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**EVALUATION EXCAVATIONS ON THE FOSSE WAY,  
GALLOWS NOOKING COMMON,  
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE/LINCOLNSHIRE**

**June 2001**

**Prepared on behalf of URS and Highways Agency**

**By Ray Holt, Howard Jones and David Knight**



**TRENT & PEAK**  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

**EVALUATION EXCAVATIONS ON THE FOSSE WAY,  
GALLOWS NOOKING COMMON, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE/LINCOLNSHIRE**

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Trent & Peak Archaeological Unit  
University Park  
Nottingham NG7 2RD  
0115 9514825  
Fax 0115 9514824

## Summary Highlights

1. Excavation identified an Iron Age linear ditch (0111) following a north-east/south-west alignment parallel to the south-east edge of the low earthen bank forming the Nottinghamshire – Lincolnshire county boundary. The upper fill of the earliest phase of the ditch contained a large portion of the base of an Iron Age pottery vessel, with indications that it may have been deliberately placed. The evidence closely matches that recovered from a ditch during earlier evaluation excavations some 90metres to the south-west. The Iron Age pottery from both the previous and current excavations raises the possibility of symbolic/ritual placements within an important territorial boundary feature and/or proximity to a significant settlement of that date.
2. Excavation of the earthen bank forming the county boundary indicated that it is very badly disturbed by roots and animal burrows. It remains strictly undated, although for a portion of its length at Gallows Nooking Common it would appear to follow the same boundary line as that marked by the Iron Age ditch. This raises the possibility of an intriguing sequence beginning with an Iron Age settlement and a territorial boundary, a possible precursor to the Norton Disney Villa and its estate. This boundary was later followed by the Nottinghamshire - Lincolnshire county boundary, as yet undated but perhaps dating to the later Anglo-Saxon - medieval period.
3. In 1776 William Stukeley recorded a possible burial mound at Potter Hill, apparently situated in the middle of the Fosse Way. The subsequent fate of this burial mound is unknown, although an Anglo-Saxon date may be suspected on the basis of its suggested position. The precise location of this important funerary monument remains to be established.
4. No evidence of the Fosse Way Roman road was recovered during the excavation. Either all traces of the Roman road have been destroyed at an earlier date or it lies outside the limits of the evaluated areas, perhaps beneath the modern A46.

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## Executive summary

- A trench (60 x 3m) was positioned at right angles to the earthwork forming the Lincolnshire – Nottinghamshire county boundary. The topsoil was removed by machine, with the exception of the area of the bank which, following machine removal of vegetation, was stripped by hand.
- Removal of topsoil from the south-eastern half of the trench revealed a sub-surface of natural sands and gravels, cut by numerous linear features.
- Removal of the topsoil from the north-west half of the trench revealed a sub-soil with clear indications of allotment cultivation in the 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Removal of the subsoil down to the natural glacial sands and gravels revealed that archaeological features were limited to an 11m band on the north-west side of the boundary bank. Excavation indicated that, with the possible exception of two undated shallow linear ditches/gullies, all were of relatively recent (19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century) date comprising field drains and a boundary ditch cutting the north-west edge of the earthen bank.
- No evidence for the Roman road or related features was recovered from Trench 03, confirming the results of the earlier evaluation (1991/1992). Either the Roman road has been destroyed at an earlier date leaving no trace, or the suggested deviation between the line of the modern A46 and the Roman road is erroneous and the latter very probably underlies the modern carriageway.
- Within the south-eastern half of the trench excavation revealed a two phased ditch (0111) running parallel with the south-east edge of the county boundary earthwork. The earliest phase contained a substantial portion of an Iron Age pot-base, with indications of deliberate placement. The alignment of the ditch and character of the finds correlates well with features and finds recorded in the 1991-1992 evaluation to the south-west.
- With the exception of three field-drains (19<sup>th</sup> century?) only two other features from the south-east portion of the trench produced dateable finds. These included a butt-ended gully (0131) cutting the infilled Iron Age ditch 0111. This contained a single sherd of Iron Age pot almost certainly derived from the same vessel as that from within ditch 0111. A single sherd of early Romano-British pottery (1<sup>st</sup> century AD) was recovered from the surface of a large shallow pit (pond?) projecting from the north-east edge of the trench.
- The low tree-covered earthen bank forming the Lincolnshire – Nottinghamshire county boundary was recorded in a series of EDM profiles. The bank was excavated by hand in a series of 0.1m spits. It was found to be badly disturbed by tree-roots and animal burrows, with no intact stratigraphic structure remaining. Finds from the bank material comprised abraded crumbs of Romano-British pottery (possibly 1<sup>st</sup> century AD) and post-medieval pottery. However, the extent of disturbance and the problem of residuality prevent secure dating on the basis of these finds. Below the south-east edge of the bank was a linear ditch following a parallel alignment to the bank. Excavation produced no dating evidence and examination of the sections suggest that the ditch had been covered by a collapse/spreading of the edge of the bank rather than being sealed beneath its core.
- The identification of an Iron Age ditch following a north-east/south-west alignment appears to correlate with the results of the previous evaluation trench to the south-west, although further excavation will be necessary to establish this with certainty. The boundary represented by this ditch appears to have formed a durable reference point within the landscape. Although direct continuity cannot be proven, the earthen bank forming the county boundary clearly respects this same boundary.
- The evaluation identified a distinctive group of linear features, united by their shared west-east alignment. On the basis of orientation alone these would appear to represent a phase of landscape division quite distinct from that represented by the Iron Age ditch and county boundary earthwork. The targeting of the intersection of these features will form a key element in any future excavation.

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 SITE TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

Gallows Nooking Common (NGR SK 858606) is situated on a pronounced hill of Lower Lias shale, clay and rare limestone capped with glacial sands and gravels. Surrounding this prominence are flat low lying areas of older river gravels. Within the excavated area the natural consisted of very variable mixed sands and gravels with occasional lenses of silty clay and distinct areas of hard iron panning.

### 1.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

At Gallows Nooking Common the primary archaeological issues focus on the arrangement and interrelationship of key elements of the historic and prehistoric landscape. These elements comprise a possible late Iron Age territorial boundary whose line appears to be followed by an earthen bank forming the later county boundary, the Fosse Way Roman road and post-Roman road line.

The common comprises an L-shaped strip of land recorded on the North Collingham enclosure map of 1790. It is located at an abrupt change in the course of the Fosse Way. Rather than an angled join between two straight lengths of road, the modern A46 follows a marked diversion to the north, forming a broad sweep on the outside of the expected angle. The latter alignment is however followed by the line of the Nottinghamshire – Lincolnshire county boundary. The boundary is also marked by an intermittent low bank, which forms the south-east edge to a large portion of the common, but continues in a straight line at the point where the county boundary turns north-west. The irregularity of the resultant parcel of land has long been regarded as an indication that the county boundary, at this point at least, may have been established prior to the both the Roman and modern road line. Prior to the 1991-1992 evaluation at Gallows Nooking Common (Kinsley 1993), the layout of the present road line had been suspected as indicating a post-Roman diversion from its original course, with the county boundary arguably following the original alignment of the Roman road at its west end. However, this no longer appears to be a valid interpretation given the absence of evidence in the 1991-1992 evaluations of the Roman road to the south-east of the A46. Instead evidence of a late Iron Age boundary ditch was recovered whose alignment appeared to be continued at a later date by the county boundary bank.

#### *Early prehistoric (Palaeolithic -Bronze Age)*

Evidence for early prehistoric activity is recorded from the site itself. A small number of stray finds are recorded from the vicinity of the site, including a pebble macehead of suggested Mesolithic date (Lincs. SMR/4330), a Neolithic polished stone axe (Lincs. SMR/4331a), a barbed and tanged (Early Bronze Age) flint arrowhead (Lincs. SMR/'E'), a flint awl of reputed Bronze Age date (Notts. SMR/04037) and a Late Bronze Age socketed bronze axe (Lincs. SMR/'H') (Knight 1991, 22). A programme of systematic fieldwalking conducted as part of the original archaeological assessment of the road corridor yielded no prehistoric finds from the area of Gallows Nooking Common (Knight 1991 Fig 31).

#### *Later prehistoric (Iron Age)*

No diagnostic later prehistoric (Iron Age) stray finds are recorded from the site or its vicinity. However, to the north of the site lies an extensive multi-phase cropmark complex of trackways, linear boundaries and enclosures, suggesting substantial settlement and organisation of the landscape, probably of Iron Age or Romano-British date.

#### *Roman*

Approximately 300m to the south-east lies the important site of the defended Roman villa of Norton Disney, revealed by ploughing in 1933, and excavated by Adrian Oswald from 1934 to 1937 (Oswald 1937). Finds included skeletons, coins pottery, glass, bronze and pewter. The date range for the coins agrees broadly with the excavation conclusions of an occupation period of AD 70 to 360 (Lincs SMR).

The previous excavations at Gallows Nooking common raised a number of questions with regard to the possibility of adjacent Iron Age settlement, the course of the Roman road and the origin of the county boundary.

- The character of the Late Iron Age pottery recovered in the 1991-1992 excavations (fresh, substantially complete) appeared consistent with the deliberate dumping/deposition of material rather than casual incorporation and also suggested possible proximity to a settlement of Late Iron Age date. The latter would also have important implications for the origins of the nearby Norton Disney Villa where the coin series begins in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.
- The earthen bank forming the county boundary remained undated.
- Evidence of Late Iron Age activity included a possible ditch appearing to share, at least for a short length, the alignment of the county boundary bank. This raised the speculative possibility of a prehistoric linear boundary, perhaps also demarcating the Roman Villa estate, which was later followed by the later county boundary.
- The long-suggested deviation between the projected line of the Fosse Way Roman road and the modern A46 was not confirmed by the 1991/1992 evaluations. However the possibility that the Roman road survived to the north-east of Folly Lane remained to be addressed.



### 3 METHODOLOGY

A single trench (3m x 60m) was positioned perpendicular to the north-east/south-west aligned boundary bank (Fig.1). This had the following aims: to check whether the Roman road survived to the north-west of the bank, to establish the character and date of the bank, to determine whether the Iron Age ditch flanking the south-east side of the bank in Trench 02 continued to the north-east, and to check whether Iron Age settlement activity extended either side of the bank. The dense tree cover of the bank partly dictated the position of the trench.

Topsoil was removed using a JCB backactor with a toothless ditching bucket. Above the boundary bank only the uppermost vegetation was removed by machine, the topsoil being removed by hand. Following machine removal of topsoil from either side of the bank, the base and sides of the trench were cleaned by hand, photographed and planned.

A disturbed subsoil containing 20<sup>th</sup> century material was identified in the north-west half of Trench 3. This was subsequently removed by JCB backactor with a toothless ditching bucket down to the underlying natural sands and gravels. At this level the sides and base were cleaned by hand, photographed and planned.

Archaeological features were identified in plan after hand cleaning. Following recording selected features were hand excavated. On completion of excavation the north-east facing baulk section was cleaned by hand, recorded photographically, and the section drawn.

Before excavation, and after each successive spit, the trench was searched using a metal detector.

#### *Palaeoenvironmental sampling*

The only feature of any antiquity to be reliably dated was selected for sampling (30L). This comprised ditch 0111, which contained Iron Age pottery and may represent the continuation of a significant linear boundary recorded in the 1991-1992 evaluation excavation to the south-west. Preliminary assessment has indicated poor potential for the recovery of palaeoenvironmental data, due largely to contamination and disturbance by roots

## 4 FEATURE DESCRIPTIONS

### 4.1 County Boundary Bank (0113, 0123, 0132, 0133 and 0134)

Following machine removal of the vegetation overlying the bank the underlying loose brown sandy loam (0123) was removed by hand to reveal the main body of the bank (0113). The bank was excavated by hand in four 0.1m spits down to the underlying natural.

A low flat topped earthen bank approximately 6m wide and 0.8m deep was revealed in section (Fig.3). Considerable root and animal disturbance was visible, obscuring evidence for distinct construction layers within the body of the bank. A thick turf and root mat to a depth of 0.2m overlay a 0.1m thick layer of very loose brown sandy loam (0123). The main body of the bank comprised a thick layer of brown sandy loam (0113) immediately below 0123 and overlying natural sands and gravels. No trace of a buried soil was observed below the bank. Within 0113 distinct inclusions of stony orange brown sandy loam were noted in section (0132, 0133 and 0134). These may represent remnants of the bank make-up although their proximity to large tree roots suggests they are the product of disturbance. The bank is cut by a ditch (0115) along its northwest edge; this post-medieval ditch runs parallel along the entire visible length of the bank. The spreading/collapse of the bank on its south-east edge appears to have sealed an otherwise undated ditch (0125). For the short length recorded this follows the same alignment as the bank and is filled with a similar brown sandy loam.

Finds consisted mainly of heat affected stones (ADA, ADB, ADL, ADP-ADT), glass (ACV), and two pieces of pottery (ADC Romano-British and ADU post-medieval). These cannot be regarded as securely stratified due to the high level of animal and root disturbance and therefore are of limited use for dating.

An EDM survey of the bank was undertaken. Due to the dense tree cover this was restricted to a series of profiles across the bank (Fig. 2).

### 4.2 Late Iron Age ditch (0111)

A substantial ditch (0111) lay c. 5m from the south-east edge of the bank. Orientated approximately north-east/south-west, it appears to follow the same alignment as the bank although no direct stratigraphic relationship exists (Fig. 3). A 0.7m cut against the southwest facing and 1.2m cut against the northeast facing sections were excavated by hand in 0.1m spits.

The ditch had been cut to a depth of 0.5 m into the natural sands and gravels (Fig.5). Its irregular stepped profile suggests multiple recuts, although only two phases were discernible within the fill. The earliest phase was represented by a ditch with moderately sloping sides and an irregular base; this was recut to a shallower 'U' shaped profile.

Eleven sherds of diagnostic Late Iron Age shell-tempered pottery, possibly wheel-made (ADD, ADG, ADH, ADI, ADK, ADM) were recovered from the uppermost 0.1m spit of the earliest phase of the ditch. These included the substantial portion of the base of a vessel and the lower part of the pot wall. Nearly all the sherds were subsequently joined to form the same vessel. The vessel base appeared to have been deliberately placed upright, and much of the breakage may be attributed to post-depositional disturbance.

### 4.3 Ditch 0115 (post-medieval)

Running parallel with the bank along its northwestern edge was a substantial linear ditch (0115). At its southwestern visible extent it only survives as a slight depression next to the bank. To the northeast of trench 3 it becomes considerably deeper indicating recent recutting. A 1.5m cut against the northeast facing baulk section was excavated by hand in 0.1m spits (Fig.2).

The ditch had been cut through the modern topsoil into the natural sands and gravels, showing at least two phases of cutting in section. The early phase of the ditch cuts the bank 0113 to the southeast. The later phase had a similar profile but was shallower. Considerable root and animal disturbance was noted in section (Fig.5).

Five sherds of pottery (ACU, ADW, AEA, AEC, AEG), two pieces of glass (AED, AEE), slate (AEB) and coal (AEF) were recovered. All finds are post-medieval suggesting a 19th - 20<sup>th</sup> century date for the ditch.

### 4.4 Ditch 0125 (undated)

A wide round bottomed ditch was revealed following the removal of the south-east edge of the boundary bank 0113 (Fig.3). The ditch appears to follow the same north-east/south-west alignment as the bank. The bank was heavily disturbed by roots and animal burrows and it is unclear whether the ditch had cut through the bank at this point (Fig.5). The fill of the ditch, a dark grey sandy loam was nearly identical to the makeup of the bank and may have been derived from the slumping/spreading of the earthwork.

No dating evidence was retrieved from the feature, although a speculative linkage could be suggested with the later phase ditch containing medieval pottery, which was recorded in the 1991-1992 evaluation (Kinsley 1993).

### 4.5 Features north-west of the county boundary bank

#### *Linear ditches and gullies*

*Ditch 0128:* This comprised an ill-defined and badly disturbed narrow gully, surviving to a maximum depth of c.0.1m. The gully was cut by a field drain and appeared to have been sealed by a layer of mixed subsoil (0118), formed during 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century allotment cultivation. The gully had been slightly truncated by machining and the remaining fill was removed during hand-cleaning. No finds were recovered.

*Gully 0129:* A second broader gully, c.0.8m wide and 0.2m deep, was cut by a modern field drain and also sealed by the layer of subsoil (0118). It followed a parallel west-east alignment c. 2.0m from the north edge of feature 0128.

#### *Miscellaneous*

*Pit/posthole 0130:* A small pit/posthole was positioned on the north edge of the gully although its precise relationship with the gully is unclear. No finds were recovered during the excavation of a 1.0m length of 0129.

#### 4.6 Features south-east of the county boundary bank

##### *Linear gullies/ditches*

*Gully 0127:* A short length (0.5m) of flat bottomed near-vertical sided gully c.0.3m deep and aligned approximately east-west, appeared to have been cut by the south east edge of the Iron Age ditch (0111). The possibility that this had formed a double or replacement posthole arrangement was considered but no distinction could be observed within the fill. No finds were recovered during the excavation of 0127. On the basis of its relationship with ditch 0111, gully 0127 would appear to represent the earliest demonstrable phase of activity on site (Iron Age or earlier).

*Gully 0131:* A 'V' shaped gully cut the Iron Age ditch 0111 and terminated in a butt-end to the north-west. The gully followed an approximate east-west alignment and extended beyond the north-east edge of the trench. One sherd of Iron Age pot (ADZ), with a rounded girth and sandy fabric distinct from that recovered from ditch 0111, was found during excavation.

*Ditch 0105:* A distinctively substantial ditch, c.1.6m wide and 0.6m deep, crossed the trench on an approximate west-east alignment. Excavation indicated a well-defined U-shaped profile with a fill of dark greyish brown sand/loamy sand. No dateable finds were recovered although two heat affected stones were retrieved from the upper fills of the ditch.

*Gully 0108:* A narrow (0.25m) sharply defined band of very dark brown sandy loam extended from the south-west edge of the on a north-east/south-west alignment and terminated in a rounded butt-end. The feature was not excavated, its sharp edges and similarity between the fill and ploughsoil suggest a modern origin.

##### *Pit/pond 0106*

A large irregular sub-rounded pit or pond feature was identified approximately 10m to the south-east of the bank. Its full extent could not be determined as the feature continued underneath the south-west facing baulk section.

A quadrant against the south-west facing section was excavated by hand in 0.1m spits. The feature had been cut into the natural sands and gravels, with gently sloping sides, to a depth of approximately 0.5m. The fill consisted of two distinct layers; an upper brown silty clay and a lower dark grey sandy silty clay. This fill contrasts with that found in all other features within Trench 3, suggesting a different method of deposition. The clay and silt content would be consistent with still-water deposition, perhaps suggesting that the feature was a pond.

Finds consisted of two heat affected stones (ADX, ADY), and one sherd of Romano-British grey ware pottery (ACY), dating to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Unfortunately the latter was recovered during cleaning of the upper surface of 0106 and is of limited value for dating purposes.

##### *Field drains (0103, 0107, 0116 and 0126)*

Three linear features (0103, 0107, 0116) were identified within the south-eastern half of Trench 3. These had pronounced straight edges, were filled with a mixed natural sand, silt and gravel fill indicating quick backfilling, and were interpreted as modern field drains. Small 0.5m x 0.5m box sections were cut through the features against their respective baulk sections. These features had sharp vertical cuts with circular section ceramic land drains in the base.

Removal of the disturbed subsoil layer relating to allotment cultivation within the north-western half of Trench 3 revealed an additional horseshoe section ceramic field drain and associated cut (0126); this was identified in plan and recorded in the north-east facing baulk section.

*Miscellaneous undated features (0101, 0102, and 0104)*

Three amorphous, brown sandy loam filled pit like features cut into the natural sands and gravel were identified in plan to the south-east of the ditch 0105. These were not excavated. Features 0102 and 0104 are cut by and therefore stratigraphically earlier than the field drain 0103. No other dating evidence was retrieved.

## 5 OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

### Earlier prehistoric (Palaeolithic - Bronze Age)

No features or finds could be reliably attributed to early prehistoric activity. A short length of gully (0127), apparently cut by the south-east edge of the Iron Age ditch 0111, represents the earliest demonstrable phase of activity on site. No finds were recovered from the feature itself, although its relationship with ditch 0111 suggests an Iron Age or earlier date.

### Later prehistoric (Iron Age)

The earlier phase of ditch 0111 contained joining sherds from the base of a Late Iron Age shell-tempered pot. This appears to support the identification in the 1991-1992 evaluation of a linear ditch of Late Iron Age date (Trench 02: 0017). Ditch 0111 follows a north-east/south-west alignment, shared at a later date by a low bank forming the Lincolnshire/ Nottinghamshire county boundary. Although no direct stratigraphic linkage can be demonstrated between the bank and ditch 0111, it seems plausible that the linear boundary represented by the Iron Age ditch formed a significant territorial boundary whose line was later preserved by the medieval county boundary. The second phase of the ditch, represented by a central recut, is undated and may represent Iron Age or Romano - British activity.

The manner of deposition character of the Iron Age vessel from ditch 0111 recalls that of the three substantially complete vessels recovered from feature 0017 in the 1991-1992 evaluation excavation. All appear to represent deliberate deposits, rather than casual incorporations within the feature, and this together with the substantial and fresh character of the sherds, raises the possibility that they represent either deliberate dumping of domestic rubbish or symbolic/ritual boundary deposits.

Gully 0131 clearly post-dated the infilling of the Iron Age ditch 0111 and also contained a single sherd of Iron Age pottery whose fabric is quite distinct from that recovered from 0111.

Other undated features in the south-eastern half of Trench 3 could relate to activity of this date or to Romano-British or later activity (0101 pit, 0102 pit, 0104 pit, 0105 ditch).

### Romano - British

The lack of Romano-British features and finds is surprising given the proximity to the Norton Disney Roman villa, approximately 300m to the south-east. Only two sherds of Romano British pottery were recovered. Badly abraded crumbs of pottery (representing a single sherd (ADC) of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD) were recovered from within the bank material 0113. They cannot however be regarded as securely stratified given the high level of root and animal penetration, and a single sherd (also of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (ACY)), from the surface of feature 0106 (pit/pond?) is likewise insecurely stratified. Similar abraded material was recovered from the bank in the 1991-1992 evaluation excavation, also insecurely stratified due to disturbance. The early date of the sherds could be significant however, and correlates with the early end of the coin series from the nearby villa (see section 1.2).

It seems very probable that the site lies within the bounds of the villa-estate. In this context the evidence from the two evaluations for possible Late Iron Age settlement and a significant territorial boundary has magnified importance, raising the possibility that the boundary might also relate to the estate.

Some of the undated features in the north-west and south-eastern half of Trench 3 could conceivably relate to a late Iron Age/Romano-British (or post-Roman) phase. Attention should be drawn in particular to a group of four linear features united by their shared west-east alignment (Fig.3: 0128, 0129, 0105, 0131). Their alignment is at variance with that of the bank 0113 and the Iron Age ditch 0111 and is indicative of discontinuity in the sequence of land division and a quite distinct phase of activity. The intersection of these features forms an obvious target for further excavations and may be a crucial element in tracing the development of the landscape and its boundaries.

### **Anglo-Saxon and Medieval**

No evidence of Anglo-Saxon activity was recovered. Medieval finds were similarly lacking and no definite correlation could be achieved between features and the ditch (0015) containing medieval pottery identified in the 1991-1992 on the south-east edge of the boundary bank (Kinsley 1993).

### **Post Medieval**

Twenty three sherds of post- medieval pottery and one piece of glass were recovered from the disturbed layers overlying the natural sands and gravels in the north-western half of Trench 3 (0116, 0117, 0118, 0119, 0120, 0121, 0122). The majority of the pottery can be attributed to the 19th and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is probable that the pottery derives in part from the manuring of allotments which local residents recall as having existed on the narrow strip of land formed by Gallows Nooking Common during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Sherds of post-medieval pot, brick, glass, slate and coal were recovered from ditch 0115, cutting the north-west edge of the bank. This correlates with ditch 0014, identified in Trench 2 during the 1991-1992 evaluation excavation, which produced a securely stratified clay pipe bowl of 1830-50 (Kinsley 1993).

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

Archaeological concerns focus on the dating and relationships of the key linear ditches (0111, 0105, 0115, 0125, 0129, 0128) and bank (0113). This includes an apparently distinctive group of west-east oriented features (0105, 0128, 0129, 0131,) whose alignment is clearly at odds with that of the county boundary and Iron Age ditch (0111). Only one element of this boundary sequence can be securely dated. The evaluation has confirmed the presence of a linear boundary ditch (0111), containing Late Iron Age pottery, along the south-east edge of the bank. This correlates with the results of the 1992-1993 evaluation excavation some 90m to the south-west. The preliminary results from Gallows Nooking Common raise the possibility of an exciting sequence beginning with an Iron Age settlement and a territorial boundary, a possible precursor to the Norton Disney Villa and its estate. This boundary was later followed by the Nottinghamshire - Lincolnshire county boundary, as yet undated but perhaps dating to the later Anglo-Saxon - medieval period.

Further excavation of a larger area will allow for the targeting of intersections between these and other key elements of the boundary complex and will thereby clarify the overall sequence of landscape division and the issue of continuity of boundaries.

### **Earlier prehistoric activity**

The lack of earlier prehistoric features and finds is entirely consistent with the fieldwalking assessment conducted in 1991, which reflected a sparse distribution of surface material from the area.

### **Iron Age: territorial boundary and possible settlement**

The excavations strongly suggest a significant linear boundary of later Iron Age date. The discovery of substantial portions of Iron Age pottery vessels in both excavations indicate either a proximity to contemporary settlement or symbolic/ritual deposition within a boundary feature. Additional excavation is required to investigate the possibility of adjacent Iron Age settlement, and to elucidate the character, date and function of the bank and to establish its relationship with adjacent linear features.

### **Earthen Bank: county boundary, undated**

The cutting across the low earthen bank forming the Lincolnshire-Nottinghamshire county boundary indicated that animal burrowing and root action had destroyed any significant internal stratigraphy. Hence the few finds recovered from the bank (post-medieval and Romano-British pottery) have little value as dating evidence. Thus, apart from the *terminus ante quem* provided by the post-medieval ditch the boundary bank remains undated. Given the disturbance to the bank it would seem that any additional archaeological work be focused on the recovery of dating evidence from beneath the bank.

The shared alignment of the bank with the Iron Age ditch appears to be confirmed by the current evaluation. However, no direct relationship could be demonstrated between the two boundary features. The issue of continuity remains problematic. A direct sequence cannot yet be established, although it seems clear that the bank represents a continuation of the same landscape division.

### **Romano-British: east-west linear ditches/gullies**

No evidence of the Fosse Way Roman road or of related features was recovered, suggesting either the subsequent destruction of the road or its location elsewhere (most probably beneath the A46).

Surprisingly, given the proximity to the Norton Disney Roman villa, indications of Roman activity were limited to a few sherds of insecurely stratified Romano-British pottery. However, a number of features may be suspected to be of Roman or post-Roman date, in particular a distinctive west-east group of ditches/gullies. Further excavation should seek to recover dating evidence and to establish relationships between these distinctive features, the Iron Age ditch and the undated bank.



### **Anglo-Saxon - Medieval**

No evidence of Anglo-Saxon or medieval activity was recovered during excavations. However, the issue of the location of the tumulus recorded by Stukeley in the middle of the Fosse Way at Potter Hill remains to be resolved. A small area of raised ground in the angle of Folly Lane and the modern A46 has been previously highlighted as a possible remnant of the suggested burial mound. This would merit investigation as part of a future programme of work at Gallows Nooking Common.

### **Post-Medieval**

The strip of land between the modern A46 carriageway and the county boundary earthwork is recorded in the 1790 North Collingham enclosure map as being 'for gravel'. No evidence of gravel extraction, piecemeal or otherwise was recorded during the current excavation, although irregularities in the surface of the field were noted to the north.

In addition to field drains and a ditch cutting the north-west side of the county boundary, evidence of post-medieval cultivation was recovered from the north-west half of the evaluation trench. This would support the recollection of local inhabitants that the strip of land bounded by the county boundary bank and the A46 had been used in the earlier decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for allotments.

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**Appendix: Environmental Archaeology assessment, ditch 0111**  
by D.J. Rackham

Three samples from the lower, middle and upper fills of a late Iron Age ditch at GNC were taken by the Trent & Peak Archaeological Unit and submitted to the Environmental Archaeology Consultancy for assessment.

**Table 1:** Environmental samples taken and preliminarily assessed

sample no.	context no.	trench	vol	feature	date
ES1	0111	3	9	Upper fill of ditch	LIA
ES1	0111	3	9	Middle fill of ditch	LIA
ES1	0111	3	9	Lower fill of ditch	LIA

LIA – late Iron Age

**Methods**

The soil samples were processed in the following manner. Sample volume and weight was measured prior to processing. The samples were washed in a 'Siraf' tank (Williams 1973) using a flotation sieve with a 0.5mm mesh and an internal wet sieve of 1mm mesh for the residue. Both residue and flot were dried and the residues subsequently re-floated to ensure the efficient recovery of charred material. The dry volume of the flots was measured and the volume and weight of the residue recorded.

The residue was sorted by eye, and environmental and archaeological finds picked out, noted on the assessment sheet and bagged independently. A magnet was run through each residue in order to recover magnetised material such as hammerscale and prill and a count made of the number of flakes or spheroids of hammerscale collected. The residue was then discarded. The flot of each sample was studied using x10 magnification and the presence of environmental finds (i.e. snails, charcoal, carbonised seeds, bones etc) was noted and their abundance and species diversity recorded on the assessment sheet. The flots were then bagged and along with the finds from the sorted residue, constitute the material archive of the samples.

The individual components of the samples were then preliminarily identified and the results are summarised below in Table 2.

**Results**

All three samples produced a residue of small to medium rounded and sub-rounded gravel with occasional soil concretions. Finds were limited to a few tiny fragments of fired earth in the middle fill.

The flots were almost completely composed of modern and recent plant and shrub roots, woody fragments of root, several modern seeds including *Rumex*, *Polygonum*, *Carex*, *Montia fontana* and *Anthemis cotula*. The top sample included one or two shells of the burrowing blind snail *Cecilioides acicula* and several larvae and beetle fragments were present in all three.

The samples included very small quantities of charcoal, with one or two poorly preserved charred grain and weed seeds.

Given the level of recent contamination and disturbance of the deposits evident from the modern rootlets and other recent remains, the charred plant remains in these deposits occur at such low densities that they are unreliable and need not be contemporary with the pottery recovered from the feature.

**Table 2: Archaeological finds from the samples**

sample	cont.	vol. (l)	residue vol. (ml)	flot vol. ml	fired earth (g)	char coal *	char'd grain *	char'd seed *	
top	O111	9	700	<1		1	1		2 grains, of Barley
middle	0111	9	1000	<1	<1	1		1	1 grass? seed
bottom	0111	9	800	<1		1			

(\*frequency 1=1-10; 2=11-50; 3=51-150; 4=151-250; 5=>250)

If similar levels of contamination and disturbance occur in the other deposits on the site it has a low potential for the study of charred plant remains. The lack of bone or shells, other than the blind snail, suggests that the soils are acidic and these elements of the environmental data are unlikely to have survived.

No further work is warranted on these samples.

KEY

ROAD CORRIDOR



COUNTY BOUNDARY BANK

PROFILE

1991-1992 TRENCHES

2001 TRENCH

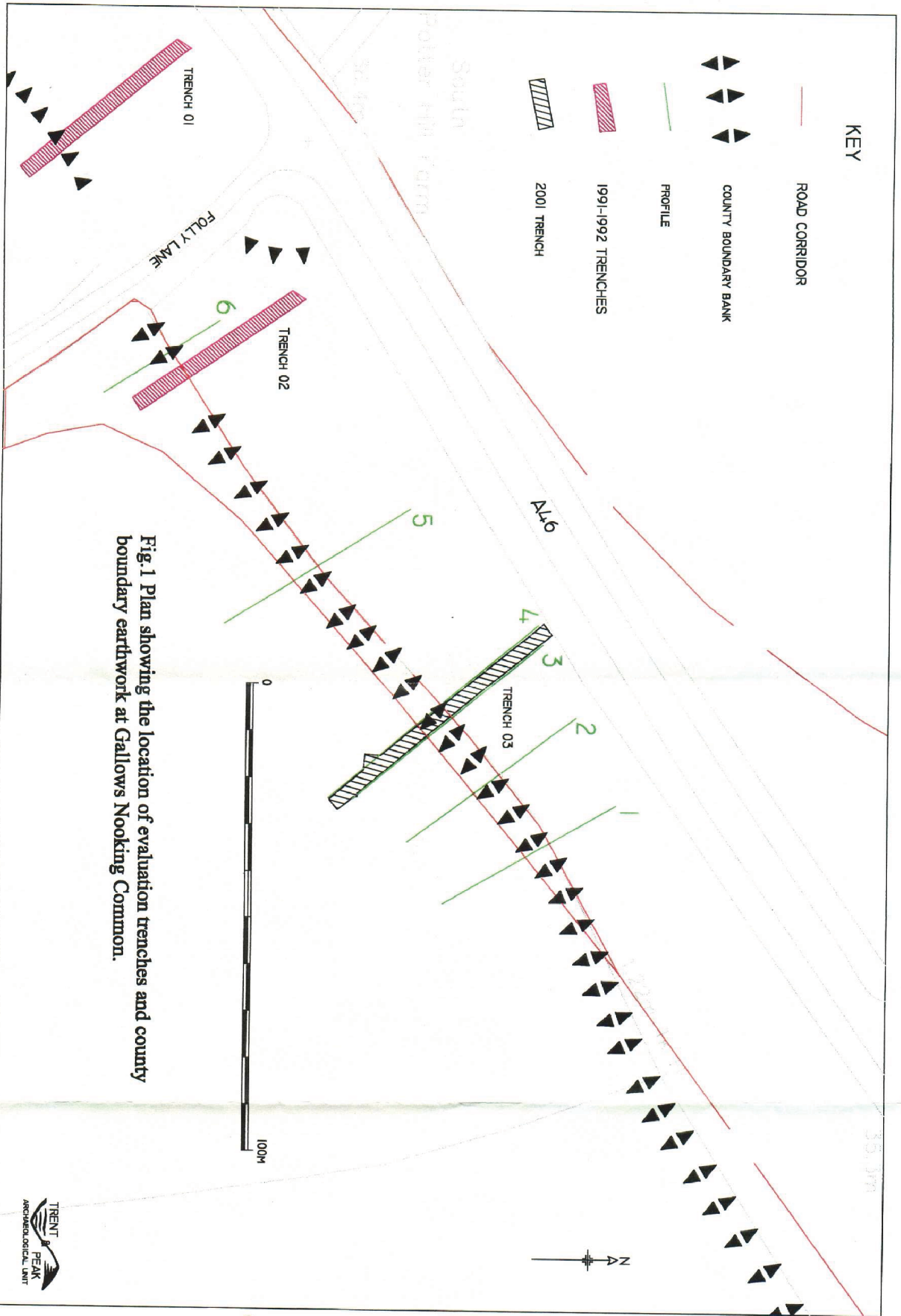


Fig. 1 Plan showing the location of evaluation trenches and county boundary earthwork at Gallows Nooking Common.

ORIGINAL AT A3

ORIGINAL IN COLOUR



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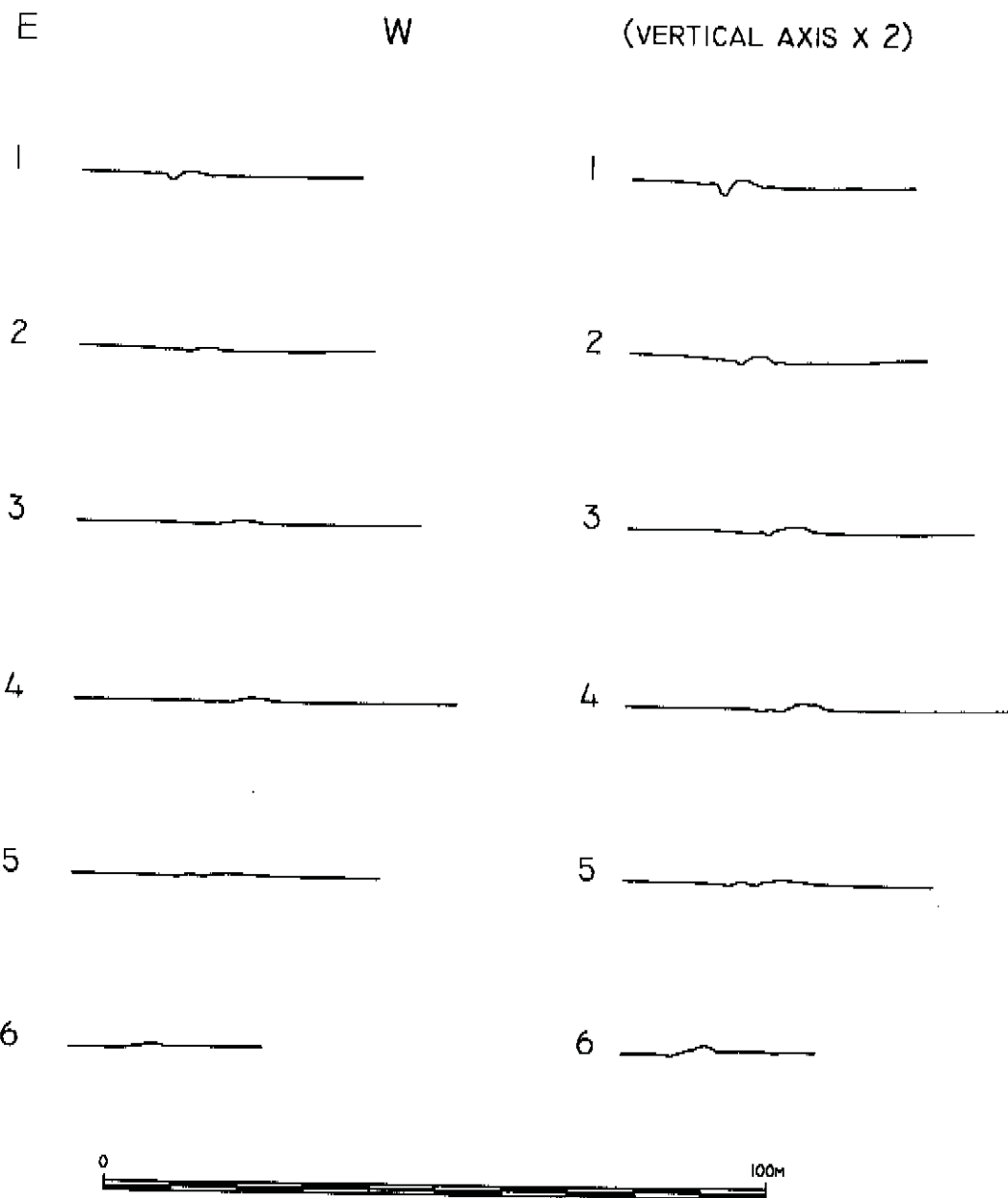


Fig.2 Profiles across the county boundary earthwork at Gallows Nooking Common.

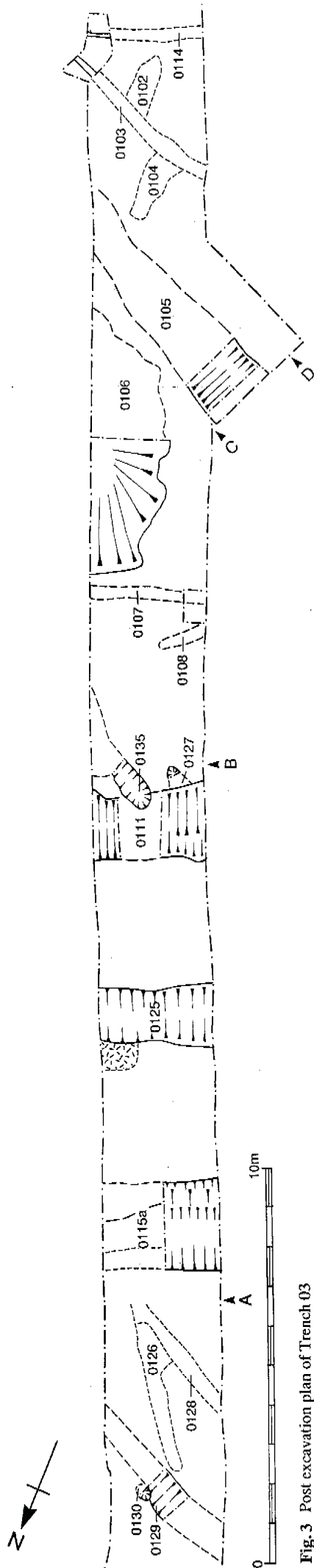


Fig. 3 Post excavation plan of Trench 03

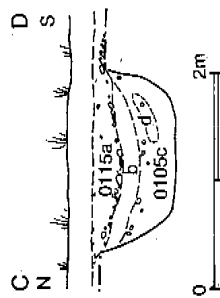


Fig. 4 East facing section of feature 0105

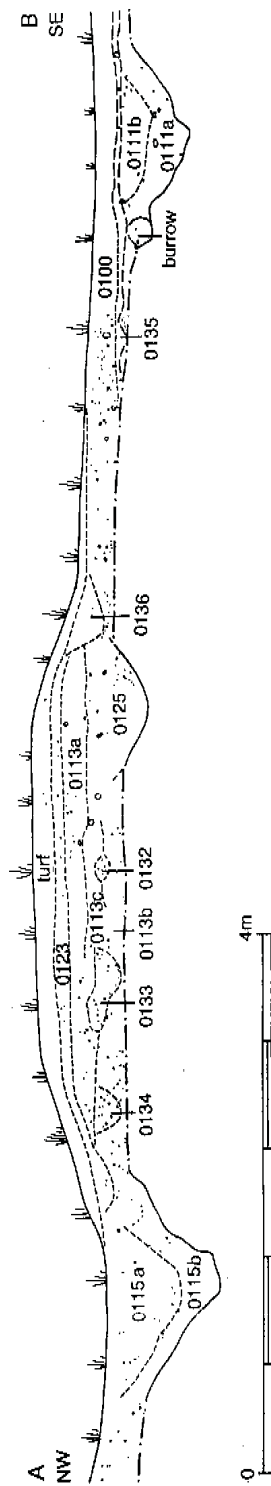


Fig. 5 North-east facing section of the boundary bank and adjacent ditches