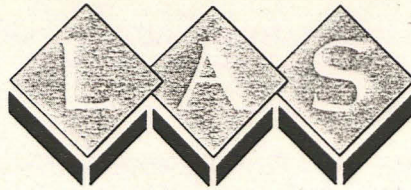


EVENT ELI 6490

SOURCE SLI 5103
SLI 1467

95/8
43294
43295



LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

FRANCIS HOUSE SILVER BIRCH PARK GREAT NORTHERN TERRACE LINCOLN LN5 8LG

Asgarby Hall Farm

Archaeological Watching Brief during Groundworks for a New Lake

NGR: TF 3280 6675

Site Code: AHF 95

LCNCC Museum Accn. No. 116.95

Report prepared for Mr. George Oliver

September 1995

LINCOLN
COLLEGE
- 6 SEP 1951
CITY AND COUNTY
MUSEUM

List of Figures

- Fig. 1 Location of Asgarby (copied at reduced scale from the 1980 OS 1:50,000 survey, Landranger Sheet 122. Crown Copyright; reproduced with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Licence No. AL50424A)
- Fig. 2 Asgarby parish, showing ponds annotated as 'fishponds' (OS 1956; 1:10560 survey, Sheet 36NW. Crown Copyright; reproduced with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Licence No. AL50424A)
- Fig. 3 Asgarby Hall, showing the position of the new lake (based on the Ordnance Survey 1972, 1:2500 map. Crown Copyright; reproduced with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Licence No. AL50424A)
- Fig. 4 Plan of the New Lake constructed at Asgarby Hall Farm, showing archaeological observations (based on a plan supplied by the client, Drawing No. 00147 94/TG; the plan uses an arbitrary origin point: its orientation is misleading)
- Fig. 5 Illustration of a complex medieval fishpond system (at Lyddington, Leics.; reproduced from Steane 1985, fig. 5.11)
- Fig. 6 Section across Brick Structure 4 (McDaid and Tann)

List of Plates

- Pl. 1** Groundworks in progress for the new lake at Asgarby Hall; note the water diversion trenches on the north and south sides of the lake area. Looking SW.
- Pl. 2** The natural valley in which the ponds and lakes were located (looking south from the track to Hall Farm)
- Pl. 3** Panoramic view showing the redeposited topsoil from the lake area spread in front of the bungalow. Asgarby Hall is in the centre, with the site of the church to the right. Some natural greenstone boulders have been collected in the foreground. Looking east.
- Pl. 4** Removal of subsoil from the new lake; it was impossible to identify backfilled earlier features. Looking south.
- Pl. 5** Grey clay, apparently natural, in the valley bottom. Looking NW towards Hall Farm.
- Pl. 6** Truncated timber 3 in the valley bottom.
- Pl. 7** Brick structure 4, visible in the southern trench (looking south; scale divisions v: 0.2m; h: 0.1m).
- Pl. 8** Detail of the eastern side of brick structure 4, showing the black clay layer at its base. Looking south; scale divisions v: 0.2m; h: 0.1m.
- Pl. 9** Upcast embankment on the southern edge of the new lake, covering brick structure 4. Looking west.

Asgarby Hall Farm

Archaeological Watching Brief during Groundworks for a New Lake

NGR: TF 3280 6675

Site Code: **AHF 95**

LCNCC Museum Accn. No. 116.95

Introduction

Lindsey Archaeological Services was commissioned by Mr. George Oliver of Hall Farm, Asgarby (nr. Spilsby) to conduct an archaeological watching brief during extensive groundworks for a new lake on land west of Asgarby House (Figs. 1-3). The watching brief was in response to a planning condition requested by East Lindsey District Council.

The new lake (about 70m north-south and 55m west-east) was to be sited in a natural valley crossing the hillside east of Hall Farm; several previous small ponds in the same position had been backfilled in the past and Mr Oliver wanted to reinstate a lake for environmental reasons (Fig. 4).

Mechanical removal of turf and topsoil, and excavation of three trenches around the site to deflect water during the works, began in late July 1995. Two monitoring visits were made, on 26th and 27th July, when the subsoil surface was inspected and pottery collected from the stripped topsoil. Further excavation and landscaping seemed unlikely to disturb additional archaeological remains and so the watching brief was concluded.

Archaeological Background

The village of Asgarby has become shrunken to include Hall Farm, and a small number of houses and other buildings close to Asgarby House. Asgarby Hall is now an empty shell, close to the site of St. Swithin's Church. The demolished church was of brick on a greenstone base. Pevsner ascribed it an early 19th century date (probably a period of extensive repair to an older building); a mid-17th century chalice would seem to indicate an earlier church (Pevsner and Harris 1964).

In 1563 the Diocesan Return noted 14 households in Asgarby, a relatively low number in comparison with many other Lincolnshire parishes (Hodgett 1975, 189-99). At the end of the 18th century the settlement had declined to 'not a dozen cottages' (Byng 1791).

The lake was sited across the positions of at least two former ponds, sometimes identified as fishponds (OS 1956). A total of four ponds were marked on that map (revised before 1930) but they had been backfilled by the end of World War II.

There appear to have been additional features for water storage at Asgarby, in the same field but slightly higher on the slope. In 1978 Mr. Cook of Asgarby House described a chain of 5 tanks "in the fold of the hill, upslope and NW of the fishponds" which had been used for tanning but had been filled in during World War II (note by P. Everson, on record card held by LAS)

Fish ponds were constructed in the medieval period to provide a reliable supply of freshwater fish to the manorial complex for food during religious festivals when meat was forbidden. The rectangular ponds had to be fed by a source of running water and usually consisted of more than one banked pond connected with a sluice arrangement so that fish of different ages (and sometimes different varieties) could be separated (Steane 1985, 171-2; Fig. 5). Very little archaeological excavation of fishponds has been conducted, but there are some documentary sources which describe the use of scorched upright stakes with faggots and earth around them. The ponds may have been drained quite frequently, and their sides grazed; dung apparently attracted flies to the water surface and acted as fish food. The fish raised in the ponds varied, but common species included pike, eels, tench, bream, perch and roach.

The Watching Brief

1. Existing Features

The lake groundworks had begun when the first visit was made but no traces were seen of earthworks at or beside the lake location. The site lies within a curving, glacially shaped valley on the hillside, broadest at the base of the slope where the lake was positioned.

2. Topsoil

Despite the information that one or more ponds had been deliberately backfilled in the recent past, few signs of tipped material were noted. 18 medieval pottery sherds were recovered from the topsoil but these need not originally have been discarded here. Topsoil removed from the lake area was transported up the slope and spread close to Mr. Oliver's bungalow; further sherds were found here and others may be exposed after weathering (Pl. 3). A single prehistoric flint scraper was found, worked from poor quality flint.

The underlying soils were brown clays above grey clay, thought to represent a gleyed (previously water-logged) version of the brown clay. All these soils had been redeposited here above a thin layer of black silt with flints and gravel at the base of the excavated lake. The soils may have been derived naturally from the valley slopes or may have been deliberate backfilling of the valley (Pls. 4 and 5).

3. Circular Timber

In the centre of the new lake the machines truncated a circular timber, about 0.22m diameter (Pl. 6). There was no evidence that this had been much higher, and the depth to which it extended was not determined. It appeared to have been upright and inserted deliberately, either before or after the gravel deposition; no traces of roots or a surrounding pit could be distinguished.

4. Brick Structure

Two north-south aligned brick walls were revealed in the south trench face close to the field hedge, approximately at the deepest part of the valley (Pl. 7; Fig. 6). The mortared walls were 0.35m wide and survived to 16 courses; the unfrosted red brick dimensions were 222mm x 110mm x 70mm. Between the walls was a gap 0.75m wide east-west, with a probable base 1.5m below ground level. There was no obviously constructed base for the feature although the base brick course of each wall projected slightly to the east. The west wall was well bonded, but the east may have been extended or one wall butted against another. The structure had been positioned on the gravel horizon seen elsewhere on the site, assumed to be a natural deposit produced by water movement along the valley.

The soil between the walls was clay, lighter above about 0.4m from the base, with traces of charcoal and burning on some lower bricks on the west side (Pl. 8). The primary fills of black silty clay with a white intervening lense were against the east side, sloping downwards to the west as if a narrower width remained active after silting had begun. A layer of dark brown clay had effectively levelled the fills, and was probably an early phase of deliberate backfilling. A later thicker deposit had virtually filled the surviving structure. No finds were found associated with this feature.

From the bricks and mortar used it is likely that the feature was of 18th century or later date; there were no obvious indications that the bricks had been re-used. The feature was revealed in only one side of the trench and did not seem to be either badly damaged or to have continued to the north.

5. Rubble Spread

Before excavation of the lake took place, trenches were cut around the north, east and south sides of the site to deflect surface water from springs and natural drainage. The faces of these trenches were inspected but the only observed features consisted of a brick structure (described below) and a spread of fragmentary brick rubble with possible burnt daub pieces close to the southern hedge boundary. The rubble spread was also located beyond the trench, in the lake area and below the turf to the east of the new lake. No dateable finds or brick fragments with measureable dimensions were found in the spread, but the rubble was identified as demolition material (perhaps from a post-medieval mud-and-stud type building) imported as hardcore for a field entrance.

Conclusion

The watching brief found no evidence for a medieval or earlier series of ponds on the site. The small quantity of pottery recovered ranged from an earliest possible date in the 13th century to the 18th century; most was of 16th-17th century wares, from local kilns including those at Toynton All Saints and Old Bolingbroke (Appendix 2). This material was all from topsoil and presumably represented medieval spreading of farmyard waste as fertiliser. No rubbish pits or medieval building foundations were found, although a small number of daub fragments were found at the SE part of the new lake area. These were found together with brick fragments and may have been imported onto the site after the demolition of buildings elsewhere. The concentration of brick rubble close to the hedge suggested a hardcore spread at a field entrance. Mr Oliver recalled that the ground now occupied by the lake had always been particularly wet ground and at least one farm animal had perished in the boggy conditions.

The only certain structure found during the groundworks was the brick-sided channel (4) at the southern side of the field. It is not possible to identify the exact use of the structure, although it certainly acted as a narrow outlet to a larger open area - a drain or a sluice seems probable. Assuming that some ponds remained in use when the channel was built, it could have served a post-medieval fishpond, a watermill, tanning ponds or sheep-washing ponds. The extent of the channel is unknown but it may have continued to the present field boundary about 7m to the south. This stretch is now covered by the lake embankment, but the brick structure probably remains, protected by the upcast heap (Pl. 9).

The single timber upright (3) was tentatively identified as a partly removed telegraph pole but a very slight possibility remains that it formed part of a medieval fishpond bank structure. This doubt cannot be resolved from the information available.

Two public footpaths were marked on the Ordnance Survey map as crossing the field between two ponds (OS 1956). One path is shown on a more recent survey, but its line will be deflected around the new lake embankment. It is difficult to explain why the path to the church would have crossed the valley especially if local springs were supplying water to a pond complex and producing an area of wet ground.

The pond complex at Asgarby Hall Farm had been effectively destroyed before the groundworks for the new lake commenced. The natural topography had apparently not been altered on a large scale for the previous water-retaining features and any signs of artificial banks which survived could not be identified during the groundworks; no deposits were seen which indicated artificially managed standing water or refuse disposal into redundant holes.

Acknowledgements

LAS would like to thank Mr. Oliver for his co-operation and interest during the watching brief. The contractors (Fox Plant, Owmbly) were also helpful.

The report on pottery from the project was prepared by Jane Young and Judy Wilkinson (City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit). A brick fragment was examined by Rick Kemp (CLAU). Ian George (Assistant Archaeology Officer, Lincs. County Council) and the staff of the Sites and Monuments Record also provided assistance. The reference to fishpond layout was provided by Kate Steane.

Geoff Tann
Lindsey Archaeological Services
4th September 1995

References

- Byng, J. 1791 'A Tour to Lincolnshire' in *The Torrington Diaries*
- Hodgett, G.A.J. 1975 *Tudor Lincolnshire* History of Lincolnshire Lincoln. 6.
- OS 1956 Ordnance Survey 1:10560 plan, Sheet 36 NW
- OS 1972 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 plan
- Pevsner, N. and Harris, J. 1964 *The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire*
London.
- Steane, J.M. 1985 *The Archaeology of Medieval England and Wales* London.

Appendix 1

Lincolnshire Sites and Monuments Record Summary

PRN	NGR (TF)	
	328 669	5 tanning pits pre war, NW of OS fishponds
	3292 6681	7 human burials in garden of Asgarby House pre 1978
	3297 6680	Elizabethan silver coin from garden of Asgarby House pre 1978
	3385 6695	?Bronze Age burials in a ring-ditch. Pots and cremations disturbed 1939 in 'a dark circle which tends to hold water'
	328 660	Roman pottery found pre-war
42259	328 660	2 barbed and tanged flint arrowheads found pre-war
42257	3345 6669	Anglo Saxon burials and grave goods including numerous sherds of pottery disturbed in sand pit
42258	3345 6669	Prehistoric flint flakes and cores from sand pit
	no location	Earthen bank marking parish boundary: up to c. 1m high; removed pre 1978

Appendix 2

Pottery Identification

by Jane Young and Judy Wilkinson (City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit)

AHF95 POST-ROMAN POTTERY ARCHIVE

Context	Ware	Sherds	Form	Comments
1	MEDLOC	1	-	WORN SURFACES;BS
1	MEDLOC	1	-	OR TB;BS
1	MEDX	1	-	?YORKS;BS
1	DUTRT	2	PIPKIN	?ID;LARGE PIP RIM
1	GLGS	1	-	NO GLAZE;BS
1	TOYII	1	BOWL	RIM
1	TB	2	JAR/JUG	BS
1	TB	2	BOWL	RIM
1	TB	1	BOWL	BS
1	TB	1	JAR/JUG	BS
1	TB	1	JAR/JUG	BS
1	TB	1	JAR/JUG	INT DEP;BS
1	GRE	1	BOWL	HANDLED RIM
1	PGE	1	BOWL	BASE
1	BERTH	1	BOWL/CHAMBERPOT	BASE

Context	Earliest horizon	Latest horizon	Probable horizon
1	PMH3	PMH8	PMH3-PMH4

AHF95: BRICK/TILE

Context	Form	Sherds	Weight	Subform	Fabric	Comments
1	BRKDISC	1	35	-	1	WORN;MED/PMED

Appendix 3

Archive Summary

Client's plans

1 Field Observation sheet

Specialist's report: post-Roman pottery

Finds: pottery and 1 flint

Glossary of Abbreviations

Medloc	medieval, local origin :early 13th/late 15th centuries
Medx	medieval, non-local or uncertain origin :early 13th/late 15th centuries
Dutrt	Low Countries origin; red earthenware : late 14th/late 17th centuries
GlgS	Glazed greensand fabrics :mid 12th/late 15th centuries
Toyll	Toynton All Saints (Kiln 3) :mid 15th/mid 16th centuries
TB	Toynton All Saints/ Bolingbroke kilns :mid 15th/mid 18th centuries
Gre	glazed red earthenwares :mid 16th/late 18th centuries
Pge	light-bodied glazed earthenwares :mid 16th/late 17th centuries
Berth	Brown earthenwares :mid 16th/early 19th centuries
Brkdisc	Broken; discarded
BS	base sherd
Rim	rim sherd
Pip	pipkin type vessel
Int Dep	internal deposit
PMH 3	post-medieval; mid-late 16th - early 17th centuries
PMH 4	post-medieval; early 17th - mid 17th century
PMH 8	late post-medieval; early 18th - mid 18th century

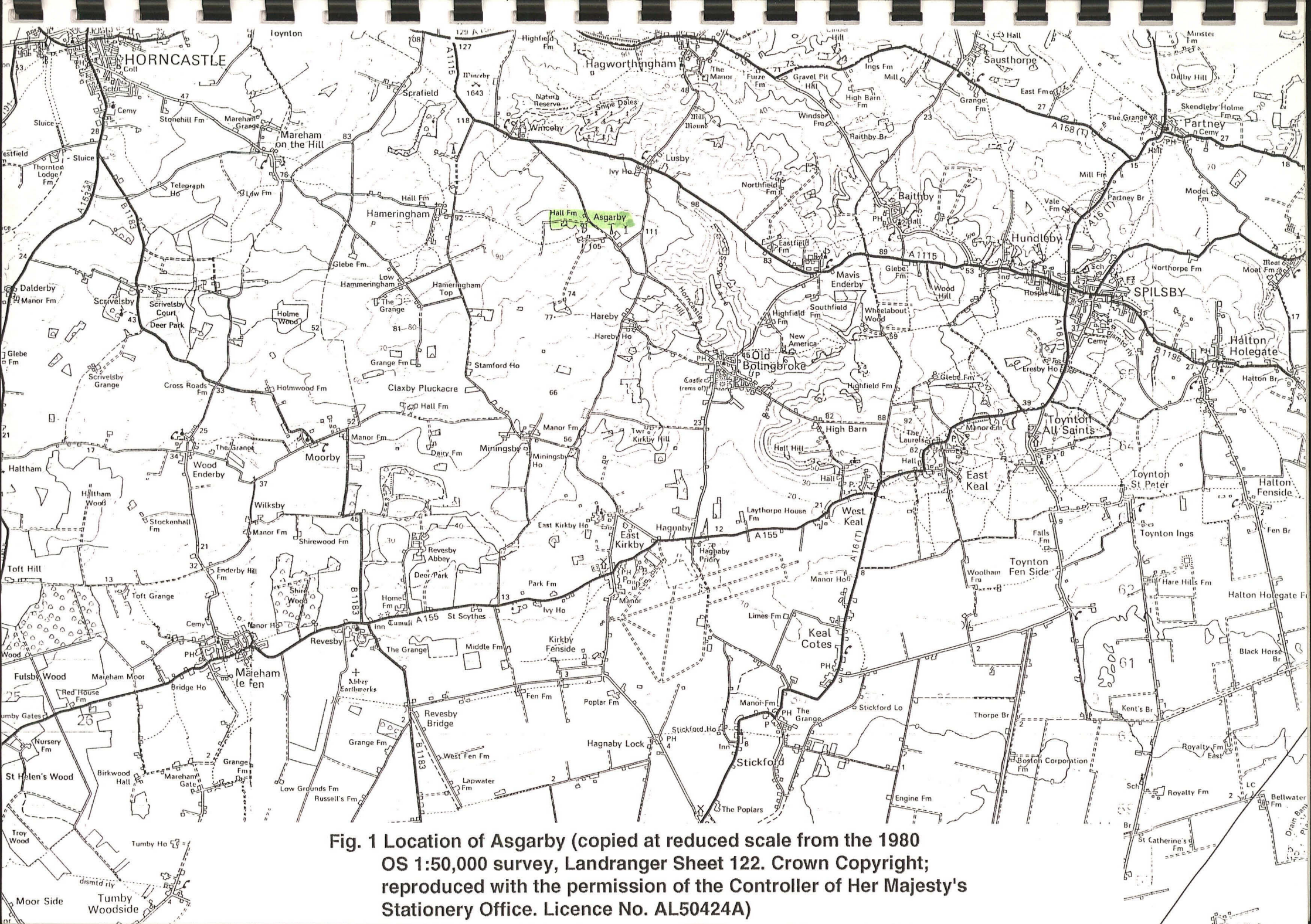


Fig. 1 Location of Asgarby (copied at reduced scale from the 1980 OS 1:50,000 survey, Landranger Sheet 122. Crown Copyright; reproduced with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Licence No. AL50424A)

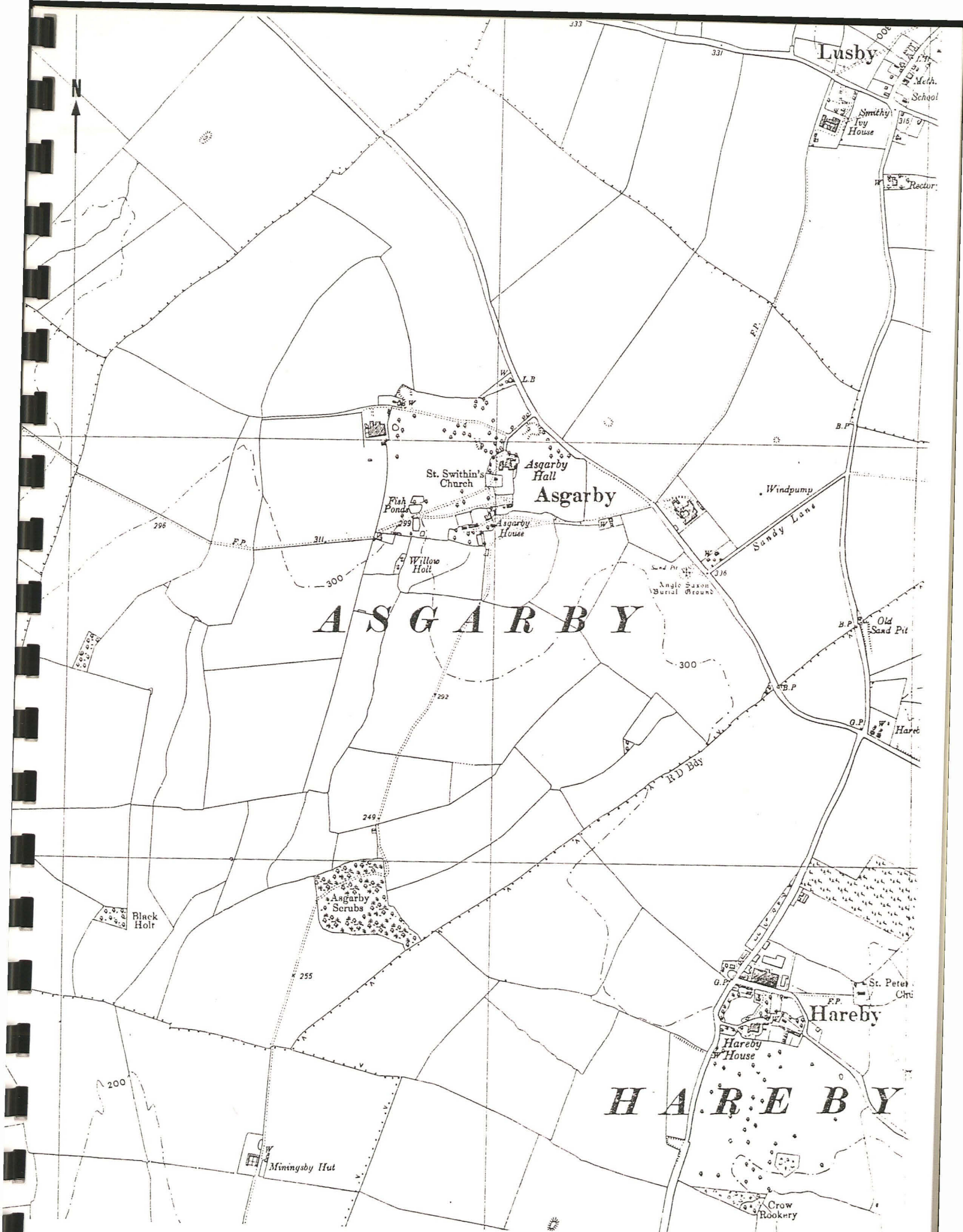


Fig. 2 Asgarby parish, showing ponds annotated as 'fishponds' (OS 1956; 1:10560 survey, Sheet 36NW. Crown Copyright; reproduced with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Licence No. AL50424A)

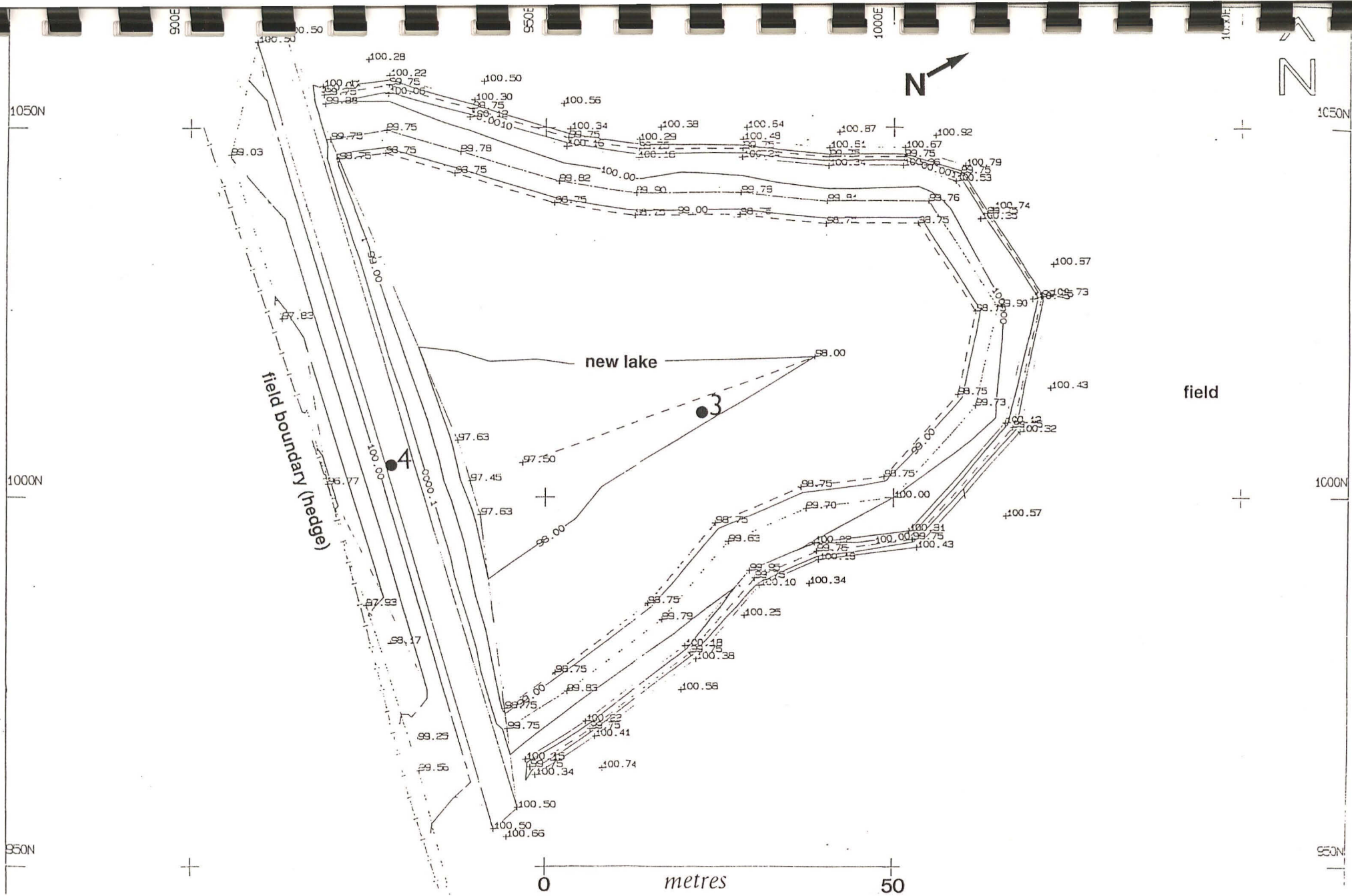


Fig. 4 Plan of the New Lake constructed at Asgarby Hall Farm, showing archaeological observations (based on a plan supplied by the client, Drawing No. 00147 94/TG; the plan uses an arbitrary origin point: its orientation is misleading)

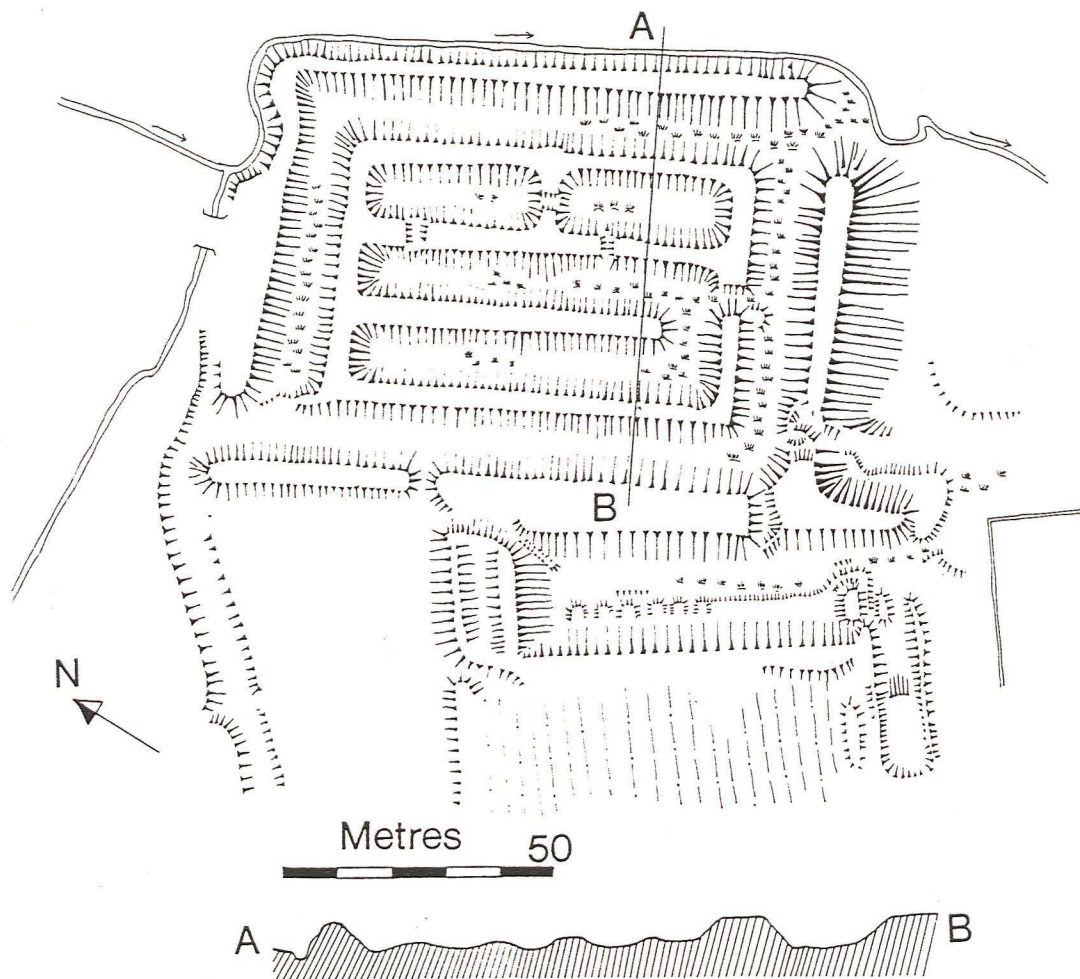


Fig. 5 Illustration of a complex medieval fishpond system (at Lyddington, Leics.; reproduced from Steane 1985, fig. 5.11)

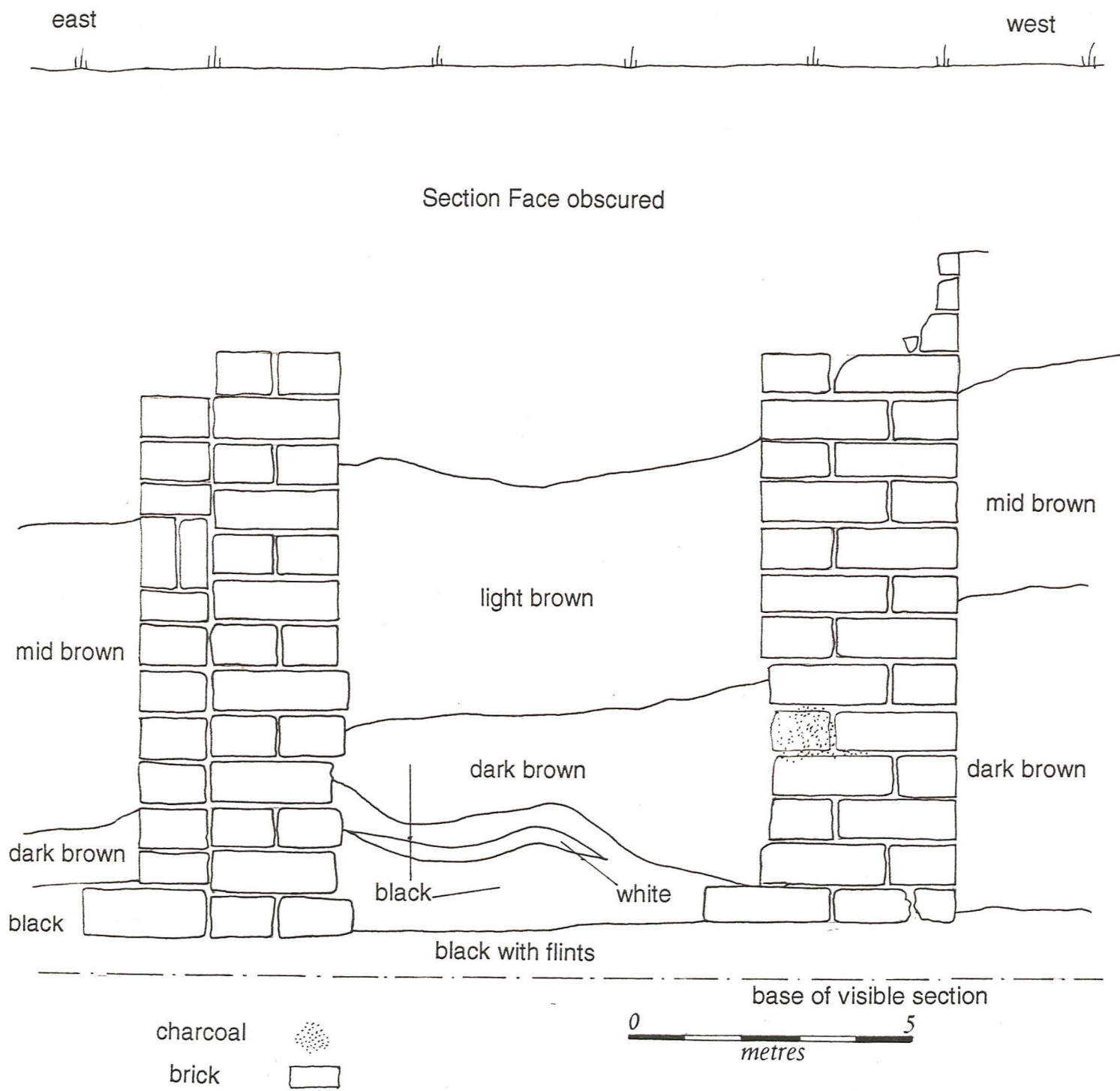


Fig. 6 Section across Brick Structure 4 (McDaid and Tann)



Pl. 1 Groundworks in progress for the new lake at Asgarby Hall; note the water diversion trenches on the north and south sides of the lake area. Looking SW.

Pl. 2 The natural valley in which the ponds and lakes were located (looking south from the track to Hall Farm)





Pl. 3 Panoramic view showing the redeposited topsoil from the lake area spread in front of the bungalow. Asgarby Hall is in the centre, with the site of the church to the right. Some natural greenstone boulders have been collected in the foreground. Looking east.



Pl. 4 Removal of subsoil from the new lake; it was impossible to identify backfilled earlier features. Looking south.



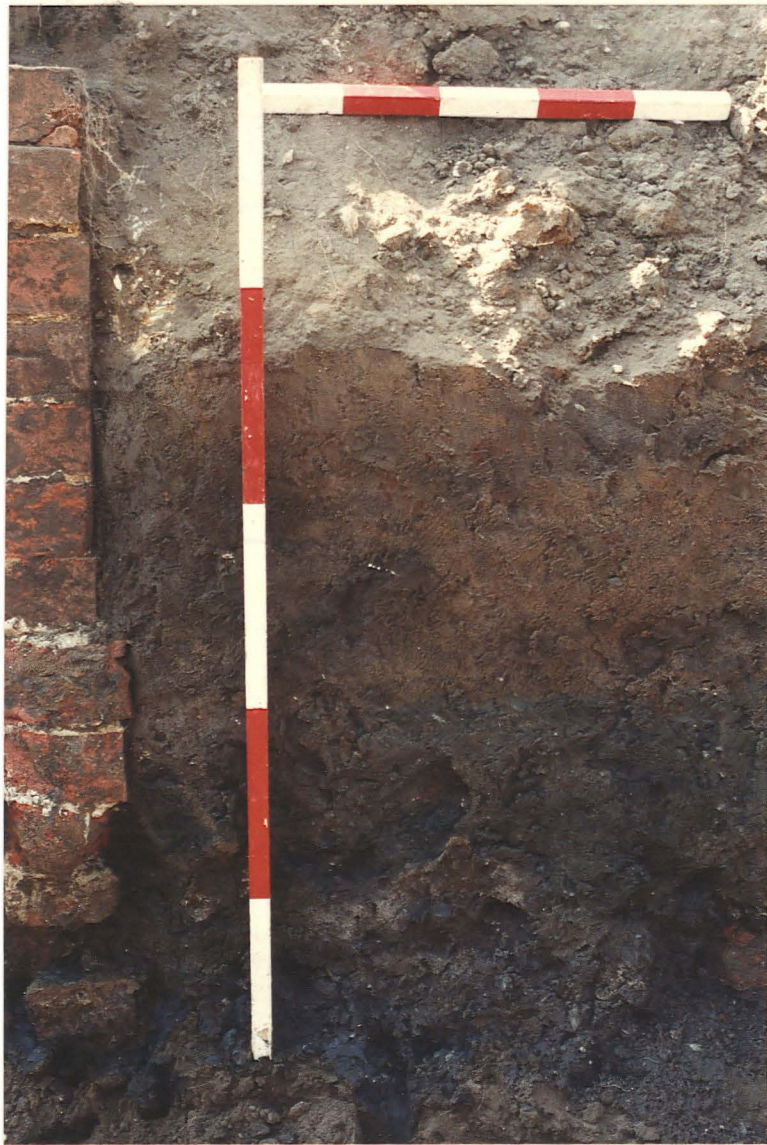
Pl. 5 Grey clay, apparently natural, in the valley bottom. Looking NW towards Hall Farm.



Pl. 6 Truncated timber 3 in the valley bottom.

Pl. 7 Brick structure 4, visible in the southern trench (looking south; scale divisions v: 0.2m; h: 0.1m).





Pl. 8 Detail of the eastern side of brick structure 4, showing the black clay layer at its base. Looking south; scale divisions v: 0.2m; h: 0.1m.

Pl. 9 Upcast embankment on the southern edge of the new lake, covering brick structure 4. Looking west.

