

Ridge and Furrow at Childerley Hall Farm, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Evaluation

Aileen Connor

December 2005

Commissioned by J.G. Jenkins Ltd

Cover Images

Machina stripping, Soham	On-site surveying
Roman corn dryer, Duxford	Guided walk along Devil's Dyke
Bronze Age shaft, Fordham Bypass	Medieval well, Soham
Human burial, Barrington Anglo-Saxon Cemetery	Timbers from a medieval well, Soham
Blue enamelled bead, Barrington	Bed burial reconstruction, Barrington Anglo-Saxon Cemetery
Aethusa cynapium 'Fool's parsley'	Medieval tanning pits, Huntington Town Centre
Digging in the snow, Huntingdon Town Centre	Beaker vessel
Face painting at Hinchibrooke Iron Age Farm	Environmental analysis
Research and publication	Monument Management, Bartlow Hills

CCC AFU Report Number 846

**Ridge and Furrow at Childerley
Hall Farm, Cambridgeshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

Aileen Connor BA, AIFA

Site Code: CHI CHH 05
CHER Event Number: ECB2091
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Editor: Elizabeth Popescu, BA MIFA
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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit (CCC AFU) on the 1st and 2nd of December 2005, in accordance with a Brief issued by Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and Countryside Advice team (CAPCA), supplemented by a Specification prepared by CCC AFU.

The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed development area.

This work has shown that there is no evidence for human activity in the immediate vicinity other than features related to medieval ridge and furrow agriculture, and pottery which may derive from a Roman manuring scatter.

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Geology and Topography	1
3	Archaeological and Historical Background	1
4	Methodology	3
5	Results	4
	5.1 Trench 1	4
	5.2 Trench 2	5
6	Discussion	8
7	Conclusions	8
	Acknowledgements	9
	Bibliography	9

List of Figures

Figure 1:	Site location showing position of trenches and development area	2
Figure 2:	Trench plans	6
Figure 3:	Sections	7

List of Plates

Plate 1:	Trench 1 looking north	4
Plate 2:	Trench 2 looking south-east	5

1 Introduction

This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Andy Thomas of the Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and Countryside Advice team (CAPCA; Planning Application S/0547/05/F), supplemented by a Specification prepared by Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit (CCC AFU).

The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16 - Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by CAPCA, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

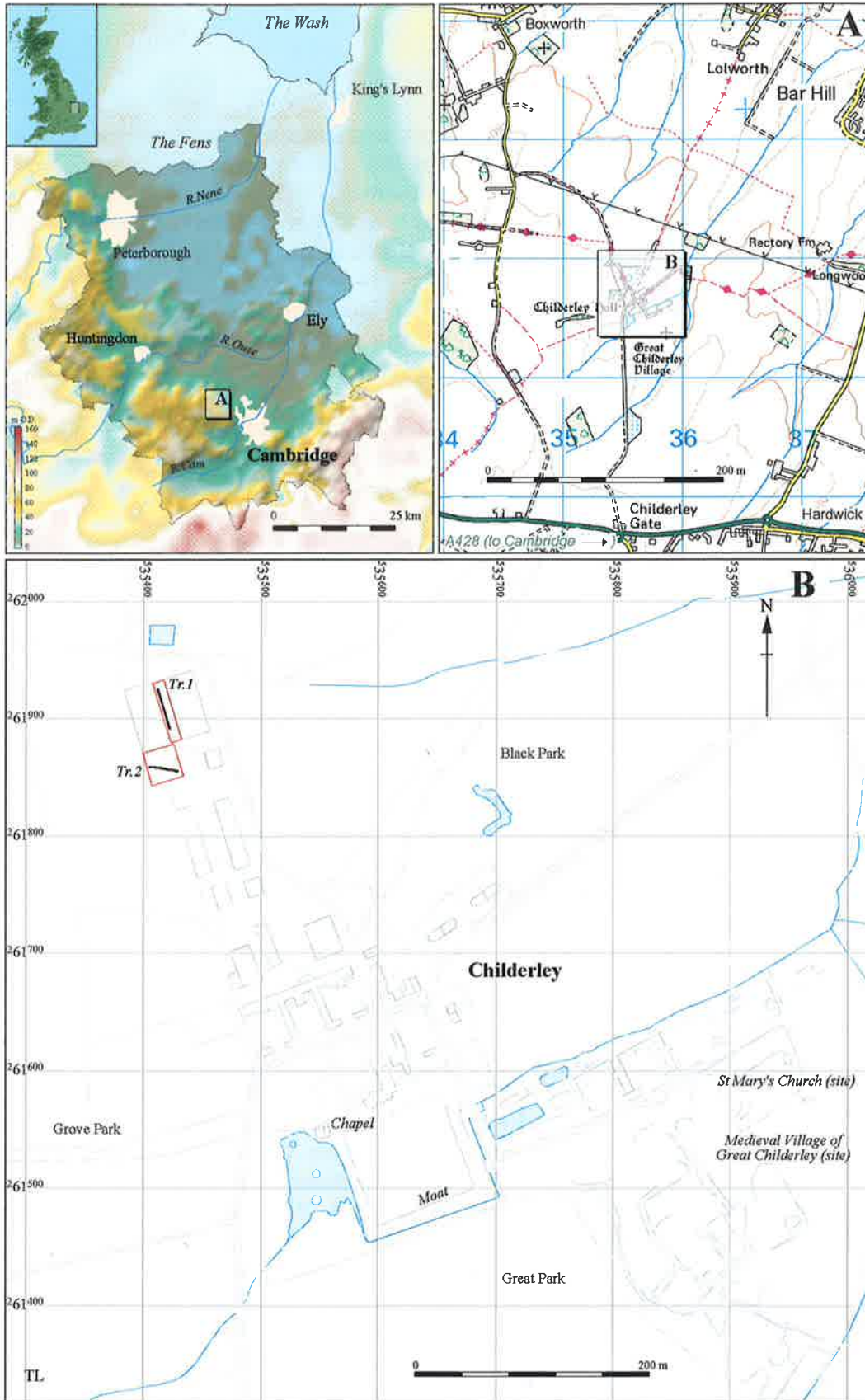
The site archive is currently held by CCC AFU and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

2 Geology and Topography

The site overlies boulder clay (British Geological Survey 1981) and is located on slightly sloping ground at approximately 54m OD. The nearest benchmark is located a short distance to the south on the north-east corner of Childerley Hall Farm, at a height of 54.35m OD. The land is currently in use as a working farm within an historic landscape that includes earthworks and the extant remains of Childerley Hall Park (listed as Grade II* in the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens (PG1605)).

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

The subject site is located in the area of the Deserted Medieval Village of Great Childerley (HER No's 03613, 03614). It is located within the grounds of Childerley Hall Park (Fig.1) which is registered as Grade II* in the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens (PG1605). Medieval Childerley consisted of two settlements, each with its own manor and church (Wright and Lewis 1989, 39). The modern Childerley Hall is located in the centre of the parish. The original hall was built by Sir John Cutts who died in 1521 and was almost entirely demolished by the 1740's and occupied by tenant farmers. Additions and alterations were made to it in the 1850's (Wright and Lewis 1989, 45). In the 17th century a deer park and rabbit warren formed part of the estate which is estimated to have been about 143 acres in size.



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Figure 1: Site location showing position of trenches (black) and development area (red)

A restored 16th Century moated garden (ECB 1123) is located a short distance to the south of the proposed development site.

Nearby to the west an archaeological recording brief was carried out on a Cambridge Water Company pipeline that ran from High Barns in Boxworth to Grove Park in Childerley. The pipeline passed through two areas of archaeological interest; the deer park boundary and an earthwork site namely the deserted medieval village of Little Childerley (Kemp and Way 1992).

4 Methodology

The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

The Brief required that a 5% sample of the proposed development area should be subject to trial trenching. Two trenches were machine excavated to expose natural/archaeological horizons; Trench 1 was 36m long by 1.6m wide, Trench 2 was 25m long by 1.6m wide. Some 0.3m of topsoil overlying 0.2m of subsoil was removed by machine to the top of natural geology.

Machine excavation was carried out using a wheeled JCB-type excavator supplied by the client and fitted with a 1.6m wide flat-bladed ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned for finds. All finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.

Trenches were cleaned and planned as necessary and all exposed archaeological features were excavated by hand to establish character, use, function, date and extent.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using CCC AFU's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations were recorded at 1:500, archaeological features were recorded in plan at 1:50 and in section at 1:20. Trench edges were recorded in section at 1:50. Colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

No deposits or features were identified that were suitable for environmental sampling.

The site was located in the grounds of a working farm to which access was generally unrestricted. Trench 1 was located within a covered barn

with low natural light levels that were supplemented by electric spot lights (Plate 1). The area within the barn was also extremely dry and compacted making removal of topsoil and subsoil difficult even with the use of a toothed bucket to loosen the upper layers. Trench 2 was located in open, grass covered ground, and was not subject to any unusual constraints (Plate 2). Weather conditions were good to wet.

5 Results

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was 36m long and 1.6m wide, aligned approximately north to south (Fig.2). Dark greyish brown loamy clay topsoil (1) was 0.3-0.35m thick and overlay 0.2-0.25m of pale greyish brown clay subsoil (2). These layers were removed by machine to the archaeological horizons. No archaeological features or deposits were observed in this trench. Two modern drain pipes were present; one on an approximately north to south alignment running parallel with the west edge of the trench and one on an approximately east to west alignment. In addition there was an area of modern disturbance towards the south end of the trench where an inspection pit had been dug.



Plate 1: Trench 1 looking north

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was 25m long and 1.6m wide, aligned north-west to south-east (Figs 2-3). Dark greyish brown loamy clay topsoil (1) was 0.3-0.35m thick and overlay 0.2-0.25m of pale greyish brown clay subsoil (2). These layers were removed by machine to the archaeological horizons. Five features were present; three furrows and two amorphous features, probably of natural origin. From north-west to south-east the features were as follows:

Furrow 4 was orientated on an approximately north to south alignment, it was 1.5m wide and 0.16m deep with a wide shallow U shaped profile. It was filled by a mid grey brown firm slightly silty clay (3) and contained four sherds of pottery, including one moderately large rim of Colne ware dating to the 13th to 14th century. The remaining pieces were possibly residual Roman shelly ware.

Feature 6 was orientated on an approximately north-east to south-west alignment. It was irregular in shape and may have been roughly linear. It was approximately 1.5m wide and less than 0.05m deep with an irregular profile. It was filled with a pale greyish brown clay (5), possibly a remnant of the overlying subsoil (2).

Furrow 8 was orientated on an approximately north to south alignment, it was 2.8m wide and 0.25m deep with a wide shallow U shaped profile, deepening slightly towards the centre. It was filled by a mid grey brown firm slightly silty clay (7) and contained three sherds of small and very abraded undiagnostic pottery, possibly of Roman date.



Plate 2: Trench 2 looking south-east

Feature 12 was orientated on an approximately north-west to south-east alignment. It was irregular in shape and may have been roughly linear. It was at least 2m long, at least 0.8m wide and less than 0.14m deep with an irregular profile. It was filled with a pale greyish brown clay (11), similar to the overlying subsoil (2). It was cut by furrow 10 and may be the result of a tree throw or other natural action.

Furrow 10 was orientated on an approximately north to south alignment, it was at least 1.5m wide its depth and profile were not established due to the presence of standing water. It was filled by a mid grey brown firm slightly silty clay (9) from which no finds were recovered.

6 Discussion

Trench 1 was difficult to assess fully due to the low light levels and the compacted ground conditions, however no archaeological finds or features were observed and it is likely that none were present. Trench 2 contained three archaeological features likely to be the remnants of medieval ridge and furrow cultivation, the features were all on a similar alignment and were equidistant from each other. They also contained an identical mid grey brown silty clay. Only pottery was present - this was a mix of abraded Roman material and a sherd of unabraded medieval. The Roman pottery is likely to be residual from a manuring scatter.

7 Conclusions

This work has successfully evaluated the area to be developed, it has shown that there is no evidence for human activity in the immediate vicinity other than that related to agriculture during the medieval period, and possibly during the Roman period as evidenced by the presence of abraded Roman pottery which may result from manuring.

Recommendations for any future work based upon this report will be made by the County Archaeology Office.

Acknowledgements

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The brief for archaeological works was written by Andy Thomas, Adrian Scruby visited the site and monitored the evaluation on behalf of CAPCA.

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