cambridgeshire archaeology
archaeological field unit

CCC AFU Report Number 834

Medieval Remains at Impington Lane, Impington, Cambridgeshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

Spencer Cooper

October 2005

Cambridgeshire County Council
Environment & Community Services

Commissioned by Unwins

Cover Images

Machine stripping, Soham	On-site surveying
Roman corn dryer, Duxford	Guided walk along Devil's Dyke
Bronze Age shaft, Fordham Bypass	Medieval well, Soham
Human burial, Barrington Anglo-Saxon Cemetery	Timbers from a medieval well, Soham
Blue enamelled bead, Barrington	Bed burial reconstruction, Barrington Anglo-Saxon Cemetery
Aethusa cynapium 'Fool's parsley'	Medieval tanning pits, Huntington Town Centre
Digging in the snow, Huntingdon Town Centre	Beaker vessel
Face painting at Hinchingbrooke Iron Age Farm	Environmental analysis
Research and publication	Monument Management, Bartlow Hills

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An Archaeological Evaluation

Spencer Cooper HND BA

Site Code: IMP IML 05
CHER Event Number: ECB2016
Date of works: September 2005
Grid Ref: TL 4432 6351

Editor: Elizabeth Shepherd Popescu BA MIFA
Illustrator: Séverine Bézie MA

Summary

Between 15th and 26th September 2005, Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit carried out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching at Unwins depot, Impington Lane, Impington (TL 4432 6351) in advance of the construction of dwellings.

It was initially envisaged that this evaluation would identify activities associated with the nearby settlements of Impington and Histon. In the event, however, the evaluation revealed limited evidence of medieval field boundaries and quarrying.

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Top Surface

Break in Section

Cut Number 118

Deposit Number 117

Ordnance Datum 18.45m OD N

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Limit of Excavation

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Natural Features

Intrusion/Truncation

Sondages/Machine Strip

Illustrated Section S.14

Deposit

Excavated Slot

Modern

Standing Water

Cut Number **118**

Pit Number 117

Stone

1 Introduction

This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Andy Thomas of the Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and Countryside Advice team (CAPCA; Planning Application S/0321/5/01), supplemented by a Specification prepared by Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit (CCC AFU).

The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16 - Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by CAPCA, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is currently held by CCC AFU and will be deposited at the appropriate county stores.

2 Geology and Topography

The geology of the site consists of mainly of calcareous clay and loams of the Evesham 3 association overlying Jurassic and Cretaceous clay. In the western part of the site are silty soils of Coombe 1 association overlying chalky drift and chalk (BGS 1981).

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 General

The site lies between the medieval villages of Histon and Impington, and probably overlaps elements of these settlements. The eastern end of the site is close to the manorial site of Burgoynes Farm (CHER 10308) and the parish church of St Andrew (CHER 05448). The western end includes a small section of frontage facing onto Histon village green and pond which are believed to be medieval in date (CHER 11247). Saxon artefacts have been recovered in the vicinity (CHER 51960), the area lying lying close to the parochial centre of a village with a recognisably Early Saxon name form (Reaney 1943).

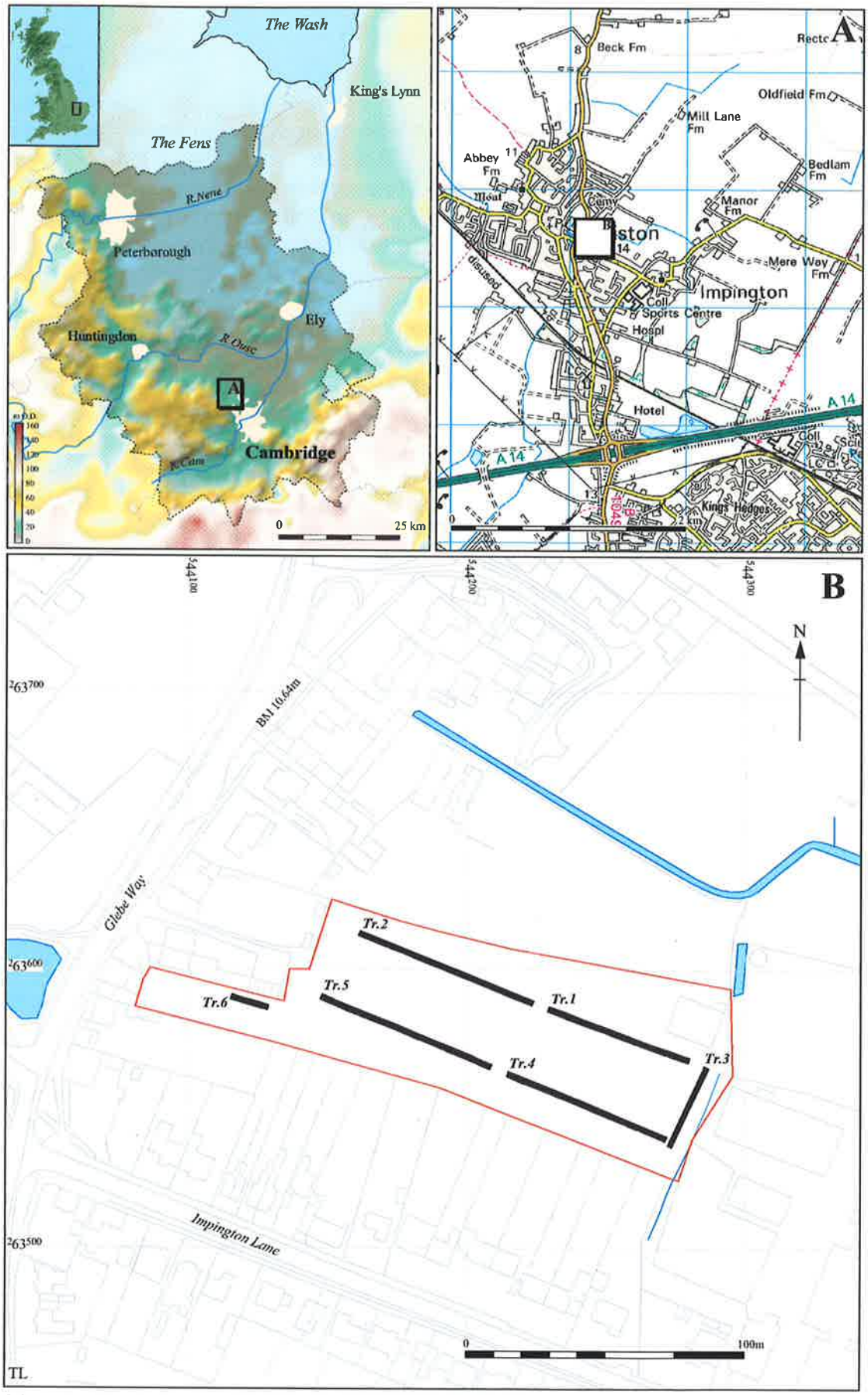

Figure 1 Location of trenches (black) with the development area outlined (red)

In addition, the form of the land parcels associated with Burgoynes Farm and St Andrew's Church to the east of the site suggests a Saxon settlement focus around an oval enclosure.

3.2 Prehistoric

Three handaxes are known from Histon which are likely to date from the Neolithic period (Fox 1923). Unfortunately, their findspots are unknown. Remains of three Bronze Age barrows are recorded from the extreme of the parish and a small number of scatters of worked flint are known from Impington (Taylor 1998). Arbury Camp, a Late Iron Age fortified site located within the parish of Impington, lies 1.8km south of the proposed development.

3.3 Romano-British

The line of Akeman Street runs approximately 500m east of the village of Impington and a possible villa is known at the site of the First Public Drain, Histon, about 1.15km south-west of the site (Margery 1955).

3.4 Anglo-Saxon and Medieval

The only evidence of Saxon activity in the vicinity is the discovery of a circular loom weight found during the construction of a school off Glebe Way, Histon 200m to the north-east of the development area (CHER 05196; Samuels 2004). Impington is referred to in a document of AD 991 (Taylor 1998) and both Histon and Impington are recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086, implying that settlement was established by the Late Saxon period.

Most of Histon was held as two manors by the Bishop of Lincoln at the time of the Domesday survey, when 29 villagers, 18 smallholders and 24 cottagers are recorded, suggesting a population in the region of 375: this makes the village one of the largest in South Cambridgeshire. The bishop gave one of these manors to Eynsham Abbey, Oxfordshire and it was held by the Abbey until the dissolution. The church of St Etheldreda was built on this estate and its earthworks survive in a field at Abbey Farm (850-900m north-west of the subject site).

The other manor which originated as tenanted land was held by 1223 by Henry De Colville, who also held land in Impington and, from the late 13th century, the Colville manors gradually merged into a single manor. They were sold in 1362 to Sir Robert Thorpe and the Histon manor became known as Histon Denny.

The manor of Impington was given to Ely Abbey by Beorhtnoth, ealdorman of Essex in 991 (Samuels 2004). In 1066 the 10 hide vill was entirely in Ely's hands, 6 hides being in demesne and the rest held by three sokemen. By the early 1070s Picot (Sheriff of Cambridge) had taken three hides of the demesne and the rest was held by sokemen. Picot's successor as Baron of Bourn, Gilbert Pecche, was named as intermediate tenant of knights fee in 1279. In the mid 12th century Robert (son of Humphrey) gave land in Impington to William (son of Reynold) as a knights fee. The bishop of Ely later created two knights fees, held separately and covering the whole parish.

The other knights fee in Impington was Burgoynes manor which was recorded in 1193 when Simon (son of Richard the constable) had successfully contested possession of seven-eighths of it. He was presumably the Simon (son of Eve) who conveyed his land in Impington in 1201.

4 Methodology

The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

The Brief required that 5% of the subject site should be examined.

Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using CCC AFU's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

5 Results

5.1 General

Six trenches were excavated across the site (Figs 1 & 2). The overburden consisted of a dark greyish brown silty clay topsoil (1) which was 0.20m-0.46 deep, overlying a pale brown silty clay subsoil (2) which was 0.40-0.55m deep across the site.

5.2 Trench 1

Trench 1 was located in the north-eastern part of the development area and was 54m long, running on a north-west to south-east alignment (Fig. 2). The features encountered are described below from west to east. In the western part of the trench a posthole (**1**) was uncovered which contained no artefacts. This oval posthole had concave sides and was 0.17m wide and 0.15m deep. It contained a single fill of mid grey silty clay (2).

Two metres to the east was a shallow ditch terminus (**3**) which had concave sides (Fig. 3, Section 7) and ran on a north to south alignment. It measured 0.31m wide and 0.05m deep and contained a single mid brown sandy clay fill (4).

To the east of the ditch terminus was an oval pit (**20**) with concave sides. It measured 0.45m wide and 0.15m deep and contained a single fill (21) of pale brown sandy clay.

Further to the south-east were two intercutting features. The earliest was a circular pit (**5**) with concave sides and a sloping base. It measured 0.77m wide and 0.22m deep and contained a mid bluish grey clay (6). A later oval posthole (**7**) had concave sides. It measured 0.48m wide and 0.09 m deep and contained a dark grey silty clay (8).

In the centre of the trench was a sub-rectangular pit (**9**) that had concave sides with a sloping base (Fig. 3, Section 4). It contained a dark greyish brown sandy clay fill (10) and measured 0.75m wide and 0.35m deep. A sherd of Essex medieval grey reduced ware dating from 1200-1500 was recovered from this feature.

Towards the eastern end of the trench were two sub-rectangular pits (**11** and **13**). The former was sub-rectangular in plan and was 0.47m wide and 0.37m deep. It contained a single dark brown sandy clay fill (12) with occasional gravel.

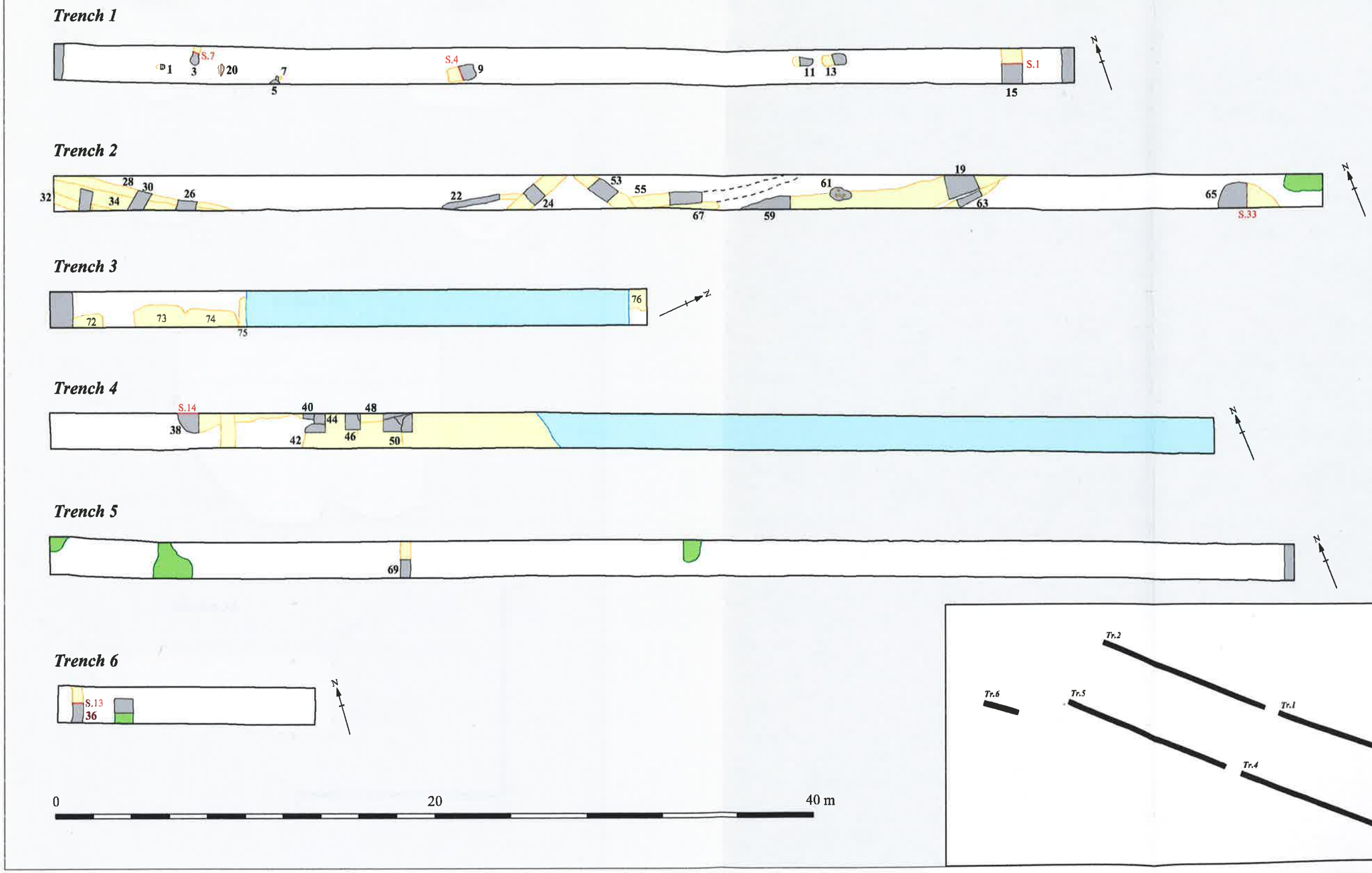

Figure 2: Trench plans

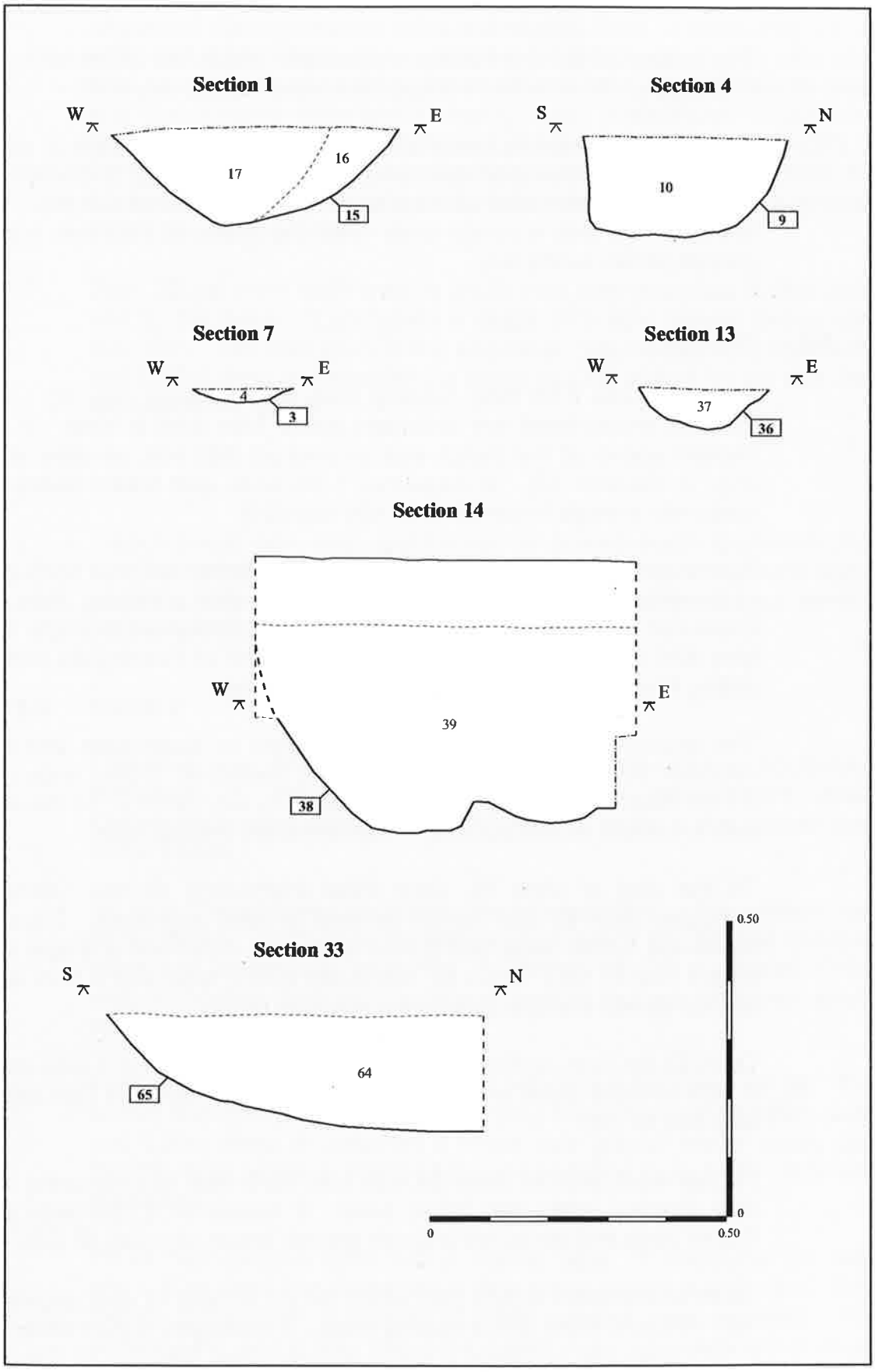

Figure 3: Section drawings

The second pit (**13**) had concave sides and measured 0.63m wide and 0.37m deep. It contained a single dark brown sandy clay (14).

To the east of the pits was a ditch (**15**) which ran on a north to south alignment, with concave sides and a sloping base (Fig. 3, Section 1). It measured 1.01m wide and 0.33m deep and contained two fills. The lower fill (16) was a sandy chalk while the upper fill (17) was a pale greyish brown sandy clay.

5.3 Trench 2

Trench 2 was 67m long running from east to west (Fig. 2). The features encountered are described below from east to west. In the eastern corner of the trench was an oval pit (**65**) with concave sides (Fig. 3, Section 33). It measured 1.3m wide and 0.40m deep and contained a single brownish grey silty clay (64).

Further to the west were two ditches. One (**19=59**) ran on a north-east to south-west alignment with concave sides and a sloping base. It measured 0.70m wide and 0.25m deep and contained a single light grey silty clay fill (18). A single residual sherd of Horningsea pottery dating from the 2nd to 4th century was recovered.

The second ditch (**63**) ran from north-east to south-west and had concave sides and a sloping base. It measured 0.30m wide and 0.11m deep and contained a single dark grey silty fill (62). To the west was a modern animal burial (61) that remained unexcavated.

To the east of ditch **19,** were three intercutting ditches. Ditch **55** truncated ditch **67** and ran on an east to west alignment. Ditch **55** measured 0.70m wide and 0.30m deep and contained a single light brown silty fill (54). Ditch **67** measured 0.60m wide and 0.35m deep and contained a single dark brown silty clay fill (66).

Ditch **53** ran from north to south and was 0.90m wide and 0.30m deep. It had concave sides and a sloping base and contained a light brown silty clay fill (52).

Further west, another ditch (**24**) ran from north-east to south-west and had concave sides and flatish base. It measured 0.70m wide and 0.20m deep and contained a single greyish brown silty clay fill (23).

Ditch **24** truncated a gully (**22**) which ran on an east to west alignment with concave sides and a sloping base. It measured 0.40m wide and 0.10m deep and contained a single orange brown silty clay fill (71).

In the western corner of the trench was another series of ditches. Ditch **30** truncated ditch **28**. The former ran on an east to west

alignment, having concave sides and sloping base. It measured 0.67m wide and 0.18m deep and contained a light greyish brown silty clay with occasional gravel (29). Ditch **28** was also aligned east to west and had concave sides and a sloping base. It measured 0.50m wide and 0.16m deep and contained a single light brown silty clay fill (27). A section was excavated across the ditch system to the east of ditch **30**. Ditch **26** was 0.50m wide and 0.18m deep and contained a greyish brown silty sand fill (25).

Ditch **32** ran from north-west to south-east and measured 0.55m wide and 0.15m deep. It contained a single fill a light greyish brown silty clay (31). The final ditch in the sequence (**34**) measured 0.65m wide and 0.45m deep and contained a single fill (33) of dark brown silty clay with moderate gravel.

5.4 Trench 3

Trench 3 was 44m long, and located on a north-south alignment (Fig. 2). This trench was partially flooded by a combination of ground water and rain water. As a result, no features were excavated but several pits were identified (**72**, **73**, **74**, **75** and **76**).

5.5 Trench 4

Trench 4 was 61.5m long, located on a north-west to south-east alignment in the eastern corner of the development area. Observations were obscured by high ground water in the eastern part of the trench.

An area characterised by quarry pits was identified in the western part of the trench. Furthest to the west a large quarry pit (**38**) had concave sides and an irregular base (Fig. 3, Section 14). It measured 1.10m wide and 0.70m deep and contained a single mid greyish brown sandy clay (37).

Further to the east, was another pit (**40**) which truncated pit **38.** The former had concave sides and a sloping base, measuring 0.50m wide and 0.50m deep. It contained a single pale greyish brown sandy clay fill (39) from which a sherd of Ely ware dating from 1150-1400 was recovered.

Pit **42** had concave sides with a sloping base. It measured 1m wide and 0.60m deep and contained a dark brown sandy clay fill (41). Two metres to the east, a number of other quarries were revealed. The earliest (**44**) was 0.60m wide and 0.40m deep. It contained a single dark grey silty fill (49). Pit **44** was truncated by pit **48** which had concave sides and a sloping base. It measured 0.50m wide and 0.40m deep and contained a brown sandy clay fill (45). Pit **50** had

concave sides with a flatish base. It measured 0.70m wide and 0.14m deep and contained a mid creamy clayey sand fill (51). Pit **46** had concave sides with a flatish base. It measured 0.75m wide and 0.32m deep and contained a pale cream clayey sand (47).

5.6 Trench 5

Trench 5 was 66.6m long and was located on an east to west alignment in the south-western part of the development area (Fig. 2). A single ditch (**69**) was revealed in the centre of the trench. The ditch ran from north to south and had concave sides. It measured 0.50m wide and was 0.12m deep.

5.7 Trench 6

Trench 6 was 17.5m long, 1.8 m wide and 0.79m deep (Fig. 2). It was located on an east to west alignment in the south-western part of the development area. A single ditch (**36**) was uncovered in the western part of the trench and ran on a north to south alignment, with concave sides and a sloping base (Fig. 3, Section 13). It measured 0.55m wide and 0.14m deep and contained a single dark brown clayey sand (37).

6 Discussion

Despite the discovery of a relatively large number of features, interpretation was hampered by the low density of finds (Appendices 1 & 2). The ditches encountered are likely to have formed part of a medieval agricultural landscape linked to the settlements at Histon and/or Impington.

One of the most significant observations in the evaluation was a series of ditches identified in Trench 2. Their differing alignments and stratigraphic relationships imply several phases of field systems. It is possible that a pre-medieval field system was superseded by a later medieval layout. The material culture recovered from these ditches was extremely limited with a residual sherd of Roman pottery being the only artefact recovered.

Ditches were also uncovered in Trenches 1, 5 and 6 which may have formed part of a wider agricultural system during the medieval period.

The quarry pits found in Trench 4 produced the greatest density of artefacts within the subject area. Sherds of Ely ware and Colchester ware (Appendix 2) were recovered from the backfill of these quarries, which probably indicate medieval quarrying for gravel and clay. It is

tempting to view such activity as being associated with adjacent settlement.

Pits were also identified in Trenches 1, 2 3 which produced medieval pottery. Two pits (**11** and **13**) revealed in Trench 1 produced pottery dating from 1200-1500.

7 Conclusions

The aim of the project was to establish the character, date, state of preservation, and extent of any archaeological remains within the site. The results of the evaluation have made a limited contribution to the understanding of medieval landscape of Impington and Histon.

The most notable observations were the presence of medieval field boundaries in Trench 2 and the identification of medieval quarrying activity in Trench 4. The density of field boundaries may imply that the development area was part of an open field system that was enclosed in the later medieval period. The major components of the landscape identified (quarrying and field boundaries) imply settlement activity in close proximity to the development area but not in its immediate vicinity. Furthermore, the absence of any great quantity of finds suggests that the archaeology of the development area is characterised by peripheral activities.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Unwins who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by Paul Spoerry. Thanks are also due to Steve Hickling, Jon Bolderson, Dennis Payne and Glenn Bailey who assisted with the fieldwork and survey. Séverine Bézie.

The brief for archaeological works was written by Andy Thomas and Kasia Gdaniec, who visited the site and monitored the evaluation.

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Appendix 1: Finds Summary

Context	Material	Object Name	Wt (kg)
10	Ceramic	Vessel	0.010
10	Bone	Unworked	0.010
12	Ceramic	Ceramic Building Material	0.480
14	Stone	Slate	0.010
18	Ceramic	Vessel	0.010
18	Bone	Unworked	0.080
21	Stone	Stone	0.080
25	Ceramic	Vessel	0.027
35	Bone	Unworked	0.070
35	Ceramic	Vessel	0.010
39	Ceramic	Vessel	0.041
41	Ceramic	Vessel	0.010
45	Ceramic	Vessel	0.020
47	Ceramic	Vessel	0.020
Unstrat.	Ceramic	Vessel	0.002

Appendix 2: Pottery

by Dr Paul Spoerry

This small late medieval assemblage has a very minor Roman component. The presence of Cambridgeshire and Essex wares demonstrates that pottery was imported into the Impington and Histon area from Ely and Colchester. The vessel types are standard domestic forms used for storage and cooking.

Context	Feature	Description	Qty	Wt (kg)	Context Date Range
10	Pit	Medieval grey reduced ware	1	0.010	1200-1500
18	Ditch	Horningsea	1	0.010	2nd to 4th century
25	Ditch	Roman rim	1	0.027	Roman
35	Ditch	Medieval grey ware	1	0.010	1200-1500
39	Pit	Ely ware (x 1) Grimston (x 2) Grimston (decorated) (x 1)	4	0.010 0.017 0.014	1150-1400 1250-1500 1350-1500 context date 1430-1550
41	Pit	Raeren-Aachen	1	0.010	1480-1550
45	Pit	Colchester Ware (x 1) Ely Ware (x 1)	2	0.010 0.010	1250-1500 1150-1400
47	Pit	Essex Coarse Ware	1	0.020	1250-1400
		Total	**12**		

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contact
cambridgeshirearchaeology
archaeological field unit

Fulbourn Community Centre Site
Haggis Gap
Fulbourn
Cambridge
CB1 5HD

Tel : 01223 576201
Fax: 01223 880946
email: arch.field.unit@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
web: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/archaeology