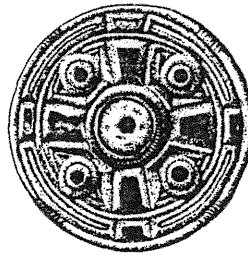


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Fullard's Farm, Woodhurst: An Archaeological Evaluation

Andrew Rudge

2003

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. A222

Commissioned by C & E Developments

**Fullard's Farm, Woodhurst:
An Archaeological Evaluation**
(TL 31558 75947)

Andrew Rudge

May 2003

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SUMMARY

The Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council conducted an archaeological evaluation in May 2003, at Fullard's Farm, Woodhurst, Cambridgeshire (TL 31558 75947). The work was carried out in advance of the construction of a residential development.

Four trenches were excavated and revealed Roman and post-Roman ditches and rubbish pits. One trench indicates there had been heavy truncation of the land within the former farmyard which appeared to have removed all traces of earlier activity. Other modern features had also truncated the earlier remains.

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Roman remains at Fullard's Farm, Woodhurst
(TL 31558 75947)

1 INTRODUCTION

During early May 2003, the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council (AFU) conducted an archaeological evaluation on the site of Fullard's Farm, South Street, Woodhurst, Cambridgeshire (TL 31558 75947). The work was carried out at the request of C & E Developments and was undertaken in order to fulfil a Brief for archaeological investigation prepared by Andy Thomas, Principal Archaeologist, Land Use and Planning, Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Section.

The site is located towards the centre of the village of Woodhurst on the north side of South Street, and lies to the south-east of the site of a archaeological evaluation (S Kenney, 2001) and subsequent excavation (BUFAU, 2001). The proposed development (Planning app no: H/01/02388/FUL) of this site includes the construction of four dwellings within an overall area of 2700 square metres.

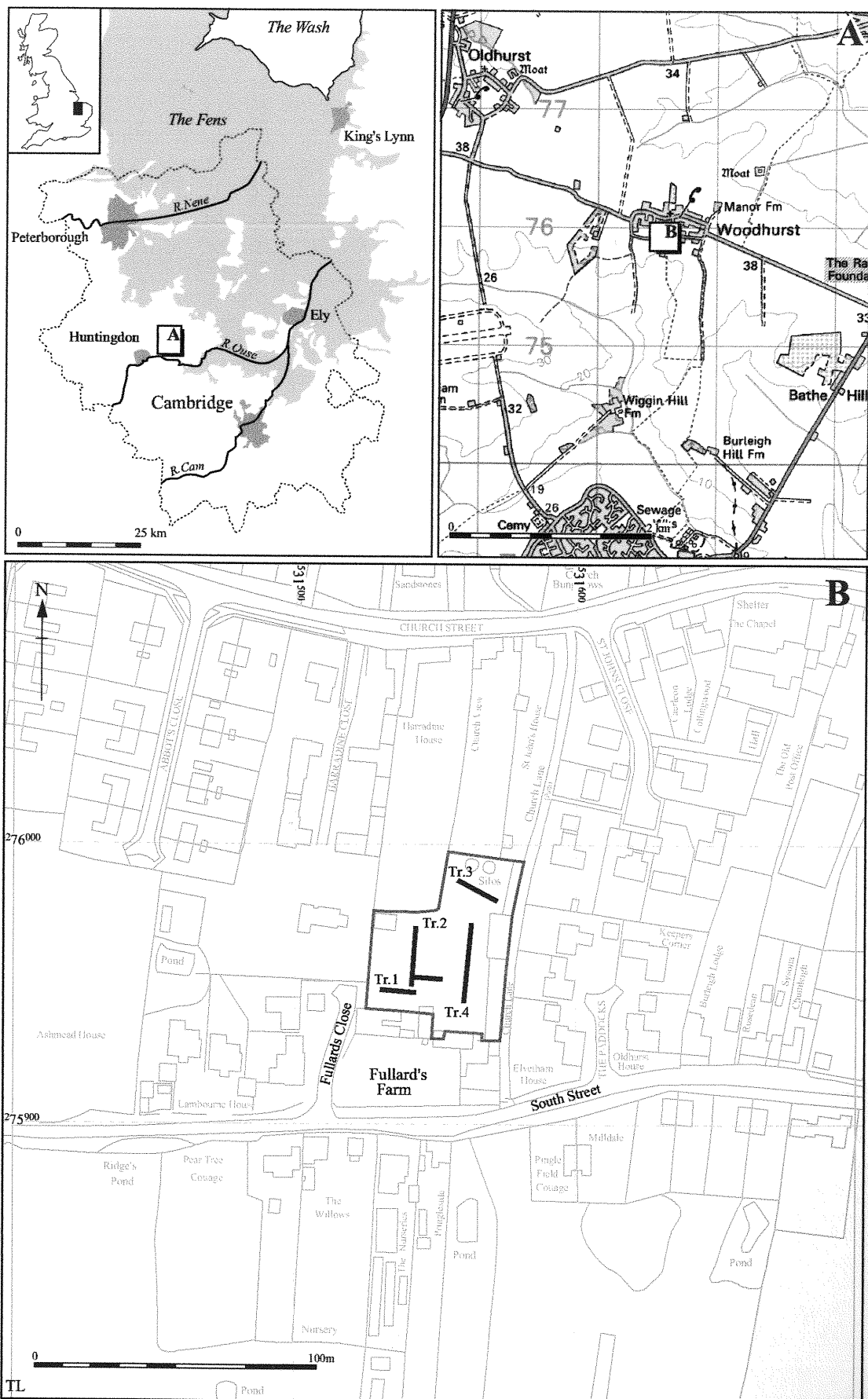
2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

According to the British Geological Survey Map (Huntingdon, Sheet 187,1:50,000) the village of Woodhurst is on Pleistocene boulder clay, which in turn overlies Upper Jurassic Ampthill Clay. Towards the eastern end of the village, a ridge of glacial gravel overlies the boulder clay.

The village is 4.8km to the north of St Ives and lies on relatively high ground, for this part of Cambridgeshire, at an elevation of between 37m – 39m O.D. 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.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The proposed development lies to the south of the historic centre of the village of Woodhurst, which is believed to be Anglo-Saxon in origin. Recent evaluation (Kenney, 2001) and excavation work (BUFAU, 2001) has identified phases of activity dating from the Roman, Saxon, early medieval and late medieval/post-medieval periods. The archaeological remains identified included late Roman human burials,



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Figure 1 Location of Trenches with Development Area outlined.

enclosure ditches, pits and gullies associated with a possible Iron Age roundhouse. A more detailed historical and archaeological overview is given in the relevant reports and the desk-based assessment by Walls (2001).

4 METHODOLOGY

Four trial trenches were excavated by a JCB with a flat bladed bucket (c1.6m wide) to the depth of geological horizons, or to the upper interface of archaeological features or deposits, whichever was encountered first.

The exposed surfaces were cleaned in order to clarify features and deposits. All exposed features identified were hand excavated and recorded using AFU pro-forma single context sheets. The features were drawn at a scale of 1:20/1:50 and photographed before an overall trench plan was produced.

Spoil from the trenches was scanned visually and with a metal detector to aid recovery of artefacts.

5 RESULTS

Trench 1

Trench 1 was 12.55m long and 1.60m wide, and was excavated to a depth of c1.0m at its western end. At its eastern end the depth of the trench was reduced (due to earlier truncation) to a depth of c0.50m.

The lowest layer identified, 128, was encountered at a depth of c1.00m. Layer 128 was a mixed, yellow brown gravely silty sand, and appeared to be the upper level of the natural geology. Cutting into 128 were seven features. From west to east these were **100**, **104**, **106**, **108**, **110**, **112**, and **114**.

Feature **100**, was a large pit or linear feature which extended over 2m across the width of the trench and beyond the western end. Feature **100** was 0.12m deep and was filled by 101, a black clay silt. No finds were recovered. Cutting into fill 101 was a second pit or possible beam-slot, **102**.

Slot **102** was 1.0m long and 0.12m wide and extended beyond the northern edge of the trench. Slot **102** was 0.32m deep and was filled by 103, a black clay silt similar to 101 from which no finds were recovered.

Continuing east, the next feature identified was pit **104**. Pit **104** (1.8m long, 0.75m wide and 0.16m deep) was sub-rectangular, orientated east-west and extended beyond

the northern section. It was filled by 105, another dark black clay silt. No finds were recovered.

To the east of **104**, was pit **106**, (1.7m long, 0.75m wide and 0.18m deep) sub-rectangular pit which again extended out of the northern section. Pit **106** had a shallow U-shaped profile and was filled by 107, a black clay silt which contained fragments of Roman (Nene Valley) grey ware.

To the east of **106** was a further, oval, pit, **108**. Pit **108** (1.1m long, 0.9m wide and 0.10m deep) was orientated north-south and extended beyond the northern edge of the section. This pit had a shallow U-shaped profile and was filled by 109, a black clay silt which contained both pottery (second to third century Horningsea black burnished wares (BB2)) and animal bone.

To the immediate east of **108**, was a further sub-rectangular pit **110** (over 1.0m long, 1.1m wide and 0.14m deep) oriented north-south with a U-shaped profile. Pit **110** extended northwards beyond the northern section was filled by 111, a black clay silt.

A second oval-shaped pit **112** (over 0.9m long, 1.0m wide and 0.09m deep) was also orientated north-south. It extended beyond the northern section and had a shallow U-shaped profile. Pit **112** was filled by 113 a black clay silt. No finds were recovered.

Immediately north of **112** was ditch **114**. Feature **114** appeared to be the butt-end of a north-south orientated ditch, which extended beyond the northern section. It was over 0.35m long, 0.32m wide and a 0.06m deep, and was filled by 115, a black clay silt. No finds were recovered from this feature.

The overlying layers comprised mostly building rubble and redeposited dark brown silty clay sands.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was excavated along two axes, the first was oriented north-south and was 21.50m long, the second was orientated east-west and was 10.30m long. At its northern end Trench 2 was 0.75m deep, at its southern end excavation was interrupted by the discovery of a large, red brick, water-filled, well. Trench 2 was extended eastwards from the well. At the western end it was 0.6m deep but at the eastern end the ground level had been reduced and natural geology was noted only c0.10m below the present ground surface.

The lowest layer identified, 223, was the natural geology which was composed of a series of light yellow brown sands and sandy gravels. Seven features, **204**, **202**, **210**, **213**, **215**, **217** and **221** had been cut directly into this layer.

In the north-western corner of the trench was a sub-rectangular posthole, **204** (0.6m long, 0.4m wide and 0.15m deep). Posthole **204** was filled by 203, a medium to dark grey brown silty sand from which two small abraded sherds of Roman Horningsea grey ware were recovered.

Sub-rectangular pit **202** (over 1.6m long, 0.75m wide and 0.33m deep) had near vertical sides and extended beyond the eastern edge of the trench. It contained two fills. The first, 201, was a grey brown, slightly gravelly, silty clay sand, 0.15m deep. The second fill, 200, was a mid-grey brown silty sandy clay, 0.18m thick. This upper fill contained fragments of modern brick and slate.

Ditch **210**, was aligned east-west, with a flat based U-shaped profile. It was 1.88m wide and 0.26m deep and was filled by 209, a dark, grey brown silty sandy clay. Oyster shell, animal bone and fragments of Roman pottery (Horningsea Black Burnished ware (BB2) and a large sherd of Horningsea storage jar) were recovered from this context. Cutting into 209 was a sub-rectangular post-hole, **208**.

Sub-rectangular posthole **208** (0.6m long, 0.48m wide and 0.08m deep) contained fill 207, a dark grey brown black, silty sandy clay which contained fragments of modern brick and tile.

To the immediate south of ditch **210**, and running parallel to it was a second ditch, **213**. Ditch **213** (1.88m wide and 0.42m deep) had a flat U-shaped profile. It had two fills - 211 and 212. The lowest fill, 211, contained fragments of animal bone, oyster shell and daub. This fill extended for 1.20m along the base of the ditch and was 0.15m thick. The second fill, 212, was 0.27m thick and composed of a dark grey brown grey, slightly clayed silty sand. A Roman coin, fragments of daub and animal bone was recovered from this upper fill.

To the south of ditch **213** is was a sub-rectangular pit **215** (3.50m long, over 1.16m wide and 0.36m deep) extended beyond the western edge of the trench. Pit **215** was filled by 214, a dark brown to black sandy silty clay, which contained three sherds of Nene Valley grey ware, animal tooth and bone and two small Roman coins.

To the south and west of **215**, a further sub-rectangular/oval pit, **217**, was excavated. Pit **217** (2.0m long, 1.8m wide and 0.14m deep) contained fill 216, a dark brown silty clay.

At the very southern end of Trench 2, and mostly obscured by collapse, was a further, apparently sub-rectangular, pit - **221**. Pit **221** (over 0.80m wide, extending eastwards, and 0.19m deep) was filled by 220, a dark grey brown clay silty sand, which contained no finds.

Truncating the eastern edge of **221** was the original cut for the construction of a large red brick well, with corbelled roof. Excavation ceased beyond this point in order not to further damage or destabilised the well. A medium grey brown silty clay, 218, filled the foundation cut **219**.

Overlying the above contexts was a mixed layer, 224, consisting of medium to light grey brown silty clay sand. This layer was cut by an east-west aligned ditch, **206** (0.68m wide and 0.13m deep) with a U-shaped profile and was filled by 205, a mid to light brown silty sandy gravel. No finds were recovered. Sealing 224 was the surface

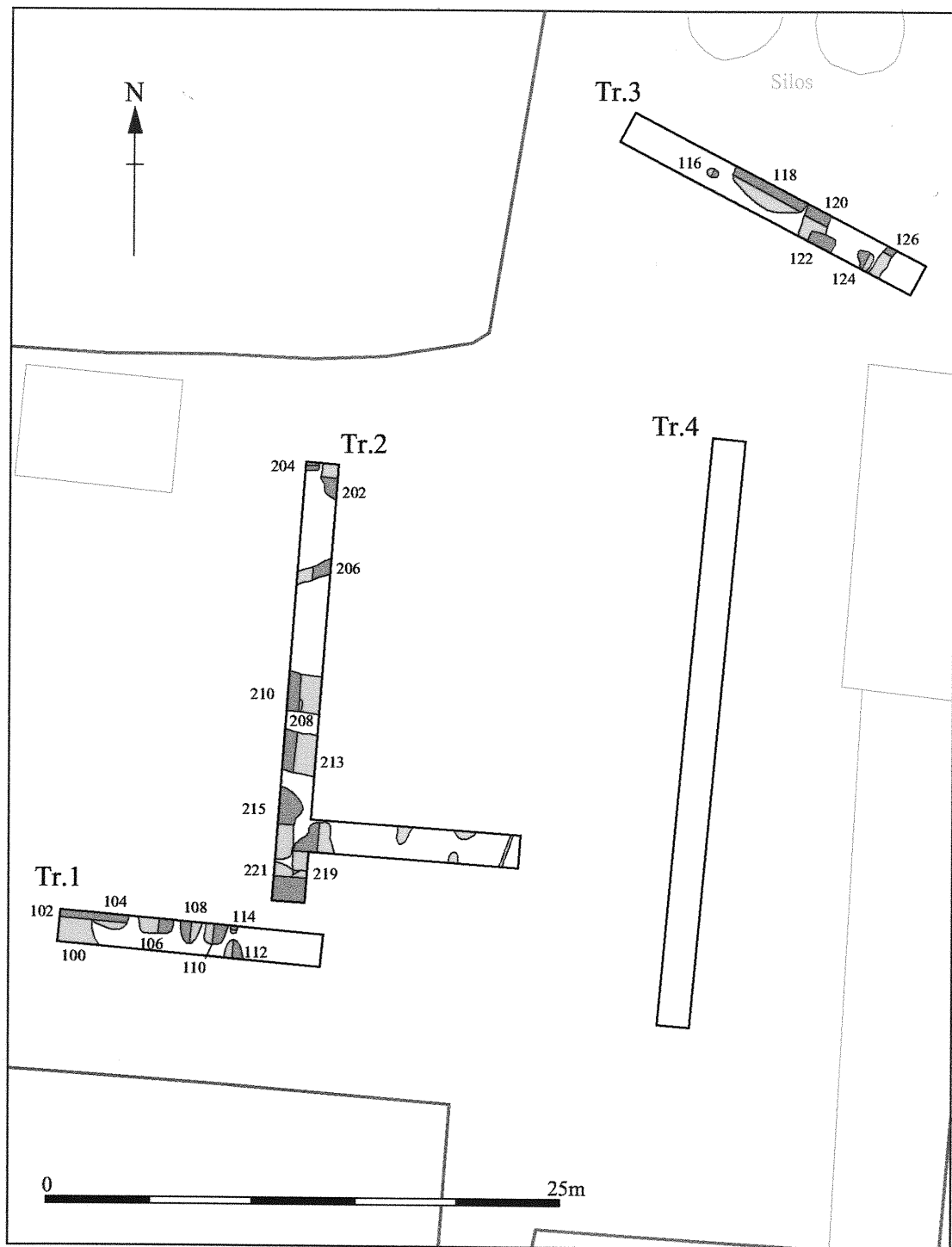


Figure 2 Trench Plan

layer composed of building/demolition rubble. A services trench for electricity cables was identified cutting through this upper layer.

No features were excavated within the eastern extension of Trench 2 apart from **217**, due to disturbance from the foundations of a recently demolished building, and truncation.

Trench 3

Trench 3 (16.0m long, 1.6m wide) was excavated to a depth of 0.46m at its western end and 0.30m at its eastern end. The natural geology, context 129 (a series of light yellow to light brown sands and sandy gravels) was encountered at a depth of c0.20m below the present surface in the western end of the trench.

Posthole **116** (diameter 0.43m, 0.19m deep) was circular with straight vertical sides and a flat base contained fill 117, a mid brown soft slightly silty clay.

To the south-east was shallow sub-rectangular pit **118** (4.2m long, over 1.2m wide and 0.10m deep). This pit had a steep eastern edge and shallow, gradually sloping western edge and a flat base. The fill (119) of this pit was a loose yellow brown sandy clay which contained a piece of slag, an abraded sherd of Roman grey ware and small fragments of brick and tile.

Crossing Trench 3 from north to south was ditch **120** (over 1.6m long, 1.2m wide and 0.17m deep) which had steep sides and a flat base. The fill, 121, was a moderately loose yellow brown sandy clay which contained fragments of brick and daub. This ditch was truncated by pit **122** on its eastern edge.

Pit **122** (1.3m long, >0.7m wide and 0.10m deep) was rectangular with steep sides and a flat base. The fill, 123, was a moderately loose yellow brown clay sand which contained a piece of pig jaw, a modern aluminium roofing nail and a very small, abraded sherd.

Irregular pit **124** (>0.9 m long, 0.8m wide and 0.28m deep) extended beyond the southern edge of the trench and was cut on its eastern edge by ditch **126**. This pit was 'bell' or 'pear-shaped' with vertical sides and a flat base and contained a soft brown black sandy clay which contained two fragments of animal bone.

Ditch **126** (over 1.6m long, 0.5m wide and 0.4m deep) had almost vertical sides and a flat base and contained a single fill, 127, a dark brown sandy clay. There were no finds from this feature.

Trench 4

Trench 4 (28.8m long and 1.6m wide) was excavated to a depth of c0.15m. Due to heavy truncation to the centre of the site Trench 4 was excavated directly onto the underlying natural geology, a blue grey bolder clay. The only features identified

within the trench were a ceramic land drain running north-north-west—south-south-east, and the remains of a brick wall in the southern end of the trench.

6 CONCLUSION

The evaluation produced a range of archaeological features but the site has been heavily truncated in the post-medieval period. Pottery from the features supports the evidence from the excavations to the north-west, at Harradine's Farm, for Roman activity in the area. There was no evidence for Saxon or medieval activity on the site although some of the features contained abraded Roman pottery suggesting a post-Roman phase of occupation.

The features were mainly ditches cut on an east-west or north-south alignment. Given the level of ground water and prevalence of ponds in the area it seems likely that these functioned as drainage ditches as well as property boundaries. The other major feature group was pits but the absence of finds from many of these suggests perhaps they be small quarry pits for the extraction of gravel (as was the case on Harradine's Farm) rather than refuse pits. The postholes on the site are likely to be post-Roman (probably modern) fence posts and do not appear to be structural.

Apart from the large Roman sherds found in ditch **210** much of the pottery is heavily abraded suggesting the material has been incorporated from domestic refuse scattered away from the Roman settlement. The absence of Saxon or medieval pottery may indicate that the features were cut at this period or that there was no medieval occupation of the site in the post-Roman period until modern construction truncated parts of the site, probably in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

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Maps

British Geological Survey Map, Huntingdon, sheet 187.

CONTEXT LIST

Context	Cut	Trench	Category	Type	Length	Width	Depth
100		1	cut	pit	1.6	2	0.12
101	100	1	fill	pit	0		0.12
102		1	cut	post hole	1	0.12	0.32
103	102	1	fill	post hole	0		
104		1	cut	pit	1.8	0.75	0.16
105	104	1	fill	pit	0		
106		1	cut	pit	1.7	0.75	0.18
107	106	1	fill	pit	0		
108		1	cut	pit	1.1	0.9	0.1
109	108	1	fill	pit	0		
110		1	cut	pit	1	1.1	0.14
111	110	1	fill	pit	0		
112		1	cut	pit	0.9	1	0.09
113	112	1	fill	pit	0		
114		1	cut	ditch	0		
115	114	1	fill	ditch	0		
116		3	cut	post hole	0	0.43	0.19
117	116	3	fill	post hole	0	0.43	0.19
118		3	cut	pit	4.2	1.2	0.1
119	118	3	fill	pit	0		
120		3	cut	ditch	1.6	1.2	0.17
121	120	3	fill	ditch	0		
122		3	cut	pit	1.3	0.7	
123	122	3	fill	pit	0		
124		3	cut	pit	0.9	0.8	0.28
125	124	3	fill	pit	0		
126		3	cut	ditch	1.6	0.5	0.4
127	126		fill	ditch	0		
200	202	2	fill	pit	0		0.18
201	202	2	fill	pit	0		0.13
202		2	cut	pit	1.6	0.75	0.33
203	204	2	fill	post hole	0		0.15
204		2	cut	post hole	0		
205	206	2	fill	ditch	0	0.68	0.13
206		2	cut	ditch	0	0.68	0.13
207	208	2	fill	post hole	0		0.08
208		2	cut	post hole	0.6	0.48	0.08
209	210	2	fill	ditch	0	1.88	0.26
210		2	cut	ditch	0	1.88	0.26
211	213	2	fill	ditch	0	1.2	0.15
212	213	2	fill	ditch	0	1.88	0.27
213		2	cut	ditch	0	1.88	0.42
214	215	2	fill	pit	1.8	1.16	0.36
215		2	cut	pit	3.5	1.16	0.36
216	217	2	fill	pit	0		
217		2	cut	pit	2	1.8	0.14
218	219	2	fill	well	0.55	0.35	0.26
219		2	cut	well	0		
220	221	2	fill	pit	0.6	0.8	0.19
221		2	cut	pit	0	0.8	0.19
222		2	layer		0		



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