

**HARVEY AVENUE,
CODDINGTON,
NEWARK**

An Archaeological Watching Brief



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SUMMARY

- From late March to early May 2003 Trent and Peak Archaeological Unit carried out an archaeological watching brief on the laying of a water drain for surface water from a new estate being built at Harvey Avenue, Coddington. This was laid to the west of Beaconfield Lane through a pasture field belonging to a local equestrian centre, an area of arable farmland and a disused sewage works. The trench ran for about 400 metres and varied in depth from 1.5 to 4 metres, and in width from 1.5 to 3.6 metres.
- The site was part of RAF Winthorpe during World War II and remnants of the barracks situated in the area during the war can still be seen. The area is also close to the site of Beaconfield Hall (also known as Coddington Hall). Little is known of the history of this building or its grounds, although the woodland to the east of the pipe trench site, and the remains of a sunken garden off of Beaconfield Close are known to have formed part of the land belonging to the hall.
- Some archaeological artefacts were discovered in the field that is presently used for crops (Area 03). The topsoil here was relatively deep (up to 0.9 metres), and it was during the stripping of this that some pieces of flint and pottery were found. Included amongst these was a piece of Romano-British grey ware rim belonging to a wide-mouthed jar. No features were associated with the finds.
- A stone drain (0004) and a small circular pit containing heat-affected pebbles (0002) were also found in this field (Area 03). Some other insubstantial features were also observed (0001 & 0003).
- A quantity of debris associated with the use of this area as an airfield was uncovered during the topsoil stripping of the areas belonging to the equestrian centre (Areas 05 and 06). A pipe-line dating from World War II was also uncovered at this time (0005).
- The initial trenching in the disused sewage works in the northeast corner of the site uncovered an anti-aircraft incendiary shell left over from the time that the area was an active airfield. This was removed and destroyed by an Army bomb disposal unit.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1 Location of Beaconfield Farm at Coddington, near Newark-on-Trent and the A1. (Ordnance Survey map: Newark-on-Trent, Retford, Southwell and Saxilby, Explorer Series 271. South Sheet 1:25000. *Reproduced with the permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright Licence No. ALD51413A/0001*).

Fig. 2 The area close to Beaconfield Farm crossed by the Severn-Trent pipeline, as shown on the First Edition 25 inch scale (1:2500) Ordnance Survey map of 1885. Beaconfield Hall is shown with tone in the bottom right corner.

Fig. 3 The area affected by new housing development at Harvey Avenue, Coddington, near Newark-on-Trent (within the thick line), and the intended course of the of the sewerage pipe for the development. Plan not to scale.

Fig. 4 The north part of the course of the pipe-trench and the positions of recorded features in Areas 01-05. Scale 1:1000.

Fig. 5 The south part of the course of the pipe-trench and the positions of recorded features in Areas 05-07. Scale 1:1000.

Fig. 6 A: Plan showing Royal Air Force Winthorpe near Newark-on-Trent, with the main concentration of the station's buildings being situated around Beaconfield Farm (highlighted), to the south of the runways. **B:** An aerial photograph showing the parking bays of the airfield (not shown on the plan) and the sewage disposal site (arrowed). Not to scale. *Reproduced from Taylor, W. 1994. RAF Winthorpe. Photographic Memories and Anecdotes 1940-1945.*

Fig. 7 The buildings of Royal Air Force Winthorpe (1940-59) that were sited around Beaconfield Farm, as shown on part of a plan of 1947. The dashed line shows the course of a pipeline that may have connected and / or served two fuel compounds (nos. 139m and 421). Scale 1:2500. Coddington (Beaconfield) Hall is shown with tone in the bottom right corner. *Plan courtesy of Newark Air Museum.*

Fig. 8 Former buildings from the area around Beaconfield Farm. **A:** Coddington (Beaconfield) Hall. (*photograph from Newark Library*), and **B:** Part of the Sick Quarters Site to the north of Beaconfield Farm, as shown on Fig. 7. *Reproduced from Taylor, W. 1994. RAF Winthorpe. Photographic Memories and Anecdotes 1940-1945.*

Plates 1-3. **1:** Manhole 1 in the course of construction; **2:** Feature 0002 in Area 03; **3:** Feature 0004 in Area 03.

Plates 4, 5. **4:** Section showing the depth of topsoil, subsoil and bedrock, close to Manhole 4, in Area 06; **5:** A wartime RAF air-raid shelter that survives in the copse that forms the north boundary of the new housing development at Harvey Avenue, Coddington.

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An Archaeological Watching Brief

Introduction

Trent and Peak Archaeological Unit were commissioned by Severn Trent Water to conduct a watching brief during the construction of a water drain for removing surface water from a new housing estate being built off Harvey Avenue in Coddington near Newark, Nottinghamshire. This drain was constructed through two fields and a former sewage works situated alongside Beaconfield Lane.

The contractors were Whitehouse Construction Ltd. Work commenced on 26th March 2003 and continued until 2nd May 2003. Prior to this a brief walkover survey was carried out on the 18th March by Richard Sheppard, and Leon Hunt carried out the watching brief intermittently between 26th March and 30th April 2003.

Coddington lies 2-3 miles east of Newark, Nottinghamshire, close to the southern slip road of the A1 (Fig. 1). A number of new houses are currently being built in the village adjacent to Beaconfield Lane and on the site of former servicemen's accommodation associated with the former airfield of nearby Winthorpe. The access road into the new estate here is Harvey Avenue. The site of the new drain lies to the west of the site of the former Beaconfield Hall (Fig. 2), now an area of new housing named Beaconfield Close. For most of its length the pipe trench passes through farmland and some fields belonging to the nearby equestrian centre (Beaconfield Farm). The outlet pipe for the drain is situated within the site of an old sewage works where it discharges into an existing watercourse (Fig. 3).

The water pipe consisted of three separate sections, each part connecting into a manhole (Manholes 1-4). The most southerly section runs from Manhole 4 (at the north end of the housing estate), through a field of pasture to Manhole 3, and consists of 675mm concrete pipe (Fig. 5). The next section runs through the north end of the same field, under the access road to the equestrian centre, and through farmland; this consists of 2.1m x 1m culvert sections. The final section runs through the north-east part of the arable field, under the tarmac of Beaconfield Lane, and through the former sewage works and into an existing watercourse; this consists of

300mm clay pipe (fig. 4). The pipe was laid in reverse order, running up-slope and starting with the outlet pipe and finishing close to the new housing estate.

Historical Background

Very little is known about the origins of nearby Beaconfield Hall, which was demolished after World War II. Photographs of the former building show a building of late 18th – early 19th century appearance, although this may belie an earlier structure behind the façade (Fig. 8a). The woodlands to the east of Beaconfield Lane are believed to part of the grounds around the former Hall. These appear to truncate a ditch which may have been part of an earlier ha-ha to the Hall (Fig. 2). Part of a sunken garden can also still be seen set between modern houses off of Beaconfield Close. Mr Hutchinson, a local farmer, has commented that it was once possible to see other remnants of the gardens of the Hall in the woods, although few traces of these are visible today.

The former military presence in the area is well attested. During World War II most of the area was part of Royal Air Force Winthorpe. Opened in 1940, the airfield was mainly used as a dispersal and training station, although for a time it became a satellite to RAF Swinderby and was used by two Polish Bomber Squadrons (Taylor 1984, 7). Later it passed into the control of RAF Ossington and RAF Syerston. In 1943 the Heavy Conversion Unit was established to train bomber crews and the airfield became known as No. 1661 H.C.U. Winthorpe. It was host to Fairy Battles, Vickers Wellingtons, Avro Lancasters, Halifaxes, Short Stirlings, plus Hurricanes and Spitfires. The units stationed there were dispatched elsewhere towards the end of 1945 and the airfield was finally reduced to inactive service in July 1959.

The sewage works appears to have been in use during this period and the remains of platforms for military buildings, such as barracks, can be seen in various places around the site. These are particularly obvious in the woods to the east of Beaconfield Lane. Two partially complete air raid shelters can be seen in amongst the trees that lie alongside the southern fence of the equestrian centre (Plate 5). Site plans held at Newark Air Museum (on what remains of the former airfield) show the layout of the airfield as it existed in July 1947 (Figs 6A, 7). These show the sewage disposal site, the sick quarters and the officer's quarters, although only the first of these was within the line of the pipe-trench. Most of the land

immediately around Beaconfield Farm probably remained in agricultural use at this time.

Excavations

Before excavating the pipe trenches the contractors stripped the areas of topsoil with a small back-actor machine with a toothless bucket. The contractors erected a wire fence in the arable field (Area 03) to define the easement area. In the pasture field used by the equestrian centre (Areas 05 & 06) a large metal fence was constructed to contain the horses. In the ploughed field (Area 03) the spoil was initially deposited within the easement, but after it was discovered that the pipe trench needed to be moved slightly to the west the topsoil was redeposited over the fence.

A large back-actor using a toothless ditching bucket excavated the pipe trenches and the manholes. The size of the trenches was naturally determined by the type of pipe to be installed. The first section within the sewage works (Area 01) was 2.4 metres wide and approximately 1.5 metres deep. The section within the ploughed field (Area 03) was approximately 4 metres wide and 2 metres deep, gradually deepening to 2.5 metres as it headed south. The final trench in the horse field (Areas 05 & 06) was only 1.5 metres wide and 1.5 metres deep.

Where the pipe trench crossed the existing roads of Beaconfield Lane (Area 02) and the access road to the equestrian centre (Area 04) the contractors dug under the road in order to avoid having to reinstate the roadway and to avoid disconnecting the high-tension fences around the equestrian centre.

Manholes were constructed between the sections of pipe and at the place of connection behind the new estate in Area 07. A further manhole was placed in Area 06 where the 675mm concrete pipe turns from its south-easterly course to head south to the estate. A brick housing was constructed for the outlet pipe where it discharges into the watercourse. The first manhole was originally to be constructed in the middle of Beaconfield Lane as it turns west past the old sewage works. However, it was not possible to position a large culvert under some existing services positioned some 3 metres into the arable field. As a result, the manhole was constructed further to the south and west, resulting in the re-positioning of the spoil heap (mentioned above).

Archaeological Observations

The depth of topsoil varied throughout the site. In the former sewage works (Area 01), the pasture field (Areas 05, 06) and in the copse behind the new houses (Area 07), the topsoil was around 0.3 metres deep and betrayed little evidence for ever having been ploughed. The soil appeared to consist mainly of sandy clay loam and was a greyish-brown colour. In places it contained a lot of debris that included brick, mortar, concrete, metal, wiring and pieces of what appeared to be asbestos, all of which are likely to date from the time that the barrack buildings associated with the airfield were demolished. Area 06 also contained a substantial concrete-covered cast-iron pipe (0005) which may well have shipped oil to a former fuel compound (Fig. 7). To avoid any possible problems from remnant oil, the sewer pipe was laid beneath this pipe.

In the arable field (Area 03) the topsoil was noticeably different. Consisting of a much darker brown sandy silt loam or sandy clay loam it varied in depth between 0.5-0.9 metres. Where it could be determined, the subsoil was a reddish brown sandy loam, around 0.15 and 0.2 metres deep with some stone inclusions. As the trench approached Area 07 the subsoil deepened to around 0.4 metres. The rest of the trench fill was typical of the natural deposits of the area, consisting of reddish brown Mercia mudstone with layers or lenses of grey clay. The general matrix of topsoil, subsoil and bedrock is shown in Plate 4.

Several archaeological artefacts were recovered during the topsoil stripping of Area 03. These included six flakes of flint, five pieces of pottery and some pieces of clay pipe. As flint had been brought in amongst the ballast stone for the pipe laying, it was difficult to ascertain whether some of the flakes were man-made or even locally derived. The pottery was very varied but was mainly post-medieval in date. However, a Romano-British greyware pottery rim was also recovered. The piece measured 90mm and was 30mm deep, and was probably part of a wide-mouthed jar dating from the third to fourth centuries A.D. No features were associated with these finds.

An insubstantial linear feature (0001) was observed during the stripping of Area 03, and this was most likely a plough furrow. Another amorphous feature was spotted close to the southern end of Area 03 (0003). This also proved to be very insubstantial, and was possibly a depression where water had been allowed to sit for some time.

A small circular feature (0002) was observed 60 metres north of the south boundary fence of Area 03, and 27 metres from the road edge (Fig. 4; Plate 2). This pit was around 0.8m in diameter and was between 0.15m and 0.2m deep, with steep sides and an uneven base. The fill of the pit was a sandy clay loam with some small flecks of charcoal and several large heat affected stones between 0.02m and 0.1m. It was difficult to determine whether it had been clay-lined or simply dug into clay. No associated artefacts were found to date this feature.

No other features were observed during the excavation of the pipe trench itself, although a stone-lined drain (0004) appeared in the trench around 30 metres from the first manhole in Area 03 (Fig. 4; Plate 3). The top of this was at a depth of over 1m below topsoil and because of the nature of the trenching it could not be examined in detail. Also, as it ran north-northeast to south-southwest it was continually destroyed as the trench progressed southwards.

An unusual and somewhat problematic artefact discovered during the excavation was a World War II anti-aircraft shell. This was a 4.5-inch incendiary device used as a tracer during aerial bombardment. This object was uncovered during the excavation of the initial trenching in the disused sewage works (Area 01). An Army bomb disposal unit had to examine this shell and it was subsequently removed and destroyed. Unfortunately, it had not been possible to measure or photograph the artefact before this occurred. A further suspicious metal artefact was discovered during topsoil stripping in Area 05. This proved to be a harmless metal spike. No further recognisable intact artefacts associated with World War II were recovered.

The presence of the shell on the site is explained by the proximity of the airfield. In late 1940 the Luftwaffe bombed the runway at Swinderby and a landmine parachuted onto the Winthorpe site created a large crater (Taylor 1984, 8). Although the origin of the shell was unclear it may have come from an anti-aircraft battery as its findspot was not far from a part of the airfield where aircraft were parked; this proximity shows in an aerial photograph reproduced here as Fig 6B. The Luftwaffe returned to the area and in March 1941 attacked the nearby Ransome & Marles ball-bearing factory on the eastern outskirts of Newark, an attack that killed 10 of the workforce.

Conclusion

The results were disappointing. Despite the length of the pipe trench, the the different areas of land-use it passed through and the history of the immediate area, very few features were seen and few artefacts were recovered. Where pieces of dateable pottery were found, no features appeared to be associated with them. Conversely, the pit feature in Area 03 could not be dated due to the lack of artefactual evidence. There was also an absence of landscape features associated with the former Beaconfield Hall, although the presence of the farm towards the centre of the site might suggest that the formal grounds or park around the Hall never extended far to the west of the building and its immediate gardens.

Although barrack platforms can still be seen in the areas surrounding the site, none were uncovered during the excavation. Only some rubble associated with their removal was to be seen in the topsoil. Despite this, the discovery of the fuel pipe and the incendiary shell did provide a small if unexpected insight into the history of RAF Winthorpe and its impact on the Coddington area during World War II.

References

Taylor, W. 1984. *Royal Air Force Winthorpe 1940-1945*. Private.

Taylor, W. 1994. *RAF Winthorpe. Photographic Memories and Anecdotes*. Private.

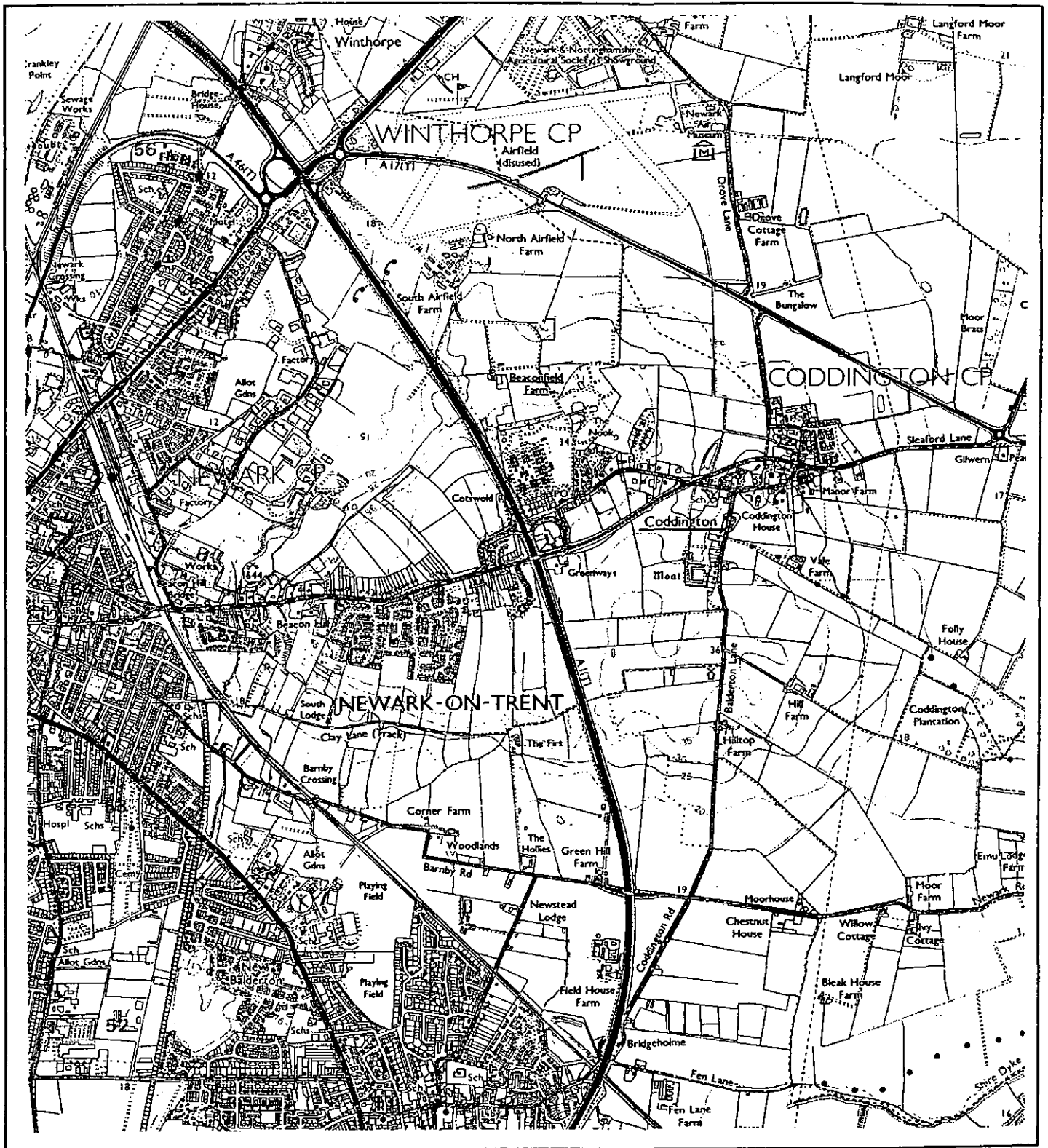


Fig. 1 Location of Beaconfield Farm at Coddington, near Newark-on-Trent and the A1.
 (Ordnance Survey map: Newark-on-Trent, Retford, Southwell and Saxilby, Explorer Series
 271. South Sheet 1:25000. *Reproduced with the permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office*
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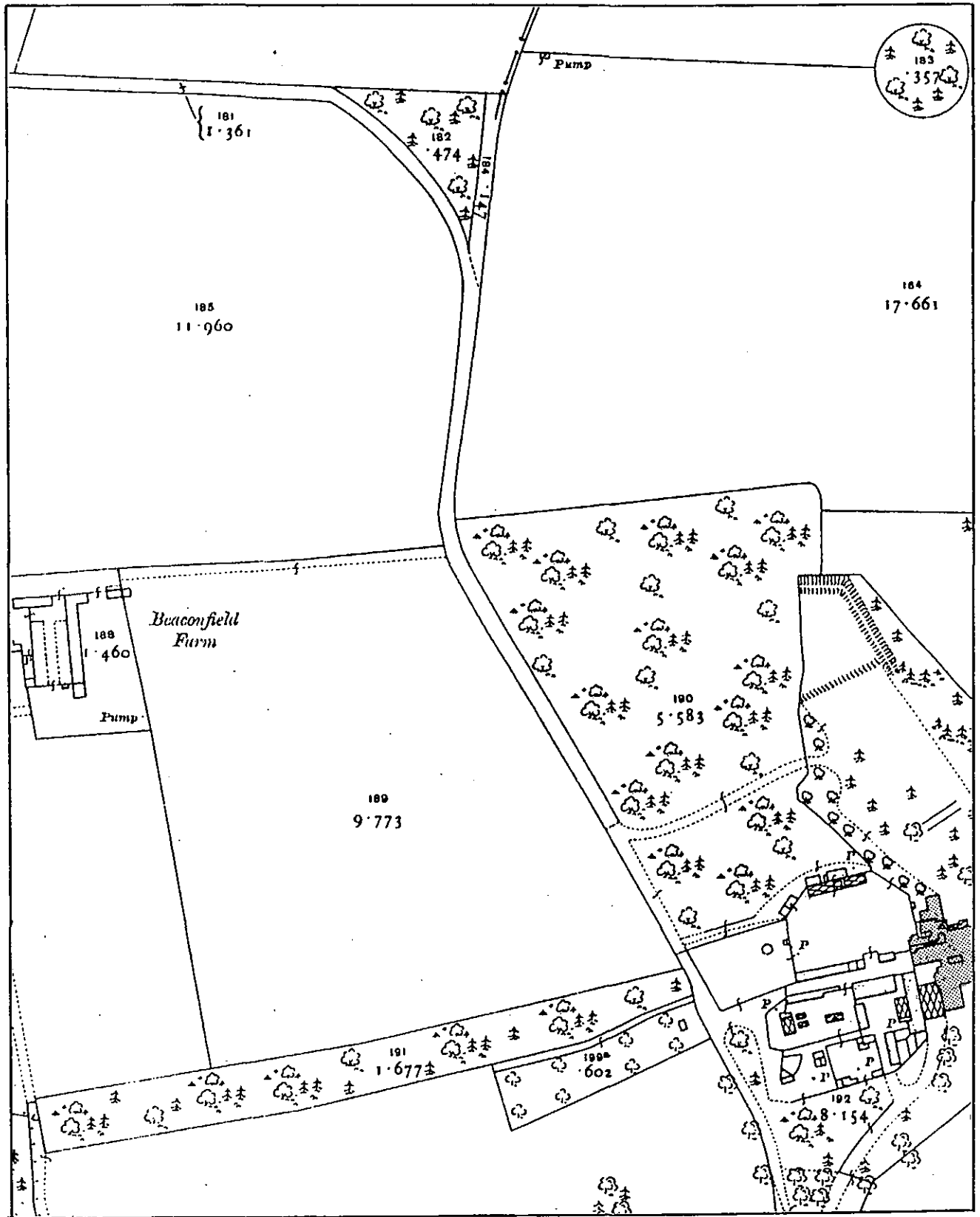


Fig. 2 The area close to Beaconfield Farm crossed by the Severn-Trent pipeline, as shown on the First Edition 25 inch scale (1:2500) Ordnance Survey map of 1885. Beaconfield Hall is shown with tone in the bottom right corner.

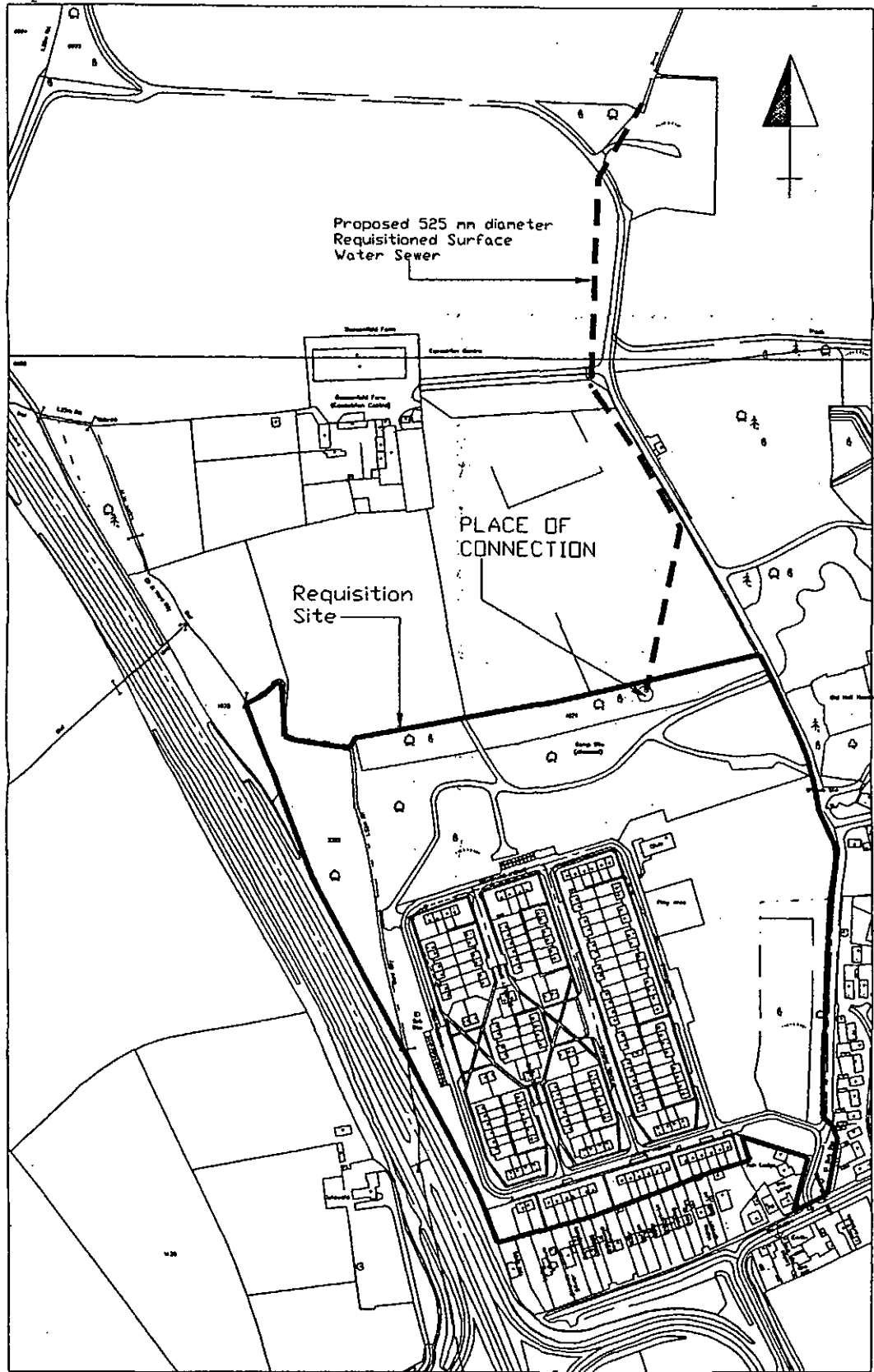


Fig. 3 The area affected by new housing development at Harvey Avenue, Coddington, near Newark-on-Trent (within the thick line), and the intended course of the of the sewerage pipe for the development. Plan not to scale.

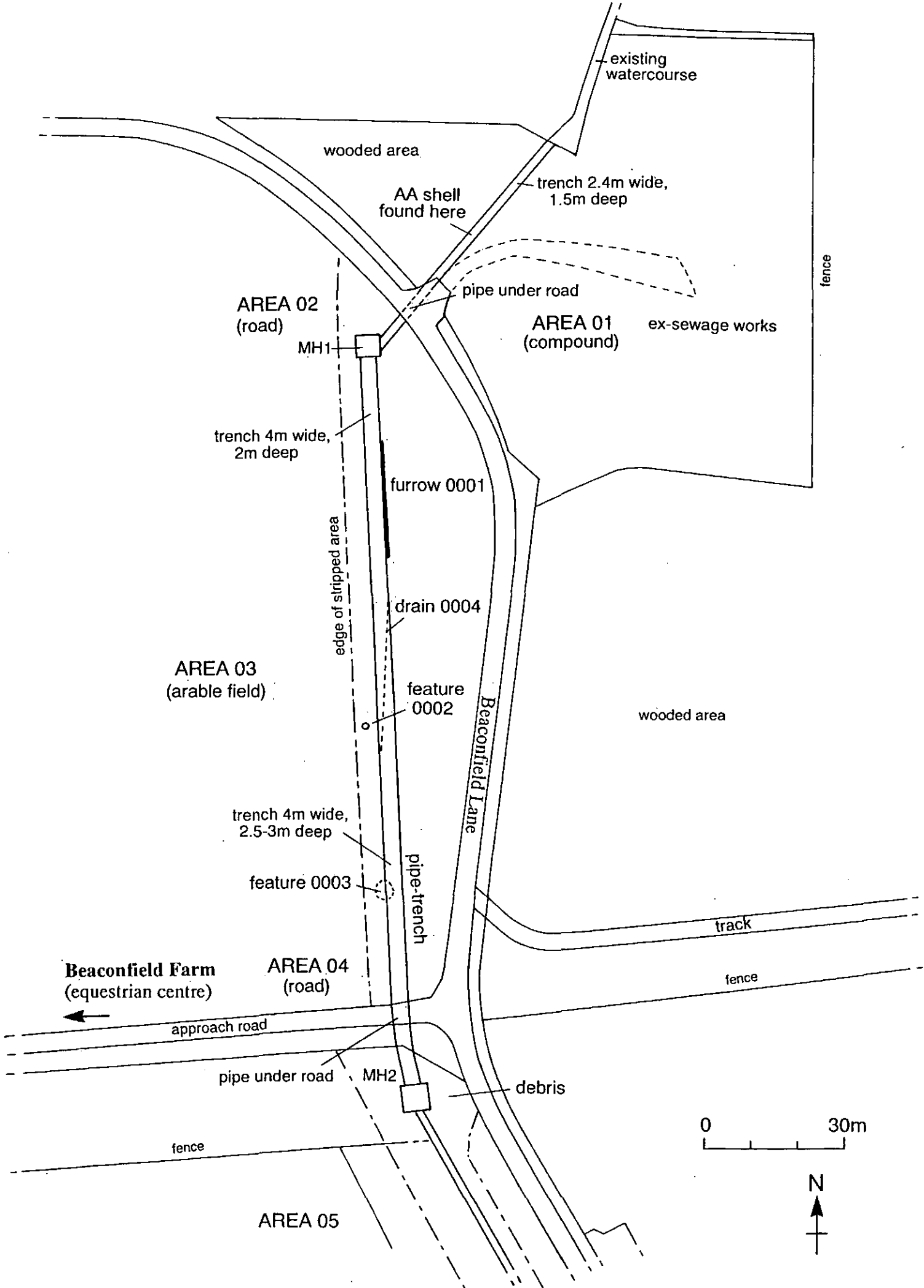


Fig. 4 The north part of the course of the pipe-trench and the positions of recorded features in Areas 01-05. Scale 1:1000.

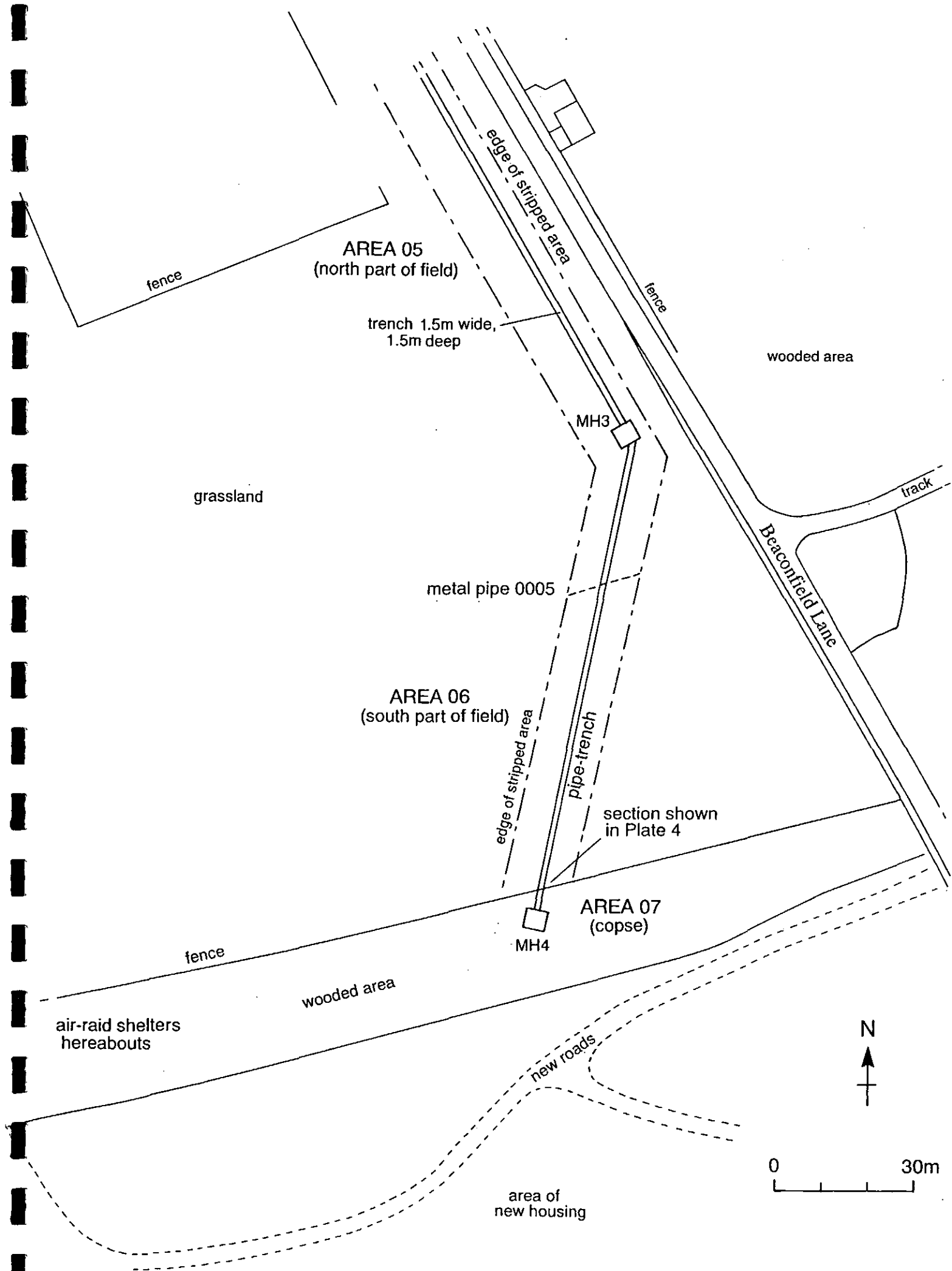
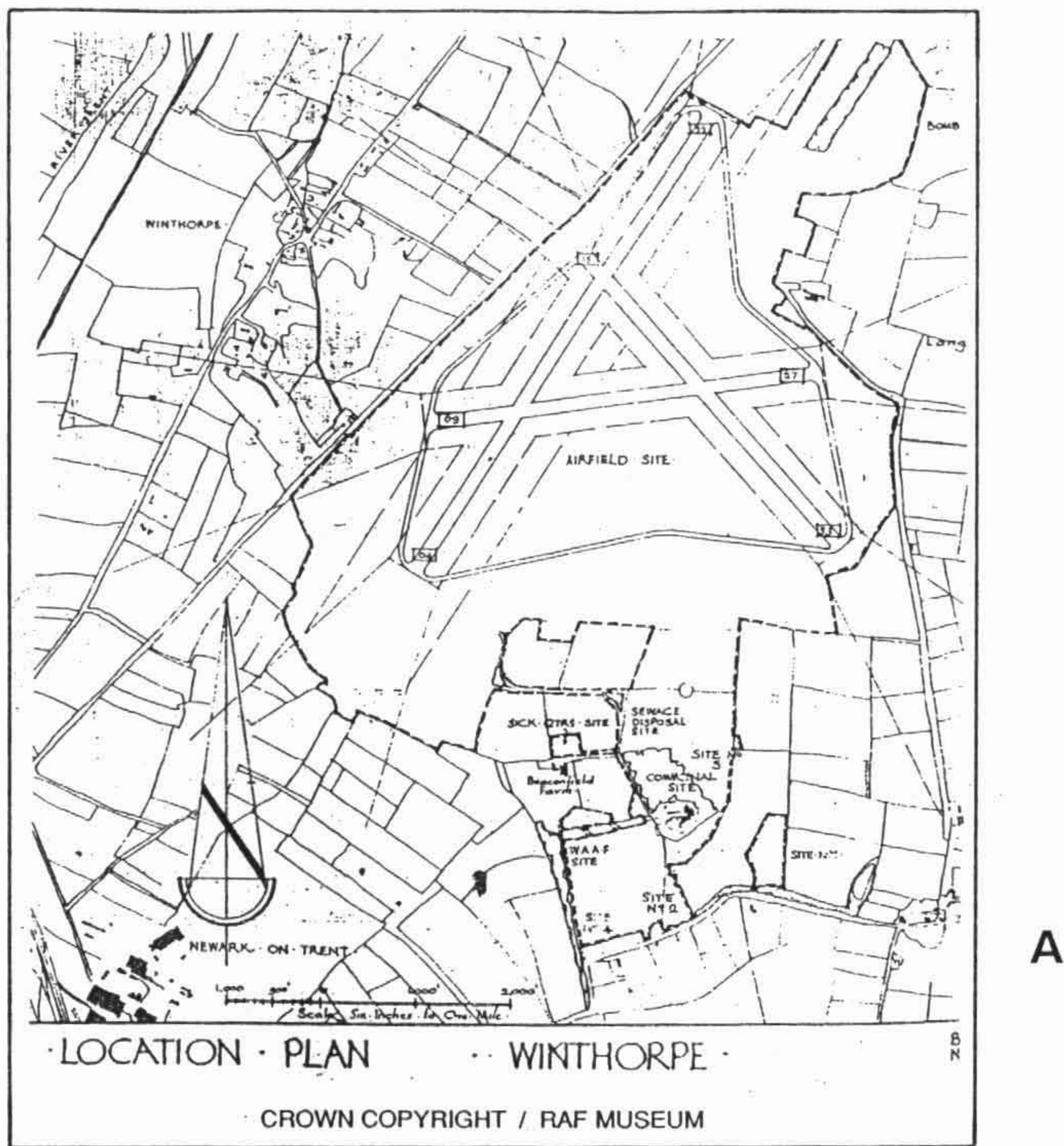
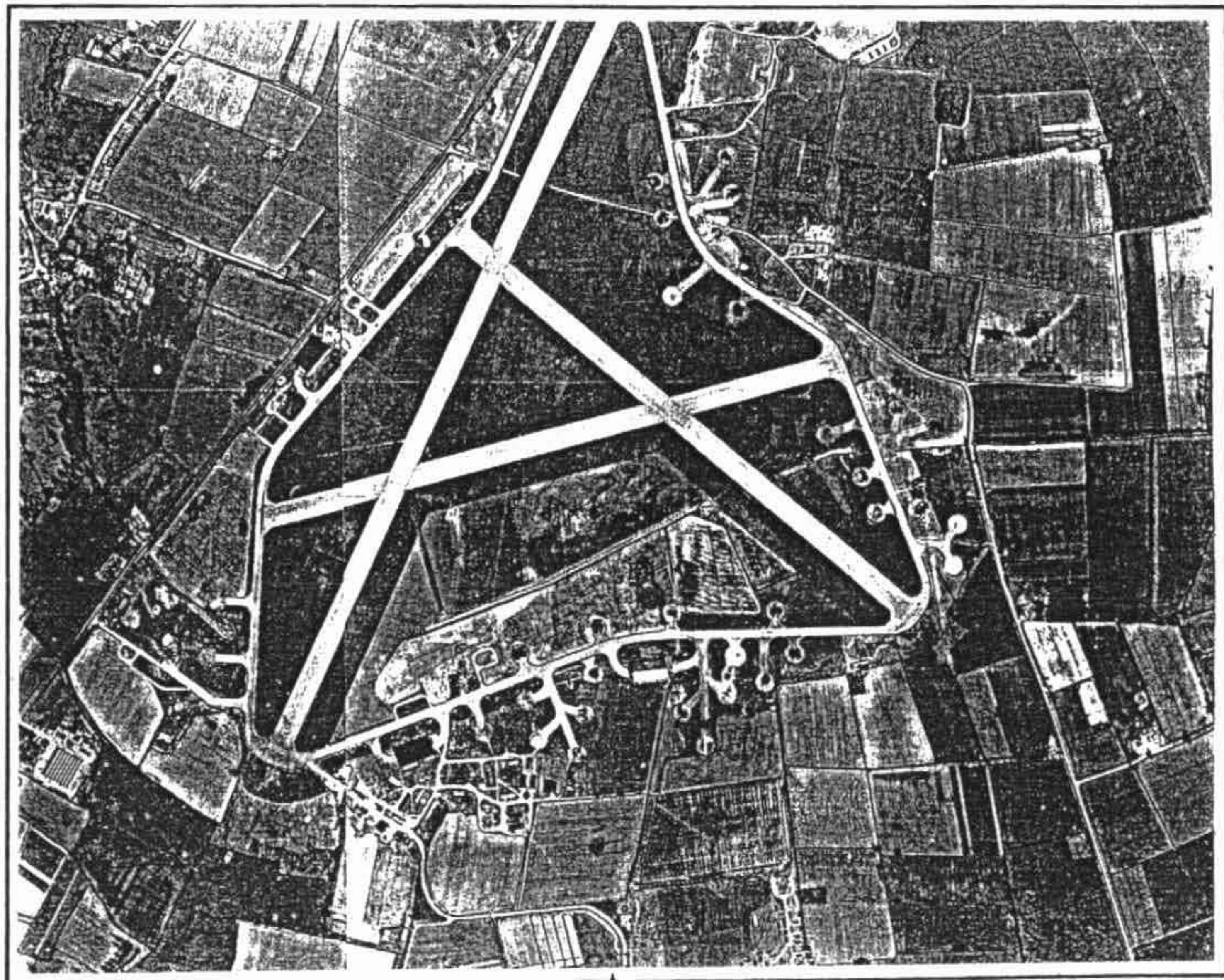


Fig. 5 The south part of the course of the pipe-trench and the positions of recorded features in Areas 05-07. Scale 1:1000.



A



B

Fig. 6 A: Plan showing Royal Air Force Winthorpe near Newark-on-Trent, with the main concentration of the station's buildings being situated around Beaconfield Farm (highlighted), to the south of the runways. B: An aerial photograph showing the parking bays of the airfield (not shown on the plan) and the sewage disposal site (arrowed). Not to scale. *Reproduced from Taylor, W. 1994. RAF Winthorpe. Photographic Memories and Anecdotes 1940-1945.*

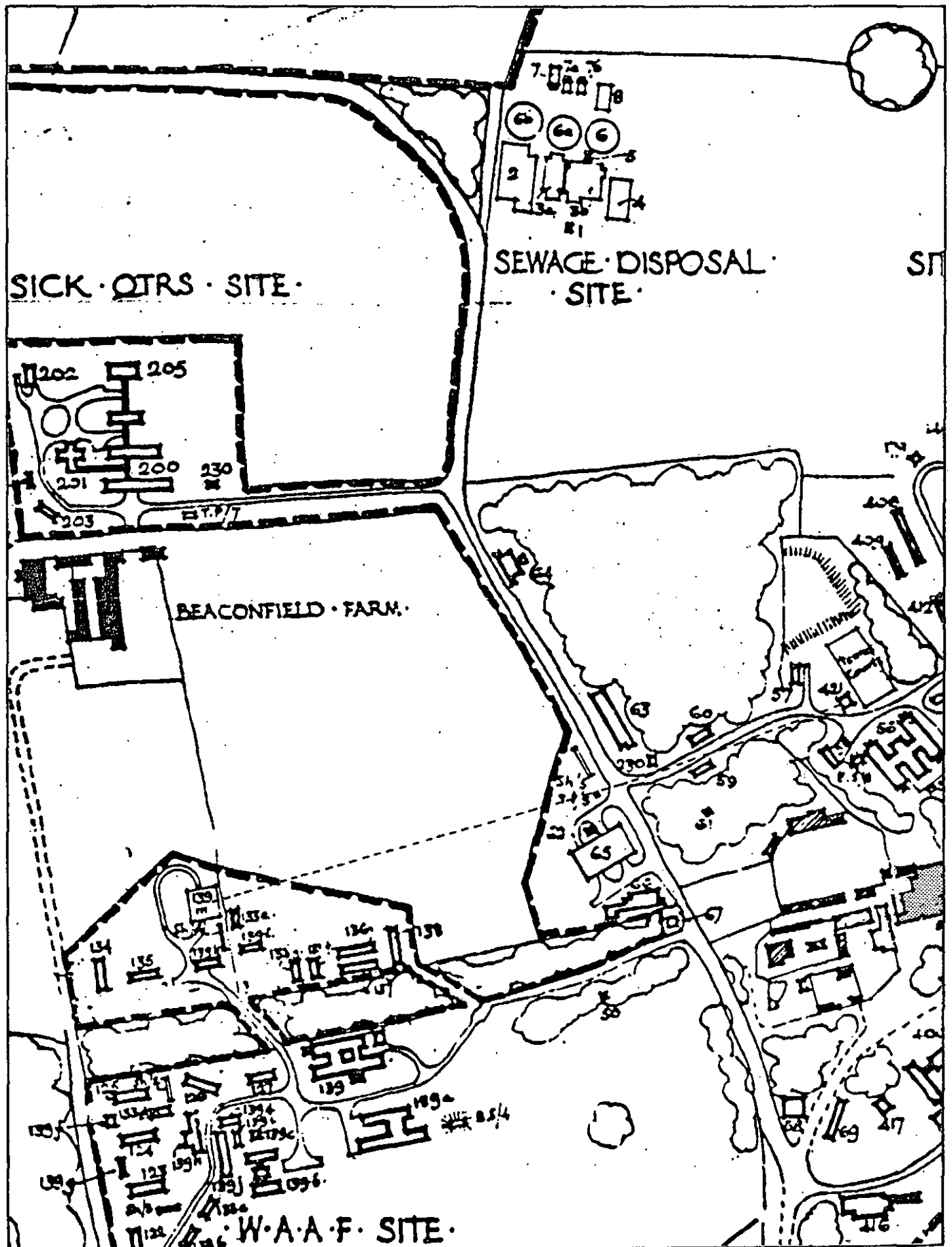
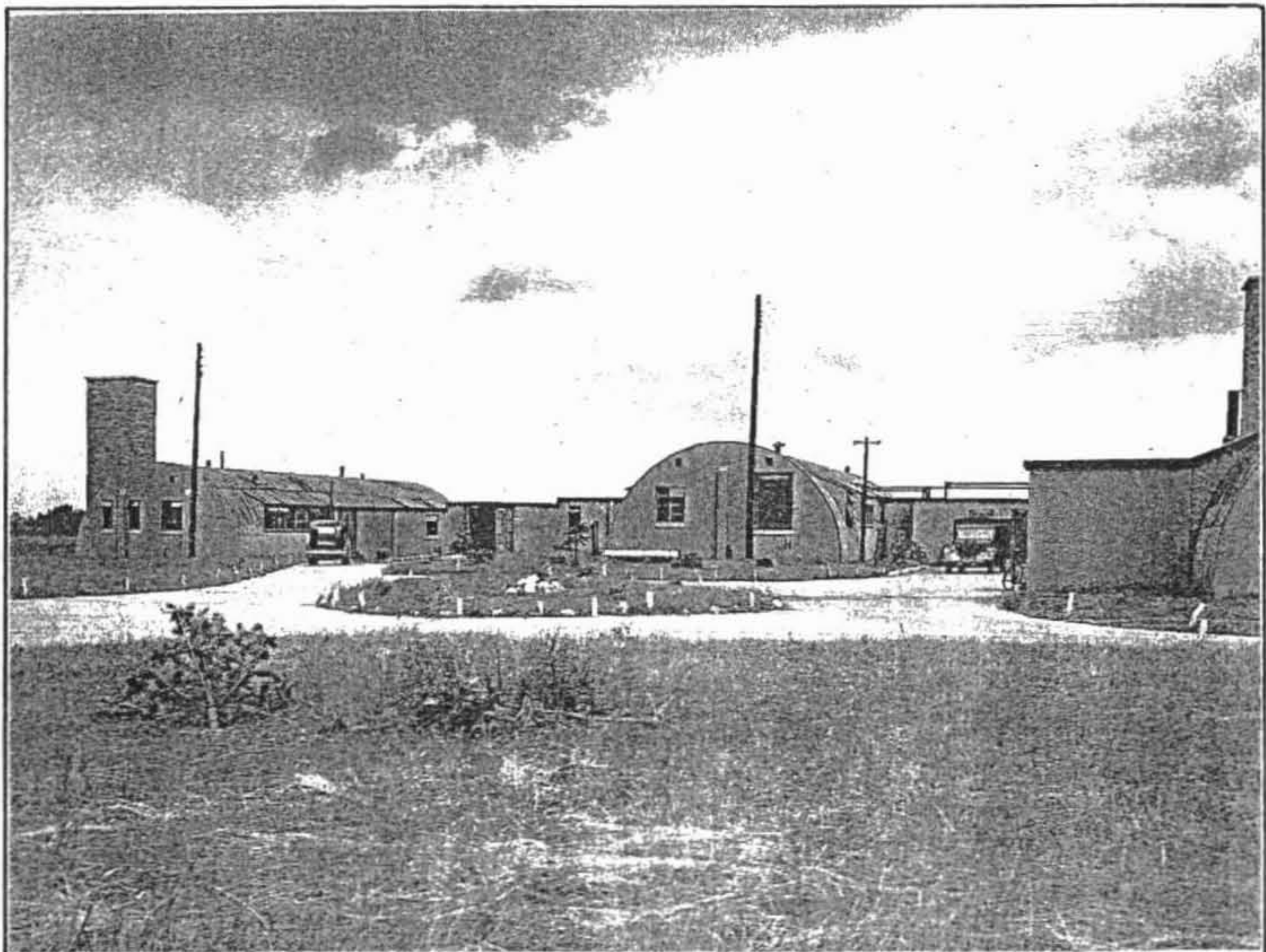


Fig. 7 The buildings of Royal Air Force Winthorpe (1940-59) that were sited around Beaconfield Farm, as shown on part of a plan of 1947. The dashed line shows the course of a pipeline that may have connected and / or served two fuel compounds (nos. 139m and 421). Scale 1:2500. Coddington (Beaconfield) Hall is shown with tone in the bottom right corner. *Plan courtesy of Newark Air Museum.*



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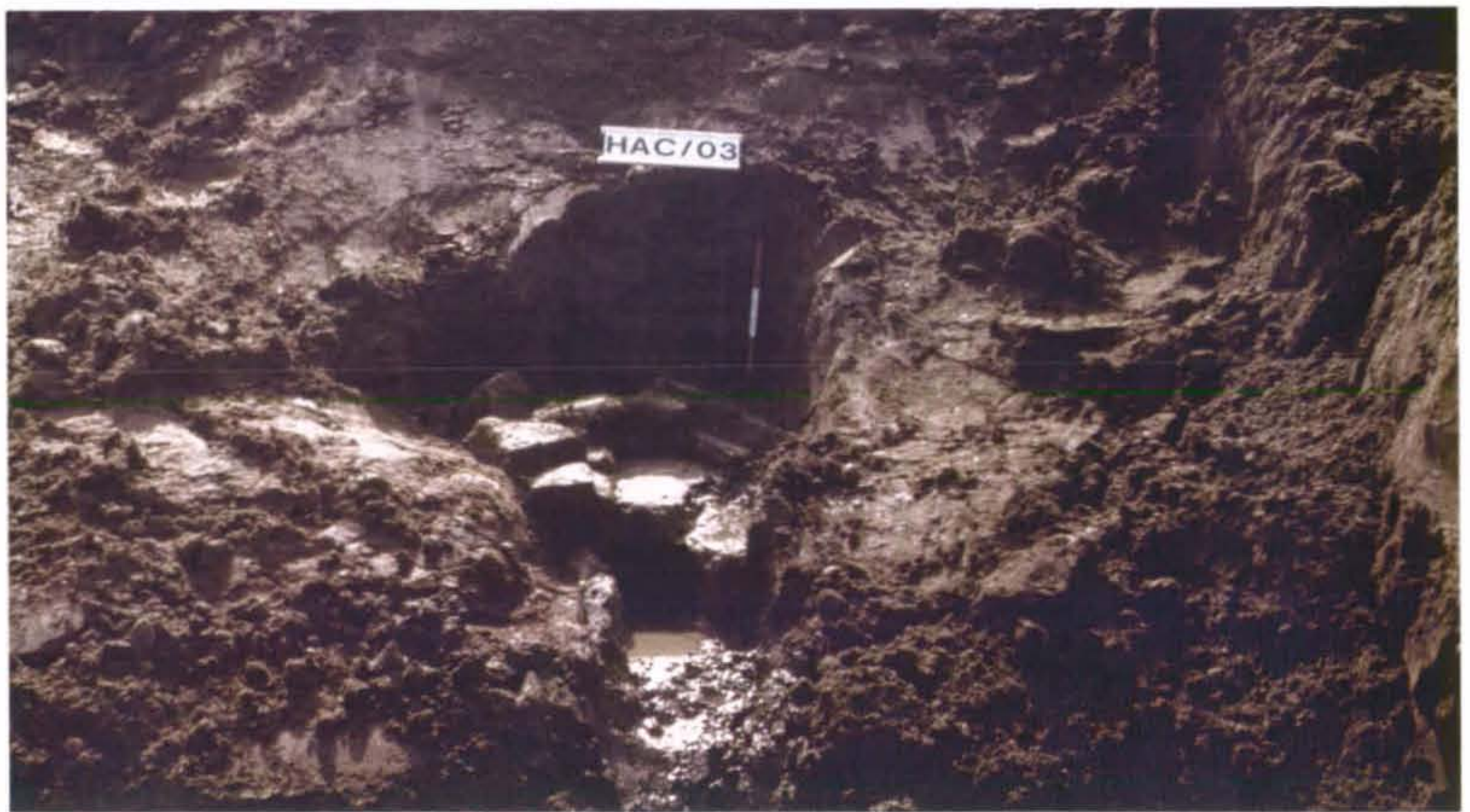
Fig. 8 Former buildings from the area around Beaconfield Farm. **A:** Coddington (Beaconfield) Hall (*photograph from Newark Library*), and **B:** Part of the Sick Quarters Site to the north of Beaconfield Farm, as shown on Fig. 7. *Reproduced from Taylor, W. 1994. RAF Winthorpe. Photographic Memories and Anecdotes 1940-1945.*



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Plates 1-3. 1: Manhole 1 in the course of construction; 2: Feature 0002 in Area 03; 3: Feature 0004 in Area 03.



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Plates 4, 5. 4: Section showing the depth of topsoil, subsoil and bedrock, close to Manhole 4, in Area 06; 5: A wartime RAF air-raid shelter that survives in the copse that forms the north boundary of the new housing development at Harvey Avenue, Coddington.