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CCC AFU Report Number 840

Post-Medieval Remains at No.2 Girton Rd, Girton, Cambridge

An Archaeological Evaluation

Spencer Cooper

October 2005

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 head, Barrington	Bed burial reconstruction, Barrington Anglo-Saxon Cemetery
<i>Aethusa cynapium</i> 'Fool's parsley'	Medieval tanning pit, Huntingdon Town Centre
Digging in the snow, Huntingdon Town Centre	Beaker vessel
Face painting at Hindlingbrooke Iron Age Farm	Environmental analysis
Research and publication	Monument Management, Bartlow Hills

**Post-Medieval Remains at No.2 Girton Rd,
Girton, Cambridge**

An Archaeological Evaluation

Spencer Cooper HND BA

Site Code: GIRGRD 05
CHER Event Number: ECB 2058
Date of works: October 2005
Grid Ref: TL 4270 6069

Editor: Elizabeth Popescu BA MIFA
Illustrator: Séverine Bézie MA

Summary

Between 26th and 28th October 2005, Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit carried out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching to the rear of No.2 Girton Rd (TL 4270 6069) in advance of the construction of two dwellings.

It was initially envisaged that this evaluation would identify activities associated with the nearby Roman and Anglo-Saxon cemeteries. In the event, however, the evaluation revealed post-medieval pits.

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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	
Deposit Number	117
Ordinance Datum	$\frac{18.45\text{m ODN}}{\times}$

Plans

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

1 Introduction

Between 26th and 28th October 2005 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken on the land to the rear of No.2 Girton Rd, Girton, Cambridgeshire. The proposed development includes the construction of two dwellings on 0.2 ha of land. This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by of the Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and Countryside Advice team (CAPCA; Planning Application S/1049/05/F), 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.

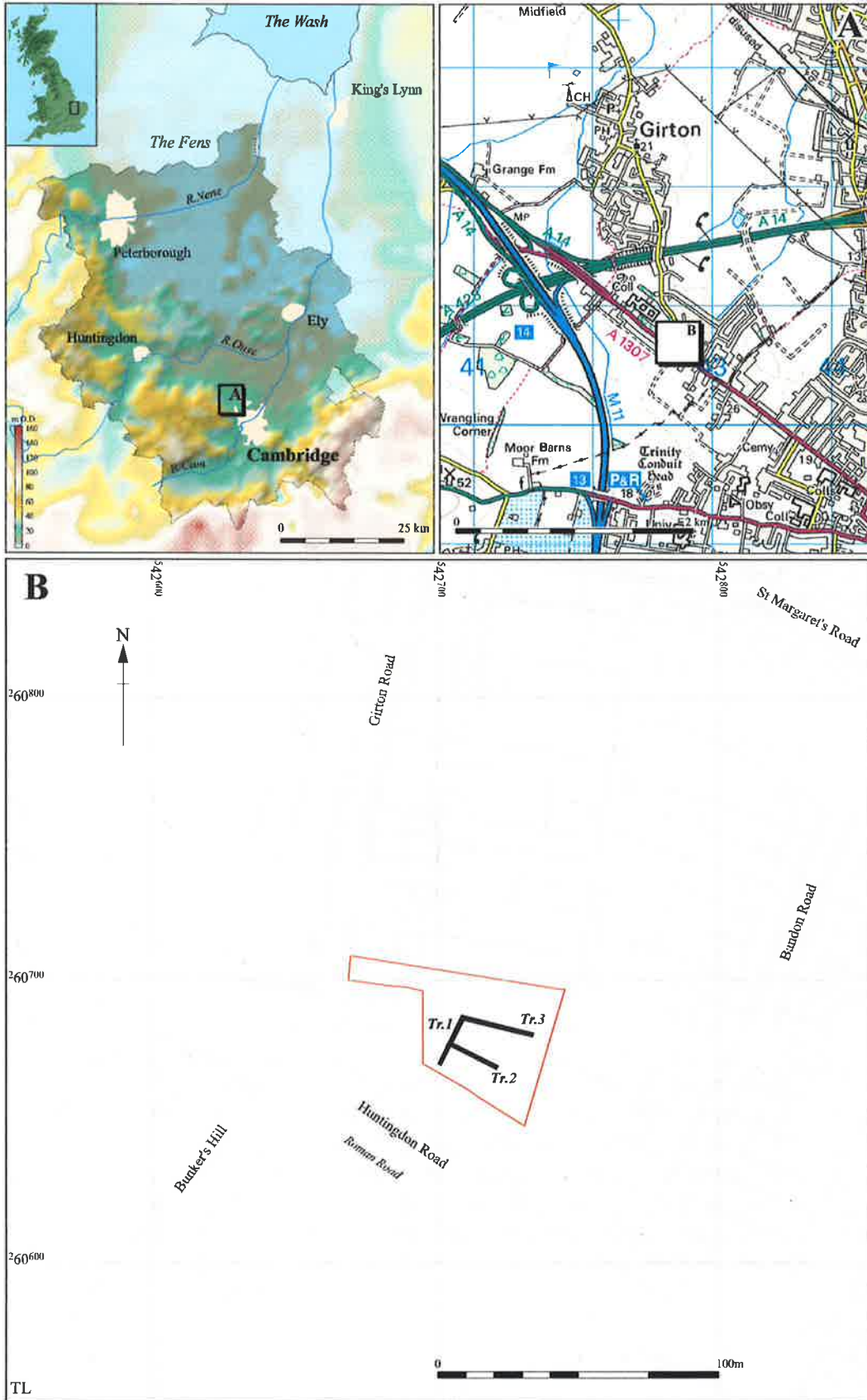
2 Geology and Topography

The site is located at the southern extent of Girton approximately 2.5 km north-west of the historic upper town of Cambridge, where drift deposits of mixed sands gravels and silts overlie Gault Clay (BGS 1981).

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 General

The site lies on the north side of the north-west to south-east Godmanchester to Cambridge Roman road which was in use during the military occupation of Cambridge in the 1st century AD (Taylor 1998). Settlement expanded along the route during the next four or five centuries. Burial mounds and flat graves of Roman date were placed along the line of the road and are known from Girton College, 400m to the north-west and from Howe House (CHER 06299) 350m to the south-west.



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

Earlier archaeological remains of Neolithic and Bronze Age date are known from ring ditches and field scatters of stone tools and flakes in the fields to the south of Huntingdon Road (CHER 06284 & 11350).

3.2 Prehistoric

A Palaeolithic hand axe was recovered from a gravel pit within the village of Girton (Taylor 1998). The earliest settlement evidence is a small group of enclosures and circular huts of Iron Age date between the village and Girton College before construction of Cambridge Northern By-pass in 1976. Excavations on the Anglo-Saxon cemetery uncovered part of a Bronze Age cremation urn probably from a round barrow.

3.3 Romano-British

The Roman road from Cambridge to Godmanchester passed close to the subject site. It was marked in Girton by two milestones inscribed with dedications to Constantine the Great which can be dated to AD 306-7 (Taylor 1998). The Iron Age settlement site continued in use as a farming settlement and the body of a young woman was buried in one of the ditches. The major Romano-British site in Girton was a cemetery dating from the 2nd to 4th century AD. It was located on the site of Girton College adjacent to the Roman road. Roman burials had been disturbed by the later cemetery and the construction works for the College. Excavators in the 1880s were only able to recover two 2nd century cremations both in square wooden boxes with iron nails, one of which contained a wooden casket studded with eight bronze bosses in the form of boars head (Taylor 1998). A rubbish pit within the cemetery contained massive carved stones, including the head of a lion devouring its prey and a male torso wearing a belted tunic. There were also many stone blocks and hypocaust and roof tiles that could have come from a domestic site but are more likely to be part of a religious structure.

3.4 Anglo-Saxon and Medieval

A large important Anglo-Saxon cemetery has been identified in the grounds of Girton College (CHER 12040 & 06429) which had over 150 cremations and 75 inhumations (Taylor 1998). Grave goods recovered from this cemetery included brooches, knives, several pairs of tweezers and wrist clasps, bone combs, and finger rings. Most cremations were in urns some of them decorated. Some artefacts such as a pair of tweezers were miniatures. Of particular note was that both inhumations and cremations contained occasional Romano-British objects.

In 1086 the village of Girton was inhabited by 32 peasants and 2 servi and in 1279 had over 90 landholders (Wright & Lewis 1989).

There were 56 taxpayers in 1327 and 196 adults paid the poll tax in 1377. Girton may have shrunk slightly in the late medieval period. Only 45 people paid the subsidy in 1524 and there were only 34 households in 1563.

The largest medieval estate in Girton was that of Ramsey Abbey, derived from the gifts of Godric in 992 and of Aethelric, Bishop of Dorchester (1016-34). Girton remained a demesne manor of the Abbey until the Dissolution, being reckoned in 1279 at 6 hides.

In the medieval period there was a small hamlet Howes (CHER 0244) situated at the extreme south-east corner of the parish (0.5km to the south-west of the development area) alongside the Roman Road. The remains of the Deserted Medieval Village from Howes House were recently investigated (ECB152). Little is known of the history of this village which in the 13th century had its own chapel.

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 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

Three trenches were excavated across the development area (Figs 1 & 2). The overburden observed in all three trenches consisted of two layers. Layer 1 (topsoil) was a dark grey silty clay with modern ceramics and masonry, varying in depth from 0.50-0.30m. Layer 2 (subsoil) was a greyish brown silty clay which varied in thickness from 0.10-0.30m across the development area.

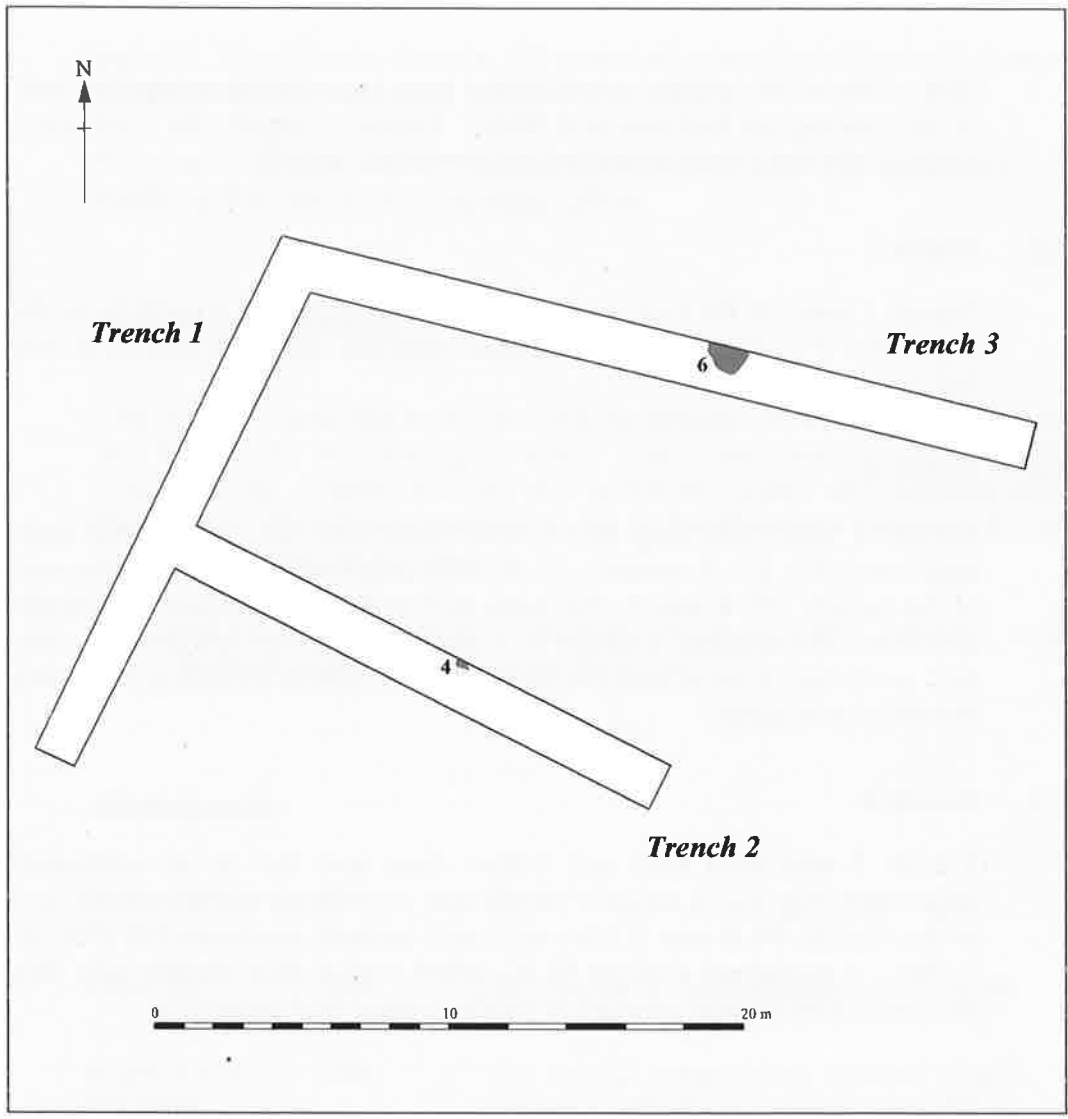


Figure 2: Trench plans

One of the most notable observations from the evaluation was the lack of archaeological features and finds. Modern rubbish pits containing glass, and bricks were identified in Trenches 2 and 3.

5.2 Trench 1

Trench 1 was 19.7m long and 0.80m deep and ran on a north to south alignment (Fig. 2). No archaeological features were uncovered in this trench.

5.3 Trench 2

Trench 2 was 18m long and 0.60m deep and ran on an east-west alignment (Fig 2). A modern pit (4) was uncovered in the eastern end of the trench. Pit 4 was 0.47m wide and partially excavated to a depth of 0.10m. It contained a single fill 3 which was a dark greyish silty clay and produced a large amount of modern artefacts including ceramics asbestos and glass.

5.4 Trench 3

Trench 3 was 25m long and 0.60m deep and ran on an east-west alignment (Fig. 2). A modern pit (6) was uncovered in the eastern end of the trench. Pit 6 was 0.82m wide and partially excavated to a depth 0.05m. It contained a single fill (5) which was a dark greyish silty clay and produced a large amount of modern glass and ceramics.

6 Discussion

The results of the evaluation indicate an absence of Romano-British and medieval remains and artefacts in the development area. This is surprising considering the close proximity of the Roman road and presence of important Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon cemeteries within the environs of Girton.

The post-medieval/modern pits uncovered in Trenches 2 and 3 probably relate to the house which currently stands immediately to the west of the development area.

7 Conclusions

The aim of the project was to establish the character, date, state, of preservation and extent of any archaeological remains. The paucity of Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon activity may suggest that the site lay beyond the edge of both settlement and cemeteries in the Anglo-Saxon and Romano-British period. Alternatively the small areas investigated might not be representative of the wider picture in these

periods. In particular there is still scope for intermittent Romano-British roadside activity, including burial, in the vicinity.

Recommendations for any future work based upon this report will be made by the County Archaeology Office.

Acknowledgements

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

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