

Witham Archaeology

A Report to Stafford Infrastructure Engineering
on behalf of Nene Park Trust

April 2011



NEW COVERED SIDING, FERRY MEADOWS COUNTRY PARK RAILWAY, PETERBOROUGH

Archaeological Watching Brief

R Trimble

NEW COVERED SIDING, FERRY MEADOWS COUNTRY PARK RAILWAY, PETERBOROUGH

Site Code: FCMP11
Planning Application No.: -
NGR: TL 14830 97510

Archaeological Watching Brief

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

SUMMARY

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Witham Archaeology during groundwork relating to the construction of a new covered siding for the miniature railway at Ferry Meadows Country Park, Peterborough. The work was commissioned by Stafford Infrastructure Engineering on behalf of Nene Park Trust to meet the requirements of Peterborough City Council as set out in a brief by the City Archaeologist, dated 11th March 2010. Fieldwork was carried out on the 7th and 8th February 2011.

The site lies within the boundaries of a Scheduled Monument (Mon. No.182), with a complex of cropmarks indicating settlement from prehistory into the Roman period. Excavations carried out in the 1970s, in advance of mineral extraction, have revealed considerable evidence of Roman-British activity, including a probable marching camp, the foundations of a temple, settlement remains, a cemetery and iron-working remains.

All of the deposits encountered during the current watching brief were recent in origin and probably derived from activity associated with mineral extraction in the 1970s.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Witham Archaeology during groundwork relating to the construction of a new covered siding for the miniature railway at Ferry Meadows Country Park, Peterborough. The work was commissioned by Stafford Infrastructure Engineering on behalf of Nene Park Trust, Peterborough to meet the requirements of Peterborough City Council as set out in a brief by the City Archaeologist, dated 11th March 2010.

The information in this document is presented with the proviso that further data may yet emerge. Witham Archaeology cannot, therefore, be held responsible for any loss, delay or damage, material or otherwise, arising out of this report. The document has been prepared in accordance with the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists and the document *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003).

2.0 SITE LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY & GEOLOGY (see Fig. 1)

The site is located within the Ferry Meadows Country Park, c. 5km west of Peterborough city centre, at NGR TL 14830 97510. It lies to the west of the existing café and visitor centre complex situated on the southwestern shore of Overton Lake.

The new siding lies at the base of the east-facing slope of a broad bank or bund, apparently created as part of landscaping after the conclusion of mineral extraction in the area.

The wider area is generally level, lying at an elevation of around 6.80m OD, within a meander of the River Nene, on a solid geology of Grantham Formation sandstone, siltstone and mudstone, overlain by superficial deposits of river terrace sand and gravel (British Geological Survey: www.bgs.ac.uk Geology of Britain - 1:50 000 map).

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The area containing the site forms part of a Scheduled Monument (Mon. No. 182). Cropmark evidence indicates a complex settlement pattern, with remains dating from prehistory to the Roman period. A Romano-British farmstead (HER Ref. 01433f) dated as early 3rd to mid 4th century and an associated cemetery were investigated during archaeological excavations on land to the west of the site, ahead of mineral extraction in the early 1970s.

Further excavations, in an area located to the northeast of the current site, resulted in the discovery of a probable early Roman marching camp, the stone foundations of a Romano-Celtic temple, and evidence of 3rd to 4th century settlement. The settlement remains included corn driers, and an aisled workshop with metal working furnaces, various drainage channels and a large, stone basin (HER Ref. 09820).

The complex of remains is bounded to the south by a series of linear features (identifiable from cropmarks), which run east-west across the peninsula. They have been interpreted as ditches, possibly with a defensive function (HER Ref. 01433).

4.0 AIMS & OBJECTIVES

The principal objectives of the project, as set out in a Witham Archaeology specification of 7th October 2010, were to:

- *allow the preservation by record of any surviving archaeological deposits and artefacts exposed by the development groundwork within the constraints imposed by the contractor's working methods, programme and development design.*
- *produce a project archive for deposition with the appropriate museum together with a client report.*
- *provide information for accession to the City's Historic Environment Record.*

5.0 METHODOLOGY

Although the original construction design provided for a new siding on land immediately west of the existing track the structure was actually positioned further to the east, on the line of the existing railway and adjacent to a fence delineating the boundary of the cafe and visitor centre area. The revised design entailed rerouting of part of the railway, to follow a more westerly course around the siding.

The foundation design required the construction of six concrete strips placed at right angles across the long axis of the structure, each measuring 3m long by 450mm wide by 600mm deep. To avoid premature disturbance to the existing track, the archaeological potential of deposits in the area was assessed through partial excavations (Pits 1 – 6) at the proposed locations of the foundation strips, extending between the fence and the existing track. To accommodate the realignment of the track, more general ground reductions were required on land to the west (see Fig. 2), extending to a maximum of around 4m wide, and depths of between 100 and 200mm to the east (in the area adjacent to the track) and up to 600mm to the west (including bank material).

All of the excavations were intensively monitored for evidence of archaeologically significant features and/or deposits and a representative cross-section/profile was recorded across the central part of the area (See Figs. 2 and 3).

A series of 35mm colour print and digital colour photographs details the recorded stratigraphy, as well as the progress of groundwork operations. The section/profile drawing was produced at scale 1:50, while written context descriptions on *pro forma* context sheets were made for each unit of stratigraphy.

6.0 RESULTS (Figs. 2 and 3)

The earliest deposit encountered in the excavations was a highly compacted layer of sand and small gravel (003), visible across much of the reduced area west of the track (top surface coinciding with the lower limit of excavation) and extending to the full depth (at least 600mm) of all six pits on the eastern side of the track. The deposit was extremely difficult to penetrate and was generally left *in situ* when encountered (apart from the foundation trenches where a toothed bucket was employed).

The basal deposit occupying the northern extent of the reduced area (approximately from the northern end of the covered siding) was a mid reddish brown sandy silt (002) containing frequent stone and occasional modern concrete, tile, iron and brick. It appeared to overlie (003) and might be interpreted as a dump deposit extending across lower lying ground, alternatively as backfill within a large cut feature. The bank was composed of moderately compact mid yellowish brown clayey silty sand, containing frequent stone to 30mm and occasional clay lumps (004). The latter deposit was overlain by a shallow depth of topsoil (001), composed of mid brown, clayey sand.

7.0 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Groundworks associated with construction of the new railway siding revealed no evidence of archaeologically significant remains, being contained entirely within deposits of comparatively recent origin. The primary deposit of sand and gravel was highly compacted – probably due to the movement of the machinery associated with mineral extraction. It is unclear whether the deposit represented an undisturbed geological horizon or material removed from elsewhere on the site. The latter would appear to be the most likely in view of the history of the site (evident on photographs of the mineral extraction process). The remaining deposits probably derived from subsequent landscaping and reinstatement operations.

8.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author of this report would like to thank Mr Terry Stafford for his assistance in providing information and ensuring the conditions for successful archaeological monitoring of the project. Thanks are also due to Rebecca Casa-Hatton, Peterborough City Council Archaeological Service, for her advice and assistance in locating relevant information.

9.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brown, N and Glazebrook, J (eds) 2000 *Research and Archaeology: a Framework for the for the Eastern Counties: 2 Research Agenda and Strategy*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers **8**

Glazebrook, J (ed), 1997 *Research and Archaeology: a Framework for the for the Eastern Counties: 1 Resource Assessment*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers **3**

Gurney, D 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Papers **14**

10.0 PROJECT/ ARCHIVE DETAILS

10.1 Project Details

SITE CODE: FCMP11

PLANNING APPLICATION No.: -

FIELD OFFICER: R Trimble

NGR: NGR: TL 14830 97510

CIVIL PARISH: Peterborough

SMR No.:

DATE OF INTERVENTION: 7 - 8th February 2011

TYPE OF INTERVENTION: Watching Brief

UNDERTAKEN FOR: Stafford Infrastructure Engineering on behalf of Nene Park Trust

10.2 Archive Details

PRESENT LOCATION: Witham Archaeology, 65 Grantham Road, Sleaford, Lincolnshire, NG34 7NG

FINAL LOCATION: Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery

ACCESSION DATE: - June 2011

The Site Archive Comprises:

Context Records	4
Plans at Scale 1:50	-
Section Drawings at Scale 1:50	1
Colour Print Photographs	1 x 36 exp film
Digital photographs	43
Set of Site Notes	1

It is intended that transfer of the archive in accordance with current published requirements will be undertaken following completion of this project.

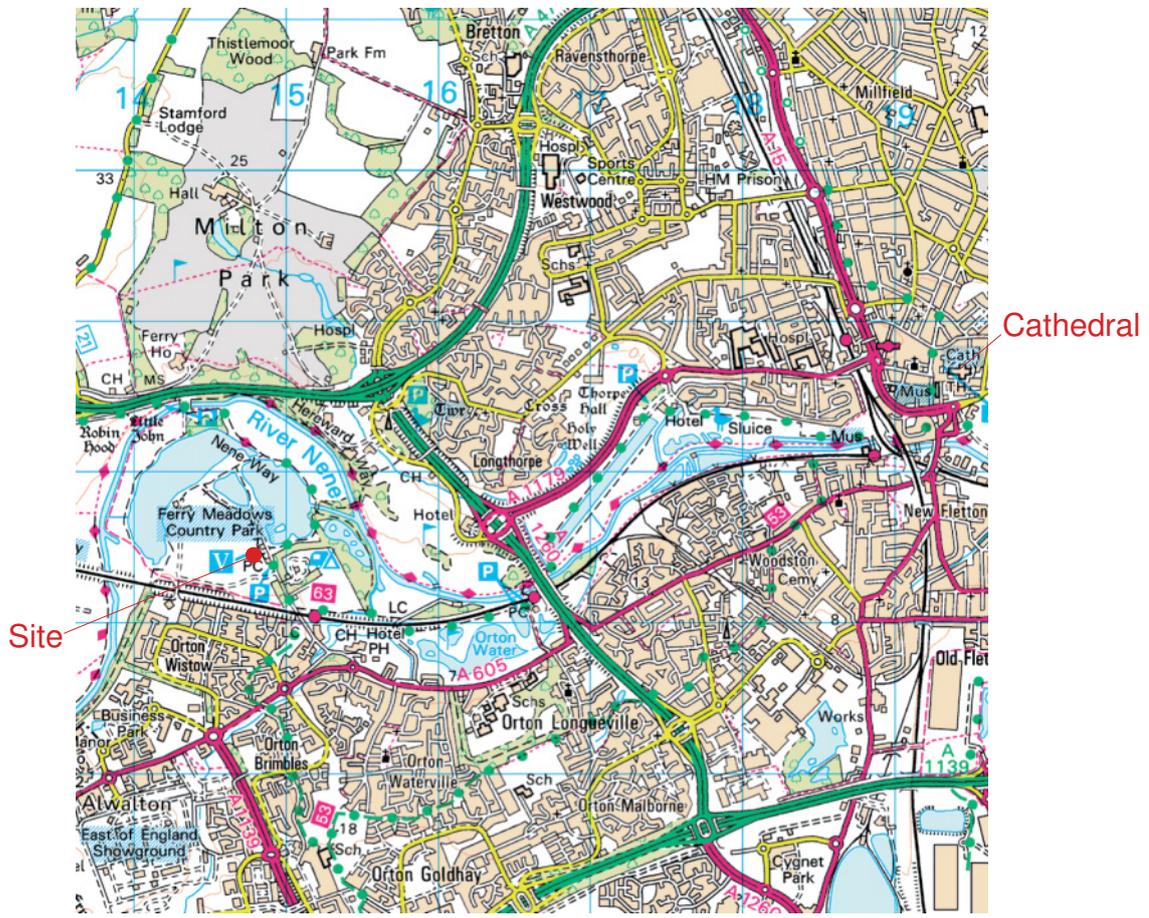
COLOUR PLATES



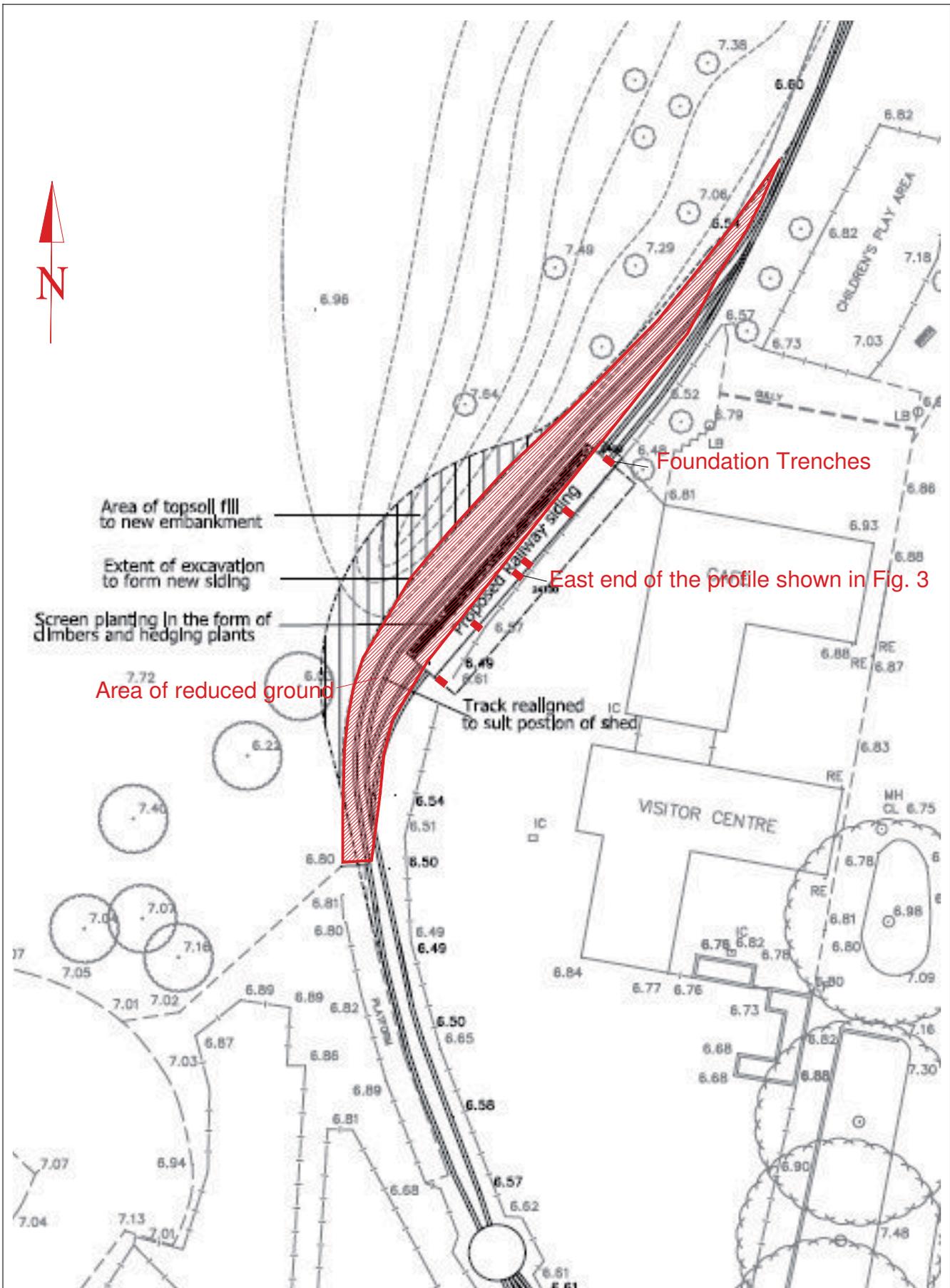
Plate 1 – General view of the reduced area and pits 1 to 6 - looking south

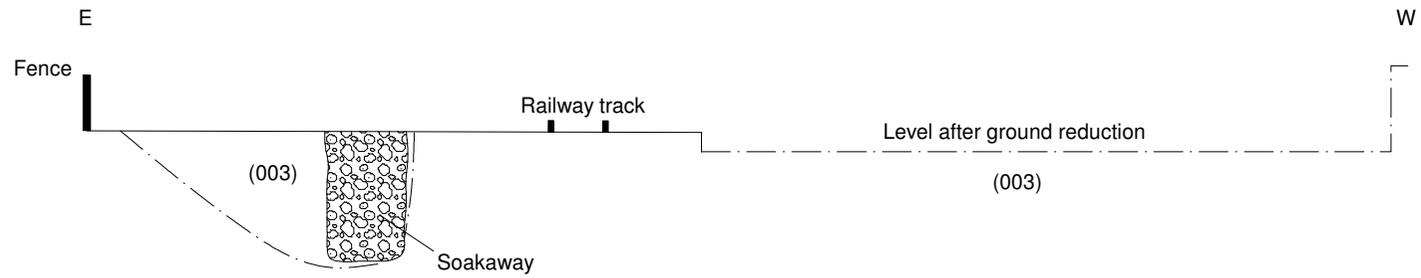


Plate 2 – View showing Section 1, looking south; 1m scale.



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