



Archaeological Field Unit

**Land North-west of the Pump House, Station Road,
Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological
Evaluation**

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May 2005

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No.805

Commissioned by *Fenland Timber Ltd*

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SUMMARY

On April 15th 2005 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Station Rd, Whittlesey (TL 2763 9611) by staff of the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council. The proposed development site is within the Fenland Timberyard, Coates, Whittlesey. The development includes the construction of two industrial units and associated access and services.











An L-shaped trench was examined within the development area. No finds and no archaeological features were encountered.

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Drawing Conventions

Sections

Limit of Excavation	
Cut	
Cut - Conjectured	
Soil Horizon	
Soil Horizon - Conjectured	
Intrusion/Truncation	
Top of Natural	
Top Surface	
Break in Section	
Cut Number	
Deposit Number	117
Ordinance Datum	$\frac{18.45\text{m ODN}}{\times}$

Plans

Limit of Excavation	
Deposit - Conjectured	
Natural Features	
Intrusion/Truncation	
Sondages/Machine Strip	
Illustrated Section	
Excavated Slot	

**Land North-west of the Pump House, Station Road, Whittlesey,
Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation
TL 2763 9611**

1 INTRODUCTION

On the 15th April 2005 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Pump House Station Road Whittlesey (TL 2763 96111) by staff of the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council. The development includes the construction of two industrial units with associated 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 (planning app no F/YR04/3615 ,Gdaniec 2005).

One trench was examined within the development area. No finds and no archaeological features were encountered.

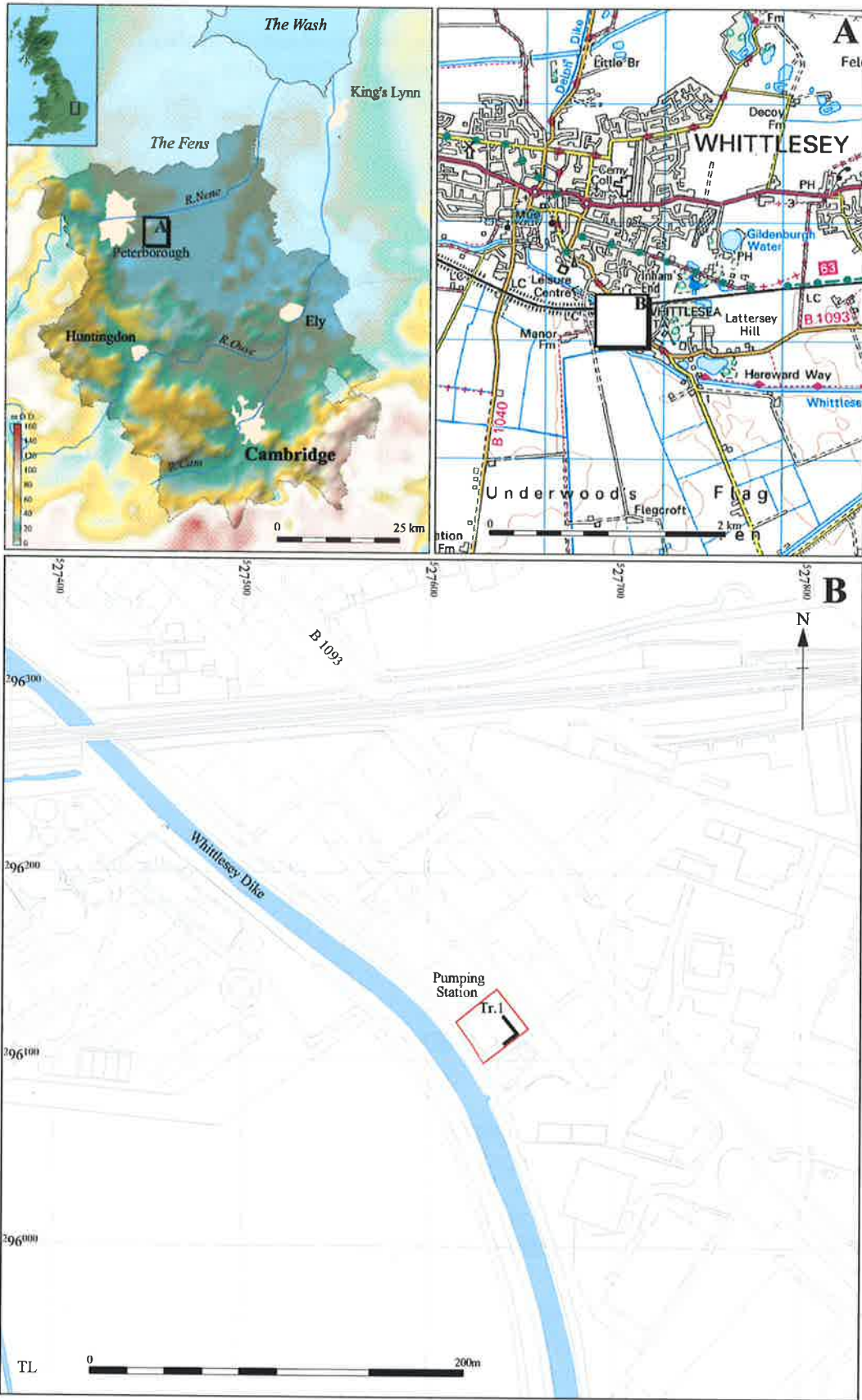
2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The development site lies on the southern edge of the gravel island at 2.0m OD. 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

Although no archaeological remains are currently known from the site itself, a considerable amount of evidence comes from the immediate surrounding area.

Finds of Roman date have already been made in the Station Road/Aaron Road Industrial Estate and in Benwick Road, some 250-500m to the south-east of the development area.



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Figure 1 Location of the trench with the development area outlined (red)

Prehistoric finds are known from the area around Whittlesey, their distribution along the fen edge placing emphasis on economic importance of the fen as an essential grazing resource.

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 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, which 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).

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 cropmark. 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 to west alignment.

4 METHODOLOGY

A mechanical excavator (with 1.6m wide flat-bladed ditching bucket) was used to excavate a single L-shaped trench under archaeological supervision. The trench was 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. The spoil heap was scanned visually for artefacts.

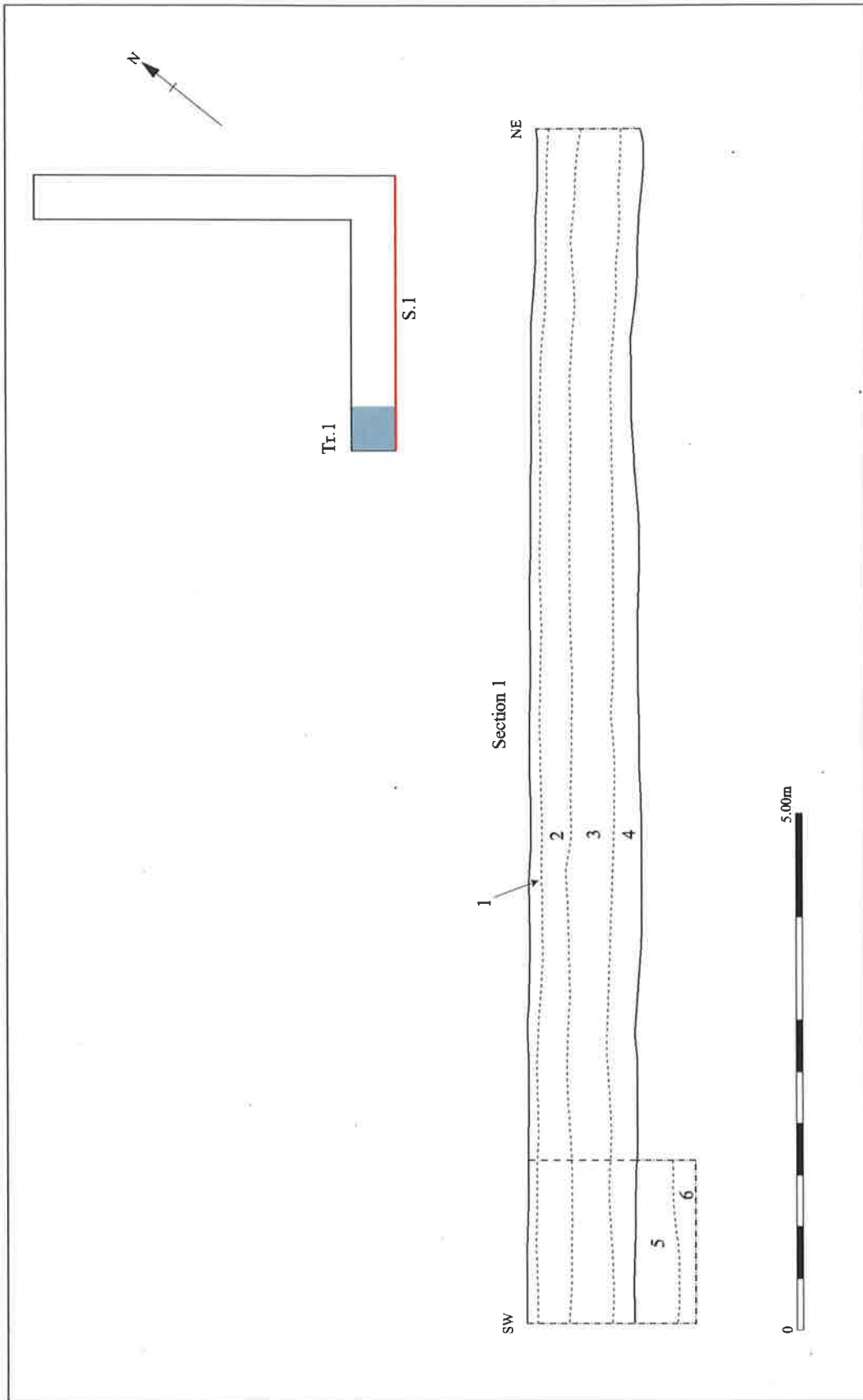


Figure 2 Plan and section of trench 1

5. RESULTS

Trench 1

The single L-shaped trench was 9.9m long on the north-east to south-west axis and 11m on the north-west to south-east axis was excavated in the development area.

No archaeological features were encountered in this trench although fen type deposits were revealed to a depth of 1.5m.

The earliest deposit within the sequence was layer 6 which was a blue grey Oxford clay. This was overlain by layer 5 which consisted of orange brown natural clay, which was 0.40m deep. The next deposit layer (4) was a light grey silty clay which was 0.20m deep, followed by a brown silty peat (3) which was 0.40m deep. A subsequent deposit of a greenish grey clay silt (2) which was 0.30m deep was overlain by a dark grey silty clay, which was 0.10m deep.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

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 failed to reveal any archaeological features from the Iron Age Roman or medieval periods.

Despite the lack of archaeological features the excavated trench provided an interesting sequence of fen deposits. The earliest deposit was represented by the Oxford Clay and overlaid by alluvial deposits (4 and 5). A peat deposit of an unknown date was revealed which in turn was sealed by clay silt (3 and 2). Layer 3 could be recent upcast, and may represent a recent attempt to raise ground level. Layer 1 represents modern topsoil.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Fenland Timber Ltd, who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. 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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