



**CAM ARC Report Number 965**

## **Post-Medieval Remains at 42 Market Square, St Neots**

---

**An Archaeological Evaluation**

Spencer Cooper and Mo Muldowney

August 2007

**CAM ARC Report Number 965**

# **Post-Medieval Remains at 42 Market Square, St Neots**

---

## **An Archaeological Evaluation**

Spencer Cooper HND BA and Mo Muldowney BA  
PIFA

Site Code: STN MSQ 07  
CHER Event Number: ECB 2533  
Date of works: 17th to 25th July 2007  
Grid Ref: TL 1829 6017

Status	Approved		
Author	S Cooper		
Checked By	J Drummond-Murray		
Authorised By			

Editor: James Drummond-Murray BA AIFA  
Illustrator: Crane Begg BSc (Hons)

## CAM ARC OASIS Report Form

OASIS Number: cambridg1-30836

PROJECT DETAILS				
Project name	Evaluation at 42 Market Square St Neots, Cambridgeshire			
Short description	A single trench revealed post- medieval activity including a large industrial pit.			
Project dates	Start	17th July 2007	End	25th July 2007
Previous work	None		Future work	No
Associated project reference codes	ECB 2533, Site code: STN MSQ 07 ECB 1962 Williams and O'Brien ECB 465 Gardner, 2001			
Type of project	Evaluation			
Site status	None			
Current land use (list all that apply)	Urban environment			
Planned development	Residential, urban			
Monument types / period (list all that apply and use <a href="#">thesaurus of monument types</a> )	None			
Significant finds: Artefact type / period (list all that apply and use <a href="#">MDA object thesaurus</a> )	None			
PROJECT LOCATION				
County	Cambridge	Parish	St Neots	
HER for region	Cambridgeshire			
Site address (including postcode)	42 Market Square St Neots, Cambridgeshire PE19 2AF			
Study area (sq.m or ha)	0.025 ha			
National grid reference	Easting (6 figure)	TL 1829	Northing (6 figure)	6017
Height OD	Max OD	14.78m	Min OD	14.05m
PROJECT ORIGINATORS				
Organisation	Cambridgeshire County Council, CAM ARC			
Project brief originator	Andy Thomas			
Project design originator	James Drummond-Murray			
Director/supervisor	Spencer Cooper			
Project manager	James Drummond-Murray			
Sponsor or funding body	Campbell Rees Associates, Architect and Designers			
ARCHIVES				
	Location and accession number		Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone, database, context sheets etc)	
Physical	Cambs County Store		None	
Paper	Cambs County Store		Evaluation	
Digital	CAM ARC		Report, illustrations	
BIBLIOGRAPHY				
Full title	Post-medieval Remains at 42 Market Square, St Neots			
Report No	965			
Series title and volume	CAM ARC			
Page numbers	10			
Author(s)	Spencer Cooper			
Date	August 2007			

## **Contents**

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Geology and Topography</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Archaeological and Historical Background</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Results</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>7</b>

### **List of Figures**

Figure 1:	Location of the trenches investigated	12
Figure 2:	Trench plan and section	13

### **List of Tables**

Table 1:	Finds Summary	8
Table 2:	Pottery	8
Table 3:	Environmental samples from STN MSQ 07	9

### **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1:	Finds Summary	8
Appendix 2:	Environmental Remains	9

## **Summary**

Between 17th July and 25th July 2007 CAM ARC conducted an evaluation on land to the rear of 42 Market Street, St Neots, Cambridgeshire

A series of deposits and features were revealed dating from at least 12th century, which relate to possible industrial activity, cultivation and make-up layers. They comprised pits, layers and a wall foundation. Similar features were identified during an evaluation at 46 Market Square, which indicates that the area was used for similar purposes throughout the medieval period.

## **1 Introduction**

Between 17th July 2007 and 25th July 2007 CAM ARC conducted an evaluation to the rear of 42 Market Street, St Neots, Cambridgeshire.

This Archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Andy Thomas of the Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and Countryside Advice team (CAPCA; Planning Application No. 0200233FUL), 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**

According to the British Geological Survey, (BGS 1980) the underlying geology is first and second terrace gravels laid down by the Great Ouse, which in its present course runs two hundred and fifty metres to the west. The surrounding area, away from the river, is comprised mainly of Boulder Clay.

## **3 Archaeological and Historical Background**

Prehistoric and Roman remains are recorded on the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER) at various points in and around St. Neots. Iron Age and Roman settlement evidence has been found to the south of St. Neots at Eynesbury and Conygeare (Kemp 1993 and Alexander 1993), but stray finds (mainly coins) have been found in the town and the HER reports a Roman cemetery on open land to the north of St. Neots. Some 500m to the east, considerable amounts of residual third to fourth century Romano-British pottery were recovered from many of the Late Saxon features excavated in 1961/2 to the south of Cambridge Street and east of Church Street (Addyman 1973). The evidence is indicative of dense rural activity and associated settlement in the vicinity during the late 3rd and 4th century and possibly into the 5th century.

A Roman road runs between Sandy and Godmanchester to the east of the Great Ouse, and also to the east of St Neots and Eynesbury. It has been suggested that there is a possible east-west crossing point of the river at St Neots (Margary 1967). Its exact route has not yet been found but it is thought to be a few hundred metres north of the medieval bridge in the area of Islands Common (Spoerry 1994).

There is evidence of pagan Saxon occupation in the St. Neots area with increasing evidence for mid and late Saxon settlement and, by the medieval period St Neots, was well established within the parish of Eynesbury. Traditionally there was a pre-Conquest religious foundation associated with the remains of St Neot, but there is no record of the priory in 1066 nor any claim to estates in St Neots made by Ely in the Domesday Book although the Benedictine priory was certainly established by the early 12th century.

By 1180 the medieval settlement was well developed, with a bridge at the crossing point, to the south of the Priory and north of the market place, and the settlement growing up around the Priory on the eastern bank of the Great Ouse.

None of the Priory buildings survive but excavations by C. F. Tebbutt during the mid 20th century are claimed to have located various parts of the Priory precinct and other parts of the medieval town have been located in more recent excavations. The town continued to develop in the later medieval and post-medieval period and expand to the north and east, on the higher land to the east of the Great Ouse.

There have been a large number of archaeological interventions in the historic core of St Neots, although only three are of direct relevance to the current site. The first took place at 46 Market Square; it was an evaluation (ECB 1962 - Williams & O'Brien 2005) that revealed activity from the 12th century onwards with tenements occupied from the 15th century. Later medieval activity comprised a ditch, postholes and two cobbled areas, including a possible malting oven. There was also evidence for layers deliberately deposited to raise the poorly drained ground surface (12th to 14th century). Another, at 15/17 South Street, a little further to the east, traces of buildings dating to the 13th to 15th centuries adjoining the street frontage (ECB 464 – Martin 2002) were revealed. Finally, to the west, at 30 Market Square an evaluation (ECB 465 – Gardner 2001) identified post-medieval riverside structures probably associated with the Hen Brook to the south.

The previous work indicates that the current site has the potential for evidence from the medieval period onwards; although the location behind the market square frontage suggest that the deposits are likely to be associated with backyard activities.

Finally, reference should be made to No 42 Market Square itself, which is an architecturally important timber-framed building with four sharp

pointed gables facing the square and has a wooden frame set on a low wall (plinth) of 15th or 16th century bricks. There is a suggestion that it was once the Falcon Inn but from at least the beginning of the 19th century there was a shop on the frontage and a bakehouse in the backyard (Tebbut 1982). The shop was a grocers for over 100 years and recorded in 1792, 1823 and 1839 as kept by John Stead but the bakery in the yard was not so long-lasting.

A building survey was carried out on 42 Market Square (ECB 2206-Aiken 2004) which suggested the current building dates to c.1600, though the presence of smoke-blackened timbers suggest a previous use of the site as a kitchen or open hall. A second visit during subsequent renovation work (ECB 2205 – Carroll 2004) noted re-used moulded stone fragments that probably originated from St Neots Priory. Other dressed stone from the priory was re-used for the construction of the town bridge in 1617.

## 4 Methodology

The objective of this Archaeological 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.

Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a mini digger using a toothless ditching bucket. Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those that were obviously modern.

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.

## 5 Results

The evaluation trench was located in the rear of No 42 Market Street, towards the southern site boundary and oriented approximately north-west to south-east. It was 1.4 m wide by 7m long and excavated to a depth of 1.8m. The ground surface was recorded at 14.67m OD.

Within the trench a series of layers and cut features were revealed, most of which were recorded in section (Fig. 3).

Pit **21** lay at the extreme south-west end of the trench and was truncated by pit **17**. The full extent of the feature was not visible but it appeared to have a U-shape profile with a concave base. The primary



fill, 22, dark grey silty clay, was 0.3m thick and overlain by dark brown silty clay, 13. Environmental sample 2 (Appendix 3) identified charred grain, insects and both charred and waterlogged seeds. No finds were recovered.

Cobble layer 18 was located 2.3m to the north of pit **21** and was 0.2m thick. A small quantity of animal bone (0.006 kg) and two residual sherds of glass were recovered. The cobbles may have been contemporary with dark brownish grey silty clay layer 15, which was located 1.5m to the north and approximately the same thickness, but contained no cobbles. These layers were truncated by pit **16** (Fig. 3), which measured 1.05m wide by 0.3m deep and had concave sides and a sloping base. It contained a single fill (11), grey silty clay, which contained no artefacts.

Pit **16** was overlain by light orange silty clay layer 10, which was 0.25m thick and at least 4.6m long, but contained no artefacts. This in turn was truncated at its south end by a very large industrial pit (**17**). Pit **17** was 2.3m wide by 0.65m deep with straight sides and a flattish base. It contained two fills (25 and 20), which were both rich in waterlogged material (Appendix 3). There was some evidence of staining which suggests the feature may have been lined with wood. Primary fill 25 was dark grey silt clay and contained 12th to 13th century pottery (Appendix 2) and roof tile. The upper fill (20) was dark brown silty clay and produced no artefacts.

A fourth layer, 9, was dark grey silty clay, which measured 0.12m thick. It overlay layer 10 and pit **17** and was truncated by wall foundation cut **14**. Layers 8 and 12 were also truncated by wall foundation cut **14** and are described, respectively, as 0.16m thick light grey silty clay and 0.21m thick brown silty clay.

Wall foundation cut **14** lay 3.2m from the north end of the trench and truncated layers 9, 8 and 12 (and possibly 7). It was 0.5m wide with an irregular profile and contained stone wall 2. The stone itself was 0.4m square but did not appear to be dressed or moulded. A single pottery fragment was recovered from the area of the wall, which dates to the later medieval period (Appendix 2). It is unclear whether layer 7, 0.29m thick brownish orange silty clay, was truncated by or abutted wall foundation trench **14**.

Layer 4, however, does appear to have abutted wall 2 and comprised greyish green clay approximately 0.21m thick. This was the final deposit associated with wall 2, as the earliest layer in the sequence (1), overlies layers 4 and 7 and wall 2. Layer 1 was dark grey silty clay, which varied between 0.1m and 0.25m thick and contained Victorian bricks.

The final and latest feature lay at the south end of the trench and extended beyond its limits. It was at least 2.3m long by 0.8m deep and

had steep sides gradually breaking to an uneven, but flat base. It contained single fill 5, light grey silty clay, from which no finds were recovered.

## 6 Discussion

This evaluation has produced evidence for early to later medieval activity and has provided a snapshot of the land use during the medieval period. Interpretation is limited, however, because of the lack of artefacts, although pit **17** and the environmental remains (Appendix 3) suggest that the area was used for industrial purposes and for cultivation, although this was probably on very small basis, as most of the residues indicate that the land was waterlogged, probably seasonally.

The first activity appears to pre-date the 12th or 13th century and comprises pits **21** and **16** and layers 18, 15 and 10. The presence of a cobble layer (18) or surface suggests that the area was within a yard or had a well-trodden pathway running across it. Layer 15 was probably associated with the cobble surface as it lies at the same OD height and may represent a relict land surface. Pits **21** and **16** show a change in land use, but it is still uncertain as to whether they were located within a backyard as they contained no waste/rubbish material (such as might be expected).

During the 12th to 13th centuries there may have been some industrial processing taking place at the rear of the yard, where pit **17** was located. Its use is unknown, but the staining around the edges—perhaps long since rotted timbers—suggests this may have been a tanning pit or fish tank, for example. Layer 9, which seals the pit and extends to the north is probably also of a similar date and may be a ground-raising and levelling layer, like overlying deposits 8 and 12.

The next phase of activity relates to wall foundation **14**, which is of 15th to 18/19th century date and truncates layers 9, 8 and 12. The alignment of the wall is uncertain, but it probably runs approximately south-west to north-east. Notes on the building at 42 Market Square (see Section 3), suggest that there may be a precursor to the 17th century building that stands today, but whether this wall foundation relates to it is unproven at this stage.

It may be asserted, however, that the wall bounded an area to the north, as layer 4 abutts its north face. There was no indication from layer 4 as to the function of the enclosed space, but it was likely to have been a backyard area.

Layer 1 and pit 6 were the latest features in this sequence and represent the most recent activity prior to the modern period. No

material was found to suggest that this area was anything other than a backyard.

## **7 Conclusions**

The aim of the project was to establish the character date, state of preservation and extent of any archaeological remains within the site. The evaluation has been successful in identifying archaeological deposits up to 1m below ground level and a possible tanning pit.

The project has made a limited contribution to constructing a deposit model for the archaeology of St Neots. The results from this trench demonstrate that the area was in use throughout the medieval period and was subject to small-scale activity, which varied throughout the years. Pit **17** provides a tantalising glimpse of possible industrial activity, although this is likely to have been very limited.

It is interesting to note that this evaluation showed similarities to the results of a previous evaluation at 46 Market Square (Williams & O'Brien 2005), to the east, which also found activity from the 12th century onwards. It identified cobbled areas, perhaps similar to cobble layer 18, and a series of layers deliberately deposited to raise the poorly drained ground surface (12th to 14th century) (see layers 9, 8, 12, etc.). Clearly the land here, which runs down to Hen Brook and is located at the rear of known medieval properties, was used from at least the 12th century for small-scale industrial purposes and partly for cultivation. Any further industrial features will probably be located to the south, closer to the Brook.

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

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Campbell Rees Associates who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by James Drummond- Murray and the report edited by Mo Muldowney.

Additional thanks go to Chris Montague who aided in the recording of the site and Crane Begg for the illustrations.

The brief for archaeological works was written by Kasia Gdaniec.

## Bibliography

- |                              |      |  |
|------------------------------|------|--|
| Addyman, P. V.,              | 1973 | <i>Late Saxon Settlements in the St. Neots Area Proc Camb Antiq 64</i>   |
| Alexander, M.                | 1993 | <i>Roman Settlement Evidence at Eanulf School St Neots. CCC AFU Rep 91</i>   |
| British Geological Survey    | 1984 | <i>England and Wales Sheet 158 Solid and Drift</i>   |
| Gardner, R.V.                | 2001 | <i>Land to the rear of 30 Market Square, St Neots An Archaeological Evaluation Hertfordshire. Archaeological Trust Report 0928</i>         |
| Kemp, S.                     | 1993 | <i>Prehistoric and Roman Archaeology at Barford Road. CCC AFU Report No 91</i>   |
| Martin, H.                   | 2002 | <i>South Street, St Neots Cambridgeshire Investigations 2001-2. Post Excavation Assessment. BUFAU Report Project 838.</i>                  |
| Spoerry, P.                  | 1994 | <i>The Archaeology of the Ouse Valley CBA Research Report</i>  |
| Tebbut, CF                   | 1982 | <i>The History of a Huntingdonshire Town</i>   |
| Williams,J. and O' Brien, L. | 2005 | <i>Land to the Rear of 46 Market Square, St Neots, Cambridgeshire An Archaeological Desk- Based Assessment and Trial Trench Evaluation</i> |

## Appendix 1: Finds Summary

by Mo Muldowney with Carole Fletcher

Context	Material	Object Name	Quantity	Weight (kg)
2	Ceramic	Vessel	1	0.070
8	Glass	Window glass	2	0.009
18	Bone	Bone	2	0.006
25	Ceramic	Vessel	6	0.205
25	Ceramic	Ceramic Building Material	1	0.016
<b>Total</b>				0.306

Table 1: Finds summary

### Pottery

A total of seven sherds of pottery (0.275kg) were recovered. All fragments were in a good, unabraded condition and were of medium to large size.

Context	Quantity	Description	Date
2	1	Orange red sandy ware, locally made large rim sherd, wheel thrown	15th to 16thC
25	2	Grey sandy ware, handmade but wheel-finished. Probably Hunts type	12th to 13thC
25	4	Large, locally made coarse shelly ware saggy bottom bowl, dark grey to black fabric	12th to 13thC

Table 2: Pottery

## Appendix 2: Environmental Remains

by Rachel Fosberry

### 1 Introduction and Methods

Three bulk samples were taken from features 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 each 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. Any artefacts present were noted and reintegrated with the hand-excavated finds. The flot was examined under a binocular microscope at x16 magnification and the presence of any plant remains or other artefacts are noted on Table 1.

### 2 Results

The results are recorded on Table 3.

Sample Number	Context Number	Cut Number	Context Type	Flot contents	Residue contents
1	20	17		Waterlogged seeds, insects	No finds
2	22	21		Charred grain, charred seeds, waterlogged seeds, insects	No finds
3	25	17		charred seeds, waterlogged seeds, insects	Single fragments of pottery and tile

Table3: Environmental samples from STN MSQ 07

#### 2.1 Plant macrofossils

Preservation is predominantly by waterlogging although there are charred plant remains surviving in samples 2 and 3 in the form of cereal grains, a bean (*Vicia* sp) fragment and seeds including stinking mayweed (*Anthemis cotula*) and vetches (*Vicia* sp).

Numerous waterlogged seeds include wetland species such as sedges (*Carex* sp) and Bull rushes (*Scirpus* sp.); grassland species such as dock (*Rumex* sp), nettle (*Urtca* sp.), buttercup (*Ranunculus* sp.) and dead nettle (*Lamium* sp.). Seeds of elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*) are also common.

Small fragments of twigs and leaves are common in all three samples.

### **3 Conclusions and Recommendations**


The plant remains from this assemblage provide limited interpretation of the contexts sampled although they suggest a damp grassland environment and cultivation of heavy clay soils. No further work is recommended.

## Drawing Conventions

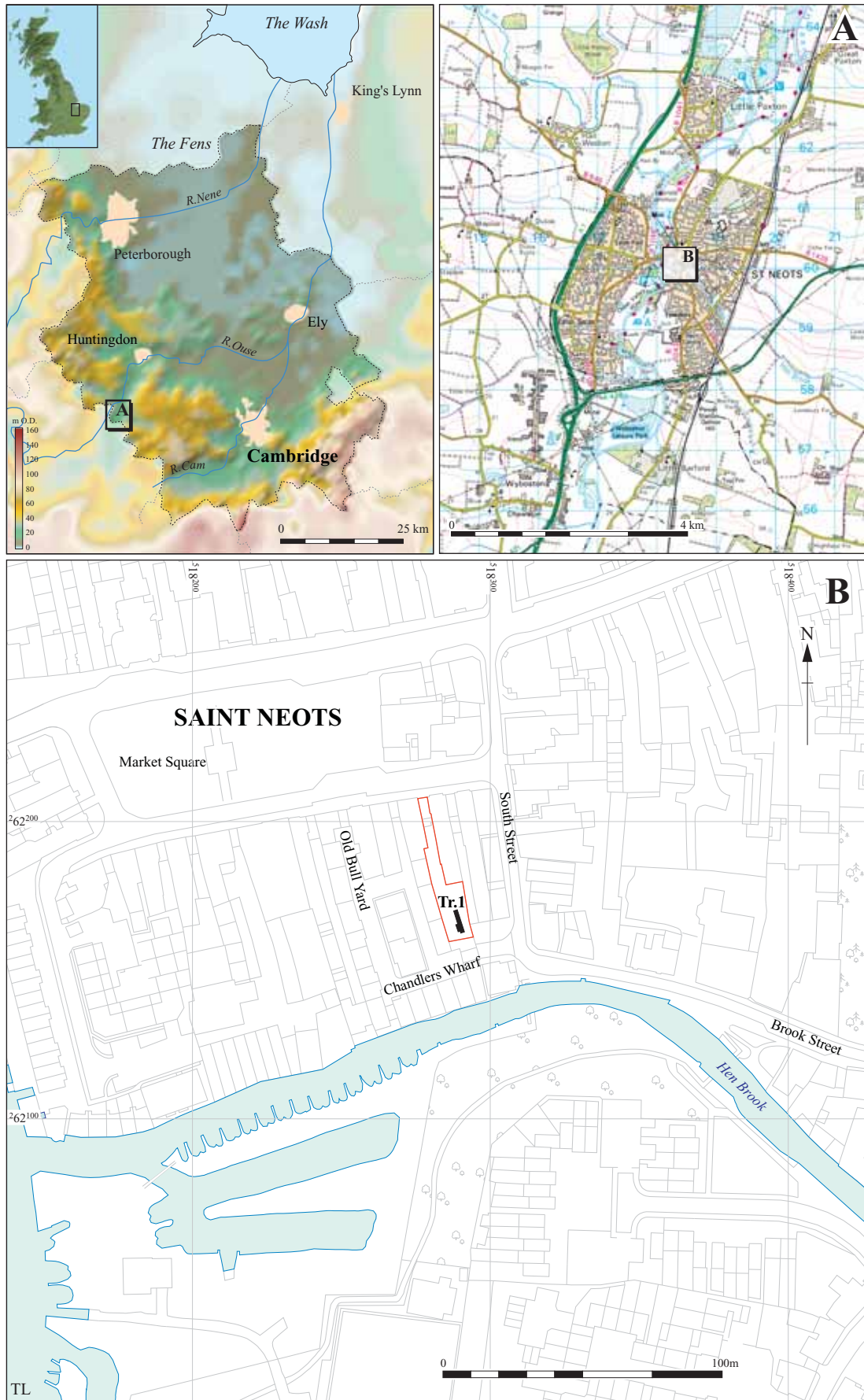
### Plans

Limit of Excavation	
Deposit - Conjectured	
Natural Features	
Sondages/Machine Strip	
Intrusion/Truncation	
Illustrated Section	S.14
Archaeological Deposit	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #f4a460; border: 1px solid black;"></span>
Excavated Slot	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #d3d3d3; border: 1px solid black;"></span>
Modern Deposit	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #add8e6; border: 1px solid black;"></span>
Cut Number	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">118</span>

### 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	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">118</span>
Deposit Number	117
Ordnance Datum	$\frac{18.45\text{m OD}}{\wedge}$
Inclusions	





© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved Cambridgeshire County Council 100023205 2007

Figure 1: Location of trench (black) with the development area outlined (red)

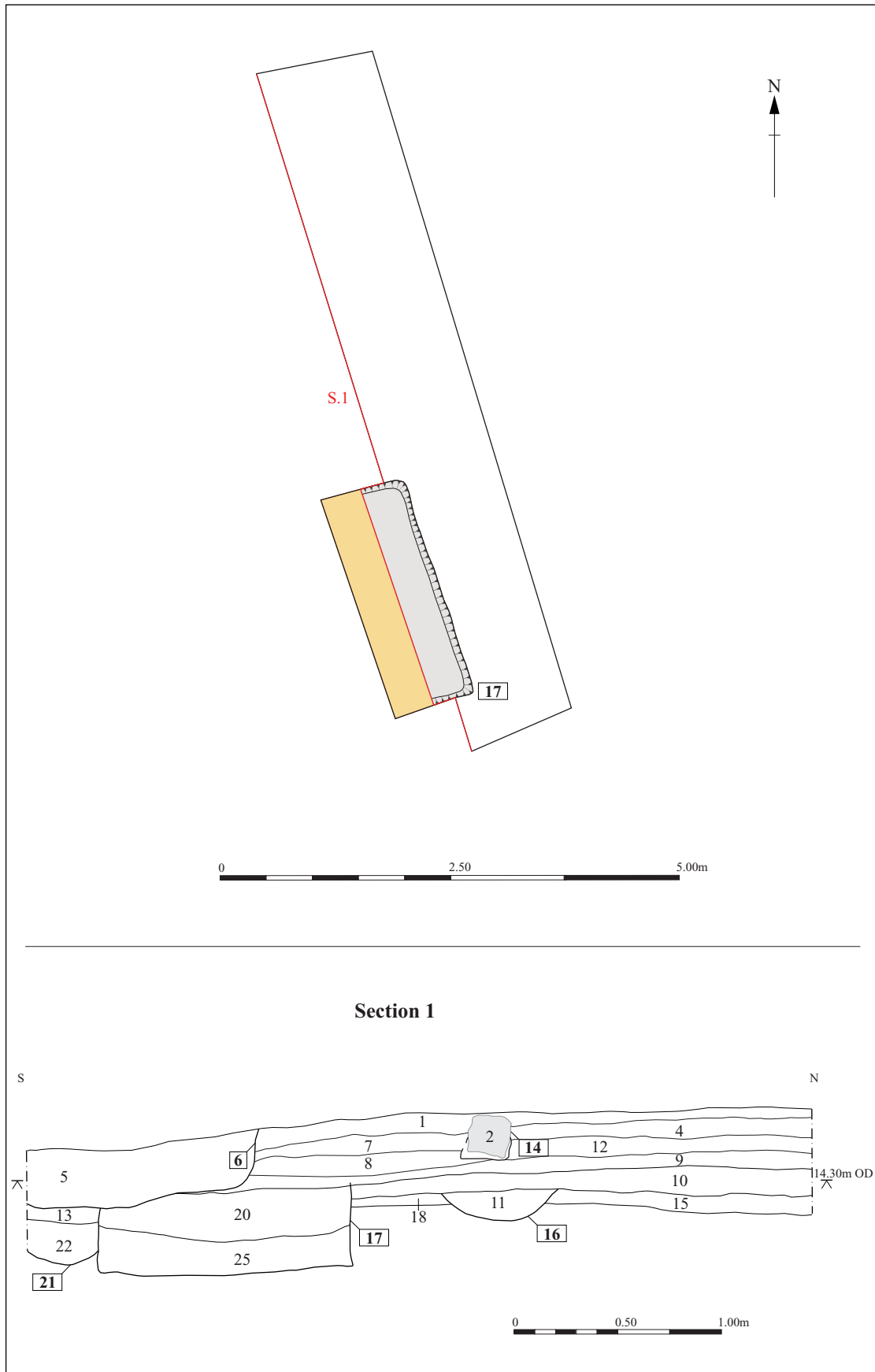
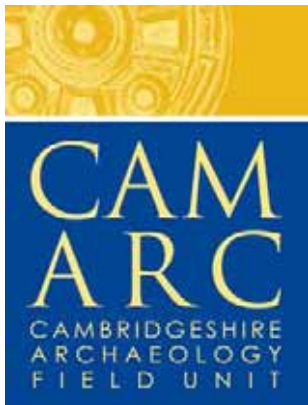


Figure 2: Trench plan and section drawing



CAM ARC,  
Cambridgeshire County Council,  
15 Trafalgar Way,  
Bar Hill,  
Cambridgeshire,  
CB3 8SQ

General Enquiries: 01954-204191  
Fax: 01954-273376

<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/archaeology>