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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

10, Church Lane, Withern

Archaeological Watching Brief

NGR: TF 42532 82131

Site Code: WCL 99

LCNCC Museum Accn. No. 33.99

ELDC Planning Application: N/212/1616/98

Report prepared for Mr and Mrs S. Wilson

LAS Report No. 355

May 1999

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Contents

Lists of Figures and Plates

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Summary | 1 |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Site Location and Description | 1 |
| Archaeological Background | 1 |
| The Watching Brief | 1 |
| Conclusion | 3 |
| Acknowledgements | 3 |
| Archive Summary | 3 |

Figures

Fig. 1 Location of Withern and the monitored house extension (Inset C based on the Ordnance Survey 1956 1:10,560 map TF 48SW; © Crown Copyright, reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Licence No. AL 50424A).

Fig. 2 A) Position of the new extension B) Archaeological features seen within the foundation trenches.

Plates

Pl. 1 Southern end of Trench 1, showing the gradual slope from adjoining farmland (looking south).

Pl. 2 Northern end of Trench 1, with the grey clay (either side of the modern water pipe) marking the position of field ditch 2 (looking north).

Pl. 3 Sequence of deposits (topsoil, subsoil, undisturbed red clay) visible in the sides of Trench 1. A piece of post-medieval brick was found in the subsoil.

Pl. 4 Grey silty clay 8 at base of Trench 2, thought to be within a peri-glacial natural feature.

Pl. 5 View across site of new extension, looking east along the line of ditch 2 to the surviving willow tree.

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief, during excavation of foundation trenches for a house extension, recorded a backfilled field ditch but no other archaeological features. A single worked flint scraper and an undated piece of brick, probably eighteenth century, were the only finds.

Introduction

Lindsey Archaeological Services (LAS) was commissioned by Mr S. Wilson in February 1999 to conduct an archaeological watching brief during excavations of foundation trenches for an extension at the rear of 10, Church Lane, Withern (Fig. 1). The watching brief was required by East Lindsey District Council to fulfil a condition of full planning permission on Application No. N/212/1616/98.

Groundworks were monitored by G. Tann on 15th February 1999.

Site Location and Description

10, Church Lane is a bungalow situated at the west end of the village, east of the parish church. To the north of Church Lane lie Withern Hall and Castle Hill, a moated site of either medieval or Civil War period.

Archaeological Background

The village of Withern is mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 and its origins lie clearly in the Anglo-Saxon period. The church is also mentioned in the Domesday Survey, although there is no surviving Anglo-Saxon fabric: it was heavily restored in the 19th century.

During the present watching brief, the author learnt that groundworks in the early 1970s for a house soakaway east of the church had disturbed what was thought to be a lead-lined coffin. This information suggests that the churchyard has contracted.

Bungalows to the south of Church Lane were constructed in the early 1970s, but no archaeological remains were reported. It was possible that groundworks associated with construction of the house extension would reveal evidence for medieval or earlier village remains.

The Watching Brief (Fig. 2)

Context numbers were assigned by LAS for recording cut features, fills and soil layers identified in the machine-excavated trenches for the building foundations. These numbers were used on finds and on the plan included in this report. Trench numbers were also given to the builder's trenches.

The site of the extension had previously been a back yard and lawn area. Existing drains had disturbed the zone closest to the house. Three trenches were excavated to a depth of 1m below ground level around the perimeter of the extension, with a 0.6m wide toothed bucket.

Trench 1

The western trench was aligned north-south, and cut through a dark brown clay loam topsoil **1**, 0.25m thick (Pl. 1). At the northern end, the dark grey clay loam fill of a former west-east aligned ditch **2** was observed immediately below this modern topsoil (Pl. 2). The northern edge of the ditch extended below the house, but the centre of the feature lay 1.7m south of the house wall. It seems probable that the house had been intentionally positioned alongside a boundary previously defined by the ditch.

Ditch **2** was at least 2.4m wide at the base of the topsoil **1**, narrowing to a width of 1.5m at the trench base. The ditch base was not exposed but was unlikely to have been much more than 1.2m below ground level. Three fills were present. The upper fill was a dark brown clay loam **3** 0.35m thick, which may have been a deliberate levelling deposit. Beneath this was 0.2m of light grey/blue clay **4**, with a primary fill of mottled yellow/green clay **5**, probably from a weathered upcast bank. The ditch was cut through a light brown clay loam subsoil **6** into red/brown boulder-clay **7**. No finds were seen.

The subsoil layer **6**, south of the ditch, produced a highly fired brick lump (Pl. 3). Only part of one surface was present, but enough survived to determine that it had no frog and was hand-made. An eighteenth century date is likely.

Trench 2

In the centre of Trench 2, a grey silty clay **8** was observed at the trench base, between the subsoil **6** and the boulder-clay (Pl. 4). Within **8** were several water-rounded flints and stone lumps but no archaeological artefacts. No clearly defined edges to this silty clay could be distinguished and it was interpreted as a peri-glacial natural feature.

Trench 3

A short north-south trench in the centre of the extension, leading from the existing house wall, revealed more of ditch **2**. No further information could be retrieved.

Trench 4

The eastern trench of the extension again exposed ditch **2**, although an existing drain inspection point had removed its southern side and its alignment could not be checked.

At the base of subsoil **6**, a flint artefact was recovered. It appears that the subsoil deposit had formed since later prehistory, and may have been the result of colluviation from the natural slope to the south.

A further natural peri-glacial feature **10** was found at the trench base.

Conclusion

No archaeological features of antiquity were revealed during this watching brief. The west-east aligned ditch was interpreted as a field ditch, perhaps of medieval date but probably of post-medieval origin. A mature willow tree in a neighbouring garden to the east represents a survivor from the former hedge which apparently grew beside the ditch (Pl. 5). The 1956 Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map shows a farm track and footpath in a similar position, and the builder recollected that a footpath had been diverted when the bungalows were built in the early 1970s (Fig. 1). Although the space between the track and Church Lane could have been occupied in the medieval period, the complete absence of medieval pottery within the trenches for the extension suggested that no rubbish pits were nearby. Rubbish pits would be expected at the rear of a medieval croft.

The flint artefact is probably of Neolithic date; there are signs of retouch at one end. It was not associated with an identified feature and probably represents a casually discarded or lost artefact within the subsoil layer.

Several small and irregular areas of light grey clay, often with flint nodules or small/medium sized stones, were interpreted as naturally deposited pockets of material on the surface of the glacial till.

Acknowledgements

LAS is grateful for the co-operation received from Mr and Mrs Wilson and their contractors.

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

Geoff Tann
Lindsey Archaeological Services
5th May 1999

Archive Summary

Correspondence

Archaeological finds: flint, brick

Developer's plans (annotated)

Photographs: LAS colour print film nos. 99/14/25-35

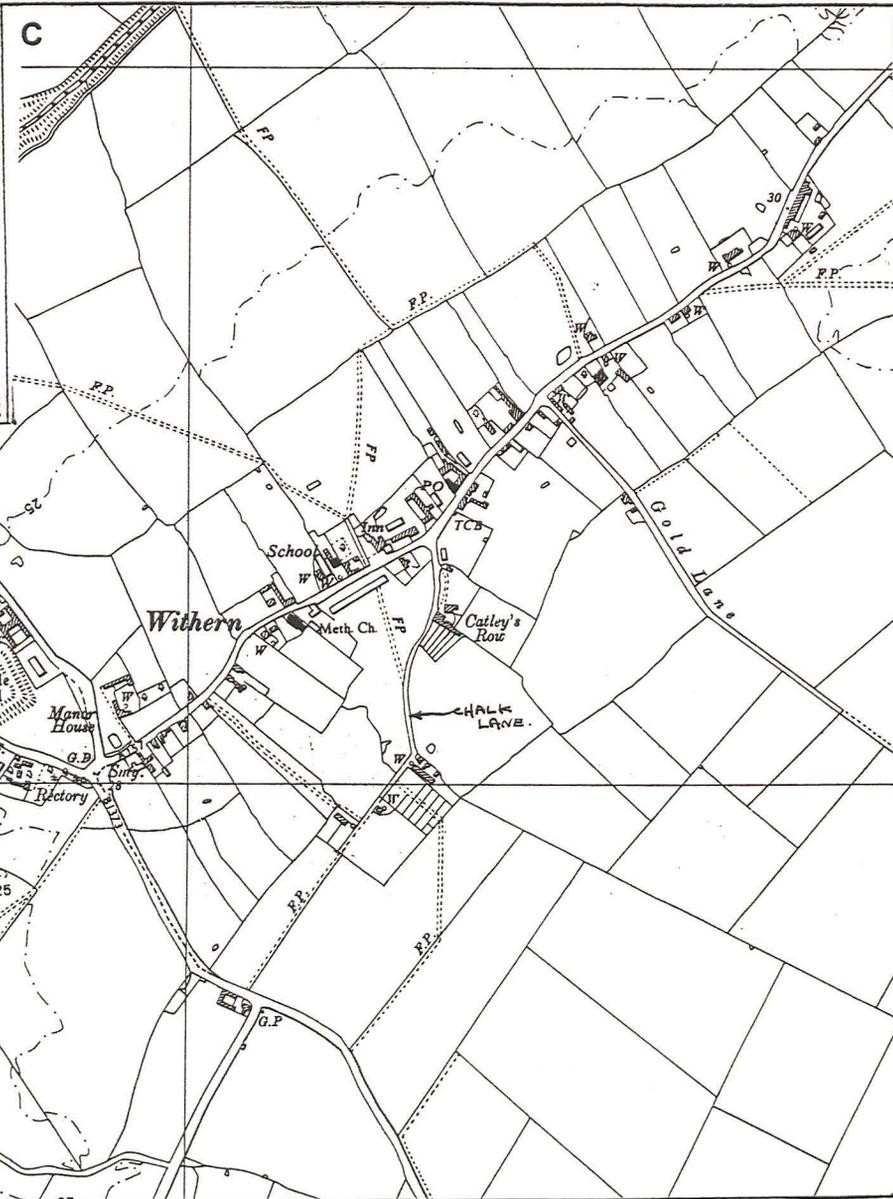
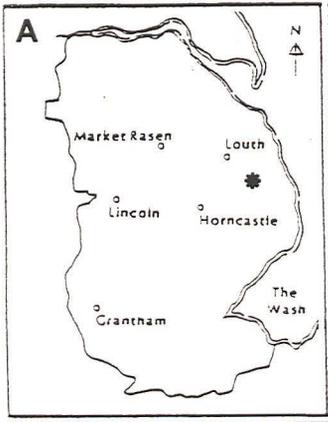
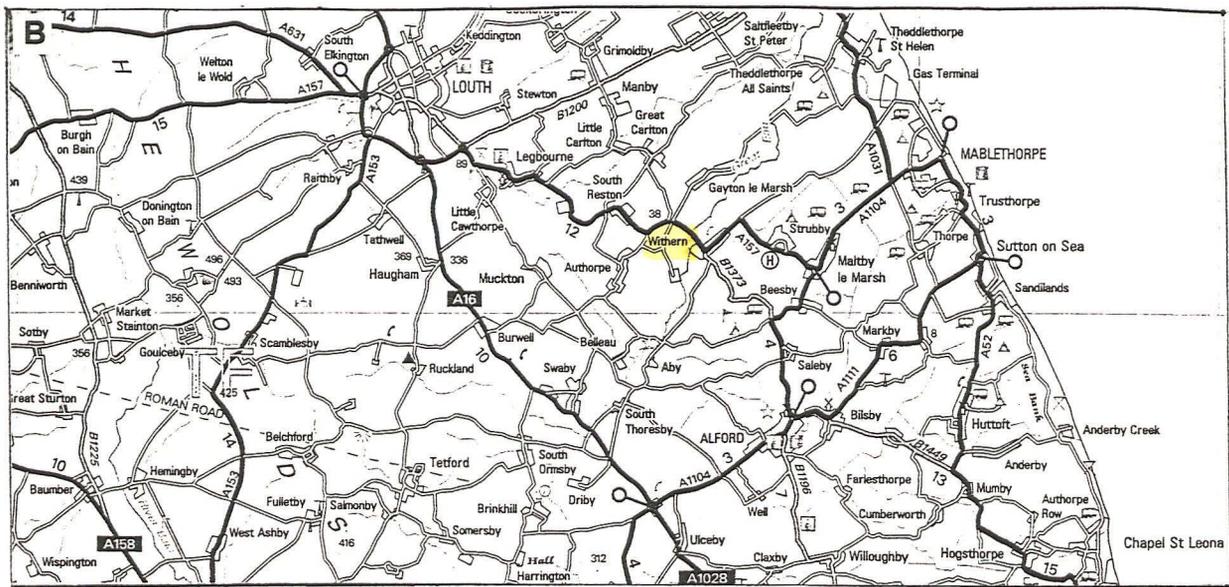


Fig. 1 Location of Witheren and the monitored house extension (Inset C based on the Ordnance Survey 1956 1:10,560 map TF 48SW; © Crown Copyright, reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Licence No. AL 50424A).

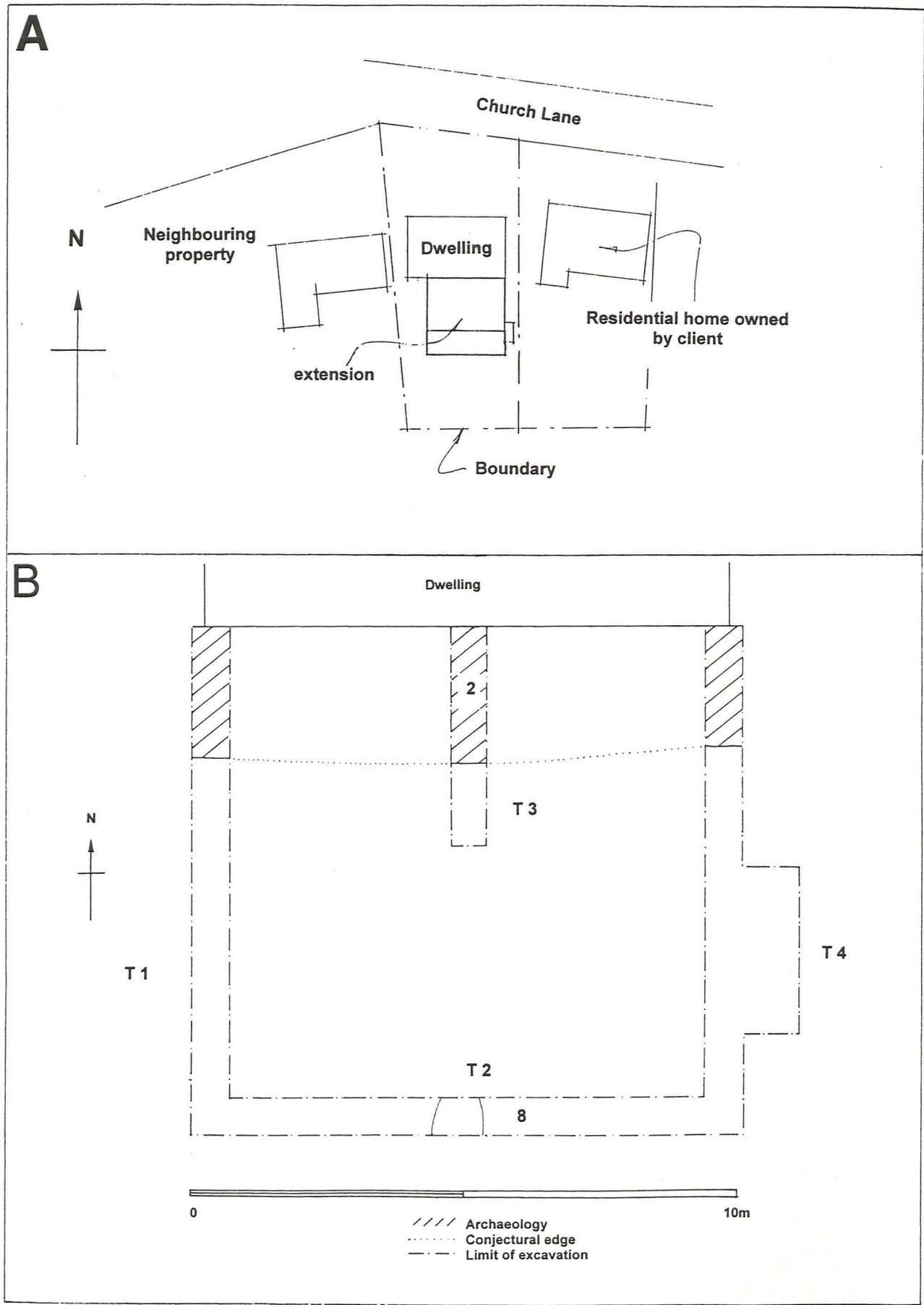


Fig. 2 A) Position of the new extension B) Archaeological features seen within the foundation trenches.



Pl. 1 Southern end of Trench 1, showing the gradual slope from the adjoining farmland (looking south).

Pl. 2 Northern end of Trench 1, with the grey clay (either side of the modern water pipe) marking the position of field ditch 2 (looking north).





PI. 3 Sequence of deposits (topsoil, subsoil, undisturbed red clay) visible in the sides of Trench 1. A piece of post-medieval brick was found in the subsoil.

PI. 4 Grey silty clay 8 at base of Trench 2, thought to be within a periglacial natural feature.





Pl. 5 View across site of new extension, looking east along the line of ditch 2 to the surviving willow tree.