and will be deposited with the National Trust within six months of the completion of fieldwork.
- 5.1.3 An OASIS form (Oasis ID - ecusltd1-168583) has been initiated and a copy is provided in Appendix 2 of this report.

6. References

- Debois Landscape Survey Group 2012. *Gunby Hall Parkland Management Plan for The National Trust*. Unpublished report.
- Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) 2008. *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation*.
- Wessex Archaeology 2013. *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Test Pitting*. Unpublished report.

Appendix 1 List of Contexts

Context Number	Description	Depth (m)
100	Topsoil	0.00-0.15
101	Subsoil – mid brown clayey silty-clay with patches of light brown discolouration and extensive areas of bioturbation	0.15-0.20
102	Path – Angular to sub-angular chalk, <10cm	0.00-0.07
103	Substrate – Stiff grey clay	0.20+
104	Silt within former drain to east of pond	0.00-0.30+
105	Steps – to east of pond comprising 5 brick treads set on edge aligned at angle to direction of flight. Signs of heavy wear.	n/a
106	Wall – upper course of handmade brick structure. Bricks exposed form header row of two course thick wall	n/a

Appendix 2 Oasis Form

OASIS ID: ecusltd1-158000

Project details

Project name	Gunby Hall Icehouse Pond
Short description of the project	Ecus Ltd was commissioned by the National Trust to carry out archaeological monitoring of during works at the Icehouse Pond at Gunby Hall, Gunby, Spilsby, Lincolnshire centred on NGR 546511 36662. The archaeological monitoring was undertaken between on the site was undertaken between 02/12/13 and 03/12/13. The works at the site comprised the excavation of a walk around the Icehouse Pond, locating and tracing the course of an earlier walk identified around the pond during previous archaeological test pitting. Where the former walk had been lost to the pond through erosion, a new walk was formed along a parallel alignment. Topsoil stripping was monitored over a continuous strip from a gate to the northwest of the Icehouse Pond, around the pond to the west, south and east, and to a gate to the northeast of the pond. The strip was typically no more than 0.2 m in depth or 1.8 m in width. The archaeological monitoring was able to locate and record the location of the Icehouse Pond walk around a large proportion of its historic route. The condition of the path was ephemeral, typically comprising a thin layer of chalk which had largely subsided into the subsoil. Large sections to the south had also been lost to the pond through bank erosion. Evidence was also observed within the wider area indicating potential for remains of structures possible associated with the now lost ice house and associated structures
Project dates	Start: 02-12-2013 End: 14-01-2014
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	4583 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Monument type	ICE POND Post Medieval
Monument type	PATH Post Medieval
Significant Finds	None None
Investigation type	""Watching Brief""
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF

Project location

Country	England
Site location	LINCOLNSHIRE SOUTH KESTIVEN GUNBY AND STAINBY Gunby Hall Park
Study area	0 Hectares
Site coordinates	TF 456 666 53 0 53 10 34 N 000 10 43 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	ECUS Ltd
Project brief originator	Self (i.e. landowner, developer, etc.)
Project design originator	ECUS Ltd
Project director/manager	Stuart Silver
Project supervisor	James Thomson

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	National Trust
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	Text", "Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Archive recipient	National Trust
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Notebook - Excavation", "Research", "General Notes", "Plan", "Report"

Project bibliography

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Gunby Hall Icehouse Pond. Gunby, Spilsby, Lincolnshire: Archaeological Watching Brief
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Thomson, J.
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Description	A4 ring bound report

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Site Location Plan

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Legend

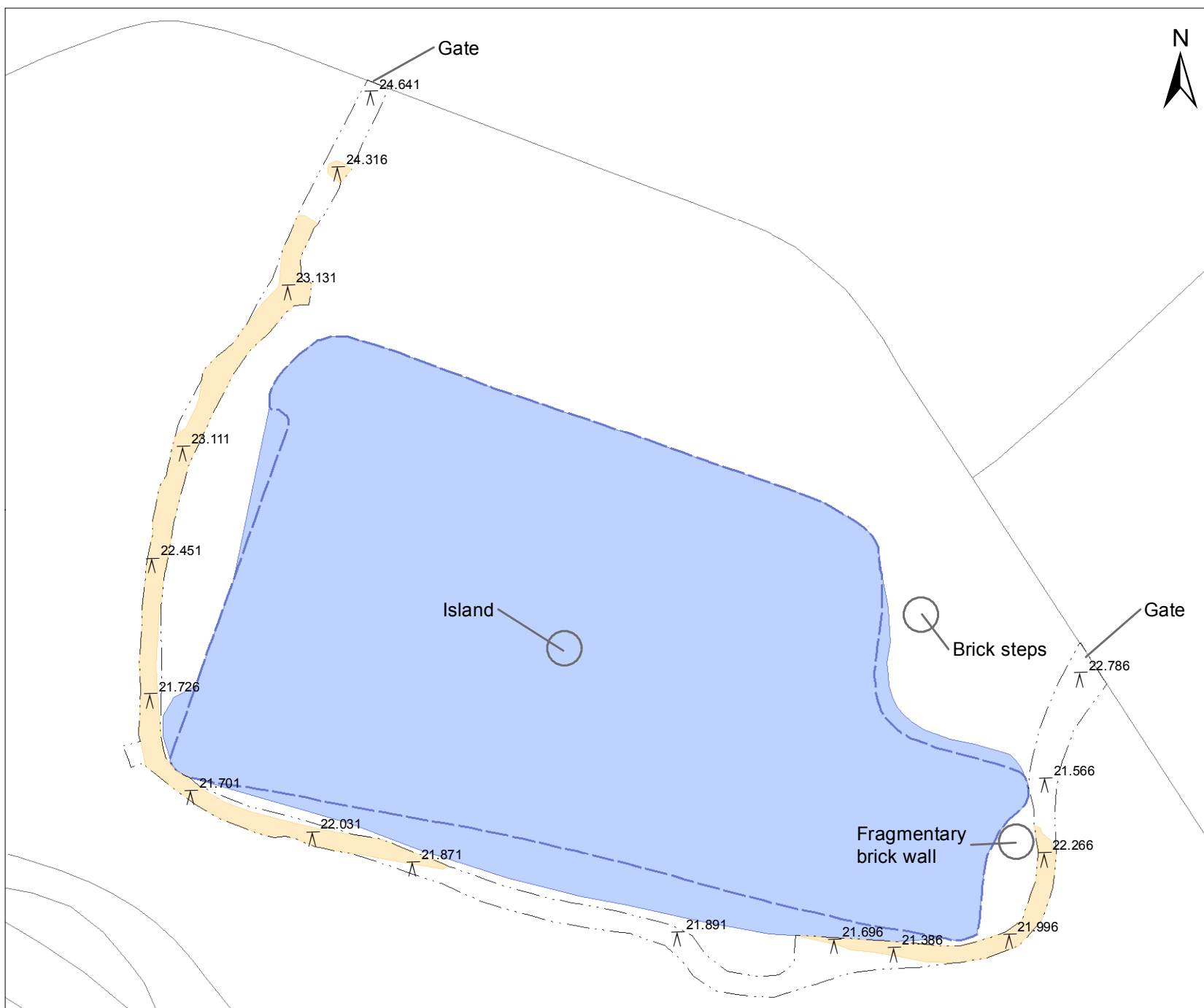
- Approximate current extent of pond
- Extent of pond on OS maps
- Extent of excavation
- Surviving path surface
- Height in m AOD

0 2.5 5 10 15 20 Metres






**4582 Gunby Hall Icehouse Pond
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Trench Plan

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Legend

-  Approximate current extent of pond
-  Extent of pond on OS maps
-  Extent of excavation
-  Surviving path surface
-  Plate location

0 2.5 5 10 15 20 Meters

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Plate Location Plan

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