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**Test Pits at 17 Wellington Street, St Ives;
Saxo-Norman and Later Deposits**

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SUMMARY

On February 18th 1999 the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council carried out an archaeological evaluation at land adjacent to 17 Wellington St Ives (TL314711). The work was commissioned by Ray Yerby before the construction of a domestic building. Test pits have revealed that archaeological deposits dating to the Saxo-Norman period or earlier survive at a depth of 1.4m and more below the current ground level.

This evidence may suggest that this part of the town was intensively occupied in pre conquest period, which is at odds with the accepted model for St Ives' Development.

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** On February 18th 1999 the Archaeological Field Unit, Cambridgeshire County Council carried out an archaeological evaluation at land adjacent to Wellington St Ives (TL314711). The work was commissioned by Ray Yerby before the construction of a domestic building.

The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit Specification PS/99/02 in response to a brief provided by the County Archaeology Office (April 2nd 1998). The development site is currently open but overgrown and includes part of the demolished remains of the previous building to occupy the site.

- 1.2** The site lies in the historic core of St Ives and in an area close to the precinct of the Medieval Priory. It was hoped this evaluation would aid us in pinpointing the large boundary ditch of Priory which was identified in 1998 by HAT(report forthcoming).

2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1** The site lies within the historic core of St Ives 30m to the north of the River Ouse.
- 2.2** The British Geological Survey map 1:50,000 shows the site to be on alluviated gravels of the River Ouse.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Archaeological Potential in Areas Studied

- 3.1.1** The paucity of archaeological investigations in this part of the town make it difficult for us to predict the archaeology within the study area. Evaluations (Murray, 1997) and Excavations by HAT, (1998) on a site almost immediately to the north revealed Roman and early Saxon occupation and found a large boundary ditch that may represent the western edge of the Priory precinct.

- 3.1.2** The archaeological potential of the site is derived from its proximity to the post-Conquest medieval Priory. The exact boundaries of the precinct and location of key buildings are not certain, however a map of 1728 (Pettis Survey) appears to show that this site lies within a block that was covered with orchard at that date, rather than with surviving buildings or their post-dissolution replacements. The evidence from the 1998 HAT excavation seems to suggest that the medieval precinct boundary ran north-south a short distance to the west of Priory Road, which would place this site just outside of the Priory bounds.

3.2 Historical Background

3.2.1 St Ives

3.2.2 The pre-conquest settlement at St Ives known as Slepe was probably concentrated around the existing parish church which was already present by the time of the Domesday Book (Page, Proby & Ladds 1932).

3.2.3 The district of the town called the 'Green' extends north of the church along the road to Ramsey and has a sinuous shape reminiscent of organically-derived settlement. This was probably the main part of the pre-conquest village.

3.2.4 A bridge is first mentioned in 1107AD, a wooden structure, and it is presumed that this lay around the the site of the later medieval stone construction.

3.2.5 The location of pre conquest monastery is unclear, it may be in the same place as the later foundation.

3.2.6 In 1110 AD Ramsey Abbey was given a week long Easter Fair at Slepe, a market presumably followed and this may have been the impetus for the Abbey to redesign the settlement accordingly.

3.2.7 The fairground / market place appears to have been an important component of the urban topography of St Ives. It was a wide zone along the river bank with the bridge at its centre, the space totalling 600m in length from the church at the north-west end to the Priory and Manor at the south eastern end.

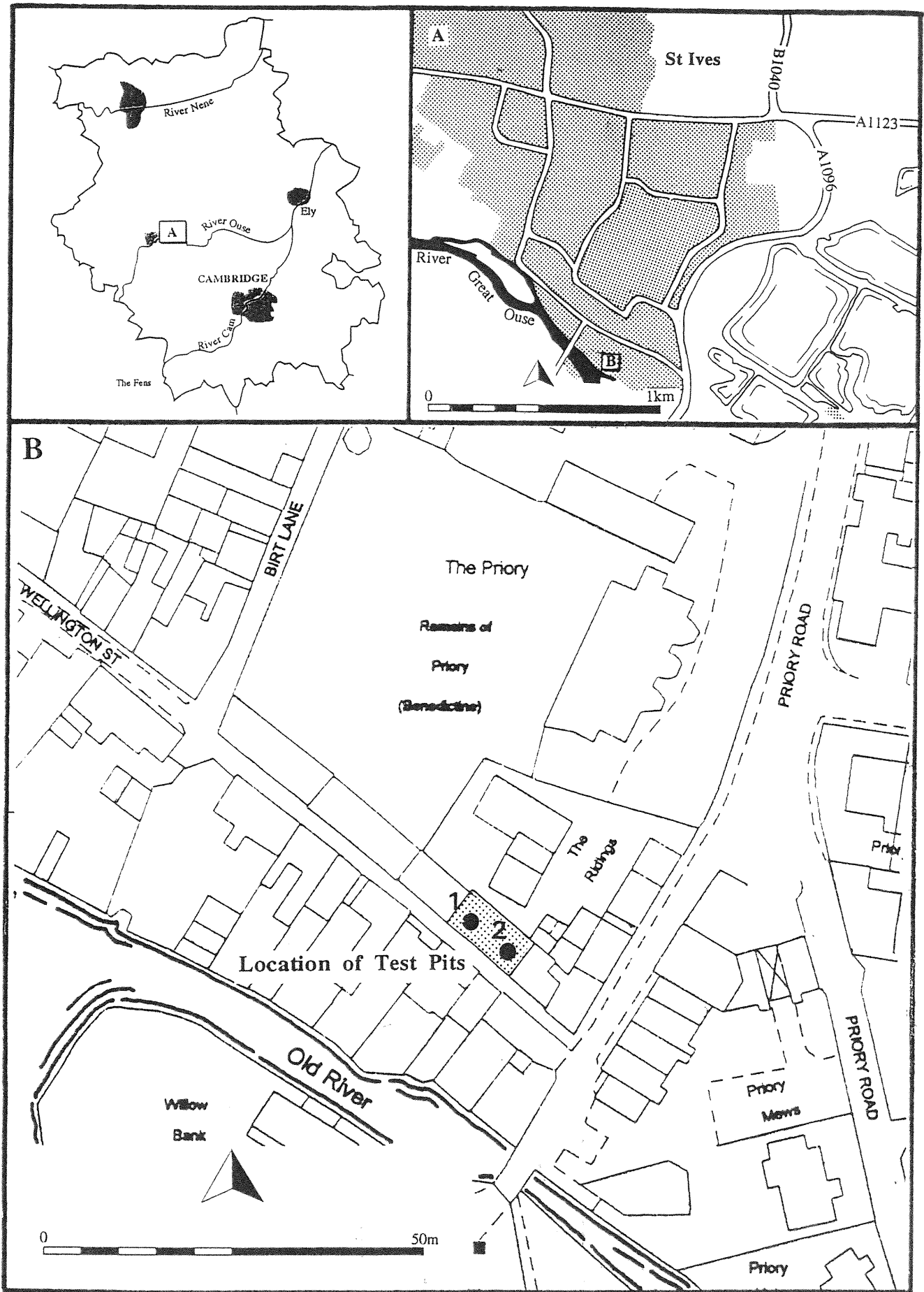


Figure 1 Site location plans.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Test Pit strategy

Two test pits were excavated on the site close to the eastern and western ends and within the new building footprint. The locations of test pits are shown in Figure 1.

4.1.1 Access by vehicle to this site was not possible therefore test pits were excavated by hand.

4.1.2 In addition the spoil heaps from the test pits were visually scanned and metal detected in order to maximise recovery of artefacts.

5 RESULTS

The evaluation revealed undisturbed medieval deposits sealed by post-medieval and modern deposits in test pit 1. The sequence in test pit 2 was slightly different with modern and post-medieval deposits overlying late medieval deposits. Example sections are shown in figure 2.

Test Pit 1

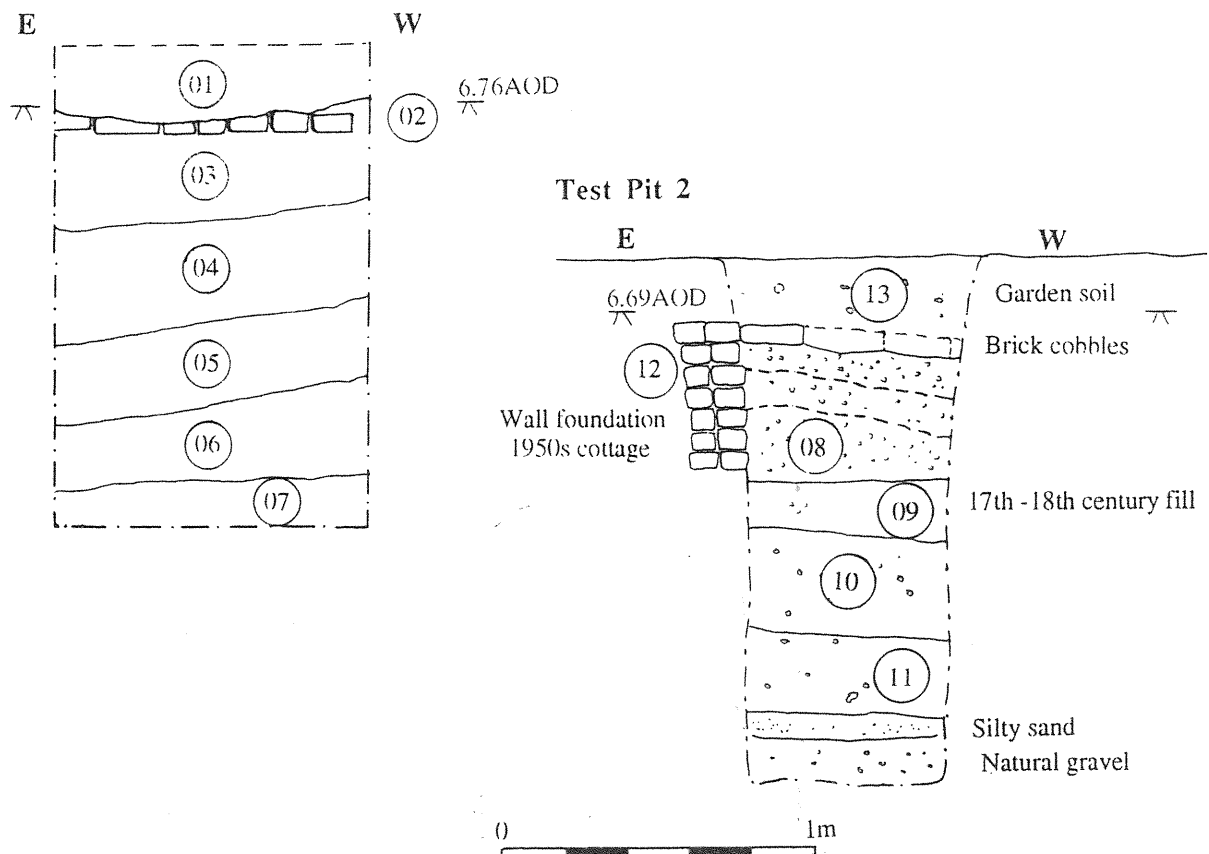


Figure 2 Test pit sections.

5.1 Test pit 1

Test pit 1 was 1m by 1m and 1.5m deep and positioned on the western side of the development area. Layer 1 was composed of a dark grey clay silt with a frequent amount of modern brick. Directly below layer 2 was a brick floor relating to the modern building which was standing on the site until recently. Layer 3 was 0.30m in depth and comprised of a yellowish brown sandy clay with a frequent amount of gravel. Layer 3 represents make-up for the floor of the modern house. Below this layer was a dark greyish brown silty clay (4) This layer was 0.30m deep and contained a number of post-medieval pottery sherds dating from the 18th to 19th centuries. It is difficult to ascertain whether this deposit represents a fill of a pit or an occupation layer. This layer sealed a greyish brown clay silt (5) which was 0.4m deep and contained post-medieval pottery dating from the late 18th century. Below layer 5 was a brownish grey clay silt 6 which was 0.30m deep and containing medieval pottery dating from 1000-1150AD. Finds from this context included Stamford ware, St Neots ware, Thetford ware, roller stamped Thetford and a sherd of residual Roman colour coat. In addition fragments of daub were recovered from this context. Beneath this, was context 7 which was a greyish brown sandy silt with occasional gravel. This context produced material dating from 900-1150AD. Finds included Thetford ware, St Neots ware and a sherd of Roman grey ware.

5.2 Test pit 2

Test pit 2 was 1m long and 1.5m deep and positioned on the eastern side of the development area. The stratigraphic sequence observed in this trench was very similar to Test pit 1. Layer 13 was composed of a dark grey clay silt with a large number of modern bricks and was 0.34m deep. This layer represents demolition of the modern building that occupied the site. Layer 13 sealed the wall 12 of the modern building. Below 12 was a yellowish brown clay (8) which represents foundation material for the modern building. Layer 9 was a dark grey silty clay and was 0.28m deep. Finds from within this layer included a green glazed decorated clay pipe which is presumably 19th century in date. Beneath 9 was layer 10 which was a dark brown silty clay with occasional sub rounded stones. Finds from within this context included Cistercian ware, local red wares, English tin glaze and an imported polychrome slip ware. From the artefactual evidence the deposit seems to be 18th century in date. Context 11 was a light brown clay silt with occasional small rounded stones. This context produced material dating from the 15th century including Late Medieval Reduced ware.

6 Interpretation

The evaluation revealed undisturbed medieval deposits sealed by post medieval and modern deposits in test pit 1. The sequence in test pit 2 was slightly different, with modern and post-medieval deposits overlying late medieval deposits.

The stratigraphic sequence in test pit 1 was composed of a modern deposit associated with the construction and demolition of the modern house overlying post-medieval deposits. The post-medieval deposits may represent garden soil relating to the period when the subject site was an orchard in the 18th century (Pettis map, 1728). The lower deposits represent late Saxon/early conquest activity, however, due to the limited nature of the test pit it is difficult to establish whether we are dealing with occupation layers or rubbish pits.

There is a similar kind of pattern to the evidence encountered in test pit 2 with a modern phase overlying a post-medieval phase. The post-medieval phase is probably represented by garden soil from the orchard. The lower deposit in this case represents late medieval activity, again either occupation layers or rubbish pits.

7 Conclusion

This evaluation has produced a considerable quantity of artefacts ranging in date from the 19th century to Roman. It has also revealed undisturbed early medieval and late medieval deposits sealed by post-medieval and modern deposits. The presence of ceramics such as Thetford ware, Stamford ware and St Neots ware in the lower deposits indicate some sort of Saxo-Norman activity in the eastern part of the town. This is of considerable interest since it corresponds with the evidence from the evaluation undertaken 100m to the north of the site (Murray, 1997) and it implies that the current ideas concerning the development of the pre-conquest settlement of St Ives may need revision.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Maps consulted

OS/map 1885 25 inch St Ives consulted at Fulbourn

OS map 1926 25 inch St Ives consulted at Fulbourn

1728 Pettis map of the parish closes and town of St Ives consulted at Fulbourn (HRO SM 16 /189)

Appendix A

Pottery Spot dating

Context list	Material	Date
04	1 sherd of transfer print bone china	19th century
04	1 sherd of Staffordshire stone ware	18 th century
04	1 sherd of Metropolitan Slipware	1600-1700AD
04	2 sherd of Bone China	19th century
05	1 sherd of Staffs Slipware	1600-1800AD
05	1 sherd of Frechen stoneware	1550-1700AD
05	1 sherd of Bone china	19th century
05	1 sherd of Westerwald stoneware	18th century
05	1 sherd of Staffs stoneware	18th century
05	1 sherd of Bone China	19th century
05	2 sherd of Chinese Porcelain	19th century
05	1 sherd of transfer print bone china	19th century
06	1 sherd of Stamford ware	900-1150AD
06	1 sherd of St Neots ware	900-1150 AD
06	1 sherd of Thetford ware	900-1150 AD
06	1 sherd of Nene Valley Colour Coated ware	2nd-4th cent
06	1 sherd of roller stamp Thetford ware	900-1150 AD
07	1 sherd of Roman Grey ware	1st -4th century
07	1 sherd of St Neots ware	900-1150 AD
07	1 sherd of St Neots ware	900-1150 AD
13	1 sherd of Staffs Slipware	1600-1800AD
13	1 sherd of English stoneware	1670-1800AD
13	1 sherd of Bone China	1780-1900AD
13	1 sherd of Polychrome slipware	1800-1850AD
13	1 sherd of English Tin glaze	1800-1850AD
14	3 sherd of Staffordshire stone ware	1800-1850AD
10	1 sherd of Staffs Slipware	1600-1800AD
10	1 sherd of Cistercian ware	1500-1600AD
10	1 sherd of Bone China	1780-1900AD
11	1 sherd of Bourne D ware	1450-1600AD
11	1 sherd of hard sandy ware	1200-1350AD
11	1 sherd of Grey ware	1st - 4th century.

Appendix B

Context List

- 1 Dark grey clay silt with a frequent amount of modern brick.
- 2 Brick floor .
- 3 A mortar make-up for floor.
- 4 Dark greyish brown silty clay with frequent amount of small stones.
- 5 Greyish brown clay silt with a frequent amount of stones.

- 6 Brownish grey clay silt with a moderate amount of pebbles.
- 7 Greyish brown sandy silt with occasional gravel.
- 8 Yellowish clay foundation material for wall.
- 9 Dark grey silty clay with occasional brick.
- 10 Dark brown silty clay with occasional stones.
- 11 Light brown clay silt with occasional small rounded stones.

Appendix C

Finds Quantification Table

ST IVES, WELLINGTON STREET 1999 - Finds Types By Context (in grammes and by count)												
Site Locations		Ceramic Finds				Metallic Finds		Lithic Finds		Organic Finds		Totals
Trench/ Location	Context Number	Pottery	Pottery Sherds	Tile & Brick	Clay Pipe	Metals Fe	Metals Cu	Worked Stone	Glass	Animal Bone	Shell	Total Weights by Context
Tp. 2	u/s	124	14	0	0	0	0	0	26	23	0	173
Tp. 1	4	127	17	0	56	30	0	0	35	46	0	294
Tp. 1	5	444	68	0	130	88	5	0	31	132	118	948
Tp. 1	6	185	18	130	0	0	0	0	1	27	0	343
Tp. 1	7	26	4	0	55	0	0	0	0	20	0	101
Tp. 2	9	0	0	100	0	0	0	142	0	0	0	242
Tp. 2	10	104	12	311	24	0	3	0	0	59	0	501
Tp. 2	11	160	10	168	0	0	0	0	0	107	0	435
Total Weights by Finds Type		1170	143	709	265	118	8	142	93	414	118	3037
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