

**Broad Lane, Cottenham: Archaeological Investigation
(TL 4493 6829)**

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Report B2

INTRODUCTION

An archaeological investigation was undertaken at the Broad Lane Works, Broad Lane, Cottenham (TL 4493 6829) on the 1st and 21st of November 1996 by the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Noyes & Noyes (Commercial Property Consultants) on behalf of the County Tyre Group of Companies and was carried out to the terms of a brief (2/9/96) issued by Cambridgeshire County Council.

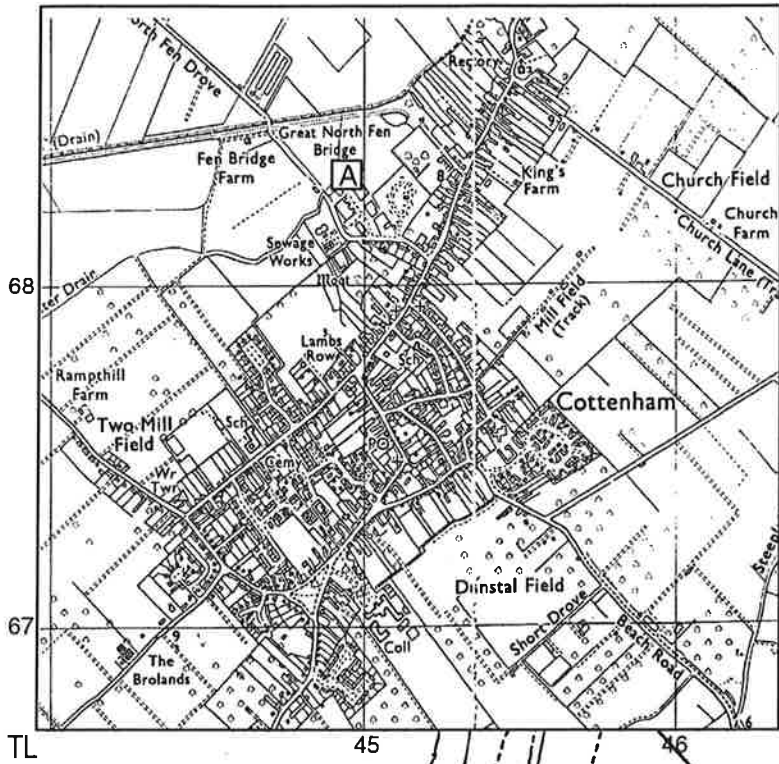
The development comprised the construction of a warehouse extension and car parking.

GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site of the warehouse extension is largely level at 6m OD and is located on Kimmeridge Clay immediately to the north of the interface with the Lower Greensand on which most of Cottenham rests. The site overlooks the alluvium of Great North Fen, to the north.

HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The Sites and Monuments Record for Cambridgeshire and previous archaeological work show only sparse prehistoric finds have been documented within Cottenham. A Mesolithic axe was found at Beach Road (SMR 05215, TL 455 675), a crouched burial was recovered at 69 Rook Street (SMR 02795). Recent work has identified a significant scatter of Mesolithic flint at the Crowlands Manor/Lordship Lane site (Mortimer pers. comm.). An Iron Age pot scatter (Cot 14), associated with cropmarks lies less than 1

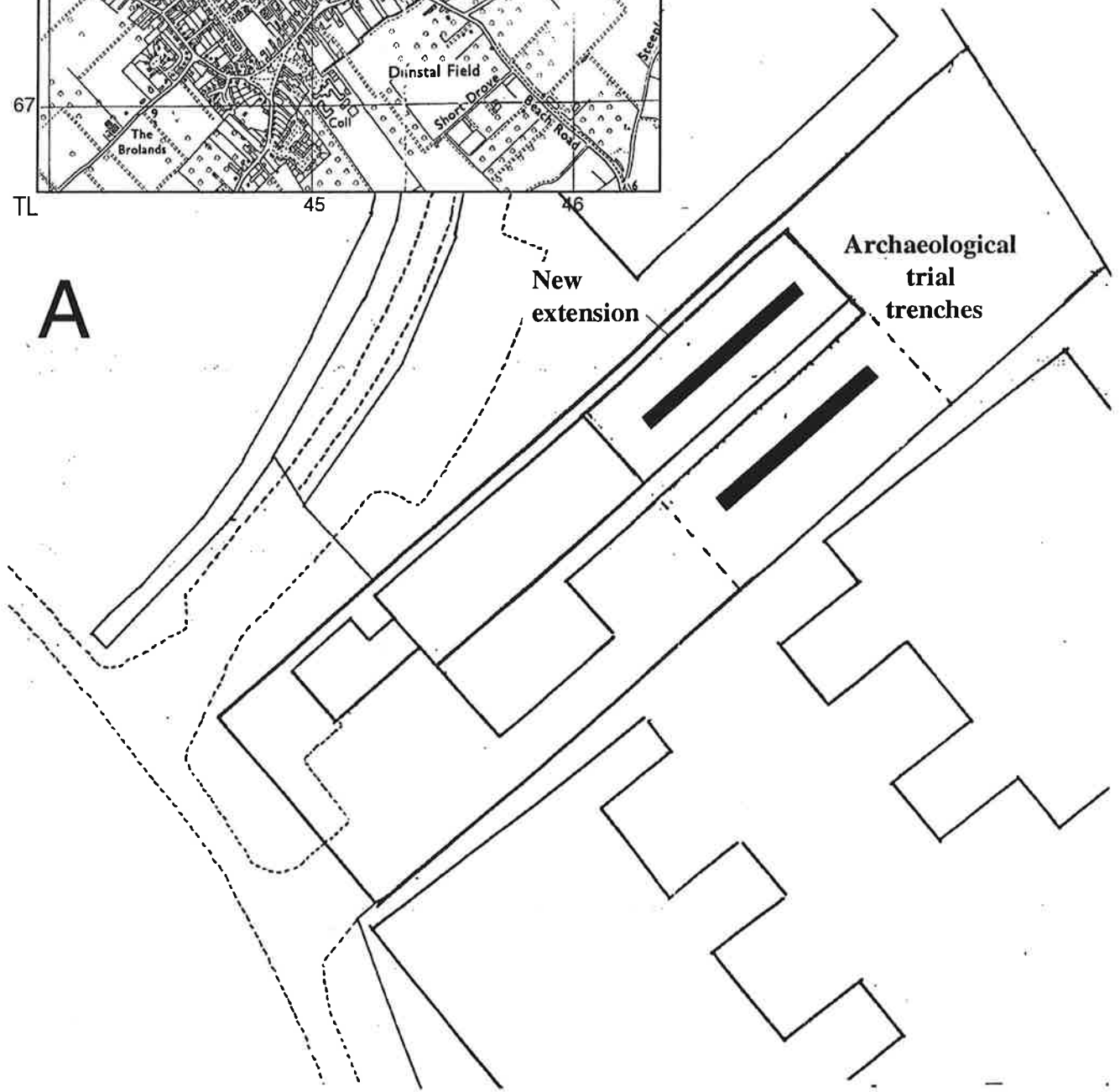


TL

A

New extension

Archaeological trial trenches



kilometre from the subject site. The fen in the vicinity of the River Great Ouse to the north of the village and terraces of the River Cam to the south and east were extensively settled in the Roman period. Many of the cropmark enclosure complexes linked by ditched trackways have been associated with surface artefact scatters (Hall 1996, 132-137).

The village of Cottenham has a long documented history; first references date back to the middle of the 10th century (Reaney 1943, 149). The village and its morphology have been considered in detail by Ravensdale, it was one of the largest villages in Cambridgeshire with over 60 tenants in the 11th century; a figure which had more than doubled by the late 13th century. In the 11th century the settlements at the church and at Crowlands Manor may have been separate, corresponding to the two Cottenhams which were perhaps distinguished in 1086 (V.C.H. Cambs. i. 367, 371, 396). Crowlands Manor House, belonged to Crowland Abbey (Lincolnshire) and was given by Thurcytel, presumably on becoming abbot shortly after 971 (VCH Vol IX 1992). It was at the Crowlands Manor settlement that at least 33 of the land holders died during the period of the black death (14th century) but the population recovered and stood at 121 families in 1563 (ibid).

Today, the only visible remnant of Crowlands Manor is the rectangular medieval moated site (measuring 36.5m x 42.5m). A larger moated area lay adjacent on the north-westside, and is thought to have enclosed outbuildings. The latter is likely to have been destroyed by the construction of a sewerage works early in the 20th century (ibid).

Recent archaeological excavations between Broad Lane and Lordship Lane in the vicinity of Crowlands Manor have revealed extensive evidence of Middle-Saxon settlement (Butler and Wait 1993; Mortimer pers. comm.), mostly in the form of multiple phases of ditched enclosures. These excavations also identified phases of medieval activity including a series of north-west to south-east oriented ditches dating to the 12th to 13th centuries. Other finds include a late medieval gully, garden soil and a limestone yard surface, post medieval ditches, pits and postholes

METHODOLOGY

The first phase of the archaeological investigation comprised the excavation by mechanical excavator of two trial trenches. The two trenches (25m long by 1.5m wide) were positioned in areas of the development site that were under the most threat from

future ground works associated with the construction of the new warehouse extension (Fig. 1).

The second phase of work at the development site was the observation of the excavation of a foundation trench (Fig. 1).

RESULTS

Topsoil (depth 0.3m) was removed from the two trial trenches to reveal the upper interface of the Kimmeridge Clay. No archaeological finds or features were identified either in the topsoil or cut into the natural clay. The same negative results were obtained from the observation of the new buildings foundation trench, which was excavated to a depth of 0.5m.

CONCLUSION

The absence of archaeological material from the two trial trenches and the foundation trench might be considered strange when taking into account the dense nature of the archaeological evidence located no more than 150m to the south-west at the `crowlands Manor site. However, open area excavation in this area revealed that most of the archaeological activity was confined to the Greensand subsoils. The Kimmeridge Clay, which has a tendency to become heavy and sticky, was clearly avoided by structures and by the small ditched enclosures. Activities such as seasonal grazing may well have been undertaken on this land, but this need not have occurred in enclosed areas and would consequently have left no physical remnants.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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