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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

**Bassingthorpe Reservoir to Ingoldsby, Lincs.
Mains Replacement Scheme
Archaeological Monitoring in Lower Bitchfield**

NGR: SK 983 284
Site Code: IMR 98
LCNCC Museum Accn. No. 208.98

Report prepared for
Anglian Water Services Ltd

LAS Report No. 356

May 1999

Lincolnshire County Council
Archaeology Section
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Fig. 1 Location of Lower Bitchfield (Inset C based on an Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 map; © Crown Copyright, reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Licence No. AL 50424A).

Fig. 2 Location of the two monitored trenches (based on the Anglian Water Services plan 9721905/1, reproduced at 1:2500 scale).

Pl. 1 Position of Trench 1 (looking SW to St. Mary Magdalen's Church).

Pl. 2 Post-medieval gravel road metalling beneath the modern tarmac, Trench 1.

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Summary

Two access pits excavated within a section of directionally drilled main contained no archaeological material. It appeared that the gravel precursor of the modern road had not extended as far south as the former Rectory and may have led only to the church.

Introduction

Lindsey Archaeological Services (LAS) was commissioned by Anglian Water Services Ltd. in September 1998 to conduct a watching brief of trenching for a 90mm diameter replacement water main between Lower Bitchfield Church and The Old Rectory, a distance of about 100m (Fig. 1). The archaeological monitoring had been requested by Lincolnshire County Council Archaeology Section. Most of the specified length past the churchyard was directionally drilled, with only a small machine-excavated hole at each end serving as an access pit.

The inspection visit by the author was made on 28th September 1998, when the trench excavation and moling within the section was completed.

Archaeological Background

The settlements at Lower Bitchfield and the village of Bitchfield are both shrunken medieval villages where earthworks of medieval house sites indicate considerable change in the developed village area. Although a church (St. Mary Magdalen) containing eleventh fabric and possibly earlier elements stands in Lower Bitchfield, the main village has no church. This may indicate Lower Bitchfield to have been the earlier or more important medieval community.

The church stands on a knoll to the west of the small road, with the ground sloping down across the road towards the River Glen. The higher ground at the eastern edge of the churchyard, retained by a low stone wall, has probably been terraced or artificially raised; there is no evidence beside the churchyard for a hollowed road although there is to the north. The churchyard extent prior to the retaining wall is not known and it may have either been extended over the verge of a hollowed lane or alternatively been clipped by the road.

To the east of the road, building work was in progress on a large stone-faced new house. This is one of several new dwellings built on the site of the former manor house and farm buildings. The Old Rectory, and its former ancillary

buildings since converted for residential use, are the oldest buildings now on the site but appear to be of mid-nineteenth century date.

A recent archaeological watching brief during excavation of foundations for the house plot NE of the church identified stone cellar walls apparently extending westwards almost precisely to the edge of the modern road. The previous building, demolished in the 1950s, seems to have dated from the late sixteenth century. A series of hearths found on the site has been interpreted as marking the central hall of a medieval manor house, but no Saxon or Late Saxon pottery was found which would have indicated continuity of use of the manor house site. Some shell-tempered pottery was reported from casual fieldwalking in the field east of the site, and has been provisionally dated as late medieval (Mark Wood, pers. comm.).

The Watching Brief

Two access pits were machine-excavated, one at each end of the specified length of replacement main, with the remainder of the section successfully flow-moled.

Trench 1

The first trench excavated was at the northern end of the area, at the eastern edge of the road beside the vehicular access to the new house (Pl. 1). The trench was 1.8m north-south and 0.6m west-east, and 1.05m deep.

The tarmac road surface was 0.12m thick and overlaid a thin band of fine grey material, probably a bedding layer or dust accumulation on the underlying surface. A 0.32m thick compacted layer of medium gravel in a dirty sand matrix beneath this almost certainly represented a post-medieval metalled road surface (Pl. 2). This layer on a 0.45m thick layer of yellow sand with the lowest exposed deposit being a grey sand. This sand probably is naturally deposited and associated with previous courses of the River Glen.

Mole hills at the NE corner of the churchyard were inspected, as was the disturbed verge close to a recent mains burst on the bank at the edge of the churchyard, but no artefacts were present.

Trench 2

The terminal trench was positioned in front of the Old Rectory on a slight ridge in the road. It had been thought that this ridge would reflect resistant ground, possibly even a limestone outcrop, but only sand was encountered. This trench was 1.6m NW-SE and 0.65m wide, excavated to a depth of 1.05m.

The tarmac road overlay 0.3m of yellow clay, above a mixed orange/white silty sand deposit. There was no trace of the gravel metalling seen in Trench 1.

Conclusion

No archaeological features were exposed in the two trenches except for the metalled surface assumed to be a road exclusively leading to the church. The

date of this road is not known but it is apparently respected by the cellars of the demolished sixteenth century manor house.

Acknowledgements

LAS is grateful to Anglian Water Services (especially Julie Bakewell and Mick Mason) for their co-operation. The site contractors on this project were AHLCo Ltd, assisted by AMS (No-Dig Moling). Information about the results of archaeological investigations beside Bitchfield Church was provided by Jenny Stevens (South Kesteven Community Archaeologist) and Mark Wood (Professional Independent Services for Archaeology Ltd.).

Geoff Tann
Lindsey Archaeological Services
10th May 1999

Archive Summary

This project (LAS Report No. 356: Bassingthorpe Reservoir to Ingoldsby) is archived together with LAS Report Nos. 357 (Bitchfield to Burton Coggles) and 358 (Ingoldsby to Pickworth).

Anglian Water Services plans

Anglian Water Services plans: annotated photocopies

Photographs: colour prints, LAS film nos. 98/119/1-2

Correspondence

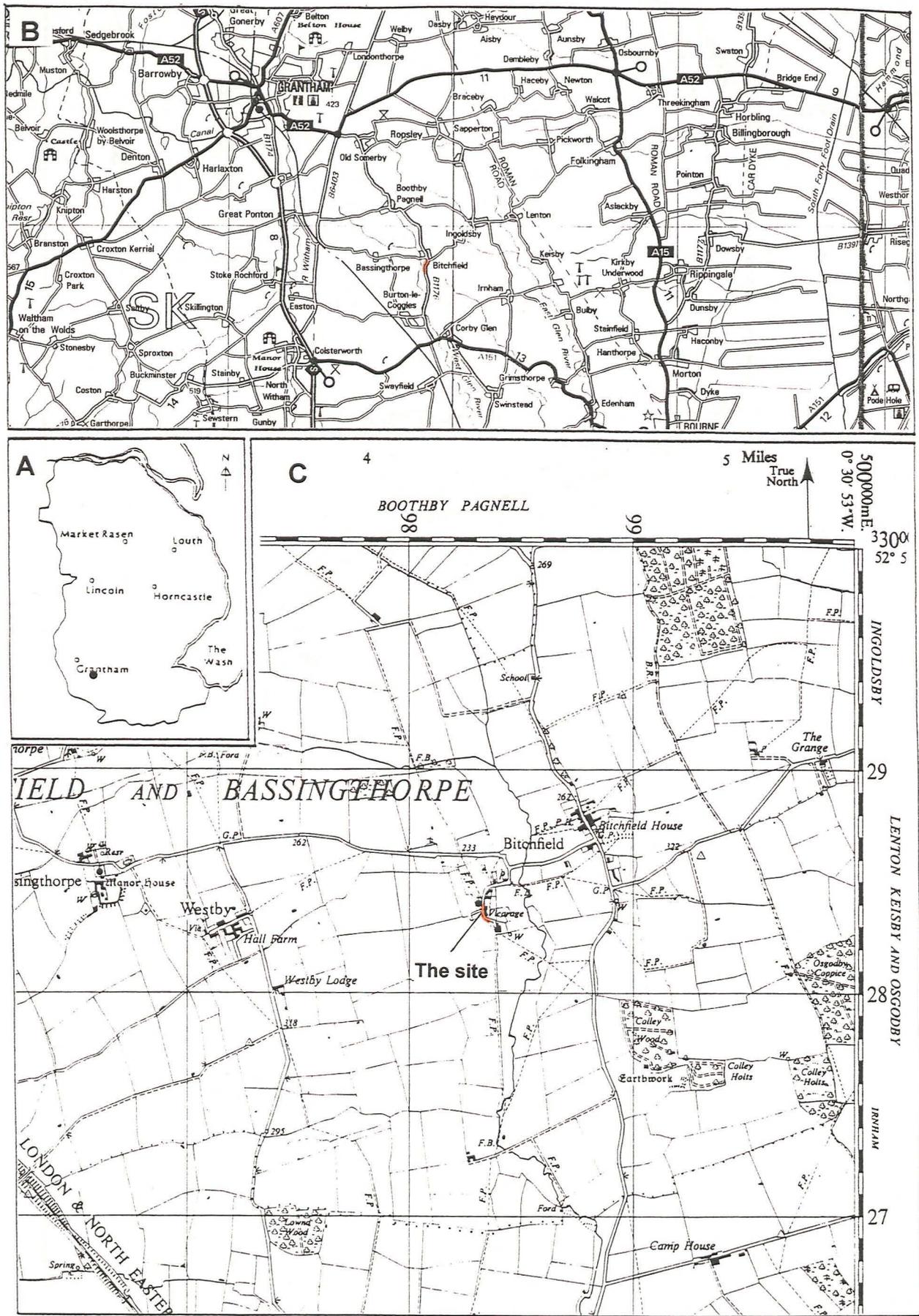


Fig. 1 Location of Lower Bitchfield (Inset C based on an Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 map; © Crown Copyright, reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Licence No. AL 50424A).

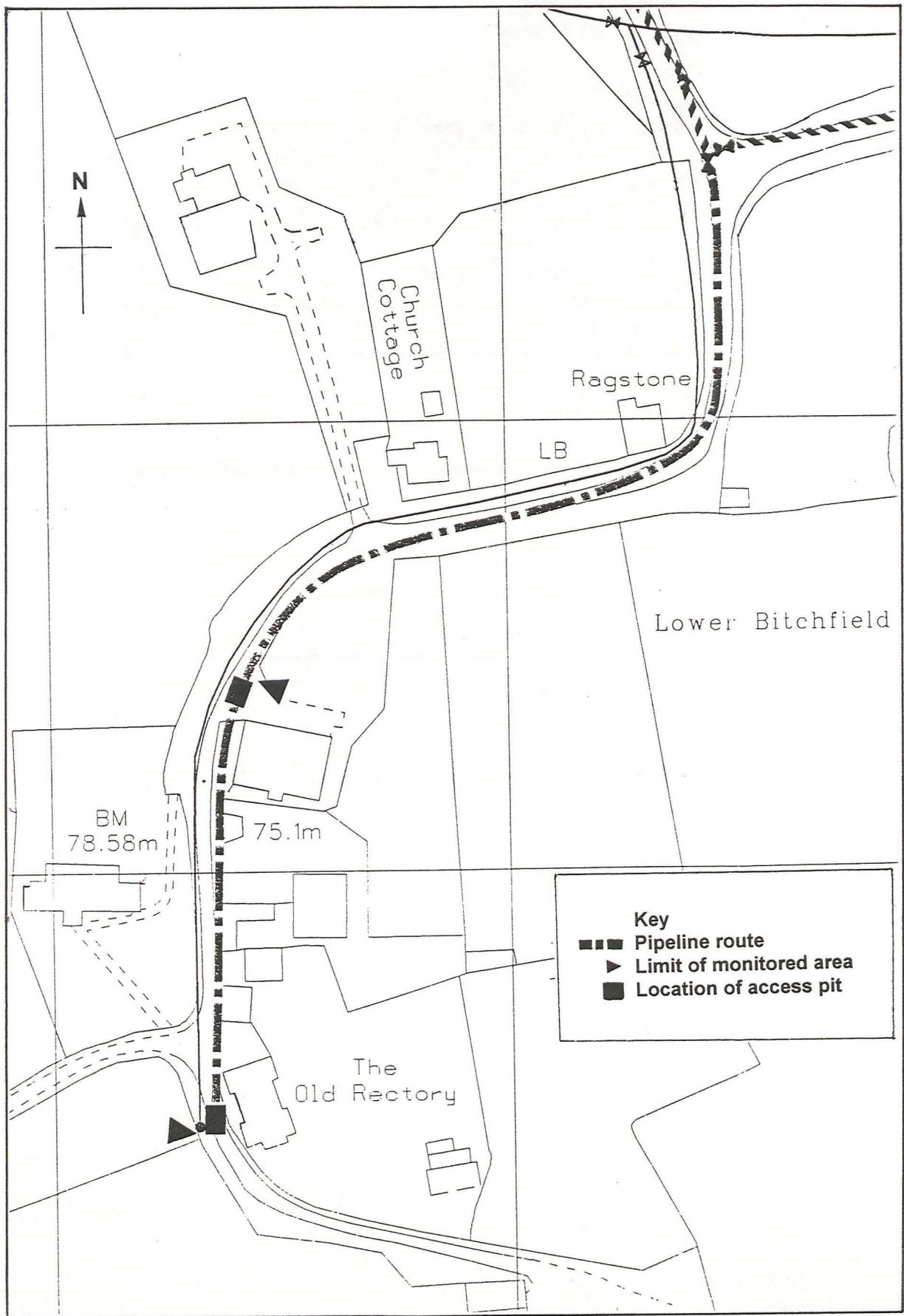


Fig. 2 Location of the two monitored trenches (based on the Anglian Water Services plan 9721905/1, reproduced at 1:2500 scale).



Pl. 1 Position of Trench 1 (looking SW to St. Mary Magdalen's Church).

Pl. 2 Post-medieval gravel road metalling beneath the modern tarmac, Trench 1.

