

# PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

L I N C O L N

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
WATCHING BRIEF REPORT;  
CHURCH STREET,  
BILLINGHAY, LINCOLNSHIRE**

NGR: TF 1567 5498  
SITE CODE: CSB01  
LCNCC ACC. NO. 2001.44  
Planning ref: N 09/0260/00







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Boston City Council  
Boston, MA

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Report prepared for  
Ploughsound Ltd.  
by Chris Clay  
April 2001

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(looking south-west)**

**Plate 2: Shot of access road, looking south-south-west**

### *Summary*

- *An archaeological watching brief was undertaken in February 2001 during the groundworks for an access road and services associated with a residential development on land off Church Street, Billingham.*
- *The site is adjacent to the parish church and within the core of the medieval settlement. However, no archaeological deposits were exposed, possibly having been disturbed by a school building which formerly occupied the site.*



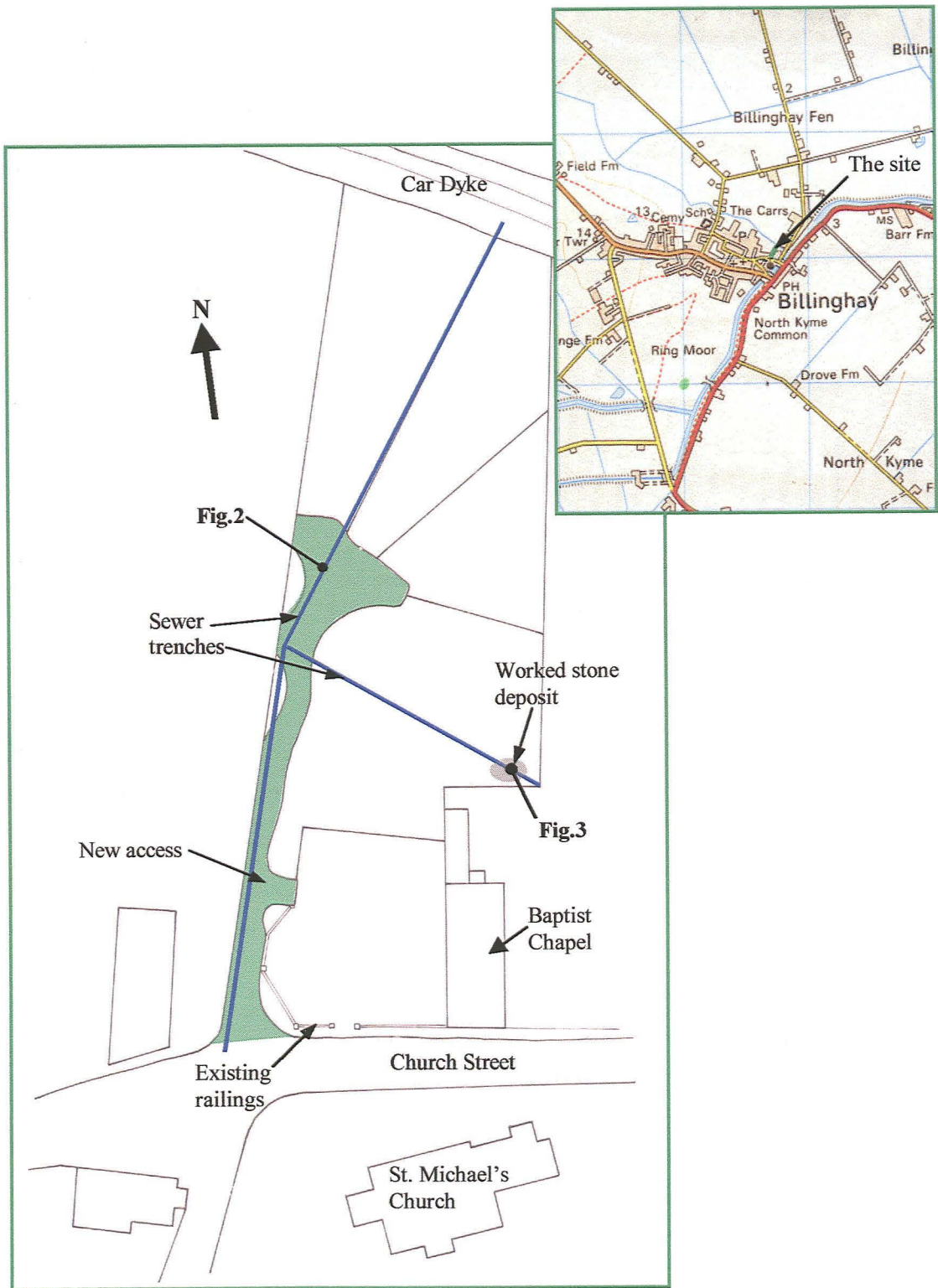


Fig.1: Site location, showing areas monitored (scale 1:1000, inset 1:50,000)

## **1.0 Introduction**

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) were commissioned by Ploughsound Ltd. to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks for an access road and services on land off Church Street, Billingham. This was undertaken to fulfil a planning requirement issued by North Kesteven District Council.

This report details the results of the fieldwork. It is written to conform to a project brief supplied by the North Kesteven Heritage Officer, and to both national and local guidelines, as set out in the Lincolnshire County Council document *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: A Manual of Archaeological Practice* (LCC, 1998).

## **2.0 Site location and description**

Billingham is situated on the western edge of the Lincolnshire fens, in the administrative district of North Kesteven. It is approximately 22km south-east of Lincoln and 7km north-east of Ruskington.

The site is a sub-rectangular block of land on the eastern edge of the village, bounded by Church Street to the south and the Car Dyke to the north (fig.1). It centres on NGR TF 1567 5498 and is a brownfield site, formerly occupied by a brick built school building. The site is generally flat, and it is covered by large amounts of brick and other building debris from the demolition of the school, as well as substantial areas of in situ concrete and tarmac.

The local geology is characterised by glaciofluvial deposits of sand and gravel, overlying Jurassic deposits of the Ancholme group (BGS, 1995).

## **3.0 Planning background**

Planning permission was granted for the erection of six dwellings, with an associated access road and services (planning ref N 09/0260/00). The permission was granted subject to the undertaking of an archaeological watching brief on all groundworks. This report relates only to the site access and sewer construction, as the house plots themselves were developed by a separate company.

## **4.0 Archaeological and historical background**

Information held in the County Sites and Monuments Record for Lincolnshire indicates prehistoric activity within the parish of Billingham. A settlement plan has not been recorded, but there have been a number of isolated finds, including a Late Bronze Age socketed axe, three Bronze Age swords, a polished stone axe, a Bronze



Age beaker, a flint axe head and several dug out canoes; discovered on the river between Billingham and North Kyme.

Romano-British activity is also represented in the area, and a Roman cemetery is tentatively suggested by occasional finds of bones and cremation urns to the west of the village; a further ten skeletons were found in a gravel pit north of the village, associated with Romano-British pottery. A single coin of the emperor Constans (AD337-50) was also recovered from the village area.

The northern boundary of the site is defined by the Car Dyke, a major artificial Roman waterway connecting the Nene and Witham.

Direct evidence of settlement in the Saxon period is not known, although the place name is believed to derive from the Old English meaning 'island in the marsh of a man called Billa' (Mills, 1993). It has been suggested that the village name may refer to the Billingas, a regional/family subdivision of the Mercian kingdom referred to in the seventh century AD Tribal Hidage (Sawyer 1998). By the time that the Domesday Book was compiled, the area had passed into the lordship of the Archbishop of York (Morgan & Thorne, 1986).

The current site lies within the core of the medieval settlement, adjacent to the parish church of St. Michael. The fabric of this church is largely 14<sup>th</sup> century with considerable rebuilding in the nineteenth century (Pevsner & Harris, 1989).

## 5.0 Methodology

The sewer trenches were excavated using a 360 degree mechanical excavator fitted with a 0.8m wide toothed trenching bucket. The access road was excavated with a 1.6m wide smooth bucket.

During excavation, all plan and section surfaces were examined and periodically cleaned to clarify the shape/orientation of archaeological features. Representative sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20, and information was recorded on standard watching brief record sheets. A colour photographic record was also maintained. The work was carried out by Mark Allen and Chris Clay of PCA between the 8th and 21st of February 2001.

## 6.0 Results

Initially, the main sewer trench was excavated. This ran from Church Street along the western edge of the site, turning to the north-east approximately 65m north of Church Street, with an overflow running into the Car Dyke at the north end of the site. Excavation began at the north end, working towards Church Street. The trench was 0.8 - 1m wide and varied in depth from 0.5m at the north end to over 2m deep at the junction with Church Street. The depth of this trench required the use of reinforced

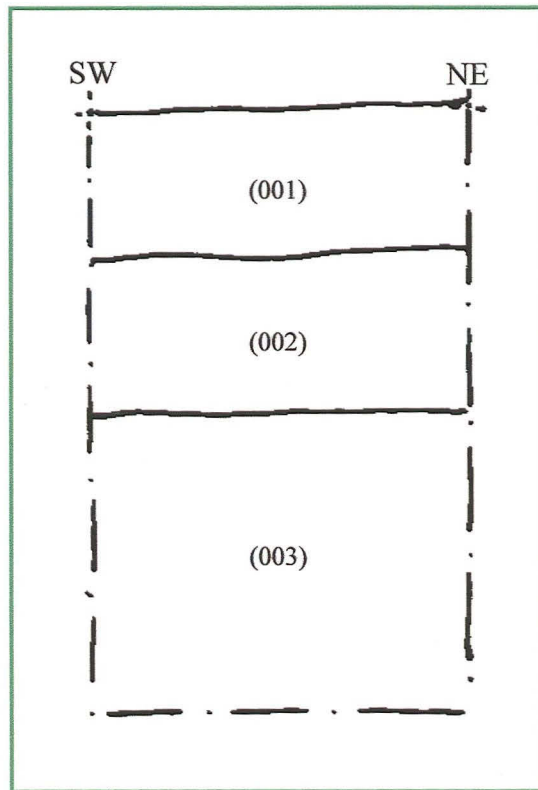


Fig.2: Representative section in sewer trench (Scale 1:20)

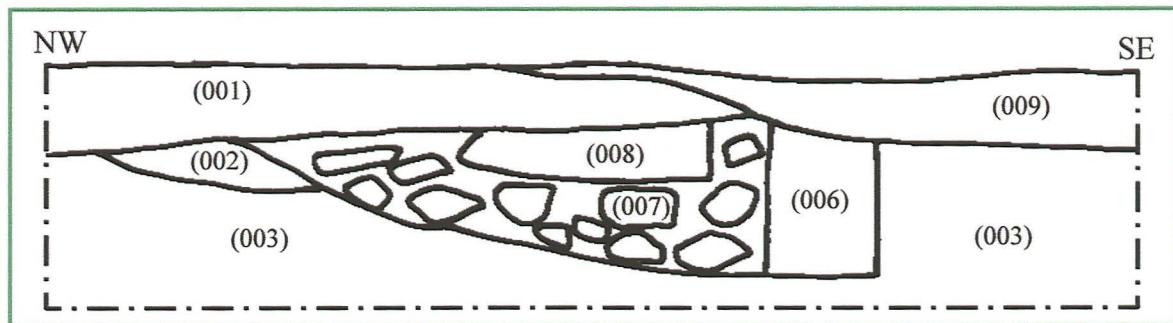


Fig.3: Limestone rubble deposit in sewer trench (Scale 1:20)



steel boxes for safety purposes at the southern end of the site, making it difficult to scan for archaeological features and deposits.

The uppermost deposit in the sewer trench, (001), was a very dark grey silty sand, approximately 0.6m deep. It contained large amounts of brick, concrete and other building debris, from the demolition of the school. It overlay a layer of dark grey silty sand, (002), varying between 0.2 and 0.5m deep, and possibly representing a buried topsoil. Beneath this, extending to the limit of excavation, was the natural geology, consisting of a slightly silty orange sand with small amounts of gravel, (003). No archaeological features were exposed in this trench (representative section; fig.2).

An area was stripped along the western edge of the site, to accommodate the access road. This was excavated to a depth of 0.4m, running northwards from Church Street. The first 8m exposed large amounts of brick rubble, roof tile and small amounts of roughly dressed limestone (004). Beyond this, the deposits changed to dark grey silty sand with smaller amounts of brick and tile rubble (005). Again, no archaeological features were exposed.

One subsidiary sewer trench was monitored, running south-east from the main sewer (fig. 1). This was approximately 0.8m wide and a maximum of 1m deep. The stratigraphy was largely the same as that in the main sewer trench. However, at the south-east end of the trench a deposit of large limestone chunks was exposed, (007) (fig.3). Several of these chunks appeared to be dressed. This deposit is undated; however, a number of limestone fragments had white paint and window putty on them, suggesting that they were from a relatively modern building, probably the former school, which is believed to have been of 19th century construction.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

No archaeological features or artefacts of significance were exposed during this watching brief. The location of the site, within the core of the medieval village, and adjacent to the church, would suggest that some form of archaeological activity would be expected. It may be that construction works associated with the former school building, and the subsequent demolition of the structure, has obliterated any earlier settlement evidence. A watching brief on building plots 1 and 4 also failed to locate any significant archaeological remains (Clay, 2001), and therefore it can be stated with confidence that the site has a very low archaeological potential.

## **8.0 Effectiveness of methodology**

The methodology chosen was appropriate to the development. A more intensive form of archaeological investigation was not required, as this development has had no impact on the archaeological resource of the area.

## 9.0 Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) would like to thank Ploughsound Ltd. for this commission and for their cooperation during the groundworks.

## 10.0 References

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## 11.0 Site archive

The primary records for this investigation are currently in the possession of Pre-Construct Archaeology. They will be deposited at Lincoln City and County Museum within six months. Access to the archive may be gained by quoting the global accession number 2001.44.



## 12.0 Appendices

### 12.1 Colour plates



**Plate 1:** General view of the site, showing excavation of the main sewer trench (looking south-west)



**Plate 2:** Shot of access road, looking south-south-west

**12.2 List of archaeological contexts**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>
001	Rubble/demolition deposit
002	Buried topsoil
003	Natural
004	Rubble deposit in access road
005	Rubble deposit in access road
006	Brick wall of former school
007	Deposit of limestone blocks
008	Concrete raft
009	Topsoil (garden soil)