

Archaeological Field Unit

Prehistoric and Romano - British Remains on Land Adjacent to Cow Lane, Godmanchester

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May 1998

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. 150

Commissioned By Nene Valley Waste Ltd.

**Prehistoric and Romano - British Remains on Land Adjacent to Cow Lane,
Godmanchester**

M Hinman and S Kenney

1998

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Report No 150

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SUMMARY

Between the 22nd and the 30th of October 1997 the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council undertook a basic archaeological investigation, and subsequent excavation, on land adjacent to Cow Lane, Godmanchester. The work was commissioned by Mr J Baker of Nene Valley Waste Ltd in advance of the proposed construction of an access route into the new Cow Lane landfill site. Evidence of Prehistoric activity in the form of pits and postholes was recorded in addition to a series of Romano - British ditches. The Prehistoric features are undoubtedly related to the giant ritual complex - dating from the Neolithic period onwards - immediately to the northwest of the investigation area. The Romano - British are thought to relate to field systems surrounding the known Villa site at Rectory Farm. The initial Basic Investigation was carried out in response to a design brief issued by Louise Austin of the County Council Archaeology Section and the subsequent excavation was undertaken in accordance with AFU specification MH 014 and approved by Louise Austin.

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**PREHISTORIC AND ROMANO - BRITISH REMAINS ON LAND
ADJACENT TO COW LANE, GODMANCHESTER.**

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

TL 257 / 707

1 INTRODUCTION

Between the 22nd and the 30th of October 1997 the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council undertook a basic archaeological investigation, and subsequent excavation, on land adjacent to Cow Lane, Godmanchester. The work was commissioned by Mr J Baker of Nene Valley Waste Ltd in advance of the proposed construction of an access route into the new Cow Lane landfill site. The initial Basic Investigation was carried out in response to a design brief issued by Louise Austin of the County Council Archaeology Section and the subsequent excavation was undertaken in accordance with AFU specification MH 014 and approved by Louise Austin.

2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The site is situated just outside the town of Godmanchester on the northern side of Cow Lane and rests on the first and second terrace gravels of the river Ouse, which in this area overlie the Oxford Clays.

3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Detailed accounts of the development of Godmanchester may be found in Green (1977) and Victoria County History Vol I & II for Huntingdonshire. A brief summary, highlighting information relevant to the proposed development area, is given below.

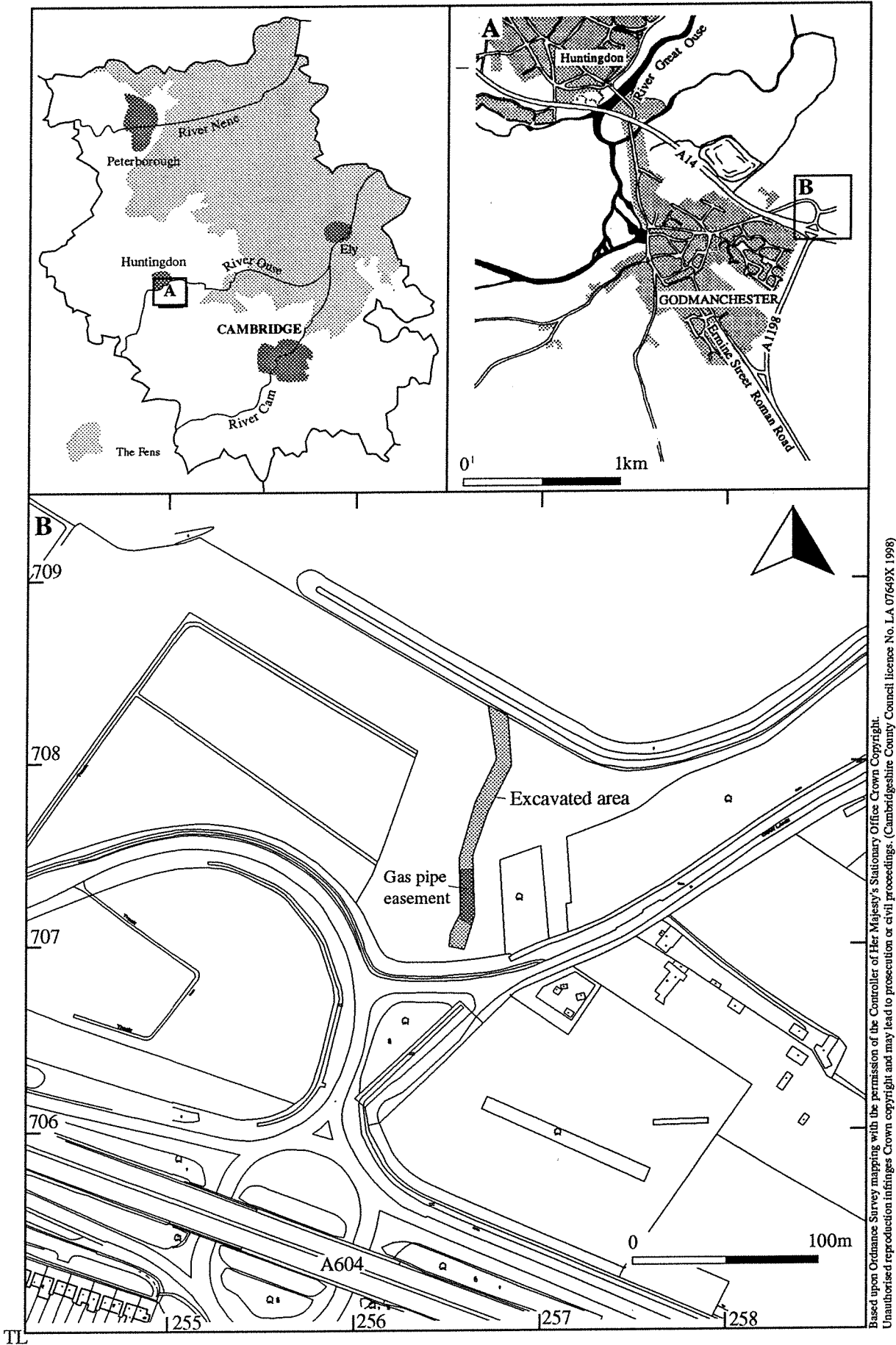
3.1 Prehistoric Godmanchester

Godmanchester is situated on the gravel terraces of the River Great Ouse which reveal a great variety and concentration of cropmarks dating to prehistoric and later times. Some of the most significant cropmark sites that have been excavated in the area are at Brampton and close by, at Rectory Farm, Godmanchester. River valleys were occupied early in prehistoric times as the

rivers provided transport routes and the surrounding valleys had fertile soils which were easily cleared of vegetation for farming. Early prehistoric occupation around Godmanchester is indicated by flint tools in both Mesolithic and Neolithic forms. A Mesolithic camp, and a later, Neolithic farmstead, were located just east of the town by excavations in 1990 (Wait 1992). Contemporary with the latter is the extensive and obscure ritual complex of a giant enclosure and cursus excavated near Rectory Farm (McAvoy 1988 - 1990). A mortuary enclosure at the end of a cursus has been excavated just west of Brampton (Malim 1991). Bronze Age barrows (or ring ditches) at Brampton (White 1966) and at Rectory Farm (McAvoy op. cit.) have also been excavated. Many other sites, probably farmsteads, are likely to have been scattered over the four by one kilometre gravel terrace upon which Godmanchester is situated, exploiting the light, free draining soils so amenable to early farming technology. Such sites are known only through collections of flint tools.

Later prehistoric settlement is relatively better understood, not least because Iron Age pottery survives much better than earlier pottery. One such farmstead has been sample excavated just east of the town (Wait 1992) and others are known from under modern Godmanchester by the appearance of the typical roundhouses and ditched enclosures encountered below Roman occupation.

McAvoy's excavations at Rectory Farm are of particular relevance to the subject site at Cow Lane, due to their extreme proximity (within 100m of the current excavations). In addition to the unprecedented large enclosure and the ring ditch mentioned above, numerous other ancillary features were located between 1988 and 1990. These include a cursus which post-dates the main ritual monument, a square, ditched enclosure, and a larger subrectangular enclosure. Pit clusters were located close to the intersection of the main enclosure and the cursus, and cremations were found near to a small ring ditch between the cursus ditches, about 200m south of this intersection. Other features in the area comprise Iron Age field systems and trackways, Roman roads and enclosures. Many isolated features could not be conclusively dated due to a lack of material evidence, and therefore might belong to one of a number of periods, due to the chronologically extensive utilisation of the area for ritual and more prosaic purposes.



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Figure 1 Site location plan

4 METHODOLOGY

The development area was stripped by a 360° tracked mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket. Topsoil, and where present, subsoil was removed to reveal the surviving archaeological deposits.

Selected areas were hand cleaned, planned and all observed features were sample excavated. Photographs were taken and section drawings made where appropriate. The site was surveyed and located using a Zeiss RecElta 15 Total Station Theodolite.

All deposits were recorded using the Archaeology Field Unit's single context system.

All artefactual and environmental materials were examined by a range of internal and external specialists including I Baxter (faunal remains), V Fryer and P Murphy (environmental), R Darrah (wood), Dr J Last (ceramics) and Dr T Way (lithics). Specialist reports not included within the body of this report are stored within the site archive.

All site records and artefacts are held currently at the AFU headquarters at Fulbourn and stored under the site code GODCOW 97.

5 RESULTS

Trench 1

Measuring 8-10m east-west by 137m north-south (*c* 1120m²), and slightly curving, Trench 1 constituted the exact footprint of the proposed access road, as laid out by the developer (Fig. 2).

The presence of a modern gas main and construction easement towards the southern limit of the area has effectively removed all traces of archaeological deposits in its path. It is worth noting here that the exact line of the gas main deviated from the path predicted within the services search conducted prior to excavation. It is also worth stressing that all deposits within the area of the easement (width 21m) appeared to have been destroyed during the construction of this pipeline and not simply those deposits along the line of the pipe trench (width 2m).

Archaeologically significant features were observed to occur in two distinct and wholly separate spatial groupings. The northern cluster of features was located about half way along the trench, and consisted of a series of intercutting pits and numerous smaller roughly circular features tentatively interpreted as postholes.

The second concentration of features was located to the south, almost at the end of the trench, consisting of a series of intercutting ditches and gullies, the latest of which can be securely dated to the Roman period. The northerly extent of these features is unknown due to truncation by the modern gas main.

Both sets of features were clearly sealed by a mid brown artefactually sterile alluvial deposit which varied in depth between 0.50m and 0.60m.

Excavation reached a maximum depth of 2.0m below present ground surface (BPS) with natural deposits in evidence at a depth of *c* 7.8-8.0m OD. Archaeological deposits were first encountered at 7.8-8.0m OD, a depth of *c* 0.9m BPS.

5.1 NORTHERN AREA

Group 1- Postholes 4, 6, 52, 54.

Because of the lack of stratigraphic relationships between the features in this group, they will be described largely in numerical order. These features all have very similar fills and are distinguished from those features in Group 2 by the absence of gravel within their fills.

Posthole 4, subcircular in plan, was 0.35m in diameter, 0.18m deep, and contained a single fill (3), a soft, light brownish grey silty sand containing occasional small subangular flints. One piece of apparently placed animal bone (a cattle radius shaft fragment) was recovered from this fill. Analysis has indicated that it was not fresh when introduced into the fill, and its position, lying vertically against the eastern edge of the cut may simply be coincidental rather than evidence for deliberate placement.

Posthole 6, oval in plan, was 0.40m x 0.30m, 0.12m deep, and contained a single fill (5), a soft, light brownish grey silty sand containing occasional small subangular flints. Burnt stone and animal bone fragments from cattle and sheep / goat were recovered from this fill.

Posthole 52, subcircular in plan, was 0.70m x 0.42m, 0.22m deep, and contained a single fill (51), a soft, light brownish grey silty sand containing occasional small subangular flints.

Posthole 54, subcircular in plan, was 0.62m x 0.45m, 0.19m deep, and contained a single fill (53), a soft, light brownish grey silty sand containing occasional small subangular flints.

Group 2-Postholes 17, 19, 25, 27, 29.

These features also displayed no stratigraphic relationships, and were filled by gravelly deposits.

Posthole 17, subsquare in plan, was 0.60m x 0.60m, 0.20m deep, and contained a single fill (16), a loose, greyish brown silty sand, containing frequent gravel, with occasional manganese flecks. Animal bone (probably sheep / goat) was recovered from this fill.

Posthole 19, subrectangular and elongated in plan, was 0.80m x 0.30m, 0.05m deep, and contained a single fill (18), a loose, greyish brown silty sand, containing frequent gravel, occasional manganese flecks. Animal bone (probably sheep / goat) was recovered from this fill.

Posthole 25, subrectangular and elongated in plan, was 0.90m x 0.40m, 0.05m deep, and contained a single fill (24), a loose, greyish brown silty sand containing frequent gravel, occasional manganese flecks. No finds were recovered from this fill.

Posthole 27, subrectangular and elongated in plan, was 0.90m x 0.30m, 0.05m deep, and contained a single fill (26), a loose, greyish brown silty sand containing frequent gravel, occasional manganese flecks and flecks of orange sand. No finds were recovered from this fill.

Posthole 29, suboval in plan, was 0.60m x 0.35m and 0.10m deep, and contained a single fill (28), a loose, greyish brown silty sand containing frequent gravel, occasional manganese flecks and flecks of orange sand. No finds were recovered from this fill.

Discussion Groups 1 and 2

The features described within these two groups have been tentatively interpreted as postholes. This functional interpretation is based solely on the general size and shape of these features which is consistent with that of known post built structures throughout Cambridgeshire. The absence of any clearly identifiable evidence for the existence of posts within any of these features such as post packing or post pipe impressions should signal caution. The position of these features in relation to Pit 39 (Group 4) has certain parallels in the CAS excavations to the north of the subject site and may imply that they indicate activity of an undefined but ritualistic nature around a focal point in the prehistoric landscape (See Discussion: Pit 39).

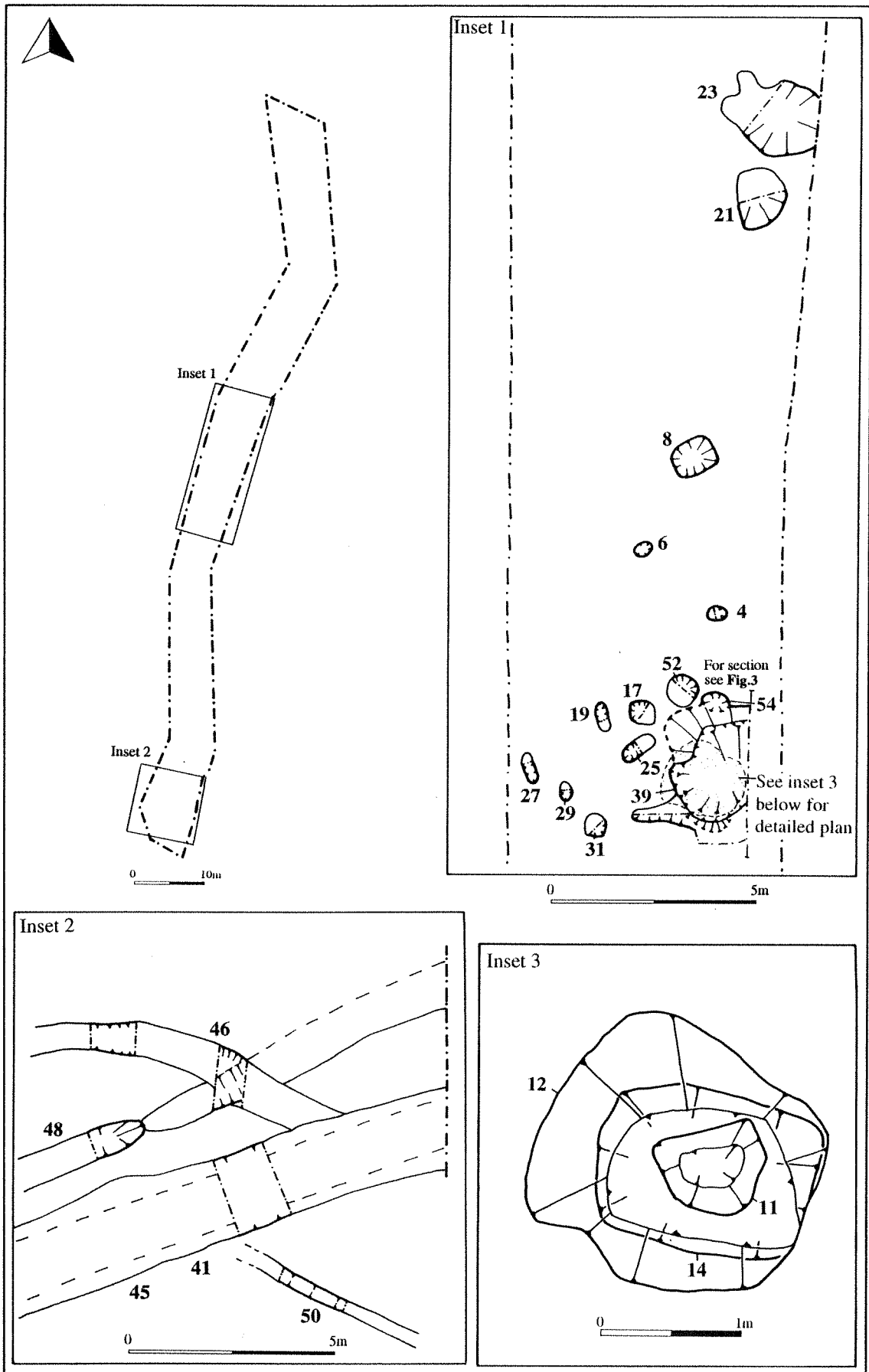


Figure 2 Detail of Excavation Areas

Group 3-Pits 8 & 31.

These features both have very similar fills to the postholes in Group 1.

Pit 8, subrectangular in plan, was 1.20m x 0.80m, 0.10m deep, and contained a single fill (7), a soft, light brownish grey silty sand containing occasional small subangular flints. No finds were recovered from this fill.

Pit 31, subcircular in plan, was 0.60m x 0.60m, 0.10m deep, and contained a single fill (30), a soft, light yellowish brown sandy silt containing occasional calcareous flecks and rare small subangular flints. No finds were recovered from this fill.

Group 4 -A Pit with Possible Symbolic Aspects: 39

Pit 39 (15), (32), (33), (34), (35), (36), (37), (55), (56), (57), (58), (59), (60), irregular in plan, 3.30m long, 1.04m deep, extending into the eastern limit of excavation. The sides of the pit slope steeply to a slightly concave base (Fig. 4). The fills of this pit will be described in order of deposition.

Fill (37), a light yellowish white sandy gravel extends across the base of the cut and is at its thickest (c 0.55m) adjacent to the southern edge of the cut. The edge of Cut 39 is clearly eroded at this point. Contained within this fill were traces of several separate pieces of wood. Survival of this material was obviously a chance occurrence, being determined by the thickness and extent of overlying clay rich fills (34 and 36). Two pieces of wood were found to be sufficiently well preserved for identification purposes (See R Darrah, Appendix B). The larger of these pieces proved to be from the upper trunk of a fast grown oak, 11 years of age at the time of felling which occurred between September and March. Poorly preserved toolmarks were present where two of the branches had been removed and are of a form more likely to be consistent with the use of a metal rather than a stone axe. The second piece of wood was less well preserved but has been identified as hazel roughly 25 years old at the time of felling. Both these surviving pieces and the traces of additional wood fragments appeared to have been scattered across the base of the pit in an apparently random fashion. The otherwise artefactually sterile fill would appear to have been deposited by the action of water eroding the southern edge of the pit cut. It seems likely that the excavation of the pit below the level of the water table would have resulted in the almost instantaneous inundation of this feature although heavy rainfall would potentially produce the same result.

Fill (55) a mid orange brown silty clay present only adjacent to the northern edge of Cut 39. This artefactually sterile fill represents an episode of collapse along the northern edge of the pit.

Fill (36), a mid - dark grey sandy silty clay containing moderate amounts of decayed wood, charcoal and occasional animal bone (sheep / goat and cattle), worked flint and a single sherd of decorated Beaker pottery (Fig 3). The lithic

assemblage consists of two waste flakes, one snapped bladelet and a heavily retouched side scraper. The pottery sherd is the only one to have been recovered from any of the fills of this sizeable feature. The decoration consists of two horizontal rows of incised lozenges filled with cross hatched lines, bounded by bands of fingernail impressions. The form and motifs of this sherd correspond best with Clarke's S2 Developed Southern Beaker of 'collared rim' form, dateable roughly to the early second millennium BC (J Last Pers Comm.). The uncharred macrofossil assemblage contains common weed and scrub species and fruits of two wetland / aquatic plants, gipsy wort and water crowfoot (Fryer and Murphy Appendix). If contemporary with this fill, which seems likely then this seems to suggest that the pit remained at least partially open to the elements. Perhaps then, the infilling of the pit after the deposition of fill (36) is a result of weathering of the pit sides over time.

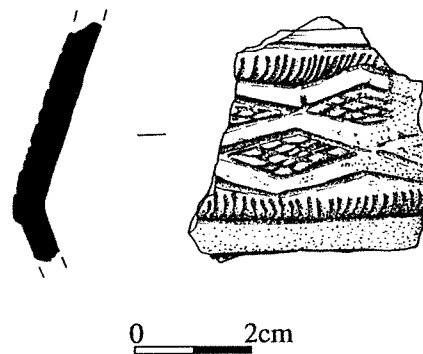


Figure 3 Decorated Beaker Pottery

Fill (35) a light yellowish white sandy gravel. This artefactually sterile fill represents an episode of collapse along the southern edge of the pit and is a further indication of the likely rapid infilling of the pit Cut 39.

Fill (56) a light yellowish white sandy gravel with frequent patches of mid - dark orange brown iron staining is deposited at roughly the same time as (35) to the south. This artefactually sterile fill represents an episode of collapse along the northern edge of the pit.

Fill (34) a mid grey silty clay containing occasional bone (cattle), charcoal flecks and poorly preserved wood fragments. The single measurable bone from this context, a distal tibia, would seem to be rather too small to suggest a Neolithic origin and is of a size more commonly associated with Bronze Age - Iron Age animals (See Baxter, Appendix).

Fill (57) a light yellowish white sandy gravel. This artefactually sterile fill represents an episode of collapse along the southern and western edges of the cut.

Fill (58) a light yellow sandy gravel. This artefactually sterile fill represents an episode of collapse along the southern and western edges of the cut.

Fill (33) a light yellowish white sandy gravel with *c* 10% mid grey sandy clay silt. This artefactually sterile fill represents an episode of waterborne infilling entering from the southern edge of the cut.

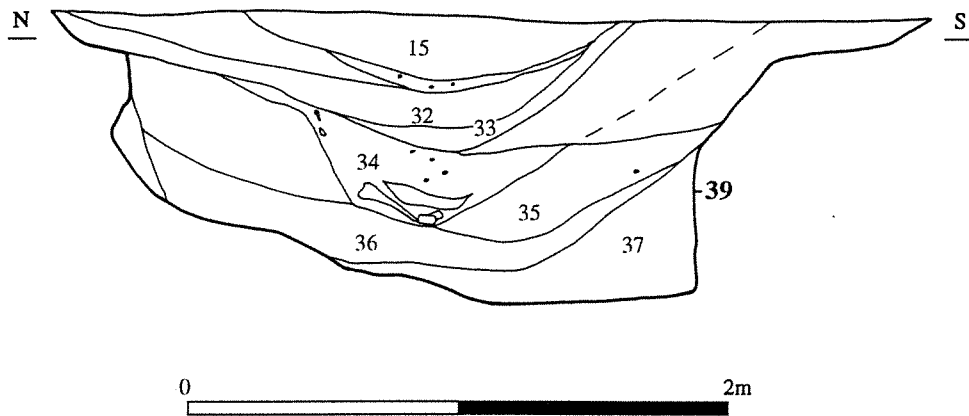


Figure 4 Section Through Pit 39

Fill (32) a light yellowish white sandy gravel with frequent patches of mid - dark orange brown iron staining appeared to be slightly interleaved with overlying fills (59) and (60). In contrast to earlier water modified deposits these fills do not appear to be derived from the collapsing sides of the pit but are in fact being washed into the surviving hollow, presumably as a result of heavy rain. Although there were no means available within the bounds of this project to prove this point it is important to note this impression of a change in the speed and nature of deposition within Cut 39 gained as a result of excavation by hand.

Fill (59) a very light grey silt with moderate small gravel inclusions partially interleaved with fills (32) and (60).

Fill (60) a dark grey clay silt with occasional charcoal was originally excavated as a part of context (15), the clear definition of the interface between these two fills only becoming distinct in section.

Fill (15) a mid - light orangey brown sandy clay silt is the final surviving fill within Pit 39. Iron staining within this fill suggests waterlogging and a variable water table over time. No finds were recovered from this fill which is partially truncated by later feature Pit 14.

Group 5 The marking of a focal point: 11, 12, 14.

Post Pit 14 (13) subrectangular in plan, length 1.54m x width 1.12m x depth 0.38m with steeply sloping sides and a concave base. The single fill (13) consisted of a moderately compacted light grey sandy clay silt containing occasional animal bone and worked flint. Both Cattle (including a mandible from an animal of less than 15 - 18 months and another from an aged individual) and sheep / goat are represented. The lithic assemblage consisted of 7 waste flakes and one multi platform flakelet core.

Postpipe 11 (10) 'D' shaped in plan, length 0.55m x width 0.50m x depth 0.38m with near vertical sides and a concave base, the flattened side of the cut facing roughly north. The single fill (10) consisted of a dark bluish grey silty clay containing occasional pottery, animal bone (sheep / goat), charcoal flecks flint pebbles and burnt stone. The flint pebbles and burnt stone were concentrated against the western edge of the cut and probably represent the remnants of secondary post packing material. The two undecorated ceramic body sherds were recovered from the southern edge of the cut. Both sherds appeared to have been placed in this position with the external face of each bodysherd pressed lightly into the side of the cut. The central position of 11 in relation to earlier Cut 14 suggests that these two features are in fact contemporary and that 14 is in fact the construction cut intended to take a wooden post. This feature was subsequently truncated by Pit 12.

Pit 12 (9) subrectangular in plan, aligned roughly east - west, length 2.04m x width 1.92m x depth 0.50m with steeply sloping sides and a flat base. The single fill (9), a mid to light grey clay silt, contained occasional animal bone (cattle - including the mandible of an adult of *c* 36 months and sheep / goat), worked flint, burnt sandstone, charcoal flecks and pottery. This material appeared to be concentrated along the eastern side and the base of the cut. This may be an indication that this material entered the cut from an easterly direction. Deposition of the various artefact types appeared random and although time pressure precluded plotting the level and position of individual artefacts it seems unlikely that any deliberate selection or placement of these objects was occurring here. Occasional patches of mineralised soil were also present throughout this fill and it is the impression of the excavator that these deposits were the last surviving traces or shadows of bones. Although no complete outlines of individual bones were revealed it is highly likely that the recovered faunal assemblage is significantly smaller than the original content of this fill.

The lithic assemblage consisted of a collection of 9 waste flakes and one fragment of a multi platform flakelet core, none of which are sufficiently diagnostic to indicate the date / period of deposition.

The ceramic assemblage consisted of one small (probably residual) sherd of Grooved Ware or Rusticated Beaker with two Plain Ware sherds with flint gritted fabrics most commonly attributed to the latter part of the second millennium BC or the Late Bronze Age although the lack of diagnostic forms prevents more precise dating.

Initially Pit 12 was considered to be the last in a series of intercutting pits at a focal point in the prehistoric landscape. Upon reflection however, the most probable interpretation of this feature is that it represents the deliberate removal or robbing of the marker post indicated by Cut 11. That this is in fact a deliberate act is clearly important but further discussion in relation to the CAS excavations is not possible without a clear indication of the date of this action in relative terms with respect to the other features within this group.

Group 6- Natural Features: 21, 23.

Pit 21, irregular in plan, was 1.20m x 1.20m, 0.12m deep, and contained a single fill (20), a firm, dark grey sandy clay containing occasional small subangular flints. No finds were recovered from this fill. This feature was possibly a natural tree throw hole.

Pit 23, very irregular in plan, was 2.40m x 1.80m, 0.20m deep, and contained a single fill (22), a loose orange brown silty sand containing occasional small subangular flints. No finds were recovered from this fill. This feature was probably a natural tree throw hole.

Environmental evidence from the CAS excavations indicates a predominantly open but lightly wooded landscape from the Neolithic period onwards.

5.2 SOUTHERN AREA

Ditches and Gullies

In contrast to Groups 1 - 3, these features have obvious stratigraphic relationships.

The earliest features were a ditch, 50, and a segmented ditch, 48, between which no stratigraphic relationship could be determined, although spatially it appeared that they might intersect.

Group 7 The Prehistoric Period: Ditch 50

Ditch 50, linear in plan, aligned west - north - west to east - south - east, 0.40m wide, 0.05m deep, and at least 5.50m long extending into the eastern limit of excavation. It contained a single fill, (49), a loose dark greyish brown silty sand mixed with gravel, from which no finds were recovered. Fill (49) was cut by ditch 45.

The unusual alignment and scale of this feature may indicate a significantly earlier date of construction than other ditches in this area. A complete absence of artefactual materials is problematic.

Group 8 The Romano - British Period: Ditches 41, 45, 46, 48.

Despite a complete absence of artefactual material from all ditches except 41 the size and alignment of the following features suggests construction during the Romano - British period. The absence of artefactual material is almost certainly due to the relatively remote location of the field systems indicated by the presence of these ditches in relation to the farming complex excavated by McAvoy *et al* at Rectory Farm.

Segmented ditch 48 was 0.80m wide, 0.40m deep, and at least 11.00m long. It contained a single fill, (47), a loose dark greyish brown silty sand and gravel, from which no finds were recovered. Fill (47) was cut by ditch 46. It was not possible to determine the length of individual segments.

Curvilinear ditch 46 was 1.00m wide, 0.28m deep max, and at least 8.00m long. It contained a single fill, (40), a loose very dark greyish brown clay sand, containing frequent small subangular flints, from which no finds were recovered. Fill (47) was cut by ditch 45.

Ditch 45 had a broad, steep-sided and flat-based profile. It was 1.90m wide, 0.74m deep, at least 10.50m long, and contained three fills-(44), (43), and (42). The lowest fill, (44), was a firm, sticky, very dark grey sandy silty clay, with occasional small subangular flints and orange flecks. Above this, fill (43) was a loose, pale yellow sand and gravel. The upper fill, (42) was an orange brown clay sand and gravel. None of the fills contained any finds. (42) was cut by ditch recut 41. Fill (44) seems to be a primary silting, and (43) represents the collapse of the sides. Fill (42) probably represents post-disuse natural filling.

Ditch recut 41 had a broad, round-based v-shaped profile. It was 1.40m wide, 0.60m deep (max), and at least 10.50m long. It contained a single fill (38), a firm dark grey sandy clay with occasional orange flecks and moderate small subangular flints, from which numerous sherds of Roman pottery were recovered. Fill (38) was sealed by the subsoil.

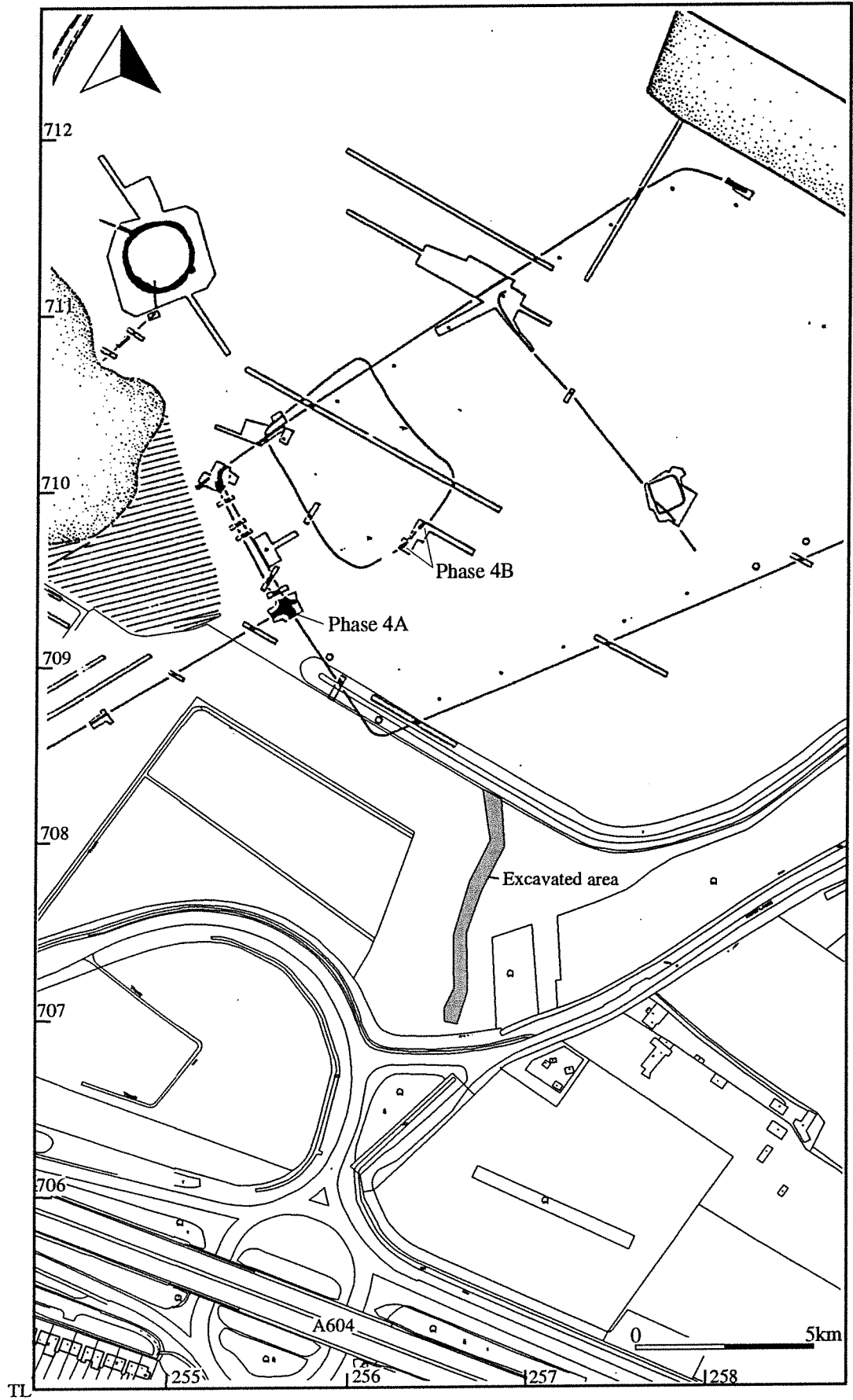


Figure 5: The Excavation Area in Relation to Previous Archaeological Work

6 DISCUSSION

The recent excavation of the proposed development area on land adjacent to Cow Lane clearly demonstrates the exceptional level of preservation of archaeologically significant deposits from the Neolithic and later prehistoric periods in the area

The Prehistoric Period

Within the southern groups of features the narrow ditch 50 may be a boundary marker. Whatever its date, it is obviously on a very different alignment from most of the other linear features. The other feature which is stratigraphically earliest, the segmented ditch 48, probably belongs to a later period, since its alignment is so different, but there is no conclusive proof of this, since 50 could not be traced beyond the large ditch 45.

Within the northern groups of features, none of the postholes seem to form the outlines of recognisable structures, but several are so similar in size and morphology that it is likely they are related, although their function cannot be determined. Alternatively, it might be that what have been described above as postholes are the remnants of small, possibly votive, pits. Their distribution around Pit 39 should not be ignored, and further comparison with McAvoy's work is recommended.

Pit 39 is by far the largest feature exposed by machining within the development area. With the exception of the other features within Group 4 none of the pits or postholes within the northern cluster truncate the underlying sands and gravels by more than 0.20m. What then is the function or purpose of this pit? Clearly water was present within the feature either at the time of excavation and inundation from the level of the water table is largely responsible for the rapid infilling of this feature. It is possible that the pit contained a lining for the duration of its usable life and that those pieces of wood retrieved from fill (37) may have formed a part of that lining. There are certainly parallels for this from the excavations of McAvoy immediately to the north of the subject site (Assessment Report, Period 2: Neolithic and Bronze Age, Phase 4A *structured activity at a focal point*). Wood was present within four pits which had been dug into the junction of the trapezoidal structure and the cursus (fig. 5) and one of these pits (9964) contained surviving traces of a wattle lining. The basal depth of Pit 39 (6.66m OD) is also very similar to that of those features excavated by Mc Avoy which, with one exception, vary between 6.25m and 6.66m OD. Evidence from the CAS excavations would seem to suggest that the opening of the larger pits in some way determines the positioning of a series of smaller pits within the immediate area which perhaps may in turn be aligned with other focal points on the landscape. This strongly suggests that a 'non - functional' interpretation is required both for Pit 39 and for those features already described within groups 1, 2, and 5. Although not fully revealed within the development area it is also worth noting that the size of this pit is most reminiscent of the two pits excavated within Area 24 (Assessment Report,

Period 2: Neolithic and Bronze Age, Phase 4B features within the trapezoidal structure)(McAvoy Pers Comm.). Pits 9224 and 9442, oval in plan measuring c 5.00m x 4.00m x 1.35m in depth were situated towards the northwest corner of the trapezoidal structure. The width of the development area proscribed by the recent construction project is insufficient to determine the full extent of Pit 39 or to allow for a full understanding of the layout of those features that may be seen as satellites to pit 39.

A return to the area defined by Pit 39 as evidenced by Post Pit 14 and Posthole 11 would appear to take place at a long though undefined interval after the original pit had been infilled. The fact that this posthole is cut directly into the fills of earlier Pit 39 is probably intentional and designed to mark a specific point in the landscape. The significance of this particular location remains unclear although it is undoubtedly linked with activities and perhaps positioned in relation to the enclosures and associated features identified and excavated by McAvoy to the north. Despite the lack of diagnostic ceramic forms the Plainware sherds recovered from features 11 and 12 are quite distinct from the highly decorated Beaker sherd from earlier Pit 39. This difference seems to indicate a return to what is considered to be a focal point in the landscape after a period of what could potentially be several hundred years. Clearly dating on the basis of such a small and undistinguished assemblage alone should be treated with extreme caution and further analysis including radiocarbon dating although highly desirable is unfortunately beyond the limit of the available resources of the current project.

Roman

The ditch recut 41 is the only securely dated feature at the southern end of Trench 1, and corresponds well to a cropmark seen on aerial photographs and recorded on the SMR map. This feature has a v-shaped profile, completely unlike ditch 45, into whose upper fill it is cut. The earlier ditch has a basically square profile, with near-vertical sides. It is possible that this is also a Roman feature, but whatever its date, its construction was obviously informed by a different need or sensibility perhaps determined by a change in the level of the water table.

Curvilinear ditch 46 cuts the fill of ditch 48, and is itself cut by 45, thus they cannot be contemporary, however, 48 and 45 are parallel, and it may be inferred that the former was still evident when the latter was cut. Another hypothesis is that there existed a natural topographic division at this point, since the features (and the cropmarks) run parallel to the contours, and this tended to dictate the location of this trackway or boundary.

General Conclusions

On the evidence of the smaller (prehistoric) features, it seems apparent that truncation has occurred, probably in the Roman or post Roman period, and is most likely due to cultivation practices such as ploughing.

This work should be seen as complementary to the excavations by McAvoy of the prehistoric ritual complex to the north, and as adding to the picture of an extensive, archaeologically rich and diverse landscape. The current increase in the level of development within Godmanchester and its environs is resulting in a corresponding increase in the number of archaeological investigations being undertaken. Where appropriate every attempt should be made to add to the work of McAvoy, Green and others. The majority of the detailed findings of these excavators remains unpublished at present. Thanks to the co operation of McAvoy it has been possible to begin placing those features identified within the project into context with previous excavations. An illustration of the projected line of the cursus (based on co ordinates provided by McAvoy) has been included here to further highlight the likely presence of important Prehistoric remains within the local area (Fig. 6).

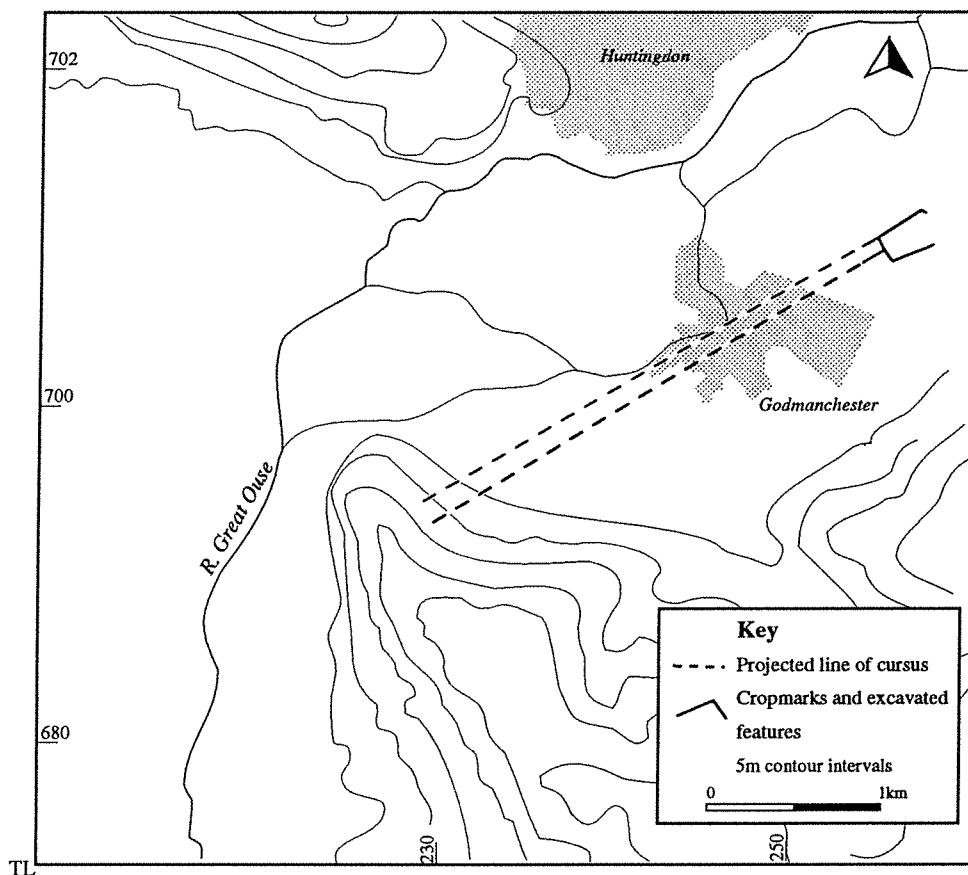


Figure 6: *Projected Line of the Cursus*

Despite the generous funding provided for this project by Nene Valley Waste Ltd secure placement of these features chronologically within this complex prehistoric landscape remains beyond the resources of the current project. This serves to highlight the difficulties experienced in achieving appropriate levels of research funding from relatively small development - led initiatives. It is hoped that the results of this project will be integrated into the main body of evidence for the area as represented by the CAS excavations of 1988 to 1990 although to date no formal structure exists to facilitate this process.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank Mr J Baker for commissioning this project, Fatchna McAvoy for providing so much useful information, Ian Baxter for examining the faunal remains, Jon Cane for the illustrations, Val Fryer and Pete Murphy for the environmental assessment, Richard Darrah for his analysis of the preserved wood, Dr John Last for examining the prehistoric pottery, Dr Twigs Way for examining the flintwork and to Michelle Bullivant for her assistance on site. The project was instigated by William Wall and edited by William Wall and Tim Malim.

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APPENDIX A: The Animal Bone from Cow Lane, Godmanchester

Ian L. Baxter

Introduction

With so very few fragments, only 31 identifiable, it is not possible to say very much about the assemblage. Most of the animal bone belongs to cattle and the rest to sheep/goat. It is safe to assume that the undiagnostic fragments categorised as large mammal and medium mammal probably also belong to these species. There are relatively few unidentified fragments in the assemblage. Most of the undiagnostic bone chips belong to identified bones that were either fragmented in the ground after deposition or during excavation/post-excavation.

Cattle

Some cattle fragments are large, the radius shaft fragment from posthole 4, (3) for example, while others derive from smaller animals. The age at death of three beasts represented by mandible fragments can be estimated. A cattle mandible from pit 12, 9 with lower P4 at wear stage g (Grant 1982) came from an adult animal of about 36 months; a mandible from pit 14, 13 with unerupted lower M2 was aged less than 15-18 months (Silver 1969); and another cattle mandible from the same feature has very worn teeth (Grant 1982, wear stage m) and represents an aged individual. Both of the latter exhibit butchery marks: the younger mandible has multiple chop marks along the base of the diastema, and the third pillar of the older beast's lower M3 has been sliced off by a transverse chop from a very sharp blade.

The only measurable bone is a distal tibia of domestic cattle from pit 39, (34) with smallest breadth of the diaphysis (SD) of 37.7mm and breadth of the distal end (Bd) of 57.4mm (Driesch 1976). This seems to be rather small for Neolithic cattle which, although smaller than aurochs, were larger than cattle from the Bronze and Iron Ages. Postglacial aurochs had an average height at the withers of 1.47m (cows) and 1.57m (bulls), Neolithic domestic cattle had an average height of 1.25m and Middle Bronze Age-Iron Age cattle were just under 1.1m at the withers (Grigson 1982; see Figure 1). Table 2 gives SD and Bd, together with withers height estimates, for cattle tibiae from the Iron Age site of Tixover and the Romano-British site of Scalford Brook in Leicester (Baxter unpublished a and b). It will be seen that the tibia from 39, 34 is more similar in size to the Iron Age material than the Roman, both of which were on average smaller animals than those of the Neolithic.

Sheep/goat

The sheep/goat bones are from small, gracile animals, although the only bone complete enough to age is sub-adult. None of the sheep/goat remains are sufficiently complete to establish which species is present or to be measured. A sheep/goat phalanx I from pit 12, (9) with unfused proximal epiphysis came from an animal less than 13-16 months old (Silver 1969).

Summary and conclusions

Some cattle and large mammal fragments are quite large. The only recognisable bone from this group is a radius shaft fragment from post-hole 4, (3) is very fragmentary and only identifiable as a radius from its D-shaped cross-section.

Other cattle bones are rather small for Neolithic cattle. This is the case with the distal tibia from pit 39, (34) which is more similar in size to remains from the Iron Age or the Romano-British period.

Cattle bones account for 75% of the total with sheep/goat forming the rest of the assemblage.

The three cattle mandibles that can be aged range from at least 15 months to very old. The sheep/goats are small lightly built animals and the only bone complete enough to age is sub-adult.

The evidence for ritual placement of some bones, e.g. the cattle radius fragment in post-hole 4, (3), is not as convincing as the deposition of ox skull and mandibles in the nearby enclosure ditch terminals found during McAvoy's 1988-90 excavations, especially given that these Cow Lane bones are fragments of butchery or food waste, some of which (including the cattle radius) may have been exposed on the surface for some time before deposition.

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Table 1. Fragment count per taxon for each context

Taxon/Context	3	5	9	10	13	16	18	34	36	Total
Cattle	1	1	2	0	2	0	0	3		9
Sheep/Goat	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	5
Large Mammal	0	0	5	0	0	1	1	0	1	8
Medium Mammal	3	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
Total	4	6	9	1	3	1	1	3	3	31

Table 2. Comparative Cattle Tibia Measurements
(based on von den Driesch 1976, Fock 1966 and Matolcsi 1970)

Tixover - Iron Age

SD	Bd	mean Withers Height
-	53.0	1.08m (n=2)
35.5	-	range: 1.07-1.09m
-	55.0	
-	55.0	

Scalford Brook - Roman

SD	Bd	mean Withers Height
40.4	65.7	1.18m (n=6)
-	63.7	range: 1.08-1.32m
-	62.6	

Cow Lane

SD,	Bd
37.7,	57.4

APPENDIX B: A length of oak trunk from context (37)

Richard Darrah

A 0.90m length of 100mm diameter oak trunk was one of two pieces of well preserved wood which were found in a pit provisionally dated to the Neolithic / Bronze Age.

No toolmarks survived on the decayed ends which might have indicated how the trunk was cut to length. There were toolmarks where two branches had been cut away from the trunk. The preservation of these toolmarks was not good but it was clear that they were not heavily dished. This lack of a dimpled surface suggests a sharp thin bladed tool of metal rather than a sharp thick bladed tool of stone. Both the branches (30mm diameter) had been cut away, having been skilfully removed with superimposed cuts flush with the trunk. Although the individual toolmarks were not clear the surviving marks were consistent with the use of an axe rather than finishing with a sharp knife blade of either stone or metal. The third branch in the whorl had been torn away and not cleaned up with a blade.

The wood was from the upper part of a fast grown trunk where the crown was beginning to develop. A fresh break of the stem revealed that the trunk was only eleven years old at this height. The outside ring was complete suggesting felling between the end of September and the end of March. The formation of the spring vessels in the bark may suggest the end of that period.

The three branches growing out of the trunk was from the base of the crown of the tree. The growth rate and branch development suggest that the tree was growing in open woodland rather than dense high forest where the growth rate would have been slower and the branch angle steeper. A typical tree of this form would have a straight branch free trunk of 5m although oak trunk lengths vary between 1 and 30m. Pollen evidence suggests that oak trees were common in eastern England so it is likely that the tree was felled locally.

The smaller of the two pieces of wood (not oak) was a straight 0.60m length of round wood 52mm diameter. It was approximately 25 years old. Both ends were decayed and no toolmarks were seen on the piece.

Both the pieces of wood had a decayed side suggesting that the area of preservation within the pit was limited and that the original ends of the timbers lay outside this area. There is no evidence of charring on either piece.

APPENDIX C: Plant Macrofossils From Cow Lane, Godmanchester - An Assessment.

V. Fryer and P. Murphy, Centre of East Anglian Studies, University of East Anglia, Norfolk.

Introduction

Flots from six samples were submitted for assessment. They came from contexts of prehistoric date including pit, post-hole, post-pipe and post-pit fills.

Methods

The samples had been processed by the excavator, collecting the flots in a 500 micron mesh sieve, before they were received. The dried flots were scanned under a binocular microscope at low power and the plant macrofossils noted are listed on Table 1. Preservation was by charring unless otherwise stated. Modern contaminants including fibrous and woody roots, stem fragments, arthropods and seeds/fruits were predominant in all samples. Sample 9 appeared to contain macrofossils preserved by waterlogging. The excavator states that water would have been present in this feature in antiquity, but whether the macrofossils are all contemporary with the feature fill or may include modern contaminants is not known at present.

Cereals

Single charred cereal grain fragments were noted in samples 3 and 5. The example from sample 3 is broken longitudinally but is probably of *Triticum* sp. (wheat).

Other materials

Small charcoal fragments were present in all samples at varying densities. A single fragment of black porous 'cokey' material, probably the residue of the combustion of organic materials at a very high temperature, was noted in sample 5.

Poorly preserved wood fragments were recovered from sample 9, together with uncharred seeds and fruits of *Euphorbia helioscopia*, *Lamium* sp., *Lycopus europaeus*, *Ranunculus* ssp. *Batrachium*, *R. acris/repens/bulbosus*, *Rubus* sect. *Glandulosus*, *Sambucus nigra*, *Sonchus oleraceus*, *Urtica dioica* and *Viola* sp.

Discussion

The very low density of charred material in these samples precludes the identification of any specific activity which may be associated with the features. The presence of two fragmentary cereal grains is inconclusive. The uncharred macrofossils in sample 9 may be of interest if contemporary with the use of pit 39. The assemblage contains common weed and scrub species and fruits of two wetland/aquatic plants, *Lycopus europaeus* (gipsy wort) and *Ranunculus* ssp. *Batrachium* (water crowfoot).

Potential for analysis

Sample 9 (context 36), though apparently from a waterlogged context, had been processed in a flotation tank, so that no material <0.5mm was recovered, and drying after flotation will have resulted in distortion and fragmentation of delicate structures. For these reasons, further work on this flot is unlikely to be profitable. If any unprocessed samples from context 36 are still available, laboratory processing and analysis would produce more informative assemblages for comparison with those from waterlogged Neolithic and Bronze Age contexts studied during the CAS excavations at Godmanchester (McAvoy, undated).

Sample No.	3	5	6	7	8	9
Context No.	18	30	10	13	34	36
Cereals						
Cereal indt. (Grain)		x				
Triticum sp. (Grain)	xcf					
Other						
Charcoal	x	x	x	xx	xx	xxx
Black porous 'cokey' material		x				
Uncharred plant macrofossils						
Euphorbia helioscopia L						x
Lamium sp						x
Lycopus europaeus L						x
Ranunculus ssp Batrachium						x
Rubus sect Glandulosus						x
Sambucus nigra L						x
Sonchus oleraceus						x
Urtica dioica						x
Viola sp						x
Wood fragments					x	xx
Volume of flot (lt.)	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.2
% flot sorted	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 1: Plant macrofossils from GODCOW 97, Cow Lane, Godmanchester

Reference

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APPENDIX D: Table Of Contexts

Cntxt	Cut	Tr	Category	Type	Function	Description	Below	Above	Findings
1		1	Deposit	Layer	Topsoil			2	
2		1	Deposit	Layer	Subsoil		1		
3	4	1	Deposit	Fill		Light brownish grey silty sand	2	4	Bone
4	4	1	Cut	Posthole		Subcircular steep-sided posthole	3	Nat	
5	6	1	Deposit	Fill		Light brownish grey silty sand	2	6	"Bone, stone"
6	6	1	Cut	Posthole		Oval shallow posthole	5	Nat	
7	8	1	Deposit	Fill		Light brownish grey silty sand	2	8	
8	8	1	Cut	Pit		Subrectangular shallow pit	7	Nat	
9	12	1	Deposit	Fill		Light grey sandy clay silt	2	12	"Pot, bone, flint"
10	11	1	Deposit	Fill		Dark bluish grey silty clay	12	11	"Pot, bone, flint, stone"
11	11	1	Cut	Pit		D-shaped vertically sided pit	10	13	
12	12	1	Cut	Pit		Subrectangular pit	9	10	
13	14	1	Deposit	Fill		Light brownish grey sandy clay silt	11	14	"Bone, flint"
14	14	1	Cut	Pit		Subrectangular pit	13	15	
15	39	1	Deposit	Fill		Light orange-brown sandy clay silt	14	32	
16	17	1	Deposit	Fill		Greyish brown silty sand+gravel	2	17	Bone
17	17	1	Cut	Pit		Subrectangular shallow posthole	16	Nat	
18	19	1	Deposit	Fill		Greyish brown silty sand+gravel	2	19	Bone
19	19	1	Cut	Posthole		Elongated shallow posthole	18	Nat	
20	21	1	Deposit	Fill		Dark grey sandy clay	2	21	
21	21	1	Cut	Pit		D-shaped shallow pit	20	Nat	
22	23	1	Deposit	Fill		Orange-brown silty sand and gravel	2	23	
23	23	1	Cut	Tree bole		Irregular shallow hollow	22	Nat	
24	25	1	Deposit	Fill		Greyish brown silty sand+gravel	2	25	
25	25	1	Cut	Posthole		Elongated shallow posthole	24	Nat	
26	27	1	Deposit	Fill		Light brownish grey silty sand	2	27	
27	27	1	Cut	Posthole		Elongated shallow posthole	26	Nat	
28	29	1	Deposit	Fill		Light brownish grey silty sand	2	29	
29	29	1	Cut	Posthole		Oval shallow posthole	28	Nat	
30	31	1	Deposit	Fill		Light yellowish-brown sandy silt	2	31	
31	31	1	Cut	Pit		Subcircular shallow pit	30	Nat	
32	39	1	Deposit	Fill		Light yellowish-brown sand+gravel	15	33	
33	39	1	Deposit	Fill		Grey/light yellow sandy clay silt	32	34	
34	39	1	Deposit	Fill		Grey silty clay	33	35	
35	39	1	Deposit	Fill		Pale yellow gravel	34	36	
36	39	1	Deposit	Fill		Dark grey sandy silty clay	35	37	
37	39	1	Deposit	Fill		Pale yellow sandy gravel	36	39	
38	41	1	Deposit	Fill		Dark grey sandy clay	2	41	

Cntxt	Cut	Tr	Category	Type	Function	Description	Below	Above	Finds
39	39	1	Cut	Pit		Irregular steep-sided pit	37	Nat	
40	46	1	Deposit	Fill		V dark greyish brown sandy clay	45	46	
41	41	1	Cut	Ditch		Broad v-shaped E-W linear	38	42	
42	45	1	Deposit	Fill		Orange-brown clay sand and gravel	41	43	
43	45	1	Deposit	Fill		Pale yellow sand and gravel	42	44	
44	45	1	Deposit	Fill		Very dark grey sandy clay silt	43	45	
45	45	1	Cut	Ditch		Broad u-shaped E-W ditch	44	"40, 49"	
46	46	1	Cut	Ditch		Curving shallow linear	40	47	
47	48	1	Deposit	Fill		Dk greyish brown silty sand+gravel	46	48	
48	48	1	Cut	Ditch		Segmented narrow E-W linear	47	Nat	
49	50	1	Deposit	Fill		Dk greyish brown silty sand+gravel	45	50	
50	50	1	Cut	Gully		Shallow narrow NW-SE linear	49	Nat	
51	52	1	Deposit	Fill		Grey sandy silt clay			
52	52	1	Cut	Posthole					
53	54	1	Deposit	Fill		Grey sandy silt clay			
54	54	1	Cut	Posthole					
55	39	1	Deposit	Fill		Mid orange sandy clay	36	39	
56	39	1	Deposit	Fill		Pale yellow sand and gravel	34	36	
57	39	1	Deposit	Fill		Mid - light yellow sandy gravel	58	35	
58	39	1	Deposit	Fill		Light yellow sandy gravel	33	34	
59	39	1	Deposit	Fill		Very light grey silt	60	15	
60	39	1	Deposit	Fill		Dark grey clay silt	15	59	



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