Interim Report on Archaeological Fieldwork North of Mount Pleasant House, Nettleton and Rothwell

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The following interim report summarizes results of fieldwork undertaken between August 2000 and September 2002 in two arable fields either side of the B1225, on a site with known later prehistoric and Roman activity. The works were part of a joint project initiated by Steven Willis of Durham University and Steve Catney for Lincolnshire County Council, examining settlement and landscape on the Wolds, and on the Wolds hinterland, during these periods. The works reported here followed two seasons of excavation at this extensive complex of remains in 1998 and 1999 during which six trenches had been opened revealing Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman features. The works were directed by Steven Willis. Some results of survey work are also reported.

Excavation in 2000

Two trenches were opened in the field west of the B1225 in 2000, in Nettleton parish. The previous two seasons’ excavations had all been within this field above the valley to the west containing Nettleton Beck. (In the case of these two trenches, and with the other two trenches reported here, specifically I and J, east of the B1225, all excavation, including that of the ploughsoil was by hand. Ploughsoil was removed in three spits to separate finds to the upper, middle and lower ploughsoil zones.)

Trench G

This trench was positioned in the central north area of the field. The location was selected so as to examine an area away from the palimpsest of features identified in the geophysical survey, in order, to test the ‘reliability’ of this method in this case. The opportunity was taken, however, to sample the one anomaly detected in this area, namely a linear feature aligned north to south and assumed to be a major prehistoric land division. This feature is traceable on the geophysical results for c.200m. This location had the ancillary advantage of allowing further clarification of the survival of archaeological remains on the ridge-plateau running approximately north to south through the field.

Trench G measured 10m by 2m on an east-west axis. The total of pottery from the ploughsoil was modest and comprised small and abraded items; nor were any small finds recovered. Cleaning following the removal of ploughsoil revealed a series of independent features cutting natural chalk; no positive horizons were extant. All archaeological deposits within the trench were fully excavated, bar the northern half of 7006. All of the archaeological contexts encountered appear to be prehistoric; the principal features are described.

Towards the western end of the trench a discrete spread of leached yellowish-brown silt, 7003, c.1.8m in width traversed the trench north to south. Upon excavation this deposit proved to be the sole fill of a contiguous band of features representing post-holes/-settings, 7004, on a tight double alignment similar band of post-settings, of Bronze or early Iron Age date was encountered in Trench D in 1999. Approximately ten settings occurred within 7004, most being around 0.4m deep although some were shallower. Evidently this feature extended beyond the limits of excavation to both the north and the south. Immediately to the east of 7004 two pairs of post-settings were excavated, 7016 and 7018, seemingly forming part of the general complex. It is possible that this complex was of more than one phase. All fills were sterile. The likelihood is that this feature is Bronze Age or early middle Iron Age, comprising a palisade.

Around three metres east of 7004 a substantial feature, 7006, was examined, which traversed Trench G from north to south (Fig.2). This feature was c.2.2m wide at its surface. Upon excavation edges of the cut were found to be vertical. On the eastern side this stopped at a depth of c.0.47m, where a shelf had been left in the chalk, c.1m wide. This was evidently a ‘working platform’ or step for the original diggers to access a further, deeper narrow slot. On the western side there likewise occurred a change at a depth of c.0.47, though here, instead of a shelf, the cut took the form of a gentle slope down towards the central slot, for some 0.6m, before steepening for 0.2m. The central slot was very regular in form, c.0.3m deep and 0.4m wide with straight sides and a flat base cut into the chalk bedrock. Its dimensions were just sufficient to enable excavation, indicating an attention to the economy of effort in its original formation and/or a desire to create a slot of a certain scale to, presumably, hold firm timbers of a certain width. No post pipes nor ghosts were detectable. No material culture or other remains were recovered from this feature. The main fill appeared characteristically similar to 7003 and reminiscent of other soil deposits encountered at the site that are generally associated with features pre-dating the late Iron Age. This feature, evidently a palisade, was detected by the geophysical survey where it can be seen to extend south from a mid point along the north boundary of the field (the limit of the magnetometer survey area) to a point near the centre of the field immediately adjacent to two circular anomalies that may be the remains of barrows. An association with these features seems likely. This palisade effectively follows the watershed between Nettleton Beck on the western side of the Wolds, and the valley to the east which ultimately opens to the Lincolnshire Outmarsh. Its realisation will have seen a considerable investment in timber. On the basis of current evidence it is likely that the palisade slot is of Bronze Age date. Post-holes and a gully lay to the east of this feature.

The rate of erosion of archaeological remains at this level location within the field appears, presently, to be a slow.

Trench H

Trench H, opened in the central part of the field, was placed to examine geophysical anomalies indicative of enclosures and boundaries. This area of the field had not previously been investigated through excavation and so the trench presented an opportunity to assess the character of remains and their survival at this locality. H lay a distance of c.20m to the south of the point at which the palisade investigated in Trench G ceased to be discernible on the geophysical readings, and immediately south of a circular anomaly which may be a barrow ditch. This location is a high point in the field, being part of the north-south watershed traversing the field. The
Fig. 1. Nettleton, Mount Pleasant: Plan showing position of the 1998-2002 excavation trenches and the geophysical anomalies. (Geophysical plot produced by Phil Catherall.)

trench was specifically placed to examine the more northerly of a pair of parallel linear features which cross much of the field from its south-west corner, heading north-east. It had been speculated that this feature is a cursus, but Phil Catherall who had overseen the geophysics had, on balance, come down against this interpretation. The geophysical results indicate that this boundary, in this area, coincides with that of an apparently square enclosure, and that here, at the location of Trench H, these features run parallel. Excavation at this point, therefore, was intended to clarify the nature of these features and their chronology. Results of field walking from 1992-93 had suggested that this was an area of the site with less intense activity during the Roman period.

Trench H measured 11m by 2m, aligned south-east to north-west, with the intention of sectioning at a right angle
the features indicated by the geophysical survey. Removal of ploughsoil exposed a series of independent features cutting natural chalk subsoil. The archaeological contexts can be divided into separate phases. All archaeological deposits were fully excavated. The most substantial feature revealed was also the earliest, this being, a cross linear post (palisade) complex, 8017, toward the southern end of the trench. As revealed within the limits of the trench this feature was an X-shaped 'slot' in plan, extending beyond the limits of the trench to the south-west, south-east, north-west and north-east. The junction of the two alignments was also the deepest part of the feature. The south-east to north-west alignment (c.3.5m of the length being revealed within the trench) comprised mainly of paired post settings (paired width-ways across the feature) within a 'slot' cut to a varying depth; five pairs were discernible. At its south-east, by the trench bank, the nature of the cut altered abruptly; the alignment was maintained but the base of the cut dropped steeply to 1.15m below the top of the natural, prior to its disappearance at the bank. This could be an associated post pit. The south-west to north-east alignment was of like character and scale to the main length of the south-east to north-west alignment, though slightly deeper overall. Some 5m of the length of this feature lay within the trench, and it measured c.1.35m in width, with the base, at its deepest, 0.41m below the top of the natural chalk. It seems that this was also an alignment of paired post-settings. Feature 8017 contained a single soil, 8005, a light brown silt which yielded no secure finds and was environmentally barren. There is no evidence to indicate that the two separate alignments are not contemporary (though they may not be). The feature type, its homogeneous silt fill and lack of secure finds suggest that this is likely to be a feature of Bronze Age or possibly early/middle Iron Age date. The geophysical survey had not detected 8017. Its extent and function are presently unclear, though it occurs in the vicinity of the field where other prehistoric features are evident.

At the north-west end of the trench two straight parallel ditches were encountered, perpendicular to the axis of the trench. These must be the features registering in the geophysical survey. The earlier of these two features was the more southerly, cut 8010, being a substantive ditch of U-shaped profile. This narrowed and grew shallower within the trench. Thus, at the south-west baulk of Trench H it measured 1.6m in width and was 0.5m deep, though by the north-east baulk the dimensions had diminished to a width of 1.0m and a depth of 0.27m. This diminishment implies the feature was terminating, a possibility that accords with the geophysical evidence. The main fill, 8007, consisted of a mixed deposit of chalk and flint fragments in a loamy silt matrix. It yielded little pottery but the shoulder of a jar with a band of herringbone style impressions occurred, being first century AD in date. Fragments of two querns were recovered from 8007, in coarse grey-green Spilsby Sandstone. One of these fragments includes part of the milling surface, while the other includes part of a handle socket; the fragments could be from beehive or Romano-British type querns, and are not chronologically specific. The use of this rock type for the production of ancient querns is attested elsewhere, and one of the sources outcrops close to Mount Pleasant, around Nettleton Top, c.4km to the north-west of the site, where quarrying and manufacture may have taken place. Soil samples contained terrestrial snail shell assemblages dominated by taxa associated with open country/ grassland; charred spelt and barley seeds were present. The more northerly ditch, 8008, was of modest scale, and might be described as a gully or ditch base. It lay 0.8m to the north-west of 8010 measuring 0.8m in width at its surface and was of U-shaped profile, being cut to 0.21m below the present top of natural. Its single fill, 8004, a silt with loam, contained oyster shell and a small group of Roman pottery, plus an amount of animal bone including sheep and cattle or horse. Environmental analysis suggested that a hedge existed to one side of the ditch. These two ditches, clearly later in date than 8017, relate to compounds/enclosures extant in the Roman era. No evidence for a cursus was identified. Here too the degree of erosion of archaeological remains is moderate.

Trench I

The third trench opened in 2000 was located in the field known as Street Furlong, on the eastern side of the B1225 in the parish of Rothwell. No archaeological works had previously been undertaken on land to the east of the B1225 and hence this Trench provided an opportunity for prospection in an area where the site complex was likely to extend. Mrs G. Bain
had collected an amount of Roman pottery and other archaeological finds (including parts of two Neolithic axe-heads) from the ploughsoil in this field over a number of years which she made available to the Project. A trench in Street Furlong offered the prospect of addressing the question as to whether the modern road overlies the course of the Roman road from Horncastle to Caistor (and potentially its prehistoric predecessor). It had long been thought that the B1225, known as the High Street, was the latest manifestation of an older arterial north-south route-way following the spine of the Wolds and dating from Roman times, if not earlier. Such a route-way would link the Roman period centres of Caistor and Horncastle. Roadside settlements are a familiar settlement form of the Roman period with other examples known from the region; they are typically manifest as linear developments, often with discrete property plots and domestic/commercial buildings opening to the road. The density of surface finds of pottery collected during the survey undertaken by the British Gas archaeologists along the eastern fringe of the field west of the B1225 in 1992-93, plus likely structural remains located in Trench B in 1998 implied that this site could be an example of the type. Hence a trench adjacent to the B1225 in Street Furlong held the prospect of providing an answer to this important question.

Trench I was positioned just into the field along its western boundary, and 285m north from the south-west corner of the field. Aproximately opposite to the location where Trench 1 had been excavated two years previously. Since this trench represented trial work its specific location was somewhat arbitrary. The area chosen lay in a slight natural dip and hence it was anticipated that this would have been favourable for archaeological preservation. This location also lay opposite the strong concentration of Roman finds recorded from the ploughsoil in the field opposite (see above). A determining factor, however, was that during 2000 this field was partitioned with trial crops. Accordingly, Trench I was placed as far north along the side of the field as the crop had been harvested.

Trench I was T-shaped in plan, with a long axis aligned north to south and a wide 'tail' projecting to the east (hereafter denoted as 'the eastern area'). The long axis measured 15m by 1.3m, with the eastern projection 4m by 3.7m. The ploughsoil proved unusually thick, 0.37m deep, doubtless due to the piecemeal accumulation of material here from adjacent slopes. A large quantity of Roman and some late Iron Age/ transitional pottery was recovered from the ploughsoil, plus several iron nails which, where reasonably extant, were of Roman type. Removal of the ploughsoil exposed a brown/dark olive silty loam, 0.95m, across the entire extent of the trench. This layer was found to seal substantive deposits of Roman date. The depth of deposits was such that there was insufficient time available to enable their full excavation. The trench was excavated to a minimum depth of c.0.65m below the top of the ploughsoil; elsewhere excavation was to a greater depth as feature fills were emptied. Natural subsoil was not reached at any point.

Phase 1: The earliest deposits observed comprised mottled yellow sand with pockets of loam recorded at the base of two ditch cuts (9034 at the base of 9013, and 9035 at the base of 9020 (see below)), and a mottled clay with silt at the base of ditch 9009. It is possible that the mottled sand, a type of deposit not seen elsewhere at the site, is a single continuous layer. These earliest contexts were not investigated and no dating evidence was recovered from them.

Phase 2: On the western side of the trench these contexts were overlain by what appeared to be a single comparatively thick layer of brown silt (9012, etc.) extending over the entire length of the trench from north to south. A small fraction of this horizon was excavated: finds included a dish similar to Gillam form 337 (c.AD70-130), a sherd from a Lezoux Drag.37 samian bowl (second century AD), and a sherd from a white-ware flagon (c.AD50-130). Two spreads present within the eastern area appear to be essentially contemporary with 9012, specifically 9025 and 9031 which seem likely to be a remnant of a surface. White ware flagon (c.AD50-130) came from 9031.

Phase 3: The 9012 horizon was cut in the western part of the trench by two contemporary straight ditches aligned north to south. These ditches were asymmetrical: 9013 at the southern end of the trench lay a little to the east of the alignment of the other (9009) and terminated c.2.5m south of the latter's southern recorded limit. Hence an apparent gap existed between the two in the vicinity of the eastern area. Ditch 9013 was recorded for a distance of c.6.25m along the eastern side of the southern arm of the trench. It extended beyond the eastern and southern baulks of the southern arm of the trench, but its northern terminal was exposed within the eastern area of excavation. As exposed within the trench the feature was fully excavated, being a regular cut with an U-shaped profile c.0.4m deep. At its northern terminal it was c.1.5m in width. The silty fills of 9013 yielded sizeable animal bone and Roman pottery assemblages, plus a copper alloy hairpin with white-metal ('tinned') surface, iron nails and oyster shells. Provisional analysis of the pottery suggests a mid-second- to mid-third-century date for the filling of the feature.

Ditch 9009 was recorded for a distance of c.5.6m along the western side of the northern arm of the trench. It extended beyond the western and northern baulks of the northern arm of Trench 1. Unlike 9013 no part of the full width of 9009 was caught within the limits of excavation, though 0.35m of its width was exposed. At c.9.5m north from the southern limit of Trench 1, opposite the northern edge of the eastern area of 1 the ditch ceased to be traceable, for it either turned to the west, or (more probably) terminated. As exposed within the trench the feature was fully excavated. The edge within the trench was regular and steep, descending 0.4m to a shallow flat base suggesting the profile was a regular U-shape. Hence the morphology of this ditch mirrored that of 9013. The main and lower fills encountered were similar to those filling 9013; again sizeable animal bone and pottery assemblages were collected from this feature, plus oyster shells. The pottery is of similar date to that from 9013.

A third ditch was also partially exposed within the trench, 9020, running east to west along the northern side of the eastern area of I, before turning to the north near to the junction of the eastern area and the northern arm of the trench, so as to run parallel with ditch 9009 some 0.6m to its west. Ditch 9020, which extended beyond the eastern and northern baulks of the trench, was recorded for a distance of c.3.5m along the northern side of the eastern area. As exposed within the trench this feature was fully excavated. Excavation revealed a fairly regular cut, 0.52m deep and of U-shaped profile. The lowest fill, 9028, was a grey-green silt and clay mix with many fragments of ironstone, Tidby Limestone sandstone and chalk with longest dimensions between 0.11m and 0.17m. Near to the turn of the ditch these were clustered and on top was the inverted skull of a horse, aligned east-west, which may perhaps have been a 'placed deposit'. Other animal bone was recovered from this feature as well as part of a quilt of flat Roman-British type in Spilsby Sandstone and oyster shells.

Analysis of soil samples from these three ditches identified a rich range of palaeoeconomic and palaeoenvironmental evidence. Slag was recorded in two of the samples and handaxe material was observed indicating iron smelting in the vicinity. The samples were comparatively rich in charred grain of barley and spelt, with the 9010 sample from ditch 9013 containing a significant amount of chaff. 9010 also yielded an assemblage of small vertebrate fauna including bank vole, field vole, common shrew, pygmy shrew and house mouse. Present in ditch 9020 were house mouse and water shrew, a rare archaeological record of this species.
The north-south ditches 9009 and 9013 appear to be contemporary and part of the same system, with which 9020 is also a part. Significantly their alignment mirrors that of the modern road lying c.6m to the west of Trench J, and hence the implication must be that the modern B1225 indeed overlies the course of the Roman road. Ditches 9009, 9013 and 9020 therefore appear to represent roadside and/or property plot boundaries fronting on to the line of the Roman road. Significantly the point at which 9020 turns is mirrored by the apparent termination of 9009 opposite this point, resulting in a gap between these ditches and 9013 to the south of some 2.8m. Further, after 9020 has turned to the north its alignment continues the line of 9013. The gap between the two ditches to the north and the ditch to the south is therefore provisionally interpretable as a causeway entrance or side track-way perpendicular to the presumed main thoroughfare. In fact, part of a 'cobble'd surface, 9033, constructed of pebble-sized items was encountered in this area, alongside 9020, overlying the mixed clay spreads, 9025 and 9031. The presence of house mouse bones in ditches 9013 and 9020 confirms domestic occupation or buildings nearby, a likelihood further supported by the proliferation of finds (including iron nails) from these features, together with boulders and fragments of ironstone and Trelby Limestone, the preferred building stone of the period. Across the 'front' of the gap, between 9009 and 9020 on the one hand and 9013 to the south, a shallow linear feature (9030, c.2.7m long, 0.28m wide and c.0.06m deep) occurs, effectively marking the causeway entrance; this seems likely to be the former position of a timber plate for a gate or similar.

Within the eastern area, contemporary with the ditches, and at the same level as the cobbles 9033, a mottled grey layer of silt and loam with flint and chalk pebbles occurred, namely 9024. This mixed layer was evidently accumulating during the life of the ditches, and conceivably was originally surfaced with pebbles. Roman regulae occurred in this layer, along with sherds from a rusticated grey-ware jar, Gauloise 4/Pielichet 47 amphora, samian and a rim of Dalesware form in quartz-tempered grey-ware suggesting a date range of c. AD130 to 270.

Phases 4 and 5: Above 9024 a distinct spread of mixed 'debris' was encountered (Phase 4). This comprised a clustered band of stones with the largest pieces in a more or less continuous north-south alignment over 0.6m wide (9005), plus a broader spread 1.2m by 1.8m, including also Roman tile and brick fragments and animal bone (collectively 9004). It is possible that 9005 represents the vestigial remains of a wall foundation, late in the site sequence, though evidently Roman. Disturbance may have occurred prior to the modern era. Overlying all the archaeological deposits was the homogeneous silt 9003 (Phase 5) 0.15m to 0.2m thick. It contained only a modest amount of material culture considering its large volume, nonetheless thirty-four recorded finds were present (twenty-one representing Roman nails). Other items included a probable door latch-lifter (of iron). This layer might be interpreted as a colluvial deposit, that is a hillwash from the surrounding slopes, from where some of its artefactual material could derive, though it is likely in fact

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**Fig.3.** Plan of Trench J, 2002, showing the earlier features, including ditches 9514 and 9525.
to represent an old cultivated soil formed subsequent to the end of the Roman settlement and including a colluvial component, as well as ploughed-in latest layers of Roman occupation.

No fieldwork was possible in 2001 as a consequence of precautions in the light of the national Foot and Mouth Disease epidemic.

Excavation in 2002: Trench J

During late August and September 2002 a further trench was excavated at Mount Pleasant. Trench J was opened with the intention of clarifying the nature of the site during the Roman period, and in particular in order to shed light upon the possibility that the site was a Roadside Settlement fronting on to a Roman road underlying the present modern road, the B1225 (see above). It was anticipated that the trench in 2002 would provide further indication of settlement associated with the course of the road. In the event a substantial stone founded building was located and partially examined, with its orientation and size virtually confirming the theory of a Roadside Settlement organized along the line of what is now the B1225.

It was decided that the 2002 trench be located on the east side of the B1225, in Street Furlong. Access was kindly permitted by Joseph Nickerson Farms via the estate manager Mr B. Emms. At Trench J in this field preservation of Roman period remains had been found to be very good, though this was thought to be in part a function of the local topography of this area of the field (see above). No geophysical results were available for this particular field as it had not been subject to development threats while in terms of the present project, seed crop trial cultivation had precluded prospection. Accordingly, there was no clear guide as to what to expect via excavation. It was decided to locate the trench close to the modern road, opposite a known concentration of Roman period pottery in the field on the other side of the modern road. The general location at this point in Street Furlong occupies a gentle slope to the north of the head of the dry valley in which Trench J was positioned. Pottery sherds were visible in the ploughsoil here and, moreover, fragments of ironstone thought likely to have been brought to this location for building purposes occurred in the ploughsoil and by the field hedge and verge. The specific location of the trench was a micro-plateaux that seemed at variance with the natural slope of the ground at this point. The western basulk of Trench J was 11.45m east from the edge of the tarmac of the B1225, while its southern basulk lay 84m north from the northern limit of Trench I.

The trench was of modest scale (26m²) being 5m by 5m with a 1m square extension at the mid point on the eastern side (Fig.3). Ploughsoil was stripped by hand in spits as at the other trenches. Following cleaning it was evident that archaeological deposits extended across the greater part of the exposed area with comparatively good preservation in an area that might have been thought to have been subject to progressive denudation as a consequence of normal modern ploughing practice. Since there was no immediate threat to the archaeology it was decided to sample the remains. A long sequence was found to be extant. Ancient soils of a type associated with Bronze Age activity (on the basis of previous evidence) overlay the natural chalk. These deposits were not examined in detail here.

Towards the end of the Iron Age a ditch had been cut on a south-west to north-east alignment (cut 9514/9523). This feature was sectioned in the south-west quarter of the trench where it was clearly discernible; it presumably traversed the trench but was obscured and at least partially disturbed by later activity and deposits on the eastern side of the trench. It was of U-shaped profile, c0.8m deep, cutting the natural chalk. It had filled with a series of clay silts some with frequent chalk gravel; a comparatively large animal bone assemblage was recovered (context 9522). The final fill had a silty humic character with charcoal and contained finds of mid first-century AD pottery and a pre-Flavian copper alloy brooch. This feature was cut by the construction trench of a stone-founded wall (9509). Also cut by this construction trench was a second ditch (cut 9525) on a different alignment, running east to west and extending beyond the limits of the excavation in both directions. This feature was also sectioned (Fig.4). It was found to have a broad U-shaped profile cut into the natural chalk and survived to a depth of c0.5m; its single silt clay fill (9521) yielded a small pottery group including body fragments forming much of the profile of a very fine 'Parisian ware' bowl or beaker, perhaps from the Market Rasen kilns. The latter item dates the filling of this ditch to the later second or third century AD.

The remains of the stone-founded wall (9509), which were visible following the removal of the ploughsoil, crossed the centre of the trench in an east-west direction for 5m before turning at a right angle to the north by the eastern trench basulk (the trench being extended at this point to reveal the turn). Its preservation had been assisted perhaps by a headland effect by the side of the field. What survived represented a carefully constructed building foundation, with Trench J revealing the south-east corner of the building (Fig.5). Excavation either side of the wall revealed details of its construction. Initially a slot for the wall foundation, c1.15m wide, had been cut to a depth of at least 0.18m. A layer of local ironstone brush had then been deposited and rammed flat to create a broad shallow base. On to this had been laid the wall foundation. This was 0.7m wide and positioned along the middle of the brush base which extended either side. The wall foundation comprised Tealby Limestone and chalk blocks (some up to 0.4m in longest dimension) forming a course set within a mortary chalk

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Fig 4. Section at Trench J, 2002, showing the cut of ditch 9525, the construction trench 9539, and deposit 9520. (Marked 'Section 2' on the plan.)
Plan of Trench J, 2002, showing the later features, including the Roman stone building and plough cuts.

Sixteen iron nails all likely to be of Roman date were recovered from the trench. The character of this foundation is closely reminiscent of that of the Roman period structures excavated at Hibalstow and elsewhere in the East Midlands. The wall foundation had been heavily disturbed in three places where it had been cut by modern broad sub-soil plough furrows; spaced c.2m apart, these ran north-south following the long axis of the present field. Evidently there is a threat to the sustained survival of archaeological remains. No features or certain floor levels associated with the building were encountered in the exposed area of its interior. However, within the structure, by the side of the wall foundation above the fill of ditch 9525 a charcoal rich spread of likely occupation soil (9520) was encountered, preserved due to sinkage of the earlier ditch fill. By the eastern exterior of the building a layer of chestnut-coloured clay may have represented a surface. A likely post setting (9529) c.1m south of the wall may have been contemporary. The building is likely to have been ailed, and was constructed and in use in the third century AD. No evidence indicating more than one phase in its life was forthcoming, and no later deposits overlay the wall or the spread (9520) other than ploughsoil.

Amongst items recovered from Trench J were fragments from three Roman glass vessels dating to the first and second centuries AD (a pillar moulded bowl, a cup and a small bowl
Fig. 6. Trench H, 2000. Cleaning across a series of features following the removal of ploughsoil; looking north. (Photo: Steven Willis)

with base ring), quernstone, several later Roman coins and sherds from three amphorae types including Spanish olive oil Dressel 20, the Gallic wine amphora Pelletier 47 and, remarkably, an Italian wine amphora from the Bay of Naples region. Collectively these finds suggest a location of some status during the Roman era. Students taking the Conservation MA at Durham University are presently working with some of the finds. Samples were taken for environmental analysis.

The excavation had demonstrated the presence of a sequence of earth fast remains associated with occupation in an area where archaeology was previously unknown. Of note, the ditch 9514/9523, yielding Iron Age and early Roman finds, had a south-west to north-east alignment mirroring that of other features at Trench E (of 1999) likely to be contemporary. The later ditch (9525), of early to mid Roman date followed a different alignment, that is, approximately east-west. This is the same alignment followed by the subsequent wall (and building). It would seem that the early Roman period witnessed a major re-organization of the site; (9525) might therefore represent a property/plot boundary. The building represented by the wall foundations lies at a right angle to the modern road and it appears highly likely that it fronted on to a Roman road, functioning as a commercial and domestic property, perhaps with integral links with agriculture and crop processing. If the Roman road directly underlies the modern road this would mean that the building discovered could be around 17m in length. Stone-founded buildings of this length are recorded at the Roadside Settlements at Hibaldstow and Sapperton; longer buildings also occur. The evidence from this trench, taken together with the property boundaries located in Trench I in 2000 on the same alignment, indicate that there were a number of like buildings on this side of the road at least, suggesting that the site was, indeed in the Roman era, a Roadside Settlement.

Summary of the Results from Trenches G to J

The work conducted in 2000-02 clarified a number of archaeological aspects of the site, confirming the widespread good survival of archaeological remains of several periods. Data on the preservation, date and character of these remains was garnered. An amount of information relating to the ancient environment and economy of the site was forthcoming. The data collected during the work at this complex between 1998-2002 has particular significance considering the limited amount of excavation undertaken on and around the Wolds.

Further stratified remains pre-dating the later Iron Age and assignable to the Bronze Age and/or early/middle Iron Age were encountered, being an addition to those examined in 1998-99. Their presence is not surprising given the many burials, linear features and enclosures detected on the Wolds that are presumed to date to the Bronze Age/early first millennium BC. These excavated features relate to major land divisions and enclosures, primarily manifest through the use of wooden palisades on a monumental scale. Whilst these features are well preserved they have yielded little in the way of artefactual remains. The potential for carbon dates is likewise poor, doubtless as a consequence of feature type, soil acidity and leaching over a long time period.

Remains dating to the late Iron Age/first century AD were present in Trenches H and J as they had been in trenches A-C in 1998. The 1998-99 seasons had already confirmed that this was a site of significance during the later Iron Age. At H in 2000 an enclosure boundary of this date was present.

The major evidence from the 2000-02 seasons related to the Roman period with remains present in Trenches H, I and J. Enclosure/field boundaries were encountered at H. Overall evidence from 1998-2002 points to domestic and industrial activity during the Roman era either side of the B1225,
implying that the Roman road from Horncastle to Caistor followed this course. Whilst the likely foundation of a building of Roman date was identified in Trench B no certain structural remains had been forthcoming before 2002. Indirect evidence of occupation though was plentiful. The trenches in Street Furlong revealed a surprisingly deep, well persevered sequence of deposits. The remains identified at Trench I were all Roman and rich in artefactual material and palaeoenvironmental indicators. The opened area lay close to domestic buildings. The ditches excavated are part of an coherent system evidently representing property boundaries fronting onto a road immediately to the west. Economic and daily processes are suggested by the collected evidence, including iron smelting, grain milling and, potentially, cereal processing. At J the Roman period activity succeeded prehistoric phases. Again a range of material culture was associated. Exotic items apart, the large majority of the Roman pottery consists of coarse grey-ware (bowls, jars, dishes and storage jars) which forms over 80% of the pottery (by weight) amongst stratified groups in Trench I. These will be locally manufactured items from the Market Rasen-Claxby industry on the eastern fringe of the An cholme valley just c.5km south-west of Mount Pleasant, or from elsewhere in northern Lincolnshire. Samian accounts for only 1% of the pottery amongst stratified groups. This latter percentage, whilst small, is consistent with proportions at other settlements of the period away from the military and major civil centres. In sum, the evidence points to a site of some scale and prosperity, with agrarian commercial, and minor industrial elements, and analogous to other middle-rank settlements known in the region such as Hibaldstow, Navenby and Sapperton. Of particular note, the building examined in Trench J is a rare example of a stone-founded Roman building located on the Lincolnshire Wolds; others occur at one or two of the villa sites and at Ulceby, towards the southern end of the Wolds, and doubtless more will be identified in time.

The Survey

Surface survey work in the area continues as part of the Project. Several fields have now been examined. During survey in the field known as Street Furlong a quern top-stone in Spilsby Sandstone, and of Roman date, was recovered. From elsewhere a part of the upper bow and spring of a brooch of Naunheim type (c.120-50BC) was found, with analysis of the surfaces indicating 75%+ silver, a complete example in copper alloy had been found in 1998, though these are rare finds in the later British Iron Age. Advantageously a sizeable assemblage of middle and later Roman period pottery from a field just to the east of Nettleton village (this being Ten Acre Field) was made available for study in 2002 by Mrs G. Bain, Mrs J. Childs and Mr A. Dawes. This site lies c.2km north-west of the site at Mount Pleasant, with which it overlaps chronologically; in the case of Ten Acre Field the assemblage is markedly utilitarian. Similarly large assemblages of Roman period pottery are recorded from a number of locations in the vicinity of Caistor, having been identified on the Wolds top, in hill-slope locations, and along the Wold edge. This particular group from Ten Acre Field derives from a slope location on the spring line; the Roman ‘core’ of Caistor is likewise situated on the spring line.

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Archives are at LCNCC, Accn numbers 2000.193 and 2000.194.

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Notes

5. A. Snelling and D. J. Rackham, Nettleton, Mount Pleasant, NMP00: Environmental Archaeology Assessment, a report by The Environmental Archaeology Consultancy (2001).
6. Snelling and Rackham, Nettleton Environmental Archaeology Assessment.
7. Snelling and Rackham, Nettleton Environmental Archaeology Assessment.
8. Snelling and Rackham, Nettleton Environmental Archaeology Assessment.