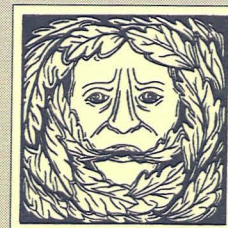


95/10

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
FOR A DEVELOPMENT AT
THE BECKETT SCHOOL,
GAINSBOROUGH,
LINCOLNSHIRE
(GBS 95)**



A P S
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ELI 8543

SWI 11831 11832

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
FOR A DEVELOPMENT AT
THE BECKETT SCHOOL,
GAINSBOROUGH,
LINCOLNSHIRE
(GBS 95)**

Work Undertaken For
Land and Building Consultancy

September 1995

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1. SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the extension and remodelling of a classroom adjacent to the Beckett School, White's Wood Lane, Gainsborough. The watching brief monitored the excavation of the foundations of this structure.

A possible Romano-British pot kiln was identified in close proximity to the development, suggesting the possibility of recovering archaeological remains from this period. The Beckett school stands in land that was not formally enclosed until the seventeenth century, prior to which the area was common pasture.

Excavation of the foundation trenches revealed a sequence of natural yellow clays overlain by subsoil, topsoil and modern construction deposits. Cutting through the subsoil and natural were two land drains of recent construction. Modern pottery (post 1500 A.D.) was recovered during the watching brief from the subsoil and topsoil deposits. A rim sherd that may be of Romano-British origin (c. 50-400 A.D.) was also retrieved.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

On the 5th, 6th and 12th September 1995, an archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the construction of an extension to the east of the Beckett School, White's Wood Lane, Gainsborough. Approval for the proposed development was sought through the submission of planning application (AC/W33/377/95). The archaeological work was commissioned by Land and Building Consultancy, and was carried out by Archaeological Project Services.

2.2 Topography and Geology

Gainsborough is situated on the east bank of the River Trent, c. 24km northwest of Lincoln and c. 45 km west of Louth. The Beckett School is situated 1.7 km to the east of Gainsborough town centre, as defined by the Market Place. The town lies in the civil parish of Gainsborough, West Lindsey district, Lincolnshire.

The site and immediate surroundings form an area of high ground above the Trent valley. The topography is gently undulating, lying at c. 32m O.D. Local soils are the Worcester Association reddish clayey soils developed in Permo-Triassic mudstone and clay shale (*Hodge et al. 1984, 367*).

2.3 Archaeological Setting

A possible Romano-British kiln site has been located in close proximity to the development (*S. Catney pers comm*). A contemporary settlement has also been recognised at Littleborough (the crossing point of the Trent during this period) approximately 6 km south of Gainsborough (*Whitwell, 1970, 147*).

The real origins of Gainsborough date back to the period of Anglo-Scandinavian conquest and migration, from the 5th to 10th centuries A.D. The Danish army wintered at nearby Torksey from 873-4 A.D., and Swein and Cnut mustered their forces at Gainsborough in 1013 A.D. (*Platts, 1985, 282*). Place-name evidence compliments the history of this period, the town's name is derived from the personal name Gegn (Gegn being a shortened form of the personal name Gaebeald or Geanburh) and Old English Burg, meaning a fortified place, town or borough (*Ekwall, 1974, 191; 75*).

Situated to the north of Gainsborough at Castle Hills, Thonock are the remains of the town's castle, believed on the grounds of morphology to be dateable to the 11th or 12th centuries (*Platts, 1985, 187*). From this period onwards the area surrounding the Beckett School formed part of a medieval park, largely as a result of the generally poor soils on this location. A moated site, believed to be the residence of the park gamekeeper, is situated 1.8 km south of the development (*Everson et al 1991, 53*).

By 1601 A.D. most of the open parkland had been enclosed, and a series of small rectangular fields covered the locality as depicted in Drake's engraving of 1747 A.D. (*Thompson, 1991, 16*). Further developments were contained to the west of the main railway line that currently bisects the modern town. Construction on a large scale did not occur to the east of this railway until after the second world war, when a series of housing estates and schools were constructed (*West Lindsey D.C., 1983, 5*). The Beckett School forms part of this post-war development.

3. AIMS

The aims of the watching brief were to locate and record archaeological deposits, if present, and to determine their date, function and origin.

4. METHODS

Trenches were excavated to a depth of *c.* 1m using a mechanical excavator. The sides of the trenches were then cleaned and examined to identify any archaeological features. Each archaeological deposit or feature revealed within the trench was allocated a unique reference number with an individual written description. Natural geological deposits were also recorded where

exposed. A photographic record was compiled, and sections and plans were drawn at a scale of 1:50.

5. RESULTS

Records of the deposits and features identified during the watching brief were examined. Phasing was assigned based on the nature of the deposits and recognisable relationships between them. Two phases were identified:

- Phase 1 Natural deposits
- Phase 2 Modern deposits

Phase 1 Natural Deposits

Exposed across the development area was a layer of plastic, orange-yellow clay (002). This deposit was not excavated to its lowest extent, but formed a stratum that was a minimum of 0.8m in thickness.

Phase 2 Modern Deposits

Immediately overlying the natural were two very distinct layers (003 and 004). Unfortunately their stratigraphic relationship had been removed by the initial machine stripping. The most extensive of the two deposits was (004), forming a hard yellow-brown silty clay *c.* 0.6m thick. The base of this context had an irregular boundary with (002). The finds from this layer consisted of several pieces of modern pottery, although one rim sherd of suspected Romano-British pottery was also recovered (*H. Healey pers comm*).

A pungent, soft greenish-blue layer of clay (003) covered an area of *c.* 5.4m length by *c.* 1.8m width across the westernmost extent of the development area. This context is assumed to be contemporary with (004). The clay has an irregular

boundary with (002), and was distinguishable as a deposit of *c.* 0.3m thickness. A fragment of clay pipe and several sherds of modern pottery were retrieved from this layer.

Cutting through (002), (003) and (004) were two circular ceramic land drains (006 and 007), running east to west across the development area for at least *c.* 8m.

The latest deposits in the stratigraphic sequence consisted of two contemporary layers (001 and 005) that effectively sealed the earlier stratigraphy (002, 003, 004, 006, 007). A very even layer of sandy silt (001) formed the turf of the present playing field. A mixed deposit of clay and sand (005), incorporating fragments of concrete and plaster, was exposed to the south of the site. The latter formed a level platform for the modern school patio. Several sherds of modern pottery and a fragment of slag were recovered from (001). No finds were retrieved from (005).

6. DISCUSSION

The clay deposit (002) exposed across the whole of the site had formed as a result of natural deposition (Phase 1).

Modern deposits (Phase 2) may represent a sterile land surface, prior to the development of the Beckett School. Finds from these deposits include pottery, a piece of clay pipe and a fragment of metalworking residue. The introduction of ceramic land drains reflects an attempt to influence the drainage of these soils. The collection of finds suggest that refuse may have been sporadically dumped across this land.

The latest activity within Phase 2 is securely associated with the building and development of the Beckett School. These

layers formed the turfline of the playing field and the construction debris of the school patio.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Archaeological investigations at White's Wood Lane, Gainsborough, show a sequence of natural to modern deposits. The natural deposit of clay was superseded by a number of modern archaeological deposits. A layer of subsoil seems to have been utilised for the sporadic dumping of modern materials. The presence of land drains suggests that the function must have been agricultural at some stage, though it is possible that the pipes were installed as drainage for the school playing field. Very recent turf and construction debris formed the uppermost horizon within the recorded stratigraphy, securely associated with the present Beckett School. The absence of any Romano-British, Anglian or medieval deposits has provided useful negative archaeological evidence for the location of these early settlements.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Project Services wish to thank Brian Raynor at Land and Building Consultancy for funding the fieldwork and post-excavation analysis. Steve Haynes coordinated the work and David Start edited this report. Background information was provided by the County Archaeologist Steve Catney and parish files maintained by Heritage Lincolnshire.

9. PERSONNEL

Project Manager: Steve Haynes
Site Supervisor: Neil Herbert
Illustration: Neil Herbert
Post-excavation analyst: Neil Herbert

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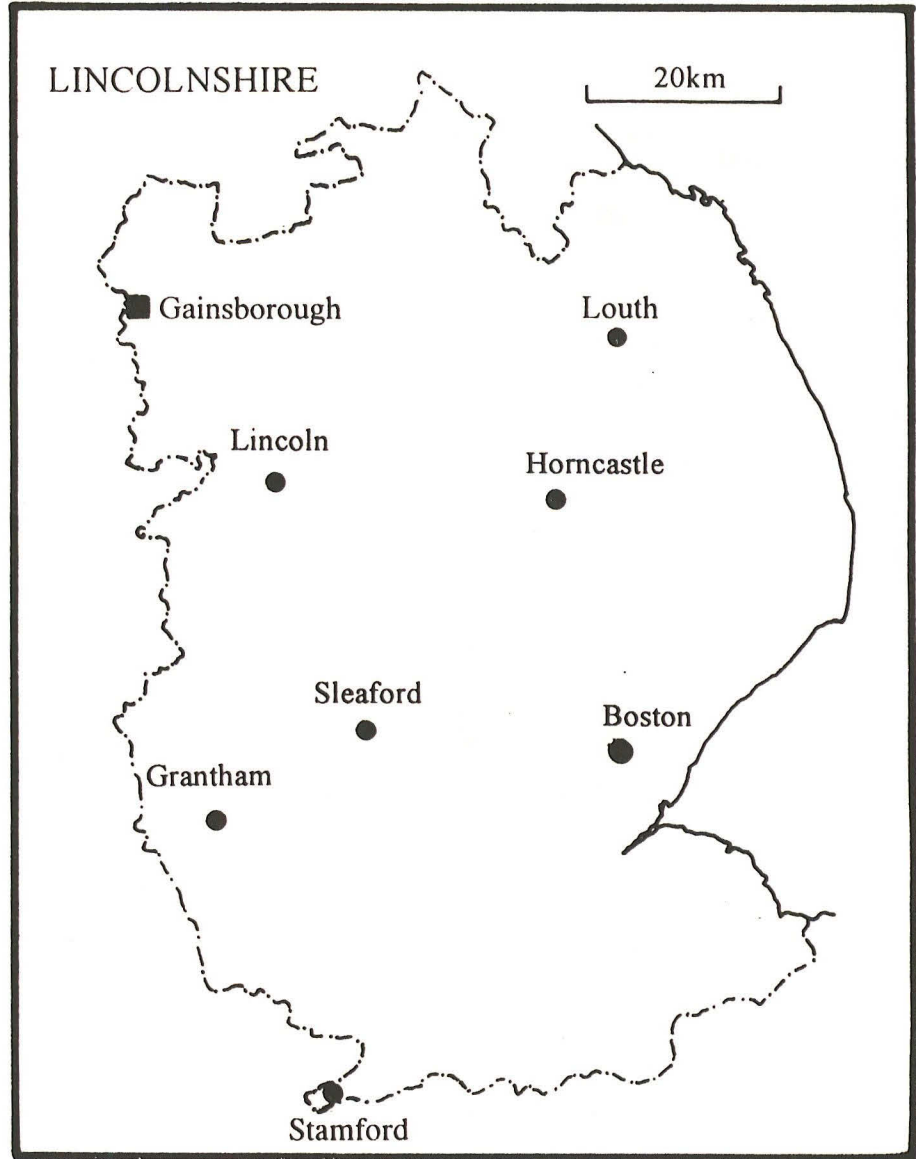
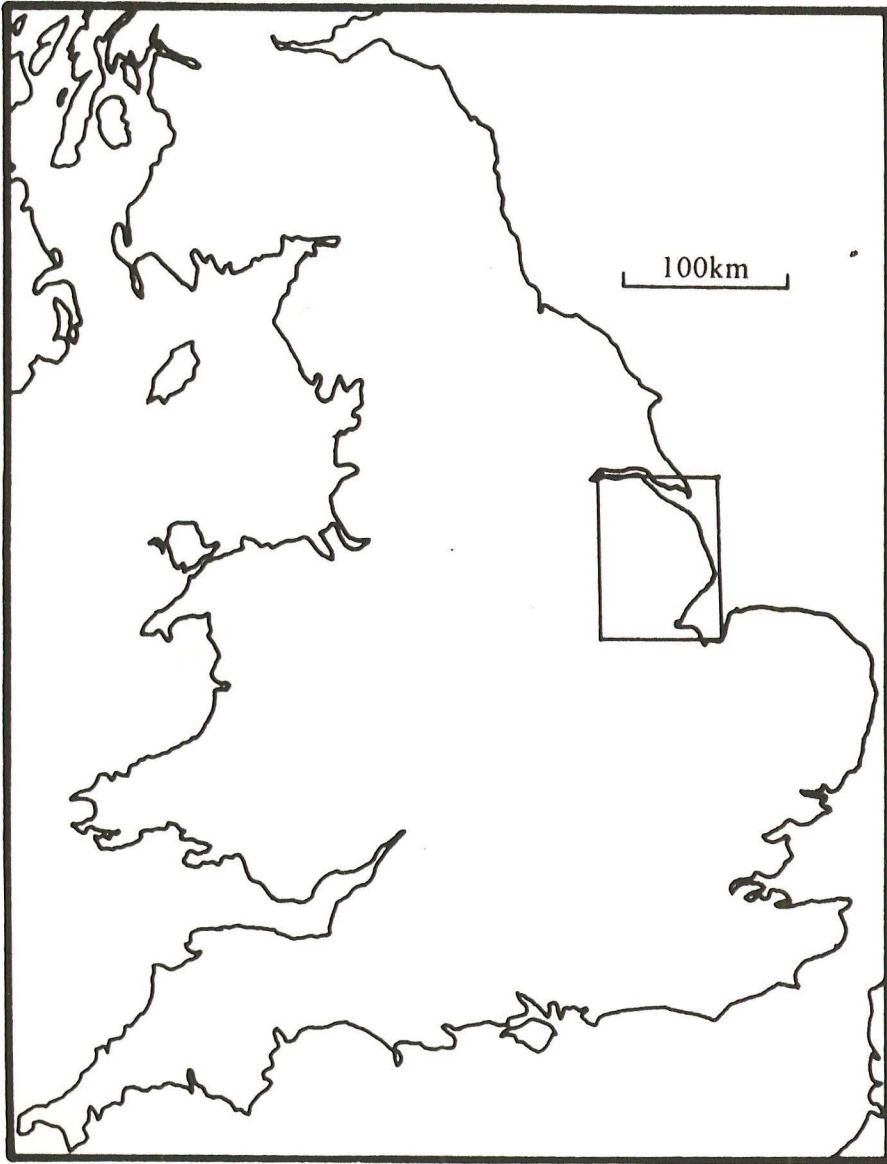


Fig. 1 General Location Plan

General Location Plan

Figure. 2 Site Location Plan



0 1km



 Area of Development



Figure. 3 Plan of the Area of Development

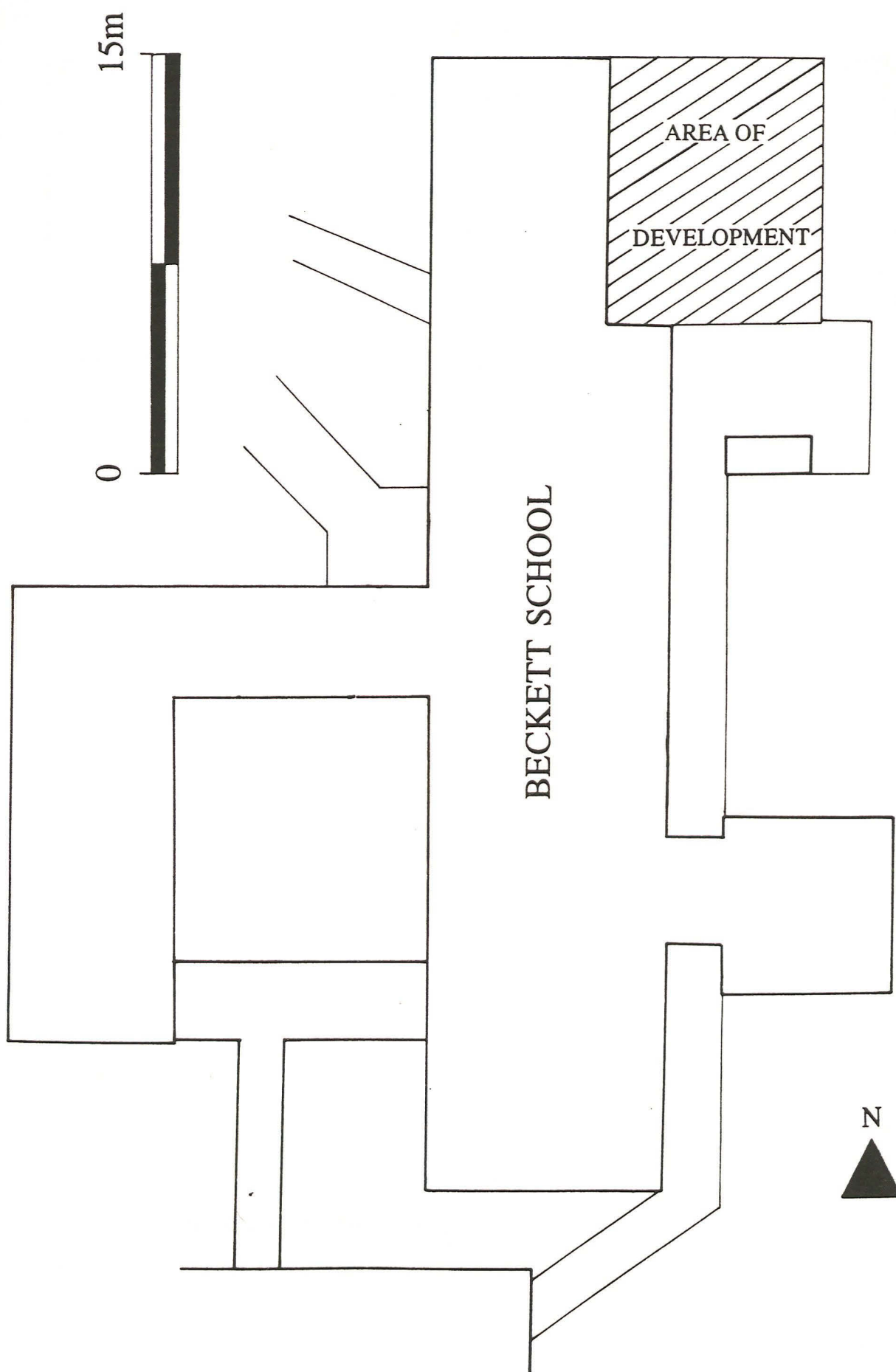
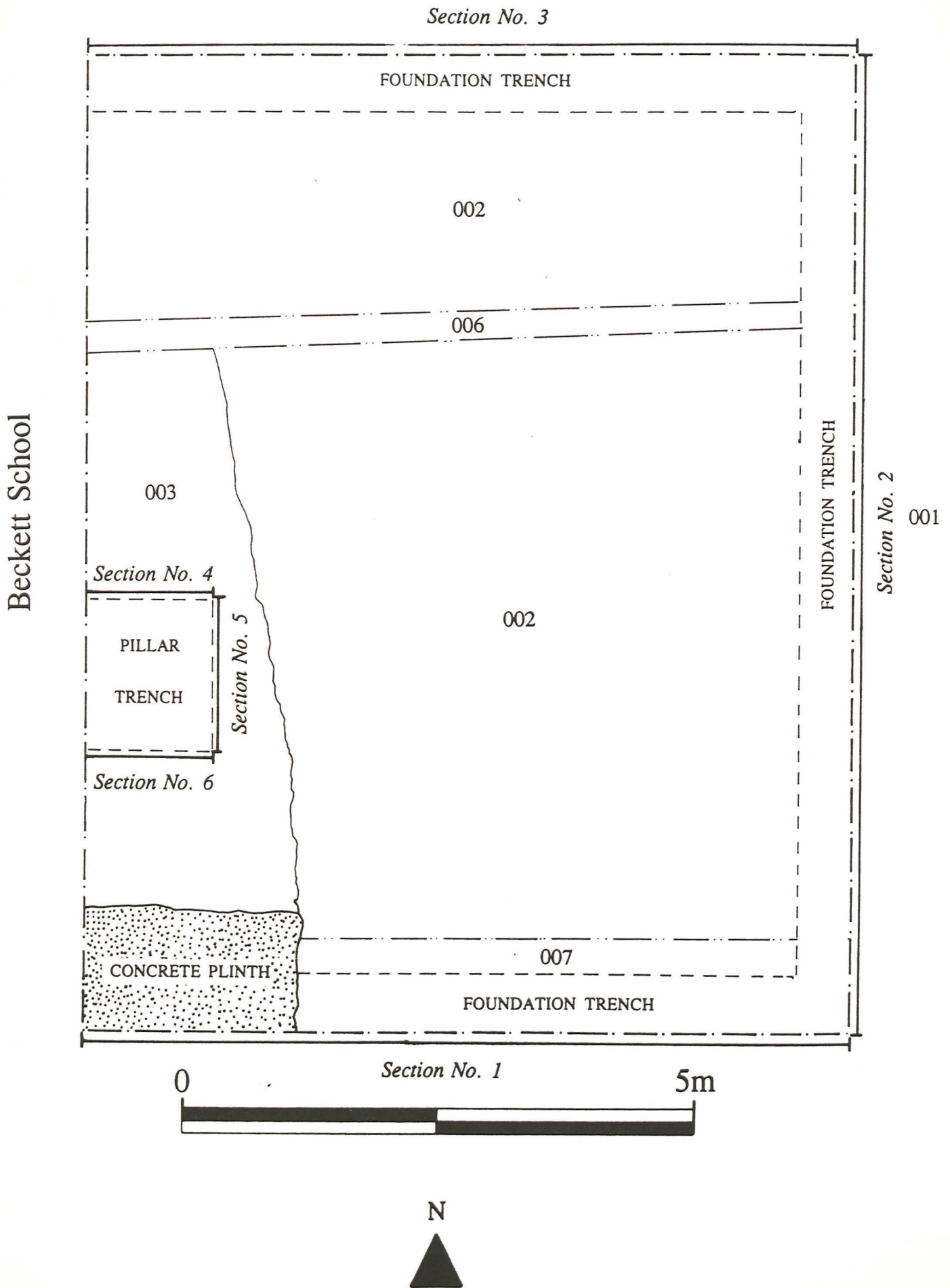


Figure. 4 Plan of the Area of Development: showing locations of features and sections



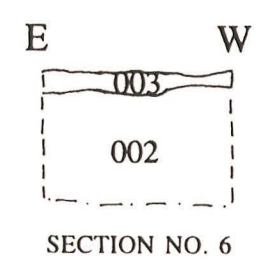
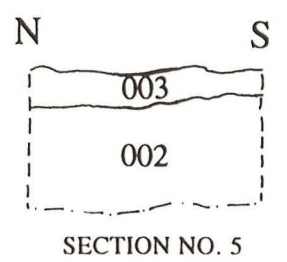
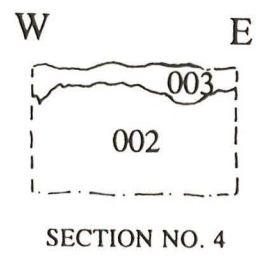
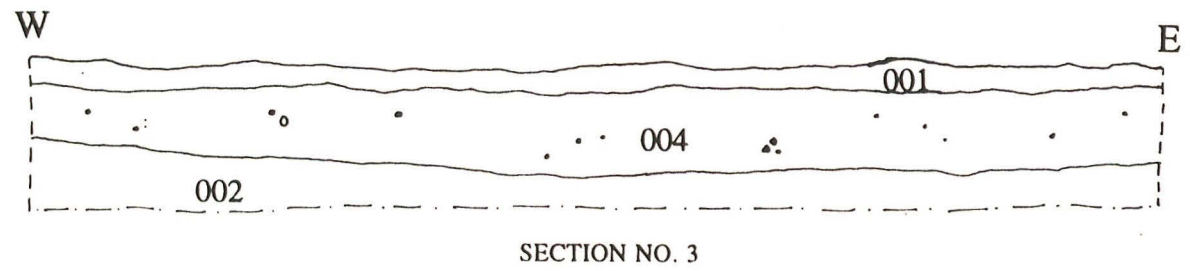
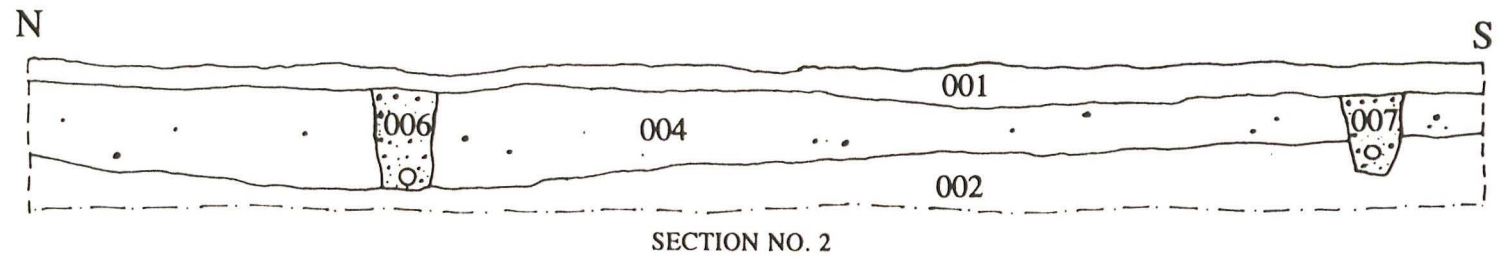
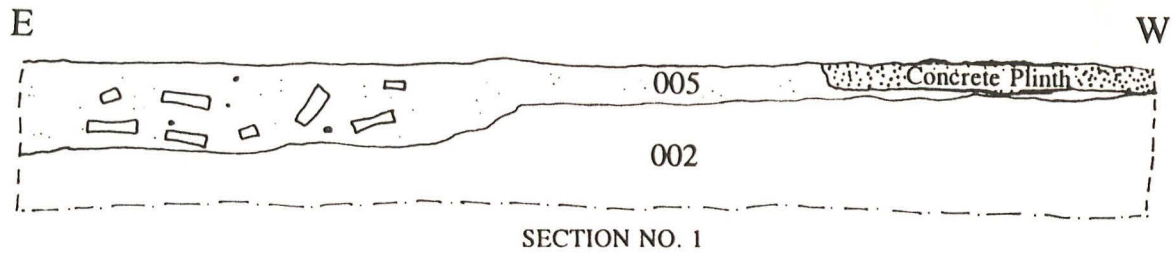


Figure. 5 Sections 1,2,3,4,5 and 6

APPENDIX 1

Context Summary

Context	Description	Interpretation
1	Sandy silt	Turf
2	Plastic orange-yellow clay	Natural deposit
3	Soft greenish-blue clay	Possible dump
4	Hard yellow-brown silty clay	Subsoil
5	Mixed sands/clays	Construction debris
6	Circular ceramic pipe	Land drain
7	Circular ceramic pipe	Land drain

APPENDIX 2

The Archive

The archive consists of:

- 7 . . Context Records
- 21 . Photographic Records
- 7 . . Scale Drawings
- 1 . . Site Matrix
- 3 . . Bags of Finds

All primary records are currently kept at:

Archaeological Project Services
The Old School
Cameron Street
Heckington
Lincolnshire
NG34 9RW

City and County Museum Accession number	158.95
Archaeological Project Services project code	GBS 95