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**Whitewall Quarry, Norton
North Yorkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

Whitewall, Quarry, Norton, North Yorkshire Archaeological Watching Brief

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MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd.
December, 1995.

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Whitewall Quarry, Norton, North Yorkshire. Archaeological Watching Brief

Introduction

This report sets out the results of a Watching Brief undertaken during the topsoil stripping of an area 50m x 290m in size, forming the southwards extension to Whitewall Quarry, Norton, North Yorkshire (SE 7915 6930 centre) (Fig. 1).

W Clifford Watts Ltd., the quarry owners and operators, were granted planning permission to extend Whitewall quarry for the extraction of limestone. The permission (no. C3/96/41D/FA) had a Watching Brief condition (no. 27) so that safe access could be afforded to a nominated archaeologist to observe and record any archaeological finds and features. The Royal Commission for Historical Monuments England (RCHME) Wolds Survey of 1994 had recorded a number of linear features, visible on aerial photographs, crossing the area of the quarry extension (see Archaeological Background below).

The site lies in a former arable field to the east of the unclassified road from Norton to Stamford Bridge, at an elevation of c.70m AOD (Fig. 1). The local topography shows a fairly gentle north-facing slope, which is essentially the top of the limestone escarpment which overlooks the low-lying Vale of Pickering. The solid geology is oolitic limestone of Jurassic date, with overlying shallow, well-drained loamy soils of the Aberford Association (Mackney *et al.* 1983).

The initial Watching Brief was carried out by the writer (M R Stephens), with assistance in the excavation stage by M Johnson, J Hustler and D Hunter. The plans were prepared by K Hunter. The fieldwork took place from the 8th to 24th November 1995.

All work was funded by W Clifford Watts Ltd., and was initially arranged through their mineral consultant, S Shorthose.

The archive is at present stored at the office of MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. in Malton, and will be passed to Malton Museum for long-term storage.

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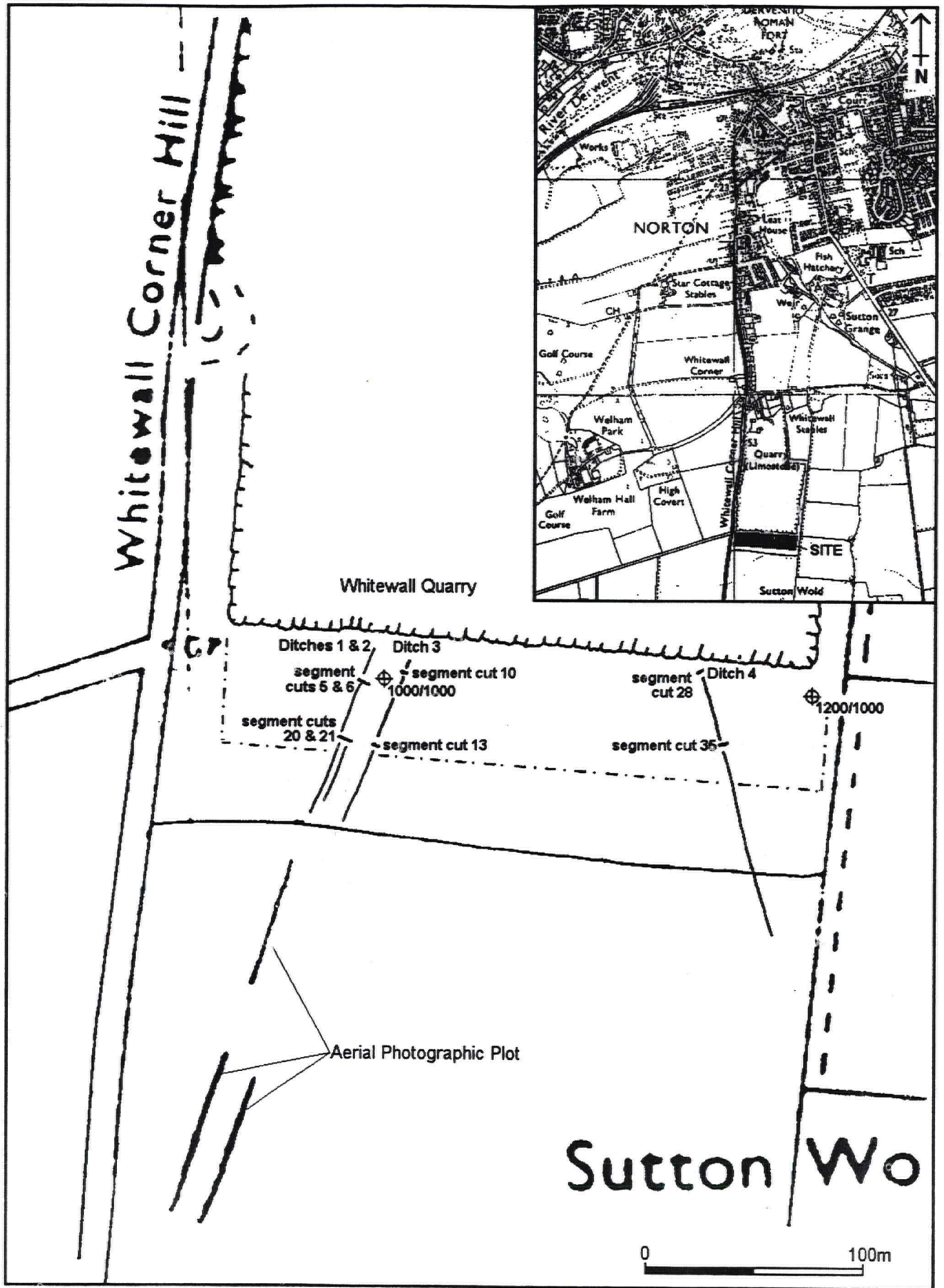


Figure 1. Site and Ditch Location Plan (inset scale 1:25000).

Archaeological and Historical Background

The RCHME Wolds Survey plots two areas of linear features crossing the area of the quarry extension on converging north to south alignments (Fig. 1).

The westernmost area of linear features is plotted as two main parallel ditches (Ditches 1 and 3) c.20m apart, with a possible area of stone in between, and was interpreted as a trackway. There are suggestions of a third ditch (Ditch 2) immediately parallel to Ditch 1. These parallel ditches extend as a rather discontinuous feature for c.300m into the field to the south of the quarry extension. After a break of c.150m they change alignment and continue to the south-west before becoming lost to the south-east of Welham Wold Farm (SE 7915 6930). This feature has been interpreted as the Roman road from York to Malton (Margary 1967, no.81A), and its course has been traced close to the civilian settlement of Norton near Sutton Grange (Robinson 1978, no. 237).

The other linear feature (Ditch 4), to the east, is plotted by the RCHME for only a distance of c.200m. Presumably it was much more extensive, and there is also the possibility that further traces remain obscured from the air by adverse crop and soil conditions. Robinson records it as an undated ditch (Robinson 1978, no.415).

Ditch 4 is plotted by Robinson as extending northwards into the area of the present quarry, where it intercepted, or was intercepted by, a south-west to north-east aligned 'trackway' of possible medieval date (Robinson, no.406). It is unfortunate that the relationship between these features has been lost to previous quarrying operations.

The ditches revealed by the Watching Brief are part of a large network of linear features occurring over much of East and North-east Yorkshire which are discussed later in the report.

The area immediately to the south of the quarry is referred to as Sutton Wold on present day Ordnance Survey maps (e.g. the current 1:10000), and this implies that the area was once part of the manor of the deserted medieval village of Sutton. None of the features outlined above are shown on the 1st edition 1" Ordnance Survey Map of 1858-60 (No. XCIII. 93). The name of the quarry - Whitewall - is first recorded in 1828 (Smith ed. 1937, 141), referring to the area known as Whitewall Corner situated c.700m north of the site.

Excavation Methods

The topsoil over the quarry extension was removed by tracked Caterpillar bulldozers. Finds of flint flakes and tools, and Roman, medieval and post-medieval pottery were recovered from the topsoil and their positions plotted (Appendix II). However, at this stage the linear features were not visible, so their assumed positions were further investigated to reveal them. Subsoil stripping was suspended for a week so that two segments could be dug into each of the features.

Plans and sections were drawn at suitable scales, and are reproduced in this report (Figs. 2, 3 and 4). A photographic record was taken in colour and monochrome, and a written record was maintained under the continuous context recording system.

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Excavation Results

The finds recovered from the initial Watching Brief showed a distribution that was heaviest in the central part of the site, but because of markedly varying light and weather conditions, it would be inappropriate to draw too many conclusions from that. However, it may be significant that two of the three Roman sherds recovered from the initial stage came from the vicinity of Ditches 1, 2 and 3, the assumed Roman trackway. In all seven flint tools, two flint cores, twenty-three waste flint flakes, three Roman sherds, five medieval sherds and two post-medieval sherds were recovered at the initial stage

The aerial photographic anomalies identified during the Watching Brief are referred to as Ditches 1, 2, 3 and 4 moving from west to east (Fig. 1). Ditches 1 and 2 were parallel and adjacent to each other, with Ditch 3 running parallel c.15m to the east with a south-south-west to north-north-east alignment. Ditch 4, situated c.150m to the east, had a north-west to south-east alignment.

Ditch 1 was excavated in two segments, context 5 to the north and context 21 to the south (Fig. 2). The width at the top of both segments was 2m, but the profiles varied. Segment 5 had a broad, dished profile with a depth of 0.25m, whereas segment 21 had a vertical eastern edge and a stepped western edge giving a depth of 0.25m.

Both segments had clay silt or sandy silt primary fills (contexts 4 and 8), with clay silt secondary fills (contexts 3 and 17). Context 18 contained a single Roman sherd (Appendix II).

A shallow oval feature (context 22) was present on the western side of the ditch in segment 21; the relationship between this feature and ditch is unknown as the fills were identical.

Ditch 2, excavated in two segments (contexts 6 and 20; Fig. 2), was present c.2m to the east of Ditch 1. This ditch was much less substantial than Ditch 1. The profile was dished with a depth of c.0.10m. The width varied between 0.6m and 0.9m. The fills (contexts 2 and 17) were clay silts.

Ditch 3 was an irregular feature situated c.14m to the east of, and parallel to, Ditch 1 and 2, which was excavated in two segments, contexts 10 and 13 (Fig. 3). It had a varying width of 1.0m to 1.6m. The profile was an irregular dish in form and the depth also varied, being between 0.2m and 0.3m. The fills (contexts 9 and 12) were clay silts. Context 12 was overlain by context 11, which was basically machine-compressed topsoil. Both contexts 11 and 12 contained Roman sherds, and context 12 also contained two flint waste flakes (Appendix II).

The shallowness of the three ditches, and the irregularity of Ditch 3 in particular, is strongly suggestive of truncation.

Taken together Ditch 1 and Ditch 2, with Ditch 3 resemble a trackway, which would have had a width of c.14m. Although the RCHME plot suggests that there was metalling, or at least 'stone', between the

ditches, this no longer survives. Ditch 1 and Ditch 2 are obviously closely linked as they share an exact alignment, and even share the same fill (context 17) in the southern excavated segment. The interval between Ditch 1 and Ditch 2 (c. 3.5m) is too large to suggest that they were formed by the erosion of wheeled traffic (a Roman trackway excavated at West Lodge, Malton with wheel-ruts had a gauge of 1.6m [Stephens 1992]). It is possible that one of the ditches is a recut of the other, and it is equally

cut it about 2m?

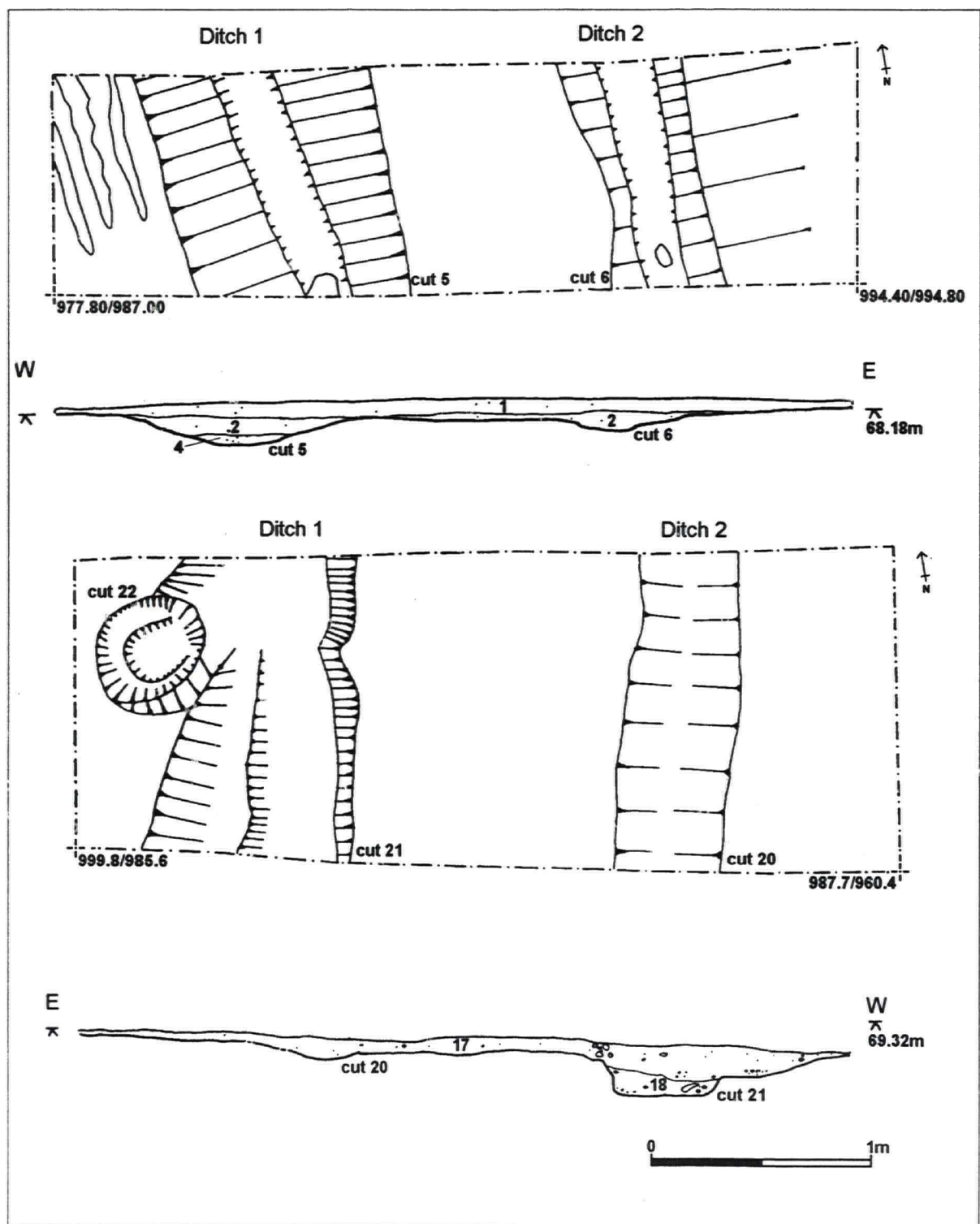


Figure 2.
Plans and Sections of Ditches 1 and 2 (cuts 5, 6, 20 and 21).

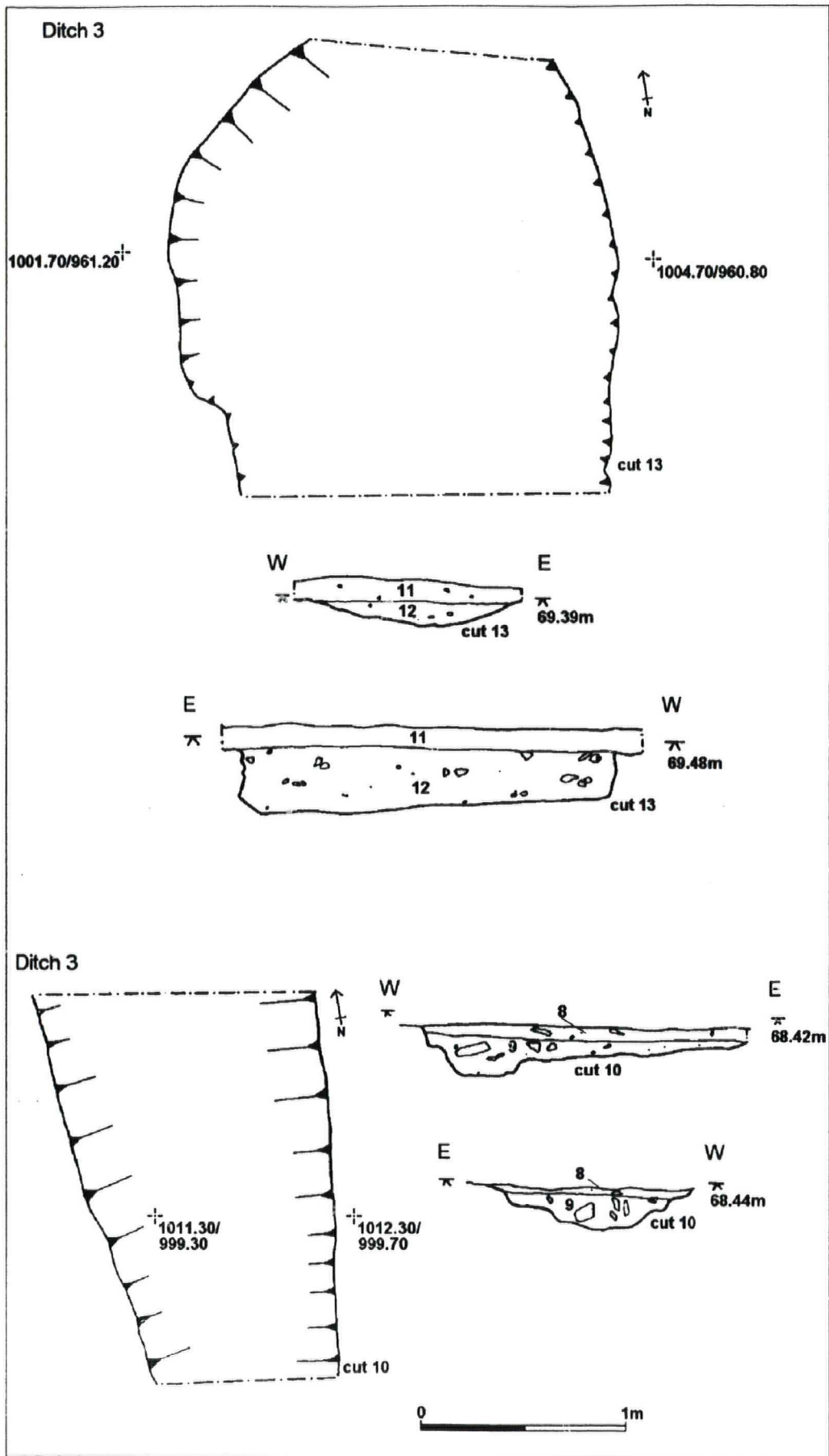


Figure 3.
Plans and Sections of Ditch 3 Segments (cuts 10 and 13).

possible that the two ditches lay on either side of a vanished hedge. The absence of large amounts of stone from the fills of Ditch 1 and Ditch 2 suggests that they were not associated with a bank as stony bank material would have weathered back into them.

Ditch 4 was a much more substantial feature than the other Ditch 1, Ditch 2 and Ditch 3, and showed a different sequence of infilling (Fig. 4). The ditch was excavated in two 1m wide segments (context 28 to the north and context 35 to the south).

Segment 28 was 2.7m wide at the top and had a depth of c.1m. The profile was V-shaped with a rounded base, and there was a change in angle $2/3$ of the way up the eastern edge (Fig. 4).

The basal fill (context 27) was largely composed of angular limestones, which suggests material derived from the erosion of the ditch's edges. The subsequent fill (context 26) was composed of smaller, more rounded limestones, and could be derived from a vanished bank. Context 26 contained a coarse primary flint waste flake (Appendix II). The next two fills (context 25 on the eastern edge and context 24 on the western edge), were silts, possibly water-deposited in origin. The final fill (context 23) was a largely stone-free clay silt and suggestive of more gentle silting.

The southernmost excavated segment of Ditch 4 (context 35) was even more substantial (Fig. 4). This segment had a width of 3.7m and a depth of 1.1m. The profile was fairly symmetrical, with steps c. $1/3$ and $2/3$ of the way up the edges, the higher step being more flared in form. The base of the ditch was slightly rounded. The gritty texture of the basal fill (context 34) suggests an initial water-borne silting into the ditch. The subsequent fill (context 33) was largely composed of angular limestone rubble, and was presumably formed by the weathering of the ditches edges. The next fill (context 32) and the two subsequent fills (contexts 30 and 31) are suggestive of more gentle filling. Subsequently, a rubbly fill (context 29) entered the ditch, and was more extensive on the ditch's eastern side. This fill is significant in that it probably represented eroded bank material, and its position in the ditch points to the bank having been on the ditch's eastern side. A more gravelly fill (context 16) above context 29 apparently represented the culmination of the erosion of the bank into the ditch. Context 16 contained a flint tool (Appendix II). The top of the ditch was filled by a largely stone-free clay silt (context 15), which contained three Roman sherds (Appendix II). A mixture of machine disturbed ditch-fill and machine-compressed topsoil (context 14) overlay the top of the ditch.

The scale of Ditch 4 suggests that it should be interpreted as a boundary ditch.