Land at Stukeley Road, Huntingdon

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Archaeological Evaluation Report

OA East Report Number 1038

Land at Stukeley Road, Huntingdon

Archaeological Evaluation

Jonathan House BA

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Site Code: HUN SUD 08
CHER Event Number: ECB 2947
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Contents

OA East OASIS Report Form **OASIS Number: cambridg1-46490**

PROJECT DETAILS				
Project name	Land at Stukeley Road, Huntingdon.			
Short description	The site lies adjacent to the Roman Road Ermine street, which appears to have remained in use up to the present day, Stukeley Road. The archaeological evidence appears to represent the outer limits of 12th to 13th century Huntingdon. The archaeological remains appeared to be concentrated in the part of the site immediately adjacent to the road.			
Project dates	Start	09/06/08	End	12/06/08
Previous work			Future work	unknown
Associated project reference codes	HUNSUD08, 0800979FUL, ECB2947			
Type of project	Evaluation, Trial trenches.			
Site status				
Current land use (list all that apply)	Residential Urban			
Planned development	Residential Flats			
Monument types / period (list all that apply)	Rubbish Pits, boundary Ditch, Post Holes, 12th to 13th century.			
Significant finds: Artefact type / period (list all that apply)	.			
PROJECT LOCATION				
County	Cambridgeshire	Parish	Huntingdon	
HER for region	Cambridgeshire			
Site address (including postcode)	Stukeley Road, Huntingdon PE29 6HG.			
Study area (sq.m or ha)	7688sqm			
National grid reference	TL 2329 7245			
Height OD	Min OD	10.84m	Max OD	11.59m
PROJECT ORIGINATORS				
Organisation	OA East			
Project brief originator	Eliza Gore			
Project design originator	James Drummond Murray			
Director/supervisor	Jonathan House			
Project manager	James Drummond Murray			
Sponsor or funding body	Campbell Rees Partnership			
ARCHIVES	**Location and accession number**		**Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone, database, context sheets etc)**	
Physical	HUN SUD 08		Pottery, Animal Bone	
Paper	HUN SUD 08		Evaluation Sheets, Drawings, Project notes.	
Digital	HUN SUD 08		Photos	
BIBLIOGRAPHY				
Full title	Land at Stukeley Road, Huntingdon.			
Author(s)	Jonathan House			
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Summary

The site lies adjacent to the Roman Road Ermine Street, the line of which appears to have remained in use up to the present day as Stukeley Road.
The fieldwork took place in June 2008 and was carried out by Cambridgeshire County Council's CAM ARC (now Oxford Archaeology East). A total of 4 trenches were excavated

The archaeological evidence appears to represent the outer limits of 12th to 13th century Huntingdon. The archaeological remains appeared to be concentrated in the part of the site immediately adjacent to the road.

1 Introduction

This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Eliza Gore of the Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and Countryside Advice team (CAPCA; Planning Application (0800979FUL), supplemented by a Specification prepared by OA East.

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.

The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

2 Geology and Topography

The site is situated on London clay with areas of overlying gravels. There is a small water course to the west, The ground drops away to the west, however there has been much modern ground workings, and disturbance in the area. There is also a railway embankment to the east running north to south obscuring much of the nearby topography.

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 Prehistoric

Little Prehistoric activity has been recorded in the vicinity of the site.

3.2 Roman

The site lies adjacent to the line of Roman Ermine Street. The roadside ditch, but not the road itself, was recorded on the site at Stanton Butts to the north (Spoerry and Cooper 1999). However there is no evidence for settlement in immediate proximity of the site. Stray finds have been made e.g. a bronze key (HER 02613).

3.3 Saxon

A small number of Saxon/Saxo-Norman features were recorded at the site at Stanton Butts (Spoerry and Cooper 1999).

3.4 Medieval

The site lies outside the medieval settlement of Huntingdon but the excavation at Stanton Butts revealed the development of roadside buildings and tenement features. This suggests the medieval settlement continued to the north alongside Ermine Street.

4 Methodology

The objective of this archaeological 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.

Due to physical limitations within the development area, e.g. standing structures on the site, extant and disused services below ground, four trenches were excavated, trenches 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a toothless ditching bucket.

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.

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 photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

Soil samples were taken from appropriate features for environmental analysis.

The site conditions involved a number of factors, some of which hindered the archaeological investigation. As previously mentioned trench location was restricted, as also was the size of trenches. An archaeological feature in trench 3 contained petrol, however this appeared to be isolated contamination, with fuel percolating through the feature and stopping at the clay, resulting in a small pocket of contaminated soil. The water table was also observed, and was seen in all the archaeological features.

5 Results

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 measured 15m by 1.5m, with a topsoil overburden of 0.22m, as can be seen in section 1 fig. 3. Two subsoils were observed the thicker measured 0.36m while the earlier subsoil measured 0.12m. There were no archaeological features observed within the trench.

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was 'L' shaped, 1.5m wide, totalling 25m. The topsoil measured 0.24m, the subsequent subsoils measured 0.37m, and 0.12m seen in section 3 fig 3. Trench 2 contained 7 features. Of these, 3 features contained datable evidence, and were medieval in date. Two undated stake holes were identified (**212** and **214**), as well as two possible post holes (**208** and **216**). A ditch (**206**) was seen running, northwest to southeast roughly aligned to the Roman road, and dated to the 13th century. Another ditch feature **210**, was on a similar alignment, and appeared to terminate within the trench. However no dating evidence was recovered from this ditch terminus. The remaining feature was a pit (**204**) containing animal bone and two sherds, a sherd of developed Stamford ware and a sherd of St Neots or Developed St Neots. The feature was square in shape with the pottery dating to the mid 12th century.

5.3 Trench 3

The trench 3 was partially staggered to avoid electric cables, the trench 1.5m wide and totalled 14m in length. The topsoil in Trench 3 is 0.30m while the subsoils are 0.39m and 0.12m. A total of 8 features were identified, a shallow ditch (**309**) was seen in the northeast end of trench 3, running northwest to southeast, no datable finds were recovered. A cluster of small intercutting features, **315**, **317**, **319**, were recorded as post holes, dating evidence from **315**, and **317** put them somewhere between the mid 11th to mid 12th century. A further separate post hole (**313)** to the east of the cluster of features contained 3 sherds dating to the mid 12th century. Two pits were observed in the trench as seen in sections 9 and 10. Pit **311** contained only a small amount of bone. Pit **303** contained varied selection of faunal remains and 17 sherds of pottery dating from the mid 12th to the mid 13th century. The base of pit **303** was contaminated with petrol. The remaining feature was a very shallow or highly truncated feature (**307**) from which no finds were recovered.

5.4 Trench 4

The trench measured 1.5m in width and 30m in length. The topsoil in trench 4 measured 0.16m in depth, with the overlying and underlying

subsoils measuring 0.30m and 0.13m respectively. Two features were identified, however partial excavation proved them to be modern and of no archaeological significance, small amounts of asbestos were also seen mixed into the soils with other structural debris.

6 Discussion

The focus of archaeological activity was close to the alignment of the road. The finds suggest domestic occupation, however no definitive structural remains were identified. Previous excavation along the road on the Stanton Butts site (ECB2104) found structural remains to be ephemeral or difficult to see. It is likely that the domestic and structural evidence seen at the previous excavation is a continuation of what might be similar, or the same, as the remains seen in this assessment. The overall pottery dating places the site use around the 12th and 13th century a period that saw Huntingdon as a very prosperous market town, which had seen much expansion. It is likely that the evidence seen on the site is the remains of the sub-urban sprawl of the 12th century town, utilising the road. The town did fall into decline by the 14th century and this may explain the lack of later finds. The reduction in the size of the town and the retraction of the settlement, would have lead to a change in use of the land adjacent to the road.

The ditches are not likely to be directly associated with the road, they do however appear to respect its alignment. They may represent the start of field plots or small enclosure ditches. Ditch **206** cuts the subsoil **202**, so the subsoil itself and the ditch may both represent a change in the use of the land to agriculture.

The area the site falls into had been used as a market garden and as the site of nursery, there has been much horticultural use, and this may explain the thick upper subsoil seen in all the trenches.

7 Conclusions

The archaeological remains were only seen in the vicinity of the road, and the archaeology appears to be consistent with that of roadside properties, although no definitive evidence for buildings was observed. The site is likely to represent the town limits of Huntingdon at its 12th to 13th century peak. Previous work 50m to the Northwest, also on Stukeley Road (ECB2104), showed similar dating and evidence of occupation. Together these sites show the area alongside the road was occupied in 12th and 13th centuries. Little or no evidence was seen of any activity after the 14th century, aside from the place name evidence of Stanton Butts, and the more recent documented activity.

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

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the Campbell Rees partnership who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by James Drummond Murray.

The brief for archaeological works was written by Eliza Gore, who visited the site and monitored the evaluation.

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Appendix 1: The Pottery

by Carole Fletcher

Summary

The evaluation at Stukeley Road, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire produced a small pottery assemblage of 31 sherds, weighing 0.312kg, including unstratified material, from seven contexts. The material recovered is a mixture of early medieval mid 11th to mid 12th and medieval, 12th to mid 14th century in date. No pottery dating to later than the 14th century was recovered. The condition of the overall assemblage is moderately abraded and the average sherd from individual contexts is moderate at approximately 10g.

1 Introduction

The evaluation produced a small pottery assemblage of 31 sherds, weighing 0.312kg, including unstratified material, from seven contexts. The material recovered is a mixture of early medieval mid 11th to mid 12th including NEOT and STAM sherds which are common fabrics in Cambridgeshire during this period, and mid 12th to mid 14th century fabrics such as SHW. The assemblage also produced more local fabrics from both the 11th-12th and 12th to 14th centuries which recently been identified by Dr Paul Spoerry and the author (Spoerry pers com.). No pottery dating to later than the 14th century was recovered. The condition of the overall assemblage is moderately abraded and the average sherd from individual contexts is moderate at approximately 10g.

Ceramic fabric abbreviations used in the following text are:

Developed Stamford ware	DEST
Developed St Neots	DNEOT
Early Medieval Essex Micaceous Sandy ware	EMEMS
Grimston-Thetford	GTHET
Huntingdonshire Early Medieval ware	HUNEMW
Huntingdonshire Fen Sandy ware	HUNFSW
Medieval Essex Micaceous Sandy ware	MEMS
Shelly ware	SHW
St Neots	NEOT/NEOTT
Stamford ware	STAM

2 Methodology

The basic guidance in the Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP2) has been adhered to (English Heritage 1991). In addition the Medieval Pottery Research Group (MPRG) documents Guidance for

the processing and publication of medieval pottery from excavations (Blake and Davey, 1983), A guide to the classification of medieval ceramic forms (MPRG, 1998) and Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Post-Roman Ceramics (MPRG, 2001) act as a standard.

Dating was carried out using OA East's in-house system based on that previously used at the Museum of London. Fabric classification has been carried out for all previously described types. All sherds have been counted, classified and weighed. All the pottery has been spot dated on a context-by-context basis.

The pottery and archive are curated by OA East until formal deposition.

3 Assemblage

The assemblage includes pottery types present in both the late Saxon and early medieval periods, however the presence of HUNEMW fabrics which are thought to be post conquest in date, indicate that the earlier material in the assemblage is also likely to be post conquest. The late 12th,13th and 14th centuries are also represented with the presence of SHW and MEMS.

The presence of HUNEMW, NEOT and STAM jar sherds indicate domestic activity on the site between the late 11th and mid 12th century. The presence of HUNFSW, a locally produced medieval coarse ware alongside SHW and MEMS indicate that domestic activity continued into the 13th century and probably the 14th century

4 Fabrics, Forms and Provenance

The fabrics present are a mixture of coarse and fine wares, the late 11th-mid 12th centuries NEOT, STAM and HUMEMW jars would have been used for cooking and storage, a small fragment of GTHET was also recovered however it was not possible to identify the vessel form, though it is possible that it was a storage jar. From the mid 12th century new pottery types become available to the medieval occupants of Huntingdon, local production of pottery continues and HUNFSW appears in the ceramic assemblage. It is not clear if HUNFSW replaces HUNEMW or if production of both overlapped for some time, with HUNFSW developing from HUNEMW. In this assemblage only HUNFSW jars are represented, however other pottery assemblages from recent excavations in Huntingdon indicates that potters were also producing jugs, and bowls. (authors own observations).

Alongside the locally produced jars pottery from several adjoining counties was present including EMEMS and MEMS both fabrics originating in Essex possibly on as yet unidentified sites close to the

border of modern Cambridgeshire. Both fabrics are commonly found on early medieval and medieval sites along the south Cambridgeshire border and in Huntingdon (authors own observations). Jar sherds are most commonly recognised, this assemblage is unusual in that the MEMS sherd appears to be from a jug. The sherds of STAM and DEST show trade with the important late Saxon-early medieval pottery production centre in Stamford, Lincolnshire, in addition SHW from Northamptonshire or the Peterborough area is present in the medieval assemblage.

Pottery present in the assemblage comes from a wide range of sources including as mentioned, local products HUNEMW and HUNFSW which have only been recently recognised and for which unfortunately no kiln has yet been located, however recent excavations have produced a possible waster sherd from the town centre excavations undertaken by OA East (formerly CAM ARC) in 2007 suggesting a kiln in the near vicinity The presence of so many different fabrics in such a small assemblage is not unsurprising Huntingdon was and is an important market town and was granted a charter in 1205 confirming the towns status as a borough and granting Huntingdon the right to hold a weekly market, where among many other things you would have found potters trading their wares.

5 Statement of Research Potential

An assemblage of this size would often provide only basic dating information for a site, however this assemblage was recovered from an area close to two previous excavations undertaken in 1996 and 1999 (Huntingdon Stukeley Road 1996, and Huntingdon Stukeley Road 1999, both Spoerry forthcoming) In light of this the assemblage offers another insight into the early medieval and medieval occupation of this area of Huntingdon. However the small size of the assemblage does limit the work that might be undertaken.

Should further work be undertaken this assemblage should be reassessed alongside any new material recovered and with reference to the earlier excavated material.

Appendix 2

Dating Table

Context	Fabric	Basic Form	Sherd Count	Sherd Weight in kg	Date Range for the Context
203	DEST	Jug	1	0.004	c. mid 12th century
	NEOT/DNEOT		1	0.008	
205	MEMS		1	0.016	13th century
	HUNEMW/HUNFSW		1	0.032	
	NEOT		1	0.007	
	SHW		1	0.006	
	SHW	Jar	1	0.015	
215	HUNEMW/HUNFSW	Jar	1	0.01	11th-12th century
304	EMEMS		2	0.013	Mid 12th to mid-late 13th century
	GTHET		1	0.004	
	HUNEMW		2	0.009	
	HUNEMW		2	0.009	
	HUNEMW/HUNFSW	Jar	2	0.052	
	HUNFSW		2	0.022	
	HUNFSW	Jar	1	0.017	
	NEOT	Jar	3	0.029	
	SHW		2	0.027	
312	DNEOT/SHW		2	0.016	c. mid 12th century
	NEOT	Jar	1	0.009	
314	NEOT		1	0.002	Mid 11th to mid 12th century
	NEOT	Jar	1	0.002	
316	STAM	Jar	1	0.003	Mid 11th to late 12th century

Appendix 3: Faunal Remains

By Chris Faine

1 Introduction

A total of 22 “countable” bones were recovered from the Stukeley Road, Huntingdon evaluation, with a further 25 fragments not identifiable to species, (53% of the total sample). All bones were collected by hand apart from those recovered from environmental samples; hence a bias towards smaller fragments is to be expected. Residuality appears not be an issue and there is no evidence of later contamination of any context. Faunal remains were recovered from a variety of contexts dating from the medieval period. Faunal remains were also recovered from 3 sieved environmental samples.

2 Methodology

All data was initially recorded using a specially written MS Access database. Bones were recorded using a version of the criteria described in Davis (1992) and Albarella & Davis (1997). Initially all elements were assessed in terms of siding (where appropriate), completeness, tooth wear stages (also where applicable) and epiphyseal fusion. Completeness was assessed in terms of percentage and zones present (after Dobney & Reilly, 1988). The ageing of the population was largely achieved by examining the wear stages of cheek teeth of cattle, sheep/goat and pig (after Grant, 1982). The states of epiphyseal fusion for all relevant bones were recorded to give a broad age range for the major domesticates (after Getty, 1975). All measurements were carried out according to the conventions of von den Driesch (1976). Measurements were either carried out using a 150mm sliding calliper or an osteometric board in the case of larger bones.

3 The Assemblage

Identifiable faunal remains were recovered from 5 contexts. Contexts **312** & **314** contained no identifiable fragments. The largest number of identifiable fragments was derived from contexts **205** & **304**. These consisted largely of sheep/goat remains along with smaller amounts of cattle and pig. Sheep/goat remains included a mandible from an animal around 3-4 years old, along with butchered portions of humerus, atlas and scapula, all from adult animals. Cattle remains included an intact astragalus, calcaneus and a butchered proximal radius/ulna. A single pig mandible (most likely from a female around 2 years of age) was also recovered. Context **304** contained portions of butchered sheep/goat humerus and metatarsal, along with a pig mandible from animal around 2-3 years of age. In addition portions of

burnt and butchered goose radius an ulna were also recovered along with the intact pelvis from a common frog (*Rana temporaria*).

Few remains were recovered from other contexts. Context **203** contained a single metatarsal from an adult sheep. Interestingly numerous cuts were observed on the caudal faces of the metaphysis, indicative of the removal of sinew, tendons etc. A portion of neonatal sheep/goat metapodial was recovered from **215**. Context **304** contained an intact dog radius and common frog ulna.

4 Discussion

As one would expect the domestic mammals, dominate the assemblage with the majority representing waste from butchery and possibly bone working, given the cut marks seen on the metapodial from **203**. Geese were kept primarily for meat and feathers. Frog remains are indicative of the general environment at the time. Although small, the taxa observed in the assemblage are consistent with those from contemporary urban sites, with the small amounts of metrical data available suggesting animals of a similar size to sites such as West Cotton (Albarella & Davis, 1994) and Winchester (Smith & Serjeantson, forthcoming).

Appendix 4: Environmental Remains

by Rachel Fosberry

1 Introduction and Methods

Four bulk samples were taken from features within the evaluated areas of the site in order to assess the quality of preservation of plant remains and their potential to provide useful data as part of further archaeological investigations. Deposits sampled were from pits and post holes provisionally dated as medieval.

The samples were soaked in a solution of Decon 90 for four days prior to processing in order to break down the clay component and also to decontaminate Sample 3.

Ten litres of each sample were processed by tank flotation for the recovery of charred plant remains, dating evidence and any other artefactual evidence that might be present. The flot was collected in a 0.5mm nylon mesh and the residue was washed through a 1mm sieve. Both flot and residue were allowed to air dry. The dried residue was passed through 5mm and 2mm sieves and a magnet was dragged through each resulting fraction prior to sorting for artefacts. Any artefacts present were noted and reintegrated with the hand-excavated finds. The flot was examined under a binocular microscope at x16 magnification and the presence of any plant remains or other artefacts are noted on Table 1.

2 Results

The results are recorded on Table 1.Flot volumes are all less than 1ml. Preservation is by charring and is generally poor with charcoal fragments present in all of the samples in sparse quantities. Small numbers of cereal grains of wheat (*Triticum* sp.) and barley (*Hordeum* sp.) are present in all of the samples except in Sample 4.

All four samples contained sherds of pottery and Samples 1, 2 and 3 also contained fragments of animal bone.

Sample Number	Context Number	Cut Number	Flot contents	Residue Contents
1	207	208	Cereal grains	Pottery, animal tooth
2	215	216	Cereal grains	Pottery, animal bone including some burnt bone
3	304	303	Cereal grains	Pottery, animal bone including some burnt bone
4	314	315	Sparse charcoal	Pottery

Table 1: Environmental Samples from HUN SUD 08

3 Discussion

In general the samples were poor in terms of identifiable material. The charred plant remains consist of a few cereal grains that were all poorly preserved, either because of taphonomic factors or because they had been charred at a high temperature. The grains may have been accidentally burnt while being dried prior to storage or during cooking over open fires prior to being deliberately deposited in the pits or naturally accumulating in the post holes.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

The samples show only a low abundance of charred material that is not considered worthy of further analysis. If further work is planned in this area, it is recommended that environmental sampling of targeted features is included as this assemblage shows that there is potential for the recovery of plant remains.

Drawing Conventions

Plans

Limit of Excavation

Deposit - Conjectured

Natural Features

Sondages/Machine Strip

Intrusion/Truncation

Illustrated Section S.14

Archaeological Deposit

Excavated Slot

Modern Deposit

Cut Number 118

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 118

Deposit Number 117

Ordnance Datum 18.45m OD

Inclusions

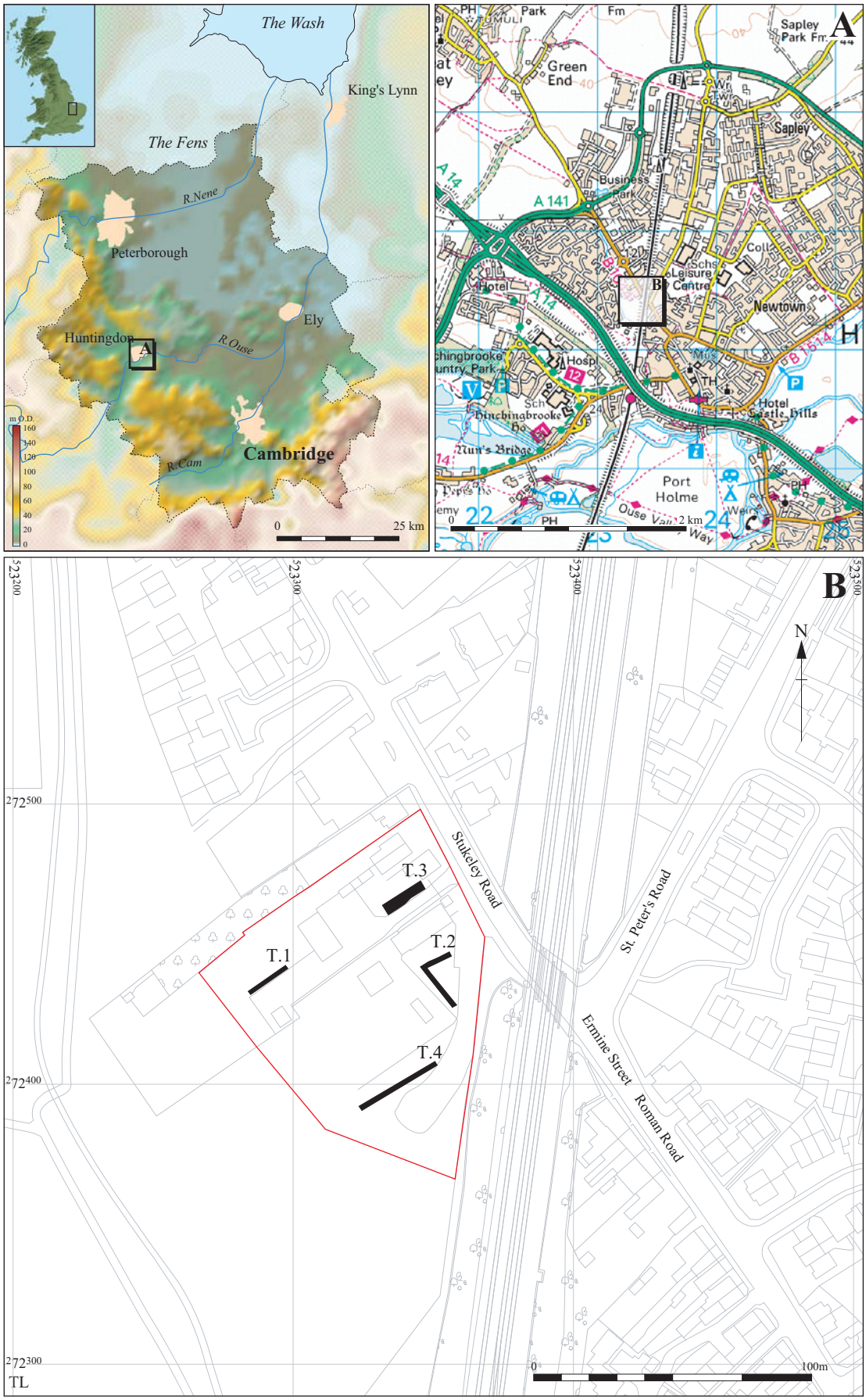

Figure 1 Location of trenches with the development area outlined (red)

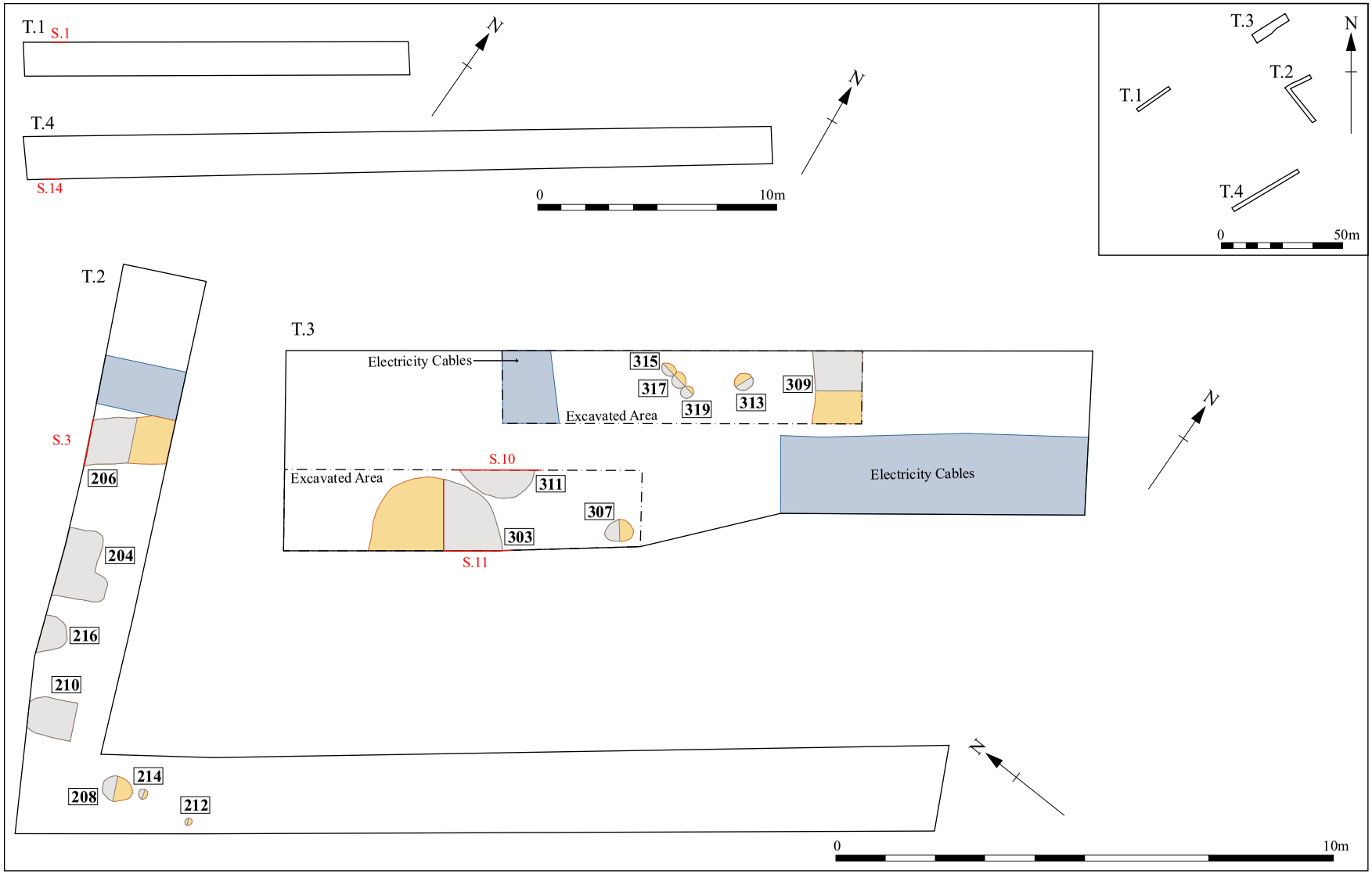

Figure 2: Trench Plans

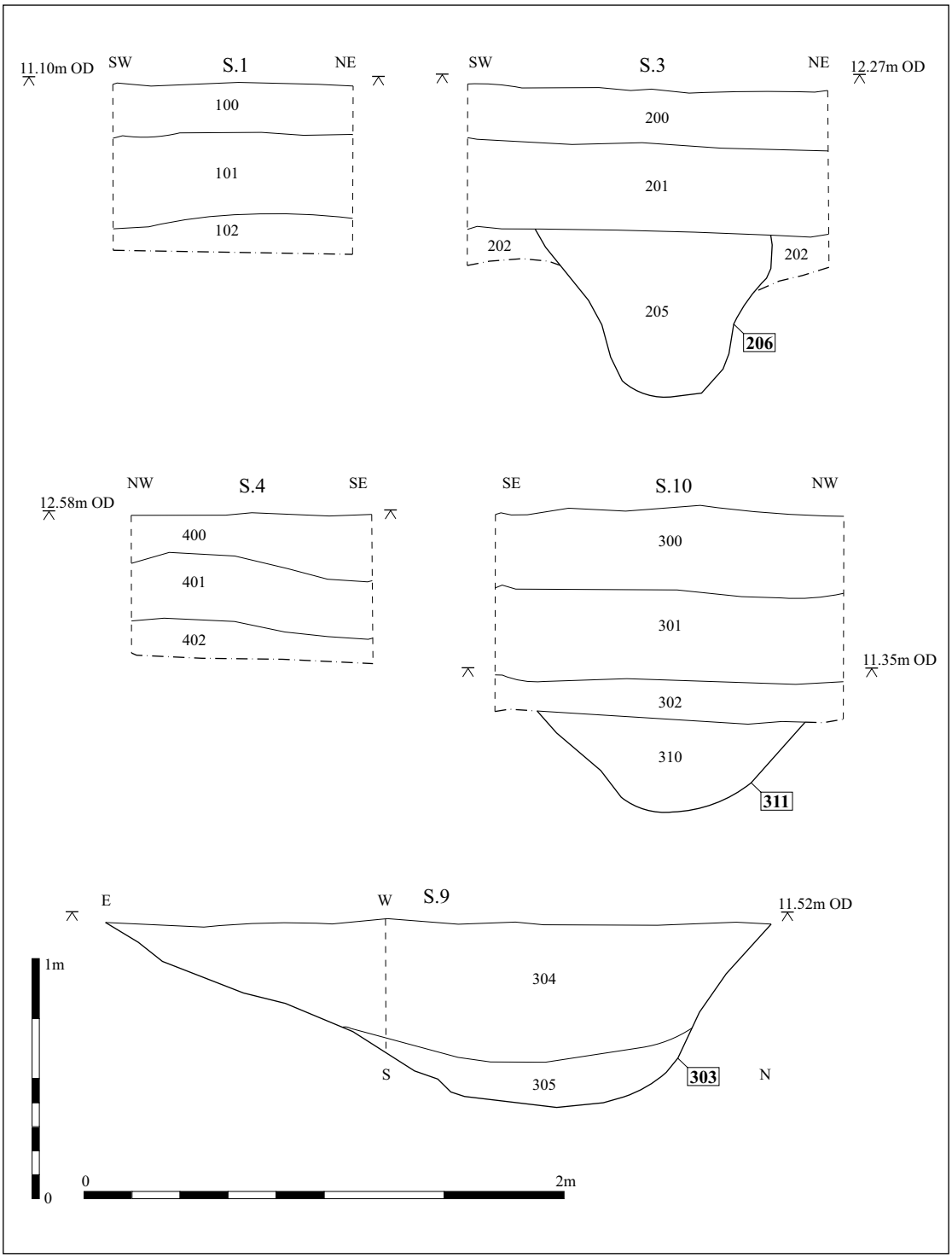

Figure 3: Sections

Plate 1: South facing section of 206

Plate 2: East facing section of 303

Plate 3: South facing section of 311

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