

ELI 6841

SLI 5217 1623

95/7

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

60944 - Updated

60998 - P. dist

LAND OFF LINCOLN ROAD AND  
WESTCLIFFE ROAD, RUSKINGTON  
  
LINCOLNSHIRE

PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

Site Code: LRR94  
CCM Accession Number 34.94

LINCOLNSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL  
14 JUL 1995  
CITY AND COUNTY  
MUSEUM

LAND OFF LINCOLN ROAD AND  
WESTCLIFFE ROAD, RUSKINGTON

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

FOR

NJ ALLEN (BUILDERS) LTD

BY

COLIN PALMER-BROWN

PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY (Lincoln)  
66 SCHOOL LANE  
SILK WILLOUGHBY  
SLEAFORD  
LINCOLNSHIRE  
NG32 8PH

PHONE & FAX 01529 302874

© Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln)  
July 1995

## CONTENTS

1.0	Non-Technical Summary	1
2.0	Introduction	1
3.0	Planning Background	1
4.0	Geology and Topography	4
5.0	Archaeological and Historical Background	4
6.0	Aims	4
7.0	Methodology	5
8.0	Results	6
	8.1 Plots 17/18	6
	8.2 Plot 27	8
	8.3 Plot 30	8
9.0	Summary and conclusions	11
10.0	Acknowledgements	11
11.0	Appendices	12
	11.1 List of Contexts	
	11.2 Colour Photographs	
	11.3 Site Archive	
	11.4 References	

## 1.0 Non-Technical Summary

A planning application was submitted to North Kesteven District Council for a residential development to take place on land set in the angle of Lincoln Road and Westcliffe Road, Ruskington, (Fig. 1). Permission was granted, subject to a condition requiring an archaeological scheme of works.

A non-intrusive and intrusive evaluation, undertaken in April 1994, established the presence of a late Iron Age enclosure on the south-west side of the site, as well as ephemeral features dating within later cultural periods elsewhere. One pit (which was cut through by the Iron Age enclosure) contained late Neolithic/early Bronze Age pottery.

Following the completion of a combined evaluation report in May 1994 (incorporating the results of field walking, magnetometry and trial excavation), a project brief/mitigation strategy was set by the Community Archaeologist for North Kesteven which outlined the scope for a standard and enhanced watching brief. It also identified a broad zone where archaeological remains would be preserved *in situ*. Regrettably, a misunderstanding on the part of the client has resulted in the collection of a limited range of data which is unlikely to be of great value in furthering a better understanding of the archaeology present.

## 2.0 Introduction

An archaeological watching brief took place between January and April 1995, during residential development on land off Lincoln Road, Ruskington (Fig. 1). The works were commissioned by NJ Allen (Builders) Ltd. and were based on a project specification submitted to the Client and the Community Archaeologist for North Kesteven.

Based on data derived during a previous evaluation, the archaeological potential of the areas covered by the project brief/specification was considered to be variably high.

There are important prehistoric, Romano-British, Anglo-Saxon and medieval remains in Ruskington, the majority of better-explored sites lying close to the present development.

The remains discovered during the watching brief will add to the data-sets thus far established, though it is considered unlikely that any dramatic modification will be possible as regards the conclusions expressed in the previous report.

The central national grid reference is TF 0755 5125.

## 3.0 Planning background

N. J. Allen (Builders) Ltd applied for full planning permission to construct 54 domestic dwellings within an area of land measuring approximately 7 acres, situated to the west of Lincoln Road and north of Westcliffe Road, Ruskington. Permission was granted subject to the Clients fulfilment of an archaeological scheme of works.

Following a full programme of evaluation (incorporating geophysical survey, field walking and trial excavation), a condition requiring an archaeological watching brief ('standard' and 'enhanced') was set by the Community Archaeologist (see Section 6.0 below).

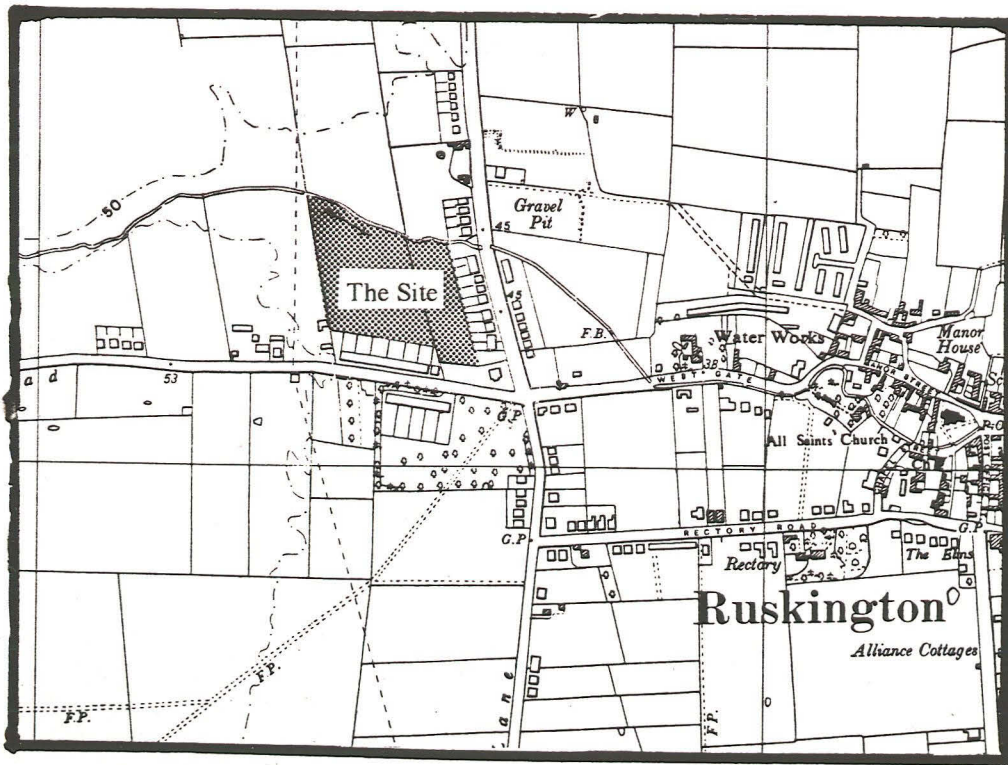
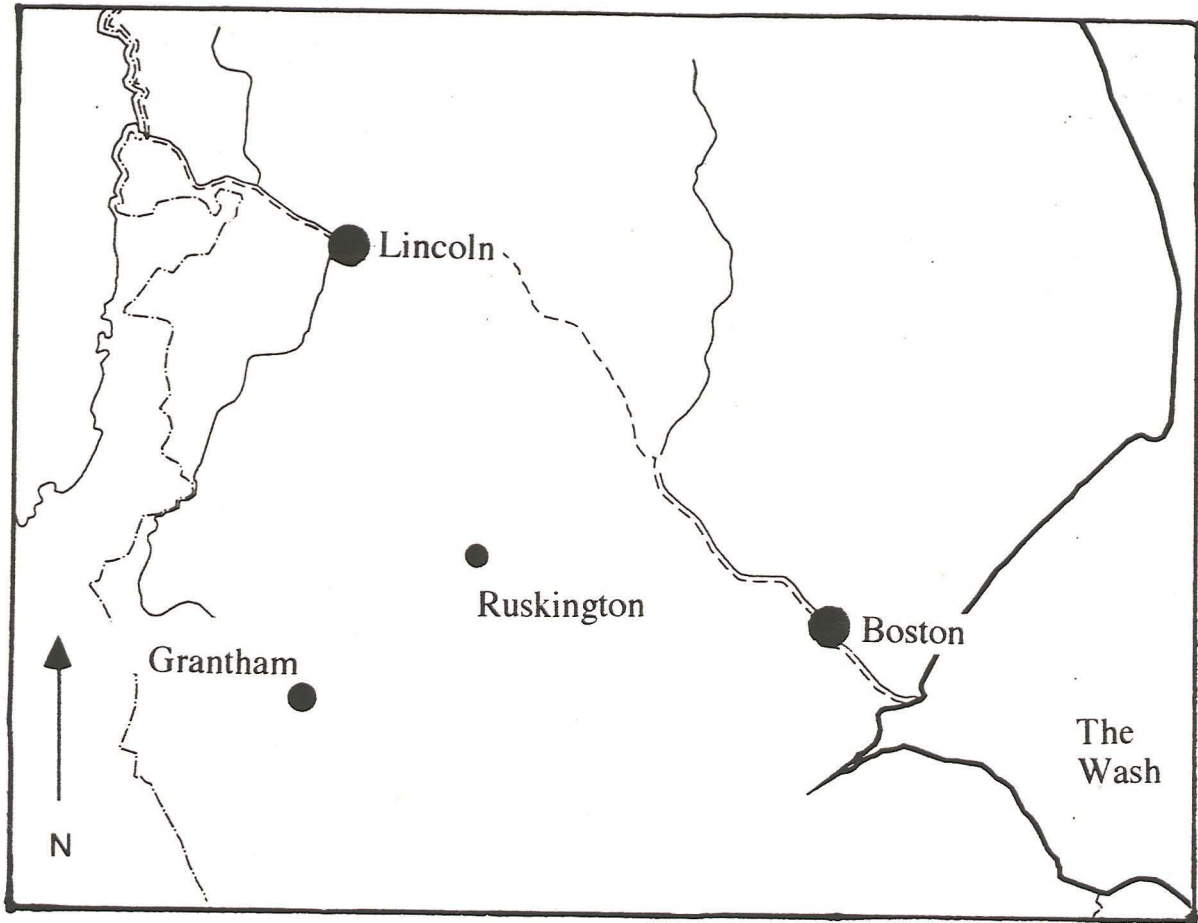
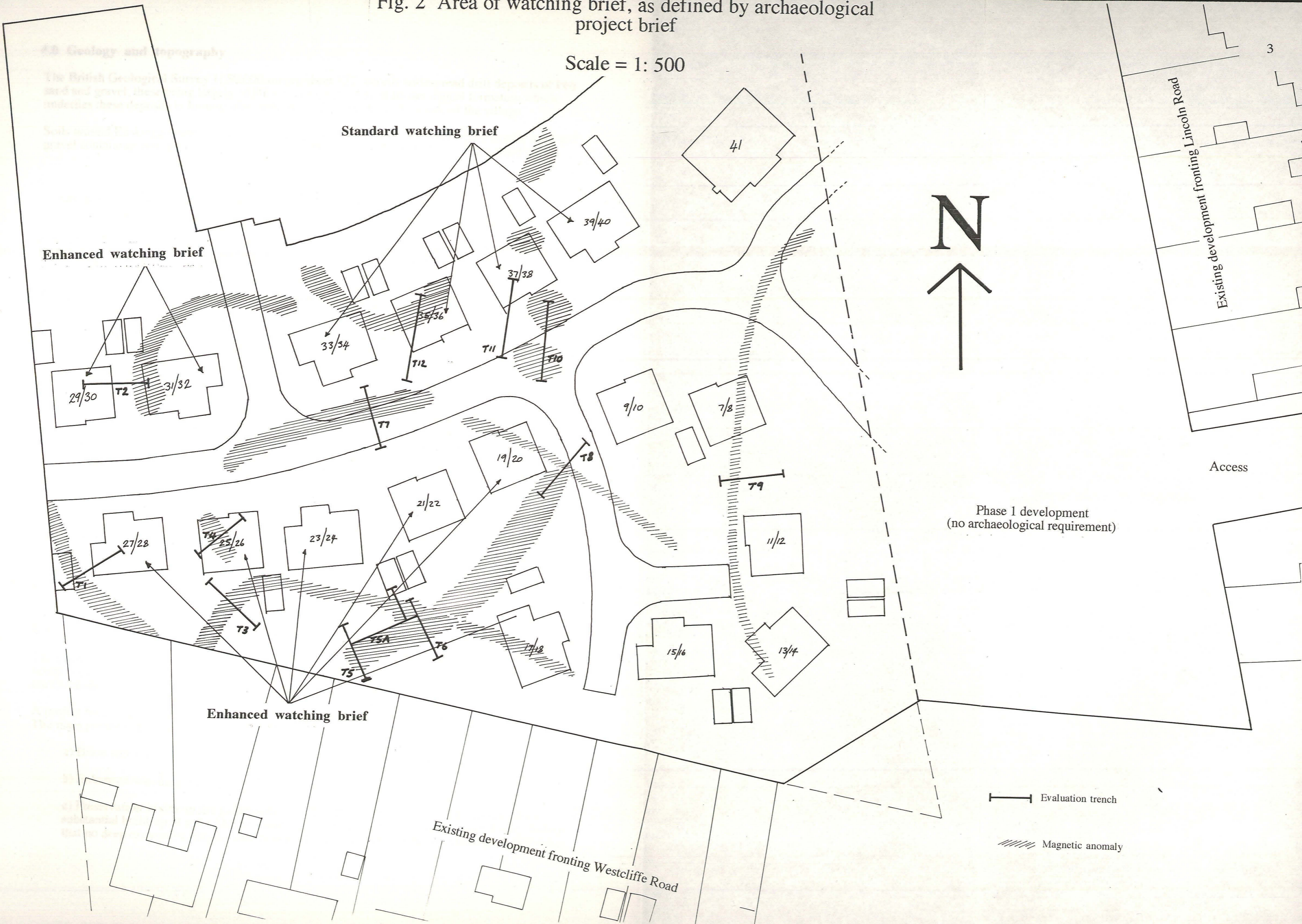


Fig. 1 Site location

Fig. 2 Area of watching brief, as defined by archaeological project brief

Scale = 1: 500



#### 4.0 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 eastern 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 the drift deposits described above.

#### 5.0 Archaeological and historical background

A potentially dense pattern of settlement evidence associated with the later prehistoric and Romano-British periods is implied by the number of cropmarks which cluster on the west side of Ruskington: a complex of ring ditches, probably remnants of Bronze Age burial mounds, and 'native-style' enclosures suggest that significant levels of settlement may have been sustained at almost any time throughout the later prehistoric and Romano-British periods.

The line of the Roman road, Mareham Lane/King Street lies approximately 700m west of the development site. It may have attracted roadside settlement (excavations at the nearby Anglo-Saxon cemetery demonstrated the existence of Romano-British quarry pits (Atkin & Healey, forthcoming), although the nature of settlement during this period, as derived from excavations within Ruskington, is not clear).

In the Domesday Book of 1086, Ruskington is named *Reschintone*: translating 'farmstead where rushes grow' (Mills, 1993). The remains of an earlier Anglo-Saxon population have been archaeologically documented since the discovery, during gravel extraction, of a rich inhumation and cremation cemetery, as early as 1871 on the north side of The Beck, west of Lincoln Road (Trollope, 1872). This cemetery is the westernmost in a group of sites in Lincolnshire, the better-known examples being Loveden Hill, Sleaford and Quarrington (Atkin & Healey, forthcoming). A total of 180 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 appear to date from the later 5th/6th century AD.

Although the Saxon cemetery has been extensively sampled by excavation, the location of the main focus of occupation during this period has not been fully-established; the recent discovery of middle and later Saxon remains in the centre of the village may have set the pace for a new agenda, however (Palmer-Brown, 1994, unpublished).

#### 6.0 Aims

The principal aims of the watching brief were to ensure that any archaeological features or artefactual remains exposed or retrieved during groundworks were recorded and interpreted to standards set by the Community Archaeologist for North Kesteven.

A project brief, outlining the scope of post-evaluation field work, was prepared in November 1994. The main points of the brief (detailed in Fig. 2) may be summarised thus:-

- a) Basic recording brief: plots 33, 34, 35, 36 and 38
- b) Enhanced watching brief: plots 17 - 32
- c) Preservation *in situ*: in the gardens of plots 23 - 28; preservation has been ensured by a substantial build-up of soil (300mm), and a covenant placed in the deed of each house, stating that no deep excavation may be undertaken which would threaten the archaeological resource.



The basic recording brief was to comprise the following:-

- soil stripping under archaeological supervision
- inspection of subsoil for archaeological features
- recording archaeological features in plan
- some rapid excavation to investigate features
- subsoil stripping under archaeological supervision
- inspection of natural for archaeological features and recording.

In addition to the above, the enhanced watching brief was to involve the extended recording of archaeological deposits, through small-scale excavation and additional recording if necessary.

## 7.0 Methodology

After receiving copies of the project brief/specification, the Client agreed to inform Pre-Construct Archaeology in advance of excavations. This was achieved on two occasions, when recording was undertaken by Mr Simon Johnson. Archaeological services were first requested between January 10th/11th and again on April 1st, 1995.

An enhanced watching brief was not possible during the excavation of plots 17 - 28 simply because the on-site archaeologist was unable to keep pace with the volume of soil being removed in advance of construction: plots 17 - 28 were excavated during the course of one day (January 10th, 1995), using three machines, each of which was operating independently in different areas. This meant that the plots, by necessity, were recorded retrospectively and rapidly; no measure of control could be exercised where archaeological features were present and the record was derived, almost exclusively, from sections. There was little opportunity for the recovery of artefactual/ecofactual remains. Drawings were produced on-site, though these also are at best minimal. Recording was continued during the morning of January 11th, though was curtailed due to the commencement of concrete pouring for foundation beds.

The site was monitored on April 1st during the excavation of plots 29 - 32 (area of enhanced watching brief). A more acceptable level of recording was made possible on this occasion, where the archaeologist to excavator ratio was a realistic 1:1.

The area to be covered by a standard watching brief (plots 33 - 38) was not monitored at all. Plots 33 and 34 were cancelled and it is understood the Client no-longer intends to construct these dwellings. As regards the other plots (35 - 38), the Client has expressed a misunderstanding regarding the scope of the brief/specification in areas to be covered by a standard watching brief; believing that these areas would be monitored retrospectively if archaeological deposits were exposed. An apology for this error has since been received. Dwellings in the areas concerned are currently being constructed, and no archaeological monitoring has taken place.

During the course of the watching brief, the sides and bases of trenches were intermittently cleaned and inspected for intrusive archaeological features. Very little hand-excavation of features took place due to the constraints outlined above, though some (non-mechanical) excavation was possible. Colour photographs were taken (prints and slides) and features were planned at 1:20. Some features were drawn in section, though the drawn record was limited by the short period of time available. In short, the data derived is confusing and does not necessarily compliment the results of a far more successful evaluation.

## 8.0 Results

Archaeological features were recorded within the areas now occupied by plots 17, 18, 27 and 30 and are summarised in that order. Deposits worthy of greater consideration were inevitably truncated in other areas, though it is to be understood by all parties that the sheer speed at which operations took place during January 10th precluded the production of anything even approaching a satisfactory record.

### 8.1 Plots 17/18 (Fig. 3)

Most of the foundation trenches were excavated when the field officer present came to monitor this part of the site (his efforts had been centred on recording other areas which had also been fully-excavated).

Archaeological features were seen in the sides of four of the trenches (sections 1 - 4). In the northernmost foundation trench, the east edge and base of a shallow ditch-like feature, [1104], was exposed, where its brown sandy fill contrasted with the white/yellow sandy gravel through which it had been dug. The east side of the ditch was relatively steep and it broke to a flat, though undulating base. It measured at least 50cm in depth. On the edge of the ditch was a shallow post hole, [1103], the fill of which was darker than the fill of the larger feature. No dating evidence was recovered.

An internal wall trench, c. 1.5m south of the above (external) trench, was cut through a further section of the same feature, suggesting it was orientated north-west to south-east. The (oblique) profile examined indicated a deepening of the ditch to more than 50cm (the water level). No finds were recovered. The profile was drawn on both sides of the cutting, where it appeared to widen quite dramatically (Fig. 3, sections 2 and 3). However, this apparent divergence may have been due to a change of orientation; a situation which could not be clarified under the unfavourable circumstances.

A further ditch-like profile, [1112], was exposed in the west wall construction trench. The excavator suggested the ?ditch was associated with that exposed in the north foundation trenches, though this was not demonstrable.

In the trench marking the dividing wall between plots 17 and 18, a shallow dish-shaped depression was exposed, [1106] (Fig. 3, section 4). It lay at a point where an earlier geophysical survey had predicted the east-west line of an enclosure ditch (dated to the middle/late Iron Age during trial excavation). However, no dating evidence was recovered and the shallowness and profile of the void was inconsistent with information derived elsewhere.

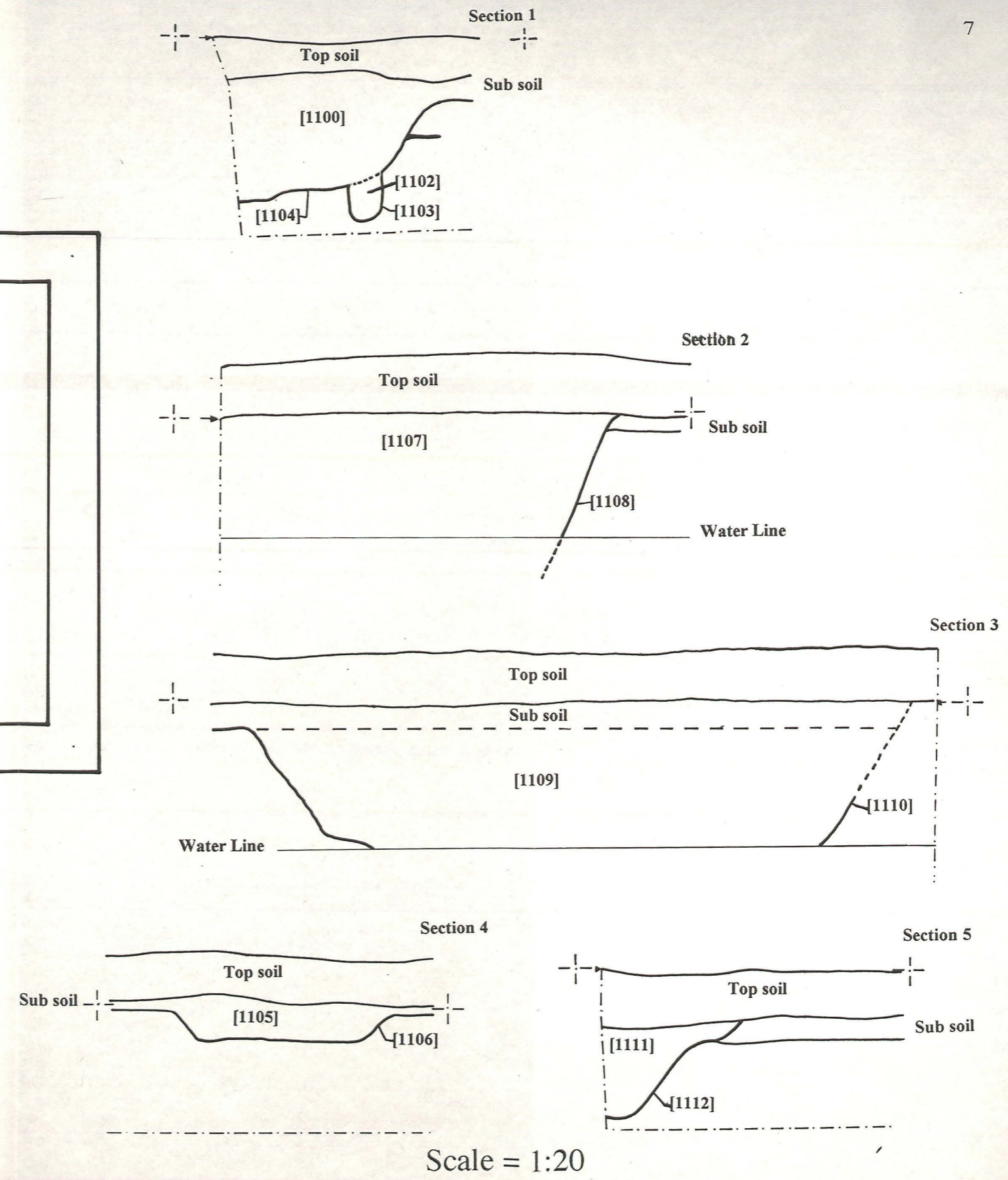
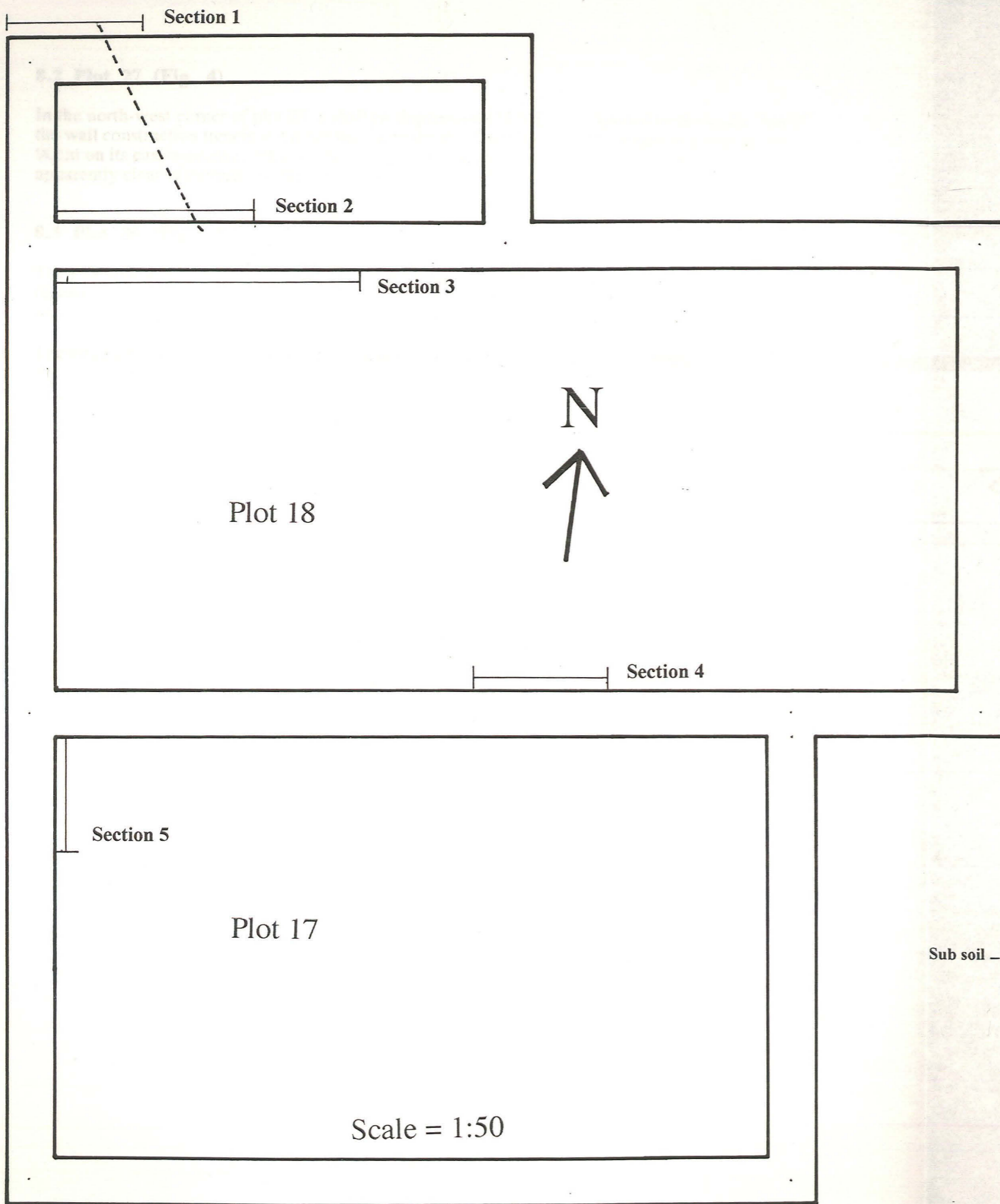


Fig. 3 Features exposed in plots 17/18

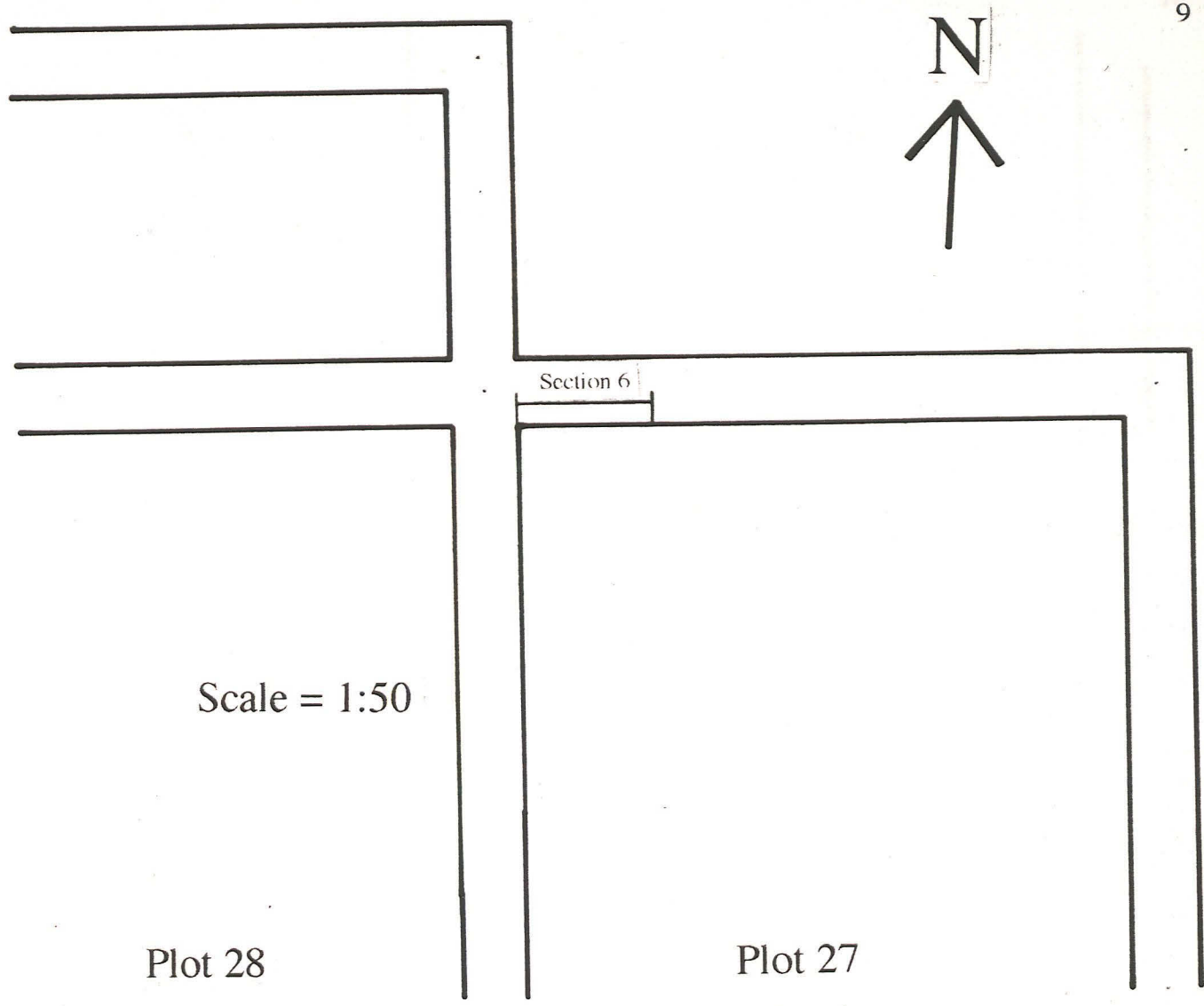
### 8.2 Plot 27 (Fig. 4)

In the north-west corner of plot 27, a shallow depression, [1114], was exposed in the south face of the wall construction trench: it did not feature in the north section face. It measured approximately 90cm on its east-west axis, 40cm in depth. It was filled with light reddish-brown sandy soil, apparently clear of cultural inclusion (eg charcoal, pottery, bone).

### 8.3 Plot 30 (Fig. 5)

The plot appeared to be largely devoid of archaeological deposits, though a small group of undated features was exposed in the north face of the south construction trench. Two of these were thought to be natural, though two others may have been the voids left by decayed timber posts.

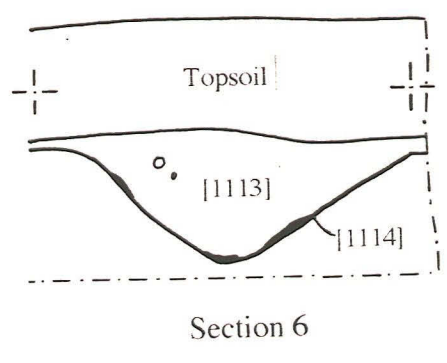
The largest feature was a shallow bowl-shaped depression, [1115]. Its fill was flecked with charcoal, suggesting a cultural rather than natural origin. Only 15cm west of the above was the slight depression of a regular, step-sided ?stake hole, [1117]. It measured little over 8cm in depth and its fill was flecked with charcoal. It was not possible to suggest a cultural context for any of the features exposed in this area.



Scale = 1:50

Plot 28

Plot 27



Scale = 1:20

Fig. 4 Features exposed in north-west corner of plot 27

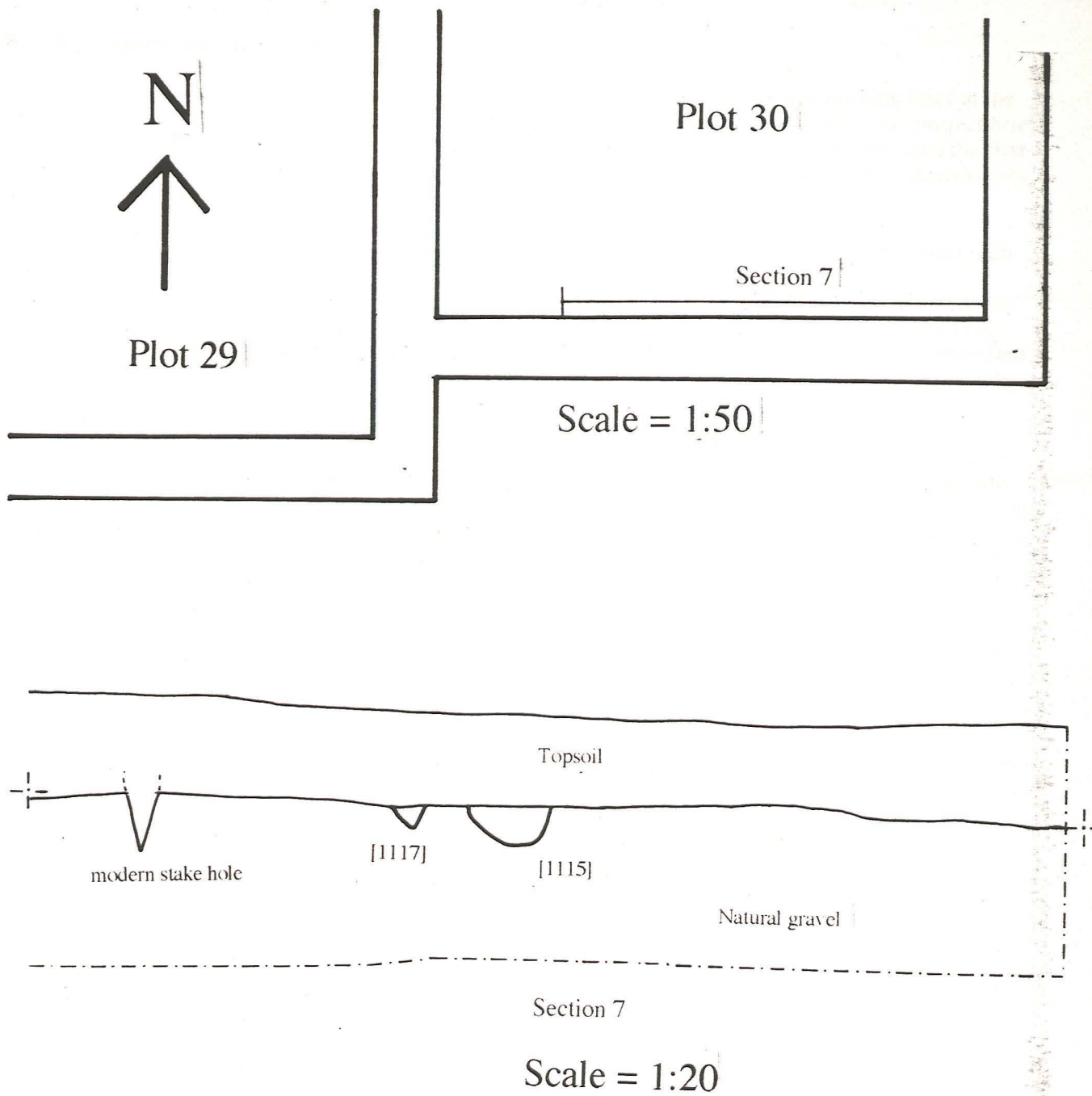


Fig. 5 Features exposed in south wall trench, plot 30

## **9.0 Summary and conclusions**

It is clear that a significant break-down has occurred regarding the scope of the watching brief at the Lincoln Road site. The Client has expressed regret regarding his misunderstanding of the project brief and has taken up the matter with the Community Archaeologist directly: this was in fact been the first occasion where the Client has been in a position to gain experience working alongside archaeologists within the parameters of a watching brief.

It will be apparent that the data collected during the course of this watching brief does not meet with the standards set by the Community Archaeologist: in effect, the record is little more than an incomplete catalogue of features which were recorded retrospectively and hurriedly. As such, it has not been possible to shed new light on the information gathered during evaluation or to predict the extent and nature of deposits exposed more recently. Had it been possible to undertake the controlled excavation of features exposed within the area designated for enhanced survey, dating evidence may have been recovered, but this was not possible.

Some of the features exposed in the area of plots 17/18 were almost certainly related to the boundary ditch associated with the native enclosure which occupies a broad zone on the south side of the site. However, as the field officer present was unable to keep pace with the sheer volume of material being mechanically removed, there is little surprise that the results are ambiguous and uninformative. This is a great pity as far as the archaeology is concerned: the development site lies amidst a complex of prehistoric landscape features which have been expressed as cropmarks during high summer but have not previously been subject to intrusive archaeological techniques.

## **10.0 Acknowledgements**

On behalf of Pre-Construct Archaeology, thanks are expressed to the commissioning Client (NJ Allen (Builders) Ltd), and to Nicola Nuttall, the Community Archaeologist for North Kesteven

## **11.0 Appendices**

### **11.1 List of contexts**

### **11.2 Colour photographs**

### **11.3 Site Archive**

### **11.4 References**



## 11.1 List of contexts (classification only)

Context	Plot No.	Description
[1100]	17/18	Fill of ?ditch [1104]. Reddish-brown friable sand containing occasional pea gravel inclusion
[1101]		Context not used
[1102]	17/18	Fill of small depression seen in base of ?ditch [1104]. Same consistency as [1100] but darker in colour (?staining from post)
[1103]	17/18	Cut of small ?post hole seen on base of ?ditch [1104]. ?post hole
[1104]	17/18	Cut of ?ditch, orientated N/W - S/E (same as [1108], [1110]).
[1105]	17/18	Fill of ?natural depression [1106], seen east-west dividing section
[1106]	17/18	Fill, ?natural depression; reddish-brown, clean, friable soil
[1107]	17/18	Same as [1100], [1109], [1111]: fill of ditch orientated N/W - S/E
[1108]	17/18	Ditch cut; same as [1104], [1110] and [1112]
[1109]	17/18	Same as [1107], [1100] and [1111]; ditch fill
[1110]	17/18	Same as [1107], [1109] and [1111]; ditch fill
[1111]	17/18	Same as [1107], [1109] and [1100]; ditch fill
[1112]	17/18	Same as [1104], [1108], [1110]: ditch cut
[1113]	27/28	Fill of ?pit seen in north foundation cutting. Friable reddish-brown sand, occasional pea gravel inclusion, large angular pebbles
[1114]	27/28	Cut for the above. Shallow profile; max. depth 35cm
[1115]	30	Cut, shallow pit/post hole
[1116]	30	Fill of above; light brown sandy loam, occasional charcoal flecks
[1117]	30	Cut, ?stake hole
[1118]	30	Fill of above; fill identical to [1116]
[1119]	30	Fill of ?root hole
[1120]	30	'Cut' for the above
[1121]	30	Cut, ?tree hole
[1122]	30	Fill associated with the above

Appendix 11.2 Colour photographs



Photo. 1 Ditch [1104] and ?post hole [1103], plot 18, looking north

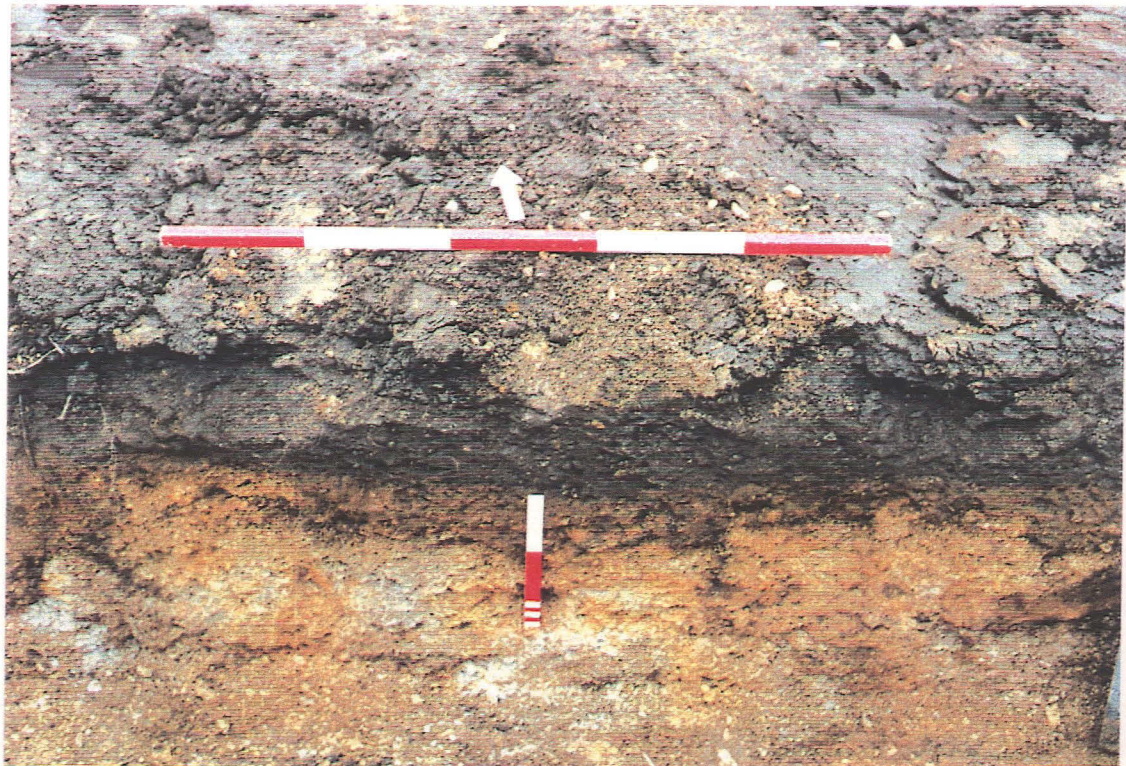


Photo. 2 ?Natural depression [1106], plot 18, looking north



Photo. 3 Ditch section [1109], plot 18, looking south-west



Photo. 4 Pit [1114], plot 27, looking south

### 11.3 Site Archives

The basic site archive comprises the following:

x8 watching brief record sheets

x1 colour print film, x1 colour slide film

x7 1:20 scale drawing (plans and sections)

Misc. notes and correspondence

Primary records are currently with Pre-Construct Archaeology, though the paper and physical archive will be deposited with the City and County Museum within 1 year of completion of this report, together with a more detailed archive list.

### 11.4 References

*British Geological Survey; 1:50,000 survey sheet 127*

Leahy, K 1993 in Vince, A (Ed.) *Pre-Viking Lindsey*

Mills, A D 1993, *English Place-Names*

Palmer-Brown, C 1994 *Land off Westcliffe Road and Lincoln Road, Ruskington, Lincolnshire: An Archaeological Desk Top Study by Pre-Construct Archaeology* (unpublished)

Palmer-Brown, C 1994 *Archaeological Watching Brief Report: 29 Station Road, Ruskington* (unpublished)

Trollope, E A 1872 *Sleaford and the Wapentake of Flaxwell and Aswardhurn* (Sleaford)