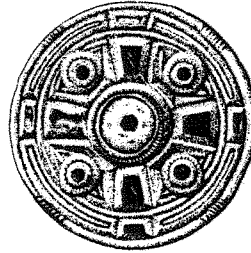


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## HINCHINGBROOKE SCHOOL, HUNTINGDON: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Andrew Hatton

1998

**Cambridgeshire County Council**

Report No. B25

*Commissioned By CCC Property Management Services*

**Hinchingbrooke School, Huntingdon:  
An Archaeological Evaluation**

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# **HINCHINGBROOKE SCHOOL, HUNTINGDON: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION 1998**

## **INTRODUCTION**

On the 7th April 1998 two trenches were mechanically excavated within the grounds of Hinchingsbrooke School (TL 236 715), prior to the construction of the 'Pepys Building' and a new 'Administration Block'. The work was carried out by members of the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council, at very short notice because of the late enforcement of an archaeological condition on the planning consent. The present works therefore consisted of a rapid evaluation of the two building sites.

## **HISTORIC BACKGROUND**

The present Hinchingsbrooke School lies within the grounds of the Benedictine Nunnery, established during the 13th century by the Benedictine nuns of Eltisley. The religious house was dissolved in 1536 after which the house passed into the possession of the Cromwell Family who incorporated parts of the original house into their new house, whilst demolishing many of the original priory buildings. In 1830 the house suffered from a devastating fire and was subsequently largely rebuilt by Blore; restoration of the house also took place in 1894 and again in 1960. Despite the extensive fire damage and subsequent refurbishments elements of the original buildings still exist which include the west wall of the Norman Church of c.1100 and blocked windows that can be identified in the north and south walls of the Library (Haigh, 1988).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The two areas designated for development were trenched using a mechanical excavator with toothless ditching bucket, a process that was observed continuously. Written context records were supplemented by photographs where considered necessary. Hand cleaning and excavation of features was not required as a sufficiently clean result was obtained by the digger bucket and no archaeological features were encountered.

## **RESULTS**

### **Trench 1 'The Pepys Building'**

The trench was 37m in length, 1.6m wide with an average depth of 700mm. The surface layer was made up of sandy silt (100mm thick) which had been laid in order to produce a smooth surface onto which concrete slabs could be evenly positioned prior to the building of mobile classroom units. Removal of the sandy silt exposed a dark topsoil (350mm thick), on excavation the topsoil was found to contain large amount of modern brick rubble and pebbles; this suggests that the topsoil had been re-deposited as a way of creating a level surface or as a landscaping exercise. The topsoil immediately overlay clay which was excavated to a depth of 250mm and was found to be natural. No archaeological evidence was identified within the trench.

### **Trench 2 'Administration Block'**

The trench was excavated within the footprint of the new 'Administration Block' and was 18.5m in length, 1.6m wide and an average depth of 700mm. The top layer consisted of turf which when removed revealed a dark topsoil which contained large amounts of modern brick and pebbles which suggested that the topsoil had been re-deposited presumably as a landscaping exercise. No archaeological evidence was identified within the trench.

## **CONCLUSION**

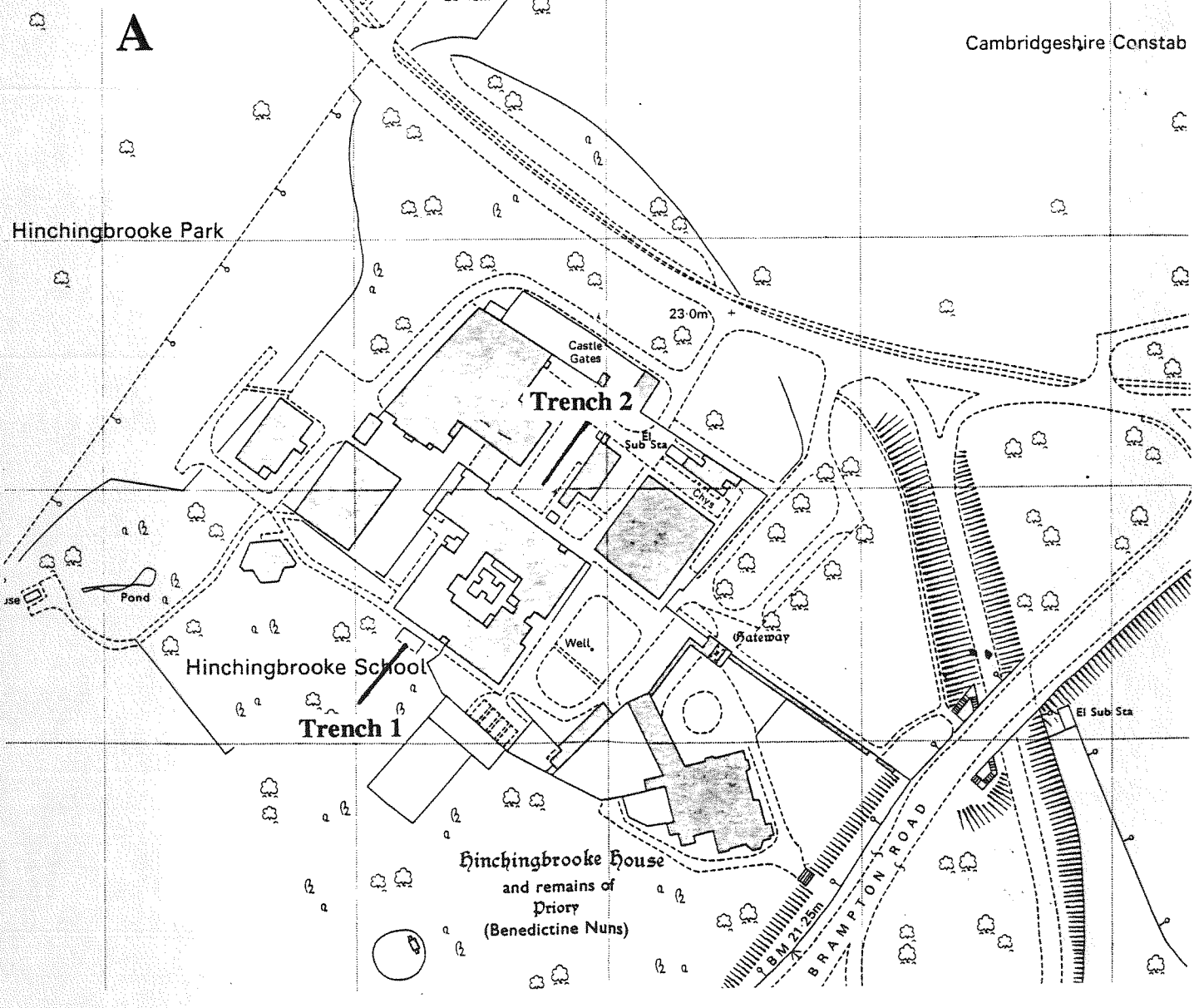
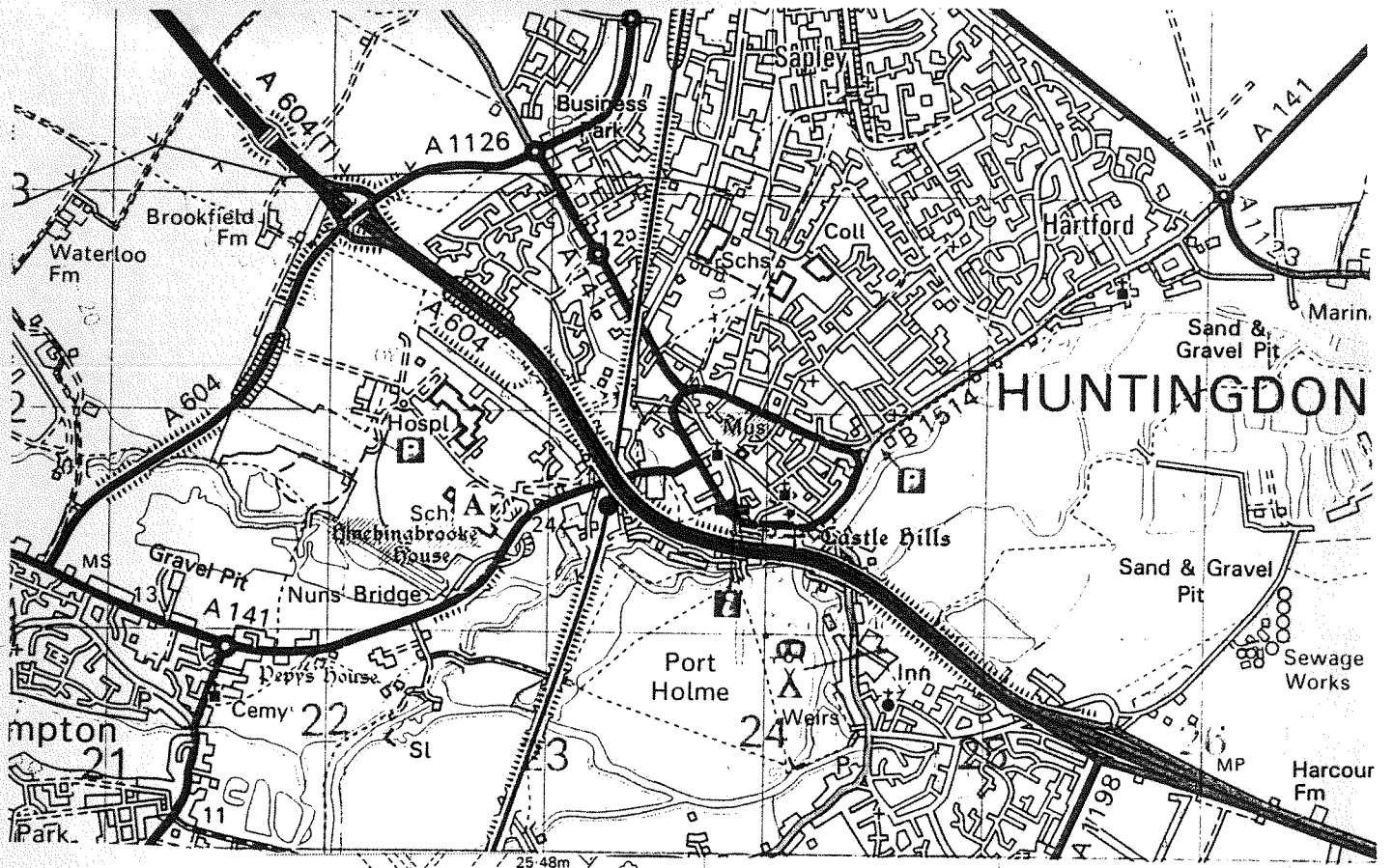
Proximity to the historic building of Hinchingsbrooke House and its associated garden landscaping features required an archaeological evaluation to assess the potential importance of these two areas. However, the lack of archaeological evidence from both trenches suggests that activity in the form of ancillary buildings was confined to the immediate area around the church, which can still be identified as part of Hinchingsbrooke House.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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