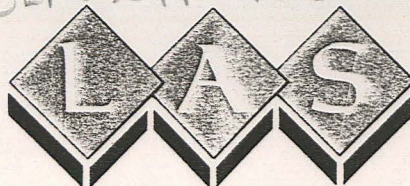


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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

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Fiskerton, Lincs.

Mains Relay:

Archaeological Monitoring

NGR: TF 07 72 TF0470 7203

Site Code: FIM 96

LCNCC Museum Acn. No. 48.96

Report prepared for Anglian Water Services

March 1997

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**Fiskerton, Lincs.
Mains Relay:
Archaeological Monitoring**

NGR: *TF 07 72*
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Summary

A watching brief during trenching around the core of the village located intermittent peat deposits between Orchard Lane and the Carpenter's Arms. Small branch and twig remains were present beside Perrin's Cottage. It is thought that the peat represents the post-Roman positions of small riverside creeks but some may have formed in later drainage features.

In Orchard Lane large rounded cobbles were visible in the trench face, apparently in association with a single piece of Roman tile. Stone blocks also seen in the trench were interpreted as the foundation of a medieval or later property boundary.

Introduction

Lindsey Archaeological Services (LAS) was commissioned by Anglian Water in January 1996 to conduct an intermittent watching brief of trenching for a 90mm diameter replacement water main in Fiskerton (Fig. 1). The archaeological monitoring had been requested by the County Archaeological Officer in December 1995.

The first inspection visit by the author was made on 19th February 1996, and intermittent monitoring continued until 7th February 1997. A total of 40 visits were made.

Archaeological Background

The present quiet residential nature of Fiskerton belies the evidence for its status in late prehistory and the Romano-British period. There are signs of local activity (although not necessarily occupation) from the Bronze Age, and the River Witham appears to have been the focus. It is difficult to determine the size and position of the river at that date as subsequent management of the course of the Witham and adjacent low-lying ground has changed the topography.

It has been suggested that the northern edge of the Romano-British river was revealed in an archaeological evaluation trench behind Perrin's Cottages (Palmer-Brown 1994b, 5). At that location, 65m south of the present road, a sloping surface of limestone rubble and Roman tile was interpreted as a 'hard' for beaching craft at the edge of a channel. In the light of other evidence it seems unlikely that this was the main channel: two Bronze Age round barrows 150m north of the present course attest to solid ground and a contemporary bronze founder's hoard is known 150m north of the barrows.

In 1981, an excavation close to the river identified two rows of multiple tall upright timbers apparently extending at least 100m southwards from close to the modern village (Field 1982). The timbers were interpreted as a causeway and were of Middle Iron Age date, 5th - 4th century BC. It was suspected then that the river lay south of all the located timbers, either on its present course or further south.

Iron Age and Roman metal items and craft tools, possibly deliberately deposited, were found around the base of the causeway. Other similar items are known from the Witham nearby and from low-lying land in Washingborough to the south of the river. The dense cluster of reported finds in the vicinity of Fiskerton probably marks a bias in fieldwork close to the modern villages and footpaths but there does seem to have been a tradition of ritual activity. This could reflect a crossing point, a hazardous stretch of the river or environs subject to severe flooding.

The Watching Brief (Fig. 2)

Reepham Road

This road lies to the north of the village and is higher up the slope than the remainder of the monitored trench.

1. Trenching along Reepham Road showed that to the west of 'Hill Rise' limestone bedrock occurs immediately below the foundation for the modern road. To the east of this point (approximately coinciding with the 10m contour) yellow clay overlies this rock and dips downwards towards the east.
2. Further east, the road rises over another localised outcrop of limestone at the junction of Plough Lane. The rock then dips, remaining at about 0.9m below the surface beneath yellow-brown clay.
3. A linear spread of rounded pebbles was seen 0.3-0.4m below the modern road surface east of Plough Lane (Pls. 1 and 2). This cobbled road surface was aligned towards Plough Lane rather than along the present course of Reepham Road and probably marks the post-medieval lane which has since been realigned south of 'Chapel Side'.
4. The trench south of 'Talltop' revealed road foundation material to 0.45m deep, overlying 0.25m of black soil. Beneath this sand (possibly flood warp deposits) was visible (Pl. 3). The sequence was only seen on the northern side of the trench and may indicate an early roadside ditch over which more recent roads have been extended.

Plough Lane

Plough Lane rises up the natural slope between Lincoln Road and Reepham Road close to the western edge of the village (Pl. 4). The trench was dug along the west side of the road.

5. At the base of the slope, west of 'Fen View', a deposit of grey/white sand was visible from 0.5m below the road surface to at least the trench base at about 1m (Pl. 5). It was suspected that this sand might be the fill of a roadside ditch, and not representative of deposits at this point. To the north the trench cut through siltier deposits beneath the road foundation of limestone lumps.

6. To the west and north of 'The Haven' the road overlay a thick layer of yellow sand (possibly flood warp deposits).

Orchard Road

In this narrow lane the pipe was laid in a trench 0.3m wide, positioned along the eastern edge of the road.

7. At the north end of the trench in this road, rock lumps were seen beneath the tarmac. It appeared probable that these were the foundation for a removed boundary wall aligned along the eastern edge of the road. The foundation extended to the NW of 'Ringwood', where it was covered by 0.55m of topsoil, possibly a collapsed bank or soil pushed to the road edge by post-medieval traffic.

8. West of 'Ringwood' large rounded pebbles were seen in the trench face and in the spoil heap (Pls. 6 and 7). These appeared to form a metallated surface close to which several fragments of tile (one piece Roman) were recovered.

9. SW of 'Ringwood' the trench was cut through loose yellow clay 0.3m below the surface.

10. A peat-filled west-east feature, probably a ditch, was noted 10m north of Lincoln Road. The ditch appeared to be about 1m wide and 0.3m deep; its fill was sealed by topsoil. Despite the peaty fill this feature may not have been of especially great antiquity.

11. At the junction with Lincoln Road slight traces of peat were seen on the surface of bedrock 0.7m below the road surface (Pl. 8).

Blacksmith Road

12. A single hole was inspected at the southern end of this road. A thin layer of black silt was seen beneath the road, overlying yellow sand which was at a depth of 0.6m.

High Street west of Nelson Road

13. West of 'Ashwell Cottage' a peaty silt layer was seen in the trench faces (Pl. 9). This seems to have been situated at the eastern edge of a former depression centred between 'Perrin's Cottage' and west of 'Five Mile House', where small pieces of wood 30-60mm diam. were seen in the exposed peat (Pl. 10). None of these pieces appeared to have been sliced, cut or otherwise

adapted for use and they did not form part of a structure or feature: they seemed to be twig and small branch detritus in a former watercourse. The sequence recorded consisted of white silt with peat lenses beneath the modern road foundation, overlying a thin peat layer; this sequence continued past 'Five Mile House' (Pls. 11 and 12). Yellow sandy clay was present 1.2m deep at the trench base (Pl. 13).

14. To the east of 'Ellesmere House' the Anglian Water operatives reported that they had dug through peat between the tarmac road surface and the underlying sand. Although this section of the trench was not observed by LAS the spoil heap was examined and a very dark brown soil noted. This soil may have been derived from peat but might have been an ash-based deposit spread on the post-medieval road (see 20).

15. A moling pit excavated in the road close to the NE corner of St. Clement's Church cut through yellow sandy brash, possibly flood warp deposits (Pl. 14).

16. West of the church, black silt was exposed between the road foundation and the yellow sandier material. The black layer may have been derived from peat but this was not confirmed.

Nelson Road

Nelson Road forms a short cul-de-sac leading to the SE off High Street (Pl. 15). It is situated closer to the present position of the River Witham than the other monitored parts of the village. The trench was excavated along the northern roadside verge or under that edge of the road.

17. At the SE end of the road, close to 'Ferndale', no peat was present in the trench which cut through a thick sandy (possibly flood warp) deposit with no finds (Pl. 16).

18. Immediately south of 'Charity Cottage' a thick layer of topsoil and modern rubble overlay 0.15m of pale yellow sand. Beneath this was a 0.1m thick layer of sandy peat to 0.65m below the modern surface. The yellow sand deposit below this was at least 0.25m thick and appeared undisturbed. This observation coincides with the rear boundary of plots to the north fronting onto High Street. It is possible that this restricted extent of peat marks the position of a medieval boundary ditch; unfortunately a deep modern disturbance to the NW had removed adjacent stratigraphy.

19. SE of 'Nemo Cottage' the trench cut through a thick deposit of bright yellow sand to 0.9m below the surface and no other layers were observed beneath modern topsoil. This sequence continued to the High Street junction where the road had been constructed on a spread of limestone rubble 0.15m thick.

High Street (to the east of Nelson Road)

20. Immediately east of the Nelson Road junction, the road and limestone rubble base covered a layer of black soil 0.05m thick to 0.4m below the road surface, above yellow clay. The thin layer of black material did not appear to be peat and was suspected to be ash, presumably spread on a post-medieval unmetalled road. The clay may indicate that this was a narrow promontory of higher land, between the creeks where sand had accumulated.

21. Between 'Greengates' and the 'Carpenter's Arms' several small holes were excavated for the directionally-drilled pipe. These revealed light grey sand and fragments of wood but no peat (Pl. 17). Here the indications are that this land lay within a creek.

22. In an east-west trench 1.2m long excavated to receive the moled pipe NW of the 'Carpenter's Arms' car park, a deposit of grey soil with peat 0.18m thick was revealed 0.5m below the road surface (Pls. 18 and 19). The base of the peat layer dropped by 0.15m across the length of the trench, suggesting a slope downwards to the east. Beneath the peat layer was a mixed deposit of yellow and grey clay with sand, presumably close to the base of the depression.

23. SW of 'Holt Farm' the trench cut through made-up ground before reaching sandy material (Pl. 20). The extent and date of the disturbance was not apparent; it may have been fill of an adjacent service trench.

Conclusion

Although this project offered an opportunity to examine the sequence of natural and artificial deposits in several parts of the village, the reasons for these deposits could not be understood because of gaps in the information where open trenching did not take place. It has, however, highlighted the most pressing omission in our knowledge of prehistoric and Roman activity at Fiskerton: before any further interpretation of the archaeological remains is made, it would be useful to know the natural configuration of the river channel, associated creeks and tributary streams. The natural contours of Fiskerton village need to be established in detail so that the observations from this project and other archaeological interventions can be correlated.

It has been assumed that where limestone bedrock was seen in the trench the ground had been firm in the prehistoric period. The overlying yellow sand deposit probably marks post-glacial and more recent flood deposition phases related to courses of the River Witham. Where sand deposits survive it is likely that the ground was outside the channels of later watercourses but the ground may have been soft.

Peat deposits by definition have formed on waterlogged ground and the survival of organic remains is an indication that the ground has remained wet since their formation. With the narrow glimpse afforded by the water main trench it is not possible to tell whether the peat is associated with natural or

artificial features, but recording of the exposures will allow future investigation if larger areas of ground are to be disturbed.

Acknowledgements

LAS would like to thank Anglian Water staff, especially Katharine Gilliatt and the in-house team (which laid much of the main) for their help. Further co-operation was received from the subsequent contractors John Martin Hoyes.

The author is grateful to Colin Palmer-Brown (Pre-Construct Archaeology) for discussion of various research problems raised by this project, and access to reports produced by PCA relating to a development site in Fiskerton.

Although most of the monitoring was by the author, other recording was conducted by Mick Clark, Naomi Field and Jane Frost. Illustrations were prepared by Mick McDaid and Jane Frost. The report was collated and produced by Jane Frost.

Geoff Tann
Lindsey Archaeological Services
19th March 1997

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Archive Summary

photographs
annotated copies of AW plans
correspondence
field sketch section

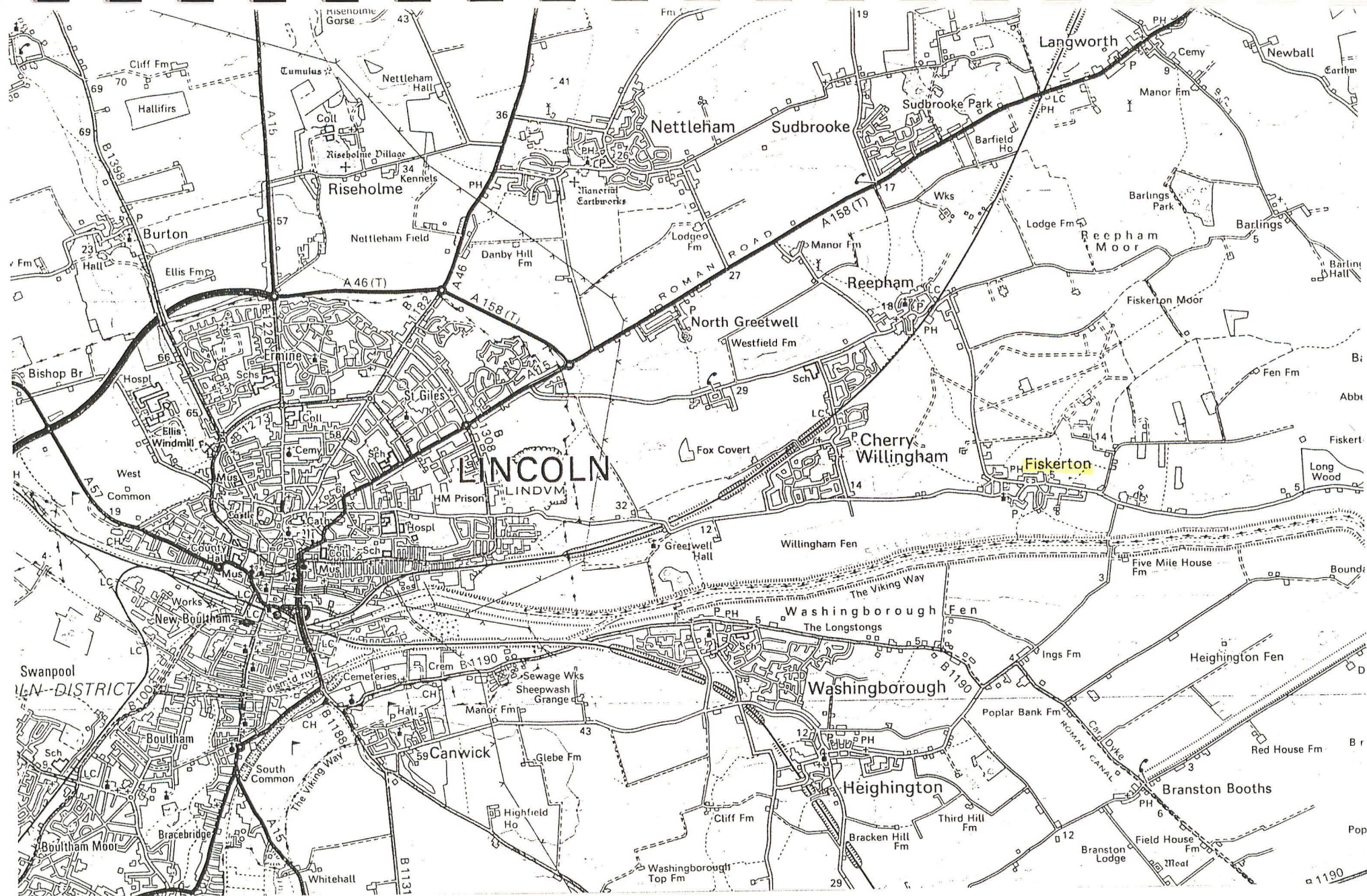


Fig. 1 Location of Fiskerton (based on the 1989 Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 Landranger map Sheet 121. © Crown copyright, reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Licence no. AL 50424A).

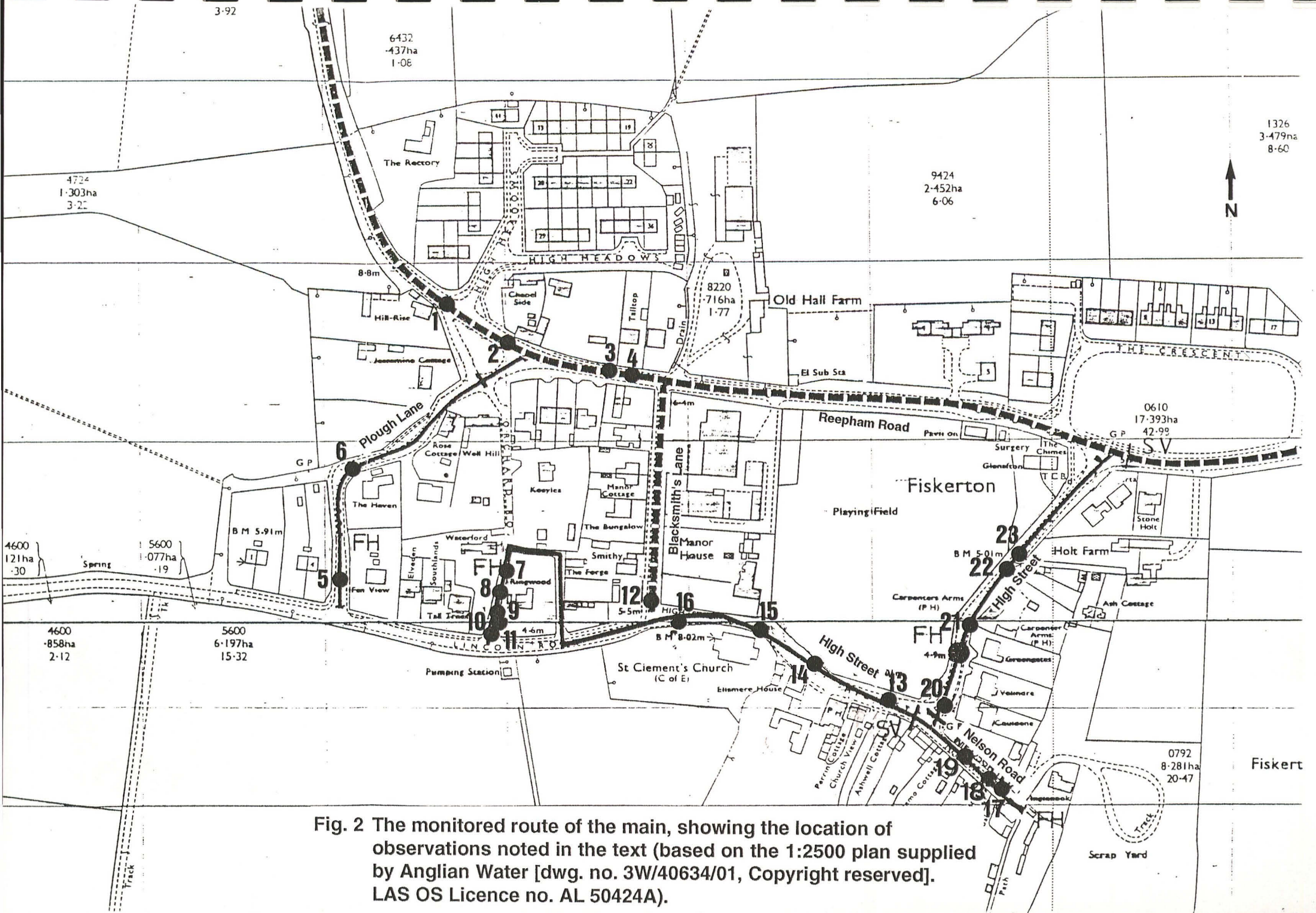


Fig. 2 The monitored route of the main, showing the location of observations noted in the text (based on the 1:2500 plan supplied by Anglian Water [dwg. no. 3W/40634/01, Copyright reserved]. LAS OS Licence no. AL 50424A).



Pl. 1 Trenching along Reepham Road close to Blacksmith Road (looking east).

Pl. 2 Spread of rounded pebbles of a post-medieval road below the modern road surface east of Plough Lane 3.





Pl. 3 The trench at 4 revealed thick road foundation material (perhaps in a roadside ditch) overlying black soil. Beneath this were sand flood deposits.

Pl. 4 Plough Lane at the western edge of the village (looking east along Lincoln Road).





Pl. 5 Grey/white sand at the base of the slope in Plough Lane 5.

Pl. 6 In Orchard Road, large rounded pebbles forming a metalled surface were seen in the trench face 8 (looking south).





Pl. 7 Rounded pebbles in trench spoil (foreground) and in the trench face 8 (looking east, scale divisions 0.5m).

Pl. 8 At the junction of Orchard Road with Lincoln Road 11 slight traces of peat were seen below a ceramic pipe. Looking west, scale divisions 0.5m).





Pl. 9 Twig and small branch detritus in a former watercourse at 13, west of 'Ashwell Cottage'.

Pl. 10 Location of the peat formation centred between 'Perrin's Cottage' and 'Five Mile House' 13. Looking west past 'Five Mile House'.





Pl. 11 The silt and peat 13 continued to the west of 'Five Mile House'. The trench barriers mark the position of Pl. 12 (looking west).

Pl. 12 Sequence of silts and peat 13 west of 'Five Mile House' (scale divisions 0.2m).





PI. 13 Yellow sandy clay flood warp was exposed at 13 on the base of the pipe trench.



PI. 14 Yellow sandy material from a moling pit in the road close to the NE corner of St. Clement's Church 15 (looking south).



Pl. 15 Junction of Nelson Road and High Street. (looking west).

Pl. 16 Trench deposits at 17, close to 'Ferndale' in Nelson Road (looking north).





Pl. 17 Small hole excavated for the directionally-drilled pipe at 21, between 'Greengates' and the 'Carpenter's Arms'.

Pl. 18 Position of trench NW of the 'Carpenter's Arms' car park 22 (looking SW).





Pl. 19 Sequence of deposits at 22, showing a deposit of grey soil with peat 0.5m below the road surface. Beneath the peat was yellow and grey clay with sand.

Pl. 20 The trench at 23, SW of 'Holt Farm' (looking NE).

