



CAM ARC Report Number 961

## Undated Remains at Longsands Community College, St Neots, Cambridgeshire

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An Archaeological Evaluation

Tom Phillips

August 2007

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## An Archaeological Evaluation

Tom Phillips BA

With contributions by Rachel Fosberry

Site Code: STN LSC 07  
CHER Event Number: ECB 2350  
Date of works: 23rd-25th July 2007  
Grid Ref: TL 1911 6072

Status	Draft		
Author	Tom Phillips		
Checked By			
Authorised By			

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## CAM ARC OASIS Report Form

OASIS Number: 29217

PROJECT DETAILS				
Project name	Evaluation at Longsands College, St Neots			
Short description	Seven 25m long trenches were machine excavated in advance of the construction of an all weather pitch. Apart from three ditches, two small pits and a post hole no archaeological remains were found. None of the features contained dating evidence.			
Project dates	Start	23/07/07	End	25/07/07
Previous work	Report 902: STNLSC 06	Future work	no	
Associated project reference codes	Site code: STN LSC 07, HER Event number: ECB 2350			
Type of project	evaluation			
Site status	Area of archaeological importance			
Current land use (list all that apply)	Recreational usage: School sports field			
Planned development	All weather sports pitch			
Monument types / period (list all that apply)	Ditches, pits and and a post hole, all of uncertain date			
Significant finds: Artefact type / period (list all that apply)	None			
PROJECT LOCATION				
County	Cambridgeshire	Parish	St Neots	
HER for region	Cambridgeshire			
Site address (including postcode)	Longsands Community College, Longsands Road, St Neots, PE19 1LQ			
Study area (sq.m or ha)	Approximately 0.75 ha			
National grid reference	TL 1911 6072			
Height OD	Min OD	18.21m	Max OD	19.71m
PROJECT ORIGINATORS				
Organisation	CAM ARC			
Project brief originator	Andy Thomas			
Project design originator	Aileen Connor			
Director/supervisor	Tom Phillips			
Project manager	James Drummond Murray			
Sponsor or funding body	Cambridgeshire County Council			
ARCHIVES	Location and accession number	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone, database, context sheets etc)		
Physical	N/a			
Paper	Cambridgeshire County Store	Context sheets, site registers, plans, photos.		
Digital	CAM ARC	photos		
BIBLIOGRAPHY				
Full title	Undated Remains at Longsands Community College, St Neots, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation			
Author(s)	Tom Phillips			
Report number	961			
Series title and volume				
Page numbers				
Date	August 2007			

## **Summary**

Between 23rd and 25th July 2007 CAM ARC, Cambridgeshire County Council (formerly Archaeological Field Unit) conducted an archaeological evaluation in the grounds of Longsands Community College, St Neots, in advance of construction of a new all weather pitch. Seven trenches, each 25m long, were excavated. Limited archaeological remains comprising three ditches, two small pits and a post-hole, were encountered. There was a complete lack of dateable artefacts from the excavated features.

Originally the all weather pitch was to be located approximately 100m to the west. This area was also evaluated by CAM ARC (Connor 2006) and was found to contain significant archaeological remains including a possible roundhouse, a ditched track and a series of large ditches that may have been part of an extensive enclosure system. Pottery from the features indicated a consistent date in the Early Roman period (1st and 2nd centuries). The scant remains in the current study area, especially the ditches, may relate to the activity to the west.

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## **1 Introduction**

Between 23rd and 25th July 2007 CAM ARC, Cambridgeshire County Council (formerly Archaeological Field Unit) conducted an archaeological evaluation in the grounds of Longsands Community College, St Neots, in advance of construction of a new all weather pitch.

This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Andy Thomas of the Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and Countryside Advice team (CAPCA), supplemented by a Specification prepared by CAM ARC, Cambridgeshire County Council (formerly Archaeological Field Unit).

The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16 - Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by CAPCA, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is currently held by CAM ARC and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

## **2 Geology and Topography**

The British Geological Survey of England and Wales (Sheet 187; 1975) shows the area to lie on a boulder clay bedrock over which, in the south-west corner of the study area, there is a deposit of 1st terrace river gravel. In reality the geology encountered in all the trenches was predominantly boulder clay with only occasional areas of sandy gravel.

The site sloped slightly from higher ground in the east (19.71m OD) to lower ground in the west (18.21m). The land continues to slope downhill to the river Ouse, approximately 1km to the west. It is likely that landscaping has taken place on the site to create a level playing field.

## **3 Archaeological and Historical Background**

### **3.1 Early Prehistoric**

The subject site is located close to the Ouse corridor which has attracted settlement from the Neolithic onwards. The earliest remains are mainly ritual in character including the regionally very important



ritual landscape at Eynesbury (Kemp, 1993, 1996, 1997, Ellis 2002). Bronze Age ring-ditches (probably the remains of burial mounds) are located close by (Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER) 08281, 04754, 09837)).

### **3.2 Iron Age and Roman**

Extensive evidence of Iron Age and Roman activity has recently been investigated at Loves Farm, 1km to the east of the subject site (Hinman forthcoming) and additional activity is known to the north-west (CHER 04747). An evaluation carried out on the original location of the all weather pitch (Connor 2006) approximately 100m to the west revealed significant archaeological remains including a possible roundhouse, a ditched track and a series of large ditches that may have been part of an extensive Roman enclosure system.

Excavations in the wider area have confirmed the presence of many Iron Age sites that continued into the Roman period. Excavations along the Ouse valley for example have recorded occupation sites stretching from Huntingdon (Malim 1990; Hinman 1997, 2000) to Brampton (Malim & Mitchell 1993), to Paxton (Greenfield 1968; Alexander 1992) and Eynesbury (Alexander 1993; Kemp 1993, 1997; Macaulay 1994). The scale of Romano-British infrastructure and wealth found in the area is also evidenced by the number of find spots recorded in the CHER records.

The line of a Roman road that ran between Sandy and Godmanchester (Margary 1967) is nearby with the nearest east-west crossing point of the river thought to be a few hundred metres to the north of the medieval bridge in the area of Islands Common.

### **3.3 Anglo-Saxon and Medieval**

The subject site is located to the north-east of the historic core of the town of St Neots. There is evidence of Early Saxon occupation in the St Neots area and of the development of the town during the Middle and Late Saxon periods. Certainly by the medieval period St Neots was well established within the parish of Eynesbury (Addyman 1973). Evidence of Late Saxon Settlement (CHER 00573) and burials (CHER 00574, 00570) is situated nearby, with further evidence of Saxon activity to the north of the site (CHER 00622).

## **4 Methodology**

The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

The Brief required that 5% of the area to be developed should be subject to trial trenching. In total 175m of trenches were excavated (Fig. 2)

Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a 1.8m toothless ditching bucket.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using CAM ARC's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

A single soil sample was taken to assess the quality and preservation of environmental remains.

Site and weather conditions were generally good although heavy rainfall over previous weeks meant the water table was particularly high. It was encountered at approximately the same depth as the natural geology, 0.5m below modern ground level.

## **5 Results**

All seven trenches were 25m in length and 1.8m wide. Only trenches 3, 4 and 6 contained archaeological features. Topsoil (1) and subsoil (2) were uniform across the site. All features cut through natural and were sealed by subsoil. Full context descriptions are included in Appendix 1.

### **5.1 Trench 1**

Trench 1, located in the south of the site, was orientated east-west and had a maximum depth of 0.49m. No archaeological features were present. Subsoil (2) measured 0.2m thick and was sealed by topsoil (1) measuring 0.29m thick. Approximately 10.5m from the western end of the trench an electric cable was discovered running north-east to south-west. It was encountered at approximately 0.45m below modern ground level.

### **5.2 Trench 2**

Trench 2, located in the south-west of the site, was orientated north to south and had a maximum depth of 0.49m. No archaeological features were present. Subsoil (2) measured 0.19m thick and was sealed by topsoil (1) measuring 0.3m thick.

### 5.3 Trench 3

Trench 3, located in the west of the site, was orientated north to south and had a maximum depth of 0.53m. It contained two ditches (**6** and **12**) and a small pit (**8**)(Fig. 3). The southern most ditch (**12**) was orientated north-east to south-west although curved slightly north-north-east to south-south-west as it ran across the trench. It had a flat based u-shaped profile, measuring 0.92m wide and 0.27m deep. Its single fill (11) was an orangey light brown silty clay containing no artefacts. This ditch may equate to ditch **4** in trench 4, which is similar in character and on a similar alignment.

Ditch **6** was located 0.5m to the north of ditch **12**. It was orientated north-east to south-west but was very different in character from ditch **12**, measuring 2.1m wide and 0.3m deep with a wide u-shaped profile. Its single fill (5) was an orangey mid brown silty clay, again containing no artefacts.

Pit **8** was an isolated feature located in the north of the trench. It was sub-circular in plan, measuring 0.45m wide and 0.16m deep with a u-shaped profile. It contained a single fill (7), a dark brown silty clay containing no artefacts.

Subsoil (2) measured 0.32m thick and was sealed by topsoil (1) measuring 0.21m thick.

### 5.4 Trench 4

Trench 4 was located to the east of trench 3. It was orientated east to west and had a maximum depth of 0.52m. Two archaeological features were encountered, a ditch (**4**) and a small pit (**10**) (Fig. 3). Ditch **4** was situated at the western end of the trench and was orientated north-east to south-west. It measured 1m wide and 0.3m deep with a flat based u-shaped profile. Its single fill (3) was a greyish brown silty clay and contained no artefacts.

Pit **10** was located approximately in the middle of trench 4. It was circular in plan, measuring 0.65m wide and 0.26m deep with a u-shaped profile. It contained a single fill (9), a greyish brown silty clay. No artefacts were recovered from the fill.

Subsoil (2) measured 0.26m thick and was sealed by topsoil (1) measuring 0.27m thick.

### 5.5 Trench 5

Trench 5, located in the north of the development area, was orientated north to south and had a maximum depth of 0.54m. No archaeological

features were present. Subsoil (2) measured 0.26m thick and was sealed by topsoil (1) measuring 0.28m thick.

## 5.6 Trench 6

Trench 6, located in the east of the site, was orientated north to south and had a maximum depth of 0.5m. A single post-hole (**14**) was discovered at the southern end of the trench. It was sub-square in plan, measuring 0.5m wide and 0.14m deep with a flat based u-shaped profile. Its fill (**13**) was a loose blackish brown silty clay. The loose nature of the fill and its square shape suggests it may be a modern post-hole.

Subsoil (2) measured 0.3m thick and was sealed by topsoil (1) measuring 0.2m thick.

## 5.7 Trench 7

Trench 7, located in the centre of the site, was orientated east-north-east to west-south-west and had a maximum depth of 0.45m. No archaeological features were present. Subsoil (2) measured 0.18m thick and was sealed by topsoil (1) measuring 0.27m thick. The electric cable found in trench 1 was encountered again running north-east to south-west approximately 11m from the western end of the trench.

## 6 Discussion

Considering the area previously evaluated for the all weather pitch (Connor 2006) yielded evidence of an extensive Roman enclosure system it is perhaps surprising to have such a lack of features and artefacts on the current site. Ditches **4** and **12** (which are possibly the same ditch) and ditch **6** may relate to the Roman activity to the west. Ditch **6** in particular looks like a truncated version of one of the large Roman enclosure ditches and it was sealed by subsoil (2) suggesting it is not a medieval furrow.

It may be a coincidence that the ditches are on the part of the site closest to the Roman activity but it may also be evidence that the ditches are on the outer fringes of the field or enclosure system. The fact that ditch **6** does not appear in trench 4 is not a problem if it is interpreted as an enclosure ditch; it could easily turn north-west somewhere between trenches 3 and 4. A total lack of artefacts makes it difficult to be any more certain about the date and function of these ditches.

## **7 Conclusions**

The evaluation has shown that despite the presence of archaeological remains directly to the west the current subject site is largely devoid of evidence relating to previous land use with only sparse, undated features located in the west of the site.

Recommendations for any future work based upon this report will be made by the County Archaeology Office.

## Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Mouchel Parkman who commissioned and funded the archaeological work on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council. The project was managed by James Drummond-Murray. The author and Dave Brown excavated the site. Survey was carried out by Rachel Clarke and Louise Bush.

The brief for archaeological works was written by Andy Thomas, while Kasia Gdaniec visited the site and monitored the evaluation.

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## Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Cut	Trench	Category	Feature Type	Colour	Fine Composition	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Shape in Plan	Side	Break of Slope	Base
1		Various	Layer	Topsoil	Dark greyish brown	Silty clay		0.3				
2		Various	Layer	Subsoil	Mid brown	Silty clay		0.32				
3	4	4	Fill	Ditch	Greyish brown	Silty clay	1	0.3				
4	4	4	Cut	Ditch			1	0.3	Linear	Steep	Gradual	Flat
5	6	3	Fill	Ditch	Orangey mid brown	Silty clay	2.1	0.3				
6	6	3	Cut	Ditch			2.1	0.3	Linear	Gently sloping	Gradual	Concave
7	8	1	Fill	Pit	Dark brown	Silty clay	0.45	0.16				
8	8	1	Cut	Pit			0.45	0.16	Sub-circular	Gently sloping	Gradual	Concave
9	10	4	Fill	Pit	Greyish brown	Silty clay	0.65	0.26				
10	10	4	Cut	Pit			0.65	0.26	Circular	Steep	Gradual	Flat
11	12	3	Fill	Ditch	Orangey light brown	Silty clay	0.92	0.27				
12	12	3	Cut	Ditch			0.92	0.27	Curvilinear	Steep	Sharp	Concave
13	14	6	Fill	Post-hole	Blackish brown	Silty clay	0.5	0.14				
14	14	6	Cut	Post-hole			0.5	0.14	Sub-square	Steep	Sharp	Flat



## **APPENDIX 2: ENVIRONMENTAL APPRAISAL OF SAMPLES FROM LONGSANDS COLLEGE, ST NEOTS**

by Rachel Fosberry

### **1 INTRODUCTION AND METHODS**

A single bulk sample was taken from an undated ditch fill within the evaluated areas of the site in order to assess the quality of preservation of plant remains and their potential to provide useful data as part of further archaeological investigations.

Ten litres of the sample were processed by tank flotation for the recovery of charred plant remains, dating evidence and any other artefactual evidence that might be present. The flot was collected in a 0.5mm nylon mesh and the residue was washed through a 1mm sieve. Both flot and residue were allowed to air dry. The dried residue was passed through 5mm and 2mm sieves and a magnet was dragged through each resulting fraction prior to sorting for artefacts. The flot was examined under a binocular microscope at x16 magnification.

### **2 RESULTS**

The sample was devoid of any charred plant remains or artefacts.

### **3 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This sample does not aid interpretation of the feature and no further work is required.







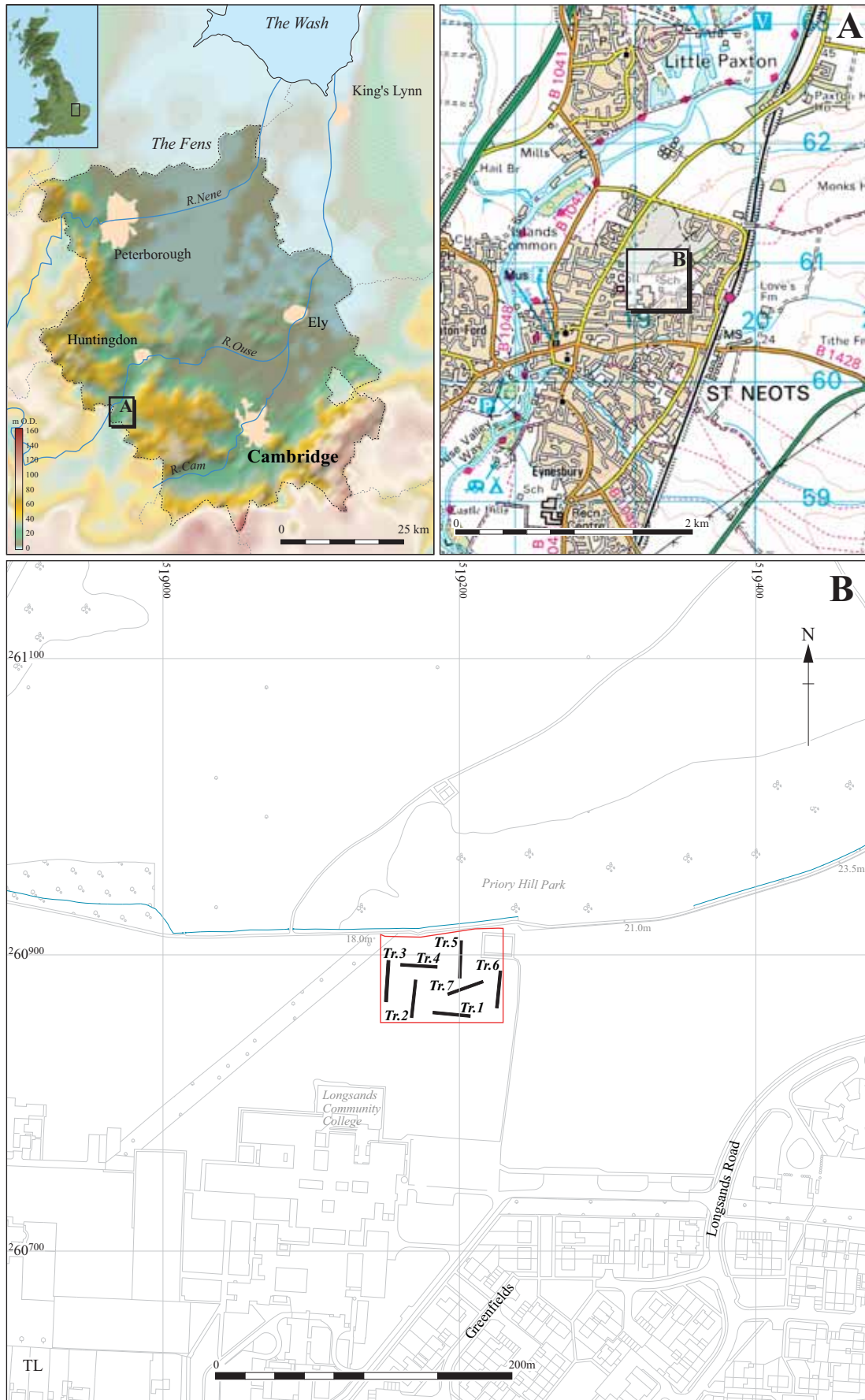
Drawing Conventions	
Plans	
Limit of Excavation	—————
Deposit - Conjectured	-----
Natural Features	—————
Sondages/Machine Strip	- - - - -
Intrusion/Truncation	.....
Illustrated Section	————— <span style="color: red;">S.14</span>
Archaeological Deposit	
Archaeological Feature	
Excavated Slot	
Cut Number	<b>118</b>
Sections	
Limit of Excavation	-----
Cut	—————
Cut-Conjectured	-----
Deposit Horizon	—————
Deposit Horizon - Conjectured	-----
Intrusion/Truncation	.....
Top Surface/Top of Natural	—————
Break in Section/ Limit of Section Drawing	- - - - -
Cut Number	
Deposit Number	117
Ordnance Datum	18.45m OD 
Inclusions	

Figure 1: Convention keys



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Figure 2: Location of trenches (black) with the development area outlined (red)

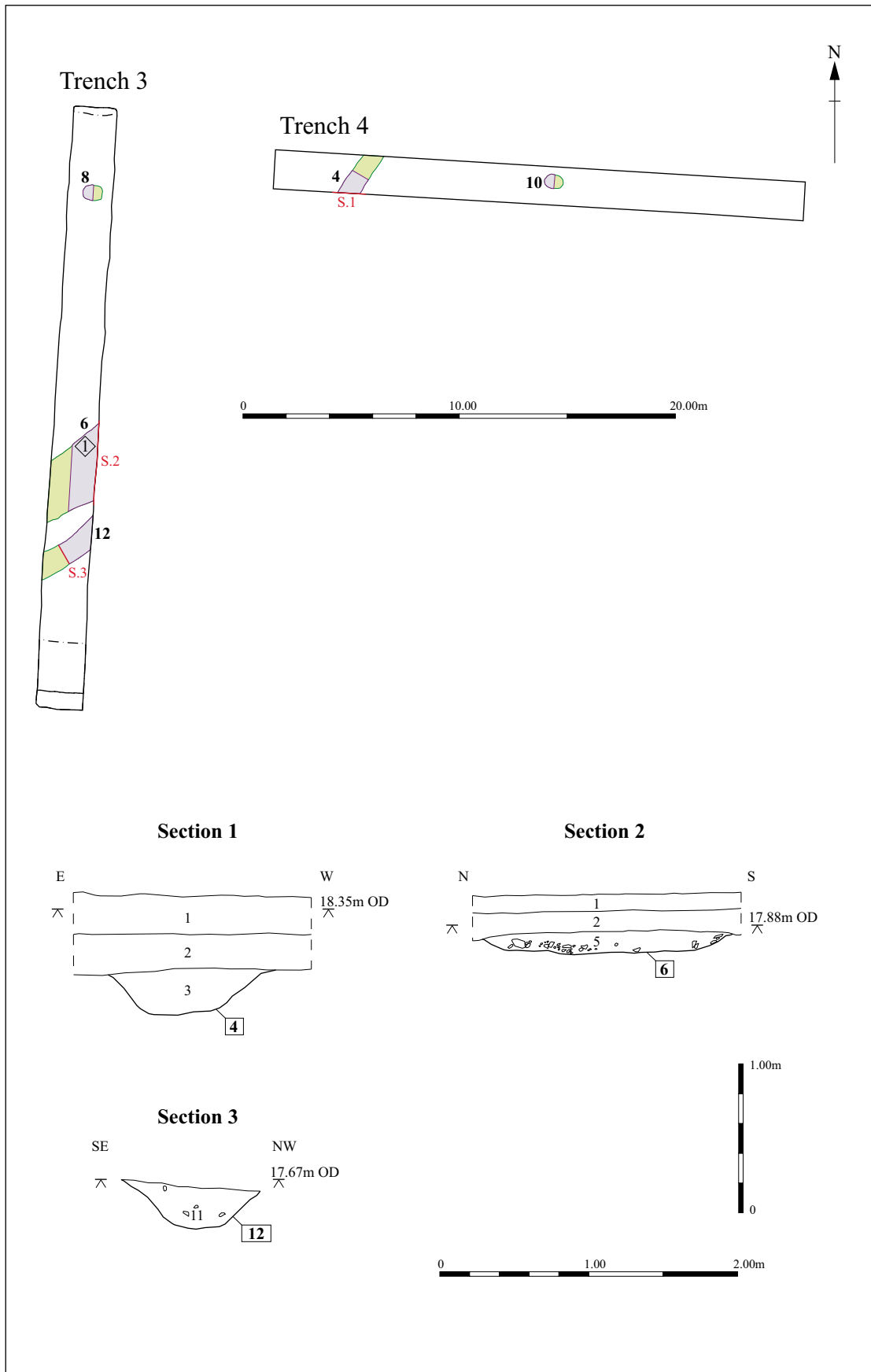
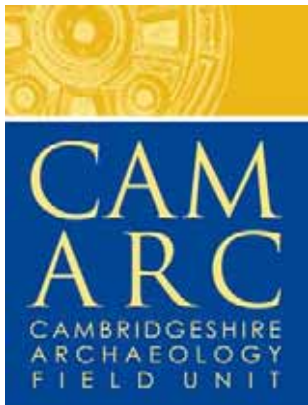


Figure 3: Trench plans and drawing sections



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