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6873

SLI 1894

34136 - Roman  
34137 - Early Med  
34874 - Med  
34875 - P Med.  
34039 - undated

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION AT  
LAND NORTH OF DYKE, LINCOLNSHIRE

BY  
THE TRUST FOR LINCOLNSHIRE  
ARCHAEOLOGY  
(NOW HERITAGE LINCOLNSHIRE)

FOR  
ANGLIAN WATER SERVICES LTD.

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## INTRODUCTION (See Fig. 1)

Between 4th February 1991 and 1st March 1991 an archaeological excavation was undertaken on land to the north of the village of Dyke, Lincolnshire (NGR TF234<sup>1345</sup>52300), in advance of the construction of a new water main by Anglian Water, replacing an existing main. The excavation was undertaken in two one-week periods rather than a two week continuous programme as originally intended. This change was a result of severe weather conditions at the time. The purpose of the excavation was to record, date and interpret a number of crop marks previously identified by aerial photography. The crop marks consisted of a circular ditch and other linear ditches forming enclosures. All of the features noted would be crossed by the pipeline and, therefore, partially or entirely destroyed during construction. It was assumed, by comparison with similar features excavated elsewhere, that these archaeological features were prehistoric in date.

Fieldwalking formed part of the project and was undertaken to the north of Bourne to locate and delineate an area of Romano-British settlement which had been identified previously during a survey of the fenland. Furthermore this survey had also identified the presence of a Roman road in the area which, as with the occupation area, required examination. Following fieldwalking, these sites were located and identified with the intention of excavating and recording them in advance of their destruction during the construction of the water main.

## METHODOLOGY

Prior to the commencement of the archaeological work the topsoil and some of the underlying sub-soil were removed by the contractor using a mechanical excavator. A 5 metre wide easement was created for the construction of the pipeline. Initially, the archaeological work consisted of the clearance, by hand, of an area in the presumed location of the archaeological features. This clearance failed to locate these features, however, it did show that a considerable depth of subsoil overlay the natural deposits of sand and gravel. This area also located the western edge of the construction trench for the existing pipeline.

In consequence a second area was opened to the south of the first. In this trench the remaining sub-soil was removed by mechanical excavator to the level of the natural deposits. The removal of the subsoil revealed the anticipated archaeological features which were found to be cut into the natural subsoil.

Due to the poor weather conditions, (which resulted in freezing ground and heavy snow cover) further archaeological excavation was impossible and work was suspended from 8th - 25th February. The work was thus separated into the two phases described above.

Following the clearance of the site by a mechanical excavator, the remaining non-archaeological material was removed using picks and shovels. Thereafter excavation of the archaeological features was

undertaken by hand and entailed the recording, in detail, of each cut (pits, ditches, etc.) and the fills within them, on pro-forma record sheets. The records describe the nature and characteristics of the soil, as well as the archaeological feature, i.e. its shape and dimensions. Scale plans at 1:20 were drawn of the entire site. Cut features were sectioned to record the sequence of fills and 1:10 scale drawings were produced of the resulting elevations. Throughout the operation a photographic record was maintained of both the progress of excavations as well as of individual features.

#### EXCAVATION RESULTS (See Fig. 2)

The fieldwork revealed the large circular feature identified by aerial photographs. Upon excavation this feature (052 and 061) was found to be 3.12m wide (at its maximum extent) and 0.64m deep. In profile the cut was U-shaped and contained a primary fill of light brown compacted soil with up to 50% of its mass being composed of flint and gravel. Such a fill suggests slumping/erosion of the sides after its original cutting. The remainder of the fill was composed of mid-brown soil, again with considerable quantities of flint/gravel. No finds were recovered from the fill of this feature and, therefore, no date can be offered for its construction.

Only a small part of the overall plan of the circular feature (probably less than 1/3) was exposed but it is likely that at its full extent the circular ditch would be in the order of 22m in diameter.

Slightly to the north of the southern limit of the ring ditch were two cut features (056 and 055), possibly also ditches, orientated east-west, and appearing to join at the western limit of the excavation. This apparent junction may be spurious and it may be the case that one cuts the other, i.e. one is later, with the apparent junction being merely the result of the similarities of the soil. The relationship of these features was not examined due to lack of time. An alternative interpretation of this feature (in view of the nature of 056) is discussed below.

The most southerly of these features (056) was, upon sectioning (in two separate locations), found to have a broadly similar profile - gently sloping sides with a flat base. The width of ditch as exposed in these sections was 1.20m; its depth was 0.32m. The western section, however, revealed an additional cut consisting of a V shaped (in profile) feature apparently cut below the level of the main ditch. The relationship of this feature to 056 is unclear and there may be a number of interpretations: 1) a small post hole cut into or possibly earlier than the ditch and therefore associated with a different phase of activity to that represented by 056;

2) a localised recut of the main ditch to assist with drainage or to prevent localised flooding or

3) a recut of the ditch, the eastern end of which did not extend into the eastern section of 056. Such a recut or separate feature would also account for the apparent junction of the two features described above.

Due to the uniform nature of the fills of these features, which consisted of a brown clay with considerable quantities of gravel, it was not possible to establish the relationship between them.

To the north of the ditches described above lay a complex of cut features consisting of the following:- Two large pits, 063 and 064. Pit 064 was sub-circular in plan and 1.90m in diameter. In profile it was bowl-shaped and contained a sequence of fills. To the west of 064 was a second large pit, 063, the precise extent of which was not established. As with 064 this was bowl-shaped in profile. The relationship between these two pits could not be established due to the point at which these would have intersected being cut by a relatively shallow feature, 089. This was bowl shaped in profile and contained a single fill of mid-brown soil. This feature (089) may represent the only examined portion of a large feature which lay to the south. The large circular ditch 061 cut the western pit 063 and therefore must predate it.

Cut into the pits described above were three smaller features. The nature and extent of these is unknown as they were not excavated. From their size, however, it may be assumed that they are post holes.

To the north of this complex of features lay cut 058 (also not excavated owing to lack of time). The plan shape of this feature suggests that rather than being composed of a single feature it may be made up of a number of individual smaller features, the relationship of which could not be defined in plan. It is suggested

that the feature was composed of two post holes separated by a beam slot.

To the east of 058 lay 060. This feature, which partially extended beyond the eastern limit of excavation, was 0.44m east-west with a depth of 70mm. The fill was a mid-brown soil with gravel pebbles and may be interpreted as a post hole or small pit.

Feature 070 which extended beyond the limit of excavation (and was, therefore, only partially exposed) was sub-circular in plan with a maximum exposed dimension of 0.70m. In section the feature was 0.20m deep and contained a fill of dark grey silt.

To the north of 061 was a substantial ditch, 067, barely perceivable on the available aerial photographs. The feature was orientated east-west and cut or was cut by 061. However, due to the similarity of the fills of these features this relationship could not be established.

Feature 067 was bowl-shaped in profile and contained a single uniform fill of mid-brown soil with small amounts of flint. The feature was 1.60m wide, 0.30m deep and a maximum length of 2.64m was exposed.

To the south of the north limit of excavation lay an irregular, in plan, shaped ditch orientated east-west. In profile this feature the upper parts of sides were gently sloping which at approximately half the depth of the feature became steeply sloping to form a V shaped base.

Over the remainder of the exposed area a number of very indistinct and insubstantial features were located (See Fig 2). They were not excavated due to lack of time and, therefore, their interpretation remains unresolved. The location of these is, however, shown on Fig. 2

## CONCLUSION

The excavation revealed a considerable density of archaeological features consisting of pits, ditches and post holes. The precise nature, and in many cases the relationship, between these features was unclear, due to the similarity of their fills. In consequence it was not possible to establish any form of relative chronology for occupation on the site, except in isolated cases - a problem which, in part, may be due to the relatively small area examined in relation to the overall area of occupation suggested by the features encountered.

The problem of dating the features is further compounded by the absence of artefacts from any of the features. However, the overall layout of the features encountered implies that they are prehistoric in origin and fall into the Neolithic, Bronze Age or Iron Age period.

The precise nature or usage of the site is a question which cannot be definitively answered due to the small area examined and lack of artefacts. However, during the periods within which it is likely these features were constructed, four main types of occupation feature occur; henge monuments which are roughly circular ditch enclosures (the precise function of which has not been established, but appear to be associated with stock management with some form of associated ritual functions); round barrows, which in their most elementary form are a mound containing a burial/s bounded by a ditch; a hut circle defined by the drip gully around the edge of a circular timber structure. This last interpretation is unlikely owing to the dimension

of the circular ditch which in the case of these features are less substantial. However, the large ditch may represent the boundary ditch to a small settlement.

The density of features encountered does suggest that the site was occupied for some considerable time. Such a conclusion is further supported by the overall confused nature of the archaeological features encountered and it may be that one or more of the archaeological interpretations, offered above, accounts for these.

The results of the excavations were significant for a number of reasons:-

i) the first detailed examination of the ring ditch and other crop marks, previously only known from aerial photographs;

ii) the location of features in association with the ring ditch indicates that this is not a single isolated feature, but rather part of a concentration of features;

iii) the excavation clearly indicated that whilst large features may be shown on aerial photographs, a mass of smaller features may also be associated with these;

iv) the work showed that the survival of insubstantial archaeological features under relatively intensive agricultural regimes was feasible.

## FIELDWALKING TF1019 2150

(Numbers shown in brackets below indicate those on Fig 3)

As stated in the introduction, fieldwalking was carried out in order to relocate the concentration of Romano-British artefacts and a road-line found during previous survey. Once located, these areas were to be examined and, where destruction was inevitable, excavated and recorded.

It was intended that the fieldwalking be carried out prior to the excavation of the topsoil and subsoil along the line of the easement. In this way any finds recovered during the fieldwalking would be retrieved in situ (taking into account movement of finds resulting from ploughing and other agencies) and significant concentrations of artefacts could be identified. Unfortunately it was not possible to undertake the fieldwalking under these conditions in the first area examined, which resulted in a control line having to be walked to confirm the results of the first line.

## METHODOLOGY

A total of 3 lines were walked, lines C and B were 409m in length and line A 100m in length. Each transect was 5m wide with two people walking each of these in parallel. Both individuals collected finds separately, except in the case of line A where the infrequent finds count did not warrant such a collection policy. Throughout the operation the types and density of finds were noted.

Conditions for this work were good. The field had minimal crop coverage and recent rainfall meant that the finds were easily identifiable.

## RESULTS

### Line C

This line was walked from north to south and revealed the following concentrations of artefacts:- From the northern limit for a distance of 86m (2) there was a fairly dense concentration of Romano-British pottery sherds and brick fragments. Beyond this, and for a distance of 20m, the frequency of finds gradually diminished and finally ceased (3).

South of this was a moderately dense concentration of artifacts (4) consisting of Romano-British pottery, brick/tile fragments, a fragment of samian rim (an orange/red high quality pottery produced in Northern France between the 1st-3rd centuries AD), sherds of a coarse black pottery, possibly of an Anglo-Saxon date, and sherds of medieval pottery. This concentration of artefacts continued for a distance of 122m. South of this and for a distance of 180m (5) was a concentration of of Romano-British pot sherds with small quantities of medieval and post-medieval pottery.

### LINE B

This was undertaken in the ploughed field adjacent to the previously

cleared easement and acted as a control area. The results for this line confirm those of line C.

#### LINE A

Line A was to test the limit of the previously located pottery scatter and was walked south to north, and located to the north of line C. Only a few sherds of pottery, brick or tile were recovered from this line, along with fragments of modern land drain.

#### WATCHING BRIEF

##### INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

During the excavation of the pipe trench a watching brief was conducted to record and, if possible, excavate any archaeological features which may be revealed during the operation. The watching brief required the monitoring of the 2m wide and 2m deep pipe-trench in those areas where the fieldwalking had revealed evidence for settlement at the northern limit of line C.

##### RESULTS

The watching brief produced no evidence of cut features in the sides of the pipe-trench or any other evidence of human occupation in this area. This was remarkable in view of the high concentrations of artefacts on the surface and may well be a reflection of the methods used to excavate the pipe-trench.

## CONCLUSION OF FIELDWALKING AND WATCHING BRIEF

The fieldwalking re-located the concentration of Romano-British occupation debris (ie pottery) identified during previous work in the area. Upon examination of this concentration during the watching brief no evidence for Romano-British settlement was identified. This odd situation invites two conclusions: i) the features which formed the settlement, such as shallow post holes or beam slots, were so slight that they had been destroyed entirely by ploughing, or

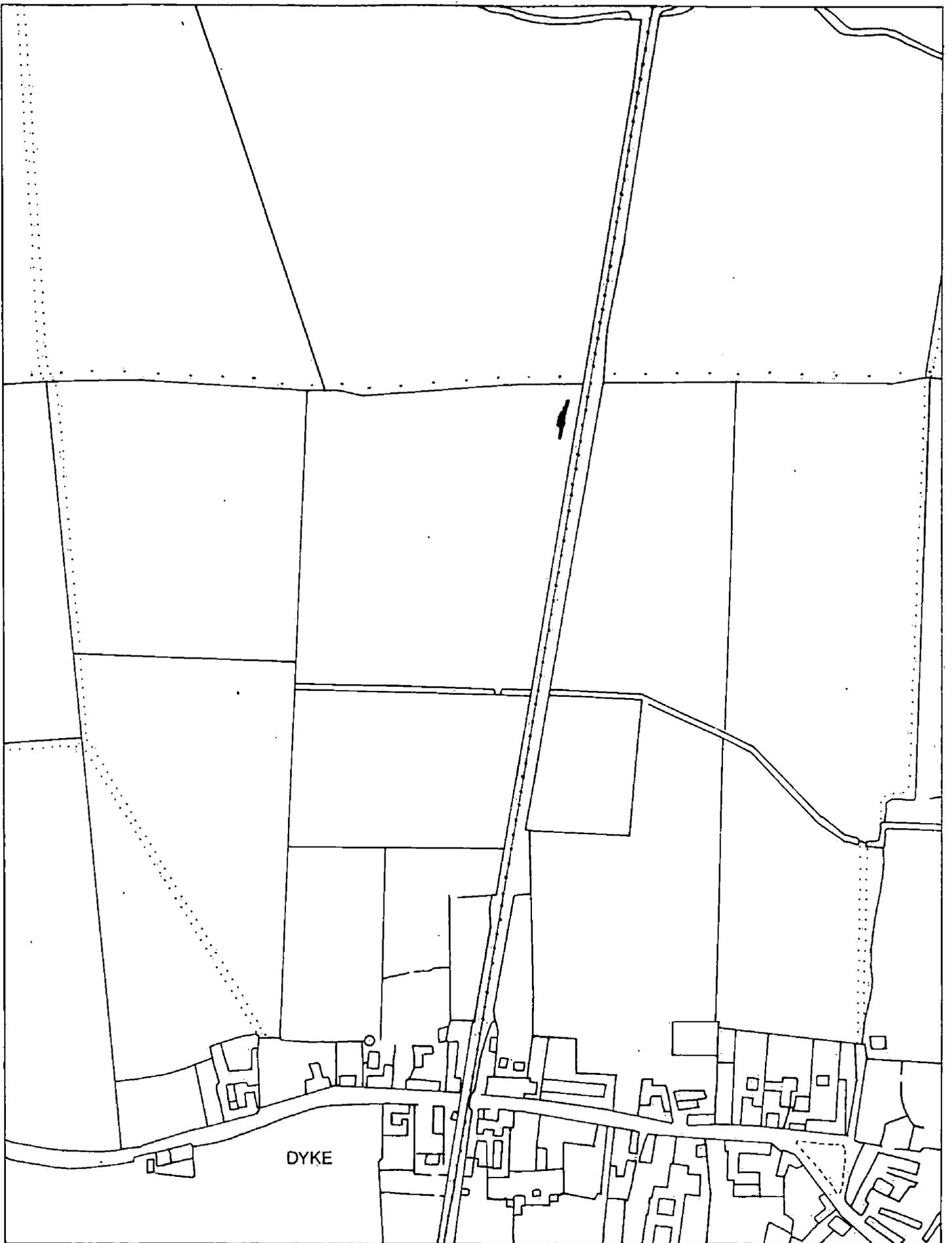
ii) the main focus of occupation is away from the area investigated.

The presence of sherds of Anglo-Saxon pottery within the assemblage recovered tends to suggest nearby occupation relating to this period, although its actual source cannot be established. It may be the case that rather than indicating a separate area of occupation, Saxon occupation took over and continued on the Roman settlement site.

The suggestion made above, that the main focus of occupation is away from the area examined is supported by the absence of any deeply cut features, such as pits or ditches, usually found in close association with settlement areas. Such a conclusion must, of course, remain tentative in view of the limited area examined.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SITE LOCATION



FIG. 1

# PLAN OF EXPOSED FEATURES

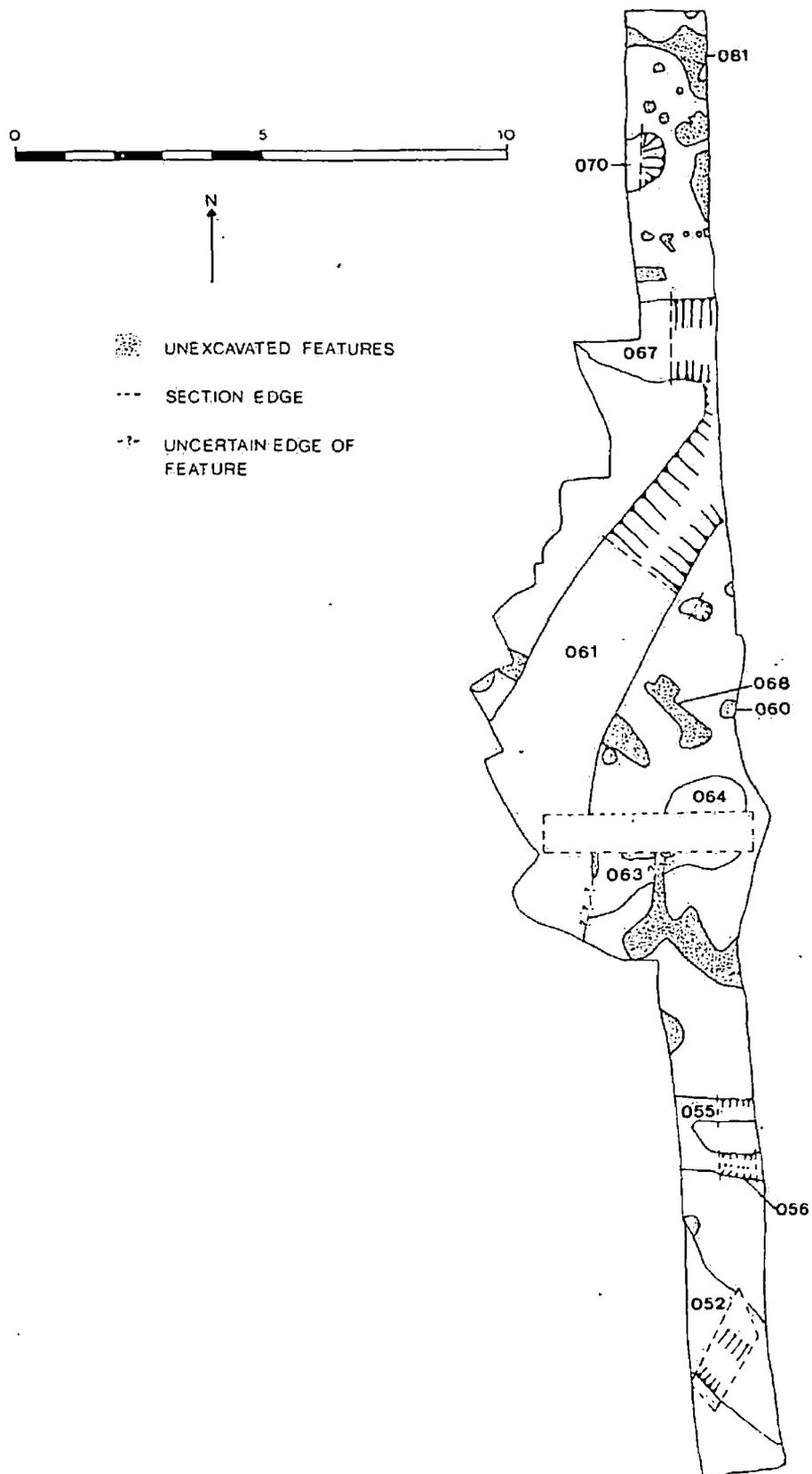
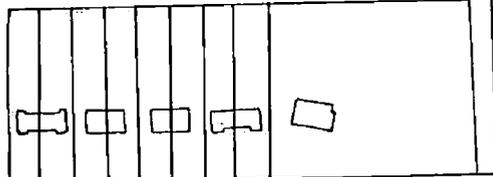
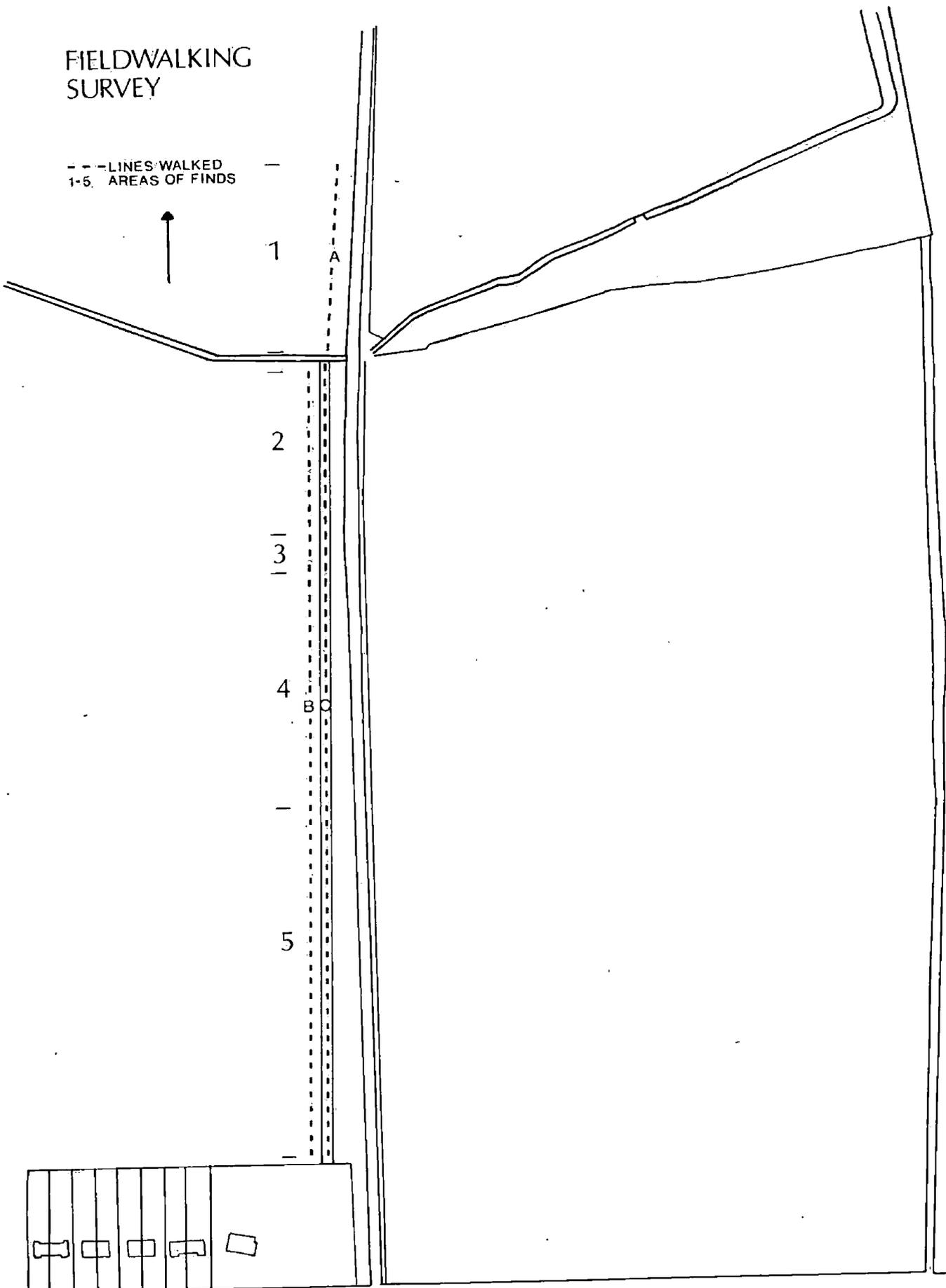


FIG. 2

# FIELDWALKING SURVEY

--- LINES WALKED  
1-5. AREAS OF FINDS



BOURNE

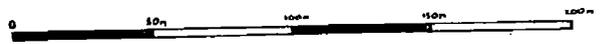
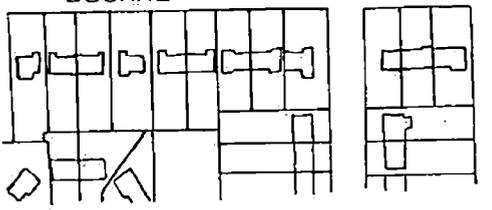


FIG.3