

**NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT**

Report No. 1018

**An Archaeological Watching Brief for  
Anglian Water Ltd at  
Abbey Road, Pentney**

40204 PEN

John Ames  
January 2005

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Location: Abbey Road, Pentney, Norfolk  
District: West Norfolk  
Grid Ref: TF 6984 1210  
HER No.: 40204 PEN  
Date of fieldwork: 5th to 12th January and 23rd February 2004

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## **Summary**

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken in advance of an Anglian Water pipeline, Abbey Road, Pentney, Norfolk.*

*The watching brief recorded burnt flints, undated ditches and a late post-medieval (perhaps modern) structure with related deposits.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

(Fig. 1)

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU) during the excavation of a water pipeline (total length of 770m) at Abbey Road, Pentney, Norfolk. The pipeline was located within the archaeologically sensitive area of the Nar Valley.

The report was commissioned and funded by Anglia Water Services Limited.

The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: ER/10/10/2003).

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**

The site was located in west Norfolk lowland, between the boundaries of High Norfolk chalk scarp and the north-west Brecklands. The geology within the area of the watching brief consists of river alluvium and peat, orange brown sands and river terrace gravels (Wade-Martins 1994).

## **3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background**

(Fig. 2)

Several sites of archaeological and historical interest are listed on the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) in close proximity to the pipeline. These sites are listed in broad chronological order below.

### **Prehistoric**

- HER 19873, 19881 and 19882: During the 1980s, the Fenland Survey recorded three prehistoric pot boiler scatters within the vicinity of the pipeline route. The majority of the pot boiler scatters produced associated pieces of worked flint.

- HER 19882: the Fenland Survey also revealed the edge of an island originally covered in peat. The surviving deposits covered an area of c. 40m x 18m and consisted of sandy gravel with some carrstone fragments and contained a scatter of pot boilers also occasional worked flints, including Mesolithic blades. Also found was a worked bone handle fragment of possible post-medieval date.

### **Roman**

- HER 25774: to the east of the pipeline is a cropmark site. The cropmark consists of a square enclosure evocative of a Romano-Celtic temple but uncharacteristically large. In 1998, a fieldwalking survey of the cropmark did not produce any artefacts of Roman date.

### **Medieval**

- HER 3924: the Priory of Holy Trinity, Saints Mary and Mary (Scheduled Ancient Monument 30590) was a medieval manorial complex that consisted of a priory, a 14th-century gatehouse, also a ?17th-century house and barn. In 2001-2, the scheduled area was greatly extended, and now includes NHERs 23013, 23240, 23635, 36585 and 31143.

### **Post-medieval**

- HER 3471: Pentney Watermill has been disused since at least the early part of the 20th century. A site visit in 1978, revealed ?19th-century brick piers and one remaining arch across the river. The remaining brick piers, however, were removed from the river in 1995. To the south is a ruined carrstone shed with a skeleton roof, formerly attached to the mill. Bryant's 1826 map of Norfolk marks this as Windmill (sic) Inn rather than a watermill.

## **4.0 Methodology**

(Fig. 2)

The objective of this watching brief was to record any archaeological evidence revealed during the excavation of a water pipeline.

On commencement of the project the length of the pipeline was divided into three areas:

- Area 1, the length of the pipeline south of the River Nar.
- Area 2, the length of the pipeline north of the River Nar (excluding the footpath).
- Area 3, the public footpath.

The Brief required that an archaeologist be present during the topsoil stripping of the 6.9m easement of Areas 1 and 2. For Area 1 machine excavation was carried out with a hydraulic 360° excavator using a 1.60m toothless ditching bucket. Area 2 was striped using a JCB-type excavator with a 0.60m ditching bucket. No easement was machined for Area 3 as this was situated on a public footpath, therefore, only a narrower pipe trench c. 0.60m wide by c. 1.10m deep, was excavated.

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 recorded on site or retained for inspection.

All 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.

Site conditions were very good with clear access to and around the site. The weather conditions varied from rainy to sunny.

## 5.0 Results

(Appendix 1)

### Area 1

(Figs 3 and 4)

The topsoil ([1]) in this area measured between c. 0.30 and 0.40m in depth and consisted of mid brown sandy loam from which four metal finds were retrieved. The subsoil ([2]) was a light brown silty sand which measured c. 0.15m in depth, in which six pieces of burnt flint were recorded.

Located at the north-east end of Area 1 was a deposit ([3]) which measured c. 3m in length by c. 0.62m in width and consisted of demolition rubble including bricks, mortar and a dark brown silty sand (Fig. 3). This rubble could be related to the remains of three walls ([4], [5] and [6]) exposed after the removal of the topsoil. Wall [4] was aligned south-east to north-west and measured c. 1.30m in length by c. 0.30m in width and survived to a depth of c. 0.50m. Wall [5] was aligned south-west to north-east and measured c. 1.20m in length by c. 0.30m in width and survived only to a depth c. 0.20m (two brick courses). Wall [6] was also aligned south-west to north-east and continued under the eastern edge of the easement and where possible to record it measured c. 2.30m in length by c. 0.40m in width. The bricks from which these walls were constructed included very hard fired examples with frogs.

To the south-west of these structural remnants were two ditches (Fig. 4). Ditch [7] was aligned east-west and measured c. 9m x 1m by c. 0.50m deep. It was filled with a mid brown silty sand ([8]) with moderate small to medium sized rounded, sub-rounded and sub-angular flint. No finds were recovered. Ditch [9] was aligned north-south and measured c. 9m x 1.50m by c. 0.50m in depth. It was filled with a mid brown silty sand ([10]) with moderate small to medium sized rounded, sub-rounded and sub-angular flint. No finds were recovered. A slot (unnumbered) was excavated at the intersection of these two ditches but due to the nature of their fills it was not possible to discern a relationship. The similarity of the ditch cuts and fills, however, suggests that they were contemporary.

In addition a natural pale grey silt alluvial deposit ([11]) was encountered, located mainly to the west of the site and a peat deposit ([12]) recorded at the eastern end of the site. The peat measured c. 100m from east to west and was c. 0.35m deep. Below the peat deposit natural river/terrace gravels ([13]) were recorded. No archaeological features or finds came from the alluvial, peat or gravel deposits.

## **Area 2**

Area 2 was located to the north of the River Nar, within the fields to the east of the footpath and up to Abbey Road. The pipeline easement measured c. 240m by c. 5m in width and was machined to a depth of c. 0.55m. The topsoil ([14]) measured c. 0.35 to 0.40m in depth and consisted of a dark brown silty sand. The subsoil ([15]) measured c. 0.15m in depth and consisted of a mid orange brown silty sand. No archaeological deposits or features were found in this area.

## **Area 3**

Area 3 was located along a public footpath between Areas 1 and 2. A trench measuring c. 120m in length by 0.60m in width was machined to a depth of c. 1.10m. A thin brick and flint rubble made-up layer ([16]) up to 10cm in depth overlay the topsoil ([17]) which was up to 0.50m deep. Below this was a mid orange brown silty sand subsoil ([18]) excavated to a depth of 0.50m. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered.

## **6.0 The Finds**

(Appendix 2)

Few artefacts were recovered during the survey. Six unstratified burnt flint fragments of probable prehistoric date were found in the subsoil ([2]), but not retained. The remainder of the finds consist of four metal detected objects which are described below.

### **Small Finds**

(Appendix 3)

The metal detector survey resulted in the retrieval of four metal finds from the topsoil [(1)]. These consist of a single incomplete ?post-medieval copper alloy sword mount (SF1), also two ovoid and one cylindrical lead weights (SF2).

## **7.0 Conclusions**

Archaeological features and deposits were recorded along the length of the pipeline easement in Area 1. The two ditches found were undated while the remnants of the structure recorded were certainly late post-medieval and possibly modern in date. The alluvium deposit, however, indicates that this area was under water for a period and was possibly turned into pasture or arable when the River Nar was canalised. Moreover, the peat deposit encountered at the eastern end of Area 1 maybe the old course of the River Nar or possibly a tributary.

Although Area 2 was within close proximity of the Pentney Abbey complex no occupational evidence was found. Moreover no archaeological deposits were recorded in Area 3 where only made-up ground with a very limited topsoil horizon was recorded.



### **Acknowledgements**

The author would like to thank Anglian Water Ltd and in particular Chris Bretton for his help during the project. Thanks also to Edwin Rose of Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA) for his advice and local knowledge and Jan Allen (NLA) for supplying the Historic and Environmental Records. Lucy Talbot processed and analysed the finds. Metal detecting was carried out by Andy Barnett. The report was illustrated by Steven Tatler, produced by David Dobson and edited by Alice Lyons.

### **Bibliography**

Wade-Martins, P., 1994      *An Historical Atlas of Norfolk*, Norfolk Museums Service



### **Appendix 1: Context Summary**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Period</b>
01	Deposit	Topsoil	
02	Deposit	Subsoil	
03	Deposit	Demolition rubble and dark brown silty sand	Late post-medieval to modern
04	Masonry	Southwest-to-northeast linear wall	
05	Masonry	Northwest-to-southeast linear wall	
06	Masonry	Northwest-to-southeast linear wall	
07	Cut	Northwest-to-southeast linear ditch	
08	Deposit	Fill of [07]	
09	Cut	Southeast-to-northeast linear ditch	
10	Deposit	Fill of [09]	
11	Deposit	Alluvium deposit	
12	Deposit	Natural peat deposit	
13	Deposit	Natural river/terrace gravels	
14	Deposit	Topsoil (Area 2)	
15	Deposit	Subsoil (Area 2)	
16	Deposit	Made-up ground (Area 3)	
17	Deposit	Made-up ground (Area 3)	
18	Deposit	Mid orange brown silty sand subsoil	

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

<b>Context</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Weight (kg)</b>	<b>Period</b>
01	Copper-alloy	1	-	?Post-medieval
01	Lead	3	-	-
06	Burnt flint	6	-	Prehistoric

### **Appendix 3: Small Finds**

<b>Small Find</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Object Name</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Period/date</b>
1	1	1	Copper alloy	Mount	? Sword	? Post-medieval
2	1	3	Lead	Weights	2 x ovoid, 1 x cylindrical	



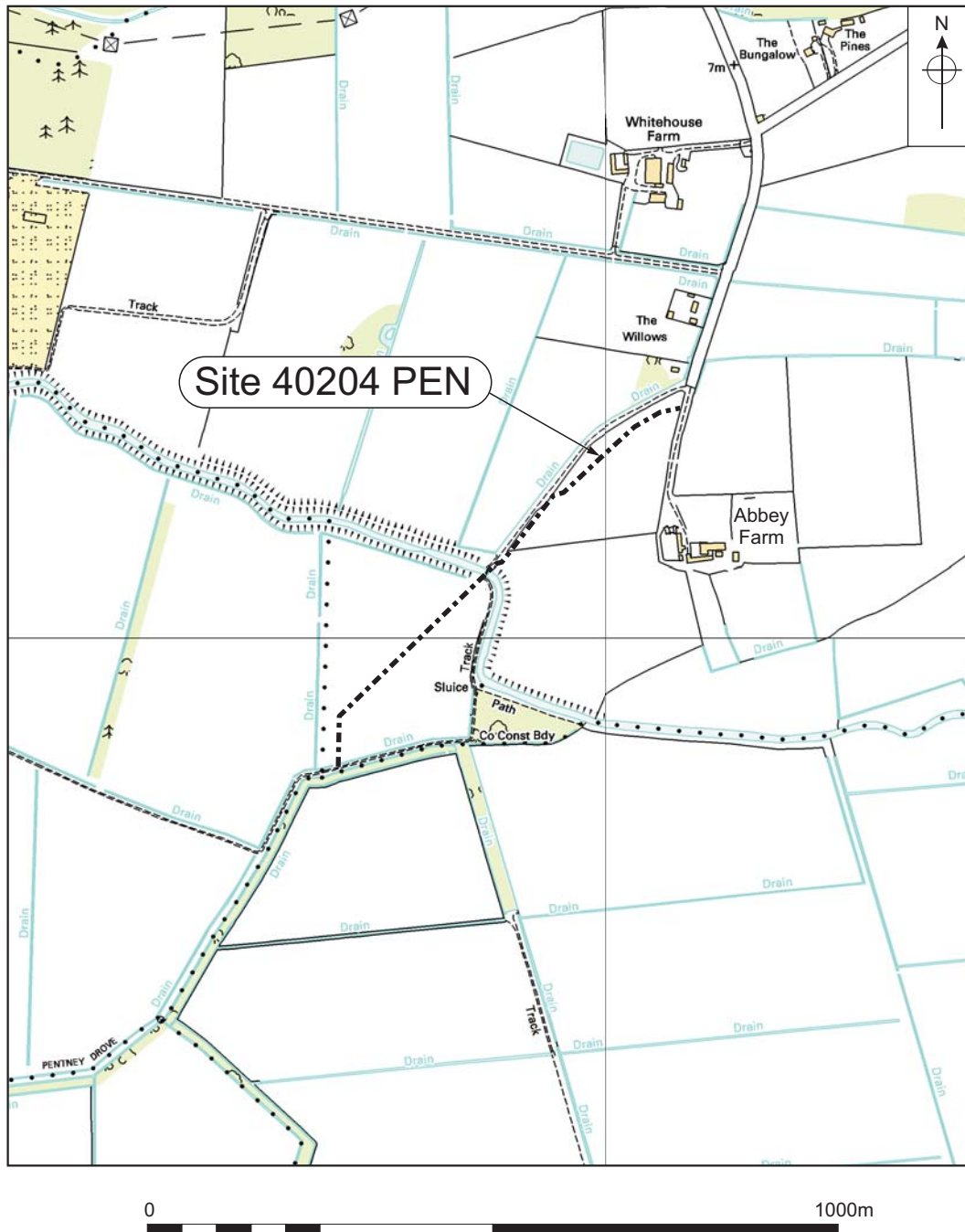


Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:10,000

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Fig. 1 is based upon the Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 map with the permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office © Crown Copyright  
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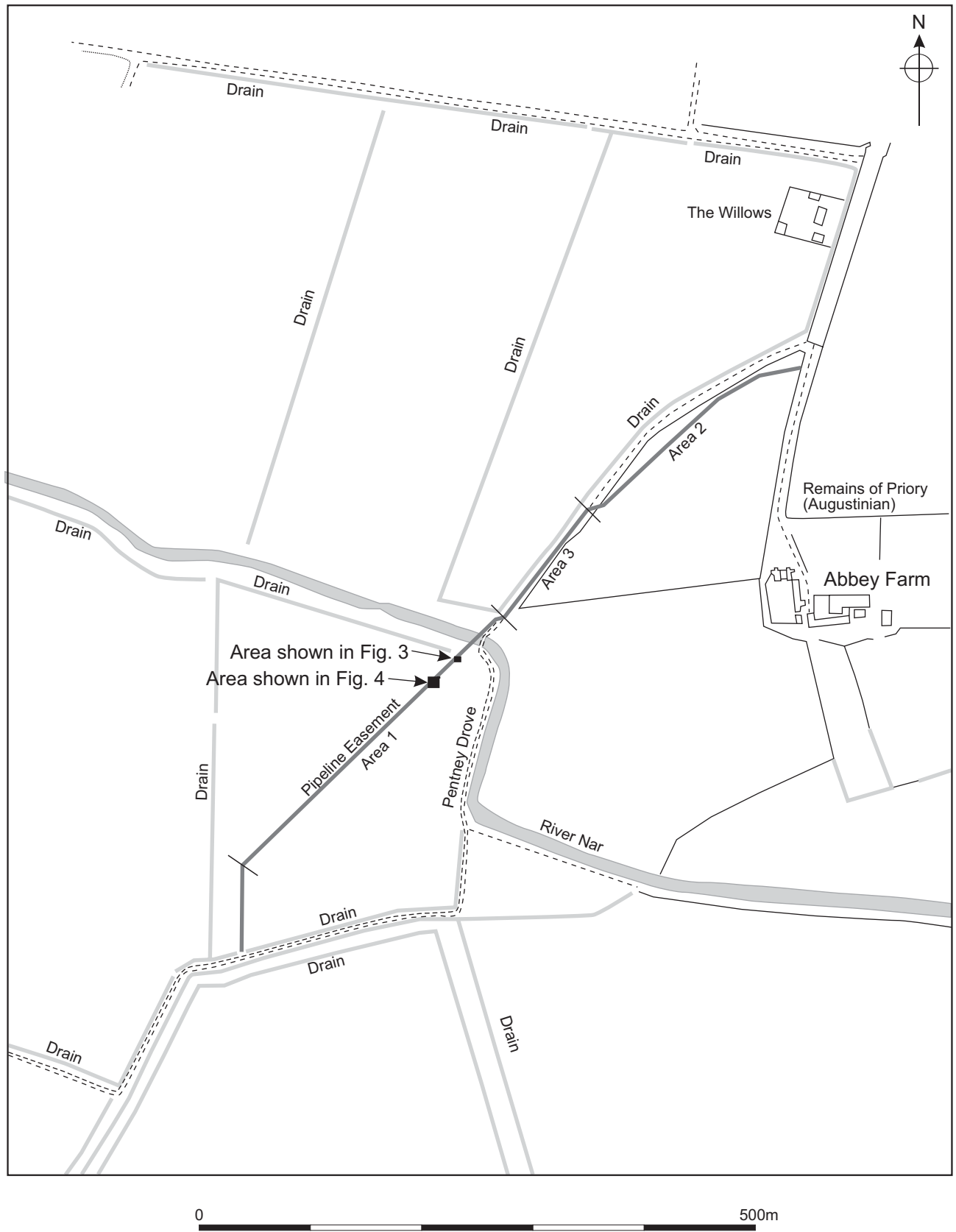


Figure 2 . Pipeline easement showing areas of interest. Scale 1: 5000

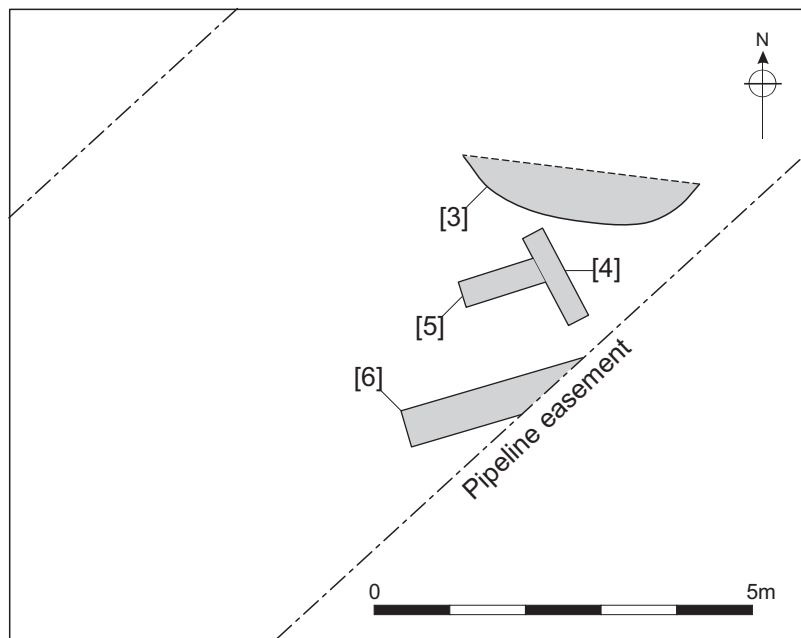


Figure 3. Plan of rubble deposit [3] and walls [4], [5] and [6]. Scale 1: 100

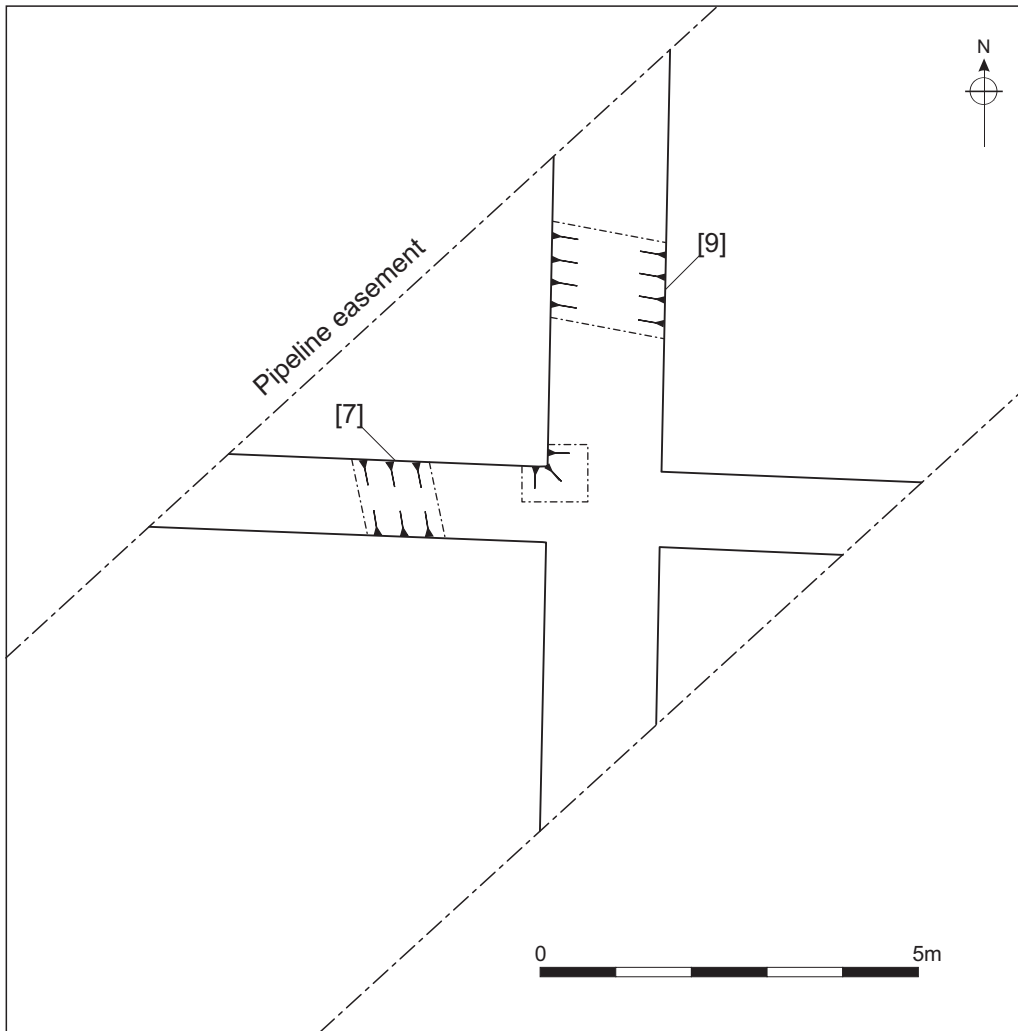


Figure 4. Plan of ditches [7] and [9]. Scale 1: 100