

Archaeological Field Unit

**Land to the rear of 65 New Road, Haslingfield, Cambridgeshire:
An Archaeological Evaluation**

Judith Roberts

September 2000

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. A163

Commissioned by Bennell Developments

**Land to the rear of 65 New Road, Haslingfield, Cambridgeshire:
An Archaeological Evaluation
(TL4067 5234)**

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2000

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SUMMARY

The proposed development, covering an area of approximately 0.15ha, lies to the north of the historic centre of Haslingfield. The development involves construction of a bungalow with related services. The site lies in an area of potentially rich archaeological remains. There are significant remains of all periods in the parish but nothing is known from the site itself. There does not appear to have been any development during the past century and recently it has been covered in willows, fir and fruit trees. During August 2000 an evaluation was carried out. Two trenches were machine excavated, topsoil and subsoil was removed from each trench but no archaeological remains were revealed. Four test pits were machine excavated by the structural engineer and these were monitored for archaeological remains.

Fragments of pottery (Roman and medieval) were recovered from the topsoil and from roots holes. A feature was noted in one test pit, adjacent to the existing site boundary, which may represent an earlier boundary ditch. The soft disturbed nature of the upper sub-soil horizon in part of the site may represent backfilling of an earlier pond. The removal of trees has caused considerable disturbance to a depth of over 1.5m across the site.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY	1
BACKGROUND	1
METHODOLOGY	5
RESULTS	5
CONFIDENCE RATING	6
DEPOSIT MODEL	7
CONCLUSION	7
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7
BIBLIOGRAPHY	8
FIGURE	
Figure 1 Site location	2

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INTRODUCTION

This study was commissioned by Bennell Developments, in advance of a proposed residential development. The evaluation aimed to record any archaeological remains that are likely to be affected by the development. The work was carried out by staff from the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Field Unit in response to a design brief for archaeological evaluation written by Andy Thomas, Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Office, dated July 14th, 2000.

The site is located to the north of the historic centre of Haslingfield and comprises approximately 0.15 hectare, currently the back garden of 65 New Road. The site is centred on TL 4067 5234.

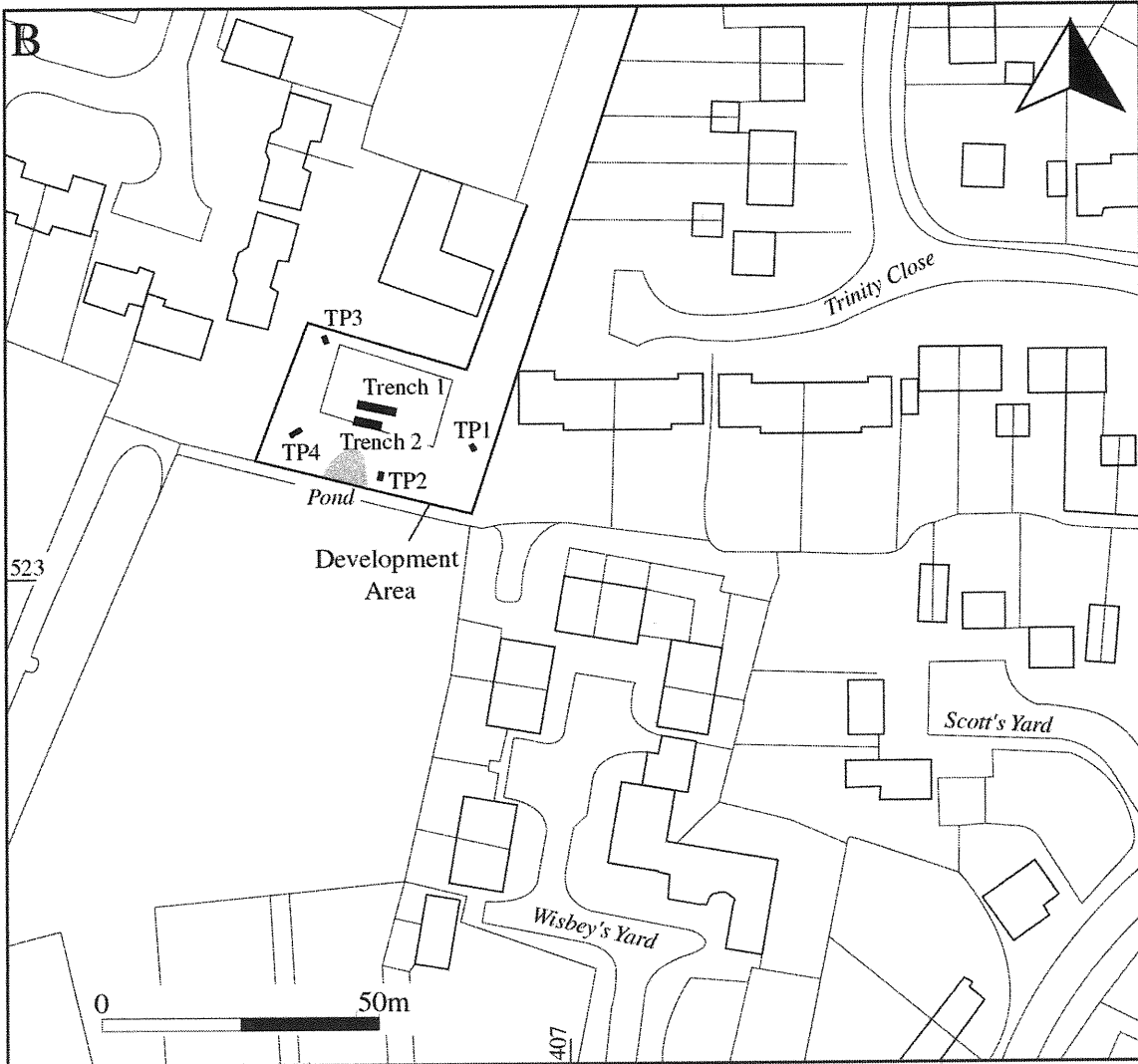
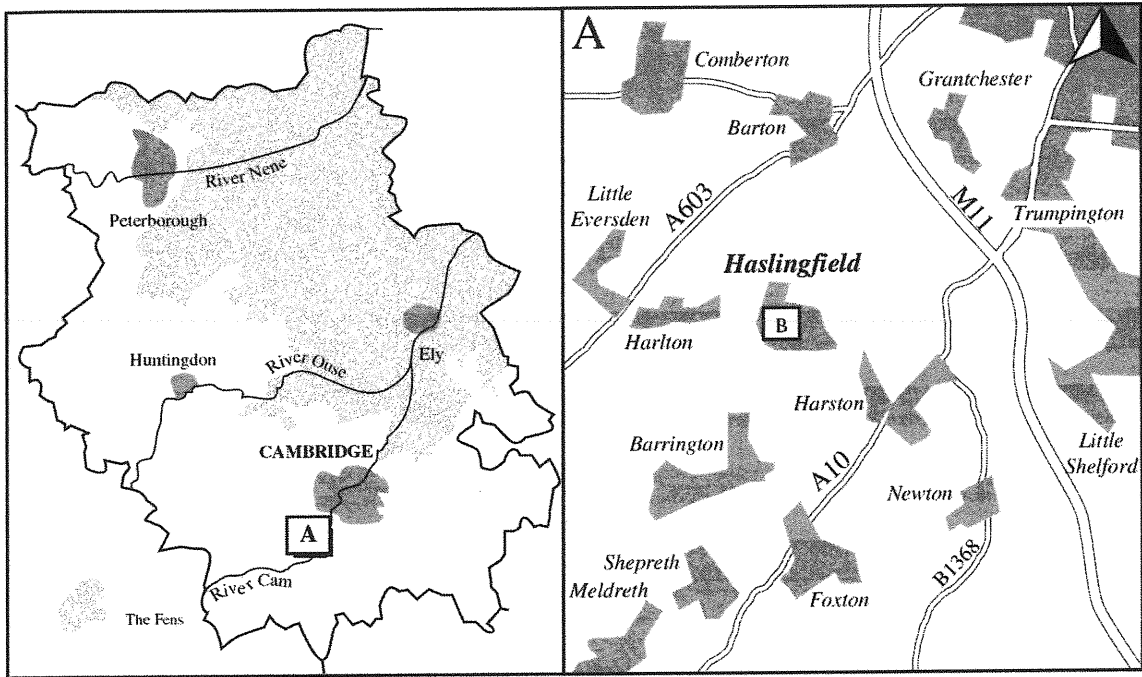
GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The village of Haslingfield is to the west of the river Cam and 8km south-west of Cambridge. The site lies close to the boundary between Totternhoe stone and Melbourn rock (Lower Chalk) overlying Gault Clay. To the east is the alluvial valley of the river Cam (also known as Rhee in this area (Widdowson, no date)). The site lies at approximately 20mOD. The land is generally flat rising to over 70mOD on Chapel Hill, to the south of the village.

BACKGROUND

Haslingfield is a parish of 1228 hectares, much of which is used for arable agriculture. The village is close to the river Cam/Rhee and Bourn Brook, which form its eastern and northern boundaries respectively. The gravel and alluvial soils along the Cam and Bourn Brook are relatively light and easy to plough and have been used for centuries for agriculture (Oosthuizen 1996) with grazing in the meadows beside the river. The heavy clay soils are less suitable for ploughing and these, with the chalk ridge to the south, may have been wooded or grazed in prehistoric and early historic periods.

The parish has been the subject of a considerable amount of research and investigation by individuals and local groups since the late nineteenth century. Most of the finds are recorded on the Cambridgeshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record. Twentieth century developments in the north-east of the parish may account for a high density of recorded finds in this area.



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Figure 1 Site Location Map

Prehistoric

Mesolithic axes, cores, scrapers, blades and other tools have been reported from the area around Cantelupe Farm in the north-east of the parish (Taylor 1997). Similarly neolithic flint tools and waste have been found in this area (SMR 4376 and 5130). Another concentration of finds has been noted on Chapel Hill to the south of the village. Close to the village and the river fieldwalking produced a variety of worked flints (SMR 4363) mainly of prehistoric date.

A Bronze Age flint dagger (SMR 4344) was reported from the parish (its exact find spot was not recorded) in the first half of the twentieth century and a barbed and tanged arrowhead from the church field (SMR 4347). Barbed and tanged arrowheads were also found close to Cantelupe Farm. Two Bronze Age timber trackways (dated 1000-900 BC) were excavated near Lingey Fen (SMR 4426) (Pullinger 1981).

Many cropmarks have been recorded from aerial photographs, these are largely undated but dates have been tentatively ascribed to some based on their morphology. These cropmarks and earthworks include round barrows on Money Hill (SMR 4719), a trackway (Mare Way?) (SMR 4718), field systems, enclosures and trackways in the northern part of the parish between the village and Bourn Brook. There are fewer cropmarks to the south of the village, between Money Hill and the river (SMR 9654). Mounds and cropmarks have also been noted in Lingey Fen (Taylor 1997).

Iron Age

A variety of Iron Age artefacts have been reported (as stray finds) from Haslingfield. These include an Iron Age weaving comb (SMR 4345), harness trappings north east of the village (SMR 4507) and several nineteenth century reports of Iron Age pottery. Up to ten Iron Age settlements have been identified in the parish. These were probably small farming settlements. Cropmarks around Cantelupe Farm indicate a growth of one of the settlements and continued use in the Roman period. The route of Mare Way divides into smaller tracks in Haslingfield with crossing places at various points across the Cam and Bourn Brook.

Roman

The earlier rural settlement pattern developed in the Iron Age appears to have continued into the Roman period. The settlement near Cantelupe Farm (SMR 4369 and 4726) appears to have been of a fairly high status with evidence of substantial structures.

Stray finds include a glass vessel (SMR 4343) found in the late nineteenth century, late Roman coins from churchyard (SMR 4347) and the vicinity (SMR 4348), fragments of Samian pottery (SMR 4363) and coins (SMR 4367) from the eastern edge of the village at River Farm. Roman finds have been reported from near Lingey Fen (SMR 4727) and the M11 (SMR 4728) and Roman coins from Money Hill (SMR 4718). At least three Roman cremation pots (SMR 4816) were found, during coprolite digging, in the late nineteenth century, in association with an Anglo-Saxon cemetery

Anglo-Saxon

Again antiquarians and local groups have reported a number of Anglo-Saxon artefacts (Fox 1923). The find spots are not always accurately recorded (e.g. bone skewers and pins, SMR 8116) and the finds are not from identified contexts. Finds include Anglo-Saxon brooches (SMR 4341 and 4342), pottery (SMR 4725) from Cantelupe Farm and between the present village and the river (SMR 5008). Late nineteenth century coprolite digging in south-west Cambridgeshire identified several Anglo-Saxon cemeteries. One of these (SMR 4816) was close to Cantelupe Road, in Haslingfield.

It has been suggested that the Anglo-Saxon settlement was close to the western boundary of the parish at Aldefeld Common (Oosthuizen 1996), on poor land, away from the main areas of Roman occupation.

Medieval

The village is first recorded historically in the Domesday Book (in 1086) as *Haslingefeld* thereafter variously as *Haselingefeud* (1236), *Haslinkefeud* (1250), and *Hasselinfeld* (1268). The name probably means 'people of *Haesel*' where *Haesel* is an old English personal name (Reaney 1943).

Evidence for medieval agriculture is still visible as ridge and furrow and other earthworks close to the village (SMR 4363, 5006) and around Spring Hall Farm (SMR 5095, 8945 and 9652) to the north of the present settlement. A considerable quantity of pottery has also been recovered from fields around the village during field walking (SMR 4364, 4365, 4366).

The medieval core of the settlement was around the green, the church of All Saints (built in the eleventh century and modified on various occasions thereafter) and the manor. The church was given to St. Mary's Abbey in York in the late eleventh century (Elrington 1973). Much of the present structure dates from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries with seventeenth, nineteenth and late twentieth century renovations. The Scales family were major local landowners between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries and the site of their manorial dwelling may have been the same as that presently occupied by Haslingfield Hall.

In the late medieval period a chapel on Chapel Hill became a place of pilgrimage for the cult of Our Lady of White Hill (Conybeare 1897).

Post-medieval

Haslingfield Hall (SMR 1005), acquired in the sixteenth century by Sir Thomas Wendy, was probably built on the site of the Scale's manor (Taylor 1997). The Hall garden was bounded on three sides by a moat and on the fourth by a wall which is close to the southern boundary of the subject site (SMR 1003). In the nineteenth century parts of the hall were removed and the materials reused in Cantelupe Farm and out of the parish, at Bourn Hall. Relhan's picture drawn in 1814 shows the land to the rear of the Hall as being pasture with a depressed (probably ditched) boundary along the western edge of the subject site. Trees bound the southern edge of the development area and the south-western corner is shown with a large rectangular pond (Taylor 1997).

An act of 1810 permitted land enclosure in Haslingfield and this was operational by 1820 (with most of the enclosure having taken place by 1814). During the seventeenth and eighteenth century houses had been erected in the area of the oval green. Following enclosure and during the height of the coprolite extraction industry the population of Haslingfield and building activity in the village increased considerably (Grove 1976).

METHODOLOGY

The known archaeological resource was investigated through the County's Sites and Monuments Record held by Cambridgeshire County Council (a gazetteer of sites from Haslingfield is not included in this report at the request of the Sites and Monuments Record Officer). Additional published resources such as the Victoria County Histories and the Royal Commission inventory for the parish were examined together with other published sources. Reports and archives on excavations and archaeological investigations carried out in and around Haslingfield were also consulted.

The modern landscape appears to retain boundaries and holdings set out in the medieval period and in some cases these may reflect prehistoric features and land divisions (Oosthuizen 1996).

Background research was followed by field evaluation. Two trenches were excavated using a wheeled excavator with a 1m wide ditching bucket. The total area opened by machine was approximately 20 sq.m. Four test pits excavated for engineering purposes were monitored by the archaeologist on site. The trenches were planned, photographed and recorded using the standard techniques of the AFU.

RESULTS

Trench 1

Trench 1 (6.4m long) was oriented approximately east-west and ran parallel to the ditch leading off the Hall moat. This trench was excavated to test for possible medieval road-side activity as there was said to be a service road or track leading from New Road to the rear of the Hall (Konsiewicz, pers. comm.). The nineteenth century drawing of the Hall indicates this track lay to the west of 65 New Road. The top soil was 0.25m thick and sealed a thin silty clay subsoil (0.1m deep) which in turn sealed the disturbed clay. Surface cleaning of the trench produced small sherds of Roman pottery (Samian and colour coated), abraded medieval pottery (Ely ware, dated between 1200 and 1350) fragments of mammal bone and part of a hand-made, sand-moulded brick (50mm thick), possibly from the demolition of the Hall. Examination of the topsoil removed by machine produced a single, very abraded sherd of Roman pottery, small fragments of hand-made and later brick.

Trench 2

Trench 2 (4.2m long) was approximately parallel to Trench 1 and to the south. This trench revealed a similar soil profile. No features other than root hollows were found in this trench. Surface cleaning produced coarse, hand-made brick (50mm thick), ceramic and stone tile fragments, a sherd of pottery (St. Neots ware) tentatively dated between 900-1150 AD. A single shaft fragment of bone shows signs of butchery.

Test Pit 1

Test pit 1, in the south-western corner of the site was 1m wide, 2m long and 2.75m deep. The south-eastern edge showed a ditch (approximately 0.5m deep), parallel to the eastern boundary of the site. At the north-western edge a layer of degraded chalk/clunch (0.3m deep) was visible in section. The upper clay fills were very soft and only at the base of the test pit was a stiff gault clay was encountered. No artefactual material was noted in the spoil.

Test Pit 2

Test pit 2, parallel to the southern boundary of the site had only 0.2m of topsoil over a very soft re-deposited clay. This test pit was over 2m deep but it flooded and the sides collapsed before detailed measurements could be taken. This test pit appears to be on the site of, or close to, the pond shown in Relhan's 1814 drawing. No artefacts were recovered from the spoil.

Test Pit 3

Test pit 3 was excavated to a depth of over 2m. Glazed floor tile was found in the spoil from the upper 1m of the pit. At 1.8m a thin, irregular, organic lens was encountered. A sample was taken for analysis. Fragments of bone from a small carnivore was found in this material. Ground water seeped into the test pit from approximately 1.6m. The clay above this organic layer was soft and disturbed, probably as a result of root activity. This organic layer be the result of decayed roots or organic material introduced in the burrows of small mammals.

Test Pit 4

Test pit 4 excavated in the south-western corner of the site showed a similar geological profile, with soft redeposited clay over a stiff blue gault clay. Two fragments of tile (one of which is possibly Roman, the other medieval or early post-medieval) were recovered from the disturbed upper 1m of this test pit.

CONFIDENCE RATING

The site access was slightly restricted by buildings and tree stumps. The level of tree cover in the last 20 years had disturbed the ground to such an extent that no features

could be seen. All other conditions were good and features would have visible had they survived the removal of trees and vegetation.

DEPOSIT MODEL

Background studies suggest the potential for survival of Roman and medieval remains in the area is high. The presence of small fragments of Roman and medieval pottery suggest activity on the site. Whether these remains are as a result of soil being redeposited as part of landscaping during emparkment of Haslingfield Hall (Way 1997) or are in a primary (albeit disturbed) context could not be determined. It is clear there has been heavy tree cover for at least the last fifty years with up to twenty mature willows being removed in the last eighteen years and subsequent planting of the site with fruit and fir trees.

The development site appears to have been used for agriculture (mainly pasture) during recent centuries. Enclosure maps, early Ordnance Survey maps respectively and drawings do not show any development on the land other than that shown on modern OS maps.

CONCLUSION

The shallow depth of topsoil and heavy clay subsoil means the site was probably unsuitable for cultivation or habitation in prehistoric periods. The proximity of the river and the present high water table suggest the site may have been prone to flooding from earliest times. Roman (Samian and colour coated) and medieval (St. Neots and Ely ware) pottery were found on the site but not from definable contexts. The high level of activity over the past few centuries has obliterated primary contexts and it is unlikely that well defined archaeological features remain undisturbed on the site.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank James Arnold of Bennell Developments who commissioned the work and the landowners, Mr. and Mrs. Konsiewicz. The project was managed by Tim Malim. Jon Cane produced the illustrations.

The brief for archaeological work was written by Andy Thomas, County Archaeology Office, who also visited the site and monitored the evaluation.

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