

# Biggin Lane, Ramsey, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Monitoring and Recording



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**Biggin Lane, Ramsey, Cambridgeshire:  
Archaeological Monitoring**

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Illustrations by Andrew Hall

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## **Introduction**

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on land adjacent to a residential area on the western edge of Ramsey, on the route of a new water main extending from the north of Biggin Lane to Canberra Close. Four launch/reception pits (referred to as L/RP) were machine excavated between Monday 27<sup>th</sup> September and Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> September. There was evidence of a potential buried soil overlain by a deep layer of sub-soil (in L/RP 1, 2 and 4). One posthole and one narrow linear were recorded in L/RP 1; there was no evidence of archaeological features in the remaining three pits.

## **Topography and Geology**

The launch/reception pits were located at the edge of agricultural fields adjacent to a large drainage ditch, the area lies at approximately 12m AOD. The underlying geology is Chalky Boulder Clay (British Geological Survey).

## **Archaeological and Historical Background**

Abundant archaeology is known within the area and surrounding landscape. Within the immediate environs isolated finds and archaeological features have been recorded including a Roman Samian Bowl (CHER 01550 0.7km east of site) and undated ditches and a pit and gully that were sealed by subsoil (CHER 18127 0.6km east of site). In the wider landscape prehistoric activity was evident from a Mesolithic/Neolithic flint scatter 3km west of the site (CHER 07811) in addition to five round barrows (CHER 03740 4.20km northeast of site and (CHER 03737) 2.87km northeast of site. Bronze Age metal work has also been recovered from the area; a palstave on the western edge of the village (CHER 2810) and socketed spearheads to the northwest (CHER 01746).

Within the village of Ramsey itself, there was evidence of 13<sup>th</sup> century activity in the town centre 0.83km to the east (CHER 16326). Ramsey Abbey (CHER 16055) on the eastern edge of Ramsey was founded in c. 969AD and had evidence of activity from the Late Saxon period through to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. There was evidence of Saxon buildings, a timber building from the 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century and a 12<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century timber framed building. Adjacent there was also a Benedictine Monastery (CHER 02781).

More recently, there is evidence of activity from World War 1 and 2; the site lies on the north-eastern edge of Upwood airfield. This station was established in 1917 by the Royal Flying Corp which closed at the end of the First World War. It was re-opened in 1937 and was home to No. 52 and No. 63 Squadron and became an operational training unit. Later, Mosquitos and Lancaster bombers were flown from here during the airborne offensive on mainland Europe. It was later used for the post-war retrieval of troops, and was officially closed in 1995 (Smith 2007). Aerial photographs show two circular concreted areas in the field of the current site with what appears to be Lancaster bombers 'parked' on each of them.

## **Original Research Aims**

The principle objective of the archaeological monitoring and recording programme was to determine the presence, absence, extent and nature of archaeological activity and to

assess the degree of preservation of any features and environmental remains and how this could impact upon any future development. More broadly, the monitoring aims were;

- To determine the degree of preservation and chronological range of archaeological remains
- To assess the presence or absence of a palaeosol, or a 'B' horizon and with potential truncation of said deposits
- To assess the environmental potential of the site through the examination of suitable deposits
- To identify 'sites' within the development area and determine the relationship of those sites within the broader archaeological landscape
- To assess the regional context of the site and to highlight any relevant research issues within a regional and national research framework.

### **Investigation Strategies**

The launch/reception pits were machine excavated with a mini-digger with a 1m wide toothless ditching bucket, which removed the topsoil and subsoil down to an archaeological level, under the careful supervision of an experienced archaeologist. The unit modified version of the MoLAS recording system was used; all relevant archaeological and geological features were planned at 1:50 and 1:20, with sections drawn at 1:10 and augmented by a colour digital imagery photographic record. Small postholes were half sectioned and linear features sampled at appropriate intervals. Archaeological features were assigned a unique number (e.g. **F.100**; bolded upon introduction within the text) and each stratigraphically distinct episode (e.g. a cut, a fill) was recorded with a unique context number, (e.g. [001]).

The site was surveyed into the Ordnance Survey Grid and Ordnance Datum by means of an RTK GPS unit. All work was carried out with strict adherence to Health and Safety legislation and within the recommendations of SCAUM. A total of 2 features were identified during the monitoring programme, with 4 separate contexts assigned. The artefacts and accompanying documentation have been compiled into a stable, cross-referenced and indexed archive in Accordance with Appendix 6 of MAP 2 (English Heritage 1991). The archive is currently stored at the offices of the Cambridge Archaeological Unit under the project code RSY 10.

### **Results**

The launch/reception pits were positioned alongside the edge of two fields; L/RP 1, 2 and 3 were alongside a grassed trackway; L/RP 4 was positioned in a field recently ploughed and drilled (Figure 0). L/RP 1 was L-shaped as where the water pipe was to turn a corner; the remaining three were oblong in shape. There was evidence of a buried soil in three of the test pits (1, 2 and 4) that was sealed by a substantial layer of subsoil which was also evident in L/RP 3. There was evidence of archaeological activity in L/RP 1 which consisted of a posthole and narrow linear feature (Figure 0). The features were extensively disturbed by tree rooting and no artefacts were recovered to suggest a date.

| Launch/Reception Pit 1 |              |             |                 |           |  |           |                            |  |      |  |
|------------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------|--|-----------|----------------------------|--|------|--|
| General Description    |              |             |                 |           | Orientation  |           | L-shaped, N-S & E-W        |  |      |  |
|                        |              |             |                 |           |  |           |                            |  |      |  |
|                        |              |             |                 |           | Test Pit contained two features; a posthole and linear. The subsoil was mid orange/brown clayey/sandy/silt with occasional gravel inclusions with frequent large tree roots. The buried soil was mid brown/grey clayey silt with occasional gravel inclusions. |           | Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)     |  | 0.31 |  |
|                        |              |             |                 |           |  |           | Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)     |  | 0.82 |  |
|                        |              |             |                 |           |  |           | Avg. Buried Soil Depth (m) |  | 0.12 |  |
|                        |              |             |                 |           |  |           | Approx. Width (m)          |  | 1.50 |  |
| Approx. length (m)     |              | 2.95        |                 |           |  |           |                            |  |      |  |
| Contexts               |              |             |                 |           |  |           |                            |  |      |  |
| Feature No.            | Feature Type | Context No. | Cut/Fill/ Layer | Width (m) | Depth (m)  | Artefacts | Comments                   |  |      |  |
| 1                      | Posthole     | 1           | F               |           |  | None      | Cuts F.2                   |  |      |  |
|                        |              | 2           | C               | 0.28      | 0.09   |           |                            |  |      |  |
| 2                      | Linear       | 3           | F               |           |  | None      | Orientated N-S             |  |      |  |
|                        |              | 4           | C               | 0.38      | 0.25   |           |                            |  |      |  |

| Launch/Reception Pit 2   |  |  |  |                                   |  |      |  |
|--|--|--|--|-----------------------------------|--|------|--|
| <b>General Description</b>   |  |  |  | <b>Orientation</b>                |  | N-S  |  |
| Test Pit contained no archaeological features. The subsoil was mid orange/brown clayey/sandy/silt with occasional gravel inclusions. The buried soil was mid brown/grey clayey silt with occasional gravel inclusions. The natural was orange sandy clay with large flint nodules. |  |  |  | <b>Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)</b>     |  | 0.58 |  |
|  |  |  |  | <b>Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)</b>     |  | 0.60 |  |
|  |  |  |  | <b>Avg. Buried Soil Depth (m)</b> |  | 0.12 |  |
|  |  |  |  | <b>Approx. Width (m)</b>          |  |      |  |
|  |  |  |  | <b>Approx. length (m)</b>         |  |      |  |

| Launch/Reception Pit 3  |  |  |  |                               |  |      |  |
|---|--|--|--|-------------------------------|--|------|--|
| <b>General Description</b>  |  |  |  | <b>Orientation</b>            |  | N-S  |  |
| Test Pit contained no archaeological features. The subsoil was mid brown/orange sandy silt. There was no evidence of a buried soil. The natural was orange sandy clay with patches clayey chalk with large flint nodules. |  |  |  | <b>Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)</b> |  | 0.68 |  |
|   |  |  |  | <b>Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)</b> |  | 0.66 |  |
|   |  |  |  | <b>Approx. Width (m)</b>      |  |      |  |
|   |  |  |  | <b>Approx. length (m)</b>     |  |      |  |

| Launch/Reception Pit 4   |  |  |  |                                   |  |      |  |
|--|--|--|--|-----------------------------------|--|------|--|
| <b>General Description</b>   |  |  |  | <b>Orientation</b>                |  | N-S  |  |
| Test Pit contained no archaeological features. The subsoil was mid brown/orange sandy silt. The buried soil was mid brown/grey clayey silt with occasional gravel inclusions. The natural was orange sandy clay with patches clayey chalk with large flint nod |  |  |  | <b>Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)</b>     |  | 0.44 |  |
|  |  |  |  | <b>Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)</b>     |  | 0.81 |  |
|  |  |  |  | <b>Avg. Buried Soil Depth (m)</b> |  | 0.22 |  |
|  |  |  |  | <b>Approx. Width (m)</b>          |  |      |  |
|  |  |  |  | <b>Approx. length (m)</b>         |  |      |  |

## **Discussion**

This investigation produced little evidence of archaeological activity. The presence of two features in L/RP1 suggests some form of archaeological presence in the immediate area. The lack of archaeological features and residual artefacts in the remaining three pits can imply an absence of archaeology to the east of the area and has tentatively placed the site outside the area of settlement and field systems. Although the limited size of the launch/reception pits must be taken into account as they provided a partial view of any potential archaeological activity within the vicinity.

## **Bibliography**

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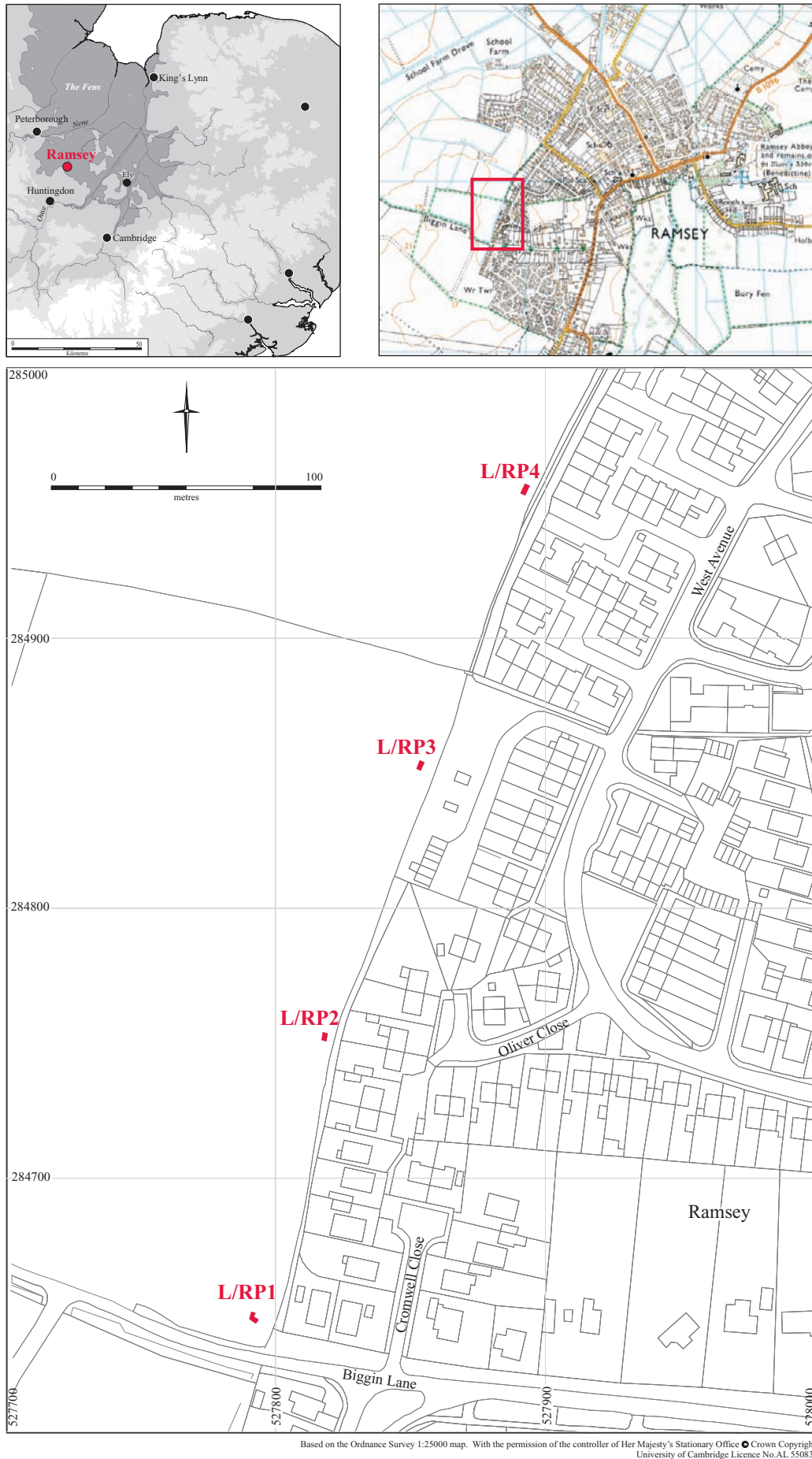
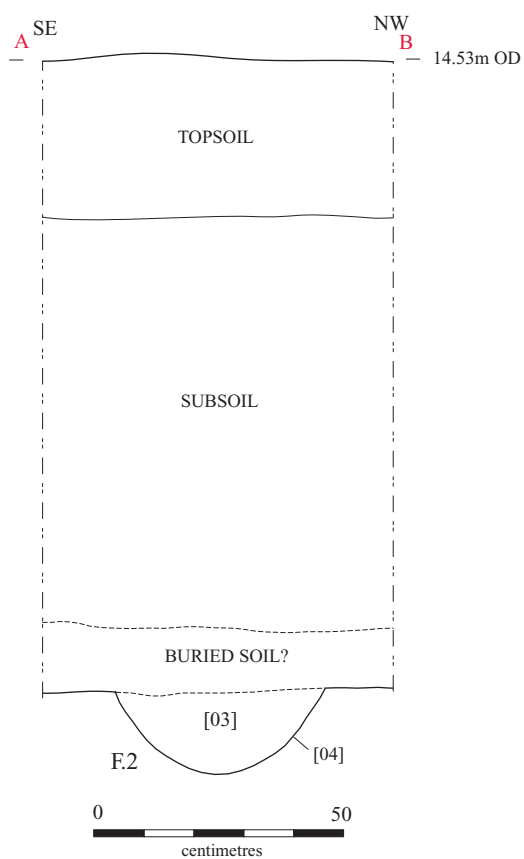
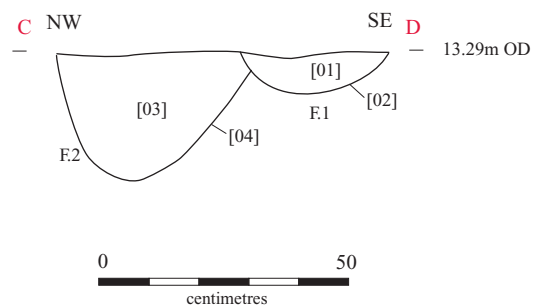
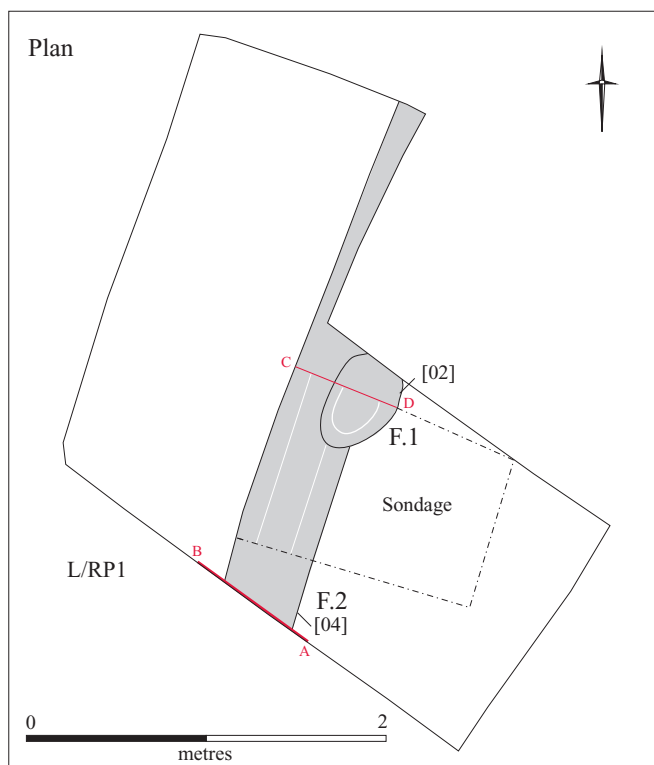
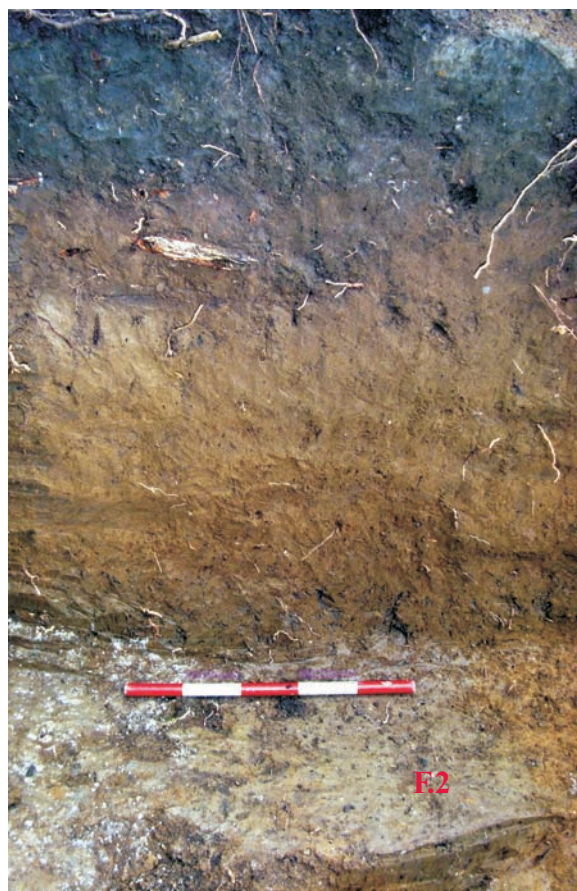


Figure 1. Test pit location



Sections



Photograph of Section A-B

Figure 2. Results of L/RP1

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**OASIS ID: cambridg3-86405**

### Project details

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Project name                           | Archaeological Monitoring at Biggin Lane, Ramsey, Cambridgeshire  |
| Short description of the project       | An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on land adjacent to residential area on the western edge of Ramsey, on a route of a new proposed water main extending from the north of Biggin Lane to Canberra Close. Four launch/reception pits (L/RP) revealed evidence of a potential buried soil overlain by a deep layer of sub-soil. One posthole and one narrow linear were recorded in one L/RP ; there was no evidence of archaeological features in the remaining three. |
| Project dates                          | Start: 27-09-2010 End: 29-09-2010   |
| Previous/future work                   | No / No   |
| Any associated project reference codes | RSY 10 - Sitecode   |
| Any associated project reference codes | ECB 3453 - HER event no.  |
| Type of project                        | Field evaluation  |
| Site status                            | None  |
| Current Land use                       | Cultivated Land 2 - Operations to a depth less than 0.25m   |
| Monument type                          | POSTHOLE Uncertain  |
| Monument type                          | NARROW LINEAR Uncertain   |
| Significant Finds                      | NONE None   |
| Significant Finds                      | NONE None   |
| Methods & techniques                   | 'Test Pits'   |
| Development type                       | Pipelines/cables (e.g. gas, electric, telephone, TV cable, water, sewage, drainage etc.)  |
| Prompt                                 | Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16   |

Position in the planning process      After full determination (eg. As a condition)

### Project location

Country      England

Site location      CAMBRIDGESHIRE HUNTINGDONSHIRE RAMSEY Biggin Lane

Postcode      PE26 1BB

Study area      10.00 Square metres

Site coordinates      TL 278 847 52.4447222222 -0.119166666667 52 26 41 N 000 07 09 W Point

Lat/Long Datum      Unknown

### Project creators

Name of Organisation      Cambridge Archaeological Unit

Project brief originator      Local Planning Authority (with/without advice from County/District Archaeologist)

Project design originator      Emma Beadsmoore

Project director/manager      Emma Beadsmoore

Project supervisor      Jacqui Hutton

Type of sponsor/funding body      Water Authority/Company

Name of sponsor/funding body      Cambridge Water

### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?      No

Physical Archive recipient      Cambridge Archaeological Unit

Digital Archive recipient      Cambridge Archaeological Unit

Digital Archive ID      RSY 10

Digital Contents      'Stratigraphic','Survey'

Digital Media available      'Images raster / digital photography','Images vector','Survey','Text'

Paper Archive recipient      Cambridge Archaeological Unit

Paper Archive ID      RSY 10

Paper Contents      'Stratigraphic','Survey'

Paper Media available 'Context sheet','Drawing','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section','Unpublished Text'

## Project bibliography 1

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