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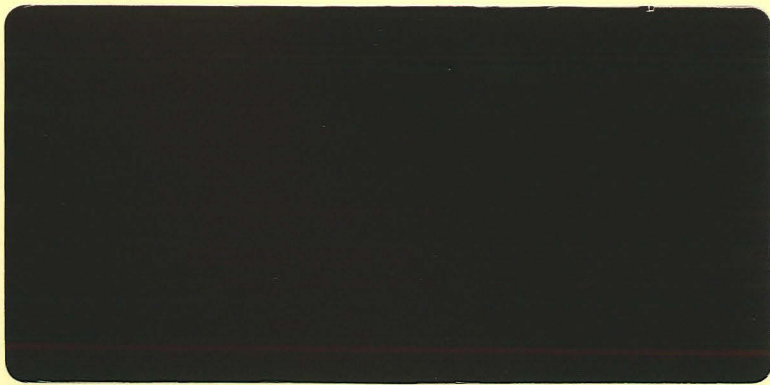
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF  
OF DEVELOPMENT ON LAND ADJACENT TO  
ROBIN HOOD'S WALK,  
BOSTON,  
LINCOLNSHIRE  
(BRH98)**

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF  
OF DEVELOPMENT ON LAND ADJACENT TO  
ROBIN HOOD'S WALK,  
BOSTON,  
LINCOLNSHIRE  
(BRH98)**

Work Undertaken For  
Greenwalk Management Ltd

October 1998

Report Compiled by  
Neil Herbert BA, AIFA

Planning Application No: B05/0119/95  
National Grid Reference: TF 324<sup>25</sup>450  
City and County Museum Accession No: 226.98

A.P.S. Report No. **78/98**

*Archaeological Project Services is an IFA Registered Archaeological  
Organisation (No. 21)*

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## 1. SUMMARY

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during development on land at Robin Hoods Walk, Boston, Lincolnshire. The lane, Robin Hood's Walk, is referred to as early as 1640 when it followed a stream which marked the parish boundary.*

*Several 19th-20th century postholes and a large pit, possible a World War 2 air raid shelter, were observed. However, no earlier archaeological remains were present, though a few fragments of medieval pottery were recovered.*

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Definition of a Watching Brief

An archaeological watching brief is defined as 'a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons within a specified area or site..., where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed.' (IFA 1997).

### 2.2 Planning Background

Archaeological Project Services was commissioned by Greenwalk Management Ltd. to undertake an archaeological watching brief during development at Robin Hoods Walk, Boston, Lincolnshire. Approval for the development was sought through the submission of planning application B05/0119/95. The watching brief was carried out between the 15<sup>th</sup> June and 14<sup>th</sup> August 1998.

### 2.3 Topography, Geology and Soils

Boston is situated 45km southeast of Lincoln and approximately 7km from the northwest coast of The Wash, in the south

Lincolnshire fenland. Bisected by the River Witham, the town is located in Boston District, Lincolnshire (Fig. 1).

Lying at a height of c. 3m OD on fairly flat and level land, the investigation area is located c. 900m north of the town centre, as defined by St. Botolph's parish church, and 200m east of the Witham. Situated on the west side of Robin Hood's Walk, centred on National Grid Reference TF 3240 4500, the development covers an area of around 350 square metres (Fig. 2).

Because the site lies within an urban area the surface geology has not been mapped. Nevertheless, on the basis of nearby deposits, it is likely that local soils are Wisbech Association calcareous alluvial gley soils developed in marine alluvium (Robson 1990, 36). Beneath this marine alluvium is glacial drift that was deposited in a geological basin between the Lincolnshire Wolds and the East Anglian Heights (Harden 1978, 5). These glacial deposits in turn overlie a solid geology of Jurassic clays.

### 2.3 Archaeological Setting

Boston is not mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, though the same survey recorded two churches and fisheries in Skirbeck, a now defunct parish lying southeast of the present investigation area (Foster and Longley 1976, 69). One of these churches, *St. Botolph's*, from which Boston took its name, was given to St. Mary's Abbey, York, in 1089.

First mentioned in 1130, Boston established itself as a major trading centre in the medieval period, partly due to its situation on the estuary of the River Witham. During the medieval period, land south of the site was known as Common Marsh, suggesting the development was then situated on marginal land (Harden 1978, fig. 9).



Historically, Robin Hood's Walk is first mentioned in the Boston Corporation Records of 1640. It was said to have originated as a narrow winding lane, following the original course of a water channel known as the *Scire-beck*, a place-name of Old Scandinavian origin meaning 'bright brook' (Ekwall 1974, 425). This channel formed the original parish boundary between Boston and Skirbeck and its course was still visible in the mid 19th century, even though much of the channel was defunct (Thompson 1856, 466; 199).

### 3. AIMS

The requirements of the watching brief were to locate, record and interpret archaeological deposits, if present, and to determine their date, function and origin.

### 4. METHODS

Foundation trenches were excavated by machine and the trench sides were cleaned and inspected for archaeological remains.

Sections of the trenches were drawn at a scale of 1:10 (Fig. 4). These sections were referenced to a 1:200 scale site plan. Recording of natural and archaeological deposits encountered during the investigation was undertaken according to Archaeological Project Services standard practice using the single context recording method. A photographic record was also compiled depicting deposits encountered and the site setting.

Planning conditions required that all groundworks be archaeologically examined. However, due to largely negative results in the early stages of the investigation, Archaeological Project Services made a request to the Boston Community Archaeologist for the examination to be

curtailed. Permission was given by the Boston Community Archaeologist to reduce the level of investigation and, consequently, House Plots 4 and 5 were not examined (Fig. 3).

## 5. RESULTS

Records of deposits and features identified during the watching brief were examined. Grouping was assigned based on the nature of the deposits and recognisable relationships between them. A list of all contexts with interpretations appears as Appendix 1. Two phases were identified:

Phase 1: Natural deposits

Phase 2: Modern deposits

Archaeological contexts are listed below and described. The numbers in square brackets are the context numbers assigned in the field.

#### Phase 1: Natural deposits

Layers of brown or grey fine silts [004, 009-014, 017-018 and 021-023] were observed throughout the site at a depth of *c.* 0.3m below present ground level (Fig. 5). These were at least 0.7m thick, extending beyond the limit of excavation, and are interpreted as natural alluvium. This alluvium did not contain any artefacts or obvious environmental remains and there was no evidence of waterlogging.

#### Phase 2: Modern deposits

Layers of red-brown [003] or grey-brown [008] silts sealed the alluvial deposits toward the eastern part of the site, in Plots 6 and 1 (Fig. 5). These deposits measured between 80mm and 0.15m thick and are interpreted as subsoils. A single fragment of 14th-16th century pottery was retrieved from the subsoil [003] within Plot 6.



Sealing these subsoils, and overlying the natural alluvium elsewhere across the site, were layers of brown silts [002 and 007] up to 0.3m thick. These were topsoil deposits and contained animal bone and artefacts of 19th-20th century date, together with residual medieval pottery fragments.

Cutting into the topsoil were three features [006, 015 and 019]. In Plot 3, at the northwest edge of the site, and Plot 6 at the northeast, were two similar, vertical sided, flat-based features, [015] and [006] respectively (Fig. 5). Cut [015] was 0.6m wide and 1m deep and feature [006] was 0.44m wide and 0.6m deep. These features are interpreted as postholes. Probable machine-made brick of 18th-19th century date was recovered from posthole [016].

Also exposed within Plot 3, was cut [019], measuring 2.2m wide and 0.9m deep, with steep sides and a broad, flat base (Fig. 5). Filling this was a dark grey-brown silt [020] containing corrugated iron and glass inclusions. This is interpreted as a pit.

Partially overlying the topsoil in Plot 6 at the northeast side of the site was a thin layer of concrete [001], representing a recent surface.

## 6. DISCUSSION

Natural layers of silt (Phase 1) representing alluvial deposition were observed across the area. These are likely to be marine deposits, though the former presence of the stream, the Scire Beck, in the area may indicate that some of the deposits are fresh water alluvium. Variations of brown-red or grey colouration to the silts is due to fluctuations in the water table.

Above the natural silts in the eastern part of the site were subsoil or, possibly garden or agricultural soil deposits (Phase 2). A

single fragment of late medieval pottery recovered from this deposit may indicate that the area was being used for agricultural purposes from that period. Above this possible agricultural layer was the modern topsoil which contained a variety of recent, 19th-20th century, material and a few fragments of medieval pottery.

Recent postholes located on the north side of the site may mark the former positions of boundary markers or, possibly, telegraph poles. Located at the northwest corner of the site, the large pit containing corrugated iron may be an Anderson Shelter, used for protection against air raids in the Second World War (1939-45).

The very restricted quantity of medieval or early post-medieval material recovered from the site suggests that this area of Boston was not occupied until the 19th century. Some confirmation of this is provided by cartographic evidence. The 1824 First Edition one-inch Ordnance Survey map of the area depicts Robin Hood's Walk traversing open countryside with virtually no buildings along the route until it reached Norfolk Street, approximately 500m southeast of the site. However, by 1887, development had extended well north of Norfolk Street, almost to the site (Molyneux and Wright 1974, Maps 10-11).

The limited amount of medieval pottery found could have been introduced to the site as manuring scatter in the Middle Ages, suggesting agricultural usage of the area at that period.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

Archaeological investigations at Robin Hood's Walk, Boston, were undertaken because the thoroughfare was referred to in 1640 and possibly had medieval origins.



However, although a few fragments of medieval pottery were recovered, no archaeological remains earlier than the 19th century were revealed. On the basis of the evidence retrieved, it seems likely that this area of Boston was not occupied until the 19th century, and probably was agricultural land before that date.

## 8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Project Services wish to acknowledge the assistance of Mr A.M. Reale of Greenwalk Management Ltd who commissioned the fieldwork and post-excavation analysis. Site manager Kim Taylor kindly provided assistance and site plans were supplied by Barnhay Design Services. Gary Taylor and Tom Lane edited this report. Gary Taylor co-ordinated the work. Steve Membery, the Boston District Community Archaeologist, kindly allowed access to the relevant parish files.

## 9. PERSONNEL

Project Coordinator: Gary Taylor  
Research: Jenny Young  
Site Supervisors: Neil Herbert, Rene Mouraille, Gary Taylor and Fiona Walker  
Finds Processing: Denise Buckley  
Illustration: Paul Cope-Faulkner, Neil Herbert  
Post-excavation Analyst: Neil Herbert

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## 11. ABBREVIATIONS

Numbers prefixed by the letter 'B' are the reference codes used by the Community Archaeologist for Boston District to identify archaeological sites and finds.

APS refers to Archaeological Project Services

IFA refers to the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

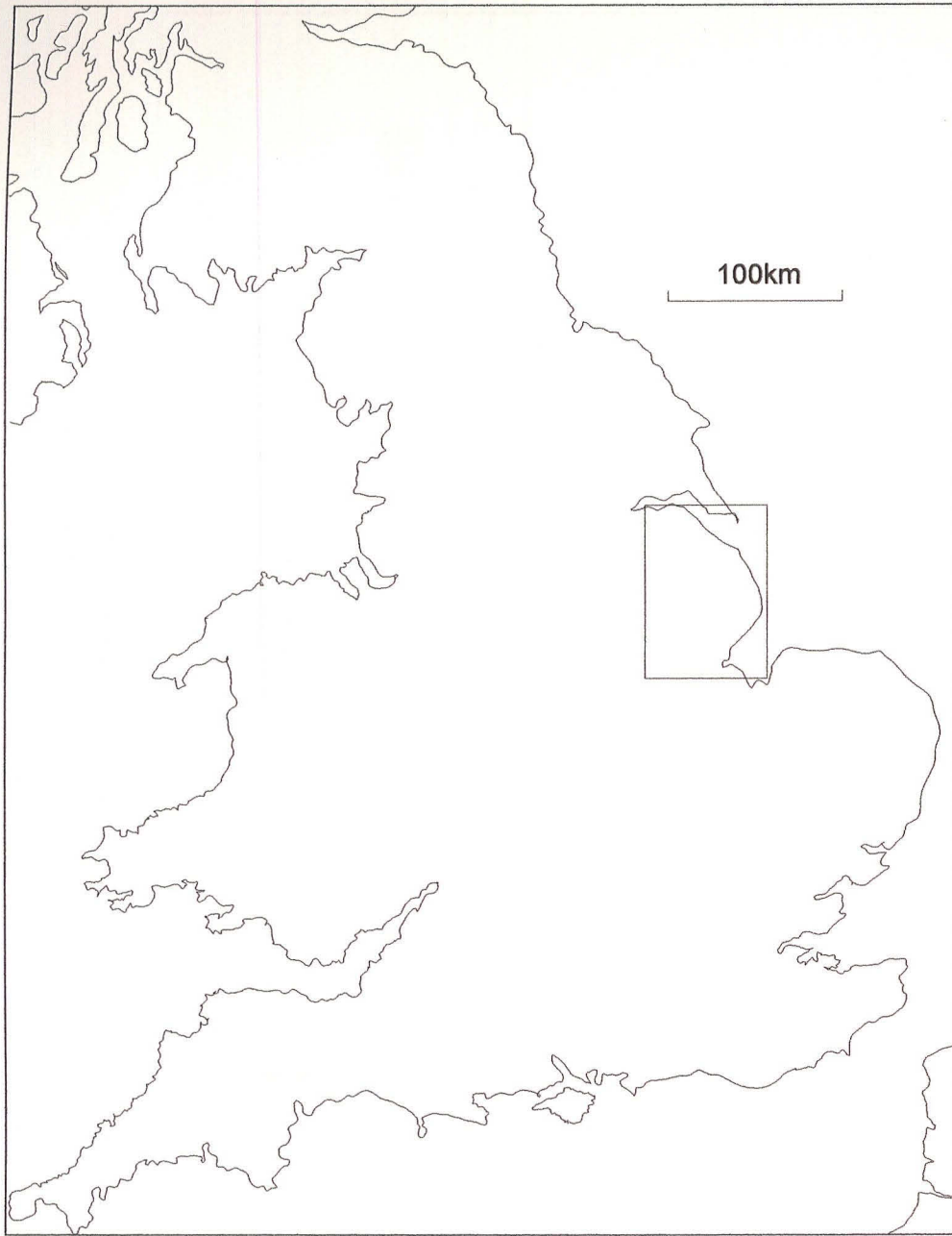
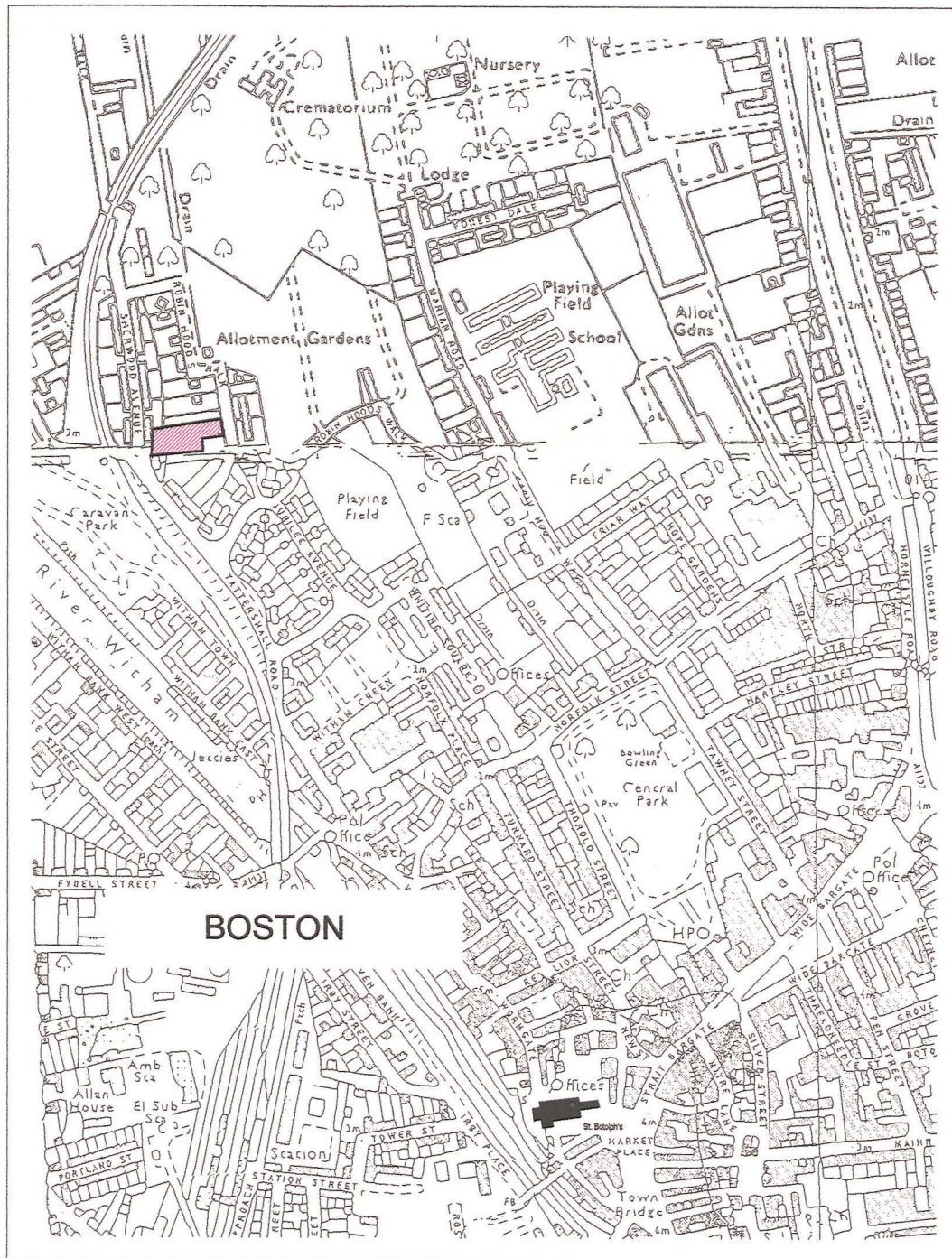


Figure 1 - General Location Plan





 Development Area

0  400m



Figure 2 : Site Location Plan



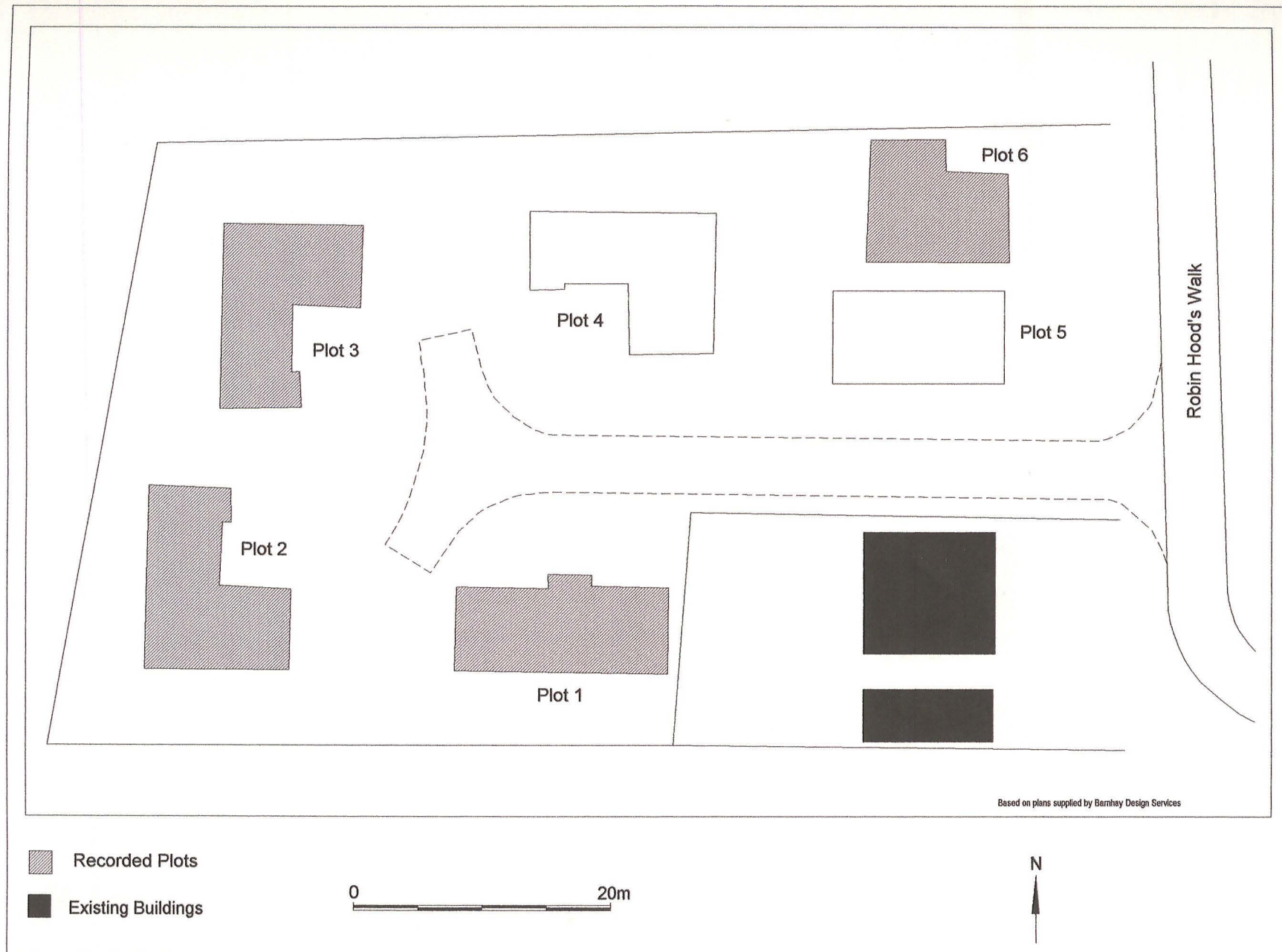


Figure 3: Site Plan, showing examined areas



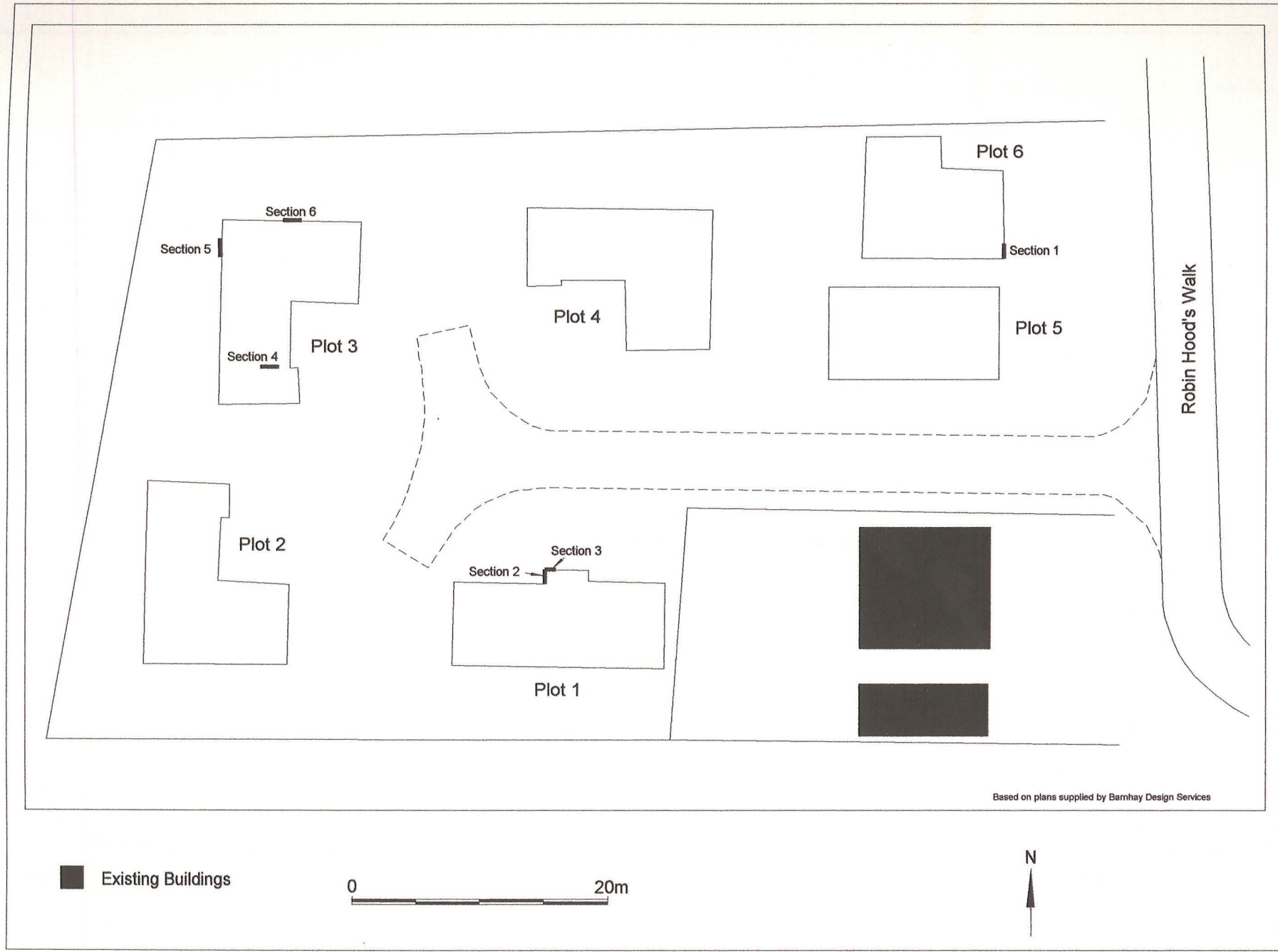


Figure 4 : Section Locations

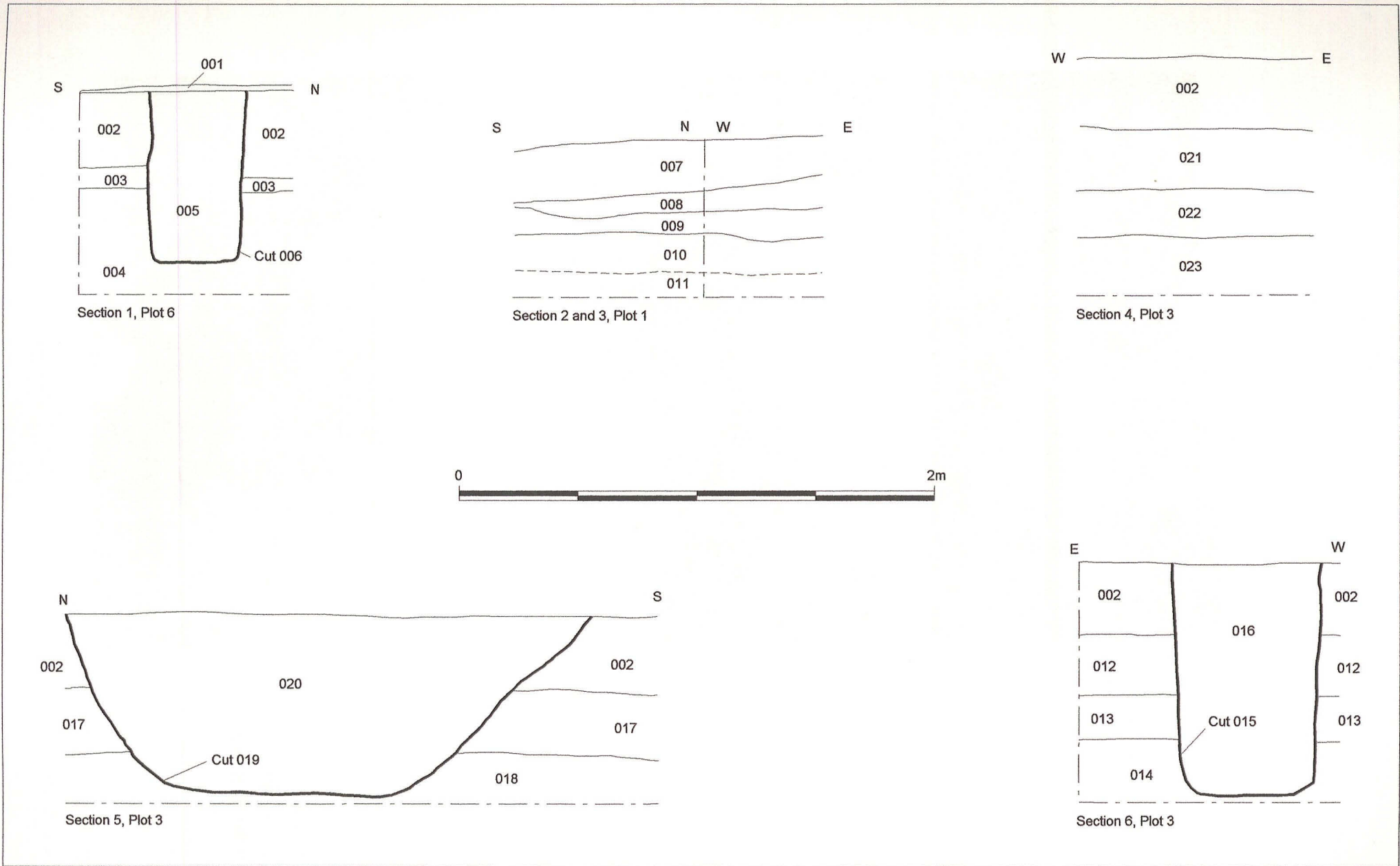
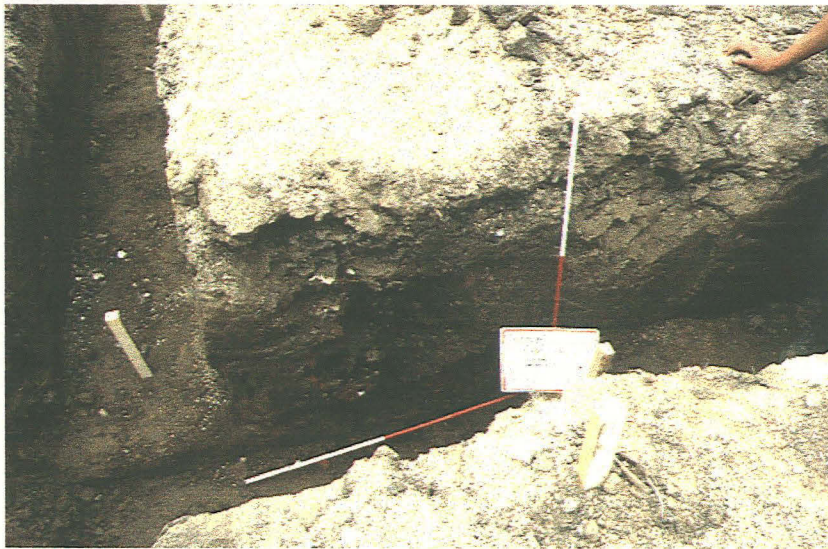


Figure 5 : Sections of foundation trenches





◀ Plate 1 : General Site View



◀ Plate 2 : Section 6, showing posthole [015]



◀ Plate 3 : Section 5, showing pit [019] (Anderson shelter?)



## APPENDIX 1

### Context Summary

CONTEXT NO	PLOT	DESCRIPTION	PHASE	INTERPRETATION
001	6	Light grey concrete layer	2	Surface
002	6	Mid brown silt	2	Topsoil
003	6	Mid red-brown silt	1	Natural Alluvium
004	6	Mid red-brown silt	2	Subsoil
005	6	Mid brown clayey silt	2	Fill of 006
006	6	Cut, 0.4m x 0.7m	2	Posthole
007	1	Dark brown-grey silt	2	Topsoil
008	1	Dark brown-grey silt	2	Subsoil
009	1	Light grey silty clay	1	Natural Alluvium
010	1	Mid brown clayey silt	1	Natural Alluvium
011	1	Mid grey-brown silt	1	Natural Alluvium
012	3	Mid brown silt	1	Natural Alluvium
013	3	Mid brown clayey silt	1	Natural Alluvium
014	3	Light brown sandy silt	1	Natural Alluvium
015	3	Cut, 0.6m x 0.9m	2	Posthole
016	3	Dark brown silt	2	Fill of [015]
017	3	Mid brown silt	1	Natural Alluvium
018	3	Mid brown clayey silt	1	Natural Alluvium
019	3	Cut, 2.2m x 0.9m	2	Pit
020	3	Dark grey-brown silt	2	Fill of 019
021	3	Mid brown silt	1	Natural Alluvium
022	3	Mid brown clayey silt	1	Natural Alluvium
023	3	Light brown sandy silt	1	Natural Alluvium



## APPENDIX 2

### The Finds

By Hilary Healey MPhil, Paul Cope-Faulkner BA, AIFA and Gary Taylor MA

#### Provenance

Most of the material was recovered from topsoil or recent pits and postholes, although one of the medieval artefacts were recovered from the subsoil.

It is likely that all of the medieval material derives from production centres in the vicinity, including Lincoln and, probably, Boston itself. The bricks may also be products of the general Boston area. However, the remainder of the later material comes from more distant sources including Wales and, probably, the Midlands.

#### Range

The range of material is detailed in the tables.

*Table 1: The Artefacts*

CONTEXT	DESCRIPTION	DATE
002	1x blue and white transfer printed tableware	19th century
	1x white with grey and brown paint glazed tableware	19th century
	1x black glazed earthenware	18th-early 19th century
	2x plant pot	19th-20th century
	1x Lincoln ware jug rim	medieval
	2x unglazed medieval sandy pottery sherds, ?Boston	medieval
	1x tile	20th century
003	1x ?Boston ware	14th-16th century
007	1x white glazed wall tile	19th-20th century
	1x Welsh slate	19th-20th century
016	2x bricks, ?machine-made	18th-19th century
	1x white mortar with green paint	
020	1x corrugated iron sheet	20th century

Table 2: The Animal Bone

CONTEXT	DESCRIPTION	NOTES
002	1 cattle rib	butchered (sawn)

The earliest artefacts are fragments of pottery of probable 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century date. There is no particularly dominant artefact type, though the most abundant objects in the small assemblage are of 18th-20th century date. The assemblage consists of pottery, tile, brick, mortar, roofing slate and animal bone.

#### **Condition**

Although the medieval sherds are slightly worn, all of the material is in good condition and presents no long-term storage problems. The assemblage should be archived by material class.

#### **Documentation**

Medieval and post-medieval artefact assemblages from throughout Boston have previously been examined and reported.

#### **Potential**

The assemblage has limited potential. It seems likely that the small amount of medieval material could have entered the area as manuring scatter at that time, therefore suggesting that the area was agricultural land in the medieval period.



## APPENDIX 3

### Glossary

<b>Alluvium</b>	Soil or other deposits laid down by water. Marine alluvium is laid down by the sea, freshwater alluvium by streams, rivers or in lakes.
<b>Context</b>	An archaeological context represents a distinct archaeological event or process. For example, the action of digging a pit creates a context (the cut) as does the process of its subsequent backfill (the fill). Each context encountered during an archaeological investigation is allocated a unique number by the archaeologist and a record sheet detailing the description and interpretation of the context (the context sheet) is created and placed in the site archive. Context numbers are identified within the report text by brackets, <i>e.g.</i> [004].
<b>Medieval</b>	The Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1066-1500.
<b>Natural</b>	Undisturbed deposit(s) of soil or rock which have accumulated without the influence of human activity.
<b>Post-medieval</b>	The period following the Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1500-1800.

## APPENDIX 4

### THE ARCHIVE

The archive consists of:

23	Context records
2	Photographic record sheet
3	Scale drawings
1	Bag of finds
1	Stratigraphic matrix

All primary records and finds are currently kept at:

Archaeological Project Services  
The Old School  
Cameron Street  
Heckington  
Sleaford  
Lincolnshire  
NG34 9RW

The ultimate destination of the project archive is:

Lincolnshire City and County Museum  
12 Friars Lane  
Lincoln  
LN2 1HQ

The archive will be deposited in accordance with the document titled *Conditions for the Acceptance of Project Archives*, produced by the Lincolnshire City and County Museum.

Lincolnshire City and County Council Museum Accession Number: 226.98

Archaeological Project Services Site Code: BRH98

The discussion and comments provided in this report are based on the archaeology revealed during the site investigations. Other archaeological finds and features may exist on the development site but away from the areas exposed during the course of this fieldwork. *Archaeological Project Services* cannot confirm that those areas unexposed are free from archaeology nor that any archaeology present there is of a similar character to that revealed during the current investigation.

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