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**Rugby Town Reinforcement
An Archaeological Watching Brief 2002**

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Contents

1.0	Summary
2.0	Introduction
3.0	Site location
4.0	Archaeological background
5.0	Aims and methodology
6.0	Results
7.0	Discussion
8.0	Conclusions
9.0	Acknowledgements
10.0	References

Figures

1	Location of pipeline route (1:50,000)
2	Pipeline Route showing areas monitored by the watching brief
3	Field 1 showing cropmark complex and location of feature groups
4	Ditch sections. Section 1: ditches F100-F103; Section 2: ditches F104-5

Plates

1	Field 1: West facing section through ditches F101-F102 and north edge of ditch F103
2	Field 1: West facing section through ditch F100 and south edge of ditch F103
3	Field 1: East facing section through ditches F104 and F105

Rugby Town Reinforcement

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1.0: SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was maintained during groundworks along three sections of Severn Trent Limited's Rugby Town Reinforcement pipeline. Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) was commissioned to carry out this work by Severn Trent Water Limited. The fieldwork was carried out intermittently from February to May 2002. The watching brief followed an archaeological assessment of the pipeline route, which highlighted areas of particular archaeological importance. Two groups of undated intercutting ditches, previously located from aerial photographs were the only features identified during the watching brief.

2.0: INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the results of archaeological monitoring carried out during groundworks for a new pipeline as part of Severn Trent Limited's Rugby Town Reinforcement scheme (located from NGR SP 4964/7650 to SP 4757/7450, Fig. 1). Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) was commissioned to carry out this watching brief by Severn Trent Water Limited following recommendations made by an archaeological assessment of the pipeline route (Conway 2001). The watching brief was carried out intermittently from February to May 2002 in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by BUFAU (BUFAU 2001), and with the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999).

3.0: SITE LOCATION (Figs. 1-2)

The new pipeline is approximately 3.5km long and follows a slightly irregular course around the northwestern fringe of Rugby. The southwestern end of the pipeline joins an existing service adjacent to Bilton Lane, around 100m to the south of the disused LNWR Rugby-Leamington branch railway (NGR SP 4757/7450). From this point it is aligned approximately southwest-northeast, traversing through a mixture of farmland, the Rugby Portland Cement Works, public open spaces, and Severn Trent Water Limited's Low Level Sewage Works. The pipeline then runs between the sewage works and the River Avon and is connected to the existing water main at Newbold Road (NGR SP 4964/7650) at the northeastern terminus of the scheme.

4.0: ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND (Fig. 2)

The assessment (Conway 2001) suggested that archaeological remains may be encountered along parts of the pipeline route. The assessment recorded scatters of prehistoric flintwork in Fields 1 and 16 (Fig. 2) which may represent prehistoric activity or settlement within the vicinity. A group of conjoined cropmarked enclosures (Warwickshire SMR No. 3366) of probable later prehistoric/Romano-British date was recorded in Field 1. Cropmarked enclosures were also identified within Field 7 (SMR No. 4145), which may be of later prehistoric or Romano-British date (Figure 2). Historic sources show that Pipewell Abbey possessed a number of granges which may have had fish weirs along the Sow Brook, as well as along the River Avon. The assessment suggested that features relating to these weirs could possibly be located near the Sow Brook, between Fields 2 and 3.

5.0: AIMS AND METHODOLOGY (Figs. 2-3)

A watching brief was maintained along those sections of the route highlighted as being of archaeological potential by the assessment. The objective of the watching brief was to identify and record any archaeological features or deposits revealed during groundworks. The watching brief was maintained in two stages. Firstly, during topsoil stripping along the pipeline easement, to record any features exposed in plan by removal of the topsoil, and secondly, during excavation of the pipe trench, to record any features revealed in section. Machine excavation was carried out using a tracked 360 degree excavator.

Archaeological deposits, or possible archaeological deposits, were cleaned and tested by hand-excavation. Deposits were recorded using pro-forma context and feature record cards. These records, combined with section drawings and photographs form the site archive, currently stored at BUFAU.

No archaeological monitoring was undertaken at Bilton Lane, since this final length of the pipeline was re-aligned within the existing road, and not within Field 7 (Fig. 2) as was originally intended.

6.0: RESULTS

The results of the watching brief are discussed using the field numbers employed in the archaeological assessment.

6.1: Field 1 (Rugby Cement)

The pipe trench was aligned along the northern and western boundaries of Field 1 (Fig. 2) and varied between 1.4-1.6m in depth.

Observation along the line of the pipe trench along the northern field boundary showed that much of the surrounding area had been subject to extensive modern disturbance. The instability of the deposits encountered in this zone meant that it was not possible to enter the trench to record the stratigraphic sequence in detail. The earliest deposit encountered was an orange gravelly sand (1006), the subsoil, recorded at approximately 1m below the modern ground surface. Above was a very mixed layer (1010), including modern debris, probably recent landfill, sealed by topsoil (1000).

The pipeline trench along the western field boundary was approximately 1.40m deep. This section of the trench was monitored in order to intercept two cropmarked ditches. The earliest deposit encountered in this length of the pipeline was an orange gravelly sand (1006), the subsoil, recorded at a depth of 0.50m below the modern ground surface. The subsoil was sealed by layer of light grey brown sandy silt (1001) which was approximately 0.30m thick and occurred at 0.20m below the modern ground surface.

The first ditch group, comprising four ditches (F100-F103, Fig. 4, Section 1, Plates 1-2) was recorded approximately 65m metres to the south of the northwestern corner of Field 1 (Fig. 3). The ditches were cut through layer 1001 and into the underlying subsoil, and were all aligned northeast-southwest. The earliest of these ditches was feature F103. Its profile was unclear because of later truncation, but the feature measured a minimum of 2.1m in width and 0.75m in depth. The ditch was backfilled with a light orange-brown very gravelly silt-sand (1005). The second ditch in the sequence (F102) was dug through the northern side of ditch F103. Ditch F102 was cut to a stepped profile, and was 1.10m wide and 0.6m deep. It was irregularly-shaped in profile, with one or more post-holes in its base, which may suggest that it formed a palisade. This ditch was backfilled with light orange-brown gravelly-silty-sand (1004). The third ditch in the sequence (F101) was cut through the southern edge of feature F102 and into the backfills of ditch F103. Ditch F101 measured a maximum of 0.90m wide and is 0.25m deep, and was filled by a mid-brown sandy silt (1003) which contained frequent small pebbles and occasional charcoal flecks. The final ditch in the sequence (F100) was cut through backfilled feature F101 and into the fills of ditch F103. Ditch F100 was 2.5m wide and 0.60m deep and had a slightly stepped profile on its northern side (Fig. 4, Plates 1-2), which suggests re-cutting. The ditch was backfilled with a mid-dark grey-brown sandy silt (1002) which contained frequent stones. This context contained two small, highly abraded and undated fragments of brick. The ditch was sealed by the topsoil (1000).

A second group of intercutting ditches (F104-5, Fig. 4 Section 2, Plate 3) were exposed approximately 25m to the south of the first ditch group (Figure 3). Ditches F104-5 were cut through layer 1001, and into the subsoil (1006). F104 is the earliest of the two ditches. It had a flattened V-shaped profile, measuring 2.7m wide and 0.78m in depth, with traces of a cleaning-slot in its base. The lower fill of this ditch was a gravelly light grey-brown silty-sand (1008), sealed by a gravelly mid-grey-brown sandy-silt (1007), flecked with charcoal. A single probable medieval roof tile fragment, possibly intrusive, was recovered from layer 1007. The southern side of ditch F104 was cut by ditch F105, which was 3m wide and 0.4m deep, with a flat base. It was backfilled with gravelly mid-

orange-brown silty-sand (1009). Ditches F104-5 and the subsoil were sealed by the topsoil (1000).

6.2: Field 3

The pipe trench in this field was excavated to a depth of 1.40m. The earliest deposit that was encountered in this field was a yellow-orange gravelly sand (3002) the natural subsoil, encountered at a depth of 0.45m below the modern ground surface. This layer was sealed by a layer of a light orange-brown sandy-silt (3001) with some clay, recorded at a depth of 0.25m below the modern surface. Above was the topsoil (3000), which also included fragments of building rubble. No archaeological features or deposits were found in this field. The area immediately adjoining the Sow Brook was not monitored because the pipeline here was cut by direct drill, and no observation was therefore possible.

5.3: Field 16

The observed section of the pipe trench was excavated to a depth of 1.40m. The earliest deposit encountered in this area was a light brown clay (1602), encountered at a depth of 0.80m below the modern ground surface. It was overlain by a layer of light orange-brown clay (1601) measuring 0.35m thick. These two clay layers (1601 and 1602) seem to represent the natural drift geology in this area. Layer 1601 was sealed by a deposit of mid grey-brown clayey-silt (1603), measuring 0.15m thick. This layer was sealed by the topsoil (1600), which was cut by a number of field drains. Only the groundworks in the northern part of this field could be monitored. No archaeological features or deposits were found.

5.4: Flint by Lynne Bevan

Four items of humanly-worked flint were recovered, comprising an exhausted flake core of probably Late Neolithic to Early-Middle Bronze Age date (3000), and three rough chunks (1001x1, 1600x2). Although the core attests to flint knapping in the vicinity of the site during later prehistory, it cannot be related to the other rough chunks which might date to the Late Bronze Age. Two of the chunks (1600) are considerably more abraded than the other two items, which might have resulted from post-depositional factors.

7.0: DISCUSSION

Two groups of archaeological features were identified within the western edge of Field 1. The two feature groups (northern group, F100-F103; southern group, F104 and F105) coincide with the known cropmarked enclosures. These cropmark enclosures have been ascribed a prehistoric or Romano-British date on the basis of their morphology. No datable artifacts were recovered during the watching brief, with the exception of the fragment of medieval roof tile from feature F104, which was probably intrusive.

Both the feature groups comprise intercutting ditches, representing the re-definition of lengths of the cropmarked enclosure ditches. It is unfortunate that the chronology and time-span of their use is not known. The size and profile of the ditches in both groups of features varies quite substantially. The earliest feature in the northern group (F103) is a very wide and deep ditch, which is replaced by a much narrower, steeper-sided, ditch (F102), possibly containing a palisade. Feature F102 was then replaced by shallow ditch or gully with gently-sloping sides (F101), and the final ditch in the sequence (F100) is wider and deeper than its predecessor. The two ditches in the southern group also differ in morphology. The earliest ditch (F104) was fairly wide, with a stepped profile on the northern side. This feature was truncated by ditch F105, a very wide and comparatively shallow ditch with gently sloping sides and a wide, flat base.

No archaeological features were located in the pipe trench within Fields 3 or 16.

8.0: CONCLUSION

Archaeological monitoring during construction of this pipeline has produced varied results, the only features being identified within Field 1. No archaeological remains were located in Fields 3 or 16. The flint scatter recorded during earlier investigations within the latter field must presumably relate to ploughed-out features elsewhere in that field.

The ditches found in the pipe trench along the western edge of Field 1 confirm that the cropmarked ditches have survived here, and that the remains are quite complex, including ditch re-cuts. Unfortunately, no *in situ* datable finds were recovered. It may be assumed that the ditches are later prehistoric or Romano-British in date, in which case the medieval roof tile fragment must be intrusive.

9.0: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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10.0: REFERENCES

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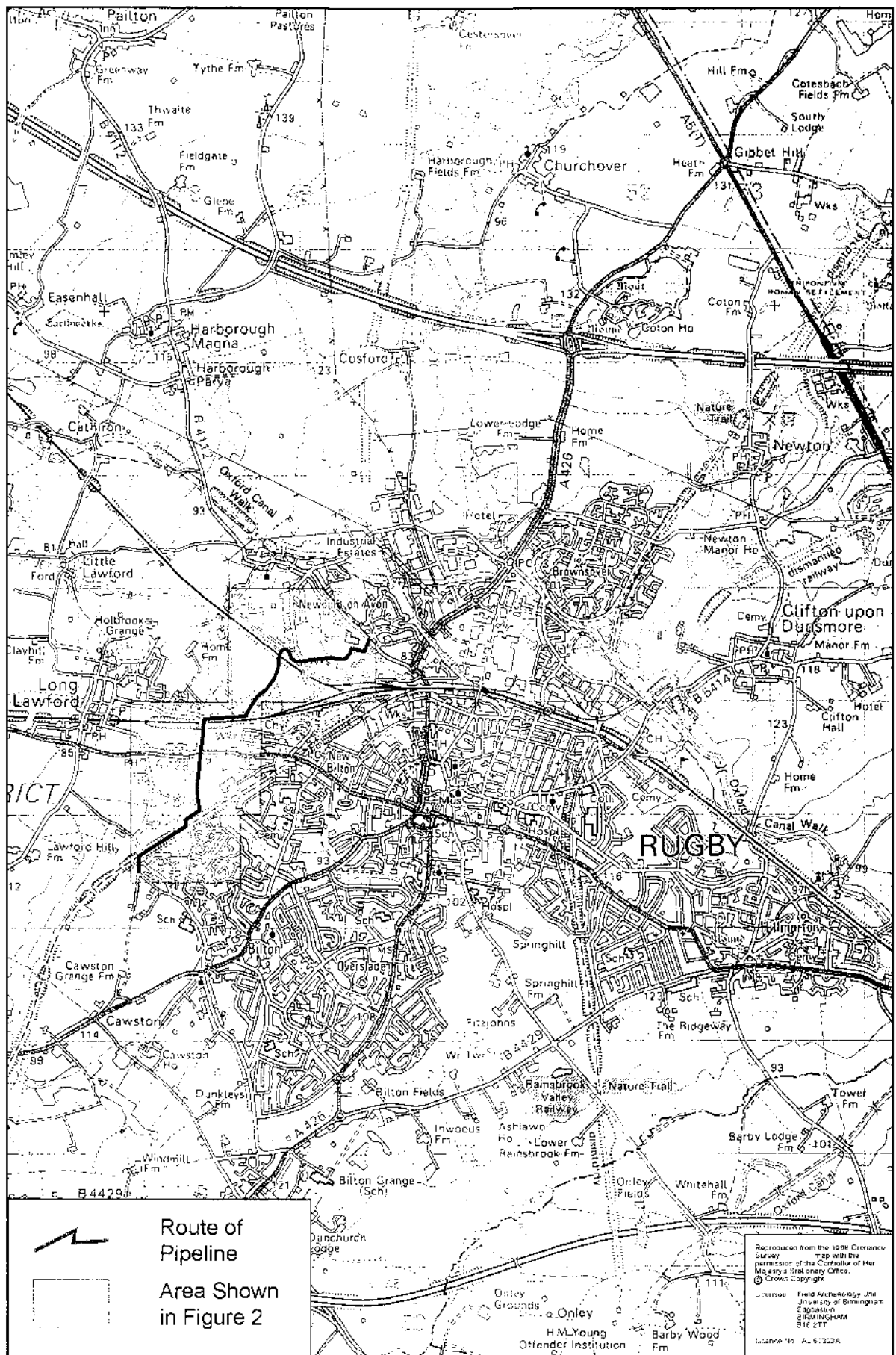


Figure 1

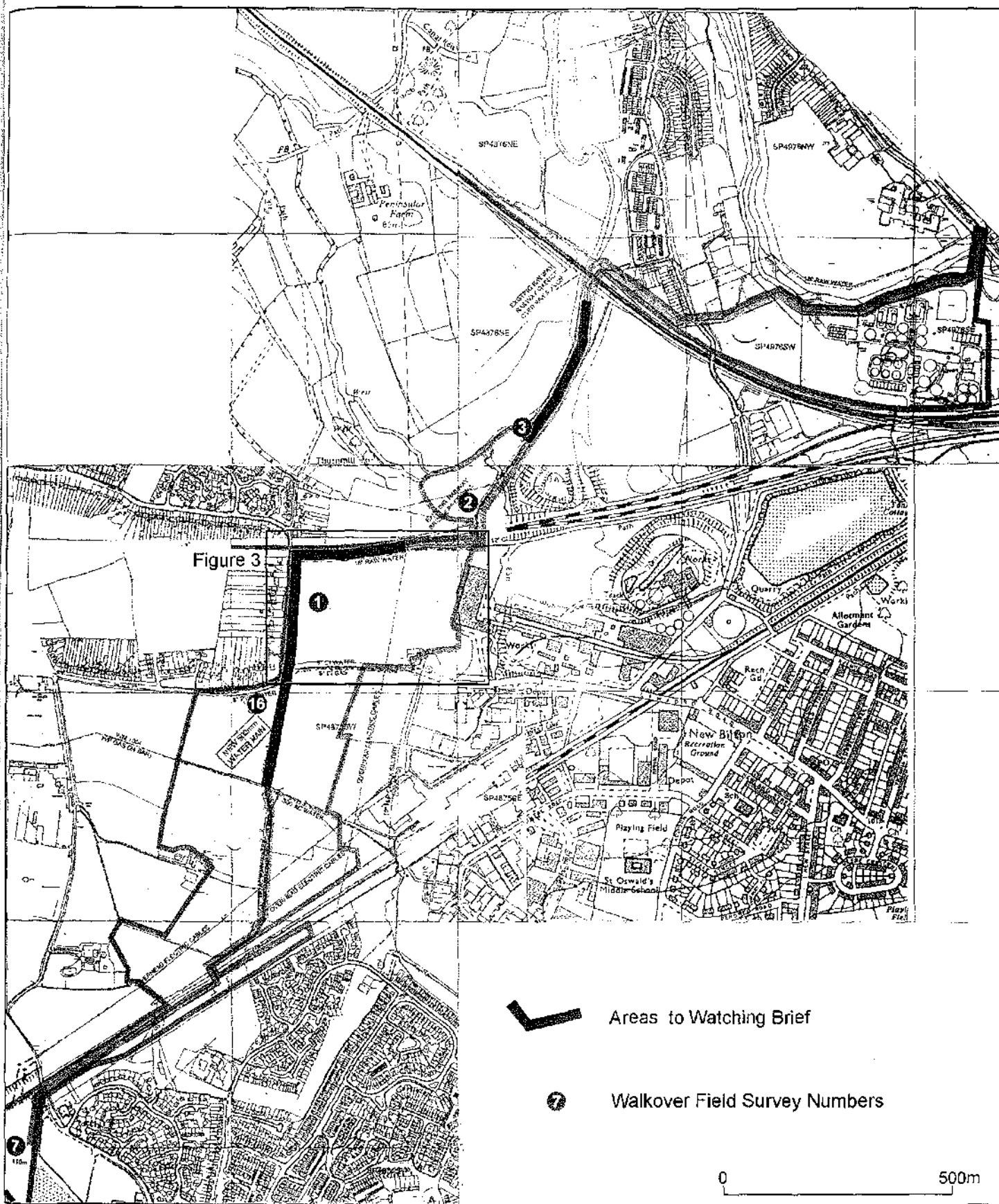


Figure 2

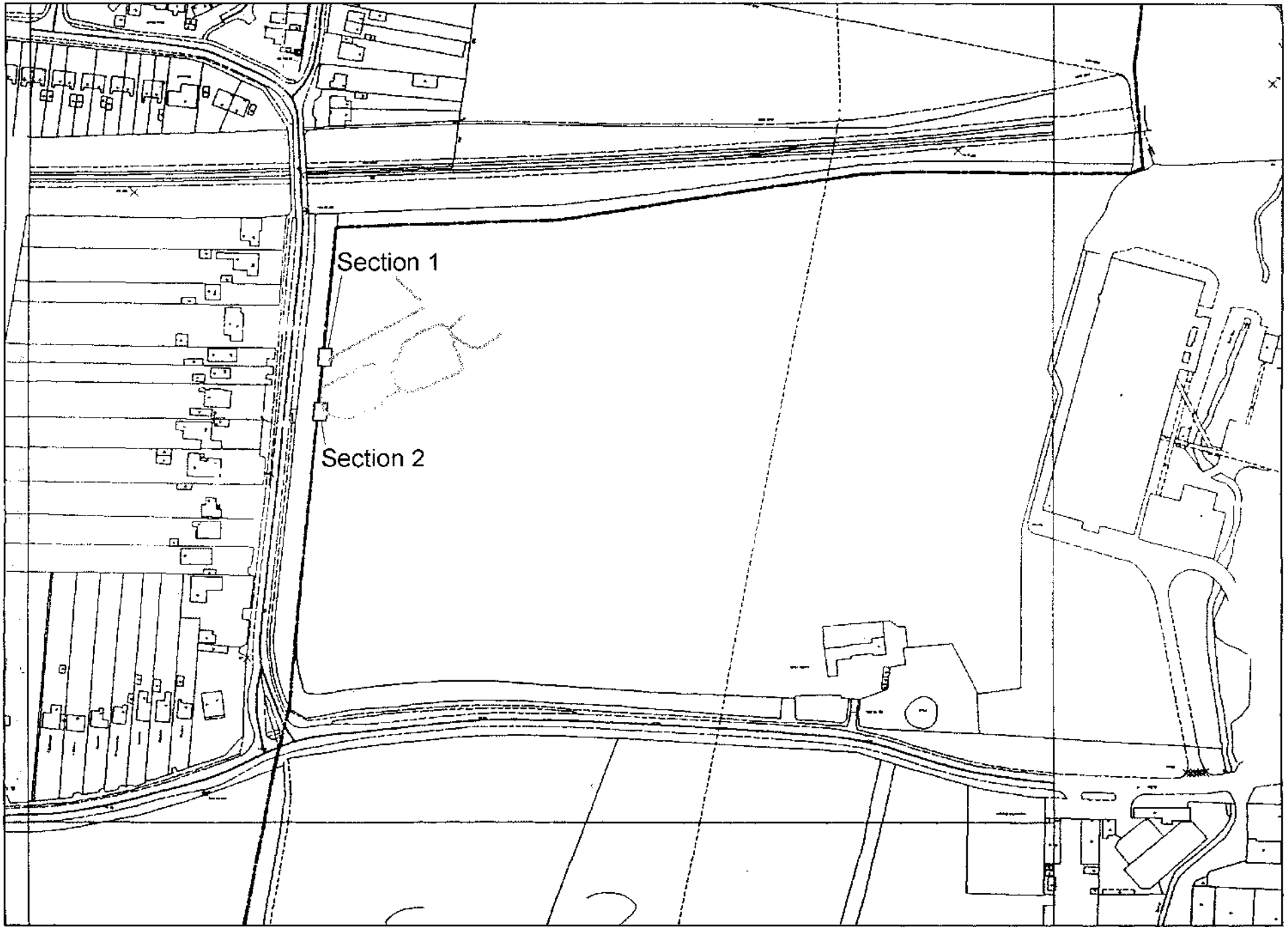


Figure 3

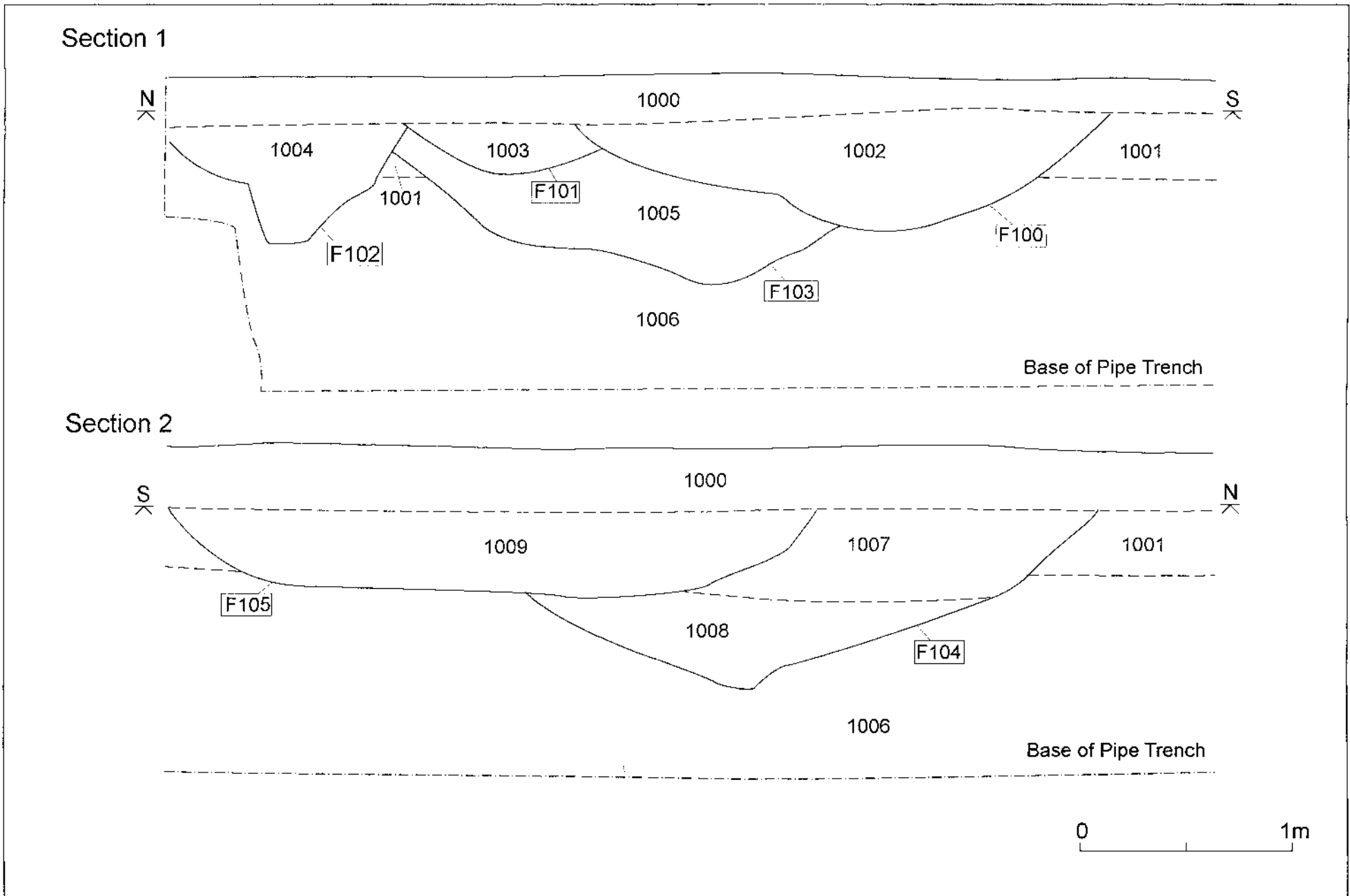


Figure 4



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3