

Summary

- An archaeological evaluation was undertaken prior to the determination of an application for a residential development on land at The Beckett School, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire.
- The site is situated close to the site of a possible Romano-British pottery kiln.
- Three evaluation trenches and a test pit were excavated, exposing a single undated linear feature of probable modern date, and a 19th/20th century ceramic land drain.

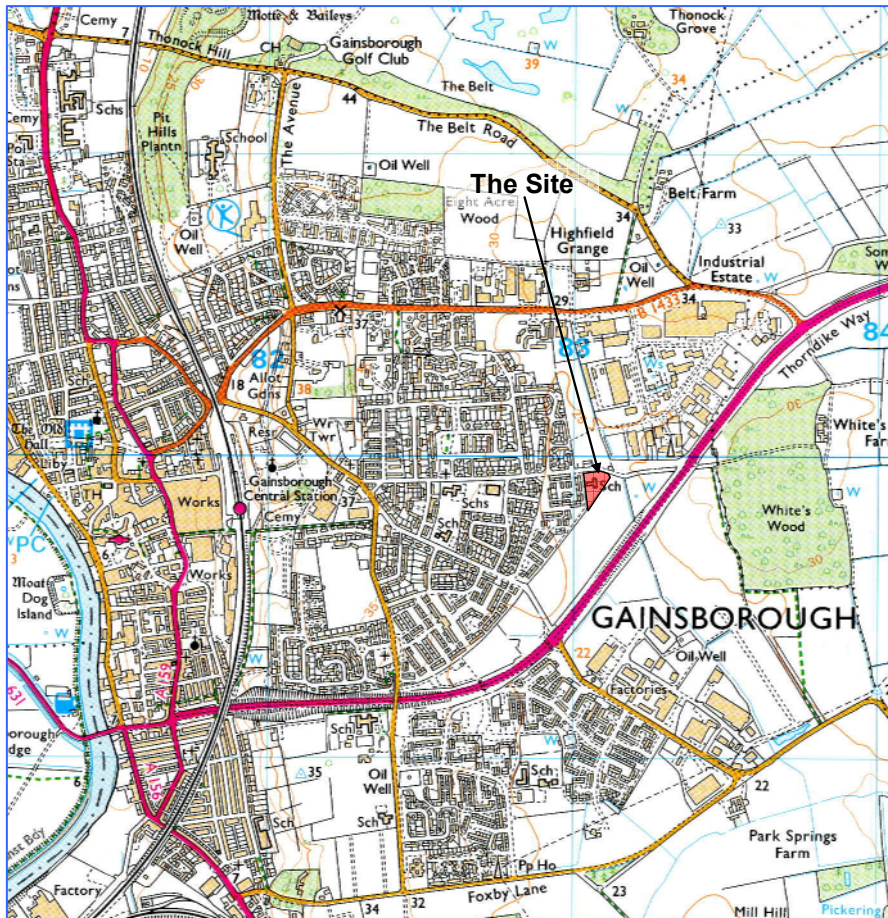


Figure 1: Site location (scale 1:25,000)

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Allen Archaeological Associates was commissioned by Archaeological Project Services, on behalf of their client, Robert Doughty Consultancy Limited, to carry out an archaeological evaluation prior to the determination of an outline planning application for residential development of land at The Beckett School, White's Wood Lane, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire.
- 1.2 The fieldwork, recording and reporting conforms to current national guidelines, as set out in the Institute for Field Archaeologists '*Standards and guidance for archaeological field evaluations*' (IFA 1999), and a specification prepared by Archaeological Project Services.
- 1.3 The archive will be submitted to The Collection, Lincoln, within six months of the completion of the report.

2.0 Site location and description

- 2.1 Gainsborough is in the administrative district of West Lindsey, approximately 24km to the north-west of Lincoln. The Beckett School is towards the east side of the town, on the south side of White's Wood Lane, with farmland to the east and south, and residential development to the west. It centres on NGR SK 8301 8994.
- 2.2 The local geology comprises drift deposits of periglacial Head, overlying the solid geology of Mercia Mudstone (British Geological Survey 1967).

3.0 Planning background

- 3.1 An outline planning application for a residential development on the school site was submitted to West Lindsey District Council in January 2007 (planning ref. 119930). It has been requested that a programme of archaeological trial trenching be undertaken prior to determination of this application.

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

- 4.1 There is limited evidence of Romano-British activity in the area of the site. The Historic Environment Record for Lincolnshire records a possible pottery kiln located in fields to the east of the site (HER ref. 52074), and a single sherd of Romano-British pottery was recovered in 1995 during a watching brief at the school.
- 4.2 Gainsborough appears to have developed as a town in the Anglo-Saxon period. The place name is Old English, meaning 'Gaegn's fortified place (Cameron 1998). This suggests a possible Saxon defended settlement, although this is not as yet supported by archaeological evidence. In 1013, the invading Viking army of Svein Forkbeard used Gainsborough as a base from which Svein launched a successful bid for the English crown, although he returned to Gainsborough in 1014 where he died (Sawyer 1998).
- 4.3 In the Domesday Book, a single landowner is listed, Geoffrey of la Guerche. At this time, Gainsborough was very much secondary to Torksey as a settlement and a port for the trans-shipment of goods from sea-going vessels to river going vessels. Torksey, with Lincoln and Stamford, was of the three major settlements in Lincolnshire (Morgan & Thorn 1986). Following the silting up of the port at Torksey in the early medieval period, much of the trade along the Trent shifted to Gainsborough.

- 4.4 The medieval town was centred around the Old Hall and All Saints church, some distance to the west of the current site, with later development extending southwards along the river (Pevsner & Harris 1989). Ridge and furrow cropmarks in fields adjacent to the school attest it as an agricultural area during the medieval period (HER ref. 54305). The 1890 First Edition Ordnance Survey map shows the development area was still agricultural land at some distance from the urban area of Gainsborough (see cover).

5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 The programme of trial trenching entailed the excavation of three trenches, each 2m wide and 10m long (Trenches 1 – 3), and a 1m x 1m test pit (Trench 4). The locations of the trenches were agreed in advance with the Historic Environment Countryside Archaeological Advisor and are shown on figure 2.
- 5.2 Machine excavation of the trenches was carried out using a 360° tracked excavator fitted with a 1.2m wide toothless dykeing bucket. Topsoil and subsoil deposits were removed in spits not exceeding 0.1m in depth, under close archaeological supervision, until the first archaeologically significant horizon was exposed. Further excavation was then carried out by hand.
- 5.3 Archaeological features were sample excavated in order to determine their depth, profile, orientation and where possible, date and function. A full written record of all archaeological features and deposits was made on standard context record sheets, accompanied by plan and section drawings at scales 1:50 and 1:20. A full colour photographic record was also maintained, and selected prints have been included as an appendix to this report.
- 5.4 The fieldwork was carried out by a team of two experienced field archaeologists, supervised by the author. It was undertaken over a period of three days, Monday 12th to Wednesday 14th March 2007.

6.0 Results

6.1 Trench 1

- 6.1.1 The uppermost deposit was a 0.3m deep topsoil deposit of brownish-grey silty clay, 100. This sealed a thin subsoil layer, 101, a brown silty clay with occasional small gravel, which was upto 0.2m deep. This in turn sealed a natural deposit of brown slightly sandy clay, 102.
- 6.1.2 A single feature was identified in the trench; a ceramic land drain running on a broadly east – west alignment.

6.2 Trench 2

- 6.2.1 The topsoil in this trench was a 0.2m - 0.3m deep layer of dark brown silty clay, 200, which sealed a diffuse subsoil layer, 201, which merged with 200 above, and with the natural geology, 202 below.
- 6.2.2 The trench contained a single linear feature, 203, aligned north-west to south-east. It was in excess of 1.7m wide and contained an undated fill of brown silty clay, 204.

6.2.3 203 was cut by a steep sided linear feature on the same alignment, 205, which was approximately 0.82m wide and 0.78m deep. The primary fill of this feature, 206 was a mixed deposit of yellowish brown and brown silty clay with lenses of topsoil, representing backfilling of the feature with redeposited natural. The final fill was a 0.1m deep layer of dark grey/brown silty clay, 207, possibly resulting from the overlying topsoil infilling the feature.

6.3 Trench 3

6.3.1 No archaeological features were observed in Trench 3. The stratigraphy comprised a c 0.2m deep topsoil layer, 300, comprising brownish grey silty clay., which sealed a 0.2m deep subsoil, 301, and the natural geology, 302, an orange/brown clay.

6.4 Trench 4

6.4.1 Trench 4 contained a topsoil layer, 400, which was 0.3m deep. It sealed a 0.1m deep layer of poorly sorted subangular rubble, 401, contained in a brown clay matrix, which was interpreted as building rubble associated with the construction of the school. This deposit lay directly upon the natural clay, 402.

7.0 Discussion and conclusion

7.1 The site was largely devoid of archaeologically significant features. A single ceramic land drain was exposed in Trench 1, and two phases of an undated linear feature was excavated in Trench 2. The function of the feature is unclear, although it runs in the direction of an electricity substation on waste ground on the north side of White's Wood Lane. It is possible that the trench was initially excavated to take an electricity cable running to this sub station, which was subsequently removed and the trench backfilled.

8.0 Effectiveness of methodology

8.1 The trial trenching methodology was appropriate to the scale and nature of the development. It has demonstrated that the proposed residential development of the site will have a negligible impact on the archaeological resource.

9.0 Acknowledgements

9.1 Allen Archaeological Associates would like to thank Archaeological Project Services for this commission. Thanks also go the staff and students of the school for their cooperation during the fieldwork, and to the site assistant, Lisa Baker.

10.0 References

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- Morgan P., & Thorn C., (eds.), 1986, *Domesday Book: vol.31: Lincolnshire*, Phillimore & Co. Ltd, Chichester
- Pevsner N., & Harris J., 1989, *The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire, second edition*, Penguin, London
- Sawyer P., 1998, *Anglo-Saxon Lincolnshire*, The History of Lincolnshire Committee, Lincoln

11.0 Site archive

- 11.1 The documentary archive is currently in the possession of Allen Archaeological Associates. It will be submitted to The Collection, Lincoln within six months, where it will be stored under the unique archive code 2007.66

Appendix 1: Colour Plates



Plate 1: Trench 1, looking south-east



Plate 2: Trench 2, looking east



Plate 3: Slot through ditches 203 and 205, Trench 2, looking east-south-east



Plate 4: Trench 3, looking north

Appendix 2: List of archaeological contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
Trench 1		
100	Layer	Brownish-grey silty clay. Topsoil
101	Layer	Brown silty clay, occasional small gravel. Subsoil
102	Layer	Brown slightly sandy clay. Natural
Trench 2		
200	Layer	Dark brown silty clay. Topsoil
201	Layer	Brown silty clay, indistinct horizon with 200 and 202. Subsoil
202	Layer	Brown slightly sandy clay. Natural
203	Cut	NW-SE aligned linear feature. Contains 204
204	Fill	Brown silty clay. Backfill of 203
205	Cut	NW-SE aligned linear feature. Recut of 203. Contains 205, 206
206	Fill	Redeposited natural. Backfill of 205
207	Fill	Dark grey/brown silty clay. Secondary fill of 205
Trench 3		
300	Layer	Brownish grey silty clay. Topsoil
301	Layer	Greyish brown silty clay. Subsoil
302	Layer	Orange/brown clay. Natural
Trench 4		
400	Layer	Brownish grey silty clay. Topsoil
401	Layer	Poorly sorted subangular rubble, brown clay matrix. Building rubble
402	Layer	Yellowish brown silty clay. Natural