

# Cambridge Castle Hill Monitoring of test pits at base of motte



Archaeological  
Watching Brief Report



March 2009

Client: Atkins Limited

OA East Report No: 1105

OASIS No: Oxfordar3-58226

NGR: TL445 591

*Cambridge Castle Hill – Monitoring of test pits at base of motte*

*Site Code: CAMCHM09*

*CHER No. ECB 3182*

*Date of Works: March 2009*

*Report No: 1105*

*Excavator: James Fairbairn*

*Client: Atkins Limited*

*Report Date: March 2009*

**Report Number:** 1105  
**Site Name:** Cambridge Castle Hill – Monitoring of test pits at base of motte  
**HER Event No:** CHER 1382  
**Date of Works:** March 2009  
**Client Name:** Atkins Limited  
**Client Ref:** N/A  
**Planning Ref:** N/A  
**Grid Ref:** TL 445 591  
**Site Code:** CAM CHM 09  
**Finance Code:** CAM CHM 09  
**Receiving Body:** CCC Stores, Landbeach  
**Accession No:**  
**Prepared by:** James Fairbarin  
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**Position:** Project Manager  
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## Summary

*Between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of March 2009, Oxford Archaeology East carried out an archaeological watching brief on three test pits at the base of a retaining wall skirting Castle Hill mound in Cambridge. (TL445 591). The skirting wall ran along the southern edge of the base of the castle mound. The monitoring was carried out during the investigation by Atkins Engineering Solutions of the walls foundation. The test pit monitoring revealed that the ground had been heavily disturbed in the modern period. The disturbed fills contained pottery from the Roman and medieval periods, as well as Post-Medieval and modern ceramics. No archaeological features were recorded.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 An archaeological investigation was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology East at the request of Quinton Carroll of Cambridgeshire Archaeology (Cambridgeshire County Council) on behalf of Atkins Engineering Solutions.

The work was carried out in accordance with a Brief issued by Cambridgeshire Archaeology and included the monitoring of test pits excavated as part of a geotechnical investigation into a retaining wall and its footings on the Clare College side of Castle Mound, Cambridge.

## 2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 2.1.1 The underlying geology of the site where the test pits were located consists of sand and gravels overlying natural chalk marl however the test pits were only cut into a mixture of redeposited garden topsoil and subsoils. In trench one however where evidence of a GPO telegraph pole were found lenses of the redeposited natural chalk marl were also encountered. The area is dominated by the castle mound or motte which rises to an approximate height of 32.36mOD giving it a strategically important position overlooking the River Cam.

## 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

### 3.1.1 Iron Age Settlements

The strategic position of Castle Hill overlooking the River Cam has attracted settlement for over 2000 years. The earliest settlements date back to the late Iron age and consisted of a large area enclosed by a ditch and bank.

### 3.1.2 Roman Period

A small Roman fort is thought to have existed on the site in AD 60/61 which may have been established as a result of the Boudeician revolt. The fort survived until the early 2nd century when it was demolished and a grid of streets (*Insulae*) were laid out parallel to Akeman Street. At this time an imperial guest house or *Mansio* was built and elsewhere in the town (known as *Duroliponte*) small houses with associated yards were established. A decline in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century was followed by a resurgence of fortunes in the 4th century AD. A substantial wall of Barnack stone was constructed around the town demolishing buildings along its course.

### 3.1.3 The Norman Castle

In 1086 William the Conqueror ordered a castle to be built at Cambridge (*Grantabrycge* the name of the Saxon town). The Domesday book records that 27 houses were demolished to make way for its construction. Like other Norman castles Cambridge Castle consisted of a *Motte* and *Bailey*. The motte was a central mound of chalk rubble on which would have stood a wooden keep. The Bailey was an enclosed area in front of the motte, which would have contained the living quarters and service buildings for the castle inhabitants. The Norman motte is the clearest visible reminder of the history of Cambridge castle on the site today.

### 3.1.4 The Edwardian castle

Having fallen into neglect by the early 13th century, Cambridge castle was remodelled in stone by Edward 1 in 1283-1306. a large stone curtain wall was constructed, together with an elaborate barbican controlling entrance to the bailey. Inside the bailey were a chapel, a three-storey Great Hall and a kitchen, providing accommodation fit for the king. Much of the castle had fallen into disrepair by Tudor times, and quantities of stone were removed for use in building the Cambridgeshire colleges. The gatehouse survived as a prison until its demolition in 1841.

### 3.1.5 Civil War defences

At the outbreak of the English Civil war in 1642, Cambridge Castle was brought back into military use, this time as an artillery fortress. The ditches were re-dug and large earthen diamond shaped bastions were constructed at three corners of the defensive circuit, which also contained a barrack block. Earthworks to the east of Shire hall are the visible remains of these fortifications. Recent excavations on castle Street revealed the large ditch that surrounded the south-eastern bastion. The fort never saw action and was decommissioned in 1647.

### 3.1.6 The County Goal

In 1802-1807 a stater of the art goal was built on the site and the Shire Hall courts were added in 1841. This elaborate Italianate building remained on the site until its demolition in 1953. The present Shire Hall was built in 1931-32 to designs by county architect H.H. Dunn and used materials from the demolished County goal.

## 4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1.1 The objective of this watching brief 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.
- 4.1.2 The area of investigation was located at three separate locations along the base of the retaining wall at the foot of the castle mound.
- 4.1.3 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
- 4.1.4 Site conditions were dry and overcast. The steepness of the bank made accesses a little difficult. A moderate amount of modern rubbish littered the excavation areas.

## 5 RESULTS

### 5.1 Test Pit One

- 5.1.1 Test pit 1 was located at the foot of the retaining wall of the castle mound and had a width of 1.90m, a length of 1.30m and a depth of 1.20m (see Fig 2). Due to a large amount of disturbance by the erection of a GPO telegraph pole no archaeological features were detected although a small amount of 19th and 20th century pottery was found within the topsoil layer. Test pit one was dug through a dark grey silty topsoil into re deposited layers of dark greyish brown subsoil and natural chalk marl.



## 5.2 Test Pit Two

5.2.1 The second test pit was dug at the junction where the the old and the new curtain wall met. (See Fig 2). The older wall is thought to be somewhere in the region of a hundred and fifty years old and the newer wall was probably constructed sometime during the early to mid twentieth century. Test pit 2 was dug to a depth of 1.0m and had a maximum width of 1.15m. The subsoil consisted of dark grey brown silty material mixed with natural chalk marl, this existed to a depth of 0.65m and was overlain by a dark grey silty clay topsoil, this had a maximum depth of 0.35m. This area again was heavily truncated by modern construction, in this case, the chimney from an under croft situated just 0.50m from the edge of the test pit. A moderate amount of pottery was found in the test pit and this dated from the Roman period through to the 20th century. Unfortunately due to this modern disturbance none of the pottery can be assigned to a secure context.

## 5.3 Test Pit Three

5.3.1 Test pit 3 was situated between the curtain wall and the rear of the under croft (See Fig 2). The test pit was dug to a maximum depth of 1.40m and a width of 1.20m. Test pit 3 was dug into an area of backfilled mid to dark grey silty grey backfilled soils relating to the construction of the nearby under croft, so only heavily disturbed ground was encountered. Pottery varying from the Romano- British period to the twentieth century was found throughout the backfilled material.

## 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 6.1 Conclusion

6.1.1 All three test pits situated at the base of the curtain wall were dug into heavily disturbed ground. Test pit 1 was dug in an area where previously a GPO telegraph pole was situated, and test pits 2 and 3 were located in an area where the ground had been truncated by the construction of an under croft relating to a nearby building so no archaeological features were encountered. Pottery dating from the Roman period to the twentieth century was found in varying amounts throughout all three test pits but again could not be assigned to any secure context and could have easily come from anywhere in the locality. Given the general location of the test pits Archaeological features could exist but at a greater depth.

## 7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 7.1.1 The author would like to thank Atkins who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by Stephen Macaulay. The watching brief was carried out by James Fairbairn and Crane Begg supplied the illustrations.
- 7.1.2 The brief for archaeological works was written by Quinton Carroll.

## APPENDIX A. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

### Project Details

OASIS Number	Oxfordar3-58226		
Project Name	Watching brief on test pits at Castle Hill Mound Cambridge.		
Project Dates (fieldwork) Start	11-03-2009	Finish	12-03-2009
Previous Work (by OA East)	No	Future Work	Unknown

### Project Reference Codes

Site Code	CAMCHM09	Planning App. No.	TBA
HER No.	ECB 3182	Related HER/OASIS No.	N/A

### Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt

### Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Field Observation (periodic visits)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Record
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Excavation (100%)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Field Walking
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Recorded Observation	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Metal Detector Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Test Pit Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Open-Area Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Excavation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Watching Brief

### Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
Bank	Uncertain	Pottery	Roman 43 to 410
	Select period...	Pottery	Post Medieval 1540 to 1901
	Select period...	Pottery	Modern 1901 to Present

### Project Location

County	Cambridgeshire	Site Address (including postcode if possible) Castle Hill Mound Adjacent to Shire Hall, Cambridge.	
District	Cambridgeshire		
Parish	Cambridge city		
HER	Cambs		
Study Area	3sqm	National Grid Reference	TL445 591

### Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	CAPCA
Project Design Originator	Stephen Macaulay
Project Manager	Stephen Macaulay
Supervisor	James Fairbairn

### Project Archives

Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
Cambs County Store	OA East	Cambs County Store
Accession ID ...	Accession ID ... CAMCHM09	Accession ID ...CAMCHM09

### Archive Contents/Media

	Physical Contents	Digital Contents	Paper Contents
Animal Bones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stratigraphic		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Textiles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Worked Bone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Stone/Lithic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Digital Media	Paper Media
<input type="checkbox"/> Database	<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photos
<input type="checkbox"/> GIS	<input type="checkbox"/> Context Sheet
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysics	<input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Images	<input type="checkbox"/> Diary
<input type="checkbox"/> Illustrations	<input type="checkbox"/> Drawing
<input type="checkbox"/> Moving Image	<input type="checkbox"/> Manuscript
<input type="checkbox"/> Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/> Map
<input type="checkbox"/> Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Matrices
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Text	<input type="checkbox"/> Microfilm
<input type="checkbox"/> Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/> Misc.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Research/Notes
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photos
	<input type="checkbox"/> Plans
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey

**Notes:**



Figure 1 Location of the watching brief area (red)

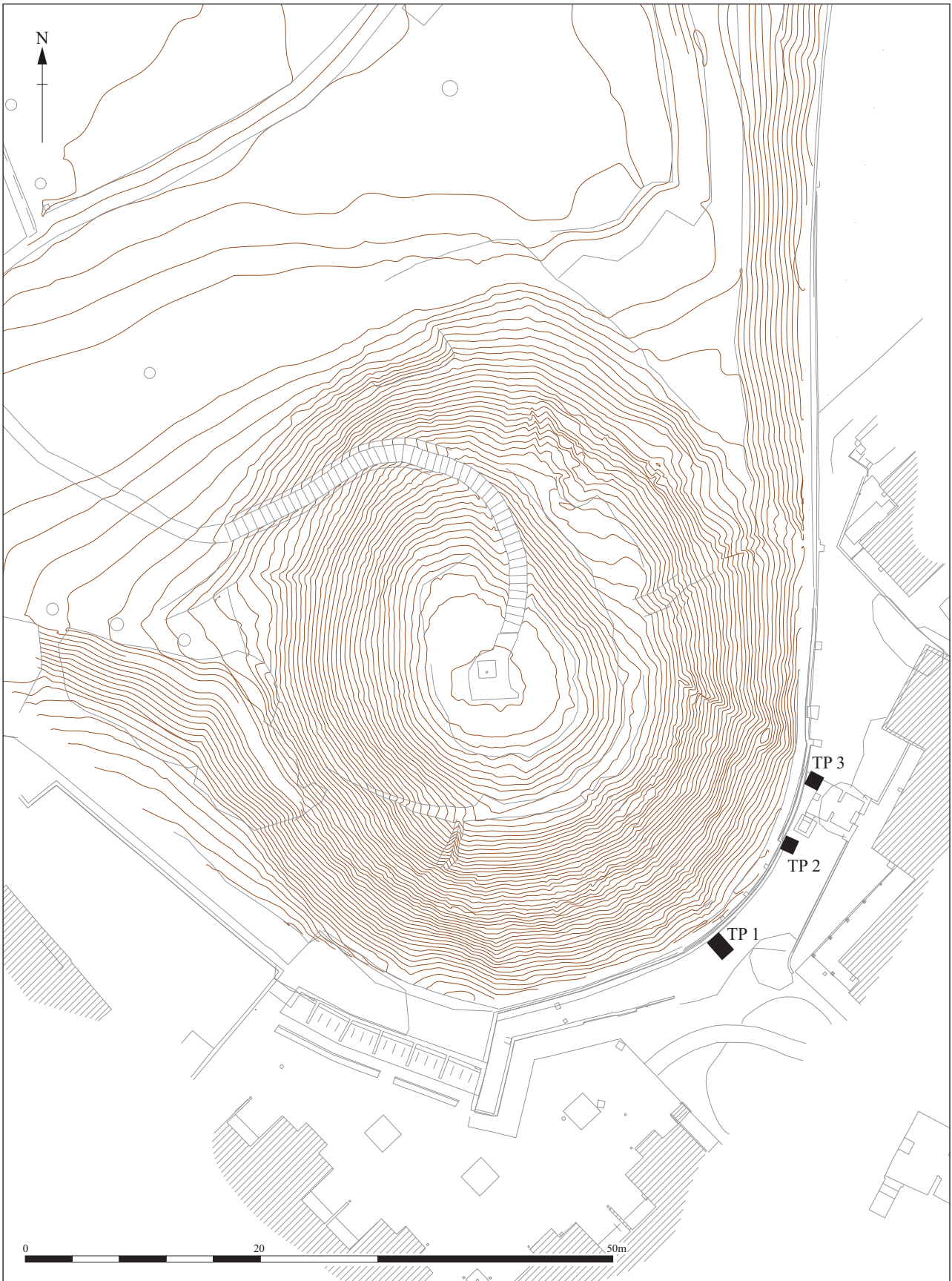


Figure 2 Location of the test pits overlain on client survey



*Plate 1: Working shot*



*Plate 2: Test pit 2*



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