

PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY L I N C O L N

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT:
PROPOSED BORROW PIT, SOUTH OF
FERRY ROAD, FISKERTON, LINCOLNSHIRE.**

Site Code: SFRF01
NGR: TF 083 7182
Planning Ref. 0838
Accession No. 2001.213



6133

EVENT L12535
SOURCES L17120
L17121

S4611 L18246 Pmed
S4612 L182147 Ppreh

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Report prepared for Bullen Consultants
by Alex Brett

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln)
61 High Street
Newton on Trent
Lincoln
LN1 2JP
Tel. & Fax. 01777 228155

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Summary

- A field evaluation was undertaken on behalf of Bullen Consultants. to assess the archaeological potential a unit of land at Fiskerton in advance of clay extraction.
- A program of trial excavation informed by earlier geophysical survey has demonstrated that, for the most part, the site has limited archaeological potential: features were only encountered in one of the five trenches, and these were both shallow and un-dated, although two of them did appear to be Prehistoric.
- The conclusion of this report is that the majority of the site is archaeologically sterile.

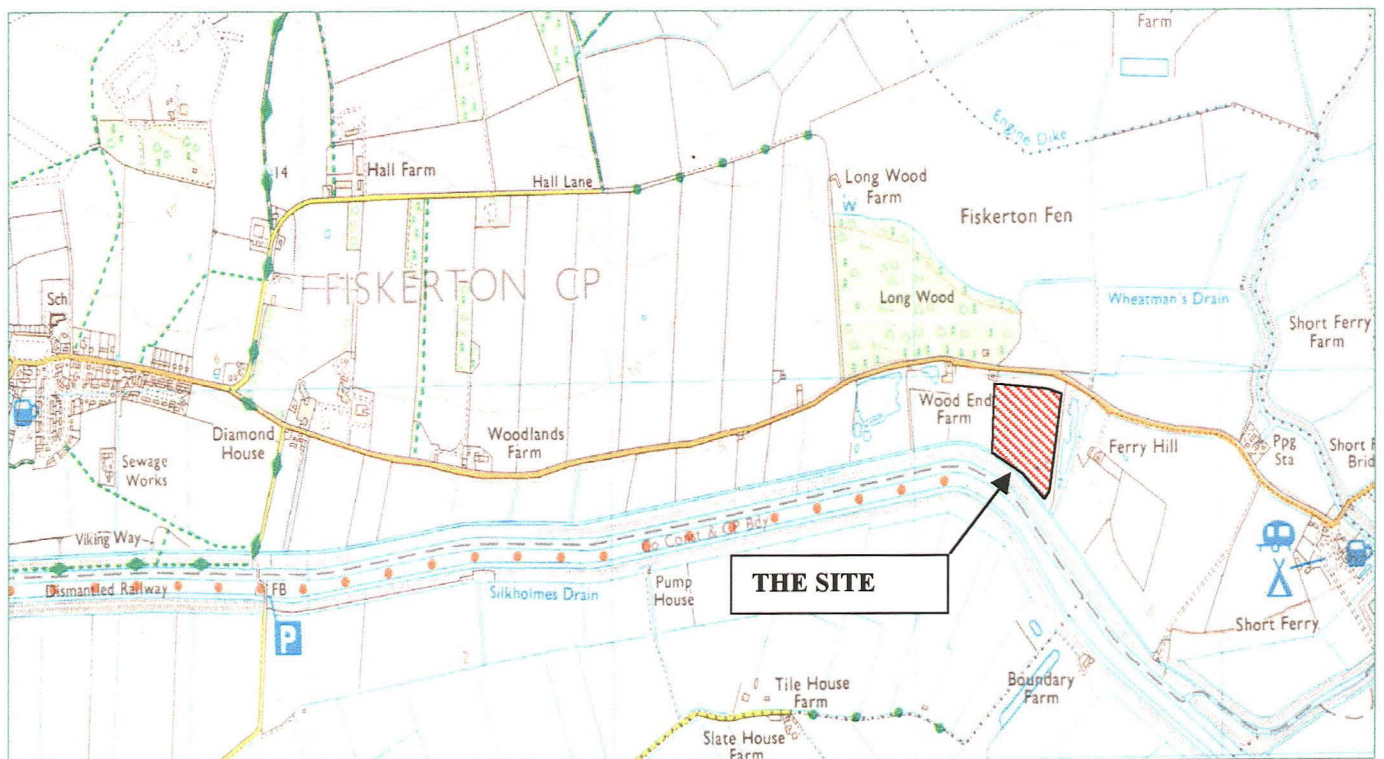


Fig.1 Location of site. Scale 1:25000

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1.0 Introduction

This report has been prepared for Bullen Consultants on behalf of the Environment Agency to advise an application for clay extraction in advance of flood defence works. Its purpose is to advise both the commissioning body and Lincolnshire County Council of archaeological constraints which may exist, and which may warrant future protection and/or further investigation in advance of/during work on the site.

The land unit (hereafter 'the site') has been evaluated for its archaeological potential using an agreed strategy of geophysical survey and trial excavation. The results of this excavation are presented below.

2.0 Location and description

The proposed work will be on agricultural land, situated approximately 2.6 km east of Fiskerton. It is bordered by the River Witham to the south, Ferry Hill to the east, Ferry Road to the north and Wood End Farm to the west. It comprises an area of approximately 5.8 hectares.

The site lies on quaternary drift deposits which extend across the Witham Fen basin. A bed of Glacial Till, a clay rich diamicton, lies directly beneath the soil across the site, over underlying solid geology comprising Jurassic Kimmeridgian and Oxfordian Clay formations (B.G.S. 1995).

The national grid reference for the centre of the site is TF 0383 7182.

3.0 Planning background

Planning consent has been sought from Lincolnshire County Council for clay extraction, and the Senior Built Environment Officer has recommended an evaluation to inform the client and the planning authority of any potential impact on archaeological remains in the area affected.

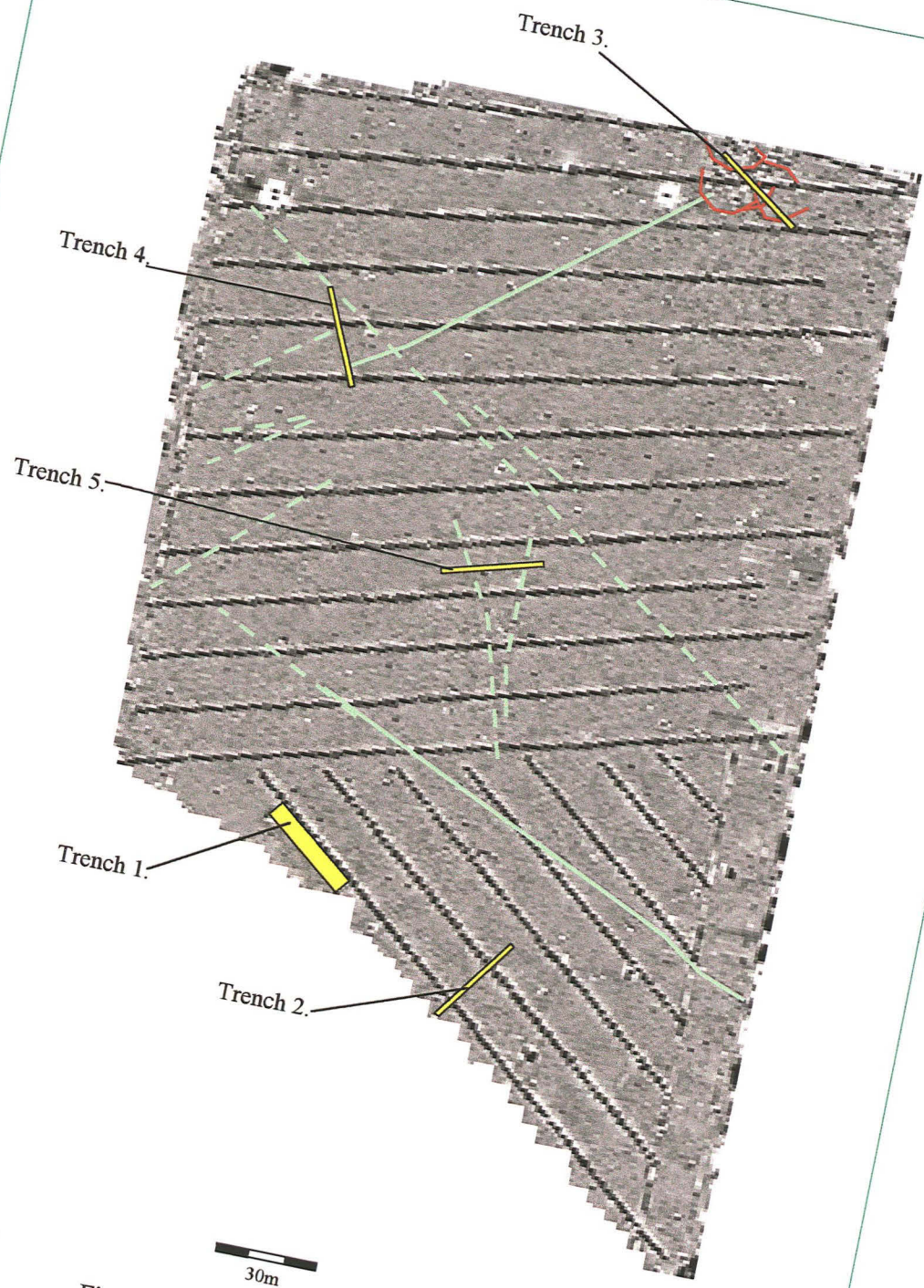


Fig 2. Geophysical anomalies
and trench locations.
1:2,000

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

Archaeological survival within the Witham valley is exceptional, the peat and sedimentary deposits produce an environment which preserves a wide range of both archaeological and environmental evidence. The County Sites and Monuments Record contains a large number of listings for sites around Fiskerton: of particular note are the Iron Age causeway to the south of Fiskerton discovered in 1981, which has produced a wide range of pottery and metal objects, the prehistoric dug-out boats found at Branston Island, a Bronze Age hoard, and a number of Bronze Age burial mounds, for instance those at Low Barlings approximately 1.5 km to the north-east of the current site. Other significant finds in the vicinity include Neolithic axe heads, Romano-British artifacts and, from the river itself, a collection of later prehistoric metalwork of national significance.

5.0 Methodology

The first investigation of the site was a geophysical survey carried out by Pre-Construct Geophysics (Bunn and Palmer-Brown 2001). This revealed a number of magnetic anomalies, including what appeared to be pits, linear features and an area of burning. In response to these results, a project specification was prepared by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) for a program of invasive evaluation via five trial trenches (Palmer-Brown 2001).

Work commenced on Monday 13th August for five days. The trenches were excavated by machine down to the first significant archaeological horizon, after which all deposits were removed by hand. The trenches and features were surveyed and a trench location plan and plan of the excavated features can be found as part of this report, Figs 2 and 3. All features encountered were planned, photographed and recorded using a standard recording sheet. The site records will be archived with the Lincoln City and Council Museum.

The number of trenches opened and the fact that they could be targeted over magnetic anomalies means that the results discussed below are a fair representation of the archaeological remains on this site.

6.0 Results

In all five trenches the first deposit encountered was a modern plough soil 0.20 to 0.45m deep, made up of a brown-grey sandy clay, although in Trenches 1 and 2 there was a silty and a humic element, derived from an underlying peat layer.

In Trenches 3, 4 and 5 this plough soil came down onto a natural deposit of mottled grey-brown boulder clay, cut by a series of land drains dating from the early nineteenth century to the modern period. These proved to be the principal anomalies detected by the geophysical survey.

In trenches 1 and 2, nearest to the river and lowest in the field, a layer of dried out peat [109] and [201] was observed. At between 0.05 and 0.20m thick it had clearly shrunk considerably as a result of drainage in the area. In Trench 2 this peat was over a layer of what appeared to be boulder clay similar to that found in the trenches mentioned above, although in this riverside location there may also have been an alluvial element. No features were observed in Trench 2.

It was in Trench 1 that potentially significant archaeological features were encountered, see Fig. 3. Once the plough soil was removed, a sub-circular (*circa* 2.60m in diameter) deposit of red-oxidised burnt clay [101] was immediately obvious. Although not dated its stratigraphic position and the fact that it was not ploughed out suggests this is the base of a modern bonfire. This patch of burning slightly overlaid a large linear feature [104], 16.00m long but only 0.10m deep. This is clearly a ditch, although whether used primarily as a boundary marker or for drainage is hard to determine. It is probably better to assume that it had some of each function. The fill was a dark grey silty clay which appears to have been deposited by slow moving water. No dating evidence was recovered from this feature. Its relatively shallow depth compared to its width is interpreted as a result of shrinkage of the peat layer [109] through which it is cut. Once this peat layer had been removed, two further cut features were exposed.

To the west was a small semi-circular cut feature [108], 1.40m across. As only part of this feature was exposed it is impossible to know if it was a pit or the butt end of a ditch, although its shallow depth, only 0.20m, and the fact that it contained no finds makes the latter interpretation more likely. In the centre of the trench was a curvilinear ditch [106], 5.30m long. Interpretation of this feature is difficult as it ran under the edge of the trench so its full size and shape could not be seen, and it did not contain a distinct or diagnostic fill. However some conclusion can be drawn, its curving shape makes it unlikely to be a drainage or boundary ditch, and its position close to the river, making it susceptible to inundation, and a complete lack of finds mean that it is also unlikely to be a roundhouse. Both of these features were filled with a material similar to the overlying peat layer, which suggests that they are roughly contemporary.

The two features mentioned above were cut into a natural deposit of mid grey-brown slightly sandy clay, equivalent to the natural boulder clay seen in Trenches 2 to 5.

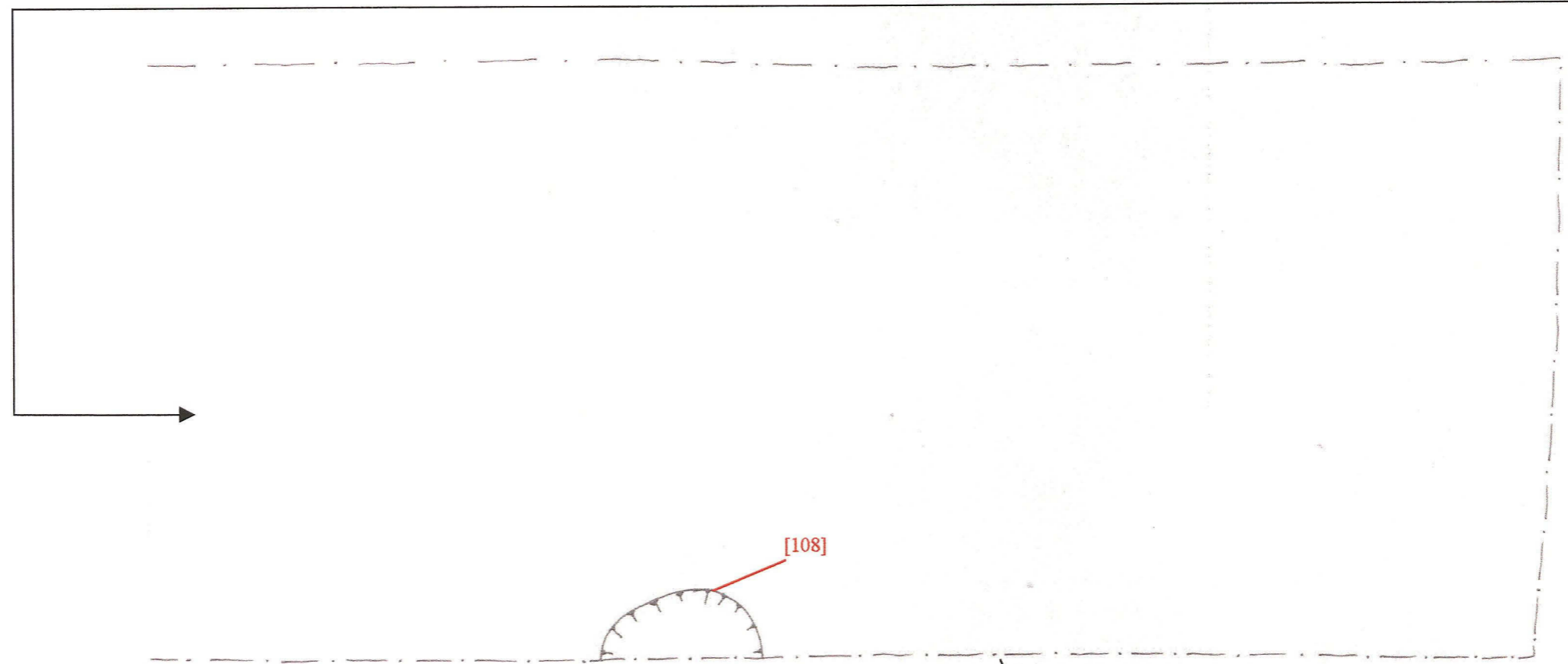
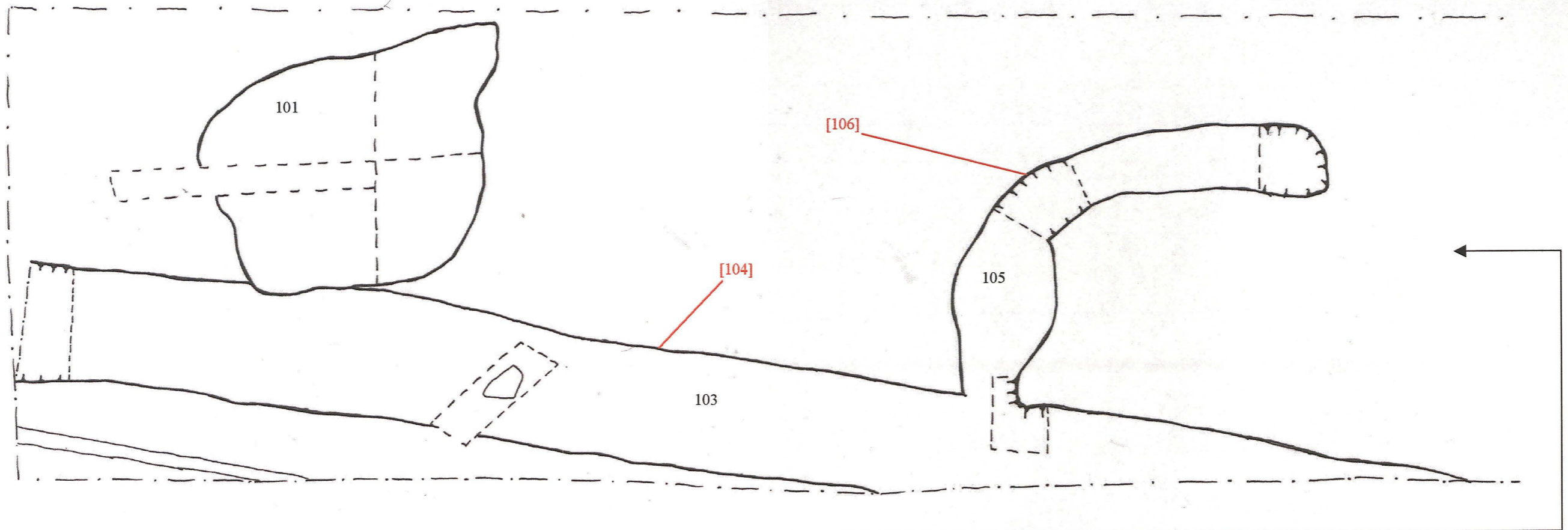


Fig 3. Trench 1 showing excavated features. 1:50

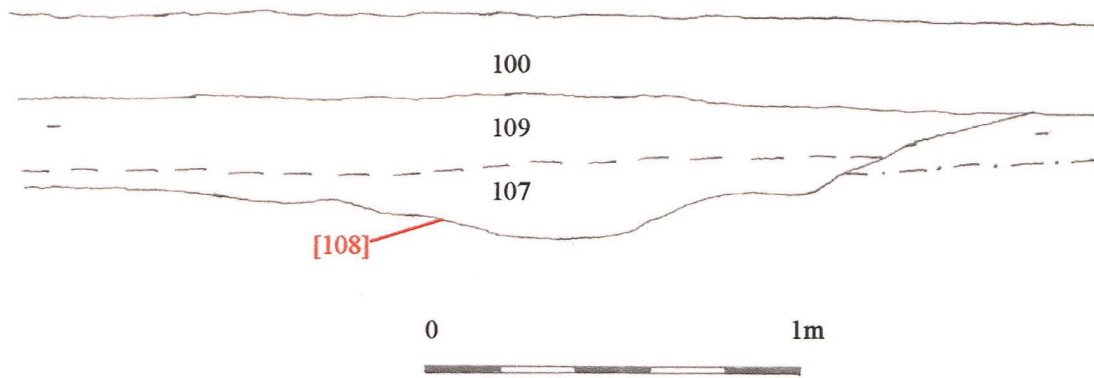


Fig 4. Representative section from trench 1.
South-west facing. 1:20

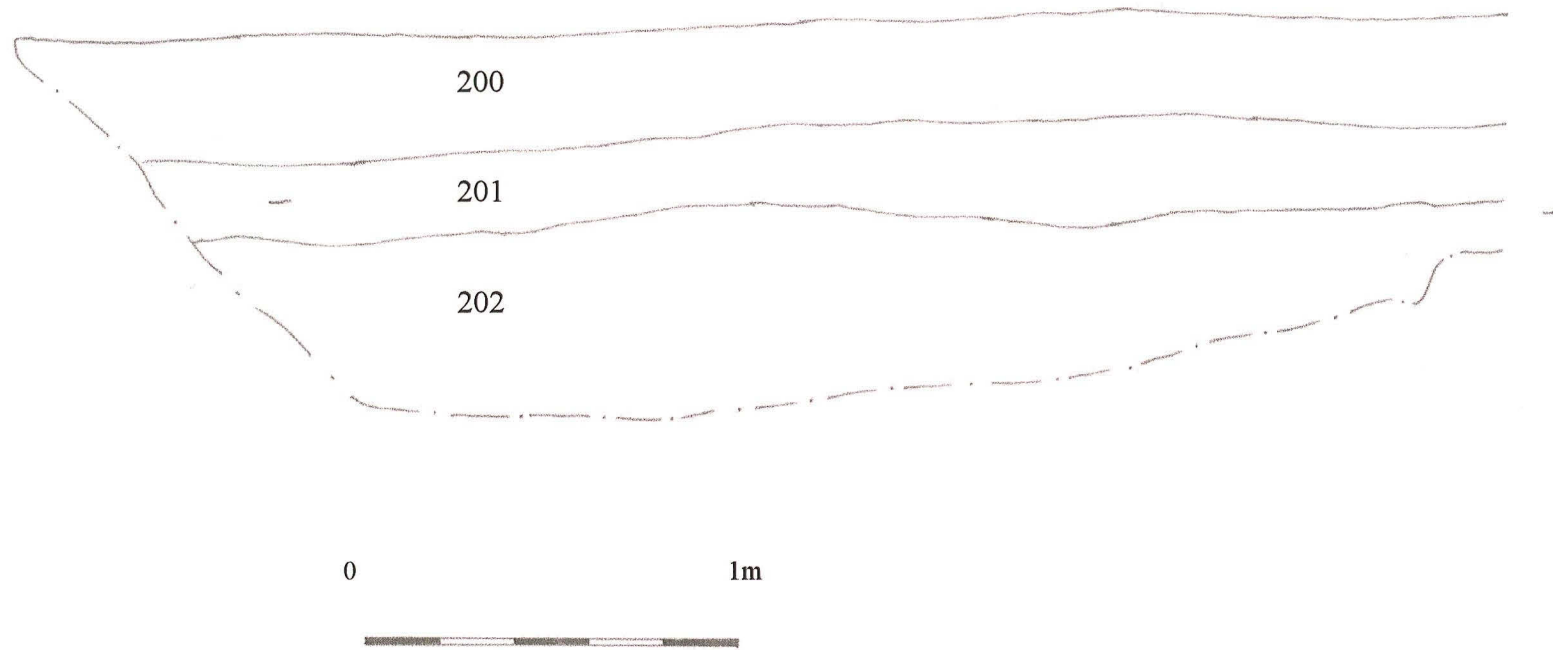


Fig 5. Representative section from trench 2.
South-east facing. 1:20

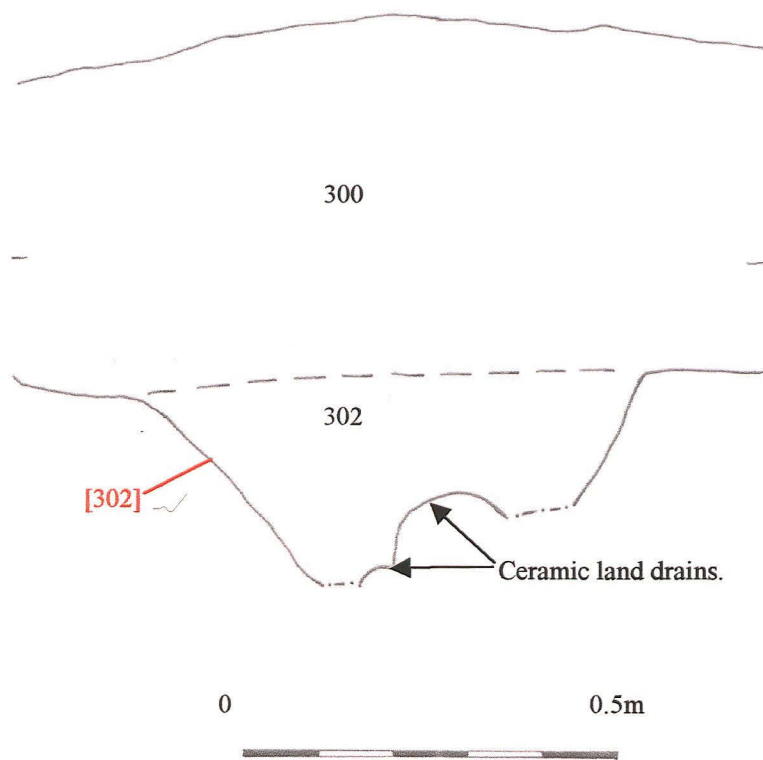


Fig 6. Representative section from trench 3.
East facing. 1:10

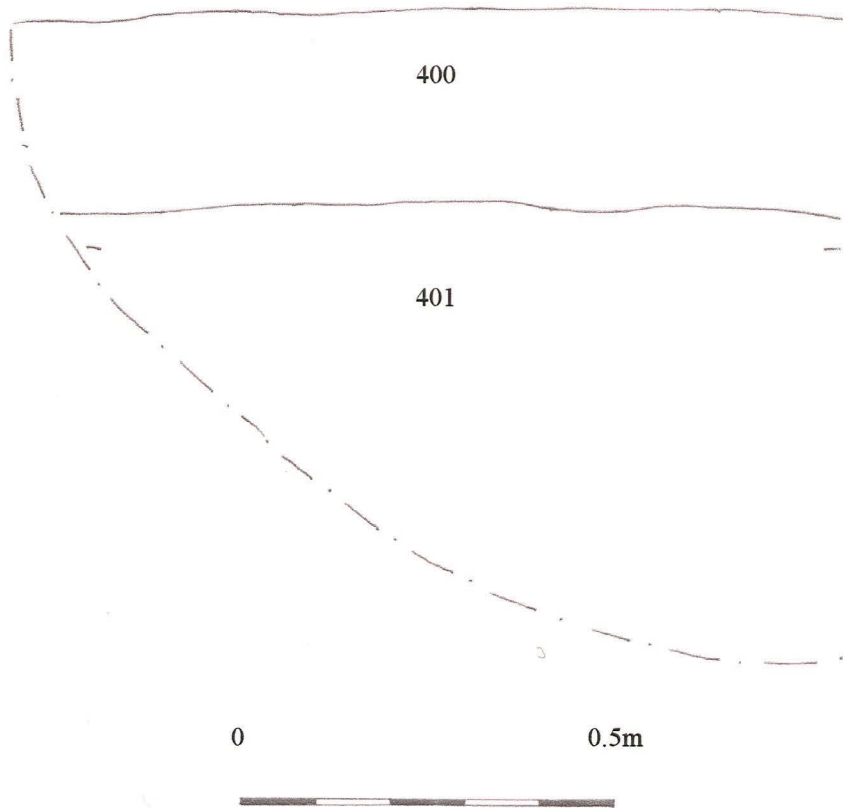


Fig 7. Representative section from trench 4.
South-east facing. 1:10

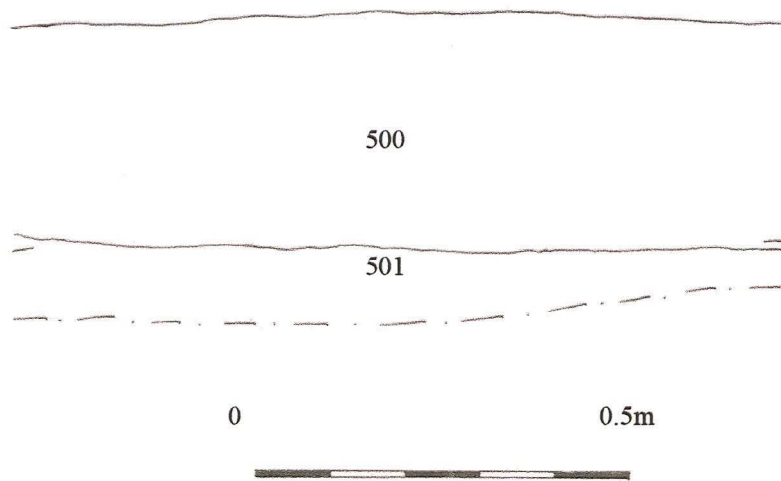


Fig 8. Representative section from trench 5.
North facing. 1:10

7.0 Conclusions

The majority of the magnetic anomalies detected by the geophysical survey proved to be of a modern date. One large ditch feature was exposed, probably an enclosure period or 19th century boundary feature. The two other features excavated in Trench 1 appeared to pre-date the growth of a layer of peat, and so are possibly of Prehistoric date, Chowne (1980, 300) gives a date of 820-515 Cal BC for peat formation further down the Witham Valley at Catley Island. These features may be worth further consideration, although given the almost complete lack of artefacts recovered their significance is likely to be limited. The remaining majority of the site appears to be archaeologically sterile.

8.0 References

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9.0 Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1: colour plates



P1. General view of site looking south (Trench 3 in foreground)



P2. Trench 1, looking north-west



P3. Gully [106], looking north-east



P4. Trench 4, looking south-east

Appendix 2. Context Summary

Context Number.	Description.
100	Cut. Small pit or butt end of ditch.
101	Peat layer.
102	Natural.
200	Plough soil.
201	Peat layer.
103	Plough soil.
104	Burnt Deposit. Interpreted as modern.
105	Not used.
106	Fill of [104]. Water lain.
107	Ditch cut.
108	Fill of [106]. Peat and plant staining.
109	Curvilinear cut.
110	Fill of [108]. Peaty.
202	Natural.
300	Plough soil.
301	Natural.
302	Cut and fill. Modern land drain.
400	Plough soil.
401	Natural.
500	Plough soil.
501	Natural.