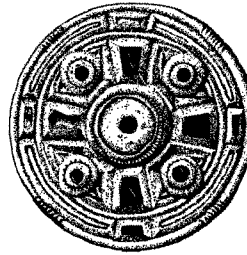


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Archaeological Field Unit

Archaeological Evaluation at Town Farm, Whaddon.

A Hatton

1995

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. A63

Commissioned By Estate Management Unit, Cambridgeshire County Council

SUMMARY

During March 1995, the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council undertook an archaeological evaluation in the village of Whaddon, Cambridgeshire (TL 348/463). A single evaluation trench was excavated across the area of land to be developed, to ascertain the presence or absence of archaeological remains.

The subsequent investigation of the trench revealed several features all of which were cut into the chalk natural, sealed below a subsoil probably deposited by colluvial action in medieval times. Many of the features contained pottery, provisionally dated to the Pagan Anglo-Saxon period. Worked flint, was also found which was considered to be residual due to its weather-damaged state. Two of the features excavated revealed in section evidence of post-settings suggesting a possible structure was in place during the Anglo-Saxon period.

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Archaeological Evaluation at Town Farm, Whaddon.

1 INTRODUCTION

In March 1995 an archaeological evaluation/assessment was undertaken by the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council on an area of land located near the centre of the village of Whaddon (TL 348/463) (*Figure 1*).

The assessment trench had to be re-located from the original position suggested in the archaeological brief; which was intended to have a trench excavated running N-S parallel to Whaddon Main Street to identify any archaeological remains that could be associated with the extensive medieval evidence already recorded within the village boundaries. Unfortunately, the position of a large agricultural building prevented the aforementioned archaeological strategy to proceed, therefore the trench position was changed to run in an E-W direction parallel to the agricultural building (*Figure 1*) along the trackway accessing the field behind.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The underlying geology is of chalk, capping Gault Clay (British Geological Survey 1985). The assessment area slopes down from west to east, the highest point being 21.37m OD and the lowest 21.6m OD.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The village of Whaddon during the time of the Domesday survey (1086) had only 48 inhabitants raising to 220 during the 19th century and so by definition the settlement as always been considered small. The historical evidence suggests that there had been three centres of settlement, Whaddon village south and west of the manor house, Whaddon Green to the east of Dyers Green on the southern boundary, and by the 18th century, there were some cottages located between the village street and Dyer's Green along Bridge Street.

Located within the confines of the village of Whaddon are seven possibly eight moated sites situated along the course of the Hoback stream, one at Dyer's Green (Hinds 1994), four in the village, one or two near Whaddon Green and one at Hoback Farm (VCH 8: 142-3).

However, Dyer's Green is not a creation of a post-conquest population, evidence exhibits some ancient features, including an irregular boundary, with its position straddling the parish boundary with Meldreth (*Figure 2*) until the act of enclosure. The common was retained from an earlier, dispersed landscape when the pre-conquest manor of the Abbey of Ely was laid in the tenth century, and if this is so is likely to have at the latest an early to mid-Saxon origin (Oosthuizen 1994).

Scalers manor situated approximately 300m to the east of the assessment site was held in the 13th century by Geoffrey Scalers, descendent of the 11th century land holder, Count Gilbert. This particular manor stayed in the ownership of the Scalers family until the 16th century, when it was sold to the Tempest family (VCH 8: 145). The written documentary evidence concerning the Scalers family and associated manor is just one example, many of the other moated sites have a similar written record which helps to build-up a picture of rural life in the south-west corner of Cambridgeshire.

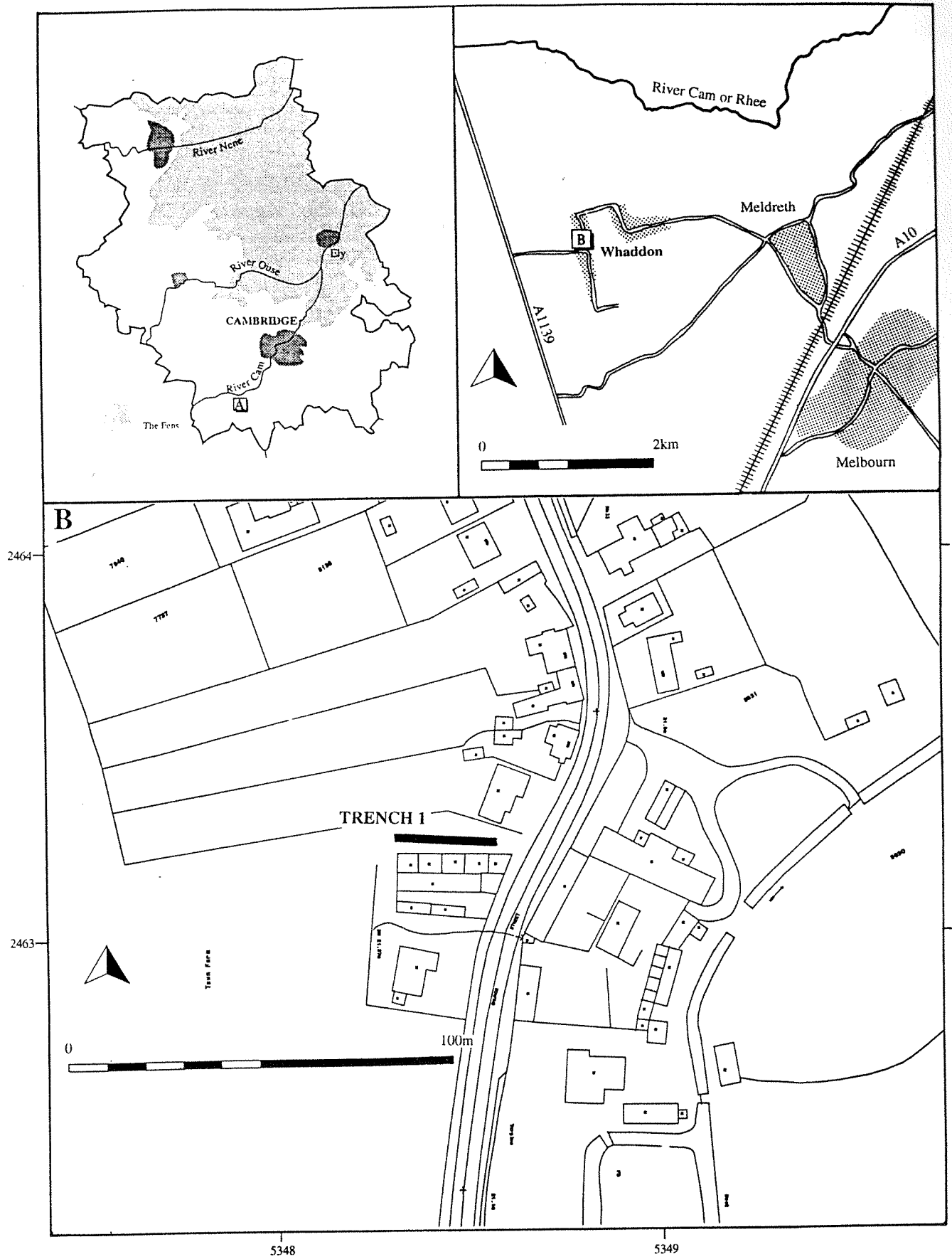


Figure 1. Location map and trench location plan

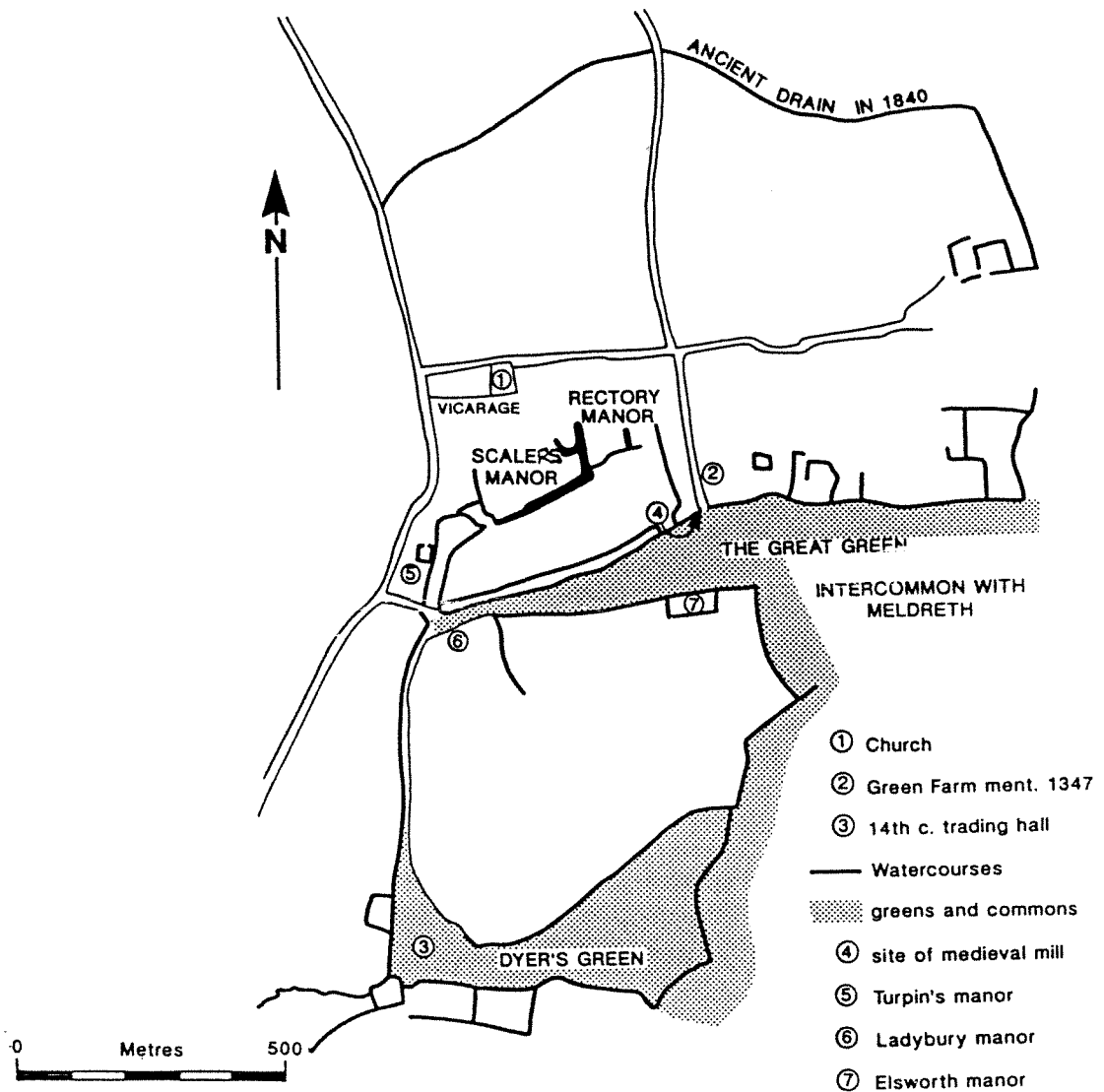


Figure 2. Whaddon - based on 1840 Enclosure map.

(after, Susan Oosthuizen)

4 METHODOLOGY OF ASSESSMENT

A mechanical excavator with a toothless bucket was used to excavate one trench 27m long and 1.5m wide. The farm trackway hard-core and naturally deposited (colluvial) subsoil were removed revealing archaeological features cut in the natural chalk geology. The inclination of the land determined the depth of overburden along the length of the trench which ranged between 0.75m at the western end of trench and 0.24m at the eastern end of the trench.

The archaeological features identified were excavated by hand, photographed, recorded on plan and section, and any artefactual evidence retrieved and recorded.

5 RESULTS

All information relates to *Figure 3*

Trench 1 contained a fairly high density of archaeological features all of which were excavated

Feature 1

Cut **100**, 1.22m in diameter, 0.33m max and 0.25 min deep, circular in plan, contained four fills:

Fill 1, a very dark brown silty soil, contained pottery fragments possibly dated to the Anglo-Saxon period, and also knapped flint of a residual nature with a probable date ranging between Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age. The fill indicates the position of a large post setting.

Fill 2, a fairly light brown silty clay loam, from which no artefactual evidence was recovered. The position of the soil suggests that its primary function was a form of packing around the post

Fill 3, a dark brown silty soil, contained pottery fragments possibly dated to the Anglo-Saxon period, residual knapped flint with a probable date ranging between Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age and also fragments of animal bone. It is very probable that fill 3 had a similar role to that of fill 2 acting as post packing material.

Fill 4, dirty white redeposited chalk/soil mix, contained pottery fragments which has a probable date attributed to the Anglo-Saxon period. The evidence from the section suggests that fill 4 was redeposited in the form of a ramp to aid the process of positioning the post in the post hole.

Feature 2

Cut **101**, 0.66m wide, 0.22 deep, linear in plan, orientation north-south, contained one fill:

Fill 1, a dark greyish brown silty/clay soil, contained pottery fragments of a probable Anglo-Saxon date and also residual flint.

Features 3 and 8 (section 1)

Cut **102**, 0.56m wide, 0.21m deep, linear in plan, orientation north-south, contained one fill:

Fill 1, a dark orange silty clay soil, contained no artefactual evidence.

Cut **105**, 0.69m in diameter, 0.34m deep, circular in plan, contained one fill:

Fill 2, a silty clay light brown soil with orange mottles, contained no artefactual evidence.

Feature 3 (Section 2)

Cut **102**, 0.40m wide, 0.17m deep, linear in plan, orientation north-south, contained one fill:

Fill 3, a dark orange silty clay soil, contained no artefactual evidence.

Feature 4

Cut **106**, 0.30m wide, 0.07m deep, linear in plan, orientation north/east-south/west, contained one fill:

Fill 1, a very dark silty soil, contained pottery fragments and occasional residual flint.

Feature 5

Cut **107**, 0.29m wide, 0.04m deep, linear in plan, orientation north/east-south/west, contained one fill:

Fill 1, a very dark silty soil, contained pottery fragments.

TRENCH 1

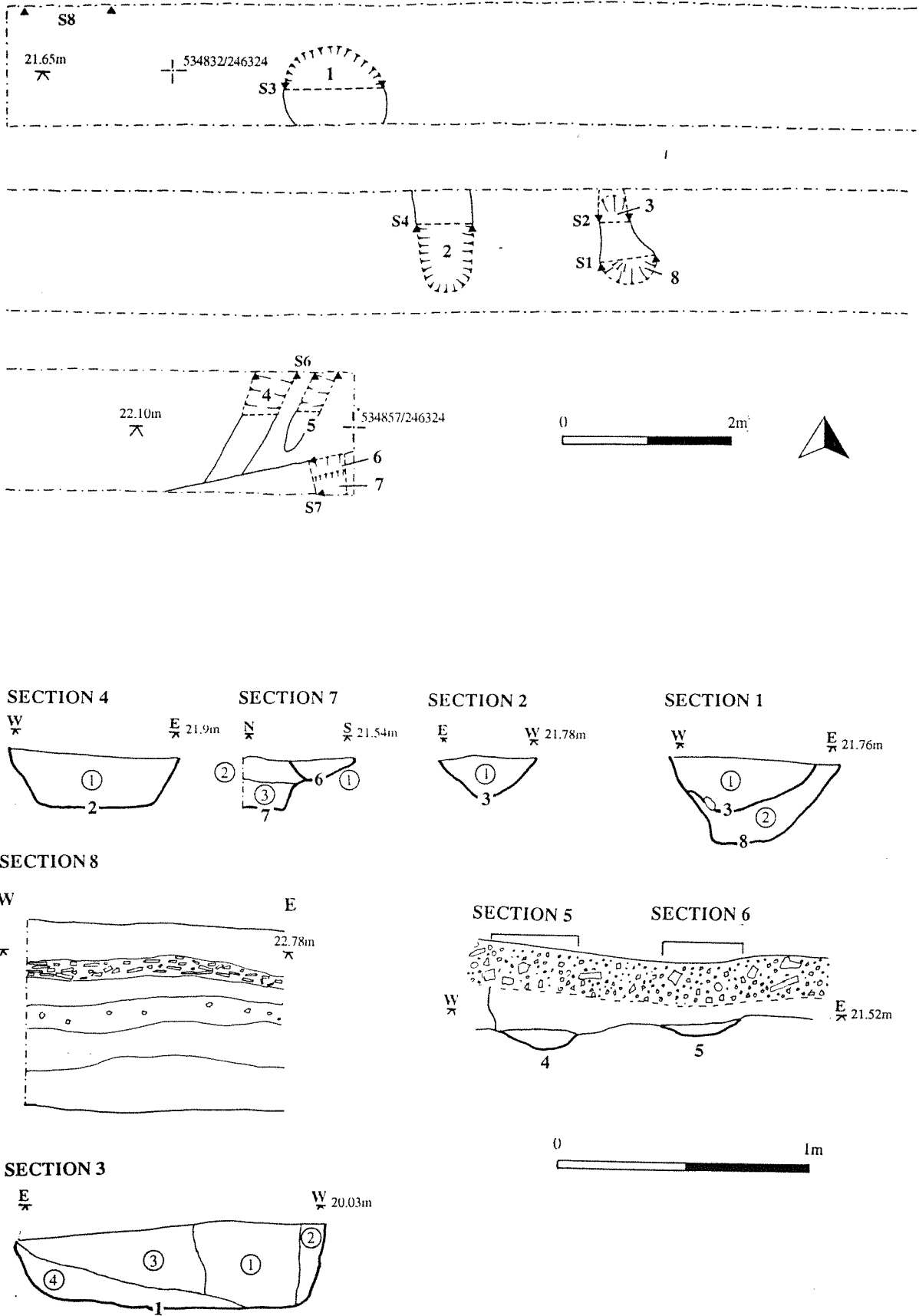


Figure 3. Plan and section drawings of features in Trench 1

Feature 6

Cut **103**, 0.26m wide, 0.08m deep, linear in plan, orientation east-west, contained one fill:

Fill 1, a very dark silty soil, contained a sherd of burnished decorated pottery and residual flints.

Feature 7

Cut **104**, 0.21m deep, (unable to give a measurement for the width of the feature due to the position of the southern baulk), orientation east-west, contained two fills:

Fill 2, a very dark brown silty soil, contained pottery fragments and residual flint.

Fill 3, a mid-brown chalk/clay soil, contained only pottery fragments.

6 INTERPRETATION

It is very difficult to draw any definite conclusions from the excavation of a very small percentage of the proposed area of development. However, the archaeological features were sealed by a layer of compacted clay loam; 0.37m deep at the western end of the trench and 0.11m deep at the eastern end following the inclination of the land. Sealing this layer were deposits of rubble, acting as hard-core for the trackway, which again followed the inclination of the land and varied in thickness from west to east (*Figure 3*). A deposit of top-soil was identified at the western end of the trench, which did not extend along the whole length of the trackway, suggesting a partial decline in the use of the trackway as an access point to the field behind the land to be developed. The fact that no topsoil build-up was recorded sealing the rubble hard-core at the eastern end of the trackway indicates a more constant use at this end.

The compacted clay loam layer was completely sterile of evidence of human activity and its pedological properties suggest that deposition must have derived from colluvial action, caused by ploughing and soil creep from the field upslope. It is interesting to note that this colluvial deposit was found along the entire length of the evaluation trench and had no contamination from medieval or modern debris, suggesting that the colluvium was deposited prior to, or during, the early medieval period. The evidence could also suggest therefore that the land use changed from arable to pasture in later medieval times.

Whatever the reason for the uncontaminated colluvial deposit the fact remains that it sealed the archaeological features thus protecting them from damage. The excavated features suggest that a timber structure existed which is attributed to the Anglo-Saxon period, on the basis of associated pottery. The most diagnostic sherd came from feature **1**, context **3** (*Figure 3 and 4*).

The main evidence for a structure was obtained from feature **1** (*Figure 3*), where the section showed clear evidence of a post-pipe and post-packing, and also feature **8** (*Figure 3*), where there is evidence of a post-pipe, although no suggestion of post-packing was apparent.

The features **3,4,5,6,7**, located at the eastern end of Trench 1 could also be associated with construction, being positioned alongside the main street in Whaddon, suggesting that their function may have been as beam slots for a form of structure. Feature **2**, could potentially be a form of boundary ditch, although the position of the baulk restricts any definite functional interpretation, which applies to most of the features identified in the trench.

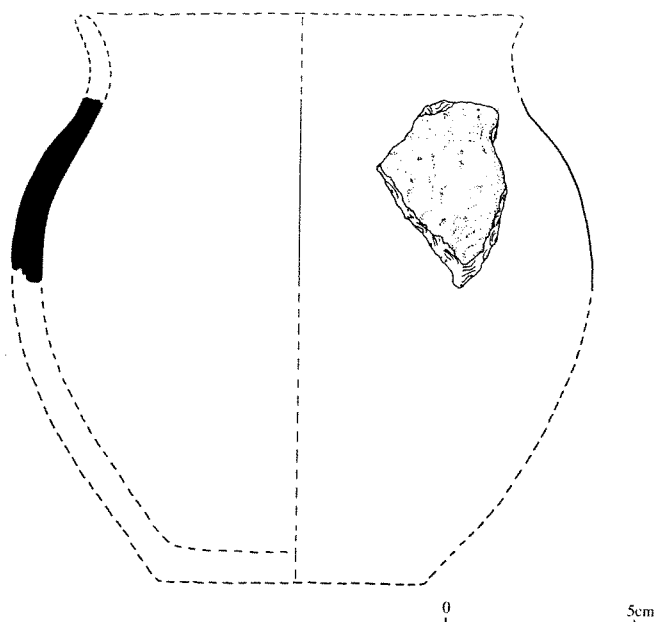


Figure 4. Pagan/Saxon pottery sherd from posthole 1 (context 3)

7 DISCUSSION

This is the first archaeological excavation in Whaddon, a village of interest for its Saxon/Medieval foundations and unspoilt state (lack of modern building expansion). As such it is very important archaeologically for investigating the inception and development of villages in Cambridgeshire. The features uncovered indicate considerable potential for investigating Saxon structural remains associated with the origins of the village.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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