ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

PLANTATION FARM, SKIPWITH
THE BEECHES, NORTH DUFFIELD
NORTH YORKSHIRE

REPORT

March 2000

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken for RJB Mining (UK) Ltd by Field Archaeology Specialists in association with Mike Griffiths and Associates. The aim of the investigation was to identify whether accumulations of windblown sand were sealed beneath the modern topsoil, if archaeological remains were present in the excavated drainage channels and whether these would be affected by improved drainage. This report presents the result from the investigation carried out between the 7th of February to the 2nd of March 2000.

1.1 LOCATION AND LAND USE

The watching brief was carried out in a total of five fields at two farms, Plantation Farm (NGR SE 672 380), Fields 1-4, south of Skipwith and at The Beeches (NGR SE 684 372), Field 5 on the edge of North Duffield (Fig.1).

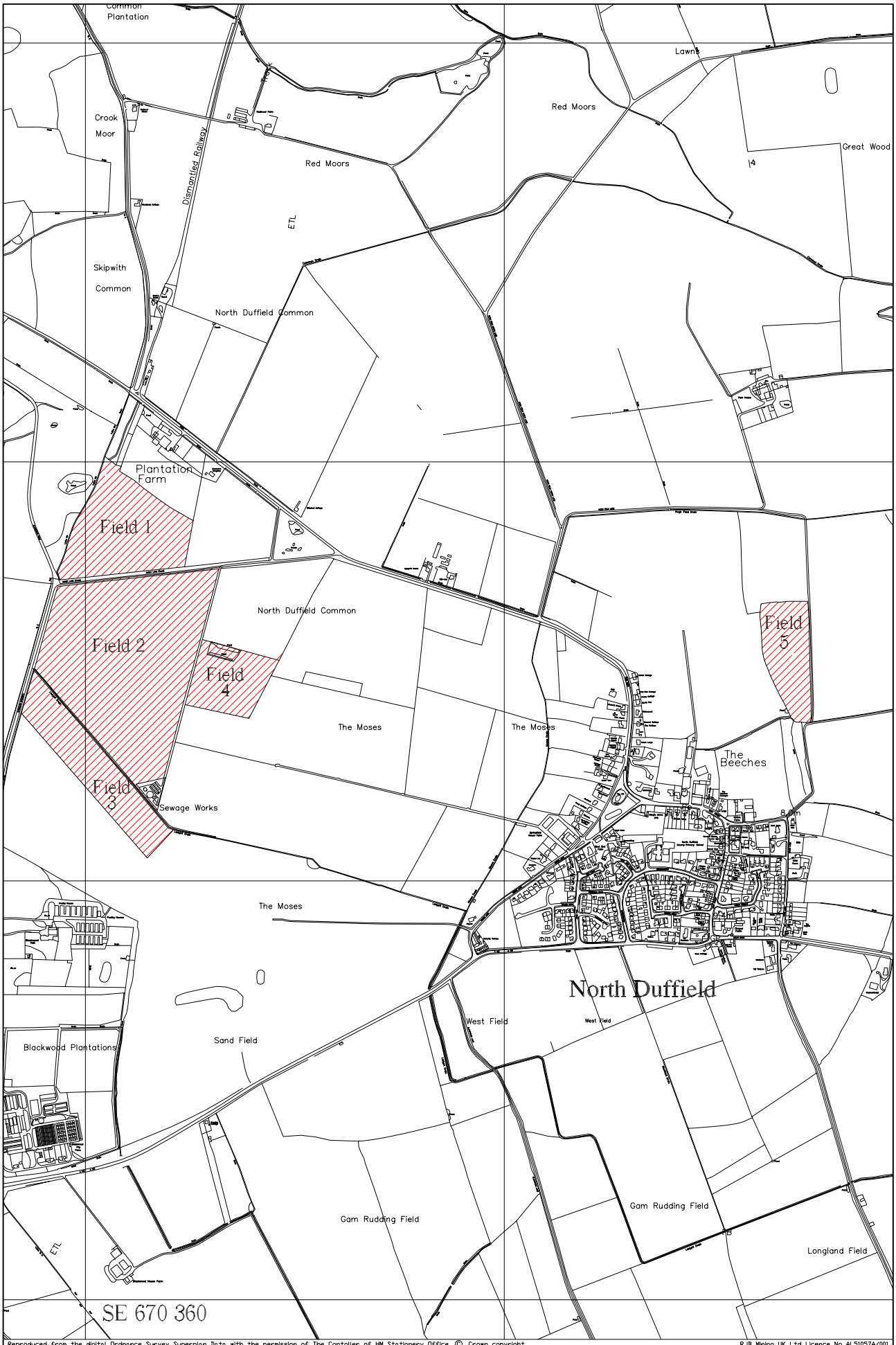
Field 1 to the south of the farm is bordered on the western side by a small drain and to the south by Sandy Lane. It was covered by the test pit survey but was still under set-aside at the time of the watching brief and is not due to be drained until later in the year. Field 2 lies south of Sandy Lane, it is also bordered by drainage dykes and by the main road south out of Skipwith. The North Duffield Sewage Works are located in the south-eastern corner of this field. Field 3 lies further south beyond Ladypit Drain and to the east of Cornelius Causeway. Field 4 is situated to the east of Field 2 and to the south-east of a disused marl pit, which is now covered by trees and contains a small pond. All fields under investigation were under stubble or contained the remains of harvested sugar beet crops.

Only the test pit survey was carried out in Field 5, but this is also scheduled to be drained later this year. The Beeches farm itself is situated on Main Street, North Duffield, although Field 5 to the north-east is bordered by a track to the east and a dyke to the west. At the time of investigation the field was under pasture.

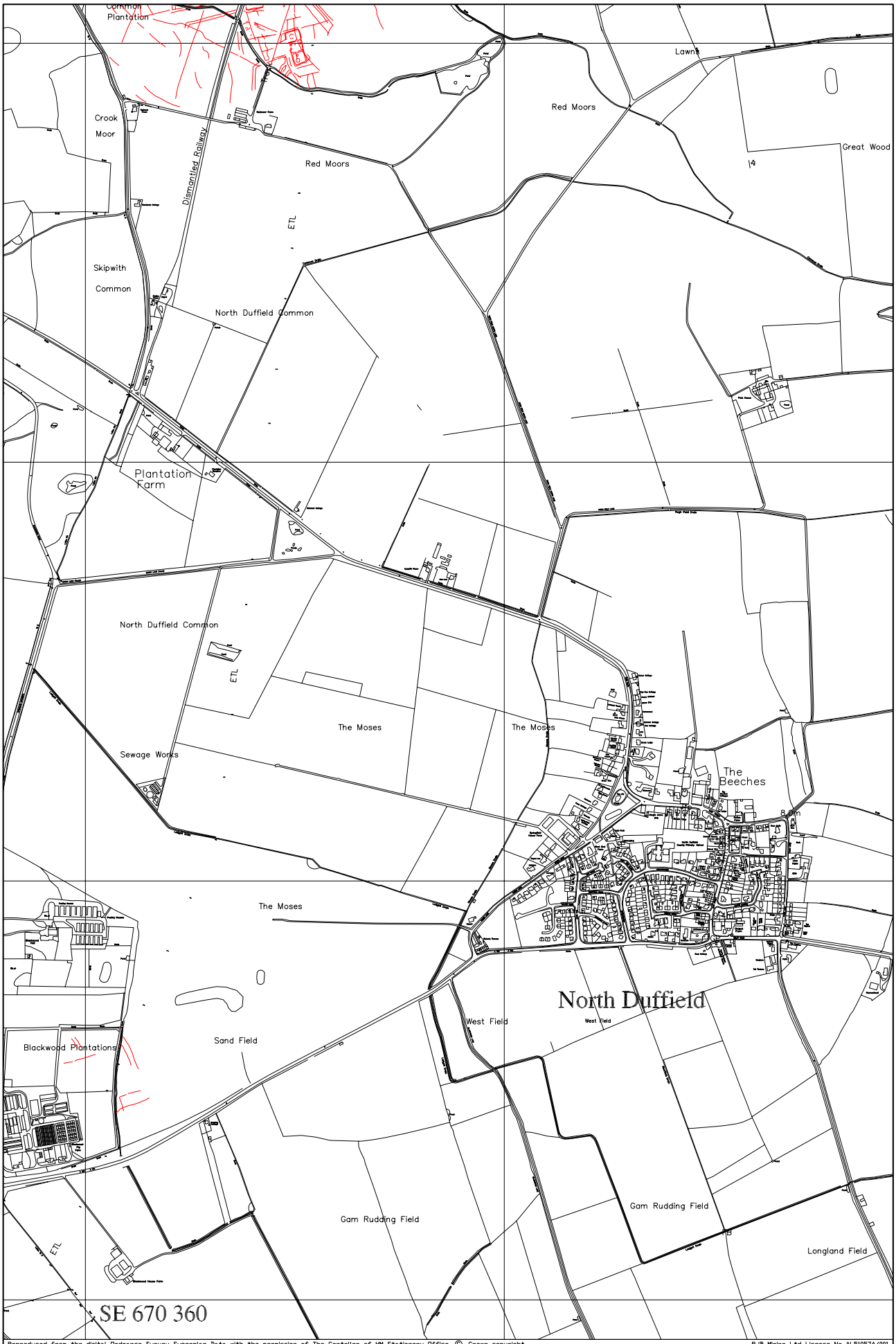
1.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Previous surveys, excavations and aerial reconnaissance have provided archaeological evidence for extensive occupation of Skipwith and the surrounding area, although little cropmark evidence has been mapped around North Duffield itself (Fig.2). Settlement and land use patterns, as well as funerary monuments which exist near to Skipwith have been found to date at least as far back as the Iron Age.

Previous investigations during drainage work at Redmoor Farm, Skipwith (Int.17), located archaeological features, some of which were beneath deposits of wind blown sand and were therefore masked from detection by aerial reconnaissance. Few archaeological features were discovered during similar investigations at Park Farm and on further fields belonging to North House Farm (Int.18), despite their close proximity to known cropmark sites. An additional field belonging to North House



Location of the watching brief, Plantation Farm and The Beeches | Scale 1:12500 | Figure 1



Cropmarks west of North Duffield | Scale 1:12500 | Figure 2

Farm (Int.19), located on North Duffield Road was within close proximity of the fields under investigation, but it contained only a small area of windblown sand and three archaeological features.

2.0 PROCEDURE

2.1 DRAINAGE PROCEDURE

A drainage scheme was installed in Fields 2 -4 in order to replace failing drains affected by mining subsidence. The pattern was similar in all three fields, with lateral arterials feeding into main drains, which took the water to dykes bordering the fields.

The drainage work was carried out by contractors (Hagrapat Ltd) working for RJB Mining. Drainage channels were mechanically excavated by a trenching machine, which spread the upcast to either side of the cut. The channel was between 0.15 to 0.40m wide and varied in depth, depending on the required drop. The drain, which consisted of conjoining lengths of plastic pipe, was fed directly into the trench by a mechanism mounted on the rear of the machine. The drainage channels were backfilled with stone ballast and infilled with the upcast. Imported stone (40mm) was used as ballast in the drains and was fed into the trench from a conveyer belt mounted on the side of a trailer. The lateral drains were covered immediately by stone, which was fed into a hopper on the back of the trenching machine. Soil was then pushed into the trenches with a blade mounted to the front of a tractor. The maximum depth of the new drainage channels was 1.60m below ground surface.

At the junction of each lateral drain, trenches were dug with the back-acting arm of a JCB in order to connect the lateral and main channels. On average these trenches measured 1.00 x 3.00m and were cut to the depth of the adjacent lateral.

2.2 WATCHING BRIEF PROCEDURE

During the watching brief, contact with archaeological remains was sought both in section, on either side of the drainage channel, and in plan from the upcast. Feature identification in section was most successful in the main arterials, as some time elapsed between trenching and complete backfilling. However, in most cases, feature identification had to rely on the upcast of the lateral drains. Nevertheless, soil colour changes were marked in the fresh soil upcast, as archaeological features were filled with darker soil compared with the light sandy subsoils.

A number of preceding drainage schemes were observed in the fields belonging to Plantation Farm. These ranged from a variety of older ceramic pipes to modern plastic drain pipes. The latter were installed by Hagrapat Ltd in the 1970s.

Before any drainage works were carried out each field was subject to a test pit survey. Pits, each approximately 0.50m square were hand dug at intervals of 50m in order to assess the nature of the subsoil and to measure the depth of buried strata.

Heights for the contour survey (Above Ordnance Datum) were calculated from Ordnance Survey spot heights taken from the adjacent road surface, with the exception of Field 5, where there were no convenient benchmarks and the survey stations were allocated arbitrary values.

3.0 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

No datable finds were recovered from the upcast of any archaeological feature located in the watching brief.

No earthworks were visible in the fields under investigation.

3.1 PLANTATION FARM

3.1.1 Field 1

The ground surface was generally level, lying between the 9.40-10.60m contour (Fig.3).

Twenty-three test pits (TP1-23) were dug and revealed an extensive cover of windblown sand across the field (Fig.4). It varied in thickness from 0.06-0.55m with a substantial area covered by more than 0.40m. The underlying subsoil was a very pale/ light brown/ brownish grey sand.

Drainage works will be carried out later in the year, but no archaeological features were contacted in the test pit survey.

3.1.2 Field 2

The field sloped gently from the south-western to the north-eastern side from the 8.80-10.40m contour (Fig.5). Drains installed by the contractors covered the entire field apart from the north-eastern corner, a total length of 8.72km.

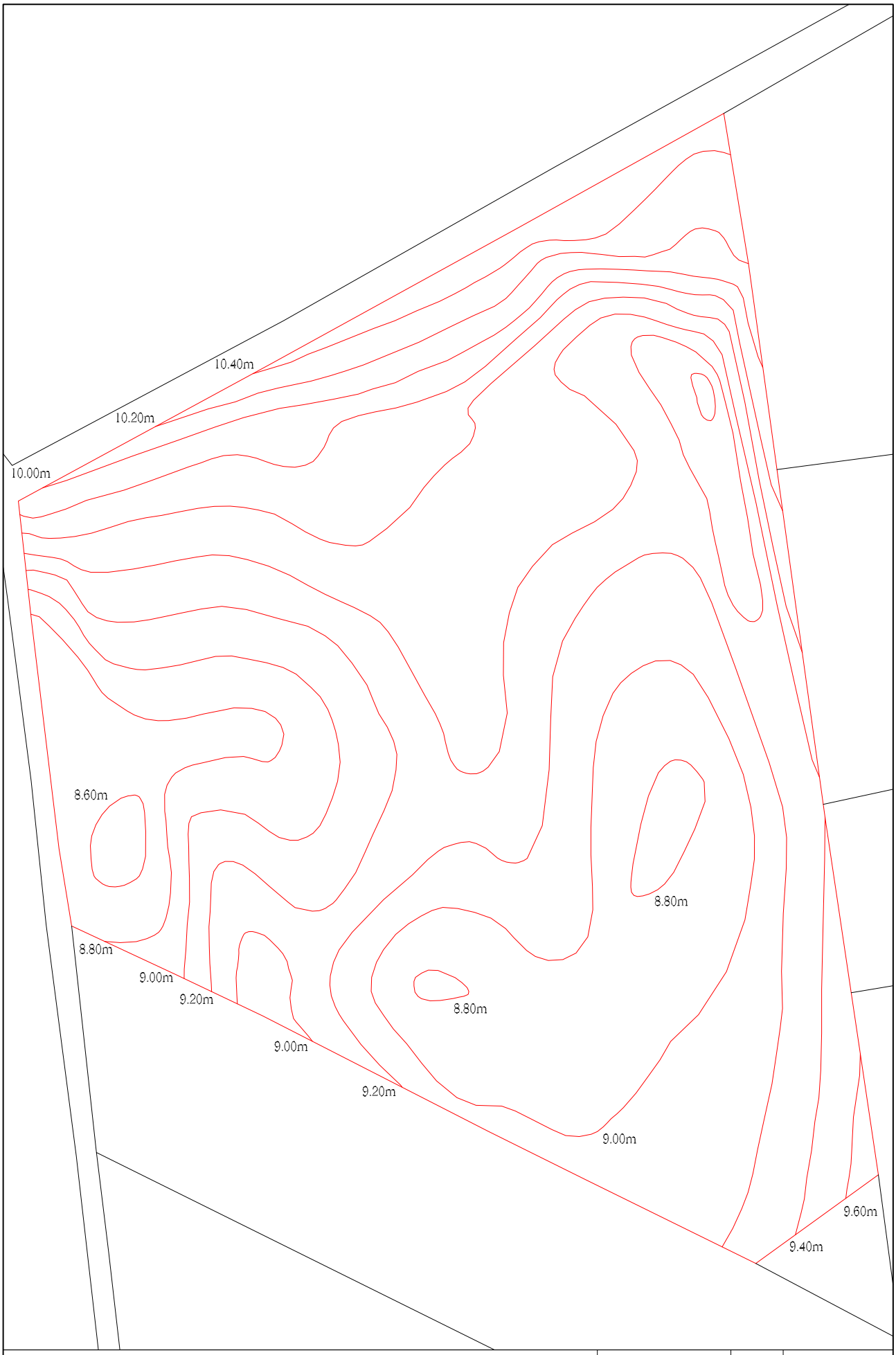
Fifty-five test pits (TP1-55) were dug (Fig.6) which revealed windblown sand also across the entire field. It varied in thickness from 0.08-0.77m, with a substantial area at the northern end covered by over 0.40m. In TP42 and TP51 the construction of earlier land drains had destroyed the buried strata, whereas TP77 contained only windblown sand (0.77m deep) and was abandoned before reaching subsoil.

Two localised areas of desiccated peat were exposed (A and B, Fig.6) situated beneath the windblown sand, but in each area it was less than 0.10m thick. The underlying subsoil was a brown / brown grey/ yellowish brown sand.

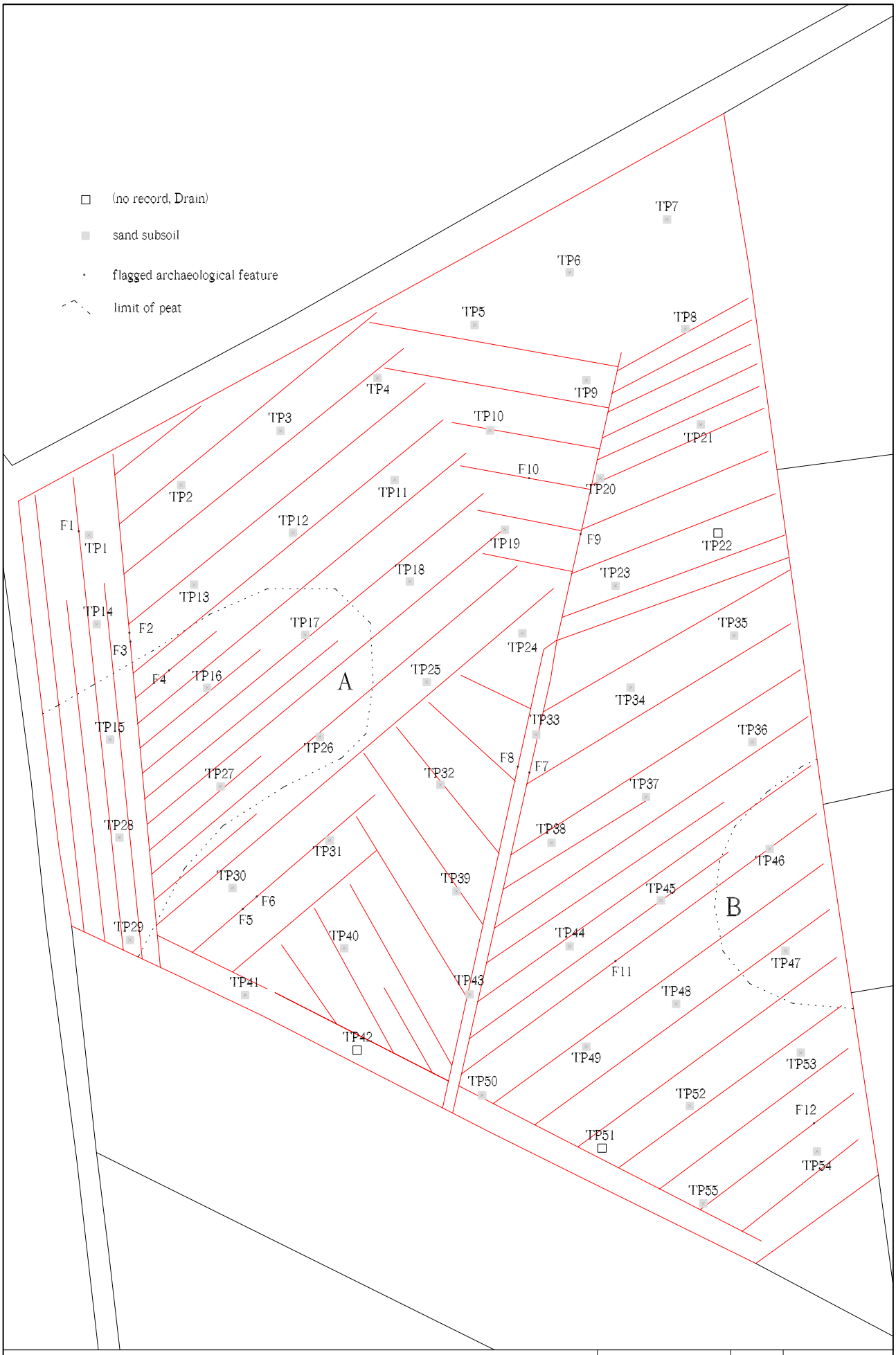
A number of archaeological features, spread across the field, were identified in the drainage works

Field 1 contour plan at 0.20m intervals | Scale 1:2000 | Figure 3

Field 1 results of investigations | Scale 1:2000 | Figure 4



Field 2 contour plan at 0.20m intervals | Scale 1:2500 | Figure 5



Field 2 land drainage scheme and results of investigations | Scale 1:2500 | Figure 6

(F1-F12). Three were gullies (F3, F7 and F8) which may represent a single linear feature crossing the field. The other features could not be classified since they appeared only in the upcast of the laterals.

3.1.3 Field 3

Field 3 was long and narrow and generally level, although rising slightly at the south-eastern end (Fig.7). A scheme of drainage works were installed at the north-western end which covered only 0.67km.

Four test pits (TP1-4) were dug in the area of the drains (Fig.8). Windblown sand, 0.06-0.35m thick was identified in each pit overlying a brown / yellow brown sand subsoil, but no archaeological features were observed during installation.

3.1.4 Field 4

The ground surface sloped down toward the northwest (Fig.9).

Drainage works covered the small field over a total distance of 1.54km.

All seven test pits (TP1-7) revealed deposits of windblown sand except TP2 and TP4 (Fig.10). It varied in thickness from 0.15-0.68m and covered a sand subsoil. TP2 and TP4 contained previously dug land drains which had cut through and destroyed the strata.

Four unclassified features were identified in the lateral drains (F1-F4), these may represent either small localised gullies or individual anomalies.

3.2 THE BEECHES

3.2.1 Field 5

The ground surface was generally level, although slightly raised toward the north-western side (Fig.11).

Ten test pits were dug (TP1-10) but no buried strata were observed (Fig.12). The predominant subsoil was a heavy brownish yellow sandy clay, although TP7 contained a clay sand.

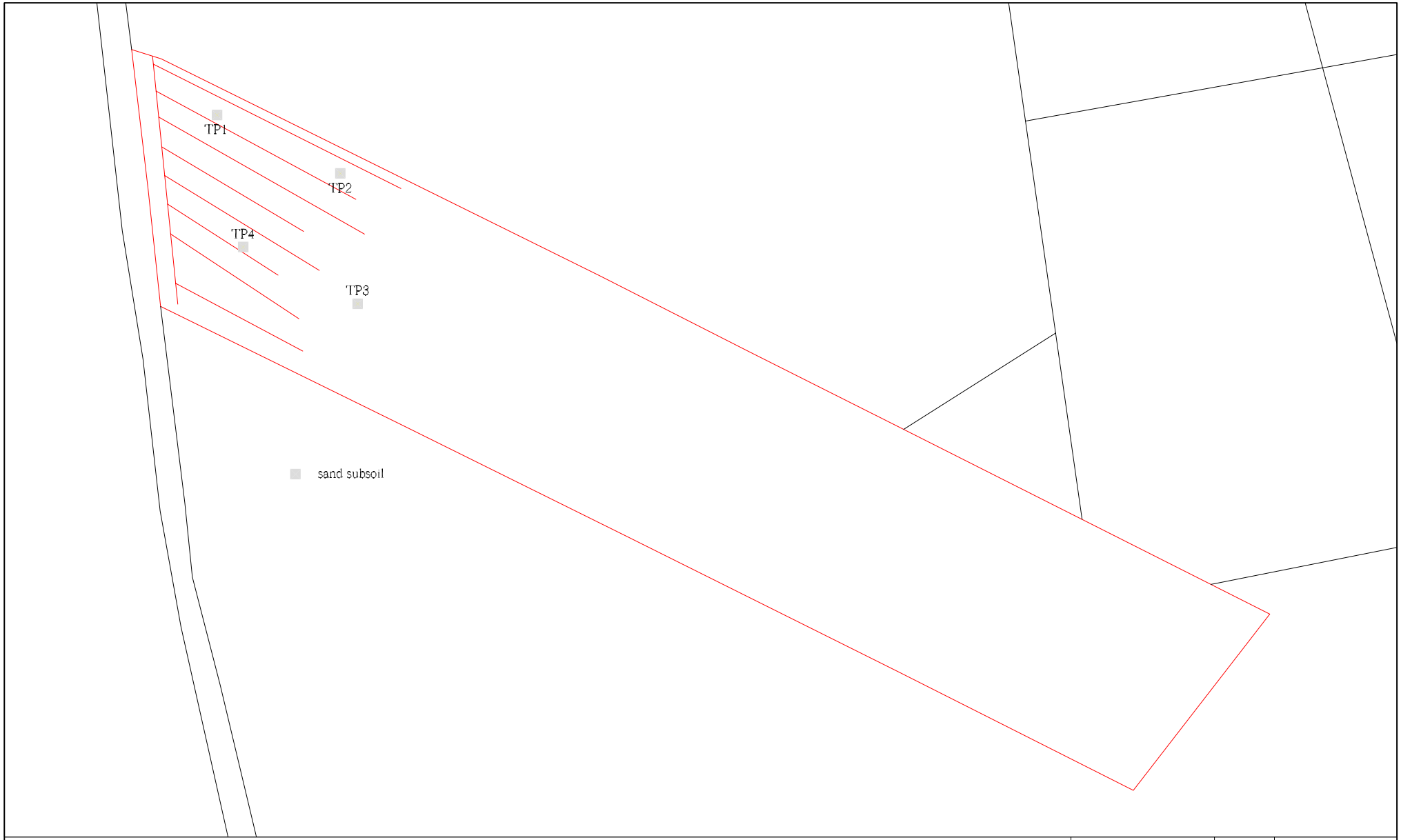
Drainage works will be carried out later in the year, but no archaeological features were contacted in the test pit survey.

4.0 ASSESSMENT

The results of this survey confirm the conclusions from earlier investigations which suggest that extensive and locally substantial accumulations of windblown sand occur around the village of Skipwith. These deposits appear to cover archaeological remains and where such remains are buried from the effects of modern ploughing valuable archaeological strata is likely to be protected.

The scattered nature of the archaeological remains from the three fields covered by drainage works suggest rather marginal activity, rather than intensive occupation.

As a result of deeper and more intense drainage the thin deposit of desiccated peat located in Field 2 is likely to deteriorate further.



Field 3 land drainage scheme and results of investigations

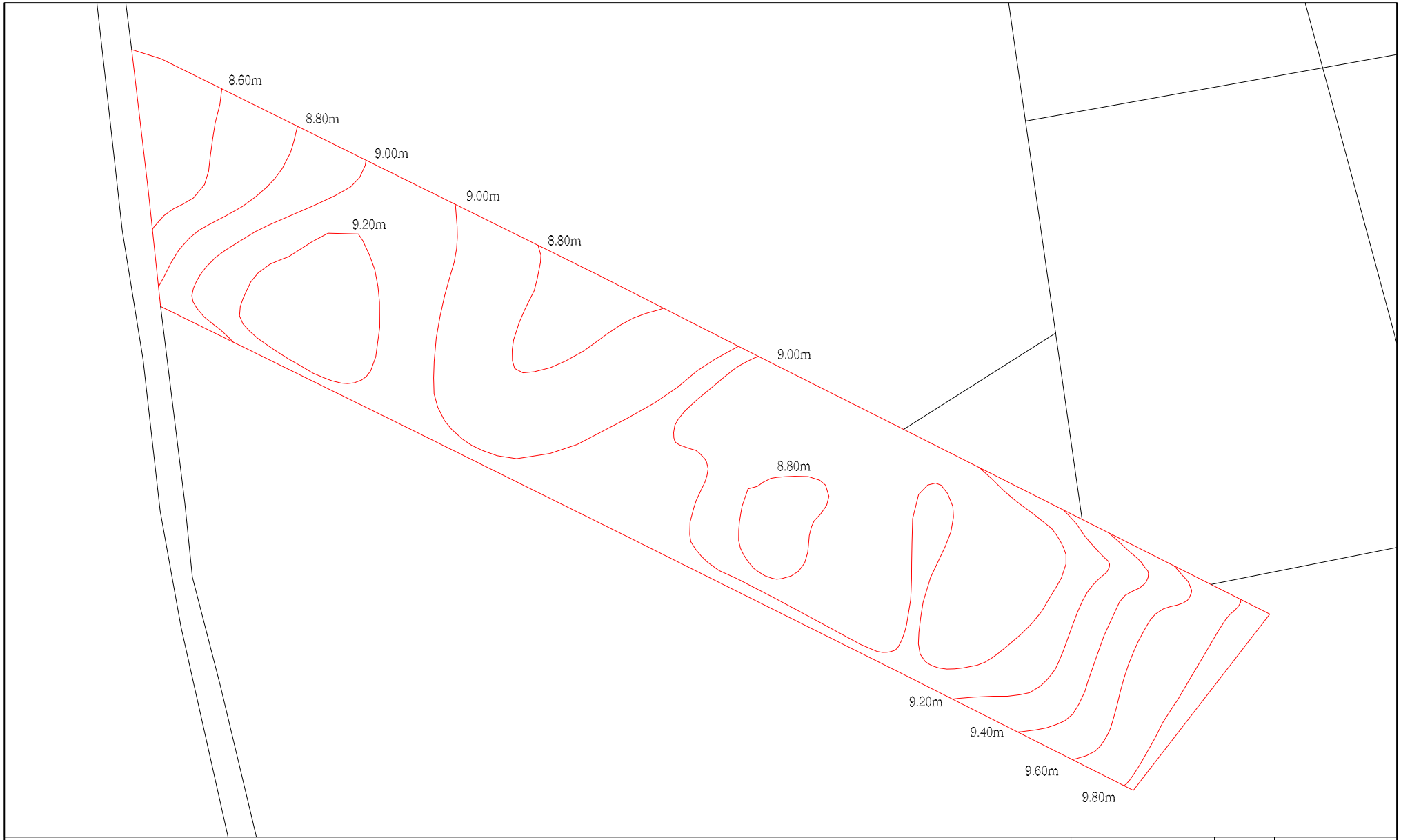
Scale 1:2000

Figure 8

Field 4 contour plan at 0.20m intervals

Scale 1:2000

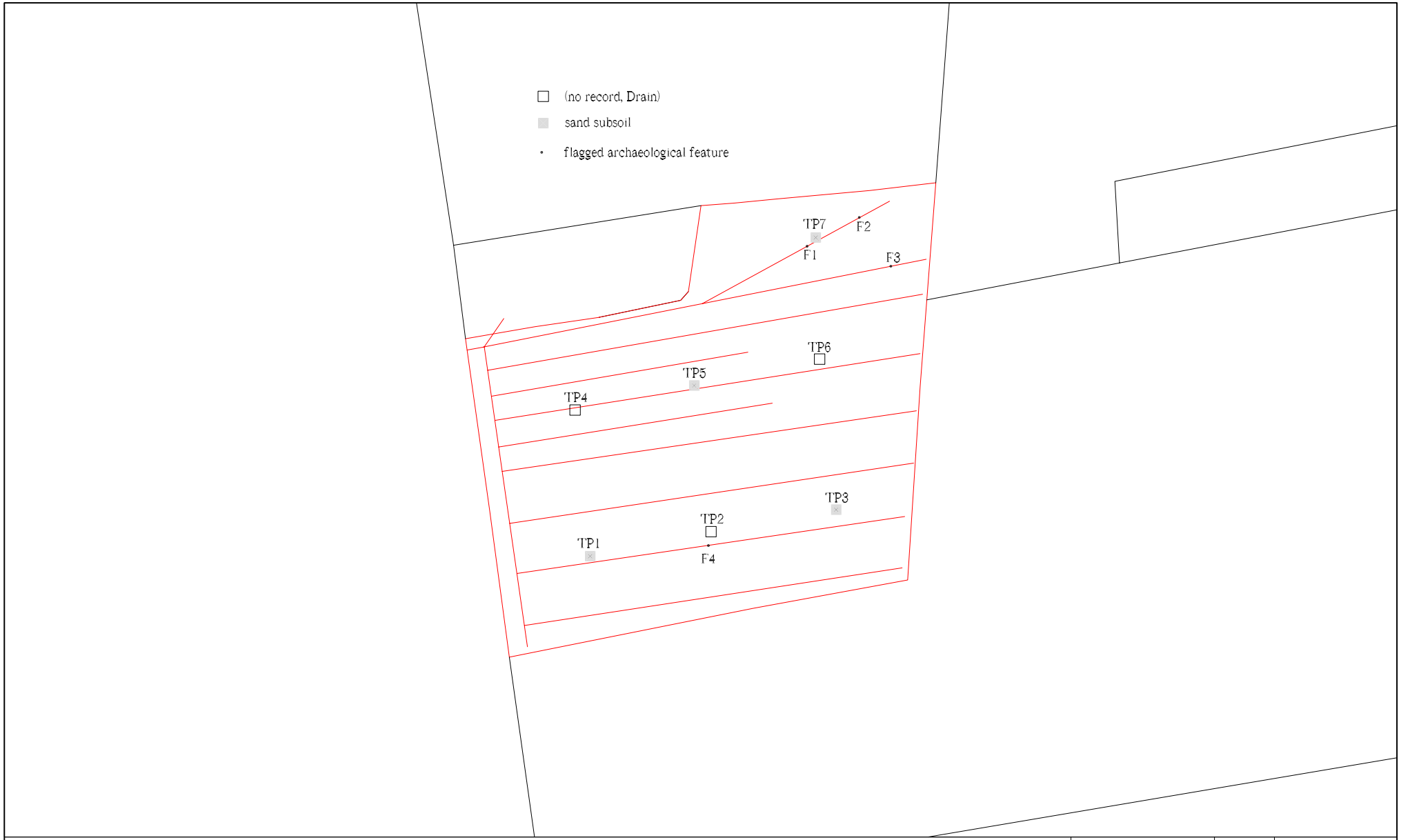
Figure 9



Field 3 contour plan at 0.20m intervals

Scale 1:2000

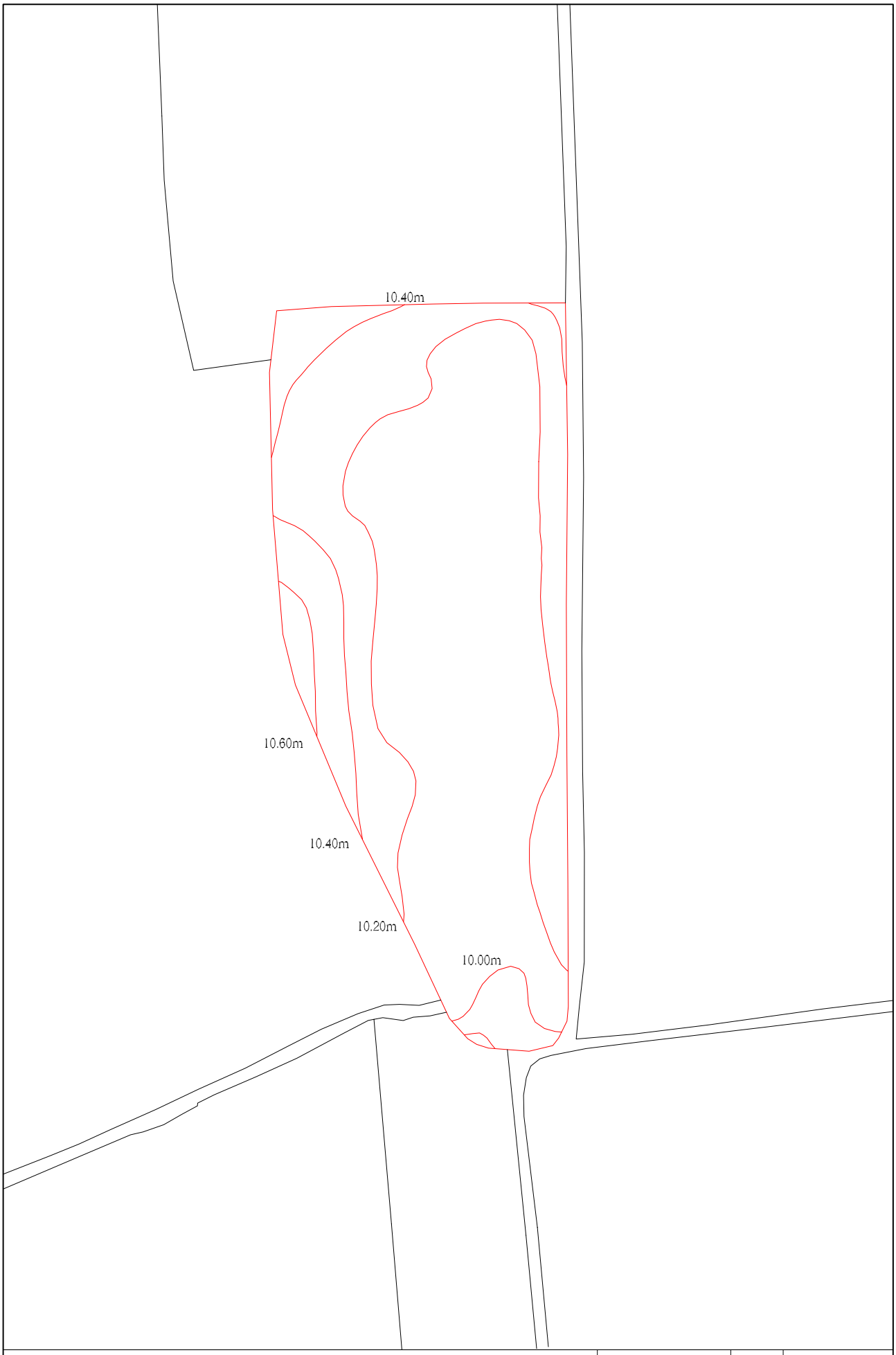
Figure 7



Field 4 land drainage scheme and results of investigations

Scale 1:2000

Figure 10



Field 5 contour plan at 0.20m intervals | Scale 1:2000 | Figure 11

Field 5 result of investigations | Scale 1:2000 | Figure 12

APPENDIX A Depth and composition of soil strata

Field 1 Plantation Farm

Test Pit No.	Total Depth (m)	Thickness of Aeolian Sand (m)	Subsoil Type & Munsell Description	Notes	Additional Deposits (m)
1	0.43	0.17	sand (10YR 6/ 2) light brownish grey	-	-
2	0.30	0.06	sand (10YR 7/ 3) pale brown	-	-
3	0.76	0.47	sand (10YR 6/ 2) light brownish grey	-	-
4	0.40	0.18	sand (10YR 6/ 2) light brownish grey	-	-
5	0.54	0.22	sand (10YR 6/ 2) light brownish grey	-	-
6	0.60	0.26	sand (10YR 6/ 2) light brownish grey	-	-
7	0.60	0.26	sand (10YR 7/ 4) very pale brown	-	-
8	0.69	0.44	sand (10YR 7/ 4) very pale brown	-	-
9	0.75	-	clay silt sand (10YR 7/ 2) light grey	mottled (10YR 6/ 8) brownish yellow	-
10	0.65	0.41	sand (10YR 7/ 4) very pale brown	-	-
11	0.80	0.50	sand (10YR 7/ 4) very pale brown	-	-
12	0.74	0.49	sand (10YR 7/ 4) very pale brown	-	-
13	0.60	0.29	sand (10YR 5/ 3) brown	-	-
14	0.69	0.44	sand (10YR 7/ 4) very pale brown sand	-	-
15	0.68	0.43	sand (10YR 5/ 2) greyish brown sand	-	-
16	0.85	-	not seen	feature or drain?	-
17	0.70	0.40	sand (10YR 7/ 4) very pale brown	-	-
18	0.85	0.55	sand (10YR 7/ 4) very pale brown	-	-
19	0.79	0.49	sand (10YR 7/ 4) very pale brown	-	-
20	0.58	0.28	sand (10YR 7/ 4) very pale brown	-	-
21	0.65	0.39	sand (10YR 5/ 1) grey	-	-
22	0.74	0.24	sand (10YR 7/ 4) very pale brown	-	0.21 degraded peat overlying aeolian deposits
23	0.84	0.51	sand (10YR 7/ 4) very pale brown	-	-

Field 2 Plantation Farm

Test Pit No.	Total Depth (m)	Thickness of Aeolian Sand (m)	Subsoil Type & Munsell Description	Notes	Additional Deposits (m)
1	0.86	0.42	sand (10YR 6/ 2) light brownish grey	-	-
2	1.00	0.70	sand (10YR 6/ 2) light brownish grey	2 layers of aeolian deposits	-
3	0.90	0.63	sand (10YR 6/ 2) light brownish grey	-	-
4	0.86	0.61	sand (10YR 6/ 1) grey	-	-
5	0.90	0.61	sand (10YR 6/ 1) grey	2 layers of aeolian deposits	0.01 silt clay overlying subsoil
6	0.94	0.69	sand (10YR 6/ 2) light brownish grey	2 layers of aeolian deposits	0.01 silt clay overlying subsoil
7	0.66	0.20	sand (10YR 6/ 2) light brownish grey	2 layers of aeolian deposits	-
8	0.53	0.25	sand (10YR 5/ 4) yellowish brown	-	-
9	0.75	0.48	sand (10YR 5/ 4) yellowish brown	-	-
10	0.80	0.50	sand (10YR 6/ 1) grey	-	-

Test Pit No.	Total Depth (m)	Thickness of Aeolian Sand (m)	Subsoil Type & Munsell Description	Notes	Additional Deposits (m)
11	0.77	0.49	sand (10YR 6/ 4) light yellowish brown	-	-
12	0.53	0.25	sand (10YR 6/ 4) light yellowish brown	-	-
13	0.82	0.53	sand (10YR 6/ 4) light yellowish brown	-	-
14	0.73	0.38	sand (10YR 5/ 6) yellowish brown		
15	0.70	0.20	sand (10YR 5/ 3) brown	-	0.20 peat overlying subsoil
16	0.83	0.26	sand (10YR 5/ 3) brown	2 layers of aeolian deposits	0.13 peat overlying subsoil
17	0.66	0.32	sand (10YR 5/ 3) brown	-	0.09 peat overlying subsoil
18	1.00	0.68	sand (10YR 5/ 3) brown	-	-
19	0.83	0.56	sand (10YR 5/ 3) brown	-	-
20	0.79	0.52	sand (10YR 5/ 3) brown	-	-
21	0.90	0.60	sand (10YR 5/ 3) brown	-	-
22	115.0	0.77	not seen	-	-
23	0.84	0.55	sand (10YR 5/ 6) yellowish brown	-	-
24	0.89	0.59	sand (10YR 5/ 6) yellowish brown	-	-
25	0.91	0.61	sand (10YR 6/ 3) pale brown	-	-
26	0.57	0.20	sand (10YR 5/ 2) greyish brown	-	0.07 peat overlying subsoil
27	0.59	0.22	sand (10YR 5/ 2) greyish brown	-	0.07 peat overlying subsoil
28	0.42	0.08	sand (10YR 5/ 2) greyish brown	-	0.06 peat overlying subsoil
29	0.58	0.11	sand (10YR 5/ 2) greyish brown	-	0.04 peat overlying subsoil
30	0.75	0.45	sand (10YR 5/ 3) brown	-	-
31	0.69	0.38	sand (10YR 5/ 3) brown	-	-
32	0.70	0.40	sand (10YR 5/ 3) brown	-	-
33	0.78	0.50	sand (10YR 5/ 3) brown	-	-
34	0.68	0.39	sand (10YR 5/ 3) brown	-	-
35	0.92	0.47	sand (10YR 6/ 2) light brownish grey	-	-
36	0.70	0.35	sand (10YR 6/ 2) light brownish grey	mottled (10YR 6/ 8) brownish yellow	-
37	0.60	0.35	sand (10YR 6/ 2) light brownish grey	mottled (10YR 6/ 8) brownish yellow	-
38	0.65	0.35	sand (10YR 6/ 2) light brownish grey	mottled (10YR 6/ 8) brownish yellow	-
39	0.59	0.34	sand (10YR 6/ 2) light brownish grey	mottled (10YR 6/ 8) brownish yellow	-
40	0.98	0.67	sand (10YR 5/ 6) yellowish brown	mottled (10YR 5/ 4) yellowish brown	-
41	1.00	0.50	sand (10YR 5/ 4) yellowish brown	-	-
42	0.78	-	-	field drain	-
43	0.56	0.27	sand (10YR 6/ 4) light yellowish brown	mottled (10YR 6/ 8) brownish yellow	-

Test Pit No.	Total Depth (m)	Thickness of Aeolian Sand (m)	Subsoil Type & Munsell Description	Notes	Additional Deposits (m)
44	0.58	0.29	sand (10YR6/ 4) light yellowish brown	mottled (10YR 6/ 8) brownish yellow	-
45	0.54	0.23	sand (10YR 6/ 4) light yellowish brown	mottled (10YR 6/ 8) brownish yellow	-
46	0.49	0.13	sand (10YR 5/ 3) brown	-	0.04 peat overlying subsoil
47	0.62	0.24	sand (10YR 5/ 3) brown	-	0.05 peat overlying subsoil
48	0.40	0.11	sand (10YR 5/ 3) brown	mottled (10YR 5/ 8) yellowish brown	-
49	0.55	0.28	sand (10YR 5/ 3) brown	mottled (10YR 5/ 8) yellowish brown	-
50	0.52	0.24	sand (10YR 5/ 6) yellowish brown	-	-
51	0.47	-	-	field drain	-
52	0.59	0.31	sand (10YR 4/ 2) dark greyish brown	-	-
53	0.70	0.41	sand (10YR 4/ 2) dark greyish brown	-	-
54	0.65	0.35	sand (10YR 4/ 2) dark greyish brown	-	-
55	0.59	0.25	sand (10YR 5/ 6) yellowish brown	-	-

Field 3 Plantation Farm

Test Pit No.	Total Depth (m)	Thickness of Aeolian Sand (m)	Subsoil Type & Munsell Description	Notes	Additional Deposits (m)
1	0.47	0.18	sand (10YR 5/ 8) yellowish brown	mottled (10YR 6/ 8) brownish yellow	-
2	0.56	0.31	sand (10YR 5/ 3) brown	-	-
3	0.35	0.06	sand (10YR 5/ 8) yellowish brown	-	-
4	0.63	0.35	sand (10YR 5/ 3) brown	-	-

Field 4 Plantation Farm

Test Pit No.	Total Depth (m)	Thickness of Aeolian Sand (m)	Subsoil Type & Munsell Description	Notes	Additional Deposits (m)
1	0.44	0.15	sand (10YR 5/ 3) brown	-	-
2	0.82	-	-	field drain	-
3	0.74	0.46	sand (10YR 6/ 4) yellowish brown	-	-
4	0.80	-	-	field drain	-
5	0.66	0.46	sand (10YR 6/ 4) yellowish brown	-	-
6	0.93	0.68	not seen	-	-
7	0.65	0.27	sand (10YR 6/ 3) pale brown	-	-

Field 5 The Beeches

Test Pit No.	Total Depth (m)	Thickness of Aeolian Sand (m)	Subsoil Type & Munsell Description	Notes	Additional Deposits (m)
1	0.42	-	sandclay (10YR 6/ 6) brownish yellow	-	-
2	0.36	-	sandclay (10YR 6/ 6) brownish yellow	-	-
3	0.30	-	sandclay (10YR 6/ 8) yellowish brown	-	-
4	0.41	-	sandclay (10YR 6/ 6) brownish yellow	-	-

Test Pit No.	Total Depth (m)	Thickness of Aeolian Sand (m)	Subsoil Type & Munsell Description	Notes	Additional Deposits (m)
5	0.36	-	sandclay (10YR 6/ 6) brownish yellow	-	-
6	0.33	-	sandclay (10YR 6/ 6) brownish yellow	-	-
7	0.31	-	claysand (10YR 6/ 6) brownish yellow	-	-
8	0.29	-	sandclay (10YR 6/ 6) brownish yellow	-	-
9	0.30	-	sandclay (10YR 6/ 6) brownish yellow	-	-
10	0.42	-	sandclay (10YR 6/ 6) brownish yellow	-	-