

Double Bank Lane, Sawtry, Cambridgeshire

An Archaeological Evaluation Assessment



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**CAMBRIDGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE**



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Illustrations by Vicki Herring

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M Collins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Cambridge Archaeological Unit
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1. Summary

Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) undertook a trenched evaluation on farmland to the north of Double Bank Lane, Sawtry, Cambridgeshire, in advance of the proposed construction of a solar farm. The evaluation identified limited archaeological remains which included a probable post-medieval ditch and two modern postholes.

2. Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) during July 2013 on farmland to the north of Double Bank Lane, near Sawtry, Cambridgeshire, PE28 5YJ. The evaluation, commissioned by ECUS on behalf of S.A.T. Sun & Alternative Technology Ltd, was carried out in advance of the proposed development of a solar farm and aimed to establish the presence, date, state of preservation and significance of any archaeological remains. This report details the results of the evaluation, together with an assessment of the archaeological evidence in relation to the regional research framework (Brown & Glazebrook 2013).

The evaluation was carried out and this report was produced in accordance with an archaeological specification written by the CAU (Gibson 2013) and approved by Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team (CHET).

2.1 Location, Topography and Geology

The proposed development area (PDA) extends over 16.4 ha, and is located on open farmland which centres on TL 4433 5904. It is bordered on all sides by open fields, with the B1090 road running close to the southwest corner, (see Figure 1). The land was slightly undulating with the height varying from 5.7m OD in Trench 23, to 6.1m OD in Trench 15, to 4.4m OD in Trench 2. The underlying geology is Oxford Clay (BGS).

2.2 Archaeological Background

The archaeological potential for the PDA has been highlighted in a recent desk based assessment carried out as part of the Environmental Appraisal for the site (ECUS 2012).

A background level of prehistoric remains have been recorded within a 1km radius of the PDA, although these are largely isolated find-spots of worked flint mainly located on higher ground to the east of the site around Wood Walton, (CHER 01739; CHER 01748; CHER 01752; CHER 09950).

A single find-spot is listed on the HER (CHER 00977) from within the PDA itself, which details the recovery of an unidentified Romano-British object. The study of aerial photography (ECUS 2013) has also identified several cropmarks (see Figure 2) towards the northeast corner of the PDA which include a possible linear feature (targeted by Trench 7 and Trench 9) and a square enclosure (targeted by Trench 1, Trench 2 and Trench 6). Also, located towards the southwest corner of the PDA a further, possible, square feature approximately 5m x 5m was observed and targeted by Trench 23.

Further Romano-British activity is known within the surrounding landscape, the closest of which is the recorded recovery of a small number of pottery sherds near to St. Andrew's church in Wood Walton 1.4 km to the southeast (CHER 05645). A series of cropmarks at Riddy Wood, 1.8 km to the northeast, show the presence of drove-ways and enclosures likely dating to the Roman period, and artefacts

including Samian pottery and quern stone have been recovered near to these features (CHER 06153 and CHER 07823).

The PDA is close to several known medieval settlements and monuments including the village of Wood Walton 1.4 km to the southeast which hosts a medieval church (St. Andrew's), at least two moated sites (CHER 01029 and CHER 01031) and a motte and bailey castle (CHER 01740). Approximately 1.75 km to the west of the PDA is the deserted medieval village of Sawtry Judith (MCB 16127), whilst to the northwest is the remains of Sawtry Abbey (CB15419). Ridge and furrow cultivation is also visible in the surrounding landscape, although aerial photography suggests none is present within the PDA.

2.3 Methodology

The total PDA measures 16.4 ha, however; due to the configuration of the solar arrays and associated infrastructure only 30% (c.4.9 ha) of the area will be developed, and most of the site will be retained as grassland. Furthermore, of the area to be developed, only c.387m² (less than 0.4 ha) will be excavated to depth. Due to the limited extent and scale of the proposed development footprint, the evaluation targeted the areas likely to be most impacted, and several possible crop marks identified through aerial photography. The PDA was evaluated by 25 trenches totalling 480.5m in length, (see Figure 2).

The PDA at the time of the evaluation was under an oil-seed rape crop and machine movements were minimised as much as possible in order to limit crop damage. Topsoil and underlying deposits were removed under the supervision of an experienced archaeologist by a tracked 21-ton 360° machine using a 2.05m wide toothless ditching bucket. The removed overburden and all exposed features were scanned by metal detector for artefacts and a digital photographic record was taken. Excavation of archaeological features was carried out using hand tools, with one metre slots excavated in ditches and postholes half-sectioned. The recording followed a CAU modified MoLAS system (Spence 1990) whereby feature numbers; F. were assigned to stratigraphic events and number [fill] and [cut] to individual contexts. The evaluation trenches were planned at 1:50 and individual sections drawn at 1:10.

All work was carried out in strict accordance with statutory Health and Safety legislation and with the recommendations of FAME (Allen & Holt 2010) and in accordance with a site specific risk assessment and the CAU Health and Safety policy. The CAU assigned site code is DBS 13 and the event number is ECB 4004.

2.4 Archive

A total of four contexts from two features were excavated and recorded. No artefacts were recovered or catalogued. The documentary records have been assembled into a catalogued archive in line with Appendix 6 of MAP2 (English Heritage 1991) and are currently being stored at the CAU offices.

3. Results

The evaluation showed topsoil and subsoil depths were relatively consistent across the PDA averaging 0.31m and 0.18m respectively. All the removed overburden was scanned by metal detector but no non-ferrous artefacts were identified, furthermore the only ferrous objects identified were deemed to be modern, and likely related to agricultural machinery. A brief examination of the topsoil similarly identified no non-metal artefacts dating prior to the post-medieval period. A tabular summary of each trench is given in Appendix 6.1, and photographic examples of three trenches are shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

A total of three archaeological features were identified within the 25 evaluation trenches, (see Figure 2). These features included a small ditch in Trench 13 and two post-holes in Trench 23. Ditch **F.002** (see Figure 3) was infilled with homogenous mid brown clay with few inclusions and contained no artefacts. However, the ditch cuts from just below the topsoil layer suggesting it is dates no later than the post-medieval period. Of the two post-holes in Trench 23, one was excavated (**F.001**). This feature was infilled with dark grey/black clay silt and contained a steel screw and nail suggesting it is quite modern in date. The location of the two post-holes close to the edge of the field suggests they are probably part of a former fence-line. A number of modern field drains and plough scars were also identified within several of the trenches (see Appendix 6.1), however no residual artefacts were observed within any of these features.

No archaeological features were identified in the trenches towards the north-western corner of the PDA which targeted several possible cropmarks (Trenches 1, 2, 6, 7 and 9, see Figure 2). Similarly, no archaeological features relating to the crop marks targeted by Trench 23 were present.

4. Discussion

Given the heavy, clay soils prevalent across the PDA it is probably unsurprising no prehistoric activity was encountered within the trenches. However, the absence of any Romano-British or medieval archaeological remains is more surprising given the large number of identified sites within the surrounding area. The results of the evaluation therefore suggest the PDA is some distance from the foci of any settlement activity, and was likely a marginalised area, that received only low-level or casual usage until the post-medieval period.

The evaluation has demonstrated that no significant archaeological activity is present within the boundaries of the PDA. Furthermore it has shown that the possible cropmarks previously identified through aerial photography are not related to archaeological activity.

5. Acknowledgements

The archaeological evaluation was commissioned by ECUS on behalf of S.A.T. Sun & Alternative Technology Ltd. Monitoring was undertaken on behalf of CHET by Dan McConnell. David Gibson was CAU project manager. Jon Moller and Katie Hutton (CAU) undertook the surveying and Emma Rees assisted the author on site.

6.1 Appendices

6.1 Trench and Context Tables

Trench 1		
General Description	Orientation	E-W
Trench 1 contained two field drains. No archaeological features or deposits were present.	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.32
	Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.15
	Width (m)	2.05
	Length (m)	42.00

Trench 2		
General Description	Orientation	N-S
Trench 2 contained a single field drain. No archaeological features or deposits were present.	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.32
	Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.15
	Width (m)	2.05
	Length (m)	13.00

Trench 3		
General Description	Orientation	E-W
Trench 3 contained a modern plough scar. No archaeological features or deposits were present.	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.30
	Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.08
	Width (m)	2.05
	Length (m)	14.00

Trench 4		
General Description	Orientation	E-W
Trench 4 contained a modern plough scar. No archaeological features or deposits were present.	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.28
	Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.11
	Width (m)	2.05
	Length (m)	19.00

Trench 4		
General Description	Orientation	E-W
Trench 4 contained a modern plough scar. No archaeological features or deposits were present.	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.28
	Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.11
	Width (m)	2.05
	Length (m)	19.00

Trench 6		
General Description	Orientation	E-W
Trench 6 contained a single field drain and modern plough scar. No archaeological features or deposits were present.	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.31
	Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.19
	Width (m)	2.05
	Length (m)	21.50

Trench 7			
General Description		Orientation	E-W
Trench 7 contained no archaeological features or deposits.		Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.34
		Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.20
		Width (m)	2.05
		Length (m)	10.00

Trench 8			
General Description		Orientation	N-S
Trench 8 contained a single field drain. No archaeological features or deposits were present.		Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.33
		Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.17
		Width (m)	2.05
		Length (m)	20.00

Trench 9			
General Description		Orientation	E-W
Trench 9 contained no archaeological features or deposits.		Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.34
		Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.15
		Width (m)	2.05
		Length (m)	9.00

Trench 10			
General Description		Orientation	N-S
Trench 10 contained a single field drain. No archaeological features or deposits were present.		Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.30
		Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.20
		Width (m)	2.05
		Length (m)	20.00

Trench 11			
General Description		Orientation	N-S
Trench 11 contained a single field drain. No archaeological features or deposits were present.		Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.29
		Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.14
		Width (m)	2.05
		Length (m)	20.00

Trench 12			
General Description		Orientation	N-S
Trench 12 contained no archaeological features or deposits.		Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.31
		Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.10
		Width (m)	2.05
		Length (m)	20.00

Trench 13						
General Description					Orientation	E-W
Trench 13 contained a single small, shallow, undated ditch.					Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.30
					Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.17
					Length (m)	21.00
Feature No.	Feature Type	Orientation	Context No.	Cut /Fill	Artefacts	Archaeological Period
1	Ditch	-	102	F	None	Undated
1	Ditch	NE-SW	103	C	-	

Trench 14		
General Description	Orientation	E-W
Trench 14 contained a single field drain. No archaeological features or deposits were present.	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.33
	Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.10
	Width (m)	2.05
	Length (m)	15.00

Trench 15		
General Description	Orientation	N-S
Trench 15 contained no archaeological features or deposits.	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.28
	Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.18
	Width (m)	2.05
	Length (m)	21.00

Trench 16		
General Description	Orientation	E-W
Trench 16 contained a single field drain. No archaeological features or deposits were present.	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.34
	Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.13
	Width (m)	2.05
	Length (m)	19.00

Trench 17		
General Description	Orientation	E-W
Trench 17 contained a modern plough scar. No archaeological features or deposits were present.	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.29
	Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.09
	Width (m)	2.05
	Length (m)	15.00

Trench 18		
General Description	Orientation	N-S
Trench 18 contained a single field drain. No archaeological features or deposits were present.	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.35
	Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.12
	Width (m)	2.05
	Length (m)	22.00

Trench 19		
General Description	Orientation	E-W
Trench 19 contained a single field drain and modern plough scar. No archaeological features or deposits were present.	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.30
	Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.20
	Width (m)	2.05
	Length (m)	19.00

Trench 20		
General Description	Orientation	E-W
Trench 20 contained a single field drain. No archaeological features or deposits were present.	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.29
	Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.08
	Width (m)	2.05
	Length (m)	19.00

Trench 21		
General Description	Orientation	E-W
Trench 21 contained a single field drain and modern plough scar. No archaeological features or deposits were present.	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.36
	Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.22
	Width (m)	2.05
	Length (m)	20.00

Trench 22		
General Description	Orientation	E-W
Trench 22 contained no archaeological features or deposits.	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.32
	Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.21
	Width (m)	2.05
	Length (m)	14.00

Trench 23						
General Description					Orientation	N-S
Trench 23 contained a single field drain and two modern postholes, one of which was excavated.					Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.25
					Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.17
					Width (m)	2.05
					Length (m)	28.00
Feature No.	Feature Type	Shape	Context No.	Cut /Fill	Artefacts	Archaeological Period
2	Posthole	-	100	F	FE	Modern
2	Posthole	Circular	101	C	-	

Trench 24		
General Description	Orientation	E-W
Trench 24 contained a single field drain. No archaeological features or deposits were present.	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.31
	Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.21
	Width (m)	2.05
	Length (m)	21.00

Trench 25		
General Description	Orientation	N-S
Trench 25 contained no archaeological features or deposits.	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.24
	Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.20
	Width (m)	2.05
	Length (m)	19.00

7. References

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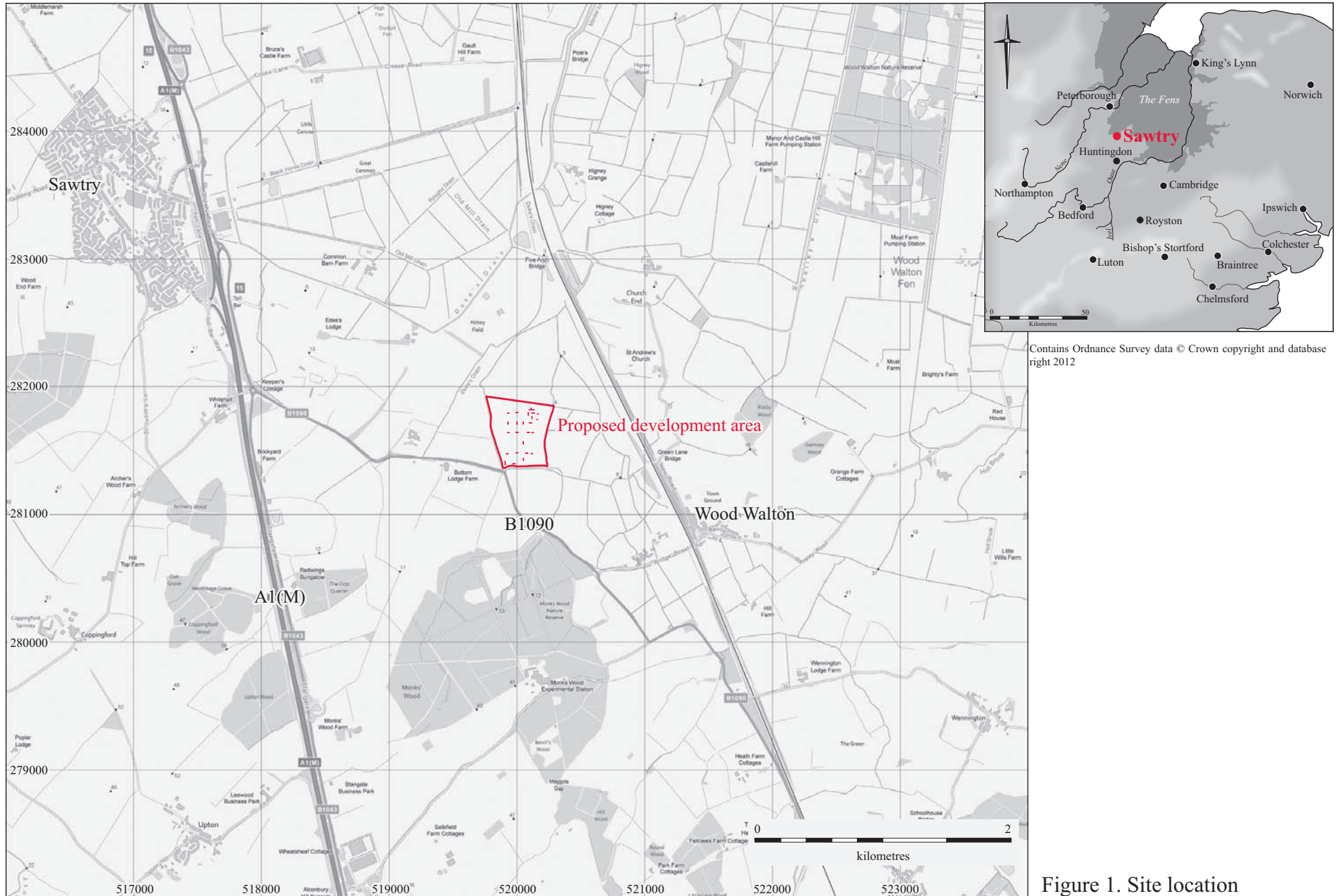


Figure 1. Site location

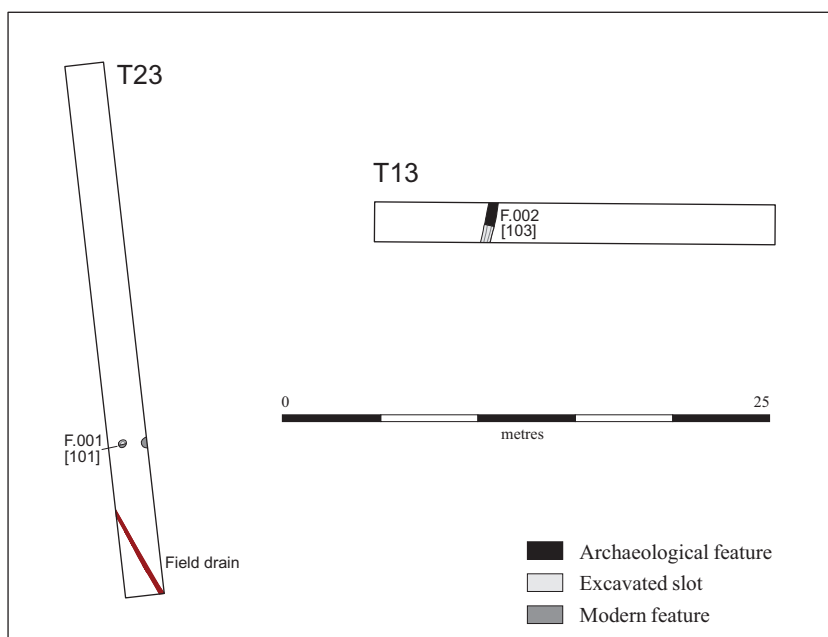
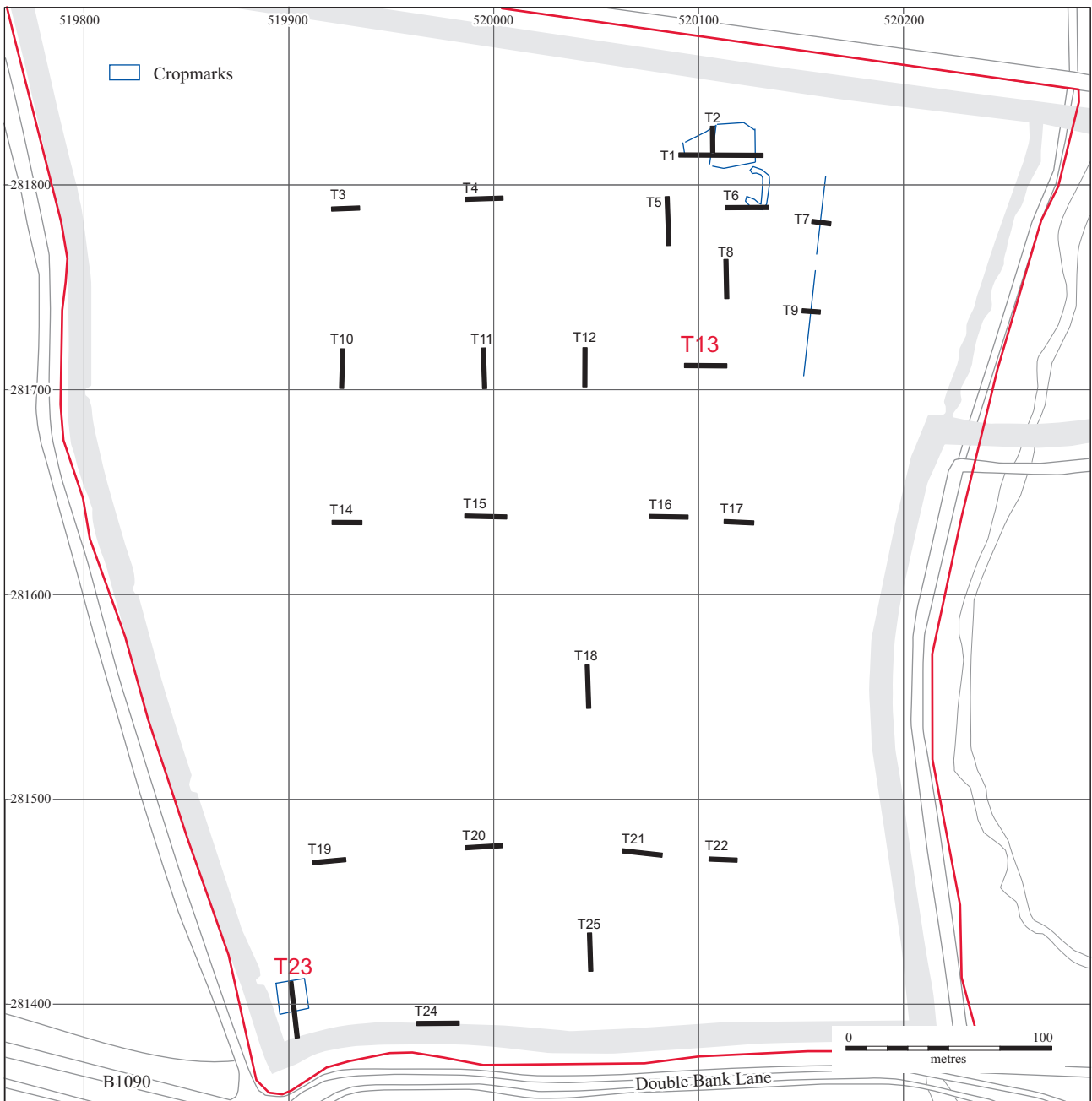


Figure 2. Trench plan



Figure 3. Trench 8, looking north (left), Trench 10, looking south (right)



Figure 4. F.002 in Trench 13 (left), and Trench 24, looking east (right)

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OASIS ID: cambridg3-154921

Project details

Project name	Double Bank Lane, Sawtry, Cambridgeshire
Short description of the project	Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) undertook a trenched evaluation on farmland to the north of Double Bank Lane, Sawtry, Cambridgeshire, in advance of the proposed construction of a solar farm. The evaluation identified limited archaeological remains which included a probable post-medieval ditch and two modern postholes.
Project dates	Start: 02-07-2013 End: 05-07-2013
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	DBS 13 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Cultivated Land 4 - Character Undetermined
Monument type	DITCH Post Medieval
Monument type	POSTHOLES Modern
Significant Finds	N/A None
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches", "Targeted Trenches"
Development type	Solar Farm Development
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country	England
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Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE HUNTINGDONSHIRE WOOD WALTON Double Bank Lane, Sawtry, Cambridgeshire
Postcode	PE28 5YJ
Study area	16.40 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 4433 5904 52 0 52 12 36 N 000 06 45 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 4.00m Max: 6.00m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	David Gibson
Project director/manager	David Gibson
Project supervisor	Matthew Collins
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	S.A.T. Sun & Alternative Technology Ltd.

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Physical Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Archive ID	DBS 13
Digital Contents	"other","Survey"
Digital Media available	"GIS","Images raster / digital photography","Survey","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Paper Archive ID	DBS 13
Paper Contents	"Survey","other"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Plan","Report","Section","Survey ","Unpublished Text"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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