

**CAISTOR GRAMMAR SCHOOL,  
CAISTOR,  
LINCOLNSHIRE.**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

Site Code: CGS04  
NGR: TA 1105 0110  
Planning Ref. W18/0034/02  
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Report prepared for Caistor Grammar School

by

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Services

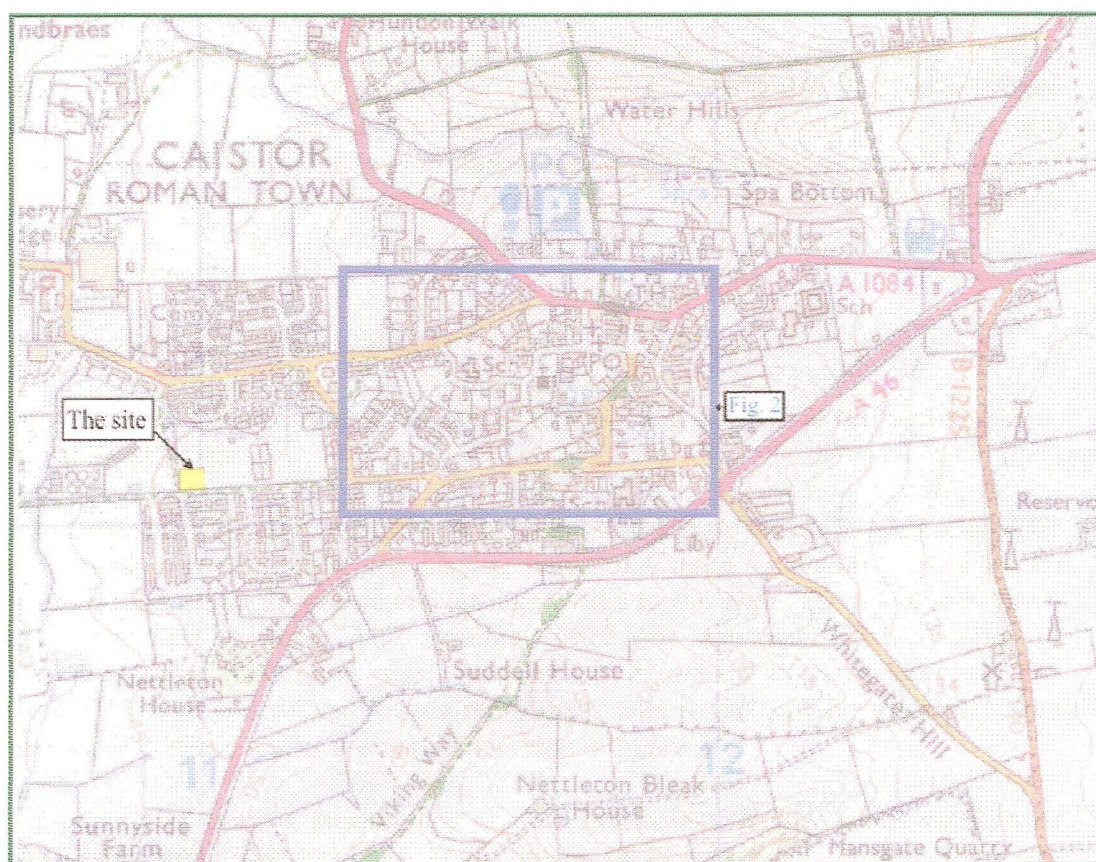
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Highways & Planning  
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## Summary

- A program of archaeological observation and recording took place on land situated off the north side of Navigation Lane, Caistor, Lincolnshire, to investigate an area of land belonging to Caistor Grammar School; to be developed into a new sports pavilion and car park.
- Archaeological fieldwork identified a number of linear features containing pottery dating to the Romano British period. In addition, a pit containing a fragment of Iron Age pottery, and a feature of unknown extent containing a fragment of a Roman fine ware, were recorded.
- The evidence collected during the fieldwork suggests that there was some type of direct settlement on the site during the Romano British period. It is likely that related archaeological remains extend beyond the limit of the groundworks monitored during this watching brief.



**Fig. 1:** Site location, shows site in yellow and area detailed in figure 2 outlined in blue. Scale 1:25 000

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## 1.0 Introduction

Caistor Grammar School commissioned Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) to undertake a programme of archaeological observation and recording on land situated off Navigation Lane, Caistor, Lincolnshire. These works were undertaken to fulfil the objectives of a formal project brief issued by the Lincolnshire County Council Built Environment Team. This approach complies with the recommendations of *Archaeology and Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16*, Dept. of Environment (1990); *Management of Archaeological Projects*, EH (1991); *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*, IFA (1999) and the LCC document *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: A Manual of Archaeological Practice*, 1998.

The full archaeological programme took place between the 12<sup>th</sup> January and 25<sup>th</sup> May 2004.

Copies of this report have been deposited with the commissioning body and the County Sites and Monuments Record for Lincolnshire. A summary will be submitted to the editor of the journal, *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology*; and this will feature as a short note in due course. Reports will also be deposited at the City and County Museum, Lincoln, along with an ordered project archive for long term storage and curation.

## 2.0 Site location and description

Caistor is approximately 30km north-east of Lincoln and lies within the administrative district of West Lindsey.

The development site comprises an approximate 40m square unit of land bordered by Navigation Lane to the south, the playing fields of Caistor Grammar School to the east and north, and rough pasture and sewage works to the west. The site slopes down slightly from East to West. This watching brief was concerned with a series of foundation trenches for a news sports pavilion and associated drainage trenches. The stripping of topsoil and subsoil from a rectangular area to the east for a car park was also monitored. These works are outlined in blue in figure 3.

Caistor is situated upon a promontory of the Lincolnshire Wolds, which consists of Ferriby Chalk with reddened basal beds. Seams of Burnham and Welton chalk are also present beneath the town. (BGS 1982). The area to the west of the town, where this watching brief occurred, has an underlying geology of windblown sand (drift) over Elsham Sandstone (solid) of the Late Jurassic period, (*ibid*).

The National Grid Reference for the centre of the site is TA 1105 0110.



### 3.0 Planning background

Full planning consent was granted for a new sports pavilion. This planning permission was granted subject to a voluntary (Section 106) agreement between the developer and West Lindsey District Council. As part of this agreement, Caistor Grammar School commissioned Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) to carry out a programme of archaeological observation and recording in accordance with directives issued by the Built Environment Officer for Lincolnshire County Council. The results of this programme are presented in this report.

The West Lindsey District Council planning reference for this development is W18/0034/02

### 3.0 Archaeological and historical background

The name of the village derives from the Old English *caester* meaning, 'a Roman station' (Cameroon, 1998). The 'Station' referred to was a Roman small town located in the area now occupied by the village core. This settlement may have been the administrative and market centre for the surrounding area, and was sufficiently important to have been enclosed by a substantial limestone wall with external bastions (Whitwell, 1992) and a series of ditches recently discovered by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln). These defences formed an irregular polygon surrounding an area of approximately 3 hectares, with the northern wall lying approximately 10m south of the development site. The defences apparently utilised the natural contours of an outlying promontory of the Lincolnshire Wolds and the eastern end of the enclosure, where the ground was more level, was protected by a system of ditches, which were recently discovered during a watching brief by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) and will be detailed in a forthcoming report.

Evidence of Romano-British activity has been identified in the area surrounding the town. Two kilns were discovered in the 1960's, (SMR Nos. 50869 & 52684), representing elements of a local pottery industry producing greyware vessels in the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. A number of *tesserae* – pieces from a mosaic floor or pavement – were discovered in a field to the west of the town, (SMR No. 52641), leading to speculation that there was a villa in this area, but further structural remains have yet to be identified

Definite Roman cemeteries have not yet been located at Caistor but are indicated by inhumation burials to the west and south west of the walled circuit, as shown in figure 3. As a settlement of some standing, Caistor is unusual in that it had no obvious connection with the Roman road network. There is a section of road, indicated in figure 3, running west from Caistor, possibly towards Ermine Street, but some doubt has been cast upon its Roman origin.



Two early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries have been identified close to the village, Hundon to the North and Nettleton to the south. A bronze bowl recovered from Nettleton cemetery had decoration imitating Roman forms and is therefore thought to be sub-Roman in date (late 4<sup>th</sup> to early 5<sup>th</sup> century AD) (Whitwell, 1992). This may indicate that the small town continued to be a regionally important settlement after the cessation of Roman political and military involvement in Britain.

There are some indications that Caistor and its hinterland had become a royal estate by the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, and it seems likely that an Episcopal Minster was constructed in the town at around this time (Sawyer, 1998). An inscribed stone found at castle hill in 1770 appears to refer to the dedication of a church in the 8<sup>th</sup> century (SMR No. 52681; Pevsner & Harris, 1989). A mint was established in the town in the last quarter of the 10<sup>th</sup> century; this operated during the reigns of Edward the Martyr, Aethelred II and Cnut (died 1035).

Following the Norman Conquest, King William retained the manor for himself, but in 1072 he granted the church at Caistor to Remigius, bishop of Lincoln (Owen, 1971; Sawyer, 1998). In so doing, he possibly restored the system of ecclesiastical administration that had pertained before the imposition of the Danelaw. The Domesday Book indicates that Earl Morcar had held the estate prior to the Conquest (Morgan and Thorn, 1986). In 1086 the holding amounted to land for 6 ploughs, 60 acres of meadow, four mills, together valued at £50. There is also a reference to "the Hall of this manor" (*ibid.*: section 338c, 66), as well as the church and a priest 'claimed' by the Bishop of Lincoln. The west end of the nave of the present church incorporates megalithic quoins that are considered to be elements of the 11<sup>th</sup> century structure (Pevsner & Harris, 1989).

Ridge and furrow earthworks, representing elements of a medieval open field system, survive in fields to the north-west of the town (SMR No. 52718) as do a number of fishponds that are also likely to be medieval in date.

## 5.0 Methodology

The groundworks were monitored by Alex Brett, Simon Savage, Will Munford and Rachel Gardner from the 12<sup>th</sup> January to 25<sup>th</sup> May 2004. A JCB 180° excavator fitted with a variety of buckets was used as a bulldozer to clear the topsoil before using the back-actor to excavate the pavilion footings and other intrusive groundworks. P.C.A staff continuously monitored this work.

The archaeological fieldwork involved the cleaning by hand of exposed surfaces followed by a thorough inspection. All archaeological deposits identified by this process were subjected to limited excavation, in order to assess their nature and dimensions and to attempt to recover datable materials. These investigations resulted in the production of written descriptions of each layer upon standard watching brief context record sheets. Colour photographs and scale section and plan drawings compliment these accounts.



## 6.0 Results

The matrix across the site consisted of a layer of mid brown sandy topsoil, (001) which overlay a mottled mid and light grey windblown sand subsoil, (002).

The removal of layers (001) and (002) at the eastern end of the car park area revealed two archaeological features, gullies [008] and [005]. Gully [005] extended for approximately 6m to the south west, from the north eastern corner of the car park area, and its two excavated sections revealed a profile with moderately sloped irregular sides that measured 0.20m deep and 0.9m wide. Its fill, (004), consisted of mid orange/grey clay and this incorporated sherds of dark grey Romano British coarse pottery fragments. Gully [008] was a similar feature, extending from the eastern edge of the car park strip for approximately 6m. It was also approximately 0.9m wide. Its excavated profile was 0.40m deep and its sides were steep and uneven. Its fill, recorded as context (007), was of mottled grey and yellow sand with occasional flint inclusions and pottery fragments similar to those recovered from (006). It was aligned east west.

Gullies [008] and [005] both appeared to truncate an area of mid orange grey clay that had been revealed in the north eastern corner of the car park. This was interpreted as a variation in the natural stratum.

A further 6m to the west, soil stripping revealed a pit, [010]. It was sub-oval and measured 1.92m long by 0.96m wide and 0.20m deep and was filled with context (009); a mid grey-yellow sand similar in consistency to (007). The features excavated profile was steep-sided with a flat base. It did not contain pottery fragments and the possibility that this was a naturally occurring feature (eg palaeochannel) was noted on site.

A comparatively substantial north-south aligned linear feature, [014] was observed partially hidden by the western limit of the car park strip. In plan this measured 1.60m wide and could be seen extending for approximately 18m. Partial excavation revealed that the ditch was 0.70m deep and had a moderately sloped side, which became steeper towards its rounded base. The ditch was filled with friable dark grey brown sand, (015), with rare flint inclusions.

To the north, the excavation of a drain trench exposed more of ditch [014] as it gradually deviated towards the east. A machine slot excavated towards the northern end of this trench proved the deposits here were 1.20m deep. This may suggest that the deposits in this location were not the fill of [014] but those of a more substantial feature of unknown extent. The finds recovered from this slot included Romano-British dark grey coarse ware and a single sherd of red-coated ware, possibly Samian, a fine ware imported from Gaul. These were allocated a separate context number, (020), due to the possibility they were from a separate feature.



At its southern end, ditch [014] appeared to join or merge with a possible pit, [016]. Although this was obscured with engineering masonry before a proper record of its dimensions could be made, its proportions were established in a pavilion foundation section and a machine slot excavated for the purpose (see sections 13 and 15). It proved to be 1.7m wide and 0.8m deep with moderately sloped sides and a wide rounded base. It was filled with two layers of dark brown soil, (019) and (017), which sandwiched a seam of pale beige sand, (018). A single sherd of crude pottery of probable Iron Age date was recovered.

In the north west corner of the pavilion foundations, a shallow linear, [011], was observed on an east west alignment. It had moderately sloped irregular sides and was filled with dark reddish brown silty friable sand, (013), which had been disturbed by roots and included rare rounded pebbles and chalk and flint fragments. A drain trench was excavated immediately to the west of the pavilion footings in this area. Because of its limited depth, dark subsoil was left *in situ* at its northern end and this may have obscured the continuing course of [011].

## 7.0 Conclusions

It is possible that the archaeological features identified during this watching brief represent simple elements of the agricultural hinterland associated with the Roman small town of Caistor. It is thought that late prehistoric and early Roman agricultural activity favoured light, easy to plough, soils such as those found on the site, and ditches of similar dimensions and morphology to that of [014] are commonplace in Romano British field systems in East Anglia and the Midlands. However there are several indications that there was actual settlement on or near the site in the Roman period.

The quantity of pottery fragments recovered during the watching brief, and the relative lack of abrasion observed on these, indicates that they were disposed of within the linear features directly and deliberately, probably from nearby dwellings. In addition (although a single sherd is never conclusive evidence), the fragment of red fine ware may even suggest that such settlement was of relatively 'high' status.

The dimensions and location of gullies [005] and [008] suggest that they are too slight to be elements of a field system. It is more likely that they relate to animal enclosures or drainage gullies that were often associated with occupied sites.

The presence of pit [016], even if it is of late Iron Age date, is also indicative that agriculture has not been the only activity on the site in the past. In addition, the increasing depths of deposits associated with feature [014], towards the north of the site, where context (020) was allocated, suggests that archaeological features in this area extend substantially beyond the limits of the trenches monitored during this watching brief. This may belie the fact that an area of deeper pits and associated complex settlement archaeology may exist further into the Grammar School playing field.



In conclusion, due to the limited recorded extent of the features revealed during the watching brief, it is difficult to be certain about the nature of the archaeological deposits affected by this development. It should not be assumed that the remains represent remnants of a field system, and any future developments to the north or east of the current works will reveal perhaps more complex and extensive Romano British archaeology.

## **8.0 Effectiveness methodology**

During the initial topsoil stripping, the excavation method adopted by the contractors (using the front bucket of a 180° excavator as a bulldozer) produced a rough and uneven surface that made archaeological monitoring difficult, and while some features were detected, other more ephemeral examples may have been completely missed. During the later part of the watching brief, the methodology employed allowed a full inspection to be made of the sections of all of the foundation trenches, with minimal disruption to the primary scheme, and a full record to be made of any archaeological deposits encountered.

Romano-British pottery (one possible Iron Age sherd) was recovered from a number of stratified contexts during the course of this watching brief. Regrettably, this material was mislaid since it left the PCA finds processing system. Attempts to locate the assemblage are ongoing; if it is recovered, then a pottery report will be produced as an addendum to this document, and the finds corpus will be added to the paper archive. The Senior Built Environment Officer of Lincolnshire County Council has been informed.

## **9.0 Acknowledgements**

The authors would like to thank Caistor Grammar School for commissioning this report, for assistance during the watching brief itself, and for providing some of the drawings used during the preparation of this account.



## 10.0 References

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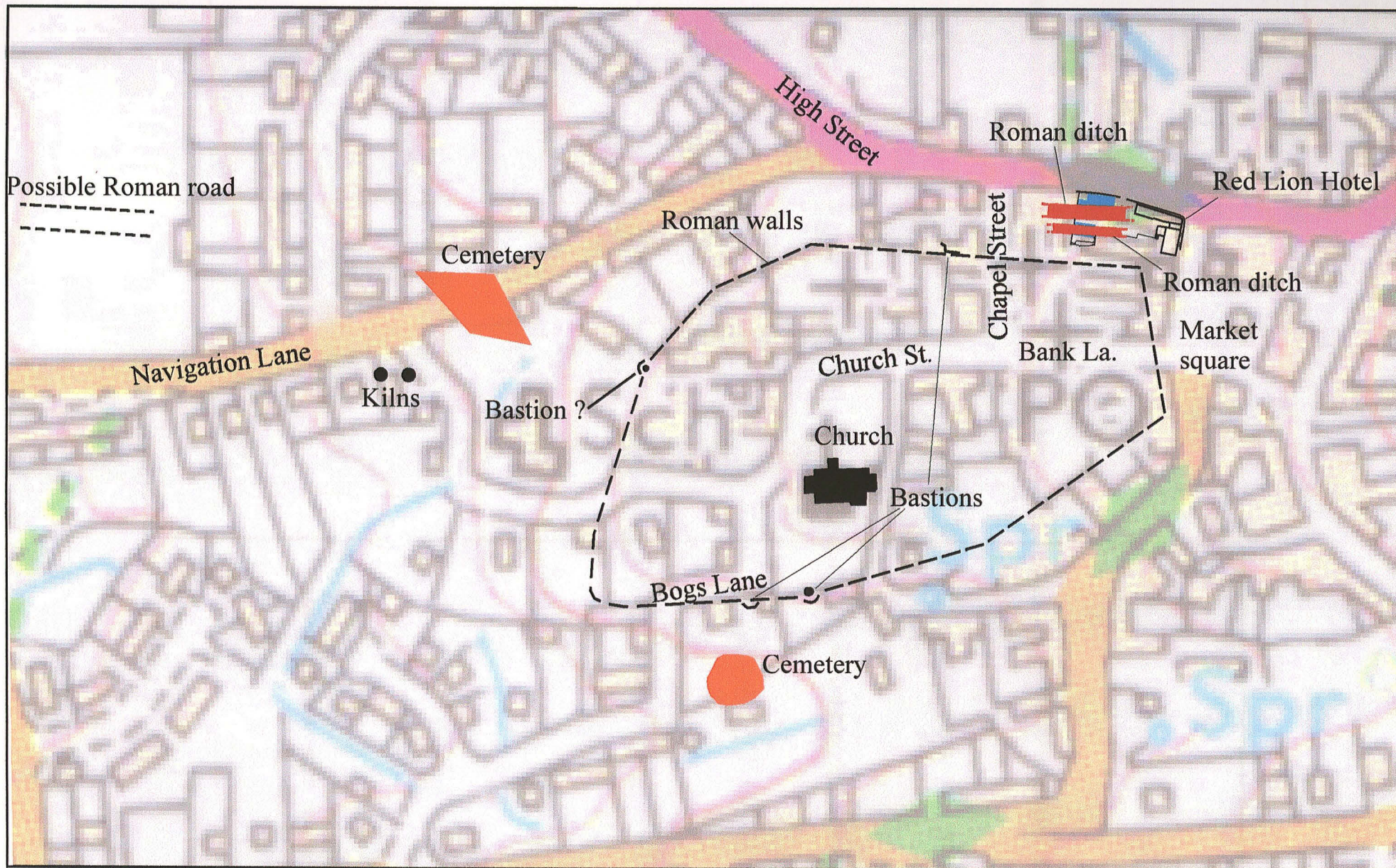
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Whitwell, J. B., 1992 *Roman Lincolnshire. History of Lincolnshire Volume II*. [Lincoln. The History of Lincolnshire Committee)

## 11.0 Site Archive

The site archive [documentary) for this project is in preparation and will be deposited at the Lincoln City and County Museum and the Lincolnshire Archives Office [documentary) within six months. Access may be granted by quoting the global accession number 2004.159.





**Fig. 2.** Map showing the centre of Caistor town in relation to the location of known and probable elements of the local Roman landscape. (Scale 1:2500: OS copyright ref 515 21 A0001).



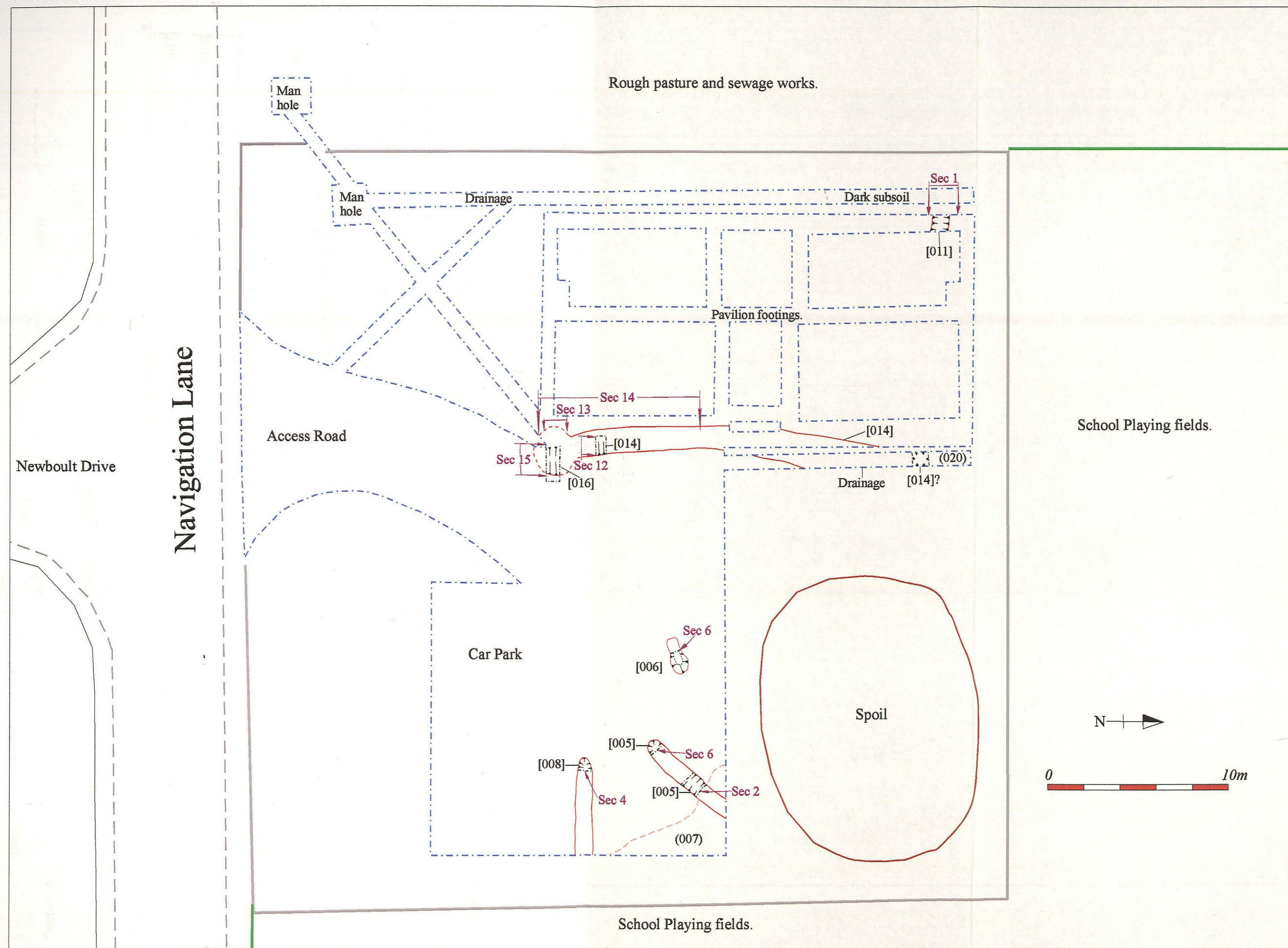


Fig. 3. Site map showing groundworks monitored during the watching brief in blue, the position of archaeological features in red and the position of drawn sections in mauve. (Scale 1:200)



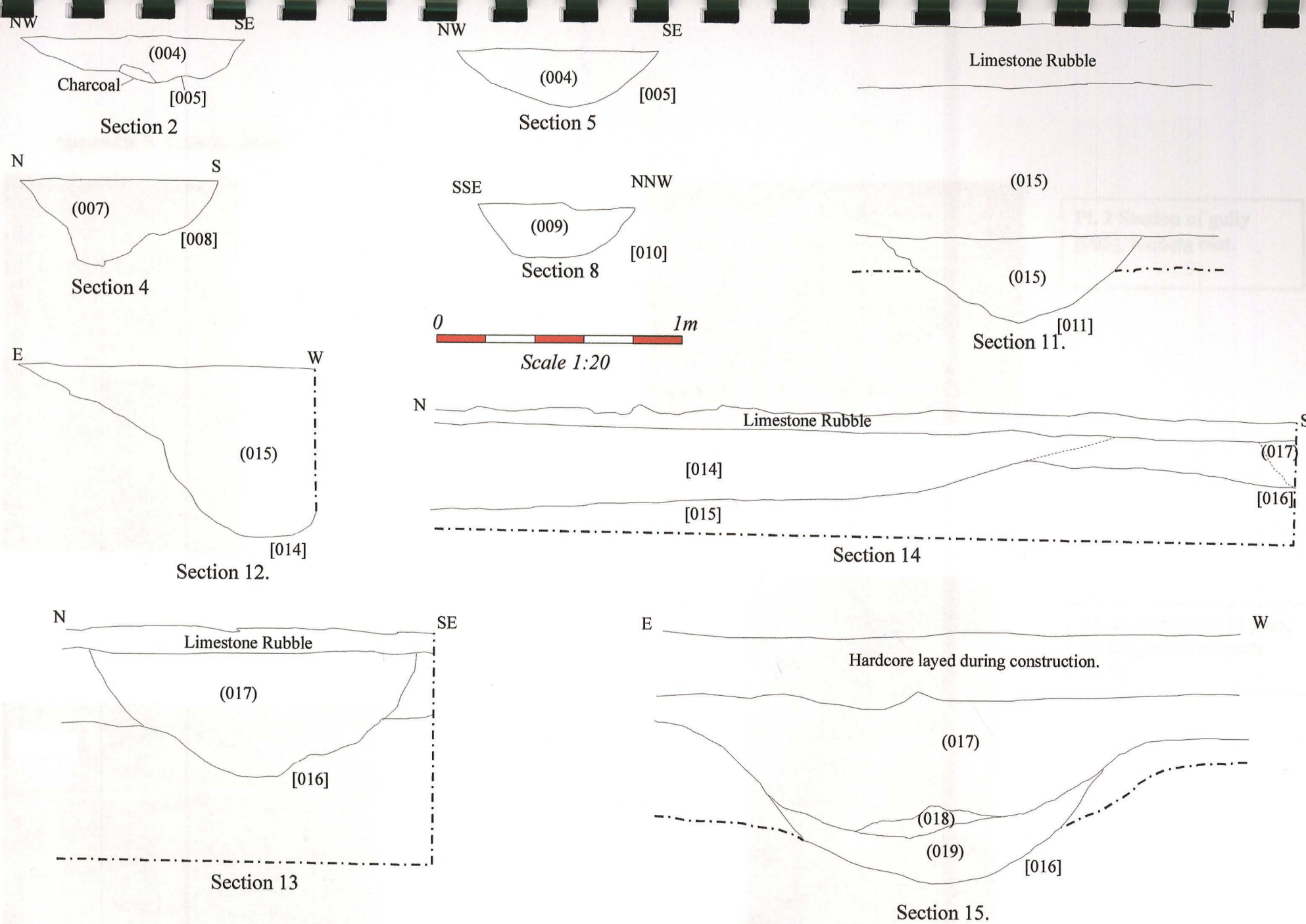
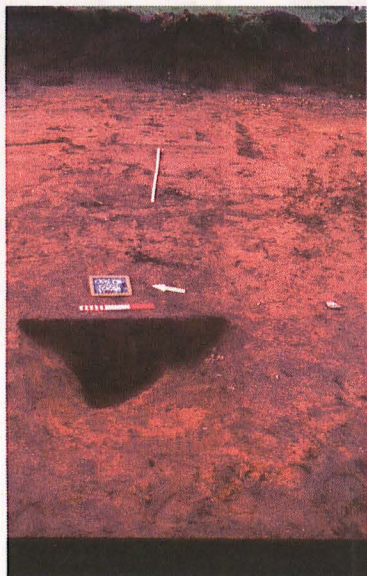


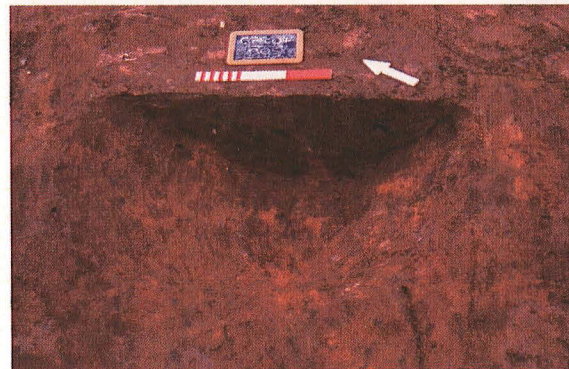
Fig. 4. Section drawings 2, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15. (Scales 1:20)



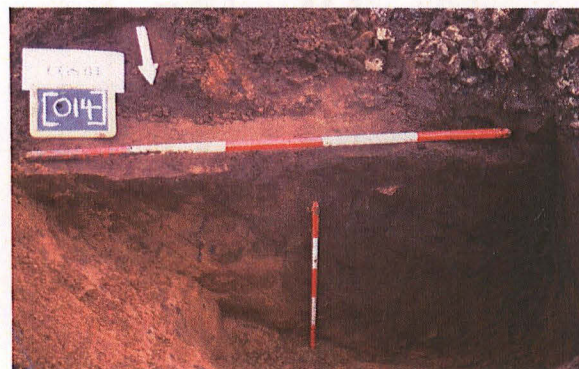
**Appendix 1. Colour plates**



**Pl. 1** Section of gully  
[008], looking west



**Pl. 2** Section of gully  
[005], looking east.

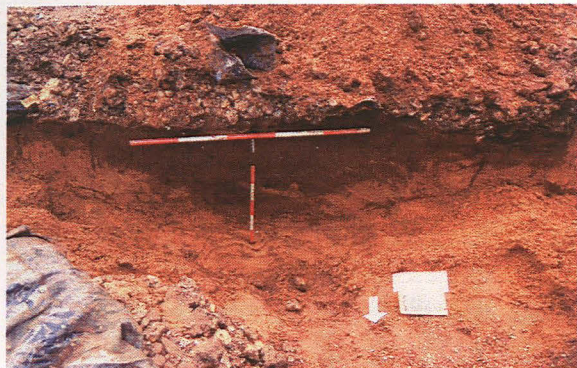


**Pl. 3** Ditch section [014],  
looking south.



**Pl. 4** Ditch [014] in plan,  
looking north towards  
[020].





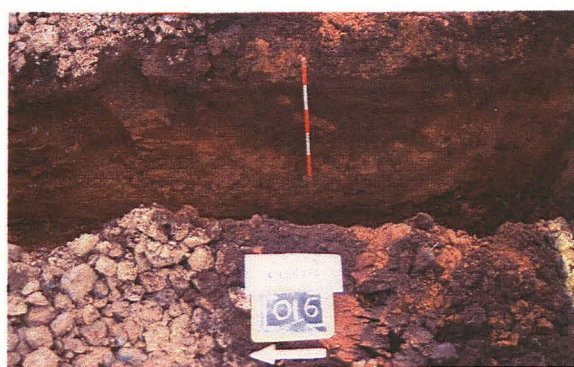
**Pl. 5** Pit [016] visible in section.  
Looking south.



**Pl. 6** Gully [011], looking west.



**Pl. 7** Gully [004], looking north  
east.



**Pl. 8** Pit [016] in foundation  
trench section, looking west.



## Appendix 2. Context Summary

CONTEXT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
001	Topsoil. Sandy with imported limestone chippings to SW
002	Subsoil. Wind blown sand
003	Natural. Degraded limestone and yellow limestone sand.
004	FO [005]. Greyish brown sand, frequent RB pottery recovered.
005	Ditch, possibly assoc w/ occupation in vicinity.
006	Natural. Orange/grey clay.
007	FO[008]. Mottled mid/dark grey sand. Large quantity of ?RB pottery.
008	Ditch. In assoc w/[005] may be part of stock enclosure.
009	FO[010]. mid grey sand. Occasional pottery
010	Irregular ?pit, poss tree bole.
011	Ditch.
012	FO [011]. No finds.
013	Subsoil, dark brown silty sand. Seals [011].
014	Ditch. Possible field boundary.
015	FO [014], dark grey/brown sand, decorated pot sherds.
016	Possible pit. Function unknown.
017	FO [016]. Brown silty sand, possible IA pottery.
018	FO [016]. Pale brown sand.
019	FO [016]. Mid/pale brown silty sand.
020	Fill. Either further FO [014] or other cut, edges not exposed. RB pottery including red-coated ware recovered.