



LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

Bicker, land off Drury Lane and Friest Lane

NGR: TF 2230 3723

Site Code: BDF 01

LCNCC Museum Accn. No.: 2001.411

Planning Application No.: BO4/0222/96

Archaeological Watching Brief [Plots 2, 3 and 5]

Report prepared for Chestnut Homes Ltd

by G. Tann

LAS Report No. 568

January 2002

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Summary

A watching brief during the excavation of further foundation trenches on the residential development identified a sherd of twelfth century pottery within an extensive thin deposit of silt with ash inclusions. This horizon formed between two episodes of marine inundation, both of which deposited considerable amounts of silt. A ditch or channel, possibly relating to a small pond, was recorded just to the east of the mapped position of a recently backfilled ditch. No further signs of a nearby sixteenth/seventeenth century pot kiln were found. Further archaeological deposits may survive below the foundations of the new buildings. Monitoring of this development has now been completed.

Introduction

Lindsey Archaeological Services (LAS) was commissioned by Chestnut Homes Ltd in March 2001 to conduct a watching brief during the mechanical excavation of further house footings on a partially completed development site between Drury Lane and Friest Lane, Bicker (Figs. 1-3). A condition of Boston Borough Council's full planning permission for residential development required an archaeological watching brief, for which a brief was prepared by the Boston Community Archaeologist (dated 6th August 1996). A project specification prepared by LAS in March 2001 was approved.

The site had previously been developed by L.E.Henton and Son Ltd, with archaeological monitoring of three house plots conducted by LAS (Tann 1998; Tann 1999). This report relates to groundworks conducted during 2001, completing the development. The watching brief was conducted by G. Tann on 26th and 27th July 2001 (Plots 2 and 3), and October 30th 2001 (Plot 5).

The Development Site

The development site lies on the corner of Drury Lane and Friest Lane, towards the southern end of Bicker. This report describes the watching brief on the foundations for three buildings, on Plots 2, 3 and 5 (Fig. 3).

Archaeological Background

The local soils are reclaimed alluvial silts, developed on former roddons. Salterns are found on previously tidally marginal land and medieval examples are known to have flanked Bicker Haven. These sites produce large volumes of briquetage (fired clay vessels and supports) associated with evaporation of brine. None have been identified on this development site.

A previously unsuspected sixteenth/seventeenth century pottery kiln is now known to have been sited near this development; a waste deposit was found below Plot 6 in 1997, but the kiln site itself was not revealed (Tann 1998). No prehistoric remains have been reported from Bicker but Romano-British finds are known.

The Watching Brief

Method

The house foundation trenches were excavated with a JCB to widths of 0.6m. Context numbers were assigned to features and their fills for recording purposes; these are used (in bold) in this report and are listed in Appendix 1. The numbers commence at **50** in order to avoid confusion with earlier phases of the watching brief on this site. The photographic record of the trenching for Plots 2 and 3 was lost as a result of camera failure.

Plot 2 (Figs. 4 and 5)

The new foundation trenches in the SE and NW parts of this house plot produced the soil sequence of topsoil, overlying light brown silt, as had been seen on adjacent house plots. The 0.25m thick topsoil **51** covered the light brown silt layer **50**, which was over 0.55m thick and extended below the trench base. In the SE corner, a sherd of sixteenth/seventeenth century pottery was found in the brown silt **50**.

Across the centre of the plot the deposits were markedly different, but these also varied from north to south; it was difficult to assess which of the colour variations were significant, and which the result of differential moisture or oxidation of the trench face. It was impossible to trace the different deposits across the house plot without interruption by a modern disturbance or anomalous patches of soil (which may have been inclusions within the more homogeneous deposits).

On the southern side of the plot the topsoil layer was slightly thicker, and sealed a 0.15m thick layer of light brown silt **53**. Below was a noticeably darker brown/grey or brown/black silt **52**, 0.4m thick, apparently filling a ditch or channel **58**. At the trench base, in places, was a brown silt, probably part of **50**. The wide, flat base of the dark material **52** is not the profile of a ditch base, but may indicate a broad shelf along the east side of the recently backfilled ditch.

Towards the northern side of the plot, the thin topsoil covered a 0.2-0.4m thick layer of redeposited yellow silty clay **54**; the redeposition appeared to have been a recent event, associated with the current development. Beneath it was a 0.3m thick dark brown silt **55**, with grey silt **56** at the trench base. This area extended to about 5m square, and could represent a small pond **57**. In the centre of the plot, where the channel was narrower, the redeposited material covered an intervening layer of black silt, above the dark brown.

Interpretation of these varied observations was further complicated by a recently backfilled trial hole and trenches for alkathene water pipes. Although this house plot is sited to the west of the plotted course of a backfilled post-medieval/modern drainage ditch, the deposits revealed during excavation of the foundation trenches suggested that a channel had crossed the centre of the house plot. The ground surface sloped downwards towards Drury Lane from the rear of the new house site, adding further credence to the ditch formerly having been further to the east, but this does not match the position of the ditch shown on the 1903 revision Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 2; OS 1906). The ground surface here had been considerably disturbed by soil spreading and levelling when adjacent house plots were built, and this complicated identification of the extent of soil tipped to backfill the ditch prior to the development commencing. It is also likely that some of the deposits represented material from the upcast bank, and if more than one phase of ditch were present, this might explain the inconsistency of the silts. The possible pond may have been fed by a narrower ditch, but none of these theories could be confirmed.

Plot 3

Plot 3 was sited to the west of the backfilled ditch, and the deposits here were much more consistent than in Plot 2. The garage footing trenches were 0.75m deep, and the house trenches 1.15m deep. The topsoil **64** was up to 0.35m thick, sealing a 0.25-0.55m thick dark brown silt layer **60**, which contained ash flecks and fragments of shells. Layer **60** produced a sherd of twelfth century Stamford-ware pottery, usefully providing the earliest possible date when this horizon was covered by the overlying silt.

Below **60** was a 0.05m thick band of blue silty clay **61**, mottled with iron-pan flecks. This layer may represent a period of vegetation growth between marine flood episodes. It covered 0.3m of light brown sandy silt **62**, which merged into a clayey silt **63** extending below the trench base.

Plot 5 (Fig. 6)

The 0.6m wide garage foundation trenches cut through the 0.25m thick topsoil **70** and the underlying 0.35m thick layer of light brown silt **71**. Beneath this was a 0.1m thick discontinuous layer **72** of wood ash fragments mixed with silt, similar to a deposit seen elsewhere on the development site. Below this was a further thick deposit of light brown silt **73**, extending below the base of the 0.75m deep trench.

The house foundation trenches, positioned closer to Drury Lane, revealed a similar sequence but with no trace of the ash. Below the upper silt **71** in the eastern part of the plot was a very thin band of iron-panning **74**, 0.65m below the ground surface, possibly representing the same episode as the ash. Beneath this layer was a darker brown silt **75**.

A 1m wide area of iron-panned silt **76** was seen at the southern edge of the house plot, close to the base of the trench. This anomaly could have been an archaeological feature, but no finds were seen and a natural origin is probable.

Conclusion

During the 1997 archaeological monitoring of Plot 6 to the NE (formerly Plot 10), there was no evidence for features between Plot 6 and Friest Lane, other than a recently filled drainage ditch crossing the SE corner. Further monitoring showed that there are unrelated archaeological features closer to Friest Lane.

A previous report on work at this site concluded that the sixteenth/seventeenth century pot and brick kiln refuse deposits found in Plot 6 (to the NE) derived from an unlocated site north or east of the development. Completion of the development has demonstrated that there are no associated post-medieval deposits to the south, but that infrequent contemporary pot sherds are within the uppermost silt layer.

Deeper trenches (on Plot 1, to the south) revealed the presence of medieval remains, including shell middens, below the marine silts, but insufficient information has been produced to enable the nature of these to be established. Within the overlying silt deposits is a band of silt with distinct signs of widespread burning, which has apparently also been noted beyond the development, on land south of Friest Lane (Hilary Healey, pers. comm.). This band seems to indicate a period of human activity on dry land within prolonged episodes of marine inundation, but it may instead reflect reworking of a earlier saltern waste heap in the locality, by flood action. The identification of a twelfth century potsherd in this layer indicates that the overlying silt layer may be late-medieval or early post-medieval in date.

The development site appears to occupy a plot of land, at the periphery of the Bicker settlement, which has seen occupation interrupted on at least one occasion by marine inundation. Despite this, nearby land proved suited to use for pottery manufacture in the seventeenth century, and subsequently housing developed at the road junction. Archaeological remains are present, and probably extend onto neighbouring land, but little damage was caused by the monitored housing development.

Acknowledgements

Site plans and access to the site were arranged through Chestnut Homes Ltd. LAS would also like to thank the Lincolnshire County Council Archaeology Section (now the Built Environment Team) for their assistance during this watching brief. Information was provided by Hilary Healey.

Pottery was identified by Jane Young. Illustrations were prepared by Mick McDaid, and the report was collated and produced by Jane Frost.

Geoff Tann
Lindsey Archaeological Services
28th January 2002

References

- LAO Smith 9/1/8 *Plan of the Parish of Bicker, 1839*. Lincolnshire Archives.
- OS 1906 *Ordnance Survey Second Edition 1:10,560 map, Sheet Lincs. 117SW*. Revised 1903.
- Tann, G. 1998 *Bicker, land off Drury Lane and Friest Lane: Archaeological Watching Brief [Plot 10]*.
LAS Report No. 300, June 1998.
- Tann, G. 2000 *Bicker, land off Drury Lane and Friest Lane: Archaeological Watching Brief [Plots 1 and 4]*. LAS Report No. 458, November 2000.

Archive Summary

- archaeological finds: pottery
- specialists' report and archive list: pottery
- correspondence
- developer's site plans (annotated)
- field section drawings
- field sketch plans
- photographs: colour prints LAS film nos. 01/105/8,9 (including those used in this report)

THE APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Context Summary, BDF 01

Context No.	Area	Type	Relationships	Description	Finds
50	Plot 2	layer	below 51	light brown silt	1 pot sherd, 16/17thC
51	Plot 2	layer	above 50, 53, 54	dark brown silt loam topsoil	
52	Plot 2	layer/?fill	below 53, above 58	dark brown/grey/black silt, 0.4m thick	
53	Plot 2	layer	below 51, above 52	light brown silt, 0.15m thick	
54	Plot 2	layer	below 51, above 55	redeposited yellow clay	20thC debris
55	Plot 2	layer	below 54, above 56	dark brown silt, 0.3m thick	
56	Plot 2	layer/fill	below 55, above 57	grey silt	
57	Plot 2	?cut	below/filled by 56	5m square ?pond	
58	Plot 2	?cut	below/filled by 52, cuts 53	flat-bottomed feature, 0.4m deep	
60	Plot 3	layer	below 64, above 61	dark brown silt, 0.25-0.55m thick, with ash and shell fragments	1 pot sherd, 12thC
61	Plot 3	layer	below 60, above 62	blue silt with iron panning flecks, 0.05m thick	
62	Plot 3	layer	below 61, above 63	light brown silt, 0.3m thick	
63	Plot 3	layer	below 62	light brown clay	
64	Plot 3	layer	above 60	dark brown silt loam topsoil, 0.35m thick	
70	Plot 5	layer	above 71	dark brown silt loam topsoil	
71	Plot 5	layer	below 70, above 72, 74	light brown silt, 0.35m thick	
72	Plot 5	layer	below 71, above 73	light brown silt with ash inclusions, 0.35m thick	
73	Plot 5	layer	below 72	light brown silt	
74	Plot 5	layer	below 71, ?above 76, above 75	iron pan lens	
75	Plot 5	layer	below 74	dark brown silt	
76	Plot 5	layer/?fill	fill of 77, ?below 74	iron pan area	
77	Plot 5	?cut	filled by 76, ?cuts 75	?small feature	

Pottery Archive BDF01

Jane Young

Lindsey Archaeological Services

context	cname	full name	sub fabric	form type	sherds	part	description	date
50	MY	Midlands Yellow		jar	1	rim	hard semi vitrified fabric;greenish glaze	16th to 17th
60	ST	Stamford Ware	B/C	pitcher/jar	1	BS	glaze;soot	12th

THE FIGURES

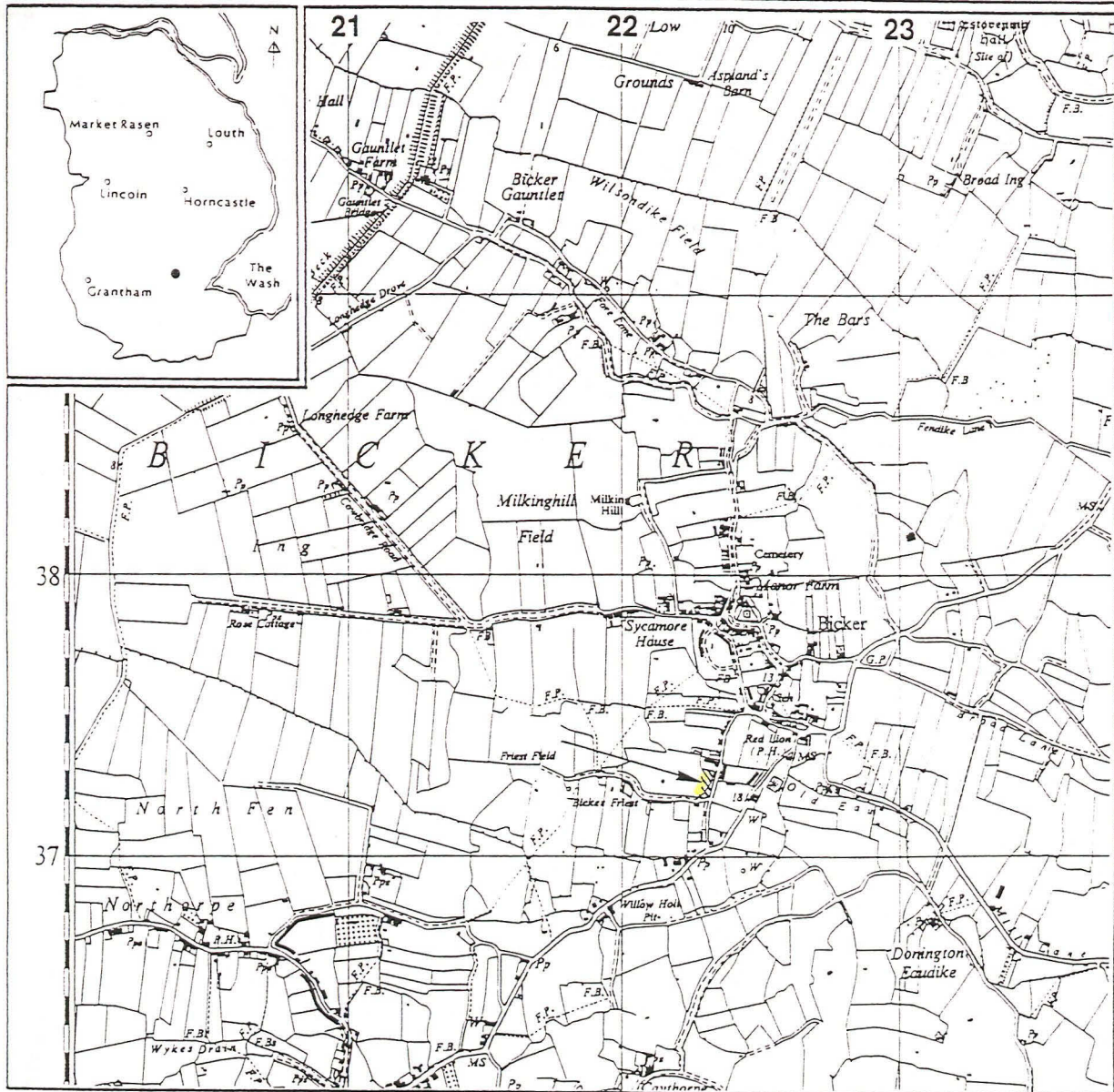
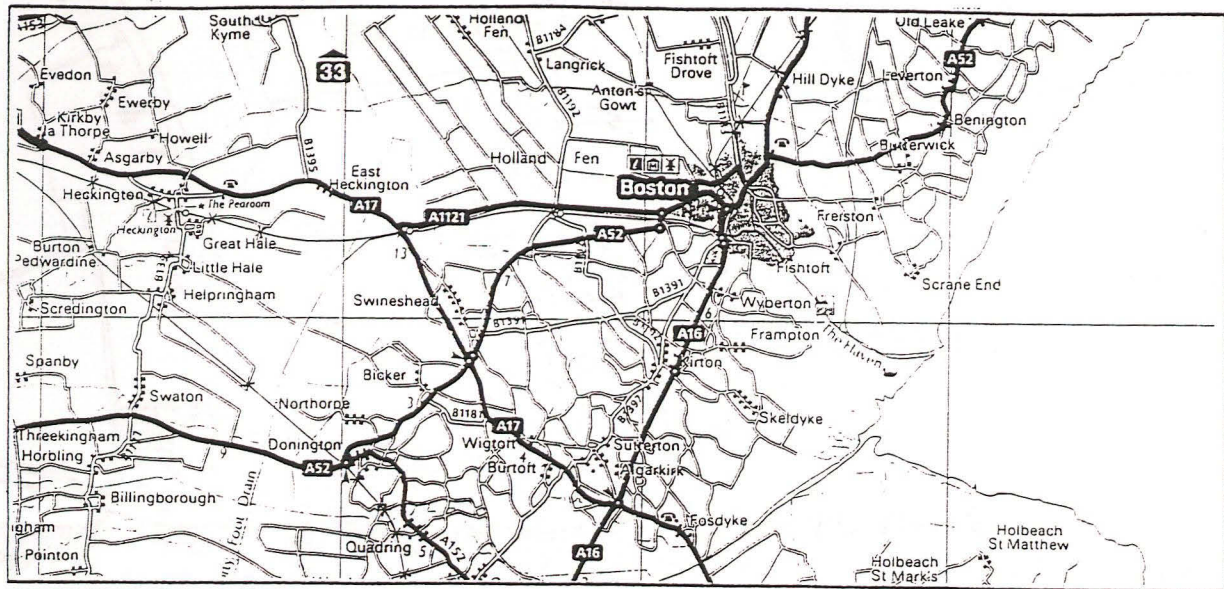


Fig. 1 Location of Bicker (based on the 1955 Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 map Sheet TF 23. © Crown Copyright, reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Licence No. AL 10002165).

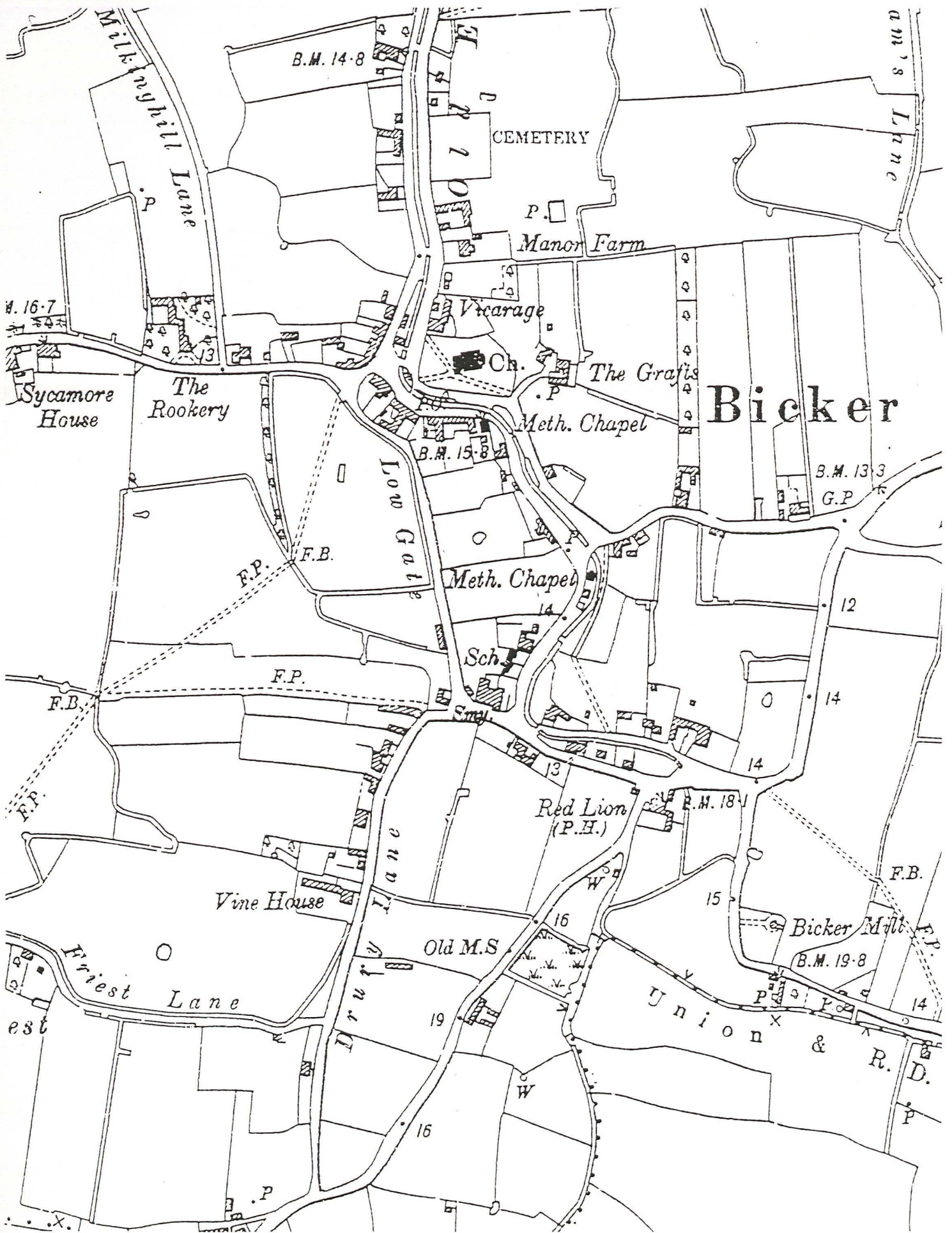


Fig. 2 Extract from the 1906 Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map, Sheet Lincs. 117SW (reproduced at enlarged scale), showing the former ditch crossing the development site.

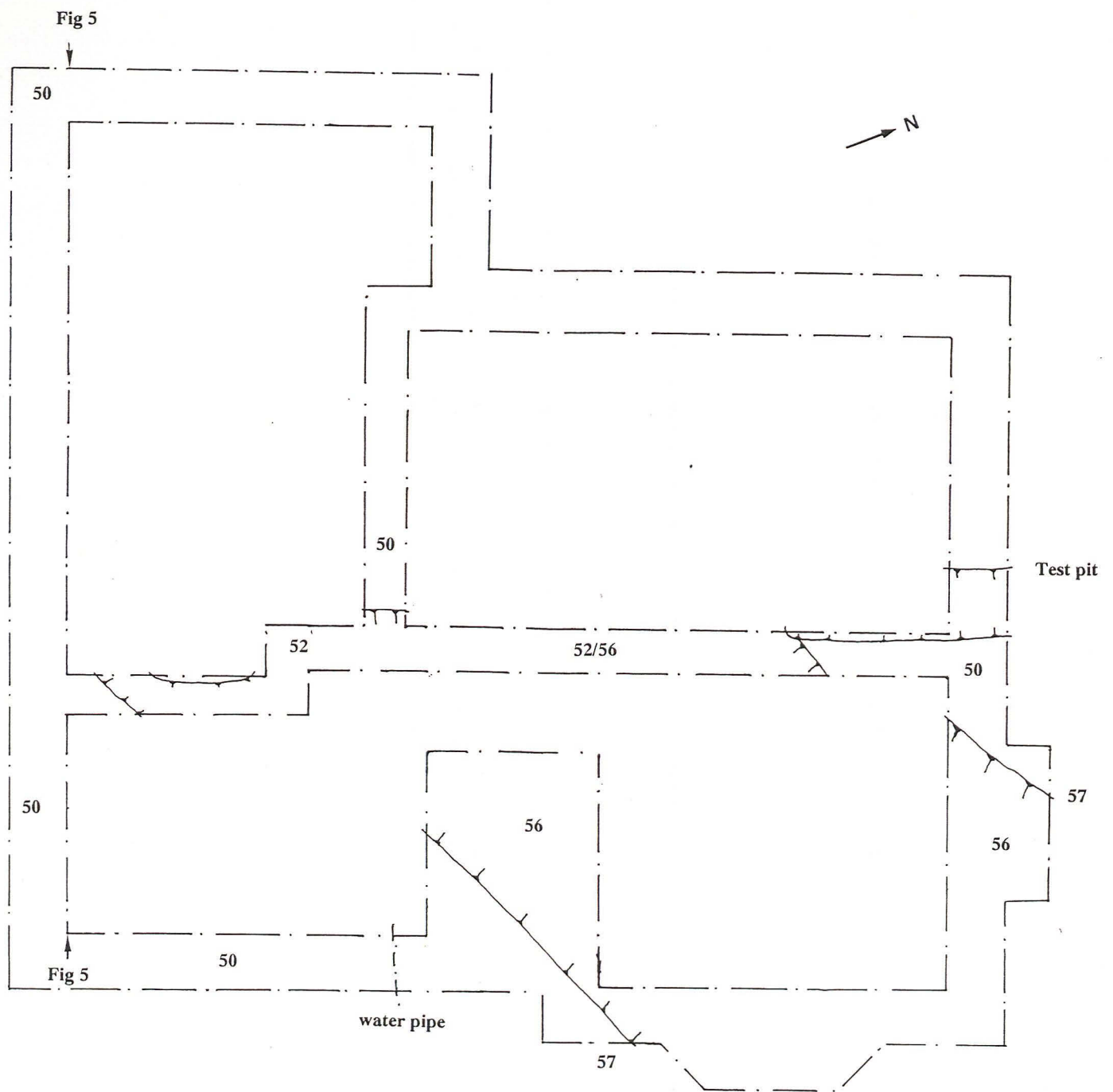


Fig. 4 House foundation plan, Plot 2, showing position of archaeological observations (McDaid and Frost, after Tann).

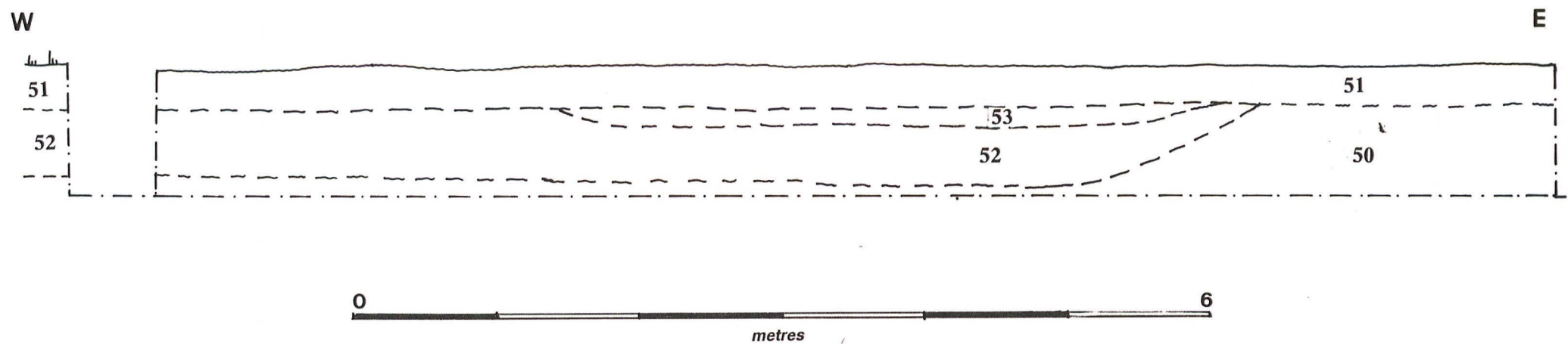


Fig. 5 Sections through deposits exposed in the southern house foundation trench, Plot 2 (Tann).

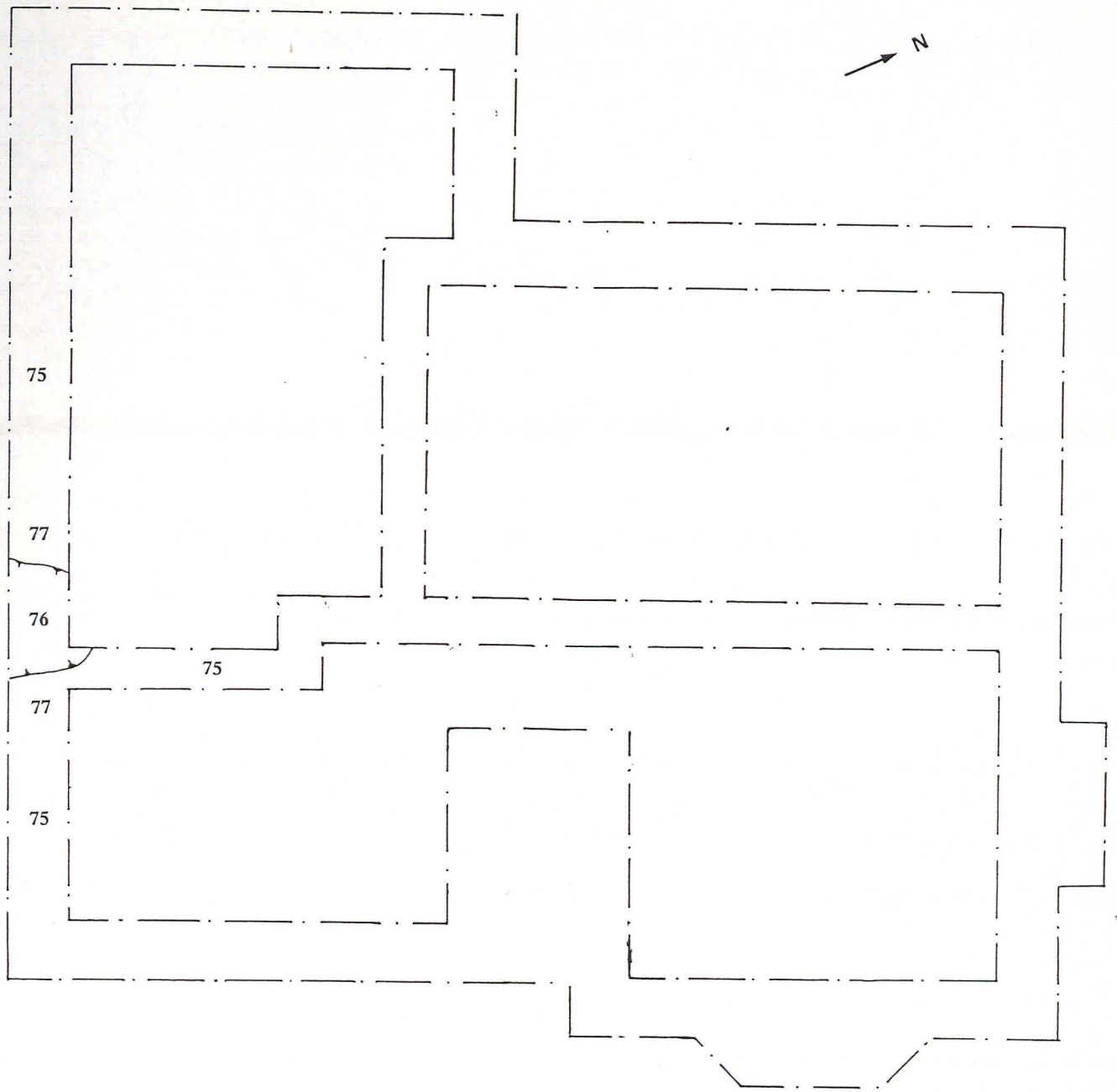


Fig. 6 House foundation plan, Plot 5, showing position of possible archaeological feature (McDaid and Tann).

THE PLATES



Pl. 1 Foundation trenches for the garage, Plot 5 (looking east towards Drury Lane, with the boundary of Plot 6 (formerly Plot 10) to the left).

Pl. 2 Excavation of foundation trenches for Plot 5 (looking east to Drury Lane)

