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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

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Thorpe on the Hill, The Farm

**Archaeological Watching Brief
during Groundworks for an Estate Access Road**

**NGR: SK 9060 6555
Site Code THF 97
LCNCC Museum Accn. No. 243.97
Planning Application No. N/64/0366/97**

**Report prepared for
J.H. Walter (on behalf of Lady Homes Ltd)**

LAS Report No. 329

December 1998

Lincolnshire County Council
Archaeology Section

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LI 7884

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Fig. 2 Position of the monitoring road within the proposed development, showing the location of the observations. Based on a plan supplied by the developer.

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LCNCC Museum Accn. No. 243.97

Planning Application No. N/64/0366/97

Summary

A watching brief during groundworks for an estate access road produced two Romano-British pottery sherds. Close to the entrance to The Farm an existing boundary ditch was found to overlie a deep broad ditch of unknown extent, interpreted as a large boundary ditch or possibly a medieval homestead moat. A fill at the edge of the early ditch produced six pieces of fired clay which may have derived from an oven or hearth.

Introduction

Lindsey Archaeological Services (LAS) was commissioned by J.H. Walter (on behalf of Lady Homes Ltd) in September 1997 to conduct an archaeological watching brief during topsoil stripping and groundworks for an estate access road and one dwelling on a plot to the NE of The Farm, Thorpe on the Hill (Fig. 1). The watching brief was required by North Kesteven District Council to fulfil a condition on Full Planning Permission N/64/0366/97, a renewal of consent granted in 1991 (N/64/0338/91).

Groundworks were monitored by G. Tann on 29th June and 1st July 1998; further trenching was inspected by N. Field on 14th July and M. McDaid on 15th July. LAS were informed that construction of the dwelling would be at a later date; this report excludes that dwelling.

Archaeological Background

The development site lies close to the centre of the medieval settlement and is 250m from the parish church. It is one of the last parts of the village to be developed and the potential for archaeological remains was considered high. The North Kesteven Heritage Officer's Brief for the monitoring noted two nearby finds of prehistoric stone axes, the Roman Fosse Way 1.2km to the south, and an uncertain reference to a Roman fort 'on or near the site'.

The Watching Brief (Figs. 2 and 3)

Context numbers were assigned by LAS for recording cut features, fills and soil layers identified in the machine-excavated trenches for the estate access road and sewer. These numbers were used on finds and on the section drawings included in this report.

During the first monitoring visit, the contractor had begun excavation of a deep trench along the line of the north-south estate access road. As the trench was not to be completed for some considerable time, the contractor agreed to excavate a shallower trench along part of the road line in order that archaeological features could be identified where present and recorded in

safer conditions (Pl. 1). Part of the east-west road line was excavated in the same way. A small area at the junction of the two trenches could not be opened at that time but there were no indications of features at that location. During subsequent monitoring visits, the access road line was extended to the west and some further information was obtained. Unfortunately the trench was too deep for safe access and close examination could not be conducted.

North-South Access Road

Two sherds of pottery were found in the thin topsoil **2**. These were an abraded thirteenth or fourteenth century jug fragment, produced locally, and a post-medieval sherd (App. 1). There was no evidence for ridge and furrow cultivation.

Layer **7**, a dark brown clay loam, was recorded only in the central part of the access road, where it appeared to represent a thin subsoil layer below **2**. Nearby small features including possible post-holes **4** and **22**, and scoop **21** had removed the layer, assuming it to have been more than a restricted spread (Pl. 2). This concentration of features might in fact be the product of an uprooted bush or small tree, but it was observed that **21** was in line with a change in angle of the eastern hedge boundary, and this may have been a minor boundary ditch between fields. A single sherd of late fourth century Romano-British pottery was found in **7**. The sherd was part of a bowl, and was probably produced at kilns in the Trent Valley rather than the closer kiln sites at Swanpool (App. 2).

At the southern end of the road trench, 2m north of the existing hedgeline, the topsoil **1** was 0.4m thick, reflecting soil build-up close to the boundary. A dark brown clay loam subsoil layer **2** beneath it was 0.2m thick above undisturbed natural of gravel and clay (Pl. 3).

East-West Access Road

To the east of the lane leading to the farmhouse and farmyard, the new access road trench cut through a 0.7m thick topsoil layer **8** which sloped down towards the lane (Pls. 4-7). The deposit produced a single late-third or fourth century Roman sherd and two post-medieval sherds. The topsoil sealed the north-south aligned trench for a ceramic land drain **18**, presumably installed for drainage when a former roadside ditch was effectively levelled. The drain had cut through the western edge of a shallow ditch **15**, 2.8m wide and 1m deep. This was interpreted as a relatively modern recut of an earlier ditch.

The recut had removed part of a shallow fill **12**, a loose dark brown clay loam. This was probably produced by final silting of the earlier large ditch **23**. Beneath this fill was a compact mid-brown clay fill **11** (probably the same deposit as **13** but this could not be confirmed). A single sherd of fifteenth/sixteenth century pot was found in this deposit, the earliest identified fill of the large ditch. Its position 0.5m below the original ground level could be the result of much later levelling of a silted feature. No earlier fills were identified. Ditch **23** was at least 7m wide and over 1.5m deep, with a steeply

sloping eastern side. The base was not visible from ground level within the contractors' trench.

The ditch fill deposit **11** was apparently overlain by **9**, a small dump of fired clay on the eastern edge of the ditch (Pl. 6). The fired clay could have been redeposited from a feature of Roman or Saxon date but its position at the lip of ditch **23** indicates a more probable medieval or later date. If the clay dump seals fill **11**, then a post-medieval date is indicated. However, at this position, slumping of an exposed medieval heap on the ditch edge onto a later fill would have produced the same sequence. Clay dump **9** produced six pieces of fired clay, all are likely to be from the same object or structure. One piece is smoothed and probably formed an outer face, and another piece has a curved surface. There is no obvious temper incorporated into the clay and this indicates that it derived from an oven or hearth rather than a cob or wattle and daub building.

The clay dump overlies a stony dark brown clay loam **10** which was probably a former topsoil, cut by ditch **23**. No finds were seen in **10**. All the material in the ditch has derived from a levelled upcast bank with perhaps some imported material used to level the ditch. There was no evidence from fill tip-lines of where the bank had been sited, but a position on the western edge of the ditch is perhaps indicated by the absence of material to the east. Beneath the buried topsoil was a 0.2m thick layer of yellow clay **19**, almost certainly a subsoil horizon, with brown clay **20** below.

It was noted that the lowest visible deposit here was a brown clay rather than the gravel and clay seen 100m to the SE. This probably represents a varied gravel-dominated drift geology, crossed by relict clay-filled channels. Natural surface drainage above the clay pockets would be much poorer and could explain the siting of artificial drainage features.

Conclusion

Although only a small part of this development site was available for monitoring when the access road was constructed, the varied archaeological remains revealed indicate that this site could be of considerable interest.

The two Romano-British sherds are indicative of some occupation in the vicinity although not necessarily on this site. An occupation site within the application area would probably have resulted in more pottery being redeposited within later features.

The large ditch to the north of The Farm, apparently medieval but on the line of a ditch boundary in use to the present day, seemed too substantial to serve purely for drainage or as a territorial marker. The minimum width of 7m, and depth of over 1.5m, suggests a substantial landscape feature such as a moat. Although The Farm could have been surrounded by a homestead moat, Manor Farm lies only 120m to the NE and a second centre of similar status so close would require some explanation which is not apparent.

Post Roman Pottery Archive List (Jane Young)

POST-ROMAN POTTERY ARCHIVE: TYPIC WARE TYPES BY CONTEXT

Acknowledgements

LAS is grateful for the co-operation received from Walter's, J. Edward Walter, Tony Cole and the contractors.

Specialist identification of finds, and subsequent reports, were produced by Jane Young, Maggi Darling and Jane Cowgill.

The illustrations were prepared by Mick McDaid and the report was collated and produced by Jane Frost.

Geoff Tann
Lindsey Archaeological Services
7th December 1998

POST-ROMAN POTTERY ARCHIVE: TYPIC HORIZON DATING

Archive Summary

Correspondence
Archaeological finds: fired clay
pottery

Specialists' archive lists and reports
Developer's plans
Field section drawings
Photographs: LAS colour print film nos.
98/80/00-0
98/89/28-37
98/91/24-26

Glossary of Fabric Codes

Bl Blackware: mid 16th - modern
Medloc medieval, local origin: early 13th/late 16th centuries
Gre glazed red earthenwares: mid 16th/late 18th centuries
Lmed Late medieval fabrics: late 14th - mid 16th centuries
Misc undated wares

Glossary of Dating Codes

R Roman
MH 0 late medieval: 15th century
PMH 2 early post-medieval: mid-late 16th century
PMH 3 post-medieval: mid-late 16th - early 17th centuries
PMH 7 post-medieval: late 17th - early 18th century
PMH 8 late post-medieval: early 18th - mid 18th century

Post Roman Pottery Archive List (Jane Young)

POST-ROMAN POTTERY ARCHIVE: THF97 WARE TYPES BY CONTEXT

Context	Ware	Sherds	Form	Comments
2	BL	1	?	16-18TH
2	MEDLOC	1	JUG	WORN;13-14TH
7	R	1	-	-
8	R	1	-	-
8	BS	1	BOTTLE	18/19TH
8	GRE	1	BOWL	-
9	MISC	1	MOULD?	-
9	MISC	5	-	FIRED CLAY;SICK IMP 1-1.5CM
11	LMED	1	?	BS

POST-ROMAN POTTERY ARCHIVE: THF97 HORIZON DATING

Context	Earliest horizon	Latest horizon	Probable horizon	Date range
2	PMH3	PMH8	-	16-18th
7	R	R	-	Roman
8	PMH7	EMH	-	17-19th
9	R	PMED	-	Roman to post-medieval
11	MH9	PMH2	-	15-16th

Glossary of Fabric Codes

Bl	Blackware: mid 16th - modern
Medloc	medieval, local origin: early 13th/late 15th centuries
Gre	glazed red earthenwares: mid 16th/late 18th centuries
Lmed	Late medieval fabrics: late 14th - mid 16th centuries
Misc	undated wares

Glossary of Dating Codes

R	Roman
MH 9	late medieval; 15th century
PMH 2	early post-medieval; mid-late 16th century
PMH 3	post-medieval; mid-late 16th - early 17th centuries
PMH 7	post-medieval; late 17th- early 18th century
PMH 8	late post-medieval; early 18th - mid 18th century

Roman Pottery Report
(Maggi Darling)

for **LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES**

by **Margaret J. Darling, M.Phil., F.S.A., M.I.F.A.**

25 September 1998

Two sherds were submitted for identification and comment:

Cxt 7 An inturned bead-and-flange bowl in sandy grey-brown fabric, of the type made at the Swanpool kilns in Lincoln (Webster & Booth 1947, type D13-23). The fabric would be atypical for the Swanpool range, and this may have come from one of the later Trent Valley kilns, mostly unpublished. In Lincoln, this type occurs in the later 4th century contexts.

Cxt 8 A sandy grey-brown body sherd, probably from a closed form, likely to be of a similar later Roman date, later 3rd to 4th century.

Both indicate activity, conservatively, from the late 3rd century, extending into the later 4th century, but both could be late 4th century.

Bibliography:

Webster, G & Booth, N, 1947 The excavation of a Romano-British pottery kiln at Swanpool, Lincoln, *Antiq J*, 27, 61-79.

Report on the Fired Clay
(Jane Cowgill)

THE FIRED CLAY FROM THE FARM, THORPE ON THE HILL (THF97).

Context 9; weight 136g; 5 pieces of oxidised fired clay. Poorly wedged silty clay and no obvious temper added so probably not from a cob building or wattle and daub structure. One curved surface. From a hearth or oven?

Context 9; weight 5g; 1 piece. Clay similar to above but appears well wedged and smoothed and has one flat surface so may represent the remains of the facing material for the above group. Face slightly reduced but core oxidised. Not a mould because they are always in a strongly reduced fabric.

Jane Cowgill

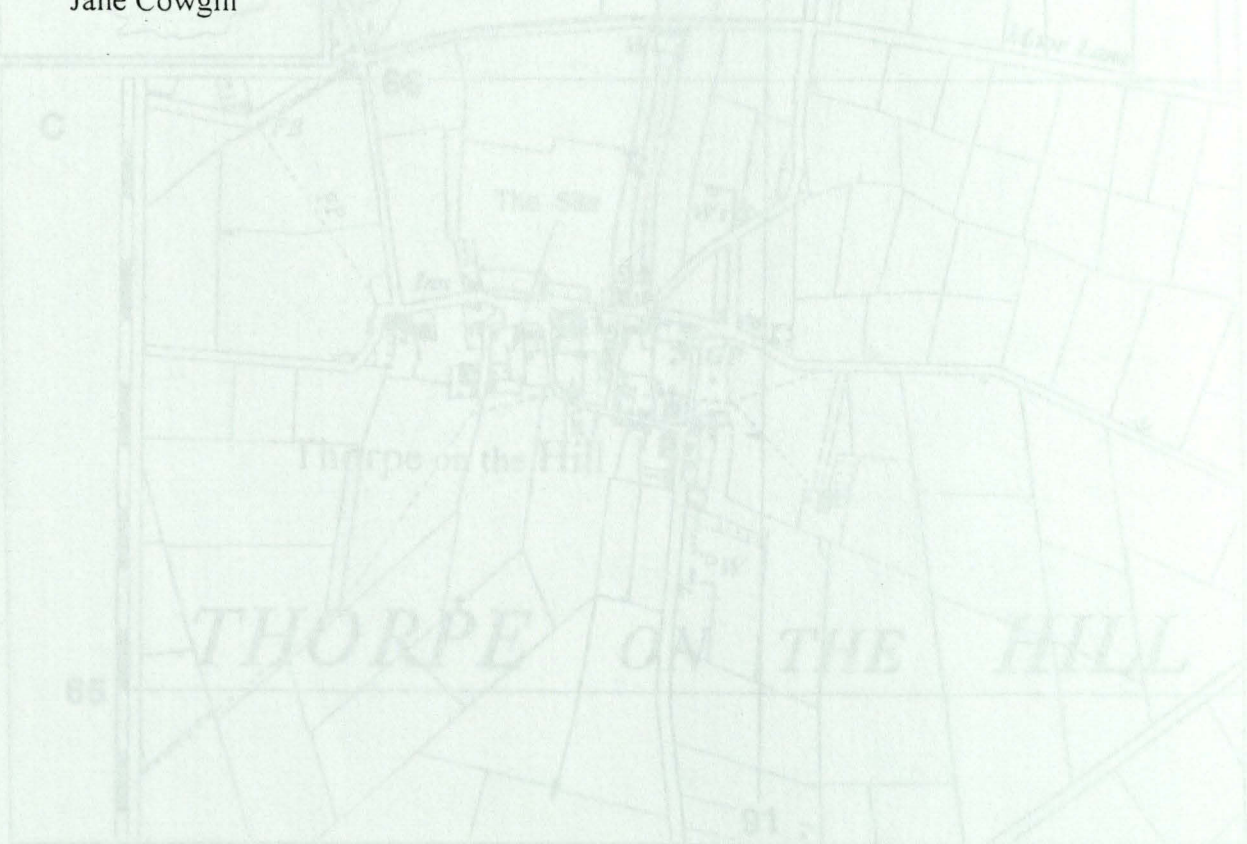


Fig. 1 Location of the Development Site. Inset C based on the Ordnance Survey map, enlarged to 1:1,250. Crown Copyright, reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Licence No. AL 50424A.



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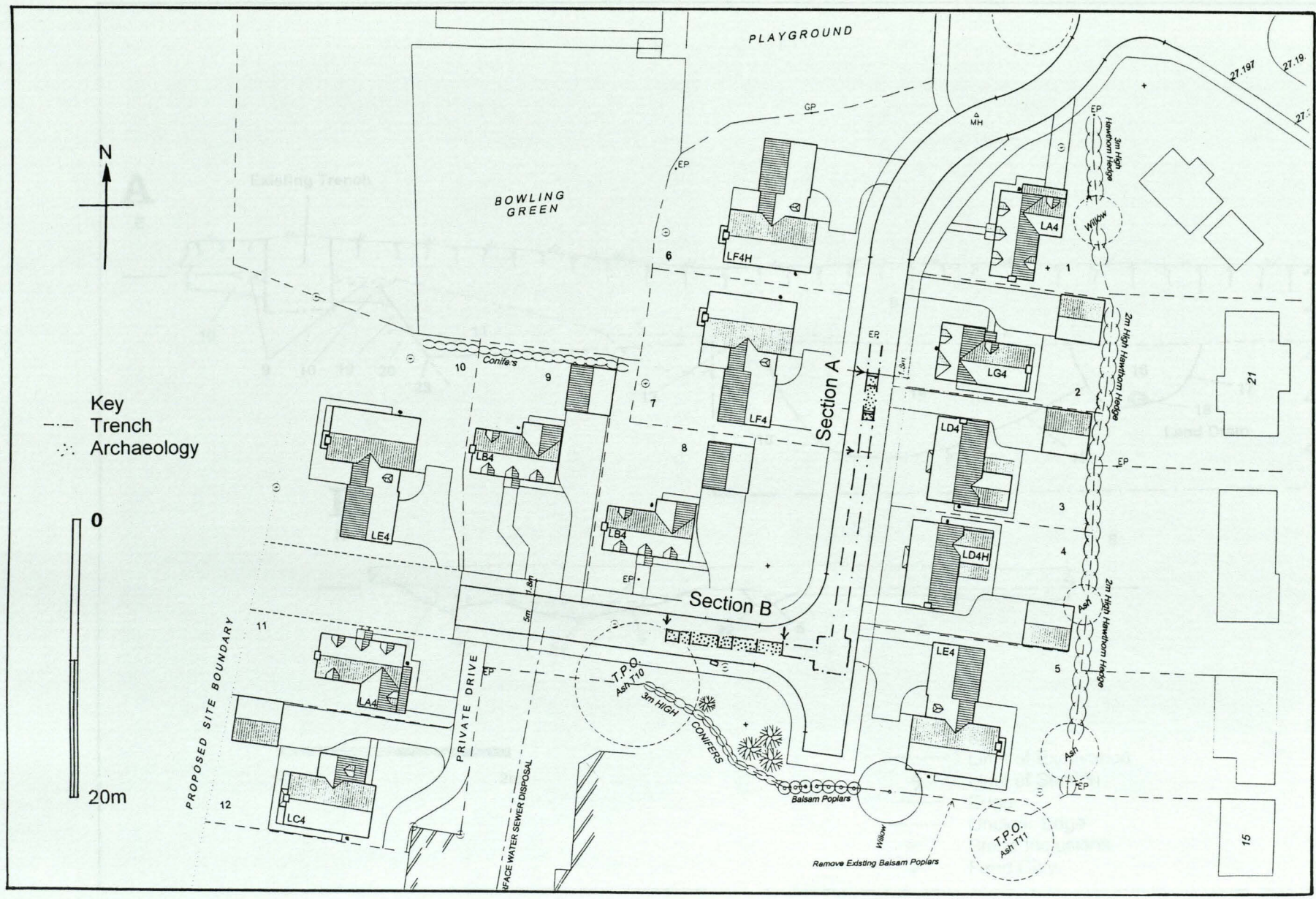


Fig. 2 Position of the monitored access road within the proposed development, showing the location of the observations. Based on a plan supplied by the developer.

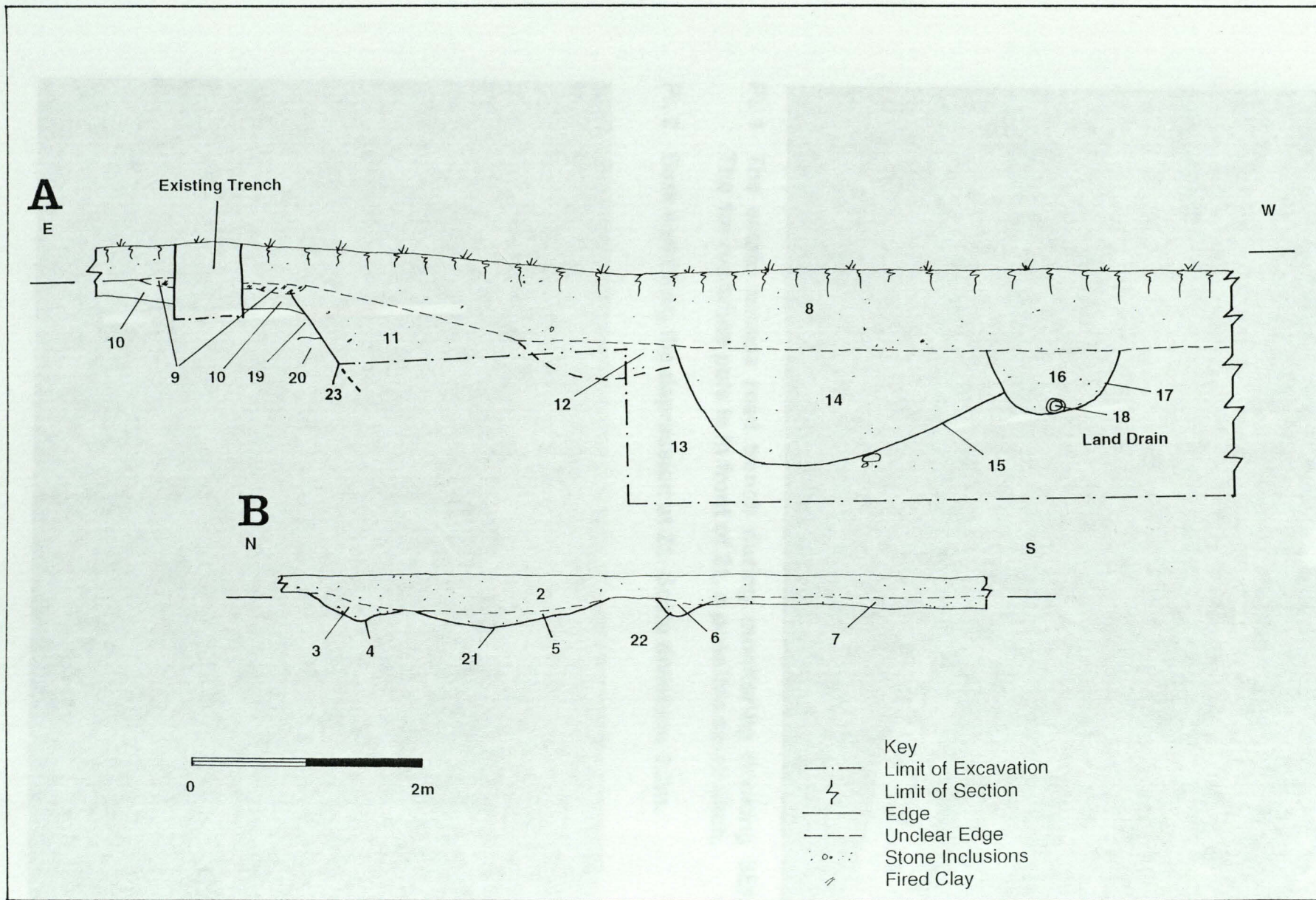


Fig. 3 A: Section across the eastern side of Ditch 23 revealed in the sewer trench. B: Section across features in the north-south road trench. (McDaid after Tann).



Pl. 1 The estate access road trench during monitoring (looking SE).
The 1m red/white pole is in front of 21, a possible small ditch.

Pl. 2 Dark soil filling the depression at 21. Scale divisions 0.2m.





Pl. 3 Sequence of deposits at the southern end of the road trench. Topsoil overlies a thin weathered clay subsoil, above yellow clay with gravel.

Pl. 4 The depression visible east of the lane to The Farm. The trench excavated for the new sewer is visible (looking south).





Pl. 5 The white upright marker (centre left) is at the eastern edge of the broad medieval ditch 23. Looking south.



Pl. 6 Composite view of deposits visible in the trench face. The red/white 1m scale is at the eastern edge of ditch 23. Blue spray paint marks an existing service pipe trench cutting through the fired clay deposit 9. Looking south.



PI. 7 Detail of fill deposits at the eastern edge of ditch 23. Looking south, scale divisions 0.2m.