



Archaeological Field Unit

**Kings College School, Cambridge:
An Archaeological Evaluation**

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Commissioned by CMC Architects (for Kings College School)

**Kings College School, Cambridge:
An Archaeological Evaluation
(TL 4400 5826)**

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SUMMARY

The Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council conducted an archaeological evaluation on land covering 0.0315 hectares at Kings College School, Cambridgeshire (TL 4400 5826). This was in advance of a proposed classroom development.

A re-cut ditch was recorded within trench 1, no archaeology was located in trench 2. No datable evidence was recovered to assign a period to the features recorded, however a medieval or post-medieval date seems most likely.

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1 INTRODUCTION

On the 23rd of April 2002, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) on land within Kings College School, Cambridgeshire (TL 4400 5826) (Fig. 1). It was commissioned by George Wright of CMC architects, acting on behalf of the school, in response to a brief set by the County Archaeology Office (CAO).

The site is adjacent to the present day tennis court and is situated on the western edge of the school, close to Grange Road.

The presence of archaeological remains was considered likely by the CAO on the basis of information contained in the County Sites and Monuments record (SMR).

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

2.1 Geology

According to the British Geological Survey the site is River Terrace Gravels.

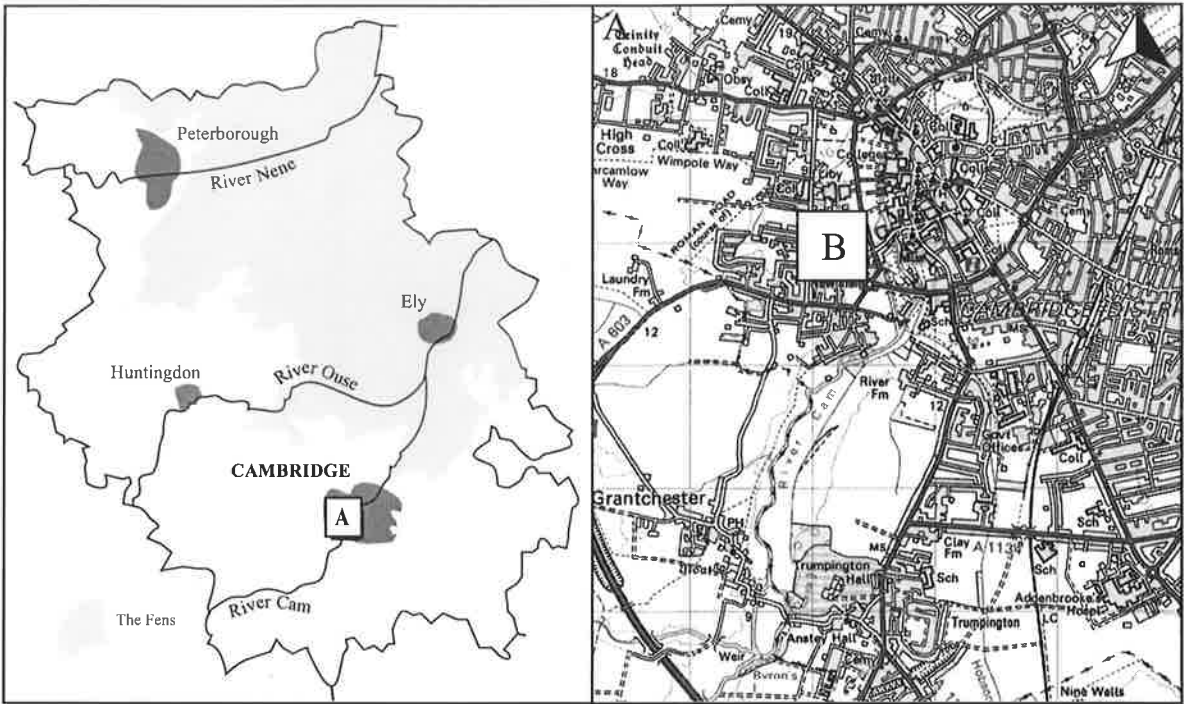
2.2 Topography

The site is located in the western suburbs of Cambridge City, west of the River Cam and city centre Colleges at a height of 10.1m O.D. It is a levelled area within the school grounds, adjacent to Grange Road.

3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies to the south and west of the Iron Age and Roman historic core of Cambridge City and to the west of the medieval city and college areas.

The Cambridge Sites and Monuments Record identifies the closest archaeological site some 250m to the north off Grange Road within Trinity College Grounds (SMR No: 11515). An excavation in 1992 revealed Prehistoric and Roman remains dating to the Neolithic/Bronze Age (ditches) and a 1st-2nd century Roman settlement respectively.



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Figure 1 Site Location Map

The only other significant archaeology in the area lies between 500-750m to both the north and south of the investigation area. The SMR identifies these as the remains of Roman and Saxon settlement and burials. St John's cricket grounds (SMR Nos: 04926, 04927, 05049 a-c and 05111a+b) excavations in 1888 and 1910-1911 uncovered over 300 Anglo-Saxon inhumations and cremations dating to the early 5th-7th centuries. Grave goods (brooches, beads, spearheads etc.) normally associated with pagan Saxon cemeteries were recovered. These sites had also earlier Roman components including burials and settlement evidence. Similar archaeological remains were discovered to the south in Newnham (SMR Nos: 04928 and 04997) again with Saxon burials and earlier Roman occupation. Interestingly one Roman inhumation was recorded as containing fragments of 'scale mail' armour.

4 METHODOLOGY

Two trenches were opened by a JCB using a flat-bladed ditching bucket 1.6m wide, under the supervision of an archaeologist. The total length of the trenching was 10.5m and this constitutes a 5% sample of the development area.

The presence of an active/live gas pipeline prevented the excavation on the proposed single north-south aligned trench of 10m immediately to the west of the tennis court. A roughly 'L' shaped trench (Trench 1) and a test pit (trench 2) were excavated and this revised strategy was approved by the County Archaeology Office on site (Jeremy Parsons pers comm.).

5 RESULTS

- 5.1 Trench 1 was 9m long, 1.6m wide and between 0.90-1.0m deep. It comprised of 7m extending eastwards from Grange Road and a 2m north-south aligned forming an obtuse 'L' shape. A Victorian garden soil (2), 0.75m thick comprised of a very dark brown sandy silt with occasional gravel and unfrosted brick fragments overlay 0.10m of pale orange-brown silty sand subsoil (3). This in turn overlay the natural swathes of lower chalk, and orange sands and gravels.

In the longer east-west arm of Trench 1 the subsoil (3) was cut by a north-south aligned ditch **13**. This was 0.95m deep and at least 1.2m wide, its western side entirely truncated by a later re-cut **10**. The surviving eastern side sloped evenly (50°) rounding to a gently concave base. The truncated lower fill (12) was comprised of a pale greyish brown silty sand with frequent small gravel stones and calcarious grits (0.10m thick). This overlain by a thick upper fill (11) of mid-dark brown sandy silt with very occasional gravel. Neither fill contained any finds or artefacts of any description.

The ditch **13** was re-cut by a slightly deep ditch **10** following the same north-south alignment. This was 1.60m wide and 1.02m deep. Its sides sloped gently (20°) from the top and then more steeply (c.60°) to a broadly concave base. Its fills consisted of a 0.12m thick primary deposit (9) a mid-orange brown silty sand with moderate to frequent gravel stones and calcareous grits. This was overlain by (8) an extensive deposit (at least 0.60m thick) of mid orange brown silty sand with moderate small gravel stones. The upper fill (7) consisted of up to 0.36m of mid-dark brown sandy silt with occasional gravel stones and rare chalk flecks. Fragments of animal bone (small) and oyster shell were recovered from the fill of (8) but no dateable finds were recovered in any of the fills.

Both ditches were overlain by the same Victorian garden soil (2) but in Trench 1 this was cut by two small modern trenches, each containing a ceramic pipe taking rainwater from a nearby building to a rubble filled sump that lay mostly within the excavated trench but did not penetrate much below the garden soil. The garden soil was also overlain, to the south only by a 0.15m thick deposit of compacted concrete rubble serving as a bed for the extant tarmac path and yard to the south.

- 5.2 Trench 2 was 1.5m long, 1.6m wide and 0.90m deep and contained no archaeology. A Victorian garden soil (2), comprised 0.80m of a very dark brown sandy silt with occasional gravel and unfrosted brick fragments overlay 0.15m of pale orange-brown silty sand subsoil (3). This in turn overlay the natural swathes of lower chalk and orange sands and gravels.

6 DISCUSSION

Although the evaluation was in an area of potential archaeology, no dateable remains were recovered. The trenches excavated revealed a ditch of unknown date. The composition and nature of the fills suggest that the ditch and subsequent re-cut are more probably medieval or post-medieval in date, rather than earlier. The ditch was re-cut on at least one occasion suggesting it remained in use over a period of time and it is likely that it may have been a boundary.

7 CONCLUSION

The objective of the evaluation was to establish the character, date, state of preservation and extent of any archaeological remains within the development area. The information from the evaluation is designed to allow an assessment

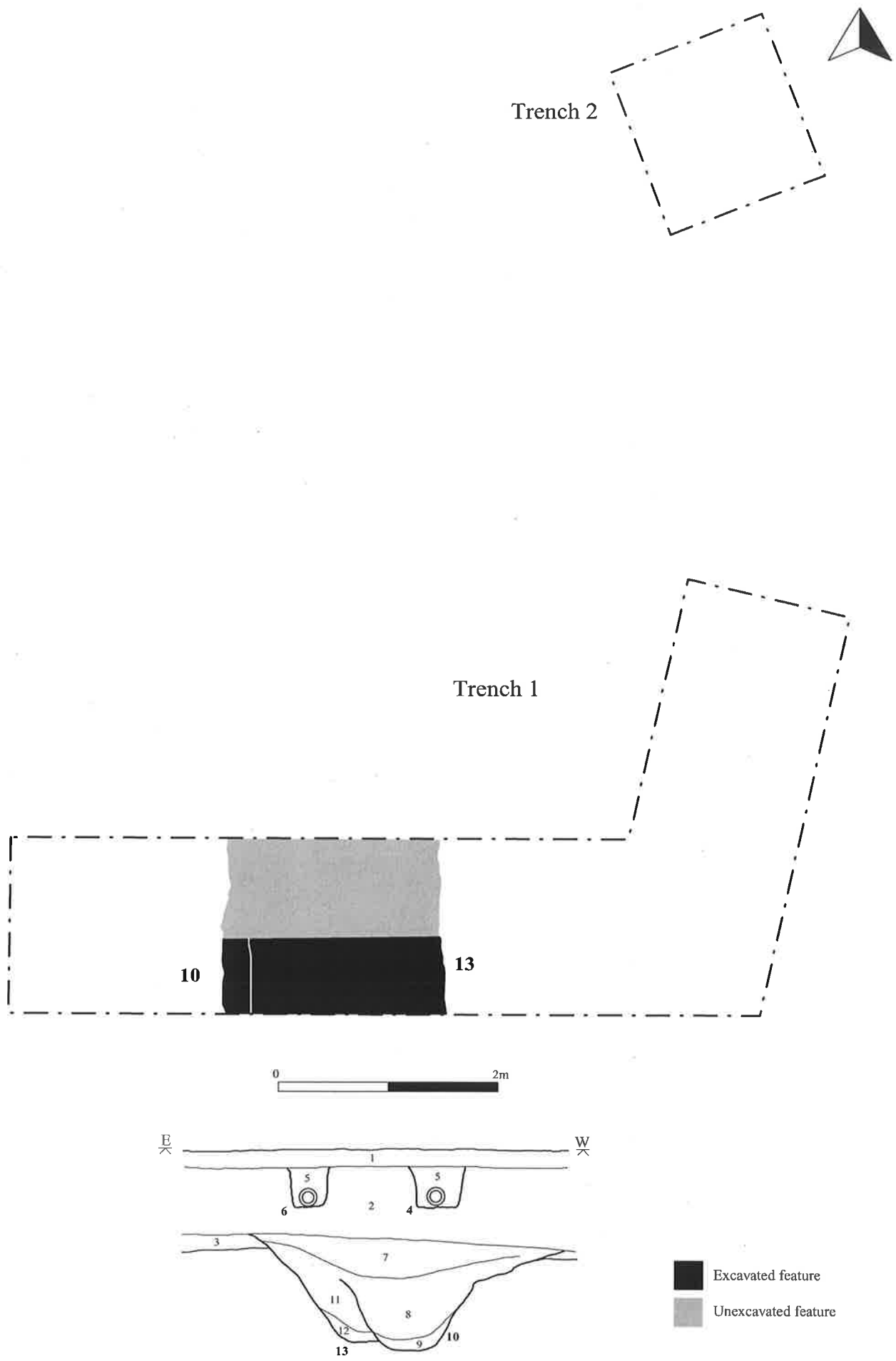


Figure 2 Plan and section

to be made of the proposed developments archaeological implications and to inform an appropriate mitigation strategy.

The project has been successful in achieving its objectives. No significant archaeological remains were encountered within the area evaluated, the undated ditch and its re-cut did not cross into the development area and were only identified due to the relocation of the trench (see Methodology above).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cambridgeshire Sites and Monuments Record



Cambridgeshire
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