

Archaeological Field Unit

**An Archaeological Evaluation at
Cow and Hare Passage, St Ives, Cambridgeshire**

Spencer Cooper

December 2004

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. 782

Commissioned by John Huggins on behalf of Mr and Mrs Webster

An Archaeological Evaluation at Cow and Hare Passage, St Ives, Cambridgeshire

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SUMMARY

On December 15th 2004 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Cow and Hare Passage, St Ives, Cambridgeshire (TL 3129 7138) by staff of the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council. The proposed development includes the construction of two new dwellings on land between 3 and 5 Cow and Hare Passage, and the extension of 12 Cow and Hare Passage.

John Huggins (Architectural technologist) commissioned the project on behalf of Mr and Mrs Webster. A planning brief was issued by Kasia Gdaniec of the Archaeology Office, Cambridgeshire County Council.

The evaluation has made a limited contribution to the understanding of the archaeology of St. Ives but has demonstrated that stratigraphy of over 1m deep survived within the development area.

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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	$\frac{18.45\text{m ODN}}{\wedge}$

Plans

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

**An Archaeological Evaluation at
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(TL 3129 7138)**

1 INTRODUCTION

On December 15th 2004 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Cow and Hare Passage, St Ives, Cambridgeshire (TL 3129 7138) by staff of the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council. The proposed development includes the construction of two new dwellings on land between 3 and 5 Cow and Hare Passage, and the extension of 12 Cow and Hare Passage. John Huggins (Architectural technologist) commissioned the project on behalf of Mr and Mrs Webster. A planning brief issued by Kasia Gdaniec of the Archaeology Office, Cambridgeshire County Council.

From the outset it was hoped that this evaluation would identify activities associated with the historic core of St Ives.

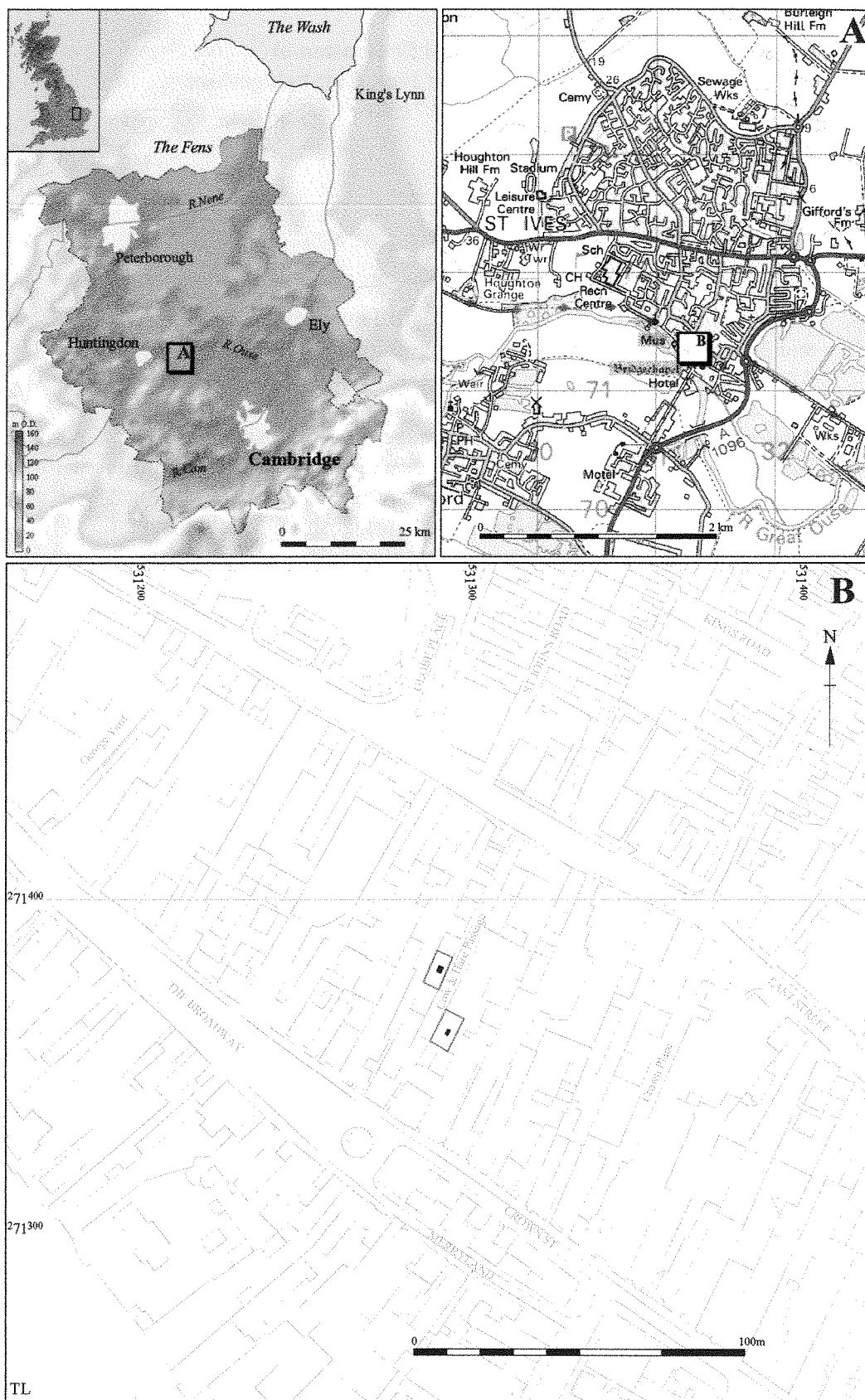
2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The geology of the site is first and second terrace river gravels. The site is located within a built-up area between West Street and The Broadway, to the north of the Great Ouse River.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site is located within the medieval core of the historic town of St Ives, a holding of Ramsey Abbey since the late 10th century, which developed into an important medieval market with international renown in the cloth trade.

The Anglo-Saxon settlement of Slepe (later St Ives) was probably close to All Saints church, at the west end of The Broadway. However, in the early medieval period settlement focus shifted to the part of the town known as the 'Street', which runs east-west from the church, parallel to the river. The once flourishing medieval market and fair declined and was abandoned in 1511, although the town continued as a market centre of local importance. A fire devastated St Ives in 1689, after which rebuilding took place and the town soon became renowned for its weekly cattle market.



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Figure 1 Location of trenches (black) with the development areas outlined (red)

A number of archaeological investigations have been carried out within the town. Excavations within the grounds of a 19th-century house (The Priory) have revealed the presence of medieval features, notably a huge ditch likely to be a demarcation of the Priory estate (Murray 1997). Medieval masonry has also been noted in the garden of the Priory (Cambs SMR 03594) and in surrounding properties.

Recent investigations at the former Permanaex site (Keir *et al* 2003), c. 250m to the west of the proposed development, uncovered areas of surviving medieval land surfaces and post-medieval features. Evidence of Anglo-Saxon/Saxo-Norman occupation was also hinted at by the presence of hand made wares and Thetford Ware pottery (SMR CB15641). An archaeological evaluation in January 2004 on land adjacent to George Yard, off West Street to the north-west of the site, revealed a number of undated and modern postholes, and probable garden layers (Cooper 2004).

4 METHODOLOGY

A mechanical excavator (with 0.7m wide flat-bladed ditching bucket) was used to excavate two test pits under archaeological supervision. A total of 5m of trench was excavated, a c.5% sample of the site. The trenches were planned at 1:20 and sections at 1:20. All features and deposits were recorded using the AFU single context system. Each distinct cut, fill and layer was allocated an individual number. In the following text cut numbers are presented in **bold** and deposit numbers in plain text.

Monochrome and colour photographs were taken, together with digital pictures.

5 RESULTS

Test pit 1 (Fig2)

Test pit 1 was 1.10m deep 2m long and 1.40m wide and positioned between Houses 3 and 5. The earliest deposit encountered in the trench was deposit 6. Context 6 was a dark grey silty clay which was 0.40m deep.

Context 5 sealed context 6. Context 5 was a brownish grey silty clay which was 0.38m deep.

Context 4 was greenish grey silty clay which was 0.18m deep. Context 4 sealed context 5.

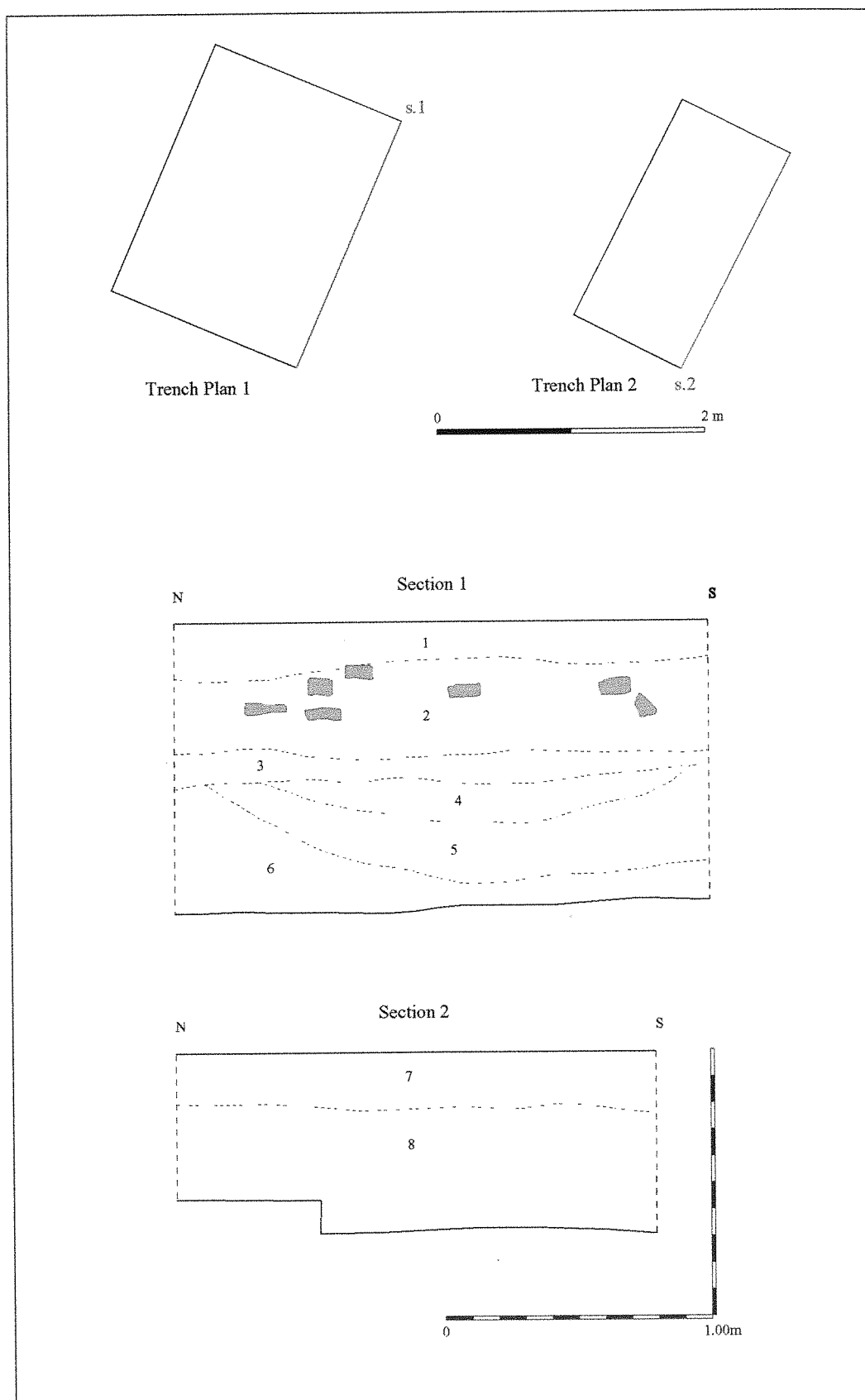


Figure 2 Trench Plans and sections

Contexts 4, 5 and 6 may represent fills of a large pit (possibly a cess pit) or alternatively they may represent occupation layers.

Layer 3 sealed context 4.

Layer 3 was a dark grey silty clay which was 0.30m deep and contained fragments of charcoal, post-medieval pottery, clay tobacco pipe and animal bone.

Layer 2 sealed layer 3. Layer 2 was a brown silty clay which was 0.40m deep and contained brick rubble.

Layer 1 sealed layer 2.

Layer 1 was a light grey silty gravel which was 0.20m deep.

Test pit 2 (Fig. 2)

Test pit 2 was 1.8m long 0.6m deep and located to the rear of property 12. Modern services (including electricity cables and water pipes) were identified at a depth of 0.60m. The earliest deposit within the sequence was layer 8. Layer 7 sealed layer 8. Layer 8 was a light grey silty clay which contained post-medieval artefacts. Layer 7 was a dark grey silty clay which contained post medieval bricks.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of the project was to establish the character, date, state of preservation and extent of any archaeological remains within the site. The evaluation has been successful in identifying archaeological deposits up to 1m in depth and a possible cess pit in test pit 1.

The earliest deposits encountered - layers 4, 5, and 6 may represent fills of a possible cess pit. No dating evidence was recovered from these layers which indicates it was probably not a rubbish pit.

Layers 4, 5 and 6 were sealed by layer 3 which represents a post-medieval occupation or levelling layer sealing earlier deposits. Layer 2 represents the remains of a Victorian terrace house which was located between House 5 and 3. Layer 1 represents modern car park material.

The deposits 7 and 8 encountered in test pit 2 represent modern and post-medieval occupation.

The ceramics encountered within the evaluation were early post-medieval/late medieval.

Given the proximity of the site to the historic core of it is surprising that medieval remains were not encountered within the evaluation.

The evaluation has made a limited contribution to the understanding of St Ives. The most notable observation to emerge from the results of the evaluation was the presence of a possible cess pit in test pit 1. Despite the lack of archaeological remains from the evaluation this work will aid the construction of a deposit model for medieval St Ives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank John Huggins (Architectural technologist) who commissioned the project on behalf of Mr and Mrs Webster who funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by Judith Roberts. The illustrations were drawn by Carlos Silva. The Brief for archaeological works was written by Kasia Gdaniec, County Archaeology Office

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Murray, J, 1997 , *The Priory, St Ives An Archaeological Evaluation*, Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust Report 278

APPENDIX 1: THE FINDS

Context	Material	Object Name	Weight in kg	Comments
3	Bone	Bone	0.01	Cut marks on bone? Possibly worked
3	Ceramic	Tobacco pipe	0.01	
8	Ceramic	Tobacco pipe	0.03	
8	Bone	Bone	0.11	
8	Slag		0.01	oilshale/coal with traces of fuel ash slag
3	Ceramic	Vessel	0.01	rim of willow pattern tea cup
8	Ceramic	Tile	0.03	
8	Ceramic	Vessel	0.09	Post-medieval Red ware and Stoneware

APPENDIX 2

Pottery and Ceramic Building Material By Carole Fletcher BA

Methodology

The basic guidance in MAP2 has been adhered to (English Heritage 1991). In addition the MPRG documents *Guidance for the processing and publication of medieval pottery from excavations* (Blake and Davey 1983) and *A guide to the classification of medieval ceramic forms* (MPRG 1998) act as a standard.

Spot dating was carried out using the Archaeological Field Unit's in-house system based on that used at the Museum of London. Fabric classification has been carried out for all previously described types. All sherds have been counted classified, and weighed. All the pottery has been spot dated on a context-by-context basis; this information was entered directly onto a quantification database (Access 2000), which allows for the appending of further data.

Excavation

The area was excavated by machine with features excavated by hand and selection made through standard sampling procedures on a feature-by-feature basis. There are not expected to be any inherent biases.

The Assemblage

The fieldwork generated five sherds (0.095 kg) of pottery and a single fragment of medieval roof tile (0.026 kg) from two contexts. The pottery consists entirely of post-medieval fabrics consisting of post-medieval Red ware bowl and jar sherds, a fragment of an English Stoneware bottle and the rim of a blue and white transfer decorated tea cup. It would appear though that for context 3 a late 18th century date can be attributed while context 8, containing both post-medieval Red ware and later English Stoneware suggests a late 17th or more likely an early 18th century date. No preservation bias has been recognized and no long-term storage problems are likely.

2 Conclusion

The assemblage as a whole can be thought of as 18th century. The presence of a single fragment of medieval tile alongside later material indicates that there

was some medieval activity on or in the vicinity the site, however, the very small size of the assemblage makes it difficult to draw any conclusions about pottery usage, or the length or type of occupation of the site. This assemblage offers little potential for further study.

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Blake, H and Davey, P. 1983 Guidelines for the Processing and Publications of Medieval Pottery from Excavations. Directorate of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings Occasional Paper 5.

English Heritage 1991 MAP2.

Medieval Pottery Research Group 1998 A Guide to the Classification of Medieval Ceramic Forms. Medieval Pottery Research Group Occasional Paper.

Context	Material	Fabric	Number of Sherds	Weight in Grams	Earliest Date	Latest Date	Vessel Forms	rim/base/ other	Comment	abrasion	Ceramic Fabrics	Geographical location
3	Xpot	TRANS	1	7	1780	1900	Cup	rim	blue & white	Moderate	Cream ware, Bone China	Staffs?
8	Xpot	PMR	1	35	1500	1800	Bowl	base		Moderate	Bourne D, PMR	Essex
8	Xpot	PMR	1	15	1500	1800	Jar	Rim	upright jar	Moderate	Bourne D, PMR	Essex
8	Xpot	PMR	1	5	1500	1800	Bowl	BS		Abraded	Bourne D, PMR	Essex
8	Xpot	ENGs	1	33	1670	1900	Bottle	Rim		Sharp		



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