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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

Middle Rasen, Church Street

NGR: TF 0882 8945

Site Code: MRCS00

LCNCC Museum Accn. No.: 2000.117

WLDC Planning Application: 99/P/0394

Archaeological Watching Brief

Report prepared for

Graeme Preston Architects

(on behalf of Havelok Housing Association)

by G. Tann and C. Angus

LAS Report No. 478

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Middle Rasen, Church Street Archaeological Watching Brief

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Summary

Medieval and post-medieval remains were revealed during groundworks at Church Street, Middle Rasen. A shallow depression, interpreted as a possible medieval rubbish pit, was identified at the south-east corner of the site, through which two later postholes had been inserted, possibly forming part of a fenceline. In addition, two deposits are thought to be natural fills within a former stream channel.

Introduction

Lindsey Archaeological Services was commissioned in March 2000 by Graeme Preston Architects (on behalf of Havelok Housing Association) to conduct an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for three bungalows, on a building plot to the east of Church Street (Figs. 1 and 2). The watching brief was required to satisfy Condition 7 of the planning permission granted by West Lindsey District Council. The watching brief was conducted according to the general requirements set out in the *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook* (Lincolnshire County Council, Archaeology Section, 1998).

Monitoring was conducted by Geoff Tann on three consecutive days (28th - 30th March 2000) during excavation of a level surface for the foundations. Three further visits were made by Claire Angus (twice on 12th July, and on 13th July 2000) to monitor excavation of a trench within a new access linking the properties to services on Church Street.

Site Location and Description

The plot is located on the east side of Church Street, Middle Rasen, 80m south of the parish church (St. Peter), and 80m north of the River Rase. The River Rase is joined by Brimmer Beck to the east of the site. A church hall had previously stood on the plot, but this had been cleared before monitoring began.

Access to the site is from Church Street, between an existing bungalow (to the north) and an existing bungalow block to the south, set back from the road. A public footpath runs alongside the southern edge of the development site, linking with a path along the bank of Brimmer Beck.

Archaeological Background

Middle Rasen is mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086, and its origins appear to lie in the Anglo-Saxon period. At that time it was divided between two ecclesiastical parishes and two townships, and this is reflected in the layout of the village. The development site lies in the former parish of Middle Rasen Tupholme, at the southern end of this settlement. The site lies close to the

church and adjacent to the River Rase, and may be within the early medieval core of the settlement.

The Watching Brief (Fig. 3)

Method

The footprint of the three-bungalow block was excavated with a JCB. Monitoring began when the southern third of the bungalow area had been lowered to the required level. The remainder of the building footprint was monitored in good weather conditions. A photographic record was made of the features seen, and context numbers were assigned by LAS for recording purposes (Appendix 1). These context numbers are used on the plan and sections.

The Bungalow Block

The bungalow block was positioned to the south of the building plot, close to an existing, but recent, hedgeline which separated this development from existing bungalows (Pl. 1).

The dark grey loamy silt topsoil **1** was distinguishable only to the west of the foundation area, where it was between 0.15m and 0.4m thick, and near the NE corner where it was 0.25m thick. Along the eastern edge of the site, only a single grey sandy loam deposit **2** could be identified. In the SE corner, this layer was at least 0.65m thick, increasing to at least 0.9m thick in the NE corner (Pl. 2). A fragment of fired clay was seen in the excavation edge, 0.65m below the modern ground surface, and a small piece of limestone was noted 0.4m deep. The same deposit was visible at the base of the stripped foundation, extending 1.7m from the SE corner, but increasing to about 6m along the southern side. Layer **2** was interpreted as an alluvial deposit, filling a former stream terrace to the west of the present Brimmer Beck. It contained five sherds of medieval and post-medieval pottery (Appendix 2).

Layer **2** varied in thickness from 0.5m to 0.8m thick, overlying yellow sand **3**, which became paler towards the west. This deposit also appeared to be the natural fill of a stream channel.

Close to the southern side of the foundation area, a deposit of burnt clay **4** was seen at the foundation base, 0.8m below the ground surface (Pls. 3 and 4). Overlying material had already been removed, and it was no longer possible to determine from what level this feature had been excavated. The clay formed an almost circular area, 0.45m diameter, with a soil-filled hole **9**, 0.1m diameter, in the centre. The SE quadrant of the clay was dark red/brown **7**, with the remainder yellow **8** (Pl. 5). This feature was tentatively interpreted as a post-hole **4**, with redeposited clay used as packing around a small diameter post. The interpretation remains uncertain, however, because the clay appeared to have been burnt *in situ*, 0.8m below the modern ground surface, constrained within a circular confine.

A second post-hole **5** was found 0.3m to the north. This was less well-defined, but was 0.2m diameter, within a small area of yellow clay **10**. Its surviving depth was about 0.12m, and it contained small pieces of animal bone.

Both features 4 and 5 were within a shallow irregular depression 6, filled with discoloured sand 11 and flecks of charcoal and fired clay.

The depression 6 did not seem to be a rubbish pit, but that interpretation would fit best with the depth and fill found at its base. Assuming it to have been dug as a rubbish pit, amongst the first debris to be tipped in was the base of a hearth, together with other burnt material from its environs. At a later date, presumably fortuitously, two stakes 4 and 5 were erected across the backfilled pit, possibly as part of a fenceline of which no other trace was identified.

Access Road and Service Trenches

The access road was excavated to a depth of 0.5m adjacent to the bungalow block, becoming gradually shallower towards Church Street (Pl. 6). Two service trenches were dug within this stripped area, one to a depth of 0.15m and another on a similar course to a depth of about 0.4m. A single dark grey loamy silt deposit, similar to 1 and interpreted as topsoil, was identified across this area. No archaeological features were revealed here.

Conclusion

The earliest feature found on this site was interpreted as the base of a medieval rubbish pit; two post-holes were also identified. This is evidence of ephemeral activity on the site, and indicates occupation near to, but not within, this site.

The development site is positioned on land to the rear of the medieval crofts fronting onto Church Street. This ground is likely to have been within a medieval open field, or been used as water meadow alongside the streams. There was no evidence of medieval ridge and furrow cultivation within the bungalow plot, but the watching brief gave no indication that land behind the modern street frontage had been developed in the past.

The depths of alluvium on the site, with the underlying sand deposits, suggest that the River Rase and Brimmer Beck occupy part of the channels of much larger watercourses, which transported large volumes of light material when in flood.

Acknowledgements

LAS is grateful to Graeme Preston Architects, and the team on site, for the co-operation received during the project. Help was also received from the Lincolnshire County Council Built Environment Team. Illustrations for this report were prepared by Claire Angus and Mark Williams, and the report was collated and produced by Jane Frost.

Geoff Tann and Claire D. Angus
Lindsey Archaeological Services
30th November 2000

Archive Summary

Archaeological finds: pottery and animal bones

Developer's plans and annotated copies

Field plan and section drawings

Photographs: LAS colour print film nos. 00/37/0-15,30; 00/66/21-23 (including those used in this report).

Correspondence

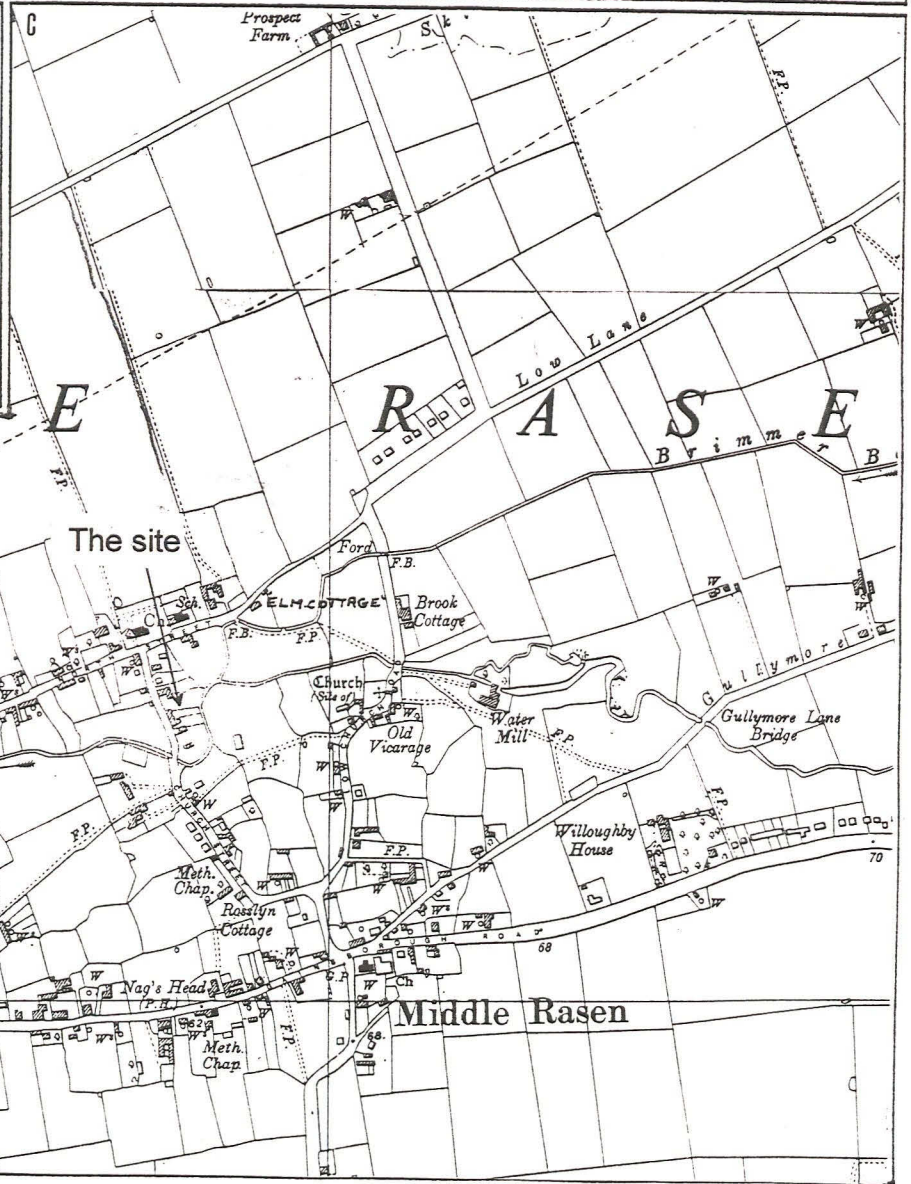
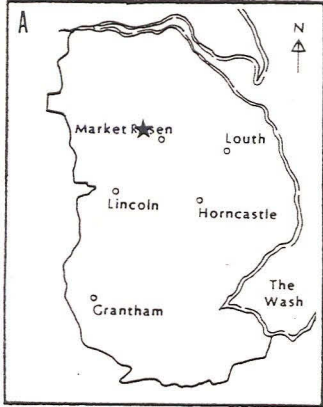
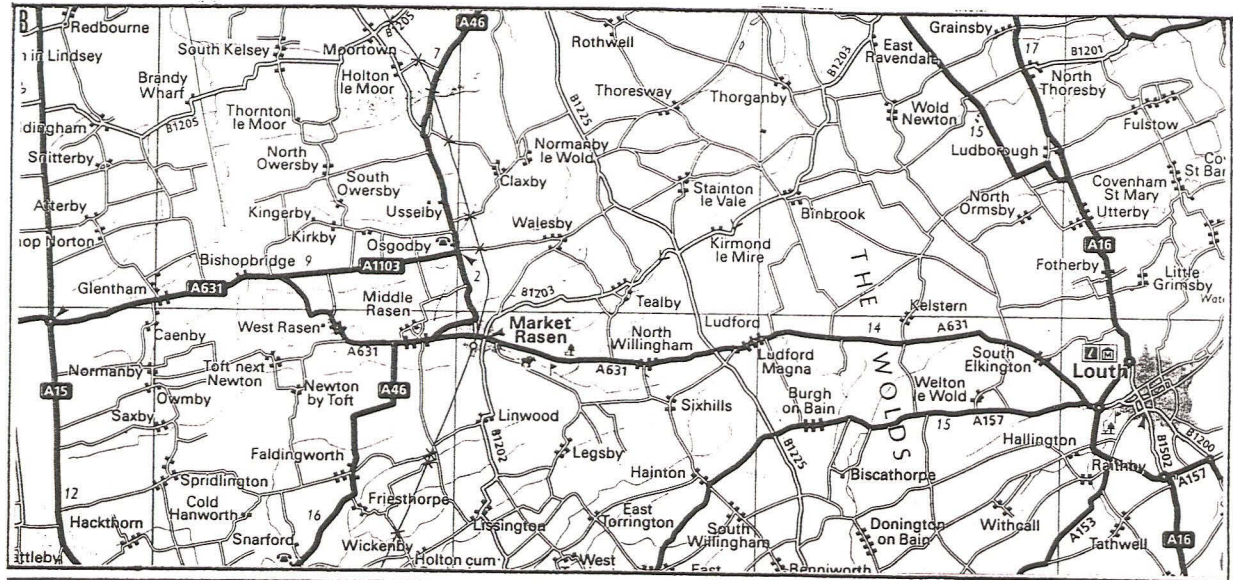


Fig. 1 Location of Church Street, Middle Rasen (C based on the 1956 Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map sheet TF 08NE. © Crown Copyright, reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Licence No. AL 50424A).

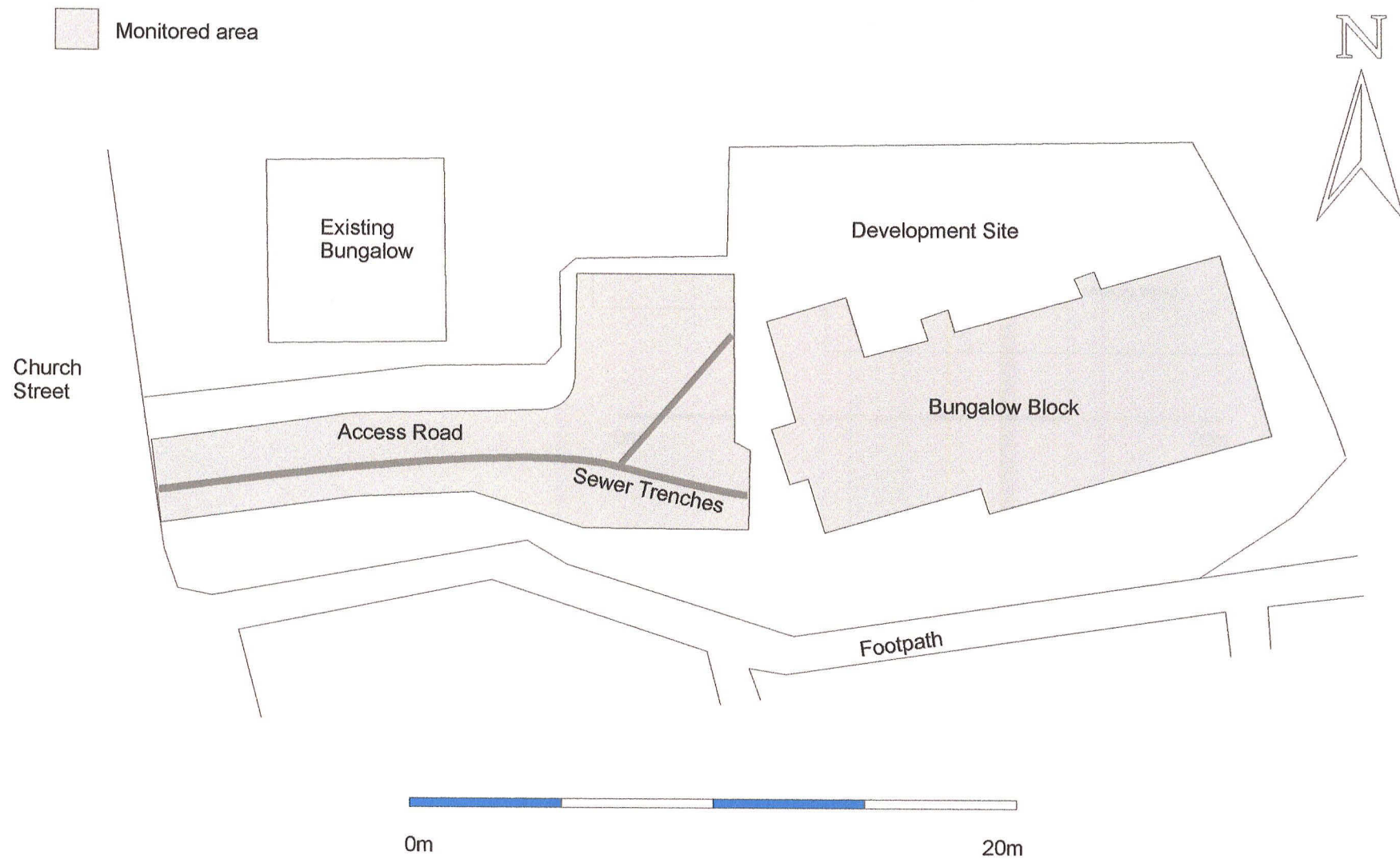


Fig. 2 Plan of monitored development site (based on dwg. no. P120/1, provided by the client).

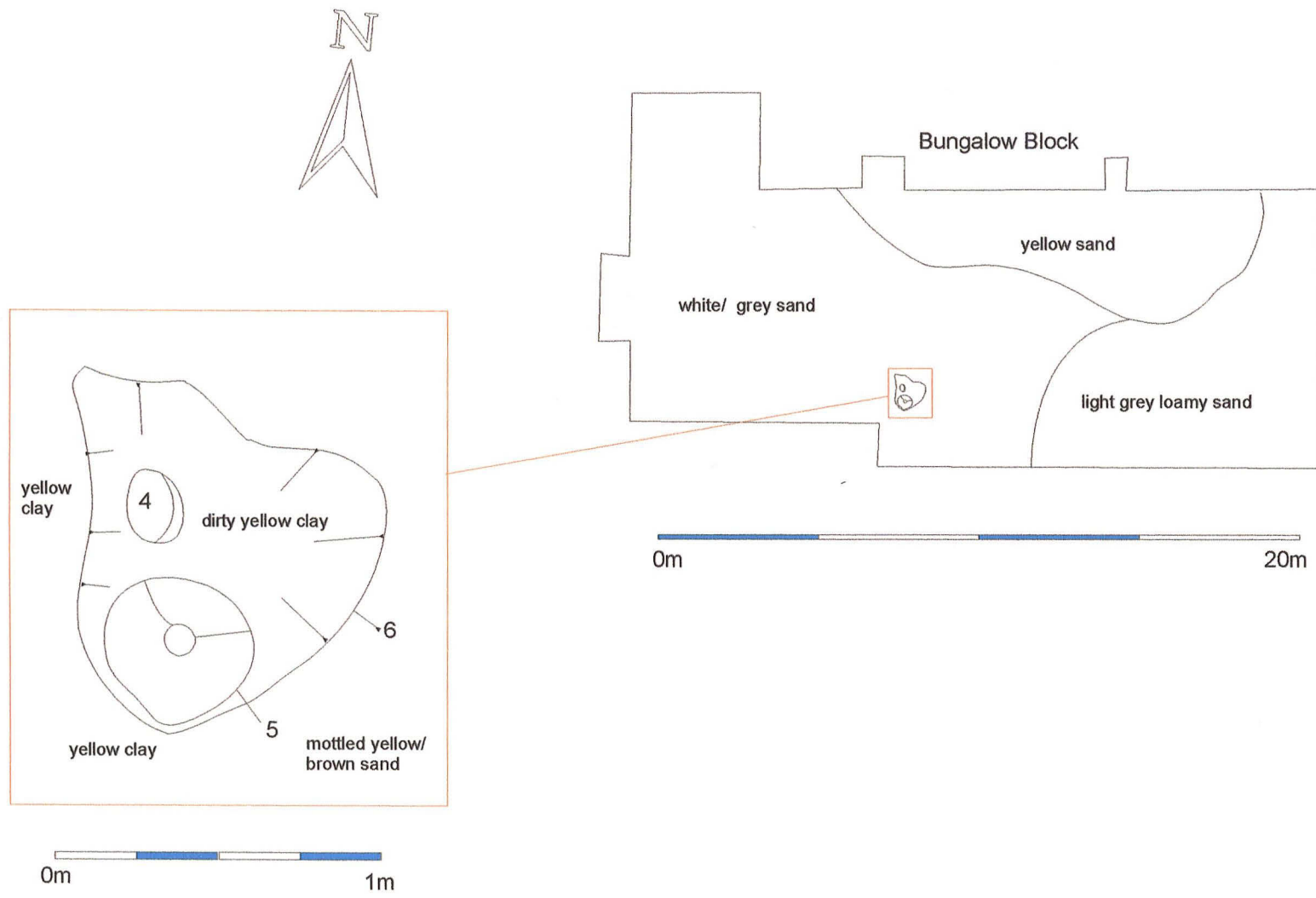


Fig. 3 Plan of the bungalow block area, showing deposits and archaeological features, with inset plan of features 4, 5 and 6 (Williams, after Tann).



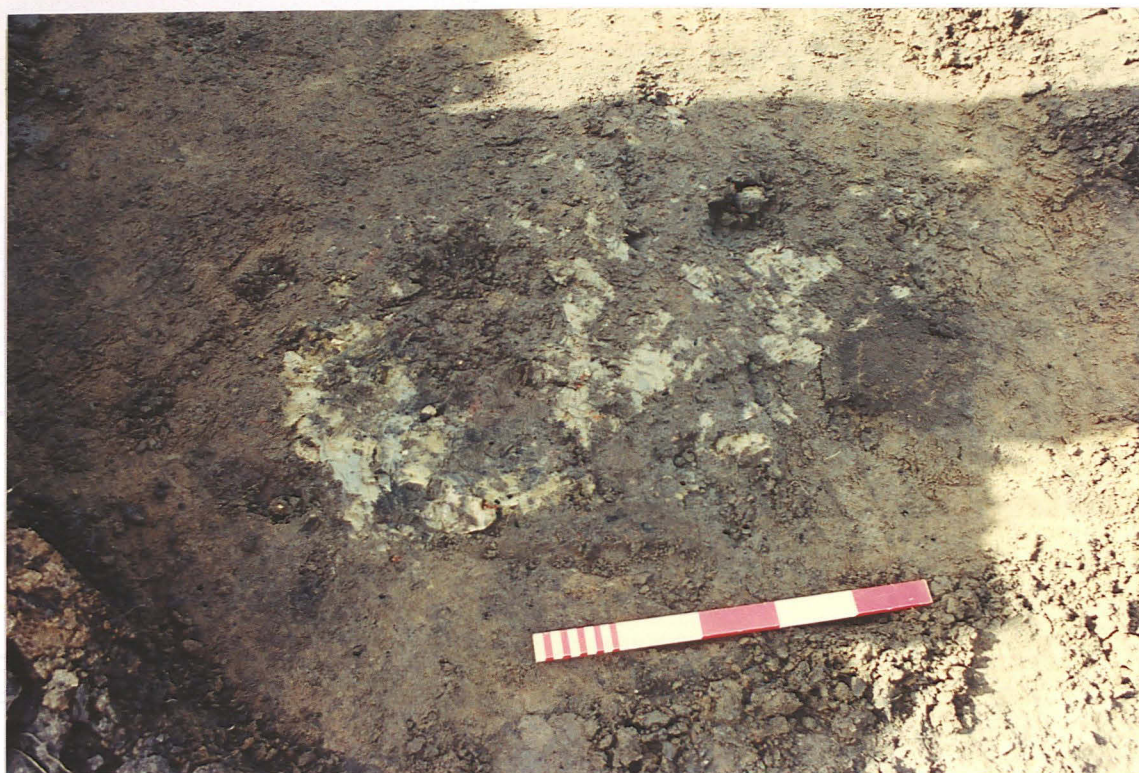
Pl. 1 Eastern end of the building area, after excavation for the foundation (looking NE). The stream is visible to the right of the photograph.



Pl. 2 The thick homogenous dark soil deposit in the NE corner of the building area.

Pl. 3 Position of the post-hole feature 4 (marked by red/white scale), on the southern side of the building area. Looking SE.





Pl. 4 Clay fill of post-hole 4, before excavation. Scale divisions 0.1m and 0.01m.

Pl. 5 Clay post-packing 7 and 8, and two excavated post-pipes, in a shallow depression cut into the sand. Looking south; scale divisions 0.1m and 0.01m.





Pl. 6 Service trenches across the access road (looking SW).