

An Archaeological Evaluation on Land at Lincoln Road, Horncastle

A report for W.A. Fairhurst & Partners

Richard Parker

May 2010

Project Code: LRH

Trent & Peak Archaeology
University Park
Nottingham
NG7 2RD
0115 9514823
<mailto:TPA@nottingham.ac.uk/tpa>

© Trent & Peak Archaeology, 2010

SUMMARY

- An archaeological evaluation was carried out on land at the historic market town of Horncastle by Trent & Peak Archaeology between the 15th & 26th March 2010, on behalf of W.A. Fairhurst & Partners.
- The area of land for development covers 1.37 hectares and is bounded by Lincoln Road to the west and a school to the east. Centred at National Grid Reference TF 25453 69733 the site is currently occupied by a number of businesses on an industrial estate.
- A total of six trenches were excavated, most of which produced little or no archaeology. One trench (Trench 04) did produce a number of features with a possible industrial purpose. A lack of associated finds and a limited view of these features made dating and full characterisation impossible.
- Despite large amounts of truncation and modern intervention, the programme of limited evaluation trenching demonstrated that pockets of archaeological deposits survive within the proposed development area.

CONTENTS

	Page
Title page	1
Summary	2
Contents	3
Table of Figures	4
Table of Plates	4
1. Project Background and Site Description	6
2. Methodology	6
3. Results	7
3.1 Trench 01	6
3.2 Trench 02	6
3.3 Trench 03	6
3.4 Trench 04	7
3.5 Trench 05	10
3.6 Trench 06	11
4. Discussion	12
5. References	13
6. Acknowledgments	13

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Location of development area on the outskirts of Horncastle, Lincolnshire.

Figure 2: Location of evaluation trenches within the development area.

Figure 3: North-east-facing section through Trench 03.

Figure 4: South-west-facing section through Trench 03.

Figure 5: Plan of Trench 04 after extension.

Figure 6: South-west-facing section through Trench 04.

Figure 7: South-east-facing section through Trench 04 extension.

Figure 8: North-east-facing section through Trench 04 extension.

Figure 9: North-east-facing section across 0074.

Figure 10: South-east-facing section across 0074.

TABLE OF PLATES

Plate 01. East facing section of trench 01

Plate 02. North-east facing section of trench 02

Plate 03. 18th/20th century bottles recovered from shallow pit trench 03

Plate 04. South-west facing section of trench 03

Plate 05. Modern post holes revealed in south-west facing section of trench 04

Plate 06. Typical late 19th early 20th century land drain cutting into south-east facing section of trench 04

Plate 07. Section through feature 0089 in trench 04

Plate 08. Section through feature 0089 in trench 04

Plate 09. Pre excavation shot of tear-drop shaped feature 0029 in trench 04

Plate 10. Post excavation shot of 0029 in trench 04

Plate 11. Section across feature 0030 in trench 04

Plate 12. Quadrant section of feature 0074 in trench 04

Plate 13. Quadrants through feature 0074 in trench 04

Plate 14. Box section across features 0075, 0031, 0085 in trench 04

Plate 15. Box section across features 0075, 0031, 0085 in trench 04

Plate 16. North facing section of depression noted in the west end of trench 05

Plate 17. North facing section of shallow east end of trench 05

Plate 18. Linear feature observed in plan in trench 06

1. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Trent & Peak Archaeology were contracted on behalf of W.A. Fairhurst & Partners to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land in the market town of Horncastle which is situated on the southern edge of the Lincolnshire Wolds. Archaeological attendance occurred between the 15th-26th March 2010 and was undertaken by Richard Parker BA, Laura Binns BA and Adrian Turner BA. The Project was managed and this report edited by David JC Walker PhD MSc.

The area for development is currently occupied by an industrial estate which houses a variety of active businesses. Within the development area there are also many derelict buildings and vacant plots of land, some of which are located within a residential area. Centred at TF 25453 69733 the site lies within the historic core of Horncastle (Fig 1).

The development area has the potential for surviving archaeology from the Prehistoric, Roman, Anglo Saxon and Medieval periods. The modern name Horncastle derives from the Anglo Saxon word Hyrnecastre meaning 'town on horn-shaped land' (between the rivers Bain and Wairing). However it is evidence of Romano-British activity in the vicinity that remains the strongest possibility given that during the 3rd and 4th centuries the town was the site of a Roman fort (Banavallum), the walls of which can still be seen at various locations within the town.

A programme of limited evaluation trenching was developed in response to a Project Design submitted to and approved by the Lincolnshire County Council Historic Environment Team. The Project Design was produced by On Site Archaeology Ltd (OSA 2009). The aim of this evaluation was to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains to inform the planning procedure.

2. METHODOLOGY

A total of six trial trenches were placed at various locations across the site (Fig 2). The trench locations were originally dictated by the need for an even spread of trenches across the site. The logistical problems of minimising disruption to ongoing businesses, avoiding known services and difficult ground including reinforced concrete, large waste dumps and impractical access, meant that some of these original trench locations were impractical. These factors also dictated the actual size of many trenches with most not achieving their stipulated size of 15m x 4m. The final location of each trench was decided following a pre-site meeting between Richard Parker and David Walker of Trent & Peak Archaeology, Jan Allen of Lincolnshire County Council, and Andy Jones of W.A. Fairhurst & Partners.

The groundworks were conducted using a wheeled JCB with a 1.4m toothless bucket on a back actor and, depending on the ground conditions

a 600mm bucket and a concrete breaker. Trenches were excavated in spits of approximately 200mm until the required depth was achieved, any features within the trenches were then planned at a scale of 1:50, sections of the trenches were drawn at a scale of 1:20 and all features were hand dug, drawn to scale and photographed with black & white film and digital images.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Trench 01 14.8m x 3m

Trench 01 was located within the floor plan of a former modern warehouse. All that remained of this structure was its concrete base through which the trench had to be excavated. The trench was narrowed to 3m so that spoil heaps did not impede access to working facilities. The stratigraphy observed in this trench was very straightforward. A thick concrete floor **(0011)** overlay **(0001)**, a loose/friable dark brown silty loam with 10% sub-rounded pebbles. This lay above a clean natural light yellow and grey patchy chalk gravel (Plate 01). The only feature noted in this trench was **(0003)** a typical late 19th - early 20th century rounded land drain running in a N-S direction. The high water table in this area was highlighted by the fact that water began to seep into the trench almost immediately after reaching the natural deposits. This was also true for all other trenches on the site.

No archaeological deposits or finds of any significance were observed in Trench 01.

3.2 Trench 02 12m x 2.5m

Trench 02 was located in an area where space was extremely limited, and consequently the trench had to be moved, narrowed and shortened to accommodate. Excavated to a depth of approximately 1m a similar natural to Trench 01 was observed **(0014/0015)**. The stratigraphy in section demonstrated that the majority of the ground here was modern or late 19th - early 20th century made ground. The N-E facing section showed a thin layer of turf covering a layer of modern loose yellow limestone road stone hardcore. This lay above and abutted a made ground deposit **(0012)** consisting of loose dark brown sandy loam matrix with 40% house brick fragments, slate fragments and other demolition rubble relating to the early 20th century. This rubble lay above a thin dark brown/black layer of friable silty loam **(0102)**, containing fragments of slate. This is likely to be a buried soil layer, probably dating from the late 19th century. Below this buried soil was a firm greyish/brown silty clay subsoil with 5% angular stones 1-3cm, which in turn lay above the light grey/yellow chalk gravel **(0014/0015)** (Plate 02).

No archaeological features or finds were noted in Trench 02.

3.3 Trench 03 15m x 1.5m (Figs 3 & 4)

Located on a rectangular patch of scrubland within a residential area and adjacent to Lincoln Road, this trench was narrowed and positioned to avoid a number of services including electricity, water and drainage. At the maximum excavated depth of approximately 600mm, a clean friable light/mid orange natural sandy gravel (**0022**) was revealed in plan. During excavation of this trench, a small and shallow pit (**0023**) which lay partially between the topsoil (**0019**) and subsoil (**0024**) was noted containing late 19th century and early 20th century bottles (Plate 03). Due to its shallow nature this feature was almost entirely removed with one scrape of the bucket. The stratigraphy in this trench was not of any great depth and was fairly straightforward. Topsoil (**0019**) overlay a friable mid brown silty sand (**0024**). This lay above a friable mid/dark grey silty sand (**0021**) which had an intrusion of a charcoal-rich deposit (**0020**). These deposits were seemingly cut toward the NE end by (**0024**), which may be attributed to relatively recent disturbance (early 20th century) (Fig 4) (Plate 04).

No features, finds or archaeological contexts predating the late 19th century were noted in Trench 03.

3.4 Trench 04 15m x 4m (extended to 15m x 9m) (Figs 5 – 10)

Set back approximately 40m from Lincoln Road, Trench 04 proved to be the most archaeologically interesting of all the trenches excavated. Located in an area clear of active businesses and services, the trench was initially excavated to the full 15x4m. As with all the trenches excavated, the area was gradually lowered in spits of approximately 100mm. The majority of trenches on the Lincoln Road site had a consistent and simple stratigraphic sequence of topsoil, overlying a single subsoil layer, overlying the natural. In contrast Trench 04 displayed a more complex stratigraphic sequence including a number of fine silt deposits. This was surprising given that only 20m to the south-west in Trench 03 the stratigraphic sequence was extremely shallow and simplistic, as it was Trench 02 located 20m to the north-east. The cause of this somewhat localised build up of silty deposits is likely to be attributed to the topography of the area. Lincoln Road and the land immediately adjacent to it is situated on a gentle slope of the hill leading in and out of Horncastle. It is therefore possible that within the area of land between trenches 02 and 03, hill wash or colluvial deposits may have found a natural channel with which to flow, creating the fine silt layers. Alternatively the trench may simply be located within a shallow depression in the landscape thus allowing such deposits to build up.

Trench 04 was excavated to a depth of approximately 700mm, a level at which archaeology could clearly be seen. Sections were cleaned and recorded and the base of the trench hand-cleaned carefully to clarify any archaeology. At this stage a number of archaeological features were visible, many of which continued beneath the trench edges. In order to understand these features further, it was suggested that the trench be

widened. After consultation with, and agreement by, Jan Allen of Lincolnshire County Council and Andy Jones of W.A. Fairhurst & Partners Trench 04 was extended by a further 2m either side.

3.4.1 Features 0094-0101

After the widening of Trench 04 the sections were again cleaned and recorded. This revealed a considerable amount of truncation, much of which could be attributed to the late 19th or early 20th century. Visible in section and plan were a number of timber post holes (**0096, 0097, 0098, 0099, 0100**) (Fig 6) (Plate 05) which were observed cutting through layers of stratigraphy from top to bottom of the sequence including deposits dating from the last century. In plan several other 20th century features were observed. These consisted of a modern rectangular brick construction silt trap (**0101**), located in the N-E corner of the trench, and fed by a single pipe running parallel with the S-W facing section which fed the trap at opposing ends. Immediately obvious were land drains (**0094**) and (**0095**) (Fig 5) which ran in a N-S direction and were datable to the late 19th early 20th century. Typically these had a common tubular drain at the base with a clear cut observed in section and a distinct redeposited fill which comprised of a mix of all the contexts through which it had been cut (Plate 06).

3.4.2 Features 0089, 0090, 0091

Similar linear features (**0089, 0090, 0091**) (Fig) were also noted in this trench, generally measuring 100mm wide and 100mm in depth. At first glance these features appeared to be land drains, however on closer investigation none of their characteristics seemed to fit those of a typical land drain. Whereas (**0094**) and (**0095**) were separate entities running along the same alignment (as land drains normally do), (**0089**), (**0090**) and (**0091**) all ran at different angles and were interconnected (Fig 5). Furthermore, excavation of these features revealed no drain at the base of these features and when sectioned a V shaped profile was observed which is certainly not conducive for holding a rounded drainage pipe (Plates 07-08). Investigating further, it was noted that in the main sections there was no visible cut penetrating the silt deposits which lay above these features, suggesting therefore an early date. Finally the fill of these features was somewhat unusual in that it consisted of an extremely fine black silt deposit. No datable evidence was retrieved from these features although samples were taken for analysis. Given the lack of dating evidence and small exposed area it is difficult to assign a certain date or purpose to these features. It seems likely however that they are drainage features of some antiquity.

3.4.3 Features 0074, 0030, 0029

Two other large and obvious features observed were (**0074**) and (**0030**) (Fig 5). These rather amorphous features measured approximately 3m x 3m and were situated adjacent to each other, separated by approximately 1m. Both continued beneath the south-west facing section. These features were immediately apparent having a fill which was a consistent light blue/grey fine silt, in stark contrast to the orange-red silt that surrounded

them. Connected to feature (0074) and consisting of the same fill was (0029) which had a tear-drop shape in plan (Plate 09). The butt end of this feature was half-sectioned, revealing a single fill to a depth of 100mm (Plate 10). No finds were recovered. Feature (0030) was half-sectioned along its length, which revealed an extremely clean fill devoid of any type of inclusions (Plate 11). Two finds were recovered from this feature. The first (AAA) was recovered at 0.04m in depth which appears to be a fragment of tile (of possible Roman date) and the second was a piece of shaped iron (AAB) which was protruding from a straight N-S inside edge of the feature at 0.03m. (0030) was excavated to a depth of 110mm where the fine silt changed to a yellowish clay and soon began to fill with water. Feature (0074) was sectioned in to two quadrants mirroring the fill and depth of (0030) (Figures 9-10) (Plates 12-13). Interestingly along the straight edge of this feature another similar iron pin was noted protruding out of the inside edge of the feature (AAC). As this has been observed in both of these features it may suggest that these large shallow pits had some sort of planking in place which has long since disappeared. Furthermore a piece of what has been identified as possible *briquetage* was recovered at a depth of 0.03m (AAD). Some of the characteristics observed in these two features are known to be associated with salt production during the Iron Age / Romano-British period. Large shallow pits, called salterns or brine pits (which may have been timber-lined) were used to hold and evaporate seawater. The remaining concentrated brine was then slowly boiled in pans made of a coarse ceramic material called *briquetage*. Such processes have been observed at a number of semi-coastal sites including Walton-on-the-Naze and Mucking in Essex, and Fengate, Cambridgeshire (Darvill 1992: 129). The pits (0030) and (0074) are certainly suitable as evaporation tanks, and their association with possible *briquetage* strengthens this connection.

3.4.4 Feature 0093

Located toward the southern end of the trench (Fig 5) this feature was approximately 4m of a curvilinear gully which was approximately 400mm wide. This feature was heavily truncated and visually very vague. A section was cut through it, revealing it to be very shallow (0.04m deep) and producing no finds.

3.4.5 Features 0075, 0031, 0085

Towards the southern end of the trench and running parallel with the NE-facing section, three differing bands of silt and clay were observed running parallel with one another for approximately 6m, these were (0075, 0031, 0085) (Fig 5) (Plates 14&15). In plan it was not clear which (if any) of these may have been a feature, therefore the decision was taken to put a box section across all of these at the southern end. The box demonstrated that (0075) was very shallow (around 0.04m deep), as was (0085). Neither produced any information in respect of a profile in section nor were any finds recovered. The band that divided these two (0031) comprised of a firm clean yellow clay and whilst no finds were recovered from this, it did have a 'U' shaped profile which appeared to cut lower than the adjacent contexts. These features ran for about 6m in a north-westerly

direction before they gradually dissipated. Truncation has undoubtedly had an impact here, and a lack of finds and a limited window on these features almost certainly hinders our understanding and consequently an interpretation of these features.

3.4.6 Feature 0028

This feature had been noted before the trench was widened; at first sight it appeared to take the form of a large ditch having a contrasting orange natural on either side. The fill of the feature was a fine white silt which had a great number (60%) of small white snail shells comprising the matrix. At the excavated surface level, several randomly scattered animal bones were identified (**AAE, AAF, AAG**). After widening the trench, this feature lost its form and revealed itself to be more of a spread of material which had occupied a hollow, rather than a ditch. A section was cut across this feature which showed it to be fairly shallow (100mm). No further finds were recovered and no further information in respect of the deposition of the animal bones was revealed.

3.5 Trench 05 13m x 2m

Located within a small compound used for the storage of plumbing equipment and a means of access to a storage shed, this trench had to be reduced in size and length to fit in to the space and to prevent blocking access. Excavation began at the western end of the trench with the ground being particularly difficult made ground consisting of large concrete fragments, large twisted iron rods, bricks and general demolition material of the 20th century (**0103**). Below this lay a modern mix of loose orange sand, gravels and angular road-stone. The stratigraphy below this differed from that noted in the surrounding trenches and revealed a depth of silt/organic-rich clays. (**0009**) was a firm loamy mid-dark brown - grey clay with 5% small angular stones, this lay above a firm light grey silty clay with 15% white snail shells and angular chalk stone fragments. Whilst attempting to extend this trench a water pipe which had been threaded through the tangle of demolition ground was fractured flooding the area and halting excavation for a period. Once this had been repaired the pipe was given 1.5m clearance before excavation resumed on the same alignment. The stratigraphy here comprised of (**0005**) a modern limestone road-stone deposit which overlay a friable dark brown silty loam with 5% subrounded pebbles 1-3cm. This lay directly above, and in sharp contrast to, the clean light grey chalky natural (**0007**). On reaching the natural here it became immediately apparent that it was much higher than what had been excavated at the western end, this therefore suggests some sort of steep sided depression which had silted up with layers of clay (Plates 16&17). Unfortunately the extent of this feature to the east could not be attained being so close the shed, and the edge to the east was located below the unexcavated area below the water pipe, making it impossible to determine the nature and extent or if indeed this feature was of anthropogenic origin. No finds were recovered from this trench.

3.6 Trench 06 8m x 4m

Located in the back garden of a property named Walton, services again impinged upon and dictated the size of this trench. The stratigraphy proved to be very shallow and extremely straightforward. Topsoil (0025) overlay (0026) a friable mid-brown/orange silty clay loam with 2% sub-rounded pebbles 1-2cm. Below this lay a clean natural gravel/chalk formed in patches of both light yellow and light grey in colour (0027). Cutting across this context in plan was observed a linear feature running in an east-west direction (0104) (Plate 18). Excavation of this feature proved inconclusive in respect of its function and date. As no associated finds were recovered from the feature accurate dating is difficult, but the fill, which was not greatly dissimilar from the topsoil, suggests it is likely to be the result of modern disturbance possibly associated with the construction of the house during the 1960s/70s. The poorly defined ragged edges of this feature do arouse some suspicion and (0104) may be the base of a ditch, though perhaps more likely it is the remnants of a former hedge line. No other archaeological features were noted in this trench although one piece of medieval pottery (green glazed 13th/14th century) (AAH) was found at an intermediary level between context (0025) and (0026).

4 DISCUSSION

While the potential for uncovering archaeological remains in this area is high, particularly with regard to Romano-British activity, there was a surprising lack of definite archaeological features observed during this limited evaluation. In mitigation the overall percentage of ground viewed was quite small, particularly after some of the trenches were downsized for reasons of access and services. Furthermore, it is clear from some of the trenches that truncation of the site has occurred over the years. This will further limit the survival of archaeological deposits.

However, as observed in Trench 04, there are undoubtedly pockets of archaeology surviving on the site. Trench 04 showed clear evidence of archaeological activity, but despite the extension of the trench the exposed area was insufficiently large to fully characterise the nature of the features recorded. As noted in Section 3.4.3 it seems likely that these features were relict of industrial practices and quite possibly related to salt production.

In conclusion this limited evaluation demonstrated that there is archaeological activity (of slightly uncertain date) within the development area. In many places truncation and modern intervention have removed or destroyed much of this material, but in some areas there is certainly potential for the recovery and characterisation of archaeological deposits.

5 REFERENCES

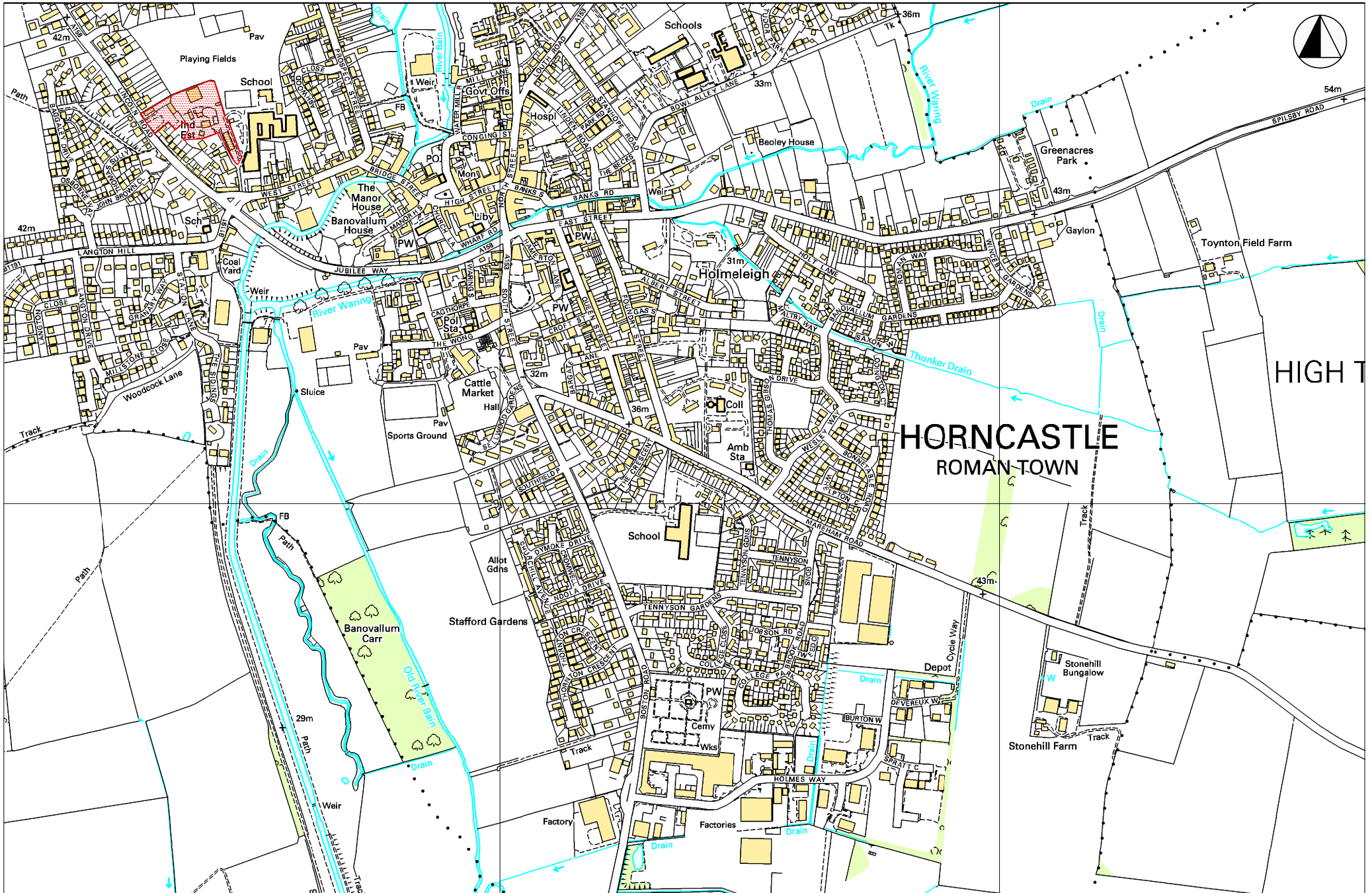
Darvill, T., 1992. *Prehistoric Britain*. Batsford, London.


Lincolnshire County Council Historic Environment Team Archaeological Brief. Lincoln Road, Horncastle, East Lindsey District Council. Planning Application Ref: S/086/2116/09/IC. Grid Reference: TF 25453 69733. September 2009.

OSA Ltd. 2009 *Land at Lincoln Road, Horncastle*. Project Design for a Programme of Archaeological Evaluation.

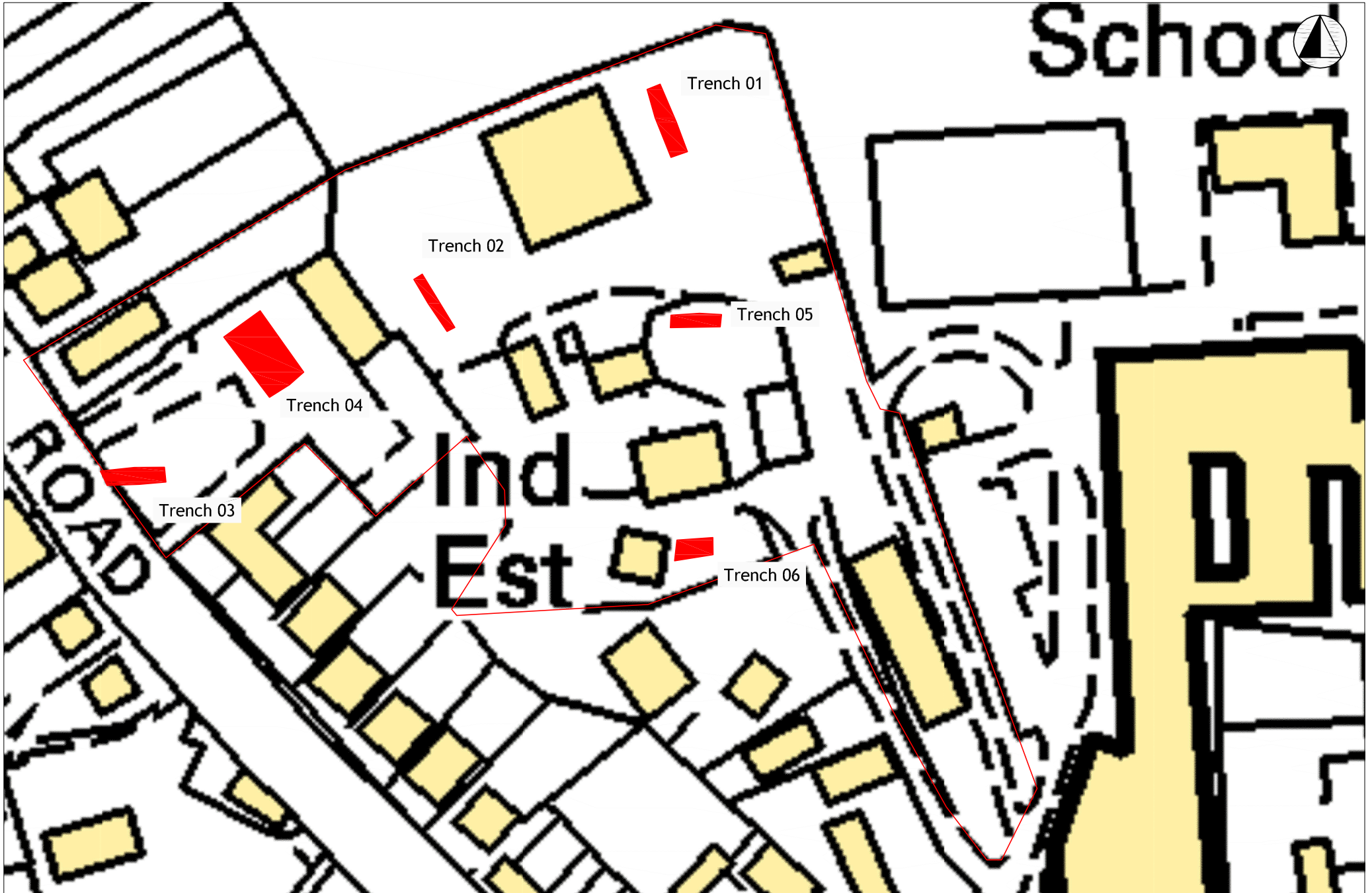
6 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

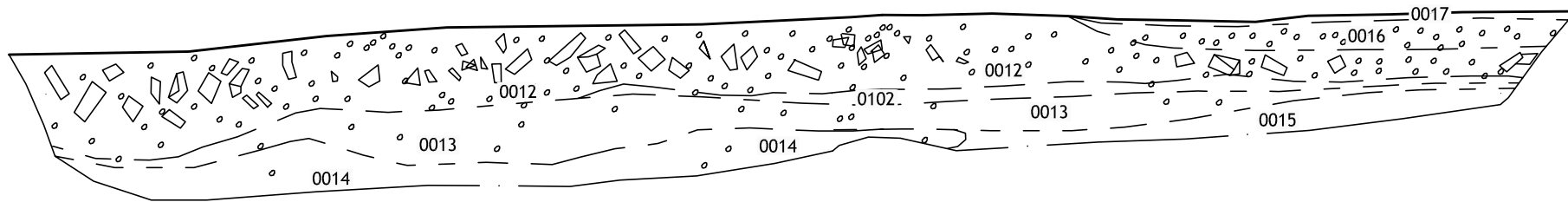
Thanks are due to Jan Allen (Lincolnshire County Council Planning Archaeologist) for her support and understanding on this project which proved to be logistically challenging to say the least.

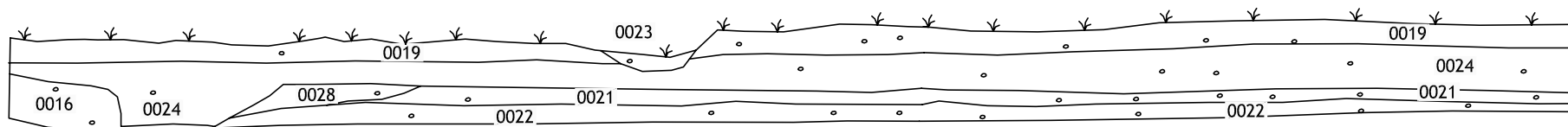


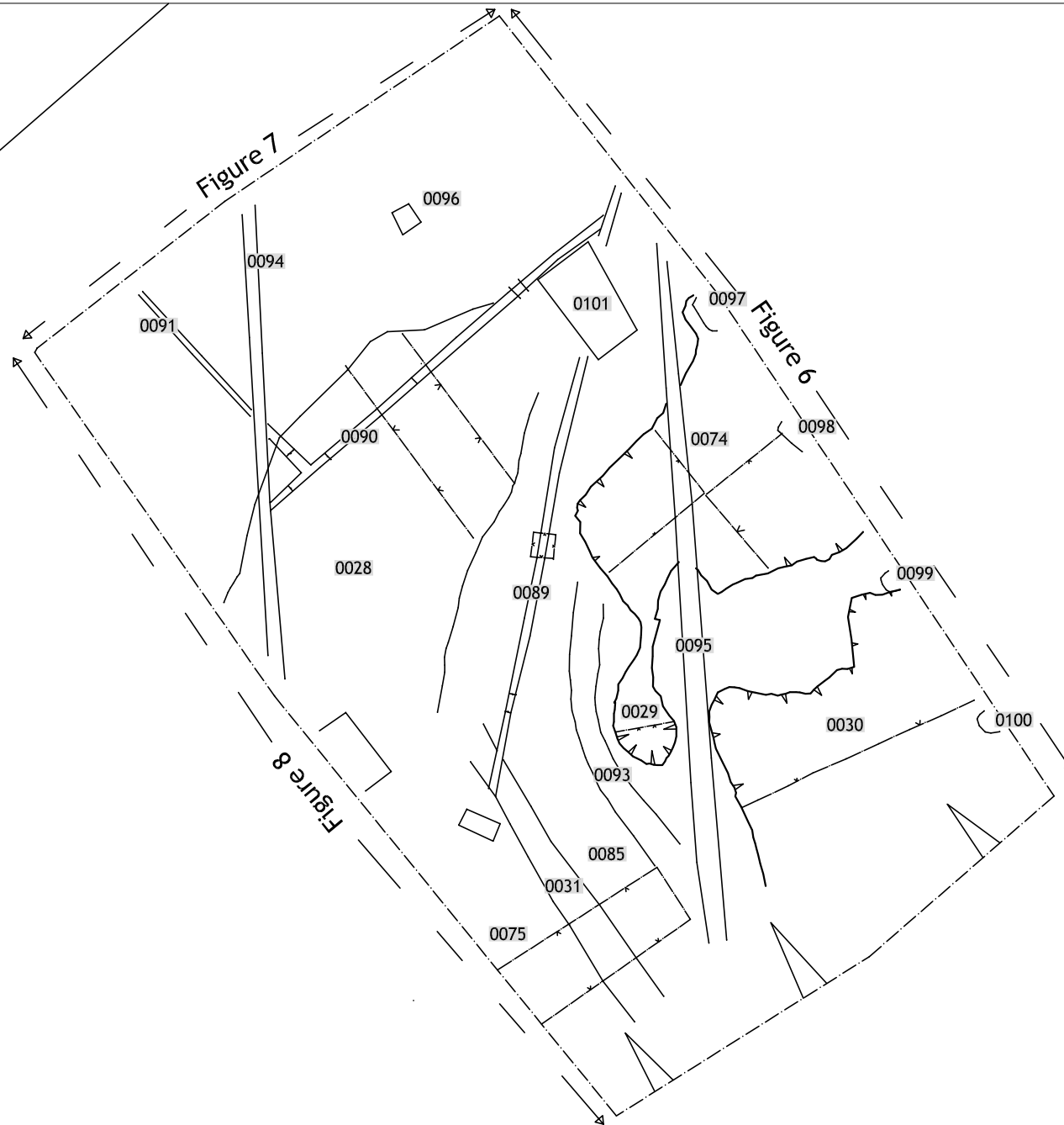

 LRH: Lincoln Road Horncastle
 Figure 1: Location of development area on the outskirts of Horncastle, Lincolnshire.
 Scale 1:10 000 at A4 RP/DW 23/04/2010

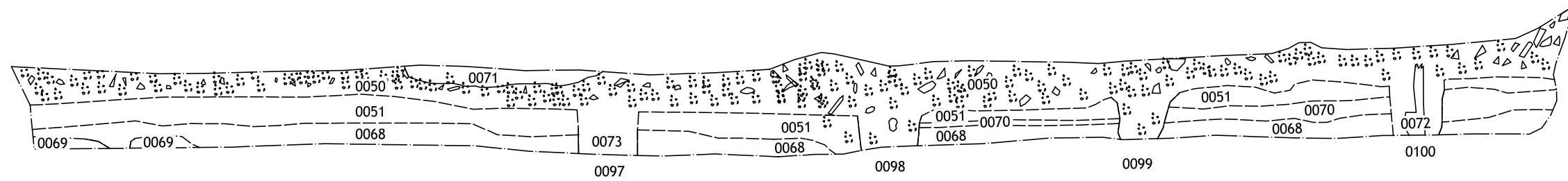
(Ordnance Survey map reproduced with the permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright Licence No. AL 100020618).



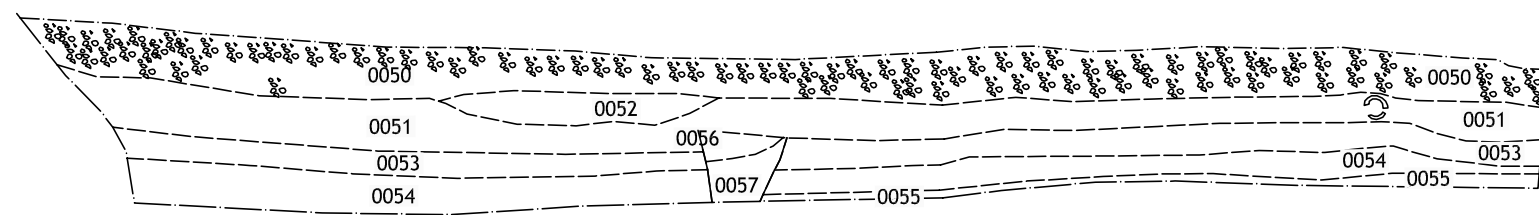






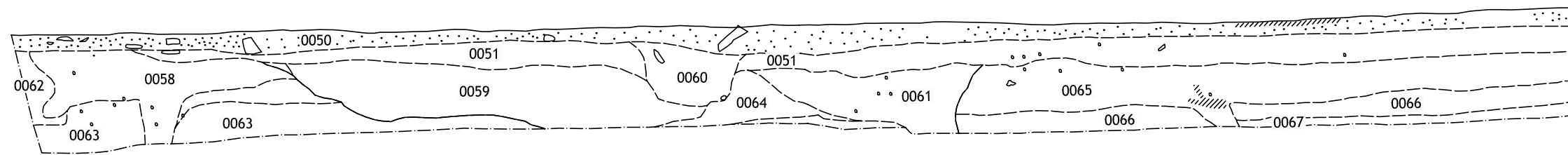


LRH: Lincoln Road Horncastle
 Figure 6: South-west-facing section through Trench 04.
 Scale 1:50 at A3 LB/DW 23/04/2010



tp
 Trent & Peak
 ARCHAEOLOGY
 LRH: Lincoln Road Horncastle
 Figure 7: South-east-facing section through Trench 04 extension.
 Scale 1:50 at A3 LB/DW 23/04/2010







LRH: Lincoln Road Horncastle
Figure 9: North-east-facing section of 0074.
Scale 1:20 at A4 LB/DW 23/04/2010

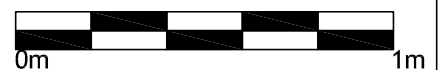
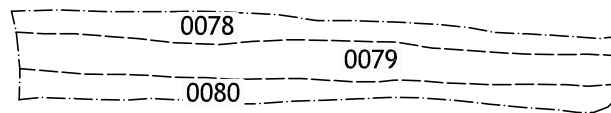
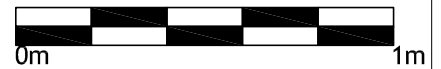




Plate 01. East facing section of trench 01



Plate 02. North-east facing section of trench 02



Plate 03. 18th/20th century bottles recovered from shallow pit trench 03



Plate 04. South-west facing section of trench 03



Plate 05. Modern post holes revealed in south-west facing section of trench 04



Plate 06. Typical late 19th early 20th century land drain cutting into south-east facing section of trench 04

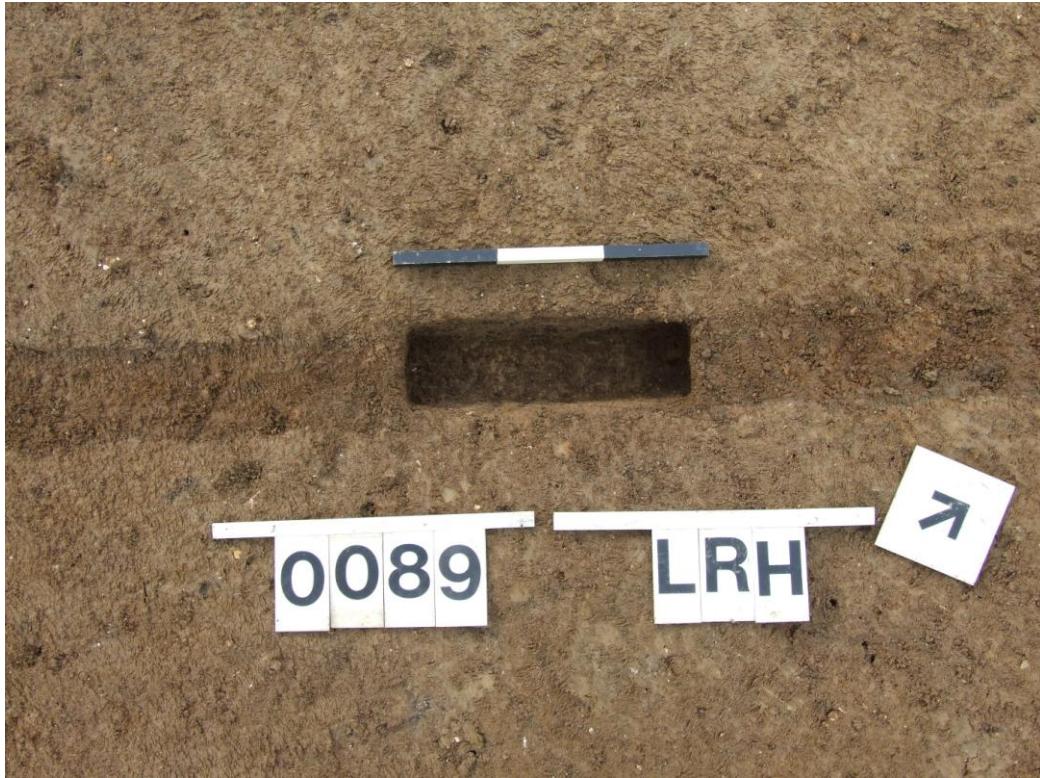


Plate 07. Section through feature 0089 in trench 04



Plate 08. Section through feature 0089 in trench 04



Plate 09. Pre-excavation shot of tear-drop shape feature 0029 in trench 04



Plate 10. Post-excavation shot of 0029 in trench 04



Plate 11. Section across feature 0030 in trench 04



Plate 12. Quadrant section of feature 0074 in trench 04



Plate 13. Quadrants through feature 0074 in trench 04



Plate 14. Box section across features 0075, 0031, 0085 in trench 04



Plate 15. Box section across features 0075, 0031, 0085 in trench 04



Plate 16. North facing section of depression noted in the west end of trench 05



Plate 17. North facing section of shallow east end of trench 05



Plate 18. Linear feature observed in plan in trench 06