

LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

FRANCIS HOUSE SILVER BIRCH PARK GREAT NORTHERN TERRACE LINCOLN LN5 8LG

Archaeological Watching Brief at Scotter C.P. School
(NGR: SE 8870 0057)

Archaeological Watching Brief at Scotter C.P. School (NGR: SE 8870 0057)

Introduction

Lincolnshire County Council's Land and Buildings Consultancy commissioned Lindsey Archaeological Services (LAS) to conduct a watching brief on the groundworks for new buildings at Scotter Primary School, Scotton Road, Scotter (Fig. 1). Work had started before LAS were contacted on April 27th 1994, but an immediate visit confirmed that no archaeological features had been encountered. Two further visits were made when machining took place in other locations (29th April and May 11th); during the final visit some unrelated landscaping disturbances in the school grounds close to the new buildings were also investigated.

Archaeological Background

Scotter School is located on the east side of Scotton Road, 0.3km south-east of the village centre and 0.15km west of the River Eau. Prehistoric finds have been found in the parish, which extends westwards to the River Trent, including a polished stone axe south of the school site and a wooden dug-out boat from the Eau valley nearer the village centre (Appendix 1).

An Anglo-Saxon cemetery is recorded to have been disturbed in the late 19th century in the NW of the present Primary School grounds, close to Scotton Road (SMR 50050, Appendix 1). A later record (c. 1962) may represent further finds or a repetition of the original data.

Finds of other human remains in Scotter, closer to the church, seem to be from vast mass interments associated with medieval plagues and are unrelated to the Anglo-Saxon cemetery (SMR 50054, 50064-5).

The rear area of the Primary School grounds has apparently been lowered, perhaps in association with the gradual extension of the school buildings, although this ground may have lain within a limestone quarry.

The Watching Brief

Building works took place in three locations, marked A, B and C on Fig. 2. Area A was in an area of school garden between two established ranges of classrooms and cloakrooms (Pl. 1); the extent of the new foundations here were 8m square, with the footings cutting about 1.2m from the present ground surface. Two sections were examined during the first visit, at A1 and A2 (Fig. 2).

A1 was at the SW corner, beside a retained covered external corridor. The stratigraphic sequence here was very simple: the asphalt surface overlay about 0.4m of loose rubble incorporating fine stone above a layer of brick rubble. Below this, a single 0.5m thick layer of dark brown soil was recorded, which seemed to be a former topsoil (Pl. 2).

A2 was cut directly through the garden on the west side of the classroom site, through a thick dark brown topsoil layer and 0.4m of the thick underlying light brown sand deposit (Pl. 3). None of the machined footings located any lower stratigraphy. The thickness of the topsoil layer may be the result of topsoil mounding in this area when the adjacent asphalted playground was laid; that lies at a noticeably lower level.

Area B consisted of a number of 1m square holes hand-dug both within and outside the wall of an existing building (Pl. 4). All these holes showed a similar sequence of the foundation trench for the present wall cutting down through some disturbed, probably redeposited, soil above a buried topsoil layer (Pls 5-8). The ground sloped upwards towards the southern end of the building, and a thin orange brown (?subsoil) layer was exposed below the buried topsoil (Pl. 6). This 0.04m band was a weathered version of the thick layer below, which continued below any excavated trenches. It was a dense fine scree deposit of limestone flakes, containing no trace of archaeological material.

Area C was situated between Areas A and B, close to a former short flight of steps (Pl. 9). The footings here were in the form of three machined trenches, which the builders had cut deeply into the fine limestone layer suspecting it to be disturbed ground; they had not found the base of this layer.

A feature, thought to be natural, crossed the trenches SW-NE. It had a sloping northern face and a steeper southern side, with a rounded base cut into the loose limestone layer (no later deposits survived) (Pls 10-13). The fill was a mid-brown compacted sand with frequent root runs and no large inclusions. This channel was interpreted as a relict stream course, although a remote possibility exists that it may have been artificial.

While the building operations were continuing, an unrelated project on a recreation area to the east removed turf and scraped some soil from a boundary bank (Pl. 14). Access to this area was arranged with the Project Organiser and a rapid inspection was made of the exposed soil. The only helpful observation here was against the northern boundary of the site, at the base of the hedge. The 0.3m thick topsoil probably included bank material although this could not be distinguished; a small ditch may also be visible beside the photographic scale, meeting the hedge boundary (Pls 15 and 16). This sealed limestone bedrock, weathered to small thin lumps in a white lime matrix.

The sequence beside the hedge had been protected from recent landscaping and mechanical earth movement, offering a glimpse of the original geological conditions of the school site. The absence of subsoil below the topsoil was interpreted as the result of ploughing or natural erosion before enclosure occurred in the post-medieval period.

The very different stratigraphy by the school buildings suggested that there had been a natural (probably post-glacial) linear depression running north-

south below the school which had contained a substantial stream channel - perhaps a previous course of the River Eau. Material eroded from the limestone slope beside this stream had formed a deep water-sorted deposit on the stream bed as had been identified in Areas B and C.

Conclusion

The reasons for the apparent discrepancy between a site reported to have produced an Anglo-Saxon cemetery and the complete absence of archaeological remains in the building trenches are difficult to explain. Several possible explanations can be offered but without great confidence. The most likely are that the exact findspot of the cemetery was incorrectly reported in the 19th century or that evidence for it was always restricted to a very small area around the actual findspot.

Another possibility is that limestone quarrying has entirely removed the cemetery, and indeed may have been responsible for the original discoveries. Hachures of an irregular pitted area, probably a quarry, are marked in the fields to both north and east of the school site on an OS map published in 1956 (although the last full revision incorporated had been in 1905-6) (OS 1956; Fig. 1). The extent of this quarrying was not determined for this report, but the hedge section with undisturbed limestone east of the school buildings suggests that the quarry may not have extended south of that field boundary onto the present school site. The fine limestone derived material from the building trenches was interpreted on site as a stream-bed sediment but perhaps represents a redeposition of quarry waste; the small-scale nature of the present disturbances prevented that being resolved.

Documentary research for this project was limited, in response to the complete absence of the anticipated archaeological remains and in order to reduce the costs of the monitoring condition; documentation clarifying the find circumstances and the earlier soil movements on the school site may exist if an extended search was appropriate.

Acknowledgements

Plans of this re-modelling were supplied by C. Smith of Land and Buildings Consultancy

Bill Reed, the site agent for the Contractors, TG Sowerby Ltd, was very co-operative with the archaeological monitoring and contacted LAS when groundworks were taking place. Ian George, Assistant Archaeological Officer at Lincs. County Council Archaeology Section and the staff of the Sites and Monument Record provided background information.

Geoff Tann
Lindsey Archaeological Services
27 May 1994

Appendix 1

Lincolnshire County Sites and Monuments Record Summary

SMR code	NGR(all SE)	Description
50050 (S)	8868 0058	Early medieval/Anglo-Saxon inhumation cemetery; skeletons found 1892 (and ? also others before 1958); associated with an iron knife.
50054 (W)	8861 0055	Human bones and animal bones in sewer trench between Scotter Green and South St., 200yds from church, 1966.
50064-5 (AE) unlocated		Human bones, ancient spurs and other relics found at various times in the village (1856).
50072	8887 0067	Spring, with well and pump
50045 (K)	8887 0090	Prehistoric dug-out boat found in or close to River Eau, 1836.
50061 (AB)	8864 0035	Polished stone axe, 1942.



Fig. 1 Location of Scotter C.P. School (Enlarged from 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey 1956, Sheet SE 80; reproduced with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Crown Copyright. Licence no. AL 50424A).

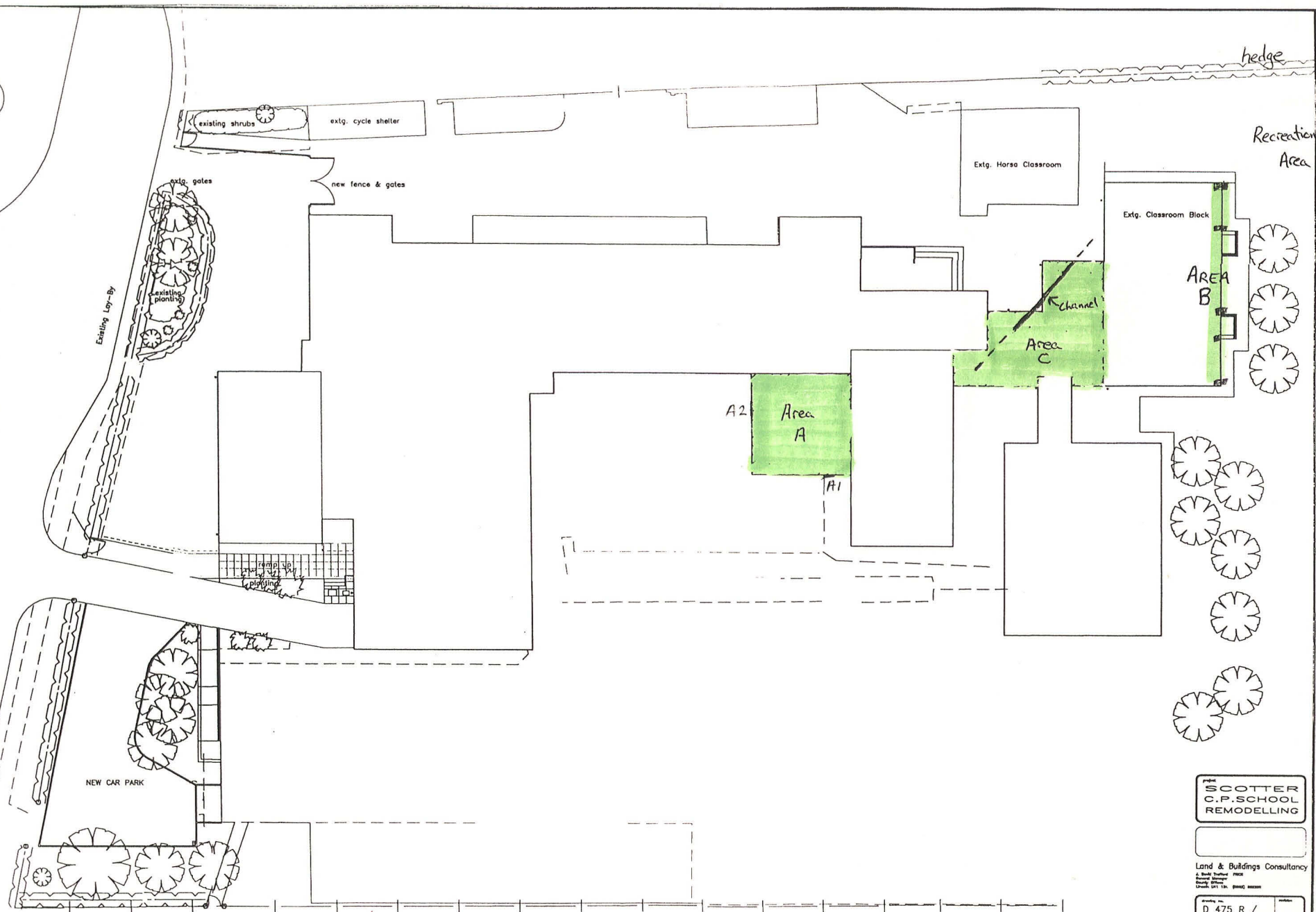


Fig. 2 Location of the monitored groundworks (reduced from 1:200 plan, Drawing no. D475R supplied by Land and Buildings Consultancy)

SCOTTER
C.P. SCHOOL
REMODELLING

Land & Buildings Consultancy
A. Smith, Architect, 1988
Remodelling, 1988
Drawing, 1988

Drawing no. D 475 R /



scale 1:200
date 1988
drawn by A. Smith
checked by A. Smith



Pl. 1 Area A, general view looking north

Pl. 2 Area A, section A1 (scale 0.5m)





Pl. 3 Area A, section A2



Pl. 4 Area B, external trenches, looking north



Pl. 5 Area B, external trench, south end

Pl. 6 Area B, external trench, centre of building





Pl. 7 Area B, trench on NE corner of building

Pl. 8 Area B external trench towards north of building





Pl. 9 Area C footings, showing loam-filled channel in section; looking NW

Pl. 10 Area C, loam-filled channel in section with fine sediments below





Pl. 11 Area C, detail of loam-filled channel, looking NW

Pl. 12 Area C, alignment of channel





Pl. 13 Area C, channel cutting section (looking east; scale 0.5m)

Pl. 14 Recreation Area, with scraped bank to north and east





Pl. 15 Recreation Area, ditch meeting hedge boundary at original ground level

Pl. 16 Recreation Area, detail of undisturbed limestone beside hedge

