

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT:

WELBOURN VILLAGE HALL, BECK STREET, WELBOURN, LINCOLNSHIRE

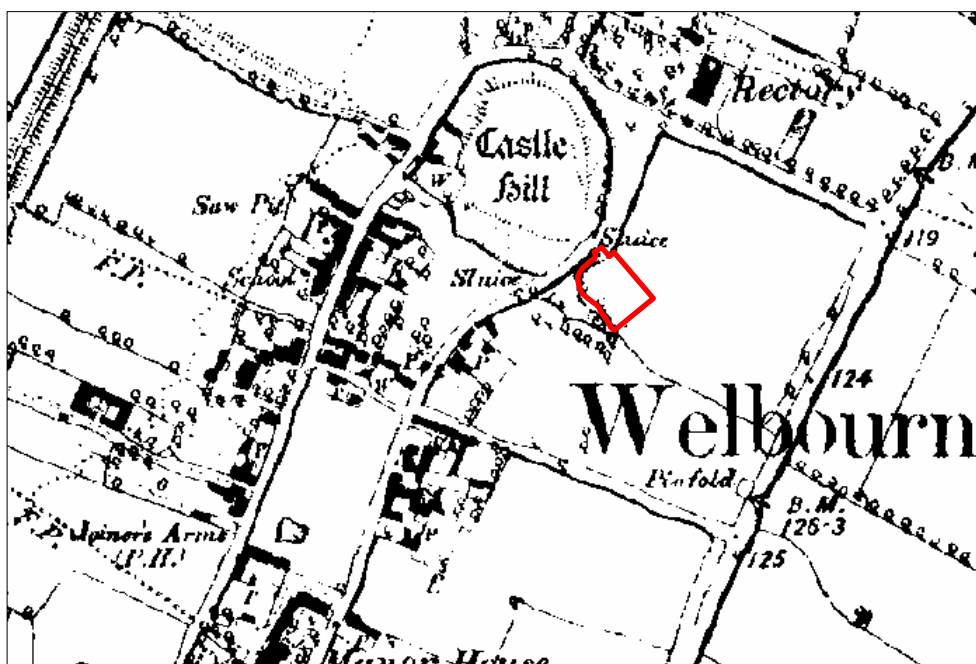
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on behalf of Welbourn Village Hall Development Committee

By
Allen Archaeology Limited
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Summary

- An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks for an extension to the Village Hall on Beck Street in Welbourn, Lincolnshire.
- There is evidence of activity from the early prehistoric through to the Roman, Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods in the vicinity of the site. Previous archaeological evaluations to the north-west of the site generated finds from the Iron Age and Romano-British periods. Further evaluation on Beck Street, to the south-west of the site, revealed evidence of Anglo-Saxon settlement immediately to the north-west are the earthwork remains of the medieval Castle of Welbourn.
- A small number of archaeological features and deposits were observed and recorded during the watching brief. Evidence of early medieval to medieval activity was recorded in the form of demolition spreads and a possible robbed out stone structure. Several undated features were also recorded, representing possible ponds, pits or ditches.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Allen Archaeology Limited (hereafter AAL) was commissioned by David Dakin Design Architects, on behalf of Welbourn Village Hall Development Committee to carry out an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks for an extension to Welbourn Village Hall on Beck Street in Welbourn, Lincolnshire.
- 1.2 The site monitoring, recording and reporting conforms to current national guidelines, as set out in *Archaeology and Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (1990) the Institute for Archaeologists '*Standards and guidance for archaeological watching briefs*' (IfA 1999, revised 2001 and 2008), the *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: A Manual of archaeological practice* (LCC 2009) and a specification prepared by AAL (Clay 2009).
- 1.3 The paper and physical archive will be submitted to The Collection, Lincoln within six months of the completion of the report, where it will be stored under the accession number 2009.104.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1 Welbourn is in the administrative district of North Kesteven, approximately 17km south of central Lincoln (Figure 1). The village is located at the base of a broadly north – south aligned limestone escarpment, known as the Lincolnshire Heath. The village hall is in the historic core of the village, on the south-east side of Beck Street, and immediately to the south-east of Welbourn Castle (Figure 2). The site centres on NGR SK 9687 5424, and lies at a height of approximately 35m above Ordnance Datum.
- 2.2 The site is located over a solid geology comprising Jurassic deposits of Whitby Mudstone, with no drift deposits recorded (British Geological Survey 1996).

3.0 Planning Background

- 3.1 Full planning permission has been granted (Planning Application N/72/0257/08) for the construction of a new extension to the existing village hall at Beck Street in Welbourn, Lincolnshire. Permission was granted subject to conditions, including the undertaking of an archaeological watching brief by a suitably competent archaeologist, comprising the monitoring of all groundworks for the scheme, and the recording of any archaeological remains exposed, effectively 'preserving the archaeology by record'.

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 Welbourn is located in an area of significant archaeological potential, where archaeological remains dating from the prehistoric period to the present day have been recorded. A polished flint axe head of Neolithic date has been found at an unspecified location in the parish (Lincolnshire Historic Environment Record Reference 62910 (hereafter LHER)). Cropmarks indicative of possible Neolithic pit alignments, a trackway, and Bronze Age round barrows are located less than 3km to the south-east of the site on Leadenham Heath, on the top of the limestone escarpment (LHER References 63341, 63344 and 63345). A further pit alignment was recorded at Leadenham Quarry 1.6km south-south-west of the site (WYAS 2001). A Neolithic flint adze and associated pottery were recovered from these pits during an excavation at the quarry (LHER Reference 61898).
- 4.2 There is some evidence for later prehistoric and Roman activity in the village. Less than a kilometre to the east of the site is the line of the prehistoric Jurassic Way, following the crest of

the limestone escarpment. Ermine Street, the Roman successor to this route is some distance further to the east (Whitwell 1992). An archaeological evaluation within a field to the west of the castle revealed a buried soil horizon which contained a few sherds of pottery which probably date to the early to middle Iron Age. A pit which contained Roman pottery dated to the 3rd century AD was also excavated on this site. The pit was associated with some undated linear features, some of which may have been structural in form (Allen 2001).

- 4.3 Several scatters of Roman pottery, building materials and coins have been found in the parish. For example, some residual Roman pottery was recovered in a medieval context from a watching brief at 28 High Street in the village (Palmer-Brown 1994). Roman corn driers dating to the 3rd and 4th centuries AD were also excavated at Leadenham Quarry (WYAS 2001). These were interpreted as being related to an as yet undiscovered possible villa site or small farmstead in the vicinity.
- 4.4 Evidence for Anglo-Saxon settlement activity was lacking until recent investigations off Beck Street, less than 50m to the south-west of the current site. Trial trenching exposed a large ditch producing pottery of 9th and 10th century date, with a possible associated bank suggesting a defensive function. As well as producing Late Saxon dating evidence, the features were on a noticeably different alignment to the existing layout of the village, which was heavily influenced by the development of the medieval castle (Chavasse and Allen 2007).
- 4.5 Welbourn appears as *Wellbrune* in the Domesday Book of 1086 (Morgan and Thorn 1986). At this time, the principal landowner was Robert Malet, and his estate included a church and a mill. The current site lays in the core of the village, immediately to the south-east of Welbourn Castle, a medieval ringwork that was in existence at least by 1158 when stone defences were ordered (Pevsner and Harris 2002). The castle may however date to immediately after the Norman Conquest. Beck Street, which runs along the north-west edge of the site, is likely to have been a medieval thoroughfare that skirted around the east side of the defensive circuit of the castle.
- 4.6 Welbourn is located at the base (west) of a broadly north – south aligned limestone escarpment. The location of spring lines along this escarpment has influenced the positioning of settlement along its length (Bewley 1998). The Old English name *Welleburn* reflects this and taken literally means ‘the stream running from a spring’ from the Old English words *wella* and *burna*. A stream rises from a spring north of the village and flows to the River Brant (Cameron 1998). Welbourn is one of a number of villages located on the line of this ridge.
- 4.7 To the west of the site lies the village pond, also known as The Beck. It is spring fed and is believed to be at least 700 years old; possibly having functioned as a water source for the castle (Welbourn Parish Council website).
- 4.8 The remains of medieval fields, some of which contain ridge and furrow earthworks indicative of medieval agriculture, radiate away from the core of the village. These relic fields are on a broadly north-north-west to south-south-east alignment that respects the linear layout of the village. The present village has two main parallel streets that form a cul-de-sac (Pevsner and Harris 2002). The site is located on Beck Street, the easternmost of these streets, with High Street to the west.

5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 The groundworks were monitored by the author over a period of six days in August and September 2009. The monitoring comprised the initial stripping of the footprint of the new building followed by the excavation of foundation trenches for the ring beam. Excavations for a new electricity cable trench were also monitored, as well as three geotechnical boreholes within the area of the new extension, which added information about the underlying geological strata.
- 5.2 The area of the proposed extension was stripped of turf, overgrowing vegetation and cement slabs. In the south-east part of the site the footings reached a maximum depth of 0.87m below ground surface, becoming shallower towards the north-west where the maximum depth reached was 0.60m. The cable trench (approximately 76m long) was excavated with a 300mm wide, toothless bucket, reaching a maximum depth of 1.0m.
- 5.3 All exposed plan and section surfaces were examined for any archaeological features and deposits to determine the stratigraphic sequence. Archaeological deposits were recorded on pro-forma AAL context record sheets, accompanied by plan and section drawings at appropriate scales (1:50 and 1:20). A full colour photographic record was maintained, and selected prints have been included as an appendix to this report (see Appendix 1).
- 5.4 Each deposit, layer or cut was allocated a unique identifier (context number), and accorded a written description, a summary of these are included in Appendix 3. Three digit numbers within square brackets reflect cut features (e.g. modern pit [111]).

6.0 Results (Figures 3 – 5)

6.1 Extension (Figures 3 and 4)

- 6.1.1 The area of the new development is located along the west and south sides of the existing village hall. The stripped area revealed a modern topsoil 100 and paving slabs resting on a thin bedding of orange sand, covering a further layer of paving slabs, which was also removed.
- 6.1.2 The three geotechnical boreholes were excavated to a depth of approximately 3.0m, exposing a largely similar sequence throughout. The uppermost layer consisted of a disturbed, firm, light brown silty clay with occasional limestone fragments, sealing a firm mid brown clay overlaying a plastic dark bluish grey clay deposit, sealing the solid geology of Whitby Mudstone.
- 6.1.3 In the southern corner of the extension the topsoil sealed a modern pit [111] filled with a demolition deposit of modern brick, stone and concrete rubble 104. It was cut through a layer of dark brown silty clay, 110 reflecting a probable former ground surface predating the construction of the village hall.
- 6.1.4 110 sealed a probable demolition layer 106, comprising a firm mid brown silty clay with frequent inclusions of sub-angular limestone fragments, occasional charcoal flecks and two sherds of pottery; one of 9th – 10th century date and one of early/mid 13th century date. 106 sealed the natural drift geology 101, a firm mid yellowish/grey brown clay that was sealed directly by the topsoil 100 at the north-west end of the site.
- 6.1.5 Two undated features were recorded in the north-western part of the extension; [102] and [108], both of which were sealed by the topsoil 100 and cut through natural layer 101. One shallow sloping side of a pit or ditch [102] was exposed in the north-western corner of the site. It contained 103, a mix of firm mottled dark to mid brown clay with frequent inclusions of poorly sorted limestone rubble. This could be a rubble filled pit or it may represent a disturbed stone structure, such as a robbed out wall.

- 6.1.6 South-east of [102] was [108], a shallow north-north-west to south-south-east aligned feature c.0.46m deep. It contained a single natural silting deposit 109, firm, mid grey clay with occasional small fragments of mudstone and a few flecks of re-deposited brown clay, very similar to the fills of features [208] and [209] in the cable trench to the north-east. It was observed in two of the internal foundation trenches but was not recorded to the north and south.

6.2 Cable Trench (Figures 3 and 5)

- 6.2.1 In the south-east part of the cable trench the uppermost deposit was a 0.40m thick, turf covered, fairly firm and compact topsoil, 200 with occasional limestone fragments and pebbles, as well as a single sherd of 10th – 12th century Lincolnshire Fine-shelled ware. Towards the south-east end of the site the topsoil sealed a probable demolition layer 202, a 0.55m thick, fairly firm, silty clay with moderate, sub-angular limestone rubble, which petered out towards the north-east. Three sherds of locally produced 10th – 12th century pottery were recovered from this layer, one of which was from the same vessel as the sherd from topsoil 200.
- 6.2.2 Towards the easternmost corner of the site the cable trench revealed a buried soil 203 sealed by the topsoil; it consisted of a 0.35m thick mid brown firm clay with occasional limestone fragments and rare charcoal flecks. Three sherds of pottery were recovered from this soil, one dating to the 9th – 10th century and two sherds of 12th – 13th century date. 203 sealed a natural drift geology of firm, light yellowish brown, mottled clay and silty clay with moderate fragments of limestone, 201.
- 6.2.3 The remainder of the cable trench ran across the car park, where the modern tarmac surface sealed 206, a 0.5m thick levelling layer of brown silty clay with abundant modern building material.
- 6.2.4 Buried soil 203 was cut by two large undated features; [208] and [209]. [208] measured approximately 10.4m wide with shallow sloping sides and contained 207, an undated fill of firm dark brownish grey silty clay with frequent fine fragmented mudstone. Its size and profile suggests that it is likely to be a large shallow pit or former pond rather than a linear feature. Feature [209] was approximately 6.40m wide with shallow sides and contained a firm grey silty clay with occasional small, sub-angular limestone fragments, 210, and may also be a pit or pond.
- 6.2.5 To the south-east of this feature and sealed by 203, was [204], an undated feature with gradual sloping sides filled with 205, a firm mottled light grey brown clay.

7.0 Discussion and Conclusion

- 7.1 A small number of features and deposits of local archaeological significance were recorded during the watching brief. Apart from the natural geology; the earliest activity on site is represented by two medieval demolition layers, 106 and 202. 106 contained two sherds of pottery (9th – 10th and 13th century date respectively) and 202 produced two 10th – 12th century pottery sherds. These layers may reflect the demolition of stone structures on or very near to the site early in the medieval period, perhaps as a result of the re-planning of the village after the Norman Conquest and the construction of the castle.
- 7.2 A period of abandonment appears to have followed, as the demolition layers were sealed by soil horizons 110 and 203. Layer 203 produced three small sherds of pottery ranging from mid 9th century to early 13th century date. The pottery is unlikely to date the soil build-up as it correlates

with the dating of the demolition layers 106 and 202 below. This soil may reflect the reversion of the site to pastoral or arable use throughout the medieval period.

- 7.3 All exposed features were devoid of finds, and due to the narrowness of the trenches it was difficult to make any proper interpretation of the features recorded. [102] contained similar rough cut and occasionally burnt limestone rubble as was observed in layers 106 and 202, although this is not sufficient evidence to date this feature. It may however potentially represent a robbed out stone structure of early medieval date.
- 7.4 Feature [204] in the cable trench is stratigraphically an earlier feature than [208] and [209], since it is sealed by buried soil 203, and the later features are cut through this layer. Features [108], [208] and [209] all appear to contain natural silting deposits of similar composition suggesting that they may be broadly contemporary with each other, but still of an unknown date.
- 7.5 The area also revealed modern activity in form of a rubble filled pit [111] and demolition deposit 206 which are related to the construction of the existing village hall. These were sealed by topsoil and modern tarmac.

8.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

- 8.1 The watching brief methodology was appropriate to the scale and nature of the phase of works. It demonstrated that the construction of the new extension has had a limited impact on the archaeological resource, which is considered to be of moderate local significance.

9.0 Acknowledgements

- 9.1 Allen Archaeology Limited would like to thank David Dakin Design Architects for this commission and Gelder Construction for their co-operation during the groundworks.

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11.0 Site Archive

- 11.1 The documentary and physical archive is currently in the possession of Allen Archaeology Limited. It will be submitted to the Collection museum in Lincoln within twelve months of the completion of the project, where it will be stored under LCCM Accession Number 2009.104.

Appendix 1: Colour Plates



Plate 1: General site location shot taken from playing field south-east of the site. Looking north-north-west



Plate 2: North-west corner of extension, showing east-north-east facing section of [102], looking west-south-west. Edge of feature highlighted in yellow.



Plate 3: South-west facing section of extension showing layer 106, looking north



Plate 4: South-east facing section of feature [108], looking north-west



Plate 5: North-west facing section in cable trench showing layer 202, looking south-east

Appendix 2: Post-Roman Pottery Archive

By Jane Young

context	cname	full name	sub fabric	form type	sherds	vessels	weight	part	description	date
106	LKT	Lincoln kiln-type shelly ware		small jar	1	1	5	BS	soot	mid/late 9th to 10th
106	POTT	Potterhanworth-type	very sandy	jar	1	1	3	BS		early to mid 13th ?
200	LFS	Lincolnshire Fine-shelled ware		jar	1	1	11	BS	same vessel in 202;soot	late 10th to 12th
202	LFS	Lincolnshire Fine-shelled ware		?	1	1	1	BS	soot	late 10th to 12th
202	LFS	Lincolnshire Fine-shelled ware		jar	2	1	21	BS	same vessel in 200;soot	late 10th to 12th
203	LKT	Lincoln kiln-type shelly ware		small jar	1	1	5	base	burnt	mid/late 9th to 10th
203	NSP	Nottingham Splashed	sandy	small jug	1	1	1	BS		mid/late 12th to early13th
203	NSP	Nottingham Splashed	sandy	jug	1	1	8	rim	slightly inturned square rim;abraded	mid/late 12th

Appendix 3: Context Summary List

Context No.	Type	Description	Interpretation
100	Layer	Dark brown fairly firm silty clay with frequent inclusions of modern glass fragments and building rubble and moderate sub-rounded limestone pebbles. Seals 104.	Modern turf covered topsoil
101	Layer	Firm and plastic, mid yellowish grey and brown clay with rare limestone pebbles and tree roots.	Natural drift geology
102	Cut	Feature with gradual sloping sides, base not bottomed. Contains 103.	Pit or ditch cut containing frequent stone rubble
103	Fill	Firm mottled dark to mid brown clay with frequent large to mid sized rough cut limestone blocks, unsorted and on occasion burnt.	Fill of [102]
104	Fill	Mid brown silty clay with frequent limestone rubble, modern brick fragments and occasional glass. Sealed by 100.	Demolition dump in pit [111]
105	Void		
106	Layer	Firm mid brown silty clay with frequent inclusions of small sub-angular burnt limestone fragments occasional charcoal and rare medieval pottery fragments. Sealed by 110, seals 101.	Medieval demolition spread
107	Void		
108	Cut	Shallow NNW-SSE aligned linear or rectangular feature with gradual sloping sides and flat base. Contains 109.	Cut of linear or rectangular feature
109	Fill	Firm mid grey clay with occasional small fragments of mudstone and few flecks of re-deposited mid brown clay.	Natural silting of [108]
110	Layer	Dark brown fairly firm silty clay. Sealed by 100, seals 101.	Buried soil/former ground surface
111	Cut	Feature with gradual sloping sides and slightly concave base. Contains 104.	Modern pit
200	Layer	Fairly firm and compact dark brown silty clay with occasional limestone fragments and pebbles. Seals 202 and 203.	Turf covered modern topsoil
201	Layer	Firm, mid brownish yellow, mottled clay and silty clay with moderate fragmented limestone. Sealed by 203.	Natural drift geology
202	Layer	Fairly firm, dark brown silty clay with moderate sub-angular limestone fragments. Sealed by 200, seals 201.	Possible demolition layer
203	Layer	Firm, mid brown clay with occasional limestone fragments and rare charcoal flecks. Sealed by 200, seals 201.	Buried topsoil
204	Cut	Shallow sided feature exposed in section. Contains 205.	Possible truncated ditch or pit
205	Fill	Firm, light grey brown clay with brownish yellow specks with occasional manganese specks.	Natural silting of ditch or pit [204]
206	Layer	Dark to mid brown silty clay with abundant brick-, tile-, coal, lime- and chalkstone fragments and gravel. Sealed by modern pavement, seals 203.	Modern demolition layer/bedding layer for pavement
207	Fill	Firm, dark brownish grey silty clay with fragmented mudstone and occasional sub-angular limestone pebbles.	Natural silting of possible pond or ditch [208]
208	Cut	Wide, feature with gradual break of slop at the top. Not fully excavated. Contains 207.	Cut of possible pond or ditch
209	Cut	Wide, feature with gradual sloping north side and sharp south side. Contains 210.	Cut of possible large pit, pond or linear
210	Fill	Firm, mid grey silty clay with occasional small, sub-angular limestone fragments.	Natural silting of [209]

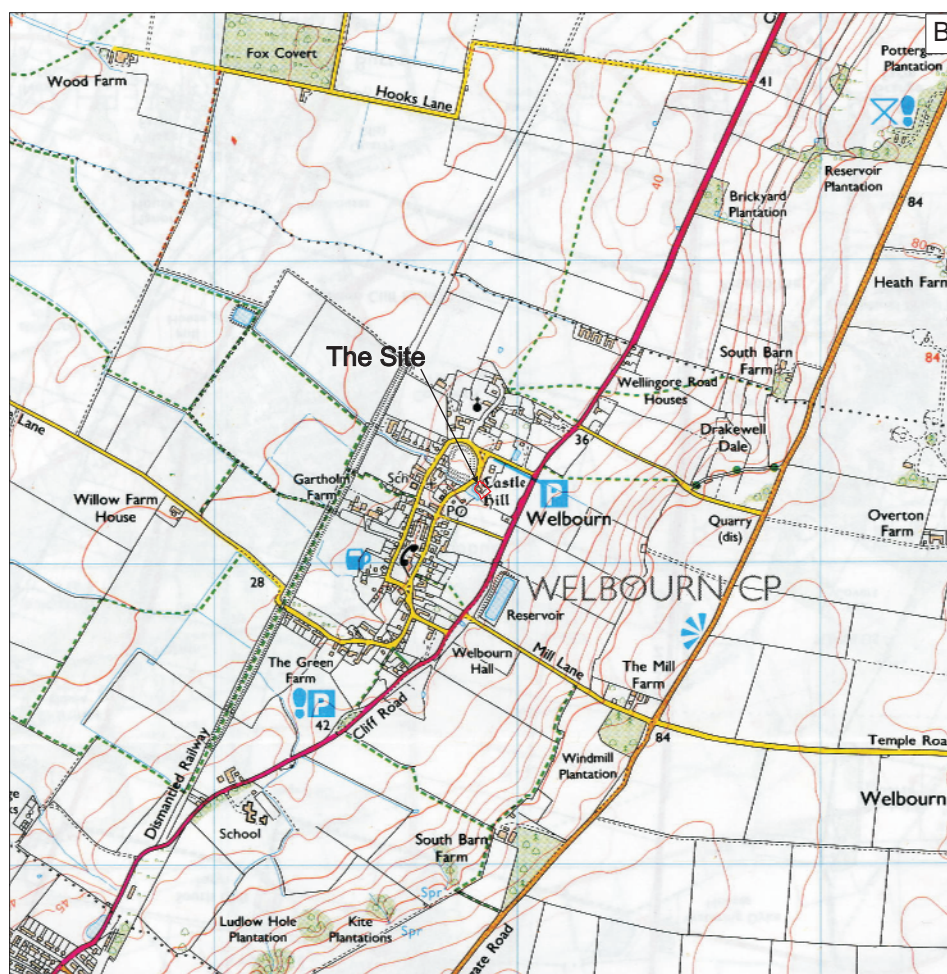
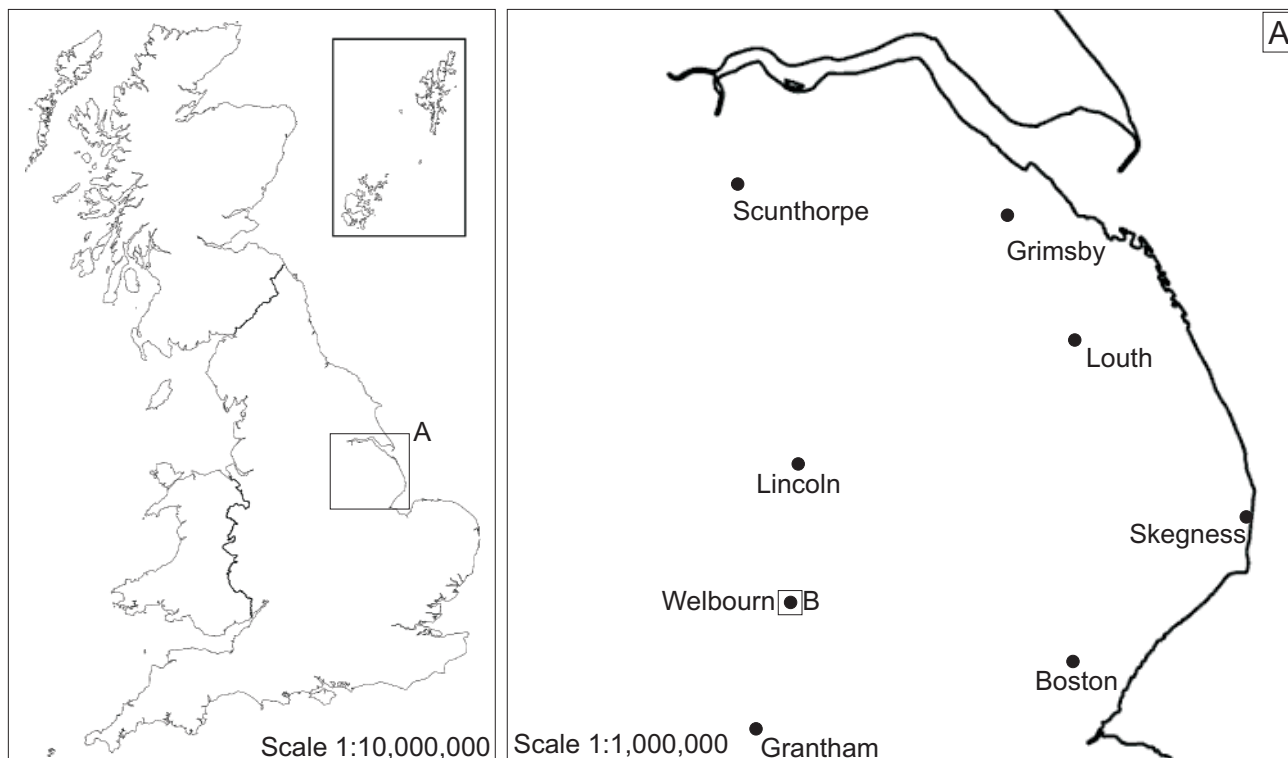


Figure 1: Site location at scale 1:25,000, with site outlined in red
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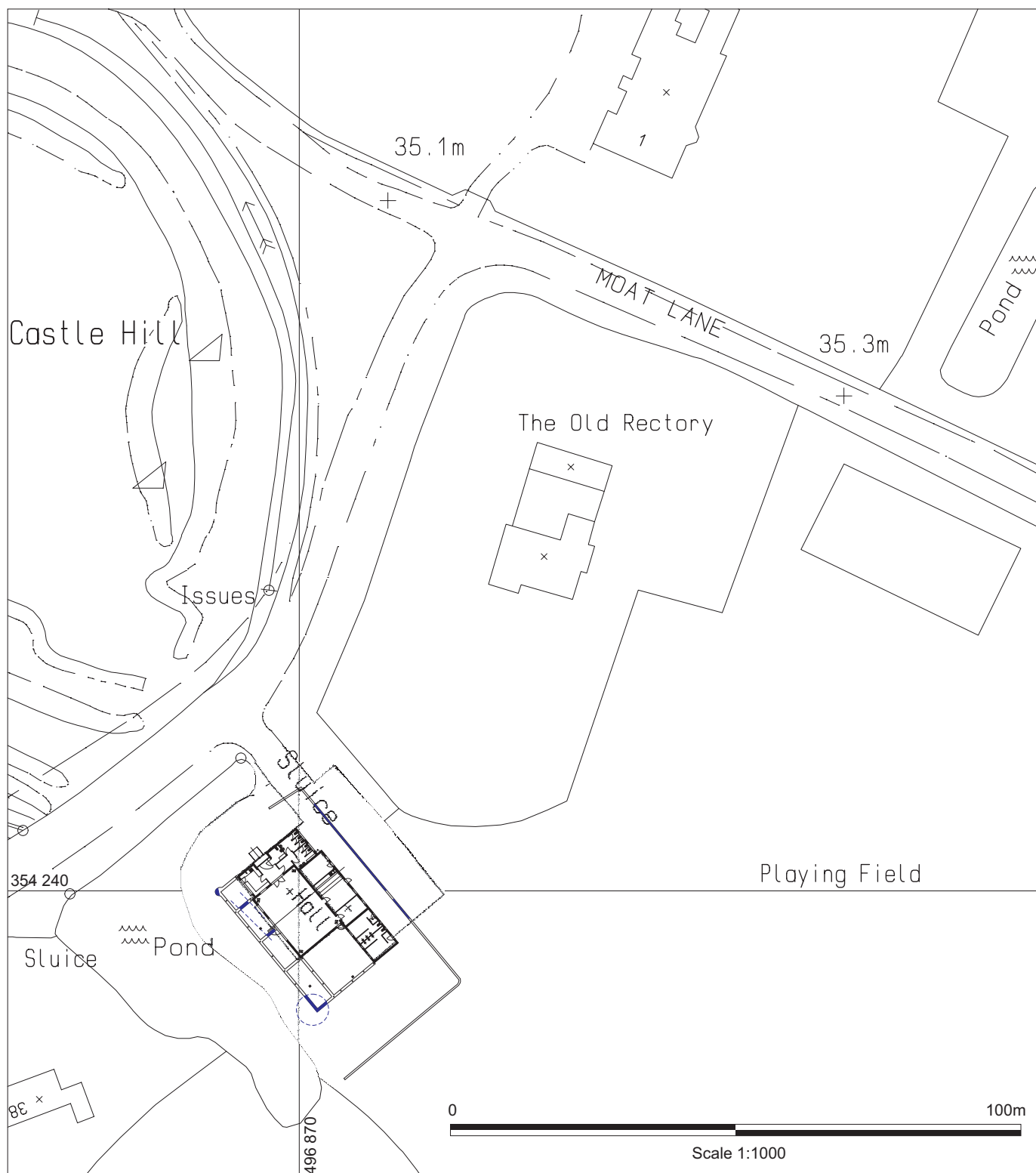
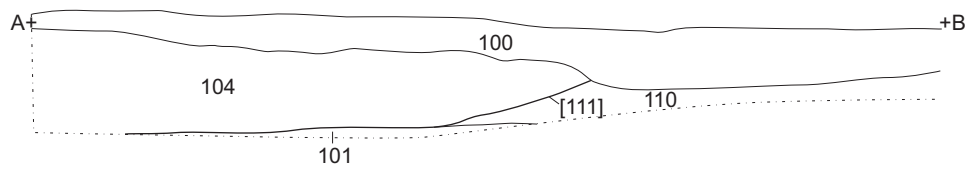
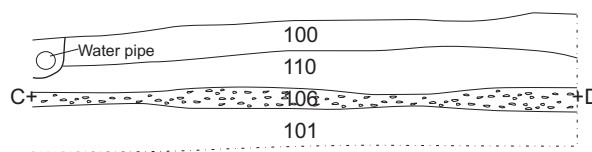


Figure 2: Site location plan at scale 1:1000 with site outlined in red and archaeological features in blue

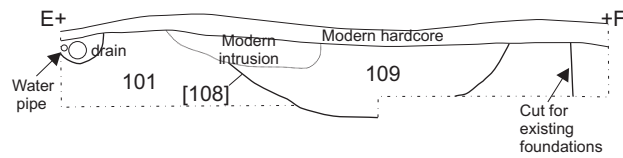
North-east facing section



South-west facing section



East-south-east facing section



North-east facing section

South-west facing section

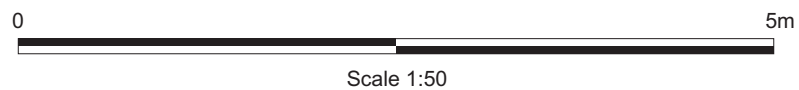
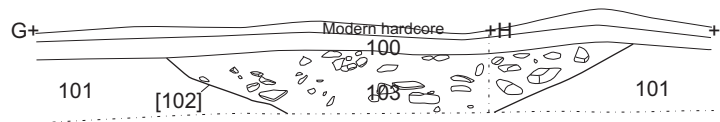


Figure 4: Extension sections at scale 1:50. Located on Figure 3

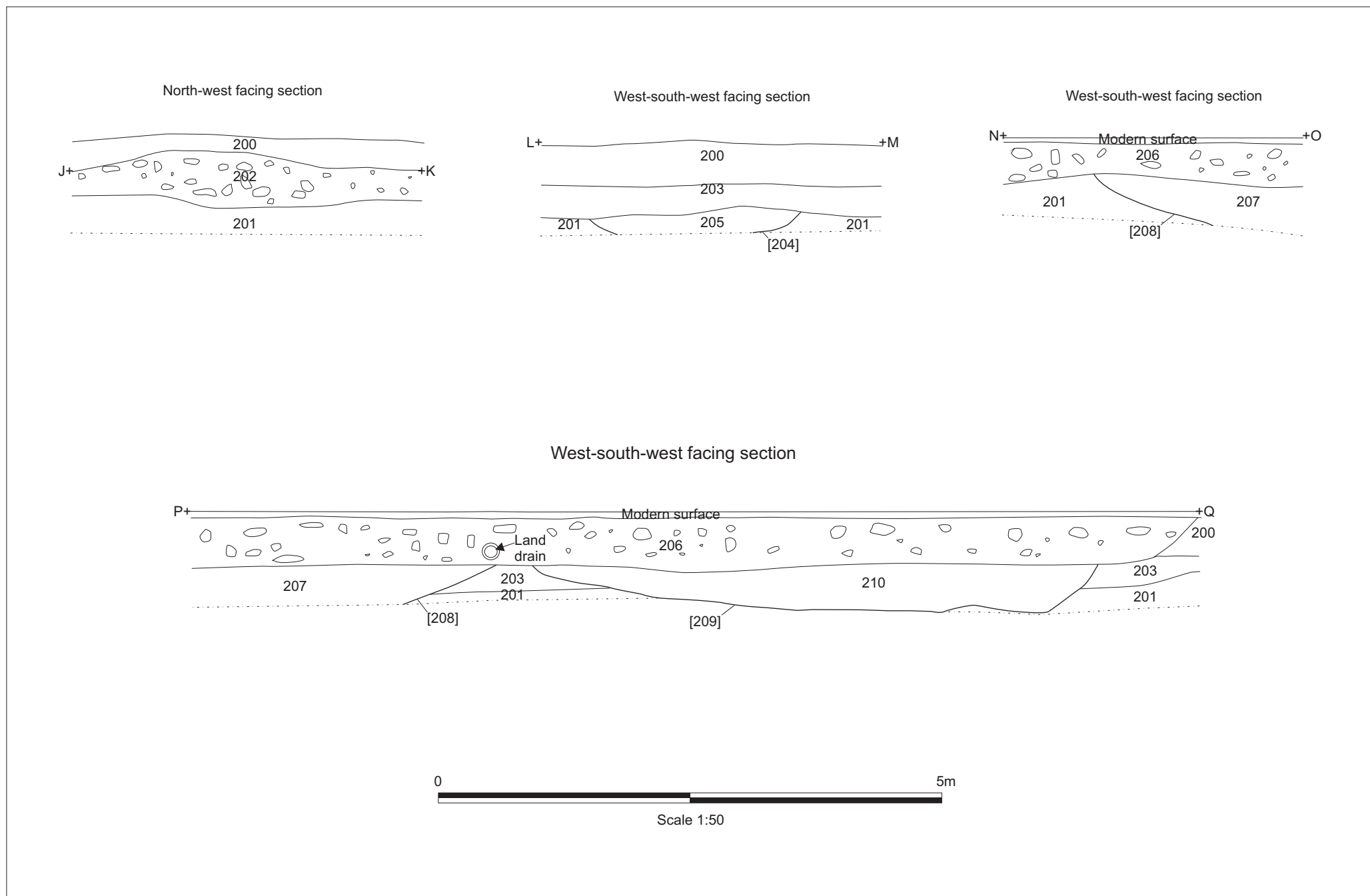


Figure 5: Cable trench sections at scale 1:50. Located on Figure 3