

**ALBERT WALK,
HOLBEACH, SPALDING,
LINCOLNSHIRE.
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

Site Code: HAW04
NGR: ~~TF 3602 2464~~ 536025 324650
Planning Ref. H/09/1409/02
Accession No. 2004.16

Report prepared for Cooper Architectural Design

by

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March 2004



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EVENT L15643

INTERVENTION: L1 9817

CON: L18747

EXCAVATION: L1 9818

negative

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Conservation
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Summary

- *An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks for a residential development on land at Albert Walk, Holbeach, Spalding, Lincolnshire.*
- *In its capacity as a former paraffin depot, the site had become contaminated. This was to limit the amount of archaeological observation possible, although all exposed sections were examined as much as it was safe to do so.*
- *The excavations for two house plots were monitored. No archaeological deposits were exposed.*

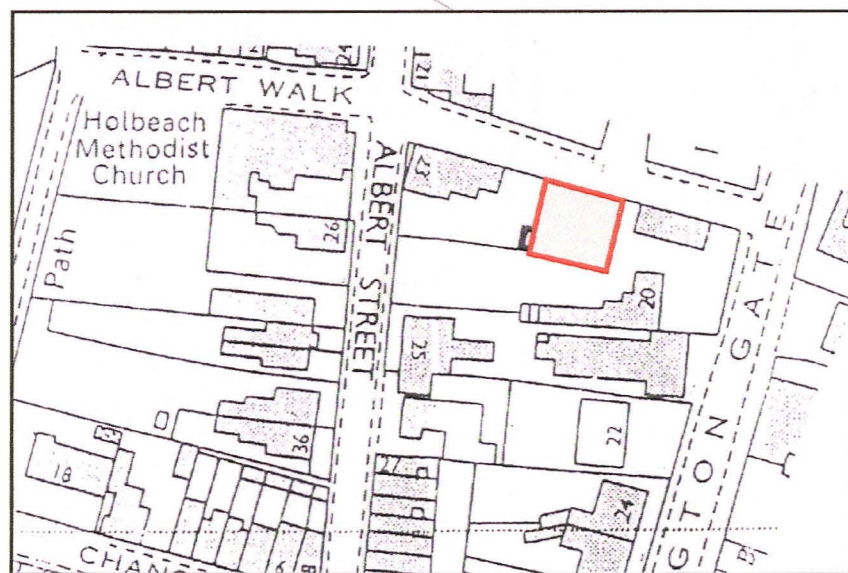
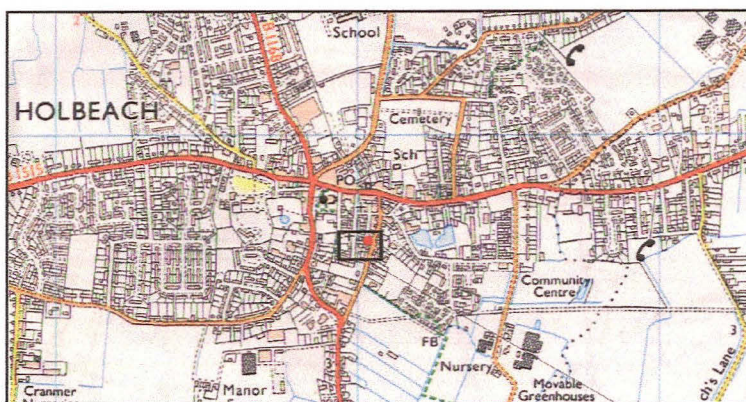


Fig. 1: Site location, site is shown in red.
Map at 1:25000, insert at 1:1250.

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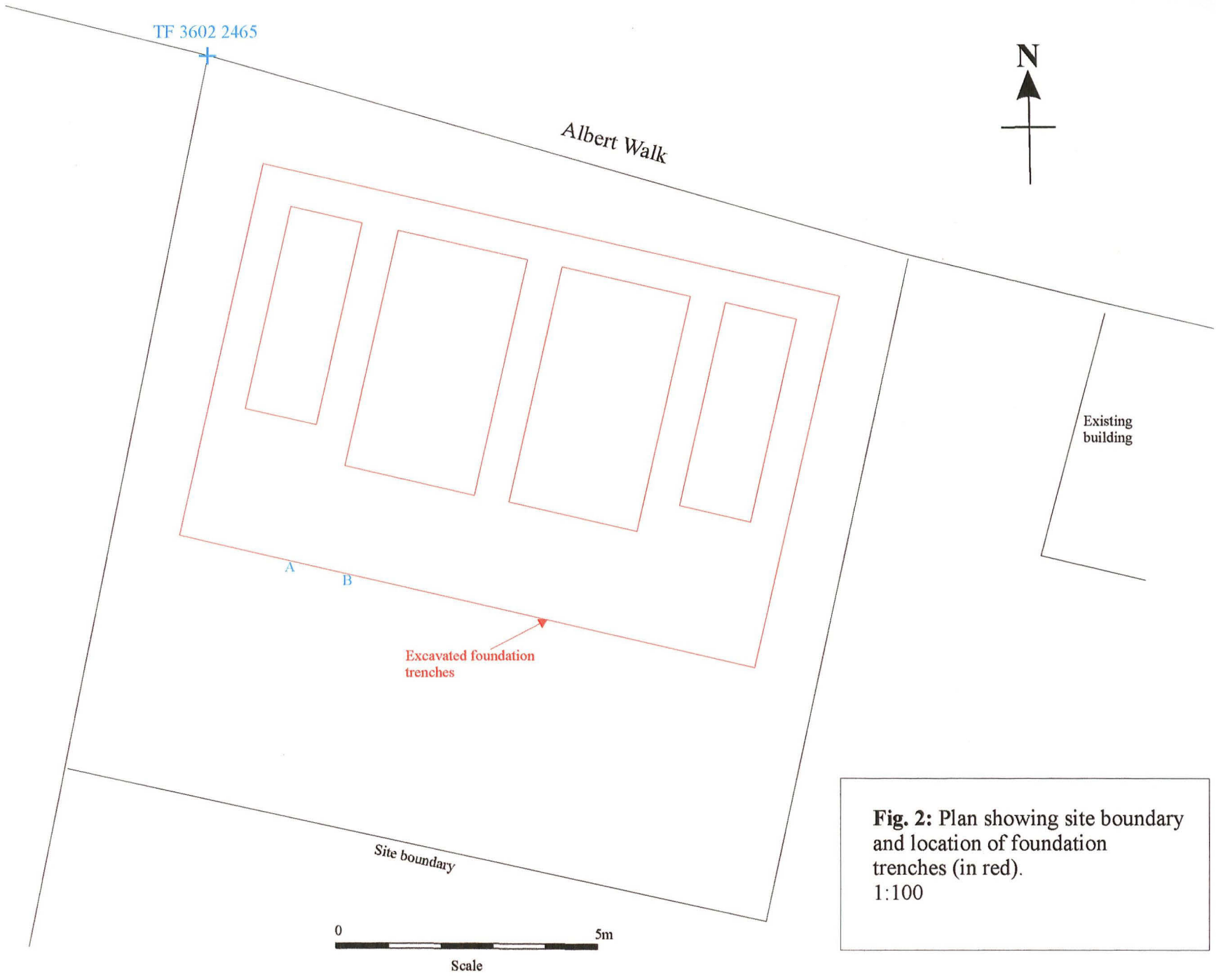


Fig. 2: Plan showing site boundary and location of foundation trenches (in red).
1:100

1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) was commissioned by Cooper Architectural Design to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks for a residential development on land at Albert Walk, Holbeach, Spalding, Lincolnshire. These works were undertaken at the request of South Holland District Council, and conform to a project specification prepared by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln). This approach is consistent with the recommendations of *Archaeology & Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (Department of the Environment, 1990), *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991), *Standards and guidance for archaeological watching briefs* (IFA, 1999) and the LCC document *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: A Manual of Archaeological Practice*, 1998.

2.0 Site location and description

Holbeach is located in the administrative district of South Holland, approximately 10km east of Spalding. The development site is within the core of the town, immediately east of Holbeach Methodist Church, approximately 200m south east of the Parish Church of All Saints and 150m south of the High Street.

To the north of the site is Albert Walk; to the other three sides are existing residential properties. The site is predominantly flat, with a thin coverage of crushed concrete and rubble. The site centres on NGR TF 3602 2464.

The underlying drift geology comprises a palimpsest of marine, salt marsh, river and creek deposits known as the Terrington Beds over Middle Oxford Clay, (British Geological Survey, 1992).

3.0 Planning background

Full planning permission was granted for the construction of two dwellings (planning ref. H/09/1409/02). The permission was granted subject to the undertaking of an archaeological watching brief during all associated groundworks.

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

Prehistoric evidence is sparse in the area, due largely to repeated marine transgressions and regressions caused by a fluctuating sea level, which would not only have made settlement impossible at times, but would also have masked earlier settlement activity. Nevertheless, there are a number of Late Iron Age sites in the area, where the processing of salt was a major industry. This practice is also known to have continued into the Romano-British period (May, 1976).

The earliest documentary reference to Holbeach dates to AD810, when Count Siward granted land in Holbeach to Crowland Abbey. Further grants were made to Crowland by the kings of Mercia in 833 and 851 (Sawyer, 1998). At the time of the Domesday Book, Crowland Abbey was still a major landowner in the area, along with William I, Count Alan, and Guy of Craon (Morgan & Thorne, 1986).

At this time, Holbeach was a coastal settlement, and the former Saxon coastline is now marked by a series of settlements stretching east to west and including Spalding, Moulton, Whaplode, Fleet Hargate and Gedney (British Geological Survey, 1992).

The 11th and 12th centuries saw large scale land reclamation, pushing the coastline further to the north (Owen, 1971).

Holbeach continued to thrive throughout the medieval period. In 1252, a charter for a fair and market were obtained by Thomas de Multon, whose family had been lords of the manor since the 12th century (Mee, 1970). By 1423, the town had also received a charter for a Sunday market (Owen, 1971).

5.0 Methodology

The watching brief methodology required monitoring the machine excavation of the footing trenches for two house plots. These groundworks were carried out with a back-hoe 180° wheeled excavator using a 650mm toothed bucket.

As soon as the first portion of the foundation was excavated, an overwhelming smell of hydrocarbons and the presence of oil slicks on the ground water made it apparent that the site was heavily contaminated with fuel of some kind. Discussion with the groundworkers indicated that the site was a former paraffin distribution depot, which had clearly affected the soil.

In response to the contamination, it was deemed unsafe to be exposed to the soil. A sample section was cleaned by hoe, and this was drawn and photographed. The remainder of the excavations were monitored, although, as the sections were stained blue with paraffin, it is unlikely that archaeological features would have been detected.

A single site visit was made on February 5th 2004. The fieldwork was carried out by the author.

6.0 Results (see figs. 2 & 3)

Only two contexts were recorded during the course of this watching brief, for reasons discussed above. The first of these, 001 was a light brown silt containing frequent mortar and brick rubble. This was a demolition or made-ground layer, possibly associated with the buildings that formerly occupied the site.

Below this was 002, a homogenous layer of greyish brown silt; this deposit had a distinct blue tinge as a result of paraffin contamination. Occasional fragments of brick and tile were noted towards the top of the deposit but were not retained. This material comprised alluvial material deriving from the Terrington Beds; it is possible that it consisted of more than one horizon, the boundaries of which could not be detected due to the adverse conditions at the site.

No other deposits were observed.

7.0 Discussion and conclusion

Significant archaeological remains were not observed during the course of this watching brief. In part, this may be due to the problems encountered with on-site observation, although there may have been other factors. The streets surrounding the site were laid out following Queen Victoria's marriage in 1840 i.e. Albert Walk (Pevsner & Harris, 1989) and so it seems likely that the area was in use as agricultural land prior to this development.

8.0 Effectiveness of methodology

Due to the contamination of the site, detailed observation of the sections exposed was not possible, although all of the sections were examined from the surface and so any stone or brick structures or particularly rich fills or layers would have been detected.

9.0 Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) would like to thank Cooper Architectural Design for this commission. Thanks also go to the groundworkers for their cooperation during the fieldwork.

10.0 References

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11.0 Site archive

An archive consisting of written, drawn, photographic and object elements is in preparation and will be deposited at the Lincoln City and County museum within six months of the completion of this report.

Access can be gained to it by quoting the L.C.C. Museum accession number 2004.16.

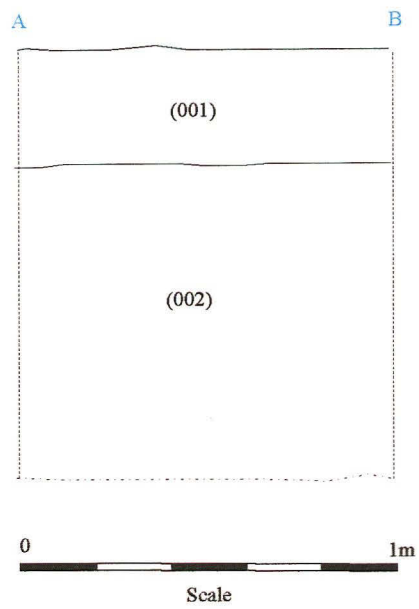


Fig. 3: North east facing sample section.
1:20

Appendix 1. Colour plates



Pl. 1: General site shot, taken after machining of the foundation trench was complete. Looking SE.



Pl. 2: Sample section showing modern made ground layer (001) over paraffin contaminated alluvial material (002). Looking S.