

**LAND AT MANOR FARM,
BARDNEY, LINCOLNSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

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Report prepared for Chestnut Homes Ltd.

by

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Summary

- *An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the groundworks for an estate of 60 houses on land at Manor Farm, Bardney, Lincolnshire.*
- *The development site lies directly to the south-east of Bardney Manor House, now Manor Farm, and adjacent to an area of recorded medieval earthworks.*
- *No archaeological deposits or features were observed, and the watching brief was terminated before completion of the groundworks.*

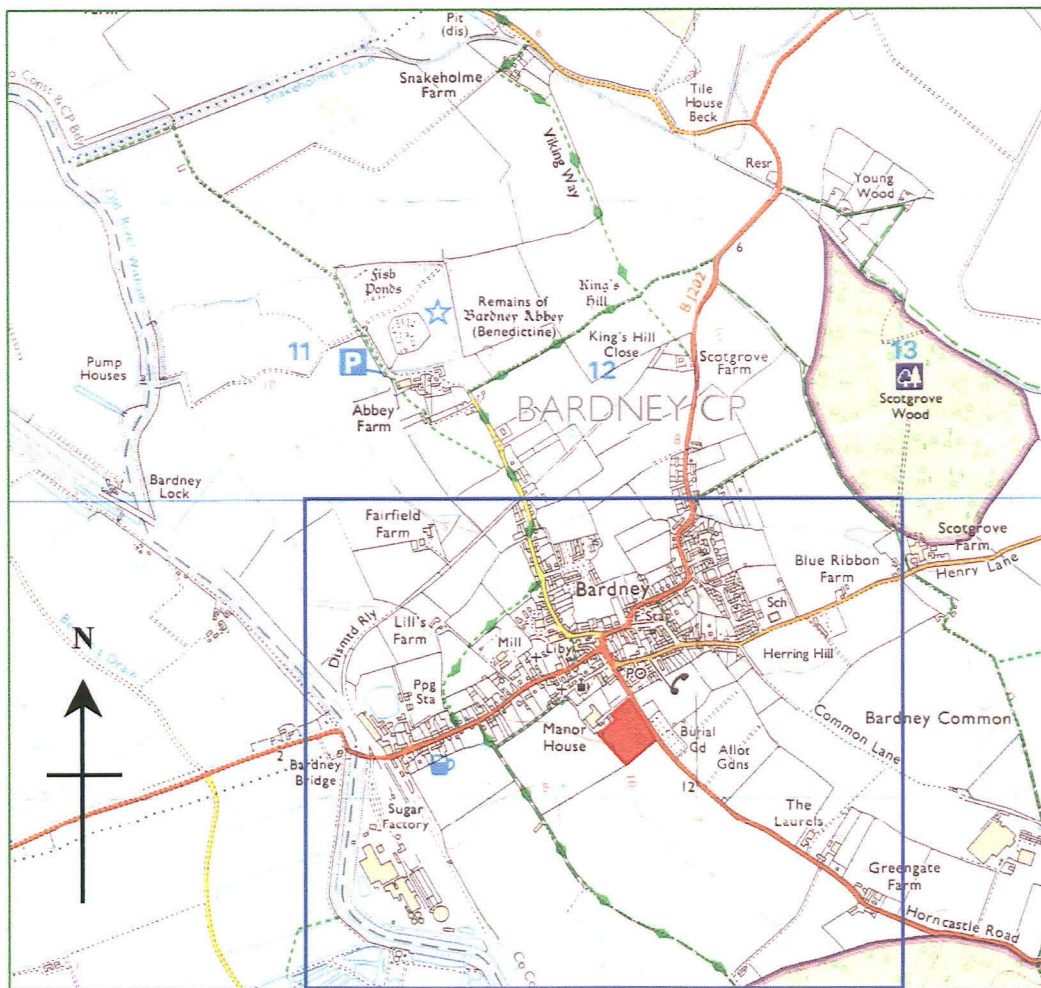


Fig. 1: Location map. The development site is shown in red and the area of Fig. 2 outlined in blue. Scale 1:25 000. O.S. Copyright licence No. AL 515 21 A0001

1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) was commissioned by Chestnut Homes Ltd. to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks for a residential development on land at Manor Farm, Bardney, Lincolnshire.

These works were undertaken to fulfil the objectives of a formal project brief issued by the Built Environment Officer for Lincolnshire County Council, and a project specification prepared by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln). This approach is consistent with the recommendations of '*Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: A Manual of Archaeological Practice*' (LCC, 1998), *Archaeology & Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (Department of the Environment, 1990), *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991) and *Standards and guidance for archaeological watching briefs* (IFA, 1999).

Copies of this report have been deposited with the commissioning body and the County Sites and Monuments Record. Reports will also be deposited at Lincoln City & County Museum, along with an ordered project archive for long-term storage and curation.

2.0 Site location and description (figs. 1 & 2)

The village of Bardney is within the administrative district of West Lindsey, approximately 15km east-south-east of Lincoln and 14km west of Horncastle. It lies on the north-east bank of the River Witham, where it is crossed by Bardney Bridge: the ground here, within the 10m contour, is higher than the expanse of sea-level reclaimed land on the other side of the river. Directly north-east of the village is the confluence of the old and new channels of the Witham, controlled by Bardney Lock.

The development site lies on the southern edge of the village, on the south-east side of Bardney Manor House, and fronting the south-west side of the B1190 (Horncastle Road). To the south and south-west, sloping slightly down to the Witham, are large, open arable fields, beyond which are a sugar factory and a railway running along the course of the river; the land to the east and north-east, on the other side of the B1190, is also open, comprising a playing field, allotments and a cemetery, with further arable land beyond. North of the development site, also fronting on to the B1190, is a recently built doctors' surgery.

The local drift geology consists of glaciofluvial sheet deposits, possibly changing to clay-rich till at the south corner of the site, overlying Jurassic Ancholme Group Clays (British Geological Survey, 1995).

Central National Grid Reference: TF 1207 6921.

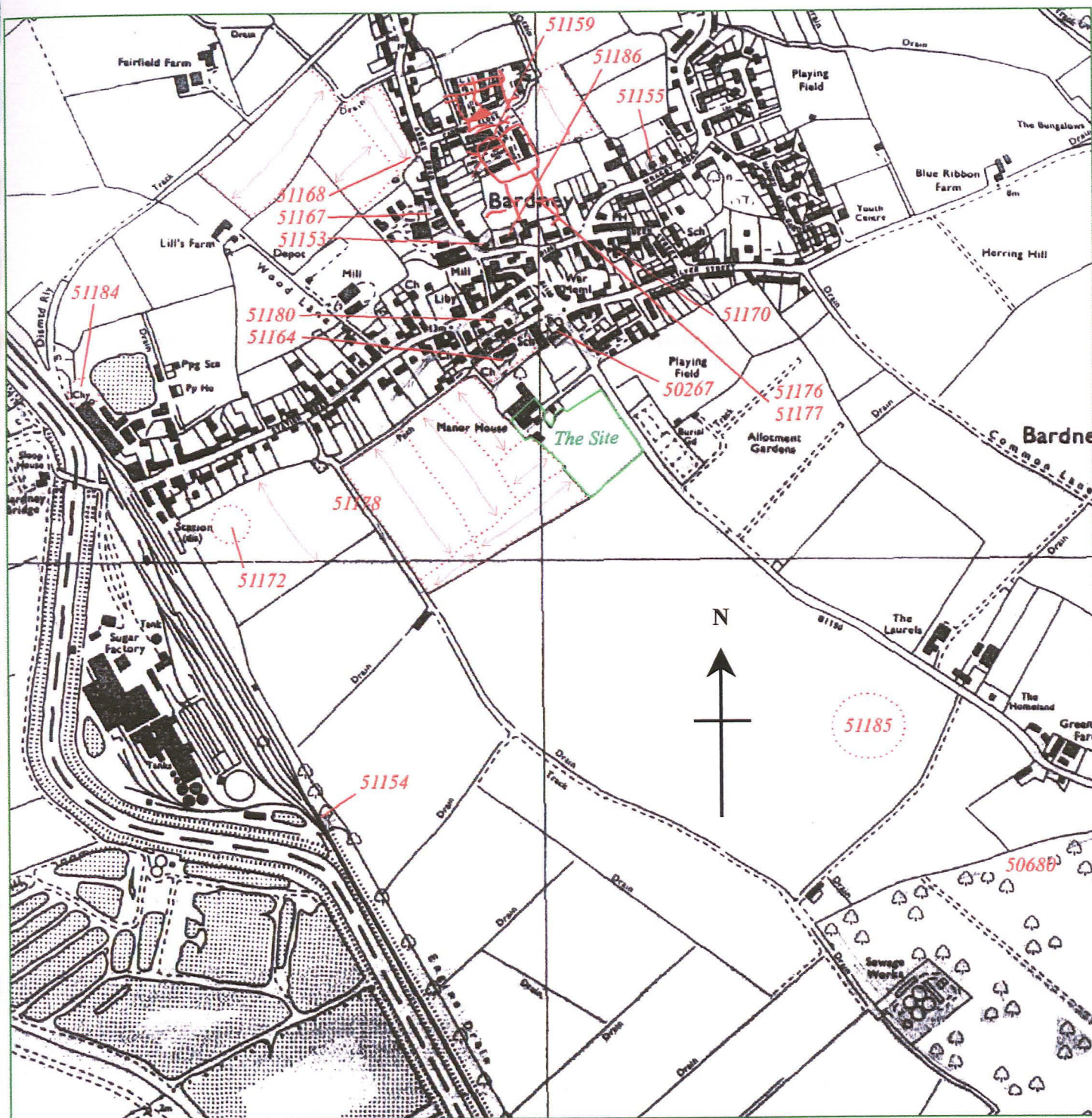


Fig. 2: Map of the local area, showing areas of ridge-and-furrow earthworks (direction of ploughing marked with arrows) and other information held by the Sites and Monuments Record. Scale 1:10,000.

3.0 Planning background

Planning permission was granted for the construction of sixty new dwellings on Horncastle Road (planning ref. M01/P/0853). This permission was granted subject to the undertaking of an archaeological watching brief on all groundworks.

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

Until the canalisation of the River Witham in the 18th and 19th centuries, the low-lying land to the west and south-west of Bardney would have been fenland, intermittently flooded by numerous river channels. The edge of the wetlands is known to have been inhabited in prehistoric times, with settlements on the dry land from which hunting and fishing would have taken place in the fens, and the river channels may have provided a quicker and safer transport route than the land. A prehistoric dugout logboat was found some 800m SW of the development site, indicating local activity in the wetlands, but the only other prehistoric find recorded by the Sites and Monuments Record in the area is a flint scraper found to the east of Abbey Road (Allen, 2002).

The Witham flood plain is also known to have been a centre of ritual activity in pre-Roman times, with deposits of valuable artefacts, usually metal objects such as weapons, being made in numerous places. An Iron Age sword was found in the Witham near Bardney, and the find of two 11th century axeheads may attest to the practice continuing well into the Christian era (*ibid.*).

Several sherds of Romano-British grey ware were recovered by PCA from the north corner of the development site prior to the commencement of work, but the SMR holds no records indicating Roman activity in the Bardney area (*ibid.*).

Some 250m to NW of the development site is the end of a causeway which ran from Bardney across the fen to Branston, a route still followed by the B1190. The causeway was certainly in use by the Anglo-Saxon period, although it may be prehistoric in origin (*ibid.*).

Bardney Abbey, to the north of the present village, may originally have been founded in the reign of King Aethelred of Mercia, who abdicated in 704AD to become abbot there (Sawyer, 1998). The first abbey was destroyed, probably during the Danish raids in the early 9th century (*ibid.*), and was not rebuilt until after the Norman Conquest, when the new Norman landowner, Gilbert of Ghent, refounded it as a Benedictine priory: this foundation may not have been on the same site as the original abbey, and there is some argument that the earlier abbey encompassed the whole of Bardney Island (Allen, 2002).

The Domesday Survey of 1086AD records Bardney as part of the lands of Gilbert of Ghent: it was a small but wealthy town, with a population of 27 households in Bardney itself and 16 in the subordinate village of Osgodby (a lost village which lay to the north-east of Bardney, adjacent to the present Lodge Farm (Foster and Longley, 1924)) and a taxable value of £20. In total, Gilbert owned 4 carucates (estimated at 480 acres) of arable land, sufficient to support a very profitable mill which paid 8 shillings in tax, 80 acres of meadow, and 500 acres of woodland pasture in Bardney

with another 240 acres of woodland, some used for pasture, in Osgodby. Bardney's position on the edge of the Witham wetlands is shown by the presence of five fisheries. No church is mentioned in either village, nor is the new abbey, which was founded the following year (Sawyer, 1998). Much of Bardney's apparent wealth is accounted for by the fact that this manor had jurisdiction over lands in nine nearby parishes, including 264 more households, 40½ carucates of ploughland and 1260 acres of meadow, and revenues from three churches, two mills and Partney market (Morgan and Thorne, 1986).

Bardney Abbey continued to be a dominant influence throughout the Middle Ages: the abbey had a navigable canal constructed, and had instituted a weekly market by 1232 (Everson *et al.*, 1991). Although a medieval manor house must have existed in Bardney, no part of the house which is now Manor Farm is older than its Georgian front (Pevsner and Harris, 1989). The field directly SW of the development site is recorded by the SMR as showing ridge-and-furrow earthworks associated with medieval strip-field cultivation, although these have subsequently been destroyed by modern ploughing (fig. 2); medieval building foundations, settlement earthworks and pottery finds are recorded throughout Bardney (Allen, 2002).

5.0 Methodology (fig. 3)

The sequence of construction intended to take place on this project comprised a first phase of excavation for the sewerage system, followed by an excavation for the surface water drains, which would run parallel to the sewers over much of the site, with the construction of the houses as the final phase. Since the network of sewer trenches extended over most of the development area, and involved much deeper excavation than the house foundation trenches, the intent was to observe these groundworks, with the part of the surface water drainage system which did not parallel the sewerage network, as a representative sample, and to decide whether to continue the watching brief in the light of the information accrued.

Due to a delay in the sewerage groundworks, which were being carried out by a different firm of contractors, the house construction groundworks began first, on 1st April 2004. Vegetation and some topsoil were first removed, using a 180° excavator with a toothless ditching bucket: according to the variations in local ground level, the strip ranged from vegetation only to the full depth of the topsoil, generally c. 0.40m. Excavation of the foundation trenches began with a 0.7m toothed bucket; later, a 0.6m toothless trenching bucket was used. Spoil was loaded into dumpers and deposited on one side of the site, making finds retrieval unlikely. The foundation trenches were generally between 0.80m and 0.90m deep, measured from the ground surface, and 0.60m-0.70m wide, and could all be entered for hand cleaning and close examination: the layers seen were recorded on standard watching brief record sheets, and sample sections were drawn at scales of 1:20 and 1:50 (fig. 4). The foundations for house plots 1-7 and 30, with garages associated with three of these house plots, were excavated before the start of drainage groundworks.

Drainage groundworks commenced on 5th May 2004, beginning with the manhole F7 in the southern corner of the development site. Excavation was carried out using a 360° tracked excavator, with a 2.0m toothless ditching bucket for the manhole pits,

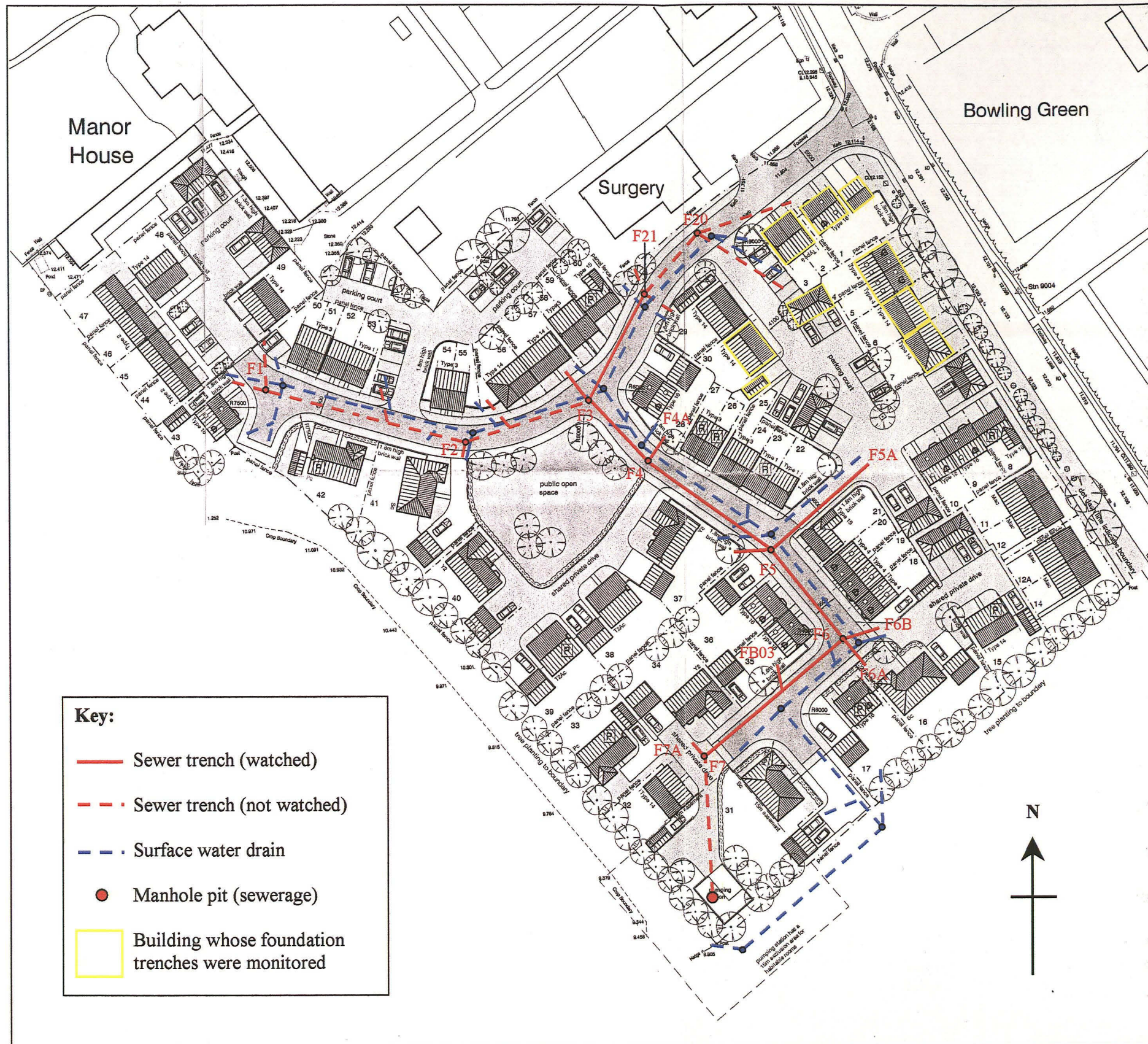


Fig. 3: Plan of the proposed development, showing the routes of the sewer trenches (red) and surface water drain trenches (blue), and the buildings whose foundation trenches were monitored (yellow). Scale 1:1000.

which were generally 3m x 3m square and up to 3m deep. The pipe-trenches were initially dug using a 0.6m bucket with a tooth-plate, but due to the instability of the ground, this had to be replaced by a 1.0m toothed bucket which could pull the full width of the trench at once. Spoil was sidecast during the excavations, and topsoil and subsoil were kept separate from the natural, allowing the spoilheaps to be checked for stray finds. Working conditions were made extremely difficult by high groundwater and running sand: the sides of the pits and trenches were continually collapsing, and drag boxes had to be used for the trench excavations. At no point could the excavations be entered when the section was exposed, and often the trench or pit edges could not be approached: the works were observed as closely as was consistent with site safety, and sample sections were recorded where possible (fig. 5). A colour photographic record of all groundworks monitored was also maintained: a selection of colour plates is reproduced in Appendix 1.

The groundworks were observed as far as manhole F21 over the period 5th-20th May, and no archaeological features or horizons were seen. After consultation with the Built Environment Officer for Lincolnshire County Council, the watching brief was then discontinued.

6.0 Results (figs. 4 and 5)

The site was sealed by dark brownish-grey sandy ploughsoil 001, up to 0.45m deep at the edge of the field. Along the NW side of the development area (house plots 1, 2 and 3 and sewer trench F3A), the upper layers were extremely disturbed, with patches of rubble and modern deposits, probably a result of building works for the surgery and its access road: no subsoil could be seen in this area, even after it had been identified elsewhere. Over the rest of the development area, 001 sealed mid brownish-grey sand subsoil 003. This layer varied in depth from 0.26m to 0.45m. On the principle that this variation might represent buried ridge-and-furrow earthworks, two sections the full width of the house plots 5 and 7 were drawn, but the results were inconclusive.

Below the topsoil and subsoil was varicoloured sand natural 002, which in manhole pit F7 and part of the trench running NE from it overlay dark bluish-grey clay 004 at a depth of 1.6m. This layer was not seen in any other part of the groundworks, and probably represents a change in the drift geology.

No archaeological features or horizons were seen during the watching brief, and inspection of the surface of the field did not produce any finds other than modern materials. Several potsherds were retrieved from layer 003, but these proved to be later post-medieval and were discarded after washing.

7.0 Discussion and conclusion

Compared to the high level of medieval remains recorded throughout Bardney village, the lack of material found during the watching brief indicates that buildings at this time never occupied the development site. While it is possible that more recent ploughing has obliterated medieval ridge-and-furrow earthworks extending to the roadside from the known medieval ploughland to the south-west, the distribution of

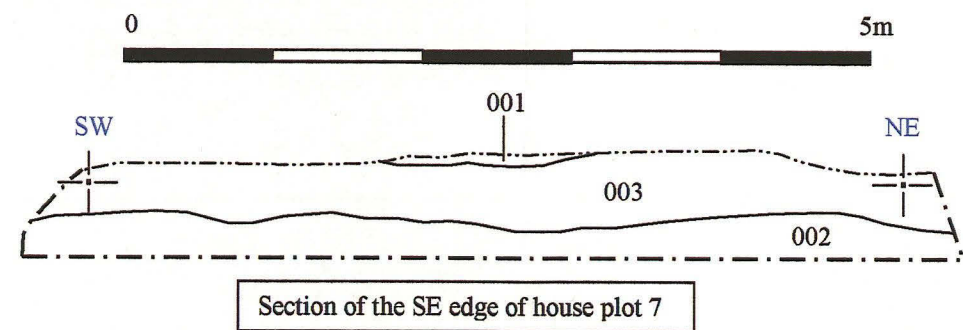
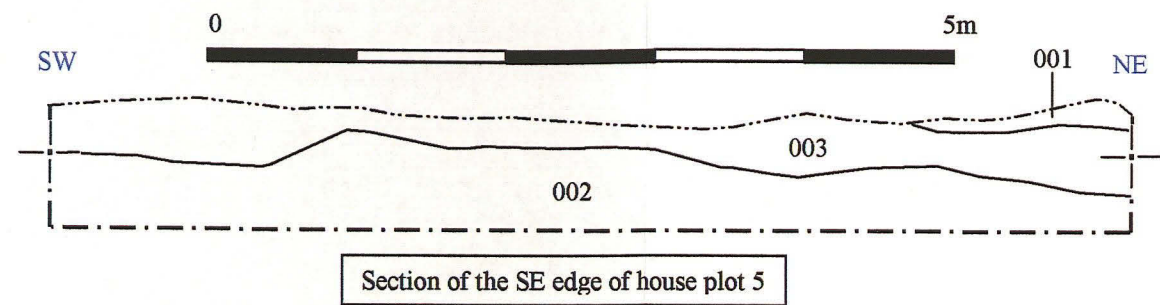
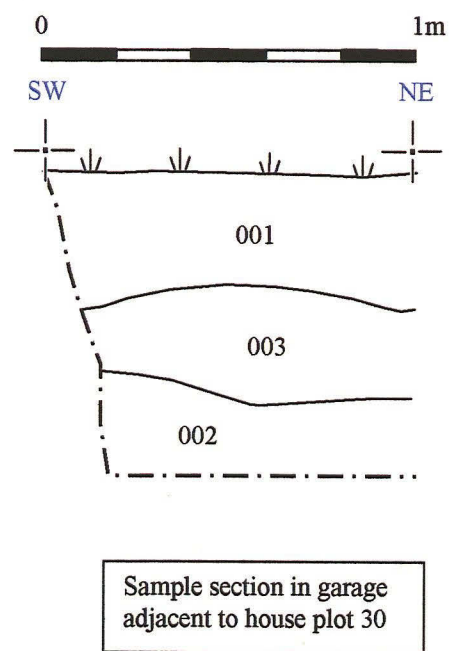
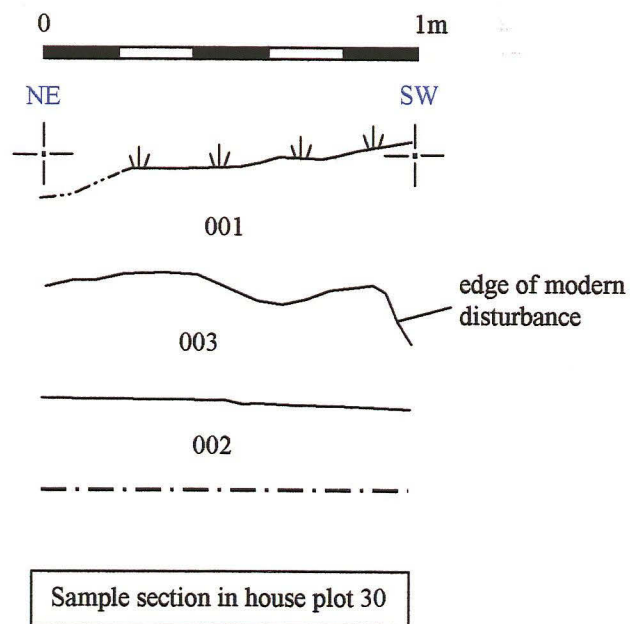
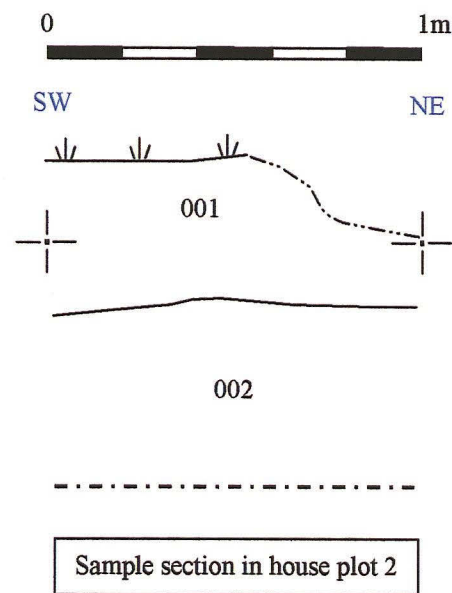
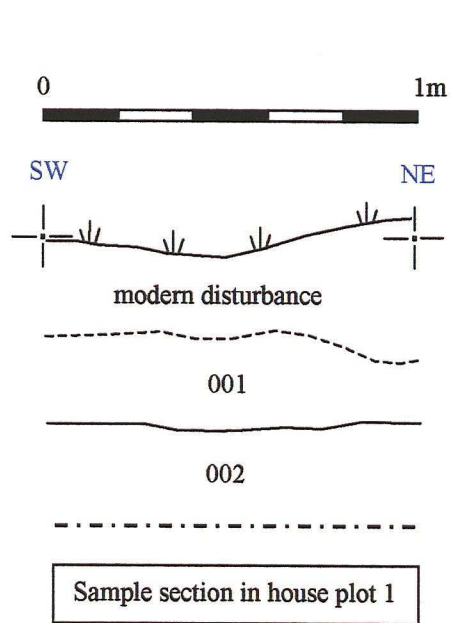
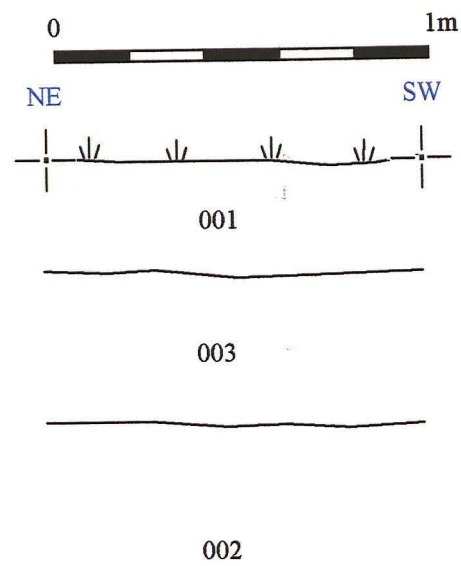
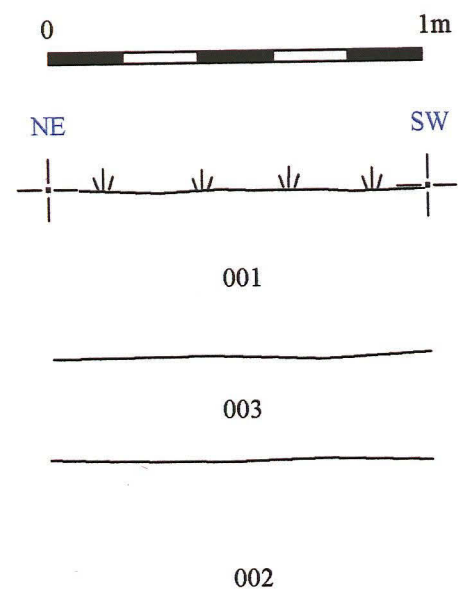


Fig. 4: Sample sections in house plot foundation trenches at scale 1:20, with sections in house plots 4/5 and 6/7 at scale 1:50 to show up the presence or absence of ridge-and-furrow.

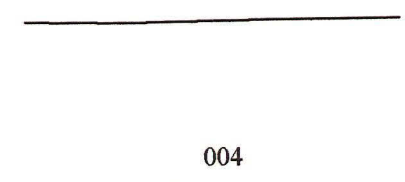
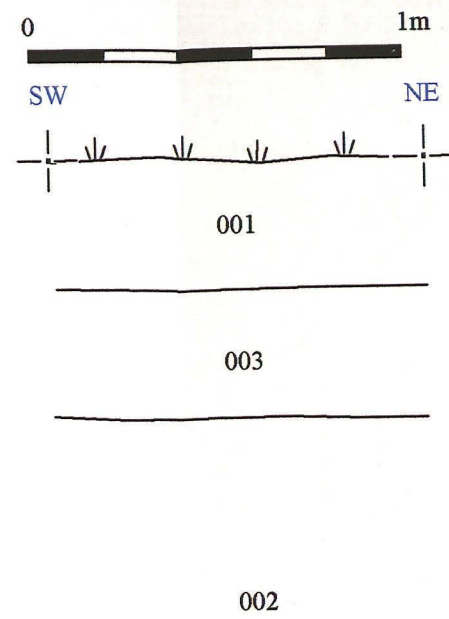


Sample section in sewer trench, NE of pit F7

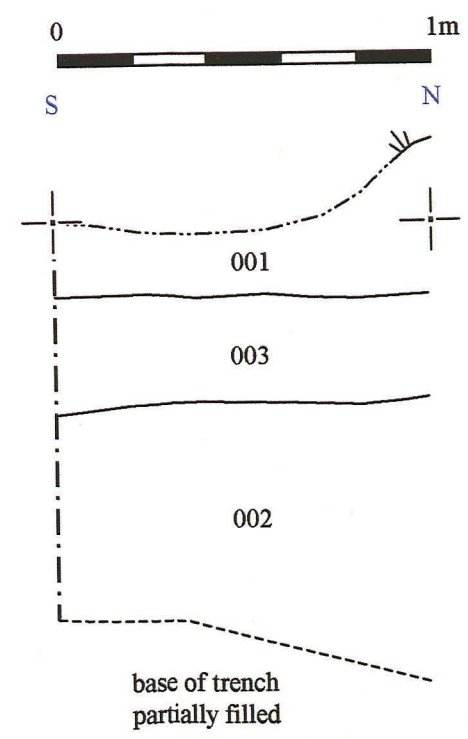


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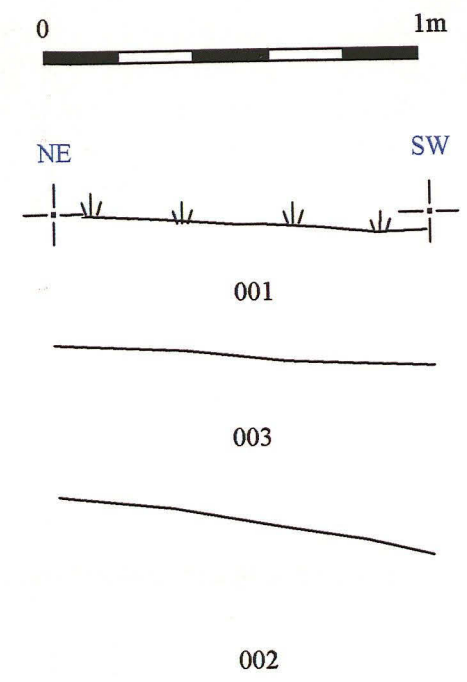
Sample section in spur trench F5A



Sample section in pit F7



Sample section at S end of sewer trench FB 03



pit not yet at full depth (danger of collapse)

Sample section in pit F4

Fig. 5: Sample sections in a selection of the manhole pits and drainage pipe trenches observed during the watching brief. Scale 1:20.

finds in the topsoil and subsoil was so sparse that it did not even reach the 'background' level normally associated with medieval ploughland, when domestic refuse such as bones and broken crockery would be thrown on the midden and subsequently scattered while manuring. A site so close to the manor house and the main road is unlikely to have been completely uncultivated, but it seems most likely that the site was pasture land (part of the 80 acres of meadow listed in Domesday Book?) until relatively recently.

8.0 Effectiveness of methodology

The methodology employed was entirely adequate to the requirements of the archaeological record, allowing the project to be reconsidered after a representative sample had been monitored and proved negative.

9.0 Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) would like to thank Chestnut Homes Ltd. for this commission, and Kirk Groundwork and UCS (contractors) for their co-operation during the watching brief.

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11.0 Site archive

The documentary archive for the site is currently in the possession of Pre-Construct Archaeology. This will be deposited with Lincoln City & County Museum within six months from the completion of the project.

Appendix 1: Colour Plates



Plate 1 (top left): General shot of the development site, looking south from the north corner, with the completed foundation trench of the garage attached to house plot 1 in the foreground.

Plate 2 (above left): Machining in progress on house plot 1, looking SW towards the sugar factory.

Plate 3 (bottom left): Sample section in the foundation trench of house plot 30, looking SE.

Plate 4 (top right): Sample section in the foundation trench of the garage attached to house plot 3, showing the maximum depth of subsoil 003, looking NE.

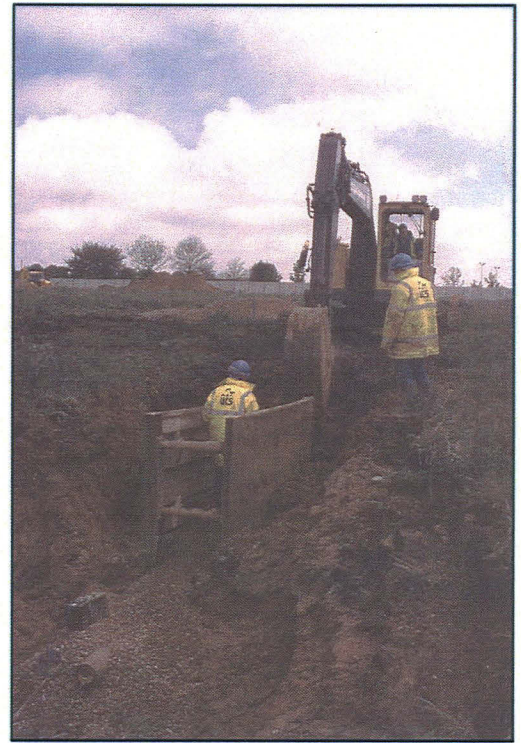


Plate 5 (top left): General shot at the start of machining for the drainage run, looking north from the south corner of the field.

Plate 6 (above): Working shot: machining in progress on the drainage run section F7, looking NE, showing the extremely unstable condition of the trench.

Plate 7 (above left): The section of manhole pit F7 directly after machining, looking NW, showing running sand above clay layer 004.

Plate 8 (left): Manhole pit F4, after collapse of the side during machining left a fresh section. The pit was too unstable to approach, so the machine tracks have been included for scale.

Appendix 2: List of contexts

- 001 Dark brownish-grey friable coarse-sandy topsoil with very frequent pebbles
- 002 Varicoloured sand and pebble natural deposits with clay lenses
- 003 Mid brownish-grey friable medium sand subsoil with c. 25% pebbles
- 004 Dark bluish-grey compact clay natural deposit below 002, with frequent chalk pebbles and gravel