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Stixwould, Lincs.

Mains Replacement Scheme:

Archaeological Monitoring

NGR: TF 1840 6638 and TF 1738 6622

LCNCC Museum Accn. No. **100.97**
Site Code: **STX 97**

Report prepared for Anglian Water Services

September 1997

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Stixwould, Lincs.

Mains Replacement Scheme: Archaeological Monitoring

NGR: TF 1840 6638 and TF 1738 6622

LCNCC Museum Accn. No. 100.97

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Summary

A watching brief during trenching retrieved re-used brick and roof tile fragments from a backfilled pit close to the clay pits west of Halstead Hall, and evidence of backfilled features beneath the road close to the site of Stixwould Priory. The clay pits may be 19th century in date, and not associated with original construction of either Tattershall Castle or Halstead Hall. Ditches associated with earthworks of Stixwould Priory appear to continue below Duckpool Lane.

Introduction

Lindsey Archaeological Services (LAS) was commissioned by Anglian Water Services Ltd in May 1997 to conduct an intermittent watching brief of trenching for a 125mm diameter replacement water main at two locations between Horsington and Duckpool Bridge, Stixwould (Fig. 1). The archaeological monitoring had been requested by the Archaeology Section of Lincolnshire County Council.

The first inspection visit by the author was made on May 19th 1997. Further visits were made until July 22nd when monitoring was concluded; a total of 8 visits were made.

Stixwould Plantation (Fig. 2)

0.3km to the west of Halstead Hall is a complex of interconnecting water-filled pits beside the road to Stixwould and opposite Stixwould Plantation (Pl. 1). These have traditionally been interpreted as clay extraction pits serving a brickworks. Two existing buildings with outhouses are sited on the NE side of the pits and are known as Halstead Cottage and Halstead House (formerly Brick Pit Cottages). The pits lie to the north of Edlington Moor, which according to documentary records was the source of bricks used in the construction of Tattershall Castle in about 1430. By association, it has been suggested that these pits contributed to the bricks for that building. Another suggestion has been that the pits supplied material for the bricks used in Halstead Hall during the early 16th century and in its late 16th century brick barn.

Research for this report indicates that these pits are much later. The first edition 1" [1: 63,360] Ordnance Survey map does not mark either Brick Pit Cottages or any pit features (Fig. 3; OS 1824). This suggests that the extant clay pits are later than the 1818 commencement of detailed survey in Lincolnshire, although their omission may have been an oversight.

The 1891 6" [1:10,560] map marks the cottages, the pit complex and various linear buildings (?tile or brick sheds) on the eastern edge of the pits (OS 1891). The complex is labelled 'Stixwold Brick and Pipe Works' which implies that the business was active (Fig. 4).

The 1905 1:2,500 map marks fewer sheds, but the same pits (Fig. 5). As the earliest 1:2,500 map was not readily available, it is unclear whether it uses 1888 survey detail (illustrating the development of the ancillary sheds) or 1904 revision (capturing decline). Possible clues are offered by the labelling of the pit complex as 'Fish Ponds' on the later map (as were disused brick pits on Edlington Moor) and the site no longer being named, as if it had been abandoned. An early 19th century Scotch-type brick kiln beside the cottages was extant in 1985 (used as a store), when it was a Grade II Listed structure.

This sequence of events would indicate that the pits were dug for clay used on site for the manufacture of bricks and (?land drainage) pipes, starting after 1818 but in full production by or before 1888, with a subsequent decline and effective abandonment by 1904.

The Watching Brief

The pipe was inserted below the roadside edge using directional drilling (moling). This reduced the extent of trenching required; small holes were excavated at intervals to check that the equipment would avoid underground services. These holes, about 2m x 1m and 1.1m deep, were located in the northern verge and were inspected after excavation.

1. This hole was 100m SW of the track to Halstead Hall. The 0.35m thick topsoil layer sealed 0.55m of clay flecked with orange iron-panning stains. Beneath this deposit was mixed yellow/grey clay and fine sand lenses.
2. NW of Halstead Cottage, the topsoil layer incorporated red brick fragments. The sandy clay deposit was encountered 0.7m below the surface.
3. Midway past the water-filled pits, the hole on the opposite verge cut through 0.4m of topsoil sealing a dark brown loamy clay layer 0.25m thick (Pls. 2 and 3). This layer contained frequent fragments of roof tile and brick rubble, some highly overfired and presumably never used for building, and other pieces with adhering mortar showing it to be demolition rubble.

Below this demolition spread was 0.45m of yellow clay, overlying a sand and gravel lense of unknown thickness.

4. Opposite the western end of the pit complex, the hole cut through 0.2m of topsoil, sealing 0.5m of orange-brown clay loam. Beneath this was 0.3m of yellow clay, with grey clay at the base. No finds were made from this hole.

Duckpool Lane (Fig. 6)

Abbey Farm occupies part of the site of a Cistercian nunnery, founded in 1135 (SMR 22606). The house was suppressed in 1536, after which Benedictine nuns used the premises. In 1537 the nunnery was refounded, this time for Premonstratensian canonesses, but finally dissolved in 1539.

Stone dismantled from Stixwould Priory was reused in the late 19th century construction of St. Andrew's church at Woodhall Spa, demolished in 1950 (Robinson 1983, 68). Part of one of the buildings survives *in situ* at Abbey Farm as part of a farm house. The Priory site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

A series of ditches (surveyed depth in 1964 1.3m) enclose irregular blocks of land to the NW of the present farm. Within these areas, lesser earthworks have been effectively levelled and their arrangement is unclear. The earthworks extend as far north as Duckpool Lane and appear to have been truncated by that road or by the present roadside boundary (Fig. 7).

The Watching Brief

5. 35m NW of the farmyard boundary hedge, a 3m wide backfilled ditch or hollow was visible in the pipe trench (Pl. 4). The feature survived to a depth of 0.15m, below the tarmac and asphalt road surfaces, and was filled with a dark brown clay loam with limestone pieces and pebbles (Pl. 5). It is possible that this feature was a medieval furrow, levelled when the post-medieval road was constructed.

6. The tarmac road here was 0.3m thick and covered a layer of gravel with sand which was 0.15m thick (Pl. 6). The well-preserved condition of this short stretch of metalled surface may indicate a track or path crossing the course of the modern road, rather than part of the post-medieval precursor of the present road.

7. 8m SE of 8, the road metalling gravel overlay a 0.12m thick spread of brick rubble; it extended 3m along the trench 0.4m below the modern road surface (Pl. 7). The rubble presumably dates from construction of the metalled road, and may have been used to fill a damp depression (possibly marking an archaeological feature, although nothing was identified beneath it).

8. A narrow ditch, 0.4m wide, crossed the line of the pipe trench in a SW-NE alignment, apparently extending the line of an existing field boundary ditch south of the modern bungalow (Pl. 8). The ditch cut below the trench base and had been backfilled with orange/brown sand.

This feature had been filled before the road had been constructed; its fill was sealed by a layer of sand beneath the post-medieval gravel metalling under the present tarmac road. The ditch may be of medieval date but no dating evidence was seen.

9. Opposite a mature ash tree (with a pond in the field beyond) the modern road had been built after filling and levelling a 7m wide disturbance. The width of this feature may be less than that observed, as the alignment is unknown. The tarmac road sealed a 0.1m thick layer of limestone chunks and rounded pebbles, overlying an earlier asphalt surface. Beneath this was a 0.25m thick deposit of dark clay loam with infrequent fragments of clay roof tile and limestone lumps. The depression was cut into dark brown clay, with a shelving SE edge and an abrupt NW face.

Either side of this feature, the tarmac road covered a 0.25m thick layer of mixed light brown sandy clay loam, presumably laid down as a levelling deposit before construction of the road. A 0.1m thick layer of light grey sandy loam beneath this may have been a buried topsoil, overlying dark brown clay.

10. 12m east of the southern field boundary, the trench cut through a single 0.25m thick course of large blocks of limestone, unmortared but laid closely fitting. The blocks were only visible on the southern face of the trench, 0.5m below the modern road surface (Pl. 9). They were set into a layer of dark grey clay (possibly fill of a natural or artificial channel) and were covered by a levelling deposit of light brown stony clay loam 0.1m thick. Above this was 0.12m of stones and pebbles forming a metalled road surface and the 0.28m accumulation of tarmac road.

To the east of the blocks, the ground beneath the levelling deposit dropped away, as if at the western edge of a depression. This was filled with a brown sandy loam and an underlying dark brown loam which may have been a buried topsoil; this contained an undiagnostic fragment of clay roof-tile. It was unclear whether the soil had formed over the limestone blocks or had been cut by that feature.

Conclusion

The pipe trench revealed no information about the clay pits or the brickworks, but showed signs of some backfilled pits or ditches opposite the known ponds. These smaller features may have been associated with the adjacent industry. The brick rubble in these pits was consistent with a mid-late 19th century date for activity on the brickworks site, as suggested by cartographic evidence. There is no reason to suspect the surviving clay pits are of greater antiquity.

The trench along Duckpool Lane exposed fill of several backfilled features but there was almost no evidence for their function or date. Some of the features may have been medieval plough furrows backfilled when the road was constructed, probably in the post-medieval period.

The trench probably cut across a corner of the priory grounds at 10, although no finds were visible. The Ordnance Survey indicate earthworks, probably a return of the embanked enclosure ditch or moat, beside the road hedge on the north side of the road. This would be consistent with the observations of this project.

This area appears to have lain within, but at the limit of, the ditched enclosure attached to the priory. Occupation features and rubbish pits would seem to have been positioned elsewhere.

Acknowledgements

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Geoff Tann
Lindsey Archaeological Services
3rd September 1997

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Archive Summary

photographs
roof tile fragments
annotated developer's plans
sketch sections
specialist's archive list: tile
correspondence

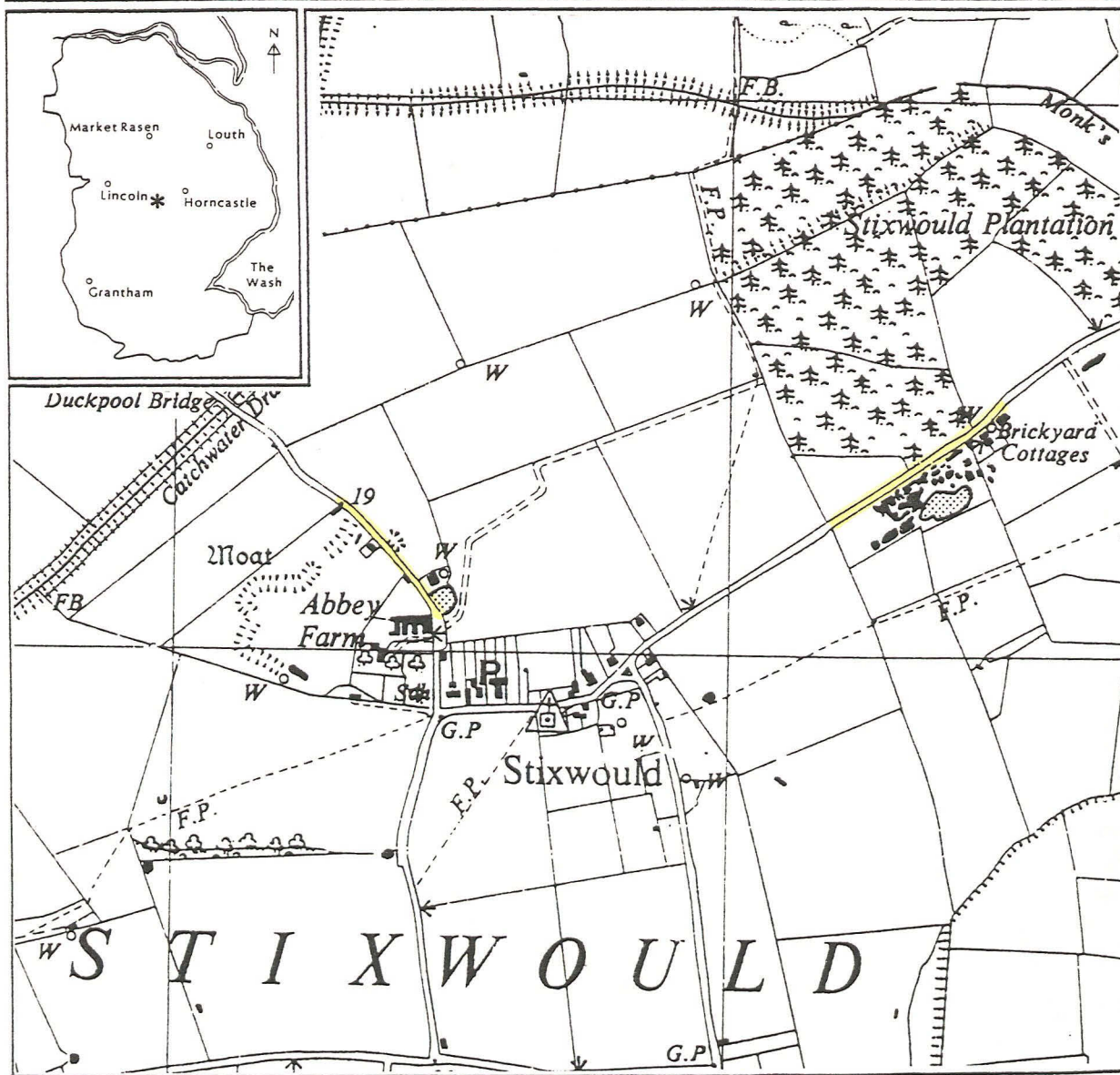
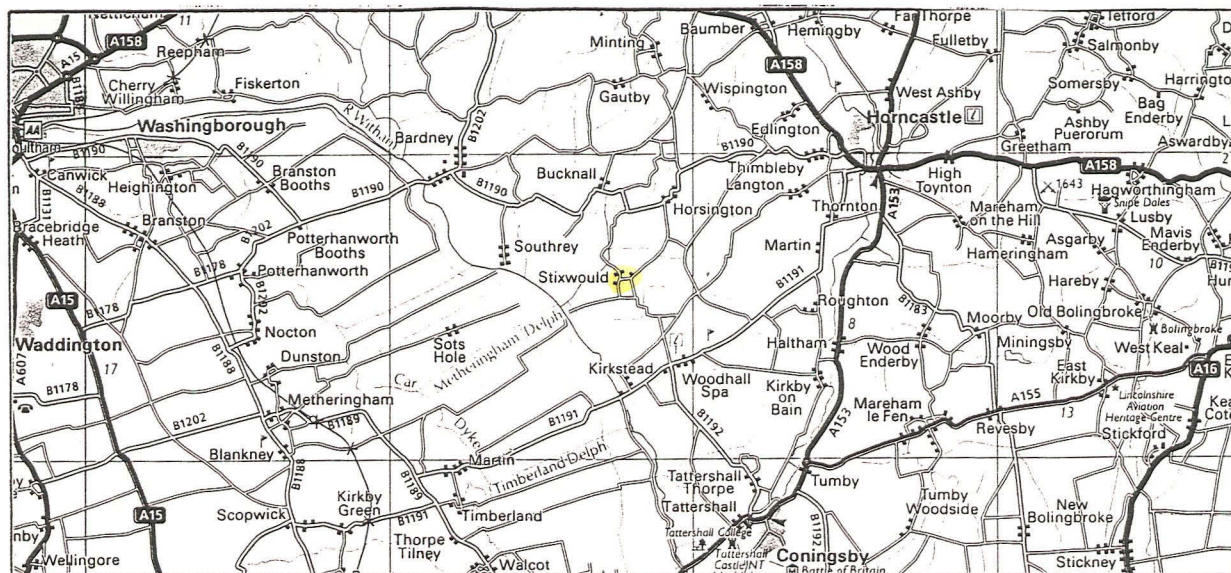


Fig. 1 Location of Stixwold (enlarged from the 1953 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey map, Sheet TF 16. Crown Copyright, reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. LAS Ordnance Survey Licence no. AL 50424A).

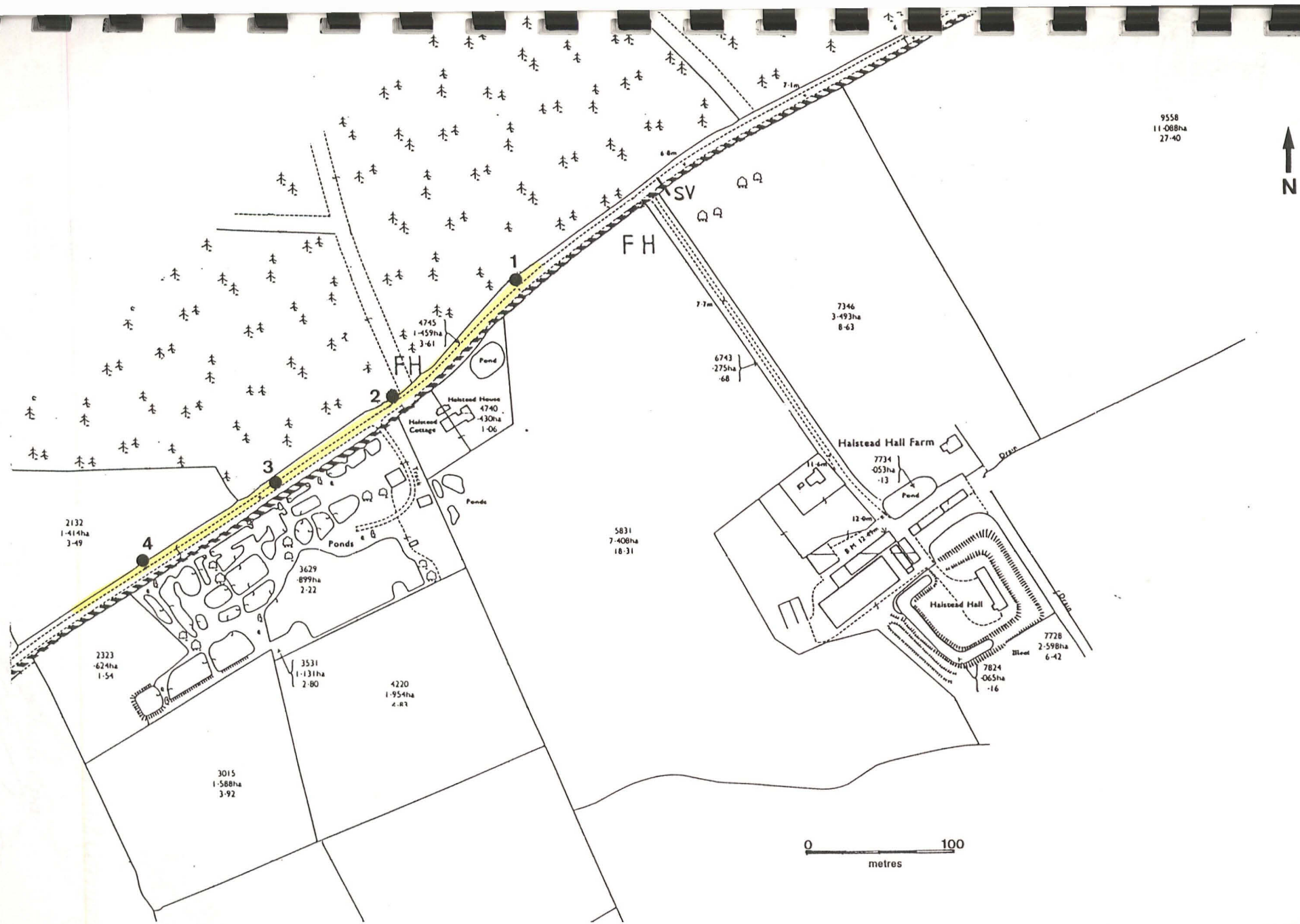


Fig. 2 The pipeline route, showing area monitored and the location of observations 1 - 4 noted in the text. (Based on the 1:2500 plan supplied by Anglian Water [dwg. no. 9344008/01, Copyright reserved]. LAS Ordnance Survey Licence no. AL 50424A).

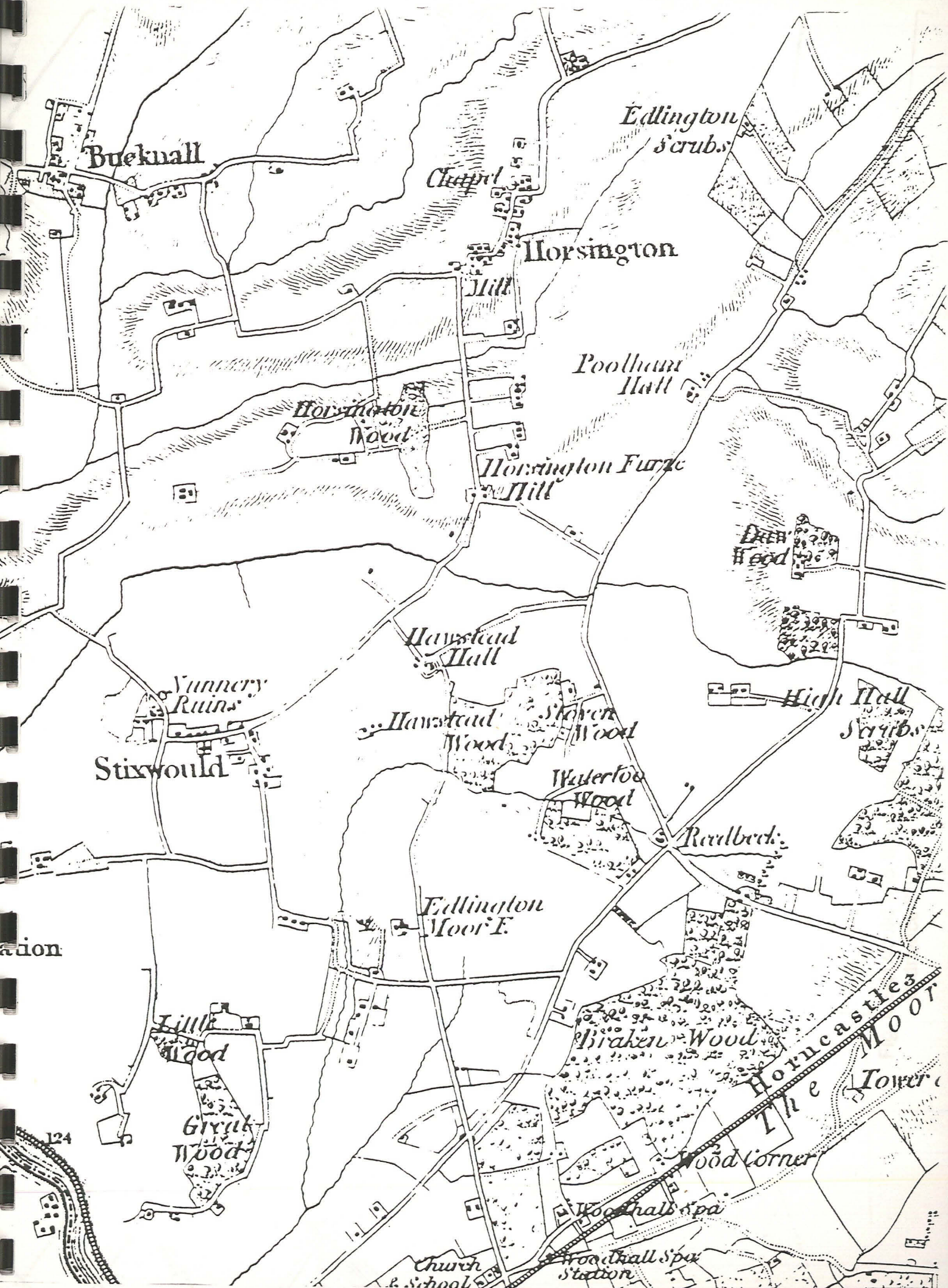


Fig. 3 Stixwold and Halstead Hall, as shown on the Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 1" map, not to scale (OS 1862).

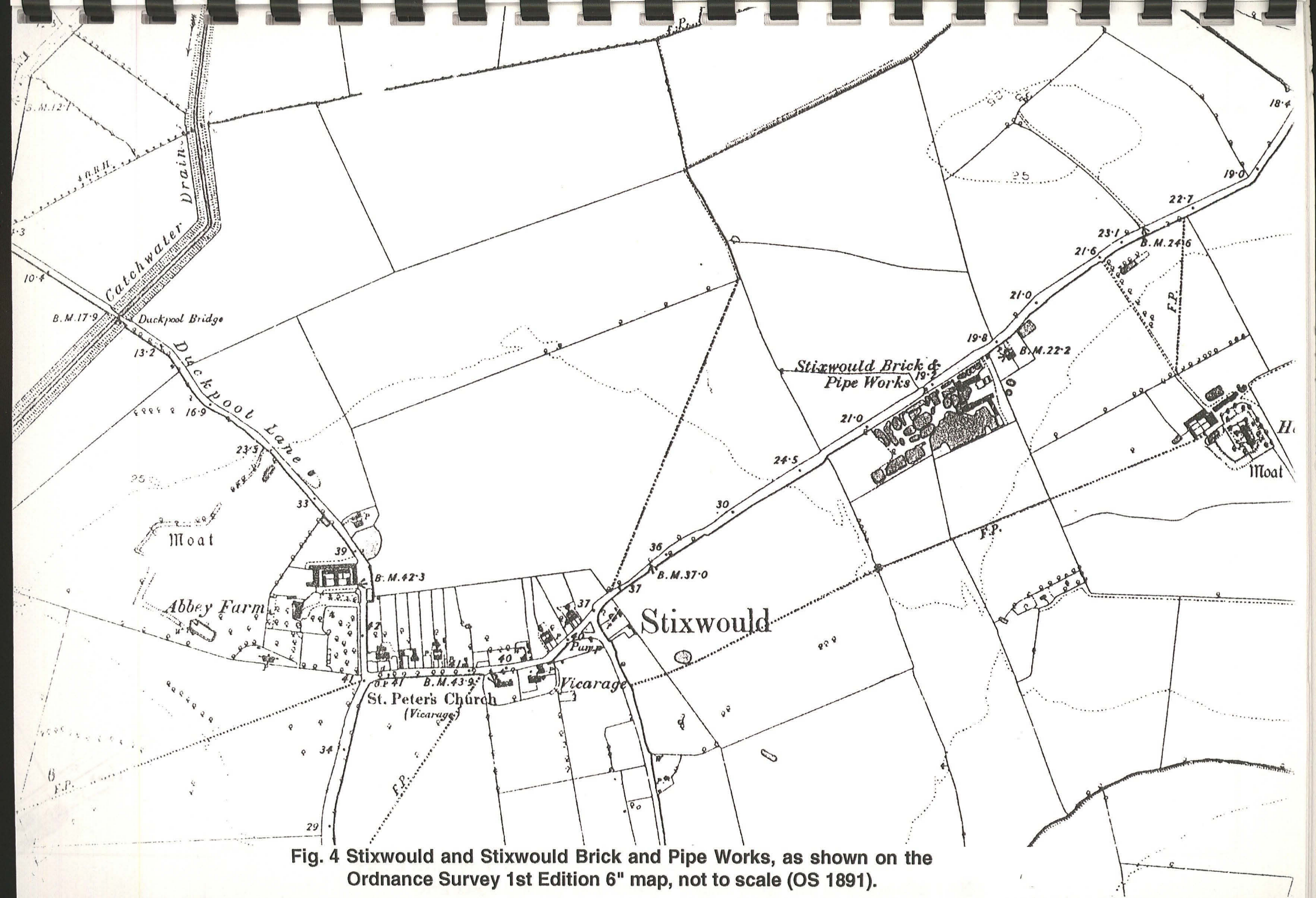


Fig. 4 Stixwold and Stixwold Brick and Pipe Works, as shown on the Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 6" map, not to scale (OS 1891).



Fig. 5 Brickyard Cottages and adjacent ponds, as shown on the Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition 1:2500 map, not to scale (OS 1905).

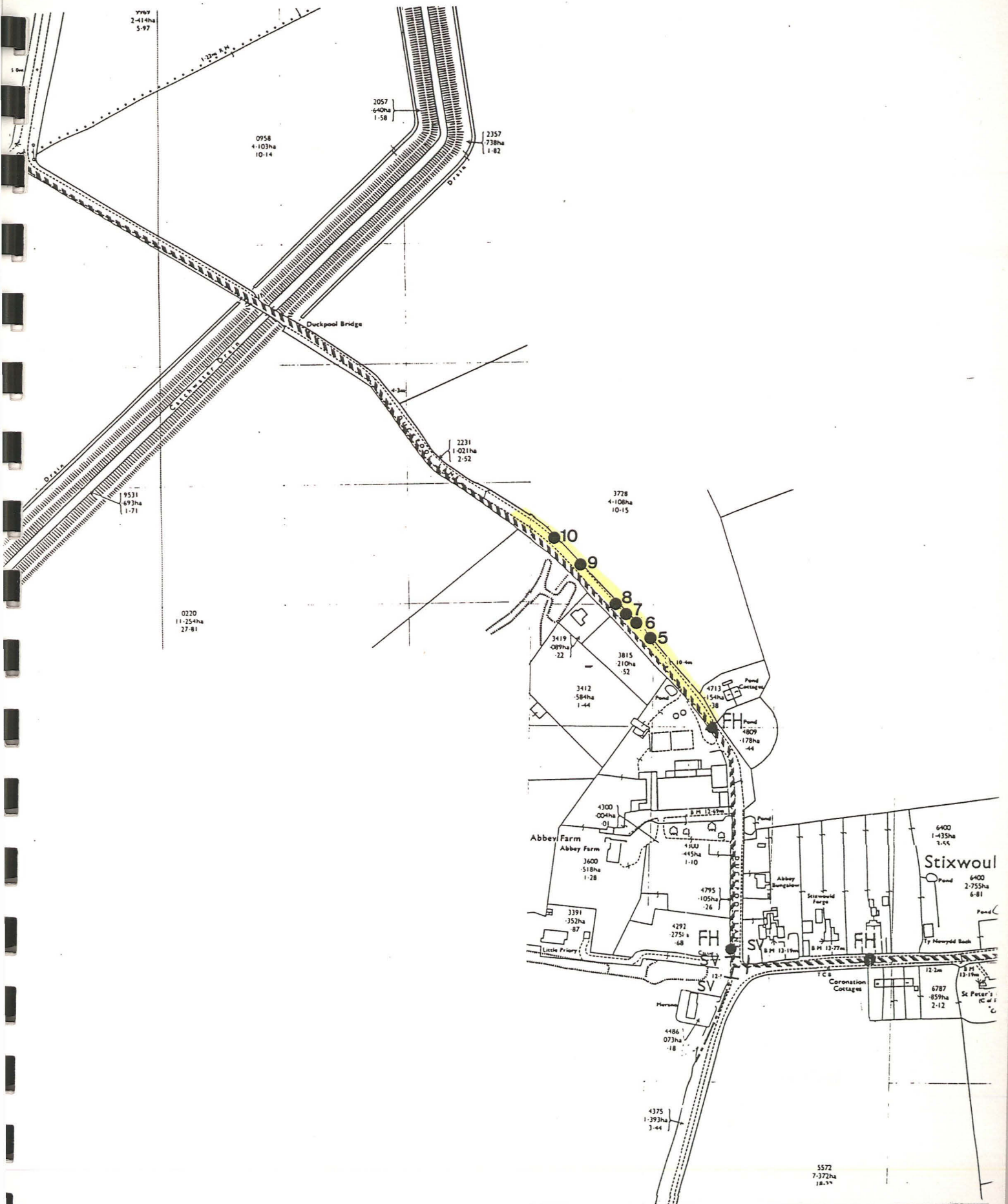


Fig. 6 The pipeline route, showing area monitored and the location of observations 5 - 10 noted in the text. (Based on the 1:2500 plan supplied by Anglian Water [dwg. no. 9344008/02, Copyright reserved]. LAS Ordnance Survey Licence no. AL 50424A).

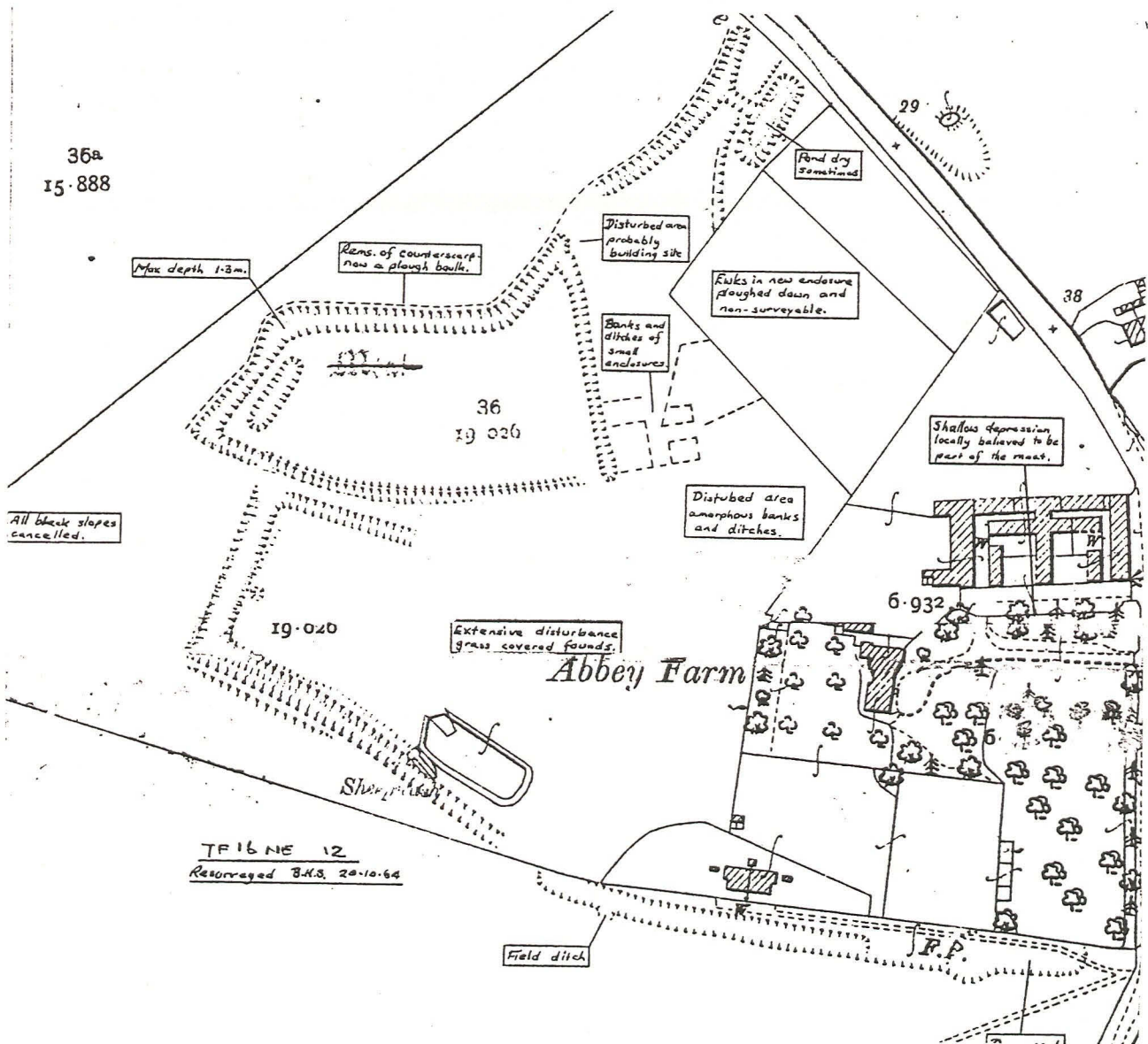


Fig. 7 Earthworks west of Abbey Farm, Stixwold (reproduced from records of Ordnance Survey fieldworkers, not to scale; Copyright reserved).



PI. 1 Overgrown clay-pits close to Halstead Hall (looking SW; the barriers mark the pipe trenches).

PI. 2 Position of moling access pit 3, beside the entrance to Stixwoud Plantation (looking SW).





Pl. 3 Brick rubble backfilling a small feature at 3 (looking NW). Note the sand at the trench base.

Pl. 4 Duckpool Lane. Feature 5 was located opposite the elder tree (looking NW).





Pl. 5 Limestone and pebbles in the fill of 5, possibly a medieval plough furrow. Looking NE.

Pl. 6 Gravel path or road metalling, 6. Scale 1m; looking NE.

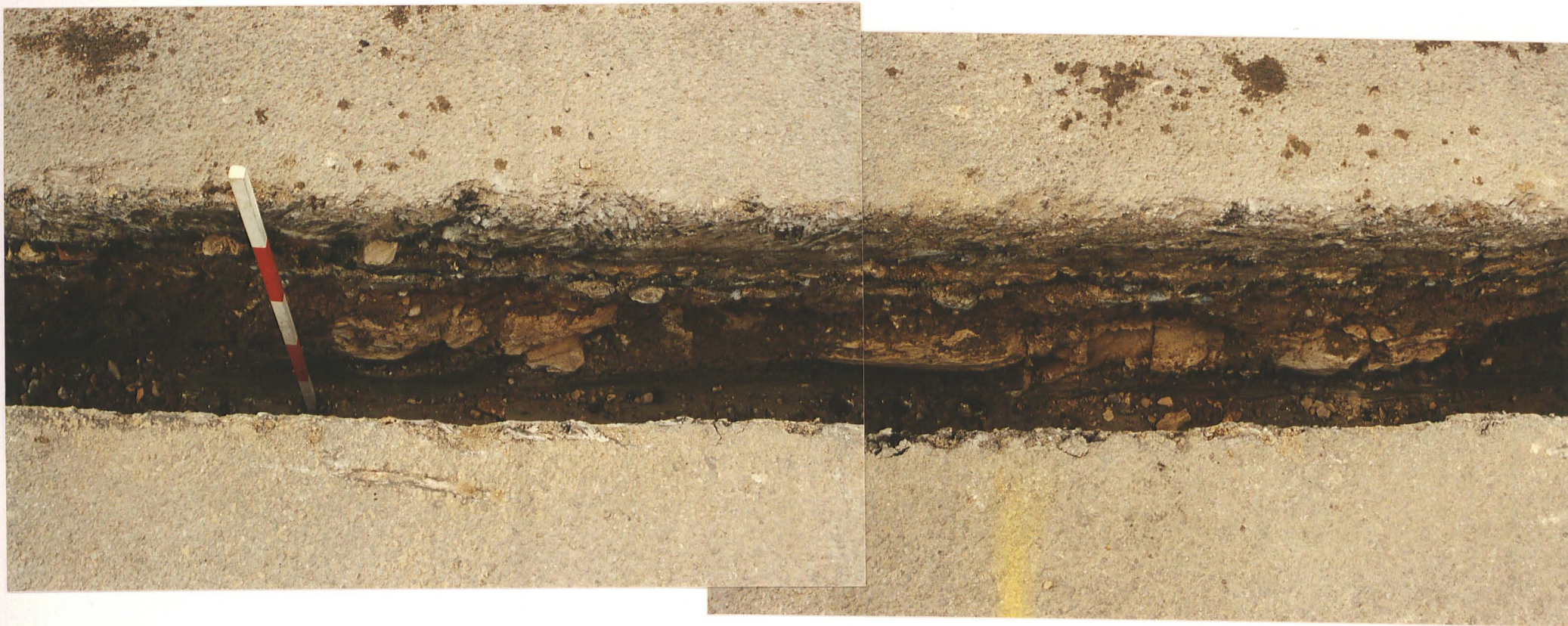




Pl. 7 Brick rubble infilling 7. Scale 1m, looking NE.



PI. 8 Location of a narrow ditch 8, crossing the trench below the scale (looking SE).



Pl. 9 Laid limestone blocks below the post-medieval road, and probably filling the medieval moat at 10. Scale 1m.