

**JACKS LANE CROSSING
AND BALANCING POND 2
PRIORS GREEN
TAKELEY
ESSEX**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
BY
TRIAL TRENCHING**



**Essex County Council
Field Archaeology Unit**



December 2006

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PRIORS GREEN
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As part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content or the presentation of this report.
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**JACKS LANE CROSSING AND BALANCING POND 2
PRIORS GREEN, TAKELEY**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
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Client: RPS Planning (on behalf of Countryside Properties Plc)
FAU Project No.: 1703
NGR: TL 57566 21613 (Jacks Lane) and TL 57790 21879 (Balancing Pond 2)
Site Code: TAPG 06
OASIS No.: essexcou1-18998
Date of Fieldwork: 18 – 20 and 26 - 29 September 2006

SUMMARY

As part of an ongoing programme of construction works associated with a housing development in the Priors Green area of Takeley, Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit was commissioned by RPS Planning to evaluate by trial trenching the eastern crossing point of Jacks Lane and the proposed location of Balancing Pond 2.

A single staggered trench was excavated across Jacks Lane and its ditches either side. Two modern consolidation layers were identified on the lane itself and both the northern and southern ditches showed episodes of re-cutting. However, the layers on the lane and the fills within the ditches were all relatively modern in origin, suggesting that the route has been regularly maintained. Although it is conjectured that Jacks Lane is medieval in origin, no evidence for this was uncovered within this trench.

Three trenches were excavated across within the intended location of Balancing Pond 2. Two of the trenches contained possible features. Of the three possible features investigated it seems likely that only one, post-hole 615 in Trench 1, was archaeological, the remaining two being of natural origin. No dating evidence was recovered from any of the features. Overall, the potential for significant archaeological remains to be present within the area of the Balancing Pond is low.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report is an assessment of the results of an archaeological evaluation consisting of two areas of trial trenching, one at the eastern crossing of Jacks Lane and the second at the proposed location of Balancing Pond 2 at the Priors Green housing development, Takeley, Essex (Fig. 1).

Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) carried out the evaluation for RPS Planning on behalf of Countryside Properties Plc. The project was carried out in accordance with a Method Statement produced by RPS Planning.

Both the fieldwork and the reporting have been carried out to professional standards and guidance issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1999) and the *ALGAO* standards for fieldwork (Gurney 2003).

The report is structured to describe the background to the project, followed by an assessment of the results of the fieldwork, followed by a discussion of the archaeological potential. Appendices include descriptions of the trenches, details of the archive contents and the EHER summary. All illustrations are placed together towards the back of the report.

The site archive will be deposited at Saffron Walden Museum. A copy of this report will be deposited with the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER), a further copy will also be uploaded to the OASIS database.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and Topography (Fig 1)

Jacks Lane runs approximately east-west, roughly parallel with the Dunmow Road (former A120), between Smiths Green in the west and Hall Road in the east. Its height is lower than the surrounding fields by approximately 1m, although this varies along the length of the lane. It is bounded on both sides by substantial ditches and hedgerows of semi-mature trees and bushes.

Balancing Pond 2 is situated outside the eastern end of the overall development area, to the west of Hall Road and to the north of Jacks Lane. Positioned in the northeast corner of a ploughed and harrowed field, it lies in an east – west running depression that may have been the route of an old watercourse. This is partially supported by the results of the geotechnical pit monitoring (Robertson 2006 b), which identified possible palaeochannel sediments at a depth of 2.5m.

2.2 Geology

The trench across Jacks Lane revealed approximately 0.3m of topsoil containing modern debris and humic material above approximately 0.3m of mid grey brown subsoil. The undisturbed geology was a pale brown yellow chalky clay with bands of mid orange brown silty clay running through it.

Over the Balancing Pond the topsoil/ ploughsoil averaged c.0.3m, with approximately 0.07m of mid grey brown silty clay subsoil below this. The observed undisturbed natural geology was a mixture of pale yellow brown chalky clay and mid orange brown silty clay.

The drift geology of the site is generally that of pale brown chalky boulder-clay of the Lowestoft Formation, although this becomes chalkier approximately 2m below ground level. The underlying solid geology of the area is London Clay (BGS map EW222 Great Dunmow v.2).

2.3 History and Archaeology

The two evaluation sites are located within a wider agricultural landscape, which has evolved from the Bronze Age through to the present day. This landscape is becoming increasingly better understood and documented as a result of archaeological fieldwork taking place in advance of extensive construction development in the Takeley area. This is particularly evident in the recent work at Stansted Airport (Havis & Brooks 2004; Framework Archaeology in prep), evaluation and excavation work undertaken in advance of the re-alignment and construction of the A120 (Fitzpatrick 2001), Frogs Hall (Ennis in prep) and also by recent work undertaken in Takeley itself (Robertson 2005 and 2006) and further west of the present site (Roberts 2003).

To the south of these two sites, Dunmow Road is thought to be on the approximate line of Stane Street, the Roman road from Braughing/Puckridge to Colchester (Drury and Rodwell 1980). To the northeast at Frogs Hall is a presumptive Roman villa (ESMR 9140) with associated Roman landscape features whilst Warish Hall (ESMR 4572), a Scheduled medieval moated site (protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, 1979), lies c.1km to the northwest. Another medieval moated site, Jacks Green (ESMR 4655), is located only c.400m to the west of the Jacks Lane crossing. Jacks Lane itself, now a bridleway, is also thought to have medieval origins. Although the lane and its flanking ditches have not been previously investigated, recent excavation within the Priors Green Phase 1 development area recorded the remains of a 13th to 14th century farmstead fronting on to its south side. This lay only c.150m to the west of the Jacks Lane evaluation trench.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The general aim of the evaluations at these two sites is to establish the character, data and function of any archaeological features within the specific areas of development impact. The research objectives follow those outlined in the regional research objectives (Brown and Glazebrook 2000) with the specific objectives being laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (RPS 2006).

4.0 METHOD

The investigation comprised of three machine-cut trenches across the proposed area of the Balancing Pond and a staggered trench across Jacks Lane. The trenches were excavated using a mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision. The location of each trench was recorded using GPS and a plan and at least a representative section drawn. All the features revealed in the trenches were hand-excavated and recorded using standard ECC FAU methodologies. A photographic record comprising monochrome prints and digital images was maintained throughout the fieldwork. All plans were linked to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

Standard FAU methodologies were employed with regard to the recording. All *IFA* standards and by-laws and *ALGAO's* Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney 2003) were adhered to throughout the project.

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS (Figs 1 - 3)

Both of the areas of trenching were situated towards the eastern side of the overall development area. Each of the trenches, in both areas, are briefly described below. Further trench information can be found in Appendix 1 and details of the recorded archaeological remains in Appendix 2. The figures are located towards the back of the report.

5.1 Jacks Lane Crossing (Figs 1 and 2)

Located to the north of the previously-investigated Phase I area, this staggered trench was excavated to a depth of approximately 0.6m on the southern side of the lane and 0.4m on the northern side. It was excavated in two stages to avoid closing Jacks Lane, a public right of way. Cumulatively the trench was approximately 19m long and 1.6m wide. The current make-up of Jacks Lane itself (layers 607 and 608) was shown to be modern, consisting of crushed concrete and tarmac, 0.3m thick. In its present form the lane is 2.6m wide. Although this fluctuates along its

length, there is no evidence for the track having significantly altered its course over time; other than perhaps becoming slightly narrower.

Both the northern and southern sides of the lane were bounded by ditches. The northern ditch had been re-cut twice. The earliest ditch in this sequence was 609, followed by 611 and finally 614 which was still extant as a partially open ditch. Ditch 609 was only seen as a small section along the southern edge of the track, was at least 0.5m deep, and contained a single fill of redeposited natural, 610. It was almost completely cut away by ditch 611 which was approximately 0.6m deep and 1.2m wide and contained two dark brown clay fills, 612 and 613. The upper of these two fills 613 was considerably loamier and exhibited a significant degree of root disturbance; it was, however, almost completely removed by ditch 614. Ditch 614 was approximately 1.8m wide and 0.6m deep, and partially filled by two loamy clay deposits; primary fill 615 and top fill 616. Fill 616 was virtually identical to the surrounding topsoil and contained a high amount of humic material in it. Both of the fills in ditch 614 showed a high degree of root disturbance, presumably from the hedgerow alongside/ within the ditch.

The trench across the southern ditch revealed a similar stratigraphic sequence to the northern, with the earliest ditch, 600, being followed by recuts 602 and finally 605. Ditch 600 was only seen along the southern edge of the ditch sequence. It was at least 0.8m deep and contained a single fill, 601, of redeposited natural. It was almost entirely cut away by ditch 602. Ditch 602 was approximately 1.4m wide and 1.05m deep, it contained two mid brown clay silt fills. The lower fill 603 may have been slumping from a presumptive bank, on the southern side, while the upper fill 604 was heavily disturbed by roots. The latest ditch 605 was 2.2m wide and 0.7m deep it contained a single loamy fill 606 which had a high humic content.

No dating evidence was recovered from the fills of either of the two earliest ditches and only modern glass, plastic and tin cans were found in the later ditch fills. Although it is likely that Jacks Lane is Medieval in origin, the evidence from this section through it suggests that the track has been maintained and the ditches cleared-out repeatedly, perhaps with all earlier associated deposits consequently being removed.

5.2 Balancing Pond 2 (Fig 3)

Three trenches measuring 25m x 1.6 were excavated by machine across the area of the Balancing Pond. They were all aligned NNW – SSE. The exposed geology was mixed and ranged from orange sandy gravel to pale brown chalky till. Each trench is briefly described below. Further information can be found in Appendices 1 and 2.

5.2.1 Trench 1

Situated along the western edge of the area, Trench 1 was excavated to a depth of 0.32m onto pale brown chalky till which turned to gravely orange clay at the southern end. Two discrete features were revealed; a shallow post-hole 617 and a probable natural feature 619. Post-hole 617 lay towards the southern end of the trench. The full extent of the feature was not exposed as it extended eastwards beyond the trench limit. It measured approximately 0.45m in diameter and was 0.19m deep, with a dark grey brown silty clay fill which contained a moderate amount of charcoal flecks. No dateable finds were collected from this feature. Irregular 'pit' 619 was located towards the north of the trench and measured 1.3m x 0.6m and was approximately 0.2m deep. Its fill was mid grey silty clay from which no finds were recovered. It is likely that this feature is of natural origin. No environmental samples were taken from either feature.

5.2.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 lay in the approximate centre of the proposed Balancing Pond. It was excavated to a depth of 0.38m onto the natural geology, a mixture of pale brown chalky clay and mid orange brown silty clay. One possible feature was identified, 615, towards the northern end of the trench. It measured approximately 1m x 0.9m and was 0.21m deep. However, none of the edges of the feature were particularly clear and seems likely that it is of natural origin. No finds were collected from the feature and no environmental samples were collected.

5.2.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was located along the eastern edge of the proposed pond area. It was excavated to a depth of 0.35m onto the mid orange brown clay silt natural geology. The topsoil was 0.29m deep and the underlying pale brown clay silt subsoil was 0.06m deep. No archaeological features or deposits were identified within this trench.

6.0 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL MATERIAL

No finds were recovered any of the trenches or features. No deposits with perceived environmental potential were identified and so no soil samples were taken.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation has established that Jacks Lane itself has clearly been maintained through time, being consolidated and resurfaced, presumably after clearing-off any deposits that had accumulated during its use. Consequently, there appear to be no surviving surfaces of archaeological significance in the vicinity of this crossing point. However, despite being severely truncated by successive recutting and cleaning-out, its flanking ditches possibly display a sequence of greater chronological depth. Although no datable and diagnostic artefacts were present in the earlier phases of the ditches at this particular location, the absence of modern material in all but the latest recuts may suggest that there is potential for such inclusions elsewhere along their length. Given the presence of the moated site at Jacks Lane and of the medieval farmstead remains alongside the track in the Phase 1 area, there may be potential for the inclusion of cultural material to be present in these ditches further west of the evaluation trench.

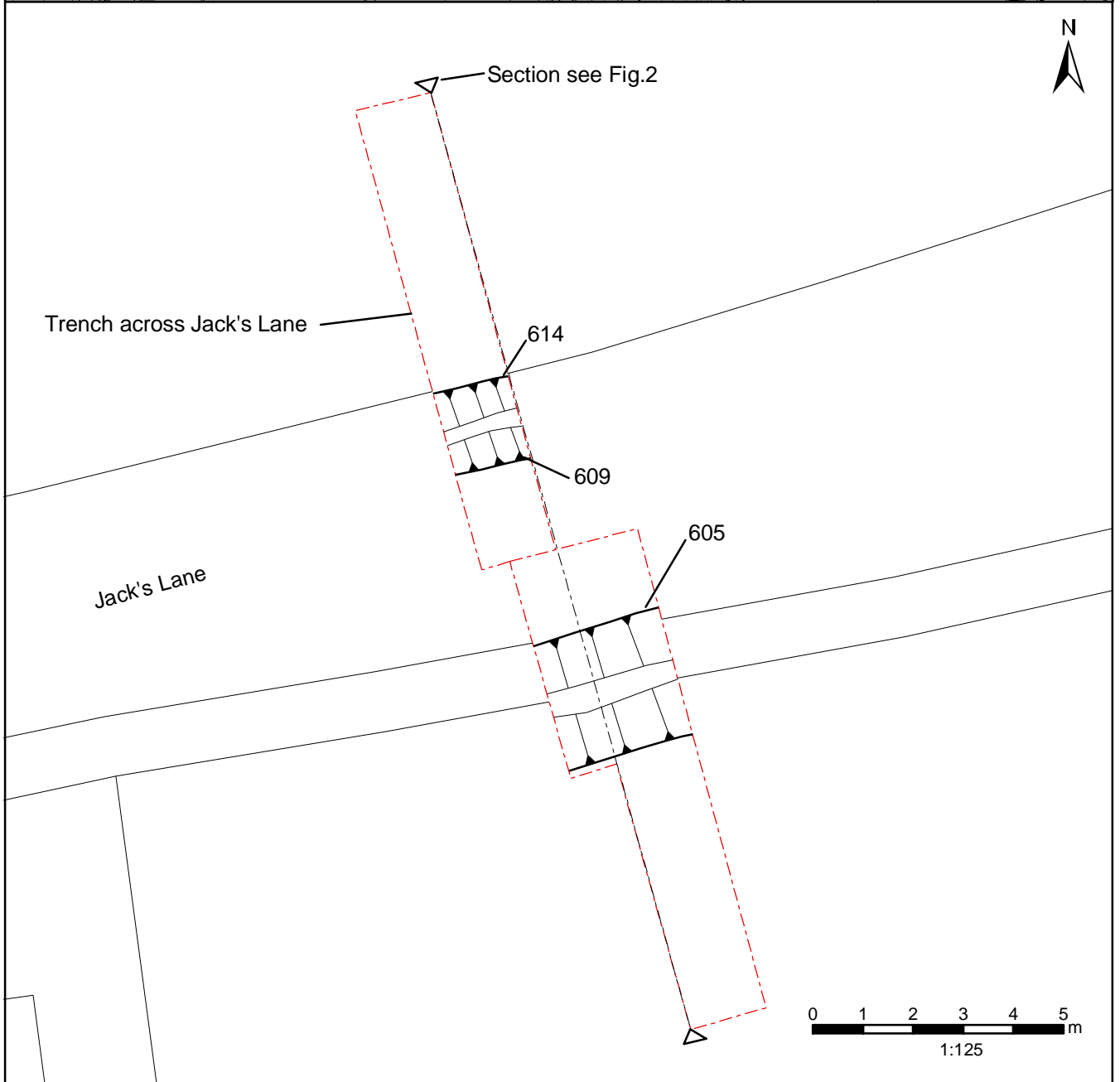
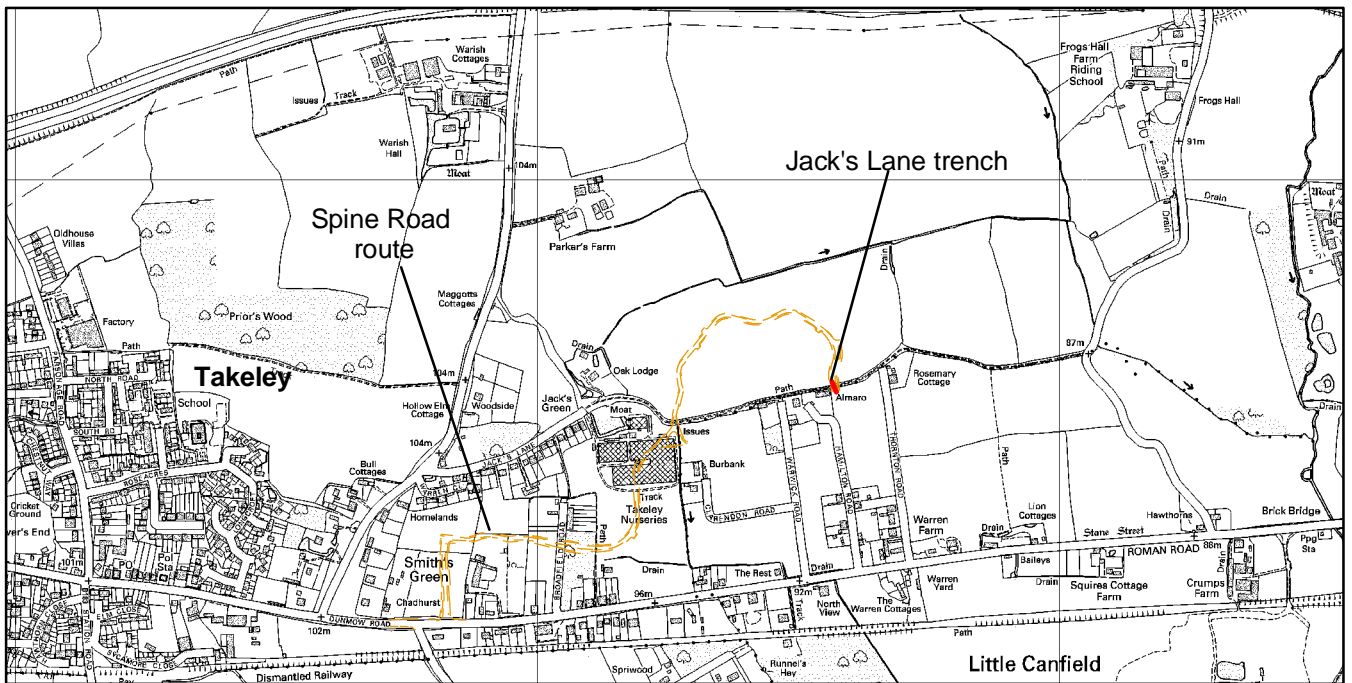
No significant archaeological remains were identified within the vicinity of Balancing Pond 2, other than a single probable post-hole. It is possible that, particularly by the medieval period, Jacks Lane and Stane Street provided the focus for the more tangible activities of settlement and such like, with the remainder of the vicinity being predominantly occupied by a low density of features such as field systems.

Acknowledgements

This project was commissioned by RPS Planning on behalf of Countryside Properties Plc. Thanks go to Simon Blatherwick his assistance throughout the project. Thanks are also due to Breheny Ltd for their assistance on site. R Havis of HEM monitored the site on behalf of the local planning authority. M. Atkinson managed the project and the author carried out the fieldwork.

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Fig.1. Location of Jack's Lane crossing trench

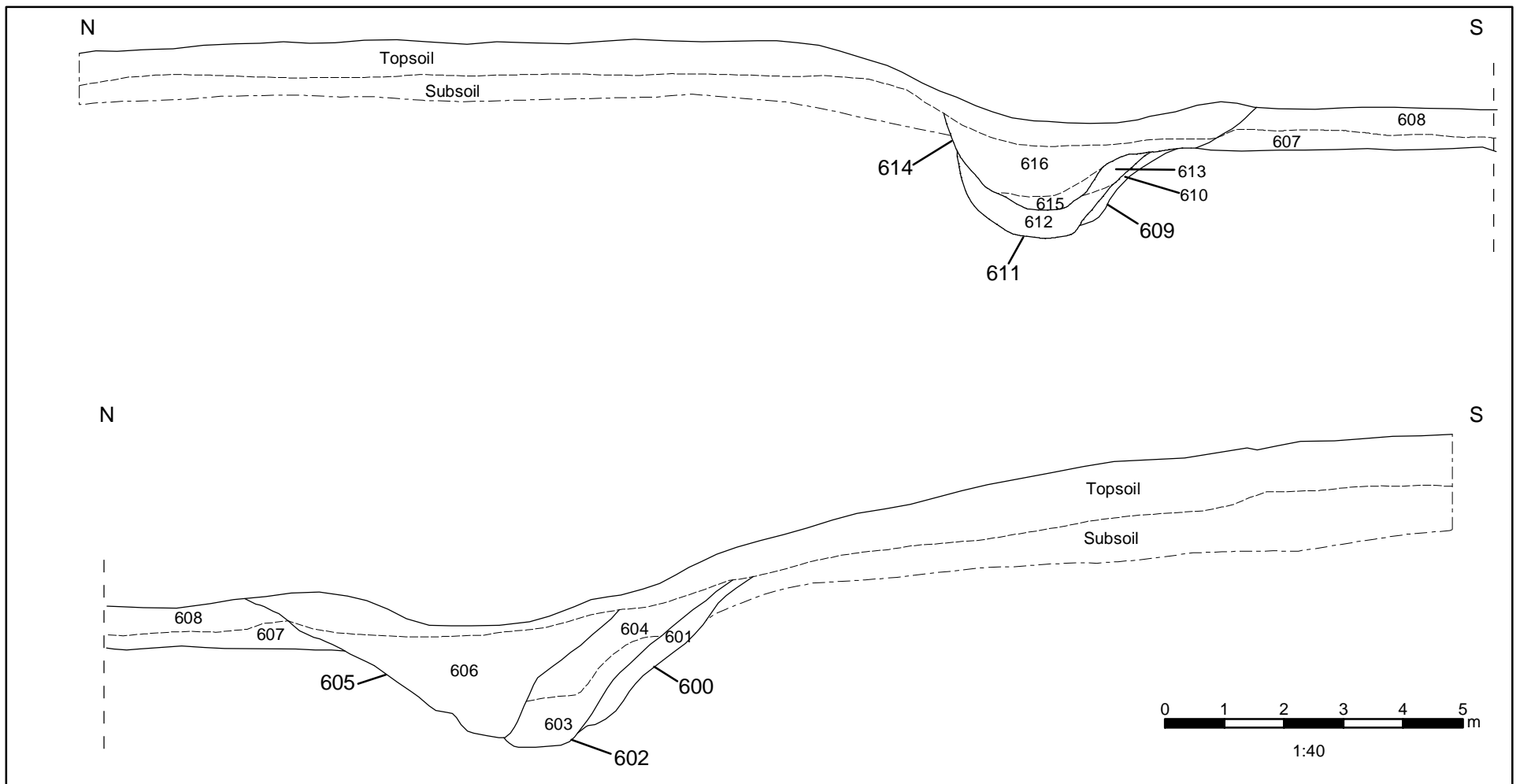
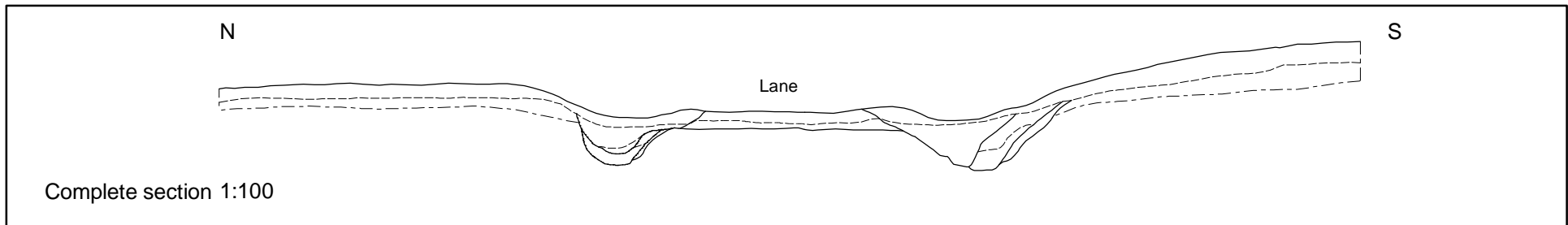


Fig.2. West facing section across Jack's Lane

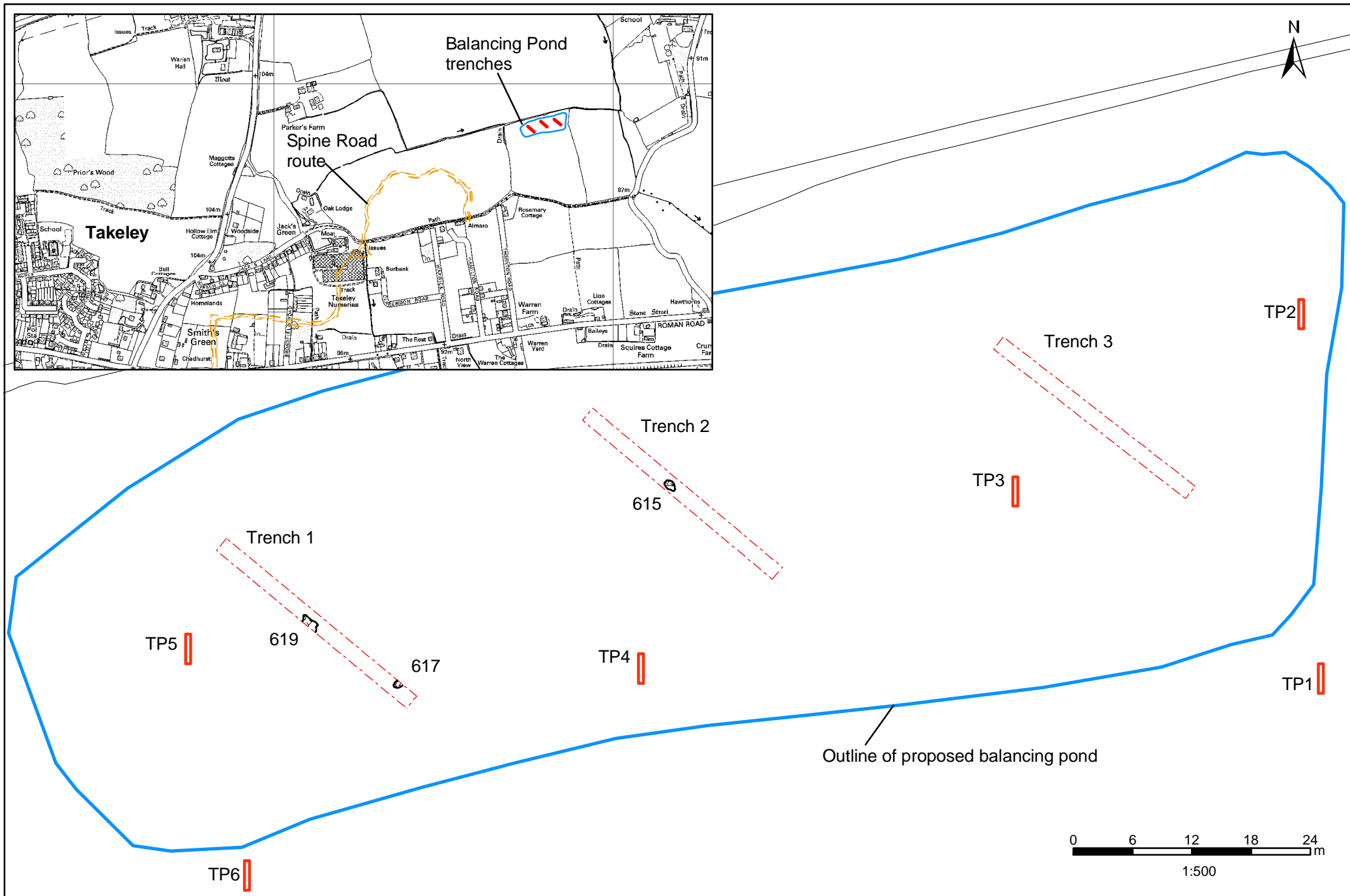


Fig.3. Location of trenches across Balancing Pond 2

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PLATES



Plate 1 – West Facing Section of Northern Jacks Lane Ditch



Plate 2 – East Facing Section of Southern Jacks Lane Ditch, under excavation

APPENDIX 1: FIELDWORK DATA

All dimensions are given in metres.

Jacks Lane Crossing

Trench	Dimensions (L x W)	Depth	Truncation of ground level?	Archaeological Features	Co-ordinates(NW and SE corners)
1	19 x 1.6	0.62	No	Yes	TL 57566 21613 / TL 57574 21595

Balancing Pond 2

Trench	Dimensions (L x W)	Depth	Truncation of ground level?	Archaeological Features	Co-ordinates(NW and SE corners)
1	25 x 1.6	0.32	No	Yes	TL 57747 21875 / TL 57767 21860
2	25 x 1.6	0.38	No	Yes	TL 57784 21888 / TL 57804 21873
3	25 x 1.6	0.35	No	No	TL 57826 21895 / TL 57846 21881

APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT DATA

All dimensions are given in meters

Jacks Lane Crossing

Context No	Type	Fills	Trench No	Dimensions (L x W)	Depth	Date
600	Ditch	601	1	2.6 x 0.15+	0.8+	Unknown
602	Ditch	603; 604	1	2.6 x 1.4+	1.05	Unknown
605	Ditch	606	1	2.6 x 2.2	0.7	Modern
607	Layer	-	1	2.6 x 2.6	0.2	Modern
608	Layer	-	1	2.6 x 2.6	0.1	Modern
609	Ditch	610	1	1.6 x 0.6+	0.5+	Unknown
611	Ditch	612; 613	1	1.6 x 1.2+	0.6	Unknown
614	Ditch	615; 616	1	1.6 x 1.8	0.6	Modern

Balancing Pond 2

Context No	Type	Fills	Trench No	Dimensions (L x W)	Depth	Date
615	Pit	616	2	1 x 0.9	0.21	-
617	Post-hole	618	1	0.45 x 0.4+	0.19	-
619	Pit	620	1	1.3 x 0.6+	0.2	-

APPENDIX 3: ARCHIVE INDEX

SITE NAME : Jacks Lane Crossing and Balancing Pond 2, Priors Green, Takeley (TAPG 06)

Index to the Archive

File containing:

1. Research Archive

- 1.1 Brief of Archaeological Works
- 1.2 Written Scheme of Investigation
- 1.3 Client Report

2. Site Archive

- 2.1 2 x Context registers
- 2.2 21 x Original Context Sheets
- 2.3 3 x Trench sheets
- 2.4 10 x digital images (and hard copy prints)
- 2.5 6 x Black and White Prints
- 2.6 2 x Photographic Registers
- 2.7 2 x Plan registers
- 2.8 2 x Section registers
- 2.9 2 x Plans Sheets(A5)
- 2.10 2 x Section Sheets (A1)

No finds

APPENDIX 4: EHER SUMMARY SHEET

Site Name/Address: Jacks Lane Crossing and Balancing Pond 2, Priors Green, Takeley	
Parish: Takeley	District: Uttlesford
NGR: TL 57566 21613 (Jacks Lane) TL 57790 21879 (Balancing Pond 2)	Site Code: TAPG 06
Type of Work: Evaluation by Trial trenching	Site Director/Group: A. Robertson ECC Field Archaeology Unit
Date of Work: 18-20 and 26-29 September 2006	Size of Area Investigated: Jacks Lane: c.36sq m Balancing Pond Area: c.0.5 ha
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Saffron Walden Museum	Funding Source: RPS Planning (on behalf of Countryside Properties Plc)
Further Work Anticipated? Yes	Related EHER Nos: 4572, 4655, 9140
Final Report: EAH Summary	
Periods Represented: Modern	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:	
<p>As part of the Priors Green housing development, at Takeley, Essex, the eastern crossing point of Jacks Lane and the proposed location of Balancing Pond 2 were evaluated by trial trenching.</p> <p><u>Jacks Lane</u></p> <p>A single trench was excavated across Jacks Lane and its ditches either side. Two modern consolidation layers were identified on the lane itself and both the northern and southern ditches showed episodes of re-cutting. However, the layers on the lane and the fills within the ditches were all perhaps relatively modern in origin, suggesting that the route has been regularly maintained through time. Although it is conjectured that Jacks Lane is medieval in origin, no evidence for this was uncovered within this trench.</p> <p><u>Balancing Pond 2</u></p> <p>Three trenches were excavated across within the intended location of Balancing Pond 2. Two of the trenches contained possible features. Of the three possible features investigated it seems likely that only one, post-hole 615 in Trench 1, was archaeological, the remaining two being of natural origin. No dating evidence was recovered from any of the features. Overall, the potential for other significant archaeological remains to be present within the area of the Balancing Pond is low.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports:	
Author of Summary: A. Robertson (ECC FAU)	Date of Summary: November 2006