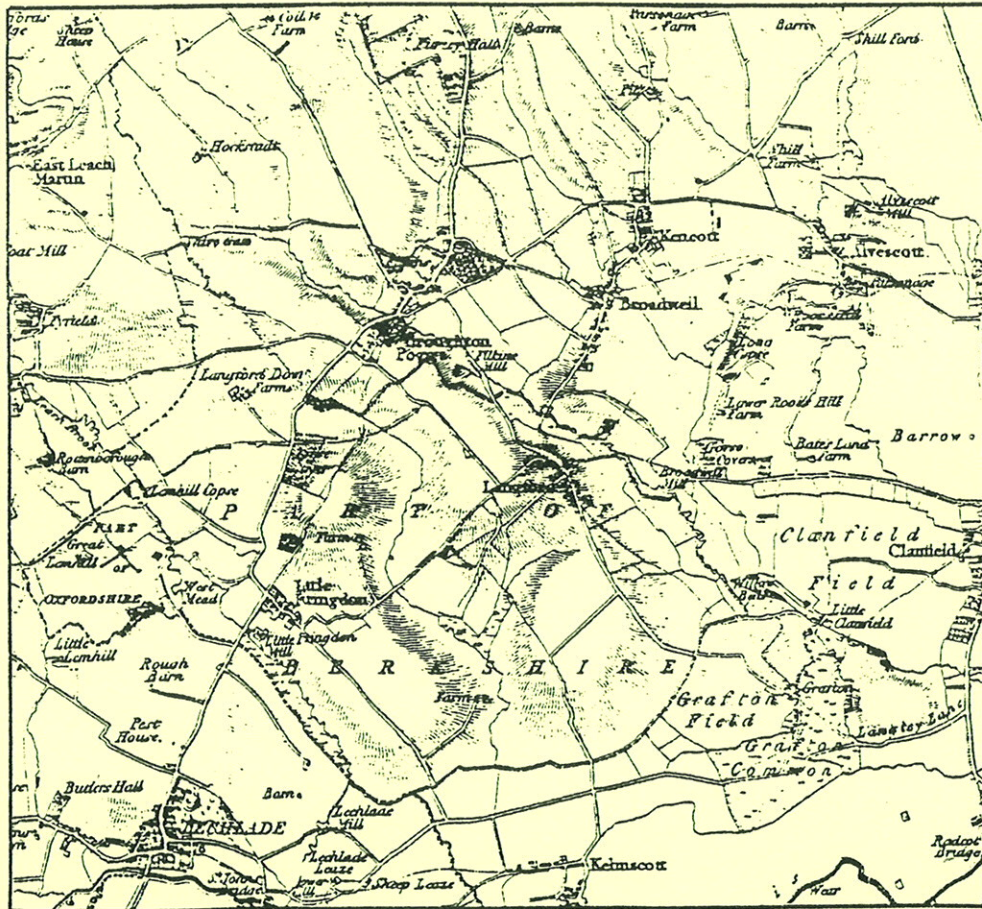


# Highworth To Broughton Poggs Pipeline

## Watching Brief Report

June 1993



# BRITISH GAS PLC. SOUTH WESTERN PIPELINE HIGHWORTH TO BROUGHTON POGGS WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

## INTRODUCTION

The Highworth to Broughton Poggs gas pipeline (Fig. 1) runs for just over 6 km and runs through parts of three counties; Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, and Oxfordshire. The route was chosen to avoid known archaeological sites. However, as this part of the Thames Valley was a favoured location for settlement in the prehistoric and Roman periods, a watching brief was maintained by the Oxford Archaeological Unit from March to June, 1993.

## STRATEGY

The aim of the watching brief was to establish the presence or absence of any archaeological remains along the working corridor of the pipeline. The corridor was generally 10 m wide and stripping of topsoil was monitored to recover finds and to locate any archaeological features. The stripping was undertaken with a 360° machine equipped with a grading bucket.

Any linear features were hand sampled, and where they were cut by the pipe trench, observed and recorded in section. Other features were hand sampled and planned, as were notable findspots.

The pipe trench was generally cut to a depth of c 2 m, and topsoil stripping usually c 0.50 m deep. Where the natural gravel was exposed, features could be identified investigated, however in many places stripping merely revealed former ploughsoils, which meant that only residual finds could be located. In these cases the cutting of the pipe trench was observed.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The area affected by the route of the pipeline is particularly dense in cropmarks, (Benson and Miles 1974, 20 ; Leech 1977, 16-18). There were no known archaeological features within the Wiltshire stretch of the pipeline. At Buscot Wick lies the site of a NW-SE aligned Neolithic cursus, a sub-rectangular enclosure (Oxon PRN 1410), and ten ring ditches. Earthworks to the north of Buscot mark the site of a medieval village, (PRN 7535), and pottery recovered from fieldwalking is of 12th to 14th century date, (SU 2265 9785). A 12th century church stands to the north of Buscot, and a Constantinian 'follis' and two grey ware jugs (PRN 7952) were found at Buscot weir (cf Parkinson 1993, 2).

To the north of Buscot the pipeline runs through part of Gloucestershire, and near cropmark enclosures (Glos PRN 3316, 3351, 2207, 3350). A trackway and linear features (PRN 3228) also lie near the working area.

Further north near Langford are a series of linear and rectangular cropmarks (Oxon PRN 8121, 8122) and to the south of Broughton Poggs lies a sizeable rectangular enclosure cropmark (PRN 12171).

Other notable archaeology in the region includes the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Butlers Field, Lechlade, and the Romano-British villa at Roughground Farms, also in Lechlade. Evidence of Iron Age settlement can be found at Langford Downs, c 1 km from the route of the pipeline, near Broughton Poggs.

## GEOLOGY

The geology along the route was predominantly sandy gravel, of the first gravel terrace overlying Oxford Clay.

## RESULTS

The length of the corridor was sub-divided into six segments for ease of recording, from here on referred to as trenches 1 to 6 (Fig. 1). The trench numbers were assigned as work progressed and do not follow a geographical sequence.

Trench 1. Waterway's to Leaze Farm boundary. Length c 400 m.  
Grid Ref. SP 2275 9902 to SP 2268 9861.

Observation of the spoil heaps produced mostly post-medieval finds but included one rim sherd of a Roman grey ware jar dated to the second century or later. Beneath the topsoil and former ploughsoil were two features; a modern field boundary and a large square pit, also modern. Also noted was a substantial deposit of alluvial clay, under the ploughsoil, relating to the Thames floodplain nearby. This deposit was c 0.41 m thick and spread for a distance of 10 m.

Trench 2. Leaze Farm to the A417. Length c 290 m.  
Grid Ref. SP 2268 9861 to 2245 9830.

This part of the corridor extends across the Thames floodplain and through the river Isis itself. The pipe trench was seen to cut through an undated former river channel, characterised by successive bands of dark grey clay and gravel. Stripping in this stretch of the corridor was very shallow, but an absence of finds from the spoil suggested no archaeological deposits were present. The placing of the pipe through the river was not monitored, owing to the lack of features or finds in the immediate vicinity.

Trench 3. A417 to A361. Length c 800 m  
Grid Ref. SP 2245 9830 to 2070 9802.

This section of the corridor runs into the county of Wiltshire and the monitoring of the work confirms the lack of cropmark evidence. No features were encountered, and only modern finds were recovered from the topsoil stripping. Beneath topsoil and a shallow subsoil lay natural gravel, which in turn sealed the natural Oxford clay.

Trench 4. Little Faringdon Road- Langford Road. Length c 620 m  
Grid Ref. SP 2303 0800 to 2334 0152.

No archaeological features were observed in this stretch of the corridor, which was stripped to the natural gravel. The only finds recovered were a few fragments of modern field drain. Natural Oxford Clay was observed in the pipe trench at a depth of 1.05 m below the stripped level.

Trench 5. Langford Road to Langford Brook drain. Length 1050 m.  
Grid Ref. SP 2334 0154 to 2335 0257.

Stripping here barely reached the gravel, but in places a series of furrows aligned NE-SW was identified. These were evenly spaced eight metres apart, centre to centre, and were c 4 m wide. Although no dating evidence was found, they were felt to be of medieval date. Furrows were observed in all fields along this stretch of the corridor. No other features were encountered in this section of the

corridor, nor in the cut section of the pipeline.

Trench 6. Brook drain to Broughton Poggs road. Length c 660 m.  
Grid Ref. 2355 0257 to 2369 0324.

Beneath a shallow topsoil, c 0.25 m thick, and the remnants of a ploughsoil, 0.05 m thick, several features were observed in this section of the corridor. Features 6/4, 6/5, 6/6 and 6/7, were hand dug but produced no dating evidence. These features were randomly spaced and formed no obvious pattern. 6/4 was half sectioned to reveal a shallow ovoid pit-like feature, 0.80 m in diameter and surviving to a depth of 0.16 m, with a gentle concave base. 6/5 was half sectioned to reveal a roughly circular pit-like feature, 1.06 m wide and 0.31 m deep. The irregular nature of its edges, which flared from the near vertical at the base to a gentle slope near the surface, may suggest a tree throw pit. 6/6 and 6/7 were half sectioned and it was observed that 6/6 cut 6/7.

The profile of 6/7 was thus destroyed, whilst 6/6 survived as a possible pit with steep sides and a concave base, 0.45 m in diameter and 0.24 m in depth.

Of greater interest was the presence linear of ditch features, some aligned NE-SW, some aligned NW-SE. Ditch 6/8 (Fig. 2,3) was sectioned to reveal a broad 'U' shaped profile with a flat base. The ditch was 1.50 m wide and the excavated depth 0.61 m. Two Roman pot sherds of uncertain date were recovered from the interface of the upper fill of 6/8 and the ploughsoil 6/2, but no dating evidence was found from the excavated fills. However, it is arguable that 6/8 was related to two other NE-SW ditches, both of which produced evidence of a possible middle Iron Age date.

Ditch 6/12 (Fig. 2,3) lay 120 m to the south of 6/8 and as excavated was 1.61 m wide and 0.51 m deep. The section revealed a broad 'U' shape with a gently curved base. The primary fill of this feature contained a small shell tempered pot sherd, of Iron Age date, but the vessel form could not be identified. A sherd of similar fabric was excavated from the upper fill of 6/12.

Twenty five metres to the south of 6/12 lay ditch 6/13 (Fig. 2,3) with gully 6/9 (Fig. 2,3) forming a possible right angle with it. The relationship between the two was however lost owing to the presence of furrow 6/10 (Fig. 2,3) which cut both features. Ditch 6/13 was sectioned to reveal a broad 'U' shaped profile with a curved base. The excavated depth was 0.41 m and width 1.19 m. Fill 6/13/2 in this feature contained five Iron Age pot sherds: four shell tempered and one with calcareous gravel. Gully 6/9 was excavated to a depth of 0.14 m and was 0.54 m wide, but produced no finds other than a horse tooth. A small portion of another possible gully, 6/14, seen in section to be cut by ditch 6/13 was tentatively felt to be aligned NE-SW, a similar alignment to 6/9. If indeed 6/9 is contemporary with the use of ditch 6/13, then together with ditches 6/8 and 6/12, and the earlier gully 6/14, it might suggest that in this area of the pipeline existed an Iron Age field system, the cut features acting as land divisions.

A substantial pit, 6/11 (Fig. 2,3), was half sectioned to a depth of 1.05 m, but the bottom was not reached owing to the presence of the water table. The pit was 1.98 m in diameter and had very steeply sloped edges. The fills, mostly silty sand and gravel layers, suggested that the pit had been deliberately infilled. Fill 6/11/2 contained evidence of burning. A substantial quantity of burnt stone was excavated and the soil had a characteristic dark reddish-brown hue. Whilst no pottery was recovered from 6/11, it is certainly of Iron Age or earlier date, as its' upper fills were cut by Iron Age ditch 6/12. No other comparable features were encountered in the vicinity - it may be that 6/11 functioned as an isolated storage pit prior to its' infilling.

Also present were a series of furrows of varying width, usually c 5 m and spaced between 4 m and 7 m apart, centre to centre. The alignment differed to those in trench 5, being NW-SE. Several medieval pot sherds found between the interface of the topsoil and the furrow fills may suggest a medieval date for the furrows.

Six Roman pot sherds were collected from the remnants of the ploughsoil. These arguably suggest that Roman agricultural activity superseded the Iron Age field system mentioned above. In the vicinity of Langford brook several tree throw pits were sampled but not recorded, as was a large NE-SW aligned ditch, c 3.5 m wide. The fill of this feature, a dark brown sticky clay loam almost identical to the current ploughsoil, strongly suggested a nineteenth or twentieth century date. This feature was not excavated.

## THE FINDS By Paul Booth

### The pottery

A total of 33 sherds was recovered from all the trenches (areas) of the pipeline examined. This included post-medieval material from ploughsoil. The sherd numbers are tabulated below by trench and period.

PERIOD	Iron Age	Roman	Medieval	Post-medieval	Uncertain	TOTAL
Trench 1		1		3	1	5
Trench 4				3		3
Trench 6	8	6	5	5	1	25
TOTAL	8	7	5	11	2	33

The sherds from trenches 1 and 4 were all from topsoil. The single Roman sherd was a rim of a grey ware jar of relatively local origin and of a type which is not more closely dateable than 2nd-4th century AD. The other material requires no comment.

The Roman and later pottery from trench 6 was all from ploughsoil. The medieval sherds were in limestone or shell tempered fabrics and were generally small. The Roman sherds were fine sandy grey wares (4) and one sherd each of an organic/grog tempered grey-brown fabric and a small rim fragment from a jar of black-burnished ware. None of these are closely dateable, though the organic/grog tempered sherd might be of 1st century date and the rest are probably 2nd century or later.

The only properly stratified sherds were of Iron Age date, from features 12 and 13 in trench 6. Six of the eight sherds were shell tempered, the others were tempered with limestone and calcareous gravel. All the sherds but one were very small (ie c 5 gm or less). One tiny shell-tempered fragment was the rounded top of a rim, but it was impossible to determine the form of the vessel. There were no other feature sherds. All the fabrics of these sherds are characteristic of the Iron Age in this region, with parallels for example at Butlers Field, Lechlade, but the absence of diagnostic features makes a more precise date difficult to assign. A middle Iron Age date has been assumed, but it is possible that these fabrics could have remained in use in the late Iron Age.

### Other finds

The only other finds were a horse tooth from gully 6/9 in trench 6 and fragments of modern field drain from various locations along the route. The field drain fragments were not retained

## DISCUSSION

Over the length of the pipeline corridor the density of features and finds was low, and those of interest concentrated as a localised group to the south of Broughton Poggs. Stripping of soil within the corridor did not always expose the natural gravel, the level where features could be observed on the ground. However the lack of finds from the spoil heaps and observation of the cut trench suggests that, as

aerial evidence has shown, few archaeological features are present along the pipeline route. The shallow depth of the corridor means that only minor damage to underlying deposits would have occurred.

The Iron Age features at the northern end of the pipe corridor near Broughton Poggs may be related to the cropmarks in the vicinity (PRN 12171), although as these are undated this assumption cannot automatically be made. As already discussed, it is arguable that the features represent an Iron Age field system related to settlement away from the route of the pipeline.

Excavations at Langford Downs in 1943 (Williams 1947) revealed the presence of a number of ditched enclosures, within which round houses, identified by rings of post holes with associated compacted gravel floors, were present. Pottery from ditch fills contemporary with the use of the buildings was dated to the middle Iron Age, the ditches having silted up and the settlement died out by the time of the Roman conquest. A few sherds of Romano-British pottery were encountered in the uppermost fills of one or two ditch features, however continuity of Roman settlement activity was not found to be present in the excavated areas.

It may be that the Iron Age features located within the pipeline corridor are contemporary with the settlement mentioned above; the presence of limited Roman activity represented by the few Roman pot sherds is certainly consistent with evidence from the Langford Downs excavations, and may equally be related to the Roman presence in the area represented by the villa complex in Lechlade.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Benson, D, and Miles, D, 1974, The Upper Thames Valley: an archaeological survey of the river gravels, Oxford

Leech, R, 1977, The Upper Thames Valley in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire: an archaeological survey of the river gravels, CRAAGS Survey No. 4

Parkinson, A, 1993, Buscot to Faringdon Water Main, OAU, Oxford

Williams, A, 1947, Excavations at Langford Downs, Oxon. (near Lechlade) in 1943, Oxoniensia xi and xii (1946-7), 44-64

## ARCHIVE.

The site archive, comprising the trench records and artifacts, has been deposited with the Oxfordshire Museum Service.

Jonathan Hiller  
Oxford Archaeological Unit  
June 1993.

## APPENDIX.

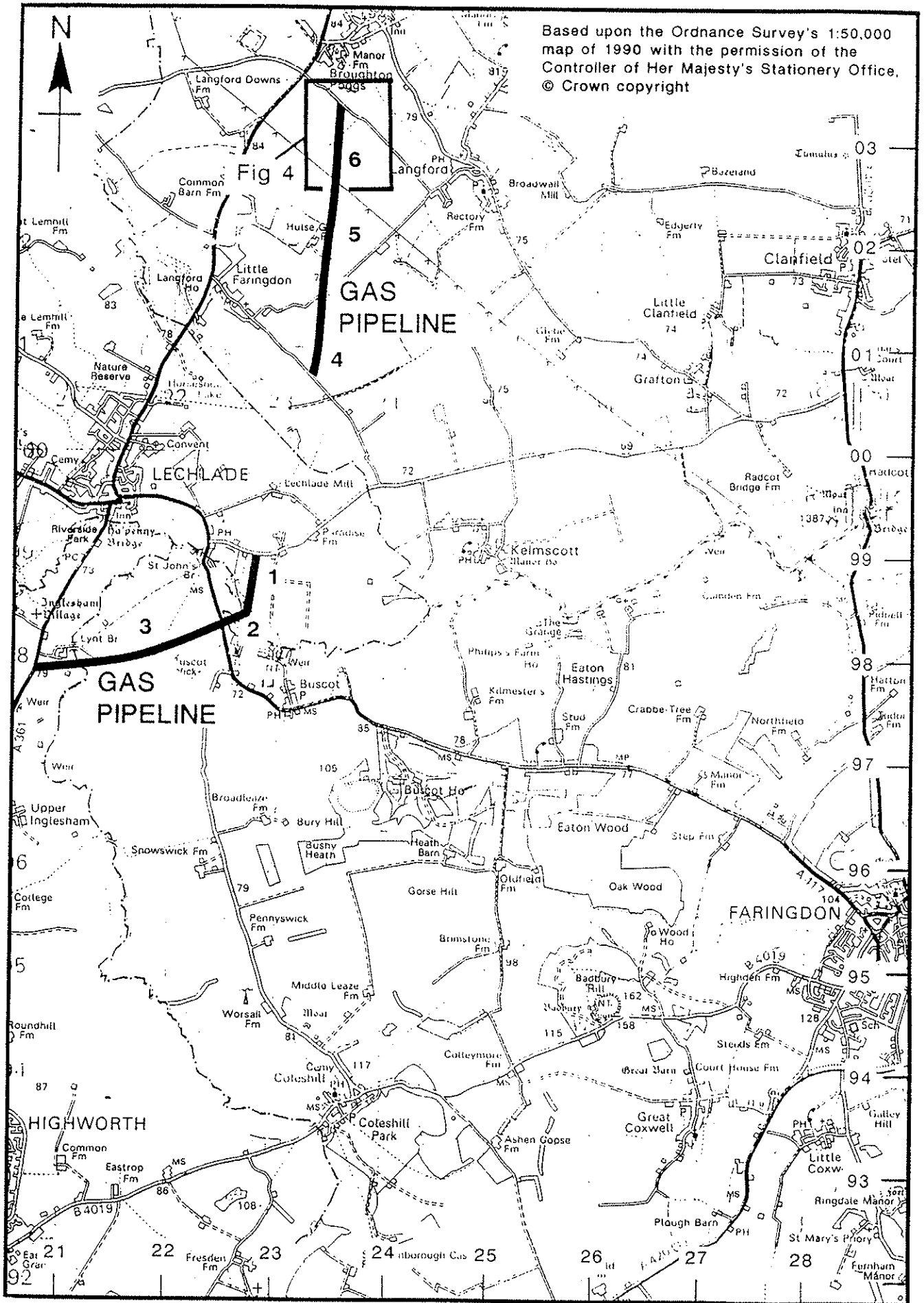
TABLE OF CONTEXTS IN TRENCH ORDER.

Trench number	Context	Type	Length	Width	Depth	Comments
1	1/1	Layer	-	-	0.14 m	Modern ploughsoil
	1/2	Layer	-	-	0.13-0.25 m	Former ploughsoil
	1/3	Layer	-	-	-	Natural Gravel
	1/4	Cut	-	3.60 m	0.81 m+	Former field boundary
	1/5	Cut	-	3.70 m	0.82 m+	Modern pit
	1/6	Layer	-	c.15 m	0.40 m+	Alluvial deposit
	1/7	cut	-	c.3 m	c.2 m	Modern field boundary
2	2/1	Layer	-	-	0.12 m	Modern ploughsoil
	2/2	Layer	-	-	-	Alluvial deposit
	2/3	Cut	-	?	c.3 m	Former rivercourse
3	3/1	Layer	-	-	0.27 m	Modern topsoil
	3/2	Layer	-	-	0.23 m	Ploughsoil
	3/3	Layer	-	-	1.40 m+	Natural clay
4	4/1	Layer	-	-	0.45-0.55 m	Modern ploughsoil
	4/2	Layer	-	-	0.20 m	Natural subsoil
	4/3	Layer	-	-	1.10 m	Natural gravel
5	5/1	Layer	-	-	0.50 m	Topsoil
	5/2	Layer	-	-	0.12 m	Natural subsoil
	5/3	Layer	-	-	-	Natural gravel
6	6/1	Layer	-	-	0.26 m	Topsoil
	6/2	Layer	-	-	0.05 m	Former ploughsoil
	6/3	Layer	-	-	-	Natural gravel

	6/4	Cut	-	0.80 m	0.16 m	? Pit
	6/5	Cut	-	1.06 m	0.31 m	? Pit
	6/6	Cut	-	0.45 m	0.26 m	? Pit
	6/7	Cut	-	-	0.25 m	Feature
	6/8	Cut	-	1.50 m	0.61 m	Ditch
	6/9	Cut	-	0.54 m	0.14 m	Gully
	6/10	Cut	-	c.3.5 m	0.18 m	Furrow
	6/11	Cut	-	1.98 m	1.05 m+	Iron Age pit
	6/12	Cut	-	1.60 m	0.51 m	Iron Age ditch
	6/13	Cut	-	1.19 m	0.41 m	Iron Age ditch
	6/14	Cut	-	0.22 m	0.13 m	Gully
	6/15	Cut	-	3.74 m	-	Recent field boundary

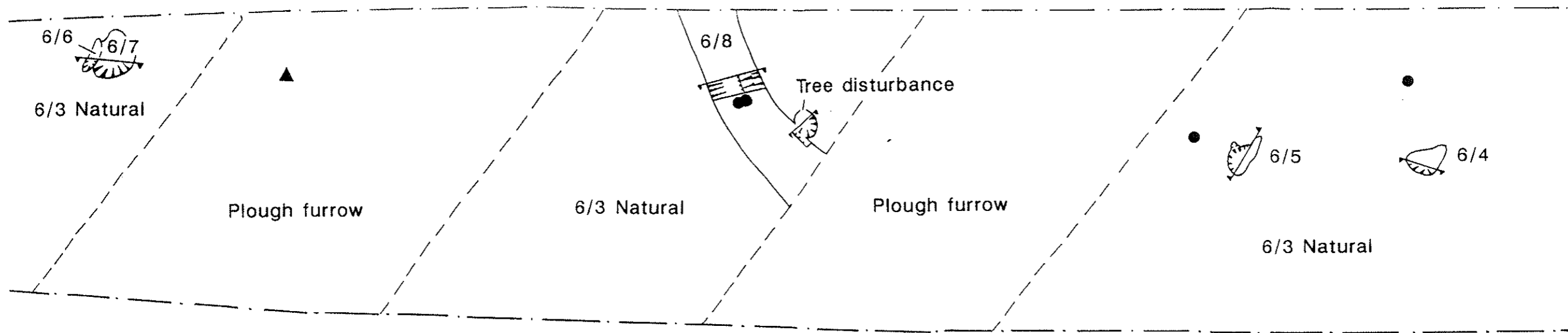


Based upon the Ordnance Survey's 1:50,000 map of 1990 with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright



SCALE 1:50,000

Figure 1



Location of Iron Age features in Trench 6

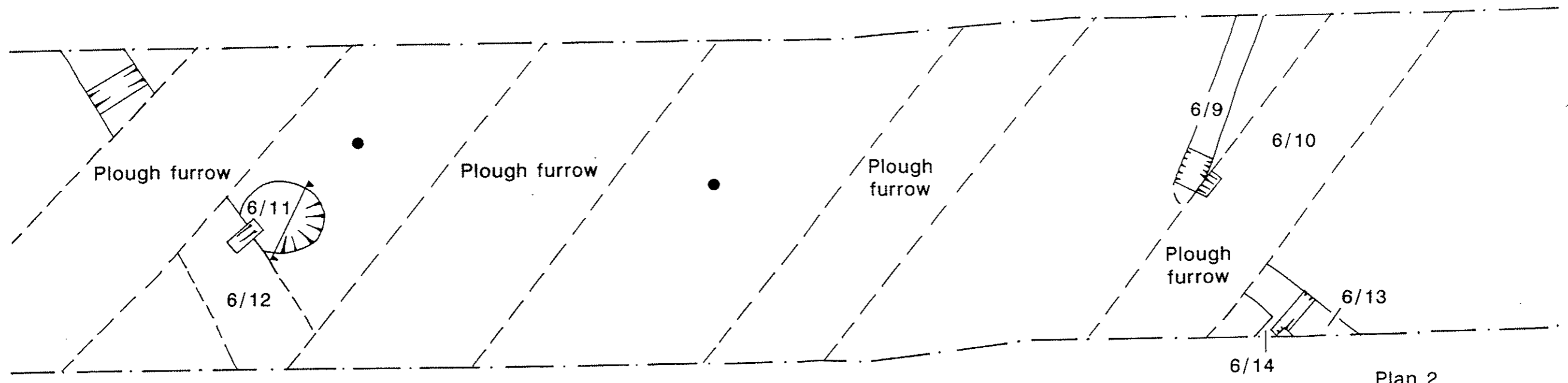
Plan 1

KEY

- Roman find
- ▲ Medieval Find

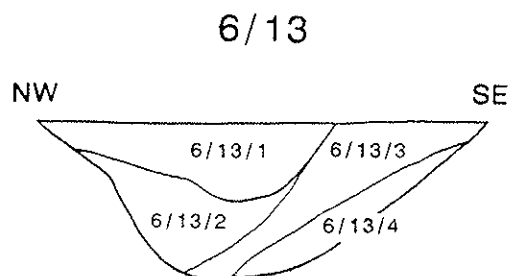
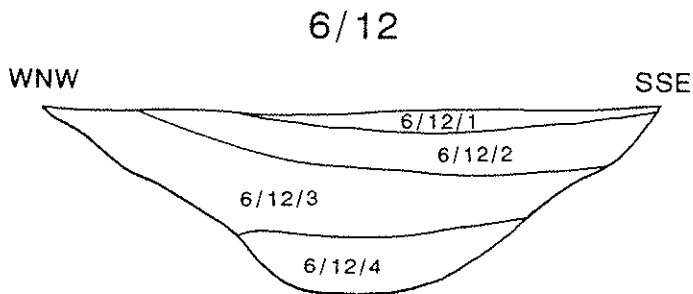
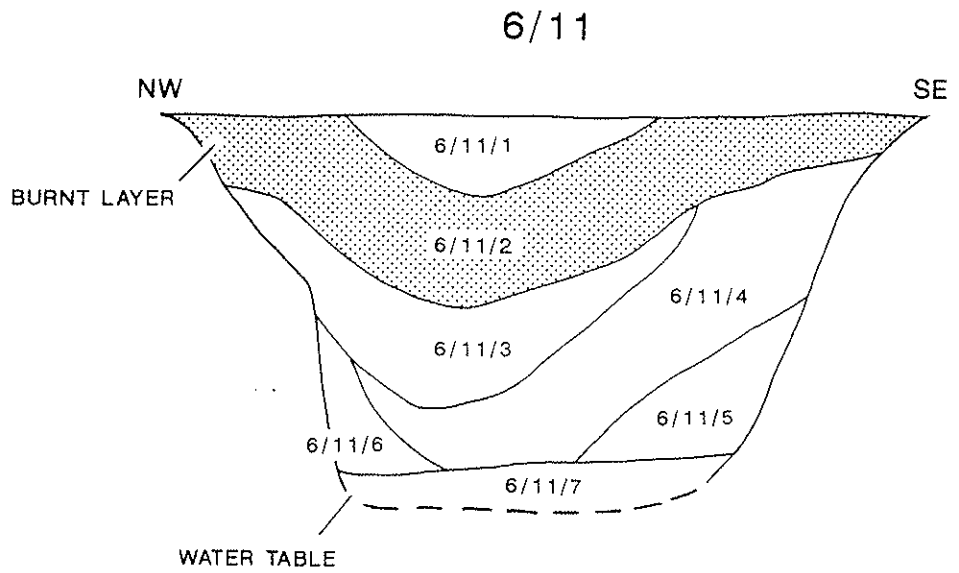
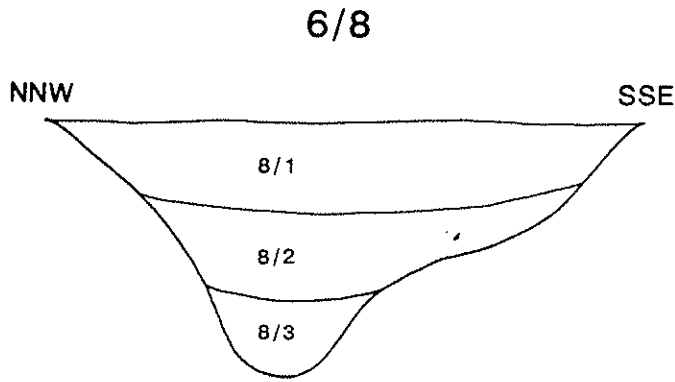


SCALE 1:125



Plan 2

Figure 2



SCALE 1:20

Trench 6: Sections

Figure 3

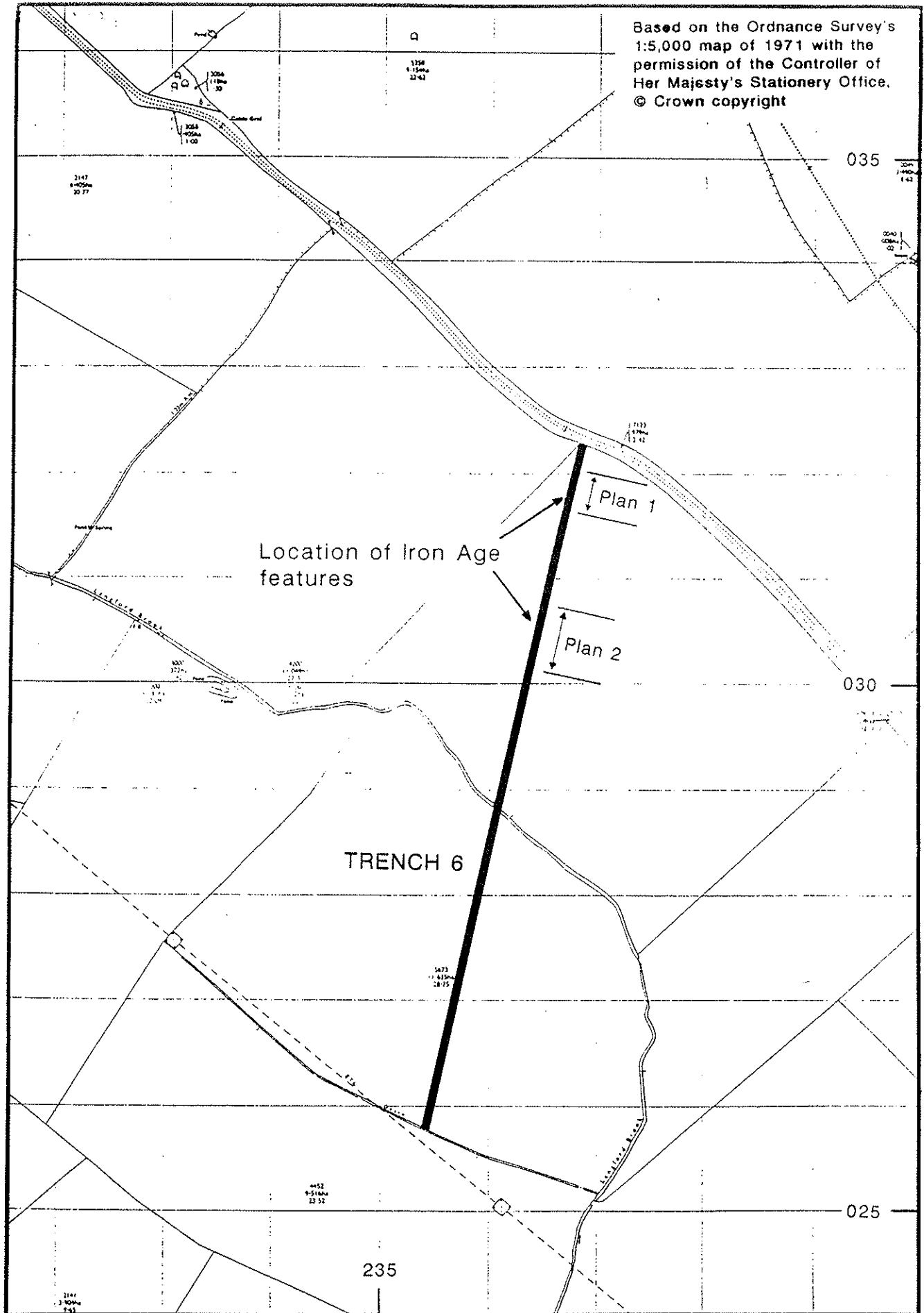


Figure 4