ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

LAND AT THE CORNER OF LANCASTER WAY AND BEDWELL HEY LANE, LANCASTER BUSINESS PARK, ELY CAMBRIDGESHIRE

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

CHER No. ECB3221

Authors: Walter McCall (Fieldwork & report)					
Kate Higgs MA (Desk-based assessment)					
Kathren Henry (Graphics)					
Andrew Newton ((Editor)				
NGR: TL 512 782	Report No: 3334				
District: Cambridgeshire	Site Code: AS1214				
Approved: Claire Halpin	Project No: 3533				
Signed:	Date: July 2009				

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OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

Project details										
Project name	Land	at	Corner	of	Lancaster	Way	and	Bedwell	Hey	Lane,
	Lancaster Business Park, Ely, Cambridgeshire									

In July 2009, Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological evaluation of land at the corner of Lancaster Way and Bedwell Ley Lane, Lancaster Business Park, Ely, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 5512 2782). The evaluation was commissioned in advance of a proposal to develop the site comprising the construction of a builders yard, offices, storage facilities, joinery workshop and associated works (Planning ref: 09/00295/FUL).

Substantial archaeological remains have been recorded locally. Iron Age and Roman settlement remains have been investigated within, and in the vicinity of Lancaster Way Business Park, including Iron Age enclosures and roundhouses and Roman boundaries. Evidence for a former Anglo-Saxon cemetery (HER 02014) was also discovered during levelling works within the aerodrome in 1947.

Despite the archaeological potential of the site, in the event the only archaeological feature present was a shallow curvilinear ditch, F1005, in the middle of Trench 2. It contained no finds. Natural root hollows were visible at the north-eastern end of Trench 2. A modern rubbish pit was recorded in Trench 1, and an earlier asphalt surface was present in Trench 3. The latter features may have been associated with the former airfield

	T				
Project dates (fieldwork)	07/07/09				
Previous work (Y/N/?)	N	Futur	e work (Y/N/?)		
P. number	3533	Site o	code	AS1	214
Type of project	Trial Trend	ch Eval	uation		
Site status					
Current land use	Vacant.				
Planned development	associated	d works		ilities,	joinery workshop and
Main features (+dates)	Undated o	litch			
Significant finds (+dates)	None				
Project location					
County/ District/ Parish	Cambridge	eshire	East Cambs		Ely
HER/ SMR for area	Cambridge	eshire F	HER		
Post code (if known)					
Area of site	0.3 ha				
NGR	TL 512 782				
Height AOD (max/ min)	14m AOD				
Project creators					
Brief issued by Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice (CAPCA)					
Project supervisor/s (PO)	Walter Mc	Call			
Funded by	Salmon E	Bros Lte	d		
	•				
Full title		Bus	iness Park. E	ay ar ∃ly,	nd Bedwell Hey Lane, Cambridgeshire. An
Authors	McCall, W	′		•	
Report no.	3334				
Enates the Copport of Lancaster Way July Bedroell Hey Lane, Lancaster Business Park, Ely,					
Cambridgeshire. An Archaeologica	il Evaluation				

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SUMMARY

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Despite the archaeological potential of the site, in the event the only archaeological feature present was a shallow curvilinear ditch, F1005, in the middle of Trench 2. It contained no finds. Natural root hollows were visible at the north-eastern end of Trench 2. A modern rubbish pit was recorded in Trench 1, and an earlier asphalt surface was present in Trench 3. The latter features may have been associated with the former airfield

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In July 2009, Archaeological Solutions (AS) carried out an archaeological evaluation of land at the corner of Lancaster Way and Bedwell Ley Lane, Lancaster Business Park, Ely, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 512 782) (Figs.1-2). The evaluation was commissioned by Salmon Bros Ltd in compliance with a planning condition attached to planning permission for the construction of a builders yard, offices, storage facilities, joinery workshop and associated works (Planning ref: 09/00295/FUL).
- 1.2 The archaeological evaluation was conducted in accordance with a brief issued by CAPCA (dated 10/06/2009), and a specification compiled by AS (dated 10/06/2009). It was conducted according to the Institute of Field Archaeologists' Code of Conduct and Standards for Archaeological Field Evaluations (revised 2001). It also adhered to the relevant sections of the document Gurney (2003)

Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers 14/ALGAO.

1.3 The evaluation aimed to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development. It also aims to identify areas of previous ground disturbance on the site.

Planning policy context

- 1.4 The relevant planning policies which apply to the effect of development with regard to cultural heritage are Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 'Planning and the Historic Environment' (PPG15) and Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 'Archaeology and Planning' (PPG16) (Department of the Environment).
- 1.5 PPG16 (1990) is the national Planning Policy Guidance Note which applies to archaeology. It states that there should always be a presumption in favour of preserving nationally important archaeological remains *in situ*. However, when there is no overriding case for preservation, developers are required to fund opportunities for the recording and, where necessary, the excavation of the site. This condition is widely applied by local authorities.
- 1.6 PPG15 (1994) is the national Planning Policy Guidance Note which applies to the conservation of the historic environment by protecting the character and appearance of Conservation Areas, protecting listed buildings (of architectural or historical interest) from demolition and unsympathetic change and safeguarding their settings as far as is possible. This condition is also widely applied by local authorities.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE (Figs. 1 - 2)

- 2.1 The site is a small (c.0.3ha) plot. It is located within Lancaster Way Business Park, which lies within the parish of Ely and within the East Cambridgeshire district of Cambridgeshire (Fig,1). The historic fenland city of Ely is located 2.5km to the north-east of the site, whilst the smaller settlement of Witchford is situated 1.8km to the west-north-west. This site is located within the southern confines of Lancaster Way Business Park, which lies to the immediate south of the A142 trunk-road running roughly east to westwards from Ely to Sutton and Chatteris.
- 2.2 The site is bounded by the Bedwell Hey Lane running through Lancaster Way Business Park, and Lancaster Way. The site formerly comprised part of the WWII RAF Witchford Airfield, which most recently has been given over to agriculture (Holmes 2009). The site was recently occupied by a small

office/workshop/store, at the corner of Bedwell Hey Lane and Lancaster Way. A BT underground main traverses the central part of the site (Fig.2).

3 METHOD OF WORK

3.1 Archaeological databases

The standard collation of all known archaeological sites and spot-finds in the surrounding area is the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER), based at County Hall, Cambridge. In order to provide a representative sample, the CHER database was searched for all known entries within a 1km radius of the site. Entries within this approximate 1km radius of the site are listed in Appendix 1. Their significance, where relevant, is discussed in Section 5.

3.2 Historical & cartographic documents

The principal source for historical and cartographic documents was the Cambridgeshire Archives & Local Studies (CALS), based at County Hall, Cambridge. Relevant cartographic sources are listed in Appendix 2.

3.3 Secondary sources

The principal source of secondary material was the Cambridgeshire Archives & Local Studies (CALS), based at County Hall, Cambridge, as well as AS's own library. Relevant material is listed in the bibliography.

4 TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND SOILS

- 4.1 The site of land at Lancaster Way Business Park is located upon an area of upland within the southern Fens of East Cambridgeshire and within an area of the historical 'Isle of Ely' (Fig. 1). The surrounding topography is nevertheless low-lying and relatively flat, and punctuated by a series of artificial drains. The largest drain in the immediate area comprises the Grunty Fen Catchwater, which lies 800m to the south-west of the site, whilst the Grunty Fen Drain is situated 850m to the north-west. The site is located on a relatively flat plot of land at *c.* 14m AOD.
- 4.2 This site is also located upon a solid geology of Kimmeridge Clay, which is overlain by a drift geology of Boulder Clay (BGS 1985). Soils of the local area comprise those of the Hanslope Association, which are described as slowly, permeable calcareous clayey soils and some slowly permeable non- calcareous clayey soils, all of which are at slight risk of water erosion (SSEW 1983). A recent evaluation undertaken 100m to the east of the site encountered the natural Boulder Clay at 13 13.7m AOD (Leith 1996). It was overlain by a very compact

layer of yellowish brown silty clay 0.25m thick and topsoil and turf 0.20m thick (*ibid.*).

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 5.1 The archaeological potential of Lancaster Way Business Park is well-documented and is explored in a recent archaeological desk-based assessment (Flitcroft 2008). Relatively few early prehistoric sites are recorded in the area surrounding the site and were restricted to sandy outcrops or islands within the fen area of Ely. However, recent fieldwalking and metal detecting at Witchford Airfield and 800m to the east revealed a small number of Lower Palaeolithic worked flints (CHER MCB18092), as well as Mesolithic to early Bronze Age flints (CHER MCB16255). Additional early prehistoric finds include worked flint found along Lancaster Way and a Bronze Age stone macehead found at Bedwell Hey Farm (CHERs 06912A & 06911).
- 5.2 Recent archaeological work at Lancaster Way Business Park has revealed extensive evidence of Iron Age and Romano-British settlement (Holmes 2008). Iron Age settlement remains at Witchford Airfield and 850m to the northeast of the site comprised a rectilinear enclosure, domestic round house, sub circular enclosure, gullies and pits (CHER MCB18095), with two ditch/gullies containing late Iron Age/early Roman pottery sherds also found nearby (CHER MCB17824). Late Iron Age/early Roman remains have also been found at Witchford recycling centre and 700m to the north-north-east and represent three phases of activity from the 1st mid 2nd century (CHER MCB18190).
- 5.3 Extensive Roman settlement evidence has also been found in the area surrounding the site, attesting to the continuation of occupation from the Iron Age until at least the 4th century AD. Such Roman settlement in the fens demonstrates the further intensification of the late Iron Age landscape, whilst the Roman Akeman Street from Cambridge to Littleport is thought to lie in the vicinity (Margery 1973). A number of Roman pottery scatters are known from within Lancaster Way Business Park and at Little Thetford (CHERs 11801, MCB16256, MCB16259, MCB17276 & MCB17277). Recent excavations have also revealed Roman ditches in the Lancaster Way area, such as those recorded 220m and 420m to the north, and 300m to the south-east (CHERs 06912, CB15366 & MCB17823).
- 5.4 Significant finds of Anglo-Saxon grave good and burials found from 1947 onwards have identified the site of the pre-Ely village of *Cratendune* approximately 1km to the south-east of the site, and which is listed in the Ely Monastic Survey of 1251 (CHER 02104; Morris 1981). Whilst it is possible that the site lies within the location of the Saxon settlement, a previous archaeological evaluation 100m to the east did not reveal any archaeological remains (Leith 1996). Additional Anglo-Saxon findspots include a pin, strap end and brooch

recovered during metal detecting 700m to the east and two early Saxon brooches found 1km to the south-east (CHERs CB15659 & MCB16257).

- 5.5 Medieval and later remains are significantly less extensive at the Lancaster Way Business Park and suggest that the area was given over to agriculture in the medieval period, until it was developed as a WWII RAF bomber airfield in 1941 (Flitcroft 2008). Traces of medieval ridge and furrows are attested by both aerial photography and previous excavation within Witchford Airfield (CHER MCB18093; Leith 1996), whilst the medieval St Andrew's Church in Witchford incorporates a 13th century tower, yet lies 1km to the north-west of the site (CHER CB14830). The only post-medieval finds from the area surrounding the site comprised a number of north to south aligned furrows backfilled with 18th 19th century debris found at Witchford recycling centre (CHER MCB18191).
- Relatively little is known of the site and no relevant documentary sources referring directly to the site were found in the Cambridgeshire Archives & Local Studies (CALS). Although the parish of Witchford enclosure map and award of 1813 was consulted, the map itself did not illustrate the area of the site (Ref. EQ/RDz1). The scarcity of information regarding the site is consistent with cartographic sources indicating that the site remained as undeveloped agricultural and throughout the early modern period. It is known that the site formed part of the WWII RAF Witchford Airfield, which was established in 1941 as a 'Class A Standard' bomber airfield (Flitcroft 2008), although the 1950 Ordnance Survey map (not illustrated) suggests that the airfield at that time lay to the immediate north.

6 METHOD OF WORK (Trial trenching)

- 6.1 Three trenches were excavated using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket (Fig. 2). The trench locations were approved by CAPCA and were generally planned to provide maximum coverage of the development area (5% of the total area).
- 6.2 Topsoil and undifferentiated overburden were mechanically excavated under close archaeological supervision. Exposed surfaces were cleaned by hand and examined for archaeological features. Deposits were recorded using *pro forma* recording sheets, drawn to scale, and photographed as appropriate. Excavated spoil was searched for finds and the trenches were scanned by a metal detector.

6.3 The measurements and orientation of each trench are tabulated below:

Trench No.	Length	Width	Orientation
1	29.4m	1.60m	NW/SE
2	28.7m	1.60m	NE/SW
3	13.4m	1.60m	NW/SE

Table 1 - The measurement and orientation of trenches

6.4 Gaps were left in the centres of Trenches 1 and 3 to avoid a British Telecom service line running generally north-south across the site. Trench 2 was placed to the west of the service line and ran parallel to it.

7 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS (Fig. 3)

Individual trench descriptions are presented below.

7.1 Trench 1

Sample section 3: SE end, NE facing 0.00m = 10.15m AOD					
0.00m = 10.15m	1 AUD				
0.00 – 0.13m	L1000	Topsoil. Friable, medium grey brown organic clayey			
		silt with occasional small stones.			
0.13 – 0.26m	L1001	Subsoil. Compact, medium yellow brown clayey sand			
	with moderate small angular stones.				
0.26m+	L1004	Natural geological deposit. Compact, medium red			
		brown silty clay with moderate small stones and			
gravel near the surface.					

Description: A large, rectangular pit was visible in the south-west baulk of Trench 1. It cut the subsoil, L1001, at the south-east end. It was filled with modern building debris including brick, plastic, and nails. No other features were present.

7.2 Trench 2

Sample section 1: NE end, NW facing				
0.00m = 10.37m AOD				
0.00 - 0.11m	L1000	Topsoil. As above.		
0.11 – 0.32m L1001 Subsoil. As above.				
0.32m+	L1004	Natural geological deposit. As above.		

Description: A small curvilinear gully, F1005, was located in the centre of the trench. A few small root hollows were present at the north-eastern end of the trench. The features were sealed by Subsoil L1001.

F1005 (3.10 x 0.27 x 0.05m) was curvilinear in plan, orientated generally NE/SW. It had shallow sides and a flattish base. Its fill, L1006, was a compact, light grey brown silty clay with moderate small angular stones and flint. No finds were present.

7.3 Trench 3 Fig. 3

Sample section	Sample section 6: NW end, NE facing					
0.00m = 10.62n	0.00m = 10.62m AOD					
0.00 - 0.08m	L1000	Topsoil. As above.				
0.08 – 0.14m	L1002	Compact, dark grey/black asphalt layer.				
0.14 – 0.19m	L1003	Made ground. Modern building debris (frogged brick, nails, etc.) in a highly compacted, pale yellow brown silty clay.				
0.19m+	L1004	Natural geological deposit. As above.				

Sample section 5: SE end, NE facing						
0.00m = 1	0.00m = 10.70m AOD					
0.00m	_	L1000	Topsoil. As above.			
0.12m						
0.11m	-	L1001	Subsoil. As above.			
0.26m						
0.26m+		L1004	Natural geological deposit. As above.			

Additional description of deposits: The asphalt layer, L1002, was present in the south-west baulk only and petered out at the very north-western end of the trench. The made ground, L1003, was much thicker (0.19m) in the south-east half of the trench, and petered out.

Descriptions: Trench 3 contained no archaeological features or finds.

8 CONFIDENCE RATING

8.1 It is not felt that any factors restricted the identification of archaeological features or finds during the evaluation.

9 DEPOSIT MODEL

9.1 The site demonstrated a simple stratigraphic sequence consisting of topsoil (L1000), subsoil (1001), and the natural clay (L1004). The topsoil comprised a friable clayey silt with occasional small stones throughout (08-0.13m). Pockets of slightly deeper topsoil (<0.20m) were present in the south-

east half of Trench 3 filling depressions in the uneven surface of the made ground (L1003).

- 9.2 In Trenches 1 and 2 and the very south-eastern end of Trench 3, the topsoil lay directly above the subsoil (L1001). The latter comprised a compact layer of medium yellow brown clayey sand (consistently between 0.13 and 0.21m thick). Near the south-eastern end of Trench 1, the subsoil was truncated by a large rectangular pit filled with modern building debris. Throughout most of Trench 3, the subsoil was replaced by an asphalt surface (L1002) and made ground (L1003).
- 9.3 The asphalt layer (L1002) was visible in the south-western baulk of Trench 3, but only in the north-western half of the trench. It was 0.09m thick, but petered out at the very north-west end of the trench. This surface directly overlay a thin layer of made-ground layer (L1003). The latter comprised modern building debris in a compact, pale yellow brown silty clay. In the south-east end of the trench, the made ground was much thicker (0.19m) and its surface much more undulating. This debris layer petered out just before the south-east end of the trench. The surface represented by the asphalt layer and made ground was not present in Trenches 1 and 2. It extended south and west of the site and was likely associated with the old airfield.
- 9.4 Throughout most of the site, the subsoil sealed the natural geology (L1003). The latter comprised a medium red brown silty clay with moderate gravel visible at the surface. Its composition was uniform throughout the site. The level of the natural clay was also consistent, demonstrating a slight south-west to north-east slope. Neither the modern disturbance in Trench 1 nor the made ground layer in Trench 3 penetrated the natural clay.

10 DISCUSSION

- 10.1 Substantial archaeological remains have been recorded locally. Iron Age and Roman settlement remains have been investigated within, and in the vicinity of Lancaster Way Business Park, including Iron Age enclosures and roundhouses and Roman boundaries. Evidence for a former Anglo-Saxon cemetery (HER 02014) was also discovered during levelling works within the aerodrome in 1947.
- 10.2 Despite the archaeological potential of the site, in the event the only archaeological feature present was a shallow curvilinear ditch, F1005, in the middle of Trench 2. It contained no finds. Natural root hollows were visible at the north-eastern end of Trench 2. A modern rubbish pit was recorded in Trench 1, and an earlier asphalt surface was present in Trench 3. The latter features may have been associated with the former airfield

DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited at Cambridge County Archaeological Store. The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions Limited would like to thank Salmon Bros Ltd for commissioning and funding this evaluation.

AS is also grateful to the staff at the Cambridgeshire Archives & Local Studies (CALS), based at County Hall, Cambridge. Thanks are also due to Ms. Sarah Poppy at the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER), based at County Hall, Cambridge.

AS also gratefully acknowledges the input of Dan McConnell, of Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice.

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Websites

(all consulted 3rd July 2009)

GENUKI website; http://www.genuki.org.uk/

Heritage Gateway website; http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATABASE (CHER)

CHER	NGR TL	Description				
Prehistoric (Prehistoric (to AD 43)					
06911	518 776	Bronze Age stone macehead found at Bedwell Hey Farm				
06912A	514 785	Prehistoric worked flint found along Lancaster Way				
MCB17824	5185 7872	Late Iron Age/early Roman features at Witchford Airfield comprised two ditch/gullies, one of which contained pottery sherds				
MCB18092	5196 7835	Fieldwalking and metal detecting finds at Witchford Airfield comprised a small number of Lower Palaeolithic worked flints, prehistoric to post-medieval pottery and a fragment of medieval silver ring brooch				
MCB18095	5193 7857	Iron Age settlement remains at Witchford Airfield comprised a rectilinear enclosure, domestic round house, sub circular enclosure, gullies and pits				
MCB18190	5154 7883	Late Iron Age/early Roman remains at Witchford recycling centre comprised post holes, pits and ditches, representing three phases of activity from the 1 st – mid 2 nd century				
MCB16255	5205 7735	Scatter of Mesolithic/Neolithic cores, blades and scrapers, and late Neolithic/early Bronze Age scrapers and flakes found at Little Thetford				
Romano-Brit	ish (AD 43 – 410	0)				
06912	514 785	Excavations revealed Roman ditches in the Lancaster Way area, and Roman pottery has also been recovered				
11801	516 785	Excavation of the foundations of a warehouse revealed a small amount of abraded 2 nd – 4 th century Roman pottery				
CB15366	5141 7851	Excavation revealed Roman ditches and a large late Roman enclosure ditch, which was abandoned until the late post-medieval period, at Plot C of Lancaster Way Business Park				
MCB16256	5208 7727	Extensive scatter of Roman pottery, mainly grey wares, found at Little Thetford				
MCB16259	5199 7729	Single worked flint blade and Roman pottery scatter found at Little Thetford				
MCB17276	514 785	Romano-British pottery scatter found at Lancaster Way Business Park				
MCB17277	521 780	Romano-British pottery scatter found to the north of Ely Fields Farm				
MCB17823	5150 7808	Early Romano-British features discovered at Witchford Airfield comprised a series of ditches, gullies and possible pits				
	(AD 410 – 1150					
02104	522 779	Anglo-Saxon grave good and burials found in 1947 identify the cemetery for the pre-Ely village of Cratendune, with more recent finds recorded				
CB15659	5195 7825	Saxon pin, strap end and brooch recovered during metal detecting at Witchford Airfield				

MCB16257	519 772	Two early Saxon brooches found at Little Thetford	
Medieval (AD) 1150 – 1500)		
CB14830	5038 7878	St Andrew's Church in Witchford incorporates a 13 th century tower, which is the survival of an earlier church	
MCB18093	5194 7830	Medieval ridge and furrows identified at Witchford Airfield by aerial photography	
Post-mediev	al (AD 1500 – 17	(50)	
MCB18191	5152 7896	Post-medieval remains at Witchford recycling centre comprised a number of north to south aligned furrows backfilled with 18 th – 19 th century debris	
Modern (AD	1900 – present)		
CB15156	5195 7805	WWII service pipe trench running parallel to the edge of the runway was found during an evaluation and represents the WWII bomber airfield built in 1941	
Undated remains			
MCB18094	5222 7814	A possible mound and a collection of ditches and pits identified during and aerial photography assessment	

APPENDIX 2 CARTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

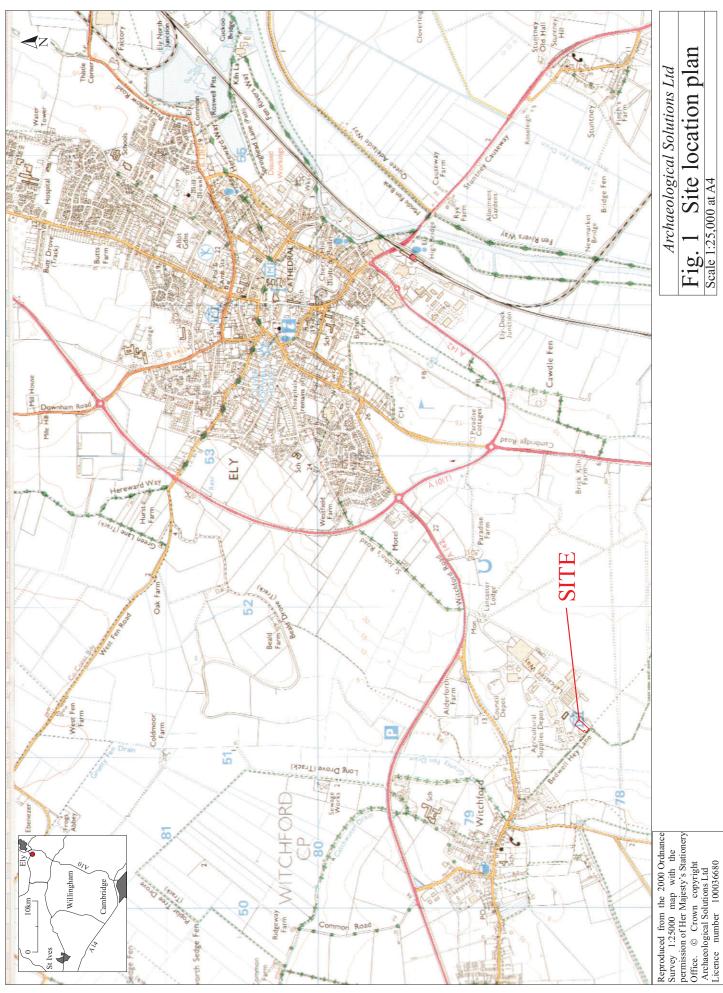
Date	Description	Fig. No.	Scale	Location
1887	Cambridgeshire sheet XXX.I; 1st edition	4	25":1 mile	CALS
	Ordnance Survey map			
1902	Cambridgeshire sheet XXX.I; 2 nd edition	5	25":1 mile	CALS
	Ordnance Survey map			
1926	Cambridgeshire sheet XXX.I; 3 rd edition	6	25":1 mile	CALS
	Ordnance Survey map			
1999	Ordnance Survey Explorer series 235;	1 & 3	1:25,000	AS
	site location			
2009	Detailed site location plan	2	XX	Client

Documents consulted at CALS;

Parish of Witchford enclosure map and award, 1813

Ref. EQ/RDz1





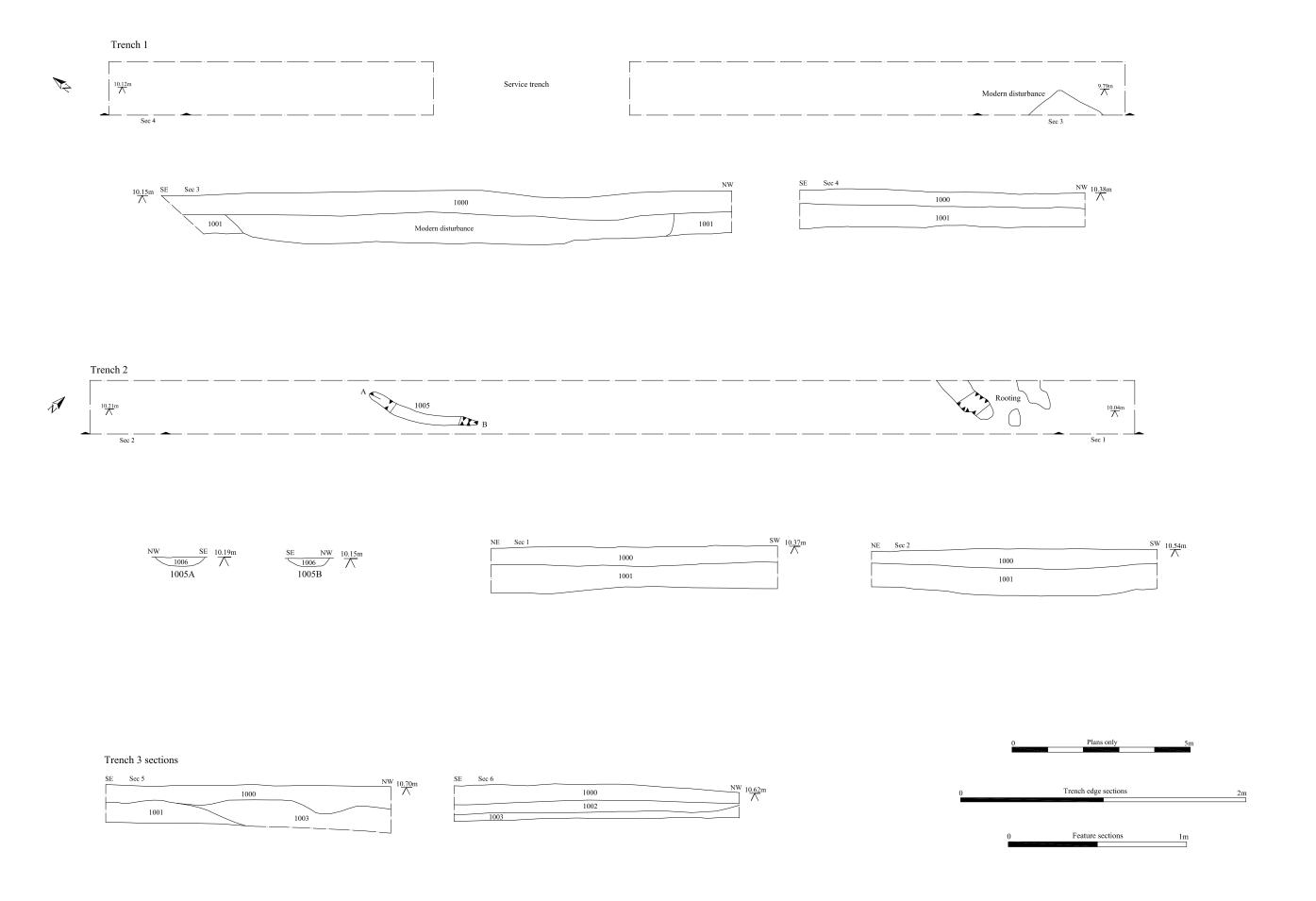
Site location plan Archaeological Solutions Ltd Scale 1:25,000 at A4 Fig.



Reproduced from the 1999 Ordnance Survey 1:1250 map with the permission of Her Majesty's Stationary Office. © Crown copyright Archaeological Solutions Ltd Licence number 100036680.

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Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan
Scale 1:1250 at A4



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Fig. 3 Trench plans & sections

Plans 1:100, long sections 1:25, feature sections 1:20 at A3