

# **Witham** Archaeology

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A Report to Mr and Mrs Holmes

June 2015



**LAND AT MORNINGSIDE NURSERIES, DOG DROVE  
NORTH, HOLBEACH DROVE, HOLBEACH, SOUTH  
HOLLAND, LINCOLNSHIRE**

**Archaeological Monitoring and Recording**

*V Mellor*

# LAND AT MORNINGSIDE NURSERIES, DOG DROVE NORTH, HOLBEACH DROVE, HOLBEACH, SOUTH HOLLAND, LINCOLNSHIRE

Site Code: HLDH15

Planning Reference: H09-0693-14

NGR: TF 3213 1244

OASIS ID:- withamar1-216423

## *Archaeological Monitoring and Recording*

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# **LAND AT MORNINGSIDE NURSERIES, DOG DROVE NORTH, HOLBEACH DROVE, HOLBEACH, SOUTH HOLLAND, LINCOLNSHIRE**

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING**

### ***SUMMARY***

*This report presents the results of archaeological monitoring and recording undertaken on land at Morningside Nurseries, Dog Drove North, Holbeach Drove, Holbeach, South Holland, Lincolnshire. The project was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Holmes to fulfil a condition of planning permission granted by South Holland District Council for the construction of a new dwelling.*

*The site lies in an archaeologically sensitive area, in close proximity to cropmarks of probable Iron Age and Romano-British date. Artefactual evidence indicated that the area was heavily utilised for salt production, probably during the early Roman period.*

*The excavation of the footings of the new dwelling was subject to archaeological monitoring. A probable ditch of Roman date was identified along with an undated possible channel, which could be contemporary with the ditch. One or both of these features may be associated with known Roman salt production in the vicinity.*

*A boundary ditch was identified which was infilled no earlier than the late 18th Century, and possibly as late as the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century.*

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This report presents the results of a archaeological monitoring and recording undertaken on land at Morningside Nurseries, Dog Drove North, Holbeach Drove, Holbeach, South Holland, Lincolnshire. The project was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Holmes to fulfil a condition of planning permission for the construction of a new dwelling. Fieldwork was carried out on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015, in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation compiled by Witham Archaeology and approved by the local planning authority.

The information in this document is presented with the proviso that further data may yet emerge. Witham Archaeology cannot, therefore, be held responsible for any loss, delay or damage, material or otherwise, arising out of this report. The document has been prepared in accordance with the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Archaeologists.

### **2.0 SITE LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY & GEOLOGY (see Figs. 1 and 2)**

The site lies just under 13.5km south-east of Spalding town centre at NGR TF 3213 1244 and 14km west of Wisbech in Cambridgeshire. Located on the west side of Dog Drove North and 200m north of Holbeach Drove, the proposed development plot measured around 0.1 of an hectare and is a sub-division of the long, narrow plots which front onto Dog Drove North. The new dwelling will occupy a footprint measuring approximately 20m x 11m, including a garage at the north end.

The geology of the area is Jurassic period mudstone of the Oxford Clay Formation, overlain by superficial deposits of quaternary clay and silt (British Geological Survey, Solid and Drift, 1:50 000).

At the start of groundworks the site formed a flat, grassed area.



### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

For much of the prehistoric period this area of the Fenland was subject to repeated marine transgressions which deposit thick layers of clays and silts within a salt marsh environment. Not until the late Iron Age to Roman period did the area become available, first for salting and then for settlement (Hayes and Lane ,1992)

During the the Anglo-Saxon period, the coastline was marked by a series of villages running eastwards along a low ridge from Spalding, and including Moulton, Whaplode and Holbeach (British Geological Survey, 1992). The low ridge would have provided slightly higher and drier ground more suitable to occupation, and the existence of these communities in the Anglo-Saxon period is confirmed by numerous land grants to Crowland Abbey, suggesting that the region was a relatively stable agricultural environment (Sawyer 1998).

Information contained in the county Historic Environment Record indicates that the site lies in close proximity to cropmarks of probable Iron Age and Romano-British date (HER 20236). The extensive survey of the Fenland undertaken by Philips (Philip, 1970) identified numerous sites cropmarks thought to of Romano-British date on the Fenland silts in this area.

Artefactual evidence indicated that the area was heavily utilised for salt production, probably during the early Roman period.

Roman finds have been recovered from Elder House located within 250m of the development (HER 22178).

### **4.0 AIMS & OBJECTIVES**

The principal objectives of the project, as set out in a Witham Archaeology specification were to:

- Allow the preservation by record of any surviving archaeological deposits and artefacts exposed by the development groundwork within the constraints imposed by the contractor's working methods, programme and development design.
- Produce a project archive for deposition with the appropriate museum together with a client report.
- Provide information for accession to the Lincolnshire Historic Environment Record.

### **5.0 METHODOLOGY**

The project specification provided for the monitoring of all sensitive groundworks including the excavation of foundation trenches.

The brief issued by the Planning Archaeologist required that a toothless ditching bucket be used during all development groundworks.

An archaeological record was made of any remains revealed by the excavations. These comprised written context descriptions on *pro forma* recording sheets, together with colour digital photographs. These included overall views detailing general site circumstances as well as specific views of individual archaeological deposits and/or features. Section drawings, showing the general stratigraphic sequence and all encountered archaeological features, were produced at scales of 1:20 and 1:10. Plans were drawn at a scale of 1:100.

### **6.0 RESULTS**

The following is an account of the overall findings of the investigations. Full context descriptions are provided in Appendix A and a complete catalogue of finds is provided in Appendix B.

The upper surface of undisturbed natural deposit (004) was exposed in the base of the southern side of the footings. This deposit comprised soft, light brown laminated silt and was over 0.46m thick. At the northern side of the footings, natural deposits comprised a stiff, mid brown clay (018).

Cut into the natural silt at the eastern edge of the footings was what was possibly a north-south aligned linear feature [019], which was not fully exposed in plan or section. This was over 1.47m wide, at least 0.39m deep and over 4.12m long with gently sloping sides where seen. Three fills were recorded within this feature, the earliest of these (011) being a 0.20m thick soft, light bluish-grey silt. It was not entirely clear whether this deposit was a true fill of feature [019] or represented staining of the underlying natural silt by overlying fills. Sealing this was a 40mm thick layer of dark grey clayey silt (010), which may represent a vegetation layer sealed by seasonal inundation. The uppermost recorded fill of [019] was (009), a firm, mixed deposit of mid brown and dark brown clayey silt with moderately frequent mid reddish-brown patches, which was 0.16m thick. This fill might represent silting up of this feature in wet conditions. Feature [019] was interpreted as a possible naturally-formed channel, although this is uncertain. No artefacts were retrieved from the fills of possible channel [019].

A further linear feature [013] was identified at the northern edge of the footings. Again this was not fully seen in plan or section, but may have been north-south aligned. This was over 2.34m wide and 0.45m deep, and may be a man-made ditch. Three sherds of a Roman greyware vessel were retrieved from what appeared to be the earliest fill of this ditch (012). This fill (012) comprised a soft, dark grey organic silt, which was 20mm thick, and may perhaps represent a vegetation layer sealed by inundation. Above this was deposit (014), a 0.25m thick soft, light bluish-grey silt, possibly the result of gradual silting or more rapid inundation.

A small patch of mid brown clayey silt (016) was recorded at the western edge of ditch [013], although it was not clear whether this was a further fill of the ditch, possibly representing soil formation on the edge of the ditch, or an isolated area of burrowing or root disturbance.

Deposits (017) and (020), also at the western edge of ditch [013], were of uncertain interpretation. Layer (017) was similar in composition to fill (014), being a soft light bluish-grey silt, and might be associated with ditch [013], perhaps representing staining of the natural clay from the fills of the ditch. Deposit (020) was a dark brown silt and clay, possibly a fill of an earlier cutting of ditch [013], but perhaps more likely an isolated area of buried soil.

It was not possible to plot the course of Roman ditch [013] across the footings, but it seems possible that this might be contemporary with, or even a continuation of, the undated possible channel [019].

At the southern edge of the footings was an east-west aligned ditch, which was over 1.75m wide, over 0.30m deep and over 12m long. This contained a single fill (003) of dark brown silty clay with moderately frequent brick fragments, which may represent deliberate backfilling of this ditch. Two sherds of a Creamware plate were retrieved from this fill, and these date to the late 18<sup>th</sup> to mid 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The location and orientation of this ditch matches a boundary depicted on old Ordnance Survey maps of the site ([www.old-maps.co.uk](http://www.old-maps.co.uk)). This boundary is depicted on maps as early as 1888 (1:2500) and as late as 1959 (1:10560). By the time of the 1976 1:2500 map this boundary had disappeared and been replaced by buildings, and a map of 1981 (1:10000) shows a large glasshouse on the site. It is not clear from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to late 20<sup>th</sup> century maps whether this boundary was an open ditch at this time, and this ditch may have been infilled prior to 1888.

The remaining deposits encountered during the investigations were restricted to buried topsoil layers (002, 008 & 007), topsoil (001) and turf (006).

## **7.0 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION**

Archaeological monitoring and recording of the building footprint revealed a sequence of deposits overlying natural clay and laminated silts.

A possible ditch was recorded which contained small quantities of Roman pottery. Roman finds have previously been retrieved in the vicinity of the site, and the area is thought to have been heavily utilised for salt production in the earlier part of the period. The fills of this possible ditch were consistent with

deposition in wet conditions, and it could be that this ditch was associated with the movement of water required for salt-making.

An undated possible channel was also identified which contained a similar sequence of fills to the Roman possible ditch, and could be contemporary, perhaps even being a continuation of the same feature. The identification of these features in the constraints of monitoring the excavation of footings trenches means that it difficult to determine the extent to which these represent man-made, deliberately cut features or the utilisation of naturally-formed features.

Ceramic evidence indicates that a further ditch identified during the investigation was infilled no earlier than the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Brief examination of a limited range of cartographic sources confirms this boundary was extant between the late 19<sup>th</sup> and mid 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, although it is unclear whether this was an open ditch during this period. Ordnance Survey maps dating to the 1970s and 1980s show the boundary to have been removed by this time.

## **8.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The author of this report would like to thank Mr and Mrs Holmes for their support in ensuring that the project was brought to successful conclusion. Thanks are also due to Alex Beeby for production of the finds report.

## **9.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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Phillips C.W. (ed.) 1970, *The Fenland in Roman times. Studies of a major area of peasant colonization with a Gazetteer covering all known sites and finds*. Royal Geographical Society Research Series no. 5, Royal Geographical Society, London

Sawyer P., 1998, *Anglo-Saxon Lincolnshire, History of Lincolnshire III*, History of Lincolnshire Committee, Lincoln

## **10.0 PROJECT/ ARCHIVE DETAILS**

### **10.1 Project Information**

SITE CODE: HLDH15

PLANNING APPLICATION No.: H09-0693-14

FIELD OFFICER: D Trimble

NGR: TF 3213 1244

CIVIL PARISH: Holbeach

DATE OF INTERVENTION: April 1<sup>st</sup> 2015

TYPE OF INTERVENTION: Monitoring and Recording

UNDERTAKEN FOR: Mr and Mrs Holmes

### **10.2 Archive Details**

PRESENT LOCATION: Witham Archaeology, Unit 6, Sleaford Station Business Centre, Station Road, Sleaford Lincolnshire, NG34 7RG

FINAL LOCATION: The Collection, Lincoln

MUSEUM ACCESSION No.: LCNCC:2015.49

#### ***The Site Archive Comprises:***

Context Records	20
Plans at Scale 1:100	1
Section Drawings at Scale 1:20 & 1:10	3
Digital Photographs	19
Set of Site Notes	1

*It is intended that transfer of the archive in accordance with current published requirements will be undertaken following completion of this project.*

## ***COLOUR PLATES***



*Plate 1: General view of work in progress from south*



*Plate 2: Recent boundary ditch [005] from east, Section 1, Scale 1m*

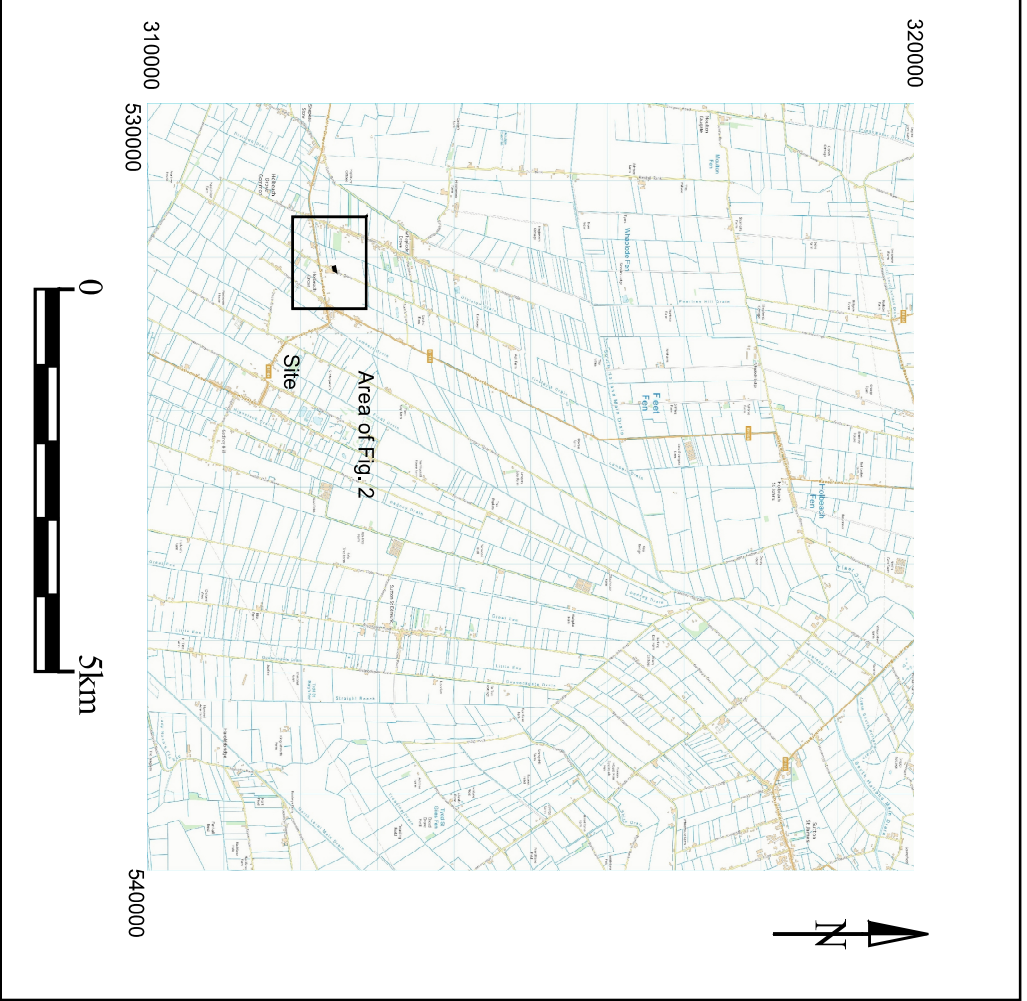
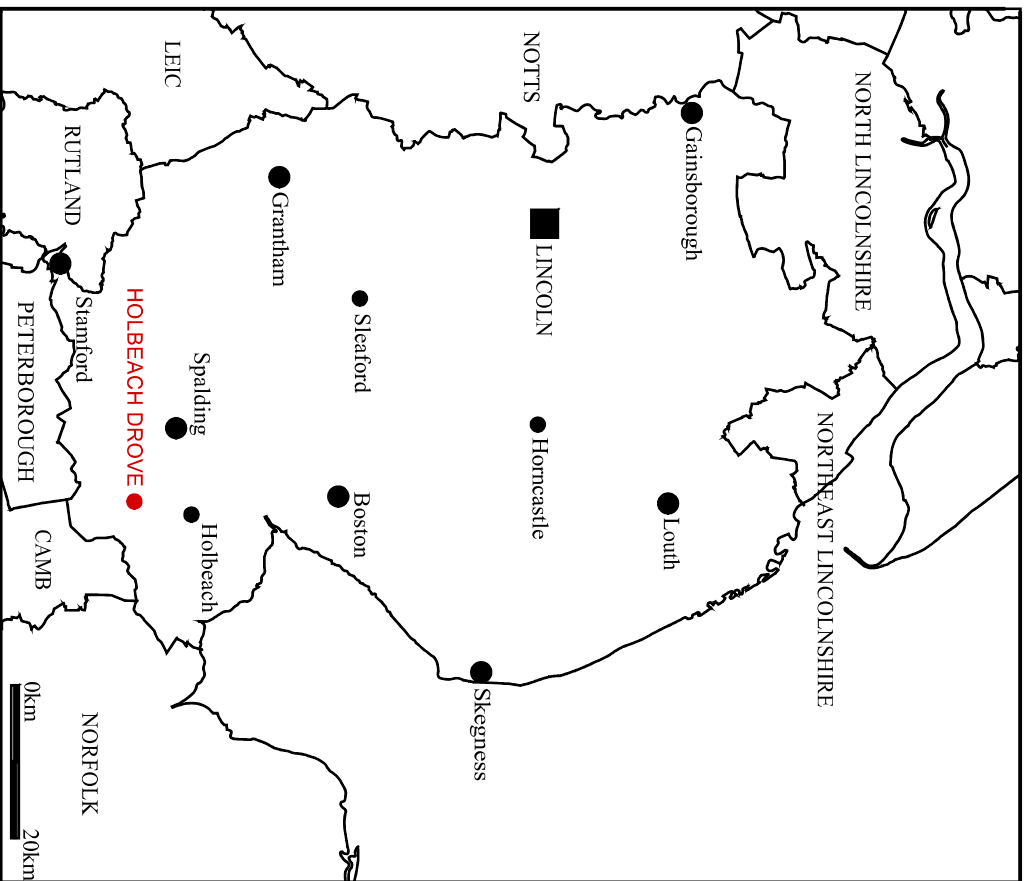




*Plate 3: Possible channel [019], Section 2, Scale 1m*

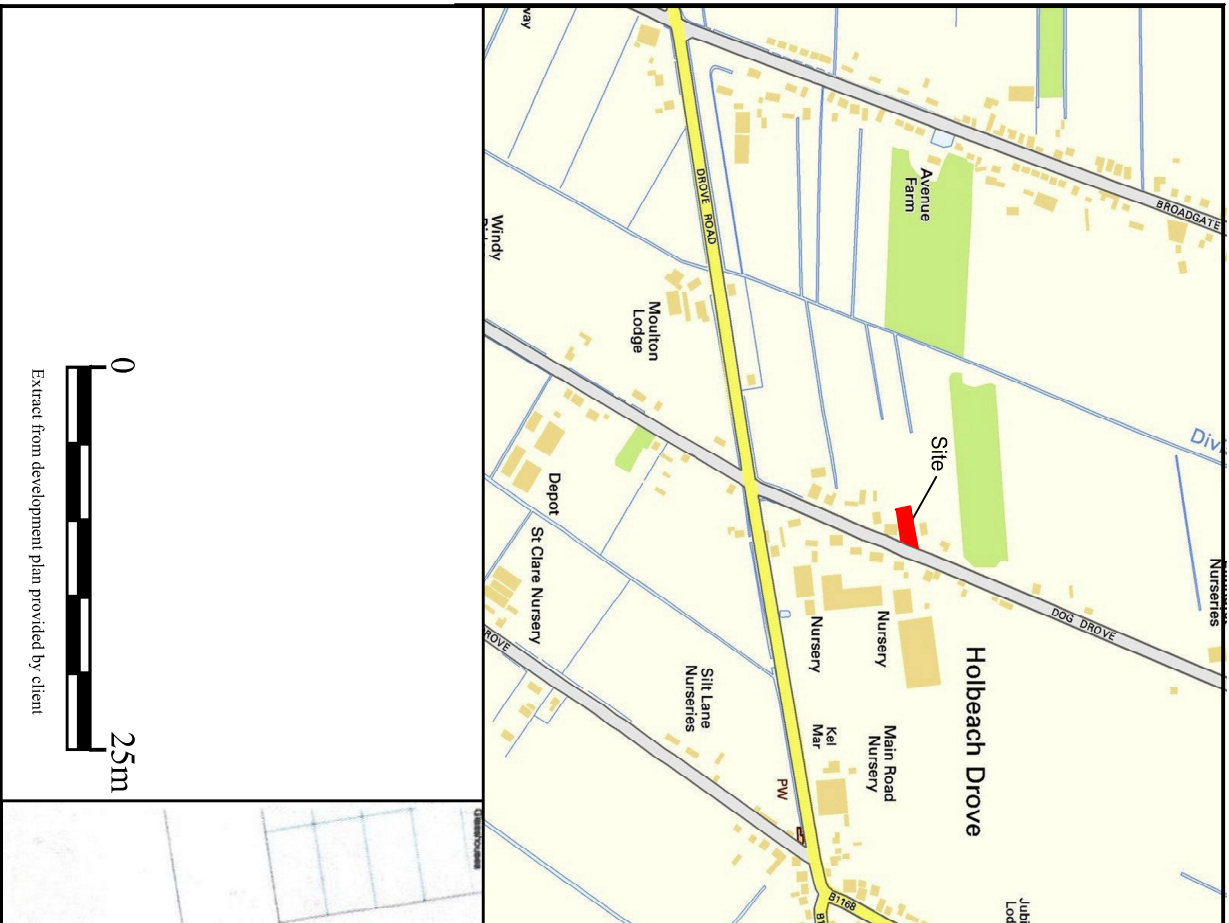


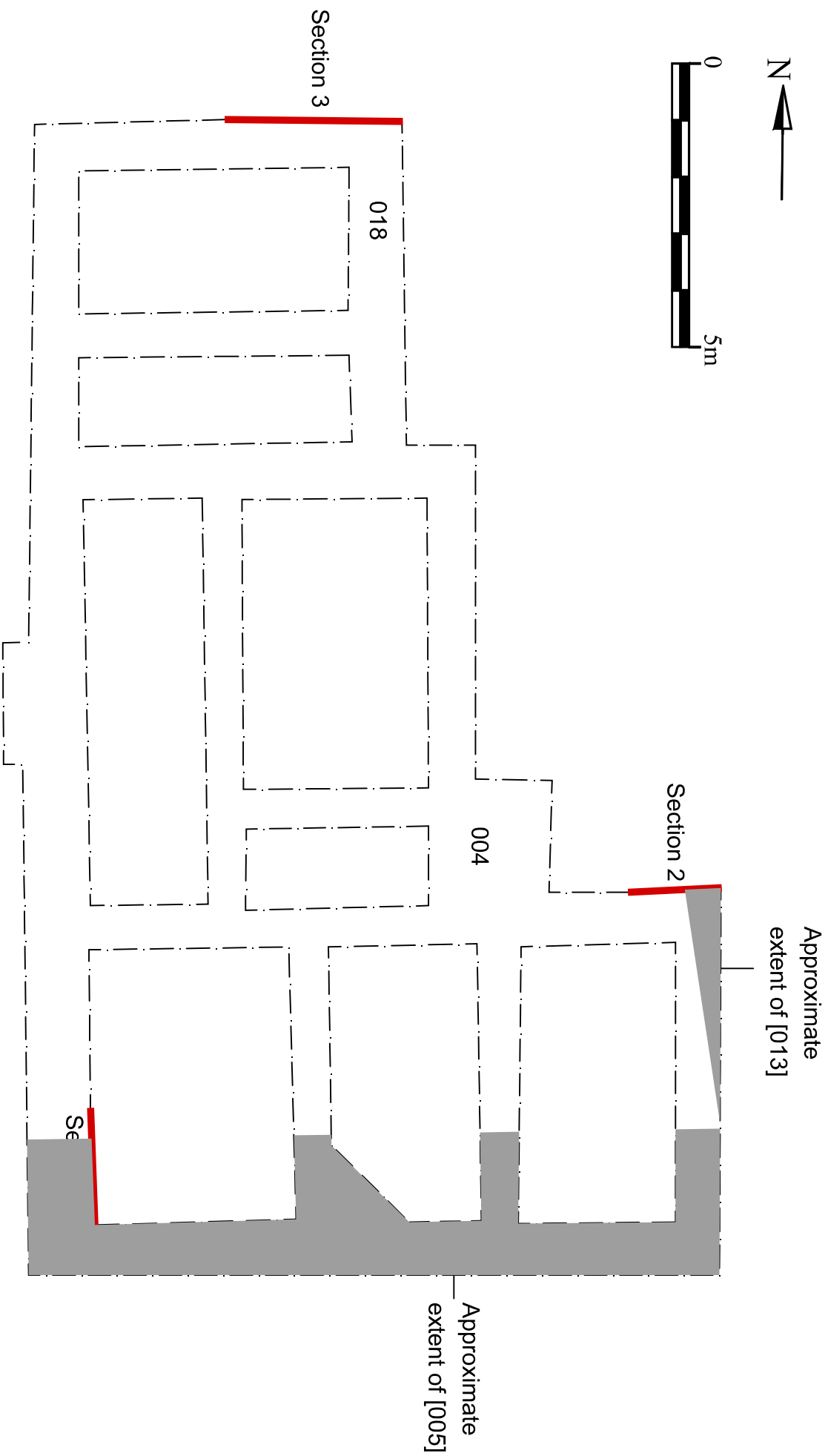
*Plate 4: Possible Roman ditch [013], Section 3, Scale 1m*

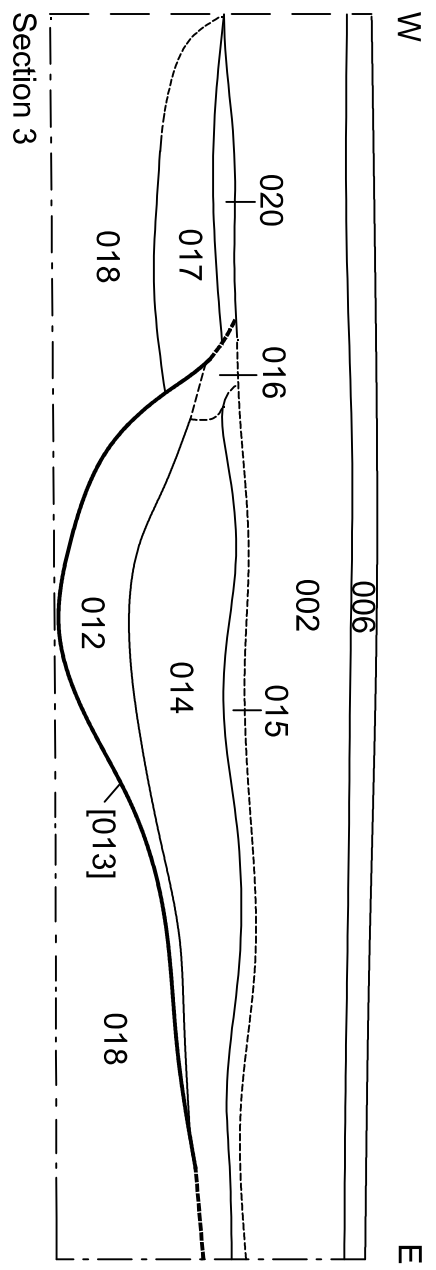
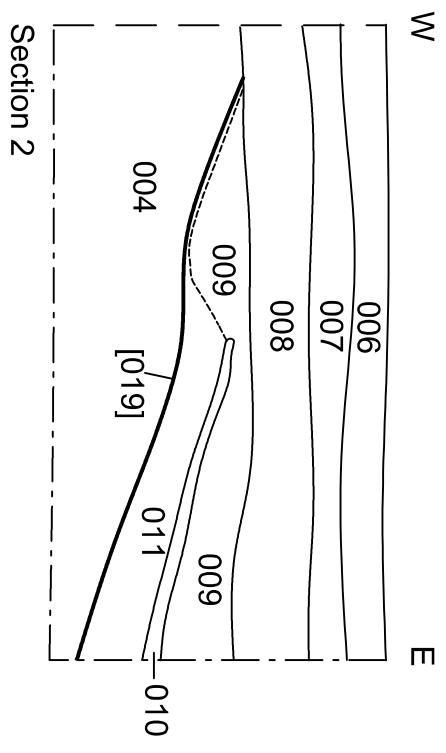
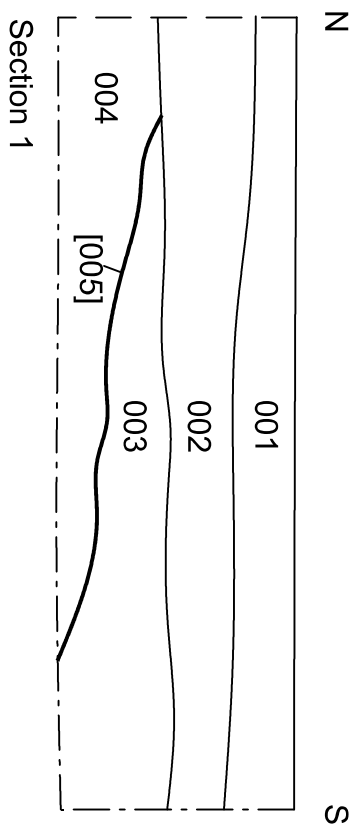


Based upon the Ordnance Survey VectorMap (TM) District map with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright  
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## APPENDIX A - CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

<i>Context</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Description</i>
001	Topsoil	Mixed deposit of soft to firm dark grey and light brown mixed clayey silt and silt, 0.17m thick
002	Buried soil layer	Firm, mid to dark grey mottled clayey silt, 0.25m thick, same as (008)
003	Fill of boundary ditch [005], likely deliberate backfill	Firm, dark brown silty clay with moderately frequent brick fragments, over 0.29m thick
004	Natural laminated silt	Soft, light brown laminated silt, over 0.46m thick
005	Boundary ditch, fairly recent	East-west aligned linear feature, over 1.75m wide, over 0.30m deep and over 12m long, with gently sloping sides where seen, not fully exposed in plan or section.
006	Modern turf layer	Turf layer, 0.12m thick
007	Buried soil layer	Firm, light brown clayey silt, 0.12m thick
008	Buried soil layer	Firm, mid to dark grey mottled clayey silt, 0.20m thick, same as (002)
009	Fill of feature [019] possible channel. Possibly silting in wet conditions	Firm, mixed mid brown and dark brown clayey silt with moderately frequent mid reddish-brown patches, 0.16m thick
010	Fill of feature [019] possible channel. Possible vegetation layer sealed by seasonal inundation.	Firm, dark grey clayey silt, 40mm thick
011	Silt, fill of possible channel [019] or possibly leaching/staining of natural silt directly beneath channel fill (010)	Soft, light bluish-grey silt, 0.20m thick
012	A fill of possible Roman ditch [013]. Possible vegetation layer sealed by inundation.	Soft, dark grey organic silt, 0.20m thick
013	Cut of possible Roman ditch	Linear feature not fully seen in plan or section, possibly north-south aligned, over 2.34m wide and 0.45m deep, with steep to moderately steep and gently concave sides at west, a concave base and concave to convex sides at east, very gently sloping towards top at east.
014	A fill of possible Roman ditch [013]. Possibly gradual silting or inundation filling feature	Soft, light bluish-grey silt, 0.25m thick
015	Layer at junction of fills of ditch [013] and buried soil (002). Possibly a further fill of [013] but uncertain. More likely buried soil.	Soft to firm, dark brown silt and clay, 50mm thick
016	Deposit. Possibly soil formation at edge of ditch [013] or isolated area of burrowing or root disturbance.	Soft to firm, mid brown clayey silt, 90mm thick
017	Deposit. Similar in composition to (014) and possibly also associated with ditch [013]. Possibly leaching/staining of natural silt adjacent to ditch.	Soft, light bluish-grey silt, 0.16m thick
018	Natural clay	Stiff, mid brown clay, over 0.37m thick
019	Feature, possibly a natural channel	Possibly linear feature, not fully exposed in plan or section, north-south aligned, over 1.47m wide, at least 0.39m deep and over 4.12m long with gently sloping sides where seen
020	Deposit, possibly associated with adjacent Roman ditch [013], perhaps part of sequence of inundation and re-cutting. More likely buried soil.	Soft to firm dark brown silt and clay, 60mm thick

## APPENDIX B – THE FINDS

## HOLBEACH DROVE (HLDH15) – FINDS REPORT

**ROMAN POTTERY***By Alex Beeby***Introduction**

All the material was recorded at archive level in accordance with the guidelines laid out by Darling (2004) and to conform to Lincolnshire County Council's *Archaeology Handbook*. The pottery was recorded using the codes and system developed for the City of Lincoln Archaeological Unit (Darling and Precious, 2014). A total of three sherds from a single vessel, weighing 17 grams was recovered from the site.

**Methodology**

The material was laid out and viewed in context order. Sherds were counted and weighed and the pottery was then examined visually and using x20 magnification. This information was then added to an Access database. An archive list of the pottery is included in Table 1 below.

**Condition**

The pottery is fragmented but not abraded.

**Results***Table 1, Roman Pottery Archive*

Context	Cname	Full Name	Form	Vessel	Comments	Sherds	W(g)
012	GREY	Greyware	J	1	BSS; FINE WALL	3	17
012	ZDATE				RO		

**Provenance**

The material was recovered from fill (012) within ditch [013].

**Range**

There are three sherds from a single vessel in Roman Greyware. These items cannot be closely dated.

**Potential**

There is no potential for further work. The material should be retained as part of the site archive and should pose no problems for long term storage.

**POST ROMAN POTTERY***By Alex Beeby***Introduction**

All the material was recorded at archive level in accordance with the guidelines laid out in Slowikowski *et al.* (2001) and to conform to Lincolnshire County Council's *Archaeology Handbook*. The pottery codenames (Cname) are in accordance with the Post Roman pottery type series for Lincolnshire, as published in Young *et al.* (2005). A total of two sherds from a single vessel, weighing 31 grams was recovered from the site.

**Methodology**

The material was laid out and viewed in context order. Sherds were counted and weighed by individual vessel within each context. The pottery was examined visually and using x20 magnification. This information was then added to an Access database. An archive list of the pottery is included in Table 2 below. The pottery ranges dates to the early modern period.

**Condition**

The pottery is fragmented but not abraded.

**Results**

Table 2, Post Roman Pottery Archive

Cxt	Cname	Full Name	Form	NoS	NoV	W(g)	Part	Comment	Date
003	CREA	Creamware	Plate	2	1	31	Base	Stamped "I" under base	Late 18th - Mid 19th

**Provenance**

The pottery was recovered from fill (003) within boundary ditch [005].

**Range**

There are two fragments from a single vessel in Creamware.

**Potential**

There is no potential for further work. The pottery should be retained as part of the site archive and should pose no problems for long term storage.

**SPOT DATING**

The dating in Table 3 is based on the evidence provided by the finds detailed above.

Table 3, Spot dates

Cxt	Date	Comments
003	Late 18th - Mid 19th	
012	Roman	

**ABBREVIATIONS**

BS	Body sherd
CXT	Context
NoF	Number of fragments
NoS	Number of sherds
NoV	Number of vessels
W (g)	Weight (grams)

**REFERENCES**

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