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Archaeological Field Unit

**Prehistoric Remains on the New Waitrose Site, Hauxton Road,
Cambridge:
An Archaeological Evaluation
TL 4450/5456**

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Cambridgeshire County Council

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Commissioned by RG Carter Projects Ltd

SUMMARY

Between the 7th and the 11th of February, the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council (AFU) carried out an archaeological evaluation on land between Anstey Hall, Plant Breeding International and Hauxton Road in Trumpington, Cambridge. The project was commissioned by RG Carter Projects Ltd, in advance of the construction of a proposed new Waitrose Foodstore. The evaluation revealed a complex picture of intercutting ditches and a number of smaller, discrete curvilinear features. Dating these features is problematic at present due to the paucity of diagnostic material recovered from the excavated features. Whilst an absolute date cannot at present be placed upon these finds, it is likely that they belong to the same period as similar features on nearby sites, and they have been provisionally been ascribed to the Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age transition. Further excavation will increase the sample size of recovered artefactual material, and enable a more certain placing of the site in a chronological context.

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**Prehistoric Remains on the New Waitrose Site, Hauxton Road, Cambridge:
An Archaeological Evaluation
TL 4450/5456**

1 INTRODUCTION

Between the 7th and the 11th of February, the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council (AFU) carried out an archaeological evaluation on the proposed site of the new Waitrose foodstore in Trumpington, Cambridge (centred upon TL 4450/5456). The project was commissioned by RG Carter Projects Ltd, in response to a brief set by Andy Thomas of the County Archaeology Office (CAO). The purpose of the work was to define the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains.

The site is located on the southwestern side of Maris Lane, Trumpington, and to the west of Hauxton Road. It is bounded to the west by the grounds of Anstey Hall, and to the south by the buildings of Plant Breeding International. The site is somewhat irregular in shape, covering an area of c.2.3ha (Fig. 2). The eastern boundary of the site consists of a tree belt, and the whole site is part of a conservation area. The area to be evaluated had been subject to ploughing in recent years, and the majority of the area was ploughed not long before the evaluation took place. The presence of archaeological remains was considered likely by the CAO, based upon information in the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR).

Although the weather was extremely variable during the evaluation, intermittent downpours actually enhanced the visibility of some of the more ephemeral features, and consequently the confidence rating to be attached to the results set out below is high.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site lies on the Pleistocene Third Terrace gravels. Situated away from the river, the site lies on relatively flat land above the 15m contour.

3 BACKGROUND

Before the evaluation phase took place, a brief review of immediately accessible documentary sources was undertaken in order to assess the archaeological potential of the subject area. This search covered both the

current site and the wider archaeological landscape, in order to frame a context for the present investigation.

Aerial Photographic Assessment

Air Photo Services of Cambridge were commissioned to undertake survey and replotting of air photo sources for the proposed new Park and Ride scheme 500m to the south of the Waitrose development. This study included the current subject area, and consequently a separate study was not commissioned for this project.

Cambridgeshire Sites and Monuments Record

Information about the present state of knowledge about the archaeological resource was extracted from the Cambridgeshire Sites and Monuments Record, Shire Hall (SMR).

Other Documentary and Cartographic Sources

Historic maps and other non-archaeological documentary sources were studied at the County Record Office, Shire Hall and the Cambridgeshire Collection, Cambridge Central Library. Further resources held at the Archaeological Field Unit's Fulbourn headquarters were also examined.

3.1 Historical Background

Trumpington probably had its origins in the Early Iron Age, near to the ford over the Cam (VCH). The route through the ford, to Grantchester and beyond, may have even earlier origins (Fox 1923). In 1086 the Domesday Book records that there were 33 peasants and 4 slaves. The church of St. Mary and St. Michael, originally dedicated to St. Nicholas, was established by 1200. Both Trumpington Hall and Anstey Hall are probably built on or very close to the site of former medieval Manor Houses.

At the time of the 1804 Inclosure Map (Fig. 2) the entire area between the "River Grant" and Trumpington Road was called Hauxton Field and, barring a couple of small areas, belonged to Christopher Anstey of Anstey Hall (CRO R60/24/2/70(a)). After enclosure was implemented in 1809, the field boundaries became as they are today. In 1862, the Bedford-Cambridge line of the LNWR was opened; it was closed in 1965 and the track removed. In about 1950, Anstey Hall Farm was acquired by the government as headquarters for the Plant Breeding Research Institute (now Plant Breeding International). Post-1984, the current layout of buildings and fields existed.

3.2 The Archaeological Landscape (Fig. 3)

The area on the south side of modern Cambridge is rich with archaeological finds and sites of periods from the Mesolithic onwards. Early sites in the area include a causewayed camp and bowl barrow at Little Trees Hill 5km ESE of the subject area (SM 24422, SMR 05056).

Palaeolithic flints were found in a gravel quarry across Hauxton Road, 300m south the study area (SMR 04415). Flint scatters have been found within 2km of the subject site to the NW (SMR 04738) and to the SW (SMR 04376, a, b). Further away to the SE, numerous flint scatters and stray finds, including polished axes, have been found running eastwards along the chalk below Clarke's Hill, and to the north of Granham's Farm, towards Little Trees Hill, Wandlebury and onto the Gog Magog Golf Course (SMR 04882, 04880, 04893, 04791, 04891, 04892, 05058, 00969, 05059, 05016, 04851, 05012, 05011, 10944, 05088, 05052, 05017).

Of particular interest is the distribution of sites from throughout the Iron Age. War Ditches (SMR 04963) and Wandlebury (SM 24406, SMR 04636) lie in the east of this landscape, some 4km east of the study area. Westwards of these sites is the recently discovered ritual site at Babraham Road, which has its origins in the Neolithic, but persists into the Iron Age (Hinman 1999 and forthcoming). Further west are the Rectory Farm (SMR 04503a) and Hauxton Mill (SMR 04978) settlement sites. To the north of these, two further probable settlement sites lie southwest of Trumpington itself (SMR 05112, 05130). About 2km to the NW, a cremation cemetery of the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age was found on the edge of Grantchester (SMR 04379), and a further settlement site (SMR 04800) lies 2km to the northeast of the subject area, beneath the modern hospital of New Addenbrookes.

There are also extensive cropmarks across a similar swathe of landscape to the north of Hauxton and Great Shelford, and southwest of Trumpington, some of which have been positively dated to the Roman period (SAMs 57, 58, 74 and 75), and others of which remain undated (SMR 08357, 08339, 08349). This pattern of cropmarks continues to the northwest of Trumpington, along the river gravels next to the Cam (SMR 05044, 08966, a, 09601, 05031). The Roman cropmarks differ in their alignments to other undated cropmarks in the same area, which have a similar alignment to the modern field boundaries. The implication of a later origin for these undated cropmarks may be misleading, however, as many of these boundaries betray ancient beginnings in their association with nearby prehistoric monuments and finds scatters.

It is worth noting that there is a distinct blank on the SMR map for approximately 500m north and northwest of Maris Lane/Grantchester Road. This area is parkland surrounding Trumpington Hall, with wooded areas which have therefore shown nothing on aerial photographs, whilst the lack of development has precluded chance finds which might be expected from fields under ploughing.

3.3 Archaeology in the Immediate Surroundings (Fig. 4)

Prehistoric

Mesolithic and other flat axes were found 800m west of the study area, at the same location as the Iron Age pottery and Roman buildings mentioned below (SMR 05112a).

Within the boundaries of Plant Breeding International, Prehistoric pottery was found in 1970, just to the south of the disused railway line, and immediately adjacent to Hauxton Road (SMR 04879). Also in 1970, pottery and bone were found in a pit 100m SW of the latter (SMR 04414).

There have been no finds of definite Neolithic or Bronze Age artefacts to date.

Iron Age

1km west of the subject area, an excavation was carried out in 1969 on an Iron Age site seen as a cropmark in aerial photographs since 1954 (SMR 05130). Iain Davidson of Selwyn College, Cambridge and Godfrey J. Curtis of the then Plant Breeding Institute jointly conducted the excavation, with the stated aim of assessing the economic potential of an area during the Iron Age. They targeted the large ring feature seen in aerial photographs, and area excavation subsequently revealed three phases of ditched enclosure, the earliest of which cut a narrow linear ditch on a different alignment. The dating of the earliest phase of the circular enclosure is based upon a single undiagnostic sherd of Iron Age pottery, the date of which could not be refined further due to its size. The final phase of the circular enclosure contained Roman pottery of the first century AD, as well as handmade Iron Age wares.

Iron Age pottery was also found in a gravel pit opposite the modern cemetery in Trumpington in 1907. A brooch of Halstatt II type found at Trumpington is thought to be related to the pottery (SMR 05143). 1km to the west of the study area, Iron Age pottery was found at SMR 05112b (see also Roman below).

The land of Plant Breeding International has produced several finds of Iron Age material and archaeological features.

In 1978, during soil improvement operations, a series of archaeological features were briefly exposed and rapidly recorded (SMR 09716). Three pits containing in varying quantities flint-tempered Iron Age pottery, animal bone, burnt clay and burnt stones were uncovered, adjacent to four linear features, several metres apart, all running N-S. One of the pits contained several burnt stones around the edge, one of which was probably a rubbing stone for a saddle quern, and this feature was interpreted as a hearth.

Three of the linear features were approximately 0.5m wide, however, the fourth was 1.5m wide and turned a right angle to the west within the exposed area. Possible traces of a marl floor were also observed, and stray finds of Iron Age and Romano-British pottery were made across the area.

Also mentioned under the same SMR entry is the Iron Age pit found in a glasshouse just to the west of the finds mentioned above, and pits containing burnt stones found just to the NE when a tennis court was built in the 1970's. Subsequently, in 1989, the large grain processing building was erected in the same location, however, no further features were uncovered.

Roman

Roman remains were found just west of the site (SMR 04878) in the grounds of Anstey Hall.

1km southwest of the present site, foundations were found of at least two Roman buildings, a circular one of the second century and a winged corridor one of the fourth century (SMR 05112); this was also the location of the Iron Age finds mentioned above.

Anglo-Saxon

A silver Anglo-Saxon penny of Edward the Confessor was found 200m southeast of the site, just south of the railway bridge on Shelford Road (SMR 05157).

Medieval

The thirteenth and fourteenth century church of St Mary and St Michael, Trumpington lies 100m northwest of the study area (SMR 04883).

Post-medieval

The Old House on the SE side of Church Lane, which lies 100m north of the subject site, has its origins in the sixteenth century (SMR 05091), and Anstey Hall itself dates from the late seventeenth century (SMR 05174).

Undated

Undated burials were also found just west of the site in the grounds of Anstey Hall (SMR 04878a).

3.4 Archaeology on the Subject Site (Fig. 4)

Undated skeletons were found in the northern part of the subject area (SMR 04875). These may relate to the other burial found in the grounds of Anstey Hall (see Undated above). It has been suggested that these might form part of a hitherto undiscovered Roman cemetery. The Roman cemetery excavated in the early eighteenth century at Dam Hill (or Gravel Hill) in the far north of the original parish contained spectacular finds of metal vessels and pottery urns among the graves (SMR 04956).

Although no other evidence is known from the immediate area of the Waitrose site, nonetheless, the general background suggested that there was every possibility that archaeological remains would continue into the site.

3.5 Aerial Photographic Evidence

The Plant Breeding Institute is unusual in having been photographed on an almost annual basis since 1950. Before 1978, cover was oblique, but since then, there have been vertical photographs taken. The cover includes the surrounding area, and the current subject site was studied for the aerial photographic assessment.

Rog Palmer of Air Photo Services has indicated in his report that no cropmarks have been observed within the development area, however, those seen just to the south correspond quite well with the location of SMR 09716. His study also showed cropmarks visible between the two present development areas, under what are now the buildings of the Plant Breeding Institute. The cropmarks extend to within 100m of the southern boundary of the Waitrose site, and it is quite possible that they continue northwards.

This lack of cropmark evidence is unusual, given that previous aerial photographic reinterpretation to the east clarified two dense complexes of cropmarks on the same gravel terrace as the present study area. This work was carried out as part of the Cambridge Southern Relief Road archaeological field evaluation. Intrusive trenching and excavation revealed the true picture to be even more complex than even the aerial photographic interpretation had suggested, but no secure dating evidence was recovered for the enclosures which had been observed (Kemp 1993).

The apparent blank on the aerial photographs of the present site may be caused by a localised change in the geology, where gravels give way to silty sands, which may be less susceptible to producing clear results.

4 METHODOLOGY

Five trenches with a total length of 267m were opened by a 360° excavator using a 2.1m wide toothless ditching bucket, under the supervision of an archaeologist. The total area constitutes a 2.4% sample of the development area.

The trenches were hand-cleaned where necessary, photographed and base planned. They were surveyed using a Zeiss RecElta 15 Total Station and located on the Ordnance Survey map using AutoCAD 2000.

Once identified, features were hand excavated, planned and recorded using the AFU's standard recording system. Sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20 and the excavated portions photographed.

5 RESULTS

Trench 1 (see fig 5)

Trench 1 was 43m long and ran south-east/north-west. At the south-eastern end of the trench, a brownish grey silty topsoil 0.36m thick overlay a mid-brown sandy silt subsoil 0.31m thick. At the north-western end, the topsoil thickness increased to 0.40m and the subsoil had decreased to

0.30m thick. The base of the trench consisted of a mid-to-light brown sandy silt natural geology with occasional patches of chalk.

No archaeological features were identified cutting into the natural geology.

Trench 2 (see figs 5 & 6)

Trench 2 was 46m long by 2.1m wide and ran north-east/south-west. At the north-eastern end of the trench, a brownish grey silty topsoil 0.41m thick overlay a mid-brown sandy silt subsoil 0.32m thick. At the south-western end, the topsoil thickness increased to 0.52m and the subsoil had decreased to 0.23m thick. The base of the trench consisted of a mid-to-light brown sandy silt natural geology with occasional patches of chalk.

A total of one linear ditch, two curvilinear ditches, one linear gully and one posthole were identified cutting into the natural geology. All the features identified were excavated.

Ditch cut **6**, 1.04m wide, 0.13m deep, linear in plan, orientation north-west/south-east, contained one fill:

Ditch fill **7**, a dark yellowish brown sandy silt, contained no artefactual remains.

Ditch cut **8**, 1.48m wide, 0.24m deep, curvilinear in plan, contained one fill:

Ditch fill **9**, a dark yellowish brown sandy silt, contained no artefactual remains.

Ditch cut **14**, 0.92m wide, 0.56m deep, curvilinear in plan, contained one fill:

Ditch fill **15**, a yellowish brown silty sand, contained no artefactual remains.

Gully cut **12**, 0.46m wide, 0.12m deep, linear in plan and butt-ending to the south-east, orientation south-east/north-west, contained one fill:

Gully fill **13**, a brown silty sand, contained no artefactual remains.

Posthole cut **10**, 0.96m wide, 0.11m deep, oval in plan, contained one fill:

Posthole fill **11**, a yellowish brown silty sand, contained no artefactual remains.

Trench 3 (see figs 5 & 6)

Trench 3 was 62m long by 2.1m wide and ran north-west/south-east. At the north-western end of the trench, a brownish grey silty topsoil 0.43m thick overlay a mid-brown sandy silt subsoil 0.23m thick. At the south-eastern end, the topsoil thickness decreased to 0.22m and the subsoil had increased to 0.29m thick. The base of the trench consisted of a mid-to-light brown sandy silt natural geology with occasional patches of chalk.

A sequence of three intercutting ditches and a gully, and a further discrete butt-ending ditch were identified cutting into the natural geology. All the features identified were excavated.

Because of the homogenous nature of the fills contained within cuts **16**, **18** & **22** it was impossible to determine through excavation or observation of the section what the relationship was between the various features.

Ditch cut **16**, 1.20m wide, 0.58m deep, linear in plan, orientation north-east/south-west, contained one fill:

Ditch fill **17**, a dark yellowish brown sandy silt, contained no artefactual remains.

Ditch cut **18**, 0.70m wide, 0.68m deep, linear in plan, orientation north-east/south-west, contained one fill:

Ditch fill **19**, a dark yellowish brown sandy silt, contained no artefactual remains.

Ditch cut **22**, 1.5m wide, 0.78m deep, linear in plan, orientation north-east/south-west, contained one fill:

Ditch fill **23**, a dark yellowish brown sandy silt, contained a number of animal bone fragments.

Gully cut 20, 0.10m wide, 0.20m deep, linear in plan, orientation undetermined due to the small amount of the feature exposed, contained one fill:

Gully fill 21, a yellowish brown silty sand, contained no artefactual remains. It was truncated by ditch cut 22.

Ditch cut 42, 0.87m wide, 0.30m deep, linear in plan with a curved butt-end to the , orientation north-west/south-east, contained one fill:

Ditch fill 43, a dark yellowish brown sandy silt, contained no artefactual remains.

Trench 4 (see figs 5 & 6)

Trench 4 was 73m long by 2.1m wide and ran east/west. At the eastern end of the trench, a brownish grey silty topsoil 0.30m thick overlay a mid-brown sandy silt subsoil 0.20m thick. At the northern end, the topsoil thickness decreased to 0.20m and the subsoil had increased to 0.38m thick. The base of the trench consisted of a mid-to-light brown sandy silt natural geology with occasional patches of chalk.

A sequence of three ditches, two of which were curvilinear and two gullies was identified, as well as a discrete butt-ending ditch, all cutting into the natural geology. All the features identified were excavated.

Because of the homogenous nature of the fills contained within cuts 24, 26, 28, 30 & 32 it was impossible to determine through excavation or observation of the section what the relationship was between the various features.

Ditch cut 26, 1.5m wide, 0.60m deep, curvilinear in plan, contained one fill:

Ditch fill 27, a dark yellowish brown sandy silt, contained no artefactual remains.

Ditch cut 32, 1.86m wide, 0.88m deep, curvilinear in plan, contained one fill:

Ditch fill 33, a dark yellowish brown sandy silt, contained no artefactual remains.

Ditch cut 30, 0.70m wide, 0.59m deep, linear in plan, orientation north/south, contained one fill:

Ditch fill 31, a dark yellowish brown sandy silt, contained no artefactual remains.

Gully cut 24, 0.48m wide, 0.20m deep, linear in plan, orientation north-west/south-east, contained one fill:

Gully fill 25, a dark yellowish brown sandy silt, contained no artefactual remains.

Gully cut 28, 0.70m wide, 0.50m deep, linear in plan, orientation north-west/south-east, contained one fill:

Gully fill 29, a dark yellowish brown sandy silt, contained no artefactual remains.

Ditch cut 34, 0.86m wide, 0.10m deep, linear in plan, butt-ending to the south-east, orientation south-east/north-west, contained one fill:

Ditch fill 35, a brown sandy silt, contained one flint flake.

Trench 5 (see figs 5 & 6)

Trench 5 was 43m long and had to be split into two segments to avoid a large drainage pipe, as a consequence the two segments of trench were labelled 5A & 5B.

Trench 5A was 13.8m long and 2.1m wide and ran north-east/south-west. At the north-eastern end of the trench, a brownish grey silty topsoil 0.36m thick overlay a mid-brown sandy silt subsoil 0.22m thick. At the south-western end, the topsoil thickness decreased to 0.30m and the subsoil depth remained 0.30m. The base of the trench consisted of a mid-to-light brown sandy silt natural geology with occasional patches of chalk.

No archaeological features were identified cutting into the natural geology.

Trench 5B (see fig 5 & 6)

Trench 5B was 29.2m long and 2.1m wide and ran north-east/south-west. At the north-eastern end of the trench, a brownish grey silty topsoil 0.39m thick overlay a mid-brown sandy silt subsoil 0.48m thick. At the south-western end, the topsoil thickness decreased to 0.38m and the subsoil decreased to 0.27m thick. The base of the trench consisted of a mid-to-light brown sandy silt natural geology with occasional patches of chalk.

A total of three features were identified cutting into the natural geology: one linear ditch, one curvilinear ditch and one posthole. All the features identified were excavated.

Ditch cut **38**, 2.4m wide, 0.80m deep, linear in plan, orientation north-west/south-east, contained two fills:

Ditch fill 39, a dark yellowish brown sandy silt, contained no artefactual remains.

Ditch fill 44, a brown sandy silt, truncated by 40, contained no artefactual remains.

Ditch cut **40**, 0.60m wide, 0.30m deep, curvilinear in plan, truncates 44, contained one fill:

Ditch fill 41, a dark yellowish brown sandy silt, contained one flint flake artefact.

Posthole cut **36**, 0.47m wide, 0.15m deep, circular in plan, contained one fill:

Posthole fill 37, a very dark greyish brown sandy silt, contained no artefactual remains.

6 DISCUSSION

Previous work in the surrounding area has apparently been unable to fully reveal the extent of putative Iron Age settlement sites, or to date them with any precision. This has again been a problem on the subject site, with substantial features yielding only a sparse and undiagnostic collection of artefacts. This is a similar result to the evaluation phase of the Cambridge Southern Relief Road project (Kemp 1993).

Features with almost identical, artefactually sterile fills were also found during the nearby evaluation on land at Plant Breeding International, in advance of a proposed new Park and Ride site. None of these sterile features can be assigned an Iron Age date, and they differ greatly from those features observed both previously and currently which contain pottery of the period.

The suggestion then, is that the features relate to an earlier, prehistoric period, and represent previous utilisation of this landscape, a pattern which has been observed repeatedly on nearby sites, such as the excavation at Babraham Road Park and Ride (Hinman 1999 & forthcoming). It may be that this earlier occupation does not represent settlement, and that the dearth of artefacts indicates a more intangible purpose, or simply that the features excavated represent peripheral field systems associated with a nearby settlement.

It is clear that further work will be needed to date the remains which have been found during the evaluation: Utilising techniques and strategies employed at the Babraham Road site, artefact recovery will be greatly enhanced. It should then be possible to place the site in its proper context within the archaeological landscape, and gather additional data towards a better understanding of the

economy and social development of prehistoric settlement along the Cam valley. The major routeway leading to a crossing of the Cam lies a few hundred metres north of the site, and this would undoubtedly have proved a particular draw to the area for activities and settlement in many periods.

7 RECCOMENDATIONS

In order to establish the nature and date of the remains found during the evaluation, further work will be needed in the areas of trenches 2, 3, 4 and 5a. To this end, a program of area excavation is proposed, to be agreed in consultation with the CAO.

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