

**Rugby Town  
Reinforcement:  
Archaeological  
Assessment**

**2001**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
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**Rugby Town Reinforcement:  
Archaeological Assessment**

by  
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# **Rugby Town Reinforcement, Warwickshire: Archaeological Assessment 2001**

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## **Rugby Town Reinforcement: Archaeological Assessment 2001**

### **1.0: SUMMARY**

A desk-based assessment was carried out in November 2001 by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit along the route of a new water pipeline to be constructed as part of the Severn Trent Water Limited Rugby Town Reinforcement programme. This assessment forms the first part of a staged archaeological response to the pipeline. The objective of this assessment was to identify any archaeological or historic sites which could be affected by the construction of the pipeline, so that appropriate archaeological mitigation strategies could be developed and implemented. The assessment identified several areas along the route which contain archaeological sites, including two prehistoric/ Romano-British cropmarked enclosures, and several fields with extensive medieval ridge and furrow earthenworks and a scatter of flint artifacts was recovered from one ploughed field. It is proposed that an archaeological watching brief be maintained along certain sections of the pipeline, with provision for archaeological recording of any features or deposits of interest.

### **2.0: INTRODUCTION**

This report outlines the results of an archaeological assessment of the corridor affected by the laying of a new water pipeline by Severn Trent Limited as part of the Rugby Town Reinforcement Scheme. The assessment was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) in November 2001, on behalf of Severn Trent Water Limited. This report forms an archaeological assessment of the land immediately affected by the course of the pipeline and its immediate environs, and forms the first part of a staged archaeological response to the works. The aim of the assessment is to provide a summary of the known archaeological information relating to the pipeline corridor and to assess the potential for the identification of other archaeological remains in this area, to enable appropriate archaeological mitigation strategies to be devised and implemented. The area of the pipeline easement will be approximately 10m in width. For the purposes of this assessment the study area measured 100m in width, centred on the pipeline. Additionally, sites presently recorded outside the study area were also included, where the possibility existed that they could have formerly extended within the study area. The walkover survey examined the pipeline easement, and its immediate surrounds. The report follows the methodology laid out in a written scheme of investigation (BUFAU 2001) and adheres to the guidelines set down in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* produced by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 1999).

### **3.0: LOCATION**

The new pipeline is approximately 3.5km long and will follow a slightly irregular course skirting around the northwestern fringe of the built-up area of Rugby (Figures 1 and 2).

The southwestern end of the pipeline is to branch off from 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 will then follow an approximately southwest-northeast orientated course through a mixture of farmland, land belonging to the Rugby Portland Cement Works, and 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, will be connected to the existing water main at Newbold Road (NGR SP 4964/7650) at the northeastern terminus of the scheme.

#### **4.0: OBJECTIVES**

This assessment has two main aims:

- 1) To identify and describe archaeological sites or historic landscape features located within, or immediately adjoining the study area.
- 2) To recommend an appropriate archaeological mitigation strategy to be adopted during the construction of the pipeline.

#### **5.0: SOURCES**

A number of sources were consulted during the course of this assessment:

- The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) maintained by Warwickshire County Council.
- Aerial photographs held by the Warwickshire SMR.
- Tithe and estate maps held by the Warwickshire County Record Office (Warwickshire CRO).
- Secondary archaeological and historical sources held by Warwickshire CRO and the University of Birmingham Library.

A walkover survey of the pipeline route was conducted to identify above-ground earthworks of archaeological, or possible archaeological interest, and to locate any ploughsoil scatters of artifacts visible in ploughed fields.

Consultation of aerial photographs held by the National Library of Aerial Photographs (Swindon) was outside the scope of this assessment.

#### **6.0: THE PIPELINE ROUTE**

##### **6.1: Topography and geology**

The proposed pipeline runs through gently undulating land bisected by two valleys. The study area reaches up to 110m AOD at Bilton Lane (NGR SP 4757/7450) at the southwestern end of the scheme. The major valley is that of the River Avon, which meanders through the study area approximately from east to west, and is joined by the

low valley of the Sow Brook. The Sow Brook flows northward and will be crossed by the pipeline near the point at which it flows into the River Avon near Thurnmill Spinney.

The underlying drift geology of the pipeline route is varied. The section of the pipeline towards its southwestern end lies wholly on stoneless clays and silts. The geology of the remainder of the pipeline route is more mixed, since it cuts through the River Avon valley, and the associated gravel terraces and alluvial deposits.

## **6.2: Archaeological and historical background**

Evidence for prehistoric settlement in the Rugby area is fairly patchy and poorly understood, as it is across Warwickshire as a whole (Hingley 1996, 21). There is some limited evidence of later prehistoric activity near the pipeline route. A Neolithic stone axe was found in the nearby parish of Kings Newnham (Hingley 1996, 9). Bronze Age activity is also documented. A dirk was found around one kilometre from the pipeline route at New Bilton, and a possible round barrow is visible as a cropmarked feature at Kings Newnham. A later Bronze Age cremation cemetery has been partially excavated at Ryton on Dunsmore (Hingley 1996, 9-12). Iron Age activity in the area has been inferred from cropmarked enclosures and boundaries, for example at Dunsmore Heath, but the remains of this period are in general poorly dated and understood.

Two major Roman roads run near to the pipeline route, Watling Street lies c.5km to the east and the Fosse Way lies c.6 km to the west. Very little definite evidence exists, however, of any Roman settlement activity between these two roads (Booth 1996, 26-7).

Warwickshire possesses numerous Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, two of which - Cave's Inn, Churchover and Clifton upon Dunsmore - are relatively close (around 5 km away) to the pipeline course (Ford 1996, figure 1). The presence of two cemeteries in this area implies that the area was settled in the Anglo-Saxon period, although archaeological evidence for settlement sites of this period across the entire county is almost entirely lacking.

Medieval activity and settlement in the vicinity of the pipeline route is reasonably well documented. The pipeline crosses parts of two medieval parishes. The northeastern portion of the pipeline from the Sow Brook onwards lies in the parish of Bilton and the remainder lies in the parish of Newbold on Avon. The Sow Brook formed the boundary between the two parishes in the medieval period. The parish of Bilton was centred on the village of Bilton, which lies around 2 km to the south of the pipeline route (Figures 1 and 2). Bilton was recorded as a manor in the Domesday Book (VCH 1951, 31). Bilton village, like the majority of villages in the Avon Valley in Warwickshire, seems to have been set in an open field system (Dyer 1996). The medieval parish of Newbold on Avon was slightly different, being composed of an agglomeration of five hamlets and their associated lands. The pipeline route also runs through land which belonged to the hamlet of Long Lawford (VCH 1951, 187). Long Lawford existed as a manor by the Norman Conquest, and is recorded in the Domesday Book (VCH 1951, 187). Long Lawford village lies about 1km to the northwest of the pipeline route, and in the medieval period was centred on the crossroads which still lies at the heart of the present village (Figures 1

and 2). The pipeline route seems to run through areas that were the agricultural hinterlands of Bilton and Long Lawford.

Pipewell Abbey was an important landowner in both parishes from the mid-twelfth century onwards, when the abbey consolidated its holdings from gifts of lands in these parishes, by the early thirteenth century holding granges at Bilton, Long Lawford and Thurnmill (VCH 1951, 31, 187). The location of the Abbey's grange at Long Lawford is unclear but it may be the farm called Holbrook Grange shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map (Figure 2). The Abbey also possessed extensive grazing rights on Long Lawford Moor. In addition to a grange, the Abbey also had a corn mill and a fulling mill at Thurnmill. Thurnmill lies by the River Avon near the Sow Brook just outside of the study area (Figures 2 and 3). Bilton Grange lies around four km to the south of the Study Area. The abbey also held fishing rights in the River Avon and, perhaps, the Sow Brook (VCH 1951, 31, 187).

The land along the pipeline route served as arable and pasture farmland throughout the majority of the post-medieval period, and seems to have been subject to a piecemeal process of enclosure from the later seventeenth century onwards. The land belonging to Bilton parish was enclosed by private agreement in 1656 (VCH 1951, 31). The process by which the land belonging to Long Lawford was enclosed is less clear. A survey and valuation of lands in Warwickshire and Leicestershire belonging to Trinity College, Cambridge dated 1793 (Warwickshire CRO CR 2026/26) states that the land had been enclosed c.1663, but further details are lacking.

The largely agricultural character of the landscape around the pipeline route persisted until the middle of the nineteenth century. Three railway lines were constructed in the Rugby area by the London and North West Railway company (LNWR). The first line to be built was the Rugby and Birmingham line, completed 1838, followed by the Trent Valley line, completed 1847 (Figure 2). The last line to be built was the Rugby-Leamington branch line which opened in 1851 (Figure 2).

The presence of railway lines soon led to the development of large-scale industries in this area, most notably the Rugby Portland Cement Works (Figure 2). The cement works was founded in 1865 by G.H. Walker but only became successful after it was taken over by C. Hall in 1871 (Timmins 1990, 136). The current Rugby Portland Cement Works occupies the original site of the works. The cement works has greatly expanded over the last century and this has entailed large-scale quarrying of areas adjacent to the works itself (Figures 2 and 3).

The late nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw considerable expansion in the extent of the built-up area of Rugby, with the construction of housing estates and industrial estates on the former fringes of the town (Figures 2 and 3). The expansion of Rugby has led to the infilling of many of the areas between the town and formerly separate villages, this has led to the villages of Bilton and Newbold on Avon becoming suburbs of Rugby in the twentieth century.

### **6.3: Present character**

The character of the land along the pipeline route is very mixed. The present land-use along the pipeline is described below, using the field numbers shown on Figure 4.

Field 1 is owned by the Rugby Portland Cement Works. The area was formerly agricultural fields, but now serves partly as a compound for plant and portacabins. The topsoil has been stripped off the majority of this area to a depth of c.0.5 m, exposing the underlying sandy gravels. The spoil created by the stripping has been piled into a series of bunds along the northern, southern and western edges of the area; the bunds vary in width from 20 to 50m.

Fields 2, 3, 5 and 7-15 are fields currently under pasture. Fields 2 and 3 lie next to the River Avon, and the boundary between Fields 2 and 3 is formed by the Sow Brook.

Field 4 is an open area containing areas of overgrown building rubble, and a grassy public open space.

Field 6 comprises the area now occupied by the Severn Trent Water Limited Low Level Sewage Works.

Field 18 is the disused Rugby-Leamington branch line, this now serves as a public footpath and is quite densely wooded in places.

Fields 16 and 17 are arable fields lying adjacent to Lawford Road. Field 16 had recently been ploughed.

Field 19 is a small, overgrown wooded area adjacent to the Avon Valley High School.

The pipeline will pass underneath an existing railway bridge between Fields 1 and 2 and underneath the railway viaduct between Fields 3 and 4 (Figure 4).

## **7.0: RESULTS**

### **7.1: Previously known sites (Figure 3)**

A search of the Warwickshire SMR identified six sites within the study area, but not presently recorded within the pipeline easement:

#### **SMR No. 4145**

Undated sub-rectangular cropmarked enclosures, which extend across several fields. Part of the cropmarked site has already been destroyed by new housing along Bilton Lane. As the extent of this site is not fully defined, and it is possible that the complex or any associated features, such as field systems, may continue into the pipeline route.



SMR No. 7977

Mesolithic flintwork located in topsoil of field.

Medieval field boundary and ridge and furrow – now destroyed by topsoil stripping across area.

SMR No. 7581

Railway bridge, constructed between 1833 and 1833, which carries Townsend Lane over Rugby Birmingham railway line.

SMR No. 7568

Railway bridge, constructed c.1850, which carries Bilton Lane over Rugby-Leamington railway line. Three arched bridge in purple brickwork.

SMR No. 6832

Quarry, disused, of Rugby Portland Cement Works. Probably in use c. 1900

SMR No. 8866

Second World War gun emplacement. Circular concrete holdfort sited on the hill, site also includes a square predictor emplacement and a semi-sunk shelter. The emplacement is the best preserved of eight Bofors sites and eleven Lewis gun sites built in a ring to defend the nearby vulnerable rail junction.

A search of the Warwickshire SMR identified four sites which may extend within the pipeline route:

SMR No. 3366

Undated cropmarked enclosure complex. The enclosures have been attributed a later prehistoric or Romano-British date on the basis of their morphology. This site could have associated field systems, although none are currently recorded.

SMR No. 7426

Disused railway line. Former LNWR line linking Leamington to Rugby, constructed between 1846 and 1851.

SMR No. 7580

Railway Bridge, constructed between 1833 and 1838. Bridge under Rugby-Birmingham railway line, single arched bridge in purple brick.

SMR No. 7577

Railway viaduct, constructed between 1845 and 1847. The viaduct carries the Trent Valley Line across the River Avon.

## **7.2: Documentary research**

Research on documents held by Warwickshire CRO failed to yield any additional data. It must be stated, however, that the availability of historic maps and documents for this area

is extremely limited. No historic mapping was available for the Long Lawford part of Newbold on Avon parish. For the remainder of the pipeline route lying in Bilton parish only a tithe map was available (Warwickshire CRO).

### **7.3: Walkover survey**

A walkover survey of the pipeline route was carried out in November 2001. Enclosure record forms were filled out for each area included in the walkover survey. The majority of the areas surveyed yielded no further archaeological information (Figure 4). Fields 1 and 7 contain the cropmarked sites listed on Warwickshire SMR (Nos. 3366 and 4145). No trace of either of these sites was visible above-ground when the walkover survey was carried out. Field 7 was under pasture (Plate 2). It is possible that the enclosure complex (SMR No. 3366) near the western edge of Field 1 may lay underneath the bunds which have been accumulated in this area (Plate 1). The areas which currently lie underneath the bunds have not been subject to stripping, unlike the remainder of the area (Plate 1). It is also possible that the stripping which has already occurred in this area may have disturbed part of the enclosure complex.

Fields 8-10, 12, 14 and 15 contain extensive above-ground ridge and furrow earthworks. Fields 9, 10, 12 and 14 contain the best preserved ridge and furrow (Figure 4). In addition, Field 12 contains earthworks which may possibly represent house platforms, located outside the pipeline route. A pond, visible as a water filled earthwork, lies at the southwestern boundary of Field 9 (Plate 3). The date of this feature is unclear; it is possible that it is medieval or post-medieval in date.

Field 16 was the only arable land encountered during the walkover survey. Artifacts visible within the recently ploughed surface were collected along the pipeline route within this field (Figure 4 and Plate 4). This collection yielded three struck flints of probable later prehistoric date, one of which had been retouched (Lynne Bevan, pers comm). Several undatable fragments of brick and tile were recorded. Four sherds of post medieval pottery were recorded; one sherd of china, two sherds of seventeenth-nineteenth century black glazed pottery, and one sherd of Cistercian Ware dated to the sixteenth century (Lynne Bevan, pers comm). The later finds may derive from manuring.

## **8.0: DISCUSSION**

Archaeological remains of several periods exist along the pipeline route.

Scatters of prehistoric flintwork are recorded in Fields 1 and 16. These scatters may represent prehistoric activity or settlement within the vicinity.

A cropmarked enclosure complex of probable later prehistoric/Romano-British date has been located in Field 1 (SMR No. 3366), and further cropmarked enclosures of the same period may also exist in Field 7 (SMR No. 4145). The enclosures in Field 1 are not visible as above-ground earthworks.

Medieval ridge and furrow exists in several fields along the pipeline route (Figure 4). Ridge and furrow is an important feature of relict medieval landscapes in England, and has also been severely diminished since the Second World War by intensive farming and development. Primary and secondary sources show that Pipewell Abbey was an important landowner in this area during the medieval period (outlined above, see Section 5.2). It is possible that the granges of Pipewell Abbey utilised fish weirs along the Sow Brook as well as along the River Avon. The possibility of encountering such features where the pipeline route crosses the Sow Brook must be borne in mind.

The pipeline route includes a number of railway features.

It is possible that further archaeological features may exist within the study area or along the pipeline route. Large areas of permanent pasture exist along the pipeline route, which may have prevented that identification of buried archaeological features from aerial photographs.

## **9.0: IMPLICATIONS**

It is recommended that an archaeological watching brief be maintained along certain lengths of the pipeline route, during its construction, to identify and record archaeological features revealed during construction. The watching brief should be maintained in those locations: (1) during the initial topsoil removal, to record any features exposed, and (2) during excavation of the pipe trench, to record archaeological features and deposits exposed in section.

An archaeological watching brief is recommended in the following locations:

Field 1: cropmarked enclosures and surrounding area, which may contain associated features, such as field systems.

Field 7: cropmarked enclosures and surrounding area, which may contain associated features, such as field systems.

Fields 2-3, Sow Brook and surrounds, possible location of fish weirs adjacent to Brook.

Field 16, location of ploughsoil flint scatters, to identify any features associated with the ploughsoil finds.

Following completion of the watching brief an illustrated report would be compiled detailing the findings, and appropriate brief reports would be prepared for period journals.

## **10.0: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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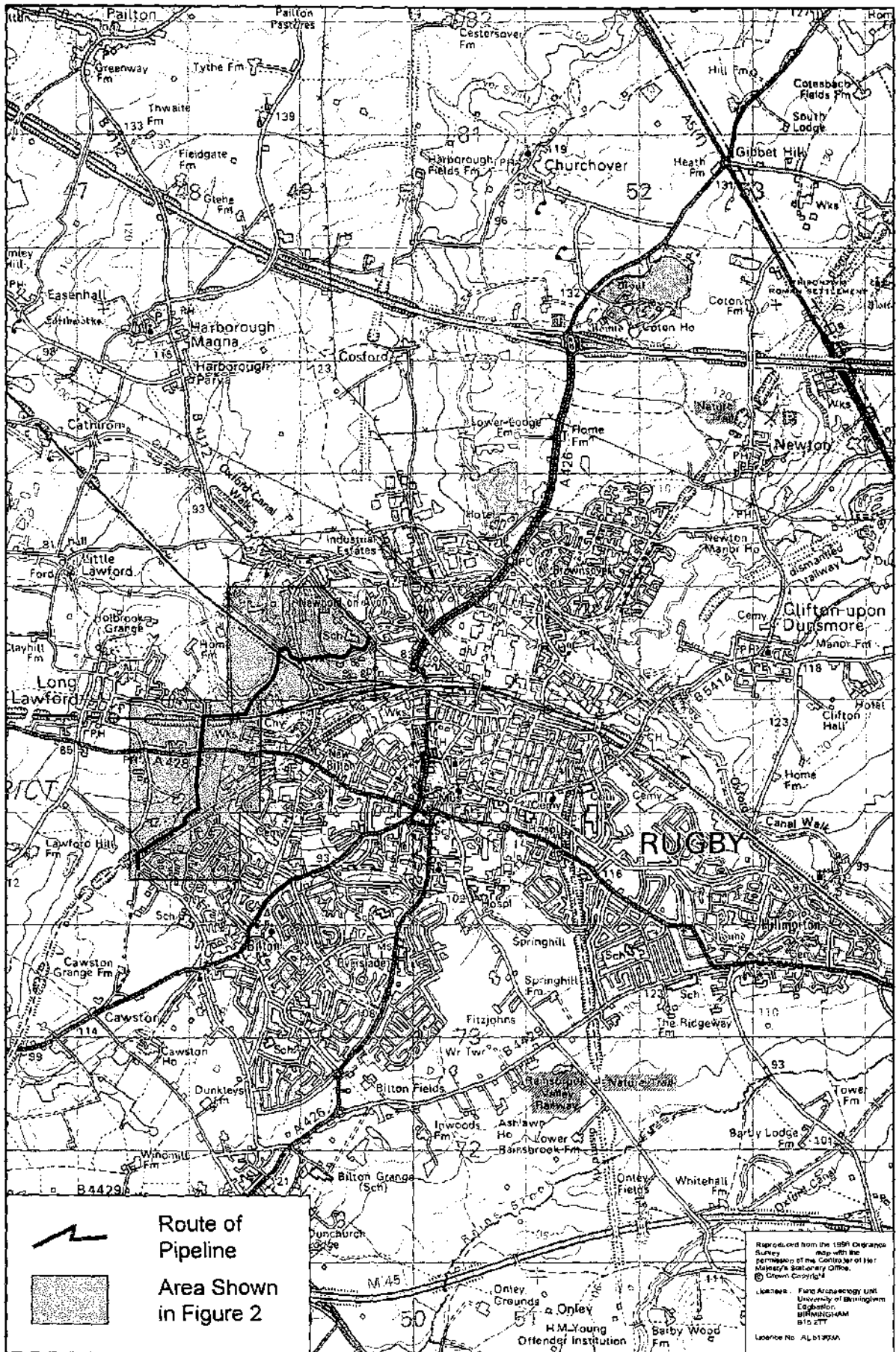


Figure 1

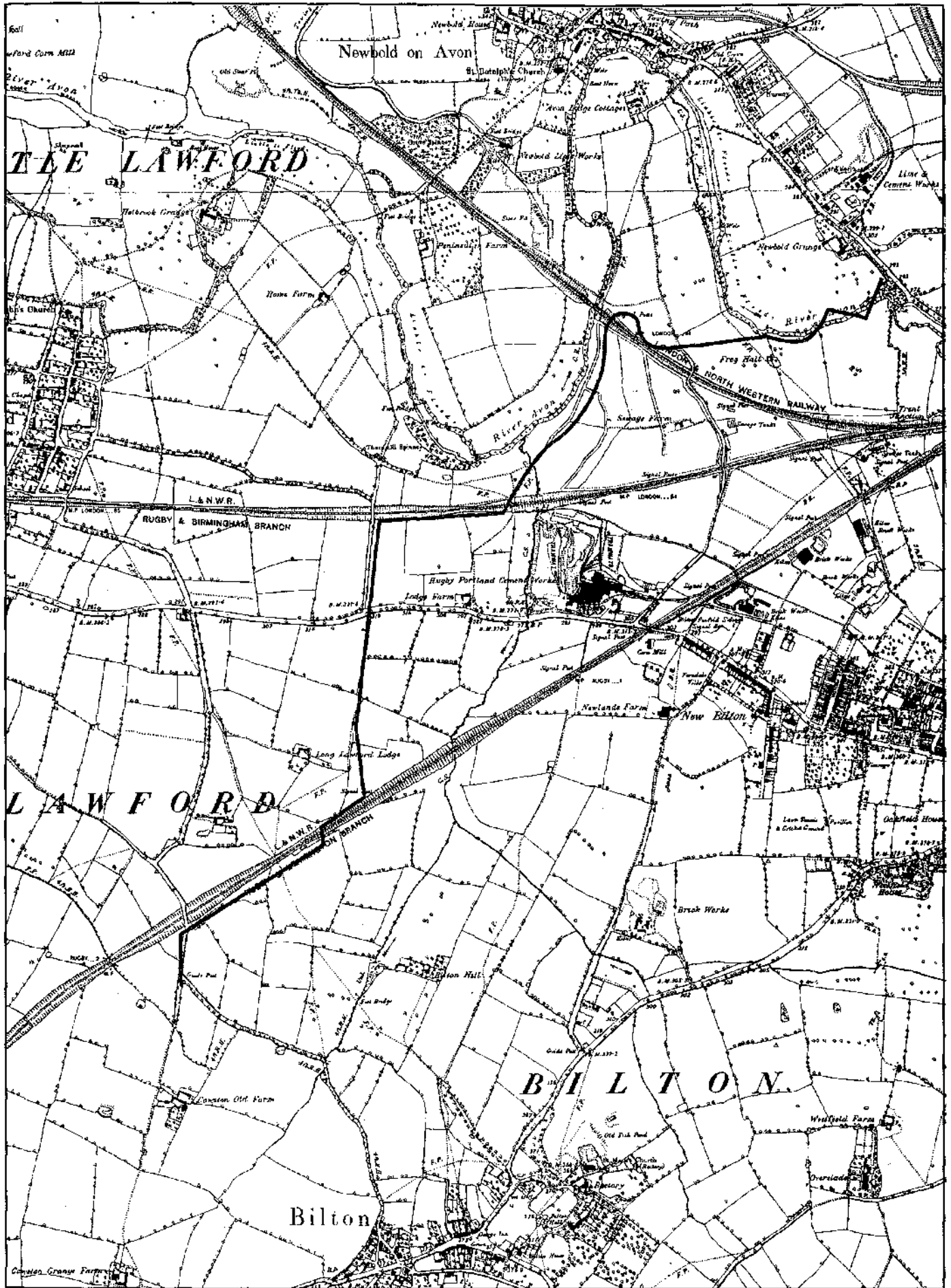


Figure 2

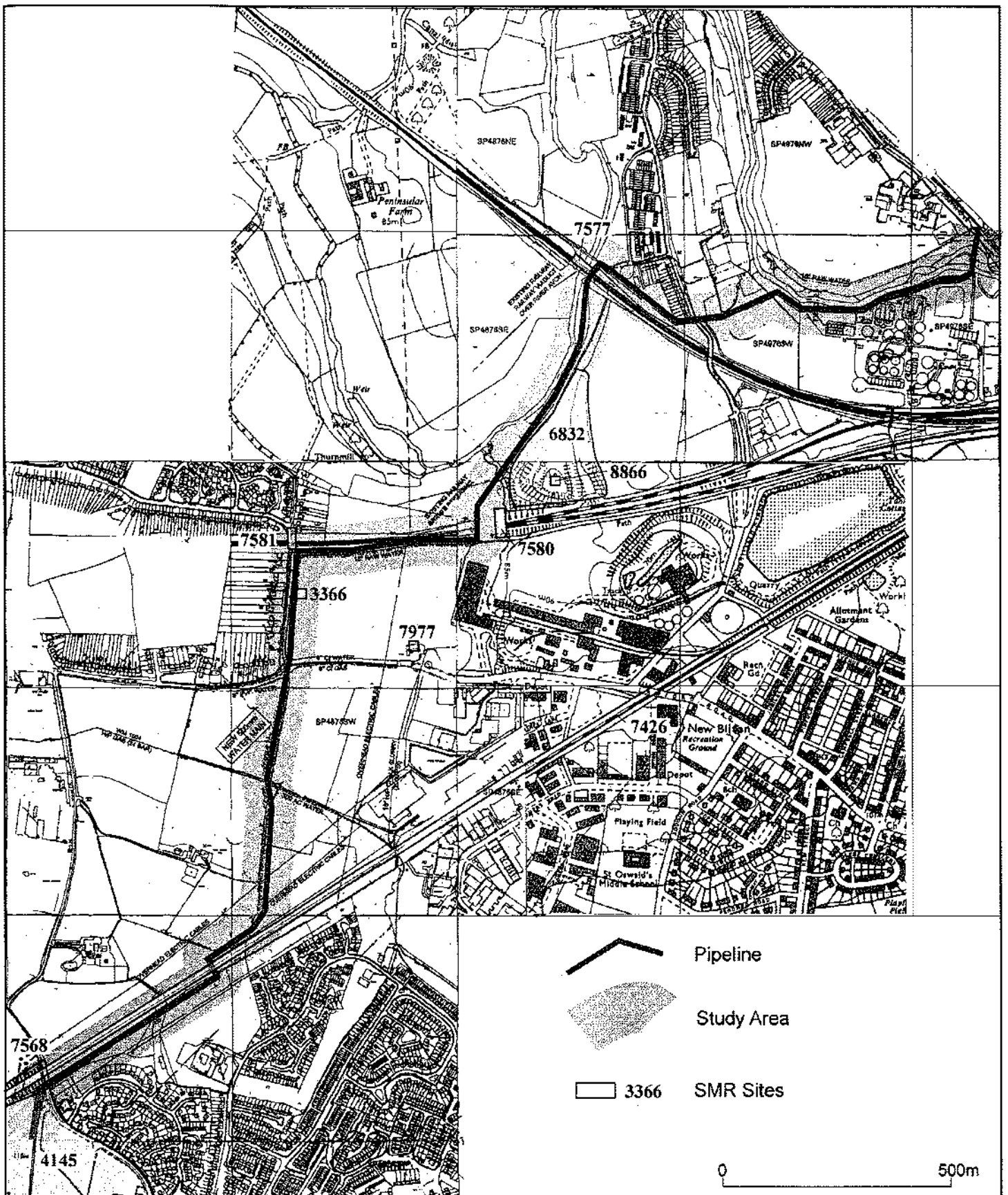


Figure 3



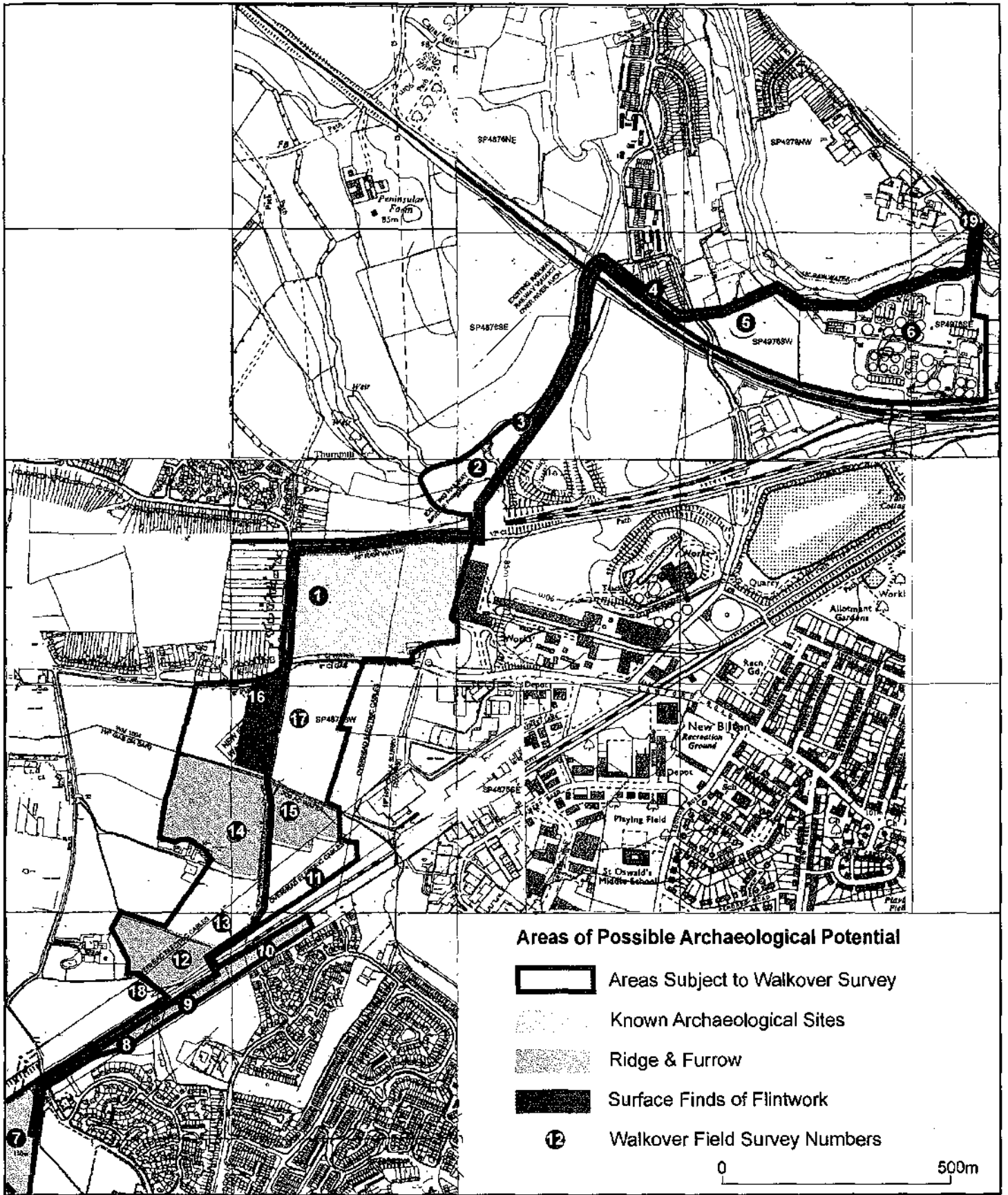


Figure 4



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3

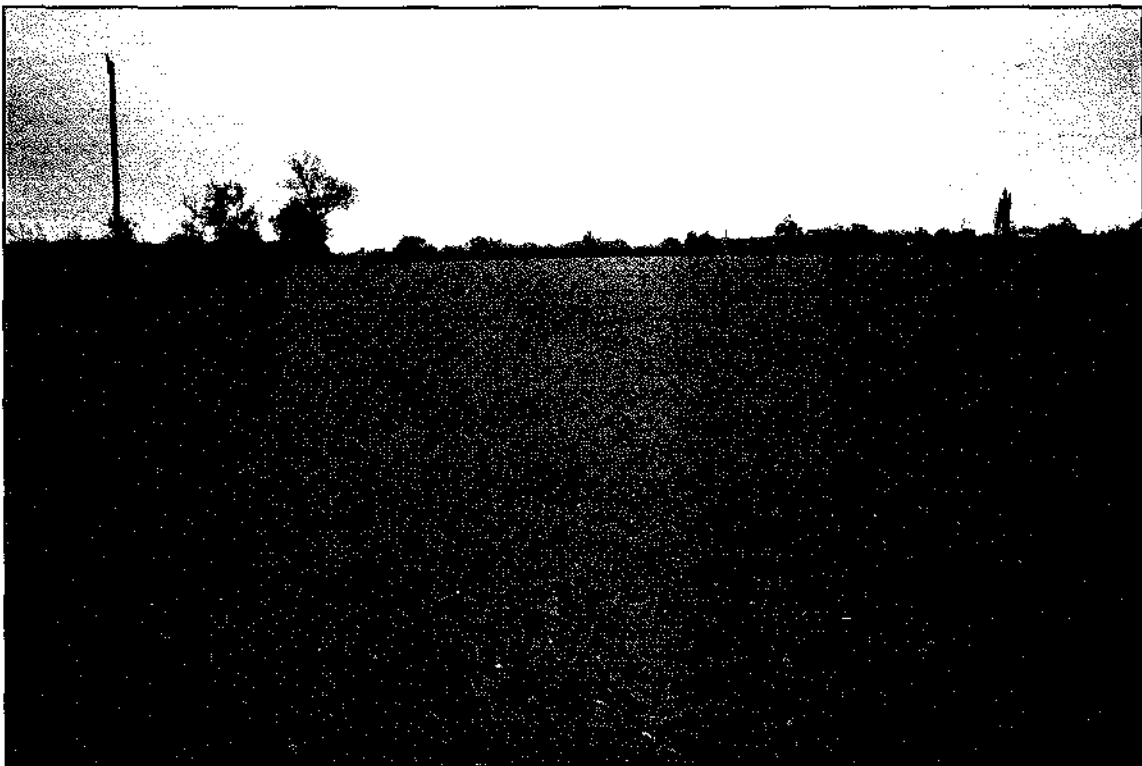


Plate 4