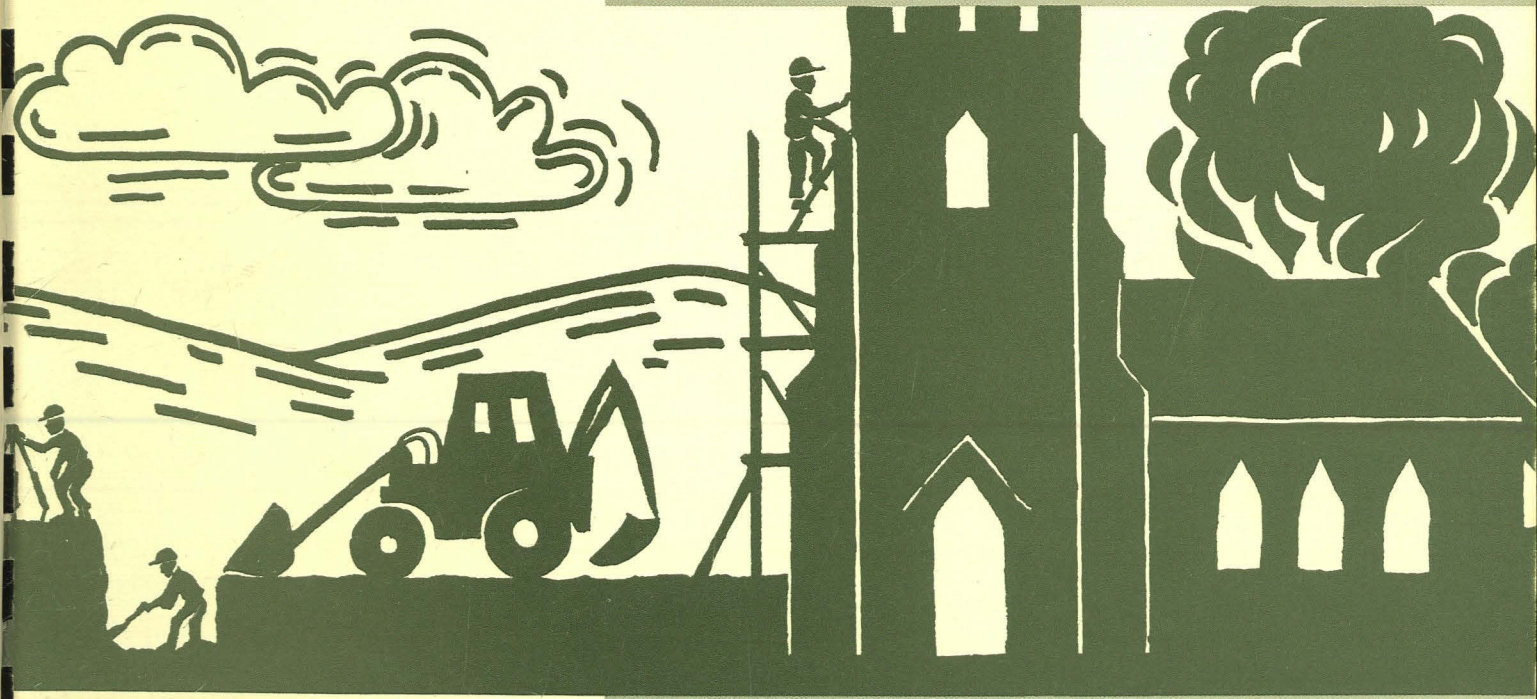




ADVANCING LINCOLNSHIRE'S PAST





**DESK-TOP EVALUATION FOR THE  
WIDENING OF THE SALTER'S WAY,  
SALTERSFORD,  
LINCOLNSHIRE**

Work Undertaken For  
Anglian Water Services Ltd

July 1993

Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire  
28 Boston Road,  
SLEAFORD,  
Lincolnshire NG34 7ET  
Charity No: 1001463. Company No: 2554738 (England)

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Heritage Lincolnshire were commissioned by Anglian Water Services Ltd to undertake a preliminary desk top assessment of the archaeological impact of the proposed widening of the Salter's Way access road, leading from the Great North Road to Saltersford Water Treatment Works. The proposed widening, on the north side of the Salter's Way, is 2m, fanning-out to 7.50m at the western limit where the access road joins the Great North Road. This work was undertaken in accordance with a brief set by the South Kesteven Community Archaeologist.

## **2. METHODS**

- 2.1 Information on the archaeological sites and finds in the vicinity of Saltersford was obtained through research and analysis of all appropriate secondary sources available. These have included: Lincolnshire Sites and Monuments Record; all Ordnance Survey maps; tithe, enclosure and parish maps; historical documents; archaeological books and journals; unpublished reports and archives; files of the South Kesteven Community Archaeologist; and aerial photographs. Additional information was kindly provided by the staff of the City and County Museum, Lincoln; Ruth Waller, the Community Archaeologist for South Kesteven; Mike Jarvis, Senior Supervisor with Heritage Lincolnshire; and Grantham Museum.

## **3. LOCATION**

- 3.1 Saltersford is located approximately 2km south of Grantham at the junction of the civil parishes of Little Ponton and Stroxtun, Grantham and Londonthorpe and Harrowby Without, in South Kesteven district, Lincolnshire (Fig. 1). It is situated at the foot of the Kesteven plateau in the Witham valley, at a point where the river is crossed by the Salter's Way. Modern physical boundaries confine the site to east and west. These limits are provided by the Great North Road, approximately 600m to the west of the bridging point, and the London to Scotland mainline railway track immediately to the east (Fig. 2).

## **4. TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY**

- 4.1 Saltersford is situated in the valley of the River Witham which flows south to north through the site. At this point the river cuts through Jurassic limestone. The valley sides are relatively steep, dipping from *c* 90m OD to *c* 45m OD within 600m of the river, and the valley bottom is covered by alluvium exceeding 5m in depth (Preston 1917, 35). The soil type is the Elmton 1 series, brown rendzina developed on the oolitic limestone, with adjacent pockets of Escrick 2 on the western valley sides (Soil Survey 1983). Mixed arable and dairy farming constitute the present land use in the area around Saltersford.

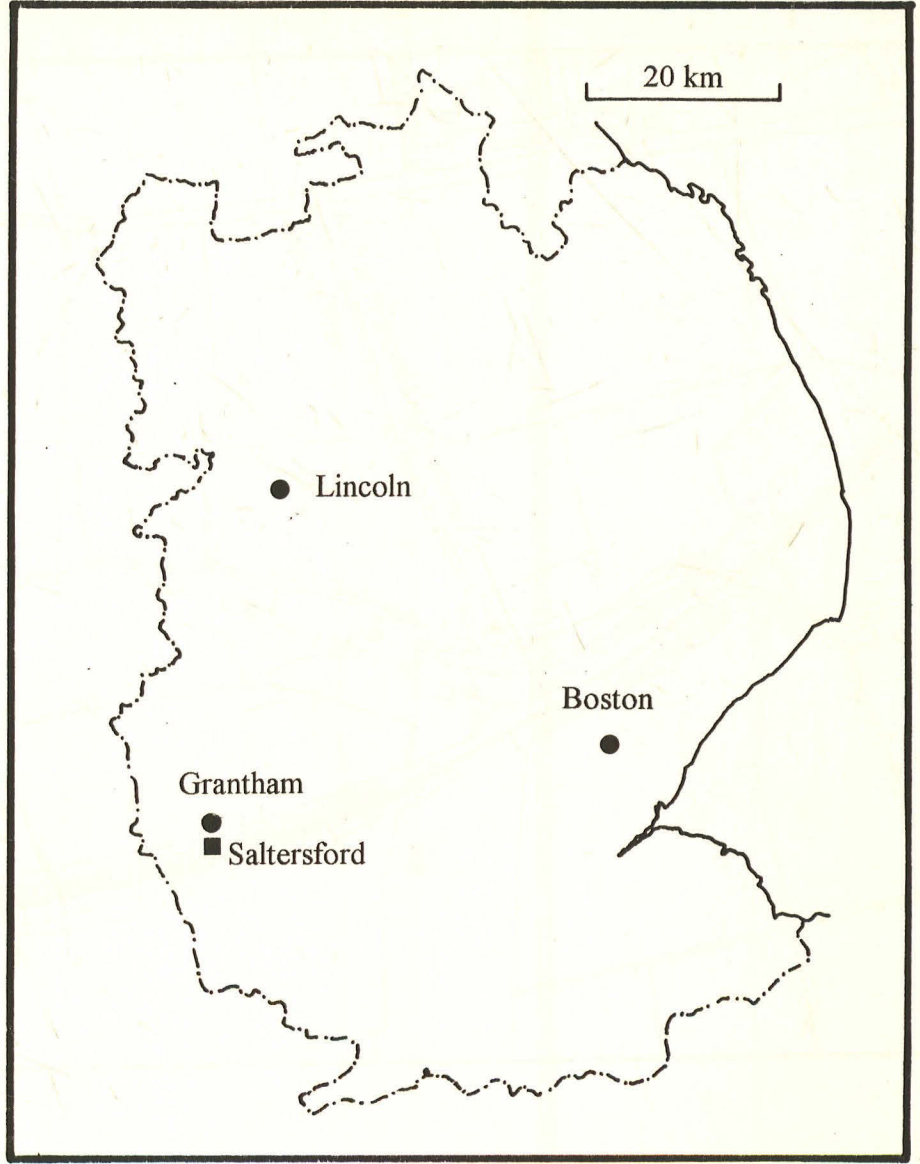
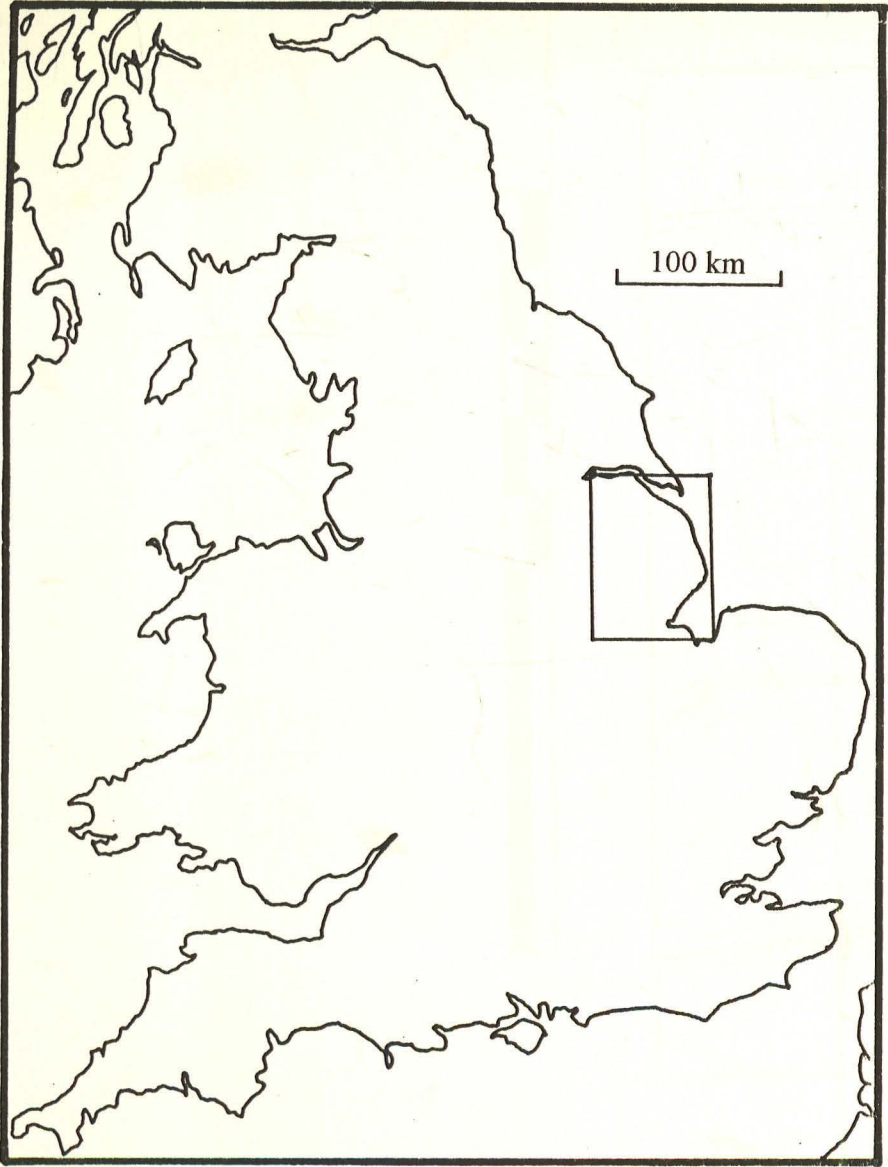
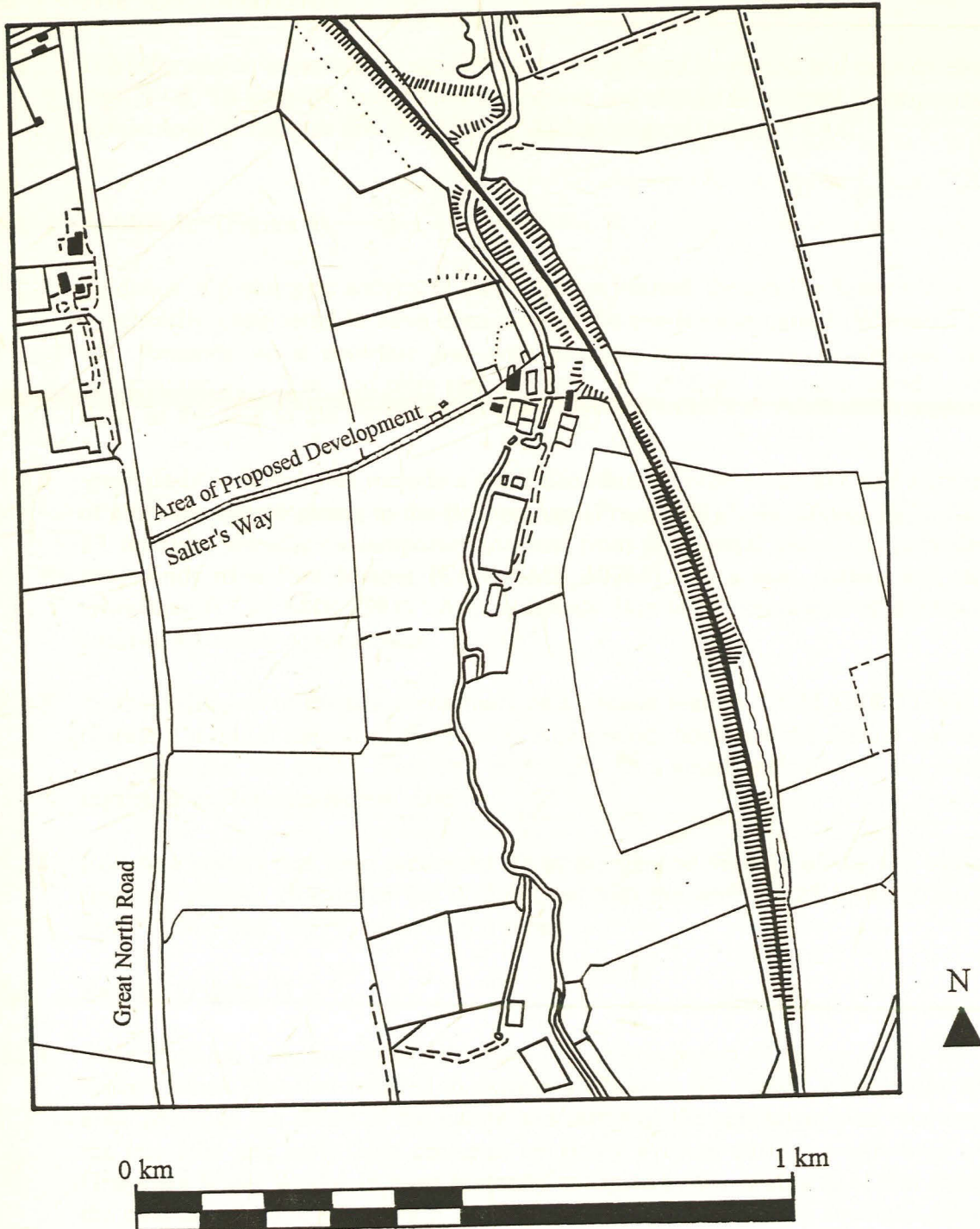


Fig. 1 GENERAL LOCATION PLAN



Fig. 2 SITE LOCATION PLAN



## 5. THE ARCHAEOLOGY

5.1 The information assembled is considered and discussed by period and is illustrated on Figs. 3 - 5. To simplify location on the figures and clarify the textual descriptions the archaeological features are grouped in "Archaeological Areas" (AAs).

### 5.2 Prehistoric (Figure 3)

5.2.1. Evidence of prehistoric activity at Saltersford is limited, though the Salter's Way road is generally considered to have been used in the pre-Roman period (Whitwell 1970, 64). Remains of a neolithic hut with contemporary pottery discovered during construction of a filter bed were reported by C. W. Phillips, who also noted neolithic flints in the area to the south (Shaw 1982, 23).

5.2.2 Stray finds from the area include a small neolithic polished stone axe and a fragment of a bronze dagger dating to the Bronze Age (Preston 1917, 40; Davey 1973, 82; Fig 19, no 198). Broadly contemporary material from the general vicinity is provided by stray finds of a flint scraper (CCM SMR 30765) and a flint barbed and tanged arrowhead (CCM SMR 3988). Approximately 1km to the southwest of the bridging point is a Bronze Age tumulus.

5.2.3 To the northwest of the site, a cropmark of a circular feature (CCM SMR 33895) may represent a burial mound of the Bronze Age period; however, the feature appears to be penannular and could, therefore, potentially be a small enclosure or hut circle of Iron Age or Romano-British date.

5.2.4 Iron Age pottery has been recovered from the general vicinity of the site but away from the present channel of the Witham, on both the west (CCM SMR 30510) and east (CCM SMR 33977) sides of the river.

### 5.3 Roman (Figure 4)

5.3.1 Saltersford has been known as a Romano-British occupation site since at least the 18th century when Stukeley referred to extensive evidence for Roman inhabitation of the area. Much of the detail of the nature and status of the settlement was recovered in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by Henry Preston during construction of the Grantham Water Works. In areas presently occupied by the structures of that complex, the remains of stone buildings, a ford and a metalled road leading southeast from the ford area, were recorded. Additionally, a wide variety of artefacts were recovered. These included a stone column capital, tesserae and fragments of a tessellated pavement, painted wall plaster, roof and box flue tiles and an in-urned cremation. Large quantities of pottery, brooches, numerous iron tools and other artefacts, window and vessel glass, mill and quern stones and a large collection of coins were also recovered. This latter assemblage covers virtually the whole period of the Roman occupation of Britain, commencing with issues of Vespasian (69 - 79 AD) and continuing through to those of Arcadius (395 - 408 AD) and Honorius, 393 - 423 AD (Preston 1917, 46-7).



Fig. 3 PREHISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGY

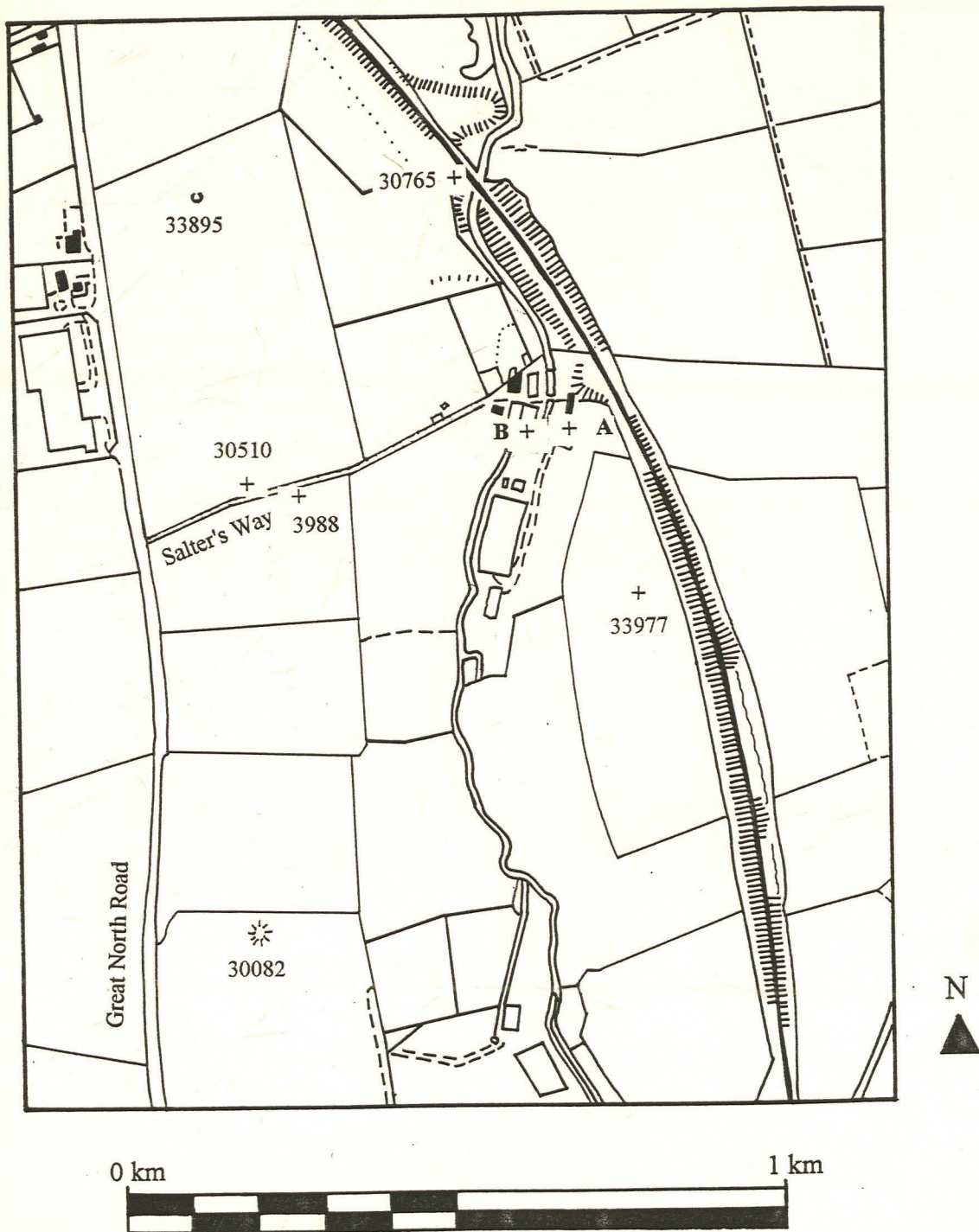
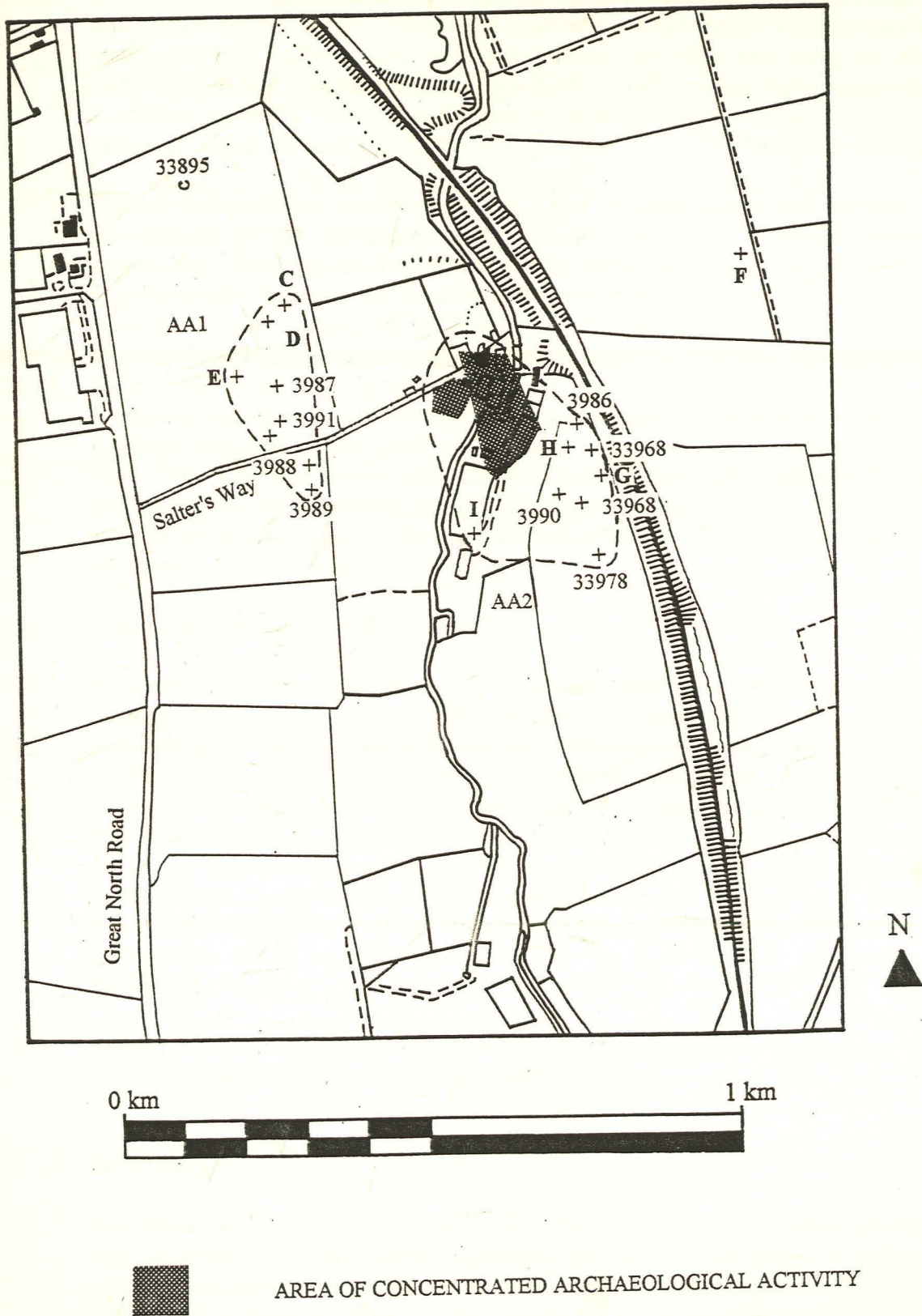


Fig.4 ROMANO - BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY



0 km 1 km



AREA OF CONCENTRATED ARCHAEOLOGICAL ACTIVITY



- 5.3.2 In more recent years, numerous objects, predominantly metal ones, have been recovered from the vicinity. These have supplemented the earlier findings, confirming bronze working as an on-site industrial process, but have also extended the site westwards. In this general area, but a little further north, an aerial photograph depicts a circular cropmark which could represent an Iron Age or Romano-British small enclosure or hut circle (CCM SMR 33895).
- 5.3.3 Formal archaeological investigation, in terms of excavations and surveys, have concentrated on the immediate vicinity of the waterworks. Although small-scale studies, they have enhanced what was known about this area of the site and added specific details. Amongst the discoveries made in these operations are corn driers and a stone-built water cistern fed by drains or catchment gullies (Lane nd, 5).
- 5.3.4 At a distance of approximately 400m to the northeast of the fording point, archaeological survey identified the remains of a stone building with a curved wall. Although minimally investigated, a burial of an infant was discovered beneath the wall (*ibid.*, 7-8). This structure is some distance from the previously understood core area and may genuinely be isolated, possibly for religious/ritual purposes. However, it also provides an indication that the Romano-British settlement may extend further east than the present evidence suggests.

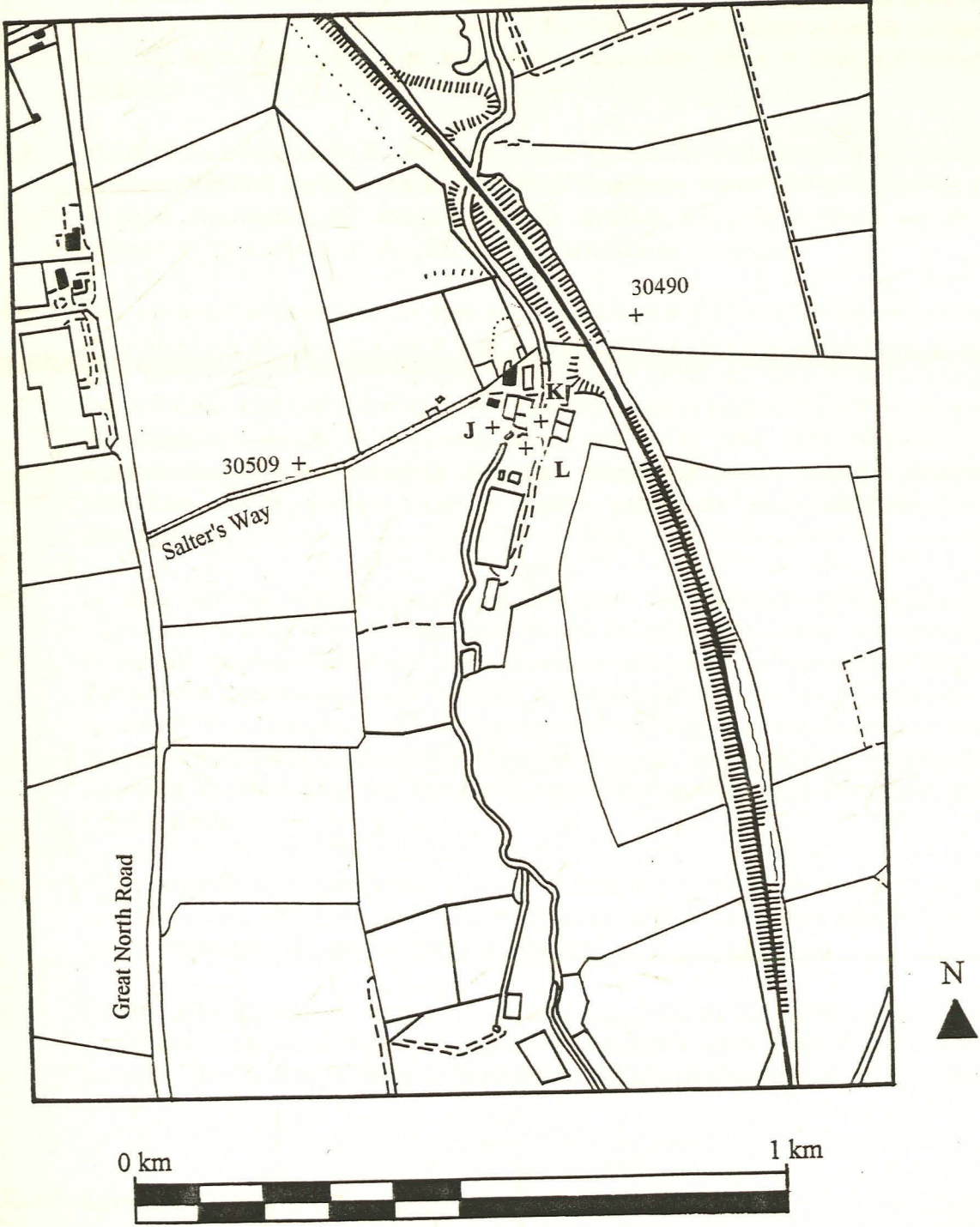
#### **5.4 Anglo-Saxon and Medieval (Figure 5)**

- 5.4.1 Evidence for Romano-Saxon and Anglo-Saxon activity is limited but displays a predominantly funerary nature. This material encompasses an inhumation burial represented by a shield boss, gilt stud and scramasax (Meaney 1964, 162) and two substantially intact Romano-Saxon grey ware bowls, (Whitwell 1970, 143). Slightly further afield, two Anglo-Saxon graves were found near the entrance to the Little Ponton cutting during the construction of the London - Scotland railway (Lane nd, 1). An Anglo-Saxon scramasax (knife) from the bed of the Witham, a chip-carved bronze buckle of late or sub-Roman type (Hawkes and Dunning 1961, 57; Fig 18k) and a single pot sherd (CCM SMR 30509) recovered from a location by the Salter's Way, to the west of the bridging point, comprise the stray finds of this period from Saltersford.
- 5.4.2 Approximately 250m to the northeast of the bridging point is an undated, though probably medieval, hollow-way (CCM SMR 30490).

### **6. DISCUSSION**

- 6.1 Prehistoric occupation and activity at Saltersford is indicated by a body of evidence that, at present, probably under represents the level of utilisation in this period. Ancient landscapes may potentially be preserved beneath blankets of alluvium in this stretch of the Witham valley. Some support for this suggestion is provided by the neolithic hut observed during filter bed construction, and the distribution of Iron Age finds, which have been discovered well away from the present river channel.

Fig. 5 ANGLO - SAXON AND LATER ARCHAEOLOGY





- 6.2 Occupation of the site in the Roman period is confirmed by significantly more substantial evidence, and the location of Saltersford as a Romano-British settlement site has been known since at least the 18th century when it was mentioned by Stukeley.
- 6.3 Much of the evidence for the Romano-British occupation of Saltersford was recovered by Henry Preston during the construction of Grantham Water Works. However, most of these discoveries are without accurate location, the plan of them, which was referred to by a visitor to the site in 1929, not having survived.
- 6.4 The evidence accumulated to date suggests that the Romano-British settlement at Saltersford lay astride the Salter's Way Roman road where it forded the River Witham. This fording point is approximately 2km west of where the Salter's Way meets the major Roman highway, Ermine Street. The settlement is potentially that referred to in the Antonine Itinerary as *Causennae* (Rivet and Smith 1981, 305). However, other Romano-British sites including Ancaster, Sapperton and a recently discovered settlement astride Ermine Street in Easton parish are also candidates for the identification.
- 6.5 Of long duration, the Romano-British settlement was extensive in area, diverse in nature with aspects of high status activity and occupation. Industrial and agricultural operations are represented and there is some evidence for religious/ritual practices. Toward the southeast, a single in-urned cremation may signify the whereabouts of a cemetery. The distribution of observations and artefacts suggests that the settlement may be concentrated in two adjacent but distinct areas. However, there are reasons for believing that this does not accurately represent the settlement formation (below, Conclusions).
- 6.6 The testimony of Anglo-Saxon material at Saltersford indicates funerary use rather than settlement. However, the evidence is tenuous and it is uncertain whether the finds denote occasional discoveries from a cemetery, or dispersed graves.
- 6.7 Finally, a small undated quarry pit, located just south of the Salter's Way where it meets the Great North Road, is depicted on Bryant's 1828 Map of the County of Lincoln. This feature is likely to have destroyed any archaeological traces within its limits.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The distribution maps of archaeological finds and observations represent occupation and use of the Saltersford area in the past. However, the maps are more records of previous archaeological and antiquarian investigation in the area, and less a true definition of the extent of ancient settlement and activity. This aspect is most clearly depicted on the plan of Romano-British activity at Saltersford. This reveals two distinct concentrations of archaeological discoveries (AA 1 and 2) separated by an apparently barren north-south band (Fig. 4). These zones are largely concurrent with the pattern of land parcelling, suggesting that they show areas where access for past



archaeological study has been obtained, rather than a dual focus of settlement. This also reflects the present land use, the 'barren' zone being under grass, and the artefact concentration to the west coming from an area under crop.

- 7.2 The Romano-British settlement is bounded to east and west by the mainline railway and the Great North Road, respectively. While the western spread of observations and discoveries exhibit a natural termination before the Great North Road is reached, the railway line appears to present a firm eastern boundary to the Romano-British settlement. Clearly, this is incongruous, and the railway track probably provides a limit to the extent of modern archaeological examination, rather than a genuine, if coincidental, boundary to the settlement. Unconfirmed reports of numerous metal detector finds from the area east of the railway lend support to this suggestion.
- 7.3 It is probable that both the prehistoric and Anglo-Saxon activity is under-represented, perhaps significantly so. Reasons for this may include the nature of the material remains of these periods, the interests of researchers and past topographical and geomorphological conditions.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Subject to access being obtained, geophysical survey should be undertaken along the northern side of the access road, especially towards the western side of the observed and assumed extent of the site. This area coincides with the western periphery of the Witham floodplain, where alluvial and colluvial deposits overlying archaeological levels may be expected to be less deep. Cropmark evidence recorded on aerial photographs supports this suggestion. Geomorphological conditions such as these are potentially conducive to successful geophysical examination. Such ground-probing survey may determine whether the settlement was defended or otherwise enclosed, which possibility has previously been suggested (Dable, communication). Should anomalies considered to be due to archaeological features be revealed by the geophysical survey, trial trenching to examine these should be undertaken. Because of the masking effects of alluvium, geophysical survey may register areas as apparently devoid of archaeological remains; these areas should also be subject to trial trenching to determine whether archaeological remains are genuinely absent, or present but more deeply buried.
- 8.2 The Roman practice of having cemeteries outside settlement areas and frequently alongside roads is well known and the potential for human burials being encountered, especially toward the west end of Salter's Way, should not be dismissed.
- 8.3 The area of investigation that examines the apparently barren zone in the centre of the site should receive greater attention. This should assist in clarifying whether there is a continuous spread of archaeological remains across the area, instead of the dual focus of activity that the evidence suggests at present. Similarly, identification of the true eastern limit of the Romano-British settlement should be sought if opportunities arise to examine the area immediately east of the railway line.



## 9. REFERENCES

9.1 All of the following sources were consulted in the data-gathering exercise. However, as some references duplicated information available in others, not all of them have been specifically referred to in the text.

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## APPENDIX 1

This schedule records those sites and finds enumerated on the County Site and Monuments Record. Other observations and finds records have not yet been provided with codes in that numerical sequence. However, these unnumbered details are shown otherwise by letters on the archaeological period plans (Figs. 3-5). The Sites and Monuments Record uses both 4 and 5 figure codes for referencing archaeological discoveries.

### Prehistoric Archaeology (Fig. 3)

| Reference Number | Description  |
|------------------|--|
| 3988             | Barbed and tanged flint arrowhead                        |
| 30082            | Bronze Age tumulus                                       |
| 30510            | Iron Age pottery   |
| 30765            | Bronze Age flint scraper                                 |
| 33895            | Ring ditch cropmark                                      |
| 33977            | Iron Age pottery   |
| A                | Neolithic hut, pottery and flints                        |
| B                | Neolithic polished stone axe; Bronze Age dagger fragment |

### Romano-British (Fig. 4)

|       |                                     |
|-------|-------------------------------------|
| 3986  | Bronze pendant                      |
| 3987  | Bronze door or hinge box            |
| 3988  | Bronze ingot brooch                 |
| 3989  | Bronze ingot fragment               |
| 3990  | Bronze ingot fragment               |
| 3991  | Bronze ingot fragment               |
| 33895 | Ring ditch cropmark                 |
| 33968 | Bronze object                       |
| 33978 | Roman pottery                       |
| C     | Building                            |
| D     | Brooch (enamelled)                  |
| E     | Coin hoard, mid 4th century         |
| F     | Curved-wall building; infant burial |
| G     | Brooch (dolphin)                    |
| H     | Coins                               |
| I     | In-urned cremation                  |

### Anglo-Saxon and Later Archaeology (Fig. 5)

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| 30509 | Pottery   |
| 30490 | Hollow-way, undated, possibly medieval                    |
| J     | Shield boss, gilt stud, scramasax, from inhumation burial |
| K     | Scramasax   |
| L     | Chip-carved bronze buckle                                 |