

Thomas Lyons
March 2008

CAM ARC Report Number 1010

Land at 30 Mill Corner, Soham, Cambridgehire:

An Archaeological Evaluation

Thomas Lyons BA

Site Code: SOH MIC 08
CHER Event Number: ECB 3828
Date of works: 18th & 19th February 2008
Grid Ref: TL 5884 7312

Status	Approved		
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CAM ARC OASIS Report Form

OASIS Number:

PROJECT DETAILS				
Project name	Land at 30 Mill Corner, Soham, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation.			
Short description	On the 18th and 19th of February 2008 CAM ARC carried out an archaeological evaluation on land at 30 Mill Corner, Soham, Cambridgeshire. An L-shaped trench was dug around a bungalow on the site, approximately 20m in length. Modern truncation and petrol contamination was found on the east of the site where the trench was machined to alluvium and not natural geology. On the south of the site two archaeological features were found, sealed beneath alluvium at a depth of 1m. One of these, 7, a sub-rectangular feature only partially visible in plan, contained medieval pottery. Feature 5 was a small, undated ditch.			
Project dates	Start	18/2/08	End	19/2/08
Previous work	ECB 3828		Future work	unknown
Associated project reference codes	SOH MIC 08			
Type of project	Evaluation – targeted trenches			
Site status	None			
Current land use (list all that apply)	Residential			
Planned development	Housing			
Monument types / period (list all that apply)	None			
Significant finds: Artefact type / period (list all that apply)	Pottery			
PROJECT LOCATION				
County	Cambridgeshire	Parish	Soham	
HER for region	Cambridgeshire			
Site address (including postcode)	30 Mill Corner, Soham, Cambridgeshire CB7 5HU			
Study area (sq.m or ha)	0.07ha			
National grid reference	TL 5884 7312			
Height OD	Min OD	3.8m	Max OD	4m
PROJECT ORIGINATORS				
Organisation	CAM ARC			
Project brief originator	Eliza Gore			
Project design originator	James Drummond-Murray			
Director/supervisor	Thomas Lyons			
Project manager	James Drummond-Murray			
Sponsor or funding body	I-plan			
ARCHIVES	Location and accession number	Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone, database, context sheets etc)		
Physical	Cambs County Store	Pottery, animal bone		
Paper	Cambs County Store	Plans & sections		
Digital	CAM ARC	Photographs		
BIBLIOGRAPHY				
Full title	Land at 30 Mill Corner, Soham, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation			
Author(s)	Thomas Lyons			
Report number	1010			
Series title and volume				
Page numbers				
Date	March 2008			

Summary

On the 18th and 19th of February 2008 CAM ARC carried out an archaeological evaluation on land at 30 Mill Corner, Soham, Cambridgeshire. An L-shaped trench was dug around a bungalow on the site, approximately 20m in length. Modern truncation and petrol contamination was found on the east of the site where the trench was machined to alluvium and not natural geology. On the south of the site two archaeological features were found, sealed beneath alluvium at a depth of 1m. One of these, **7**, a sub-rectangular feature only partially visible in plan, contained medieval pottery. Feature **5** was a small, undated ditch.

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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 07/00804/FUL), 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 1st Terrace sand and gravels (British Geological Survey 1990).

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 Prehistoric

The fen-edge around Soham and the Snail Valley has a long history of human activity. Sites and find spots in the immediate vicinity include Mesolithic and Neolithic remains recorded to the northwest of Broad Hill, where a large quantity of worked flints, including axes, knives and scrapers, were recovered (Hall 1996). To the north and northeast of the village the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER) records Neolithic artefacts at MCB8560, 12952, 12953 and 14568 and a Late Bronze Age brooch at MCB12953. An evaluation in the town centre at St Andrew's House produced a single Bronze Age ditch (Casa Hatton 2000).

Evidence of later prehistoric, Iron Age, activity in and around Soham is relatively scarce. A site was located on the hilltop at Henney, on the periphery of Stuntney (Hall 1996). Iron Age features were found to the southwest of the development area, on Clay Lane and may represent an enclosure (Nichol 2002) and a large evaluation at the Fordham

Road allotments produced settlement remains dating to the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age (Connor 2001). Further remains were recorded in Soham itself at St Andrew's House (Atkins 2004).

3.2 Roman

Coins of Roman date have been found to the north (MCB8554), in the vicinity of an undated ring ditch (MCB8561). Human skeletal remains of possible Roman date have been found in the area of White Hart Lane (MCB8413). The evaluation at Fordham Road allotments, the closest archaeological evaluation to the subject site, also produced significant Romano-British settlement remains alongside those of the Late Iron Age (Connor 2001).

3.3 Anglo-Saxon & Medieval

Funerary remains attest early Saxon occupation at Soham from three cemeteries. Burials were discovered in the church graveyard (TL 5998 7239) where grave goods and stray finds included brooches, several beads and spearheads (Fox 1923). Another cemetery was located at the Soham/Fordham Waterworks some 1200m to the southeast of the subject site, during excavations conducted in the 1930s (Lethbridge 1933). Some 23 furnished inhumations (and 2 cremations) were identified and assigned to the 6th-7th century. Further Anglo-Saxon human skeletal remains (MCB 13882) were uncovered in the rear garden of a house located on White Hart Lane. Evidence suggested that they were not *in situ*, and may have originally belonged to the same cemetery as the burials from the church graveyard (Robinson 1995).

Present day Soham is Early Saxon in origin. According to Reaney, the place name is derived from the Old English *Soegan Hamm* or 'swampy' settlement or enclosure (Reaney 1943). Further, 12th Century, documentary sources refer to the foundation in the 7th Century AD of a monastery by St Felix, first bishop of the East Angles, who was buried in Soham. The monastery was destroyed during the Danish invasions of East Anglia (late 9th Century) along with many other religious foundations in the area, never to be re-established (Salzman 1948). As yet there has been no definite archaeological evidence for Middle Saxon activity in Soham, though a single sherd of Ipswich ware was recovered during excavations at St Andrew's House (Atkins 2004).

The manor of Soham was given to Ely Abbey shortly after the re-foundation of the latter in the 10th Century (Conybeare 1887). The exact location of the monastery is unknown, although it is possible that the Parish church of St Andrew's (late 12th Century) was founded on the site of its Saxon predecessor. The sub circular pattern of roads around the centre of the village may suggest a religious precinct (Oosthuizen 2000).

Evidence for occupation during the Saxo-Norman period has emerged through recent excavations. At nos. 9-13 Pratt Street an archaeological evaluation revealed shallow gullies, a posthole and a large pit containing 11th or 12th Century Thetford Ware (Hatton and Last 1994). Evaluation trenches at the rear of no. 38 Station Road produced evidence of ditches dating from the 10th to 12th Centuries (Heawood 1997). An evaluation conducted at Soham County Infant's School revealed several ditches containing 10th to 14th Century assemblages, predominantly St Neots and Thetford type ware (Bray 1991).

The remains from the Infant's School (and from High Street/Clay Street) represent a major phase of development and prosperity that is attested by the construction of St Andrew's Church in the late 12th Century (Hatton & Last 1997). Soham is also thought to have held an un-chartered market before the 12th Century (Ridout 2000).

Evaluations in the town centre at St Andrew's House (Casa Hatton 2000), Market Street (Cooper 2004a) and Clay Street (Atkins 2004) produced medieval (12th to 16th Century) pits, ditches and posthole structures. A small evaluation at Ten Bell Lane produced one late medieval quarry pit and some undated ditches (Atkins 2004a) and another at Brook Dam Lane recorded a single medieval pit and a post-medieval ditch (Cooper 2004).

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.

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

High levels of groundwater and petrol contamination hindered working conditions on site.

5 Results

One L-shaped trench was opened to the south and east of the existing house, 20m in length (Figure 2).

The north south orientated part of the trench, to the east of the existing house, was dug to a depth of 0.6m on to alluvium (3) where petrol was visible on the surface. Make-up foundation deposits, presumably for small outbuildings, had truncated the original soil sequence. These deposits were 0.45m deep (Section 1). Natural geology was not reached along this part of the trench.

The east-west orientated part of the trench was dug to a maximum depth of 1m. No petrol was present. Natural clay was reached at the base of the trench. The original soil sequence was intact on this part of the development area, with a greater amount of topsoil, likely to have been deposited during building of the bungalow on the site. Above the natural was between 0.3m and 0.4m of alluvium (3). Subsoil (2) was between 0.1m and 0.2m thick and the topsoil (1) was almost 0.4m thick (Section 2). Towards the west end of this part of the trench a 1.5m long step was left which contained a sewer pipe.

Two archaeological features were encountered along the east-west orientated part of the trench, Features **5** and **7** (Sections 2 & 3). These were both sealed by alluvium (3) at a depth of 1m. Feature **5** was a narrow ditch located at the west end of the trench and was orientated northwest southeast. It was 0.35m wide and 0.2m deep and contained a grey blue clay fill (4) which yielded no finds. Feature **7** was located in the centre of the trench and orientated east west. It was 4m long and 0.9m wide and appeared sub-rectangular in plan although presumably at least half of it lay beneath the south-facing baulk. A thin lining of peat delineated its edge. Nearly 2m of it was excavated and it was revealed to be 0.3m deep. The fill (6) was a grey blue clay, similar to the overlying alluvium and contained medieval pottery and animal bone.

6 Discussion

Features **5** and **7** remain undated and uncharacterised, respectively. The peat lining in Feature **7** was difficult to interpret; it was not present any higher up during the machining and was conceivably naturally occurring in a relatively shallow feature. The pottery from Feature **7** consisted of three sherds of a late medieval 'lid seated' jar which dates from the late 14th Century through to the 16th Century, as well as thirteen smaller sherds of medieval shelly ware dating between 1150 and 1350. Two pieces of animal bone were recovered from Feature **7**: an unfused juvenile cattle radius and a pig scapula.

7 Conclusions

The east of the proposed development area has been truncated by foundation deposits for small buildings while the south and west of the area looks to have been built up with added topsoil; it follows that is probable for the rest of the proposed development area. This evaluation revealed the presence of archaeological features beneath alluvial clay deposits at a depth of 1m.

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

Acknowledgements

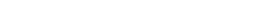
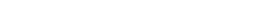
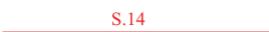
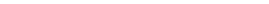
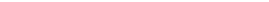
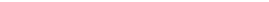
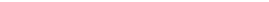
The author would like to thank I-plan who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by James Drummond-Murray and Caoimhin O Coileain assisted with the fieldwork. Paul Spoerry spot dated the pottery and Chris Faine identified the animal bone.

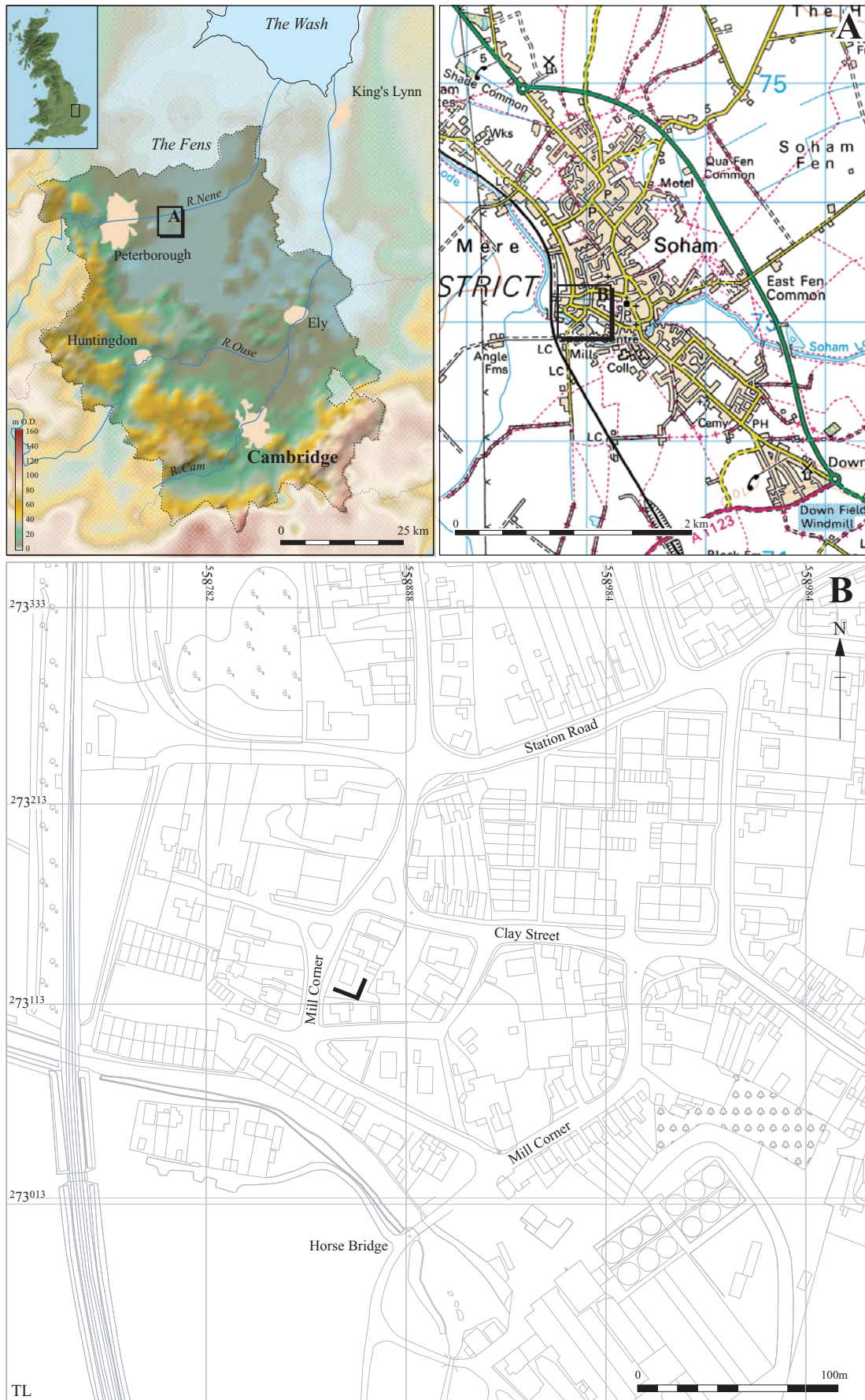
The brief for archaeological works was written by Eliza Gore, who visited the site and monitored the evaluation.

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Drawing Conventions	
Plans	
Limit of Excavation	
Deposit - Conjectured	
Natural Features	
Sondages/Machine Strip	
Intrusion/Truncation	
Illustrated Section	
Archaeological Deposit	
Excavated Slot	
Modern Deposit	
Cut Number	
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	
Ordnance Datum	
Inclusions	



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Figure 1 Location of trench with the trench highlighted (black)

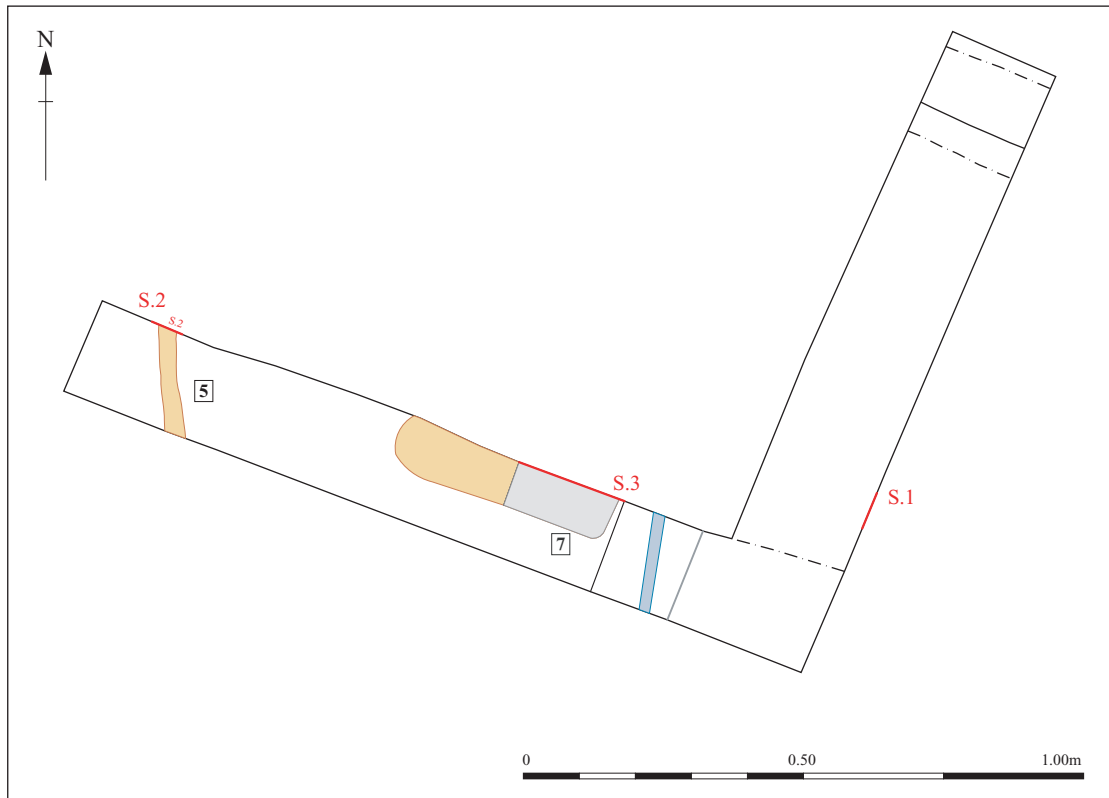


Figure 2: Trench plan

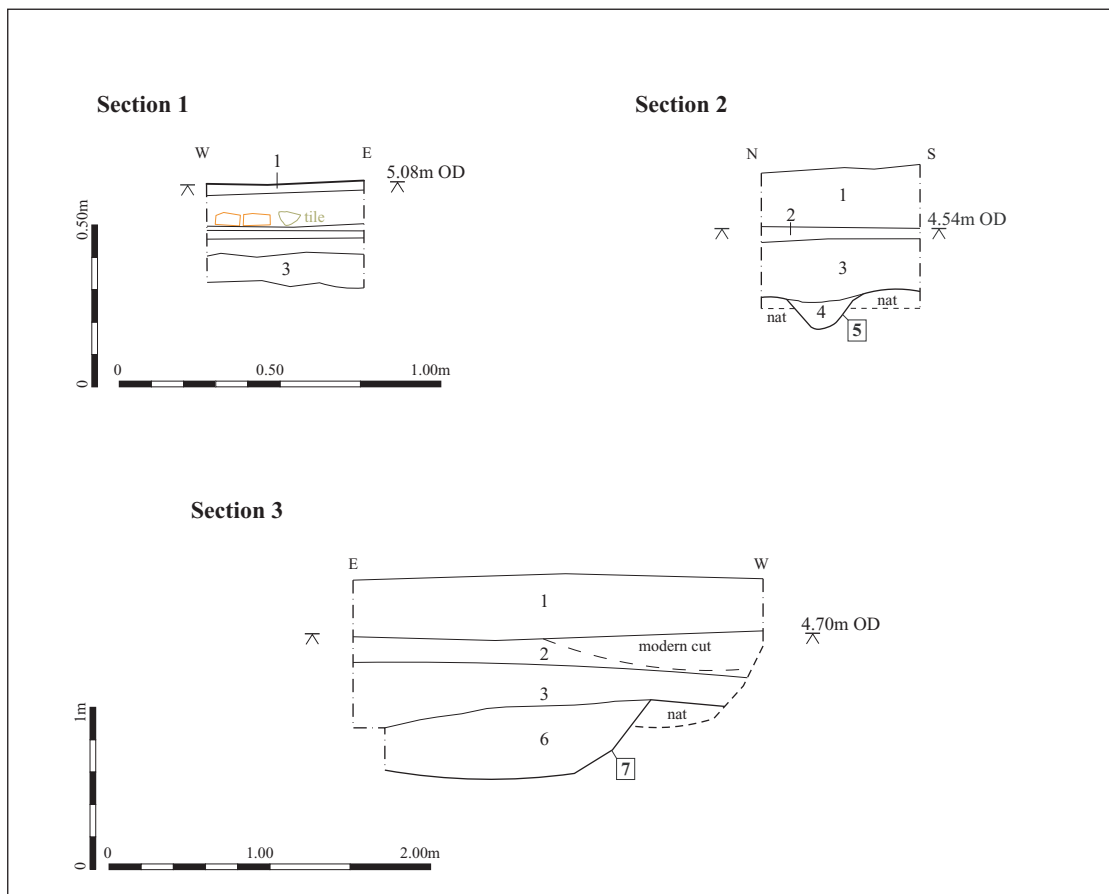
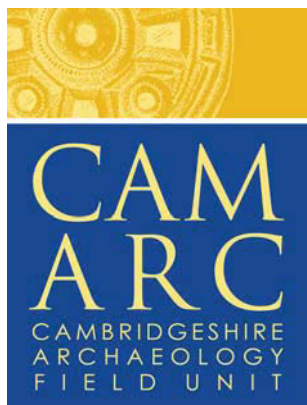


Figure 3: Section Drawings



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