
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT VICARAGE LANE,
HELPRINGHAM,
LINCOLNSHIRE
(HPVL 10)**

**Work Undertaken For
Willow Homes Lincs Limited**

May 2010

Report Compiled by
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
PROJECT
SERVICES**



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1. SUMMARY

A watching brief was undertaken during groundworks at Vicarage Lane, Helpringham, Lincolnshire. The watching brief monitored the excavation of foundation trenches for a new detached dwelling.

The watching brief was required as the site lay close to the medieval (AD 1066-1540) core of the village which is best represented by St. Andrew's church, the base of a cross and ridge and furrow of the medieval field system. Additionally, a Saxon (AD 410-1066) spindle whorl is known from the village.

The watching brief revealed a sequence of undated, Saxon, medieval and post-medieval deposits. Undated layers comprise three ditches and four pits which may have been used for the extraction of sand. A single Saxon pit and one of medieval date were also recorded along with a post-medieval example. Also of post-medieval date was an extensive subsoil apparent across the site.

Finds retrieved during the investigation include Saxon, medieval and later pottery and a medieval tile. Post-medieval clay pipe was also collected as was a prehistoric flint flake. Animal bones were also retrieved.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Definition of a Watching Brief

An archaeological watching brief is defined as “a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed.” (IFA 1999).

2.2 Planning Background

Archaeological Project Services was commissioned by Willow Homes Lincs Limited to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with new residential development at Vicarage Lane, Helpringham, Lincolnshire. Approval for the development was sought through the submission of planning application 09/1024/FUL. The watching brief was carried out on the 12th and 14th April 2010 in accordance with a specification prepared by Archaeological Project Services and approved by the Assistant Heritage Environment Record Officer, Heritage Lincolnshire.

2.3 Topography and Geology

Helpringham is located 9km southeast of Sleaford and 19km west of Boston in the administrative district of North Kesteven, Lincolnshire (Fig. 1).

The site is located 140m northeast of the village centre as defined by St. Andrew's parish church at National Grid Reference TF 1398 4085 (Fig. 2). Lying to the south of Vicarage Lane, the site is in an area of generally level ground at a height of c. 6m OD. Heights drop down to the north, towards the valley of the Helpringham Eau.

Local soils are of the Beccles 3 Association, typically fine loamy over clay soils (Hodge *et al.* 1984, 121). These soils overlie a drift geology of glaciofluvial outwash overlying boulder clay which in turn seals a solid geology of Jurassic Oxford Clay (BGS 1995)

2.4 Archaeological Setting

The development site lies within an area of known archaeological remains dating from the Saxon period to the present day. An Anglo-Saxon spindle whorl was found towards the southern extent of the village.

Helpringham is first mentioned in the Domesday Survey of c. 1086. Referred to as *Helperincham* and *Helpericham* the name is derived from the Old English and means the settlement (*hām*) of ‘Helpric’s’ people (Cameron 1998, 62). The Domesday Survey records that the land was held by Ivo Taillebois, Colsuain, Gilbert de Gand, Robert de Veci and Godfrey of Cambrai and contained a church and at least 22 acres of meadow (Foster and Longley 1976).

The only extant remains of the medieval period are the 13th century church of St. Andrew (Pevsner and Harris 1989, 379), which presumably replaced the church referred to in the Domesday account of the village, and a medieval cross base reused as a foundation for a war memorial. Earthworks of medieval ridge and furrow have been identified immediately south of the village (Albone 2000, 4).

A watching brief undertaken immediately south of the site identified an undated pit and boundary ditch with pottery and clay pipes of 19th century date (Cope-Faulkner 2000, 1). A second watching brief carried out along the High Street, 130m southwest of the site, identified quarry pits, ditches and a posthole, though these were undated (Cope-Faulkner 2003, 1).

3. AIMS

The aim of the archaeological investigation was to ensure that any archaeological features exposed during the groundworks should be recorded and, if present, to determine their date, function and origin.

4. METHODS

Prior to the excavation of foundation trenches, topsoil was largely stripped from the site. Foundation trenches were then

excavated by machine to depths of up to 1.55m. Following excavation, the sides of the trenches were then cleaned and rendered vertical. Selected deposits were excavated further to retrieve artefactual material and to determine their function. Each deposit was allocated a unique reference number (context number) with an individual written description. A list of all contexts and their descriptions appears as Appendix 1. A photographic record was compiled and sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10. Recording was undertaken according to standard Archaeological Project Services’ practice.

Following excavation finds were examined and a period date assigned where possible (Appendix 2). The records were also checked and a stratigraphic matrix produced. Phasing was assigned based on the nature of the deposits and recognisable relationships between them and supplemented by artefact dating.

5. RESULTS

Following post-excavation analysis six phases were identified;

Phase 0	Natural deposits
Phase 1	Undated deposits
Phase 2	Possible Saxon deposits
Phase 3	Possible medieval deposits
Phase 4	Post-medieval deposits
Phase 5	Recent deposits

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

Phase 0 Natural deposits

The earliest deposit encountered at the base of the foundation trenches was a layer of reddish yellow sand (003). This measured in excess of 1.1m thick.

Phase 1 Undated deposits

Aligned east-west through the house plot (Fig. 3) was a ditch (009/013). This was 3.75m wide at the east end and 1.75m towards the west and was 1.05m deep (Fig. 4, Section 3; Fig. 6, Sections 7 and 8; Plate 4). Fills comprised grey sandy silt (010) and (014).

This ditch had an uncertain relationship with a pit (021). This pit was over 0.6m long by 1.2m wide and 0.55m deep (Fig. 6, Section 8). A single fill of yellowish grey sandy silt was recorded (022).

Parallel to ditch (009/013) on its northern side was ditch (011). Measuring over 6.1m long, it was 2.4m wide and 1.14m deep (Fig. 5, Section 4; Plate 5) and contained a fill of yellowish grey sandy silt (012).

Located in the northeastern foundation trench was pit (015). This was longer than 0.9m, wider than 0.65m and 0.9m deep (Fig. 5, Section 5; Plate 6). A single fill of grey sandy silt (016) was recorded.

Immediately west of this pit was a north-south aligned ditch (019) that measured 3.05m wide by 0.45m deep (Fig. 5, Section 6). This contained a single fill of grey sandy silt (020).

To the west and having an uncertain relationship with this ditch was pit (017). This was over 0.48m long, wider than 1.55m and 0.87m deep containing a fill of grey sandy silt (018).

Phase 2 Possible Saxon deposits

Located within the southernmost foundation trench was pit (006) that was 4m wide by 0.5m deep (Fig. 4, Section 2; Plate 3). Two fills were recorded, a lower of grey sandy silt (007) and an upper of darker grey sandy silt (008). A single sherd of early to mid Saxon date was retrieved along with a residual prehistoric flint and animal bone.

Phase 3 Possible medieval deposits

Situated in the southwest corner of the foundation trenches was pit (025) measuring over 0.9m long and over 0.85m wide by 0.26m deep (Fig. 6, Section 9; Plate 8). A brownish grey sandy silt (026) was recorded from which 11th century Stamford ware was retrieved.

Phase 4 Post-medieval deposits

Located in the southeast corner of the site was pit (004). This measured 1.5m wide and 0.45m deep (Fig. 4, Section 1; Plate 2) and contained a fill of grey sandy silt (005). A single 19th century clay pipe fragment was retrieved from the fill.

Developed over this deposit across the site was a subsoil (002). This comprised a 0.4m thick layer of grey sandy silt.

Phase 5 Recent deposit

Cutting into the subsoil along the western foundation trench was pit (023). This was over 1.6m long, wider than 1.2m and over 0.95m deep (Fig. 6, Section 8; Plate 7). A fill of brownish grey silt (024) was recorded from which residual post-medieval finds were retrieved.

Sealing all deposits was the current topsoil of brownish grey silt (001). Though largely cleared from the site, it measured 0.3m thick.

6. DISCUSSION

Natural deposits of sand relate to the underlying drift geology of glaciofluvial outwash.

A number of deposits remain undated (Phase 1) due to a lack of artefactual material. These comprise three ditches and four pits. The ditches are likely to represent former boundaries and must pre-

date the first Ordnance Survey mapping of the area as no boundaries are depicted on them. The pits may have been used for quarrying the underlying sand.

A single pit (Phase 2) was dated on the basis of one sherd to the early-middle Saxon period. The form of the pit, shallow and long, is reminiscent of sunken floored buildings, typical of the period. However, insufficient area of this feature was exposed. If it is Saxon in date it has considerable local importance.

Likewise a single medieval (Phase 3) feature was revealed and may have derived from nearby refuse disposal at the site. Vicarage Lane forms a back lane to the High Street and it is probable that this ditch is related to activities fronting the main highway.

A post-medieval (Phase 4) pit may also indicate quarrying at the site. However, this was sealed beneath subsoil which suggests that the area may have had been under an agricultural regime.

A prehistoric flint was the earliest item found and suggests transient activity in the vicinity. Pottery of Saxon, medieval and later date was retrieved from the investigation as was medieval roof tile, post-medieval clay pipe and a small quantity of animal bone.

7. CONCLUSION

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on land at Vicarage Lane, Helpringham, as the site lay within the core of the medieval village and close to previous discoveries of unknown date.

The watching brief recorded a number of undated ditches and pits. An Early to Middle Saxon pit was also identified and is of significant local importance. Medieval and post-medieval features, principally pits were also found.

Finds include pottery of Saxon and later date, medieval roof tile and post-medieval clay pipe. A single prehistoric flint was also retrieved along with a quantity of animal bone.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Project Services wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Mr M Robinson of Willow Homes Lincs Limited for commissioning the fieldwork and post-excavation analysis following initial enquiries by the Robert Doughty Consultancy Limited. The work was coordinated by Gary Taylor who edited this report along with Tom Lane.

9. PERSONNEL

Project Coordinator: Gary Taylor
 Site Supervisor: Ross Kendall
 Finds processing: Denise Buckley
 Photographic reproduction: Sue Unsworth
 Illustration: Paul Cope-Faulkner
 Post-excavation analysis: Paul Cope-Faulkner

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11. ABBREVIATIONS

APS Archaeological Project Services

BGS British Geological Survey

HER Historic Environment Record

IFA Institute for Archaeologists



Figure 1 - General location plan

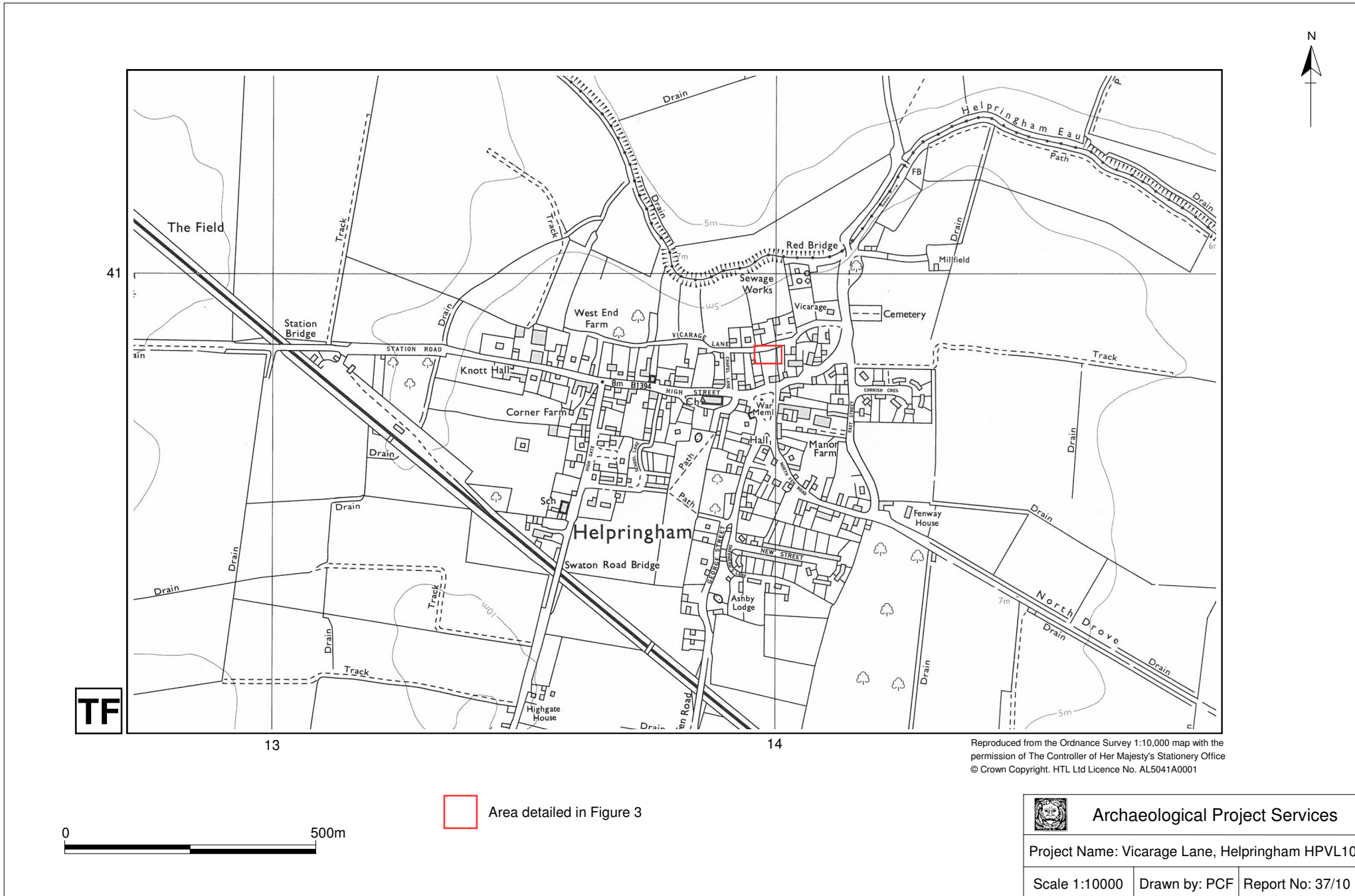


Figure 2 - Site location plan

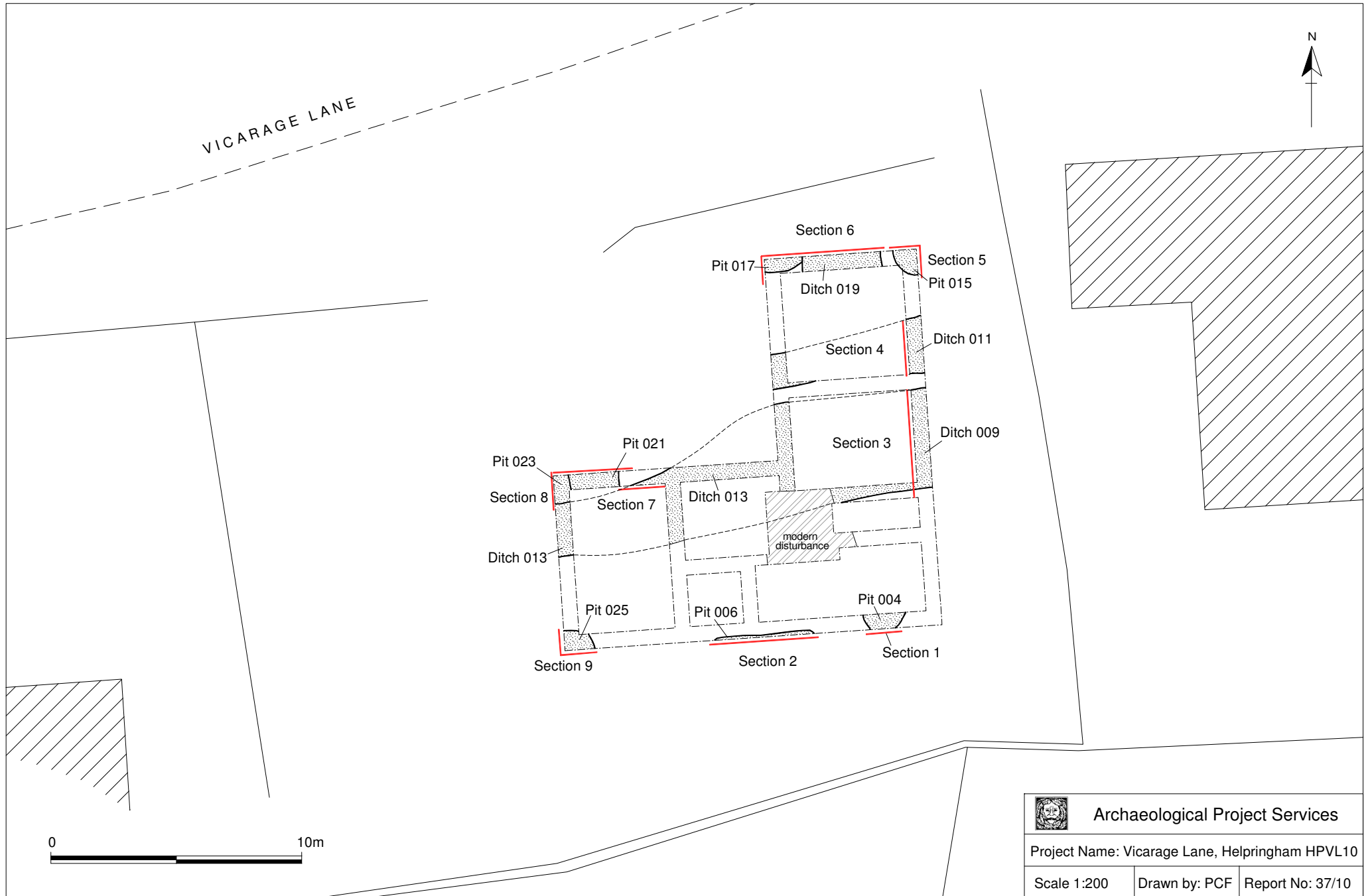
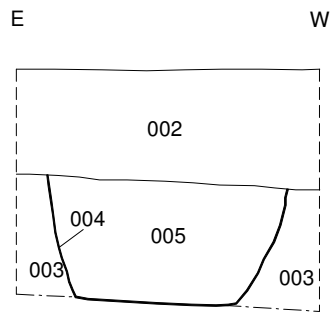
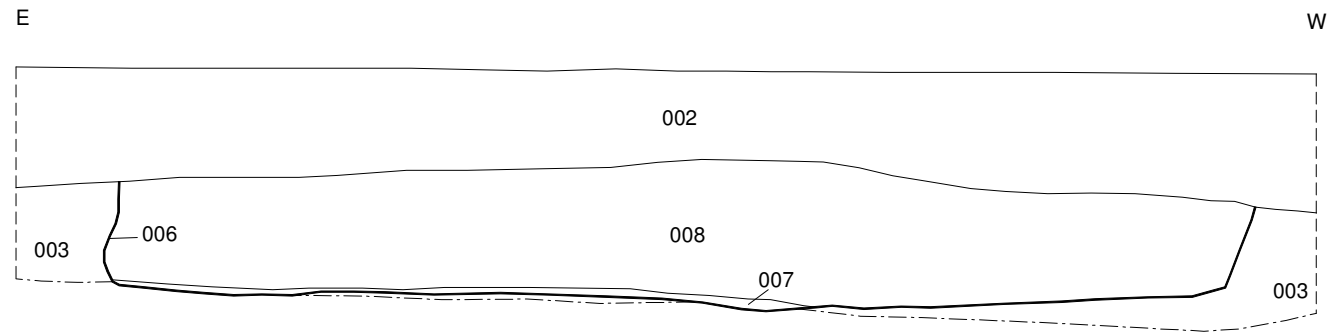


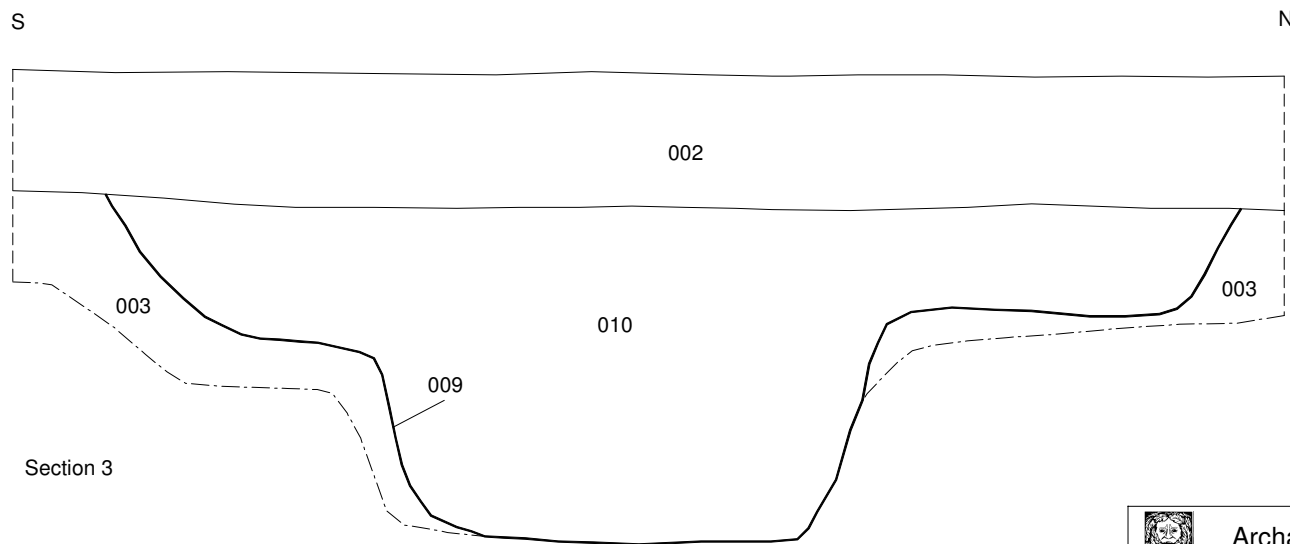
Figure 3 - Plan of the development showing principal features and section locations



Section 1



Section 2



Section 3




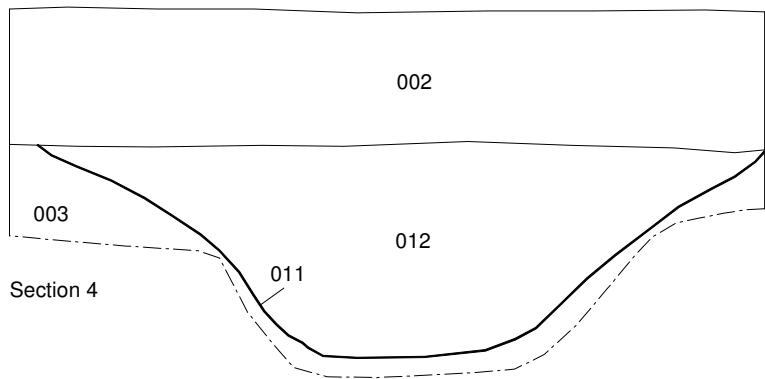
		
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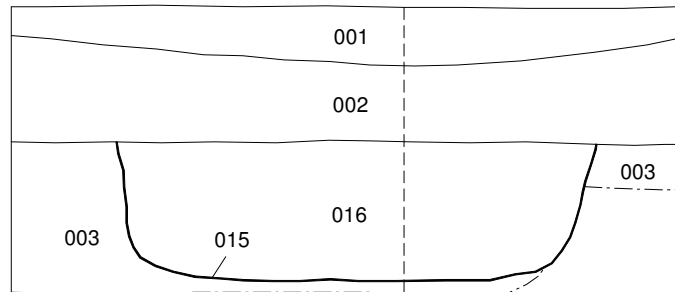
Figure 4 - Sections 1 to 3

S N



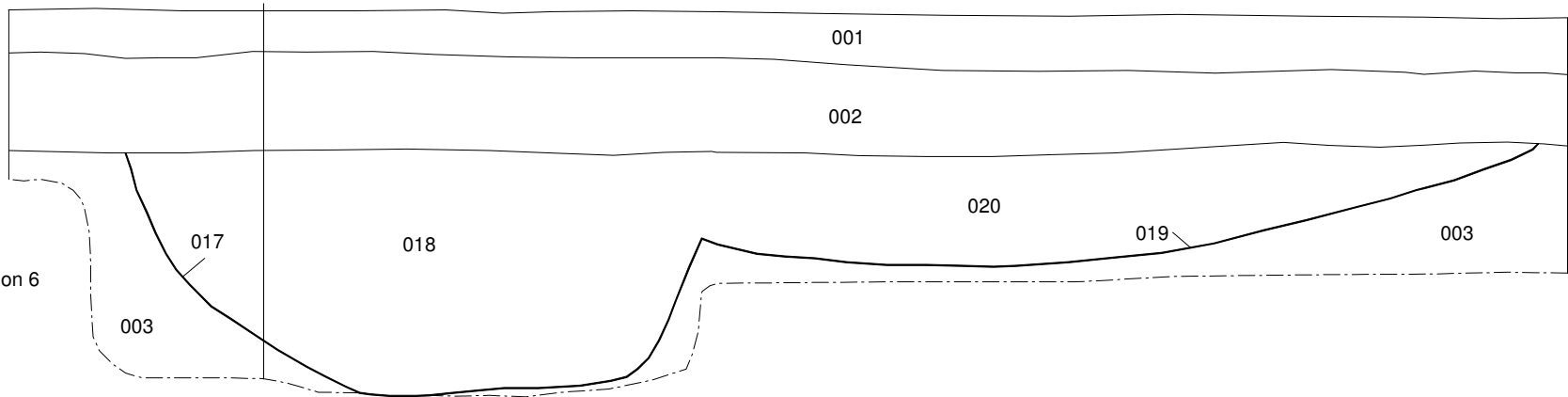
Section 4

W E/N S



Section 5

S N/W E



Section 6



Archaeological Project Services

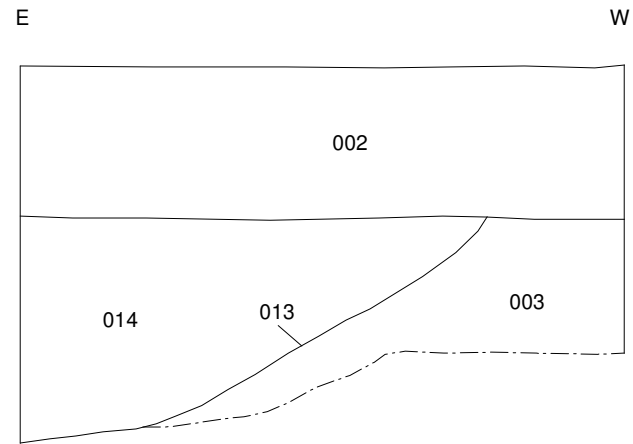
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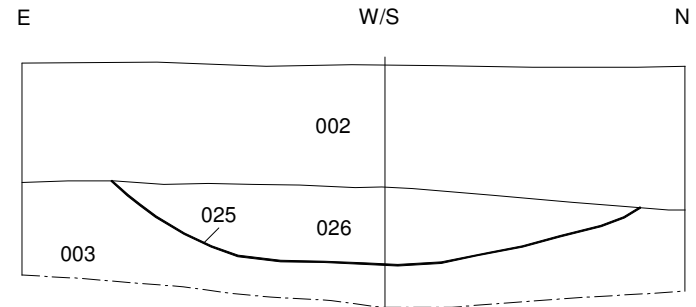
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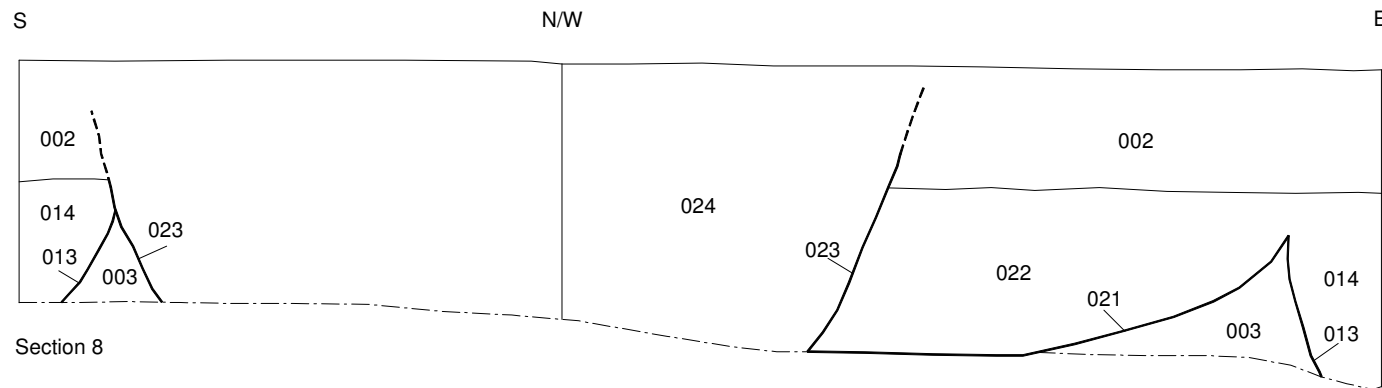
Figure 5 - Sections 4 to 6



Section 7



Section 9



Section 8



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Report No: 37/10

Figure 6 - Sections 7 to 9



Plate 1 – General view across the development area, looking southeast



Plate 2 –Section 1 showing post-medieval pit (004), looking south

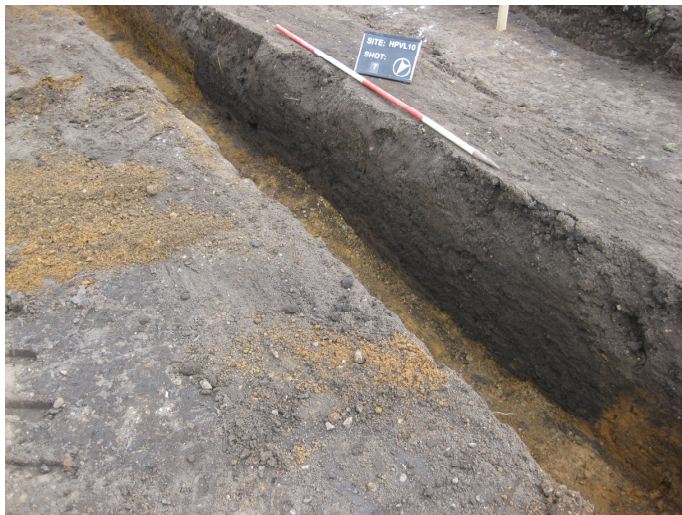


Plate 3 – Section 2 showing the Saxon pit (006), looking southeast



Plate 4 – Section 3 showing undated ditch (009), looking northwest



Plate 5 – Section 4 showing undated ditch (011), looking west



Plate 6 – Undated pit (015), looking northeast



Plate 7 – Recent pit (023),
looking west



Plate 8 – Section 9 showing
the medieval pit (025), looking
southwest

Appendix 1

CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

No.	Description	Interpretation
001	Firm dark brownish grey silt, 0.3m thick	Topsoil
002	Soft mid grey sandy silt, 0.4m thick	Subsoil
003	Soft and loose mid reddish yellow sand, >0.4m thick	Natural deposit
004	?sub-circular pit, >0.65m long by 1.5m wide and 0.45m deep, steep sides and flat base	Pit
005	Soft dark grey sandy silt	Fill of (004)
006	Feature, 4m wide by 0.5m deep, steep sides and flat base	Pit
007	Firm mid grey sandy silt	Fill of (006)
008	Soft dark grey sandy silt	Fill of (006)
009	Linear feature, aligned northeast-southwest, 3.75m wide by 1.05m deep, stepped to vertical sides and rounded base	Ditch
010	Soft dark grey sandy silt	Fill of (009)
011	Linear feature, aligned northeast-southwest, 2.4m wide by 1.15m deep, moderate sides and rounded base	Ditch
012	Soft mid yellowish grey sandy silt	Fill of (011)
013	Linear feature (<i>same as (009)</i>)	Ditch
014	Soft dark grey sandy silt	Fill of (013)
015	?sub-circular pit, >0.65m long by 0.9m wide by 0.9m deep, steep sides and flat base	Pit
016	Soft mid grey sandy silt	Fill of (015)
017	?sub-circular feature, >0.48m long by 1.55m wide and 0.87m deep, steep to gradual sides and flat base	Pit
018	Soft mid grey sandy silt	Fill of (017)
019	Linear feature, aligned north-south, >0.6m long by 3.05m wide by 0.45m deep, gradual sides and rounded base	Ditch
020	Soft mid grey sandy silt	Fill of (019)
021	?sub-circular feature, >0.6m long by 1.6m wide and 0.55m deep, gradual sides and flat base	Pit
022	Soft mid yellowish grey sandy silt	Fill of (021)
023	?sub-circular feature, >1.6m long by 1.2m wide and >0.95m deep, steep sides not fully excavated	Pit
024	Soft dark brownish grey silt	Fill of (023)
025	?sub-circular feature, >0.9m long by 0.85m wide and 0.26m deep, gradual sides and rounded base	Pit
026	Soft dark brownish grey sandy silt	Fill of (025)

Appendix 2

THE FINDS

POST ROMAN POTTERY

By Anne Boyle

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 six sherds from six vessels, weighing 39 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 1. The pottery ranges in date from the Anglo-Saxon to the early modern period.

Condition

Most of the sherds are in fairly fresh condition, although at least one is noted as being very abraded.

Results

Table 1, Post Roman Pottery Archive

Cname	Full name	Earliest date	Latest date	NoS	NoV	W (g)
CREA	Creamware	1770	1830	2	2	21
EMSAX	Early or Middle Saxon wares (generic)	400	870	1	1	14
PEARL	Pearlware	1770	1900	1	1	1
ST	Stamford Ware	970	1200	1	1	2
TPW	Transfer printed ware	1770	1900	1	1	1
TOTAL				6	6	39

Provenance

All of the pottery was recovered from pits [006], [023] and [025].

Range

A single Anglo-Saxon sherd from a lugged vessel is present in a fine fabric. Inclusions of acid igneous rock and biotite are present in small amounts indicating this may be a Charnwood fabric, although it is not typical of that type. This sherd and an 11th century Stamford ware, indicate early activity occurring nearby. The remainder of the assemblage comprises ubiquitous early modern types.

Potential

All of the pottery is stable and poses no problems for long-term storage. The assemblage should be retained.

Summary

A small assemblage of mixed date was retrieved from three contexts.

CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL

By Anne Boyle

Introduction

All the material was recorded at archive level in accordance with the guidelines laid out by the ACBMG (2001) and to conform to Lincolnshire County Council's *Archaeology Handbook*.

Methodology

The material was laid out and viewed in context order. Fragments were counted and weighed within each context. The ceramic building material was examined visually and using x20 magnification. This information was then added

to an Access database. An archive list of the ceramic building material is included in Table 1.

Results

Table 2, Ceramic Building Material Archive

Cxt	Cname	Full name	Fabric	NoF	W (g)	Description	Date
005	PNR	Peg, nib or ridge tile	Oxidised; medium sandy + fe + clay pellets/shale	1	9	Flat roofer	Late 12th to 15th

Provenance

A single fragment of medieval roofing tile came from pit [004].

Potential

The fragment is suitable for discard.

Summary

A single piece of medieval tile was retrieved from the site.

FAUNAL REMAINS

By Paul Cope-Faulkner

Introduction

A total of 6 (305g) fragments of animal bone were recovered from stratified contexts.

Provenance

The bone was retrieved from the fills of pits (005, 008, 024 and 026).

Condition

The overall condition of the remains was good to moderate.

Results

Table 3, Fragments Identified to Taxa

Cxt	Taxon	Element	Number	W (g)	Comments
005	large mammal	humerus	1	53	juvenile
	large mammal	ulna	1	4	juvenile
008	large mammal	mandible	1	96	
	large mammal	vertebra	1	12	
024	cattle	molar	1	65	
026	cattle	horn core	1	75	

Summary

The assemblage is dominated by large mammals and probably entirely cattle. As a small assemblage it is of limited potential though should be retained as part of the site archive.

CLAY PIPE

By Gary Taylor

Introduction

Analysis of the clay pipes followed the guidance published by Davey (1981) and the material is detailed in the accompanying table.

Condition

The clay pipe is in good, archive-stable condition.

Results

Table 4, Clay Pipes

Context no.	Bore diameter /64"					NoF	W(g)	Comments	Date
	8	7	6	5	4				
005					1	1	2	Stem only	19 th century
024				1		1	1	Stem only	18 th century
Totals				1	1	2	3		

Provenance

The clay pipes were recovered from pit fills (005, 024). They are probably fairly local products of the Sleaford – Boston area.

Range

Two stems of 18th-19th century date were recovered.

Potential

As a small assemblage of later post-medieval date the clay pipe collection is of limited potential, other than providing some dating evidence.

WORKED FLINT

By Tom Lane

Introduction

A single worked flint weighing 4g was recovered.

Condition

The flint is in good condition and presents no problems for long-term archive storage.

Results

Table 5, Worked Flint Archive

Cxt	Description	No	Wt (g)	Date
008	Flake, struck, possibly retouched along one edge	1	4	prehistoric

Provenance

The flint was recovered from a pit fill.

Range

A single flint flake was recovered. It is struck and may exhibit some retouch. However, it is otherwise undiagnostic and can only be ascribed a prehistoric date.

Potential

As an isolated undiagnostic item the flint is of limited potential but does indicate a prehistoric presence, perhaps transient, in the area.

SPOT DATING

The dating in Table 6 is based on the evidence provided by the finds detailed above.

Table 6, Spot dates

Cxt	Date	Comments
005	19 th	Based on 1 clay pipe
008	5th to 9th	Based on a single sherd
024	Mid 18 th to 19th	
026	11th	Date on a single sherd

ABBREVIATIONS

ACBMG	Archaeological Ceramic Building Materials Group
BS	Body sherd
CBM	Ceramic Building Material
CXT	Context
NoF	Number of Fragments
NoS	Number of sherds
NoV	Number of vessels
W (g)	Weight (grams)

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ARCHIVE CATALOGUES*Archive catalogue 1, Post Roman Pottery*

Cxt	Cname	Fabric	Form	NoS	NoV	W (g)	Part	Decoration	Description	Date
008	EMSAX	Sparse medium quartz + rare acid igneous and biotite	Jar/ bowl	1	1	14	BS	Burnished?	Possible lug; soot and carbonised deposit; upright rounded rim	5th to 9th
024	CREA		Dish/ bowl	1	1	15	BS			
024	CREA		Dish/ bowl	1	1	6	Rim		Very abraded	
024	PEARL		Hollow	1	1	1	BS	Dark brown and turquoise slip		
024	TPW		?	1	1	1	BS	Blue transfer print		
026	ST	A/D	Jar/ pitcher	1	1	2	BS		Thin greeny/yellow glaze; flake	11th

Appendix 3

GLOSSARY

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 interpretations of the context (the context sheet) is created and placed in the site archive. Context numbers are identified within the report text by brackets, <i>e.g.</i> (004).
Cut	A cut refers to the physical action of digging a posthole, pit, ditch, foundation trench, <i>etc.</i> Once the fills of these features are removed during an archaeological investigation the original 'cut' is therefore exposed and subsequently recorded.
Fill	Once a feature has been dug it begins to silt up (either slowly or rapidly) or it can be back-filled manually. The soil(s) which become contained by the 'cut' are referred to as its fill(s).
Layer	A layer is a term 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.
Prehistoric	The period of human history prior to the introduction of writing. In Britain the prehistoric period lasts from the first evidence of human occupation about 500,000 BC, until the Roman invasion in the middle of the 1 st century AD.
Saxon	Pertaining to the period dating from AD 410-1066 when England was largely settled by tribes from northern Germany.

Appendix 4

THE ARCHIVE

The archive consists of:

26	Context records
2	Photographic record sheets
11	Sheets of scale drawings
1	Stratigraphic matrix
1	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:

The Collection
Art and Archaeology in Lincolnshire
Danes Terrace
Lincoln
LN2 1LP

Accession Number: LCNCC: 2010.47

Archaeological Project Services Site Code: HPVL 10

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 development site but away from the 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 current investigation.

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