

**GRANGE FARM,  
NETTLETON,  
LINCOLNSHIRE.**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

Site Code: NEGS04  
NGR: TF 1160 9945  
Planning Ref. M03/P/0462  
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Report prepared for G. T. Hair and Partners

by

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## 1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) was commissioned by Mr Hair of G T Hair and Partners to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of footing trenches for a proposed new stable block at Grange Farm, Nettleton, Lincolnshire. This work was commissioned to satisfy a planning requirement issued by West Lindsey District Council. The approach complies with the requirements of *Archaeology and Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16*, Dept. of Environment (1990); *Management of Archaeological Projects*, EH (1991) and *Standard 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 (Figs. 1 & 2)

Nettleton is situated c. 2km southwest of Caistor and c. 11km north of Market Rasen. The farm is situated some 900m to the southeast of the village of Nettleton on the Viking Way. The development is located to the southeast of the existing farm complex. Previously, the development area had been occupied by a recently demolished barn.

The site is bordered to the south west by an earthen bank, which has been battered for the purposes of this development; to the west and north west are the existing farm buildings while to the east the ground slopes down steeply towards Nettleton Beck.

The underlying solid geology is complex, primarily comprising Ancholme Clays, but with an outcropping of Spilsby Sandstone, Claxby Ironstone, Burnham Chalk and Tealby Limestone, known as Nettleton Hill to the west. The overlying drift geology is equally varied: to the east of the site is alluvium, deposited by Nettleton Beck; to the west, a landslip deposit eroded from Nettleton Hill, and to the north a large deposit of blown sand, (B.G.S. 1982).

## 3.0 Planning Background

West Lindsey District Council granted full planning consent for a development comprising a new stable block, subject to the undertaking of an archaeological watching brief on all intrusive ground works. This approach is consistent with the recommendations of *Archaeology and Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16*, 1990.

The planning reference number for this development is M03/P/0462.

#### 4.0 Archaeological and historical background

The Lincolnshire Wolds incorporate extensive evidence for occupation during the prehistoric period. The area around Nettleton itself has a number of find spots recorded in the SMR, dating from the Neolithic period through to Iron Age, namely two scatters of Neolithic- Bronze Age flints (SMR numbers 51528 and 50192), Bronze Age pottery (SMR number 50201), a Bronze Age dagger (SMR number 50202) and Iron Age pottery (SMR number 50203); occurring in the immediate area of the development.

Nettleton is approximately 1.8km from the Roman walled town of Caistor, where the defended nature of the settlement suggests that it functioned perhaps as an administrative and market centre. The size of the settlement, covering approximately 8 acres, would have supported a sizable population and would have relied on a large agricultural hinterland. Evidence for two pottery kilns dating to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, have been found on Navigation Lane, about a kilometre to the north of Nettleton (Whitwell, 1992). Evidence relating to Roman farming practice can be anticipated in the wider area, in the way of field systems and farm buildings.

Nettleton appears in the *Domesday* book of 1086 as *Neteltone* which is derived from the old English *netel(e)*, nettle and *tūn* farmstead or village, namely the farm/ village where the nettles grow (Cameron, 1998), which suggests a Saxon origin for the settlement. Archaeological evidence is sparse for the Saxons in Nettleton itself but the area between Nettleton and Caistor is relatively rich, with a Saxon cemetery dating to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD (Sawyer, 1998 & Whitwell, 1992), and evidence for settlement in the form of "*Grubenhäuser*" have been found on Nettleton Top during excavations in 1986- 87 (Field and Leahy, 1993).

The evidence from the later Saxon period is sparse, but it is evident from *Domesday* entries that Nettleton was a thriving settlement, with five major landowners being cited; namely the Bishop of Bayeaux, Roger of Poitou, Erneis of Buron, Durand Malet and Svartbrandr. The *Domesday* Book also mentions nine mills operational within the Parish, which is suggestive of a large area under cereal cultivation. SMR evidence has identified seven areas of medieval ridge and furrow within a kilometre of Nettleton, two of which are close to the development area (SMR numbers 51552 and 51554).

Nettleton Grange itself was a part of the estate of the Sixhills Priory, a wealthy Gilbertine priory which also owned a number of other Granges in the vicinity; their wealth in this area was based on wool, which was produced in large quantities for export. Henry VIII dissolved the priory in 1538 and the buildings and land were granted to Sir Thomas Heneage. This land appears as three separate large fields outside the village enclosures on the 1794 enclosure map (Everson *et al.* 1991).

Nettleton itself is a shrunken village, normally associated with a sharp drop in population in many areas linked with the Black Death or with land use changes from an agrarian to a pastoral economy, with a resultant lessening in demand for agricultural labour. In Nettleton, there may have been other factors at play, namely landslips in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century which destroyed twenty five houses and Garths, between the main Wolds scarp and the village core. This area can be seen to remain unoccupied on the 1794 enclosure map and remains little developed to this day (Everson *et al.* 1991).

## 5.0 Methodology

Five visits were made to the site by Mr Sean Jackson, on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of June and the author on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2004. During the first two visits the initial ground levelling was monitored; during the remaining visits the excavation of footing trenches for the new building was observed. The final visit was scheduled with the ground workers to observe two final portions to the south of the foundation trench; when the author arrived, concrete pouring was already underway and no observation of this last section was possible, (see fig. 3). The foundation trenches were 0.70m wide and 0.8-1.2m deep.

All archaeological deposits identified were subjected to limited excavation, in order to assess their nature, dimensions and to attempt to recover datable materials. These investigations resulted in the production of written descriptions of each layer. Colour photographs and scale drawings, in both plan and section, compliment these accounts. Pottery and other finds recovered during these works were processed at the offices of PCA before being submitted for specialist examination, the results of which are appended to this report.

## 6.0 Results

The uppermost material recorded on the site was layer 001, comprising mixed yellow and dark grey sand with frequent ceramic building material (hereafter CBM), crushed chalk and concrete rubble. This material represented waste from the demolition of barns that recently occupied the site, (J. Hair, pers. comm.). Cut from this level were a number of large modern post holes also associated with the barns. This material was later removed in order to provide a flat dry surface on which to mark out and excavate the new foundation trenches.

Below the rubble was 002, a mottled dark grey sand with frequent rooting and occasional lenses of dumped rubble; interpreted as a former topsoil, buried and slightly reworked by demolition activity. This sealed two cut features; towards the north of the footings, a single large post hole, [016] was recorded. Its fill, 015 was yellowish brown sand in which the decayed wood of a former post was visible. The survival of wood in such a sandy environment suggests a relatively recent date for this feature.

To the south of this was [018], a steep-sided flat-bottomed feature filled with 017, dark grey sand containing coal, clinker and occasional chalk flecks. The presence of clear pockets of lighter sand and the steep well-defined edges suggest this feature was backfilled soon after it was excavated. Despite a thorough inspection, this feature was not visible in the sections to either side, and so its exact form could not be determined, although the shape detected in the one small portion does suggest a linear plan.

The above features were cut into a series of sand layers; (003, 004, 005, 006 & 007). For the most part these comprised yellow or brown sand, although a lens of gravel defined the base of layer 003, mixed with occasional fired clay. A similar though less substantial deposit marked the base of 004. Along with the presence of considerable root or worm activity, these lenses demonstrate that layers 004 and 005 each once formed a ground surface, subsequently inundated by the deposition of further sand deposits. Rooting was also present in the top of 006, which suggests that this too may once have been a stable ground surface. For a fuller description of these layers see Appendix 2.

## 7.0 Discussion and Conclusions

The uppermost archaeological deposit exposed during this watching brief consisted of a series of demolition spreads and cut features relating to the building and recent demolition of a number of barns.

While no direct stratigraphic or artefactual dating of the proposed linear feature was determined, it seems probable that, if it was a ditch, then it pre-dates the construction of farm buildings on the site, as a land division or boundary would not be required once the site was developed. The post hole was interpreted as part of an wooden barn or other farm building - the survival of the post in such a sandy environment suggesting a relatively recent date.

These features were cut into a series of sand deposits representing a number of chronologically disparate events. Between these depositional phases, surfaces stable enough for plant growth developed. The process that led to the formation of these layers is unclear; to the north of the site the BGS records substantial deposit of wind-blown sand and it is possible that the layers represent a number of similar aeolian events. To the west, a deposit described as 'landslip' is shown at the base of Nettleton Hill, and catastrophic landslides are known to have happened in the area in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This prominence is in part formed of Spilsby Sandstone, which may have eroded to form these layers as a result of colluvial processes.

## 8.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

The methodology employed allowed the sections of all intrusive works to be monitored for archaeological materials, and for a full record of the deposits encountered to be made. The methodology employed allowed this work to take place with minimal disruption to the primary scheme.

## 9.0 Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) would like to thank Mr Hair for this commission. Also thanks are extended to the contractors on site and to Plantec Building Services for the site plans.

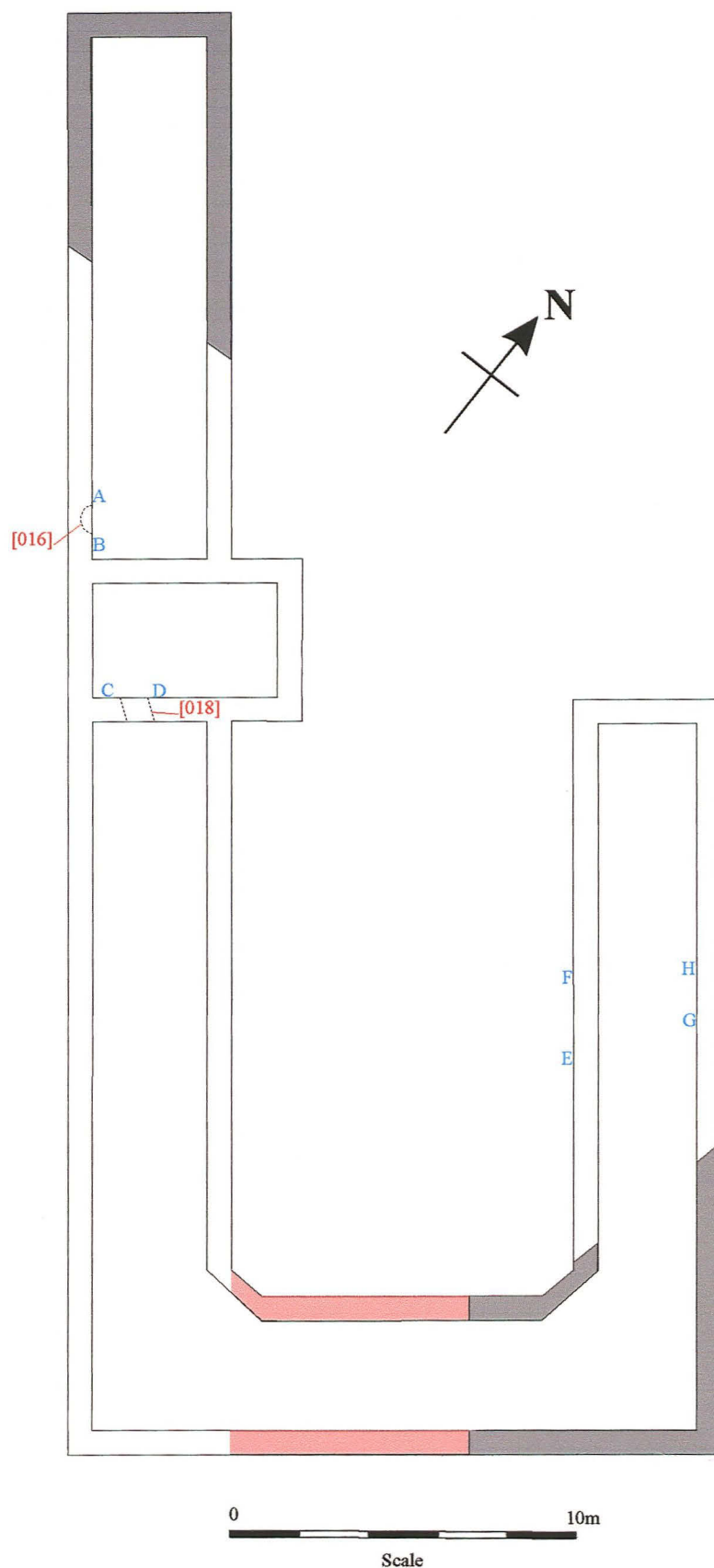
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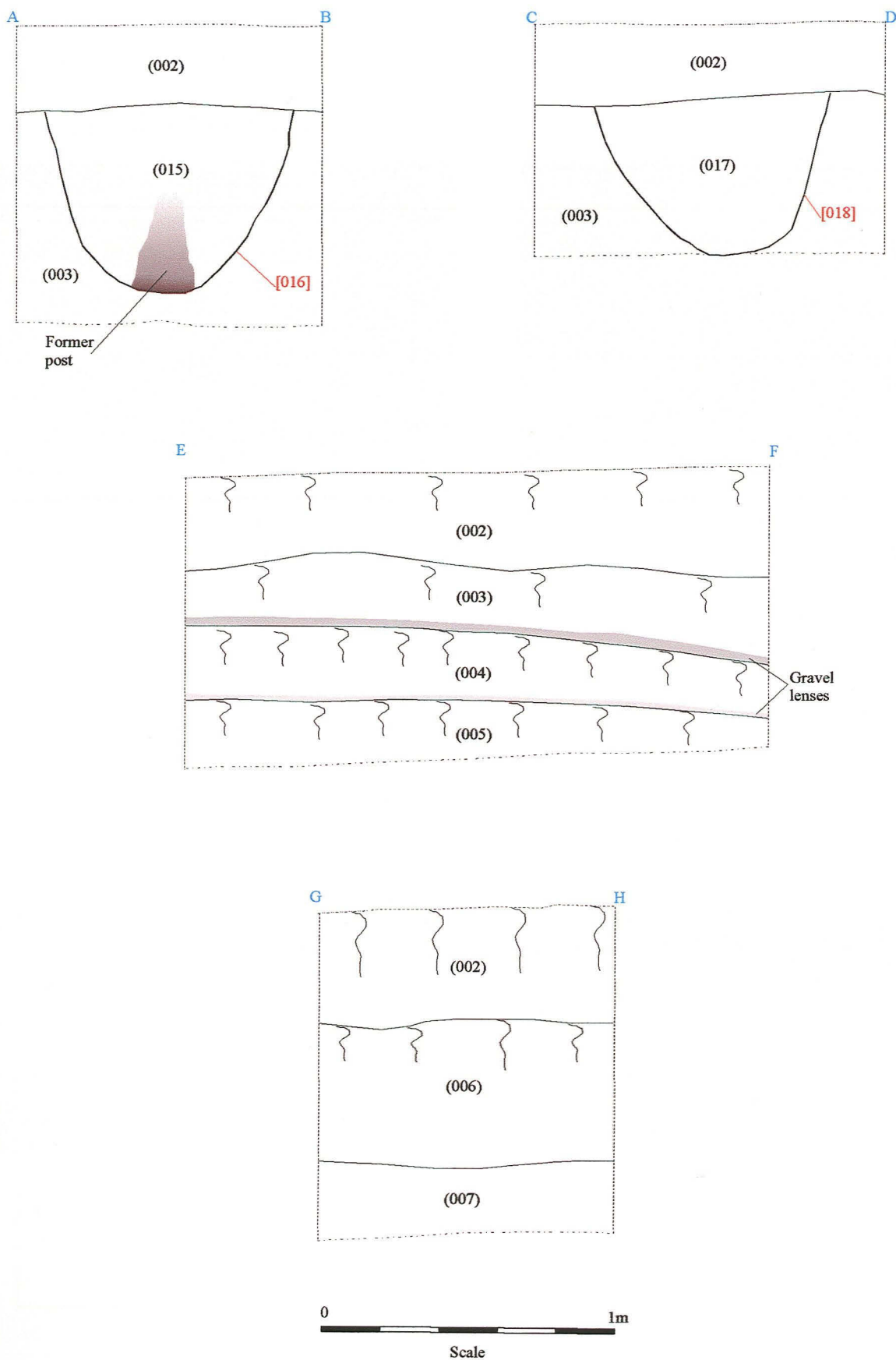
## 11.0 Site archive

The site archive (documentary and physical) for this project is in preparation and will be deposited with Lincolnshire City and County Museum within six months.

Access to the archive can be gained by quoting the universal accession number 2004.210



**Fig. 2:** Plan showing foundation trench. Areas of modern truncation shown in grey, portion not monitored in red.  
1:200  
Taken from Plantec Building Services Dwg. No. AS 14032



**Fig. 3:** Sections from foundation trench.  
All at 1:20

## Appendix 1. Colour plates



**Pl. 1:** Site shot once rubble layer (001) had been removed



**Pl. 2:** South west facing section showing recent post hole [016]



**Pl. 3:** South east facing section showing ditch [018]



**Pl. 4:** Sample section E-F. Notice banded layers towards base

## Appendix 2: Context summary

CONTEXT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
001	Modern demolition spread
002	Topsoil, in part comprising lenses of dumped material
003	Sand layer, dark yellow with occasional root/worm action. Base marked by lens of gravel w/ occ fired clay
004	Sand layer, light orange/yellow, considerable rooting from top, base defined by much less substantial gravel lens
005	Sand layer, light yellow, some rooting from top, no inclusions
006	Sand layer, mid yellowish brown, some root/worm action. Possibly same as 003
007	Sand layer, compact light yellowish brown
008-014	Numbers not used
015	FO [016]. Wood suggests reasonably modern date
[016]	Post hole, probably from former barn
017	FO [018]. Probably back-fill
[018]	Possible ditch, form uncertain