



Archaeological Field Unit

**Willow Brook Farm Yard, Castle End Road, Maxey,  
Cambridgeshire:  
An Archaeological Evaluation**

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July 2003

**Cambridgeshire County Council**

Report No. A228

Commissioned by *Richardson Surveyors on behalf of Mrs. R. Morton*

**Willow Brook Farm Yard, Castle End Road, Maxey,  
Cambridgeshire:  
An Archaeological Evaluation by Trenching**

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## **SUMMARY**

*The Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit conducted an archaeological evaluation by trenching in July 2003 at Willow Brook Farm Yard, Castle End, Maxey (TF 1291 0846). The work was carried out in advance of the redevelopment of the farmyard for housing.*

*Five trenches were excavated, with the vast majority of the archaeological deposits found at the eastern end of trench 1, close to the street front. It could be characterized as medieval street front occupation of a domestic character, probably beginning in the tenth or eleventh century, carrying on perhaps into the sixteenth century. Surfaces, walls, ditches, postholes and a hearth were encountered.*

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>RESULTS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>DISCUSSION</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	
Figure 1 Site Location Map	2
Figure 2 Trench Plan	4
Figure 3 Trench 1 Plan	6
<b>LIST OF APPENDICES</b>	
Appendix 1. Trench 1 Matrix	10
Appendix 2. Context List	11
Appendix 3. Finds Data	12
Appendix 4. Medieval Pottery Assessment	13

**Willow Brook Farm Yard, Castle End Road, Maxey,  
Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation  
TF 1291 0846**

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

During mid July 2003, the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit (CCC AFU) conducted an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching at Willow Brook Farm Yard, Castle End Road, Maxey, Cambridgeshire (TF 1291 0846). The work was carried out at the request of Richardson Surveyors acting on behalf of the owner, Mrs. R. Morton. It was undertaken in order to fulfil a Brief for Archaeological Investigation issued by Ben Robinson of the Peterborough City Council Archaeological Service (PCCAS).

The site is located close to the centre of one of the foci of settlement in the parish of Maxey, 325m south of the castle and 1km east-northeast of the parish church. The proposed development (planning application 01/00870/OUT) of this site includes the demolition of the farmyard buildings and the construction of four houses. The Brief called for a 6% sample of the site (approximately 105m of trenches). However, due to the presence of active services (electric and water) this was curtailed to five trenches totalling 85m in length.

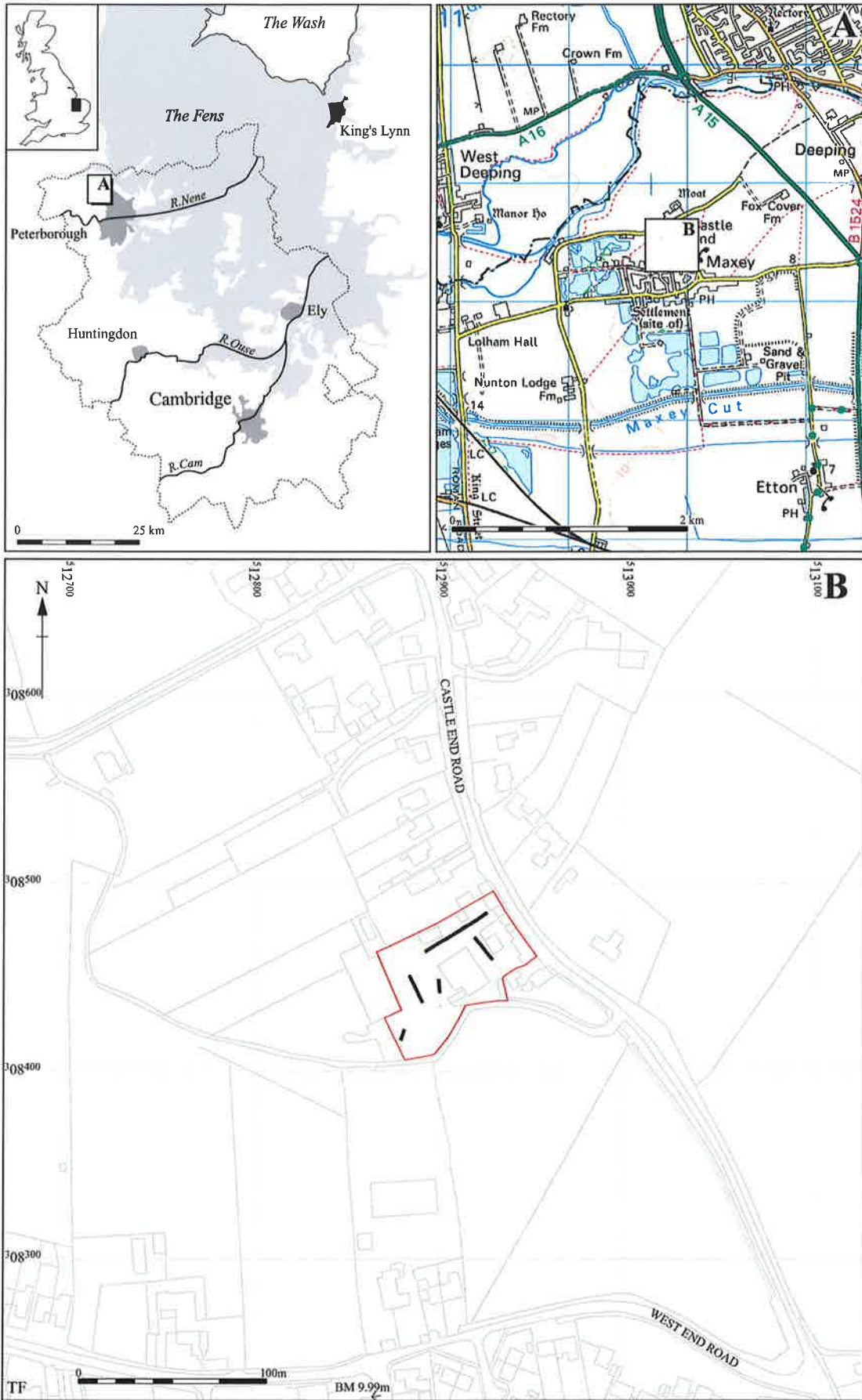
## **2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

According to the British Geological Survey Map (Peterborough, Sheet 158, 1:50,000), the hamlet of Castle End is situated upon alluvial deposits. This overlays river terrace gravels overlaying Kellaways Clay.

The hamlet of Castle End is 500m north of the modern core of the village of Maxey, 3km south west of Market Deeping and 8km northwest of Peterborough. The site is gently sloping southwards, at a height of approximately 9m O.D.

## **3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Prehistoric, Roman, Saxon and medieval remains are recorded in the Peterborough City Council Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for the surrounding area and there is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 23404) some 300m to the north of the development site.



Based upon Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. (Cambridgeshire County Council licence No. LA 07649X 2003)

**Figure 1** Location of Trenches with Development Area outlined.

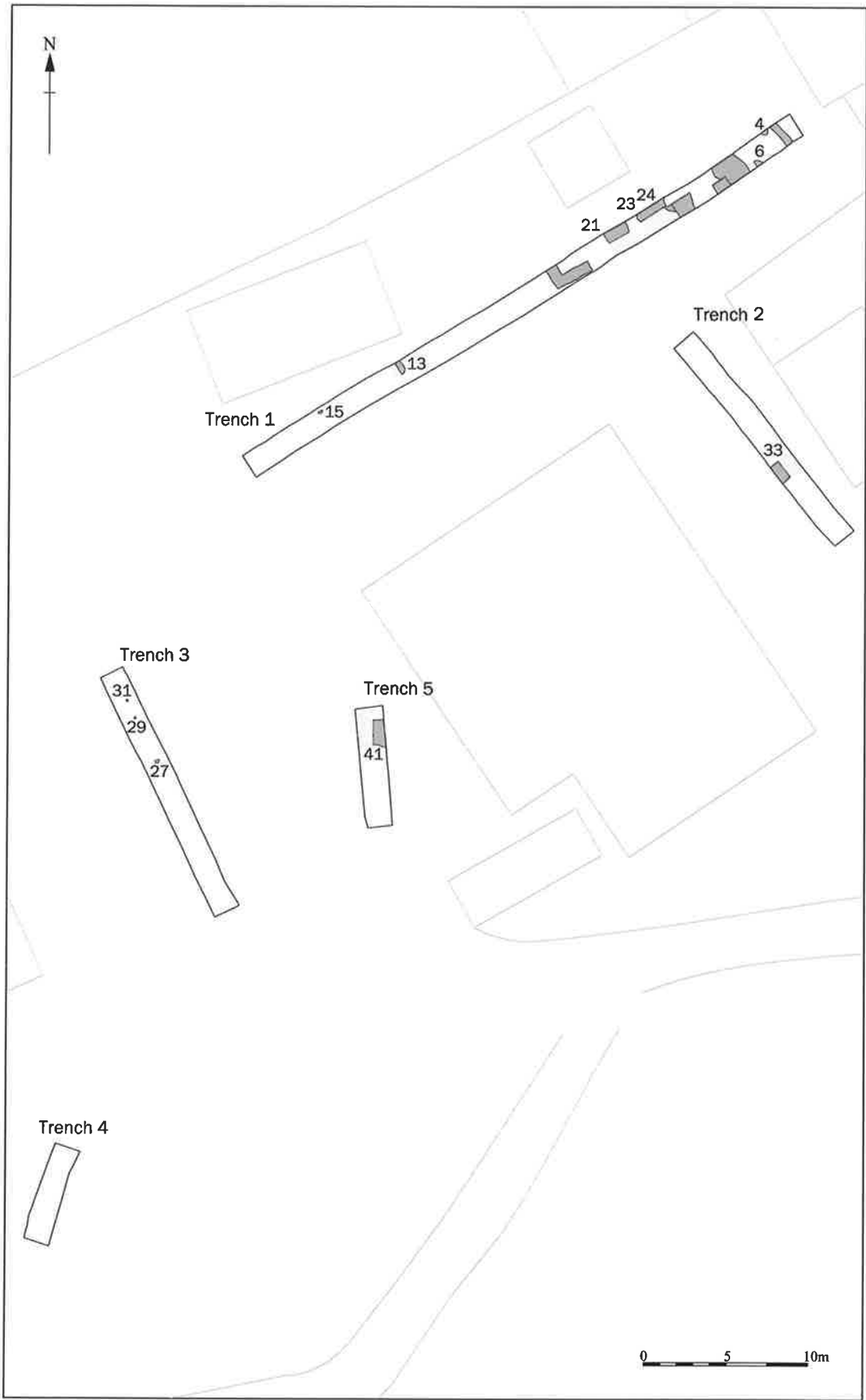
Archaeological studies in the area have indicated an early neolithic presence with an organised and ceremonial landscape nearby, between the rivers Welland and Nene. There was considerable forest clearance in the area by the late fourth millennium BC with seasonal pastures and cereal growing. The extension of cleared areas allowed organisation of the land for the alignment and construction of monuments in the vicinity over a period of at least 1000 years. Extensive archaeological investigation in the surrounding areas, threatened by gravel extraction, has identified the archaeological importance of this region (A. Connor, forthcoming).

The proximity of King Street to the west and the construction of Car Dyke (2km to the northeast) in the early second century allowed greater movement of agricultural produce and other material between the fens and upland regions. Excavations in the area suggest a hierarchy of settlement types with local farmsteads (e.g. Maxey East Field, Lyndon Farm and Plant's Farm), villas (e.g. Helpston) and on a regional scale larger sites such as the settlement at Stonea, in the fens, and the expanding Roman town of Dubobrivae 11km to the south, on Ermine Street. Work at Maxey supports this settlement model, with evidence for small, rural, Iron Age and Romano-British settlements with local trade links evident in the ceramics. Excavations 150m to the north, at the Coal Yard (Connor forthcoming) revealed limited evidence for Roman activity during the Roman period.

Two manors at Maxey are mentioned by an Anglo-Saxon charter. These were given by Bishop Aethelwold to the monastery at Medeshamstede (Peterborough) c.963. One has been suggested in the area between the church and the modern village (Addyman 1964). Early editions of the Ordnance Survey map show Lolham as a separate small settlement, with its own mill.

In the medieval period the north end of Castle End road was one of the foci of settlement at Maxey. The other foci are located at Nunton and Lolham to the west, the area around the eleven-twelfth century St. Peters church (now isolated to the west of the village), the modern village around High Street and West End Road, and at Deeping Gate, 2km to the northeast. Excavations at the Coal Yard site (Connor forthcoming) show considerable activity in the vicinity of the present development site between the eleventh and fifteenth century. Occupation at the Coal Yard site consisted of timber buildings on at least two adjacent properties fronting onto the Castle End Road. There was evidence for further timber buildings to the south, possibly associated with a second street, close to the present development site. There also appeared to be industrial or craft activities involving water on the site. There was evidence of burning and demolition followed by construction of stone buildings in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It is not clear how extensively this may have occurred around Castle End.

The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR 2251) indicates the presence of a chapel in the area to the south of the castle, which stood at least until 1549. The castle (SAM 23404) survives as a moated site with fishponds. It obtained a licence to crenulate in the late fourteenth century.



**Figure 2 Trench Plans**



## 4 METHODOLOGY

The five trial trenches were excavated by a JCB fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket, under archaeological supervision, after the hardcore yard surface had been broken-up using a toothed bucket. The topsoil was stripped down to the level of the archaeological horizons or the natural geology, whichever appeared first.

The exposed surfaces were cleaned in order to clarify any features or deposits. All exposed features and deposits were excavated and recorded according to CCC AFU standards and practises. Sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20 and trench plans at 1:50. The trenches were located using a Total Station Theodolyte.

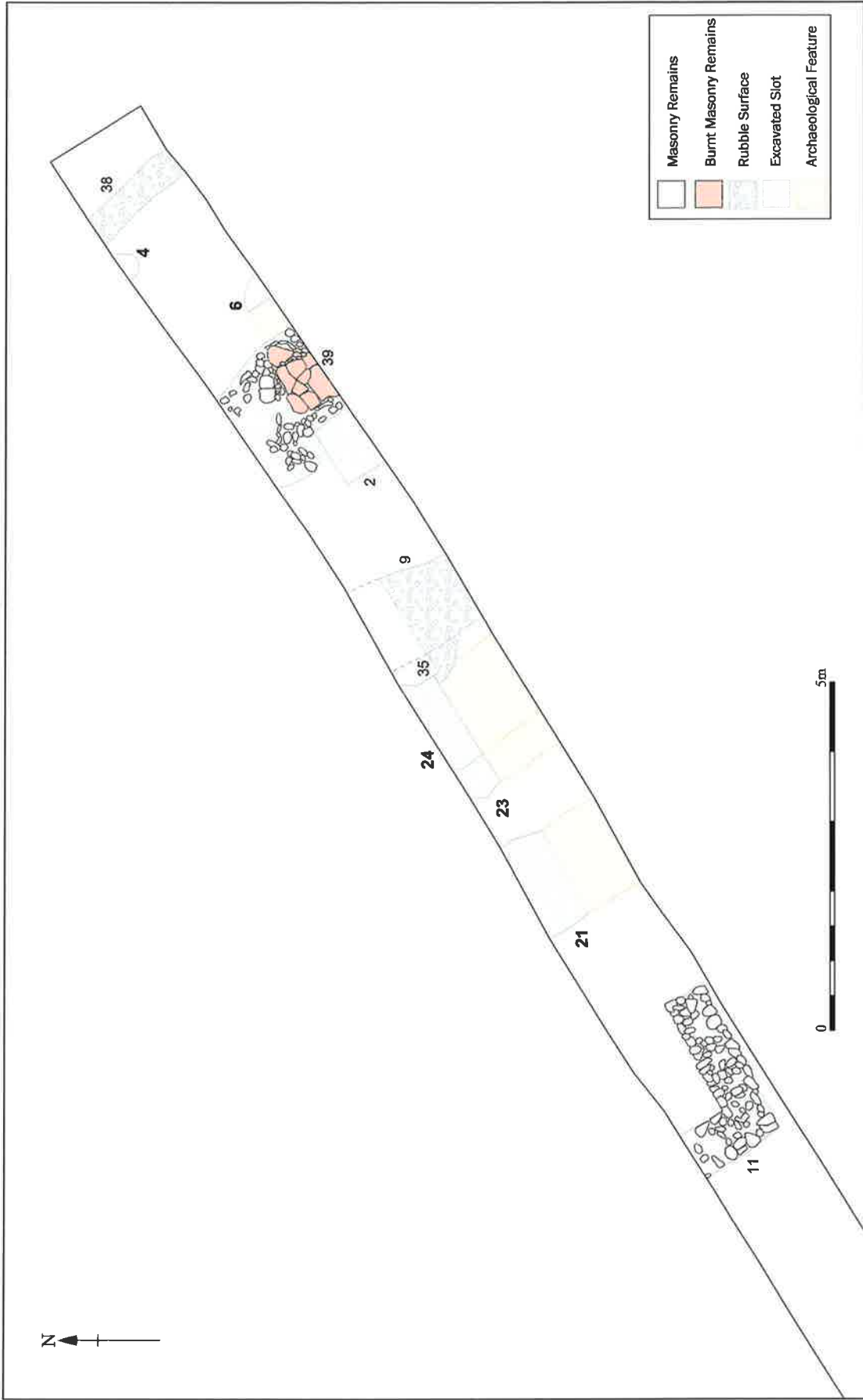
## 5 RESULTS

### Trench 1 (Figs. 2 and 3)

Trench 1 was 39.25m long, 1.6m wide and up to 0.5m deep. Two features in the western portion of the trench could be dated to the eleventh or early twelfth century. These were a pit, **13**, and a posthole, **15**. Pit **13** was 0.80m wide and 0.15m deep, its length truncated by the edge of the trench. The fill, **14**, was a brown silty clay with no inclusions apart from three fragments of Saxo-Norman, Stamford ware, pottery. Posthole **15** was circular, 0.30m in diameter and 0.23m deep with vertical sides. Its fill, **16**, was a dark greyish brown clay with no inclusions apart from four fragments of Saxo-Norman Stamford ware pottery.

A good quality, unmortared wall, **11**, fell out of use before the fourteenth to early fifteenth century and so may have belonged to this early phase. This was an L-shaped structure, 2.3m long, with a return 1.05m long, averaging 0.6m thick and surviving to a height of 2 courses in places. The facings of the wall were of coursed, but not dressed, blocks of local limestone, with a rubble infill. There was no evidence of mortar.

Hearth **39** also appears to have fallen out of use by the fourteenth century. This was a patch of unmortared, limestone flagstones exhibiting discolouration caused by burning. It may have been part of a structure, together with the robbed-out walls **9** and **38**, which are both orientated north-west to south-east, positioned 3m to the east (**38**) and west (**9**) of the hearth. These two robbed-out walls consisted of spreads of limestone rubble, mostly quite small fragments which would not be suitable for reuse elsewhere. Within the remains of wall **9** was a quantity of pottery datable to 1450-1630. Associated with wall **38** was a gravel surface (**36**), which overlaid a small pit, **4**, which was otherwise undated. To the west of the rear of this possible house was a succession of northwest to southeast-aligned ditches. The earliest was ditch **23** (dated by pottery to 1380-1450), which was c.0.6m wide and 0.28m deep and U-shaped, filled with a brown clayey silt with flecks of charcoal. This was cut by ditch **21** (dated by pottery to 1450-1630), 0.48m wide and 0.26m deep and V-shaped, filled with a



**Figure 3 Trench 1 Detail**

yellowish brown silty clay. Parallel to these was ditch 24 (dated by pottery to 1450-1630), 2m wide and 0.3m deep and U-shaped, filled with a dark greyish brown clayey silt. Overlaying ditches 24 and 23 were two gravel surfaces, 35 and 44 which were separated by a layer of soil build-up, 43, which may represent a period of disuse.

## **Trench 2**

Trench 2 was 15.5m long, 1.6m wide and up to 1.2m deep at its southern end. Once the hardcore yard surface was removed, a layer of topsoil, 19, varying from 0.4-0.9m deep was encountered, dated by pottery to 1150-1250. Sealed by this was a north-east to south-west-orientated ditch, 33, 1.1m wide and 0.5m deep. It was flat bottomed but V shaped, with a step high up on its southeast side. Its fill, 34, was a pale brown clay containing occasional flecks of charcoal and baked clay, as well as fragments of pottery dateable to 1000-1150. This ditch may be the same feature as ditch 41 in trench 5.

## **Trench 3**

Trench 3 was 16.2m long, 1.6m wide and up to 0.7m deep. Only three features were present, all sealed by the old plough soil. These were a line of postholes, 27, 29 and 31. Postholes 27 and 29 were vertically sided and flat bottomed. Posthole 31 was very truncated. The fills of all three postholes were dark brown silty clay with frequent charcoal and burnt clay. None of these features contained any datable material, despite their culturally rich nature. The posthole alignment was orientated north-northwest to south-southeast.

## **Trench 4**

Trench 4 was 6.1m long, 1.6m wide and up to 1.05m deep. The old plough soil was badly contaminated with diesel. No features were present.

## **Trench 5**

Trench 5 was 7.3m long, 1.6m deep and up to 0.6m deep. Sealed by the old plough soil was an east-west orientated ditch, 41, 1.4m wide and 0.75m deep. It was flat bottomed but V-shaped, with a step high up on its southern side. It was filled by 42, a pale brown clay with charcoal flecks, dated by pottery to 900-1050. This feature may be the same ditch as that in trench 2 (ditch 33).

## 6 DISCUSSION

The majority of the archaeological features were discovered in trench 1, in the north-eastern corner of the development area, closest to the street frontage. The type of archaeology was typical of low-density street front occupation; walls, surfaces and boundary ditches. One building appeared to have fallen out of use before the fourteenth to early fifteenth century, the other in the period 1450-1630, although its open hearth may have become disused earlier (by the fourteenth century). All these walls appeared to have been unmortared, suggesting that they may have been short walls supporting a wooden box-frame construction. No rubbish pits, cesspits or wells were discovered, however, these probably exist outside the confines of the trenches. Two features, a pit and a posthole, to the rear of these buildings were Saxo-Norman in date, as was a ditch to the south of these buildings, picked up in trenches 2 and 5.

## 7 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the archaeology discovered in this evaluation can be characterized as medieval street front occupation of a domestic character, probably beginning in the tenth or eleventh century, carrying on perhaps into the sixteenth century. The standing buildings on the frontage of Castle End Road in the immediate locality date to the seventeenth century. Objectives for further research might include:

- a) why did the area of the present development site apparently fall out of use in the sixteenth century, while elsewhere in the locality there was continuous occupation until the present day?
- b) How did the housing stock of this village develop? Did it follow national trends, e.g. open hearths being replaced by chimneys, earth-fast walls being replaced by box frame construction?
- c) What are the similarities and differences with the Coalyard site a little to the north.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Richardson Surveyors, acting on behalf of Mrs. R. Morton, who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by Judith Roberts. Adam Lodoen assisted with the fieldwork, Emily Oakes did the illustrations while Paul Spoerry and Carole Fletcher examined the pottery. Steve Kemp examined the worked stone and Carole Fletcher examined the rest of the finds.

The Brief for archaeological works was written by Ben Robinson of PCCAS, who visited the site and monitored the evaluation.

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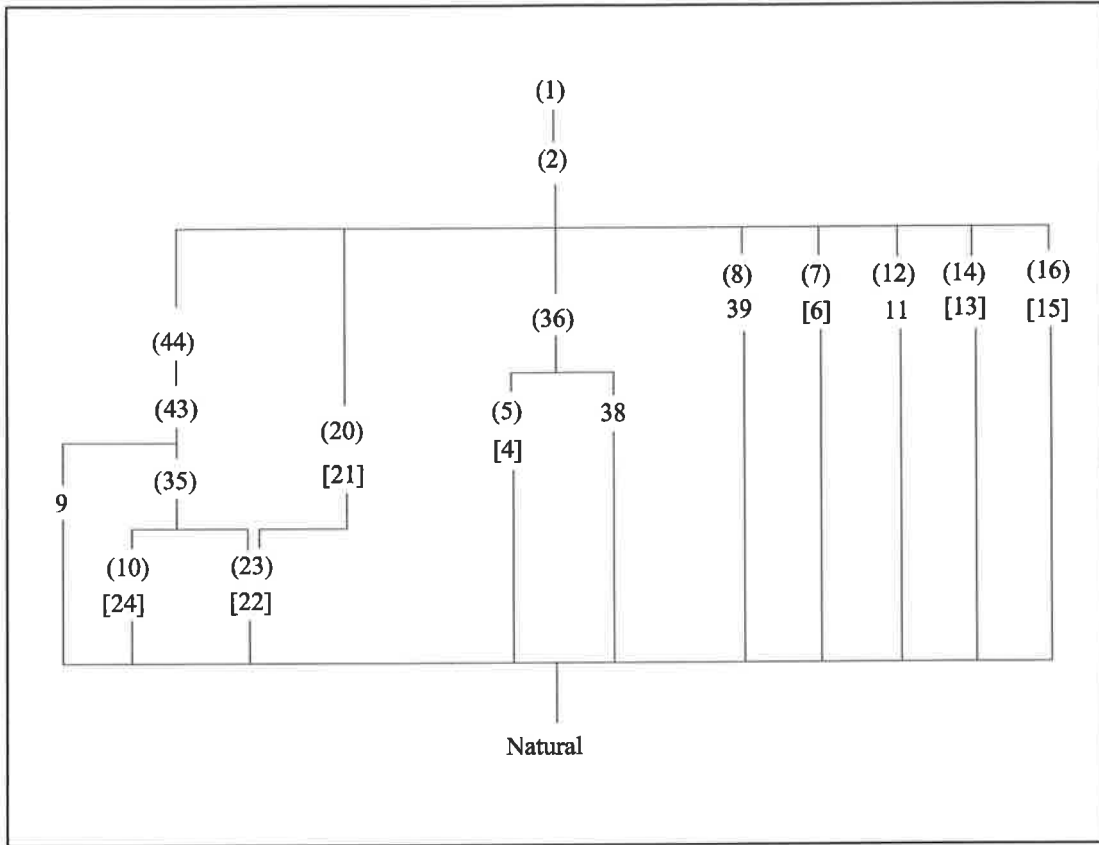
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**APPENDIX 1: Trench 1 Stratigraphic Matrix**



## APPENDIX 2: Context List

Context	Feature	Type	Trench	Description	Date
1		Layer	All	Hardcore farmyard surface	Modern
2		Layer	1	Plough soil	
3			1	Unstratified finds	1480-1630
4	4	Pit	1	Shallow, circular pit	
5	4	Fill	1	Brown clay	
6	6	Pit	1	Shallow, possible pit	
7	6	Fill	1	Dark greyish brow silt	
8	17	Layer	1	Cleaning layer from above hearth 17	1300-1400
9	38	wall	1	Cleaning layer above wall	1450-1630
10	24	Layer	1	Dark greyish brown, clayey silt	1450-1630
11		Wall	1	Remains of partially robbed-out wall	
12	11	Layer	1	Cleaning layer above wall 11	1300-1450
13	13	Pit	1	Subcircular pit	
14	13	Fill	1	Brown silty clay	1000-1150
15	15	Posthole	1	Circular, vertically sided posthole	
16	15	Fill	1	Dark greyish brown clay	1000-1150
18			2	Unstratified finds	1750-1900
19		Layer	2	Old plough soil	1150-1250
20	21	Fill	1	Yellowish brown silty clay	1450-1630
21	21	Ditch	1	Northwest-southeast orientated ditch	
22	23	Fill	1	Brown clayey silt, flecks of charcoal	1380-1450
23	23	Ditch	1	Northwest-southeast orientated ditch	
24	24	Ditch	1	Northwest-southeast orientated ditch	
25			3	Unstratified finds	875-1150
26		Layer	3	Old plough soil	
27	27	Posthole	3	Circular, vertically sided posthole	
28	27	Fill	3	Dark brown silty clay, frequent charcoal and burnt clay	
29	29	Posthole	3	Oval, vertically sided posthole	
30	29	Fill	3	Dark brown silty clay, frequent charcoal and burnt clay	
31	31	Posthole	3	Oval, shallow posthole	
32	31	Fill	3	Dark brown silty clay, frequent charcoal and burnt clay	
33	33	Ditch	2	Large, steep sided ditch	
34	33	Fill	2	Pale brown clay, occasional charcoal and burnt clay	1000-1150
35		Surface	1	Gravel surface	
36		Surface	1	Gravel surface	
38		Wall	1	Possible robbed-out wall	
39		Hearth	1	Burnt stone hearth surface	
40		Layer	5	Old plough soil	
41	41	Ditch	5	Large, steep sided ditch	
42	41	Fill	5	Pale brown clay, occasional charcoal	900-1050
43			1	Dark brown silt, flecks of charcoal	
44		Surface	1	Gravel surface	

### APPENDIX 3: Finds Data

Context	Material Type	Artifact cat	Weight	Count
3	Ceramic	Pottery	93	2
3	Ceramic	Pottery	184	4
3	Ceramic	Pottery	96	7
3	Ceramic	Pottery	17	2
3	Ceramic	Pottery	53	5
8	Ceramic	Pottery	23	7
9	Organic	Animal bone	104	0
9	Organic	Animal bone	32	0
9	Ceramic	Pottery	139	12
9	Ceramic	Pottery	29	4
9	Ceramic	Pottery	25	5
9	Metallic	Metalwork Fe	61	1
9	Local limestone	Worked stone	9000	1
10	Ceramic	Pottery	788	25
10	Ceramic	Pottery	53	11
10	Ceramic	Pottery	84	10
12	Ceramic	Pottery	170	13
14	Ceramic	Pottery	23	3
16	Ceramic	Pottery	126	4
18	Ceramic	Pottery	153	5
18	Ceramic	Pottery	55	3
19	Ceramic	Pottery	83	7
20	Ceramic	Pottery	101	4
22	Ceramic	Pottery	30	3
25	Ceramic	Pottery	11	3
30	Ceramic	Fired clay	10	0
34	Organic	Animal bone	7	0
34	Ceramic	Fired clay	3	0
34	Ceramic	Pottery	31	4
42	Organic	Animal bone	2	0
42	Ceramic	Pottery	35	7
42	Ceramic	Pottery	22	2
42	Ceramic	Pottery	46	8



## **APPENDIX 4: Medieval pottery Assessment**

By Carole Fletcher BA

### **1 Introduction**

This assessment considers pottery from the evaluation of Willow Brook Farm Yard, Maxey, in 2003.

### **2 Methodology**

The basic guidance in the Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP2) has been adhered to (English Heritage 1991). In addition the following documents act as a standard: Medieval Pottery Research Group (MPRG) documents 'Guidance for the processing and publication of medieval pottery from excavations' (Blake and Davey, 1983), 'A guide to the classification of medieval ceramic forms' (MPRG, 1998) and 'Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Post-Roman Ceramics' (MPRG, 2001).

Spot dating was carried out using the Archaeological Field Unit's in-house system. Fabric classification has been carried out for all previously described types. All sherds have been counted, classified and weighed.

All the pottery has been spot dated on a context-by-context basis. This information was entered directly onto a full quantification database (Access 2000).

### **3 Quantity of material**

The fieldwork generated 201 sherds of pottery, weighing 2445 grams, including unstratified material.

The majority of the assemblage is post-medieval with 1295 grams, 79 sherds of pottery in the AD 1450 to 1630 bracket (mid fifteenth to mid seventeenth century). The second largest group is Saxo-Norman (mid ninth to mid twelfth century) with 466 grams, 79 sherds. A single sherd of Roman grey ware was also recovered.

The normal range of vessel types is present within the assemblage; these include jars, bowls and jugs in medieval and post-medieval Bourne fabrics. Stamford ware jars and bowls are also present, though there are few glazed Stamford sherds. However, fragments of a decorated developed Stamford ware jug were identified.

A sherd of a St Neots ware jar was recovered along with several medieval Shelly ware sherds and a single sherd from a Lyveden-Stanion jug. The base from a Tudor Green cup, a sherd of Raeren stoneware, and post-medieval Black Glazed ware bowls were also recognised. The character of the assemblage, though very small, suggests it derives from a rural domestic context.

The assemblage offers little potential for characterising anything more than a local assemblage.

#### **4 Provenance and contamination**

Basic statistics relating to source area for the assemblage are given in Table 1. This indicates the bulk of the assemblage is likely to have travelled less than 11 miles from source to place of use.

<i>General provenance</i>	<i>% of assemblage by count</i>	<i>% of assemblage by weight</i>
<b>Lincolnshire</b>	<b>91.54</b>	<b>89.24</b>
<b>Huntingdonshire/ Northamptonshire</b>	<b>3.98</b>	<b>2.62</b>
<b>Essex</b>	<b>2.98</b>	<b>7.24</b>
<b>Import</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.37</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>0.53</b>

*Table 1 General provenance areas for post-Roman assemblage*

The table indicates the source for the bulk of the assemblage to be Lincolnshire. The dominance of fabrics from Lincolnshire is due to the proximity of the county and suggests good communications by road from the production centres, at Stamford and in later phases, Bourne.

The Lyveden-Stanion jug sherd may indicate that there is some trade in fine wares. However, the small number of sherds in the assemblage from other areas suggests that almost all of the site's needs were being met by local industries. Contamination of this assemblage is light.

#### **5 Sampling bias**

The excavation was carried out by hand and selection made through standard sampling procedures on a feature-by-feature basis. There are not expected to be any inherent biases

#### **6 Condition**

This assemblage is small, the average sherd size is moderate at 12.16 grams per sherd. No preservation bias has been recognised and no long-term storage problems are likely.

This assemblage has no near complete vessels. It is a closely grouped assemblage, however the small size of the assemblage makes full quantification and analysis of the main period groups of limited value beyond the basic requirements of the stratigraphic sequence and the need to provide comparative period statistics.

## 7 Statement of Research Potential

The potential to aid local, regional and national priorities is limited by the small size of the assemblage. If further work is undertaken the assemblage should be looked at with reference to the material recovered from excavations undertaken by the Archaeological Field Unit, at the Coal Yard, Mill Road, Maxey in 1999 (Fletcher in Connor forthcoming).

### Fabric types by context.

Context	Fabric	Weight in Grams	Number of Sherds	Spot dating Date Range for Context
3	BonB	171	5	1480 to 1550
3	BonD	184	8	
3	Cist	8	1	
3	Lyst	6	1	
3	Raeren	9	1	
3	Shw	31	1	
3	Stam	38	4	
8	BonB	8	2	1300 to 1400
8	Shw	4	2	
8	Stam	11	3	
9	BonB	2	1	1450 to 1630
9	BonD	139	28	
9	Neot	5	1	
9	Shw	18	3	
9	Stam	29	4	
10	BonB	17	2	1450 to 1630
10	BonD	843	38	
10	Stam	62	6	
12	BonB	170	13	1300 to 1450
14	Stam	23	3	1000 to 1150
16	Stam	126	4	1000 to 1150
18	BonD	28	1	1750 to 1900
18	Dest	2	1	
18	Pmbl	177	6	
19	Dest	83	7	1150 to 1250
20	BonD	101	4	1450 to 1630
22	BonB	13	2	1380 to 1450
22	Tudg	17	1	
25	Roman grey ware	5	1	875 to 1150
25	Stam	6	2	875 to 1150
34	Stam	6	28	1000 to 1150
42	Lincs	9	1	900 to 1050
42	Stam	94	16	

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