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PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

LINCOLN

BURTON CORNER, BOSTON ASHTOFT
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AND EVALUATION REPORT

Site Code: BCB02
NGR: TF 3395 4520.
Planning Ref. B/00/0162/FULL
Accession No. 2002.166

EVENTS 43800 43801
SOURCES 48445 48446
13643 48882 UNDATED

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Report prepared for Chartdale Homes Ltd.
by
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Summary

- *A program of archaeological observation and recording, supplemented with limited evaluation, took place during initial groundworks for a residential development of land at Burton Corner, Boston, Lincolnshire.*

- *Two archaeological features were exposed, comprising a pair of ditches that were interpreted as field boundaries. They ran parallel to Wainfleet Road which has a 16th century property fronting onto it.*

- *For the most part, the archaeological result was negative, and the watching brief was cut short, following consultation with the Boston Community Archaeologist.*

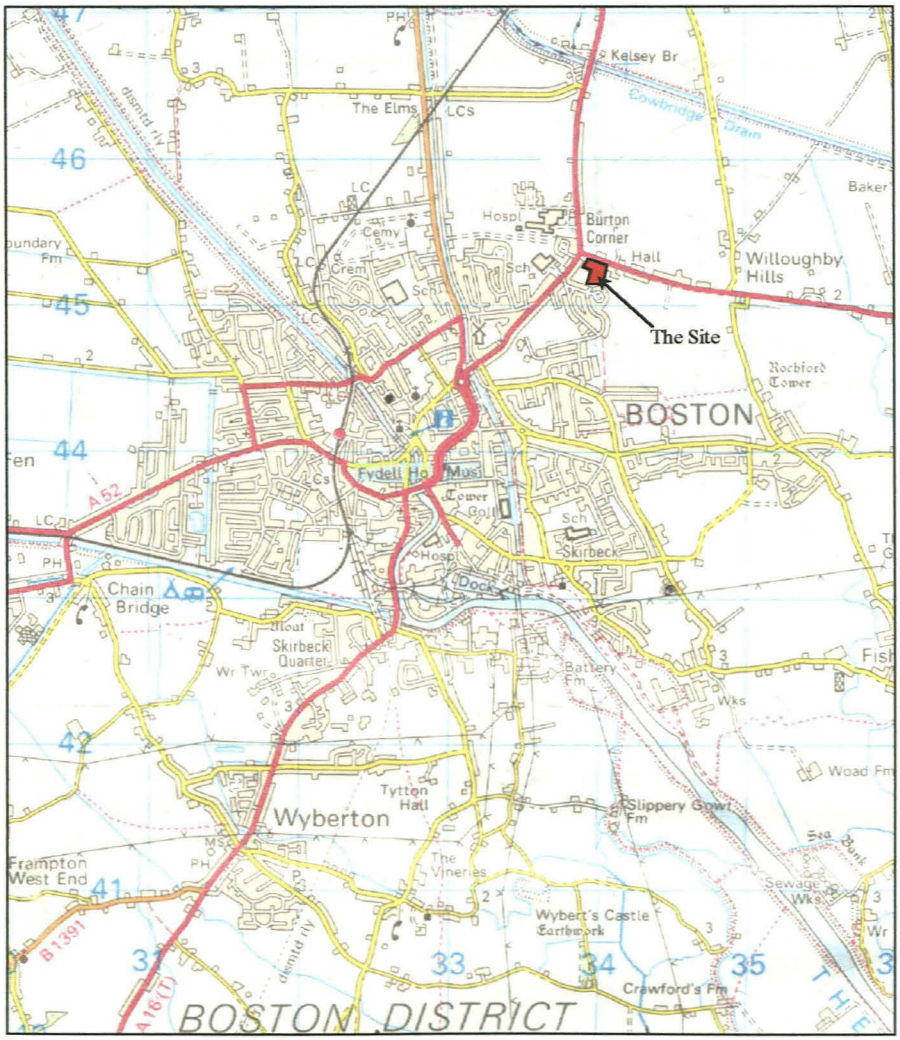

Fig. 1: Site location, site is shown in red.
Scale 1:50,000

1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) was commissioned by Chartdale homes Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the construction of new homes at Burton Corner, Boston. This work was undertaken to fulfil the objectives of an agreed archaeological mitigation strategy that was based on the recommendations of the Community Archaeologist of Boston Borough 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.

2.0 Site location and description

Boston lies on the silt fens of southeast Lincolnshire, 45 km southeast of Lincoln and 7 km from the coast of the Wash. The site is approximately 3.5 km northeast of the town center. It is bordered by Wainfleet Road to the north, Sibsey Road to the west, and residential properties to the south and east.

The site was overgrown when construction commenced, with a mixture of long grass, thistles and other weeds. Topographically it was typically flat.

The underlying drift geology consists of Barroway Drove beds to the north of the site and Terrington Beds to the south. These are marine and salt-marsh deposits, the former laid down in the Neolithic period, the later in the post-Roman era. Both of these deposit groups are over a solid geology of the Ancholme Group sand and mud stones (BGS, 1995).

The National Grid Reference for the centre of the site is TF 3395 4520 and the elevation is between 2.0 and 2.5m OD.

3.0 Planning background

Full planning consent was granted for the construction of 31 new houses and associated services. This was subject to the completion of an archaeological watching brief, the nature of which was defined in a document 'Specification for an enhanced watching brief: Land at Burton Corner, off Wainfleet Road/Spilsby Road, Boston, Lincolnshire' (Palmer-Brown 2001).

The planning reference for this project is B/00/0162/FULL

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

The town of Boston is of medieval origin, although recent work has demonstrated occupation of the area during the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods. The relative paucity of remains dating from the Roman and early Saxon periods can be explained by higher sea levels, which resulted in inundation of the fenland basin, where occupation was restricted to discrete (ie dryer) zones, (Harden 1978). Some Romano-British material has been recovered from the east side of the town, in the vicinity of the investigation area. Late Saxon structures have been recorded at Fishtoft, some 4km south-east of the site, dated to the late 9th/mid-10th centuries. Furthermore, Middle Saxon activity was recently investigated in the Church Road area of the town, although there is good evidence to suggest that this was not attached to any permanent settlement of the area (Palmer-Brown 1996).

Following the Norman Conquest, annual fairs were established by Alan Rufus, the first Earl of Richmond, and this is often taken to represent the founding of Boston, (Owen 1984). The port developed rapidly, mostly shipping wool from the many religious houses that existed upstream in the Witham valley. During the high medieval period, the port of Boston was second in importance only to London (Pevsner & Harris 1989).

At the Reformation, following the Dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII, most of the former ecclesiastical, as well as other properties in the town, passed to the crown and thence to the Duke of Suffolk. The leading townsmen, who formed a corporation for that purpose, purchased these properties. The Corporation of Boston was officially inaugurated in June 1545.

No archaeological activity has been previously recorded at the current site, although this could reflect a general lack of investigation in this particular area. Romano-British remains have been recorded in the vicinity; a pottery scatter 500m to the north, and two coins 500m to the west.

The site lies opposite Burton Hall, a brick house of late 16th century date, (Pevsner & Harris 1989). The road that separates Burton Hall and the current site leads from Boston to Wainfleet, and the presence of Burton Hall itself suggests that this was probably a medieval thoroughfare.

Medieval ploughing has been recorded in fields surrounding Burton Hall, and to the east of the site is the location of the medieval chapel of St Michael. A medieval building has been recorded in this area.

5.0 Methodology

Visits were made to the site on 14 occasions in order to observe excavations for the first foundations, as well as the stripping of the access road and part of the drainage installation; these were on 25th, 29th and 30th of January and the 1st and 20th February 2001. Visits were also made on the 27th and 29th of May, the 5th, 6th, 7th, 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th of June 2002. These visits were by Mark Allen, Chris Clay and Alex Brett.

The initial monitoring concentrated on the excavation of foundation trenches on plots 3,4,5,6 and 7 (Pl. 3). Following this, the next work undertaken by the contractors was the removal of topsoil along the course of the access road. This was followed by the installation of foul water sewers along the centre of this access road: due to the unstable nature of the ground, this phase took several weeks to complete (Pl.s 1 & 2).

All of this work was continually monitored by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln). Any archaeological features exposed were drawn in plan and section and recorded on pro-forma context record sheets. A record of photographs of all archaeological features was also maintained.

Following a meeting on site between the Boston Community Archaeologist, Pre-Construct Archaeology and Chartdale Homes Ltd. on 24th June 02, it was decided to amend the overall methodology: the watching brief on the drainage works was suspended; to be replaced by a scheme of evaluation trenches. Five trenches were excavated (see Fig. 2). Each of these trenches was recorded in plan and section, using scale drawings and pro-forma context sheets. A record of photographs was also maintained.

6.0 Results

The uppermost deposit across the site was a dark and humic topsoil (001). This gave way to a subsoil; context (002) for the house plots, and (009) for the access road and drainage cuts (Fig. 3). This material had been formed by the action of roots and earthworms on the underlying alluvial deposits.

Beneath this subsoil, were a series of banded alluvial layers, representing the various phases of deposition that make up the Baroway and Terrington beds. These were recorded in some detail during the watching brief, but will not be discussed in this report. For a description of these deposits, see Appendix 2. The features that were observed during the evaluation phase were cut into the top of this material.

During the phase of trial trenching that replaced the suspended watching brief, two ditches were observed in evaluation Trenches 1 and 5. Ditch [020] from Trench 1 ran approximately east-west and was 1.85m wide and 0.60m deep (Pl. s 4 & 5, Fig.s 4 & 5). Its fill (019) was homogenous clay containing occasional fragments of burnt earth and cockle-shell. The homogenous clayey nature of this material suggests that it was naturally water-lain.

A similar, though smaller, ditch was investigated in Trench 5. Ditch [022] was 1.0m wide and 0.20m deep (Pl. s 6 & 7, Fig.s 6 & 7). The fill (021) was dark brown clayey silt with no inclusions. Like (019) above, it appeared to be naturally formed.

These ditches ran parallel across the site from southwest to northeast, and although no finds were recovered to date them, it seems likely that they were associated.

No other features, archaeological or otherwise, were observed in Trenches 2, 3 & 4 (Pl. s 8, 9 & 10, Fig. s 8, 9 & 10).

7.0 Discussion and conclusions

The only archaeological features encountered during this project were a pair of parallel boundary ditches; recorded during the evaluation phase of investigation. Although each of these was only observed in a single trench, an estimate of their alignment can be projected, and this is shown on fig. 2. This alignment is parallel to the road, which runs to the north of the site and is on the alignment of a 16th century road. This may suggest a period during which these ditches were in use.

The site is located on the geological formations known as the Barroway and Terrington Beds, with the border running roughly east to west across the southern part of the site; this may have implications for the possible survival of archaeological remains. The former were laid down during the Neolithic period and the latter formed between the Romano-British and later post-medieval periods. Clearly, both have the potential to mask earlier archaeological horizons.

As the alluvial deposits are a minimum of 20m in thickness, it is clearly impossible to ascertain if any archaeological remains are present beneath them, but it seems reasonable to suggest that there are no remains present at modern ground level, or within 1m of the present ground surface.

8.0 Effectiveness of methodology

The work carried out on this site fell into 3 different phases. The first phase was the monitoring of the initial house plots, along with the access road. This allowed an early assessment of the potential of the site to be determined. This proved negative, and it was decided to only monitor the installation of the drainage in order to examine a section across the site.

The examination of the drainage works also failed to produce any archaeological results, and as the installation of the drains progressed so slowly that it proved uneconomic to monitor it completely.

The scheme of evaluation that replaced it allowed the remaining areas of the site to be examined more efficiently. These trenches only produced two relatively late boundary ditches, and so the archaeological scheme was then terminated.

9.0 Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Chartdale homes Ltd for commissioning this investigation. Thanks are also expressed to Tom and the ground workers from Sharkeys Civil Engineering Ltd for their cooperation during the course of the site works. Particular thanks are due to Dave Stafford for assistance with surveying. Also all of the staff at the Lincolnshire S.M.R. are thanked for assistance with the research for this report, and the Boston Community Archaeologist is thanked for her assistance during the course of the investigation.

10.0 References

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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 2002.166.

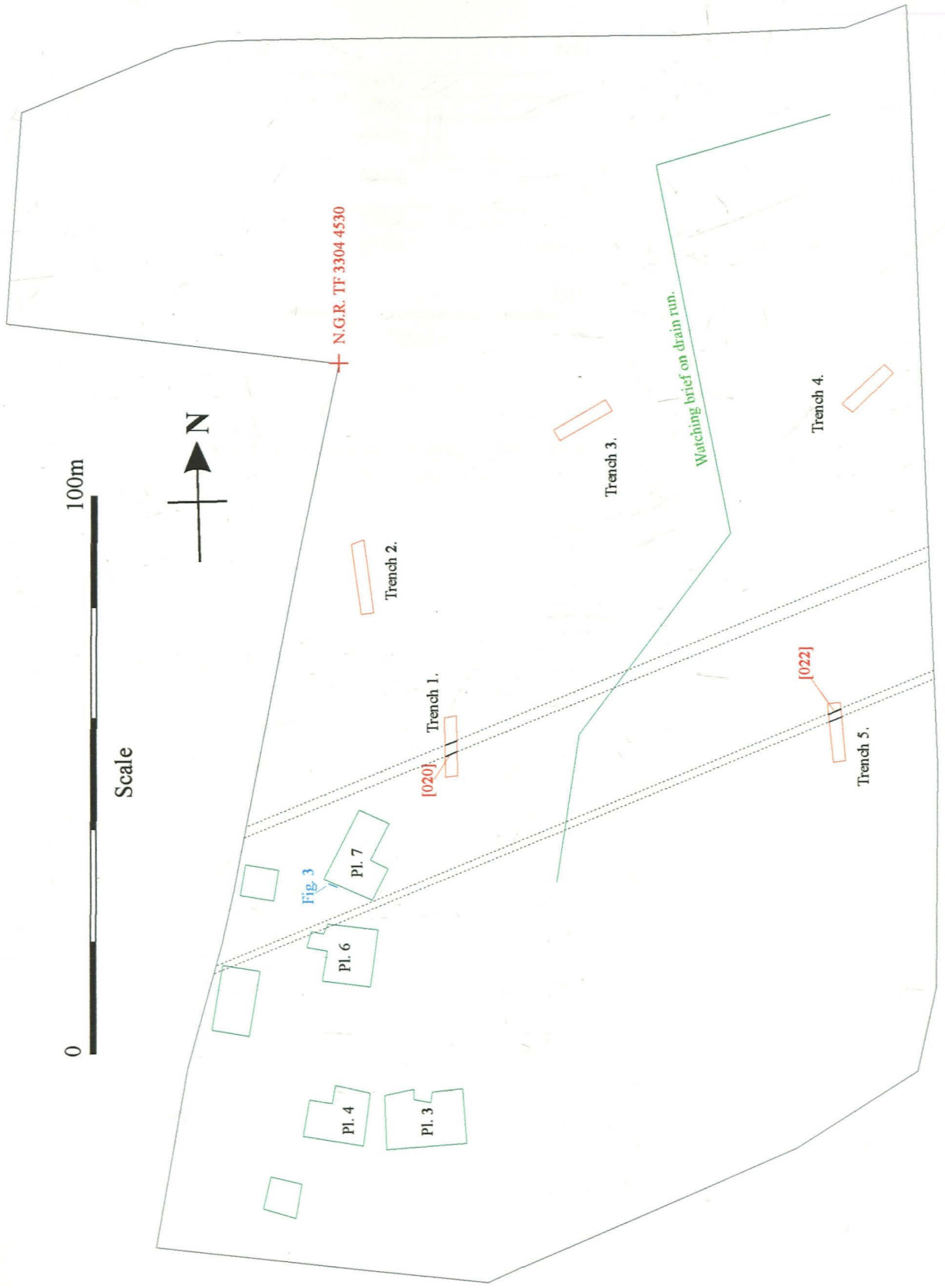


Fig. 2: Plan of the site showing watching brief areas in green and evaluation trenches in red. Archaeological features are shown in black and their projected alignments are dashed. Scale 1:1000

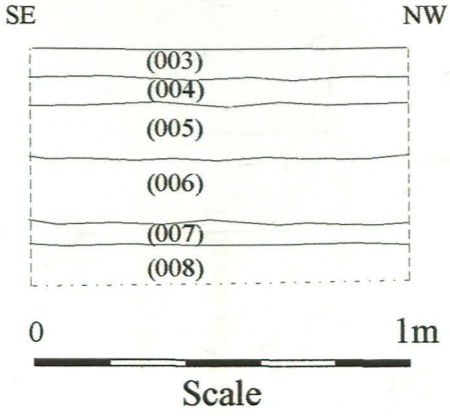


Fig 3: Representative section from plot 7. North-east facing, 1:20.

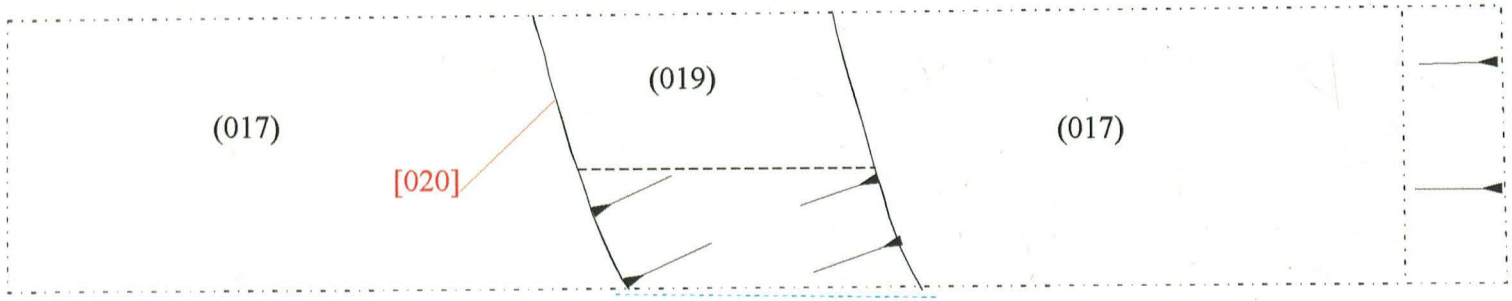


Fig. 4: Plan of evaluation trench 1.
1:50

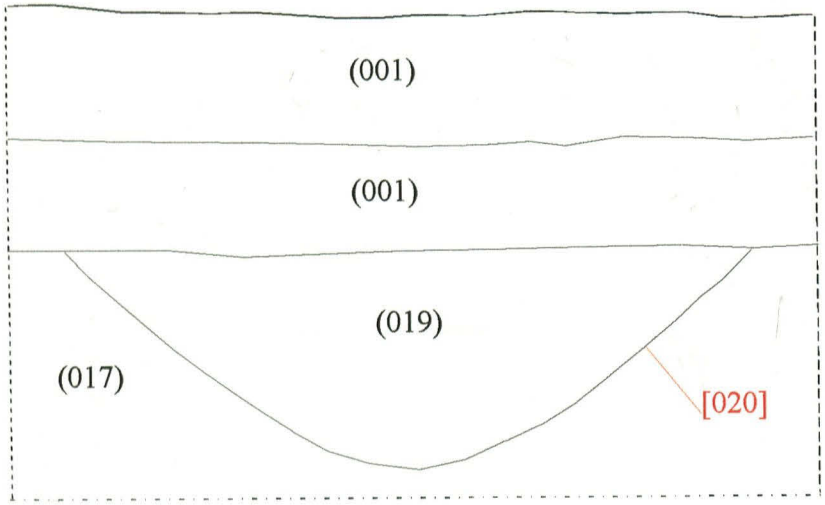


Fig. 5: West facing section from trench 1.
Shows ditch [020], 1:20.

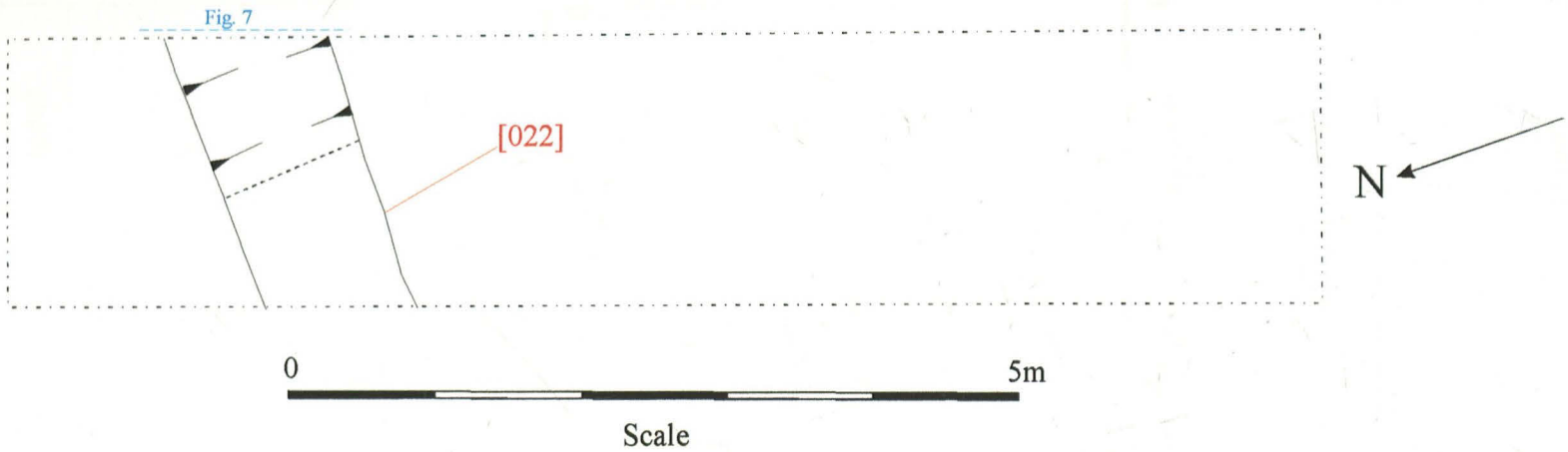


Fig. 6: Plan of evaluation trench 5. 1:50.

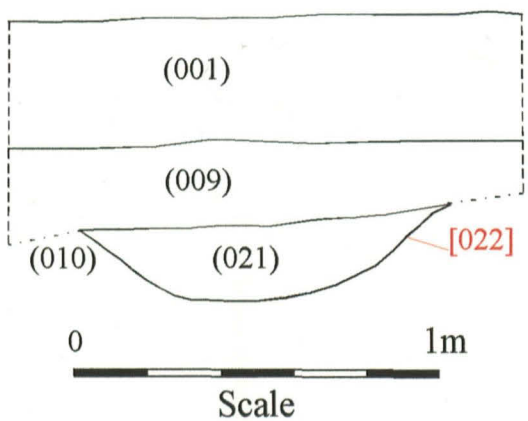


Fig. 7: West facing section from trench 5. Shows ditch [022], 1:20.

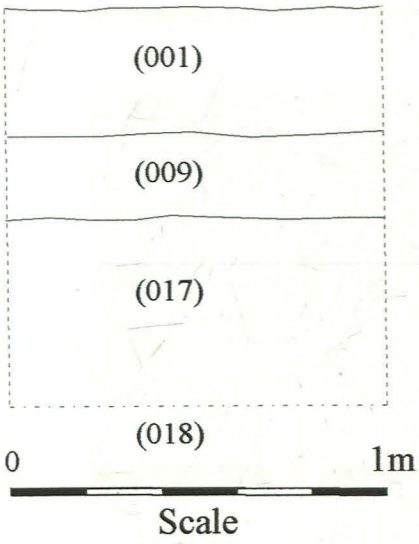


Fig. 8: Representative section from trench 2.
East facing, 1:20.

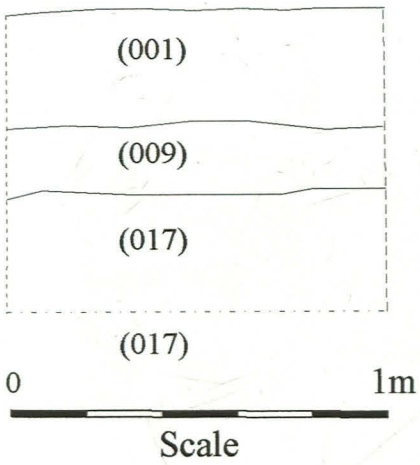


Fig. 9: Representative section from trench 3.
North facing, 1:20.

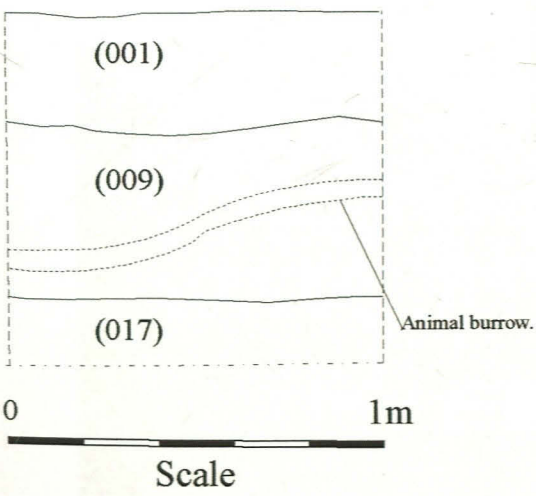


Fig. 10: Representative section from trench 4.
North facing, 1:20.

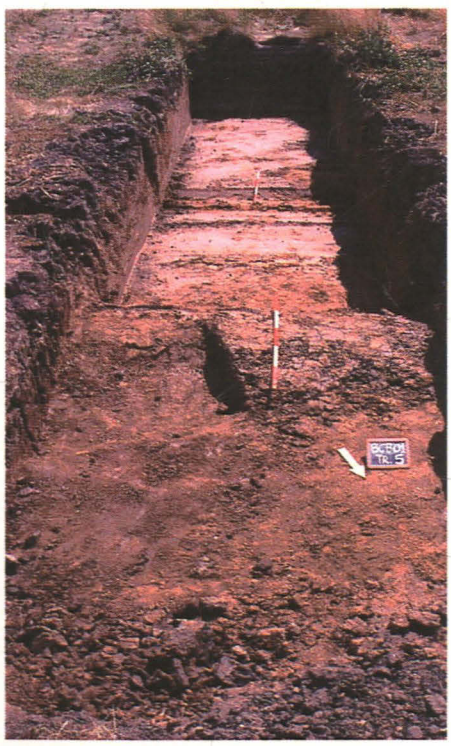
Appendix 1. Colour plates

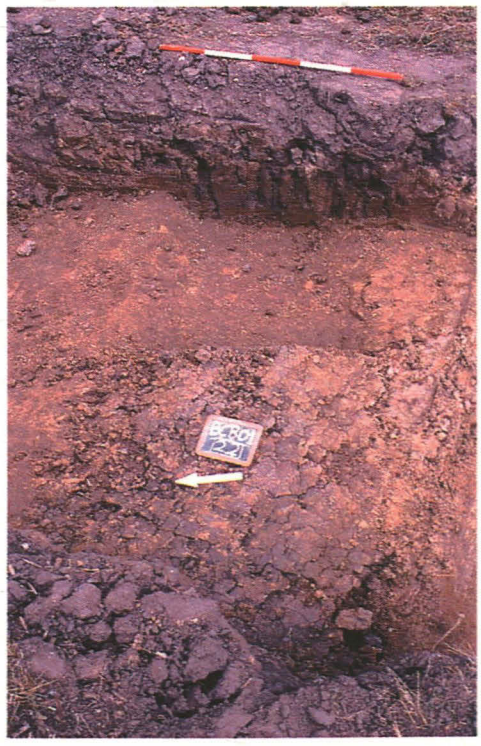
Pl. 1 : View of the first inspection chamber being inserted. The collapse at the top left of the image is the reason that the drains took so long to install.

Pl. 2 : In order to overcome the problem of 'running sand' encountered on the site, trench boxes had to be inserted as soon as the trenches were dug. This made archaeological recording difficult

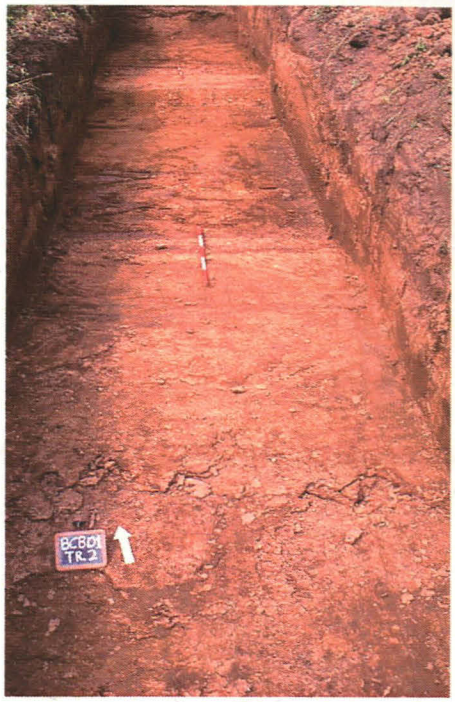
Pl. 3 : North east facing section from plot 7. The topsoil has been removed and so only subsoil and alluvium are visible in this image.

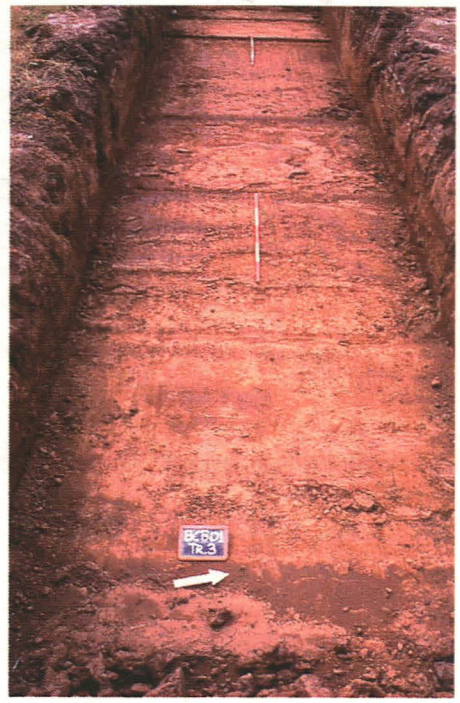
Pl. s 4 & 5 : Evaluation trench 1. Shows ditch [020] which was aligned ESE-WNW and appeared to be parallel to Wainfleet Road to the north of the site.





Pl. s 6 & 7 : Evaluation trench 5. Shows ditch [022] which appeared to be on the same alignment as [020] above and was interpreted as part of the same field system.





Pl. s 8-10 : Showing evaluation trenches 2, 3 and 4. In each case the topsoil and subsoil was removed down to the first alluvial layer. No archaeological features were exposed in any of these trenches.

Appendix 2. Context summary.

CONTEXT NUMBER	CONTEXT DESCRIPTION	
001	Topsoil. Very humic.	
002	Subsoil.	
003	Low energy alluvium.	
004	Low energy alluvium.	
005	Very low energy alluvium.	Plot 7.
006	Very low energy alluvium.	
007	Low energy alluvium.	
008	Very low energy alluvium.	
009	Subsoil. Alluvium re-worked by modern soil processes.	
010	Alluvium.	
011	Higher energy sandy alluvial deposit.	
012	Low energy silty alluvium.	
013	Fine sandy alluvium.	
014	Series of alluvial deposits. Could not be closely examined.	
015	Alluvium.	
016	Alluvium.	
017	Series of high and low alluvial events. Sand and silt bands.	
018	Fine sandy alluvium. May represent a number of separate events.	
019	Fill of [020]. Uniform nature suggests natural formation process.	
[020]	Ditch. Boundary or marker function.	
021	Fill of [022]. Appears naturally formed.	
[022]	Ditch. Boundary or marker function.	