ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING ON THE ALSTON TO HILLHEAD WATER MAIN, KINGSWEAR TORBAY, DEVON

Prepared for South West Water

by A. Farnell

With contributions from P. Manning and C. Smart

Exeter Archaeology

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Summary

An archaeological and Geophysical assessment of the Allston to Hillhead (NGR SX 8920 5540 to SX 9020 5390) proposed water pipeline was undertaken by Exeter Archaeology (EA) during October 2008 (EA Report 09.46).

The assessment established that the route of the pipeline would traverse a landscape known to have been suitable for prehistoric occupation and a number of features, potentially of prehistoric date, were indentified in the geophysical survey.

Subsequently, a watching brief and recording programme was undertaken by Exeter Archaeology in November 2008 during the topsoil stripping and cutting of the pipeline trench with particular attention paid to locations where features had been identified in assessment.

The principle findings were those of a section of a probable curvilinear ditch, represented by at least two phases, of possible prehistoric date (NGR SX 8912 5520) and a metalled trackway of uncertain date (NGR SX 8922 5460).

1. INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared for South West Water, and presents the results of archaeological recording undertaken by Exeter Archaeology (EA) in November 2008 on the route of a pipeline between Alston reservoir (SX 892 554) and Hillhead reservoir to the south (SX 902 539) It represents archaeological work requested by Devon County Council's Historic Environment Service.

The site has been allocated an OASIS reference number of 60214.

1.1 **The site** (Fig.1)

The site is located to the west of Brixham and the pipeline follows a route from Alston reservoir at its northern extent, to Hillhead reservoir at its southern extent; a distance of some 2.4km. The route lies to the west of the A379 and approximately follows the route of that road. It passes through predominantly ploughed fields and some pasture. It crosses two minor roads towards its northern end. The topography of the route is gently undulating, with good views at the northern end over the River Dart and Torbay.

1.2 Geology

The geology of the area dates from the Devonian period. The southern part of the route consists of sandstone with interbeds of siltstone and slaty mudstone. The central part of the route consists of mudstone with slaty laminae and thin beds of limestone and fossil coquinas, and the northern part consists of slaty mudstone with thin beds of siltstone and limestone to the base.¹

2. PROJECT SPECIFICATION

Specifications for archaeological recording were supplied by Devon County Historic Environment Service (DCHES) acting on behalf of Devon County Council. The principal requirements were:

- Production of desk based assessment,
- geophysical survey to be conducted on selected areas of the pipe trench route,
- areas subject to geophysical survey to be stripped of topsoil to the full width of the easement under supervision,
- geophysical anomalies to be identified on the ground, investigated and recorded as appropriate,
- watching brief to be conducted on the excavation of the pipe trench outside of areas subject to geophysical survey,
- reporting and archiving as appropriate.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK BASED ASSESSMENT AND GEOPHYSICAL ASSESSMENT by Pru Manning and Chris Smart

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¹ BGS 2004.

The assessment conformed to a brief provided by the Devon County Council Historic Environment Service (HES). The work comprised a desk-based assessment of the pipeline route and its vicinity and a geophysical survey solely of the pipeline route prior to works commencing. This assessment was intended to inform the recording element and to allow for the targeting of features identified in the geophysical survey. A full account of this assessment may be found in *Archaeological Assessment and Geophysical Survey of the proposed Alston to Hillhead Water Main, Kingswear and Torbay*, 2009, Manning, P. and Smart C. For the purposes of this report a summary of the findings from both the documentary and geophysical research is given here

3.2 Summary of the documentary research (for site references see Fig.2)

The pipeline route lies within a landscape of medieval and post-medieval fields associated with the surrounding farms, including Hillhead (Site 1). The settlement of Lupton (Site 8) was referred to in Domesday and has been suggested as the possible site of a prehistoric settlement. Prehistoric activity in the area is attested by the presence of the nearby Noss Hillfort an Iron Age hillfort also known as Greenway Camp (Scheduled Ancient Monument 33792; Old DV 281). At the north end of the route the adjacent fields with the name 'Yamberry' (Site 20) may indicate former earthworks of prehistoric or medieval date (the place-name element berry or bury being indicative of such – Gelling, 1998), and cropmarks representing enclosures and a field system are recorded (Site 21).

Features of Post-Medieval or later date include Kennel Wood, a small part of Lupton Park (Grade II* Historic Park, Site 5). The kennels within the wood are protected as a Grade II Listed Building (Site 6). The fieldname 'Deadmans Close' (Site 13) may relate to post-medieval activity, possibly the site of a gallows.

There are a number of quarry sites along the route, many of at least early 19th-century origin and some of which are still evident as features (e.g. Site 17). Evidence of a building present in 1803-4 was also found (Site 15).

Cartographic evidence suggested that there has been little significant change along the pipeline route since the early 19th century, the main alterations being the removal of a number of field boundaries. The surviving boundaries all consist of hedgebanks.

The most recent site to emerge from documentary research is a WWII anti-aircraft battery, however, the precise location of this has not been established, and it may have lain some distance from the pipeline route; an approximate position has been given as Site 14.

3.3 Summary of the geophysical assessment (see Figs.3/4)

The geophysical assessment sought to investigate the potential for archaeological remains prior to the commencement of ground works along the line of the Alston to Hillhead trunk main. Magnetic survey was chosen as a suitable method. Areas of survey were distributed along the course of the pipeline, specifically targeting positions of archaeological potential. These were largely determined on topographic grounds.

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² Brief dated 12.9.08.

It was apparent that Field 1 had undergone at least two phases of boundary changes and Field 3 was once subdivided into five smaller fields. Feature L in Field 3 corresponds to a structure shown on an Ordnance Survey drawing of 1803-04 and building debris was noted in this location. Features D in Field 1, and G in Field 3 (Fig. 3), were of the greatest archaeological potential as they appeared to represent curvilinear ditches that are unrelated to the historic field pattern. They were potentially of medieval, Roman or prehistoric origin. Heavy ploughing obscured the character of Feature Group M in Field 4 (Fig.4), but it also has archaeological potential. The heavy plough scarring seen along the length of the pipeline route demonstrates the shallow depth of soils and the potential for damage to in situ archaeological deposits.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING

4.1 Method

Seven areas along the pipeline route had been subject to evaluation by magnetometer survey, totalling approximately 560m at a consistent width of 20m. These areas were stripped using a tracked excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket.

Machine excavation continued until either natural subsoil or the top of archaeological deposits were reached. Where archaeological deposits were exposed, areas were cleaned back by hand, and the deposits investigated and recorded.

Features identified in the assessment as post-medieval boundaries were to be identified and recorded using photography only. Other features were, as a minimum, to be investigated where they crossed the proposed pipe trench, with further investigations where clarification was necessary.

Areas not evaluated by magnetometer survey were monitored during the excavation of the pipe trench. Where archaeological deposits were exposed, areas were cleaned by hand, and the deposits investigated and recorded.

Standard EA recording procedures were employed. Stratigraphic information was recorded on *pro-forma* single context record sheets, a drawn record was compiled in plan and section at scales of 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50 as appropriate and a photographic record was prepared in black and white film and digital (colour) format.

4.2 Results

Results of area strip

Stripped areas were located within fields numbered 1-5 (Figs.3 and 4) targeted on the 18 potential features identified during the magnetometer survey. These features are labeled A-R. Each feature was identified during the monitoring of the topsoil strip and is described below. Linear feature 307, located in field 3, had not been identified by the magnetometer survey, but was observed during the topsoil strip; it is also described below.

The general layer sequence observed across the stripped areas consisted of undisturbed natural subsoil encountered at a depth of approximately 350mm, overlain

by grey brown silty clay topsoil. All features were observed to cut into the natural subsoil and were overlain by topsoil.

Field 1

Feature A

This feature consisted of two parallel ditches approximately 1.5m apart and aligned approximately northeast-southwest. The space between the ditches appeared to be the truncated remains of a substantial hedgebank. It has been reported in the geophysical survey as a probable post-medieval field division. The evidence from excavation supported this interpretation.

Feature B

This anomaly, which was cited in the geophysical survey, was not located and it may have been the result of material within the topsoil.

Feature C

This feature consisted of an approximately east-west aligned ditch cutting natural subsoil. It has been reported in the geophysical survey as a probable post-medieval field division. The evidence from excavation supported this interpretation.

Feature D (Figs. 5 & 7)

This feature, which was interpreted by geophysical survey as at least one curvilinear ditch, was found to comprise of at least five individually cut features. These features were divided into two distinct phases. The first was comprised of ditches 106, 113 and 114. Ditch 106 was aligned northeast-southwest and measuring at least 11.7m long. At its northeast extent it continued beyond the limit of excavation. At its southwest extent it split, just before the limit of excavation, into two separate ditches 113 and 114. The profile of ditch 106 was steep sided with a concave base. The sides were occasionally irregular, due to the nature of the bedded slate through which it was cut. From east to west the ditch became gradually wider and deeper. The backfilling material consisted of layers of redeposited natural, abundant with slate pieces, presumably the result of natural weathering. No finds were recovered from the fills of this ditch. Charcoal sample <2> was recovered from fill 112.

Ditch 113 continued in an approximate southwesterly direction from the southwestern end of ditch 106. Approximately 1.3m of this ditch was exposed in plan. The backfill of this feature consisted of primary, weathered, redeposited natural fill 119, overlain by a further two layers of naturally formed weathered backfill (122,115). No finds were recovered from these fills.

Ditch 114 continued in an approximate easterly direction from the southwestern end of ditch 106. Approximately 1.3m of this ditch was exposed in plan. The backfill of this feature consisted of primary, weathered, redeposited natural fill 121, overlain by a further layer of naturally formed weathered backfill (120). No finds were recovered from these fills.

In profile, any visible intersection between these two ditches had been removed by later ditch 104. The intersection between these two ditches and ditch 106 revealed no discernable relationship, suggesting that they were contemporary with one another.

The difference exhibited between the fills of 113,114 and the fills of 106, appear to be the result of a sudden and striking change in the natural subsoil from which their fills were derived. Ditch 106 was cut into slate bedrock. At the point of intersection with 113 and 114, the natural became highly weathered and fragmented slate (possibly within a naturally occurring fissure).

The second phase of feature D comprised two opposing ditch termini 102 and 104. Both of these features were cut directly into the top of the earlier ditches, following their line almost exactly. Ditch 102 was aligned northeast southwest and terminated approximately 8m from the eastern limit of excavation. In profile it possessed moderately steep sides and a concave base. The backfill consisted of a patchy primary fill resulting from natural silting, below a layer of homogenous mid brown friable silty clay. Ditch 104 was once again aligned northeast-southwest and terminated approximately 3.7m from the western limit of excavation. It was moderately steep sided with a flat base in profile. The backfill consisted of mottled mid brown and yellowish brown, friable silty clay. Possibly deliberate infilling. No finds were recovered from the fills of either feature.

Field 2

Feature E

This feature was observed to be a narrow linear feature; probable modern service trench.

Feature F

This feature was a wide shallow linear gully, aligned northwest-southeast. It followed the head of a coombe continuing in a northwesterly direction. It is likely to represent a naturally scoured channel.

Field 3

Feature G (Figs. 6 & 8)

This feature was located at the northern end of field 3. It consisted of a wide shallow east-west aligned ditch, measuring at least 16.2m in length and continuing beyond the limit of excavation in both directions. Its profile was wide and shallow with a slightly undulating base. The backfill consisted of a lens of weathered natural on the southern side of the cut (303), overlain by probable deliberately dumped infill 304/306.

Feature H

This feature recorded by geophysics was not observed during the topsoil strip. It is likely to be associated with plough scarring.

Feature I

This feature was identified as an area of natural variation.

Feature J

This northwest-southeast aligned linear feature could not be identified during the topsoil strip. It is likely to be associated with plough scarring.

Feature K

This feature consisted of two parallel ditches approximately 1m apart and aligned approximately northeast-southwest. The space between the ditches appeared to be the truncated remains of a substantial hedgebank. It had been reported in the geophysical survey as a probable post-medieval field division. The evidence from excavation supported this interpretation.

Feature L

This feature was not exposed during the topsoil strip. Its location placed it below the spoil heap to the east of the easement.

Feature 307 (Figs. 6 & 8)

This feature was a northeast-southwest aligned linear measuring at least 23.5m long, continuing beyond the limit of excavation in both directions. It possessed a wide shallow profile with gradually sloping sides and a flat base. Overlying natural bedded slate, covering the flat base of the cut, was a thin layer of tightly packed small sub angular quartz pebbles forming a compacted metalled surface. The backfill of the feature consisted of lenses of weathered natural at either side of the cut (314,315) overlying the metelled layer, overlain by dark organic silt lens 313 followed by thick mid brown, humic silty clay layer 310. No finds were recovered from these fills. Sample <1> was taken from fill 313.

Field 4

Features M, N, O and P

These features were identified as areas of natural variation.

Field 5

Features Q and R

These features were identified as areas of natural variation.

Results of watching brief

Excavation of the pipe trench within the stripped areas of the wayleave was observed over a length of approximately 820m. Two additional linear features were observed to cross the line of the pipe trench in Field 3. Feature 316 was a narrow gully, approximately 320mm wide and 300mm deep, backfilled by dark reddish brown silty clay. Feature 318 was a wide linear cut located in the southern half of field 3. It is likely to represent a ditch, possibly associated with a truncated field boundary.

4.3 Discussion

Prehistoric? (ditch complex, feature D)

This feature comprised a moderately sized ditch cut into natural slate (106), splitting into two ditches (113,114) at its western extent. This occurred at the exact location of a change in the natural subsoil to a significantly softer material. Further to the east, beyond the limit of excavation, the magnetometer survey appears to show the ditch curving to the east. The backfill of the ditch appears to be the result of natural weathering. No finds were recovered from the fill. A small quantity of charcoal was

recovered (sample 2), which may be suitable for Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS) dating.

Whilst no dating evidence is currently available for these ditches, the character of the features is consistent with ditches of prehistoric date. There is a significant amount of known prehistoric activity in the area, including the nearby Noss Hillfort of Iron Age date, and extensive flint scatters from the area around Brixham Golf Club consisting of lithic material from the Neolithic and Bronze Ages³.

Ditches 102 and 104 appear to represent a later re-establishment of the ditch which had become infilled. Both ditches, which are likely to be contemporary, are cut directly into the top fill of ditch 106 forming two opposing termini. There is no direct evidence to date these features, although once again their character is consistent with ditches of prehistoric date and they appear to have a clear relationship with the ditches which preceded them suggesting a continuity of purpose.

There is limited evidence upon which to base an interpretation for these features. However, the available evidence is not inconsistent with a large ditched enclosure, typical of the Iron Age. Such enclosures frequently featured ditches branching in different directions as well as long ditches excavated in shorter sections with opposing termini. Such enclosures can be indicative of small settlements or farmsteads.⁴ It is also worth noting the commanding position of the enclosure if that is what the features represent, which occupy a hilltop location, overlooking Torbay and the Dart river valley.

Medieval – Early Post Medieval? (Field 3, feature G and feature 307)

Neither of these linear features appears on the earliest mapping, nor does their position or alignment respect the surrounding layout of post-medieval fields. It is possible, therefore, that they predate the formation of this field system. Feature 307 has a rammed stone base, which is clearly deliberately lain. It seems possible that it is the remains of a trackway that either joined or even predated the route of the A379. With no dating evidence for either of these features and little known about the origin of the A379 it is impossible to offer further interpretation.

Post Medieval

Three truncated field boundaries, identified by the magnetometer survey, were observed during the topsoil strip. All were represented a map of 1803-4. Feature 318, observed during the watching brief, appears to represent a fourth field boundary, dividing the southern end of field 3. This boundary is also present of the map of 1803-4.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The pipeline route passes through fields of known post-medieval date. The geophysical survey revealed 3 former post medieval field boundaries (A, C and K), all of which were observed by the survival of their associated ditches during the

³ EA Report No 08.77

⁴ Cunliffe 1974, 161-163

archaeological recording phase, in addition to a fourth field boundary observed outside of the area of geophysical survey.

Feature D, identified as a curvilinear ditch during the geophysical survey, represented at least two phases of probable prehistoric activity located at the approximate top of the hill in field 1. A small amount of charcoal (sample <2>) recovered from the infill of the first phase of this feature may be suitable for an AMS date.

The two features at the northern end of Field 3 (feature G and feature 307) have been tentatively interpreted as medieval owing to the fact that they do not appear on later mapping and do not appear to be prehistoric or Roman in character. It is worth noting that although it picked up the relatively ephemeral feature G, the magnetometer survey failed to detect feature 307, despite its greater size and compaction, with 307 almost certainly representing the remains of a metalled trackway.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX 1: ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLES

Sample	Context	Description	on Processed Flot Weights (g)		Approx Contents	
No.			1mm	500μ	300μ	
1	313	Dark organic layer	0	0	0	Empty
2	112	Charcoal pieces from possible prehistoric ditch fill.	_	_	_	Charcoal lumps

Two samples were recovered. Sample <2> contained a quantity of charcoal suitable for Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS) dating.

APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT LISTING

Table 1: Field 1

Context	Depth b.g.s.	Description	Interpretation
100		Mid grey brown loamy silt	Topsoil
101		Bedded slate bedrock	Natural subsoil
102		Shallow NE-SW aligned linear. Terminates at SW end	Ditch cut
103		Mid grey brown, friable, silty clay with moderate slate frags	Fill of 102 (as seen in slot 4)
104		Shallow NE-SW aligned linear. Terminates at NE end	Ditch cut
105		Mottled mid brown, friable silty clay with rare slate frags and sub-angular stones	Fill of 104 (as seen in slot 1)
106		NE-SW aligned linear, slits into two ditches as SW end	Ditch Cut
107		Mid yellowish brown, soft, silty clay with abundant slate pieces	Primary fill of 106 (as seen in slot 3)
108		Mid yellowish brown, soft, slightly silty clay	Fill of 106 (as seen in slot 3)
109		Mid yellowish brown, soft, slightly friable, silty clay with abundant slate pieces	Fill of 106 (as seen in slot 3)
110		Mid brown, friable silty clay with occ small slate frags	Fill of 102 (as seen in slot 3
111		Pale yellow brown, soft, silty clay with occ tiny slate frags and rare charcoal flecks	Fill of 106 (as seen in slot 1)
112		Mid yellowish brown, soft friable, silty clay with abundant slate frags and pieces, rare charcoal.	Fill of 106 (as seen in slot 1)
113		Linear cut continuing west from 106, southern fork	Ditch cut
114		Linear cut continuing west from 106, northern fork	Ditch cut
115		Mid brown, friable, silty clay with moderate slate frags	Upper fill of 113
116		Mid yellowish grey brown, friable, silty clay with frequent slate	Fill of 102 (as seen in slot 4)
117		Mid yellowish grey brown, loose silty clay with frequent slate pieces	Fill of 106 (as seen in slot 4)
118		Mid grey brown, friable, silty cla with frequent slate pieces	Fill of 104 (as seen on slot 2)
119		Pale brown, soft, clay with frequent small slate frags and rare charcoal flecks.	Primary fill of 113
120		Mid yellowish brown, friable, silty clay withfrequent slate frags and occ charcoal flecks	Upper fill of 114
121		Pale grey brown, soft, clay with occ small slate frags	Primary fill of 114
122		Mid brown, soft, silty clay with small slate frags	Fill of 113

Table 2: Field 3

Context	Depth b.g.s.	Description	Interpretation
300		Mid grey brown silty clay loam	Topsoil
301		Bedded slate bedrock	Natural subsoil
302		Light reddish brown, loose silty clay	Subsoil
303		Wide shallow linear	Cut of truncated gully
304		Light reddish brown, friable, silty clay	Fill of 303
305		Light grey, friable, silty clay	Fill of 303
306		Light reddish brown, friable, silty clay	Fill of 303
307		Wide, shallow, flat bottomed, linear cut	Cut of possible track way
308		Light grey, friable, silty clay with common slate frags	Fill of 307
309		Light reddish brown, friable, silty clay with frequent shillet frags	Fill of 307
310		Mid brown, soft, silty clay with frequent small slate frags	Upper fill of 307
311		Pale yellowish brown, soft, silty clay with occ. small slate frags	Fill of 307
312		Mid grey brown, soft, silty clay with occ. small slate frags	Fill of 307
313		V.dark brown-black, soft, silt	Fill of 307
314		Pale grey brown, soft, silty clay with occ small slate frags	Fill of 307
315		Blue grey, compact, silty clay with abundant small- medium sub-angular and sub-rounded quartz pebbles	Mettled surface/track within cut 307
316		Small 'U' shaped linear cut	Cut of gully
317		Dark reddish brown silty clay with common slate frags	Fill of 316
318		Wide linear cut	Ditch cut
319		Reddish brown, silty clay with occ. slate frags	Fill of 318

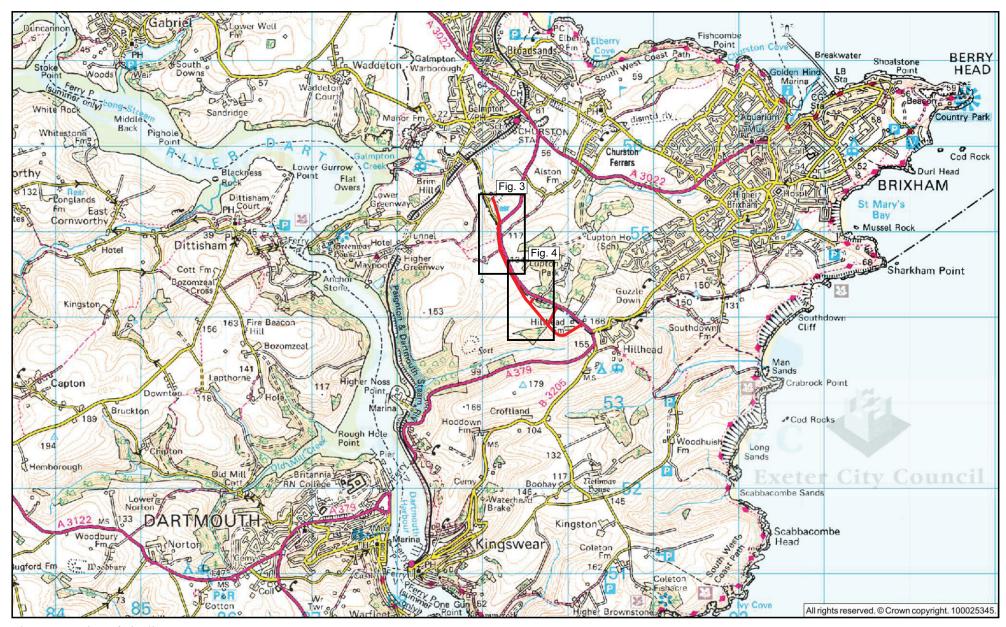


Fig. 1 Location of pipeline route.

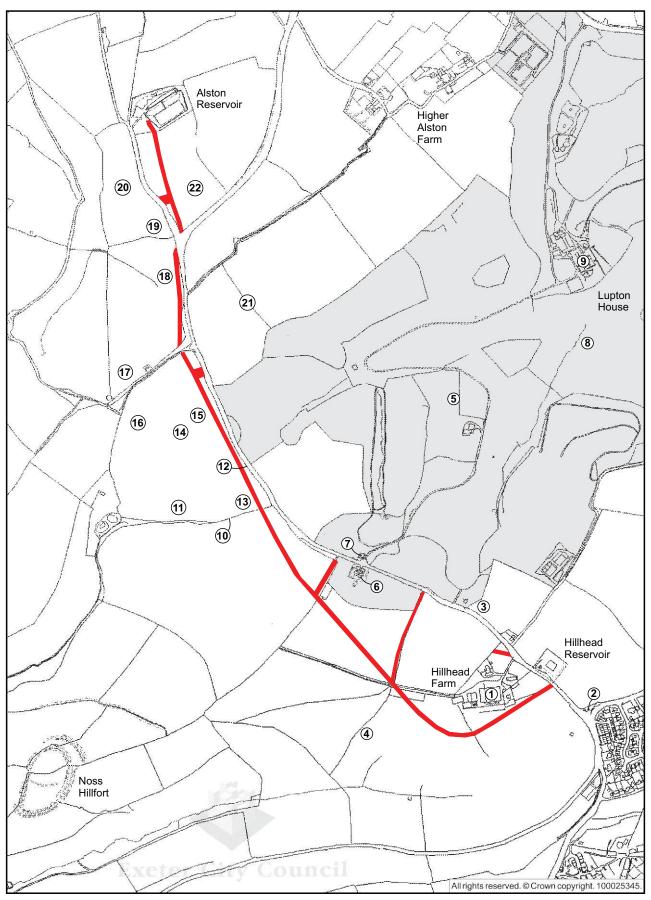


Fig. 2 Location of pipeline route and sites of archaeological interest (numbered 1-22). The historic park (site 5) is represented by the shaded area. Scale 1:10000.

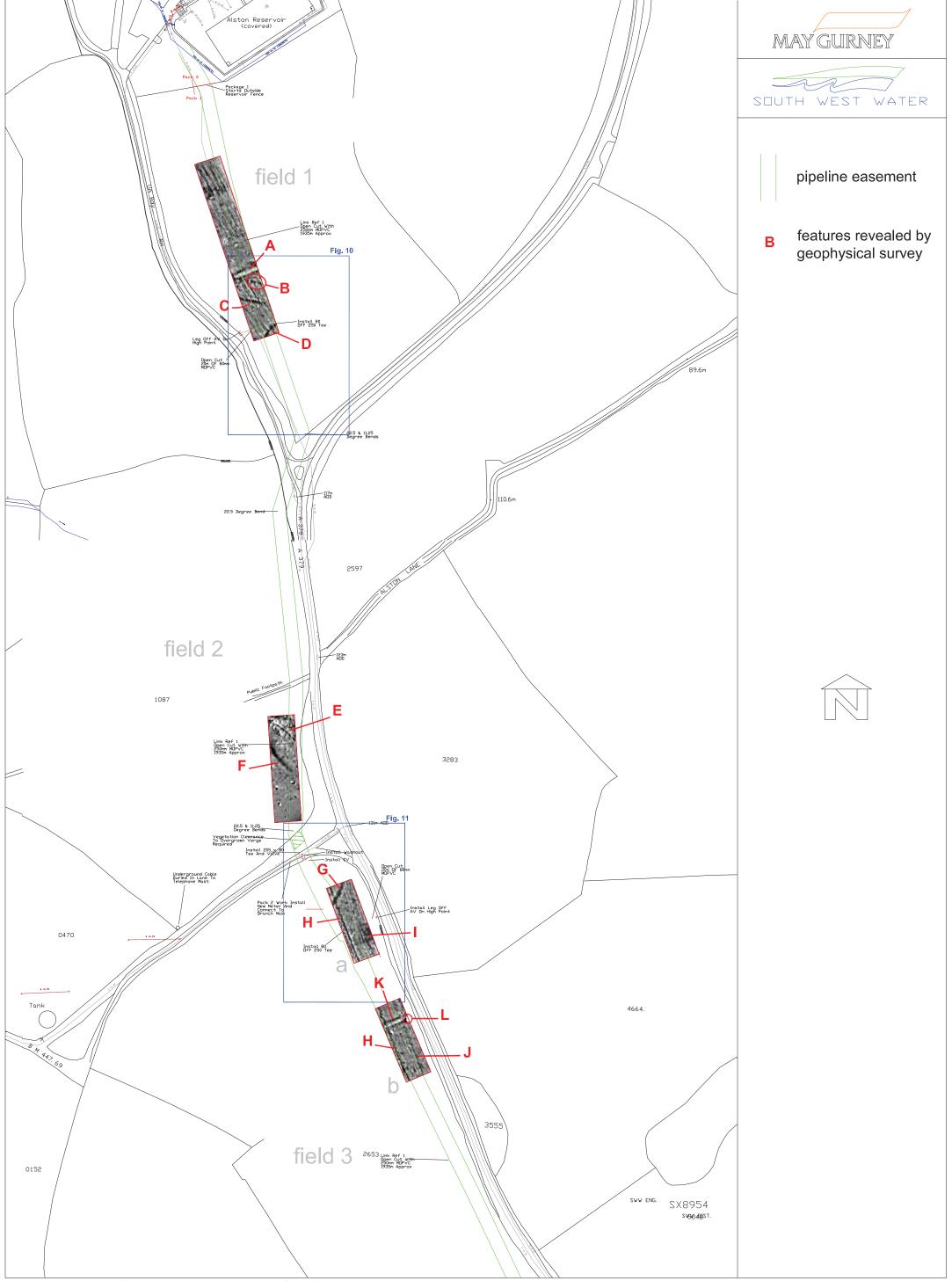


Fig. 3 Evaluative gradiometer survey at northern end of pipeline route. Scale 1:2500.

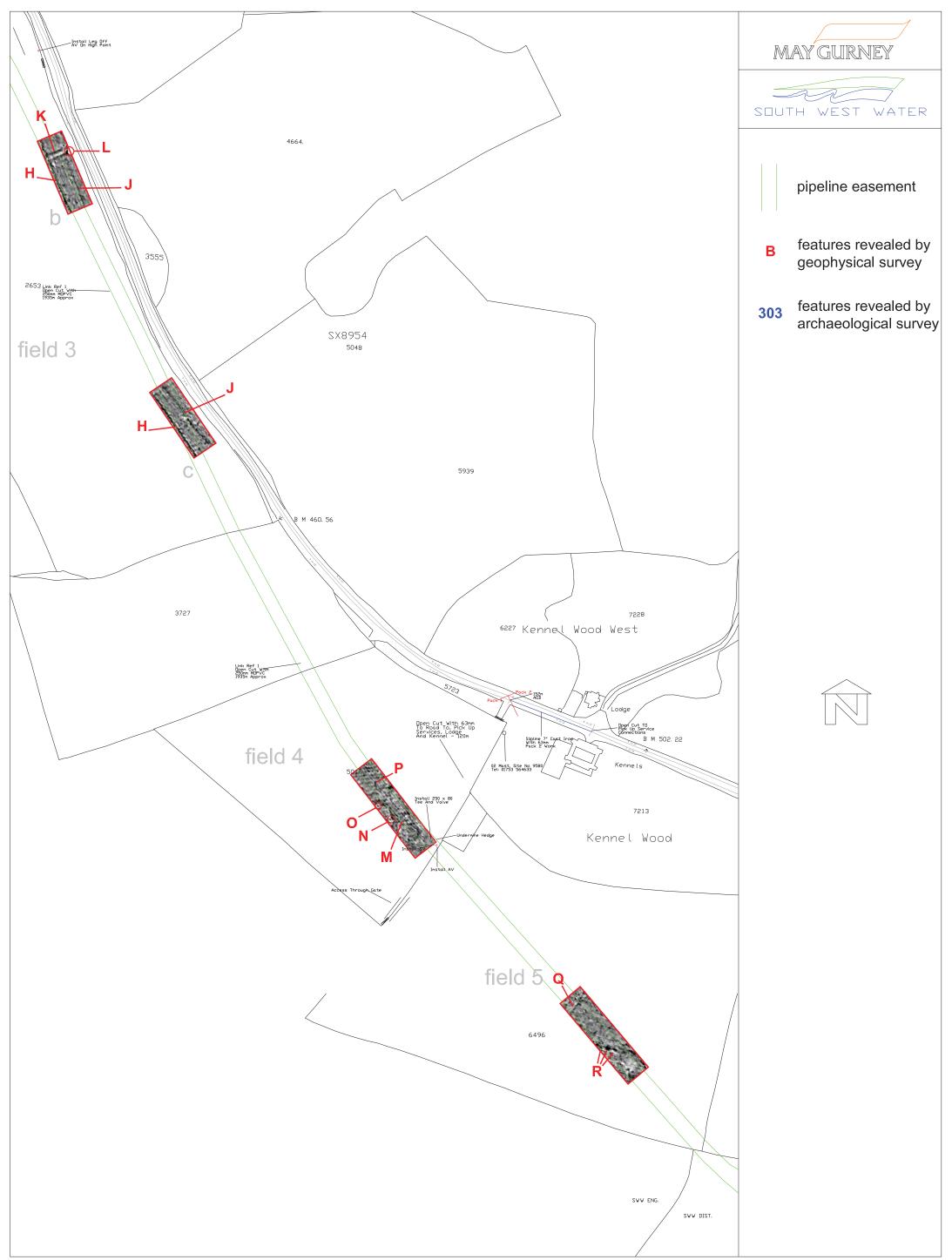


Fig. 4 Evaluative gradiometer survey at southern end of pipeline route. Scale 1:2500.

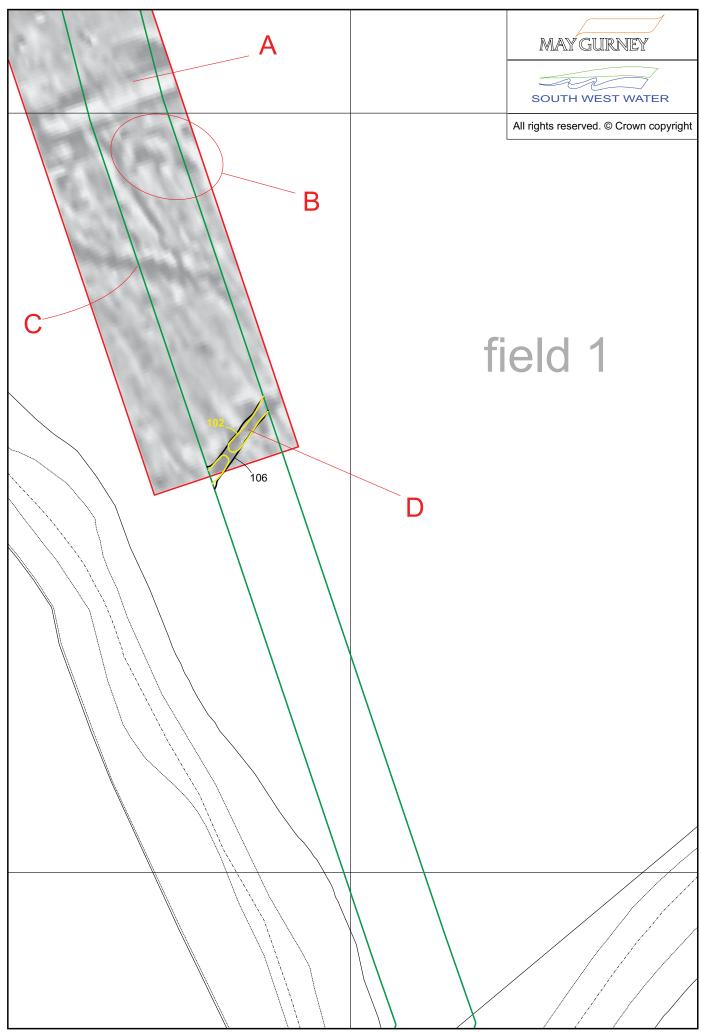


Fig. 5 Location of archaeological features in field 1. Scale 1:500.

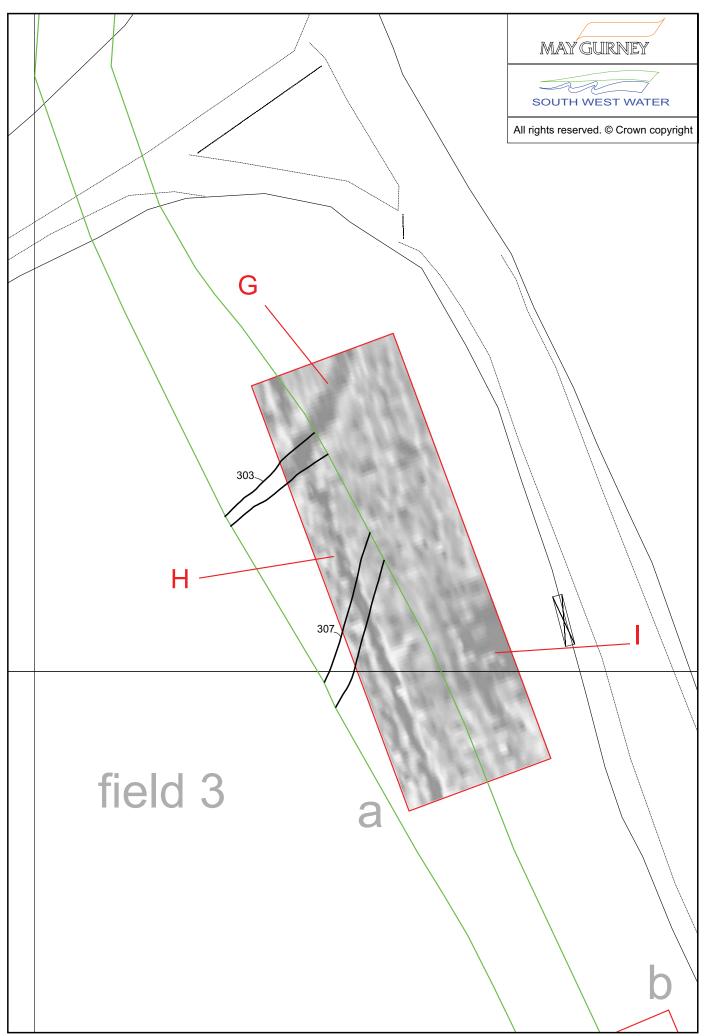


Fig. 6 Location of archaeological features in field 3. Scale 1:500.

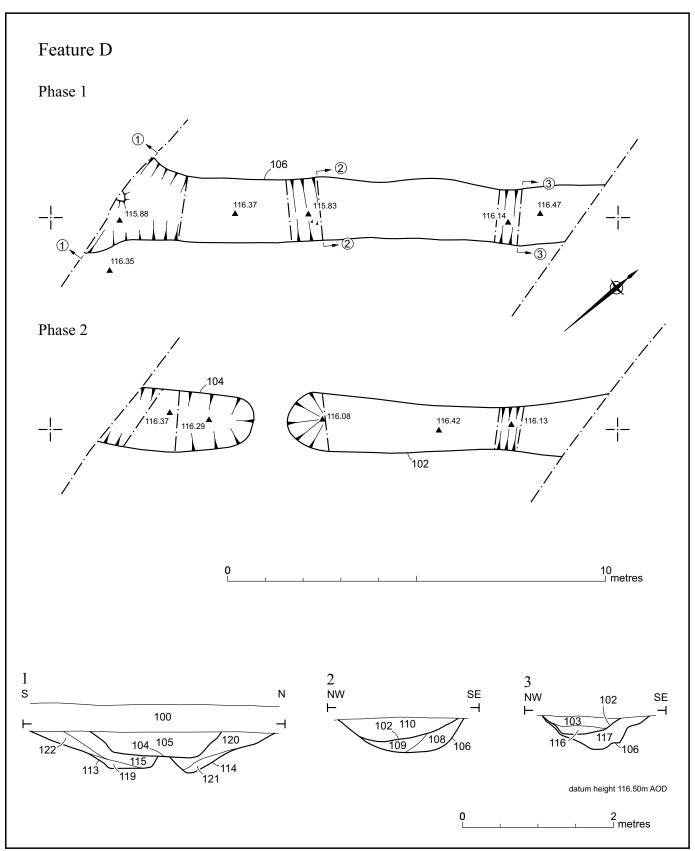


Fig. 7 Feature D, plans and sections.

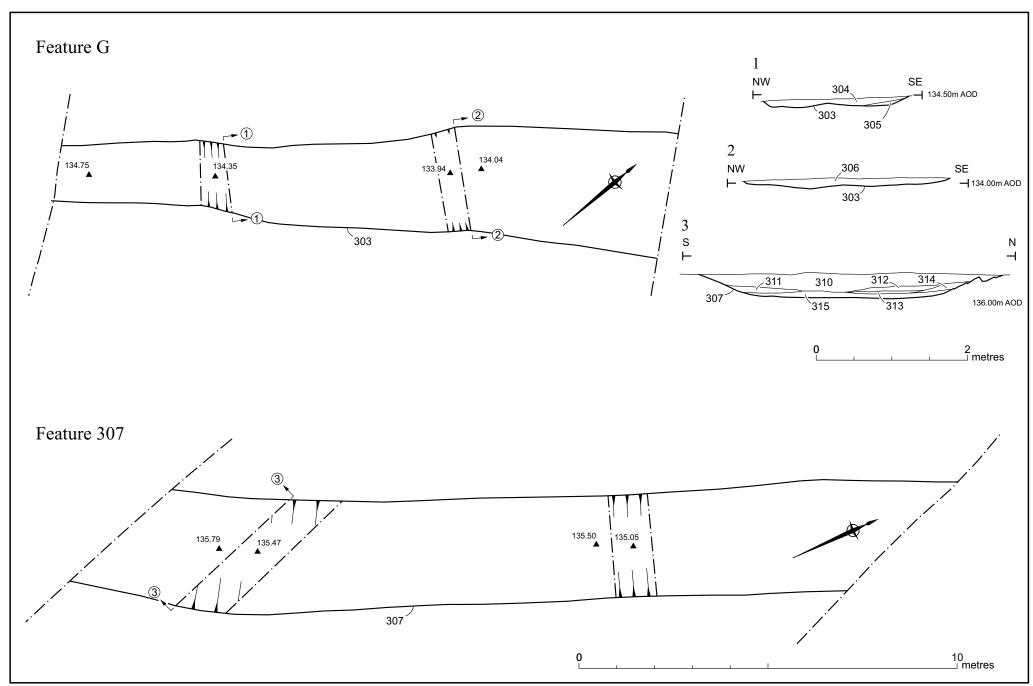


Fig. 8 Features located in field 3, plans and sections.