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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

## Land West of Middlefield Farm, Aisby, Lincs.

NGR: SK 87<sup>25</sup> 9299  
Site Code: AMF 02

LCNCC Museum Accn No.: 2002.261  
WLDC Planning Application No.: M01/P/1112 ⊗ MOD/P10440

## Archaeological Watching Brief

Report prepared for Don Welbourn Architectural Design  
(on behalf of Mr D. Ryan)

by G. Tann

LAS Report No. 646  
February 2003



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# **Land West of Middlefield Farm, Aisby, Lincs. Archaeological Watching Brief**

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## **Summary**

*An archaeological watching brief during groundworks for a new house identified a series of pits excavated within an area of natural clay. Little dating evidence was found, but backfilling of the pits was probably almost complete by about the eighteenth century. The features may have been the source for local building materials, but there was no reason to suspect a brickworks nearby.*

## **Introduction**

Lindsey Archaeological Services (LAS) was commissioned in December 2001 by Don Welbourn Architectural Design (on behalf of Mr D. Ryan) to conduct an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for a residential development at Aisby, Lincs. (Figs. 1 and 2). The watching brief was required by West Lindsey District Council to fulfil a condition on the planning permission (M01/P/1112).

Groundworks for the house plot were monitored by Geoff Tann on 26th March 2002. Further works for the associated garage and septic tank have not been notified.

## **The Development Site**

Aisby is a small hamlet in the parish of Corringham, 6km NE of Gainsborough. The development site has been a pasture field fronting onto a lane to the NW of Aisby House, at the NE of the settlement of Aisby (Pl. 1). On the opposite side of the lane are farm buildings, formerly part of Middlefield Farm (Pl. 2).

## **Planning Details**

Planning permission was granted by West Lindsey District Council for construction of a single dwelling, garage and soakaway, subject to Condition 2 requiring an archaeological watching brief being carried out during the groundworks phase of construction.

## **Archaeological Background**

At the time of the *Domesday Survey* of 1086, Aisby was part of a large estate centred on Kirton in Lindsey. The place-name Aisby derives from Old Norse and Old Danish elements meaning "Asi's farmstead or village" (Cameron 1998, 1). The settlement dates back to the Saxon/ pre-Conquest period.

## **The Watching Brief (Fig. 3)**

Excavation was by JCB with a 0.6m wide, toothed bucket. Parts of the foundations for the house plot could not be examined or recorded in detail because of collapsing trench sides and deep trenches.

Context numbers were assigned by LAS for recording purposes, and these are used, in bold, in the text (Appendix 1).

### ***The House Plot***

Turf was stripped from the area of the new house but most of the topsoil layer **1** remained (Pl. 3). This layer was about 0.25m thick, but thicker at the lane frontage where it probably incorporated spread from the hedgebank. At the eastern side of the plot, the topsoil overlay an orange sand **7**, which extended below the trench base (Pl. 4). This deposit was interpreted as naturally formed, and may have been the same material as **20** at the western side of the plot. **20** was lighter in colour, but patches of leached sand were present to the east and NE.

A 5m wide SW-NE aligned zone of natural clay **15** was identified in the centre of the house plot. This may have been an ancient stream channel; there was no suggestion that this was not a natural feature. Within this clay area were four pits, varying in depth and extent. The largest feature **2** was about 7m east-west, and between 2.5m and 4.5m wide. The foundation arrangement in the centre of the house was complex, and although this feature was seen in six foundation trenches, it was difficult to establish its profile. Its southern and eastern edge was a 0.3m - 0.6m deep shelf, broadest and deepest where underlying deposits were sand (Pl. 5). Two layers of backfill were present between the topsoil and the shelf. The upper layer **8** was 0.2m thick, slightly siltier and darker than the topsoil, and produced a sherd of late seventeenth/early eighteenth century pottery (Appendix 2). The underlying layer **3** was a lighter brown/grey sand, between 0.2m and 0.3m thick. Both layers were interpreted as levelling fills, although the uppermost, **8**, may have been remains of a subsoil preserved where settling of the feature had occurred.

Beneath **3**, at the level of the sand shelf, was a dark grey loamy sand **25**, 0.1m thick at the eastern edge, but becoming at least 0.3m thick towards the centre of the feature. To the east of this fill were various sandy deposits which may have been slumps down the face of the pit while it remained open. The largest, and earliest, of these was mixed yellow sand **6**, with its successors **5** and **4**, both of which were much darker. **5** contained lenses of dark green sand, the colouration of which may indicate human or animal waste. The deepest part of the pit was over 1.35m below the modern ground level.

At the northern side of pit **2** was another shelf, 0.45m below the stripped surface. As it was impossible to tell if this were the same as on the southern and eastern sides, the outer, shallow cut here was recorded as **21**, and deposits above the shelf were assigned the context **22**.

The eastern end of a smaller pit **9** was found at the SE corner of the house plot. The feature was at the edge of the clay where it projected eastwards. Little of pit **9** was seen, as it was almost entirely between the new trenches, but it was about 2m north-south, and 0.5m deep, with almost vertical sides. Its fill **10** was mixed clay and sand.



Pit 19 was 6m to the east of pit 9, and about 3m south of the large pit 2. 19 was 6m wide, with its base over 1.3m below modern ground level (Pl. 6). On the eastern side of the pit, the red clay fill 24 incorporated thin limestone rubble which could possibly have been a drain or a wall foundation. The main pit fill was a discoloured sand 18, with a thin clay dump 23 overlying it to the west. A shallow shelf, 0.5m below ground level, was seen to the east, west and south of this pit. The layer of dark brown sandy loam 17 above this shelf had settled into the pit below, and this was probably a deliberate levelling layer extending at least 5m west-east. As there remained a chance that this shallower deposit was fill of a separate feature post-dating the backfilled pit, the higher feature was assigned the context 16.

A much smaller pit 13 was equidistant between pits 2 and 19. This was 1m wide and 0.5m deep, with a brown clay loam fill 14.

A post-hole 11 was seen at the southern end of the plot. The feature was 0.2m wide, with straight sides and a flat base. Its fill 12 was a mix of clay and dark soil, with the base 0.5m below the stripped surface. It was only seen in one trench face. Another less certain feature 26, of similar characteristics, was seen cutting into sand at the SE corner of the house plot.

### **Conclusion**

Several pits were found within the clay zone, extending to its eastern and western limits, and these may have been intended for clay extraction. The scale of this seems to have been quite limited, possibly providing building materials for mud and stud type structures in the close vicinity, although no extant examples are known. The absence of brick, tile or pottery wasters within the soil, sand and clay backfills argues against these features serving nearby industry.

### **Acknowledgements**

LAS is grateful for the co-operation received from Don Welbourn, Dan Ryan, and the groundwork contractors.

The pottery was identified by Jane Young. Illustrations were prepared by Mick McDaid, Mark Williams and Naomi Field, and the report was collated and produced by Jane Frost.

Geoff Tann  
Lindsey Archaeological Services  
25th February 2003

### **Archive Summary**

Correspondence  
Developer's plans and annotated copies  
Field plans and section drawings  
Archaeological finds: pottery  
Specialist's archive list: pottery  
Photographs: LAS colour print film nos. 02/28/28-36; 02/32/00-10 (including those used in this report).



## APPENDIX 1

**Land adjacent to Middlefield Farm, Aisby, Lincs.  
Context Summary (AMF 02)**

Context No.	Type	Relationships	Description
1	layer		topsoil
2	cut	cuts 7,15; filled by 4,5,6,25, 3,8	large pit with shallow shelf
3	layer	below 8, above 25, ?fill of 2	brown/grey sand
4	fill	fill of 2, below 25, above 5	dark grey sandy silt
5	fill	fill of 2, below 4, above 6	mixed discoloured sand, with green sand lenses
6	fill	fill of 2, below 5, above 2	mixed yellow sand slump at side of pit
7	natural layer	cut by 2, 9, 26, 11; ?same as 20	yellow sand, leached in places
8	layer	below 1, above 3, ?fill of 2; ?same as 22	silty and sandy dark brown layer
9	cut	filled by 10, cuts 7 and 15	pit
10	fill	fill of 9, below 1	mixed clay and sand fill
11	cut	cuts 15, filled by 12	
12	fill	fill of 11, below 1	dark brown clay loam with red clay
13	cut	filled by 14, cuts 15	small pit
14	fill	fill of 13, below 1	dark brown clay loam
15	natural layer	red/brown clay	
16	cut	filled by 17, cuts 15 and 20; ?same as 19, or cuts 23	shallow shelf around pit 19
17	fill	fill of 16, below 1, above 23	dark brown sandy loam
18	fill	fill of 19, below 23, above 24	dirty sand
19	cut	filled by 23, 24, 18; cuts 20 and 15	pit
20	natural layer	?same as 7	pale sand
21	cut	cuts 15, filled by 22; ?same as 2	shelf to north of pit 2
22	fill	fill of 21, below 1; ?same as 8	dark brown clay loam
23	fill	fill of 19, below 17, above 18	clay tip to west of pit
24	fill	fill of 19, below 18	red clay with limestone rubble
25	fill	fill of 2, below 3, above 4	dark grey loam
26	cut	cuts 7, filled by 27	post-hole
27	fill	fill of 26, below 1	mixed sand and clay



## APPENDIX 2



# Pottery Archive AMF02

*Jane Young Lindsey Archaeological Services*

context	cname	full name	form type	sherds	weight	part	description	date
8	BL	Black-glazed wares	bowl	1	10	BS	int glaze	mid 17th to 18th

## THE FIGURES



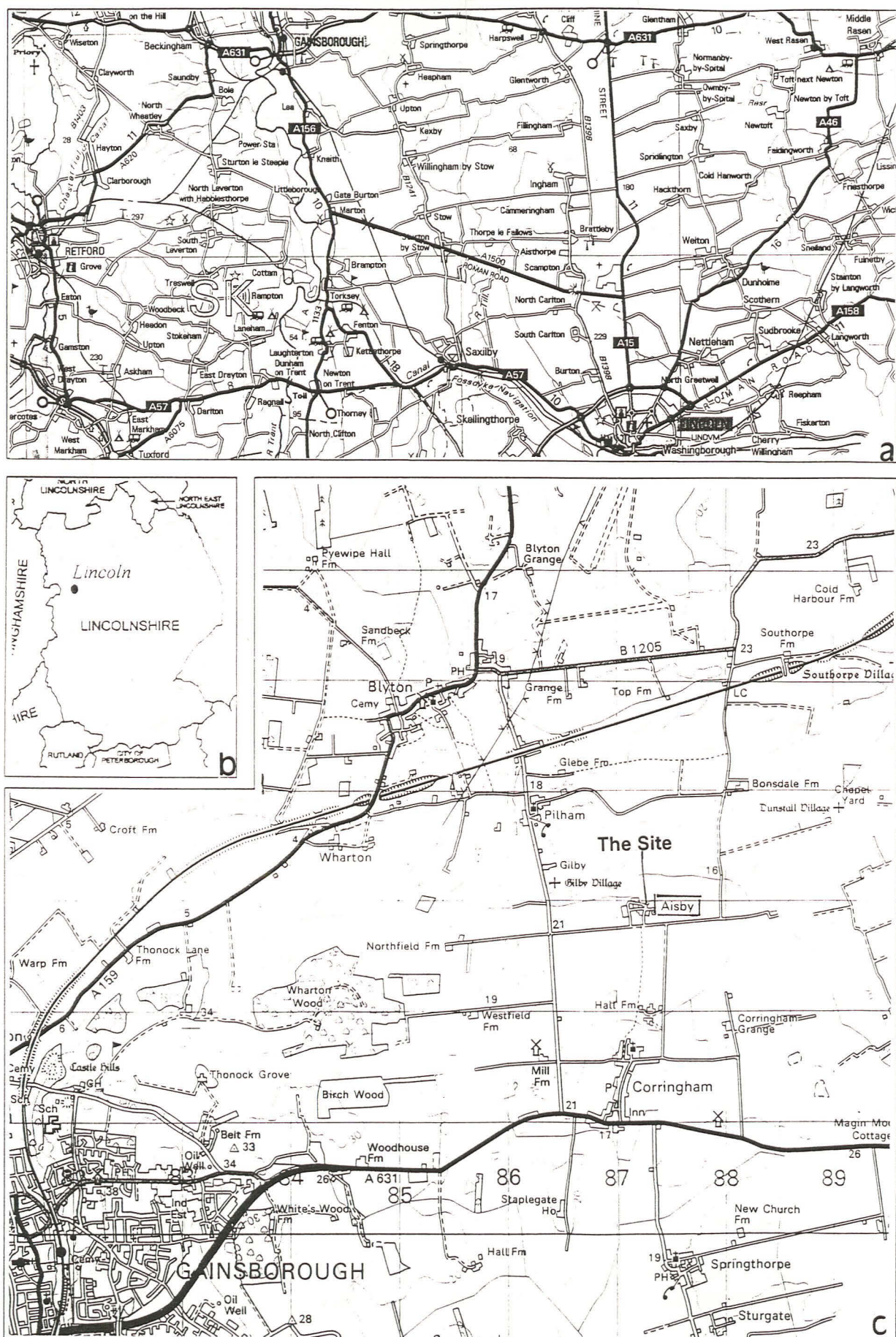


Fig. 1 Location of Aisby (C based on the 1994 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey Landranger map, Sheet 112. © Crown Copyright, reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Licence No. AL 100002165).



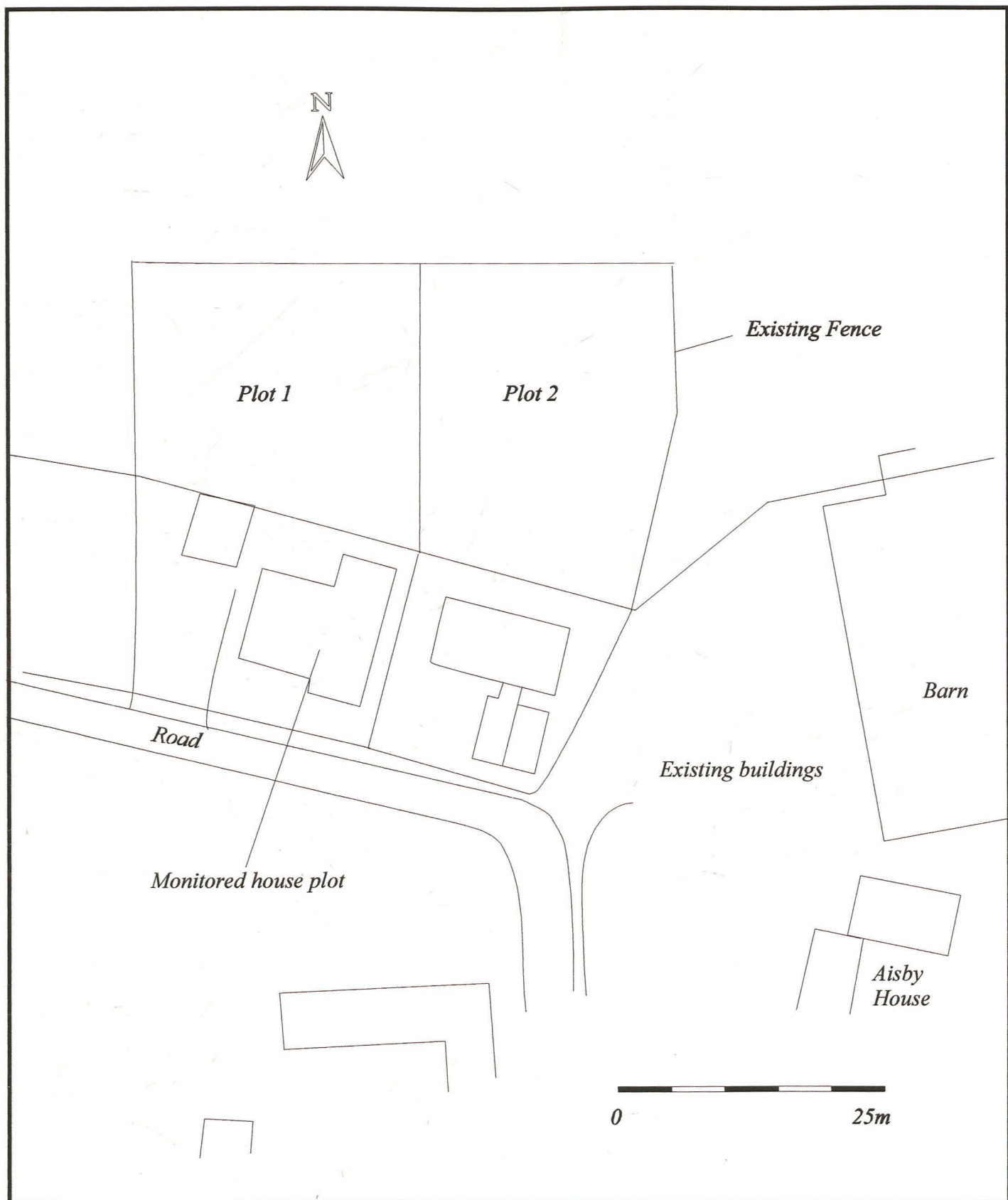


Fig. 2 Location of the monitored development (based on a plan supplied by the client. © Crown copyright, reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Licence No. AL 100002165).

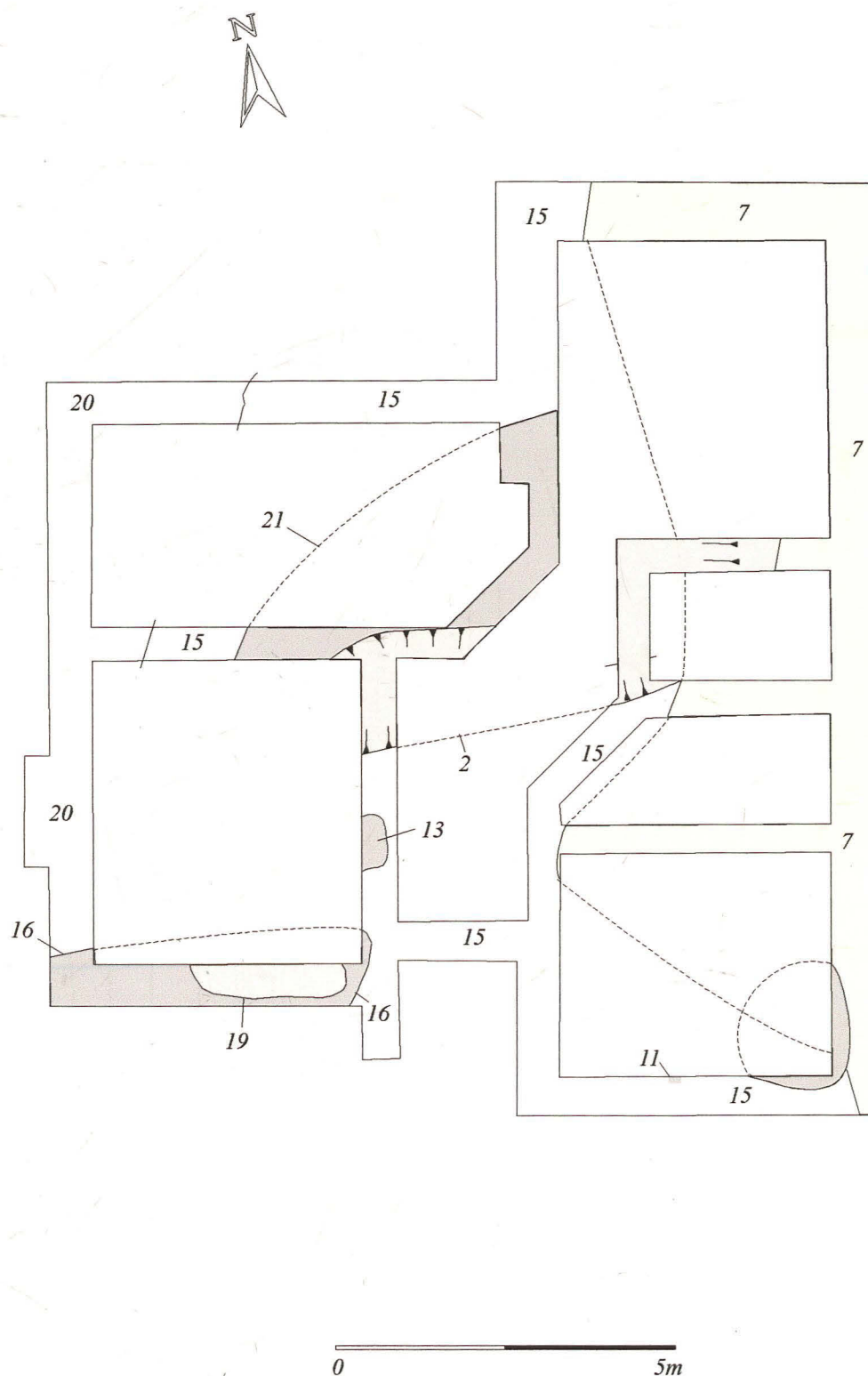


Fig. 3 Plan of the house foundation trenches, showing the positions of archaeological features (based on a plan supplied by the client).

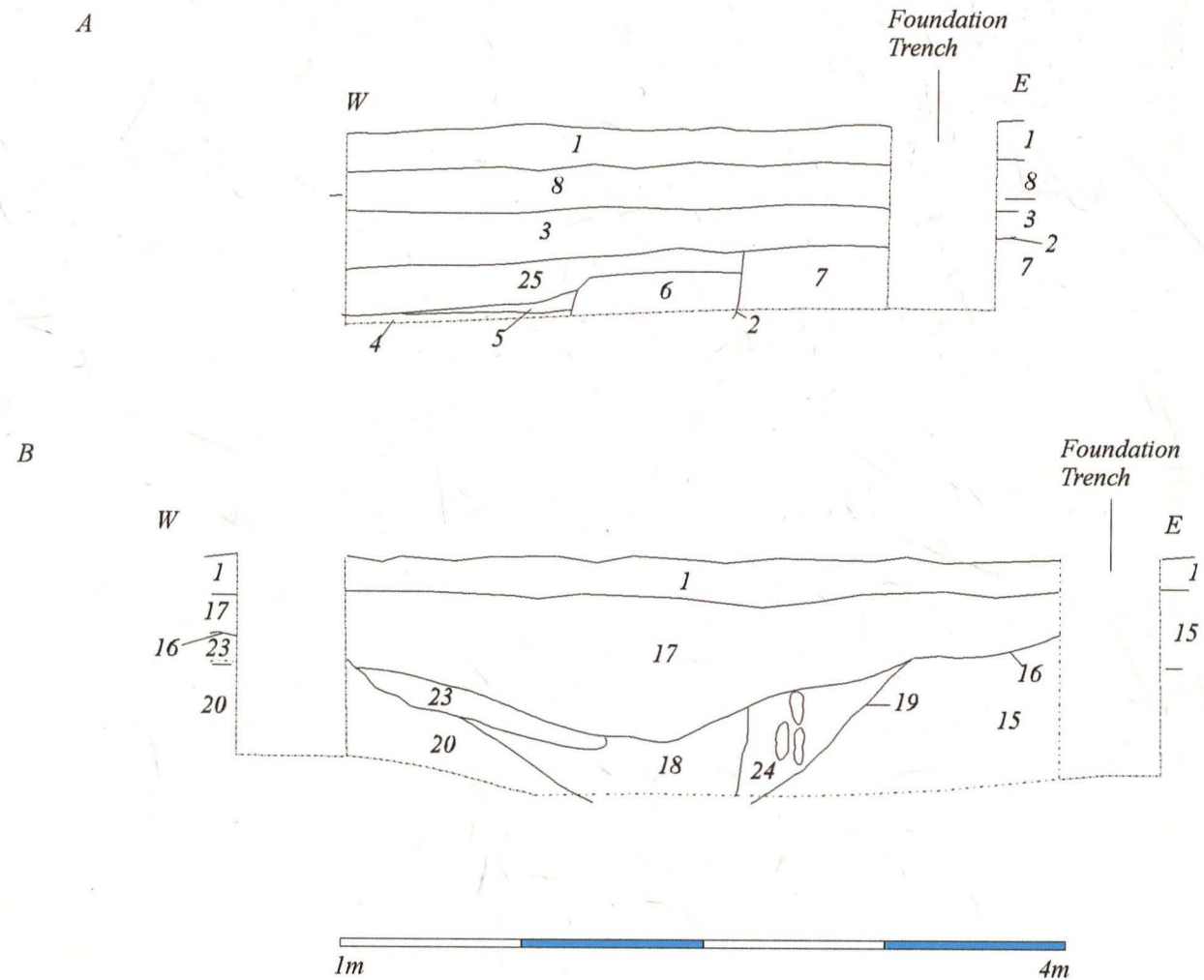


Fig. 4 a) Section across deposits backfilling pit 2.  
b) Section across backfilled pit 19.



## THE PLATES





Pl. 1 Location of the monitored house site (looking NW).





PI. 2 Middlefield Farm, Aisby (looking SE, with the monitored site to the left).





Pl. 3 Site of the new house, after removal of turf (looking NW).





Pl. 4 Thick topsoil covered orange sand on the eastern side of the house plot.

Pl. 5 Dark fill of pit 2, with the sand defining its eastern edge (looking NE). The pit extended lower than the base of the new foundation trench.







Pl. 6 Mixed fill of pit 19 at the front of the house plot, cutting through undisturbed sand (looking NW).