

Archaeological Field Unit

**Prehistoric and Roman Features at Roman Way,
Godmanchester, Cambridgeshire:
An Archaeological Evaluation**

John Bolderson and Rob Atkins

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**Prehistoric and Roman Features at Roman Way,
Godmanchester, Cambridgeshire:
An Archaeological Evaluation
(TL 252 699)**

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SUMMARY

During August 2003 the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council conducted an archaeological evaluation at Roman Way, Godmanchester, Cambridgeshire (TL 252 699) in advance of the construction of 60 houses.

Seven trenches, totalling 450m in length, were excavated. The evaluation revealed a range of (heavily truncated) archaeological features. These features consisted of pits, some of prehistoric date, and ditches of Roman and later origin. The relative paucity and abraded condition of finds from the Roman and later periods implies that the site occupied a peripheral location from known settlement foci.

Aerial photographs indicate that the site was located within the medieval field systems around Godmanchester until recent times. The archaeological features on the site were heavily truncated and compacted by development work c.20 years ago. This development has also resulted in many areas of modern disturbance across the subject site.

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**Prehistoric and Roman Features at Roman Way, Godmanchester,
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1 INTRODUCTION

The evaluation was commissioned by Twigden Homes Ltd. The Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council carried out the work during August 2003 at Roman Way, Godmanchester, Cambridgeshire to fulfil the requirements of a planning application before the construction of 60 houses.

The Brief for archaeological work was dated 15th May 2003. The archaeological objectives for the evaluation were recorded in the specification for the site. These objectives were to establish the character, date, state of preservation and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed development area. The Brief and Specification required a suitable level of documentary research and an aerial photographic assessment to be undertaken to place the results of the evaluation into context. The results of this research have been incorporated into this report.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site lies on grey mudstone (Oxford Clay) close to a band of 1st/2nd Terrace Gravels (BGS 1975). In the evaluation the natural geology consisted of mid-orange to red gravely silty clay. The site was on level ground at approximately 15m OD.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Introduction

The subject site is approximately 400m south-east of the Roman small town of Godmanchester (*Durovigutum*). The history and development of the town is excellently reviewed in a booklet by H.J.M. Green entitled *Godmanchester* (Green 1977), based upon over 40 years experience excavating and researching the town and its environs. Other information for this summary is derived from the Cambridgeshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), Victoria County History Vol I & II for Huntingdonshire, various development-

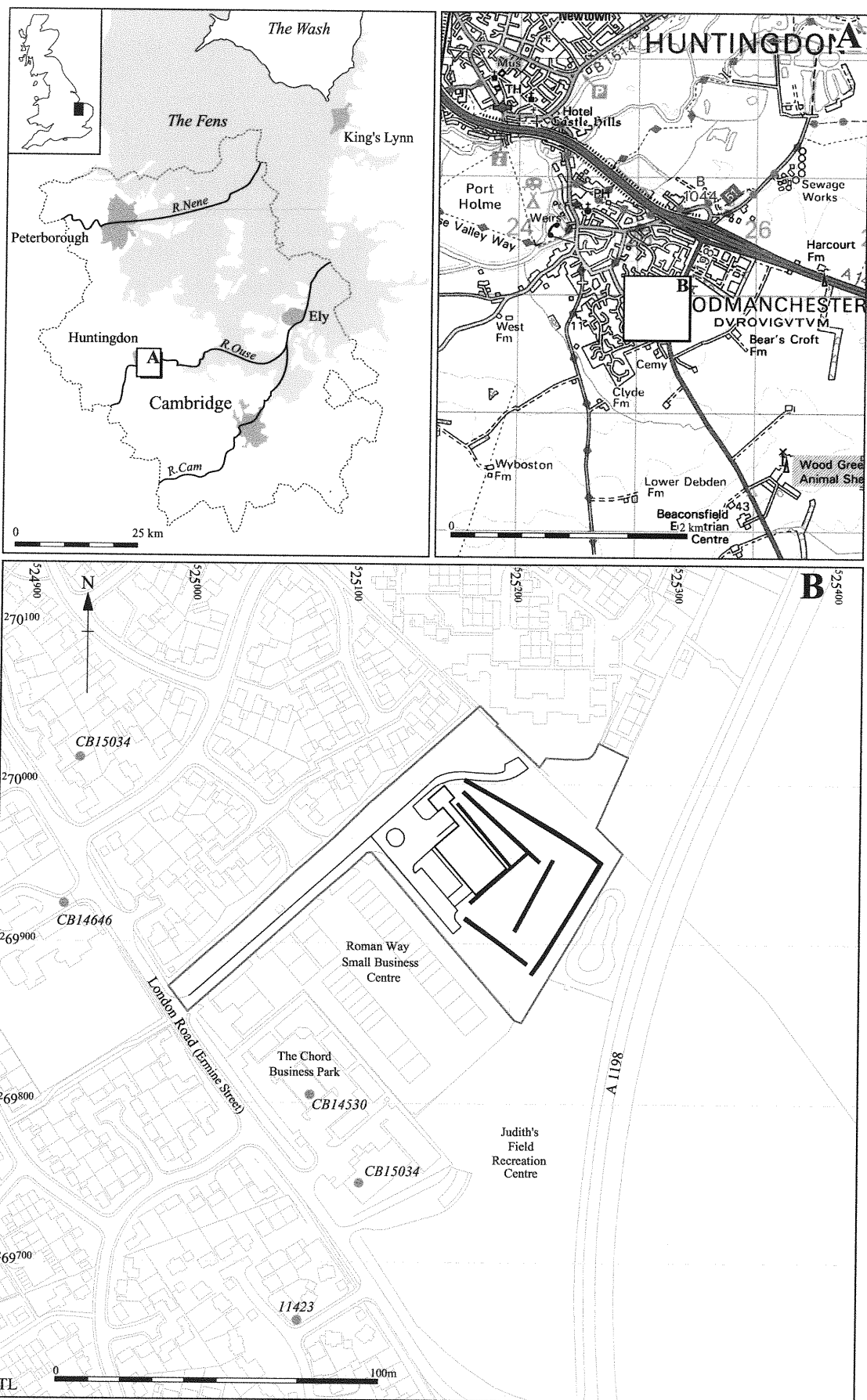


Figure 1 Location of Trenches (black), Development Area (red) and SMR entries (blue).
 Landscape banks within the development area are shown in green.

led evaluations and excavation reports. Discussions with H.J.M. Green regarding unpublished information on the subject area also produced valuable background material relating to the immediate vicinity of the site.

The Ouse valley in the vicinity of Godmanchester has yielded abundant evidence of prehistoric activity. Dispersed Iron Age settlement existed in the area, although the town owes its Roman development to its situation on an important Roman Road (Ermine Street) adjacent to a crossing of the Ouse. A fort was established on this river crossing soon after the conquest. Settlement grew rapidly around this early nucleus and along Ermine Street; re-development in the early second century saw the construction of the massive *mansio* and bath house, whose remains have been excavated to the south-west of the development site on Pinfold Lane (Green 1977; Hinman 1998).

The gravel terrace of the River Great Ouse has revealed a great variety and concentration of cropmarks dating to prehistoric and later times. Some of the most significant cropmark sites that have been excavated in the area are at Brampton and close by at Rectory Farm, Godmanchester. River valleys were occupied early in prehistoric times as the rivers provided transport routes and the surrounding valleys had fertile soils which were easily cleared of vegetation for farming.

Early prehistoric occupation around Godmanchester is indicated by flint tools in both Mesolithic and Neolithic forms. A Mesolithic camp and a later, Neolithic farmstead were located just east of the town by excavations in 1990 (Wait 1992). Contemporary with the latter is the extensive and obscure ritual complex of a giant enclosure and cursus excavated near Rectory Farm (McAvoy in prep.). A mortuary enclosure at the end of the cursus has been excavated just west of Brampton (Malim 2000). Bronze Age barrows (or ring ditches) at Brampton (White 1969) and at Rectory Farm (McAvoy *op. cit.*) have also been excavated. Many other sites, probably farmsteads, are likely to have been scattered over the four by one kilometre gravel terrace upon which Godmanchester sits, enabling successive populations to exploit the light, free draining soils so amenable to early farming technology. Such sites are known only through collections of flint tools.

Later prehistoric settlement is relatively better understood, not least because Iron Age pottery survives much better than earlier pottery. One such farmstead has been sample excavated just east of the town (Wait 1992) and others are known beneath modern Godmanchester in the form of roundhouses and ditched enclosures encountered below Roman occupation.

Recent archaeological investigations (see below) have demonstrated that the Roman settlement extended a considerable way outside the town along Ermine Street. Ermine Street, aligned roughly north to south, was c.150m to the west of the subject site (CB 15034). A recent archaeological investigation c.500m north-east of the development area has revealed extensive evidence for the continuation of Roman settlement into the Saxon period (Gibson and Murray, forthcoming).

Green encountered Early Saxon pottery associated with timber buildings close to the *mansio* site (1977, 22) and elsewhere within the formerly enclosed Roman town, indicating sub-Roman continuity or re-occupation. There is some evidence to suggest that Godmanchester formed the southern twin of a double *burh*, and was re-fortified along with Huntingdon during the early tenth century. Late Saxon boundary ditches have been noted in the vicinity of Pinfold Lane. A charter of 1212 established Godmanchester as a self-governing manor or 'liberty', and the town remained prosperous throughout the medieval period. The town plan, however, lacks signs of large scale medieval re-planning and tenements seem to have been established haphazardly along the various roads and lanes. St Anne's Lane follows the southern boundary of The Great Park, created by an award of lands to Merton Priory by King Stephen between AD 1135-1154 and is probably dateable to this period although limited evaluation (Hinman 1998) suggests a Roman foundation.

The subject site was outside the medieval and post-medieval settlement of Godmanchester and was only affected by development in recent years. In 1984 the site was levelled and topsoil and subsoil were removed and a factory was built in the centre of the area. New soil was imported and the ground levelled.

3.2 Excavations in the immediate vicinity of the subject site (Fig. 3)

3.2.1 Prehistoric

Early Neolithic/Bronze Age activity as well as Roman occupation from the first century to the fourth century AD was found 190m to the west of the subject site (CB 14646; Hinman 1996; Jones 1999). Evidence for the period consisted of a single small pit of later Neolithic date and residual lithics recovered from later deposits.

Similar evidence was recovered at the A14/A604 Junction site (Wait 1992), Cardinal Way (Gibson and Murray forthcoming) and to the north at Rectory Farm (McAvoy forthcoming) and Cow Lane (Hinman 1998). The flint recovered from the Junction site was mainly residual, derived from Romano-British ditches. At the adjacent Cardinal Distribution Park site a number of probable prehistoric features including pits and postholes were present; all were associated with a small amount of late Neolithic/early Bronze Age pottery.

3.2.2 Romano-British

Many of the excavations within the vicinity of the subject site (Fig. 1) have recorded the presence of Romano British burials and a cemetery (see below). Other Romano-British features include Ermine Street and a series of roadside



Figure 2 Godmanchester, South Periphery Excavations and the Roman Town.

buildings to its west (CB 14646). Evaluation immediately adjacent to and west of the subject site revealed evidence of Romano-British activity and a single burial.

Between 1978 and 1984 Granville Rudd (unpublished; H.J.M. Green, pers. comm.) recorded the presence of a minimum of 60 bodies (TL 24/70; SMR 7224) during the construction of housing estates at Porch Farm to the north and adjacent to the subject site. Anecdotal evidence gathered from Porch Farm recalled that the area of land north of the farm had been extensively quarried for gravel during the 19th century (H.J.M. Green, pers. comm.). Numerous skeletons had apparently been disturbed during this quarrying.

The inhumed remains of at least 13 individuals were recovered during rescue excavations at London Street c.350m north of the subject site in 1991 (Hoyland and Wait 1992). Excavation to the north-west of the subject site (TL 2460 6980) revealed surviving traces of the southerly continuation of the Romano-British cemetery despite a high degree of truncation due to later quarrying (Macaulay 1994).

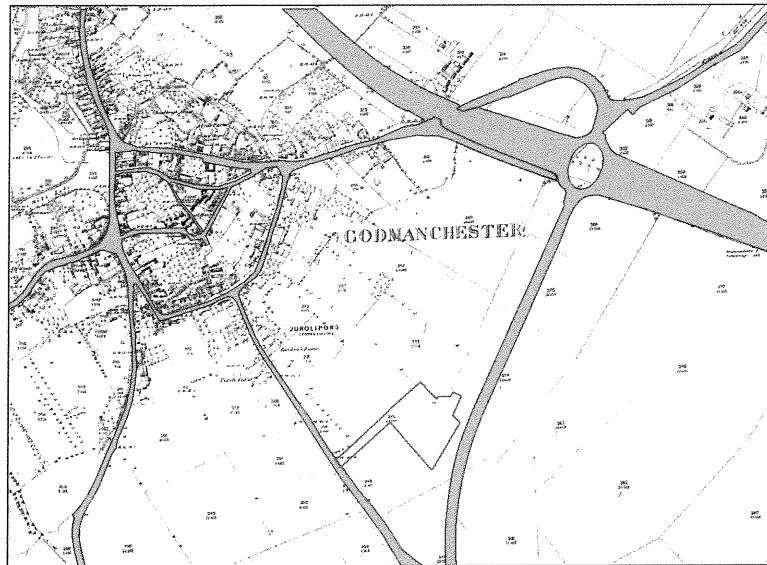
Further evidence for a cemetery beyond the southern limits of the Roman town, adjacent to Ermine Street, is known from an assessment of an area covering c.2.5ha immediately to the south of the 1994 excavation (TL 2470/6970). This revealed a number of archaeological features surviving beneath the remains of a ridge and furrow system (SMR 10122). A number of ditches of unknown date and function were noted. In addition a small amount of residual prehistoric material was recovered comprising worked flint flakes, tools and several sherds of abraded pottery dating from the late Neolithic to early Bronze Age periods. This material, although unstratified, was concentrated towards the eastern limit of excavation.

A single, isolated burial was recovered by a member of the public and reported to the AFU from the New School Site, c.100m south of the subject site, following the completion of excavations by BUFAU in 1997. This inhumation was deposited by the AFU with the CAO in 1997 (TL 2492/6990; SMR2660A).

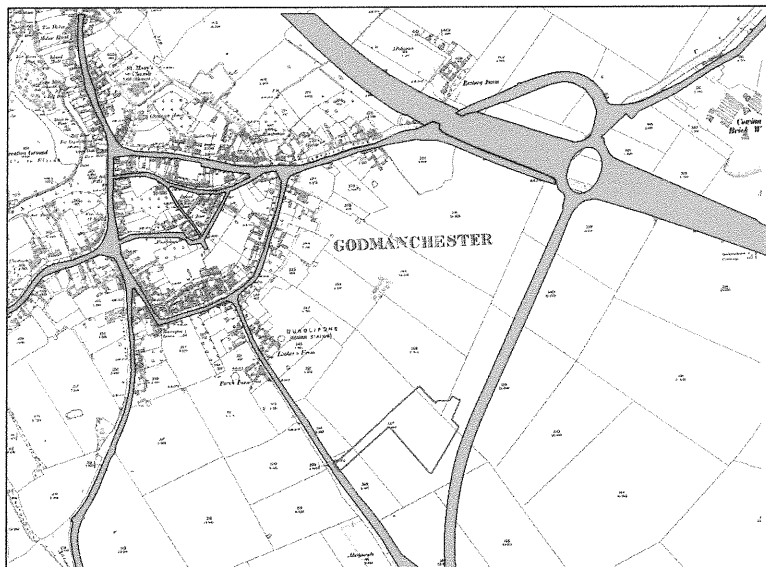
Excavations at the A14 Junction site c.400m north-east of the subject site revealed at least four phases of Roman activity including evidence of late Iron Age and early Roman occupation.

3.2.3 *Anglo-Saxon*

Excavations at Cardinal Way c.400m north-east of the subject site revealed an early Anglo-Saxon settlement, occupied in the sixth and seventh centuries, consisting of six *grubenhäuser*, a possible drove way, a number of animal pens and possible rectangular structures, a large causewayed enclosure and an animal enclosure (see below).



Godmanchester, 1st Series Ordnance Survey Map



Godmanchester, 2nd Series Ordnance Survey Map



Godmanchester, 3rd Series Ordnance Survey Map

Figure 3 Ordnance Survey Maps (series 1-3) of Godmanchester with Modern Road Layout (orange) & Excavation Area (red)

3.2.4 *Medieval*

Examination of aerial photographs revealed extensive evidence for ridge and furrow cultivation both on the subject site and the immediate environs (Appendix 3).

3.2.5 *Post-Medieval*

Examination of the first, second and third edition Ordnance Survey maps indicate that the site was under pasture or arable farming during this period (Fig. 3).

3.3 **Sites and Monuments Record Summary**, by Rebecca Casa Hatton

The Sites and Monuments Record was visited for records of previous archaeological investigations in the vicinity of the subject site (Fig. 2).

8a Almond Close (2000)

TL2500/7052. In 2000 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at No. 8 Almond Close in advance of the construction of a dwelling. Despite the potential for the presence of Roman burials and the course of the *Via Devana*, the site produced negative evidence (Boyer and Prosser 2000).

Cardinal Distribution Park (1998, 1999)

SMR09834, 13011, TL/2550/7030. During 1998 an evaluation was carried out on land at the Cardinal Distribution Park in advance of redevelopment of the site. Two main periods of occupation were identified, Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age and Early to Middle Saxon. The range of features indicated settlement during both periods and included pits and ditches for the prehistoric period, and pits, ditches, postholes and a sunken-featured building of Saxon date. Unstratified Roman pottery suggested that the site was under cultivation in Roman times.

The subsequent excavation confirmed the results from the evaluation. Three main phases of activity were identified. Phase 1 was prehistoric and consisted of a few isolated pits and a possible post-built round house dating to the late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age. Phase 2 produced evidence for Roman activity in the form of a ditch and a substantial curvilinear ditch (part of an enclosure?), suggesting agricultural activities. Phase 3 produced Early Saxon remains including enclosures, trackways and domestic structures, both *grubenhäuser* and timber-framed buildings, consistent with the presence of a farmstead or small hamlet (Murray and Last 1999).

Cardinal West (2000)

TL/2570/7040. During 2000 an archaeological evaluation was conducted on land at Cardinal West in advance of light industrial development. The evaluation revealed the presence of a second century pit. Much of the site had been disturbed during the construction of a lorry park (Seddon 2000).

A14/A604 Junction (1988-1991)

SMR09834, 09834A, TL/255-/704. The area was field-walked by County Archaeology staff in 1988. The recovery of Neolithic flint and Roman pottery prompted further investigations.

In 1989 trenching was carried out in an area at the junction of the A14 and A604 in advance of a proposed industrial development. The site produced negative evidence although residual abraded pottery dating to the Roman period suggested the presence of a settlement in the vicinity (Wait 1990a).

1990

SMR09902, TL/255-/705. Trial trenching was carried out to the south of the 1989 evaluation area. An area of 1ha in the extreme south-western corner of the proposed development produced evidence for one inhumation burial and a dense pattern of ditches, pits and postholes that were interpreted as belonging to a small Roman farmstead (Wait 1990b).

1991

Further investigations in the southern part of the site produced evidence for Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age activity in the form of lithic scatters. No features dating to these periods were found. During the late Iron Age a pattern of small ditched plots (paddocks) were present, while during the Roman period the site was a small farm (Wait 1991).

Buttermel Meadow (1991)

SMR10116, TL/246-/701. In 1991 a theodolite earthwork survey was conducted on land at Buttermel Meadow to the south of London Street prior to development. The site lies in an area of high archaeological potential in terms of evidence for Roman burials (below) and village earthworks consisting of a hollow way and associated house platforms. The survey produced evidence for a multi-period site, including recent pitting, the construction of the platforms and an earlier phase of banks and ditches on varying alignments (Hoyland and Kemp 1991).

London Street (1992)

SMR10376, TL/2470/7020. During 1992 rescue excavations were conducted in London Street following the discovery of human bones during development. At least 13 unfurnished inhumations were excavated, together with a series of earlier features, namely pits and ditches, possibly associated with Roman suburban activity during the second and third centuries. The extent of the cemetery was not defined due to major disturbance caused by building work in progress. Most of the pottery dated to the second and third century. The cemetery probably belonged to the later third and fourth century (Hoyland and Wait 1992).

Sweetings Road (1994, 1995)

SMR11421A, TL246-/698. An archaeological evaluation was carried out at Sweetings Road in 1994 in advance of housing development. The site had

undergone extensive gravel pitting during the post-medieval period. The paucity of finds, with particular reference to the Roman period, would indicate that this site was outside the area of Roman occupation. Of particular interest were the finds from a rescue trench located near the eastern boundary of the development site. This contained inhumation burials, which probably belonged to the cemetery at Porch Farm and London Street (above) (Macaulay 1994).

Further work comprising an earthwork survey and trenching was carried out to the south of the 1994 site. Evidence emerged for medieval cultivation in the form of ridge and furrow (SMR10122) (Oakey 1995).

London Road (1994, 1996, 2001)

1994

SMR11423, TL/2510/6974. An assessment of a small area at London Road in 1994 revealed only the presence of nineteenth-century field drains (Welsh 1994).

1996

SMR CB14645, CB14646, TL/2492/6992. In 1996 an archaeological evaluation was conducted at London Road in advance of the construction of a new school complex. A preliminary earthwork survey revealed the presence of ridge and furrow. The evaluation trenches produced evidence for Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age pits and ditches, in addition to evidence for Roman suburban ribbon occupation and associated activities, dating from the late first to the fourth century AD. Plots defined by ditches flanked the western side of Ermine Street (London Road). Rubbish pits contained charred seeds indicative of agricultural activity. A possible furnace was interpreted as evidence for (unspecified) industrial activity (Hinman 1996).

20-28 London Road 2001

SMR CB14808, CB14809, TL/2473/7013. An archaeological evaluation was conducted near the junction between London Street and London Road, to the east of the site excavated in 1992 (Hoyland and Wait 1992), in advance of housing development. The evaluation produced evidence for Roman activity in the form of rubbish pits from which pottery and organic remains, including cereal grains, were recovered. The significant assemblage of pottery dating from the first to the fourth century would suggest that this area was used for dumping rubbish from the Roman town. A series of post-medieval quarry pits were also recorded. These contained residual sherds of Roman pottery, and are likely to have partly obliterated the evidence for earlier occupation. The absence of human remains indicated that the western limit of the Roman inhumation cemetery excavated in 1992 at London Street did not extend as far as London Road (Abrams 2001).

Chord Business Park (1998)

CB 14530, SMR13012, TL/2566/7078. In 1998 an archaeological investigation was carried out at the Chord Business Park, on land adjacent to

London Road. Trial-trenching identified a group of Roman features, comprising a ditch, a human burial and a post-hole, all located near London Road. The fill of the grave contained (residual?) second-century pottery (Coates 1998).

The Parks (1991, 1992 and 1998)

1991

SMR10136, 10136A, 10136B, TL/2460/7080, evaluation. An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in 1991 to the west of a medieval moated site (SMR 11550) on behalf of the school who wished to purchase the land as an extension to the playing field. The area is presently known as The Parks. The site produced evidence for Roman quarry ditches that had been excavated and immediately backfilled, and for slightly later rubbish pits containing pottery (both fine and coarse ware), glass, metalwork, building debris, and painted plaster. Evidence for bone working indicates a craft/industrial aspect of the town. At the end of the second century boundary ditches were dug, probably to fence off the quarry area. The date range (Flavian-Hadrianic) provided by the pottery from the site supports Green's evidence of major building and road construction at Godmanchester during the second century. The Roman features were overlain by the remains of a twelfth-century fish tank system associated with the moated site to the east. The fish tanks were linked-up by a series of ditches. A bank between these ditches probably served as high ground providing access to the tanks. At a later stage during the medieval period a large pond was dug, partially obliterating the old tank. The pond was served by a ditch leading to the extant pond of the moated site to the east (Gdaniec 1991).

1992

SMR10487, 10487A, 10487B, TL/2470/7085, evaluation. In advance of an application for planning consent for a housing development an archaeological investigation was carried out at The Parks, immediately to the north of the area evaluated in 1991. Preliminary fieldwork consisted of an earthwork survey and a geophysical survey that included the 1991 area. The surveys confirmed the presence of features in the form of ridge and furrow, ponds, banks, a droveway, a series of pits and two parallel ditches possibly flanking the projected line of the *Via Devana* (Green, Site 17). The subsequent excavation confirmed the presence of a number of second- to third-century pits and ditches containing domestic refuse, an enclosure with adjacent droveway and a gravel quarry. In addition, five Roman inhumation burials dating to the fourth century were found near the north-western side of the site. They were interpreted as belonging to the burial ground excavated by Green in 1976 (Site 17). A foundation trench for a masonry building of probable Roman date was also identified. Later activity was represented by ridge and furrow from medieval agricultural activities. No evidence for the Roman road was found (Reynolds 1992).

1998

SMR CB14699, TL/2470/7085. In 1998 an open area excavation was carried out in the western corner of The Parks site, including the 1991 evaluation area and part of the 1992 investigation area, in advance of housing development. Five phases of activity were identified:

Phase 1 prehistoric (Neolithic): background activity in the form of unstratified flint and pottery sherds;

Phase 2 (late first century-early second century): layout of roadside ditches and ditched property boundaries containing pits, to the rear of the road frontage;

Phase 3 (later second-early fourth century): the driveway was redefined by a fence line, whereas the quarry pits were backfilled. Four kilns, a group of hearths and a building located in the area of the former plots were the main features attributable to this phase. Two urned cremation burials were also uncovered;

Phase 4 (fourth century): inhumation cemetery. Sixty-two inhumations were uncovered in the area of the former kilns. The features of the previous two phases had been backfilled prior to the use of the area for burial. The inhumations included individuals of both sexes and all ages. The bodies were on WSW-ESE/ENE-WSW alignments, extended and supine, with few cases of prone, crouched and decapitated burials. The analysis of the skeletal remains indicated that living conditions and level of health of the buried population were fairly good. Only 21% of burials (juvenile and young adults) were furnished (Nene Valley beakers, coins and, frequently, personal ornaments);

Phase 5: medieval and post-medieval. There was no evidence for sub-Roman activity on the site. Medieval and post-medieval agricultural activity survived in the form of ridge and furrow below the modern plough soil (Jones 2003).

Cow Lane (1984, 1997-98)

1984

SMR10158A, TL/259-/714. In 1984 rescue excavations were carried out in advance of gravel extraction at Cow Lane in an area of known cropmarks associated with a villa site. The investigations showed that this area was part of the villa complex at Rectory Farm with Iron Age occupation preceding the Roman field systems (Haigh 1984).

1997-1998

SMR CB14624, CB14625, TL/2566/7078. An evaluation and subsequent excavation were undertaken on land adjacent to Cow Lane near Rectory Farm in advance of the proposed construction of an access route into the new Cow Lane landfill site. The evaluation demonstrated the exceptional level of preservation of archaeologically significant deposits from the Neolithic and later prehistoric periods in the area. Evidence of prehistoric remains in the form of ditches, pits and postholes were interpreted as belonging to the Neolithic period ritual complex at Rectory Farm. Romano-British ditches were probably part of the field systems surrounding the later villa site. Farming in the post-Roman period had caused some degree of truncation affecting shallow features (Hinman and Kenney 1998).

4 METHODOLOGY

The application area included an existing access road, upstanding bunds around the perimeter of the development and the substantial concrete foundations of the previous factory unit. Consequently the area available for trial trenching was restricted leading to a revision of the original trench layout as agreed with the CAO.

- Total Area of Development = 21,469.143m
- Area of Access Road and Upstanding Banks = 8,729.079m
- Area of Building = 3,945.790m
- Area available for Evaluation = 8,794.274m
- Area of Trenching = 938.347m

Despite these restrictions a total of 450m of trenches exposing 938.35sq m were excavated. This gave a 4.37% sample of the development as a whole or a 5.096% sample of the site not including the access road (to be retained). If the area of the previous factory unit, banks (to be retained) and other land not available for evaluation are also removed from the equation the sample size can be calculated at 10.67%.

Mechanical excavators were used to open the evaluation trenches under archaeological supervision. A JCB with a 1.60m wide ditching bucket was used to cut Trenches 1 and 2. The made ground covering the evaluation area was found to be extremely compacted and, as a result, the JCB was replaced with a more powerful mechanical excavator with a 2.10m wide ditching bucket. The extreme compaction of the ground across the development area was attributable to works associated with the previous phase of construction on the site in the 1980's.

The trenches were planned at 1:50 and sections drawn at 1:20. All features and deposits were recorded using the AFU single context system. Each distinct cut, fill, and layer was allocated individual numbers with Trench 1 starting at 100, Trench 2 at 200 and Trench 3 at 300. In the following text cut numbers are in **bold** and deposit numbers are in plain text. Monochrome and colour photographs were taken.

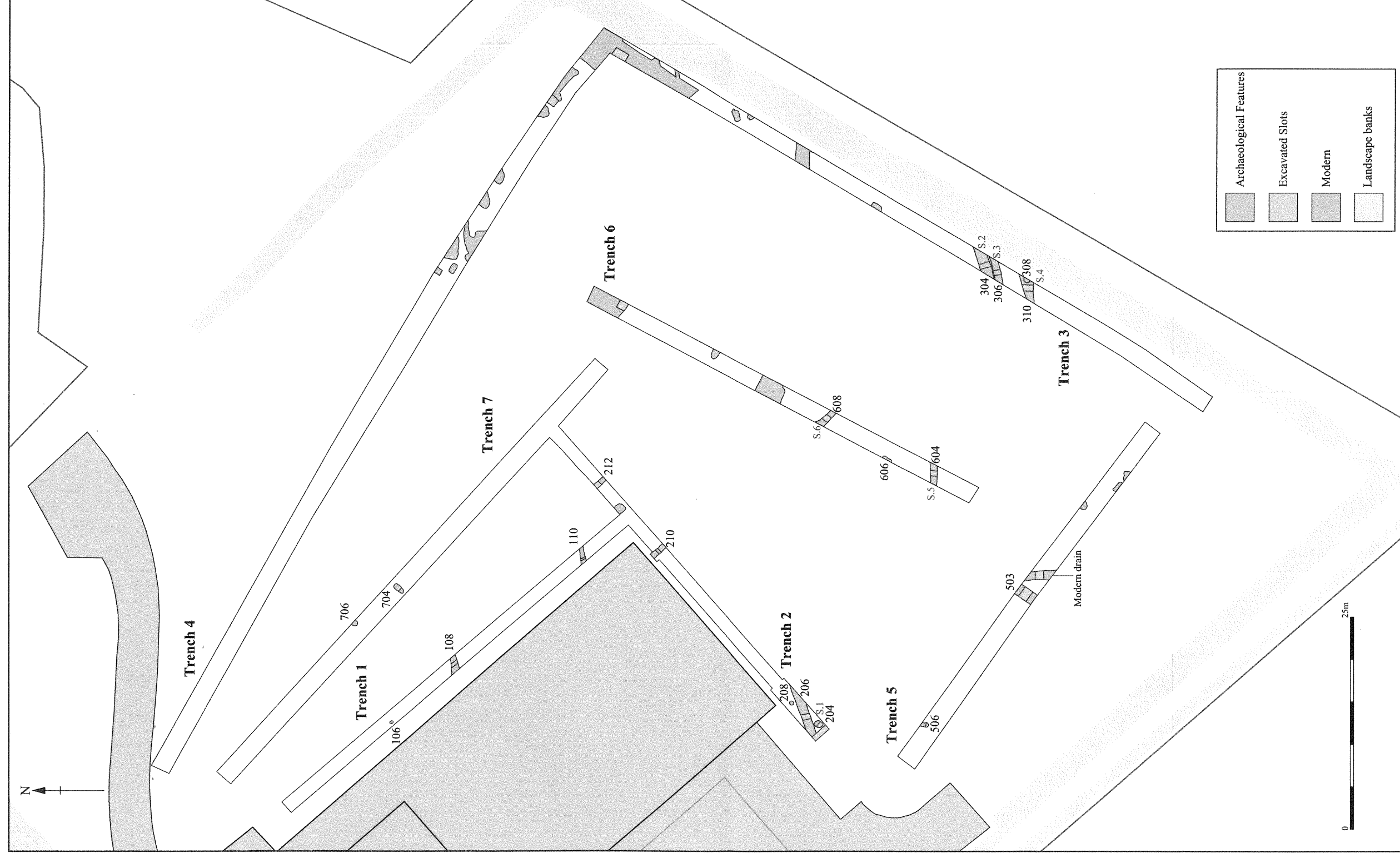


Figure 4 Trench layout

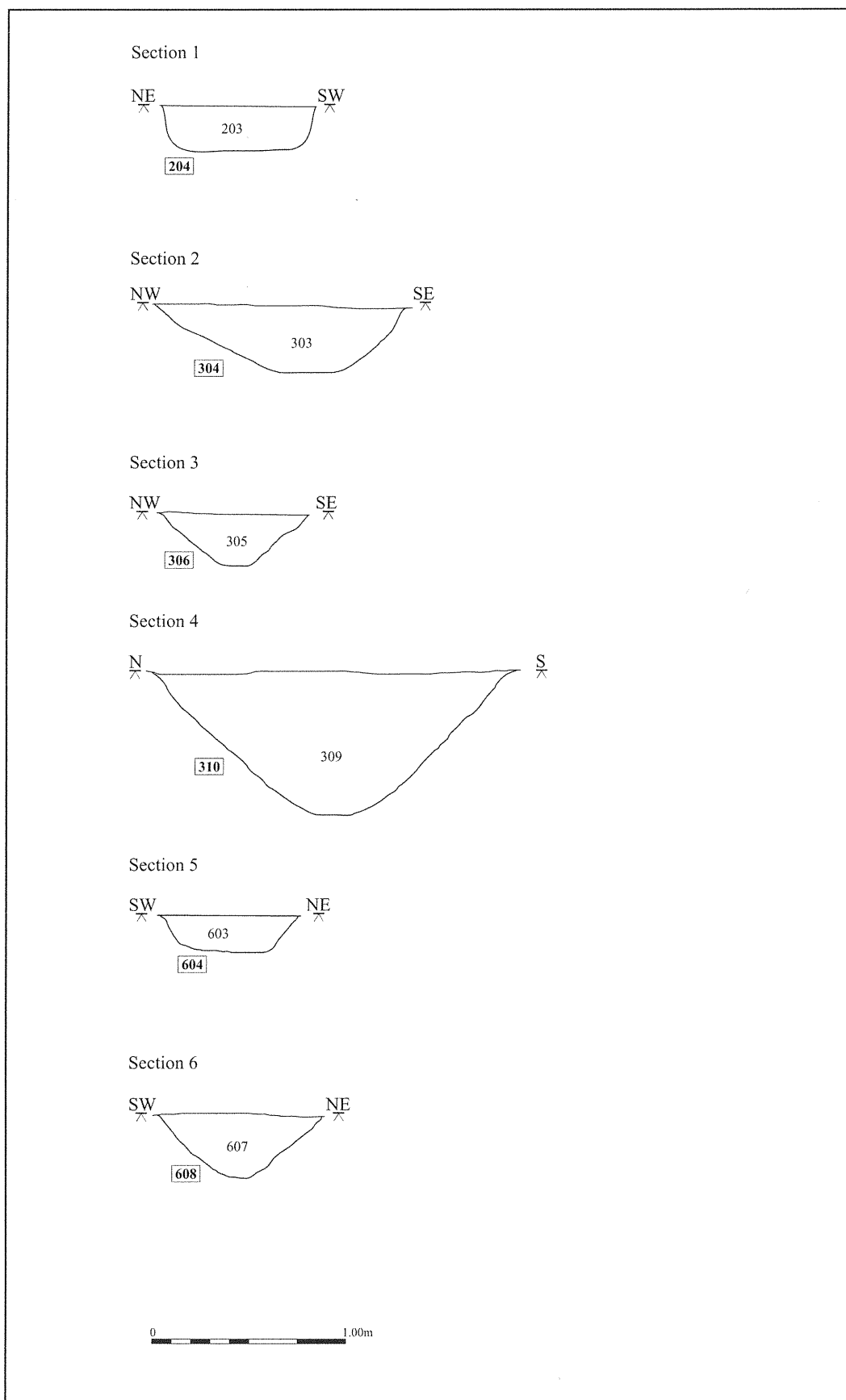


Figure 5 Sections

5 RESULTS

Modern deposits of varying depth were present in every trench and consisted of a loosely compacted topsoil containing frequent inclusions of modern building materials and plastics. This deposit overlay a series of heavily compacted layers present to varying depths within the individual trenches. These layers had clearly been machine compacted and following removal by machine revealed a series of features containing modern building materials similar to those artefacts present within the topsoil layer as well as several features of archaeological significance. The depth of overburden was greatest within the north-east corner of the development whereas surviving features of greatest archaeological significance were present within the south-west corner of the site. Differential truncation and machine compaction represented evidence for the landscaping of the northern portion of the development area in the 1980s to provide a level surface for construction. Although a layer of possible colluvium was present within the western portion of Trench 4 this was seen to be sealing stratigraphically earlier but modern deposits and had clearly been re-deposited less than 20 years ago. Further evidence that these deposits were of recent origin was provided by the presence of modern building materials embedded into the underlying natural clays and gravels across the site. Post medieval glazed tile fragments were retained from Trench 1 (Spoerry, Appendix 1).

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1, aligned north-west to south-east, was 51.50m long. Modern make-up layers (100-101 and 103-105), between 0.68m-0.74m thick across the trench, were removed by machine.

The topsoil layer (100) between 0.20m-0.30m thick along the trench comprised very dark brown silty clay. It sealed a 0.10m thick layer (103) in the western 3.60m of the trench which consisted of red-orange sandy clay containing concrete fragments. Layer 103 overlay layer 104 which was up to 0.16m thick in the western 4.50m of the trench. Layer 104 consisted of a dark grey-brown silty clay containing occasional flecks and fragments of coal, roof tile and concrete. Below layer 104, layer 105 extended across the whole trench and sealed the natural gravel. Layer 105 was between 0.32m and 0.44m thick and was a mid yellow to orange brown sandy silt.

Natural geology 102 was exposed throughout the trench and was cut by three modern features consisting of two brick footing walls running east to west and an undated posthole 106.

Posthole 106 was sealed by layer 105 and was 0.26m in diameter and 0.09m deep. It was filled with a compact grey brown clay with no finds. Features 108 and 110 were linear and parallel in alignment. Both features were heavily compacted and modern building materials were observed within the compact grey brown clay fills. The presence of modern materials within these features

may be attributable to construction on the site in the 1980s. The alignment of these features may suggest a contemporary date to archaeologically significant ditches **304**, **306** and **310** within Trench 3 (see Discussion and Conclusions).

Four small fragments of roof tile (Spoerry, Appendix 1) were recovered from the upper surface of the geological horizon. This was interpreted as evidence for the stripping and levelling of the site during the construction of the factory in 1984. Layers 103-105 can be attributed to the modern period on this basis.

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2, aligned north-east to south-west, was 47.85m long. Modern overburden (topsoil 200 and layer 201) was mechanically removed to expose archaeological features cutting natural geology (202). There were two modern features cutting the natural. The overburden in Trench 2 was equivalent (visually and stratigraphically) to layers 100 and 105 above. The archaeological features included two, probably prehistoric, pits (**204** and **208**) and a Roman ditch (**206**) which were in the south-western end of the trench and parallel ditches **210** and **212**.

Ditch **206** aligned east to west was 1.05m wide and 0.37m deep. Its fill (205) was a reddish orange sandy clay which contained a single cow tooth (Hickling, Appendix 1).

Pit **204**, located to the south of ditch **206** was circular, 0.80m in diameter and 0.20m deep, with steeply sloping sides. Fill 203 was a very compact dark brown silty clay with occasional small stones and pebbles. Probable later prehistoric pottery (Spoerry, Appendix 1) and burnt and unburnt animal bone were recovered from the fill, indicating a possible cremation (see Hickling, Appendix 1, Fosberry Appendix 2). A soil sample was taken and produced further fragments of bone, charred seeds, charcoal and a fragment of pottery, together with modern rootlets and seeds. The pit also produced several daub fragments.

Pit **208**, located to the north of ditch **206**, was small and circular, 0.45m wide and 0.13m deep with moderate sides (*c.* 50°). It was filled with a dark greyish brown compact silty clay and a single worked flint flake (Atkins, Appendix 1).

Ditch **210** was aligned south-east to north-west and was 0.85m wide and 0.31m deep. It was filled with a compact mid greyish brown silty clay.

Ditch **212** was aligned south-east to north-west and was 0.80m wide and 0.10m deep. It was filled with a compact mid greyish brown silty clay. Ditch **212** was located 10m to the north of ditch **210** and was parallel to that ditch.

5.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was 84m long and aligned approximately east to west. Modern overburden, 0.28m thick, comprised topsoil 300 and silt layer 301, equivalent

(visually and stratigraphically) to layers 100 and 105 above. These were mechanically removed to expose archaeological features and modern intrusions cutting natural geology (302). Four archaeological features were located towards the centre of the trench, three ditches aligned north-east to south-west (**304**, **306** and **310**) and pit **308**.

Two ditches (**304** and **306**) aligned roughly north-east to south-west and were next to each other. They may represent a single boundary ditch with a recut. Ditches **304** and **306** were 1.25m and 0.75m wide and 0.35m and 0.27m deep respectively, both had moderate (c.45°) sides. Their fills were a very compact light grey silty clay. Early Saxon pottery was recovered from the fill of ditch **304** and a Roman sherd from the fill of ditch **306** (Spoerry, Appendix 1).

Three metres to the north of ditch **306** was pit **308**. This was 0.95m wide and 0.27m deep with moderate sides (c.40°). Fill 307 was a compact light grey brown silty clay with occasional small stones.

Pit **308** cut ditch **310**. Ditch **310** was 1.90m wide and 0.75m deep and was filled with a light grey silty clay but was undated.

5.4 Trench 4

Trench 4, aligned south-east to north-west, was 102.25m long. Modern overburden (topsoil 400 and silt subsoil 401 equivalent (visually and stratigraphically) to layers 100 and 105 above) was mechanically removed to exposed natural geology (402) and some areas of modern intrusion. This overburden was 0.18m thick in the south-eastern end of the trench widening to 1m deep in the north-western end of the trench. There were no features of archaeological significance within the trench. The modern features at the eastern end of Trench 4 were sample excavated where no modern artefactual materials were immediately visible. Modern brick and concrete fragments were observed an excavation ceased. These features were interpreted as depressions and ad hoc excavation associated with construction works on the site in the 1980s. Rather than representing deliberately cut features many of the areas marked in blue on Figure 4 were irregular depressions containing fills which were similar to layer 401. The infilling and subsequent compaction of the fills of these features and overlying deposit 401 represent consolidation and landscaping.

5.5 Trench 5

Trench 5, aligned north-west to south-east, was 48.70m long. Overburden 500 and 501, between 0.36m and 0.44m thick, equivalent (visually and stratigraphically) to layers 100 and 105 above, was removed to expose natural geology (502) and areas of modern intrusion. There was an additional modern overburden layer (503) which sealed natural geology in the middle of the trench. It was up to 0.25m thick and consisted of a light greyish brown silty clay. Although (503) was artefactually sterile the character of the fill was so

similar to those modern features present within Trenches 3, 4 and 6 it was also considered to be of recent origin.

There was one archaeological feature (**506**) in the north-western part of the trench. It was a small ditch aligned north to south which butt-ended on the southern side of the trench. It was 0.48m wide and 0.24m deep with steep sides (*c.*60°). It was filled with a very compact light greyish orange brown silty clay.

5.6 Trench 6

Trench 6, aligned north-east to south-west, was 50.70m long. Modern overburden (600 and 601, 0.30m thick equivalent (visually and stratigraphically) to layers 100 and 105 above) was mechanically removed. Beneath the modern overburden three archaeological features (**604**, **606** and **608**) were uncovered within the south-western part of the trench and areas of modern disturbance were noted in the north-eastern part.

Ditch **604** was aligned north-east to south-west. It was 0.70m wide and 0.16m deep. It had moderate (*c.*45°) sides and a slightly concave base. Fill 603 was a very compact light grey brown silty clay with no dateable artefacts.

Pit **606** was 1.05m wide, 0.30m deep with moderate sides (*c.*45°). Fill 605 was a very compact dark brown to black silty clay with occasional flecks and fragments of daub (Spoerry, Appendix 1).

Ditch **608** was aligned south-east to north-west and was 0.85m wide and 0.31m deep with moderate (*c.*45°) sides. Fill 607 was a compact mid greyish brown silty clay.

5.7 Trench 7

Trench 7, aligned north-west to south-east, was 65.10m long. Modern overburden (700 and 701, equivalent to 400, 401 in Trench 4) was removed by machine. The overburden was 0.90m deep at the western end and 0.20m deep at the eastern end of the trench. Two archaeological features (**704** and **706**) were present in the middle of the trench cutting natural geology (702).

Pit **704** was sub-circular, *c.*0.60m by 0.45m and 0.17m deep. Its fill (703) was a mid grey brown silty clay.

Pit **706** extended beyond the northern edge of the trench. It was 0.70m wide and 0.13m deep and filled with a light grey brown silty clay.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The subject site was clearly extensively landscaped and subjected to deliberate machine compaction during the construction of a factory in the 1980s. A number of features of archaeological interest were nonetheless present, albeit in a heavily truncated and compacted state of preservation. Despite a general paucity of artefactual materials the evaluation has identified significant archaeological remains from the prehistoric, Roman and Early Saxon periods.

At least two small prehistoric pits were identified in Trench 2. The pottery recovered from one of these pits was not particularly diagnostic but is almost certainly dateable to the later prehistoric period (Spoerry, Appendix 1). A number of previous fieldwork projects in the immediate vicinity have produced similar features, notably the New School Site (Hinman 1997; Jones 2003), Cardinal Way (Gibson and Murray forthcoming) and the A14 Junction site (Wait 1992). Whether these features represent evidence for settlement in the vicinity or relate to the ritual complex at Rectory Farm/Cow Lane (McAvoy forthcoming; Hinman and Kenney 1998) remains to be established.

The subject site was some distance from the Roman town of Godmanchester (*Durovigutum*). Despite the presence of 'ribbon development' extending south of the town adjacent to Ermine Street very little occupational material was recovered from the current development area and all of the Roman pottery sherds were very abraded. Only one ditch (306 in Trench 3) contained Roman pottery. Ditches on a parallel alignment were present within Trench 1 (108, 110) and Trench 2 (206) could be the contemporary remains of the boundaries to former field systems. The few fragments of daub and bone and Roman pottery may represent evidence for manure scatters preserved within open features. This could well be residual material preserved within later, possibly Saxon ditches.

Hand-made pottery tentatively ascribed an Early Saxon date was recovered from ditch 304, adjacent to 306 and on the same alignment, in Trench 3. This could represent evidence of the maintenance of field boundaries from the Roman into the Early Saxon period and, as such, could represent the most significant result from the recent fieldwork.

The lack of artefactual material within any of the ditches and the possible continuity and maintenance of Roman field boundaries in the Anglo-Saxon period accord well with the results from the Cardinal Way excavations. Although little information is currently available from this excavation the Saxon population appears to have respected the orientation of earlier field boundaries and the excavators suggested that it was unlikely that the ditches on that site were Roman in date, given the almost complete absence of Roman pottery. Continuity in field boundaries between the Roman and Saxon periods has been noted at other sites. At Hinxton Hall (Leith 1996, 172) and Hinxton Quarry (Mortimer and Evans 1996), there is evidence that Roman field boundaries were maintained in the Early Saxon period.

Ditches **210** and **212** within Trench 2 and ditch **608** (equivalent to **210**) within Trench 6 were aligned with Ermine Street. An examination of aerial photographic evidence (Palmer, Appendix 3) has shown that medieval ridge and furrow systems were laid out with respect to the road and it is suggested that these features may form part of this pattern.

The significance of those remains dateable to the prehistoric period is ambiguous. The presence of ditched boundaries combined with the presence of small quantities of heavily abraded pottery of Roman, Saxon and later dates and evidence from the Ordnance Survey maps all point to continuity of agricultural use for this area until the 1980s.

Those archaeological remains that survived the previous phase of construction were located within the south-western quadrant of the current development. The fills of these features were still extremely compacted which is interpreted as further evidence of past construction. A small artefactual assemblage was recovered from these features. The presence of small fragments of post medieval tile and asphalt within the upper interface of the natural geology was taken as supporting evidence that the majority of the proposed development area had been stripped to this level in the 1980s and that the current overburden was re-deposited at that time.

Development of the site in the 1980s has resulted in the presence of modern construction features cut in to the natural geology in various parts of the subject site. Evaluation has shown that any archaeological deposits in the north-west quadrant of the site would have been destroyed by the industrial unit constructed there during the 1980s. Further evidence of the construction process in the form of discrete features containing compacted modern building debris were present across the site particularly within the north-eastern corner of the area (Fig 3).

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The Brief for archaeological work was written by Andy Thomas, Principal Archaeologist, Land Use and Planning County Archaeology Office, who visited the site and monitored the evaluation.

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APPENDIX 1: The Finds

1 Pottery, by Paul Spoerry

Twelve sherds (60g) of abraded pottery were recovered from three features in the evaluation. There were four body sherds (26g) of probable later prehistoric pottery from pit fill 203. They were hand made with quartz inclusions and could, alternatively, be early Saxon in date. Very small, abraded, sherds were recovered from the soil sample and these were tentatively dated to the Anglo-Saxon period. There were also two Roman sherds (8g), including a possible Horningsea rim sherd in sandy fabric, from the modern overburden (401) and a Roman coarse ware sherd found in fill 305 of ditch 306. Six sherds of hand made pottery (26g) have tentatively been given an Early Saxon date. They were recovered from fill 303 of ditch 304 and consisted of body sherds from two vessels with vegetable and quartz inclusions. It is possible the pottery was later prehistoric in date.

2 Tile and Daub, by Paul Spoerry

Four small fragments (3g) of glazed medieval/post-medieval roof tile were recovered from deposit 102. In addition, twenty very abraded daub fragments (60g) were recovered from seven contexts (Table 1).

Context	Number	Quantity (g)
203	6	28
303	5	2
307	3	3
605	1	2
607	1	10
701	2	4
703	2	11

Table 1: Daub by context, number and quantity

3 Flint, by Rob Atkins

A single flint waste flake was recovered from pit fill 207.

4 Animal Bone, by Steve Hickling

Very small quantities of animal bone fragments were recovered from three contexts. Pit fill 203 produced several small burnt bone fragments. The fragments were small and mammalian but not identifiable as human. There were also a few fragments of unburnt bone from pit fill 203 including a pig molar. Two further contexts in the evaluation each produced a single bone fragment. A bovine tooth was recovered from ditch fill 205 and a probable cow bone from ditch fill 305.

APPENDIX 2: Environmental Assessment, by Rachel Fosberry

A single 10 litre sample was taken from Roman Way, Godmanchester, and considered to be a cremation due to the observation of charcoal, burnt bone and pottery fragments (fill 203, pit **204**).

It was processed through the AFU Siraf-type tank flotation system. The flot was collected in a 0.5mm mesh and the residue retained in a 1.0mm mesh. The dried flot was examined under a binocular microscope at x16 magnification. The residue was scanned by eye and any artefacts were removed and retained.

The residue contained numerous charcoal fragments (up to 2cm in length), 8g burnt bone, 17g pottery fragments (largest piece 2cm x 1.5cm, probably Saxon in date). The bone was generally white with a few fragments that were grey. The colour of cremated bone indicates the completeness of burning; white bone is completely burnt and grey indicates partial burning. It was not possible to identify any of the fragments as human bone and certainly one small bone was identified as mammalian.

The flot comprised numerous charcoal fragments (mostly 0.5cm) including a few culm nodes, lots of modern rootlets and a few charred and modern seeds. Single charred seeds of *Polygonum* sp (knotweed), *Rumex* sp and *Chenopodium* sp. were found. These seeds are very common and are found in most habitats. A single seed of *Scirpus* sp. (bulrush), a wetland species, was present. It may well be that rushes were used as fuel although the charcoal indicates a mixture of fuel plants including straw. A single charred, beautifully preserved but fragmented *Hordeum* grain (barley) was recovered. This may have been windblown or incorporated in the fuel.

The density of charred plant macrofossils in this sample was low but the preservation was very good. The sample shows that bone has been deliberately burnt in a fire but it is not possible to conclude definitely that this is a cremation.

APPENDIX 3a: Aerial Photographic Assessment (Air Photo Services report No. 2003/8), by Rog Palmer MA MIFA

1 SUMMARY

This assessment of aerial photographs examined an area of some 1.6 hectares (centred TL252699) in order to identify and accurately map archaeological and natural features. Medieval cultivation in the form of ridge and furrow remaining was the only archaeological evidence visible on the air photographs examined. No mapping was undertaken.

2 INTRODUCTION

This assessment of aerial photographs was commissioned to examine an area of some 1.6 hectares (centred TL252699) in order to identify and accurately map archaeological and natural features and thus provide a guide for field evaluation. The level of interpretation and mapping was to be at 1:2500.

3 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, which may survive in unploughed grassland, 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.

Natural faults and deposits can cause similar differences in crop growth and may also appear as colour differences in bare winter soils. On the soils of this assessment area we may expect indications of periglacial cracks on the gravels. These may be mistaken for archaeological ditches as they can affect the growth of crops and become visible at the same times as archaeological features. Clay soils usually present a uniform appearance from the air.

The most immediately 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. To be able to map accurately from these photographs it is necessary that they have been taken from a sufficient height to include surrounding control information.

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.

4 PHOTO INTERPRETATION AND MAPPING

4.1 Photographs examined

A cover search was made at the Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs (CUCAP) and open access oblique photographs were checked at the National Monuments Record: Air Photographs (NMRAP), Swindon. Photographs included those resulting from specialist archaeological reconnaissance and routine vertical surveys.

Photographs consulted are listed in Appendix 3b.

4.2 Base maps

Digital data from survey at 1:1250/2500 were provided by the client. An extract from the 1892 edition OS 1:10560 map was downloaded from the internet and used in conjunction with old aerial photographs.

4.3 Study area

Photographs were examined in detail for an area extending one modern field beyond the assessment area.

4.4 Photo interpretation and mapping

All photographs were examined by eye and under slight (2x) magnification, viewing them as stereoscopic pairs when possible. Archaeological features – ridge and furrow only – were sketched on to the OS 1:10560 copy. No accurate mapping was done for this Assessment.

The photographs examined were not taken for archaeological purposes. The CUCAP obliques were panoramas illustrating Godmanchester and its setting – the Assessment Area was included by chance.

5 COMMENTARY

5.1 Soils

The Soil Survey of England and Wales (SSEW 1983) lacks precise detail as the area is masked by text. However, the map shows that it is most likely to be on boulder clay (chalky till, soil association 411d) with possibly a thin cap of marine and river terrace gravel (soil association 571s).

5.2 Archaeological features

Ridge and furrow remaining from medieval cultivation was recorded on photographs taken in 1951. This most likely covered the Assessment Area but accurate placing requires matching the old 1:10560 map to the modern digital data. Recent development surrounding the Assessment Area makes this difficult. The medieval strips were parallel, or nearly so, to Ermine Street and may be identified as such in the Assessment Area.

5.3 Non-archaeological features

No natural or recent features were identified on the photograph examined.

5.4 Land use

Land holding the medieval fields was pasture in 1951 and 1954 and the field boundaries on the OS 1:10560 map suggest this would also cover the Assessment Area. By 1979 field boundaries east of Ermine Street had changed and the land was in arable use.

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APPENDIX 3b: Aerial photographs examined

Source: Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs

Oblique photographs

FR 14-19	16 June 1951
NS 25-27	25 April 1954

Vertical photographs

RC8-CX137-138	13 May 1979	1:20400
RC8-CX168-169	13 May 1979	1:20400
RC8-EI 40-41	11 May 1982	1:10000

Source: National Monuments Record: Air Photographs

Specialist collection

TL2569/1/200-202	5 August 1969
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Most informative photographs

FR 14-16



Cambridgeshire
County Council

Education, Libraries
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