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CAM ARC Report Number 897

Prehistoric and Medieval Remains at Oxney Grange, near Eye, Peterborough

An Archaeological Excavation

Spencer Cooper

March 2007

Cover Images

Machine stripping, Soham	On-site surveying
Roman corn dryer, Duxford	Guided walk along Devil's Dyke
Bronze Age shaft, Fordham Bypass	Medieval well, Soham
Human burial, Barrington Anglo-Saxon Cemetery	Timbers from a medieval well, Soham
Blue enamelled bead, Barrington	Bed burial reconstruction, Barrington Anglo-Saxon Cemetery
Aethusa cynapium 'Fool's parsley'	Medieval tanning pits, Huntington Town Centre
Digging in the show, Huntingdon Town Centre	Beaker vessel
Face painting at Hinchibrooke Iron Age Farm	Environmental analysis
Research and publication	Monument Management, Bartlow Hills

CAM ARC Report Number 897

**Prehistoric Remains and
Medieval at Oxney Grange,
near Eye, Peterborough**

An Archaeological Excavation

Spencer Cooper HND, BA

Site Code: EYE OXG 06
Date of works: JULY 2006
Grid Ref: TF 2245 0135

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Summary

Between July 13th and 27th 2006, Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) conducted an archaeological excavation at Oxney Grange, near Eye, Peterborough (TF 2245 0135) in advance of the redevelopment of the area for dwellings. This excavation followed an evaluation undertaken in 2005.

The evaluation revealed features relating to the Late Bronze Age / Early Iron Age. The character of the remains implies domestic activity. Given the location of the site – on a gravel promontory just to the north of Flag Fen – finding remains of this date in this position is not unexpected. The evaluation also discovered significant remains relating to the medieval monastic site of Oxney Grange. These included graves, pits and some very substantial ditches. The graves were on an east to west alignment and had no grave-goods. They were interpreted as Christian burials, presumably the graves of the monks living on the grange. The ditches were thought to be internal boundary ditches, and were dated to the 13th to the 14th century. They were presumably contemporary with the medieval *moat* that is still faintly visible in the fields surrounding the site. Also discovered was considerable post-medieval activity, in the form of landscaping / build-up layers, garden soils, demolition layers, a concrete path and a modern yard surface.

An excavated area 9m by 22m was opened on the request of Peterborough City Council Archaeological Service to expose large pits and postholes relating to an Iron Age settlement. Postholes in the northern part of the site may have formed part of a roundhouse. These postholes were equally spaced and may have had a projected diameter of 7m. Other postholes to the south of the roundhouse may have formed four poster structures or outbuildings.

One large boundary ditch was uncovered in western part of the site which was associated with the medieval complex at Oxney Grange. This ditch was thought to be internal 13th or 14th boundary ditch dividing the site into different specialised areas.

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

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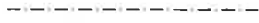
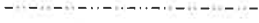
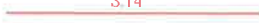




- Plate 1* *Watching brief trench following insertion of tank*

Drawing Conventions

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	
Natural Features	
Cut Number	
Deposit Number	117
Ordnance Datum	$\frac{18.45m}{x}$ OD
Inclusions	

Plans

Limit of Excavation	
Deposit - Conjectured	
Natural Features	
Sondages/Machine Strip	
Intrusion/Truncation	
Illustrated Section	
Archaeological Features	
Archaeological Features From Evaluation Phase	
Excavated Slot	
Stone	
Cut Number	118

1 Introduction

Between, July 13th and 27th 2006, Cambridgeshire County's CAM ARC (formerly the Archaeological Field Unit) conducted an archaeological excavation at Oxney Grange, Peterborough (TF 2245 0135). The work was carried out at the request of Manor Construction (Herts Ltd) in order to fulfil a Brief for Archaeological Excavation which was written by the planning authority (PCCAS). This work followed on from an evaluation that was undertaken in 2005 (Cooper & Lodoen 2006).

This archaeological excavation was undertaken in accordance with the Brief (PCCAS), supplemented by a Specification prepared by CAM ARC.

The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed development 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 the Local Planning Authority with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is currently held by CAM ARC and will be deposited with the PCCAS.

2 Geology and Topography

The site lies at around 5m OD on the northern edge of Flag Fen, a low-lying area bisected by the partly canalised River Nene.

The geology on site is Second River Terrace gravels. The site is surrounded on all sides except in the south-east by Oxford clay, followed in the south by Nordelph peat. The geology to the south-east of the site is First River Terrace gravels (British Geological Survey, 1984).

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 General

Considering the standing remains, historical background and results of the previous evaluation this site had considerable potential to contribute to research themes concerning the origins and development

of monastic granges. It was hoped that some of the elements that comprise a monastic grange such as storage barns, dovecotes, chapels and fishponds would be identified within the excavation. Furthermore the potential for ecofacts and artefacts would aid the characterisation of the diet and economy of the monastic site.

The other major research area was the Flag Fen type landscape, of which the subject site forms part. The evaluation data and background information suggested a high potential for Bronze Age and Iron Age activity in the form of field systems, domestic and ritualised features and deposits.

Immediately to the west of the grange a series of enclosures were identified (PCC SMR 08376) from aerial photographs. The enclosures have not been dated, but are likely to be later prehistoric or Romano-British. Also identified from aerial photographs were an enclosure and a ring ditch (PCC SMR 08371) about 600m south-east of Oxney Grange, and a ring ditch (PCC SMR 08426) 200m southeast of the grange, all of uncertain date.

Recent aerial photographs taken of Oxney Grange and the surrounding area are particularly informative since they identify a large corner of an enclosure which is immediately to the north of the site, which may represent a moated ditch. A large rectangular crop mark and other associated cropmarks immediately to the north of the existing road and excavated area may represent a medieval fishpond complex.

A cauldron of uncertain date was dug up in 1948, four feet below the ground, just west of Oxney Grange (PCC SMR 02964).

3.2 Prehistoric

Oxney Grange lies north of Flag Fen, itself well known for important survival of a well-investigated prehistoric fen-edge landscape, including Bronze Age settlement (PCC SMR 05576) (not shown on Figure 1).

There are known Bronze Age settlement remains and a cremation burial 400m south-east of Oxney Grange, discovered by G Wyman Abbott (PCC SMR 02963). Another Bronze Age cremation urn was discovered in 1936 c.550m south-west of the grange (PCC SMR 03012, apparently identical to 50204).

An excavation which was carried out in 2004 in a field c.500m to the north-west of Oxney Grange revealed Neolithic flints, and settlement activity (ditches, pits and postholes) from the later Bronze Age / Early Iron Age (Williams and Webley 2004) (PCC SMR 51298).

An excavation (PCC SMR 51199) on the same spot as an earlier evaluation (PCC SMR 51198) about 350m south of the grange, revealed Bronze age features (ditches, postholes, stake holes and pits), together with lithic implements from the Mesolithic to the Bronze Age and Bronze Age pottery. A watching brief just to the south of this site (PCC SMR 51243) did not reveal any archaeology at all.

In addition, a flint arrowhead was found 1912 as a stray find c.650m to the south-west of the grange (PCC SMR 02995), and a Bronze Age dagger was found during gravel works in 1953, c.500m to the east of the grange (PCC SMR 03019).

Excavations conducted 2km to the north west of the development area at Eye quarry have produced evidence for Early Iron Age in the form of a roundhouse, four-post structures and pits of varying sizes (Gibson & White 1998).

An evaluation undertaken by CAM ARC (Cooper & Lodoen 2006) revealed postholes and a ditch dating to the Late Bronze Age / Early Iron Age. The character of the remains implies domestic activity. Given the location of the site – on a gravel promontory just to the north of Flag Fen – finding remains of this date in this position is not unexpected.

3.3 Romano-British

Oxney Grange lies some distance north of the important east-west Roman canal / road known as the Fen Causeway and in addition the Roman canal known as the Car Dyke passes within a mile.

An excavation in 2004 to the west of Oxney Grange (PCC SMR 51298) found prehistoric features, as previously mentioned, and also yielded evidence of 2nd and 3rd century AD Romano-British occupation in this spot (pits, postholes, tiles, pottery).

The presence of a possible Romano-British temple site (PCC SMR 08370) was noted from aerial photographs in 1990, c.500m to the east of Oxney Grange, comprising a small near square enclosure with an inner circle of eight pits surrounding a central amorphous feature.

In the field directly adjacent to the grange and to the west, four Roman coins (two probable late third century bronze radiates, a pierced sestertius of Marcus Aurelius, and a pierced coin of Constantine I) were reported by metal detectorist Rod Blunt in 2001 (PCC SMR 51214).

3.4 Anglo-Saxon and Medieval

3.4.1 Oxney Grange

In the Saxon period Peada founded a monastery at Medehamstede (later Peterborough) around AD 655-656. This was later sacked by the Danes and it was re-founded, along with the nearby monastery of Thorney in about 966 AD. It seems that the estate of Oxney (PCC SMR 01039), or Oxanige, was purchased for Thorney at this time. In AD 972 or 973 it was acquired by Peterborough Abbey. It remained a possession of Peterborough until the dissolution.

Oxney does not seem to have been a particularly important estate up until the early 12th century, as in 1125 it was just a part of the abbey's *vaccary* (dairy farm) of nearby Eye, its only occupants being a cowherd and the 23 cattle in his care. There is a reference to a chapel at Oxney, implying that it was by then a more substantial settlement, in the second bull of Pope Eugenius to Abbot Martin in 1146, and its chancel was enlarged or rebuilt by Abbot Robert of Lindsey (1214-1222), when it was noted to have been dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

The increasing prosperity of Oxney was presumably related to the drainage and development of the surrounding fen. Much of the drainage of the Fens in the medieval period was undertaken by the great monastic houses in the area, including that of Peterborough. The Abbey was particularly busy in such work, both in the Fens and in the assarting of forests to the west, in the later 12th and early 13th century.

By a survey of 1231, Oxney was one of two buildings owned by the Abbey described as granges – indicating well-established outlying farms. In August 1249, Henry III granted the Abbot of Peterborough the right to hold an annual fair there in September. The fair was still being held in 1330 and the date it ceased is not known.

Further improvements and additions to the grange were apparently carried out in the late 13th and early 14th century, including the construction of a causeway, the building and subsequent rebuilding of a cowshed (after it had been destroyed in a fire), and a bridge over a ditch for cattle. References at the time also mention a brewhouse.

During this time Abbot Godfrey of Crowland built a new house just to the south of Eye and enclosed the land that became the abbot's park of Eyebury. This is just to the north of Oxney Grange.

It has been suggested that prior to the reign of Edward I (in 1272), Oxney was a small priory, dedicated to St Mary, rather than a large grange or cell. Some of the remaining medieval elements of the present house do suggest a building of high status.

At some time, a *moat* was also dug around the site, though the date is not known.

The present farm buildings preserve exceptional medieval rib-vaulted rooms and other historic building elements (Moriss 2004).

The evaluation undertaken in 2005 (Cooper & Lodoen 2006) discovered significant remains relating to the medieval monastic site of Oxney Grange. These remains included graves, pits and some very substantial ditches. The graves were on an east to west alignment and had no grave-goods. They were interpreted as Christian burials, presumably the graves of the monks living on the grange. Other significant findings were ditches which were revealed in the northern part of the development area and were 13th to the 14th century internal boundary ditches.

3.4.2 Other Medieval

In the field to the west of the Grange, where the previously mentioned medieval fair is supposed to have been located, medieval finds spanning the mid - 13th to later 15th centuries were reported by metal detector Rod Blunt in 2001 (PCC SMR 51214). These included at least six coins (pennies, cut halfpenny, farthing), a seal matrix, and belt fittings. The seal matrix depicts the bust of a tonsured figure.

Immediately to the west of this field, medieval ridge and furrow cultivation has been identified (PCC SMR 03022).

3.5 Post-medieval

3.5.1 Ownership of Oxney Grange

Peterborough Abbey was dissolved by Henry VIII on 29th November 1539. Oxney Grange is said to have been granted to Roger Horton. It subsequently passed through a large number of owners.

In 1568 it was sold by his widow, Margaret Horton, to Sir William Cecil. He was still owner when, in 1612, he granted a Rent Charge to Clare College, Cambridge. At some point, ownership of the estate passed to Sir John Austen, who in his turn sold it to the Bevill family, who are recorded as owners c.1686-1705. In the late 18th century the Hotchkins family of Uppingham were owners of the estate. Since the male heir was declared a "lunatic", Charles Bowyer Adderley I took guardianship or control in 1806. In 1826, his grandnephew Charles Bowyer Adderley II inherited the estate. In 1871, he sold the estate to its sitting tenant, John Pank. He in his turn, in his Will, left Oxney in trust for his daughter, Mary Ann. The trustees were effectively the owners until the late 1930's, when Mary Ann, her husband, and their

only son were dead. Oxney Grange then was sold to Francis H Tucker, at some time between 1937 and 1940. In 1948, he sold the estate to Reginald Charles Murrells, who sold it on to William David Obee. He died in 1969: his widow and son remained owners until fairly recently (Hillier 2005).

3.5.2 Standing remains

The historian John Bridges Esq., writing in the 18th century, described the standing buildings. The hall and dairy had arched stone roofs, with ribs crossing each other at the top, and supported with low pillars. In the dairy remained the old floor of Barnack stone. The wall between the hall and dairy was at least four feet thick. The walls and other marks of antiquity were below stairs. No vestiges of the chapel remained in Bridges' time. Four similarly arched rooms were pulled down by a member of the Bevill family (Whalley 1791).

Oxney Grange became a II* listed building in February 1952. The barn to Oxney Grange is probably of 17th century origin, whereas the farmhouse, originally of 14th century origins, was much altered and renovated in the 19th century, according to the official list of listed buildings (Department of the Environment, no date).

Oxney Grange was burned to the ground in 2003. Arsonists dragged in rubbish dumped by flytippers and set it alight (Swift 2003). Despite this, substantial remains of the post-medieval farmhouse are still preserved on site.

Recent work (Clarke 2005) has highlighted exceptional well preserved medieval architectural elements such as rib-vaulted rooms stone columns and chamfered stone plinths.

4 Methodology

The objective of this excavation was to preserve the archaeological evidence contained within the excavation area by record and to attempt a reconstruction of the history and use of the site.

The Brief required this project to be undertaken in two stages. Firstly strip and map of an area 9 x 22m in the northern part of the development area on the site of house plots 12,13 and14. Secondly to excavate features revealed within the excavated area. Machine excavation of the agreed area was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a JCB using a toothless ditching bucket. The site was then cleaned and planned and following a meeting with Ben Robinson of PCCAS, a strategy for excavation was agreed and implemented.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using CAM ARC'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.

5 Results

5.1 General

An area of 9m x 20m was excavated to the south of the main range of buildings in the north-eastern part of the development area. Previously an evaluation trench that was 18.5m long and 2m wide was excavated within the development area. This Trench (Trench 1) had revealed medieval and prehistoric activity (Cooper & Lodoen 2006).

The depth of overburden across the excavated area varied between 0.8m and 1.2m. The overburden consisted of post-medieval build-up deposits, including garden soils and demolition layers. All features encountered were cut into the natural gravel that formed the gravel island of Oxney.

The excavation revealed two main periods of activity namely Iron Age and medieval (Figure 2). Three Iron Age pits were uncovered in the southern, northern and eastern part of the site. Iron Age structural remains in the form of postholes were uncovered in the southern part of the site. The medieval period was characterised by a large ditch which ran the length of the development area.

5.2 Iron Age (Figs 2 and 3)

A number of large Iron Age pits (**536**, **501** and **517**) were exposed across the development area. In the southern part of the excavated area a section measuring 1.60 m wide and 0.60m deep was excavated across quarry pit **536** (Figure 3, Section 1). The section revealed it had concave sides with a sloping base and contained two fills 538 and 535.

The primary fill (535) was a mid brown silty clay which was 0.30m deep. Large hand made sherds dating from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age, faunal remains, carbonised cereal and weed remains were recovered from this fill. The upper fill (538) was a light greyish brown silty clay which was 0.30m deep. This pit may have formed part of a larger pit **519** which was partially excavated in the evaluation and was found to be over 4m wide.

The dry and hot conditions hindered observations of these features and it was not clear whether they represented a large single pit or a series of pits. In the evaluation a section (**65**) (Figure 1 and 2) was excavated across this area of pitting (Cooper & Lodoen 2006). This section revealed a number of fills (45,44,43 and 70) which contained sherds of Early Iron Age pottery and Middle Iron Age pottery (Appendix 3). The faunal remains recovered from this feature included cattle sheep and goat which are typical of an Iron Age agricultural regime (Appendix 5).

Pit **536** was truncated by a medieval ditch **504** in the south-western corner of the site.

Pit **517** (Figure 3, Section 7) was oval in plan with its eastern limit obscured by the edge of excavation. It had concave sides and a sloping base measuring 1.30m wide and 0.20m deep. It contained a single light grey silty clay (546) from which five sherds of Iron Age pottery was recovered. In addition a number of butchered cattle, sheep remains and a single tooth from an adult horse were recovered from context 546.

A shallow pit **501** was identified in the north-east corner of the excavated area (Figure 3, Section 6). This pit had concave sides and a flatish base, which measured 1.70m wide, and 0.40m deep. It contained a single dark grey sandy silt fill 531 which produced two sherds of Iron Age pottery. A soil sample from fill 531 revealed the presence of weed seeds and cereals (Appendix 3).

In the northern part of the development area there was a group of postholes that may form part of an Iron Age roundhouse. The remains provide a partial plan but postholes, **505**, **506** **507** and **508** (Figure 2) may have formed part of a larger building. There was no direct dating for these postholes and therefore is based on inference. Factors such as morphology and the close proximity of features, which contained dateable Iron Age material, suggest Iron Age roundhouse or associated structure.

Posthole **505** was oval and had concave sides and was 0.32m wide and 0.02 m deep. It contained a single fill of light grey silty clay and occasional gravel. Posthole **506** was oval and had concave side and was 0.32m wide and was 0.02m deep. It contained a single fill of light grey silty clay (522) and occasional gravel. Posthole **507** (Figure 3, Section 4) was oval and had concave side and was 0.35m wide and 0.30m deep. It contained a single fill of brownish grey silty clay and occasional gravel (523). Ecofacts recovered from the soil sample taken from fill 523 included weed seeds and cereals (Appendix 4). Posthole **508** had concave sides and a flatish base. It measured 0.30m wide and 0.03m deep and contained a single dark grey silty clay fill.

To the south of postholes **507** and **508** were a group of postholes (**510**, **511**, **512** **513** and **514**) which in turn may relate to the Iron Age roundhouse to the north. This group of postholes may represent four post granary type structures or paddock enclosures. Posthole **510** was oval with concave sides and a sloping base (Figure 3, Section 8). It measured 0.30m wide and 0.25m deep and contained a light brown silty clay (525). Two sherds of Iron Age shelly ware (Appendix 3) was recovered from fill 525. Immediately to the east of **510** was posthole **511** which measured 0.40m wide and 0.40m deep. It had concave sides and a flatish base and contained a dark brown silty clay (526). Further to the east was an oval posthole (**512**) that had concave sides and a sloping base. It measured 0.25m wide and 0.20m deep and contained a dark grey silty clay.

Further to the south were postholes **513** and **514**. Posthole **513** was sub oval with concave sides and a sloping base. It measured 0.35m wide and 0.20m deep and contained a dark grey silty clay fill. Posthole **514** located in the centre of the excavated area was 0.30m wide and 0.10m deep. It contained a light grey silty clay with occasional gravel.

To the north of pit **517** were two postholes **516** and **552** which may link with the other postholes uncovered. Posthole **516** was 0.30m wide and 0.11m deep. It contained a single fill a light grey silty clay. Posthole **552** was a sub oval posthole that was 0.20m wide and 0.11m deep. It contained a greyish brown silty clay with occasional gravel.

In evaluation Trench 1 (Cooper & Lodoen 2006) (which was located in the excavated area) a number of postholes (**64**, **62**, **58** and **60**) were revealed to form some kind of structure. Posthole **60** was of particular significance since a single sherd of Iron Age pottery was recovered from this feature. It should also be noted that all of these postholes were extremely difficult to locate within the excavated area.

5.3 Medieval (Figs 2 and 3)

The only medieval feature encountered in the excavation was a large north-south ditch (Ditch 1) (Figure 2) which ran the length of the excavated area. This ditch (Ditch 1) probably represents a major division of the monastic grange into areas with different functions. Three sections were excavated through ditch 1 and were numbered accordingly **504** and **545** in the southern part and **554** in the centre of the development area.

In the southern part of the site an east-west section (Figure 3, Section 1) revealed a north-south ditch **504** which had concave sides and a sloping base. The section was 1.20m wide and 0.90m deep and contained three fills (532 533 and 534). The primary fill (534) was a

greyish brown silty clay which was 0.30m thick. Fill 533 was a mid brown silty clay which was 0.50m thick. The upper fill 532 was a light greyish silty clay which was 0.35m deep.

To the north of **504** was section **545** which demonstrated that ditch 1 was truncated by a post-medieval well 502. Section **545** (Figure 3, Section 15) was partially excavated to a depth of 0.15m and contained a dark brown sandy clay.

In the centre of the site an east-west section **554** (Figure 3, Section 15) was excavated through ditch 1. In this section the ditch had concave sides and a sloping base and measured 1.1m wide and 0.86m deep. It contained four fills (556,557,555 and 553). The earliest fill 556 was 0.14m thick and consisted of a dark brownish grey silty clay. Fill 557 was 0.12m thick and consisted of a greyish brown silty clay. Fill 555 was 0.10m thick and consisted of a greyish brown silty clay. The environmental sample from this context revealed evidence of cereals and charcoal. The uppermost fill 553 was 0.66m thick and consisted of a dark greyish brown silty clay. Finds from this primary fill included 14th century Ely and Bourn ware pottery and faunal remains of a goose. Ditch 1 may be associated with ditch 26 in Trench 3 which was interpreted as a medieval monastic boundary ditch.

5.4 Post-Medieval

Post-medieval activity is represented by a well **502** (Figure 2) which cut ditch 1 and was located in the south-western part of the excavated area. This stone lined Well was identified in the south-western part of the excavated area with at least four courses of irregular Barnack stone exposed to a depth of 0.50m. The fill of the well was a dark grey sandy clay 549 which contained post-medieval brick and residual prehistoric pottery, animal bone and human remains.

To the north of well **502** was an irregular shallow pit **515** which was 0.70m wide and 0.20m deep. It contained single fill 558 which was a light brown silty sand which contained post-medieval building material.

5.5 Standing Buildings

Architectural analysis of the standing remains at Oxney Grange was an integral part of the archaeological work undertaken. Alongside the excavation monitoring work continued on the large detached farmhouse and associated barns. No significant architectural features were uncovered within the period of the excavation.

6 Discussion

6.1 Prehistory

The archaeological excavation produced evidence of occupation at Oxney Grange during the Iron Age period.

The most significant findings of the excavation were the uncovering of pits (501, 517, and 536) and postholes (507 508 510, 511, 512 513 and 514) (Figure 2) which represent a possible Iron Age roundhouse and associated structures. The presence of an Iron Age settlement in the development area is not totally unexpected since previous investigations at a nearby site at Eye quarry have revealed Iron Age occupation. Excavations conducted at Eye quarry have produced evidence for Early Iron Age in the form of a roundhouse, four-post structures and pits of varying sizes (Gibson&White1998).

The low density of material culture recovered from the Iron Age pits (501, 517 and 536) suggests that these features are not rubbish pits but are more likely to be quarry pits. The botanical remains recovered from these pits included butchered cattle and sheep that suggests that we are in close proximity to a settlement.

The postholes (505, 506, 507 and 508) (Figure 2) may represent a partial plan of roundhouse on basis of landscape context and the fact that Iron Age pottery was recovered from a posthole in the evaluation in this part of the site. Botanical remains recovered from these postholes included cereals such as Barley and wheat and weed seeds.

The types of features and the substantial and unabraded fragments of pottery imply domestic activity. The findings are also consistent with the known character of an Iron Age landscape.

6.2 Medieval

A large medieval boundary ditch (ditch 1) that contained medieval pottery ran the length of the excavated area. This ditch would have divided the monastic complex internally into areas with different functions. It may be linked to the possible fish ponds to the north of the excavated area or it may relate to the moat shown on the 1880 1st Edition OS map.

The main ditch (1) may be traced through to evaluation Trench 3 to the south. This ditch ran on a roughly north-south alignment and may have acted to demarcate the main medieval building and the burials to the south.

The construction of this ditch and of the moat is probably an indication of the relative importance of the site. The amount of work necessary to construct the ditches would have been quite substantial, and is likely only to have taken place on a high-status site or one that fulfilled important functions that required physical separation.

It is not clear when this ditch went out of use as dateable finds were only recovered from the lower fills. It is possible that they only went out of use at some time after the Dissolution in 1539. There is however no firm evidence of the ditches still being in use at that time.

6.3 Post-Medieval

A limited number of features were encountered including a well and a pit. These features relate to the period when the monastic grange had fallen into private ownership. The fill of the well included residual material from both periods of activity on the site, including human remains that could be either Iron Age, or displaced from the medieval burial ground to the south.

6 Conclusion

The aim of the project was to establish the character, date, state of preservation, and extent of any archaeological remains within the site.

The most important aspect of the excavation was that it has revealed that a major medieval monastic site succeeded an earlier Iron Age settlement

This is a fascinating site that will aid current understanding of monastic granges in East Anglia. Underpinning the results of the excavation are the findings from evaluation, architectural and documentary surveys which highlight that we are dealing a high status monastic grange complex which may have its origins in the 10th century.

The results of the excavation have also added to the understanding of the prehistoric landscape in the area south of Eye. A number of features including a pit and a partial roundhouse of Late Bronze Age to Mid-Iron Age date were discovered. The remains suggest the presence of a domestic site.

Also encountered on site were a number of layers and features of post-medieval and modern character.

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Appendix 1 Context Table

Context	Category	Feature Type	Width m	Depth m	Description
501	Cut	Pit	1.70	0.40	Filled by 531
502	Same as 520				
503	Not used				
504	Cut	Ditch	1.20	0.90	Filled by 532,533 534
505	Cut	Posthole	0.32	0.02	Filled by 521
506	Cut	Posthole	0.32	0.02	Filled by 522
507	Cut	Posthole	0.35	0.30	Filled by 523
508	Cut	Posthole	0.30	0.03	Filled by 524
509	Not used				
510	Cut	Posthole	0.30	0.25	Filled by 525
511	Cut	Posthole	0.40	0.40	Filled by 526
512	Cut	Posthole	0.25	0.20	Filled by 527
513	Cut	Posthole	0.35	0.20	Filled by 528
514	Cut	Posthole	0.30	0.10	Filled by 529
515	Cut	Pit	0.70	0.20	Filled by 558
516	Cut	Pit	0.30	0.11	Filled by 530
517	Cut	Pit	1.20	0.20	Filled by 546
518	Cut	Pit	0.38	0.22	Filled by 547
519	Cut	Pit	1.50	0.30	Filled by 538
520	Cut	Well	1.2	0.16	Filled by 550
521	Fill	Posthole	0.35	0.02	Fill of 505
522	Fill	Ditch	0.32	0.05	Fill of Cut 506
523	Cut	Ditch	0.35	0.30	Fill of 507
524	Fill	Ditch	0.30	0.03	Fill of 508
525	Fill	Ditch	0.30	0.25	Fill of 510
526	Fill	Ditch	0.40	0.40	Fill of 511
527	Fill	Posthole	0.25	0.20	Fill of 512
528	Fill	Posthole	0.35	0.20	Fill of 513
529	Cut	Posthole	0.30	0.10	Fill of 514
530	Fill	Ditch	0.30	0.11	Fill of 516
531	Fill	Pit	1.70	0.40	Fill of 501
532	Fill	Ditch	1.44	0.44	Fill of Cut504
533	Fill	Ditch	1.00	0.50	Fill of Cut 504
534	Fill	Ditch	0.35	0.30	Fill of Cut 504
535	Fill	Pit	1.60	0.30	Filled by 536
536	Cut	Pit	1.60	0.30	Filled by 535
537	Not used				
538	Fill	Ditch	1.60	0.30	Fill of 536
539	Not used				
540	Not used				
541	Not used				

Context	Category	Feature Type	Width m	Depth m	Description
542	Not used				
543	Not used				
544	Same as 549				
545	Cut	Ditch	1.30	0.15	Filled by 548
546	Fill	Pit	1.20	0.20	Fill of 517
547	Fill	Pit	0.38	0.22	Fill of 518
548	Fill	Ditch	1.30	0.15	Fill of 545
549	Fill	Well	0.80	0.20	Fill of 520
550	Fill	Well	0.26	0.33	Fill of 520
551	Fill	Posthole	0.40	0.11	Fill of 552
552	Cut	Posthole	0.40	0.11	Filled by 551
553	Fill	Ditch	1.1	0.66	Fill of 554
554	Cut	Ditch	1.1	0.86	Filled by 553,555,556 and557
555	Fill	Ditch	0.30	0.10	Fill of 554
556	Fill	Ditch	0.45	0.11	Fill of 554
557	Cut	Ditch	0.30	0.12	Fill of 554
558	Fill	Pit	0.80	0.20	Fill of 518

Appendix 2 Finds Summary by Helen Fowler

Context	Material	Object Name	Weight in kg
525	Bone		0.026
526	Bone		0.027
527	Bone		0.014
528	Bone		0.008
531	Bone		0.016
531	Ceramic		0.004
532	Bone		0.164
532	Ceramic	Fired clay	0.011
532	Flint		0.001
532	Shell		0.008
533	Ceramic	Vessel	0.029
533	Bone		0.034
535	Bone		0.014
544	Bone		0.034
546	Bone		0.022
546	Ceramic		0.018
549	Ceramic		0.008
549	Ceramic		0.018
553	Ceramic		0.028
555	Ceramic	Building material	0.018

Appendix 3 Pottery Report by Dr. Paul Spoerry

A small assemblage of 33 sherds was recovered from seven contexts. Of these, 25 sherds were hand-made and all probably prehistoric in origin, whilst eight medieval sherds were recovered from Context 553. One rim from context 535 would be a publishable form if found/published in association with other material, but on its own it does not warrant this treatment.

Prehistoric Sherds

Most sherds were fairly undiagnostic, shell, sand and/or limestone tempered body fragments. Two Middle-late Iron Age Scored Ware sherds were identified (contexts 532 and 535), whilst a large jar rim of a form seen in LBA/EIA pottery was also recovered from Context 535.

The 2005 evaluation assemblage produced further prehistoric material from this part of the site. One shelly sherd was recovered from the fill of pit/posthole **60**, offering the only direct dating of the discrete features in the centre of the site. An assemblage of 25 hand-made sherds was recovered from the fills of quarry pit **65** (here **536**) and the only dateable sherd was assigned to the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age (Blinkhorn in Cooper & Lodoen 2006).

The prehistoric assemblage is therefore of mixed date, with Quarry pit **65 / 536** containing LBA/EIA and MIA/LIA material. It is perhaps reasonable to suggest this feature and the assemblage as a whole are generally *Later* Iron Age in date, with no immediately pre-Roman material present, and with occasional residual LBA/EIA sherds.

Medieval Sherds

Bourne wares are the most commonly found pottery type in this area in the 14th –15th centuries. Ely ware is also present.

Context 525 (Sample 100)
Hand-made prehistoric pottery
2 body sherds in shelly fabric

Context 531 (Sample 102)
Hand-made prehistoric pottery
2 body sherds in shell and grog-tempered fabric

Context 532
Hand-made prehistoric pottery; Middle-Late Iron Age
1 rim in smooth fabric with occasional leached shell, c. 20cm diameter
1 body sherd in oolitic limestone-tempered fabric
1 rim in shelly fabric. very everted/flanged shape, perhaps 30cm rim diameter

3 body sherds in shelly fabric. One of these has a scored surface
Scored ware is common in pottery of the East Midlands in the middle and late Iron Age

Context 535

Hand-made LBA-EIA and Middle-Late Iron Age pottery

1 large rim sherd from jar; slightly tapered neck-rim, rounded and ext. beaded, in quartz sand and shell tempered fabric. Recognizable LBA/EIA form, but could also be later

1 scored ware body sherd in oolitic limestone-tempered fabric (Later IA)

2 body sherds in shelly fabric

2 body sherds in quartz sand and shell tempered fabric

Context 546

Hand-made Iron Age pottery

5 body sherds in shelly fabric. One of these has a change of angle showing biconical form

1 rim in shelly fabric from small, thin-walled vessel (c.20cm rim diameter)

1 rim in leached shelly fabric from large thick-walled vessel (c.34cm rim diameter)

Context 549

1 Thetford ware thumbled rim sherd (AD 875-1150)

1 hand-made shell-tempered sherd

Context 553

14th century pottery

1 body sherd possibly Ely ware; 1150-1350

1 body sherd Bourne B ware; 1300-1450

3 body sherds Bourne B ware with translucent yellow-green glaze (one vessel; a jug probably); 1300-1450

3 body sherds in oxidised Bourne B ware with clear external glaze, horizontal grooves and evidence for buff slip painted lines. A wheel-made rounded jug with upright neck with cordon, 1300-1450.

From EYEOXG 05 Trench 1 (Blinkhorn 2006)

Context 43: Fill of quarry pit 65

Hand-made prehistoric pottery

11 sherds of hand-made pottery: variable amounts of shell and oolitic limestone temper. One vessel has a very narrow (9cm) flat base. Most sherds are light brown/buff externally and mid and dark grey internally.

Context 44: Fill of quarry pit 65

Hand-made Late Bronze Age / Early Iron Age sherds (LBA/EIA)

9 sherds of hand-made pottery: variable amounts of shell and oolitic limestone temper. One sherd has a triangular rim that is characteristically LBA/EIA (Knight 2002).

Context 45: Fill of quarry pit **65**

Hand-made prehistoric pottery

5 sherds of hand-made pottery: variable amounts of shell and oolitic limestone temper including one very shelly sherd.

Context 59; fill of pit/posthole **60**

1 sherd of shelly hand-made prehistoric pottery

Ceramic Building Materials

From EYE OXG 06

Context 555

3 medieval roof tile fragments (12th century or later)

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Appendix 4: Environmental Appraisal by Rachel Fosberry

1 Introduction and Methods

Nine samples were taken from across the excavated area and were submitted for an initial appraisal. Between ten to twenty 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 is noted in Table 1.

2 Results

Sample Number	Context Number	Feature Type	Cereals	Weed seeds	Charcoal
100	525	Post hole			++
101	527	Post hole			++
102	531	Pit	+	+++	++
103	535	Pit	+	+	+
104	520	Well			+
106	525	Post hole	+	+	++
107	523	Post hole	+	+	+
108	528	Post hole			+
109	555	ditch	+		+

Table 1 Environmental Samples from EYE OXG 06

Key to Tables

+ = 1 - 10 specimens ++ = 10 - 100 specimens +++ = 100+ specimens

Plant macrofossils

Preservation is by charring and is generally poor to moderate. Charcoal fragments are present in all of the samples in small quantities. Most of the samples contain a few charred weed seeds including small *Poaceae* sp. (grasses) and a single seed that has been tentatively identified as *Polygonum amphibium* (amphibious bistort).

Modern contaminants in the form of rootlets and a few common seeds such as *Chenopodium* sp. are present in most of the samples.

Cereals

Both Barley (*Hordeum* sp.) and wheat (*Triticum* sp.) are present in small quantities. No chaff elements were noted.

Animal bone

Several samples contain small mammal bones, probably rodent.

3 Conclusions and Recommendations

The plant assemblages from the excavation at Oxney Grange consist of low densities of plant macrofossils that are probably derived from scattered refuse. It is not considered that full analysis would add significantly to this interpretation and further work is not recommended.

Appendix 5 The Faunal and Human Remains by Chris Faine

1 Introduction

The assemblage in question was obtained from an excavation at Oxney Grange, Peterborough, consisting of features ranging from the Iron Age to medieval periods. The features consisted primarily of pits along with two linear features and a well. Fourteen contexts contained animal bone, with 10 containing elements identifiable to species. The assemblage contained 50 fragments, with 23 identifiable to species (46% of the total sample). All bones were recovered by hand, with preservation being good albeit fragmented in many cases.

2 Recording

Initially all elements were assessed in terms of siding (where appropriate), completeness, tooth wear stages (also where applicable), and epiphyseal fusion. In addition, any taphonomy, i.e. butchery, burning, gnawing etc was recorded where seen. Loose teeth and ribs without epiphyses were noted but not included in any quantification. All unidentifiable fragments were classed as being from medium/large mammals. Completeness was assessed by percentage and anatomical zones present (after Dobney & Reilly, 1988). Tooth wear was assessed using Grant (1982). All data was entered using MS Access.

3 Assessment

Table 2 shows the broad species distribution for the identifiable assemblage. Of the domestic mammals cattle dominate, making up 48% of the identifiable assemblage, along with smaller amounts of pig, sheep/goat and horse remains. By far the largest number of identifiable elements was obtained from context **553**, the bottom fill of a linear feature (**554**) dating from the medieval period. These included butchered post-cranial cattle remains along with a mandible from an individual of around 2 ½ years of age. In addition a single tibia from a neonatal sheep was also recovered. Bird remains from this context include a number of butchered goose long bones along with a tibiotarsus and tarso-metatarsus from young individual provisionally identified as chicken. Context **546**, the fill of a large pit (**517**) contained a number of butchered cattle and sheep/goat remains along with a single loose tooth from adult horse. The remaining features consisted mainly of small pits containing further butchered cattle, sheep and pig remains, indicative of small rubbish deposits.

In addition to these features a small number of human skeletal remains were recovered from context **544**, the fill of a well (**502**).

These were a 2nd metacarpal and portion of pubic symphysis, both identified as being from an adult individual (i.e. 20+ years of age).

4 Conclusions

Despite the extremely small sample size some conclusions can be drawn from the faunal assemblage. The presence of bird bone, particularly waterfowl is not surprising given the landscape surrounding the site. The presence of goose remains in medieval deposits such as **553** is also characteristic of sites from this period as a whole. The domestic mammal remains found in many contexts do show chop marks suggesting butchery waste. However as mentioned above the sample size is too small to draw any further conclusions from.

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Species	NISP	NISP%	MNI	MNI%
Cattle (<i>Bos</i>)	11	48	6	43.1
Goose (<i>Anser anser</i>)	4	17.5	2	14.3
Sheep/Goat (<i>Ovis/Capra</i>)	3	13	2	14.3
Chicken (<i>Gallus gallus</i>)	2	8.6	1	7
Pig (<i>Sus scrofa</i>)	2	8.6	2	14.3
Horse (<i>Equus caballus</i>)	1	4.3	1	7
Total	23	100	14	100

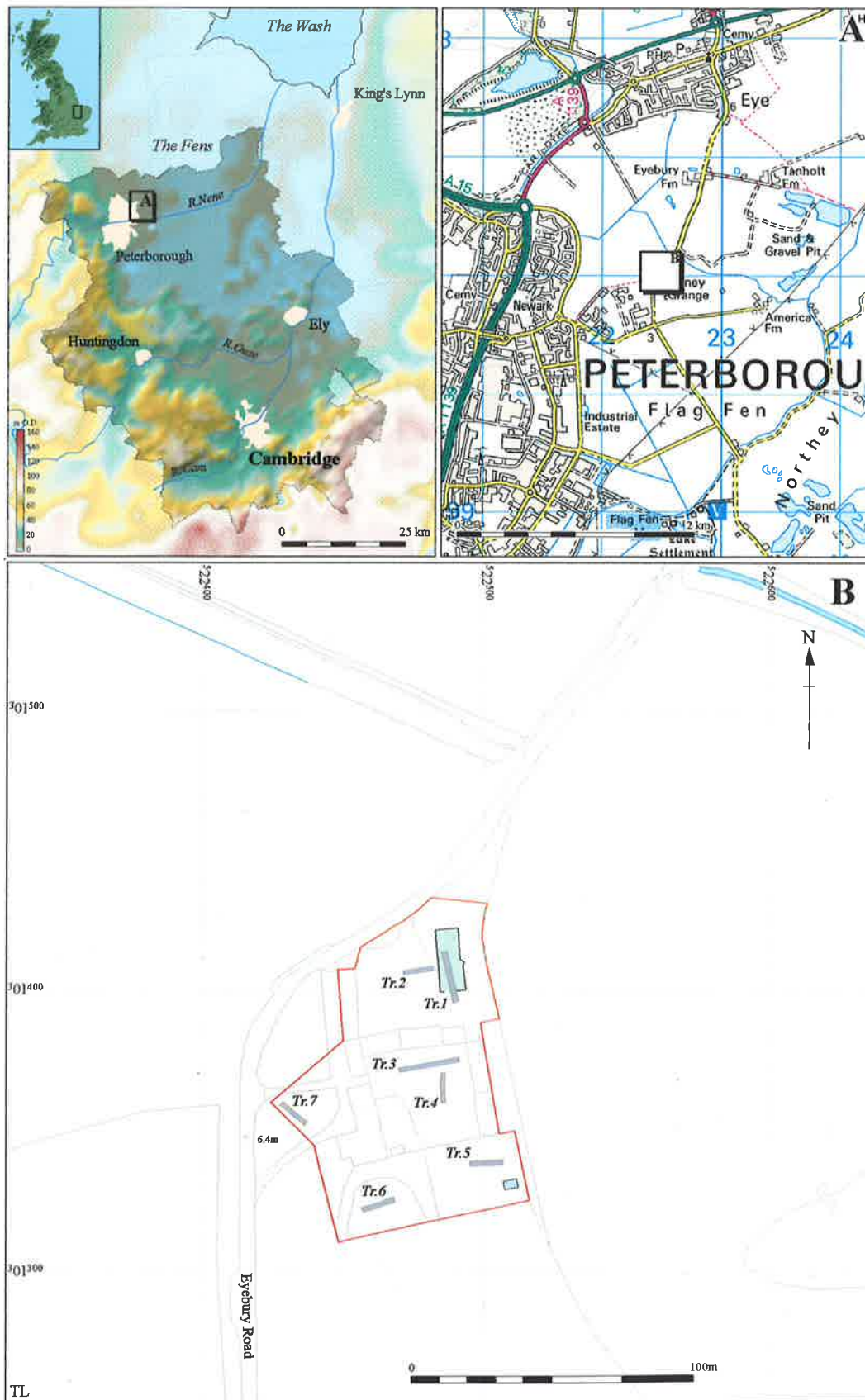
Table 2: Species distribution for identifiable assemblage

Appendix 6: Watching Brief Summary

A watching brief was carried out by CAM ARC on the 12th March, 2007 on an approximately east-west service trench of dimensions approximately 5m by 3.5m. This trench was located approximately 5m south of evaluation trench 5 and in the south eastern part of the development area (see Figure 1). This trench was machine excavated by a mechanical "mini-digger" with a 1.6m wide bucket, under the supervision of an experienced archaeologist, to a depth of 2.5m. Modern overburden and a modern pit were identified and recorded within the section. The modern pit measured 1.5m deep and 0.80m wide and contained several fills. The lower fill was a dark grey silty clay which was 0.80m deep and the secondary fill was a light brown silty sand which was 0.70m deep.



Plate 1: Watching brief trench following insertion of tank (Copyright Ben Robinson, by permission)



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Figure 1: Location of excavation area (green), evaluation trenches (grey) and watching brief trench (blue) with the development area outlined (red)

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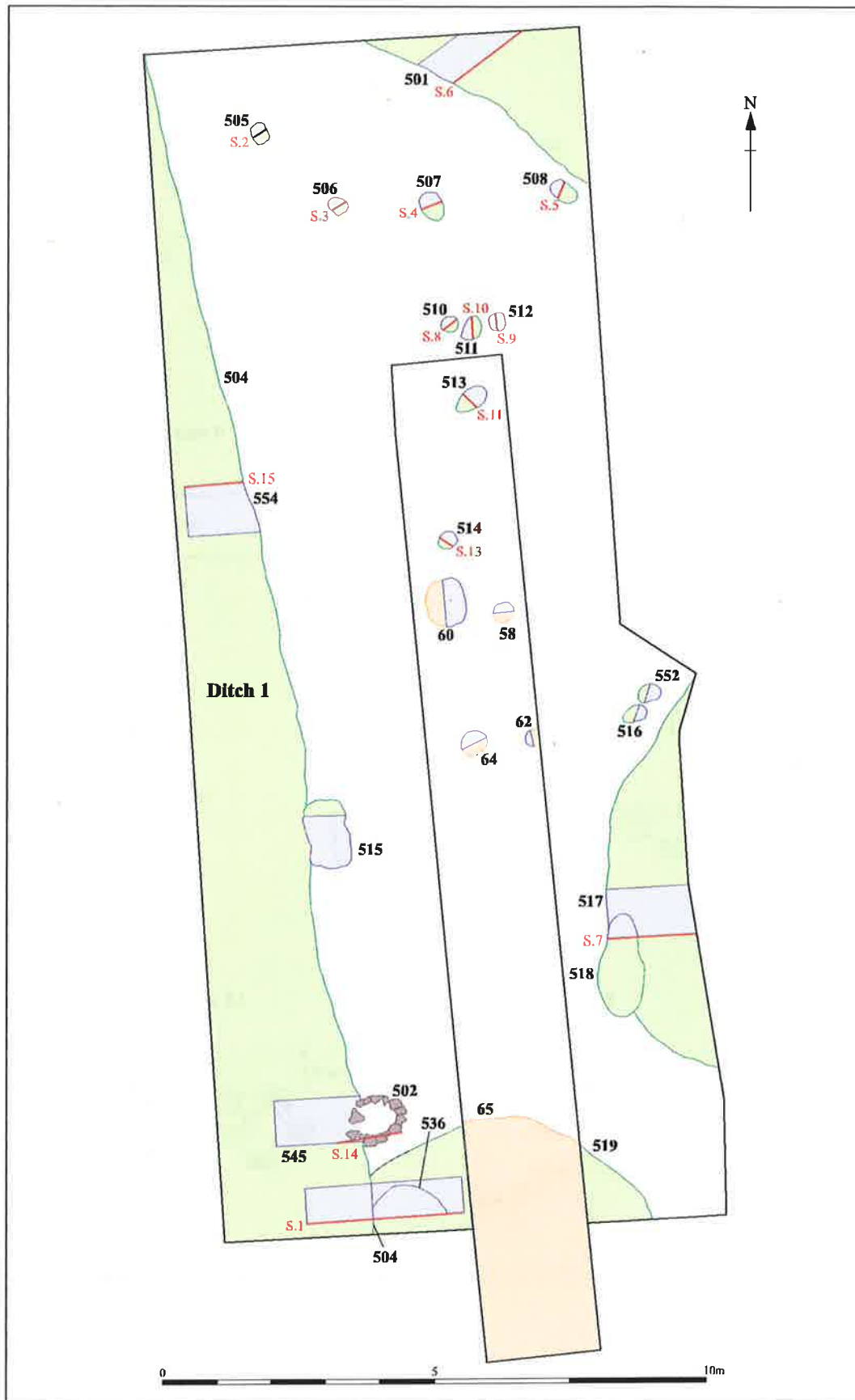


Figure 2: Excavation area plan showing evaluation trench

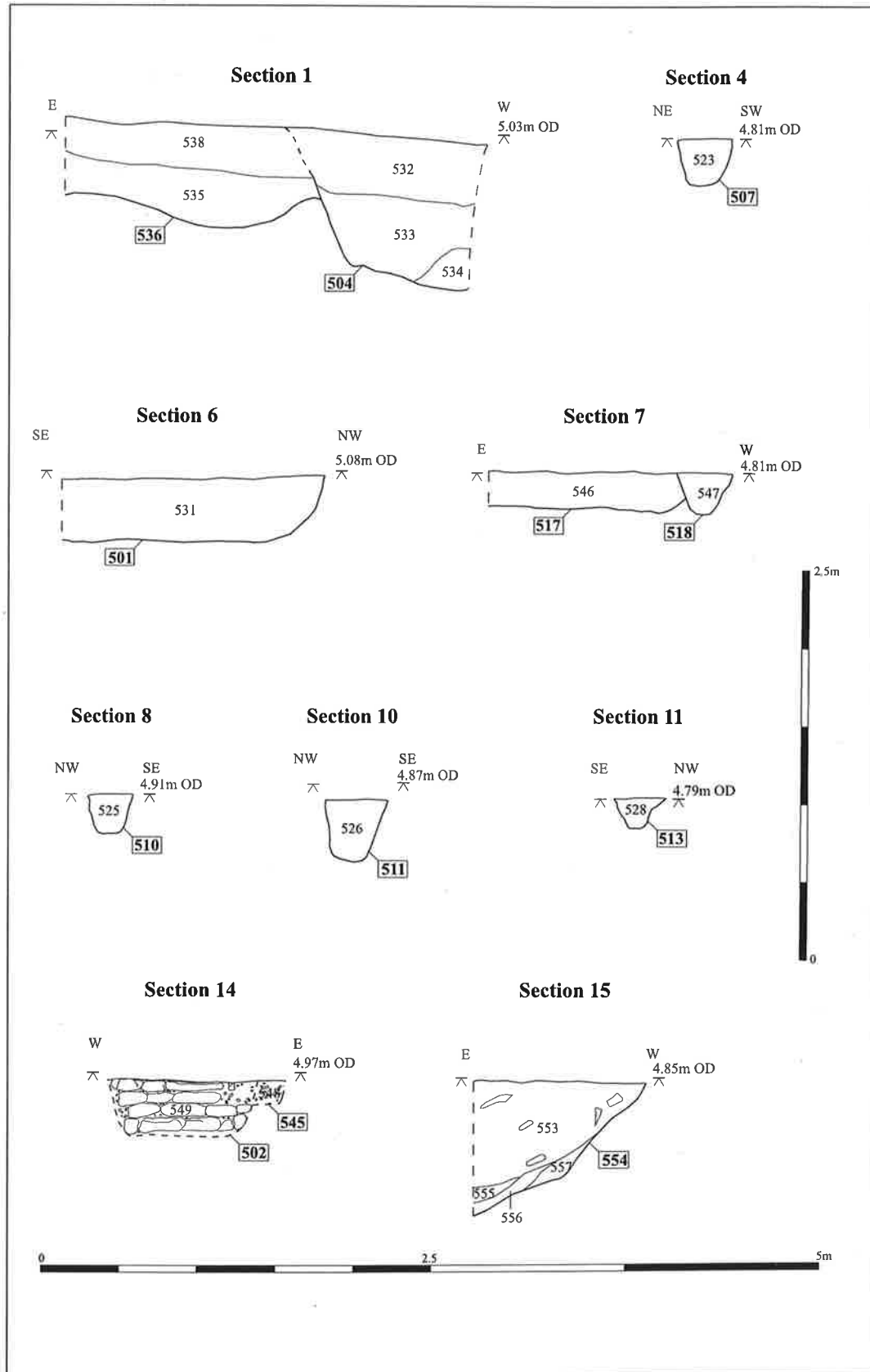
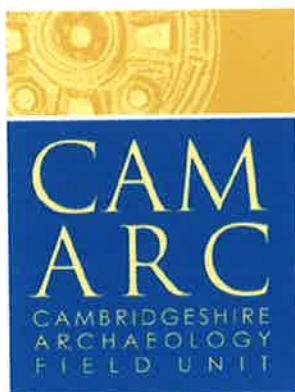


Figure 3: Section drawings



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