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Archaeological Field Unit

**Roman and Post-Medieval Ditches at Melbourn
Village College, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological
Evaluation**

Taleyna Fletcher

September 2004

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. 747

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SMR) Room A107, Castle Court,
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 Chris Scull,
Archaeology Commissions,
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23 Savile Row,
London W1X 1AB

**Roman and Post-Medieval Ditches at Melbourn Village College,
Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation**

Taleyna Fletcher

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Editor: Judith Roberts

Illustrators: Emily Oakes and Alexandra Howe

With contributions by Carole Fletcher, Rachel Fosberry and Sue Constable



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©Archaeological Field Unit
Cambridgeshire County Council
Fulbourn Community Centre
Haggis Gap, Fulbourn
Cambridgeshire CB1 5HD
Tel (01223) 576201
Fax (01223) 880946

arch.field.unit@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
<http://edweb.camcnty.gov.uk/afu>

SUMMARY

Between the 28th July and 5th August 2004 the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council conducted an archaeological evaluation on land at Melbourn Village College, Cambridgeshire. The work was commissioned by Cambridgeshire County Councils Property and Procurement Division and was carried out in advance of development of the site for a new fitness suite, tennis courts and associated car parking.











Five trenches and a test pit totalling 118m in length were excavated within the grounds of the college car park and playing fields. Archaeology was recorded in four trenches including pits, stakeholes and at least two phases of ditches. One ditch was dated to the Roman period, all other features were either undated or post-medieval.

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Drawing Conventions

Sections

- Limit of Excavation 
- Cut 
- Cut - Conjectured 
- Soil Horizon 
- Soil Horizon - Conjectured 
- Intrusion/Truncation 
- Top of Natural 
- Top Surface 
- Break in Section 
- Cut Number  118
- Deposit Number 117
- Ordnance Datum 18.45m $\frac{N}{OD}$

Plans

- Limit of Excavation 
- Deposit - Conjectured 
- Natural Features 
- Intrusion/Truncation 
- Sondages/Machine Strip 
- Illustrated Section  S.14
- Archaeological Deposit 
- Excavated Slot 
- Natural Feature 
- Cut Number 118

**Roman and Post-Medieval Ditches at Melbourn Village College,
Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation (TL 3829 4512)**

1 INTRODUCTION

Between 29th July and 5th August 2004 the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council undertook an evaluation on land at Melbourn Village College, Cambridgeshire. The work was commissioned by Cambridgeshire County Councils Property and Procurement Division in advance of the proposed development of the site for a new fitness suite, tennis courts and associated car parking.

The excavations were carried out in accordance with a Brief dated 10th June 2004 (Thomas 2004). The archaeological objectives for the evaluation were recorded in the specification for the site (Roberts 2004). These objectives were to establish the character, date, state of preservation and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed development area. The specification (and location of the trenches) was approved by the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Office (CAO) before the start of the evaluation.

Five trenches were opened, four of which contained archaeological features.

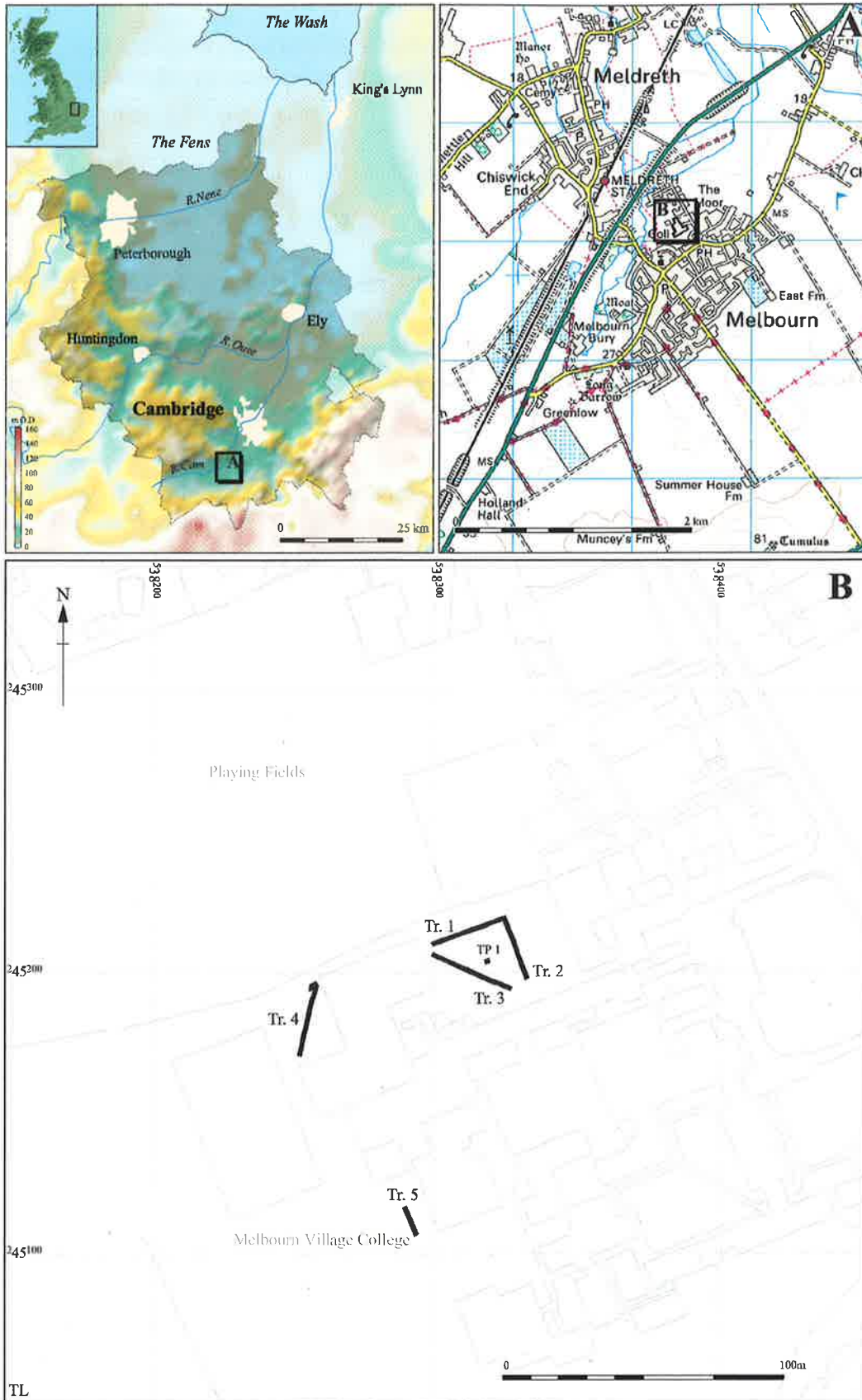
2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The area is on Lower Chalk (close to the junction between Melbourn Rock and Totternhoe stone) (BGS Sheet 204). The height in the car park area (trenches 1,2 and 3 and test pit 1) was approximately 21.56m OD and the playing field to the west (trenches 4 and 5) was approximately 20.68m OD.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prehistoric

Prehistoric remains identified in Melbourn include a Neolithic enclosure or henge near New Farm (SMR no. 3195) and various Bronze Age barrows (SMR nos. 3124, 3125, 3149, 3171 and 3172) and enclosures (SMR no. 3165 and 3434).



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Figure 1 Location of trenches 1-5 and test pit 1

Iron Age and Roman

Iron Age and Roman settlement and burial monuments around the parish have been identified through aerial photography of cropmarks and soilmarks.

Ancient trackways (Ashwell Street and the Icknield Way), both Romanised, pass through the parish (Erlington 1982).

Anglo-Saxon and Medieval

Many of the Anglo Saxon and medieval finds come from closer to the village itself suggesting that settlement has been concentrated in this area in the historic period (SMR no. 8665).

Recent excavation has revealed an Anglo-Saxon cemetery (including early Christian period graves) at some distance from the core of the village. This has been dated to the early seventh century, perhaps related to the nearby Minster at Meldreth (Taylor 1997).

The site is located close to the medieval core of the village. The thirteenth century parish church of All Saints (SMR no. 3115) lies 300m to the south and Lordship Farm medieval manor and moat (SMR CB 01993) lies approximately 120m to the south-east. Saxon and medieval pottery has been recovered from the Village College playing fields. (SMR 8665).

Excavation to the rear of 28-32 High Street, Melbourn (Roberts 2002), has produced archaeological remains from the medieval and post-medieval periods. The investigation identified structural remains located away from the High Street and north-east of the church, suggesting that occupation was not confined to the main thoroughfares of the settlement.

The place name *mel* or *meld* has variously been interpreted as deriving from the name for fat hen (eaten as a vegetable in the early medieval period) or relating to barrows or mounds, or being named after a personal name (Reaney, 1943).

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Aerial Photographic Survey

At the request of the Cambridgeshire Archaeology Office, an aerial photographic survey was commissioned. No archaeological features were identified within the Village College grounds (See Appendix 5).

4.2 Excavation

Five trenches were opened using a mechanical excavator with a flat-bladed ditching bucket. All trenches were opened to a width of 1.5m under the supervision of an archaeologist. The total length of the trenches was 118m and this constitutes a 5% sample of the development area. The machine removed overburden and modern deposits until reaching the interface between the soil horizons and the natural chalk; the level at which archaeological features were encountered.

4.3 Trench and Area Locations

The position of the trenches was determined by the location of the development area. The specification and trench location plan were approved by the CAO before work began on the site (Fig. 1). After machining, the trenches were cleaned in order to fully expose the archaeological features and to understand their extent and relationships within each trench.

4.4 Environmental Samples

Samples were taken from a range of features during the evaluation to establish the presence and preservation of any ecofacts which may suggest the character of the immediate historical environment. In most cases 20 litres of soil were collected for processing, examination and identification. On this occasion the majority of the features which yielded plant remains were later dated to the post-medieval/ modern period. Consequently, no further analysis was required.

4.5 Recording

All features were hand excavated and recorded using the AFU standard context recording system. The trenches were planned at a scale of 1:50 and sections were drawn at 1:10 or 1:20 depending on size and detail required. Colour print, colour slide and monochrome photographs were taken as well as digital photographs using a Canon A40 Powershot Digital camera. The spoil heaps and trench surfaces were scanned visually for archaeological remains.

The trench locations were surveyed using a Leica Total Station Theodolite and tied in to the Ordnance Survey grid. The individual trench plans showing feature locations were then incorporated with the survey data. The nearest benchmark was on the High Street, Melbourn. The ground surface of the site was approximately 21.5m OD.

5 RESULTS

Archaeological features were recorded in four of the five trenches and in the test pit. The earliest feature was a ditch in trench 2, on a different alignment to any of the other ditches, believed to date from the Roman period and

contained sherds of Roman pottery. All remaining features were post-medieval or undated. In the trenches which contained archaeological features (1 to 4 and the test pit), several modern make up layers were encountered.

The findings of this evaluation will be presented trench by trench. Cut numbers will be represented in **bold** text and all other contexts will be in standard text. The modern make-up layers will be described first, the features will then be presented in chronological order.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was 28m in length and orientated on an east, north-east, to west, south-west alignment. Four layers of modern make-up were encountered during machining the trench, 110 to 113 overlying the natural chalk. Features in this trench consisted of two ditches and a pit/posthole.

Layer 110 (equivalent to 75, 89): a modern, compacted rubble car-park surface with a maximum depth of 0.18m

Layer 111 (equivalent to 76, 90): a modern, moderately compact make-up layer with a maximum depth of 0.12m.

Layer 112 (equivalent to 77, 91): a modern, compact redeposited chalk levelling layer with a maximum depth of 0.16m.

Layer 113 (equivalent to 79): a mixed light brown chalky soil with a variable redeposited chalk component. Maximum depth; 0.30m.

Modern ditch **109** (equivalent to **55** in Trench 4), linear in plan, orientated north-east to south-west with vertical sides, 1.20m wide with a maximum depth of 1.18m (recorded in section) (Fig 4, Sec 15.1 and 15.2). Filled by 107; (equivalent to 54) a compact, mid brown to yellowish white mixed silty clay with a high chalk rubble content, and 108; a mid grey silty clay with no obvious inclusions and a maximum thickness of 0.12m.

Ditch **115** recorded in section only (Fig. 4, Sec 15.2) Dimensions and orientation unknown, moderate sloping side. Filled by 114; a light to mid grey brown silty clay with rare small stones and charcoal flecks. This possible ditch or pit truncates ditch 109 and despite the lack of dating evidence, is likely to be one of the latest features recorded on site due to its position within the stratigraphic sequence.

Pit/post hole **122**: Full dimensions and shape in plan unknown, recorded in section only (Fig. 4, Sec 15.3). Max 0.60m deep. Filled by 120; a dark clayey silt with fragments of timber fencepost.

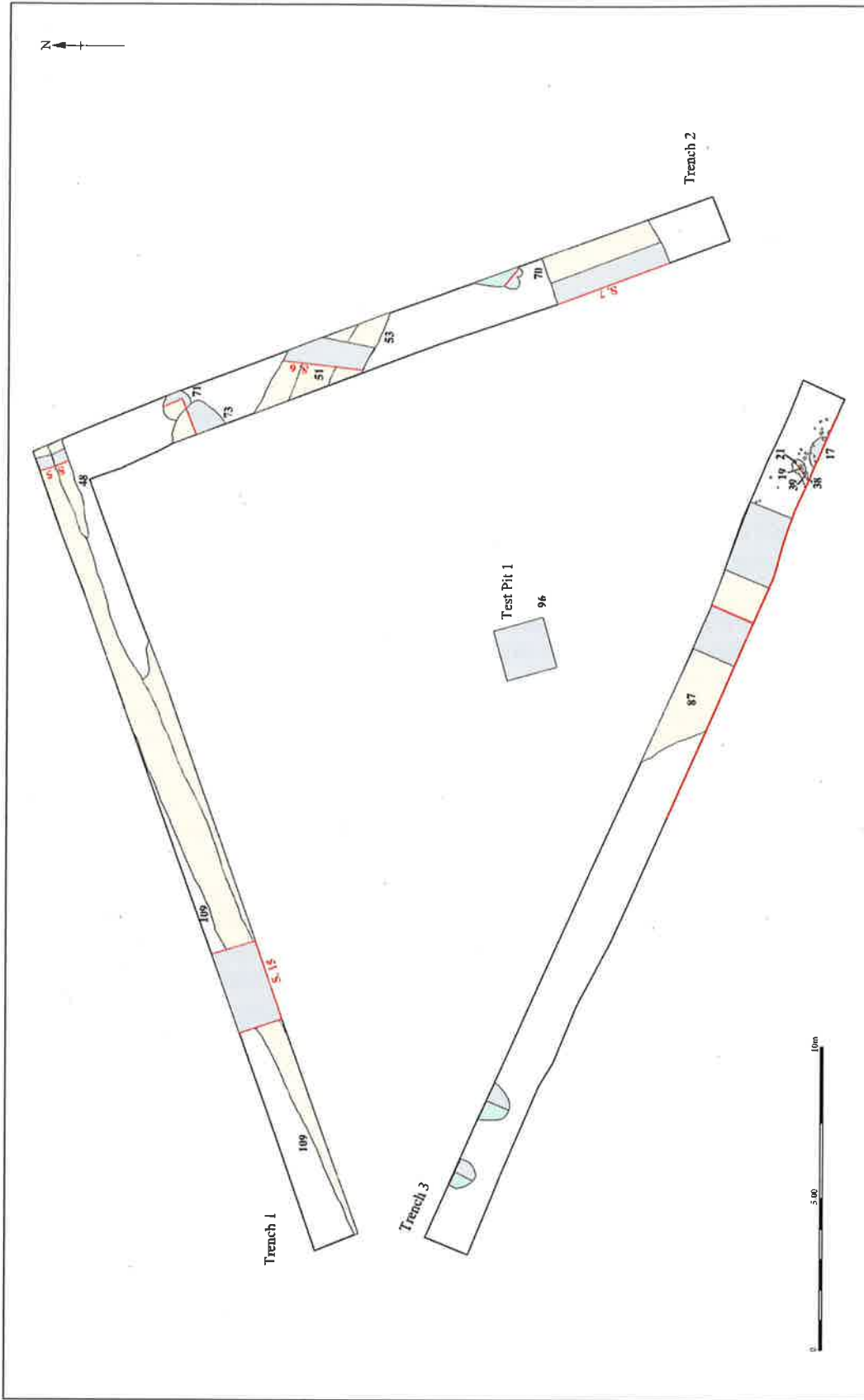


Figure 2 Plan of trenches 1, 2 and 3 and test pit 1

Trench 2

Trench 2 was 22m in length and orientated on a north, north-west to south, south-east alignment. Three layers of modern make-up were encountered during machining the trench, 116 to 118 overlying the natural chalk. Features in this trench consisted of three ditches, one of which was a Roman ditch with re-cut, and two modern pits.

Layer 116 (equivalent to 75, 89, 110): a modern, compacted rubble car-park surface with a maximum depth of 0.15m

Layer 117 (equivalent to 76, 90, 111): a modern, moderately compact make-up layer with a maximum depth of 0.12m. Layer 118: a mid greyish brown sub-soil with maximum depth of 0.35m, with occasional stone inclusions and fragments of post-medieval factory manufactured brick.

Ditch 48: linear in plan, 0.52m wide x 0.35m deep (Fig 4. Sec 5). Filled by 49: a compact, brownish grey silty clay with rare stones, a small animal bone, fragment of clay pipe and a fragment of modern ceramic building material.

Ditch 53: linear in plan, 2.6m wide x 0.2m deep. Filled by 52: a moderately compact, light greyish brown silty clay with rare subangular flints, two sherds of Roman pottery and a piece of animal bone. This deposit was interrupted by re-cut 51: linear in plan, 0.88m wide x 0.32m deep. Filled by 50: a moderately compact, mid greyish brown silty clay with occasional large subangular flints. A single ten-litre soil sample examined from this deposit identified five preserved grains and several snails.



Plate 1 Ditches 53 and 51

Ditch 70: linear in plan, 3.8m wide x 1m deep (Fig 4. Sec 7). Filled by 69: a soft, dark grey silty clay with occasional small stones and preserved wood fragments; 68: a firm, light brownish grey clay containing a piece of animal bone, a fragment of 19th century pottery and charred wheat fragments recovered from a sample taken from this deposit and 67: a fairly loose, greyish brown clayey silt with occasional small stones, chalk flecks one piece of animal bone, a fragment of 19th century pottery, and a piece of modern tile.

Pit 71: circular in plan, 0.75m in diameter x 0.10m deep. Filled by: a compact, yellowish brown silty clay with rare stones and a single sherd of 19th century pottery.

Pit 73: circular in plan, 0.70m in diameter x 0.08m deep. Filled by 74: a moderately compact greyish brown silty clay with rare stones.

Trench 3

This trench was 30m in length and orientated on a north-west to south-east alignment. Seven make-up layers were encountered during machining the trench, 75 to 81 overlying the natural chalk. Features in this trench consisted of a pit, two postholes, several stakeholes and a modern ditch.

Layer 75 (equivalent to 89, 110): a modern, compacted rubble car-park surface, with a maximum depth of 0.20m. Layer 76 (equivalent to 90, 111): a modern, moderately compact make-up layer with a maximum depth of 0.18m.

Layer 77 (equivalent to 91, 112): a modern, compact redeposited chalk levelling layer with a maximum depth of 0.22m.

Layer 78: a moderately compact, mid brown soil with no obvious inclusions with a maximum depth of 0.34m.

Layer 79 (equivalent to 113): a mixed light brown chalky soil with a variable redeposited chalk component with a maximum depth of 0.30m.

Layer 80: a thin layer of white natural chalk with a maximum depth of 0.10m.

Layer 81 (equivalent to 93): a moderately compact mid brown clayey silt with occasional chalk flecks and a maximum depth of 0.24m.

Layer 85: a light to mid brown clayey silt with occasional chalk flecks and a maximum depth of 0.31m.

Layer 86: a moderately compact, mid brown soil with no obvious inclusions with a maximum depth of 0.40m.

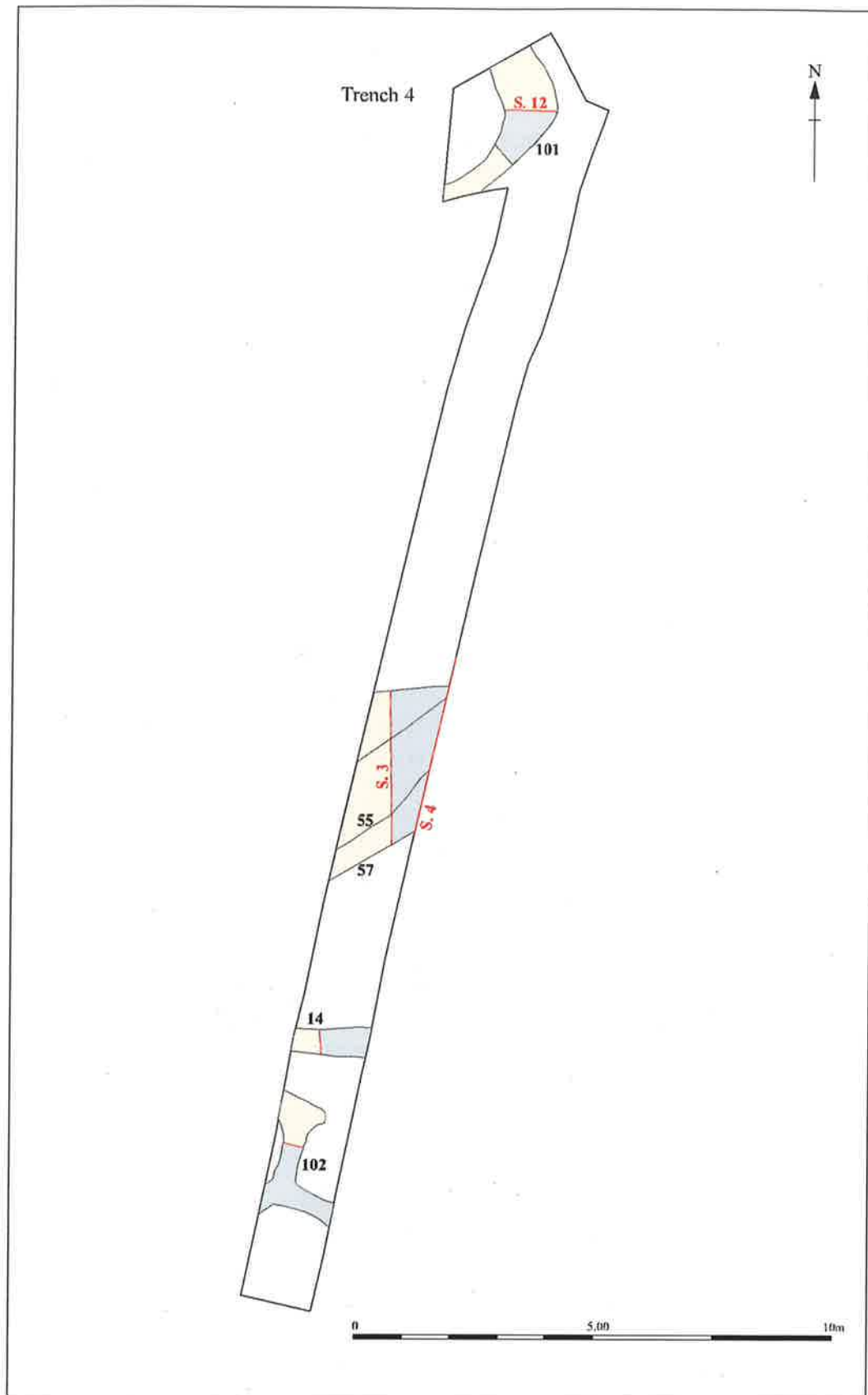


Figure 3 Plan of trench 4

Pit 17: circular in plan, 1.05m in diameter x 0.16m deep. Filled by 15: a soft, light grey brown silty clay with chalk flecks and 16: a soft, light grey brown mixed chalky clay.

Posthole 19: circular in plan, 0.25m in diameter x 0.14m deep. Filled by 18: a soft, light grey-brown mixed chalky clayey silt with rare small stones and chalk fragments. This fill contained one sherd of pottery dating from the 16th-17th century.

Posthole/Pit 21: circular in plan, 1.05m in diameter x 0.22m deep. Filled by 20: a soft, mid grey-brown mixed clayey silt with rare small stones, chalk fragments and a piece of animal bone.

Stakeholes 22 – 47: all circular in plan and filled by a light grey brown silty clay. A sample were excavated (24, 25, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41 and 43) and revealed that their depths varied between 0.10m and 0.26m and all were driven in vertically. These stakeholes were all located at the eastern end of Trench 3, and formed no discernable pattern in plan.

Ditch 87 (equivalent to 96 in the test pit): linear in plan, 2.85m wide x 0.6m deep and orientated approximately north-west to south-east. Filled by 106: a soft, waterlogged dark grey brown silty clay with a high organic content, containing frequent charcoal and chalk flecks and frequent preserved plant remains, a leather shoe was also retrieved from this context which has been dated to around 1800; 84: a soft, waterlogged light grey brown clayey silt with yellowish orange degraded sandstone lumps, containing preserved plant material and animal bone; and a fragment of ceramic building material, 83(equivalent to 95): a moderately compact, light grey brown clayey silt with occasional small stones and chalk lumps, charcoal and a few wheat grains recovered from a sample taken and 82 (equivalent to 94): a moderately compact, light orange brown coarse sandy silt. A ten litre soil sample was examined from this context which contained several small snails and shiny charcoal fragments which suggest high burning temperatures.



Plate 2 Working shot in Ditch 87

Trench 4

This trench was 26m in length and orientated on a north, north-east to south, south-west alignment. A layer of topsoil, 10, and a layer of subsoil, 11, were encountered during machining the trench overlying the natural chalk. Features in this trench consisted of one modern ditch, two undated ditches and two natural features. Layer 10: a fairly loose, dark brown silty clay-loam topsoil with occasional small stones and a maximum depth of 0.26m.

Layer 11: a moderately compact, mid brown clayey silt subsoil with occasional small stones and moderate chalk flecks and a maximum depth of 0.46m.

Ditch 14: linear in plan, 0.53m wide x 0.25m deep. Filled by 13: a compact, dark grey silty clay with occasional chalk fragments and charcoal flecks.



Plate 3 Ditch 14

Construction cut **55** (equivalent to **109**): linear in plan with vertical sides, 1.6 wide. Excavated to 0.65m depth. Filled by 54 (equivalent to 107): a compact, mid brown to yellowish white mixed silty clay with a high chalk rubble content. Interpreted as a construction cut due to its vertical edges, this may have been for a robbed out wall or a disused service trench.

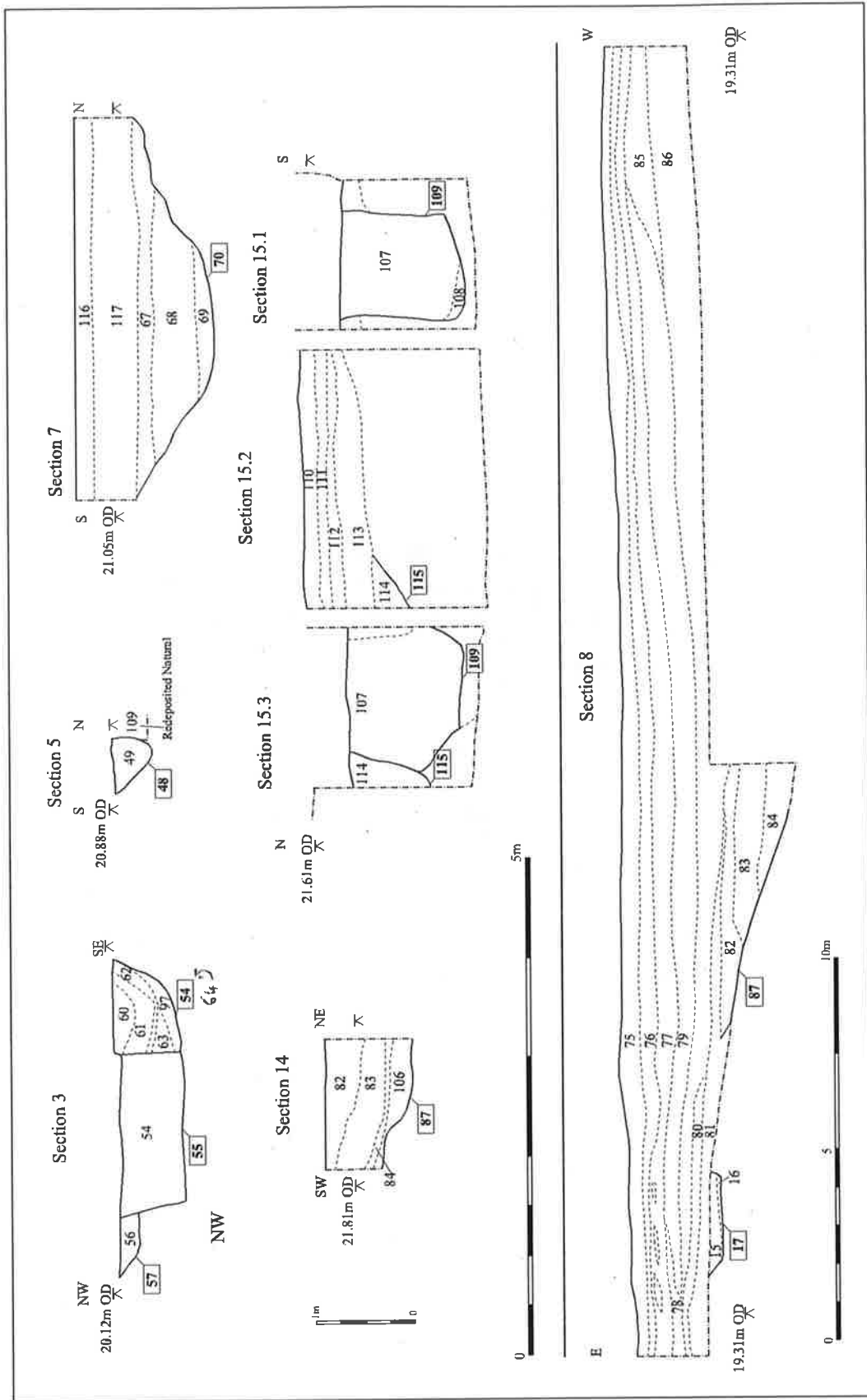


Figure 4 Section drawings

Ditch 57: linear in plan, 0.6m wide x 0.24m deep. Filled by 56: a moderately compact, light grey clayey silt.



Plate 4 Ditches 57 and 55

Ditch 101: curvilinear in plan, 1.05m wide x 0.3m deep. Filled by 100: a hard, very dark brown silty clay with no obvious inclusions.

Ditch 102: curvilinear in plan, 0.5m wide x 0.23m deep. Filled by 103: a moderately compact, mid grey brown clayey silt with light yellow mottling and brown streaky root intrusions, containing rare small stones.

Trench 5

This trench was 12m in length and orientated on a north to south alignment. A layer of topsoil, 119, 0.34m thick over a subsoil 0.21m thick was recorded over the natural chalk. No archaeology was present within this trench.

Test Pit

This Test Pit was excavated in order to confirm the continuation of ditch **87** recorded in Trench 1. The same sequence of make-up layers was encountered.

Layer 89 (equivalent to 75, 110): a modern, compacted rubble car-park surface with a maximum depth of 0.14m.

Layer 90 (equivalent to 76, 111): a modern, moderately compact make-up layer with a maximum depth of 0.20m

Layer 91 (equivalent to 77, 112): a mixed light brown chalky soil with a variable redeposited chalk component and a maximum depth of 0.22m.

Layer 92 (equivalent to 79) a mixed light brown chalky soil with a variable redeposited chalk component and a maximum depth of 0.32m.

Layer 93 (equivalent to 81,): a moderately compact mid brown clayey silt with occasional chalk flecks and a maximum depth of 0.38m.

Ditch **96** (equivalent to **87**) Filled by 94 (equivalent to 82): a moderately compact, light orange brown coarse sandy silt with a maximum depth of 0.16m and 95 (equivalent to 83): a moderately compact, light grey brown clayey silt with occasional small stones and chalk lumps, thickness unknown due to the rapid rise of the water table within the test pit.

6 DISCUSSION

Car Park Area (Trenches 1, 2 and 3 and Test Pit 1)

Investigations within this area revealed the presence of several large ditches spanning at least three phases of activity.

Fieldwork generated a very small assemblage of pottery, and as a result the dating and phasing ascribed to most features is tentative. However, two sherds of Roman pottery which were recovered from the fill of ditch **53**, suggests that this ditch represents the earliest activity on the site. This ditch, recorded in Trench 2, on a north-west to south-east orientation, was also identified in Trench 1. A possible later re-cut was also identified, **51**. However, there was no dating evidence retrieved.

The remaining features in Trenches 1 to 3, and the test pit, can all be ascribed to the late medieval to post-medieval phase.

Ditch **109**, identified in Trench 1 contained no dating evidence. However, it was cut from high up in the stratigraphic sequence (Fig. 4. Sec. 15.1) and was detected less than 0.20m below the current ground surface during machining.

This vertical sided, deep ditch was also identified in Trench 4 (55) and could be a service trench or modern drain. This ditch was also recorded relatively high in the stratigraphic sequence.

An undated pit and two postholes were recorded located on the eastern side of ditch 87. One posthole, 19 contained a large sherd of pottery dating to the 16th to 17th century. This appears to be a solitary posthole, and no other contemporary features were identified.

Two substantial ditches were recorded within the car park area; 87 (identified in Trench 1 and 3 and Test Pit 1) and 70 in Trench 2. Pottery sherds recovered from ditch 70 indicate a date range of 16th to 19th century, however, the alignment of the ditch suggests it would be present in Trench 3, but has presumably been truncated by 87. The lower deposit in both of these ditches was waterlogged, indicating a drainage function for these features. An almost complete, leather shoe was found in context 106, the primary fill of 87. The leather cutting and stitching techniques used dated no earlier than 1800 (S. Constable, Heritage Shoe Officer, Northampton Boot and Shoe Museum, pers comm.).

The remaining features in this area comprise two shallow pits in Trench 1, which date to 19th century, and a group of stakeholes in Trench 3, which do not appear to make any structural formation. Although no dating evidence was retrieved from the stakeholes, they appear to truncate the edge of ditch 87, which suggests they are later than 1800.

The 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1888 of the area shows the presence of several boundary divisions, yet none of these alignments correspond with the ditches found and there is no description of whether these divisions are by ditch or by fencelines (Appendix 1). However, a pre-enclosure map of 1834 (CRO R78/39) shows the area as common pasture, with several ditches, and an Enclosure Map dated 1839 (CRO Q/RDc63) shows a number of large "public drains". Although it has not been possible to directly relate any of the ditches found in the evaluation with the drains and ditches on the maps, the maps do show land use and the presence of these water-management features, which relate to location and dating evidence found. The location of the medieval moated manor site at Lordship Farm (SMR CB 01993) less than 100m to the south-east of the College also indicates that water-management may have been an issue at the time the drains were dug.

Playing Fields (Trenches 4 and 5)

The two trenches located within the college playing fields were too far apart to be discussed together generally, and so are presented separately.

Trench 4 contained three ditches (14, 57 and 58) and two natural features (101 and 102). No dating evidence was retrieved from any features within this

trench, however, there are two phases represented by ditches **55** and **57**. Strataigraphically, ditch **57** is earlier than **55** (Fig 4. Sec. 3). No dating evidence was retrieved, but **55** appears to be a continuation of **109** recorded in Trench 1 which is known to be later than 1800.

The other undated ditch within this trench was **14**. This ditch runs on a different alignment to **55** and **57**, and although undated, it may represent a third phase of activity.

Trench 4 was approximately 40m to the south-west of the car park area, and shows the continuation of types features seen in the car park area. This suggests that drainage may have been an issue within this area as well, although on a lesser scale.

No archaeological features were recorded in Trench 5. The absence of any ditches may suggest that there was no need for drainage in this area or that this trench was placed in an area of little or no activity.

7 CONCLUSIONS

Investigations at Melbourn Village College have identified activity on the site dating from the Roman through to the post-medieval period. Water management appears to represent the majority of the features, which appears to have been an issue in the post-medieval period. The continuation of features between the car park area and Trench 4 suggests that more features are preserved in the area between. This should be considered in any future plans for development of this area.

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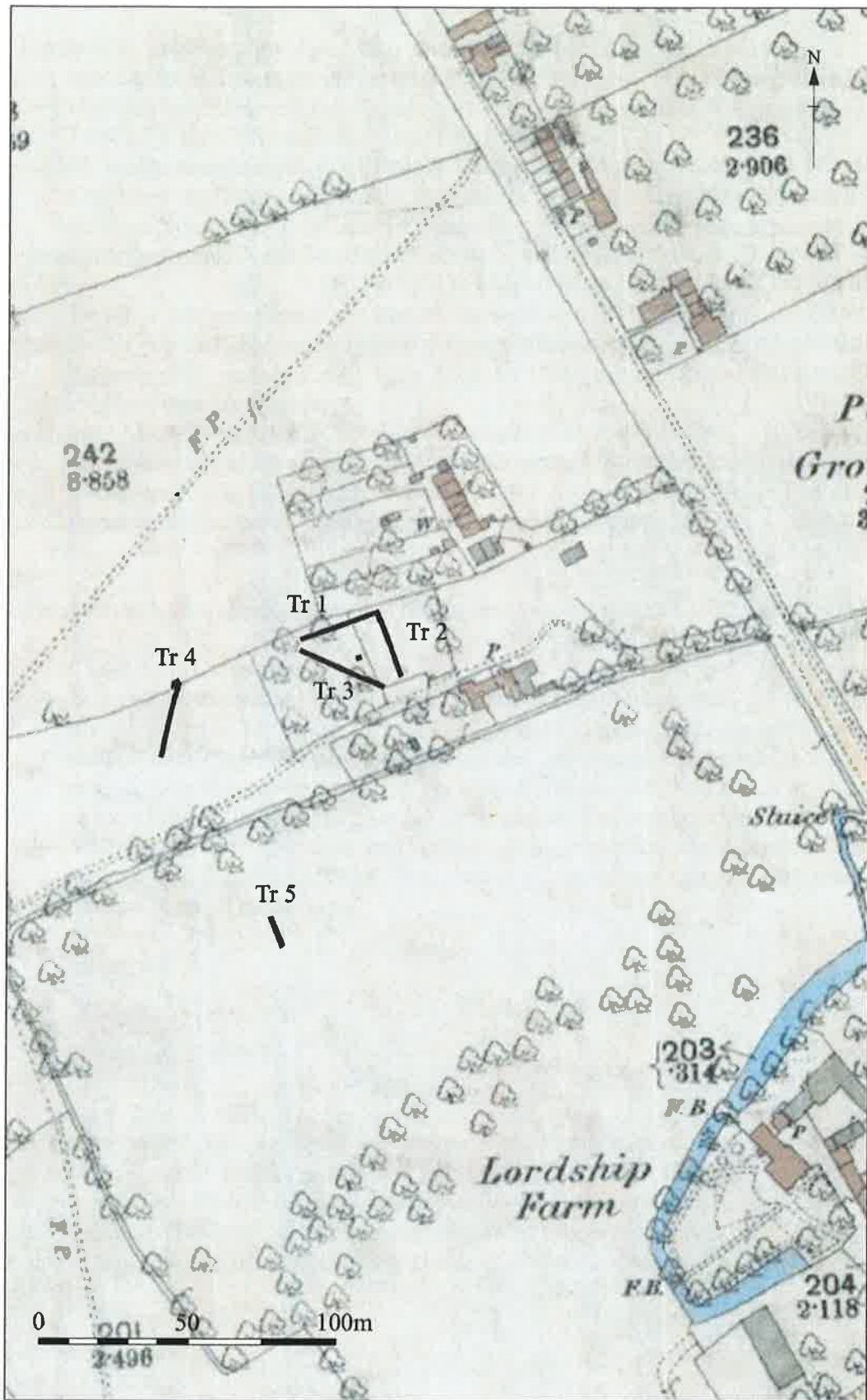
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Appendix 1 1885 25 inch 1st edition OS with location of trenches

APPENDIX 2: Pottery Assessment

By Carole Fletcher BA

The Assemblage

The fieldwork generated ten sherds (0.207kg) of pottery from six contexts. This material consists of five abraded roman sherds, a moderately abraded sherd from a sixteenth century Tudor Brown ware vessel tentatively identified as a costal, a body sherd from a post-medieval bichrome bowl possibly produced in Ely and base sherds from two modern earthen ware vessels. No preservation bias has been recognised and no long-term storage problems are likely. The assemblage offers little potential for further study.

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Context	Spot dating Date Range
18	16th-17th century
52	Roman
67	19th century
68	16th century
72	19th century

APPENDIX 4: Finds Quantification table

Context	Material	Object Name	Weight in kg	Comments
18	Ceramic	Vessel	0.07	
20	Bone		0.02	
49	Bone		0.00	
49	Ceramic		0.00	Clay pipe
49	Ceramic	Ceramic Building Material	0.01	
52	Ceramic	Vessel	0.01	
52	Ceramic	Vessel	0.00	
52	Bone		0.18	
67	Bone		0.07	
67	Ceramic	Tile	0.30	
67	Ceramic	Vessel	0.09	
68	Ceramic	Vessel	0.02	
68	Bone		0.19	
69	Bone		0.04	
72	Ceramic	Vessel	0.01	
83	Ceramic	Ceramic Building Material	0.13	
84	Bone		0.00	
106	Leather	Shoe		Incomplete, well preserved

APPENDIX 5: Aerial Photographic Survey

**MELBOURN VILLAGE COLLEGE,
AREA CENTRED TL382452,
CAMBRIDGESHIRE:
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC ASSESSMENT**

SUMMARY

This assessment of aerial photographs examined an area of some 30 hectares (centred TL382452) in order to identify and accurately map archaeological, natural and recent features.

No archaeological or non-archaeological features were identified within the Village College grounds.

A moated sites is located west of the stream that bounds the College grounds and seems unlikely to have extended on the east side.

Original photo interpretation and mapping was at 1:2500 level.

**MELBOURN VILLAGE COLLEGE,
AREA CENTRED TL382452,
CAMBRIDGESHIRE:
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC ASSESSMENT**

Rog Palmer MA MIFA

INTRODUCTION

This assessment of aerial photographs was commissioned to examine an area of some 30 hectares (centred TL382452) in order to identify and accurately map archaeological and natural features and thus provide a guide for field evaluation. The level of interpretation and mapping was to be at 1:2500.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND NATURAL FEATURES FROM AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

In suitable cultivated soils, sub-surface features – including archaeological ditches, banks, pits, walls or foundations – may be recorded from the air in different ways in different seasons. In spring and summer these may show through their effect on crops growing above them. Such indications tend to be at their most visible in ripe cereal crops, in June or July in this part of Britain, although their appearance cannot accurately be predicted and their absence cannot be taken to imply evidence of archaeological absence. In winter months, when the soil is bare or crop cover is thin (when viewed from above), features may show by virtue of their different soils. Upstanding remains, which may survive in unploughed grassland, are also best recorded in winter months when vegetation is sparse and the low angle of the sun helps pick out slight differences of height and slope.

Grass sometimes shows sub-surface features through the withering of the plants above them. This may occur towards the end of very dry summers and usually indicates the presence of buried walls or foundations. Such dry summers occurred in Britain in 1949, 1959, 1975, 1976, 1984, 1989 and 1990 (Bewley 1994, 25) and more recently in 1995 and 1996. This does not imply that every grass field will reveal its buried remains on these dates as local variations in weather and field management will affect parching. However, it does provide a list of years in which photographs taken from, say, mid July to the end of August may prove informative.

Natural faults and deposits can cause similar differences in crop growth and may also appear as colour differences in bare winter soils. On the soils of this assessment area we may expect indications of periglacial features – which may be mistaken for archaeological ditches – and of patches of deeper and shallower soil. Both can affect the growth of crops and become visible at the same times as archaeological features. The visible edges and extents of deep soil areas tend to vary from year to year with the amount of ground moisture content.

The most immediately informative aerial photographs of archaeological subjects tend to be those resulting from observer-directed flights. This activity is usually undertaken by an experienced archaeological observer who will fly at seasons and times of day when optimum results are expected. Oblique photographs, taken using a hand-held camera, are the usual products of such investigation. Although oblique photographs are able to provide a very detailed view, they are biased in providing a record that is mainly of features noticed by the observer, understood, and thought to be of archaeological relevance. To be able to map accurately from these photographs it is necessary that they have been taken from a sufficient height to include surrounding control information.

Vertical photographs cover the whole of Britain and can provide scenes on a series of dates between (usually) 1946-7 and the present. Unfortunately these vertical surveys were not necessarily flown at times of year that are best to record the crop and soil responses that may be seen above sub-surface features. Vertical photographs are taken by a camera fixed inside an aircraft and adjusted to take a series of overlapping views that can be examined stereoscopically. They are often of relatively small scale and their interpretation requires higher perceptive powers and a more cautious approach than that necessary for examination of obliques. Use of these small-scale images can also lead to errors of location and size when they are rectified or re-scaled to match a larger map scale.

PHOTO INTERPRETATION AND MAPPING

Photographs examined

A cover search was obtained from the Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs (CUCAP). Photographs included those resulting from observer-directed flights and routine vertical surveys.

Photographs consulted are listed in the Appendix to this report.

Base maps

Digital data from original survey at 1:2500 or greater were provided by the client.

Study area

Photographs were examined in detail for an area extending one modern field beyond the Assessment Area in those parts that were free of buildings.

Photo interpretation and mapping

All photographs were examined by eye and under slight (2x) magnification, viewing them as stereoscopic pairs when possible. Scanned digital copies of the most informative were transformed to match the digital data using the specialist program AirPhoto (Scollar 2002). All scanned photographs were enhanced using the default setting in AirPhoto before being examined on screen. Transformed files were set as background layers in AutoCAD Map, where features were overdrawn, making reference to the original prints, using standard conventions.

Layers from this final drawing have been used to prepare the figures in this report and have been supplied to the client in digital form.

Accuracy

AirPhoto computes values for mismatches of control points on the photograph and map. Control information was poor for transformation of the features mapped and required use of wooded junctions and kinks in streams. Positional accuracy is unlikely to be better than $\pm 5.0\text{m}$ despite considerably lower mismatch values being returned by AirPhoto.

COMMENTARY

Soils

The Soil Survey of England and Wales (SSEW 1983) shows the area to lie wholly on river terrace and chalky drift (soil association 512f: Milton). Crops on this soil between Melbourn and Cambridge have indicated the presence of sub-surface archaeological and natural features.

Archaeological features

No archaeological features were identified within the Village College grounds.

The moated site and its accompanying features would seem likely to be contained on the west side of the stream (assuming its present course is similar to that at the date of the moat) and no continuation is expected on the east (College) side of that watercourse.

Non-archaeological features

No recent or natural features were identified within the Village College grounds.

Land use

On all dates of photography the Village College was extant and its grounds maintained as playing fields. The moat is in arable land as was the field north of the College before housing was built over much of it.

REFERENCES

- Bewley, R. H., 1994. *Prehistoric Settlements*. Batsford/English Heritage, London.
- OS, 2004. <http://www.ordnancesurvey.gov.uk/productpages/landline/positional-background.htm>
- Scollar, I., 2002. Making things look vertical, in Bewley, R.H. and Rączkowski, W., (ed). *Aerial archaeology: developing future practice*. NATO Science Series, Vol 337, 166-172.
- SSEW, 1983. *Soils of England and Wales: sheet 4: Eastern England (1:250,000)*. Soil Survey of England and Wales, Harpenden.

APPENDIX

Aerial photographs examined

Source: Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs

Oblique photographs

BEM 54-56 8 October 1970

Vertical photographs

RC8-CK 76-77	16 November 1977	1:10000
RC8-JN 185-187	1 July 1987	1:10000
RC8-JO 69-71	2 July 1987	1:10000
RC8-JQ 152-153	21 August 1987	1:10000
Z-knGU 592a-593a	7 May 1998	unknown

Most informative photographs

BEM 56
RC8-CK 87

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That transcriptions, documentation, and textual reports presented within this assessment report shall be explicitly identified as the work of Air Photo Services.

Air Photo Services has consulted only those aerial photographs specified. It cannot guarantee that further aerial photographs of archaeological significance do not exist in collections that were not examined.

Due to the nature of aerial photographic evidence, Air Photo Services cannot guarantee that there may not be further archaeological features found during ground survey which are not visible on aerial photographs or that apparently 'blank' areas will not contain masked archaeological evidence.

We suggest that if a period of 6 months or more elapses between compilation of this report and field evaluation new searches are made in appropriate photo libraries. Examination of any newly acquired photographs is recommended.

That the original working documents (being interpretation overlays, control information, and digital data files) will remain the property of Air Photo Services and be securely retained by it for a period of three years from the completion date of this assessment after which only the digital files may be retained.

It is requested that a copy of this report be lodged with the relevant Sites and Monuments Record within six months of the completion of the archaeological evaluation.

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APPENDIX 6: Contents Table

Context	Trench No.	Cut / Fill / Layer	Fill of	Filled by	Description	Equal to
10	4	Layer			Topsoil	
11	4	Layer			Subsoil	
13	4	Fill	14		Ditch Fill	
14	4	Cut		13	Ditch cut	
15	3	Fill	17		2nd Pit fill	
16	3	Fill	17		1st Pit fill	
17	3	Cut		15,16	Pit cut	
18	3	Fill	19		Post hole fill	
19	3	Cut		18	Post hole cut	
20	3	Fill	21		Post hole fill	
21	3	Cut		20	Post hole cut	
22	3	Cut & Fill	22	22	Stake hole cut & fill	
23	3	Cut & Fill	23	23	Stake hole cut & fill	
24	3	Cut & Fill	24	24	Stake hole cut & fill	
25	3	Cut & Fill	25	25	Stake hole cut & fill	
26	3	Cut & Fill	26	26	Stake hole cut & fill	
27	3	Cut & Fill	27	27	Stake hole cut & fill	
28	3	Cut & Fill	28	28	Stake hole cut & fill	
29	3	Cut & Fill	29	29	Stake hole cut & fill	
30	3	Cut & Fill	30	30	Stake hole cut & fill	
31	3	Cut & Fill	31	31	Stake hole cut & fill	
32	3	Cut & Fill	32	32	Stake hole cut & fill	
33	3	Cut & Fill	33	33	Stake hole cut & fill	
34	3	Cut & Fill	34	34	Stake hole cut & fill	
35	3	Cut & Fill	35	35	Stake hole cut & fill	
36	3	Cut & Fill	36	36	Stake hole cut & fill	
37	3	Cut & Fill	37	37	Stake hole cut & fill	
38	3	Cut & Fill	38	38	Stake hole cut & fill	
39	3	Cut & Fill	39	39	Stake hole cut & fill	
40	3	Cut & Fill	40	40	Stake hole cut & fill	
41	3	Cut & Fill	41	41	Stake hole cut & fill	
42	3	Cut & Fill	42	42	Stake hole cut & fill	
43	3	Cut & Fill	43	43	Stake hole cut & fill	
44	3	Cut & Fill	44	44	Stake hole cut & fill	
45	3	Cut & Fill	45	45	Stake hole cut & fill	
46	3	Cut & Fill	46	46	Stake hole cut & fill	
47	3	Cut & Fill	47	47	Stake hole cut & fill	

Context	Trench No.	Cut / Fill / Layer	Fill of	Filled by	Description	Equal to
48	2	Cut		49	Ditch cut	
49	2	Fill	48		Ditch fill	
50	2	Fill	51		Ditch fill	
51	2	Cut		50	Ditch cut	
52	2	Fill	53		Ditch fill	
53	2	Cut		52	Ditch cut	
54	4	Fill	55		Construction fill	107,108
55	4	Cut		54	Construction cut	109
56	4	Fill	57		Ditch fill	
57	4	Cut		56	Ditch cut	
58	4	Fill	59		Ditch fill	
59	4	Cut		58	Ditch cut	
60	4	Fill	64		5th fill of ditch	
61	4	Fill	64		4th fill of ditch	
62	4	Fill	64		3rd fill of ditch	
63	4	Fill	64		2nd fill of ditch	
64	4	Cut		60-63, 97	Cut of ditch	
67	2	Fill	70		3rd fill of ditch	
68	2	Fill	70		2nd fill of ditch	
69	2	Fill	70		1st fill of ditch	
70	2	Cut		67-69	Cut of ditch	
71	2	Cut		72	Cut of pit	
72	2	Fill	71		Fill of pit	
73	2	Cut		74	Cut of pit	
74	2	Fill		73	Fill of pit	
75	3	Layer			Car park surface	89, 110, 116
76	3	Layer			Car park makeup	90, 111
77	3	Layer			Car park levelling	77, 91, 112
78	3	Layer			Layer above ditch	
79	3	Layer			Layer above ditch	92, 113
80	3	Layer			Layer above ditch	
81	3	Layer			Layer above ditch	93, 114
82	3	Fill	87		4th fill of ditch	94
83	3	Fill	87		3rd fill of ditch	95
84	3	Fill	87		2nd fill of ditch	96
85	3	Layer			Subsoil above ditch	
86	3	Layer			Subsoil above ditch	
87	3	Cut		82-84, 106	Cut of ditch	
88	Not used	Not used			Not used	Not used
89	TP 1	Layer			Layer in test pit	75; 110, 116
90	TP 1	Layer			Layer in test pit	76, 111
91	TP 1	Layer			Layer in test pit	77, 112

Context	Trench No.	Cut / Fill / Layer	Fill of	Filled by	Description	Equal to
92	TP 1	Layer			Layer in test pit	79, 113
93	TP 1	Layer			Layer in test pit	81, 114
94	TP 1	Fill	96		2nd Fill of ditch	82
95	TP 1	Fill	96		1st Fill of ditch	83
96	TP 1	Cut		94 - 95	Cut of ditch	87
97	4	Fill	64		1st Fill of ditch	
98	4	Fill	99		Fill of modern cut	
99	4	Cut		98	Modern cut	
100	4	Fill	101		Fill of ditch	
101	4	Cut		100	Cut of ditch	
102	4	Cut		103	Fill of ditch	
103	4	Fill	102		Cut of ditch	
104	4	Fill	105		Fill of ditch	
105	4	Cut		104	Cut of ditch	
106	3	Fill	87		1st fill of ditch	
107	1	Fill	109		Construc. cut fill	54
108	1	Fill	109		Construc. cut fill	54
109	1	Cut			Construction cut	55
110	1	Layer			Car park surface	75, 89, 116
111	1	Layer			Car park makeup	90, 76
112	1	Layer			Car park levelling	
113	1	Layer				79, 92
114	1	Fill	115		Fill of ditch	81, 114
115	1	Cut		114	Cut of ditch	
116	2	Layer			Car Park Layer	75, 110, 89
117	2	Layer			Car Park Layer	76, 111, 90
118	2	Layer			Subsoil	
119	5	Layer			Topsoil	
120	5	Layer			Subsoil	
121	1	Fill	122			



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Education, Libraries
and Heritage

The Archaeological Field Unit
Fulbourn Community Centre
Haggis Gap
Fulbourn
Cambridge CB1 5HD
Tel (01223) 576201
Fax (01223) 880946