

CAM ARC Report Number 999

11 Babraham Road, Sawston, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Evaluation

Nick Gilmour

January 2008

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**11 Babraham Road, Sawston,
Cambridgeshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

Nick Gilmour MA

Site Code: SAW BRA 07
CHER Event Number: ECB 2831
Date of works: 7th -9th January 2008
Grid Ref: TL 4861 4988

Status	Approved		
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PROJECT DETAILS				
Project name	11 Babraham Road, Sawston, Cambridgeshire; an archaeological evaluation			
Short description	Three trenches totalling 65 square meters were excavated. No significant archaeological finds or features were recorded.			
Project dates	Start	07/01/08	End	09/01/08
Previous work	none		Future work	unknown
Associated project reference codes	Site code SAW BRA 07, ECB 2831			
Type of project	evaluation			
Site status	none			
Current land use (list all that apply)	House and garden			
Planned development	New houses			
Monument types / period (list all that apply)	none			
Significant finds: Artefact type / period (list all that apply)	none			
PROJECT LOCATION				
County	Cambridgeshire	Parish	Sawston	
HER for region	Cambridgeshire			
Site address (including postcode)	11 Babraham Road, Sawston, CB22 3DQ			
Study area (sq.m or ha)	1565 sq.m			
National grid reference	TL 4861 4988			
Height OD	Min OD	25.93m	Max OD	26.28m
PROJECT ORIGINATORS				
Organisation	CAM ARC			
Project brief originator	Eliza Gore, CAPCA			
Project design originator	James Drummond-Murray, CAM ARC			
Director/supervisor	Nick Gilmour			
Project manager	James Drummond-Murray			
Sponsor or funding body	Mrs. Susan Lee			
ARCHIVES				
	Location and accession number		Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone, database, context sheets etc)	
Physical	CAM ARC office, Bar Hill		Pottery, flint	
Paper	CAM ARC office, Bar Hill		Context list, plans, section drawing etc.	
Digital	\\CCC.Cambridgeshire.gov.uk\data\ElhAfu\Active Projects\Cambs\Sawston\SAWBRA07\Project Reports		report	
BIBLIOGRAPHY				
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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was carried out at 11 Babrham Road, Sawston between 7th and 9th January 2008. This was prior to the construction of two new houses on the site of a house and garden. No significant archaeological finds or features were recovered, in spite of there being known archaeological remains in the local vicinity.

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1 Introduction

This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Eliza Gore of the Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and Countryside Advice team (CAPCA; Planning Application S/2450/06/F), 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 site overlies Holywell Nodular Chalk formation (British Geological Survey 1985) at approximately 26m AOD.

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 Sawston Parish

Sawston Parish is bordered by the Rivers Cam (to the west) and Granta (to the north) with the village in the south-west of the parish on the east bank of the Cam. The parish occupies a central position on the strip of chalk land between the Fens and the high claylands of Essex traversed by Southern England's principal west-east routeways from prehistoric times – the Icknield Way and Ashwell Street. There would also have been a north-south prehistoric and Romano-British route, passing through Sawston from London to Cambridge along the eastern side of the Cam valley.

3.2 Prehistoric

Several prehistoric finds have been made within the parish. A collection of Neolithic flint tools was found near the vicarage (HER 04113) with further finds to the south at The Spike. A Late Bronze Age hoard (HER 04110) consisting of a winged axe, two socketed

spearheads, two socketed axes and other pieces were found 'within the parish'.

Recent excavations to the north of the village, around the junction of Cambridge Road and Babraham Road, have revealed parts of an extensive Middle Bronze Age ditched field system (Cessford and Mortimer 2004, Mortimer 2006a). Other parts of this system, including a posthole structure and a well or shaft, have recently been excavated at Lynton Way to the northeast by Archaeological Solutions (Gdaniec pers. comm.). There is evidence for the continuation of this field system across the north of the parish in the form of a group of rectangular or D-shaped enclosures which can be seen as a series of crop marks from Borough Hill in the west across to Lynton Way in the east.

Borough Hill, an Iron Age contour fort, is one of the largest in Cambridgeshire and occupies a spur of land overlooking the Cam 1500m to the west of the village at the site of Spicer's paper factory. Although little is now evident above ground, the sub-surface remains are extensive and in a good state of preservation (Mortimer 2001).

3.3 Romano-British

Two possible Roman roads have recently been recorded in Sawston (ECB1464), during excavations prior to the construction of the new Police Station at the north end of the village (Cessford and Mortimer 2004), and a scatter of Roman pottery was found to the southeast (HER 04115). Recent evaluations to the south, in the grounds of Sawston Hall, have revealed evidence for short-lived, but fairly intensive, occupation at the time of the Roman conquest (Mortimer 2006b).

3.4 Medieval & post-medieval

The village of Sawston is almost certainly Anglo-Saxon in origin and is first mentioned in the 10th century as *Salsingetune*, either 'farm of *Salse*' or 'of *Salses* people', and later in Domesday (1086) as *Salsiton(e)* (Reaney 1943). An early Anglo-Saxon burial was found on Huckeridge Hill, on the Cambridge road to the north of the village (HER 04537). The richly furnished burial was uncovered during road widening early in the 19th century and it is likely that others are, or were, present. It is unclear whether this burial relates to settlement at Sawston itself, to an Anglo-Saxon settlement at Dernford Farm to the north-west, where there are a series of earthworks and cropmarks (HER 10958) or to Early Saxon occupation of the Iron Age Hillfort. An Anglo-Saxon brooch (HER 04112) and Saxon/Viking key (HER 04111) were found in the parish although their locations are not certain. Early, Middle and Late Saxon remains have recently been recorded in

evaluation and excavation within the grounds of Sawston Hall to the south (Mortimer 2006b).

The main estate in Sawston at Domesday was known as Pyratts or Sawston Manor. It was held by the Pirot family until the late 14th century. According to Teversham the manor, built by 1279, stood near the church on a moated site close to the present hall (1942–47). Sutherland (1995) interpreted a flooded earthwork to the south of the site as representing part of the earlier moat (HER 01267). However a survey commissioned by the hall in the 15th century makes no mention of a moat associated with the building, suggesting that Pirot's Manor, the precursor to Sawston Hall, was unmoated (Gdaniec 1991).

The Hall is located within c. 22 hectares of formal and informal gardens. Evidence from the OS map 1885 suggests that the gardens were mainly laid out during the 19th century but have been simplified in the 20th century.

Another important manor known as Huntingdon's or Somery's Manor recorded in 1279 was located to the west of the village (HER 01268) and stood on a moated site just west of the present farmhouse, Huntingdon's Farm. The moat is rectangular and surrounds the garden of Huntingdon's Farm with the west side of the moat fairly complete.

There is further evidence of medieval activity in the immediate vicinity with St Mary's church, dated from the 11th or 12th century (HER 04123); the Queen's Head Inn, a 15th-century timber-framed building (HER 04140) and the medieval or post-medieval cross that stands at the junction of High Street and Church Lane.

Sawston was enclosed by an act of parliament in 1802, its general extent indicated later on the Inclosure map of 1811.

Sawston experienced considerable industrial growth in the 19th century with the presence of the leather and parchment works and also the paper-mill. This led to a great expansion of the working population which in turn led to the building of considerable numbers of workmen's cottages, some on land bought by the leather works owner in South Terrace and along the main road to the west of Sawston Hall (Wright 1978).

Sawston Hall was requisitioned by the military during the Second World War and used as headquarters of the 66th Fighter Wing of the 3rd Air Division of the American Eighth Airforce. There is clear evidence for this occupation in the grounds with an air-raid shelter, outbuildings, paths and platforms of wartime concrete. There are also relics of the period – graffiti drawings - in the Hall itself.

3.5 Previous archaeological work

There have been two pieces of archaeological work carried out in close proximity to the site. An evaluation and watching brief was carried out by CAU in 2003 on the site of the new police station (Cessford and Mortimer 2004), just 25m to the east of the present site. As well as an Evaluation conducted by CAM ARC on land to the rear of the police station in 2005 (Mortimer 2006a). These showed the presence of a Middle Bronze Age field system, part of which had been infilled with a large amount of knapped flint. In addition a Roman road junction from the 1st century AD was found during the 2003 excavations (Cessford and Mortimer 2004).

Within the parish of Sawston further work has been carried out at Borough Hill Iron Age hillfort in 1993 and 2001 by the Archaeological Field Unit (Bray 1994) and the CAU (Mortimer 2001) (respectively HER ECB1086 and ECB1378). Further large-scale trenching was carried out in 2001 by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants (Samuels 2001). Evaluation and a series of small excavations at Sawston Hall (HER ECB2291) in 2006 uncovered Neolithic/Bronze Age, Late Iron Age/Early Roman, Earlier Medieval and Late Medieval/Post Medieval remains (Mortimer 2006b). An evaluation at The Spike (HER 11720) revealed a series of undated ditches (Sutherland 1995), while an evaluation at Bellbird Primary School (HER ECB 2774) carried out by CAM ARC in 2007 revealed no significant features (Mortimer 2007).

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 at least 5% of the total development area should be subjected to trial trenching.

Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a tracked 12 tonne 360 excavator using a 2.1m wide 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 which 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.

Site conditions were fine and dry throughout.

5 Results

5.1 Soil Deposits

Four different deposits were identified across site:

Context 1: Topsoil

A loose dark greyish brown sandy silt with rare angular gravel. Modern garden soil, identified in all trenches

Context 2: Subsoil

A fairly loose mid orange-brown silty sand with rare angular gravel. Identified in trenches

Context 3: Subsoil

A fairly loose light orange-brown silty sand with occasional chalk gravel. Mixed subsoil/natural layer. Identified in trenches

Context 4: Natural bedrock

Compact chalk and sand with sand filled fissures. Identified in all trenches.

5.2 Trench Dimensions

Three trenches were excavated along the same alignments as the boundary of the plot, either north-northwest / south-southeast or at right angles to this (figure 2). One trench was L shaped comprising sections in both these directions.

Trench no.	Length (m)	Alignment	Depth topsoil (1) (cm)	Depth subsoil (2) (cm)	Depth subsoil (3) (cm)	Overall depth (cm)	Features
1	22.5	L-shape	23	24	12	60	Ditch?
2	10.9	E-W	35	11	6	52	Modern
3	19	N-S	42	-	14	56	Ditch?

5.3 Features Recorded

Two possible ditches of uncertain date were excavated. In addition several natural fissures in the chalk were excavated to prove beyond doubt that they were natural in origin. Two modern features were also observed.

Trench 1

This trench contained a possible ditch (context 8) that on complete excavation had irregular sides and an irregular base, it measured 1.1m wide and 0.38m deep (figure 3, section 10). It had one fill (context 7)

which was a mid orange-brown slightly silty sand with occasional chalk fragments. The nature of the fill and irregular shape make it likely that this feature was natural. At the north end of the trench was a modern pit within which were a large number of glass bottles, modern pottery and iron objects, none of which were kept.

Trench 2

Within this trench only natural features and a modern feature were observed.

Trench 3

This trench contained a possible ditch of unknown date (context 14) which was filled by a dark brown grey silty sand with rare charcoal inclusions (context 13). This feature was 30cm wide and 4cm deep and ran across the trench from east to west.

5.4 Finds Recovered

One sherd of probable Roman pottery was found in the top of the fill (context 7) of the possible ditch (context 8) in Trench 1. A single struck flint was recovered from the top of the fill (context 5) of a natural fissure in Trench 2.

6 Discussion

Neither the Roman roads nor the Middle Bronze Age field system excavated to the west of the site appeared in the trenches. Only two possible features were recorded. The possible ditch (context 8) was almost certainly natural with a small sherd of intrusive Roman pottery. The second ditch (context 14) contained no dating evidence and was so shallow that it too remained unconvincing.

A series of natural fissures in the chalk were excavated to check that they were natural; the single piece of struck flint recovered from the top of one of these (context 8) is insufficient evidence to draw any conclusions about prehistoric activity.

7 Conclusions

No Significant Archaeological remains were identified; in spite of the sites close proximity to known archaeological features.

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

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Susan Lee who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by James Drummond-Murray. Steve Graham, Gareth Reese and Nick Gilmour carried out the excavation.

The brief for archaeological works was written by Eliza Gore, who visited the site and monitored the evaluation.

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|-------------------------------|---------|--|
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Drawing Conventions

Plans

Limit of Excavation	- - - - -
Evaluation Trench	—————
Deposit - Conjectured	- - - - -
Natural Feature
Sondages/Machine Strip	- - - - -
Test Pit	- - - - -
Intrusion/Truncation	- - - - -
Illustrated Section	S.14 —————
Archaeological Feature	
Excavated Slot	
Archaeological Deposit	
Modern	
Cut Number	118

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	118
Deposit Number	117
Ordnance Datum	18.45m OD ∇
Inclusions	Ⓞ



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

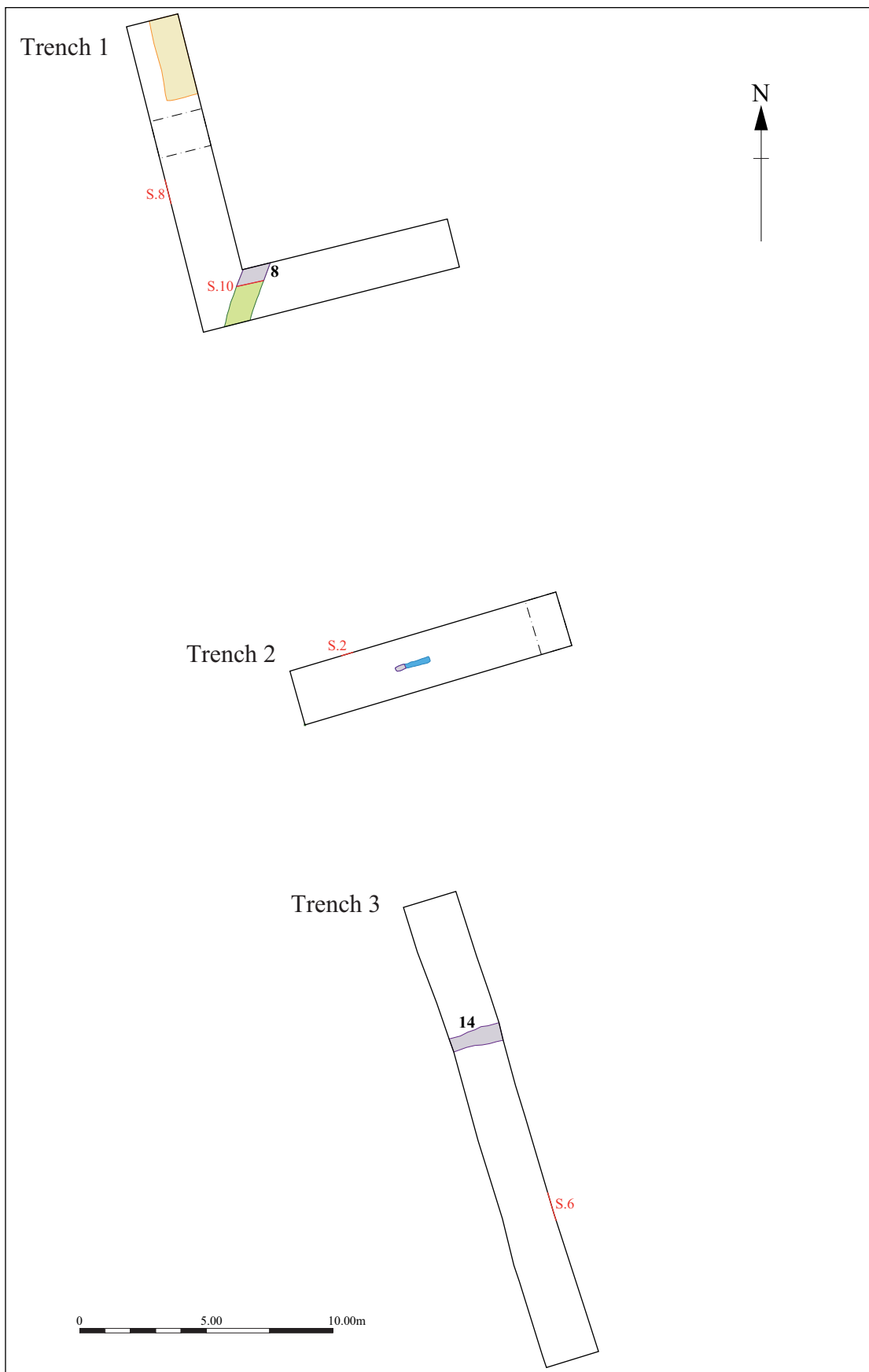


Figure 2: Trench plans

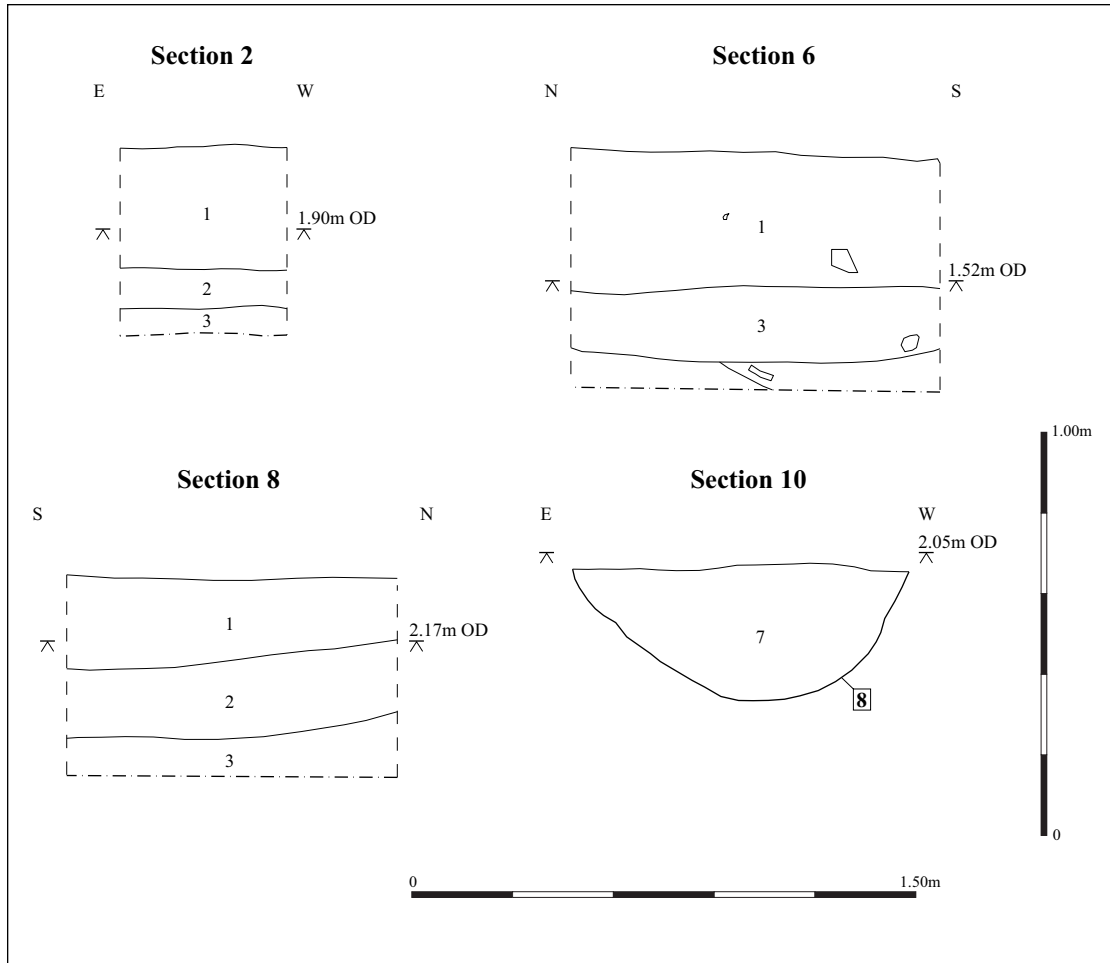
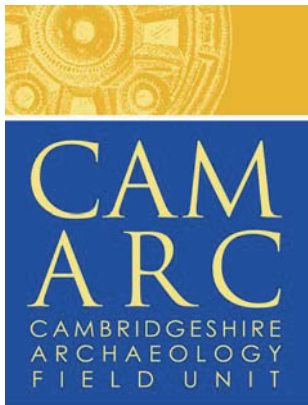


Figure 3 *Excavations*



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