



**CAM ARC Report Number 1008**

## **Sapley to Sawtry (via Alconbury Hill) Anglia Water Pipeline**

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### **Archaeological Evaluation**

Nick Gilmour

March 2008

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**Sapley to Sawtry (via Alconbury Hill) Anglia Water Pipeline**

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**Archaeological Evaluation**

Nick Gilmour MA

With contributions by  
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Site Code: MUL SSP 07  
CHER Event Number: 2784  
Date of works: 6<sup>th</sup> February 2008  
Grid Ref: TL 19768 76380 to TL 18208 80138

Status			
Author			
Checked By			
Authorised By			

Editor: James Drummond-Murray  
Illustrator: Lucy Offord BA

**PROJECT DETAILS**

Project name	Sapley to Sawtry (via Alconbury Hill) Anglia Water Pipeline: An Archaeological Evaluation		
Short description	An Archaeological evaluation was carried out along part of the route of a proposed Anglia Water pipeline between Sapley and Sawtry (via Alconbury Hill), between 6 <sup>th</sup> February and 13 <sup>th</sup> February 2008. This route runs alongside the major Roman route of Ermine street, through a landscape of known archaeological features from Prehistory to the present. At the southern end of the route, just south of Monk's Wood farm, several ditches and other features were identified, that may represent Later Iron Age enclosures and possible settlement. These are likely to relate to known cropmarks in the same field, which had previously been identified as Roman in date. Along the remaining length of the route, to the north of Monk's Wood Farm, no significant archaeological finds of features were recorded.		
Project dates	Start	06/02/08	End 13/02/08
Previous work	None	Future work	unkown
Associated project reference codes	MULSSP07 HER 2784		
Type of project	Evaluation		
Site status	None		
Current land use (list all that apply)	Arable Agricultural.		
Planned development	Water pipeline		
Monument types / period (list all that apply)	Field system/ settlement boundary		
Significant finds: Artefact type / period (list all that apply)	Saddle quern fragment prehistoric Pottery Later Iron Age		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>			
County	Cambridgeshire	Parish	Multiple
HER for region	Cambridgeshire		
Site address (including postcode)			
Study area (sq.m or ha)			
National grid reference	TL 18768 76380 to TL 18208 80138		
Height OD	Min OD 18.59m		Max OD 47.42m
<b>PROJECT ORIGINATORS</b>			
Organisation	CAM ARC		
Project brief originator	Andy Thomas		
Project design originator	James Drummond-Murray		
Director/supervisor	Nick Gilmour		
Project manager	James Drummond-Murray		
Sponsor or funding body	Anglian Water Services Ltd		
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location and accession number</b>	<b>Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone, database, context sheets etc)</b>	
Physical	CamArc office, Bar Hill	Pottery, bone, stone	
Paper	CamArc office, Bar Hill	Context list, plans, sections drawings etc.	
Digital	\\CCC.Cambridgeshire.gov.uk\data\Elh Afu\Active Projects\Cambbs\Multi Parish & Linear\Sapley-Sawtry\Project Reports	report.	
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>			
Full title	Sapley to Sawtry (via Alconbury Hill) Anglia Water Pipeline: an archaeological evaluation		
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## **Summary**

An Archaeological evaluation was carried out along part of the route of a proposed Anglia Water pipeline between Sapley and Sawtry (via Alconbury Hill), between 6<sup>th</sup> February and 13<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

This route runs alongside the major Roman route of Ermine street, through a landscape of known archaeological features from Prehistory to the present. At the southern end of the route, just south of Monk's Wood farm, several ditches and other features were identified, that may represent Later Iron Age enclosures and possible settlement. These are likely to relate to known cropmarks in the same field, which had previously been identified as Roman in date.

Along the remaining length of the route, to the north of Monk's Wood Farm, no significant archaeological finds or features were recorded.

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## **1 Introduction**

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 development 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 mixed clays of the Anglian Till. The development area runs from the flat of the Fens in the north, up a clay ridge and south along higher ground towards Alconbury Hill (figure 1). The ridge is the highest point for many miles to the North and offers views all the way to Peterborough, but is also north facing and very exposed.

## **3 Archaeological and Historical Background**

The development area lies in a region with significant archaeological remains from the Prehistoric to Post Medieval period (figure 4).

### **3.1 Prehistoric**

There is an Early Bronze Age Saucer barrow; Monks Hole Barrow (HER 819), located within view (c. 600m east) of the development area. It is unusually located on flat land at the bottom of a steep ridge. This barrow is a scheduled ancient monument (SM 27165). A prehistoric flint axe was found near Sawtry (HER01313). Evidence for an Iron Age or Roman field system has come from aerial photography to the north of Monks Wood Farm (HER 814). An Iron Age beehive quern was also found at Monks Wood farm (HER 816).

### **3.2 Romano - British**

The pipeline follows the east side of the major Roman route of Ermine Street (HER CB15034). There is evidence for possible Roman field system at Monks Wood Farm, in the form of crop marks (HER 00815), which the southern end of the development area passes through. Roman pottery was also found near the farm (HER 00818) and in association with the nearby Monks Hole Barrow (HER00819A). A coin of Faustina II was discovered also discovered on Monks Wood Farm (HER 04066).

Various other Roman finds have been made alongside the line of Ermine Street including a coin from Monks Wood (HER 00976) and road metalling from Alconbury (HER00813). A scatter of Roman creamware dating to before 200 AD was also found nearby (HER02068).

### **3.2 Medieval and Post Medieval**

Medieval agricultural practices are represented by ridge and furrow, identified on aerial photographs at Sawtry (HER 10508) and through a recording brief at Alconbury Hill (HER CB15565). To the south of the development area in Alconbury is a potential medieval moat (HER 00810).

An 18<sup>th</sup> century milestone obelisk (HER00812), formally a scheduled ancient monument also stands to the south of the development area. A 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century decoy site lays c.500m to the west of the pipeline route (HER 00790).

### **3.4 Previous Archaeological work**

Preliminary work for the A1 widening scheme revealed extensive Roman material at Vinegar Hill but found no evidence of the Napoleonic POW cemetery at Normans Cross (Evans & Shottliff 1991). A magnetometry survey at Archers Wood and Alconbury Hill as part of the same scheme also showed no archaeological features, other than possible medieval ridge and furrow at Alconbury Hill.

Evaluation (Sutherland 1995) and excavation (Ellis *et al* 1998) at South Farm Upton on the west side of the A1, opposite the proposed development area, revealed further sparse features relating to the possible settlement at Monks Wood farm. The former producing only two abraded pieces of Roman pottery, while the latter identified only three undated features. A watching brief on the Government Oil pipeline from Sawtry to Alconbury Hill crossed the crop mark site at Monks Wood, but only small amounts of Roman pottery were

recovered during machine stripping and there were no finds from the three possible ditches identified (Hatton 1993).

## **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 total development area be subject to trial trenching, therefore, 625m of trench was excavated.

Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a tracked 13-ton excavator using a 1.8m 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.

Bulk samples for the recovery of archaeo-botanical remains were taken from three features, to assess the survival of such remains.

Conditions on site were generally fine and dry, but with occasional thick fog that made photographing trenches difficult.

## **5 Results**

### **5.1 Soil Deposits**

Two different deposits were identified across site:

#### **Context 1: Topsoil**

A sticky dark brownish grey silty clay with rare gravel inclusions. Modern plough soil, identified in all trenches.

#### **Context 2: Subsoil**

A sticky mid greyish brown silty clay with rare gravel. Identified in trenches.



## 5.2 Trench Dimensions

The trenches were laid out along the centre of the easement and on the same alignment as the pipeline (figure 1). The table below summarises the trenches.

Trench no	Length (m)	Topsoil depth (m)	Subsoil depth (m)	Comments
1	50	0.30	0.30	Possible ditch
2	50	0.28	0.26	Several features
3	25	0.35	0.30	Ditch
4	25	0.41	0.17	2 Ditches
5	50	0.30	0.15	No archaeology
6	25	0.27	0.23	No archaeology
7	50	0.39	0.21	No archaeology
8	25	0.30	0.30	No archaeology
9	25	0.20	0.20	No archaeology
10	50	0.20	0.35	No archaeology
11	50	0.18	0.32	No archaeology
12	25	0.24	0.28	No archaeology
13	50	0.24	0.28	No archaeology
14	50	0.20	0.30	No archaeology
15	50	0.20	0.24	No archaeology
16	50	0.20	0.30	No archaeology

## 5.3 Features Recorded

Several ditches were excavated, along with some other possible features (figure 2). In addition, a number of geological features were investigated in order to prove they were natural in origin; these are not discussed further.

### 5.3.1 Trench 1

There was a possible ditch (context 62) at the southern end of Trench 1; a 1m slot was excavated across it.

Possible ditch **62** was linear in plan, 1m wide x 0.38m deep, orientated southwest to northeast. It had had steeply sloping sides, with a flat base and sharp breaks of slope. It was filled by fill 61 a pale brown moderately compact slightly silty sand with no inclusions.

### 5.3.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 contained the highest concentration of archaeological features. At the northern end of this trench was a large ditch (context **59**). To the south of this were a possible posthole (context **15**) and a

narrower, but surprisingly deep ditch (context **13**). Further to the south were two possible pits (contexts 8 and 10), with a small gulley (context 4) right at the southern end of the trench.

Ditch **59** was linear in plan, 4.1m wide and 1.4m deep (from base of subsoil), orientated approximately east – west. It had steeply sloping stepped sides with sharp breaks of slope and a flat base. Ditch **59** was filled by:

Fill 54 a moderately compact mid orangey greyish brown silty clay with occasional gravel, measuring 1.8m wide with a maximum thickness of 0.3m.

Fill 55 a moderately compact mid greyish brown silty clay with occasional gravel inclusions, measuring 4.1m wide with a maximum thickness of 0.4m.

Fill 56 a moderately compact mid brownish grey silty clay with rare gravel and stone inclusions, measuring 2.8m wide with a maximum depth of 0.3m.

Fill 57 a moderate to loosely compact dark brownish grey very silty clay with rare gravel inclusions, measuring 1.2m wide with a maximum depth of 0.2m, sample number 3 was taken from this fill.

Fill 58 a very compact dark orangey grey silty clay with no inclusions, measuring 1.2m wide with a maximum thickness of 0.2m

Fill 60 a moderately compact mid orangey yellowish brown silty clay with frequent gravel and stone inclusions, measuring 0.5m wide with a maximum thickness of 0.2m

Possible posthole **15** was circular in plan with a diameter of 0.22m and a depth of 0.12m. It had steeply sloping sides, a concave base and sharp break of slope. Posthole **15** was filled by fill 14, a loose mid grey brown silty clay with occasional angular gravel.

Ditch **13** was linear in plan, 1.10m wide and 0.65m deep, orientated east to west. It had a V shape profile, with steeply sloping sides and sharp break of slope. Ditch **13** was filled by:

Fill 11 a moderately compact mid greenish brown sandy clay occasional gravel and rare charcoal inclusions, measuring 1.10m wide with a maximum depth of 0.54m.

Fill 12 a moderately compact mid greyish brown silty clay with occasional charcoal and gravel inclusions, measuring 7.6m wide with a maximum depth of 0.16m. Sample number 2 was taken from this fill.

Possible pit **10** was sub-circular in plan, with a diameter of 0.18m and a depth of 0.17m, although it continued outside the excavated trench and may represent a ditch terminal. It had steep sides, a concave base and sharp breaks of slope. Pit **10** was filled by fill 9 a firm pale reddish brown sandy clay with no inclusions.

Possible pit **8** was a sub-circular in plan, 1.50m long, 1.10m wide and 0.34m deep, although it continued outside of the trench. It had steep sides, a concave base with sharp breaks of slope. Pit **8** was filled by:

Fill 7 a moderately compact light grey clayey silt with rare gravel inclusions, measuring 0.48m wide with a maximum depth of 0.32m

Fill 6 a firm mid greyish brown silty clay with rare gravel inclusions, measuring 1.10m wide, with a maximum depth of 0.34m

Fill 5 a firm mid orangey brown sandy clay with rare gravel inclusions, measuring 0.70m wide, with a maximum depth of 0.22m

Ditch **4** was linear in plan and may represent a terminal, but it was truncated by modern field drains to the east, and continued out of the trench to the west making this uncertain. It was orientated east to west and may have slightly curved, it had steep sides with a concave base and measured 0.60m in length, 1.4m in width and a maximum of 0.18m deep. Ditch **4** was filled by fill 3, a moderately compact mid greyish brown silty clay with rare gravel inclusions.

### **5.3.3 Trench 3**

Ditch **44** was excavated at the northeast corner of Trench 3. This ditch continued outside the trench to the east and north, a 2m slot was excavated across it.

Ditch **44** was linear in plan, 0.8m wide and 0.34m deep, orientated north-northeast to south-southwest. It had steeply sloping sides and a flat base with sharp breaks of slope. Ditch **44** was filled by fill 43, a compact mid brownish grey silty clay with occasional gravel inclusions.

### **5.3.4 Trench 4**

Trench 4 contained two nearly parallel ditches running northwest to southeast across the trench (contexts **25** and **27**).

Ditch **25** was linear in plan, 0.83m wide and 0.38m deep and orientated northwest to south east. It had steeply sloping sides and a flat base with sharp breaks of slope. Ditch **25** was filled by fill 26 a moderately compact mid greyish brown sandy clay with rare chalk gravel.

Ditch **27** was linear in plan, 0.74m wide and 0.35m deep and orientated northwest to south east. It had steeply sloping sides and a flat base with sharp breaks of slope. Ditch **27** was filled by fill 24 a moderately compact mid greyish brown sandy clay with rare chalk gravel, sample number 1 was taken from this fill.

## **5.4 Finds Recovered**

### **5.4.1 Pottery**

Only a small amount of pottery was recovered from any of the features. Several pieces from fill (12) of ditch **13** were of an unusual form, with comb decorated body sherds; one showing evidence of a shoulder and another with had a T-shaped rim. The dark black fabric with frequent shell and some grit together with the comb decoration make a later Iron Age date most likely (Sarah Percival, pers. comm.). Two thumbnail size fragments from fill (55) of the large ditch **59** were of very similar fabric and therefore likely to be of similar date, however, considering their small size identification is difficult.

### **5.4.2 Bone**

Only a small amount of animal bone was recovered, the assemblage is too small to draw any conclusions from and at the most basic level represents general settlement waste.

### 5.4.3 Stone

A single fragment of a saddle quern was recovered from fill 56 of the large ditch **59**. This object is difficult date accurately but is almost certainly prehistoric.

### 5.5 Environmental Remains

Only two charred cereal grains were recovered from sample 1, the fill of undated ditch **27** (appendix 2). This shows that there is the possibility for the survival of plant macrofossils, although the data recovered so far does not add to the current interpretation,

## 6 Discussion

There was a lack of archaeology recorded in trenches 5 to 16, to the north of Monk's Wood Farm. However, several interesting features were identified in trenches 1 to 4 south of the farm.

The one possible ditch (**62**) in trench 1 contained a single fill **61** which appeared geological in character. If this is a ditch then it remains undated and its purpose uncertain, although it could relate to the known cropmark site in the same field (HER 815).

The two ditches (**25** and **27**) in trench 4 and single ditch (**44**) in trench 3 have very similar profiles and dimensions (figure 3) and, therefore, may relate to one another. Unfortunately none of these ditches contained any dating evidence. These may also be part of the same system as the ditches identified on the opposite side of the A1 (Sutherland 1995: Ellis *et al* 1998), as they have very similar profiles, unfortunately these were also not securely dated.

The most interesting archaeology occurred in trench 2. The presence of the large ditch **59** of probable Later Iron Age date is of particular interest. Although the dating of this feature is not secure, the saddle quern fragment and small pottery sherds it contained, together with its large size (figure 3), would suggest a Later Iron Age date. This almost certainly relates to some of the crop marks seen in the same field (HER 815) and would seem to suggest that they represent Iron Age enclosures, and not a Roman field system as recorded in the HER. This would agree with their initial interpretation as a probable prehistoric field system and enclosures (Pelling & Leith 1992, 13) and would be further supported by these cropmarks not being aligned at all to the current line of the A1.

Ditch **13** is certainly of Later Iron Age date, with its initial fill (12) probably representing a dumped deposit and containing several sherds of Later Iron Age pottery. This ditch had a steep V-shaped profile

(figure 3) and could have formed a boundary, or possibly served as a drainage ditch. The various other features within trench 2 all remain undated. They could represent the remains of settlement activity that, if related to the two ditches, would be of Later Iron Age date. However, this is not conclusive as the character of many of the features was difficult to ascertain as they continued outside of the excavated trench.

## **7 Conclusions**

In spite of the close proximity of the development area to Ermine street and other known Roman sites, no evidence of Roman activity was positively identified. However, several probable Later Iron Age features were identified. It is likely that the crop marks (HER 815) at Monk's Wood Farm identified as Roman are in fact earlier. These crop marks may represent a Later Iron Age field system with possible associated settlement.

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

## Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Anglian Water Services Ltd who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by James Drummond-Murray and excavation was carried out by Steve Graham, Tom Lyons, Ross Lilley and Caoimhin O'Coileain.

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

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- |   |      |   |
|---|------|---|
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| Hatton, B.  | 1993 | Government Oil Pipeline, Sawtry, Cambridgeshire. Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit Report A019  |
| Pelling, R. & Leith, S.                                       | 1992 | <i>A1 Widening Scheme – 1992 Alconbury – Fletton Parkway</i> . Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit, report No. 64.  |
| Sutherland , T.   | 1995 | <i>Archaeological Evaluations at South Farm, Upton</i> . Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit, report no. A62  |

## **Appendix 1: The Faunal Remains; Sapley to Sawtry pipeline.**

Chris Faine March 2008.

The very small assemblage consisted of 16 fragments, with 10 elements identifiable to species (62.5% of the sample). All unidentifiable elements were classed as medium/large mammals. Preservation of the sample is fair, albeit extremely fragmented in some cases. Faunal remains were recovered from three contexts dating from the middle Iron Age period.

Context **12** contains four mandibular molars from an adult horse around 4-6 years old at death, along with small portions of shattered mandible. Context **55** contains portions of adult cattle scapula, humerus, metapodial and 1<sup>st</sup> phalange, all of which show signs of butchery. A single portion of cattle scapula and an unworn sheep/goat 3<sup>rd</sup> molar were recovered from context **57**. The assemblage is too small to draw any conclusions from and at the most basic level represents general settlement waste.

## **References**

Davis, S. J. M. 1992. A rapid method for recording information about mammal bones from archaeological sites. Ancient Monuments Laboratory Report 19/92.

Levine, M. 1982 The use of crown height measurements and eruption wear sequences to age horse teeth. In B. Wilson, C. Grigson & S. Payne (eds.) *Ageing and sexing animal bones from archaeological sites*. Oxford: BAR British Series 199

## Appendix 2: Environmental Assessment; Sapley to Sawtry pipeline.

Rachel Fosberry February 2008

### 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. The dried residue was passed through 5mm and 2mm sieves and a magnet was dragged through each resulting fraction prior to sorting for artefacts. 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 x.

### 2 Results

The results are recorded on Table 1.

Sample Number	Context Number	Flot contents	Residue Contents
1	24	Cereal grains, sparse charcoal	No finds
2	12	Charcoal only	Pottery
3	57	Sparse charcoal only	No finds

Table 1: Bulk samples from MUL SSP 08

### 3 Discussion

In general the samples were poor in terms of identifiable material. The charred plant remains consist of two cereal grains that were poorly preserved, either because of taphonomic factors or because they had been charred at a high temperature. The poor preservation did not allow detailed identifications and the grains have been identified simply as cereals.






#### **4 Conclusions and Recommendations**

The low density of charred plant macrofossils in this assemblage limits interpretation of the features sampled. If further work is planned in this area, targeted environmental sampling should still be considered as these results show that there is some potential for the recovery of plant macrofossils.

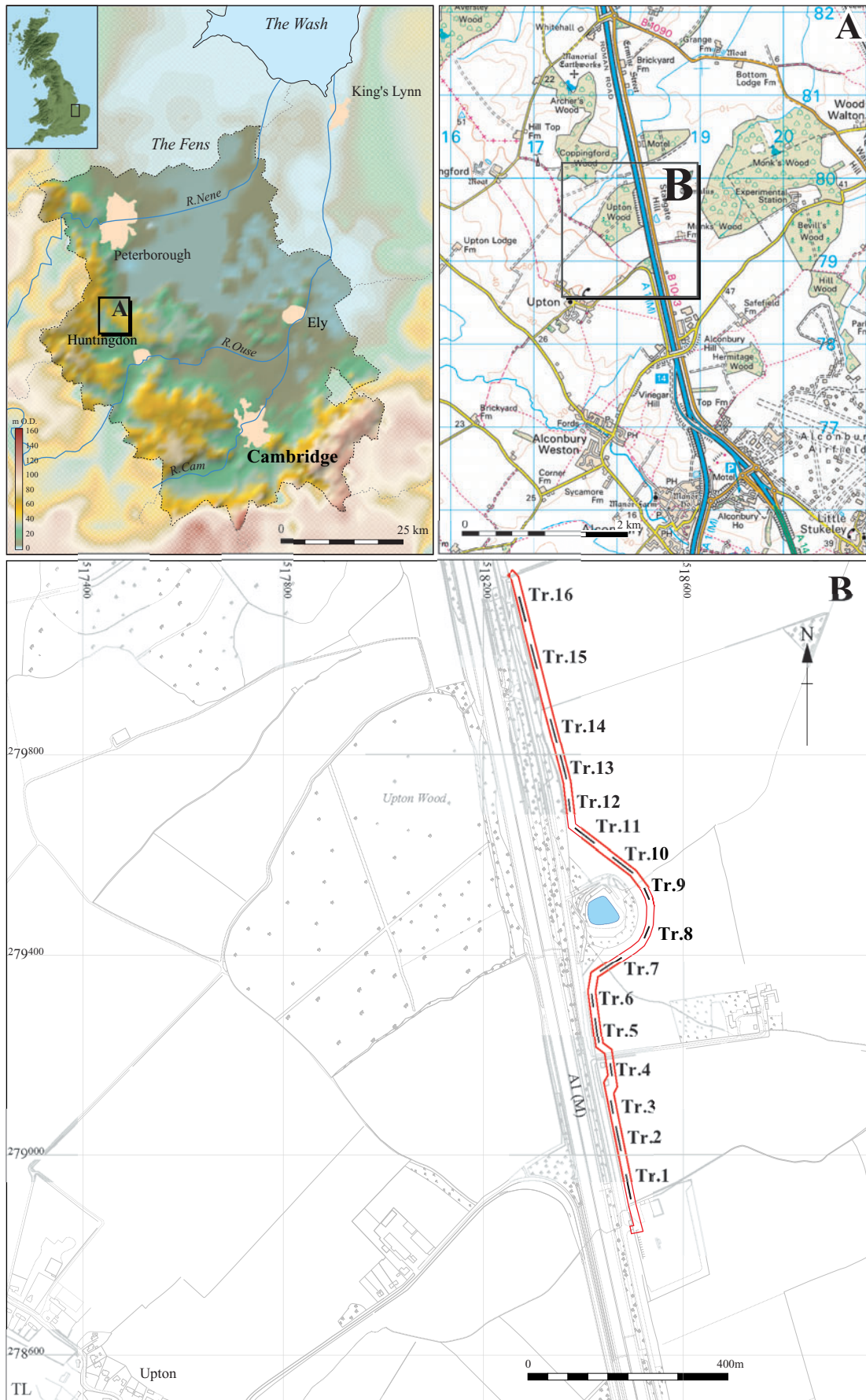
## Drawing Conventions

### Plans

Limit of Excavation	_____
Illustrated Section	_____ S.14
Archaeological Deposit	
Excavated Slot	
Modern Deposit	
Cut Number	<b>118</b>

### Sections

Limit of Excavation	- - - - -
Cut	_____
Deposit Horizon	_____
Top Surface/Top of Natural	_____
Break in Section/ Limit of Section Drawing	- - - - -
Cut Number	<b>118</b>
Deposit Number	117
Ordnance Datum	18.45m OD X



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

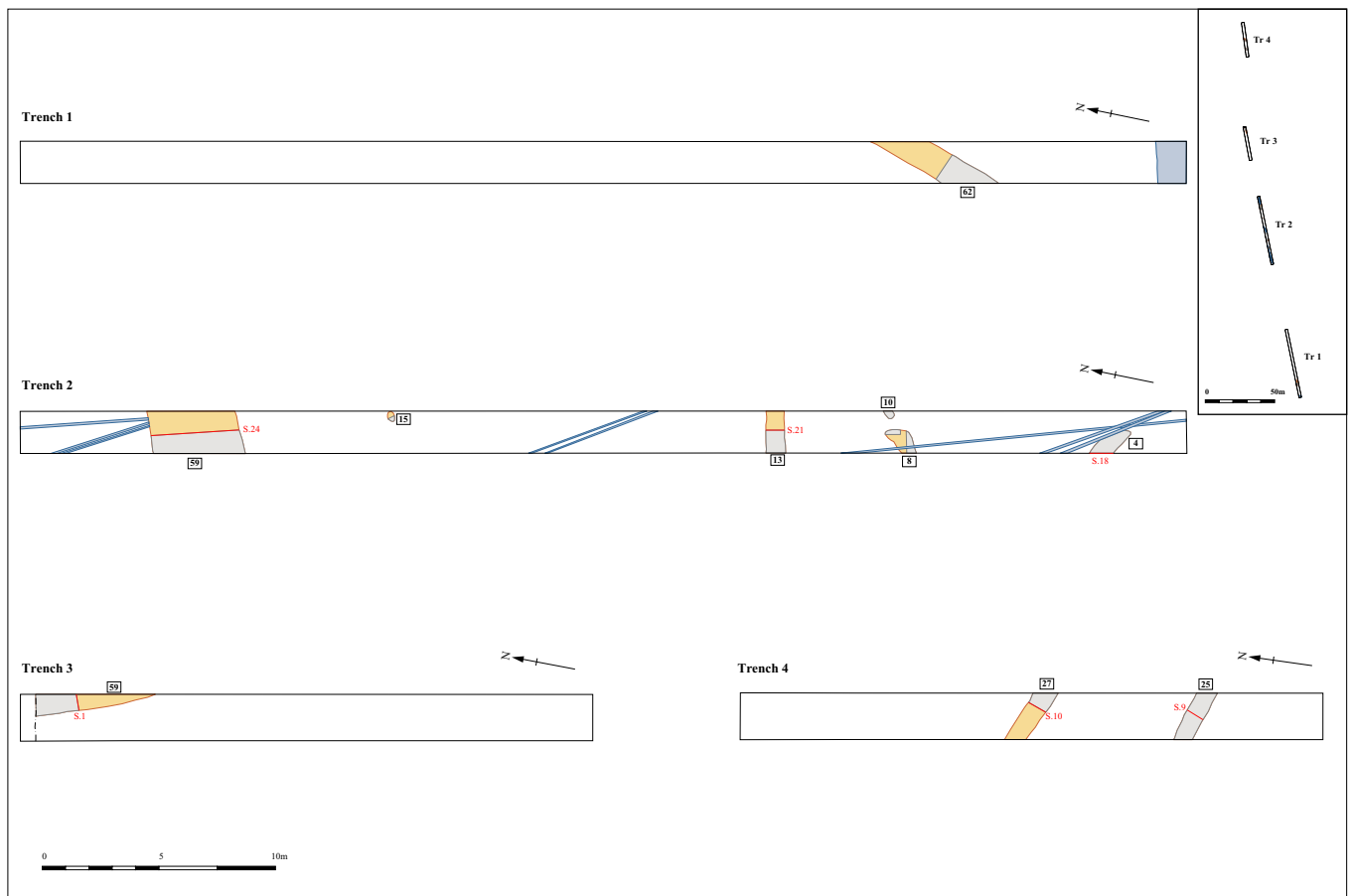


Figure 2: Detailed trench plans

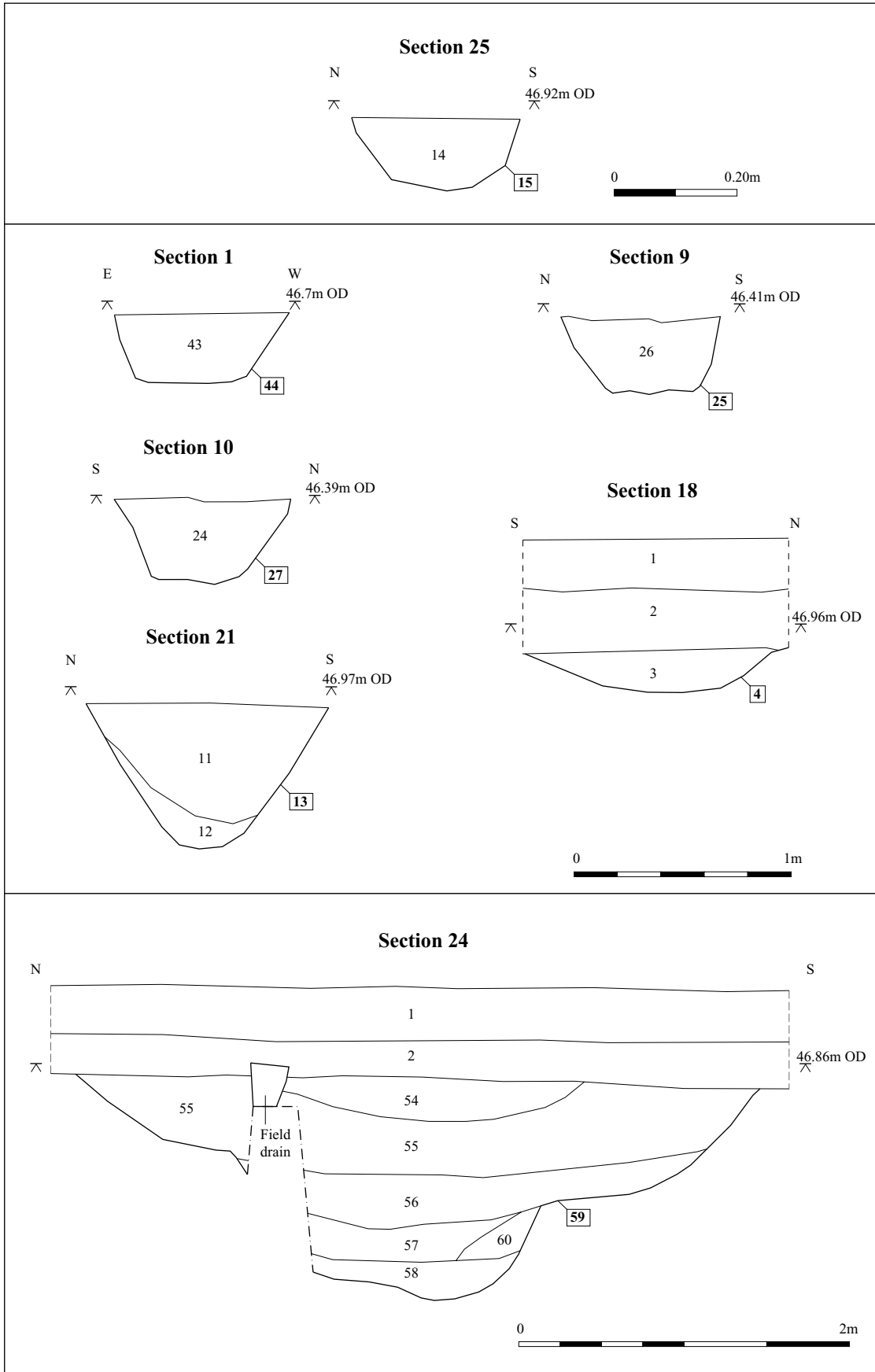
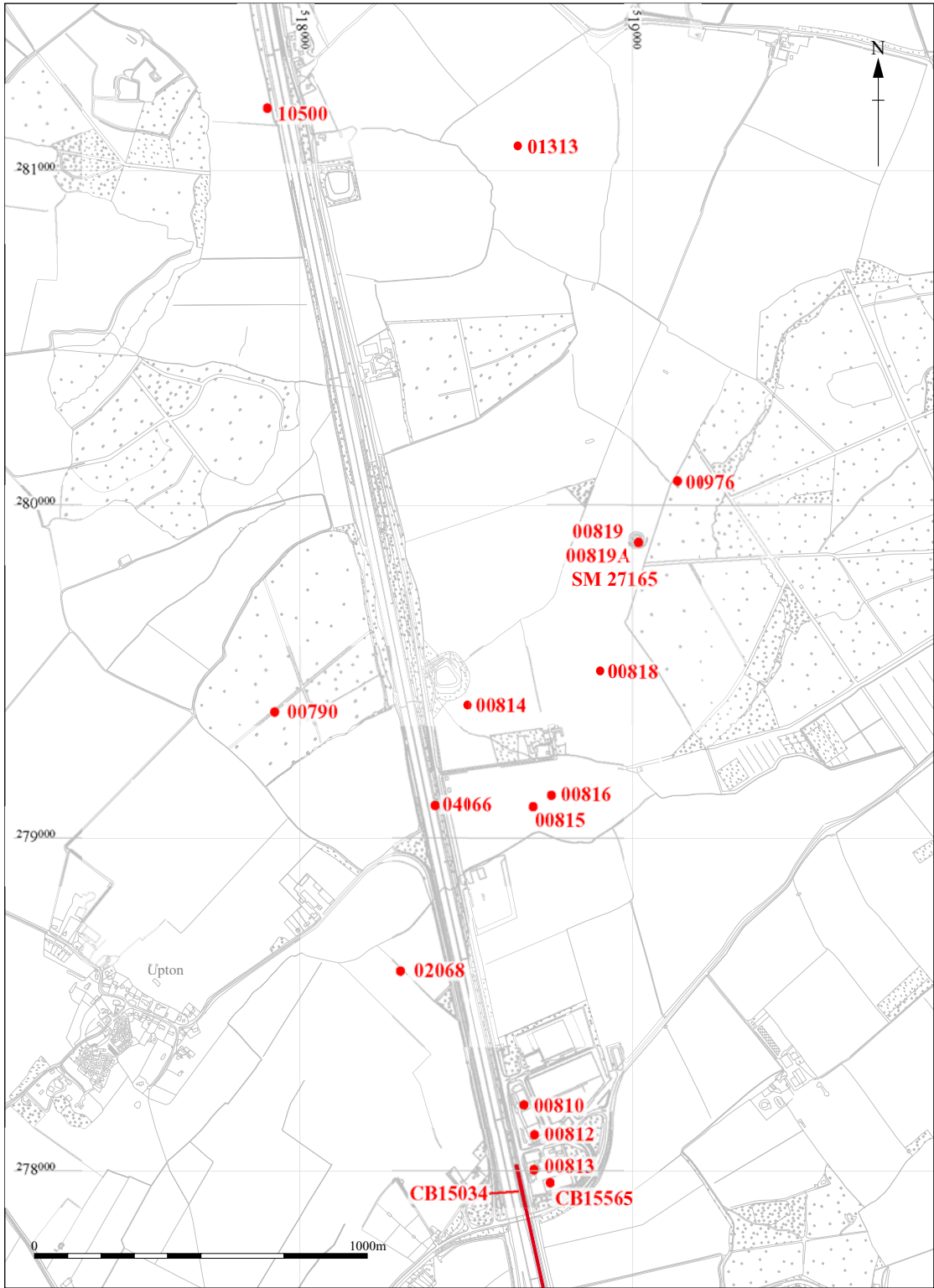
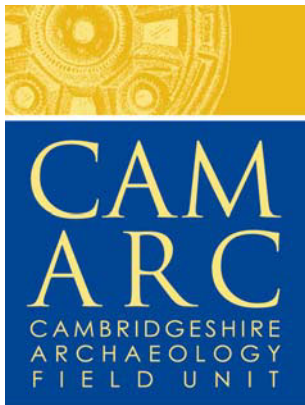


Figure 3: Section Drawings



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Figure 4: Location of HER entries



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