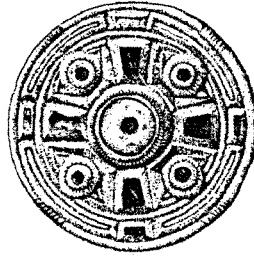


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Archaeological Field Unit

19th Century Garden Features in the North Parkland,
Hinxton Hall, Hinxton

S Kenney

August 1996

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. A94

Commissioned By Fuller Peiser

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August 1996

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Report No A 94

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SUMMARY

In May 1996 the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council carried out an archaeological evaluation on land at Hinxton Hall, Hinxton, Cambridgeshire (TL4982/4496). The work was carried out on behalf of The Wellcome Trust.

A previous phase of evaluation in 1993 revealed a possible chalk house platform. Earlier in 1996, observation of seven geotechnical test pits had not revealed any archaeological features.

Five trenches with a total length of 125m were opened. Eighteenth century or later garden features containing re-used Welsh roofing slate were uncovered in two trenches, and undated features in a further two. No evidence of additional house platforms was found.

From the results of this evaluation, it would seem that the chalk platform found in 1993 is an isolated entity, and no other buildings existed in this part of the Hall grounds. The features indicate that more formal gardens once existed in this part of the Parkland, although their full layout is likely to remain unclear.

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19th Century Garden Features in the North Parkland, Hinxton Hall, Hinxton

1. INTRODUCTION

Between 13th and 16th May 1996, the AFU carried out an archaeological evaluation on land at Hinxton Hall (TL4982/4496). The work was carried out at the request of Fuller Peiser on behalf of the Wellcome Trust.

2. GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site lies on the interface between the 1st-2nd terrace gravels of the Cam, and the Cretaceous Middle Chalk. In this area, the chalk is notable for the extensive frost polygons which were visible in all the excavated trenches.

In the northeastern part of the Hall grounds, the land rises slightly towards the east, to around 36m OD in the corner of the parkland. The area evaluated varies between 35.5m and 34m OD.

3. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Historical Background

The village of Hinxton was well established by the time of the Domesday book (Wright, 1978). Variations on the name include Hestitona, Hestitone, and Hincstitona, which all mean 'Hengest's Farm' (Reaney, 1943). Two manors existed at Domesday, held by Picot the Sheriff and Robert. Subsequently, Picot's estate was divided, but all three manors descended together after 1416. The church existed by 1092, but the current building is mainly 14th century. The local economy was based on arable farming, and Enclosure was put into effect in 1836 after an Act of 1820. The parkland of the Hall was established between 1833 and the 1885 OS survey of Hinxton. The creation of the Hall grounds involved the truncation of the south of the village, and rerouting of the road to Ickleton. The current building on the Hinxton Hall site was built in the mid-18th century, and has been remodelled several times. Presently, it is a grade II* listed building, and is undergoing careful restoration.

3.2 Archaeological Background

3.2.1 Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic

No Palaeolithic or Mesolithic finds are known from the area, however worked flints and a Neolithic polished axe have been recorded from Ickleton (SMR 04114, 04168).

3.2.2 Bronze Age

Tumuli have been found in Ickleton parish, and a Bronze Age barrow containing two cremations was found during excavations at Hinxton quarry. During the main excavation at Hinxton Hall (Leith & Spoerry, forthcoming), numerous sherds of Beaker pottery were recovered from the top of a large pit.

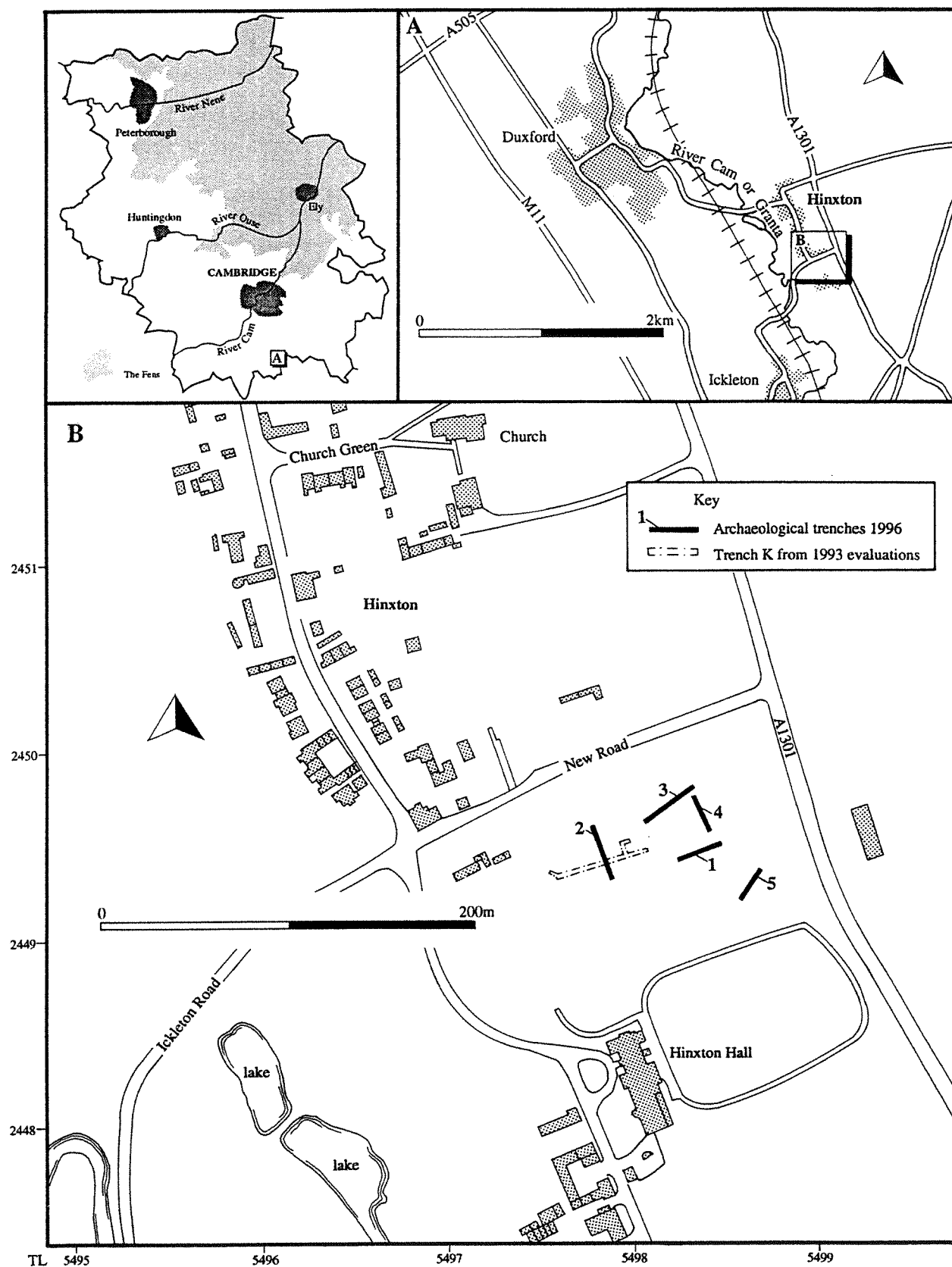


Figure 1 Location Map

3.2.3 Iron Age

Field systems are visible as extensive cropmarks immediately to the south of Hinxtion Hall Park (SMR 08892).

3.2.4 Roman

A Romano-British settlement is located across the river from Hinxtion village (SMR 04210a), and is a scheduled ancient monument (SAM 76). The Roman town of Great Chesterford lies about 1.5km to the south of the site, and associated roads and farms spread out towards Hinxtion Hall Park. A Roman cemetery is situated close to the old railway track near Great Chesterford, and across the river in Ickleton there is a Roman villa (SMR 04153, 04168) which has been scheduled as an ancient monument (SAM 62).

3.2.5 Anglo-Saxon

The Saxons reused the Roman cemetery at Great Chesterford, and extensive settlement remains were found within the grounds of Hinxtion Hall (see 3.3 below). Hinxtion lies in a strategic position between the Saxon defensive or territorial earthworks of Brent and Bran ditches.

3.2.6 Medieval

Medieval sites in Hinxtion include the church, several houses, the site of a watermill, and a moat.

3.3 Summary of Previous Work

Between August 1993 and April 1994, two phases of evaluation and a large open area excavation took place in the grounds of Hinxtion Hall, prior to the construction of a series of research, conference, and residential facilities; a new lake was also to be created to the south of the existing one.

The main area of archaeological interest was the southern part of the site, which revealed Early to Late Saxon, and Early Medieval settlement. This settlement was represented by a succession of timber buildings, as well as associated rubbish pits, ovens, hearths, and wells. In the later period, the settlement was enclosed by a large v-shaped ditch or ditches. Significant prehistoric remains were also revealed, including pits, quarry pits, a linear ditch, and a chalk-cut shaft. These contained flint artefacts and pottery dating from the Late Neolithic to Early Bronze Age.

An area of earthworks between the new lake development and the river was surveyed in March 1995 (Leith & Spoerry 1995). The main area of earthworks comprises a hollow way, and a series of rectilinear enclosures and platforms adjacent to it. This hollow way corresponds to a track on the 1799 draft OS 1" map. Documentary evidence suggests occupation in this area in the seventeenth century, although the alignment of these earthworks, which is similar to the Late Saxon settlement, may suggest an earlier date.

The two phases of recording undertaken during the lake development revealed numerous Roman ditches, including parts of two rectangular enclosures, and field boundaries. The second phase also revealed a timber building of probable Early to Mid Saxon date, most likely belonging to the settlement of that period revealed during the main excavation.

4. METHODOLOGY

Five trenches with a total length of 125m were opened by a mechanical excavator using a 1.6m toothless ditching bucket under the supervision of an archaeologist. Originally, only three trenches were envisaged, but clearance of scrub and trees had not taken place at the time of evaluation, and the trenching scheme had to be redesigned to take advantage of the available gaps.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was 23.5m long and contained three evenly spaced features. The topsoil was 0.15m deep; the subsoil was 0.25m deep at the northeast end and 0.35m deep at the southwest end.

Easternmost, **3** was a rectangular feature, 1.15m long, 0.38m deep, and 1.15m wide, containing a single fill, **4**, from which was recovered abraded Post-Medieval pottery and tile. On the base of the cut was laid a piece of reused Welsh roofing slate.

Central, **9** was a rectangular feature, 1.15m long, 0.35m deep, and at least 0.65m wide, containing two fills, **8** and **10**, from which were recovered abraded Post-Medieval pottery, bottle glass and animal bone. On the base of the cut was laid a piece of reused Welsh roofing slate.

Westernmost, **5** was a rectangular feature, 1.15m long, 0.35m deep, and at least 0.35m wide, containing a single fill, **6**, from which was recovered abraded Post-Medieval pottery.

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was 30m long and contained no archaeology. The topsoil was 0.55m deep, and the subsoil was 0.5m deep at the northwestern end. At the southeastern end, the topsoil and subsoil were each 0.25m deep. The trench was extended southwards in an attempt to locate precisely 1993's trench K, which had contained the previously mentioned chalk platform. This was achieved, and it enabled trench K to be surveyed in and plotted relative to the trenches of this evaluation. Trench 2 did not cut across the known location of the chalk platform, but was aligned slightly to the west, within the proposed building location.

5.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was 32m long and contained one feature. The topsoil was 0.45m deep, and the subsoil was 0.25m deep at the northeastern end. At the southwestern end, the topsoil was 0.35m deep, and the subsoil was 0.25m deep.

15 was a small subcircular feature, 0.3m in diameter, and 0.15m deep, containing a single fill, **16**, from which no finds were recovered.

5.4 Trench 4

Trench 4 was 20.5m long and contained a single feature. The topsoil was 0.35m deep, and the subsoil was 0.20m deep at the northwestern end. At the southeastern end, the topsoil was 0.25m deep, and the subsoil was 0.15m deep.

13 was a rectangular feature, 1.2m long, 0.35m deep, and at least 0.6m wide, containing a single fill, **14**, from which was recovered abraded Post-Medieval pottery. On the base of the cut was laid a piece of reused Welsh roofing slate.

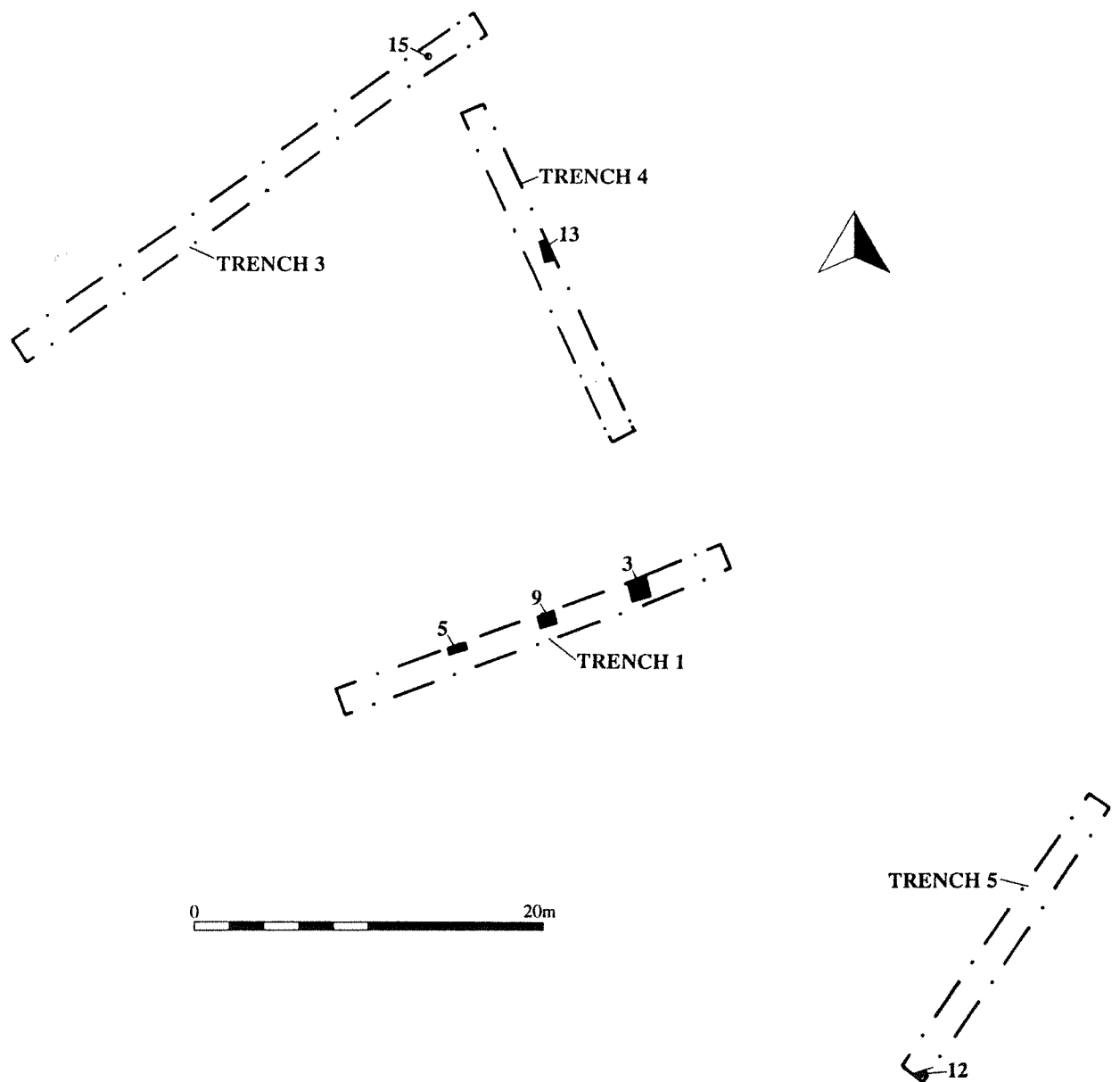


Figure 2 Feature location plan

5.5 Trench 5

Trench 5 was 19m long and contained one feature. The topsoil was 0.20m deep, at the northeastern end; subsoil was not present. At the southwestern end, the topsoil and subsoil were each 0.2m deep.

12 was a narrow, straight linear feature, 0.35m wide, 0.1m deep, and at least 1.4m long, containing a single fill, 11, from which no finds were recovered.

6. DISCUSSION

The dearth of features found during this evaluation, and the paucity of material recovered, suggests that this area of the Hall Park was not subject to settlement prior to emparkment. It may have been under cultivation or pasture, but there is no direct evidence for either of these. After emparkment, a series of regularly spaced square holes were dug, and in their bases were laid reused Welsh roofing slates. At some point, these slates were broken *in situ*, presumably by the application of a heavy weight from above. It is likely that these features relate to the 18th and 19th century practice of setting out different plants at various times of the year to reflect the changing seasons. Large plant pots would have held small trees or bushes, and these could easily be dug up and replaced. The function of the slates may have been both to level the base of the hole, and to isolate the pot slightly from poorly draining soil (Dix pers comm). It is interesting to note the accuracy with which the features were both laid out and dug, being exactly 3'9" square and 14' apart. If 13 belonged to a second, parallel, line, they would have been 61'6" apart.

It was not possible to further define limits for the chalk platform seen in 1993, either to the north or to the south. However, it was apparent that it did not extend as far as the southwestern end of trench 3, and no similar, or apparently related features were located. The isolated linear feature in trench 5 was sealed by the subsoil, but is undated. The possible post-hole in trench 3 is also undated.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

No further works are recommended before development takes place, but a watching brief during stripping, and prior to construction would probably add to current understanding of the house platform found in 1993, and might reveal further the layout of the garden features located during this evaluation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX A

List of Contexts

<u>Context</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Nature</u>	<u>Below</u>	<u>Above</u>
1	Topsoil	10YR 4/2 dark yellowish brown sandy silt	-	2
2	Subsoil	7.5YR 4/6 strong brown sandy silt	3, 5, 9, 13	11
3	Cut	Rectangular garden feature	4	2
4	Fill	10YR 4/4 dark yellowish brown silty sand	1	3
5	Cut	Rectangular garden feature	6	2
6	Fill	10YR 3/3 dark brown silty sand	1	5
7	Natural	N 8/ white chalk	2	-
8	Fill	10YR 4/2 dark yellowish brown and 7.5YR 4/6 strong brown sandy silt	10	9
9	Cut	Rectangular garden feature	8	2
10	Fill	10YR 3/3 dark brown sandy silt	1	8
11	Fill	10YR 3/3 dark brown silty sand	2	12
12	Cut	Narrow linear	11	Natural
13	Cut	Rectangular garden feature	14	2
14	Fill	10YR 4/4 dark yellowish brown sandy silt	1	13
15	Cut	Posthole	16	2
16	Fill	10YR 4/2 dark yellowish brown sandy silt	1	15



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