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Roman and Medieval Routeways along the Comberton Eversden pipeline



 Cambridgeshire
County Council

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1993

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Report no. 93

Archaeologists cleaning the pipeline easement, at the site of Fox's Bridge Roman Villa, Comberton.



Archaeological Field Unit

Roman and Medieval Routeways along the Comberton Eversden pipeline

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SUMMARY

Monitoring of the Cambridge Water Company pipeline between Comberton and the Eversden Reservoir was carried out by the Archaeological Field Unit, Cambridgeshire County Council. The pipeline passed through three main areas of archaeological interest; Fox's Bridge, Comberton; land adjacent to the moated site of Little Eversden; land adjacent to Sing Close, Great Eversden. Other areas were also monitored due to the proximity of the route to artefact scatters and cropmarks recorded on the Cambridgeshire County Council's Sites and Monuments Record.

Archaeological remains were only recovered from the Roman villa site of Fox's Bridge, where a number of ditches were recognised. These had largely been disturbed by root action. A combination of historical documentation and archaeology, in the form of earthworks, give evidence of extensive quarrying along the Bourn Brook and this appears to have removed any remaining traces of the villa complex. It is recorded that extraction was for the maintenance of roadways within the parish, Pottery and coinage from the excavation indicates occupation from the late 1st century AD to the late 4th / early 5th centuries.

Results from the other two sites indicated an absence of archaeological remains. Pottery found close to the moated site of Little Eversden is likely to result from the cleaning out of the moat removing leaf litter etc. Historical research based on Sing Close suggests that this wooded enclosure was formed during the early 1800's following enclosure of the field systems.

Archaeological remains were not seen over rest of the route, however the standard of stripping over 7km of pipeline was not always of a depth and clarity normally required by archaeologists, this may have hindered the recognition of archaeological features. However, consultation of historical documents as part of this project highlights the wealth of data surviving for this area and shows the potential for reconstructing the main elements of Medieval and post-Medieval landscapes.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Archaeological Field Unit, Cambridgeshire County Council was commissioned by Cambridge Water Company to monitor pipe line works between Comberton and the Eversden Reservoir during the summer of 1993. The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) indicated three areas of special archaeological interest; Roman villa at Fox's Bridge Comberton (SMR PRN 3462) , adjacent to the moated site at Little Eversden (SMR PRN 1111), and Sing Close, Great Eversden. These were areas where detailed investigation was required due to the suspected presence of important archaeological remains.

2.0 BACKGROUND

The pipeline route runs to the east of Comberton, heading southwards from Barton Road. to Fox's Bridge Farm. The route then turns eastwards towards Royston lane and the dismantled railway crossing the site of a Roman villa to the east of Fox's Bridge, and from this point the route heads southwards towards the A603. Approximately 200m from the A603 the route diverges eastwards to Lords Bridge Pumping Station and south-westwards to Little Eversden, then westwards to the junction between High Street Little Eversden and Harlton Road. The route heads westwards past Sing Close, then west-southwest to the Eversden Reservoir at the junction between the Mare Way (Roman road) and Wimpole way. See Figure 1.

3.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The pipeline route provides a cross section through a landscape with differing geologies. Comberton, and land north of Little Eversden, is dominated by Cretaceous gault clays lying about 25m OD. Alluvium and 1st/2nd Terrace gravels are associated with the Bourn Brook. Around the Eversdens the geology is dominated by chalk at about 40m OD, whilst glacial tills lie on highlands to the south and west, rising to about 70m OD.

The area is bounded to the north, west and south by boulder clay (glacial till). Removal of glacial deposits in the Eversden and Comberton area indicates the replacement of the glacial topography (dissected by spring fed streams) by low lying relief centred on the Bourn Brook, and the River Cam to the east. A north south glacial/preglacial valley lies to the west of the assessment area infilled with glacier deposited material.

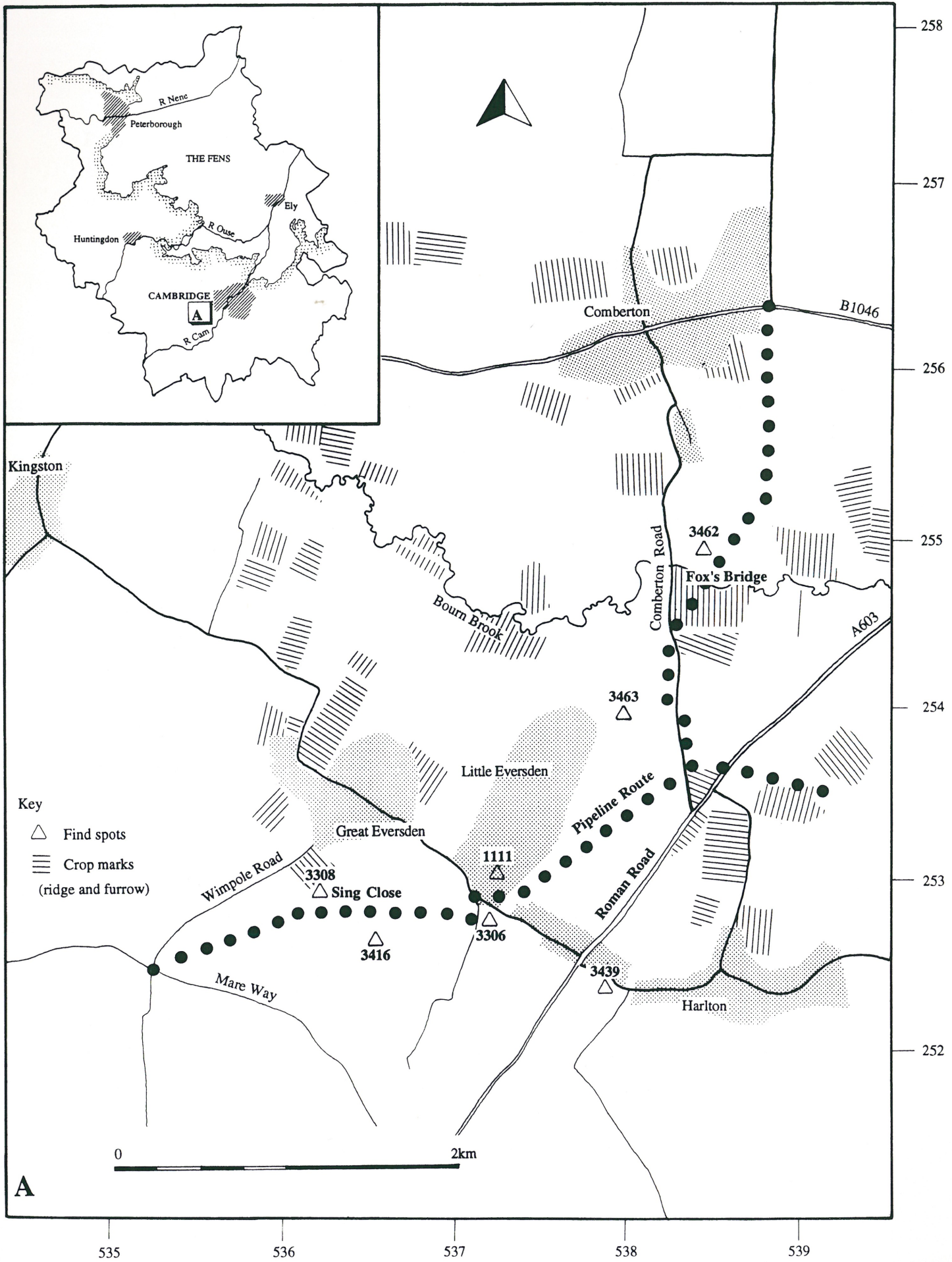


Figure 1 Course of the Comberton to Eversden pipeline. The figure shows archaeology recorded on the County's SMR.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

Prior to trenching an easement approximately 8m wide was opened through ploughed and cropped fields along the course of the pipeline. The pipeline length was examined following stripping in order to define areas of archaeological interest not previously recognised and reported to the County's Sites and Monuments Record. In many areas the top and sub soils were only partially removed and remained to obscure the 'natural' deposits. Walking in areas adjacent to the easement showed no traces of archaeological material, pottery etc. This was taken to indicate the absence of archaeological remains in such areas.

Archaeological work was combined with a search of the historical documents focussed on the areas of particular interest. Very different levels of documentary information were attained for each of the sites due to differences both in the type of information being sought on behalf of the archaeologists and variation in the availability of primary documentary and cartographic material (although the documentary material for Great and Little Eversden overlaps to some extent). Documentary material was widely spread between several depositories with, for example, Comberton material being held in the Cambridgeshire County Record Office (CRO), the Ely Diocesan Records (deposited at the Cambridge University Library) (CUL EDR), and the St Thomas Hospital Archive held by the Greater London Record Office (GLRO ST). This further restricted the amount of work that could be reasonably carried out within the remit of the project and agreed budget. A bibliography of documents consulted is appended to this report.

5.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL RESULTS

5.1 Comberton to Fox's Bridge

The SMR indicates the presence of ridge and furrow, demonstrating Medieval field systems along the course of the pipeline, these were also recognised from aerial photographs. The field is presently ploughed, so earthwork remains are no longer visible. To the north of Fox's Bridge lies a square enclosure and a parallel ditch system aligned north-northwest to south-southeast towards the Roman villa (see later discussion on routeways). Three ditches were recognised in this area. As there was little control over trenching except by further negotiation, dependent on work schedules of the pipeline contractors and owing to difficulties in predicting the activities of the trenching crew with short stretches open for limited periods, recording of these ditches did not occur. The absence of other features such as pits suggests that these are

remnants are of earlier field boundaries and drainage ditches, but none of these were aligned with the trackway shown on the SMR cropmark plots as a series of parallel ditches.

5.2 Roman Villa at Fox's Bridge TL 384/548

The Roman villa at Comberton was an area of particular archaeological interest along the route. It was suspected that quarrying had removed a significant part of the Roman enclosures associated with the villa as indicated by the Ordnance Survey maps and documents held by the County Record Office.

Cropmark evidence indicates a ditched track system entering the field thought to contain the Roman villa. The field is pasture, cropmarks do not therefore show, but it is likely that this trackway would have connected the villa site with contemporary settlements in the region.

a) Roman villa (*SMR PRN 03462*)

The pipeline passes through an area where gravel excavations in the mid nineteenth century discovered remains of a villa site. There are several nineteenth century plans of the area of the gravel quarry, and it is also clearly marked on the enclosure map. The enclosure map marks an area to be set aside for gravel extraction and indicates that this is 'allotted to Surveyors of the highways for gravel'. This covers an area of 2-3-24 acres, bounded on the north by the present day field boundary and is accessed by a small track leading from the west. An undated post enclosure map (CUL MsPlans 379) shows the original allotment for gravel extraction and marks an extension to that area placed between the two main areas. This includes the area marked on the enclosure map as 'already dug'.

It appears that a small amount of gravel extraction had taken place in the area prior to the enclosure period - although earlier terriers refer to a gravel pit much further to the west, situated next to the Bourn Brook. The furlong name immediately to the north of the gravel pit is 'Church Holes' (CUL Ms Plans 379a). This may be related to quarrying or pitting, but is probably derived from the earlier name of 'Church Holmes' recorded in the 1567 terrier.

A graphic description of the discovery of the villa is held at CRO (CRO R58.9.3.32), which confirms the position of the discovery in the quarry on the land of Mr Whittett in

the years immediately following enclosure. In addition to this quarry a second allotment for repair of highways was allocated at enclosure and a clay pit in the Harborough Field.

There is no record of earlier common rights to gravel quarrying.

b) Archaeology of Fox's Bridge Roman villa

Pasture and subsoil was removed within an 8m easement between Bourn brook and the northeast corner of the field. The easement was cleaned and archaeology excavated by staff of the Archaeological Field Unit.

The easement could be divided into three sedimentary units. In the north lies a mixed layer of 'modern' building rubble, further stripping showed that this extended downwards into a large quarry pit. The second area lies above the river terrace, consisted of mottled grey brown fine gravels and sands. A number of very irregular pit and ditch like features were recognised and excavated in this area to test their archaeological integrity. To the south, below the river terrace lies a dark organic deposit presumably associated with development of vegetation along the side the brook.

Five of the potential features proved to be natural tree boles cut into yellow brown fine sands and gravels and often dipping into apparently *in situ* gravels. On the southern side of one of these lay an east west aligned ditch, step sided with U-shaped base containing flint, quartzite, and chalk fragments in a sandy silt matrix. The only find from this ditch was a cow skull.

A large number of re-deposited Roman pottery sherds were recovered from secondary locations within these disturbed areas. The disruption of the ditch system and the quantity of pottery may indicate the disturbance of archaeological remains by tree rooting within adjacent areas.

Only a limited access to archaeological deposits was possible during trenching and pipelaying, this showed that the northern half of the field contained redeposited sediments lying within a large quarry pit. Excavation occurred on the margins of this large quarry pit where root disturbance of archaeological features and redeposition of archaeological material was recognised.

Excavation, machine trenching and machine cleaning all suggest that the removal of a further 10-15cm by machining during easement stripping would have greatly aided the process of excavation by defining of features and extent of disturbance at an earlier

stage, this would have reduced the field input required for this phase of archaeological works.

Archaeological features [#] and excavated layers (#):

- [4] Feature containing grey brown sandy silts. Deposit is much disturbed by root action, this is a loose organic sediment penetrating into the natural gravels. The feature containing these deposits is up to 0.50m in depth with slight slope $<45^{\circ}$, the base is very irregular. Feature cuts through gravels on to grey/green clays. Abraded Roman sherds of Nene Valley and Grey Wares were present.
- [6] Feature on the south side of [4] in sondage section, this *ditch* was difficult to discern in plan indicating the need for a level of stripping not accomplished or required by the contractor. The feature is an east-west aligned ditch, steep sided $70-80^{\circ}$. Contains sandy silts with a very percentage of flint, quartzite and chalk pebbles. Finds include a cow skull and abraded Roman pot sherds of Nene Valley and Grey wares were present.
- [10] Sondage excavated to assess an area of grey brown silty sands which appeared in plan to be a series of east-west aligned interrupted ditches. Excavation revealed a tree bole penetrating into sands and gravels ; containing an organic stony deposit which was seen to dip beneath in situ sands and gravels. Slight east-west aligned gullies ([8] & [12]) penetrating into the sands and gravels indicated the likely presence of ditches which had been heavily disturbed by root action. Pottery types include Nene Valley, Colour coated, and Hadham Wares storage jars and bowls dating between the early/mid third to late fourth centuries.
- (14) Deposit of dark grey brown to light grey brown clays with sands and silts. Deposit overlies natural green clays dipping southwards at a shallow angle $<40^{\circ}$. This layer seems to be banked up against the gravel terrace indicating the gradual deposition of probably organic rich sediments along the river bank with occasional flooding and settling out of fine sediments.
- [15] Sondage excavated to assess the nature of a ditch aligned with [6]. Dark greyish brown clayey sands and silts were seen to extend beneath presumed *in situ* gravels, deposits dip $<45^{\circ}$ northwards. The deposits are again loose and organic suggesting similar disruption as seen in [4] suggesting root disturbance of an earlier features
- [16] Sondage excavated to assess yellow brown sandy silts found to overlie red brown silty clays. These deposits were seen to dip eastwards extending beneath presumed *in situ* gravels. The extent of the feature not recognisable at this level. Basal natural gravels were found at a depth of 0.30 and 0.50m.

Unstratified Finds

A metal detector was used to search the spoil heaps following the stripping of the easement by mechanical excavator. Four coins were found in unstratified deposits; a Constantine Commemorative (330-346 AD), Constans (337-350 AD), Valens (364-378 AD) and a 4th century coin.

Aerial Photograph showing pipeline easement running through ploughed and pasture fields east of Fox's Bridge Roman villa and north of Bourn Brook. The photograph also shows the extent of quarrying east of the villa site. (Photograph by Tim Malim)



Aerial photograph showing the pipeline easement between Wimpole Way and the Eversdens passing Sing Close (Photograph by Tim Malim)



Pottery by G. Lucas

Around fourteen different fabrics were identified, mostly coarsewares of local manufacture; interestingly, the date of the pottery more or less covers the whole of the Roman period, although features can be attributed more specific dates within this periods where they occur in undisturbed deposits. Three main dates stand out; late 1st century AD, early-mid 3rd century AD and late 4th- early 5th century AD, the latter being the most predominant in terms of quantity of pottery. Apart from the occasional Samian, the finewares mostly come from British kilns, ie. Nene Valley, Oxfordshire and Hadham, which are the typical late Roman finewares one would expect to find in this region. The state of the pottery, in nearly all cases, is not terribly good, this could point to factors such as curation or the nature of deposition. The presence of quite a high proportion of finewares suggests the local importance of the site.

Conclusions from Excavation at the Roman villa, Fox's Bridge, Comberton

The deposits indicate major disturbance of the archaeological record through quarrying and root action. It is unlikely that any traces of the villa complex exist in the immediate vicinity and the pipeline has clearly shown the extent of the post-Medieval gravel extraction, as represented both by earthworks and the impact on earlier archaeological remains. This work has also been extremely useful in adding information on the potential survival of the villa site and related archaeological remains.

c) Fox's Bridge TL382/548

As part of the wider remit on the organisation of road networks in the parish (see below) it was hoped to establish the date of the construction of Fox's Bridge. The earliest reference to 'Fox Holes Bridge' recovered during this research is within the terrier of 1567 (H1/ST/E107/1 held GLRO). Manorial court rolls from 1486 onward were consulted but no further reference was traced, this *does not* mean that the bridge was not extant in that period. It is possible that a different name was used prior to 1567.

d) Communications Network

It has been suggested that the Roman villa discussed above may have been connected by a road network to surrounding Roman sites and that certain other routes, which survived until the enclosure period, might have originated either in the Roman or Prehistoric periods (*Oosthuizen pers comm*). It is not possible within the limitations of this project to fully investigate this possibility, but the rich collection of documentary materials at the GLRO St Thomas collection, which were consulted in connection with the main questions above, did throw some light on this problem.

Important documents for this reconstruction of the layout of the pre-enclosure parish is a series of estate maps of 1723 (QCC H1/ST/E107/2). These are fully described by Bendall (unpub.PhD). Although not a complete survey (omitting those areas not held by Birdlines manor) they indicate many of the furlong and field names and, importantly,

the routeways through these fields. A very detailed terrier of 1567 (QCC H1/ST/E107/1) can be compared against these maps to produce a 'composite' picture. This can be supplemented by references in the manor court rolls of 1486 onwards (QCC H1/ST/E72/1-11).

There are several points that can be made from the information held in these documents.

i) There was originally more than one crossing of the Bourn Brook. In addition to Fox's Bridge there was a ford known as the 'common ford' which lay below the lords gravel pit in the 'Stallow field' next to 'Stallowholes'. This appears to have lain somewhere in the far southeast of the parish - perhaps in the approximate area of 'Lords Bridge'. Also in the southeast was 'Stallow Bridge', referred to in 1567 and again in the court rolls of 1486 and 1505, when it was referred to as the 'Stalwelbrege'. The only location given for this is 'Stalwelfolde'. It is possible that one of these two 'extra' crossings may have connected with the 'Port Way' at Harlton parish (to the south) which led to the Bourn Brook at approx. TL 392/546 (CRO 124/PS2).

ii) There was a complex network of paths and roads within the parish prior to enclosure. Many of these are listed within the enclosure award (CRO R54/22/1), the majority of them being stopped up, not all of these are marked in the accompanying map. Reference to the earlier maps, terriers and rolls enables partial reconstruction of this earlier landscape. These routes include Stallow Way which crossed northwest to southeast across Stallow Field, a 'mayor way' (mere?) also laying in this field, and a Great Hodge Way above Stallow Way. West Field was crossed by Mill Hill Way and The Broad Way, and Harborough Field the Long Good Way, Long Bellow Way and Little Offield Way. North Field was bounded by the St 'Neads' road and Dux Way (all from 1723 maps).

The 1567 terrier refers to 'Portwaie' furlong and 'Portwaie', in 'Herberfelde'; 'Seynte Nedes Waie', 'Dux waye', and 'Potters waie' in 'Northefelde'; 'Stallow waie' in 'Stallowfelde'. There are also references to the 'Barton waie' and the 'highway to Cambridge'. In the court rolls for 1486 there is a further reference to 'Pottersweye' laying in 'Northefolde' and 'Portweye' is referred to in 1279 (Reaney, 1943 p.28).

iii) The references to Port way and Potters way are particularly interesting. The derivation of both these names (as they appear in other parishes) is discussed by Reaney (*ibid.*) who suggests that they are of Roman or earlier date.

With the aid of the terrier and maps it would be possible, given considerable time, to map the sixteenth century landscape of the parish, including these early routeways. There appears to be strong evidence for a Roman or pre-Roman network of roads in the area some of which are probably connected to known archaeological sites in the vicinity.

During excavation the pipeline will have disturbed several of these routes and boundaries. These trackways do not appear to have left any archaeological traces.

5.3 Bourn Brook to A603

The easement passed through two areas where cropmarks indicate ridge and furrow. No traces of these Medieval cultivation remains are visible in the field and no finds were recovered during the walking of the easement. The SMR reports the presence of Roman pottery approximately 200m to the west of this field.

5.4 A603 to Lords Bridge Pumping Station

The easement passed through two areas of cropmark ridge and furrow. No traces of such remains were encountered during these works. No finds were recovered.

5.5 A603 to Little Eversden

No remains are recorded on the SMR. A field boundary marked by hedging continues as a slight stone wall about 1m long before turning into a drain to the west of the moated site of Little Eversden. No finds were recovered.

5.6 Eversden Moated Site TL 373/529

The second area of special interest recognised by the CAO was to the south of the moated site of Little Eversden, where Medieval pottery and a Neolithic axe have been discovered.

No archaeological remains were recovered from the easement. Field walking to the east of the moat produced a number of Medieval pottery sherds. These were collected from greyer soils at the field edge suggesting that their presence is a result of cleaning out of the moat. The OS Draft of 1810 (1st edition sheet 235) shows a building close to the crossroads in this field. No indication of this structure or associated remains were recognised in the easement.

a) Historical report on the small enclosure immediately to the south of the moated site at Little Eversden.

The proposed pipeline passes through the crossroads to the south of the main village of Little Eversden just below a moated site (SMR PRN 1111). Little is known about the site although fourteenth century pottery has been collected from the surface of the interior (ibid). Attention was focussed on the field lying between this moated site and the crossroads. The field is bounded to the south and east by a stream rising as a spring on its southwest corner, whilst the west butts onto the main north-south street of Little Eversden. Two small triangular fields intervene between the southern extent and the east-west road. No earthworks are extant in this field and no archaeological material has previously been recovered from it.

As discussed above, documentary and cartographic material for Great and Little Eversdens overlap - both parishes having been part of the same manorial system during at least the latter part of the Medieval period, and post Medieval periods.

On the enclosure map of 1811-14 (CRO R/Dc19) this field is numbered 103 and is indicated as being an 'Old Enclosure'. The moated site is no.104 and is shown in considerable detail with a series of buildings inside the water filled ditches. In the index no name is given to the field (this is somewhat unusual, even for an old enclosure) and the moated site is referred to as 'messuage and homestead'. The two areas come under different ownerships - both of whom appear to be minor land holders, Th. Crisp held the moated area whilst H. Royston held the field to the south. Neither men come from families connected with the area (CRO church registers). The will of Th. Crisp (CRO) gives much detail on the buildings within the moated area but does not refer to land outside that area.

Queens College records do not include this area as it was not held of their manor, however east to west roads and surrounding areas are roughly indicated (QC 355a). None of the Glebe Terriers consulted (EDR H1/3) referred to this area and, as the field name or ownership are not known prior to 1814, it would be almost impossible to trace the earlier history in the court rolls.

The area is shown on the OS draft of 1810 where the field is subdivided. However, given the inaccuracy of small field boundaries for Great Eversden this cannot be viewed as reliable.

Unless further documentary material for other manorial holdings is recovered and made available no information can be gained on this area by documentary based historical research.

5.7 Little Eversden to Sing Close

The pipeline route crosses crossroads to the south of little Eversden before continuing westwards towards Sing Close. The only known archaeology in the vicinity was a Neolithic axe. No finds were recovered during walking of the easement.

5.8 Sing Close TL 362/529

Sing close was indicated as an area of interest due to the presence of a small area of woodland/scrub still surviving within an arable field. Potential exists for the preservation of earthworks within such areas, Medieval and Roman pottery are also known from this particular site.

Closer inspection of the 'close' revealed no traces of earthworks. The 'close' is dominated by hawthorn bushes. Dark organic rich deposits to the south showed in the easement, this indicates the once greater extent of the spinney.

a) Historical analysis of the area of woodland known as 'Sing Close' in the parish of Great Eversden.

This small area of woodland scrub had been highlighted for archaeological attention. Small areas such as this in the midst of arable or pasture areas frequently indicate the existence of earthworks or mark areas set aside from 'normal' agricultural activities. The name of the close is somewhat unusual and it was thought this might derive from an earlier name ('spring') possibly connected with the stream/ditch and spring shown to the west of the area on the current 1:25,000 (TL 25/35). This stream, (appears to have been artificially straightened at lower levels) descends from the 70m contour at the southern boundary of the parish running along an extant field boundary towards St Botolph's Rectory Farm. It is one of several small streams/ditches within the parish, most of which drain to the Bourn Brook in the north.

There are no extant tithe records for the parishes of Great and Little Eversden (CRO Handlist Tithe Records unpub.), however enclosure records survive. Enclosure took place in 1811-1814 at the instigation of the Lord of the Manor and seemingly against the wishes of the local farmers. The parishes of Great and Little Eversden were enclosed by one act and a single award and map were created (Map CRO Q/RDc19;

Award CRO Q/RDz7). On the enclosure map 'Sing Close' is marked as an area of scrub woodland and allocated number 76. The stream/drain to the west is not marked but a more sinuous stream is shown to the east, rising at approx. TL364/529. This is called 'Eastwell Spring'. 'Sing Close' and the surrounding fields are marked as 'Old Enclosures' and as such are not discussed within the enclosure award. However, on an index accompanying the map field nos. 74, 75, 76 and 77 are listed as 'Sink Close' with a total area of 9-0-03. Field 76 on its own is 2-3-14 and is somewhat larger than at the present day, the western boundary having moved. Only field 76 is shown as wooded, and field 74 lays on the west side of the road.

The ownership of these fields is divided between the Earl of Hardwick (exchanged from Halstead) and W. White (exchanged from Crespigny).

Just prior to enclosure the first OS draft maps of the area were created and Sheet 235 shows the field systems of both Great and Little Eversden. The enclosed fields do not appear to have extended as far south as 'Sing Close' at that period. There is some doubt over the cartographic accuracy of this draft - but I believe that although there is some error in the internal field boundaries the actual *extent* of the closed fields is accurately shown. If the field names of 1814 are used for reference, then the 1810 map suggests that the closed fields furthest south were the group consisting of 'Buck Rushing', 'Church Dole' and 'Land Dowl'. If this is the case it would suggest that 'Sing Close' was created between 1810 and 1814.

A further set of maps for these parishes is available in the Queens College archives (QCC 328). Unfortunately, in a manner typical of estate maps of the period, these only indicate areas of land owned by the College. However, this map indicates that to the immediate south of 'Buck Rushing' lay the 'open field' and 'field also indicated to the south of 'copy lane' which runs along the southern boundary of 'Land Dowl'. A terrier of 1732 (QCC 15/14) also refers to these enclosures of 'Buckrushing' etc but not to any enclosures further south. It is comparison of the field boundaries shown on this map with those of the enclosure maps (and an even later 1835 map QCC 355/15) that cast doubt on the accuracy of the internal boundaries as shown on the OS draft edition.

A Glebe Terrier of 1638 (CUL EDR H1/3) refers to land held by the church within the open field system. This includes selions within 'Church Field' which are said to be butting north onto Church Dole, and again in 1787 (CUL EDR H1/3), the 'Church Field' is located to the immediate south of 'Rush Meadow' (Buckrushing) and Meare Way. There is no mention within these terriers (or earlier versions) of a 'Sing' or 'Sink' Close laying within the open fields.

Although it cannot be stated conclusively there is thus strong evidence that 'Sing' or 'Sink' close was not created until immediately prior to the enclosure period - when a new block of closed fields was created to the south of the existing 'Church Dole' and 'Land Dole', the previous extent of the closed fields having been marked by a small lane. The questions that remain to be answered are the derivation of the field name and the further subdivision of the field and growth of woodland on one area alone.

The only clue to this may be a comment made by Vancouver in his 'General View of the Agriculture of Cambridgeshire' (1794) where he indicates that attempts had been made to drain and improve the fields of the parish and to cultivate different crops in some areas. He goes on to record that these had been met with 'obstinacy' by the farmers in the parish who had destroyed the new drains. It is possible that 'Sink Close', and its associated stream/ditch to the west are remnants of that early attempt at improvement. The field name is unusual and does not appear to derive from a local name (CRO church registers) and may be a referral to drainage.

5.9 Sing Close to Eversden reservoir

The pipeline course ran westwards from Sing close to Eversden reservoir at the junction between the Roman Road, Mare Way and Wimpole Way. The land rises in this area from 40m to over 70m with the area dominated by a ridge of glacial deposits. Although no archaeological remains are known from the area it was suspected that such a cross roads may have formed the focus for activity.

No archaeological remains were recognised.

6.0 RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Although the level of stripping required by contractor and archaeologist were of differing standards a large sample of Cambridgeshire landscape to the southwest of Cambridge was assessed by archaeological and historical means. No archaeological features were recognised except in areas indicated by the SMR as areas of archaeological significance. Historical documents provided a valuable insight into activities and land alteration, assisting in the interpretation of the 'archaeological' landscape.

The site of the Roman villa at Comberton has been largely removed by quarrying during the post Medieval period, this was recognised from archaeological remains and indicated

by documentary research. Gravels appear to have been extracted for the maintenance of routeways in the parish. A number of undated boundary ditches were recognised to the north of this area, and a large quantity of Roman pottery was recovered during the course of excavations of a number of irregular features exposed within the easement. Archaeological remains not removed by quarrying appear to have been disturbed by tree roots.

Prehistoric finds indicate activity within the study area and the development of a communication network along river courses and trackways from an early date. It is likely that these routes continued in use during the Roman period, acting as a focus; providing a social and economic link between sites such as Fox's Bridge villa with the villa at Harlton and settlements ie Town End Farm, Comberton (SMR 03374). Much of this earlier track system was lost during enclosure or has been blocked up since. Many of the river courses are presently shallow and narrow channeled making it difficult to imagine these brooks and 'rivers' as playing a major role in any waterborne communication network. However, present low altitude streams in Britain are often under-fit due to climatic shifts and anthropogenic land alterations which can result in changes to channel form and sediment input; present channel forms may be significantly different from those seen by Prehistoric or Roman populations. This could partly explain the location of early settlements and their later shift to more centralised locations; changes in a community's local and regional interactions would have led to a re-routing of the communications network.

No significant archaeological remains were discovered from within the vicinity of other recommended observation areas, although pottery was recovered from the field to the south of Eversden moated site this is probably the results of moat cleaning operations. Sing Close was probably formed in the early 1800's following enclosure in 1810, organic remains surrounding the Close indicate the contraction of the spinney in recent years.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Monitoring of trenching along the pipeline route verified the results of earlier research based on the SMR, historical documentation and field visits. The pipeline route avoided important archaeological remains, and areas of interest proved to be either largely disturbed (root action and quarrying at Fox's Bridge) or lacking in (Sing Close) archaeological remains. This landscape sample seems to confirm a picture of sparsely populated human environment prior to the Medieval period.

The use of historical documentation has provided an insight into the management of the archaeological landscape and aided the interpretation and understanding of archaeological remains recovered during detailed archaeological works.

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