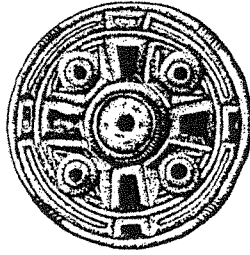


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Archaeological Field Unit

**Rectory Farm, Hardwick:  
an archaeological evaluation**

Judith Roberts

November 1999

**Cambridgeshire County Council**

Report No. B64

*Commissioned by Beechdale Homes PLC*

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Editor: Paul Spoerry  
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## **SUMMARY**

*An archaeological evaluation of a 1.1ha site at Rectory Farm, Hardwick was undertaken by the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit in November 1999. A single trench was dug within the footprint of the proposed new building. No clear evidence for Saxon or medieval settlement on the area was discovered in spite of the presence of the church and medieval earthworks nearby.*

## **CONTENTS**

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY AND CONSTRAINTS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>RESULTS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>DISCUSSION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>4</b>

## **APPENDIX 1**

<b>SMR SITES IN AND AROUND THE PARISH OF HARDWICK</b>	<b>5</b>
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## **ILLUSTRATION**

<b>Figure 1</b>	<b>Site location plan</b>	<b>2</b>
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**Rectory Farm, Hardwick:  
an archaeological evaluation  
(TL 373 587)**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In November 1999 the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council undertook an evaluation to reveal archaeological remains at Rectory Farm, Hardwick (TL373/587) (Fig. 1). The work was carried out on behalf of Beechdale Homes PLC before development of the land for housing.

## **GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

The 1.1ha site lies on Boulder Clay (British Geological Survey 1978), at approximately 58m OD. The land slopes steeply from the north-west. The topography has been modified considerably with deposits of soil and rubbish to level the site and make a track. The topsoil had been stripped before archaeological work was carried out. This had been deposited on the western part of the site.

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

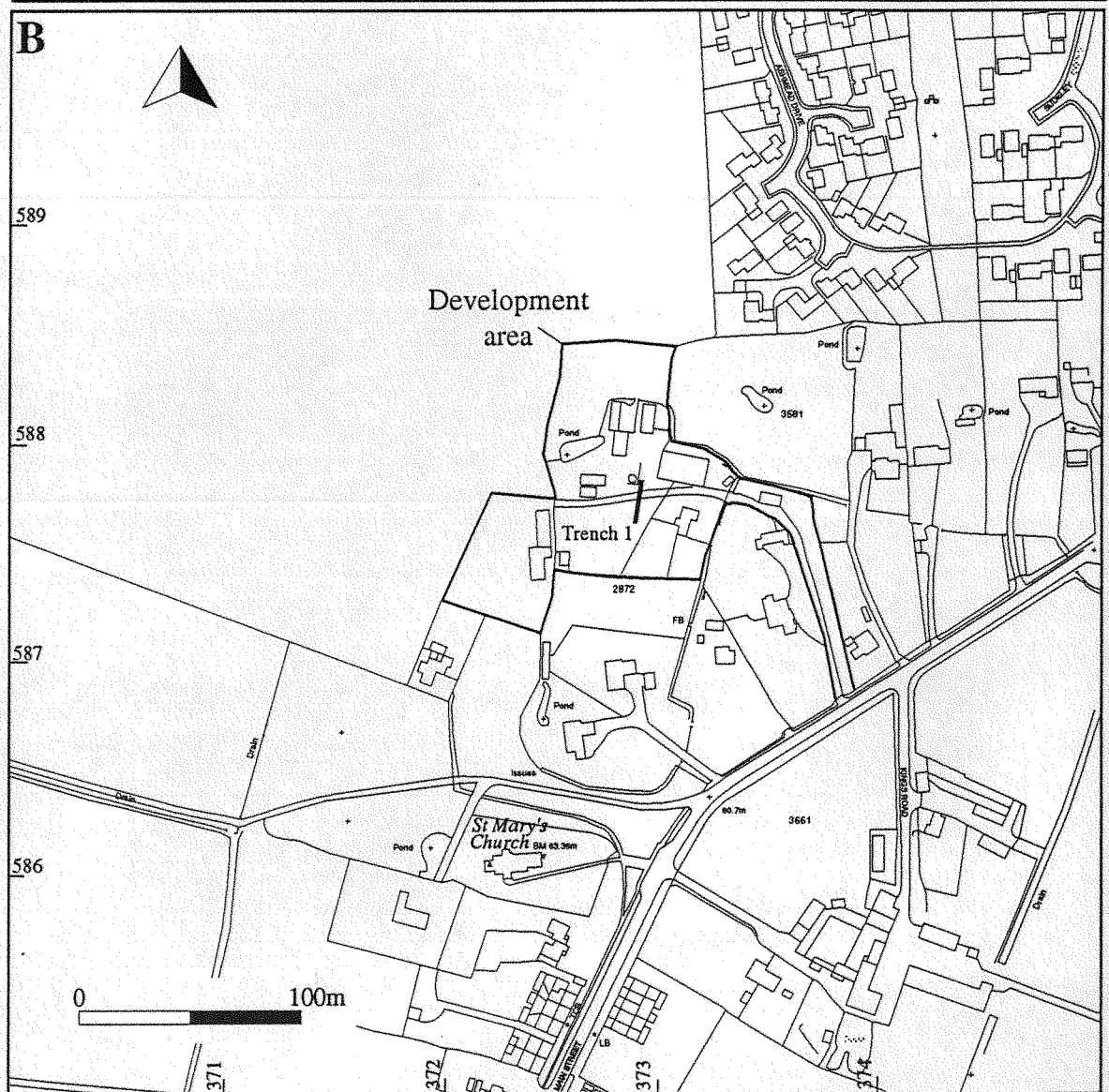
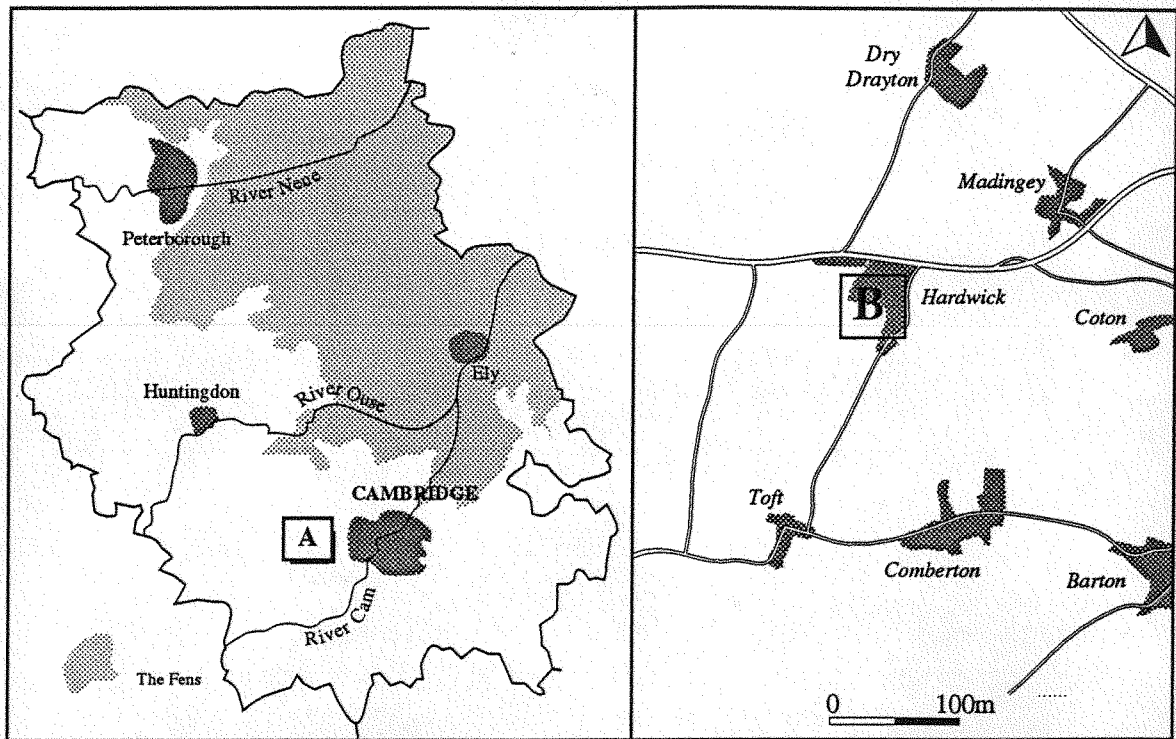
The village of Hardwick lies approximately eight kilometres west of Cambridge and today has two separate focal points. The original village, roughly in the centre of the parish, is about 1.6km south of the Cambridge to St. Neots road and was focused around a central green until enclosure after 1836. A newer settlement has grown up along the St. Neots road since the 1930s. Hardwick is mentioned in 1050 as *Hardwic*, although manorial lands are known from the tenth century. The name derives from the Old English for 'sheep farm' (Reaney 1943).

Evidence for early occupation of the village can be seen in earthworks (SMR no. 3226) which may be of Iron Age or Roman date. Occupation continued into the early medieval period with a small cross surviving in the churchyard (SMR no. 3252).

A 'public watering place' close to the church and centre of the village is marked on the Hardwick Enclosure Map of 1837. This may have been an important element in the development of the village and became the focus of the village green.

The manor at Hardwick was said to have been given to Ely priory in 991, a gift from Ealdorman Beorthnoth before a battle against the invading Danes. Ely's rights were confirmed in the eleventh century by Edward the Confessor and remained effective until 1600 when the manor was taken by Elizabeth I. In 1610 James I gave the lands back into private ownership and it passed through various owners (including Lancelot 'Capability' Brown in 1770). By the nineteenth century the manor was much reduced





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TL  
Figure 1 Site Location Plan

and was known as Victoria Farm – perhaps the site of the present Victoria Farm at the northern end of the old village, close to the church and green.

An un-named moated site at the southern end of the old village (SMR no. 1100) still exists as an earthwork. Early land divisions and ridge and furrow agriculture are visible around the village. The village has communications via the Port Way to the east and west and small paths joining the St. Neots road in the north. The soils are relatively heavy and agriculture has been a mainstay of the village until recent years.

## **METHODOLOGY AND CONSTRAINTS**

Agricultural buildings in the northern part of the site had been demolished and the farmhouse was in process of demolition. A range of barns is being retained for conversion. The area to be sampled was restricted to the footprint of the proposed new building. The development is not expected to have an impact on the rest of the site and consequently it was not evaluated

The total area opened by machine was approximately 38.5 sq.m. The trench was planned, photographed and recorded using the standard techniques of the AFU. Modern intrusive features, such as ditches and dumped deposits, were recorded in plan but not excavated by hand.

## **RESULTS**

A single trench (24m long and 1.6m wide) was opened by machine. The southern part revealed 0.3m of subsoil over clay with chalk flecks. Two features were noted in this part of the trench: a possible posthole (0.3m diameter and 0.13m deep) which contained a grey brown silty clay fill and no artefactual material; and a narrow gully (0.3m wide) with a grey brown silty clay fill. This ran south-west–north-east across the trench and the excavated segment contained a single piece of peg tile.

To the north there was evidence of considerable modern disturbance and a trackway having been laid and repaired. The deposit was a dark brown clay silt, 0.42m deep, with very few stones. This was sealed by a layer, 0.3m deep, of redeposited clay which in turned was covered in gravel and hard-core. Finds from the lower deposit included aluminium wall ties, plastic strips, broken slates, brick and coal. It would appear that this part of the site has been built up and used as a track to provide access up a steep slope to the northern and western part of the site.

## **DISCUSSION**

Documentary research suggested that the development area was close to but beyond the core of the medieval village. There was no evidence of prehistoric or Roman

occupation (masked by ridge and furrow) on the heavy clay lands in this part of Hardwick.

The conditions were dry and cut features were clearly visible in the sub-soil and natural geology. It is likely that had medieval or earlier features existed on the site they would have been identified.

## CONCLUSIONS

The absence of medieval or earlier remains and high level of modern disturbance across the site suggest that further work is unlikely to provide further information on the early occupation of Hardwick.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Beechdale Homes Ltd. which funded the project, Paul Spoerry, Project Manager and Jon Cane for the illustrations. The project was monitored by Andy Thomas of the County Council Archaeology Office (Development Control).

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## APPENDIX 1

### SMR SITES IN AND AROUND THE PARISH OF HARDWICK

SMR no.	Grid ref.	Type
1100	372/583	medieval moat
3225	373/580	windmill mound
3226	373/586	Iron Age/Roman earthwork
3252	372/586	Anglo-Saxon cross
3265	373/587	clay pit
3336	375/588	post-medieval house
3363	375/584	post-medieval inn
3437	373/584	ridge and furrow
4217	372/586	medieval church
8924	383/579	Iron Age/Roman settlement
8924 A	383/579	ridge and furrow
9385	372/586	pound stone
9572	370/585	ridge and furrow
9580	395/588	ridge and furrow
11237	374/586	pond
11238	375/587	undated earthwork
11239	373/584	medieval earthwork

(Highlighted records are those mentioned in the text above.)





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