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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

Brauncewell Water Main Replacement

Nipton Lane, Brauncewell

Archaeological Watching Brief

CENTRE: TF 0341 5194

NGR: TF 0240 5138 - TF 0340 5200
Site Code: BQR 99
LCNCC Museum Accn. No. 69.99

Report prepared for

Anglian Water Services Ltd

LAS Report No. 354

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Summary

A watching brief during excavation of a narrow pipe trench in the road beside the quarry revealed one feature which appeared to be a ditch. This coincided with the position of one of the multiple prehistoric ditches which have been investigated within the quarry. A second expected ditch was not observed, but conditions were not suited to identification of archaeological features. No finds were seen.

Introduction

Lindsey Archaeological Services (LAS) was commissioned by Anglian Water Services in March 1999 to conduct an archaeological watching brief during excavation of a pipe trench for a new water main along Nipton Lane, between the limestone quarry entrance and the A15 Sleaford-Lincoln road. The monitoring had been requested by the County Archaeological Officer in a letter dated 15th January 1999.

The purpose of the Watching Brief was to record any evidence of the prehistoric and Romano-British features known from past archaeological excavations in advance of quarry extensions, and from air photographs.

The first site visit was made on 8th March. Further monitoring visits were made until 27th April 1999, when the specified section of trenching was completed; a total of eight visits were made.

Archaeological Background

A mutiple ditch system crosses the site of Brauncewell Quarry in a north-south direction. Multiple ditch systems are known to the north and south of Lincoln, forming what are thought to be extensive territorial divisions. Despite an increasing amount of archaeological investigation, their exact function is unclear. Dating evidence has been quite elusive but a late Iron Age date seems likely.

LAS has conducted a programme of archaeological evaluation and excavations to the north of the Brauncewell road since 1994, in advance of quarry extensions. The investigations have shown the quarry to lie on a concentration of archaeological features, many of which appear to be associated with an entrance between the multiple ditch system. A Late Iron Age post-built animal enclosure was found beside the ditches in 1997. Several Roman inhumations and a series of Roman quarry pits have been found, superimposed onto, or beside, the deliberately backfilled ditches. A barrow cemetery has also been recorded close to the ditch system.

Cropmarks of the multiple ditch system indicated that a trench along Nipton Lane beside the quarry would cross the alignments of at least two ditches. These were calculated to be at about 100m and 140m west of a farm track which leads south of the road at the eastern end of the present quarry (Fig. 1).

The Watching Brief (Fig. 2)
The trench was excavated at the southern side of the lane (except for 150m at the eastern end, which was at the northern edge) using a trenching machine. The trench was about 0.2m wide and 1.1m deep. The faces of the narrow trench were difficult to view; smearing by the machine 'teeth' and dust swept from the road obscured part of the exposed deposits. Except where limestone bedrock was uniform, archaeological features may not have been recognised.

Part of the watching brief was conducted with a series of daily visits, ensuring that all the trench was inspected. Short sections of the trench were monitored continuously during trenching, but this produced no better results. The machine operator reported only one area of distinctly different material, and his observation coincided with the possible boundary ditch at **1**.

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1. Although no trace of a ditch was seen at the western of the two anticipated locations, a 7m wide feature was visible between 110m and 117m west of the farm track (Pls. 1 and 2). The road at this location consists of a 0.1m thick layer of tarmac over a bedding layer of limestone rubble and soil 0.3m thick (Pl. 3). Beneath this was red/brown clay subsoil, above undisturbed limestone.

The feature was interpreted as a ditch, cut into the dense limestone bedrock and backfilled with small fragments of limestone within a red/brown clay matrix. It coincided with a ridge in the road: either the ditch was using the natural topographic feature as an additional obstacle, or the ditch had been recut to the east, producing an upcast bank on the western side over which the road rises. It was not possible to distinguish a recut or an upcast bank in the trench face.

2. To the east of the farm track, the density of the bedrock decreased, although varying. This change in the surface geology was interpreted as ancient natural fill of a depression or valley in the local undulating terrain. The concentration of clay increased, but no archaeological features or finds were evident.

3. Where the new trench crossed to the northern side of Nipton Lane, the proportion of limestone visible in the trench face declined further, extending eastwards to the access track beside Dunsby Pit Plantation.

4. The trench beside Dunsby Pit Plantation (a former quarry site) cut through much denser limestone bedrock, explaining the siting of the post-medieval quarry. The road here overlay 0.2m of bedding material and 0.2m of clayey subsoil. Variations in the underlying natural deposits (compact brash, less compact brash, and dense bedrock) were observed but interpreted as of natural origin.

Conclusion

The results of this archaeological monitoring were inconclusive and did not add further information about the adjacent important archaeological site. It is now clear that the ground between the present quarry and Dunsby Pit Plantation has a different surface geology to that beside the quarry, with much less bedrock and more clay. This difference will affect how well archaeological features are evident as cropmarks from the air; the absence of cropmarks in this zone cannot be assumed to accurately reflect use of the land in the prehistoric and Romano-British periods.

Acknowledgements

LAS is grateful to Anglian Water Services (especially Mick Claffey), their contractors AHLCO and the trenching machine operator (Richard) for their help.

Illustrations were prepared by Mick McDaid, and the report was collated and produced by Jane Frost.

Geoff Tann
Lindsey Archaeological Services
17th May 1999

Archive Summary

Anglian Water Services plans
Annotated copies of plans
Photographs (LAS colour print film no. 99/30/13-22)
Correspondence

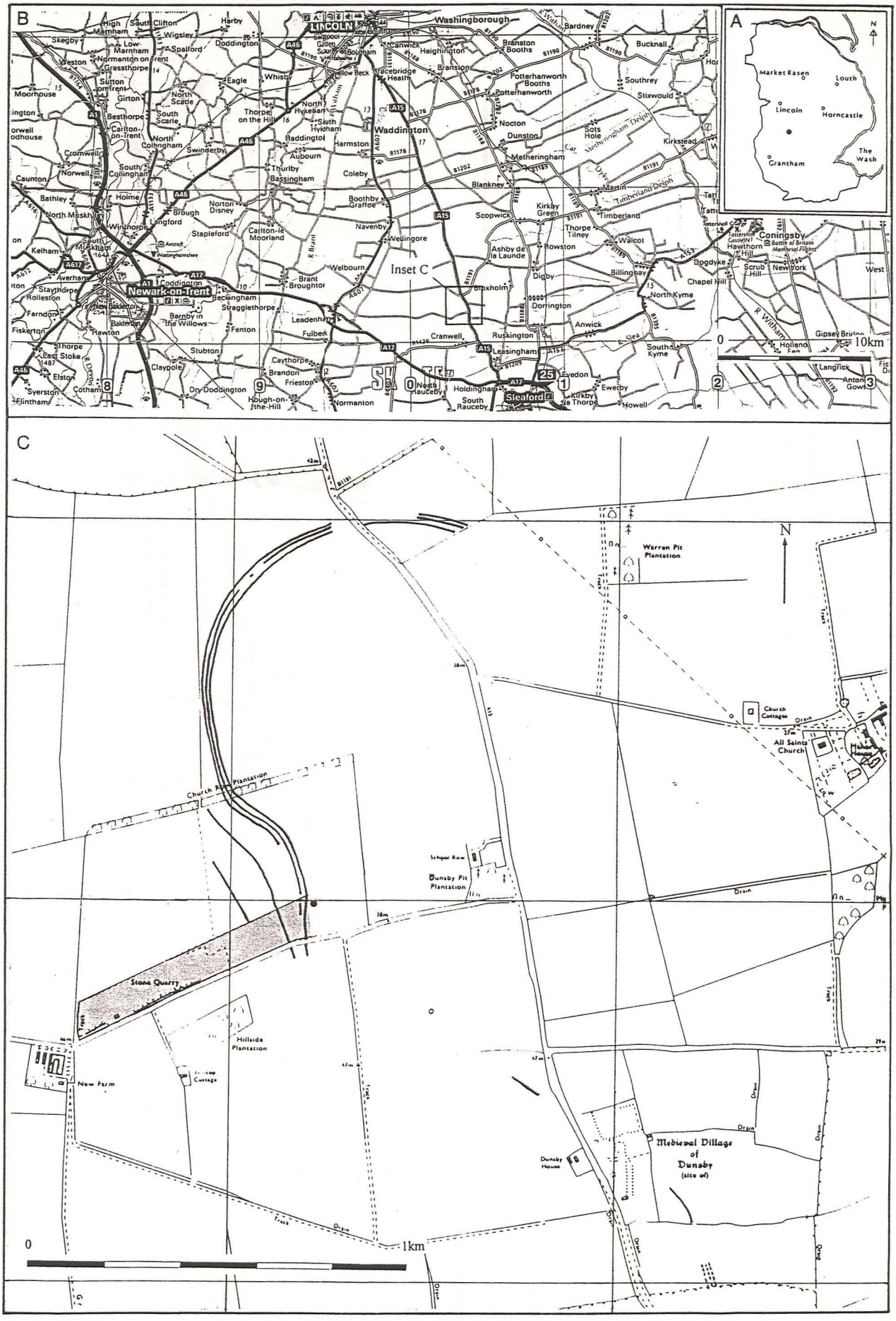

Fig. 1 Location of Brauncewell, and position of the multiple ditch cropmarks, as plotted by J. Tipper (Inset C based on an Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 map; © Crown Copyright, reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Licence No. AL 50424A).

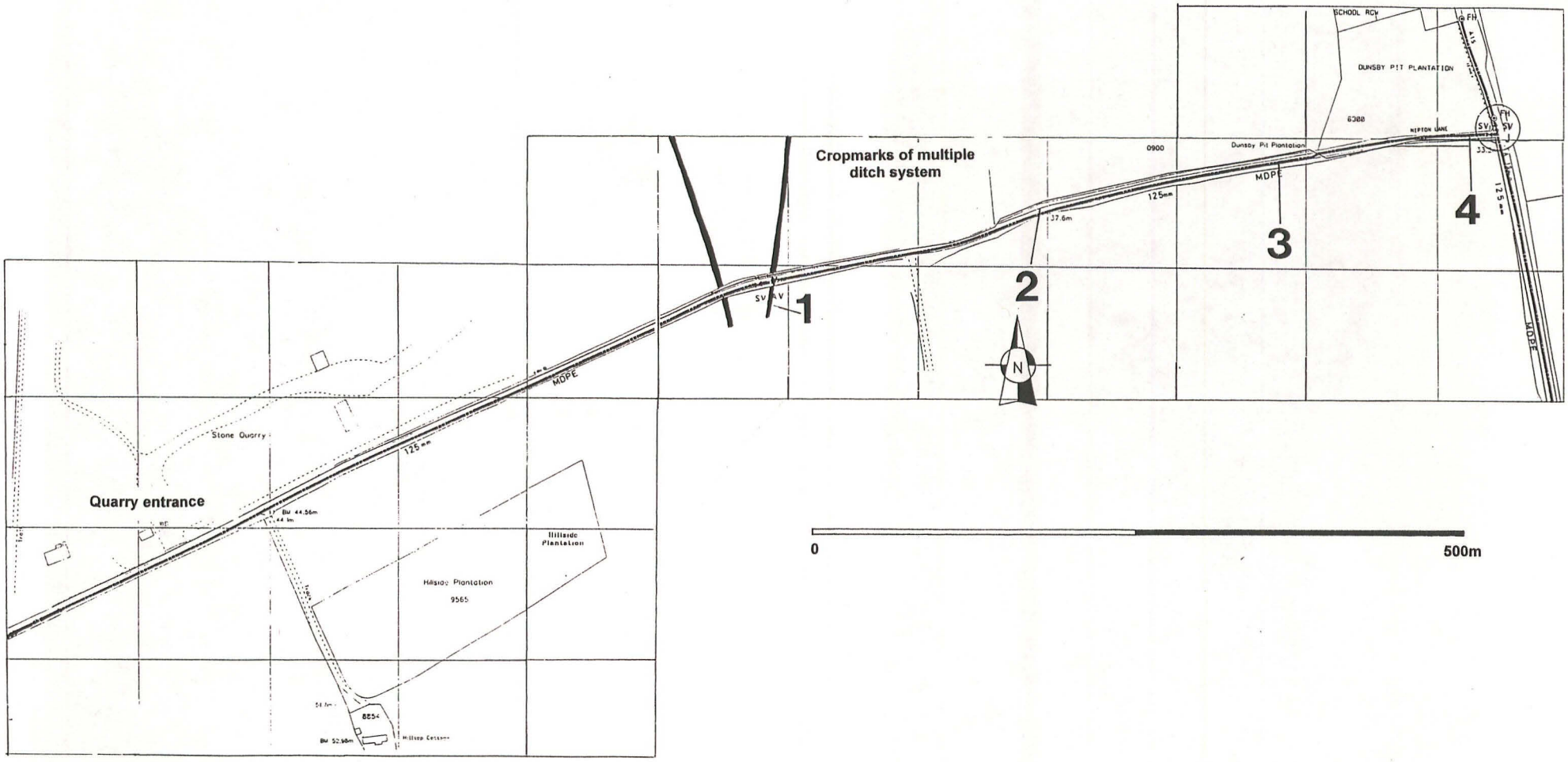

Fig. 2 Location of the observations, related to the anticipated position of the multiple ditch system (based on the Anglian Water Services plan 02210/12, reproduced at reduced scale).

Pl. 1 Position of Ditch 1 (between two cones in foreground; looking SW along Nipton Lane, with Brauncewell Quarry to the right).

Pl. 2 Position of Ditch 1 (between two cones in foreground; looking east along Nipton Lane).

Pl. 3 Sequence of deposits visible in the pipe trench to the west of Ditch 1. Trench depth 1m.