

97/7

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

LAGOON WALK, SKEGNESS

Site Code: LW 97  
LCNCC Acc No. 55.97

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Report prepared for the Environment Agency by James Albone  
May 1997

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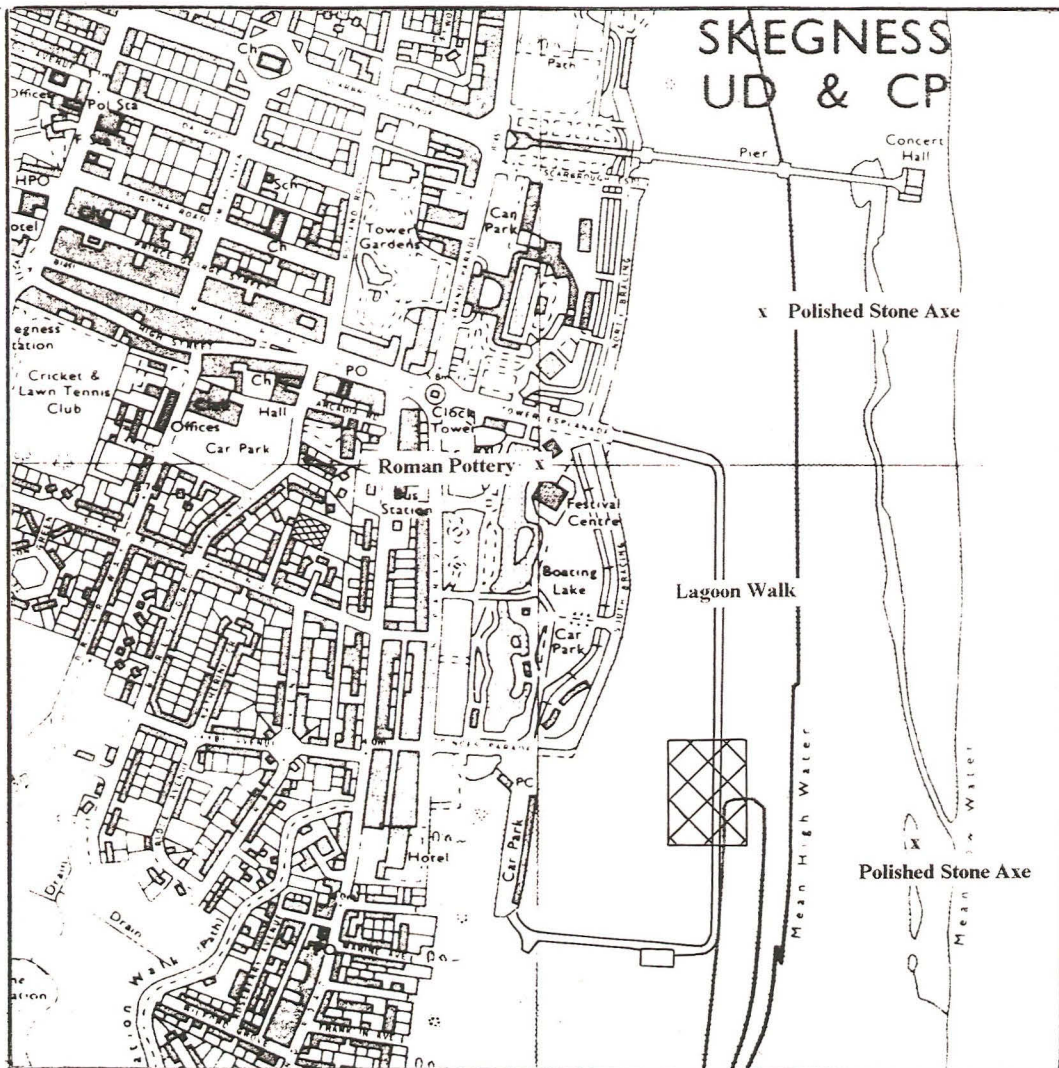
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*Summary*

- \* *An intermittent archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the renewal of sea defences at Lagoon Walk, Skegness, Lincolnshire (Fig. 1).*
- \* *A series of modern beach deposits were exposed and a small number of residual archaeological artefacts, including briquetage fragments, were recovered.*
- \* *The watching brief was terminated prematurely following consultation with the Assistant Archaeological Officer for Lincolnshire.*



**Fig. 1: Site location incorporating principal entries from the County Sites & Monuments Record (1:10,000)**  
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## 1.0 Introduction

The Environment Agency undertook a programme of urgent work to repair the sea defences at Lagoon Walk, Skegness. This programme involved the removal of existing sheet piling and the construction of new defences. These consisted of a reinforced concrete and sheet piling access ramp through a rock armour revetment. The southern end of the access ramp was buried below beach level to compensate for further erosion.

The Lincolnshire Coast has been recognised as an area of high archaeological potential ( English Heritage 1996 ) and this is supported by entries within the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). Salt-making sites, dating from the Bronze Age to the post-medieval periods, have been located along most of the coastline. Post-glacial deposits are present at various points along the coast. Perhaps the best known of these are the submerged forests which are exposed at low tide between Mablethorpe and Skegness. These have been broadly dated to the Neolithic / Bronze Age periods. Documentary evidence from the sixteenth century suggests the presence of a former town which had been lost to the sea by this time.

A copy of this report will be deposited at the County SMR, and a short text will be submitted to the editor of the county journal, *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology*; effectively placing the information in the public domain. Reports will be deposited at the City and County Museum, Lincoln, accompanied with an ordered project archive.

## 2.0 Location and description

Skegness is situated approximately 57km. east of Lincoln in the district of East Lindsey. It is a typical example of a planned seaside resort. It lies on post-glacial deposits at approximately 6.0m. OD. The geomorphology of this part of the Lincolnshire Coast is relatively poorly understood. The submerged forests provide clear evidence of changes in the position of the coastline.

Lagoon Walk, centred on TF 572 628, comprises of a roughly rectangular area extending south from Tower Esplanade. It was constructed in the 1970's and enclosed an area of former beach with concrete and sheet piled defences. Parts of these defences were substantially eroded and breached by the sea.

## 3.0 Purpose and methods

The County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) contains entries which indicated that there was potential for the disturbance of archaeological remains during the construction of the new defences. The level of recording considered to be appropriate on this occasion was an archaeological watching brief. This has been defined as follows:

*'An archaeological watching brief is defined as a programme of observation and investigation conducted during the destruction of archaeological deposits, resulting in the preparation of a report and ordered archive' (IFA, 1994 Standard Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs)*

The excavation work for the construction of the access ramp and the placement of the rock armour were large scale operations. A strip for the ramp was excavated through the dunes and into the existing beach at a gradient of 1:10. At the southern end the surface of this was c.-1.8m. OD., approximately 6.0m. below the existing beach level. The excavation of sumps took this to a depth of c.-2.5m. OD. For safety reasons it was necessary to clear a working space around the strip and batter the sides and spoil heaps back at 45 degrees. The spoil heaps were also used to provide a flood barrier around the excavation.

Recording was undertaken using standard context record sheets (incorporating physical descriptions, interpretations, and stratigraphic relationships). The method of excavation made it difficult to observe any thickness of deposits at any one time. This made it necessary to record the stratigraphy using small sections and levelled points to produce a generalised stratigraphic column.

The excavation was planned at a scale of 1:500 in conjunction with development plans which were provided by the engineers. These, and the rest of the paper record, will form the basis for a long-term project archive.

The watching brief was undertaken by Mr S Johnson and the writer.

#### **4.0 Archaeological and Historic Background**

The archaeological potential of the coast at Skegness is supported by a number of isolated finds from the foreshore. Neolithic stone axes, flint arrowheads, Roman pottery and handbricks ( briquetage ) have all been found on the beach at various times. Salt-making sites have been located inland at Skegness, but none have been found on the coast. However, investigations carried out during the Lindsey Coastal Survey did not encounter any deposits of archaeological importance ( Brooks 1990 ).

The place-name Skegness is first recorded in 1166 as *'Shegenesse'*. It is of Old Norse origin meaning 'Skeggi's headland' ( Ekwall 1989, 424 ). It is, perhaps, significant that it is not recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086. However, it is possible that a place referred to as *'tric'*, which is not mentioned after this time, was a predecessor of Skegness ( Morris 1986, 12,77 notes ).

The antiquarian John Leland visited Skegness in the sixteenth century. He wrote of a walled town and castle which had been lost to the sea ( Chandler 1993, 300 ). It has been speculated that this may have been the remains of a Saxon Shore fort ( Whitwell 1992, 52 ).

At the start of the nineteenth century Skegness was a small village. The original parish church, of St. Clement, remains and has a thirteenth century tower ( Pevsner & Harris 1995, 644 ). The development into a seaside resort, mainly under the direction of the Earl of Scarborough, took place after the coming of the railway in 1876.

## 5.0 Results

Much of the site was covered by a sand dune [100] and the clay core of the existing defences [101]. These were underlain, and surrounded, by [106], the modern beach sand. A water-worn sherd of post-medieval stoneware pottery was found in this context.

Underlying [106] was a layer of sand containing lenses and bands of black clay-silt up to 0.1m. thick [107]. The clay-silt contained wood, plants remains and water-worn fragments of peat. However, these deposits are only of recent date as a fragment of a modern house brick was recovered from the sand in between the silts. The bands of silt thinned towards the west ( i.e. landwards ) across the area of the excavation. A further deposit of sand with gravel patches and sparse clay-silt layers [108] was found beneath these. The upper extent of this context was marked by a layer of gravel and shell fragments. A range of artefacts, including a medieval pottery sherd, two fragments of briquetage and modern brick and glass, can be loosely assigned to this context.

A trial hole was excavated to a depth of c.-1.2m. OD. to establish the nature of the deposits at this level. This was the maximum depth to which the excavations for the placement of rock armour would be. The deposits encountered were the same as in the main excavation area.

## 6.0 Discussion

The sequence of deposits encountered represent the accumulation of the modern beach. The black clay-silt layers must have been deposited in a low energy environment within the inter-tidal zone. This is likely to have happened in shallow tidal ponds, especially between periods of high tides. The presence of similar deposits on the beach at low tide, which are adjacent to tidal ponds, further support this explanation. The black clay-silt deposits on the beach, which weather to a medium brown colour, contain modern litter which suggests that they are still accumulating. In reality the three contexts [106], [107] and [108] represent a continuous sequence of deposition and could be regarded as a single stratigraphic event.

The nature of the deposits, environment and method of excavation presented a number of problems. Water was constantly seeping through the sides of the excavation, resulting in flooding. Despite the continual use of pumps, there was always some standing water in the bottom of the excavation. This meant that the mechanical excavators were often working in the water, making observation difficult. The continual flow of water brought with it another problem; that of mobile sand. The water washed sand into the excavation from the sides, bringing with it shells, stones and artefacts (modern and archaeological). The upper dry sand remained stable, while



the lower deposits continually washed in. As a result of this, the archaeological artefacts recovered can be only loosely associated with [108] and have been considered as unstratified.

Given the nature of the deposits, the archaeological artefacts are of limited significance. The pottery sherds and briquetage fragments are mostly water-worn and could have travelled any distance down the coast before being incorporated into the beach deposits. One of the briquetage fragments is not worn, suggesting it has only travelled a short distance. The nearest recorded salt-making site on the coast is at Ingoldmells, approximately 4.5km. to the north of Lagoon Walk. This fragment could have come from such a site or may indicate that there are more salt-making sites to be found on the coast in the Skegness area.

The presence of only modern deposits meant that the development has had little or no impact on the archaeological resource. This also means that it has been unable to provide any new information about the archaeology of this section of the Lincolnshire Coast.

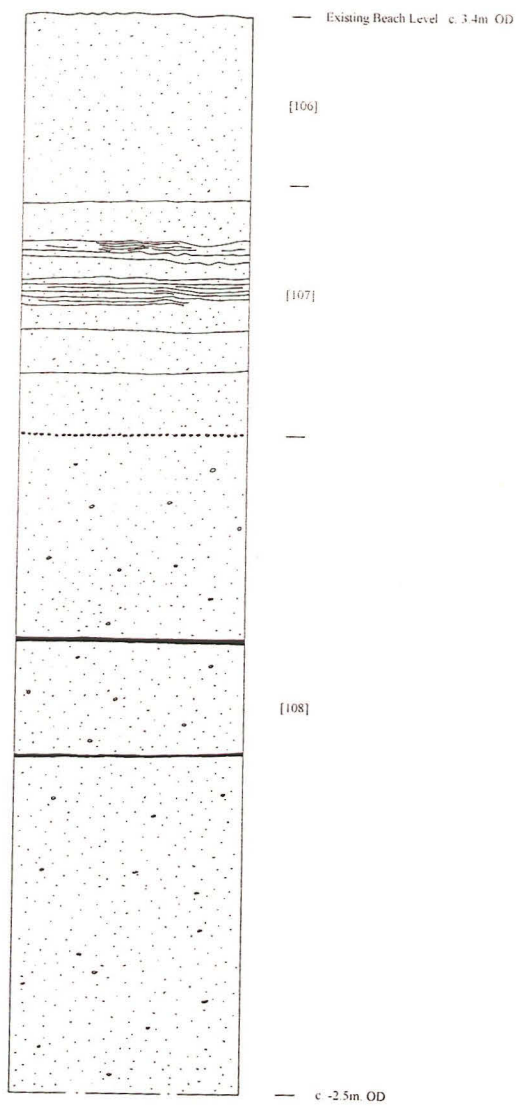


Fig. 3 Composite stratigraphic column showing deposits at south end of the excavation (scale = 1:40)

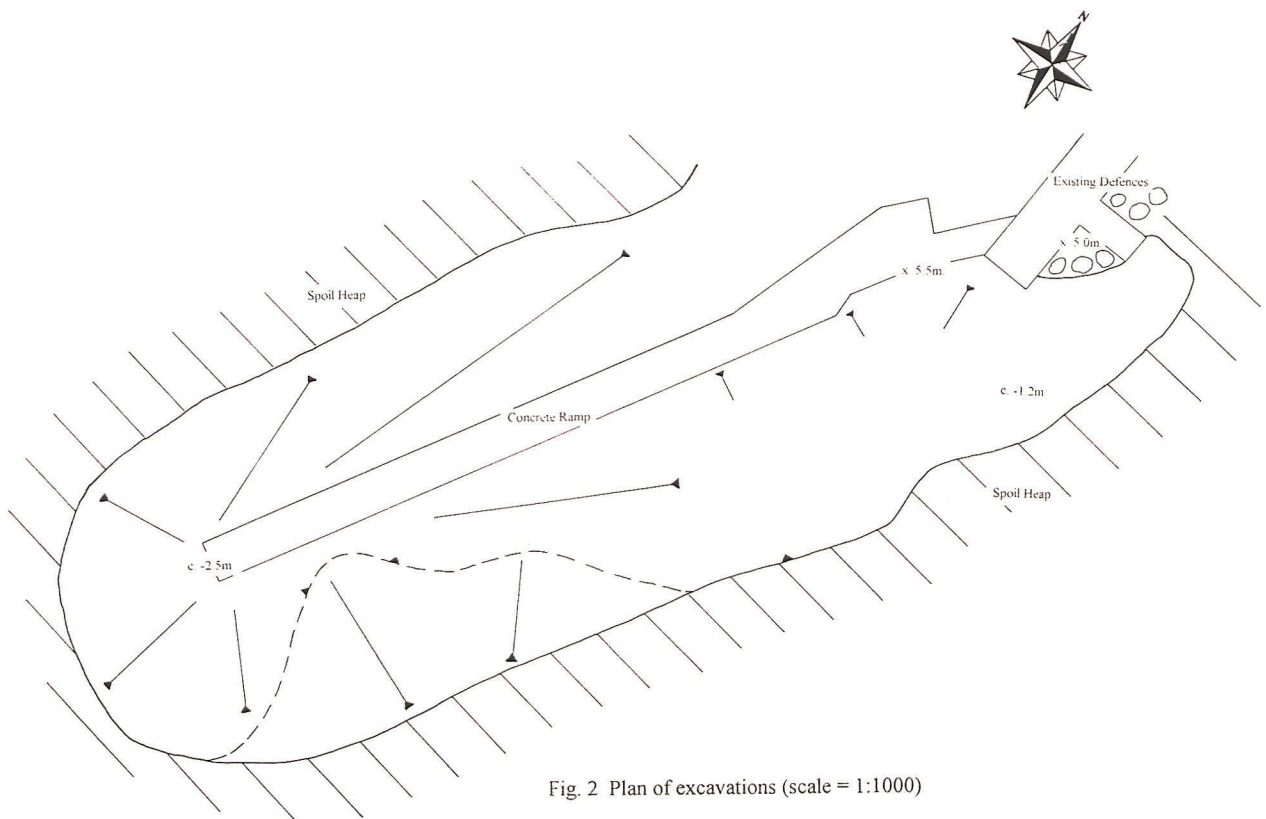


Fig. 2 Plan of excavations (scale = 1:1000)

## 7.0 Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) express their sincere thanks to the Environment Agency, especially Harry Lunt; Comer Mead, Resident Engineer for Posford Duvivier and the staff of the contractors Edmund Nuttall Ltd. Thanks also to Mark Bennet and Sarah Grundy (County SMR) for allowing access to the parish file.

## 8.0 Appendices:

### 8.1 Site archive

The site archive consists of :

Paper Element:

- x 1 Project Specification
- x 3 General account sheets
- x 5 Context record sheets
- x 3 Site drawings
- x 7 Development plans
- x 1 Contractor's Method Statement
- x 4 Colour print film

Object Element:

- x 1 Post-medieval pottery sherd
- x 1 Medieval pottery sherd
- x 2 Briquetage fragments (undated)

Primary records are currently with PCA (Lincoln). An ordered archive of both paper and object elements is in preparation and will be deposited at the City and County Museum, Lincoln, within six months.

### 8.2 References

- Brooks, I.P. 1990 The Lindsey Coastal Survey 1989-1990.
- Chandler, J. 1993 John Leland's Itinerary.
- Ekwall, E. 1989 The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-names.
- English Heritage 1996 England's Coastal Heritage: A Statement on the Management of Coastal Archaeology.
- Morris, J. (gen. ed.) 1986 'Lincolnshire' Domesday Book.

- Pevsner, N & Harris, J. 1995 The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire.
- Whitwell, J.B. 1992 Roman Lincolnshire.

### 8.3 List of Contexts

Context	Description
100	Sand dune.
101	Clay core of existing defences.
102	Tarmac surface and foundation.
103	Sand make-up in existing defences.
104	Concrete surface of existing defences.
105	Rubble scatter from existing defences.
106	Modern beach sand.
107	Modern beach sand with clay-silt layers.
108	Modern beach sand and gravel with clay-silt layers.

**8.4 Briquetage Analysis** by Jane Cowgill.

Context u/s probably 108, briquetage, 9g, 1 piece, organic temper, oxidised, thin 'sherd' 7mm thick; not worn.

Context u/s probably 108, briquetage, 14g, 1 piece, organic temper, oxidised and reduced, 'wind' abraded or water rolled.

Both of the pieces of fired clay are made from a fabric ( clay with a large amount of organic temper) that was commonly used for the production of the clay equipment used at salt production sites. The abraded piece is definitely associated with salt making because the oxidised area is the pink-mauve that indicates that the iron within the clay has been affected by the salt. The two pieces have undergone different post-depositional processes.

## 8.5 Colour photographs



P1. General view of excavation work in progress  
(note flooding)



P2. Section through context (107) showing black clay-silt deposits