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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
OF GEOTECHNICAL TEST PITS
ON LAND AT THE HOPLANDS,
~~SLEAFORD,~~ KIRKBY LA TH
LINCOLNSHIRE
(STH02)



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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
OF GEOTECHNICAL TEST PITS
ON LAND AT THE HOPLANDS,
~~SLEAFORD,~~ KIRKBY LA THORPE
LINCOLNSHIRE
(STH02)**

Work Undertaken For
Broadgate Homes

February 2003

Report compiled by
Steve Thomson BSc (Hons)

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National Grid Reference: TF ~~0787 4624~~ ^{TF0782 4597}
City and County Museum Accession No:2002.500



Conservation
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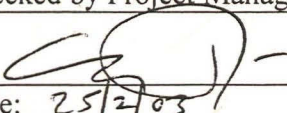
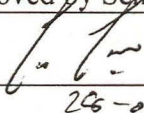
07 MAR 2003

Highways & Planning
Directorate

A.P.S. Report No:205/02 *

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STH02

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1. SUMMARY

A watching brief was undertaken during geotechnical test pitting on land at The Hoplands, Sleaford, Lincolnshire, as the site lay within an area of known prehistoric and Romano-British remains.

During the course of the investigation and post-excavation analysis a 'dark earth' deposit (reworked archaeological deposits) was identified in all three test pits, suggesting it covered the entire site. The 'dark earth' relates to late 3rd to 4th century Roman abandonment of the site.

A relatively modern ditch was also recorded, with animal bone and Prehistoric and Romano-British pottery recovered from the site.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Definition of a Watching Brief

An archaeological watching brief is defined as, '*a formal program of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits maybe disturbed or destroyed.*' (IFA 1999).

2.2 Planning Background

Archaeological Project Services was commissioned by Broadgate Homes Limited to undertake an archaeological watching brief during geotechnical test pitting on land at The Hoplands, Sleaford.

Archaeological recording of the results was undertaken with a view to submitting a report of the findings for the attention of the North Kesteven Heritage Officer to assist with pre-planning determination.

2.3 Topography and Geology

Sleaford is situated 27km south of Lincoln in North Kesteven District, Lincolnshire (Fig.1). The town stands on the River Slea and its tributaries, which flow northeastward to join the Witham.

Located at a height of c. 12m OD, the investigation area is situated north of Boston Road and east of St. Giles' Avenue, on land adjacent to the NKDC Hoplands Depots. Lying within the parish of Ewerby and Evedon, the site is approximately 1km east of Sleaford town centre, as represented by the parish church of St. Denys, and covers an area of c. 3.24ha, centred on national grid reference TF 0787 4624 (Fig.2).

Although as an urban fringe the investigation area has not been fully mapped by the Soil Survey, it is probable that the soil regime consists of Newsleaford Series gleyic brown calcareous sand on calcareous Fen sand and gravel (George and Robson 1978, 86-7).

2.4 Archaeological Setting

Archaeological remains and artefacts of prehistoric and later date have previously been found in close proximity to the investigation area.

A Bronze Age metal palstave is reported immediately north of the site and prehistoric flints have also been found in

close proximity (Taylor 1996). Just to the west of the site is a trackway that marks the line of the Roman road, Mareham Lane. This is thought to have originated as a prehistoric route (May 1976, 8) and investigations about 800m to the north established that the Roman road was on the line of a Middle Iron Age trackway (Herbert 1998).

Evidence for Iron Age settlement is recorded south, west and north of the investigation site and the core of Roman Sleaford appears to be broadly in the area of the current investigation. This evidence includes both cropmarks and remains recorded by previous archaeological observation and excavation. Approximately 600m to the south of The Hoplands, excavations have previously revealed part of a substantial Middle Iron Age palisaded enclosure with internal corn-drying hearths, pits and post-built structures which may represent granaries (Elsdon 1997, 30).

Late Iron Age occupation is attested by other excavations conducted within 250m of the site. South of Boston Road, pits and gullies containing pottery dated to this period, have been revealed (*Ibid.*, 1997, 26). Further west, investigations have recorded both circular and rectangular buildings, trackways and enclosures of Late Iron Age date (*ibid.*, 30).

Excavation, conducted in the vicinity of Old Place, about 150m to the southwest recovered over 4,000 coin pellet-mould fragments. This is the largest collection of such material found in northern Europe and strongly suggests the presence of a mint within the later Iron Age settlement.

Archaeological investigations on land immediately north of the site revealed evidence of late Iron Age and Romano-

British occupation. Timber and stone structures were recorded along with several burials (Rayner 2001). Similarly, investigations directly to the southeast revealed Romano-British buildings, including a substantial stone structure (Herbert 1998).

3. AIMS

The aim of the archaeological investigation was to record and interpret archaeological features and deposits exposed during the excavation of the test pits and, if present, to determine their spatial arrangement, date, function and origin.

4. METHODS

Three geotechnical test pits were mechanically excavated to depths of 2.8m to 3.58m. The width and depth of the trial holes prohibited close examination of the sections due to the risk of collapse of the sides. Sections (Fig. 4) were recorded at a scale of 1:20 and their locations plotted on a scale plan of the site (Fig.3).

Each deposit revealed was allocated a unique reference number (context number) with an individual written description. Recording was undertaken to APS' standard practice.

A colour slide photographic record was compiled of the recorded deposits and the setting of the site. Records of the investigation were examined post-excavation and further archaeological deposits were recognised.

A summary of all contexts and

interpretations appears as Appendix 1. Artefacts retrieved from the investigation were analysed (Appendix 3).

Archaeological contexts are described below. The numbers shown in bold and brackets are the context numbers assigned in the field.

5. RESULTS

Following post-excavation analysis, the following results were noted.

The earliest deposit revealed was a reddish yellow sand and gravel (**003**), which was observed to be greater than 2.4m thick.

Overlying this was a 'dark earth' deposit (**006**) (Plate 3). The deposit was approximately 0.5m thick and was sealed by a greyish brown sandy silt topsoil (**002**). Pottery and animal bone was recovered from the topsoil

A north-south oriented ditch (**005**) (Plate 2) cut the dark earth and also appeared to cut the topsoil. The ditch was 1.1m deep and 2.5m wide and contained a sandy silt (**004**) similar in colour and nature to the topsoil.

The most recent deposit was restricted to the area of test pit 1 and comprised a 0.1m thick layer of tarmac and brick rubble (**001**). This deposit was identified as modern demolition debris.

6. DISCUSSION

The earliest recorded deposit of sand and gravel are likely to have resulted from glaciofluvial action.

Overlying this was a 'dark earth' deposit. Similar deposits have been recorded immediately north of the site (Rayner 2001) and to the southwest (Herbert 1999). The deposit represents the transformation of archaeological layers, post-deposition, through the action of such as worms and natural decomposition. The deposit was identified as dating to a late 3rd to 4th century abandonment of the Roman town (Rayner 2001) and sealed structural remains.

One feature, a ditch, was identified in test pit 1 and appeared to cut the topsoil. As such, it is likely to be of a relatively recent date, though the fill of the ditch and the topsoil were similar in nature, and a precise relationship was not clear.

Pottery recovered from the topsoil was of prehistoric and Romano-British date, which reflects well the results of prior investigations in the area, indicating settlement of both periods.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Archaeological investigations were undertaken at The Hoplands, Sleaford, Lincolnshire as the site lay within an archaeologically sensitive area, in proximity to archaeological remains of Romano-British and prehistoric date.

The investigation revealed a dark earth deposit. Comparable deposits have been identified during previous investigations in the vicinity, as being associated with Romano-British occupation, suggesting the possibility of similar activity on the current investigation site. Whilst no physical remains of this period were identified

during the watching brief, pottery was recovered together with animal bone and may relate to habitation.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Project Services wish to acknowledge the assistance of Mr Matt Barker of Broadgate Homes, who commissioned the fieldwork and post-excavation analysis. The work was coordinated by Gary Taylor, who jointly edited this report with Tom Lane. Dave Start and Joanna Hambly kindly permitted access to the parish files and library maintained by Heritage Lincolnshire.

9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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10. ABBREVIATIONS

APS Archaeological Project Services

BGS British Geological Survey

IFA Institute of Field Archaeologists

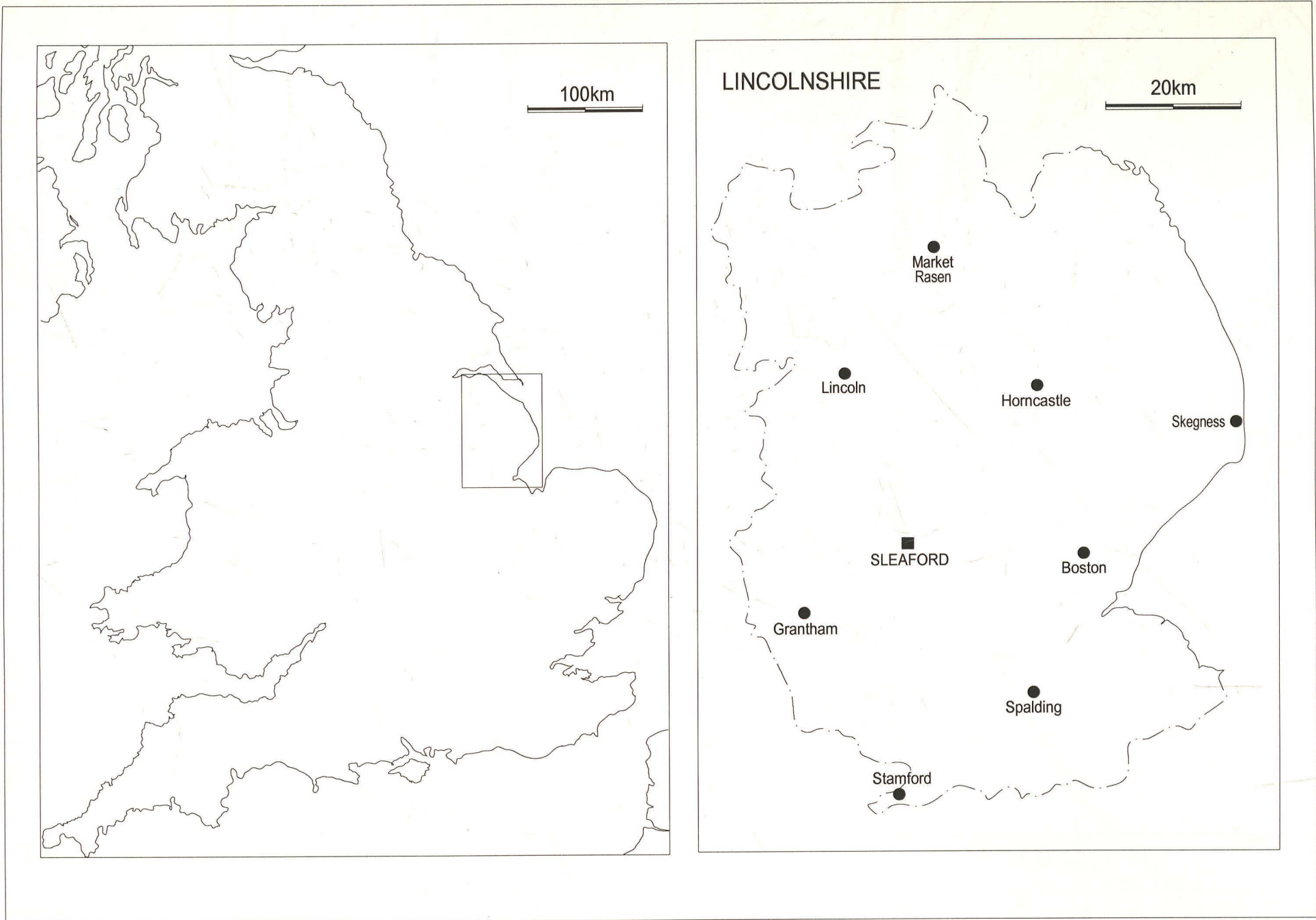
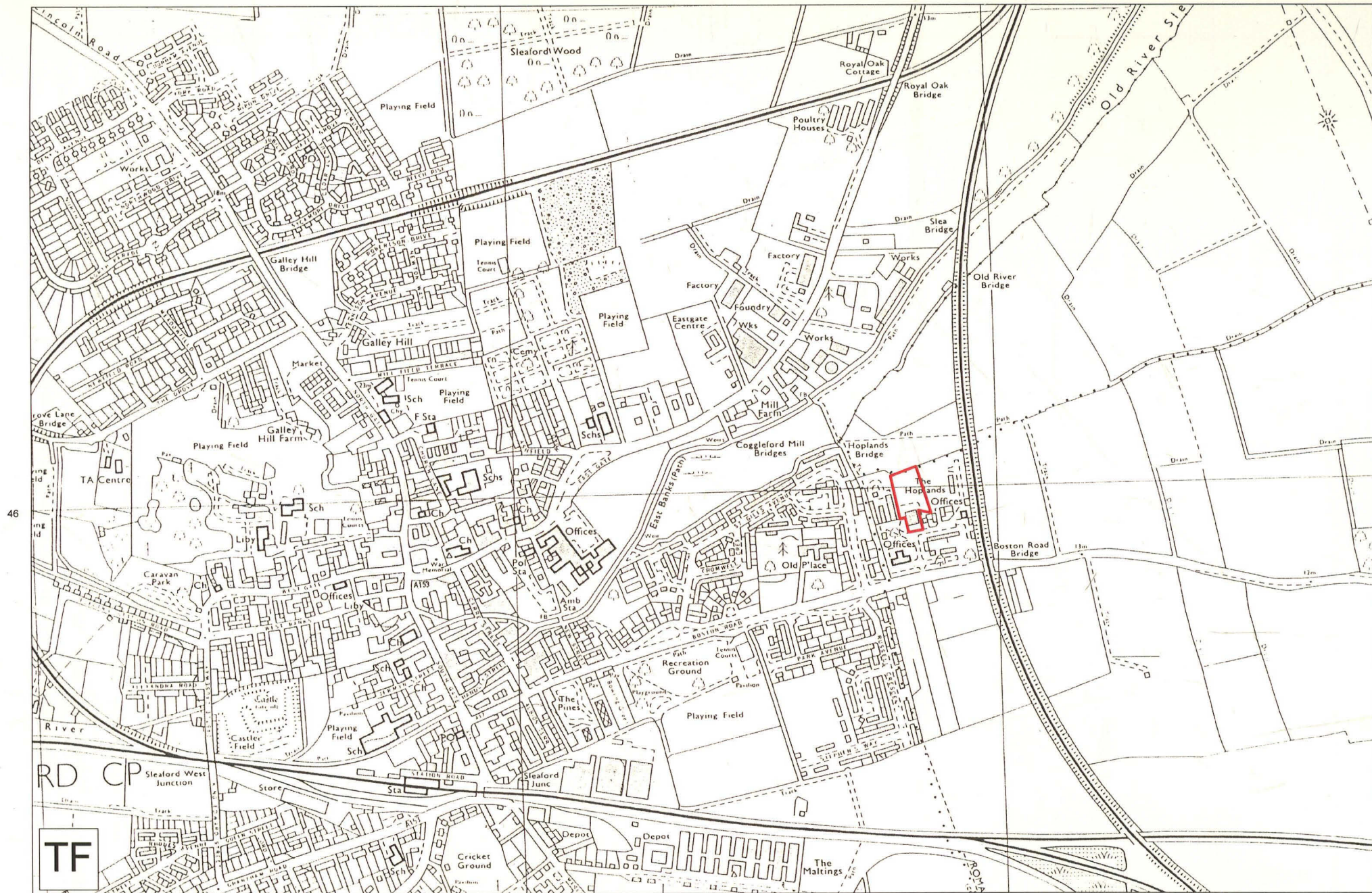


Figure 1: General Location Plan



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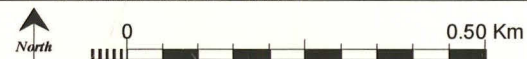


Figure 2 Site location plan



Figure 3 - Detailed site plan showing test pit locations

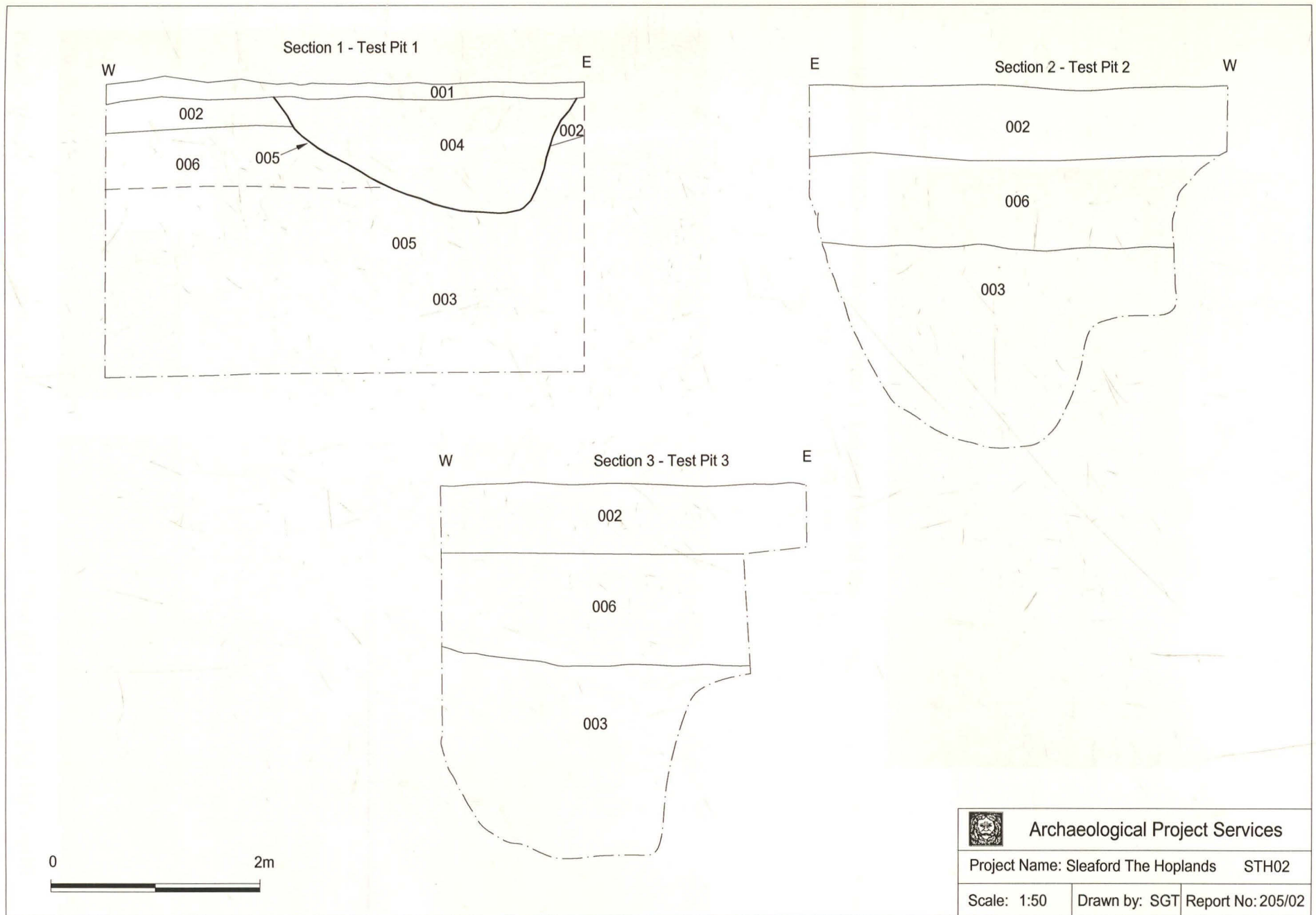


Figure 4 - Section drawings



Plate 1 General view of the development area, looking south



Plate 2 - Test pit 1, section 1, looking northwest



Plate 3, Test pit 2, showing dark earth

Appendix 1
Context Summary

Context No.	Section	Description	Interpretation
001	1	Compact, mixed black, red and yellowish white, tarmac and brick rubble, 0.1m thick	Demolition layer
002	1,2,3	Soft, greyish brown sandy silt, up to 1.3m deep	Topsoil
003	1,2,3	Loose, reddish yellow sand and gravel	Natural geological deposit
004	1	Similar to topsoil	Fill of 005
005	1	Cut feature, >0.6m N-S x 1.1m deep x 2.75m E-W, N-S orientation	Ditch
006	1,2,3	Black soil – previously identified during prior evaluation	'Dark earth'

Appendix 2

THE FINDS

by Paul Cope-Faulkner

Provenance

The material was recovered from the topsoil (002).

Range

The range of material is detailed in the table.

Table 1: The Faunal Remains

Context	Species	Bone	No.	Wt (g)	Comments
002	cattle	vertebra	1	130	
	cattle	metacarpal	1	71	
	cattle	clavicle	1	68	

Condition

All the material is in good condition and present no long-term storage problems. Archive storage of the collection is by material class.

Documentation

There have been several previous archaeological investigations at Sleaford that are the subjects of reports. Details of archaeological sites and discoveries in the area are maintained in the files of the North Kesteven Heritage Officer and the Lincolnshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record.

Appendix 3

The Pottery
By Barbara Precious

CONTEXT	FABRIC	FORM	DEC	NO VESS	COND	DWG NO	COMMENTS	JOIN	SHERDS	WT
2	GREY	BWM	BIA;B WL	1			BSS;CF SPOOL;TEST PIT 1;L3-4C		2	323
2	NAT		HM		ABR		BS COARSE W CLAY PELL;TP2;PREHIST		1	8
2	ZDATE						PREH-L3-4C			
2	ZZZ						TEST PITS 1 & 2			

Appendix 4

Glossary

Bronze Age	A period characterised by the introduction of bronze into the country for tools, between 2250 and 800 BC.
Context	An archaeological context represents a distinct archaeological event or process. For example, the action of digging a pit creates a context (the cut) as does the process of its subsequent backfill (the fill). Each context encountered during an archaeological investigation is allocated a unique number by the archaeologist and a record sheet detailing the description and interpretation of the context (the context sheet) is created and placed in the site archive. Context numbers are identified within the report text by brackets, <i>e.g.</i> [004].
Crop mark	A mark that is produced by the effect of underlying archaeological or geological features influencing the growth of a particular crop.
Cut	A cut refers to the physical action of digging a posthole, pit, ditch, foundation trench, <i>etc.</i> Once the fills of these features are removed during an archaeological investigation the original 'cut' is therefore exposed and subsequently recorded.
Fill	Once a feature has been dug it begins to silt up (either slowly or rapidly) or it can be back-filled manually. The soil(s) that become contained by the 'cut' are referred to as its fill(s).
Iron Age	A period characterised by the introduction of Iron into the country for tools, between 800 BC and AD 50.
Layer	A layer is a term used to describe an accumulation of soil or other material that is not contained within a cut.
Natural	Undisturbed deposit(s) of soil or rock which have accumulated without the influence of human activity
Prehistoric	The period of human history prior to the introduction of writing. In Britain the prehistoric period lasts from the first evidence of human occupation about 500,000 BC, until the Roman invasion in the middle of the 1st century AD.
Romano-British	Pertaining to the period dating from AD 43-410 when the Romans occupied Britain.

Appendix 5

The Archive

The archive consists of:

- 6 Context records
- 3 Drawing sheets
- 1 Daily record sheet
- 1 Context record sheet
- 1 Section record sheet
- 1 Photographic record sheet
- 1 Bag of finds

All primary records and finds are currently kept at:

Archaeological Project Services
The Old School
Cameron Street
Heckington
Sleaford
Lincolnshire
NG34 9RW

The ultimate destination of the project archive is:

Lincolnshire City and County Museum
12 Friars Lane
Lincoln
LN2 1HQ

The archive will be deposited in accordance with the document titled *Conditions for the Acceptance of Project Archives*, produced by the Lincolnshire City and County Museum.

Lincolnshire City and County Council Museum Accession Number: 2002.500

Archaeological Project Services Site Code: STH02

appl # —?

The discussion and comments provided in this report are based on the archaeology revealed during the site investigations. Other archaeological finds and features may exist on the development site but away from the areas exposed during the course of this fieldwork. *Archaeological Project Services* cannot confirm that those areas unexposed are free from archaeology nor that any archaeology present there is of a similar character to that revealed during the current investigation.

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