NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
ARCHAEOLOGY

# *WATCHING BRIEF ON LAND*

# *AT KIRKBY LA THORPE,*

# *LINCOLNSHIRE*

*JUNE 2003*

REGISTERED IFA ORGANISATION

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***NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY***

***NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL***

***JULY 2003***

*Planning application number No N/34/0406/02*

*Lincolnshire County Council City and County Museum Accession No 2003.270*

# *WATCHING BRIEF ON LAND AT KIRKBY LA THORPE, LINCOLNSHIRE*

***JUNE 2003***

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## *QUALITY CONTROL*

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| Approved by | Steve Parry | S Parry | 22/7/03 |

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# *WATCHING BRIEF ON LAND AT KIRKBY LA THORPE, LINCOLNSHIRE JUNE 2003*


## *ABSTRACT*

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken in June 2003 on land at Kirkby la Thorpe, Lincolnshire prior to the construction of a reservoir. The watching brief concentrated on an area where several isolated anomalies had been located by a previous geophysical survey. The isolated anomalies were identified as points of discrete positive readings over a back-filled drainage ditch and a series of land drains of a post-medieval date or recent date. No archaeological features were present, but Roman, medieval and post-medieval pottery was recovered.*


## 1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief on land adjacent to Mount Lane to the south of Kirkby la Thorpe near Sleaford, Lincolnshire between 11 and 19 June 2003 (Fig 1, centred on NGR TF 1030 4422). The site was part of a development on which the Thorpe and Asgarby Estate have been granted planning permission for the construction of a reservoir (planning application number N/34/0406/

The objective of the watching brief was to identify, record and interpret any archaeological remains exposed during groundworks in an area containing several isolated anomalies identified by geophysical survey carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (Fig 2, NA 2002).

The watching brief was undertaken in order to fulfil the planning condition by North Kesteven District Council. The watching brief met requirements as specified by the Heritage Officer. Lincolnshire County Council City and County Museum has issued Accession No 2003.270 for the work.

## 2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The reservoir site lies within a low flat area between Beacon Hill (20m aOD) to the south, and raised ground to the north of Kirkby la Thorpe (10m aOD). The site was generally level, around 7.5m aOD and had recently been used as arable farmland.

The British Geological Survey has mapped the underlying geology as the Jurassic Oxford Clay with overlying Denchworth Series soils. A large drainage dyke adjacent to the track on the north side of the site suggests this area was a wet landscape, which would be consistent with low-lying land and clay geology.

## 3 BACKGROUND

The site lies to the south-east of Sleaford, within an area of rich archaeological remains, mainly comprising cropmarks and recovered artefacts, covering a diversity of periods from the Iron Age through to the post-medieval. A recent archaeological excavation of some of these cropmarks, prior to the installation of a high-pressure gas pipeline to the north of the reservoir site, identified Iron Age and Romano-British settlement on an area of free-draining gravels. Within the area of the reservoir no cropmarks have been identified, but a curvilinear cropmark to the west of the site could have continued into this area (Hambly 2002). A geophysical survey was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology to determine the presence of archaeological features, but nothing positive was located (NA 2002).

The presence of a now lost Saxon marker stone indicated that the area of the reservoir development was an historic meeting place in the Saxon period. The site has probably been used for agricultural purposes from at least the medieval period to the present. Medieval field boundaries have also been identified to the north and the west of the site, with post-medieval boundaries and building remains also recorded in that area (Hambly 2002).

## 4 METHODOLOGY

The area selected for the watching brief was sited over the area of the geophysical survey containing six isolated anomalies which were located in the north-west part of the survey area of Field 1, in Grid 5R (NA 2002). The watching brief area was *c* 1ha square and aligned parallel to the lane and large drainage ditch on its north side leading east from Mount Lane. The area was stripped of all its topsoil and selected strips of subsoil in an approximately east-west alignment on the north side, through the middle and south side,

which covered approximately 20% of the site. The west corner of the north subsoil strip was avoided as Grid 15R from the geophysical survey showed a possible buried service aligned in that direction. The excavation was carried out using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket.

All the groundworks were supervised by an archaeologist, and the exposure of subsoil and natural were examined for archaeological features. Any significant archaeological deposits identified were recorded, planned and sampled sufficiently to determine their date

## 5 WATCHING BRIEF

### 5.1 Topsoil

The whole of the watching brief area was stripped of its topsoil (1), which overlay subsoil (2). The topsoil consisted of dark grey-brown clay, with a depth of 0.25m to 0.30m. Several medieval and post-medieval pottery sherds were recovered, including fragments of ploughed out ceramic land drains (see below).

### 5.2 Subsoil

The subsoil (2) was formed by compact dark yellowish brown clay, with the occasional cobble inclusion, with a depth of 0.35 to 0.45m. No archaeological artefacts were recovered in the subsoil layer, but observation confirmed the presence of deeper buried land drains.

### 5.3 Natural

Three machine cut strips were cut through the subsoil onto the natural (3). They revealed no archaeological features. The natural consisted of blocky blue-grey and yellowish brown Oxford Clay, with occasional small patches of orange–brown sand.

### 5.4 Post-medieval ditch

Cut through the subsoil was a backfilled linear ditch [4], aligned approximately north-south across the site (Fig 2, section 1). The fill of the ditch (5) was a loosely compacted mixed dark yellowish to grey clay, containing a moderate number of root fragments. The ditch was

machine excavated in the north section of the site, in order to ascertain its profile and possible date, but no artefacts were recovered. The ditch was a broad 2.50m wide, and 0.90m in depth from the top of the sub-soil, with $45^0$ sloping sides onto a flat base (Fig 3, section 1). Although no dating evidence was recovered from the ditch, it was probably backfilled in recent times, and then ploughed over.

The ditch is probably associated with a post-medieval field boundary which can be identified on nineteenth century maps including the Kirkby la Thorpe Tithe Award Plan of 1851 (Fig 4). The ditch probably extended to the north to join an existing open drainage ditch that runs adjacent to the south side of the track.

## 5.5 Land drains

A series of ceramic land drains cut the subsoil and some of these probably drained into the ditch prior to its backfill (Fig 2). The majority of the land drains occurred to the west of the ditch, suggesting the ditch defined two separate parcels of land. It appeared that this system of drainage was replaced by a large plastic drain that ran parallel 1 - 2m from the ditch. From both sides of this plastic drain a series of smaller plastic land drains were laid diagonally across the site.

## 6 POTTERY by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery was collected from the topsoil and comprised 34 sherds with a total weight of 412g. The entire assemblage was unstratified, but the range of ware types present, indicate activity from around the turn of the 13th century until the present day. All the sherds were abraded to a greater or lesser degree, and have been exposed to considerable attrition, particularly the medieval wares.

### Fabrics

Where appropriate, the coding system of the City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit ceramic type-series was used, as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *SLST: South Lincolnshire Shelly ware* | mid 12th – mid 13th century | 1 sherd, 9g |
| *BRILL: Brill/Boarstall ware* | 13th – 16th century | 1 sherd, 21g |
| *DST: Developed Stamford Ware* | mid 12th – early 13th century | 1 sherd, 12g |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *TOYII. Toynton ware; Kiln 3* | 15th century | 9 sherds, 162g |
| *MP: Midland Purple ware* | mid 15th – 17th century | 2 sherds, 35g |
| *BOU. Bourne 'D' Ware* | *c* 1450-1637 | 5 sherds 85g |
| *STMO: Staffordshire Mottled ware* | late 17th – 18th century | 1 sherd, 3g |
| *LERTH. Early modern black-glazed earthenwares*, 18th-19th century. | | 4 sherds, 60g |
| *WS. White salt-glazed stoneware.* | 18th century. | 1 sherd, 4g |

The following are not listed in the CLAU type-series:

*Pearlware*: Pale buff earthenware with cobalt added to the glaze, giving it a blue tinge. Later examples with painted or transfer decoration. 1765 - 19th century 1 sherd, 3g

*Miscellaneous 19th/20th century wares:* mass-produced white earthenwares, stonewares, etc. 3 sherds, 18g

## 7 CONCLUSION

The site of the proposed reservoir is located on low lying ground with clay geology and therefore before the extensive drainage schemes were initiated the area would have probably been wet, making it a peripheral landscape which discouraged settlement. Medieval and more recent pottery recovered from topsoil may have been derived from its inclusion in manure to improve the fertility of the land.

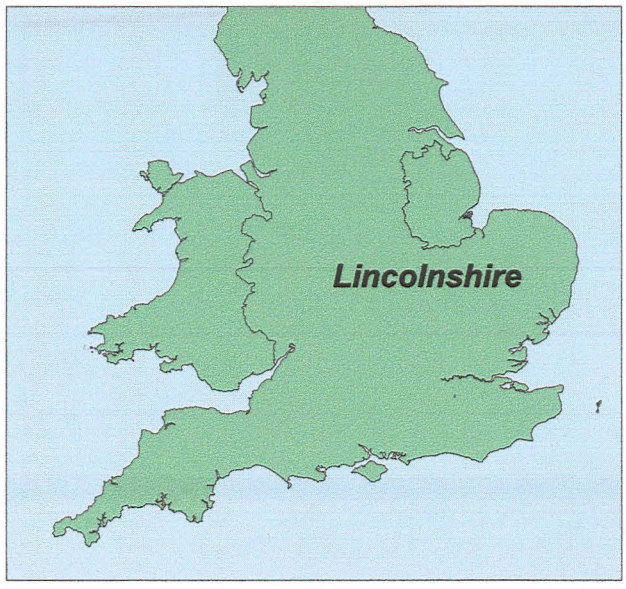
The ceramic drainage system presumably marks a considerable investment with the construction of the adjacent dyke, the backfilled ditch and numerous land drains in order to improve agricultural production. The isolated anomalies identified in the 2002 geophysical survey appear to relate to points of discrete positive readings from the ditch and land drains.

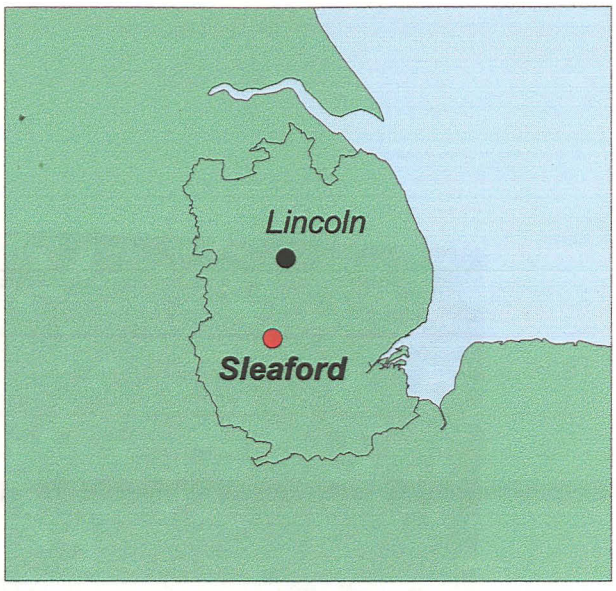
## 8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

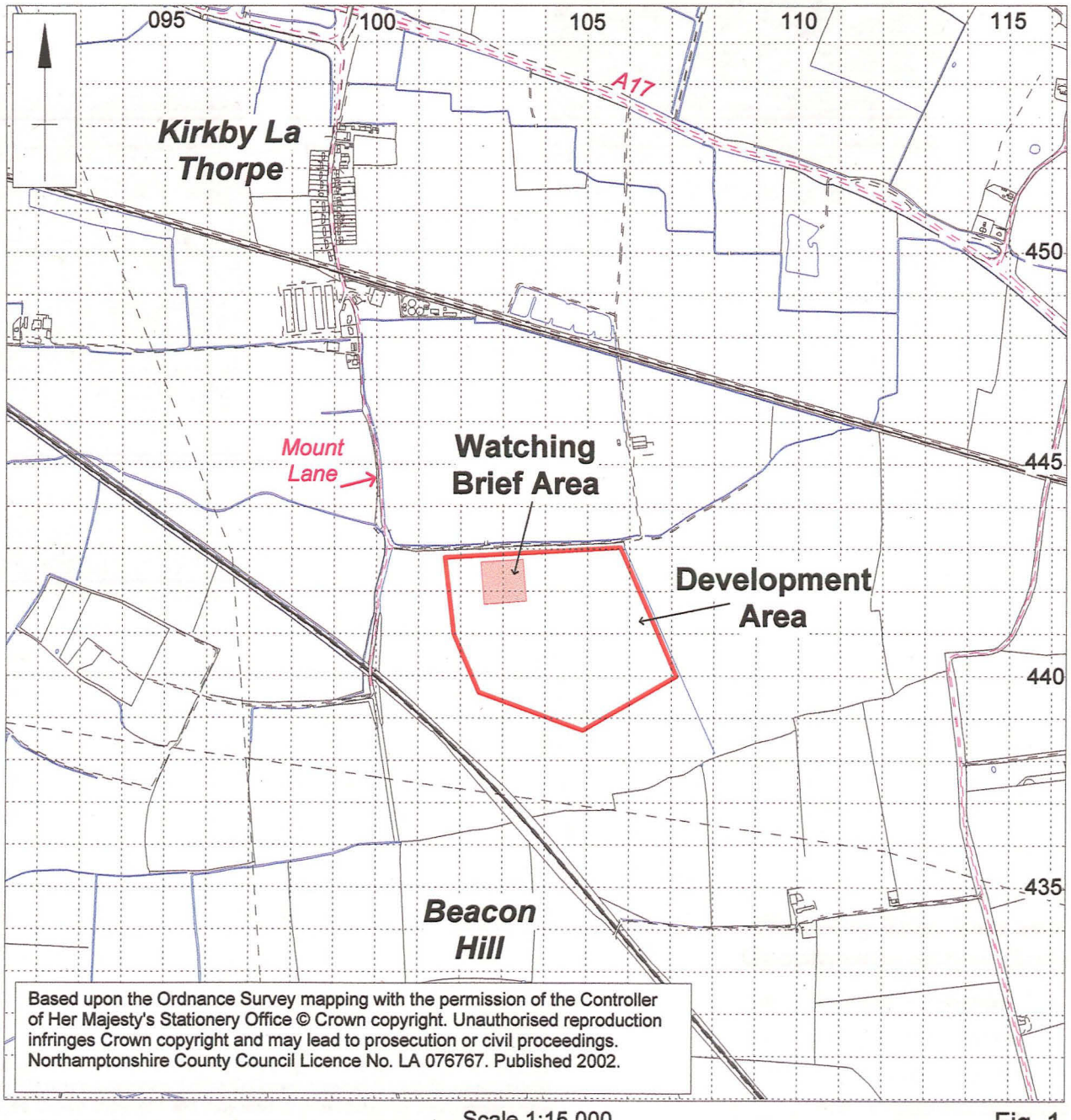
Hambly, J, 2002 *Brief for Archaeological observation, investigation and recording east of Mount Lane, Kirkby La Thorpe, Lincolnshire n/34/0406/02,* North Kesteven Heritage

NA, 2002 *A Geophysical Survey at Thorpe and Asgarby Estates, Kirkby La Thorpe, Lincolnshire,* Northamptonshire Archaeology Unit report

Northamptonshire Archaeology
a service of Northamptonshire County Council 21 July 2003






Scale 1:15,000

Fig. 1

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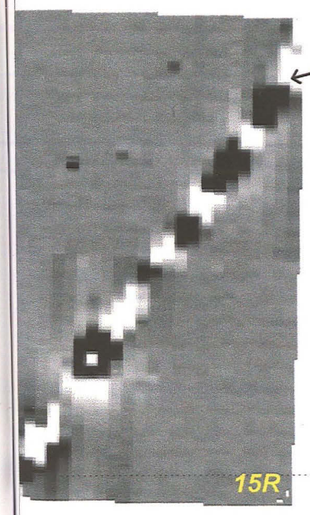
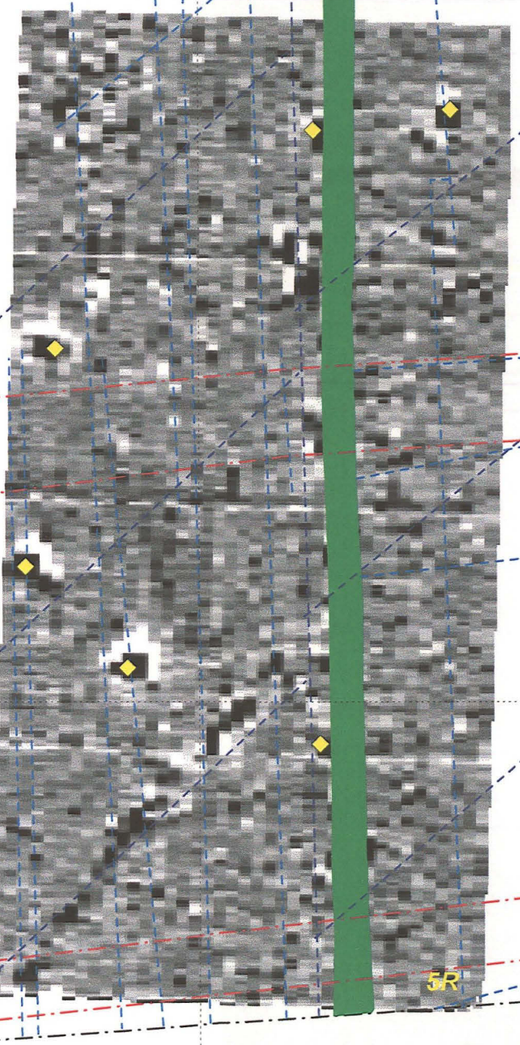
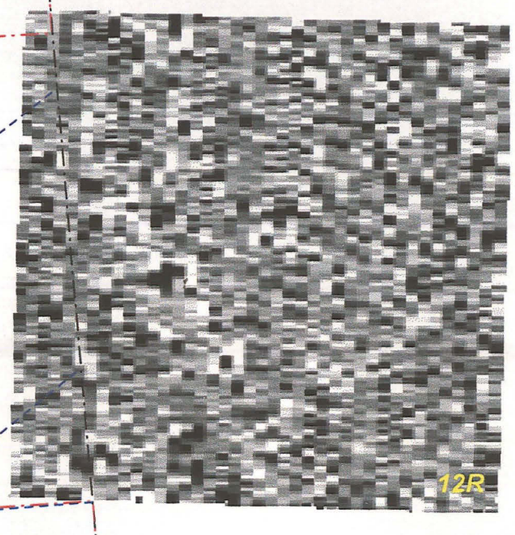
S.1

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**Watching Brief Area and Geophysical Survey Grids**

- Isolated Anomalies
- Land Drains - Plastic
- Land Drains - Ceramic
- Area of Sub-soil Stripping
- Backfilled Ditch

Scale 1:500

Fig. 2

## *Section 1*

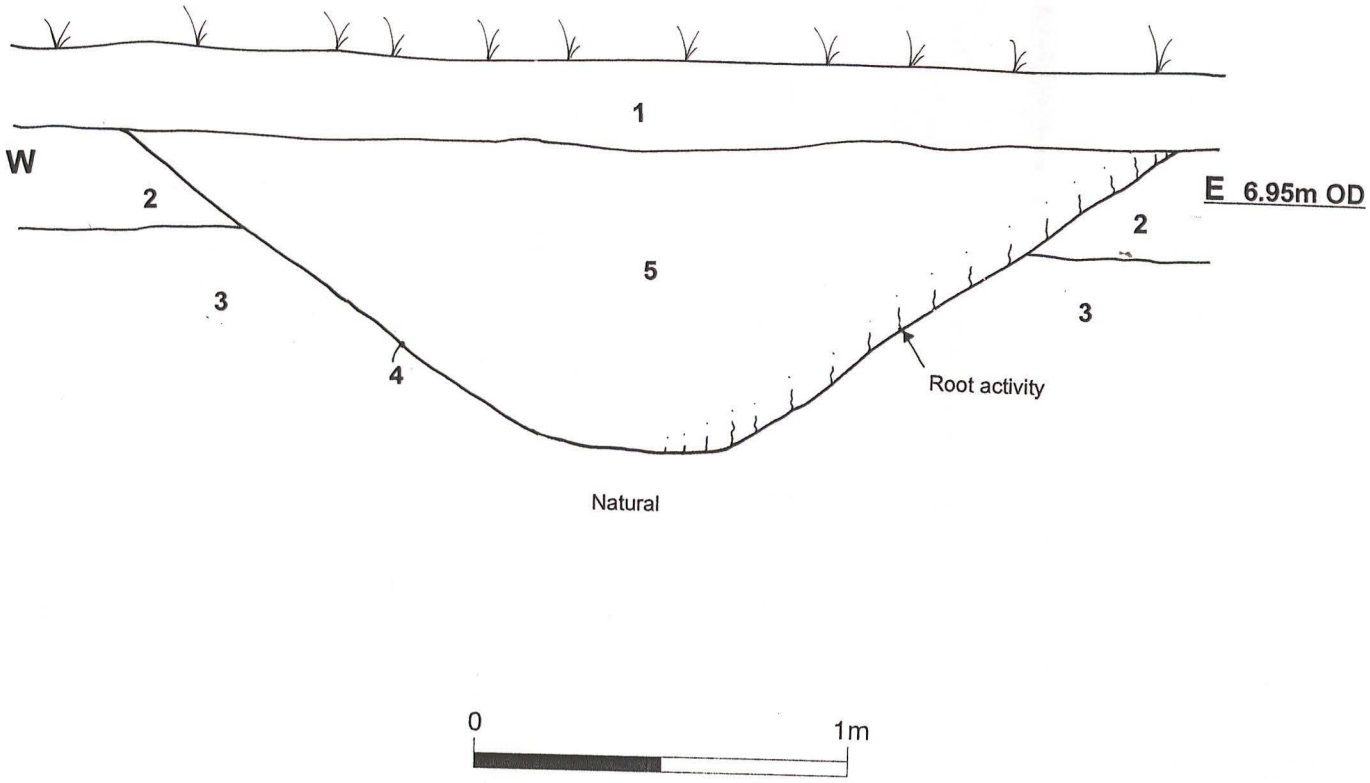
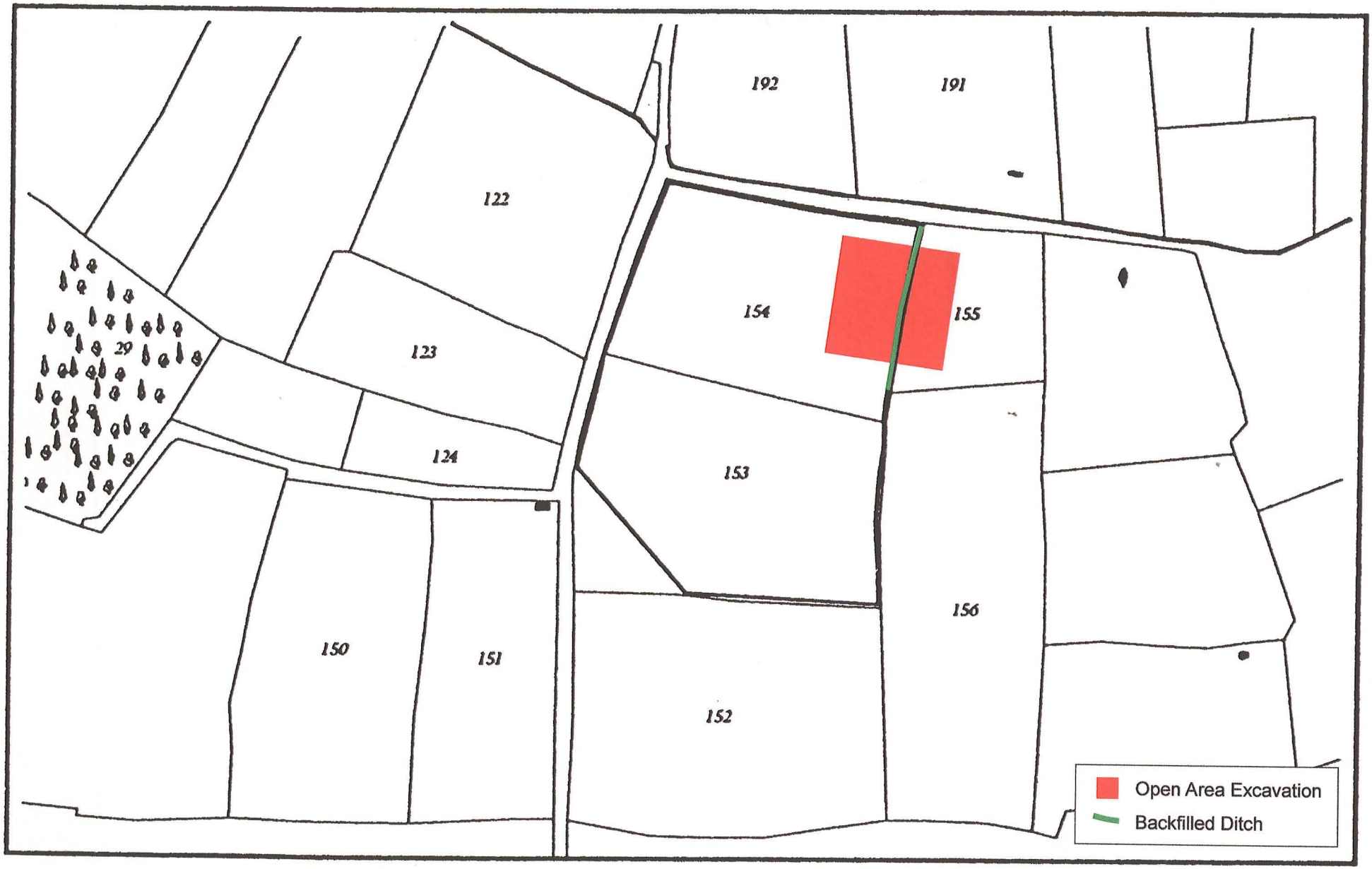



Fig. 3




Extract from the Kirkby La Thorpe Tithe Award Plan, 1851

Fig. 4