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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

LAND OFF MILLVIEW ROAD, RUSKINGTON  
LINCOLNSHIRE

PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY (Lincoln)

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# MILLVIEW ROAD, RUSKINGTON

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

FOR

Mr. M. Curt (on behalf of Mrs K. Curt and Miss S. Wilson)

by

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## **1.0 Non-Technical Summary**

A planning application was submitted to North Kesteven District Council to construct two bungalows on a plot of land located off Millview Road, Ruskington. Permission was granted, subject to a condition requiring archaeological observation and recording during earth-removal.

For the most part, the site appeared devoid of archaeological deposits, though a substantial curvilinear ditch was exposed on the south side of the plot. Finds which were recovered from the ditch have been dated to the Roman period.

## **2.0 Introduction**

An archaeological watching brief took place on August 28th, 1995 during construction trenching for two new bungalows (Fig. 's 1 and 2). These works were commissioned by Mr M Curt on behalf of Mrs K Curt and Miss S Wilson and were centred on a project specification, dated August 19th, 1995.

The archaeological data base (the County Sites and Monuments record) does not contain site-specific records in relation to this site, though dense settlement remains, spanning from the late prehistoric to modern periods, have been recorded in many parts of the modern settlement, rendering Ruskington an extremely sensitive, yet relatively unexplored, archaeological zone.

The central national grid reference is TF ~~508170~~ ~~351350~~

## **3.0 Planning background**

An application was made for residential development (application 52 / 602 / 1995). Planning permission was granted, subject to the undertaking of an archaeological watching brief. A project brief, outlining the scope of the archaeological requirement, was issued by the Community Archaeologist on August 17th, 1995, and a project specification was prepared by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) on August 19th.

Prior to development, the site consisted of derelict pasture, the rough grass vegetation being littered with building and other debris.

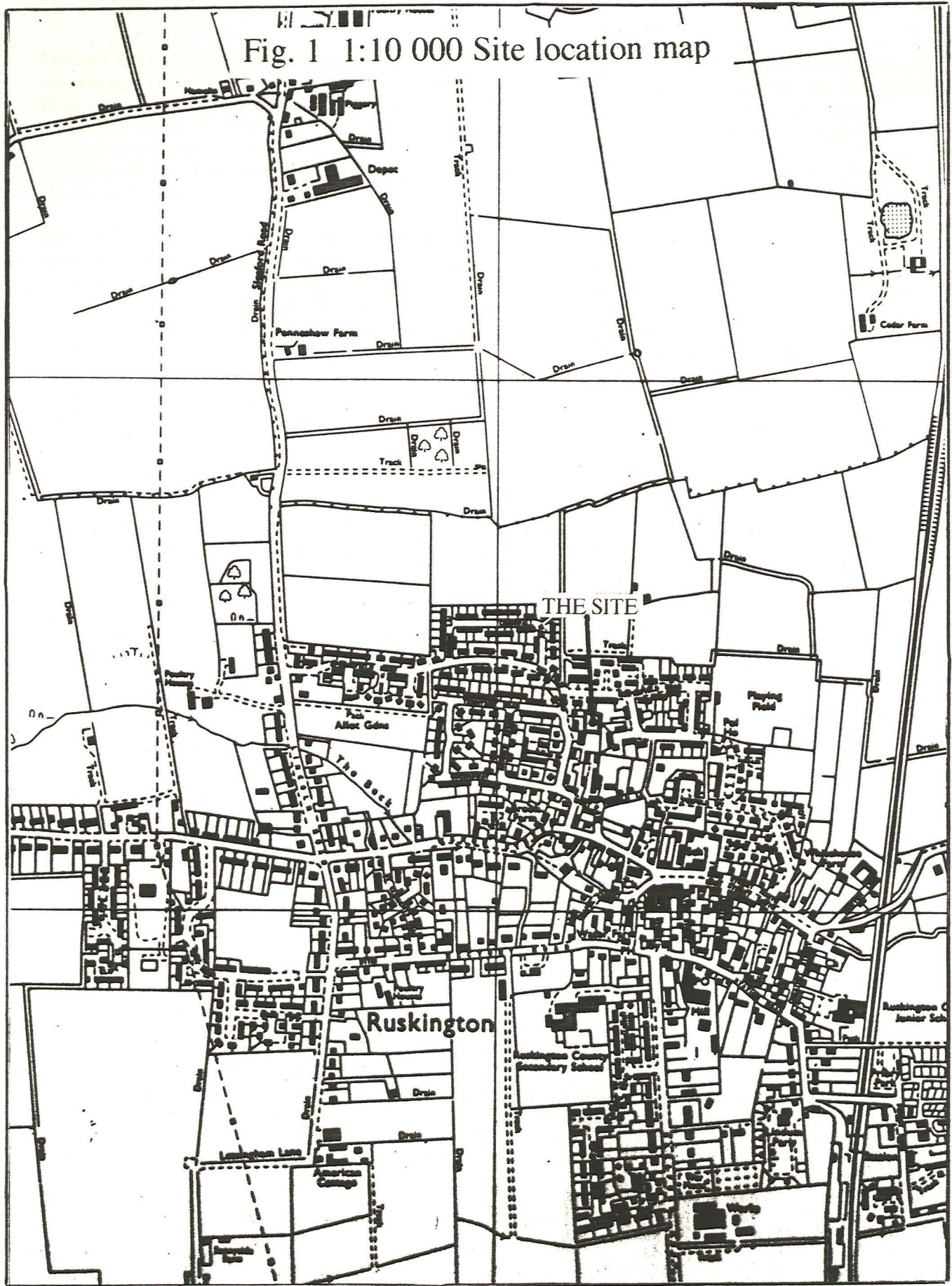
## **4.0 Geology and topography**

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, consisting of coarse sandy topsoils which overlie sand and gravel containing combash and quartzite pebbles - glacial drift.

The site and its surrounding environment is predominantly flat and lies at an altitude approximately 15.0m above modern sea level.

Fig. 1 1:10 000 Site location map



## 5.0 Archaeological and historical background

Dense settlement remains associated with the later prehistoric and Romano-British periods have been recorded as cropmarks to the west of Ruskington - a complex of ring ditches, probably the remains of Bronze Age burial mounds, and 'native-type' settlement enclosures. These remains imply that significant levels of settlement may have been sustained at almost any time throughout the later prehistoric and early historical periods. In 1994, an evaluation sited in the angle of Westcliffe Road and Lincoln Road, exposed sections of an Iron Age enclosure, as well as a small pit containing late Neolithic/early Bronze Age pottery (LHA, 29, 49).

Bronze Age and earlier remains have been recorded as 'chance finds' in several parts of the modern settlement, though it has not been possible to quantify these remains. However, a watching brief in 1994 on the site of the Chestnuts Residential Home (29 Station Road) led to the identification of an unsuspected early Bronze Age (Beaker) inhumation cemetery (Pre-Construct Archaeology, unpublished). It is becoming increasingly clear that this was a particularly desirable settlement zone during the later prehistoric phases. A prime attraction may have been the light, free-draining soils above the fen gravels and the proximity of a reliable water source (ie The Beck). Indeed, it has been rightly suggested that Mareham Lane/King Street (which may have functioned as a policing channel on the east side of the limestone uplands during the period of Roman military Conquest) was a prehistoric foundation; the implication of this being the dense settlement remains which seem to cluster about the route in the area of Ruskington (Whitwell 1982, 24).

The line of the Roman road, Mareham Lane/King Street lies approximately 500m west of the development site, traversed by the more recent Lincoln Road. It may have attracted roadside settlement (excavations at the nearby Anglo-Saxon cemetery revealed the presence of Romano-British quarry pits (Atkin & Healey, forthcoming), though the nature of settlement during this period, as derived from excavations within Ruskington, is not clear).

The earliest historical reference to Ruskington occurs in the Domesday Book of 1086 where a settlement is named *Reschintone* (Mills, 1993). The evidence to support the presence of a large Anglo-Saxon population has 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). The cemetery is the westernmost of a group of such sites, 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, settlement remains (house plans, roads, rubbish pits etc) have been more difficult to identify, though middle and later Saxon pottery was recovered in association with structural-type features at Station Road (Pre-Construct Archaeology, unpublished report).

## 6.0 Aims

The principal aims of the watching brief Millview Road were to ensure that any archaeological features or artefactual remains exposed or retrieved during groundworks would be recorded and interpreted to standards accepted by the Community Archaeologist for North Kesteven. A project Specification, based on these objectives, was jointly agreed between Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln), the Community Archaeologist and the Client.

## 7.0 Methodology

As the Client wished to undertake all soil stripping and excavation in one operation, a continuous watching brief was maintained over a period of one day. Mechanical excavation was undertaken using a JCB with back actor, fitted with a 0.5m or 0.7m wide bucket.

The foundation footprints of both dwellings had been marked-out with wooden pegs and chalk lines in advance of trenching. The upper topsoil, [1], had also been removed, incorporating a spread of coarse vegetation. Trenching commenced on the north side of the plot and progressed southwards. Trenches were excavated to depths averaging 80cm, usually involving the truncation of natural gravels in the base of each cutting. The gravels were common to the whole of the development area.

The bases of all trenches were shovel-cleaned and inspected for intrusive archaeological features, as were the trench sides. For the most part, the site proved archaeologically sterile, though a substantial east-west ditch was exposed in trenches associated with Plot 1 on the south side of the site (below).

Recording and excavation was undertaken by C. Palmer-Brown.

## 8.0 Results

### 8.1 Basic stratigraphy

The fundamental units of stratigraphy may be summarised thus:-

- [1] Topsoil: dark brown sandy loam containing moderate small gravel inclusion; depth = 35cm+
- /
- [2] Subsoil: olive-green/brown sandy silt containing moderate gravel inclusion. Not continuous, but filling irregularities/depressions in natural gravel surface.
- /
- [3] Natural: clean yellow/orange very loose gravel mixed with soft sand; widespread drift deposit of fen sand and gravel

### 8.2 Archaeology

Only one archaeologically significant feature was exposed during trenching (modern features, including an electricity mains cutting, were exposed in plot 2 but are not here described).

Three sections of a substantial curvilinear ditch, [5], were exposed in the foundation trenches of plot 1 (Fig. 2). The ditch was orientated east-west and was defined by its dark upper backfill, [4], which contrasted against the natural gravels through which it had been cut. Its course was traced in the east, central and west construction trenches, its width varying between 1.5m and 2.0m.

A section of ditch fill was removed in the east wall construction trench; to determine the depth and date of the feature. At this point, its depth was c. 80cm. The profile was U-shaped (slightly exaggerated in Fig. 3 as the section drawn was oblique). Lining the base of the cut was a shallow lens of yellowish-brown silty sand and gravel, though the bulk fill was an homogenous green/brown silty sand which contained frequent small limestone gravel fragments, as well as occasional small pieces of charcoal. In the upper void was a layer of small/medium-sized stones - they were noted in the top of each of the three exposures.

Fragments of animal bone and four sherds of Romano-British pottery were recovered from the ditch. They were examined by Ms. B. Davies (City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit) who suggested a date range of C2nd AD - C3rd AD, though the sample was simply too small to allow a more definitive assessment.

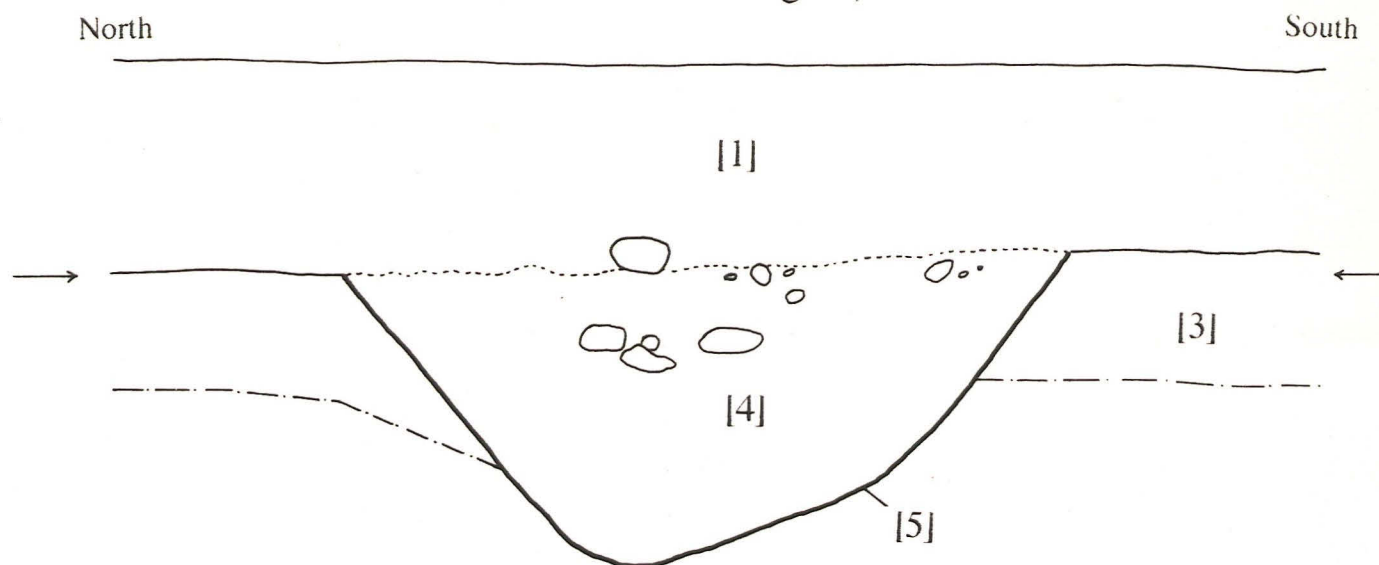
No other archaeological features were exposed during the recording brief.

Fig. 2 1:200 Plot/location plan





Fig. 3 North-south section across ditch [5]  
(location on Fig. 2)



### 9.0 Conclusions

The nature of settlement during the Romano-British period has been poorly-defined in the area of Ruskington. Roman coins and other finds have been recovered from within the modern settlement, as have other finds, though a context for these remains has not been determined. Cropmark sites on the north-west, west and south-west periphery of the village could imply that settlement was focused on Mareham Lane/King Street, though since the morphology of settlement-type enclosures alone is an unreliable indication of antiquity, it is not known whether these remains are Romano-British, late prehistoric or both.

Ephemeral Romano-British features were exposed during excavations at the Anglo-Saxon cemetery, on the north side of the Beck, mainly on the west side of Lincoln Road. Similarly, Romano-British finds were reported during evaluation trenching at a site set in the north-west angle of Lincoln Road and Westcliffe Road.

Unfortunately, within the remit of the present investigation, it has not been possible to be certain on the detailed interpretation of the curved ditch exposed in Plot 1. It is tenuously suggested, however, that it was a settlement boundary/enclosure ditch. This is implied by the curve of the ditch and the quantity of remains within its fill - the recovery of four (some large) unabraded pottery sherds and quantities of domestic animal bone suggests that the ditch lay close to, or within, an area of domestic habitation. If the feature is part of an enclosure, then most of it must lie west of the present development plots.

## 10.0 Acknowledgements

On behalf of Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln), sincere thanks are expressed to the commissioning Clients. Thanks also to the Community Archaeologist for North Kesteven and to staff at the County Sites and Monuments Record for allowing access to the parish files. Finally, thank you to Barbara Davies for her assessment of the pottery.

## 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	Classification
[1]	Topsoil; dark brown sandy loam with moderate small gravel inclusion
[2]	Subsoil; olive green/brown sandy silt containing moderate quantity of small gravel inclusion
[3]	Natural; mixed yellow/orange, very loose, sandy gravel
[4]	Fill of ditch [5]; homogenous greenish-brown silty sand containing frequent (70%) gravel inclusion, occasional flecks of charcoal, pottery sherds and animal bone.
[5]	Cut of large curvilinear ditch, orientated vaguely east-west.



General view of site during trenching, looking south-west



Unexcavated fill of ditch [5] in central construction trench, Plot 1, looking south



Section through ditch [5] in east wall construction trench, Plot 1, looking east

## 11.2 Colour Photographs

### 11.3 Site Archive

The basic site archive comprises the following:

x1 watching brief daily log sheet

x1 colour print film

x1 1:20 scale drawing (section through ditch 5)

x1 1:200 development plan (incorporating location/alignment of ditch [5])

x1 1:100/1:50 architect drawing, Plot 1 (incorporating location/alignment of ditch [5])

x1 bag of finds

Misc. notes and correspondence

Primary records are currently with Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln), 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*

*LHA* 1994, **29**, 49

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

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Whitwell, JB 1982 'The Coritani: Some Aspects of the Iron Age Tribe and Roman *Civitas*, *BAR* British Series 99