



Archaeological Field Unit

**Post-Medieval Quarrying at Kingsfield School, Chatteris:
An Archaeological Evaluation**

Scott Kenney

May 2004

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. 712

Commissioned by Mouchel Property Services
on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council

**Post-Medieval Quarrying at Kingsfield School, Chatteris:
An Archaeological Evaluation
(TL 3895/8622)**

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Drawing Conventions

Sections	Plans
Limit of Excavation	Limit of Excavation
Cut	Deposit - Conjectured
Cut - Conjectured	Natural Features
Soil Horizon	Intrusion/Truncation
Soil Horizon - Conjectured	Sondages/Machine Strip
Intrusion/Truncation	Illustrated Section
Top of Natural	Excavated Slot
Top Surface	Archaeological Deposit
Break in Section	Machine Sondage
Cut Number 118	Modern
Deposit Number 117	Cut Number 118
Ordnance Datum $\frac{18.45m}{\times}$ ODN	

SUMMARY

In March 2004, the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council conducted an archaeological evaluation on approximately 0.2ha of land at Kingsfield School, Chatteris, Cambridgeshire (TL 3895/8622). This was in advance of the proposed construction of new classroom blocks.

Three trenches totalling 60m in length were opened by machine, of which two contained post-medieval archaeology. There was some evidence of the ground in the middle of Trench 1 having been made up, possibly to level out the dip left by quarrying.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY	1
3	ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	3
4	METHODOLOGY	4
5	RESULTS	5
6	DISCUSSION	7
7	CONCLUSIONS	7

	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	8
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	BIBLIOGRAPHY	8
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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Location of trenches with development area outlined (red)	2
Figure 2	Trench plan	6

Appendices

Appendix 1	Post-medieval pottery by Carole Fletcher	9
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**Post-Medieval Quarrying at Burnsfield School, Chatteris:
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1 INTRODUCTION

Between 15th and 17th of April 2004, the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council conducted an archaeological evaluation on land at Kingsfield School, Chatteris (TL 3895/8622). The work was carried out at the request of Mouchel Property Services on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council. The evaluation was conducted in advance of the construction of new classroom blocks.

The site lies on the western side of Chatteris. It consists of three areas, two of which were roughly rectangular in plan and 0.27ha in total area. Only two of the areas, totalling some 0.2ha, could be evaluated due to the presence of services in the third.

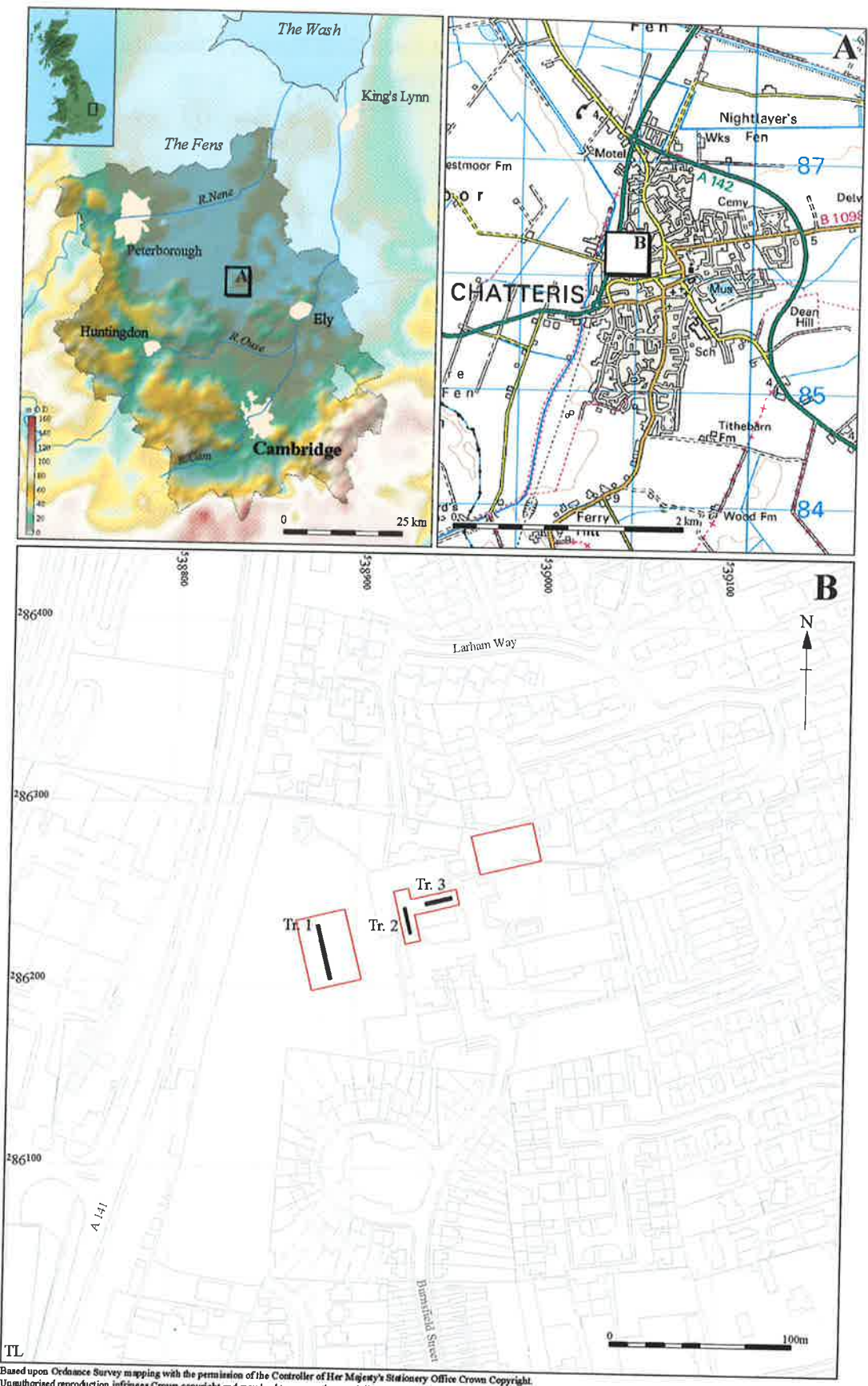
The presence of archaeological remains was considered possible by the CAO on the basis of information contained in the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), which records prehistoric, Roman and medieval finds in the general vicinity of Chatteris.

Weather conditions during the fieldwork were fine, and there were no factors that are likely to have had an adverse effect upon context recognition. Accordingly, the confidence rating to be applied to the results is judged to be high.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

According to the British Geological Survey, the site lies on Pleistocene March Gravels. In this area, the March Gravels overlie the Ampthill Clay, which in turn overlie Upper Jurassic Oxford Clay (BGS 1995).

The part of the site on which the school itself stands is relatively flat and lies at around 9m OD. Benchmarks to the south and east have similar values, but the land falls rapidly to the west and the A141 (Fenland Way) lies at around 4.5mOD.



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Figure 1 Location of trenches with the development areas outlined (red)

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Archaeological Background

During the Neolithic period a major river channel, with associated tributaries, ran close to the northern edge of the island with tidal or intertidal marsh between the tributaries. Much of the island was dry land but the soils were too heavy to attract settlement (Hall 1992). Apart from a flint scatter and a Neolithic axe to the west of the modern settlement and a polished axe from Delve Terrace, the majority of finds and settlement evidence comes from the southern and eastern part of the island.

During the Bronze Age the peat fen encroached, covering the marine sediments. A considerable amount of Bronze Age metal work has been reported from Chatteris possibly as a result of cemeteries being disturbed by agriculture. Much of the land at this time was relatively dry. A dispersed barrow field is the chief monument occupying the eastern half of the island towards the fen edge and comprises at least fifteen barrows (Hall 1992).

Intensive Iron Age occupation has been found in two areas with late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age pottery forms (Hall 1992). Smaller settlement sites of later Iron Age date have been identified. Chatteris appears to have been an important area in the Roman period with settlement and a local economy based on stock rearing.

No Saxon remains were identified by the Fenland Project survey around Chatteris Island, away from the town. It is possible that the present town is built over the Saxon settlement. The main island was subjected to Midland-type strip cultivation in the medieval period (Roberts 2000)

Two manors are known for Chatteris from the medieval period. Part of Chatteris was given to Ramsey Abbey by Athelstan Mannesson and confirmed in 974 by Edgar. A small nunnery was founded at Chatteris between 1006 and 1008 by Eadnoth, Abbot of Ramsey (Hall 1992).

The church of St Peter and St Paul consists of a chancel, north and south chapels, a north vestry, clerestoried nave, aisles, two south porches and a west tower. It is built of rubble with stone dressings and the roof is part tiled and part leaded. The oldest remaining part of the structure dates from the mid-14th century and the porch is 15th century.

3.2 Previous Archaeological Work

Numerous pieces of work have been carried out in the parish, but the majority have been located in the fens surrounding the town. In the town itself, no archaeological work has been carried out within 500m of the current site. In 1996, 750m to the north, medieval remains were found at 36 Bridge Street,

while further remains of the same period were uncovered 650m to the south-east at 23 South Park street in 1998. Excavation just north of the church (600m to the east of the present site) in 2000 revealed Bronze Age and Roman activity. Evaluation and Excavation at 15 St Martin's Road (850m east of the present site) in 2001 uncovered medieval remains. During the most recent investigation in 2002 at Black Horse Lane (500m to the north-northeast of the present site) medieval remains were found (SMR).

3.3 Historical Background

Chatteris lies nine miles south of March and twelve miles north-west of Ely, on the main road between them. The road is known as Ireton's Way after the Civil War general who caused it to be constructed to convey troops from Chatteris to Ely (Pugh 1953). The main industry of Chatteris was, until recently, almost entirely agricultural in nature.

The name Chatteris is first recorded as *Cæteric*, meaning 'wood-stream' in around 975, and in the Domesday Book of 1086 as *Cietriz*. Variations very close to the modern spelling occur from 1271 onwards (Reaney 1943). Chatteris is reputed to have been the last refuge for *Boudicca* and the Iceni. The Abbey was founded in AD 980 and subsequently destroyed during a great fire in the early 14th century. A church existed at Chatteris by 1133, however the present church of St Peter and St Paul dates from the 14th century, having been built after the aforementioned fire. The population of the town was around 1000 in 1563, increasing to 2393 at the start of the 19th century. In 1851, the population stood at about 5000, rising to 9000 today.

4 METHODOLOGY

Three trenches with a total length of 60m were opened by a JCB using a flat-bladed 1.5m wide ditching bucket, under the supervision of an archaeologist (see Fig. 1). This constitutes a 6% sample of the total development area.

The trenches were cleaned by hand where appropriate, planned and photographed, and recorded using the AFU's single context recording system. The trenches were tied in three-dimensionally to Ordnance Survey mapping.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was 30m long, 2.3m wide and was oriented N-S. It contained several shallow and irregular features that were interpreted as opportunistic quarrying. Up to 0.25m of dark greyish brown sandy silt topsoil overlay up to 0.6m of disturbed orange-brown silty sand and gravel, and very dark grey silty clay. At either end of the trench, this latter deposit was only 0.3m deep. The disturbed gravels sealed pits 2, 4, 6, 8, 11 and 13 (see Fig. 2). Almost all of these features were shallow, less than 0.2m deep, and contained a very dark grey silty clay with very frequent gravel, essentially a disturbed natural. The exception was pit 11, which seemed more similar to pit 15 in Trench 2, being possibly sub-rectangular, with steep sides, at least 1.0m wide, 1.6m long and over 0.4m deep. Fill 1 of pit 2 produced 17th century clay pipe fragments, while fill 3 of pit 4 produced 18th century earthenware. 17th and 18th century pottery was recovered from fill 10 of pit 11, including Babylon Ware locally produced at Ely. All of these features were cut into natural orange gravel.

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was 15m long, 1.8m wide and was oriented N-S. It contained a single pit at the southern end. Up to 0.15m of tarmac overlay up to 0.15m of brick rubble, which in turn overlay 0.1m of dark greyish brown clay silt. Below this, a layer of orange-brown disturbed silty gravel 0.1m thick overlay the fill of pit 15. Fill 14 was a very dark brown silt with frequent gravel. Pit 15 was perhaps sub-rectangular in shape, with steep slightly concave sides, at least 1.5m long, 1.2m wide and 0.85m deep. Groundwater prevented further excavation. Pit 15 was cut into natural deposits of orange gravel.

5.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was 15m long, 1.8m wide and was oriented E-W. It contained no archaeology. Up to 0.15m of tarmac overlay up to 0.2m of brick rubble, which in turn overlay 0.1m of dark greyish brown clay silt. Below this, a layer of orange-brown disturbed silty gravel 0.1m thick overlay natural deposits of orange gravel, brownish yellow silty sand, yellow clay sand and blue-grey clay.

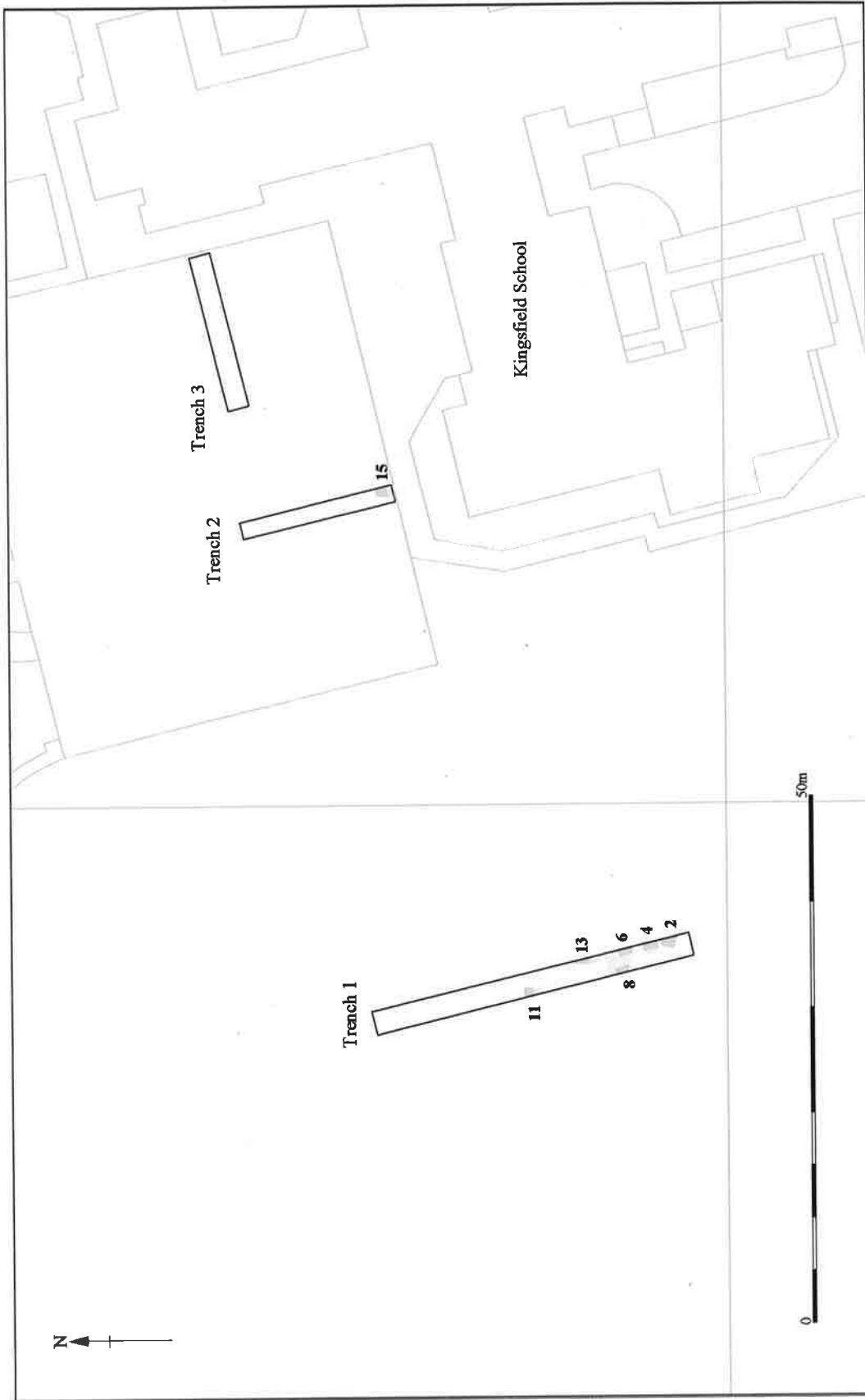


Figure 2 Trench Plan

6 DISCUSSION

The disturbed deposits encountered in Trench 1 are probably due to backfilling carried out to level up what must have been an considerable depression left by the post-medieval quarrying. The small pit found in Trench 2 might have been associated with occupation further towards the town centre, or it may have been just another small quarry pit. It does not appear from this evaluation that this part of the Chatteris Island was occupied until perhaps the 20th century.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The objective of the project was to establish the character, date, state of preservation and extent of any archaeological remains within the site in advance of development. Information from the evaluation will allow an assessment of the proposed development's archaeological implications and to inform an appropriate mitigation strategy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Cambridgeshire County Council who funded the archaeological work. Stephen Macaulay managed the project for the AFU and Elizabeth Shepherd Popescu edited the report.

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Ordnance Survey digital map TL 3885, 3886, 3985, 3986, (2004)

Appendix 1

Post-medieval pottery by Carole Fletcher BA

Methodology

The basic guidance in MAP2 has been adhered to (English Heritage 1991) In addition the MPRG documents '*Guidance for the processing and publication of medieval pottery from excavations*' (Blake and Davey 1983) and '*A guide to the classification of medieval ceramic forms*' (MPRG 1998) act as a standard.

Spot dating was carried out using the AFU's in-house system based on that used at the Museum of London. Fabric classification has been carried out for all previously described types. New types have been given descriptive identifiers, but full fabric descriptions using binocular microscope and x20 magnification have yet to be carried out for these. All sherds have been counted classified, and weighed. All the pottery has been spot dated on a context by context basis; this information was entered directly onto a quantification database (Access 2000), which allows for the appending of further data. The AFU curates the pottery and archive until formal deposition of the site archive.

Excavation

The trenches were machine excavated with further excavation carried out by hand and selection made through standard sampling procedures on a feature by feature basis. There are not expected to be any inherent biases.

The Assemblage

The fieldwork generated 5 sherds of pottery (0.062 kg) from two contexts. From context 10 (pit 11) were recovered two moderately abraded sherds from a post-medieval jug, with an all over thin iron flecked lead glaze dated to the 17th or 18th century, a single sherd from a post-medieval red ware bowl of similar date to the jug and a single sherd of Babylon ware (16th to late 17th) from Ely. The final piece of pottery from context 3 (pit 4) is a sherd of white earthenware of mid 18th century or later. No preservation bias has been recognised and no long-term storage problems are likely. The assemblage offers little potential for further study.

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