FIVE SIGNAGE PITS ON THE A46 ROAD CORRIDOR, EAST STOKE, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Site code	ESNN 06
NGR:	SK 7580 5020 - SK 7480 4870
PCA Job No	200-B

Report prepared for
Scott Wilson Ltd.

by

S.A. Savage

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Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln)
Unit G
William Street Business Park
Saxilby
Lincoln
LN1 2LP
Tel. & Fax. 01522 703800
e-mail mail.pca@virgin.net

Summary

- *An archaeological watching brief took place during the excavation of five signage pits and associated trenching at five separate locations on the A46 road corridor at East Stoke, Nottinghamshire.*

- *East Stoke was the site of the battle of Stoke Field (AD 1487), which took place in the fields to the north of this stretch of the A46 – a mass grave associated with this battle has been discovered on the southern approach to the village.*

- *The brief identified no features of archaeological significance, the predominant layers encountered being of Victorian or later origin.*

- *One sherd of Victorian period pottery was recovered from one of the locations.*

1.0 Introduction

An archaeological watching brief took place during the excavation of five signage pits with associated trenching on the A46 road corridor at East Stoke, Nottinghamshire. (National Grid Reference SK 7580 5020 - SK 7480 4870). Scott Wilson Ltd commissioned this work to fulfil a recommendation by Nottinghamshire County Council on road improvement works.

This report documents the results of the archaeological watching brief that was undertaken between 13.2.2006 and 24.2.2006. It has been prepared to meet the requirements of current local guidelines *(Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: A Manual of Archaeological Practice, 1998)* and a formal project specification prepared by Scott Wilson Ltd. approved by the Assistant Archaeology Officer for Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC). This approach complies with the recommendations of *Archaeology & Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16*, (Department of the Environment, 1991), *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991), and *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*, (IFA, 1999).

Copies of this report will be deposited with the commissioning body, who will forward copies to NCC Archaeology Section for inclusion in the Sites and Monuments Record.

2.0 Location and Description (Fig. 1)

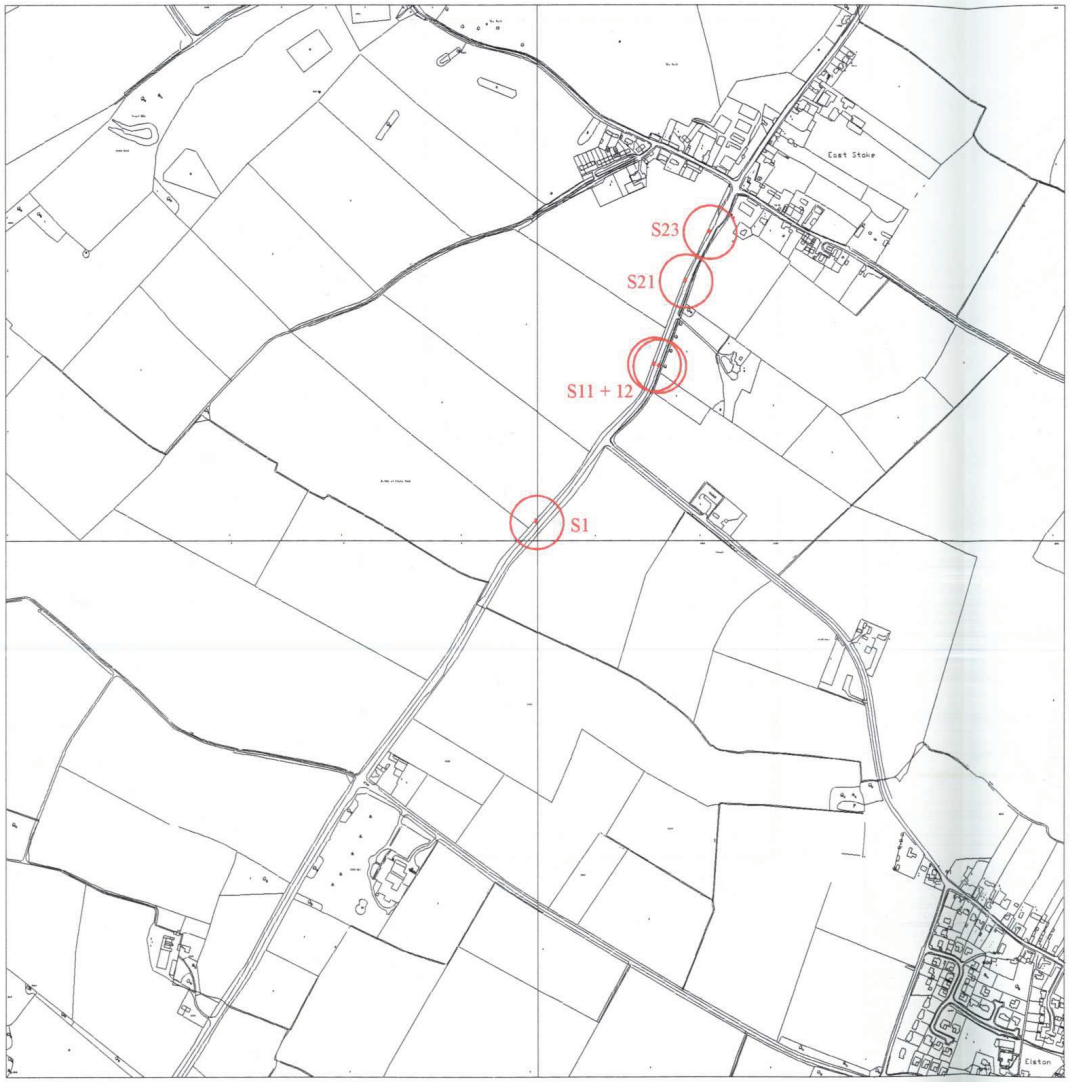
The five signage sites are variously located on the verges on both sides of the carriageway of the current A46 to the south-west of East Stoke (SK 7580 5020 - SK 7480 4870).

The A46 runs close to the location of the battle of Stoke Field (AD 1487) on this section of its route.

The underlying drift geology of the area is characterised as glacial sands and gravels (drift), overlying base deposits (solid) of Upper Triassic marls and sandstone (BGS 1996). The majority of the sites were located to the north of the carriageway, within the grass roadside verge, and were bounded by a roadside ditch and hedge to the north and the modern surface of the A46 itself to the south. Signage pit 12 was located to the south of the carriageway within the grass roadside verge: the verge here slopes gently down from the A46 and was bounded by the footpath and a hedge to the south and the modern surface of the A46 to the north.

3.0 Planning Background

Permission was granted for the erection of 21 new road signs, associated electric ducts and the replacement of existing drainage along the A46, East Stoke, Nottinghamshire with an archaeological recommendation attached. The permission was granted subject to the undertaking of a watching brief on five of the proposed road signs and five electric duct trenches.



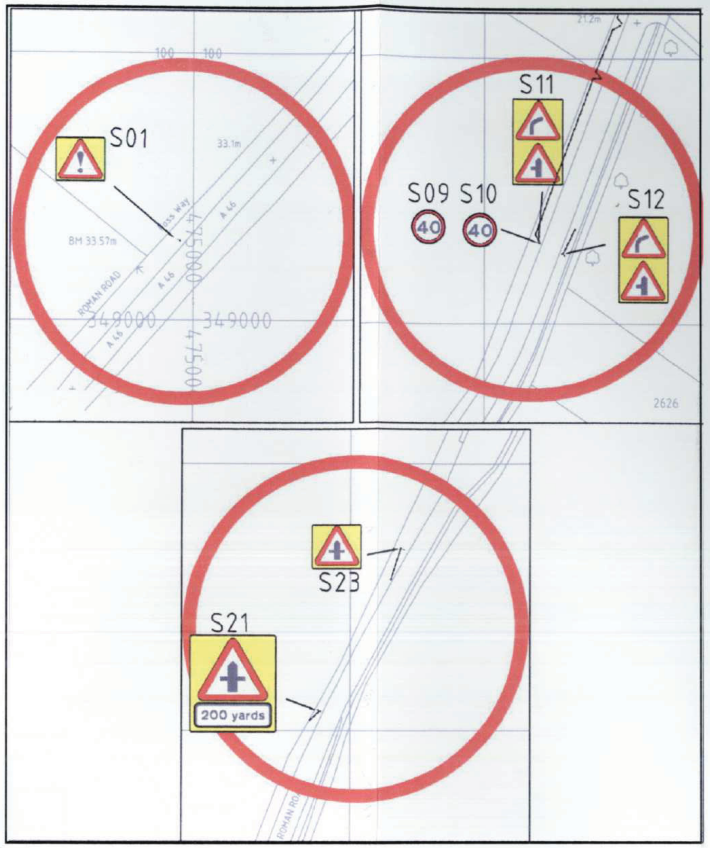


Fig. 1: Overall location plan at scale 1:10 000 showing the location of signage pits subject to archaeological watching brief with their locations and sign types shown at 1:2000 on the right.

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

East Stoke is situated on the Fosse Way, a Roman road constructed in the mid to late first century AD, and the Fosse Way has continued as an important routeway into modern times.

The village itself contains a Scheduled Ancient Monument on the west side of the A46 (SAM 29914: remains of a shrunken medieval village), a conservation area, and listed buildings adjacent to the carriageway. It was the site of a medieval battle, the Battle of Stoke Field on 16th June 1487, and a mass grave associated with this battle has been discovered in a drainage ditch associated with the A46 carriageway on the southern approach to the village (NCCSMR Ref no.1599).

The wider landscape has also been utilised extensively from the prehistoric period through to modern times, with evidence of flint scatters, Bronze Age barrows, the Roman town of *Ad Pontem*, medieval fishponds and medieval and post-medieval agriculture.

The signage sites are located in areas assessed to have had little or no impact from modern services, and all may have the potential for disturbing remains associated with roadside activity along the route of the Fosse Way (the present A46), but are particularly sensitive because of their proximity to the site of the Battle of Stoke Field.

5.0 Methodology

The site was visited intermittently in the period between 13.2.2006 and 24.2.2006: a total of five visits were made. The excavation work was undertaken at night as the road was closed for resurfacing and this would produce the minimum of disruption to normal traffic flow. Initial excavation was undertaken with a 2.5 tonne mini-digger, supplemented by hand-digging because of the suspected presence of roadside utilities. The signage pits varied in size between 1.2m and 1.6m, but all were 1m –1.1m deep. All of the cable trenches were 0.45m deep. This work was monitored continuously to ensure that any archaeological features exposed were identified and recorded.

The archaeological fieldwork entailed the cleaning by hand of exposed surfaces, followed by a thorough inspection. All archaeological deposits identified by this method were subjected to limited excavation to assess their nature/dimensions and to attempt to recover datable materials. These investigations resulted in the production of written descriptions of each deposit on standard watching brief context recording sheets. Colour photographs and scale drawings complement these accounts.

6.0 Results (Figs. 2 -10)

The pits were identified using their sign numbers according to the specification, and cable trenches were numbered according to the signs with which they were associated.

Signage Pit 1 (Contractor ID: S1) (Fig. 2)
This pit was situated on the northbound side of the carriageway 205m SW of the junction of the A46 with Elston Lane (NGR SK 74996 49030); it was 1.6m square. The uppermost layer was modern topsoil, context 100, a very dark greyish brown humic sand. This had been removed and replaced on the south side of the trench in a service trench (102), which was seen cutting the entire sequence. This trench was filled by a stony mid orange brown sandy clay with patches of redeposited natural (context 101). It is unclear what the service trench contained as it continued below the base of the excavated signage pit. Outside of the area of the service trench, the topsoil sealed a mid orange brown coarse silty sand subsoil layer with frequent mid-brown mottles (103) which in turn sealed a mid orange brown clean silty sand layer (104), which overlay the natural at the base of the pit – a very coarse pinkish brown marl, with occasional medium rounded pebbles (105). No artefacts were recovered from the pit.

Signage Pit 11 (Contractor ID: S09, S10 and S11) (Fig. 6)
This pit was located on the northbound side of the carriageway 98m SW of the junction of the A46 with a track to 'The Old Vicarage' (NGR SK 75221 49330); it was 1.3m square. The modern topsoil, context 111, a very dark grey silty sand, sealed 112 – a coarse mottled yellow/grey sand. Layer 112 sealed a layer of mid/light grey sandy silt (113), which in turn sealed the coarse pinkish brown marl natural, which here contained occasional medium limestone fragments (114). No services were discovered within the footprint of the pit. No artefacts were recovered from the pit.

Signage Pit 12 (Contractor ID: S12) (Fig. 8)
This pit was situated on the southbound side of the carriageway, directly opposite signage pit S11, 98m SW of the junction of the A46 with a track to 'The Old Vicarage' (NGR SK 75229 49324); it was 1.4m square. The modern topsoil here, context 121, was a very dark grey silty sand. This material sealed a very similar recently buried topsoil (122), these layers separated on the north (road) side of the pit by a thin lens of yellow sand. It seems likely that the modern topsoil is the product of recent works in this area, probably the construction of the footpath ton the south of the signage pit. Sealed below the earlier topsoil (122) was a thin layer of redeposited natural pinkish clay (123) sealing a layer of clean mid/light grey sandy silt (124) which in turn overlay the coarse pinkish brown marl natural, which here again contained occasional medium limestone fragments (125). No services were discovered within the footprint of the pit. No artefacts were recovered from the pit.

Signage Pit 21 (Contractor ID: S21) (Fig. 9)
This pit was located on the northbound side of the carriageway 176m SW of the crossroads in East Stoke; it was 1.2m wide and 1.6m in length. The verge here was narrow (little wider than the signage pit itself) and sloped slightly downwards towards East Stoke; it was bordered on its northern side by the modern roadside ditch. The topsoil, context 211, consisted of a very dark grey silty sand, occasional small and medium asphalt chunks and small rounded pebbles. The concrete kerb setting intruded

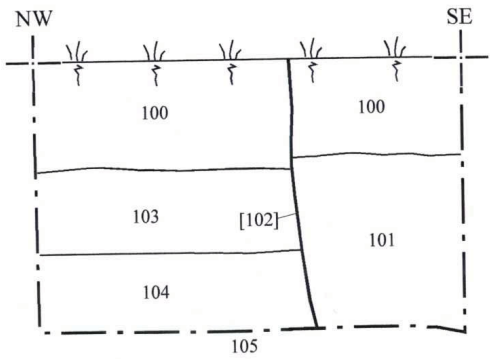


Fig. 2: Southwest facing section of pit 1.
Scale 1:20

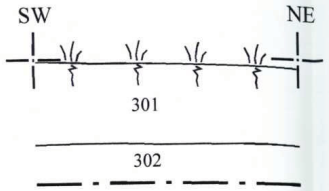


Fig. 3: Southeast facing sample section at SW end of trench 3.
Scale 1:20

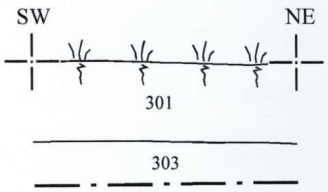


Fig. 4: Southeast facing sample section of trench 3, 50m NE of S3 .
Scale 1:20

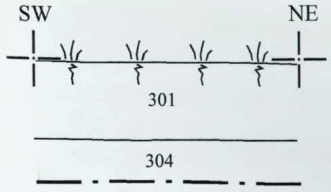


Fig. 5: Southeast facing sample section at NE end of trench 3.
Scale 1:20

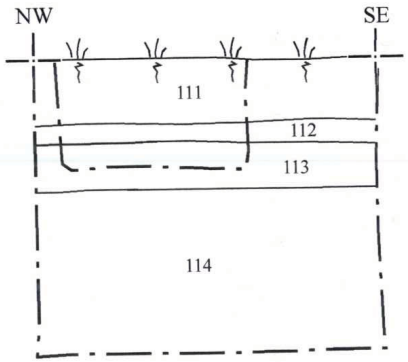


Fig. 6: Southwest facing section of pit 11.
Scale 1:20

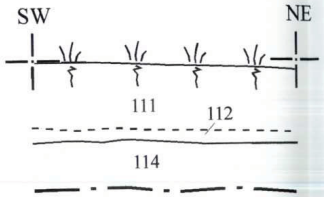


Fig. 7: Southeast facing sample section of trench 11, 20m NE of S11.
Scale 1:20

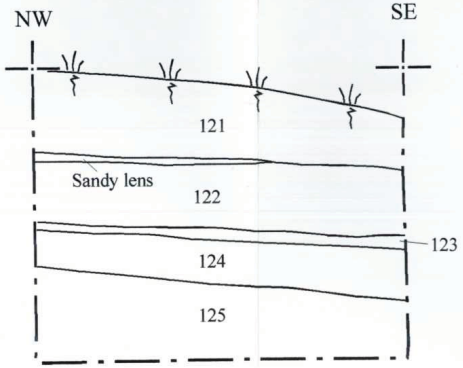


Fig. 8: Southwest facing section of pit 12.
Scale 1:20

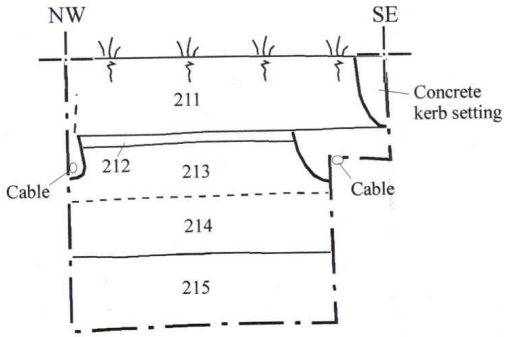


Fig. 9: Southwest facing section of pit 21.
Scale 1:20

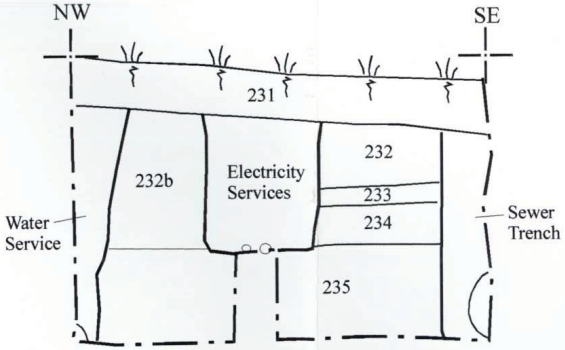


Fig. 10: Southwest facing section of pit 23.
Scale 1:20

into the southeast side of the pit, but was no thicker than the topsoil. Modern services were present c. 0.1m below the base of the topsoil in the form of two cables – running to the north and south sides of the pit, which was reduced to fit between them. NB space was at a premium here as an earlier attempt to excavate the pit some 6m to the NE had encountered only the culverted roadside ditch. Below the topsoil was a thin layer of fine yellow sand material (212), which sealed a mixed mid brown gritty silty sand with occasional asphalt chunks and frequent gravel inclusions, occasional small rounded pebbles (213) – probably upcast from the roadside ditch. Layer 213 sealed a mid grey clean silty sand layer (214), which in turn overlay the natural coarse pinkish brown sandy marl (215). A sherd of Victorian creamware was recovered from layer 213 - its presence was noted and it was discarded.

Signage Pit 23 (Contractor ID: S23) (Fig. 10)
This pit was situated on the northbound side of the carriageway 110m SW of the crossroads in East Stoke; it was 1.5m wide and 1.3m in length. The north side of the road appears to have been widened and the verge here, although wide, sloped steeply to the north of the signage pit up to the roadside hedge: no roadside ditch was present (having been culverted c10m to the north of signage pit 21). The topsoil, context 231, consisted of a very dark grey-brown humic silty sand. A modern mains water service was present on the northern edge of the pit, in a steep-sided trench. A modern sewer was present on the southern edge of the pit, in a vertical-sided trench. Two electric cables occupied a narrow trench in the middle of the signage pit. In the area not truncated by the services the topsoil sealed 232, a mixed mid brown sandy clay with redeposited natural marl mottles, occasional small and medium rounded pebbles and asphalt chunks, representing modern disturbance. On the south side of the trench, between the cable and sewer trenches, 232 sealed 233, a thin band of redeposited natural pinkish clay, which in turn sealed a layer of mid orange brown sandy silt (234). This material in turn sealed 235, the underlying coarse pinkish brown sandy marl, which here exhibited blue-green veining. No artefacts were recovered from the pit. The modern services were backfilled with a mixture of 235 and 234, which represent the upcast from the trench excavation.

Trench 3 (Figs. 3, 4 and 5)
A trench was cut from signage pit S3 to lamp post GL476. This trench was 95m in length and a further 4m trench was cut to the north-east of GL476 to connect it to S5. The trench was 0.25m wide and 0.45m deep, and ran NE from signage pit S3 approximately 0.5m from the kerbline for the first 60m before passing to the north of roadside telecoms covers (1.95m from kerb), after which the verge widened and the trench continued directly to GL476, approximately 3.25m from the kerb. In the vicinity of GL476 the verge was wide (c.5.5m) however, to the SW of the telecoms covers it was only 1.3m in width. The A46 drops from S3 (located some 20-30m NE of a crest) down to a level terrace in the area of the junction to Elston before sloping again towards East Stoke.

Over the entire length of the trench, was a very dark greyish brown silty sand topsoil (301) to a depth of 0.3m. For the southernmost 40m of the trench, this sealed a light brown silty clay subsoil with occasional gravel concentrations – (302). In the middle of the trench the topsoil sealed the natural pinkish sandy clay (303), while at the northern end the topsoil was more disturbed and sealed a mid brown soft silty sand containing occasional modern refuse (304). It seems likely that in the vicinity of

GL476 and S5 this represents made ground as the verge is approximately 0.5m higher than the field to the north of the roadside ditch.

Trench 11 (Contractor ID: S11 to GL508) (Fig. 7)
A trench was cut from signage pit S11 to lamp post GL508. This trench was not continuous, running 58m in length from S11 to lamp post GL506, with a 21m gap from GL506 to GS239, and a further 38m trench was cut from GS239 to GL508. The A46 here slopes gently down towards East Stoke. The trench was again 0.25m wide and 0.45m deep, and ran NE from signage pit S11 approximately 0.4m from the kerb. In the leg from S11 to GL506, the stratigraphy was identical to that seen in signage pit S11, however, it was increasingly disturbed in the vicinity of GL506 probably because of the proximity of modern services.

From GS239 to GL508 the trench was 1.8m from the kerb. The ground was disturbed in the vicinity of GS239 (and a nearby field entrance) but the stratigraphy was clearer nearer to GL508, where the modern topsoil 111 was 0.2m thick, sealing a mid orange-brown silty sand subsoil (similar to 302), which in turn sealed the natural pinkish clay (114) at the base of the trench.

Trench 12 (Contractor ID: S12 to GL503)
In the case of the trench cut to link signage pit S12 to lamp post GL503, the trench was 0.25m wide and 0.45m deep, and ran for a length of 4m in a southerly direction from S12. The stratigraphy here was identical to that seen in signage pit S12 (Fig. 8).

Trench 21 (Contractor ID: S21 to GL510)
A trench was cut to link signage pit S21 to lamp post GL510: the trench was 0.25m wide and 0.45m deep, and ran for a length of 8m in a north-easterly direction from S21, approximately 0.95 m from the kerb. The stratigraphy here was very similar to that seen to signage pit S21 (Fig. 9), however context 212 was seen to be only present in localised patches over the length of the trench.

Trench 23 (Contractor ID: S23 to GL512)
In the case of the trench cut to link signage pit S23 to lamp post GL512, the trench was 0.25m wide and 0.45m deep, and ran for a length of 13m in a south-westerly direction from S23, 1.45m from the kerb. The stratigraphy here was identical to that seen in signage pit S23 (Fig. 10), but was very disturbed as it was close to the line of the services seen within the signage pit.

7.0 Discussion and Conclusions

All of the pits contained some degree of modern disturbance, either in the form of service trenches or recent road make-up/landscaping. In each of the pits, with the exception of pit 1, a thin layer of redeposited natural or sand was observed. It seems likely that this material was the product of roadside landscaping, such as ditch excavation or recutting.

A further layer of predominantly sandy silt was present above the natural in all of the pits. This was particularly noticeable in pits 11 and 12, where it was recorded as 113 and 124; it probably equates to 104, 214 and 234 in pits 1, 21 and 23 respectively.

This material may represent an early buried topsoil, now leached of colour, which may predate recent road widening/re-profiling and is certainly earlier than the Victorian period, since it is sealed below 213 – the only context to yield pottery. However, the lack of any direct dating evidence leaves any definitive interpretation open.

8.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

The methodology employed has allowed the presence/absence of archaeological features to be determined. No features of archaeological significance were exposed by the watching brief.

9.0 Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) would like to thank Scott Wilson Ltd. for this commission, and for the assistance provided by AMScott (the client), and the staff of P J Musgrave during the course of the watching brief. Particular thanks are due to Jim Neil (AMScott Night Shift Supervisor).

10.0 Bibliography

British Geological Survey, 1996, *Nottingham, England and Wales Sheet 126, Solid and Drift Geology, 1:50 000 Series*. Keyworth, Nottingham: British Geological Survey

Knight, D, & Kinsley, G, 1992, *Archaeology of the Fosse Way. Implication of the proposed dualling of the A46 between Newark and Widmerpool.* Trent and Peak Archaeological Trust Vol. 2.

Appendix 1: Colour Plates

Plate 1 (left): General view of the location of signage pit S1 (far left) after erection of the sign.

Plate 2 (right): Signage Pit S1, looking northeast.

Plate 3 (left): General view of the location of signage pits S11 and S12 (S12 is on left) after erection of the signs.

Plate 4 (right): Signage Pit S11, looking northeast.

Plate 5 (left):
Signage Pit S12,
looking northeast.

Plate 6 (right):
Trench 12,
running southwest
from Pit S12,
looking southwest.

Plate 7 (left):
General view of the
location of signage
pit S21(with S23 in
background) after
erection of the signs.

Plate 8 (right):
Signage Pit S21
looking northeast.

Plate 9 (left):
General view of the location of signage pit S23 after erection of the sign.

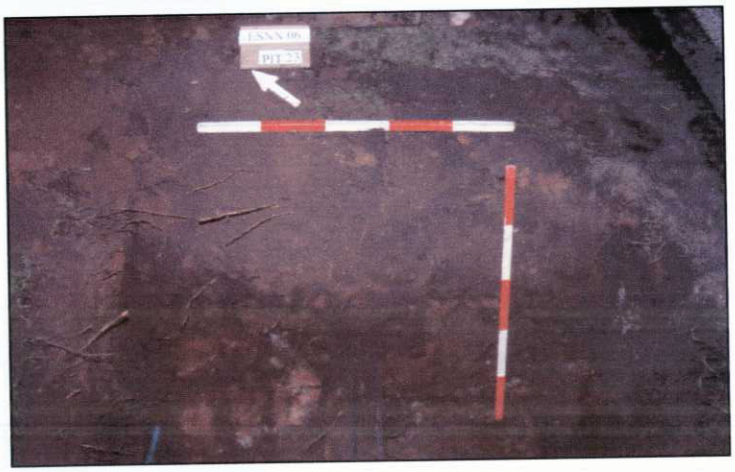


Plate 10 (right):
Signage Pit S23, looking northeast.

Plate 11 (left):
General view of the location of trench 3, which ran from S3 (on left in shot) down the hill to lamp-post GL 476 (in centre of shot in front of speed limit).

Plate 12 (right):
General view of the location of trench 11, which ran from S11 (on left in shot) down the hill to lamp-post GL 508 (behind sign S12 on right).

Appendix 2: Context Summary

Pit 1

Context	Description
100	Very dark grey-brown humic silty sand, occasional pea gravel – modern topsoil
101	Mid-orange brown sandy clay with common patches of redeposited natural and occasional medium rounded pebbles and roadstone.
102	Cut of service trench
103	Mid orange brown coarse silty sand with frequent mid-brown mottles, occasional small rounded pebbles
104	Mid orange brown clean silty sand
105	Very coarse pinkish brown marl, occasional medium rounded pebbles - Natural

Trench 3

Context	Description
301	Very dark grey-brown humic silty sand – modern topsoil
302	Light brown silty clay containing occasional coarse gravel patches - subsoil
303	Very coarse pinkish brown sandy marl, occasional medium rounded pebbles – Natural geology
304	Mid brown soft silty sand, small rounded pebbles, frequent modern refuse.

Pit 11/Trench 11

Context	Description
111	Very dark grey silty sand, frequent asphalt chunks, occasional small rounded pebbles – modern topsoil
112	Coarse mottled yellow and grey sand
113	Mid/light grey sandy silt, common small rounded pebbles
114	Very coarse pinkish brown marl, occasional medium and large rounded pebbles and limestone fragments - Natural

Pit 12/Trench 12

Context	Description
121	Very dark grey silty sand, frequent small and medium asphalt chunks and small rounded pebbles – modern topsoil
122	Dark grey silty sand, frequent small rounded pebbles – buried topsoil
123	Redeposited natural - coarse pinkish brown sandy marl
124	Mid/light grey clean sandy silt
125	Very coarse pinkish brown marl, occasional medium and large rounded

	pebbles and limestone fragments - Natural

Pit 21/Trench 21

Context	Description
211	Very dark grey silty sand, occasional small and medium asphalt chunks and small rounded pebbles – modern topsoil
212	Redeposited natural sand
213	Mixed mid brown gritty silty sand with occasional asphalt chunks and frequent gravel inclusions, occasional small rounded pebbles – upcast from roadside ditch.
214	Mid grey clean silty sand
215	Very coarse pinkish brown sandy marl, occasional medium rounded pebbles and limestone fragments - Natural

Pit 23/Trench 23

Context	Description
231	Very dark grey-brown humic silty sand – modern topsoil
232	Mixed mid brown sandy clay with redeposited natural marl mottles, occasional small and medium rounded pebbles, asphalt chunks etc. – modern disturbance.
232b	Same as 232, on north side of service trench.
233	Redeposited natural band
234	Mid orange brown sandy silt
235	Very coarse pinkish brown sandy marl, blue/ green veined - Natural