

# Mill Hill, Swaffham Prior

An Archaeological Watching Brief



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**Mill Hill, Swaffham Prior, Cambridgeshire**  
An Archaeological Watching Brief

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*Illustrations by Andrew Hall*

**Cambridge Archaeological Unit**  
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## *Summary*

*In compliance with a request from Cambridge Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice (CAPCA) Anglian Water Services Ltd commissioned a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording on a new water main route in Swaffham Prior, along the B1102. No archaeological evidence was discovered during the course of the programme.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

Between the 21<sup>st</sup> of January and the 24<sup>th</sup> March 2010 Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) undertook a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording along the route of a new water main in Swaffham Prior, Cambridgeshire.

### **1.1 Location, Topography, geology**

The works comprised of a 648.17m long ditch along the verge of Mill Hill, the B1102 Swaffham Prior bypass in Cambridgeshire, see Figure 1. Centred on grid reference TL570 638 the route of the pipeline ran from the junction with the, now disused, Cadenham Road along the verge of the B1102, crossing the Cage Hill/Heath road junction, before terminating at the water tower on the top of Mill Hill. Only at the ends of the pipeline did the trench deviate from closely following the road. The trench was predominantly 1.2m deep although up to 1.7m deep in places, and mainly 0.7m wide although occasionally extending to 1.5m.

The village of Swaffham Prior is located on the edge of the chalk downland where it drops into the fen. The underlying geology is Lower Chalk (British Geological Survey 1978). The road runs up the gentle hill but the chalk has been levelled, graded and cut to provide a smooth passage for the road. Although this means that it runs along one of the highest points in the landscape it has effectively resulted in the road, and therefore the water main, being located within a relatively deep cutting for most of its duration. Figure 2 illustrates a cross section of this cutting. The greatest potential for archaeology was where the trench turned a corner and entered the water tower compound near the top of the hill.

### **1.2 Archaeological Background**

#### *1.2.1 Prehistoric*

Prehistoric activity is known within the local area, evidenced by a Neolithic Hand Axe discovered close to the south end of the pipeline (Monument No.374852), a ring ditch further south (Monument No. 374947) and a Bronze Age palstave found within the parish (Monument No. 870054). On the fen edge to the west of the route it is suspected that there was prehistoric settlement activity due to a large flint scatter (CHER 06766, 06766A). An Iron Age temple complex was excavated on Gallows Hill as part of a multi period excavation (Malim 2006).

#### *1.2.2 Romano-British*

Roman shrines were excavated on Gallows Hill and a possible Roman building has been identified within the area (Monument No. 374882). Roman roof tiles and pottery have also been discovered to the west of the pipeline, some within the grounds of Swaffham Prior House (Monument No. 374880 & 374881).

### 1.2.3 *Saxon*

A Saxon inhumation cemetery was also excavated on Gallows Hill in 1992-3 (Malim 2006).

### 1.2.4 *Medieval*

The village of Swaffham Prior has medieval origins and contains two churches founded in c1110 and c.1233. Earthworks denote a possible deserted village to the west of the road and medieval moated sites are recorded within the area (Monument No. 374843, 374849).

In 1996 inhumations of an unknown date were found on Greenshead Hill during pipe laying (Monument No. 374953).

## 1.3 **Methodology**

Balfour Beatty was the contractor laying the water main and the works were monitored in accordance with a project specification (Beadsmore 2009) and followed guidelines in the SCAUM manual Health and Safety in Field Archaeology (Allen and Holt 2002). A base plan was drawn at a scale of 1:50 and the location of the trench surveyed into the OS Grid using an EDM/GPS.

## 2.0 **Results**

No archaeological evidence was discovered other than modern services in the 500m of trenching south of the cross roads. Here the natural chalk was overlain by between 0.17 and 0.34 cm of topsoil with occasional redeposited chalk constituting a levelling layer from the road construction. The tooth of a machine bucket was found within the redeposited chalk as further proof of its modern date. The depth of the cutting varied along the route from 0.23m to a maximum of 2.15m. Although at the southern end of the pipeline some exploratory trenches were pulled into the field adjacent to the road, no archaeology was encountered.

The water main crossed Cage Hill where it could be seen that the modern road was made up of three tarmac layers with no evidence of a medieval road underneath. On either side of the junction concrete had been used to build up the level of the street.

On the northern side of the cross roads the majority of the trench was disturbed by a modern cast iron water pipe and a drainage pipe paralleling the road. This included a drain and grate from an earlier phase of the road. Where these were not disturbing the natural chalk no archaeological evidence was found. Where the trench turned the corner into the water tower compound and cut through the bank at the edge of the road evidence for reshaping and building up the bank was visible in the section. This was evidence that the land had been deliberately flattened, allowing for the road to have a sensible camber.

Within the compound, although modern services did intrude, the topsoil was 0.3m deep and the subsoil was 0.57m deep. The subsoil was a mid- pale grey clayey silt with rare chalk inclusions. No archaeological features were encountered.

### **3.0 Discussion**

This programme of archaeological monitoring and recording encountered no archaeological evidence. It has revealed that the landscape on the eastern outskirts of Swaffham Prior, although has the potential to contain archaeological remains, has been dramatically altered by the construction of the B1102 and disturbed greatly by services therefore removing any earlier existing archaeology evidence.

## **Acknowledgements**

Cambridgeshire Archaeological Unit was commissioned by Anglian Water Services Ltd and Balfour Beatty were the contractors laying the water mains. Emma Beadsmore was the Project Officer and Donald Horne surveyed the site. The graphics for this report were produced by Andrew Hall.



## References

Allen, J.L. and A. Holt. 2002. Health and Safety in Field Archaeology. SCAUM.

Beadsmore, E, 2009. A specification for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording at Mill Hill, Swaffham Prior Cambridgeshire. Cambridge Archaeological Unit

British Geological Survey. 1987. Cambridge Sheet 188. Solid and Draft Edition.

Malin, T. 2006. A Romano-British temple complex and Anglo-Saxon burials at Gallows Hill, Swaffham Prior. Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquity Society, 95 (2006), 91-114. Publisher: Cambridge Antiquarian Society.

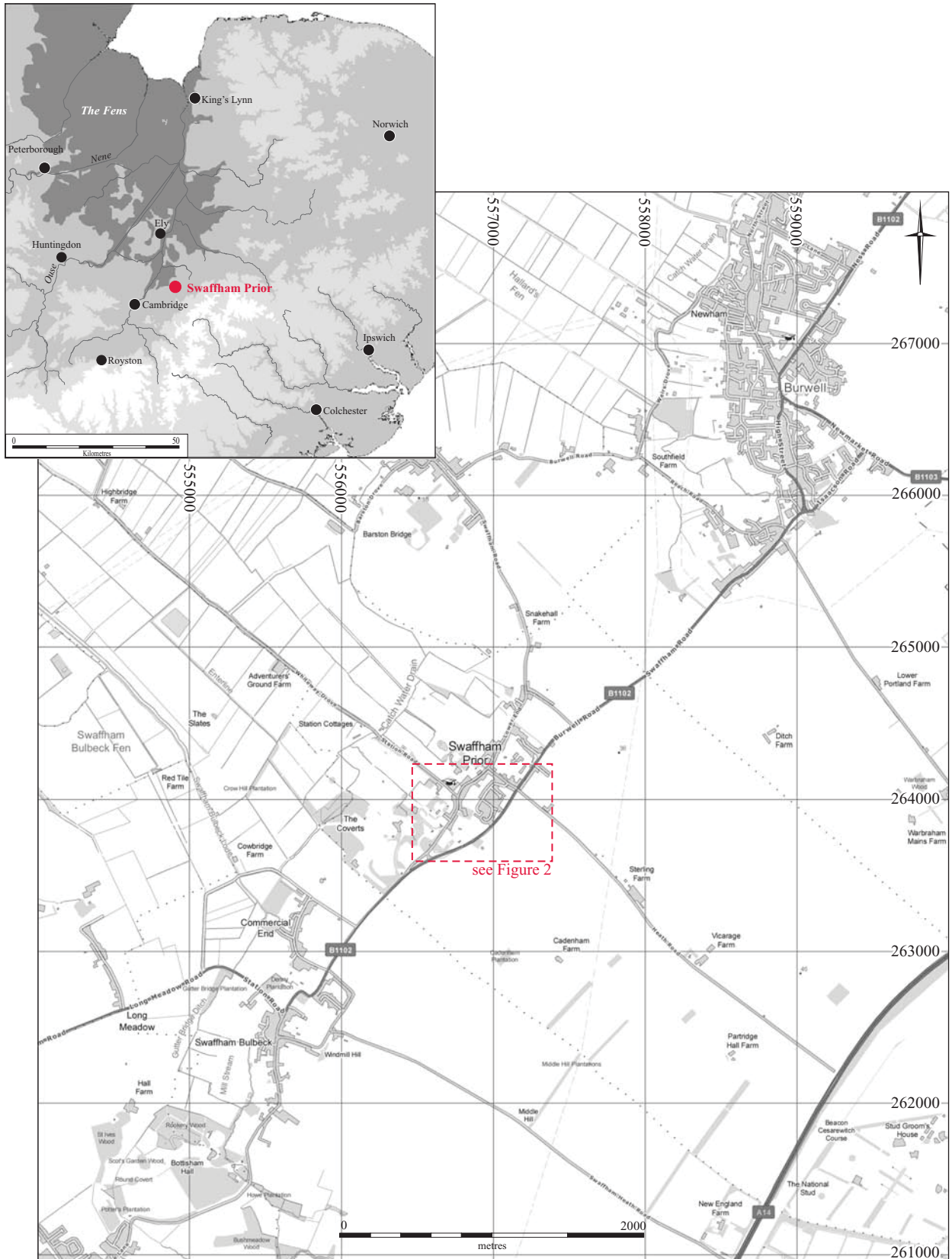


Figure 1. Site location

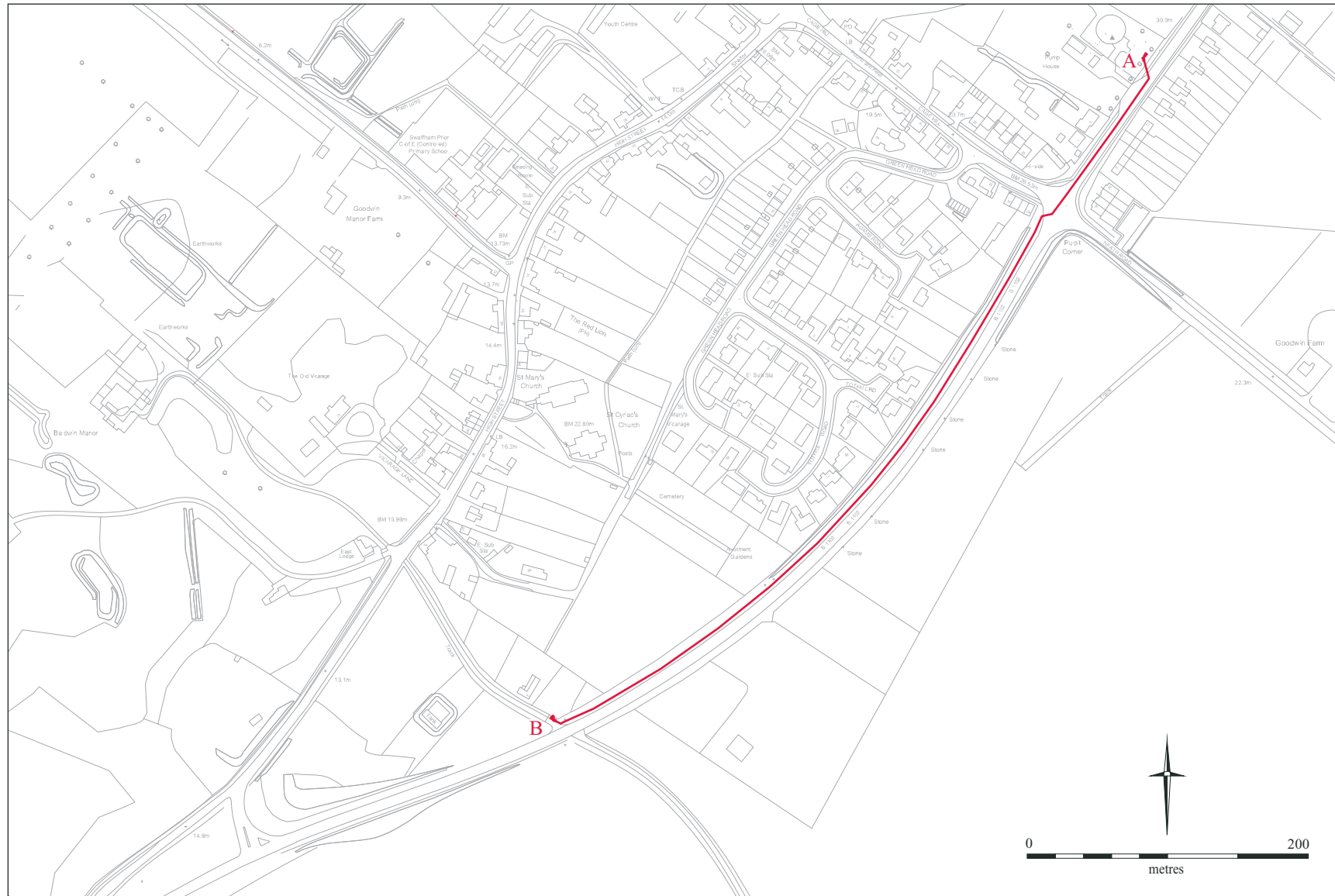


Figure 2. Pipeline route



Figure 3. Pipeline cross-section

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### Project details

Project name	A Watching Brief at Swaffham Prior
Short description of the project	In compliance with a request from Cambridge Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice (CAPCA) Anglia Water commissioned a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording on a new water main route in Swaffham Prior, along the B1102.
Project dates	Start: 21-01-2010 End: 30-03-2010
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 12 - Verge
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE SWAFFHAM PRIOR Swaffham Prior
Postcode	CB25 0JX
Study area	0 Kilometres
Site coordinates	TL 570 638 52 0 52 14 58 N 000 18 00 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 15.00m Max: 30.00m

**Project creators**

Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Emma Beadsmoore
Project director/manager	Emma Beadsmoore
Project supervisor	Hayley Roberts
Type of sponsor/funding body	Water Authority/Company
Name of sponsor/funding body	Anglian Water Services Ltd

**Project archives**

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