

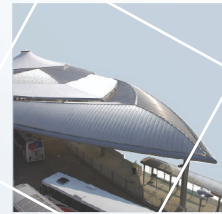
Report № 1838

**An Archaeological Evaluation at Sixty Acre Field,
Thieves' Bridge Road, Watlington, Norfolk
of the Tottenhill S101A Sewerage System**

NHER 52553

Prepared for

anglianwater



Matt Ratcliff

December 2008

BAU1838

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Location: Sixty Acre Field, Thieves' Bridge Road, Watlington
District: King's Lynn and West Norfolk
Grid Ref.: TF 6240 1054
HER No.: 52553
Client: Anglian Water
Dates of Fieldwork: 20–21, 24–25 November 2008

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was carried out in Sixty Acre Field, Watlington, in advance of a proposed sewage pipeline between Watlington and Tottenhill. Five 10m trenches were opened along the southern edge of the field, on an east-west alignment, directly adjacent to the tree-line along Thieves' Bridge Road.

All of these trenches revealed a mixed, well-ploughed topsoil overlying natural gravel and boulder clay deposits. Trenches 3 and 4 contained a number of parallel north–south ditches cut into the natural gravel. A single piece of prehistoric pottery was recovered from one of these features. These ditches were of a similar date and character to those exposed in the northern half of the field during excavations in 2005.

1.0 Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken along the southern edge of Sixty Acre Field, Watlington, Norfolk, in advance of a proposed Anglian Water pipeline (Figs 1 and 2). Sixty Acre Field is located in the southern half Watlington Quarry, an area of land bordered by the A10 to the east, the Watlington Road to the north and Thieves' Bridge Road to the south. The village of Watlington lies a short distance to the west.

This archaeological programme was undertaken to fulfil a brief for archaeological evaluation by trial trenching issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref.: JA 06/11/2008). The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NAU Archaeology (Ref: BAU1838). This work was commissioned and funded by Anglian Water Services Ltd.

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 results will enable decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is currently held by NAU Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

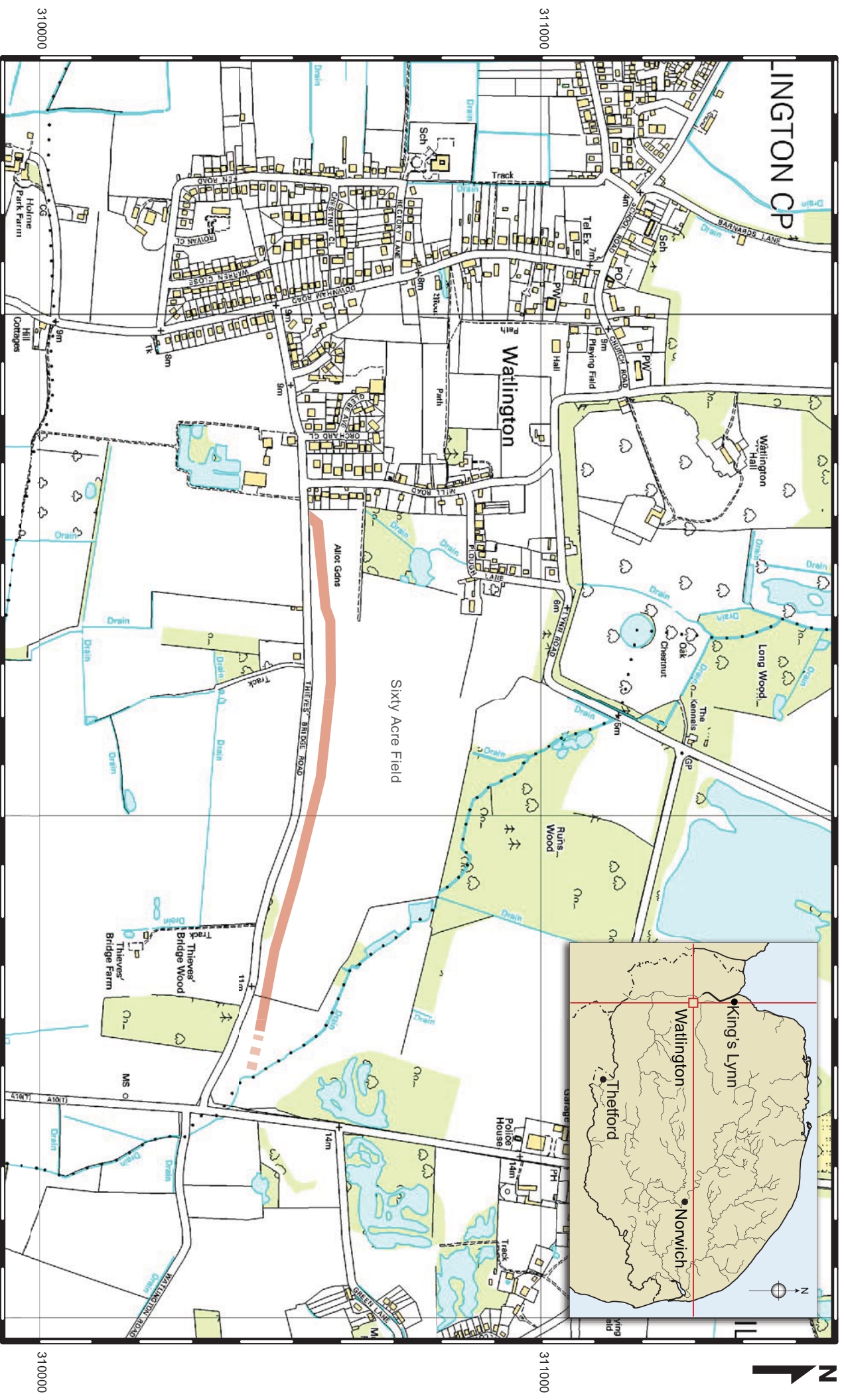


Figure 1 Site location

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2.0 Geology and Topography

The site is located just to the east of Watlington village, on the western edge of the A10 (Figs 1 and 2). The northern half of the site has been previously quarried for gravel and now consists of a partially water-filled gravel pit. Sixty Acre Field itself is ploughed and used for crops. The field slopes gradually downhill to the east, from a well-defined north–south ridge that is visible across the centre of the field. The land to the west of the ridge also slopes down gradually, but towards the west.

The topsoil was a mid-brown sandy silt, containing frequent sub-rounded gravel inclusions. Below this was a thin deposit of orangey-brown silty sand, containing frequent gravel. The natural encountered in Trenches 2, 3 and 4 was a firm brownish-orange gravel. In Trenches 1 and 5 a mid-grey boulder clay with small chalk inclusions was revealed at the same depth.

The site is located in the West Norfolk Lowland. This mixed landscape between the chalk scarp and the fenland consists of mostly well-drained brown sands, with distinctive orange-brown sands on the carstone and heavy soils on the boulder clay. The underlying solid geology is formed of a geological basement of Jurassic Kimmeridge Clay (Funnel 2005).

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

The proposed pipeline crosses the southern edge of Watlington Quarry. Aerial photographs show a significant concentration of cropmarks in the field. The northern half of this complex sequence of features has been subject to systematic archaeological excavation by NAU Archaeology since 2003, prior to mineral extraction undertaken by Cemex.

These excavations revealed evidence for intensive Iron Age and Roman land use, possibly indicating a farmstead in existence for up to 500 years. The buildings associated with this farmstead are suspected to be located on the higher, better-drained ground in the southern half of the field, corresponding to the location of the proposed pipeline. To the north, the pipeline route runs through the village of Tottenhill. Close to this is a cropmark of a probable Bronze Age ring-ditch. It is possible that there are other barrows in the vicinity.

Prior to the 2003 excavations no archaeological work had taken place within the area of the quarry, including Sixty Acre Field. However, further archaeological excavation was carried out in different phases during 2007 and 2008 in Police House Field to the north-east and along the conveyor route linking the two fields. Further field-systems and isolated features were identified, with additional evidence for Iron Age and Roman occupation.

Objects recovered prior to excavations on the site were isolated and poorly provenanced, often found during mineral extraction from the 19th century onwards. These finds include a Neolithic Axe (NHER 2266), Palaeolithic flint artefacts (NHER 2268), Early Bronze Age Beaker pottery (NHER 2268) and Early Saxon pottery (NHER 2266). There is also evidence for an Early Saxon cemetery to the east of the site, adjacent to the A10 (NHER 2266), and a possible Romano-British pottery kiln represented by kiln bars (NHER 2268). Similar kilns were found in Police House Field during the 2007 excavations, and in the northern part of Sixty Acre Field during 2005.

4.0 Methodology

The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence or absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

The brief required that five 10m x 1.60m trenches be excavated at intervals along the length of the proposed pipeline (Fig. 2).

Machine excavation was carried out with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a toothless ditching bucket, operated 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.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NAU Archaeology pro forma. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits. No environmental samples were taken.

The temporary benchmark used during the course of this work was transferred from an Ordnance Survey benchmark with a value of 9.50m OD, located on the side of a house on the southern side of Thieves' Bridge Road.

Site conditions were cold, with the work taking place in fine weather.

5.0 Results

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was located in a small field at the western end of the proposed pipeline (Fig. 2). It was oriented east–west and was excavated to a depth of 0.54m, where the natural was encountered. The topsoil (01) was a 0.30m-thick mid-brown sandy silt with frequent gravel inclusions. Below this was subsoil (02), a 0.24m-thick orange-brown sandy silt with occasional small and medium sub-rounded flint inclusions. The natural in this trench was an orange-brown clay silt with iron staining and frequent small–medium gravel inclusions.

No archaeological features or finds were located and the trench filled with water very soon after it was excavated.

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was oriented east–west and was excavated to a depth of 0.57m (Fig. 2). The topsoil (03) was 0.31m deep and consisted of a heavily ploughed mid-brown sandy silt, containing frequent gravel inclusions. Below this was subsoil (04), which was a 0.26m-thick mid-yellowish-brown sandy silt, with frequent gravel inclusions (Fig. 4). The topsoil and subsoil remained the same across this field, with slight variations in depth. The natural here was an orangey-yellow sand, with abundant gravel inclusions. A small north–south ditch was revealed at the western end of the trench [05] (Fig. 3). The sides were uneven and concave, with a flat base (Fig. 4).

A single flint 'piercer' was found within subsoil (04), but no further finds were recovered from this trench.

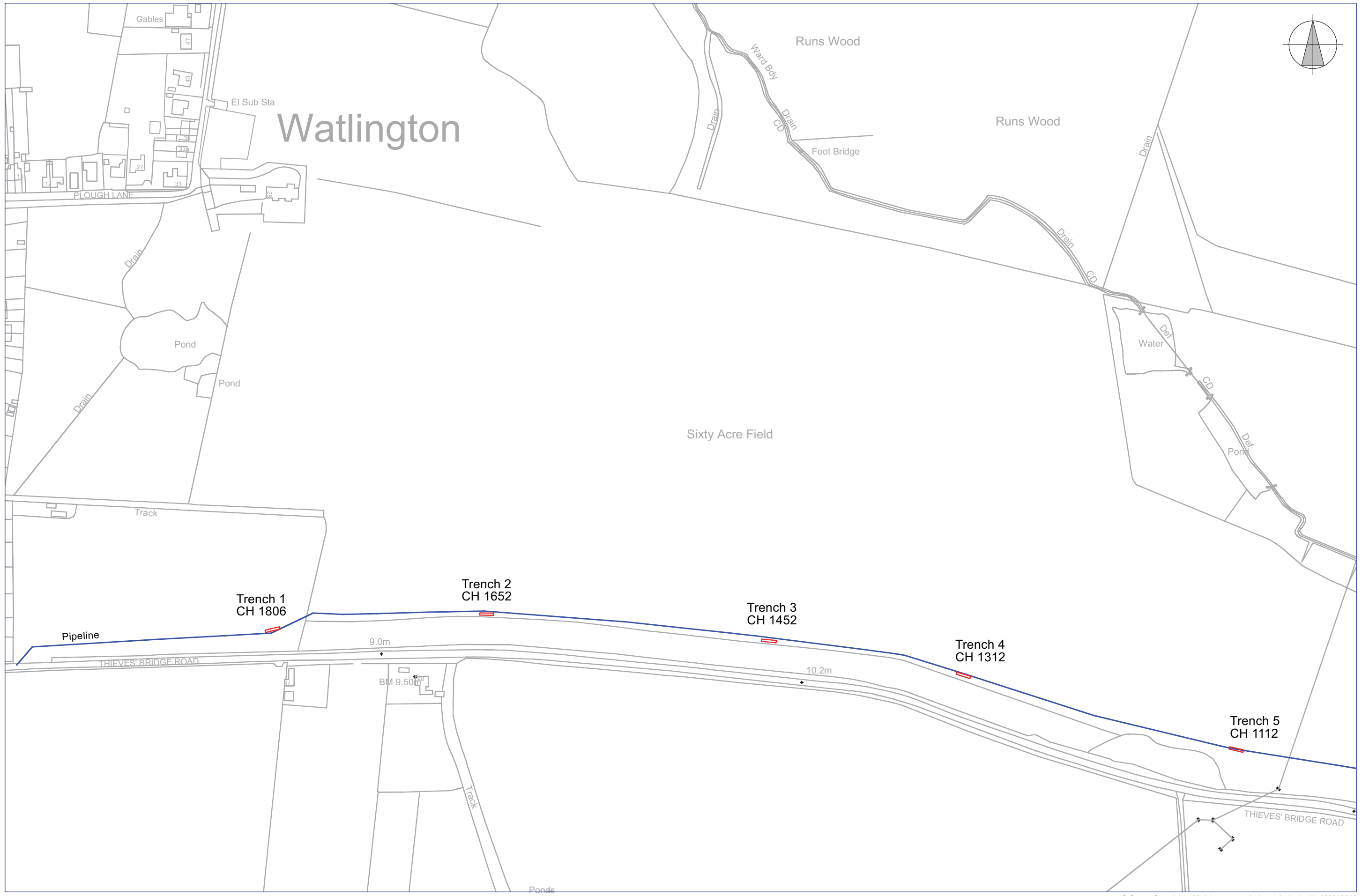


Figure 2 Trench locations

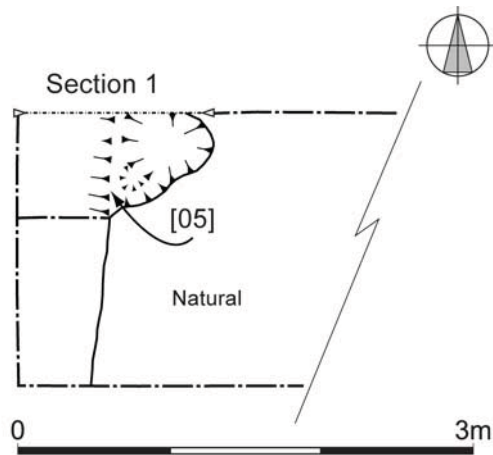


Figure 3 Plan of the western end of Trench 2

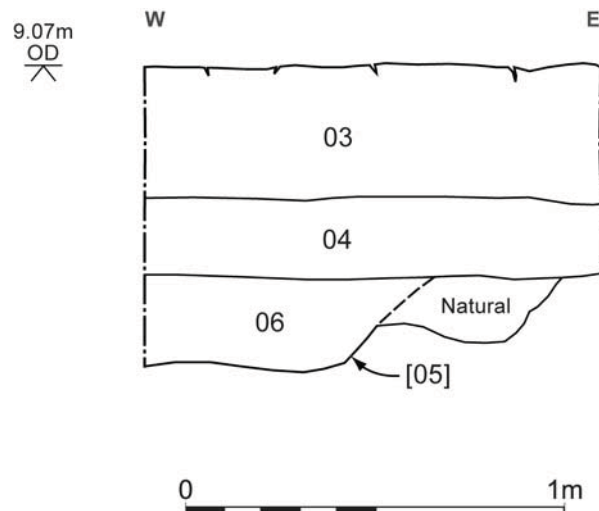


Figure 4 Section 1, south-facing section of Ditch [05]

5.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was oriented east–west and was located towards the centre of the field (Fig. 2). It was excavated to a depth of 0.51m, at which the natural was revealed. The topsoil in this trench was 0.40m thick and the subsoil was 0.11m thick (Figs 6–8). The natural within this trench was an orangey-yellow sand, with abundant gravel inclusions.

Three ditches were cut into the natural, below the subsoil (Fig. 5). Ditch [11] was 1.30m wide and oriented north–south. It was a shallow feature, 0.15m deep below the subsoil, with gradually sloping sides and a flat base (Fig. 6). Single fill (12) was a mid-brown sandy silt, containing frequent gravel inclusions, and a single small piece of prehistoric pottery.

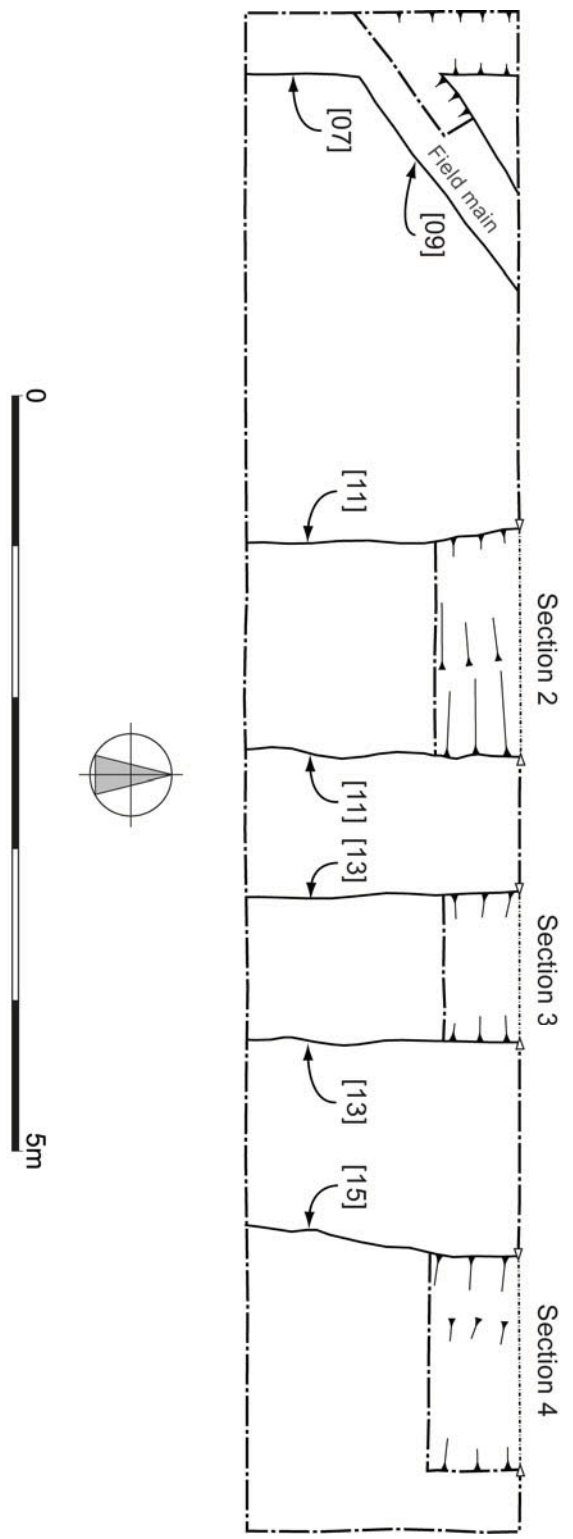


Figure 5 Plan of Trench 3

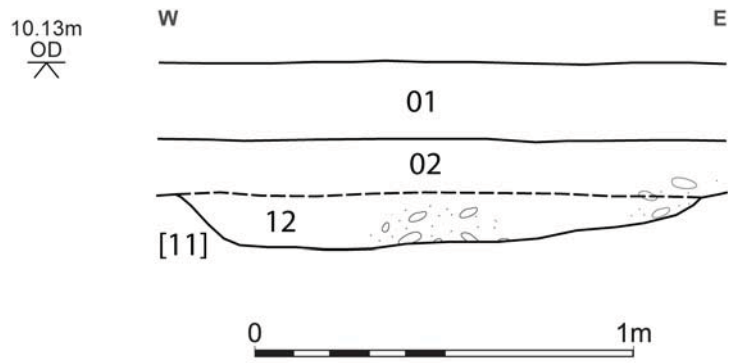


Figure 6 Section 2, south-facing section of Ditch [11]

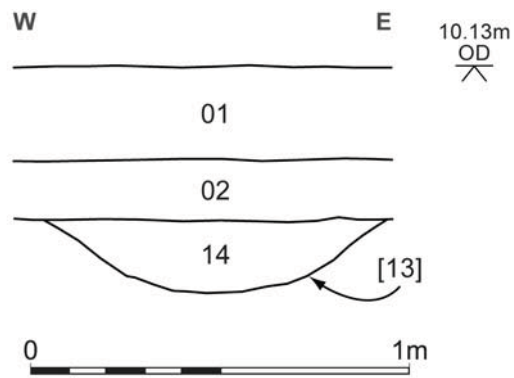


Figure 7 Section 3, south-facing section of Ditch [13]

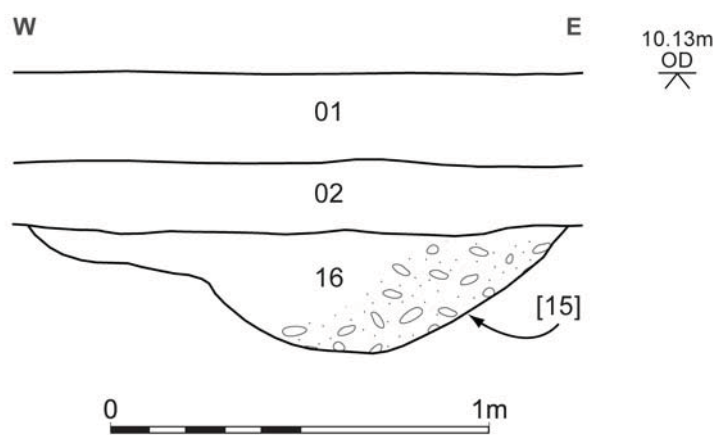


Figure 8 Section 4, south-facing section of Ditch [15]

Ditch [13] was 0.90m wide and oriented north–south (Fig. 5). It was 0.20m deep, with moderately sloping sides and a concave base (Fig. 7). Single fill (14) was a mid-brown sandy silt, with frequent gravel inclusions.

Ditch [15] was located at the east end of the trench (Fig. 5). It was 1.50m wide, and 0.30m deep, with a shallow 0.10m ‘shelf’ along the western edge (Fig. 8). The single fill (16) was a mid-brown sandy silt, with frequent gravel inclusions, but no finds.

Two intersecting land drains were located at the west end of the trench. They were both modern, with steep sides and a flat base. A small piece of glazed ceramic pipe was retrieved from the fill, and they were not recorded further.

5.4 Trench 4

Trench 4 was oriented east–west and was excavated to a depth of 0.65m (Fig. 2). The trench was located on the area of higher ground on the ridge that runs north–south across the field. The topsoil was 0.33m thick and the subsoil was 0.22m thick (Figs 10 and 11). Two parallel ditches were revealed oriented north–south across the trench (Fig. 9).

Ditch [17] was cut 0.21m deep into the natural, and had gradually sloping sides, a flat base and a shallow ‘shelf’ along the eastern edge (Fig. 10). Single fill (18) was a pale grey silt, with occasional small rounded gravel inclusions. There were no finds.

Ditch [19] appeared to be a terminus. It had steep sides, with a narrow concave base, and extended to a depth of 0.20m below the natural (Fig. 11). Single fill (20) was a mixed mid-greyish-brown sandy silt with occasional small rounded stone inclusions. There were no finds.

5.5 Trench 5

Trench 5 was located to the far east of 60 Acre Field, in the lower area at the foot of the ridge (Fig. 2). It was excavated to a depth of 0.45m, at which the natural was revealed. The topsoil was 0.35m thick and the subsoil below was 0.10m thick. The natural within this trench was different to that in Trench 4. The orangey-brown sandy gravel in this trench was present, but alternated with bands of heavy, pale greenish-grey boulder clay. The deposits were all natural and undisturbed. There were no archaeological features or finds within this trench.

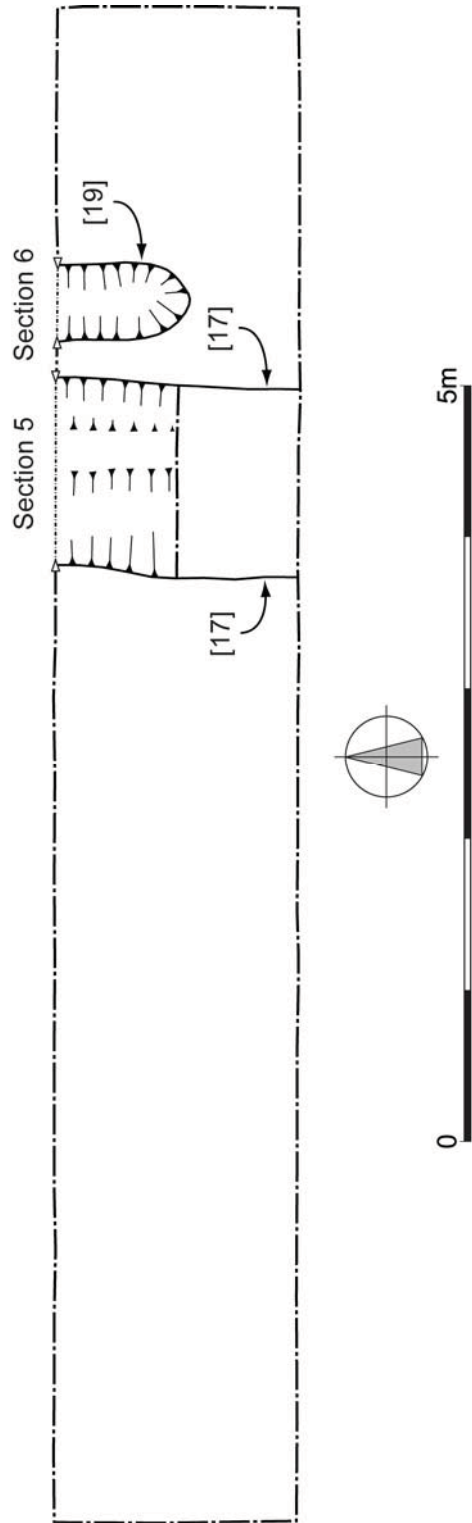


Figure 9 Plan of Trench 4

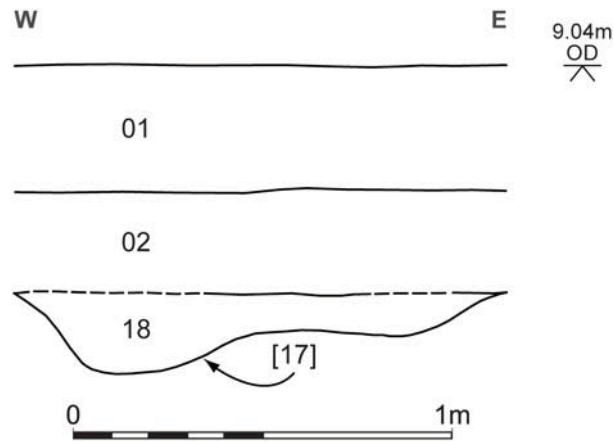


Figure 10 Section 5, south-facing section of Ditch [05]

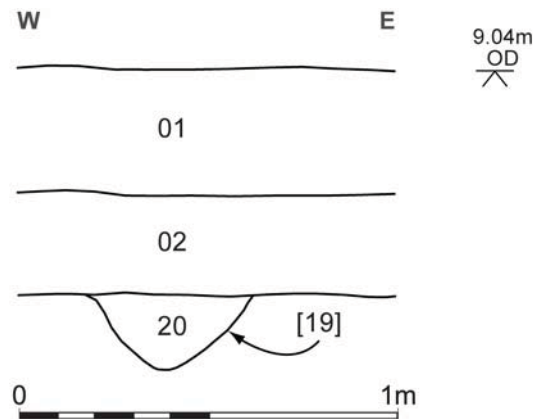


Figure 11 Section 6, south-facing section of Ditch [19]

6.0 The Finds

A small quantity of finds were recovered from the site. The assemblage consists of a single sherd of prehistoric pottery and a single piece of worked flint. Other artefacts recovered include an 18th–19th-century copper-alloy watch winder and a fragment of un-datable rolled lead sheet.

6.1 Pottery

By Sarah Percival

A small scrap of pottery weighing less than 1g was recovered from context (12). The sherd is made of flint-tempered fabric and is probably Iron Age, however the small size prohibits exact identification.

6.2 Flint

By Sarah Bates

A single struck flint was found at the site. This is a small piercer on a roughly triangular flake with slight retouch of its protruding distal point (04). The flake has abraded pebble-type cortex on its platform. There are very small notches on opposite sides of the flake towards its distal point. There appear to have been deliberately formed and may have served to hold the flint, possibly to haft it. The shape of the piercer, the position of the retouch and the possible evidence for hafting suggest that the piece probably dates to the later Neolithic or earlier Bronze Age (Butler 2005, 126 and 168).

7.0 Conclusions

From the small area revealed by the trenches in Sixty Acre Field, it is clear that the features exposed coincide with the concentration of cropmarks previously recorded in this field. The north–south ridge across the centre of the field appears to be made primarily of a firm orangey-brown gravel, the northern part of which has already been recorded, excavated and quarried during the 2005 phase of mineral extraction by Cemex.

This phase of excavation (carried out by NAU Archaeology in 2005) also revealed a high concentration of primarily prehistoric features, including frequent long ditches of varying sizes. Trenches 2, 3 and 4 in Sixty Acre Field were all located on the gravel natural and all contained north–south ditches of similar dimensions. Ditch [11] in Trench 3 contained a small fragment of Iron Age pottery. The close proximity, similar dimensions and shared orientation of the additional ditches indicate that they all of a similar date.

Trenches 1 and 5 were located away from the gravel ridge and revealed a natural of a slightly different character. Gravel inclusions were present in the topsoil and subsoil of these trenches, but the underlying natural was more clay than gravel. The site conditions were wet, but the deposits within Trenches 1 and 5 were noticeably wetter than those in Trenches 2–4. There was also more surface water visible. After being open for several hours, Trench 1 had filled with enough water to cover the clay natural, while Trenches 3 and 4 remained dry.

The evaluation has confirmed the character of the natural deposits across Sixty Acre Field, and revealed archaeological features present in the area, of a nature and date consistent with previous excavations just to the north of the area evaluated.

Recommendations for future work based upon this report will be made by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology.

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was undertaken by the author and Andy Phelps. The metal-detecting was carried out by Andy Barnett, who also processed the metal finds. The surveying data and trench location plan were provided by John Percival, and the HER information was provided by Alice Cattermole. Plant was provided by WR Chapman.

The finds processing was carried out by Lucy Talbot and Becky Crawford. The prehistoric pottery was analysed by Sarah Percival, and the flint was processed by Sarah Bates. The report was illustrated by Michael Feather and edited by Richard Hoggett.

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Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
01	Layer	Topsoil	-
02	Layer	Subsoil	-
03	Layer	Topsoil	-
04	Layer	Subsoil	-
05	Cut	Ditch	-
06	Deposit	Fill	-
07	Cut	Drain	Modern
08	Deposit	Fill	Modern
09	Cut	Drain	Modern
10	Deposit	Fill	Modern
11	Cut	Ditch	? Iron Age
12	Deposit	Fill	? Iron Age
13	Cut	Ditch	Prehistoric
14	Deposit	Fill	Prehistoric
15	Cut	Ditch	Prehistoric
16	Deposit	Fill	Prehistoric
17	Cut	Ditch	Prehistoric
18	Deposit	Fill	Prehistoric
19	Cut	Ditch	Prehistoric
20	Deposit	Fill	Prehistoric

Appendix 1b: OASIS feature summary table

Period	Feature type	Quantity
Prehistoric (500000BC to 42AD)	Ditch	5
Iron Age (800BC to 42AD)	Ditch	1
Modern (1900 to 2050 AD)	Drain	2

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Quantity	Weight (g)	Period
04	Flint - worked	1	-	Late Neolithic
12	Pottery	1	1	Iron Age

Appendix 2b: NHER Finds Summary Table

Period	Material	Quantity
Unknown	Rolled lead	1
Late Neolithic (2700 to 2201BC)	Flint	1
Iron Age (800BC to 42AD)	Pottery	1
Post-medieval (1540 to 1900AD)	Watch winder	1

Appendix 3: Pottery

Context	Fabric	Form	Qty	Wt (g)	Date
12	Flint tempered	Bodysherd	1	1	Iron Age

Appendix 4: Metal Objects

Context	Material	Qty	Description	Period
02	Lead	1	Rolled sheet fragment	Undiagnostic
04	Copper alloy	1	Watch winder	Post-medieval

Appendix 5: Flint

Context	Type	Quantity
04	Piercer	1