

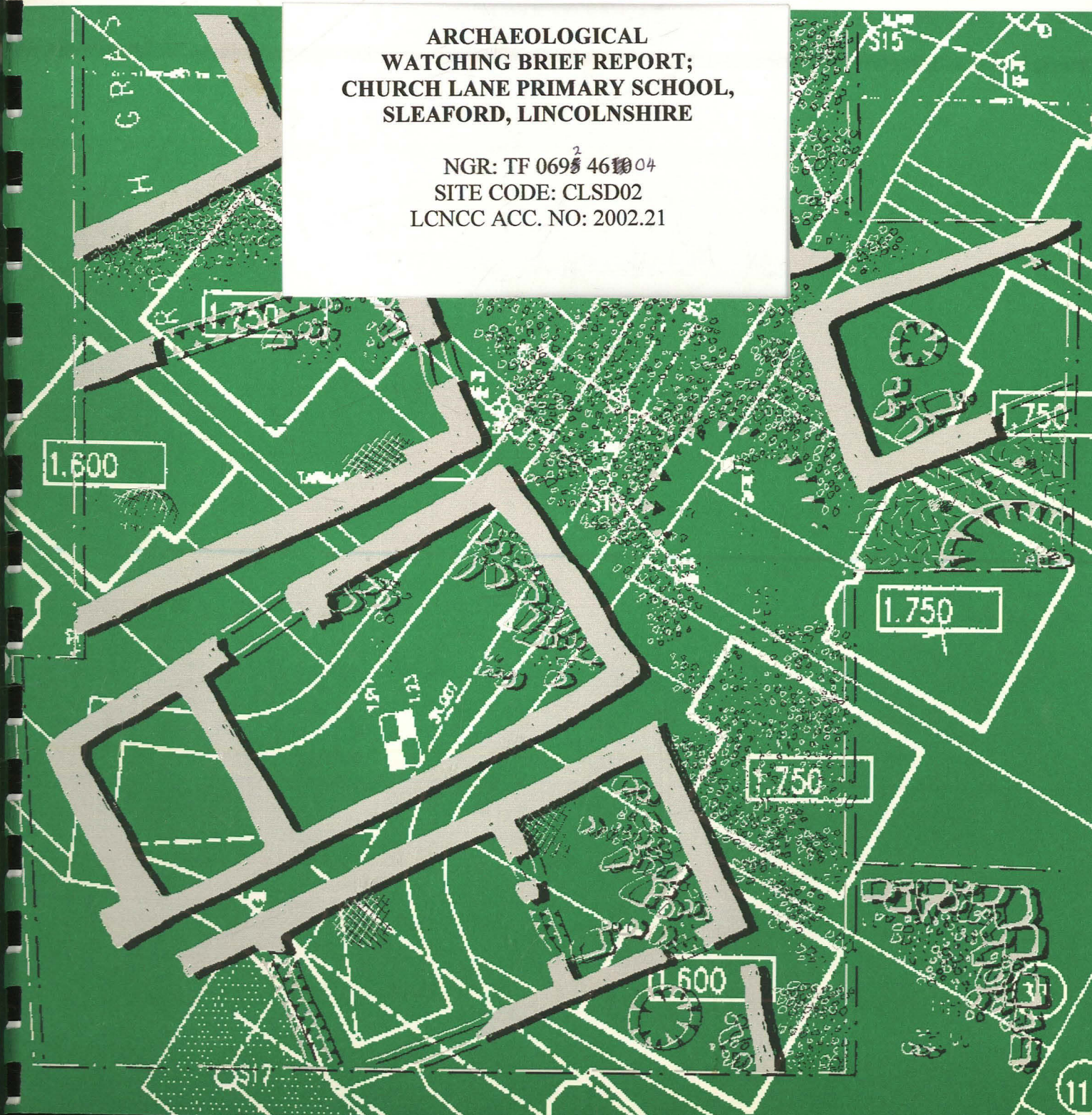


PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

L I N C O L N

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF REPORT;
CHURCH LANE PRIMARY SCHOOL,
SLEAFORD, LINCOLNSHIRE**

NGR: TF 069~~5~~² 461~~0~~⁰⁴
SITE CODE: CLSD02
LCNCC ACC. NO: 2002.21



EVENT: L15908

INTERVENTION: L19988

EXCAVATION: L19989

PRN 63567 undated.

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF REPORT;
CHURCH LANE PRIMARY SCHOOL,
SLEAFORD, LINCOLNSHIRE**

NGR: TF 069² 4610⁰⁴
SITE CODE: CLSD02
LCNCC ACC. NO: 2002.21

Report prepared for
Bovis Lend Lease Ltd.
by Chris Clay
March 2002

Conservation
Services

18 MAR 2002

Highways & Planning
Directorate

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln)
61 High Street
Newton on Trent
Lincoln
LN1 2JP
Tel. & Fax. 01777 228155

© Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln)

CONTENTS

Summary	1
1.0 Introduction	2
2.0 Site location and description	2
3.0 Planning background	2
4.0 Archaeological and historical background	2
5.0 Methodology	4
6.0 Results	4
7.0 Discussion and conclusion	5
8.0 Effectiveness of methodology	5
9.0 Acknowledgements	6
10.0 References	7
11.0 Site Archive	7
Appendix 1: Colour plates	8
Appendix 2: List of archaeological contexts	10

List of Figures

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

Fig.2: Developer plan of the site, showing areas monitored and location of drawn sections (scale 1:500)

Fig.3: Sample section, west side of site (scale 1:20)

Fig.4: Ditch [013]/[010], east facing section (scale 1:20)

List of plates

Plate 1: General view of the site, looking north-east

Plate 2: North-west corner of the site, after the removal of the former school foundation trenches, looking south-east.

Plate 3: Retaining wall trench at the southern end of the site, looking east

Plate 4: Ditch [010]/[013], in retaining wall trench, looking west.

Summary

- An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the groundworks for a new school building at Church Lane Primary School, Sleaford, Lincolnshire.
- In the Iron Age, Sleaford was a major settlement and coin production centre for the Corieltavi tribe. A major Romano-British settlement is centred on the same site, and much closer to the current development, a substantial Anglo-Saxon settlement has been previously excavated.
- A single, undated, east-west ditch was exposed during the watching brief, possibly a boundary relating to the Saxon settlement to the south. A substantial series of alluvial deposits were exposed throughout the site, suggesting that the area was flooded over a protracted period prior to the construction of the school in the 20th century.



Fig.1: General site location (scale 1:25,000)
(O.S. Copyright License No. A1 515 21 A0001)

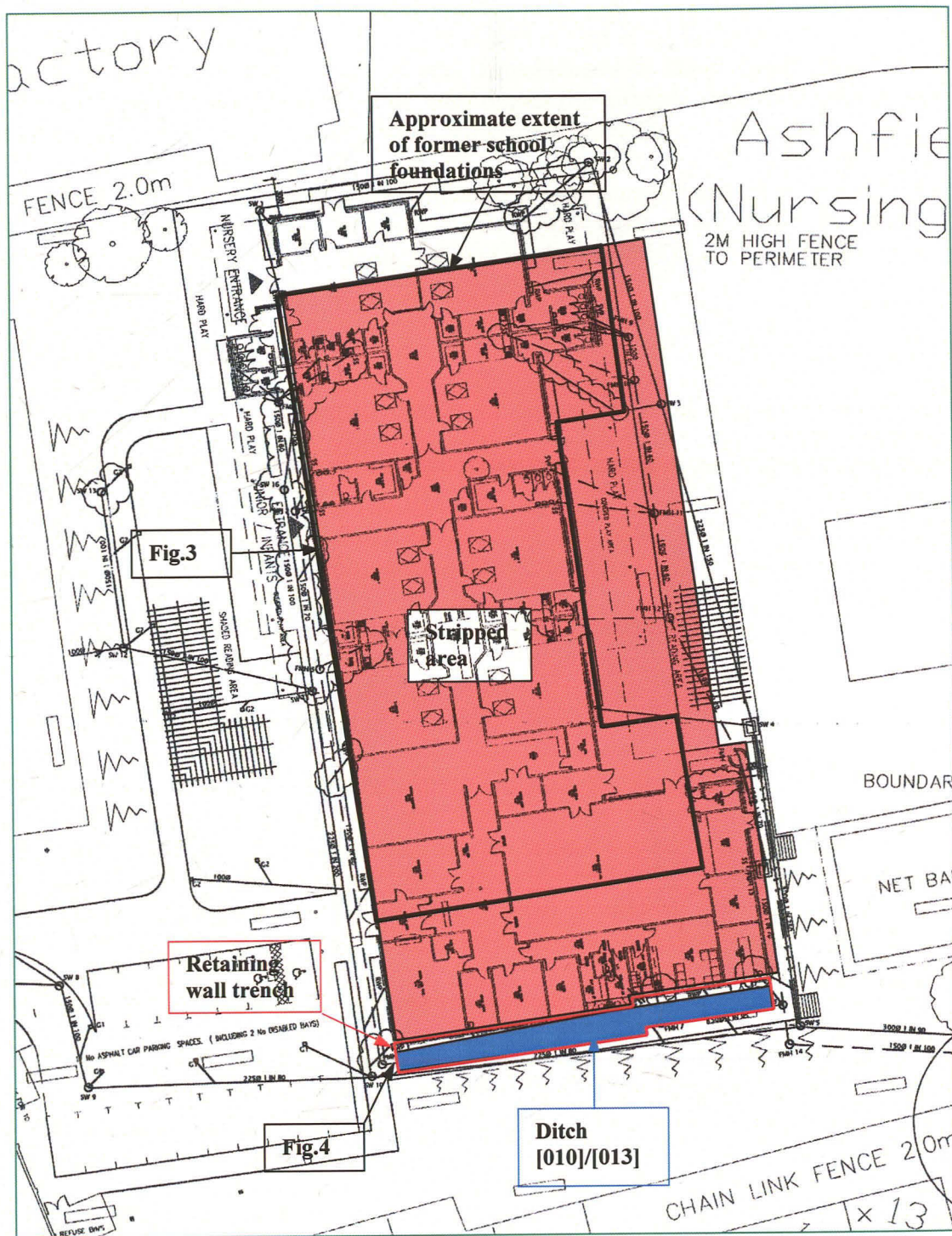


Fig.2: Developer plan of the site, showing areas monitored and drawn sections (scale 1:500)

1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) was commissioned by Bovis Lend Lease Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks for a new school building at Church Lane Primary School, Sleaford, Lincolnshire.

This report details the results of the fieldwork. It is written to conform to national and local guidelines, as set out in the Lincolnshire County Council document *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: A Manual of Archaeological Practice* (LCC, 1998).

2.0 Site location and description

Sleaford is in the administrative district of North Kesteven, approximately 27km south of Lincoln. The site is to the north of the town centre, on the east side of Church Lane. It consists of a sub-rectangular area of land of approximately 2500m², bounded by industrial buildings to the north, a nursing home to the east, residential properties to the south and existing school buildings to the west. The land slopes gently downwards to the south and east, and is centred on NGR TF 0695 4610.

The local geology consists of Jurassic Oxford Clay (British Geological Survey, 1972).

3.0 Planning background

Full planning consent was granted for the erection of a single storey school building with associated services (planning ref. N/57/0845/00). The planning permission was granted subject to the undertaking of an archaeological watching brief on all associated groundworks. This included a contingency that would allow for the proper recording of any significant archaeological remains, if required.

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

There is only limited evidence of early prehistoric activity in the area; in the form of isolated findspots. The earliest stratified settlement evidence derives from traces of a palisaded enclosure of Middle Iron Age date, exposed on the south side of Boston Road, approximately 800m east-south-east of the current site.

A series of excavations from 1960 onwards were carried out in the area of Old Place, north of Boston Road, and close to the palisaded enclosure. These excavations revealed a series of linear features and settlement enclosures, and yet more features were recorded to the south of Boston Road, over 250m from the core of activity. Towards the core of the settlement, these features yielded high status local and continental pottery types. However, the main find from the 1960-63 excavations was a collection of over 4,000 coin pellet moulds (baked ceramic trays used to portion out silver, which could then be stamped into coins). This was a discovery of international significance, and the number of coin pellet moulds found exceeds the combined total from the rest of Europe (Elsdon, 1997). Sleaford falls within the tribal territory of the *Corieltavi*, and hence may have served as a mint for this community. However, there

is no evidence to suggest that the coins were being stamped at the same site; and they may have been sent elsewhere to be minted.

Settlement activity continued in the area of Old Place into the Romano-British period. Again, numerous excavations, the first in 1955, exposed evidence of an extensive settlement. The focus of settlement activity was Mareham Lane, a metalled track that ran north to south, connecting the town with Bourne and Lincoln. On either side of this road were a series of structures indicative of agricultural and settlement functions. These included a rectangular stone building with a large stone built circular corn drier, and a 3rd to 4th century aisled building, associated with a well, and a smaller circular corn drier. Other buildings were more tentatively identified by numerous paved surfaces, stone packed postholes, beam slots and stone wall foundations exposed in keyhole excavations (Clay, 1998).

To the west of Mareham Lane, excavations in 1984-5 exposed a series of Romano-British agricultural enclosures, associated with 10 adult human burials, a 4th century coin hoard of over 500 coins, and large amounts of pottery from the second century AD onwards (Oetgen & Simmons, 1992).

A major addition to the known Romano-British settlement pattern in Sleaford came with the excavations carried out in 1997 in advance of the construction of a new police station. This exposed several phases of building activity, dating from the second century AD, and culminating with a large stone structure, possibly of two storeys. Excavation suggested a moderately high status domestic structure, due to the presence of painted wall plaster, window glass, hypocaust flue tiles, hair pins, bronze tweezers, and high status imported finewares. The building seemed to be in use from the late 3rd to late 4th century AD, when it was deliberately demolished (Clay, 1998).

There is abundant evidence for settlement in the Anglo-Saxon period. A major 6th to 7th century cemetery of around 600 burials was uncovered and partially excavated during the construction of Sleaford's railway station. Another cemetery of a similar date was excavated in Quarrington in 1826, and more recent excavations have revealed an associated settlement (Mahany & Roffe, 1979). Further evidence of Anglo-Saxon activity was exposed in the market place, 150m south of the current site. Brief excavations in 1978 exposed possible settlement activity and animal pens of 8th to 9th century date (Mahany & Roffe, 1979).

At the time of the Domesday Survey, the town was divided into Old and New Sleaford. Old Sleaford was centred on the now lost, parish church of St.Giles, which was believed to be in the area of the Iron Age and Roman settlement. This parish was controlled by St.Benedicts of Ramsey. New Sleaford was focussed on the area of the modern town centre, and was controlled by the Bishop of Lincoln (Morgan & Thorne, 1986). The 'Old' and 'New' prefixes were initially believed to represent a chronological differentiation of the two parishes, with New Sleaford being planted in the 12th century AD. However, the presence of both parishes in the Domesday Survey, and the Saxon cemetery and settlement evidence in New Sleaford mitigates against this (Mahany & Roffe, 1979).

Nevertheless, there appears to have been considerable redevelopment of New Sleaford in the 12th century, with the construction of a castle c.1130 and the parish church of

St. Denys c.1180 (Pevsner, 1989). The town also had a Sunday market charter late in the 12th century (Sawyer, 1998).

5.0 Methodology

Prior to monitoring of the groundworks, the existing school buildings were demolished. This included the backfilling of a cellar in the south-east corner of the site.

The new school building was constructed on a raft foundation, held in place by a retaining wall at the south end of the site. Consequently, the watching brief involved the monitoring of the stripping and levelling of the site to the level of the base of the raft; the removal of the foundations of the former school buildings, and the excavation of a foundation trench for the retaining wall.

The fieldwork was carried out between January 28th and February 14th 2002. A total of six visits were carried out, three by the author and three by Simon Savage.

6.0 Results

The first phase of fieldwork focused on stripping and levelling the site. This involved the removal of up to 1.2m of material, becoming less as the ground sloped to the south and east. In the south and east of the site, beyond the area disturbed by the former school foundations, the uppermost deposits comprised a dark grey former topsoil, (001), and an underlying subsoil deposit (002), consisting of a mid greyish brown sandy silt. Towards the north and west of the site, this was replaced by an orange/yellow sandy clay, (003), which appeared to be associated with the foundations of the former school buildings.

Over much of the site, soil stripping revealed (004), a dark grey sandy silt, with occasional charcoal flecks, which appeared to be alluvial. At the western side of the site, where the greatest depth of material was removed, it was possible to discern three further layers of dark grey and brownish grey alluvial material, (005), (006), and (007). Deposits (004) – (007) extended a total of 0.85m in depth, to the base of the excavation. No artefactual evidence was recovered from any of these deposits.

The removal of the foundations of the former school buildings revealed no additional archaeological deposits; merely confirming the sequence that was exposed by the site stripping operation.

The final phase of groundworks was the excavation of a trench for a retaining wall at the southern end of the site. This trench was 2.4m wide, and 30m long, with a dog-leg 20m from its western end. The trench had a maximum depth of 1.9m at its western end. Sealed beneath alluvial deposits (004) and (006), a substantial linear feature was exposed in plan, running along the length of the trench, aligned approximately east to west. In the east facing section of the trench, it was possible to identify at least two phases to this ditch. The first, [013], was approximately 1.55m wide and survived to a depth of 0.44m. The southern edge of the feature was beyond the limit of the trench,

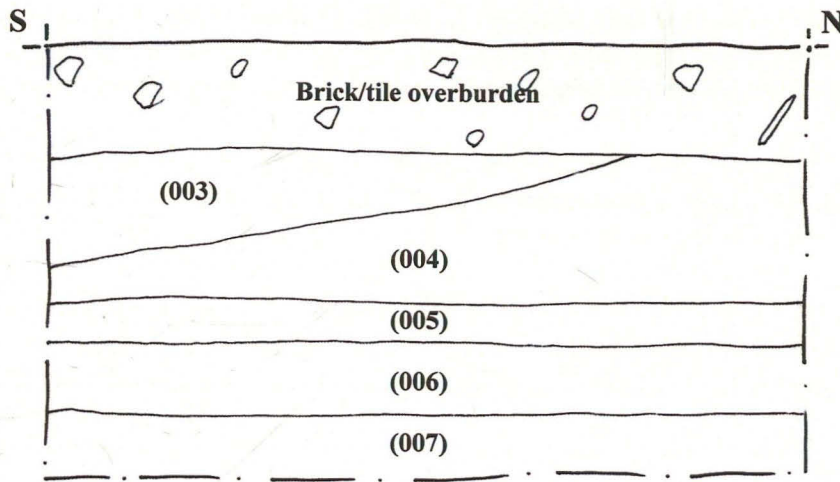


Fig.3: Sample section, west side of site (scale 1:20)

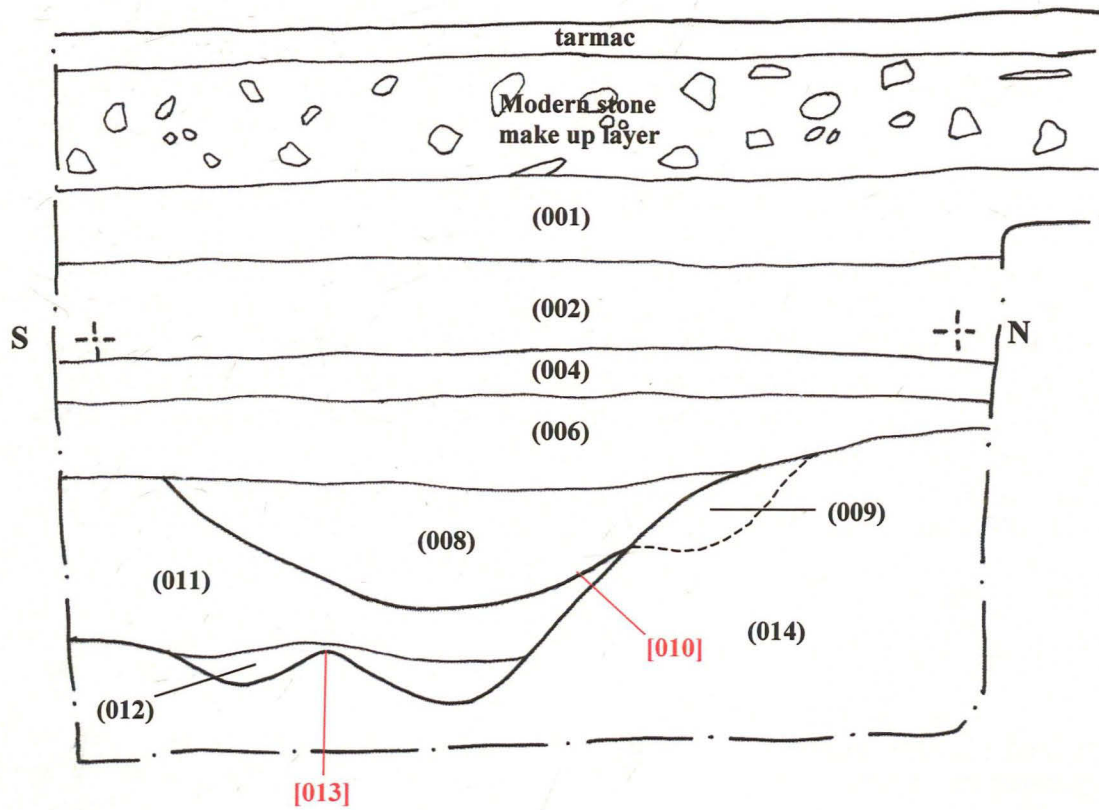


Fig.4: Ditch [013]/[010], east facing section

while the northern edge was approximately 45° from horizontal. The ditch appeared to be double based, probably reflecting a phase of recutting that was not evident from the stratigraphy. The lower fill was a mid grey silt, (012). This was sealed by a bulk fill of mottled grey/brown silty clay, (011). Neither fill produced any dating evidence.

Ditch [013] was truncated by [010], a shallow feature with a seemingly bowl shaped profile measuring 1.5m wide by 0.32m deep. It contained a single fill of mid grey sandy silt, (008). Again, no dating evidence was recovered from this feature.

On the northern edge of [010]/[013] was (009). This was defined by an orange/brown clayey sand deposit 0.4m wide and 0.2m deep. The exact nature of this feature is uncertain. It may be the cut for an earlier phase of the ditch, or simply represent leaching of the natural sand.

Both [010] and [013] were cut into a natural deposit of yellow/orange sandy clay, (014).

7.0 Discussion and conclusion

The watching brief exposed a single linear ditch at the south end of the site, which had been recut on at least one occasion. Although no specific date or function can be attributed to this feature, it is possible that it represents a component of the nearby Saxon settlement. This lies no more than 150m south of the current development, and the ditch may represent a drainage and boundary feature.

The watching brief exposed an extensive and relatively deep sequence of alluvial, (water deposited) layers, sealing, and therefore post dating, the ditch. The most likely origin of this material is the River Slea, the modern course of which is 350m south of the site. These alluvial deposits indicate a sustained period during which the site would have been unsuitable for habitation (which would explain the complete absence of features and finds, other than the ditch). Clearly, this situation must have subsided when the original school buildings were constructed in relatively recent times.

It is perhaps noteworthy that almost every phase of excavation carried out in the Iron Age and Romano-British settlement at Old Place revealed 1.0m or more of overburden, cut only by modern features.

8.0 Effectiveness of methodology

For the most part, the watching brief methodology was appropriate to the scheme of development. Despite the fact that the site is in an area of high archaeological potential, it had been subject to considerable disturbance caused by the construction of the original school buildings.

Much of the groundworks involved the stripping of the development footprint to a specified level. This was, for the most part, to the depth of the alluvial deposits, which had masked the ditch exposed at the south end of the site. It is possible therefore, that these deposits masked other archaeological features. Countering this possibility

however, is the detailed examination of the open areas left by the removal of the foundations of the former school buildings, and the depth of the excavations on the west side of the site, neither of which exposed any archaeological deposits.

9.0 Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) would like to thank Bovis Lend Lease Ltd. for this commission. Thanks also go to Wrights Construction, the sub-contractors, for their cooperation during the monitoring.

10.0 References

- British Geological Survey, 1972. *Grantham. England and Wales Sheet 127. Solid and Drift Geology. 1:50000 Provisional Series*. Keyworth, Nottingham: British Geological Survey
- Clay C., 1998, *Roman Sleaford: A reassessment of the settlement and its environs based on the 1997 Sleaford Police Station excavations*, MA dissertation, School of Archaeological Studies, University of Leicester, Leicester.
- Elsdon S.M., 1997, *Old Sleaford Revealed*, Oxbow Monograph 78, Nottingham Studies in Archaeology 2, Oxford.
- Mahany C. & Roffe D. (eds.), 1979, 'Sleaford', *South Lincolnshire Archaeology: 3*, South Lincolnshire Archaeology Unit, Stamford.
- Morgan P., & Thorn C., (eds.), 1986, *Domesday Book: vol.31: Lincolnshire*, Phillimore & Co. Ltd, Chichester
- Oetgen J.M. & Simmons B.B., 1992, *Excavations at the Iron Age and Roman site at Old Place, Sleaford, Lincolnshire, 1984/5*, unpublished archive report, Archaeological Project Services.
- Pevsner N., & Harris J., 1989, *The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire, second edition*, Penguin, London
- Sawyer P., 1998, *Anglo-Saxon Lincolnshire*, History of Lincolnshire III, History of Lincolnshire Committee, Lincoln

11.0 Site archive

The documentary 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 2002.21.

APPENDIX 1: Colour Plates



Plate 1: General view of the site, looking north-east



Plate 2: North-west corner of the site, after the removal of the former school foundation trenches, looking south-east



Plate 3: Retaining wall trench at the southern end of the site, looking east



Plate 4: Ditch [010]/[013], in retaining wall trench, looking west

APPENDIX 2: List of archaeological contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
001	Layer	Topsoil
002	Layer	Subsoil
003	Layer	Redeposited. Associated with old school foundations
004	Layer	Alluvial deposit
005	Layer	Alluvial deposit
006	Layer	Alluvial deposit
007	Layer	Alluvial deposit
008	Fill	Fill of ditch recut [010]
009	Layer	Redeposited natural?
010	Cut	Recut of ditch [013]
011	Fill	Primary fill of ditch [013]
012	Fill	Secondary fill of ditch [013]
013	Cut	Ditch cut
014	Layer	Natural