



**A Level 1 Earthworks Survey at Field  
Barn Caravan Site, Field Barn Lane,  
Crophorne, Worcestershire**

*A report for Mr R. Cooper*

August 2005

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**Project: PJ 142**

**WSM 33483**

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# 1. Project Background

## 1.1. Location of the Site

Field Barn Lane caravan site (NGR SP 0014 4441) is located around 3 kilometres to north-west of Evesham and around 5 kilometres to the east of Pershore. It is set back along a single lane unadopted road to the north of the A44 road from Worcester to Evesham (Figure 1).

## 1.2. Project Details

A planning application has been made to Wychavon District Council by Mr Ray Cooper, proprietor of the Field Barn Lane Caravan Park, to re-align the access road through the site and construct caravan hard standing areas with associated infrastructure (reference W/05/0097). The planning process determined that the proposed development was likely to affect an area of historic earthworks that were noted on the site during a visit by a Wychavon District Council planning officer. As a result, the Planning Archaeologist, Worcestershire County Council, placed a 'programme of archaeological recording' planning condition on the application, for which a brief of work was written (WHEAS 2005).

## 1.3. Site Description

Field Barn Lane caravan site is enclosed to the north, east and south by a mature hedge and fencing and bounded on the west by Field Barn Lane. There is a slight natural slope running to the west and south. There are around 70 static caravans situated on the site, most sitting on top of the ridges of remaining medieval ridge and furrow agriculture.

# 2. Methods and Process

## 2.1. Project Specification

- ❑ The project fieldwork conforms to the Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Field Evaluation (IFA 1999) and conforms to a Level 1 survey, as specified by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME 1999)
- ❑ The archive conforms to the standards and guidelines established by the Archaeological Data Service.
- ❑ The project conforms to a brief prepared by the Planning Archaeologist, Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service (WHEAS, 2005) and

for which a project proposal and detailed specification was produced (Mercian Archaeology 2005).

## 2.2. Specific Aims of the Project

- ❑ To carry out a basic measured survey of the surviving earthworks on the site.
- ❑ To classify the field monument type represented by the earthworks.
- ❑ To place the earthworks into a wider context, using readily available background information, including cartographic sources, historic documents, photographs and primary and secondary written sources.
- ❑ To use the results of the archaeological work to produce a report highlighting: -
  1. The survival and location of any archaeological deposits.
  2. Analysis of identified natural and cultural deposits and their interpretation.

## 3. The Documentary Research

### 3.1. The Topographical, Archaeological and Historic Background

Crothorne lies in the south-east of the county of Worcestershire. It is bounded to the north by the River Avon and the Merry Brook marks the eastern side of the parish. It is a parish of some 1538 acres and earlier this century it had 777 acres of arable, 515 acres of permanent grass and 23 acres of woodland. The north of the parish is within the low lying Avon Valley, whilst the south rises to its highest point at around 50 metres above sea level at Haselor Hill near Charlton. The village is a mixture of old and new, with many 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century timber framed cottages alongside more recent brick built dwellings. The soils are mixed, with light sandy soil in some parts, with stiff clays in others. The agriculture is of wheat, barley and beans, with extensive market gardening and some orchard (VCH III).

The first reference to Crothorne appears in a document of AD 780, in which King Offa of Mercia granted 7 *manentes* (hides) at Crothorne to the bishopric of Worcester. Crothorne lay at centre of large unit of land, which formed basis of the hundred of Cudburbelawe, which has been identified as the pre-conquest estate, with its centre in the same location as the present settlement. The charter is published and although it has been judged to be fundamentally a fabrication, it is likely to embody some authentic material or record a genuine transaction (WSM 25279). The estate was still in Royal hands in 841 when King Beorhtwulf of Mercia held it.

In 1148 the manor was confirmed to the prior and convent of Worcester by Bishop Simon and the prior leased estate there to William de Wetmora until his death in 1212. The prior expanded the estate piecemeal until the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The priory was dissolved in 1539-40 and the manor passed back to the crown, which granted it to the Dean and Chapter of Worcester. In 1649 the manor was sold under the commonwealth to Thomas Kempe, who passed it to William Dineley a year later. The Dean and Chapter regained control of the manor at the restoration and held it until 1861, when the Ecclesiastic Commissioners sold it to Francis Holland, whose family had farmed the site since at least 1649. The Inclosure Award of 1780,

referred to below (Section 3.2) indicates that Francis Holland farmed the field at the time of inclosure. The Parliamentary Survey of the Dean and Chapter of Worcester shows that in 1649, Sibell Holland and her son Francis farmed lands within the open fields of Cropthorne. They had copyhold of 45 acres of arable, 2 ½ acres of meadow and 6 acres of pasture.

The Worcestershire Sites and Monuments Record contains few relevant records relating to the site or wider area. An area of ridge and furrow (WSM 10568) is recorded around 1200 metres to the north east of the site. During World War 2 a gun emplacement (WSM 25126) was located on the site, with a searchlight (WSM 25125) located close to Field Barn Lane.

### 3.2. The Cartographic Sources

The earliest available and significantly detailed plan of the area was the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map of 1904, which shows the site as part of Fieldbarn Farm. The field is the same shape as today, but there are no caravans, access road or facilities (Figure 4).

There are, however, two earlier conjectural maps based on the inclosure awards for Cropthorne dating from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. They were drawn by J.D. Schooling in 1964 based on the texts of the inclosure awards. The first depicts the open fields of the township of Cropthorne and hamlet of Charlton in Cropthorne parish. This is reproduced in Figure 2; the second shows the newly enclosed areas, again based on the detail within the texts (Figure 3).

The latter plan shows the site as still being part of a larger enclosed field at this time (1780). The copyholder is one Francis Holland, who held other parcels across the remainder of the parish. The pre-inclosure draft, indicates that the site was within the large open field called Crabdown Field and the furlongs (see Section 5.1) were known as the ‘Butts Behind the Town’.

#### Cartographic Sources Consulted

##### WRO ~ Worcestershire Records Office

Source	Reference Number
A Map of the Township of Cropthorne (conjectural) based on the text of the 1780 inclosure award. Drawn by J.D.Schooing in 1964	WRO BA 3992 899:70
The pre-Inclosure Common Fields of Cropthorne (conjectural), based on the text of the 1777 and 1780 inclosure awards for Cropthorne and Charlton. Drawn by J.D.Schooling in 1964	WRO BA 4095 899:70
Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition 25". Worcestershire Sheet XLII.14 (1904)	

Other sources used are referenced within the report.

### **3.4. The Fieldwork Methodology**

The archaeological field survey was undertaken on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> August 2005.

The survey was carried out using 100 metre fibreglass tapes and was based on a 1:500 scale plan of the caravan park, which was kindly supplied by the client.

A basic photographic record was made using digital imaging at a resolution of 800 x 600. A 1-metre scale was used where possible.

Paul Williams and James Goad carried out the survey for Mercian Archaeology.

The methodology adopted and the favourable working conditions meant that the aims and objectives of the brief could be fully met and the fieldwork was successfully concluded.

## **4. The Archaeological Fieldwork**

### **4.1. The Survey**

The survey was carried out using 100 metre tapes to offset and plot the extent of the remaining furrows, ridges and disturbed areas. The resulting horizontal data from the field survey are contained within Figure 5.

### **4.2. Earthwork description**

The features encountered during the survey were generally well preserved, although it was apparent that there were several areas where the ridge and furrow had been levelled, possibly prior to the foundation of the caravan park. The infrastructure of the caravan park had been located in order to use the ridges as platforms for siting caravans and providing access routes.

The ridges varied slightly in width, but generally averaged around 10 metres wide. They survive to around 50-60 centimetres high, giving a good impression of the form and nature of the earthworks before they grassed over after ploughing ceased.

There are two distinct areas of earthworks on the site. On the eastern half the ridges run north to south, whilst to the west and the far south, the ridges run east to west. Those on the west curve slightly to the north and on the east they have a similar curve to the east.

Two areas within the earthworks represent headlands, where the plough would have been turned. These are shown on the plan (Figure 5) and are generally visible as wide platforms, although the westernmost is somewhat obscured by the central toilet block and landscaping.

## 5. Discussion of the Physical and Documentary Evidence

### 5.1. Background to Ridge and Furrow Agriculture

Ridge and furrow is easily recognisable and survives in swathes across the clay soils of the midland counties, giving the impression of a corrugated land surface.

The basic principal behind the existence of ridge and furrow is one of co-operative farming, whilst still retaining individual holdings within the common fields. The category of field system pre-dates the enclosed field landscape that forms the mosaic of hedged fields that we see today across the modern rural landscape. A village, or settlement was surrounded by two or three large open fields, which were farmed in 'strips', or 'lands'. These fields were commonly, although not always, named North Field, South Field, West Field or East Field, the name(s) often surviving into the modern day, even if the area has been 'urbanised'. The Lord of the Manor allocated each farmer within the community strips of land within the fields. The strips would be spread across the fields, so that each farmer had a share of the good and bad land equally and no two strips farmed by an individual farmer were located together. Each farmer's allocation extended to (generally) around 20 acres across some 70 strips. Each strip measured about a quarter of an acre.

Various nomenclature is used when commenting on ridge and furrow agriculture and this may cause confusion. For example, a furlong, as we know it today, is the length of a ridge, i.e. 200 metres (220 yards). But a furlong when referring to medieval agriculture was the area of a strip, or block of ridges within a field. The extent of an individuals land holding was known as a yardland or virgate in the south and an oxgang or bovate in the north.

The lands were usually farmed on a three year rotation, with one field planted with wheat and barley in the first year, beans and peas the next, and left fallow in the third year and the rotation began again on the second or third field. Animals would then be grazed on the stubble of the fallow field (Hall 1982, 17). The ridges were the result of the action of the plough throwing the soil into the centre of a two directional plough corridor, but it is without doubt that the method was deliberate and the ridges were created to provide a well drained seed bed with drainage channels either side (furrows), which also acted as boundaries between individually owned strips. The ridges were formed by a clockwise ploughing mode starting in the middle of the strip by a single-directional plough throwing the soil only to the right. During the fallow season the strips were ploughed in an anti-clockwise mode so that some soil was thrown back towards the shallower build up near the furrows, so as to and prevent later cutting into less fertile subsoil.

From the air, the pattern of medieval ridge and furrow appears as a reverse 'S' or elongated 'C' pattern in plan. This is because there was a tendency of the oxen plough-team to veer to the left in preparation for making a turn at either end of the strip (Muir and Muir 1989, 61-2). At the end of each ridge a 'head' was formed by accumulation of soil from the plough coming up

out of the earth and being cleaned off. This is noticeable where strips are orientated end to end and a double head is formed, also referred to as a 'joint'. Where a series of strips lies at right angles to another, a wider and flatter ridge was created, this was known as a 'headland' and it would have been used as an access track and turning area.

From the late 14th century narrow strips of un-ploughed land were left to demarcate 'special' strips, such as those belonging to the church or the lord of the manor. Other groups of strips were left to generate permanent grass, which were known as 'leys'. These areas are now recognisable as they have a now have a lower profile than frequently ploughed ridges (much of the above is based on Hall 1998).

The origins of ridge and furrow agriculture lie in the Anglo-Saxon period, although the form is commonly associated with post-conquest agricultural practice. Excavation and fieldwork at Hen Domen in Powys has revealed evidence for a pre-Norman ridge and furrow field system (CPAT; Aston 1985, 121) and other early ridge and furrow has been noted at Gwithian in Cornwall and on the Somerset uplands (Aston 1985, 122). Anglo-Saxon charters of the 10th - 11th centuries often contain references to furrows and headlands. Sometimes, these can be located on modern maps and associated with modern parish boundaries, which remain in the same place as Anglo-Saxon boundaries. A charter of AD 903 concerning boundaries at Compton Beauchamp in the Vale of the White Horse, refers to the boundary travelling along two furrows and over a headland (Hooke 1998, 126), indicating that the furrow were already a permanent fixture in the landscape at this time.

However, dating individual systems without historic sources is problematic as it generally relies on the dating of features cut into or crossing the field system, therefore, proving the ridge and furrow to be earlier. For example, at Hen Domen, the early timber-framed motte and bailey castle built in AD 1070 was constructed directly over ridge and furrow.

There are also suggestions that ridge and furrow has a much older origin and may date from the Iron Age. Ridges lying around a deserted settlement on Haystack Hill on the Cheviot Hills of Northumberland, are said to 'respect' dated Iron Age landscape features, including boundary ditches, dykes and hut circles, suggesting that the ridges were formed when the features were still in use (Adams 1996), although, it is difficult to see how the Iron-Age and medieval forms can be related. If this were the case, then surely there would be expanses of ridge and furrow readily dateable to the intermediate Roman period. Perhaps the term 'ridge and furrow' confuses questions of development, as the simple act of ploughing will create a ridge and a furrow, although some forms are more distinct than others. The long straight narrow plough ridges that appear to be earlier than the laying out of the Bronze Age stone circle of Mitchell's Fold, near Chirbury in Shropshire, clearly differ in form from the wide reverse 'S' profile of the medieval ridge and furrow that swathe the landscape across the clay soils of the midland counties. Earlier medieval (Anglo-Saxon) ridge and furrow, seems to have been narrower (Taylor 1975), as does a further type of ridge and furrow created by the Victorian steam plough, which formed long narrow straight and uniform ridges (Hall 1982).

This report is not the place for commentary on the social aspects of the common field system and ridge and furrow agriculture. However, it is easy to see that, whilst the theory of co-operative farming sounds commendable, this type of common farming must have had social implications at a local level. For example, where a farmer with more than one male heir died, the lands may have had to be split, creating smaller holdings. This was usually overcome by 'impartial inheritance', where the lands would be passed entirely to the eldest son (Taylor 1975). Also, the fact that the farmers were allocated land by the Lord of the Manor, meant that



they were indelibly tied to the land and the feudal system that developed through into the middle ages.

## 5.2. The Cropthorne Earthworks in Context

The ridge and furrow at Cropthorne is only a small snapshot of part of one open field (Crabdown Field); there are traces of the earthworks in the adjacent field to the south, although there are no visible remains to the north and east. The interpretative map based on the text of the inclosure awards (Schooling 1964) indicates that the furlongs on the site were known as Butts Behind the Town. The pattern of remaining ridge and furrow (recorded) in the area is too small to make assumptions or predictions regarding changes in direction of the ridges and generally, it may be assumed that furrows used any slight gradient to drain water away from the site. This was very noticeable in a survey of ridge and furrow at Battlefield in Shrewsbury, where the furrows all converged on two artificial ponds, which would have been kept wet by natural drainage (Williams 1998). With this in mind and taking into account that usually, although by no means in all cases, the length of a ridge would be some 200 metres, we may predict that the westernmost ridges on the site carried on through the more modern Field Barn Lane to the watercourse to the west, a distance of around 200 metres. This would also explain the slightly curved field boundaries to the west of the road, as the inclosed fields would follow earlier patterns created by a ridge and furrow classic elongated 'C' pattern.

## 6. Conclusion

*The results of the archaeological survey at Field Barn Lane determined the survival of well-preserved ridge and furrow probably dating from the medieval period. The ridges ran in two directions across the site, those on the west running east to west and those to the north running north to south. There is evidence of two headlands, where the plough would have turned, at the heads of each set of ridges. The ridges survived to around 50 centimetres high and were well defined, except in some areas where there had been some modern disturbance and levelling. On the east of the site a flattened area is likely to have been the site for World war 2 anti-aircraft battery, which is listed on the Worcestershire Sites and Monuments Record, but has now gone.*

*The background research, mainly based on the cartographic sources, suggested that the ridges to the west were probably of an elongated 'C' form in plan and the modern field boundaries to the west of Field Barn Lane appear to have been aligned along the ridge and furrow, which would have drained down into the watercourse, which flows north-westwards into the River Avon.*

## 7. Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the client Mr Ray Cooper for his co-operation. Thanks are also due to James Goad for assisting with the on-site survey; Deborah Overton of Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service for carrying out the HER search; Mike Glyde, Planning Archaeologist, Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service and the staff of Worcester Records Office.

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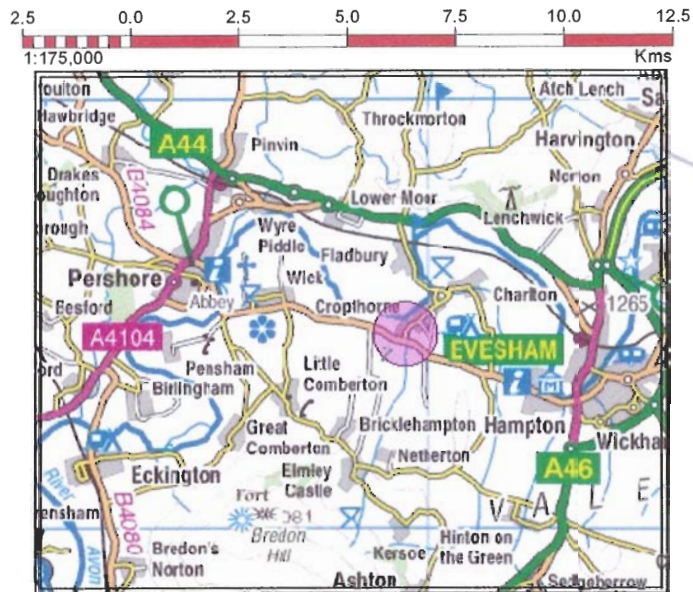
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# Figure 1: Location of the Site



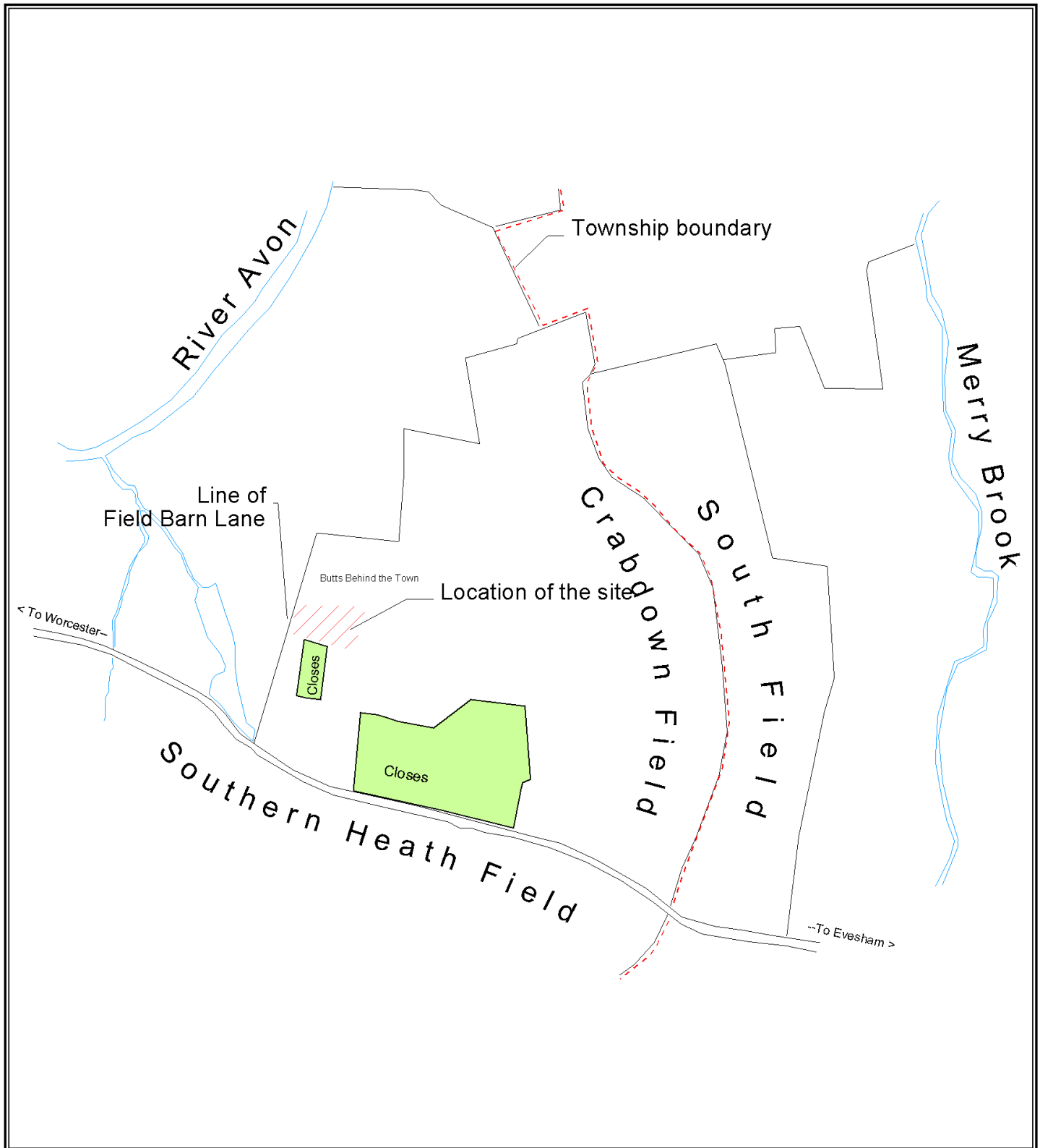
Location of the Site at Crothorne

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Figure 2: Conjectural Plan of the pre-Inclosure Open Fields of Crophorne and Charlton



The conjectural plot of the open fields of the township of Crophorne before the late 18th century inclosure, shows the site to be within Crabdown Field and the furlongs in this area are named as Butts Behind the Town.

Scale unknown

Redrawn from a plan by J.D.Schooling (1964)

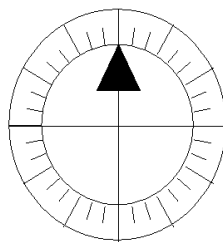


Figure 3: Conjectural Plan of the post-Inclosure fields of Crophorne and Charlton



The conjectural plot of the enclosed fields of the township of Crophorne after the late 18th century inclosure. This can be compared against Figure 2 to indicate how the landscape changed within the span of around 5 years.

Scale unknown

After plan by J.D.Schooling (1964)

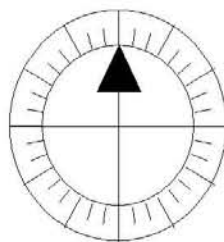
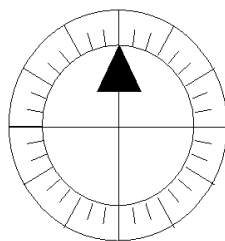
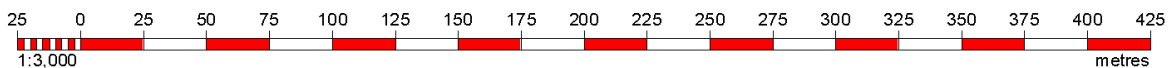
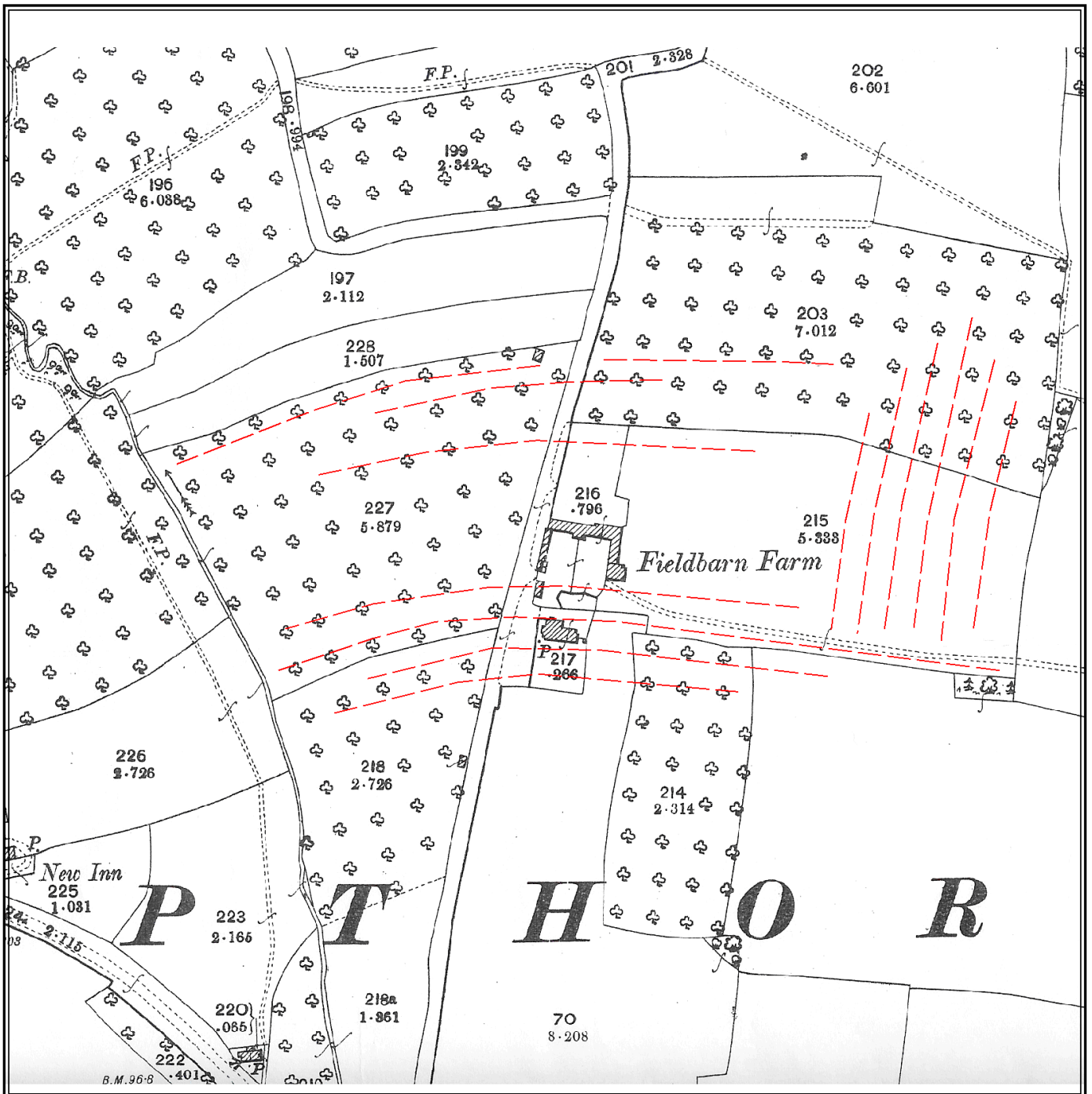


Figure 4: 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey (1904)



The 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map of 1904 showing the layout of the landscape at that time. The general direction of ridge and furrow, based on the physical remains on the site and the available cartographic evidence, are shown in red.

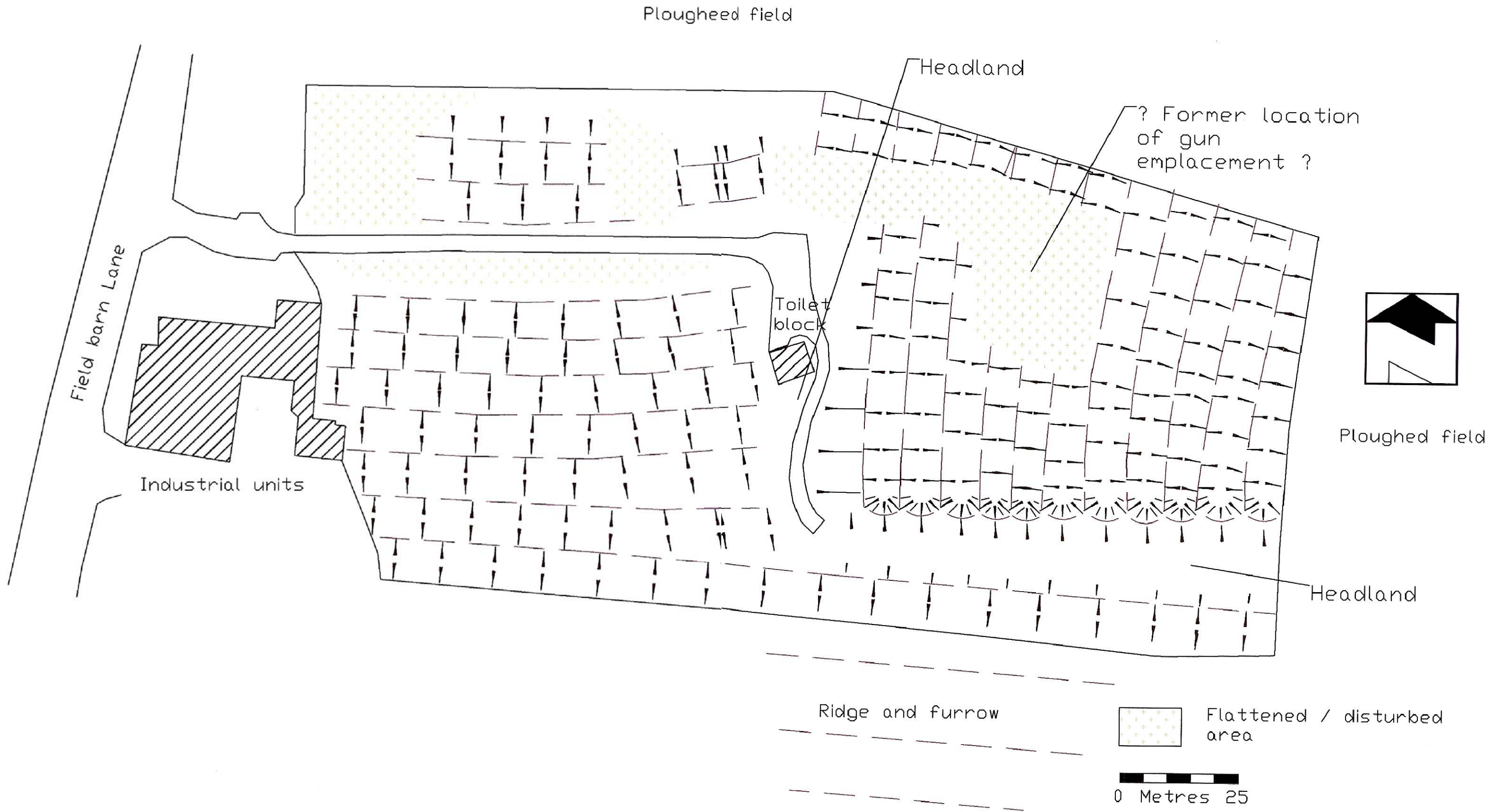


Figure 5: Plan of Ridge and Furrow at Field Barn Lane Caravan Site  
 Scanned From Original



# Plates

## Plate 1



*Ridge and furrow earthworks looking north-east from the centre of the site*

## Plate 2



*Headland on the southern side of the site, looking west*

# Plates

## Plate 3



*Ridge and furrow earthworks looking west from the centre of the site*

## Plate 4



*The site viewed to the north*