

Bentley Rise
Doncaster
South Yorkshire

Archaeological Watching Brief

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief at Bentley Rise, Doncaster was undertaken during the excavation and replacement of a sewage pipe. One linear ditch was identified as a field boundary in recent use. No other archaeological features or deposits were identified during the course of the watching brief.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Archaeological Services WYAS (ASWYAS) was commissioned by M J Gleeson Engineering on behalf of Watermark-Yorkshire to undertake an archaeological watching brief during topsoil stripping in advance of, and during the laying of a replacement sewage pipe between the sewage works and the recreation ground at Bentley Rise, Doncaster (see Fig. 1).
- 1.2 The area subject to the archaeological watching brief was a section crossing an open field, approximately 600m in length (centre point NGR 570 050), from the Doncaster-Wakefield railway line to the Fowler Bridge Drain (Fig. 2).
- 1.3 The geology of the site is alluvium overlying Bunter Sandstone (British Geological Survey 1969).

2. Archaeological Background

- 2.1 Little is known of the archaeological potential along the pipe route. An aerial photograph dated 1979 and recorded in the South Yorkshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) shows crop-marks indicative of co-axial Iron Age/Romano-British field boundaries and settlement enclosures focussed upon a double ditched trackway (Figs 2 and 4). The course of the pipeline should have intersected the trackway and one of the enclosures at a distance of 110m from the western field edge, and have cut another former field boundary at a point 200m from its eastern field edge. Since the cropmarks were recorded the site has been repeatedly ploughed (Matthews *pers comm.*).

3. Method

- 3.1 The aim of the watching brief was to establish the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality of survival, date and significance of archaeological remains within the area affected by the development.
- 3.2 The original proposal included a walkover by the attending archaeologist in order to identify/recover any finds or features present. However upon arrival at the site was covered in a brassica crop so field walking was unproductive.
- 3.3 The topsoil was removed by a 360° mechanical excavator, equipped with a toothless ditching bucket, to create an easement approximately 7 meters in width along the length of the pipeline route. The resultant sections and surfaces were examined for archaeological features and deposits. The cut for the pipe trench was monitored likewise.
- 3.4 The topsoil stripping was undertaken over January 19th and 20th 2006 and the pipe trench was monitored over January 23rd and 24th 2006.
- 3.5 The paper archive resulting from the investigation is currently stored by Archaeological Services WYAS and will be deposited with Doncaster Museum, within a timescale agreed between Archaeological Services WYAS and the recipient museum.

- 3.6 All archaeological and potentially archaeological features were investigated. An appropriate written, drawn and photographic record was made of all of the features and trenches in accordance with industry standards and the Archaeological Services WYAS standard method (ASWYAS 2003, 2006).
- 3.7 The site archive contains all the information gathered during the investigations, which is indexed in Appendix I. Inventories of contexts and artefacts are listed in Appendices II and III respectively.

4. Results

- 4.1 The area was machine excavated to a depth of 0.3m-0.7m, through a 0.3m-0.4m ploughsoil, overlying a reddish brown sand at the south western end of the easement, and a yellow/grey sandy clay at the north eastern end. Approximately 250m at the south western end was excavated to a depth of 0.2m prior to the archaeologists' arrival on site. This area was therefore re-skimmed to an appropriate depth under the supervision of the attending archaeologist.
- 4.2 One linear ditch (101) was identified during the works, lying 200m from the western field edge (Fig. 3). Its position corresponds with the position and alignment of the easternmost field boundary shown on the 1979 aerial photograph. It was aligned north-west to south-east and was subject to a 1m sample excavation slot. It was found to measure 1.00m in width, 0.39m in depth and to have a U-shaped profile. It contained a single grey-brown sandy clay fill (100) which produced a single medieval pottery sherd and an iron horse shoe. The area around the ditch was subject to severe root and animal disturbance.
- 4.3 No other archaeological features, deposits or finds were identified during the rest of the watching brief.

5. Artefact Record

5.1 Medieval pottery by C.G. Cumberpatch BA PhD

A single sherd of pottery recovered from the fill of ditch 101 proved to be of medieval date. The sherd fabric was soft, oxidised and sandy in texture containing moderate to abundant sub-rounded grains of quartz up to 0.4mm on the long axis and rare red, non-crystalline grains up to 1.0mm. It was covered with a sparse green glaze externally. The sherd, which weighs 4 grams, is somewhat finer in texture than Hallgate A ware and is also softer than is typical for this ware. The origin of the sherd is unknown, but its characteristics suggest that it is of local manufacture and probably dates to the later 13th or 14th century.

5.2 Iron horse shoe

The iron horse shoe was conserved and x-rayed by Karen Barker and the plate was briefly examined by Dr Hillary Cool. Visible features included rectangular holes which, were not countersunk, a narrow web and an absence of calkins. Non counter-sunk holes were introduced in the 13th century, although shoes of this period had wider webs than this shoe. There was also the suggestion that the shoe incorporated a toe plate, a post-medieval introduction. It is concluded that this is a post-medieval shoe of a later date than the pottery sherd from the same context.

6. *Discussion and Conclusions*

- 6.1 The archaeological watching brief at Bentley Rise, identified a single linear boundary ditch, the fill of which yielded a single sherd of medieval pottery and a post medieval iron horse shoe. The boundary ditch was in use until at least 1979 and although the other plotted features appear to have been manifested as cropmarks at least up until 1979, only this ditch remained visible during the stripping process. It can only be concluded that the supposed Iron Age/Romano-British ditch and enclosures that were anticipated in the western part of the easement have suffered severe agricultural degradation over the last 27 years in this part of the field at least.

Bibliography

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ASWYAS, 2006, 'Watching Brief Guidelines', Archaeological Services WYAS, unpubl.

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Acknowledgements

Project management

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Report

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Graphics/illustrations

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Fieldwork

Andrew Walsh

Specialists

Dr C.G. Cumberpatch BA PhD (pottery)

K. Barker (x-ray and conservation)

Dr H. Cool (horseshoe)

Appendix I

Inventory of primary archive

File no.	Description	Quantity
	Watching brief monitoring forms	3
	Context register	1
	Context cards	2
	Drawing register	1
	Drawings	2
	Black and White negatives	1

Appendix II

Inventory of contexts

Context	Trench	Group	Description
100	-	-	Fill of ditch (101)
101	-	-	Cut of linear ditch

Appendix III

Inventory of artefacts

Fabric	Trench	Context	SF no.	Quantity	Details
Pottery	-	100	-	1	medieval
Horse shoe		100	-	1	post medieval

Appendix VI

Specification for archaeological watching brief

Figures

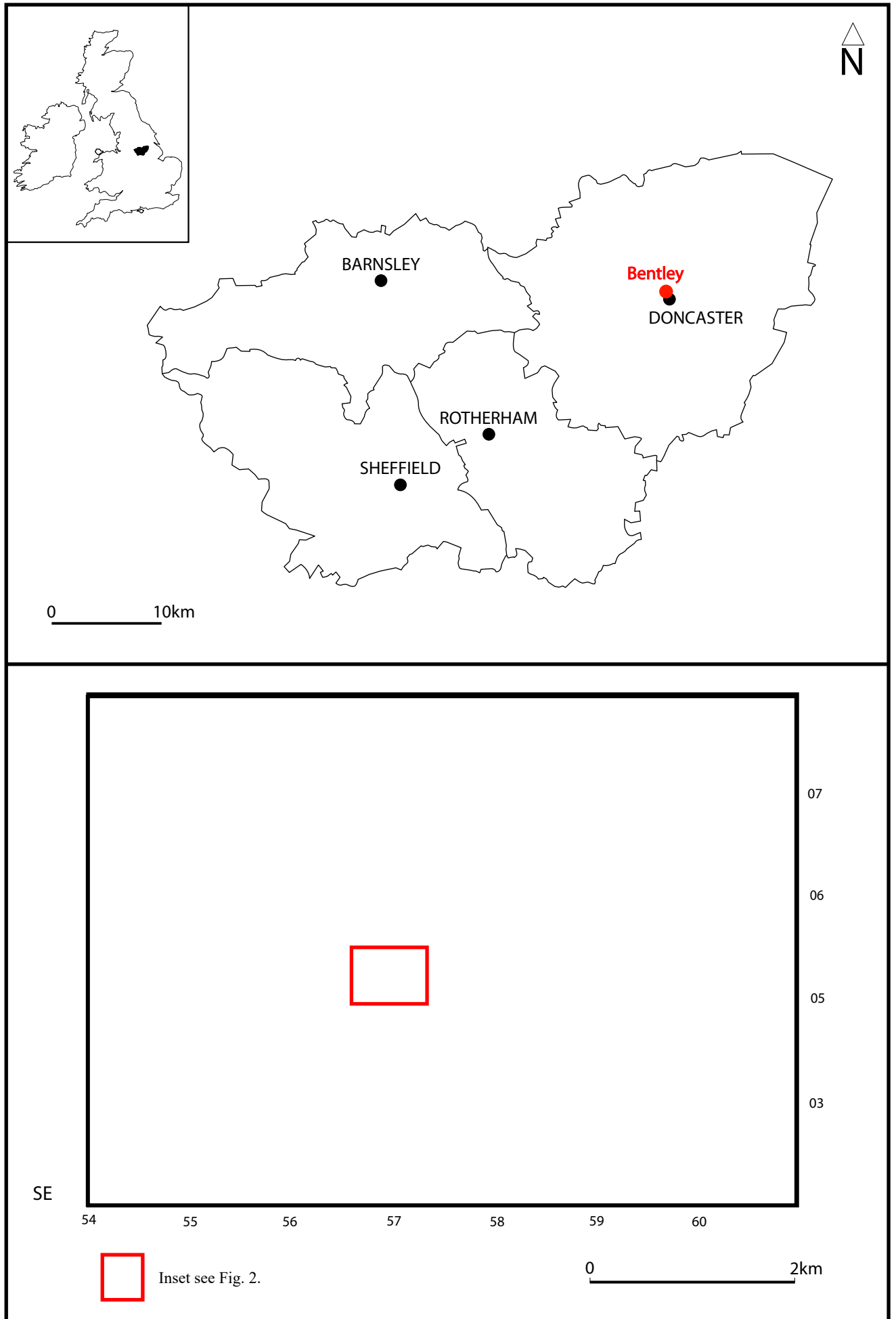


Fig. 1. Site location

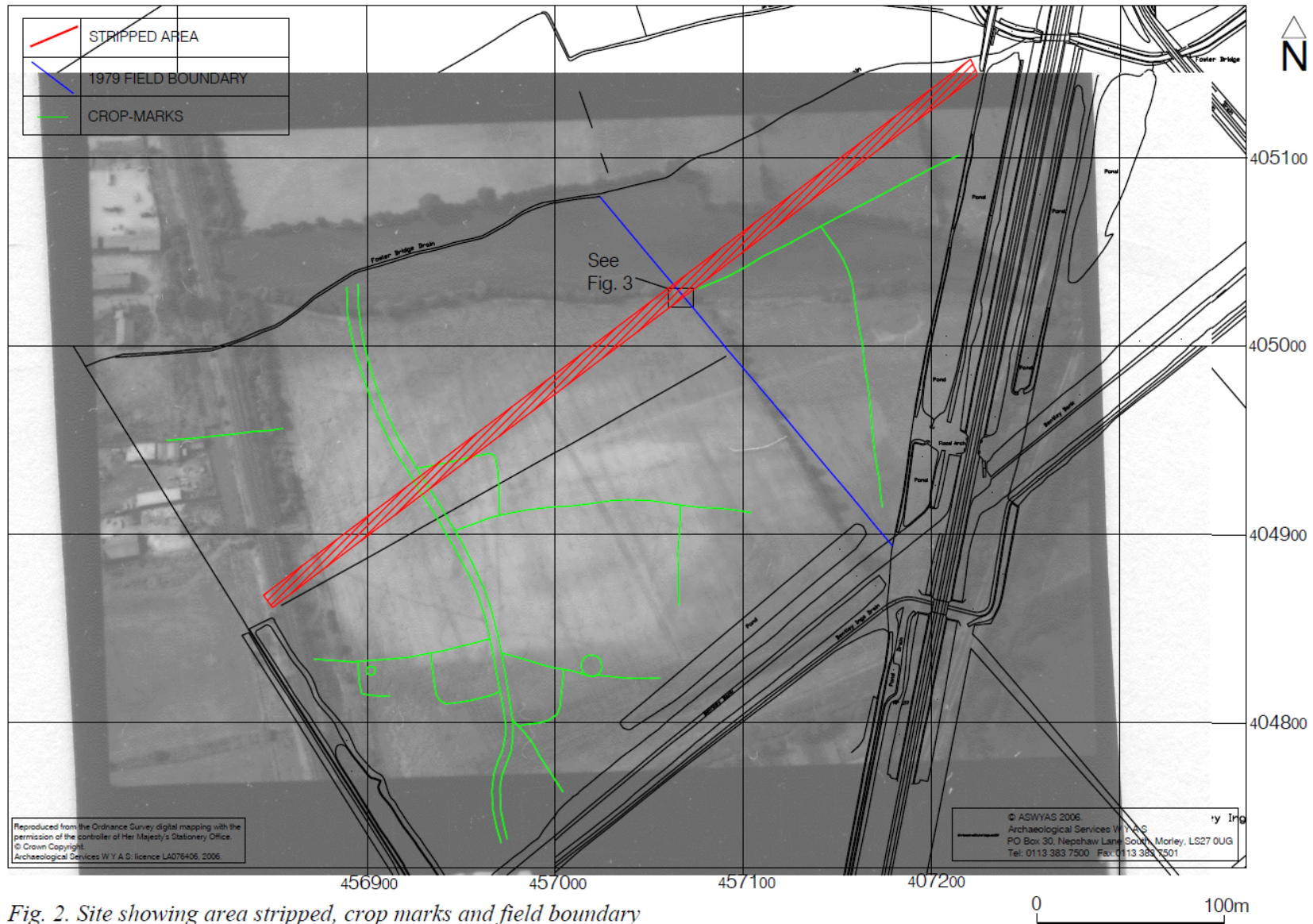


Fig. 2. Site showing area stripped, crop marks and field boundary removed between 1979 and 2006

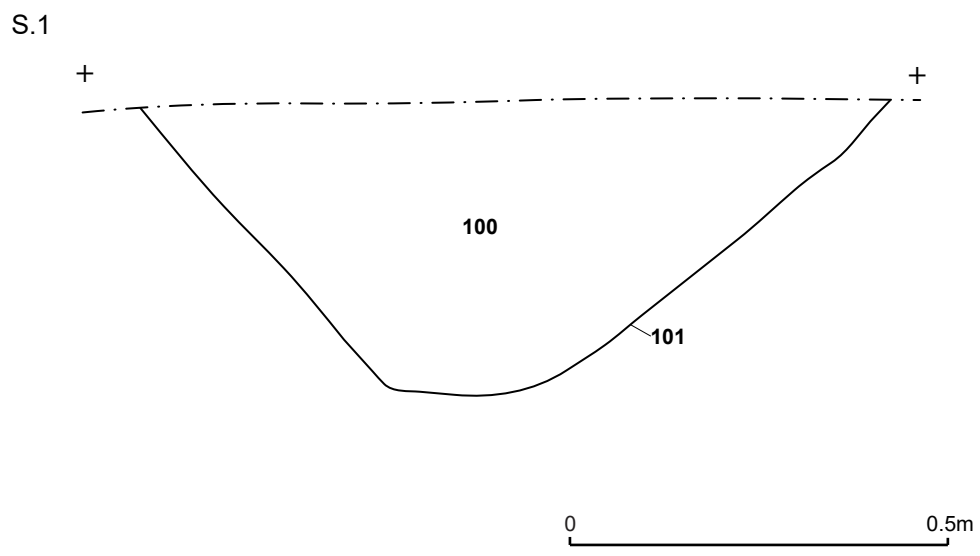
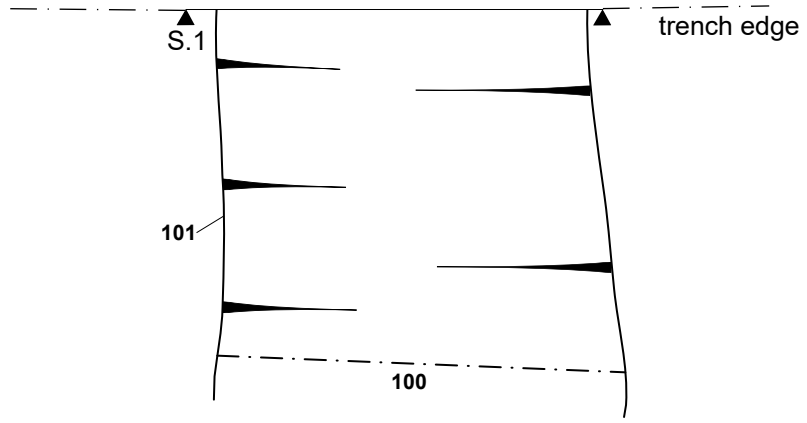


Fig. 3. Plan & section

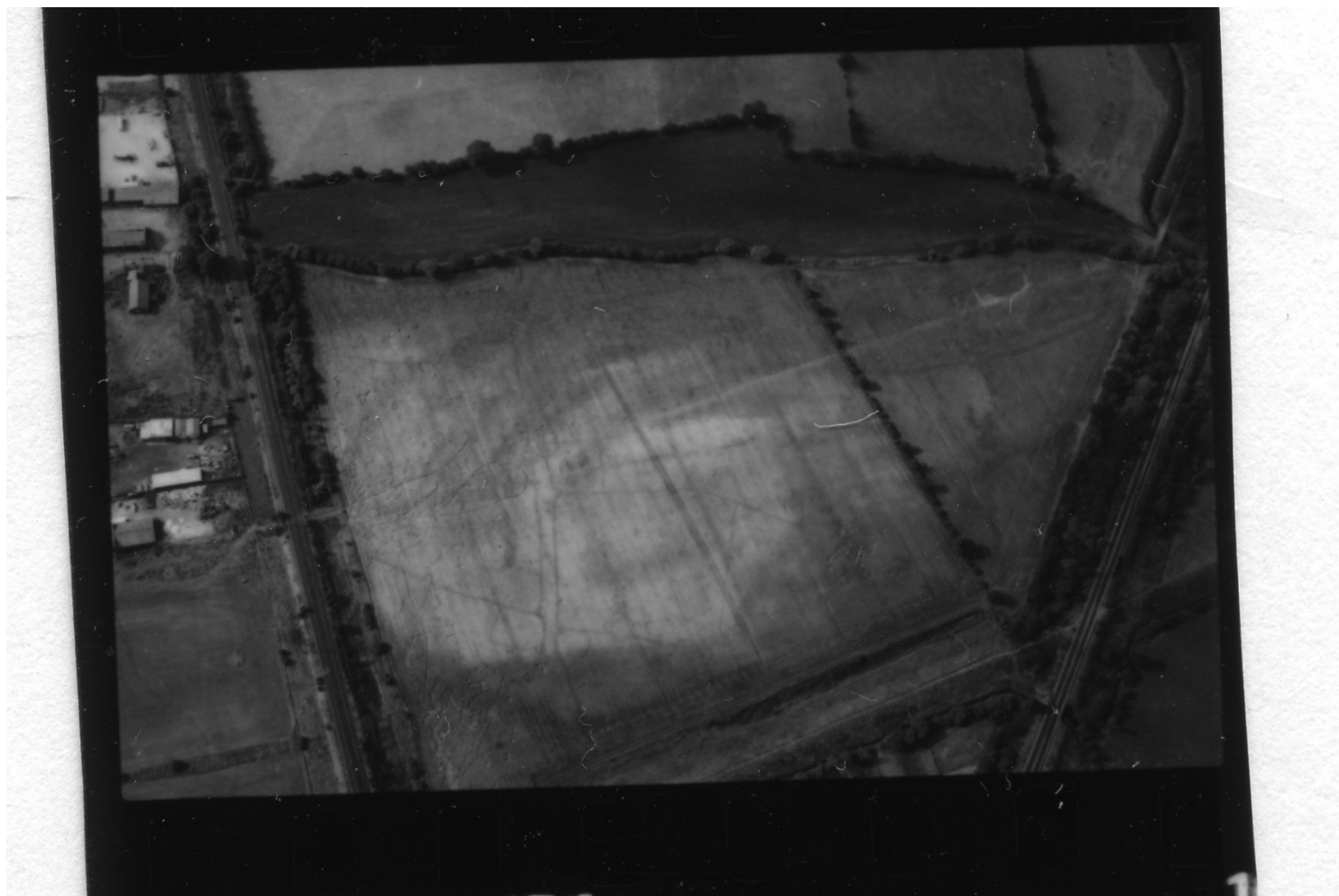


Fig. 4. Aerial photograph dated 1979. The crop-marks are visible left of centre, with the field boundary to the right.