

PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY LINCOLN

PLOT 1, MAIN ROAD, BURWELL,
LOUTH, LINCOLNSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Site code
NGR:
LCCM Acc No:

MRBL 01
TF 53545 37960
2001.179
W/025/0224/01



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L16170

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Report prepared for J Stainton (Architect) on behalf of Mr & Mrs Norbron
by S.A. Savage

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Conservation
Services

03 JAN 2002

Highways & Planning
Directorate

Summary

- An archaeological watching brief took place during the groundworks for a residential development on Land on the west side of Main Road, Burwell, Louth.
- The watching brief identified a limited range of archaeological features, mostly of a post-medieval or modern date, although some features could not be dated.

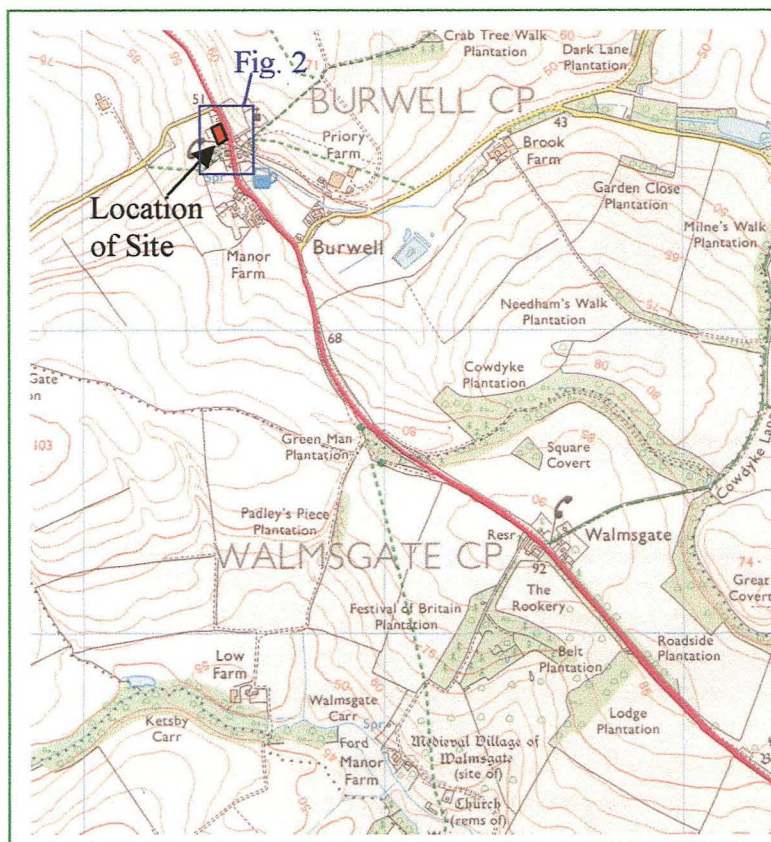


Fig. 1 Site location, area highlighted in red is the development plot, the blue square is that seen in fig. 2.
(Scale 1:25000; OS copyright ref AL100033876)

1.0 Introduction

An archaeological watching brief took place during the excavation of footings trenches for a housing development, comprising a single dwelling, with associated detached garage, on Plot 1, Main Road, Burwell, Louth (National Grid Reference TF53545 3796). The work was commissioned by J Stainton (Architect), on behalf of Mr & Mrs Norbron, to fulfil a condition attached to a planning permission (Ref. N/025/0224/01).

This report documents the results of the archaeological observation and recording undertaken on 17.7.2001. It has been prepared to meet the requirements of current local guidelines (*Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: A Manual of Archaeological Practice*, 1998); and a formal project specification prepared by this company.

Copies of this report will be deposited with J Stainton (Architect) on behalf of Mr & Mrs Norbron, the Assistant Built Environment Officer for Lincolnshire County Council / the County SMR. A short text will be submitted to the editor of the county journal, *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology*; and this will feature as a short note in due course. Reports will also be deposited at the City and County Museum, Lincoln, accompanied with an ordered project archive.

2.0 Location and Description

Louth is in the administrative district of East Lindsey at the eastern edge of the Lincolnshire Wolds. Burwell is located approximately 7km south east of the town.

The site of development lies on the north side of the village, on the west side of Main Road (fig.1), at National Grid Reference TF 53545 3796. It comprises an irregular (L-shaped) unit of approximately 0.06 hectares.

The geology of the area is characterised as a boulder clay, which lies above a weathered secondary chalk. (BGS 1998).

Prior to this development, the site was part of a forecourt and building associated with the (now defunct) filling station, which occupies the remainder of the property (fig. 2). The plot itself is defined by a mature hawthorn hedge on the west side, a post and chain fence, and an existing property to the south, and is presently open to Main Road to the east. The ground slopes slightly downwards to the southeast and Main Road.

When the watching brief was undertaken, almost all of the area of the site was covered with demolition rubble, and ground cover only remained on the west side, comprising grass and some thistles etc. In the area of the detached garage, however, the ground was undisturbed and comprised the roadside verge to the east of the neighbouring property.

Planning permission was granted for residential development, comprising a single dwelling, with a detached garage on the south-east side (fig. 3). The permission was

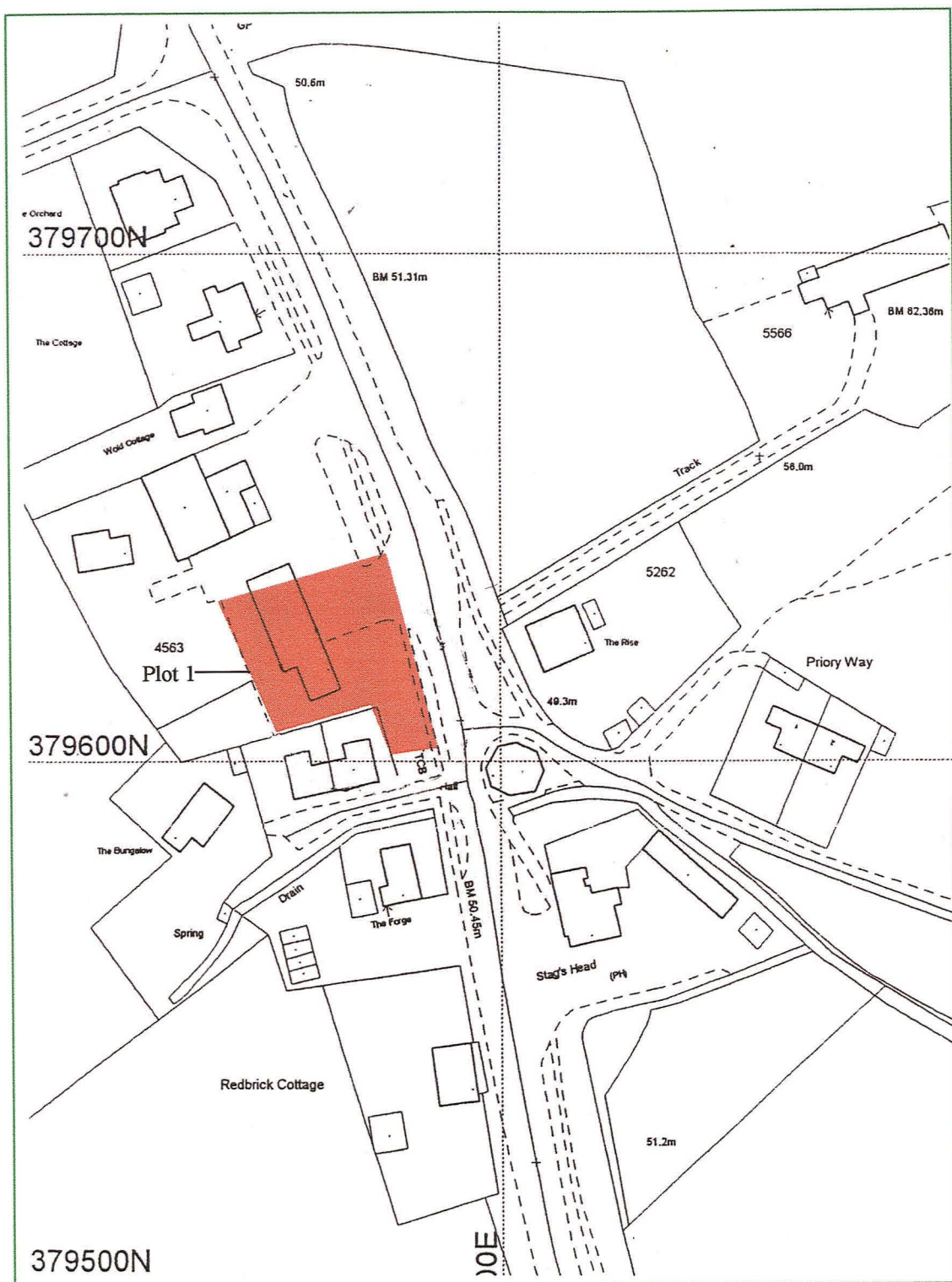


Fig. 2 Plan of the centre of Burwell village, with the area of Plot 1 highlighted.
(Scale 1:1250)

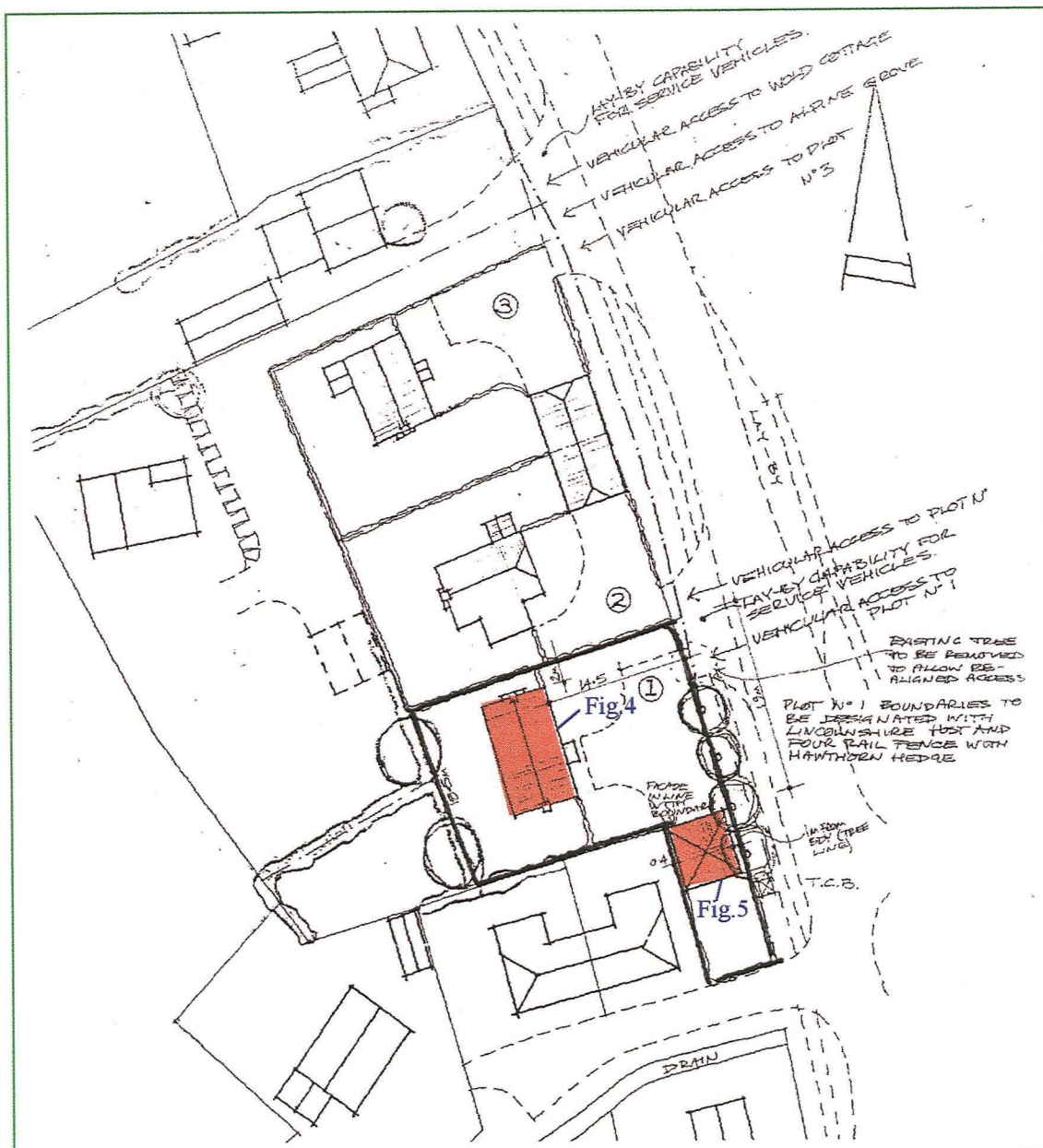


Fig . 3 Plan of the development, showing Plot 1(bold outline) with the house (fig.4) and garage (fig.5) highlighted.

granted subject to an archaeological watching brief being undertaken on all groundworks.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

The origins of Louth can be traced back as far as the Anglo-Saxon period: the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that, in the year 790AD, Abbot Aethelheard of a monastery at Louth was elected Archbishop of Canterbury.

Burwell was one of the settlements listed in the Domesday Survey of 1086 (*Buruelle*), when it was in the lordship of Asgautr (Morgan & Thorne 1986). At this time (i.e. late Saxon), the settlement had its own church, one mill, and 3s of woodland pasture. The existing church, St Michael's, contains some 12th century fabric and is surrounded by the earthwork remains of the alien Benedictine priory.

The SMR records finds of Romano-British pottery in the field to the west of the site (PRN 42364). A possible kiln site (PRN 42370) producing light grey ware of mostly 3rd/4th century date is located close to the moated site on the south side of the village - evidence of burning here has since been ploughed out.

The site is located within what would have been the traditional medieval core of the village.

4.0 Methodology

The site was visited on 17.7.2001, when the foundation trenches were cut for the house and garage. This work was undertaken with a JCB excavator employing a 0.5m wide flat-bladed bucket. The foundation trenches were generally 0.6 – 0.7m wide and a minimum of 1m deep. Due to the lay of the land, this resulted in trenches up to 1.6m deep in the NW part of the site. This work was monitored continuously to ensure that any archaeological features exposed were identified and recorded.

The archaeological fieldwork entailed the cleaning by hand of all exposed surfaces, followed by a thorough inspection. All archaeological deposits exposed by this method were subjected to limited excavation to assess their nature/dimensions and to attempt to recover datable material. These investigations resulted in the production of written descriptions of each layer on standard watching brief context recording sheets. Colour photographs and scale drawings compliment these accounts.

5.0 Results

5.1 The House Plot (fig. 4)

The modern topsoil, context 001, was 0.25-0.30m deep, and consisted of a very dark grey sandy clay loam, containing occasional small rounded flint and chalk pebbles. This was only encountered along the western edge of the plot, where it had not been disturbed during demolition and site clearance.

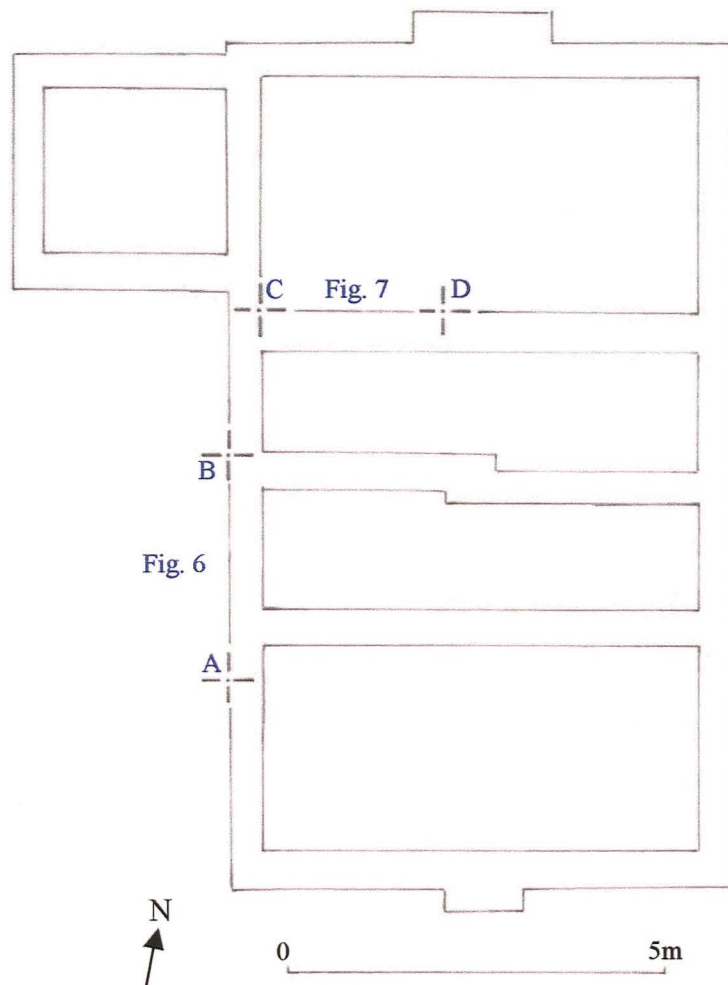


Fig. 4 Plan of foundation trenches for house showing location of figs 6 and 7. (Scale 1:100)

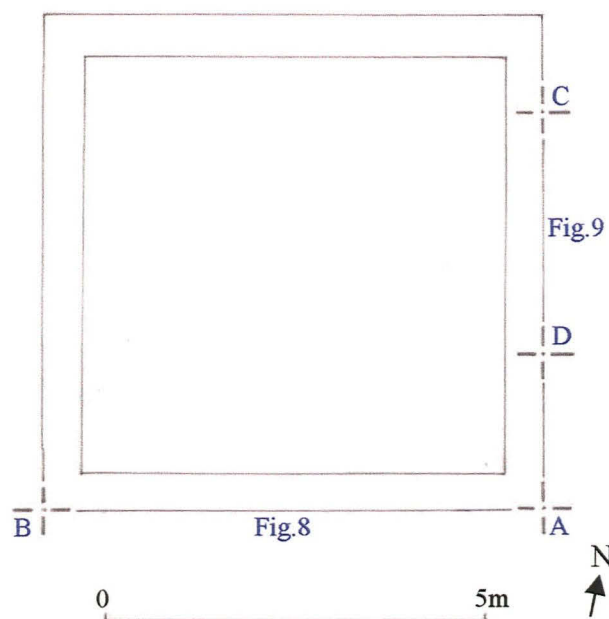


Fig. 5 Plan of foundation trenches for garage showing location of figs 8 and 9. (Scale 1:100)

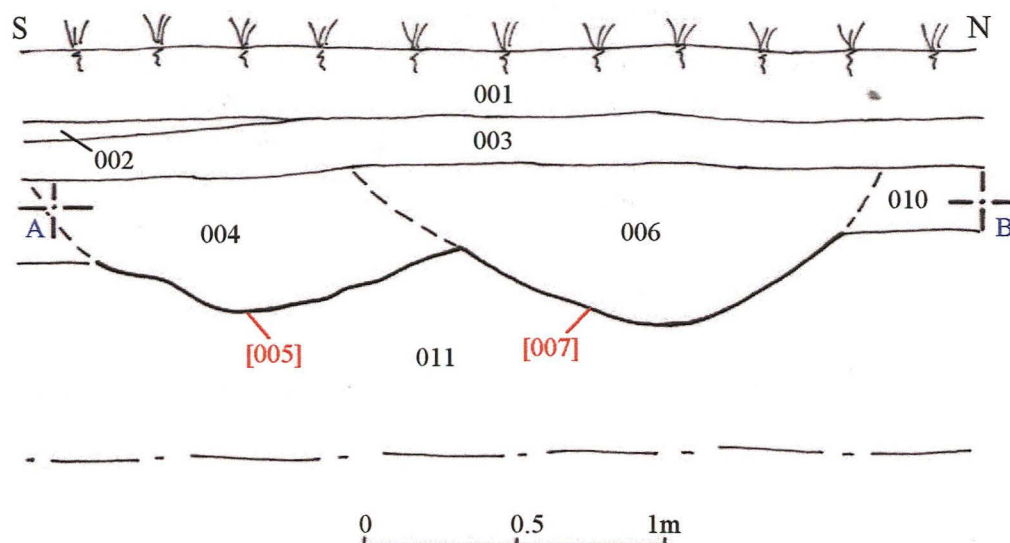


Fig. 6 East facing section in SW corner of house plot, showing pits [005] and [006]. (Scale 1:25)

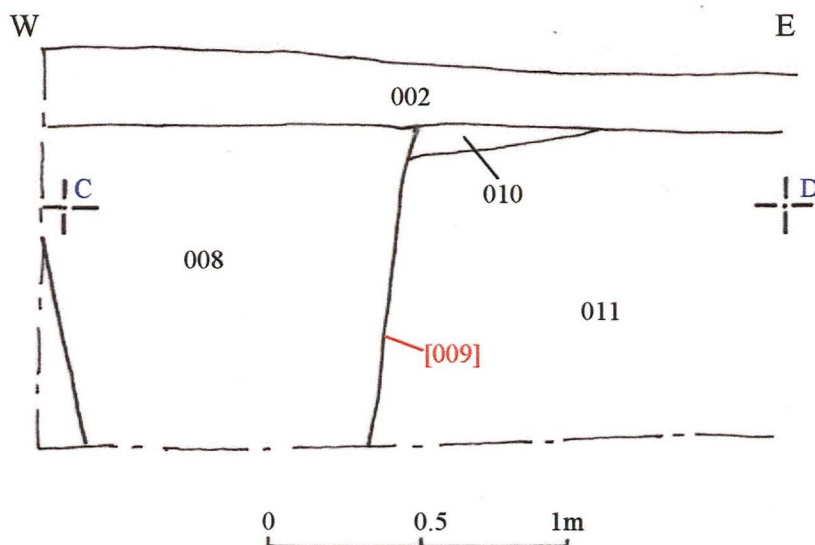


Fig. 7 South facing section showing rubbish pit/latrine [009]. (Scale 1:25)

In the western section, below the topsoil, lay a thin rubble layer (002), which may represent site clearance prior to the construction of the filling station (see fig. 2). Over the remainder of the plot, this material is indistinguishable from the levelled material produced by the recent demolition of one of the garage buildings. This material extended over most of the plot to a thickness of 0.24-0.30m.

Over the majority of the area, 002 stripped off onto the natural geology, which is a weathered chalk (011). Along the western side of the area, however, a thin layer of natural boulder clay was encountered in an irregular strip approx. 1.5m wide. This material, 010, lay over the chalk to an increasing depth as the trenches proceeded westwards, becoming 0.5m thick in the west trench of the conservatory.

Again in the west section of the site, a layer of friable, dark brown sandy clay loam, lay below context 002. This material, 003, was 0.13m thick, and contained occasional hand-made brick and tile fragments. It seems likely that this material represents a buried garden soil, predating the construction of the filling station.

Two shallow pits were observed in the western section of the house plot. These were located approximately half way along the west trench (fig. 6). The pits, [005] and [007], contained very similar fills: a mid-brown clay containing very occasional small rounded pebbles and angular flint, numbered 004 and 006 respectively. Fill 006 appeared very slightly darker than 004, and pit [007] appeared to cut 004. The lack of clarity of the boundary between the pit fills and the surrounding boulder clay, however, coupled with the very clean nature of these fills, suggests the pits may in fact be the product of solution activity within the chalk, rather than true archaeological features. The pits contained no datable material.

One other cut feature was encountered within this area (fig. 7). This was at the west end of the trench for the wall dividing the lounge from the hall. It was a steep sided pit, [009], which may well have been rectangular in plan; the east and west sides being parallel, but the north and south sides lay outside the excavated trench. It contained a firm, dark greenish brown silty clay fill (008), which contained occasional charcoal flecks and animal bone. It seems likely that this feature was a rubbish pit or latrine associated with a street front property of post-medieval date.

5.2 The Garage (fig. 5)

The modern topsoil, context 012, was 0.22-0.32m deep, and consisted of a very dark greyish brown sandy clay loam, containing occasional small rounded chalk and flint pebbles, and occasional charcoal flecks.

Below the topsoil lay 013, another rubble layer comprising frequent handmade brick and tile fragments, sand and mortar lenses, glass, etc and containing pottery of Victorian date, i.e. transfer ware

In the trench excavated for the south wall of the garage (fig. 8) the remains of a wall and floor were encountered. The floor (016) was constructed of handmade floor bricks (230 x 115 x 50mm) and was 0.5m below modern ground level; it was oriented north-south, and bedded on a thin layer (0.05m) of friable, semi-bonded lime mortar. The remains of a wall were seen along the east edge of floor 016. This wall (015)

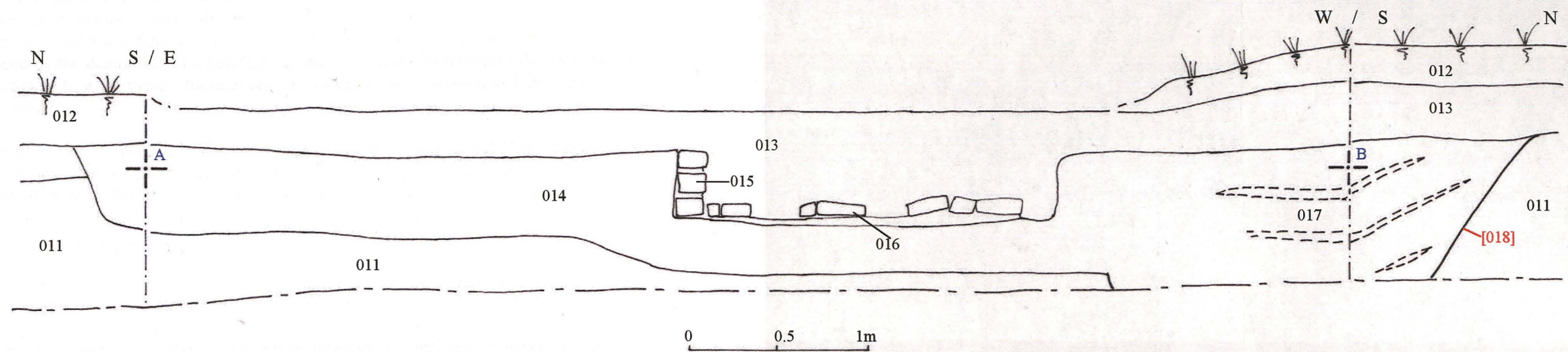


Fig.8 North facing section along south wall of garage showing structural remains of wall 015 and floor 016, levelling layer 014, and pit/ construction cut [018]. (Scale 1:25)

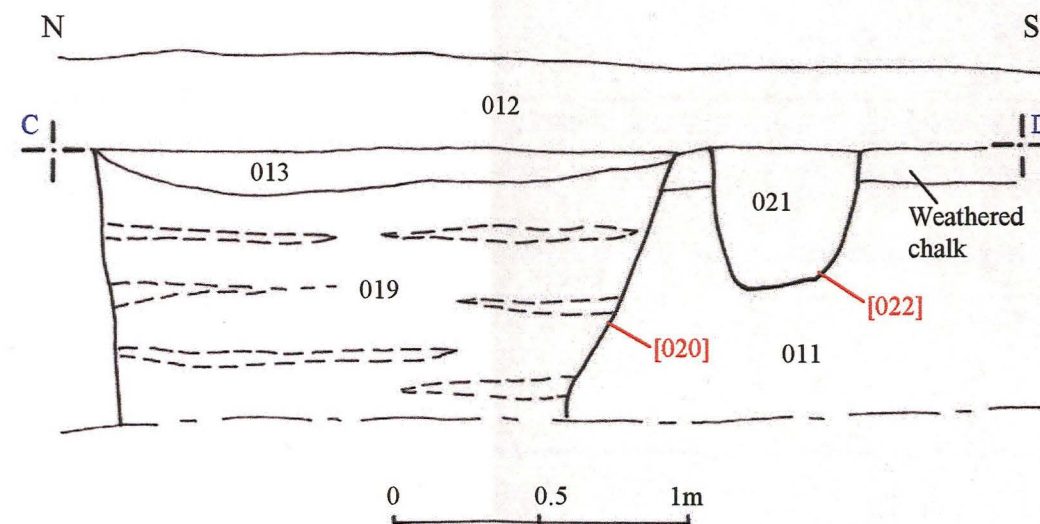


Fig.9 West facing section along east wall of garage showing pit [020] and ?posthole [022]. (Scale 1:25)

consisted of three remaining courses of handmade bricks (260 x 140 x 80mm), set in a lime mortar and oriented north-south: a void on the west side of floor 016 probably represented the return of this wall.

Structure 015/016 was filled by rubble 014, and it seems likely that this rubble was produced by the demolition of a building of which 015 and 016 represent the remains. It is not clear how far these structural remains extended beyond the trench into the garage area.

Structure 015/016 was cut into a layer of dark brown sandy clay (014). This material contained abundant small and medium rounded and sub-angular chalk pebbles and occasional charcoal flecks. It appeared to lie within a cut, which may represent the construction trench of a building located further to the south, but at the west side could not be distinguished from the fill of a deeper pit (017).

In the southwest corner of the garage plot, a steep sided pit was partially revealed (018). Only the northeast side of this pit was seen in the base of the foundation trench where it appeared east-west oriented, with a rounded northeast corner. Pit [018] was filled by 017, a material similar to 014, which although it contained tip lines of small rounded chalk pebbles on the west side, became indistinguishable from 014 to the east. It seems likely that the filling of pit [018] coincided with the deposition of 014, and the subsequent construction of 015/016.

In the east foundation trench for the garage (see fig. 9) another pit was encountered, along with a smaller pit or posthole. Pit [020] was seen on both sides of the foundation trench and was 1.92m long and 0.9m deep with very steep sides. It was filled by 019, a friable, dark brown sandy clay containing lenses of chalk and pea-gravel up to 0.05m thick. No datable material was recovered from this pit.

Adjacent to pit [020], but only seen in the eastern section of the foundation trench, was a smaller steep sided pit [022]. This contained 021, a rubble fill, in all respects similar to 013, which suggests the removal of a structural element such as a post during the demolition of 015/016.

6.0 Discussion and Conclusions

Despite previous finds of Romano-British pottery in the field to the west of the site, no finds of this date were recovered during the watching brief.

The archaeological features exposed by the watching brief appear to represent what one would perhaps anticipate, given the location of the site, close to the core of the traditional settlement. The position of the new house footprint (set back from the frontage) has resulted in the exposure of features of a type that could perhaps be anticipated in a 'garden zone', situated behind a roadside dwelling (a buried garden soil (003), two (undated) pits (005,007) and a steep-sided rubbish pit/latrine (009)).

The lack of dating evidence associated with some features is a problem and it is possible that the suggested latrine, for example, was of medieval origin.

The garage footing, located immediately adjacent to the road, exposed structural evidence associated with frontage activity. Although the entire garage footprint contained rubble (presumably from demolition of the building of which 015/016 represents a part), the presence of a pit and possible posthole to the north of 015/016 suggests that building remains did not extend this far. Consequently, no direct link could be made between the features seen in the area of the house and the structural remains exposed closer to the frontage.

7.0 Bibliography

Knowles, D & Hadcock, R N, 1971, *Medieval Religious Houses of England and Wales*

Morgan, P & Thorn, C (eds), 1986, *Domesday Book: Lincolnshire*

Pevsner, N. & Harris, J. 1989 *The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire* (2nd Edition revised by N. Antram). London, Penguin.

8.0 Appendix 1. Colour Plates



Plate 1. General view, looking SE across the site, during setting out. The trenches for the house are marked out in the foreground, the garage plot is located in the grassy area behind the digger.



Plate 2. General view of the foundation trenches for the house , looking North.



Plate 3. Pits [005] and [007], in the western section of the house plot, looking west.



Plate 4. Latrine/rubbish pit [009] located at the at the west end of the trench for the wall dividing the lounge from the hall, looking north.



Plate 5. Wall [015] (located adjacent to the vertical scale) and floor [016] in the foundation trench for the south wall of the garage, looking SW.



Plate 6. Pit [020] and ?posthole [022] in the foundation trench for the east wall of the garage, looking east.