

Archaeological Field Unit

**No 213-215 Coates Road, Coates, Whittlesey,  
Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation**

Spencer Cooper

December 2004

**Cambridgeshire County Council**

Report No. 777

Commissioned by *Fenland Timber Ltd*

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## SUMMARY

*Between 30th November and December 6th 2004 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at, 213-215 Coates Road, Whittlesey (TL 3053 9771) by staff of the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council. The proposed development site is within the Fenland Timber yard, Coates, Whittlesey. The developments includes the construction of 8 new dwellings garages and associated access road and services.*

*Three trenches and four pits were examined within the development area. No finds and no archaeological features were encountered within the development area.*

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**No. 213-215 Coates Road, Coates, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire:  
An Archaeological evaluation  
TL 3053 9971**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Between 30th November and December 6th 2004 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Fenland Timber yard 213-215 Coates Road, Whittlesey (TL 3053 9971) by staff of the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council. The proposed development site is within the Fenland Timber yard, Coates, Whittlesey. The development includes the construction of 8 new dwellings garages and associated access road and services.

The project was commissioned by Fenland Timber Ltd. and carried out in accordance with a planning brief issued by Kasia Gdaniec of the Development Control Office, Cambridgeshire County Council.

Three trenches and four pits were examined within the development area. No finds and no archaeological features were encountered within the development area.

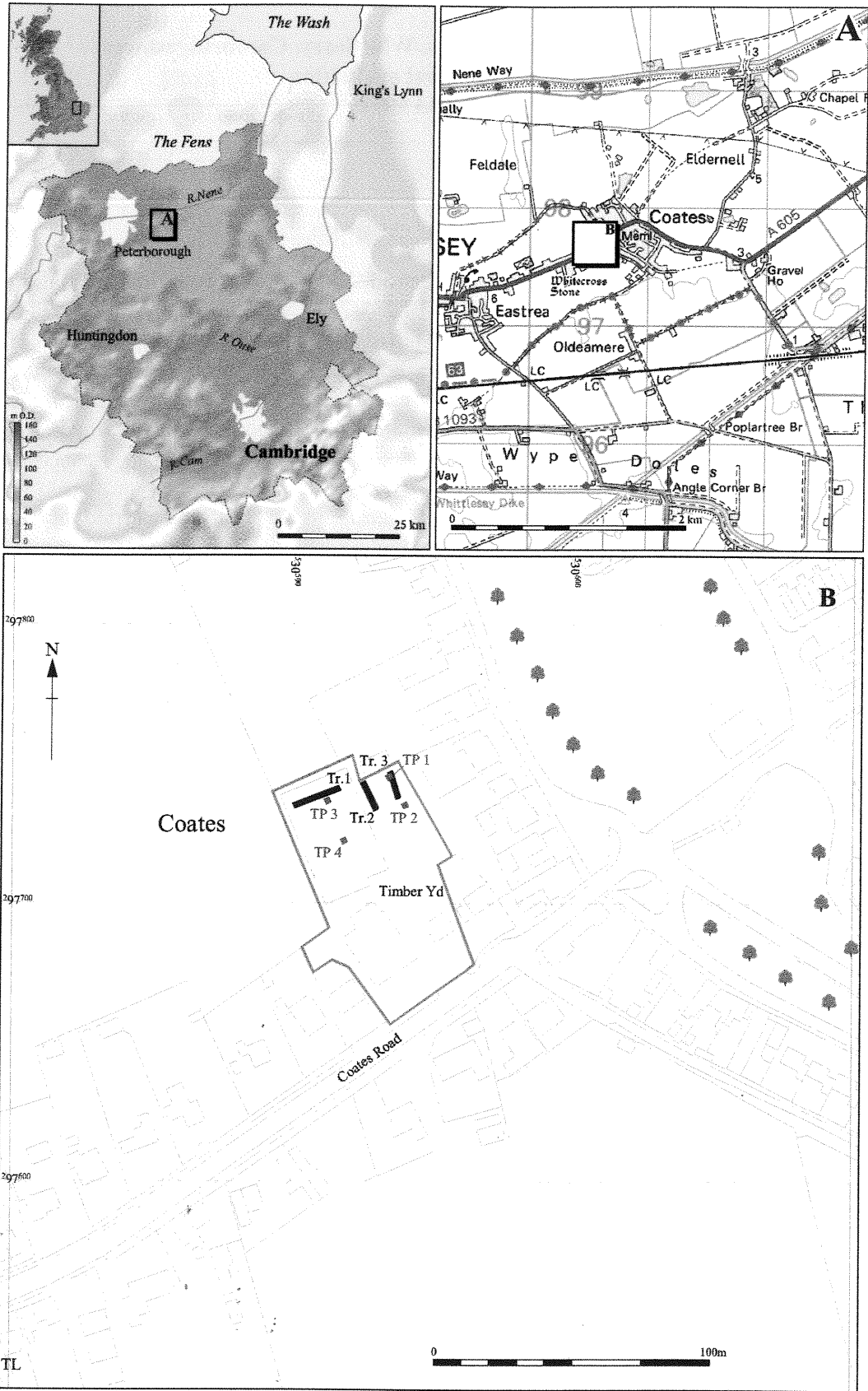
**2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

The development site lies on an island in the fen at a height of 5.3m OD. The nearest benchmark was located at western end of Coates Road. The underlying geology is March Gravels, a marine or estuarine deposit, overlying Oxford clays (British Geological Survey sheet 158, Peterborough, 1:50,000).

**3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

A large amount of archaeological sites and finds are known in this area, probably due to the fen edge location being particularly attractive in all periods until modern times, taking advantage of marsh and dry land resources. In the medieval and post medieval periods the marsh was used for early grazing, allowing the fattening of animals earlier than at dry land sites.

The Bronze Age in this area is characterized by both ritual activity and domestic settlement. Barrow mounds have been identified at Eldernell and Suet Hill, to the south of Whittlesey. Recent excavations between Whittlesey and Fengate to the west of the development site have revealed evidence for



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**Figure 1** Location of trenches and test pits with the development area outlined (green)

settlement that had not been identified through aerial and field surveys. At Kings Dyke West excavations (Knight 1999) revealed the presence of a short lived Late Bronze Age settlement consisting of five roundhouses, four-post structures and pits. In addition henges, ring ditches and an urned cremation were also noted on this site.

Iron Age remains are likely to be a component of the extensive cropmarks surrounding the development area.

There is a possibility that more evidence of Roman settlement remains exist clustered along the route of the Fen Causeway Roman canal, later a Roman road, crosses the central part of Whittlesey island. Its projected course from Peterborough to Grandford near March crosses the north of Whittlesey and Eastrea. The route enters the island from Flag Fen and Northey, where portions of the gravel road have been recorded (Hall 1987). Excavations at Stonald Field have confirmed the course of the Roman road in the eastern portion of the parish (Knight 2000). A Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 109) lies 1km to the west of the site. The crop marks, which identify this archaeological site, extend beyond the designated area and lie in all directions around the development area. Although these remains are considered Anglo-Saxon (SMR2834a), it is highly likely that the remnants of Roman and probably earlier Iron Age settlements, ditches, drove ways and animal enclosures survive. A large amount of Roman pottery has been found in Coates village (SMR03878). Less than 1km to the west lie extensive crop marks of possible Roman date (SMR 04205) representing enclosures, a trackway and a ring ditch. Extensive crop marks (SMR11655) are present in the field a joining the site to the west representing enclosures and a trackway of uncertain date, but likely to be Roman in comparison to the other crop marks in the locality.

Although the Whittlesey area is not particularly rich in Saxon and early medieval remains, unusually an Anglo-Saxon settlement (SMR no. 2834a, SAM 109) is known in this area. This site survives as a crop mark. In addition to the west of the development area an Anglo-Saxon cemetery (SMR No 10594) consisting of seven inhumations was uncovered in the 19th century. All of the skeletons were orientated on an east-west alignment.

Later medieval finds have been discovered from the central area of Whittlesey. The churches of St Andrew's and St Mary's appear to be relatively late in date, having been erected during the 13th century. The historic settlement core, however, lies in their vicinity, and in particular in the area of the Market Place and St Mary's. 400m to the west of the development site along Coates Road, lies the Whitecross Stone (SMR 03917), thought to be a medieval milestone.

The closest SMR point to the development site is Holy Trinity Church (SMR14874), a Victorian brick built structure.

## 4 METHODOLOGY

A mechanical excavator (with 2.0m wide flat-bladed ditching bucket) was used to excavate three trial trenches and four test pits under archaeological supervision (Trenches 1-4). Initially four test pits were excavated through the reinforced concrete to establish survival of topsoil and subsoil. The next stage of work involved the removal of reinforced concrete from the development area and the excavation of three trial trenches. A total of 40m of trenching was excavated, a *c.*5% sample of the site. The trenches were planned at 1:20 and sections at 1:20. All features and deposits were recorded using the AFU single context system.

Each distinct cut, fill and layer was allocated an individual number. In the following text cut numbers are presented in **bold** and deposit numbers in plain text.

Monochrome and colour photographs were taken. All the spoil heaps were scanned for artefacts.

## 5. RESULTS

The overburden observed in test pits and trenches consisted of (1) concrete floor and associated make up and a light brown silty clay subsoil (2).

### **Trench 1** ( see Fig.1)

Trench 1 was 19.80mm long 0.85m deep and located on an east to west alignment. No archaeological features were present in this trench.

### **Trench 2**

Trench 2 was 11.10m long and 0.73 m deep and located on a north to south alignment. No archaeological features were present in this trench.

### **Trench 3**

Trench 3 was 10.50m long and 0.40m deep and located on a north to south alignment. No archaeological features were present in this trench.

### **Test pit 1**

Test pit 2 was 2m by 2m and was located in the north eastern part of the development area. No archaeological features were present in this test pit.



### **Test pit 2**

Test pit 2 was 2m by 2m and was located in the north eastern part of the development area. No archaeological features were present in this test pit.

### **Test pit 3**

Test pit 2 was 2m by 2m and was located in the north western part of the development area. No archaeological features were present in this test pit.

### **Test pit 4**

Test pit 4 was 2m by 2m and was located in the south western part of the development area. No archaeological features were present in this test pit.

## **6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The aim of the project was to establish the character, date, state of preservation, and extent of any archaeological remains within the site. The evaluation has been unsuccessful in its aims and has failed to reveal any archaeological deposits from the Roman, Iron Age or Medieval periods. Given the proximity of the site to the historic core of Coates it is surprising that medieval remains were not encountered within the evaluation.

Despite the survival of topsoil and subsoil underneath an area of reinforced concrete no archaeological remains were encountered within the test pits and trenches.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Fenland Timber Ltd, who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. Glenn Bailey for his work on the site. The project was managed by Stephen Macaulay. The brief for archaeological works was written by Kasia Gdaniec, County Archaeology Office, Cambridgeshire County Council.

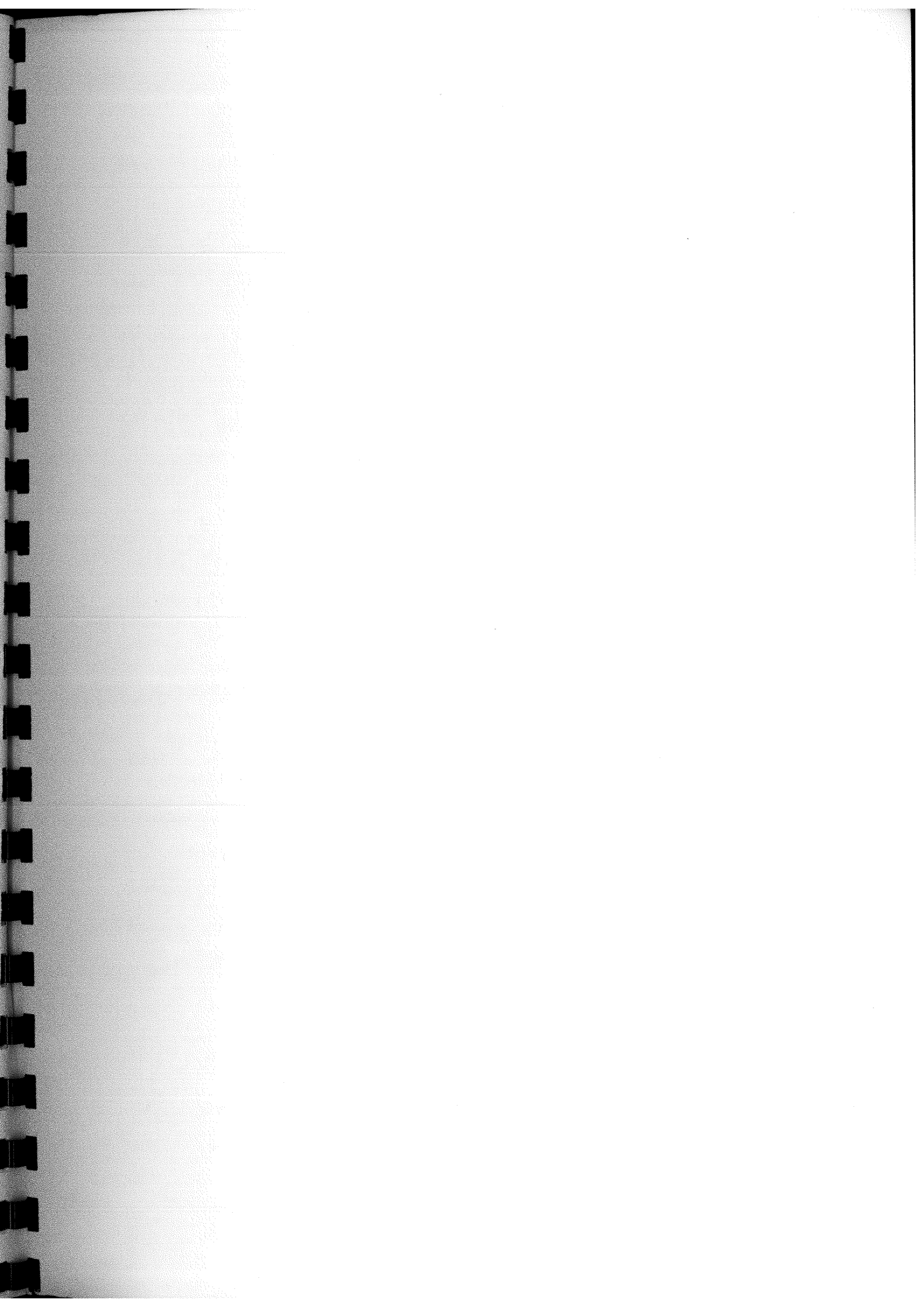
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