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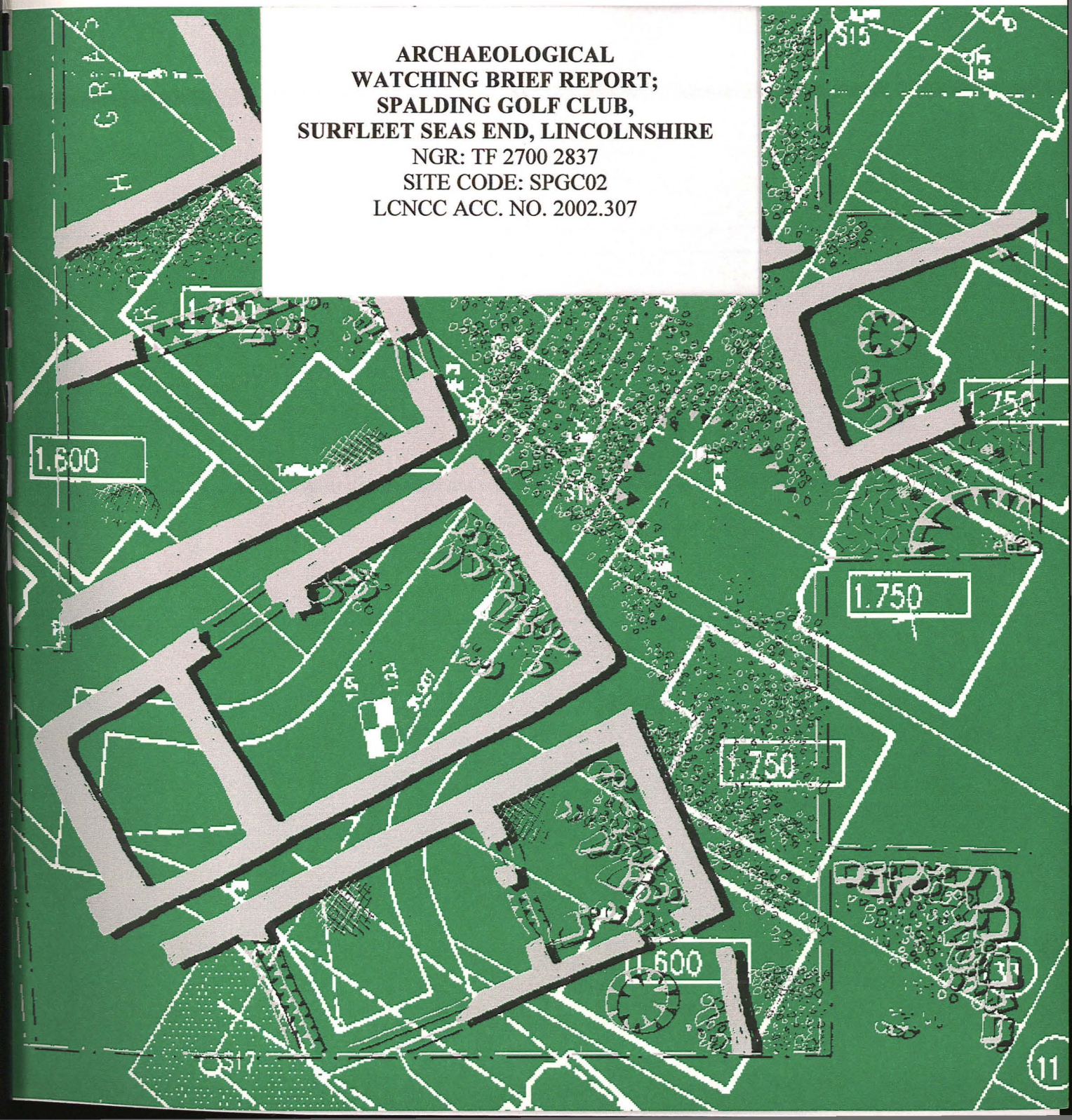
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT; SPALDING GOLF CLUB, SURFLEET SEAS END, LINCOLNSHIRE

NGR: TF 2700 2837
SITE CODE: SPGC02
LCNCC ACC. NO. 2002.307



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Report prepared for
International Irrigation Consultants
by Chris Clay
August 2002

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Summary

- *An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the groundworks for an irrigation reservoir at Spalding Golf Club, Surfleet Seas End, Lincolnshire.*

- *The site lies towards the southern edge of an extensive saltern mound, where previous archaeological investigations in the immediate vicinity have revealed features and deposits relating to commercial salt production in the medieval period.*

- *The irrigation reservoir was purposefully constructed within an area of the site that appeared (based on earlier surveys) to contain minimal archaeological remains*

- *The watching brief exposed two undated circular gullies that were probably associated with the salt making industry, as well as a substantial linear feature.*

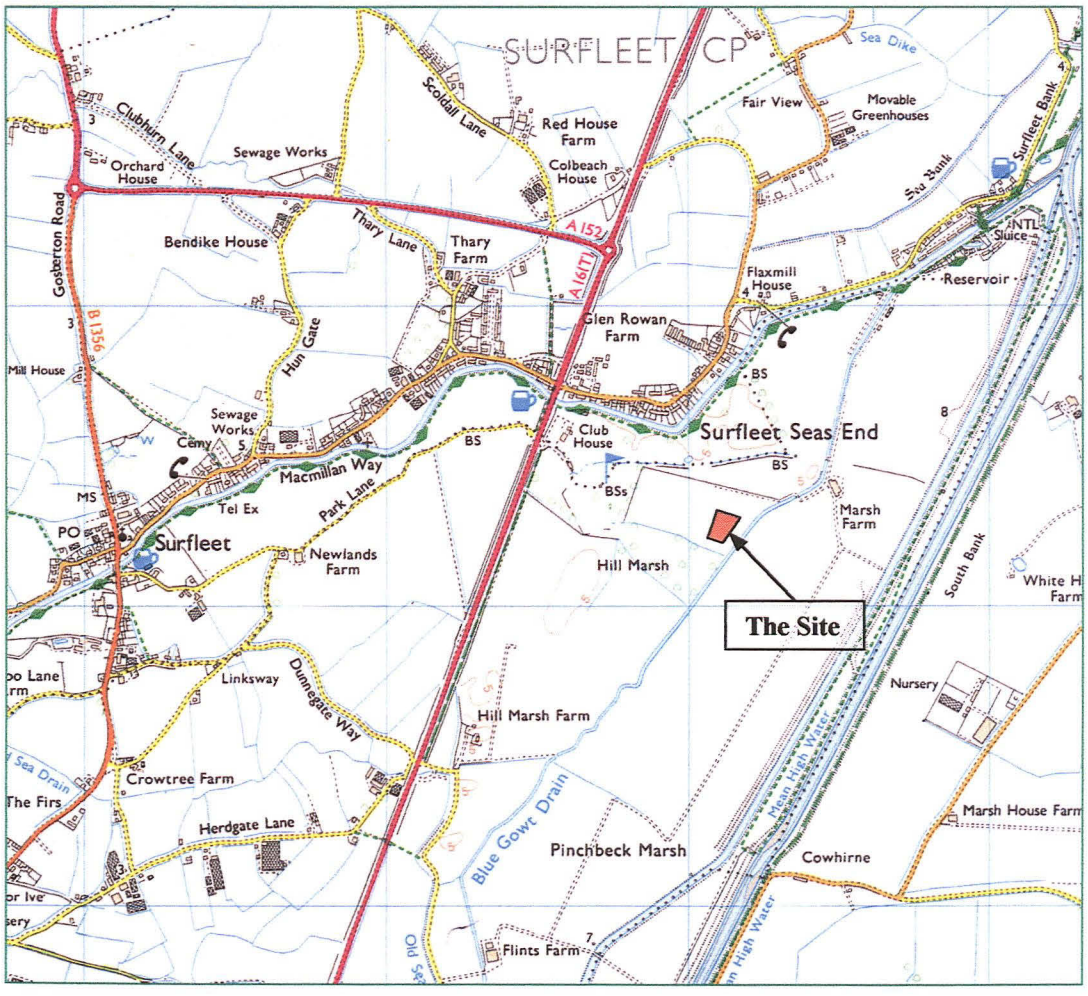

Fig. 1: General site location (scale 1:25,000)
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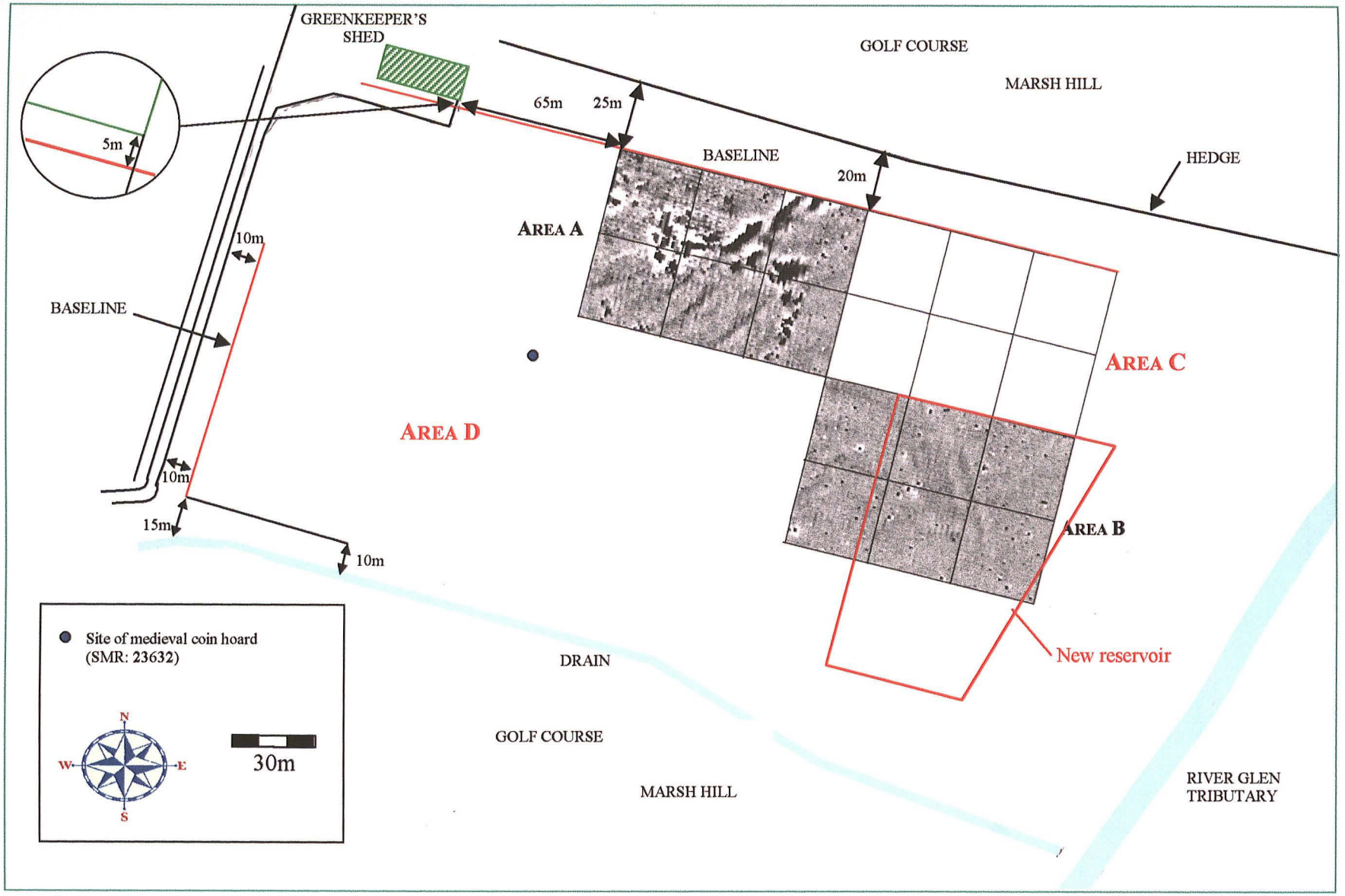

Fig. 2: Site location, showing the new reservoir in relation to the areas of geophysical survey (after Rylatt & Bunn, 2001)(scale 1:2000)

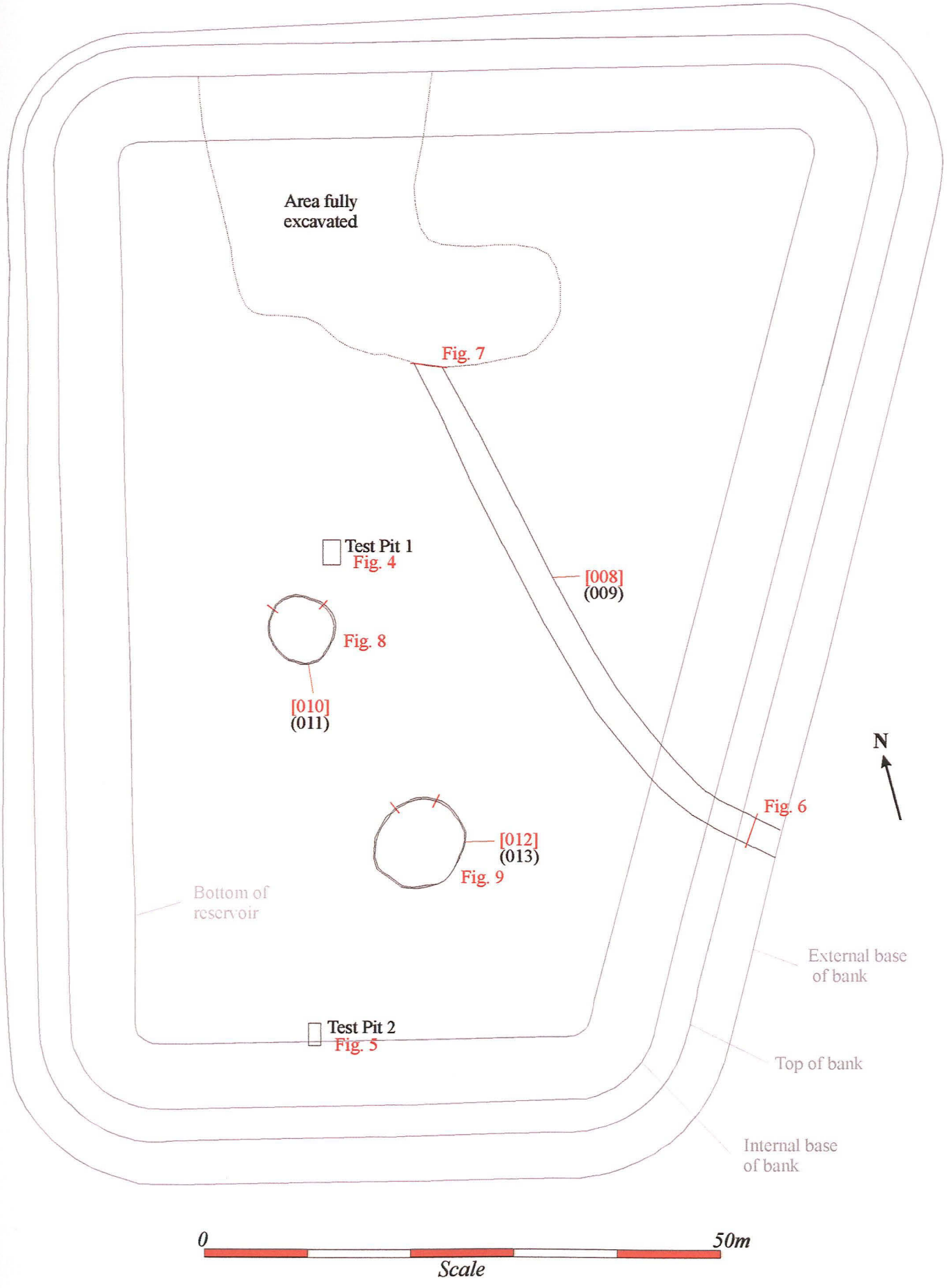

Fig. 3: Site location plan, showing exposed features in relation to development footprint (location of drawn sections shown as a red line) (scale 1:1000)

1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) were commissioned by International Irrigation Consultants, on behalf of Spalding Golf Club, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks for an irrigation reservoir at Spalding Golf Club, Surfleet Seas End, Lincolnshire.

These works were undertaken to fulfil the objectives of a formal project brief issued by the Senior Built Environment Officer of Lincolnshire County Council, and a project specification prepared by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln). This approach is consistent with the recommendations of *Archaeology & Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16*, (Department of the Environment, 1990), *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991), *Standards and guidance for archaeological excavation*, (IFA, 1994), and the Lincolnshire County Council document *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: a manual of archaeological practice* (LCC, 1998).

Copies of this report have been deposited with the commissioning body and the County Sites and Monuments Record for Lincolnshire. Reports will also be deposited at the City and County Museum, Lincoln, along with an ordered project archive for long term storage and curation.

2.0 Site location and description

The site is within the administrative district of South Holland, towards the centre of the south Lincolnshire fens. It is situated approximately 5.5km north-north-east of Spalding and 16km south-south-west of Boston.

The site lies within a 7.0ha lawned area, which is bordered to the north, south and west by components of the golf course. To the east, beyond the Blue Gowt Drain, lies an area of cultivated agricultural land. A modern steel-framed building is situated at the north-west corner of the field containing the site; this is the green keepers' shed.

The north-western quarter of the site lies occupies higher ground that slopes downwards toward the east, west and south. The southern and eastern slopes are pronounced features within an otherwise flat fenland landscape. The elevated area is an artificial mound; the by-product of medieval salt extraction (British Geological Survey, 1992). The new reservoir is situated to the south-east of this feature, on land that exhibits a gentler slope to the south. It is broadly sub-rectangular in plan, measuring approximately 106m by 82m in plan, with a maximum depth of c.2.5m; designed to contain approximately 2.8 million gallons of water (fig. 2).

The local drift geology consists of Terrington Beds: layers of younger marine alluvium, salt marsh, tidal creek and river deposits, laid down from approximately 500BC onwards. This seals a solid geology of Middle Oxford Clay (British Geological Survey, 1992).

Central National Grid Reference: TF 2700 2837.

3.0 Planning background

Spalding Golf Club was granted planning consent for the construction of an irrigation reservoir (planning ref. H14/1342/00). This consent was granted, subject to the undertaking of an archaeological watching brief on the associated groundworks, in accordance with the recommendations of the Senior Built Environment Officer for Lincolnshire County Council.

The current programme follows an evaluation of the area (geophysical survey and trial excavation) and constitutes a final mitigation strategy for the area.

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

Prehistoric activity in the fenland can be difficult to define, as this low-lying area has been subject to sustained periods of inundation, linked to changes in sea level. During such inundations, much of the region would have been unsuited to sustained human occupation; a theory supported by the punctuated nature of the archaeological record. Furthermore, repeated inundations have, to some degree, masked the prehistoric settlement pattern, often beneath substantial deposits of marine silt.

Numerous salt procurement and processing sites appeared along the western fen edge during the Iron Age (Simmons, 1980). Many of these have been identified as part of the Fenland Survey, although the Lincolnshire component of this scheme did not extend as far south as Spalding (Lane, 1993). However, work undertaken by Simmons (1980) suggests that during the Iron Age the Surfleet area was under water, with the coastline lying c. 15km to the west and approximately 8km to the south.

There was a significant drop in sea level towards the beginning of the Roman period, initiating a phase of settlement expansion at the end of the 1st century AD that continued throughout the 2nd century (Hallam, 1970). As with the preceding Iron Age, marine salt production appears to have retained a central economic role, but Romano-British communities were also engaged in farming, fishing and wild fowling. Trade was also important, and the large number of coins recovered from many sites suggests that Fenland settlements were fully integrated into the Roman monetary system.

There is no archaeological evidence for Anglo-Saxon activity in the parish. However, the etymology of the place-name suggests that the origin of the modern settlement lay in the later Saxon period. The village appears as *Sverefelt* in the *Domesday Book*, a word utilising Old English components *sur* and *fleot*, meaning 'the sour inlet, or creek', presumably referring to the River Glen (Cameron, 1998).

The *Domesday Book* indicates that 'Heppo the Crossbowman' had the jurisdiction over some property in the parish (Morgan & Thorn, 1986). Two salt houses are also listed, suggesting a continuation of this practice through the Saxon and into the early medieval period. Saxon salt making sites are notoriously elusive to detect.

A market and fair was established at Surfleet during the reign of Edward I (1272-1307) (White, 1856).

Jocelin, son of Helpron, gifted Surfleet church to Spalding Priory in the 12th century. This entitled the monastery to farm the glebe land and appropriate the income of the church in the form of tithes and customary offerings, such as unpaid labour (Owen, 1971). These would have provided this monastic establishment with the resources necessary for land reclamation and salt procurement, yielding further wealth.

The current site has been the subject of three previous phases of archaeological investigation. In 2001, a fluxgate gradiometer survey was undertaken on two potential reservoir sites. The northernmost of these, Area A, contained numerous anomalies that were believed to reflect features related to the medieval salt industry. Area B, to the south-east of A, had a much lower density of anomalies (Rylatt & Bunn, 2001). A trial excavation, consisting of six trenches, investigated Area A, exposing evidence of salt making during the 12th/13th centuries (Rylatt, 2001).

A second geophysical survey examined two further potential sites for the reservoir: Area C, contiguous with the northern edge of Area B and the western edge of Area A, and Area D at the western edge of the field. Both areas contained further anomalies; interpreted as spreads of burnt silt and ash associated with the salt making industry (Rylatt & Bunn, 2002).

Some 99 medieval gold coins were discovered c. 30m from the south-west corner of Area A (SMR No: 23632). These 14th century gold nobles of Edward III and Richard II were located close to a number of preserved timbers and a cobbled surface (H. Healey, *pers. comm.*). A silver halfpenny of Henry VI, minted in Calais between 1424 and 1427, has also been recovered from the field in which the current site lies.

5.0 Methodology

Following evaluation of the area, a location for the reservoir was selected that would minimise any damage to *in situ* archaeological deposits (fig. 3).

The formal specification for the current scheme required close monitoring during the removal of topsoil and underlying deposits, with a view to identifying and recording archaeologically significant horizons. This process commenced with the stripping of topsoil from the area of the reservoir bank, along its north and west sides. Subsequently, two small test pits were excavated to the full depth of the reservoir to record the soil stability, and a section of the reservoir was then fully excavated at its northern edge to build and shape the north bank. Finally, the remainder of the footprint was stripped.

The groundworks were carried out using two 360° tracked excavators fitted with 1.8m wide smooth blades, and were monitored by the author between Monday 8th July and Monday 15th July 2002.

Where archaeologically significant deposits were encountered, these were sample excavated to establish their depth, profile, date and, where possible, their function. Section drawings were produced at a scale of 1:20, and these were accurately referenced to a detailed base plan. Context information was recorded on standard

watching brief record sheets, and a colour photographic record was maintained, selected prints from which are included in this report (Appendix 1).

6.0 Results

The uppermost deposit was a dark greyish brown topsoil, (001), between 0.3 and 0.4m thick. This sealed a series of silty deposits, exposed in the two test pits. Directly beneath (001) in Test Pit 1 was a substantial deposit of mid brown silt, up to 0.45m deep, (002), which was presumed to represent part of the saltern mound upon which the golf club is built (fig. 4).

Sealed beneath (002) (directly below (001) in Test Pit 2), was a series of alluvial silt layers (fig. 5). The uppermost of these, (003), was a yellowish brown silt c.0.4m deep. Beneath this, in both test pits, was a light grey silt, (0.15m deep), (004). These layers are indicative of deposition in a standing water environment. Two further 'events' are represented by grey silt layers (006) and (007), at the base of the test pits, separated from (003) by a thin band of yellow alluvial silt, (004) (figs. 4,5). No dating evidence was recovered from any of these layers.

Three features were exposed in plan. Extending north-west to south-east across the footprint area was a substantial linear feature, [008] (fig. 3). This survived to a depth of no more than 0.2m. Its fill, (009), was a dark brown slightly sandy silt, which yielded no artefactual material. At the north end of the reservoir excavation, the feature was cut away by deep excavations (carried out to obtain material for the northern bank), although it was possible to record the ditch profile at this point (figs. 6,7).

To the west of ditch [008], two large circular features were exposed. The smaller of the two, [010] had an internal diameter of approximately 6.5m, with the surrounding ring gully being 0.3m to 0.6m wide. Four sections were excavated through this feature, exposing a shallow bowl shaped profile. It was filled with an homogenous greyish brown silt, (011), which yielded no finds (fig. 8).

Approximately 25m south-south-east of the above was a similar, but larger, circular feature, [012], with an internal diameter of c.9m. The defining gully was of a similar width and profile to [010], although there was a considerable degree of truncation to the south-east quadrant. The fill comprised a mid-brown silt, which again, was devoid of artefactual evidence (fig. 9).

No further archaeological features were exposed by the watching brief.

7.0 Discussion and conclusion

The excavated features were undated and did not contain any functionally diagnostic artefacts. The interpretive potential of these features is therefore limited. The extensive linear feature [008] could represent a boundary/drainage feature. Quite how it relates to the medieval salt production is unclear, although one assumes a direct association.

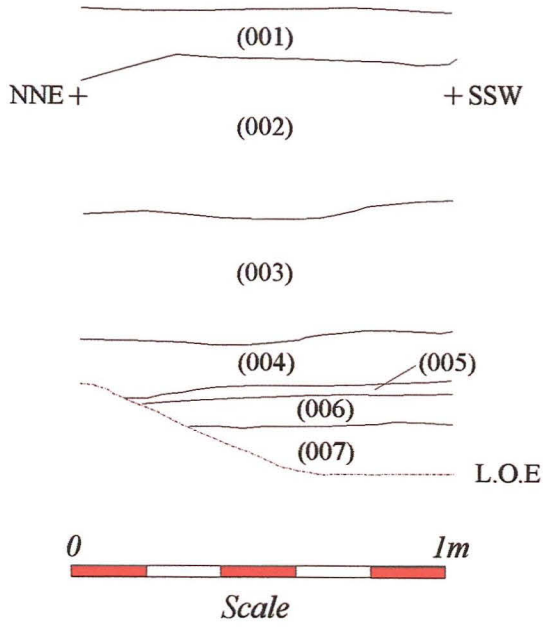

Fig. 4: Test Pit 1, west-north-west facing section (scale 1:20)

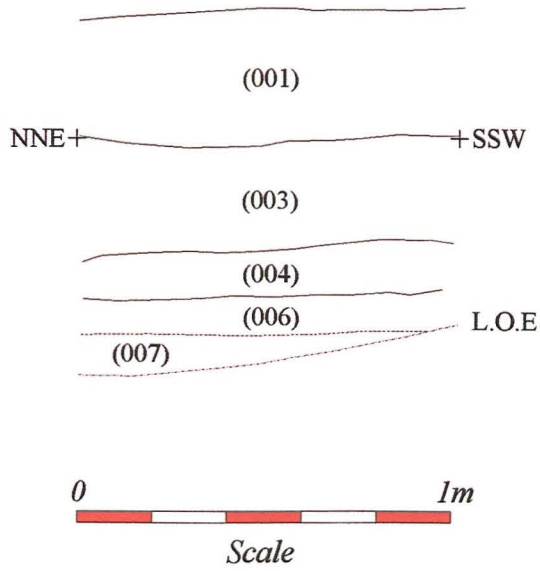

Fig. 5: Test Pit 2, west-north-west facing section (scale 1:20)

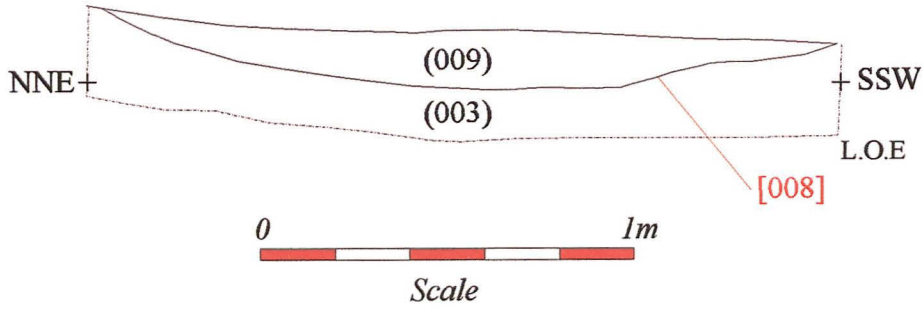

Fig. 6: West-north-west facing section through ditch [008] (scale 1:20)

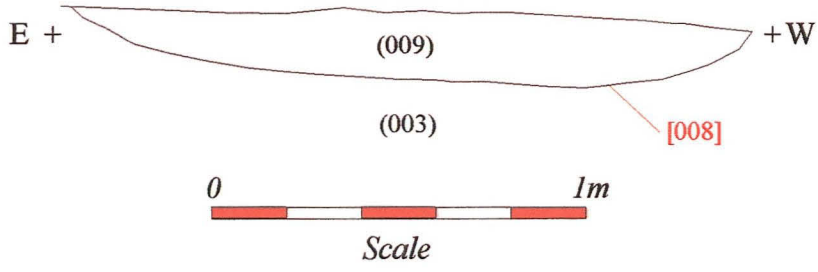

Fig. 7: North facing section through ditch [008] (scale 1:20)

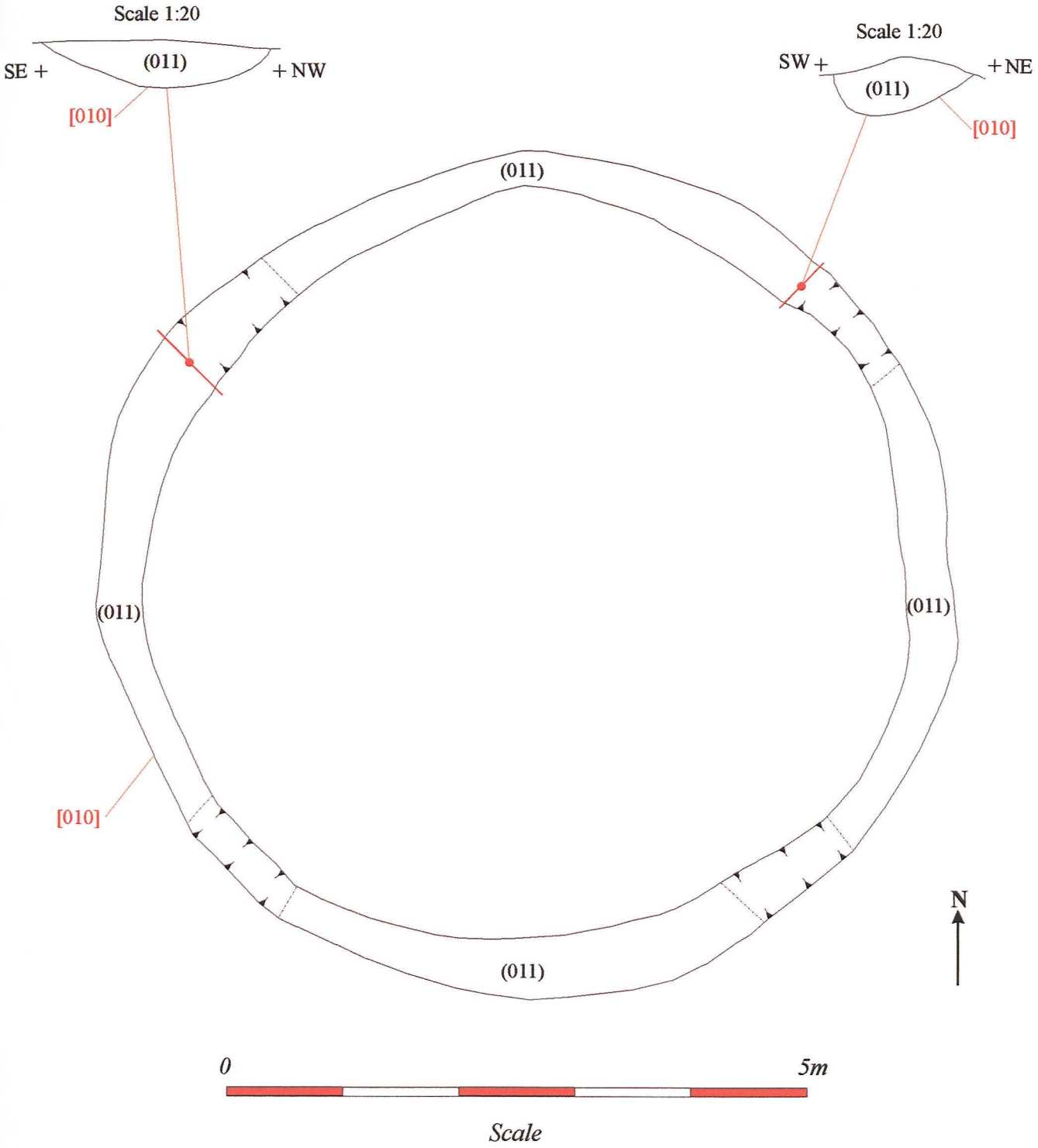

Fig. 8: Plan of ring gully [010], showing sample sections (plan scale 1:50, sections 1:20)

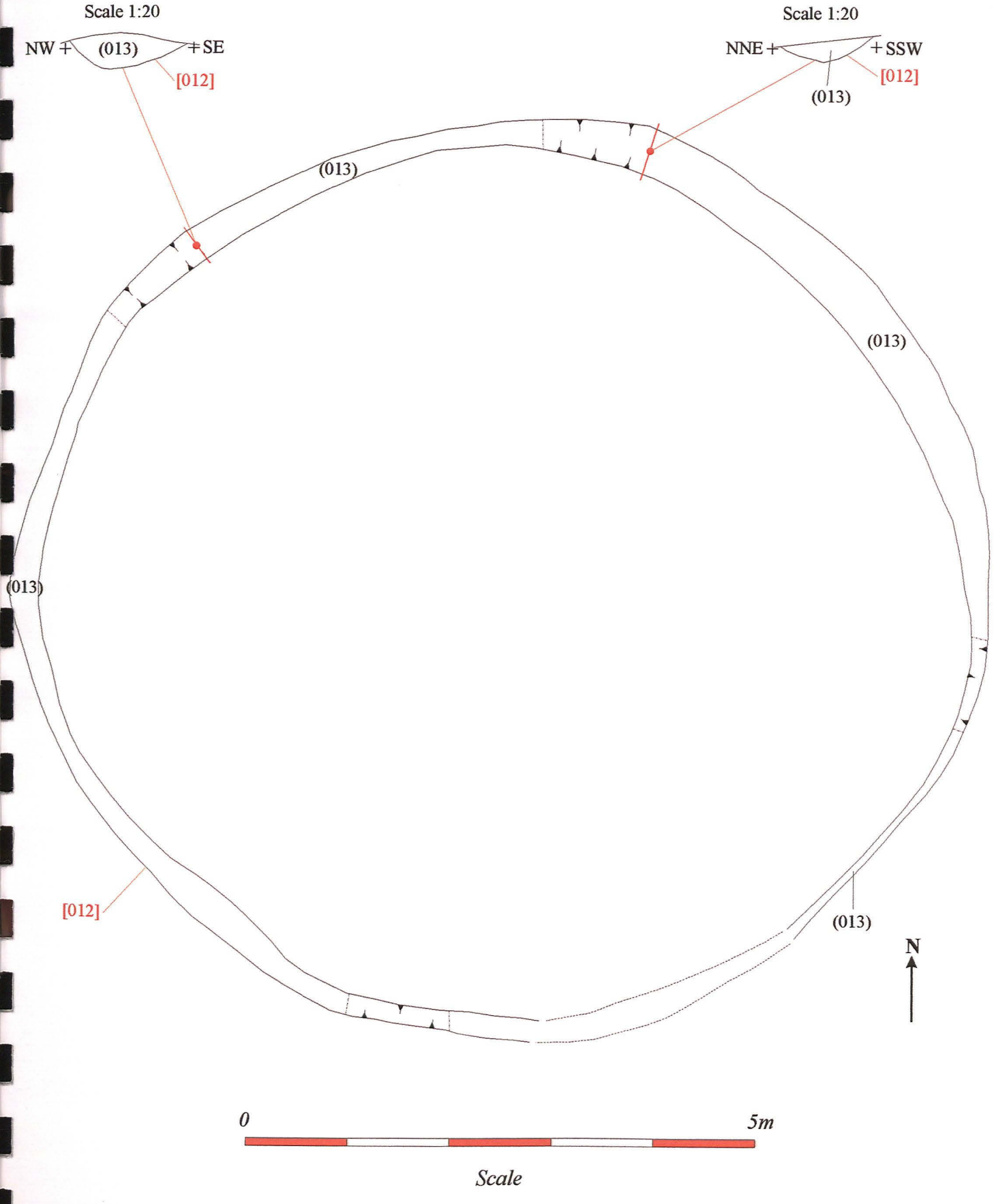

Fig. 9: Plan of ring gully [012], showing sample sections (plan scale 1:50, sections 1:20)

The circular gullies [010] and [012] are equally enigmatic. Superficially, they resemble the eaves drip gullies for circular prehistoric structures such as dwellings and barrows of Bronze Age date. However, structures of this date would not occur within the study area, which was probably submerged during the British Bronze Age and, in any case, both features appeared to form complete circles, rather than penannular footprints.

Almost certainly, the circular features were in some way related to the medieval salt industry. Both are situated to the south of a large saltern mound, possible evidence for which was exposed in Test Pit 1 in the form of deposit (002). This deposit was not apparent in Test Pit 2 further south, nor was it possible to observe in plan where it disappeared. It is possible that [010] and [012] represent features that occurred just on the edge of this mound.

Excavations at Cowbit exposed a similar circular structure on a salt making site, although this was in an Iron Age context. The feature was interpreted as defining a raised mound, possibly supporting a hearth (Lane & Morris eds., 2001). This is not necessarily helpful in the current context and, as far as the author is aware, no such features have been investigated on the larger medieval salterns of the region; for example, Wainfleet in the Lindsey Marshland (McAvoy 1994, Albone 1999)

8.0 Effectiveness of methodology

For the most part, the methodology was appropriate to this development. The stripping of the footprint area allowed a rapid assessment of the archaeological potential to be assessed, and also allowed time for sufficient excavation and recording of the exposed features. At the north end of the site, it was necessary to excavate to the maximum depth of the reservoir to obtain material for the outer bank (the topsoil and underlying silt had to be well mixed to maintain the stability of the bank). In this area, some information may have been lost: for example, ditch [008] was truncated as a result of deep excavation. However, in negotiation with the groundworkers, it was possible to restrict this disturbance to a minimum.

9.0 Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) would like to thank Spalding Golf Club for this commission. Thanks also go to Marcus White (International Irrigation Consultants) and the site staff (Raingear Irrigation) for their co-operation during the groundworks.

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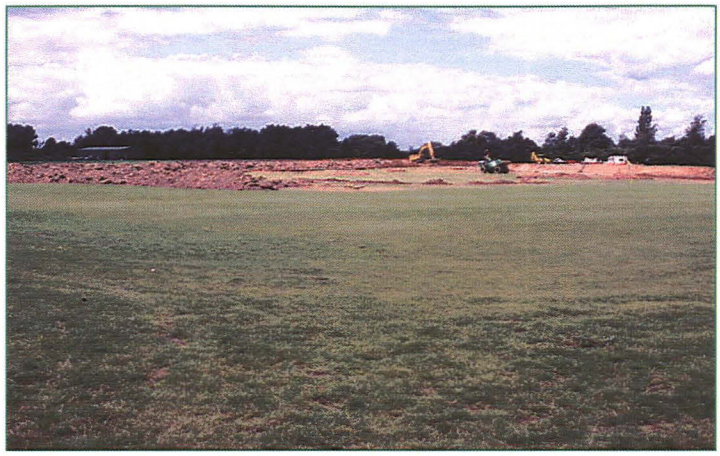
11.0 Site archive

The documentary and physical archive for the site is currently in the possession of Pre-Construct Archaeology. This will be deposited at Lincoln City and County Museum within six months. Access to the archive may be gained by quoting the global accession number 2002.307.

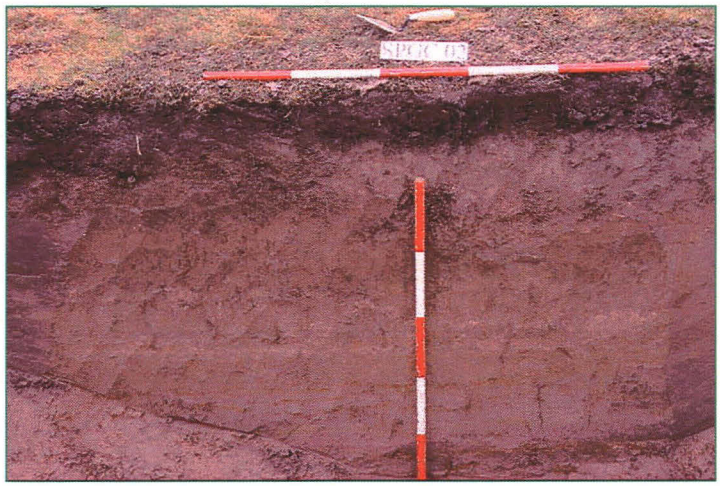
APPENDIX 2: List of archaeological contexts

Context	*Type*	*Description*
001	Layer	Topsoil
002	Layer	Possible saltern waste mound
003	Layer	Alluvial silt layer
004	Layer	Alluvial silt layer
005	Layer	Alluvial silt layer
006	Layer	Alluvial silt layer
007	Layer	Alluvial silt layer
008	Cut	Linear ditch
009	Fill	Fill of [008]
010	Cut	Ring gully
011	Fill	Fill of [010]
012	Cut	Ring gully
013	Fill	Fill of [012]

APPENDIX 1: Colour Plates

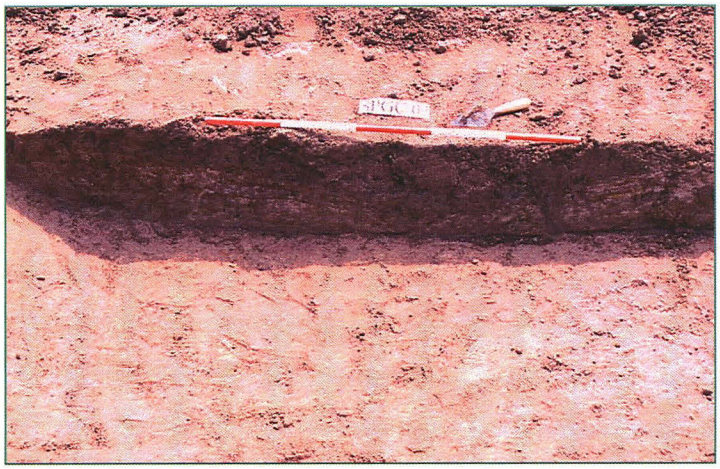


Pl. 1: General view of the site, looking south.

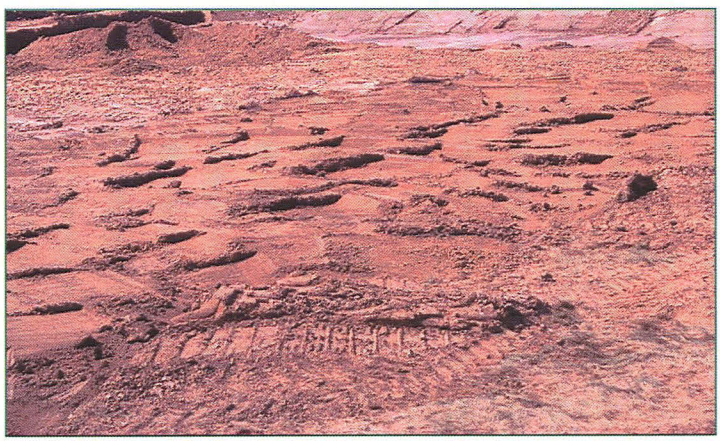


PL. 2: Stratigraphic sequence in test pit 1, looking east-south-east.

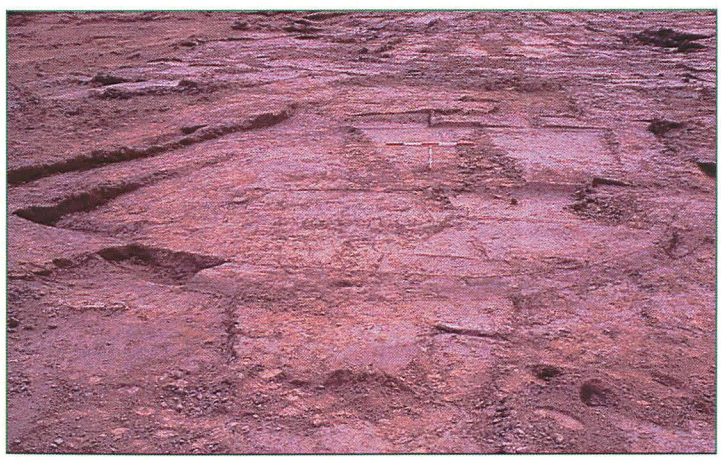
Pl. 3: Stratigraphic sequence in test pit 1, looking east-south-east.



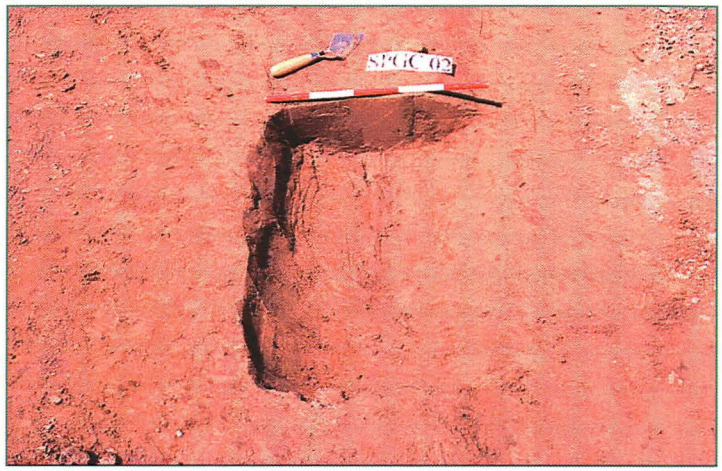
Pl. 4: Section through ditch [008], looking east-south-east



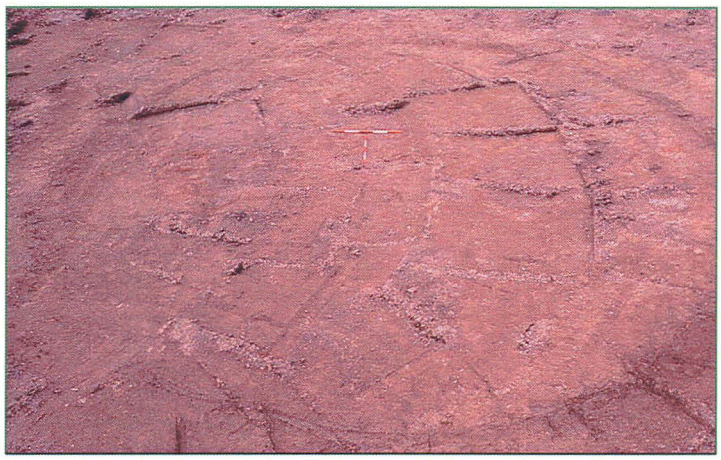
Pl. 5: Ditch [008], running northwards, looking north-north-west



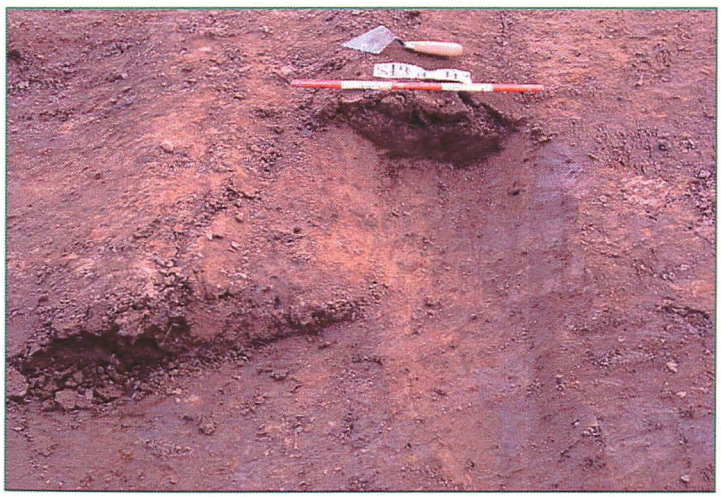
Pl. 6: Ring gully [010], post excavation, looking north.



Pl. 7: Section through ring gully [010], looking west-north-west



Pl. 8: Ring gully [012], post excavation, looking north-west.



Pl. 9: Section through ring gully [012], looking east.