# LAND OFF LINCOLN ROAD, RUSKINGTON, LINCOLNSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK TOP STUDY
PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY (Lincoln)

# Land off Lincoln Road, Ruskington Lincolnshire

An Archaeological Desk Top Study

for

N. J. Allen (Builders) Ltd.

by

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Extract 1st Edition OS (1888)

Extract 2nd Edition OS (1906)

## I.0 Non-technical summary

NJ Allen (Builders Ltd.) propose to develop an area of land on the west side of Ruskington, immediately east of Lincoln Road (Fig. 1). The site lies within an area occupied by an extensive Anglo-Saxon cemetery. It is also adjacent to an important Roman road and is set within a broad zone where a significant density of prehistoric cropmark and other sites are known to exist.

There is evidence of extensive quarrying within and around the proposed development site, which may have obliterated or substantially truncated archaeological remains on a site which is otherwise of high potential. The overall potential may still be high, though this cannot be demonstrated without limited intrusive investigation: non-intrusive evaluation is considered to be inappropriate.

The site central National Grid Reference is TF 0775 5133

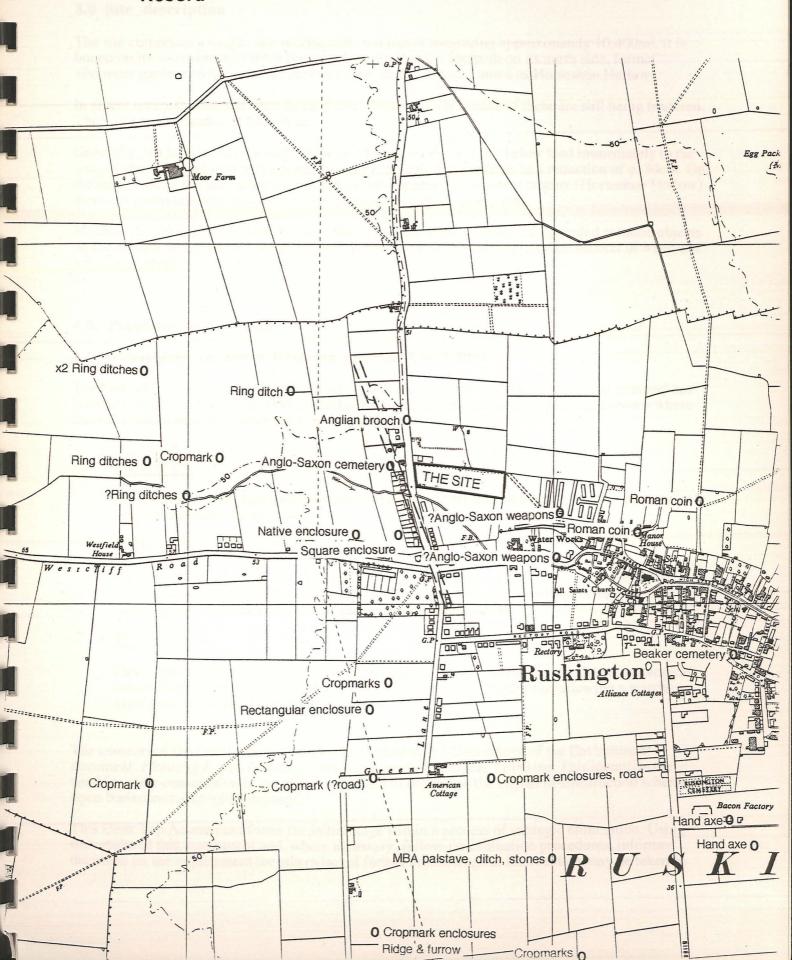
#### 2.0. Introduction

This Desk Top Study was commissioned by N. J. Allen (Builders) Ltd. in advance of housing development on land situated on the east of Lincoln Road, Ruskington. The commission was made following the Clients acceptance of a costed specification, originally submitted to William H Brown before the plot was sold-on to NJ Allen (Builders) Ltd.

A project brief was issued by the Community Archaeologist for North Kesteven on December 19th, 1994 requiring an archaeological scheme of works; to include a desk top assessment and field evaluation in advance of development. Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln), following consultation with the Community Archaeologist, provided the Client and the Community Archaeologist with a detailed project specification on March 15th, 1995, the contents of which may be reviewed following completion of this desk top report.

The report was researched and written between March 14th and March 22nd, 1995 by Colin Palmer- Brown of Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln). Research included a visual inspection of the site; inspection of the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), Lincoln; parish records held by Heritage Lincolnshire; the Local Studies Library, Lincoln and the Lincolnshire Archives Office. Aerial photographic cover-searches had previously been requested from Cambridge University Dept. of Aerial Photography and the National Monuments Record Aerial Photographic Library during an earlier assessment on a neighbouring site.

Fig. 1 Site location + entries recorded in the Sites and Monuments Record



## 3.0 Site description

The site comprises a single, sub-rectangular land parcel measuring approximately 10,400m<sup>2</sup>. It is bound on its west side by a ditch flanking Lincoln Road, a footpath on its north side, formal allotment gardens to the east and pasture to the south (an area known as Horseshoe Hollow).

In recent times, the site has been divided into allotment units - some of these are still being tendered. There is a sparse scatter of fruit trees.

Generally, the land is flat: the back of the plot lies in excess of 1.0m below land immediately to the east, as does the east side of the north boundary, though this shallows to a reduction of c. 30cm. On the south side of the site, ground reduction is less apparent: in adjacent pasture (Horseshoe Hollow) there are prominent topographical variations, possibly small quarry pits.

Much of the site is littered with bonfire residue, and there are a number of discarded metallic objects on the surface which (where not cultivated) is covered with a moderately dense blanket of weed and grass vegetation.

## 4.0. Planning background

## 4.1 Archaeology in North Kesteven and the Local Plan

The District Council has acknowledged the significance of buried archaeological resources and has included within its Local Plan (1992) conditions relating to the protection of buried deposits where these are threatened by development (Sections C4 - C6):

#### Policy C4

Development proposals which are likely to adversely affect a Scheduled Ancient Monument will not normally be approved.

#### Policy C5

Development proposals which are likely to adversely affect a site of archaeological interest will normally be subject to a condition of planning permission requiring archaeological investigations to take place before and/or during development.

## Policy C6

Development proposals which are likely to adversely affect a site of potential archaeological interest will normally be subject to a condition of planning permission allowing a watching brief to be maintained during development.

The contents of the Local Plan mirrors advice contained in a Department of the Environment document, *Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology And Planning* (PPG16). This identifies the need for early consultation in the planning process to determine the impact of construction schemes upon buried archaeological deposits.

This Desk Top Assessment forms the initial stage within a process of strategic elimination. Using the results of this assessment and, where necessary, follow-on evaluation procedures, informed decisions on the requirement (or otherwise) of further archaeological intervention may be taken by

the local planning authority. Where archaeology remains a requirement, beyond Desk-Top stage, further management strategies for safeguarding the archaeological resource may be developed, including; preservation *in situ* (usually the preferred option by all interested parties), excavation (preservation by record), or a watching brief.

## 4.2 Report Objectives

The report aims to identify and assess archaeological deposits which may be threatened by construction works associated with development at the proposed site. It will, in essence, gather sufficient information to provide interested parties with a set of data from which reasoned judgements may be made regarding future archaeological resource management. Desk-Top Assessment is the first stage in the process of archaeological investigation and may be procedurally followed by further assessments, exploratory trial work or a watching brief.

#### 4.3 Method

The survey is based largely on data contained within the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), records held by the Community Archaeologist, published, unpublished and cartographic sources and the Draft Local Development Plan for North Kesteven. Other sources relating to the geological, historical, and archaeological heritage of Ruskington have also been consulted.

## 5.0 Geology and topography

The British Geological Survey 1: 50,000 survey sheet 127 records widespread drift deposits of Fen sand and gravel, these being largely of Pleistocene origin. The older geological formation which underlies these deposits is Jurassic clay, which outcrops on the east side of the village.

Soils around Ruskington are usually light, comprising coarse sandy topsoils which overlie sand and gravel containing cornbrash and quartzite pebbles; these being drift deposits which have remained an attractive source of raw material since at least the Roman period.

No borehole surveys have taken place on the site of proposed development. Detailed local deposit descriptions are not therefore available for the purpose of this report.

## 6.0 Archaeological and historical background

## 6.1 Introduction

The area now occupied by the parish of Ruskington was a settlement zone from at least the later prehistoric period and has been occupied, in various forms, until the present day. The west side of the village abounds with cropmarks, most of which, it is inferred, belong to the later prehistoric or Romano-British periods (Fig. 1).

#### 6.2 Pre-Roman

Information contained within Sites & Monuments Record infers a potentially dense pattern of settlement associated with the later prehistoric and early historical periods. Although few artefactual discoveries have been recorded, it is clear from the number of cropmark sites which cluster on the west side of Lincoln Road, and in other parts of the parish, that settlement (from at least the Bronze Age) was probably dense.

It is possible that many of the enclosures recorded as cropmarks on the west side of Ruskington are Romano-British in origin, though a recent evaluation on land set within the angle of Lincoln Road and Westcliffe Road suggested a late Iron Age date for one enclosure (Palmer-Brown, 1994, unpublished). It is possible these pre-Roman enclosures point towards a native precursor to the

Roman road Mareham Lane/King Street (Whitwell, 1982) which is crossed by Lincoln Road a short distance south of the proposed development site.

There are well-defined circular cropmarks to the north of Westcliffe Road. It is likely these 'ring ditches' are the remains of (now ploughed-out) burial mounds dating within a culturally earlier period, the Bronze Age (broadly, second millennium BC). A Middle Bronze Age palstave, found on the south side of the village and a socketed axe (unfortunately, not located) demonstrate further evidence of settlement during this period and a hitherto unknown early Bronze Age 'Beaker' cemetery was discovered only last year during a watching brief off Station Road, in the heart of the village (Palmer-Brown 1994, unpublished). Very clearly, there exists an extensive 'ceremonial landscape' in and around Ruskington and it is possible that many more Bronze Age sites will be discovered in future years.

Finds of earlier periods are recorded in the Sites & monuments Record, mainly flint and stone tools. Two Palaeolithic (Early Stone Age) hand axes were found on the south-east side of the village, though these were probably redeposited during the formation of natural gravels in the Pleistocene era (more than 10,000 years ago).

## 6.3 Roman

As noted above, enclosures revealed as cropmarks on the west side of Lincoln Road may be provisionally dated anywhere within the later Iron Age to Romano-British periods, though one site is demonstrably Iron Age in origin.

Roman coins have been recorded in Ruskington and ephemeral features were securely dated during excavations on the site of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery, directly opposite the proposed development area (Atkin & Healey, forthcoming). Some of the Saxon graves were dug through quarry pits and ditches which contained Romano-British pottery sherds in their lower fills. Further quarry pits were excavated during the recent evaluation of a site in the angle of Lincoln Road and Westcliffe Road (Palmer-Brown, unpublished).

An important north-south Roman road, Mareham Lane/King Street, passes through the west side of Ruskington and is crossed by the modern Lincoln Road somewhere close to the junctions between the latter and Westcliffe Road (Fig. 1). The road would have been an effective line of communication on the eastern edge of the limestone escarpment and may have featured during the initial military period of Roman occupation (Whitwell, 1992). It probably joined with Ermine Street close to the Legionary Fortress (and later, *Colonia*) at Lincoln, approximately 20km north-northwest of Ruskington. Significantly, the two roads lie roughly parallel on either side of the limestone uplands and may have functioned as effective policing channels during the Conquest period (*ibid.*). Both routes lie close to the only available sources of water on the spring lines.

As far as can be judged from the available cropmark and other data, the western edge of the Roman road may underlie properties fronting the west side of Lincoln Road, a short distance west of the proposed development. There is a possibility, therefore, that building remains will be present along the early alignment, though this has not been demonstrated archaeologically. Such remains have not been encountered during earlier investigations.

## 6.4 Saxon and Medieval

The earliest historical reference to Ruskington occurs in the Domesday Book of 1086 where a settlement is named *Reschintone*, meaning 'farmstead where rushes grow' (Mills, 1993). At the time of the survey, there were 38 families living within the settlement (8 of which were considered 'villains', little better than slaves) (Dauncey, 1950). A church lay within land owned by Geoffrey Halselin - probably one of the early lords of the manor.

The Norman church, All Saints, which lies in the historic core of the village, south of the High

Street, may overlie the site of a smaller Saxon precursor which may have been of timber construction only.

The physical remains of a large Anglo-Saxon population have been archaeologically documented since the discovery, during gravel extraction, of a rich inhumation and cremation cemetery, as early as 1871 (Trollope, 1872). The cemetery is the westernmost in a group of Lincolnshire sites, the better-known examples being Loveden Hill, Seaford and Quarrington. The cemeteries at Sleaford, Quarrington and Ruskington all lie on spring lines at the junctions of cornbrash limestone and glaciofluvial gravels and all cemeteries within the region are sited on the margins of what became Christian parish boundaries - a pattern well-known in other parts of Lincolnshire and elsewhere (Atkin & Healey, forthcoming).

The full extent of the cemetery has not been documented archaeologically though, to date, all of the identified burials have been recorded on the north side of the "Beck", the majority of which lie on the west side of Lincoln Road. A total of 180 identifiable inhumation burials have been recorded since 1872, as well as a small number of cremations from what must have been a much larger cemetery (Leahy, 1993). They are believed to date from the later 5th/6th century AD.

At least 19 burials were discovered during excavations on a site immediately opposite the proposed development site - on the west side of Lincoln Road (H. Healey, pers. comm.).

It is noteworthy that, to date, almost nothing is known regarding the distribution of early Saxon settlement sites in the area. However, stratified mid-late Saxon pottery was found during a recent watching brief at 29 Station Road occupying the former site of an early Bronze Age cemetery (Palmer-Brown, 1994, unpublished).

## 7.0 Archaeological potential

It can be variously concluded that the area of proposed development lies within an extremely rich historic landscape, modelled and re-modelled over more than 4000 years. It is essential therefore that site-specific potential is defined so that, if necessary, mitigation strategies may be developed, following recommendations contained within the Department of the Environment's *Planning Policy Guidance 16:* Preferably, if archaeological deposits are present, preservation *in situ* will be accommodated within the scheme of development.

## 7.1 Pre-Roman

Based on existing data, there is a possibility that archaeological deposits dating to within the later prehistoric periods may lie within the proposed area of development (if not obliterated by quarrying). The large number of known sites in this area would justify further, site-specific, investigation. The discovery of an early Bronze Age cemetery further east at Station Road suggests that the modern settlement may be masking aspects of the prehistoric past which, under more favourable conditions, would be expressed as cropmarks during high summer.

## 7.2 Romano-British

The proposal site lies approximately 40m east of the predicted line of the Roman road Mareham Lane/King Street. If building remains of the period lie on the street frontage, then these would probably lie west of the site being investigated. It is possible, however, that the rears of properties may be traced as well as other ephemeral features.

As noted, Roman features (quarry pits) were excavated within the area subsequently occupied by the Saxon cemetery north of the Beck, and similar features were encountered during evaluation of a site set within the angle of Lincoln Road and Westcliffe Road. However, the extent and influence of Roman culture has not been determined and is a point of consideration within this project.

## 7.3 Saxon and medieval.

Of major significance is the proximity of the Saxon cemetery, as the proposed development site lies adjacent to a site where large numbers of burials have previously been recorded (on the opposite side of Lincoln Road). It is considered essential therefore that measures are taken to ensure that further burials or settlement features are not unnecessarily disturbed during development at the proposed site.

## 7.4 Post-medieval and modern

No information has been identified during the course of this study which suggests that significant archaeological deposits dating to within the post-medieval periods will be affected during the proposed development. Indeed, it has been rightly suggested that (?post-medieval) quarrying may have removed the archaeological resource entirely.

At the Lincolnshire Archives Office, relevant enclosure plans were consulted (ref. LDAP 4/40), though these did not include the area of proposed development. The earliest map consulted (Ordnance Survey First Edition, 1888) indicates the site of a 'Sand Pit' on the west side of the proposed development site and this is replicated on the Second Edition Ordnance Survey (1906), though this time the description 'Gravel Pit' is used. These two maps suggest that sand/gravel extraction was restricted to the west side of the site only, though a recent superficial site inspection suggested that ground reduction has been universal across the entire site.

## 7.5 Archaeo-environmental Potential

The environmental potential of the site at Ruskington is considered to be moderate. The well-drained, gravel-based soils limit the possibilities for water-logging within archaeological deposits and the production of environments favourable to the preservation of wood, leather, pollen and other organic remains. That said, the base of a ditch associated with a 'native-type enclosure' that was sampled close to the Lincoln Road/Westcliffe Road junction did contain peat and organic muds capable of preserving pollen, insect and other remains. It is possible, therefore, that deeply-excavated features, if present, will contain such remains.

## 8.0 Impacts to buried archaeological resources

There is little doubt that some impacts to archaeological resources, if present, have already taken place. At least part of the site has been subjected to quarrying, which appears to have taken place prior to 1888. However, there are no detailed records relating to the depth and extent of quarrying.

The proposed housing development, with its associated access, services and other features involving ground disturbance may threaten resources further. A preliminary 1:500 development plan (Drawing 1340/1) has been provided by the Client. It shows 28 houses and garages and an access route extending eastwards off Lincoln Road; a scheme of moderate to high density.

#### 9.0 Mitigations

As stated above, the District Council Local Plan contains procedural details for dealing with archaeological heritage. These are based on national guidelines contained within the Department of the Environment's *Planning and Policy Guidance; Archaeology and Planning*. (PPG 16), November 1990.

English Heritage in their recent publication, Exploring Our Past (Wainwright, et al. 1991) have summarised key points as follows:

- i)"that archaeological remains should be seen as a finite, non-renewable resource, in many cases highly fragile and vulnerable to damage and destruction;
- ii) that development plans should reconcile the need for development with the interests of conservation including archaeology and that detailed development plans should include policies for the protection, enhancement and preservation of sites of archaeological interest and their settings:
- iii) that where nationally important remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings are affected by proposed development, there should be a presumption in favour of their preservation and that in such cases preservation by record (excavation) should be regarded as the second best option after physical preservation *in situ*;
- iv) that the needs of archaeology can be reconciled, and potential conflict very much reduced, if developers discuss their preliminary plans for development with the planning authority at an early stage (the PPG gives detailed guidance on how this can be achieved);
- v) that decisions by planning authorities on whether to preserve archaeological remains in situ in the face of proposed development are to be taken on merit, taking account of development plan policies and all other material considerations including the importance of the remains and weighing these against the need for development
- vi) that planning authorities, when they propose to allow development which is damaging to archaeological remains, must ensure that the developer has satisfactorily provided for excavation and recording, either through voluntary agreement with the archaeologists or, in the absence of agreement, by imposing an appropriate condition on the planning permission."

Where archaeological features, as identified by the Desk Top Study, are likely to be encountered, strategies should be developed to deal with them. These may include preservation *in situ*, by limiting the archaeological impact, redesigning building plans or raising floor levels, or preservation by record. If the latter is the favoured or apposite course for sub-surface deposits, archaeological trial excavations to assess the nature, depth, level of survival etc. may be conducted. This would usually involve the cutting of archaeological trenches in one or more locations, usually not exceeding 10% of the area to be developed.

The Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 states that, where preliminary research suggests survival of important archaeological remains,

"it is reasonable for the planning authority to request the prospective developer to arrange for an archaeological field evaluation to be carried out before any decision on the planning application is taken. This sort of evaluation is quite distinct from full archaeological excavation. It is normally a rapid and inexpensive operation, involving ground survey and small scale trial trenching, but it should be carried out by a professionally qualified archaeological organisation or archaeologist. Evaluations of this kind help to define the character and extent of the archaeological remains that exist in the area of a proposed development, and thus indicate the weight which ought to be attached to their preservation. They also provide information useful for identifying potential options for minimising or avoiding damage. On this basis, an informed and reasonable planning decision can be taken."

#### It continues.

"Local planning authorities can reasonably expect developers to provide this information as part of their application for sites where there is good reason to believe there are remains of archaeological importance. If developers are not prepared to do so, the planning authority may wish to consider whether it is appropriate to direct the applicant to supply further information under the provisions of

Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Applications) Regulations 1988".

The results of trial work may lead to a redesign or realignment of the proposed scheme, further trial or survey work or open area archaeological excavations.

#### 10.0 Conclusions

## 10.1 Summary of potential

This report has identified the site at Ruskington as being one of high archaeological potential. However, it is acknowledged that the archaeological resource may have been partially or totally removed as a result of quarrying which is known to have taken place at some time prior to 1888.

#### 10.2 Further work.

A central theme to be addressed is the establishment of the extent and depth of disturbance associated with quarrying. Although it is possible the whole of the archaeological resource has been removed, it is also possible that undisturbed areas remain, or areas where the impacts from quarrying are minimal. As such, it is considered appropriate that a programme of field evaluation be implemented with a view to assessing actual site potential and the threat posed to archaeological remains during development.

Non-intrusive modes of evaluation are not appropriate:

the vegetation cover is too dense for field walking

the results of a magnetometer survey would be prejudiced by quantities of surface/buried iron, as well as frequent bonfire residue which is intermittently present over the entire site.

The only viable means of evaluating actual site potential is by random test-trenching. An original project specification submitted by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) proposed that eight test trenches, each measuring approximately 10.0m x 1.5m be sited within the area of intended development.

It may be concluded that no new information has been produced during the production of this report which would involve adjustments to the original project specification.

## 11.0 Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) wish to thank N. J. Allen (Builders) Ltd. for commissioning this report. Thanks are expressed also to Hillary Healey and Malcolm Atkin for allowing access to a draft version of a report currently being prepared on the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Ruskington and to Nicola Nuttall, the Community Archaeologist, for providing assistance during the course of research.

#### 12.0 References

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**APPENDICES** 

## Appendix 1

Details of information in parish files of the Community

Archaeologist for North Kesteven + additional information
from the county Sites and Monuments Record, Lincoln

## a) Parish records, Sleaford

Ref. No	Description	NGR	Map No
NK52.1	Anglo-Saxon cemetery. 4 cremations + grave	TF 076 514	J
	goods. 24 inhumations. Excavated 1975		
NK52.2	Arrowhead (flint)	TF 0739 4976	
NK52.3	Flints	TF 0737 4967	M
NK52.4	Palaeolithic hand axe	TF 085 504	J
NK52.5	Ring ditch. ?Barrow. (Aerial Photograph 7838)	TF 073 516	J
NK52.6	Roman coin	TF 0822 5119	J
NK52.7	Roman coin	TF 090 511	· ·
NK52.8	Roman coin	TF 088 503	J
NK52.9	Roman coin	TF 084 513	J
NK52.10	?Anglo-Saxon cemetery, ?Path	TF 084 512	recole J
NK52.11	Roman road and fields (King Street)	TF 0815 5000	M
NK52.12	Flints	TF 094 505	J
NK52.13	Leaf-shaped arrowhead and scrapers	TF 073 497	M
NK52.14	Flint Axe(?s)	TF 087 507	J
NK52.15	Romano-British pottery and building debris	TF 086 498	M
NK52.16	Palstave (middle Bronze Age), ditch, stones	TF 080 503	J
NK52.17	Hand axe	TF 0858 5036	J
NK52.18	Ring ditches	TF 069 514(c)	J
NK52.19	Socketed axe	Unlocated	-
NK52.20	Stone axe	TF 122 530	J
NK52.21	Roman road	TF 080 503(c)	J
NK52.22	Cropmark enclosures, ?Roman road	TF 078 495	M
NK52.23	Cropmark enclosures	TF 090 495(c)	M
NK52.24	Cropmark, ?road (+ associated cropmarks)	TF 075 505	J
NK52.25	?Anglo-Saxon weapons	TF 0802 5114	J
NK52.26	?Anglo-Saxon weapons	TF 0800 5123	J
NK52.27	Earthworks	TF 0903 5034	J
NK52.28	Earthworks	TF 0911 5024	J

NK52.29	Cropmarks	TF 0757 5119	J
NK52.30	Cropmarks	TF 0756 5078	J
NK52.31	Cropmarks	TF 081 499	M
NK52.32	All Saints Church	TF 0826 5107	J
NK52.33	Cropmark enclosures, road	TF 084 494	M
NK52.34	Cropmark enclosures, road	TF 078 505	J
NK52.35	Cropmark enclosures	TF 086 494	M
NK52.36	Cropmark enclosures	TF 075 501	J
NK52.37	Cropmark and ridge and furrow	TF 075 501	J
NK52.38	Cropmark ?ring ditches	TF 105 499	M
NK52.39	Cropmark enclosures	TF 068 495	M
NK52.40	Neolithic polished flint axe	TF 088 508	J
NK52.41	Cropmark	TF 070 505	J
NK52.42	Cropmark	TF 071 514	J
NK52.43	Cropmark	TF 074 512	J
NK52.44	Cropmark	TF 091 503	J
NK52.45	Cropmark	TF 099 502	J
NK52.46	Cropmark	TF 100 500	J

## b) Additional information from County Sites & Monuments Record, Lincoln

Code	Description	NGR
(L)	2 circular cropmarks	TF 06885165 & 06885154
(S)	Circular cropmarks (JTH 1953)	TF 070513
(M)	Anglian Brooch	TF 076515
(O)	Rectangular enclosure (Cropmark)	TF 075507

Appendix 2 Historical maps

