

SMR

97/14

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK TOP STUDY  
AND FIELD EVALUATION REPORT**

**SEAHOLME ROAD, MABLETHORPE, LINCOLNSHIRE**

Site Code: SRM 97  
LCNCC Acc No. 260.97  
NGR: TF 508 838  
Planning Ref. N/110/1126/97



EU 495

SL 3504 1711

43684 - Med.  
43685 - Roman.

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Report prepared for Mr R Lowe (Chartered Architect) on behalf of Mr D Amott by  
J Albone and CPH Palmer-Brown  
November 1997

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## Illustrations

Fig. 1 1: 10,000 site location map section

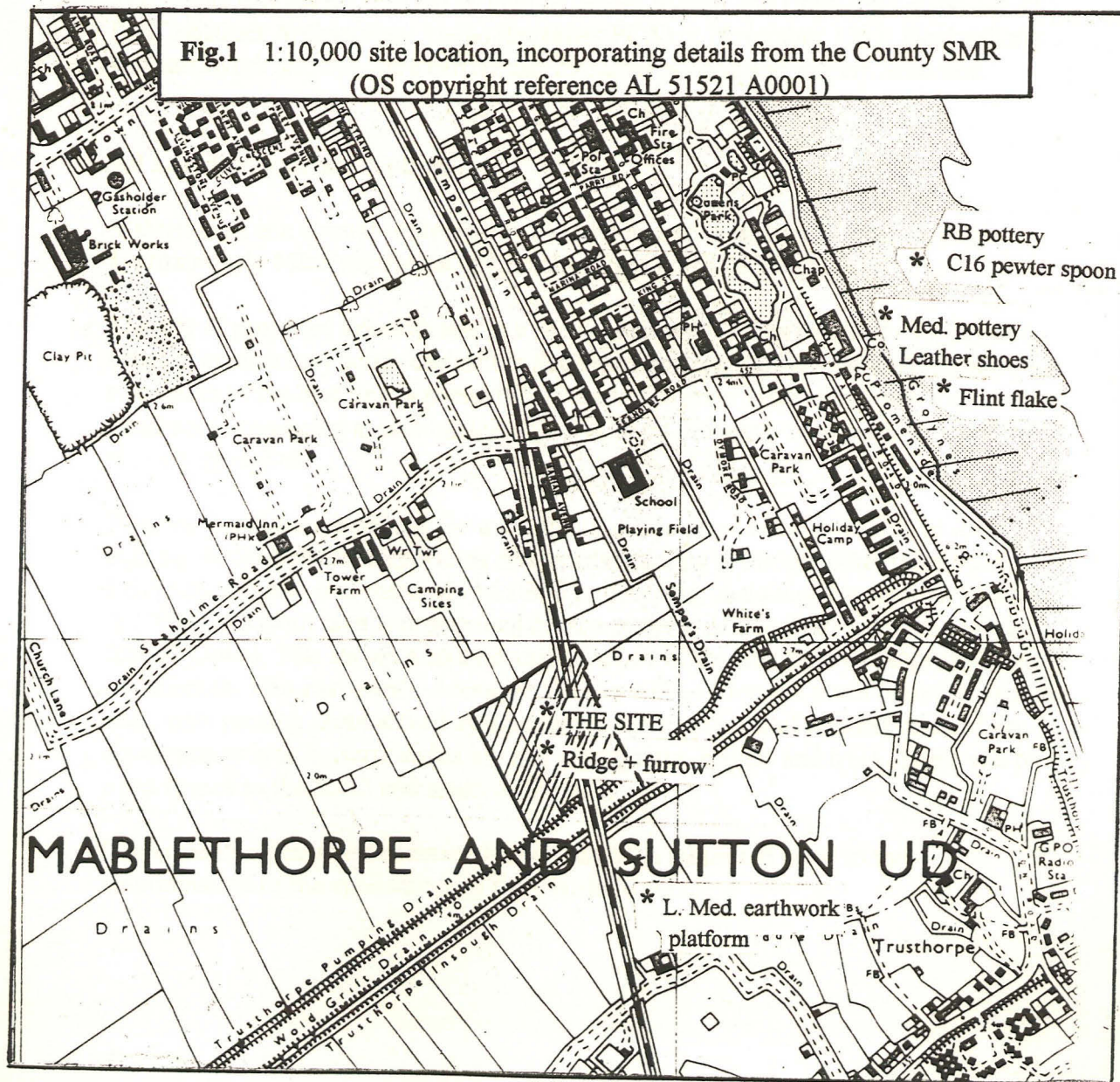
Fig. 2 Plan of site incorporating earthwork survey and fieldwalking results



### Summary

- \* *This archaeological desk top study and non-intrusive field evaluation report has been prepared in advance of a possible commercial development on land immediately south-east of the Seahaven Springs Caravan Park, Mablethorpe, Lincolnshire*
- \* *The results of this report suggest that the archaeological potential of the site is limited: it contains low earthworks associated with medieval cultivation and/or land division*
- \* *Fieldwalking over part of the site has resulted in the collection of a sparse scatter of medieval pottery sherds, as well as three pottery/tile fragments of Romano-British date*
- \* *It is suggested on the basis of work carried out that development of the site will not destroy significant archaeological remains which lie close to the soil surface, excluding the extant medieval earthworks that occupy the eastern two-thirds of the overall area.*

**Fig.1** 1:10,000 site location, incorporating details from the County SMR  
(OS copyright reference AL 51521 A0001)





## **1.0 Introduction**

This desk-based and field-based study was commissioned by Robert Lowe (Chartered Architect), who acts as the agent for Mr D Amott.

Planning permission is sought for a change of use to provide an extension to the existing Seahaven Spring Caravan Park; the application site is situated immediately south-east of the existing park (NGR: TF 508 838). Landscaping and construction associated with this development may affect buried archaeological remains.

The purpose of this report is to assess the overall archaeological potential of the site, without the use of intrusive fieldwork, and to assess the potential impacts which may be posed by development of the area. The report will assist the District Planning Authority with its further decision-making in relation to the archaeological interests of the site, and will likewise inform the client of any archaeological constraints which may be of relevance to his application.

The report was researched and written by James Albone and Colin Palmer-Brown of Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) (hereafter PCA) in November 1997. Fieldwalking and earthwork surveys were carried out by James Albone and Robert Schofield.

## **2.0 Location and description**

Mablethorpe is a coastal settlement in the administrative district of East Lindsey, approximately 55km north-east of Lincoln, 20km north of Skegness.

The site of proposed development is a rectangular unit of approximately 3.9 hectares, situated immediately south-east of the Seahaven Springs Caravan Park. Approximately two thirds of the land unit is presently covered with grass vegetation, with a relatively small area (measuring approximately 200 x 60m on the south-west side) having been recently ploughed.

Planning permission is sought for a change of use to provide an extension to the existing caravan site, incorporating new roads, parking areas and other infrastructure. It is proposed also that there will be some landscaping, including the creation of a lake. A 1:500 site layout plan was provided for the purpose of this study (Drawing 9612:05, Robert Lowe). This shows a lake occupying much of the eastern area (approx. 100m north-south, 40m east-west). Access to the site will be from the north (existing caravan site), with parking areas served by a comprehensive network of internal roads. The development is to be surrounded by, and incorporate, hedges and trees. There will be open spaces to the north and south of the lake.

The archaeological assessment/evaluation has been requested prior to the determination of the application by the District Council.



### 3.0 Geology and topography

The settlement lies within the Lincolnshire Outmarsh: an area of flat silts deposited in post-glacial times as a result of marine transgression. The history of the marsh is poorly understood: in the Neolithic period (New Stone Age) and Bronze Age (c. 4000BC - 1000BC), areas that are now beneath the sea may have been dry land, and during the 1st millennium BC, the whole coastline may have been some 10 - 15km east of its present position. Tree trunks associated with the later prehistoric forests can still be seen at low tide between Mablethorpe and Skegness (May 1976, 5).

Beneath the silts and muds associated with successive marine transgressions lies boulder clay deposits that formed during cold (ie glacial) phases.

The site is located on flat land at an altitude approximately 1.6m OD.

### 4.0 Planning background

A planning application has been submitted to East Lindsey District Council for a change of land use from agriculture/pasture to provide an extension to the existing caravan site - see details above, Section 2.0.

Prior to determination of the application, the District Council, acting on the advice of the Assistant County Archaeologist, has requested the undertaking of an archaeological desk top study and field evaluation (planning reference N/110/1126/97).

#### 4.1 Archaeology in East Lindsey and the Local Plan

The District Council has embraced within its Local Plan most of the guidelines set-out in *Archaeology and Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (1990). PPG16 notes that:-

"Archaeological remains should be seen as a finite and non-renewable resource, in many cases highly fragile and vulnerable to damage and destruction. Appropriate management is therefore essential to ensure that they survive in good condition. In particular, care must be taken to ensure that archaeological remains are not needlessly or thoughtlessly destroyed. They can contain irreplaceable information about our past and the potential for an increase in future knowledge. They are part of our sense of national identity and are vulnerable both for their own sake and for their role in education, leisure and tourism."

### 5.0 Objectives and methods

The purpose of this report is to identify and assess archaeological remains which may be sensitive to the construction works associated with the proposed development and,



if necessary, to suggest further methods by which the site may be evaluated in advance of the development.

The report has drawn from the following sources of information:-

The County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)

The aerial photographic records of the RCHME

Records held at the Lincolnshire Archives Office

Information supplied by Robert Lowe

Published and unpublished accounts

Two non-intrusive archaeological surveys

## 6.0 Archaeological and historical background

Long before the development of the medieval village, a human presence had already been established in and around the area we now know as Mablethorpe, though this settlement need not have been on a permanent basis. From later prehistoric times onwards, the marshland appears to have been of considerable importance for coastal salt production. One recently discovered site at Tetney has been dated to the late Bronze Age (Palmer-Brown 1993) and salterns of Iron Age and Romano-British date have been recorded elsewhere; notably around Ingoldmells and Skegness (Whitwell 1992). Salt production sites have not been recorded at Mablethorpe itself, though occasional finds of Romano-British pottery could betray the proximity of local production sites.

In the Domesday Survey of 1086, land at Mablethorpe was held by Earl Hugh, Gilbert of Ghent and Rainer of Brimeux (Morris 1986). The place-name Mablethorpe (*Malbertorp* in 1086) is derived from 'Malbert's thorp'. 'Malbert' is an Old French personal name and 'thorp' is a small, dependant settlement (Ekwall 1989, 310).

Mablethorpe was originally two parishes; Saint Peter and Saint Mary. Saint Peter's church and "a considerable portion of the parish" were lost to the sea in 1287 (Kelly's 1933, 418). The parish remained until the early twentieth century with the rectory united with that of Saint Helen's at Theddlethorpe (ibid).

The church of Saint Mary stands at the western end of the settlement. The land was given by Sir Roger de Montalt in 1300. Parts of the nave possibly date from this early fourteenth century foundation. However the nave had mostly been rebuilt in brick and bore a date of 1714 prior to further rebuilding in the late 1970s. The upper part of the low west tower is also of brick, dating to the seventeenth century. The chancel has a higher roof than the nave, giving the church an unusual appearance (Pevsner et al. 1995, 548).



Like many other settlements on the Lincolnshire coast, Mablethorpe played an important role as a small port from at least the fourteenth century (Platts 1985, 195), and even as late as the second half of the eighteenth century, goods such as timber were still being landed there (Beastall 1978, 52).

Mablethorpe Hall was a Royalist seat and played a minor role during the civil war. During 1643 it was home to a Royalist garrison but following the Battle of Winceby it was attacked by Parliamentary forces (Brears 1940, 29. Holmes 1980, 170).

Documents show the population of Mablethorpe declining from the late sixteenth to early eighteenth centuries (Beastall 1978, 9) and it remained a small settlement until the nineteenth century, when it developed as an east coast resort. In 1855 it was described as follows;

"It has a good inn, and many private boarding-houses, and is much frequented in the season on account of the excellent bathing accommodation it affords, the sands being smooth and firm, and of such gradual descent that it may safely be performed at all times of the tide" (Kelly's 1855, 170)

A convalescent home was constructed in 1870 and the resort was well established by the 1880s. The Louth and East Coast Railway, which terminated at Mablethorpe, opened in 1877 (Wright 1982, 188-9). This was followed in the late 1880s by an extension to the Sutton and Willoughby Railway which formed a loop between Louth and Willoughby (ibid, 195). The twentieth century saw the further development of the resort particularly with the growth of chalets and caravan parks in the post-war period (Robinson 1989, 175). The railway to Louth was closed in 1960 and the remaining link to Alford in 1970 (ibid, 172).

## **7.0 Archaeological potential**

Against the historical backdrop presented above, there is a small body of information that relates more directly to the site of proposed development; based largely on surrounding field assessments and aerial photographic records. Presented below, therefore, is an assessment of site-specific cartographic and other information which has not been referenced above, but which is of relevance to the conclusions contained in this report.

### **7.1 Information derived from the Lincolnshire Archives Office**

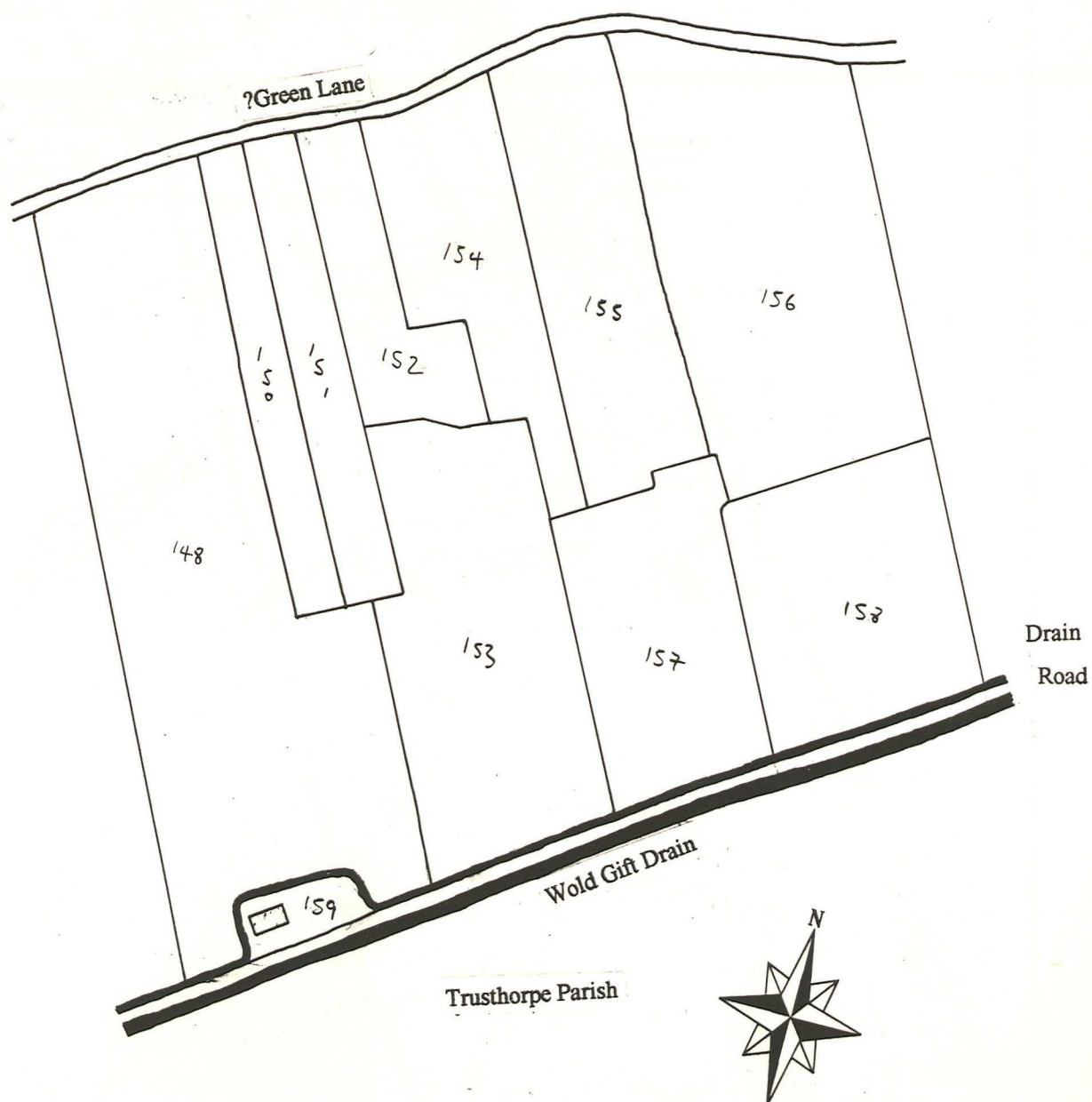
Documents and maps held at the Lincolnshire Archives Office were consulted as part of this study. Five maps were consulted, and sections from two of these are reproduced:

**1830 Mablethorpe Drainage Map (by Thomas Mager, Maltby-le-Marsh**



On the north-east, east and south sides the site boundaries have not altered (157 and part of 153): only the west boundary has changed over the past 150 years or so, and the map shows no indication of structures. Field 157 was named the Gift Bank Close, field 153 is recorded as part of Eleven Acres. What is now known as Seaholme Road was probably Green Lane (this is supported by other field names to the north of the road).

The south side of the site is delineated by an un-named drain; a predecessor to the Trusthorpe Pumping Drain (shown on the 1905 OS map). Between this and the Wold Gift Drain is an un-named road.

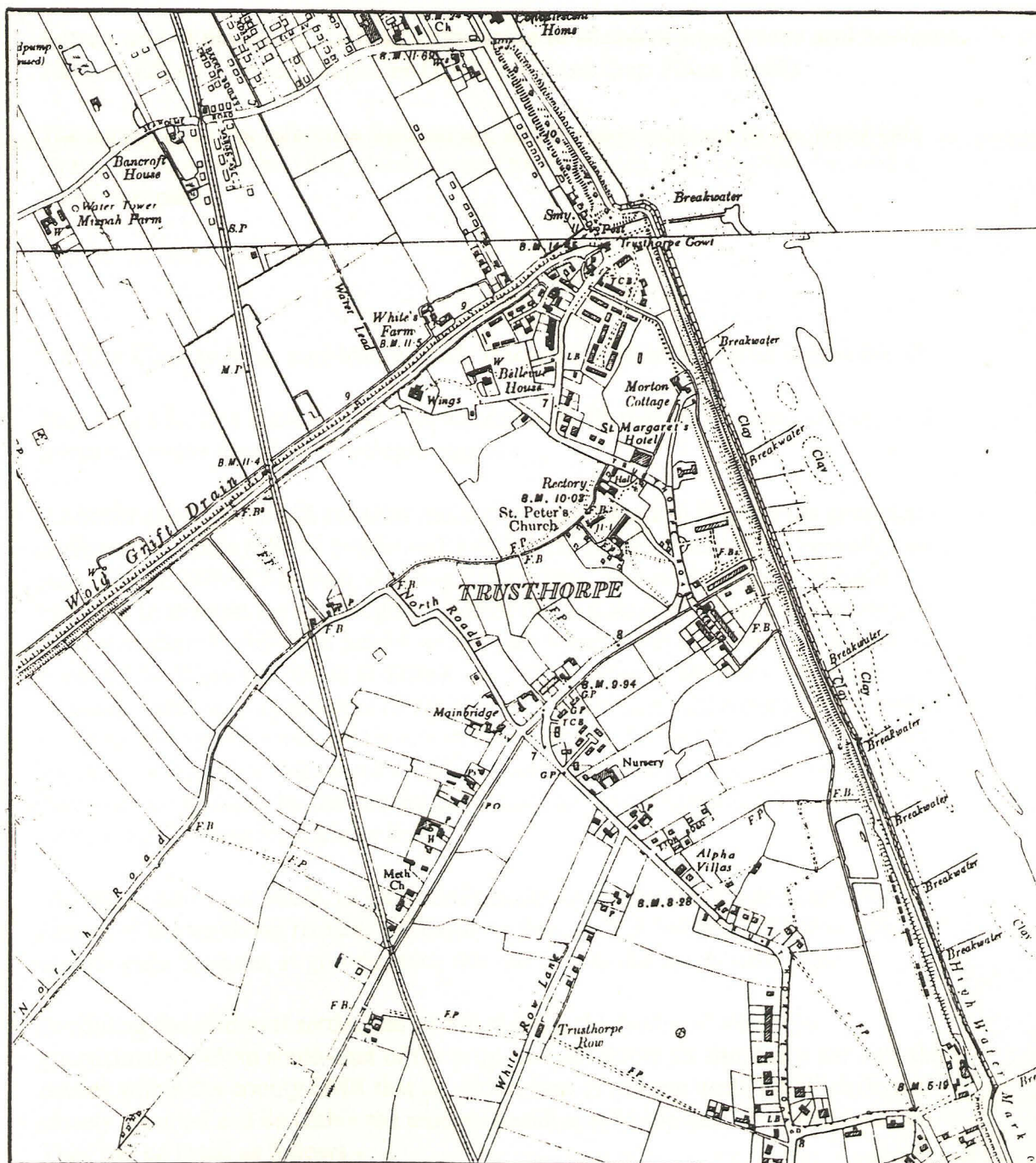


Extract, 1830 Mablethorpe Drainage Map



## 1905 Ordnance Survey 6" map

Excluding the obvious feature that, by 1905, the east side of the site is traversed by the Louth and East Coast Railway line, there is little change in ground plan. Immediately east of the site, adjacent to the Wold Gift Drain, a small area of land has been sub-divided.



Extract, 1905 Ordnance Survey 6" map



**Mablethorpe Tithe Plan, 1838 (LAO ref. Lind Dep 113/4) - not reproduced**

**Map of Mablethorpe parish, c. 1850 (LAO ref. Misc Dep 142/1/4/1) - not reproduced**

The above two maps indicate no significant changes to the site, but they do show Little Field and Mil Field (151 and 157) as being divided into north-south strips - this would be concordant with the direction of ridge and furrow plotted within the area of research by the RCHME.

**Sutton and Willoughby Railway (Extension to Mablethorpe) Plans and Sections, 1886, R Elliott Cooper, Engineer (LAO ref. Lind Dep Plans 1/160)**

The survey does not reference field names, and the road adjacent to the Wold Gift Drain, indicated on the 1830 Mablethorpe Drainage Map, has, by 1886, become a public footpath.

## **7.2 The County Sites and Monuments Record (further details in Appendix 1)**

There are a limited number of entries within the SMR that are of direct and indirect relevance to the proposed development site.

As noted above, the SMR contains aerial photographs which indicate the presence of earthwork remains (photo. reference L1.432.2.1). These remains have been plotted as part of the RCHME National Mapping Programme. The earthworks, which are confined to the east (ie un-ploughed) side of the site, appear to represent ridge and furrow medieval cultivation marks, and similar remains can be observed immediately south of the Wold Gift Drain in Trusthorpe parish, close to the site of possible medieval earthwork platforms (TF 5094 8367). The ridges and furrows are orientated north-north-west to south-south-east, and they appear to incorporate (less clear) right angled off-shoots, perhaps separating discreet areas/smaller units. The remains are traversed north-south by the embankment associated with the construction of the Sutton and Willoughby Railway line.

Attempts have been made, as part of this study, to produce a detailed earthwork survey of the surviving remains although, as described in Section 7.4 below, the results are not clear because, at ground level, the earthworks are barely detectable.

Excluding the medieval settlement of Trusthorpe, the centre of which lies approximately 450m south-east of the proposed development site, there are only three entries within the county SMR that lie within 1km of the site itself, all of which are closely grouped and lie within the modern beach area to the east of Seaholme Road. They can be listed as follows:-

Romano-British pottery and a 16th century pewter spoon; found April 1948  
(TF 5136 8458)

*why are the APs  
not plotted or  
sketched?*

*all the more  
reason for*



Medieval pottery sherds and the remains of leather shoes; found March 1996 (TF 513 845)

A discoidal flint flake (TF 5140 8439).

Whether or not these finds relate to settlements which were abandoned due to the loss of land to the sea is uncertain. One is reminded that at nearby Skegness, for example, John Leland, writing in the 16th century, refers to a walled settlement (which some writers believe to have been Roman); now completely lost to the sea (Chandler 1993). For Mablethorpe, Whitwell has commented that, despite the fact that the Ordnance Survey indicates the site of a minor (Roman) settlement on the coast, there is little reason to think this site any more significant than others known along the coast such as Sutton on Sea, Chapel St Leonards and Ingoldmells (Whitwell 1992, 75), which may have been industrial working areas (ie salt) rather than discreet settlements.

It is worth noting that in 1992, an Anglian Water Services pipeline was monitored between Mablethorpe and Sutton on Sea (Tann 1993). This development did not affect the proposed development site, but it crossed the Wold Gift Drain a short distance to the west. Few surface artefacts were recorded in this area in advance of the development.

### 7.3 Gridded field walking

As part of this assessment, the west side (ie ploughed area) of the site was systematically fieldwalked to assess the density and significance of artefacts brought to the soil surface as a result of modern ploughing. The results of this, and an earthwork survey of the grassed area, are presented in Fig. 2.

Fieldwalking of the west section of the site (approximately 1.3 hectares) took place on November 3rd 1997 and was carried out by James Albone and Robert Schofield. The entire ploughed area was divided into 20m grid squares and the site was scanned at 5m intervals (ie 5m transects). Artefacts recovered were plotted according to their grid locations. These finds were washed and processed and were then submitted to J Young (medieval ceramics specialist) for identification and archive.

The overall finds count was low - only eight widely-spaced artefacts from the whole of the ploughed area. These are listed as follows:-

Grid sq.	Description
[1]	x1 fragment of Romano-British pottery, x1 fragment of tile; both probably Romano-British, very abraded
[4]	x1 sherd of local fabric medieval pottery; C13th - C15th, abraded
[9]	Fragment of floor tile in good condition. Possibly Romano-British



- [11]            x1 small sherd of local fabric medieval pottery; very abraded, C12/13
- [13]            x1 sherd of local fabric medieval pottery; C13th - C15th, fresh
- [18]            x1 sherd of local fabric medieval pottery; C13th - C15th, abraded
- [27]            x1 sherd of local fabric medieval pottery; C13th - C14th, abraded

#### 7.4 Earthwork survey

In addition to the fieldwalk, the project brief required the undertaking of an earthwork survey of the grassed area on the east side of the site which, as noted above, contains low extant earthworks: principally medieval ridge and furrow.

The survey took place on November 4th and was carried out by James Albone and Robert Schofield. The results are indicated on Fig. 2.

Although minor topographical variation can be detected across the site, it was not possible to produce a detailed earthwork survey (ie incorporating discrete units defined by hachures). The earthworks on the site are now so low that they cannot be defined at close range (excluding the line of the lowered embankment associated with the Sutton and Willoughby Railway line).

Given the above, a drawing has been produced which indicates spot heights at 20m intervals. This does not provide any useful archaeological information, although it does indicate just how minor the topographical fluctuations are. The poor survival is partly attributed to the levelling of the disused railway line embankment (equally, it may be that some of the earthworks were also scarped during the construction of the railway). Although the surviving remains may stand out from the air, they are extremely difficult to define at ground level.



Fig. 2 Plan of the proposed development site,  
incorporating fieldwalking and earthwork survey  
results





## 8.0 Impacts to archaeological resources

As noted above, the construction of the embankment for the Sutton and Willoughby Railway line must have involved widespread scarping of surrounding areas to provide a suitable body of soil to produce the embankment. Following the abandonment of the line, the mound appears, for the most part, to have been levelled and it is likely that some of this material was spread over the surrounding area, thus masking some of the extant medieval remains. Lesser impacts will have occurred during excavations for a gas pipeline which traverses the ploughed area on a north-west to south-east alignment (in the absence of contrary information, it is assumed that this development was not monitored).

Excluding ploughing, it is assumed that there have been limited impacts to the potential archaeological resource. Three holes have been excavated to support wooden poles carrying the electricity supply across the grassed area (orientated north-west to south-east) and, in the ploughed area, a British Gas pipeline extends north-west to south-east (Fig. 2). It would appear that this service was not monitored.

## 9.0 Conclusions

It is tenuously concluded that the archaeological potential of the site is limited. This conclusion is based on a combination of desk-based and field-based research. Taken together, the information suggests that, from at least the medieval period, the site has been agricultural/pastoral and it is considered unlikely therefore that post-Roman settlement features (ie structures etc.) will be disturbed or destroyed as a result of the development. Inevitably, the development will destroy what remains of the earthworks on the east side of the site, though (in the opinion of the writer) these earthworks, which are included as part of the RCHME Mapping Programme, are of limited further archaeological potential.

The site has produced a small quantity of Romano-British material and it is just possible that a site of this date is located in the general vicinity. However, with such low numbers of artefactual remains, it is difficult to substantiate this possibility further (clarification would require the employment of alternative techniques such as magnetometry or possibly rapid magnetic susceptibility remote sensing).

Whether or not further evaluation is necessary in advance of development is a matter for the Assistant County Archaeologist to consider. If deep excavations are to be restricted to the site of the proposed lake, it may be that in this area only the application of further techniques may be useful.



## 10.0 Acknowledgements

PCA would like to thank Mr R Lowe (Chartered Architect) for commissioning this study and providing some of the relevant background information.

## 11.0 References

- |                        |      |   |
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## 12.0 Appendices

### Appendix 1: Catalogue of material derived from the County Sites and Monuments Record at Lincolnshire County Council

NGR	Description
TF 5136 8458	Romano-British pottery, found April 1948; and C16th pewter spoon
TF 513 845	Medieval pottery + leather shoes: found February/March 1966
TF 5140 8439	Discoidal flint flake
TF 5086 8387	Medieval earthworks/ridge and furrow
TF 5094 8367	Probable late medieval earthwork platforms