

Archaeological Field Unit

**An Archaeological Investigation at King George V
Playing Field, Trumpington, Cambridge,
Cambridgeshire**

Celine Beauchamp

December 2003

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. B 120

Commissioned by Cambridge City Council

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Trumpington, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire**

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SUMMARY

On the 25th and 26th November 2003 the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council conducted an archaeological investigation on the King George V Playing Field, Trumpington, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire (TL 4483 5486) in advance of construction of a multi-sports court.

The area totalling 542.5m² was mechanically excavated. The topsoil was removed and subsoil reached, although no archaeological or natural features were found within the development area.

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**An Archaeological Investigation at King George V Playing Field,
Trumpington, Cambridge,
(TL 4483 5486)**

1 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological investigation was carried out at King George V Playing Field, Trumpington, Cambridge (TL 4483 5486) to fulfil the requirements of a planning application (P/C/03/0492/OP) in advance of the construction of a multi-sports court. The investigation was carried out by the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council on 25th and 26th November 2003.

The archaeological objectives of the site were recorded in the Design Brief for the investigation (Gdaniec 2003). This Brief required that the proposed development (including the removal and grading of topsoil on the existing playing field) be carried out under archaeological supervision, and that the subsoil and natural be inspected for archaeological features.

An archaeological specification for the work was written detailing the proposed archaeological investigation of for the site (Macaulay 2003). This specification was approved by the County Council Archaeological Office before the start of the investigation.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The development area lies in the east part of Trumpington. The natural geology is the highest Terrace River Gravels (BGS 1974). The 0.19m depth stripped for the development did not reach natural deposits. The subsoil exposed consisted of a mid brown clayey silt, with occasional patches of sand and stones.

The site is a flat playing field with a spot height of 17.7m on the adjacent road. The land slopes up to the chalk uplands of south-east Cambridgeshire.

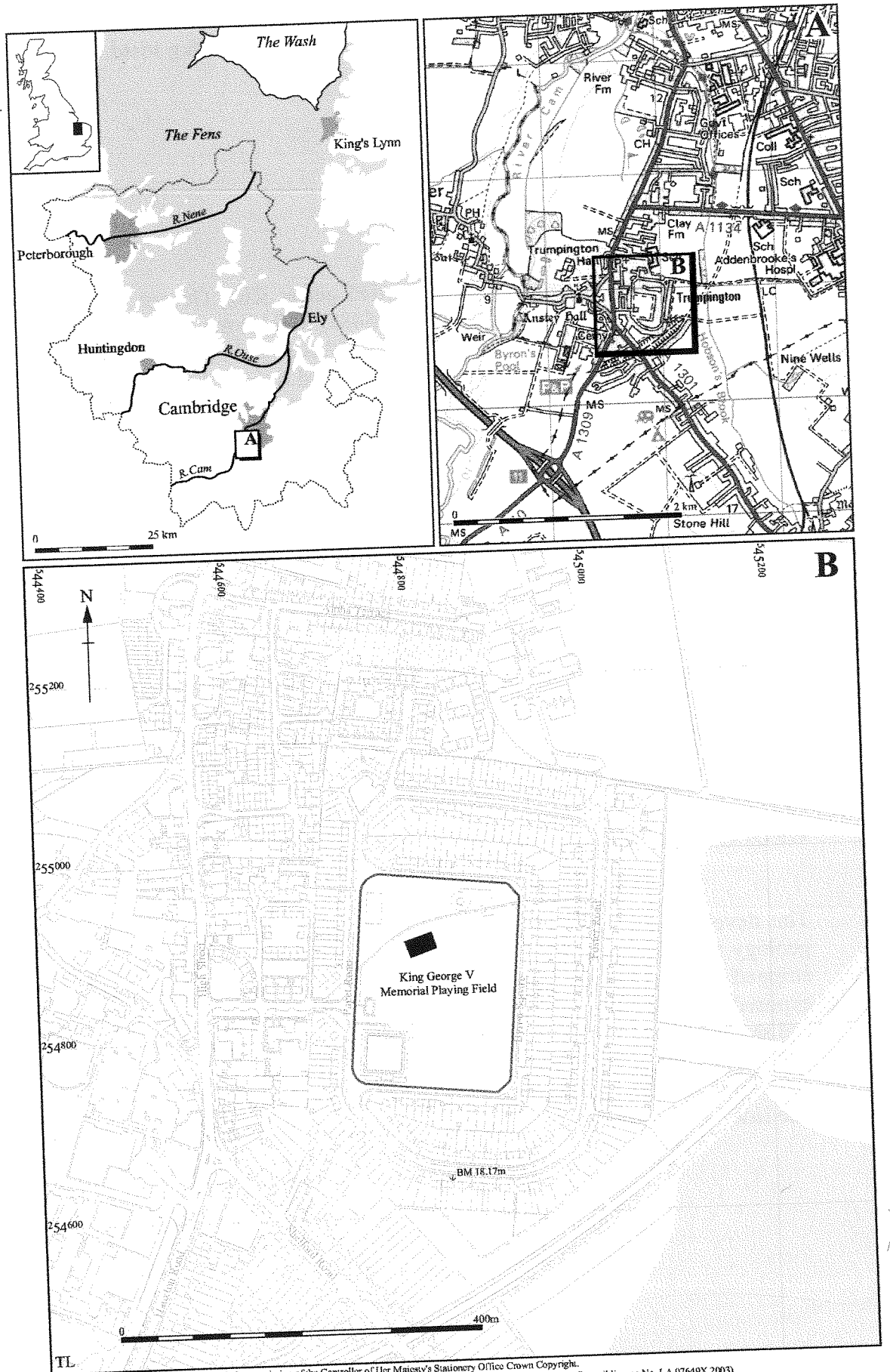


Figure 1 Location of Investigation Area (black) with Development Area outlined (red) and Area of dense Cropmarks (green)

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Introduction

In accordance with the archaeological brief for the site (Gdaniec 2003), archaeological and historical sources were consulted at the archives of AFU. These have recorded previous archaeological work, any archaeological finds reported and the historic documentation for the area.

The settlement of Trumpington probably had its origins in the early Iron Age, near to the ford over the River Cam (Wright 1989). The route through the ford, to Grantchester and beyond, may have had earlier origins (Fox 1923) and certainly continued in use as a major route way into medieval times. In 1086 the Domesday Book records that there were 33 peasants and 4 slaves. A church now dedicated to SS Mary and Michael, but originally dedicated to St Nicholas, was established by 1200.

The site is located 500m east of this church and 250m east of the main road to Cambridge, in an area that is now surrounded by modern housing. It appears on an map dating to the end of 19th century as part of a field system indicating the possible survival of any archaeological remains. That means that the chance of finding some well conserved archaeology is good.

The area has produced traces of human activity from the Palaeolithic onwards (Hatton & Hinman 2000).

3.1.1 Prehistoric

Paleolithic flints were found in a gravel quarry in Hauxton Road. Numerous flint scatters and stray finds, including polished axes, have been found along the chalk below Clarke's Hill, and to the north of Granham's Farm, towards Little Trees Hill, Wandlebury and onto the Gog Magog Golf Course (SMR 04882, 04880, 04893, 04971 04891, 04892, 05058, 00969, 05059, 05016, 04851, 05012, 05011, 10944, 05088, 05052, 05017).

The area on the south side of modern Cambridge is rich in archaeological finds and sites of periods from the Mesolithic onwards. Early sites in the area include a causewayed camp and bowl barrow at Little Trees (SMR 24422, SMR 05056).

3.1.2 Iron Age

A site of an Iron Age settlement (SMR 04800) was recorded during the construction of Addenbrookes Hospital in the 1960s. Further settlement sites in the vicinity include Rectory Farm (SMR 04503a) and Hauxton Mill (SMR

04978), and two further probable settlement sites lie within the area (SMR 05112, 05130).

Slightly further afield are the two Iron Age hillforts of Wandlebury (SMR 24406, SMR 04636) and War Ditches (SMR 04963) c.1.5km to the east, on the chalk uplands. Recently a ritual site which has its origins in the Neolithic, but continued in use into the Iron Age has been discovered at Babraham Road (Hinman 1999).

3.1.3 *Roman*

A Roman road (241e) is reported to have run east-west to the south of the site. This formed a T-junction with another Roman road which runs parallel to modern day Hills Road .

3.1.4 *Medieval and Post-Medieval*

The expansion of Cambridge to its present southern limits is part of 20th-century development. The subject site therefore lay outside the settlement core during the medieval and post-medieval periods and is clearly shown as farmland on the OS map of 1810. There are a number of locally important communication routes in the vicinity. Immediately to the south of the subject site is a very long linear crop mark (SMR 11165), which is likely to have a very recent origin as the SMR suggests it may be part of a water main laid down in the 1950s.

3.2 **Cropmarks**

On the immediate east of the site three areas of dense cropmarks have been found. The continuation of such archaeological remains to the west, as far as the site of the King George V playing field, is very probable, although the cropmarks are not visible on the ground surface due to localised disturbance caused by the construction of housing surrounding the playing ground and the old Bedford-Cambridge railway line, opened in 1862, subsequently closed and removed after 1965. As yet, there is no clear evidence for the date of the cropmarks.

4 **METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS**

A mechanical excavator stripped a rectangular surface measuring 31m x 18m as defined in the archaeological brief (Fig 2), as well as four smaller rectangular areas around the edges for the mini-soccer goal and basketball unit (4m x 1m). As described in the archaeological brief, the machining of this area was conducted under the supervision of an archaeologist. The machining did not reach the natural, but removed the topsoil and some of the subsoil.

The topsoil comprised a very dark grey brown clayey silt and was less than 10cm deep. The subsoil was a mid-brown clayey silt, with occasional patches of sand and stone, its total depth remaining unknown. The depth of both layers was over 0.3m. The spoil removed was examined for artefactual evidence.

No archaeological features were noted. The investigation of the removed soil produced a few broken 17th-century clay pipes and some pieces of modern pottery and brick.

5 CONCLUSIONS

No archaeological features were found by this investigation. The few finds recovered from the topsoil do not indicate the presence of disturbed archaeological deposits. Despite this negative evidence archaeological remains may survive beneath the 0.3m level examined.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Cambridge City Council who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. Judith Roberts managed the project. The illustrations were produced by Emily Oakes and the report was edited by Elizabeth Shepherd Popescu.

The brief for archaeological works was written by Kasia Gdaniec, Development Control Archaeologist, from the County Archaeology Office (CAO).

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