

96/22

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT THE COTTAGE,
NORTH END,
SWINESHEAD,
LINCOLNSHIRE
(STC96)**



A P S
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
PROJECT
SERVICES

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT THE COTTAGE,
NORTH END,
SWINESHEAD,
LINCOLNSHIRE
(STC96)**

Work Undertaken For
Dr J. Vellam

Report Compiled By
Chris Moulis

December 1996

A.P.S. Report No. 62/96

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1. SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief undertaken by Archaeological Project Services monitored the excavation of foundations for an extension to a building at The Cottage, Boston Road, North End, Swineshead.

Excavation of the foundation trenches revealed evidence of at least three phases of occupation. Apparently the earliest, and most significant, of these was represented by a Late Saxon refuse pit that contained pottery and animal bone. A gully and pit, both undated, were also recorded.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

On the 7th December 1996, an archaeological watching brief monitored development work during the extension of a dwelling off Boston Road, North End, Swineshead. Approval for the development was sought through the submission of planning application B19/0489/96. Permission was granted subject to a standard negative condition for archaeological recording. The archaeological work, commissioned by Dr J. Vellam, was carried out by Archaeological Project Services.

2.2 Topography and Geology

Swineshead is situated 7km from the northwest coast of The Wash, in the fenlands of south Lincolnshire (Fig. 1). Approximately 40km southeast of Lincoln and 10km southwest of Boston, the town lies in the civil parish of Swineshead, Boston District. The investigation site is located at grid reference TF23234162, c. 1.5km north of the town centre as defined by the parish church of St. Mary (Fig. 2).

The site lies at approximately 4m O.D. in an area of relatively level ground. The site lies on an area of Romney Series coarse silty gleyic brown calcareous alluvial soils. Immediately to the east are Wisbech Series coarse silty calcareous alluvial gley soils, developed in stoneless marine alluvium (Robson 1990, 26; 36).

2.3 Archaeological Setting

A prehistoric stone axe (B19/030) has previously been recovered 250m north of the development site (Fig. 2). A second stone axe found 650m north of the site (B19/023) dates to the Bronze Age. However, the Bronze Age land surface is known to be deeply buried under later peats and alluvial silts. If the recorded find spots are correct, then the axes must have been recovered from a lower level, probably during drainage works. Alternatively these artefacts were brought into the area, possibly as part of a collection, and subsequently lost.

Romano-British pottery has been recovered within 0.75km north of the development (B19/023 and B19/032), and fieldwalking has produced a significant quantity of material from this period within a 5km radius of the site (Fig. 2). Aerial reconnaissance has located a series of enclosures, probably farms or settlements, that are typical of the late prehistoric-Romano-British period (B19/001; 002; 004; 012).

Late Saxon pottery (B19/053), recovered 150m south of the present development site (Fig. 2) provides archaeological evidence for occupation during the periods of Anglo-Scandinavian migration and conquest (c. A.D. 400-1066). A single Late Saxon strap-end (B19/018), found near the centre of the village, 1.3km south of the development, is the only other recorded artifact from this period. The earliest historical reference to Swineshead dates to approximately A.D.

650, and suggests the presence of a monastery. A passage from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle mentions *Swineshaefed* in 675 A.D. (Ekwall 1974, 457), suggesting that occupation during the 7th century may be expected.

Medieval finds are common in the village, and the surrounding landscape contains several standing monuments from this period. A scatter of pottery of medieval date was recovered from land 300m west of the investigation site during a watching brief on a pipe-laying operation (B19/050). *Stenning* or *Estovenning* (B19/014), a village mentioned in the Domesday survey of A.D. 1086 but deserted in the 14th century, lay approximately 1.5km south of the development area. A church of the 14th century, St. Mary the Virgin (B19/006), lies in the centre of the village, 1.5km south of the site, and Manwar Ings Castle (B19/025), a relic of the feudal economy, is situated 1.2km to the southeast. A Cistercian abbey of the 12th century is located c. 1.9km to the southeast of the development site (Fig. 2).

Swineshead was a market town during the medieval period with charters for two annual fairs (Platts 1985, appendix 1). In the centre of the village, c 1.5km to the south of North End is the Butter Cross (B19/005). This stone market cross provided a focus for trading activities during the medieval period and later (Fig. 2).

Previous investigations approximately 100m to the south of the site recorded large quantities of pottery and other occupation debris, together with pieces of brick and dressed limestone masonry. This evidence suggested that a stone and brick building of 16th-17th century date had been located in the area (Archaeological Project Services 1996, 3).

3. AIMS

The objective of the watching brief was that any archaeological remains exposed by the groundworks should be recorded and interpreted.

4. METHODS

Foundation trenches were opened to a maximum depth of c. 1.70m using a mechanical excavator. The sides of the trenches were cleaned and examined to identify any archaeological features. All archaeological deposits or features revealed were allocated a unique reference number (context number) and assigned individual written descriptions. A photographic record was compiled and sections were drawn at scales 1:10 and 1:20.

5. RESULTS

Finds recovered from deposits identified during the watching brief were examined and a date assigned where possible. Records of deposits and features were examined, and a stratigraphic matrix of all recorded contexts was created and phased. Phasing was assigned based on the nature of the deposits and recognisable relationships between them.

Five phases were identified:

- Phase 1 Natural Alluvial Deposits
- Phase 2 Late Saxon Domestic Refuse Pit
- Phase 3 Undated Archaeological Features and Deposits
- Phase 4 A buried topsoil
- Phase 5 Modern deposits, and the extant cottage.

Phase 1 Natural Deposits.

Deposit (016), a light whitish brown fine

sand recorded at the very base of the excavations. General in extent and sealed by (015). Natural alluvium.

Deposit (015), a firm, mid grey sandy clay, 0.11m thick, and general in extent. Natural alluvium.

Deposit (014), a soft, dark grey organic layer, 20mm thick, at the interface of (015) and (013). Natural deposit.

Deposit (013), a firm, mid brown sandy silt, 0.33m thick, and general in extent. Natural alluvium.

Deposits (012), (011), (007), and (022). Laminated deposits of light brown fine silty sand, approximately 1.0m thick, and general in extent over the plot.

Phase 2 Late Saxon Domestic Refuse Pit.

Deposit (001), a mid-light grey sandy silt, 0.32m thick, containing pottery, bone and fragments of mid red scorched clay. Fill in (002).

Deposit (003), a mid grey fine sandy silt, 0.20m thick, containing pottery, bone and fragments of mid red scorched clay. Primary fill in (002).

Cut (002), a sub-rectangular feature, at least 0.70m by 0.35m in plan, and 0.44m deep. Recorded immediately south of the existing cottage (Fig. 5, section 1). Refuse pit.

Phase 3 Undated archaeological deposits.

Deposit (019), a mid brown sandy silt, 0.28m thick, containing occasional small fragments of mid red scorched clay, occasional charcoal flecks, and a fragment of scorched and degraded limestone. Fill in (021).

Deposit (020), a mid-dark grey sandy silt, 20mm thick. Fill in (021).

Cut (021), a steep-sided linear feature, approximately 0.60m wide, and at least 0.80m long (north-south). Recorded in the northernmost foundation trench (Fig. 6, section 3). Gully, or possibly a robbed foundation trench.

Deposit (017), a light yellowish brown mix of fine sand and silt, at least 1.20m thick. Fill in (018).

Cut (018), a large cut, at least 3.00m by 0.50m in plan, and 1.20m deep recorded in the northernmost foundation trench. Pit, function unknown.

Phase 4 Buried topsoil deposit.

Deposits (006) and (010) form a general layer of mid-dark brown sandy silt, up to 0.40m thick, representing a buried topsoil. This deposit sealed (002), but had no direct stratigraphic relationship with either (018) or (021) in the trenches recorded.

Phase 5 Modern deposits.

Wall (004). The standing wall of the existing cottage.

Foundation (005), sitting in cut (008). The foundation for (004).

Cuts (024) and (026), filled respectively by rubble deposits (023) and (025). Relatively modern pits, possibly backfilled cisterns or cess pits.

Deposit (009), a compacted layer of bricks and stones in a dark brown sandy silt matrix. Approximately 4.0m wide (north-south) by at least 14.0m long, and up to 0.30m thick. Forms a metalled access-way along the northern boundary of the plot.

Deposit (027). Mixed rubble and dark brown sandy silt. Modern dumping to the rear of the standing cottage.

6. DISCUSSION

Natural layers of alluvium represent the earliest deposits on the site. The variation in texture of the deposits from soft silty sand to a much firmer sandy clay, and the presence of the organic layer (014), indicate varying local environmental conditions during the accumulation of these layers.

The Late Saxon refuse pit (Fig. 5 and Plate 1) represents the earliest recorded phase of occupation on or very close to the development site. The finds, in particular the cooking pot fragment, appear to form a domestic assemblage. This activity, together with that recorded 150m to the south (B19/053), provide firm evidence for the 10th or 11th century settlement pattern in this part of Swineshead parish. The fragments of scorched clay recovered from the fills of the feature indicate an intense burning process somewhere in the vicinity, and probably represent the remains of a hearth.

The phase of undated features includes pit (018), and gully (021) (Fig. 6). These cannot be linked, either stratigraphically or by artifacts, to the Late Saxon phase, although the absence of finds from this period indicates that they are probably later in date. Pit (018) has no obvious function, but may have been dug to extract clay. The steep sides and flat bottom of gully (021) suggest that the feature may represent a robbed wall foundation. The presence of limestone in the fill supports this interpretation. If an earlier building stood here, then its fabric was comprehensively robbed when demolished.

A buried topsoil layer was recorded, pre-dating the building of the existing cottage and sealing the medieval pit. Unfortunately this did not have any direct stratigraphic relationship with the undated phase of archaeological activity in the trenches opened.

The latest activity is represented by walls, pits, a metallised surface and general dumping associated with the standing cottage.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Development on land at North End, Swineshead, fell within an area of known archaeological remains of prehistoric to post-medieval date. Consequently, archaeological investigations were undertaken at the site as it was possible that archaeological deposits might be disturbed as a result of the development.

Five phases of deposition were identified during the development work at The Cottage. The earliest deposits reflect intermittent flooding and sedimentation in this area over a considerable period of time, and highlight the marshland origin of the present landscape.

A pit containing Late Saxon pottery suggests that the site itself, or one of the adjoining plots, was occupied during the 10th-11th century. This evidence augments previous observations of contemporary activity in the vicinity, and also adds to the overall picture of the extent of Late Saxon and early medieval settlement around the North End part of Swineshead.

This pit was sealed by a layer of mid-dark brown silt, presumably a cultivated topsoil. The cut features of the undated phase suggest a degree of archaeological activity on the site between the digging of the Late Saxon pit and the construction of the present

cottage. This may have included the construction and demolition of a building.

The latest phase refers to the construction of the present building on the site, on its shallow brick foundation, and to subsequent activity in the plot associated with the occupation of the building.

Archaeological deposits on the site survived largely intact and in good condition. Therefore it probable that, elsewhere in the vicinity, broadly contemporary archaeological deposits are similarly well-preserved. Animal bones survived in good condition but no other environmental remains were recorded. Moreover, there was no evidence of waterlogged deposits at the site and, consequently, environmental material is unlikely to survive in the area other than by charring.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Project Services wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Dr. John Vellam who commissioned the fieldwork and post-excavation analysis. Dale Trimble coordinated the work and Tom Lane edited this report. Hilary Healey identified and reported on the pottery. Access to the relevant parish archaeological files was kindly provided by Hilary Healey, the locum Boston District Community Archaeologist.

9. PERSONNEL

Project Coordinator: Dale Trimble
Site Supervisor: Chris Moulis
Illustration: David Hopkins and Chris Moulis
Finds Processing: Denise Buckley
Post-excavation Analyst: Chris Moulis

10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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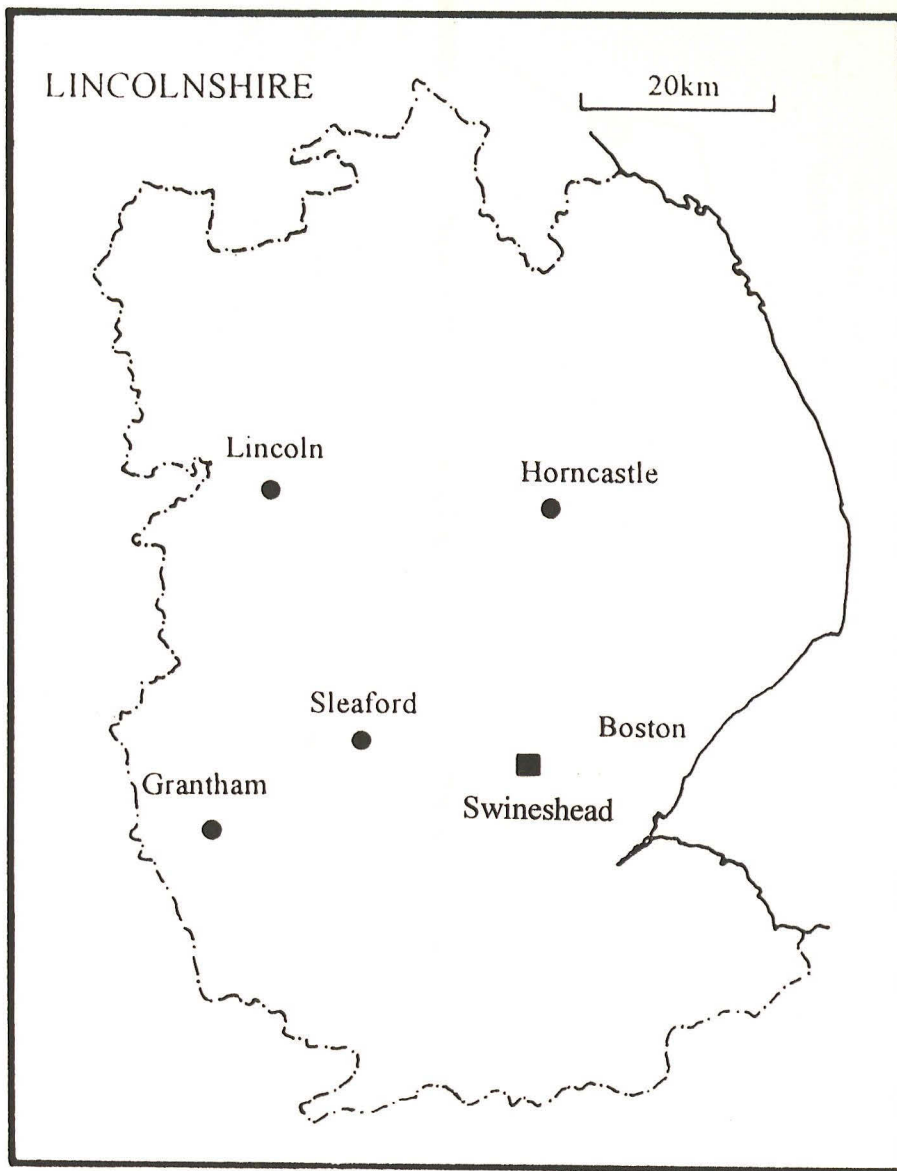
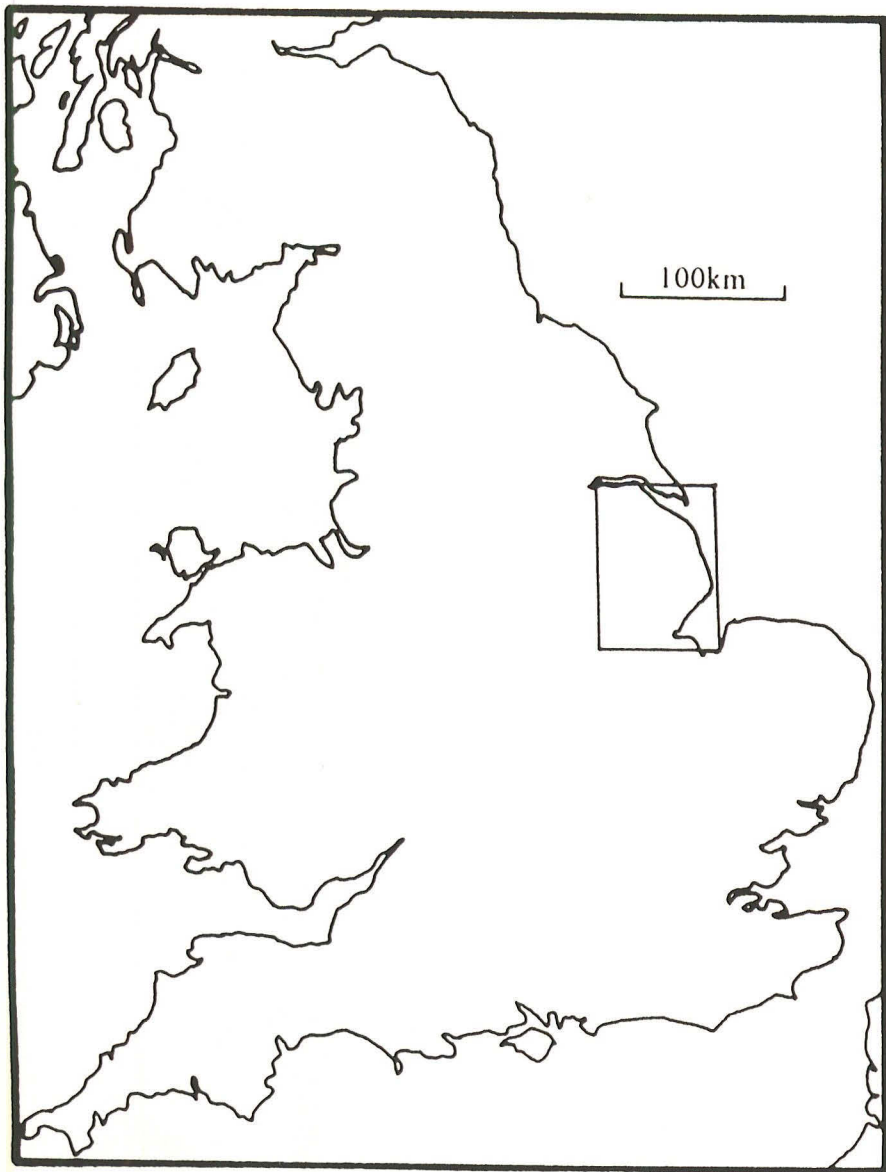
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11. ABBREVIATIONS

Numbers prefixed 'B' are the reference codes used by the Boston Borough Community Archaeologist for identifying archaeological sites and finds.

Fig. 1 General Location Plan



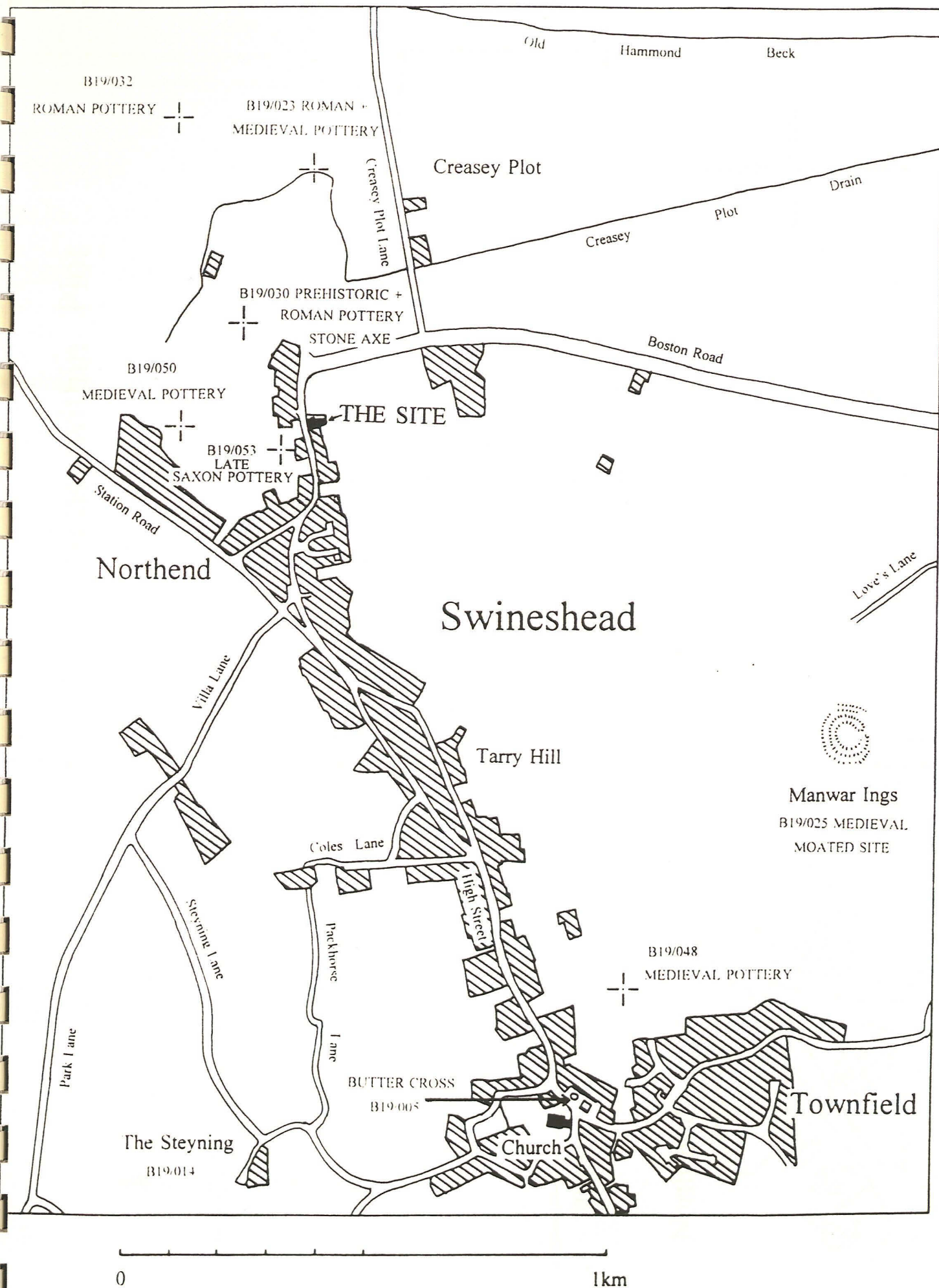
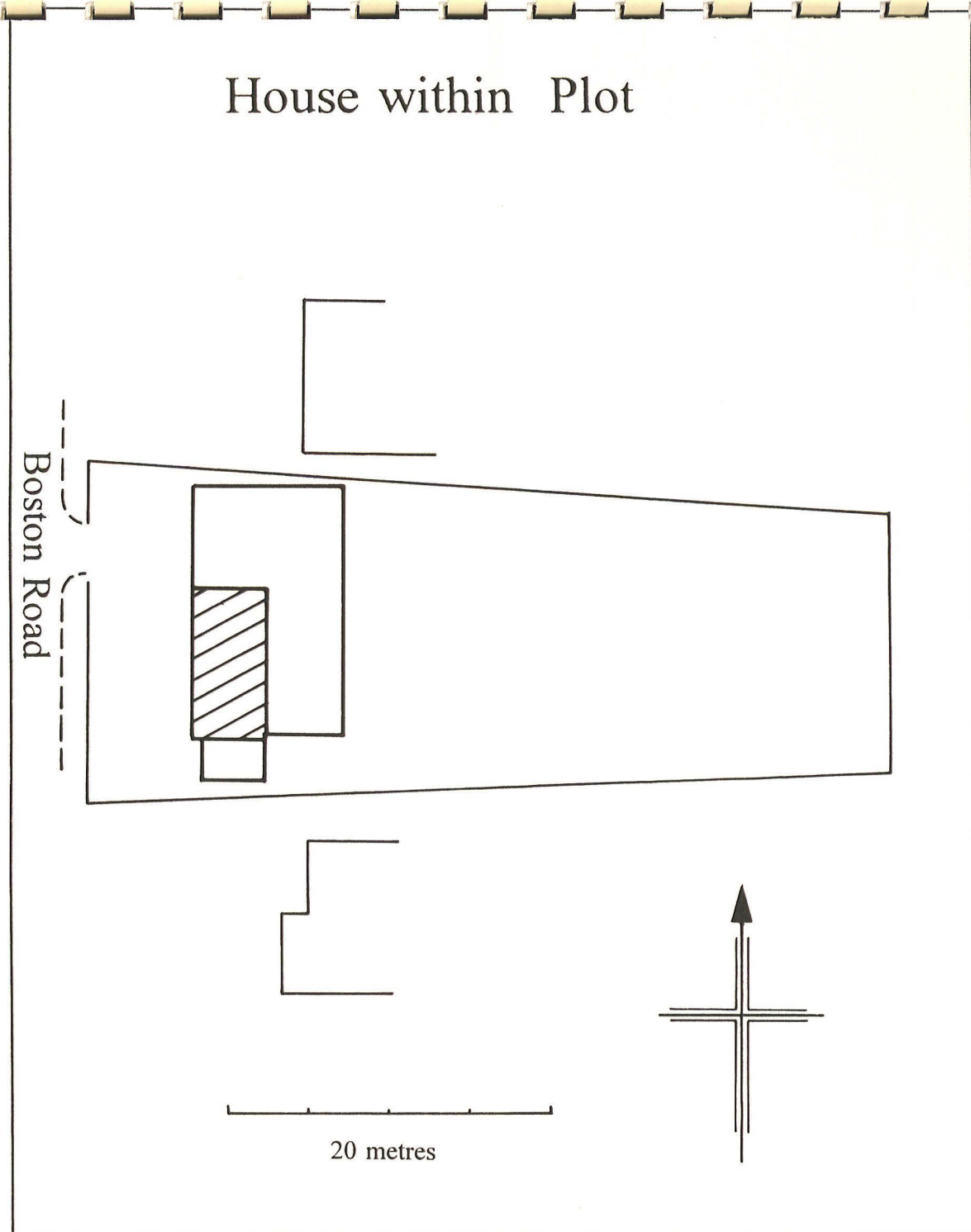
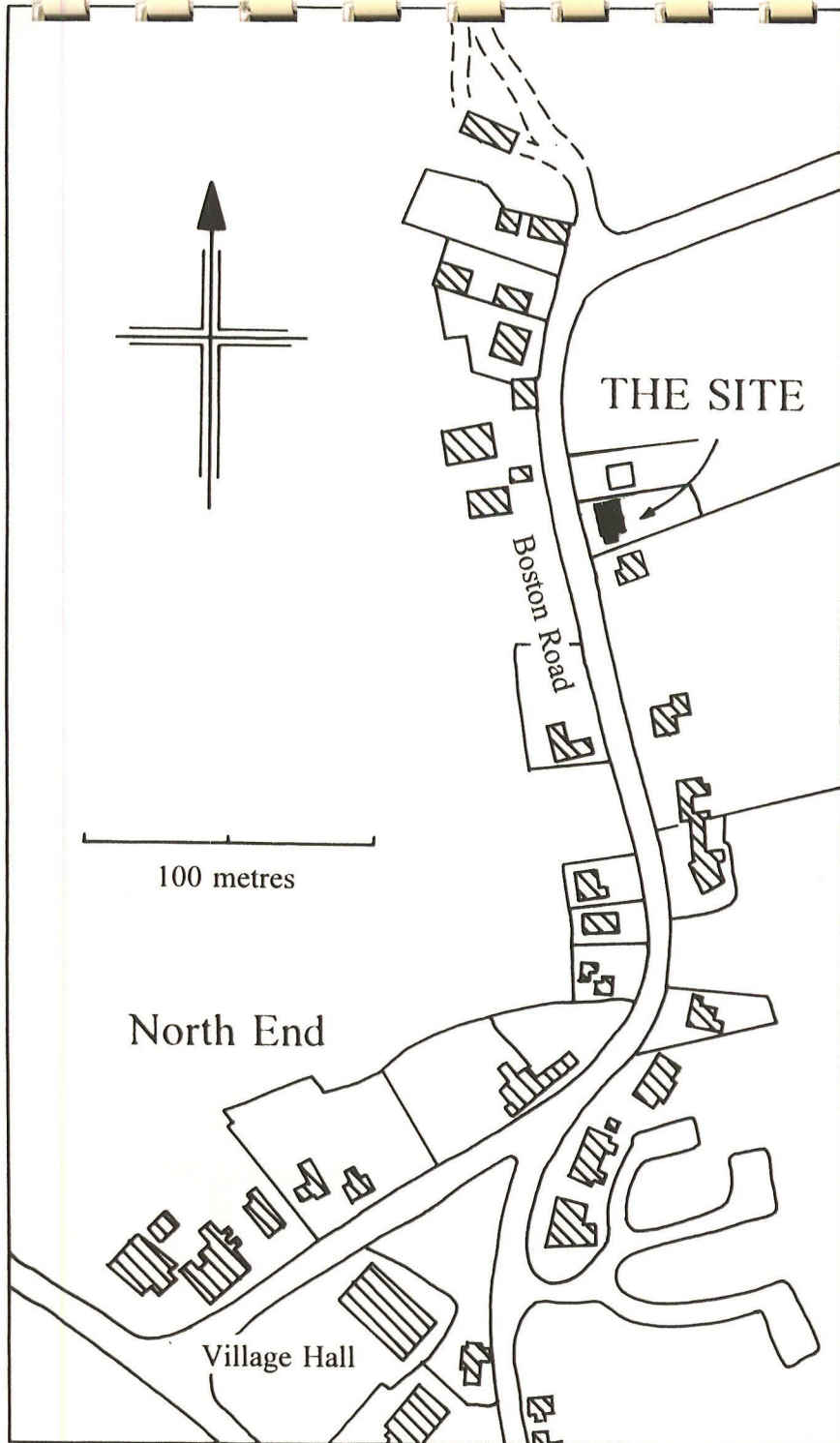


Fig. 2 Site Location

Fig. 3 House within Plot



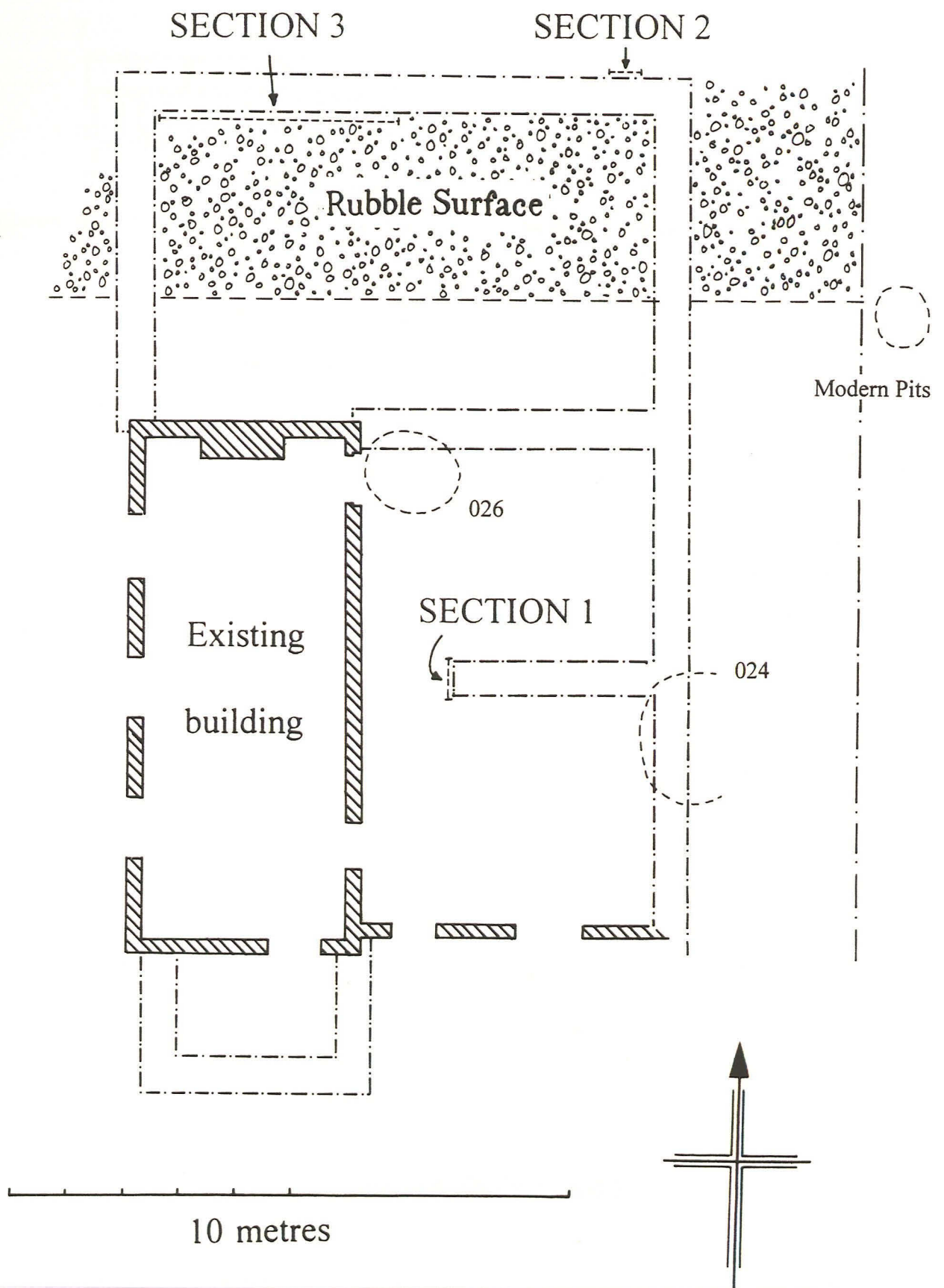


Fig. 4 Foundations showing Section Locations

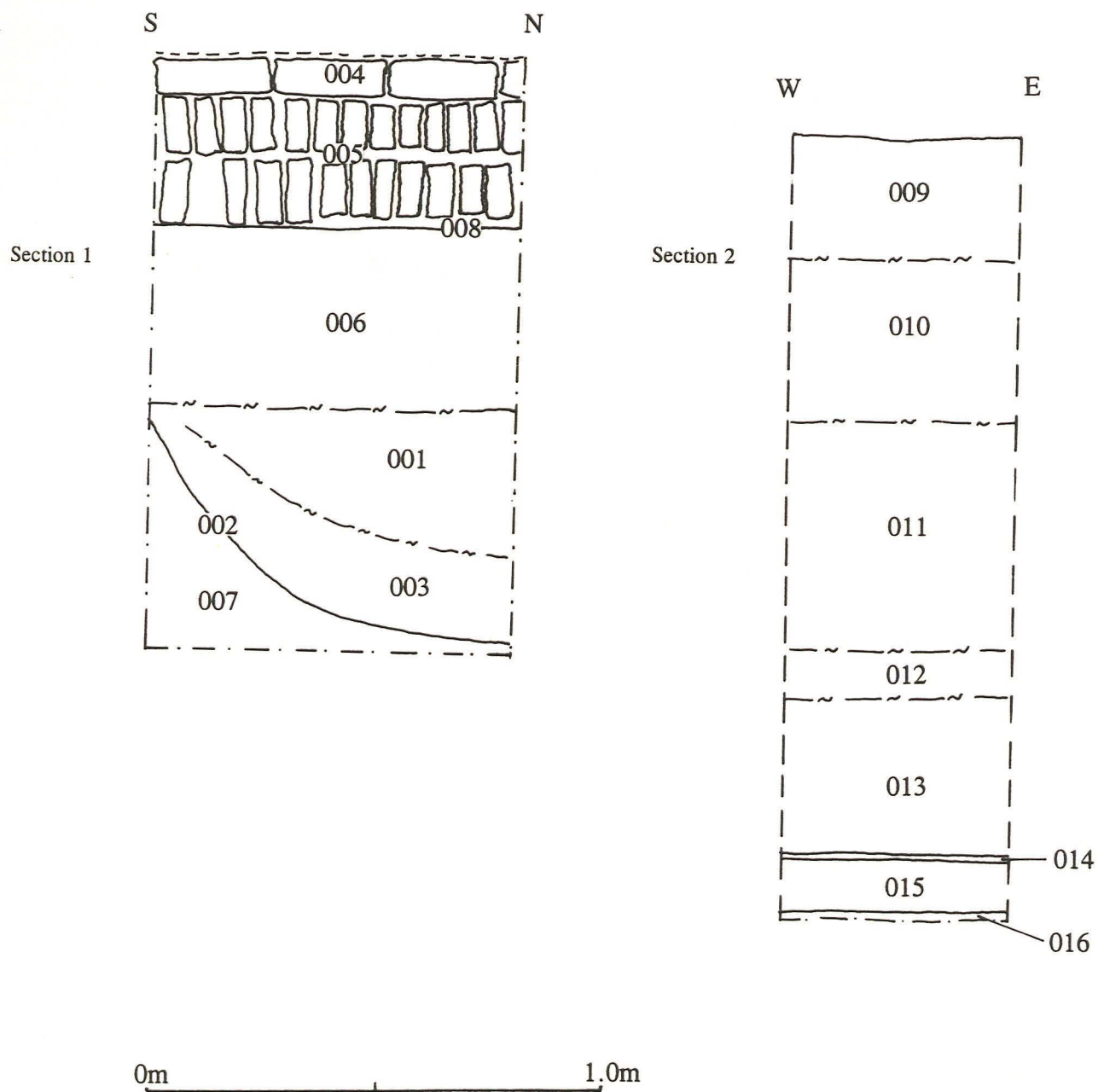
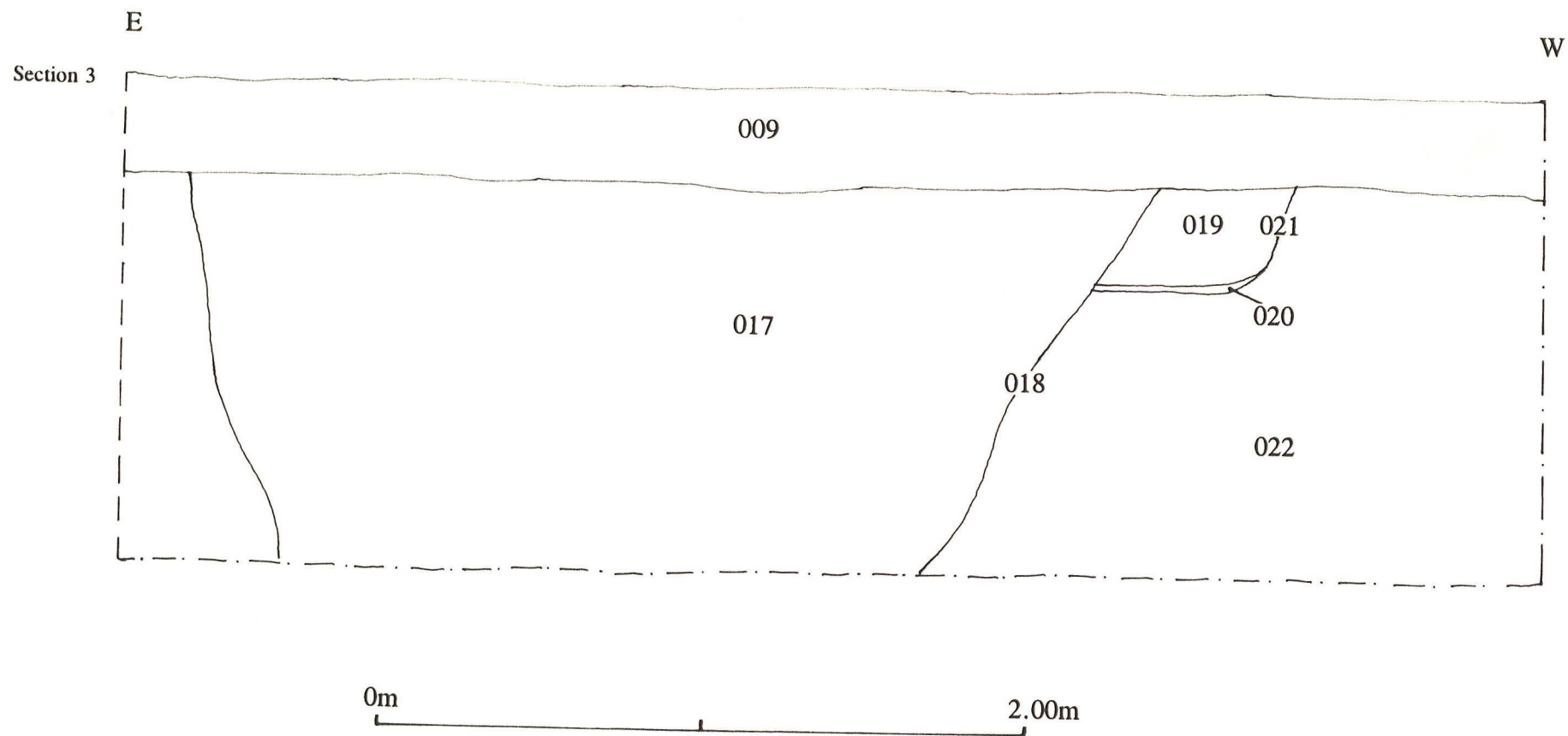
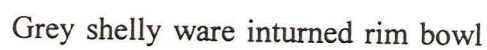


Figure 5: Sections 1 and 2

Figure 6: Section 3





Scale 1:2

Figure 7. Late Saxon Pottery from the Watching Brief



Plate 1: Pit (002)



Plate 2: Surface (009) and Natural Alluvial Layers

APPENDIX 1

Context Summary

Context	Description	Interpretation
001	Mid-light grey sandy silt	Fill in 002
002	Sub-rectangular cut, at least 0.70 by 0.35m in plan, and 0.44m deep	Pit
003	Mid grey sandy silt.	Fill in 002
004	Brick wall	Wall of existing cottage
005	Brick foundation	Foundation for 004
006	Dark brown sandy silt	Buried topsoil layer
007	Light brown silty sand	Natural alluvium
008	Linear cut	Foundation trench for 005
009	Mixed deposit: dark brown sandy silt and rubble	Metalled access-way to the rear of the building plot
010	Mid-dark brown sandy silt	Buried topsoil layer
011	Light brown silty sand	Natural alluvium
012	Light yellowish brown silty sand	Natural alluvium
013	Firm mid brown sandy silt	Natural alluvium
014	Black organic silt	Natural deposit
015	Firm mid grey sandy clay	Natural alluvium
016	Light whitish brown fine sand	Natural alluvium
017	Light yellowish brown sand and silt mix.	Dumped fill in 018
018	Cut, at least 3.00m east-west by 0.50m north-south, and at least 1.20m deep	Pit, function unknown
019	Mid brown sandy silt	Fill in 021
020	Mid-dark grey sandy silt	Fill in 021
021	North-south orientated steep sided linear cut, 0.60m wide and at least 0.80m in length	Gully, or possibly a robbed foundation trench

Context	Description	Interpretation
022	Light brown silty fine sand (a general context including some colour and texture variation)	Natural alluvium
023	Rubble deposit	Fill in 024
024	Sub-rectangular cut, at least 2.00m by 1.20m in plan, and 1.20m deep	?Pit; relatively modern
025	Rubble deposit	Fill in 026
026	Sub-circular cut, at least 2.00 by 0.30m in plan, and 1.00m deep	?Pit; relatively modern
027	Dark brown sandy silt, containing frequent brick fragments etc.	Modern dumping

APPENDIX 2

Finds Summary
by
Hilary Healey and Paul Cope-Faulkner

Context Number	Artifact Description	Latest Possible Date
unstratified	1 clay pipe stem, large bore 1 green glazed pancheon rim, Boston kiln 1 unglazed vessel base	c. 17th century 17th century Medieval or later
unstratified	3 fragments of mussel shell	
001	6 shelly ware, grey (2 fit together forming complete profile of inturned rim bowl [Fig. 7]) 1 shelly cooking pot rim (neck and shoulder), with 3 rows rectangular notched rouletting on shoulder (Fig. 7) 2 grey sandy ware, small sherds 2 fragments fired clay	Late Saxon ?10th-11th century Late Saxon ?10th-11th century Late Saxon ?10th-11th century Undated
001	10 sheep bones, 2 cattle bones	
003	4 shelly ware, grey 3 fragments fired clay	Late Saxon ?10th-11th century Undated
003	5 sheep bones, 3 cattle-size bones, 1 bird bone; 2 fragments of mussel shell	

All the pottery from context (001) is typically Late Saxon, probably of 10th-11th century date.

The fired clay has no outer surfaces, and is very crumbly. Also there were some possible vegetation inclusions, but these have not been examined in detail. It is probably part of a hearth rather than, say, mud from mud and stud walling/construction.

A total of twenty-one animal bones were recovered from two contexts during archaeological investigation at The Cottage, Swineshead. Six of the bones were burnt and two showed signs of extensive gnawing.

Context (001) contained twelve bones of which ten are of sheep and two are cattle. One cattle skull fragment shows evidence of butchery in the form of several parallel 'cut' marks on the outer surface. A sheep limb bone is in particularly bad condition and may indicate a trauma, obtained through injury or disease. Context (003) contains nine bones. Three are cattle sized, five are sheep and a single bone may be that of a moderately sized bird, such as a chicken.

This assemblage is considered to be too small for any detailed analysis.

APPENDIX 3

Glossary

Anglo-Scandinavian	Pertaining to the period during which the Anglo-Saxons and Vikings entered and occupied Britain, dating from approximately AD 400-1066.
Bronze Age	Part of the prehistoric era characterised by the introduction and use of bronze for tools and weapons. In Britain this period dates from approximately 2000-600 BC.
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 archaeological investigation is allocated a unique 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 brackets, <i>e.g.</i> (004).
Cut	A cut refers to the physical action of digging a posthole, pit, ditch, foundation trench, <i>etc.</i> Once the fills of these features are removed during an archaeological investigation the original 'cut' is therefore exposed and subsequently recorded.
Dumped deposits	These are deposits, often laid down intentionally, that raise a land surface. They may be the result of casual waste disposal or may be deliberate attempts to raise the ground surface.
Fill	Once a feature has been dug it begins to silt up (either slowly or rapidly) or it can be back-filled manually. The soil(s) which become contained by the 'cut' are referred to as its fill(s).
Late Saxon	The latter part of the Saxon period, upto the time of the Norman conquest. The period dates from approximately AD 850-1066.
Layer	A layer is a term used to describe an accumulation of soil or other material that is not contained within a cut.
Medieval	The Middle Ages, dating, in England, to the period between the Norman conquest in 1066 and approximately 1500.
Natural	Deposit(s) of soil or rock which have accumulated without the influence of human activity.
Prehistoric	The period during which written records were absent, forming the majority of the archaeology in the U.K. until c. AD 43.
Romano-British	Pertaining to the period AD 43 - 450 when Britain formed part of the Roman Empire.

APPENDIX 4

The Archive

The archive consists of:

- 27 Context Records
- 3 Photographs
- 5 Scale Drawings
- 1 Stratigraphic Matrix
- 3 Bags of finds (in one box).

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	180.96
Archaeological Project Services project code	STC 96