

Archaeological Field Unit

**Post-Medieval Garden Features,
193 Huntingdon Road, Cambridge:
An Archaeological Evaluation**

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(TL 543267 260165)

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SUMMARY

On the 15th December 2003 the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council conducted an archaeological evaluation on land at 193 Huntingdon Road, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire (TL 543267 260165) in advance of proposed building development.

Three trenches, each approximately 6m in length, were excavated. The only surviving features identified were the remains of truncated post-medieval garden features.

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1 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by staff of the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council on 15th December 2003 at 193 Huntingdon Road to fulfil the requirements of a planning application (C/03/0402/FP) in advance of building development. The work was carried out in accordance with a Brief for archaeological evaluation issued by the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Office.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site lies on the interface of the Gault clay, gravel terrace and lower chalk geology (BGS Sheet 188). The natural was a chalky flecked gault (blue) clay.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Prehistoric

The Cambridgeshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) lists a number of artefacts found in the vicinity of the site which date to the prehistoric period. These include two 'flint implements' (SMR 04408) and (SMR 04408A), prehistoric stone objects (SMR 05301), a hand axe and worked flints (SMR 05299).

3.2 Iron Age/Romano British

The development area is located in an area of known archaeology. Huntingdon Road follows the route of the 1st century AD Roman Road (*Via Devana*) which linked the legionary garrisons of Cambridge and Godmanchester. The site is located just to the north of the Roman town of Cambridge. Burial traditions during the early (pre-Christian) Roman period were for burials to be on the outskirts of towns commonly adjacent to roads.

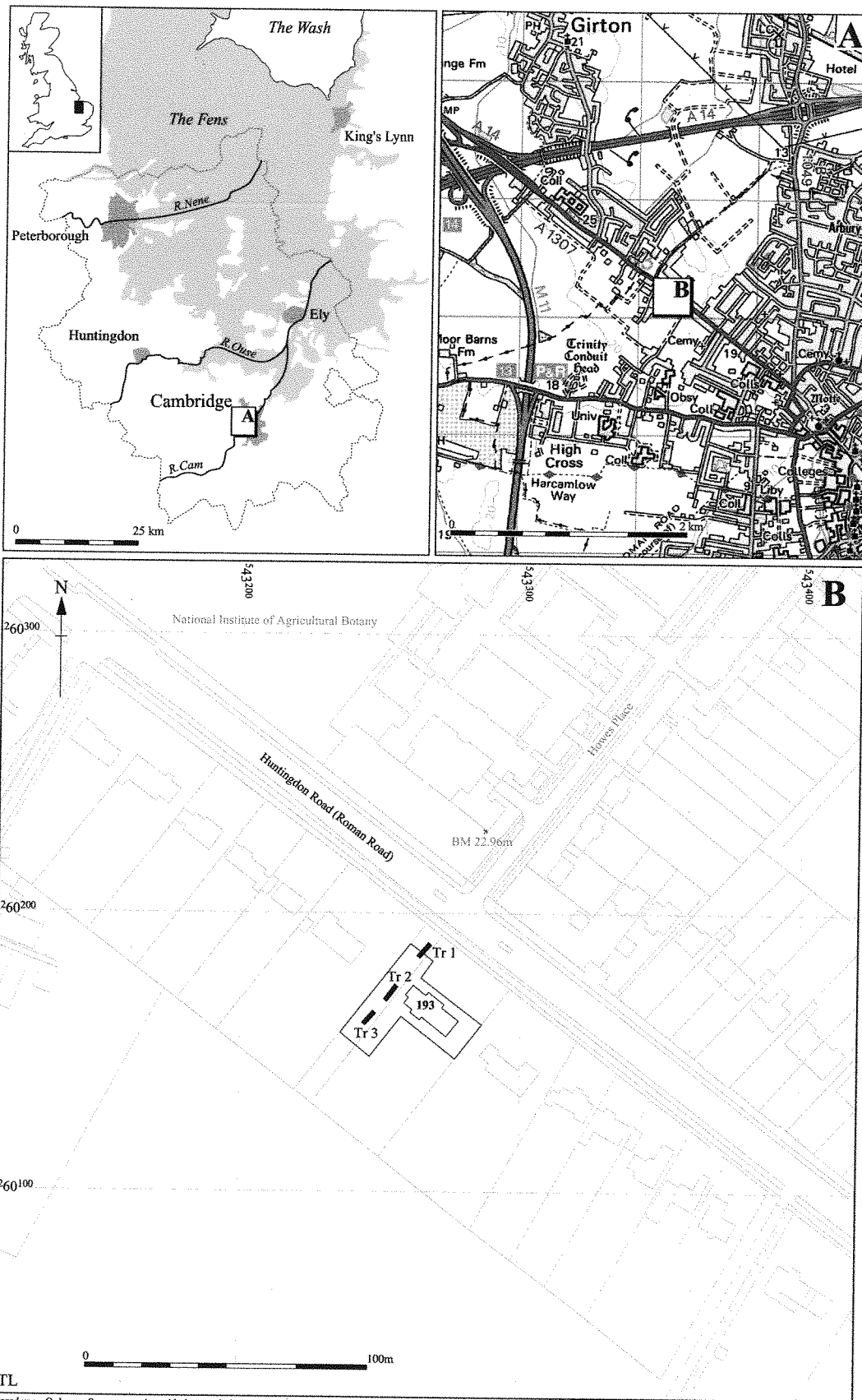


Figure 1 Location of Trenches (black) with New Building Footprint (red)

The Cambridgeshire SMR has records of previously identified inhumations close to the Huntingdon Road. Two stone coffins were found alongside Huntingdon Road during coprolite digging in the 19th century, one of which contained the remains of a female and several grave goods dating the burial to the 3rd or early 4th century (SMR 05129 – SMR CB6237). The SMR has also identified a stone sarcophagi (SMR 9527), barrow mound (SMR 6299) and a Roman cremation (SMR 5186).

In addition to the proximity of the Roman town and associated remains, the site lies close to known (from aerial photography) cropmarks which indicate a probable Iron Age or Roman settlement and enclosures located to the south-west.

An archaeological evaluation at nearby Gravel Hill Farm carried out in 2002 revealed a ditch producing Iron Age and Roman pottery (SMR CB1415).

3.3 Saxon

The Cambridgeshire SMR has records relating to the discovery of a Saxon inhumation and unidentified iron object found in close proximity the excavation site (SMR 04409).

3.4 Medieval

The deserted medieval village at Howes Close (SMR 244) lies on the north of Huntingdon Road, within 300m of the development site. Aerial photos and maps provided in the archaeological brief show a system of ridge and furrow in the area, showing that there was extensive medieval agricultural activity in the vicinity.

3.5 Post Medieval

Investigations at Gravel Hill Farm showed that there was a significant amount of gravel and coprolite extraction in the post medieval period. This was evident though a number of pits (CB1415).

4 METHODOLOGY

Three trenches, all approximately 6m in length and 1.5 wide, were excavated using a JCB with a flat-bladed bucket. The position of the trenches was determined by the proposed layout of the development area (Fig. 1), whilst also taking into account the presence of existing active utility service pipes and cables. The trenches were all on the same north-east to south-west

alignment. Trench 1 was positioned as close to the Huntingdon Road (also known as *Via Devana*) as possible. Trench 3 was set furthest back towards the area of cropmarks identified in the aerial photographs. Trench 2 was situated between one and three. After machining the trenches were cleaned, photographed and recorded using the AFU standard contextual recording system. The spoil heap was scanned visually for artefacts.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Trench 1

The topsoil consisted of a dark brown loose silty clay, 0.20-0.30m thick with chalk flecks, occasional small stones, fragments of building material and frequent plant roots. The topsoil sealed a soft sandy silt, 0.40-0.47m thick with frequent chalk flecks.

The trench was situated approximately 8m back on the south-west side of the Huntingdon Road. Although it was located outside of the building development footprint, the trench was excavated at the request of the Development Control Archaeologist of the CAO to assess the survival of remains close to the road. The trench could not have been located closer to the route of the possible Roman road due to the presence of live services (detected by a C.A.T. scanner).

This trench was 6.14m long and 1.5m wide. Four features were recorded (1 to 4).

Several 'regular shaped' features were identified, all of which were investigated through excavation. The features were all very shallow and contained fragments or flecks of post-medieval building material. Cut 1 contained 19th century porcelain and an iron nail.

All the features contained the same fill. This fill was a mid orangish brown silty clay with occasional chalk and charcoal flecks. Heavy plant root truncation and disturbance was also encountered.

5.2 Trench 2

The topsoil was composed of a dark brown loose silty clay (as in Trench 1), but the deposit was thicker here, 0.36-0.38m, with chalk flecks, occasional small stones, fragments of building material and frequent plant roots. The topsoil sealed a soft sandy silt, but a thinner deposit than in Trench 1; 0.04-0.20m thick with frequent chalk flecks.

Trench 2 was located between Trench 1 and 3 and located within the footprint of the proposed building development area.

This trench was 6.72m long and 1.5m wide. Four features were recorded (5 to 8).

A change in the geology was encountered in this trench. At the south-west end of the trench the geology changed from a chalky marl mix to a light orange sandy gravel material.

Several 'regular shaped' features were identified and excavated. The features were all very shallow and most contained fragments or flecks of post-medieval building material. Feature 7 contained a large fragment of red brick at the base of the cut.

All the features contained the same fill, as was the case in Trench 1. This fill was a mid orangish brown silty clay with occasional chalk and charcoal flecks. Heavy plant root truncation and disturbance was also noted.

5.3 Trench 3

Similar to Trenches 1 and 2, the topsoil in Trench 3 was composed of a dark brown loose silty clay, 0.25-0.37m thick with chalk flecks, occasional small stones, fragments of building material and frequent plant roots. The topsoil sealed a soft sandy silt, but a thinner deposit than in Trenches 1 and 2; 0.00-0.10m thick with frequent chalk flecks.

Trench 3 was the furthest back from the road of the three trenches, closer to the cropmarks identified by the aerial photographs, and inside the footprint of the proposed development area.

This trench was 6m long and 1.5m wide. Two features were recorded (9 and 10).

A change in the geology was encountered in this trench as in Trench 2. At the south-west end of the trench the geology changed from a chalky marl mix to a light orange sandy gravel material.

Several 'regular shaped' features were identified and excavated. The features were all very shallow and most contained fragments or flecks of post medieval building material (19th century machine-made bricks). Feature 10 contained a large iron 'hoop', possibly from a barrel and a fragment of post-medieval decorated orange and brown Staffordshire slipware.

All the features contained the same fill, as was the case in Trenches 1 and 2. This fill was a mid orangish brown silty clay with occasional chalk and charcoal flecks. Heavy plant root truncation and disturbance was again noted.

6 CONCLUSION

The objective of the project was to establish the character, date, state of preservation and extent of any archaeological remains within the site in advance of development. Information from the evaluation will allow an assessment of the proposed development's archaeological implications and to inform an appropriate mitigation strategy.

The project has been successful in achieving its objectives.

No archaeological features or remains prior to the post-medieval period were found during this evaluation. Most of the features revealed in the trenches appeared very regular in shape, and all were investigated by excavation. Almost all were revealed to be very shallow and contained post-medieval pottery or building material. All features had the same fill and appeared to be the remains of truncated garden features, or a result of tree root disturbances.

In view of the geology of the surrounding area, this site investigated was located in an area of natural gault clay and chalk deposits. This would have been very poor for drainage and may explain the lack of archaeology here, as opposed to the area further south-west which has free draining river gravels. It was noticed during investigations, that Trenches 2 and 3 were much shallower than Trench 1 which was located closer to the road. This could be explained by the natural build-up of soils close to the roadside from both drainage and build-up during construction and maintenance of the road, its repairs and accompanying services.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Brief for archaeological work was written by Kasia Gdaniec, County Archaeology Office, who visited the site and monitored the evaluation.

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Appendix 1

Context No.	Trench	Context Type	Context Description	Finds
1	1	Modern garden feature	E-W orientated shallow linear feature with steep sloping edges and a flat base.	Fragments of brick, 1 sherd of 19th century pottery and one iron nail.
2	1	Unknown – possible tree bole	Irregular shaped shallow feature with steep sloping edges and a flat base.	Flecks of ceramic building material.
3	1	Garden feature	SE-NW orientated shallow linear feature with steep sloping edges and a flat base.	Fragments of brick.
4	1	Tree bole	Irregular shaped shallow feature with irregular edges and base.	Fragments of brick
5	2	Unknown	Irregular shaped shallow feature with steep sloping edges and a mostly flat base.	Fleck of pottery and modern building material.
6	2	Garden feature	Rectilinear shaped shallow feature with steep sloping edges and a flat base.	Small fragments of modern building material and one piece of animal bone.
7	2	Garden feature/post from fence	Shape in plan obscured. Steep sided feature with irregular base.	Two large fragments of 18/19th century brick.
8	2	Tree bole/garden feature	Sub-circular shaped shallow feature with steep sloping edges and a flat base.	None.
9	3	Animal burrowing /garden feature	Irregular shaped feature with steep sloping edges, moderately deep with an irregular base. Continued beyond trench edge.	None
10	3	Tree bole / garden feature.	Sub-circular shape, deep feature with steep sloping edges and an irregular base.	1 sherd of brown decorated slipware, a fragment of roof tile and an iron barrel hoop.



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