

Harby Flood Alleviation Scheme

By Dr. Peter Inker

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF UNDERTAKEN
BETWEEN FEBRUARY AND MARCH 2005

Accession Number X.A145.2005



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Summary

- Trent & Peak Archaeological Unit was commissioned by Severn Trent Water Ltd. to monitor the archaeological impact of a flood alleviation scheme at Nether Street, Harby, Leicestershire (SK744314)
- The route of the pipeline ran from the Grantham canal (SK74363151) to Harby Garage (SK74443128), via fields along Nether Street and along Nether Street itself. It was anticipated that the impact of works on archaeology would be minimal, as pre-modern activity at Harby appears to be located predominantly to the south-east of this area.
- Archaeological monitoring was undertaken throughout the period of intrusive ground-works. The opportunity was also taken of excavating a series of trial trenches through the ridge and furrow in order to recover dating evidence and to enhance understanding of the stratigraphy of the area.
- A brick –lined well was uncovered during excavation of the pipe trench in the British Waterways Maintenance depot (Area 01). The well is likely to be associated with the 19th century brewery that previously occupied this site.
- Prior to works being undertaken, a rapid walkover survey highlighted the survival of elements of the Medieval landscape that would be affected by the proposed ground-works.
- Excavation and EDM survey clarified the extent and the stratigraphy of the ridge and furrow in the area, confirming that modern field boundaries were imposed upon the existing Medieval landscape. Pottery evidence from the top layers of the ridge and furrow indicates that they were in use before the 18th century.
- Observations during the watching brief of possible remnants of ridge and furrow under Nether Street road surface, is compatible with ridge and furrow remaining along the eastern edge of Nether Street, suggesting cultivation of the area prior to the current road being built.

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Acknowledgements

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Project Manager for T&PAU was Dr. Howard Jones, to whom thanks are extended for his comments and assistance during the project.

1 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of a watching brief conducted from 10th February - 31st of March 2005, during ground-works forming part of the flood alleviation system at Nether Street, Harby, north Leicestershire. Works were undertaken by Danaher and Walsh (C.E.) Ltd., in line with specifications provided by Pick Everard for Seven Trent Water Ltd.

T&PAU was commissioned by Severn Trent Water Ltd to monitor the archaeological impact of the ground-works. The existing pipeline was deemed too narrow to cope with drainage requirements. Severn Trent Water proposed the introduction of a new pipeline along the western edge of Nether Street, Harby, Leicestershire (SK744314).

The route of the pipeline ran from the Grantham canal to Harby Garage, via fields along Nether Street and alongside Nether Street itself (Fig.11). The pipe-trench began at the edge of the Grantham canal (SK74363151), 17m west of Langar Bridge, and ran for 25m through the compound of the British Waterways maintenance depot and under its southern wall. At this point it turned due west for 8m, then due south for 125m into the three fields south of the compound. The pipeline continued south-east for 30m turning 90° to the north-east, alongside the Tythby Farm Dairy Cheeseworks. After a further 70m the pipeline emerged at the western edge of Nether Street. Here it turned south-east to run parallel with the edge of the road for 40m, turning due south for a further 45m and ending at a manhole cover outside the Harby Garage (SK74443128).

2 SITE TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

Harby sits on a Ferruginous Limestone outcrop, within the Mercia mudstone band that runs north-east along the Vale of Belvoir. The modern village of Harby lies on sloping land that runs from the Harby Hills 2km to the south-east of the village, to the bottom of the Vale 5km to the north-west. The village is focused on the 50-55m contours, with the land running away to the west of the village.

The Ferruginous Limestone outcrop was clearly evident in the bright orange character of many of the clays observed during excavation (0115) (Fig.1). A layer of stratified conglomerate limestone with a dense fossil matrix was identified within this orange clay in areas to the west of Nether Street. Outcrops of this conglomerate were visible on the surface of the fields to the west of Areas 02, 03 and 04. The remaining deposits uncovered during excavation consisted of oxidised and unoxidised clays with varying sandy compositions (Grey clays, contexts 0118, 0124, 0125).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Published material on the history and archaeology of Harby is limited. The following discussion relies heavily on the data contained within the Sites and Monuments Record maintained by Leicestershire County Council.

Earliest Harby

The earliest remains from Harby focus on the higher ground around and to the east of Saint Mary's Church. A flint flake (SMR: MLE10202) discovered during works undertaken at Pinfold Lane provides the earliest evidence of activity in the area, dating between the Late Neolithic and Late Bronze Age (3000-800BC). A sherd of Iron Age pottery (SMR: MLE10199) from the locality raises the possibility of settlement during the later Prehistoric period (800BC-AD42). This sherd, of scored ware type, is a common form in the East Midlands that has origins dating back to the fourth century BC¹. A series of gullies and post-holes (associated with Roman pottery (SMR: MLE10201)) represent more substantial evidence of occupation during the Roman period (AD43-409). A further cluster of Roman cultural material (SMR: MLE3550) including a coin, dress and cosmetic accessories and a spearhead has also been recovered from this area, to the east of Harby Church, and reinforces the hypothesis that the earliest occupation was focused on this higher ground.

¹ Elsdon, S. M. 1992, East Midlands Scored Ware. *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeology and History Society*, LXVI, pp.83-91.

Saxon and Medieval Harby

Occupation in the Saxon period (AD450-1065) is represented by two sherds of mid-Anglo-Saxon pottery (AD650-849) found amidst a scatter of Roman pottery discovered during field walking (SMR: MLE 6195). A Frankish equal armed brooch of 7th or 8th century AD date had previously been discovered in the same area (SMR: MLE 6195). In Domesday book (AD1085) Harby is mentioned as *Herdebi or Hertebi*, this is possibly a derivation from the Viking village name *Hjotr*.² There are indications therefore, that permanent settlement at Harby had taken place before the Norman Conquest (AD1066).

By the Medieval period (AD1067-1539) the centre of the existing village had been established (SMR: MLE 8748) at what is now the junction of Burden Lane and Dickens Lane, directly to the south of Saint Mary's parish Church and the areas of earliest cultural remains. In this period Saint Mary's was built (SMR: MLE3541) as an offshoot of the monastic settlement at Stathern, 2.5km to the west. Pevsner dated the construction and development of the church to AD1290-1350³. A possible Late Anglo-Saxon interlace decorated stone (SMR: MLE3544) was said to have been found in the church yard, although this is may be a reference to the still extant medieval 'butter cross' now reused as a war memorial.

Post-Medieval Harby

The most significant post-medieval features associated with Harby are the Grantham Canal (SMR: MLE3545), which was built in the 1790's linking Grantham to Nottingham, and the 18th and 19th century windmills and towermill in Harby's environs (SMR: MLE3540/45/46/48).

The British Waterways compound where the pipeline began (alongside the Grantham canal) is identified as the location of a windmill (SMR: MLE3545) built at some time after the enclosure map of AD1790. On the AD1888 map no

windmill is mentioned and the site is described as the Vale Brewery.⁴

The affected route

The cultural remains recovered from Harby focus about 1km east-south-east of the areas affected by the proposed works (see above). The northern part of the affected route (Areas 02-04) was identified in the earlier walkover survey as containing features of potential archaeological significance.⁵ The three fields through which the pipeline passed preserved upstanding earthworks consistent with Medieval strip cultivation, including ridge and furrow and plough headlands (Fig.12). However, during the course of the watching brief further possible ridge and furrow was noted behind the houses to the east of Nether Street, and less certainly, along the roadside verge opposite Harby garage. Additional Medieval field systems including headlands and ridge and furrow have been identified to the south of Harby, along with possible building platforms (SMR: MLE5914). These field systems can provide valuable evidence for the chronology and character of agricultural practices, and can occasionally preserve earlier landscapes and features beneath their surfaces.

Archaeological impact of the scheme

On the basis of the above analysis it was anticipated that the impact of the groundworks on archaeological deposits would be minimal. Past activity at Harby appears to focus on the higher ground 1km to the south-east. However, it was apparent that substantial damage would occur to the ridge and furrow in Areas 02, 03 and 04 and that preservation by record would be necessary through topographic survey prior to pipe-laying. The eastern edge of Areas 02, 03 and 04 appeared to have been subjected to previous damage during the establishment of the existing sewage infrastructure.

4 METHODOLOGY

² Williams, A. and Martin, G. (eds), 2003. *Domesday Book, A Complete Translation*, p.763.

³ Leicester SMR

⁴ Ordnance Survey First Edition 1:10,560 County Series 1888

⁵ Meek, J. 2003. *Nether Street, Harby – Rapid Walkover Survey*, ULAS.

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken throughout the period of intrusive ground-works. The pipe-trench and manhole pits were excavated using a 360° mechanical excavator, with a 0.5m toothless bucket. In the areas of pasture (02, 03 and 04), a tracked excavator was used. In the concreted areas (05 & 06) a wheeled excavator was employed. Throughout the excavation a 4-wheel steered articulating dumper was used to remove spoil.

Easement: Areas 02, 03 and 04

In Areas 02, 03 and 04 topsoil was machine stripped from an easement c.14m wide. However, the contractor limited the depth of the stripping to c.0.15-0.2m, removing only the turf and root-mat. A substantial covering of topsoil was left *in situ*, over which a spread of coarse gravel was laid to provide an access track. Where this easement cut through ridge and furrow, slight adjustments in depth took place to provide a levelling of the area. Excavation of the easement was undertaken using a 360° mechanical excavator and a dumper (Fig.2). This provided a restricted window of opportunity for archaeological assessment, although the potential for the identification of features was nullified by the contractors preferred method of stripping.

Trial trenches

The opportunity was taken to excavate a series of trial trenches through the ridge and furrow in Areas 02, 03 and 04. These presented the possibility for recovering dating evidence and enhancement of our understanding of the pipeline stratigraphy (recorded as Sections 2 to 7).

Pipeline: Area 05 and 06

In Areas 05 and 06, the pipeline was initially excavated with a road drill to a depth of approximately 0.2m, then excavated deeper (c.2.5m+) by 360° mechanical excavator. In places the discovery of previous services in the road and roadside verge necessitated the use of trench boxes. These comprised 3m x 2m metal sheets braced 1m apart, and obviously hindered access and observation of the trench sides. Once excavated a basal layer of gravel was deposited onto which the pipe was laid. Prior to backfilling there was a limited window of opportunity to record and

analyse the stratigraphy and its archaeological potential (Fig.3).

Fieldwork and recording

Features of potential archaeological interest were hand-cleaned and recorded by photography and scale drawing.

Where access permitted representative sections were hand-cleaned and recorded by photography and scale drawing. Examination of the sections of the pipeline trench in Areas 05 and 06 (exceeding 2.5m deep) was constrained by safety considerations which limited observation to ground level (Fig.3). The location of all observed areas, features and recorded sections was annotated on 1:1000 site plans, supplemented by EDM survey where necessary.

Recording follows the format described in the Unit's manual, a copy of which has been lodged with the County Archaeological Officer. For convenience all pipe-trenches, and distinct lengths of the easement were allocated a two digit Area number (Fig.11). All recorded contexts have been given a four-digit number (e.g. 0001). Small finds are identified by a unique three letter code (e.g. AAA).

The archive is comprised of a digital (including digital photographs) and paper record, these will be lodged with the Leicestershire and Rutland Sites and Monuments Record.

Assessment of methodology

Area 01 had been excavated and back filled prior to the recognition of the scheme's requirement for archaeological intervention, and hence monitoring was limited to those aspects that remained exposed (Fig.5). Within the main lengths of easement (Areas 02-04) a topographic survey conducted prior to stripping ensured preservation by record and provides the necessary data for reinstatement. Whilst the contractor's methodology of partial topsoil strip followed by metalling restricted archaeological observation, it is likely to have limited damage to any underlying archaeological deposits through provision of a protective surface for trafficking.

Within Areas 05 and 06 archaeological observation and analysis was subject to

the constraints of safe access to deep and confined excavations, and integrating the demands of archaeological intervention and recording with the contractors pipe-laying schedule (Fig.3).

5 RESULTS

Area 01 – British Waterways maintenance depot, Harby

Excavation had already taken place within the compound of British Waterways' Harby maintenance yard when the watching brief was begun. Inside the maintenance yard a 1m wide and 1.5m deep trench had been cut on a north-south alignment (Fig.5). The trench extended from the northern edge of the compound, 5m from the Grantham canal, to the southern compound wall, a distance of 25 metres. Two 2m diameter manholes had been placed in 2.5m square extensions in the trench. At a point 5m from the southern compound wall the trench turned in a westerly direction, at a bearing of approximately 22° off north. The entire trench had been backfilled with a gravel mix, apart from a 5m stretch where a well had been exposed.

Well (0100)

A well was uncovered during excavation of the pipe trench in Area 01. The well was brick lined, 2m diameter and 8m deep. The pipe trench had cut through a section of the side of the well leaving about 90% of the well intact under the concrete surface of the compound (Fig.6). From the limited amount of stratigraphy visible it could be seen that the top 0.9m of deposit was made up of a concrete hardstand, over mixed deposits of brick and rubble. Beneath this a redeposited layer of grey-brown clay was visible (0112). The bricks making up the well were 23cm x 10.5cm x 7cm in size and constructed with little or no mortar. This building technique is compatible with post-medieval techniques of construction and from subsequent examination of the area there was no indication of earlier, pre-modern activity. The approximate centre of the well was 7.8m from the south wall of the depot (marked where the scales cross in Fig.5). It is possible that the well was a source of water for the Vale Brewery, which previously occupied this site.

The Medieval landscape: Areas 02, 03 and 04

Before the watching brief had begun ground-works had already taken place in Area 02. An easement 14m wide had been partially stripped of topsoil, running on a north-south alignment through the centre of the field (Fig.2). This strip was mettled with gravel to enable trafficking by machinery. Approximately 8.5m from the western edge of the easement, a 1m wide and 1.5m deep trench had been cut. Two Large 2m square manholes had been placed at the northern and southern end of this trench. The entire trench was backfilled with a gravel mix, apart from the northern corner where pipe was still being fitted. A section of the stratigraphy in the northern corner of the trench was still visible, showing possible colluvial deposition at the base of the slope.

Ridge and Furrow

The walkover survey had identified ridge and furrow in Areas 02, 03 and 04.⁶ The preliminary ground-works had not impacted on these earthworks, but following consultation with the archaeological agent for Severn Trent (Gavin Kinsley), it was decided to include them in a general survey to provide a broader interpretative framework for those elements within the easement limits. A total station (EDM) contour survey of the extant ridge and furrow was undertaken of Areas 02, 03 and 04 (Fig.11).

Prior to completion of a topographic survey two distinct alignments of ridge and furrow were noted in Area 03. Those elements along the northern and southern edges of the field were postulated to belong to an earlier field system. Sections were dug at intervals to assess the stratigraphy and potential phasing of these (sections 2-7; Figs.13, 14 & 15).

In Area 02 the ridge and furrow was seen to run from the north-west to south-east, at a bearing of approximately 160° from north. The headland of this ridge and furrow would appear to now be in the north-eastern corner of Area 03 (Fig.12). Stratigraphy of the ridge and furrow in this Area was uniform, consisting of a layer of

⁶ Meek, J. *ibid*

topsoil (0110), overlying a yellow-brown clay subsoil (0111), overlying a layer of orange-brown clay (0113), with a final layer of orange clay with a stratified fossil matrix (0115) (Fig.13). A layer of redeposited 0115 occurred at the base of each ridge (0112) underneath context 0113 and on top of 0115. Dating evidence recovered from the section through the ridge and furrow in Area 02 was limited to small sherds of post-medieval pottery, indicative of manuring in the later phases of use.

In Area 03 the majority of the ridge and furrow ran north-east at a bearing of approximately 60° from north (Fig.12). A headland could be identified on the south-west edge of the field. Shorter stretches of ridge and furrow extended underneath the boundary hedges of Area 03 indicating that these hedges are of later date. The stratigraphy of the ridge and furrow in the northern part of Area 03 was very similar to that found in Area 02, consisting of a layer of topsoil (0110), over a yellow-brown clay (0111), overlying a final layer of orange clay with a stratified fossil matrix (0115) (Fig.14). As with Area 02, a layer of redeposited 0115 occurred at the base of each ridge (0112) underneath context 0113 and on top of 0115. This suggested a connection between the ridge and furrow either side of the intervening hedge.

The stratigraphy of the ridge and furrow in the majority of Area 03 was rather more complex than Area 02 (Fig.15). A layer of topsoil (0110), overlay a yellow-brown clay subsoil (0111). The layer of redeposited 0115 found at the base of the ridges in Area 02 occurred with context 0117, (another redeposited layer) as a fill of the furrows in area 03. At the base of each ridge was a layer of grey-yellow-brown clay and pebbles (0116) underneath context 0113 and on top of 0118.

The completed EDM survey showed that the majority of the ridge and furrow measured c.4m from top of ridge to bottom of furrow (Fig.12). The survey also confirmed the evidence of the stratigraphic analysis that the short ridges in the northern part of Area 03 were in-fact a continuation of ridge and furrow from Area 02. It can also be seen that the modern field boundaries on both the northern and southern edges of Area 03 bisect the ridge and furrow, this is particularly clear on the

southern edges of Area 03. Headlands to the ridge and furrow can be identified within the northern and western edges of Area 03. This pattern of enclosure of medieval field systems is arguably consistent with the hypothesis that ridge and furrow survives best in areas (particularly the clay soils of the midlands) that, from the 16th to 18th centuries AD, were enclosed to provide pasture for animals⁷

Areas 05 & 06: Tythby Farm dairy and Nether Street.

In Areas 05 and 06 the pipe trench was excavated through modern concrete and road surfaces (Figs. 3, 4 & 10).

Stratigraphy in Area 05, along side the Tythby Farm Dairy, consisted of a layer concrete (0122) on a sand base (0121) and over a mixed rubble hardcore (0120). Undisturbed natural layers underneath this 'made ground' had no indications of archaeological interest.

Area 06 contained a number of gas and electrical services that hampered initial excavation (Fig.4). Work was also hindered in this area by a hard layer of compacted stone chippings over an orange sand base (0129) 0.4m below the modern Tarmac road surface. This could conceivably represent an earlier road surfacing, however opportunity for investigation was limited and so no firm conclusions can be made as to its origin.

The northern end of the pipe trench in Area 06 showed little sign of archaeology within the series of clay layers. Further to the south however, undulations in the thickness of the road surface and stratigraphy of the trench wall raised the possibility that ridge and furrow were present in this area (Fig.16). The stratigraphy in Area 06 typically consisted of a 0.2-0.3m layer of compacted tarmac (0126) over the hard compacted stone and sand layers already mentioned (0127). Underneath this, lay a series of undulating layers of clay c.0.5m thick. The top layer was a mid-dark grey sandy clay (0125) which merged with the grey-green clay that lay underneath (0124). Beneath this

⁷ T, Williamson, 2003, *Shaping Medieval Landscapes*, p.152.

was an orange-green clay (0114) which overlies a firmer mid grey clay (0118). Towards the south of the pipe route the undulations in these layers became somewhat pronounced. A patch of yellow-white gravel (0112) could be identified between layers 0114 and 0118. This patch corresponded with a slight rise in the layers above it. Similarly, a patch of more dirty looking redeposited yellow-white gravel (0128) could be identified between the same layers in a corresponding depression. Comparison with the stratigraphic sequence recorded in Areas 02 and 03 (Figs 13-16) suggests that the stratigraphy of Area 06 could be compatible with remnants of ridge and furrow cultivation prior to road building.

Wider analysis in the vicinity of Area 06 revealed possible residual traces of ridge and furrow on the road verge opposite the garage. These follow the same east-west alignment as the strips within Areas 03 and 04 and may even be a continuation of this field system. In contrast, the ridge and furrow in the fields beyond the houses running along the eastern edge of Nether Street and behind the Park run north-south.

Ridge and furrow under Nether Street in this area would imply a post-medieval date for the thoroughfare. However, the observation is tentative and should be viewed within the context of the recording constraints of the watching brief, and in the absence of an authoritative account of Harby's history.

Appendix: Context list

Features

0100	Well - Area 1
0101	Ridge and furrow - field 1 / Area 2
0102	Ridge and furrow - field 2 / Area 3
0103	Modern pipe trench - Areas 1-6
0104	Ridge and furrow - east side of field 2 / Area 3
0105	Ridge and furrow - field 3 / Area 4

Contexts

0110	Topsoil slightly sandy
0111	Yellow-brown silty clay layer (<i>disturbed post-med plough soil</i>) firm, 2% stone inclusions, 5% fossil shells in matrix, charcoal flecks, C18 pottery
0112	Grey-brown clay redeposited layer (<i>Redeposited 0115, appears as dumps at the base of the ridges forming the hump</i>) firm, fine white shell and grit inclusions 50%
0113	Orange - brown clay redeposited layer (<i>mix of both 0114 and 0115</i>) firm, slightly sandy, fossil shell in matrix
0114	Orange - brown clay layer slightly sandy firm, some large sandstone inclusions
0115	Orange-grey clay layer stratified with 50% fossilised shell in matrix, clumps of conglomerate fossils, firm
0116	Grey-yellow-Brown clay redeposited layer(<i>mix of 0114 and 0118</i>) firm, pebble inclusions 50%
0117	Grey-orange clay redeposited layer (<i>mix of 0118 and 0115</i>) firm, shell inclusions 50%
0118	Grey clay layer stratified dark unoxidised layers of clay and silt stone, firm
0119	Grey clay – black and orange mixed fill (modern drain cut) firm, rounded pebble inclusions 2%
0120	Black-brown rubble layer rubble, mixed brick, grit and stones 60%
0121	Yellow-brown sand layer loose
0122	Grey concrete layer (modern hardstand) rounded pebble inclusions 50%
0123	Red sandy layer loose, rounded pebble inclusions 50%
0124	Darkish Grey-green clay layer firm, rounded pebble inclusions 30%
0125	Mid-dark grey sandy-clay
0126	Black Tarmac (series of layer of modern Tarmac road surface)
0127	Hard compacted stone layer over orange sand (previous road surface)
0128	Grey-brown clay redeposited layer firm, fine white shell and grit inclusions 50%



Fig. 1.
Cross-section through pipe trench showing Ferruginous character of clay (Area 03).



Fig. 2.
Methodology employed in stripping the easement through ridge and furrow (Area 04).



Fig 3.
Photo of pipe trench showing level of visibility and technique of excavation of pipe trench through road (Area 06).



Fig. 4.
Photo of pipe trench showing level of visibility of stratigraphy in wider parts of Area 06.



Fig. 5.
Location of well in Area 01 (centre marked by 'L' shaped scale bars).



Fig. 6.
Well in Area 01 uncovered.



Fig. 7.
Sections 2 and 3 joined: 5m section through ridge and furrow Area 02.



Fig. 8.
Sections 4 and 5 joined: 3.5m section through ridge and furrow Area 03.



Fig. 9.
Section 6: 5m section through ridge and furrow
Area 03.



Fig. 10.
Pipe trench 0103 showing section through road
Area 06.

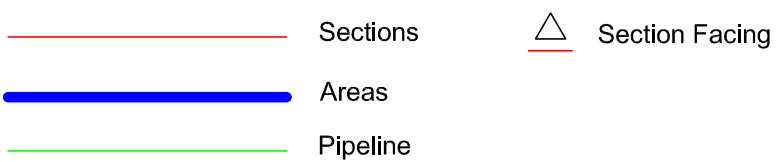
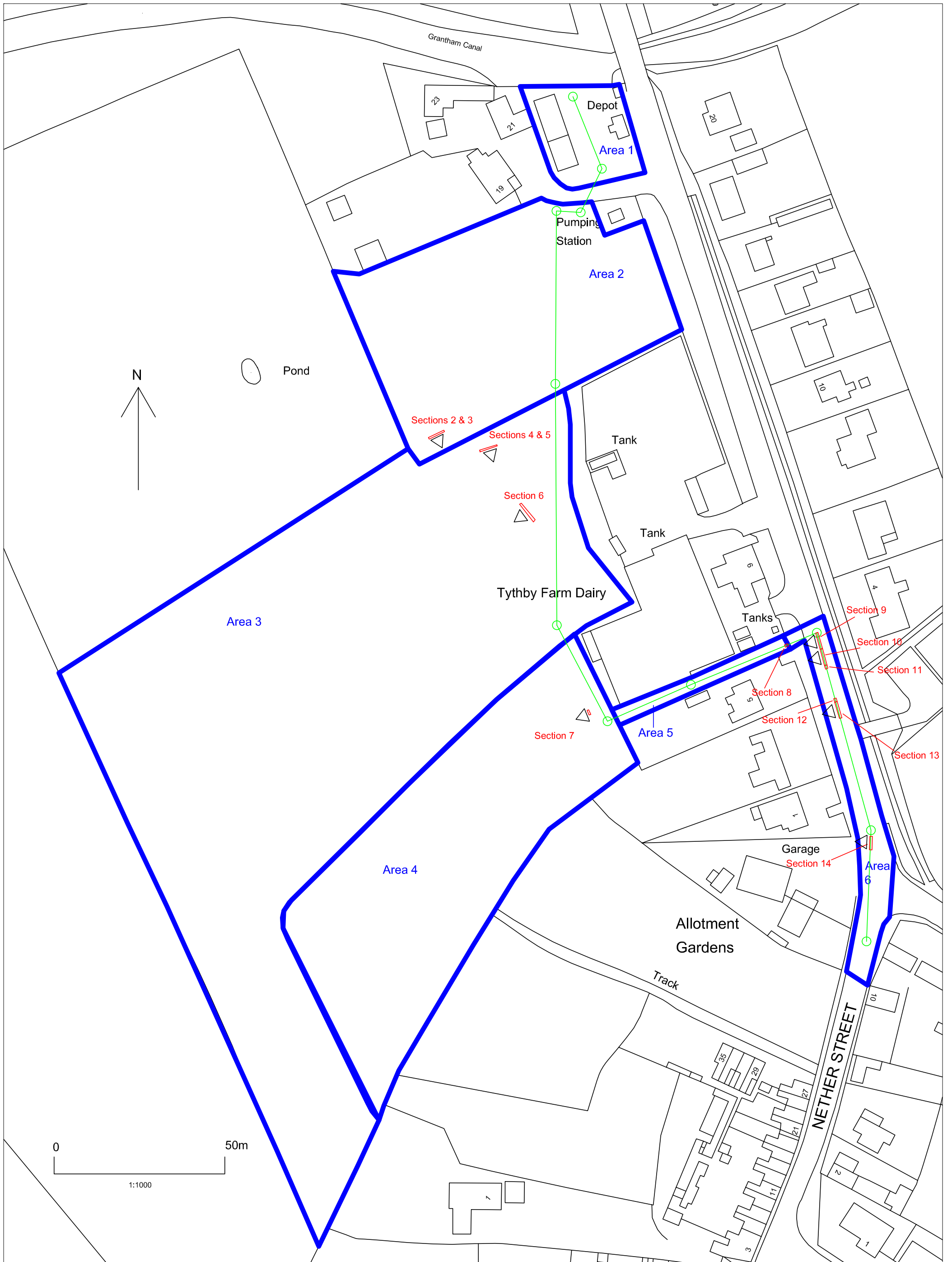
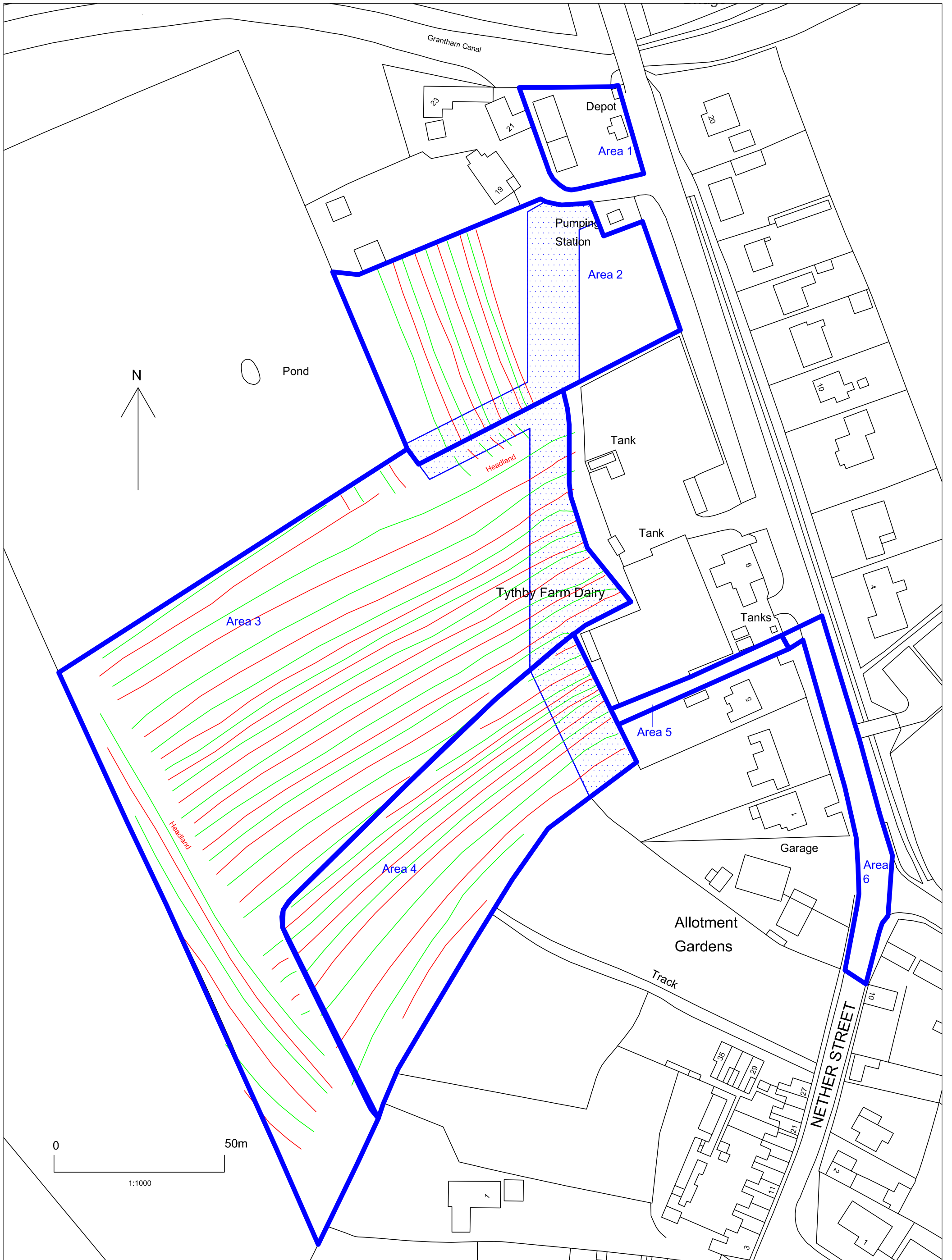


Fig.11 . Location map of Areas, sections and pipe route.
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- Ridge
- Furrow
- Easement

Fig.12 . Location map of ridge and furrow, including location of headlands and easement.
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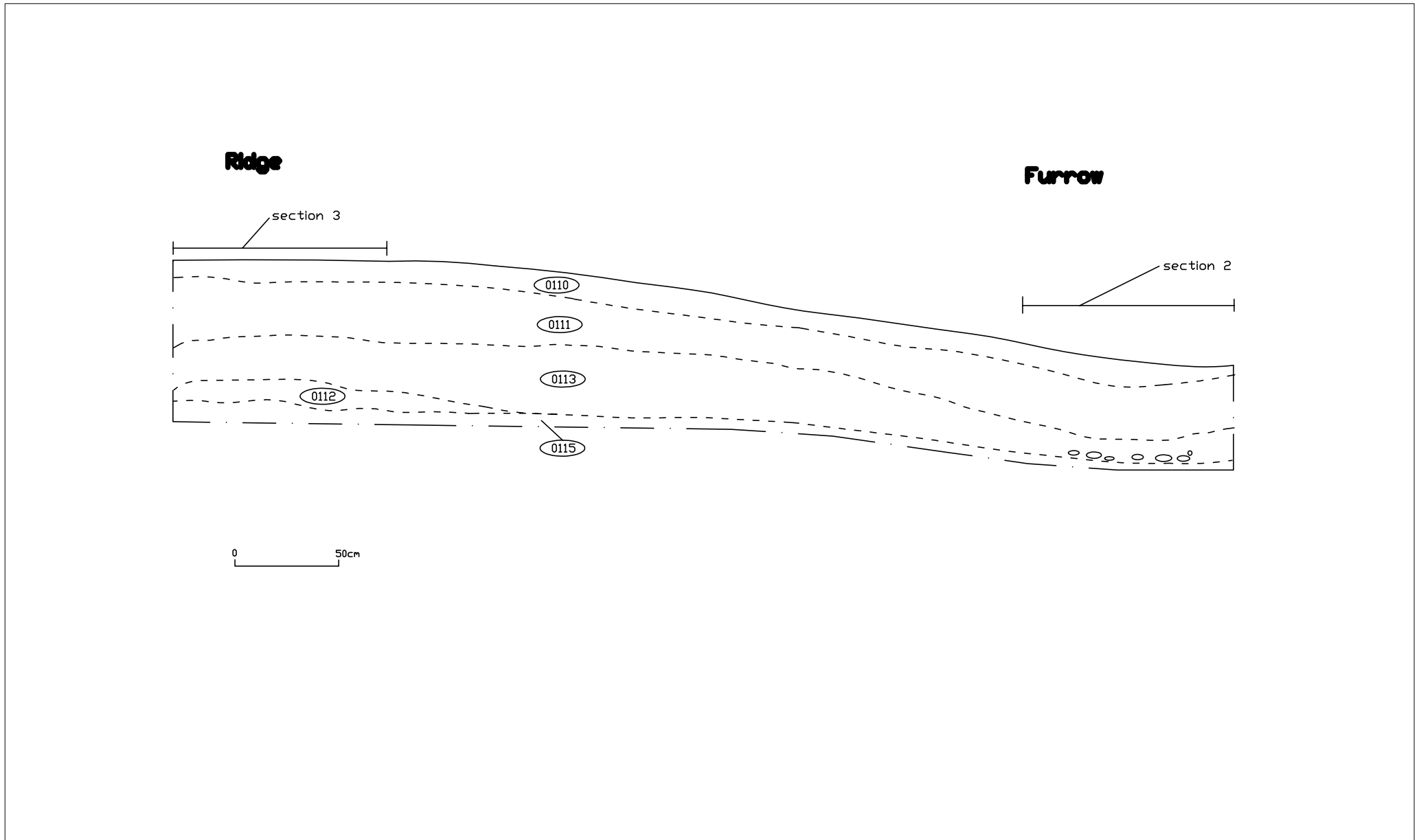


Fig.13 . South Facing Sections 2 and 3 through Area 02. Showing Stratigraphy of Ridge and Furrow. Scale 1:25
Accession Number: X.A145.2005

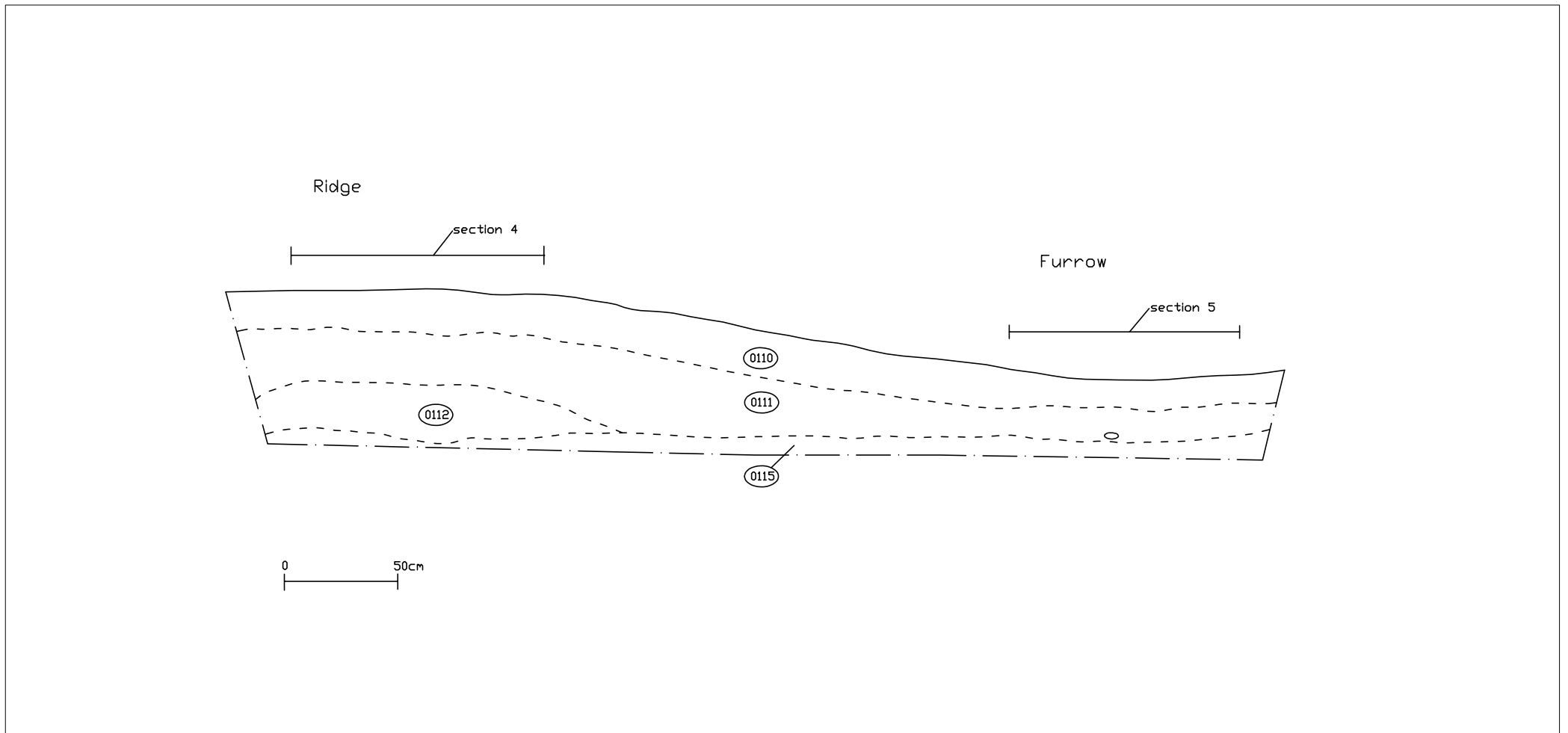


Fig. 14 . South Facing Sections 4 & 5 through Area 03, showing stratigraphy of ridge and furrow. Scale 1:25
Accession Number: X.A145.2005

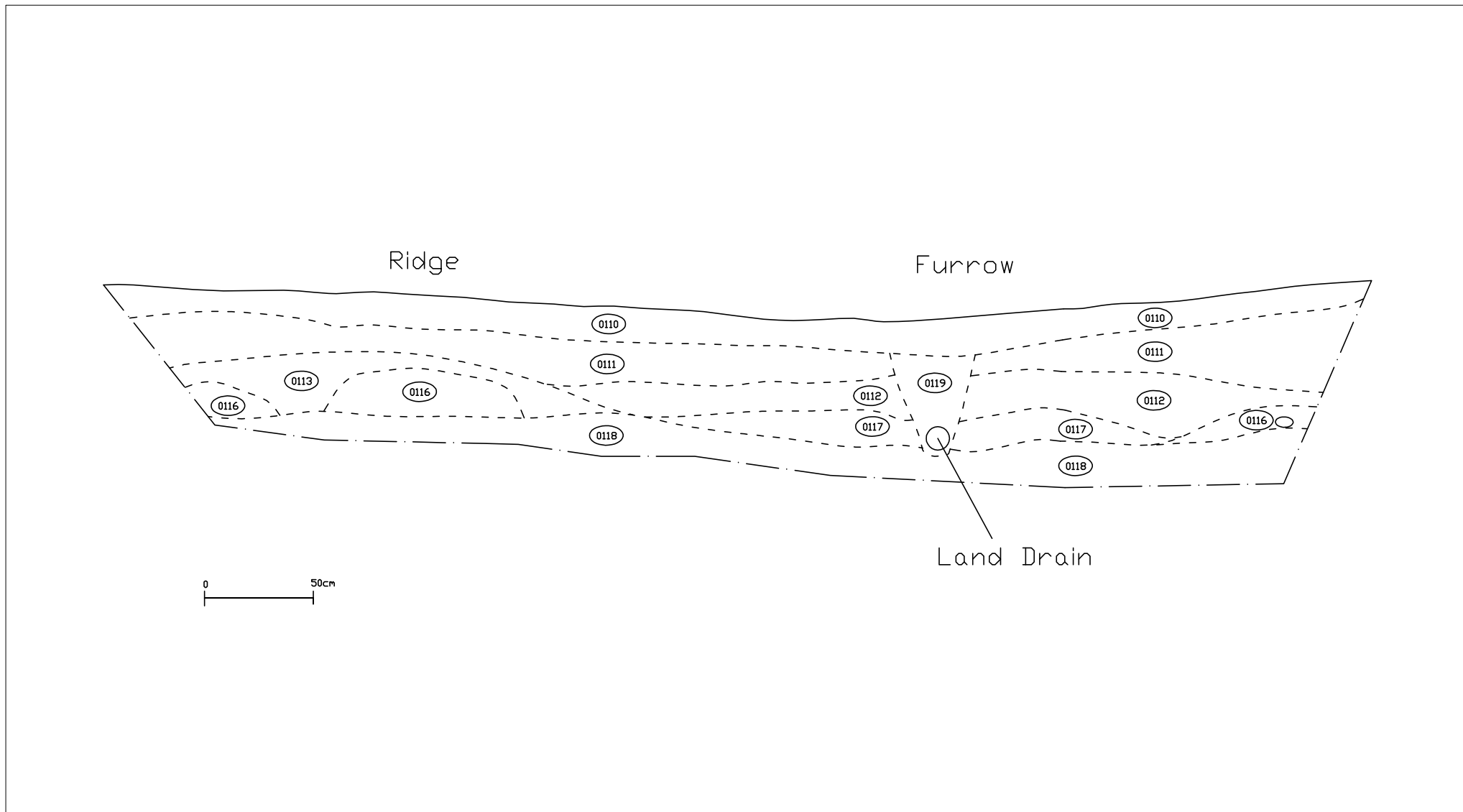


Fig. 15. Southwest Facing Section 6 through Area 03 showing stratigraphy of ridge and furrow. Scale 1:25
Accession Number: X.A145.2005

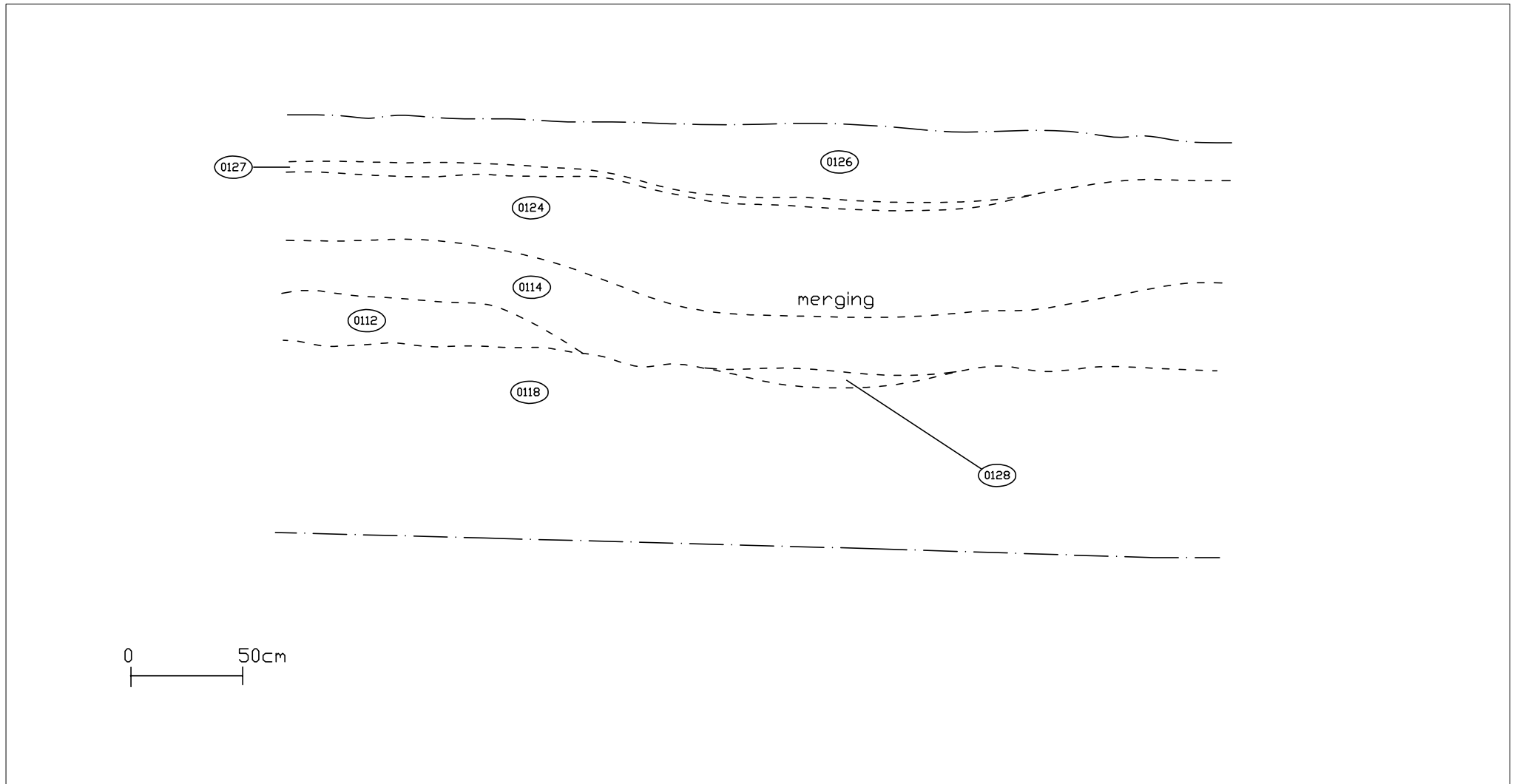


Fig. 16 . West Facing Section 14 through Area 06, showing possible ridge and furrow under road surface.
Scale 1:25.
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