

**NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT**

Report No. 955

**An Archaeological Excavation at  
Banham's Farm, Methwold Hythe,  
Methwold,  
Norfolk**

40334 MTW

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May 2004

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Local Authority No. 100019340

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Location: Banhams Farm, Methwold Hythe, Methwold, Norfolk  
Grid Ref: TL 70224 94218  
HER No: 40334 MTW  
Date of fieldwork: 5th to 6th April 2004

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## **Summary**

*An archaeological excavation using a 'strip, map and sample' method in advance of the construction of a new onion store. Twenty-four features were recorded within the footprint of the proposed store, some comprising a fence line of unknown but probable recent date. The site was located in rural farmland where efforts to manage the marshy fen edge conditions had been attempted.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

(Fig. 1)

The site was located within an area of proposed development at Banham's Farm, Methwold Hythe, Methwold, Norfolk, covering 22m by 30m. The work was commissioned and funded by Darby Methwold through their agent Thurlow Nunn Standen Ltd.

This archaeological excavation was undertaken in accordance with a Method Statement prepared by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU 1738/KJP) and a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (DG/16/1/2004).

The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16 — Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990).

The site archive is currently held by the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

## **2.0 Geology and Topography**

(Fig. 1)

The site lay on the fen-edge, where it was bounded to the south and east by modern farm buildings belonging to Banham's Farm. Across the site there was a natural slope from south down to north towards the open fields. The underlying solid geology is Upper Chalk overlaid by alluvium.

### **3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background**

(Fig. 1)

This is an area of archaeological interest with previous finds recorded on the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (HER). The main area of archaeological interest is site 23663 which lies within the immediate vicinity of the excavation area and where two Neolithic flint scatters, a spread of burnt flints, animal bone fragments and one sherd of Roman samian pottery were all recovered. No previous excavation had been carried out in the environs of the farm.

### **4.0 Methodology**

(Fig. 1)

The objective of this excavation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the origins, development, function, character date and status of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

The Brief required that a 'strip, map and sample' excavation be undertaken to preserve by record any archaeological features found. This would provide a complete plan and by excavating a representative sample of the features uncovered, aim to understand the nature and function of the site. The site measured 22 metres by 30 metres.

Machine excavation was carried out with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds, other than those which were obviously modern, were retained for inspection.

The site location and archaeological features were surveyed using a Trimble TST, and the survey data was downloaded to provide the basis of the CAD plans prepared for this report. Archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NAU *pro forma* sheets. Plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

Due to the lack of suitable deposits, no environmental samples were taken.

Work was undertaken in generally good conditions, although there were occasional heavy showers. Access to the site was good and extra information provided by the client useful.

### **5.0 Results (Appendix 1)**

(Figs 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7)

The dark brown fine sandy clay topsoil was a maximum of 0.50m in depth and it lay directly on a white, (becoming yellow and mixed to the north) chalk-derived natural. The depth of the topsoil can be seen in section (Fig.7).

Twenty-four features were recorded during the work, of these a sample of eleven were excavated (Fig.3). Seventeen post-holes lay in a linear alignment and were all of a similar small to moderate size. Three roughly rectangular pits, and two round

similar-sized pits were recorded. Other isolated features included a large shallow pit and a small round feature (not on the same alignment as the seventeen post holes).

The seventeen post-holes ([3], [5], [45], [7], [9], [11], [47], [13], [15], [17], [19], [21], [23], [25], [27], [29] and [31]), which formed the linear alignment ranged in size from the smallest (0.20m by 0.20m) to the largest (1.0m by 0.80m). The depth varied from 0.11m to 0.22m. The alignment ran in a north-west to south-east orientation from immediately inside the north edge of the site to within a metre of the southern edge. Of the seventeen post-holes, a representative sample of seven ([3] [5] [45] [7] [9] [47] and [13]) were excavated. The post-holes clearly formed a fence line however no dating evidence found in any of them. Moreover, post-hole [13] was seen to have been truncated by post-hole [47], which indicated that individual post-holes were erected at different times to maintain the fence-line. Without individual dating evidence, phases within the fence-line could not be ascertained. Post-holes [7] and [23] both contained remains of wooden posts (Fig. 4). Both were light coloured and non-waterlogged and were relatively recent in appearance probably of 20th-century date.

The three roughly rectangular pits [33], [35] and [37], ranged in size from 1.60m by 0.70m to 3.0m by 1.0m. The two excavated examples ([35] and [37]) had a consistent depth of 0.50m (Fig. 5). The three pits roughly lined up, were orientated in the same manner and ran in a north-west to south-east direction parallel to the fence line (Fig. 3). Only fill [38] of pit [37] provided any finds, constituting two fragments of animal bone. The position of the pits, parallel to the fence line, indicated that they were of a similar or later date to it. They were positioned where the underlying natural was lower and of a more yellowed appearance (possibly once a more waterlogged area). It is possible that these pits are the remnant of a type of marshland management, possibly interventions used to check the level of the water table on the edge of the fen.

Two roughly round pits of similar dimensions were noted during the excavation ([41] and [43]), measuring 1.05m by 1.05m and 1.60m by 0.60m respectively. Pit [43] was excavated and its depth was 0.67m (Fig. 6). The fill [44] of pit [43] had a high peat content and contained the occasional lump of black organic matter which indicated that the pit may have been used as a cess or rubbish pit. Both pits were positioned about three metres north of the fence-line which possibly indicated that they respected that boundary.

A single circular post-hole ([49]) was found in the north-west corner of the site. It had a diameter of 0.60m and a depth of 0.13m and contained no dating evidence. It had no obvious relationship with the other features on the site.

Towards the central north end of the site a large pit [39] was located, measuring 7.0m east to west and 6.0m north to south. A slot was excavated through this feature and its maximum depth was recorded as 0.30m. It had an undulating irregular appearance. The barren fill of [39] indicated that this was possibly a shallow quarry pit designed to remove natural deposits for use elsewhere.

## **6.0 The Finds (Appendix 2)**

Only five fragments of animal bone, weighing 0.083kg were recovered from two contexts during this excavation. No ceramics or lithics were found. It is noteworthy that no metal finds were recovered during the metal detecting survey.

### **6.1 Faunal Remains (Appendix 3)**

#### ***Methodology***

All of the bone was scanned for basic information primarily to determine species, ages and elements present. Bones were also examined for butchering or other modifications, gnawing and pathologies. Bones were quantified; total counts were noted for each context and the total for each species in the individual contexts was also recorded, along with the total weight for each context. All information was recorded on the faunal remains recording sheets and a summary of the information is included in a table with this report.

#### ***Results***

Bone was recovered from two contexts during this excavation work. Context [30], the fill of pit [37], produced elements from pig and cattle, the pig humerus had been butchered. The bone from [40], the fill of pit [39], included a butchered sheep/goat radius and two fragments of large mammal rib (probably cattle) which had been butchered.

#### ***Conclusion***

The assemblage, although small, appears to be derived from secondary butchering waste.

## **7.0 Conclusions**

The artefacts previously recorded on the HER suggested that evidence for ancient settlement had been likely to be encountered in the general vicinity. This excavation demonstrated, however, that the ground within the area under investigation had probably been too marshy and prone to flooding for domestic occupation. The fence-line and pits found were are probably connected, therefore, with the agricultural use of the land. Only the possible cess or rubbish pit ([43]) provided direct evidence for near-by human settlement.

Without absolute dating, the impression from the individual features was that they were probably of 19th or 20th-century date. This was suggested in particular by the presence of two surviving wooden posts within the fence line, their light colour and their non-waterlogged appearance indicating a relatively recent date.



### **Acknowledgements**

The work was funded by Darby Methwold. The fieldwork was carried out by Peter Crawley and Sandrine Whitmore. The report was written by Peter Crawley with illustrations by Sandrine Whitmore and Peter Crawley. The animal bone was quantified by Richenda Goffin and the report provided by Julie Curl. The finds were processed by Lucy Talbot. The report was produced by Maggie Foottit and edited by Alice Lyons.

### **Bibliography**

Funnel, B., 1994 'Solid Geology in Wade Martins, P., (ed), *An Historical Atlas of Norfolk* (Norfolk)



## Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
1	Deposit	Topsoil	Post-medieval
2	Deposit	Natural	-
3	Cut	Post-hole	Post-medieval
4	Fill	Fill of [3]	Post-medieval
5	Cut	Post-hole	Post-medieval
6	Fill	Fill of [5]	Post-medieval
7	Cut	Post-hole	Post-medieval
8	Fill	Fill of [7]	Post-medieval
9	Cut	Post-hole	Post-medieval
10	Fill	Fill of [9]	Post-medieval
11	Cut	Post-hole	Post-medieval
12	Fill	Fill of [11]	Post-medieval
13	Cut	Post-hole	Post-medieval
14	Fill	Fill of [13]	Post-medieval
15	Cut	Post-hole	Post-medieval
16	Fill	Fill of [15]	Post-medieval
17	Cut	Post-hole	Post-medieval
18	Fill	Fill of [17]	Post-medieval
19	Cut	Post-hole	Post-medieval
20	Fill	Fill of [19]	Post-medieval
21	Cut	Post-hole	Post-medieval
22	Fill	Fill of [21]	Post-medieval
23	Cut	Post-hole	Post-medieval
24	Fill	Fill of [23]	Post-medieval
25	Cut	Post-hole	Post-medieval
26	Fill	Fill of [25]	Post-medieval
27	Cut	Post-hole	Post-medieval
28	Fill	Fill of [27]	Post-medieval
29	Cut	Post-hole	Post-medieval
30	Fill	Fill of [29]	Post-medieval
31	Cut	Post-hole	Post-medieval
32	Fill	Fill of [31]	Post-medieval
33	Cut	Pit	Post-medieval
34	Fill	Fill of [33]	Post-medieval
35	Cut	Pit	Post-medieval
36	Fill	Fill of [35]	Post-medieval
37	Cut	Pit	Post-medieval
40	Fill	Fill of [39]	Post-medieval
41	Cut	Pit	Post-medieval
42	Fill	Fill of [41]	Post-medieval
43	Cut	Pit	Post-medieval
44	Fill	Fill of [43]	Post-medieval
45	Cut	Post-hole	Post-medieval
46	Fill	Fill of [45]	Post-medieval
47	Cut	Post-hole	Post-medieval
48	Fill	Fill of [47]	Post-medieval
49	Cut	Post-hole	Post-medieval
50	Fill	Fill of [49]	Post-medieval

### ***Appendix 2: Finds by Context***

<b>Context</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Weight (kg)</b>
38	Animal bone	-	0.045
40	Animal bone	-	0.038

### ***Appendix 3. Summary of the faunal remains***

<b>Context</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Weight (kg)</b>	<b>Species</b>	<b>Comments</b>
38	4	0.045	Cattle	Tooth
			Pig	Butchered humerus
			Mammal	Small unidentifiable fragments
40	1	0.040	Sheep/Goat	Chopped radius
			Mammal	Two large butchered rib fragments

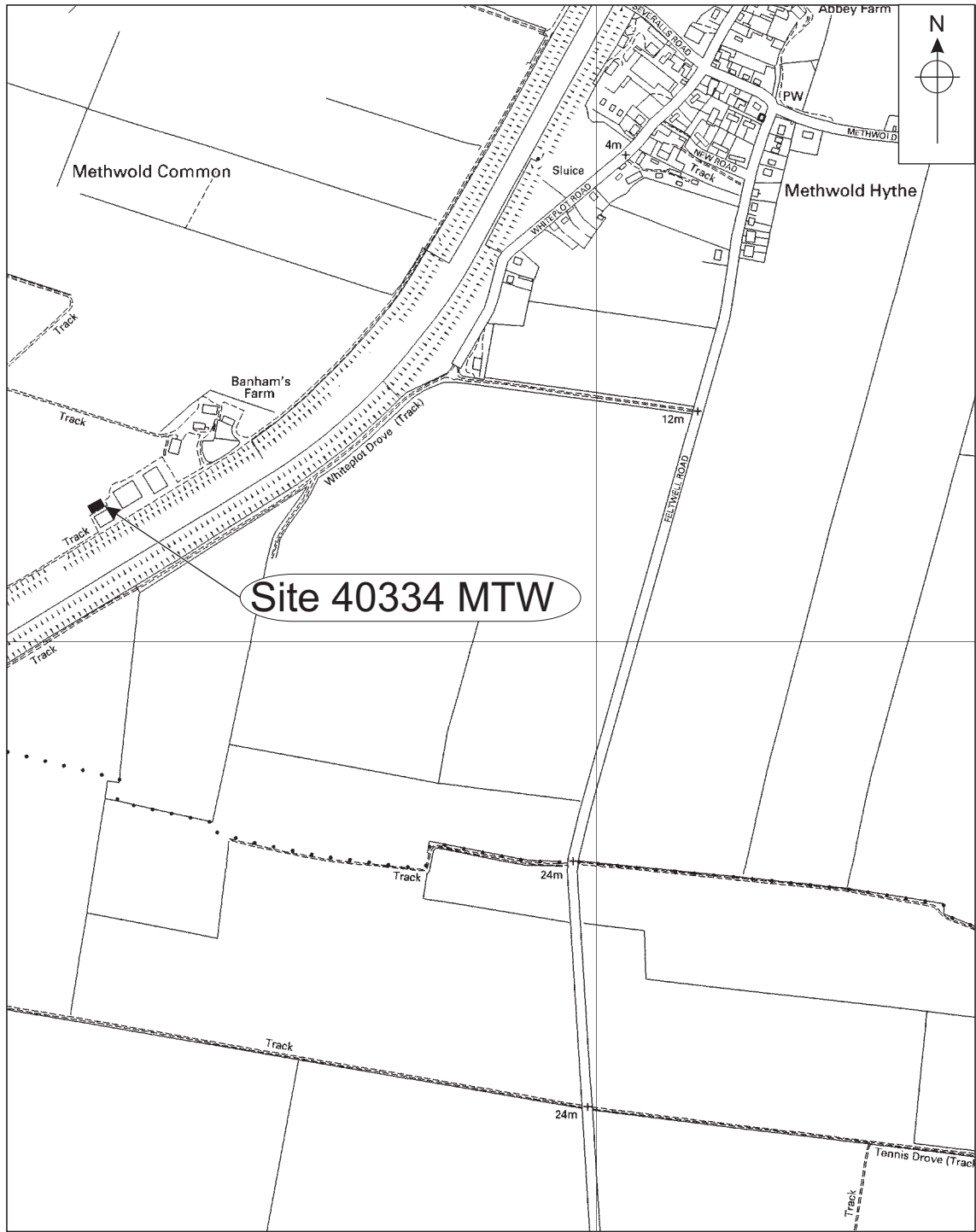


Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:10,000

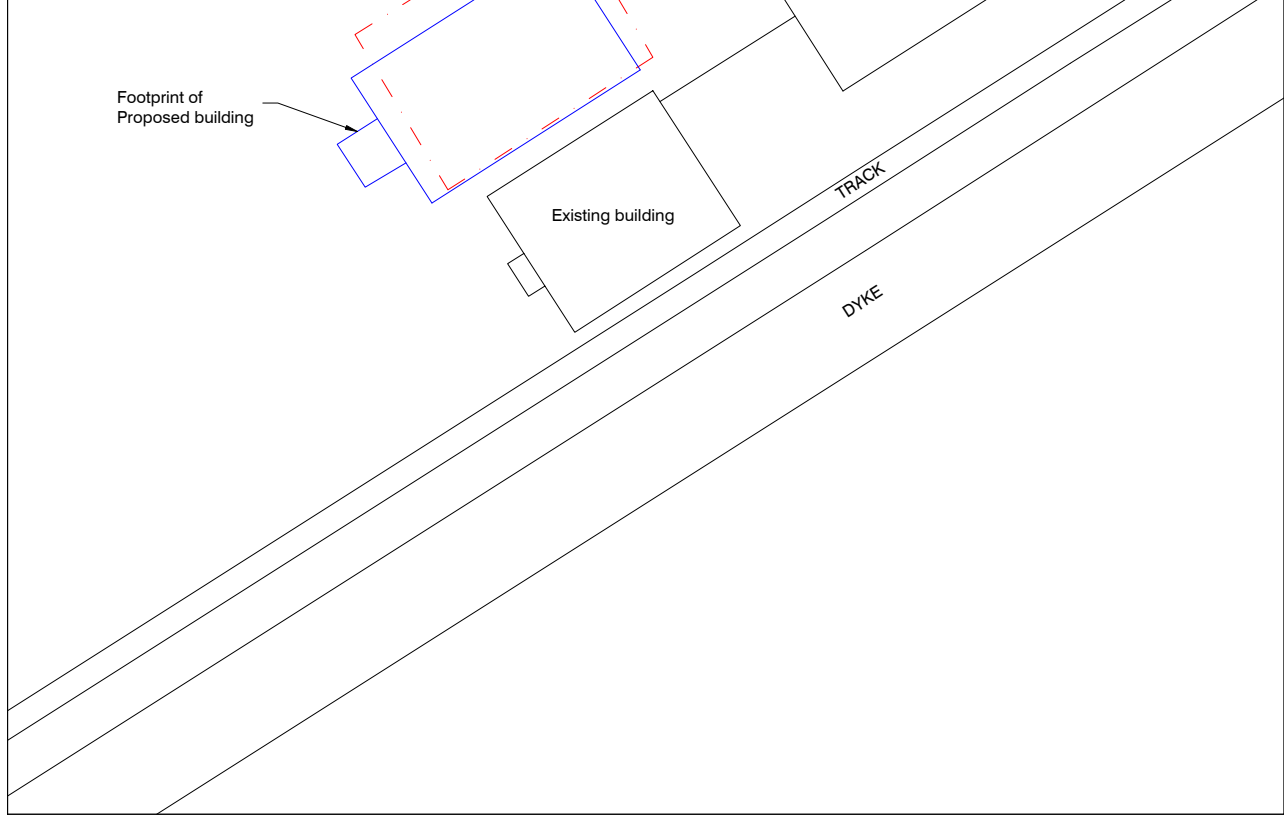


Figure 2. Site plan. Scale 1:1000.



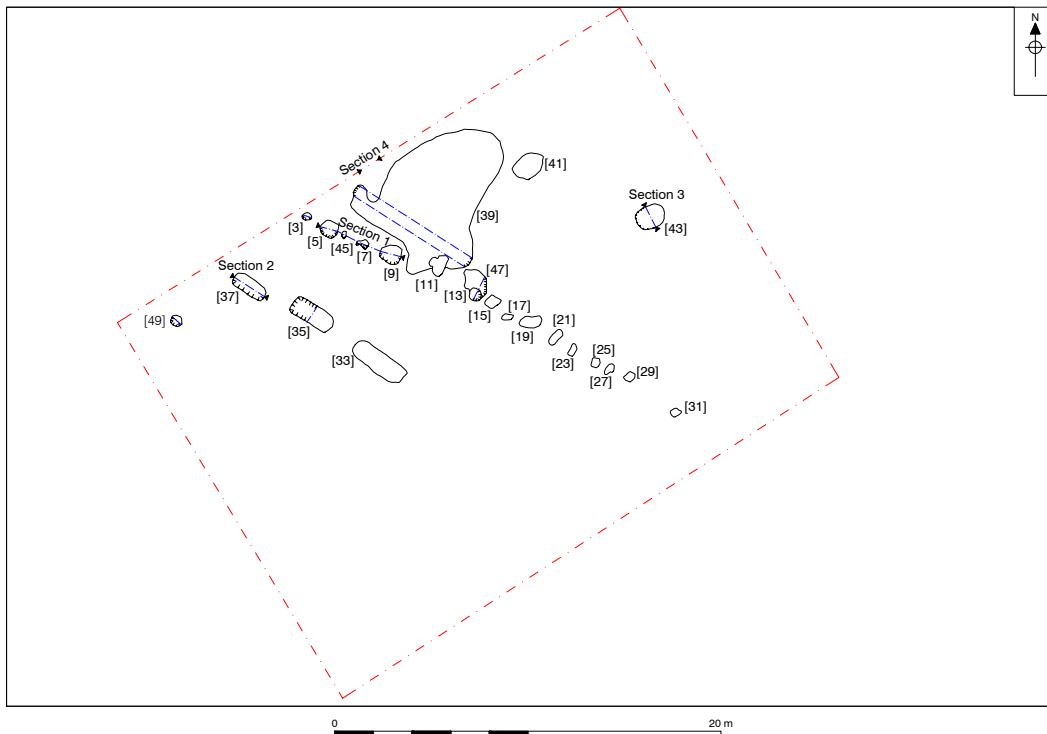


Figure 3. Plan of features. Scale 1:200.





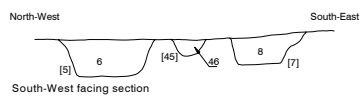
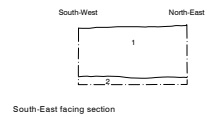
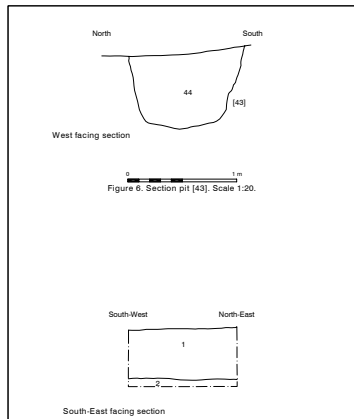


Figure 4. Section of post-holes [5], [45] and [7]. Scale 1:20.



Figure 5. Section of pit [37]. Scale 1:20.







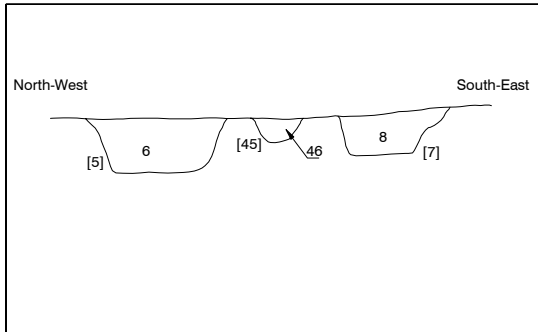


Figure 4. Section 1. Scale 1:20.

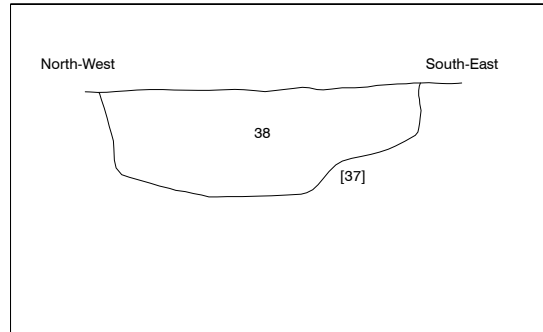


Figure 5. Section 2. Scale 1:20.

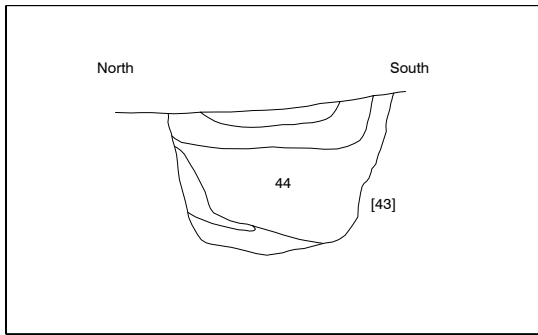


Figure 6. Section 5. Scale 1:20.

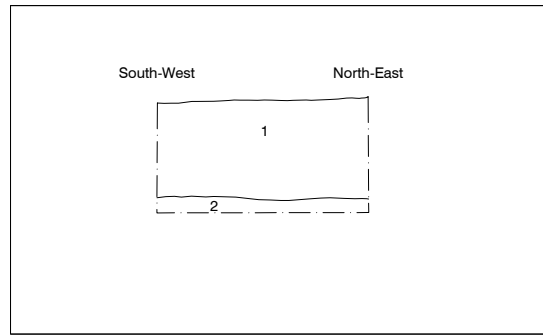


Figure 7. Section 7. Scale 1:20.

