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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

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WILSFORD RELAY PIPELINE 1993

NGR. SK 9970 4358 - TF 0070 4310 - TF 0038 4248

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Introduction

The village of Wilsford is located east of Ancaster, just within the boundary of the North Kesteven District of Lincolnshire. The A153 Sleaford Road passes into the village but avoids the centre by deflecting along Back Lane (which despite its name appears to be a post-medieval or modern route diversion). Anglian Water Services Ltd and their contractors M.P. Burke plc carried out a 2.3km water-mains replacement scheme through the village between mid April and late July 1993, and commissioned Lindsey Archaeological Services (LAS) to monitor the project for archaeological sites or finds which might be encountered (Fig.1). The brief for this work was prepared by the Lincolnshire County Council Archaeology Section.

Archaeological Background

A preliminary search of existing archaeological records noted on the Lincolnshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) was made before fieldwork began. A summary is listed in Appendix 1. This search was complemented by study of records held by LAS including air photographic cover. The parish file at Lincoln City Library (Local Collection) was checked for further relevant historical information.

The site of the medieval village of Hanbeck, marked only by a cluster of farm buildings and slight earthworks in pasture, is the closest recorded location of archaeological significance to the pipeline route (Pl.1). It lies on the north side of The Beck and is unlikely to have any relevance to archaeological material from the village of Wilsford. The topographical barrier of the stream acts as a clear division between the former settlements despite their immediate proximity.

Romano-British pottery, stone and metalwork findspots in the area are a reflection of the contemporary importance of Ancaster as a Roman settlement on Ermine Street (Fig.1). There are doubtless further archaeological sites of that date to be located in the vicinity.

Parts of St. Mary's Church, Wilsford are of Anglo-Saxon construction with later additions. No evidence of the early associated community has been recorded although it is likely to have been sited close to the church, water source and bridging point over The Beck. This settlement and its medieval successor may be below the present dwellings, where glimpses will only be revealed during redevelopment or works such as mains replacement.

The Watching Brief

The replacement plastic pipe was placed into a new trench, width 0.5m, which was excavated mechanically using a JCB fitted with a narrow toothed bucket. Short stretches of the trench sufficient for burying a few pipe lengths were excavated in each operation; the new main was laid and covered before further stretches were opened. The existing main was not re-excavated or removed. Short stretches of existing service trenches were exposed in places but these were avoided where possible.

Excavation of the pipe trench began at the south end, along the unclassified road to Kelby (Fig.2). Here the trench was excavated through a variety of natural deposits which appeared to result from a post-glacial stream channel crossing the lane in a slight dip at the start of the pipeline. The road surface north of this channel had been laid on a thin foundation above undisturbed limestone platelets which extended towards the junction with the road to Wilsford Heath.

In the vicinity of the junction the trench cut through mixed soil and stony material which seemed to have been disturbed although no ceramic material was found to confirm this (Pl.2). The cultivated field east of the road at this junction is considerably lower than the road level and rises steeply up a slope to the south, suggesting past quarrying. The remains of an abandoned stone quarry remain visible to the NW of the junction behind the former school building (Pl.3). This quarry was apparently active in the mid 19th century and may have provided an income for the school teacher and upkeep of the building (Lincolnshire Archives Office (LAO): Wilsford Parish Records 16/PW/1 1857). The observations of the pipe-trench here were inconclusive but a possibility remains that these roads had once led to an extensive quarry in the location of the present junction; waste soil and rock material had perhaps been used to raise part of the quarry sufficiently to construct a thoroughfare to neighbouring villages. Available cartographic evidence was examined but there was no evidence that an earlier quarry had been backfilled.

The trench then followed the west edge of the road leading to Wilsford village centre. After rising from the junction, cutting through rock with less soil, the route sloped down into the valley occupied by the River Slea. Close to the top of this slope a metalled track to Hall Farm (Pl.4) joined the road on the east side, virtually opposite a path (labelled The Plot on the Ordnance Survey (OS) 1:2500 scale map) which skirts the back of properties before meeting the main village street beside the Post Office (Fig.2). The sequence of strata below the road surface between the farm track and The Plot path seemed to mark a localised but considerable disturbance; to both north and south the road was constructed almost immediately above limestone platelets, but between the

paths there was a soil-filled depression. This was about 6m wide and continued below the base of the trench (Pl.5). It seemed unlikely that cart or foot traffic between the village and Hall Farm had created a pronounced hollow-way given the rock formation, but deliberate quarrying of this narrow area seemed equally unusual. The feature may have been a natural stream course filled either naturally or deliberately and later used as a path. A small stream is marked on the 1775 Enclosure Award plan (Fig.3) and this appears to confirm that interpretation (LAO Kesteven Award 88/8). No archaeological material was seen in the trench section here but the soil had probably been introduced deliberately.

The limestone bedrock was replaced by sand about 30m further down the slope and extended to the village street. An intervening thin band of limestone observed within the sand 25m south of the junction appeared to represent a natural rather than an archaeological event.

The Village Centre

The pipe trench was excavated on the north side of the road through much of the village except at the NW end where an active sewer was repeatedly encountered. The trench passed on the opposite side to the parish church and the intervening road prevented the recovery of information on previous limits of the churchyard or detail about the land use in the church environs. The churchyard rises considerably above the present road level and is retained behind the churchyard wall. Part of the difference in height can be attributed to the natural valley slope, part to the road becoming deeply rutted when it served as the main route through Wilsford between Sleaford and Grantham, but the church site may have been terraced and raised to reduce the risk of flooding. The monitoring of the pipe trench to the NE of the church located sand or clay below the road surface and its foundation but this was interrupted for a 15m stretch between the church and the road to Wilsford Heath (Fig. 4). In this area the trench was crossed by a feature at an indistinct angle, filled naturally or deliberately with tipping layers of sandy loam or limestone lumps (Pl.6). It was noted that this was centred at the west end of the Plough Inn where an alternative access to the Wilsford Heath road survives and the similarity with ground conditions at the Hall Farm/The Plot crossing was obvious. It appears from the 1775 map that the same tributary may have continued on this course.

Successive layers of roadmaking or repair material were expected but not observed during the watching brief; a mixed layer of limestone lumps below the tarmac road appeared to be a contemporary foundation but lower introduced surfaces could not be recognised. It is possible that early roads were unmetalled and used the

adjacent mixed clay, sand and brash material which could not be distinguished from the naturally disturbed valley deposits in the narrow trench.

In contrast to the area east of the Plough Inn, the soils at the road junction to the west showed intact stratigraphy of aerobic/anaerobic clays and sands which appeared to be natural (Pl.7). The width of the trench was again too small to indicate whether a narrower earlier road passed beside it but had been missed by the pipe trench. It is surprising that the trench produced no evidence for habitation below the present road surface here as the frontage onto the village street would have been a prime location. A subsequent study of the Enclosure Award map of Wilsford found that the junction has not moved since at least 1775 but the lane towards Wilsford Heath cuts through three planned croft areas, as if it represents a late medieval route diversion (Fig.3) (LAO: Kesteven Award 88/8 1775; copy). The route of the earlier road is open to conjecture but may have left the village centre to the east of the church and through the farmyard of Hall Farm before respecting the back of the crofts and continuing on its present course. A path linking the rear of the crofts to the village street west of the junction on the OS 2nd edition 6" map (Fig.5) was not marked on the Enclosure Award and is unlikely to preserve a medieval alignment (OS 105 Lincs. 1906)

Indications of demolished stone walls were recorded below the road surface further west in the heart of the village (Fig.6). Two probable foundations, 0.3m wide, consisting of small limestone pieces were seen in front of The Old Bakehouse, 2m apart and apparently diverging slightly towards the south (Fig.6a). They did not seem to be substantial or load-bearing wall foundations and were interpreted as property boundary walls divided by a passage. The foundations had been cut into the fill of a large feature thought to be a pit at least 17m broad and it is assumed that these were outside any dwelling or other building. The west edge of the pit was in front of the Old Bakehouse front door; tip lines of stone rubble, clay and sand were visible in section continuing deeper than the trench base. The east side was not satisfactorily determined but did not seem to continue across the present entrance at the side of the building. No artefacts or dateable material could be found associated with the pit or the later foundations but as they were revealed 1.5m into the modern roadway both must pre-date the road on its present alignment. The stone foundations were not thought to be from an underground drainage culvert. Occasional obstructions into the roadway are marked on the OS 2nd edition (1906) 6" map (Fig.5) elsewhere along the village street but these are unlabelled and do not seem to be associated with the recorded foundations.

Stone footings of another wall were revealed in the trench section 110m further west in front of an existing stone barn (Fig.6b). This foundation was more substantial and laid deeper than the pipe trench to at least 0.7m below the road surface. The 0.3m wide foundation was constructed of irregular medium sized stone lumps in a brown sandy loam. To the west of this wall the soil was light brown sand, contrasting with the mixed dark brown sandy loam to the east and this may imply an open yard area to the east unprotected by buildings, floors or paving from pits and other disturbances. A shallow feature 2m wide and filled with dark brown loam and stone rubble was seen 2m east of the wall. This had a sloping west side and a vertical east face and was cut 0.3m through the loam below the road make-up.

A single sherd of pottery was found in spoil from the trench where it cut through the roadside verge of the Ancaster-Sleaford road. This was a fragment of an inverted rim bowl, ?11-13th century, recorded as WIL 93 1, from SK 9995 4340. There was no indication that this had been disturbed from an archaeological feature. It represented the only artefact from this monitoring project.

Conclusions

The replacement water main through Wilsford village did not disturb any recognisable remains of archaeological significance; the wall foundations and small pit features identified could not be dated reliably and insufficient was exposed to indicate their nature or extent. It is not considered that any of the recorded remains pre-date the late medieval period.

The absence of earlier structural or artefact remains in the village streets may suggest that the Saxon core of Wilsford lay on a similar alignment using the same thoroughfare between Ancaster and Sleaford as the present main street. The monitoring exercise did not produce any evidence for Romano-British activity close to the village and it is unlikely that this village centre site was settled at that time.

Wilsford is positioned in a stream valley with abrupt sides. The archaeological monitoring showed evidence of former tributaries approaching this stream; although they are known from contemporary maps to have been landscape features in the 18th century their courses are now obscured by road improvements and development. It is likely that the sandy soils and wetter conditions in the vicinity of the stream were less convenient than the nearby limestone geology for early settlement.

Acknowledgements

LAS was grateful for the co-operation received from Anglian Water and their contractors M.P. Burke plc. Staff at Lincolnshire Archives Office, City and County Museum, Lincolnshire Sites and Monuments Record, Heritage Trust for Lincolnshire, and Lincoln Library (Local Collection) provided help for this report. Jane Young of the City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit identified the medieval pot sherd.

Geoff Tann
Lindsey Archaeological Services
24.11.93

APPENDIX 1

Lincolnshire County Sites and Monuments Summary OS sheet TF04 SW

<u>Grid Ref</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Description</u>
TF 005 434	B	Roman greyware pottery and coin (antoninianus of Allectus) found 1956
004 431	C	Large flint axe
"	D	Bronze armlet
"	E	Bucket type burial urn
0008 4333	H	Roman coin (Constantine II)
0345 4385	K	Romano-British pot
0133 4295	R	Bronze Age pottery vessel
0065 4301	Y	St. Mary's Church; Saxon-Perpendicular style, restored 1860-61
003 432	Z	Hanbeck deserted medieval village; traces show on air photographs, remains of ruined dovecote (?monastic site)

location unknown:

00 42	AA	Microlith-producing site
00 42	AB	Medieval Benedictine cell
	EI	Roman coin

OS sheet SK94 SE

SK9935 4278	A	Romano-British stone figure
983 417	C	Roman road to Sapperton villa
995 421	AK	Romano-British pottery scatter
9854 4114	AT	Soil mark of Roman road (to 9884 4060)
991 443	BE	Roman pottery scatter and coin (Constantine I)
996 426	BF	Romano-British pottery scatter and building debris

Additional Entries: Heritage Trust for Lincs.

0059 4451 74.21		Romano-British pottery scatter and settlement site, Wilsford Carr
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Additional Entries: Lindsey Archaeological Services

998 437		Rectangular enclosure cropmark, with at least 2 internal divisions. AP: SF3023/16 (14.7.84)
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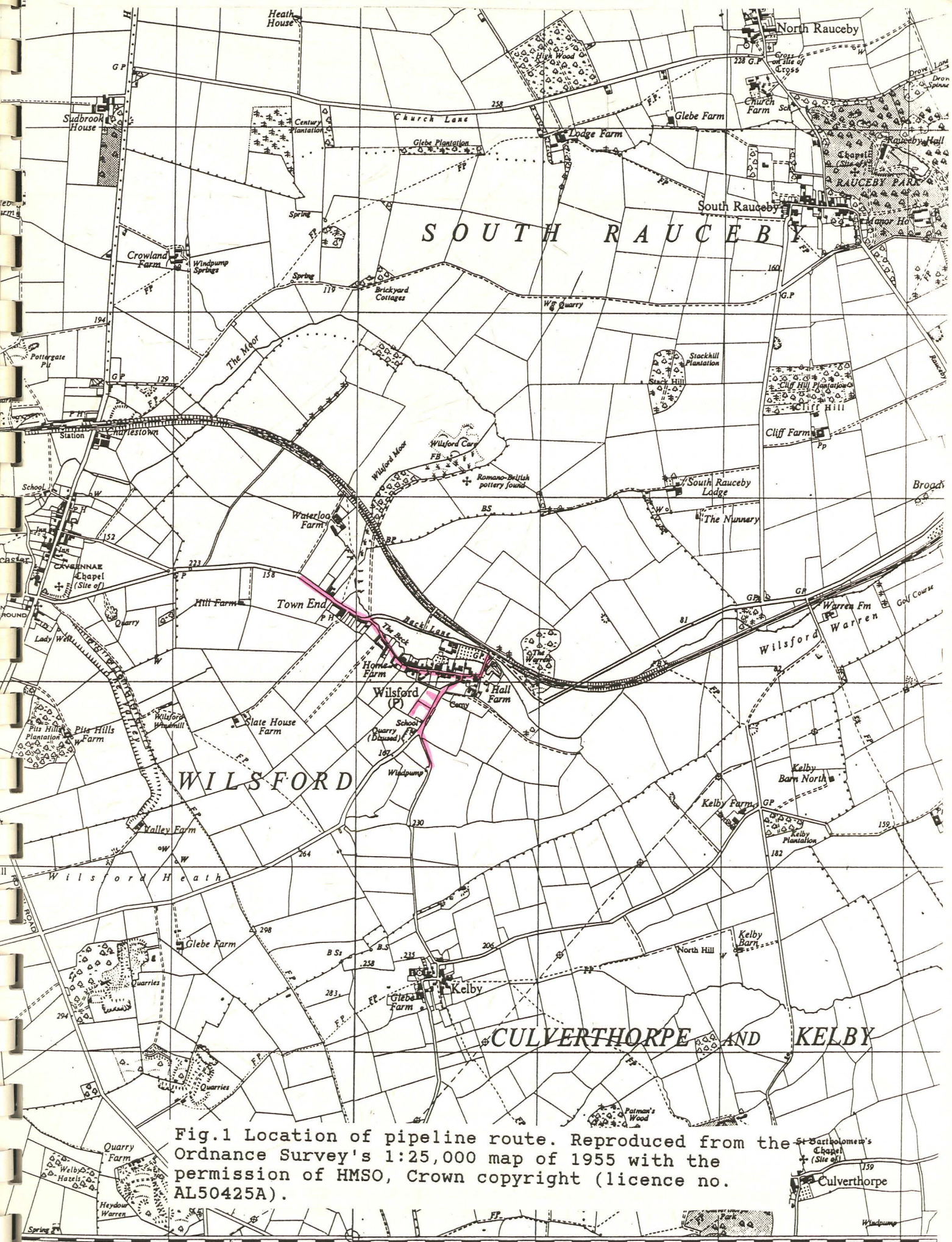


Fig.1 Location of pipeline route. Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey's 1:25,000 map of 1955 with the permission of HMSO, Crown copyright (licence no. AL50425A).

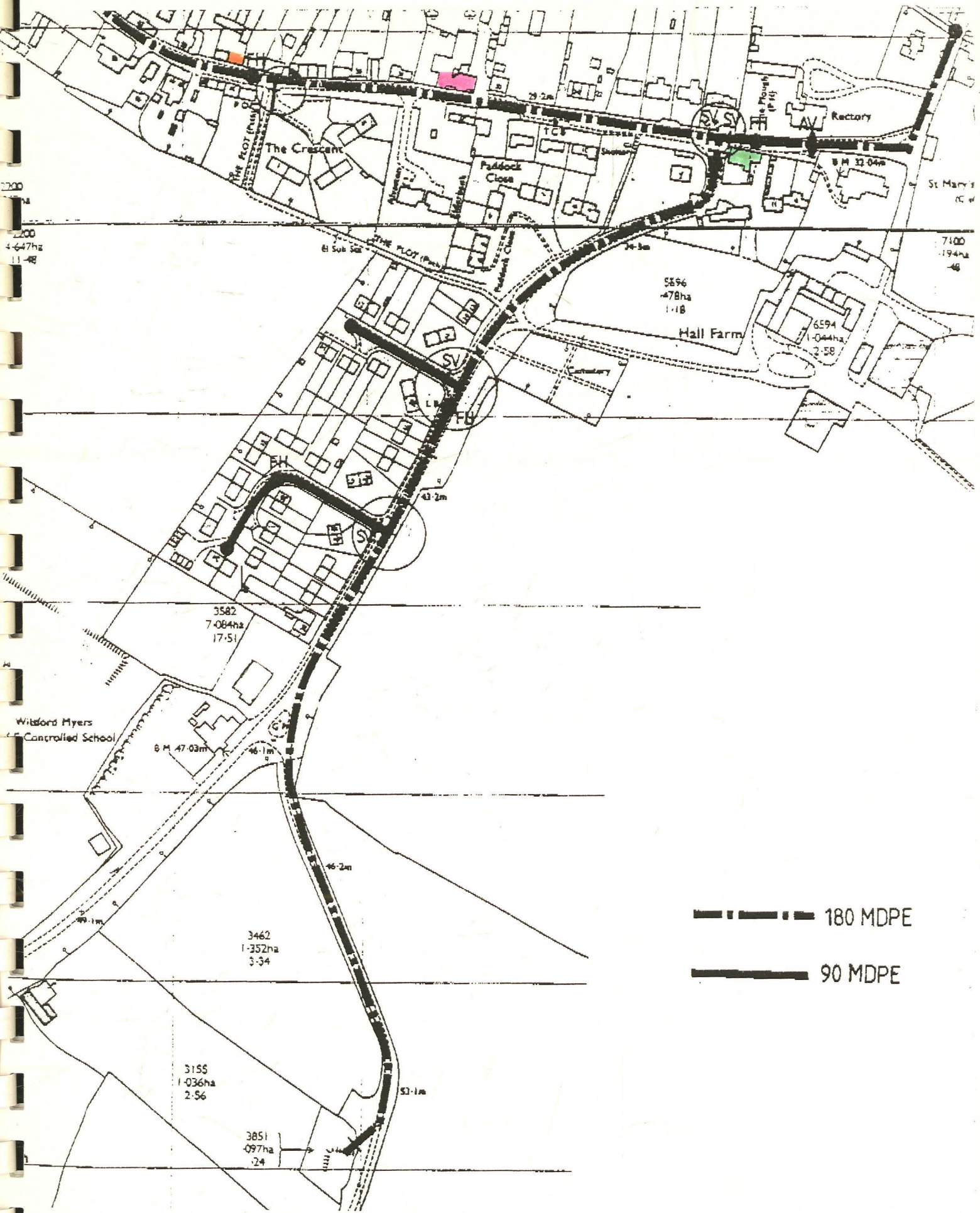


Fig.2 Location map of southern section of the Anglian Water pipeline route, supplied by Anglian Water showing position of recorded trench sections (scale 1:2500).

Forge Cottage ■ The Old Bakehouse ■ Plough Inn ■

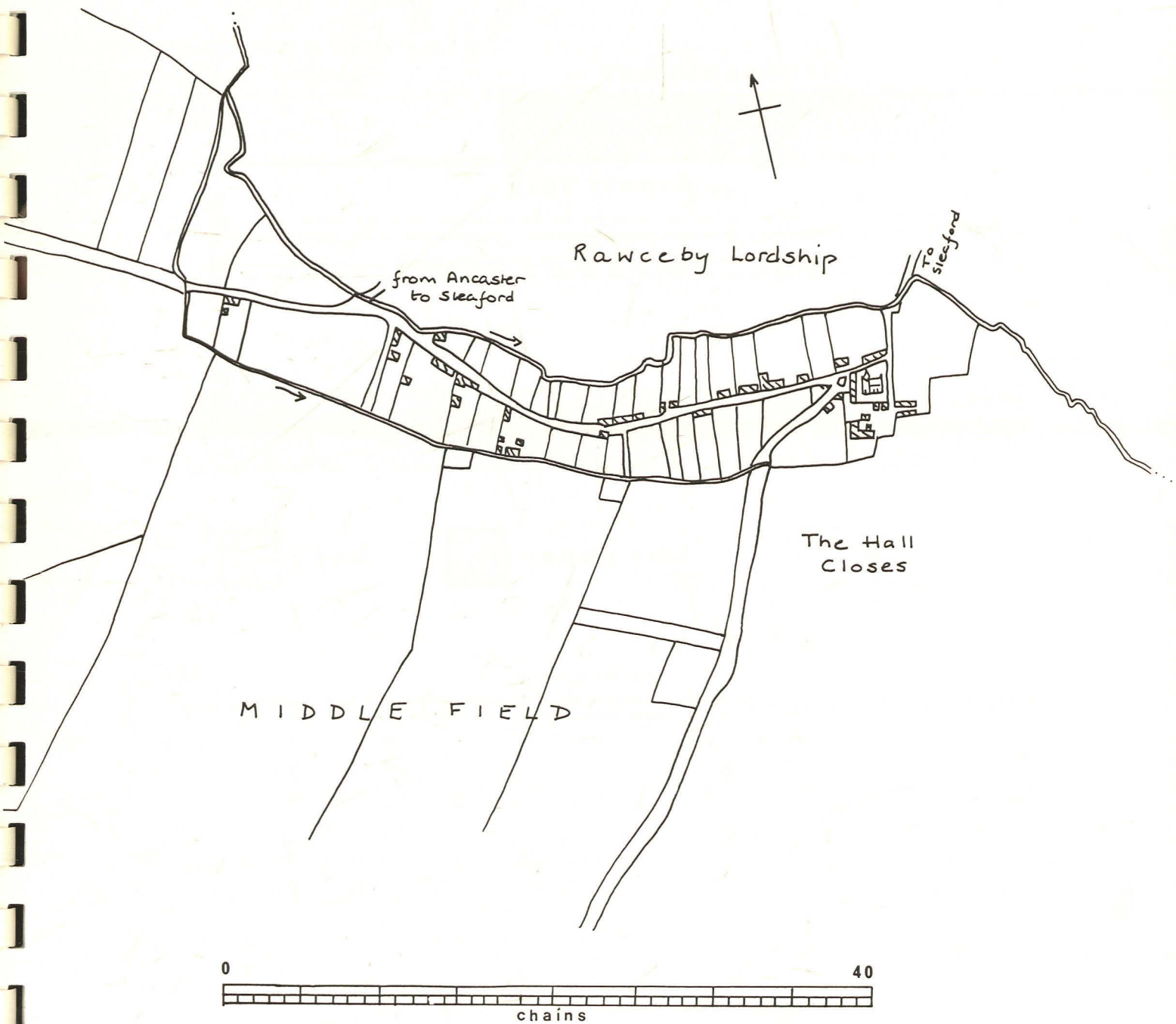


Fig.3 Tracing of the Wilsford Enclosure Arward map of 1775.

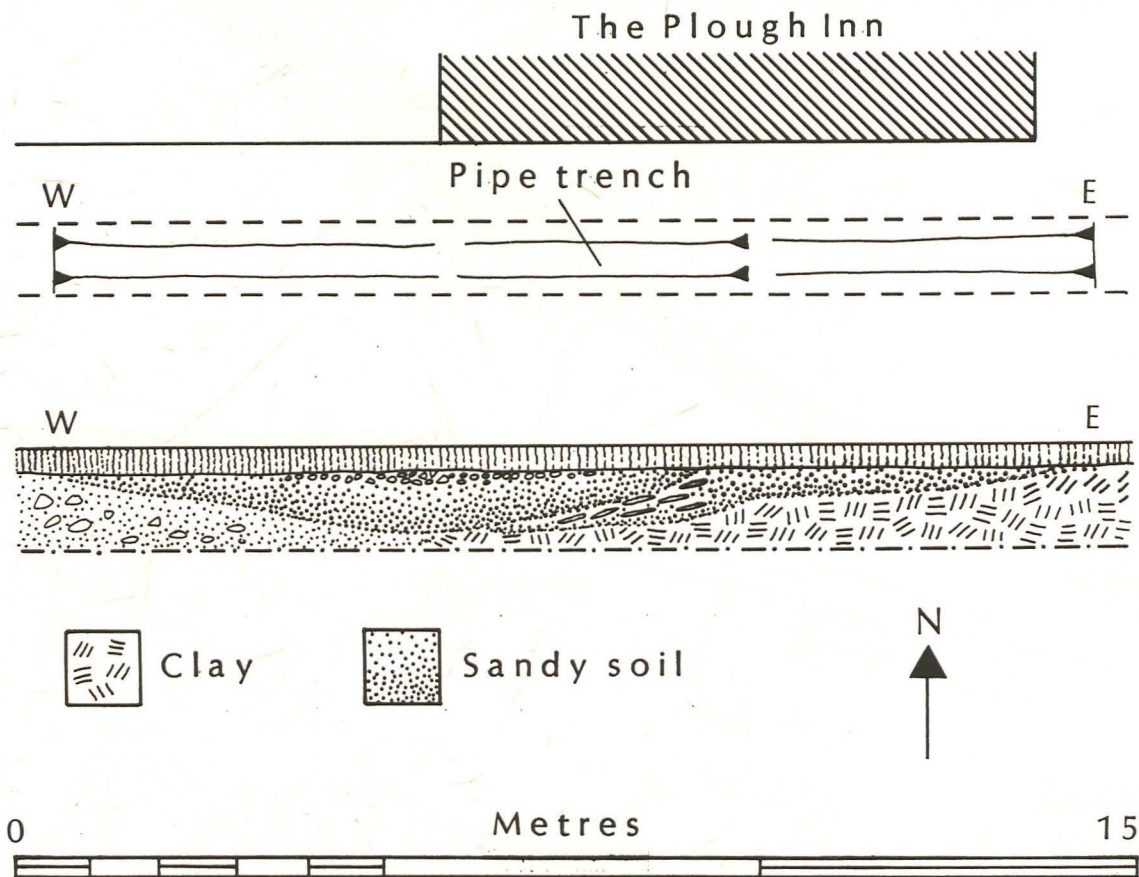


Fig.4 Trench plan and section at the Plough Inn showing possible stream bed.

M.P. G. S.P.
G. N. R.
WINTHAM, SLEAFORD & BOSTON

of Granby
(H.)

B.M. 97.7

Back Lane

Dovecot

The Beck

Hanbeck G.P. 90

Chap.

F.B.

Rectory

Home Farm

B.M. 106.1

The Plot

Wilsford

Hall Farm

139

School

Quarry
B.M. 154.9

G.P.



Fig.5 Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 scale map of 1906 (2nd edition)

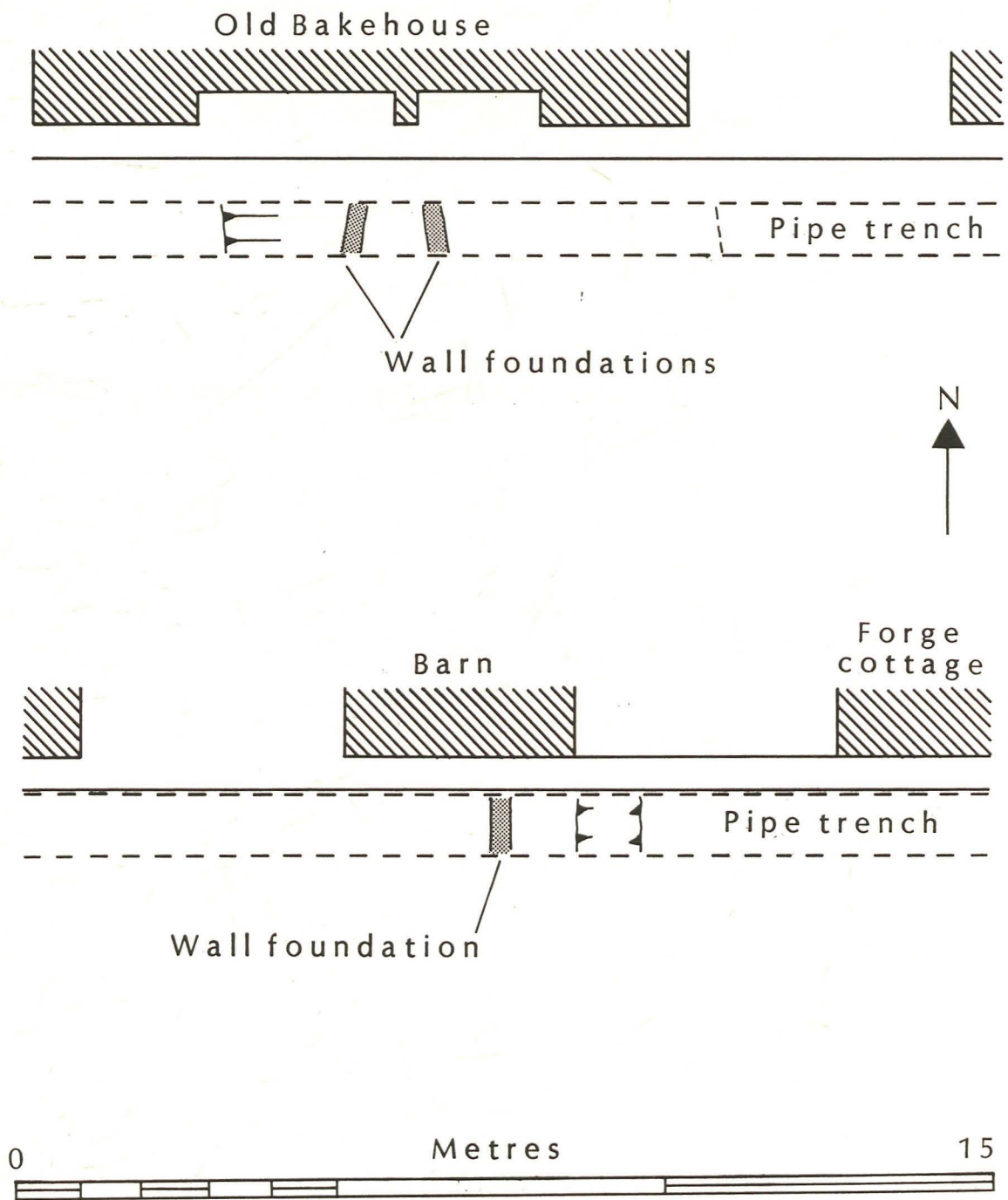


Fig.6a Trench plan and section at the Old Bakehouse

6b Trench plan and section at Forge Cottage





Pl.1 Panoramic view of Hanbeck deserted medieval village, looking south.



P1.2 Trench section at junction opposite Old School

P1.3 Abandoned stone quarry on the Wilsford Heath Road





Pl.4 Trackway to Hall Farm

Pl.5 Soil-filled depression opposite track to Hall Farm





Pl.6 Possible stream bed at the Plough Inn

Pl.7 Road junction west of the Plough Inn showing undisturbed stratigraphy

