

Archaeological Field Unit

**90 Glebe Road, Cambridge:  
An Archaeological Desk-Top Assessment**

Judith Roberts

2000

**Cambridgeshire County Council**

Report No. A155

*Commissioned by Berkeley Homes (Eastern) Limited*

**90 Glebe Road, Cambridge:**  
**An Archaeological Desk-Top Assessment**  
(TL 4671 5588)

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February 2000

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## **SUMMARY**

*The proposed development, covering an area of approximately 1.3 hectare (TL 4671 5588), lies to the west of Hills Road, a major arterial route into Cambridge. The development involves construction of houses and related services by Berkeley Homes (Eastern) Limited. The site lies in an area of potentially rich archaeological remains. There are prehistoric and Roman remains in the vicinity but nothing is known from the site itself. The site appears to have been agricultural over the last two centuries and was developed in the early part of the twentieth century. Apart from a few structures in the northern part of the site there does not appear to have been any development during the past century and recently it has been gardens and playing fields. The evidence of past activity in the area and the lack of recent development implies a high potential for preservation of any remains on the site.*

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**90 Glebe Road, Cambridge:  
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(TL4671 5588)**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This study was commissioned by Berkeley Homes (Eastern) Limited in advance of a proposed residential development. The assessment aims to define the archaeological potential of the land likely to be affected by the development. It has been compiled by Judith Roberts following submission of a specification (prepared by Tim Malim, dated 25th January 2000) in response to a design brief for archaeological evaluation written by Andy Thomas, Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Office, dated 5th January, 2000.

The site, an area of approximately 1.3ha, is located to the south of Glebe Road which runs off Hills Road, one of the main arterial routes into Cambridge from the south-east (Fig. 1). The site is centred on TL 4671 5588.

## **TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

The site lies to the south-east of central Cambridge on an area of Lower Chalk. It is approximately level with a gentle slope from 13mOD in the west down to 10mOD in the east. The area is located to the east of the edge of the second terrace gravels of the River Cam with a tributary of river Cam running just over 1km to the west.

The development site was used for agriculture during recent centuries. Enclosure maps and early Ordnance Survey maps (1807 to 1901) do not show any development on the land.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The aim of this desk-top assessment is to provide information concerning the location, extent, survival and significance of the known archaeological remains in the vicinity and on the site as well as assessing the potential for further archaeological remains to survive.

In order to map the potential for archaeology at 90 Glebe Road, Cambridge the investigation concentrated on the accessible archaeological and historical resources held by Cambridgeshire County Council Record Office and Sites and Monuments Record and documentary sources held by the CCC Archaeological Field Unit. Aerial photographic assessment was carried out by Rog Palmer, Air Photo Services, to meet the requirements of the design brief for archaeological evaluation (see Appendix I). Aerial photography confirmed that the site has been under grass at least since 1967.



Based upon Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. (Cambridgeshire County Council licence No. LA.07649X.1998)

Figure 1 Site location

No other archaeological features were identified in, or close to, the assessment area. Levelling to establish gardens and playing fields may mask earlier activity.

The known archaeological resource was investigated through the County's Sites and Monuments Record held by Cambridgeshire County Council. Additional published resources such as the Victoria County Histories and the Royal Commission inventory for the parish were examined. Reports and archives on excavations carried out in and around south-eastern Cambridge were consulted.

The historical records held at the County Record Office in Cambridge were investigated. The Office holds copies of the Enclosure Award and associated maps. This work was supplemented by consultation of the Ordnance Survey maps of the area. The modern landscape appears to retain boundaries and holdings set out in the medieval period and perhaps dating from earlier periods.

No geotechnical survey has been undertaken or is known to the client, thus it has not been possible to assess the condition and status of buried deposits or identify local geological conditions.

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **Prehistoric**

Prehistoric remains from the vicinity tend to have been mainly stray finds (SMR no. 4738, 4776, 4777 and 4896) comprising flint tools and manufacturing debris (Fig. 2). No settlement remains have yet been identified but barrows, ring ditches and cremations have been recorded (SMR no. 4964 and 8880). No prehistoric remains have been found close to the development site and most occur on the chalklands to the south.

### **Iron Age**

The river gravels to the west of the site were an area of intense occupation from the prehistoric period onwards. Cropmarks are visible to the south and west of the site indicating occupation of probable prehistoric or Roman date in the surrounding chalk lands. Those to the west (SMR 9596 and 9599) include a number of linear and ring-like features on the river gravels. Cropmarks to the south (SMR 4800 and 9591) suggest ditched enclosures and possible field systems.

Rescue excavations to the south of Long Road, at the new Addenbrooke's site (SMR 9591) in 1967 (Cra'ster, 1969) revealed substantial Iron Age settlement on a slight rise (above 15mOD). An enclosure (approximately 350ft across) was noted with internal pits. Domestic debris was recovered from the ditch sections. Pottery from this site has been dated to the Iron Age.

Further work along the course of the proposed southern relief road identified cropmarks (Kemp 1991) and field evaluation suggests that prehistoric remains have been preserved (Kemp 1993) beneath the topsoil. Drainage ditches were dug (these appear as cropmarks in the thin soils) and this suggests the land was cultivated in the Iron Age and Roman period. To date the associated settlement has not identified but

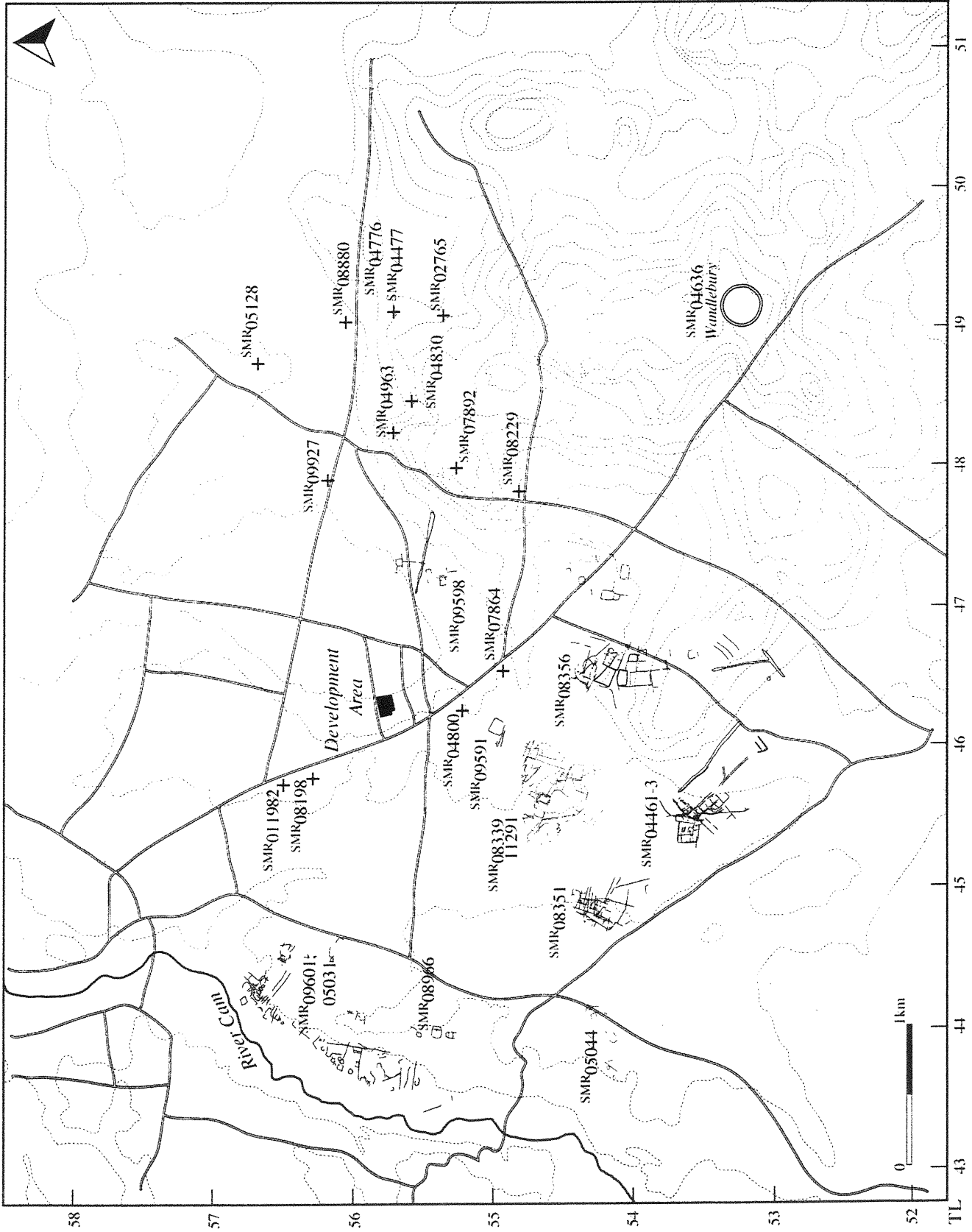


Figure 2 Map showing location of site (black) and cropmarks of the general area. Contour interval is 5m.

hill forts are known at Wandlebury and War Ditches (SMR 4830 and 4963).

## Roman

A Roman road is reported to have run through the grounds of the Perse School, to the west of Hills Road (Walker 1910). This was apparently visible as a ridge until 1910 when it was levelled. According to Walker the road would have run from a T-junction with Worts Causeway (a Roman road running east-west) near the new Addenbrooke's Hospital, north through the Perse School playing fields, across Luard Road and through the grounds of Homerton College, across Brooklands Avenue and the University Botanic Gardens to join the line of Regent Street at Hyde Park Corner (Fig. 3). From this point north the modern road follows the line of the Roman road to the river crossing near Magdalene Bridge. Walker notes that this line is on slightly higher ground than the modern Hills Road (close to the 15m contour) and suggests that the land to the east would have been marshland which occasionally flooded (*ibid* 167).

In 1910 Walker observed a section across the Roman road in the Perse School playing fields. The road was 12 to 51 feet wide with nine inches of chalk, 2'3" of gravelly earth and then chalk again, all beaten hard. The upper part of the road had been removed in antiquity (*ibid* 166-7). Roman pottery, tile, a coin of Severus (AD 193-211) and a broken fibula together with animal bone were recovered during these excavations.

In 1952 another section was excavated across the Roman road within the Perse School grounds, located at TL 4626 5583 (RCHME 1959, 6). This showed flanking roadside ditches, 14.5m apart, but no metalling. An adjacent rubbish pit contained pottery of *c* AD170-200.

Certain field boundaries visible on the Draft Ordnance Survey map may indicate the line of the Roman road. A line of trees which runs across the Perse School playing fields may therefore mark the line of the road, but this does not coincide with the grid reference given for the 1952 excavation.

A desk-top study (Dickens 1999) of land to the north-west of Glebe Road, archaeological evaluation at Homerton College, formerly Cavendish College (SMR 11982), and at Brooklands Avenue, also to the north-west of Glebe Road, all suggest that elements of Iron Age and Roman occupation may survive in the vicinity.

Roman pottery and cropmarks of a possibly Romano-British agricultural settlement were also noted in the vicinity (SMR 4830) and an undated skeleton associated with Roman pottery is recorded to the south-west (SMR 7864).

## Medieval

No evidence for post-Roman or medieval remains has been recorded in the vicinity and it would appear that the site is sufficiently far from the medieval centre of Cambridge not to have been settled at this time although it is likely to have been cultivated or used as pasture. It appears to have been just outside the boundary of the town fields (Haslam 1984). The low lying nature of the site suggests it was subject to periodic flooding. A Brigettine priory is recorded in 1406 (SMR 9927) just over a kilometre to the east. No other medieval remains have been recorded in the vicinity.



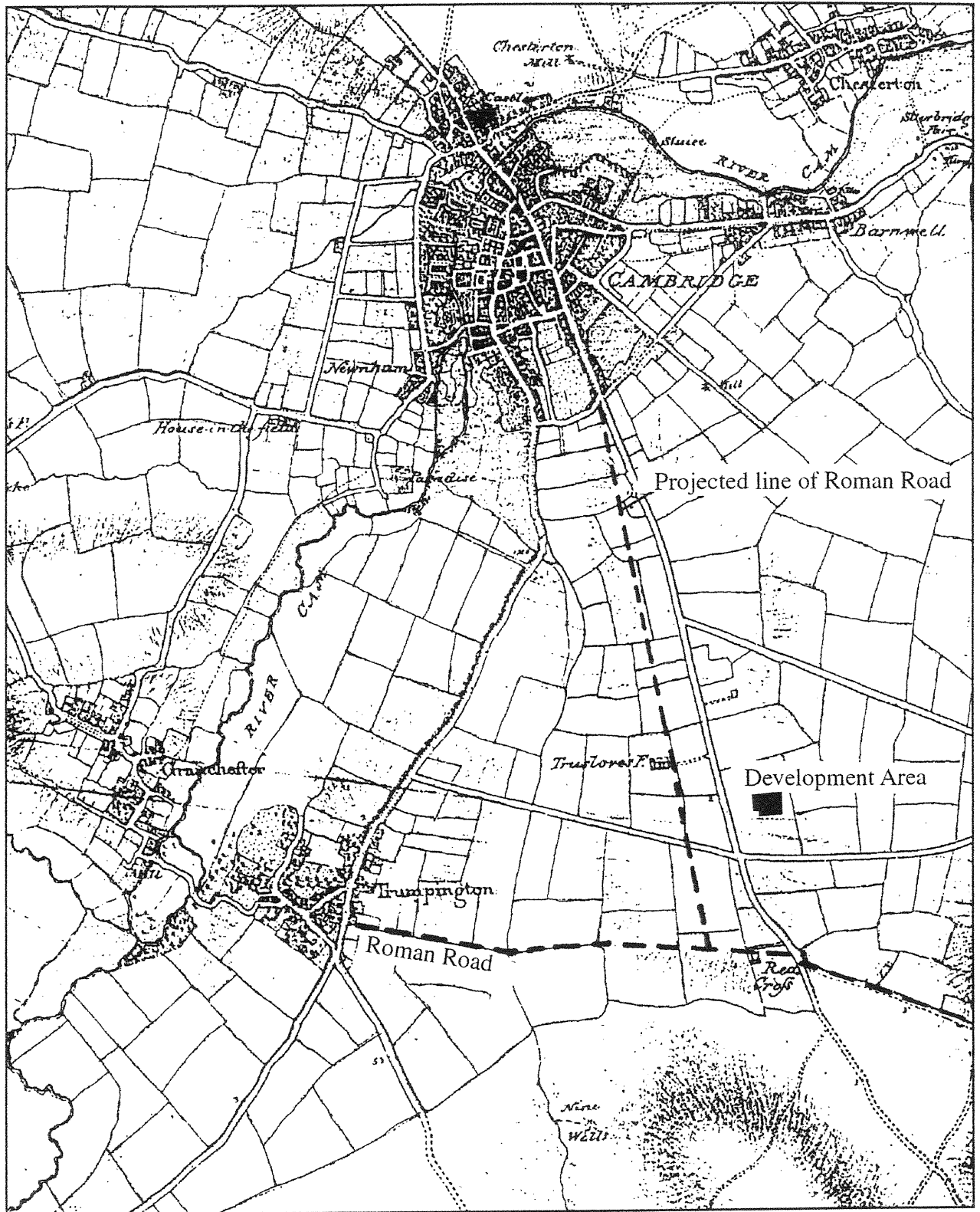


Figure 3 Draft of 1st edition OS Map (1810) with projected line of Roman Roads

## **Post-medieval**

As Cambridge developed in the post-medieval period the area settled included more land to the south of the medieval town. By 1873 Cavendish college (later re-named Homerton) was founded along Hills Road, to the north-west of the site (SMR 8198 and 11982).

Post-medieval, nineteenth century and early twentieth century Ordnance survey maps indicate that Glebe Road was under cultivation in the recent past. Development of adjacent streets is clear from early twentieth century Ordnance Survey maps. By 1925 the properties along Glebe Road had been laid out and the present buildings appear on the 1925 OS map (sheet LVII.7). These include the school, sewerage tanks, out-buildings and an orchard.

Mid-twentieth century development of the site has been noted in the aerial photographic assessment (Appendix I) and this includes conversion of part of the playing field into vegetable gardens between 1946 and 1952.

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL**

The south Cambridge area is rich in archaeological remains of all periods. From the neolithic through to the medieval period finds scatters, features and settlement remains are closely related the city and its surrounds.

From the study of historical records and known archaeological remains it is clear that the development site has the potential for survival of archaeological deposits. The absence of recorded remains in the vicinity should not be interpreted, at this stage, as an indication of the absence of archaeological remains on the site. Rather it may be indicative of the development history of this part of south Cambridge.

## **IMPACT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

Given the requirements of a residential development and the depths of ground work, the proposed development will have a major impact on any buried archaeological remains on the site. The development is planned in an archaeologically sensitive area. No details of present soil depth or ground water are yet available but excavations at The Perse School for Boys, Hills Road, Cambridge, less than 500m to the west, revealed archaeological remains surviving at 15.6m OD.

Proposals for mitigation strategies are beyond the scope of this report. The site has moderate archaeological potential but preservation by record or *in situ* may be considered, depending on the precise nature of the development. Deep deposits may be preserved through architectural or engineering measures. Given the nature of the site intrusive evaluation may uncover extensive remains or demonstrate that no archaeology exists. Without physical investigation this cannot be predicted, in spite of the documentary research already carried out.

## CONCLUSIONS

The archaeological potential of the development at Glebe Road can be described thus:

- |                                     |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| • mesolithic, neolithic, Bronze Age | low/unknown      |
| • Iron Age/Romano-British           | moderate/unknown |
| • Anglo Saxon                       | low/unknown      |
| • medieval                          | low/unknown      |

The study has demonstrated that the subject site lies within a rich archaeological landscape, surrounded by sites of prehistoric and Roman date, albeit not in the immediate vicinity. Whilst no archaeological sites or finds are known from the subject site itself, its archaeological potential may be considered moderate. If archaeology is encountered on the site conditions for preservation are likely to range from good to very good.

## REFERENCES CONSULTED

- Cambridgeshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)  
Cambridge Record Office (CRO) map sources for south Cambridge (incl. Draft Enclosure map dated 1807; Baker's map 1930; OS maps: 1886 to the present)  
Cra'ster, M. D. 1969 New Addenbrooke's Iron Age Site, Long Road, Cambridge, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, **LXII**, 21-28  
Dickens, A. 1999 Land Around Homerton Street, Cambridge – An Archaeological Desktop Assessment, Cambridge Archaeology Unit Report no. 304  
Haslam, J. 1984 The Development and Topography of Saxon Cambridge, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, **72**, 13-29  
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Kemp, S. 1993 Cambridge Southern Relief Road Archaeological Field Evaluation, Cambridgeshire Archaeology Report no. 85  
Leith, S. 1996 An Archaeological Evaluation at The Perse School for Boys, Hills Road, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire Archaeological Field Unit Report no. A89  
Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England 1959 City of Cambridge  
Walker, F. G. 1910 Roman Roads into Cambridge, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, **XIV**, 141-175

## APPENDIX I

### Aerial Photographic Appraisal

90 GLEBE ROAD, CAMBRIDGE, TL467559

CAMBRIDGESHIRE:

#### AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC APPRAISAL

Rog Palmer MA MIFA

#### INTRODUCTION

This appraisal of aerial photographs was commissioned to examine an area of some 1.8 hectares (centred TL467559) in order to identify archaeological features and thus provide a guide for field evaluation. Mapping was to be at 1:2500 if relevant.

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND NATURAL FEATURES FROM AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

In suitable cultivated soils, sub-surface archaeological features – including ditches, banks, pits, walls or foundations – may be recorded from the air in different ways in different seasons. In spring and summer these may show through their effect on crops growing above them. Such indications tend to be at their most visible in ripe cereal crops, in June or July in this part of Britain, although their appearance cannot accurately be predicted and their absence cannot be taken to imply evidence of archaeological absence. In winter months, when the soil is bare or crop cover is thin (when viewed from above), features may show by virtue of their different soils. Upstanding remains are also best recorded in winter months when vegetation is sparse and the low angle of the sun helps pick out slight differences of height and slope.

Grass rarely shows such marks but instead may reveal sub-surface features through the withering of the plants above them. This may occur towards the end of very dry summers and usually indicates the presence of buried walls or foundations. Such dry summers occurred in Britain in 1949, 1959, 1975, 1976, 1984, 1989 and 1990 (Bewley 1994, 25) and more recently in 1995 and 1996. This does not imply that every grass field will reveal its buried remains on these dates as local variations in weather and field management will affect parching. However, it does provide a list of years in which photographs taken from, say, mid July to the end of August may prove informative.

The most informative aerial photographs of archaeological subjects tend to be those resulting from specialist reconnaissance. This activity is usually undertaken by an experienced archaeological observer who will fly at seasons and times of day when optimum results are expected. Oblique photographs, taken using a hand-held camera, are the usual product of such investigation. Although oblique photographs are able to provide a very detailed view, they are biased in providing a record that is mainly of features noticed by the observer, understood, and thought to be of archaeological relevance. In the collections searched, no obliques were held of the assessment area.

Vertical photographs cover the whole of Britain and can provide scenes on a series of dates between (usually) 1946-7 and the present. Unfortunately these vertical surveys are not necessarily flown at times of year that are best to record the crop and soil responses that may be seen above sub-surface features. Vertical photographs are taken by a camera fixed inside an aircraft and adjusted to take a series of overlapping views that can be examined stereoscopically. They are often of relatively small scale and their interpretation requires higher perceptive powers and a more cautious approach than that necessary for examination of obliques. Use of these small-scale images can also lead to errors of location and size when they are rectified or re-scaled to match a larger map scale.

## PHOTO EXAMINATION AND MAPPING

### *Photographs examined*

Cover searches were made at the Cambridgeshire Record Office and the Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs. Photographs were all taken during routine vertical surveys.

*Source: Cambridgeshire Record Office*

#### Vertical collection

106G/UK/1718: 3083-3084	6 September 1946	1:10000
Fairey 200796-200797	late summer 1949	c.1:6000
58/866: 6051-6052	30 April 1952	c.1:5000
BKS Run 13/563397-563399	late summer 1962	1:10000

*Source: Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs*

#### Vertical photographs

RC8-AQ 212-213	18 July 1974	1:12000
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### *Base maps*

A base map of unknown scale was provided by the client and used for this rapid appraisal. This has been enlarged to provide background for the figure below.

### *Photo interpretation and mapping*

All vertical photographs were examined using a 1.5x magnification stereoscope. For each year of photography, features identified were sketched on to the base map. This information is combined on the figure below.

## COMMENTARY

### *Archaeological features*

No archaeological features were identified on the photographs examined nor would any be expected to be visible under the land uses noted between 1946 and the present.

### *Land use*

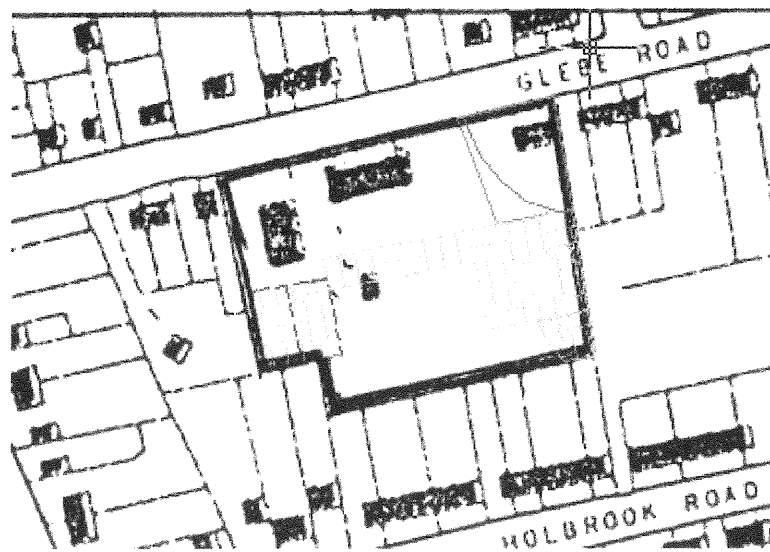
On all dates of photography the assessment area has been defined by a hedge-plus-trees boundary which appears mature in 1946. This suggests that the plot was established well before that date.

Between 1946 and 1952 the area included a large plot of (probably) vegetable garden which extended across its width as shown by the yellow area. This varied in size during that period and the figure shows the greatest combined area. Two smaller plots in the south-west corner were fenced (red dashed lines) and also used as vegetable gardens. Remaining land was grass, with a games area immediately south of the east-west aligned building.

The north-east corner was tree-covered (green line), possibly orchards as the trees were regularly spaced. That area was cleared of trees in 1962 and the photographs show ground cleared for house construction (purple line). Some trees were retained to make the west boundary of that property.

By 1962 most of the unfenced garden area had been converted to grass playing fields. The smaller area in the south-west corner was still fenced off and managed as garden.

By 1974, and since that date, the area has been grass playing fields.



## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that no further examination of aerial photographs is undertaken for this assessment.

## REFERENCE

Bewley, R. H., 1994. *Prehistoric Settlements*. Batsford/English Heritage, London.

## APPENDIX II

### Sites and Monuments Record Gazetteer for south Cambridge

SMR no	Grid ref. TL	Period	Description
2763	491/554	undated	cropmark - ring ditches
4738	456/555	neolithic/Bronze Age	flint adze
4776	491/559	neolithic/Bronze Age	flint arrowhead, scrapers, etc.
4777	491/557	Bronze Age	flint scrapers and flakes
4800	464/552	Iron Age	enclosure and settlement
4830	486/555	Iron Age/Roman	cropmark - field system
4896	492/558	prehistoric	worked flints
4901	450/556	post-medieval	post-medieval house
4963	484/555	Iron Age	earthwork enclosure
4964	489/557	neolithic/Bronze Age	two barrows
5128	487/567	undated	ditch
7808	455/555	undated	cropmark enclosure, tracks, fields
7864	470/550	Roman?	skeleton and pottery
7892	480/552	undated	cropmarks
8198	461/564	post-medieval	Cavendish College founded 1873
8880	491/560	Bronze Age	ring ditches and cremation
9591	461/553	undated/Roman?	cropmark enclosure and fields
9596	454/557	undated	cropmarks - linear
9598	474/551	undated	cropmark - enclosure
9599	455/558	undated	cropmarks
9927	481/565	medieval	Briggettine priory founded 1406
11164	478/551	modern	1950s watermain
11165	459/552	undated	cropmark continuation of 11165
11807	465/553	negative	excavation revealed no archaeology
11902	462/557	undated/post-medieval	excavation revealed minimal arch.
11982	461/564	Roman?	brooch and pottery





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*Aerial photograph of development area*



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