



Archaeological Field Unit

Eltisley Parish, Cambridgeshire: A Desktop Study

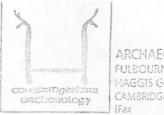
Rebecca Casa Hatton

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Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. 202

Commissioned by Eltisley History Society



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Eltisley Parish, Cambridgeshire: A Desktop Study

(NGR TL 26--/58--)

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2002

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SUMMARY

This desktop assessment was commissioned by Eltisley History Society.

Based on the comprehensive assessment of the available sources, the study has attempted to define the historical background and archaeological potential of the Parish of Eltisley.

Pre-medieval finds in the area are scarce.

By contrast, medieval remains are well documented and survive as earthworks and cropmarks visible on aerial photographs. The village itself preserves elements of the medieval layout. During the post-medieval period the medieval greens and the moated sites continued to attract occupation.

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Eltisley Parish: A Desktop Assessment

(NGR TL 26--/58--)

1 INTRODUCTION

This desktop assessment was commissioned by Eltisley History Group. Based on the comprehensive assessment of the available sources, the study has attempted to define the historical background and archaeological potential of the Parish of Eltisley.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Eltisley is a small parish of some 800ha. which lies on the borders of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire. It occupies a plateau of watersheds dividing streams which flow south-east to the Bourn Brook, west to the upper Ouse at St Neots and north to the lower Ouse at St. Ives. The village of Eltisley is located in the southern half of the parish, some 7km east of St Neots and 18km west of Cambridge (Fig. 1). It centres upon a medieval green at the junction between the Cambridge to St. Neots Road and the Biggleswade to St. Ives road. A lane (Caxton Drift) along the valley of the Bourn Brook through Caxton leaves the southern corner of the green. At Caxton End along this route there was a second green.

The average land contour is 45mAOD.

The local geology consists of glacial deposits of boulder Clay with pockets of sand and gravel of varying size (also referred to as till) (Edmonds & Dinham 1965; BGS Sheet 187).

3 SOURCES AND CONFIDENCE RATING

Abbreviations

SMR (Cambridge) Sites and Monuments Record CRO County Record Office

CUCAP Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs

NMR(C) National Monuments Record (Centre)

RCHM(E) Royal Commission of Historic Monuments (of England)

VCH Victoria County History

3.1 Sites and Monuments Records

The SMR of Cambridgeshire County Council records few finds within the parish of Eltisley. Most entries refer to medieval and post-medieval occupation sites and field systems known from documentary sources and, in many cases, still visible on aerial photographs as cropmark remains.

The information provided by the SMR is affected by the following:

- Distribution of entries with a bias towards periods which are well represented by material culture, i.e. medieval and post-medieval remains. This bias has its roots in the kind of information provided by the Ordnance Survey records, i.e. the precursor of the SMR, that placed emphasis on extant remains, including earthworks, and important finds' spots.
- The SMR collection represents a variable source of information that has been influenced by documentary sources, collection of finds, antiquarian observations, local and professional interests.

3.2 Archaeological Excavations and Surveys

Due to its position outside the Fens, Eltisley has not benefited from surveys seen elsewhere in Cambridgeshire, i.e. the Fenland Survey conducted in the 1990's (Hall 1996). Other county surveys such as the County Farm Survey (Malim 1990) and the survey of the river gravels (French & Wait 1988) do not apply to the village.

The parish and village of Eltisley have witnessed no archaeological excavations, although foundations and service trenches for two bungalows at Church End were investigated by an archaeologist in 1994. No archaeological features were identified. Settlement expansion from the medieval period is likely to have reduced the amount of land surface available for archaeological investigations within the built-up area, and to have truncated archaeological remains and deposits. Outside the village, modern ploughing practice may have been responsible for some degree of damage of buried remains, especially in those areas where the medieval plough soil has been disturbed. Nonetheless, the potential for the survival of archaeological remains in the heavy clay soils remains reasonably high.

3.3 Cartographic Evidence

The earliest maps of Eltisley date from the earlier part of the nineteenth century. They depict estate properties in the village held by Jesus College and Emmanuel College of Cambridge University (Bendall 1992).

The first comprehensive maps of the village are the Tithe Map of 1841/1888 and the Enclosure Map of 1864. Later maps include Ordnance Surveys from the end of the nineteenth century onwards.

As a whole, the available cartographic evidence provides useful information for the post-medieval history of Eltisley, and has relevance to understanding changes affecting land ownership and boundaries.

3.4 Documentary Sources

Eltisley is known through regional studies (VCH and RCHM). These tend to be biased towards:

- The medieval ecclesiastical history
- The medieval origin and development of the village with emphasis on extant monuments.
- · Social history.

There are also regional and national studies that concentrate on specific research topics, e.g. place-names (Reaney 1943) and buildings (Pevsner 1970).

As a whole, the available documentary sources provide useful and reliable information on the historic, economic and social development of the village. They are researched by experts within their fields, by local historians and by amateurs.

3.5 Aerial Photographs and Overlays of Aerial Photographs

The SMR has a collection of maps showing overlays of aerial photographs digitised in the 1980's from research in the CUCAP and NMR.

Aerial photographic collections show a high density of features around the village. Of particular interest is the evidence for earthwork and cropmark remains showing medieval ridge and furrow.

3.6 Listed Buildings

There are 21 Grade II Listed Buildings of Special Architectural or Historical Interest in the village:

Cambridge Road

Mile Post

Caxton End

- -No. 12 (RCHME 14): Framed single-storey, 17th-18th C.
- -No. 18, Pump Cottage (RCHM 15: Framed single-storey, 17th-18th C.
- -Village Pump (north of Pump Cottage)
- -No.38, Manor Farm House(SMR 01142b; RCHME 5): see below
- -No. 52, Pear Tree Cottage
- -Nos. 70-72, Mistletoe House

-Nos. 122-124

-No. 130, Jesus College Farmhouse (SMR 02295; RCHME 6): see below

The Green

- -Green Farmhouse (SMR 02297; RCHME 3): see below
- -No. 75, The Old House (SMR 02344; RCHME 2): see below
- -Church of St Pandionia and John Baptist (SMR 00252; RCHME 1): see below
- -Lych Gate (north east of Church)
- -No. 23, Pond Farmhouse (SMR 01143a; RCHME 7): see below
- -No. 18, The Old Posthouse (RCHM 9, SMR 02316): two-storey framed building, late 15th-early 16th C.
- -No. 20, South View (RCHM 13): Framed single-storey, 17th-18th C.
- -No. 26, Kent Cottage
- -No. 52, Southview or Chestnut Cottage (RCHM 11): Framed single-storey, 17th-18th C.
- -Telephone Kiosk

Potton End

No. 1 (RCHM 16): Framed single-storey, 17th-18th C.

St. Ives Road Milestone

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prehistoric

A series of east-west tracks across south Cambridgeshire exist which may have connected the Great Ouse Valley to the Cam Valley. Among these, the Ridgeway stems from the medieval village green and runs from Eltisley to Madingley Hill, following a watershed. A gold coin of Cunobelinus was discovered on its line at Childerley Gate (Fox 1923, 154).

Despite the presence of trackways of possible ancient origin, prehistoric finds from the parish are unknown. The absence of finds is consistent with the general scarcity of dating evidence (namely, pottery) from contexts of this period, and with the situation for the whole clay region where the rate of survival of pre-medieval finds is low.

In the past it has been suggested that the clay region of Cambridgeshire (including Eltisley) was unsuitable for occupation, explaining the absence of finds (Fox 1923). However, recent air photographs re-assessments and excavations on the Boulder Clay at Papworth Everard (above) and Caldecote have produced evidence for Bronze Age and Iron Age settlements (Kenney 2001). Excavations are currently under way in Cambourne (Wessex Archaeology) where there is evidence for Bronze Age and Iron Age sites. The latter (round houses within enclosures) seem to have been part of an organised

landscape of economically specialised settlements on the south-east facing slope of a plateau (Mark Roberts, per. comm.).

The distribution of known finds may suggest that occupation in the earlier prehistoric period was mainly confined to the well-drained gravels of the river valleys. However, there is growing evidence for Bronze Age/Early Iron Age activity on marginal heavy clay soils in Cambridgeshire, according to a trend observed elsewhere in Britain, which may point to increased pressure on land from the later Neolithic period.

Roman

The main feature of the Roman landscape is represented by a network of roads, including Ermine Street that linked Royston with Waternewton- *Durobrivae* via a crossing of the Ouse at Godmanchester (Margary 1967). Roman forts (e.g. Cambridge-*Durolipons*, Godmanchester-*Durovigutum*, Waternewton-*Durobrivae*) were established in the late first century along this route. At a later stage *vici* and *mansiones* developed around the forts that, by then, had become redundant. West from Cambridge a possible Roman road ran to Ermine Street at Caxton Gibbet and continued via Eltisley and Croxton. There it connected with the Sandy/Godmanchester road (Malim 2000, Ch. 21).

Despite the presence of roads, no Roman finds are known from the area. As with the situation for the prehistoric period (above), the clay region of Cambridgeshire has produced very little surface finds of this date.

Saxon and Medieval

Saxon Eltisley remains elusive and no artefacts of this period are known in the area. Tradition has it that a Saxon nunnery was founded at Eltisley where Pandionia, daughter of a Scottish king, would have taken refuge (Haigh 1988). The site of the nunnery is unknown. It has been tentatively located to the south of the church (Fig.1) near a well (SMR 2380) marking the original burial place of St Pandionia. This area contains earthwork remains (below, SMR 02380a). The site of the nunnery (referred to as Eltisley Abbey) and the well are represented in this location on the OS Maps of 1886 and 1902. At present, the only link with the figure of Pandionia is preserved in the dedication of the parish church which contains the relics of the Saint.

An alternative location for the nunnery is Papley Grove where a ruined chapel was confirmed by the bishop of Ely to the nuns of an unnamed house probably based at Hinchingbrooke where the community is believed to have transferred after the Conquest (RCHME 1968, 90; Pugh 1973, passim).

The granting of the chapel to the nuns of Hinchingbrooke may have given rise to the tradition of a nunnery at Eltisley before it moved to Hinchingbrooke (Taylor 1997, 43).

The place-name of both Eltisley and Papley Grove may suggest a Saxon origin.

Eltisley is recorded in the Domesday survey (AD 1086) as *Hecteslei* meaning 'wood (*leah*) of *Elti*'. Pappley Grove is first recorded in 1279 as *Pappele* meaning '*Pappa*'s Wood, possibly the same Pappa associated with the placenames of Papworth Everard and Papworth St Agnes (*leah*)' (Reaney 1943, 158).

The place-name evidence seems to suggest that clearance of woodland occurred relatively late. Assarting from the wood was still in progress from the late twelfth century (Pugh 1973, 46).

Further evidence for a Saxon origin is provided by documents which refer to Eltisley as being part of the estates of Earl Alfgar in c. 1062 (Pugh *ibid*.).

After the conquest Eltisley was one of the twelve vills of the royal Hundred of Longstowe.

Between 1086 and 1088 the estate of Eltisley was held by the canons of the Cathedral of St Mary, Bayeux (Calvados). In the middle of the twelfth century Niel bishop of Ely confirmed grants of land made by Roger de Mowbray whose family had obtained Eltisley. The manor became known as Stowe in the fourteenth century. It was acquired and sold many times in the course of the medieval and post-medieval periods until it came into possession of the Leeds family of Croxton Park in 1789. Therefore the manor has descended with Croxton (Pugh 1973, passim). It has been suggested that the original manor house may be on the same location as the present Manor Farm.

Manor Farm moat (SMR 1142a; RCHME 19) dates from the late medieval period. The moat is c. 10m wide and surrounds a rectangular area of some 1.4 ha. It is fed by a spring at the south-east corner where there is a pond. Remains of a wall are visible along the west edge of the moat. The causeway at the entrance could be original. There are remains of a cobbled surface to the north of the house. To the south-east of the moat is a ditched bank that runs to Eltisley Wood and follows a hedged boundary (SMR 2411, RCHME 20). Inside the moated area the post-medieval farm house (SMR 1142b; RCHME 5) stands on a platform (below). The moat is represented on both Tithe Map (1841) and Enclosure Map (1868) which also show the location of the farm house. The OS Map of 1887 shows nineteenth century buildings in the eastern half of the site.

At the beginning of the thirteenth century a third of the vill of Eltisley had been granted to the Musters in exchange for the advowson of the church. Musters manor was re-absorbed into Stowe manor during the fourteenth century. The site of the manor house is unknown (Pugh 1973, passim).

A third manor, Papley, originated in a series of grants of land in Eltisley and Caxton made to Hinchingbrooke Priory between the middle of the twelfth century and the early fourteenth century. A deed of the mid twelfth century refers to the nuns of Papley. At around the same time, the bishop of Ely confirmed the site of the chapel at Papley to the nuns of an unnamed house. At the Dissolution the manor was granted to Richard Williams *alias* Cromwell who sold it to William Marshalls in 1540. The estate then comprised land in

the parish of Papworth Everard. In 1593 Papley was purchased by Emmanuel College, Cambridge, that held the estate until 1899 when it became part of Papworth Hall estate in Papworth Everard. It is known that in the sixteenth century the 'mansion' belonging to the estate stood in the village (Pugh 1973, passim).

A square moated site at Papley Grove (SMR 1049, RCHME 22) may represent the original site of the manor house (Fig. 1). The moat is some 10m wide and encloses an area of approximately 0.5ha (Tithe Map of 1841 and Enlosure Map 1868). The present building was erected by Emmanuel College after the Enclosure of 1868. Earthwork remains include a fishpond. The site is occupied by an overgrown orchard first shown on the OS Map of 1887 which also depicts the post-medieval farm building.

There are several other moated sites still visible as earthwork remains near the village.

Pond Farm (SMR 1143, RCHME 18) is located on the east side of the village green (Fig.1). A rectangular area of c. 0.5 ha is enclosed on three sides by a moat some 9m wide. The forth (western) side has been destroyed. A hollow represents the line of the ditch. Along the north and east sides is a ledge lower than the rest of the moated area. The site is visible on both Tithe Map (1841) and Enclosure Map (1868) which also show a winged Tudor building (SMR 1143a, RCHME 7). On the OS Maps of 1887 and 1902 the eastern side of the site is covered by an orchard.

A moat (Fig.1) is located opposite Jesus College Farm (SMR 2295, Monument 6) near Caxton End (SMR 1179, RCHME 21). In the fifteenth century it was part of a messuage of the Mitchell family. In 1756 it was purchased by Jesus College, Cambridge, which held it until the early part of the nineteenth century. The moat is 9m and encloses a trapezoidal area of c. 1ha. A counterscarp bank runs along the north-east side of the moat. Remains of a cobbled area may represent the original entrance to the site on the east side. In the south-west corner of the moated site is a rectangular area bounded by ditches on the west and east side, and by a hedge on the south side. The moat is shown on both the Tithe and Enclosure Maps. The OS Maps of 1887 and 1902 only represent the western side of the moat and a 'holloway' that follows the layout of the original ditch.

Another moated site (Fig.1) is located at the north edge of Eltisley Wood, to the south of the village (SMR 1144, RCHME 24). It comprises a rectangular moated site of some 0.7ha. The moat is approximately 10m wide and is flanked by a bank on the east and south sides. The site is flanked on the inside by a hollow, possibly a pond. To the north of the moat is a rectangular enclosure with a causeway entering the north side. Thirteenth century pottery was found on the surface of the moated area (SMR 1144a). Both moat and enclosure appear on the Tithe and Enclosure Maps which show the moated area as being covered by woodland vegetation. On the same maps the site is accessed from the south. On the OS Maps of 1887 and 1902 the long axis of the moated area appears on a different alignment. The two maps also show a later causeway on the west side.

Finally, earthwork remains survive to the south-east of the church where banks, ditches, ponds and house plots survive (SMR 10020, 2351). The Tithe and Enclosure Maps only show a large pond, whereas the later OS maps depict a series of water features and a partial ditched enclosure, and refer to a 'moat'. Medieval pottery was recovered nearby (SMR 2352).

Eltisley was apparently divided into two fields in the late twelfth-early thirteenth century. From the sixteenth century the open fields were rearranged into three fields, Papley, Middle and Easton Fields. Many of the original medieval furlongs survived throughout the post-medieval period (Tithe Map of 1841) their names being recorded as early as the fourteenth century (Reaney 1943, 366). The parish was enclosed in 1864.

Remains of ridge and furrow of the medieval open fields cover much of the parish (SMR 02350, 02372, 02402, 05753). They are visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs. Cartographic evidence is provided by the Tithe Map of 1841 which shows individual furlong names. The pattern of fields around the village may have resulted from assarting of woodland as the settlement developed. The Tithe and Enclosure Maps show that these areas were not part of the medieval common fields. Eltisley Wood may have contained a deer park the pale of which is still visible as a long curving bank (Taylor 1973, 130).

There are still surviving portions of ancient woodland, i.e. Papley Grove to the north of the village, and Eltisley Wood (SMR 2349), to the south.

The village of Eltisley developed around a triangular green at the junction of the Ridge-way (Cambridge-St Neots road), with a north to south road (Biggleswade to St. Ives) and focused around the parish church of St Pandionia and St John the Baptist at the west corner of the green. The church (SMR 252) retains original thirteenth century elements in the nave and aisles. Late medieval additions include the tower. The chancel and much of the north chapel were rebuilt during the nineteenth century. The dedication of the church to St. Pandionia is linked with the tradition of a nunnery at Eltisley (above). However the earliest datable elements of the church are no earlier than AD 1200.

A second green is located at Caxton End, along the route in the east of the village (Caxton Drift). It is uncertain whether the Caxton End green represented a separate medieval focus, or resulted from later expansion of the original village nucleus. The presence of a second green and moated site is consistent with a polifocal village stemming from the early-mid Saxon pattern of groups of dispersed farms. In the fifteenth century the two nuclei were referred to as 'Le Upende' (The Green) and 'Le Estende' (Caxton End Green).

The distribution of moated sites (above) in relation to the layout of the medieval village is of particular interest. Pond Farm moat is located near the eastern side of the main green near the church. At Caxton End a moat is also located at the eastern side of the green. Between these two moats is a third one, Manor Farm. The place-name 'Manor Farm' may indicate an early origin

for this site that is also likely to have been occupied by the main manor-house. At a possible later stage, the village layout focused on the church and on the moated site at Pond Farm, with the creation of The Green and the possible realignment of the main routes through the village. As a result of settlement development and shift of focus, Manor Farm became isolated. The causeway entrance on the north side of manor farm moat implies the existence of a north-south route either predating or merging into the road to Caxton (Paul Spoerry, Pers. Comm.).

Papley Grove represented a separate (secondary?) settlement that was deserted by 1100, although the manor house was still in occupation in 1279, as records mention that the prior of Huntingdon had purchased the messuage and farmstead at that date (Oosthuizen 1985; Taylor 1973, 84). Although in Eltisley parish, Papley Grove may relate to either of the two parishes immediately to the north, i.e. Papworth Everard and Papworth St Agnes, as the personal name *Pappa* would suggest (above).

Post-Medieval and Modern

The post-medieval settlement developed around the medieval greens and moated sites, preserving the medieval facet of the village.

There are twenty-one Listed Buildings in the village (above). Of particular interests are those associated with the moated sites, as these show continuity of occupation and use of sites from the medieval period.

Manor Farm (SMR 1142b; RCHME 5) is located on moated site SMR 1142a, RCHME 19 (Fig. 1). It is partly a two-, partly a one-storey house with a frame cased in modern brick, and tiled roof. It was built towards the end of the medieval period and rebuilt in the seventeenth century.

Pond Farm (SMR 1143a, RCHME 7) is located on moated site SMR 1143, RCHME 18 (Fig.1). It is a two-storey early Tudor 'L'-shaped building with low-pitched slated roof

Other Listed Buildings of special interest associated with earthwork remains include the following:

Jesus College Farm (SMR 2295, RCHME 6) is an early seventeenth century two-storey framed and plastered building with hipped roof covered in tiles and pantiles located opposite moated site SMR 1179, RCHME Monument 21 (Fig. 1). It appears to have stood on the site of the late fifteenth century messuage.

The Old House (SMR 02344, RCHME 2) is located to the south-east of the church. It is an 'L'-shaped two-storey framed building with tiled roof dating to the beginning of the seventeenth century. Earthwork remains (SMR 2380a; RCHME 17) may have originally represented water features of a garden associated with the building.

Finally, post-medieval earthwork remains include the Windmill Site (SMR

2463, RCHME 23) south of the Cambridge Road. It is shown on the Tithe Enclosure Maps as a circular moated site some 40m in diameter described as 'Mill Hill'. Only a patch of flint and cobbles is visible on the present ground surface.

Other buildings of historical interest which are not listed nor are associated with earthworks include:

West Farm Barn (SMR 2318; RCHME 4), a sixteenth century unaisled building on the road to Potton End south of the village.

The Leeds Arms Public House (SMR 2317; RCHME 8) is a two-storey brick building dating to the eighteenth century located at the north end of the village green.

'The Mill House' comprises sixteenth to eighteenth century stone work built into a small dwelling of the nineteenth century which is located some 100m to the north-east of the church (RCHME 10).

Unknown

Three parallel groups of pits of uncertain date (Iron Age?) were noted during road works conducted in the late 1960s some 300m to the south-west of the church (SMR 2403). They produced no finds.

An undated subrectangular enclosure visible as a cropmark on aerial photographs is located 1km to the south of the village green (SMR 08428).

5 DEPOSIT MAPPING AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

To date, there is scant record of pre-medieval activity around Eltisley. However, there is the potential for the survival of yet undiscovered remains, as recent excavations in the region have shown. Excavations and re-assessments of air photographs have revealed evidence for later prehistoric activity on the heavy clay soils that had previously gone undetected through traditional air reconnaissance and chance discovery.

Despite the presence of Roman roads, no finds of this period are known from the area. As with the earlier period, it cannot be discounted that remains may exist buried underneath the soil burden created by the medieval ridge and furrow, or within areas of old development not recorded.

Saxon Eltisley remains elusive, despite the foundation of a possible nunnery and reference in historic sources to a pre-Conquest estate. Saxon (and, in particular, early Saxon remains) are rare and difficult to identify.

Notwithstanding the impact caused by development from the post-medieval

period, and the introduction of modern farming techniques, evidence of medieval Eltisley survives in the present village layout and as extant earthworks (moated sites) and cropmarks (i.e. ridge and furrow) visible on aerial photographs. The full extent and date of the medieval settlement and moated sites have not been established.

6 POTENTIAL SURVIVAL AND RATING OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS

6.1 Potential Survival of Archaeological Remains

The parish of Eltisley offers great potential for the study of the medieval origin and later developments of the village and associated fields. Medieval remains are well documented and survive as earthworks or cropmarks. The village itself preserves elements of the medieval layout, with particular reference to the greens and the moated sites.

By contrast, mapping suggests that the prehistoric and Roman periods may be under-represented, as, in comparison with the situation for the later periods, the location of prehistoric remains is least well known and finds least well preserved.

6.2 Rating

Based on the assessment of the available evidence, period rating can be described as follows:

Mesolithic/Neolithic unknown
Bronze Age unknown
Iron Age unknown
Roman low

Saxon low/unknown

Medieval high for field-systems/moderate for settlements
Post-medieval high for field-systems/moderate for settlements

7 CONCLUSIONS

The object of this study was to assess the archaeological potential of the parish of Eltisley by consulting a wide range of available sources. These comprised SMR information, cartographic evidence, secondary documentary sources and aerial photographic overlays that were integrated to produce the general historical and archaeological background to the parish.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The illustrations were produced by Jon Cane (AFU).

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Maps Consulted

Cambridgeshire Record Office (CRO)

Enclosure Map of 1868 (Location: Q RDc 81)

Tithe Map of 1841 (Photostats, No Location)

Altered apportionment and Map of 1888 (Location: P65/27/1)

OS 1:2500: Huntingdonshire (Sheets XXVI. 10-11, 14-15)/Cambridgeshire (Sheets XXXVIII.10-11, 14-15):

- First Edition of 1887

- Second Edition of 1902

British Geological Survey

BGS Huntingdon Sheet 187 Solid and Drift Geology, 1:50 000



