

Archaeological Field Unit

Observation of Post Medieval Demolition Debris Within
Groundworks for the Construction of New Dwellings
at Manor Farm, Sawtry

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Cambridgeshire County Council

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Commissioned By Mr M Hunting

**Observation of Post Medieval Demolition Debris Within Groundworks for
the Construction of New Dwellings at Manor Farm, Sawtry.**

Basic Archaeological Investigation

TL 173 / 838

1 INTRODUCTION

The monitoring project was commissioned by Mr M Hunting in advance of the proposed development of the site for housing with associated gardens and car parking. The monitoring was undertaken in accordance with the Design Brief prepared by Simon Kaner of the County Archaeology Office; Development Control.

Full evaluation was considered inappropriate in this instance despite the proximity of the development to the nationally important remains of a medieval moat, ridge and furrow and earthworks relating to the shrunken medieval village (SAM 172). This was due to the extent of truncation associated with the usage of farm buildings previously occupying the development area.

2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The site is situated within the modern village of Sawtry, to the south-east of All Saints Church. The natural geology of the area consists of Oxford Clays.

3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The development site is located to the south and east of the nationally important remains of a medieval moat, ridge and furrow and earthworks relating to the shrunken medieval village (SAM 172, SMR 1329, 1338, 1575). The area is also rich in Roman remains, with the A1 following the course of Ermine Street, a major Roman road. In addition Roman artefactual material recovered from beneath the earthworks of the medieval village suggest Roman settlement in the immediate vicinity.

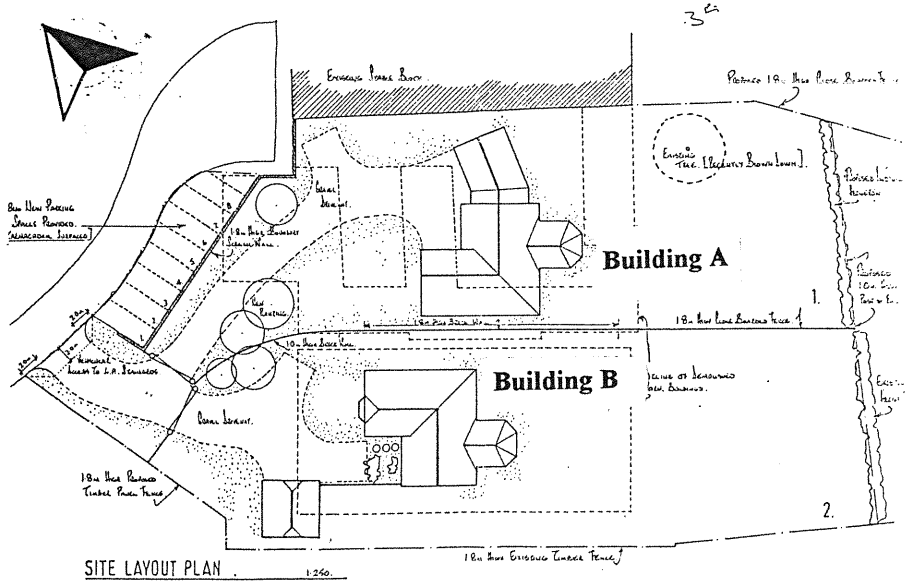
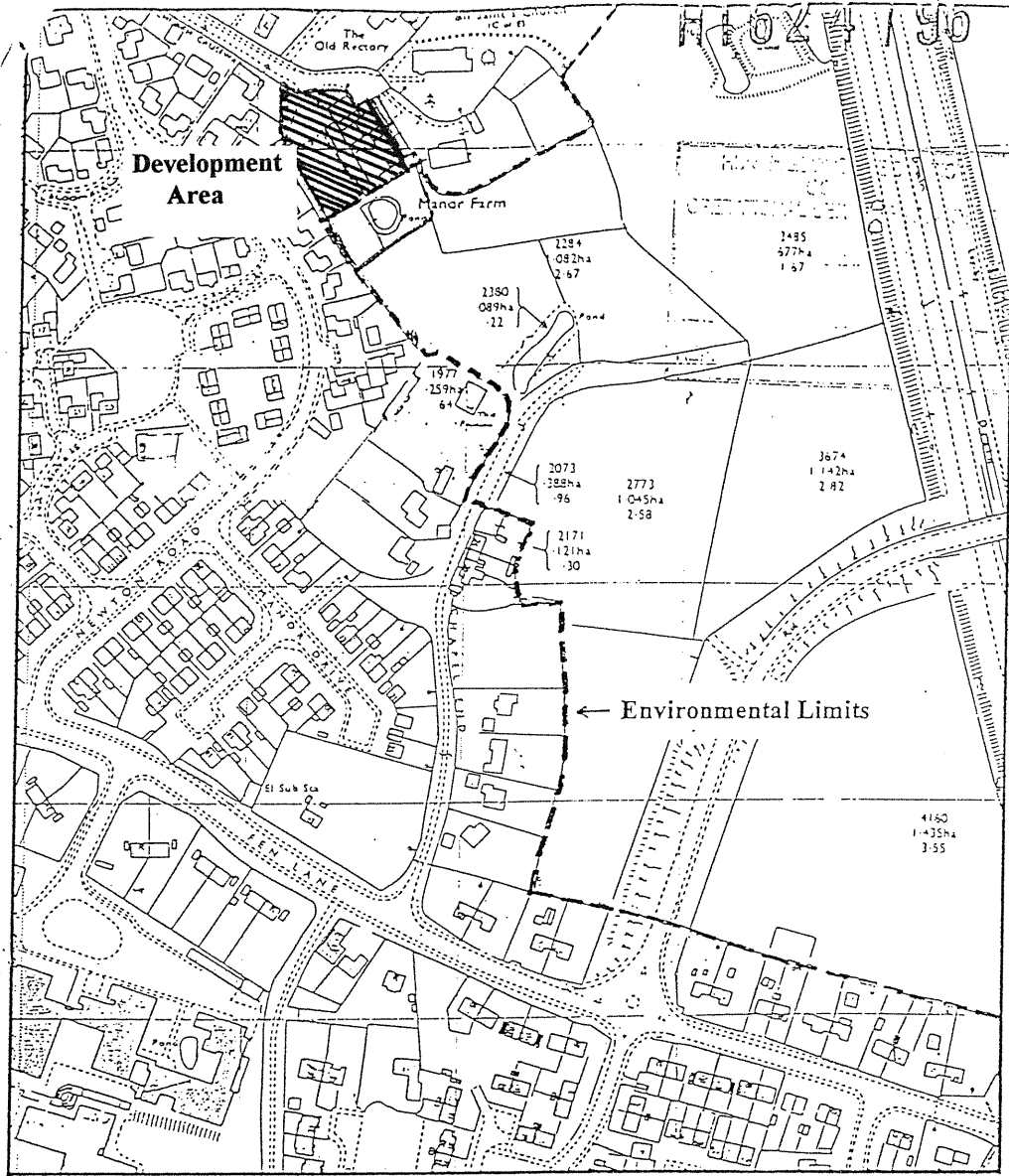


Figure 1 Site Location Plan

4 METHODOLOGY

The basic monitoring of the development required a total of three site visits.

Visit 1: On 30/06/97 S Macaulay of the AFU observed the site prior to the commencement of groundworks and agreed that basic monitoring during these works would ensure the identification of any surviving deposits of archaeological significance.

Visit 2: On 20/08/97 M Hinman of the AFU observed the newly opened foundation trenches for Building A.

Visit 3: On 28/08/97 M Hinman of the AFU observed the newly opened foundation trenches for Building B.

As a result of the third visit it was agreed, in consultation with L Austin of the County Archaeology Office (CAO) that no further archaeological work would be required within the development area.

Details of each visit were recorded using the AFU standard Recording Brief pro forma sheets.

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

5 RESULTS

Building A

Building A was located within the eastern half of the development area adjacent to the existing stable block(Fig 2).

Excavation reached a maximum depth of 1.00m below present ground surface (BPS) within foundation trenches 0.60m wide. Examination of the trench sections revealed compacted demolition rubble 0.20m in depth overlying a light yellowish brown natural clay which extended to the basal limit of excavation.

A scan of the spoil heaps adjacent to the excavation produced only Post Medieval and modern demolition rubble, including brick, tile and decayed wood.

Building B

Building B was located within the western half of the development area (Fig 2).

Excavation reached a maximum depth of 1.50m below present ground surface (BPS) within foundation trenches 0.60m wide. Examination of the trench sections revealed a mixture of compacted demolition rubble and yard like surfaces consisting of crushed brick or bitumen up to a maximum of 0.50m in depth overlying a light yellowish brown natural clay which extended to the basal limit of excavation.

A scan of the spoil heaps adjacent to the excavation again produced only Post Medieval and modern demolition rubble, including brick, tile and decayed wood with additional fragments of blue and white 'willow pattern' pottery and occasional cattle bones.

None of the artefacts examined on the site were retained.

6 DISCUSSION

Despite the high potential for the presence of archaeologically significant deposits, in particular those relating to the Roman and Medieval periods, no evidence of activity relating to these periods was observed during the course of the monitoring works.

It is likely that the absence of such remains is directly attributable to truncation associated with the construction of the recently demolished farm buildings within the development area.

The absence of any residual artefactual material of archaeological significance within the development area cannot be taken as evidence to suggest a lack of past activity in this instance. This is due to the proximity of the development area to a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 172). It seems probable that truncation of deposits and removal of any associated artefactual material occurred at the time of construction of previously extant buildings within the development area. This localised disturbance appears to have been restricted to the current development area.

It is worth noting that the depth of the foundation trenches for this building precluded any close examination (i.e. manual cleaning and excavation) for health and safety reasons. The potential risk of entering the foundation trenches was increased due to the presence of up to 0.50m of compacted rubble within the top of the trench sections. The difficulty of observing surviving archaeological deposits within the trench sections was compounded in this case by the clay nature of the underlying natural, which is prone to smearing and requires hand cleaning. Whilst in this instance it is highly unlikely that any remains of

archaeological significance were overlooked, care must be taken to ensure that the monitoring methods selected will permit the satisfactory completion of the terms of the brief for basic archaeological investigation.

In conclusion, the results of this monitoring brief record the absence of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area. These results cannot however be used to infer the presence / absence of deposits even within the immediate area of this development due to the site specific reasons detailed above.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Mr M Hunting for commissioning the monitoring works and Mr D Smith for his co operation and assistance during each of the site visits. `Figure 1 is based on a drawing supplied to the client by JJ Emms RIBA, architect.