

SME H1/25

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL  
SURVEY OF ORNAMENTAL PONDS AT  
GRIMSTHORPE CASTLE,  
GRIMSTHORPE,  
LINCOLNSHIRE  
(GCP 01)**



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SURVEY OF ORNAMENTAL PONDS AT  
GRIMSTHORPE CASTLE,  
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LINCOLNSHIRE  
(GCP 01)**

Work Undertaken For  
Grimsthorpe Estate

Report Compiled By  
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National Grid Reference: TF 0451 2265

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## 1. SUMMARY

*Archaeological Project Services was commissioned to undertake a survey and recording of two recently exposed ornamental ponds at Grimsthorpe Castle, Lincolnshire. An historical survey was also undertaken to determine the date of their construction, period of use and disuse.*

*The earliest known gardens at Grimsthorpe castle date to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century with remodelling in the early and late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Drawings and plans from these periods do not show any ornamental ponds and it is possible they were a later 19<sup>th</sup> century addition.*

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Background

Archaeological Project Services was commissioned to survey and record two ornamental ponds at Grimsthorpe Castle, Grimsthorpe, Lincolnshire. The work was commissioned by Grimsthorpe Estate and was undertaken on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2001.

### 2.2 Site Location

Grimsthorpe is located 15km north of Stamford and 22km west of Spalding in South Kesteven District, Lincolnshire (Fig. 1).

The garden in which the ponds are located lies to the southeast of Grimsthorpe Castle at National Grid Reference TF 0451 2265 (Fig. 2). The gardens and woodland extension occupy the top of a northwest-southeast aligned ridge at a height of c. 60m OD.

Local soils at the site are of the Ragdale Association, typically pelo-stagnogley soils (Hodge *et al.* 1984, 293). These soils overlie

a drift geology of glacially derived boulder clay which in turn overlies Jurassic Oxford Clays (GSGB 1972).

## 3. AIMS

The aims of the survey were to record the position and shape of each of the two ornamental ponds, supplementing this with historical research to establish a date for their construction, use and disuse.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

The two ponds were surveyed using a Geodolite Total Station System with data recorded on a Psion datalogger. Both ponds were surveyed to establish their position within the gardens at Grimsthorpe Castle and planned to identify features.

Compilation of the historical data relevant to the gardens involved the examination of appropriate primary and secondary sources. These included historical documents and maps held at the Lincolnshire Archive Office (LAO), recent and old Ordnance Survey maps, the files maintained by Heritage Lincolnshire and published books and journals.

## 5. RESULTS

### 5.1 Survey Results

The position of the ponds in relation to the castle and other features is depicted on Figure 2. Detailed plans of each pond are shown as Figures 3 and 4.

The more easterly pond (Fig. 3) is rectangular with Nowy-headed sides and ends. The pond has a brick construction which has then been mortared over to provide a waterproof lining. The rectangular

portion of the pond measures 3.06m by 1.85m increasing to 3.71m by 2.51m within the semi-circular heads. The depth of the pond measures 0.56m. Set within the centre of the pond is a vertical steel pipe for a fountain and there is an exit pipe of lead on the southeastern side. The sides to the pond are near vertical becoming more concave towards the bottom before meeting the flat base.

The western pond (Fig. 4) is the same shape although is slightly smaller than the eastern pond, measuring 3.05m by 1.84m increasing to 3.63m by 2.46m with a depth of 0.57m overall. In the middle of the pond is a square raised area at the centre of which is a vertical lead pipe for a fountain. An exit pipe is placed on the southeast side as before.

#### **A Note on the Bricks** *by Gary Taylor*

Three loose brick fragments were recovered from the pond lining during the survey. In addition, measurements were taken of complete bricks within the pond structure for comparison. All three brick fragments are in the same fabric, tempered with abundant small rounded limestone fragments, abundant small sub-angular grog and occasional small sub-rounded ironstone, with moderate small voids from burnt-out vegetation.

The bricks are all well made with smooth faces and if not machine manufactured are probably from the final stages of hand making. Measurements were made on complete bricks within the pond and these dimensions are: 224mm long by 105mm wide and 67mm thick, essentially identical to the recovered measurable example. By contrast, handmade bricks built used to construct a building in 1856 at Surfleet, near Spalding, have average dimensions of 225mm by 111mm and 67mm thick. This is

clearly a very close correspondence with the Grimsthorpe bricks and might suggest that they are broadly similar in date.

## **5.2 Historical Data**

The extensive remodelling of Grimsthorpe Castle dates largely from the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century when the the 13<sup>th</sup> century castle was altered to receive Henry VIII in 1541 (Hodgett 1975, 151). It is not certain that a garden existed with the castle at this time.

The gardens close to the house on the southeastern side were laid out in *c.* 1685 by George London under the direction of Elizabeth, Countess of Lindsey (Pevsner and Harris 1989, 351). Although no maps of these gardens survive, the layout is preserved in a series of engravings by Kip dating to 1674 (LAO 3 Anc 5/87). These show the formal parterre on the southeast of the castle little changed from how it appears at present. No ornamental ponds are depicted on any of the engravings seen.

The next major remodelling of the gardens occurred in *c.* 1711 when Stephen Switzer made the wood into a polygonal bastion with walks radiating from a central circle, keeping the southeastern parterre (Fig. 5). Two maps of this arrangement survive, one a sketch plan by Stukeley dating to 1736 and the second by John Grundy dating to 1753 (LAO 3 Anc 4/35A). Neither show an ornamental pond.

In comparison, the nowy-head shape is evident in a number of garden designs dating to the early and mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. The shape, although not as elaborate as the ponds, was used for a lawn at Nostell Priory in Yorkshire by Stephen Switzer between 1730 and 1740 and for a pond at Wimpole Hall, Cambridgeshire, in 1721 by Charles Bridgeman (Jackson-Stops 1991, 42, 47).

Extensive remodelling of the park supervised by Capability Brown in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century was undertaken by John Grundy from 1745. Grundy landscaped the view from the southwestern side of the house and did work on the lake (Wright n.d, 7). Of his work at Grimsthorpe it is the provision of a piped water supply to the castle which is most relevant. By pumping water from a well located to the southeast, he was able to pipe water to the castle which was 5m lower than the well. This would have been necessary to provide water to the fountains associated with the ponds, although there are no indications that fountains were used at Grimsthorpe at this time. It is possible that the bastion garden was naturalised at the end of Grundy's and Capability Brown's association with Grimsthorpe, c. 1780.

There are no indications of the ornamental ponds at Grimsthorpe during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and even by the date of the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey plan of 1904, no trace of the ponds is visible (Fig. 6). Account books for the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, though absent for some years, unfortunately do not provide details of the possible work undertaken on the grounds (eg. LAO 3 Anc/6 1079).

A published photograph of 1968 showing the southeast front of the house taken from within the hedged enclosures indicates that the ponds had been infilled by this time (Anon. 1968, 46).

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Survey and recording of two recently uncovered ponds at Grimsthorpe Castle was undertaken in order to determine their date, use and disuse.

The position and plan of each of the ponds was undertaken. Historical survey could find no evidence for the early existence of the

ponds at Grimsthorpe Castle and it is probable that they are late 19<sup>th</sup> century in date. However, this date could indicate a remodelling of existing ponds. No map evidence was forthcoming, although such minor features may have been neglected by surveyors.

## 7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Project Services wish to thank Mr R. Biggs, the public access manager for the Grimsthorpe Estate, for commissioning the survey and historical research. Tom Lane coordinated the project and also edited this report. Gail Smith, the Community Archaeologist for South Kesteven District Council, permitted examination of the relevant parish files maintained by Heritage Lincolnshire.

## 8. PERSONNEL

Project Coordinator: Tom Lane  
Project Officer: Paul Cope-Faulkner  
Surveying: Rachael Hall  
Illustration: Paul Cope-Faulkner  
Photographic Reproduction: Sue Unsworth  
Report Compilation: Paul Cope-Faulkner

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## 10. ABBREVIATIONS

GSGB Geological Survey of Great Britain



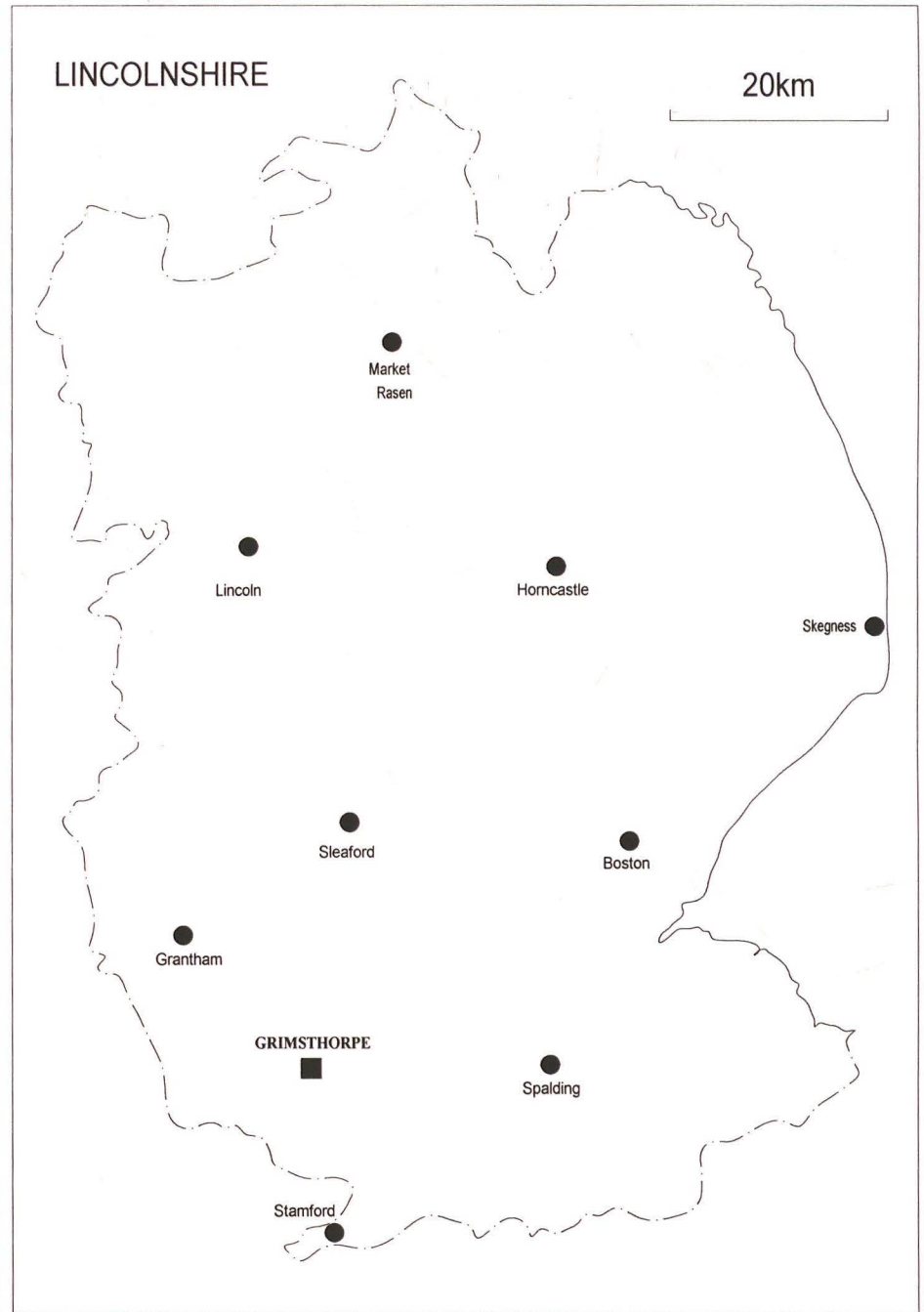


Figure 1 - General Location Plan



Figure 2 - Site location plan

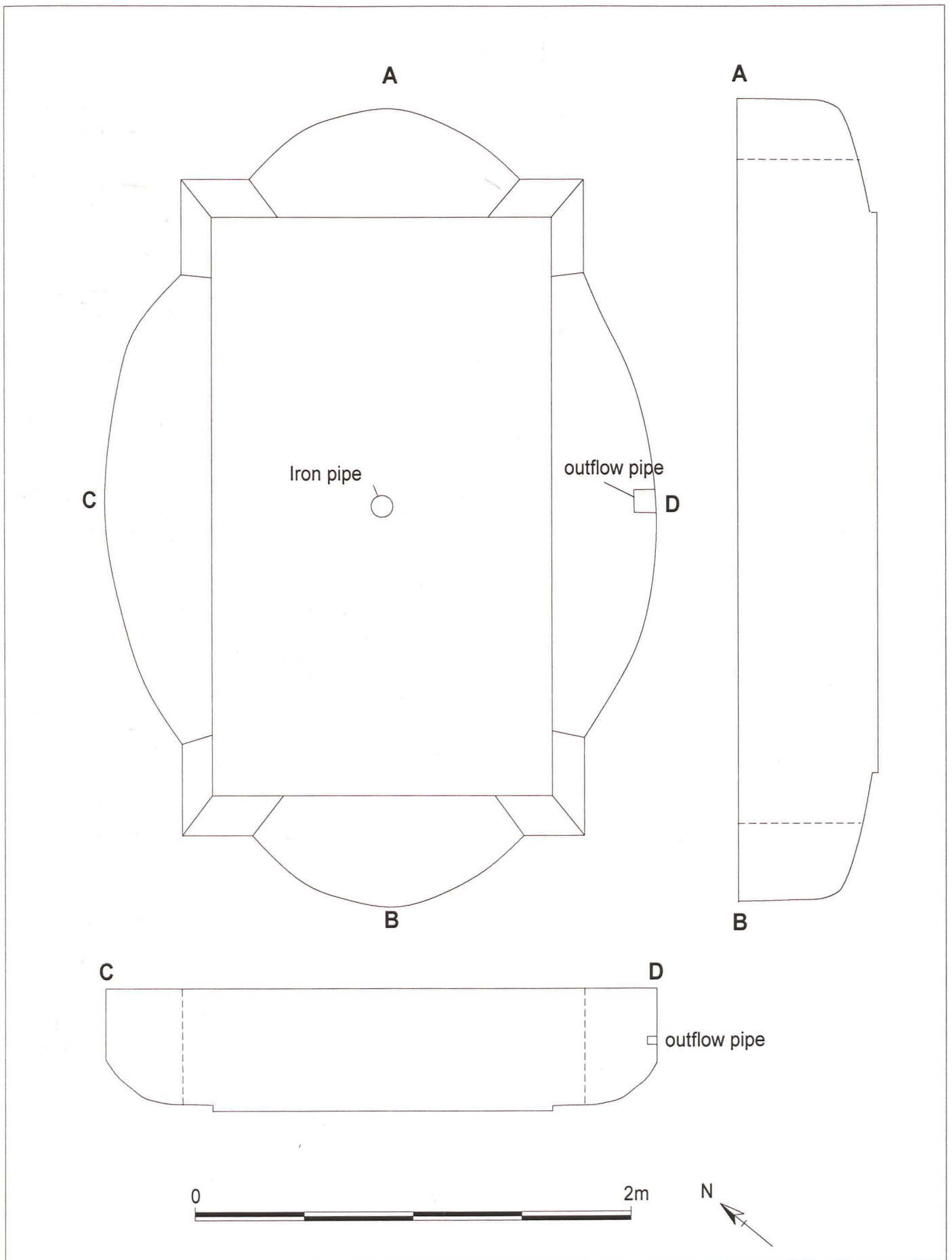


Figure 3 - The easternmost pond

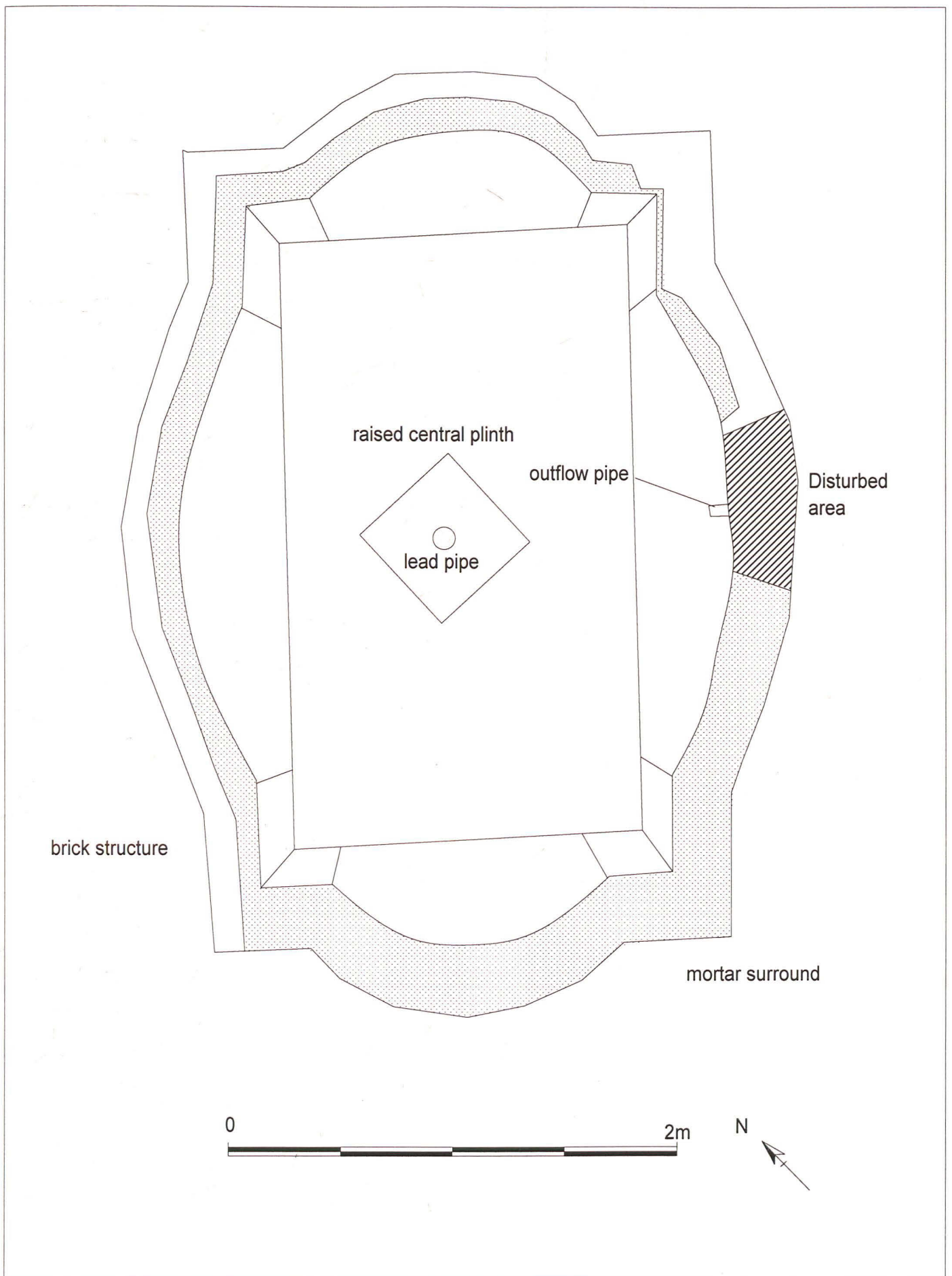


Figure 4 - The westernmost pond

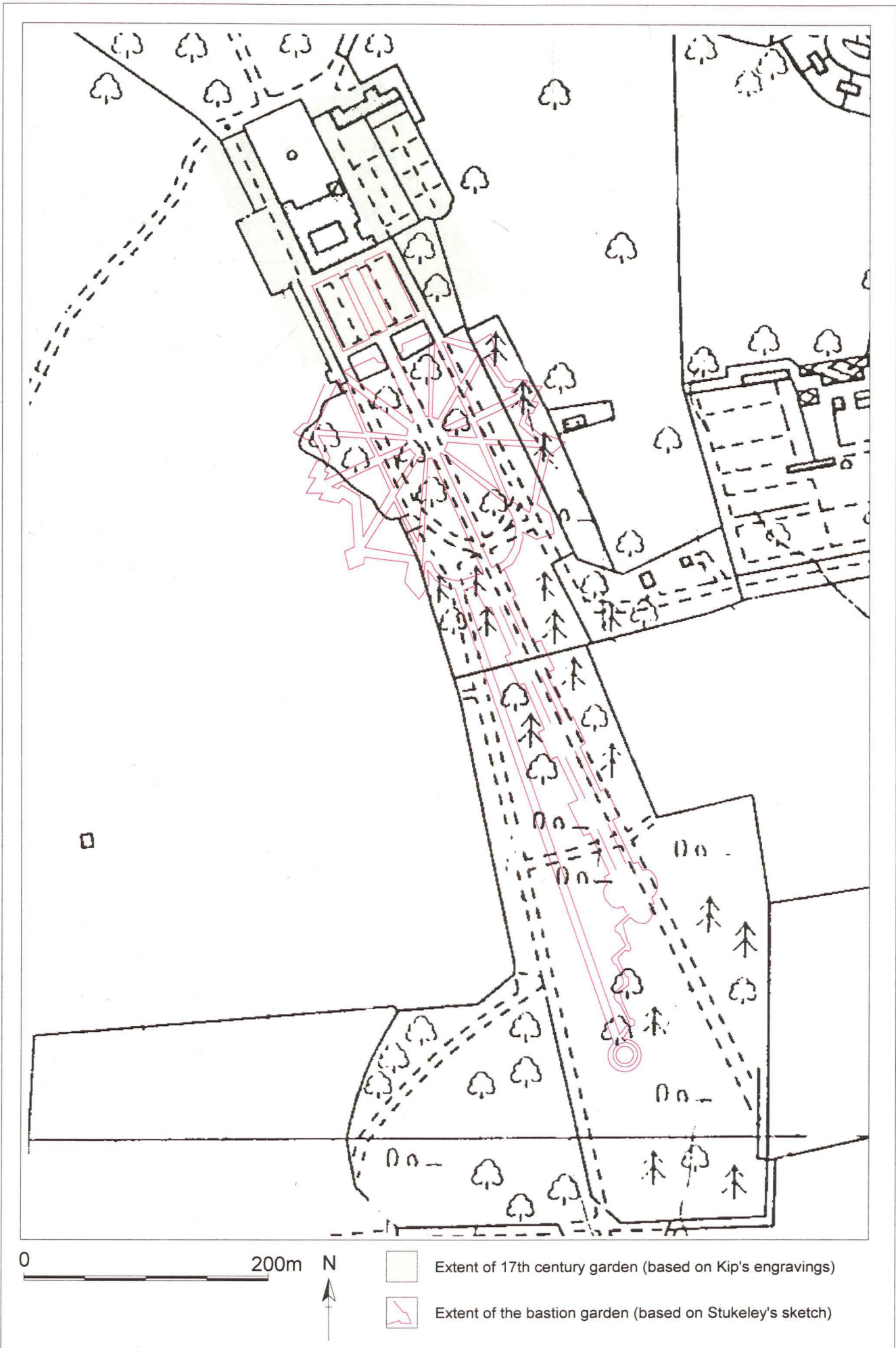


Figure 5 - Grimsthorpe garden plans

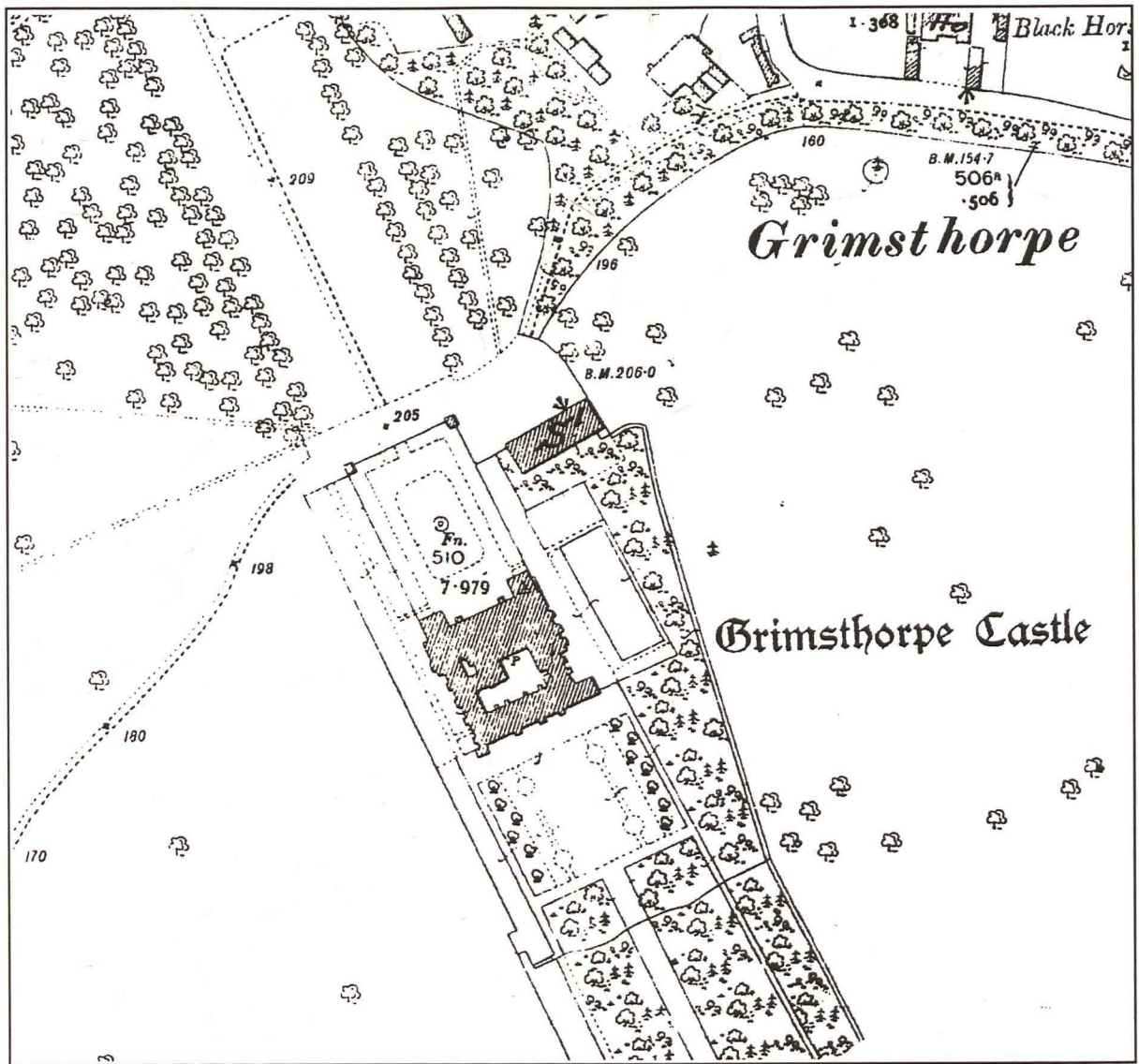


Figure 6 - Extract from the 1904 2nd edition Ordnance Survey plan.



Plate 1 - The easternmost pond, looking northeast



Plate 2 - The westernmost pond, looking northeast