



Archaeological Field Unit

**Stibbington Education Centre,
Sibson-cum-Stibbington:
An Archaeological Evaluation**

Richard Mortimer
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Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. 825

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**Stibbington Education Centre,
Sibson-cum-Stibbington:
An Archaeological Evaluation**

TL 0853 9864

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SUMMARY

On the 22nd of July 2005, the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council conducted an archaeological evaluation within the area of a proposed new development at Stibbington Education Centre, Sibson-cum-Stibbington, Cambridgeshire. The development comprises an extension to the current Education Centre buildings and the work was undertaken in advance of planning. The area has a long association with Roman remains, and particularly Roman pottery kilns, and it was thought prudent to investigate the area prior to applying for full planning consent.

A single trench was excavated, 15m in length. A single feature was recorded; a shallow, right-angled ditch with its main length aligned north-south. The ditch is dated to the first half of the 20th century.

A few abraded Romano-British pottery sherds were recovered from the subsoil but there was no indication that pottery kilns, or any other significant Romano-British remains lay within the immediate vicinity.

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Drawing Conventions

Sections	Plans
Limit of Excavation	Limit of Excavation
Cut	Deposit - Conjectured
Cut-Conjectured	Natural Features
Soil Horizon	Intrusion/Truncation
Soil Horizon - Conjectured	Sondages/Machine Strip
Intrusion/Truncation	Illustrated Section
Top of Natural	Archaeological Deposit
Top Surface	Excavated Slot
Break in Section	Cut Number 118
Cut Number	
Deposit Number 117	
Ordnance Datum $\frac{18.45m}{\times}$ ODN	

Stibbington Education Centre, Sibson-cum-Stibbington: An Archaeological Evaluation

(TL 0853 9864)

1 INTRODUCTION

On the 22nd of July 2005, the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council (CCCAFU) conducted an archaeological evaluation within the area of a proposed development at Stibbington Education Centre, Sibson-cum-Stibbington, Cambridgeshire. The proposed development includes a replacement residential centre. The evaluation was in response to a brief produced by Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice (CAPCA) and the Cambridge Historic Environment Record Office reference number is ECB1919. The work was commissioned by Cambridgeshire Environmental Education Services.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site is located on the edge of the village of Stibbington, in the parish of Sibson-cum-Stibbington on the Cambridgeshire side of the River Nene. Stibbington lies at the centre of a small, near-circular projection with the River Nene 1km away to the west, north and east, and on the line of the Great North Road.

The underlying geology is 2nd Terrace River gravels, overlain by alluvium, and at an interface of Northampton Sands Ironstone and Clay (g3) deposits (BGS sheet 187). The height of the natural gravels at the south of the trench is 17.60m OD.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site is located immediately to the west of the known medieval core of the village of Stibbington, centred on the 12th-century church of St John the Baptist (CHER 00226) and the 16th-century Stibbington Hall (CHER 00173).

The Nene Valley area is known for its extremely rich and dense remains of the Roman period. These centre on the Roman town of Durobrivae, palatial

remains at Castor and the nearby forts and villas (e.g. Normangate Field) and the important Nene Valley pottery industry.

A possible Roman fort is located to the north of the site (CHER 00178a) and pottery kilns have been identified within the vicinity (CHER 00170). These kilns were thought to possibly lie either directly beneath or immediately adjacent to the proposed development area.

Earlier archaeology has been suggested from cropmarks with the remains of possible Bronze Age burial mounds (CHER 00178), and parts of known later Iron Age or Roman field systems and settlement enclosures in the area (CHER nos. 04474, 10043).

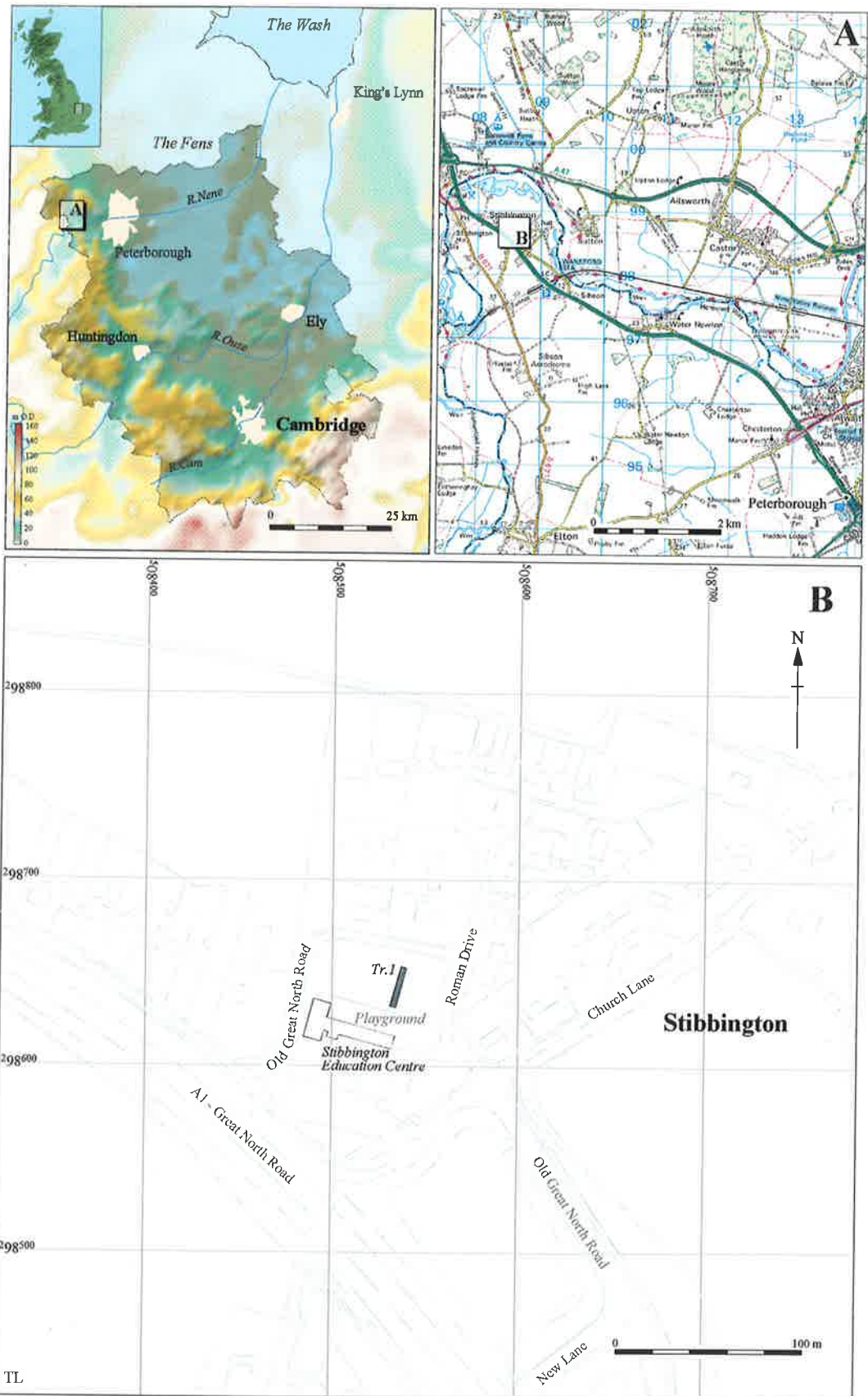
4 METHODOLOGY

The exact size of the development area is not yet known but is estimated at approximately 500 square metres. Two trenches were to be excavated – west to east and north to south, following the axes of the two parts of the proposed building – however, the former could not be excavated as the area lay beneath the decorated tarmac playground. A single north to south trench (Trench 1) was set out across the football pitch to the north of the present building. The trench was excavated to the depth of the geological horizons by a wheeled 360° excavator with a 2m wide toothless ditching bucket.

Trench 1 was aligned north-northeast/south-southwest and was 15m long – this represents a 6% sample of the estimated development area. There was a negligible depth of topsoil and a single spoilheap was placed to the east of the trench and scanned for artefactual material.

The exposed surface at the base of the trench was cleaned by trowel and hoe as necessary in order to clarify located features and deposits.

Site records comprise survey, drawn, written and photographic data. The drawn record comprises trench plans at scales of 1:100 (Trench 1) and 1:200 (location plan). The trench is tied in to the OS grid. A single feature section was drawn at 1:10 and two trench-edge sections at 1:20. None of these sections warrant inclusion in the evaluation report. The written record comprises context descriptions on CCCAFU pro-forma context sheets. The photographic record is made up of digital photographs.



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Figure 1 Site location showing position of trench (black)

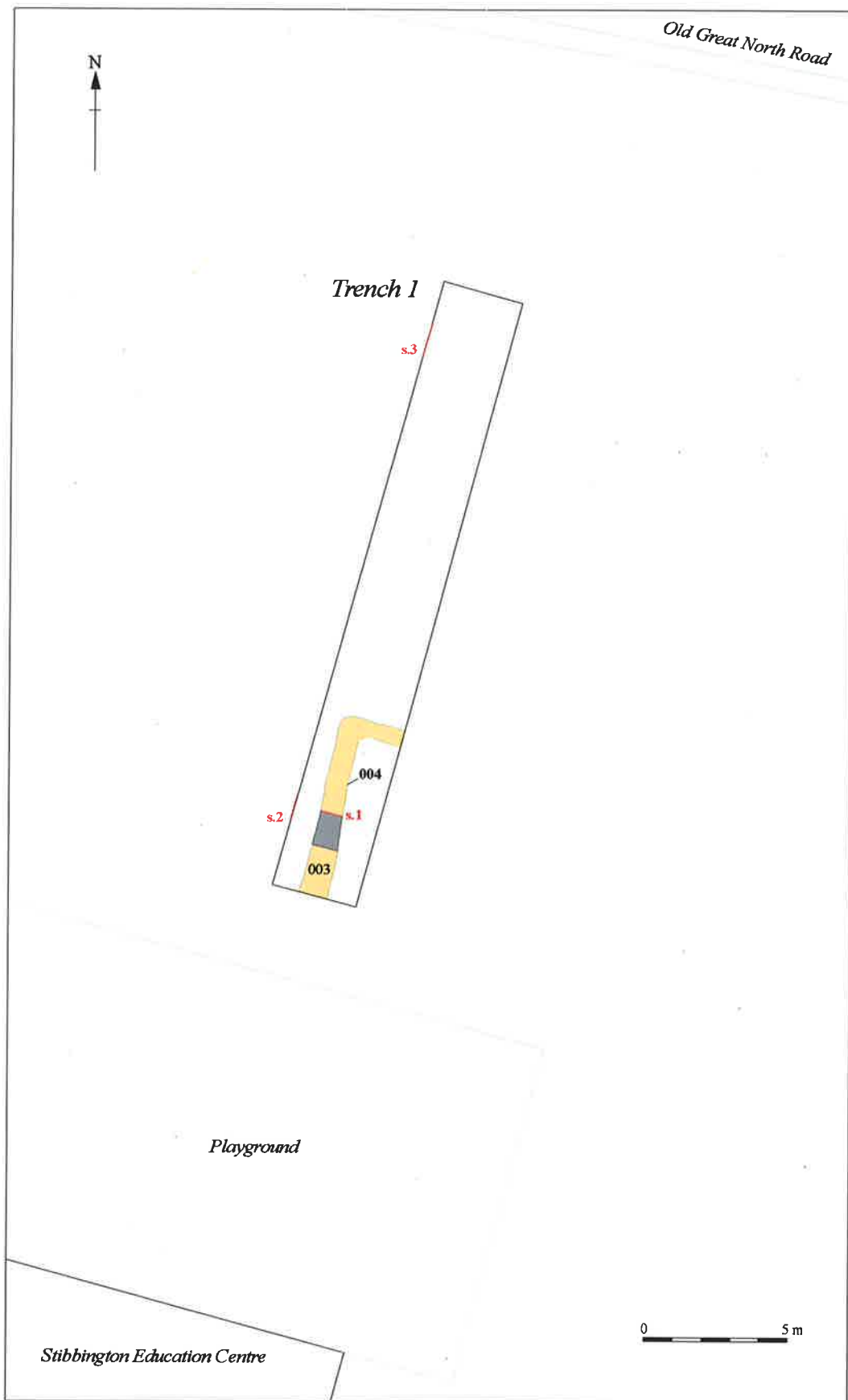


Figure 2 Trench plan

5 RESULTS

Trench 1

Three soil layers were recorded within the trench and the overall depth of the trench was *c.* 0.48m at the south, deepening to 0.60m at the north.

Topsoil 001: A very dark brown sandy silt with occasional to common gravel inclusions. This layer was only *c.* 0.06 – 0.08m deep and formed the playing surface of the football pitch.

Subsoil 002: A mid orange-brown silty sand with common gravel inclusions. Depth, 0.18m at the south of the trench, deepening to 0.30m at the north.

Subsoil/Natural divide 005: An area of blending between subsoil 002 and the underlying natural silty gravels. Depth 0.15 – 0.20m.

A single, modern archaeological feature was recorded within the trench:

Ditch 004 ran parallel to the trench for 4m from the southern end, turning at a right-angle and heading east into the edge of excavation. The ditch was approximately 0.60m wide at the level of the natural gravel trench base. The ditch sides were 45° to a narrow flat base and the single fill was a fine grey-brown silty loam topsoil. Finds included rusty iron wire and broken bottles.

The trench spoilheap (006) was intensively scanned for artefacts and two abraded Roman (Nene Valley) pottery sherds were recovered.

Context	No.	Date	Material	Description
001	1	Roman	Pottery	Very small, highly abraded, Nene Valley colour coat
001	1	Post-medieval	Pottery	Small, abraded Glazed Red Earthenware
001	2	Modern	Pottery	Bone china and transfer print
001	1	Modern	Pottery	Flowerpot
001	1	Modern	CBM	Flowerpot base?
001	1	Modern	Copper alloy	George V halfpenny
001	1	Unknown	Shell	Oyster
002	2	Roman	Pottery	Very small, highly abraded, Nene Valley colour coats
002	2	Modern	Pottery	20 th C china and stoneware
003	1	Modern	Glass	Flat-bottomed green glass bottle base
006	2	Roman	Pottery	Abraded, Nene Valley colour coats

Table 1: The finds

6 DISCUSSION

The single ditched feature (004) recorded on the site can be assigned a secure 20th-century date. The majority of the finds recovered from topsoil 001, including the George V halfpenny, came from the area immediately above the ditch and were almost certainly contained within its upper fills.

7 CONCLUSIONS

A single ditched feature, of modern date, was recorded. The evaluation however had been intended to identify any likely Romano-British remains within the development area. The exact location of the excavated trench is marked 'ROMAN POTTERY KILNS (sites of)' on the modern OS maps and 'ROMAN HOUSES (sites of)' on the First Edition OS of 1891. It is unclear whether these two are a reference to the same, or different discoveries.

In conversation with the staff of the Education Centre, it was mentioned that the ex-headmaster and pupils from the school had excavated the kilns in the field some 200m to the north.

The small number and ragged condition of the Roman pottery sherds from the evaluation – five, mostly small and heavily abraded sherds – suggests neither the proximity of kilns nor of houses.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The project was managed by Stephen Macaulay. The finds were processed by Shannon Cliff and the illustrations were prepared by Carlos Silva.

The brief for archaeological works was written by Andy Thomas, Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice (CAPCA), and thanks are extended to Adrian Scruby of CAPCA who monitored the evaluation. The trench excavation and backfilling was undertaken by Philip Hall Plant of Peterborough



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