

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT: ISLAND SITE REINFORCEMENT MAIN, LITTLE PAXTON CAMBRIDGESHIRE NGR: TL 4639 5550

on behalf of Anglian Water



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May 2005

ASC: 658/LPI/01

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Site Data

ASC site code:	LPI		Project no:		658	
County:		Cambridgeshire				
District:	District:		St Neots			
Village/Town:	Village/Town:		St Neots			
Parish:		St. Neots				
NGR (pipeline centre	NGR (pipeline centre):		TL 5189 2619			
Pipeline length:		c.1 km				
Present land use:		Pasture				
Planning proposal:		Installation of water main				
Client:		Pitsford - Grange L Northam	Water Service - Networks Enter American Pitsford pton s. NN6 9AP		g Office	
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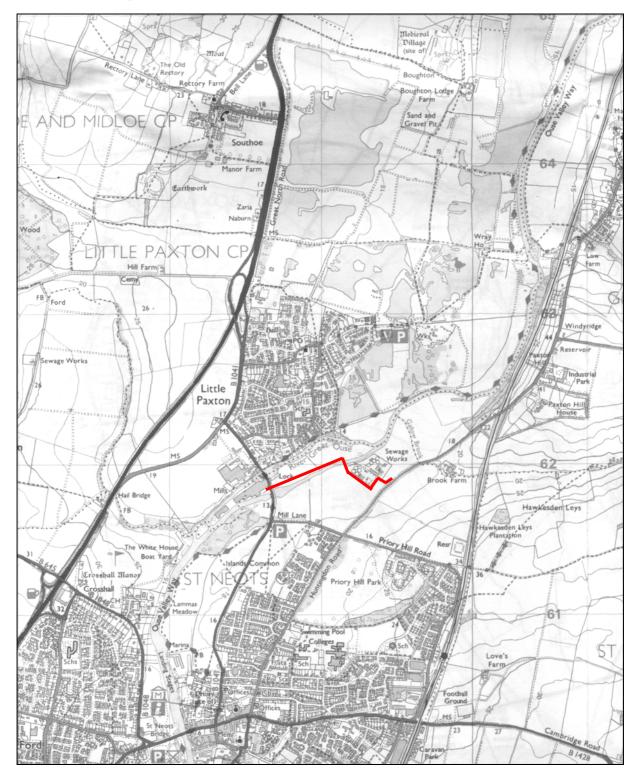


Figure 1: General location showing proposed route of pipeline (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

A desk-based assessment of the proposed route of the Island Site Reinforcement Water Main, Little Paxton, Cambridgeshire was undertaken in May 2005. The assessment details the large amount of multi period archaeology contained within the study area.

Archaeological finds and features are not known from the island in the Great Ouse, although deposition of alluvium may have masked archaeological features. A short distance from the proposed position where the pipeline crosses the river, dredging recovered structural remains, perhaps of a Romano-British quay formerly located on the banks of the southern river channel. The full extent of cropmark complexes south of the River Great Ouse have probably been masked by alluvium and may extend into the pipeline corridor.

Truncation of archaeological remains by modern ploughing and works associated with the construction of an adjacent sewage works is possible, but, the proposed pipeline traverses undeveloped agricultural land which may conceal well preserved late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Romano-British archaeological remains.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 In May 2005 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) carried out an archaeological desk-based assessment of the proposed route of a reinforcement water main at Little Paxton, Cambridgeshire (Fig. 2). The project was commissioned by Anglian Water, and was carried out according to a recommendation (letter dated 11th November 2004) prepared by the Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Office (CCAO).
- **1.2** The desk-based assessment was required by a CCAO *recommendation* as a first stage of archaeological evaluation. The purpose of the assessment is to inform subsequent mitigation strategies.

1.3 Setting

- **1.3.1** The scheme, designated the *Island Site Reinforcement Main*, comprises installation of 1km of 225mm water main to serve a new housing development constructed on the former site of the St Neots Paper Mill. The pipeline lies just within the northern boundary of St Neots Civil Parish.
- **1.3.2** The proposed pipeline traverses relatively level ground, which lies at an elevation of *c*.15m AOD. It runs southwest northeast on an island in the River Great Ouse then crosses the southern river channel to follow the southwestern and southeastern boundaries of the St Neots Sewage Works through agricultural fields. The centre of the pipeline is located *c*.0.8 km south of the historic core of Little Paxton. at NGR TL 5189 2619 (Fig. 1).
- 1.3.3 The scheme of works will include locating a site compound within the boundaries of St Neots Sewage Works. Erection of boundary fencing and topsoil strip along the pipeline route is scheduled to commence week starting 16th May 2005 and trenching for the pipeline *c*. 25th May 2005. It is intended

that the pipeline will cross the river using directional drilling at a depth of at least 1m below the hard bed level of the river.

1.3.4 Soils in the wider area belong to the Efford 1 Association, described as "well drained fine loamy soils often over gravel, associated with similarly permeable soils variably affected by groundwater" and the underlying geology comprises "river terrace gravels" (Soil Survey 1983, 571s).

On the island and immediately adjacent to the southern river channel the route of the pipeline traverses alluvium of the Fladbury 1 Association (*ibid*, 813b). Further away from the river, Efford 1 Association soils developed on the first terrace gravels likely exist, the presence of a system of infilled palaeochannels cut into these soils and gravels is noted by the aerial photographic assessment (Palmer, 2005).

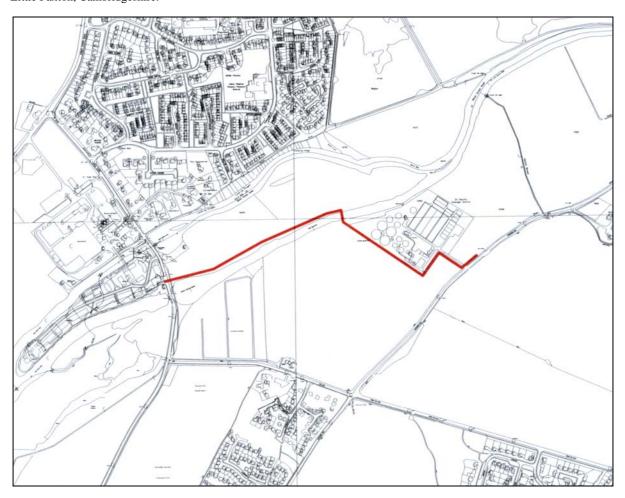


Figure 2: Proposed route of pipeline (scale 1:10,000)

2 Aims & Methods

- 2.1 An archaeological desk-based assessment is an assessment of the known or potential archaeological resource within a given area, consisting of a collation of existing archaeological, historical and topographical information in order to identify the likely extent, character and quality of the known or potential archaeological resource, in order that appropriate measures might be considered.
- 2.2 The desk-based assessment was carried out according to the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (IFA 1999. ALGAO, 2003).
- **2.3** The following readily available sources of information were consulted for the desk-based assessment:

2.3.1 Archaeological Databases

Archaeological databases represent the standard references to the known archaeology of an area. The principal source consulted was the Cambridgeshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). The study area employed in the SMR search includes the pipeline, and a surrounding corridor of 500m radius.

2.3.2 Historic Documents

Documentary research provides an overview of the history of a site and its environs, suggesting the effects of settlement and land-use patterns. The principal source consulted was the Huntingdonshire County Records Office (CRO).

2.3.3 Cartographic & Pictorial Documents

Old maps and illustrations are normally a very productive area of research. The principal source consulted was the Huntingdonshire County Records Office (CRO).

2.3.4 Aerial Photographs

An aerial photograph assessment extending at least 200m from the pipeline route was undertaken by Rog Palmer (Palmer, 2005). Given favourable light and crop conditions, aerial photographs (AP's) can reveal buried features in the form of crop and soil marks. They can also provide an overview of and more specific information about land use at a given time. The principal sources consulted were AP's held by Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs (CUCAP) and the National Monuments Record: Air Photographs (NMRAP).

2.3.5 Preliminary Walk-Over Survey

As part of the desk-based assessment a preliminary walk-over survey of the site was undertaken on 12th April 2005, (see section 5).

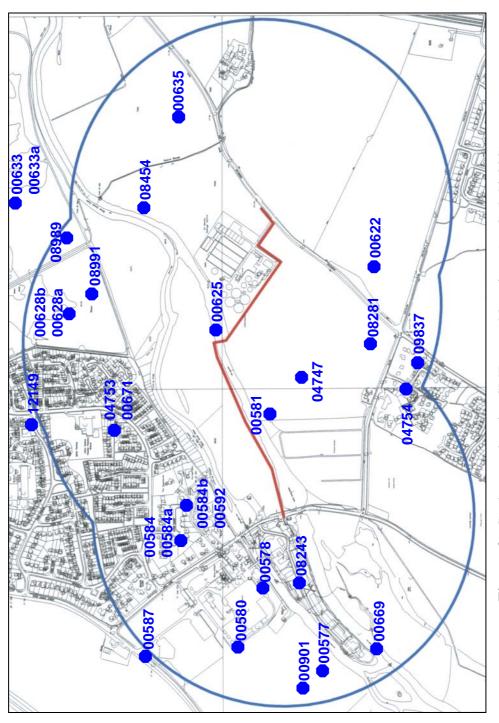
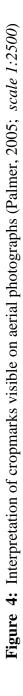
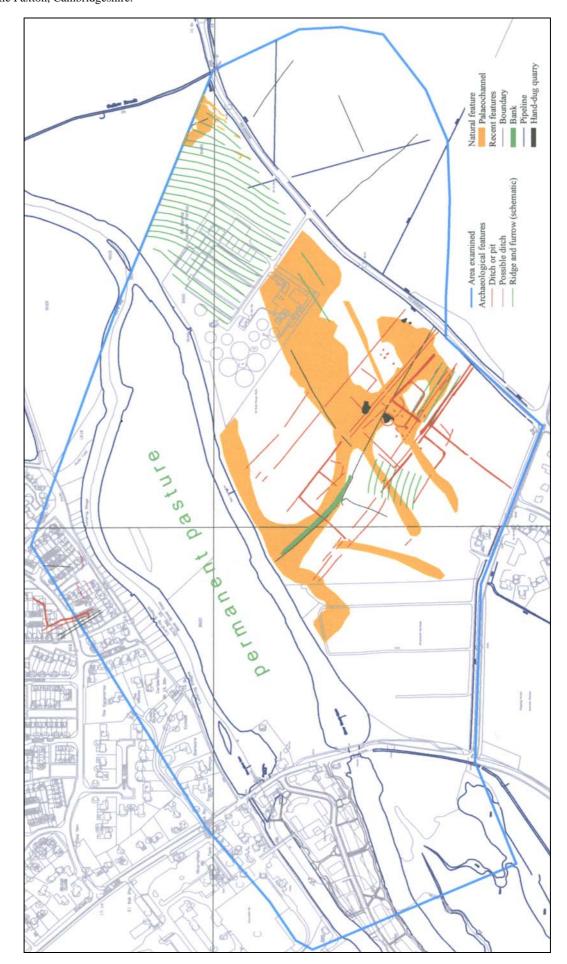


Figure 3: Study area showing SMR record locations (scale 1:10,000)





3 Archaeological & Historical Evidence

3.1 Archaeological & Historical Background to the Study Area

The local and regional settings of archaeological sites are factors that are taken into consideration when assessing the planning implications of development proposals. The following sections provide a summary of the readily available archaeological and historical background to the development site and its environs.

The study area lies within an area of archaeological and historical interest, and the site has the potential to reveal evidence of a range of periods. The location of known archaeological and historical sites recorded in the SMR is shown in Fig. 3, and details appear in Section 9.

SMR = Cambridgeshire Sites and Monuments Record

3.1.1 *Prehistoric* (before 600BC)

The river terrace gravels underlying the study area have yielded artefactual evidence demonstrating the presence of humans during the Pleistocene epoch (Paterson and Tebbutt, 1947). Palaeolithic flint implements were discovered in gravel pits on the northern bank of the river in the early decades of the 20th century (SMR 00578, 00584, 00584a) and an unprovenanced handaxe was discovered in the parish of Little Paxton in 1931 (Reynolds, 2000; SMR 11014). Pleistocene faunal remains, including rhino teeth, have been recovered to the northwest of assessment area (SMR 00587).

Evidence of Mesolithic human activity is absent in the study area. It is probable that this reflects the relatively poor archaeological visibility of the types of artefacts and features produced by these hunter-gatherers, rather than truly indicating their absence. Large mammals would have populated this area during the Mesolithic and red deer bones have been recovered from the assessment area (SMR 08454). However the age of the bones and their relevance to human activity is uncertain as they were not associated with artefactual evidence and their stratigraphical context is not stated.

The well drained soils of the study area were well suited to the agricultural practices of Neolithic populations and their presence is shown by finds of flint scatters (SMR 00577, 00584b, 08989, 08991), and the discovery of Neolithic settlement activity on the northern bank of the river (Addyman, 1969; SMR 00628b). Archaeological evaluations to the west (Alexander, 1992a, SMR 08994) and to the east (Prosser, 2000) of the study area have indicated that Neolithic activity may have been widespread in the surrounding landscape.

Continuity from the Neolithic to Bronze Age may be indicated by the discovery of Bronze Age finds and features at the same location as the Neolithic site (Addyman, 1969, SMR 00628a), and it has been suggested that the Little Paxton area provided optimum conditions for Neolithic / Bronze Age settlement (Alexander, 1992b).

Aerial Photographic assessment (Fig. 4. Palmer, 2005) has demonstrated the presence of an extensive multi-phase cropmark complex located on the southern side of the river southwest of St Neots Sewage Works (SMR 04747). Artefacts discovered during limited trial trenching of part of the cropmark complex near the southern boundary of the assessment area (SMR 04754) indicated that the earliest archaeological features may date to the late Bronze Age (Tempvs Reparatum, 1988, SMR 09837).

Nearer the proposed pipeline route the cropmark complex includes a ring ditch, interpreted as a Bronze Age barrow, which may have been robbed at some time in the past, and trackway, field system and enclosure ditches (Fig. 4, Palmer, 2005). The morphology of the cropmarks suggests that the nearest settlement activity may be located c. 300m southwest of the pipeline route with ditches demarcating a rectilinear field system running parallel to and c. 150m southwest of the sewage works boundary. The cropmarks in this area have not been closely dated, but may include later prehistoric and Romano-British remains.

Immediately southeast of the ring ditch lies an area formerly called Barrow Close (SMR 08281), a name suggesting that ploughed out funerary monuments may have existed at this locale.

The AP assessment did not identify cropmarks on the island between the two channels of the river Great Ouse (*ibid.*).

3.1.2 *Iron Age* (600BC-AD43)

A late Iron Age settlement / farmstead was located and excavated c. 150m northeast of the study area (Greenfield, 1969; SMR 00633a).

Within the study area on the northern side of the river, Iron Age activity is suggested by an undated cropmark complex that includes enclosures, ring ditches and pit alignments (SMR 00580, 00901).

An undated cropmark complex located *c*. 200m from the eastern end of the proposed pipeline may be Iron Age (SMR 00635), and shows several irregular enclosures to the north, and a double ring ditch to the south, of Huntingdon Road. At least two phases of activity are evident and it is unlikely that the full extent of the features causing the cropmarks has been mapped, partly as the consequence of masking by alluvium.

3.1.3 *Romano-British* (AD43-c.450)

The presence of a Romano-British cremation cemetery (Tebbutt. 1969, SMR 00581) north of cropmark complex (SMR 04747) shows that Romano-British remains are present in the study area and lends weight to the suggestion that part of this cropmark complex dates to this period.

A double ditched trackway and other cropmarks (Palmer, 2005), on the northern side of the river may have been extant during this period although

they are undated and were not examined prior their destruction by housing development.

Structural remains and Romano-British artefacts recovered by dredging in the southern channel of the river suggest the presence of a boat quay in close proximity to the pipeline route (*ibid.* SMR 00625). Undated timber piles recovered from a silted up channel of the river at the western end of the island indicate further waterside structural remains (SMR 08243)

Two excavated Romano-British farmsteads (SMR 00633) on the northern side of the river may indicate continuity from the Iron Age settlement / farmstead (SMR 00633a) or reoccupation of this area during the 1st-4th centuries (Greenfield, 1969).

An isolated Romano-British globular flask was recovered from a gravel pit on the northern side of the river (SMR 00592). The exact location of the findspot is uncertain.

3.1.4 Saxon (c.450-1066)

Saxon settlement is demonstrated by two foci of archaeological features. Late Saxon post-holes; pits, ditches and beam slots are noted on the southern side of the river to the southeast of Huntingdon Road (SMR 00622). On the northern side of the river an inhumation burial (Tebbutt and Lethbridge, 1962), and an extensive area containing a large number of features indicates at least two phases of late Saxon occupation (Addyman, 1969; SMR 00628).

3.1.3 *Medieval* (1066-1500)

The medieval village of Little Paxton probably had its centre at the current High Street, a shift in focus away from the location of the late Saxon settlement (SMR 00628) that may have been the result of changes in land ownership and land use after the Norman Conquest.

At the time of the Domesday survey Little Paxton was a berewick of Great Paxton and was held by Countess Judith. Three areas of ridge and furrow strip field systems and other cropmarks that may date to the Medieval period have been identified on the southern side of the river by aerial photographic assessment (Palmer, 2005).

The location of the deserted Medieval village of Sudbury, Eaton Socon parish is recorded at TL 183 616 (SMR 00669). The exact location of the village is unknown and the provided grid reference is questionable given its position close to the southern channel of the river.

A parcel of land was enclosed by Robert le Moyne c. 1328, probably for use as a deer park (SMR 00671). The parks exact location is uncertain although cropmarks (SMR 04753) in an area now covered with late 20th century housing may suggest its position. The earliest parts of the Church of St James, Little Paxton, are late 12th century (Pevsner, 1997, 286).

3.1.4 *Post-Medieval* (1500-1900)

The Ferrers family held the Manor of Little Paxton until the Civil War and it subsequently changed hands several times during the late 17th and 18th centuries (Broad, 1989). In the early 19th century a park of approximately 80-90 acres was established to surround the newly built Paxton Place, home of the Pointer Stanleys (SMR 12149).

Significant extant buildings in the village include Paxton Hall, which was built for the son of Bishop Reynolds of Lincoln in 1738 (Pevsner, 1997, 286). Until the 20th century the village grew very little although land to the south of the historic core was inclosed by Act of Parliament in 1812 (Fig. 5).

The pipeline route is located just within the parish of St Neots close to it boundary with the parish of Little Paxton. Inclosure and Tithe mapping is extant for both parishes and was the earliest cartographic evidence examined. The area traversed by the pipeline is not represented on any of the mapping, although the 1812 Little Paxton Inclosure Map comes tantalisingly close (Fig. 5).

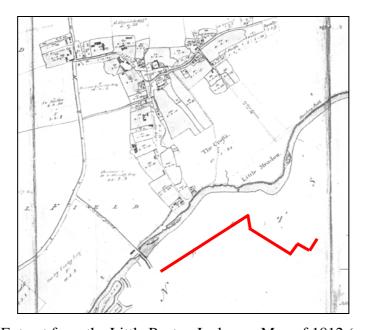


Figure 5: Extract from the Little Paxton Inclosure Map of 1812 (not to scale)

The first edition Ordnance Survey 25" mapping of 1882-1887 is the earliest definitive representation of the land affected by the proposed route (Fig. 6). The majority of land in the study area is agricultural although small scale gravel extraction is evident to the north of the river. The St. Neots Paper Mill had been built at the western end of the island and east of Mill Lane the island is marked as "liable to floods". The fields on the southern bank of the River Great Ouse are inclosed and adjacent to the river are also marked as "liable to floods". The aerial photographic assessment has identified relatively recent infilled boundary ditches to the southwest and southeast of St Neots Sewage Works (Palmer, 2005), which may date to the period of inclosure.

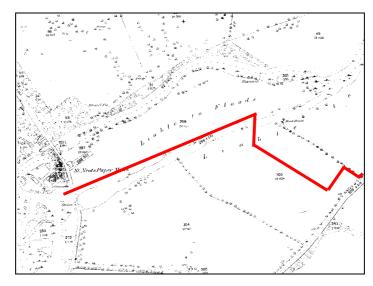


Figure 6: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 25" 1882/7 mapping (not to scale)

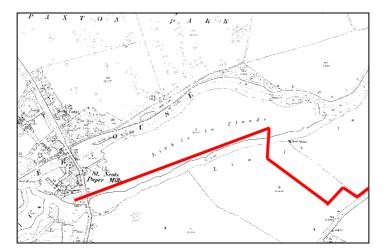


Figure 7: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 25" 1900 mapping (not to scale)

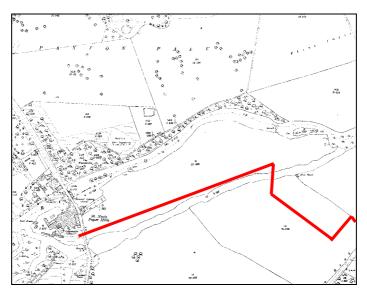


Figure 8: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 25" 1924 (not to scale)

3.1.5 *Modern* (1900-present)

During the early decades of the 20th century, field boundaries remained unaltered on the route of the pipeline and the area of gravel extraction on the northern side of the river gradually expanded (Figs 7 and 8).

The second half of the 20th century saw residential development of areas of land to the south and southwest of the historic core of Little Paxton and extensive gravel extraction to the east and north. The disused gravel pits are now flooded and used for recreation, or are part of a nature reserve designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest. St Neots expanded northwards and a sewage works was constructed on the southern bank of the River Great Ouse to serve the growing population (Figs. 1 and 2).

On the route of the pipeline a field boundary was established to divide the island into two parcels of land, while inclosure boundaries on the southern bank of the river were grubbed out, and new boundaries established to delimit a western allotment area and the sewage works to the east (Figs. 1 and 2). The proposed route is currently sandwiched between the southern limit of Little Paxton and the northern limit of St Neots.

4 Walk-Over Survey

As part of the assessment, a preliminary walkover survey of the site was undertaken on the 12th April 2005.

4.1 *Aims*

The walk-over survey was undertaken with the following aims:

- To examine any areas of archaeological potential identified during research for the assessment, in particular with a view to gauging the possible survival or condition of any remains present.
- To consider the significance of any above-ground structures, historic buildings or historic landscape features present.
- To assess the present site use and ground conditions, with a view to the appropriate deployment of fieldwork techniques, as suggested by the CCAO.

4.2 Results

- 4.2.1 The island is level and had a groundcover of rough pasture (Plate.1). The edges of the island are lined with a light cover of trees (Plate. 2). The dividing boundary visible on modern Ordnance Survey mapping (e.g. Fig. 1) was not extant and no evidence of its former position was observed.
- **4.2.2** A young cereal crop was growing on the field southwest of the entrance road of the sewage works (Plate 3). That part of the field traversed by the proposed pipeline was level and did not contain evidence of any archaeologically significant landscape features (Plate's 4 and 5).
- **4.2.3** The field northeast of the sewage works entrance road had a well established crop of oilseed rape growing on it (Plate 6). It appeared level and lacked historic landscape features although a proper visual inspection was impossible due to the height of the crop.



Plate 1: View northeast along the pipeline section on the island



Plate 2: View northeast showing riverbank tree cover on the island



Plate 3: View northwest into field containing young cereal crop



Plate 4: View northwest along the boundary of the sewage works



Plate 5: View west showing the entrance and southeastern boundary of the sewage works,



Plate 6: View west across oilseed rape towards sewage works entrance

5 Conclusions

- A high density of archaeological sites are located on the gravels of the river Great Ouse. This assessment has demonstrated that the proposed pipeline is located in an area that reflects this distribution.
- 5.2 The first river terrace gravels at Little Paxton contain Pleistocene faunal remains and artefactual evidence demonstrating Palaeolithic hunter-gatherer activity.
- 5.3 Archaeological evidence demonstrating the presence of Mesolithic hunter-gatherers is absent from the assessment area although the channels of the Great Ouse and the surrounding area should have provided an ideal ecological habitat for exploitation by Mesolithic populations.
- 5.4 The presence of people during later periods of prehistory is amply demonstrated by excavated Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age sites and the presence of cropmark complexes that include ritual and funerary elements. Deposition of alluvium in areas flanking the river will have hampered mapping of the full extent of the cropmarks.
- 5.5 A multi phase cropmark complex that probably contains Romano-British elements is located on the southern side of the river, c. 150m to the southwest of the proposed pipeline route. A nearby cremation cemetery and the recovery of structural evidence indicating the presence of a boat quay from the southern river channel illustrates some of the funerary and economic activities of the Romano-British population. Mapping of the northwestern extent of the cropmark complex will have been hampered by deposition of alluvium.
- 5.5 A number of palaeochannels underlie the cropmark complex and it is unlikely that they represent a single phase of the rivers course. Although some of these palaeochannels will have silted prior to the establishment of the cropmark complex others may have remained open into the Romano-British period. Thus they may contain artefactual and environmental evidence pertinent to this and earlier periods.
- 5.6 Excavation has revealed a substantial Saxon settlement on the northern side of the river. On the southern side of the river, southeast of Huntingdon Road and the aforementioned cropmark complex, excavation recovered further evidence of Saxon settlement activity. It is currently unclear whether part of the cropmark complex may belong to this period.
- 5.7 The land traversed by the pipeline appears to have remained in agricultural use throughout the Medieval, Post Medieval and Modern periods and other than establishment of inclosure boundaries and subsequent boundary alteration has probably been subject to little change.
- 5.7 There are no recorded archaeological features known on the island. The lack of features may reflect the long term use of this parcel of land as permanent pasture or could be caused by a gap in knowledge due to lack of fieldwork and / or masking by deposition of alluvium.

5.4 A cropmark, interpreted as a relatively recent boundary, and similarly aligned remnants of ridge and furrow cultivation strips may be affected by the section of pipeline adjacent to the sewage works.

5.5 Archaeological Potential of the Pipeline

The aerial photographic assessment suggests that there may be limited potential for discovery of archaeological remains on the majority of the section of pipeline on the island. However deposition of alluvium may have obscured archaeological features and the study area has a high concentration of archaeology, which suggests that the potential may be medium - high.

The structural evidence indicating the presence of a Romano-British boat quay, and the nature and masking by alluvium of parts of the cropmark complexes located southwest and northeast of the sewage works, indicates that the section of pipeline that crosses and then runs beyond the southern river channel has high potential for the recovery of remains relating to the late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Romano-British periods.

The combined evidence from the walk-over survey and the cartographic sources suggests that the ground has been subject to little recent truncation or disturbance. As a result, any subsurface archaeological remains may be well preserved.

6 Impact on the Archaeological Resource

6.1 We currently know that the site compound will be located within the boundaries of the sewage works and the diameter of the water pipe is 225mm while the fenced working corridor is 20m in width. Other details of the ground works to establish the pipeline are currently unavailable although ASC's experience of previous water pipeline projects suggests that a maximum width of 15m will be stripped of organic topsoil to a minimum depth of 300mm, that a 1m wide trench at least 2m deep will be excavated to lay a 225mm pipe and that land take for the directional drilling is likely to be a maximum of 4m x 4m.

7 Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Anglian Water for commissioning and funding this assessment. Thanks are also due to Sarah Poppy of the Cambridgeshire Sites & Monuments Record for providing access to the SMR data. The assistance of the staff of the Huntingdonshire Record Office is also gratefully acknowledged.

The research for the assessment, and the walk-over survey, were undertaken for ASC Ltd by Alastair Hancock BSc PgDip. The report was prepared by Alastair Hancock and edited by David Fell MA MIFA.

8 References

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9 Sites & Monuments Data

Sites listed below are those within the study area, *i.e.* a corridor with a 500m radius from the proposed pipeline

CAS No	NGR	Period	Type	Description
00577	TL 1825 6175	Neolithic	Findspot	Flint scatter
00578	TL 185 619	Palaeolithic	Findspot	Lithics and Animal Bones
00580	TL 1832 6195	Prehistoric	Monument	Cropmark
00581	TL 1892 6187	Romano-British	Monument	Cremation vessels
00584	TL 186 621	Palaeolithic	Findspot	Lithics
00584a	TL 186 621	Palaeolithic	Findspot	Lithics
00584b	TL 187 621	Neolithic	Findspot	Lithics
00587	TL 183 622	Palaeolithic	Findspot	Animal Bone (incl. Rhino teeth)
00592	TL 187 621	Romano-British	Findspot	Grey Flask
00622	TL 193 616	Late Saxon	Monument	Settlement
00625	TL 1914 6201	Romano-British	Findspot	Building materials (boat quay ?)
00628	TL 192 624	Late Saxon	Monument	Settlement
00628a	TL 192 624	Late Prehistoric	Monument	Ditch
00628b	TL 192 624	Neolithic	Findspot	Building material (settlement ?)
00633	TL 195 625	Romano-British	Monument	Features and finds
00633a	TL 195 625	Iron Age	Monument	Features and finds
00635	TL 197 621	IA - RB	Monument	Cropmark
00669	TL 183 616	Medieval	Monument	DMV
00671	TL 189 623	Medieval	Monument	Deer Park
00901	TL 182 618	Late Prehistoric	Monument	Cropmarks
04747	TL 190 618	BA - RB	Monument	Cropmark
04753	TL 189 623	Medieval ?	Monument	Cropmark
04754	TL 190 615	?	Monument	Cropmark
08243	TL 1849 6179	?	Monument	Timber Piles
08281	TL 191 616	Late Prehistoric	Monument	Suggested location of barrows from
				fieldname
08454	TL 1946 6218	?	Findspot	Red deer bones
08989	TL 194 624	Neolithic	Findspot	Lithics
08991	TL 19252 62354	Neo -BA	Findspot	Lithics
09837	TL 1905 6148	Late Prehistoric	Monument	Excavation of subsurface deposit
12149	TL 189 626	Post Medieval	Monument	Landscaped park

10 Cartographic Sources

The following maps and plans were consulted in the course of this assessment:

Date	Reference	Description
1770	LR 16/352	Inclosure Map - St Neots
1777	SM 9/55	Estates Map including Little Paxton
1812	MC 7/8	Inclosure Map – Little Paxton
1815	LR 16/374	Meadow Inclosure Map - St Neots
1850		Little Paxton Tithe Apportionment and Plan
1882-87	XXV 7	Ordnance Survey 25in
1900	XXV 7	Ordnance Survey 25in
1924	XXV 7	Ordnance Survey 25in
1999	208	Ordnance Survey Explorer 1:25000