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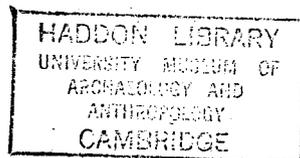
PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN  
SOCIETY

(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



VOLUME LXII

JANUARY 1969 TO DECEMBER 1969



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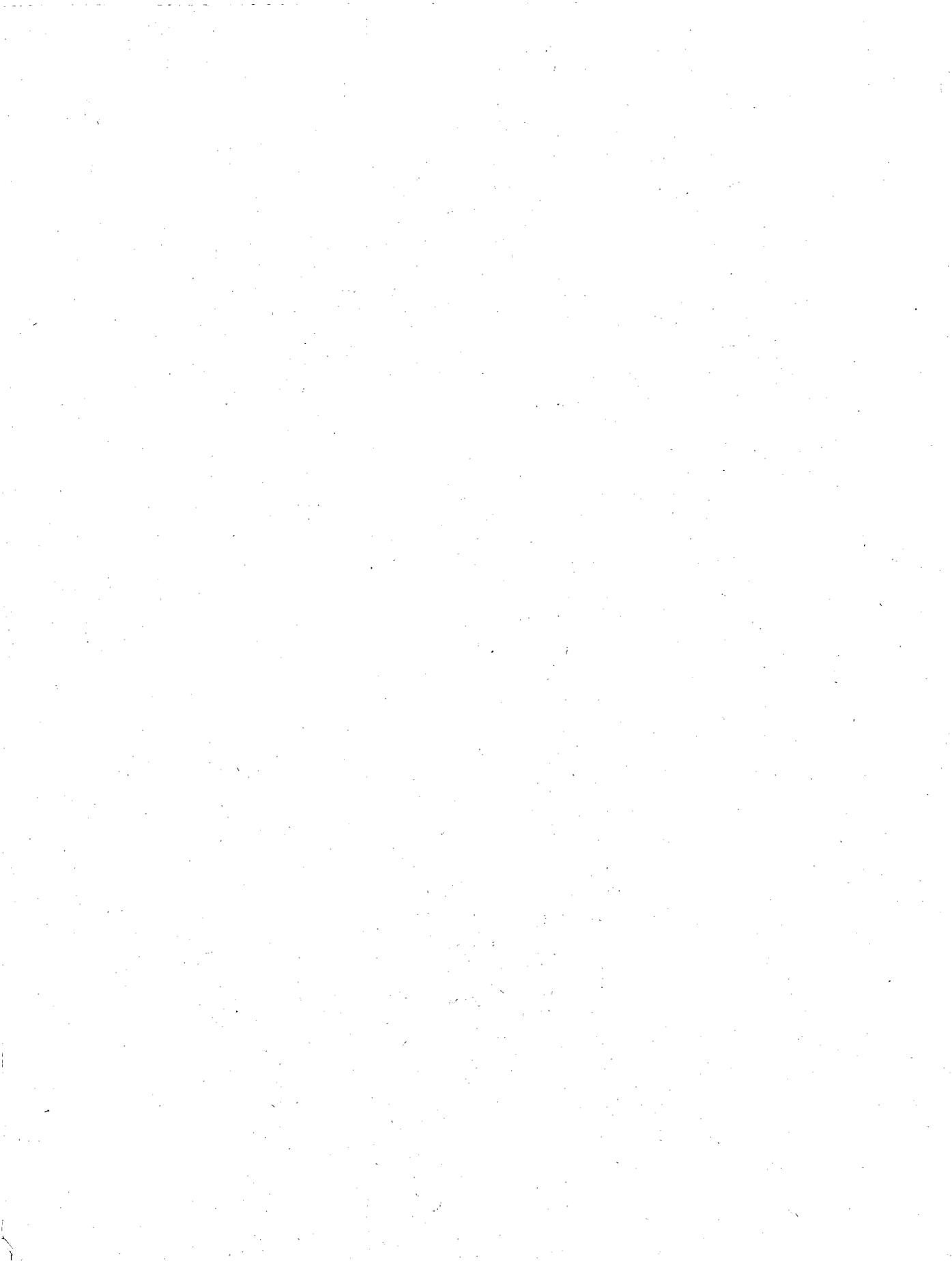
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# ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS FROM THE NORTH SEA GAS PIPELINE IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE 1968

C. C. TAYLOR

IN the second half of 1968, the Gas Council cut a large trench across South Cambridgeshire to take the No. 3 Feeder Main for North Sea Gas. In view of the fact that the trench was to cross all four of the Cambridgeshire Dykes and the possibility of other archaeological finds being made, the Cambridge Antiquarian Society and the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) agreed to co-operate on watching the work.<sup>1</sup> The greatest help was received from the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, the Gas Council and the contractors.

The trench, for a 36-in. pipe, was cut to an average depth of 7 ft and was 4-5 ft wide. Its line extended from near Royston in the W. to Chippenham in the E., a distance of almost 30 miles. The following finds and sites were recorded.

## THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE DYKES

### *Devil's Dyke and Fleam Dyke*

The pipeline was originally intended to cut all four of the Cambridgeshire Dykes, but following representations by the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments and the Cambridge Naturalists' Trust both the Devil's Dyke and the Fleam Dyke were untouched and the pipe was inserted in boreholes some 18 ft deep under both ditches, at TL 54385463 (Fleam Dyke) and 58786414 (Devil's Dyke). Spoil from both boreholes was examined but proved to be entirely natural chalk.

### *Heydon or Bran Ditch (Fig. 1)*

The trench was cut through the line of this dyke 230 yards N.W. of Heydon Grange (TL 41744262) almost exactly at right angles to it. The ditch was thus completely sectioned, but no trace of a bank was seen, presumably here being entirely ploughed away. The bottom of the ditch was not exposed as it was at this point some distance below the bottom of the pipe trench. The ditch was some 21 ft wide at the top and 8 ft wide at the bottom of the trench. It was completely filled with a light brown chalky loam, containing small chalk lumps and tiny fragments of flint. There was no

<sup>1</sup> This note is published by kind consent of the Commissioners. The views expressed are those of the author who carried out the work for the Commission.

stratification whatsoever, except near the bottom where chalk rubble, perhaps the result of initial weathering, was exposed. No finds were made.

This section adds little to what is already known of the Heydon Ditch following the excavations on it by Fox, Palmer and others.<sup>1</sup> The homogeneous fill noted in 1968 confirms the evidence of the other ten sections made, though there was no evidence here of any earlier ditches on the E. side of the main ditch which the previous excavators noted.

*Brent Ditch (Fig. 1)*

The pipe trench was cut through the line of this dyke near its centre, in the S.E. corner of Pampisford Park 400 yards S.S.E. of Pampisford Hall (TL 51104803), almost at right angles to it. The section was of some interest in that it was the first

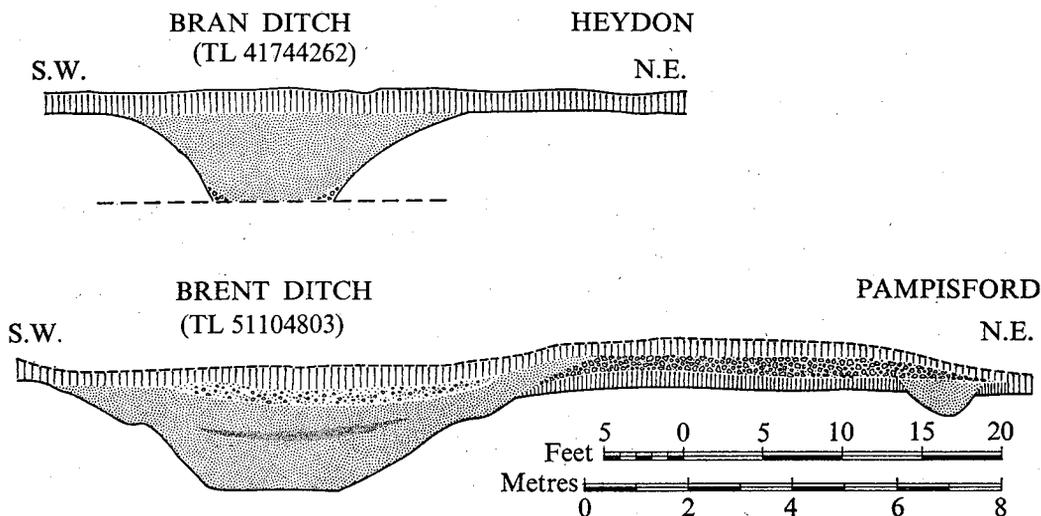


Fig. 1

time any cut through the dyke has been recorded. Fox said that no definite bank existed but that it seemed possible that there had been one once on the S. side.<sup>2</sup> Recent fieldwork had suggested that the bank did indeed exist in a few places and was on the N. side. The trench section proved this.

The ditch was some 30 ft wide at the top of the trench, 8 ft wide across its flat bottom and just over 7 ft deep below the ground surface. There were well-marked ledges or berms on both sides of it. It was largely filled by a dark brown loam containing small lumps of chalk except for a narrow lens of sandy loam in the centre, and a small amount of gravel and sand at the top. There was no evidence of chalk rubble weathering on the sides.

Immediately to the N. of the ditch a slight rise in the ground 30 ft wide and 1 ft

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. C.A.S.* xxvii (1926), pp. 16-33; xxx (1929), pp. 78-93; xxxii (1932), pp. 54-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Archaeology of the Cambridge Region* (1923), pp. 126, 130.

high proved to be the remains of the bank. A narrow layer of light brown loam, presumably the old ground surface, lay directly on weathered natural chalk and was covered by a band of chalk rubble on which was the modern soil. At its N. end the tail of this bank overran and sealed a small ditch 2 ft deep and 5 ft wide with homogeneous dark brown loam fill. This clearly pre-dated the bank and may represent an earlier ditch on the line of the dyke or a marking-out ditch for the dyke itself. No finds were made.

### *Linear Ditch Systems*

The Chalk land between Newmarket and the River Cam on both sides of the A 11 is characterized by having a number of complex linear ditch systems over parts of it, completely unrelated to the main Cambridgeshire dykes. They are all ploughed out and are only known from air-photographs. None has been noted in print up to now. These ditches are generally straight but turn in sharp angles and sometimes run for hundreds of yards across the countryside. They often intersect with other ditches but form no coherent pattern, vary greatly in width and are completely undated.

A particularly complex area of these exists S. and S.W. of Allington Hall in Bottisham parish which is outside our concern here.<sup>1</sup> Another less complex but extensive area of these ditches lies on either side of the A 11, N.E. of Worsted Lodge in Balsham and Fulbourn parishes in an area containing a number of barrows and ring ditches (Fig. 2). The pipe trench passed through part of this complex and cut two of these ditches. The first, which appeared to be very narrow on air-photographs,<sup>2</sup> runs N. and N.E. from just N. of Worsted Lodge (TL 52985224) for a distance of 300 yards before it ends (at TL 53055251). The pipe trench cut it very obliquely near its S.W. end immediately N.W. of the old railway (*a* on plan) (TL 62995229). The section showed this ditch to be extremely small, only 2 ft 6 in. deep and 6 ft wide across the top with an asymmetrical profile and rounded bottom. It was completely filled with dark soil flecked with small pieces of chalk. There were no finds. The second ditch which was sectioned by the pipe trench was S. of Heath Plantation (TL 53205273) (*b* on plan) and also appeared to be extremely narrow on air-photographs. It runs in a northerly direction from a point N. of Worsted Lodge (TL 52915229) for a distance of some 530 yards (to TL 52885282) and then turns sharply due E.S.E. and runs for a further 600 yards. The section revealed a ditch almost identical in fill and shape to the previous one except that it was 3 ft deep. The pipe trench also cut another ditch to the N.W., but for technical reasons it was not possible to record this.

Other apparent ditches, perhaps a part of another complex but not visible on air-photographs, were noted in Great Wilbraham parish. One lay immediately N.E. of the road joining Wilbraham to the A 11 (TL 55365655) and appeared to be running in an E.-W. direction. It was V-shaped, 5 ft deep, 12 ft wide across the top and, apart from some chalk rubble in the bottom, 9 in. was filled with light brown earth with small chalk lumps in it. A small flint-scraper and a single sherd of unidentifiable,

<sup>1</sup> See R.C.H.M., *Cambridgeshire*, vol. II, forthcoming.

<sup>2</sup> R.A.F. Vertical Air Photographs 1065/UK 1365:5356-9; and photographs taken by Dr St Joseph.

but probably prehistoric pottery was found in it. 1,000 yards to the N.E. near the parish boundary with Little Wilbraham (TL 55905736) the pipe trench cuts three more ditches, all apparently aligned N.W.-S.E. within 30 yards of each other. They were all V-shaped, 8 ft wide across the top and 4-5 ft deep and all filled with a light grey clay and small pieces of broken flint. Fragments of long bones of sheep or goats came from the fill of the north-easternmost ditch. These three ditches are close to the large Pagan-Saxon cemetery in Little Wilbraham 300 yards to the N.E. and may be connected with it.<sup>1</sup>

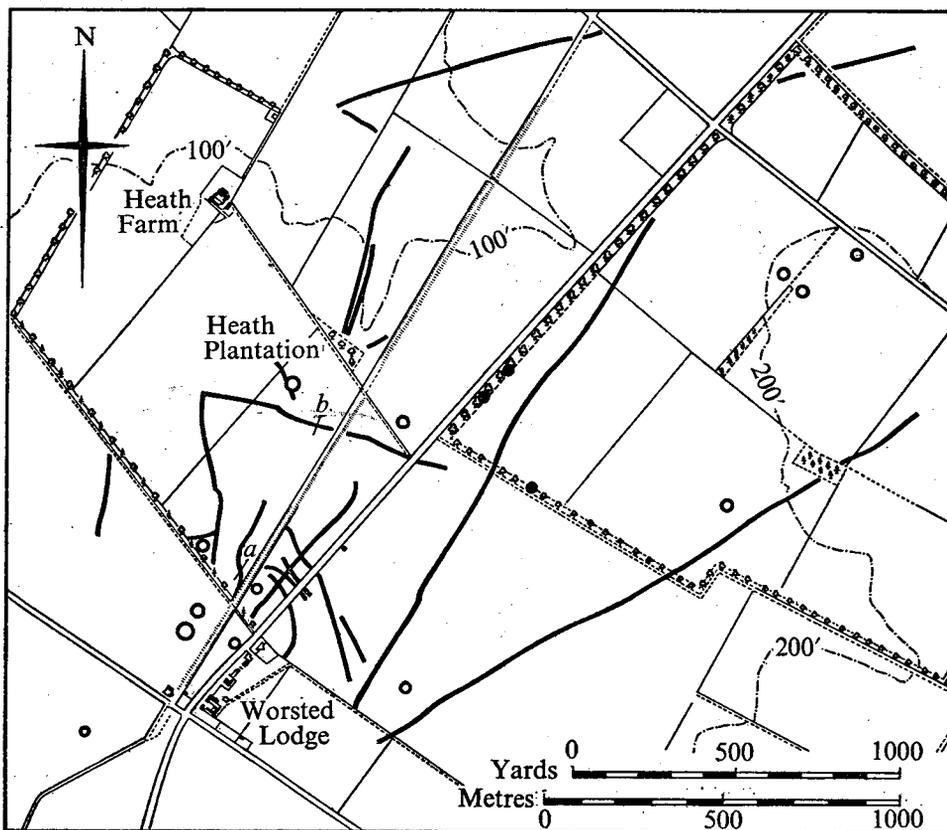


Fig. 2

### *Roman Settlement, Exning*

The pipe trench passed within 100 yards of the Roman Building, in the N.W. of Exning Parish, close to the county boundary (TL 61206760), and it was anticipated that some finds might be made there. In the event nothing at all was found in the immediate vicinity of the building.

However, S.E. of the site for a distance of nearly a mile (TL 61206750-60376628) the trench was cut through a large Roman settlement area. Some 70 features were

<sup>1</sup> *V.C.H. Cambs.* I (1938), p. 317.

exposed, most of them (over 40) apparently being pits. These were usually U-shaped, 3–5 ft deep and between 3 and 4 ft wide, all cut in the natural chalk. All were filled with a homogeneous dark grey chalky soil containing small flints, lumps of chalk, pottery, animal bones, charcoal and wood ash.

In addition there were a number of what appear to have been sleeper-beam trenches. These were exposed as long rectangular slots, 3–8 ft long, 1 ft wide and up to 1½ ft deep with vertical sides, filled with black earth sealed by a layer of yellow calcareous clay, perhaps mortar up to 6 in. deep. Due to the narrow width of the pipe trench it was impossible to obtain any plan, but at least four appeared to be at right angles to each other and may represent the footings of a rectangular structure.

Other features included three large basins or depressions, up to 30 ft across and 3 ft deep. They were completely filled with grey clay, lying on a narrow band of burnt earth containing charcoal and fire-crackled flints, 2 or 3 in. deep, which covered the bottom. In addition a number of 'post holes' 1½ ft deep and 9 in. wide were noted, as well as what appeared to be a series of V-shaped ditches running in a generally N.W.–S.W. direction. The latter were 3–4 ft deep filled with dark soil and containing pottery and animal bones. Other similar ditches were noted beyond the limits of the main settlement area to the N.E. (TL 61596796).

Large quantities of Roman pottery were found in the pits and ditches, in the spoil heaps from the pipe trench and in the surrounding fields. It was mainly second century to fourth century in date and included some forms closely resembling those made at the Horningsea Kilns near Cambridge<sup>1</sup> as well as other types found in the well excavated in 1956 at Exning.<sup>2</sup> A few sherds of colour-coated ware of Nene Valley type were also recovered. An almost complete pot was found in the fill of one of the pits. This was a jar in black calcite-gritted fabric, whose exterior was coloured black to orange, and decorated with horizontal rilling. It is almost identical to one found at Wangford, Suffolk in 1955.<sup>3</sup> No Samian ware was found. In addition there were small quantities of hand-made black burnished wares perhaps of late Iron Age date, as well as some sherds of semi-carinated jars based on Belgic forms which are probably first century or early second century in date.

Fragments of bricks, roofing tiles, and box tiles were found, and large quantities of animal bones, all of cattle and sheep. The upper part of a rotary quern was found in the filling of one ditch and still had the remains of an iron haft in its central hole round which it was turned on its base.

There can be little doubt that this site is part of an extensive Roman settlement in the area lying along the S.E. side of a small N.E.-flowing brook. From surface finds from the adjacent fields it appears that the pipe trench cut longitudinally across the settlement which is thus almost a mile long and up to 200 yards wide. It must cover at least 50 acres, and dates from perhaps the later Iron Age to the fourth century A.D.

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. C.A.S.* XI (1913), pp. 14–69.

<sup>2</sup> *Proc. C.A.S.* LII (1959), 11–20.

<sup>3</sup> *Proc. C.A.S.* LI (1958), p. 25, fig. 4, no. 8.

*Roman Settlement? (Pampisford)*

Immediately S. of Pampisford Park (TL 50504764) the plough soil removed from above the pipe trench contained a quantity of Romano-British coarse-ware and one sherd of unidentifiable Samian ware. No structures, pits or ditches were visible in the pipe trench, but it is possible that a settlement area exists nearby.

*Human Skeleton*

A pit filled with dark earth was cut by the pipeline near Duxford (TL 479450). It had no visible stratification in the filling; at the bottom a human skeleton was found lying in a jumbled position. The pit was about 3 ft wide, except for a flaring near the top, and 9 ft deep. It could possibly have been a well, but remains unexplained and undated.

*Earthen Ridges*

Much of the lower slopes of the Chalklands of S.E. Cambridgeshire are characterized by having long low sinuous earthen ridges on them. These slight features are now being rapidly destroyed by modern ploughing. They are usually only 1-2 ft high, up to 30 yards wide and as much as 700 yards long. They are usually curved in plan, often in the form of a reversed-S. Similar ridges have been recognized elsewhere, notably in the Welland Valley of Lincolnshire,<sup>1</sup> where they were interpreted as being boundaries between furlongs in medieval and later open fields. Fieldwork in Cambridgeshire has confirmed this, and there is no doubt that such ridges are former headlands between furlongs.

The pipe trench was cut through a number of these ridges, e.g. in Pampisford parish, S. of Pampisford Hall (TL 50244741), Swaffham Bulbeck parish E.N.E. of Chalk Farm (TL 57706080) and Swaffham Prior parish, W. of Partridge Hall Farm (TL 58206229). All the cuts showed that these ridges were entirely made up of brown loamy soil with flecks of chalk in it, and with no indication of stratification or structure.

*Old Road, Pampisford*

In Pampisford parish (TL 50384754) the pipe trench exposed a large flat-bottomed depression some 50 ft across and 4 ft deep cut in natural chalk, apparently orientated N.W.-S.E. It was filled completely with brown plough soil, resting on a 6 in.-deep layer of dark soil containing small lumps of chalk and pieces of flint. Examination of air-photographs<sup>2</sup> revealed a dark mark running for a distance of 1,000 yards from the end of the road S.E. of Pampisford village (TL 49904792) to Hinxton Belt Plantation almost parallel to a modern farm track, and it was this that the pipe trench had exposed.<sup>3</sup> Its connection with the modern road makes it clear that it is nothing more than an old road, though as it is not shown on the Enclosure Map of Pampisford of 1779<sup>3</sup> it is likely that it is of medieval or later date through the former open fields of the parish.

<sup>1</sup> R.C.H.M., *A Matter of Time* (H.M.S.O. 1960), p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> R.A.F. Vertical Air Photograph 1064/UK 1635:4394.

<sup>3</sup> Cambridge County Record Office.

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