

Archaeological Field Unit

**Transco Gas Pipe Line at Kneesworth Street,  
Royston, Hertfordshire:  
An Archaeological Watching Brief**

Spencer Cooper

October 2001

**Cambridgeshire County Council**

Report No. N020

Commissioned by Transco plc

**Transco Gas Pipe Line at Kneesworth Street, Royston, Hertfordshire:  
An Archaeological Watching Brief  
TL357408 (July 2001).**

## **INTRODUCTION**

On the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> July the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit undertook an Archaeological Monitoring and Recording Brief at Kneesworth Street, Royston (TL 357408). The development consisted of a pipe trench for a gas pipe in Kneesworth Street. The pipe trench was located in an archaeologically sensitive area with a number of standing buildings relating to King James Hunting Palace. It was hoped this project might aid understanding of the Palace plan. The project was commissioned by Transco plc.

## **GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

The site is situated within the historic core of Royston at 60.8m OD and on chalk.

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

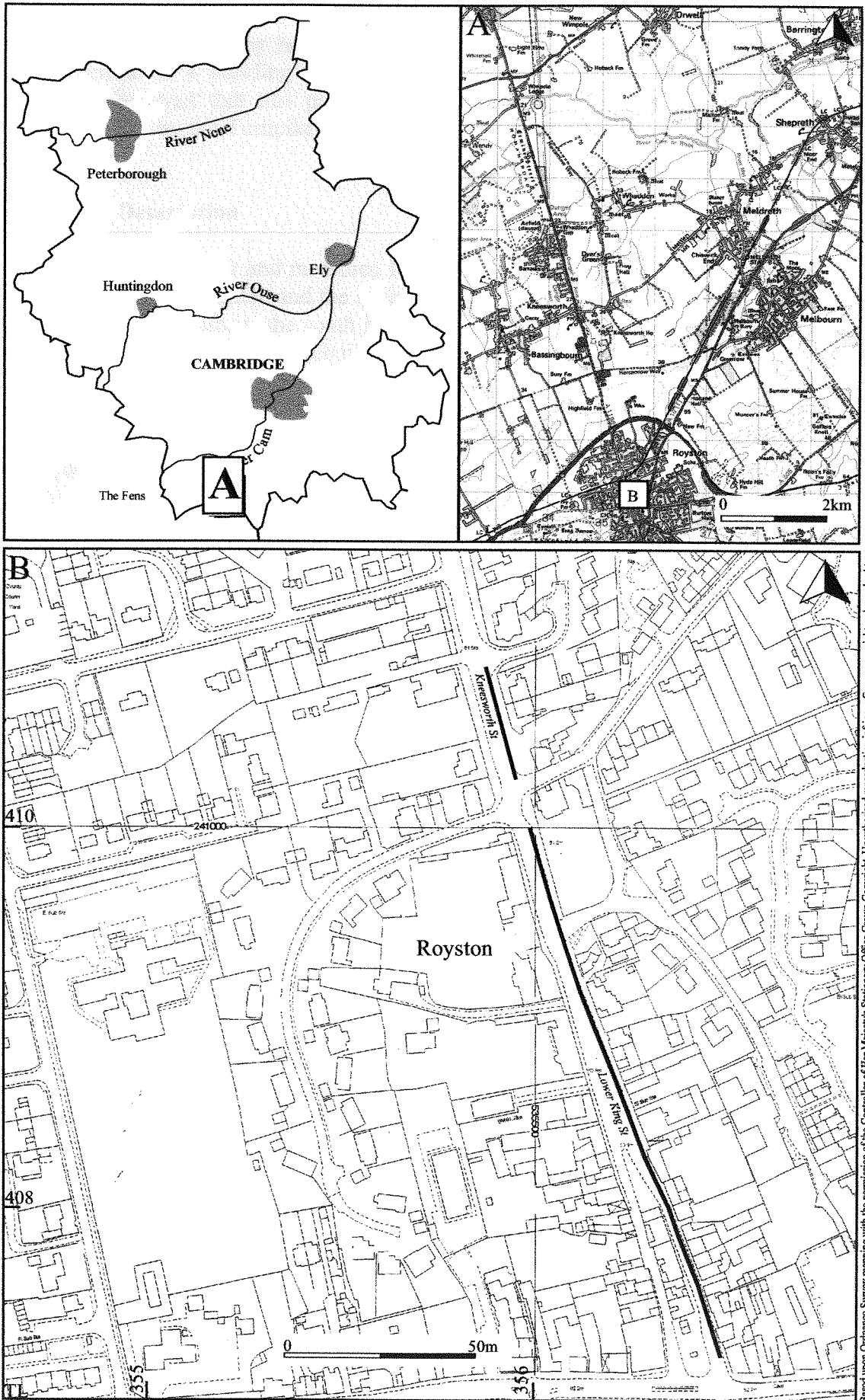
### **General**

In the Roman period Royston was no more than the intersection of two major roads, the Icknield Way and Ermine Street. There is no record of Royston in the Domesday Book. The town grew up after a Priory was built in 1100 at the crossroads.

Most of the buildings in Kneesworth Street are seventeenth century in origin and relate to the reign of King James 1, 1603-1627. The whole of the subject site is associated with the house and hunting lodgings occupied by James 1 and Charles 1 and their courts.

### **King's Lodgings**

This residence is sometimes known as a palace or a hunting lodge, however the existing buildings and documentary evidence suggest that it was no more than a collection of disparate buildings (Kingston, 1906). The palace extended between Kneesworth Street, Dog Kennel Lane to the north-east and Melbourn Street. The chief survival is the so called 'Palace', the remains of the former King's Lodgings.



Based upon Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of His Majesty's Stationery Office Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. (Cambridgeshire County Council licence No. LA 07649X 2001)

Figure 1 Site Location Plan: Course of pipe trench shown in black

This building is a two storey brick house with two chimneys. The chimneys were originally central to a building which would have projected 8m into Kneesworth Street. It is believed that this part of the building was demolished in the early eighteenth century by the Turnpike trust in order to straighten the street.

### **Architectural Description**

The building is rectangular and measures 17m by 6m, the front (Pevsner, 1967) is on the east side facing the garden and the back faces the street. It consists of two stories with attics and a cellar under the south part. Externally the street front has two large plain projecting chimneys mostly rebuilt, only the lower parts being original.

Immediately to the south of the Old Palace was a timber framed building, identified as the former buttery. Houses on the eastern side of Kneesworth Street were the domestic quarters of the kings hunting lodge.

Previous archaeological evaluation undertaken by North Hertford District Council on Lower Kings Street revealed the front corner of the Palace.

### **METHODOLOGY**

A pipe trench was excavated under archaeological supervision. The trench was opened by a JCB with a toothed ditching bucket. After machining was completed the trench was photographed and recorded using the AFU's standard recording system. The spoil from the trench was scanned by eye in order to obtain artefacts.

### **RESULTS**

A total length of 100m of pipe trench was excavated. No archaeological features were observed, but a possible post-medieval deposit or layer was encountered at the base of the trench. The pipe trench was 0.45m wide and 0.8m deep. Most of the pipe trench was excavated through deposits of late 20<sup>th</sup> century date.

The upper layers 1, 2 and 3 observed in the trench represent material associated with the construction of the present road. Layer 1 was the modern road surface, 0.30m deep. Layer 2 was composed of concrete and gravel and represents make up for the present road. Layer 3 was a modern gravel layer. Layer 3 sealed a light grey silty chalk (layer 4) which contained post-medieval brick. It is possible that layer 4 represents a post-medieval demolition layer associated with the Palace.

## CONCLUSION

The observation was conducted through deposits which were associated with the construction of the present road. Layer 4 may be associated with the destruction of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Palace buildings which extended within the development area.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Transco plc who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by Judith Roberts. Spencer Cooper was the site supervisor. The illustrations were produced by Jon Cane.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Kingston, A. 1906      A History of Royston.  
Pevsner, N. 1967      The Buildings of England, Hertfordshire.



Cambridgeshire  
County Council

Education, Libraries  
and Heritage

The Archaeological Field Unit  
Fulbourn Community Centre  
Haggis Gap  
Fulbourn  
Cambridge CB1 5HD  
Tel (01223) 881614  
Fax (01223) 880946