

Archaeological Field Unit

**9-21, Lone Tree Avenue, Impington:
An Archaeological Evaluation**

Rebecca Casa Hatton

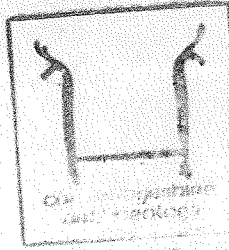
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Report No. B87

Commissioned by Gerard Crouch on behalf of Mr R. Burton



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**9-21, Lone Tree Avenue, Impington:
An Archaeological Evaluation
(TL 4414 6183)**

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SUMMARY

On 29th May 2001 staff of the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council conducted an archaeological evaluation on land at 9-21, Lone Tree Avenue, Impington (TL 4414 6183) in advance of a proposed residential development. The area is situated within an historical landscape that includes the Iron Age monument at Arbury Camp, Roman finds in the vicinity of Akeman Street (Mere Street), and remains of the medieval hamlet of Howes Close (presently in Girton parish).

Six linear trenches totaling 95m were mechanically excavated. The site produced no archaeological features, with the exception of a shallow ditch (a drain?) along the side of Lone Tree Avenue, possibly associated with a former track. No dating evidence was retrieved from the ditch fill. Modern activity was represented by a large pit that contained a layer of burnt building debris.

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(TL 4414/6183)**

1 INTRODUCTION

On 29 May 2001 staff of the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council conducted an archaeological evaluation on land at 9-21, Lone Tree Avenue, Impington, TL 4414 6183 (Fig. 1), in advance of the construction of seven dwellings with associated roads and services (Planning Application Number S/1612/99/O).

Given the known archaeological background of the area under investigation (below), the Archaeology Officer of Cambridgeshire County Council (CAO) made recommendations to the District Planning Authority for an archaeological evaluation to be undertaken.

The work was carried out by the AFU for Gerard Crouch on behalf of Mr R. Burton, in accordance to a Design Brief issued by the County Archaeology Officer (Thomas, 7 March 2001). The nature of the work was outlined in a Specification (Connor MAR092/00) which was submitted to the CAO prior to the evaluation.

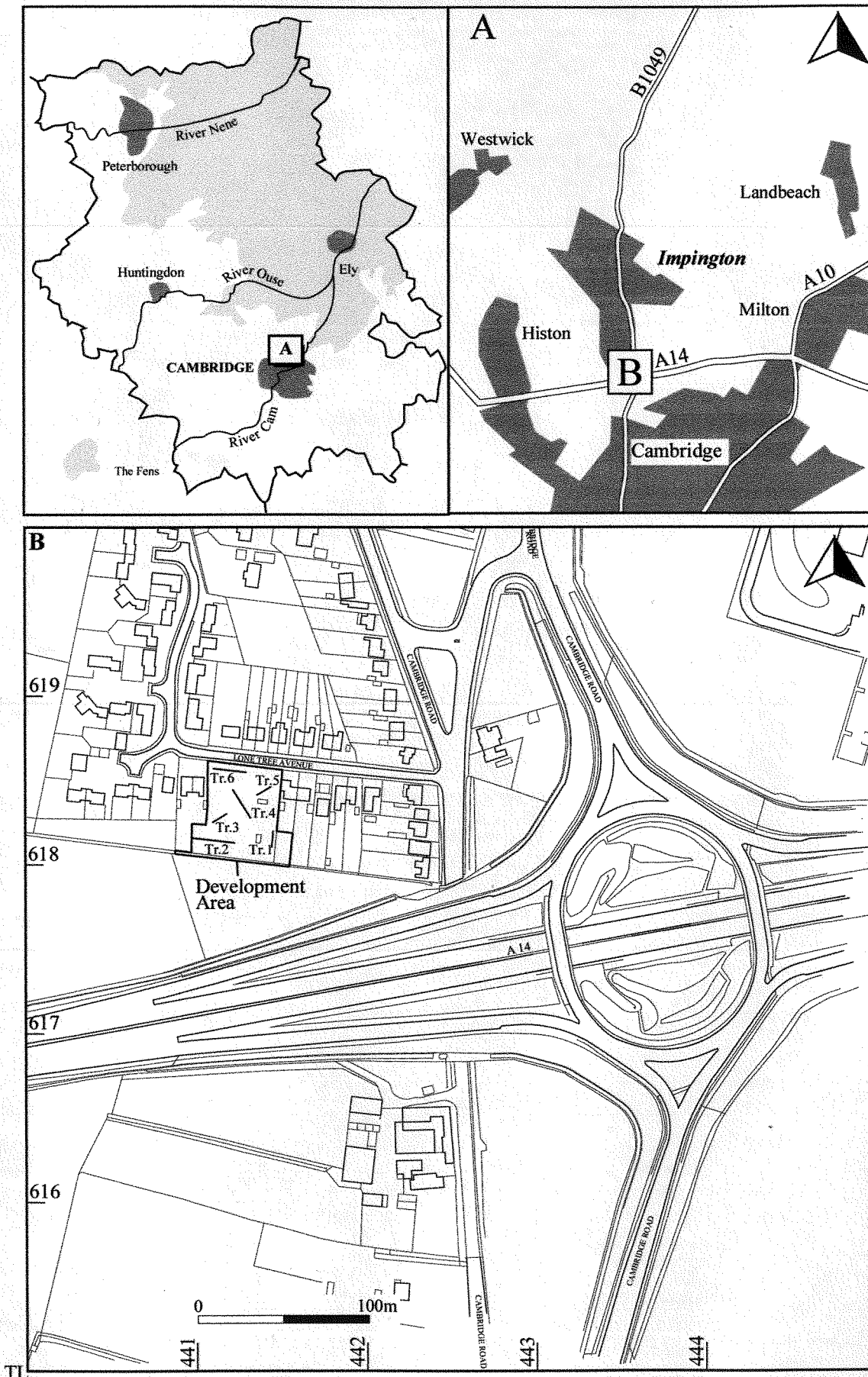
The archaeological work was supervised on site by Rebecca Casa Hatton and managed by Aileen Connor (Project Officer).

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The development site is located to the south of the medieval village of Impington, immediately north of the city of Cambridge. It comprises a rectangular area of 0.28 hectares off Lone Tree Avenue, flanked by private properties to the west and east, and by a drain to the south. At the time of the evaluation the area was disused open grassland formerly under cultivation (Fig. 1).

The site is situated on an outspread of gravel from the Third Terrace of the Cam catchment system. The gravel seems to have accumulated in a lake or wide reach of the river in which there may have been Gault Clay islands separated by deeper channels made by the stream as it changed its course from time to time (Worssam *et al.* 1969, 95, BGS Sheet 188). The upper deposits in the southern portion of the site also comprise riverine silt.

The land lay at an average height of 13m sloping gradually to the south where the silt deposits overlay the Terrace Gravel and Gault clay.



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Figure 1 Site Location Map showing position of trenches within the development area

3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The development site is situated in an area of known archaeological and historical interest.

The general account that follows is drawn upon the published report by Tim Reynolds (1994a) who conducted an archaeological evaluation on former allotments off Histon Road, some 700m to the south-east of the present development site.

Further information was obtained from the Sites and Monument Record Office in Cambridge (SMR). Records of finds and excavations, together with historical maps and overlay maps of aerial photographs were consulted and combined with relevant historical and archaeological information from documentary sources.

Prehistoric

There are no records of Mesolithic and Neolithic finds from the area. The earliest known prehistoric activity dates from the Bronze Age period and is documented by few lithic implements found during excavations at Arbury Camp to the south-east of the development site.

Late Iron Age activity is well documented by the earthwork complex at Arbury Camp (SMR 08479). A recent survey by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments of England (RCHME 1995) has confirmed the results from previous investigations. The earthwork survives as a subcircular rampart bank with a south-east entrance, mirroring the layout of the hillfort at Wandlebury to the south of Cambridge. In contrast with the latter, Arbury appears to have been the focus of seasonal activities of uncertain nature. The monument would be too substantial to represent a stock enclosure, and too poor in terms of artefactual remains to represent a ritual site. Subcircular enclosures of uncertain function are known in the region, their origin possibly stemming from the Late Bronze Age. By the Roman period the monument was in disuse.

Further cropmarks (namely trackways and ditches) in the area may have belonged to the Iron Age. Whether these were contemporary with the main banked enclosure is uncertain.

Finally, undated trackways and enclosure ditches are located some 0.5km to the south-west of the development site (SMR 08955 & 08956).

Roman

The earliest feature of the Roman landscape was the road system, with Akeman Street between Cambridge and Littleport attracting occupation to the area. A portion of the road was investigated in the 1960's c. 1km to the east of the present development site, not far from Arbury Camp (SMR 10087). Further

sections of the road were excavated at Milton (Ozanne 1991) and Landbeach (Macaulay 1997). An area of dense occupation stretches along Akeman Street, representing the northern suburban ribbon development of Roman Cambridge. Inhumation burials have also been uncovered, their location marking the boundary of the built-up area in the later Roman period.

To the north of Cambridge villa sites by Akeman Street are evidence of occupation and farming close to the line of the Roman road (Ette 1991; Reynolds 1994b).

Roman activity has also emerged in the form of scatters of abraded pottery from Arbury Camp, probably as the result of manuring. In addition, pottery was recovered during fieldwalking undertaken in close proximity to the development site in advance of the widening of the A45 (SMR 11191). The distribution of pottery would be consistent with rural activity associated with farmsteads in the vicinity.

Finally, further to the north cropmarks visible on aerial photographs are thought to indicate the presence of a villa-complex (SMR 05187).

Saxon and Medieval

Very little is known of Saxon Impington, although the place-name suggests a possible Saxon origin. It derives from *tun/ingtun* meaning 'hamlet' and *Empa/Impa* (Reaney 1943, 178). According to Late Saxon sources, the manor of Impington was given to Ely abbey by the ealdorman of Essex, in 991. Impington is later referenced in Domesday Book. In the twelfth century the bishop of Ely created two knights' fees, held separately and covering the whole of the parish. One of the fee later became Burgoynes manor. This latter estate was partitioned in 1574, the shares being distinguished as Manor Place Part and Ferme Part (Wright 1989, 131 ff.).

The parish included the Hamlet of Howes. This is first mentioned in 1279 and first recorded in 1219. The name seems to be associated with either *hoh* (from the Old English for 'mound') or *haugr* (from the Old Norse for 'barrow') (Reaney 1943, 177). Its crofts and closes extended into Impington, Chesterton and Cambridge.

The deserted hamlet has been traditionally located in the north-west end of Grithowe Field (Reaney, 1943, 177) at Howes Close, near the boundary of Girton parish (SMR 00184). Earthwork remains of medieval field-systems (ridge and furrow) associated with the hamlet are known to be located some 700m to the north-east of the site (SMR 05466). Further remains of ridge and furrow survive c. 0.5km to the south of the proposed development site (SMR 10104).

The medieval village was presumably near the church of St Andrew (SMR 05448), originally built in the twelfth century and dedicated to St Etheldreda, which stands with Burgoynes Farm in a large enclosure.

Post-Medieval

The medieval manor house of Impington was replaced by a Hall which was completed in the seventeenth century in the setting of a formal park, and later remodelled (SMR 05287). It was demolished in the 1950's. No ancient features survive.

The parish was enclosed with Histon in 1806. Remains of medieval/post-medieval ridge and furrow survive to the south of the present development site (above).

Modern

Residential and industrial development from the late nineteenth century caused the parishes of Impington and Histon to be physically joined together. At the beginning of the twentieth century an area belonging to Chesterton was transferred to Impington. In 1953 land that included the ancient hamlet of Howes was added from Impington to Girton.

4 METHODOLOGY

The objective of the evaluation was to establish the presence/absence, nature and degree of preservation of archaeological features and deposits likely to be affected by ground-works. To this aim, six linear trenches totalling 95m (i.e. c. 5.5% sample) were located across the site in order to maximise coverage and thus increase the possibility of discovering archaeological remains (Fig. 1). The modern topsoil was removed to the top of the geological gravel and clay by means of a mechanical excavator with a 1.60m wide toothless ditching bucket. Natural deposits were encountered at a depth between 0.76m and 0.64m below the present ground surface.

A general location plan was produced to show the position of the trenches within the development site. In addition, a photographic record was compiled which consisted of colour slides, and colour and monochrome prints.

The recording system and the post-excavation procedures followed the standard AFU practice in compliance with IFA guidance policy.

5 RESULTS

Trench 1

Trench 1 (10m x 1.60m), north-south aligned, was located in the south-east corner of the development site. The removal of topsoil to a depth of 0.18m

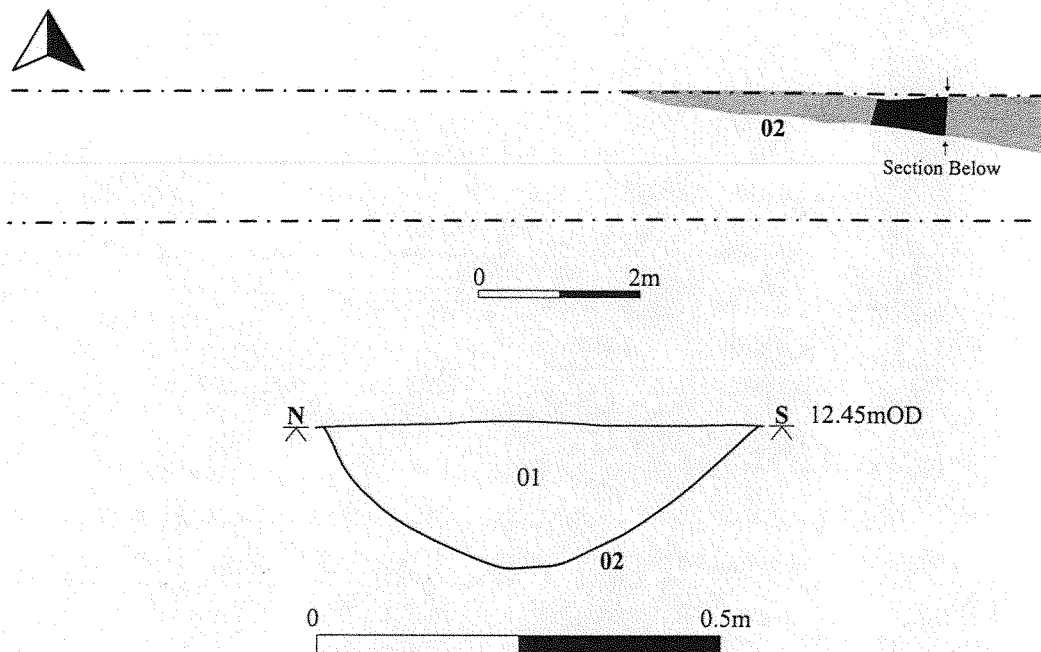


Figure 2 Plan and section of linear 02 at eastern end of Trench 6

(north end) and 0.25 m (south end), and subsoil (0.45m thick) exposed an upper silty deposit overlaying the natural gravel and clay.

No archaeological features or deposits were uncovered.

Trench 2

Trench 2 (25m x 1.60m), west-east aligned, was located in the southern part of the development site, parallel to the drain. The removal of topsoil to a depth of 0.19m (east end) and 0.30m (west end) exposed subsoil 0.56m thick (east end) and 0.40m (west end). The natural geology consisted of gravel and clay.

No archaeological features or deposits were uncovered.

Trench 3

Trench 3 (10m x 1.60m), north-east to south-west aligned, was located north of Trench 2, near the western boundary of the site. The removal of topsoil to an

average depth of 0.30m exposed subsoil 0.46m thick (north-east end) and 0.360m (south-west end). The natural geology consisted of gravel and clay.

No archaeological features or deposits were uncovered.

Trench 4

Trench 4 (20m x 1.60m), north-west to south-east aligned, was located in the centre of the site. The removal of the topsoil to an average depth of 0.22m exposed the subsoil 0.50m thick. The natural geology consisted of gravel and clay.

A modern pit at least 1.6m in diameter and 0.70m deep containing a layer of burnt debris and a mixed fill was exposed below the topsoil. No archaeological features or deposits were uncovered.

Trench 5

Trench 5 (10m x 1.60m), north-east to south-west aligned, was located in the north-east corner of the site. The removal of the topsoil to a depth of 0.30m (south-west end) and 0.25m (north-east end) exposed the subsoil 0.40m thick. The natural geology consisted of gravel and clay.

The removal of the topsoil revealed the presence of modern land-drains being cut through the subsoil. No archaeological features or deposits were uncovered.

Trench 6

Trench 6 (10m x 1.60m), west to east aligned, was located in the north-west part of the site, parallel to Lone Tree Avenue. The removal of the topsoil to an average depth of 0.10m exposed a layer of small gravel (0.25 to 0.30m thick) overlaying the subsoil (0.40m thick). The layer of gravel is likely to be part of the modern road make-up. The natural geology consisted of gravel and clay.

The removal of the subsoil uncovered the remains of a shallow and narrow ditch of uncertain function (a drain?) and date (modern?) possibly associated with a rural trackway pre-dating the construction of Lone Tree Avenue in the 1950's (Occupant of 9, Lone Tree Avenue, *per. comm.*). No archaeological features or deposits were uncovered.

Cut 02: Wide 'U' shaped ditch, west to east aligned, 0.50m wide and 0.18m deep. It contained one fill, 01.

Fill 01: Mid brown sandy silty clay with small gravel inclusions. It produced no finds

6 CONCLUSIONS

The objective of the project was to establish the character, date, state of preservation and extent of any archaeological remains within the site prior to development.

The evaluation produced negative results. In spite of the presence of modern features, the site does not appear to have been heavily disturbed. Absence of archaeological features and deposits would indicate that the area was not occupied in ancient times. The reason may be partly due to the local topography. Compared with the location of the medieval village, the land further to the south slopes gradually. As with the evaluation site to the south of Arbury Camp (Reynolds, 1994), drainage of the area may have been a problem, as suggested by the presence of modern land-drains across the site leading towards the water catchment channel flanking the southern perimeter of the site.

The presence of Roman pottery in the immediate vicinity may be associated with manuring, possibly from the villa-estate to the north of the development site. However, absence of domestic refuse on the present development site would indicate that there were no centres of activity in the immediate vicinity of the development site and that the area was probably marginal, having been used as seasonal pasture. The same consideration may apply to the medieval period, although shallow ridge and furrow are likely to have been obliterated by modern ploughing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Gerard Crouch and his client, Mr. Burton, for commissioning the work.

The work was carried out in response to a design brief issued by Andy Thomas of CAO, who monitored the work. The project was managed by Aileen Connor (Project Officer) who also edited the present report. Andrew Hatton (Site Supervisor) helped on site.

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