
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK BASED ASSESSMENT
OF LAND AT
LOW LANE,
HOLBEACH,
LINCOLNSHIRE**

Work Undertaken For
Studio 11 Architecture

January 2015

Report Compiled by
Paul Cope-Faulkner BA (Hons)

National Grid Reference: TF 3675 2558

APS Report No: **7/15**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
PROJECT
SERVICES**



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1. SUMMARY

A desk-based assessment was undertaken to determine the archaeological implications of proposed development at Low Lane, Holbeach, Lincolnshire.

There are no prehistoric remains within the assessment area. Any such remains are likely to be buried beneath later alluvial deposits and lie at considerable depth from the ground surface.

Romano-British (AD 43-410) pottery has been found to the southeast of the site, although remains of this period are generally sealed by post-Roman alluvium.

There are no Saxon (AD 410-1066) remains within the assessment area. Low Lane may fossilise a former sea-bank which may have originated during the latter part of this period.

During the medieval period (AD 1066-1540), the site probably lay within the open fields of Holbeach and maintained for agricultural purposes. Cartographic sources indicate that the site was still maintained as arable and/or pasture land into the 20th century, though was adversely affected by the construction of the A17 Holbeach bypass.

A site visit recorded only recent finds across the field surface. The site is suitable for fieldwalking and geophysical survey as the next appropriate means of evaluating the archaeological potential for the area.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Definition of a Desk-Based Assessment

An archaeological desk-based assessment is defined as an ‘assessment of the known or potential archaeological resource within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. It consists of a collation of existing written, graphic, photographic

and electronic information in order to identify the likely character, extent, quality and worth of the known or potential archaeological resource in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate’ (IfA 2008).

2.2 Planning Background

Archaeological Project Services was commissioned by Studio 11 Architecture Limited to undertake a desk-based assessment of land at Low Lane, Holbeach, Lincolnshire. The assessment is required in support of a proposed planning application for residential development.

2.3 Site Location

Holbeach is situated 11km east of Spalding and 20km south of Boston, in the administrative district of South Holland District, Lincolnshire (Fig. 1).

The proposed development site is located 1.2km northeast of the centre of Holbeach, as defined by the Market Place, at National Grid Reference TF 3675 2558 (Fig. 2). The site lies on the north side of Low Lane and adjacent to the A17 Washway Road.

2.4 Geology and Topography

Local soils are of the Wisbech Series, typically coarse silty calcareous alluvial gley soils, and coarse silty gleyic brown calcareous alluvial soils of the Romney Series in the western part of the site (Robson 1990, 26, 36). These soils are developed upon a drift geology of younger marine alluvium which in turn seals a solid geology of Upper Jurassic West Walton Formation mudstones and Ampthill Clay (BGS 1992).

The local topography describes a generally flat area of land within the fens of South Lincolnshire. The site lies at a height of c. 3m OD. The site encompasses some 0.79 hectares.

3. AIMS

The purpose of the desk-based assessment is to obtain information about the known and potential archaeological resource of the assessment area. In addition to the above, statutory and advisory heritage constraints are identified.

4. METHODS

In the following text, the term *Site* refers to the limits of the application site and the *Assessment Area* comprises an area of 1km radius from the centre of the application site.

The research undertaken in the compilation of this archaeological desk-based assessment involved the examination of all available sources relevant to the Site at Holbeach, and the immediate surrounding area. These sources consisted of:

- Historical documents, held in the Lincolnshire Archives.
- Enclosure, and other maps and plans, held in the Lincolnshire Archives
- Recent and early edition Ordnance Survey (OS) maps
- The Historic Environment Record, located at Lincolnshire County Council
- Archaeological and historical books and journals.
- Aerial photographs
- Lidar

A full list of the sources is contained within the bibliography.

This research was supplemented by a walkover survey of the Site, undertaken to assess the current ground conditions, land-use patterns and to ascertain the presence of any surface finds of an archaeological character, and of features that might indicate the presence of archaeological remains.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Historical Data

Holbeach is first mentioned in the Domesday Survey of c. 1086. Referred to as *Holobec*, *Holobech* and *Holebech*, the name is derived from the Old English and means the ‘hollow (*hol*) back (*bæc*)’, derived from the local topographic position of the town on raised ground (Cameron 1998, 64).

The Domesday Survey records that Holbeach was held by the King (as sokeland of Gedney), by Crowland Abbey (as a manor), Count Alan (as sokeland and a berewic) and Guy of Craon (also manorial) and contained 5210 acres of arable land and 182 acres of meadow, though the acreage was shared with Whaplode (Foster and Longley 1976, 1/32-3; 11/1; 12/83-4; 57/50).

The de Craon manor was being held by the main tenant-in-chief, the de Moulton family, from perhaps the early 12th century until the mid 14th century after which it was held by the D’Acre family until 1470. It then split into three smaller manors, Fitzwalter Manor, Harrington Manor and the Moiety of Dominorum (Allen 1834, 334). These had become united by the mid 19th century and were known as Holbeach Lord D’Acre (White 1856, 830).

The manor belonging to Crowland Abbey was the principal manor in Holbeach and seems to have formed part of the demesne lands of the abbey at the time of the dissolution in 1539 (Dugdale 1819, 124). The descent of the manor is generally unknown but was held by Sir Joseph Banks in the 18th century and was known as Holbeach Abbots.

A probable manorial chapel dedicated to St Nicholas is recorded at Holbeach prior to 1300. It was founded by Laurence Holbeche and is believed to have been

located one mile northeast of the church (Owen 1975, 18).

A substantial amount of early documentary material relates to the reclamation of the land from sea and fen. The nearest sea-bank that can be traced with confidence, *Saltnaygate* follows the line of the modern Washway Road and is believed to pre-date the Domesday Survey (Hallam 1954, 17). However, earlier sea-banks are suggested including a possible bank following the line of Low Lane. Leases of land by Crowland Abbey involved the service and repair of sea-banks as part of the tenancy in the early 13th century (*ibid.*, 16).

5.2 Cartographic Data

The Site lies to the northeast of the centre of Holbeach. Appropriate maps of the vicinity were examined.

The earliest map examined was the Ordnance Survey 2" drawing of 1812 (Fig. 3a). It is of too small a scale to be useful, though does show the Site as occupying the southern area of a large triangular field. The road layout is recognisable, though none are named. There are few buildings depicted in the vicinity of the Site (OS 1812).

Also of too small a scale is Bryant's *Map of the County of Lincoln*, dating to 1828 (Fig. 3b). This shows a similar arrangement of roads around the Site as previously, though no field boundaries are shown. The area to the north of the Site is referred to as Battle Fields. The origin of this name is not known, though it could refer to land where juridical battles (i.e. that is trial by battle) took place (Field 1972, 15). Alternatively, it may indicate land owned by a family called Battle, who were major landowners in Lincolnshire and elsewhere (Hilary Healey *pers. comm.*).

The first large scale and detailed map of the Site is on the 1838 Tithe Award map (Fig. 4). The Site encompasses the southern part of 5 fields with Low Lane (though not named) providing the southern boundary to

the Site. The accompanying apportionment relating to the Site is summarised below;

Field No.	Land Use
Owner: Revd. John Wing Tenant: John Westmorland	
1108	Meadow
1109	Arable
1110	Arable
Owner: William Tinsley Tenant: George Major	
1128	Arable
1129	Homestead

Despite the mention of buildings in Field 1129, these are not depicted on the map.

The next available map is the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887 (Fig. 5a). The arrangement of fields is broadly similar to 1838, although some boundaries have been removed. Immediately north of the Site is a cluster of buildings with a pond with tracks heading to the north and south. This is presumably the homestead mentioned in the tithe schedule. The 2nd edition map of 1906 shows very little change within the Site and its environs, although only a single building remains to the north of the Site (Fig. 5b).

It is only on post-war Ordnance Survey maps that significant changes occur, both in the layout of fields and encroaching development from Holbeach (Fig. 5c and 5d). The fields have been enlarged and the building (with its pond) is no longer depicted. Buildings have been constructed on the south side of Low Lane, along Battlefield Lane and the newly constructed King George V Avenue. Subsequent mapping shows no major change until the construction of the A17 Holbeach bypass in 1988 (Fig. 2).

5.3 Aerial photographic Data

Aerial photographs of Holbeach, including those published or transcribed in secondary sources, were examined for evidence of archaeological remains.

A series of four aerial photographs are located within the parish files of Heritage Lincolnshire. These are undated, although they are likely to have been taken within the last 30 years. These depict Holbeach from a moderate altitude and are taken vertically to the ground. The present day layout of the town is very clear, though there is no archaeology visible at the Site.

In addition, lidar (light detection and ranging) for the area was examined. This did not reveal any noticeable archaeological features, though former field boundaries were visible as slight linear hollows.

5.4 Archaeological Data

Records of archaeological sites and finds within the assessment area are held at the Lincolnshire County Council Historic Environment Record (HER).

Prehistoric

No prehistoric entries are recorded within the assessment area at the HER. Sites of this period are likely to be buried beneath later alluvium which could be several metres thick.

Romano-British

Two sherds of Romano-British pottery were recovered during fieldwalking to the southeast of the Site (Fig. 6, No. 1). One sherd was in a Nene Valley Colour Coated ware dating to the 2nd to 4th century AD. As such material in the vicinity of the Site is usually buried beneath later alluvium, the presence of pottery, which perhaps was brought to the surface by agricultural activities and may indicate settlement of this period.

Saxon

No Saxon sites are recorded at the HER. However, the British Geological Survey indicates that the Saxon shoreline lay to the immediate north of the Site, beneath the A17. This is possible, as also is the line of Low Lane. It has been considered that minor sea-banks were in existence by AD 850 and a major sea-bank protecting the area had

been created by the mid 11th century (Hallam 1965, 7).

Medieval

The principal medieval site is the settlement of Holbeach (Fig. 6, No. 2) located to the southwest of the Site. Within this are All Saints' church and the site of All Saints' Hospital.

The Site is, therefore, located in the open fields of the town which were created following the reclamation of marsh from the sea. This is partly evidenced by scatters of pottery, perhaps derived from manuring, located to the northwest and southeast of the Site (Nos. 3 and 4).

Post-medieval

The principal post-medieval entry at the HER is the settlement of Holbeach (Fig. 6, No. 6). This includes a number of historic buildings within the town (Nos. 9, 13-15, 19 and 20) of which some are listed buildings.

Outside of the town are further listed buildings including Washway House (No. 16), its associated barn (No. 18) and Town Farm (No. 17). To the south of the town are claypits for brickworks (No. 7) and there are three historic parklands within the assessment area (Nos. 10-12).

Located on the eastern edge of the Assessment Area, on the parish boundary with Fleet, is the findspot of a number of human skeletons (No. 5). These were discovered during the construction of the A17 and comprised several bodies in a possible east-west alignment. The HER assigns them to the post-medieval period where they may have been associated with a gibbet. It is also possible that they are medieval suicides (such individuals were not permitted burial in consecrated ground) or perhaps from the chapel of St Nicholas, which was located northeast of the town, though it would be unusual for a manorial chapel to have burial rights.

Modern

Only a single modern site is recorded at the HER and is the extant remains of an observation post which formerly belonged to the Royal Observer Corps (Fig. 6, No. 21).

Undated

Undated items recorded at the HER include an excavated pit (Fig. 6, No. 22) and geophysical anomalies (No. 23).

Previous archaeological interventions

There have been several archaeological interventions (evaluations, watching briefs, fieldwalking and site visits) within the assessment area. Where archaeological features or artefacts were identified, details from these are referred to in the preceding section.

The nearest work was undertaken to the southeast of the Site and revealed scatters of medieval and post-medieval artefacts together with two sherds of Roman pottery along with undated geophysical anomalies (Hall 2006). Below ground intervention occurred to the northwest at Penny Hill which retrieved medieval and post-medieval artefacts (Peachey 2012). The results of these investigations suggested that the artefacts were deposited in manuring scatters and demonstrate the extent of arable land during these periods.

5.5 Walkover Survey

The site was visited on the 11th December 2014 in order to assess the ground conditions, to identify any potential archaeological features and to note any constraints to further work. The conditions were cold and fair after overnight rain. The results of the survey are shown on Figure 7.

Access to the site was from Low Lane. The site is completely open on this southern side, with only a grass verge to separate the field from the road (Plate 1). The northern side of the site is marked by a drain. Beyond the drain is an earth bund which follows the southern side of the A17 trunk road (Plate 3). The western end of the site is marked by

the chain-link fence of an Anglian Water compound. Just to the east of the compound, and open to the rest of the field, is an unfinished building plot. Concrete foundations have been laid, but the building had not progressed any further (Plate 2).

At the time of the site visit the field had been drilled and carried an emerging crop, possibly of grass. The field surface was visible but no archaeological material was recovered during the site visit. A sparse overall scatter of modern material, including small concrete fragments, was noted.

A man-hole cover observed mid-way along the site, on the north verge of Low Lane, suggests the presence of a sewer running along the road (Plate 4).

No other services were noted on the site, although overhead electrical wires cross Low Lane just west of the junction with Battlefields Lane South.

There is no inter-visibility between the site and the listed buildings at Town Farm.

The Site is suitable for geophysical survey and fieldwalking as a next means of evaluating the area.

6. CONSTRAINTS

6.1 Heritage Constraints

There are no Scheduled Monuments protected by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Area Act of 1979 (HMSO) present within the assessment area.

There are a total of 7 listed buildings lying within the assessment area, all of which are Grade II. Current housing screens most of those located towards the centre of Holbeach from the Site. There is also no inter-visibility to Town Farm,

Washway House and its associated barn. There are a further 2 buildings which have been noted for their historic interest, though these are not statutorily protected.

Holbeach Conservation Area just clips the southwest edge of the Assessment Area. Again there is no inter-visibility and limited impact on the setting of the Conservation Area as the Site is screened from the centre of the town and from routes into it.

All other archaeological remains within the assessment area are protected only through the implementation of the National Planning Policy Framework which identifies the historic environment as a non-renewable resource (DCLG 2012). Its fragile and finite nature is a particularly important consideration in planning. The effect of an application on the significance of a heritage asset or its setting is a material consideration in determining the application.

6.2 Other Constraints

No specific checks were carried out to determine the presence of services (gas, water, electricity *etc.*) at the site. However, no buried or overhead services were noted within the Site's bounds during the walkover survey.

If further archaeological intervention is required, the excavation of trenches would entail a certain degree of risk which would be enhanced by the use of a mechanical excavator.

7. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

Past impact appears to have been largely agricultural since the early post-medieval period and perhaps into the medieval period. Tithe documents of the mid 19th century indicate that the Site was used for both pasture and arable farming with a small part referred to as a homestead, though maps would suggest only a track to the buildings would lie within the Site boundary.

The principal impact would have been the

construction of the bypass in 1988 which, other than separating the fields from their northern extents, involved drainage works and some tree planting. This is likely to be restricted to the northern boundary of the Site.

Proposed details regarding the development have not been finalised but would include a degree of infrastructure to provide services and access to buildings. Aspects of the development most likely to impact buried archaeological remains, if present, are foundation trenches and service trenches.

The development will have no visual impact on listed buildings or Holbeach Conservation Area due to existing housing. There will also be minimal impact on the setting of the conservation area.

8. ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL AND SIGNIFICANCE

Information collated in the production of this document has allowed an assessment of the known and potential archaeological resource.

Prehistoric sites are absent from the assessment area and are likely to only be encountered at considerable depth due to the deposition of alluvium. Potential is therefore considered to be low to negligible.

Roman pottery has been recovered from an area to the southeast of the Site, albeit only two sherds. This may indicate the possibility of Roman features, though these are likely to lie at some depth from the surface. However, potential is considered low.

Potential is considered to be low to negligible for remains of the Saxon period, though it is possible that Low Lane represents an early sea-bank.

During the medieval period, the Site probably lay within the open fields of Holbeach. There is mention of a chapel in the vicinity of the Site, although this has yet to be firmly located. Potential is considered to be low to negligible.

Cartographic evidence suggests that the proposed development area has been open agricultural land since at least the early 19th century. Later maps indicate that this area had been divided and enclosed with some rearrangement of field boundaries to accommodate modern farming methods with housing development on the south side of Low Lane occurring from the 1940s.

The results of the walkover survey show no surface indicators of buried archaeological remains. Geophysical and fieldwalking surveys would be appropriate for the next stage of evaluation, though would be dependent on crop cover and the lack of early material observed during the walkover survey may suggest the latter technique is unnecessary.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The HER data used in the production of this report is copyright of Lincolnshire County Council.

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All of the following references were consulted in the research. However, as some of them duplicated evidence given in others, or proved not to be relevant to the assessment, not all of them have been specifically referred to in the text.

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Ordnance Survey, 1906 *Lincolnshire. Sheet CXXV. S.E.*, 6" map

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DCLG, 2012 *National Planning Policy*

Framework

	BGS	British Geological Survey
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	HER	Historic Environment Record
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	LAO	Lincolnshire Archive Office
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11. ABBREVIATIONS

APS Archaeological Project Services

Table 1: Archaeological sites and findspots within the assessment area

Map No.	HER No.	Description	Period	National Grid Reference
1	MLI89925	Pottery	Romano-British	TF 3700 2532
2	MLI20227	Settlement of Holbeach	Medieval	-
3	MLI89926	Pottery	Medieval	TF 3689 2534
4	MLI98817	Pottery	Medieval to post-medieval	TF 3620 2603
5	MLI20536	Human bones	Post-medieval	TF 3772 2550
6	MLI20557	Settlement of Holbeach	Post-medieval	-
7	MLI22201	Claypits/brickworks	Post-medieval	TF 3629 2453
8	MLI89928	Pottery	Post-medieval	TF 3689 2534
9	MLI90079	Holbeach Union Workhouse*	Post-medieval	TF 3700 2490
10	MLI92297	Wood House Park	Post-medieval	TF 3774 2622
11	MLI92408	Carter's Park	Post-medieval	TF 3597 2508
12	MLI92409	Redroofs Park	Post-medieval	TF 3672 2470
13	MLI94345	71-77 High Street, houses*	Post-medieval	TF 3611 2481
14	MLI94346	14 and 16a High Street, shops*	Post-medieval	TF 3617 2476
15	MLI94348	Cemetery chapel*	Post-medieval	TF 3620 2508
16	MLI94352	Washway House*	Post-medieval	TF 3677 2628
17	MLI94447	Town Farm*	Post-medieval	TF 3612 2560
18	MLI94452	Barn at Washway House*	Post-medieval	TF 3680 2629
19	MLI97218	24 Park Lane	Post-medieval	TF 3604 2494
20	MLI97219	Former Infant School	Post-medieval	TF 3613 2490
21	MLI81129	Royal Observer Corps observation post	Modern	TF 3645 2634
22	MLI92434	Excavated pit	Undated	TF 3630 2473
23	MLI97858	Geophysical anomalies	Undated	TF 3689 2533

* denotes a listed building



Figure 1 - General location plan

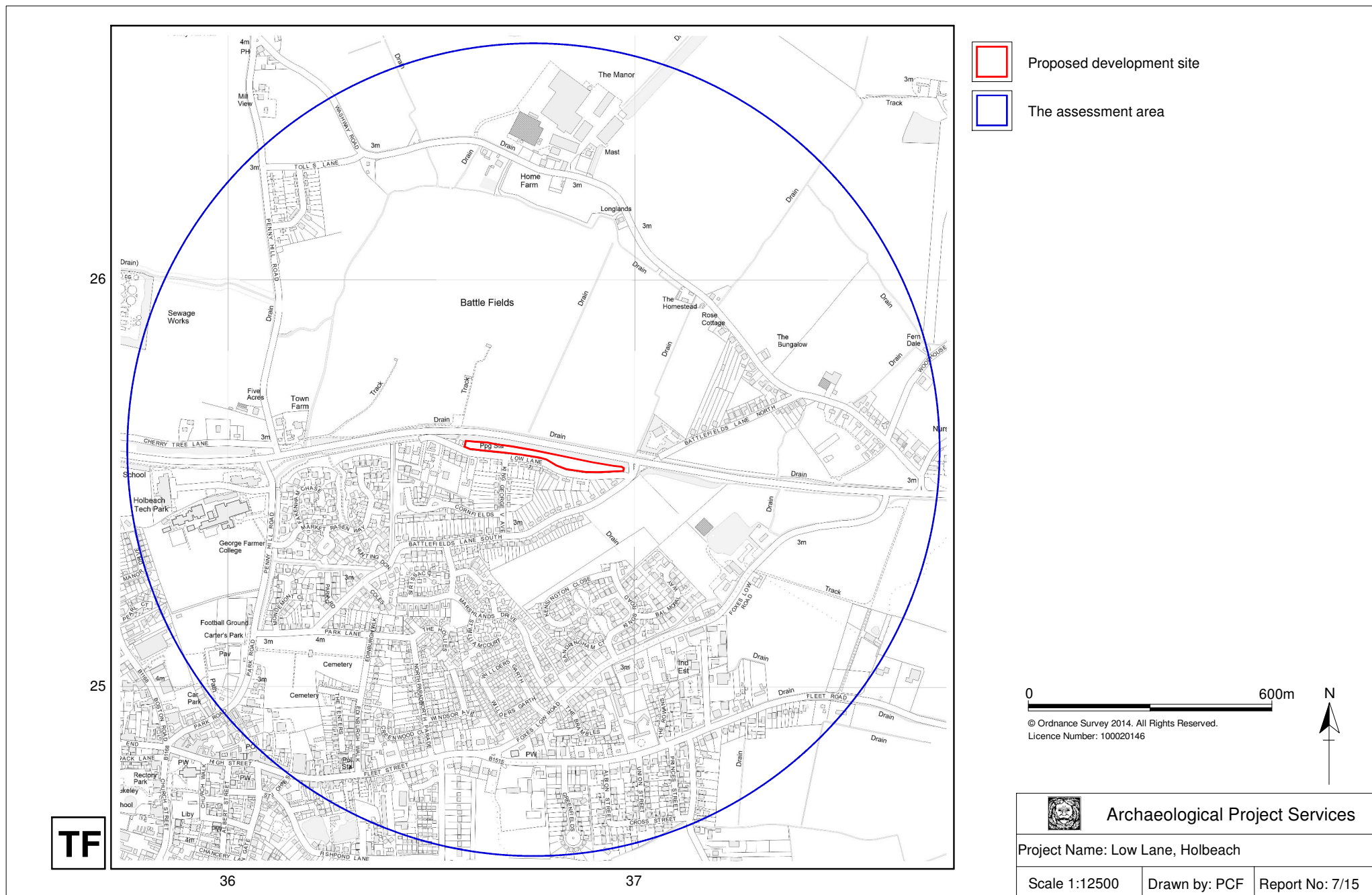


Figure 2 - The assessment area showing the proposed development site



Ordnance Survey 1812



Bryant 1828



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Scale 1:25000 Drawn by: PCF Report No: 7/15

Figure 3 - Extracts from maps of 1812 and 1828



0 200m

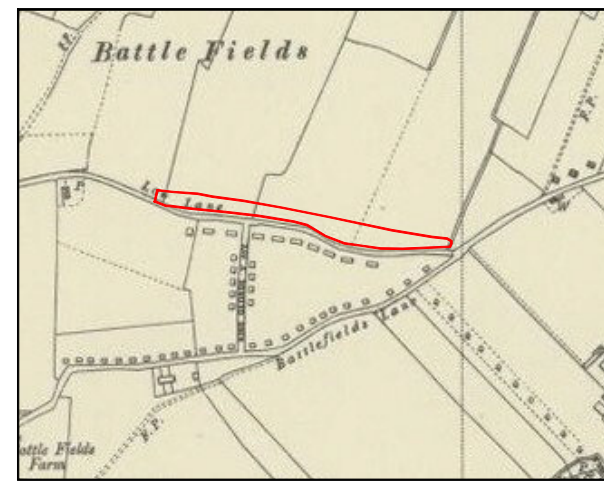
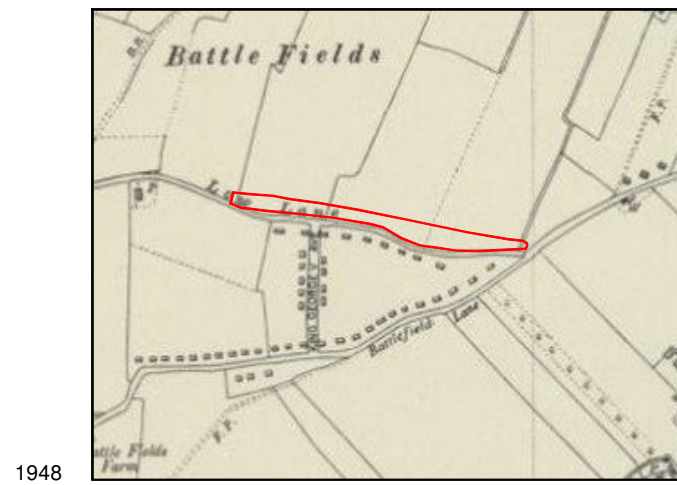
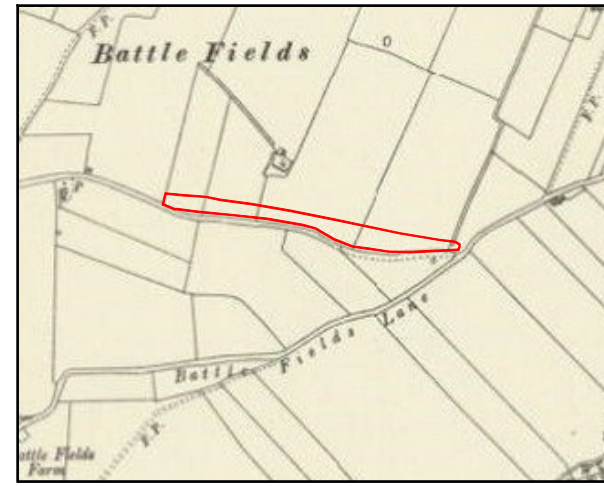
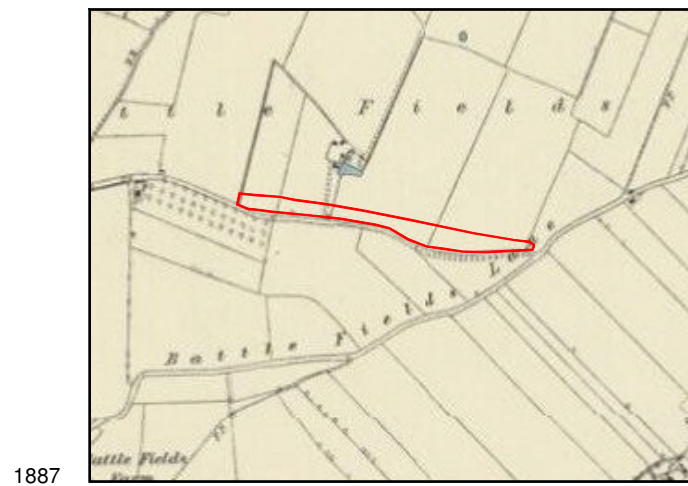


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Project Name: Low Lane, Holbeach

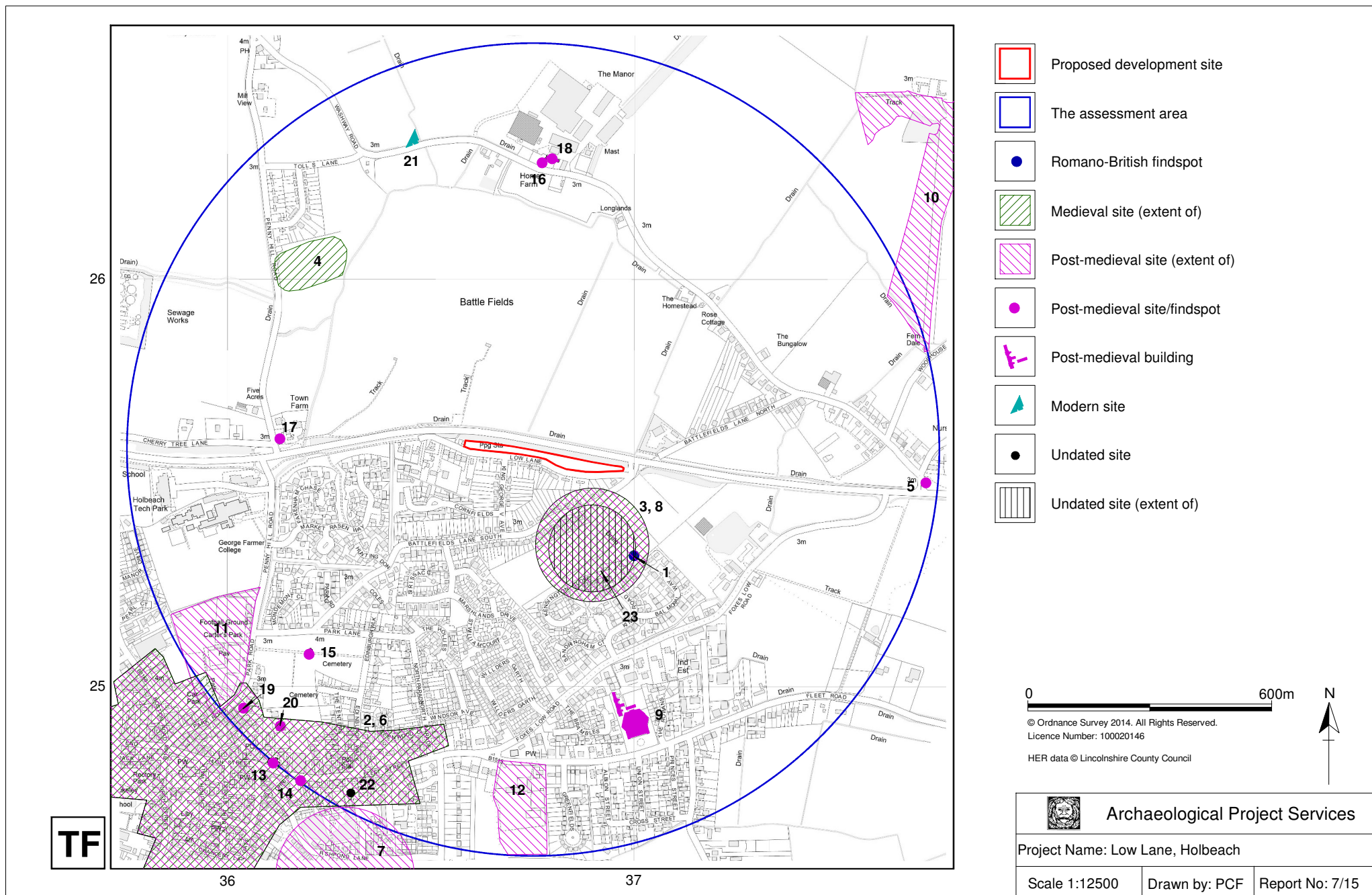
Scale 1:5000 Drawn by: PCF Report No: 7/15

Figure 4 - Extract from the Holbeach Tithe Apportionment map, 1838



	Archaeological Project Services		
Project Name: Low Lane, Holbeach			
Scale 1:10000	Drawn by: PCF	Report No: 7/15	

Figure 5 - Extracts from the 1887, 1906, 1948 and 1952 editions Ordnance Survey 6" maps



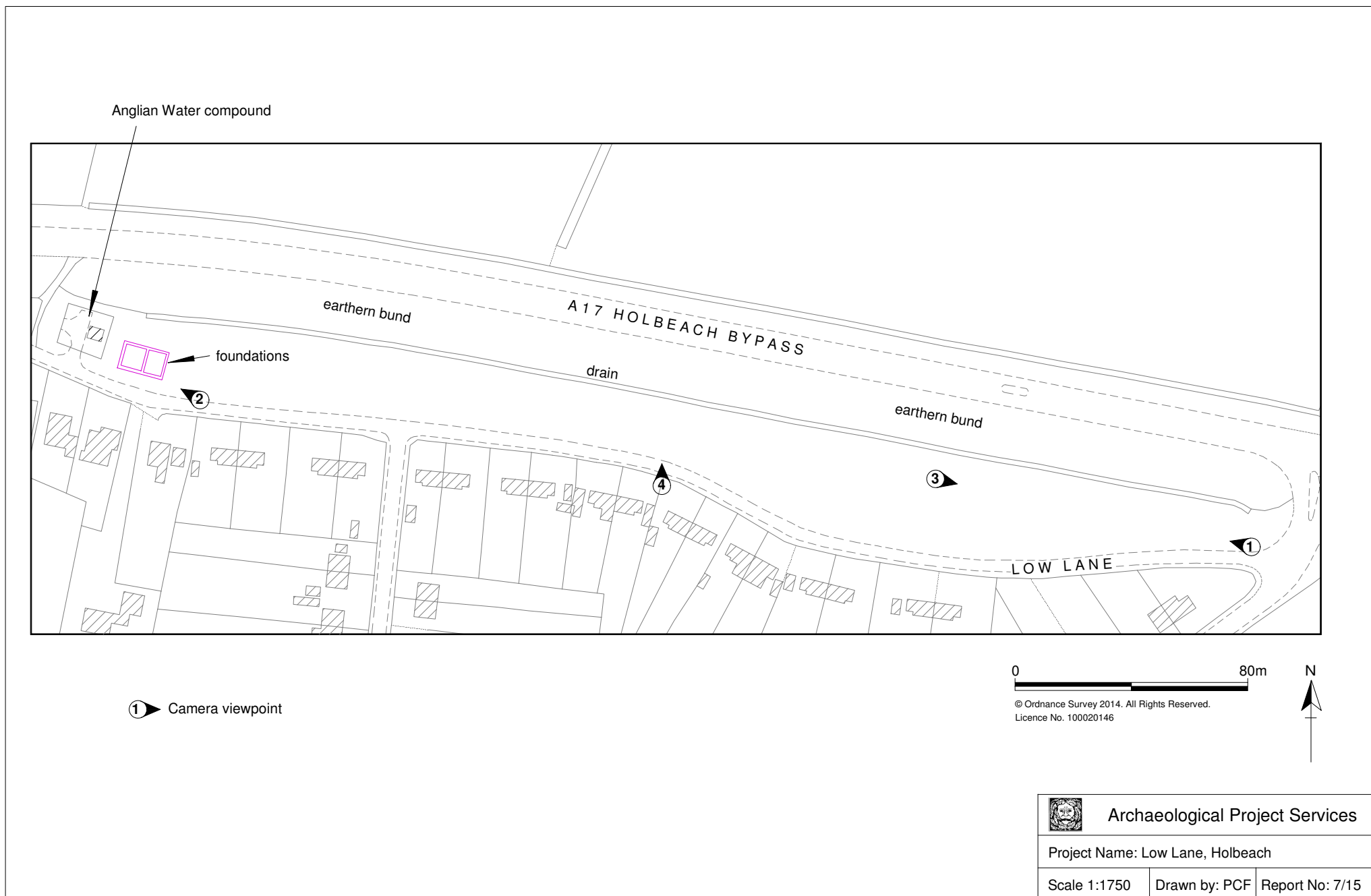


Figure 7 - Results of the walkover survey



Plate 1 – View looking northeast across the Site with Low Road to the left



Plate 2 – The western end of the Site with the partial foundations for an unfinished building in the foreground, looking west



Plate 3 – View looking southeast with the earth bund alongside the A17 to the left and overhead cabling (centre)



Plate 4 – Manhole cover and drain on the edge of the Site, looking north

Appendix 1

GLOSSARY

Alluvium	A deposit (usually clay, silts or sands) laid down in water. Marine alluvium is deposited by the sea and freshwater alluvium by streams, rivers or within lakes.
Cropmark	A mark that is produced by the effect of underlying archaeological features influencing the growth of a particular crop.
Geophysical Survey	Essentially non-invasive methods of examining below the ground surface by measuring deviations in the physical properties and characteristics of the earth. Techniques include magnetometry and resistivity survey.
Medieval	The Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1066-1500.
Post-medieval	The period following the Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1500-1800.
Prehistoric	The period of human history prior to the introduction of writing. In Britain the prehistoric period lasts from the first evidence of human occupation about 500,000 BC, until the Roman invasion in the middle of the 1 st century AD.
Romano-British	Pertaining to the period dating from AD 43-410 when the Romans occupied Britain.
Saxon	Pertaining to the period dating from AD 410-1066 when England was largely settled by tribes from northern Germany.