

**Land southwest of No. 10
Newgate Street, Doddington**

Glenn Bailey

April 2006



Cambridgeshire
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Cover Images

| | |
|--|--|
| Machine stripping, Soham | On-site surveying |
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| Bronze Age shaft, Fordham Bypass | Medieval well, Soham |
| Human burial, Barrington Anglo-Saxon Cemetery | Timbers from a medieval well, Soham |
| Blue enamelled head, Barrington | Bed burial reconstruction, Barrington Anglo-Saxon Cemetery |
| Aethusa cynapium 'Fool's parsley' | Medieval tanning pits, Huntingdon Town Centre |
| Digging in the snow, Huntingdon Town Centre | Beaker vessel |
| Face painting at Hinchinbrooke Iron Age Farm | Environmental analysis |
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CCC AFU Report Number 851

**Land southwest of No. 10
Newgate Street, Doddington**

An Archaeological Evaluation

Glenn Bailey BSc

With a contribution by Paul Spoerry PhD, BTech
(Hons), MIFA

Site Code: DOD NST 05
CHER Event Number: ECB2109
Date of works: 13th December 2005
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Illustrator: Severine Bezie

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by Cambridgeshire County Council's Archaeological Field Unit (CCC AFU) in response to a proposed development at land southwest of No. 10 Newgate Street Doddington. Three trenches were excavated revealing a probable medieval land division perpendicular to the road and a small number of associated features hinting at occupation nearby. A very large feature, perhaps a pond or channel and possibly natural in origin, occupies part of the northeast quarter of the site, and this was backfilled in early modern times. Very little archaeological evidence survives to provide a clear picture of the previous uses of this plot owing, at least in part to recent truncation and disturbance. It seems unlikely, however, that the plot was densely occupied in the medieval period.

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


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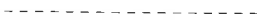








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Drawing Conventions

Sections

| | |
|---|--|
| Limit of Excavation |  |
| Cut |  |
| Cut-Conjectured |  |
| Soil Horizon |  |
| Soil Horizon - Conjectured |  |
| Intrusion/Truncation |  |
| Top of Natural |  |
| Top Surface |  |
| Break in Section/ Limit of Section Drawing |  |
| Cut Number |  |
| Deposit Number | 117 |
| Ordinance Datum |  18.45m ODN |
| Field Drain |  |

Plans

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Limit of Excavation |  |
| Deposit - Conjectured |  |
| Natural Features |  |
| Intrusion/Truncation |  |
| Sondages/Machine Strip |  |
| Illustrated Section |  |
| Excavated Slot |  |
| Archaeological Deposit |  |
| Modern Deposit |  |
| Machined level |  |
| Cut Number | 118 |

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), 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 lies on March Gravels overlying Ampthill Clay and it forms part of a southern promontory of March island. A large part of the west of Doddington parish is covered with peat fen that developed during the earlier prehistoric period, associated with roddons of the Ouse. Later marine conditions developed resulting in the deposition of alluvial clay. None of that sequence is present on the current site. The height of the site was fairly consistently around 6.3m OD with a sharp rise to 6.75 at the extreme west end of Trench 1. Natural sandy gravels were first encountered at 5.71m OD, towards the south of the development area.

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

Although March Island generally has, in common with many counterparts in the peat fen, significant later prehistoric and Romano-British remains, virtually none are known from Doddington parish. Hall describes the landscape developments from early prehistoric river systems through to the development of the fenland, but provides no known sites (Hall 1992). In addition, Hall only identified one Roman site, on the skirtland of a promontory southwest of the village and approximately 1.5km from the subject site: his recording may, however, have been hampered by a lack of access to many fields on the island itself.

The site is located within the historic core of the village, known to date at least from the Saxon period. The parish church of St Mary, located approximately 200m northeast of the site, dates from the 13th century.

Doddington was the principal medieval settlement on the island, being much larger than March or Wimblington. This was due to, or resulted in, the development of the Manor Farm as a Major Grange and residence of the Bishops of Ely, the site being located about a kilometre to the east of the historic village core, which itself grew up around the parish church.

The site appears to lie in part of the medieval village, and includes a substantial street frontage where former properties may have been located.

Recent archaeological work in the area has for the most part identified ridge and furrow (Macaulay 1999; Air Photo Services 2001) and post-medieval features (Hounsell 2001; Sutherland 2002).

4 Methodology

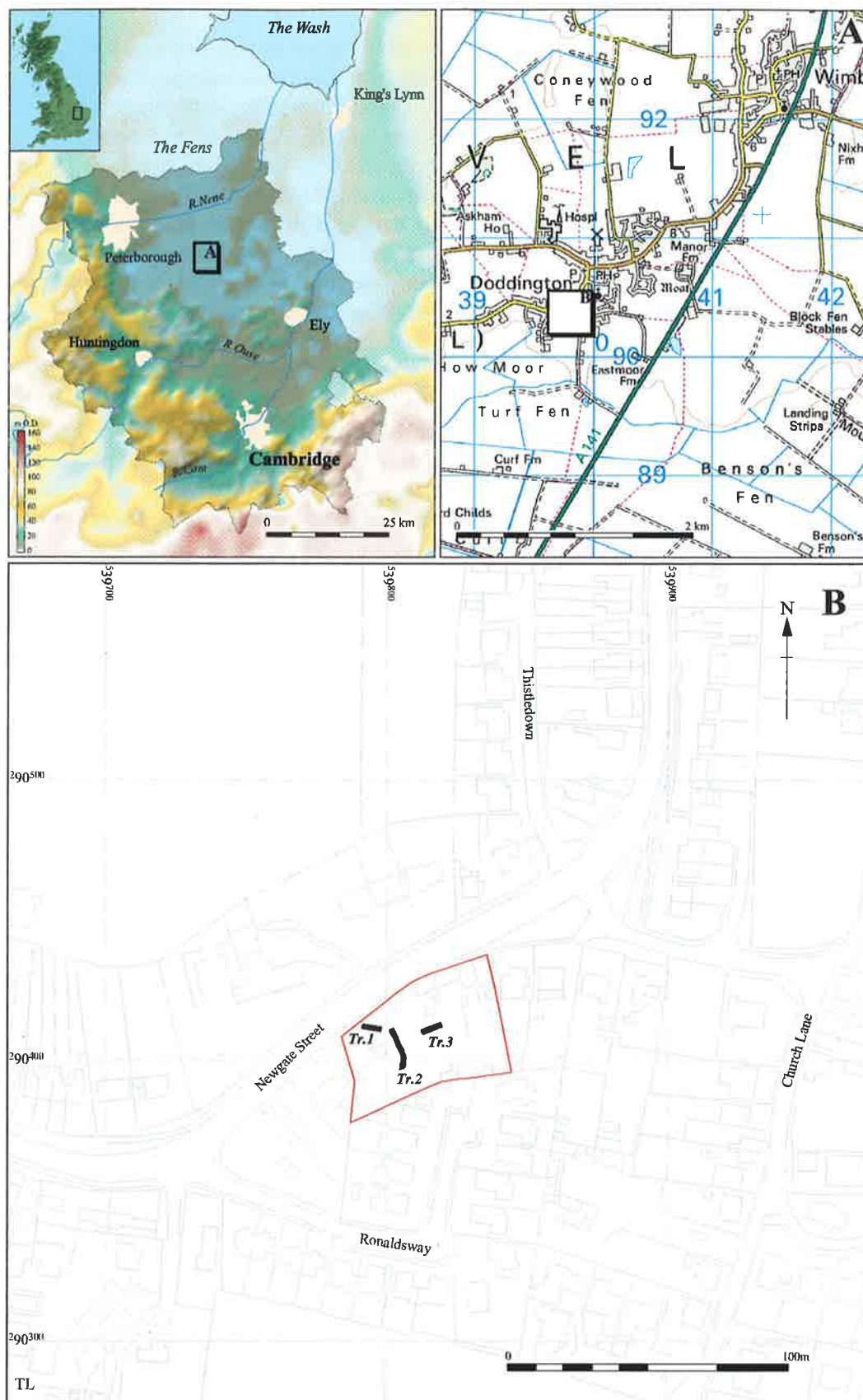
The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

Machine excavation was carried out, under constant archaeological supervision, with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a toothless ditching bucket. Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those that were obviously modern.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using CCC AFU's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

Environmental samples were not taken, since the features and the deposits they contained were not deemed to be of sufficient interest to merit sampling.

Site conditions were fair. The cool, overcast weather allowed excavation to proceed well, however, surface water from recent rain made the stripping and management of topsoil challenging. The depth at which groundwater was encountered also prevented excavation to the level of the natural bedrock in some parts of the trenches.



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Figure 1: Location of trenches (black) with the development area outlined (red)

5 Results (Figures 2 and 3)

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was 7m long, 1.8m wide and positioned at the northwest corner of the site in order to locate any archaeological activity associated with the adjacent road. The potential for roadside development was deemed high, due to the proximity to the village centre and the Church of St Mary (c.250m to the northwest).

The uppermost deposit (1) was composed of recent rubble which overlay recent topsoil (2). Together these were up to 1.1m deep and all features were sealed beneath them, where they were cut into the natural gravel.

The features in this trench consisted of four postholes, one pit and one large potential channel.

Postholes **23** and **25** were investigated and revealed no artefacts. Postholes **24** and **26** were identified as modern, as they contained either modern wooden stakes or modern pottery. Postholes **23** and **25** were very close to **24** in shape and size, suggesting they were also possibly elements of a relatively modern fence line.

Shallow pit **14**, slightly truncated by **24** on its western side, proved to be the oldest confirmed feature in this trench. It was c. 1.4m x 1.5m but only c. 0.2m deep (Figure 3, Section 5). One sherd of pottery from the single fill (13) was medieval whilst the other was 18th to 19th century in date. This combination demonstrated that the deposit had been subject to disturbance prior to excavation.

The final feature in this trench was a large, silt and gravel filled channel or pond (**27**). This feature extended across the trench and occupied roughly half of the trench base. On the west side the feature had a shallow edge that sloped down to the east to a depth of at least 1.40m below present ground level. The water table was reached at 1.30m. This feature is further discussed in Trench 2.

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was 16m long, 1.8m wide and up to 1.46m deep where features were excavated.

Positioned roughly north south in the middle of the site, with the expectation of revealing features running east west and from Trench 1 to Trench 3. This trench was by far the longest of the three, the curve of the trench purely a result of logistics in a confined space.

The upper deposits were as in Trench 1, extending to a slightly lower depth at the northern end (0.6m), but deeper to around 0.85m in the central and southern parts. Below these in the southern part of the trench was a possible deposit (3) about 0.3m thick, that is most likely to have been the disturbed upper interface of the natural gravel. This horizon did not appear to be present north of ditch 12 which may imply an anthropogenic and local origin for the disturbance or deposition of what is otherwise very much like natural gravel.

By far the busiest of the three trenches, in terms of recognisably pre-modern features, Trench 2 contained three postholes, two ditches and a possible channel.

Posthole 5, 0.44m wide and 0.26m deep was cut from below the topsoil through deposit 3 into the natural gravels (see Figure 3, Section 2). The slightly smaller posthole 7, 0.27m wide and 0.24m deep, cut through the same deposit as 5 (Section 3). Posthole 7 was located close to the southern edge of ditch 12, highlighting a potential but unsubstantiated relationship. Posthole 5 was located just to the west of ditch 9, but again no definite relationship was established. No artefacts were recovered from either posthole.

Ditch 9 ran most of the length of the trench, extending into the eastern baulk towards both the northern and southern trench ends (due to the curvature of the trench). At least 7m in length, 0.44m wide and 0.42m deep this was the feature most convincingly associated with roadside development. The orientation indicated that ditch 9 might be the boundary ditch of a land parcel, dividing plots that extended perpendicular to the road. Although the supporting evidence is limited, such divisions are likely to have been in place during the medieval period. The sole deposit within this ditch (8) was mid-greyish brown, with frequent small stones, occasional chalk marl and sandy gravel. Unfortunately, no artefacts were recovered from this feature to date it or offer a further suggestion of function.

Ditch 12 was located approximately halfway along the trench and ran east northeast to west southwest. Proven to be earlier than ditch 9, as it was clearly truncated by the thinner ditch, two deposits of similar thicknesses (16cm) filled this shallow ditch. The upper deposit (10) a mid-brown gritty silt overlay a mottled mix of mid-orange, white and brown sandy gravel (11). No artefacts were recovered from either deposit.

The final feature in this trench (22) was also identified in Trench 1. Several clearly defined deposits were recorded. The deposits below the topsoil were clay and gravel based. As the feature was excavated to the present water table, a very dark, thin, highly organic deposit, 20, was recorded. Whilst the artefacts within this deposit initially seemed promising (Raeren Stoneware and Bourne D pottery fragments dated

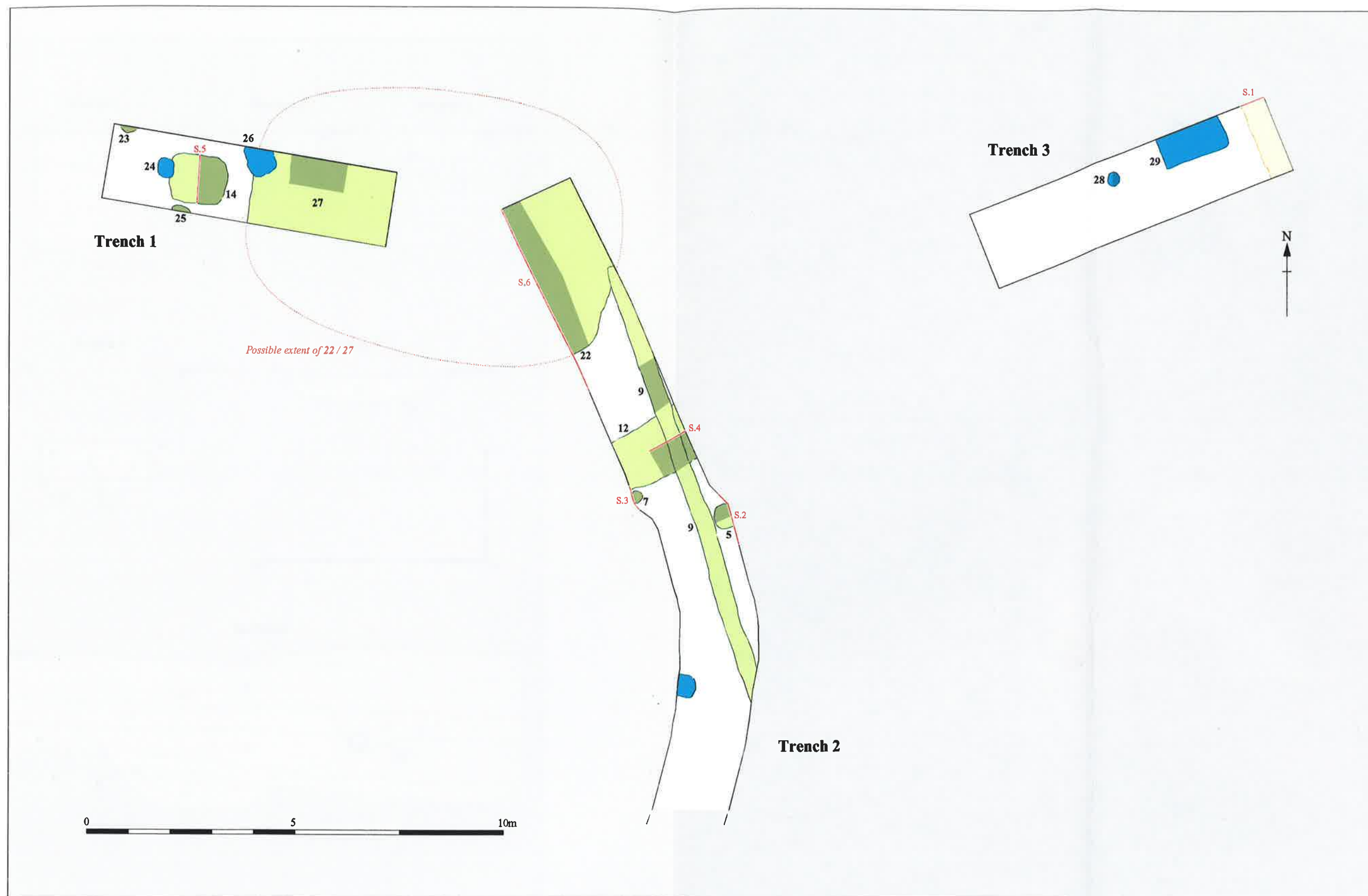


Figure 2: Trench plans

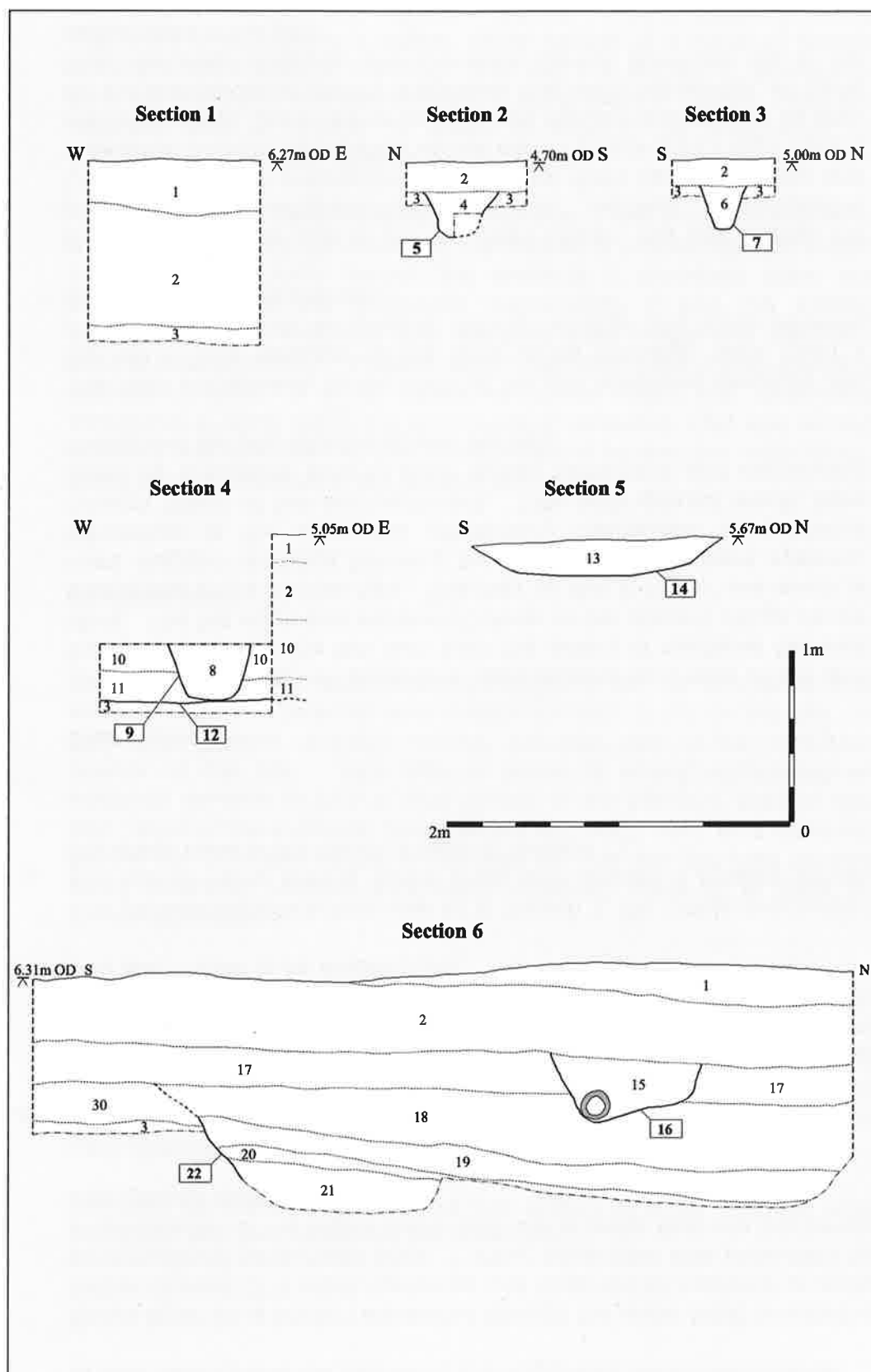


Figure 3: Section drawings

to the 16th century), it also contained one fragment of building material (a 20th century wall-tile fragment) that suggested recent disturbance.

Below layer 20, a section excavated through the water table revealed a further deposit (21) which contained one fragment of medieval or early post-medieval hand-made brick. Further excavation was prevented by a combination of the trench depth and rate of water flow into the trench from ground water.

5.3 Trench 3

This trench proved to be the least significant in terms of archaeological remains. One posthole was excavated and contained modern artefacts (28). A further feature towards the eastern end of the trench was also shown to be modern (29).

The deposit sequence here was as in Trench 2, the rubble overburden and topsoil being around 0.95m thick, with deposit 3 present across the whole base of the trench (Figure 3, Section 1).

6 Discussion

The medieval village of "Dudintone" was situated on a spur of dry land that projected into the fen 3km from the extent of medieval Benwick Mere. The fen edge was somewhat closer to the present village centre than it was in the Bronze Age. This may be due to higher sea levels or more sluggish drainage following the silting up of the creek systems. Whichever is the case, the promontory maintained its existence through times of fen encroachment. This high ground would have acted as a suitable area to draw human settlement and exploitation throughout the prehistoric and later periods.

The road immediately to the north of the site continues eastward into the fen. This passage to the fens would probably have been a relatively busy route for grazing, fishing, wildfowl and trade between the fens and dry land areas.

Being close to the hub of the fen edge village, this site offered the potential for well-preserved medieval roadside development. Unfortunately, the excavation revealed that there had been deep and extensive modern disturbance on the site. Feature 22/27 may have a medieval origin, but it seems to have had modern disturbance as well. Of the few medieval pottery fragments that were recovered, all came from disturbed deposits and therefore cannot illuminate as to the earlier uses of the plot.

The level of natural encountered in Trench 3 was noticeably higher than that in Trench 1, but close to Trench 2. The implication of this is that there was possibly a hollow, either natural or a result of human activity in the vicinity of Trench 1. The fact that deposit 3, believed to be a top of natural interface horizon, is not present in Trench 1 and the northern part of Trench 2, tends to support the suggestion of truncation/ground level reduction in this area.

The large feature **22/27** revealed in Trenches 1 and 2 did not extend to Trench 3. Defining the nature of this feature is problematic; its extent was not satisfactorily traced, the artefacts it contained were not informative about the processes surrounding it and the infilling processes simply indicated that the soils were mixed and disturbed prior to final deposition. Feature **22/27** may have been a long-standing channel or pond, of either natural or human origin, that underwent intentional in-filling within the last couple of centuries. This was almost certainly in preparation for the development of houses and outbuilding, some of which survive to the present day.

7 Conclusions

Following excavation of the three trenches, it can be concluded that some evidence of potential land division remains *in situ* on this site. A very large feature, possibly natural, occupies part of the northeast quarter of the site. Very little in terms of strong archaeological evidence remains to give a clear picture of the previous uses of this plot. Most of the evidence points to this site being used as a dumping ground for soils and rubble. This may be due the low-lying ground being otherwise useless, or it being purposely made-up to allow its further exploitation.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Mr. Hugh McGarvie who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by Dr Paul Sperry.

The brief for archaeological works was written by Andy Thomas, who visited the site and monitored the evaluation.

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Appendix 1: Context summary

| CONTEXT NUMBER | TRENCH | TYPE | DESCRIPTION | DATE |
|----------------|---------|---------------|--|------------|
| 01 | 1, 2 | Make-up layer | Present over eastern half of site | Modern |
| 02 | 1, 2, 3 | Topsoil | Dark brownish grey gravelly silts | |
| 03 | 2, 3 | Natural | Sandy gravels | |
| 04 | 2 | Fill of 05 | Dark brownish grey gravelly silts | Modern |
| 05 | 2 | Posthole | 0.44m wide and 0.26m deep | Modern |
| 06 | 2 | Fill of 07 | Dark brownish grey gravelly silts | Modern |
| 07 | 2 | Posthole | 0.27m wide and 0.24m deep | Modern |
| 08 | 2 | Fill of 09 | Mid greyish brown silt with frequent marl and sandy gravel | Undated |
| 09 | 2 | Ditch | 7m+ long, 0.44m wide and 0.42m deep | Undated |
| 10 | 2 | Fill of 12 | Mid brown gritty silt | Undated |
| 11 | 2 | Fill of 12 | Mid orange and white sandy gravel | Undated |
| 12 | 2 | Pit | 1.8m+ long, 1.40m wide, 0.45m deep | Undated |
| 13 | 1 | Fill of 14 | Mid brown gritty silt | Victorian? |
| 14 | 1 | Pit | Sub rectangular 1.77m long, 1.42m wide, 0.22m deep | Victorian? |
| 15 | 2 | Fill of 16 | Mid brownish grey gravelly silts | Modern |
| 16 | 2 | Field drain | Trench, 0.88m wide, 0.37m deep | Modern |
| 17 | 2 | Layer | Mid brown | Victorian? |

| | | | | |
|----|---|------------|--|--|
| | | | clayey gravel | |
| 18 | 2 | Fill of 22 | Mid greyish brown silty clay | Victorian? |
| 19 | 2 | Fill of 22 | Pale brown silty gravel | Victorian? |
| 20 | 2 | Fill of 22 | Dark grey silt | Late medieval with modern disturbance? |
| 21 | 2 | Fill of 22 | Greyish brown gravel with occasional silt and sand | Victorian? |
| 22 | 2 | Channel? | 4.10m+ long, 1.80m+ wide, 0.74m+ deep | |
| 23 | 1 | Posthole | | Undated |
| 24 | 1 | Posthole | | Modern |
| 25 | 1 | Posthole | | Undated |
| 26 | 1 | Pit | | Modern |
| 27 | 1 | Channel? | 3.40m+ long, 1.80m+ wide, 1.10m+ deep | |
| 28 | 3 | Posthole | | Modern |
| 29 | 3 | Pit | | Modern |
| 30 | 2 | Layer | Silty gravel | |

Appendix 2: Finds Summary

| Context | Material | Object Name | Weight in kg |
|---------|----------|---------------------------|--------------|
| 21 | Ceramic | Ceramic Building Material | 0.18 |
| 13 | Bone | Bone | 0.19 |
| 13 | Ceramic | Vessel | 0.04 |
| 19 | Ceramic | Vessel | 0.02 |
| 19 | Ceramic | Ceramic Building Material | 0.12 |
| 20 | Ceramic | Ceramic Building Material | 0.03 |
| 20 | Ceramic | Vessel | 0.13 |
| 20 | Bone | Bone | 0.12 |

Appendix 3: Pottery Assessment

by Paul Spoerry

1 Introduction and Background

This evaluation produced a small pottery assemblage of nine sherds, weighing 0.19kg. Of the fourteen deposits recorded, three contained pottery. The material from the topsoil and any unstratified material are included in these totals.

2 Methodology

2.1 Fieldwork

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.

2.2 Ceramic Analysis

The basic guidance in *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991) has been adhered to along with the MPRG documents (MPRG 1998 and 2001). *Guidance for the processing and publication of medieval pottery from excavations* (Blake and Davey, 1983) acts as a standard.

Spot dating was carried out using the CCC 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. All sherds have been counted, classified and weighed. Sherds warranting possible illustration been identified, as have possible cross-fits.

The AFU curates the pottery and archive until formal deposition of the site archive.

3 Results of Assessment

Post-Roman Ceramic fabrics identified were as follows:

| Type | Code | Context | No. sherds | Pottery spotdate | Context spotdate (where different) |
|---------------------------------|------|---------|------------|------------------|------------------------------------|
| Bourne B type ware | BONB | 13 | 1 | 1300-1450 | 1700-1900 |
| English stoneware | ENGS | 13 | 1 | 1700-1900 | |
| Post-medieval black glazed ware | PMBL | 19 | 1 | 1700-1900 | |
| Bourne D type ware | BOND | 20 | 4 | 1450-1650 | 1480-1550 |
| Raeren stoneware | RAER | 20 | 2 | 1480-1550 | 1480-1550 |

4 Interpretation and Conclusions

The assemblage is small, has no complete vessels, and full statistical analysis is not viable.

The pottery represented suggests one late medieval context (20) and some later post-medieval activity. One medieval sherd (in 13) suggests residuality.

No preservation bias has been recognised and no long-term storage problems are likely.

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