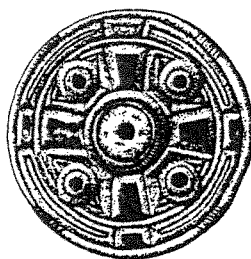


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Archaeological Field Unit

**Land Adjacent to 60, Water St. Chesterton, Cambridge:
An Archaeological Evaluation**

S. Cooper

1999

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. B46

Commissioned by Mr and Mrs Few-Mackay

**Land Adjacent to 60 Water St. Chesterton, Cambridge: An Archaeological
Evaluation**

Spencer Cooper

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Editor: William Wall BA

Illustrator: Jon Cane BA

Report No B46

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Cambridgeshire County Council
Fulbourn Community Centre
Haggis Gap, Fulbourn
Cambridgeshire CB1 5HD
Tel (01223) 881614
Fax (01223) 880946

SUMMARY

On April 19th and 20th 1999 the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council carried out an archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to 60, Water Street, Chesterton, Cambridge (TL 468599). The work was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Few-Mackay before the construction of two residential properties. The results from the evaluation revealed 19th century deposits including cultivation soils and redeposited alluvial material which may relate to dredging and management of the River Cam in the 19th century. No features or artefacts earlier than the 19th century were identified within the subject site.

Land Adjacent to 60 Water St. Chesterton, Cambridge: An Archaeological Evaluation

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** On April 19th and 20th 1999 the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council carried out an archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to 60 Water St, Chesterton, Cambridge (TL468599). The work was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Few-Mackay, joint owners of the site, before the construction of two residential buildings. The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit Specification WW/99/11 drawn up by William Wall in response to a design brief issued by Andrew Thomas of the County Archaeology Office.
- 1.2** The village of Chesterton was of considerable importance in the Middle Ages and the site lies close to the historic core. Furthermore the site has a frontage along the River Cam and it was considered possible that deposits associated with medieval water front activities might survive.

2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

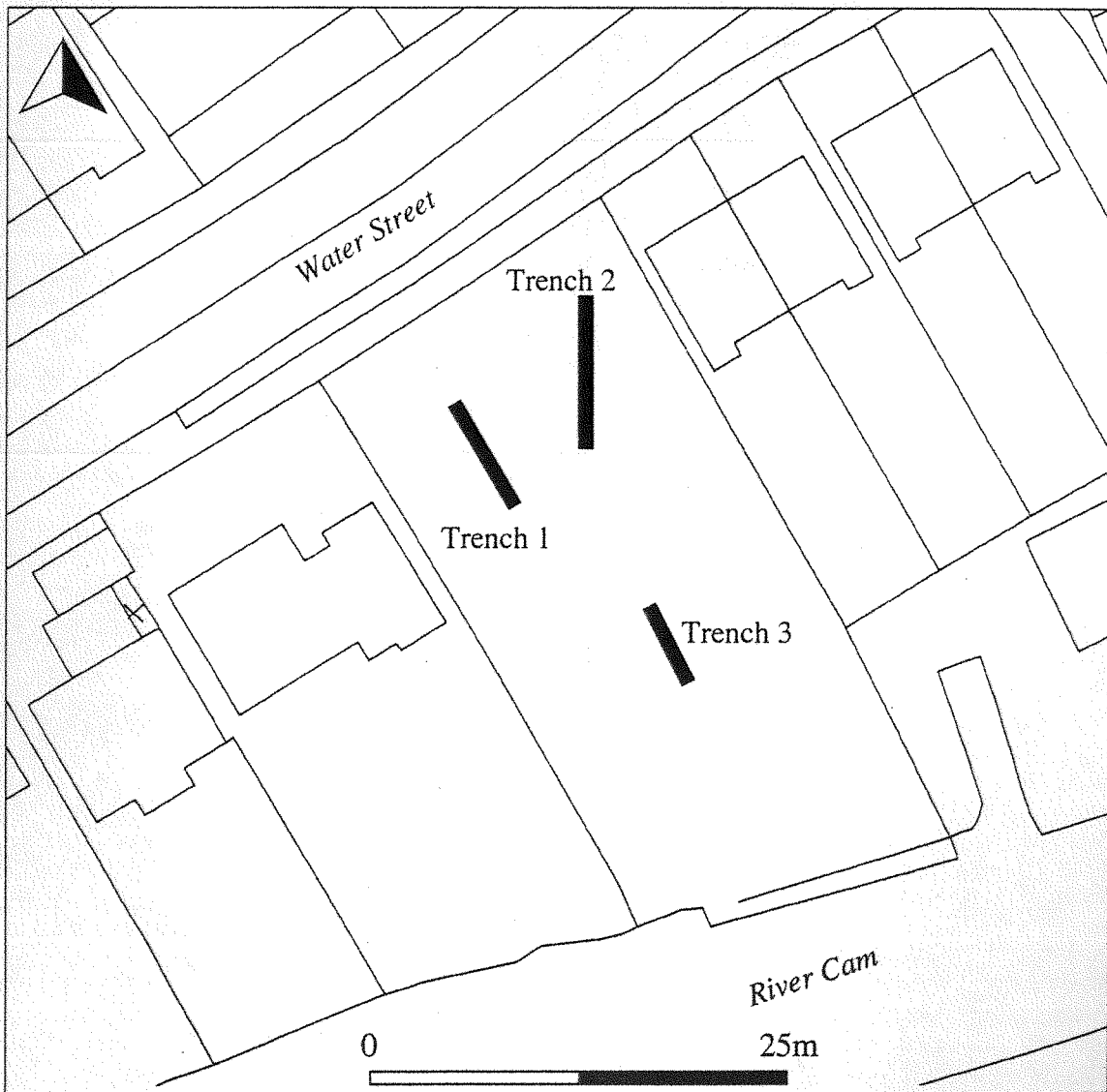
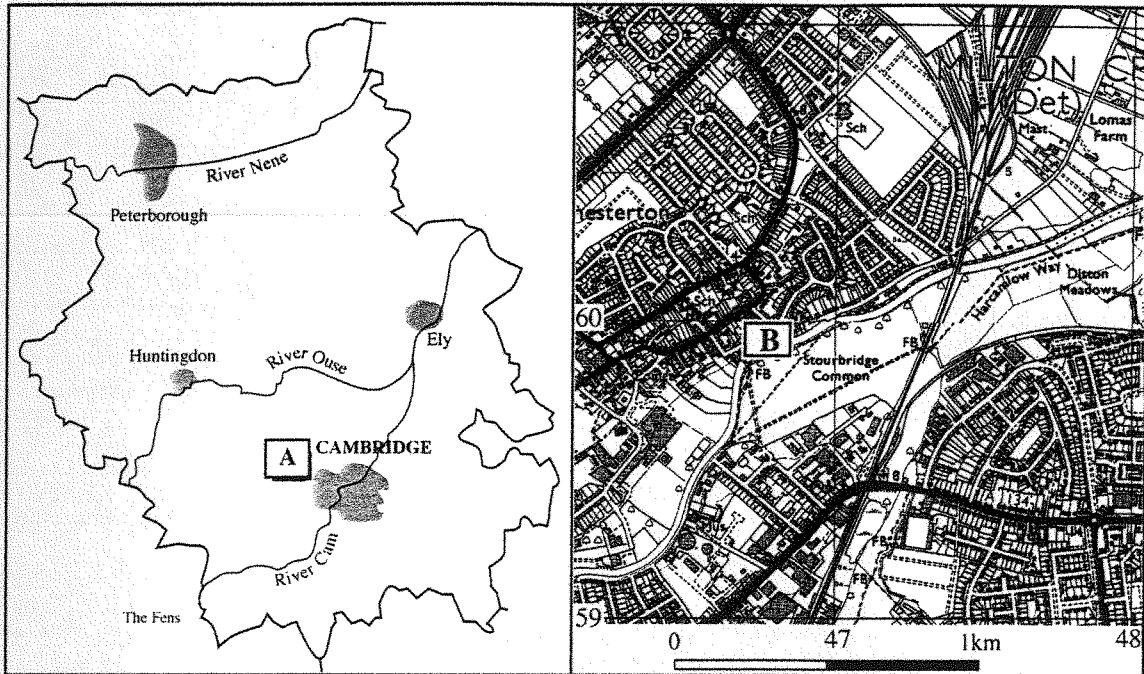
The site lies on the north side of the River Cam to the south of High Street and the historic core of the village of Chesterton, now a suburb of Cambridge

The British Geological Survey map 1:50,000 shows the site to be on first terrace gravels. The site lies on land which gently slopes southwards towards the River Cam.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Historical Background

Chesterton was part of an Anglo-Saxon royal vill spanning the river, from which three quarters were detached when a burgh was established at the river crossing probably in the 8th century (Wright, A.P.M 1989). Chesterton had 24 peasant households in 1086. There were possibly 190 persons paying taxes in 1225. The village stood by the river near the southern edge of the parish, its closes curving gently north eastwards along a high street mentioned in 1293. The church and main manor house stood to the south west off Church Lane by 1327. Ferry Lane ran south from the middle of the high street to the parallel Water Street which was in existence by 1580. Few village houses dating from before 1800 survive today. The most substantial building



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Figure 1 Location

is Roebuck House at the west end of Water St which was rebuilt in 1775. There is documentary evidence for a Carmelite Priory at Chesterton in 1247 although the site is unknown (Haigh 1988). The house probably consisted of a group of hermits each with his own cell. In 1249 the main group of friars moved to Newnham in order to play a greater role in the university, however some disliked the change of rule and stayed in Chesterton.

The site is known to have been open land for most of the post-medieval period. On Bakers map 1830 the area is shown as open land with no evidence of buildings. The 1808 OS 1-inch map depicts a similar situation with open land which appears to be an orchard.

4 METHODOLOGY

Following background documentary study, a series of three trenches totalling 23m in length, all of them 1.6m in width, were excavated using a JCB with a toothless ditching bucket. Trenches 1 and 2 were located within footprint of the proposed buildings. A total of 5% of the development area was evaluated. The locations of the trenches are shown in Figure 1. After machining was completed each trench was cleaned by hand and photographed and recorded using the AFU standard archaeological recording system. In addition all of the spoil heaps from the trenches were scanned visually and with a metal detector to aid recovery of artefacts.

5 RESULTS

Common layers were found in each of the excavated trenches which probably represent 19th century cultivation soils.

5.1 Trench 1 (figure 2)

Trench 1 was 7m long and 1.2m deep and positioned on a north-south alignment. It was located in order to investigate the area of the proposed new building footprint. The topsoil (layer 1) consisted of a dark grey clay silt which was 0.35m deep and contained modern brick. Directly below layer 1 was layer 2 which was a mid brown clay silt. This layer was 0.20m deep and contained a number of post-medieval artefacts. Layer 2 sealed a silty clay, 3, which was 0.22m deep and contained modern building material. Beneath this was layer 6 which was a greyish brown silty clay and was 0.30m deep gravel. Below layer 6, in the southern part of the trench, was a possible foundation trench for a building. This foundation trench, 9, was 0.4m wide and 0.5m deep and ran on an east-west alignment. It was filled with mortar and a pale blue grey clay (8). This cut a greyish brown silty clay layer 7, which was 0.40m deep. Beneath this was a linear 5 which was 0.70m wide and ran on a north-south alignment. It contained a dark grey clay silt and produced a number of 19th century artefacts.

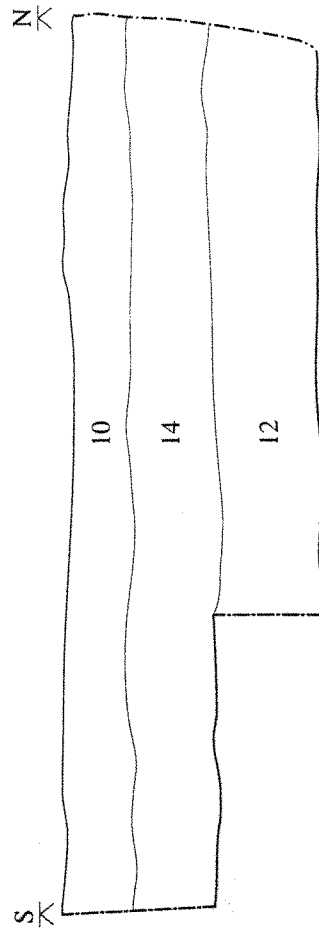
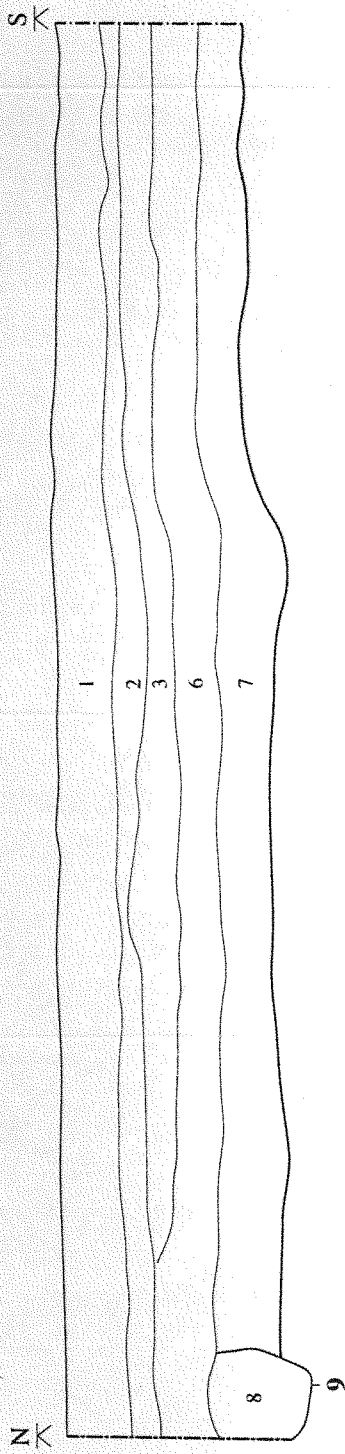


Figure 2 a) West facing section of Trench 1
 b) East facing section of Trench 3 (diagramatic)

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was 9m long 1.1m deep and was located on a north west-south east alignment. The stratigraphic sequence observed in this trench was very similar to Trench 1. Topsoil 19 was 0.30m deep and was composed of a dark grey clay silt which contained modern brick. Beneath this, was a brown clay silt, 20, with a moderate amount of small gravel. This sealed layer 21 which was a clay silt with a frequent amount of mortar present. Beneath this was a dark brown clay silt 22 which was 0.17m deep. In the northern part of the trench a pale blue grey clay 23 was encountered which was 0.20m deep and contained no artefacts.

5.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was 6m long and 1.2m deep and located on a north-south alignment. Layer 10 was a dark grey clay silt topsoil which contained recent building material. This context sealed layer 14, a pale blue grey clay which was 0.50m deep and contained 19th century brick. This overlay a ditch 16 which was filled with a dark brown silty clay and produced 19th century pottery. Ditch 16 measured 0.60m wide and 0.40m deep. Ditch 16 cut 12 which was a pale blue grey clay and 0.40m deep. This layer 12 probably represents alluvium or redeposited alluvium.

6 Interpretation.

A similar stratigraphic sequence was observed in trenches 1 and 2. The sequence was composed of a series of layers which represent 19th century cultivation soils. The pale blue grey clays identified in trench 2 and 3 may represent redeposited alluvium from dredging of the River Cam. An alternative explanation is that the blue grey clays may represent a deliberate attempt to consolidate the edge of the river. Several contexts were encountered with a large mortar component which may indicate that there was a building on or near the site.

7 Conclusion

No features or artefacts of great antiquity were identified within the three excavated trenches. The results from the evaluation revealed 19th century deposits including cultivation soils and redeposited alluvial material which may relate to dredging and management of the River Cam in the 19th century. Other deposits identified may represent a deliberate attempt to consolidate the edge of the river in the 19th century. The lack of medieval remains is notable and is surprising considering the proximity of the site to the historic core of Chesterton and its waterfront location.

9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank the developers Mr and Mrs Few- Mackay for their co-operation, Andrew Thomas for monitoring on behalf of the CAO and Jon Cane for his illustrations.

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The Archaeological Field Unit
Fulbourn Community Centre
Haggis Gap
Fulbourn
Cambridge CB1 5HD
Tel (01223) 881614
Fax (01223) 880946