ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT
ALL SAINTS' CHURCH,
RUSKINGTON,
LINCOLNSHIRE
(RAS 98)

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Work Undertaken For
East Midlands Electricity

Report Compiled by
Neil Herbert BA (Hons)

March 1998

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1. SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of postholes and a cable trench at All Saints' Church, Ruskington, Lincolnshire. The church was built during the 11th century and is surrounded by a graveyard that was used until the late 20th century. Consequently, it was likely that human remains would be disturbed during development.

Investigations recorded several episodes of re-worked soil and natural containing both fragmented human remains and domestic refuse, dating from the 14th to the 19th century. Topsoil sealed these layers and forms the present surface of the site.

Although most of the development did not impact beyond a depth of 0.4m, the watching brief has ascertained the presence of disturbed deposits and human remains that reflect burial within the churchyard from the 14th to the 19th centuries.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Planning Background

Archaeological Project Services was commissioned by Mr Keith Corner on behalf of East Midlands Electricity to undertake an archaeological watching brief during excavation of postholes and a cable trench for the purpose of street lighting at All Saints' church, Ruskington, Lincolnshire. The work was carried out on the 19th February 1998, in accordance with aims defined by Lincolnshire County Council Archaeology Section (Appendix 1).

An archaeological watching brief is defined as '*a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological purposes within a specified area, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed*' (IFA 1994, 1).

2.2 Topography, Geology and Soils

Ruskington is situated approximately 6km north of Sleaford and 24km south of Lincoln in North Kesteven district, Lincolnshire (Fig.1). The village is located at the centre of a shallow valley and is bisected by a small east-west stream. All Saints' church lies at the heart of the modern settlement, on the north bank of the stream (Fig.2).

The church is central to a small graveyard, whose surface sits approximately 1m higher than surrounding land, containing a predominance of badly weathered limestone headstones and tombs (Fig.3).

Ground at the site slopes gradually away from the church, before dropping sharply at the boundary to the graveyard. The limit of the graveyard is marked by a wall which fronts onto Chapel Street and Church Street, to the west the area is contained by a row of dwellings. The surface of the site lies at approximately 12m OD at National Grid Reference TF 0823 5104.

Local soils are of the Ruskington Association and comprise gleyic brown calcareous earths and sands. These soils overlie glaciofluvial sand and gravel and have a calcareous substrate containing limestone, flint and quartzite pebbles (Hodge *et. al.* 1984, 304). Natural geology was not exposed during excavation for the development.

2.3 Archaeological Background

Remains of a prehistoric cemetery, dating to the Bronze Age (2000-600 BC), have been excavated approximately 300m southeast of the development (Fig.2; PCA 1994). Two inhumation burials, accompanied by beaker pottery, were recorded here during building construction (Palmer-Brown 1994).

Romano-British (AD 43-410) coins have been found north of All Saints' church (Fig.2; NK52.06/09). Both date to the 3rd century and probably represent casual losses.

Place-name evidence suggests that the present settlement originated during the Anglo-Saxon period (AD 410-1066). Ruskington derives from a combination of the Old English *ryscen*, meaning 'rushy' and *tun*, meaning 'settlement' (Ekwall 1974, 397). This suggests that early occupation probably lies in close proximity to the Beck that divides the modern village. Mid to Late Saxon settlement remains, primarily building slots and postholes, are recorded on the site of the prehistoric cemetery, within 300m of the church (Palmer-Brown 1994). Anglo-Saxon weapons have been found less than 200m west of the development, though it is not clear in the parish records whether these came from burials or other contexts (Fig.2; NK52.25/26).

The earliest historical reference to Ruskington occurs in the Domesday Book, written 1086, recording the presence of 38 families and a church owned by Geoffrey Haselin (*ibid*). No standing remains of 11th century date are recorded at the present church, suggesting that the Domesday Book is referring to an earlier precursor.

All Saints' was probably constructed during the 12th century and is dated by the Norman tower arch and Early English chancel and chancel arch (Pevsner and Harris 1989, 617). The church is of coursed limestone rubble and ashlar build and evidences alterations of 13th, 15th, 17th and 19th century date (DoE 1986, 30). A monument to a priest of probable 14th century date, and much defaced, lies due south of the church (Pevsner and Harris 1989, 617). Observation of surviving memorials suggests that burial within the bounds of the graveyard had ceased by the end of the 19th century, as there are no surviving monuments of later date.

Previous development along the south aisle of the church revealed human burials, though these were not subject to archaeological investigation. Archaeological observation during partial removal of flooring, adjacent to the north aisle, discovered an undated north-south stone wall (Healey 1981).

3. AIMS

The aim of the watching brief was to record and interpret archaeological features exposed during ground disturbance (Appendix 1).

4. METHODS

Excavation of the postholes and cable trench was completed by hand and all work was subject to archaeological observation. The cable trench was dug to a depth of 0.4m and a width of 0.3m (Plate 1). All postholes had a diameter of 0.3m and were augered to a depth of 0.8m. Trench 1, at the northern limit of the graveyard, was also excavated to a depth of 0.8m (Fig.3).

Spoil heaps were inspected for archaeological remains disturbed by the

2

development. Human bone, where excavated, was identified prior to re-burial within the cut of the cable trench. The position of human bone was recorded and is plotted on Figure 3. All animal bone and pottery was kept for further analysis (Appendix 3).

Representative sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10. Colour slide photographs were taken during groundworks, depicting the setting of the site and recording the deposits encountered. All records were made in accordance with the Archaeological Site Manual (MOLAS 1994).

5.   RESULTS

5.1   The Stratigraphic Sequence

Finds recovered during the development were examined and a date was assigned where possible. Records of the deposits excavated during groundworks were also examined. A list of all contexts and interpretations appears as Appendix 2. Grouping was assigned based on the nature of the deposits and recognisable relationships between them, supplemented by artefact dating. A stratigraphic matrix of all identified deposits was produced. Three groups were identified:

> Group 1: Buried soil deposits
> Group 2: Re-deposited natural
> Group 3: Topsoil deposits

Archaeological contexts are described below. The numbers in brackets are the context numbers assigned in the field.

5.2   Group 1: Buried soil deposits

Friable, mid-brown sandy silts (003) comprised the earliest recorded deposits. These were approximately 0.5m thick,

though they were only subject to partial excavation. Two sherds of medieval pottery were retrieved from this layer within Trench 1.

5.3   Group 2: Re-deposited natural

Mid yellowish-brown sandy silts (002/004) sealed the buried soil to a thickness of c. 0.3m (Plate 2). This layer contained fragments of limestone and is interpreted as re-deposited natural. Fragments of human bone and animal bone was found during excavation of these layers.

5.4   Group 3: Topsoil deposits

Loose, dark-brown sandy silt (001) formed the uppermost surface of the site and varied in thickness between 0.1m and 0.34m. Pottery, human bone, animal bone, glass, nails, clay pipe and pantile was retrieved from the topsoil, dating from the 14th to the 20th centuries.

6.   DISCUSSION

Investigations within the area of development has revealed archaeological remains of probable medieval and post-medieval date.

The nature of the development meant that only a small area and depth of deposits was excavated and, as a result, the stratigraphic sequence is only partially understood.

A buried soil (003) formed the earliest recorded deposit, containing two sherds of Potterhanworth ware, dateable to the 14th century. Although no human remains were contained by the buried soil, this layer probably represents an accumulation of graveyard soil, developed as a result of frequent grave digging within the limit of the graveyard. The potsherds found within

this deposit are unlikely to have been deliberately buried and more likely reflect the deposition of domestic refuse from nearby dwellings.

Re-deposited natural (002/004) overlay the buried soil and most probably formed as a result of continued, and later, grave digging. This caused upcast of re-worked natural over the surface of the graveyard. Over a period of time this has accumulated to form a layer over 0.3m thick.

Several fragments of human bone were found within (002/004), representing remains of previously disturbed burials. This may result either as a consequence of pressure upon space, or an absence of marking or identification of the burial location. A single fragment of pig jaw recovered from this layer reflects the deposition of domestic refuse within the church grounds.

Topsoil forms the present surface of the site and was thickest toward the northern boundary of the churchyard. This contained fragments of glass, pantile, pottery and animal bone, probably deposited as refuse by the occupants of the village from the 14th century to the present day. The pantile probably came from the roof of the south porch of the church or, alternatively, from the buildings that flank the western edge of the churchyard. All of the human bone within this layer was disarticulated and fragmented, most probably as a result of previous disturbance.

7. CONCLUSIONS

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during excavations at All Saints' parish church because there was a possibility that archaeological remains, specifically those of human burial, would be disturbed.

The earliest recorded deposit comprised a layer of graveyard soil, dated by pottery to the 14th century. This was sealed by a deposit of post-medieval upcast, also formed during grave digging, and subsequently overlain by topsoil.

Disarticulated and fragmented human bone was found, in a good state of preservation, within the topsoil and post-medieval upcast. None of this was in situ, and all had been disturbed from the original depositional context.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

9. PERSONNEL

Project Coordinator: Gary Taylor
Site Supervisor: Neil Herbert
Site Assistant: Peter Davies
Finds Processing: Denise Buckley
Illustration: Neil Herbert
Post-Excavation Analysis: Neil Herbert

10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Hodge, C. A. H., Burton, R. G. O., Corbett, W. M., Evans, R. and Seale, R. S., 1984 *Soils and their Use in Eastern England*, Soil Survey of England and Wales **13**

MOLAS 1994 *Archaeological Site Manual*

Palmer-Brown, C., 1994 *29 Station Road, Ruskington, An Archaeological Watching Brief Report* Unpublished PCA Report

Pevsner, N., and Harris, J., 1989 *Lincolnshire*, The Buildings of England (2nd edition, rev N. Antram)

11.   ABBREVIATIONS

APS   Archaeological Project Services

DoE   Department of the Environment

IFA   Institute of Field Archaeologists

PCA   Pre-Construct Archaeology

MOLAS   Museum of London Archaeological Service

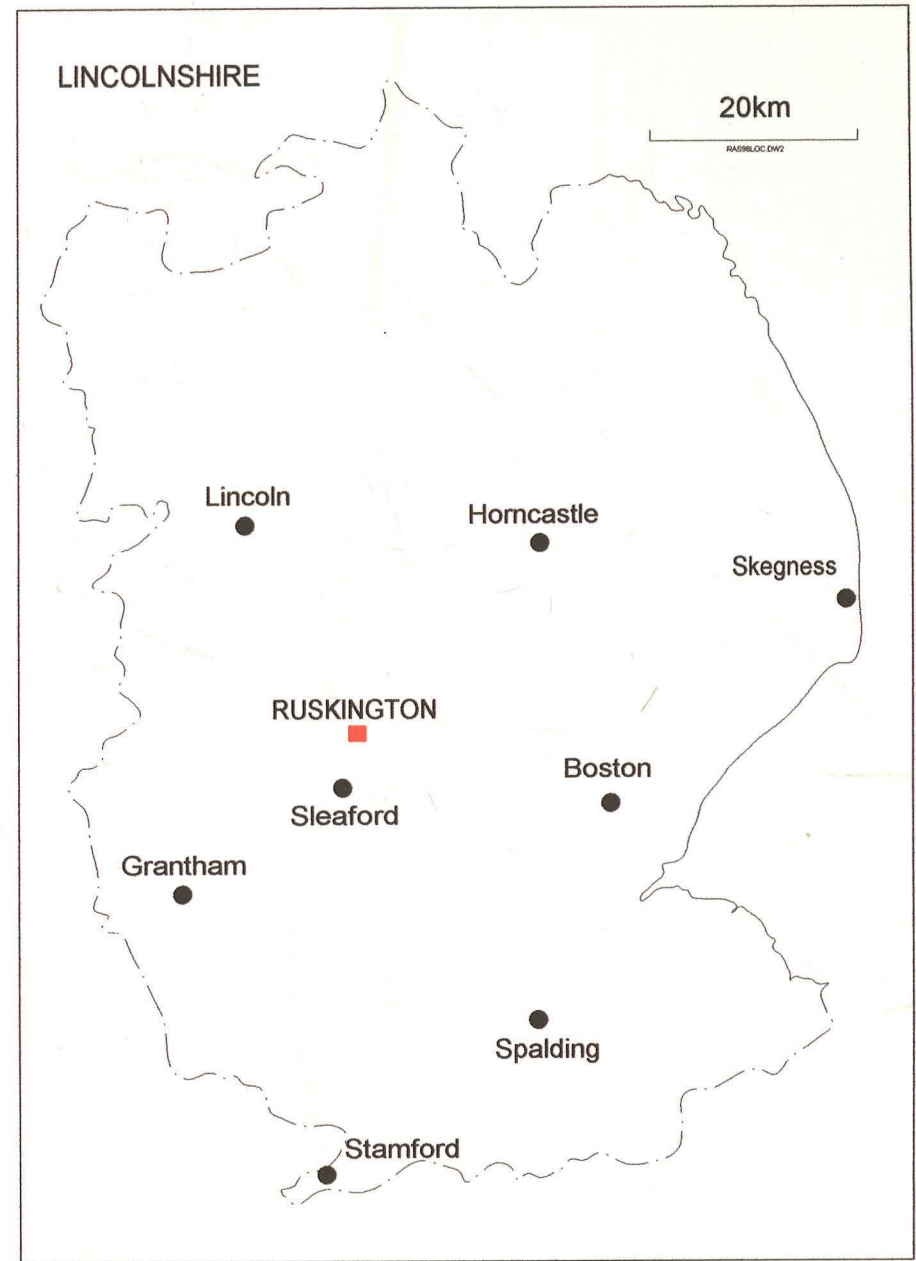NK   Prefix to records filed by the North Kesteven Heritage Officer

LINCOLNSHIRE

100km

20km

RAS98LOC.DW2

Lincoln

Horncastle

Skegness

RUSKINGTON

Boston

Sleaford

Grantham

Spalding

Stamford
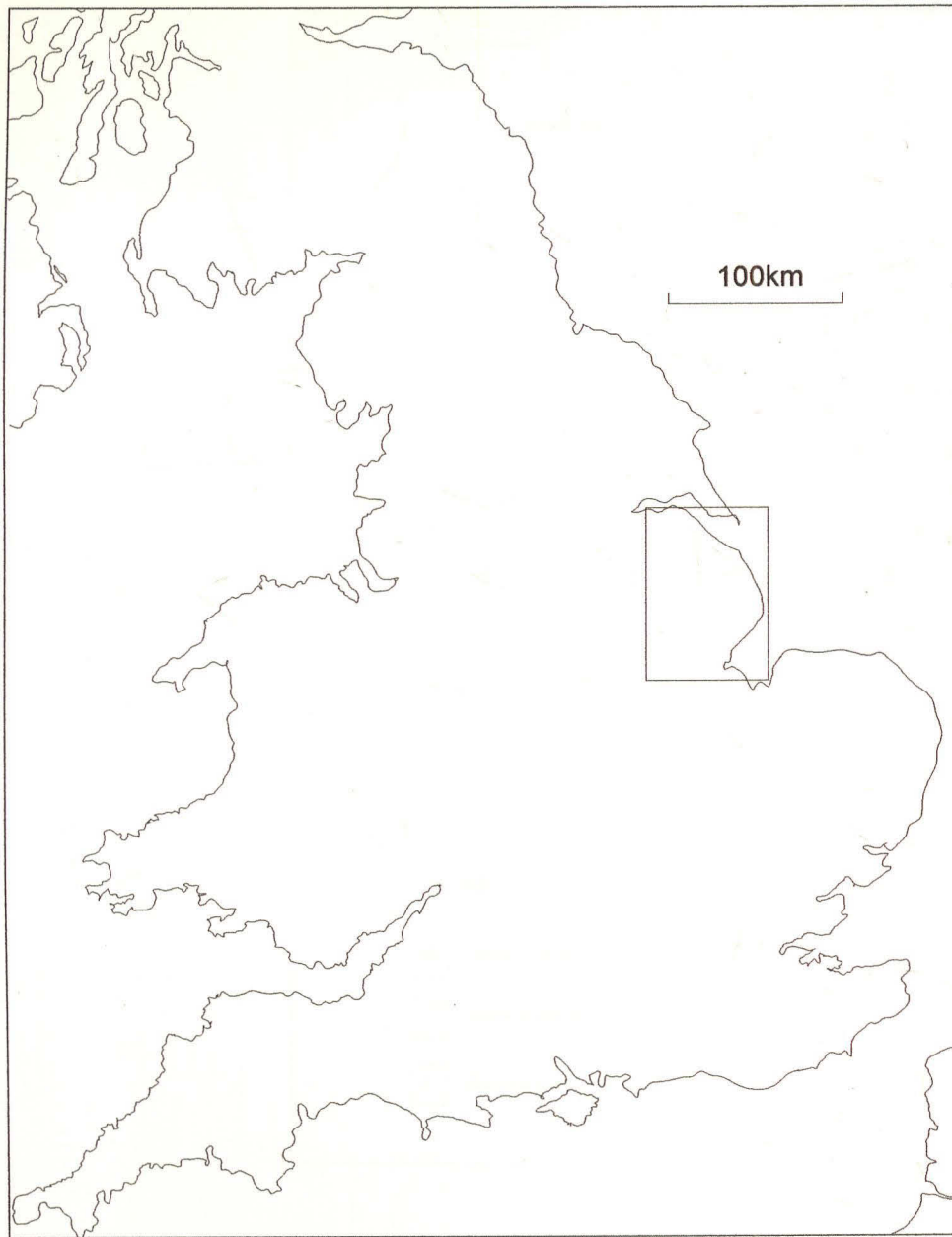
Figure 1: General location map

RUSKINGTON CP

SLEAFORD ROAD

THE BECK

NK52.09

NK52.25

NK52.06

NK52.26

ALL SAINTS'
CHURCH

080510

090510

PCA 1994

15

15

15

SLEAFORD-LINCOLN

RAILWAY LINE

KEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS

PARISH BOUNDARY

CONTOUR INTERVAL (mOD)

0   500M

RAS98F1.DW2

N
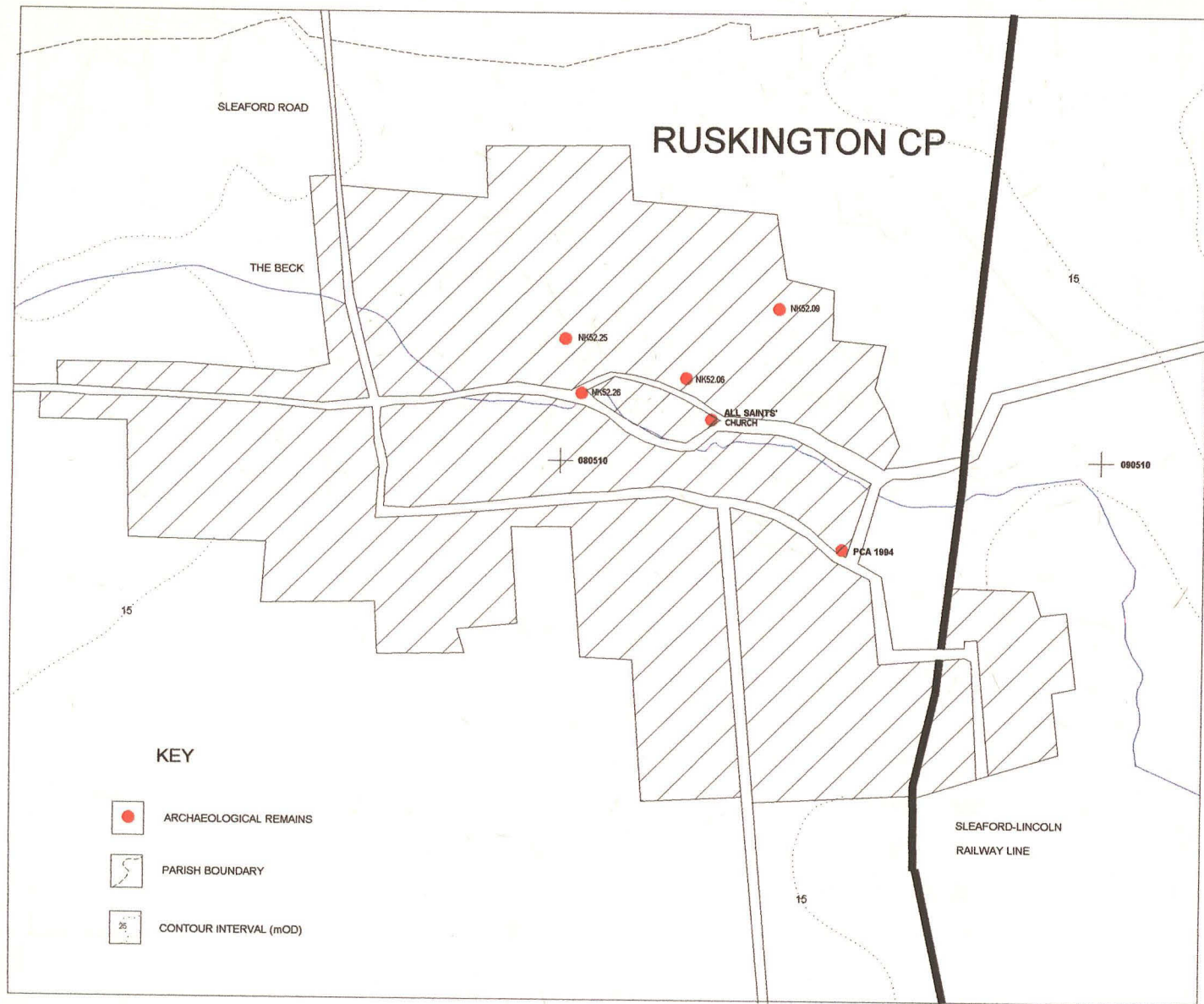
Figure 2: Location of development and selected archaeological remains

SECTION 3

SECTION 1

●3

●2

ALL SAINTS'
CHURCH

CHURCH STREET

CHAPEL STREET

●1

KEY

DEVELOPMENT

+ FINDSPOT

●1 POSTHOLE

THE BECK

0   25M

RAS99F3.DW2

N
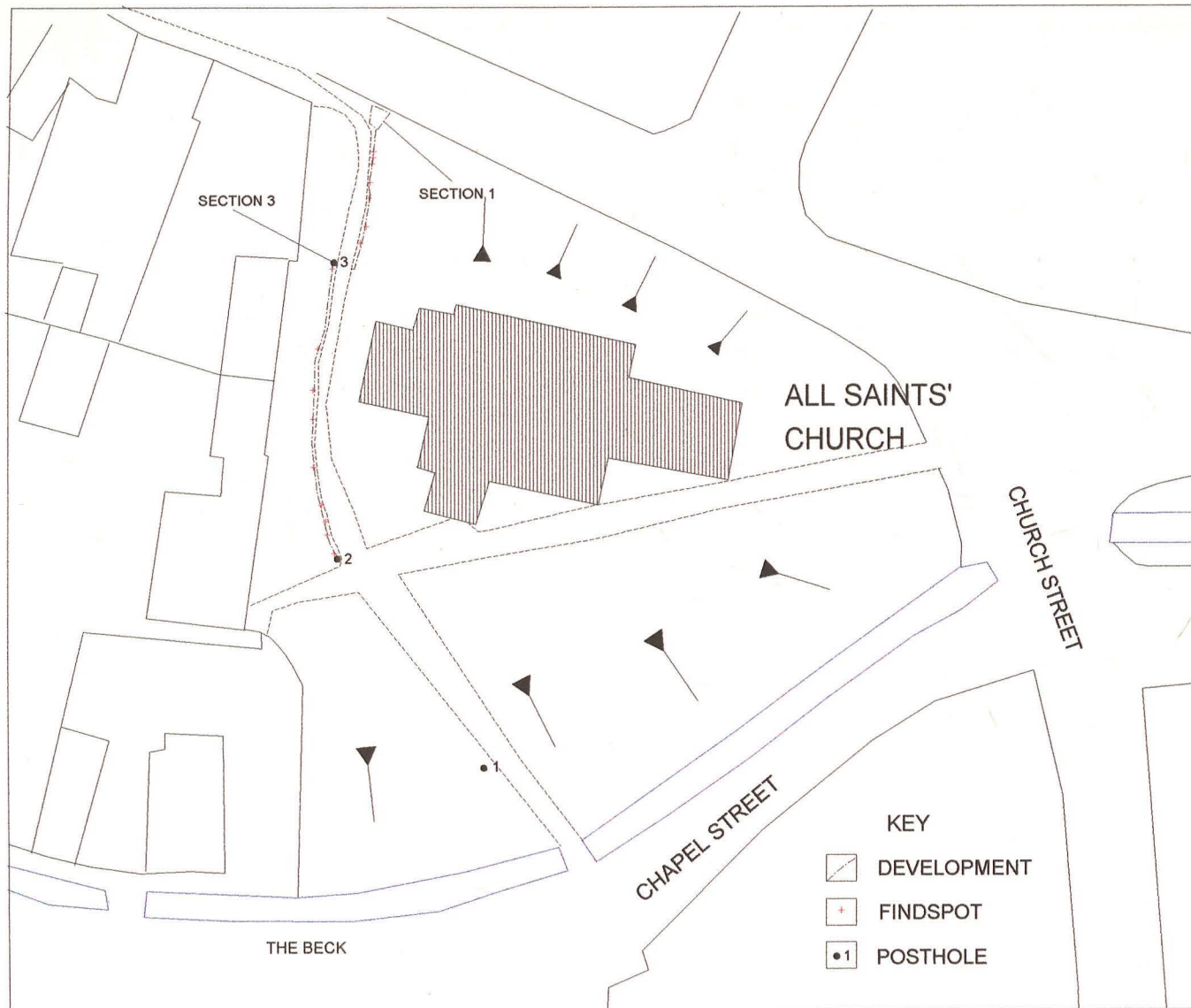
Figure 3: Area of development and distribution of finds

N   S   N   S

001

001

SECT NO. 1
FACING WEST

SECT NO. 2
FACING WEST

002

002

003

003
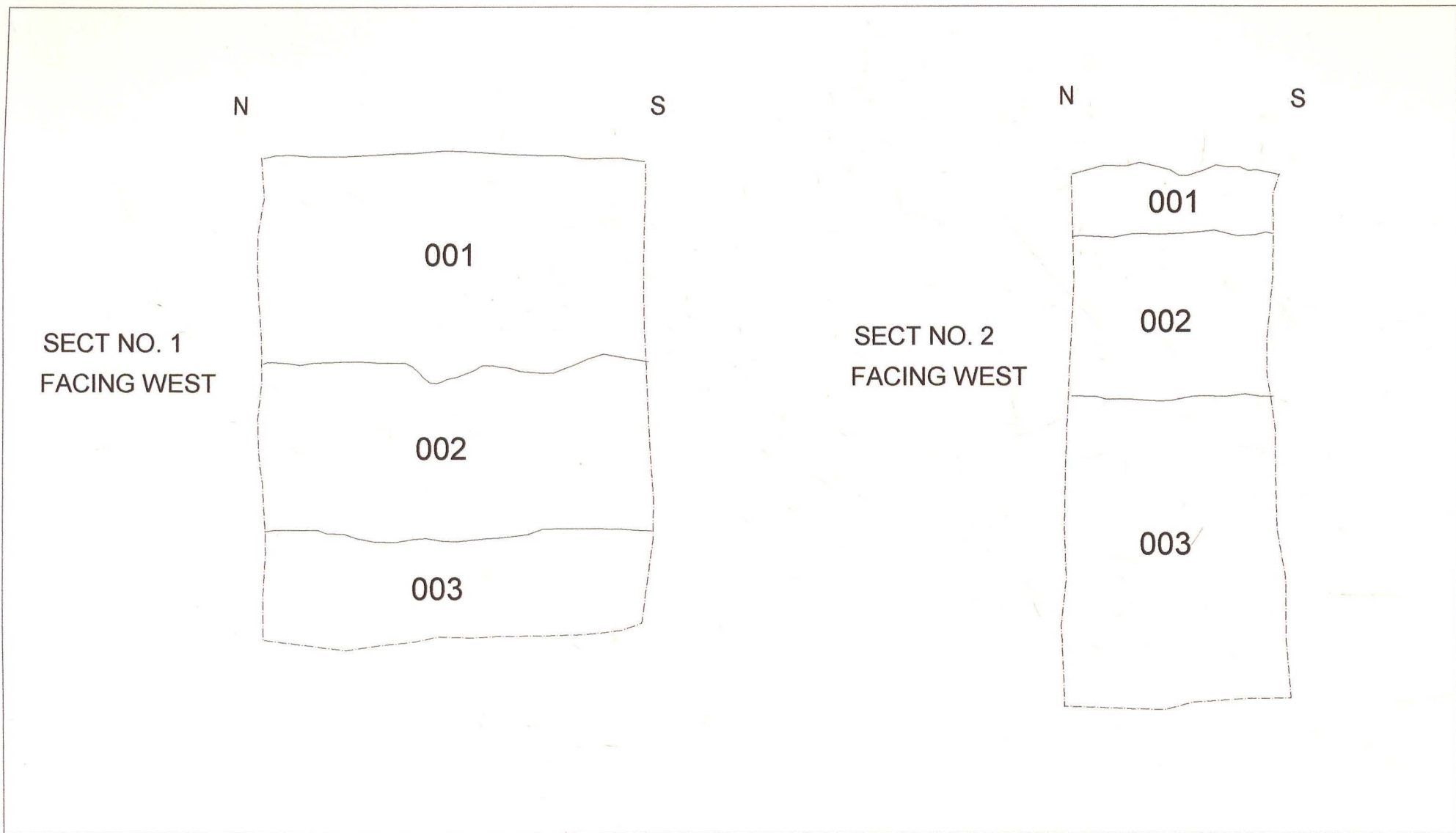
0   50CM

RAS98F4.DW2

Figure 4: Sections 1 and 2

Figure 5 Clay pipe from (001) at scale 2.1 with expanded motif

Plate 1 - General Site View, showing All Saints' Church

Plate 2 - View of Cable Trench, looking north

Extract from *Standard Brief for Archaeological Projects in Lincolnshire,*
Lincolnshire County Council Archaeology Section 1997,
Unpublished Document

3.12 Watching Brief

3.121 Where a site has a perceived archaeological potential or where the mitigation strategy suggests some level of recording is necessary a watching brief may be appropriate. Such a process has also been defined by the IFA.

The purpose of a watching brief is also defined by the IFA (1994c):

- to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works.

- to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support a treatment to a proper and satisfactory standard.

3.12.2 Also in line with IFA guidance it should be noted that there are various scopes of work represented by watching brief.

A **comprehensive watching brief** is one where archaeological staff are present at all times during the groundwork operations.

An **intensive watching brief** is one where archaeologists are present on site during the undertaking of sensitive groundworks.

An **intermittent watching brief** the trenches/groundworks will be observed after the completion of machining.

A **partial watching brief** entails observation only when considered appropriate.

3.12.3 The watching brief should involve:

a. archaeological supervision of soil stripping
b. inspection of subsoil for archaeological features
c. recording of archaeological features in plan
d. rapid excavation of features if necessary
e. archaeological supervision of subsoil stripping
f. inspection of natural for archaeological features and recording them

Appendix 2

Context Summary

Context Number	Description	Phase	Interpretation
001	Loose, dark-brown sandy silt containing frequent small roots and occasional small sub-angular limestone fragments.	3	Topsoil deposit, overlying (002) and (004)
002	Friable, mid yellow-brown sandy clayey silt containing occasional medium limestone fragments and moderate small sub-angular limestone.	2	Re-deposited natural, overlying (003), same as (004)
003	Friable, mid to dark-brown clayey sandy silt containing occasional medium limestone fragments and moderate small sub-angular limestone fragments.	1	Buried soil, recorded at limit of excavation
004	Loose, light-yellow sandy gravel.	2	Re-deposited natural, overlying (003), same as (002)

The Finds
Hilary Healey MPhil and Gary Taylor MA

Provenance

Most of the material was recovered from the topsoil and was random in distribution, though individual fragments where retrieved from underlying deposits. In particular, medieval pottery only was obtained from a buried soil layer (003).

Much of the assemblage is relatively modern, of 18th-19th century date, though there are earlier pieces of medieval or early post-medieval date. These medieval pieces derive from production sites at Potterhanworth and (probably) Toynton All Saints.

Range

The range of material is detailed in the table.

The earliest artefacts are fragments of pottery of probable 14th century date. However, the majority of the assemblage is 18th-19th century in date and includes pottery, relatively abundant ceramic tile, clay pipes, iron, copper alloy and animal bones.

CONTEXT	DESCRIPTION	DATE
001	4x black glazed earthenware; 2x white glazed tableware; 1x stoneware; 1x Toynton All Saints-type ware; 1x Potterhanworth ware (abraded); 5x clay pipe stems, one marked 'HEBLETH/WHIGHT'; 5x pantile; 1x iron nail; 1x copper alloy object, unidentified; 2x sheep teeth	18th-early 20th century; 19th-20th century; 18th-19th century; 16th-17th century; 13th-14th century; 18th-19th century;
002	1x pig jaw	
003	2x Potterhanworth ware (connecting sherds)	13th-14th century

Condition

Although the iron nail is corroded, all the remaining material is in good condition and presents no long-term storage problems. The medieval pottery from context (003) are large, unworn sherds that connect. The assemblage should be archived by material class.

Documentation

The stamped clay pipe stem corresponds with previously discovered examples and is a product of the Heblethwight family (various spellings of the name exist), who were pipemakers in

Lincoln from at least 1662 to 1729. Possible users of the mark are Stephen, who was working as a claypipe maker from 1720 - 1729, and Matthew, who was first recorded as a pipemaker in 1715 and who died in 1729 (Walker and Wells 1979, 12).

Medieval and post-medieval artefact assemblages from throughout the county have previously been examined and reported.

Potential
The assemblage has limited potential, though the purely medieval material from context (003) may indicate that a definable medieval ground surface, or surviving stratigraphy of the period, exists within the churchyard.

References
Walker, I C, and Wells, P K, 1979 'Regional Varieties of Clay Tobacco-Pipe Markings in Eastern England', in P Davey (ed), *The Archaeology of the Clay Tobacco Pipe* I, BAR British Series **63**

Appendix 4

The Archive

The archive consists of:

4	Context records
2	Sheets of scale drawings
1	Photographic Record Sheet
1	Stratigraphic Matrix
5	Bag of finds

All primary records and finds are currently kept at:

Archaeological Project Services
The Old School
Cameron Street
Heckington
Sleaford
Lincolnshire
NG34 9RW

The ultimate destination of the project archive is:

Lincolnshire City and County Museum
12 Friars Lane
Lincoln
LN2 1HQ

Archaeological Project Services project code: RAS 98
City and County Museum Accession Number: 79.98

The discussion and comments provided in this report are based on the archaeology revealed during the site investigations. Other archaeological finds and features may exist on the proposed development site but away from those areas exposed during the course of this fieldwork. *Archaeological Project Services* cannot confirm that those areas unexposed are free from archaeology nor that any archaeology present there is of a similar character to that revealed during the curent investigation.

Appendix 5

Glossary of Terms

Bronze Age   Period dating from *c.* 2000 - 600 BC and characterised by the introduction and use of bronze and other copper alloys for tools and weapons.

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, *e.g.* (004).

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 from approximately AD 1066-1500.

Natural   Undisturbed deposit(s) of soil or rock which have accumulated without the influence of human activity.

Post-medieval   The period following the Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1500-1800.

Romano-British   Pertaining to the period from AD 43-410 when Britain formed part of the Roman Empire.