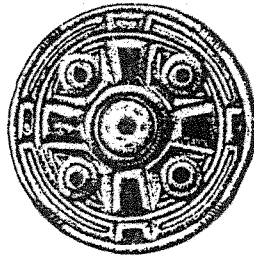


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Archaeological Field Unit

**Site adjacent to Church End Farm, Warboys Road,
Pidley, Cambridgeshire:
An Archaeological Evaluation**

Rebecca Casa Hatton

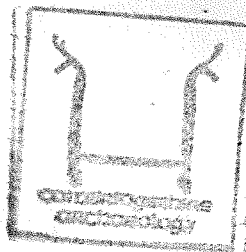
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Commissioned by T. W. Lumley Ltd.



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**Site adjacent to Church End Farm, Warboys Road,
Pidley, Cambridgeshire:
An Archaeological Evaluation
(TL 3270 7819)**

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September 2001

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Report No. B91

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SUMMARY

On the 28th August 2001 staff of the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council conducted an archaeological evaluation on land next to Church End Farm, Warboys Road, Pidley cum Fenton, Cambridgeshire (TL 3270 7819) in advance of a proposed residential development.

Four trenches, totalling 43m, were mechanically excavated. The site produced no archaeological features, with the exception of a possible late medieval/early post-medieval cobbled surface (a trackway?). Modern activity was represented by a phase of levelling of the whole area under investigation, and by the subsequent excavation of small rubbish pits (containing brick, plastic sheets, etc.).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY	1
3	ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	3
4	METHODOLOGY	3
5	RESULTS	4
6	CONCLUSIONS	6
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	6
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	7

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Location Plan	2
Figure 2	Plan of Cobbled Area	5

**Site adjacent to Church End Farm, Warboys Road,
Pidley, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation
TL 3270 7819**

1 INTRODUCTION

On the 28 August 2001 staff of the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council conducted an archaeological evaluation on land next to Church End Farm, Warboys Road, Pidley, Cambridgeshire, TL 3270 7819 (Fig. 1), in advance of the construction of a single two-storey dwelling with associated paddock/tree planted area.

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 on behalf of T. W. Lumley Ltd., in accordance with a Design Brief issued by the Acting Senior Archaeologist of the County Archaeology Office (Thomas, July, 16, 2001). The nature of the work was outlined in a Specification for Archaeological Evaluation (Roberts, JUL183/01) which was submitted to the CAO before the evaluation.

The archaeological work was supervised on site by Andrew Hatton and managed by Judith Roberts (Project Officer).

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Pidley cum Fenton is a small parish in the northern part of Cambridgeshire. The village of Pidley lies eight miles to the north-east of Huntingdon. In relation to the village itself, the proposed development site is located in the area known as Church End, to the south-west of All Saints' Church.

At the time of the evaluation it comprised a rectangular area of some 981sqm, off Warboys Road, to the north of Church End Farm, at approximately 30m AOD. It was flanked by hedges and bushes to the east and west respectively, and by a wooden fence to the north (Fig. 1). The site was disused open grassland formerly under cultivation.

The local geology consists of a high plateau of Glacial Till (boulder clay) over Amphill Clay/West Walton formations, close to the edge of the medieval settlement. The plateau falls sharply to a fen which contains an extensive deposit of marine clay with roddons (Hall 1992, 50).

3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Prehistoric finds are known from the higher gravels and fen of Somersham. The fens of Pidley and Fenton consist of a heavy clay skirtland that was not occupied in early prehistoric times.

Iron Age and Roman occupation also occurred on Somersham fen-edge, representing an outlier of the sites discovered on the gravel terraces of Earith, Colne and Somersham. At Fenton a Roman site was located on top of a spur of higher skirtland in the fen.

Although within the borders of Huntingdonshire, in an area mainly controlled by Ramsey Abbey, the greater part of the parish of Pidley was within the chace of Somersham that belonged to the Bishops of Ely. Pidley is first recorded in relation to the demesne of Bishop Geoffrey of Ely in a confirmation of a charter of 1225-28 and has been associated with Fenton since the fourteenth century (*Pidele et Fenton*) (Page 1974, 24).

The village developed on the top of a hill along the road from Huntingdon to Chatteris. The area known as Church End lies in the north-eastern part of the village. It comprises All Saints Church (1864-65) built on the same site as its twelfth century precursor. The only remaining features of the early church are the fourteenth century square-headed two-light windows reset in the west wall of the vestry.

The parish was enclosed at the end of the eighteenth century. Remains of earlier ridge and furrow are still visible around the villages of Pidley and Fenton.

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 four trenches totalling 43m (i.e. c. 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 deposits by means of a mechanical excavator with a 1.60m wide toothless ditching bucket. Natural deposits were encountered at a depth between 0.58m and 0.22m 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 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 (11m x 1.60m), north-west to south-east aligned, was located in the north-eastern corner of the development site. The removal of topsoil to a depth of 0.58m (north-west end) and 0.40m (south-east end) exposed the natural gravel and clay deposits.

Modern rubbish pits containing fragments of brick had been cut through the topsoil and were sealed by a turf layer.

No earlier archaeological features or deposits were uncovered.

Trench 2

Trench 2 (12m x 1.60m), north-west to south-east aligned, was located to the west of Trench 1, in the proposed footings of the house. The removal of topsoil to a depth of 0.42m (south-east end) and 0.30m (north-west end) exposed the remains of a cobbled surface, 05. The natural geology consisted of gravel and clay.

Feature 05: remains of a cobbled surface (a track?) on a west to east alignment, some 2.25m wide. It consisted of randomly coursed flint cobbles, between 18cm to 2cm in diameter, which had been embedded in the natural clay. Finds recovered from this feature included sherds of Colne Ware dating to the fifteenth century (Paul Spoerry, *pers. comm.*), burnt brick of late medieval/early post-medieval date (Paul Spoerry, *pers. comm.*), burnt animal bone and an iron nail.

Trench 3

Trench 3 (10m x 1.60m), north-east to south-west aligned, was located west of Trench 2, parallel to the northern boundary of the site. The removal of topsoil to a depth between 0.30m (north-east end) and 0.23m (south-west end) exposed the geological gravel and clay deposits.

Modern rubbish pits and a ditch containing fragments of brick had been cut through the topsoil but were sealed by the turf layer.

No earlier archaeological features or deposits were uncovered.

Trench 4

Trench 4 (20m x 1.60m), north-west to south-east aligned, was located to the south of Trench 3, perpendicular to it. The removal of the topsoil to an average depth of 0.22m exposed the natural gravel and clay deposits.

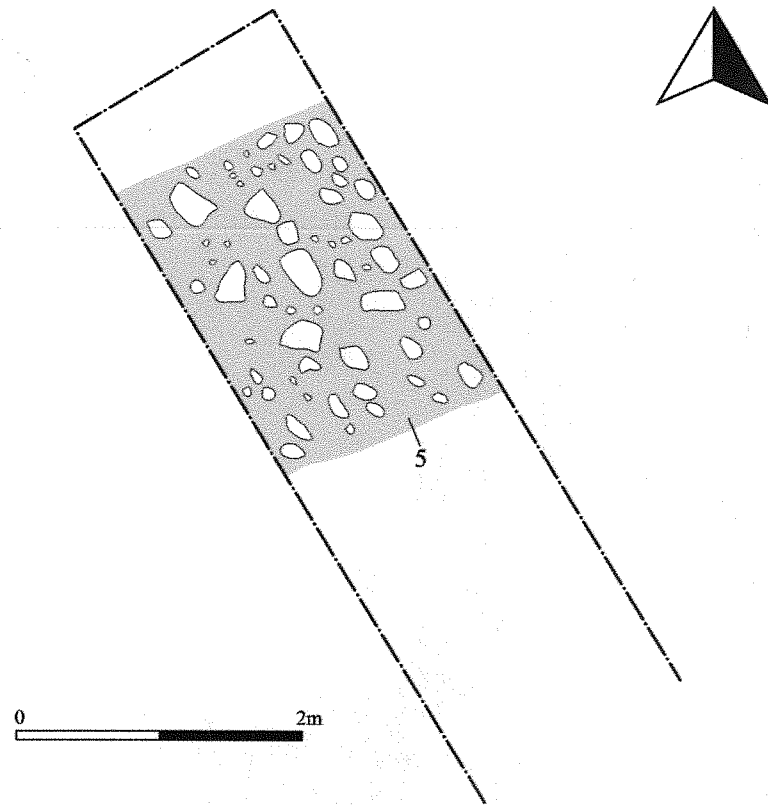


Figure 2 *Detail of cobbled area in Northwestern end of Trench 2*

Modern disturbance was represented by rubbish in the topsoil (namely brick, plastic sheets, *etc.*)

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 before development.

Besides the presence of a cobbled surface in Trench 2, the evaluation produced no archaeological features or deposits.

Notwithstanding the high degree of modern disturbance in the form of levelling and landscaping, it is unlikely that the area was ever occupied before the Middle Ages, the presence of clay in the underlying geology making it unsuitable for settlement.

The earliest feature on site was represented by the cobbled surface that appeared to have been truncated and damaged. Truncation caused by modern levelling may partly explain the absence of further evidence for this feature in Trench 4, some 10m to the east. The width of the cobbled surface (2.25m) may indicate the remains of a track on a west to east alignment. Sherds of fifteenth century Colne Ware were recovered from the feature during cleaning. No other artefacts were recovered from the development site. This could suggest that the dating evidence is reliably associated with the cobbled track.

No medieval/post-medieval buildings are known to have stood within or near the evaluation area. It is however possible that a small farm existed nearby, having been obliterated by the later complex of Church End Farm (OS Map of 1927).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank T. W. Lumley Ltd. for commissioning the work.

The work was carried out in response to a design brief issued by Andy Thomas of CAO, and monitored by Jeremy Parsons (Archaeology Information Officer). The project was managed by Judith Roberts (Project Officer) who also edited the present report. Andrew Hatton was the site Supervisor. Dr. Paul Spoerry spot-dated the finds.

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