92/3

Archaeological Watching Brief at Osbournby, Lincolnshire

by

Heritage Lincolnshire

on behalf of

Anglian Water Services Ltd.

Report compiled by M. Dymond

SUMMARY

Between the 29 July and 25 August 1992, an archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Heritage Lincolnshire during the construction of a water main from Osbournby village, south along the A15, to Osbournby roundabout (TF 07053811 to TF 07243693 - see figs 1 and 2), on behalf of Anglian Water Services Ltd.

The watching brief exposed a buried soil which is modern in date. No substantial archaeological deposits were disturbed during the course of the work.

CONTENTS PAGE

INTRODUCTION

Between the 29th July and 25th August 1992, an archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Heritage Lincolnshire during the construction of a water main from Osbournby village, south along the A15, to Osbournby roundabout (TF 07053811 to TF 07243693 - see figs. 1 and 2), on behalf of Anglian Water Services Ltd. The purpose of the work was to record any archaeological remains exposed during the mechanical excavation of the pipe-trench.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SETTING

Osbournby is first mentioned in the Domesday Book (1086) where it is referred to as *Esbernebi*. The only evidence for occupation of the area before this date comes from chance archaeological finds and small scale excavations which have produced material dating to the prehistoric, Roman, Saxon and medieval periods.

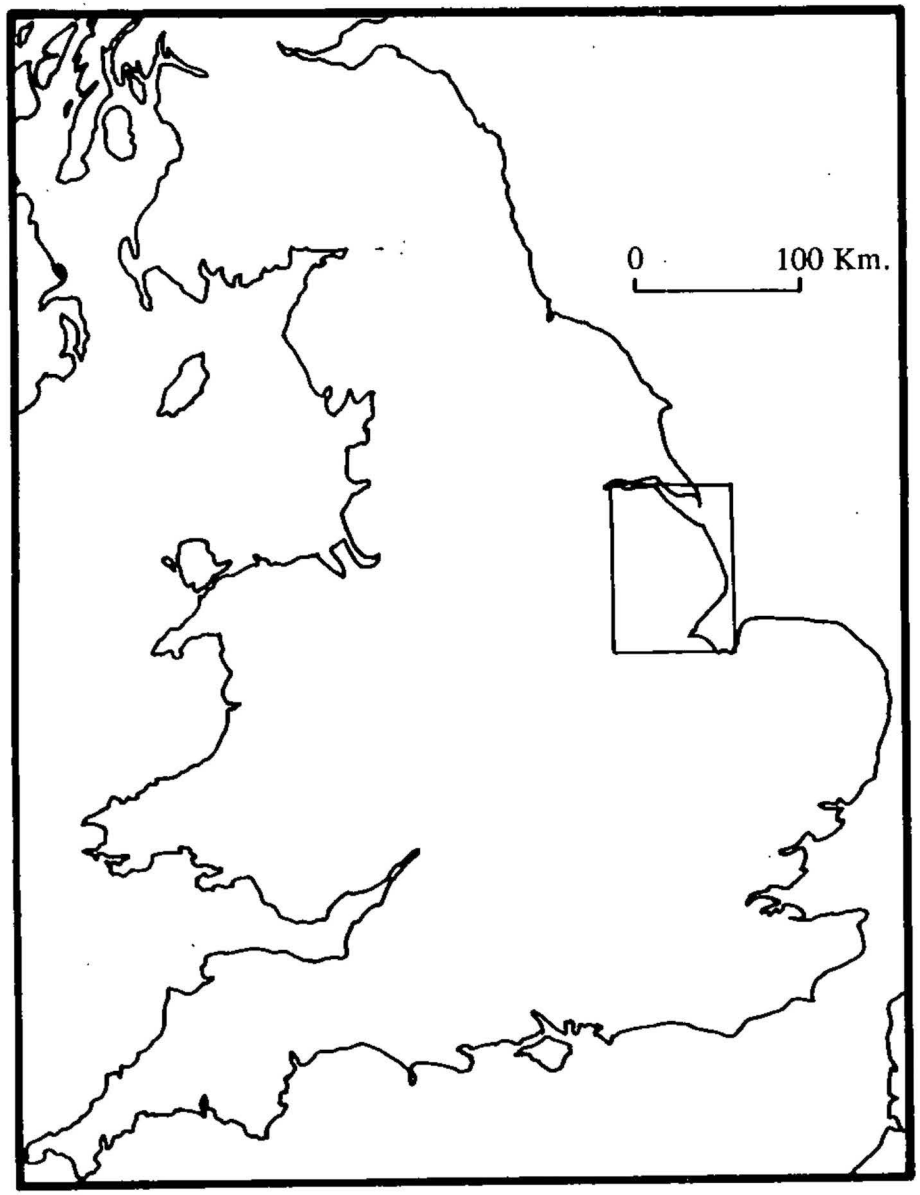
Of singular importance is evidence gained from a small excavation west of the village where the remains of a Roman field system and a Saxon building were discovered.

METHODOLOGY

During excavation of the pipe-trench (which varied in depth from 1.2m. to 1.4m.) all archaeological deposits ('contexts') exposed were recorded. The recording of these contexts took the form of a unique context number and individual written description. The surface geology was recorded in the same manner at intervals of approximately 50 metres.

The route of the pipe-line was divided into areas A to F, which are defined by present day field boundaries. Within each area the point at which a record was compiled is marked by a number (see fig. 2).

FIG. 1 LOCATION



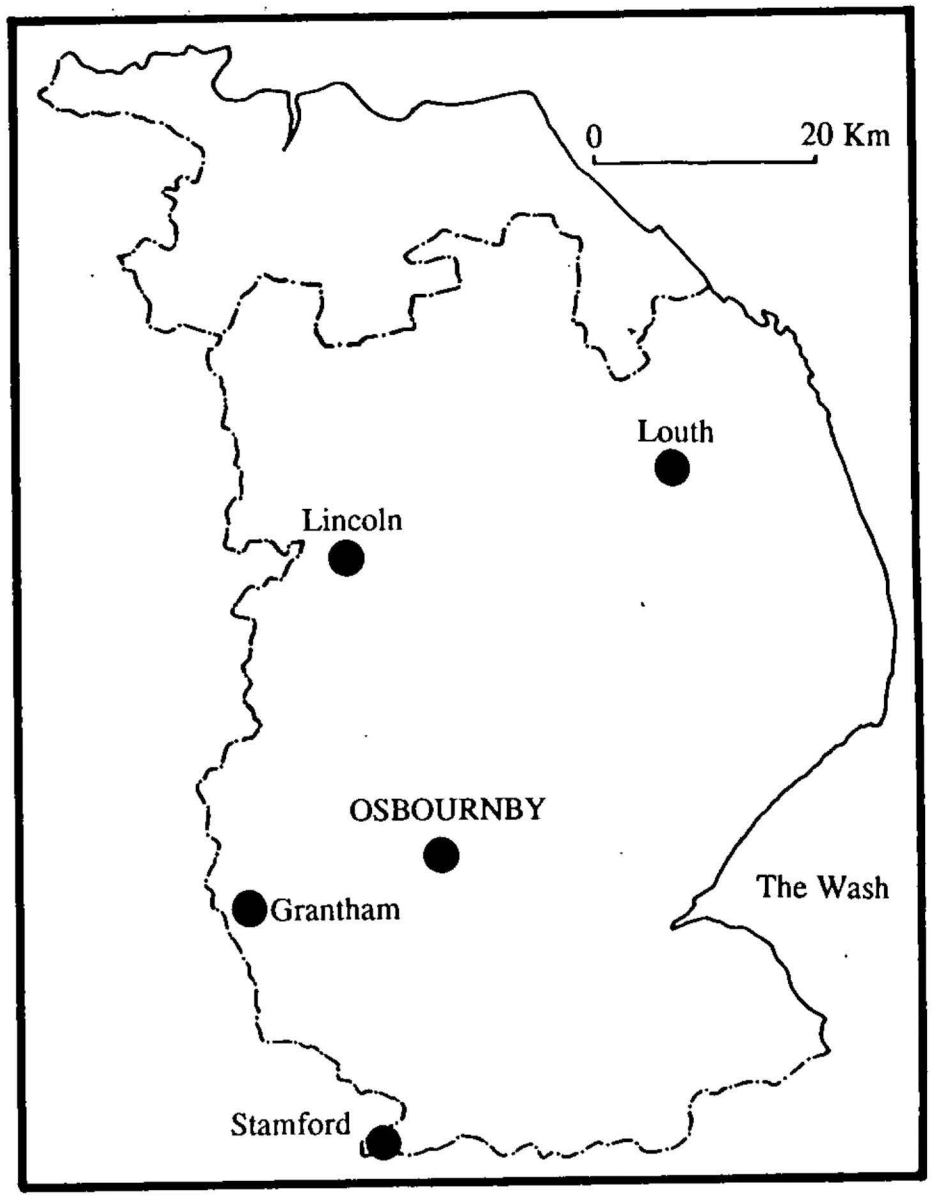
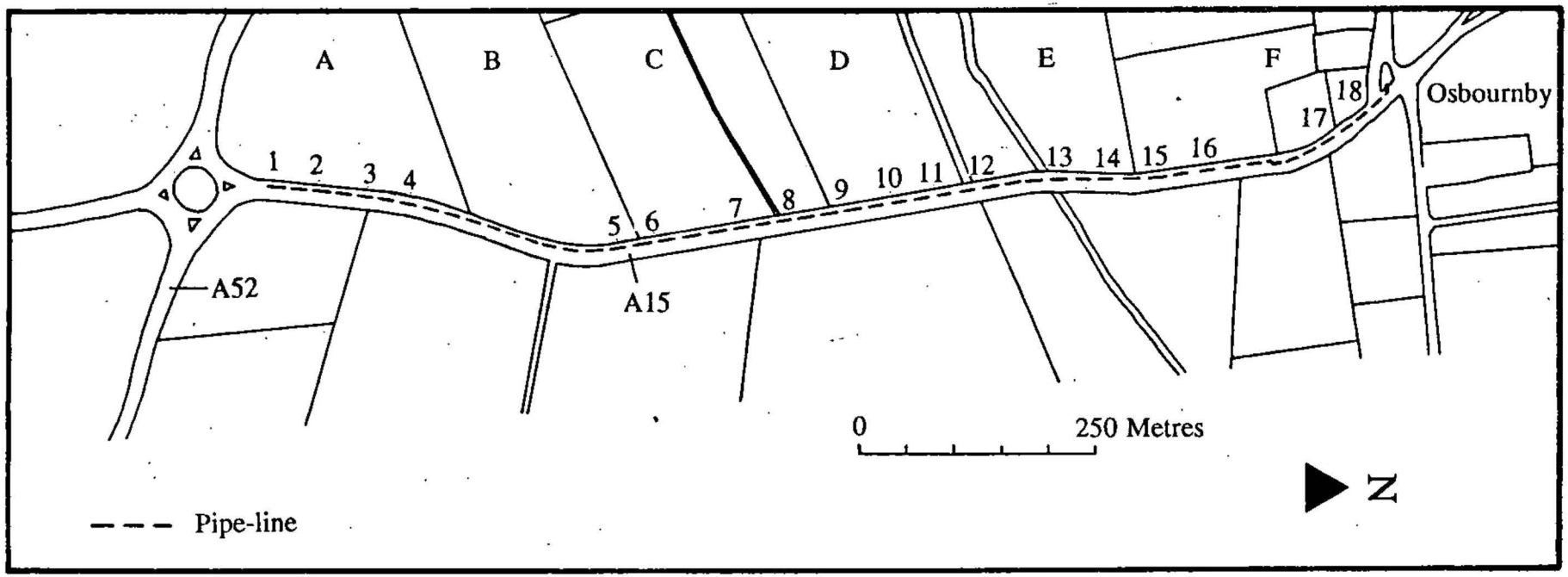


FIG. 2 ROUTE OF PIPE-LINE



WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

A buried soil [002], visible in areas D, E and F, was sealed by top-soil [001], probably created when a dyke located adjacent to and parallel with the A15 was re-cut. The spoil derived from the re-cutting of the dyke [001] covered the then present top-soil, thereby preserving it *in situ*. Artefactual remains from [001] are modern in date and comprise plastic cups, drinks cans and nylon rope amongst other items, showing that the buried soil was not 'buried' until recently.

SURFACE GEOLOGY

The geological stratigraphic sequence exposed along the length of the pipe-trench can be broadly summarised as follows:

1. Top-soil
2. Buried soil
3. Sub-soil
4. Silt
5. Clay
6. Sand and Gravel

The top-soil and buried soil, discussed above, overlie a yellow subsoil [003] composed almost entirely of silt. [003] contained fragments of flint and granite and varied in thickness from 0.30m. to 0.85m.

The silts and clays varied in colour, composition and thickness along the length of the pipe-trench and consequently no two positions where a record was compiled are exactly the same. However, throughout the length of the pipe-trench, a general transition from silt to clay was noted as depth increased. At two separate locations sand and gravel was exposed at the base of the trench.

The only marked difference in the stratigraphic sequence occurred in area F where five separate silts were identified at location 17. Additionally, at location 18, approximately 50m. north of 17, a dark grey silt was exposed in which preserved plant remains were clearly visible.

CONCLUSION

The buried soil, although archaeological in nature, is important only in the wider context of the past management of land drainage, and does not relate to any form of sustained archaeological activity.

The dark grey silt exposed at location 18 probably represents the remnants of a pond/lake which had become overgrown, allowing deposits of silt to build up, which eventually buried the vegetation. The resulting anaerobic conditions enabled the plant remains to be preserved. The pond/lake would have presumably drained towards the south (assuming the topography is the same now as it would have been then), accounting for the varied deposits located at 17. This process was almost certainly a slow one, allowing the silt and clay held in suspension to settle, suggesting that a low energy water environment prevailed. Therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest that during the period when these silts and clays were being deposited, this area was a marsh, draining to the south.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Heritage Lincolnshire would like to thank Anglian Water Services Ltd. for funding the watching brief

APPENDIX 1 GLOSSARY

Context An archaeological context represents a distinct archaeological event or process. For example the action of digging a pit creates a context (the cut) as does the process of its subsequent backfill (the fill). Each context encountered during an excavation or evaluation is allocated a unique context number by the archaeologist and a record sheet detailing the description and interpretation of the context (the context sheet) is created and placed in the site archive. Context numbers are identified within the report text by square brackets e.g. [001].

Layer A layer is a term used to describe an accumulation of soil which is not contained within a cut.

Natural Deposit(s) of soil which have accumulated without the influence of human activity.