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**Bow Brook Feckenham, Worcestershire.
An Archaeological Watching Brief. 2002**

Fieldwork Reference No. WSM 31882

by
Kate Bain

For further information please contact:
Simon Buteux, Iain Ferris or Alex Jones (Directors)
Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
The University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham B15 2TT
Tel: 0121 414 5513
Fax: 0121 414 5516
E-Mail: BUFAU@bham.ac.uk
Web Address: <http://www.bufau.bham.ac.uk>

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Bow Brook, Feckenham, Worcestershire. An Archaeological Watching Brief 2002

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit, on behalf of the Environment Agency at Bow Brook, Feckenham, Worcestershire (NGR SP 0048 6125) in July 2002. The site was located on the eastern bank of the Bow Brook, to the south-west of Feckenham village centre. The area consisted of a strip of land on the eastern bank of Bow Brook, bounded to the north by the Droitwich road. Groundworks, that included the stripping of a temporary access road and the construction of a concrete weir, were monitored ahead of the construction of a new gauging station. The aim of the watching brief was to assess the site for any possible archaeological remains and salvage record any archaeological deposits revealed by the contractors' groundworks. Environmental evidence was given specific importance as the site lay within an area potentially containing palaeochannels and possible prehistoric activity relating to woodland clearance. Although several layers of stratigraphy were observed during groundworks, no features of archaeological interest were identified. A record of the revealed stratigraphy was made.

1 Introduction

An archaeological watching brief, including a Sites and Monuments Record (S.M.R.) survey, was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (B.U.F.A.U.), in July 2002. The S.M.R. survey was carried out, prior to the commencement of work on site, to investigate the potential for archaeological remains in the area. The watching brief was required during groundwork in advance of the construction of a new gauging station, which included the stripping of a temporary access track and construction of a concrete weir at Bow Brook, Feckenham, Worcestershire.

The work was commissioned by the Environment Agency in accordance with a brief provided by Worcestershire County Council (Glyde 2002), included within a briefing document prepared by the Environment Agency (Environment Agency 2002), and a specification prepared by B.U.F.A.U. (B.U.F.A.U. 2002). It was also carried out in accordance with guidelines given in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16, section 30 and the 1999 I.F.A. '*Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching brief*'.

2 Site Location (Fig. 1 & Plate 1)

The site (centred on NGR SP 0048 6125) is located on the eastern bank of Bow Brook, bounded to the north by Droitwich road, to the south-west of the centre of the village of Feckenham.

3 Archaeological background (Figs. 2 & 3)

An S.M.R. search was carried out prior to the commencement of groundworks on the site in order to establish the likelihood and nature of archaeological remains that may have been encountered on the site. This involved research into the documentary,

photographic and cartographic evidence available for the site, a summary of which is outlined as follows.

The site lies next to the Bow Brook to the south-west of the historic village of Feckenham, which lay in a large forested area covering a large area of the eastern side of the country, running from Bordesley, in the north, to Evesham, in the south. A watching brief (WSM 30771) to the north of the site revealed palaeo-environmental deposits which may provide information on the prehistoric landscape of the area. The road to the immediate north of the site, sometimes called the Lower Saltway, is identified as the Roman road between Droitwich and Alcester (WSM 07193). The bridge (WSM 31740), at the crossing point of the road and the brook, is attributed to the post-medieval period but may have its origin in the Roman period. Near to the centre of the village is an elliptical multi-banked enclosure enclosing 3 acres, dated to the medieval period but with possible origins in the Anglo-Saxon period (Figs. 2 & 3). The Bow Brook may also have been canalised in order to feed the Needle Mill (WSM31738; see Fig. 2, where it is referred to as *needle factory*) to the north. The parish of Feckenham is recorded as being well known for the manufacture of fishing hooks and needles in the 18th century (Pearson & Jones 2001).

4 Aims

4.1 General Aim

The objectives of this archaeological watching brief were to establish the presence and significance of archaeological deposits and to recover any artefactual evidence and environmental material.

4.2 Specific Aim

The watching brief specifically aimed to identify any deposits associated with peat-filled palaeochannels and possible prehistoric woodland clearance activity, as observed in a watching brief carried out at Brook House, Feckenham (Pearson, E. & Jones, L.2001).

5 Method

5.1 General Method

All groundworks within the area of the Bow Brook, including the stripping of the temporary access road and construction of the weir, were monitored and recorded by a qualified archaeologist. A stratigraphic record of all deposits revealed during groundworks and the extent of these works was made. All archaeological deposits and features were sampled and their potential for environmental analysis was assessed. Recovered finds were cleaned, marked and remedial conservation work was undertaken where necessary.

All stratigraphic sequences were recorded, even where no archaeology was present. Recording was by means of pre-printed pro-forma for contexts and features, supplemented by plans (at 1:20 and 1:50), sections (at 1:10 and 1:20), monochrome

print and colour slide photography, which, together with recovered artefacts and environmental evidence, form the site archive. This is currently stored at B.U.F.A.U.

5.2 Environmental sampling

Palaeochannel deposits were appropriately sampled in line with the guidelines laid out by '*Environmental Archaeology and Archaeological evaluations - recommendation regarding the environmental archaeology component of archaeological evaluations in England*'. (Association for Environmental Archaeology working paper no 2, 1995).

6 Results

6.1 Temporary Access Track (not illustrated)

A temporary access track was excavated on the eastern bank of the Bow Brook using a 360° tracked mechanical excavator. The topsoil (1000) was removed and stockpiled in an area at the southern end of the site. The depth of the topsoil removed ranged from between 0.18 and 0.25m. At the southern end of the temporary access a compound was also stripped, as was the area for the footings of the gauging station. The strip revealed a brown-red clay subsoil (1002) with a moderate stone content. There was evidence for quite heavy tree root disturbance caused by the mature trees situated at the top of the Brook bank. Nothing of archaeological significance was identified during the topsoil strip.

6.2 Gauging Station Base and Brook Bank (Figs. 4 & 5, Plates 2 & 3)

The bank of the Bow Brook was also stripped of topsoil revealing a similarly composed brown-red clay subsoil (1002) (see Fig. 5). The bank was then removed, creating a 39m long, west-facing, section at a maximum distance of 6m from the edge of the brook. At 20m from the northern end of the section the base for the gauging station was excavated (see Fig. 4). These excavations revealed several distinct layers of stratigraphy. The earliest distinct layer seen in this section appeared to be composed of a dark red-brown clay mottled with blue-green clay (1007), which was revealed to a depth of 0.20m at the bottom of the section. Directly above this was a 0.50m deep layer of grey-green clay (1006), which was almost identical to 1005, seen running toward the brook in shallow bands, higher in the section. This layer appeared to follow the gradient of the bank, sloping downward toward the brook. Overlying this layer was a clean, dark red-brown clay (1004), interrupted occasionally by shallow bands of grey-green clay (1005). The bands of grey-green clay could be seen to follow irregular linear alignments and abut the edge of the brook. Above the clay layer was a very compact layer of mixed sand and gravel (1003) that could be seen throughout the section. The extent of the gravel could be seen, in plan, to extend, forming a quite regular straight edge: the former edge of the brook. Immediately overlying the gravel layer was a continuation of the clay subsoil layer previously identified as 1002.

At the northernmost end of the section, a dark brown sand-silt deposit (1001), associated with tree root disturbance and possible activity associated with the construction of the bridge, could be seen. No archaeological features or artefacts were identified at any stage during these excavations.

6.3 Excavation in the Brook

The bottom of the brook was excavated in order to alter its course, allowing for the construction of the new weir. A dark organic material (1009) could be seen in some extent within the watercourse (prior to excavation). The bed of the brook appeared to be quite gravelly and contained some vegetation and modern rubbish, particularly at its extremities. Beneath the gravel bed of the brook, at the northern end of the excavation, an irregular, very dark grey-black (1008) deposit was seen. This deposit contained numerous small shells, some fragments of post-medieval pottery and some fragmentary leather objects, including the partial remains of a shoe. This area of the brook bed was heavily disturbed by tree root activity. Deposit 1008 was above the mottled clay deposit (1007), as seen in section. The brook bed was excavated to the same depth as the bottom of the section.

7 Discussion

The excavation of the temporary access route did not reveal any evidence associated with either the Roman road or the Needle Mill indicated in the S.M.R. search. Similarly, excavations associated directly with the bank of the Bow Brook and the gauging station did not produce any evidence of either palaeo-channels or archaeological activity. The distinct layers of stratigraphy seen within the section appear to be the natural result of deposition from the steep brook bank and the action of the brook itself. A small amount of post-medieval ceramic material and some preserved leather was discovered during excavations of the brook bed itself. These objects were found in association with tree root activity and are not thought to have been specifically deposited.

8 Acknowledgements

The work on site was undertaken by Kate Bain, Emma Hancox, Erica Macey and Andy Rudge. This report was written by Kate Bain, the figures were prepared by Nigel Dodds and the plates prepared by Ed Newton. The watching brief was managed for B.U.F.A.U. by Gary Coates, who also edited this report.

Fiona Goddcs and Giles Matthews managed the project, on behalf of the Environment Agency.

Work was monitored by Mike Glyde, on behalf of Worcestershire Archaeological Service.

Thanks are due to the staff of Worcestershire Sites and Monuments Record, Babbie Group, Alpha Construction and Jackson Civil Engineering.

9 References

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Figures

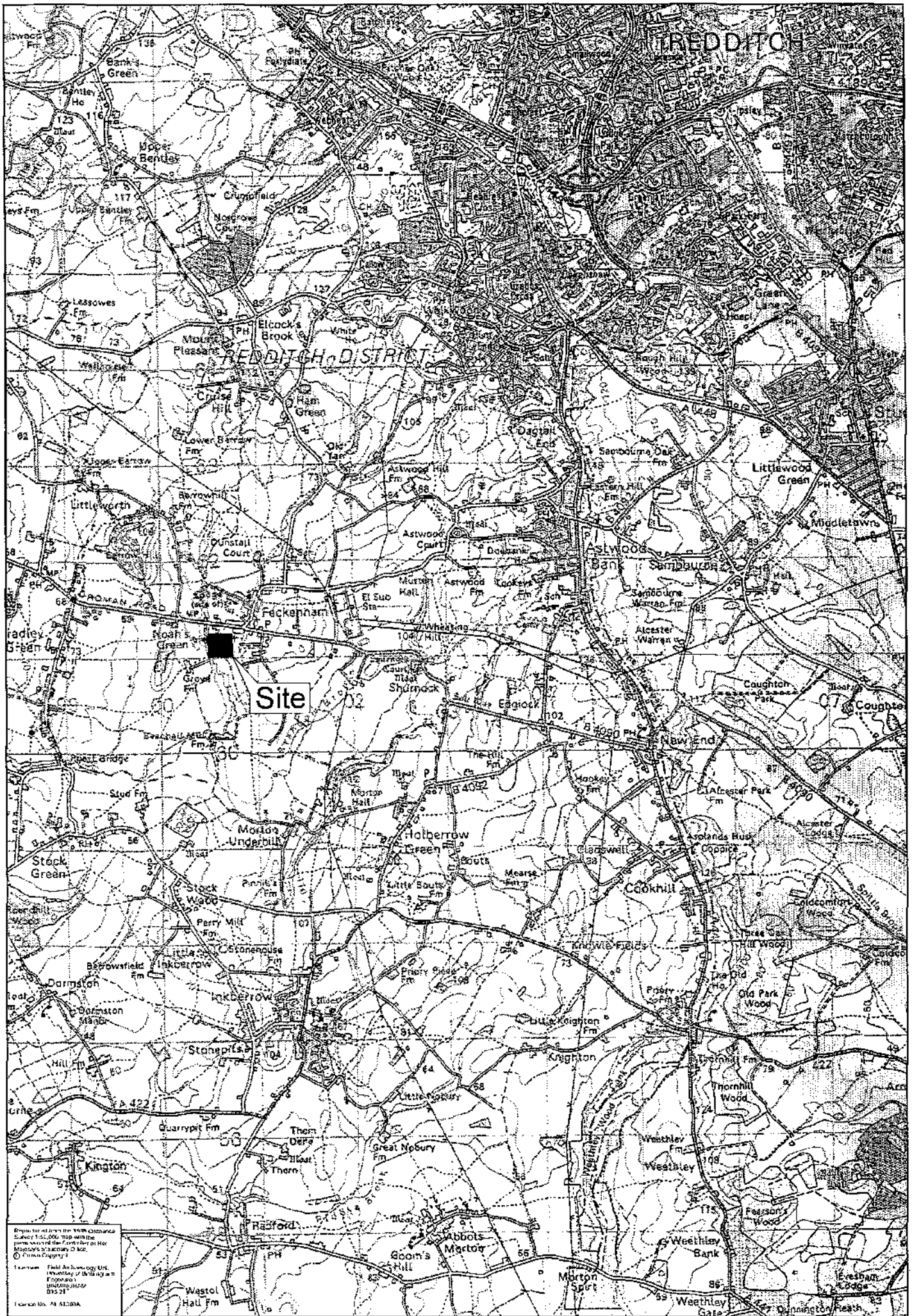


Fig.1

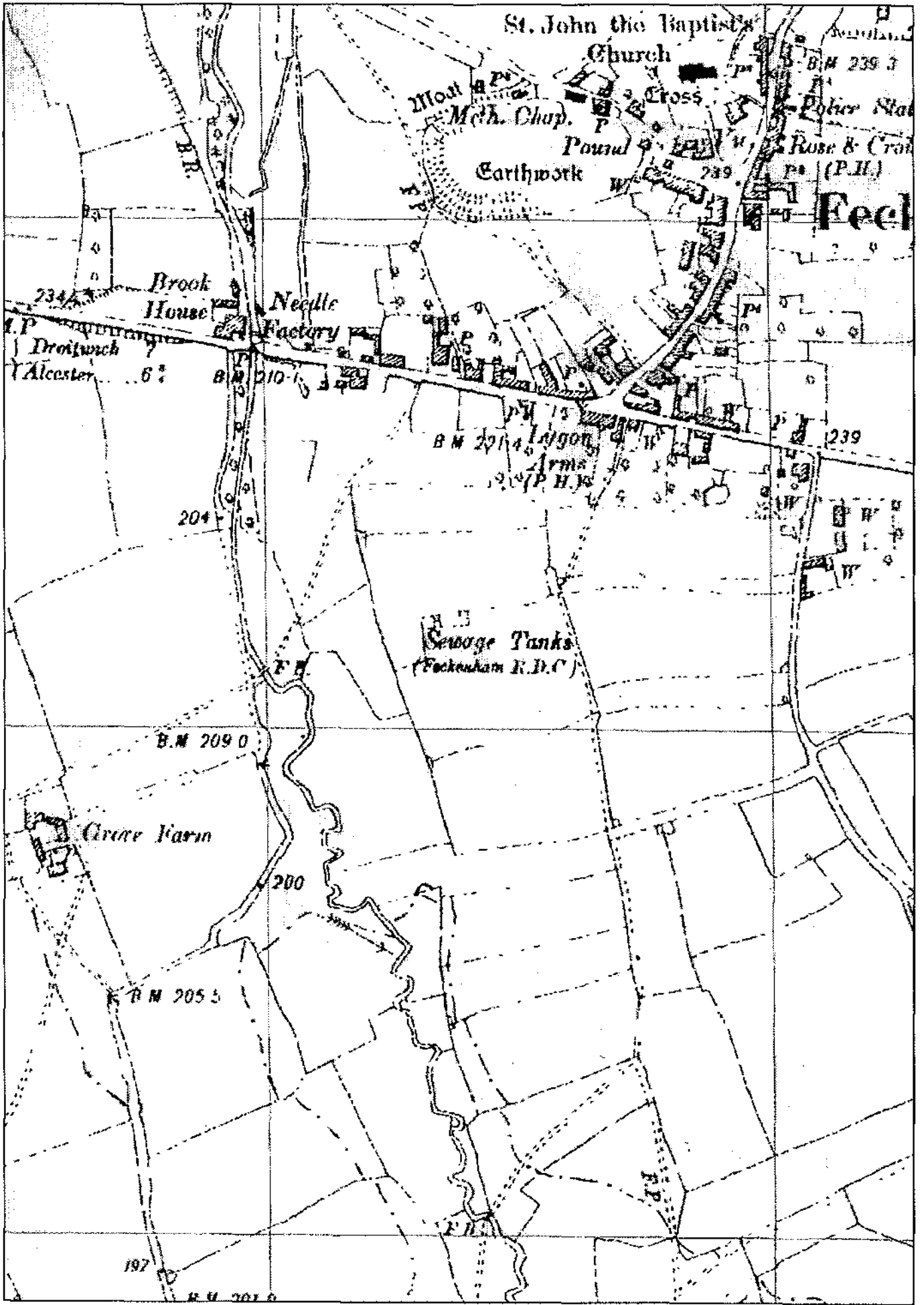


Fig.2

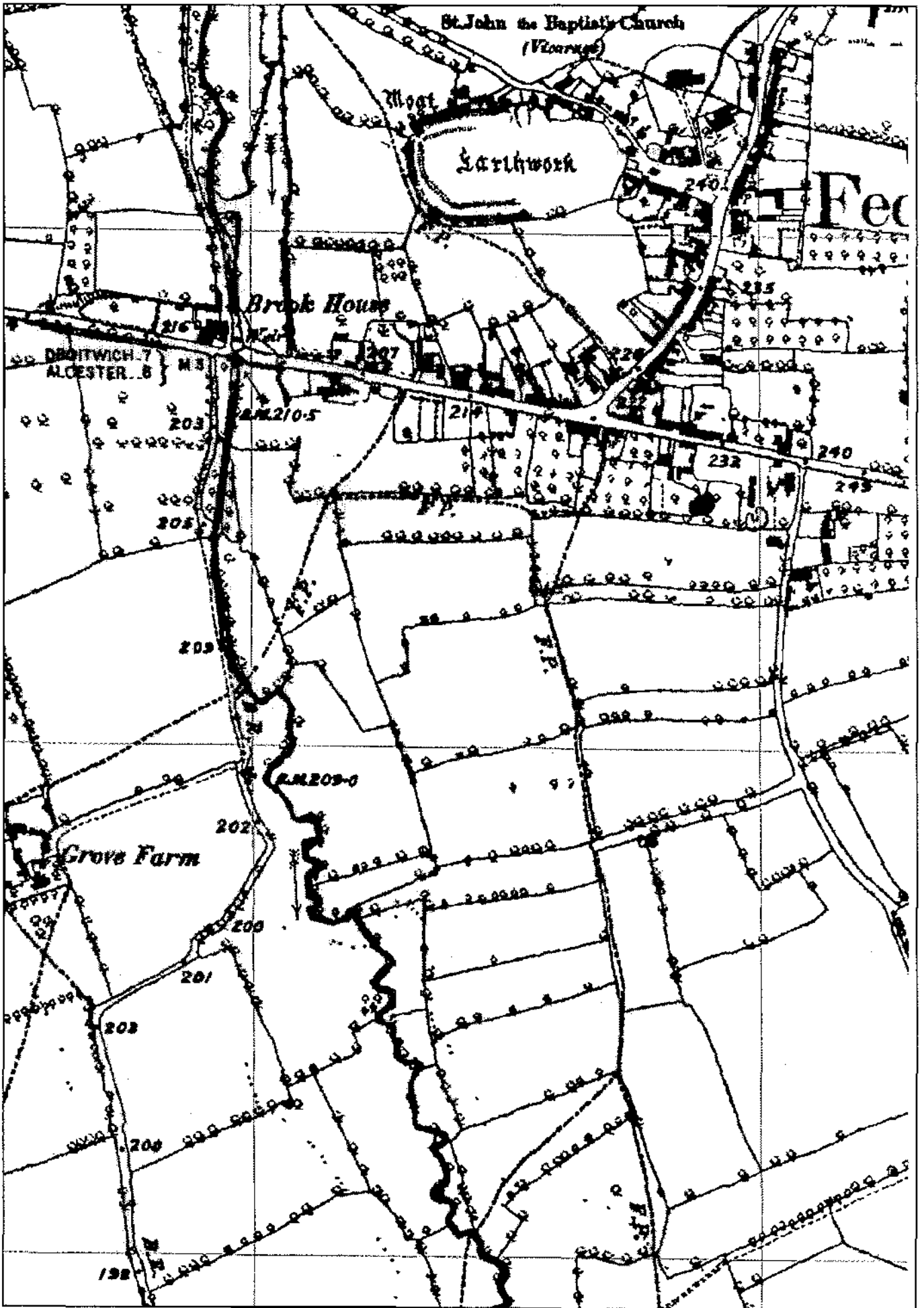


Fig.3

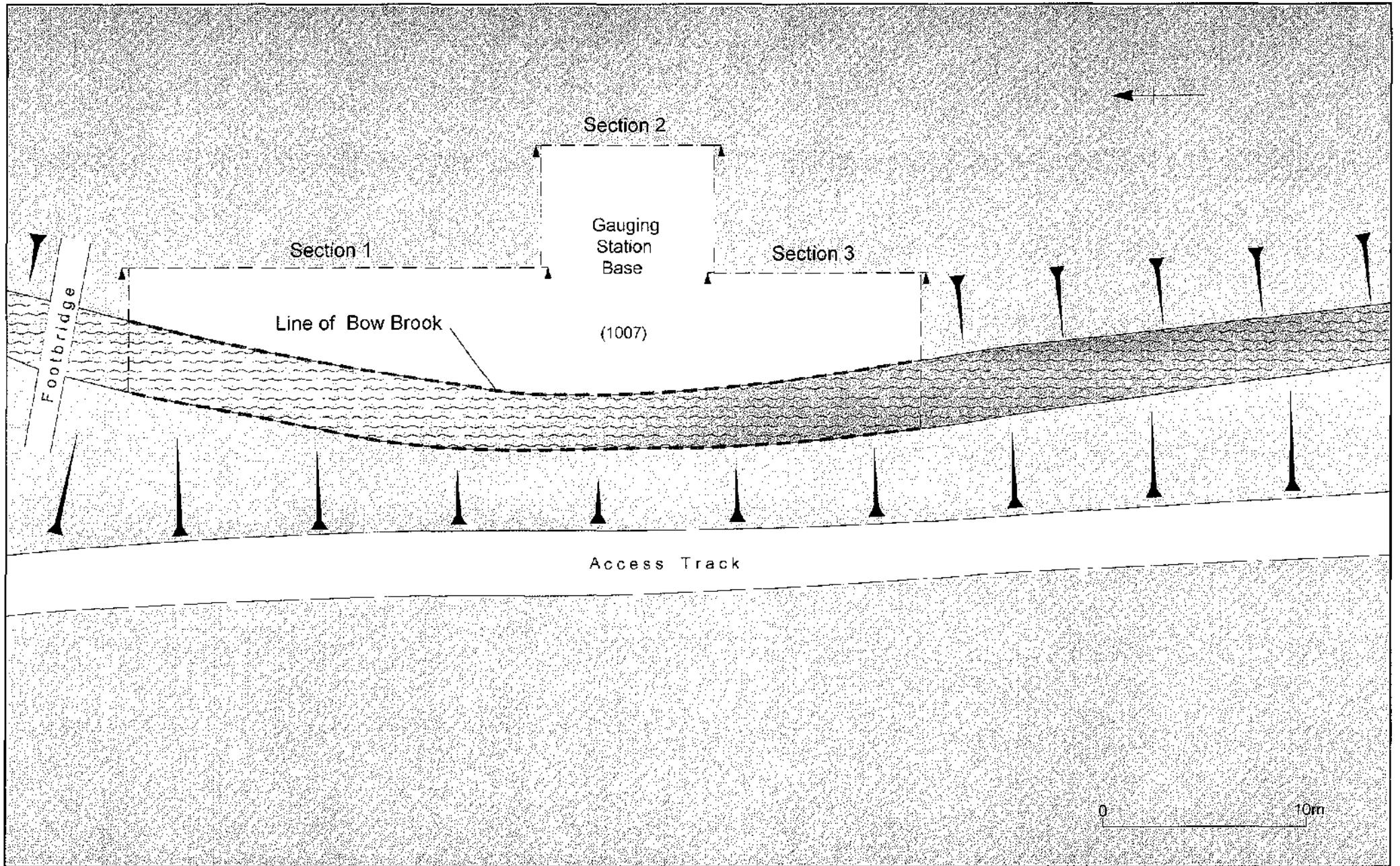
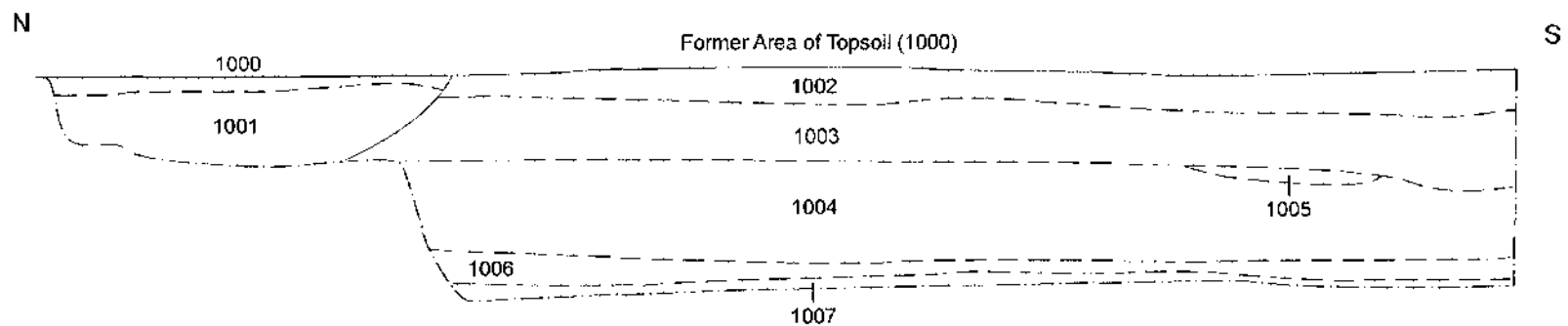
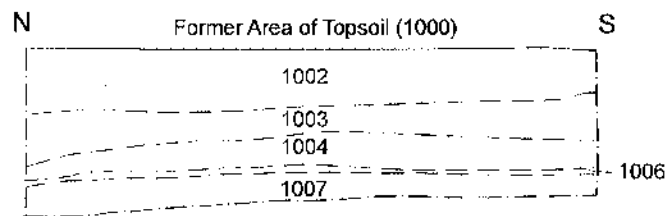


Fig.4

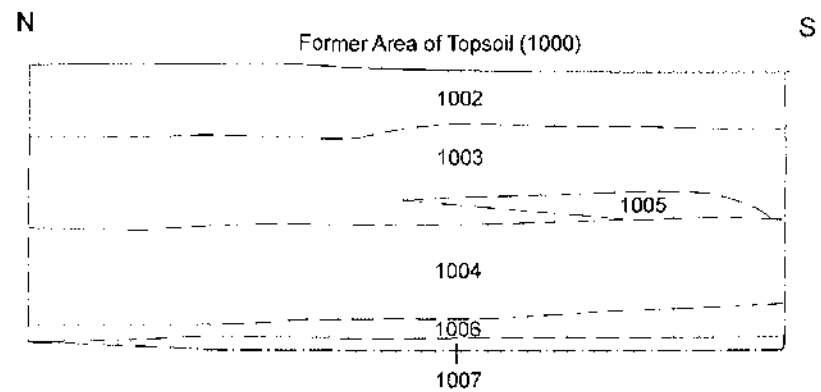
SECTION 1



SECTION 2



SECTION 3



0 5m

Fig.5

Plates



Plate 1

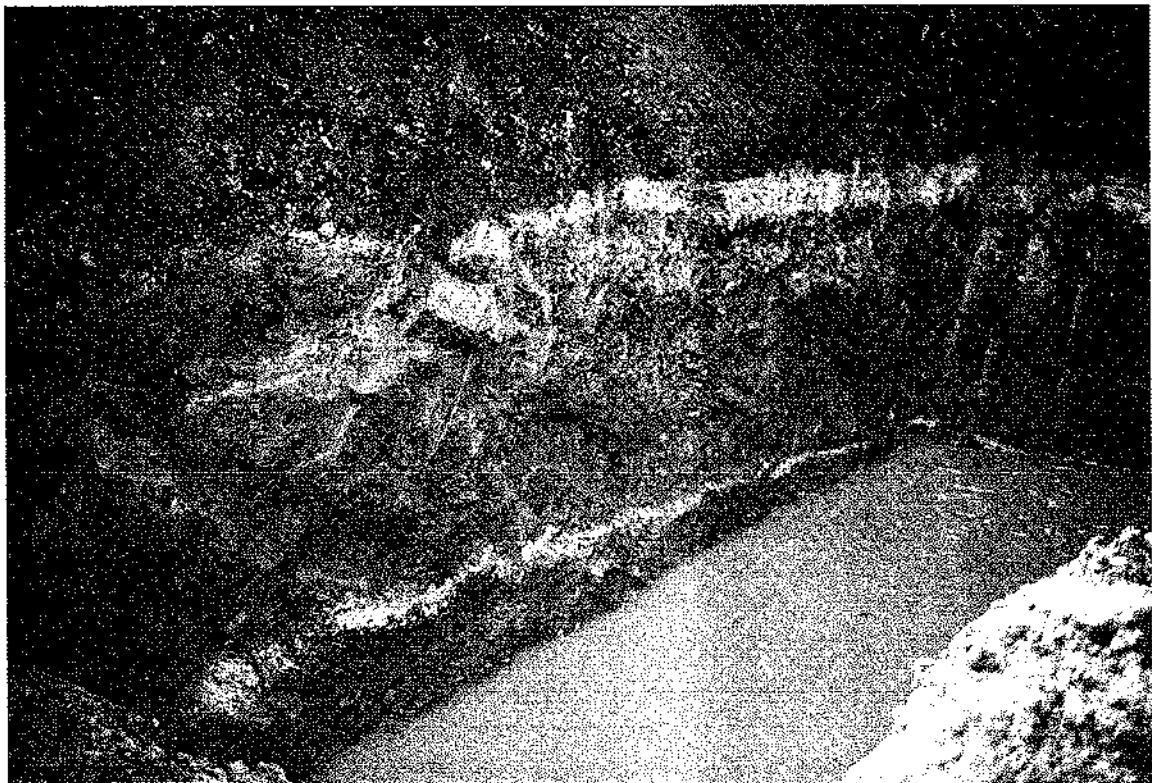


Plate 2



Plate 3