

Archaeological Field Unit

**A Late Iron Age Feature at the A505/A1301 Roundabout TL492473.
An Archaeological Evaluation.**

Aileen Connor

July 1999

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No.B53

Commissioned by McDonalds Restaurants Ltd.

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Summary

An Archaeological Evaluation of land at the junction of the A505 and A1301 in the parish of Duxford Cambridgeshire, (TL 492473) revealed the presence of a single archaeological feature in one trench. This has been dated to the Late Iron Age based on the presence of a small number of Late Iron Age pot sherds in the upper fill of the feature, flint flakes were found towards the base of the feature. The remaining five trenches contained no archaeological evidence.

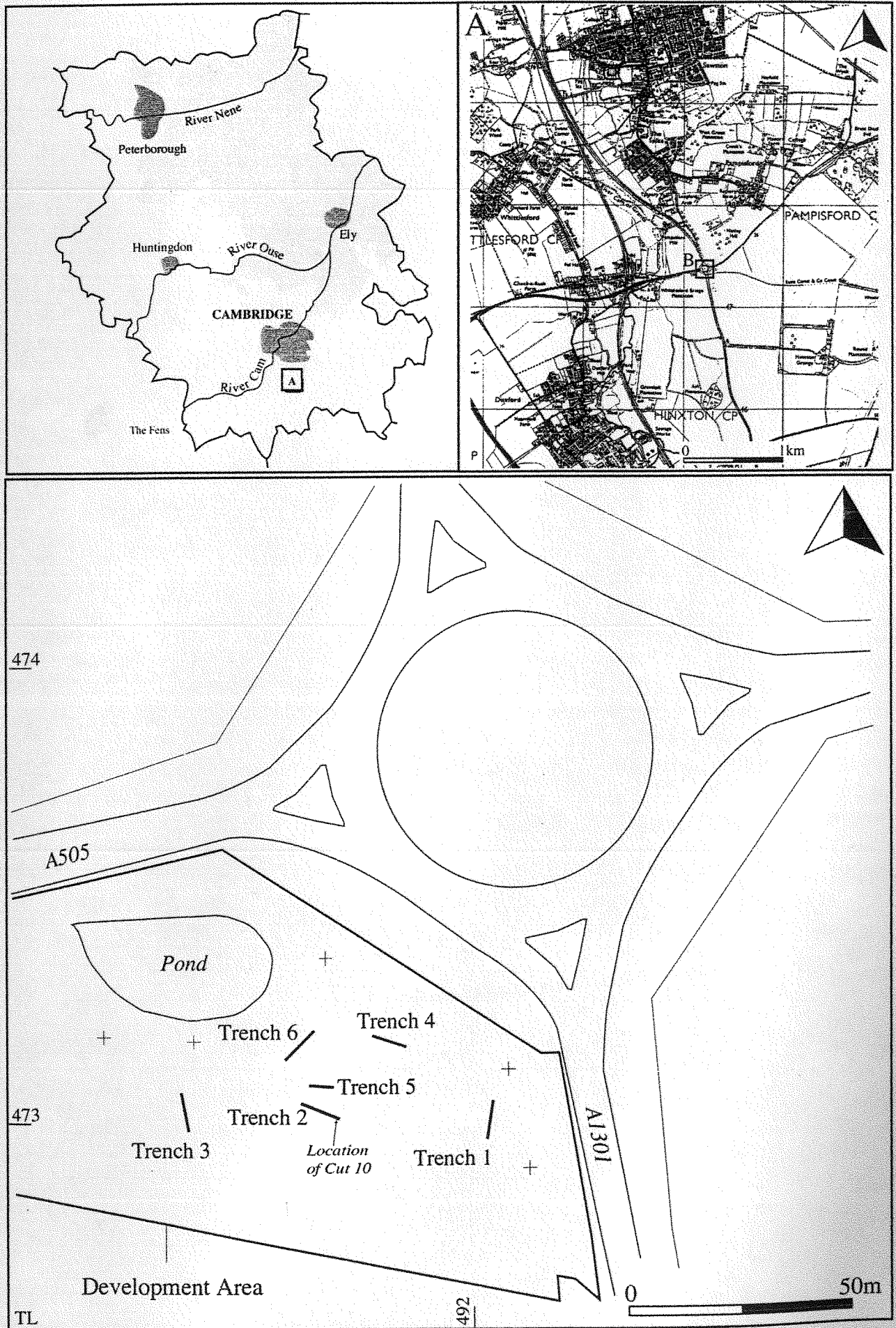


Figure 1 Location

A LATE IRON AGE FEATURE AT THE A505/A1301 ROUNDABOUT

1 INTRODUCTION

In response to a Brief set by the County Archaeology Office (Kaner, June 17, 1999), planning application number (S/1979/98), an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at the junction of the A505/A1301 in the north of the parish of Hinxtun (TL492473). The work was undertaken by the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council in early July 1999.

The proposed development includes the construction of a new McDonalds Restaurant with carparking and landscaping in an area of 0.3 hectares.

2 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Romano-British and possibly prehistoric cropmarks are known to exist to the north and north-east of the site, further to the South there are cropmarks of an extensive Romano-British farmstead and Iron Age cemetery (SMR11306), the latter was excavated by the Cambridge Archaeology Unit in 1994 (Alexander, M. and Hill J.D. 1996. CAU report no. 159).

No archaeological remains are known from the site in this investigation and an aerial photographic appraisal of the site revealed no archaeological features on the site or in the immediately surrounding fields (Appendix A)

The Sites and Monuments Record lists a number of sites and finds spots in the vicinity of the site, including Prehistoric, Roman and Medieval (Appendix B). The nearest of which is a record of Roman pottery found approximately 200m to the east of the site (SMR09236).

3 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site is located on third terrace river gravels of the River Cam overlying middle chalk.

The site lies at 27m above Ordnance Datum. At the time of the evaluation the land was rough scrub with evidence of some disturbance to the topsoil around its southern edges, presumably caused during construction of an exit road for an adjoining petrol station to the west of the site. The site was fairly level but had a slight downwards slope from the south-west to the north-east.

4 METHODS

Six trenches were excavated using a mechanical excavator with 1.6m wide flat bladed bucket. Five trenches were 8m long and a sixth was 5m long, a total of 72 square metres or 2.4% of the development area. The excavation of the six

trenches took place under constant archaeological supervision. The written and drawn record was supplemented by monochrome and colour photographs.

A scale 1:100 plan was produced for each trench. The single feature was planned after excavation. All trenches were tied in to the OS grid. The excavated feature was drawn at scale 1:10. Descriptions were made of each trench and these were supplemented by the AFU single context record sheets. Monochrome photographs were taken of each trench supplemented by colour photographs of excavated features. Spoil from the trenches was inspected for finds after some weathering had taken place.

The single feature present was extremely pale and leached and showed no signs of containing any burnt or waterlogged material it was therefore deemed unnecessary to take any samples for environmental or other purposes.

The site archive is kept at Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit Offices at Fulbourn, Cambridgeshire.

5 RESULTS

Six trenches were excavated by machine to test for the presence of archaeological features. A 0.3m thick layer of mid brown slightly clayey sand topsoil was common to all the trenches. Trenches 1, 2, 4 and 5 also contained a layer of yellowish-brown sandy clay sub-soil with moderate angular flints. This was between 0.05m and 0.3m thick.

Trench 1

8.5m long x 1.6m wide by 0.5m deep. Topsoil 4, 0.28m thick, overlay subsoil 5, 0.22m thick, overlay natural reddish brown clay sand 6. No archaeological features were observed.

Trench 2

8.8m long x 1.6m wide x 0.45m deep. Topsoil 7, 0.3m thick, overlay subsoil 8, 0.05-0.1m thick, overlay natural reddish brown sandy clay 9.

Cut 10, an irregular linear feature was observed crossing the trench at a slightly oblique angle at the south-east end of the trench. The feature appeared linear although it may have consisted of several small pits. It did not appear to continue to the north into trenches 5 or 6. The feature may have cut through subsoil layer 8, although the relationship was difficult to determine since its fill, 11, was very similar in character to 8. The cut had steep sides breaking sharply to a flat base, it was 1.2m wide x 0.5m deep, length unknown. Filled by a yellowish brown sandy clay subsoil from which 5 sherds of Late Iron Age pottery (1 decorated) and 2 flint flakes were recovered. The pottery was all recovered from the top 0.05m of 11, and the flint flakes were recovered from the base of the fill.

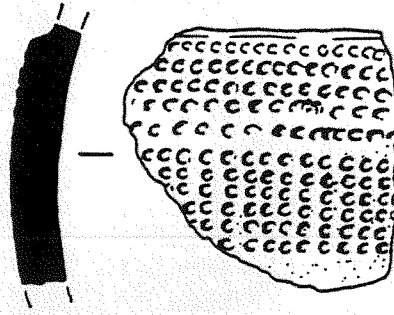


Figure 2 Sherd of Late Iron Age decorated pottery context 11. Scale 1:1.

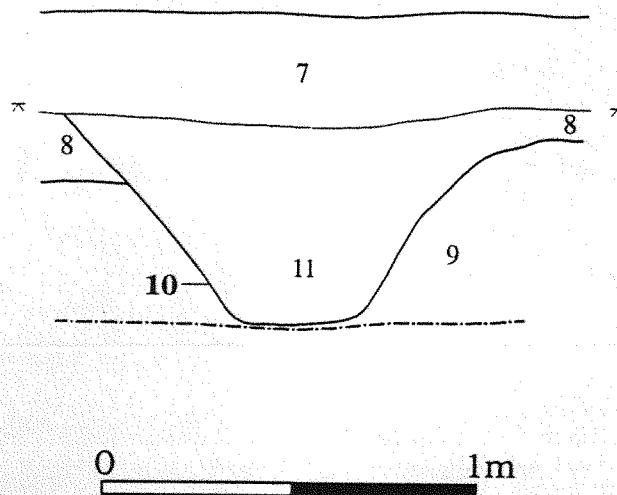


Figure 3 South Facing Section through Cut 10

Trench 3

8.5m long x 1.6m wide x 0.35m deep. Topsoil 12, 0.3m thick overlay natural flinty gravel.

No archaeological features observed.

Trench 4

7.8m long x 1.6m wide x 0.64m deep. Topsoil 1, 0.3m thick, overlay subsoil 2, 0.3m thick, overlay natural yellowish brown fine sand mottled with reddish brown clayey sand.

No archaeological features were observed.

Trench 5

5.3m long x 1.6m wide x 0.4m deep. Topsoil 16, 0.3m thick overlay subsoil 17, 0.1m thick, overlay natural reddish brown sandy clay.

No archaeological features observed.

Trench 6

8.9m long x 1.6m wide x 0.35m deep. Topsoil 14, 0.3m thick, overlay natural flinty gravel.

No archaeological features observed.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Only one trench contained any evidence for past human activity, trench 2 along the southern edge of the site. Pottery from the upper fills of the feature suggests a Late Iron Age date for backfilling, but there was no direct evidence to suggest when the feature may have been cut. Trenches to the north, west and east contained no archaeological evidence and it may be that the feature found in trench 2 was an isolated event, or perhaps represents an outlying feature associated with activity beyond the limits of the development area. The fact that pottery was found associated with the feature, especially the sherd of decorated pottery suggests that settlement or other human activity was present close to the development area but probably not within it.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The archaeological monitoring and recording was commissioned by McDonalds Restaurants Ltd. The Project Manager was William Wall. Paul Spoerry identified the pottery. Illustrations by Jon Cane. The fieldwork and background was undertaken by the author. The Brief and Planning Advice were provided by Andrew Thomas of the County Archaeology Office. Machine hire was provided by Borehams.

REFERENCES

SMR. Cambridgeshire Sites and Monuments Record

Alexander, M. and Hill J.D. 1996. The Excavation of a Late Iron Age Cemetery at Hinxton, Cambridgeshire. CAU report no. 159.

APPENDIX A

PROPOSED McDONALD'S RESTAURANT,
HINXTON, TL491473,
CAMBRIDGESHIRE:
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC APPRAISAL

SUMMARY

This appraisal of aerial photographs examined an area of under one hectare (centred TL491473) in order to identify archaeological features and thus provide a guide for field evaluation.

No archaeological features were identified although the presence of medieval cultivation is likely.

No mapping was undertaken.

**PROPOSED McDONALD'S RESTAURANT,
HINXTON, TL491473,
CAMBRIDGESHIRE:**

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC APPRAISAL

Rog Palmer MA MIFA

INTRODUCTION

This appraisal of aerial photographs was commissioned to examine an area of under one hectare (centred TL491473) in order to identify archaeological features and thus provide a guide for field evaluation. Mapping was to be at 1:2500 if relevant.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND NATURAL FEATURES FROM AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

In suitable cultivated soils, sub-surface archaeological features – including ditches, banks, pits, walls or foundations – may be recorded from the air in different ways in different seasons. In spring and summer these may show through their effect on crops growing above them. Such indications tend to be at their most visible in ripe cereal crops, in June or July in this part of Britain, although their appearance cannot accurately be predicted and their absence cannot be taken to imply evidence of archaeological absence. In winter months, when the soil is bare or crop cover is thin (when viewed from above), features may show by virtue of their different soils. Upstanding remains are also best recorded in winter months when vegetation is sparse and the low angle of the sun helps pick out slight differences of height and slope.

The most informative aerial photographs of archaeological subjects tend to be those resulting from specialist reconnaissance. This activity is usually undertaken by an experienced archaeological observer who will fly at seasons and times of day when optimum results are expected. Oblique photographs, taken using a hand-held camera, are the usual product of such investigation. Although oblique photographs are able to provide a very detailed view, they are biased in providing a record that is mainly of features noticed by the observer, understood, and thought to be of archaeological relevance. In the collections searched, no obliques were held of the assessment area.

Vertical photographs cover the whole of Britain and can provide scenes on a series of dates between (usually) 1946-7 and the present. Unfortunately these vertical surveys are not necessarily flown at times of year that are best to record the crop and soil responses that may be seen above sub-surface features. Vertical photographs are taken by a camera fixed inside an aircraft and adjusted to take a series of overlapping views that can be examined stereoscopically. They are often of relatively small scale and their interpretation requires higher perceptive powers and a more cautious approach than that necessary for examination of obliques. Use of these small-scale images can also lead to errors of location and size when they are rectified or re-scaled to match a larger map scale.

PHOTO EXAMINATION AND MAPPING

Photographs examined

Cover searches were made at the Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs and Cambridgeshire County Record Office. All photographs were taken during routine vertical surveys.

Source: Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs

Vertical photographs

RC8-DY 142	23 September 1981	1:10500
RC8-DY 191-192	29 September 1981	1:10000
RC8-JO 142-143	2 July 1987	1:10000
RC8-KnBE 28, 30	12 June 1988	1:10000
RC8-KnBL 172	14 June 1988	1:10000

Source: Cambridgeshire County Record Office

Vertical collection

106G/UK/1635: 2408-2409	9 July 1946	1:10000
F21.540/1143: 0002-0003	9 June 1953	1:10000
BKS: Run 18: 565833-4	late summer 1962	1:10000
MAL/69/69: 1469-1470	22 July 1969	1:10000

Base maps

A base map at a scale of 1:10000 was available and used for this rapid appraisal.

Photo interpretation and mapping

All vertical photographs were examined using a 1.5x magnification stereoscope.

COMMENTARY

Soils

The Soil Survey of England and Wales (SSEW 1983) shows the area to be chalky drift and chalk (series 511e) with river terrace drift (series 512f) to the north-east of the road junction.

Archaeological features

No archaeological features were identified in any of the fields surrounding the road junction. The presence of former medieval cultivation is indicated by a headland some 200m south of the development area and hints of ridge and furrow in the field south-east of the road junction. Previous work in this area of Cambridgeshire has shown that the chalk ground was extensively cultivated in medieval times and, in places, probably much before then.

Non-archaeological features

Photographs of two different dates suggest the presence of an uneven bedrock which is likely to be visible after topsoil removal as a slightly undulating surface with pockets of deeper soil. These may hinder perception of any archaeological features.

The building, which is within the boundary of the development, was erected between 1953 and 1962.

Land use

All fields surrounding the road junction have been in arable use on all dates of photography.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that no further examination of aerial photographs is undertaken for this assessment.

REFERENCES

SSEW, 1983. *Soils of England and Wales: sheet 4: Eastern England (1:250,000)*. Soil Survey of England and Wales, Harpenden.

APPENDIX B

SMR No.	Grid ref.	Parish	Period	Description
04102	TL/488-/473-	Pampisford	Mes / Neo	Mes / Neo site.
04106	TL/489-/473-	Pampisford	Roman	Pottery
04107	TL/489-/475-	Whittlesford	Neo	Flint tools - scrapers, blades, cores.
04169	TL/4953/4780	Pampisford	Roman	Rectory Farm. Area centred TL/496-/477- Cropmarks and Roman finds.
08822	TL/486-/465-	Hinxton	Roman	Cropmarks, and trial trenching which produced finds.
08904	TL/496-/474-	Pampisford	Unknown	Cropmarks
09236	TL/494-/473-	Hinxton	Roman	Roman pottery and bone from fieldwalking.
09738	TL/485-/468-	Duxford	Roman	Cropmarks. Trial trenching produced evidence of corn drying oven, finds and cropmarks suggest the site is probably that of a Roman farmstead with associated garden plots, paddocks and infields.
10260	TL/487-/466-	Hinxton	Post Med	Fieldwalking and trial trenching between the two cropmark complexes SMR 09738 and SMR 08822 has been identified as an archaeological blank. Sparse scatter of Post Med tile and brick over entire area.
10706	TL/487-/466-	Hinxton	Neo/BA	Evaluation and Watching brief uncovered a ditch containing BA scraper and 2 ? Neo flakes. A late Neo transverse arrowhead was found on one of the spoil heaps. Also SMR 10706a Anglo Saxon and Medieval features.
10875	TL/4865/4630	Hinxton	Prehistoric	Field walking.
11306	TL/487-/466-	Hinxton	Iron Age	Excavation. Late Iron Age cremation cemetery.



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