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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

## **Woolsthorpe Manor, Lincolnshire**

*NGR: SK 9243 2436*

*Site Code: NTW 00*

*LCNCC Museum Accn No.: 2000.65*

## **Archaeological Watching Brief**

**Report for The National Trust**

**by C. Angus and G. Tann**

**LAS Report No. 460**

**March 2001**

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## **Woolsthorpe Manor, Lincolnshire**

### **Archaeological Watching Brief**

**NGR: SK 9243 2436**

**Site Code: NTW 00**

**LCNCC Museum Accn No.: 2000.65**

#### **Summary**

*An archaeological watching brief carried out at Woolsthorpe Manor, Lincolnshire, revealed evidence of a pitched paved floor surface, below modern make-up layers containing a large quantity of nineteenth-century pottery. Beside the pitched paved floor were the foundations of a small building, possibly the dovecote, depicted on the 1797 plan of the manor.*

#### **Introduction**

Lindsey Archaeological Services were commissioned by the National Trust to carry out an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for a new toilet block at Woolsthorpe Manor (Figs. 1 and 2).

The work was carried out in accordance with the general requirements set out in the *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook* published by the Archaeology Section, Lincolnshire County Council (1998). Monitoring, by Claire Angus, took place on February 28th and 29th 2000.

The main objectives of the watching brief were to:

- establish the presence or absence, quality and extent of any archaeological remains;
- record any archaeological deposits disturbed during groundworks.

#### **Site Location**

Woolsthorpe Manor is located approximately 11km south of Grantham, close to the village of Colsterworth. The original medieval house was rebuilt by the Newton family between 1623 and 1639, and from 1642 Woolsthorpe Manor was the birthplace and family home of Sir Isaac Newton. The house was later modernised by Edmund Turnor in the late eighteenth century.

The landscape surrounding the Manor has been changed greatly by the working of iron ore, an activity which may have Anglo-Saxon or earlier origins in this vicinity.

The 5m north-south by 12.5m east-west monitored development was alongside a stone boundary wall in the SW corner of the farmyard, close to the entrance and driveway (Figs. 2 and 3; Pl. 1). Beyond the wall, the ground rises with a belt of trees on the top of the slope. The yard area is almost surrounded by farm buildings, with a former threshing barn to the NE and smaller outbuildings to the NW. The eastern part of the yard is concreted, although the remainder is under low grass; the yard has a slight slope to the east



(Pl. 2). Beside the concreted yard, the boundary wall has been rebuilt in breeze blocks, suggesting that this area corresponded with some previous land use.

### Background

A *Plan of Woolsthorpe* drawn in 1797 by J.C. Barrows shows the layout of the Manor farm complex (Fig. 3). This can be readily compared with a recent survey, despite a reduction in the attached land, demolition and subsequent development on the site (Fig. 2). The farm continued as a working farm until it was handed over to the National Trust.

### The Watching Brief

The area was machine-excavated under archaeological supervision using a JCB with 1.8m wide toothless bucket to depths varying from 0.3m at the concrete-covered eastern end to 1.2m at the western end (Pls. 3 and 4). Any archaeological features identified were recorded using colour photographs, scale plans and sections. Archaeological features and deposits were assigned context numbers by LAS for recording purposes; these context numbers are used (in bold) in this report and the illustrations.

Much of the southern part of the trench was under water, as was the eastern trench face, making it difficult to record features. Parts of wall foundations were not photographed as they were too far under water. Their presence was established by trowelling under the water to establish the presence or absence of stone.

### Results (Figs. 4 and 5)

A 0.15m - 0.2m thick layer of concrete **116** covered the eastern end of the trench. This formed part of a more extensive surfaced yard area, extending beyond the site of the new toilet building. A 0.12m thick make-up layer of sand and gravel **117** lay beneath this, with a limestone rubble spread **118** below (Pl. 5).

Across the remainder of the trench, the topsoil **100** consisted of a grey-brown loam approximately 0.05m deep. Immediately below this, and extending 0.6m eastwards below the concrete, was a grey-brown silty clay make-up layer **101**, containing 140 sherds of mostly nineteenth/twentieth century pottery and modern debris including brick, glass, and stone rubble. Both table-wares, stone and earthenwares were recovered, although the majority of material was fine wares, including the remains of several tea services. Some seventeenth/eighteenth century sherds were also found (Appendix 2). A number of bottles were recovered, including one labelled as containing butter colouring, suggesting that butter was made on site. It is possible that, in addition to the butter produced for consumption in the manor, surplus was sold in the neighbourhood. Layer **101** appears to represent a deliberate dump of material, possibly to form a level surface at this end of the farmyard (Pl. 6).



A stone surface **102** was covered by the make-up layer, bedded on a layer of yellow-brown clayey sand **103** (Pls. 7-9). The paved surface extended across most of the area covered by grass, but did not continue below the concreted area. A small part of the exposed surface was of pitched stones, possibly marking an entrance or path, while the remainder was of regular sized, cut small blocks of limestone which were rounded as if by frequent use. The surface may have been within a building delimited to the east by wall **106**.

At the junction between the overlying topsoil **100** and concrete **116**, coinciding with the eastern edge of stone surface **102**, a north-south aligned 0.8m wide limestone wall foundation **106** was revealed (Pl. 10). The foundation was not continuous, but it was unclear whether it marked the position of piers from an open-fronted building or gaps for doorways (Pl. 11). The nature of the surrounding material and standing water made it very difficult to record these features. No foundation trench or backfilled wall-robber trench could be identified, although the foundation did appear to have a deposit of red clay **112** associated with it. The relationship of **106** to the standing boundary wall could not be ascertained, but it is possible that they were both part of the same structure.

Further concentrations of stone rubble were recorded west of wall foundation **106**. A 1.8m length of west-east aligned stones **107**, 0.25m wide, was associated with a 0.5m wide deposit of red clay **110**, initially suspected to have been the fill of a wall foundation trench **109**. **107** has since been reinterpreted as part of the floor **102**. Beside **106**, a restricted cluster of rubble **108** may have been an entrance or part of **102**.

### Conclusion

The north-south stone wall foundation **106** found within the monitored area is in the approximate position of the eastern gable end of the rectangular 'Dove House' marked on Barrows' 1797 plan of Woolsthorpe Manor (Fig. 3). As the buried foundation appears to be a return wall related to the existing stone boundary wall, it is suggested that the foundation forms part of the mapped dovecote and that a substantial part of the late eighteenth century or earlier dovecote survives reused as the boundary wall. A north-south wall survived in this position until the late twentieth century, and is shown on Ordnance Survey maps. Irregularities in the stonework of the boundary wall at its western end may indicate another removed return wall, although this was not identified in plan (Pl. 6). The entire south wall of the dovecote may survive.

The excavation did not extend sufficiently far north or west to clarify the extent of surface **102**, but the identified features could represent a partly demolished rectangular dovecote building (as shown in 1797) with a pitched internal floor surface.

Dovecotes, housing pigeons providing an egg source and winter food supply, were introduced to England in the Norman period. The quantity of grain which the birds consumed meant that numbers needed to be restricted, and this was achieved by legally limiting them to manorial or monastic holdings. Early examples are circular, as introduced by the Normans, but later versions are rectangular or square (Wood 1972, 207). The Woolsthorpe Manor example is unlikely to be of medieval origin, but it could well be considerably earlier than the first available documented reference in 1797.

### **Acknowledgements**

LAS is grateful to The National Trust staff at Woolsthorpe Manor for their co-operation.

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

Claire Angus and Geoff Tann  
Lindsey Archaeological Services  
26th March 2001

### **References**

- Wood, E.S. 1972 *Collins Field Guide to Archaeology in Britain*. London.
- Field, N. and Williams, M. 1997 *Woolsthorpe Manor: An Archaeological Watching Brief*. LAS Report No. 245, August 1997.

### **Archive Summary**

Correspondence

Developer's plans

Photographs: colour prints, LAS film nos. 00/23/12-33; 00/26/15-31

Archaeological finds: pottery, tile

Context sheets

Field plan and section

Inked plan and section



## APPENDIX 1

### Woolsthorpe Manor (NTW00) Context Summary

Context No.	Type	Description	Relationship	Finds
100	Layer	Grey/brown silty clay topsoil, 0.05m thick	Above 116	
101	Layer	Make-up layer of grey/brown silty clay with frequent domestic refuse inclusions	Above 101, below 118	140 sherds pottery, 17th-20thC; 2 frags. tile
102	Layer	Stone surface, containing 0.12m diameter rounded pebbles and flat laid limestone blocks 0.05m - 0.4m long. Some thin limestone pieces laid pitched. Initially thought to be wall foundation, but probably an internal floor or possibly external yard. Extended over most of monitored area, apparently restricted to west side of wall 106. Bedded onto 103	Above 103, below 101	
103	Layer	Bedding layer of cream/yellow clayey sand	Above 104, below 102	
104	Layer	Slightly grey/brown clay, 0.2m - 0.25m thick	Above 115, below 103	
105	Masonry	?Wall foundation, aligned west-east at northern edge of excavated area. Possibly an internal division.	Fill of 113, below 101; ?later than 102	
106	Masonry	Wall foundation, aligned north-south at eastern limit of upstanding stone boundary wall. Only visible in places, not necessarily a continuous wall	Fill of 111, below 101	
107	Masonry	Wall foundation, aligned west-east. 1.7m observed	Fill of 109, below 101	
108	Masonry	Spread of stones, possibly a wall foundation or buttress to west of 106	Above 104, below 101	
109	Cut	Foundation trench	Contains 107, cuts 115	
110	Fill	Fill of wall foundation trench	Fill of 109, below 101	
111	Cut	Wall foundation trench, only defined by presence of 112	Contains 106, 112, cuts 115	
112	Fill	Fill of wall foundation trench 111. Blue/grey silty clay, mixed with red clay	Fill of 111; below 101	
113	Cut	Wall foundation trench	Contains 114, 105; cuts 115	
114	Fill	Fill of wall foundation trench 113. Red/brown sandy clay	Fill of 113; below 101, above 113	



115	Layer	Subsoil or natural layer of grey/brown clay, with infrequent pieces of stone building rubble	Cut by 111, 113; above 119	
116	Layer	Concrete yard surface, at east end of area. 0.15m -0.2m thick	Below 100, above 117	
117	Layer	Bedding layer of sand and gravel	Below 116, above 118	
118	Layer	Limestone rubble in NE corner of area, in a clay matrix	Below 117, above 101	
119	Layer	Undisturbed natural blue/brown clay, 1.2m below ground level	Below 115	

## APPENDIX 2

### Post-Medieval Pottery and Tile from Woolsthorpe Manor (NTW00) Archive Report by C. Angus

An assemblage of pottery and tile was recovered during a watching brief in the farmyard of Woolsthorpe Manor. This assemblage consisted of post-medieval pottery and tile.

#### Pottery

A total of 140 sherds of pottery representing 122 vessels was recorded. The assemblage consisted of both table and kitchen wares. This material was all recovered from a single context 101, a make-up layer.

Table 1: Pottery by Code Name

Codename	Full Name	Period	No of sherds	No of vessels
BERTH	Brown glazed earthenware	pmed	1	1
BL	Black-glazed wares	pmed	10	10
CRMWARE	Creamware	emod	8	8
LERTH	Late earthenwares	pmed	1	1
LPM	Late Post-Medieval wares	emod	96	87
LSTON	Late stoneware	emod	14	10
PORC	Porcelain	pmed- emod	4	3
SLIP	Unidentified slipware	pmed	6	2

The kitchen wares included black-glazed ware bowls, jam jars, slipware bowls and earthenware storage jugs.

The fine tablewares includes a few sherds of porcelain together with creamware vessels and post-medieval wares with transfer decoration. A number of sets were represented in the assemblage, one of which was a tea set with grey and white transfer decoration.

The majority of the pottery dates to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, although a number of sherds are from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

#### Tile

Only two fragments of tile were recovered. These were both pantiles dating to the post-medieval period.

#### Condition

The majority of the material is in a good condition, with many of the breaks occurring during machining for the new development. The glaze of many of the black-glazed ware bowls has been worn through constant use of the vessels.

#### Statement of Potential

This assemblage represents both kitchen and tableware dating from the seventeenth century to the twentieth century. As the assemblage was found within the grounds of the Manor House, it can be assumed that this material was used in the house, and subsequently been discarded as part of a rubbish dump.

#### Storage and Curation

This assemblage should be retained for future study, although no further work is necessary at the moment.

Claire D Angus  
Lindsey Archaeological Services

# pottery archive ntw00

Jane Young, Claire Angus, Lindsey Archaeological Services

context	cname	form type	sherds	vessels	decoration	part	description	date
101	BERTH	large bowl	1	1		rim	large frag; internal ware marks form use	18/19th
101	BL	bowl	1	1		rim	worn glaze; large frag; int glaze	
101	BL	bowl	1	1		rim		
101	BL	large bowl	1	1		base	large frag; worn through use; glaze int	
101	BL	bowl	1	1		BS	int glaze	
101	BL	bowl	1	1		BS	int glaze	
101	BL	bowl	1	1		base	int glaze	
101	BL	bowl	1	1		base	int glaze	
101	BL	bowl	1	1		rim	worn int; int glaze	
101	BL	bowl	1	1		rim	worn int; int glaze	
101	BL	bowl	1	1		rim	worn int; int glaze	
101	CRMWARE	hollow	1	1		rim		
101	CRMWARE	hollow	1	1		BS		
101	CRMWARE	?	1	1		BS		
101	CRMWARE	flat	1	1	press moulded dec around rim	rim		
101	CRMWARE	?	1	1		BS		
101	CRMWARE	bowl/dish	1	1		base		
101	CRMWARE	bowl/dish	1	1		rim		
101	CRMWARE	hollow	1	1		BS		
101	LERTH	bowl	1	1		rim	Fe adhered	
101	LPM	bowl/dish	1	1	blue & white transfer dec; blue bird on ext surface	rim		
101	LPM	bowl/dish	1	1	blue & white transfer dec; blue bird on ext surface	rim		
101	LPM	?cup	1	1	blue & white transfer dec; blue bird on ext surface	rim		
101	LPM	flat	1	1	blue & white transfer dec; blue bird on ext surface	rim		
101	LPM	hollow	1	1	int & ext blue & white transfer dec	BS		





context	cname	form type	sherds	vessels	decoration	part	description	date
101	LPM	flat	1	1	blue & white transfer dec	rim		
101	LPM	plate	1	1	grey & white transfer	rim		
101	LPM	plate	1	1	grey & white transfer	rim		
101	LPM	jug/pitcher	1	1	brown transfer dec	handle		
101	LPM	plate	1	1	grey & white transfer	rim to base		
101	LPM	plate	1	1	grey & white transfer	base		
101	LPM	plate	1	1	grey & white transfer	base	'premier' on base	
101	LPM	flat	1	1	blue & white transfer dec	base	large frag	
101	LPM	bowl/dish	2	1	blue & white transfer dec	rim to base		
101	LPM	bowl/dish	1	1	blue & white transfer dec	rim		
101	LPM	cup	1	1	grey & white transfer	BS		
101	LPM	flat	1	1		BS		
101	LPM	hollow	1	1		BS		
101	LPM	flat	1	1	blue & white banded transfer dec	base	small frag	
101	LPM	?	1	1		handle		
101	LPM	jar	1	1	blue & white transfer dec	base		
101	LPM	flat	1	1		rim		
101	LPM	hollow	1	1		rim		
101	LPM	flat	1	1		BS		
101	LPM	flat	1	1		BS		
101	LPM	flat	1	1		BS		
101	LPM	flat	1	1		BS		
101	LPM	flat	1	1		BS		
101	LPM	?	2	1		BS		
101	LPM	flat	1	1		BS		
101	LPM	flat	1	1	crest with lion on left; DIEU E written below	base		
101	LPM	?	1	1		BS		
101	LPM	?	1	1		BS		
101	LPM	?	1	1		BS		
101	LPM	?	1	1		BS		
101	LPM	?	1	1		BS		
101	LPM	hollow	1	1		BS		

context	cname	form type	sherds	vessels	decoration	part	description	date
101	LPM	hollow	1	1		BS		
101	LPM	hollow	1	1		BS		
101	LPM	hollow	1	1	green transfer	BS		
101	LPM	bowl/dish	2	1		BS		
101	LPM	flat	1	1		BS		
101	LPM	flat	1	1	green transfer print	rim		
101	LPM	hollow	1	1	blue & white transfer print	BS		
101	LPM	dish	1	1	gilt	rim		
101	LPM	bowl/dish	1	1	brown transfer dec	rim		
101	LPM	bowl/dish	1	1	brown transfer dec	rim		
101	LPM	chamber pot	1	1	brown transfer dec	BS		
101	LPM	chamber pot	1	1	brown transfer dec	BS		
101	LPM	bowl/dish	1	1		rim		
101	LPM	plate	2	1	green transfer print	rim	large frag	
101	LPM	hollow	1	1		hadnle join		
101	LPM	pedestal base	1	1		base	?egg cup	
101	LPM	teapot	2	1	moulded dec on spout	rim & spout	brown glazed stoneware	
101	LPM	bowl	1	1		rim	large frag; yellow glaze; 8.5cm tall	
101	LPM	bowl/dish	2	1	blue transfer print	rim & BS		
101	LPM	hollow	2	1	green & pink overglazed paint	BS		
101	LPM	hollow	1	1	pink lustre & gilt	BS		
101	LPM	dish	1	1	gilt decoration	rim to base		
101	LPM	dish	1	1	gilt decoration	rim		
101	LPM	dish	1	1	gilt decoration	rim		
101	LSTON	jar	1	1		rim		
101	LSTON	bowl	4	1	press moulded dec	rim	large frags	
101	LSTON	pitcher	2	1		BS	jug for spirits	
101	LSTON	jar/jug	1	1		BS	small frag	
101	LSTON	flat	1	1		base		
101	LSTON	jug	1	1		BS	'CHARLES' wine & spirit STAM' in moulded writing on front	
101	LSTON	jam jar	1	1		rim		
101	LSTON	jam jar	1	1		BS		



context	cname	form type	sherds	vessels	decoration	part	description	date
101	LSTON	jam jar	1	1		BS		
101	LSTON	jam jar	1	1		BS		
101	PORC	?candlestick holder	1	1	gilt & overglaze paint	rim	small broken handle attached	
101	PORC	hollow	1	1	gilt & overglaze paint	?rim or base		
101	PORC	?	2	1		base & BS		
101	SLIP	jar/bowl	2	1		handle join & BS	brown	
101	SLIP	large bowl	4	1		BS, base & 2x rim	worn; red body with white slip	

# tile archive ntw00

Jane Young Claire Angus, Lindsey Archaeological Services

context	cname	full name	period	frags
101	PANT	Pantile	pmed	1
101	PANT	Pantile	pmed	1

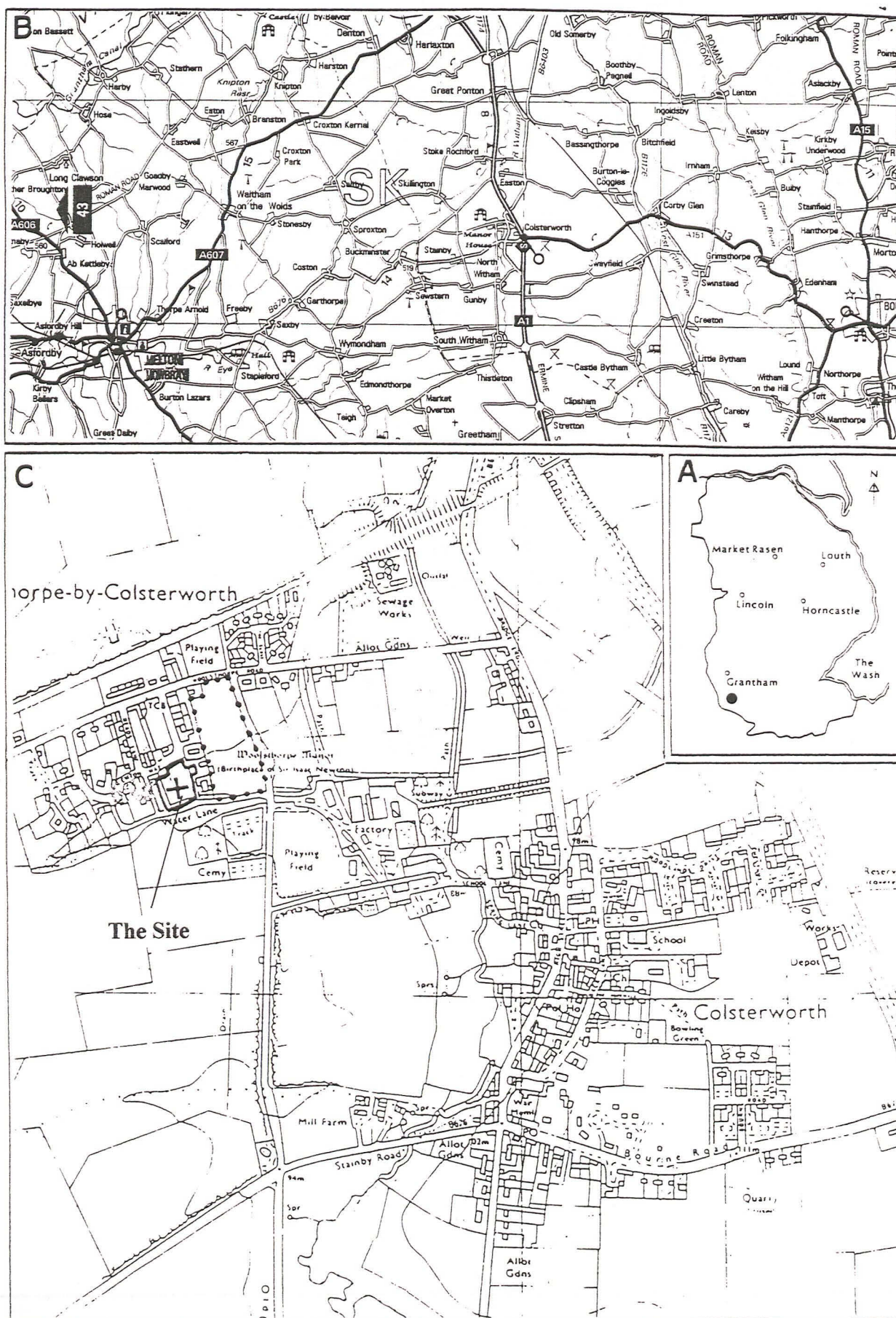
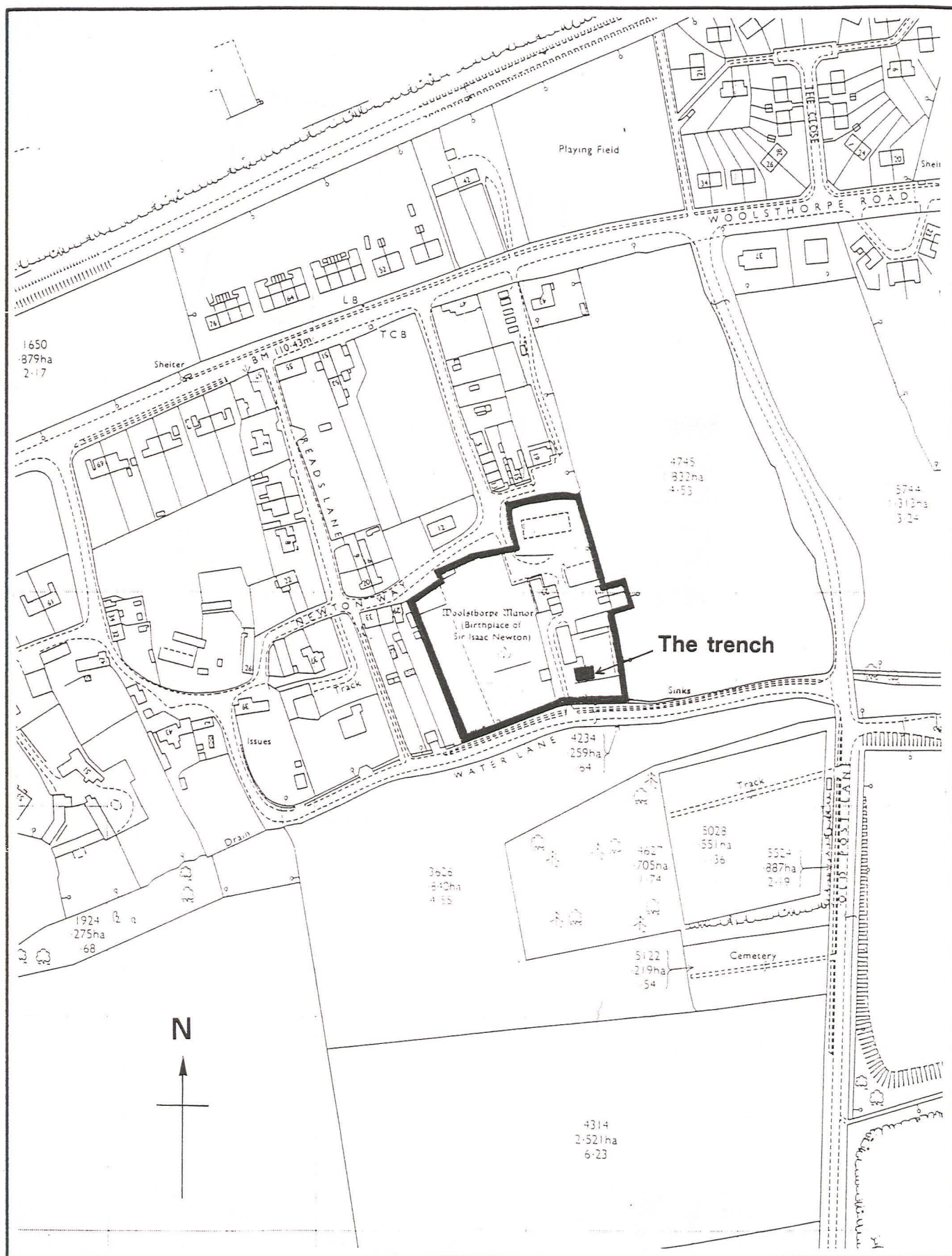


Fig. 1 Location of Woolsthorpe Manor (C based on the 1:10,000 Ordnance Survey map SK 92SW. © Crown copyright, reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Licence No. AL50424A).





**Fig. 2** Position of the monitored development, Woolsthorpe Manor (based on the 1:2,500 Ordnance Survey map. © Crown copyright, reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Licence No. AL50424A).

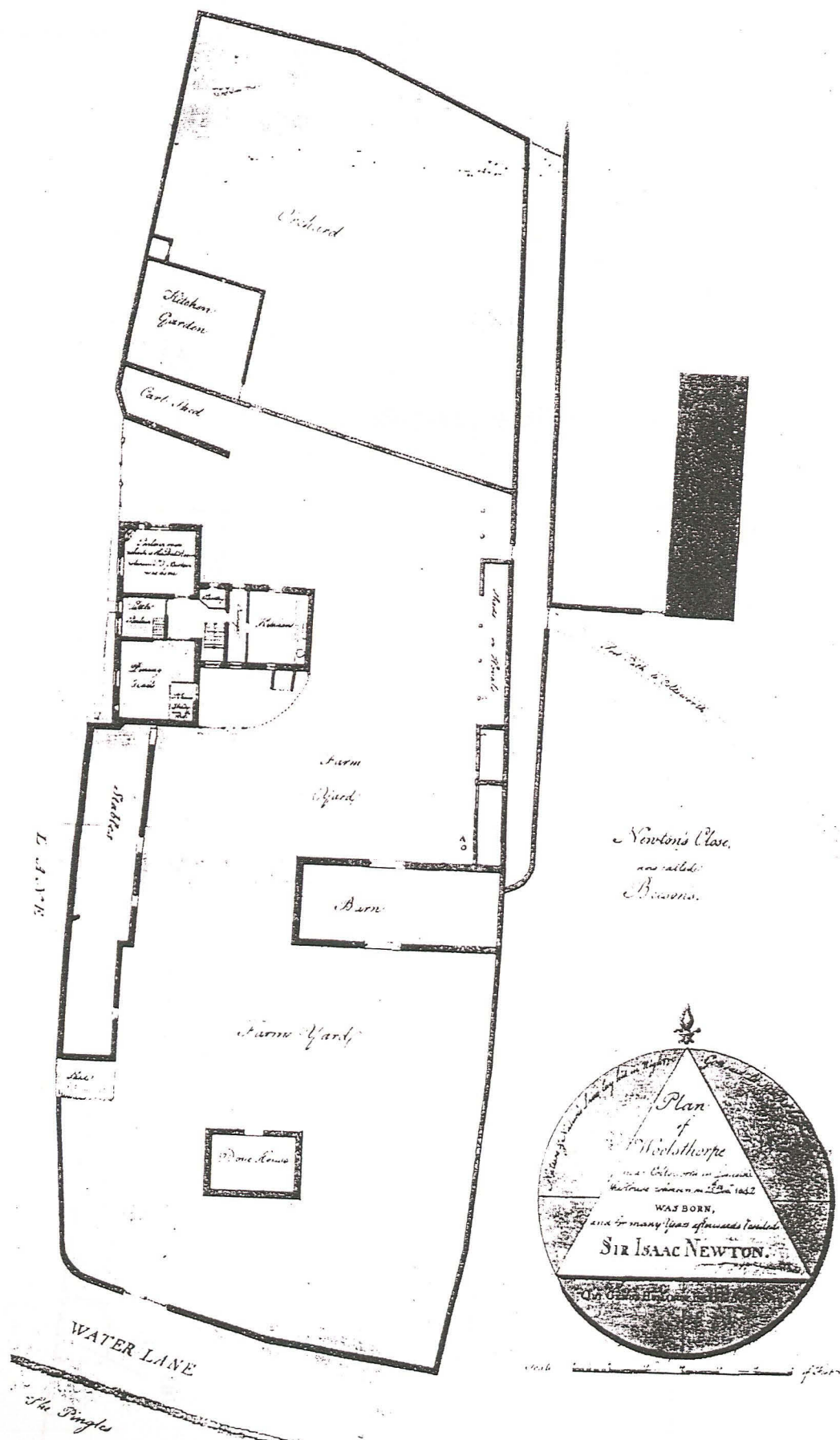


Fig. 3 Plan of Woolsthorpe Manor, 1797, by J.C. Barrows. The new development occupies the site of the Dove House, and extends slightly further east. The stone boundary wall occupies the position of the southern dovecote wall.

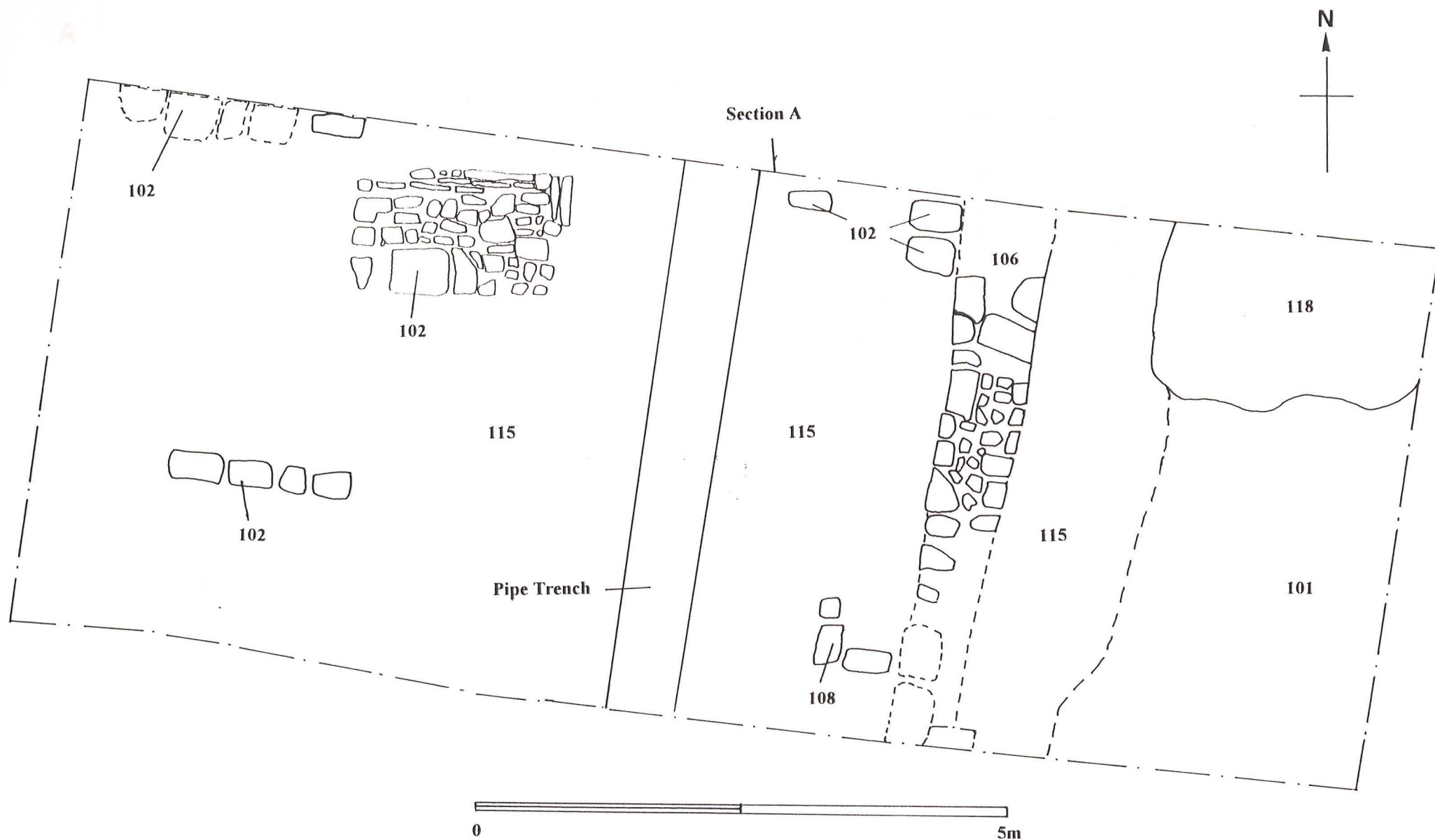
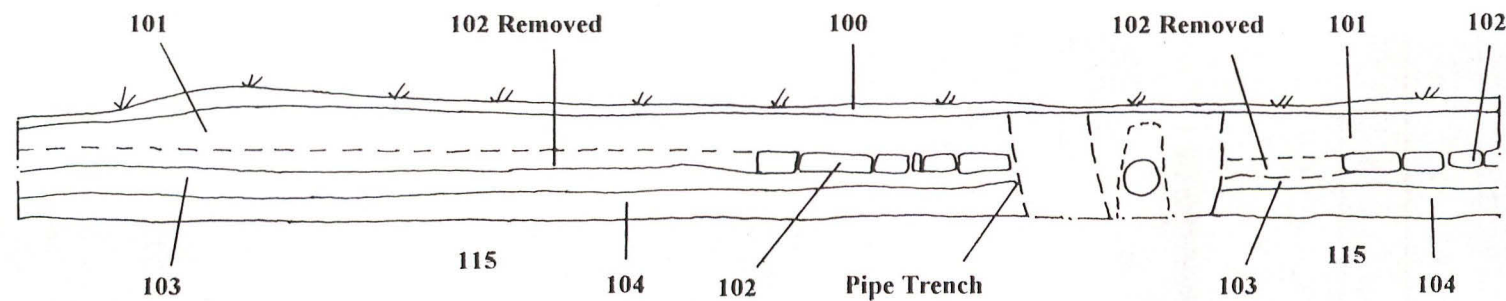


Fig. 4 Plan of the monitored development, showing archaeological features (McDaid, after Angus).



A

W



E

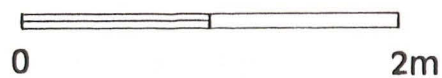
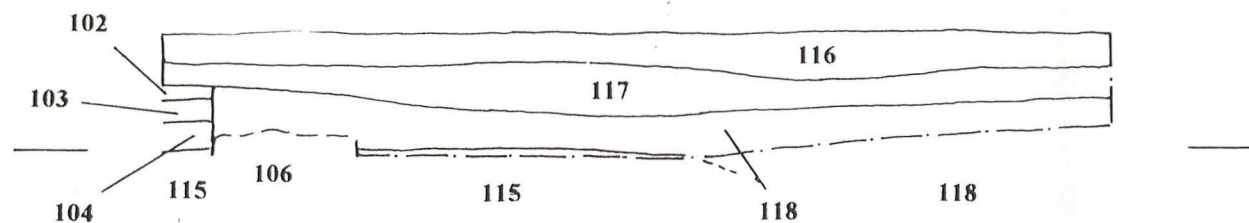


Fig. 5 Section along the northern side of the monitored area, showing archaeological deposits (McDaid after Angus).





**Pl. 1** Site of the new toilet block, prior to groundworks. Note the junction between the stone boundary wall and the breeze block wall, coinciding with the limit of the concrete yard area (looking SE).

**Pl. 2** The stone threshing barn and other outbuildings beside the concrete yard, NE of the toilet block site.







**Pl. 3** Standing water obscuring the excavated site of the new toilet block (looking south).

**Pl. 4** Position of the monitored groundworks within the former farmyard (looking NE).







**Pl. 5** Limestone rubble spread 118 at the eastern end of the excavated area, below the concrete yard surface (looking NE).

**Pl. 6** Western end of the new toilet block site, after excavation (looking SW). The void left in the fabric at the base of the stone boundary wall at its western end may indicate the position of a demolished return wall, but no sign of this was identified in the trench.







**Pl. 7** Detail of pitched stone surface 102, possibly a floor within the demolished dovecote (scale 1m).

**Pl. 8** Stone floor 102, bedded onto mortar and clayey sand layer 103 (scales 1m and 0.5m).





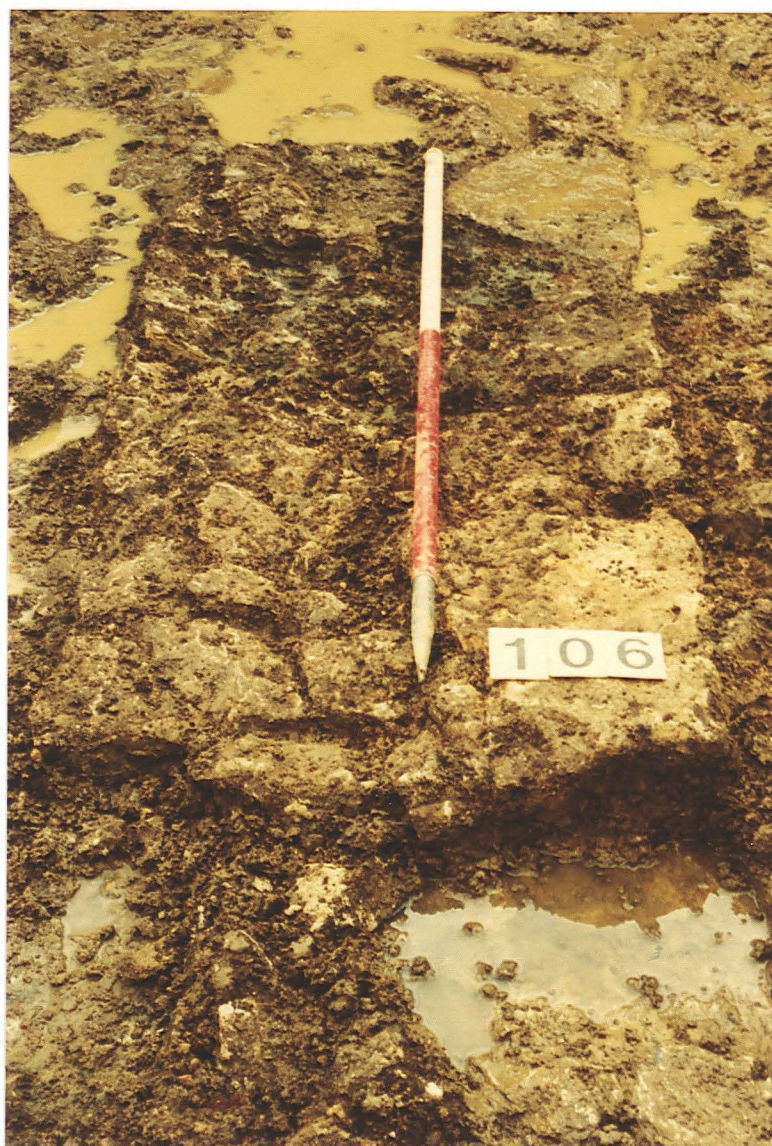


Pl. 9 Floor bedding layer 103 (scales 1m and 0.5m).

Pl. 10 Wall foundation 106, probably the east wall of the demolished dovecote. The foundation may be contemporary with the upstanding stone boundary wall (looking south, scale 1m).







**Pl. 11 Detail of stone foundation 106 (scale 1m).**