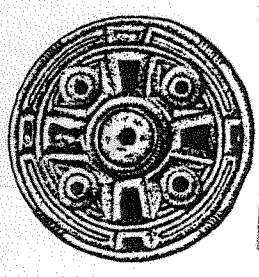

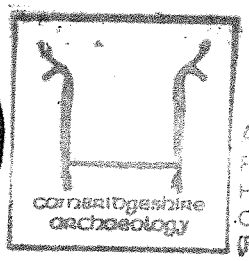

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Land off Wesleyan Road, Peterborough: An Archaeological Evaluation.

Andrew Hatton

1999

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. B47

Commissioned by Warden Housing

Land off Wesleyan Road, Peterborough: An Archaeological Evaluation.

By Andrew Hatton
18th May 1999

1 INTRODUCTION

On the 12th May 1999, the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council undertook an archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to Wesleyan Road, Peterborough (TF 1912 0140). A 0.45 hectare area was sampled through the excavation of trial trenches. The object of the evaluation was to establish the nature and extent of surviving archaeological remains in advance of the proposed development of the site (fig 1).

The work was commissioned by George Sykes of Warden Housing in response to a brief prepared by Ben Robinson of Peterborough City Council Archaeological Services (PCCAS).

The subject site lies adjacent to and to the west of Wesleyan Road. At the time of the evaluation it comprised an open, roughly grassed area formally used as a garden allotment. Some soil dumping and minor ground disturbance is known to have occurred on a small portion of the site during the construction of neighbouring development.

2 GEOLOGY

The underlying geology of the site consists of third terrace gravels (British Geological Survey, Sheet 158).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Evidence of human activity in the immediate area takes the form of Palaeolithic worked flint (SMR 2169), together with later prehistoric worked flint (SMR 2205). Located to the east of the proposed development site further finds of flint tools and flakes (SMR Nos. 2998 and 2999) dating to the late Neolithic suggest that gravel islands in the fens remained dry during the period of inundation, offering scope for non-permanent settlement.

The subject site has produced sherds of Iron Age and Romano-British pottery (SMR 2208). They were of sufficient quantities to have been noted in RCHM 1969, and later to be interpreted as a positive indication of settlement. The presence of Romano-British pottery could be due to the location of the site in relation to the Car Dyke (SMR 2982) which is approximately 2 miles to the north.

Historic maps of the area within which the subject site is located, show that the parcel of land investigated was enclosed agricultural land from 1821 until the post-war creation of allotments.

4 METHODOLOGY

Evaluation of the site was carried out by use of a JCB mechanical excavator with a 1.8m ditching bucket which cut three trenches, total length 80m, providing a 3.2% sample of the proposed development area.

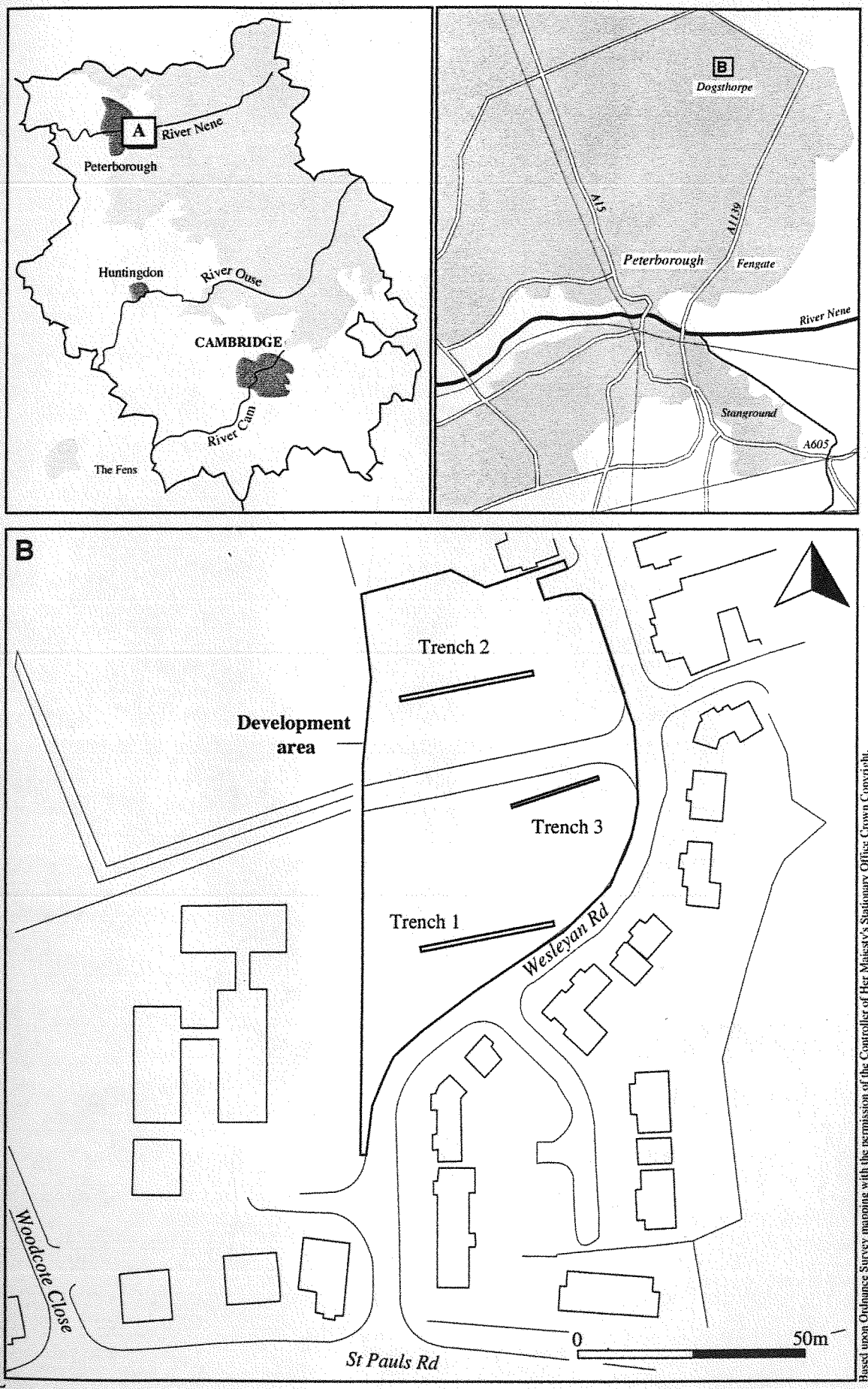

Figure 1 *Location plan*

The trenches were located across the site to produce maximum coverage, thus increasing the probability of identifying features or artefacts that may be of archaeological/historical interest. Also used in the process of trench location were the results gathered from several 2 x 2m test pits excavated for the purpose of checking the underlying geology for its suitability for house construction (Stirling Maynard 1999). One of the geological test pits identified an area of considerable modern disturbance along the southern boundary of the subject site, thus allowing for the repositioning of Trench 1.

5 RESULTS

Trench 1 (fig 1)

Trench 1 was 30m long and 1.8m wide, and ran in a north east- south west direction. The excavated depth at the south western end of the trench was 1.13m increasing to 2.24m at the north eastern end. Examination of the section revealed that the upper 0.40m was made-up of re-deposited topsoil covering 0.50m of infill which consisted of gravel, sand, plastic pipes, a large steel plate and brick. The removal of the debris revealed a sterile layer of silty sand 0.20m thick overlying the natural gravel. At the north-eastern end of Trench 1 a large rubbish pit was identified also filled with modern rubble debris which accounted for the increased depth of the trench.

No archaeological features or deposits were encountered during the excavation of the trench.

Trench 2 (fig 1)

Trench 2 was 30m long and 1.8m wide, depth 0.90m, and ran in a north east-south west direction. Excavation of the trench revealed in section the same re-deposited topsoil as identified in Trench 1, overlying a dark brown silty sand layer interpreted as the original topsoil that would have covered the subject site prior to the construction of the adjacent dwellings. Below the original topsoil was the light brown silty sand also identified in Trench 1 overlying the natural gravel geology.

The stratigraphic sequence (see above) was not present throughout the length of the trench. At the south western end of the trench a silted-up river channel was identified which extended 4.5m along the trench. The silty fill of the river channel was removed using the mechanical excavator down to the top of the natural clay a depth of 1.25m. Excavation of the river channel and subsequent examination of the spoil failed to produce any artefactual evidence. At the north eastern end of the trench large amounts of modern rubble debris was encountered which extended for 4m, and was found on excavation to extend down to the top of the natural gravel, thus truncating the original stratigraphic sequence.

Trench 3 (fig 1)

Trench 3 was 20m long by 1.8m wide, depth 0.66m, and ran in a north east-south west direction. As with Trench 1 the section showed that the ground had been made-up using modern waste material and covered with re-deposited topsoil.

No archaeological features or deposits were encountered during the excavation of the trench.

6 CONCLUSIONS

Prior to the evaluation an engineering test pit survey was undertaken to determine the geological suitability of the site for house construction. These test pits revealed the presence of modern rubble debris in the south east corner of the site. Evaluation trial trenching identified the presence of rubble debris covering much of the eastern side of the subject site; also extending down to the south west corner of the area, previously the location of the secure compound during the construction of the adjacent housing estate.

In spite of the record of pottery from the site the evaluation in fact revealed no evidence of archaeological remains. Perhaps the original finds of pottery were due to the importation of soil or a location error exists in the SMR.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank George Sykes of Warden Housing for commissioning the project. The work was carried out in accordance with the design brief written by Ben Robinson (PCCAS) who also monitored the work.Thanks are also due to Rebecca Casa-Hatton who assisted with the field work, Mark Hinman (Project Officer) who helped organise the project and Tim Malim (Project Manager) for giving advice concerning the final report.

REFERENCES

British Geology Survey Sheet 158

Stirling Maynard and Partners 1999 *Report on a ground investigation carried out at Wesleyan Road, Peterborough.* DTS 7041.

Peterborough City Council Sites and Monuments Record

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