## *Summary*

- *An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the groundworks for a housing development on land at Chapel Heath, Navenby, Lincolnshire.*
- *The site lies on the edge of the Roman settlement discovered along the course of Ermine Street (the modern High Dyke).*
- *The watching brief formed part of a sequence of archaeological projects carried out during the course of this development: Roman buildings and Romano-British burials have been found during previous phases.*
- *Three linear features and two pits were encountered during the watching brief, but none could be dated.*


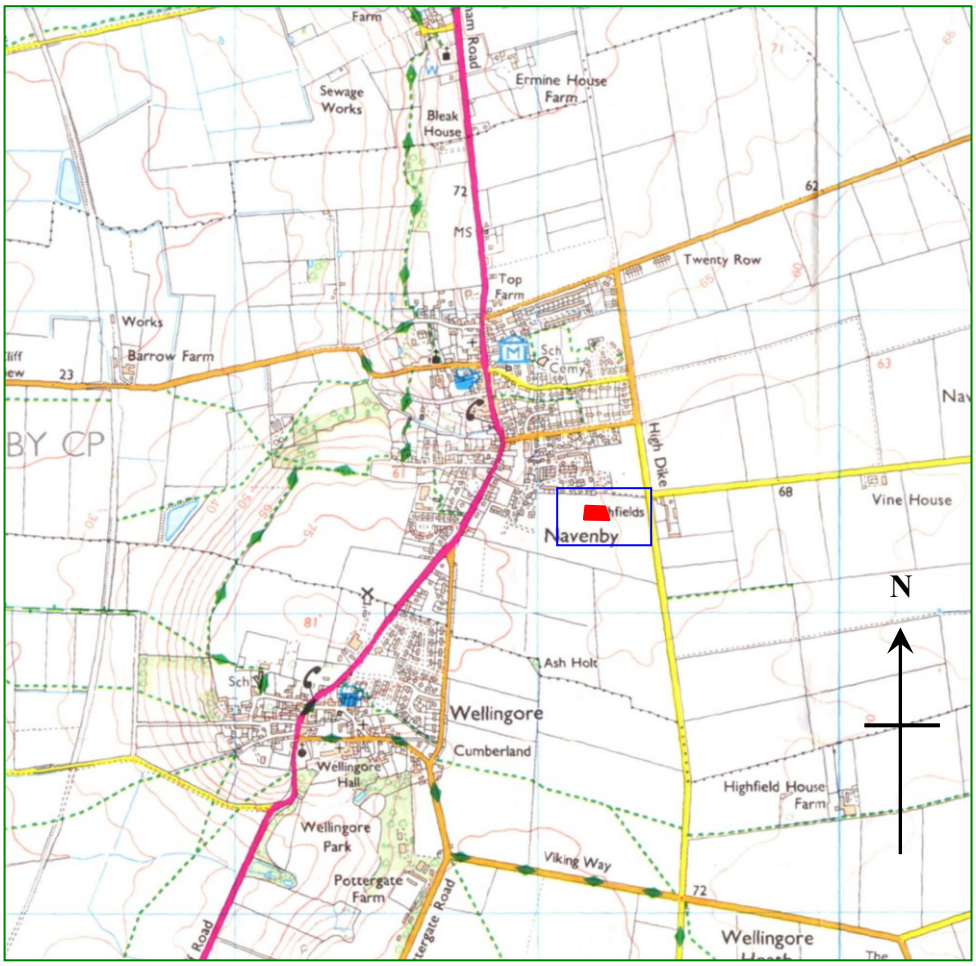


**Figure 1:** Site location map: the development site is marked in red, and the area shown in Figure 2 outlined in blue. Scale 1:25 000.
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## 1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) was commissioned by Persimmon Homes (East Midlands) Ltd. to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks for a residential development on land at Chapel Heath, Navenby, Lincolnshire.

These works were undertaken to fulfil the objectives of a formal project brief issued by the Heritage Officer for North Kesteven District Council, and a project specification prepared by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln). This approach is consistent with the recommendations of *Archaeology & Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (Department of the Environment, 1990) and *Standards and guidance for archaeological watching briefs* (IFA, 1999).

Copies of this report have been deposited with the commissioning body, the Heritage Officer and the County Sites and Monuments Record for Lincolnshire. A report will also be deposited at Lincoln City & County Museum, along with an ordered project archive for long-term storage and curation.

## 2.0 Site location and description (figs. 1 & 2)

The village of Navenby lies within the administrative district of North Kesteven, approximately 10km south of Lincoln, on the west side of the Roman road of Ermine Street; the modern A15 runs some 3km further to the east. It is one of a line of villages running along the western edge of the Lincoln limestone ridge: these villages are all set at a distance from the course of Ermine Street, which in most cases forms their eastern parish boundary, although Navenby parish is an exception, extending well to the east of Ermine Street.

To the west of the Oolitic limestone ridge (west of the post-Roman settlement), the land falls steeply to approximately 20m OD, where it approaches the floodplain of the River Witham. The river itself is approximately 7.5km west of the village, with the closest major natural water source being the River Brant, a tributary of the Witham, approximately 4.5km west of Navenby. There are less significant sources of water that follow the spring line along the edge of the limestone scarp.

The current development area lies to the west of the High Dyke, a minor road which overlies the course of Roman Ermine Street in this area. It is an extension to the recent housing development of Chapel Heath, south of Chapel Lane on the south side of the village: the house plots featured in this report lie near the centre of the new estate, on either side of the east end of Road 7. Local ground level is between 69.0m and 70.0m above sea level.

There is no drift geology in the vicinity of the development area: the solid geology is Lower Crossi Bed Limestone (British Geological Survey, 1973).

Central National Grid Reference: SK 9920 5725.

## 3.0 Planning background

Planning permission was granted for the construction of twenty-nine new dwellings, fourteen of which had planning conditions attached (planning refs. N/40/0816/03, N/40/1101/03 and N/40/1340/03). Planning permission for these fourteen dwellings was granted subject to the undertaking of an archaeological recording brief on all groundworks, including services.

## 4.0 Archaeological and historical background

Archaeological work in and around Navenby has encountered evidence of settlement in this area as far back as the Neolithic period and the Bronze Age. Pits containing burnt stones, charred seeds and post-Deverel-Rimbury pottery, indicating a Late Bronze Age settlement, have been found on two sites in the area, while a cemetery site whose earliest burials were Bronze Age cremations was exposed during a watching brief immediately south of Chapel Lane. A feature of Neolithic to Early Bronze Age date was encountered, along with extensive Romano-British features, in a sewer trench to the north of the current development site (Gardner, 2005).

Roman Navenby was a roadside settlement, stretching along either side of Ermine Street in a 'ribbon development'. Trial excavations to the south of Chapel Lane exposed Romano-British stone buildings on the west side of Ermine Street, with an enclosure of native British type containing circular buildings: the settlement dated from the 3rd to the late 4th or early 5th century AD, with earlier phases that could not be investigated, as they lay below the Romano-British remains. The watching brief which identified the cemetery site took place on the north side of this area: as well as the Bronze Age cremations, Romano-British cremation burials and pagan Anglo-Saxon inhumations were discovered. The watching brief undertaken on the sewer trench to the north of the site, in addition to a single prehistoric feature, encountered Romano-British inhumation burials and numerous features associated with the settlement of this period. The most significant discovery was made in 2001, when ten evaluation trenches were opened along the east side of the current development site, adjacent to Ermine Street: further Romano-British stone buildings were uncovered, with a minor road joining Ermine Street from the west. At the junction of the two roads was a polygonal building, which has been interpreted as a possible shrine. A number of Romano-British inhumations were exposed on the west side of the settlement (*ibid.*).

The continuation of settlement in the area after the end of Roman colonial rule is indicated by the presence of pagan Anglo-Saxon burials, and can be traced into the Scandinavian period by the place-name 'Navenby', derived from the Old Danish personal name *Nafni* and the Old Danish suffix *-by*, 'Nafni's farmstead' (Cameron, 1998, p. 90). Medieval Navenby, although a manor in its own right, from which other holdings (*sokeland*) were administered, was no more than a hamlet: the Domesday Survey of 1086 records only two households in Navenby itself, with a small amount of arable land and meadow (Williams and Martin, 1992, p. 944).

The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1890 (fig. 3) shows the modern settlement of Navenby developing at a distance from the High Dyke: the site remained within farmland during the industrial period.

A series of archaeological watching briefs has previously been carried out on earlier phases of development at Chapel Heath. Since the presence of the roadside settlement had already been demonstrated, the contractors agreed not to develop the area closest to the High Dyke, with the exception of a single access road (Road 6). The topsoil strip for this road exposed the foundations of two limestone walls, with stubs and fragments of six further walls; coins and pottery from the walls and associated features ranged in date from the 1st century AD to the late 4th century (Gardner, 2005). A watching brief on a group of seven house plots to the north of the site, currently ongoing, exposed three inhumation burials in the foundations of the most easterly house (HP E7a): one of these, apparently an early Christian burial, was associated with iron nails indicating the presence of a coffin, while another was enclosed within a cist of limestone slabs (Gardner, forthcoming).

## 5.0 Methodology

The groundworks began on 15th September 2005 with the topsoil strip for a plant access road between Roads 6 and 7. A 4m deep soakaway was then excavated within the road strip, and a series of sewer trenches and drains were cut. The watching brief on the house plot footings began on 21st November 2005; groundworks on mains drainage and services continued during the excavation of the house plots. The service trenches associated with individual house plots were not routinely watched, but those pertaining to house plots E24, E25, E29 and E30 were observed as the groundworks for the houses themselves had been missed. The watching brief was completed on 2nd March 2006, and was carried out by M. Daley, L. M. Hamilton, W. Munford, S. A. Savage and the author.

Most of the observed excavations could safely be entered, although some were too narrow or too deep for access. Features exposed in the sides of trenches were cleaned by hand and recorded in section at scales of 1:20 and 1:50; where possible, material was excavated from the sections to retrieve potential dating evidence. Where no features were seen within a house plot or a section of trench, a 1m wide sample section was drawn. All features were recorded on standard watching brief record sheets, and plan and section drawings were located on a general site plan. A colour photographic record was also maintained: a selection of colour plates is reproduced in Appendix 1.

## 6.0 Results (figs. 4-8)

The natural (solid) geology of the site was weathered limestone brash 021, overlying bedded limestone, which was exposed in some of the deepest excavations. Although no drift geology is recorded in the area, the limestone bedrock was overlain by natural deposits of clay, sand, silt and gravel in many places, often to such a depth that the groundworks did not reach the limestone. These layers were interpreted as hillwash or alluvial deposits (002 and 003) and as the natural product of decayed limestone (020), filling large solution holes or frost wedges within bedrock 021.

No features were seen within any of the house plots, or in the service trenches directly associated with the house plots. Most of the width of the Road 7 access strip had already

been disturbed when a sewer was laid there in 2003 (recorded as watching brief CLN 03): no new features were exposed during this part of the project.

A sewer extension trench at the hammerhead of road 7 contained three features. Ditch [004] ran roughly north-south, also passing through the northern sewer extension pit. It was up to 0.90m deep, and contained four fills: a waterborne deposit, clayey silt 009, at the base, overlain by fills 007 and 008, which both appeared to have slumped into the ditch from the west side, and sealed by fill 006, which appeared to be redeposited natural. None of these fills produced any datable material, nor did they contain any other evidence of human activity, such as charcoal flecks.

Ditch [005] was also north-south aligned. In the north-west facing section, it could be seen to be cut by ditch [004], but this section could not be drawn, as the contractors needed to position shoring within the trench. [005] was 0.70m deep, and contained two fills: a primary fill of gravelly, silty clay, 011, sealed by a mixture of clay, silt and sand. Both fills appeared to be natural deposits, and, although [004] could be seen to post-date [005], no finds were retrieved from either feature, and so no absolute dating was possible.

The south-west corner of the sewer extension trench contained pit [012], which was 1.0m wide, with steep sides and a concave base. It contained two fills, 013 and 014, both of which comprised gravel in a clay matrix and appeared to have been deposited by natural silting processes. No datable material was recovered.

The remains of another feature were observed at the south end of the north sewer extension pit. Feature [016] did not extend into the south-west sewer trench, and so was interpreted as a large pit: when seen, it had already been severely truncated by the construction of manhole A. The remaining part was 1.6m deep, filled by fine, greyish-black silt 015, which appeared to have an organic component, as though it had incorporated decayed vegetation. No dating evidence was retrieved. This feature cut the southern edge of ditch [004].

A smaller linear feature was observed where pipe-trench 3 cut across the Road 7 strip. Ditch [018] was 0.50m wide and 0.35m deep, with a regular, bowl-shaped profile. Its fill, sandy silt 017, produced no dating evidence.

## 7.0 Discussion and conclusion

All archaeological features encountered during this project lay within the Road 7 strip, and were observed in the sections of trenches. The absence of artefactual material from these features, and the appearance of their fills, indicates that they were closed up by natural silting processes, rather than deliberately back-filled, and that they lay outside the settlement with which they were associated.

The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (fig. 3) shows no field boundaries in the area of the site, ruling out the possibility of a post-enclosure date for these features. The distance between the site and the old core of the present village of Navenby makes it unlikely that these features are the boundaries of medieval tofts, as small, privately enclosed fields are normally found on the fringes of medieval villages. The most likely

interpretation is that linear features [004], [005] and [018] are boundary ditches from fields lying outside the Romano-British settlement, allowed to silt up naturally following the abandonment of the Roman road and the buildings pertaining to it, and that as such they correspond to undated linear features seen in previous watching briefs on the western side of Road 7 and the sewer runs and road strips branching off it (Gardner, 2005). However, in the absence of dating evidence, this can only be a tentatively advanced theory.

## 8.0 Effectiveness of methodology

The methodology recommended was sufficient for the requirements of the archaeological record, while causing the minimum possible delay to the contractors. Although the foundation trenches of four house plots were not observed, due to a communication lapse between the contractors and PCA, this was compensated for by watching the excavation of drainage trenches and soakaways adjacent to the houses in question: any linear features in the area would have been identified.

## 9.0 Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) would like to thank Persimmon Homes for this commission.

## 10.0 References

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## 11.0 Site archive

The documentary archive for the site is currently in the possession of Pre-Construct Archaeology, and will be deposited with Lincoln City & County Museum within six months from the completion of the project.