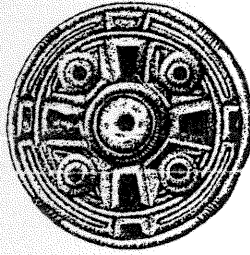


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**Harradine's Farm, Church Street, Woodhurst:  
An Archaeological Desk-Top Assessment**

Diane Walls

2001

**Cambridgeshire County Council**

Report No. A177

*Commissioned by D H Barford & Co on behalf of Fleming Construction*

**Harradine's Farm, Church Street, Woodhurst:  
An Archaeological Desk-Top Assessment**  
(TL 3151 7601)

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April 2001

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Report No. A177

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## **SUMMARY**

*The proposed development, an area of 0.65 hectares (TL 3151 760), is in the historic village of Woodhurst. The development involves the construction of houses and related services, commissioned by D H Barford & Co on behalf of Fleming Construction. The site lies within a potentially rich archaeological landscape and has moderately high potential for archaeology, from all periods. Topographically, it is situated on quite a prominent position. Romano-British remains are located north and east of the site and there is evidence of Anglo-Saxon/medieval occupation, including human remains, only 130m north-west of the site.*

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**Harradine's Farm, Church Street, Woodhurst:  
An Archaeological Desk-Top Assessment  
(TL3151 7601)**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

This study was commissioned by D.H Barford & Co on behalf of Fleming Construction in advance of proposed residential development. The assessment aims to define the archaeological potential of the land likely to be affected by the development. It has been compiled by Diane Walls following submission of a specification (prepared by Judith Roberts, dated 15<sup>th</sup> February 2001) in response to a design brief for archaeological evaluation written by Andy Thomas, Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Office, dated 25<sup>th</sup> January 2001.

The development site, Harradine's Farm, is 0.65 hectares and lies to the south of Church Street, between Church Lane, to the east, and Abbot's Close, to the west (Fig. 1). The site is centred on TL 3151 7601. The present land use includes a number of farm buildings and associated hard-standing and yards together with a small grassed area and a pond/reservoir.

**2 TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

**2.1 Topography**

The site is in the village of Woodhurst on Ampthill Clays, which sit between the River Ouse gravels to the south and the Ramsey Fen to the north. The village of Woodhurst is about 4.8km north of St Ives and lies at an elevation of between 37m – 39m O.D, which is particularly high for this part of Cambridgeshire. In comparison, the neighbouring parishes of Somersham (5km north-east of the subject site) and St Ives are both at an elevation of only 10m O.D. The parish of Old Hurst (about 2km north-west) is on a similar elevation to Woodhurst, though lower, between 32m and 34m O.D. Pidley Heath (1.8km east/north-east) lies at an elevation of between 15 to 20m O.D.

**2.2 Geology**

The village of Woodhurst is based on boulder clay overlying Ampthill Clay. The Geological Survey map also shows a ridge of glacial gravel to the east of the modern village along the western end of Wheatsheaf Road, which runs into the eastern part of the village (British Geological Survey Map, Huntingdon, Sheet 187,1:50,000).

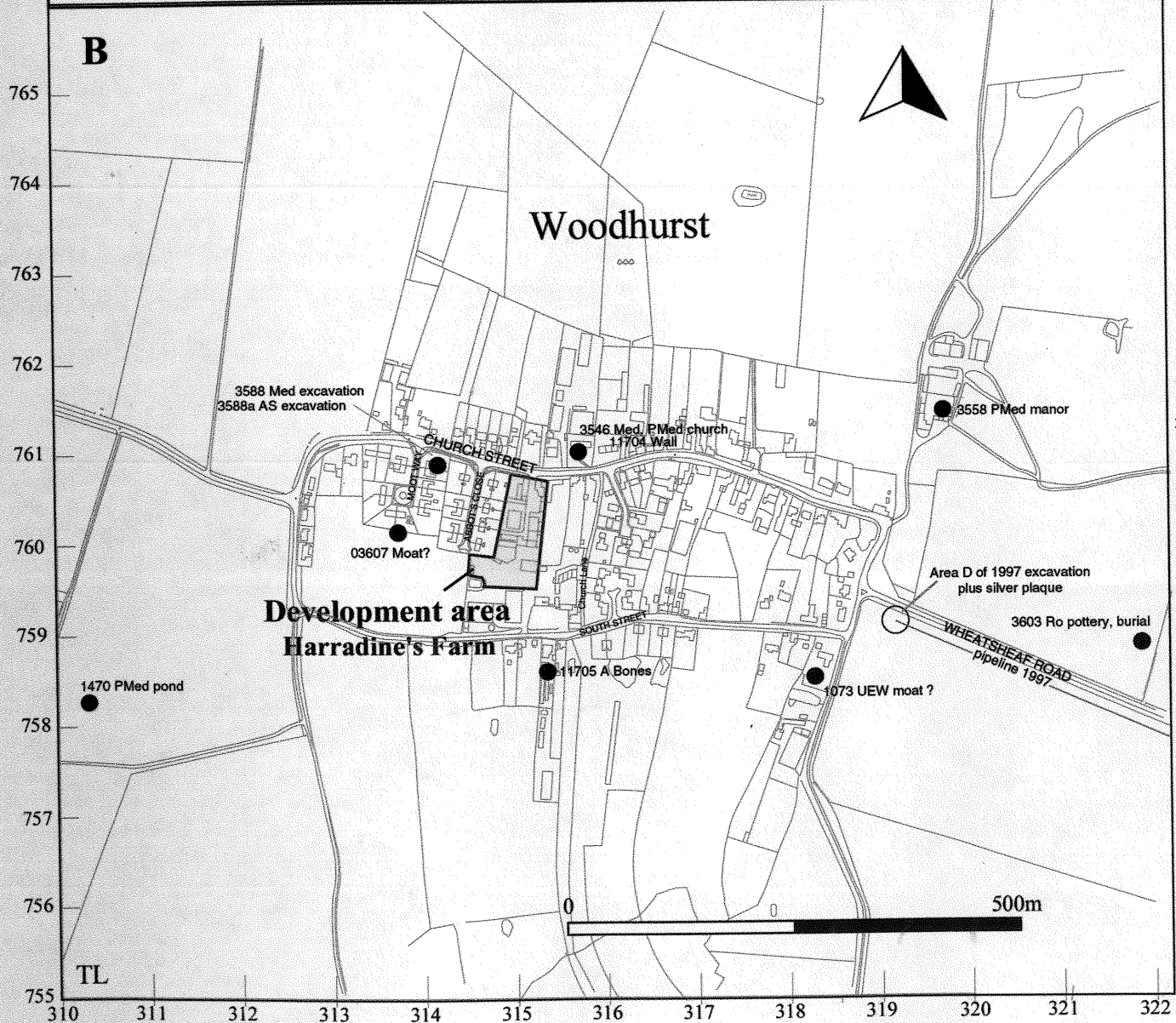
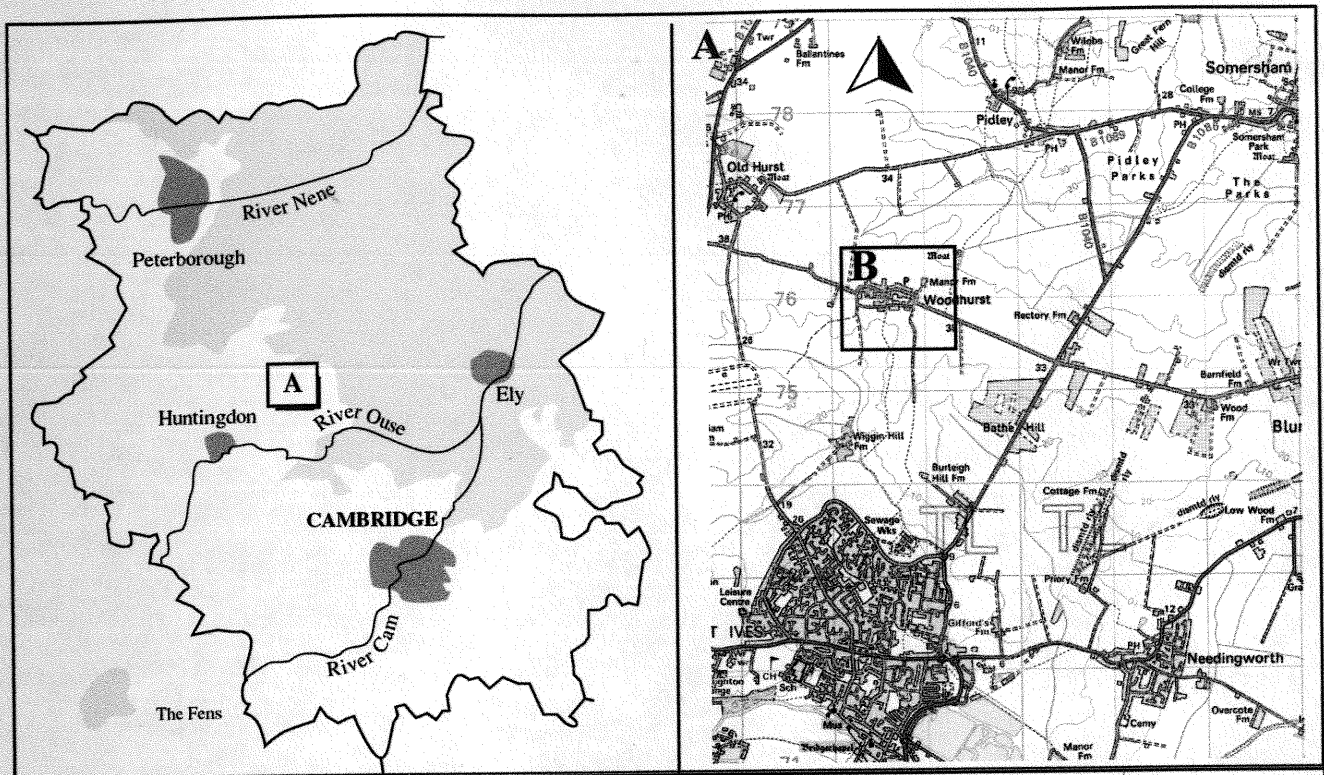


Figure 1 Location map

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

The aim of this desk-top assessment is to provide information on the location, extent, survival and significance of the known archaeological remains on and in the vicinity of the site. The archaeological potential for further surviving archaeological remains will also be assessed.

#### **3.1 Archaeological and Historical Sources**

In order to map the archaeological potential of the site at Harradine's Farm Woodhurst, a number of documentary, archaeological and cartographic sources were consulted. These concentrated on the accessible archaeological and historical resources held by Cambridgeshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record Office (SMR) as well as those held by Huntingdonshire District Council Records Office (HRO). Documentary and cartographic sources were also consulted at the CCC Archaeological Field Unit.

#### **3.2 Aerial Photographic Assessment**

Rog Palmer, of Air Photo Services, was consulted and advised that a re-assessment of aerial photographs would be unlikely to show archaeological features other than those already known and recorded. The number of buildings on the subject site and the fact that the adjacent field has been under pasture for many years means that archaeological features (other than earthworks) will not be visible in aerial photographs (Fig 2). The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR 03607) suggests a cropmark 'moat' was identified to the west of the farm in aerial photographs but other records indicate the site has been under grass for many years. As a consequence aerial photographic re-assessment has not been carried out.

#### **3.3 Geophysical Survey**

Because of the density of buildings and areas of hard-standing geophysical survey was not thought to be appropriate for this site. It has therefore not been possible to assess the condition and status of any buried deposits or local geological conditions on the subject site.

### **4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

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

There is, to date, no recorded prehistoric activity in the vicinity of Woodhurst. The nearest prehistoric finds have been recorded north-east of the village of Old Hurst (SMR 10323) 2km north-west of the subject site. Two polished stone axes were identified by Peterborough Museum, one was made of flint



1997/98 Aerial Photographs.  
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and the other possibly of black dolerite. Late Bronze Age socketed axes were recorded, in the Sites and Monuments Record, from Pidley, 2.4km north-east of the site. The exact location of these axes is unknown. Archaeological work in neighbouring parishes, such as Somersham and St Ives, has proven the existence of at least late prehistoric occupation in the surrounding areas. Excavations in 2000 at Parkhall Road, Somersham (4.8km from Harradine's Farm) uncovered evidence early and late Iron Age occupation (Cooper; 2000 and Roberts, forthcoming). A considerable number of Iron Age sites are also known in the area of Earith (7km east of site).

Recent excavations, in advance of gravel extraction, east of St Ives (5km south/south-east from the subject site), have revealed late prehistoric funerary monuments, field systems, boundaries and even settlements (Cambs. County Council SMR; Evans *et al*, 1997).

The heavy clays of the Huntingdonshire Uplands would not have been attractive to prehistoric farmers because of the difficulty of ploughing heavy soils. Other activities may have occurred on these uplands in the prehistoric period, including gathering wild resources and hunting which would lead to the discovery of chance finds and small sites occupied for short periods. The absence of records for prehistoric finds in Woodhurst does not discount the potential for survival of remains of this period on the site.

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

There is some evidence for Romano-British occupation around the area of Woodhurst, although there are no finds recorded on the subject site itself.

Limited excavations in 1997, on the line of a Cambridge Water Company pipeline running on the south side of Wheatsheaf Road towards the east end of Woodhurst village, revealed two Roman sites (Last, 1997). The smaller of the two sites, Area D, is only 400m east/south-east of Harradine's Farm. A small ditched enclosure, of possible Roman date, was discovered on Area D (Last, 1997). Surface finds included a mixed pottery assemblage thought to be of late Roman date. Roman coins and a spectacular square of silver bearing an inscription VRSACI VIVAS ("may you have life, Ursacius") were found to the west of Area D, during a metal-detecting survey.

Relatively large quantities of tile fragments and possible building stone were found along with deposits of animal bone and oyster shells in linear features discovered on the other area, B2 (Last, 1997). This site is approximately 1.5km south-east of Harradine's Farm and provides firm evidence for Romano-British occupation and possibly settlement in the parish of Woodhurst.

Scatters of Roman finds, mainly pottery, have been recorded on the Cambridgeshire County Council SMR. All have been found to the north or east of the village (Fig 1). The most significant discovery was of Roman urns



(SMR 3606) found during gravel digging in 1801 (Fox, 1923). The exact location of the digging (or the urns) is uncertain, although it is thought that they were found in the area of TL 31 75. A finds scatter consisting of Roman pottery and possible burials (SMR 3603) is recorded only 700m east of Harradine's Farm. More Roman pot sherds were discovered during "limited perambulation" (SMR 3723), 1.65km to the south-east of the site. The SMR also records a bronze cup (SMR 3644), 3.1km east/south-east of the site, in the parish of Bluntisham.

As suggested by Last (1997), these isolated Roman finds may relate to Romano-British occupation discovered on Wheatsheaf Road. He believes that this evidence for occupation may reflect the spread of late Roman settlements onto the higher ground between the Ouse and Ramsey Fen. Other known settlements, such as those around Colne and Somersham, are nearly always situated near waterways (Last, 1997). This evidence for Romano-British occupation in Woodhurst certainly does raise the question of road access, and it also suggests that the potential for finding Romano-British remains on the site is assessed as moderate to high.

#### **4.3 Anglo-Saxon (AD 410–1066)**

The name Woodhurst means a dense area of surviving woodland (Oosthuizen, 2000) (see also Mawer and Stenton, 1969). It is likely that Woodhurst and neighbouring Oldhurst formed a wooded district some time ago. The village of Woodhurst is described as a woodland ring fence settlement (Page, Proby and Ladds; 1932) with probable Saxon origins.

Excavations in 1949, on land previously owned by Harradine's Farm, 130m north-west of the site, revealed Anglo-Saxon occupation debris which included floors of burnt clay and pebbles as well as remains of wattled structures covered by fire-hardened clay (SMR 3588a). The proximity of the 1949 site to the subject site means that discovery of remains from this period are considered a moderately high possibility.

#### **4.4 Medieval (AD 1066–1520)**

The potential for survival of medieval remains on the site of Harradine's Farm can similarly be assessed as moderate to high.

Woodhurst, like Oldhurst, was originally a 'Hurst' hamlet belonging to the manor of "Slepe" (St Ives). Slepe was a holding of Ramsey Abbey since the late tenth century. Tenants of Woodhurst had to pay rent to the abbots of Ramsey Abbey from at least the twelfth century until 1539 at the dissolution of the Abbey. Parochial rights were obtained shortly before the middle of the thirteenth century (Page, Proby, Ladds; 1932).

Medieval architectural remains are present in the village today in the church of St John the Baptist (SMR 3546). The church is only 150m north-east of the development site and dates back to the twelfth century. Later additions were made to the building in the mid-thirteenth, fourteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Restoration works took place in 1871.

Possible medieval human remains were uncovered in 1949, during the excavation described in the previous section (Fig. 1). Seven skeletons lying east-west (SMR 3588) were uncovered. Three were excavated and no grave goods were found. One was in a coffin. The graves were cut through a scatter of late Anglo-Saxon and early medieval pottery. It has been suggested that they may be "plague interments", possibly associated with the Black Death of 1349-51, because of their distance from the church (CCC SMR).

Skeletons thought to be possibly medieval were also discovered on land c.100m south-east of the subject site (SMR 11705). These were reported to the police who described them as "very old" and covered them back over!

The site of Spinney Moat, a medieval homestead moat, is less than 1km from the subject site (SMR 1074). It has been suggested that this may represent the site of an earlier manor house although no traces of a building have been discovered. The site lies c.500m north-east of the present post-medieval manor house (SMR 3558). Medieval ridge and furrow is visible to the north of the site and an earthwork moat is visible to the west of the site (SMR 03607).

The village has a classic medieval High Street and Back Lane pattern with a central green, which is now partially infilled and encroached upon by housing. This encroachment may have included Harradine's Farm, the original buildings of which were destroyed by fire in 1834 (see below).

#### **4.5 Post-Medieval (AD 1520-Present)**

Post-medieval developments in and around the village of Woodhurst are reported in the various documentary and SMR sources (Page, Proby, Ladds; 1932, CCC SMR). These include a manor house (SMR 3558) shown as Manor Farm on the modern Ordnance Survey map of the area. The manor house dates to the seventeenth century and is 500m north-east from Harradine's Farm. Additions were made to the building in the eighteenth century.

Alterations were also made to the Parish Church of St John the Baptist (SMR 3546), in the early sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (RCHM, Hunts; 1953). Capping stones, including two, which resembled coffin lids, were added to the church wall (SMR 11704).

It is also documented in 1545 that a cross, called St Johns Cross, used to stand at one end of the village (SMR 01478). A medieval cross-base was discovered in the 1960s on Wyton airfield, c.1.7km from the village centre. It was called

the Abbot's chair or hundred-stone (SMR 1573). This may or may not have been part of the cross, described above.

An early eighteenth century dovecote (documented in the SMR, number 10387) was said to have been on the northern side of South Street but the exact location is unknown and it has since been demolished. Two post-medieval earthworks have been identified in the vicinity of the village (SMR 1073, 350m south-east of the subject site and SMR1470, 130m west of the site). These are described in the SMR as farm ponds.

The village of Woodhurst, was almost entirely destroyed by fire in 1834, including buildings at Harradine's Farm (Firth, pers. comm.).

The potential for finding remains from the post-medieval period is likely to be moderate to high.

#### **4.6 Present-day land use**

The site today is one of the few remaining farms in the centre of the village. The boundaries of the farm have been greatly reduced from those shown on the 1927 Ordnance Survey map of the area ( O.S, Hunts, Sheet XIX.5 ). This was caused by residential development in 1949. The site appears to have been used as a farm since at least the early 1900s. The land surrounding the site is predominantly rural. It includes pasture land 300m to the south, Woodhurst Heath c.1km to south-east and a number of other farms in the immediate vicinity of the site, including Fullards Farm, Natts Farm, and Bulls. If archaeology is encountered on the site, conditions of preservation are likely to be relatively good although there may have been truncation of features by the foundations of the existing farm buildings.

## **5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL**

The parish of Woodhurst and the surrounding area is moderately rich in archaeological remains from all periods. From the study of historical records and the few known archaeological remains, it is clear that the development site has the potential for survival of archaeological deposits. The lack of recorded remains on the site itself and specifically prehistoric and Romano-British remains in its immediate vicinity should not be interpreted, at this stage, as an indication of the absence of archaeological remains on the site.

## 6 IMPACT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Given the requirements of a residential development and the depths of ground work, the proposed development will have a major impact on any buried archaeological remains on the site. The development is planned in an area of relatively high potential for all periods. Details of present soil depth on the site are not yet available.

## 7 CONCLUSION

The archaeological potential of the development at Harradine's Farm can be described as the following:

<b>Prehistoric (before AD 43)</b>	<b>moderate</b>
<b>Romano-British (AD 43-410)</b>	<b>moderate-high</b>
<b>Anglo-Saxon (AD 410-1066)</b>	<b>moderate-high</b>
<b>Medieval (AD 1066-1520)</b>	<b>moderate-high</b>
<b>Post-Medieval (AD 1520-present)</b>	<b>moderate-high</b>

The study has demonstrated that the subject site lies within a potentially rich archaeological landscape and is surrounded by sites of all periods, although not all in the immediate vicinity. The site has moderately high potential for archaeology, from all periods, even though no finds are known from the site itself. It has quite a prominent position topographically which may have attracted settlement or occupation. Romano-British remains have been found north and east of the site and Anglo-Saxon/medieval occupation and remains (including human inhumations) have been found in the vicinity of the site itself, only 130m to the north-west. These finds and the presence of the Church of St John the Baptist so near to the site add to the potential for the discovery of archaeological deposits at Harradine's Farm.

## 8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank DH Barford & Co who commissioned the desktop assessment on behalf of Fleming Construction. The author would also like to thank Aileen Connor, Judith Roberts and the team at CCC SMR for their assistance with this study as well as Caroline Malim for the illustrations. The work was edited by Judith Roberts and Tim Malim.

This desktop assessment was carried out in response to a brief for archaeological evaluation, written by Andy Thomas, County Archaeology Office ( Development Control ) dated 25<sup>th</sup> January 2001.

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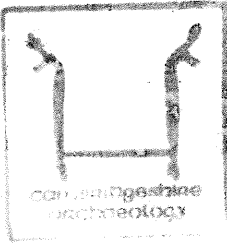
### Maps

SMR Maps of Woodhurst & Old Hurst ( CCC, SMR ).  
O.S, 2000,  
O.S, 1989, Pathfinder Series 960, Huntingdon, 1:25000.  
British Geological Survey Map, Huntingdon, sheet 187  
O.S, 1927, Hunts, Sheet XIX.5.

## APPENDIX I

### Sites and Monuments Gazetteer for Woodhurst

SMR No	GRID REF	PERIOD	FORM	DESCRIPTION
1073	TL 318 758	Undated	earthwork	Moat or farm pond.
1074	TL 323 764	Medieval	earthwork	A water-filled moat with no traces of a building on the island
1470	TL310 758	Post-med	earthwork	Farm pond, said to be a moat.
1478	TL31 76	Medieval/ post-medieval	documentary evidence	St John's Cross, mentioned in 1545, probably stood at one end of Woodhurst village.
1573	TL 300 750	Medieval	architectural fragment	Hundred-stone (?) – the Abbot's chair. Probably the base of a medieval cross
3546	TL315 761	Medieval/ post-med	roofed building	Parish Church of St John the Baptist
3558	TL 319 761	Post-medieval	roofed building	Brick-built house. Early C17, with additions in early C18
3588	TL 314 760	Medieval	excavation, finds scatter	7 skeletons, east-west. 3 were without grave goods. One was in a coffin.
3588a	TL 314 760	Anglo-Saxon	excavation, finds scatter	Scatter of late Anglo-Saxon and early med pottery. There were floors of burnt clay and pebbles and remains of wattled structures covered by fire-hardened clay.
3603	TL 322 759	Roman	finds scatter	Roman pottery, possibly burials.
3606	TL 31- 75-	Roman	finds scatter	Various Roman urns found in gravel digging during 1801
3607	TL 313 760	Undated	cropmark ? (earthwork?)	Probable moat visible on aerial photographs
3723	TL 329 751	Roman	stray find	Roman pottery.
10387	TL 31- 75-	Post-medieval	documentary evidence	Dovecote on N side of South Street. Early C18.
11704	TL 315 761	Post-medieval	building	Two complete stone coffin lids and parts of others used as capping stones
11705	TL 315 758	Undated	excavation	Human skeletons



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