

COWLEY SECONDARY SCHOOL

DONINGTON, LINCOLNSHIRE

Site Code: DCS00
NGR TF 21170 35681

00/7



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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

COWLEY SECONDARY SCHOOL

DONINGTON, LINCOLNSHIRE

Site Code: DCS00
NGR TF 21170 35681

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Report prepared for
Lincolnshire County Council Property Division

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Summary

- ♦ *An archaeological watching brief took place during the groundworks for a classroom at Cowley School, Donington, Lincolnshire.*
- ♦ *The majority of the deposits uncovered were of modern origin, including a pond, a pit/ditch and a small brick structure.*
- ♦ *A single feature, either a grave cut, or more likely a well, was probably of an earlier date.*

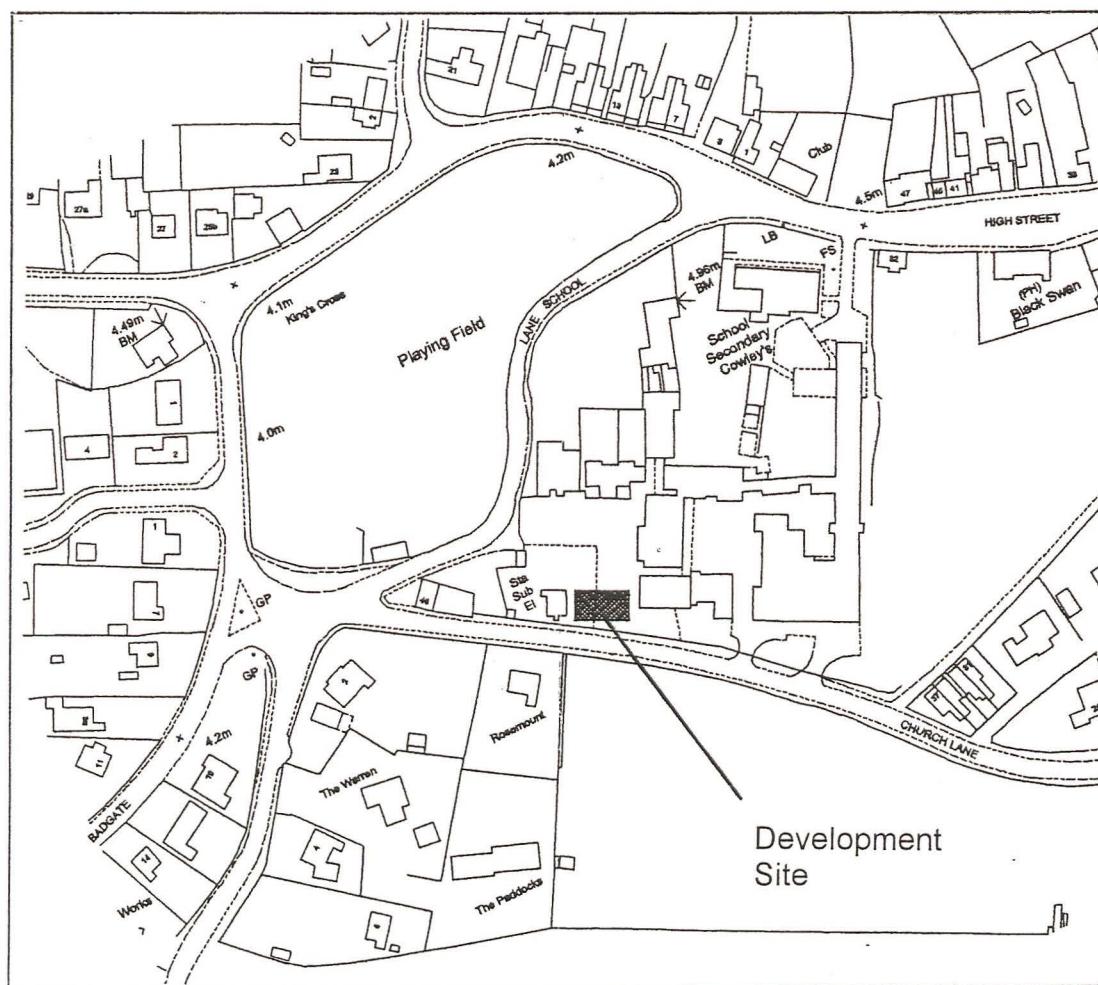


Figure 1: Location map of the development (Scale 1:2500)
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1.0 Introduction

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during groundworks associated with the construction of a classroom at Cowley School, Donington, Lincolnshire (Fig 1). The work was commissioned by South Holland District Council (Housing & Planning Services Dept.) to fulfil a planning requirement.

The project was carried out in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Lincolnshire County Council Archaeology Section publication *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook; a manual of archaeological practice*, (LCC 1998).

2.0 Site location and description

Donington is located approximately 13km north of Spalding and 15km southwest of Boston, within the administrative district of South Holland.

The development site comprises a small rectangular unit of land at Cowley Secondary School, off Church Lane at NGR TF 21170 35681.

Donington falls within the Lincolnshire Fens, an area of extensive silt fenland with areas of saltmarsh. The surrounding land is characterised by large fields with drains, dykes and canalised rivers, bounded by embankments (Boutwood 1998, 26).

The land, at the time of writing, consisted of a tarmac surface to the northwest, a grassed area to the southeast, and a mobile classroom at the northeast end of the development area.

3.0 Planning background

South Holland District Council, following the recommendations of the Assistant County Archaeologist for Lincolnshire, requested the undertaking of an archaeological watching brief on all groundworks during the development. Any archaeological deposits exposed or disturbed as a result of the development would be recorded and interpreted to the appropriate standards. This approach is consistent with the advice set out in *Archaeology and Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16, 1990*.

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

The County Sites and Monuments Record for Lincolnshire (SMR) indicate that within the grounds of the school complex, a vault measuring approximately 0.6m x 0.6m was exposed during previous groundworks (PRN 22492). This vault was made of hewn stone with a burial urn containing a cremation. The date of the urn has not been established.

A number of cropmarks, believed to be Roman in date, have been located around Donington. These have been identified as possible settlements and enclosures. A large quantity of artefacts from around Donington, mainly pottery, also attests to the concentration of activity during the Roman period.

A single cremation and inhumation cemetery, possibly of Saxon date, is also recorded within the town, although its location is unknown (PRN 20039).

Donington is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as *Duninctune*, meaning 'estate at the hill-place' (Mills 1996). The records state that land was held at Donington, and saltmaking was occurring (PRN 20037 & 20038). The medieval settlement included Wykes Manor House (PRN 22987), built before 1280, and rebuilt in the 17th century. A number of Saltern sites have also been discovered in fields surrounding Donington.

Several windmills of post-medieval construction are also recorded at Donington (PRN 22983 & 22410), although no trace of these survive.

Cowley School was originally a Grammar School built in 1719 and rebuilt in 1812 (Pl. 1).

5.0 Methodology

The watching brief was carried out by the writer from the 22nd-25th February 2000. The fieldwork element of the project consisted of archaeological observation during the excavations and a thorough inspection of all plan and section surfaces exposed as a result of the groundworks. Written recording was undertaken using standard watching brief record sheets. A photographic record was also made and some prints are reproduced in this report. The photographs, and the paper record, will form the basis for a long-term project archive.

Primarily, a mobile classroom had to be removed from the site prior to any excavations. Once this was achieved, a JCB, fitted with a toothed-bucket, was used to remove an upper layer of tarmac and other deposits to a depth of 0.3m across the development area. The foundations were then excavated using a 0.6m wide toothed-bucket to a depth of approximately 1.6m.

6.0 Archaeological results

A number of archaeological deposits exposed (Fig 2), although these are considered to be of minimal significance.

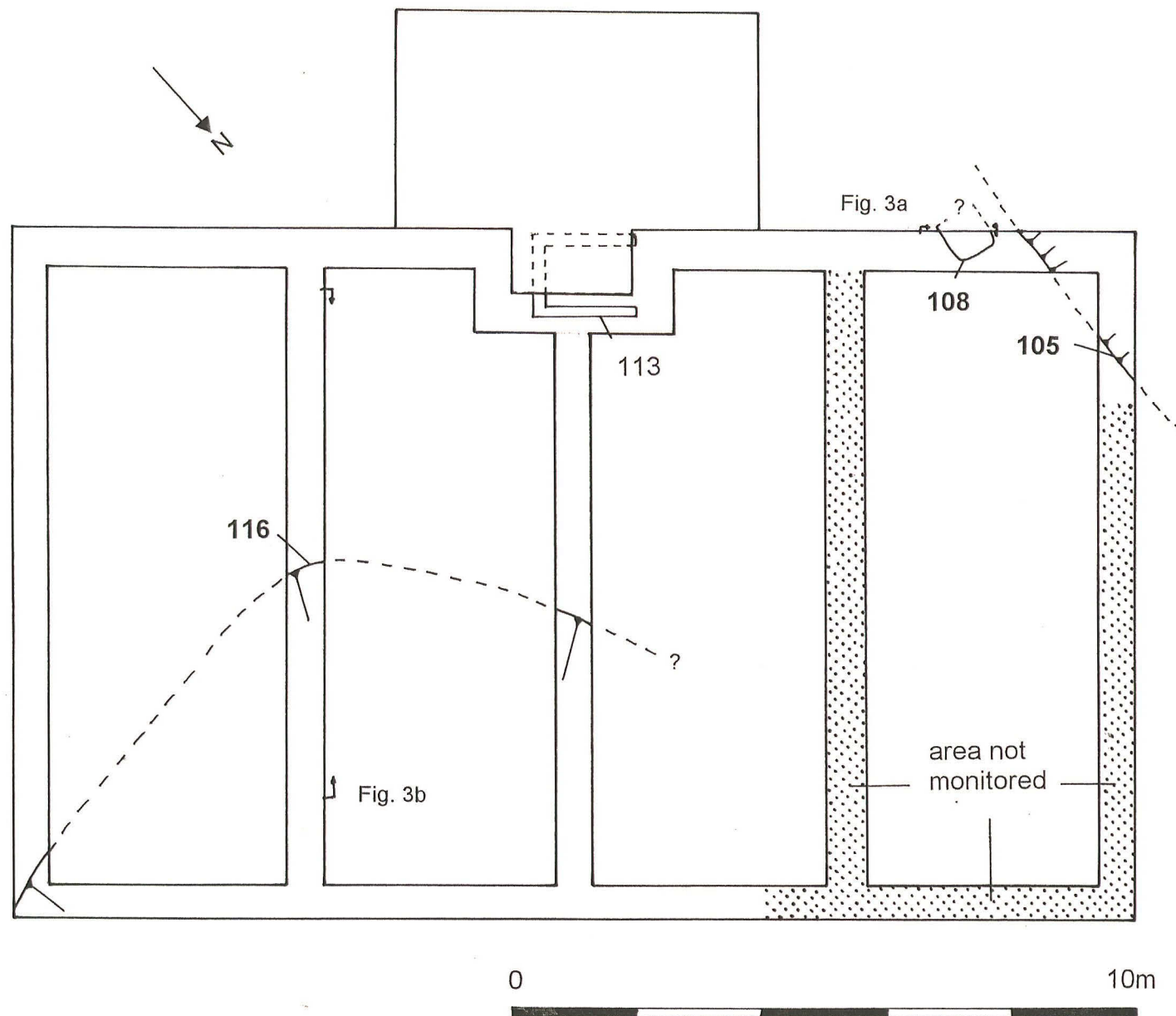


Figure 2: Plan of archaeological features (Scale 1: 100)

6.0.1 Post-medieval/modern

Below the tarmac was a brick rubble deposit (104) that appeared to form a continuous layer across the site. Pottery from the rubble was dated to the 19th - 20th centuries.

Below the rubble deposit were a number of features. These included a small rectangular brick structure (113), possibly part of a manhole for services (Pl. 2).

A large pond (116) was uncovered in several areas of the trenching (Fig. 3; Pl. 3). The feature appeared to slope fairly gradually, and contained two fills (114 & 115), both formed through silting. Although no dateable artefacts were recovered from the pond, it is likely to be of post-medieval date.

The edge of a pit or ditch (105) was uncovered at the western corner of the development (Pl. 4). Feature 105 had a 45° downward sloping edge and contained two fills (106 & 107). The large pit or ditch seemed to be of Victorian or modern date and was backfilled with domestic rubbish.

6.0.2 Unknown date

A well/grave (108) was uncovered immediately to the east of pit/ditch 105 (Fig 3; Pl. 5). The feature, sealed by flood deposits 111 & 112, was only slightly truncated by the construction trench, and was therefore left unexcavated. The cut had very steep edges and seemed to be square or rectangular in shape, although the southern edge of the cut was outside the excavated area. No finds were recovered from the fill 109, a dark grey sandy silt. Two suggestions present themselves as to the possible function of the feature: firstly that it was a square-shaped well; secondly that it may have been a north-south aligned ?pagan grave. The first is perhaps the most likely as the feature had silted naturally and had not been backfilled. The feature cannot be dated, although as it was sealed by flood deposits it could be earlier than the modern features described above.

7.0 Discussion

The majority of the archaeological deposits were of modern origin, with only a single feature warranting possible further attention. Feature 108 was probably a well of pre-modern (medieval or perhaps earlier) construction. The possibility that the feature was a grave cannot be discounted however, as a cremation urn was found nearby (PRN 22492) and a ?Saxon inhumation and cremation cemetery is known, although its location remains uncertain.

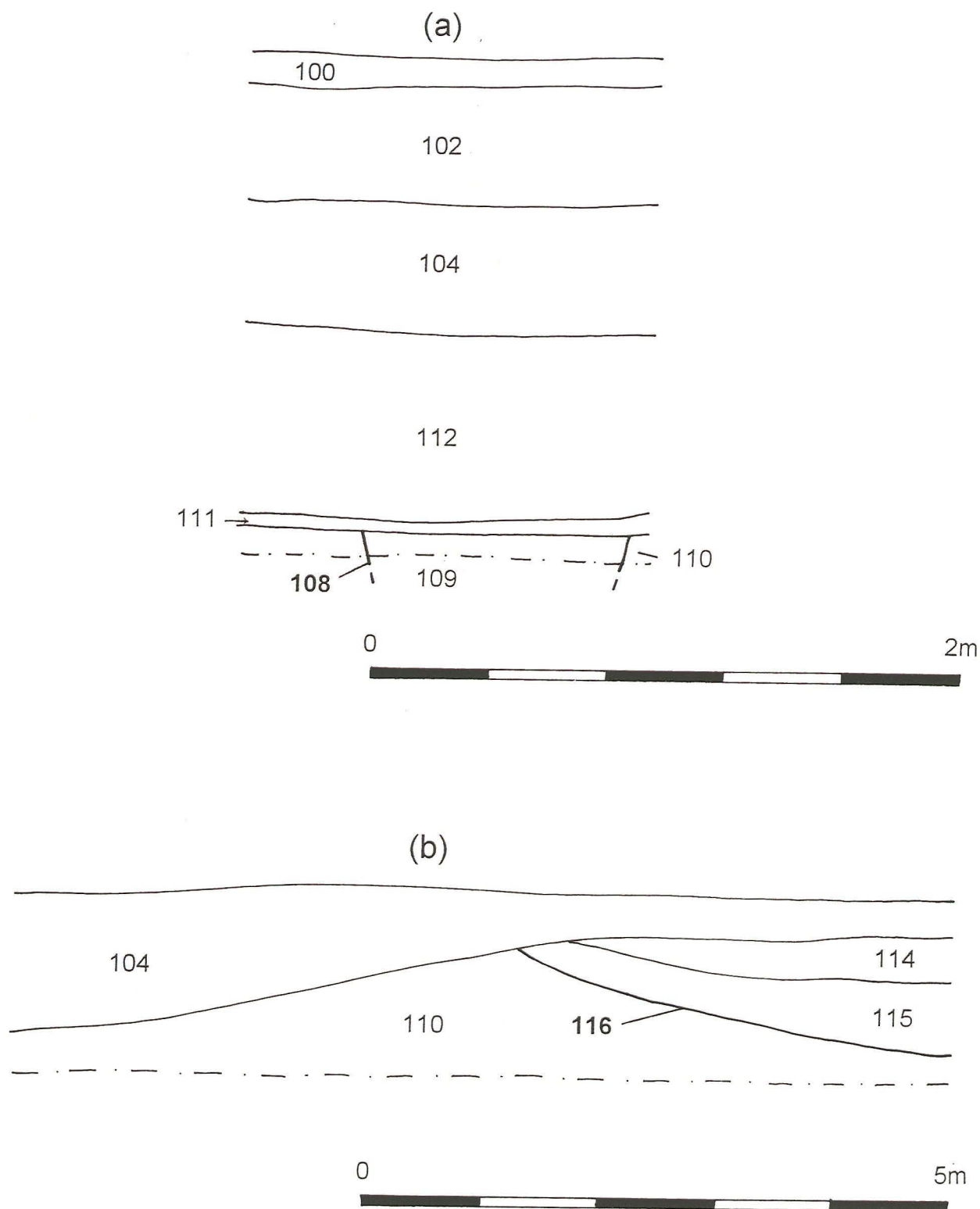


Figure 3: Sections through features 108 and 116.

8.0 References

Boutwood, Y., 1998, *The physical landscape of Lincolnshire*, in Bewley, R. H. (ed.), 1998, *Lincolnshire's Archaeology from the Air*, The Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology.

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9.0 Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct Archaeology would like to express their thanks to the County Archaeologist for Lincolnshire County Council. Thanks are also extended to Mark Bennet and Sarah Grundy of the County SMR.

APPENDICES



P1. Cowley Secondary School foundation plaque, looking NE.



P2. Brick wall 113, looking SE.



P3. Pond 116, looking SW.



P4. Pit/ditch 105, looking SW.



P5. Well/grave 108, looking SW.

APPENDIX 11.2 - Context summary list

	Context No.	Type	Relationship	Description
1	100	layer	seals all	tarmac
2	101	layer	below 102	topsoil and turf
3	102	layer	below 100	levelling deposit for tarmac 100
4	103	structure	cuts 101	modern service trench
5	104	layer	below 102	urban build-up with brick rubble - Victorian/modern
6	105	cut	cuts 112	pit/ditch - Victorian/modern
7	106	fill	backfill of 105	brick rubble - Victorian/modern
8	107	fill	backfill of 105	dark grey sandy clayey silt backfill - Victorian/modern
9	108	cut	sealed by 111	well/grave cut - ?medieval/earlier
10	109	fill	silting of 108	dark grey sandy silt - ?medieval/earlier
11	110	layer	below 104	orange/light brown sandy silt natural - flood deposit?
12	111	layer	below 104	light brown sandy silt - flood deposit
13	112	layer	below 112	mid grey/brown sandy silt - flood deposit
14	113	structure	cuts 104	brick ?manhole - modern
15	114	fill	silting of 116	light-mid brown clayey sandy silt - post-medieval
16	115	fill	silting of 116	mid brown/grey sandy silt - post-medieval
17	116	cut	sealed by 104	large ?sub-circular pond - post-medieval