

PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

L I N C O L N

**EXTENSION TO SHEPEAU STOW
PRIMARY SCHOOL,
SHEPEAU STOW, LINCOLNSHIRE**

WHAPLODE

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF REPORT**

Site code	SHEP 01
NGR:	TF 30561 12210
LCCM Acc No:	2001.444



Conservation
Services

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Report prepared for Hyder Business Services
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Scale 1: 100.

Summary

- A standard archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Shepeau Stow Primary School during the groundworks for a classroom extension
- The recording brief was required as a condition of planning due to the known proximity of cropmark remains; believed to be of Romano-British date
- No significant archaeological deposits or features of any period were exposed during the course of this investigation, which was undertaken over a period of 4 days



Fig. 1: Site location. The site is highlighted in red and the area shown in Fig. 2 is outlined in blue. The areas containing extensive Romano-British cropmarks are shown in green. Scale 1:12500 (OS copyright licence AL 515 21 A0001)

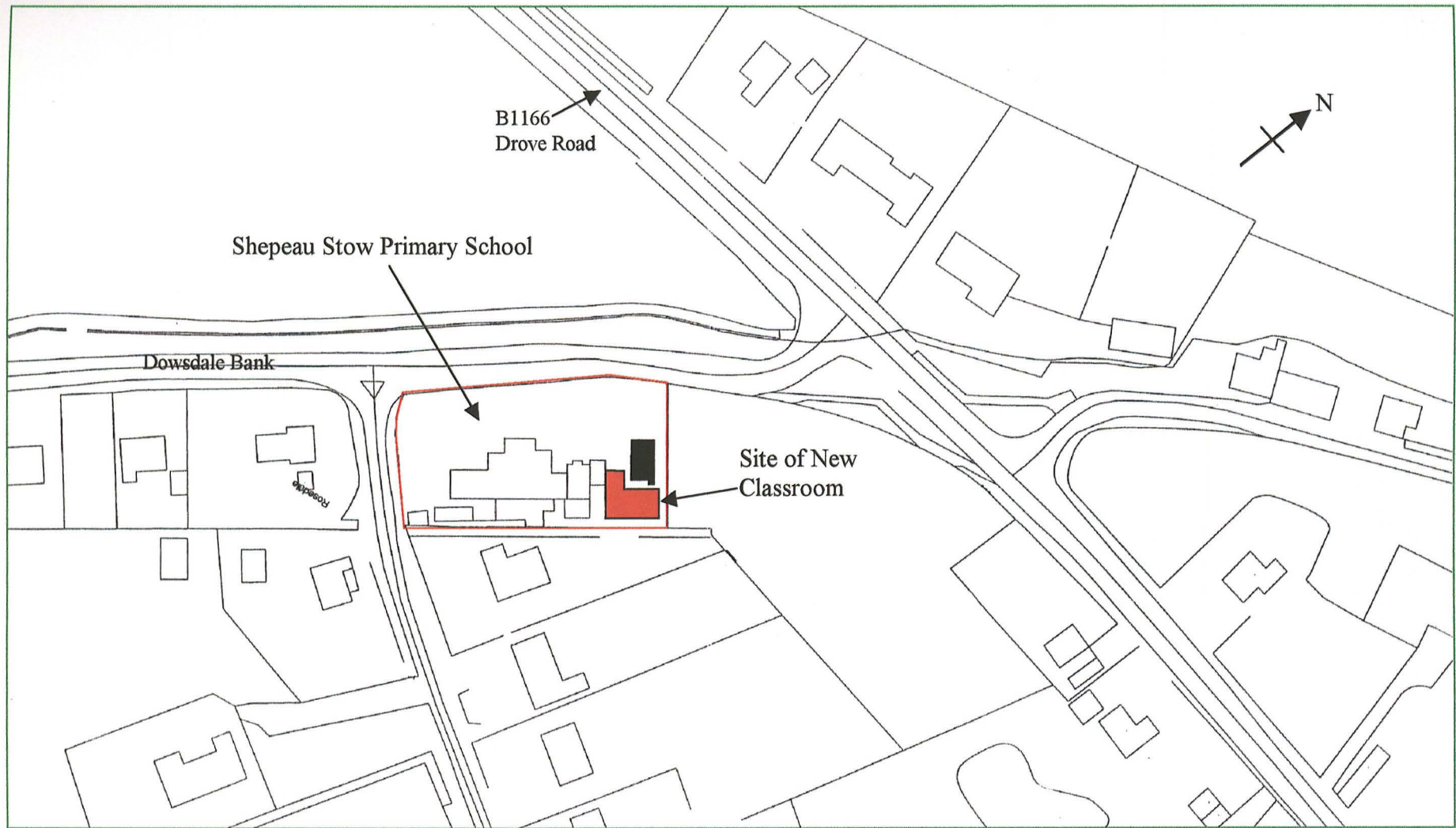


Fig. 2: Plan of Shepeau Stow showing the location of the primary school. The site of the new classroom is shown in red, the black building is a temporary classroom relocated to this position. Scale 1: 1250.

1.0 Introduction

An archaeological watching brief was carried out for Hyder Business Services at Shepeau Stow Primary School. This work was commissioned to fulfil a planning requirement associated with an extension to the north east side of an existing building range (fig. 2).

The fieldwork was carried out in accordance with current national guidelines (IFA, 1994), which have been adopted in the Lincolnshire County Council publication *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: A Manual of Archaeological Practice* (LCC, 1998).

The archive for this project will be held at the Lincoln City and County Museum. Access can be granted with reference to the global accession number, 2001.444.

2.0 Location and description

Shepeau Stow is located within the Lincolnshire fenland approx. 7km east of Crowland and 12km SSE of Spalding in the administrative district of South Holland. It occupies a slightly raised 'island' at c. 3m ODN (the surrounding land lies at an elevation of between 0 and 1m ODN). The Primary School is towards the centre of the settlement, on the south side of the junction of Dowsdale Bank and the B1166 (Drove Road).

The site boundaries are defined to the south-west by an existing school building, to the southeast by a chain link fence and a stream, to the northwest by a large mobile classroom, and to the northeast by a temporary fence and a grass playing field area. There is some topographic variation, the ground slopes steeply away from the road, which appears raised above the surrounding, predominantly flat, landscape. The area of development lies on the lower ground adjacent to a stream and is fairly level. The central national grid reference is TF 30561 12210.

The footprint of the new classroom measures approximately 12m x 6.5m in area with a 4m x 4m cloakroom on the west side.

3.0 Planning background

Full planning permission was granted by Lincolnshire County Council to construct an extension on the northeast side of the existing school range. This extension will create an additional classroom, including a practical area along with cloakroom/toilet facilities.

The planning permission was granted subject to the undertaking of an archaeological recording brief on all groundworks likely to expose or destroy archaeological remains, resulting in the production of an ordered archive and archaeological report.

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

Prehistoric finds from the area of Shepeau Stow are limited to some late Iron Age pottery recovered along with Romano-British pottery from a private excavation approximately 600m south of the primary school (SMR ref 22127)

The village is located within an area of extensive cropmarks, which have been identified from aerial photographs (SMR refs 20246, 20417, 20421, 20422, 20423, 22045, 22179), and various spotfinds (SMR refs 20418, 22042, 22141, 23185, 23186, 23187) have dated these to the Romano-British period (Hallam, 1970). The cropmarks have been interpreted as field systems, watercourses, enclosures, trackways, settlements and areas of industrial activity including saltworks.

Concentrations of Romano-British settlement activity and saltmaking have been recovered from three areas within 750m of the primary school (SMR refs 23177, 22039 and 20418). A watching brief carried out in 1998 at Matheson House, Oxcroft Bank (some 650m to the SW of the present development at TF 3015 1175) identified one ditch as a continuation of one of the cropmark features.

The place-name 'Shepeau' meaning 'the river where sheep are found' is derived from the old English *scep* and *ea* (Cameron, 1998), although it is interesting to note that *ea* has become the Norman *eau*. 'Stow' is a later addition and in S Lincolnshire meant 'a dam' (ibid). Documentary evidence suggests that the name *Shepeau* is at least as old as the mid 12th century and may date to the late 10th century (Hayes & Lane, 1992).

Shepeau Stow is located on the boundary between the parishes of Crowland and Whaplode, near to watercourses and was probably given over to sheep or cattle, as the name suggests. Within the village envelope, however, only a few sherds of medieval pottery have been recovered from fieldwalking (ibid).

The settlement of Shepeau Stow does not appear in the Domesday Survey, which indicates that its origins lie after 1086 in the medieval period. Its most notable feature is the post-medieval windmill (SMR ref 22078).

Although the present development is located near to the crossroads in the middle of the medieval settlement, it is more significantly located in the middle of a Romano-British cropmark field system.

5.0 Methodology

Several visits were made to the site, although the significant ones were on 8.1.02 (when a hole was excavated for a new septic tank) and 18.1.02 / 21.1.02 when the area of the new classroom was excavated, including the removal of several Victorian cesspits/soakaways.

The investigation has resulted in the production of written descriptions on standard watching brief context recording sheets and colour photographs. These records have been ordered in post-excavation and will form the basis of a long-term project archive.

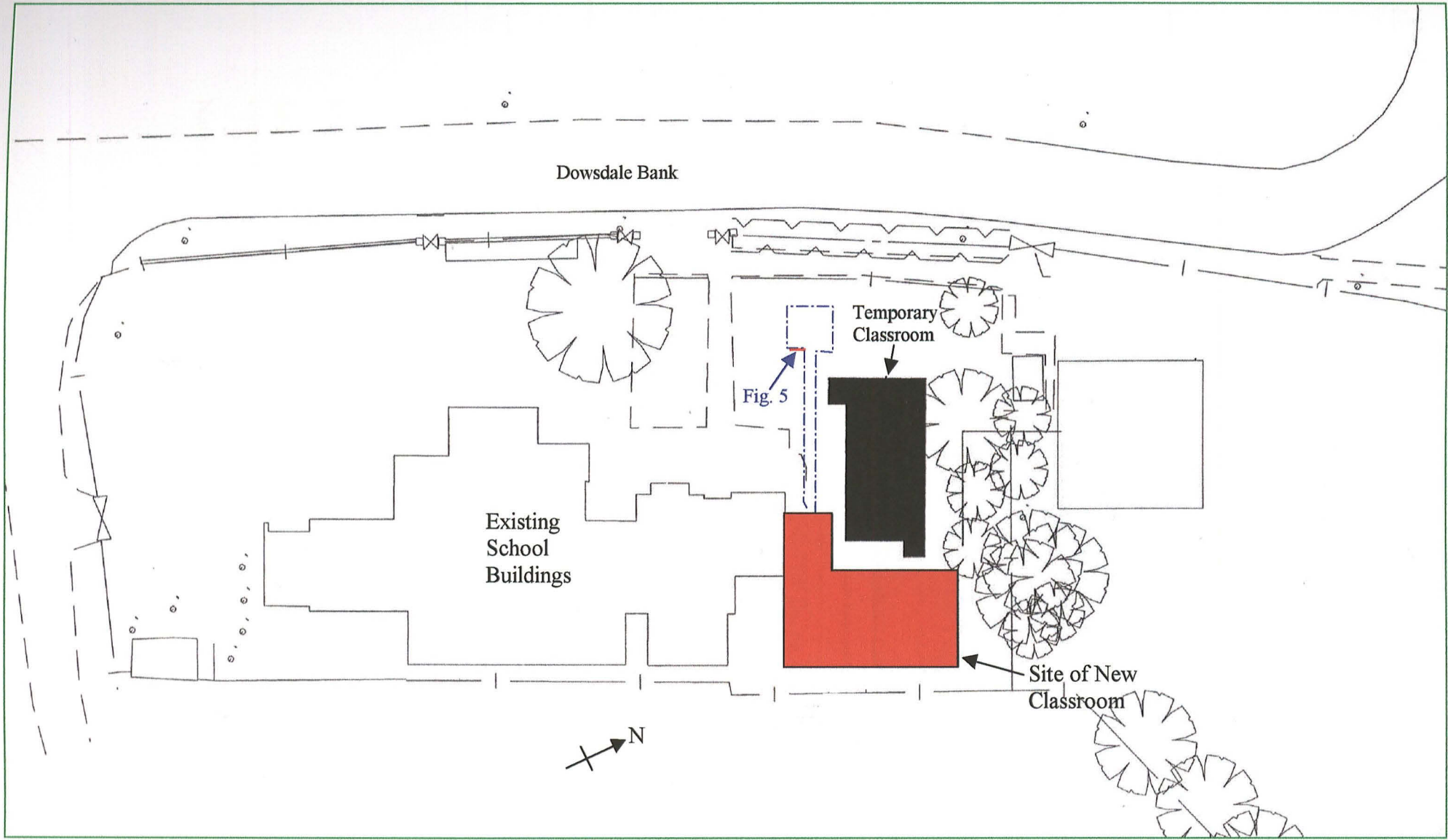


Fig. 3: Plan of Shepeau Stow Primary School showing the development area in red. The blue dot-dash line represents the area excavated for the new septic tank and the drainage trench leading to it. The section illustrated in Fig. 5 is highlighted in red. Scale 1:400.

6.0 Results

On 8.1.02, a large hole (4.6 x 3.3m) was excavated in the E corner of the site for a new septic tank.

This hole, approx. 1m deep, contained no archaeology, but provided a section through undisturbed deposits.

In this area, the modern topsoil, 001, was 0.35m thick and consisted of a dark brownish grey silty loam with occasional sub-rounded gravel inclusions and charcoal flecks. Below 001, was a mid/dark brown slightly loamy silt subsoil layer, approximately 0.15m thick (002). Below the subsoil was 003, a naturally derived light brown silt containing occasional lenses of mid-orange silt.

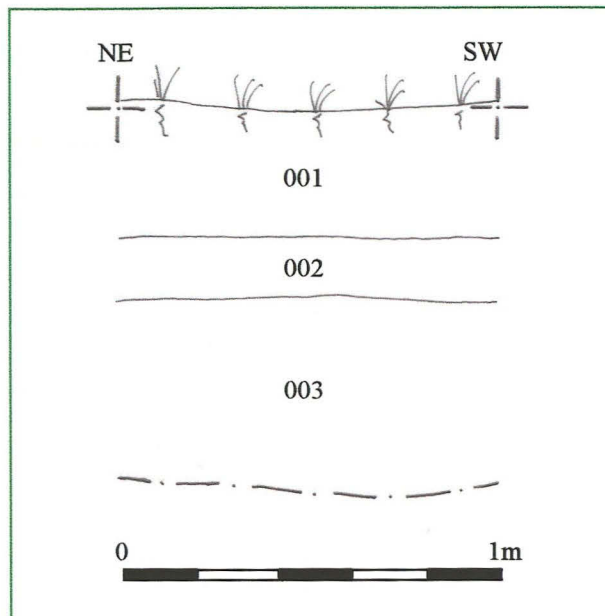


Fig. 4: NW facing section showing typical sequence of layers. Scale 1:20

When the site was examined on 18.1.02, the footprint area had been cleared and work was underway to excavate to 350mm – 500mm beneath existing ground level. The only areas where a record of the stratigraphy could be made were the peripheral section faces on the SW and NE sides. No discrete archaeological features or significant deposits were identified within any of the section faces that were examined.

On the southwest side of the footprint, the section face revealed the following stratigraphic sequence:

Modern tarmac surfaces (10cm)

/

Mixed limestone/pebble/brick hardcore (10cm – 15cm)

/

Mid grey-brown sandy silt, containing occasional pebbles, brick frags and gravel, also common small coal inclusions (004) (30cm).

/

Natural light brown silt (003)

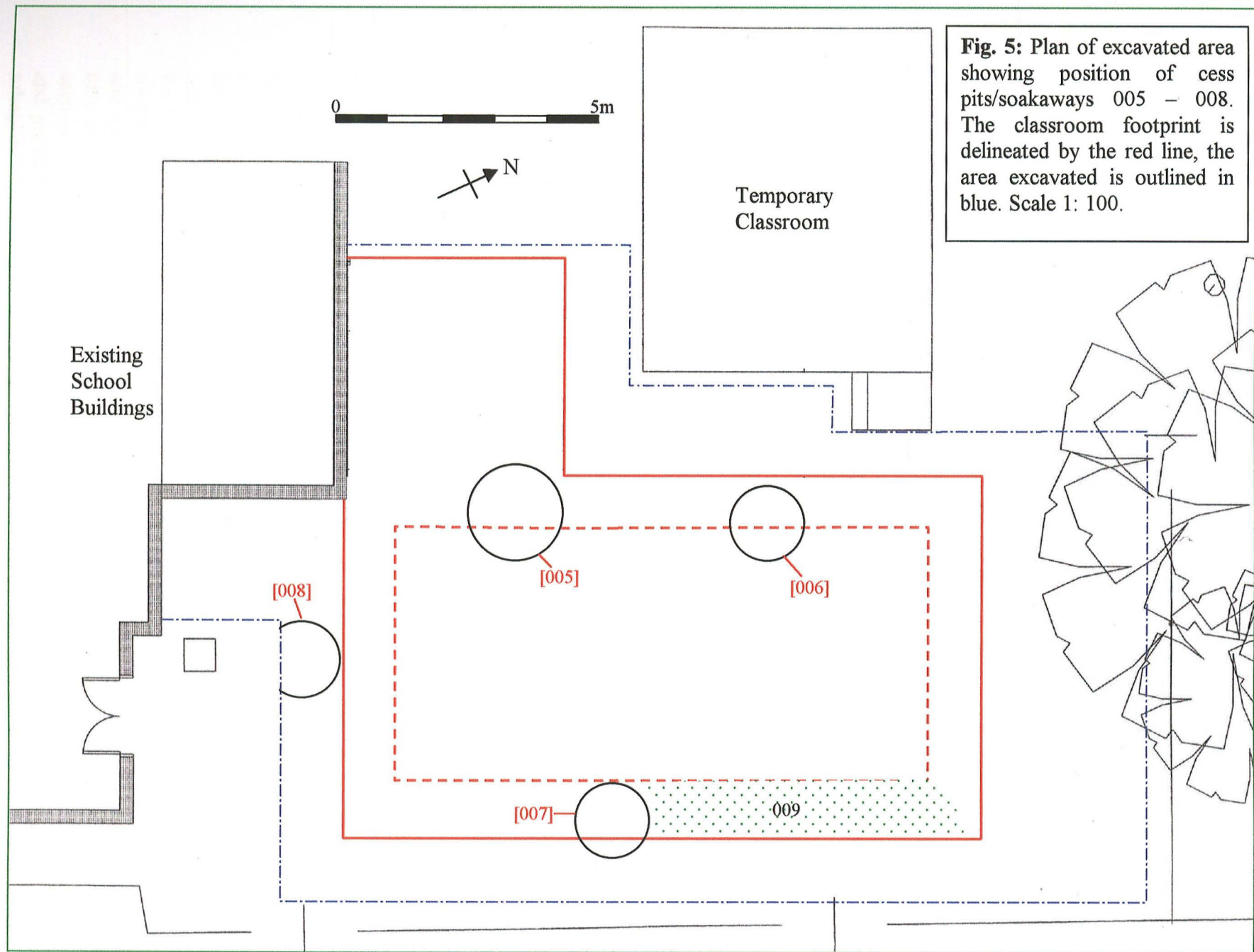


Fig. 5: Plan of excavated area showing position of cess pits/soakaways 005 – 008. The classroom footprint is delineated by the red line, the area excavated is outlined in blue. Scale 1: 100.

On the west side of the footprint, the exposed sequence was slightly different:

Turf/grass

/

Brown soil mixed with pea gravel, occasional brick fragments (20cm)

/

Mid grey-brown sandy silt, containing occasional pebbles, brick frags and gravel, also common small coal inclusions (004) (30cm+).

Several modern services were exposed within the foundation footprint: these were sewer/drainage pipes associated with the existing structure to the immediate south-east of the new building footprint.

Within the area of the new classroom, several brick-built cesspits and soakaways were encountered (see fig. 3). The largest, 005, was circular in plan and some 1.8m in diameter; it was constructed of mortared brick (brick dimensions 230 x 110 x 70mm) and, including a 0.4m high domed cap, it was 2m deep. Although Victorian in date, this feature has remained in use until the clearance of the site, as a septic tank.

Approximately 5m to the NE of 005, was another circular brick built structure: 006. This feature was 1.4m in diameter and constructed of dry-built brick in a loose 'honeycomb' pattern (brick dimensions 225 x 110 x 60mm). The overall depth of this structure, including a 0.4m domed cap, was 1.7m. The loose, unbonded nature of the brickwork suggests that this structure was a soakaway, and a modern pipe connecting this to 005 demonstrates that its most recent use was as an overflow to 005.

Two similar features were already backfilled with crushed limestone when the visit was made and very little information could be gained from them. 007 was located near to the fenceline on the SE side of the site; it was circular in plan, 1.5m in diameter and constructed of dry-built brick. 008 was located near to the SW limit of excavation; also circular in plan, it was 1.5m in diameter and constructed of rendered brick. When questioned, site workers maintained that 007 had been approximately 1m deep and 008 approximately 1.2m deep. It seems likely that these two features had performed a similar function to 005 and 006 but were no longer in use when the area was cleared.

When the visit was made on 18.1.02, it was unclear to what depth the area would be finally trimmed and, as natural silt was encountered in the SW corner of the site, it seemed likely that further significant removal of material might expose earlier features. The visit on 21.1.02 was made in order to observe the final trim and the excavation of the blindings trenches around the periphery of the raft. When the levels had been calculated, they showed that the base level of the raft had already been reached, so the final trim did not reveal any further archaeology. The excavation of the blindings trenches – 1m wide trenches excavated around the edges of the building footprint to a depth of 0.2m – revealed only the underlying natural silt (003) at the SW and a patch of handmade brick rubble, 009, in the NE part of the site. Layer 009 was only seen at the base of the blindings trench, to the NE of soakaway 007, and was seen in the trench for a distance of some 3.5m. this material was sealed below 004, and probably represents the site clearance before the construction of the Victorian school buildings.

7.0 Discussion and conclusions

The watching brief was entirely negative, with no archaeological features of significance being exposed within the area of investigation.

It seems likely that, if archaeological remains do exist at the site, then these must lie at depth from the modern ground surface. A thorough check of the spoilheap at the site appeared to confirm this: it revealed only white china, brick fragments and related late post-medieval/early modern debris.

8.0 Effectiveness of methodology

The level of archaeological investigation was proportional to the scale of development being monitored, and it is variously concluded that this development has not impacted significantly on the archaeological resource which, in this area (and assuming that significant archaeological deposits do exist within this part of the site) is likely to lie at depth.

9.0 Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) would like to thank Hyder Business Services for this commission.

10.0 Bibliography

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11.0 Site archive

The site archive (documentary) for this project is in preparation and will be deposited at the Lincoln City and County Museum and the Lincolnshire Archives Office (documentary) within six months. Access may be granted by quoting the global accession number 2001.444.

12.0 Appendix 1: Colour Plates.

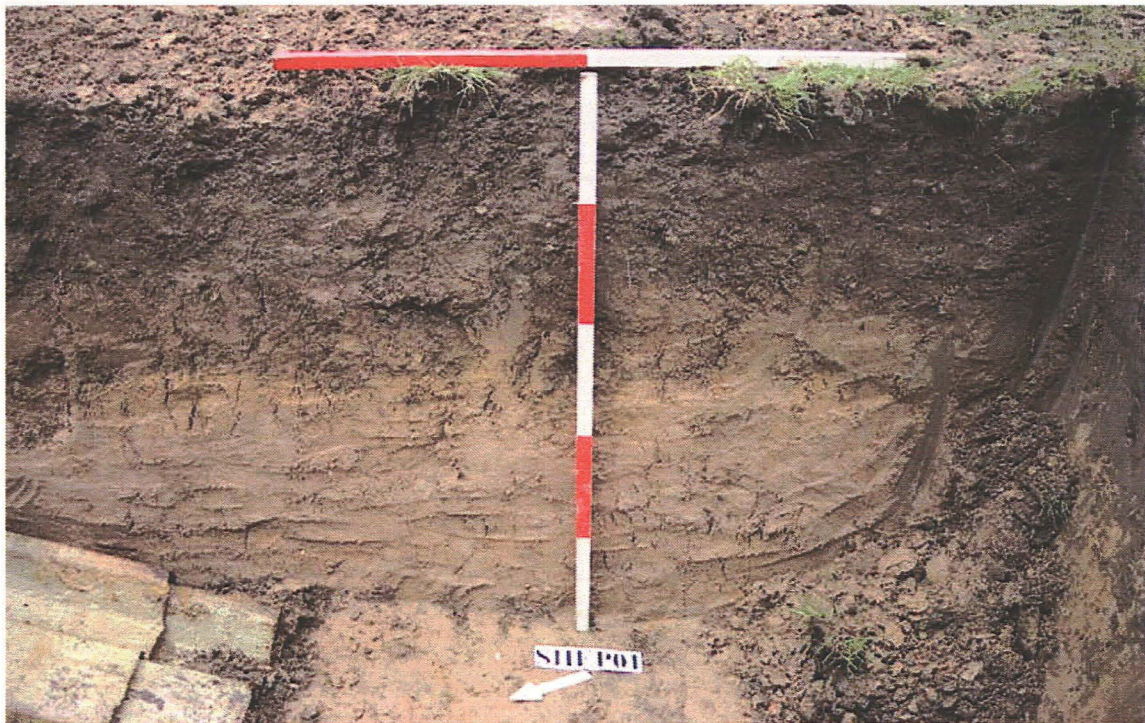


Plate 1: North-west facing section of septic tank pit showing natural layers.



Plate 2: General view, looking north-east across the footprint of the new classroom, Victorian cesspit [005] is in the foreground and soakaway [006] can be seen behind.



Plate 3: Victorian soakaway [006], looking south.



Plate 4: General view of the site after levelling and excavation of the blindings trenches, looking west.