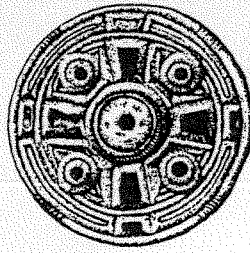


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Archaeological Field Unit

Summary of Archaeological Evaluation at Woodston Hill, Oundle Road, Peterborough.

Bob Hatton

February 2000

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. B70

Commissioned by Stirling Maynard and Partners.P

**Summary of Archaeological Evaluations at Woodston Hill, Oundle Road,
Peterborough. TL 178975.**

March 2000

by Bob Hatton BA

Archaeological Field Unit, Cambridgeshire County Council.

Introduction

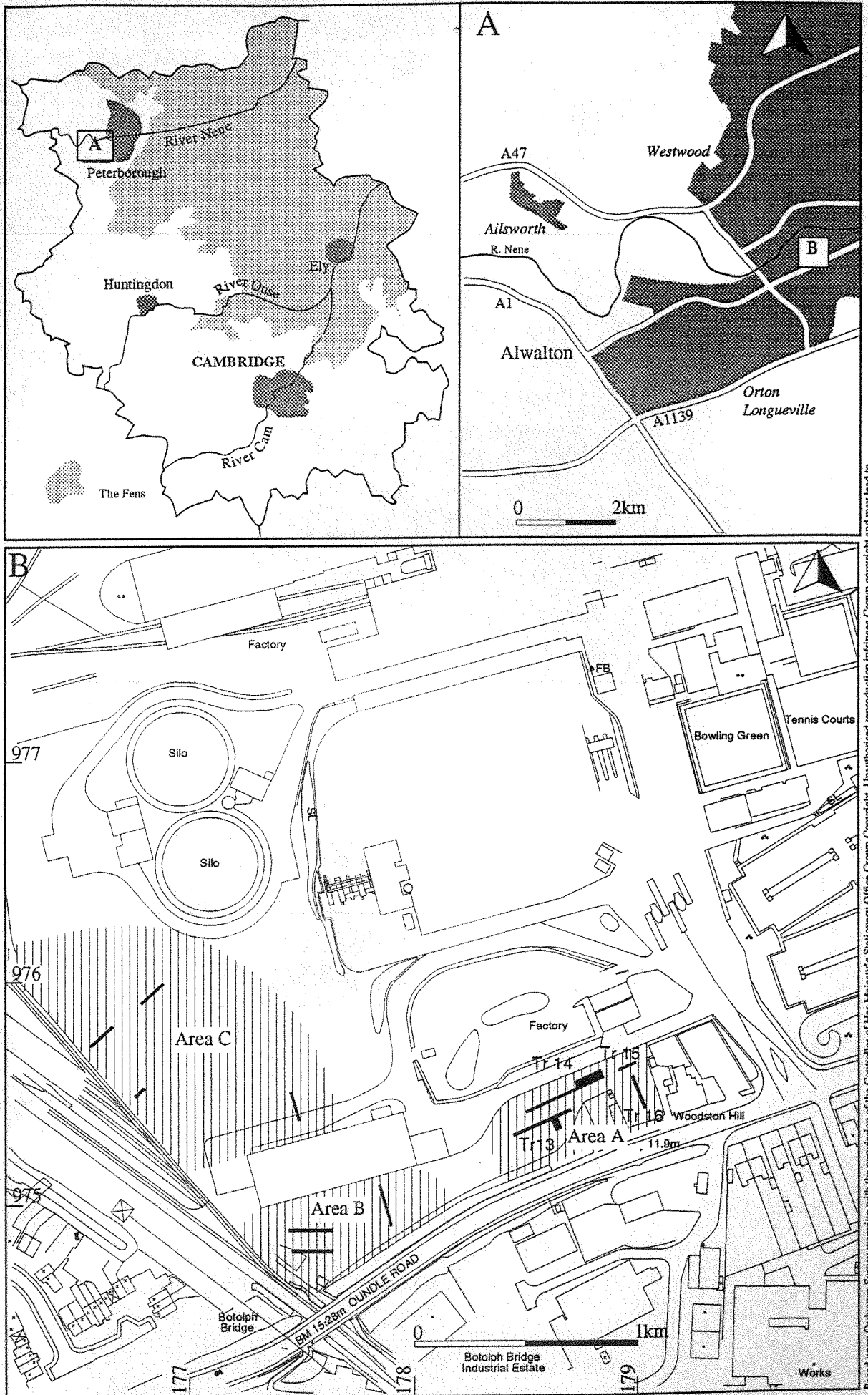
Between the 22nd to 25th February 2000, the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council (AFU) carried out an archaeological evaluation on land once occupied by the British Sugar processing plant, Peterborough (TL 178975). The work was undertaken at the request of Stirling Maynard and Partners on behalf of British Sugar. This follows earlier limited field evaluations and monitoring undertaken in areas B and C also undertaken by the AFU in 1998 (Kenney 1998).

Methodology

Eleven trenches with a total length of 173m and at 1.8m wide were opened by 360° tracked excavator under the supervision of staff of the AFU. Trenching was restricted by services which included gas, electricity and a water pipeline. Machine excavation was followed by hand cleaning of the archaeology within the trenches, feature excavation and recording.

Results

Three discrete excavation areas were defined (Fig. 1), Area A lies next to the Oundle Road and south of the existing car park.; Area B was also located next to the Oundle Road and to the north-east of the railway; Area C was located 50m to the north-west of Area B and also alongside the railway.



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Figure 1 Site Location Plan

Area A

Area A is known as Woodston Hill Four trenches were excavated down to the top of the natural sandy gravel geology which occurs at a depth of between 1m below the present ground surface in the east and 1.30m in the west. The overburden to the archaeology consists of a layer of subsoil presumed to be the medieval cultivation deposits. A medieval date is presumed as a number of the parallel shallow north south orientated features were discovered which may be the remnants of medieval furrows. This layer is overlain by a layer of sand which, in turn, was overlain by about 0.60m of imported topsoil presumably associated with landscaping of the British Sugar environs.

Three of the trenches were found to contain archaeological features which cut into natural geology. These features consisted of ditches, pits, gullies and postholes which when excavated were found to contain silty sandy fills with few or no artefacts possibly suggesting a prehistoric date for the features. In contrast the pottery from the more recent features excavated was dated to the 18th century. A modern fence line probably associated with internal partitions associated with the adjacent house and gardens was also found within the trenches of Area A.

Two of the three trenches were extended to clarify structural elements of the archaeology. Additional excavation yielded no further dating evidence. The extra work did however, indicate the complexity of two concentrations of features identified by the initial trenching. The structural remains identified in these areas were clearly shown to be the remnants of timber buildings consisting of a combination of posts and gullies. The actual shape of these buildings could not be defined because at the time trenching was restricted by the presence of a live gas pipe. It is possible that some of these building remains will have been removed by the pipeline trench, however, this can only be confirmed once the pipeline has been made safe.

Area B

Three trenches were excavated down to the top of the natural sandy clay geology which occurs at an average depth of 1.1m in Area B. Only one trench contained archaeological remains, these consisted of two linear ditches one of which was excavated. No artefactual evidence found. It must also be noted that all three trenches excavated in Area B flooded almost immediately after opening.

Area C

Four trenches were excavated down to a depth of c. 2.8m in Area C. No natural geology was encountered, because of the extensive build up of redeposited clays including modern building materials. This disturbance can be attributed to activities of beet washing and trenching associated with the British Sugar processing plant.

Conclusion

The site has revealed evidence of occupation on a gravel rise presently close to the Oundle Road known as Woodston Hill (Area A). The structural features identified in Area A are presently of an indeterminate date. In order to answer the basic questions of age and function of the site it would be necessary to increase the area exposed through widening the existing excavation area. The opportunities for data recovery in the form of artefactual evidence would be greatly increased by such work and the structures associated with a settlement could be more accurately defined providing that they have not been entirely removed by the gas mains.

These remains could potentially be of Anglo-Saxon date given the recovery of Saxon inhumations (01045, 01656) c. 200m to the east of Area A and north west (01416, 01716) which would suggest that Area A lies within the grounds of the cemetery. Equally the scarcity of finds could suggest the presence of agricultural buildings and associated activity of Iron Age date and these remains could be part of the Iron Age settlement (SMR 01711) found 100m to the north of Area A during gravel extraction.

Friday, 10th March.



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