

Nene Infant School,  
Norwich Road, Wisbech



## Archaeological Evaluation Report

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December 2008

**Client: Capita**

OA East Report No:1049

OASIS No:48625

NGR:TF 4653 0938

**Nene Infant School, Norwich Road, Wisbech**

*Archaeological Evaluation*

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*Report Date: August 2008*

**Report Number:** 1063  
**Site Name:** Nene Infant School, Norwich Road, Wisbech  
**HER Event No:** ECB 3010  
**Date of Works:** August 2008  
**Client Name:** Capita  
**Client Ref:** none  
**Planning Ref:** F/02011/07/CC  
**Grid Ref:** TF 4653 0938  
**Site Code:** WISNIS08  
**Finance Code:** WISNIS08  
**Receiving Body:** -  
**Accession No:**

**Prepared by:** Dan Hounsell  
**Position:** Project Officer  
**Date:** 18 / 9 / 08

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**Signed:** .....



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## Summary

*Between the 11<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 2008 Oxford Archaeology East (OA East) undertook an archaeological evaluation at Nene Infant School, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire (TF 4653 0938) in advance of the construction of an extension to the existing school. This evaluation involved the excavation of a trial trench aligned NW to SE. The trench was 12m long and 1.50m wide at both ends.*

*The evaluation did not reveal any Significant archaeological features, finds or deposits that indicated the presence of any substantial human archaeological activity occurring at the site prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. There were two pits containing post-medieval material and a brick built structure, clearly 19<sup>th</sup> century in date.*

*The underlying solid geology was sandy silts overlying Ampthill Clay.*

## 1 THE EVALUATION INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted at Nene Infant School, Norwich Road, Wisbech between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of August 2008.
- 1.1.2 This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Andy Thomas (2008) of the Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and Countryside Advice team (CAPCA; Planning Application No. (F/02011/07/CC), supplemented by a Specification prepared by OA East (formerly Cambridgeshire County Council's CAM ARC, Drummond-Murray 2008). The work was undertaken in advance of the construction of a new school building.
- 1.1.3 The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16 - Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by CAPCA, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.
- 1.1.4 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

### 1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located on relatively flat ground, at an elevation of of approximately 5.5mOD. The nearest water course was the northward flowing River Nene, located approximately 1km west of the site. The site is underlain by Terrington Beds, comprising of sandy silt deposited by two watercourses in effect creating an island of silt, overlying solid geology of the Ampthill Clay.

### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The name Wisbech probably derives from the Anglo-Saxon words 'wisc' (the marshy meadow) and 'bec' (the bank by).
- 1.3.2 Two Roman coins of Constantine the Great were found during the excavation for the railway (Wisbech Harbour NE) in 1850 (HER 03934).
- 1.3.3 An Anglo-Saxon "Urnes-Style" openwork brooch (11<sup>th</sup> century) was found in the ditch at Wisbech castle in 1846 (HER 01926a).
- 1.3.4 The Domesday Book of 1086 records Wisbech as supporting 50 households and that the land was owned by the Abbey of Ely. During the medieval period the town was approximately 4 miles away from the sea and so became part of the port of Kings Lynn.

- 1.3.5 North west of the site lies the site of Wisbech Castle (HER 01926). The castle was first fortified in 1086 on the orders of William the First. In 1236 it was rebuilt following a sea flood before being dismantled before the end of Henry the Third's reign. Subsequent building work during the 15<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries have removed all trace of the original castle earth works, although the shape and extent of the original castle is indicated in the pattern of the town centre.
- 1.3.6 Finds made during building alterations to Wisbech Market include a carved bone and pottery, including the base of a medieval jug also carved architectural fragments and broken gravestones (HER 10489).
- 1.3.7 A vaulted chamber possibly connected to the medieval guildhall exists underneath a post-medieval shop at 29 Market Street (HER 10493). A building now the Conservative Club in Hill Street was probably the guildhall. Within the building are five carved corbels of a style consistent with a date of c1379 (HER 11575). Excavation at Market Mews has revealed a sequence of deep medieval deposits with evidence for industrial metalworking and eight possible building phases, the earliest of which has been provisionally dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century (HER CB14619). The main parish church at Wisbech dates originally from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, with further additions in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries (HER CB14828). The main parish church of Saint Peter and Paul's (HER CB14828) dates originally from the 12<sup>th</sup> century with further additions in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- 1.3.8 In 1549 Wisbech became incorporated and during the Civil war (1642-1646) the town sided with the parliamentary forces leading to the construction of earthwork defences around the town. The town expanded in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century as a result of the drainage of the fens exporting agricultural products to markets such as London. In 1680 the town became a port in its own right. Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the town continued to prosper with the 1810 Act of parliament allowing the Corporation to extensively 'improve' the port and town centre including the rebuilding of the Shire Hall, the construction of the town hall and the erection of a cattle market. Structures from this period include 19<sup>th</sup> century warehouses at North Street (HER MCB 16628), the baptist chapel (HER MCB17216), the Clarkson Memorial on the High Street (HER MCB17825). In 1850 the town became connected by the railways in 1850.
- 1.3.9 The existing school accommodation is of a predominately Victorian red masonry construction with steep pitched roofs and flat infill including minor extensions. Two further extensions have recently been constructed, these have been constructed in a style sympathetic to the original Victorian design. The surrounding buildings are a mixture of residential developments including 1960's flat roofed panellised housing, Victorian terraced housing and recently developed detached and semi detached housing.

## 1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 Thanks are due to Capita for commissioning the work. The project was managed by James Drummond-Murray and the field work was run by Dan Hounsell assisted by Steve Graham.

## 2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The Brief required that the work be carried out by a team of professional, competent archaeologists.
- 2.2.2 Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a wheeled JCB-type mini excavator using a toothless ditching bucket. A single evaluation trench was excavated aligned NW to SE. The trench was 12m long and 1.5m wide at either end.
- 2.2.3 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.
- 2.2.4 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
- 2.2.5 The evaluation was undertaken during a period of relatively clement weather. There were no conditions which may have hindered the recognition or archaeological artefacts or deposits.
- 2.2.6 During the excavation of the Trial Trench, a gas mains was revealed to be running at an angle to the course of the trench 3m from the NE end . This forced the rest of the trench to be excavated 0.50m further to the SW from this point to the NW end of the trench, making the trench irregular in plan. Furthermore the high density of post medieval rubble in all of the contexts above the primary sub soil meant that the SW side of the trench was unstable in places. However none of this hindered the recognition of potentially archaeological deposits, features or finds.

### 3 RESULTS

#### 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This archaeological evaluation revealed two pits containing post medieval material and a Victorian structure. The deposit model presented by the trial trench is presented below.

#### 3.2 Trial Trench 1 (AOD 5.68m-6.11m)

3.2.1 See figures 1 -3 for illustrations of the location, alignment and section drawings referring to the trial trench.

3.2.2 Context **001**. Topsoil. This material was 0.16m-0.24m thick. It was a light greyish brown, loose, mixture of sandy silt containing the occasional small angular stone with 10% rooting. This directly overlay contexts **008** and **009**.

3.2.3 Context **002**. Subsoil. This material was 0.20m-0.28m thick. It was a dark greyish brown, loose, silt. It contained the occasional very small angular stone. This directly overlay context s **007,016 and 018**.

3.2.4 Context **003**. Subsoil. This material was 0.50m-0.55m thick. It was a light greyish brown, loose, sandy silt. It contained occasional small stones. This directly overlay context **019**. This silt build up is a result of the confluence of two water courses in the Nene valley and upon which Wisbech is founded. It was cut into by context **011**.

3.2.5 Context **004**. Post medieval rubble mixed with sand. This was dark reddish loose sand with lumps of cement and 40% small stones and gravel. This material was 0.07m-0.19m thick. This directly overlay contexts **005** and **010**.

3.2.6 Context **005**. Post medieval building rubble. This material was 0.01m-0.10m thick. It was a dark reddish brown, loose sand, containing 60% very small stones and gravel, 10% medium angular stones and post medieval brick fragments all randomly distributed throughout the fill. This directly overlay context **006**.

3.2.7 Context **006**. Post medieval building rubble. This material was 0.01m-0.04m thick. It was a light greyish sand mixed with cement fragments. This directly overlay context **002**.

3.2.8 Context **007**. Post medieval building rubble. This material was 0.01m-0.12m thick. It was a pale yellow, loose, sand. This is a mixture of collapse from the Victorian culvert **011** and surrounding silt **003**. This directly overlay context **012**.

3.2.9 Context **008**. Post medieval building rubble. This material was 0.44m thick. It was a light greyish brown, loose, mixture of silty sand. It contained 15% brick rubble. This most likely represents a dump layer of 19<sup>th</sup> /20<sup>th</sup> century debris similar to 013. This directly overlay context **004**.

3.2.10 Context **009**. Post medieval building rubble. This material was 0.156m-0.18m thick. It was a mid orange brown, loose mixture of sandy silt. It contained a small amount of very small stones and brick fragments, randomly distributed throughout the context. This directly overlay context **004**.

3.2.11 Context **010**. Post medieval building rubble. This material was 0.13m-0.16m thick. It was a very dark reddish brown, loose sand. Two thirds of the context were very small angular stones with medium angular stones and brick randomly distributed throughout the context. This directly overlay context **013**.

- 3.2.12 Context **011**. Foundation cut for mid 19<sup>th</sup> century culvert **012**. The cut was square in plan and steep sided if not close to vertical in profile. This cut was on a NEE-SWW orientation. The cut continued beyond the excavated extent of the trench and so its true length was unable to be ascertained, its visible length was 1.40m long. The visible depth of the context was 1.32m. This directly cut into context **003**.
- 3.2.13 Context **012**. Mid 19<sup>th</sup> century brick built culvert. This was a square in plan structure with an arched roof. Its walls consisted of two courses of bricks. The bricks were 225mm x 108mm x 65mm thick. They were poorly made, from white and red clays with creased sides and were poorly puddled. The bricks were dated to the last half of the 18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Attached to them were traces of cement. This has been identified as Portland cement from the later 19<sup>th</sup> century. The conclusion is that these bricks have been reused from an earlier structure by the culverts builders. Within the structure was extensive rubble collapse and infill but no evidence of any other use than foul/storm water drainage. This rubble fill was not fully excavated and the visible depth of the structure was 1.32m. The culvert ran underneath the extent of the trial trench, its visible length being 1.40m long. The width of its NEE end was 1.70m. Attached to the NW side of the culverts roof was a brick square comprising of 13 complete and cut bricks. This ended at exactly the same point as the culvert walls and so was clearly part of the same structure although it could not have acted as a buttress, its function can only remain conjectural at this point.
- 3.2.14 Context **013**. Post medieval building rubble. This material was 0.15m-0.80m thick. It was a light greyish brown, loose, sandy silt. Half of the context was made up of small to medium stones and brick fragments, randomly distributed throughout the context. This was most probably a dump of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century building debris cutting into the subsoil, similar to 008. This directly overlay contexts **002** and probably **018**.
- 3.2.15 Context **014**. 20<sup>th</sup> century building rubble. This context was 0.20m thick and 0.80m wide. It consisted of a layer of concrete 0.14m thick atop a bed of 11 bricks 0.06m thick. It was rubble from a later concrete floor. This directly overlay context **013**.
- 3.2.16 Context **015**. This was an irregular shaped (sub circular) pit. This was a sub circular cut in plan with gradual sides going to a depth of 0.10m. It had a concave base and an expanded U shape. It was 0.80m long and 0.60m wide in a NNW-SSE orientation. Possibly a post hole or footing for a post medieval structure that has no further trace. It directly cut into the subsoil **003**.
- 3.2.17 Context **016**. Disuse fill of pit 015. It was the single fill of the cut consisting of a dark greyish brown, loose, mixture of sand and silt. The fill contained 2 pipes stems and a piece of crockery all clearly 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards in date.
- 3.2.18 Context **017**. Pit cut. This was a circular, steep sided pit with a concave base. Its diameter was 1.10m whilst its depth was 0.42m. It had only one fill 018 and a U shaped profile. It was in isolation in the trench, so its function is conjectural. This cut into the subsoil **003**.
- 3.2.19 Context **018**. Disuse fill of pit **017**. This was the single fill of the cut consisting of a mid greyish brown, loose, mixture of sandy silt. The fill contained a piece of post medieval crockery and lump of plaster.
- 3.2.20 Context **019**. The natural soil which is a dark yellowish brown silt sand mixture.

### **3.3 Finds Summary**

- 3.3.1 All of the artefactual evidence was clearly post medieval in date from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

### **3.4 Environmental Summary**

- 3.4.1 As all of the contexts above the primary subsoil **003** were contaminated by post medieval rubble, no environmental samples were taken.

## **4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **4.1 Conclusions**

- 4.1.1 This evaluation did not reveal any archaeological features, finds or deposits that could be dated prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. All three archaeological features are firmly from the 1850s onwards. Had any earlier archaeological evidence been at the site then it would have been entirely truncated by subsequent activities.

### **4.2 Significance**

- 4.2.1 This archaeological work was significant as it appeared to demonstrate that the area under study contained no evidence for it being subject to substantial, surviving, human occupation or significant land use prior to the 1800s. The area can be thought of having a fairly low archaeological potential.

### **4.3 Recommendations**

- 4.3.1 Recommendations for any future work based upon this report will be made by the County Archaeology Office.



## APPENDIX A. HEALTH AND SAFETY STATEMENT

- A.1.1 OA East will ensure that all work is carried out in accordance with relevant Health and Safety Policies, to standards defined in *The Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act, 1974* and *The Management of Health and Safety Regulations, 1992*, and in accordance with the manual *Health and Safety in Fieldwork Archaeology* (SCAUM 1997).
- A.1.2 Risk assessments prepared for the OA East office will be adhered to.
- A.1.3 OA East has Public Liability Insurance. Separate professional insurance is covered by a Public Liability Policy.
- A.1.4 Full details of the relevant Health and Safety Policies and the unit's insurance cover can be provided on request.

## APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Drummond Murray, J. 2008. Specification For An Archaeological Evaluation: Nene Infant School, Norwich Road, Wisbech.

Thomas, A. 2008. Brief For An Archaeological Evaluation: Nene Infant School, Norwich Road, Wisbech.

## APPENDIX B. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

### Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-48625			
Project Name	Nene Infant School, Norwich Road, Wisbech: An Archaeological Evaluation			
Project Dates (fieldwork)	Start	11-08-2008	Finish	12-08-2008
Previous Work (by OA East)	No		Future Work	No

### Project Reference Codes

Site Code	WISNIS08	Planning App. No.	F/02011/07/CC
HER No.	ECB3010	Related HER/OASIS No.	N/A

### Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Development Type	Public Building

### Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - interpretation	<input type="checkbox"/> Grab-Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Gravity-Core	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sample Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Annotated Sketch	<input type="checkbox"/> Laser Scanning	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure
<input type="checkbox"/> Augering	<input type="checkbox"/> Measured Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Targeted Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Dendrochronological Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Metal Detectors	<input type="checkbox"/> Test Pits
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Documentary Search	<input type="checkbox"/> Phosphate Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Topographic Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Photogrammetric Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Vibro-core
<input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwalking	<input type="checkbox"/> Photographic Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit)
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Rectified Photography	

### Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
sewer	Post Medieval 1540 to 1901	brick built sewer	Post Medieval 1540 to 1901
	Select period...		Select period...
	Select period...		Select period...

### Project Location

County	Cambridge	Site Address (including postcode if possible)	
District	North Cambridgeshire	Nen Infant School Norwich Road Wisbech PE13 3UX	
Parish	Wisbech		
HER	Cambridgeshire HER		
Study Area	225 m2	National Grid Reference	TF 4653 0938

## Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	Andy Thomas
Project Design Originator	James Drummond Murray
Project Manager	James Drummond Murray
Supervisor	Dan Hounsell

## Project Archives

Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
N/A	OA East	Cambs County Store
Accession ID ...	WISNIS08	WISNIS08

## Archive Contents/Media

	Physical Contents	Digital Contents	Paper Contents
Animal Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stratigraphic		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Textiles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Bone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Stone/Lithic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Digital Media	Paper Media
<input type="checkbox"/> Database	<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photos
<input type="checkbox"/> GIS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Context Sheet
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysics	<input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence
<input type="checkbox"/> Images	<input type="checkbox"/> Diary
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illustrations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drawing
<input type="checkbox"/> Moving Image	<input type="checkbox"/> Manuscript
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spreadsheets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Map
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Matrices
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Text	<input type="checkbox"/> Microfilm
<input type="checkbox"/> Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/> Misc.
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research/Notes
	<input type="checkbox"/> Photos
	<input type="checkbox"/> Plans
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Survey

### Notes:

## Drawing Conventions

### Plans

Limit of Excavation	—————
Deposit - Conjectured	- - - - -
Natural Features	—————
Sondages/Machine Strip	- · - · - ·
Intrusion/Truncation	- · - · - ·
Illustrated Section	————— <span style="color: red;">S.14</span>
Archaeological Deposit	
Excavated Slot	
Rooting Deposit	
Cut Number	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">118</span>
Structure Number	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">118</span>

### Sections

Limit of Excavation	- · - · - ·
Cut	—————
Cut-Conjectured	- - - - -
Deposit Horizon	—————
Deposit Horizon - Conjectured	- · - · - ·
Intrusion/Truncation	- · - · - ·
Top Surface/Top of Natural	—————
Break in Section/ Limit of Section Drawing	- - - - -
Cut Number	<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">118</span>
Deposit Number	117
Ordnance Datum	18.45m OD 
Stone	

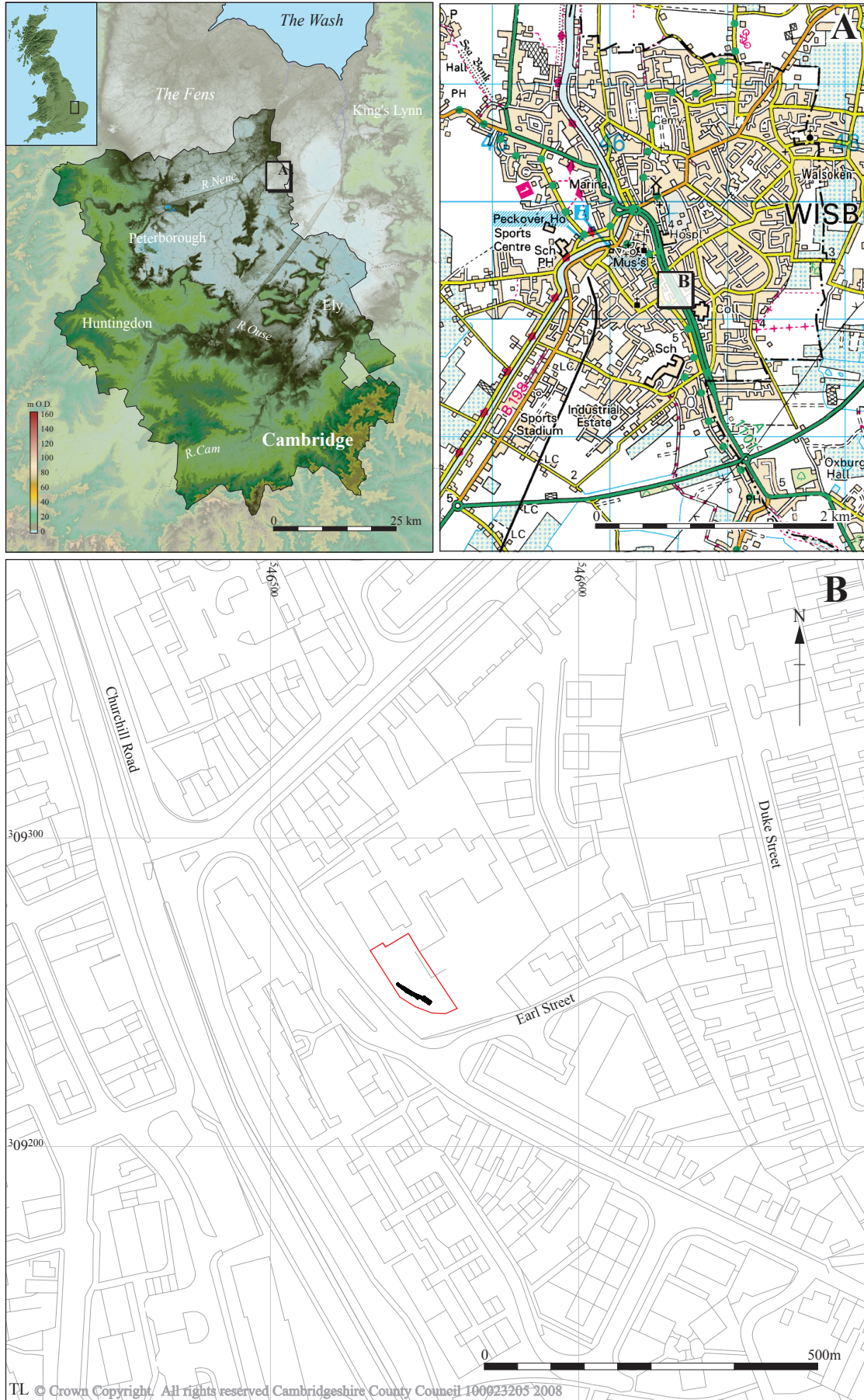


Figure 1: Location of excavation (black) and development area highlighted (red)



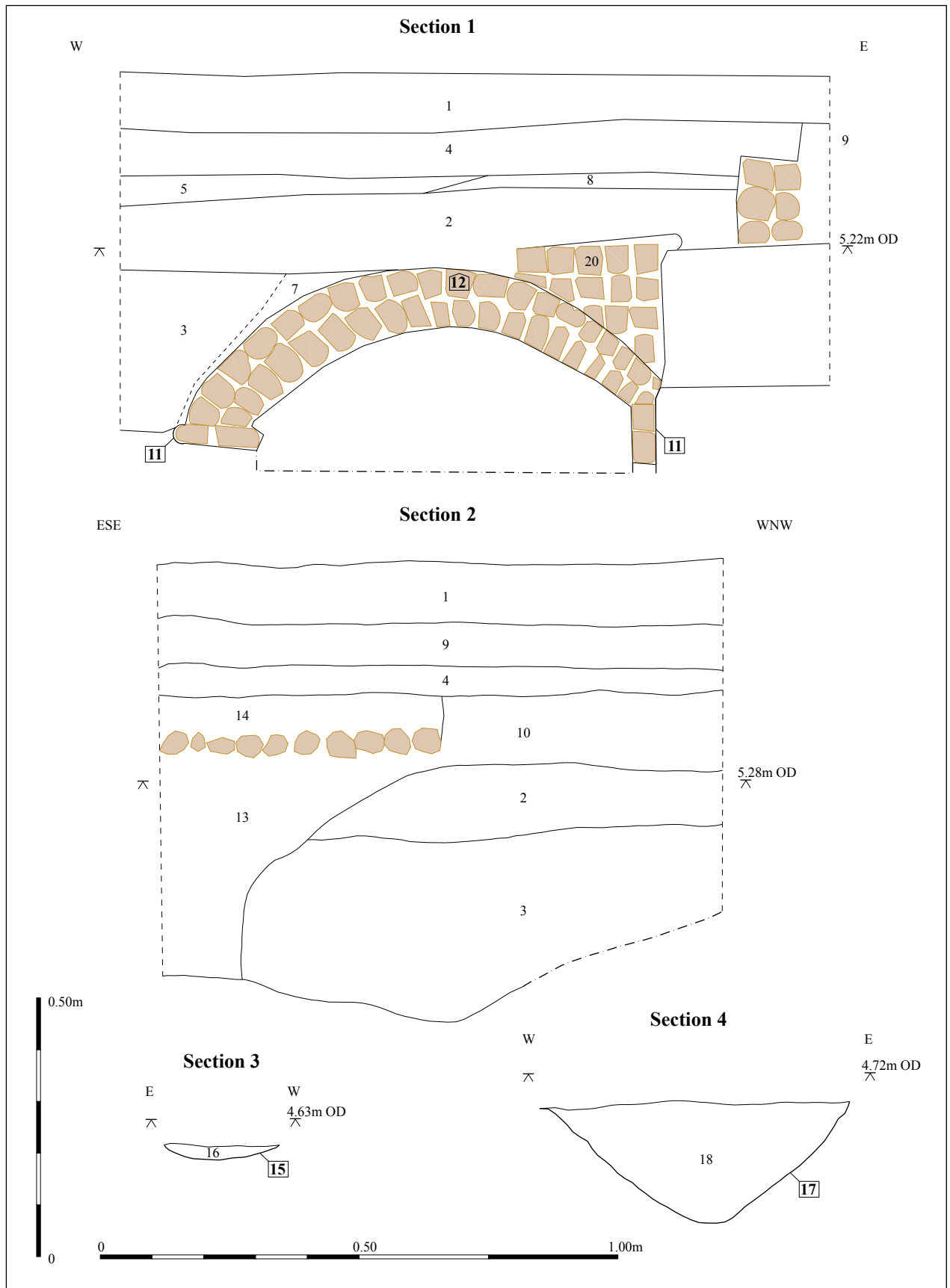


Figure 3: Sections 1 - 4





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