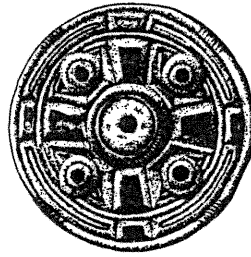


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Archaeological Field Unit

**A Ring-Ditch at the East of England Showground, Orton Waterville,
Peterborough: An Archaeological Evaluation**

W. Wall and A. Hatton

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**A Ring-Ditch at the East of England Showground, Orton Waterville, Peterborough:
An Archaeological Evaluation**

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October 1999

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Summary

Between 15th September and 1st October 1999, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken on 18 hectares of land at the East of England show ground near Alwalton, Peterborough, by staff of the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit. The work was carried out in connection with a planning application for the site involving the construction of a large number of dwellings, associated access roads and services.

Eighteen 100 x 2m evaluation trenches were excavated across the site. Archaeological remains were uncovered in only one area, where a trench crossed the central part of a probable ring-ditch about 24m in diameter. Finds from the ring-ditch were not inconsistent with a prehistoric date, but close dating evidence was lacking. The surviving depth of the ring-ditch was shallow, and it had probably been truncated by medieval or earlier ploughing. No evidence of human remains was uncovered.

The lack of finds from elsewhere on the site can probably be taken to indicate a low level of activity here in the Roman and Medieval periods. Since there seems, however, to have been activity in at least one area in the Prehistoric period, the absence of prehistoric finds over most of the site should be interpreted with caution.

A Ring-Ditch at the East of England Showground, Orton Waterville, Peterborough: An Archaeological Evaluation

1. INTRODUCTION

Between 15th September and 1st October 1999, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken on 18 hectares of land at the East of England show ground near Alwalton, Peterborough, by staff of the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit. It was commissioned by Persimmon Homes (East Midlands) Ltd in connection with a planning application for the site involving the construction of a large number of dwellings, associated access roads and services. The work was carried out according to a brief for archaeological evaluation issued by Peterborough City Council Archaeological Services (PCCAS) (Robinson 1999). The work was supervised on site by A. Hatton and the project was managed by W. Wall.

2. GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Located to the south-east of the village of Alwalton, 6 miles to the south-west of Peterborough, the site is situated on the interface of third terrace sands and gravel of the River Nene and Oxford Clay (BGS 1984).

The site lies within the East of England show ground, at its north-eastern corner, and is bordered to the north by the A605. It has been managed as pasture land for many years, functioning occasionally as an overflow car park for the show ground and also in recent years as the location of a 'car-boot' sale.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Although the site actually lies within the present civil parish of Orton Waterville, the nearest settlement is the village of Alwalton, the historic core of which lies about 750m to the north-west. Alwalton is in Cambridgeshire, whilst Orton Waterville is within the area of the Peterborough City Council, which became a unitary authority in 1998. The site and its environs are therefore covered by both the Cambridgeshire County Council and the Peterborough City Council Sites and Monuments Records.

Although administratively part of Cambridgeshire, the village of Alwalton has now been largely assimilated into the conurbation of Peterborough. The derivation of the name is unclear but can certainly be traced back to the 10th century when it is recorded as 'Aethelwoldington', to 'Alwoltune' in the 11th century, 'Alewaltone' in the 12th to 14th century, finally becoming Alwalton in the 17th century (VCH, 1967). The manor appeared to have been prosperous as by 1086 there were two mills recorded, increasing to three by 1125. The church is not mentioned in the Domesday book, but by the end of the 12th century there was a stone-built church; this was altered about 1300 and extensively re-built during the 15th century.

The parish was inclosed in 1805 under a private act of Parliament and an inclosure map of 1809 shows the area divided into separate fields. The first edition OS 1-inch map, published in 1824 but surveyed 1808 - 1817, shows the area of the site as open land without fences, hedges or buildings.

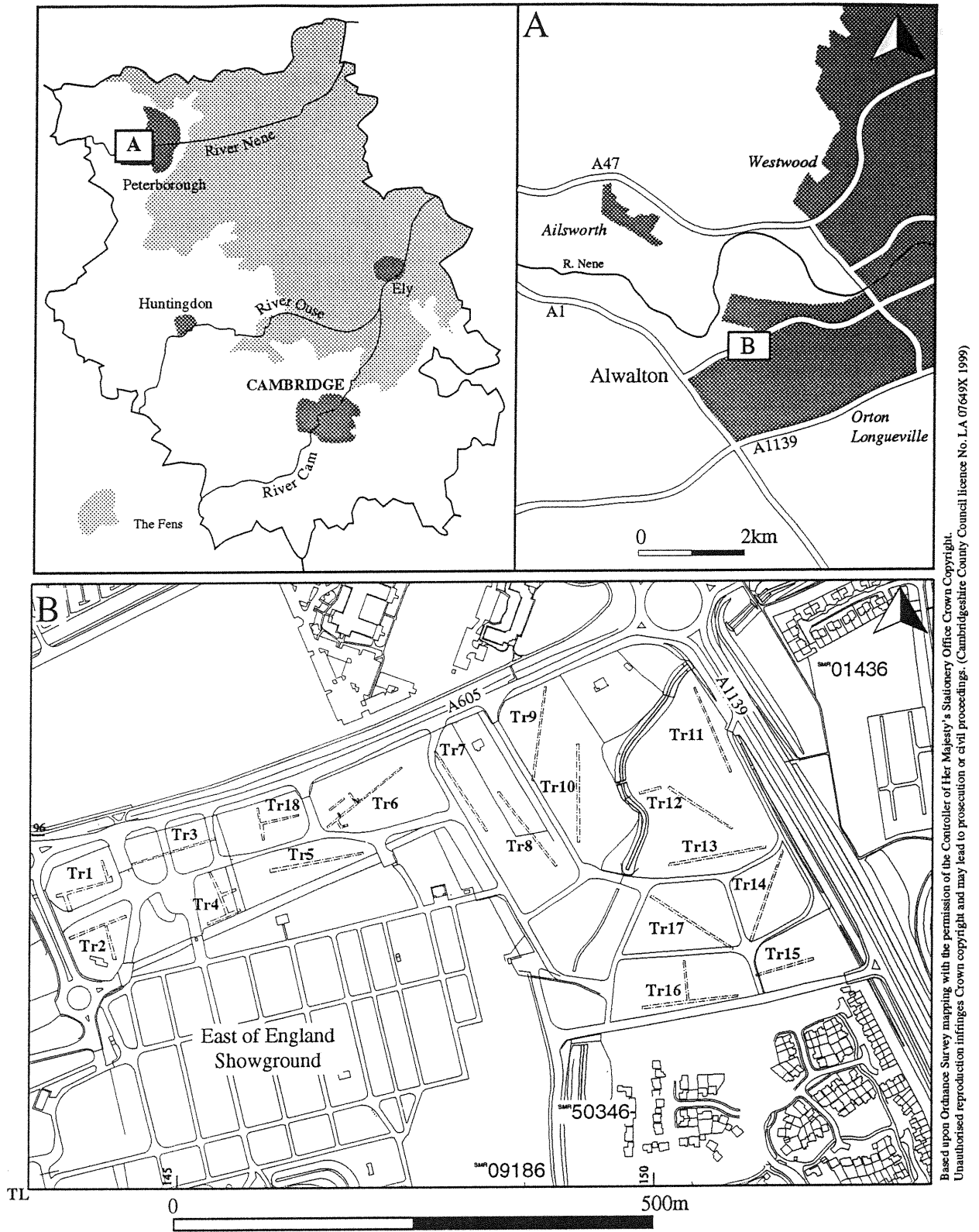


Figure 1 Site Location Plan showing location of archaeological trenches and location of Peterborough City Council Sites and Monuments Records.

The site is located within an archaeologically rich landscape with most periods represented, although primarily dominated by Roman activity. The Roman town of *Durobrivae* lies some 2km to the north-west, and the Roman Ermine Street runs nearby. The site is bordered to the north by the Ailsworth to King's Cliffe Roman road (Margary 1967) along the course of which frequent isolated Roman finds have been recorded. In Alwalton itself the remains of a Roman building (PCCSMR No. 00912) and burials (CCCSMR No. 05714) have been recorded. A 1st century pottery kiln, along with metallised yards and up to 6 extended inhumations, probably of Roman date, were recorded during construction work at Lynch Wood, 200m to the north (PCCSMR 10091).

The prehistoric period is represented primarily by records of barrows and ring-ditches in the area around the site. A scheduled barrow cemetery (PCCSMR 1436, SAM 193) lies 100m to the east, on the other side of the A1139. There are also records of three ring-ditches to the south of the development area, (PCCSMR 9174, 9186 and 50346) although doubt has been cast on some of these records. Two ring-ditches (PCCSMR 9174 and 9186) were identified from aerial photographs taken by the Ordnance Survey, but more recent examination of these photographs has failed to confirm their existence. More detail on this is given in the aerial photographic report, which appears in the project archive (Palmer 1999). The validity of the record of the third ring-ditch (PCCSMR 50346) has not been questioned by Palmer, but as the source quoted for it in the PCCSMR seems to be the same Ordnance Survey AP as for the other two (OS/64/198, 033-34), it should be treated with caution.

There have been several previous archaeological excavations and evaluations in and around Alwalton. A site on the eastern edge of the village, about 300m north-west of the present site, was evaluated by the AFU in December 1998 (Roberts 1999). This work uncovered evidence of Roman and Middle Saxon occupation. A subsequent excavation during the summer of 1999 on this site carried out by Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust uncovered further Saxon occupation and a Middle Saxon cemetery. There was also evidence for a Bronze Age barrow on this site (Cambs. County Council CAO News, issue 1). The final report on this work has not, however, been published as yet.

An evaluation on land to the West, carried out in January 1998, probably represents the closest previous investigation to the present site (Bray, 1998). This uncovered no archaeological activity earlier than the ridge and furrow that ran across the site. It seemed from the arrangement of ridges and furrows that the land had been ploughed in triangular divisions known as gores. This, and other evidence, suggested that the area had been marginal land, only ploughed, perhaps, when arable production was at a premium. Medieval ridge and furrow agriculture is evident from aerial photographs of several other areas around the site (PCCSMR nos. 09824, 01436a and 08750), although no ridge and furrow is known from the site itself. It is nevertheless likely that the site was cultivated at various times during the Middle Ages.

In summary, there is considerable evidence to suggest that Alwalton and its environs, in which the site lies, have a considerable archaeological potential; this covers all periods, but there are particularly high densities of Roman and Anglo-Saxon remains. Prehistoric funerary monuments such as barrows (mostly heavily ploughed since at least the medieval period and known only from air photographs as ring-ditches) also feature prominently in the surrounding area. Nevertheless, there is no known archaeology from the site itself.

4. METHODOLOGY

Reassessment of air photographic evidence for the site was undertaken by Air Photo Services of Cambridge in order to identify archaeological features prior to the field evaluation. Photographs examined at the Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs showed the land under pasture with no archaeological features visible and as a consequence no mapping was undertaken. A full report on the aerial photographic assessment is available in the site archive (Palmer 1999).

A desk-based assessment of known archaeological information for the site was undertaken before fieldwork began. This revealed general information about the area, rather than specific information about the site itself. The results of this study appear above as part of the archaeological and historical background.

Initially a total of eighteen 100m x 2m trenches was excavated and later a further trench was added. All trenches were excavated using a mechanical excavator with toothless ditching bucket. The trenches were located across the area of the proposed development in order to obtain maximum coverage thus increasing the possibility of discovering any archaeological features.

The modern ground surface and subsoil were removed to a depth where the natural gravel or clay deposits were noted, between 0.35m and 0.90m below the present ground surface. Where potential features were encountered a process of cleaning and excavation took place followed by planning where appropriate. Trench spoil and the excavated surfaces of trenches were scanned by eye and with a metal detector to maximise artefact recovery.

Archaeological trenches and features were recorded using a Zeiss RecElta 15 Total Station, and a digital base plan of the site was produced with Prosurveyor mapping software. Archaeological features were sample excavated and recorded using the pro-forma recording sheets of the Archaeological Field Unit. All trenches excavated during the evaluation were described; giving details of topsoil and subsoil depths and the natural geology visible in the base of the trench.

5. RESULTS

Many of the excavated trenches contained no archaeological remains. In trench 6, however, a curving ditch was uncovered, containing flint flakes, a fragment of animal bone and a single abraded sherd of pottery. This probably represents a ring ditch associated with a barrow or burial mound, although no human remains were found during this evaluation. Figure 1 shows the layout and orientation of all trenches, whilst figure 2 shows the plan of features in trench 6 in greater detail.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was 60m long and ran approximately north-east/south-west. Two smaller segments (both 20m in length) were excavated at right-angles to the main segment, at either end. At the south-western end of the trench, a brownish grey silty clay topsoil 0.15m thick overlay a brown sandy clay subsoil (0.25m thick) which in turn overlay a

0.50m thick clayey silt deposit. This sequence remained roughly the same at the north-eastern end although the subsoil decreased to a thickness of 0.10m and the clayey silt deposit increased to 0.53m thick. The base of the trench was mainly sandy gravel with patches of clay. At the north-eastern end of the trench a linear feature was identified approximately 0.60m wide. On visual examination and following an examination using a metal detector it was decided that the feature was probably a modern ditch as the finds recovered from the fill consisted of large nails, two rifle cartridges and a shotgun cartridge. As a result of the finds recovered from the ditch no further work was undertaken on it.

Trench 2

Trench 2 had a total length of 80m and ran approximately north-east/south-west. A shorter segment was located at a right-angle towards the north-eastern end of the main trench segment. For the entire length of the main segment of trench 2 no topsoil existed because it had been replaced by gravel 0.15m thick which made up the hard standing for a car park. Underlying the gravel at the south-western end of the main segment was a brown sandy clay subsoil 0.40m thick. This sealed a clayey silt deposit 0.15m thick. At the north-eastern end of the main segment the subsoil thickness was 0.30m and the underlying clayey silt deposit had a thickness of 0.50m. The same broad sequence was observed in the shorter segment of trench. The natural geology uncovered in the base of the two trench segments consisted of sandy gravels with large patches of clay.

The only evidence of human activity in Trench 2 was a continuation of the modern ditch observed in Trench 1.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was 100m long and ran approximate north-east/south-west. At the south-western end Trench 8 was 100m long and ran approximately north-west/south-east. At the south-western end of the trench, a brownish grey silty clay topsoil 0.15m thick overlay a brown sandy clay subsoil 0.20m thick which in turn sealed a clayey silt deposit 0.25m thick. This sequence remained roughly the same at the north-eastern end of the trench where it cut through a disused road the topsoil layer in the sequence was 0.10m thick, below the subsoil layer was 0.18m thick which in turn sealed the lower clayey silt layer (0.12m thick). The exposed natural geology consisted of a light-to-mid brown decayed Oxford Clay with patches of gravel. No archaeological features were observed in the trench.

Trench 4

Trench 4 consisted of two segments initially arranged in a T-shape, and each measuring 45m in length. Later a third segment 10m in length was added in order to locate the continuation of a possible ditch. At the north-eastern end of the trench, a brownish grey silty clay topsoil 0.18m thick overlay a brown sandy clay subsoil 0.30m thick which in turn sealed a silty deposit 0.42m thick. This sequence remained roughly the same at the south-western end although the subsoil decreased to 0.15m thick, and the lower silty deposit also decreased to 0.27m in thickness. The same sequence and depths of deposits were encountered in the smaller segment. The base of the trench consisted of sandy silt combined with patches of gravel and decayed Oxford Clay into which to potential features were cut. On excavation, however, the two features turned out to be natural.

Trench 5

Trench 5 was 100m long and ran approximate north-east/south-west. At the north-eastern end of the trench, a brownish grey silty clay topsoil 0.12m thick overlay a brown sandy clay subsoil 0.2m thick, which in turn sealed a silty deposit 0.24m thick. This sequence remained roughly the same at the south-western end although the topsoil increased in thickness to 0.25m. The base of the trench consisted of sandy silty gravel and patches of Oxford Clay and decayed Oxford Clay. No archaeological features were identified in the trench.

Trench 6

Trench 6 initially was 100m in length and ran north-east/south-west. Later, however, it was extended in order to identify the direction of a ditch (see below) that had been identified in the original trench (fig. 2). At the south-western end of the trench, a brownish grey silty clay topsoil, 0.15m thick overlay a brown sandy clay subsoil 0.12m thick which in turn sealed a 0.25m thick clayey silt deposit. This sequence remained roughly the same at the north-eastern end although the subsoil had increased to a thickness of 0.20m. The natural geology revealed in the base of the trench was sandy silty gravel.

At approximately 17m from the south-western end of the trench was a ditch 1, 1.30m wide and 0.12m deep with gradually sloping sides and a concave base. The single fill, 2, was a moderately compacted mid-brown sandy silt with occasional small flint inclusions. A single animal bone fragment, three flint flakes and a single, very small and very abraded pottery sherd were recovered from this fill.

The original interpretation of the orientation of the ditch was north-south, however the excavation of a further trench to the north-west of the main segment of trench 6 revealed that feature 1 did not continue in a north-south direction. Further trenching within the immediate proximity of feature 1 was therefore undertaken, revealing it to be roughly circular (fig. 2). The shape of feature 1, and the artefacts from its fill, which are not inconsistent with a prehistoric date, suggest that it was a ring-ditch, probably demarcating a burial mound or barrow. No human remains, however, were recovered from any of these trenches.

Trench 7

Trench 7 was 100m long and ran approximately north-west/south-east. At the north-western end of the trench 0.12m of topsoil (a brownish grey silty clay) overlay a brown sandy clay subsoil 0.10m thick which in turn sealed a silty deposit at least 0.68m thick (the bottom of the silty deposit was not found). At approximately 60m from the north-western end of the trench the depth of the overburden began to lessen, with a final depth measured at the south-eastern end being 0.40m, at which point the natural sandy gravel was encountered. At the south-eastern end of the trench 0.10m of topsoil (a brownish grey silty clay) overlay a brown sandy clay subsoil 0.15m thick which in turn sealed a silty deposit 0.15m thick.

The presence of a deep silty deposit identified in Trench 7 suggested the presence of an extinct palaeo-channel which ran approximately east-west. Evidence for the course of the palaeo-channel comes from observations of it in Trenches 9 & 10; it did not, however, appear in Trench 6. No archaeological features were observed in the trench.

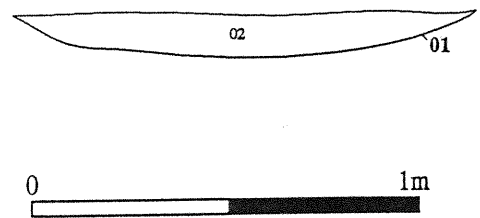
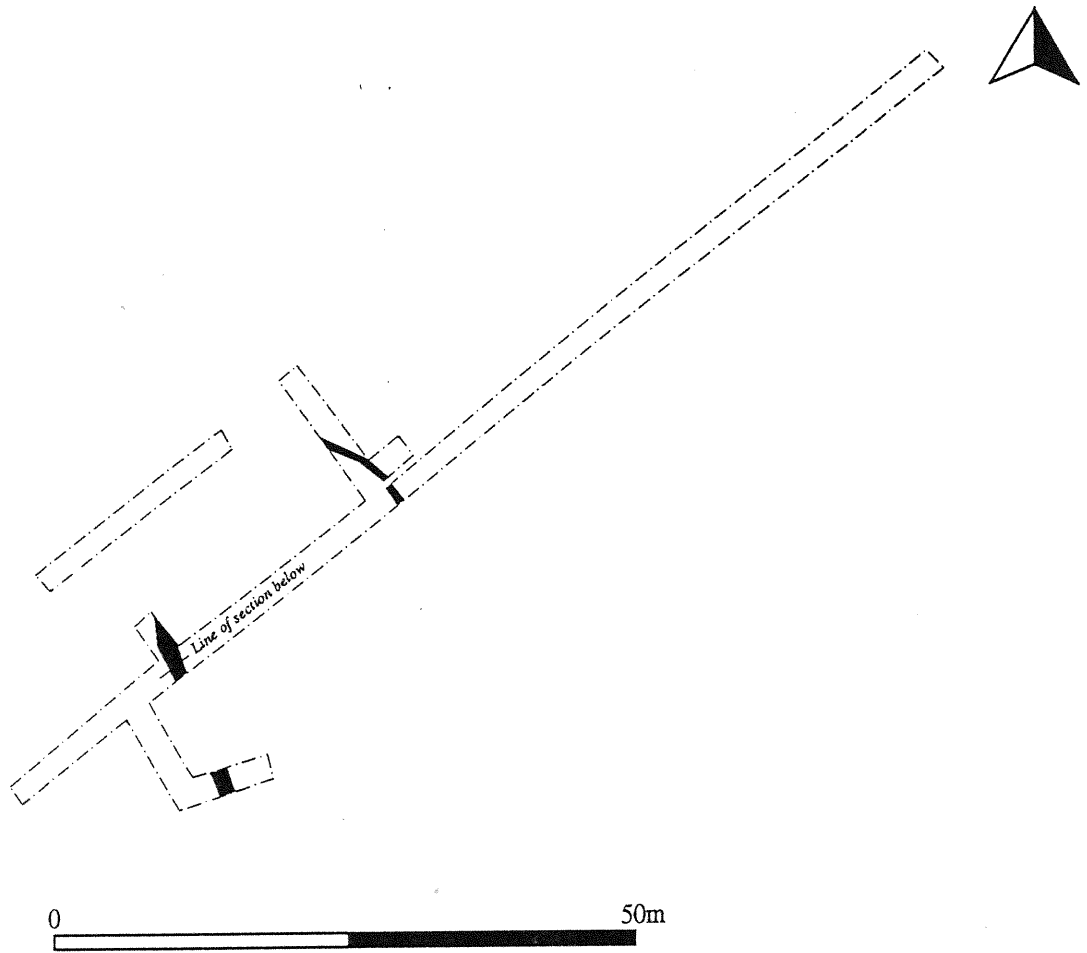


Figure 2 Detail of features in Trench 6 (above) and south-east facing section of Cut 01(right)

Trench 8

Trench 8 (fig. 1) was 100m long and ran approximately north-west/south-east. At the north-western end of the trench, a brownish grey silty clay topsoil 0.12m thick overlay a brown sandy clay subsoil (also 0.12m thick) which in turn sealed a clayey silt deposit 0.16m thick. This sequence remained roughly the same at the south-eastern end although the subsoil had increased to 0.20m thick and the lower silty deposit had also increased to 0.35m in thickness. The natural geology appeared to be an amalgamation of sandy-silts, gravels and outcrops of clay. No archaeological features were observed in the trench.

Trench 9

Trench 9 was 100m long and ran approximately north-east/south-west. At the north-eastern end of the trench, a brownish grey silty clay topsoil 0.15m thick overlay a brown sandy clay subsoil (0.15m thick) which in turn sealed a clayey silt deposit 0.30m thick. This sequence remained roughly the same at the south-western end although the subsoil had increased to 0.20m thick whilst the lower silty deposit had decreased to 0.10m in thickness. The natural geology where visible appeared to be a light brown decayed Oxford Clay, although much of the north-eastern half of the trench showed an expanse of silt, which was identified as the fill of the palaeo-channel previously seen in Trench 7. No archaeological features were observed in the trench.

Trench 10

Trench 10 was 100m long and ran approximately north-east/south-west. At the north-eastern end of the trench, a brownish grey silty clay topsoil 0.20m thick overlay a brown sandy clay subsoil 0.15m thick which in turn sealed a clayey silt deposit 0.30m thick. This sequence remained roughly the same at the south-western end although the topsoil had decreased to 0.15m thick, subsoil had increased to 0.20m thick and the lower silty deposit had also increased to 1.05m in thickness.

The first 30m of the base of the trench from the north-eastern end consisted of silt. The next 50m revealed sandy gravels. The base of the remaining 20m of trench consisted of silt. The silt expanses may have been further palaeo-channels, similar to those encountered in trenches 7 and 9. No archaeological features were observed in the trench.

Trench 11

Trench 11 was 100m long and ran approximately north-west/south-east. In the first 20 from the north-western end of the trench, a brownish grey silty clay topsoil 0.20m thick overlay limestone slabs. The remaining 80m of the trench showed in section a topsoil 0.20m thick which sealed, on average, a 0.80m thickness of re-deposited clay mixed with modern debris. No archaeological features were observed in the trench.

Trench 12

Trench 12 totalled 100m in length but was split into two segments to take account of the up-slope from the stream. The first segment ran approximately east-west and was 20m

long. The section showed, at the western end, a brownish grey silty clay topsoil 0.20m thick, overlying a brown sandy clay subsoil 0.15m thick. At the eastern end, a brownish grey silty clay topsoil 0.20m thick overlay 1.20m of re-deposited clay and modern debris.

The second segment of Trench 12 was 80m in length and ran north-west/south-east. At the north-western end a brownish grey silty clay topsoil 0.20m thick overlay 1.15m of re-deposited clay and modern debris. The re-deposited layer continued for 30m in a south-easterly direction, at which point the decayed Oxford Clay natural geology was observed. At the south-eastern end of the trench a brownish grey silty clay topsoil 0.20m thick overlay a brown sandy clay subsoil 0.23m thick which in turn overlay the decayed Oxford clay natural geology.

Trench 13

Trench 13 was 100m long and ran approximately east-west. At the eastern end of the trench, a brownish grey silty clay topsoil 0.12m thick overlay a brown sandy clay subsoil 0.15m thick which in turn overlay a clayey silt deposit 0.63m thick. This sequence remained roughly the same at the south-western end although the lower silty deposit decreased to 0.35m in thickness. The natural geology at the western end of the trench was clay, with silty clay at the eastern end. No archaeological features were observed in the trench.

Trench 14

Trench 14 was 100m long and ran approximately north-east/south-west. At the north-eastern end of the trench, a brownish grey silty clay topsoil 0.15m thick overlay a brown sandy clay subsoil 0.20m thick which in turn overlay a clayey silt deposit 0.20m thick. The same sequence was observed at the south-western end although the lower silty deposit increased to 0.53m in thickness. The natural geology consisted of silty sand with patches of decayed Oxford Clay. No archaeological features were observed in the trench.

Trench 15

Trench 15 was 50m long and ran approximately east/west. At the eastern end of the trench, a brownish grey silty clay topsoil 0.20m thick overlay a brown sandy clay subsoil 0.20m thick which in turn sealed a clayey silt deposit 0.15m thick. This sequence remained roughly the same at the western end. The natural geology consisted decayed Oxford Clay. No archaeological features were observed in the trench.

Trench 16

Trench 16 was 100m long and ran approximately east/west. An additional segment was excavated at a right-angle to the main segment. At the eastern end of the main segment a brownish grey silty clay topsoil 0.15m thick overlay a brown sandy clay subsoil 0.20m thick which in turn sealed a sandy clay deposit 0.10m thick. The same sequence was seen at the western end, although the topsoil thickness had decreased to 0.10m. No archaeological features were observed in the trench.

In the north-south segment, the topsoil and subsoil were both 0.20m thick, and there was no trace of the underlying sandy clay deposit. The natural geology observed in both segments was sandy silty clay, with patches of Oxford Clay.

Trench 17

Trench 17 was 100m long and ran approximately north-west/south-east. At the north-western end of the trench, a brownish grey silty clay topsoil 0.10m thick overlay a brown sandy clay subsoil 0.20m thick which in turn overlay a clayey silt deposit 0.20m thick. This sequence remained roughly the same at the south-eastern end although the topsoil thickness had increased to 0.20m. The natural geology consisted of silty sand with patches of decayed Oxford Clay. No archaeological features were observed in the trench.

Trench 18

Trench 18 was 50m long and ran approximately north-west/south-east. An additional segment was excavated at a right-angle to the original segment which was also 50m in length. At the north-western end of the first segment, a brownish grey silty clay topsoil 0.15m thick overlay a brown sandy clay subsoil 0.15m thick which in turn sealed a clayey silt deposit 0.45m thick. This sequence remained roughly the same at the south-eastern end although the topsoil had increased to 0.20m thick and the subsoil had also increased to 0.20m thick with the lower silty deposit also increasing in depth to 0.50m. The depositional sequence at the north-eastern end of the additional segment remained the same with the topsoil depth of 0.10m, a subsoil depth of 0.15m and a lower clayey silt 0.25m thick. The natural geology revealed in the base the trench was mixed, consisting of outcrop of gravel and clay. No archaeological features were observed in either segment of the trench.

6. DISCUSSION

The general paucity of archaeological features across the site is quite surprising. Although it is in line with the results of the closest previous evaluation (Bray 1998), it is nevertheless unusual to find such a relatively small amount of archaeology over what is a relatively large area. The absence even of any abraded pottery (evidence of manuring), and the very low numbers of metal finds recovered by metal detecting suggest that most of the area of the site was not intensively used, even for agriculture, in the Roman and Medieval periods at least.

The only part of the site where the above remarks do not apply is the area around trench 6. The curving ditch uncovered there may well be part of the ring-ditch surrounding a barrow. If it is, it has an apparent diameter of about 24m. This would fit in well with the ring-ditch diameters of the scheduled barrows to the east of the showground site (PCCSMR 01436), which range from 18 to 27.4m (60 - 90ft). Significantly, the ring-ditches to the south of the site (PCCSMR 09174, 09186 and 50346), at least two of which are now regarded as of dubious authenticity, are much smaller in diameter, ranging from 6 to 15m (20 - 50ft). This may tend to reinforce the doubts over the southern "barrows", whilst adding weight to the interpretation of the remains in trench 6 as a ring-ditch. At 24m, the diameter of the latter would be in the middle of the range for East Anglian barrow ring-ditches (Lawson et al. 1981). The finds recovered from the excavated portion of the putative ring-ditch (three worked flints, a fragment of animal bone and a single, highly abraded sherd of pottery) do not conflict with a prehistoric date, which may reinforce the ring-ditch interpretation.

The plan of trench 6 and its extensions (Figure 2), however, raises some questions. The south-eastern extension of trench 6 seems to show the south-western arc of the putative ring-ditch as lying too far to the south-west to be part of the ring. Indeed, the feature uncovered here seems to be heading off in a southerly direction, rather than curving round to join up with the features observed in the main segment of the trench. There are several possible explanations for this. Firstly, it may be that the southernmost feature shown on figure 2 does not join up with feature 1 and is not part of the ring-ditch anyway. Secondly, not all ring-ditches are perfectly circular, and a deviation into an oval or other plan-form may not necessarily invalidate such an interpretation (Lawson et al. 1981). And finally, the exact identification and delineation of a linear feature in such a narrow trench is difficult, and the plan, as recorded, may not reflect the true alignment of features particularly accurately. These questions over the true alignment and relationship of these features can only really be resolved by topsoil-stripping and examining the area as a whole.

The discovery of prehistoric remains in at least one area may call into question the apparently negative results of the work over the rest of the site. Prehistoric archaeology is notoriously difficult to find, as compared with remains of Roman or medieval date. Roman and medieval sites often produce large quantities of pottery and other finds, whilst prehistoric sites are generally artefact-poor. Prehistoric features can also be ephemeral and have often been damaged by later activity. Whilst the lack of finds over most of the showground site means it probably was not intensively used by Roman or medieval farmers, greater caution should be exercised in interpreting the lack of finds as a lack of prehistoric use of the site.

If we compare the location of the scheduled barrows to the East of the showground with that of the ring-ditch in trench 6, it may be significant that both are situated on the 3rd terrace deposits, and both, indeed, appear to be located on their northern edge, looking towards the River Nene. The development area, as noted on the BGS 1:50000 geological map, lies partly on 3rd terrace deposits (mainly the western half of the site), and partly on Oxford Clay (the south-eastern corner). Deposits of Head and Kelloways Sand and Kelloways Clay are mapped in the middle portion of the site, around the stream. The evaluation trenches have tended to confirm this picture, with clay being uncovered in trenches 11 - 17 in the south-eastern corner of the site, for example. The discovery of a ring-ditch on the terrace deposits in the western half of the site may suggest that these areas have been deliberately selected for occupation in the Prehistoric period, and that it may be worthwhile deploying further evaluative techniques in order to test whether the blank picture produced by trial trenching is a true reflection of the site's archaeology. Geophysical survey, for example, is one technique which could be employed to gain a different view of the site's archaeology. This is probably not worth employing on the clay areas, but the areas on terrace deposits may repay study.

7. CONCLUSION

The objectives of the project were to establish the character, date, state of preservation and extent of any archaeological remains within the site likely to be affected by ground-disturbing development. This information was then to be used to allow an assessment to be made of the proposed development's archaeological implications and to inform an appropriate mitigation strategy. Detailed plans of the proposed development are not presently available, but if it involves the construction of houses, together with associated

access roads and services, the potential impact on below-ground remains over the whole development area is likely to be extensive.

The project has only been partially successful in achieving its objectives. Archaeological remains were uncovered in only one area of the site, in and around trench 6. The precise extent of the remains here is still uncertain, but it seems that the trench crossed the central part of a ring-ditch about 24m in diameter. Finds from it were not inconsistent with a prehistoric date and the ring-ditch probably dates to the Bronze Age, but close dating evidence was lacking. The surviving depth of the ring-ditch was shallow, and it had probably been truncated by medieval or earlier ploughing. No evidence of human remains was uncovered. A full understanding of the character, date and state of preservation of the ring-ditch has not been obtained by the present project, and this will probably only be produced by open-area investigation of the site and the area around it.

The lack of finds from elsewhere on the site can probably be taken to indicate a low level of activity here in the Roman and Medieval periods. The presence of apparent prehistoric remains in one area of the site, however, may call this negative result into question for the Prehistoric period. It may be that further evaluative techniques (e.g. geophysical survey) may be more successful in uncovering evidence of prehistoric occupation of the site than those so far deployed.

FINDS

The single sherd of pottery from (2) the fill of the ring ditch 1 was examined by Dr. Paul Sealey of Colchester Museum. It was in an oxidised, shell-tempered fabric, fairly thin-walled, but heavily abraded and badly affected by soil conditions. It was no longer possible to tell whether or not it was wheel-made, and no date could be confidently assigned to it (Sealey, pers. comm.).

The worked flints from fill (2), of ring ditch 1, were examined by Steve Kemp of the AFU. All three were heavily plough-damaged and the most one could say was that they were undiagnostic probably struck flint.

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1809 Inclosure Map



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