

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN
SOCIETY

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)

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JANUARY 1972 TO DECEMBER 1973



IMRAY LAURIE NORIE AND WILSON

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CONTENTS

<i>Officers and Council of the Society, 1971-72</i>	<i>page</i> iv
<i>Officers and Council of the Society, 1972-73</i>	v
An Iron Age Site on the Land of the Plant Breeding Institute, Trumpington <i>By</i> IAIN DAVIDSON <i>and</i> GODFREY J. CURTIS	i
Roman Godmanchester. III: Emmanuel Knoll <i>By</i> H. J. M. GREEN	15
Notes <i>By</i> D. M. BROWNE, M. D. CRA'STER, C. B. DENSTON <i>and</i> M. SMITH	25
Cambridgeshire Earthwork Surveys <i>By</i> C. C. TAYLOR	35
Late Saxon Settlements in the St Neots Area. III: The Village or Township of St Neots <i>By</i> P. V. ADDYMAN	45
The Group of Foreign Stained Glass Windows in Thorney Abbey Church <i>By</i> HEINZ OETTLI	101
<i>Index</i>	113

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTES

D. M. BROWNE, C. B. DENSTON, M. SMITH AND M. D. CRA'STER

IRON AGE GRAVE GROUP FROM NEWNHAM CROFT, CAMBRIDGE

The exact location of the finding of this well-known group (C. Fox, *Archaeology of the Cambridge Region*, p. 81 and plate xv) has unfortunately not been accurately recorded.

Recently, however, an old letter of Baron Anatole von Hügel, then Curator of the University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, where the Newnham Croft group has been preserved ever since it was found, has come to light; this letter gives some information on the circumstances of the finding, and is quoted below in full.

Late Celtic interment

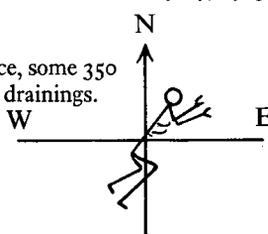
King's College land off the Barton Rd. (Newnham)

Skeleton in very bad state of preservation found 4 feet below the surface, some 350 feet S. of Road (at the back of St. Mark's) in the trench for the surface drainings.

The skeleton lay in a somewhat contracted attitude, but owing to decay rather difficult to locate, with the head N.N.E. and the feet S.S.W.

On the chert, three bronze fibulae with white enamel, on the right lower arm (above wrist) a decorated bronze bracelet (the bones of the left arm were missing), and near the feet a cup-shaped bronze(?) lamp with links of a chain attached. Three small flat bronze rings had been taken off the skeleton before I reached it.

May 27, 1903



A. v. Hügel
M.D.C.

TWO BURIALS FROM THE KINGS HEDGES ESTATE, CAMBRIDGE

In late April 1970 two human skeletons were unearthed by building workers during excavations of footing trenches for houses on the Kings Hedges Estate, Cambridge (TL 543612). This discovery was reported in the *Cambridge Evening News* for Thursday, 23 April 1970. The discovery was also reported to the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. The present writer and Mr R. Bishop investigated these finds. Mr Bishop undertook most of the recording and recovery of objects.

Unfortunately most of the skeletons, which were virtually intact, had been removed from their archaeological context before Bishop and Browne arrived. The present whereabouts of the skeletal material is uncertain. One skeleton was certainly of an adult and the other probably of a younger person. At the time of burial it seems that the bodies had been lain in extended positions within shallow wooden coffins which

were interred within roughly rectangular excavations in the natural gravel of the site. The evidence for wooden coffins is stronger for Grave B than for Grave A. In the former several nails were gathered from the peripheries of the burial excavation. Mr Bishop notes that the legs and possibly the arms of the body in Grave B were crossed at the time of burial. Both graves were orientated roughly North-South but the head of the body in Grave A lay at the northern end of the grave whilst that in Grave B lay at the southern. No evidence of any grave goods was encountered. A few sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from the earth that had filled the burial excavation after the rotting of the presumed coffins.

Dating these burials is difficult but the Roman period is suggested. It should be noted that the Roman period ditch which was encountered to the west of these burials was cut through similar soil to that which filled the burial excavations although it was not possible to demonstrate a stratigraphical link between the two.

In the course of this rescue work other features were noted in the builder's footing trenches. These may be listed.

(1) A pit north of Grave B. This was dug from a similar level to that of the graves. It was not excavated and yielded no surface finds.

(2) A ditch west of the burials. This was on average 12 feet wide and ran for at least 200 feet roughly North-South. Again it was not possible to excavate this feature. From its clayey upper fill, however, was obtained Roman pottery, some of a later character. Associated with the ditch along the entire length of its western edge was a broad area of disturbed soil.

This isolated evidence must be added to that already gathered of the Arbury-Kings Hedges Roman settlement. Presumably the presence of burials of not too late a date suggests that we are beyond the confines of a settlement proper. It seems best at present to associate the ditch and burials with extra-settlement activity along the line of the nearby Roman road.

Note. The collection from the site, which comprises pottery from the upper fill of the ditch and pottery and a coin from the builder's spoil heaps, is deposited in the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology together with the investigators' records. Catalogue Nos. 71.97 to 71.100. D.M.B.

JADEITE AXE FROM BOTTISHAM

Three 'ceremonial' greenstone axes, all surface finds, are in the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge; they were found at Foxton, Histon and Burwell Fen (C. Fox, *Archaeology of the Cambridge Region*, plate v and W. Campbell Smith, *P.P.S.* xxix (1963), 139 ff.). A fourth axe of a similar type has been recently found in the Cambridge district (Fig. 1).

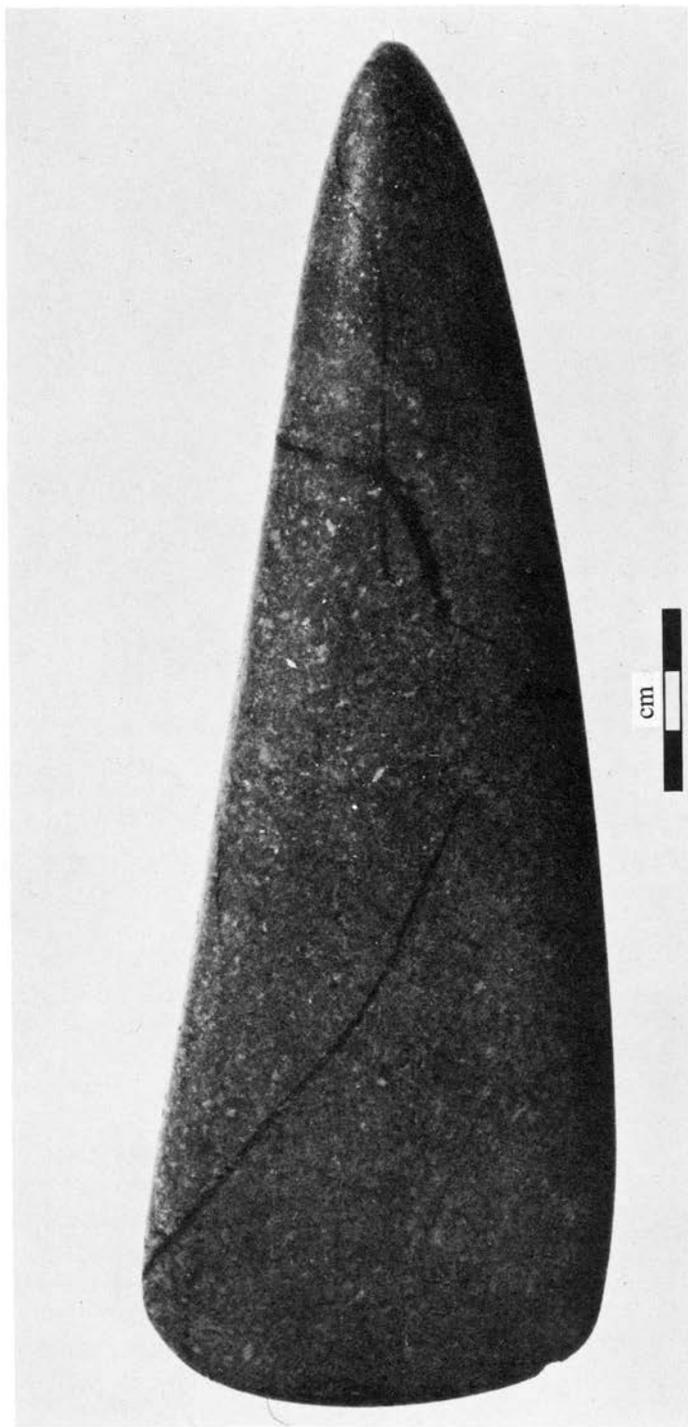


Plate I. Ceremonial 'greenstone' axe from Bottisham.

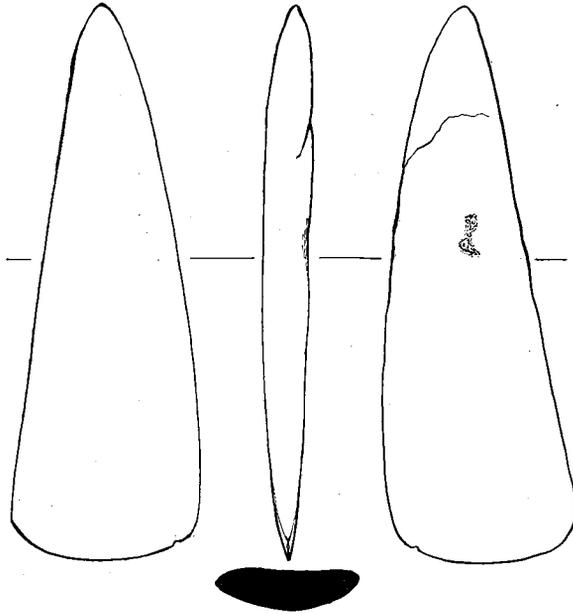


Fig. 1. Greenstone axe. Scale 1:3 (approx.).

The new axe is a dark, greeny-grey amphibolite, and as exquisitely finished as are the others (Plate I). It was found in a ploughed field, in Bottisham (TL 553612) by Mr G. Butler of Swaffham Bulbeck, in whose possession it remains. M.D.C.

SAXON HUMAN REMAINS FROM HORSEHEATH

The remains were few in number and apart from a complete atlas and a thoracic vertebra were fragmentary, and represented the following bones: skull; innominate bone; femora; tibiae; humeri; ulna; clavicle; scapula; ribs; a metatarsal bone and a cervical vertebra.

The skull was represented by five fragments of the parietal bones, all of which articulated, a nasal bone and the gonial portion of the left ramus of a mandible; and though these and the postcranial remains were fragmentary some sexual characters were present.

Sexual dimorphism in the human species is such that, in general, the surface contours in the male are rougher as contrasted with the more rounded ones of the female, and the structure is more massive. These differences can be attributed to

the thinner layer of subcutaneous fat in the male, and to his larger, stronger and more massive bony skeleton with a more extensively developed musculature. Even when the muscles are powerfully developed in the female, the thicker layer of subcutaneous adipose tissue still manages to confer smoother curves upon the female form. Comparatively, the limbs in the female are shorter, and body longer. The female arm tends to be cylindrical in section as contrasted with a flatter appearance in the male. In association with the relatively shorter femur and the greater deposition of fat the female thigh tends markedly to be conical, while that of the male is cylindrical.

Bearing in mind the sexual characters mentioned, other sexual characters such as the appearance of the greater sciatic notch of the innominate bone, the angle at the gonion of the mandible fragment, and measurements taken on the atlas and the glenoid fossa of the scapula, it would appear they balance more in favour of a male than a female.

A tentative age at death could be assessed from features of the bones. There were no signs of unfused epiphyses, suggesting that the individual represented by the remains was an adult. Though in disrepute as a method of ageing, from the amount of fusion of the cranial sutures some idea can be gathered of the age. The sagittal suture and part of the coronal suture could be observed, and from their appearance a possible age of between thirty and fifty years was estimated. A medium degree of osteo-arthritis had formed on a superior articular facet of a cervical vertebra, adding weight to the possibility that the individual was over thirty years of age at time of death.

The skeleton was found during the laying of a main pipeline across the land of Mr J. D. Webb of Streetly Hall, at TL 606477. The spot is just below the brow of the chalk hill occupied by the Horseheath Roman settlement at TL 609477 (*P.C.A.S.* XXXI (1931), 99-104), and so under 300 yards away from the site of numerous finds of Roman pottery, iron tools and buildings. It lies just south of the so-called Roman road, Wool Street (*P.C.A.S.* LVI/LVII, 1962/3, 42-60). The pipeline trench was being dug by a continuous-bucket trenching machine.

At the point where the find was made, the trench was 15 ft deep, and running through solid chalk. It was here reported by the men in charge of the digging, Messrs Boyle and Houlder, to cut through a wide shaft of dark clay, whose bottom was not reached by the base of the trench. The skeleton lay at a depth of 12 ft, roughly across the trench (i.e. East-West), and covered by a thick layer of rough flint lumps.

With the skeleton, which was probably a fully adult male, were found a few scattered beads, mostly of the blue glass, but one of amber, and two small-long brooches of bronze with (lost) iron pins (Fig. 2).

In view of the apparently rather curious circumstances of the burial (or disposal) of this skeleton, the find is here published in full, although the only actual witnesses of the stratigraphical evidence were the trenching team.

C.B.D.

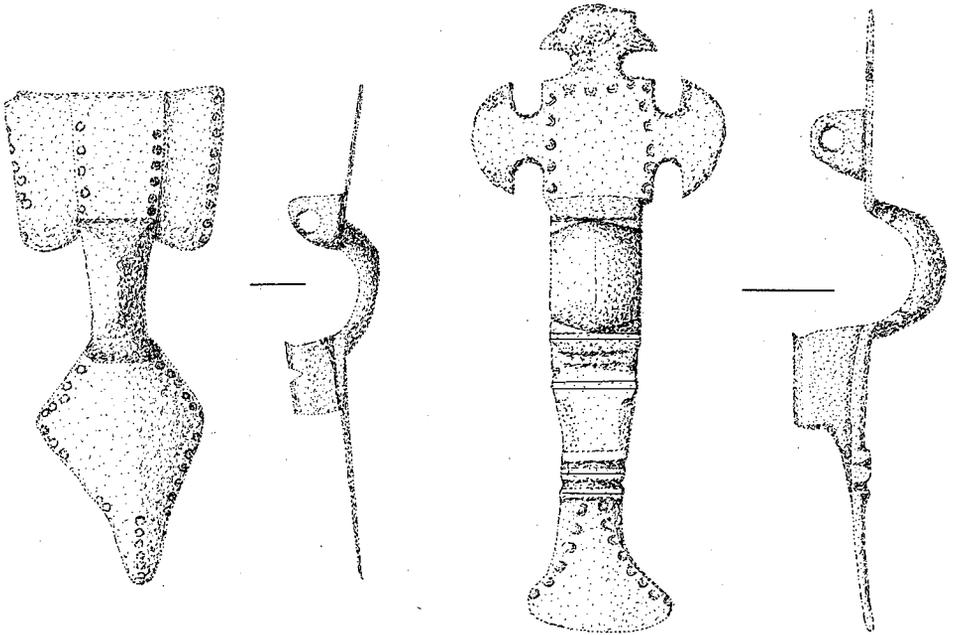


Fig. 2. Small-long brooches from skeleton. Scale 1:1 (approx.).

A SECTION ACROSS THE FLEAM DYKE

In October 1971 the Cambridge Water Board informed Miss Cra'ster of the University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology that they were cutting a pipe-trench through the Fleam Dyke at TL 542548, just to the east of the Pumping Station (Fig. 3). Miss Cra'ster drew a sketch-section of the ditch and, finding that the pipes had already been laid and the trenches partially filled in, asked the writer to cut a section across both bank and ditch. The work was done by members of the Cambridge Archaeological Field Club.

Fig. 4 shows that the pipe-trenches were put through an already existing interval in the bank and ditch of the dyke. It was decided to draw what remained of the section of the ditch in the pipe-trench and also to section the bank to the west, making a connecting cut between the two.

Fig. 5 is the result of the correlation of these two sections. I would suggest the following interpretation. The primary fill of the ditch, the bottom of which was hidden by a water-pipe, consisted of chalk nodules mixed with brown clay, suggesting that there was once a counterscarp bank on the south side of the ditch. Above the primary fill lay a thick deposit of silt, succeeded by a clean layer of angular chalk

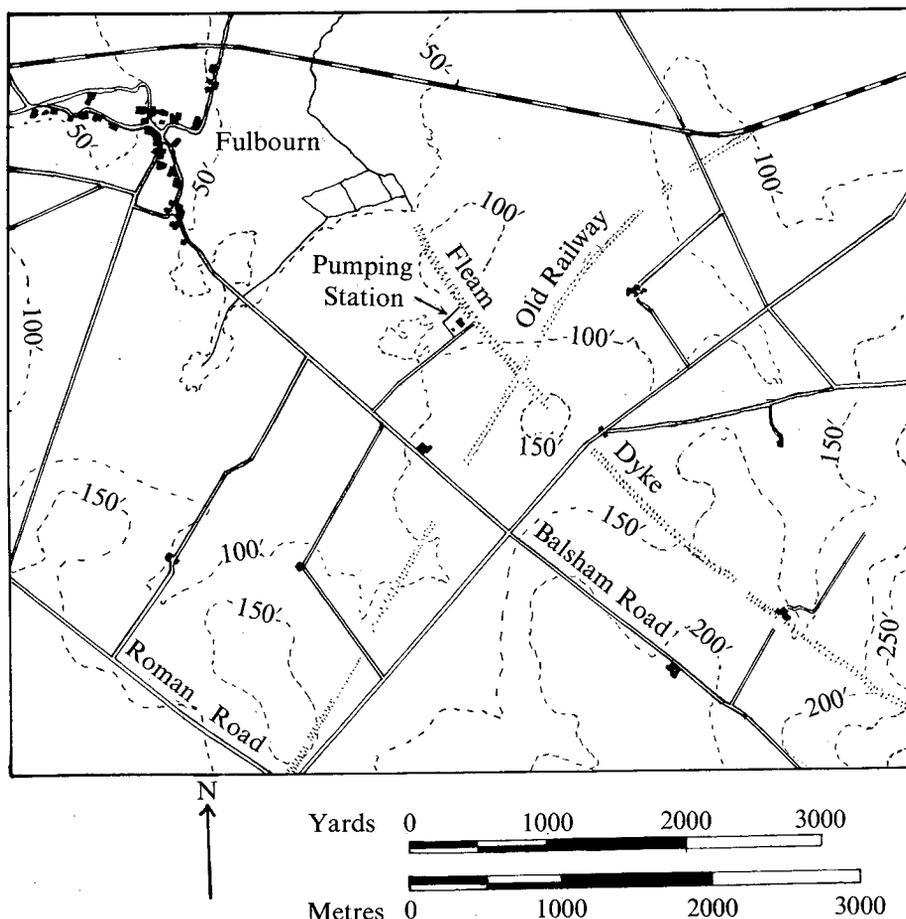


Fig. 3. The Fleam Dyke, Cambridgeshire.

lumps. This appears to have been dumped there, possibly recently, as the depth of the silty deposit indicates. The ditch sequence was sealed by the present silty topsoil. Under the bank the natural Middle Chalk displayed a well-marked erosion surface filled with clay and angular fragments of chalk. A clear soil horizon was obtained between this and the bank, the latter being made up of alternate layers of chalk rubble of varying sizes and brown clay. The small deposit of rubble may represent a marking-out line for the bank, and the manner in which the rubble deposits overlap at the middle of the bank seems to indicate that the material was made up into successive ramps from the direction of the ditch and then thrown over on to the north side of

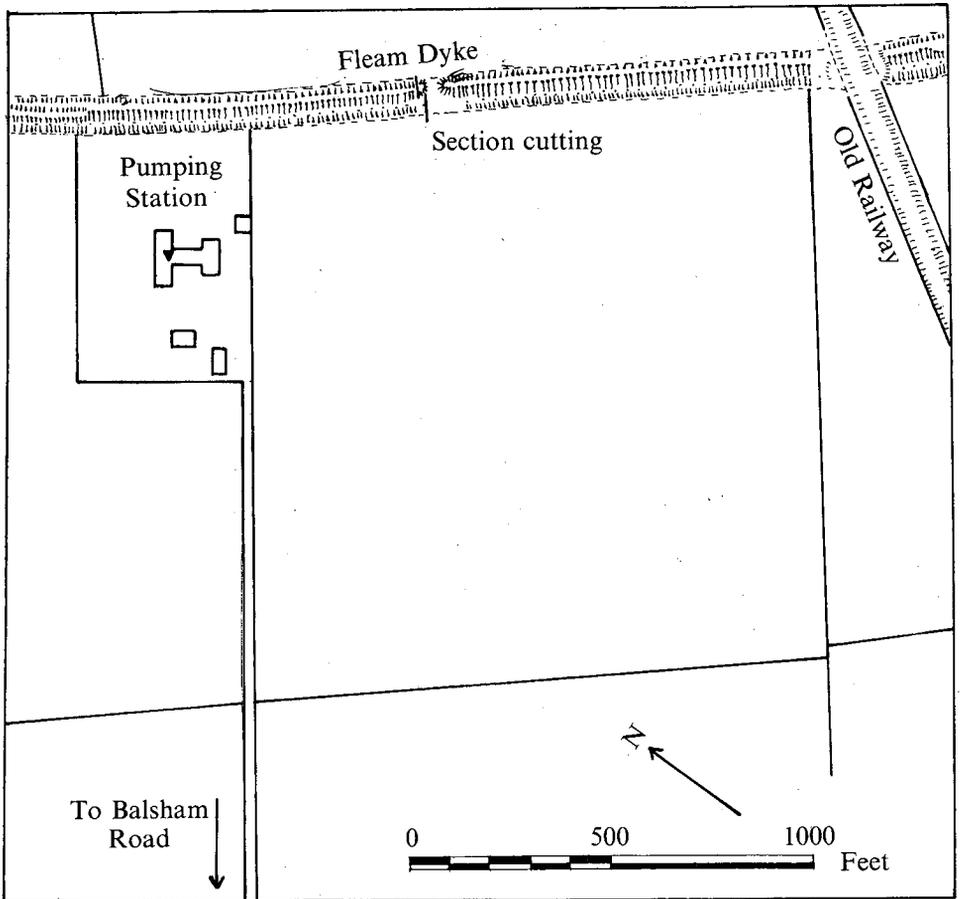


Fig. 4. Fleam Dyke pumping station: site of cutting.

the bank. The South face of the bank was disturbed at the section-line for some distance, hence the dotted line showing the postulated full bank profile; at this point the bank was widening towards the west.

No artefacts were found during the work.

I should like to thank the Cambridge Water Board for their co-operation and in particular Miss Cra'ster, Miss Jane Peirson-Jones and Mr David Browne for their help and advice.

M.S.

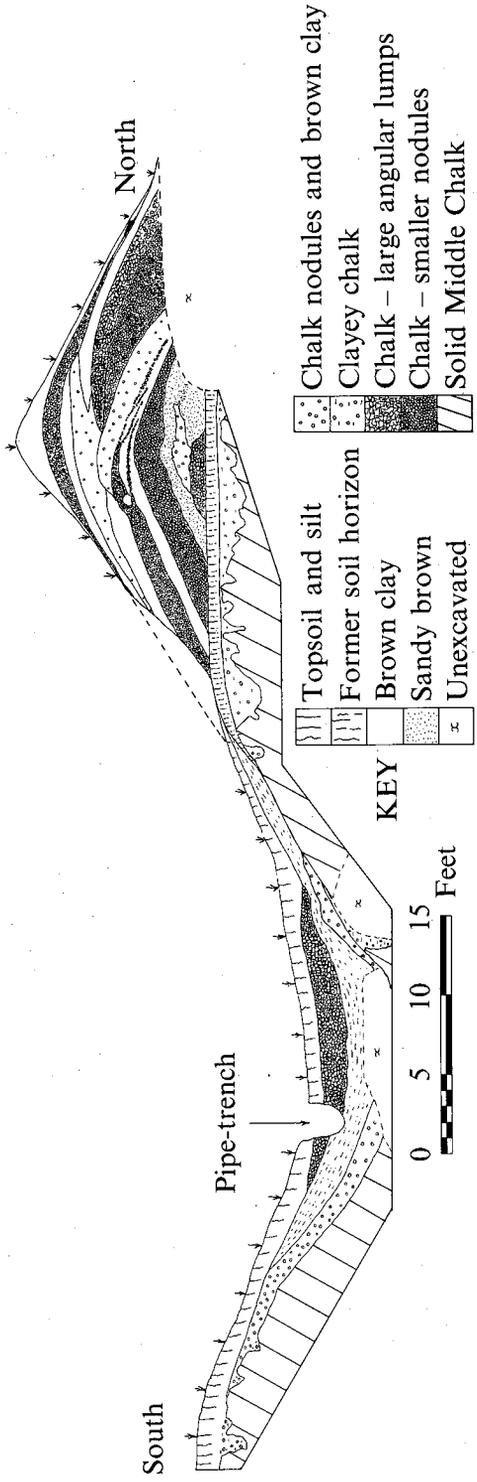


Fig. 5. Section across the Fleam Dyke, east of Pumping Station.

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<i>Index</i>	115