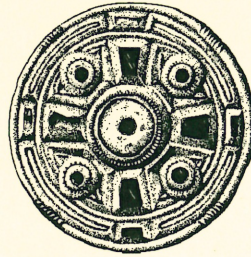


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Archaeological Field Unit

Archaeological Evaluation at Moorfield Road, St. John's Street,
Duxford

T L Sutherland BSc HND PIFA & P Spoerry BTech PhD

1995

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. 110

Commissioned By Caspian Homes Ltd.

ERRATA

The following changes should be made to the text in the report entitled 'Archaeological Evaluation at Moorfield Road, St. John's Street, Duxford'.

1. Following the words, 'These give a *terminus post quem* to this feature of AD 900-1150' in the second paragraph on page 6, the following paragraph should replace the one written:-

'A rim sherd, found in Trench 2 and dating from the mid twelfth to fourteenth centuries, is shown below and is typical of many of those found on the site.'

2. The last paragraph on page 9 should be replaced by the following paragraph:

'There is some evidence for late Saxon activity, but it is not of a form that suggests occupation in the immediate area. This paucity of definite Late Saxon settlement evidence suggests that the site does not lie within the core of the occupation area mentioned in Domesday Book.'

**Archaeological Evaluation at Moorfield Road, St. John's Street,
Duxford**

T L Sutherland BSc HND PIFA
P Spoerry B'Tech PhD

1995

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Report No 110

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SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was carried out on a plot of land at the junction of Moorfield Road and St. John's Street, Duxford, Cambridgeshire (TL 479/463), during November 1994. Although trenching was severely restricted by the abundance of trees and shrubbery which covered the site, several features were recorded, mostly in the chalk natural, below the relatively sterile subsoil. Many of these features contained a small number of pottery sherds, which dated from the Roman period, to early this century. The most significant features appeared to date from the late medieval period and are more abundant on the periphery of the site. These may be boundary ditches, or may mark the edges of a raised piece of ground on which the site stands.

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Archaeological Evaluation at Moorfield Road, St. John's Street, Duxford.

1 INTRODUCTION

In November 1994 an archaeological evaluation was carried out by The Archaeology Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council on an area of land adjacent to the junction of Moorfield Road and St. John's Street, Duxford, Cambridgeshire (TL 479/463).

Eight trenches were excavated across the site, seven 10 metres by 1.6 metres and one 5 metres by 1.6 metres. The location of the site and the positions of the trenches are given in Figure 1. The area in which these trenches could be placed was severely restricted by a large number of trees (some of which had preservation orders upon them), shrubs and dense undergrowth.

2 GEOLOGY, TOPOGRAPHY AND LAND USE.

The underlying geology is Middle Chalk (British Geological Survey 1985). The site lies at 27.00 m OD, is generally flat with the land sloping away slightly to the east towards the River Cam or Granta. The site has a recorded history as gardens and orchards and still retains a vegetable patch in the west, an apple orchard in the south and many large deciduous trees such as Sycamore and Horse Chestnut in the north. Moorfield Road lies immediately to the east of the site whilst St. John's Road lies to the north.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies on a braid of the national prehistoric routeway, the Icknield Way (Taylor 1973). This south west/north routeway is represented by both St John's Street, and St Peter's Street in Duxford. The preservation of these routes in the street plan of the village suggests that from the earliest period of Duxford's existence there may have been occupation on sites such as this one, adjacent to the route.

The site was initially thought to be within the medieval, and probably Saxon, core of the village of Duxford. It lies on the north east corner of the medieval village green. This green would have originally been an open space, but was mostly occupied by the eighteenth century. The main part of the 'proposal area' is an exception, being open space in recent centuries as one can see from the copy of the 1842 Duxford Tithe Map marked as properties 170 and 171, (Fig 2). This does not, however, tell us anything of its early use-history and it could easily have experienced Saxon or medieval occupation. Certainly Duxford was a large, populous village in the late Saxon period (37 tenants in Domesday Book) and this, coupled with the restriction on eastwards growth by mill leats, may have caused early encroachment onto the Green.

Duxford was a poly-focal village, with two churches, both with twelfth century fabric, and three major manorial centres within the medieval centre. The site lies towards the north east edge of the village core, but south west of a manorial complex that was probably Lacy's Manor (marked as 285, Fig. 2; SMR 01263).

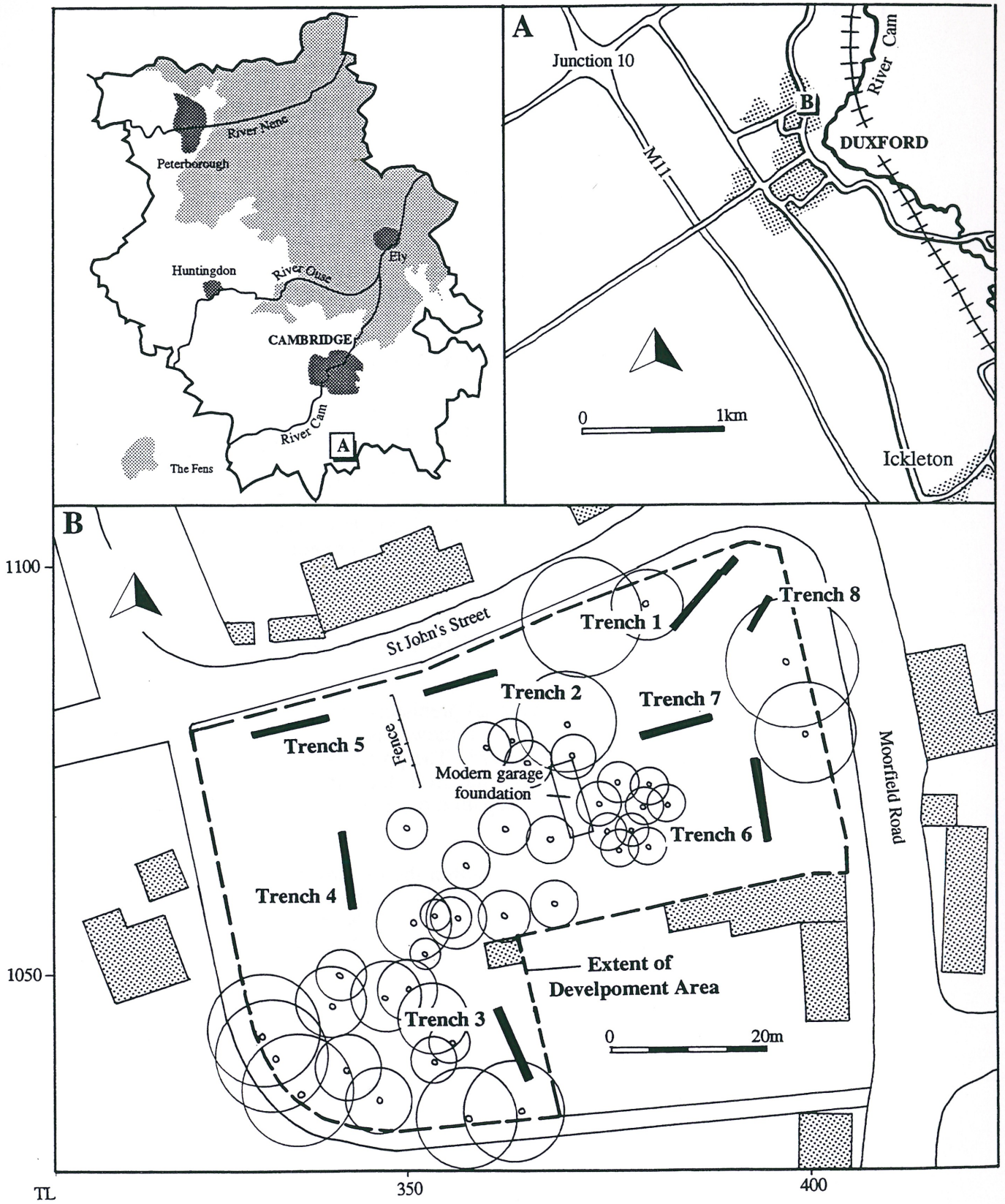


Figure 1 Location plan

4 METHODOLOGY

Seven trenches 10 metres by 1.6 metres and one 5 metres by 1.6 metres were partially excavated with a mechanical excavator using a 1.6 metre wide toothless bucket. The topsoil and subsoils were removed to reveal any archaeological features cut into the chalk natural. Only once was an archaeological feature encountered within the topsoil (15), and this feature was excavated by hand. The depth of the soils over the natural, averaged approximately 0.40 metres and consisted of generally stone free very dark-greyish brown sandy silt loam which produced very little modern pottery but several late medieval sherds in its lower levels.

Areas of archaeological interest were then photographed, recorded on plan and section, and any artefactual evidence retrieved and recorded.

5 RESULTS

Several trenches uncovered archaeologically stratified material of significant interest and most contained features cut into the natural chalk. The topsoil contained pottery dating from the medieval period (AD 900-1150) to the early twentieth century (AD 1780-1900). The subsoils which lay below these, but above the natural, contained pottery dating from between AD 900 -1150 and AD 1100-1400.

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was positioned in the north-east corner of the site in an attempt to find evidence of both the recorded early trackway and any trace of buildings fronting onto the road (Fig 1).

The trench (Fig 3), uncovered a 3.2 metre wide and 0.75 metre deep ditch **32**, the northern side of which appears to have been either eroded or cut away at the point of investigation. The fill of this feature (4), contained pottery which dated to between AD 900 and AD 1150.

Stratigraphically above the northern side of the ditch cut, lay a compacted area of small flint stones (31). These formed a horizontal bed which was approximately 1 metre wide and 5 centimetres thick. No dating evidence was found sealed beneath this context.

To the north of these stones and possibly cutting them lay a feature **51**, which sloped down into an area which could not be investigated due to the close proximity of a hedge and fence. Its fill (50), contained three badly abraded sherds of pottery which were flint tempered, hand made and appeared to be either Romano-British or late prehistoric.

The fill above the stony area (4), had at some period been cut into by a 0.5 metre wide, and 0.5 metre deep, flat bottomed trench **30**, which had been filled with a matrix of re-deposited chalk (29). This lay approximately 0.10 metres above the stones and therefore post-dated them. In the uppermost fills of the large ditch and 0.4 metres beneath the present surface one could clearly see a

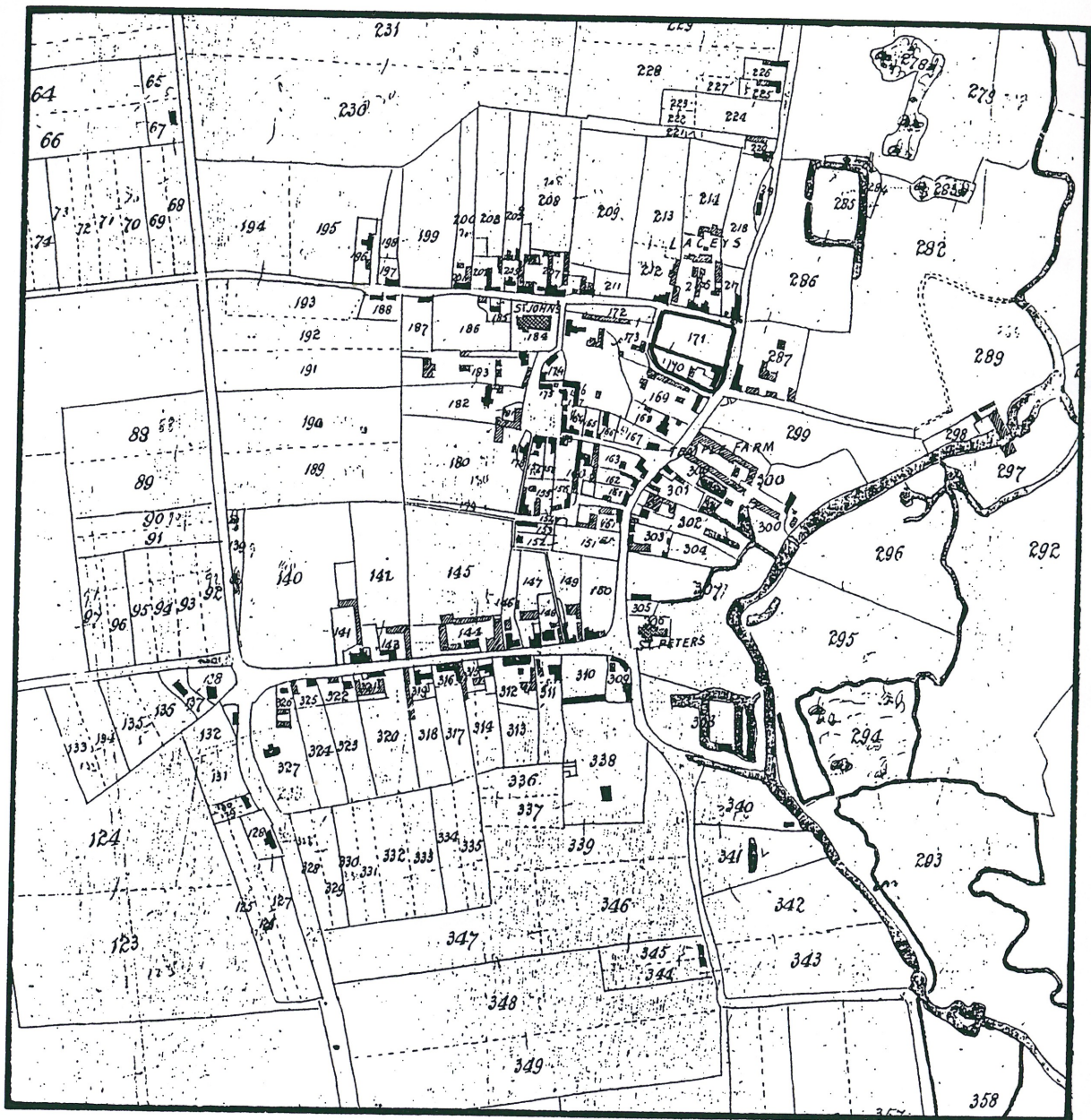


Figure 2 1842 Duxford Tithe Map with the site location marked as properties 170 and 171. (Ref. no. QRDC 44)

collection of mixed animal bones in a confined area (2). These consisted of most of the forelimbs of a dog and two rabbit bones. Whether these bones were in a possible feature 3, cut through the topsoils from above or were simply lying within the matrix of the ditch fill can not be determined. Pottery associated with these remains however tentatively suggest that this context was of a late medieval date, although the pottery could have been residual in the backfill.

The large ditch may represent a land division or simply a drainage ditch. The rammed flint layer appears to have been a 1 metre wide path although this may have made narrower by a cut on its northern side and so may have been part of a trackway. The ditch, which lay above these stones and was filled with chalk, may have been just one of a series of boundaries at this point, as would be

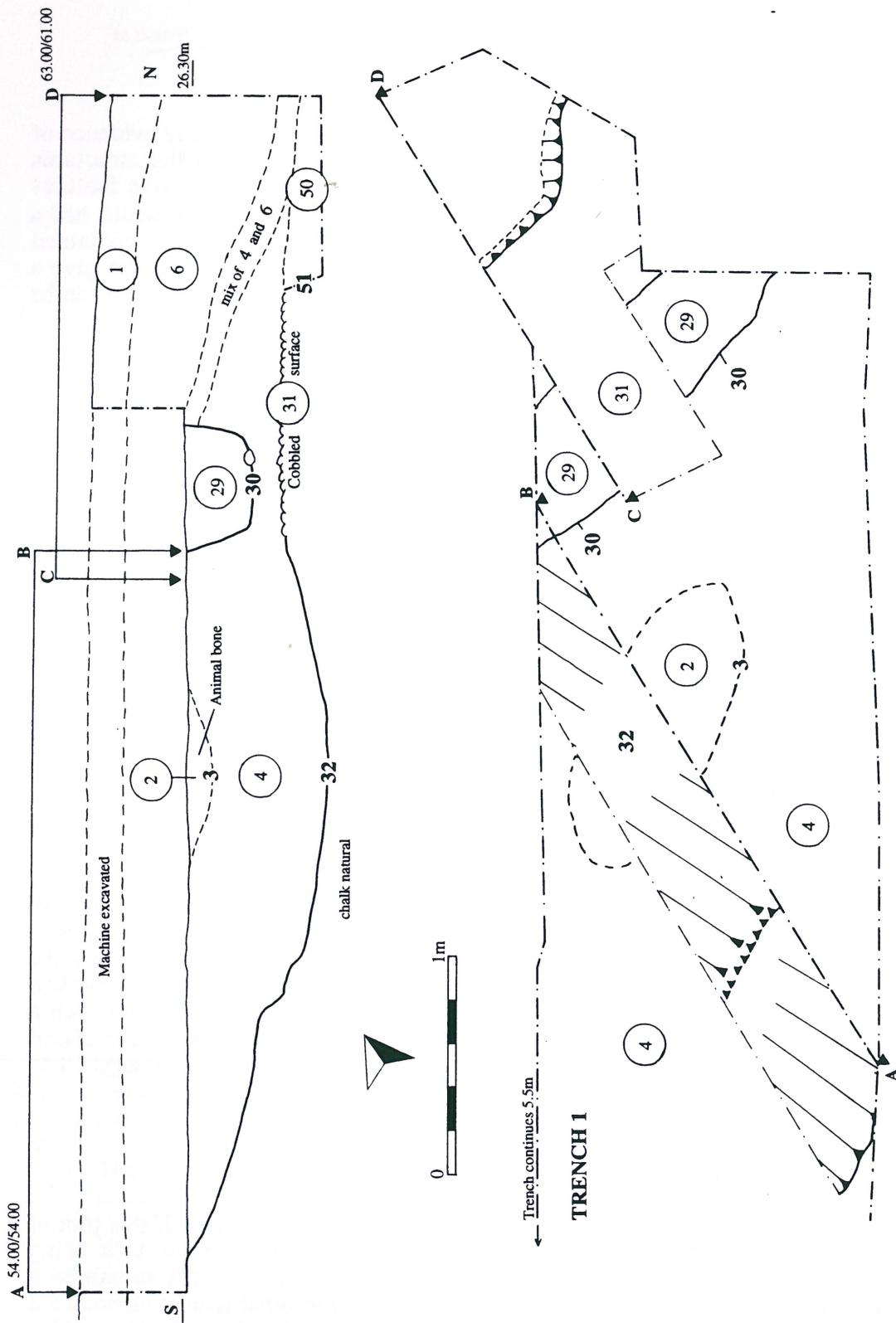


Figure 3 Section and plan of trench I

expected along the line of what appears to have been a well established route way. Alternatively drains are known to have been constructed in this manner in similar dimensions, although the chalk fills are usually of a looser type. The bones in the ditch fill (Appendix B), are probably the result of animal remains being dumped in the gradually silting ditch.

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was positioned in the north of the site in order to find any evidence of the early routeway and to see if there was any evidence of earlier structures fronting onto the road (Fig 1). The trench contained two distinctive features (Fig 4). The most striking of these was a large cut in the chalk **23**, which had a 0.6 metre deep steep side, a shallow end and a flat base. Its fill (22), contained several sherds of pottery which varied in date (see Appendix C). These give a *terminus post quem* to this feature of AD 900-1150. A typical rim sherd can be seen below (Fig 4).



Figure 4 *In-turned rim of a greyware vessel dating to the mid twelfth-fourteenth centuries, with parallel forms known from Essex*

A second feature consisted of a very small, 0.20 metre wide and 0.10 metre shallow trench **42**, which ran into the top of the latter feature, but its fill (43), contained no dating evidence. The relationship between these features is uncertain as they contained almost identical fills.

The small depression has the appearance of a beam trench but is too insubstantial to suggest a structure of any significance.

The large feature appears to be either the remains of a small quarry which may have lain beside the roadway or a depression made into the chalk for an unknown purpose. It lies adjacent to, and to the south of, St John's Street, which has a long history as a routeway. Initial interpretation analysis raised the suggestion that it may be remains of a Grubenhous (Anglo-Saxon sunken featured building). Although this feature had certain similarities with such a structure, such as the depth, the steep sides, the possibility of an associated beam trench and the Saxon pottery, not enough of it could be investigated to draw any significant conclusions.

5.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was excavated at the south of the site in order to check if this plot of land contained differential stratigraphy to the rest of the site due to it being partitioned from the rest some time in its past. This area still contained a separate orchard, and the possibility of refuse pits and other features associated with the rear of domestic structures being recorded seemed quite high. The trench revealed a number of features, two of which appeared to be of archaeological interest, the others being of natural origin.

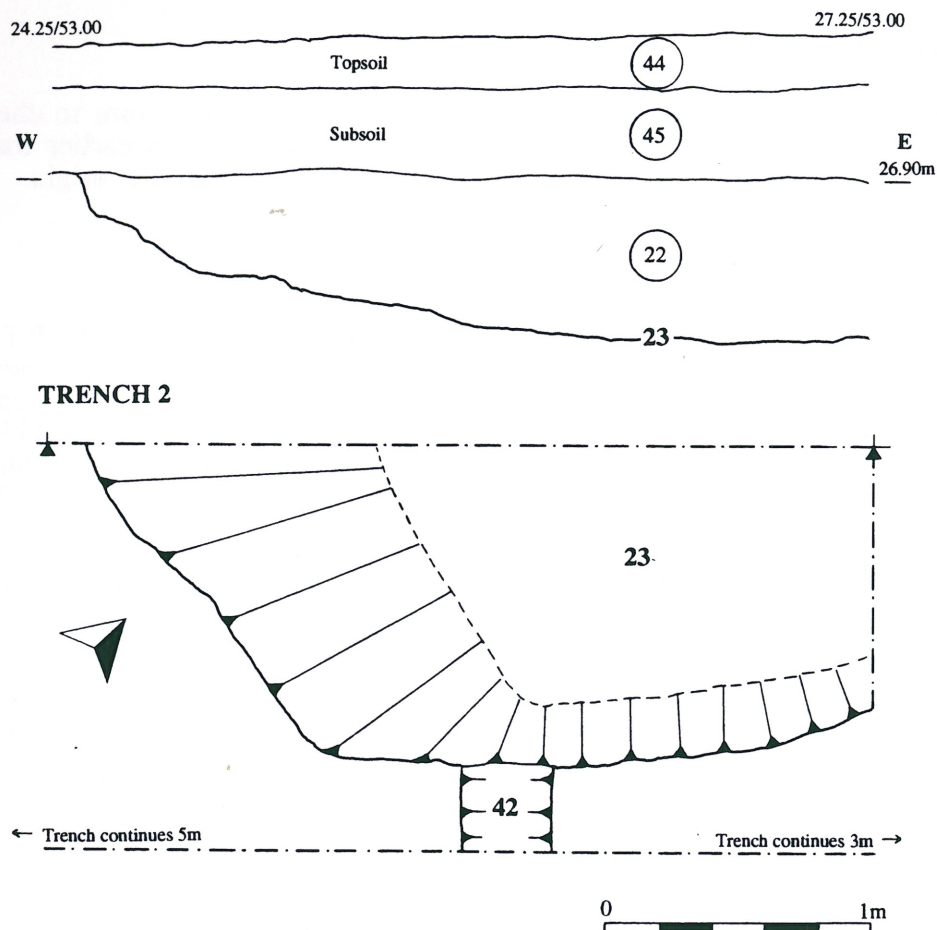


Figure 5 Section and plan of trench 2

One feature **39**, formed a circular and concave cut into the chalk, and contained tip lines which showed evidence of an uneven filling (38). This lay close to straight, shallow feature **37**, 0.10 metres deep and 0.30 metres wide, which had steeply cut sides and a very flat base and contained a fill (036), in which were found several sherds of pottery (see Appendix C). These give a *terminus post quem* to this feature of AD 1600-1800.

This feature could be therefore be the result of relatively modern horticultural activity.

The circular feature appears to be a pit but as it contained nothing by way of significantly differential fills or artefactual material, little can be said of its date or function. It may, for example have been cut to receive a sapling for the orchard which did not then reach maturity.

Feature **41** appears to be the remains of a tree bowl whilst feature **47**, was found to be a solution hollow.

5.4 Trench 4

Trench 4 was positioned in the centre of the west of the site and contained no identifiable features.

5.5 Trench 5

Trench 5 was located in the north-west of the site once more to check for potential evidence of road front structures and signs of an earlier track. It contained several features, all of which appeared to be of natural origin.

5.6 Trench 6

Trench 6 was excavated in the south-east of the site in order to check for road fronting structures (Fig 1). It contained one area of archaeological interest (Fig 6). Removing the topsoil exposed a mixed debris layer at the southern end (15), 0.10 metres below the surface. This contained chalk and brick rubble, flint stones, bone fragments (Appendix B), and pottery sherds of variable dates (Appendix C). These give a *terminus post quem* to this feature of AD 1780-1900.

This debris was approximately 0.10m thick and was found to be lying in a slump in the subsoil which lay directly 0.35 metres above the cut of a feature 20, which was just visible in the base of the trench. This latter feature was 0.40 metres deep, had a steep side and a very flat base. The fill (19), contained large cattle bones, some of which showed evidence of butchery, (see the faunal remains report, Appendix B), and a small amount of late medieval pottery.

This latter feature appeared to be more linear than pit-like and therefore may either represent one side of a ditch, the edge of a platform or simply a square sided pit

5.7 Trench 7

Trench 7 was located as close to the eastern centre of the site as possible, the trees severely restricting access to this point. It contained one feature which is of archaeological interest. A linear 'U' shaped cut 7, was recorded running north/south across the centre of the trench which was approximately 1 metre wide and 0.25 of a metre deep. Several sherds of pottery were recovered from its fill (8), which would give a *terminus post quem* to this feature of AD 900-1150.

This feature appears to be a boundary ditch of some form.

5.8 Trench 8

Trench 8 was located as close to the present road front as possible in an attempt to find any evidence of structures fronting onto the street. A very shallow concave feature 27, approximately 0.10 metres deep and greater than 1 metre wide, had very smooth sides was recorded in the extreme east of this short trench. Its fill (26), contained one sherd of hard fired, quartz tempered pottery dating from approximately AD 1350-1550.

The feature possibly represents the remains of a shallow pit.

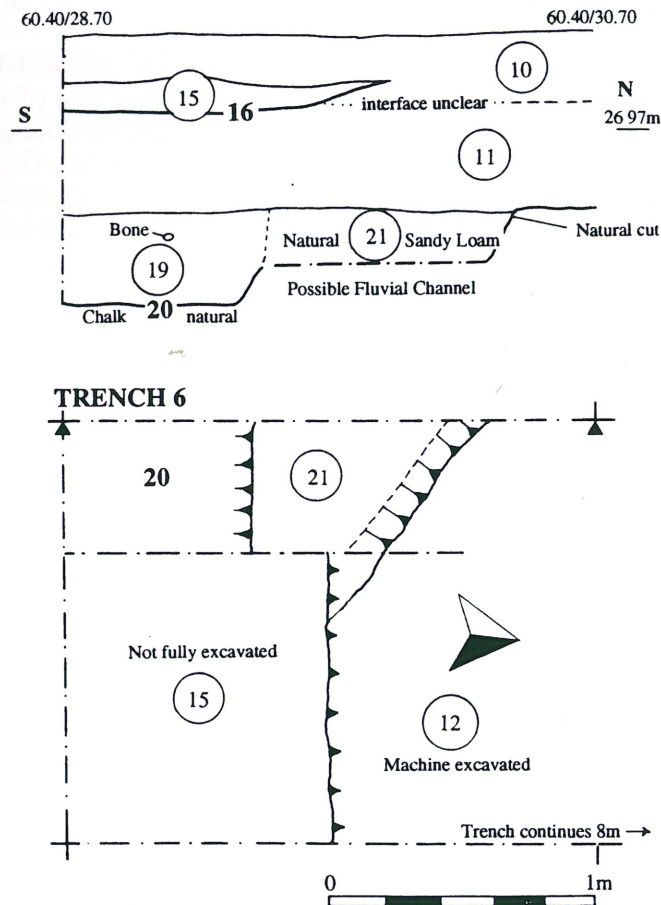


Figure 6 Section and plan of trench 6

6 INTERPRETATION

The excavation evidence suggests that most of the major earth moving activity has been carried out around the periphery of the present site but that none of these episodes appear to relate to any significant structural development. This suggests that it has possibly always been an open, undeveloped area of land.

The apparent large ditch or platform edge which runs along the northern side of the plot is significant as it lies close to or along the known alignment of part of the prehistoric routeway, the Icknield Way. Whether the excavated remains of the laid flints 31, form a part of this routeway, or whether they simply represent a later footpath could not be determined due to the limitations of space available for the evaluation.

The apparent lack of any definite early medieval features is also significant as it would appear that the late Saxon settlement mentioned in Domesday Book is not located in the immediate vicinity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Caspian Homes Ltd. for the funding of this work, and also Rob Butler at the County Archaeology Office who produced the Brief and monitored the site works. Thanks must also go to the British Gas plc. for their assistance with the location of the services, the on-site excavators, Spencer Cooper and Charlie Miller, Caroline Gait-Utime for the illustrations and Lorrain Higbee for the identification of the faunal remains.

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APPENDIX A

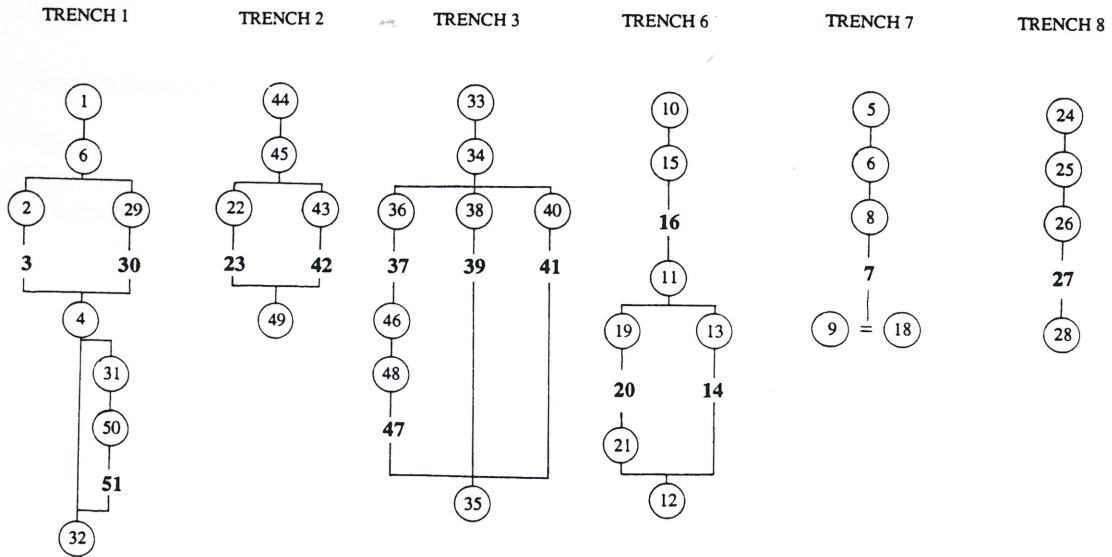
CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context	Description	Nature	Depth	Below	Above
1	Layer	Topsoil - 2.5Y 3/2 very dark greyish brown sandy silt loam	0.40m	/	6
2	Fill of 3	Ditch fill - 2.5Y 4/2 dark greyish brown sandy clay silt	0.15m	6	3
3	Cut	Depression in ditch fill, filled by 2	/	2	4
4	Fill of 32	Ditch fill - 2.5Y 4/2 dark greyish brown sandy clay silt	0.6m	6,30,3	32
5	Layer	Topsoil - 2.5Y 3/2 very dark greyish brown sandy silt loam	0.30m	/	6
6	Layer	Sub-soil - 2.5Y 4/3 olive brown sandy silt loam	0.25m	5	8
7	Cut	Ditch filled by 8	/	8	Natural chalk
8	Fill of 7	Ditch fill - 2.5Y 4/2 dark greyish brown silty clay	1.50m	6	7
9	Layer	Natural - 2.5Y 8/3 yellow chalk	/	6,7	/
10	Layer	Topsoil - 2.5Y 3/2 very dark greyish brown sandy silt loam	0.20m	/	15,11
11	Layer	Sub-soil - 2.5Y 4/3 olive brown sandy silt loam	0.30m	10,15	19,21
12	Layer	Natural - 2.5Y 8/4 pale yellow chalk	/	19,21	/
13	Fill of 14	Fill of natural gully - 10YR 4/6 dark yellowish brown sandy loam	varies	11	12
14	Cut	Cut of natural gully- filled by 13	varies	13	12
15	Fill of 16	Fill of slump above ditch fill - 2.5Y 6/4 light yellowish brown silty clay	0.10m	10	11
16	Cut	Cut or base of depression filled by 15	/	15	11
17	Unused context				
18	Layer	Natural - 2.5Y 8/1 white chalk	/	6	/
19	Fill of 20	Fill of ditch /platform edge - 2.5Y 5/4 light olive brown sandy silt loam	0.40m	20	20
20	Cut	Cut of one side of ditch or platform edge filled by 19	/	19	12,21
21	Fill	Fill of natural gully - 10YR 4/6 dark yellowish brown sandy loam	/	11	/
22	Fill of 23	Fill of large hollow in chalk natural 2.5Y 5/4 light olive brown sandy silt loam	0.47	45	23
23	Cut	Cut of large hollow in chalk natural filled by 22	/	22	18

24	Layer	Topsoil - 2.5Y 3/2 very dark greyish brown sandy silt loam	0.20m	/	25
25	Layer	Sub-soil - 2.5Y 4/3 olive brown sandy silt loam	0.55	24	26,28
26	Fill of 27	Fill of shallow hollow in chalk natural - 2.5Y 5/3 light olive brown silty loam	0.10m	25	27
27	Cut	Cut of shallow hollow in chalk natural filled by 26	/	26	28
28	Layer	Natural - 2.5Y 8/1 white chalk	/	27,25	/
29	Fill of 30	Fill of ditch or trench - 2.5Y 8/4 pale yellow chalk	0.40m	6	30
30	Cut	Cut of ditch or trench filled by 29	/	29	4
31	Layer	Road or path made of small flint pebbles	0.03m	4	?
32	Cut	Cut of large ditch filled by 4	0.60m	4	28
33	Layer	Topsoil - 2.5Y 3/2 very dark greyish brown sandy silt loam	0.20m	/	34
34	Layer	Sub-soil - 2.5Y 4/3 olive brown sandy silt loam	0.15m	33	35,36,46
35	Layer	Natural - 2.5Y 8/4 pale yellow chalk	/	34,47	/
36	Fill of 37	Fill of shallow cut - 2.5Y 5/3 light olive brown sandy silt loam	0.10m	34	37
37	Cut	Cut of possible garden feature filled by 36	/	36	48
38	Fill of 39	Fill of pit - 2.5Y 5/3 light olive brown sandy silt loam	0.47m	34	35
39	Cut	Cut of pit filled by 38	/	38	35
40	Fill of 41	Fill of tree bowl - 2.5Y 5/3 light olive brown sandy silt loam	0.20m	34	41
41	Cut	Natural cut caused when tree roots decayed filled by 40	/	40	35
42	Cut	Possible beam trench/ drainage trench filled by 43	/	43	49
43	Fill of 42	?Trench /ditch? fill - 2.5Y 5/3 light olive brown sandy silt loam	0.12m	45	42
44	Layer	Topsoil - 2.5Y 3/3 very dark brown sandy silt loam	0.20m	/	45
45	Layer	Sub-soil - 2.5Y 4/3 olive brown sandy silt loam	0.35	44	22,18
46	Layer	Top of natural feature - 2.5Y 4/3 sandy silty loam	0.05	34,36	48
47	Cut	Natural cut of solution hollow filled by 46	/	48	35
48	Fill of 47	Fill of solution hollow	0.75m+	46	35
49	Layer	Natural - 2.5Y 8/1 white chalk	/	22	/

50	Fill of 51	Fill of negative feature - 5/4 olive brown silty clay	0.20m+ 4	/
51	Cut	?Terrace/ platform edge? or cut for later road, track of path filled by 50	/	50 Unexcav.

SITE MATRIX



APPENDIX B

FAUNAL REMAINS

Context No.	Trench No.	Taxa	Bone	Number	Comments
002	1	Dog	Humerus	2	
002	1	Dog	Radius	2	
002	1	Dog	Ulna	2	
002	1	Dog	Metacarpal	4	
002	1	Dog	Phalanx	1	
002	1	Dog	Vertabrae	1	Thoracic
002	1	Rabbit	Femur	1	
004	1	Dog	Mandible	1	Permanent dentition
004	1	Cattle	Phalanx	1	
004	1	Cattle	Metacarpal		
004	1	Rabbit	Ulna	1	Juvenile
006	7	Cattle	Mandible	1	
006	7	Cattle	Scapula	1	
006	7	Sheep/ Goat	Pelvis	1	
010	6	Sheep/ Goat	Femur	1	Juvenile
019	6	Cattle	Metacarpal	1	Pathology shows increased width of condyle = evidence of animal being used for traction
019	6	Cattle	Humerus	1	Evidence of butchery on distal end

The Size of the Assemblage

The animal bone assemblage comprises of mixed remains from several differing contexts weighing approximately 1.9 Kg in all.

Potential information from the animal bone

There is a very small assemblage from what could be seen as a good representative sample of that from the site, as all the bones are in a good state of preservation.

The following taxa are present; Cattle, Sheep/Goat, Dog, and Rabbit.

The lack of complete skeletons on the site suggest that the singular bones or disarticulated remains were taken onto the site and dumped as rubbish by humans; taken onto the site by predators/scavengers as food; or that the animals, such as those of the rabbit were caught, disarticulated and taken onto the site to be eaten by predators/ scavengers, with the rest of the remains being spread further afield. It would appear that the dog was not a buried pet as the skeleton is incomplete. The increased width of the cattle metacarpal condyle suggests that this was a draught animal.

The remains of each taxa are too few in number to infer other any reliable data upon them other than that they are present.

Recommendations

This assemblage is too small to recommend any further examination, such as that of age, sex, or metrical analysis, as little further reliable information will be obtained which will be of any use.

APPENDIX C

POTTERY SPOTDATES

Context No.	Description	Date
Trench 1		
1	Topsoil 2 sherds of medieval Herts/Essex greywares 1 sherd of post-medieval redware	>1100-1400 1600+
4	Ditch fill 1 sherd of St. Neots ware base	900-1150
50	Fill of negative feature 3 sherds of flint-tempered hand-made pottery (late Pre-historic or Roman)	<400
Trench 3		
36	Fill of negative, possibly a garden feature 2 sherds of glazed post-medieval redware 1 rim sherd of shell tempered redware (not St. Neots) 1 thin-walled, hard-fired late-medieval sherd 1 flanged rim sherd in quartz-tempered redware from an interned vessel (as seen in 25 & 45)	1600-1800 900-1400 1350-1550 1150-1350
Trench 7		
6	Subsoil 3 sherds of St. Neots ware 2 sherds of grey ware (possibly Thetford) 3 sherds of quartz-tempered coarse ware	900-1150 900-1150 1100-1400
8	Ditchfill 2 sherds of St. Neots ware 3 sherds of greyware: 2 probably Thetford	900-1150 900-1150
Trench 6		
10	Topsoil 1 sherd of St. Neots ware 1 sherd of greyware 5 sherds of assorted redwares, possibly late-Medieval	900-1150 1100-1400 1350-1650
15	Rubble layer 1 sherd of Post-medieval redware 1 sherd of Creamware 1 sherd of metallic slipware 1 sherd of St. Neots ware 2 sherds of shell tempered ware, possibly Roman 1 sherd of late-Medieval redware	1600+ 1780-1900 1600-1700 900-1150 ? <400 ? 1350-1550

Trench 2		
22	Ditchfill	
	1 sherd of Roman greyware	<400
	1 sherd of thin-walled late Saxon/Medieval greyware	900-1150
	4 sherds of thick-walled greywares, some micaceous, probably Thetford	900-1150
45	Subsoil	
	1 inturned, flanged-rim greyware sherd (as seen in 25 & 36)	1150-1350
	2 greyware base sherds, possibly of Thetford type	900-1150
Trench 8		
24	Topsoil	
	1 sherd of English stoneware	19th century
	1 sherd of Creamware	1780-1900
25	Subsoil	
	3 base sherds of assorted greyware	1100-1400
	2 greyware rim sherds, flanged form, wheel made or inturned vessel: parallels in Essex (also in 036 & 045)	1150-1350
26	Pitfill	
	1 sherd of Medieval hard fired, quartz tempered ware	1350-1550

The assemblage is almost all quartz-tempered greywares of varying dates; on parallels with elsewhere. They appear to represent the medieval greyware tradition as seen in Hertfordshire and Essex, but the types are not well enough identified or dated to be certain. This assemblage should be re-evaluated when the recently excavated Hinxtton Hall assemblage has been fully studied.



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