

Summary

- Allen Archaeological Associates was commissioned by BSA Design, on behalf of T Balfe Construction Ltd., to carry out an archaeological evaluation on land at Sutterton Enterprise Park, Sutterton, Lincolnshire.
- Previous work has highlighted a significant potential for Romano-British archaeological remains to exist in the area. Following a geophysical survey of the site in 2007, seventeen evaluation trenches were excavated to investigate the geophysical anomalies.
- The fieldwork revealed a sequence of Romano-British archaeological features and deposits which were centred upon an established drainage system dating from the mid 2nd – 4th century AD. Archaeological and environmental evidence suggests that domestic occupation and industrial activity occurred, and represents the southward continuation of a known Roman settlement.
- The scheme of works has demonstrated that the most significant area of archaeological potential is towards the western half of the site, with mainly post-medieval and early modern drainage features truncating the eastern sector.

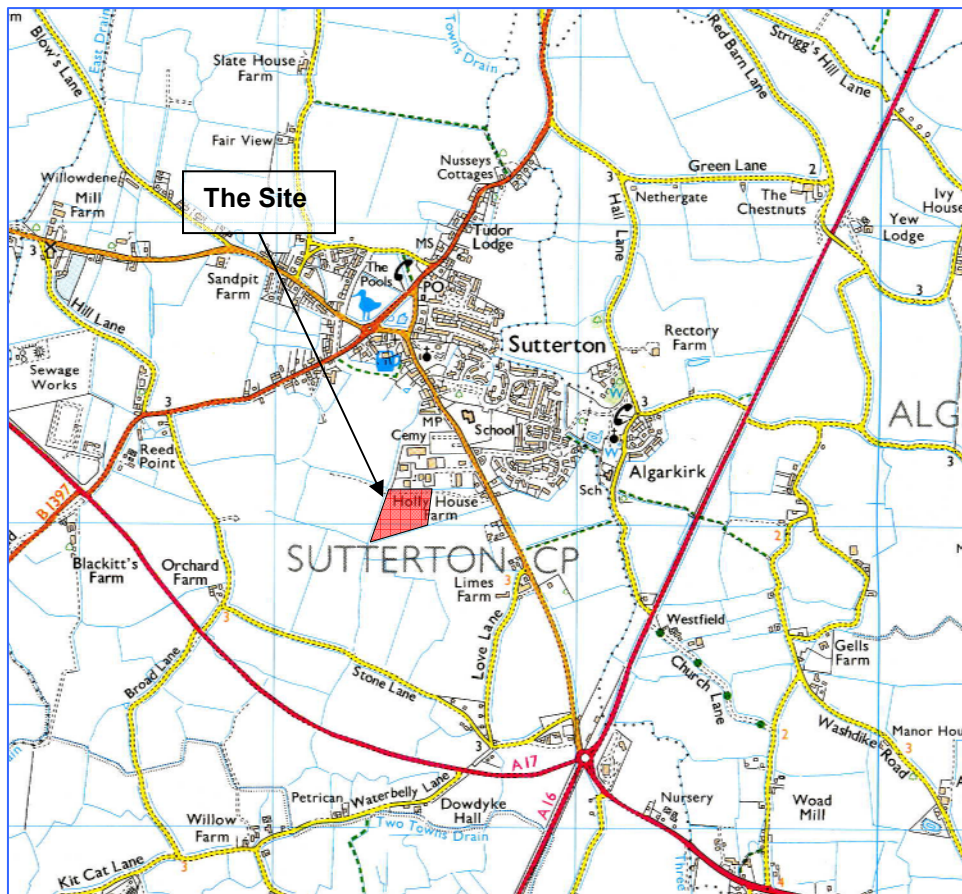


Figure 1: Site location in red at scale 1:25,000

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Allen Archaeological Associates was commissioned by BSA Design, on behalf of T Balfe Construction Ltd. to carry out a programme of archaeological evaluation by trial excavation of land to the rear of Holly House Farm, adjacent to Sutterton Enterprise Park, Sutterton in Lincolnshire. This work was carried out prior to determining a planning application by Boston Borough Council in advance of an industrial development.
- 1.2 The site works and reporting conform to current national guidelines, as set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16, (Department of the Environment 1990), in the Institute for Field Archaeologists 'Standards and guidance for archaeological evaluations' (IFA 2001), procedures that are detailed in the Lincolnshire County Council publication *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: A Manual of Archaeological Practice* (LCC 1998), and a specification prepared by this company (Allen 2007).
- 1.3 The archive will be submitted to the museum in Lincoln (The Collection) for long-term storage (Accession Number: 2008.002).

2.0 Site location and description

- 2.1 Sutterton is in the administrative district of Boston Borough, and is located approximately 9km south-west of central Boston. The proposed development area comprises a 2.4 hectare block of agricultural land to the south of the village, on the west side of Station Road and to the south of Endeavour Way. The site centres on NGR TF 2843 3500.
- 2.2 The site lies at approximately 3m OD in a fenland environment characterised by drift deposits of the Terrington Beds; salt marsh tidal creek and river deposits, laid down from the Romano-British period onwards, until large scale reclamation and drainage in the 17th and 18th centuries (British Geological Survey 1995).

3.0 Planning background

- 3.1 A planning application was submitted to Boston Borough Council in August 2007 for the construction of twenty-five commercial/industrial units (classes B1, B2 and B8) with associated compounds, parking, highway infrastructure and landscaping (Planning Application Number B/07/0524/FULL). Following discussions with the Boston Planning Archaeologist, the planning application was withdrawn to allow a programme of archaeological trial trenching prior to determination of the application. The results of this evaluation will then enable the Local Planning Authority to assess the implications of the development upon the archaeological resource, and to reach an informed and reasonable decision on the development.

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

- 4.1 It is considered that the paucity of prehistoric evidence from the Sutterton area can be attributed to prehistoric ground surfaces being sealed by considerable depths of up to 3m of later alluvium rather than its general absence (Taylor 1994).
- 4.2 The proposed development area lies in an area of considerable archaeological interest due to its proximity to a previously excavated site. Archaeological work in advance of the construction of the existing Enterprise Park, abutting the current site to the north, identified a probable high status settlement of Romano-British date. The site consisted of pits, ditches, a possible kiln and over one thousand pottery fragments. A significant volume of grain recovered from these features was

indicative of agricultural activity within the local landscape and evidence to suggest metalworking (lead working) in the vicinity was also encountered (Casa et al 1997).

- 4.3 Two further closely spaced sites (identified by surface pottery scatters and cropmark evidence) located north-east of the proposed development site may suggest a landscape of either closely spaced Romano-British farmsteads or a successive chronological sequence of sites located in close proximity (Taylor 1994).
- 4.4 A geophysical survey of the proposed development has indicated that this Romano-British settlement activity is likely to extend into the present site. The survey identified numerous enclosures, linear boundary features, pit-like anomalies, and a possible palaeochannel running along the west edge of the site (Boston Planning Archaeologist comments, November 2007).
- 4.5 The village of Sutterton is believed to have developed from the medieval period onwards as it is not mentioned in the Domesday Book and is only referenced in 1200 as ‘Suterton’ meaning ‘shoe makers village’ from the Old English *sutere* or Old Scandinavian *sutari* with *tun*, meaning settlement or hill in Old English (Cameron 1998). Near the site, only Holly House Farm is shown on Bryants 1828 *Map of the County of Lincoln*.
- 4.6 The 1890 Ordnance Survey Map illustrates that the area encompassed by the site was dissected by an additional drainage ditch (see Section 7.1 below) and has subsequently remained unchanged.

5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 The trial trenching methodology entailed the excavation of seventeen trenches across the development area, equating to approximately a 3% sample of the site. This comprised 3 x 50m, 3 x 40m, 1 x 30m, 9 x 20m and 1 x 10m long trenches, all 2m in width. Information regarding the location and number of trenches was provided by the Boston Planning Archaeologist and is shown on Figure 2.
- 5.2 The fieldwork was carried out from the 11th to the 25th of January 2008, by a team of five experienced field archaeologists, under the supervision of Mike Daley.
- 5.3 All trenches were located on site using a differential GPS with centimetre accuracy. In each trench, topsoil, subsoil and underlying non-archaeological deposits were removed by mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket in spits no greater than 20cm in depth. This process was repeated until the first archaeologically significant or natural horizon was exposed. Machine excavation was monitored at all times by an experienced field archaeologist. All further excavation was then carried out by hand.
- 5.4 A full written record of the archaeological deposits was maintained on standard Allen Archaeological Associates context recording sheets. Archaeological deposits were drawn to scale, in plan and section at an appropriate scale (usually 1:20 or 1:50), with Ordnance Datum heights being displayed on each class of drawing. Full colour photography formed an integral part of the recording strategy, and all photographs incorporated scales, an identification board and directional arrow.
- 5.5 Finds collected during the fieldwork were bagged and labelled with the appropriate deposit context number, and then later processed at the offices of Allen Archaeological Associates. These were then submitted for specialist assessment to the approved organisations/persons.

6.0 Constraints

- 6.1 The excavation of this site coincided with two weeks of heavy rain that severely affected the programme of works. Constant flooding resulted in some of the trench sides becoming unstable with frequent episodes of collapse. As a consequence, Trenches 7 and 14 were abandoned for health and safety considerations. No archaeological features were apparent within these trenches during machine excavation although persistent heavy rain severely reduced levels of visibility.
- 6.2 A safe working depth of 1.2m was adhered to for most of the trenches with selected features excavated to greater depth where necessary under constant supervision.

7.0 Results

- 7.0.1 The excavation of Trenches 2, 4, 5, 7, 14 and 17 did not reveal any archaeological features. Trench 10 was machine excavated and abandoned as it was known to contain only an early modern drainage ditch that is illustrated on the 1891 Ordnance Survey map of the area (Figure 4).
- 7.0.2 The underlying natural deposits on the site conformed to the mid brown fine alluvial clay silts typical of the fenland landscape and were uniform throughout the development area. In Trench 8 it was demonstrated that these silts were overlying an outcropping of blue/grey plastic clay that was also observed in Trenches 14 and 15. This area was heavily truncated by numerous co-axial land drains that were found to account for a significant proportion of the disturbance recorded by the geophysical survey (see Figure 3).

7.1 Trench 1 (Figure 5)

- 7.1.1 The natural geology underlying Trench 1 was encountered at 0.45m below the modern ground level at the south end of the trench, falling to 0.90m at the north. Cut into the natural were a series of features located in the central and southern sectors of the trench.
- 7.1.2 The southernmost feature was a large ditch [102] that was aligned north-west to south-east. This ditch was filled by a homogenous mid brown silty clay 103 that had accumulated by a process of gradual silting in a waterlogged environment. A single piece of cattle bone and fragments of marine shell (cockles) were recovered from the lowest level of this fill (Appendix 8).
- 7.1.3 Approximately 2.2m to the north was a smaller ditch, [106] aligned on a roughly parallel axis. The primary fill of this ditch consisted of mid grey silty clay 113 that was interspersed with lenses of re-deposited mid brown silty clay. Partially overlying this deposit on its southern side was a thick deposit of re-deposited mid brown clay 119, that may have been re-cut before it was sealed by a dark grey backfill deposit, 107. This fill contained a significant amount of charcoal within its matrix alongside Roman pottery that suggested a late 2nd to mid 3rd century AD date for its deposition. A further deposit of mid brown silty clay 120 overlay fill 107 and was subsequently sealed by a layer of mid grey alluvial clay 121.
- 7.1.4 The sequence of fills in ditch [106] would appear to demonstrate the deliberate deposition of waste materials evidenced by deposits 113 and 107. This material was then partially sealed by re-deposited silty clays 119 and 120 that may represent the slumping of up-cast bank material. This interpretation suggests that a bank was constructed on the southern side of the ditch as a consequence of its excavation.
- 7.1.5 Extending from the northern edge of ditch [106] the underlying natural 101 slopes gradually downwards toward the northern extent of the trench. Cutting the approximate centre of the trench was an irregular feature possibly made up of two pits [105] with an adjacent post hole, [111].

- 7.1.6 The profile of pit [105] revealed gently sloping sides with an irregular double bowl shaped base. The primary fill of this feature consisted of the in-washing of laminated grey silts 108 that were sealed by successive layers of dark grey charcoal rich occupation debris 116, 109, and fine light brown clay silt 117 that appeared to have washed into the pit from its northern side.
- 7.1.7 Pottery recovered from 109 suggests a 2nd to early 3rd century date for this fill and a single fragment of a Roman tegula (roof tile) may suggest settlement nearby displaying high status architectural sophistication.
- 7.1.8 A single artefact in the form of a flattened clay ball with an indentation in one surface was recovered from fill 109 (Appendix 6). Other examples of clay balls have been recovered from Romano-British sites in the Sutterton area that have been attributed to some form of industrial processing, although this is entirely conjectural (Taylor 1994).
- 7.1.9 The analysis of environmental samples has revealed an abundance of small legumes from fill 109, suggesting either crop processing or the burning of animal bedding as a source for this deposit. Fryer (Appendix 7) has suggested that the inclusion of barley may be indicative of fodder for cattle, as it was only considered suitable for animal feed during the Roman period. An alternative interpretation may consider the use of barley for producing beer with the residual carbonised materials representing the remains of fuel used during the process of drying and malting the grain.
- 7.1.10 The adjacent post pit [111] was filled by similar dark grey clay silt 112 that also contained 2nd to 3rd century AD pottery and moderate fragments of fired clay within its matrix. This may suggest that the post hole was contemporary with pit [105].
- 7.1.11 Sealing pit [105] and post pit [111] was a 0.24m thick dark grey silty clay occupation layer 104, which extended to within 2m of the northern end of the trench. This layer incorporated within its matrix a very high volume of charcoal and fired clay fragments, possibly from part of a hearth. This may indicate that some form of industrial processing (or possibly burning of waste materials within a structure) had taken place in the vicinity of this trench.
- 7.1.12 The pottery assemblage, a single stone fragment from the upper part of a rotary quern, and a small fragment of a 3rd/4th century glass vessel (Appendix 6) recovered from this layer may represent the accumulation of domestic waste materials dated to within a mid 2nd to early/mid 3rd century time frame. The recovery of early to mid 2nd century imported samian ware pottery may be indicative of a site of some status. Animal bone indicative of the consumption of sheep and cattle were also recovered from 104 combined with a charred fragment of samian pottery that possibly confirms the practice of burning domestic waste materials on the site.
- 7.1.13 The trench was sealed by a 0.60m deep of dark brown ploughsoil, 100.

7.2 Trench 3 (Figure 6)

- 7.2.1 The underlying natural deposit in this trench, 302 was encountered at approximately 0.54m below current ground level.
- 7.2.2 Cutting 302 at the northern end of the trench was a shallow linear depression [305], which based upon its profile, may be interpreted as a trackway extending into the site from the north along an approximate north - south alignment. The primary fill was layer 304, which consisted of a 0.15m thick deposit of dark grey plastic clay, including a very high proportion of charcoal within its matrix.

- 7.2.3 Environmental evidence recovered from layer 304 included an abundance of chaff incorporating a number of cereal grains and detached cereal sprouts. The palaeo-environmental specialist (Appendix 7) has suggested that this deposit may have derived from burnt processing waste, possibly associated with the malting of grain. The location of this deposit within feature [305] along the northern boundary of the site, and Romano-British pottery from 304, may suggest this material has derived from activities carried out on the adjacent Roman occupation site to the north.
- 7.2.4 Sealing 304 was a thin (0.03m thick) layer of light grey alluvial silty clay 303, which is likely to have coincided with the abandonment of the trackway. The feature was subsequently infilled by the gradual accumulation of subsoil 301.
- 7.2.5 South-east of trackway [305] was a small linear gully [308] that had a regular bowl shaped profile and followed a parallel alignment to the track. The fill of [308] was very dark grey silty clay 309 that was interspersed with charcoal fragments. Pottery recovered from this fill confirms a Romano-British date and may suggest it was contemporary to trackway [305].
- 7.2.6 At the southern end of Trench 3 was ditch [306]. The geophysical survey (see Figure 3) had identified this large feature crossing the line of Trench 3 at an oblique angle that resulted in an excavated section of almost 10m width. This feature displayed gradually sloping sides; however the base was not excavated due to incessant flooding as a consequence of the high water table in this area of the site.
- 7.2.7 A single homogenous mid brown silty clay 307, indicative of the gradual natural silting of this ditch, contained a single sherd of late 14th-15th century pottery, a stone hone (Appendix 6) and six fragments of brick of 14th-16th century date (Appendix 5). An 18th century buckle (dated by A Daubney, *pers. comm.*) and clay pipe stem were recovered from the uppermost levels of this fill. This evidence would suggest a probable date range for the gradual infilling of the ditch during the 15th-18th centuries.
- 7.2.8 The alignment of ditch [306] would also suggest that it pre-dates the reorganisation of the local field systems and drainage network as a consequence of the Enclosure Acts. This landscape was evident on the 1890s Ordnance Survey Map and has remained largely unchanged until modern times.
- 7.2.9 All of the features within this trench were sealed by a mid brown silty clay subsoil 301 and subsequently the modern dark brown silty clay plough soil 300.

7.3 Trench 6 (Figure 7)

- 7.3.1 At the western end of the east – west arm of Trench 6, layer 603 extended to approximately 4m in width, and continued westwards beyond the west end of the trench. It comprised a 0.15m thick, dark grey silty clay, interspersed with frequent charcoal and fired clay fragments. This layer occupied a slightly depressed area of the trench and it may tentatively be interpreted as a continuation of trackway [305] extending southwards from Trench 3.
- 7.3.2 Pottery recovered from 603 was dated to the 2nd century AD, with environmental evidence revealing a substantial quantity of marine mollusc shells that were indicative of the procurement of marine resources, and possibly their secondary use in some form of industrial process (Appendix 7).
- 7.3.3 Occupying the centre of the east - west arm of Trench 6 was ditch [604]. The excavation of this ditch was abandoned after a large piece of clearly modern metalwork (probably part of some farm

machinery) was encountered in-situ and adjacent to the remains of a tree stump at approximately 0.80m deep within upper fill 603 of the ditch.

7.3.4 Sealing the trench was a 0.20m thick mid brown silty clay subsoil 601 below the 0.25m thick dark brown silty clay plough soil layer 600.

7.3.5 The eastern arm of Trench 6 was devoid of archaeological features.

7.4 Trench 8 (Figure 7)

7.4.1 At the centre of this trench a sondage was machine excavated to investigate a change in the underlying natural deposits (see Section 7.2 above) from soft clay silts in the northern part of the site, to plastic alluvial clay in the south. This area appeared to represent an interface between these deposits that resulted in a mixed sequence of alluvial clay layers and lenses of re-deposited silts.

7.4.2 Approximately 1.2m from the north eastern end of this trench was [802], a sub oval pit over 3m in diameter that was filled by a sequence of deliberately dumped deposits. The character of each fill within this pit 805, 806, 804 and 803, conformed to a similar reddish brown silty clay matrix that incorporated varied amounts of crushed handmade brick fragments suggesting a medieval or post-medieval date.

7.4.3 The function or indeed the origin of this pit cannot be determined with certainty. It may however have been created as a form of soak away in an attempt to alleviate the increased ground water holding capacity in this area due to the underlying impermeable marine clays.

7.5 Trench 9 (Figures 8 and 9)

7.5.1 The eastern half of the trench was mostly filled by a wide, shallow linear feature [906] that contained two sedimentary silt deposits 907 and 910, comprising varying shades of light orange/brown alluvial clay silts.

7.5.2 Fills 907 and 910 were sealed by orange/brown subsoil 916, and were cut by a large ditch [908]. This ditch was aligned north - east to south - west and conformed to a regular bowl shaped profile. The ditch can be seen to extend through Trenches 12 and 16 on the geophysical survey (see Figure3) and excavated evidence has demonstrated that it also continues through Trench 11.

7.5.3 Ditch [908] was filled by mid orange/grey slightly plastic silty clay 909 that displayed substantial evidence for continued waterlogging in the form of iron pan deposits. The artefactual assemblage recovered from this feature consisted of two fragments of indeterminate animal bone and a single oyster shell.

7.5.4 At the centre of Trench 9, a small pit or ditch terminal [914] extended c.0.5m from the northern trench edge. This feature was filled by mid brown silty clay, 915 that contained thin lenses of black organic residues within its matrix.

7.5.5 This feature was subsequently truncated by [911]; a large ditch in excess of 5m wide that displayed gradually sloping sides with a steeper sided drainage channel at its centre. The primary fill of this ditch was dark red/brown silty clay 912, which contained a small number of cattle and pig bone fragments and a single iron nail fragment (Appendix 6). A significant assemblage of Roman pottery (Appendix 2) from 912 consisted predominantly of cookwares including mortaria, and suggested a date range in the later 3rd or 4th century AD. A single residual (or possibly antique) sherd of mid 2nd-early 3rd century samian fine ware pottery completed the assemblage.

- 7.5.6 The secondary fill of this ditch, grey/brown silty clay 913, represented the gradual silting up of the feature, with evidence for iron panning indicative of standing water.
- 7.5.7 Located approximately 1.5m west of ditch [911] were two inter-cutting features, [902] and [904]. The earliest, [902], was a narrow gully cutting across the trench on a north-east to south-west alignment that was subsequently truncated by a shallow sub-rectangular pit [904]. Gully [902] was filled by mid orange/brown silty clay 903 that was moderately interspersed with charcoal fragments. A similar but slightly more charcoal rich fill 905 was recorded within pit [904], which was sealed by subsoil 916.
- 7.5.8 A small assemblage of pottery recovered from fill 903 provided dating of mid 2nd to early 3rd century AD and included a colour coated beaker base usually associated with the consumption of wine.
- 7.5.9 The pottery recovered from pit fill 905 was the largest assemblage (69 sherds) collected during this scheme of works and represents a significant grouping of pottery from a single fill. The pottery assemblage included predominantly locally produced coarsewares including Nene Valley greywares and South Midlands shell tempered fabrics. The mortaria in this group were almost exclusively Nene Valley products with one example in a Mansetter-Hartshill fabric. Fine table wares included Nene Valley colour coated beakers and samian ware cups, dishes and bowls. This group suggested a deposition date in the mid 3rd - 4th century. The pottery was predominantly sourced throughout the East Midlands region indicating the potential for close economic links with the site. Sherds dating from the later 2nd century probably formed a residual element within the fill.
- 7.5.10 Cutting across the west end of the trench was the slightly meandering north-east to south-west course of a relict water channel, which was sample excavated in Trenches 12 and 13, and as such was not excavated in this trench.

7.6 Trench 11 (Figure 10)

- 7.6.1 Cutting the natural geology 1101 in the eastern half of the trench was the wide, shallow cut for a probable hollow way or trackway [1102]. This was filled by a 0.20m thick layer of redeposited dark grey clay silt 1103 that had frequent inclusions of charcoal and burnt clay fragments. This material was dated by pottery to the late 2nd to mid 3rd century AD, and was possibly derived from some form of industrial activity on the site.
- 7.6.2 Sealing 1103 was a layer of mid brownish grey clay silt 1104 that represented the gradual silting up of the hollow way and was itself partially sealed at the west side of the feature by a compact brown clay silt deposit 1110, possibly representing collapsed material from an adjacent bank or upcast from periodic cleaning out of the feature. A further spread of highly carbonised grey clay silt 1109, with burnt clay inclusions represented the uppermost fill of the hollow way.
- 7.6.3 Cutting 1103, 1104 and 1109 was the steep sided cut of ditch [1105] that represented a continuation of a large drainage feature [908] and [1202] running north-east to south-west across the site. The full depth of this feature (in excess of 1.6m) was not excavated due to the unstable trench sides.
- 7.6.4 The primary fill consisted of firm mid brown clay silt 1106 that probably represented a slump of material into the ditch along its eastern edge, which was sealed by blue grey alluvial silt 1107. The tertiary fill, 1111 was compact grey brown silty clay interspersed with a moderate amount of charcoal flecks. No artefactual evidence was recovered from the fills of ditch [1105].

- 7.6.5 The resultant depression left over the silted up hollow way and ditch subsequently became filled by a layer of sterile brown clay silts, 1108 of probable alluvial origin.
- 7.6.6 A 0.40m thick layer of dark brown silty clay ploughsoil, 1100 sealed this trench.

7.7 Trench 12 (Figure 11)

- 7.7.1 Located at the western end of this trench was a large channel, [1214] that was filled by homogenous compact brown alluvial clay silt 1215. The channel was over 1.5m in depth, over 8m in width and followed a meandering course along a north-east to south-west axis and continued beyond the site limits.
- 7.7.2 The primary re-cut of this channel [1205] extended to approximately 6m in width with gradually sloping sides that steepened into a bowl shaped central profile. The primary fill 1206, consisted of compact dark grey clay with frequent mussel shells. Environmental evidence was recovered from this fill to suggest the presence of cattle feed (barley) and burnt animal fodder/bedding within the fill (Appendix 7). A small assemblage of Roman domestic pottery indicated an early/mid 2nd century date for the primary fill within this feature. This date corresponds well with the fineware assemblage from 1206 that included samian ware bowls closely dated to c120-160 AD.
- 7.7.3 The secondary fill 1207 is represented by a banded deposit of grey and brown silts and clays, indicative of successive alluvial deposits of marine clays and silting derived from natural erosion.
- 7.7.4 Overlying this fill is a thin band of dark organic silt 1208 that may demonstrate a reduced water flow and reduction in depth that allowed vegetation to grow in the ditch. This layer was subsequently sealed by a further banded deposit of grey and brown alluvial silts and clays 1209.
- 7.7.5 A second re-cut [1210] that cuts the eastern half of ditch [1205] revealed shallow sloping sides that stepped into a steeper bowl shaped cut at the base of the feature (similar to cut [1205]). This cut demonstrated a trend toward the eastward migration of the channel with each successive re-cut. It was not possible to safely extend this section to reveal the full profile of [1210] however its projected width would have exceeded nine metres in total.
- 7.7.6 The primary fill of re-cut [1210] was compact mid grey silty alluvial clay 1211, sealed by yellowish brown silty clay, 1212 that was banded with layers of marine shell fragments. Filling the remainder of this feature was a 0.90m depth of compact blue grey alluvial clay, 1213 that contained a single sherd of Roman mortaria that may tentatively suggest a later 3rd to 4th century AD date for the final infilling phase of this sequence of features.
- 7.7.7 In the eastern part of Trench 12 was ditch cut [1202] that represented the southward continuation of feature [908] in Trench 9. A section excavated across the ditch revealed a similar regular bowl shaped profile approximately 5.5m in width. The primary fill of this ditch consisted of a 1.15m depth of mid grey brown clay alluvium 1203, which contained moderate amounts of marine shell fragments within its matrix. A small lens of compact mid yellowish grey clay silt 1204 occupied a shallow depression, possibly representing localised re-cutting on the eastern side of the in-filled ditch. No artefactual evidence was recovered from this feature.

7.8 Trench 13 (Figure 12)

- 7.8.1 This trench was located to sample the eastern part of a large meandering channel identified by the geophysical survey (see Figure 2). A 2m deep section through this feature revealed the gently sloping eastern profile of cut [1309] that extended below safe limits of excavation.

- 7.8.2 The basal fill consisted of mid brown re-deposited natural silts, 1307 that was sealed by fine blue grey alluvial clay 1306. At the eastern extent of the section was a thick deposit of grey black charcoal rich silty clay, 1305 that contained occasional shell fragments, fired clay fragments (possibly indicative of industrial activity) and mid/late 2nd to 3rd century AD pottery. This deposit appeared to represent a tipline formed by the deliberate disposal of Roman waste materials into the channel.
- 7.8.3 A layer of brown silty clay mottled by frequent iron pan deposits, 1304 sealed 1305 and provided evidence for a gradually rising level of standing water within this feature. A small lense of blue grey alluvial clay 1303 had collected over 1304 toward the eastern side of the channel.
- 7.8.4 Channel [1309] and the remaining extent of the trench was sealed by mid brown silty clay 1302 that appeared to represent the abandonment and natural infilling of the area with alluvial deposits. This in turn was sealed by dark brown clay silt ploughsoil 1301.

7.9 Trench 15 (Figure 12)

- 7.9.1 At the north-western end of the trench a single 2m wide by 0.63m deep ditch, [1502], was excavated. It was filled by mid grey brown silty clay 1503 and aligned north-east to south-west. This feature followed a parallel alignment to the features recorded in Trenches 9 and 12 to the west, and therefore may be part of a broadly contemporary landscape, although no artefactual evidence was recovered during excavation to confirm this.

7.10 Trench 16 (Figure 13)

- 7.10.1 Occupying the centre of this trench was ditch [1603], that displayed a regular 4.5m wide by 1.48m deep bowl shaped profile and represented a probable continuation northwards of ditch, [908]/[1202]. The single homogenous fill 1604 consisted of dark grey brown plastic silty clay, and contained no artefacts.
- 7.10.2 This feature was sealed by mid brown silty clay subsoil 1601, followed by the modern ploughsoil 1600.

8.0 Discussion

- 8.1 The results of this evaluation have provided evidence for Romano-British occupation and later landscape reorganisation. The interpretation of the geophysical survey results (Figure 3) suggested the presence of a large rectilinear enclosure extending from the south into the centre of the site, with numerous individual features clustered within the enclosure and dotted around its outer limits. The excavated evidence has not confirmed the geophysical survey interpretation, demonstrating the difficulties in interpreting this data and the variations in the results of this type of survey in the fenland landscape.
- 8.2 The spatial arrangement of the site is clearly linked to the channel [1214]/[1309] that dissects the site along a north-east/south-west alignment, effectively isolating the northwest corner of the development area. Dating provided by the pottery assemblage and stratigraphic relationships have enabled the site to be chronologically split into clearly defined areas of activity, with the area west of the channel (around Trench 1), representing late 2nd to early 3rd century AD activity.
- 8.3 Features recorded in Trench 1 provided evidence of domestic occupation associated with a mixed farming regime. This interpretation may be determined from environmental evidence indicating the presence of cultivated barley and animal fodder alongside animal bone, suggesting the rearing

and consumption of cattle and sheep. The recovery of part of a rotary quern was also indicative of arable production and processing. A broad range of pottery was also recovered including both kitchen and fine tablewares.

- 8.4 The possible presence of structural elements in this area may be inferred by post hole [111], the recovery of a single *tegula* (Roman roof tile) and a piece of grooved tile, possibly representing part of a box flue tile. These structural fragments may suggest the presence of a significant Roman building nearby.
- 8.5 Environmental analysis from this trench has suggested the disposal of waste materials by burning, possibly in conjunction with some form of industrial processing. Fragments of fired clay recovered from within layer 104 may have derived from a hearth associated with this activity. The residual charred mix of waste material was initially deposited into pit [105] and ditch [106], and the continuation of this practice eventually generated an extensive 'occupation layer', 104.
- 8.6 The spread of this material may have extended eastwards as far as Trench 11 (see Figure 3), as evidenced by a thick layer of comparable material, 1103 that fills a hollow way running parallel to channel [1214]. This might suggest that additional features associated with this postulated industrial activity were also located on the eastern bank of the channel.
- 8.7 Ditch [106] is located at the southern extent of this occupation layer, and hence may be interpreted as defining the southern limit of occupation, with an external bank alongside the ditch providing an additional division between this and the adjacent land.
- 8.8 In the south-eastern quadrant of the site (Trench 12), pottery recovered from the lowest fill 1206 in the primary re-cut [1205] of channel [1214] demonstrates that there may have been occupation located in the field south-west of the site. This was evidenced by the dumping of waste into the channel commencing as early as the middle of the 2nd century AD.
- 8.9 It would appear that the channel remained as a pivotal component within the Roman landscape, the excavated evidence demonstrating continual maintenance, that resulted in a gradual shift eastwards with each successive re-cut. Dating evidence from fill 1213 of the easternmost (and latest) re-cut suggests its eventual silting up in the later 3rd to 4th century AD.
- 8.10 It would appear that in the later 3rd to 4th century phase of occupation the focus of activity had shifted southwards adjacent to the eastern side of the channel. A ditch [915] aligned parallel with the channel, a gully [902] and pit [904] may all be attributed to this phase. The substantial pottery assemblages, specifically that from fill 905 of pit [904] may demonstrate that domestic occupation was likely to have existed within close proximity to these features.
- 8.11 No features or artefacts dating to the Romano-British period were recovered from the central trenches, but Trench 3 in the north-east corner of the site revealed a hollow way following an alignment southwards and presumably extending from the previously excavated Roman settlement to the north (Casa R, et al 1997).
- 8.12 It is possible that this feature provided a north – south thoroughfare that may have also extended through Trench 6. This was indicated by the spread of dark fill within a shallow depression that appears to be confined to the hollow way and was not encountered in any of the adjacent trenches. It is possible that the inclusion of sprouted and charred grain within the environmental samples from the fill of the hollow way is associated with malting ovens, as an alternative interpretation to the function of the kilns identified on the adjacent site.
- 8.13 The postulated enclosure based upon the geophysical survey results was revealed to be the junction of two large co-axial ditches [106] (extending south east from Trench 1) and [1202] (extending through Trenches 9, 11 and 16; cuts [908], [1105] and [1603] respectively). Each of

these ditches had a similar profile and was filled by similar alluvial silts and clays containing no dating evidence. It may be possible to suggest that these features be considered as close contemporaries based upon their physical attributes and their clearly defined co-axial spatial relationship.

- 8.14 From the excavated results it is not possible to date these ditches; however in Trench 11 ditch [1105] clearly cuts the late 2nd/mid 3rd century fill 1103 of the adjacent hollow way [1102]. This evidence potentially places ditch [1105] in a post 3rd century phase of activity.
- 8.15 This hypothesis when applied to the relationship between the large channel and ditch [106] would suggest ditch [106] post dates the early/mid 2nd century primary channel re-cut [1206] and is likely to cut the 3rd/4th century channel as part of establishing new co-axial field systems across this landscape at some time after the final silting of the channel. This cannot however be definitively proven based upon the excavated data.
- 8.16 The pottery assemblage from this site suggests it was a relatively prosperous settlement with access to a variety of ceramic types, both imported from Gaul and traded from production centres across the midlands region. A significant proportion of fine tablewares suggest a high status site within the context of rural settlement, where jars normally form the main body of an assemblage. This assemblage also provides some insight into the typical consumption of this social group, colour coated beakers evidencing wine (and probably beer) drinking and mortaria suggesting a Romanised style of food preparation.
- 8.17 The recovery of cockles from deposit 102 and oysters from 605 may be considered as the procurement of localised marine resources as part of the settlement's economic base. Larger deposits of marine shells within 1203 and 912 may represent primary waste or a component part of some secondary processes. The inclusion of marine resources within these deposits is undoubtedly due to the location of this site and the ease of access to the sea that will have been afforded by the networks of channels that dissected the fenland at this time.
- 8.18 The post medieval features on the site demonstrated a shift in the alignment of drainage features at some time prior to the 19th century. It has been suggested (Taylor 1994) that the northern boundary ditch of the site dates to the 16th century, possibly representing a boundary/drainage feature that was contemporary with ditch [306]. The prevailing network of ditches of which [604] was a component, appear to reflect restructuring of the landscape as a consequence of Enclosure during the 19th century.

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1 The evidence provided by this evaluation may be seen as typical of 2nd century AD expansion of Romano-British settlement onto the fens that has traditionally been considered as deliberate settlement of virgin land instigated by the imperial government (Bennett 2001).
- 9.2 Tentative evidence has been provided to establish the economic basis of this site as a mixed farming settlement that may also have been involved in some form of industrial processing focussed largely on the banks of the palaeochannel running along the west side of the site. It may be assumed that the current site represents the southern extent of the previously excavated area to the north that revealed large spreads of burnt waste, carbonised grain within the ditch fill and a 'kiln' of an industrial nature.
- 9.3 The presence of a significant volume of burnt deposits in the 2nd to 3rd century features would commonly be associated with salt production when encountered within a fenland settlement of this period. However, the presence of carbonised grain on the site to the north, and sprouted and charred grain from a hollow way leading from this area, might suggest the germination of grain in

malting ovens for the production of beer as a working interpretation for the industrial processing carried out on both parts of the site.

- 9.4 Irrespective of the economic basis of the site, finds of *tegula* and possible hypocaust tile alongside a significant fineware pottery assemblage suggests a settlement possessing a level of wealth that allowed them in part to emulate contemporary urban material culture.
- 9.5 It would appear that settlement in some form remained on this site from the later 2nd until the early 4th century AD, which presumably hinged upon the continued maintenance of the drainage system, particularly that provided by the relict palaeochannel dissecting the site along its western side. It may be suggested that this channel provided not only drainage, but was used as an avenue of transportation, linking this settlement with other settlements within the localised region and facilitated links with broader trade networks.
- 9.6 For the later features it was apparent from the geophysical survey and mapping evidence that the centre of Trench 6 corresponded with the junction of 15th century ditch [306], aligned in a south westerly direction, and [604], a 19th century ditch (recorded on the 1890 Ordnance Survey map) that extended southwards from Trench 4. Excavation of this trench encountered only a single cut belonging to ditch [604], which suggests the earlier ditch was entirely truncated by the excavation of the later feature at this location.

10.0 Effectiveness of methodology

- 10.1 The methodology employed was appropriate to the scale and nature of the development. It has identified the presence of a concentration of archaeological features and deposits dating to the 2nd to 4th centuries AD that are located in the westernmost third of the site and the extreme north eastern corner. The central and eastern parts of the site were dominated by post-medieval and early modern boundary and drainage features and a possible trackway of Roman date. Across the development area, the archaeological features have been shown to be sealed by approximately 0.4m of overburden.

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