

Neale Wade Community College, March Cambridgeshire



Desktop Assessment



March 2009

Client: Cambridgeshire County Council

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Neale Wade Community College, March, Cambridgeshire

Desk-Based Assessment

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Summary

In March 2009 Oxford Archaeology East undertook a desk based assessment to examine and compile the existing archaeological, historical and cartographic evidence relating to the site of Neale Wade Community College, March, Cambridgeshire. The purpose of the study was to assess the potential for the presence of surviving archaeological remains ahead of redevelopment of the school site.

The study area is located in the Town End part of March, south of the river Nene and the town centre. It lies on a narrow band of gravel (the line of the current B1101) which extends from the March island to the smaller Fen islands of Wimblington and Doddington to the south. The Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record shows several entries in the immediate vicinity of the study area. These include, cropmark and aerial photographs, individual find spots and archaeological fieldwork including evaluations and excavations. There is good evidence that the study area lies in an area of high archaeological potential. Iron Age and Roman remains have been discovered along the route of the current B1101 for approximately 1.5km and the study area is located in the centre of these remains.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning Background

- 1.1.1 This desk based assessment has been prepared in advance of redevelopment of Neale Wade Community College as part of the BSF scheme.

1.2 Location, Geology and Topography

- 1.2.1 The study area is located in the Town End area of March. The western boundary is the B1101 Wimblington Road which is orientated north south and leads to March town centre to the north and the village of Wimblington to the south.
- 1.2.2 The study area lies on a narrow north south ridge of March gravels, with deposits of boulder clay to the east and west (British Geological Survey 1995) which forms the southern tip of the March island, surrounded by Fen to the south east and west.

1.3 Acknowledgements

- 1.3.1 This desk based assessment was funded by Cambridgeshire County Council.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOURCES

2.1 Historical Sources

2.1.1 No historical sources refer to the site.

2.2 The Historic Environment Record (HER)

Relevant entries:

- HER 09009 – Rectilinear enclosure and possible building cropmark evidence (Palmer 2003)
- HER 11645 – Cropmark of large sub rectangular enclosure to the south of the PDA. Probably Middle or Late IA like one found at Wimblington Rd.
- HER MCB14807 – Excavation at 9 Church Street (Grassam 2004)
- HER MCB15352 – Iron Age and Roman remains, Wimblington rd (Atkins 2004)
- HER MCB16060 – Icenic coin hoard, Field Baulk Farm. Immediately north of study area (Potter 1996).
- HER 03781 – Roman pottery, bronze coins and other bronze objects.
- HER 03781a – Anglo-Saxon cruciform brooch, probably 6th Century (same find spot as above).
- HER 11643 – Ridge and furrow agricultural remains. Aligned east west. Thought to be medieval.
- HER 05915 – Roman coin hoard. “Large pot” full of Hadrianic coins (early 2nd Century) found in the 19th Century.
- HER ECB3013 – Evaluation at 12 Jobs Lane (Adams 2008).
- HER CB14565 – Evaluation at Cavalry Park, The Avenue (Kemp 1999).
- HER 05917 – Large dolerite perforated axe hammer. Found in St. Wendreda's Churchyard in 1969.
- HER 02007 – Grandford Farm Romano-British settlement. Extensive settlement located on the north western edge of the March island.
- HER 06032 – Roman occupation and industrial site at Flaggrass, located immediately north of Fen Causeway on the north east of the March island.
- HER 06016 – Norwood Ro settlement. Sub rectangular Roman enclosures with saltern pits containing briquetage.

See also Appendix A for a full summary of all HER entries quoted.

2.3 Cartographic Evidence

2.3.1 The first edition Ordnance Survey sheet for Town End, March shows settlement around St. Wendreda's Church. Since then the route of Wimblington Road has been altered so the original frontage of Wimblington Road, for the most part, lies beyond the western boundary of the study area.

2.4 Aerial Photographs

- 2.4.1 To the south of the study area, on the west side of the B1101, there exists significant cropmark evidence indicating a rectilinear enclosure with associated field system (HER 10798, Palmer 2003). Palmer suggests these are Iron Age or Roman in date and also that there might be a building immediately to the west, although this is less certain. Atkins suggests that the probable track way visible in crop marks is a early precursor of the medieval Wimblington to March road (modern B1101). See Fig.2 for this AP evidence overlaid on to HER plot.
- 2.4.2 The remains of medieval ridge and furrow agriculture are also visible to the west of this putative enclosure and field systems. This might mask further Iron Age and Roman archaeology.
- 2.4.3 Excavations at 22-23 Wimblington Road discovered the remains of at least two large sub rectangular enclosures both with internal post holes and ring gullies (Atkins 2004 pp. 53-4, Fig. 2). One of these was 58m long and over 22m wide. Further south towards Wimblington on the east side of the B1101, a substantial sub rectangular cropmark (HER 11645) measures approximately 60m east west to 70m north south (See Fig.2). These are conceivably large Middle Iron Age enclosures, more of which might exist in the vicinity.

2.5 Earthworks

- 2.5.1 No earthworks survive within the study area.

2.6 Archaeological Excavations and Surveys

Recent developer funded investigations and surveys in the south of March have revealed the presence of occupation and settlement. See Fig.2.

- 2.6.1 Excavations at 9 Church Street (Grassam 2004).

Open area excavation took place immediately north of St Wendreda's Church, located to the west of the proposed development area on the other side of the B1101. This revealed several ditches, pits, post holes and a pond or hollow. Most of these were thought to date from the Iron Age and Roman periods and contained mostly abraded pottery, interpreted as residual. Of five ditches found, four were orientated north south while one was east west. A further five other ditches were identified during the evaluation of the same site but located in trenches outside the area of later excavation. These were all orientated north south.

Several post holes were also discovered which might have formed fence lines. No dating evidence was recovered from them.

The conclusion reached was that, although not securely dated, the ceramic material recovered from the excavation indicates a continuous Roman presence in the vicinity. A Saxon presence was also suggested by a diagnostic Ipswich Ware sherd. This could also be residual, particularly when considering the likelihood of early medieval settlement associated with St Wendreda's Church.

The evidence recovered from this excavation was interpreted as being associated with farming and manuring.

Post medieval and modern archaeology was also found. A large pit in the east of the excavation was thought to have been used for gravel extraction.

2.6.2 Excavations at 22-23 Wimblington Road, March

Open area excavation found part of a rural settlement which dated from at least the 1st Century BC to the early 2nd Century AD. This was located to the south of the study area and c.150m to the south of St. Wendreda's Church. Large Middle / Late Iron Age enclosure ditches were the earliest features recorded on site. Within these were possible circular and/or post built structures, possibly part of a ditched farmstead. These were followed by field systems and possible fence lines in the early Roman period. The middle Roman period (mid second early third century) was characterised by further enclosures, boundary ditches and east west track way ditches (Atkins 2004).

All features continued beyond the limits of excavation to the north, south, east and west. Moreover, the excavations conducted by AS Grassam 2004), some 350m to the north, found Iron Age and Roman ditches on the same alignment, undoubtedly part of the same settlement.

2.6.3 Evaluation at Cavalry Park, March.

Evaluation trenches revealed a series of large pits, approximately 14m in diameter. These were thought to be medieval or post medieval in date, although one was probably Roman. Kemp[suggests that the relatively large amounts of residual Roman pottery found indicates a settlement either on the site or close by (Kemp 1999).

2.6.4 Evaluation at 12 Jobs Lane, March.

Evaluation revealed an Early Bronze Age pit containing worked flint and Beaker pottery. Also, a Roman ditch, on a north south orientation is presumably is part of the same field system noted in the excavations at Church St to the north (HER MCB 14807) and Wimblington Road (HER MCB15352) to the south.

2.6.5 Field Baulk Farm Icenian Coin Hoard

Immediately north of the study area a coin hoard was discovered containing 872 Icenian coins which are thought to have been buried at the time of the Boudiccan revolt. They appeared to be contained within a single vessel. Excavation of the immediate area showed the coins to have been deposited adjacent to or within a small curvilinear ditch. This was up to 0.6m wide and 0.4m deep which probably represents occupation on the site in the Late Iron Age and early Roman period.

3 DEGREE OF SURVIVAL

- 3.1.1 Any archaeological remains within the study area have potentially been disturbed by ridge and furrow agriculture or deep ploughing, although the extent of any damage is unknown. Ridge and furrow has been identified to the south and west of the study area (HER 09009 & 11643). The study area is on the site of Eastwood House of which no physical remains exist. The house was located in the north east corner of the Park, the remains of which now lie under school buildings. However the vast majority of the plot was Park land (as shown on the 1st Edition map, Fig.3). As the original Wimblington Road frontage now lies beyond the boundary of the present study area (Fig.3) this reduces the likelihood of there being any building foundations within the study area.
- 3.1.2 Quarry pits have also been discovered at Cavalry Park and at 9 Church St. This is most likely to be medieval in date and associated with the development of the town around St. Wendreda's Church in which case it is possible that gravel extraction could have taken place within the study area.
- 3.1.3 Archaeological remains found in the vicinity of the study area were relatively well preserved. Features at the Wimblington Road excavations were relatively untouched by ploughing and approximately 0.4m beneath the modern ground level (Rob Atkins pers. comm.). Considering the proximity of these excavations to the present study area it is quite probable that any archaeology that extends within the study area is equally well preserved.

4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1.1 Until relatively recently known archaeological sites in March have been limited to the north of the island where excavation and cropmarks have provided evidence for substantial Roman settlement, enclosure and industrial activity, notably salt production (at Longhill rd, Atkins 2003). Much of this would have been associated with the Fen Causeway, a Roman route which runs through the Fens on a east west alignment.

Fieldwork conducted in the last few years in the south of March has begun to redress this imbalance. It is now quite likely that south of the river Nene, the narrow spur of gravel which leads to Wimblington contains settlement, enclosure and field systems dating from the Middle Iron Age through to the 3rd Century when Roman occupation appeared to cease as flood deposits and inundations reached approximately 2m AOD. Between HER no.s MCB 14656 and 09009, to the north and south of the study area, there appears to be 1.5km of fairly continuous archaeology. It also follows that a road or track way existed linking this occupation to settlements in the north of March and south towards Wimblington. Such a feature might have been partially identified by AP evidence to the south of the excavations at 22-23 Wimblington Road (HER Plot Fig.2).

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1.1 This purpose of this study was to gather together existing archaeological, cartographic and documentary evidence in order to assess the potential for surviving archaeological remains within the proposed development area.
- 5.1.2 The site has a high level of archaeological potential. It lies on a narrow band of gravel between March town centre to the north and the small Fen islands of Wimblington and Doddington to the south. As has become increasingly apparent from recent fieldwork and survey in the vicinity, this land appears to have been exploited between the 1st Century BC and the 3rd Century AD, and possibly from the 3rd Century BC. Enclosures and settlement look to have been followed by field systems until activity ceased some time in the 3rd Century AD.
- 5.1.3 There is evidence for quarrying both to the south and the north of the study area and remains the possibility that any archaeology within the study area might have been disturbed, truncated or removed by later aggregate extraction.

APPENDIX A. SUMMARY OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE HER ENTRIES

HER No	Grid Ref.	Description	Period	Type of Works	Designation
09009	TL 415 948	Rectilinear enclosure and poss. building	LIA/Ro	Aerial Photographic Survey	
11645	TL 418 946	Large cropmark enclosure.	IA?	n/a	Monument
MCB14807	TL 415 953	Excavation at 9 Church St	IA/Ro	Excavation	Monument
MCB 15352	TL 416 949	Excavation at 22-23 Wimblington Rd	IA/Ro	Excavation	Monument
MCB106060	TL 417 955	Iceni coin hoard & assoc features	LIA	Small excavation	Monument
03781	TL 416 956	Ro pottery, coins & other bronze objects	Ro	n/a	Find Spot
03781a	TL 416 956	Anglo-Saxon cruciform brooch	AS	n/a	Find Spot
11643	TL 4137 9535	Ridge and Furrow	Med	n/a	Monument
05915	TL 417 955	Coin hoard	Ro	n/a	Find Spot
ECB3013	TL 415 952	Evaluation at 12 Jobs Lane	BA, Ro, Med	Evaluation	Monument
MCB14565	TL 416 958	Evaluation at Cavalry Park	Ro, Med	Evaluation	Monument
05917	TL 415 952	Large dolerite perforated axe hammer	BA	n/a	Find Spot
02007	TL 393 996	Grandford Farm settlement	Ro-Brit	Excavation	Monument
06032	TL 434 985	Flagrass occupation & industry	Ro	Excavation	Monument
06016	TL 418 995	Norwood Ro settlement	Ro	Excavation	Monument
CB15747	TL 415 994	Salt working & settlement, Longhill Rd	Ro	Evaluation	Monument
06013	415 952	St. Wendred's Church	Med	n/a	Building

APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, M. 2008 12 Jobs Lane March, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation. Archaeological Solutions Report no. 3185

Atkins, R. 2003 An Early Salt Making Site and Settlement at Longhill Road, March, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation. Cambridge County Council Archaeological Field Unit Report

Atkins, R. 2004 Iron Age and Roman-British Settlement at Land of Wimblington Road, March: Post-Excavation Assessment, Part 1.

Kemp, S. 1999 Roman and Medieval Gravel Pits Along The Avenue, Cavalry Park, March. Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit Report no A147

Palmer, R. 2003 Land Adjacent to 22-23 Wimblington Road, March, TL415948, Cambridgeshire: Aerial photographic assessment.

Potter, TW. 1996 *In* Jackson, RPJ. & Potter, TW 1996 Excavation at Stonea, Cambridgeshire 1980-85 pp.45-48

Cartographic Sources

England and Wales Sheet 159. Solid and Drift Edition. British Geological Survey 1995.

Ordnance Survey First Edition 1885, Cambridge Record Office

HER Plot, Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record

APPENDIX C. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details

OASIS Number	Oxfordar3-56453			
Project Name	Neale Wade Community College: A Desk Based Assessment			
Project Dates (fieldwork)	Start	04-03-2009	Finish	06-03-2009
Previous Work (by OA East)	No		Future Work	Unknown

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	MAR NEL 09	Planning App. No.	n/a
HER No.	n/a	Related HER/OASIS No.	n/a

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt	Planning condition
Development Type	Public Building

Please select all techniques used:

DBA

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - interpretation	<input type="checkbox"/> Documentary Search
<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Visual Inspection (Site Visit)

Monument Types & Period

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period
n/a	Select period...
	Select period...
	Select period...
	Select period...

Project Location

County	Cambridgeshire	Site Address (including postcode if possible)	
District	Fenland Distric Council	Neale Wade Community College Wimblington Road March PE15 9PX	
Parish	March		
HER	Cambridgeshire		
Study Area	8ha	National Grid Reference	TL 417 952

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	n/a
Project Design Originator	n/a
Project Manager	James Drummond-Murray
Supervisor	Thomas Lyons

Project Archives

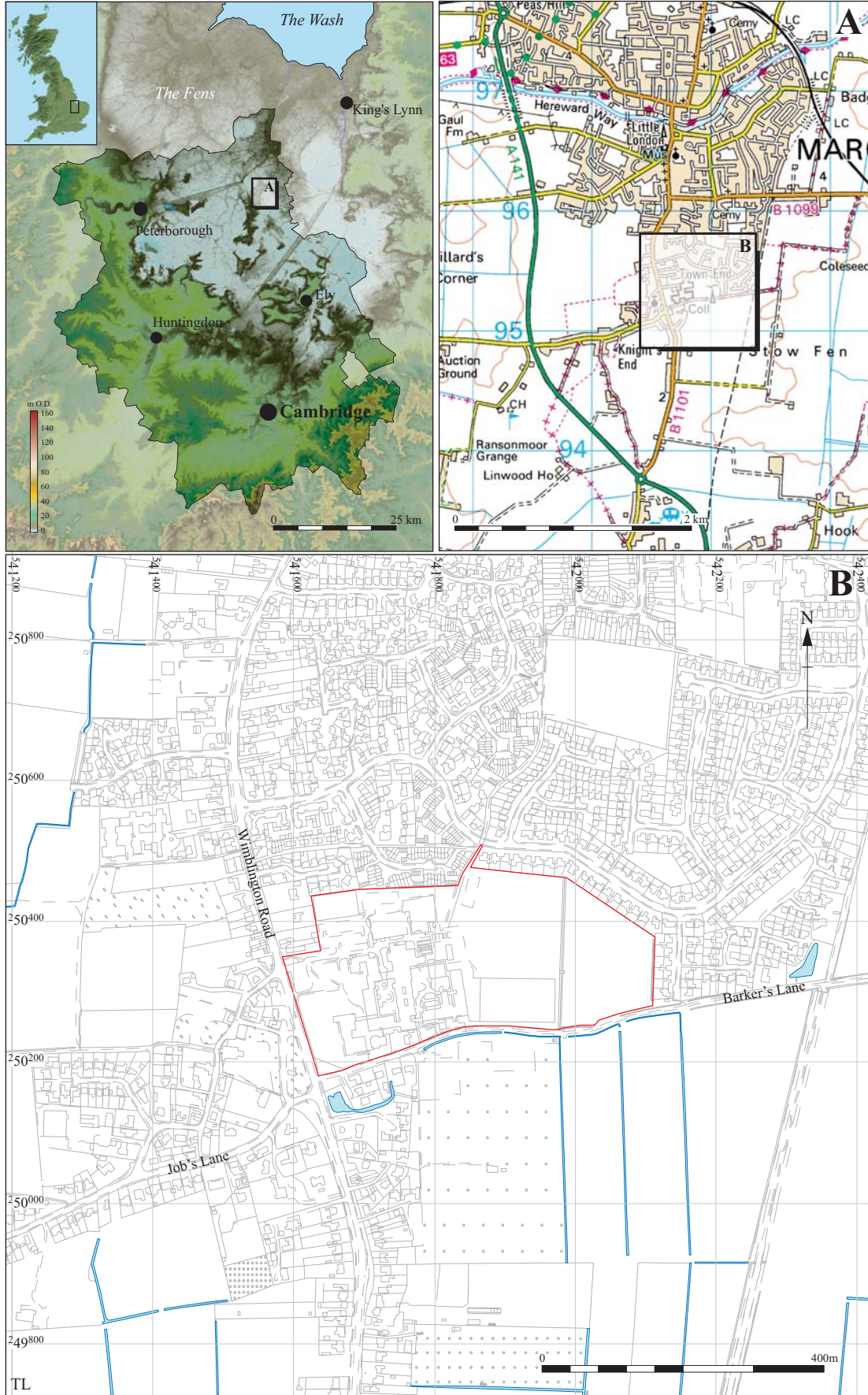
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Location ...	OA EAST	OA EAST
Accession ID ...	Accession ID ...	Accession ID ...

Archive Contents/Media

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Ceramics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Survey		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Textiles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Bone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Stone/Lithic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Digital Media	Paper Media
<input type="checkbox"/> Database	<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photos
<input type="checkbox"/> GIS	<input type="checkbox"/> Context Sheet
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysics	<input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence
<input type="checkbox"/> Images	<input type="checkbox"/> Diary
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	<input type="checkbox"/> Photos
	<input type="checkbox"/> Plans
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey

Notes:



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Figure 1: Location of study area (red)

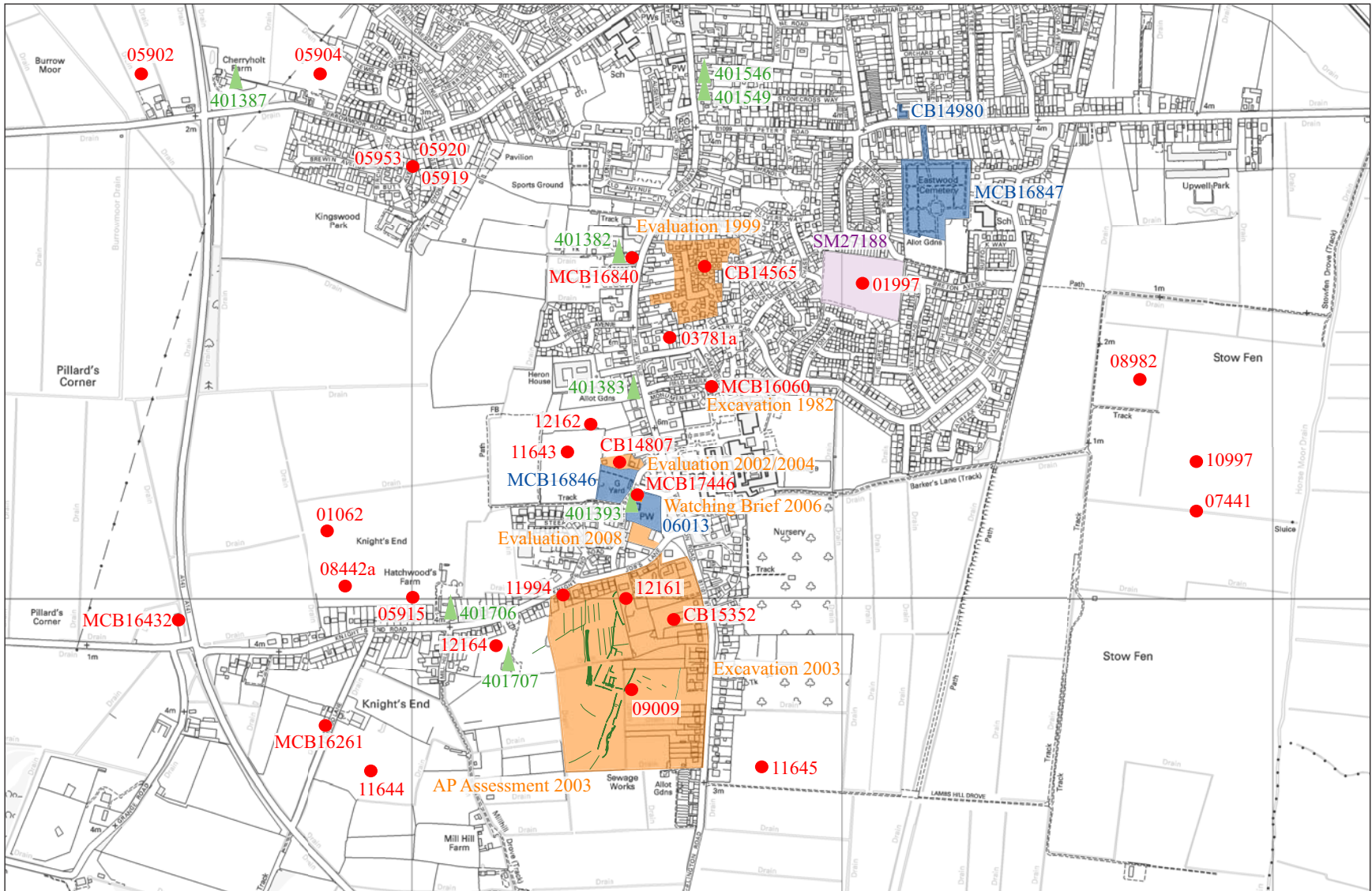


Figure 2: HER plot (incorporating AP survey data from Palmer 2003)

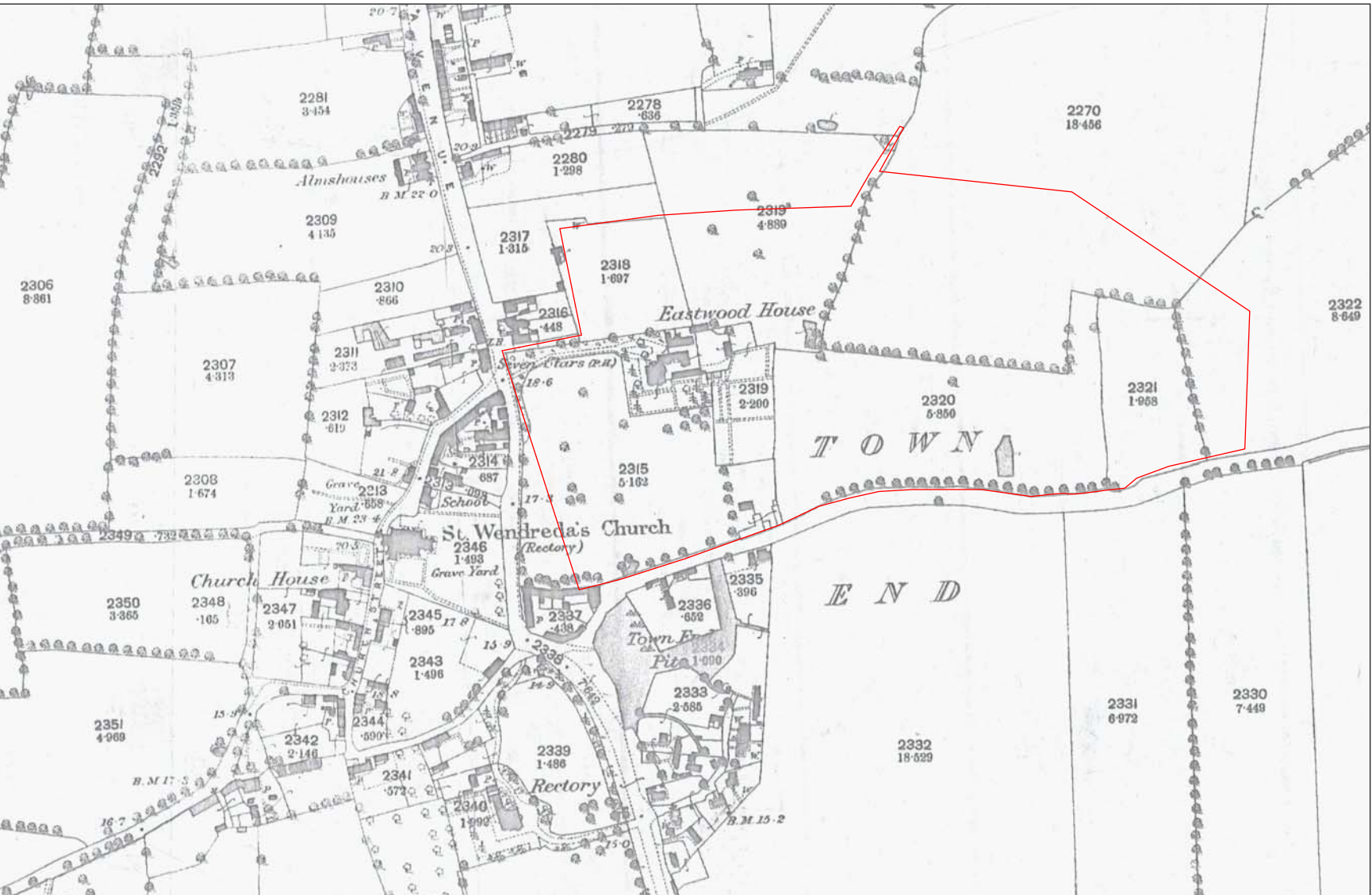


Figure 3: 1st Edition 1885 map of March with study outlined (red)



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