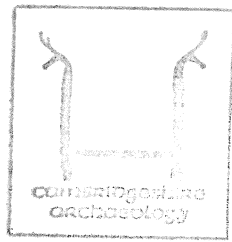


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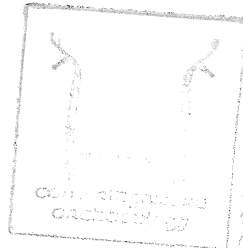
# Late Saxon and Medieval Settlement Activity at Green End House, St. Ives: An Archaeological Investigation

Joe Abrams

April 2001

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. 194  
Commissioned by Target Construction



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Joe Abrams BA, PIFA

2001

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## **SUMMARY**

*An archaeological evaluation was carried out at Green End House, St. Ives in advance the construction of a proposed housing development. The work was carried out by the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council between 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> December 2000.*

*A total of four trenches were excavated and all contained archaeological features. Evidence of late Saxon/Saxo-Norman and twelfth to fourteenth century domestic activity was recorded. This consisted of an enclosure ditch, a series of postholes, a possible oven feature and a series of minor boundary ditches, many of which contained pottery from the medieval period. Evidence of Iron Age activity occurred in one ditch. A post-medieval well and boundary ditches associated with Green End House were also recorded.*

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**Late Saxon and Medieval Settlement Activity at Green End House, St. Ives:  
An Archaeological Investigation  
NGR TL 3103 7214**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

An archaeological investigation was carried out at Green End House, St. Ives to inform the planning process in advance the construction of a proposed housing development. The work was carried out by the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council between 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> December 2000 on behalf of Target Construction. The project specification (Roberts 2000) was written in response to a Brief set by the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Office (Thomas, November 2000).

**2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

The subject site lies c1km north-north-west of the historic medieval core of St. Ives, on the Ramsey Road. The site is on broadly level ground. The temporary bench mark on site was 7.97m above Ordnance Datum taken from an 8m spot height on Ramsey Road.

The site was bordered on its northern edge by Green End House and barn buildings associated with Green End Farm. On its eastern, western and southern edges residential buildings and gardens bordered the site.

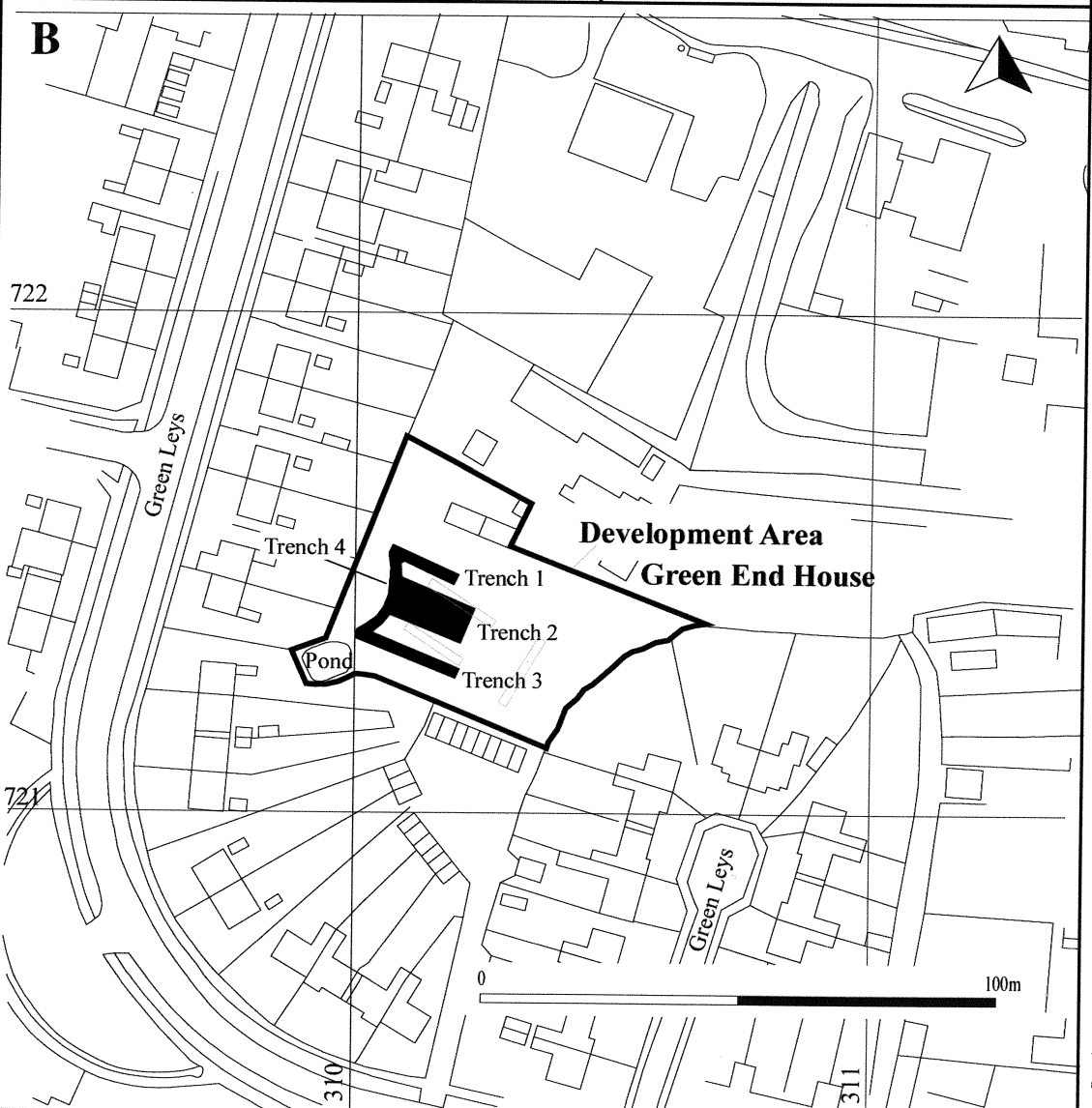
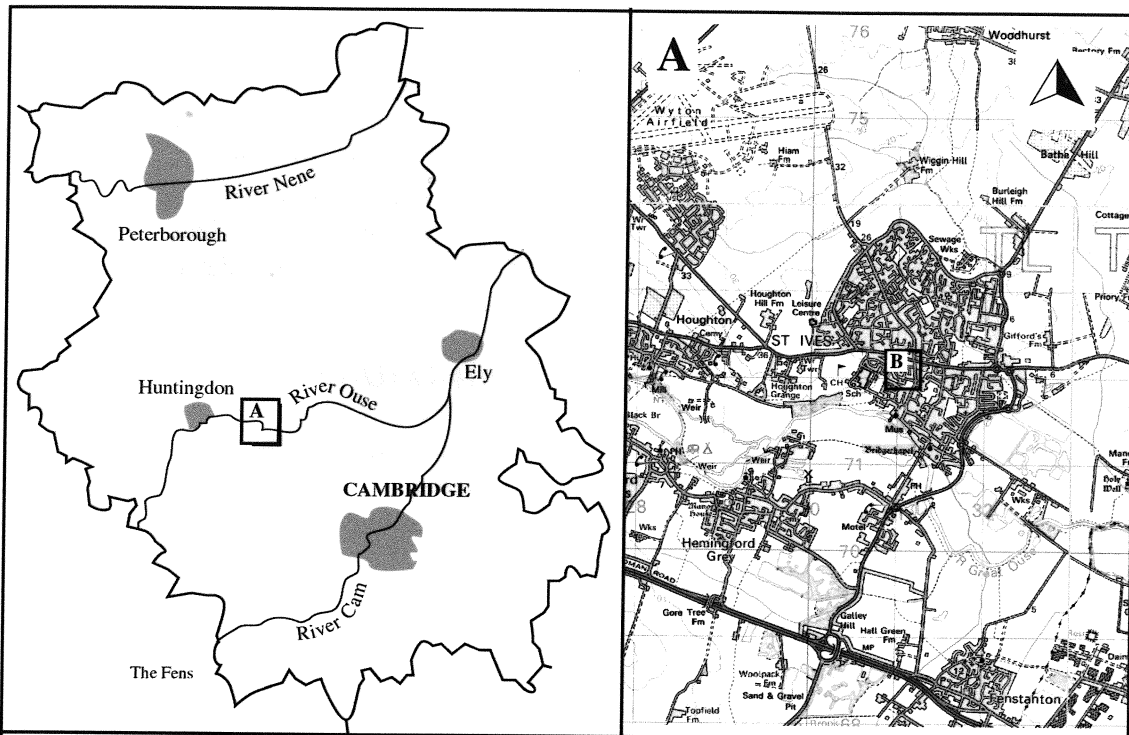
St. Ives lies on the alluviated gravels of the River Great Ouse (British Geological Survey map, sheet 187. In the immediate vicinity of the subject site the geology is Oxford Clay with grey mudstones in infrequent bands. The natural geological layer encountered in all four trenches consisted of mottled light grey and light yellow clay.

**3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

**3.1 Within the vicinity of St. Ives**

**3.1.1 Prehistoric (before AD 43)**

The gravel terraces of the Great Ouse in the locality of St. Ives have provided evidence of significant prehistoric activity in the area. Stray finds spanning the palaeolithic to neolithic periods are well documented (Cambridgeshire



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Figure 1 Site Location Plan

Sites and Monuments Record). They include numerous finds from gravel pits c1km to the south-east of the subject site. These finds span the palaeolithic to the Iron Age (SMR 2029, 1916, 1961, 1425, 1489, 1669 and 3595). Recent excavations, also in advance of gravel extraction to the east of the town, have revealed funerary monuments, field systems, boundaries and settlement of later prehistoric date (Cambs. SMR; Evans, Lucas, Malim, Reynolds & Way; 1997; 171-188).

### **3.1.2 Romano-British (AD 43-410)**

The Great Ouse valley provided attractive settlement locations during the Romano-British period. St. Ives lies c7km from the significant Roman town of Durovigutum (Godmanchester), and villas were located along the river valley.

Within St. Ives excavations adjacent to Priory Road at 'The Priory' (a nineteenth century house thought to be located on the site of the medieval Priory – see below), have provided evidence of Romano-British settlement within the historic medieval core of St. Ives. An excavation in the 1940s, focussed on the Priory barn walls, revealed earlier foundations and a pottery sequence dating to the Romano-British period (first-fourth centuries AD), indicative of settlement (Green 1958). More recent excavations at the Priory have provided further evidence of settlement in the form of a ditched enclosure encompassing several pits and a posthole structure. Local and imported Romano-British wares were recovered, as well as high status finds such as mosaic tile (Murray 1997).

To the north-east of St. Ives excavations on the Needingworth bypass (Schlee 1995) provided evidence of industrial and domestic activity dating from the third and fourth centuries AD.

The most well known objects from the area which are likely to be of this period are the stone coffin and skeletal remains attributed to the fabled St. Ivo (or Ivo), a bishop of Persia, from which the town derives its current name (see below – section 3.1.4). It is far more likely that the remains discovered by Saxon ploughmen were of a Romano-Britain. The recent excavations, discussed above, would appear to add evidence in support of this suggestion.

### **3.1.3 Anglo-Saxon (AD 410-1066)**

It is likely that the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Slepe (as St. Ives was originally known) derives its name from its location. Slepe means 'muddy low lying ground by the river' in Old English (Mawer and Stenton 1969, 222). The settlement was probably around the parish church, which lies c550m south of the subject site. A church was recorded in the Domesday survey (Page, Proby & Ladds 1932) and the existing church building contains structural remains dating to the twelfth century. It is presumed that the present buildings were built on the site of Anglo-Saxon predecessors, and therefore the Saxon village would have been around the church (Burn-Murdoch 2000). The district of the town called the 'Green' extends north of the parish church along the road to

Ramsey and has a sinuous shape reminiscent of 'organically' developed settlement. This was probably the main part of the pre-conquest village (Spoerry – unpublished). The focus of settlement was to move in the early medieval period to the part of the town known as the 'Street', which runs east-west from the parish church, parallel to the river. The street layout and property boundaries here have a more structured appearance, and it has been suggested that this part of the town was medieval in origin (Page, Proby & Ladds 1932). However, recent work off Prioory Road (Murray 1997), recorded the presence of a grübenhauser (sunken floored building) containing pottery dateable to AD 400-900. Work at Wellington Street (Cooper 1999) also recorded evidence of Anglo-Saxon activity in this area, in the form of sealed deposits containing pottery dating from AD 900-1150. Both projects challenge current ideas concerning the development of the pre-conquest settlement of St. Ives.

#### **3.1.4 Medieval (AD 1066-1520)**

Slepe (later St. Ives) was a holding of Ramsey Abbey from the late tenth century. It had been raised to fame following the discovery of a stone coffin and skeletal remains, attributed to St. Ivo (or St. Ivo), by Abbot Ednoth (992-1008). He established a cell of the abbey with its own church dedicated to the honour of St. Ivo. This was near to the site of the 'saints grave', from which a health-giving spring was said to have arisen. It is thought that this may have been on or close to 'The Prioory' excavations, discussed above. It was later replaced after being destroyed by fire in 1207. The medieval Prioory was built on the same site and consecrated in 1238, and was a functioning monastery until the Dissolution in 1539. Its exact location is unknown although the Cambridgeshire SMR records that it is likely to have been on the site where a nineteenth century house 'The Prioory' preserves its name. The grounds of this property have been subject to excavations, which have revealed the presence of medieval features, notably a huge ditch likely to be a demarcation of the Prioory estate (Murray 1997). Also, medieval masonry has been noted in the garden of the Prioory (Cambs SMR 03594), and in surrounding properties.

The Prioory and the activities of its sponsors at Ramsey Abbey are fundamental to the formation of the medieval core of St. Ives. The main reasons for establishing a Prioory on the site are less likely to be connected with the tale of St. Ivo and the associated tales of healing springs, and more likely to be economic. The story of St. Ivo was used to raise the profile of this profitable estate, which grew to be an internationally renowned medieval cloth. French merchants in Douai recorded it in their list of five major English markets in 1258 (Hudson 1989). This had been made possible by the granting of an annual eight day Easter Fair in 1110 AD and the establishment of a 600m long market area running parallel to the river from the parish church in the north-east to the Prioory in the south-west. Traffic on the Ramsey to Potton Road was compelled to pass through the market and the River Ouse meant that national and international trade links were encouraged (Page Proby & Ladds 1932). The economic success of St. Ives led to the economic eclipse of Huntingdon, further downstream, a process that was encouraged by the construction of mill weirs on the Ouse between the two settlements. It appears



that these weirs impeded the traffic of goods to Huntingdon and the protests of the authorities are documented (Spoerry – unpublished). The owners (Ramsey Abbey) of these mills, however, were unmoved by their plight. Instead it is suggested this was part of a plan to increase the success of the Priory's investment in St. Ives to the detriment of surrounding competitors such as Huntingdon. Therefore the very existence of the historic core of St. Ives is intrinsically linked to the town's medieval Priory.

### **3.1.5 Post-Medieval (AD 1520-present)**

The fair declined in significance and was abandoned in 1511. This was largely due to the decline in trade with French merchants during the Hundred Years War (Spoerry - unpublished). The town continued as a local market centre but it never regained its former significance as a centre for the international cloth trade. A fire devastated St. Ives in 1689 and the town was rebuilt. The weekly cattle market grew in importance and by 1800 it was regarded as second only to Smithfield (Hudson 1989). Much of the trade was with Ireland. This important trade was developed further with the coming of the railway in the nineteenth century. However, a new cattle market twelve miles away in Cambridge opened in 1886, and this triggered a decline in the significance of trade in St. Ives.

## **3.2 Within the vicinity of site**

Before the recent projects on the subject site no archaeological excavations had been carried out in the immediate vicinity of the site. However, valuable information relating to it was gained through reference to cartographic, documentary and archaeological databases (Cambridgeshire County Sites and Monuments Record - SMR).

### **3.2.1 Prehistoric (before AD 43)**

Several finds from this period are recorded in the vicinity of the site. These include a neolithic or Bronze Age antler awl (SMR 03548) recorded c100m north-east of the site, and a neolithic leaf-shaped arrowhead (SMR 03552) c75m to the south-west. A prehistoric finds scatter (SMR 03602), and pottery of a possibly Iron Age date (SMR 03598), are recorded within a 300m radius of the site.

Survival of evidence of prehistoric activity within the subject site was considered a possibility.

### **3.2.2 Romano-British (AD 43-410)**

Several finds from this period are recorded. They include an early fourth century coin (SMR 0459) and a box of unprovenanced Roman pottery (SMR 03581) c500m to the south-west. A further pottery scatter (SMR 03555) was recorded c500m to the south-east.

Discovery of further evidence of Romano-British remains within the site was considered a possibility.

### **3.2.3 Anglo-Saxon (AD 410-1066)**

No finds from this period are recorded, but it is generally accepted that the parish church and the area known as the Green are in the pre-conquest settlement of Slepe (see above 3.1.3). The site, c550m north of the parish church and within the area known as the 'Green', has a high potential for survival of remains from this period. Before the evaluation (Prosser & Crank 2000), and the excavations which are the subject of this report, there had been no archaeological excavations carried out in this part of St Ives. Therefore the present project represented an opportunity to gain important physical evidence of pre-conquest settlement patterns in this part of the town.

It was hoped that the first evidence of activity during the Anglo-Saxon period in this part of St. Ives would be found on the site.

### **3.2.4 Medieval (AD 1066-1520)**

The parish church (SMR 03531) lies only c500m to the south of the subject site and contains fabric dating to the twelfth to fourteenth century. However, the main settlement focus during this period was to the east of the church, and not to the north, where Green End House is located. Instead this was a large 'common' green during the medieval period. The green is recorded in court rolls from 1281 AD (Mawer & Stenton 1926), and was much larger at this time than it was in the post-medieval period. Pettis' survey of 1728 records the existence of important meadows, known as the Hows, to the west of the Green. Such meadows were central to medieval settlements and they were subject to customary rights of pasture by inhabitants of the associated settlement. Therefore the green was an important area between the medieval settlement and its crucial pasturelands.

The 1728 survey shows how the green had been reduced in size by building encroaching on to the 'common' land as a result of squatting. The origins of Green End House, and its associated farm buildings, may have followed the forcible establishment of a manorial farm at Green End (Prosser & Crank 2000). The origins of Green End House and the farm, of which it was a part, remain obscure.

The evaluation recorded three ditches "which contained medieval pottery, predominantly twelfth to fourteenth century", and the presence of features containing domestic pottery in an area of common land. It was suggested that such features may represent evidence of "illegal activity e.g. squatting" (Prosser & Crank 2000).

Following evaluation further evidence of domestic medieval activity was expected on the site.

### 3.2.5 Post-Medieval (AD 1520-present)

The site lies immediately south of Green End House, itself a post-medieval building, and its associated farm buildings. These are the last remaining structures of Green End Farm. Much of the area was enclosed by 1728, as shown in Pettis' survey. The farm was c75m to the north of 'Oliver Cromwell's Barn' (SMR 03545). It is described as a heavily buttressed five-bay brick-built structure with a queen-post roof. Architecturally it was dated to the sixteenth or early seventeenth century. This was demolished during the 1960s (Royal Commission 1926).

The name of this building does not, in itself, prove a connection with Oliver Cromwell himself. Documentary sources suggest there may have been one, as he lived in St. Ives between 1631 and 1635-36, during which time he leased land for farming. Slepe Hall (SMR 01565), c300m to the south-east of the subject site was also known commonly as 'Cromwell Place' "in reference to an alleged lease of the house to Oliver Cromwell" (Page, Proby and Ladds 1932). It is thought "he may have leased all or part of the Slepe Hall estate from Henry Lawrence with whom he was connected" (Page, Proby and Ladds 1932). Slepe Hall also dated from this period, its eighteenth century replacement was demolished in 1847 after the death of Lieut.-Col. Taylor White, its last inhabitant. His family name is preserved on the 1808 Enclosure map in the field directly adjacent to the Cromwell's Barn structure as 'T. White Esq', which reinforces a connection between the inhabitants of Slepe Hall and the use of Oliver Cromwell's Barn.

By the time of the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887, the ancient common at Green End had disappeared completely. It is likely that any remaining parts of the green were effectively re-allocated by the compulsory Act of Parliamentary Enclosure. The area around Green End Farm remained basically unchanged as a semi-rural setting until the 1960s, during which a massive expansion of St. Ives occurred, which saw the surrounding fields turned into a residential area. Until now the subject site has been used as a garden for Green End House.

The proximity of the site to Green End House, Oliver Cromwell's Barn and Slepe Hall suggests preservation of post-medieval remains was a high possibility.

## 4 METHODOLOGY

Four trenches (1, 2, 3 and 4) totalling 65.50m in length, were excavated within the area of a proposed housing development. Topsoil and modern overburden were removed using both a wheeled and tracked mechanical excavator, with a 1.8m wide flat-bladed bucket. Trench 2 was extended to 7m wide. Soil stripping was carried out under archaeological supervision. Trenches were dug in the north-western part of the development area which was identified in

the evaluation as having the greatest potential for survival of archaeological remains. Attempts to remove the overburden with both a wheeled and tracked mechanical excavator in the south-eastern part of the site failed due to severe flooding.

After machining each trench was photographed. All archaeological features were excavated by hand in order to determine date and character (see below – section 4.3). The AFU's single context-based recording system was used to record all the archaeological features and deposits. Sections were hand drawn at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20. Plans were hand drawn at a scale of 1:100 or 1:50. In addition the spoil heaps were scanned for artefacts.

The presence of considerable groundwater not only inhibited machine stripping of the proposed excavation area, but also prevented hand excavation of features. Despite the use of a mechanical water pump to empty the four trenches, combined with the digging of several sumps and construction of minor baulks to prevent re-flooding, it was not possible to keep the trenches clear of water long enough to safely excavate a sample of every feature. Under these circumstances those features of greatest archaeological interest were investigated. Post-medieval features **230** and **228** were not investigated as they lay in the most flooded part of Trench 2.

In this report deposit numbers are shown in plain text and cut numbers are in **bold** text. Features are discussed in the phases suggested by their stratigraphic relationships, character and morphology and the finds recovered from them.

## 5 RESULTS

### 5.1 Topsoil, subsoil and natural geology

The topsoil, 1, in all four trenches was a dark brownish grey sandy silt layer which varied from 0.35m to 0.40m deep, this was an organic-rich garden soil of recent origin. The subsoil, 2, also encountered in all four trenches, was an orange grey sandy clay with occasional small gravel. This varied in depth from 0.12m in the south-eastern ends of Trenches 1, 2 and 3, to 0.40m in the north-western end of Trenches 1 and 4. The difference in depths between the trenches in the north-west of the site and those in the north-east, suggest that the site slopes to the north-west. The height above Ordnance Datum for the level of the natural geology over the site remains reasonably constant at 7.48m OD in the south-eastern extreme of the site to 7.53m OD in the north-west. Therefore the variability in the depth of the subsoil accounts for differences in trench depth.

The natural geology (3) in all four trenches was a mottled, light grey and light yellow, clay. This was encountered at a depth of 0.52m in the south-east of the site and 0.80m in the north-west.

## 5.2 Trench descriptions

Trench 1 was 12m long, 1.80m wide, 0.52-0.80m deep and aligned north-west to south-east (see Fig.2). Trench 1 contained one archaeological feature **101** cut into the natural geology. A modern land drain was also recorded.

Trench 2 was 15m long, 7m wide, 0.57-0.76m deep and aligned north-west to south-east (see Fig.2). Trench 2 contained twelve archaeological features cut into the natural geology. Three ditches **206**, **201/203** and **233**, five pits **208**, **210**, **213**, **225** and **226** and four postholes **215**, **218**, **220** and **230**. With the exception of **230** and **233** these were all sealed by subsoil, 2.

Trench 3 was 18.5m long, 1.8m wide, 0.57m deep, and aligned north-west-south-east (see Fig.2). Trench 3 contained eight features cut into the natural geology. Five ditches **301**, **307**, **309**, **311**, and **317**, one posthole **313**, and two ditch terminals **305** and **303**. With the exception of **317** and **313** these were all sealed by subsoil 2.

Trench 4 was 20m long, 1.8m wide and 0.57m-0.8m deep (see Fig.2). In order to avoid disturbing an area affected by a Tree Protection Order, immediately to the west of Trench 4, the trench curved. Trench 4 contained two features - well **404** and its associated water pipe/service cut **401**. These were both cut through subsoil, 2, but were sealed by topsoil, 1.

The evaluation trenches 1 and 2 (Prosser and Crank 2000) were between the excavation trenches 1/2 and 2/3 respectively (Figs. 1 and 2). Thus a large part of the eastern end of the development area was examined and excavated for archaeological remains.

## 5.3 Feature description by period

### 5.3.1 Period 1 – Iron Age

Ditch **101**, 1m from the south-eastern end of the Trench, was aligned north-east-south-west. Ditch **101** was sealed below subsoil 2, and contained pottery dating to the late Iron Age (Belgic ware). This feature was not recorded in the HAT evaluation trench or in Trench 2 of the current phase of work.

**101**, 0.70m wide, 0.10m deep, linear in plan, irregular sloping sides, flat base, contained one fill: fill 100, yellow-grey clay, occasional small pebbles and Iron Age pottery sherds.

### 5.3.2 Period 2 Late Saxon – Medieval

Features dated to this period have been assigned to phases on the basis of spatial and stratigraphic relationships, where possible, and datable material from their fills. In several cases it has not been possible to assign features to a phase and they have been placed in the general period only.

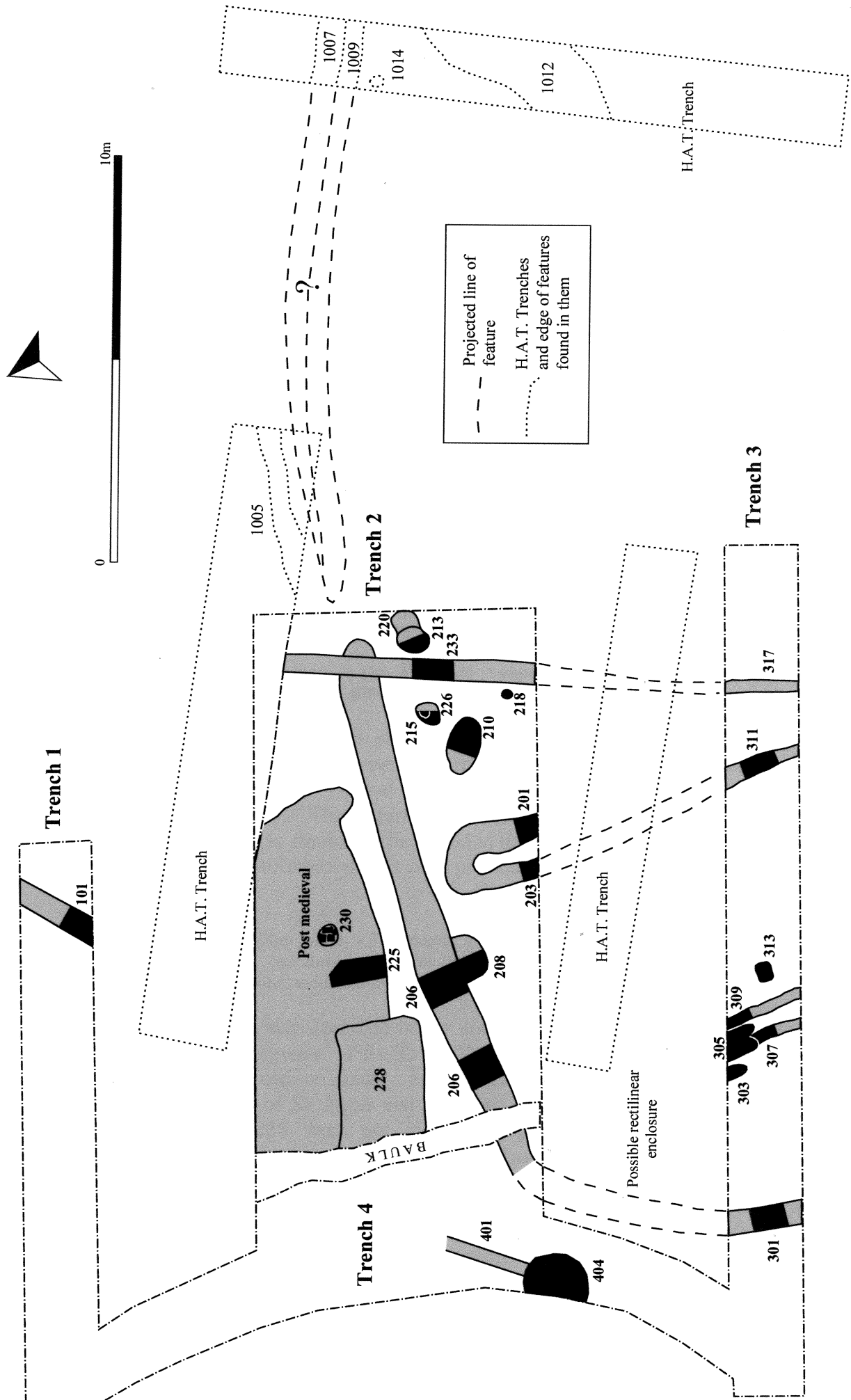


Figure 2 Details of Trenches 1, 2, 3 and 4

## Phase 1

A series of postholes (**215**, **218** and **220**) were identified in the south-eastern part of Trench 2. These are significant as they contained domestic pottery of a contemporary date; had similar fills, and when viewed in plan formed a right-angle suggestive of a structure (see Fig. 2). This structure is likely to continue to the south and east, beyond the confines of Trench 2.

Posthole **215** contained one deposit 216 which produced pottery sherds dating to 900-1150 AD. This posthole had been truncated by pit **226**.

Posthole **218** contained two deposits 217 and 219, the secondary fill 217 contained pottery dating to 900-1150 AD.

The fill of posthole **220**, 211, contained one residual sherd of Roman pottery and some animal bone fragments. Posthole **220** was truncated on its western edge by pit **213**.

**215**, 0.30m diameter, 0.26m deep, sub-circular in plan, steeply sloping sides, flat base, contained one fill: Fill 216, light grey silty clay, occasional pottery sherds.

**218**, 0.30m diameter, 0.22m deep, circular plan, steeply sloping sides, convex base, contained two fills: fill 217, black/dark brown clay, occasional charcoal, medium pebbles and pottery sherds. fill 219, grey/ mid brown clay, no inclusions.

**220**, 0.60m long, 0.45m wide, 0.16m deep, oval in plan, convex sloping sides, convex base, contained one fill: fill 211, dark grey silty clay, occasional pottery sherds.

Directly to the west of the above postholes was pit **210**. This contained deposit 209 from which several sherds of late Saxon/early post-conquest pottery were retrieved. Animal bone, charcoal pieces and fragments of daub were also recorded. The material from the fill is consistent with domestic refuse and the fill is similar to that found in the posthole complex. This would support the above interpretation of a possible structure with adjacent refuse pits.

**210**, 1.40m long, 1.00m width, 0.50m depth, oval pit shape in plan, steep irregular sides, slightly convex base, contained one fill: fill 209, black/dark brown silt clay, occasional daub, pottery and animal bone, moderate charcoal flecks and angular medium flint pebbles.

A large pit, **225**, was recorded in the north-western part of Trench 2. This contained four deposits. Fills 221, 222 and 223 were re-deposited alluvial clays and contained no finds. Sealed below 223 was deposit 224 which contained sherds of St. Neots and Stamford wares (900-1150 AD). The full dimensions of **225** were not visible within the trench, but its visible dimensions were 9m long and 4m wide. It was excavated to a depth of 0.65m but this is unlikely to be its maximum depth. Such a large feature may be a backfilled quarry pit.

**225**, c9m long, c 4m wide, 0.65m deep, sub-rectangular in plan, slightly sloping becoming steep, base not fully excavated, contained four fills: fill 221, orange/mid brown clay, no inclusions; fill 222, brown/mid orange clay, frequent small gravel; fill 223, orange/mid brown

clay, no inclusions; fill 224, dark grey sandy clay, with red/brown mottling, occasional small gravel, occasional pottery sherds.

## Phase 2

Pit **213** contained a single fill in which large amounts carbonised material including burnt grain, charcoal, burnt clay and daub were found. Some of the larger pieces of daub had post impressions, this combined with the carbonised material, suggests that **213** may be the base of an oven and the daub fragments part of the walls of the oven. A sample taken from 212 for environmental analysis produced a high proportion of free-threshing wheat grains and a small quantity of weed seed (Appendix 3). This feature had cut through the western part of posthole **220** (above).

**213**, 0.88m long, 0.67m wide, 0.30m deep, sub-circular in plan, steeply sloping sides, slightly convex base, contained one fill: fill 212, black silty clay, occasional daub and animal bone. Sample 1 was taken from this feature (see Appendix 3).

Pit **226** truncated the south-western part of posthole **215**.

**226**, 0.58m diameter, 0.09m deep, sub-circular in plan, convex sloping sides, flat base, contained one fill: fill 214, dark grey silty clay, moderate amounts of small gravel.

Pit **208**, in the centre of Trench 2, had one fill (207) which contained pottery sherds dating to 1200-1400 AD and animal bone. The northern part of **208** was truncated by ditch **206**. Apart from this pit **208** is isolated and bears no striking similarity with any of the other features in either character or morphology.

**208**, 0.72m wide, 0.20m deep, oval in plan, near vertical sides, concave base, contained one fill: fill 207, dark grey silty clay, occasional small gravel, occasional pottery sherds.

## Phase 3

Two sections (**201** and **203**) were excavated through a curvilinear ditch emerging from the southern baulk of Trench 2. Both contained identical fills 200 and 202. Deposit 202 contained pottery dating to 900-1150 AD, and animal bone was recovered from 200. Ditch **203** is on the same alignment as ditch **311** in Trench 3, and it is possible that together these represent a subdivision of the land contained within the rectangular enclosure suggested by ditches **206** and **301** (below).

Ditch **311** was c5m from the south-eastern end of Trench 3. It contained one fill, 310, which was very similar to fill 202 in ditch **203**. This similarity is significant as both ditches **311** and **203** are on the same alignment and are similar in morphology. Deposit 310 lacked finds, but it is suggested that **311/203** are contemporary and together make up a subdivision of land within the possible enclosure formed by **206/301**. A similar role to that suggested for **307/309**, see below.



**201**, 1.10m wide, 0.20m deep, irregular linear in plan, forming a U-shape with **203**, slightly sloping sides with break of slope on eastern side, slightly concave base, contained one fill: fill **200**, grey clay, no inclusions.

**203**, 0.50m wide, 0.25m deep, linear in plan forming U-shape with **201**, concave sloping sides, slightly concave base, contained one fill: fill **202**, grey clay, no inclusions.

**311**, 0.3m wide, 0.12m deep, linear in plan, sloping sides, flat base, contained one fill: fill **310**, light grey silty clay, occasional sub angular flint pebbles.

Ditch **206** extended 14m from the south-western end of Trench 2 to c1m from the eastern edge of the trench. Ditch **206** turned sharply into the baulk of Trench 2 at its south-western end and it is possible that it continues as ditch **301** in Trench 3. If this is the case **206** and **301** may form part of a rectilinear enclosure ditch. Two fills **204** and **205** were recorded within **206**. Fill **204** contained pottery dating to 1200-1400 AD, and two residual sherds dating to the late Anglo-Saxon period as well as lava quern, bone and shell.

Ditch **301**, c1.5m from the north-western end of Trench 3 was aligned with ditch **206** in Trench 2., and had one fill **300** which contained no finds.

**206**, 1.02m wide, 0.45m deep, linear in plan, sloping sides, convex base, contained two fills: fill **204**, brownish mid grey silty clay, occasional fine gravel, occasional charcoal flecks, occasional pottery sherds, bone pieces, shell fragments and one piece of lava quern; fill **205**, yellowish light grey clay, occasional small gravel.

**301**, 0.65m wide, 0.12m deep, linear in plan, sloping sides, flat base, contained one fill: fill **300**, light grey silty clay, occasional small sub angular flint pebbles.

Ditch **1007** in evaluation Trench 3 may be a continuation of the enclosure ditch **206/301**, found during excavation. In this section it was 0.8m wide and 0.55m deep with nearly vertical sides and a narrow, concave base. The fill was a mid to dark greenish grey soft clay silt with small sub-angular flints. This contained pottery dated to the twelfth to fourteenth century. Gully **1009** was shallow, narrow and ran parallel and adjacent to the south side of **1007**. This feature contained a fill which was indistinguishable from **1008**. It was suggested they were two parts of the same feature.

Two parallel ditches **307** and **309** were noted c6m from the north-western end of Trench 3. These had identical fills, **306** and **308** respectively. However, deposit **306** contained pottery dating to 900-1150 AD, whereas **308** contained pottery sherds dating to 1200-1400 AD. Features **307** and **309** are identical morphologically and are both aligned north-south. On this basis it is suggested they are contemporary, both representing a further sub-division of the area enclosed by **206/301** (discussed above) and may serve a similar purpose to ditches **203/311** (see above). The fact that the pottery assemblage from both features is so small (four sherds), does not contradict a contemporary date for them, the earlier (late Saxon/early medieval) sherds may well be residual.

**307**, 2m long (within trench), 0.3m wide, 0.06m deep, curvilinear in plan, convex sloping sides, convex base, contained one fill: fill **306**, mid/dark grey silty clay, moderate small gravel.

309, 2m long (within trench), 0.3m wide, 0.10m deep, curvilinear in plan, convex sloping sides, convex base, contained one fill: fill 308, mid grey silty clay, occasional small gravel, occasional pottery sherds.

#### Phase 4

Ditch terminal 305 truncated both 307 and 309. It had one fill, 304, which contained pottery dating to 1200-1400 AD. Directly adjacent to this was ditch terminal 303. This had a fill, 302, which was similar to 304, as well as a very similar morphology, suggesting the two features may be contemporary. These are likely to have continued north beyond the limit of Trench 3, but did not appear in Trench 2, 5m to the north, and are within the possible enclosure formed by ditch 206/301.

303, 0.50m long (within trench), 0.35m wide, 0.12m deep, ditch terminal, convex sloping sides, slightly convex base, contained one fill: fill 302, brownish mid grey silty clay with mottled orange sandy clay, occasional small gravel within grey component, moderate amounts of small gravel within orange material.

305, 0.75m (within trench), 0.70m wide, 0.24m deep, ditch terminal, gradually sloping sides slightly concave sides, flat base, contained one fill: fill 304, brownish mid grey silty clay, occasional small gravel, occasional pottery sherds.

To the south-east of the excavation area the evaluation trench exposed further features dated by twelfth to fourteenth century pottery. It was not possible to associate any of these with features exposed during the excavation or assign them to a specific phase.

Ditch 1012 was aligned approximately east-west and crossed the trench for approximately 3.3m. This ditch was 3.5m wide and 0.3m deep with an irregular stepped profile and an undulating, uneven base. The fill, 1013, was a mid to dark green/grey soft clay silt with moderate gravel. This contained twelfth to fourteenth century pottery and fragments of animal bone.

Pit 1014 was sub-circular (0.25m diameter, 0.096m deep) with steep sides and a flat base. The fill, 1015, was a dark green/grey soft clay silt with occasional gravel and no finds.

#### 5.3.3 Period 3 – Post-medieval

A large rectangular feature 228, was observed c2m from the north-western end of Trench 2. This appeared to be a post-medieval pond, of which there are two surviving examples within the development area, of comparable size and shape. It is suggested that 228 was a post-medieval pond in what served as a garden/back yard for Green End House. Feature 228 was cut through the fills of pit 225.

228, 3m long, 2.10m wide, rectangular in plan, (not excavated), upper fill 227, dark grey silty clay, moderate flecks of charcoal.

Ditch 233 was recorded c3.5m from the south-eastern end of Trench 3. The fill of this ditch, 232, contained post-medieval pottery and brick fragments. This appeared to the same feature as 317 in Trench 3. The fill of 233 was

identical to fill 316 of ditch 317. It is likely to have been as a boundary ditch as no land drain was encountered within it and because there is also a possible fence line running parallel to it.

Ditch 317 was recorded c3.50m from the south-eastern end of Trench 3. This was on the same alignment as ditch 233 in Trench 2. The fill 316 of 317 was identical to fill 232 of ditch 233, it contained post-medieval tile and one sherd of residual medieval pottery. On this basis it is suggested that these make up part of the same ditch alignment. It is likely to have been as a boundary ditch as no land drain was encountered in it and because there is a possible fence line running parallel to it.

This fence line is represented in Trench 2 by posthole 230 which had one fill 229. This contained post-medieval bricks, likely to have been used as a post pad or foundation for a wooden post. Posthole 230 was 7m north-west of ditch 233/317. Posthole 230 was similar to posthole 313.

This fence line is represented in Trench 3 by one posthole, 313. This was observed in the centre of the trench. Posthole 313 had one fill 312 which contained post-medieval bricks, likely to have been used as a post pad or foundation for a wooden post. Posthole 313 was 7m north-west of ditch 317 discussed above. It is possible that postholes 313 and 230 formed part of post-medieval fence running parallel to ditch 317/233.

230, 0.50m diameter, circular in plan, (not excavated), upper fill 229, dark grey sandy silt, frequent pieces of post-medieval brick.

233, 7m long (within trench), 0.5m wide, 0.2m deep, linear in plan, convex steeply sloping sides, convex base, contained one fill: fill 232, Dark brown, moderate post-medieval brick, occasional pottery sherds, occasional fragments of metal objects.

313, 0.45m diameter, circular (not excavated), upper fill 312: dark grey sandy silt, frequent pieces of post-medieval brick.

317, 1.80m long (within trench), 0.30m wide, 0.15m deep, linear in plan, convex steeply sloping sides, convex base, contained one fill: fill 316, dark brown, moderate post-medieval brick.

Well 404 was made up of post-medieval bricks 403 and mortar 402, it was a 'bell shaped' well with a c0.50m diameter opening at the top extending to a maximum diameter of c1.40m. The depth of well 404 was 3.10m below the base of Trench 4. No silting up of 404 was apparent, the brickwork being visible for its entire depth and it remained full of ground water.

Service trench 401 was linear, on a north-east to south-west alignment, it contained a metal pipe and was aligned north-east directly towards Green End House. The level of this pipe and trench 401 sloped upwards to the north-east, therefore it was only cut into the natural geology for c4m after which it was removed during the initial machine excavation of the site.

401, 0.40m wide (not excavated), linear in plan: fill 400, medium blue clay, no inclusions.

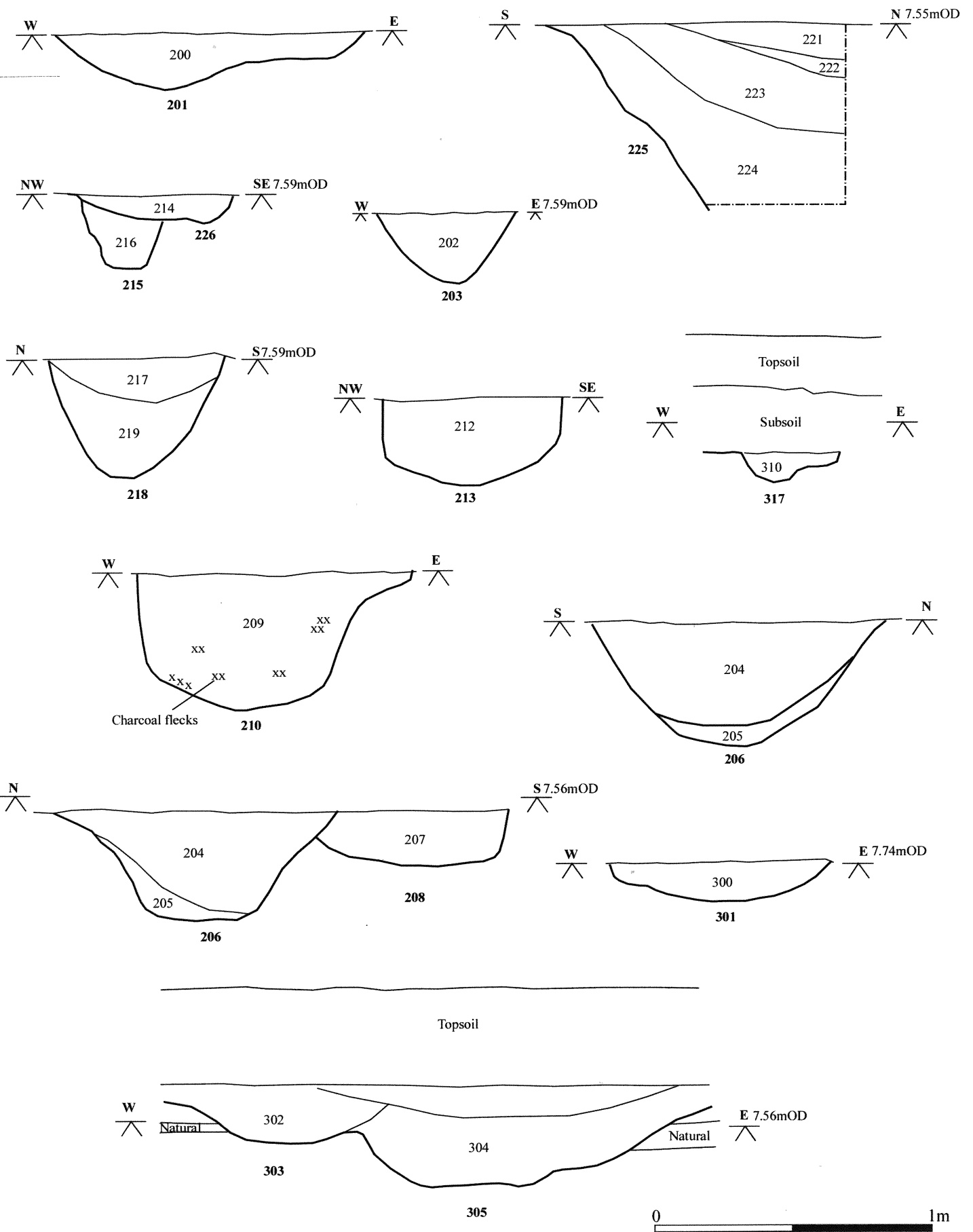


Figure 3 Selected Section Drawings

404, 0.50m diameter at surface widening to 1.4m wide, 3.10m deep, circular brick lined well, vertical sides, flat base: fill 402, greyish white mortar; fill 403, post-medieval brick lining of well 404, bricks were laid in regular courses, and were dark red in colour, slightly thinner than the most modern bricks at 0.06m.

#### 5.3.4 Period 4 – Modern

Modern land drains were observed in all trenches (not shown in Fig. 2). One was exposed in the north-western end of Trench 1. Three were observed in Trench 2. These truncated several of the archaeological features discussed above, but caused only minor damage. A further modern land drain was observed in Trench 3 c4.50m from the south-eastern end of the trench. This had not damaged any of the archaeological features discussed above. Two land drains were observed in the northern end of Trench 4.

A layer of subsoil, 231 (not shown), sealed the upper part of pit 210. No finds were recovered from this deposit which appears to have been caused by modern tree roots.

Layer 231, 2m long, 1.50m wide, sub oval spread of greyish mid brown sandy silt material, patches of natural clay (3) were visible throughout this layer. This is suggestive of either root disturbance or animal burrowing.

## 6 DISCUSSION

The evaluation at Green End House was conducted during August 2000 and the excavation followed at the end of December 2000. There are notable similarities between the character of deposits and the morphology of features encountered and the material recovered from them.

The evaluation recorded the existence of three ditches and a pit. The pottery from these features is tenth to fourteenth century in date (Prosser and Crank 2000 and Spoerry, pers. comm.). The larger excavation trenches picked up further evidence of ditches containing both Saxon/early medieval pottery and twelfth to fourteenth century pottery.

### 6.1 Late Iron Age

There was a small Iron Age element to the site, ditch 101. The alignment of this ditch suggested it may have continued south-westwards. However, it was not seen in the evaluation trench or in excavation Trench 2. This isolated feature represents some of the first evidence of Iron Age activity in this part of St. Ives. The only other evidence for Iron Age activity is recorded to the east in the SMR (see section 3.2.1).

## 6.2 Romano-British

Feature 220 contained one residual sherd of Roman pottery and one sherd of mortarium was recovered from the topsoil during machining.

The small number of finds from this period indicates activity in the vicinity of the site but not on it. Other finds are already recorded by the SMR (see section 3.2.2).

## 6.3 Late Saxon/Early Medieval and Medieval

The majority of features on the site (18 out of a total 26) date to the Late Saxon/early medieval and medieval period. It is likely that there was continuity of use from the late Saxon into the medieval period. Some of the boundary features such as 206/301 and 307/309 contain sherds from both periods suggesting incorporation of earlier material into the fills of features.

### 6.3.1 Evidence for an enclosure and settlement activity

Ditch 206/301 may form part of an rectangular enclosure (see Fig.2), curving from a terminal in the north-east of Trench 2, and turning sharply south-west where it was exposed in Trench 3. This feature contained pottery sherds dating to Period 2. Seventeen of the eighteen features assigned to this period are south of the enclosure formed by ditch 206/301. The posthole complex formed by 215, 218 and 220 is in the area that was later enclosed, along with the minor ditch alignments 203/311, 307 and 309. These features indicate continuity of the settlement focus. Also within this area are pits 210 and 208 both of which contained domestic pottery. These features support the idea that space within the enclosure was being used differently from that outside, probably for domestic activities. It is likely that this activity continues to the south and east of the excavation area.

Pit 225 was the only feature containing Late Saxon/early medieval pottery found outside the enclosure. It may have been a quarry pit outside the settlement. The existence of a clearly 'non-domestic' feature outside the enclosure, in contrast to the typically 'domestic' features inside, is important supporting evidence for the model of enclosure and settlement discussed above.

## 6.4 Post-medieval

There is a significant post-medieval element to the site. This includes a large well 404 and associated pipe 401. The alignment of the pipe cut was straight towards Green End House suggesting it was for domestic supply. The date and style of the brickwork in the well indicates a date contemporary with Green End House.

A possible fence line and boundary ditch running north-east–south-west across Trenches 2 and 3 was recorded. This consists of postholes (230/313) and a ditch (233/317). The finds from all these features were consistent with a nineteenth century date, again contemporary with Green End House.

As would be expected the archaeology recorded from this period is dominated by features associated with Green End House, which used the site as a back yard/garden.

## 7 CONCLUSION

The excavation provided significant physical evidence of activity during several archaeological periods in a part of St. Ives where it was not generally expected, due largely to a lack of any previous excavation here.

In particular the evidence of possible enclosure and settlement during the late Saxon/early post-conquest medieval period is significant as it suggests that the settlement of Slepe may not have been based solely around the Parish church. Instead a more dispersed settlement pattern during the Saxon period is emerging which is in line with accepted understanding of rural settlement origins in general in this period (see recent review of evidence in Hooke, 1998, chapter 6). Further evidence for settlement is known from excavations at Priory Road (Murray 1997) and Wellington Street (Cooper 1999), see also Section 3.1.2. It may well be that the pre-conquest history of Slepe is of the development of several groups of farms/estate centres, one of which was located here. The development of a major post-medieval farm estate centre on this same location may be more than coincidence.

The assumption that this area may have been a ‘common’ or ‘green’ in the late Saxon to post-conquest medieval period must be challenged. Although the remains found are not extensive, there is enough evidence of land division and occupation to suggest some planning and longevity which may imply something more than squatter occupation.

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The project was carried out and the report prepared in response to a brief written by Andy Thomas from the County Archaeology Office (Development Control). The site was visited and monitored by Simon Kaner from the County Archaeology Office (Development Control).

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### Map References

1728 Pettis Map of the closes and town of St. Ives consulted at Fulbourn  
Ordnance Survey map Edition 1887



## Appendix 1 Context List

Trench No	Context No	Fill of	Filled by	Context type
All	1	-	-	Topsoil layer
All	2	-	-	Subsoil layer
All	3	-	-	Natural clay
1	100	101	-	Ditch fill
1	101	-	100	Ditch cut
2	200	201	-	Ditch fill
2	201	-	200	Ditch cut
2	202	203	-	Ditch fill
2	203	-	202	Ditch cut
2	204	206	-	Ditch fill
2	205	206	-	Ditch fill
2	206	-	204, 205	Ditch cut
2	207	208	-	Pit fill
2	208	-	207	Pit cut
2	209	210	-	Pit fill
2	210	-	209	Pit cut
2	211	220	-	Pit fill
2	212	213	-	Pit fill
2	213	-	212	Pit cut
2	214	226	-	Pit fill
2	215	-	216	Posthole cut
2	216	215	-	Posthole fill
2	217	218	-	Posthole fill
2	218	-	217, 219	Posthole cut
2	219	218	-	Posthole fill
2	220	-	211	Pit cut
2	221	225	-	Pit fill
2	222	225	-	Pit fill
2	223	225	-	Pit fill
2	224	225	-	Pit fill
2	225	-	221, 222, 223, 224	Pit cut
2	226	-	214	Pit cut
2	227	228	-	Rectangular pit/pond fill
2	228	-	227	Rectangular pit/pond fill
2	229	230	-	Posthole fill
2	230	-	229	Posthole cut
2	231	-	-	Layer
2	232	233	-	Ditch fill
2	233	-	232	Ditch cut
3	300	301	-	Ditch fill
3	301	-	300	Ditch cut
3	302	303	-	Ditch terminal end fill
3	303	-	302	Ditch terminal cut
3	304	305	-	Ditch terminal end fill
3	305	-	304	Ditch terminal cut
3	306	307	-	Ditch fill
3	307	-	306	Ditch cut
3	308	309	-	Ditch fill
3	309	-	308	Ditch cut
3	310	311	-	Ditch fill
3	311	-	310	Ditch cut
3	312	313	-	Posthole fill
3	313	-	312	Posthole cut
3	316	317	-	Ditch fill
3	317	-	316	Ditch cut

Trench No	Context No	Fill of	Filled by	Context type
4	400	401	-	Ditch fill
4	401	-	400	Ditch for pipe to well
4	402	-	404	Mortar
4	403	-	404	Bricks
4	404	402, 403	-	Well cut

## Appendix 2 - Finds List

Context	Finds category	Date/description	Quantity
100	Bone	Animal	2 pieces
100	Pottery	Belgic ware c 0-100 AD	
201	Bone	Animal	2 pieces
201	Pottery	St. Neots – 900-1150 AD	1 sherd
204	Bone	Animal	48 pieces
204	Pottery	1200-1400 AD	2 pieces
204	Pottery	Residual Anglo-Saxon	2 pieces
204	Lava Quern	Un-diagnostic	1 fragment
207	Bone	Animal	17 pieces
207	Pottery	1200-1400 AD	2 sherds
209	Bone	Animal	16 pieces
209	Pottery	St. Neots, lamp – 900-1150 AD	1 sherd
209	Pottery	900-1150 AD	6 sherds
211	Pottery	Roman	1 sherd
211	Bone	Animal	1 piece
212	Daub	Un-diagnostic	20 pieces
212	Bone	Animal	3 pieces
216	Bone	Animal	1 piece
216	Pottery	900-1150 AD	1 sherd
217	Bone	Animal	1 piece
217	Pottery	900-1150 undiagnostic	1 sherd
217	Bone	Animal	1 piece
224	Pottery	St. Neots – 900-1150 AD	1 sherd
224	Pottery	Stamford Ware	1 sherd
224	Bone	Animal	1 piece
232	Metal	19 <sup>th</sup> century - Fire Grill	1 piece
232	Brick	19 <sup>th</sup> century Brick	16 fragments
232	Pottery	19 <sup>th</sup> century	3 sherds
304	Pottery	1200-1400 AD	2 sherds
304	Pottery	Residual Anglo-Saxon	1 sherd
306	Pottery	900-1150 AD un-diagnostic	2 sherds
308	Pottery	1200-1400 AD un-diagnostic	2 sherds
316	Pottery	Residual 1200-1400 AD	1 sherd
316	Tile	Post-medieval	2 fragments
316	Bone	Animal	3 pieces

## Appendix 3 – Environmental sampling results – Dr. C. Stevens

### *Pit/hearth 213*

Half of Sample 1 from context 212 was bucket floated and submitted for analysis.

The sample was almost entirely composed of grains of free-threshing wheat *Triticum aestivum sensu lato*. No identified rachis fragments were recovered that would allow more specific identification as either hexploid wheats, such as bread-wheat *Triticum aestivum*, or tetraploid, such as *Triticum durum*. A single grain of broadbean, *Vicia faba* was also recovered.

The sample weight was approximately 95 grams with 180 grains being counted from 10 grams. This would give an estimate of around 1700 grains being represented in total in the sample.

Several seeds of wild species were recovered from the sample, although these were relatively infrequent. Four seeds of probable wild oat (*Avena* sp. from its small size, though no floret bases were found to confirm this) were recovered. In addition a single seed of cleavers, *Galium aparine*, two seeds of vetch/tare, *Vicia* spp., one of black-bind weed, *Fallopia convovulus* and one of knotgrass, *Polygonum aviculare* were recovered. All these seeds are common arable weeds and relatively large. Several smaller seeded species from common arable weeds were also recovered. These were: two seeds of red bartsia, *Odonities vernus*; fat-hen, *Chenopodium album* of which there were four seeds; and a single seed of scentless mayweed, *Tripleurospermum inodorum* and *Atriplex* sp.

While it is possible that final-sieving before consumption could have wasted so much grain, it would seem more likely that the sample represents almost fully cleaned cereal. It appears the grain had already been threshed, winnowed, and sieved and perhaps required only hand-sorting. Given the general higher probability of the stored crop or waste from it being burnt, it is probable that the crop was stored in a cleaned state. Free-threshing wheat crops may be exposed to fire for several reasons. One may have been drying, before storage, the others include malting, sweepings from granary spillage (usually fed to fowl), or partial charring to obtain toasted grains. While a drying accident is a possibility the greater regularity of charring for malting, or for toasted grains may make these more likely.



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