

RAUCEBY TO SILK WILLOUGHBY LINCOLNSHIRE

An Archaeological Watching Brief
for
Anglian Water Services Limited



Pre-Construct Archaeology
January 1994

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1. ABSTRACT

Two separate points should be made with regard to the outcome of the watching brief of the water main replacement from Rauceby to Silk Willoughby.

Although every effort was made to observe and record the archaeology and stratification of the entire length of the water main trench, the results were disappointing from the archaeological viewpoint. Where reasonable archaeological deposits might have been expected - principally in the area of Silkby, and where the water main trench cut through the supposed prehistoric ditch (at c.TF 041437) - the outcome produced less than expected. On the other hand, one valuable site was discovered, that of a spread of early Saxon pottery (centred on TF 04754316), and the supposed ring ditch of a barrow on School Lane. Of lesser significance, one artifact, half of the top stone of a Romano-British quern set (at c.TF 057431). These finds, together with a description of the general archaeology of the pipeline, including miscellaneous artifacts will be described in greater detail below.

The second point is that, in the event, too little time was allowed for the recording of the stratigraphy of the water main trench as it passed through the only surviving grass field in Silkby. Although no blame can be ascribed for this, it should be noted that, as Silkby is not a protected site within the law, this may have been the last chance to do any worthwhile archaeology there; the remainder of the field is imminently in danger of being ploughed for the first time since the abandonment of the village. (Half the grass field - the northern part - was ploughed about 4 years ago). Since the construction of the pipeline, the farmer has ripped out one of the hedges, and made a second entrance to the field, presumably in preparation for extending the arable nature of the farm.

2. INTRODUCTION

Pre-Construct Archaeology were invited by Anglian Water Services Limited to conduct a watching brief on the new pipeline between Rauceby (the junction of the A153 and Rauceby Lane) to the centre of Silk Willoughby. The construction of the water main lasted from the beginning of August to 8 December 1993, a period of almost 19 weeks. It should be noted that only a short length of the new water main was programmed to be laid in the parish of South Rauceby and none in North Rauceby.

3. LOCATION OF THE WATER MAIN

Anglian Water's replacement of the existing water main commenced in Gorse Lane, Silk Willoughby opposite the last house, no.16, continuing from this point to London Road (the former A15). Here, the pipeline crossed the road with a short length going to the west as far as Manor Farm. This length was extended northwards along the main road to the village pond with an arm being constructed to the eastern end of the churchyard (Church Lane). From the main road the water main was continued westwards following the route of School Lane to within a few yards of Gables Farm where the pipeline changed direction north-westerly cutting through, first of all, a grass field (part of the site of the ancient and shrunken village of Silkby), and, secondly, through a narrow arable field before meeting the new by-pass where a crossing was made under the road. A further arable field was then negotiated by trenching until the sugar beet hard-standing was met on Rauceby Lane. The pipeline trench reverted to the line of the roadside verge which it followed until the Sleaford-Grantham road (A153) was encountered which was crossed by trenching; the problem of the railway line 100m or so to the south of the A153 was circumvented by thrust-boring (see also location map, fig 1).

4. REASONS FOR THE WATCHING BRIEF

4.1 The Planning Background

4.1.1 North Kesteven District Council's local plan contains two statements relevant to the watching brief for the water main replacement in Silk Willoughby: a. *Development proposals which are likely to adversely affect a scheduled ancient monument will not normally be approved,* and b. *Development proposals which are likely to adversely affect a site of archaeological interest will normally be subject to a condition of planning permission requiring archaeological investigations to take place before and/or during development.* (North Kesteven District Local Plan, 1992, 48). Both statements are expanded upon in their accompanying texts.

4.1.1i The watching brief includes an SSSI at Wilsford Warren which is immediately to the west of the final leg of the water main replacement, and alongside, to the south, of the A153 in the parish of South Rauceby.

4.1.1ii There are various Acts and guidelines which are helpful to developers and, in particular, appropriate to Anglian Water's replacement water main in Rauceby and Silk Willoughby. Chief among these documents are: *The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1970, The National Heritage Act 1983, the General Development Order 1988, and Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG 16) on Archaeology and Planning 1990.* The latter, especially, is most useful in its application to the planning background.

4.2 The Archaeological Background

4.2.1 Silk Willoughby is known to have several archaeological sites and monuments within the bounds of the parish; there are few recorded archaeological finds within that part of South Rauceby through which (or close by) the new water main was to be placed. Notably, in Silk Willoughby, there are four scheduled monuments (2 bronze age barrows and the site of a medieval chapel, County number 78, and the remains of a medieval cross, County number 79; the larger of the two barrows, the western one, is also known as the Folk Moot and the smaller as Butt Mound, both presumably

referring to a later, medieval use; the field in which these monuments occurs is sometimes called Butts Lees). A further site of some import is the shrunken medieval village of Silkby located on either side of the western end of School Lane. Other finds of lesser archaeological merit, or deemed to be so, are the possible prehistoric ditch at c.TF 041437, various finds of early Saxon, Romano-British and medieval pottery, together with a few prehistoric flints and a Anglo-Saxon brooch. On occasions, there have also been found medieval and Roman coins, usually the products of treasure hunting from the area of Silkby. There was also a Roman quern found some years ago within the parish.

4.2.2 Fortuitously, one of the staff of Pre-Construct Archaeology is resident in Silk Willoughby and can claim to have a good understanding of the archaeology of the village. Indeed, some of the finds mentioned in the previous paragraph, and throughout this report, have been the result of his fieldwork. Part of this fieldwork demonstrated that the deserted village of Silkby is far more extensive than previously realised and for this reason the original specification for the watching brief was amended to include extra time to deal with this relatively recent knowledge.

4.2.3 The revised watching brief was agreed by the County Planning Archaeologist and endorsed with the approval of Anglian Water Services Limited.

5. GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY OF THE IMMEDIATE AREA

5.1 The Geology

The route of the water main passes through a mixture of drift and solid geology and soils. Mainly, the soils lie over Lincolnshire Limestone but, on occasions, there is evidence of Cornbrash close to the surface. At the north-western end of the route, gleyic brown calcareous sands (Newsleaford Series) are encountered close by and to the east of Wilsford Warren. On the whole, however, the pedology is of gleyic brown calcareous alluvial soils (Romney Series). (Dampney & Robson, 1979; Hains & Horton, 1969).

5.2 The Topography

Silk Willoughby, and that part of South Rauceby relevant to the water main, lie mainly between 10m and 30m ODN. Much of the farm land in this area is arable, in excess of 75% of the total. Where once the soils would have undoubtedly supported woodlands, little of this remains; the greatest proportion of the remaining woodland is situated towards the eastern parish boundary away from the replacement water main. There are no sudden rises nor steep drops in the topography but, typical of this type of limestone landscape, there are dry shallow valleys, the remnants of glacial activity. In one or two places, minor streams can be encountered but, again, these are away from the line of the water main. The only exception to this rule is the village pond which is located a short distance from the former vicarage alongside and to the west of London Road. The pond is fed by a small stream. Pond and stream are within a few metres of the most northerly extension of the water main in the centre of Silk Willoughby.

6. BACKGROUND - Sites of known archaeological significance.

The greater proportion of the water main replacement took place in Silk Willoughby and thus, of necessity, much of the archaeological background to the watching brief reflects the ancient settlement of Silk Willoughby. In fact, of the 3,500m of pipeline laid in the scheme only 500m or so was in South Rauceby all of which went through no known archaeological findspot. Nevertheless, it should be said, generally, that South Rauceby, like Silk Willoughby, has an ancient history; Willoughby, for example, is mentioned several times in Domesday (Foster and Longley, 1924, 34, 35, 53, 115, 168, 171, & 188), whereas the earliest reference for Silkby is 1212 (Ekwall, 1960, 422). Rauceby, too, has several references in Domesday (Foster & Longley, 1924, 34-5, 156, 187-8, 195 & 226). For this reason it was considered appropriate to give equal diligence to that length of pipeline relating to South Rauceby as to the Silk Willoughby portion.

The archaeology of Silk Willoughby is considerable, and particularly so in a relatively small parish. The remains of the village cross, located at the junction of London Road and School Lane is of some archaeological and historical interest, its base being medieval (14th century). Unfortunately the cross is not in its original position having been moved in the nineteenth century. Other finds of the same general period are early Saxon pottery from the garden of Gables Cottage, School Lane (c. 50 sherds) and a copper alloy brooch from a garden in Rowan Drive (SMR).

The Roman period is well represented within the parish. Chance finds of pottery and other artifacts have been made in and around the deserted village of Silkby. Mareham Lane, a known Roman Road (Margary, 1973, 234-6) with a possible prehistoric genesis, makes up the eastern boundary of the parish but well away from the route of the pipeline. Of greater significance, perhaps, is the Roman mosaic pavement, together with associated pottery found some 30 years ago within the farmyard of Willoughby House (SMR & Lincs Hist & Arch, 1978). Although this find spot is some distance from the route of the water main, there is a remote chance that Roman buildings could have extended towards the route. Equally, an unpublished aerial photograph of the area shows part of an extensive

rectangular and regular earthwork in that locality, possibly the ditches of a Roman military marching camp (Pickering). Again, a suspicion of Roman activity spreading as far as Rauceby Lane, and thus to the line of the pipeline, cannot be precluded.

As well as Mareham Lane being possibly pre-Roman, there are other prehistoric monuments within the parish, notably the two upstanding bronze age barrows on School Lane, and adjacent to the pipeline's route. A third probable barrow, now ploughed down, lies at some distance from School Lane but within the general group of the other two mounds. Captain de la Bere, writing in 1933, postulated a fourth mound in the same field but this is not recorded on O.S. maps. It was de la Bere who made the only known archaeological excavation in Silk Willoughby, that of the largest of these barrows (de la Bere, 1933). Although no positive dating was found, he deduced that the mound was constructed in the early Iron Age. In light of more recent knowledge, and for the purpose of this report, the mounds are referred to as bronze age. From time to time, there have also been sporadic finds of prehistoric flint tools and waste flakes in the general locality of Silk Willoughby and South Rauceby (SMR).

The archaeology of medieval Silk Willoughby is known principally through the site of the shrunken village of Silkby which is first mentioned in 1212 (*op. cit.*). From surface evidence it would appear that Silkby was a fairly extensive village at its prime. The major visible remains can be seen in a grass field immediately to the east of Gables Farm, where many house platforms, and other features, are easily discerned and covering up to 2 ha. A sunken way, running north-south, bisects these earthworks. However, further remains are detectable in the ploughed field to the east, and in another ploughed field to the south-east. In both fields spreads of building stone and possible house platforms, now ploughed down to a great extent, indicate the limits of Silkby, although the site of Gables Cottage could extend these limits to a green lane, which separates the curtilages of Gables Cottage and Rowan Drive. It should also be noted that School Lane from this point, and to Gables Farm, is sunken, thus producing a crossroads of sorts with the other sunken way, mentioned previously. From this general area medieval and post medieval potsherds have been retrieved from time to

time. In all, Silkby would appear to have spread over about 6 ha. at its peak. A monastic cell has also been recorded here (SMR).

A significant ditch, man-made but not apparent on the ground, can be seen on an aerial photograph (Univ. of Cambridge print no. FA 038 - SMR). The ditch runs more or less parallel with School Lane at the Silkby (western) end and about 50m or so to the north. If the ditch were continuous it should have been cut by the water main trench at about TF 048432. A point to be made by the reference to this ditch is that the first element in the place-name *Silkby* could refer to a gully or drain thus making the ditch of some antiquity - the element is Old English or earlier in origin (Fellows Jensen, 1978, 82). As such, the ditch could have been the northern boundary of Silkby.

7. OBJECTIVES OF THE WATCHING BRIEF

In general terms, all archaeological remains should be seen as finite, and a non-renewable source (PPG 16; see also The Planning Background 4.1 above). Ideally, it is necessary for archaeologists to be able to discuss projects with potential developers before any earthmoving work commences. The policy which Anglian Water Services Limited has adopted with regard to conservation is laudable, and particularly so when much of the work is outside the control of Planning Acts. With this well founded policy it is possible to formulate a practical programme of archaeological investigation before the start of any groundwork. The water main replacement in Rauceby and Silk Willoughby presented such a chance and a brief was written by the County Planning Archaeologist in which areas of potential threat were stated to Anglian Water. These areas are given on Anglian Water's working drawings for all those engaged on work on the water main.

8. REQUIREMENTS FOR WORK

8.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology, as the chosen archaeological contractors for the work, undertook to comply with the requirements of PPG 16, to observe the standards suggested by the Institute of Field Archaeologists with regard to watching briefs, and to adhere to the Planning Archaeologist's brief. In this way, not only were those areas of archaeological importance, designated as such by the Planning Archaeologist, observed, but also the entire length of the pipeline was inspected. The work included the examination of subsoil for archaeological features and their recording in plan, and the observation of natural deposits, again recording details wherever necessary. Nevertheless, as mentioned in 1 above, time did not always allow for this criterion to be resolved to the ultimate.

8.2 After completion of the fieldwork, Pre-Construct Archaeology arranged with the City and County Museum, Lincoln for the long term storage of all artifacts, and the deposition of the site archive, together with a copy of the report commissioned by Anglian Water Services Limited, the report to comply with the recommendations listed in paragraph 7.1.3. in the Planning Archaeologist's brief.

9. RESULTS OF WATCHING BRIEF

9.1 The route of the water main is detailed in 3 above. Work on the pipeline started before Pre-Construct Archaeology was notified of its progress and had already reached London Road (to about The Horseshoes public house) before any archaeological observations were made.

9.2. London Road, Silk Willoughby.

No features were found with the exception of recent trenches for foul sewers, and the like, cutting through the route of Anglian Water's trench. The general stratigraphy of the make up to London Road was of the road surface lying over rubble foundation, varying in thickness, which, in turn was over the upper layers of natural clays and heavy random pieces of limestone. It should be noted that in the locality limestone is often close to the ground surface in a free condition and is sometimes referred to locally as 'field stone'. The water main passed close to the present position of the village cross (see also 6 above). The cross is of some national and local importance but, as it is not in its original position, the water main trench was unlikely to yield any information nor did it do so at this point. Nevertheless, within about a hundred metres to the north of the cross - the exact provenance is uncertain - the find of half of the top stone of a Roman quern set was made by the JCB driver (Mr. P. Robinson). Fairly extensive examinations of the trench gave no clue as to the exact place from which the artifact came nor was there any other indicator of man-made disturbance below the road. However, as this part of London Road was relocated in the late nineteenth century, it could well be that the quern was included at that time in the foundations of the road, brought in from elsewhere (see also 9.3 below).

9.3 Church Lane, Silk Willoughby.

The character of the stratigraphy changed somewhat in the length from London Road to the slight bend in Church Lane, close to the gate of the south porch. It is known that a vicar in 1880 had the road realigned in this short stretch in order to divert the lane away from the vicarage

garden (the bend in London Road, between the village pond and the vicarage, was made at the same time and for the same purpose). It came as no surprise, therefore, to find that the foundation to that part of Church Lane parallel with the garden wall of the vicarage contained quantities of late 19th century material.

9.4. School Lane, Silk Willoughby

The first find of any note in School Lane occurred at a distance of c. 45m to the west of the village cross and on the south of the lane side. An area of sets (i.e. granite paving blocks) was encountered and removed by the JCB before any detailed record could be made of them *in situ*. The sets varied in size from 10cms square to 15cms, and the length covered was about 8m, east to west. The sets were directly beneath the road surface and were only found on the south side of the water main trench; in other words the sets were not continuous under the present day road surface. It is difficult to postulate a purpose for this surface, unless it was to do with a farmyard - their position was not far from a modern access to Manor Farm.

The fill of the trench between the stone surface mentioned in the preceding paragraph and the first (eastern) barrow varied only slightly from the norm. It could be that, here and there, some local differences, with the possibility of man-made intrusions, were present. This position altered as the first barrow was passed. The pipelaying trench kept to the south side of the road throughout School Lane, that is, the side away from the barrows. Nonetheless, when the second, larger, barrow was passed the machine-cut trench may have revealed part of the barrow's ring ditch. A short distance to the west of the barrow an intrusion was apparent though neither the width nor the shape of the profile of the feature was evident as it appears that the feature was cut obliquely. The sequence is shown on the section drawing (fig 2): tarmac and hardcore 330mm above a compact layer of dark brown clay which included small limestone fragments. There were three small (weathered?) fragments of red tile from this latter layer and a possible bone fragment (machine damaged) from the west and beyond the visible limits of the cut. A single fill composed of mid grey/brown sandy silt with some clay was recorded within the feature which also contained

frequent grey/purple (?manganese) mottles with fairly frequent limestone fragments. No finds were recovered. The cut measured c2.70m from east to west and was at least 500mm deep. Both the east and west sides had rounded profiles and the base was gently rounded. East of the cut was a c. 3-400 mm thick layer of orange brown mottled clay below which was a layer of large, roughly shaped limestone fragments. West of the cut a similar matrix was apparent, although there was more mixing of rubble and clay throughout. Below both was a layer of yellow/brown clay with some fine rounded pebbles. Some features are almost certainly naturally occurring deposits. In the opinion of the field worker (G. Brown) if the intrusion is associated with the barrow then the extreme outer edge has been obliquely cut.

The shrunken village of Silkby occurs to the west of the barrows. Between the barrows and Silkby no archaeological features of note were recorded in the pipe trench with the exception of a supposed rubbish pit which contained relatively modern material - bottles, brick and the like. It is known that School Lane (formerly Shuttleworth Lane) was unpaved until about 60 years ago with few buildings on it.

School Lane takes on a different character at a point approximately opposite number 64 where the land on either side of the Lane is noticeably elevated, in some places up to 1m above the level of the road surface. At about this point, the ancient earthworks and general debris of the abandoned village can be detected in the fields and gardens on either side. the reason for this difference in height from the base of the road to the adjoining fields has been given as a medieval sunken way dividing the north and south parts of Silkby. The pipe trench was excavated along the verge on the south side of the sunken way. One sherd of pottery - post medieval - was the only find in the trench from 64 School Lane to Gables Farm where the pipe trench changed direction. However, it may be relevant to record that the general nature of the sub-strata changed significantly; the tarmac of the road appeared to have been laid directly over a sandy limestone matrix. In the north facing section of the trench (i.e. where the tarmac could be observed) there were dark grey sandy silts with frequent fine to medium sized angular and rounded pebbles; this layer was c.250-300mm thick.

9.5 From School Lane to New Bypass.

At Gables Farm the water main trench veered from a westerly direction to a north-westerly one, initially through a grass field, where the best preserved remains of Silkby are located, and, secondly, through a narrow ploughed field. It was fully expected that the apparent house platforms and other upstanding features would reveal, *inter alia*, traces of buried walls. This was not the case, however, as the drawn section indicates (fig 3). In this area, laminated bed rock comes almost to the surface of the field in some places. There was no doubt that the rock was natural and had no bearing on the remains of any settlement hereabouts (see plate 1).

A hedge separates the grass field from the narrow ploughed field bordering the bypass. The water main trench continued through the ploughed field but now with a cleared strip as a working space for the JCB. Immediately on the west side of the hedge a darker strip of soil was observed within a metre of the hedge and running parallel with it. Although this darker mark had the indications of a filled ditch, on sectioning it there were no clearly defined limits to it. During the archaeological fieldwork here one or two sherds of early Saxon pottery were retrieved from the strip of land running alongside the pipe trench. On further fieldwalking in the immediate area it was noticed that the small parcel of field enclosed by the pipe trench to the north, the hedge on the east, and the road and hedge on the west and south respectively, (in area less than 1 acre) was distinctly different in character from the remainder of the field. A heavy spread of limestone on the surface - almost certainly the debris from destroyed buildings - was obvious. The stone spread thinned to almost nothing to the north of the pipe trench (see plate 2). Equally, the density of early Saxon pottery associated with the stone spread was remarkable; in all 71 sherds were recovered from this small area, together with Romano-British greywares and colour coats, and medieval green glazed wares, Bourne types and one sherd of developed Stamford ware. Also within the area described were several lumps of iron slag. This part of the field is on a slight slope, which levels off beyond and to the north of the pipe trench. At the same time, the distribution of artifacts is reduced to a sparse spread north of the pipe line. (N.B. the work on the site described here is mostly beyond the

requirements of the watching brief). There were no archaeological features noticed or recorded in the sections of the water main trench. The early Saxon pottery from Silkby is similar in character to many other sites found during the past 25 years or so in this part of south Lincolnshire - Hacconby, Little Hale, Osbournby, Dowsby, etc (Simmons, 1975, 196-9), and also from 66 School Lane Silk Willoughby (Simmons, unpublished). Of the 71 sherds recovered from this new site in Silk Willoughby, only one decorated sherd was noted with five other sherds being rim sections. The site is likely to be domestic rather than funerary especially if the combination of building stone and iron slag is associated with the pottery.

9.6 New Bypass to South Rauceby.

Continuing through the ploughed field to the west of the bypass, the water main trench proceeded to the sugar beet hard-standing on a sharp corner of Rauceby Lane. This field yielded no archaeological features or finds of any sort, nor did the remainder of the trench from Rauceby Lane to its termination alongside and to the north of the main Grantham to Sleaford road (A153). In one place, at approximately the parish boundary between Silk Willoughby and South Rauceby, a mark had been noted on an aerial photograph suggestive of a prehistoric ditch at TF 038437 (SMR). There is also known to be a complex of ditch-like marks to the west of here, depicted on further aerial photographs, and which cut through the land now belonging to Sleaford Golf Club. Although a close watch was kept on the water main trench as it moved from Silk Willoughby parish to South Rauceby nothing was seen of any man-made features. The sub-strata in this area, from about the sugar beet hard-standing, mentioned previously, to the A153, consist almost entirely of sand in which it should have been relatively easy to observe any sudden change of infill.

10. DISCUSSION

The results of the watching brief have indicated, to some extent, the value of the archaeological work in Silk Willoughby and South Rauceby. The acquired knowledge of fairly intensive early Saxon activity in Silk Willoughby, for example, is useful and, to a degree, important adding to what is already known of this period in and around the locality, not least for its apparent similarities with the site presently being excavated in Quarrington (January 1994). More confusingly, but perhaps of negative value, is the lack of anything substantial coming from Silkby and particularly so in the grass field where foundations of medieval buildings could have survived. But negative results are sometimes as vital as positive ones.

Both barrows immediately adjacent to School Lane are protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, 1970. The difficulties of protecting such mounds are well known for, although the mounds themselves are clearly visible, the subtleties of associated buried features are not so easily safeguarded. This precept is emphasised by the finding of part of the supposed ring ditch of one of the barrows beneath School Lane. If such a feature can be seen in the narrow confines of a trench no more than 0.6m wide, and shallowly under the tarmac at that, the damage caused consistently to the ring ditch in the ploughed field opposite could be enormous.

The lack of any positive feature in the sand sub-stratum on the Silk Willoughby/South Rauceby boundary is a mystery not easily solved; it should have been there but was only obvious by its absence.

11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Pre-Construct Archaeology would like to thank Anglian Water Services Limited for the opportunity to conduct the watching brief and for taking an interest in the work as it progressed, especially the two site engineers involved. Thanks are also due to the staff of the County and City Museum who gave assistance when required. None of the work could have been done without the co-operation of the JCB driver (Mr. P. Robinson) and his team and PCA would like to show appreciation, too, in this respect.

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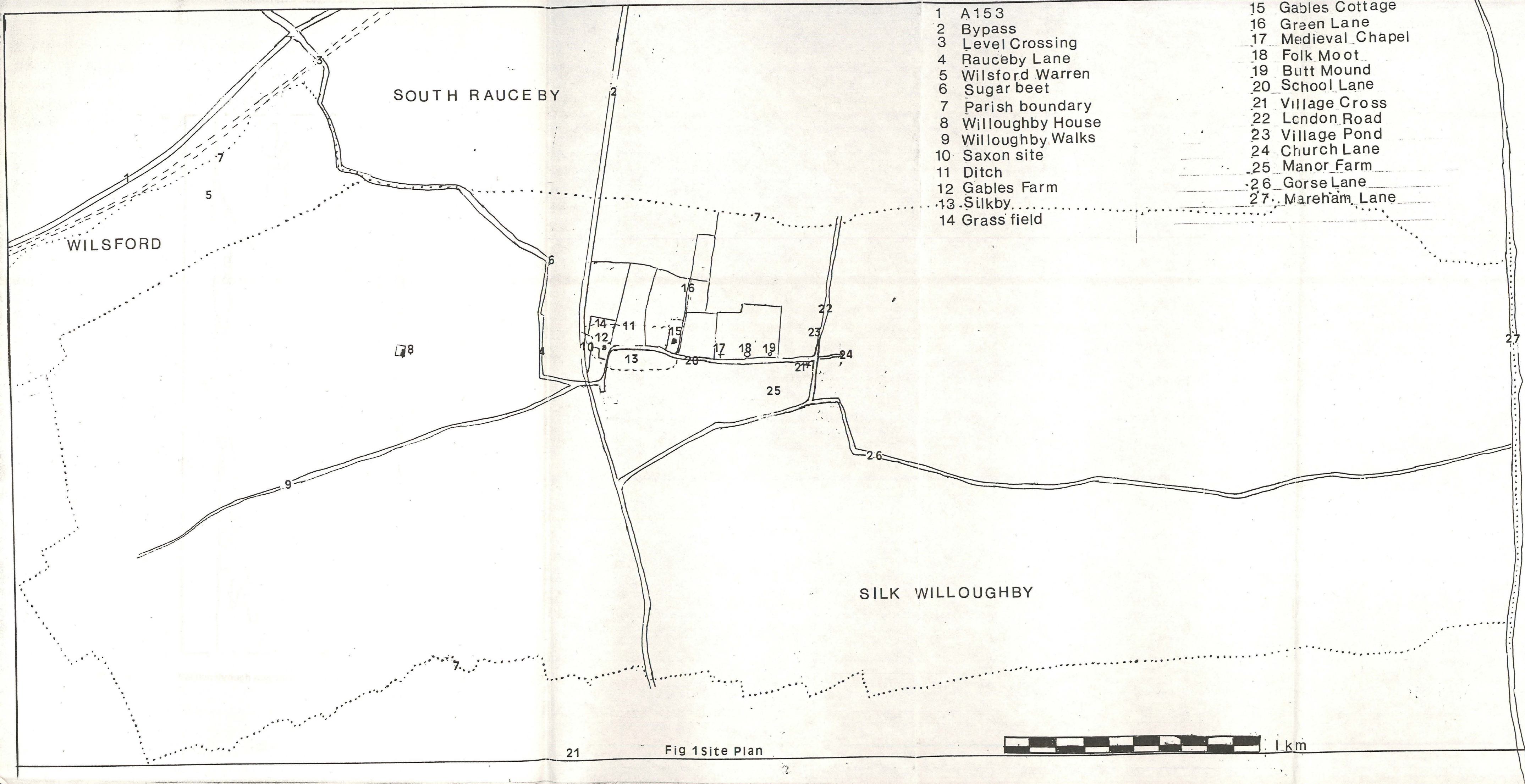
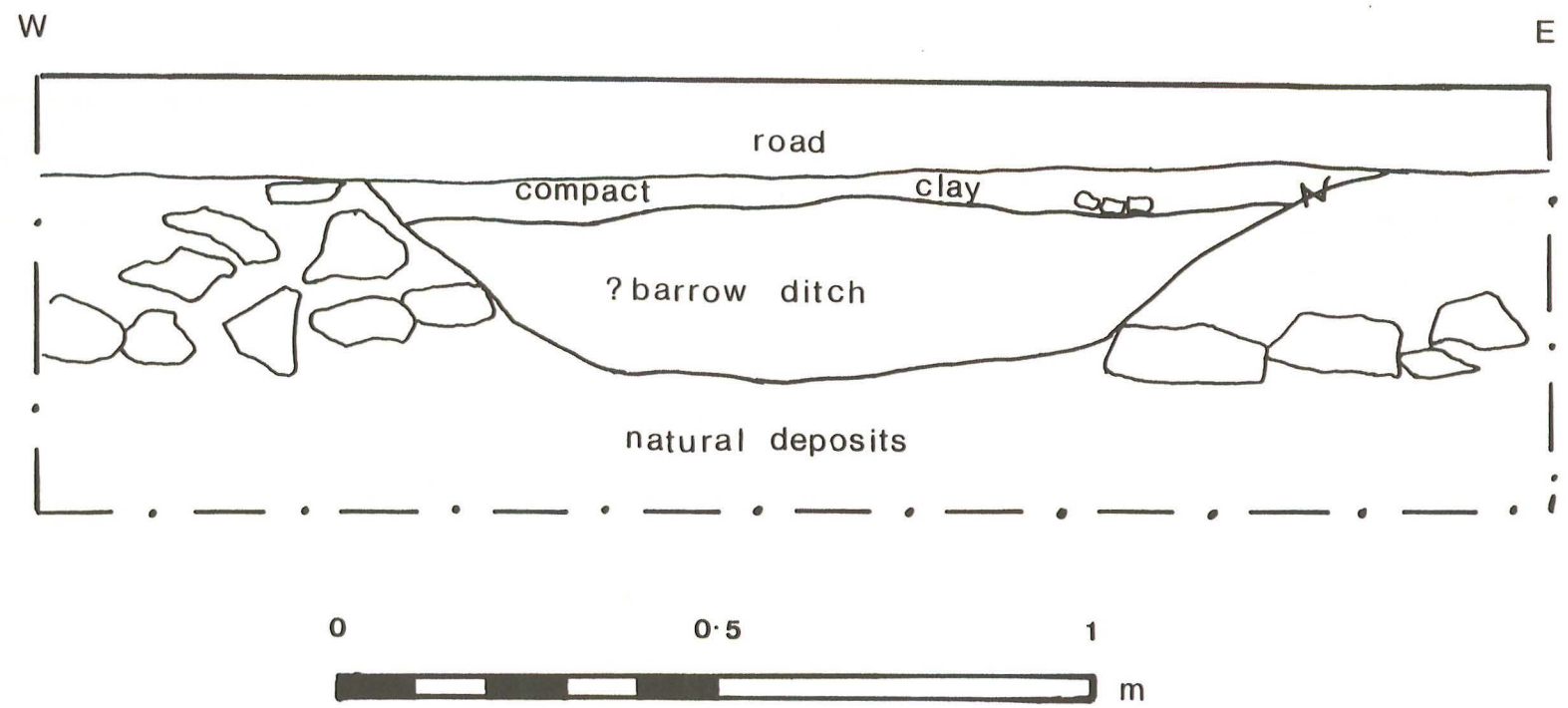


Fig 2

Section through ring ditch, Folk Moot



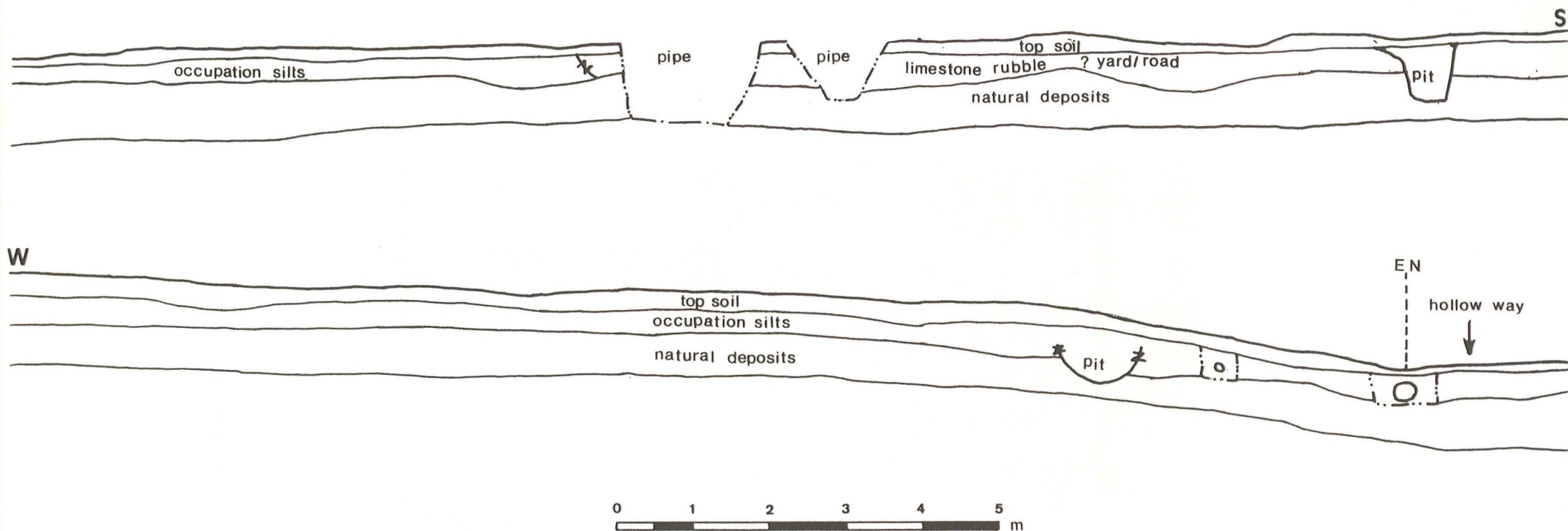


Fig 3 Section through grass field, Silkby



Plate 1 Silkby showing water main trench and natural limestone



Plate 2 Saxon site seen from bypass (north is to the left)