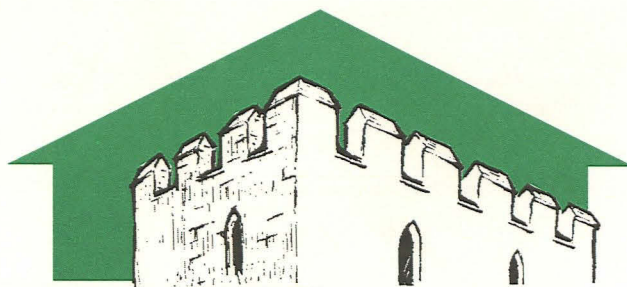


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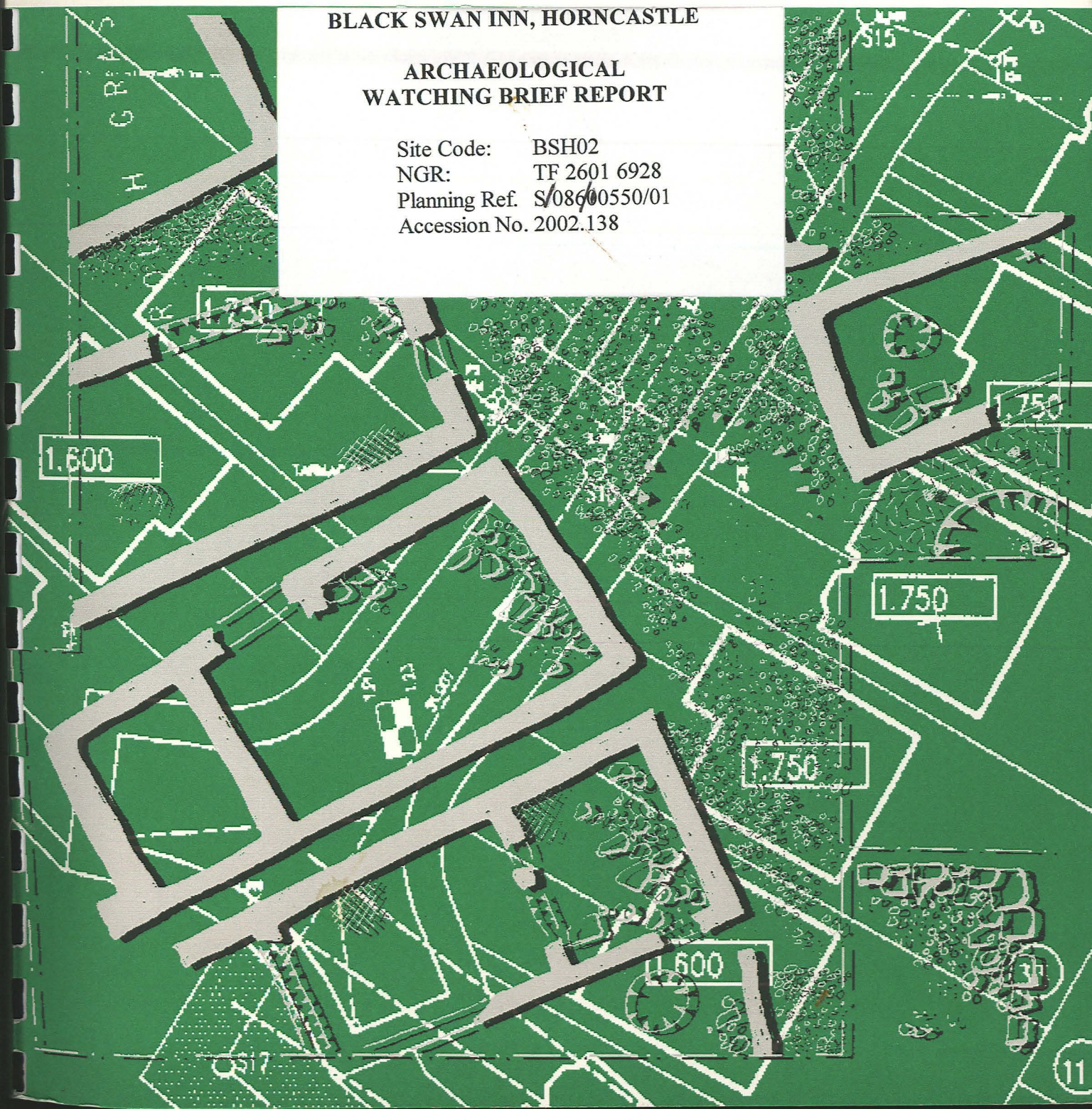


# PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY LINCOLN

BLACK SWAN INN, HORNCastle

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Site Code: BSH02  
NGR: TF 2601 6928  
Planning Ref. S/08600550/01  
Accession No. 2002.138



Event L12968  
Source L17695  
L17696  
Mon L3747

## BLACK SWAN INN, HORNCastle

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Report prepared for Mr and Mrs D. Body.  
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April 2002



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## *Summary*

*An archaeological watching brief took place during the excavation of foundation trenches for a new building in the car park of The Black Swan Inn, Horncastle.*

*Following a request from the building control officer it was necessary for the foundation trenches to be deepened, to the east of the site up to 1.7m deep. This had a detrimental effect on the observations that could be made in this area.*

*The first archaeologically significant horizon was a plaggen soil, formed presumably by the addition and digging-in of manure in a domestic garden setting. This frequent re-working of this material meant that some features that appeared to be cut from beneath it could have post-dated it.*

*A series of ditches were recorded which form a continuation of Roman and Iron Age field systems visible in aerial photographs to the west of the site. Three pits were also observed, two of which were for the disposal of domestic waste, the third being a possible quarry for the extraction of sand. These pits were of Late Iron Age or Roman date.*

*Mortar rubble was recovered from one of the ditches, and opus signinum fragments from one of the pits. This is indicative of stone buildings and of cement floors, which must have been demolished in the vicinity.*

*The results generally confirm that the site is on the margins of the extra-mural part of the Iron Age and Roman settlement of Horncastle*

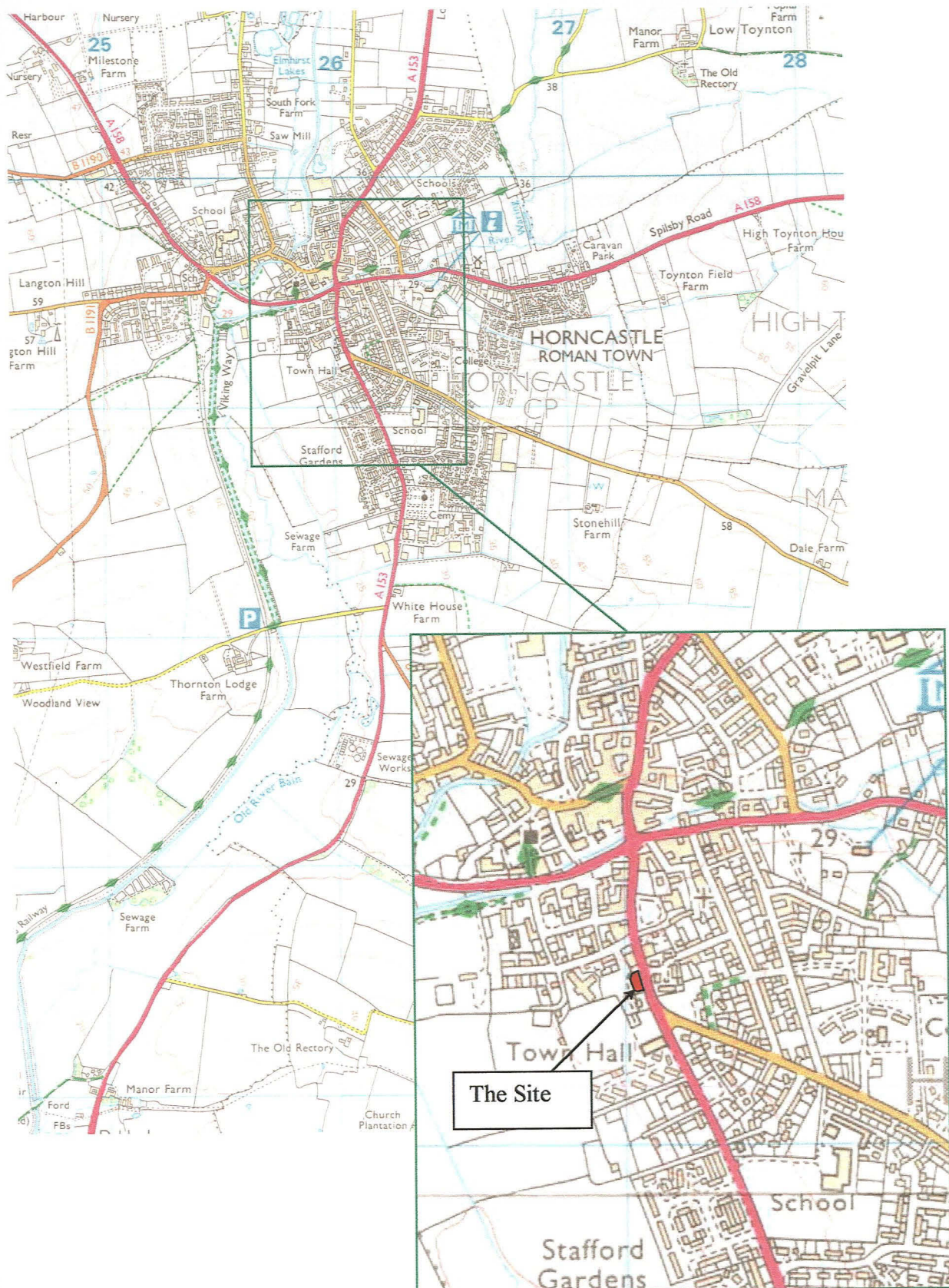


Fig. 1: Site location  
 1:25,000 (insert at 1:10,000)  
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## Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) was commissioned by Mr and Mrs D. Boddy to carry out an archaeological watching brief during the construction of a new building at The Black Swan Inn, Horncastle. This work was undertaken to fulfil the objectives of an agreed archaeological mitigation strategy that was based on the recommendations of the Assistant Built Environment Officer of Lincolnshire County Council. This approach complies with the requirements of *Archaeology and Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16*, Dept. of Environment (1990); *Management of Archaeological Projects*, EH (1991); *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavations*, IFA (1994) and the LCC document *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: A Manual of Archaeological Practice*, 1998.

### 1.0 Site location and description

The town of Horncastle is situated approximately 28km east of Lincoln and 30km west of the coast, on the south-west tip of the Lincolnshire Wolds. The Black Swan Inn is south-west of the town centre, on the west side of South Street. The center of the site is at NGR TF 2601 6928.

The site has been artificially leveled, by the removal of 0.5 - 0.6m of topsoil to create a car parking area (D. Boddy, pers. comm.). It is now surfaced with compacted chalk/limestone.

The local geology consists of upper river terrace sand and gravel deposits from the River Bain and River Waring, overlying Kimmeridge Clay (BGS, 1995).

### 2.0 Planning background

Planning permission was granted for the construction of a residential property, subject to the completion of an archaeological watching brief on all intrusive ground works. This watching brief was carried out over three days, on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of March and the 2<sup>nd</sup> April. This report is the final stage of the process and discharges this condition.

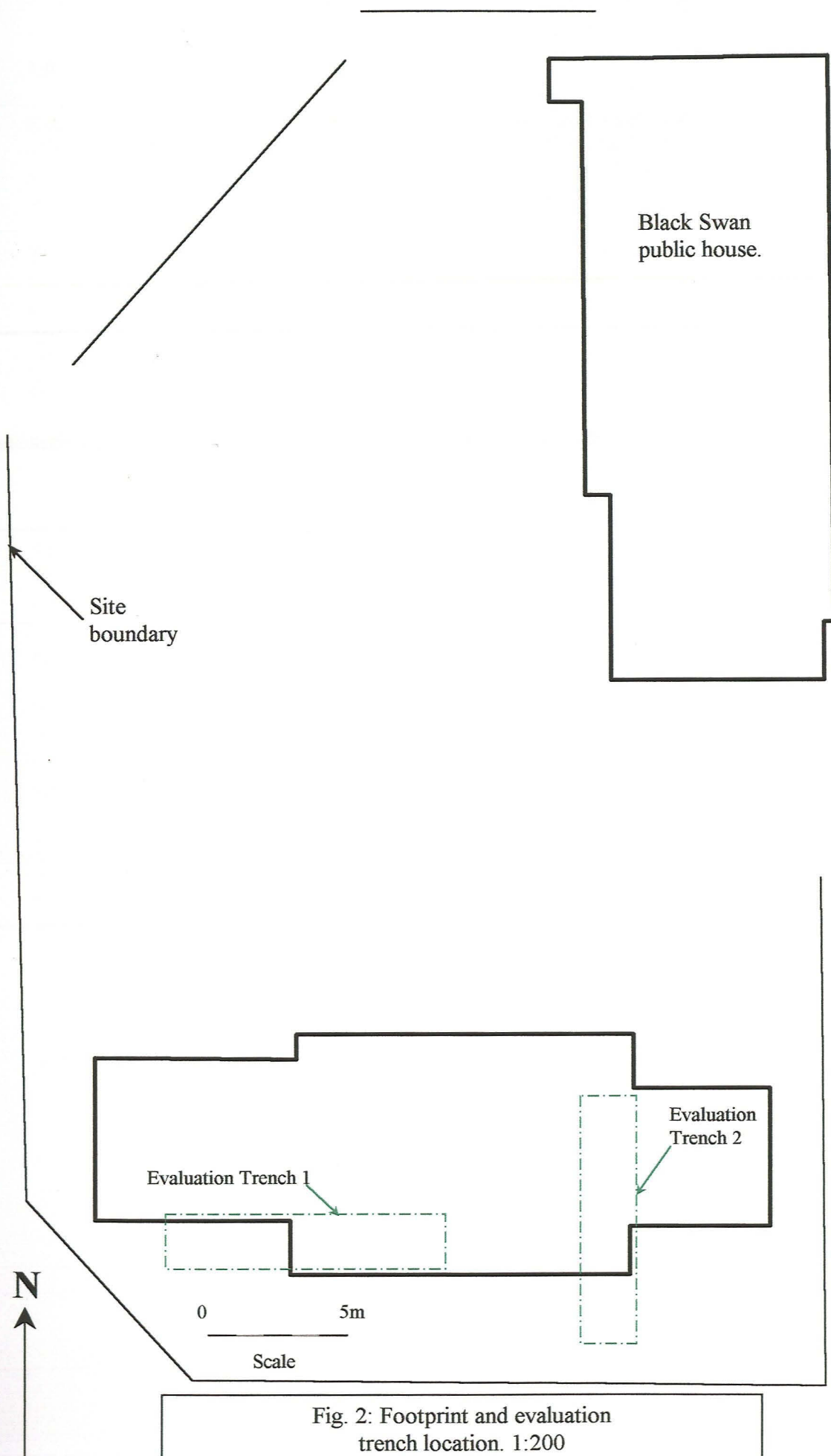


Fig. 2: Footprint and evaluation trench location. 1:200

### 3.0 Archaeological and historical background

Relatively small concentrations of prehistoric material have been found in the vicinity of the proposed development. These consist of Mesolithic and Neolithic worked flints and a Bronze Age basalt axe-hammer (SMR records). A substantial Iron Age settlement has also been postulated for the area (May, 1976).

The town is best known for its substantial Romano-British remains, which have been the subject of several previous archaeological investigations, including a substantial review in 1983 (Field & Hurst 1983). The Roman settlement appears to have developed as a market town and administrative centre in the first century AD (Whitwell 1992), with the addition of a defensive walled enclosure sometime around the late third century AD (Field & Hurst 1983). The current site lies approximately 300m south of this enclosure, still well within the known area of Romano-British activity, which includes several human inhumations and cremations, as well as pottery scatters (*ibid.*).

A P.C.A. evaluation on the site in 2000 revealed a single Iron Age ditch and four Romano-British ditches, all of which appear to be part of field systems (Clay 2000). There was also a compacted layer of sand and gravel exposed which was tentatively interpreted as a metallised surface.

### 5.0 Methodology

Three visits were made to the site in order to observe all groundworks; these were on March 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> and on April 2<sup>nd</sup>. The excavation of all the foundation trenches was continuously monitored in order to detect discreet features such as cremations, which might not be seen in section. See plate 1.

It was deemed necessary to dig the foundations to the top of a sand and gravel layer, which, to the east, was up to 1.7m below the existing ground surface. For this reason it was not safe to enter some of the trenches, and some sections could only be examined from the surface.

Those features that were accessible were cleaned and recorded using pro forma context sheets and scale drawings. Where this was unsafe, sketch drawings and context sheets were completed from the surface. A record of photographs was also maintained.

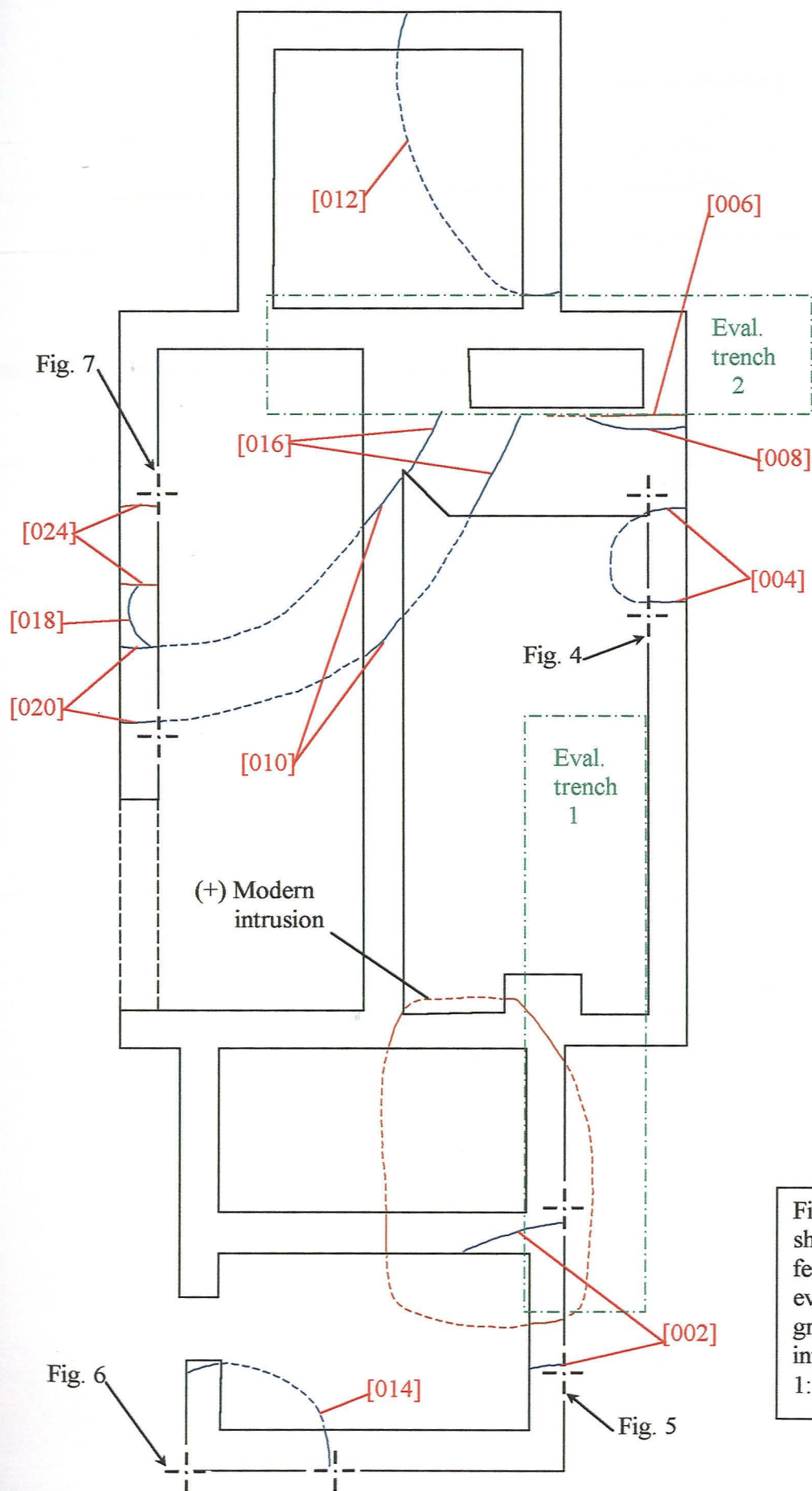


Fig. 3: plan of footprint showing archaeological features in blue, evaluation trenches in green and modern intrusion in brown. 1:100

## 6.0 Excavation results

The uppermost material encountered was a patchy layer of limestone chippings, in places up to 0.1m thick. This was the remains of the pub car park surface. The first archaeological deposit was a homogenous layer of very dark grey sand, (021) varying in thickness from 0.10 to 0.50m. This was interpreted as a *plaggen* soil; a thick homogenous layer (the 'A' horizon) formed by prolonged 'human amendment'. This would take the form of a year-on-year input of material such as manure to increase fertility, and the working in of that material, although some aeolian accumulation may also have taken place. Such a soil will form in an urban garden or small-holding (Dincauze 2000, p 313). No pottery could be confidently allocated to this material. It is probable that some or all of the features that appeared to be cut from the bottom of this deposit were in fact cut from above it, the distinction is lost due to the similarity in the soils and to subsequent reworking as (021) continued to form.

This layer was cut by a number of modern features: a large feature, [006] which appears to be Trench 2 from the 2000 evaluation, as well as a ditch [024] and a shallow feature that appeared to be either Trench 1 or part of a slab foundation from a former Black Swan outbuilding.

Layer (021) also appeared to be cut by a substantial pit or possible ditch [004]. This feature contained large quantities of pottery suggesting that it was used for the disposal of domestic refuse. The fact that it could be separated from the surrounding homogenous material (021) suggests that it was filled with imported material. 11 sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from the fill of this feature (003), including a body sherd from a shell-gritted Dales ware jar, which together date this material to the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. It was while examining this feature that the sections first began to collapse and so a full understanding of its form could not be obtained.

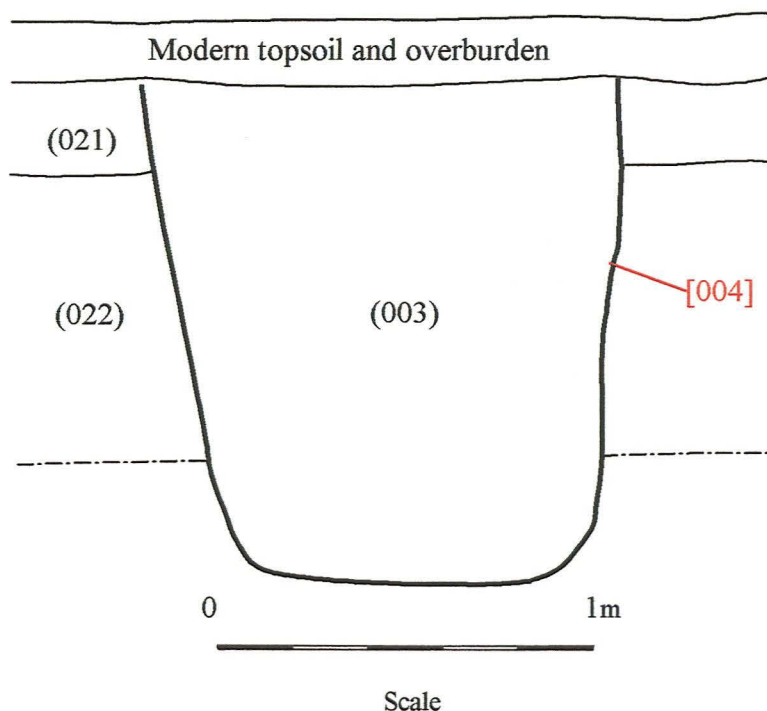


Fig. 4: South facing section through pit [004].

To the west of the foundations two archaeological features were exposed beneath (021). The first was [002], a large ditch 2.4m wide and running north-south, which appeared to have been purposely backfilled. The fill (001) contained considerable quantities of mortar, presumably dumped waste from the demolition of a building, as well as a sherd of Iron Age tradition pottery from the later 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> century. A single sherd of medieval Toynton Ware dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century was also recovered from this fill, but, given that it is the only piece of medieval pottery, found on the site, it seems likely that it is intrusive. This ditch would appear to be that recorded as [106] during the evaluation, except that the pottery from [106] was almost exclusively Iron Age. It may be that the two features are separate but represent the continued use of a similar boundary alignment. See plate 3.

To the north of this ditch a substantial pit [014], approximately 3.0m across was recorded. The fill (013) was very dark sand with occasional animal bones and *opus signinum* fragments, as well as Late Iron Age or early Roman pottery. This appears to be a rubbish pit. The presence of *opus signinum* rubble may suggest that it was open at the same time as [002], as both contained building debris. See plate 4.

In the centre of the area examined several cut features were exposed. The largest of these was a curvilinear ditch recorded as [010], [016] and [020] in three separate sections. It was between 1.2 and 1.5m wide and in total it was 8.5m long. It ran out of the area investigated to the north and east. The fills were the ubiquitous dark grey sand, a paucity of finds or other inclusions and uniformity of texture suggesting that they had naturally formed. A single sherd of abraded Roman pottery was recovered from the northern portion of the ditch (019). See plate 5.

To the north, this ditch cut pit [018]. This was circular, approximately 1.4m in (projected) diameter and 1.1m deep. The fill (017) was mixed; towards the base it contained lenses of clean yellow sand derived from the edges, as well as gravel from the base, both of which are indicative of natural collapse. Over these materials the fill was a more familiar dark sandy material, seen in most of the features on the site. A basal sherd of probably 2<sup>nd</sup> century Roman pottery was recovered, but no animal bone or other finds were found in this context. This feature bottomed at the top of the underlying gravel natural, removing only the local coarse sand, and it seems possible that it was dug as a small quarry pit to extract sand for small scale building or industrial use. The collapse of the sides suggests that it was then abandoned and filled naturally over time. This pit was cut by the modern intrusion [024].

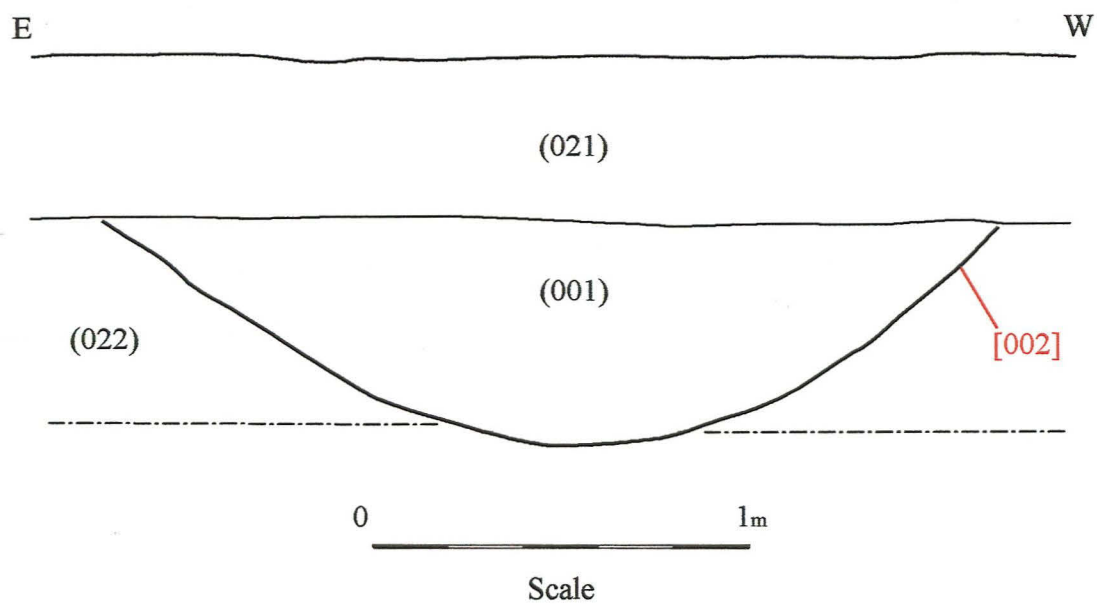


Fig. 5: North facing section through ditch [002] 1:20

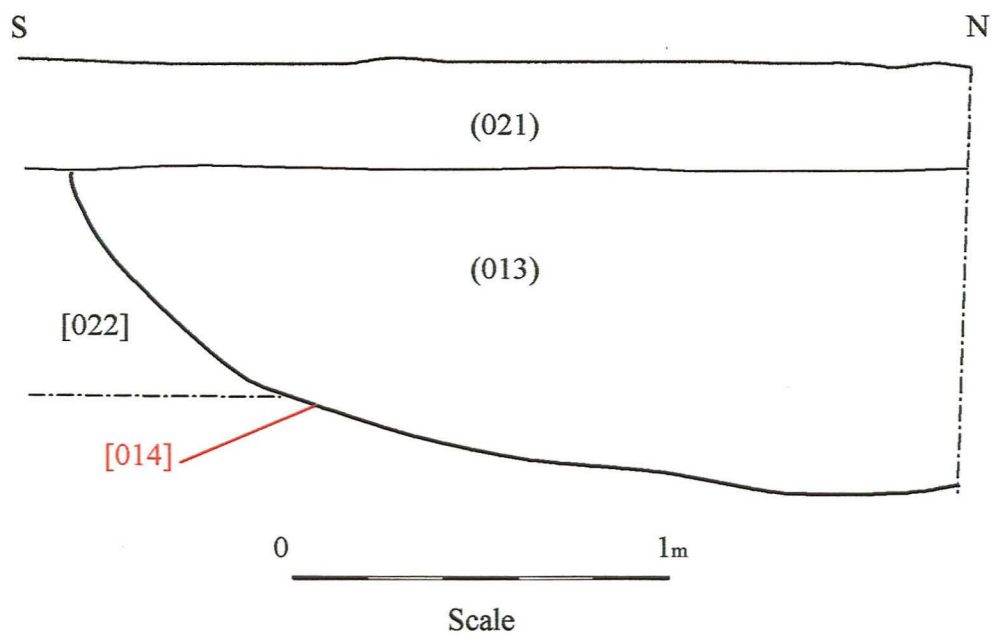


Fig. 6: East facing section through pit [014] 1:20

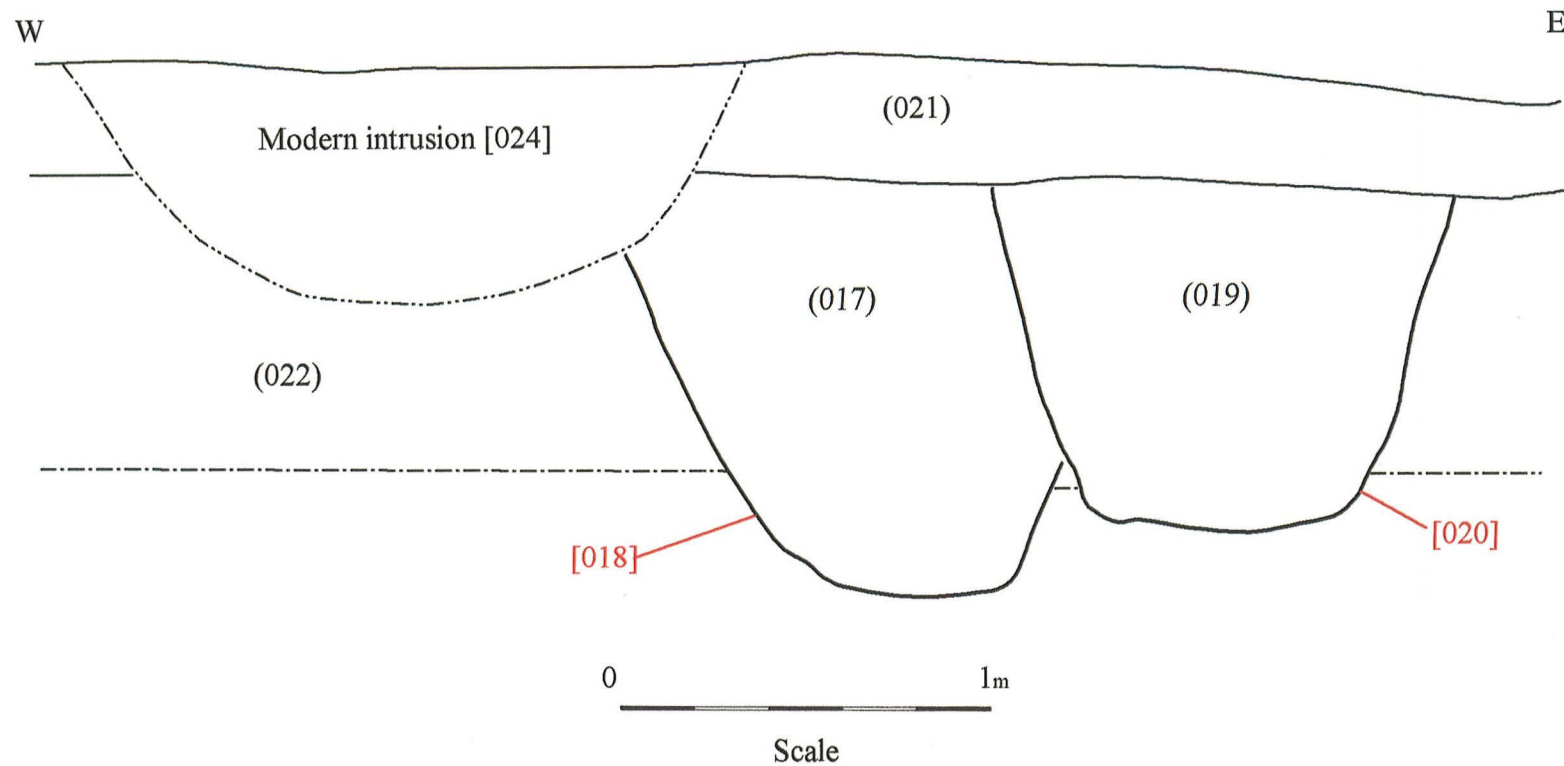


Fig. 7: South facing section through pit [018] and ditch [020]. 1:20.

As noted above the foundation trench was deepened towards the east, and it was impossible to examine these sections in any detail. Despite this, some features could be observed; the largest of these was pit [012], located to the east of the new building footprint. It was 4.7m east west, 2.6m north south and 1.7m deep. The fill (011) contained large amounts of Victorian pottery and glass indicating that this feature was a rubbish pit, possibly associated with an earlier phase of the public house on the site.

The second feature identified in the eastern part of the site was [008]. Due to disturbance from feature [006] and the instability vertical of the sections, it was impossible to determine the full extent of this feature (save to say that it was cut by [006] and that it was not detected to the far (eastern) side of it). The fill (007) was dark grey sand, from which it was possible to recover a single sherd of pottery, loosely dated to the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century. It appears from the plans that [008] is part of the feature recorded as [207] during the evaluation, interpreted as a boundary ditch, although the pottery from [207] was of a slightly earlier date. The alignment was determined as east-west from the evaluation.

These features were cut into the natural horizon (022), a mixed sand and gravel deposit, made up of coarse yellow sand and rounded flint gravel. These are river terrace deposits from the nearby Rivers Bain and Waring.

## 7.0 Discussion and conclusions

Three ditches were exposed, and given the sandy free draining nature of the area it is reasonable to assume they filled a boundary rather than drainage function. It was not possible to determine their relationships stratigraphically, and the dates obtained from finds do overlap, so they may or may not be contemporary. However they do not appear to share any similarity in alignment, and so probably each represent part of a successive series of boundaries. There are well-documented Iron Age and Roman field systems visible in aerial photographs to the west of the buildings which currently front onto Boston Road or the roads running off it, and it seems probable that these are similar of features (Field and Hurst 1983).

Three pits were recorded; the largest [014] to the west seems to have been a rubbish pit used for the disposal of domestic waste, but also of rubble indicative of building demolition in the vicinity. The feature [004] also appeared to be a pit, and it too was filled with what appeared to be dumped domestic waste. A third smaller pit [018] to the north of the area examined appeared to be a small quarry.

These three pits are more indicative of occupation than the ditches discussed above. They provide evidence of waste dumping and possibly the extraction of sand for building or other use. The presence of *opus signinum* in the fill of [014], along with mortar from ditch [002] also point to dwellings or other buildings having stood in the vicinity.

This project produced finds from the Late Iron Age to the early 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, spanning most of the Roman occupation of Horncastle. The features are of various types and occur within this date range, and the juxtaposition of field boundaries and domestic rubbish pits fits well with the layout of the town suggested by Field and Hurst (1983, pp 84-85), which places the site at the margin of the occupied area and on the edge of the land under cultivation. This hypothesis is further supported by the presence of layer (021), a *plaggen* soil formed by the continued addition and digging-in of manure. This type of soil is seen in garden plots, which would seem to indicate activity on the edge of settlement, neither fully urban nor completely under cultivation (Dincauze 2000, 313).

The evidence then is of different land uses over the period discussed, urban in the form of rubbish pits and building rubble, semi-urban as indicated by the *plaggen* soil and rural, demonstrated by field boundaries which appear to be part of a much larger system stretching westwards to the River Bain. Unfortunately the scarcity of tightly dated features means that the order in which these events took place cannot be determined.

## 8.0 Effectiveness of methodology

The methodology employed allowed a reasonable understanding of the features to be gained in the western part of the footings. To the east, trenches were too deep and unstable to be entered safely and so the sections could not be cleaned. Therefore it proved impossible to make anything more than the most basic of observations.

## 9.0 Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Mr and Mrs Boddy for commissioning this report and the groundworkers for their cooperation during the course of the watching brief.

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## 11.0 Site archive

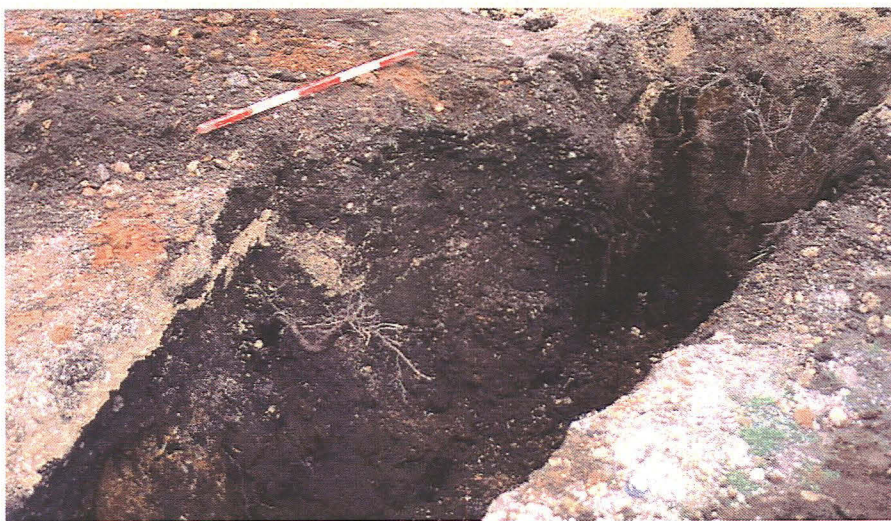
An archive consisting of written, drawn, photographic and object elements is in preparation and will be deposited at the Lincoln City and County museum within six months of the completion of this report.

Access can be gained to it by quoting the L.C.C. Museum accession number 2002.138.

**Appendix 1. Colour plates.**



**Pl. 1: View of the site, looking north-east.**



**Pl. 2: Collapse of section in eastern part of site, looking north-west.**



**Pl. 3: Ditch [002], looking south-east.**

**Appendix 1. Colour plates.**



**Pl. 4: Pit [004], looking east.**



**Pl. 5: Pit [018] in centre, ditch [020] in foreground, looking south-east.**

## Appendix 2. Roman and medieval pottery report.

### REPORT 107 ON POTTERY FROM BLACK SWAN, HORNCastle WATCHING BRIEF, BSH02

#### for PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

by Margaret J. Darling, M.Phil., F.S.A., M.I.F.A.

10 April 2002

#### QUANTITY AND CONDITION

The Roman pottery consists of 17 sherds, weighing 187g from six contexts. The condition is average, with little abrasion; no problems are anticipated for long term storage. The pottery has been archived using count and weight as measures according to the guidelines laid down for the minimum archive by *The Study Group for Roman Pottery*. A copy of the archive database is attached (and can be supplied on disk), and will be curated for future study.

#### QUANTITIES AND DATES

The quantities and dating by context is shown in Table 1

Table 1

| Cut | Identification | Cxt | Sherds | Weight | Date       | Comments |
|-----|----------------|-----|--------|--------|------------|----------|
| 002 | Ditch          | 001 | 1      | 15     | 1-2c       |          |
| 004 | Ditch          | 003 | 11     | 93     | M3/POSTMED |          |
| 008 | Edge feature   | 007 | 1      | 33     | M2-3       |          |
| 014 | Pit            | 013 | 1      | 19     | LIA/EROM   |          |
| 018 | Pit            | 017 | 2      | 15     | 2c?        |          |
| 020 | Ditch          | 019 | 1      | 12     | ROM        | Abraded  |
|     | Total          |     | 17     | 187    |            |          |

No sherd links occurred between deposits. Only the ditch 004 produced any quantity of pottery, and while the Roman sherds can be dated to the mid 3rd century, it also contained a clay-pipe stem. The other contexts rely largely upon single sherds, providing little secure evidence for date. The fabrics appearing are: GREY grey ware, DWSH dales ware shell-gritted, NVCC Nene Valley colour-coated ware, IAGR Iron Age tradition gritty, and SHSF shell-gritted with sparse fine shell inclusions.

#### DISCUSSION

The earliest pottery appears to be the rim from 014 Pit, a curved rim in a shell-gritted fabric with sparse fine shell, and burnished both internally and externally. This fragment is difficult to date with any certainty, but the fabric and finish suggests a Late La Tene influence (as has occurred earlier at this location, Darling 2000), indicating either a late Iron Age or an early Roman date. The single sherd from ditch 002 appears to be in a variety of an Iron Age tradition gritty fabric, for which a later 1st to 2nd century date applies. The most securely dated pottery is from the ditch 004, with a body sherd from the shell-gritted dales ware jar, unlikely to occur much, if at all, before the mid 3rd century, although the post-Medieval pipe stem dates the deposit. The feature on the edge of the trench 008 can only be loosely dated to the mid 2nd to 3rd century, and a base sherd from the pit 018 is of a type current in the 2nd century.

## Appendix 2. Roman and medieval pottery report.

The chronological spread is similar to that seen in an earlier excavation on this site, broadly from the late Iron Age through to the later 3rd century. There are no sherds that can be positively dated to the 4th century.

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Darling, M.J., 2000 *Report 70 on the pottery from the Black Swan Inn, Horncastle, BSH00*,  
17 October 2000

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## Appendix 2. Roman and medieval pottery report.

# Pottery Archive BSH02

*Jane Young    Lindsey Archaeological Services*

| context | cname | full name             | form type | sherds | weight | part | date         |
|---------|-------|-----------------------|-----------|--------|--------|------|--------------|
| 01      | TOY   | Toynton Medieval Ware | jug/jar   | 1      | 5      | BS   | 13th to 15th |

### Appendix 3. List of archaeological contexts.

| CONTEXT<br>NUMBER | DESCRIPTION                               |
|-------------------|---|
| 001               | Fill of [002]                             |
| [002]             | Ditch. Boundary or marker function.       |
| 003               | Fill of [004]                             |
| [004]             | Ditch or pit. Cuts (021).                 |
| 005               | Fill of [006]. Back filling.              |
| [006]             | Trench 2 from 2000 evaluation.            |
| 007               | Fill of [008].                            |
| [008]             | Western edge of unidentified cut feature. |
| 009               | Fill of [010].                            |
| [010]             | Ditch. Same as [016] and [020]            |
| 011               | Fill of [012].                            |
| [012]             | Victorian rubbish pit.                    |
| 013               | Fill of [014].                            |
| [014]             | Pit.                                      |
| 015               | Fill of [016].                            |
| [016]             | Ditch. Same as [010] and [020]            |
| 017               | Fill of [018].                            |
| [018]             | Pit.                                      |
| 019               | Fill of [020].                            |
| [020]             | Ditch. Same as [010] and [016]            |
| 021               | Garden soil. Multi-period.                |
| 022               | Sand and gravel natural.                  |