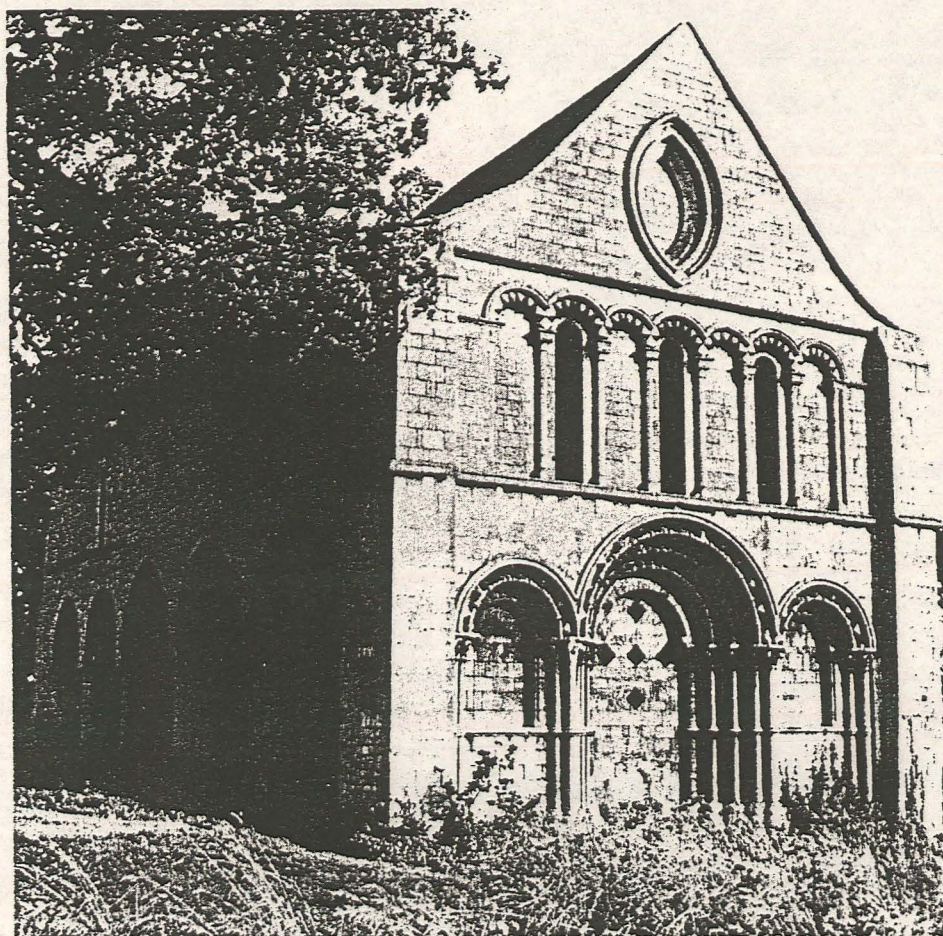


ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

**MALCOLM SARGENT GM SCHOOL,
STAMFORD,
LINCOLNSHIRE**



PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY (LINCOLN)

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MALCOLM SARGENT GM SCHOOL
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT
FOR
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1.0 Abstract

An archaeological watching brief took place between 31st May and 5th June 1995 during the construction of a new teaching wing at the Malcolm Sargent G.M. School, Stamford (Fig. 1). A total of 4 site visits took place; resulting in the recovery of no significant archaeological remains and an early termination of the brief.

Most of the teaching block is situated on an area previously occupied by a tarmac playground, the construction of which had involved soil removal to natural cornbrash and possibly the truncation of archaeological deposits.

A small number of unstratified finds were recovered during the brief, dating principally to the later post-medieval period: a single sherd of Saxo-Norman pottery (Stamford Ware) was highly abraded and does not imply direct settlement on the site. A similar explanation may be sought regarding a battered worked flint which was also recovered from an unstratified context.

The site central national grid reference is TF 0140 0740

2.0 Introduction

Malcolm Sargent G.M. School. was granted planning approval for the construction of a new teaching block within an existing school precinct. The site lies within an archaeologically sensitive part of Stamford and there was a possibility therefore (based on information contained within the Sites and Monuments Record and records held by the Community Archaeologist for South Kesteven) that the scheme would disturb buried deposits.

To fulfil a planning condition, D B Lawrence & Associates commissioned PCA (Lincoln) to undertake a low-level watching brief so that archaeological deposits disturbed during development could be recorded and interpreted to standards set by the Community Archaeologist for South Kesteven.

A copy of this report will be deposited with the Sites and Monuments Record.

3.0 Purpose and methods

The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) contains entries which suggest the presence of important archaeological deposits within the area of development. In recognition of the site as one of (potential) archaeological significance, the District Council issued an archaeological requirement as a condition of planning. The level of recording deemed most appropriate was an archaeological watching brief. This may be defined as follows:

'An archaeological watching brief is defined as a programme of observation and investigation conducted during the destruction of archaeological deposits, resulting in the preparation of a report and ordered archive' (Institute of Field Archaeologists draft on Standard Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs, 1993)

The method of operation was as follows: Mr J L Allenby of D B Lawrence & Associates and Mr A Teggardine of Peacock Construction Ltd, were closely liaised with to ensure, wherever possible, that a maximum extent of excavation was monitored during any one site visit. On each occasion, exposed section faces were scanned and intermittently cleaned to enable the interpretation and recording of natural or archaeological strata.

Recording was undertaken using standard watching brief daily log sheets; supplemented with photography and sketch drawings. Scale drawings (1:20) were not used on this occasion as no archaeological features were exposed (measured sketch sections of the natural stratigraphy were made on the daily log sheets).

Observation points were plotted on 1:200 drawings which were supplied by the Client (Fig. 2).

Prior to the start of field work the county SMR was consulted.

4.0 Location and description

Stamford is in the district of South Kesteven, approximately 40 miles south of Lincoln, 25 miles east of Leicester.

The solid geology comprises beds of Lincolnshire limestone. The earlier formation is represented by Collyweston slate of south-east Leicestershire and the southernmost tip of Lincolnshire. Often, the limestone lies close to the surface and is usually beneath shallow, medium to heavy loamy soils, which are calcareous and contain weathered rock debris (brash).

The site lies at approximately 62 m above modern sea level.

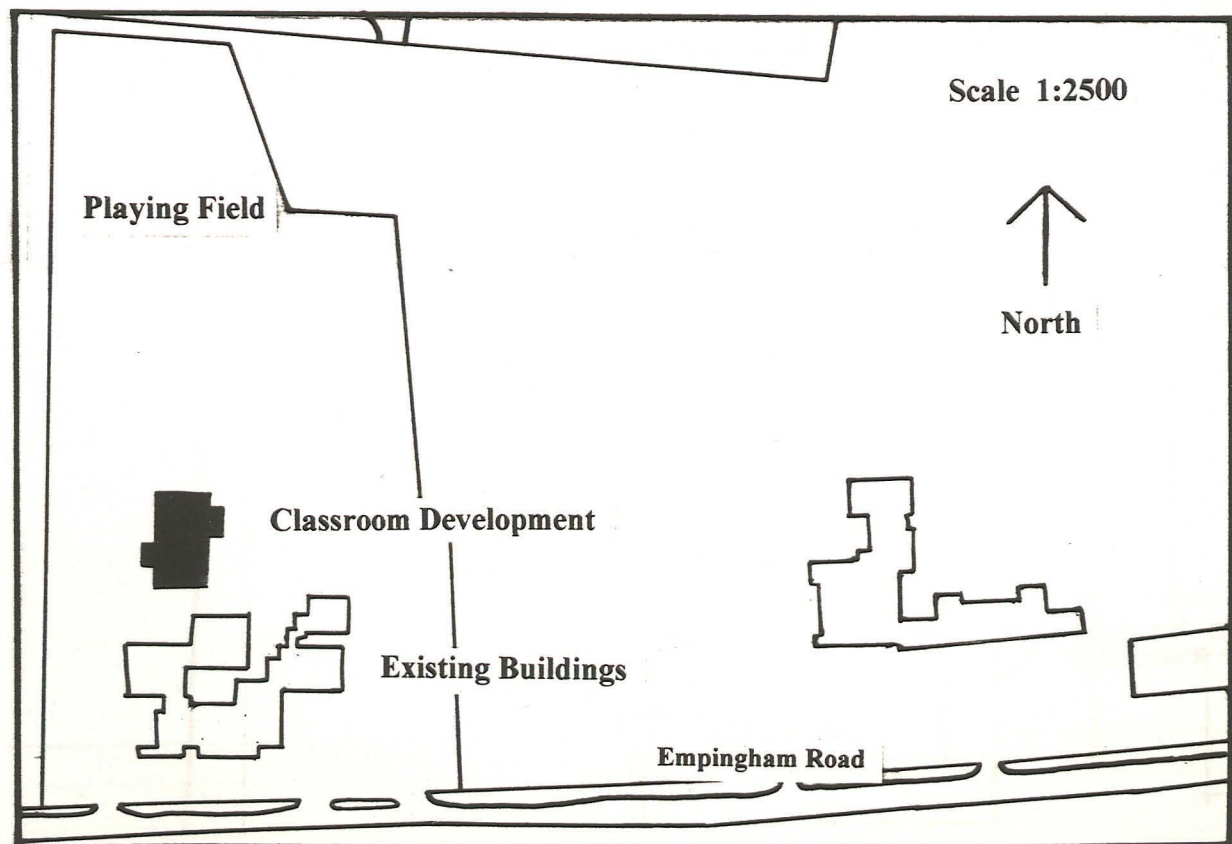
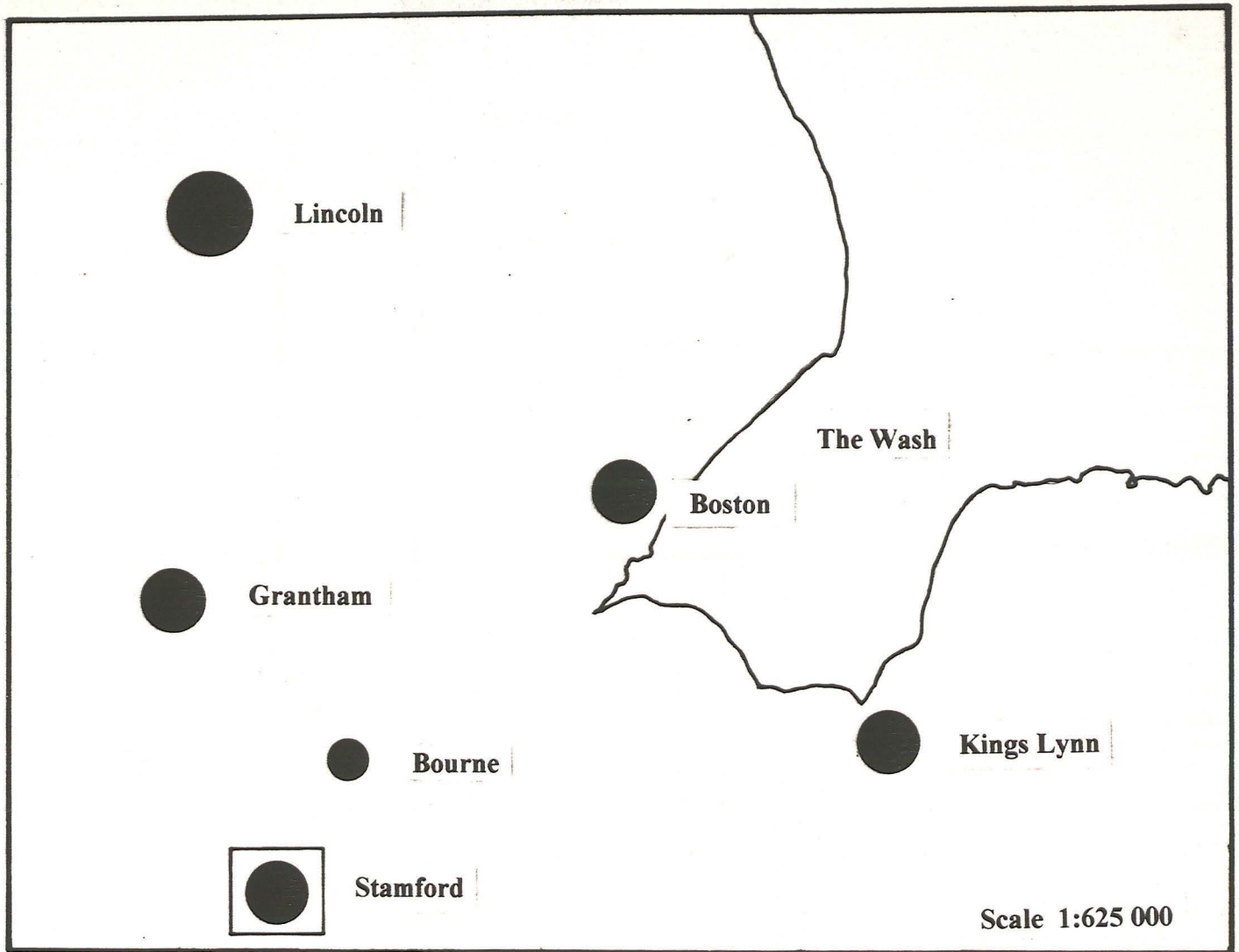


Fig. 1: Site Location

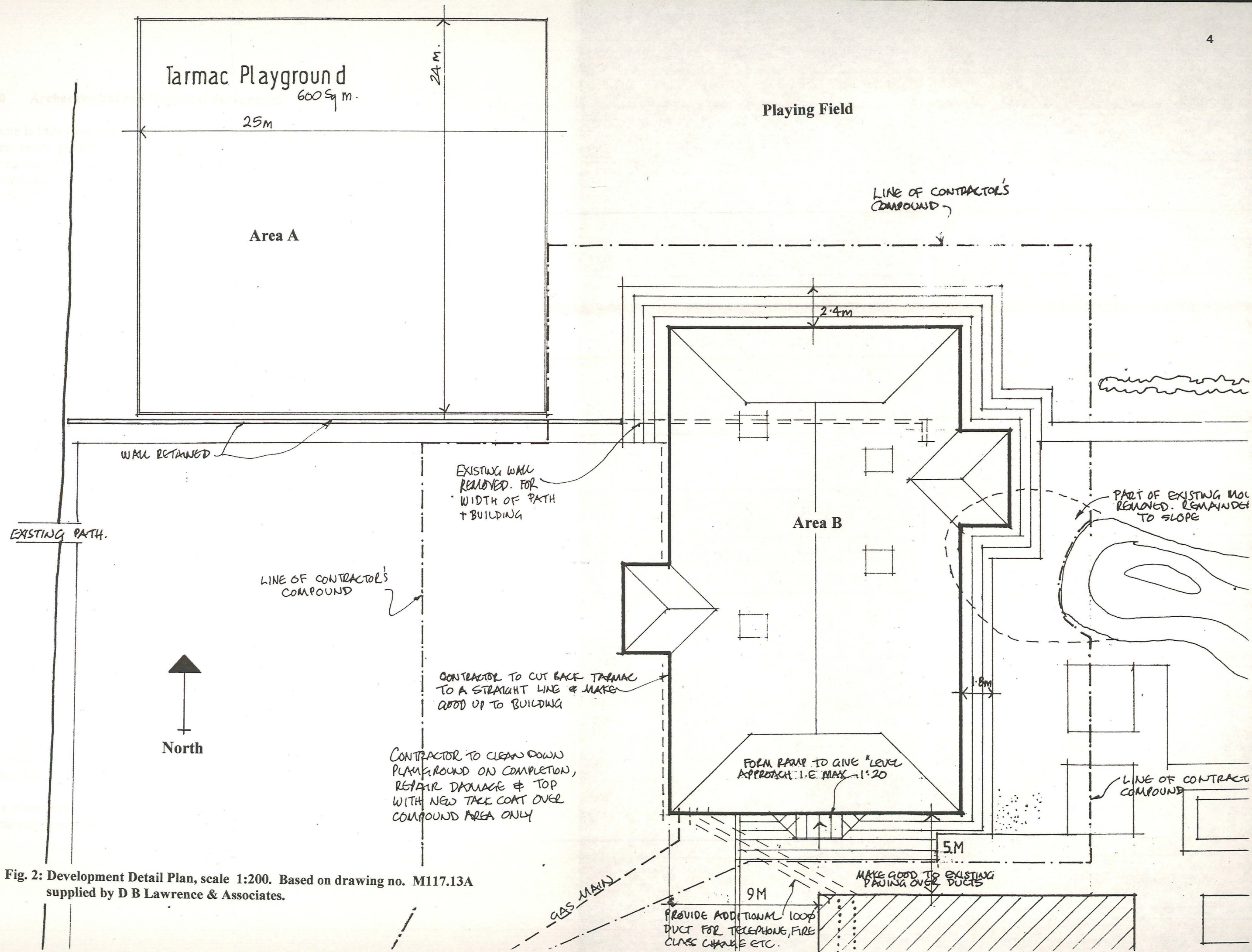


Fig. 2: Development Detail Plan, scale 1:200. Based on drawing no. M117.13A supplied by D B Lawrence & Associates.

5.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

There is little evidence of pre-Roman occupation in the area of Stamford, though there exists, possibly, a "pre-Roman trackway of some considerable importance... along the eastern edge of the limestone escarpment, traceable perhaps from Stamford northwards" (Whitwell, 1982, 63). Only one prehistoric artefact has been entered in the SMR: a Mesolithic flint tool, found at SK 69003.

Direct evidence of occupation during the Roman period is equally slight. There is very little material from within the town itself, the exceptions being occasional 'chance finds' (which may indicate the proximity of a settlement on or near the modern site). Despite this superficial dearth, there was a Roman town and important military camp at nearby Great Casterton. Also, the Roman road *Ermine Street*, which linked London with York, passes through the north-west part of the modern town, close to the current development.

During excavations by Charles Green, preceding construction of the school in 1956, data was collected on the alignment and construction of the road in the north-east corner of the current playing field. A more recent watching brief along Sutherland Way, however, did not result in any significant findings, although an area of leached soil was taken to indicate the position of *Ermine Street* prior to its destruction during modern road construction. (Cope-Faulkner 1994).

The modern town emerged during the Saxon period. By the ninth century it was an important Anglo-Scandinavian trade centre. A Danish *burgh* developed on the north bank of the River Welland, an English *Burh* to the south, in what is now known as S^t Martins, after King Edward the Elder won the area back from the Danes in the tenth century. By the late tenth century Stamford had become one of the five *Danelaw* boroughs having both a market and mint.

The first castle at Stamford is believed to have been built by William the Conqueror in 1068 and assumed to have been of *motte and bailey* type. Most of the site now lies under a housing estate; the only extant remains being a section of the east end arcading of the hall. Excavations carried out between 1971-76 revealed several phases of building with an earlier, defended, enclosure dated to the ninth century and an associated pottery kiln. The kiln products showed strong continental affinities with the Beavais region of northern France, indicating developed trade routes and possibly the patronage by a local lord of quasi-French potters.

The castle underwent much rebuilding and alteration during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries but two *inquisitions* of the fourteenth century point to its decline at that time (Mahany, 1985, 27-8)

The town walls, now virtually gone, also date from the thirteenth century although these may have replaced earlier earth and timber revetments.

Stamford prospered throughout the medieval period. Recorded as *Stanford* (meaning 'stony ford') in the Domesday survey of 1086, it possessed a market, fair and at least four churches. By the close of the middle ages it had fourteen churches, two Benedictine houses, four friaries and at least one monastic hall and a hospital. The wealth for such building programmes stems from the towns principal industries of cloth, pottery production and iron-working. (Pevsner & Harris, 1989, 685-8)

Excavation and chance finds from the town have highlighted various aspects of the medieval foundations which, largely, have not survived. Perhaps the most intriguing evidence to date comes from the excavation of a garderobe shaft at S^t Leonard's Priory in 1967 and 1972. Under a destruction layer corresponding to it's dissolution in 1536-9, glass crucibles, distillation vessels, sulphur and mercury were discovered along with book clasps and laminated material, possibly pages. Silver clippings from coins were also found in an adjoining cellar: materials from a medieval laboratory, possibly incorporating a scientific library - the principal elements of alchemy (Mahany, 1977, 17).

As may be clear, the development of Stamford between the dark ages and the early modern period is basically understood. Evidence regarding earlier periods is scarce, however and an opportunity to investigate the underlying strata of the town is clearly desirable.

6.0 Results

The development divides into two areas. The new playground was designated Area A, with Area B being the site of the new classroom block.

No archaeological features were observed or recorded during the brief, though several sherds of pottery and one flint artefact were recovered.

6.1 Area A

A hardcore foundation for the new playground area was deposited prior to recording, despite a verbal agreement that notice would be given as soon as the topsoil had been removed (there was no excavation beneath topsoil level in this area). Sections adjacent to the kerbs were scanned and intermittently cleaned but no archaeological deposits were exposed.

The natural stratigraphy may be summarised:

[100]	Topsoil	180-210 mm.
[101]	Subsoil	150-180 mm.
[102]	Limestone/brash	>100 mm.

6.2 Area B

Monitoring in this area comprised the observation and recording of the classroom block foundation trenches.

Topsoil and subsoil horizons survived on the north and east sides with isolated pockets of subsoil to the south and east of the block, where the site had previously lain under a playground. No archaeological features were observed. The stratigraphy may be summarised:

[100]	Topsoil	200-210 mm.
[101]	Subsoil	140-160 mm. (with deeper pockets around tree boles)
[102]	Natural	>800 mm.

7.0 Conclusions

The archaeological watching brief did not identify significant archaeological deposits within the development area. If such deposits had ever been present, occupation horizons would have lain close to the modern ground surface and could, conceivably, have been removed during cut and fill operations associated with the original playground construction. However, it would seem unlikely that this type of development would truncate deep 'earth-cut' features, had they been present.

Although late Saxon (one sherd) and late post-mediaeval pottery was recovered (unstratified in Area B), the information is of limited archaeological value.

8.0 Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks are expressed to Mr J L Allenby of D B Lawrence & Associates for commissioning Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) to undertake the watching brief. Particular, thanks to Mr A Teggardine for his assistance and co-operation throughout the project. Finally, thank you to Jane Young and Richard Kemp (City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit) for their assessment of ceramic finds recovered from the site.

9.0 Appendices:

9.1 Lithic assessment

9.2 List of contexts

9.3 Colour plates

9.4 Site archive

**9.5 Information derived from the County Sites and Monuments
Record, City and County Museum, Lincoln**

9.6 References

Appendix 9.1 Lithic Assessment

One flint flake was recovered from the topsoil. It measures 21 x 15 x 7.5 mm. and is of a translucent light brown, striated black, silex with intermittent patches of white patination. The flake is triangular in section with no surviving cortex.

The ventral surface retains the bulbar scar and bulb of percussion with a hinge fracture at the distal end. The dorsal surface is divided into left and right by a central ridge showing post-depositional damage along its apex; the distal end shows a flake scar due to a frost fracture. The right dorsal surface is characterised by an earlier flake scar running the entire length of the object. The left side has been damaged after deposition.

The slight bulb of percussion and small striking platform at the proximal end suggests manufacture by soft percussion technique.

The object appears to be only the second worked flint recorded in this area.

Appendix 9.2 List of Contexts

- | | |
|-------|--|
| [100] | Topsoil - humic dark grey/black friable sandy/clay loam: 90% Sand |
| [101] | Light reddish-brown sandy/clay loam: 40% sand, 60% silt: occasional limestone inclusions <50 mm. max. dim. |
| [102] | Natural limestone: upper c. 750 mm. cornbrash type mixed weathered limestone slates in a buff clay matrix. |



Plate 1: General view of the site during marking out, looking south-west. The surface level corresponds to the foundation level of the previous play area.

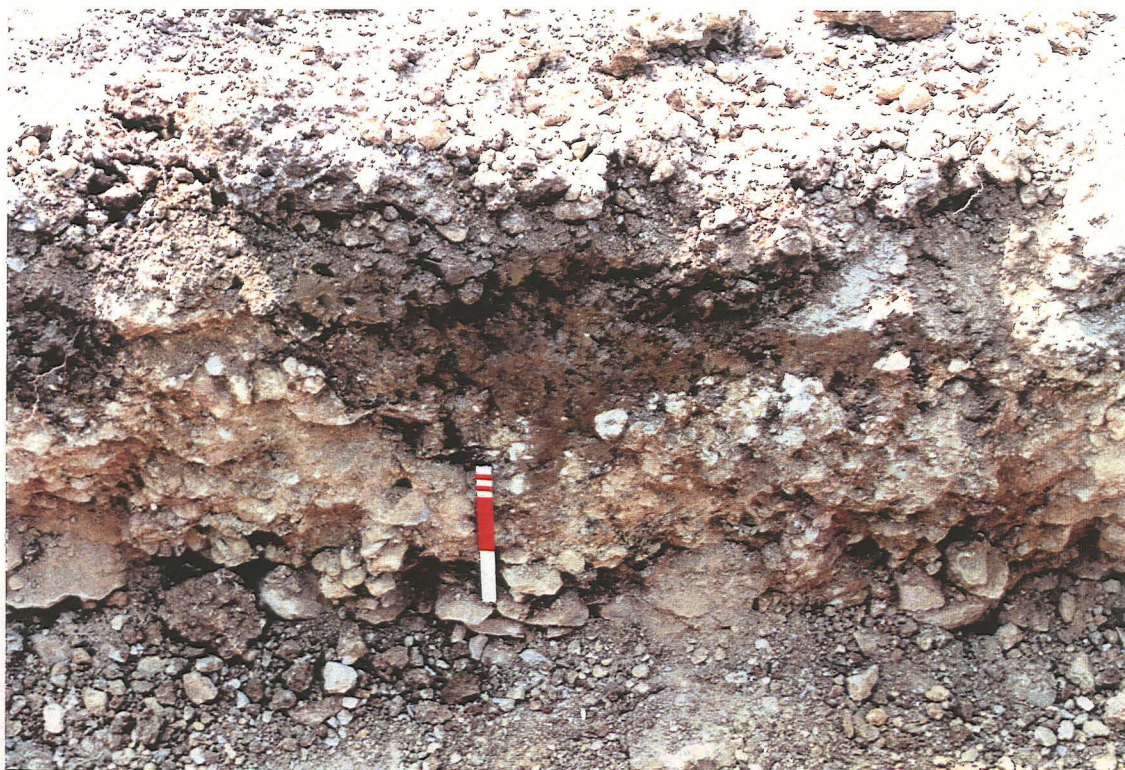


Plate 2: Sectional shot showing one of a number of tree root bole encountered during the brief. These often look like archaeological features until they are cleaned, when a tapering V section becomes apparent at the base.



Plates 3 & 4: Showing the same trench (eastern foundation) during excavation and concreting. The fragmentary upper ~800 mm. above bedded limestone shows clearly.

Appendix 9.4 Site Archive

The basic site archive comprises:

4 record sheets

Pottery/tile data sheets (CLAU)

1 colour print film

2 bags of pottery

Primary records are currently with PCA, but a complete ordered archive of both the paper and object element will be deposited with the City and County Museum, Lincoln within 1 year of completion of this report.

**Appendix 9.5 Information contained on the County Sites and Monuments
Record, Lincoln**

Grid Ref.	SMR PRN/ Site Code	Description
TF 0100 0796	00028	Roman road running NW from the crossing of the Welland. The stretch northwards from Empingham Road. Survived recently as an earthwork 4-5 ft high and c.30 yds wide. By February 1972 it had all reputedly gone under a housing development. Sectioned by C Green for MoW 1956.
TF 015 077	30695	Mesolithic flint found by Casterton Road by Mr Worby, 1971.
TF 019 075	30707	Papal Bulla: probably Innocent VI (1352-62), found in garden at 39 Reform Street.
TF 011 071	30720	Large rectangular enclosure lies NW-SE just north of County boundary. Shows as a cropmark, the southern ditch seems to continue west on slightly different alignment. Undated.
TF 0172 0723	30752	A Roman bronze spatula 2 & 11/16" long found in garden of 61 Empingham Road, immediately above the line of Ermine Street.

Appendix 9.6 References

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