POLDEN VILLAGES PIPELINE PROJECT

EDINGTON EASTFIELD

PV94/45

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Edington Eastfield

PV94/45

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Archaeology on the Polden Villages Pipeline

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SUMMARY

Three features of indeterminate nature, one containing many sherds of pre-Roman Iron Age pottery, were sampled where they were cut by a pipe trench. A further linear feature, probably a drain, containing a small quantity of Romano-British pottery was investigated. The absence of charcoal and animal bone suggests that these features are not adjacent to a settlement site but pieces of burnt clay and one clay roof tile fragment suggest that occupation or associated activities are present in the vicinity, probably uphill to the south.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Edington excavations were a part of a larger project known as the Polden Villages Enhancement Scheme, a Wessex Water project designed to link the Polden Hills villages to a new sewerage system.

The new sewer pipeline ran for a distance of 10 kilometres along the lower northern slopes of the Polden Hills linking the villages of Woolavington, Cossington, Chilton Polden, Edington, Catcott and Shapwick.

With the kind co-operation of Wessex Water and their project manager Ian Kear, facilities were made available for this previously unknown settlement to be investigated before the pipe trench was excavated by the contractors.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Topography

Edington is a long narrow parish stretching from the lowland marshes of the Somerset Moors and the River Brue in the north to the ancient ridgeway which follows the crest of the Polden ridge in the south. Land below the 10m contour is usually regarded as being at least seasonally waterlogged and therefore unfit for permanent occupation.

The archaeological site lies just above the 15m contour on the same old trackway that runs past sites 46 (Edington Holy Well) and 47 (Edington Jear's Croft). The site lies some 150m to the east of site 46 at the northern, downhill, margin of a field recorded as Eastfield in the Tithe Award. The fields to the north are called East Close, suggesting that the site lies near the division between medieval arable and meadow, a suggestion reinforced by the contours.

2.2 Historical Background

For the historical background to Edington, please see report number 71 on site 46, Edington Holy Well.

3.0 METHODS

3.1 METHOD STATEMENT

Once the turf and topsoil was machine stripped from the pipeline easement, the cleared ground was walked to recover surface pottery and finds so that the locations of any unknown settlement sites could be identified. The finds were numbered sequentially, starting at the west in Woolavington parish. The surface finds from Eastfield were numbered 45, and this number has been retained as the site code.

A JCB machine with a narrow gauge bucket was used to cut the trench down to the top of the archaeological deposits. More detail about excavation strategy will be forthcoming as each deposit is described individually and in the trench reports.

All contexts were numbered sequentially in the order in which they were excavated using the site codes PV 94/45, numbering them 4501, 4502, etc. The site name is taken from the tithe map field name. Plans and sections of features and contexts were drawn at a scale of 1:20. The excavations were also recorded photographically using colour slides and black and white prints.

The excavations were carried out between the 25th and 29th of August 1994 by R. A. Broomhead and Keith Faxon. Due to time limitations it was not possible to fully investigate these two trenches.

A policy of total finds collection was followed, with finds from different contexts being handled separately. Finds have been marked with their respective context number plus the **Somerset County Museum accession number: 117/1994.** The pottery has been separated into different fabrics in accordance with the type series used in the Ilchester excavation reports (see bibliography).

When the excavations were completed, the machine cutting of the pipe trench was monitored.

3.2 TRENCH REPORT

See Figs. 1 & 2.

3.21 Trial trenching on the line of the pipe trench at the location of fieldwalking finds 45 (consisting of 3 sherds of medieval pottery, 1 sherd of post-medieval pottery, and 2 fragments of clay tile) was undertaken by R. A. Broomhead. The first trench, Trench A, revealed an east-west, slightly curving ditch **4503** accompanied by small quantities of Romano-British pottery. Results were inconsistent with findings from a settlement site so a second trench, Trench B, was excavated c45m to the east. This trench revealed two features, **4514** and **4516**,and a few more Romano-British sherds. Again there was little evidence of settlement in this trench.

3.22 Both trenches were excavated by hand by R. Broomhead and K. Faxon and recorded using techniques outlined in the methods statement above. Pre-Roman Iron Age pottery was retrieved from a feature of indeterminate function in Trench B, **4514**. Two of the features in Trench A, **4504** and **4512**, cut by the Romano-British east-west ditch, contained no pottery and are assumed to date from the prehistoric period, possibly of the Pre-Roman Iron Age.

3.23 After excavation and recording were completed the machine cutting of the pipe trench was monitored between the 12th and 15th of September by Keith Faxon in case more finds and features were revealed. Nothing in the vicinity of Trench A was noticed but a dark grey-brown silty layer extended east of Trench B for c2 metres. It contained the unstratified (U/S) finds recorded in the Finds List along with burnt clay fragments and charcoal flecks. To the east of this layer was a spread of c6 metres of local lias stones in light grey-brown to blue-green crumbly clay. Although these appeared to constitute a natural deposit, small sherds of abraded Romano-British pottery were found in the spoil from this layer, recorded as unstratified (U/S) in the Finds List. This may have been a natural outcrop.

3.34 No other features or finds were seen until Manhole number 7 was excavated on the west side of the eastern boundary hedge, where a ditch was sketched. This cut through the colluvium layer, suggesting a medieval or post-medieval date. No finds were recovered. To the east of the ditch the colluvium covered a thin spread of dark brown clay with charcoal which extended for c2.5 metres and lay under the hedge. This feature will be included in the report on boundary features, forthcoming.

4.0 RESULTS

See Fig. 2, Matrix, Finds and Context Tables

4.1 Phase 0: Natural Geology

The natural substrate displayed considerable variation in this field, lending credibility to the interpretation of the stony layer described in para. 3.2 as being natural.

no.	type	description	interpretation
4517	deposit	clean light grey-white clay	natural
4518	deposit	clean blue-grey clay	natural
4519	deposit	clean yellow-orange clay	natural

One feature in Trench B may also be a natural feature:

no.	type	description	interpretation
4520	cut & fill	thin, NE-SW, slight curve filled with clean orange clay	?natural

4.2 Phase I: Pre-Roman Iron Age

a) Unknown feature

Only a small portion of this features was seen in the south-eastern corner of Trench B; its steep side and linear edge suggest that it is a ditch.

no.	type	description	interpretation
4515	fill	light brown sticky clay, tiny stones, burnt clay	fill of 4516
4516	cut	steep sides, only small part seen, c46cm deep x 30 wide	unknown

The only datable finds from this cut were prehistoric:

	pottery			building materials	
context{	sherds	fabric	date}	{no. type}	misc.
4515	23.	1(prehist.) reduced, heavy limestone grits	LIA		2x baked clay

This feature appears to be associated with the dark layer noted during machining of the pipe trench, which extended only c2 metres to the east of the trench. This extent is inconsistent with the interpretation of the feature as a ditch.

b) Unknown Features

Only a small segments of these features were visible in Trench A, where they were cut by ditch **4503**.

no.	type	description	interpretation
4506	fill	black sandy clay, dense charcoal, burnt lias, c12cm deep	upper fill of 4504
4505	fill	orange/brown sandy clay, freq. charcoal flecks, burnt lias	fill of 4504
4504	cut	only small part seen	unknown

no.	type	description	interpretation
4513	fill	orange-brown sandy clay, few charcoal flecks	fill of 4512
4512	cut	linear, N-S, c50cm wide x 12cm deep, varying width	?ditch

No datable finds were recovered.

4.3 Phase II: Romano-British Pit and Possible Drain

a) Pit

Although this feature from Trench B is interpreted as a pit, only part of it was seen and its true function is unknown:

no.	type	description	interpretation
4502	fill	firm dark brown clay, charcoal flecks, ?burnt clay	fill of 4514
4514	cut	shallow, flat base, irregular outline, sloping sides, part seen	?pit

Its fill contained one sherd of Dorset black burnished ware, usually part of a Romano-British assemblage but manufacture of which commenced in the late pre-Roman Iron Age. Given the lack of Romano-British pottery in Trench B, it is likely that this feature is actually of Iron Age date.

	pottery			building materials		
context	sherds	fabric	date	no.	type	misc.
4502	1...10 (BB)	small	C1-4			8x baked clay, small

b) Occupation Debris

In contrast to Trench B, Trench A revealed definite evidence of Romano-British activity. The earliest evidence of this came from the hand cleaning of the natural clay:

no.	type	description	interpretation
4511	layer	thin layer above grey/yellow to orange hard sandy clay	occupation debris

context	pottery: sherds	fabric	date	building materials: no.	type	misc.
4511	1	3 (Samian)	C1-3	1	tile	1x animal tooth
	1	?7 (Oxford ware)	C3-4			
	3	9 (greyware)	C1-4			
	9	10 (BB)	C1-4			
	1	10A (BB) rim	C1-4			
	9	10A (BB)	C1-4			
	4	10B (BB)	C1-4			
	1	11 (local wares) rim				
	5	13 (storage jar)	C1-4			

c) Possible Drain

This east-west feature in Trench A cut features **4504** and **4512**.

no.	type	description	interpretation
4501	fill	dark purple/brown sandy clay, charcoal flecks, on lias slabs.	fill of 4503
4503	cut	linear, E-W. >1.0m wide x c0.3m deep, only part seen	?drain

context	pottery: sherds	fabric	date	building materials: no.	type	misc.
4501	1	9 (greyware) v. small	C1-4			1x animal bone, small
	1	10A (BB)	C1-4			1x burnt clay
	2	10A (BB) joining	C1-4			
	1	10B (BB)	C1-4			

This cut, running through the length of the trench, was a shallow flat bottomed feature carrying lias slabs in a depression in its base. Although these slabs were not investigated or lifted, it is possible that they form the base of a culvert lined with lias slabs although its true function is unknown.

Sealing **4501** was the following layer:

no.	type	description	interpretation
4507	layer	fine purple/brown sandy clay, freq. pea grits, burnt lias	natural silting

There were no finds, and the nature of the soil suggests gradual silting.

Above layer **4507** was a thick lens of redeposited natural clay:

no.	type	description	interpretation
4508	layer	dense blue-grey sticky clay lens, c90cm wide x 10cm thick	redeposited natural

This layer must derive from the excavation of an unseen cut into the natural clay to the south of the trench. There were no finds.

4.4 Phase V: Medieval and Post-medieval colluvium

Covering the whole of trench A was:

no.	type	description	interpretation
4509	layer	purple/brown sandy clay, some lias chips, c30cm thick	

Above this was the following layer:

no.	type	description	interpretation
4510	layer	brown sandy clay, much root activity, up to 40cm thick	colluvium

In Trench B only **4510** was recorded, probably reflecting the difference in interpretation between two different archaeologists. Neither of these contexts produced finds and they were recognizable as the colluvium which covered all of the sites seen on the Polden Villages pipeline.

5.0 THE FINDS

(See Finds Table)

5.1 Flint

No flint was recovered

5.2 Pottery

As stated above in the methods statement, the pottery fabric groups were given the same type code numbers as those analyzed by Western Archaeological Trust in Ilchester. Summarized from the Ilchester report, these code numbers are:

Fabric	description	sherds
1	Iron Age types*	26
2	Amphorae	0
3	Samian	1
4	Colour Coat Wares	0
5	Plain Fine Wares	0
6	Mortaria	0
7	Oxfordshire Wares	?1
8	New Forest Wares	0
9	Greywares	5
10	Black Burnished Wares# (Dorset)	15
10A	Black Burnished Wares (Local)	13
10B	Black Burnished Wares (Oxidized)	5
11	Soft Oxidized Wares	0
12	Local Wares	12
13	Storage Jars	5
	*(abbreviated as IA on the Finds List)	
	#(abbreviate as BB on the Finds Lists)	

Fabric 1: Iron Age types. Only a few sherds of prehistoric pottery were recovered from the limited excavations. All are probably local late-Iron Age pottery types, 1st century BC to 1st century AD.
A number of greyware sherds had early bead rims, suggesting 1st or early 2nd century AD settlement.
All of the other pottery types are of Romano-British date.
Fabric 2: Amphorae. These are large storage jars, usually with pointed or rounded bases, designed to hold large volumes of, usually, liquids. The fabrics are thick, hard and of buff to pale pink colour.
Fabric 3: Samian. Bowls, cups and dishes imported from France or Spain, mould-made, often with elaborate embossed outer decoration. Hard, fine, red fabric with a shiny red coating, this luxury table-ware was in use from the 1st to early 3rd centuries.
Fabric 4: Colour Coat ware. Bowls, cups, beakers in fine, hard, pale fabrics with dark brown or black slips. Fine table ware.
Fabric 5: Plain Fine Wares. Bowls, cups, beakers in fine, hard pale to orange colour with no surface decoration.
Fabric 6: Mortaria. Fine fabric in the form of well fired thick bowls with large grits pressed into the bottom surface. A cooking utensil used for making pastes and purees.
Fabric 7: Oxfordshire Wares. Bowls in fine thin fabrics with red slip, frequent decoration stamped or painted in white, made in Oxfordshire. Most are copies of Samian. the 3rd to 4th century dates suggest they are replacements of Samian, no longer being produced.
Fabric 8: New Forest Wares. Bowls, jugs, flagons and bottles in thin, fine cream to grey stoneware with red-brown, purple or orange slip. Much decorated. Late 3rd to 4th century fine table ware.

Fabric 9: Greywares. Bowls, cups, jars, dishes, cooking pots, etc. in hard, medium to coarse grey fabric. Incised cross-hatched decoration is common. Locally produced finer grade kitchen or table ware. 1st to 4th centuries.
Fabric 10: Black Burnished Ware. A wide variety of small forms: bowls, dishes, cups, jars, jugs, beakers, etc. in a thick, black, coarse, well gritted fabric. Incised cross-hatched ornament is common. Derived from Iron Age pottery techniques common to the Durotrigians, kilns have been found in Dorset. Everyday kitchen and table wares. Iron Age and early Romano-British forms have thin bead rims. 1st to 4th centuries.
Fabric 10A: Locally produced Black Burnished Ware. Black Burnished wares with local limestone temper in the fabric. Probably produced in Somerset for local markets.
Fabric 10B: Oxidized Black Burnished Ware. Black Burnished ware with oxidized margins or surfaces.
Fabric 11: Oxidized Wares. Bowls and cups in soft orange fabric. Some may derive from the kilns in Shepton Mallet.
Fabric 12: Local Wares. A variety of poorly fired coarsewares.
Fabric 13: Storage Jars. Thick coarse fabrics, often poorly fired and usually of 3rd/4th century date.

Of the Iron Age sherds, 23 were found in **4515** and may constitute one vessel. The site produced too few sherds to lend itself to meaningful analysis of comparative frequencies of the different fabrics.

5.3 Fired clay

23 small fragments of baked clay were found. None showed the twig marks associated with daub. They probably came from domestic structures or activities, but they are too few to comment upon.

5.4 Mortar

No mortar was seen, indicating that major stone buildings were not to be found in the immediate vicinity, despite the recovery of one fragment of roof tile..

5.5 Metalwork

No metal of any kind was recovered.

6.0 DISCUSSION

6.1 The absence of worked flint suggests that there is no occupation of this site in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages.

6.2 Activity in the **Iron Age** is attested by the finds of Iron Age pottery types. No structures were recognized. This does not necessarily indicate that none existed;

6.3 Finds from both the **Iron Age** and **Romano-British** phases are inconsistent with interpretation as settlement sites. Only 2 fragments of animal bone were recovered, nor were there any signs of buildings apart from one fragment of clay roof tile. Small fragments of baked clay and occasional charcoal flecks attest to human activity from both phases somewhere in the vicinity. The definite presence of a linear feature of the Romano-British period, **4503**, and a possible Iron Age ditch, **4516**, along with a location near a medieval field boundary, suggest that this area may have served as a boundary zone in earlier periods. If this is the case, the focus of activity may well lie somewhere uphill further to the south.

6.4 Since the original fieldwalking finds lay above the colluvium layer it is unlikely that they derive from the site below. These finds, of medieval and post-medieval date, are consistent with the types of material deposited with manure when fertilizing arable fields.

6.5 The colluvium **4509** and **4510** originated from disturbed ploughsoil being washed downhill by the action of rainwater. The replacement of the small prehistoric fields by the large medieval open fields seems to have occurred after the introduction of a heavier plough requiring a larger team of draft animals. Turning the larger team was more difficult, making a longer plough run more efficient. In addition, criss-cross ploughing of the prehistoric and Romano-British period was abandoned in favour of

ploughing in long strips which produced ridges and furrows. These features have been flattened by more modern agricultural processes.

These ridges are typically oriented at right angles to the contours, and the Poldens area is no exception. It could be predicted that this ploughing arrangement would be conducive to significant soil erosion and on the Polden sites the extent of this erosion is apparent. The fields in this area, once arable, are now used for permanent pasture. To the south of these fields there is only a thin layer of turf and topsoil above the bedrock[1]. Apparently, most of the ploughsoil has been washed away.

This erosion would have progressed during the Middle Ages, gradually depleting the fertility and productivity of the arable fields at a time when the population was growing. The effect of this decline in fertility on the economic and social structures of the medieval period has seldom been discussed, largely because the severity of the phenomenon has seldom been recorded.

The depth of the colluvium over sites investigated in the Polden Villages Project indicates that soil erosion has had a significant impact on soil fertility in this part of the Polden ridge.

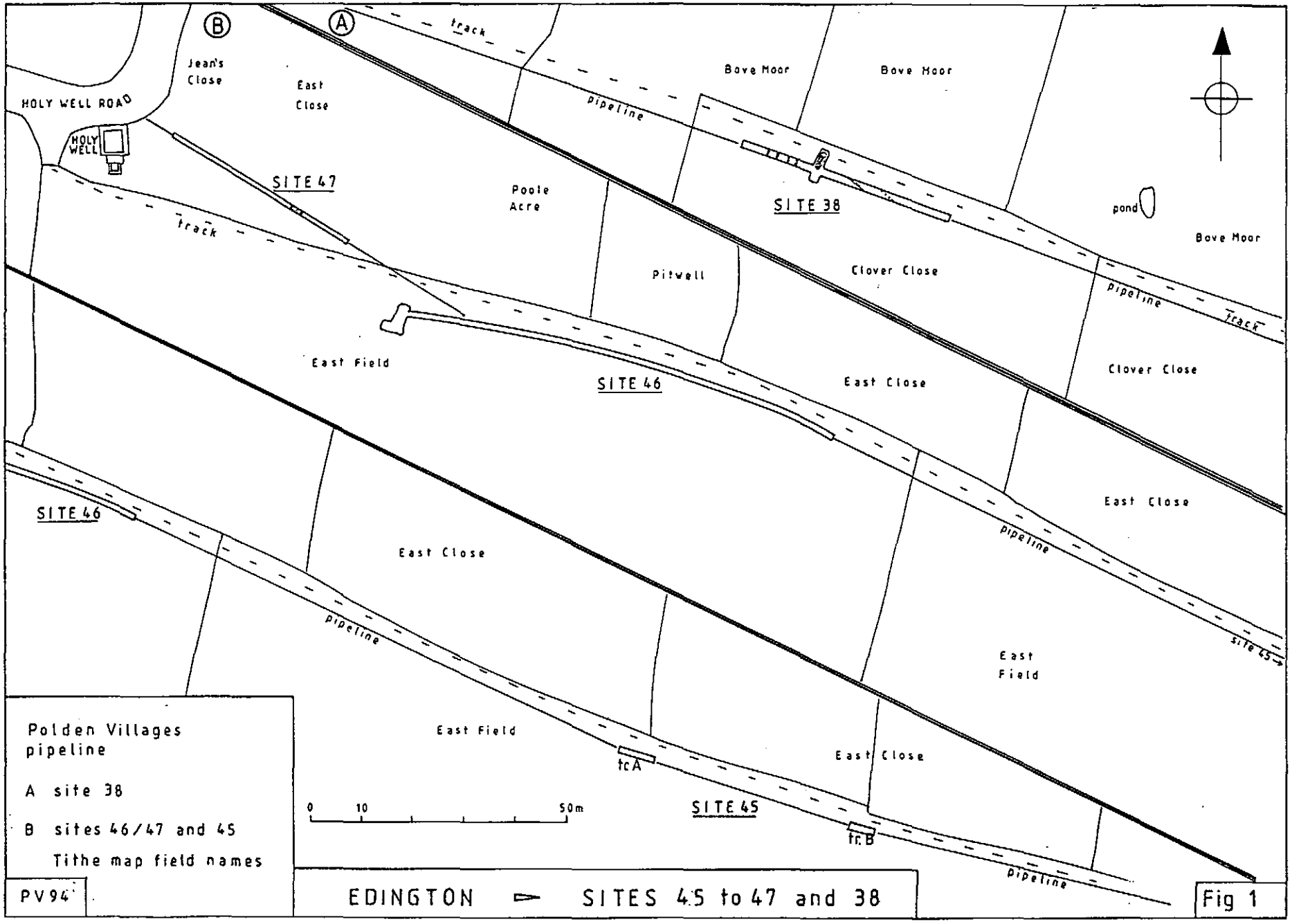
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

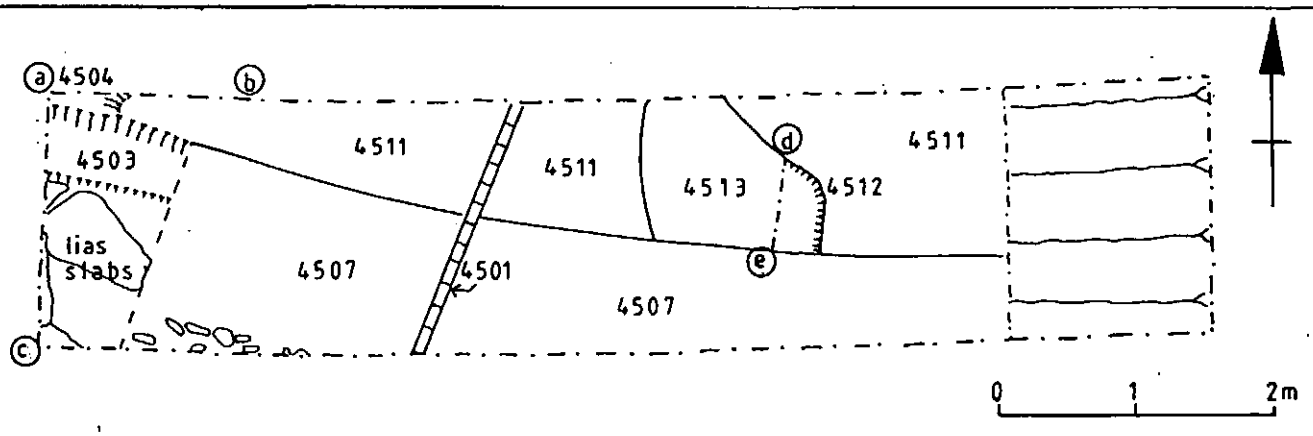
We would like to thank Mr. Ian Kear, project manager for Wessex Water for agreeing to the excavation and to Mr. Tony Smith, site engineer, and foreman Mr. Hugh Williams of Westwick Construction, the site contractors, for their help and cooperation during the project.

Charles and Nancy Hollinrake

5 June 1996

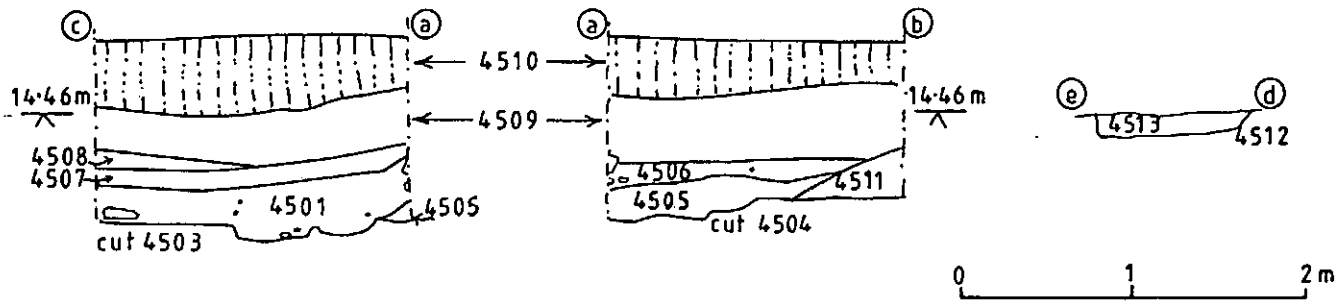
[1] Mr. Cox, pers. comm.


B
A
track
Jean's Close
East Close
HOLY WELL ROAD
HOLY WELL
pipeline
Bove Moor
Bove Moor
SITE 47
Poole Acre
SITE 38
pond
Bove Moor
track
Pitwell
Clover Close
pipeline
track
East Field
SITE 46
East Close
Clover Close
SITE 46
East Close
East Close
pipeline
pipeline
site 45
East Field
East Field
tc A
East Close
0 10 50m
SITE 45
tc B
pipeline
Polden Villages pipeline
A site 38
B sites 46/47 and 45
Tithe map field names
PV94
EDINGTON — SITES 45 to 47 and 38
Fig 1



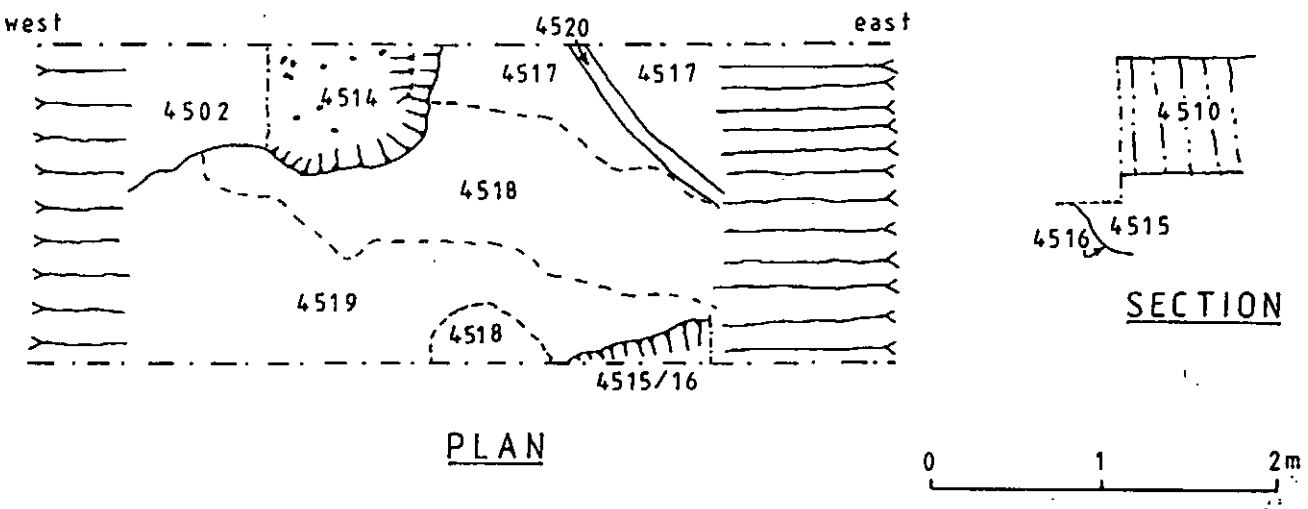
TRENCH A PLAN

A



TRENCH A SECTIONS

B



PLAN SECTION

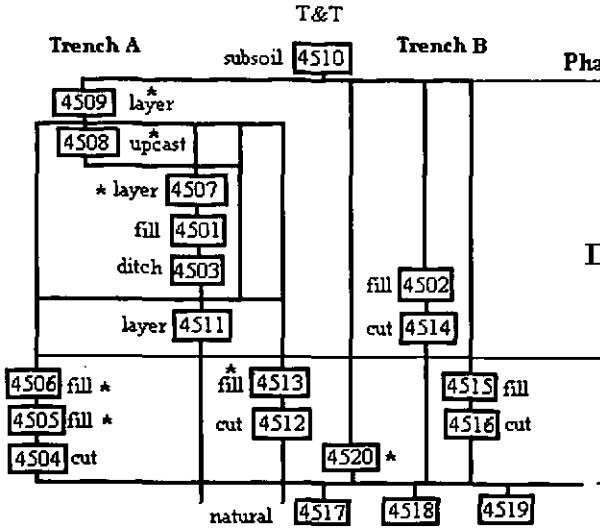
TRENCH B

C

POLDEN VILLAGES PIPELINE	SITE 45	FIG 2

no.	type	description	interpretation	trench	phase
4501	fill	dark purple/brown sandy clay, charcoal flecks on lias slabs	fill of 4503	A	II
4502	fill	firm dark brown clay, charcoal flecks, ?burnt clay	fill of 4514	B	II
4503	cut	linear, E-W. >1.0m wide x c0.3m deep, only part seen	?drain	A	II
4504	cut	only small part seen	unknown	A	I
4505	fill	orange/brown sandy clay, freq. charcoal flecks, burnt lias	fill of 4504	A	I
4506	fill	black sandy clay, dense charcoal, burnt lias, c12cm deep	upper fill of 4504	A	I
4507	layer	fine purple/brown sandy clay, freq. pea grits, burnt lias	natural silting	A	II/?III
4508	layer	dense blue-grey sitcky clay lens, c90cm wide x 10cm thick	redeposited natural	A	II/?III
4509	layer	purple/brown sandy clay, some lias chips, c30cm thick	colluvium	A	IV/V
4510	layer	purple/brown sandy clay, much root activity, up to 40cm thick	colluvium	A & B	V
4511	layer	thin layer above grey/yellow to orange hard sandy clay	occupation debris	A	II
4512	cut	linear, N-S, c50cm wide x 12cm deep, varying width	?ditch	A	I
4513	fill	orange-brown sandy clay, few charcoal flecks	fill of 4512	A	I
4514	cut	shallow, flat base, irregular outline, sloping sides, only part see	?pit	B	II
4515	fill	light brown sticky clay, tiny stones, burnt clay	fill of 4516	B	I
4516	cut	steep sides, only small part seen, c46cm deep x 30 wide	unknown	B	I
4517	deposit	clean light grey-white clay	natural	B	0
4518	deposit	clean blue-grey clay	natural	B	0
4519	deposit	clean yellow-orange clay	natural	B	0
4520	cut & fill	thin, linear, NE-SW, slight curve filled with clean orange clay	?natural	B	?0

						building materials	
context	{ sherds	fabric	surface	date }	{ no.	type }	misc.
4501	1	9 (greyware) v. small		C1-4			1x animal bone, small
	1	10A (BB)		C1-4			1x burnt clay
	2	10A (BB) joining		C1-4			
	1	10B (BB)		C1-4			
4502	1	10 (BB) small		C1-4			8x baked clay, small
4511	1	3 (Samian)		C1-3	1	tile	1x animal tooth
	1	?7 (Oxford ware)		C3-4			
	3	9 (greyware)		C1-4			
	9	10 (BB)		C1-4			
	1	10A (BB) rim		C1-4			
	9	10A (BB)		C1-4			
	4	10B (BB)		C1-4			
	1	11 (local wares) rim					
	5	13 (storage jar)		C1-4			
4515	23	1(prehist.) reduced, heavy limestone grits		LIA			2x baked clay
U/S	4	10 (BB) v. small		C1-4			12x baked clay, small
dark soil							
U/S	1	10 (BB) small		C1-4			
stoney	1	9 (greyware) small		C1-4			
layer	3	1 (prehistoric)		LIA			
total pot	65						



Pottery Fabrics

Phases	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	10A	10B	11	12	13
II			x				x		x	x	x	x	x		x
I	x														

Pottery Fabrics

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	10A	10B	11	12	13
4501									x		x	x			
4502										x					
4511			x				x		x	x	x	x	x		x
4515	x														

MATRIX