

HERITAGE NETWORK



LAND AT DUNSTAN STREET Ely, Cambs.

(HN410)

Archaeological Evaluation Report



THE HERITAGE NETWORK LTD

Registered with the Institute of Field Archaeologists as an Archaeological Organisation

Archaeological Director: David Hillelson, BA MIFA

Land at
DUNSTAN STREET
Ely, Cambs.

HN410

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Prepared for E J Gifford (Construction) Ltd

by

Geoff Saunders, BA

Report no. 201

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Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this project was carried out by Karin Semmelmann and Geoff Saunders. The text for the report was compiled by Geoff Saunders, and the illustrations were prepared by Karin Semmelmann and David Kaye. The finds assessment was prepared by Helen Ashworth and the report was edited by David Hillelson.

The Heritage Network would like to express its thanks to Ed Gifford, E J Gifford (Construction) Ltd; and the staff of the County Archaeology Office, Cambridgeshire County Council for their co-operation and assistance in the execution of this project.

Summary

Site name and address:	Land at Dunstan Street, Ely, Cambridgeshire		
County:	Cambridgeshire	District:	East Cambridgeshire
Village/town:	Ely	Parish:	Ely
Planning reference:	02/01007/FUL	NGR:	TL 5313 8087
Client name and address:	E J Gifford (Construction) Ltd, 16b High St, Landbeach, Cambridge, CB4 4DT		
Nature of work:	New Housing	Present land use:	Scrub land
Size of affected area:	1276m ²	Size of area investigated:	50m ²
Site Code:	HN410	Other reference:	n/a
Organisation:	Heritage Network	Site Director:	David Hillelson
Type of work:	Evaluation	Archive location:	Cambs. C.C.
Start of work	01/07/2003	Finish of work	03/07/2003
Related SMR Nos:	n/a	Periods represented:	Saxon/early Medieval
Previous summaries/reports:	n/a		

Synopsis: In response to an archaeological condition on the planning permission for a new housing development on land at Dunstan Street, Ely, Cambridgeshire, the Heritage Network was commissioned by the developer to carry out an archaeological evaluation of the site.

Two trial trenches were opened across the proposed development area. Trench 1 was specifically located in order to assess the continuity of features located on the adjacent site to the north and west. It contained two ditches of Saxon date, one of which appeared to be a large enclosure ditch. Trench 2 contained a single ditch of late Saxon/early Medieval date.

Although Iron Age activity had also been recorded to the north and the west of the present study area, no evidence for the continuity of features and artefacts of this period was recorded in the evaluation.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared on behalf of *E J Gifford (Construction) Ltd* as part of a programme of archaeological evaluation of a proposed development site on land at Dunstan Street, Ely, Cambs. The planning permission for the development (ref. 02/01007/FUL) controlled by the East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC), has been granted subject to a condition requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, in accordance with the provisions set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note No.16 (PPG16) on Archaeology and Planning. The scope of the required work has been set out in a *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation* prepared by the *County Archaeology Office* (CAO) of Cambridgeshire County Council, acting as advisers to ECDC (ref. AT 19/02/03). The specification for the work carried out is contained in the Heritage Network's approved *Project Design* dated April 2003.

1.2 The site is located towards the northwest margin of the Isle of Ely, approximately 1.3km northwest of Ely Cathedral, centred on NGR TL 5313 8087 (Figure 1). The development proposes the construction of six new dwellings in two blocks, with car parking and access to the front, and gardens to the rear.

1.3 The present study area lies within a well documented archaeological landscape, with extensive Iron Age and Saxon evidence located immediately north and west of the site, and extensive Saxon and medieval evidence to the south and west. Although excavation in advance of a sewerage pipeline in 1995 in the southern half of the present site revealed no archaeological features or deposits, it was considered likely that evidence of Iron Age and Middle Saxon settlement activity would extend on to the northern half of the site.

1.4 The aim of the evaluation has been to assess the risk that archaeological remains might be disturbed in the course of the development works, and to consider the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any such remains, together with their archaeological and historical context.

1.5 The present report is intended to provide the planning authority with sufficient data to allow it to consider the archaeological implications of the proposed development, and to determine what further, if any, mitigation measures may be required to allow the development to proceed.

2. Background

TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

2.1 The site is located on level ground at the north-west margin of the Isle of Ely at approximately 7.30mOD.

2.2 The underlying geology of the area consists of Kimmeridge clay over which calcareous humic gley soils of the Peacock unit have developed (Soil Survey of Eastern England, Sheet 4).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

2.3 Archaeological investigations carried out prior to the housing development adjacent to the site revealed evidence of Iron Age and Saxon settlement (*West Fen Road, Ely, Cambridgeshire*, Northamptonshire Archaeology, October 2000). The report indicates that features associated with the Iron Age and Saxon settlements may run into the present site from the north and the west (see Figure 3). In particular a large Iron Age ditch appears to run into the northwest corner of the site on a north to south alignment and a smaller middle Saxon ditch runs into the same corner on an east to west alignment.

2.4 Although the site lies outside the core of the Medieval settlement at Ely, extensive Saxon and Medieval remains have been excavated on land to the south and the west (Mortimer, R. Regan, R. and Lucy, S. 2002, *The Saxon and Medieval Settlement at West Fen Road, Ely: Excavations on the Cotmist, Cornwell and Green Fields*, Cambridge Archaeological Unit).

2.5 The southern half of the site was excavated in advance of a sewerage pipeline in 1995 and revealed no archaeological features or deposits (Gibson, D. 1995, *Excavations at West Fen Road, Ely, Cambridgeshire*, CAU Report 160).

3. Fieldwork

METHODOLOGY

3.1 The area available for evaluation covers approximately 1276m². Two trial trenches were excavated with a total area of 50.1m² and representing an approximate 4.1% sample of the area (see Figure 2). Overburden was removed using a wheeled JCB 180° excavator fitted with a 1.5m wide toothless ditching bucket under direct archaeological supervision.

3.2 Spoil from the machining was inspected for archaeological artefacts.

3.3 The trenches were cleaned by hand, and all potential archaeological features were sampled to ascertain their nature, depth, date, and quality of preservation.

3.4 Bulk soil samples were taken from all archaeological features and deposits to assess the environmental potential of the site.

3.5 All work was carried out in accordance with the detailed method statement contained in the Heritage Network's approved *Project Design*, and followed the relevant sections of the Heritage Network's *Operations Manual*.

RESULTS

Trench 1

3.6 Trench 1 extended from the north-west corner of the site to cross the footprint of Units 4-6 (see Figure 2). The trench measured 1.5 x 18.0m and was aligned north-west to south-east.

3.7 The stratigraphy in the trench consisted of a layer of black (5Y 2.5/1) clayey silt topsoil overlying a dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4) sandy clay subsoil, beneath which was the mixed greyish brown (2.5Y 5/2), gravelly clay natural interspersed with olive brown (2.5Y 4.4), sandy clay natural. The trench contained two ditches dating to the Saxon period and a modern posthole (see Figure 4).

3.8 Two sections, [105] and [108], were excavated through a large ditch which appeared to form part of an enclosure. The ditch measured approximately 3.5m in width and approximately 0.53m in depth. It had steep straight sides, a flat base and contained two fills ([106]/[110] & [107]/[109]). The pottery fragments recovered from this feature were of early/middle Saxon date.

3.9 Ditch [103] ran across the northwest end of the trench on an east to west alignment. The ditch measured 0.58m in width and 0.10m in depth. It contained a single fill [104]. The northern side of the ditch was shallow and slightly concave, the southern side was steeper and slightly concave, and the base was slightly rounded. The pottery recovered from this feature was of middle Saxon date.

3.10 Posthole [101] was cut through the large enclosure ditch and contained a mixed topsoil fill [102]. The posthole was circular in shape with a diameter of 0.25m and a depth of 0.18m. It had straight vertical sides and a flat base. The nature of the cut suggests the posthole was machine bored and probably represents the remains of a telegraph pole or similar feature.

Trench Data				
Context Number	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)	Level (mOD)
101	Cut	Circular cut feature with vertical sides and a flat base. Modern posthole.	0.25 diameter 0.18 deep	6.56
102	Fill	Firm, black (5Y 2.5/1), clayey silt with occasional small rounded stones. Fill of posthole [101].	0.25 diameter 0.18 deep	-
103	Cut	Linear cut feature on an east-west alignment with slightly concave sides and rounded base. Shallow ditch.	1.53+ long 0.58 wide 0.10 deep	6.39
104	Fill	Plastic, olive brown (2.5Y 4/4), slightly sandy clay with very occasional small stones and charcoal flecks. Fill of ditch [103].	1.53+ long 0.58 wide 0.10 deep	-
105	Cut	Linear cut feature appearing to form an enclosure with steep sides and a flat base. Large ditch, same as [108].	0.50+ long 0.79+ wide 0.44 deep	6.40
106	Fill	Plastic, olive brown (2.5Y 4/4), slightly sandy clay with very occasional charcoal flecks. Secondary fill of ditch [105].	0.50+ long 0.79+ wide 0.25 deep	-
107	Fill	Firm, yellowish brown (10YR 5/6), sandy clay with occasional chalk and charcoal flecks. Primary fill of ditch [105].	0.50+ long 0.79+ wide 0.10 deep	-
108	Cut	Linear cut feature appearing to form an enclosure with steep sides and a flat base. Large ditch, same as [105].	0.50+ long 0.75+ wide 0.53 deep	6.32
109	Fill	Firm, yellowish brown (10YR 5/6), sandy clay. Primary fill of ditch [108].	0.50+ long 0.75+ wide 0.14 deep	-
110	Fill	Firm, olive brown (2.5Y 4/4), slightly sandy clay with moderate charcoal flecks and occasional small rounded pebbles. Secondary fill of ditch [108].	0.50+ long 0.75+ wide 0.41 deep	-

Trench 2

3.11 Trench 2 was located in the centre of the eastern half of the site, across the footprint of Units 1-3 (see Figure 2). The trench measured 1.5 x 15.4m and was aligned north-east to south-west.

3.12 The stratigraphy in the trench consisted of a layer of black (5Y 3/2), clayey silt topsoil overlying a dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4), fine sandy clay subsoil, beneath which was the greyish brown (2.5Y 5/2) gravelly clay natural interspersed with olive brown (2.5Y 4.4) sandy

clay natural. The trench contained a single ditch dating to the late Saxon/early Medieval periods. (see Figure 5).

3.13 Ditch [201] ran across the trench on a northeast to southwest alignment and measured 0.50m in width and 0.09m in depth. The ditch had steep, slightly concave sides and a flat base. It contained a single fill [202]. The pottery fragments from the ditch date to the late Saxon/early Medieval periods.

Trench Data				
Context Number	Type	Description	Dimensions (m)	Level (mOD)
201	Cut	Linear cut feature on a northeast to southwest alignment with steep sides and a flat base. Shallow ditch.	2.54+ long 0.50 wide 0.09 deep	6.76
202	Fill	Soft, dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4), sandy clay with occasional small sub-angular stones and charcoal flecks. Fill of ditch [201].	2.54+ long 0.50 wide 0.09 deep	-
203	Cut	Animal burrow.	0.27+ long 0.18 wide 0.07+ deep	6.76
204	Fill	Soft, black (5Y 3/2), clayey silt with occasional charcoal flecks and small stones. Fill of animal burrow [203].	0.27+ long 0.18 wide 0.07+ deep	-

FINDS ASSESSMENT

Concordance of Finds

Ctxt	Pottery		CBM		An.bone		Shell		Stone		Daub		Burnt Clay	
	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.
102											3	1		
104	25	3			4	2							15	1
106					15	3	4	1						
110	70	7			55	14	3	1	165	2	15	2		
202	15	3												
204	1	1	10	2							3	1		
U/S			15	1	275	24								
Total	111	14	25	3	349	43	7	2	165	2	21	4	15	1

Pottery

3.14 A total of 14 sherds of pottery weighing 111g were recovered during the evaluation. Saxon wares comprise 99% of the assemblage by weight and 93% by number. The sherds consist of locally produced, low status sandy wares.

3.15 Sixty four percent of the Saxon pottery comes from ditch fill [110]. The pottery dates to the early/middle Saxon period and consists of sandy wares with some quartz tempering. Ditch fill [104] contained three sherds of sandy ware dating to the middle Saxon period, which represent

three individual vessels. Ditch fill [202] contained 3 sherds of sandy ware, which were wheel thrown and date to the late Saxon/early Medieval period.

3.16 A single very small sherd of black glazed pottery dating to the 18th century was recovered from the fill of animal burrow [203].

3.17 It is proposed that this assemblage, combined with that from any future work on the site, is submitted for further specialist examination.

CBM

3.18 A total of 3 fragments of tile weighing 25g were recovered during the evaluation. Two fragments were recovered from the fill of animal burrow [203], the remaining fragment was recovered unstratified in Trench 1. All the fragments appear to be handmade and date from the late medieval/early post-medieval periods. The fragments are likely to have been imported onto the site as part of the manuring process when the site was open farmland.

3.19 No further work is proposed on this assemblage.

Animal bone

3.20 A total of 43 fragments of animal bone weighing 349g were recovered during the evaluation. Unstratified bone from the overburden represents 79% of the assemblage by weight and 56% by number.

3.21 The condition of the assemblage is poor, with many of the bones being fragmentary and showing signs of mineralisation, making species identification difficult. Species that are definitely present are sheep, goat and pig. No bovine bones were recovered during the evaluation.

3.22 No further work is proposed on this assemblage.

Shell

3.23 A total of two snail shells were recovered during the evaluation. Both shells are from the large enclosure ditch in Trench 1.

3.24 It is proposed that this assemblage, combined with that from any future work on the site, is submitted for further specialist examination.

Daub

3.25 A total of 4 fragments of daub weighing 21g were recovered during the evaluation. Two fragments were recovered from ditch fill [110] and therefore are probably early/middle Saxon in date. The remaining two fragments were recovered from posthole fill [101] and animal burrow [203] and are of uncertain date.

3.26 No further work is proposed on this assemblage.

Stone

3.27 Two stone fragments were recovered during the evaluation. One was a burnt sandstone and was approximately 10mm thick. The other was an oolitic limestone from the Lincolnshire limestone belt and probably originated from the Clipsham quarry. Both fragments were recovered from ditch fill [110].

3.28 No further work is proposed on this assemblage.

Burnt Clay

3.29 A single fragment of burnt clay was recovered during the evaluation. It was recovered from ditch fill [104] and was approximately 16mm thick.

3.30 No further work is proposed on this item.

Bulk Samples

3.31 Bulk samples were collected from contexts (104), (106) and (202) which were each securely dated.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

4.1 The site is located in a well documented archaeological landscape, and the fieldwork has demonstrated direct evidence of activity on the site from the early/middle Saxon period through to the late Saxon/early Medieval period.

4.2 No evidence was found for the continuation of feature 1005, a substantial Iron Age ditch identified on the adjacent site. According to the site plan produced by Northamptonshire Archaeology, this feature should have crossed the boundary of the site in the north-east corner.

4.3 Sections [105] and [108] were excavated through a large ditch dating to the early/middle Saxon period which appears to form part of an enclosure. It is possible that this feature relates to ditch 162 on the adjacent site to the north (see Figure 3).

4.4 Ditch [103] dates to the middle Saxon period and may represent a continuation of a ditch of similar date (feature 1608), which runs into the present site from the west (see Figure 3).

4.5 Ditch [201] dates to the late Saxon/early Medieval period. It may represent a land or property division, but does not appear to be directly related to any of the features recorded on the adjacent site.

4.6 The pottery assemblage from the present site is comprised of locally produced low status wares. The assemblage is small in size suggesting the present site may be located towards the edge of the settlement.

RISK ASSESSMENT

4.7 On the basis of the information gathered during the evaluation, it is possible to predict the likelihood that archaeological remains within the present site will be disturbed by groundworks associated with the current development. The model has been subdivided by period.

Prehistoric

4.8 Previous work adjacent to the site has identified extensive evidence of Iron Age activity in the immediate vicinity. The current phase of work has identified no archaeological features or artefacts relating to this period.

4.9 On this basis, it is considered that there is a moderate to low probability that Prehistoric remains will be encountered during the development of the site.

Romano-British

4.10 No evidence of Romano-British activity was identified in the current phase of work or on the land immediately adjacent to the site during previous work.

4.11 On this basis, it is considered that there is a low probability that Romano-British remains will be encountered during the development of the site.

Saxon

4.12 Previous archaeological investigations have identified extensive evidence for Saxon activity to the north, south and west of the present study area. The current investigations have revealed evidence for activity of a similar nature from the early/middle to late Saxon periods.

4.13 On this basis, it is considered that there is a high probability that Saxon remains will be encountered during the development of the site.

Medieval

4.14 Previous archaeological investigations have identified evidence for early Medieval activity to the south and west of the present study area. The current investigations have revealed evidence for early Medieval activity on the site, although no evidence of later Medieval activity was revealed during the fieldwork.

4.15 On this basis, it is considered that there is a moderate to high probability that Medieval remains will be encountered during the development of the site.

Post-Medieval/Modern

4.16 The current phase of work revealed a single modern posthole which appeared to have been machine bored, possibly for a telegraph pole or similar feature. A small sherd of 18th century pottery and two fragments of handmade tile were recovered from the fill of animal burrow [203], this material is likely to have been imported onto the site for the purpose of manuring when it was open farmland.

4.17 On this basis, it is considered that there is a high probability that unstratified material of post-medieval or modern date will be encountered during the development of the site, but only a low to moderate probability that features of this date will be encountered. In the context of the established archaeological interest in the vicinity, it is not considered that material of this date is of high significance.

Environmental Potential

4.18 On the basis of the mineralisation of the animal bone assemblage from the site, it is considered that the survival of small bones (rodent and wildfowl) on the site may be problematic. Other environmental indicators such as mollusc shell and carbonised plant macrofossils may be retrieved by wet-sieving of bulk samples from well dated contexts. The residues from this material may also contain significant evidence for industrial activity on the site, e.g. metalworking.

CONFIDENCE RATING

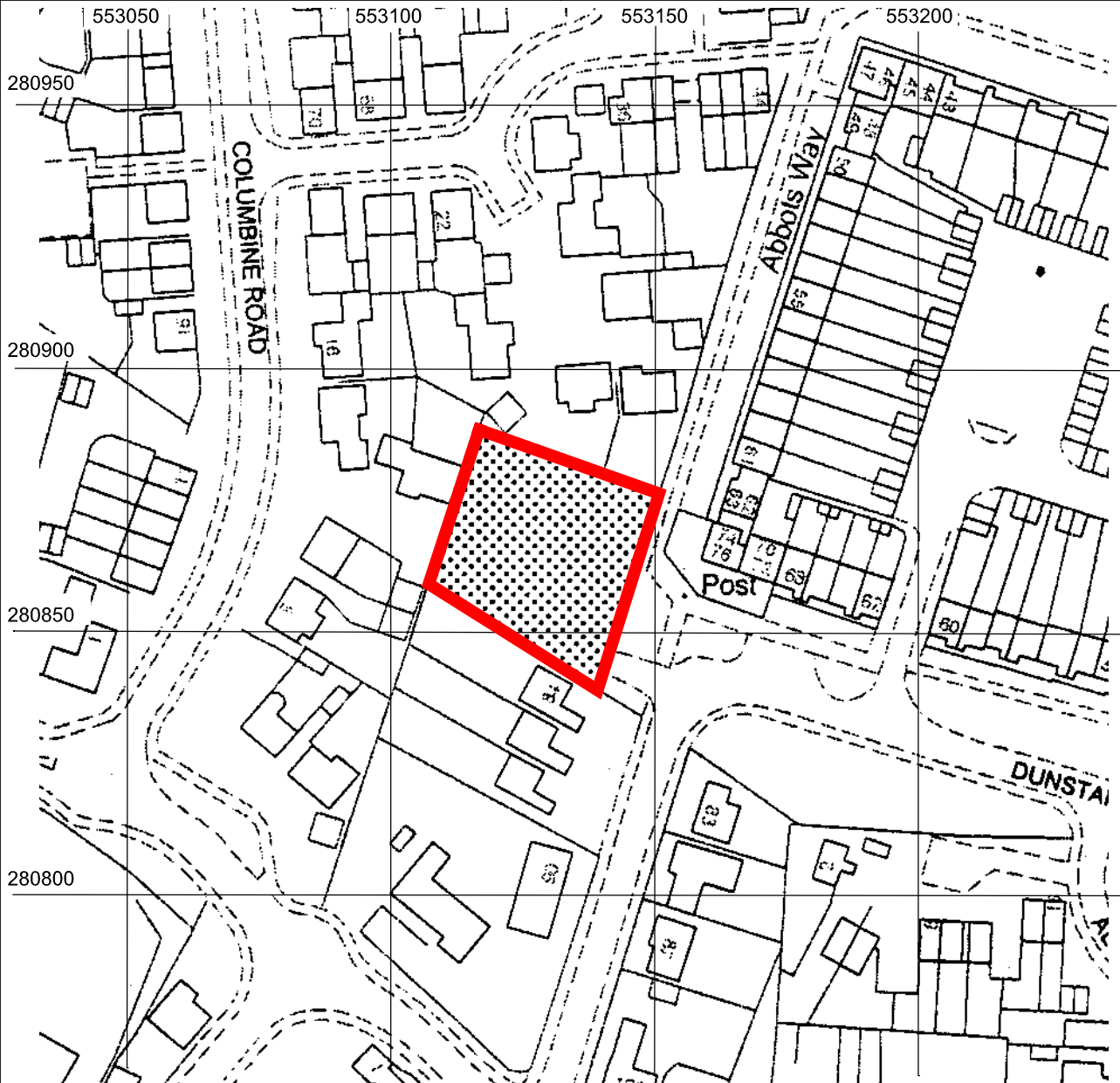
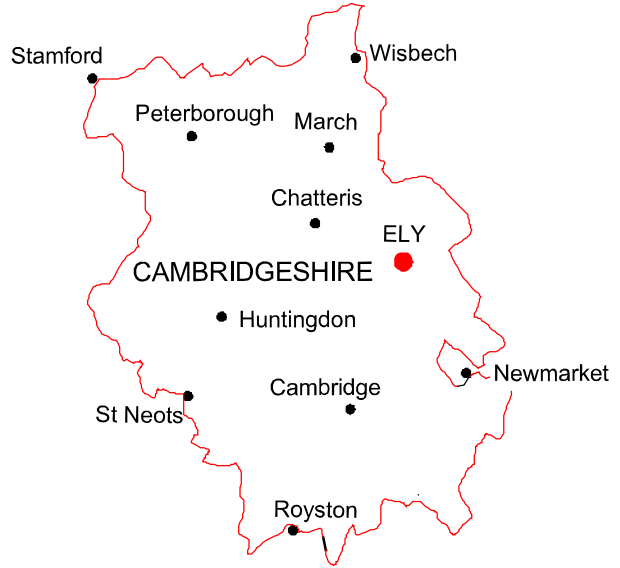
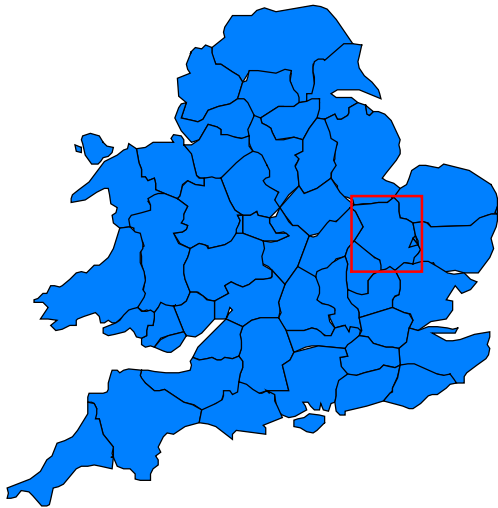
4.19 In the course of the fieldwork conditions were generally acceptable for the identification of potential features and deposits, and for their investigation. On this basis, there are no circumstances which would lead to a confidence rating for the work which is less than high.

5. Bibliography

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West Fen Road, Ely, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire Archaeology, October 2000

6. Illustrations

- Figure 1 Site location
- Figure 2 Trench layout
- Figure 3 Archaeological setting
- Figure 4 Trench 1: plan & section
- Figure 5 Trench 2: plan & section
- Figure 6 Feature sections

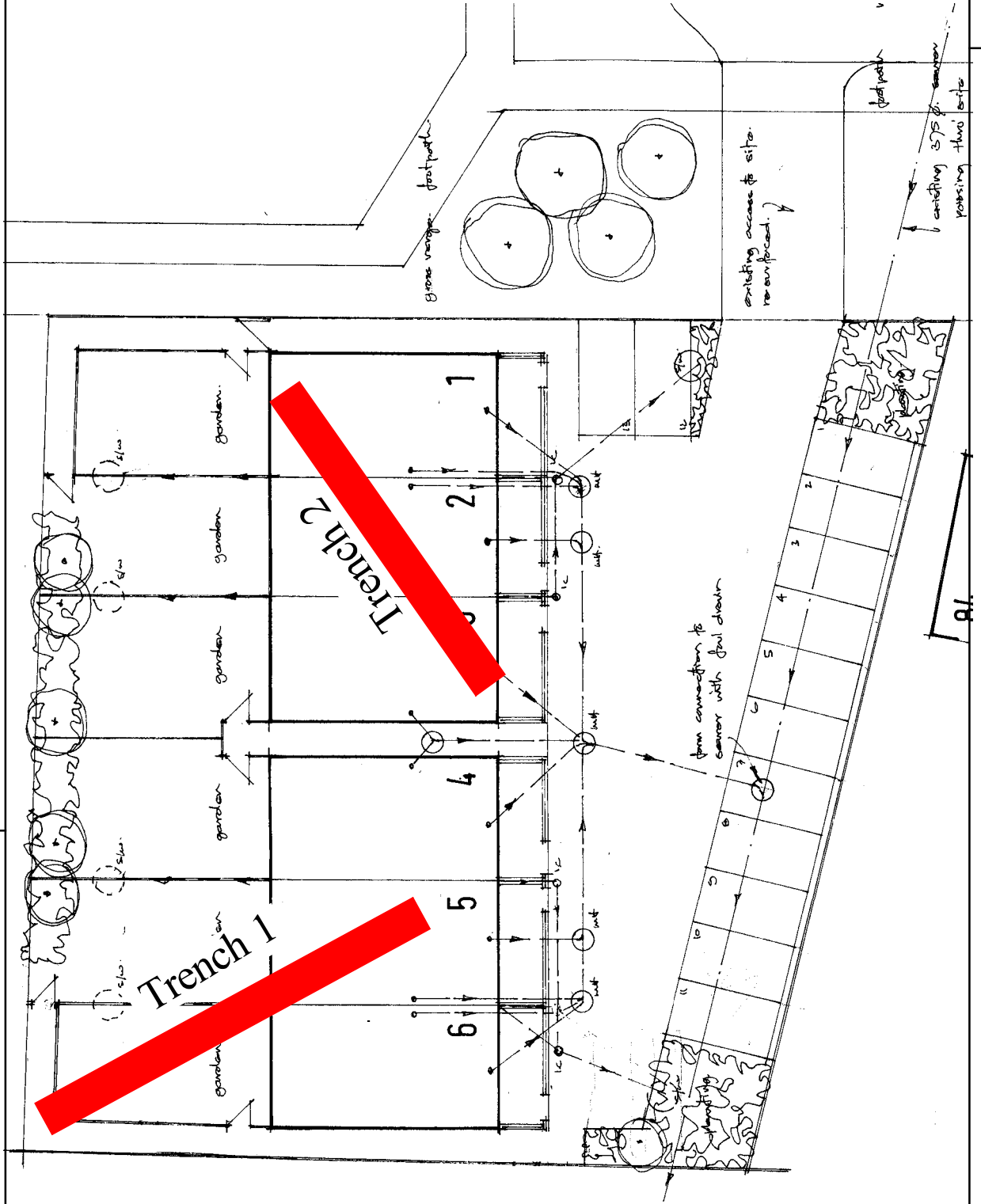


Site location plan

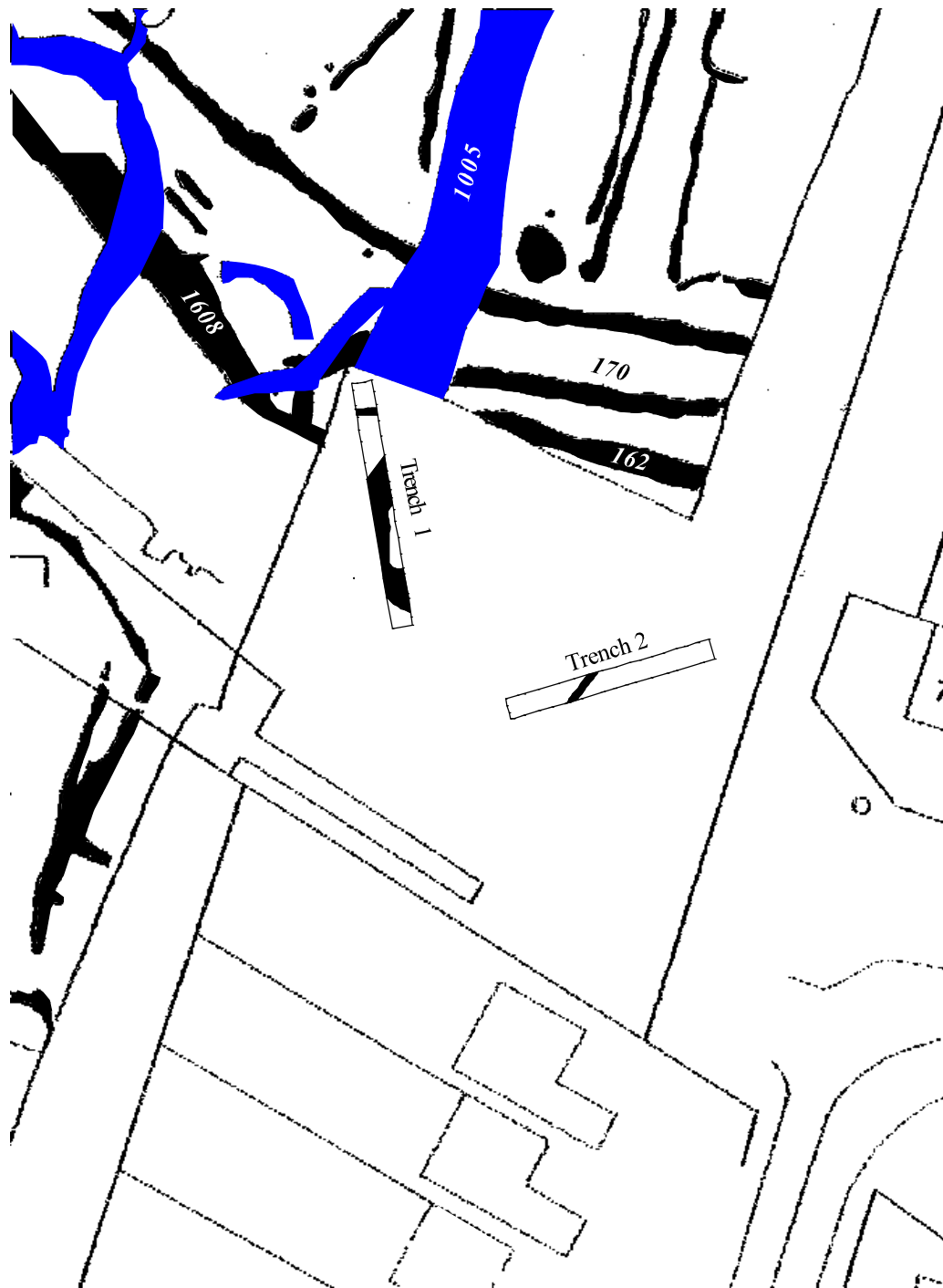
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(Reproduced from OS mapping with the permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Licence No. AL100014861)

Figure 1



Trench Layout



-  Iron Age Features
-  Saxon Features

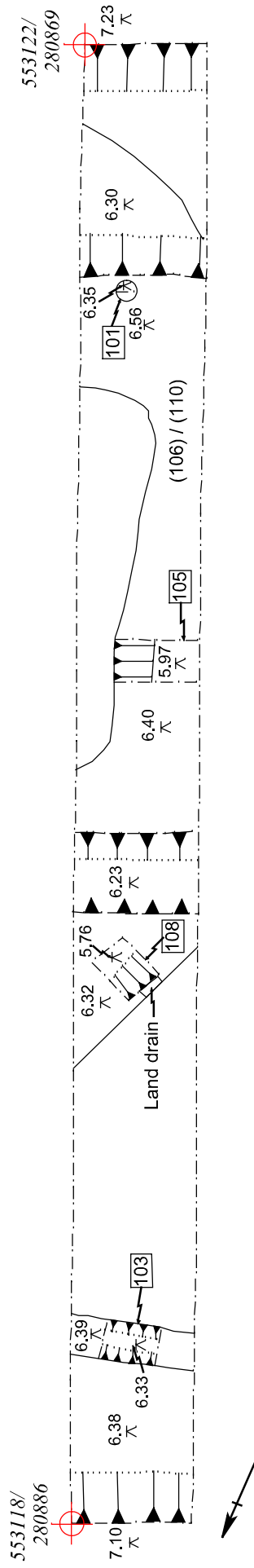
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Archaeological Setting

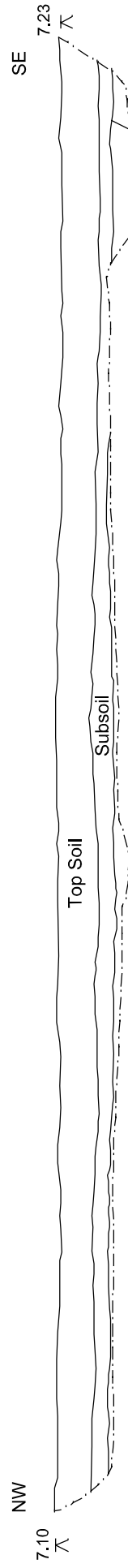
Base plan courtesy of Northampton Archaeology

Scale 1:500

Figure 3



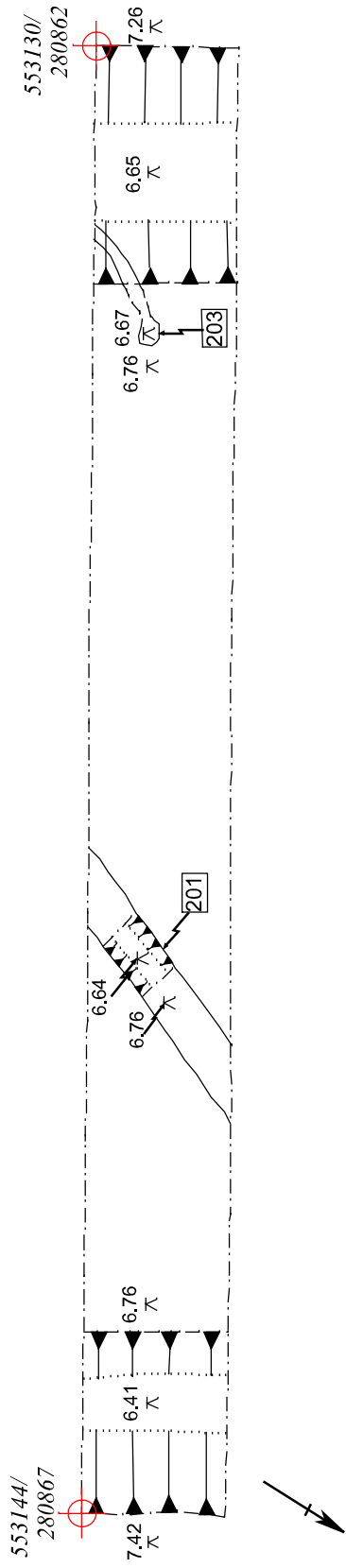
South-west facing section



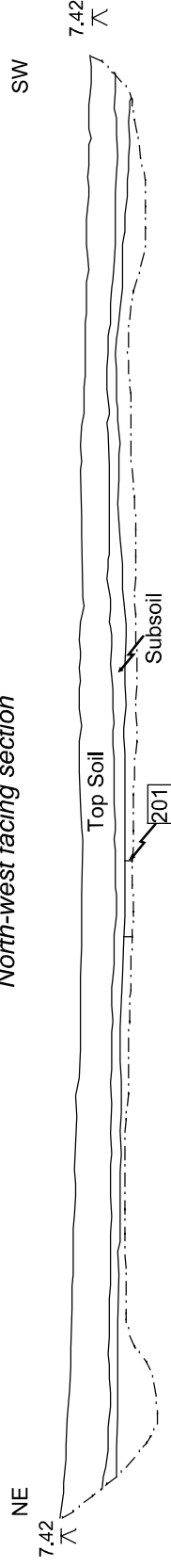
All levels in metres OD



Trench 1: plan & section



North-west facing section

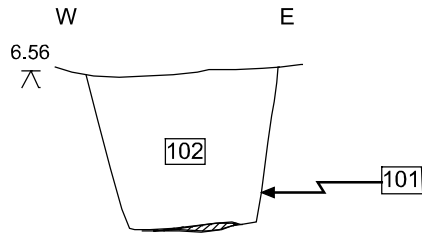


All levels in metres OD

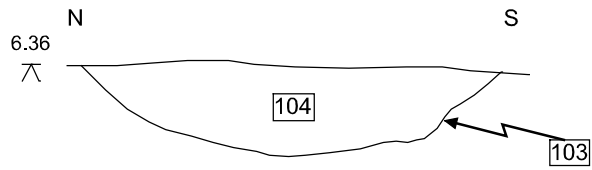


Trench 2: plan & section

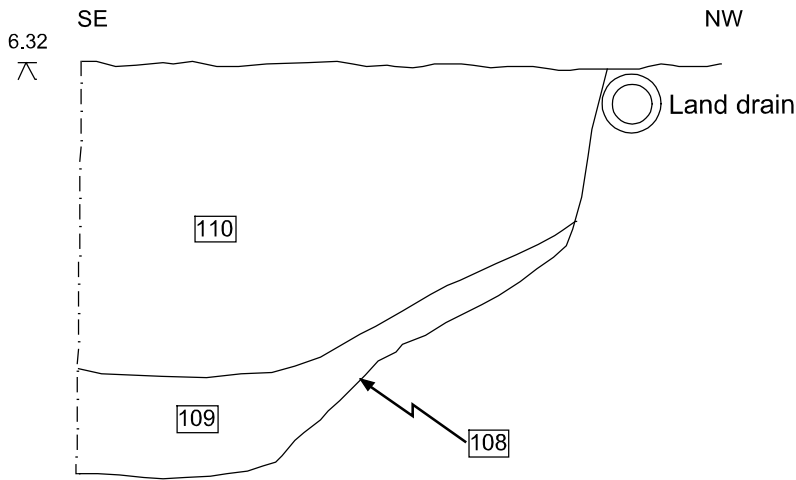
South facing section of posthole [101]



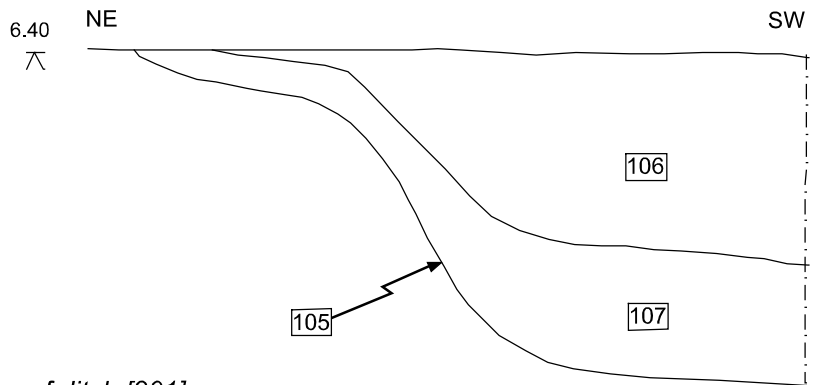
West facing section of ditch [103]



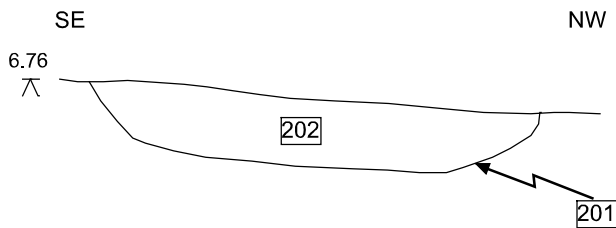
North-east facing section through ditch [108]



North-west facing section through ditch [105]



North-east facing section of ditch [201]



 Greensand

All levels in metres OD

