Cambridgeshire County Council

The Historic towns of Cambridgeshire Extensive Urban Survey

MARCH

FENLAND

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***Cambridgeshire Extensive Urban Survey: March*. Report 09/03/2015.**

Revision	Date	Issued to	Purpose/Status	Amendments
-		CCC	Final Report	
1				
2				

List of Abbreviations Used in the Text

APS	Archaeological Project Services
BGS	British Geological Survey
BUFAU	Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
CAM ARC	new name for CCC AFU
CAU	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
CCC	Cambridgeshire County Council
CCC AFU	Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit, later CAM ARC
CRO	Cambridgeshire Record Office
CUCAP	Cambridge University Committee for Aerial Photographs format
EAA	East Anglian Archaeology
HER	(Cambridgeshire) Historic Environment Record
LB	Listed Building
NMR	National Monuments Record, English Heritage
OAE	Oxford Archaeology East
OS	Ordnance Survey
PCAS	Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society
PPG 16	Planning Policy Guidance Note 16, introduced in 1990
RCHM(E)	Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments (of England)
SM	Scheduled Monument
VCH	Victoria County History

SUMMARY

March falls into Historic Environment Character Area 3 (HECA No. 3): Cambridgeshire Fen Islands. It occupies a strip of higher ground rising from the waterlogged fens that offered a base for occupation and, as a result, activity is known from most periods of history. The Fenland Survey confirmed the presence of Mesolithic and Neolithic sites along Gaul Road lying on gravel deposits and these have been more recently confirmed by fieldwalking and trial trenching. Evidence of Bronze Age activity was fairly sparse until recently when developer-funded work located Bronze Age occupation to the north part of the town and also within the south part of the historic core.

In the Iron Age settlements grew up at the main egresses to the island and waterways linked outlying sites to the main ones. Recent work indicates that Iron Age settlement covered a larger part of the gravel island than was previously thought and that some of the cropmark field systems may be late Iron Age in date. A large scale Iceni presence in the area may have been a catalyst for the scale of Roman occupation. Roman activity appears to fall into three areas, being Grandford Farm, Flaggrass Hill and Stonea Grange. The Fen Causeway ran across the north of the parish connecting the first two, and a canal ran from Flaggrass to Stonea. A growing number of Roman salterns are being identified. Extensive cropmarks in the area suggest a network of stock enclosures, and archaeological finds from butchery remains are indicative of the rearing, slaughtering and salting of meat for transport from the region.

There is little Saxon activity known in March. The earliest reference to March is in Domesday, when it is referred to as Merc, derived from the Old English word meaning ‘boundary’. Saxon activity in this area was centred around Doddington, and March was assessed with this manor.

Medieval activity in March was centred around the south of the current town, where the parish church of St Wendreda stands. The manor of Hatchwood was here, and remains associated with medieval settlement are known in the surrounding fields. At some point, the settlement focus shifted north to around the crossing of the diverted River Nene, where the core of the current town is.

By the 16th century, March had outstripped Doddington as a town, although was still smaller than the likes of Ely or Wisbech. It developed on the intersection of two important routes; the navigable River Nene on which March was an inland port and on the land route between Wisbech and Ely.

March’s main impetus for growth came with the railways, the first of which opened in 1846. The years 1846-8 saw the connection of March with the rest of the Fens and thus the country, and its central location made it the ideal choice for a central hub. This was expressed by the presence of the Whitemoor Yards and the sheer number of people employed on the railways.

INTRODUCTION

This report is an archaeological and historical assessment of March (Fig 1) and forms part of the Cambridgeshire Extensive Urban Survey of 28 historic settlements in Cambridgeshire. This project, funded by English Heritage, forms part of a nation-wide reassessment of the management of the urban archaeological resource. The original EUS project was carried out between 1999 and 2003, and involved work by Quinton Carroll, Bob Hatton, and Rebecca Casa-Hatton, all of Cambridgeshire County Council. It was refreshed and completed by Steven Morgan of Oxford Archaeology (East) in 2014.

A number of sources have been used to compile this report, including the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record, the Database of Listed Buildings held by the County Planning Department, and various cartographic and documentary records, in particular the Victoria County History (Pugh 1967). The tables were prepared using the computerised mapping system and database of the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record.

This report presents the findings of the assessment and characterisation stage of the process. In addition to the written reports, a computer-based digital mapping and database has been created using Exegesis Geographical Information System (GIS) and forms an important element of the project outputs. It is intended that elements of this report will be made available online. A further stage of works provides a strategy outlining management guidance for the defined environment resource.

The study area focuses geographically on the historic core of the town of March as defined on Fig 2, and chronologically from the Palaeolithic through to c.1900 AD. Where appropriate, these restrictions may be exceeded on occasion. The definition of the historic core is based on the extent of settlement in the town at the time of the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map (1885) but does not include the railway line and the sidings on the northern side of the town.

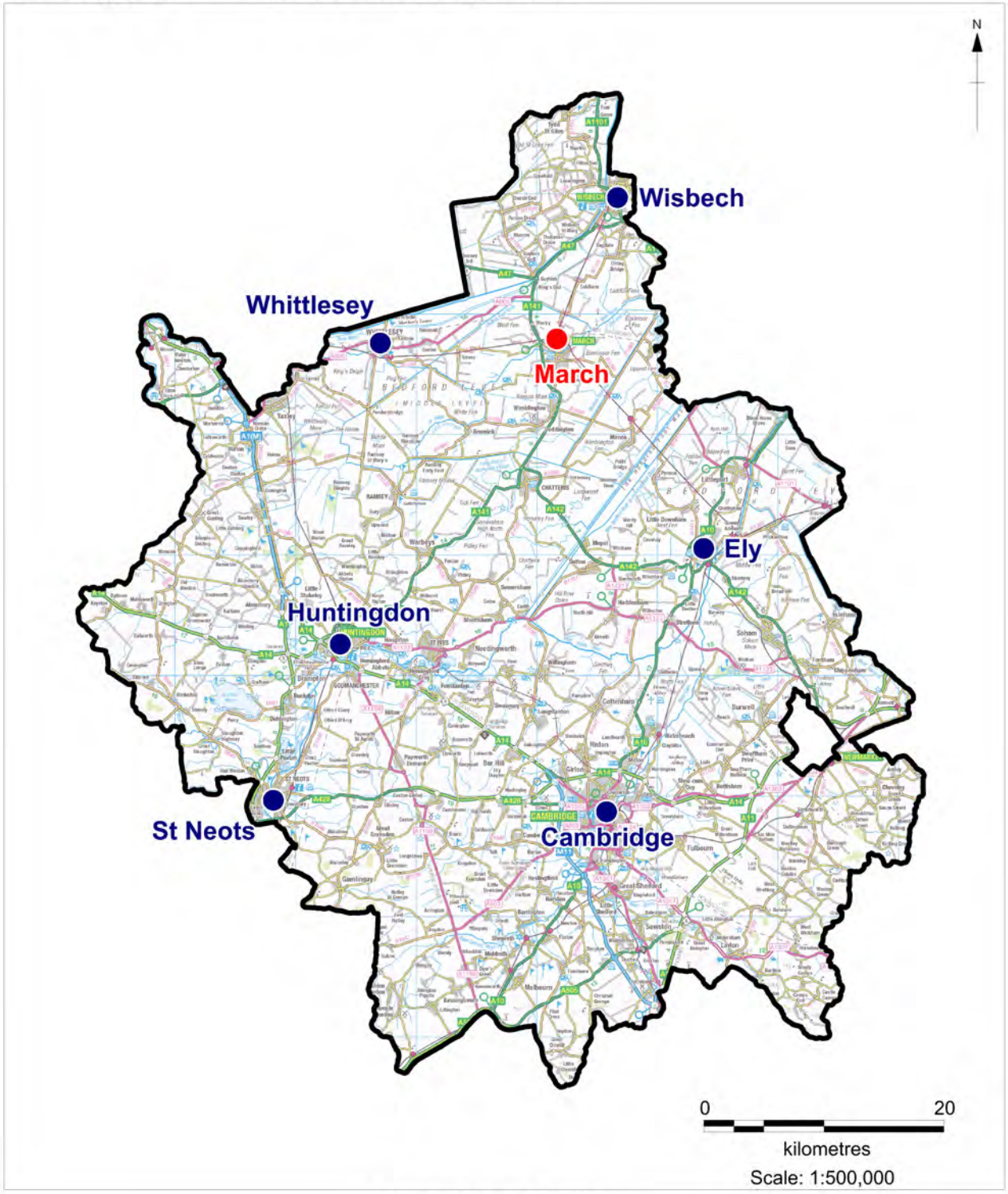

Fig 1 Location of March

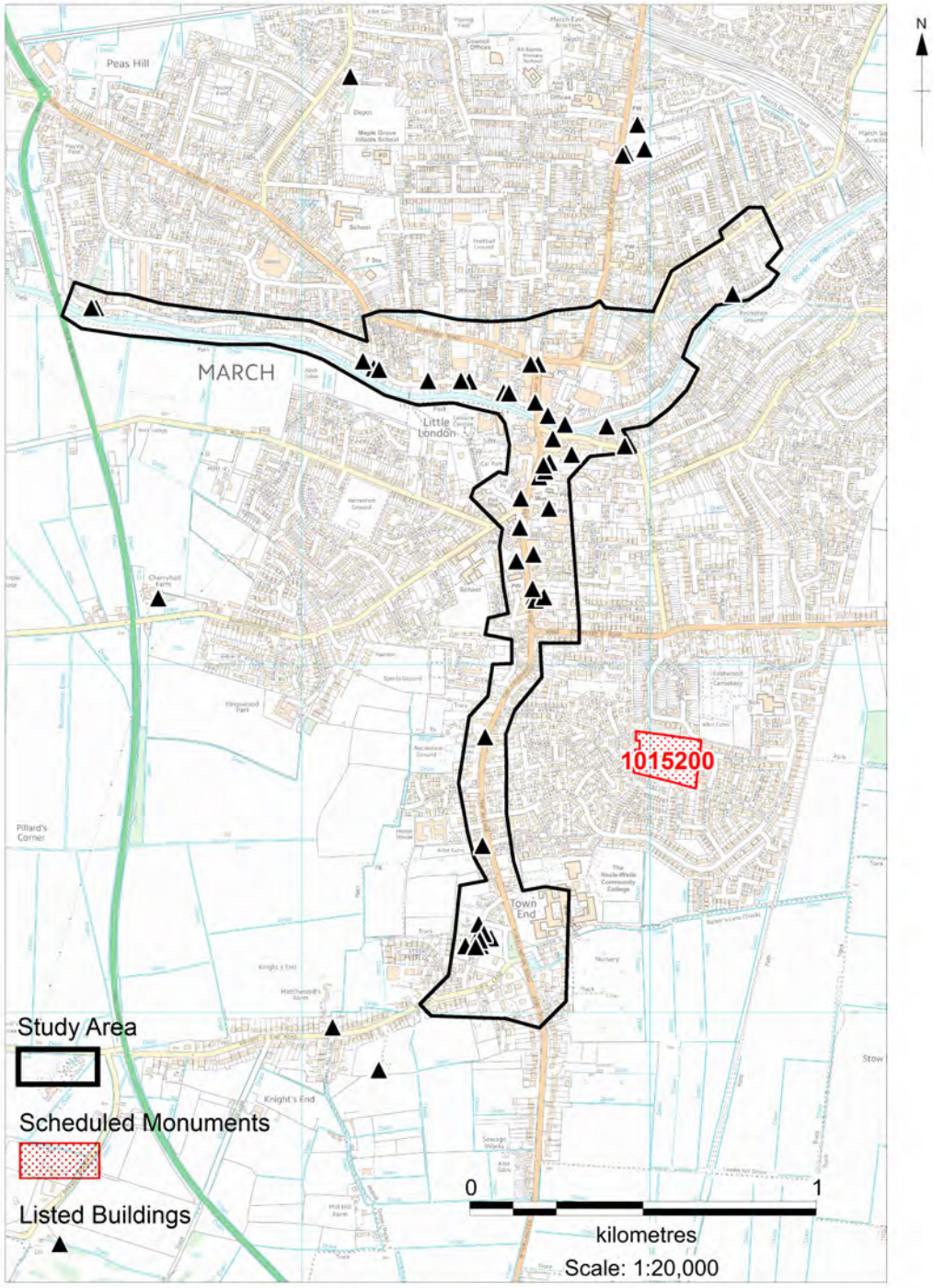

Fig 2 Map of Historic Core

LANDSCAPE

Location and Topography

The town of March was formerly the County Town of the Isle of Ely, and is still the administrative centre of Fenland District Council. The town lies on the northern peninsula of a island rising out of the surrounding fen that also has the villages of Wimblington and Doddington upon it.

March is situated east of Peterborough and west of Norwich, approximately 90 miles north of London. March sits astride the River Nene, part of the Middle Level of the Fenland Waterways.

The parish covers an area of 7786 hectares after boundary changes in 1981. Initially a chapelry of Doddington, it became a Local Board of Health District in 1851, and converted to an Urban District Council in 1894. There are no other population centres apart from the town itself within the parish; the remaining population inhabits outlying farms and isolated houses.

Geology

The underlying geology is Kimmeridge Clay. The island comprises a bed of Boulder Clay overlain by a north-south band of gravel, known as the March Gravels. Major river systems and roddons have influenced the geology and development of the island and the surrounding fen. The roddon of the combined Ouse/Nene lies to the west and a lesser system to the east. Both these are overlain by the Barroway Drove silts deposited around 1000 BC. The March island rises to height of 4m OD, and the surrounding fen dips to 0m OD.

Hydrology

The current course of the Nene through the town is artificial (see below) due to a diversionary cut created in the early medieval or medieval period. Its course has varied over time, with depositions of silts forcing changes in flows and courses. The following is based on Hall (1987):

Neolithic	Main channel to west combined with Ouse, smaller channel to east
Bronze Age	Western channel splits into two, eastern channel remains
Iron Age	Single western channel (Nene only) flowing north, smaller system to east
Roman	Western channel flows north then east abutting island, artificial channels created
Medieval	Nene diverted across island and water courses canalised

THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE

Archaeological Evidence

A summary of archaeological data within the historic core of March is contained in the Cambridgeshire HER. This includes monuments, buildings, findspots, fieldwork events and chance finds. HER numbers in this study are preceded by ECB for an event or MCB for a monument. There are twenty five events that have taken place within the historic core of March and these are listed in Appendix 1, with their SCB number - the source number for the report.

The HER collection represents a variable source of information that has been influenced by fieldwork strategies, collection of finds, antiquarian observations, local and professional interests. The degree of accuracy of the entry is therefore variable. Many prehistoric finds are without provenance and generically located within the parish.

Much of our knowledge originates in the Fenland Survey (Hall 1987) and actual intrusive investigation was fairly rare compared to other towns before 1990. Potter carried out extensive excavations outside the historic core, in and around Grandford House and also in various areas around Flaggrass, but these are the only predecessors to developer-funded excavations under PPG16. Developer-funded investigations within the historic core include excavation of land at Wimblington Road by CCC AFU in 2003 (ECB1475); excavation at 9 Church Street by Archaeological Solutions in 2004 (ECB1712); and excavation at Neale Wade Community College by OAE in 2010 (ECB3360) as well as many other smaller evaluations and watching briefs. Wisbech and District Archaeological Society (now FenArch) carried out excavations at land west 47 Wimblington Road in 2010.

Outside the historic core investigations in the last ten years have mainly been to the north around Longhill Road, Norwood Road and the Whitemoor Sidings as well as along Cedar Close and near the station.

<u>Scheduled Ancient Monuments</u>
There are no scheduled ancient monuments within the historic core. The nearest is March Sconce – a 17th century artillery battery surviving as a badly damaged earthwork 250m south-west of Eastwood Cemetery (SM27188). The site is in the ownership of Fenland District Council. The structure has been the subject of many debates as to who constructed it, its function and extent. Further information can be found in PCAS (1983).

<u>Listed Buildings</u>
March's collection of listed buildings is fairly unremarkable compared to some of its neighbours. Full details are given in the HER, but a breakdown is as follows:

Grade	Number
I	1
II*	4
II	50
BLI	17
All	72

Table 1: Listed buildings by Grade

The Grade I building is the medieval Church of St Wendreda. The other medieval 'building' is a Wayside Cross on the Avenue. A breakdown by date is as follows:

Century	Number
Medieval	2
16	2
17	6
18	30
19	30
20	2

Table 2: Listed buildings by century

Most of the buildings are domestic or commercial, although one water tower of the mid-19th century survives as a reminder of March's railway past. Fenland District Council have four identified buildings as being 'at risk'. These are 93 Nene Parade, 55 West End, 125 West End and 126 West End. All are Grade II.

Conservation Area

The original conservation area designation for March was made in February 1972 and appraised in October 1993. The conservation area incorporates the Market Place and the northern part of High Street and the Riverside area including West End and part of Nene Parade. A more recent appraisal was carried out in 2008 in which it was recommended that the conservation area be extended further along the High Street to to the south and to include Broad Street to the north, as well as the park to the south of the river (Fenland DC and Conservation Architecture and Planning 2008).

Documentary Evidence

March is identified in the *Liber Eliensis* as one of the estates given to Ely Abbey around 1000. In the Domesday Survey of 1086 the main landowner in March was Ely Abbey with the Abbot of Bury St Edmunds having a smaller holding. The Inquisitio Eliensis (the inquiry into the full holdings of Ely Abbey) gives more information information about the Abbot of Ely's holding. The *Liber Eliensis* (Blake 1962) is a compilation of chronicles, land grants and other documentation relating to the Abbey and town. Created in the 12th century from earlier material, it provides a valuable source, although one that should be treated with caution when using it to refer to earlier periods.

Other documentary sources from the medieval period are manorial and diocesan records but these are sparse. The various taxation returns from the 14th to the 18th centuries give some indication of the size of the town in comparison to others in the region.

Various secondary sources have been consulted for this report including VCH of Cambridgeshire, Volume 4 (Pugh 1967).

Cartographic Evidence

The following is a list of historic maps are available for study, most of which can be found in the CRO:

William Haywoods Plan and description of the Fennes 1604
Map of March c 1630
Map of March, Wimblington, Doddington 1680
Thomas Badeslade map of the Great Level of ye Fenns 1723
A Plan of the Commons within the Town or Hamlet of March in the Manor and Parish of Doddington, Isle of Ely, Cambridge, 1794
Thomas Yekell's map of 1824 map (surveyed in 1819)
March Tithe Rural Area; Part 1 Township of March in the Rectory and Parish of Doddington, Isle of Ely, Cambridge, 1840
The OS maps from 1885 onwards .

Aerial Photographic Evidence

The CHER has a collection of OS-based maps showing overlays of aerial photographs plotted in the 1980s and digitised in 2001 from research in the CUCAP and NMR collections. The original aerial photographs of the parish were taken in the late 1940s-1980s. In 1997-1998 Cambridgeshire County Council commissioned an aerial photographic coverage of the whole county. The photographs are available in digital format.

Several aerial photographic surveys have been carried out for specific development proposals in the vicinity of March's historic core for example for Land North of Gaul Road in 2007 (ECB2799).

Other Projects

The Fenland Survey was systematic in its coverage of the current study area, although the problems of modern construction over the more favourable areas of settlement were highlighted at the time (Hall 1987, 38). The main investigative technique was fieldwalking, often using aerial photography as a guide.

The Defence of Britain project identified sixteen sites in March. These are mainly pill boxes, with one mortar emplacement and one Home Guard store (http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/dob/).

March was included in the the county-wide Historic Environment Characterisation Project undertaken by Cambridgeshire County Council and Oxford Archaeology East.

PERIOD SYNOPSES AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

There follows an overview of the archaeology of the parish of March followed by a detailed discussion of the archaeology of the historic core of the town, on a period by period basis.

Overview of the Parish

March has archaeological remains from most periods of human history. The earliest period, Palaeolithic, has been recognised from a very small number of stray finds , one of which can be dated to the Clactonian period (400,000 to 200,000 BP). Mesolithic sites have been found by fieldwalking on the better drained gravels on the western side of the island. These comprise two flint scatter sites on either side of a creek at Gaul Road, suggesting the presence of an active water course at this period. Both sites are quite substantial, and also revealed Neolithic material. These sites were further investigated in 2007 by an archaeological evaluation comprising trial trenching and fieldwalking. This investigation revealed a buried soil sealed by peat. Radiocarbon dating indicated that the peat began to form as the water table rose above the buried soil during the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age (ECB2886, Peachey 2008). In 2011 an evaluation was carried out to the south of Gaul Road, to the south of the flint scatters and this uncovered ten features including an Early Neolithic pit (ECB3641, Tabor 2011). Another Neolithic flint scatter was also found at Stonea Island.

The scale of occupation during the Bronze Age is more readily identifiable, although again most discoveries from this period have been stray finds and from fieldwalking. Three locations on the gravels outside the built-up area have been identified as areas of Bronze Age settlement. These are at Cherryholt, Westry and Flaggrass Hill, but the full nature of these sites is unknown. In addition, two round barrows are known from Stonea island, being part of a larger barrow field. A general scattering of flints has been discovered over much of the island, suggesting a wide-spread land-use during this period, with the possibility of more, as yet undiscovered, sites.

Recent fieldwork has added to this picture. A Late Bronze Age to Middle Iron Age ritual and agricultural landscape was excavated at Northern County Offices, to the south of the railway line (ECB928, O'Brien and Weir 2002; O'Brien 2003). To the north of the railway line, evaluation and monitoring at Whitemoor Sidings found Early Bronze Age ditches, pits and post holes of Early and Late Bronze Age date as well as a field system of probable Roman date (ECB2014, Hall 2004). To the west an evaluation and excavation at the Trading Park at Hundred Road revealed a dense concentration of Bronze Age features, comprising watering holes, pits, several cremations, a post-built structure, a ring gully, linear gullies and land enclosures (ECB2965, Hutton 2008; ECB3027, Thatcher 2009). These sites fill in some of geographical gaps between the previously known three Bronze Age sites on the island and suggest that Bronze Age occupation and agriculture may have been more extensive than previously thought.

It had been traditionally thought that the Fenlands were too wet and marginal for habitation during the Iron Age (Hall 1981, 82), with the camp at Stonea Grange being being one of the few sites recognised. However, the Fenland Survey combined with more recent fieldwork nearer the historic core (see below) has demonstrated the

inadequacy of this idea. The Survey identified Early Iron Age sites from the March part of Stonea and these can be added to the earlier Iron Age site known to exist under Stonea Grange camp. Two other Early Iron Age sites were identified on the northern and north-eastern extremes of the main fen island, at Grandford and Flagrass respectively. The latter two sites would have been accessible to the river that ran along the east side of the island, suggesting use of water communication and a possible link with the sites on Stonea.

More recently, a Middle Iron Age ritual and agricultural landscape with a Bronze Age precursor was excavated at Northern County Offices, to the south of the railway line (ECB928, O'Brien and Weir 2002; O'Brien 2003).

Occupation on the Early Iron Age site at Flaggrass Hill continued into the Late Iron Age and Roman period and there is a evidence for further Late Iron Age activity nearby. The Iron Age sites at Flaggrass Hill are close to the Fen Causeway suggesting this communication route may have been in existence before the Roman period. Excavations at Flaggrass and analysis of aerial photographs suggest that the Fen Causeway follows the course of an Iron Age droveway which had associated field systems.

The camp at Stonea Grange is in Wimblington parish. This is a multi-vallate hill-fort, now heavily eroded and damaged by agriculture, that appears to have formed a focus for Iron Age activity in the area (Jackson and Potter 1996). Excavation has shown that the defences formed the last phase of the Iron Age site, with Potter interpreting the earlier phase as a possible religious site. Analysis of part of the bank has shown it to have been constructed in the 1st century AD and extensive coin finds show the area to have been under the control of the Iceni of Norfolk at this time. The quantity of coins suggests a site with commercial importance.

The are over seventy Roman sites known in the parish, varying from stray finds to villages, with the cropmarks at the northern end of the island being amongst the most complex and best preserved in East Anglia. The Romans built canals and roads leading away from March to other centres such as Stonea and Eldernell. These connect to the Car Dyke system which is out of the study area upstream on the Nene.

The Fenland Survey identified a network of Roman channels including the Fen Causeway - the main Roman communications link running across the island - which originated, at least in part, as a canal. The Fen Causeway is the main Roman road across the island and runs across the Fen to Grandford settlement, then over the island to Flaggrass and eastwards, out of the parish. In addition, another canal led southwards from Flaggrass to Stonea Grange, the finding of which was an important discovery for the understanding of this latter site. Analysis of aerial photographs, particularly of the north and north-east of the island and also around Stonea revealed evidence of the nature of Roman field systems and the role played by drainage in them. The Romans made full use of natural channels as boundaries, as well as droveways and artificial cuts, all of which served to create a better controlled landscape (Hall 1987, 40).

Despite the canals, there were catastrophic flooding events, as appears to have happened several times in the 3rd century AD. In addition, local field drains encourage alluviation and this only served to block canals with silt. Hence parts of the Fen Causeway were placed on top of a silted canal. The Causeway has been sampled by excavation at various places along its course. For example an evaluation

at 92 Elm Road in 2005 located it as a layer of gravel on an east-west alignment, with a large roadside ditch on its southern side (ECB1929, Weston and Williams 2005).

The Fen Causeway stimulated settlement and activity along its route; the main Roman settlements along it being at Grandford and Flaggrass, both of which have been excavated from the 1940 to 1960s. Other finds suggest that a road ran north/south (roughly along the line of The Avenue) towards Doddington. Stonea Grange was adopted by the Romans as the site of a large stone building, thus stamping their authority on what had been a native focus – a common Roman practice. One model identifies Stonea as a regional administrative/commercial centre, with Flaggrass and Grandford on the canal system as ports/hythes. Roman activity was impacted by climate and water level change, and by the 3rd century AD the nature of activity changed. Stonea was still an important centre, but Grandford appeared to become more so whilst Flaggrass reverted to predominantly an industrial centre. More information on these sites can be found in Hall 1987.

March has extensive cropmarks of Roman field systems, covering 150ha are the largest network in Cambridgeshire and can be seen clustering to the north of the Fen Causeway. They consist of droveways and enclosures suggestive of livestock enclosures rather than arable fields, with no other settlement present. Some of these cropmarks do not align with the Fen Causeway and may pre-date it, for example those at Estover Road (ECB497).

Field systems have also been shown to exist within the built up area of March in areas devoid of cropmarks to the north and south of the railway line. Recent evaluations and excavations at Norwood Road (ECB2346, Cooper 2007a; ECB3114, Cooper 2007b); at the Trading Park on Hundred Road (ECB2965, Hutton 2008; ECB3027, Thatcher 2009) and at Whitemoor Marshalling Yard (ECB3845, Railton 2012) have all revealed Roman field ditches, some with Iron Age origins.

Salterns are common in the area, and those excavated at Norwood House revealed something of the scale of the salt production industry, with numerous storage tanks. Another major saltmaking site was excavated at Longhill Road in 2003 (ECB 1437, Atkins 2003; ECB3085, Murrell 2009). The main requirements for the salt industry are sea water and fuel; during the Roman period salt water penetration along watercourses reached the island, and the proximity of peat provided the necessary fuel for the process. Turbaries (cuts left after peat extraction) show the sources of raw materials. Pollen analysis at Stonea suggests that arable land use was not common until the later Roman period. Corn driers dating to this period were also found here, although the close proximity of salt water would not have been ideal for the processing of crops. Faunal remains indicated possible animal butchery, with extensive remains of animal skulls and lower limbs being found.

Given the salt production and the evidence for stock rearing and butchery in the area it is tempting to see the March region as the centre of an Imperial estate whose focus was the raising, butchery, curing and export of meat products for official purposes.

Historic Core Plan Form Components

The following is a list of components that have been identified for the historic core of March. Meaningful mapping of the historic core is not possible for any evidence pre-dating the Anglo-Saxon period. The boundaries of these components have therefore been defined by elements of the Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post-medieval development of the town. Each is a region defined chronologically, so there are several areas where components overlap.

Figs 3-5 relate to these components. Further discussion of these periods and associated activity can be found in the synopses.

Component		Description/Evidence	Fig
No.	**Name**		
Anglo-Saxon			
MAR 1	Speculative site of Late Saxon settlement and manor around Knights End and around St Wendreda's Church, possibly dispersed	Liklihood of Domesday settlement and manor being in the same place as the DMV and Hatchwood Manor. Dedication of the 14th century church to St Wendreda suggests an Anglo-Saxon origin	3
Medieval			
MAR 2	Settlement at Knights End, probably part of Hatchwood's Manor, now deserted, stretching to the current settlement around St Wendreda's Church	Earthworks of ridge and furrow, Ploughed out earthworks of a DMV-moat and fishpond Manor of Hatchwood mentioned in 1328 Placename and cartographic evidence for 'Hatchwood' Excavated evidence from the Church Hall and Neale Wade Community College investigations Streetscape around St Wendreda's	4
MAR 3	St Wendreda's Church -13th – 14th century with 16th century additions Possible site of original market	Standing building Standing cross near St Wendreda's Church	4
MAR 4	Ford over the diverted River Nene, possibly Late Saxon in date Settlement and inns growing up around the river crossing sometime in the medieval period if not the Late Saxon period	Documentary records for 'Marcheford', 16th century extant buildings 14th-15th century pottery found at 2 Grays Lane	4
Medieval or Post-medieval			
MAR 5	Expansion along the north bank of the River Nene of uncertain date but certainly by 1630	1630 maps shows houses with narrow burgage plots along West End and Nene Parade Archaeological evidence from 2 Grays Lane etc	5

MAR 6	Planned development along the east side of the High Street to as far as St Peters Road	1630 map shows properties with long narrow burgage plots to the rear	5
Post-Medieval			
MAR 7	Port	16th century documentary evidence for a port Trade tokens	5
MAR 8	Market at Market Place	Documentary evidence for a market being granted in 1670	5
MAR 9	Development along The Avenue/ Wimblington Road in the 19th century	Cartographic evidence	5
MAR 10	Industrial area to the north of the historic core consisting of: Railway 1847,Station , Whitemoors Sidings and Marshalling Yard	Cartographic evidence Existing buildings	5

Table 3: Historic core plan form components

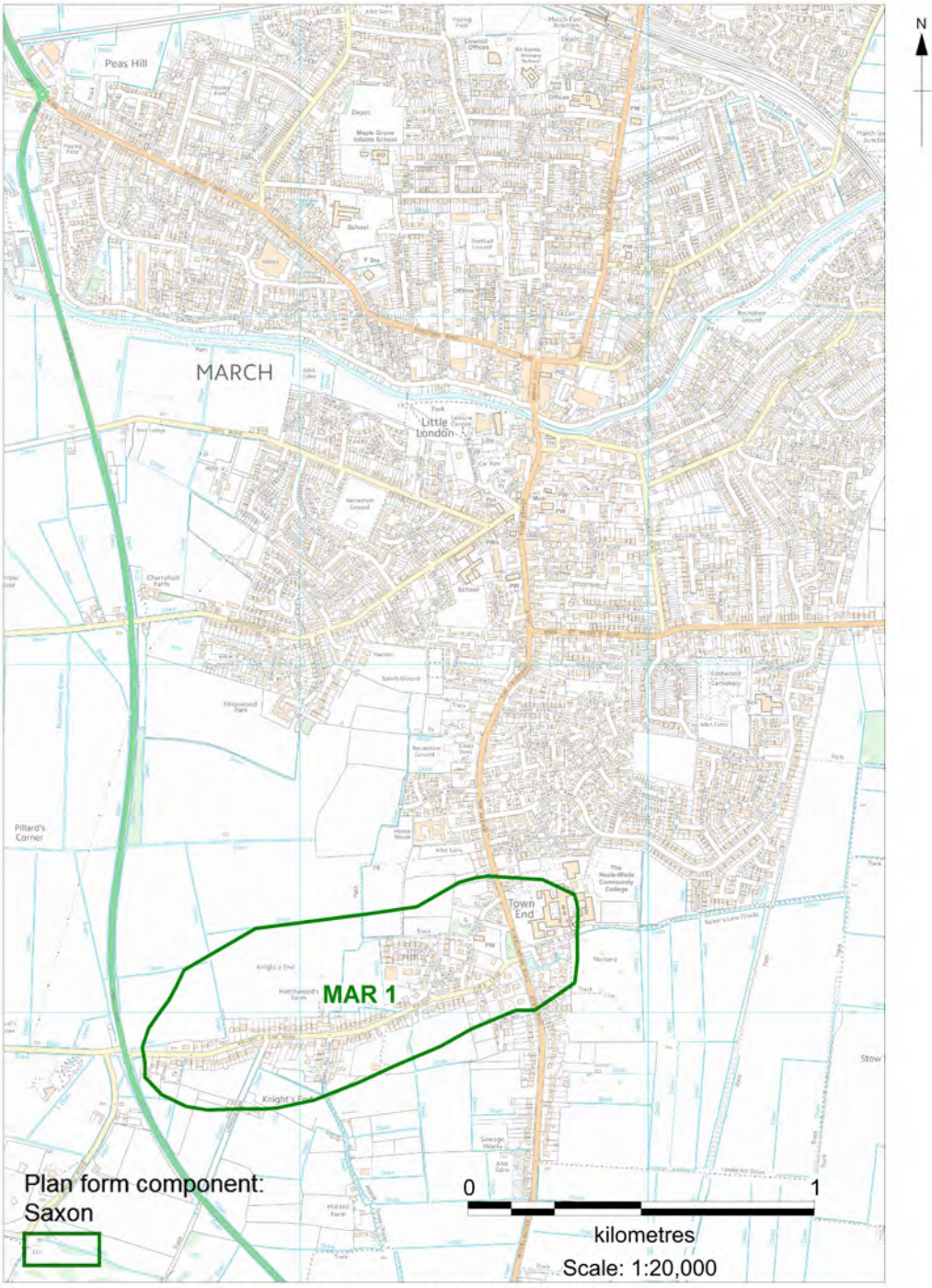

Fig 3 Anglo-Saxon Plan Form Components

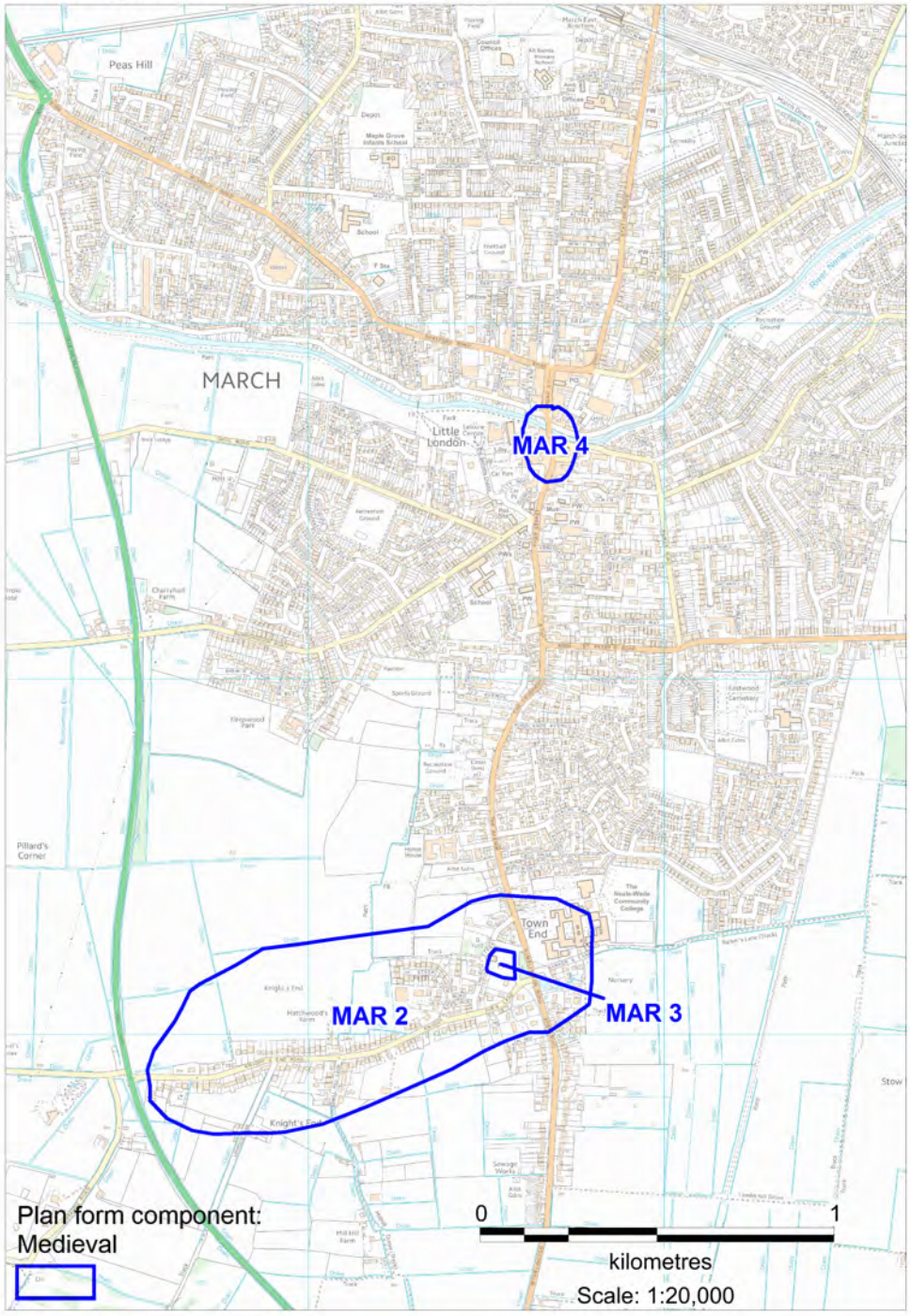

Fig 4 Medieval Plan Form Components

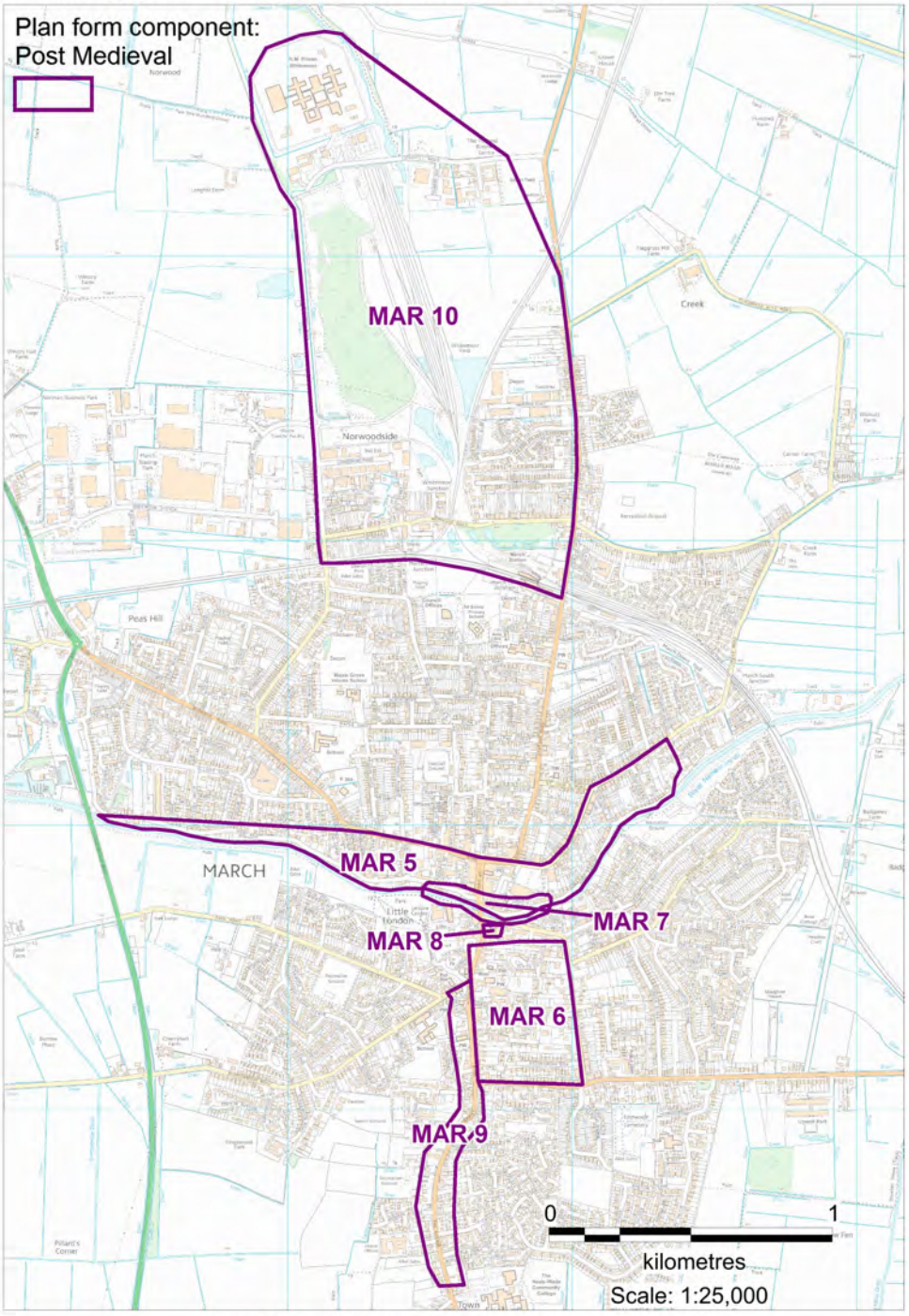

Fig 5 Post-Medieval Plan Form Components

Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age

The geology of the March island itself is dominated by the band of gravel running north-south which would have been a favourable location for settlement. As described above, there are Mesolithic and Neolithic flint scatters known from the western side of the gravel island, just north of Gaul Road, either side of what was an inlet leading to the Nene roddon. These are just outside the historic core but may indicate further sites within the historic core itself.

Evaluation at Elliott Road, in the north-western part of the historic core, north of West End found discrete Early Bronze Age features as well as a ditch containing an early Bronze Age pottery sherd (ECB3894, Lichtenstein, 2012). Interestingly, this site is between the two previously known Bronze Age sites at Cherry Holt and Westry.

At the south end of the historic core evidence of Neolithic and Bronze Age activity has been found recently. At land west of 47 Wimblington Road an excavation just outside the historic core by FenArch revealed an Iron Age ditch cutting through an earlier gully on a different alignment which contained a Neolithic flint blade (ECB3422, Alex Fisher pers comm). Evaluation on land at 12 Jobs Lane, just west of Church Street, revealed a broad range of features including an early Bronze Age pit containing worked flint and two distinct types of Beaker pottery (ECB3013, Adams, 2008). Excavation at Neale Wade Community College on the east side of Wimblington Road uncovered a series of Late Bronze Age wells dug into a modified natural hollow. Preserved timber and an antler pick were recovered from the well, along with organically rich environmental samples (ECB3360, Pickstone 2010).

This evidence, combined with what has been found outside the historic core by the Fenland Survey as well as by recent investigations on the north side of the town, suggests that large parts of the gravel island were populated in the Bronze Age and that there may be more to find within the historic core.

Iron Age and Roman

In common with the rest of the Fens the proximity of Iron Age settlements to water courses suggests that the former were an important means of transport and communication. This may be particularly relevant in the later Iron Age when the area appears to have been an important trade and possible ritual centre for the Iceni of Norfolk. In addition, the formation of peat deposits at around the time of the Iron Age helped stabilise the river systems to the west and east of the island, if not the north, which may have added to the attraction of the area.

Recent archaeological investigations, mainly development-led, have demonstrated that Iron Age settlement covered a wider area of the island and was not just limited to locations next to water courses. Middle Iron Age deposits found recently at the Northern County Offices, south of the railway line have already been mentioned. Within the historic core there is growing evidence for Iron Age activity at the south end of March, around Knights End and in the vicinity of the Church of St Wendreda. An evaluation followed by an excavation to the north of the church, at 9 Church Street, revealed a number of ditches and a gully, as well as a pit and a large hollow. The finds were consistently Iron Age and Roman (ECB699, O'Brien, 2002; (ECB1712, Williams, and Williamson, 2004). At the Church Hall, Church Lane, three Iron Age pot sherds and a loom weight of possibly the same date were found (ECB2398, Mellor, 2006).

To the south of St Wendreda's Church, cropmarks south of Knights End Road and west of Wimblington Road (MCB09009) were investigated as part of an aerial photographic survey in advance of a development on Wimblington Road, in 2003. An area of 16ha was surveyed , revealing a number of archaeological features to the west and south of the development area including a ditched enclosure system of probable Iron Age or Roman date and a possible building, perhaps a Roman villa (ECB1474, Palmer 2003). As part of the same development trial trenches were dug followed by an excavation of a 0.2ha area to the east of the cropmarks (ECB1005, Cooper, 2003; ECB1475, Atkins 2004). This revealed features relating to a Roman farmstead or possible nearby villa, the pottery indicating occupation since the late Iron Age. Some evidence for cereal processing, pottery and salt production was recovered and this dated to the mid Roman period. On the east side of Wimblington Road, an evaluation and excavation at Neale Wade Community College uncovered several Iron Age ditches as well as a series of Bronze Age wells (ECB3283, Gilmour, 2009; ECB3360, Pickstone 2010).

Just outside the historic core, the Wisbech and District Archaeological Society (now FenArch) carried out excavation at land west of 47 Wimblington Road (ECB3422, Alex Fisher pers comm). A section was excavated through a ditch which showed as a cropmark. The lower fill of this ditch contained Late Iron Age and Romano-British pottery as well as flint and animal bones. Other test pits and trenches revealed similar material.

Within the more built up area near the River Nene a possible Iron Age pit was found during an evaluation at Elwyn Road (ECB285, Casa Hatton 2001) and another pit of either Bronze Age or Iron Age date was found at land west of Dartford Road (ECB2511, Hogan *et al* 2007).

Evidence for Roman salt production has been discovered within or very close to the historic town at 14 Market Place, next to the River Nene (ECB3646, Crawley 2011) and at land east of Cedar Close in (ECB1394, Hickling 2003; ECB2605 Lane *et al* 2007, 89-109). Cropmarks of Iron Age or Roman enclosures and a possible villa south of Knights End have already been described in the Overview of the Parish.

The Iron Age occupation at the south end of the town around Knights End continued into the Roman period as has been described above. More evidence for a possible Roman Road running north to south along the line of the Avenue/Wimblington Road has come to light with the discovery of a V-shaped north-south Roman ditch during an evaluation at 12 Jobs Lane, just west of Church Street (ECB3013, Adams, 2008). Further to the north, an evaluation at the Avenue, Cavalry Park recorded a series of gravel quarry pits, one of which was probably Roman. A quantity of Roman pottery was also recovered from later quarry pits on the site (ECB281, Kemp 1999). These discoveries indicate that Roman settlement was not solely located on the northern reaches of March Island but extended all the way along it.

Anglo-Saxon

Early and Middle Anglo-Saxon

The name ‘March’ derives from the Old English term ‘mearc’, which means boundary. Given that the settlement grew up as a northern outlier of Doddington then this is a reasonable interpretation.

Although Saxons were present at Stonea for a short while in the 5th and 6th centuries, no other occupation by them is known archaeologically, although a settlement was in existence by the later Saxon period. The area probably formed a series of scattered farms and occasional hamlets as part of the manors of Doddington. Beyond the dedication of the church, there is no evidence even connecting St Wendreda with the island, and certainly nothing to suggest that March formed a Saxon religious centre in the same way as Ely.

Late Anglo-Saxon

March is identified in the *Liber Eliensis* as one of the estates given to Ely Abbey around 1000 by Oswy and Leofleda on the admission of their son as a monk. It was valued in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as a berewic (outlier) of Doddington:

> *The Abbot of Ely holds Doddington.....With this manor lies one outlier, March, where there are twelve villagers with twelve acres each; it is assessed with the manor.*
>
> *The Abbot of St Edmunds holds 16 acres in March. Land for ½ plough; it is there, with 3 small holders.*
> *Meadow for 4 ploughs or oxen; woodland, 4 pigs.*
> *The value is and always was 3s.*
> *It lies and always lay in the lordship of St Edmunds church*

The main landowner was Ely Abbey, although the Abbot of Bury St Edmunds also had a small estate here. The difference between these estates was large, with Ely's holdings in excess of 144 acres and Bury St Edmund's only 16 acres. According to the Inquisitio Eliensis (the inquiry into the full holdings of Ely Abbey), the Abbot of Ely maintained the soke over all lands.

The Late Saxon settlement (MAR 1) probably clustered around the area where the Church of St Wendreda (MAR 3) now stands and around the deserted medieval village at Knights End (MAR 2), with outlying farms over the island.

Actual archaeological evidence from the Anglo-Saxon period within the historic core is thin on the ground and consists of two ditches containing fragments of later Saxon/early medieval pottery found during an excavation at 9 Church Street (ECB1712, Williams and Williamson 2004).

Medieval

Manor (MAR 2)

After the division between Ely abbey and diocese in 1109, March became a holding of the bishop of Ely. The manor of March is first mentioned in 1328 as the manor of Hatchwood (Pugh *et al* 2002). The area of Hatchwood can be seen on a map of 1630 to be in the vicinity of Knights End, and 'Hatchwood's Farm' still exists there.

Early Settlement

The area of the name Hatchwood corresponds to the area of medieval settlement at Knights End and this is where the main settlement probably originated (MAR 2). Earthwork remains here (now ploughed out) including a fishpond and possible moat (MCB9846), indicate a settlement of some size. The settlement was surrounded by a field system, the surviving ridge and furrow of which can be seen around it. Some of these medieval cultivation remains were mapped during an aerial photographic

survey of land west of Wimblington Road in 2003 (ECB1474, Palmer 2003). A Market Cross near St Wendreda's Church indicates the probable original site of the market before it moved to its present location.

The origin of the medieval settlement at Knights End is uncertain. The records of Domesday suggest the presence of two 'centres' (that belonging to Ely and Bury St Edmunds) and the wording of Ely's entry – 12 tenants with 12 acres each – tentatively suggests a dispersed settlement pattern in the landscape. One aspect of the island identified by aerial photographic analysis is that ridge and furrow remains (of the Midlands type) are confined to the south of the island, with none to the north. This division is accentuated topographically by the presence of the two inlets on either side of the island. These were used during the construction of the Nene diversion, and conveniently provide a break in the landscape. It has been tentatively suggested that the area to the north of this diversion was used for animal grazing and the area to the south for arable. (Hall 1986, 47). Fieldwalking over Knights End revealed pottery predominantly of the 15th century, but its location adjacent to the main manor, the church and a wayside cross suggests an earlier origin for what is almost certainly a Deserted Medieval Village. The street layout in this area is suggestive of a small scale medieval settlement.

Recent archaeological investigations along Church Lane and Wimblington Road appear to confirm the medieval occupation in this area. At the Church Hall, Church Lane, medieval occupation of the site was indicated by a pit, occupation horizons and a cess pit dating to the 12th and 13th centuries (ECB2398, Mellor 2006). An evaluation at Neale Wade Community College, on the eastern side of Wimblington Road (ECB3283, Gilmour 2009), uncovered several medieval ditches. A small watching brief was carried out afterwards which revealed two possible quarry pits with one containing animal bone and pottery dating to the 14th and 15th centuries. Subsequent excavation uncovered three phases of medieval activity, dating from the 12th to mid 16th centuries. Preliminary results show a series of potential boundary ditches with a later phase of large, potentially industrial, pits dug along the largest line of boundary ditch (ECB3360, Pickstone 2010).

The 'End' part of names of Knights End as well as Eastwood End and Town End (see 1819 map) suggest a dispersed settlement which would accord with the area being made up of a series of scattered farms and occasional hamlets as part of the manors of Doddington during the Late Saxon period. The 1630 map, as well as showing Hatchwood, also depicts an 'Eastwood Hall' in a close to the north-east. The map also shows a widening in the main road to the north, halfway between St Wendreda's and the Nene which appears to be a green with two or three houses on it (P Spoerry pers comm.)

Church of St Wendreda (MAR 3)

The church of St Wendreda is not recorded in the Domesday Book. It comprises a chancel, nave with clerestory, north and south aisles, a south porch and a west tower. The extant building is predominantly 14th century, the church having been rebuilt from 1343 by Papal Indulgence, in itself a very unusual occurrence that merits further investigation. However, the north arcade is earlier as it was built in the 13th century. During the 16th century the clerestory was added and the aisles rebuilt. The chancel was rebuilt in 1874. The church's most architecturally significant feature is its roof, which dates from the construction of the clerestory in the 16th century and remains a superb example of double hammer beam construction.

The identity of St Wendreda is unknown. Traditionally she is believed to be a member of the Mercian aristocracy who founded churches locally, but most indexes of Catholic Saints do not mention her. Her relics were moved to Ely Abbey on the instructions of King Aethelred (the Unready), and were taken as ‘standards’ to the Battle of Ashingdon in 1016, where they were captured by the victorious King Cnut and donated to Christ Church, Canterbury. They are now lost, as the inventory of 1315 does not record them (Christ Church, Canterbury archives pers.comm).

Another possibility for St Wendreda's origins can be gleaned form her name. It was common for known Saxon families to have similar dithemetic personal name elements. The name ‘Wendreda’ is a corruption, especially of the second element, and a more likely name is ‘Wenthryth’ or ‘Wynthryth’. This is not dissimilar to ‘Aethelthryth’, or in the corrupted version ‘Etheldreda’, suggesting a relative or descendant of the founder of Ely. This is conjectural, although it would explain why St Wendreda's relics went to Ely. It is also problematic that individuals traditionally claimed to be related to Aethelthryth (her sisters Seaxburgha and Withburga, and Seaxburgha’s daughter Ermenhild and her daughter Werburga) do not have similar names.

Shift of settlement to the River Nene (MAR 4)

The settlement core shifted during the medieval period, the stimulus for this probably being the diversion of the River Nene through, rather than around, the peninsula. This created the need for a crossing and maintenance, and presumably created the small port seen in 16th century records (MAR 7). Documentary records refer to the settlement as 'Marcheford', presumably a reference to the river crossing. A limited amount of archaeological evidence for this shift has come from various investigations in the north of the historic core. This comprises medieval pot sherds dating to the 14th/15th century which were found residually in later features during an evaluation at 2 Gray's Lane which is west of Broad Street (ECB284, Whittaker 1998).

The Ship Inn on Nene Parade and the Griffin Hotel adjacent to the market place both have 16th century origins. The presence of two ‘taverns’ in this area suggest that the market place and crossing were firmly established by this time. In addition, a map of March from c.1630 shows the area around Knights End and Hatchwood, including the fields containing medieval remains, to be enclosed. Hence, it is a reasonable supposition that the settlement had moved by the early 16th century.

The Nene Diversion

There is no documentary evidence for the Nene diversion, but the Fenland Survey speculated that the work was carried out at the behest of Ely Abbey in the late Saxon period (Hall 1987, 46). However, it must be stressed that the evidence for this is circumstantial. It is fairly certain that the church was undertaking various water management schemes in the Fens, probably to drain and claim marginal arable land, and also to create stable communications and trade routes. It is also believed that Ely Abbey in particular was interested in improving the drainage of the Wisbech silt fen. The Nene cut, by facilitating greater water throughput, would probably have lowered water levels at Wisbech and Coldham by diverting the main water flow away from that particular area. The full diversion from Botany Bay to the Old Croft River is approximately of 12km long. This diversion is Mainly in the low lying fen, it crosses the March island where there were two existing inlets/creeks on the west and east side of the island at Gaul Road and Peas Hill respectively, that form a ‘waist’, so only a narrow cut was required.

The diversion may date to the later Saxon period. However, if this was the case then it has implications for the location of medieval March itself. As a fairly typical manorial

site, the main settlement would presumably have focussed around the manor and church. Both Hatchwood Manor and St Wendreda's church are located some 1.5 km south of the river crossing. If Ely was responsible for the works, then it would be assumed that the settlement over which they had lordship it would have been positioned to take full advantage of the improvements; certainly a 'mercator' is mentioned as early as 1221. There are several possible explanations for this anomaly:

1. The Nene diversion was deemed to be of little importance to the berewic of March
2. The cut was created after the establishment of the manor and church in its current location
3. The area around the cut was too marginal for settlement
4. There was another settlement that is now under the modern town centre
5. The diversion took place as part of a concerted effort to divert the Nene from Wisbech into the Ouse, but this would require a medieval origin for Popham's Eau, which is not yet forthcoming.

Unfortunately, the *Liber Eliensis* makes no mention of this scheme, nor indeed of most of the drainage at this time. Archaeological evidence may go some way to make up for the lack of documentary evidence although deposits are likely to have been largely truncated by subsequent recutting and construction along the river bank. However, a recent evaluation at 14 Market Place revealed a sequence of largely naturally deposited layers that had probably formed on the edge of a channel in the earlier medieval period. A layer of peat had also formed on the edge of the channel in the 12th-14th centuries, which may mark the original course of the River Nene. Evidence for the ground being deliberately raised in the 17th to 19th centuries was also identified (ECB3646, Crawley 2011). Additionally an evaluation carried out to the north of the river and west of Dartford Road revealed evidence of two medieval ditches aligned perpendicular to the Nene which has been dug to aid drainage (ECB2511, Hogan *et al*, 2007).

Other waterways

The medieval period also saw the creation of the Doddington Leam and Morton's Leam. Morten's Leam was created in 1478 by John Morton, Bishop of Ely as a 19km long straight cut from Stanground to Guyhirn. It provided the waters of the Nene with a more direct route to the sea than the previous route through Benwick, Floods Ferry, March, Outwell and Wisbech.

Growth

Almost wholly owned by Ely diocese, and totally within the jurisdiction of the Bishop, March rapidly outgrew its parent Doddington, no doubt abetted by its favourable location on the river and canal network. The status of the town is hinted at by the reconstruction of the church of St Wendreda by papal bull and the high quality of craftsmanship employed on that project. However, March always remained smaller than Ely, Whittlesey or Wisbech.

Guilds

March had six guilds by the 15th century, being dedicated to St Wendreda, Holy Trinity, St Anne, St John the Baptist, St Mary and St Peter (Pugh 1967, 120). Only St Wendreda's was of any size, as it had been in existence in the 14th century and recorded as having a guildhall that was sold in 1571. All the rest were small, and it should be stressed that St Wendreda's does not appear to have been a particularly large organisation.

Medieval or Post-medieval

Settlement
By the early 16th century (if not before) the town had refocused to a core around the river crossing. The map of 1630 shows houses with narrow medieval-looking burgage plots on the north side of the River Nene, along what is now West End and Nene Parade (MAR 5). The arrangement has the appearance of organic growth along the northern bank (P Spoerry pers comm.). This development may have started in the medieval period and continued into the 17th century. It is uncertain why the south bank was not also utilized. Many of these cottages still survive today and have a domestic character. They probably would have had quays during the medieval period. An evaluation at 2 Gray's Lane which is north of the River, south of Dartford Road, revealed backplot activity associated with gardens and outbuildings belonging to the 17th house at the front of the plot. It was shown that land use was continuous from the 17th century onwards, with the majority of features datable to the 18th-19th century (ECB284, Whittaker 1998). An evaluation off Elwyn Road, on the south side of the river revealed two late medieval/post-medieval ditches possibly representing drains/boundaries defining the eastern limit of the post-medieval built up area to the south of the bank of the Old Nene (ECB285, Casa Hatton 2001).

The 1630 map also shows what looks like a planned development on the eastern side of the High Street stretching from the Market Place as far as St Peters Road (MAR 6). Properties with long narrow burgage plots to the rear again have a medieval character. That this is a fairly early settlement is reflected in the amount of listed buildings in this area.

Post-medieval

Port (MAR 7)
With the onset of Fenland drainage, the importance of March as a local centre probably grew and by 1566 the town was regarded as a minor port. Trade tokens are known from the town, and in 1657 barges were recorded as being present.

Market (MAR 8)
The town did not gain a market until 1670, a development that was vigorously opposed by the Corporation of Wisbech. The same charter of 1670 also allowed for two fairs. The Ship Money returns of 1639 record £35/5s from March, which was actually less than the larger villages such as Downham. It would be difficult to classify March as a truly urban centre during this period. The market place is still in use today.

Settlement
The map of 1819 shows a similar layout to that shown on the 1630 map except that by this time houses had been built on the western side of the High Street. The tithe map of 1840 does not show buildings at all and is therefore of limited use in this respect. By the time the 1st Edition OS map of 1885 was surveyed there were houses lining The Avenue and The Causeway all the way along to St Wendreda's Church (MAR 9).

Drainage
The major drainage of the fens was undertaken was by Cornelius Vermuyden, a Dutch land reclaimer in the 17th century. He built a drainage system to improve summer cultivation and prevent serious winter flooding. It succeeded because he

treated the fenland drainage problems comprehensively. Work began in 1631 and was completed in 1652. March is situated on the Middle Level and work in this area included The Twenty Foot River, and The Forty Foot Drain (Vermuyden's Drain). Outside the Middle Level the New Bedford River was constructed to drain the upland water. The drainage schemes released thousands of acres of farmland for exploitation, and also had the added bonus reducing the liklihood of catastrophic flooding.

The 19th century

The Enclosure Act for the area was passed in 1792, and the award made in 1805.

The 19th century saw the rapid expansion of March. The agricultural crisis of the late 18th and early 19th centuries caused a general population migration from the land into the town. Unlike many Fenland towns, after 1847 March actually had alternative employment to offer when the railway companies realised the advantages of its location. The original intention was to build the rail complex at Wisbech, a major port, but to do so entailed construction over the lands of the Peckovers. Whilst agreeable in principle the family, being staunch Quakers, insisted that no train travel could take place on Sundays. This condition may have lead to the construction of the lines at March (MAR 10), which in turn lead to both the construction of the marshalling yards and the choice of the town as the county town of the Isle of Ely.

The railway passed to the north of the town and the construction of a railway station here created a new focus. The creation of the Whitemoor sidings (MAR 10) which at over 110 hectares were one of the biggest in Europe, led to industrialisation on a greater scale than seen elsewhere in the county, and by 1931 almost 25% of the male population worked on the railways, the highest such ratio in England (Pugh 1967, 117-8). The impact of the railways from 1850 to 1950 was vast. In terms of the numbers employed, March can be classified as an industrial rather than agricultural town. Certainly the railways appear to have been the impetus for the construction of the 19th century workers' houses, as most of these dwellings lie in the north of the town near to the yards. These yards are now closed.

Industrialisation had the added benefit of creating the technology needed to complete the drainage of the surrounding fenland, with steam pumps ensuring the consistency of dry land in the parish.

March did not appear have the massive health and poverty problems in the mid-19th century as was in evidence for example in Ely. However, this could be an artefact of recording as March was not as significant a location as Ely and would, therefore, not have attracted the commentators who described the cathedral city in such grim terms. The lack of workhouses and Board of Health criticisms are probably valid indicators that the population of March enjoyed a relatively high standard of welfare.

In 1851, in an attempt to capitalise on the introduction of the railways, Sir Henry Peyton opened a new Market Hall and this initiated a sporadically successful, albeit small, market. The current Town Hall dates from 1900. The Guild of St Wendreda is recorded as having a hall that was sold in 1571, and although a building known as 'Guildhall' was used as a debtors court from 1778 to 1846, it is unknown whether this was the same building. The current Guildhall is on the same site as the the former one on High Street and dates from 1827. The current County Hall dates from 1908. The construction of the Town Bridge in 1850 was an important development and linked the principal streets of the High Street with Broad Street and the railway station, which previously were connected by a ford.

Quarrying

Quarrying for gravel was commonplace in the post-medieval period and gravel pits are commonly found during archaeological investigations, for example at 23-33 Wimblington Road (ECB1475, Aktins 2004); at 9 Church Street (ECB1712, Williams, and Williamson 2004) and at Land West of Dartford Road (ECB2511, Hogan *et al* 2007).

Churches

The rise in March as a town in the industrial period is reflected by changes in its status. The Doddington Rectory Division Act of 1856 (enacted 1868) created the ecclesiastical parish of March as a separate entity whereas before it had been a chapelry for the northern part of Doddington parish. The delay between enactment and creation was as a result of decision to await the vacancy of Doddington rectory. This Act allowed for the creation of four rectories, being those of Saints Wendreda (which already possessed a medieval church), John (1872), Mary (1873) and Peter (1880/1). All three are fairly typical Victorian churches, although the church of St Mary does not align east-west. The Act also allowed for the construction of a chapel in West Fen, and the chapel of St Mary Magdalen which was built in 1891 as part of the rectory of St Mary. This is an interesting social statement about West Fen, as a school was also built here in 1889 as was a Baptist chapel (1845). This suggests the presence of a large community (probably agricultural workers) in the area in the 19th century. Both places of worship have been demolished, and the school was closed in 1926 and is now a private house.

As one would expect from Fenland town , March was a centre for non-conformist activity. The 1676 survey records 139 Dissenters and 1 Papist, being 13% of the population at the time. Their buildings are best presented in tabular form:

Address	Denomination	Date Built	Current Status	Notes
High Street	Baptists (Centenary)	1799	Active	Rebuilt 1870
Providence Chapel, Burrowmoor Road	Strict Baptists	1821		Rebuilt 1835
?	Particular Baptists	1849	?	
Chain Bridge	Baptists	1859	Extant	Offshoot of West Fen chapel
West Fen	Baptists	1845	Closed	
Station Road	Congregational	1836	?	
High Street	Wesleyan Methodist	1829	Active	Rebuilt 1889
Station Road	Primitive Methodist	1848	?	
Floods Ferry	Methodist	?		
High Street	Salvation Army	1904	Active	
Our Lady & St Peter, St John's Road	Roman Catholic	1912	Active	

Table 4: Non-conformist buildings

Cemeteries

The churches of St Wendreda and St Mary both have cemeteries, the other two do not. The chapel of Mary Magdalene does not have had a cemetery. March possesses two civic cemeteries, the first on Station Road (adjacent to the church of St John), and the second on Eastwood Road. The first dates from the 1860s, and the second

opened in 1939. There is no evidence that any of the other faiths had their own cemetery, but this should not be ruled out, especially in the case of the Baptists, who possessed not only the largest congregation but also the oldest chapels of the non-conformists.

Schools

Although a school in March was first recorded in 1596, the first recorded building was not until 1827, when the 'Guildhall' was converted into a National School for both boys and girls. Another reused building was the theatre in Bridge Street, an early 19th century construction that in 1844 was converted into a British School for Boys. This building is still extant. Other schools built in the 19th century were at Dartford Road (1873) and Burrowmoor Road (1907). The increasing population of West Fen is attested by the presence of a school adjacent to the chapel that ran from 1889 to 1926. The Grammar School was created in 1851 out of the National Schools at the Guildhall, although was for boys only.

Later development

After receiving its parochial status, March received its urban government by the establishment of the Urban District Council in 1894. That March was a communications hub was instrumental in its being made the County Town of the Isle of Ely, over more established centres such as Wisbech or Ely itself. The first meeting of the new county was held on 24 November 1889. The current County Hall (now Fenland District Council) dates from 1908. Upon the abolition of the Isle of Ely as a County, the town became the centre of Fenland District Council authority.

After World War II March was the target for several air attacks. The town suffered from both changes in agricultural practices and the collapse of the railways, losing both its roles as an agricultural and an industrial centre simultaneously. It is still attempting to adjust, and new light industry on the old railway sidings reflects this. Today, March is presented as a large town of post-medieval form and function set in the middle of a Fenland intensive agricultural landscape. A prison now stands on the site of much of the old marshalling yards, and the town acts as a service centre for the local agricultural economy.

Population

March's population figures reflect its development.The impact of the railway is evident, as the population from 1801 to 1901 trebled, whereas in Ely in only doubled. In fact from 1851 to 1901, when the population of Ely actually fell, that of March continued to rise, albeit at a reduced rate.

Year	**Population**
1086	100? (incl. Doddington)
1563	1000(incl. Doddington)
1801	2514
1851	6241
1861	5455
1901	7565
1931	11266
1981	14600
1991	17020
1999	18530

Table 5: Population figures for March

DEPOSIT MODELLING AND SURVIVAL OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS

Introduction

The assessment takes the form of a prediction model based on probability and not certainty. It is meant as a guide only and should not be used to produce 'constraint maps'.

Modern development in March makes some sites hard to access and has also, along with quarrying, truncated and destroyed earlier deposits. However, archaeological investigations both within the core and to its north have shown that destruction is not total and there are areas of preservation even of Bronze Age and Iron Age remains. Flood deposits have had the effect of sealing and preserving some deposits and the peat which has built up over many thousands of years, is an excellent preserving material. Therefore the area is considered to have high archaeological potential for all periods.

Modern ploughing will have caused damage to sites on the edge of the historic core. This only applies to the extreme southern tip of the core, south of Knights End Road.

Prehistoric

Occupation favoured the gravel areas which run in a band north-south down the island. Unfortunately the bulk of this area is occupied by the current town, hence much of the area best suited to prehistoric settlement is difficult to access for assessment. Despite this, Mesolithic and Neolithic flint scatters have been found very near the historic core at Gaul Road the existence of and similar deposits cannot be discounted within the historic core, particularly on the better drained gravels on the western side of the island. Bronze Age and Iron Age sites are more extensive within the historic core particularly at the southern end around St Wendreda's Church and Knights End.

This evidence, combined with what has been found outside the historic core by the Fenland Survey as well as by recent investigations on the north side of the town, suggests that large parts of the gravel island were populated in the Bronze Age and Iron Age and that there may be more which are as yet undiscovered within the historic core.

Roman

Until recently most of the known Roman sites in March were north of the town and from Stonea. Recent work has altered the picture, with evidence emerging for Roman salt production within or very close to the historic core at 14 Market Place and at land east of Cedar Close. There was a continuation of the Iron Age occupation into the Roman period at the southern end of the historic core. Cropmarks of Iron Age or Roman enclosures and a possible villa are known to the south of Knights End. There is evidence for a possible Roman Road running north to south along the line of the Avenue/Wimblington Road and for associated occupation further south along the gravel island than was previously thought.

Anglo-Saxon

Anglo-Saxon evidence is sparse and based mainly on documentary evidence. For the Early and Mid Anglo-Saxon period there is no firm archaeological evidence. The area probably formed a series of scattered farms and occasional hamlets as part of the manors of Doddington and evidence relating to this phase could potentially be found almost anywhere within the historic core. By the Late Saxon period settlement may have been focussed around Knights End and the Church of St Wendreda where the medieval settlement later developed. However the evidence for this is circumstantial and remains unproven The records in Domesday suggest the presence of two ‘centres’ (belonging to Ely and Bury St Edmunds) and the wording of Ely’s entry – 12 tenants with 12 acres each – tentatively suggests a dispersed settlement pattern in the landscape. The Fenland Survey suggested that the diversion of the Nene to its present course was undertaken during the Late Saxon period, in which case the settlement which grew up around this river's crossing point may have originated at this time.

Medieval

The area around St Wendreda’s Church and to the south may prove to hold evidence of medieval or earlier occupation given the close proximity of the deserted medieval village at Knights End. There was a shift in focus to the ford over the newly diverted Nene sometime in the medieval period (if not before). Evidence of settlement, trade and industry from this period will likely survive below ground in the areas around Broad Street and market place. In both ends of the historic core it is expected that these potential remains will have suffered some truncation by post-medieval buildings, especially on the street frontages. Certain extant post-medieval buildings may preserve vestiges of medieval structures and may, therefore, prove a useful avenue for study.

Post-Medieval

The historic core of the town, as defined in this document, is largely a post-medieval creation. Houses with quays spread east and west along the north bank of the Nene from at least the 17th century onwards and settlement subsequently extended south from the ford, along the High Street so that by late 19th century there was a continuous built-up area between the two settlement centres. Many post-medieval buildings are still standing.

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APPENDIX 1: HER DATA IN HISTORIC CORE

Date	From	To	
Palaeolithic	500000BC	10000BC	Prehistoric
Early Mesolithic	10000BC	7000BC	
Mesolithic	10000BC	4000BC	
Early Neolithic	4000BC	3000BC	
Neolithic	4000BC	2200BC	
Bronze Age	2500BC	700BC	
Late Bronze Age	1000BC	700BC	
Iron Age	800BC	43AD	
Roman	43AD	410AD	Historic
Early Anglo-Saxon	410AD	650AD	
Middle Anglo-Saxon	650AD	900AD	
Late Anglo-Saxon	900AD	1066AD	
Anglo-Saxon	410AD	1066AD	
Medieval	1066AD	1540AD	
Post Medieval	1540AD	1900AD	
Modern	1900AD	present	

Table 6: Date Ranges

HER no.	Name	Organisation / Source	Summary
ECB281	Evaluation at the Avenue, Cavalry Park, March, 1999	CCC AFU Kemp, S.N. 1999. Roman and Medieval gravel pits along the Avenue, Cavalry Park, March.CCC Archaeological Field Unit Report A147 (SCB17217)	Trial trenching revealed a series of large pits, probably quarry pits, that appear to be medieval or post-medieval in date, although one is probably Roman. The quantity of Roman pottery recovered from these pits suggests Roman settlement was not solely located on the northern reaches of March Island. Three ditches were also identified. Two of these run parallel to modern field boundaries and are thought to be medieval or post-medieval (but are undated). The third undated ditch was orientated SE-NW.
ECB284	Evaluation at land N of 2 Gray's Lane, March, 1997	CAU Whittaker, P. 1998. An Archaeological Evaluation at Land North of 2, Grays Lane, March, Cambridgeshire. CAU Report 263 (SCB17220)	An evaluation revealed a late Medieval roadside drainage ditch (possibly 15/16th C), superseded by backplot activity of gardens and outbuildings associated with the 17th C house at the front of the plot. Land use was continuous from the 17th C onwards, with the majority of features datable to the 18th-C19th C. Medieval pot sherds were found dating to the 14th/15th C, although these were residual.
ECB285	Evaluation at Elwyn Road, March, 2001	CCC AFU Casa Hatton, R. 2001. Post-medieval activity at land off Elwyn Road, March, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation.CCC AFU Report A187 (SCB17221)	An evaluation revealed two late medieval/post-medieval ditches in the SE part of the site, and an isolated pit of uncertain date (possibly IA) further west. The ditches may represent drains/boundaries defining the E limit of the post-medieval built up area to the S of the bank of the Old Nene. In the northern part of the site, evidence emerged for 19th C landscaping, with deposition of soil to contain flooding and to make the area suitable for cultivation. The site was used for orchards during the 19th-early 20th C.
ECB286	Evaluation at New March Library, 1998	CCC AFU Kenney, S. 1998. The New March Library, March: An Archaeological Evaluation. CCC AFU Report B040 (SCB17222)	No archaeological features were found, and deposits encountered close to the river almost certainly relate to the demolition of Acre Mill, a corn mill which once stood on the site, adjacent to The Acre PH.
ECB409	Evaluation at White	Hertfordshire	Evaluation revealed sparse archaeological features, with the remains of a small post-medieval

	Horse Public House, West End, March, 2001	Archaeological Trust Gardner, R. and Prosser, L. 2001. Land to the rear of the White Horse Public House, West End, March, Cambridgeshire. An Archaeological Evaluation. Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust Report 0970 (SCB17370)	ditch, a possible 18th or 19th C brick culvert and field drains. One trench contained a pit with a large sherd of 17th C Bellarmine in its backfill. Desk-top assessment suggested the site was unoccupied in the historic period until the 17th C.
ECB699	Evaluation at 9 Church Street, March, 2002	Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust O'Brien, L. 2002. 9 Church Street, March, Cambridgeshire. An Archaeological Evaluation. Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust Report 1084 (SCB17765)	Evaluation revealed a number of ditches and a gully, as well as a pit and a large hollow. The finds were consistently Iron Age and Roman.
ECB728	Watching brief at Creek Road, March, 1996	BUFAU Evans C, Keen D, Lucas G, Malim T, Meadows I, Reynolds T. and Roberts J. 1998. Fieldwork in Cambridgeshire. PCAS 86: 179-86. , p. 185 (SCB17793 Jones, L. 1996. An archaeological watching brief at Creek Road, March, Cambridgeshire. BUFAU Report 428 (SCB6919)	No significant archaeological features were uncovered during excavation of foundation trenches.

ECB1005	Evaluation at 23-33 Wimblington Road, March, 2003	CCC AFU Cooper, S. 2003. Roman Farmstead at 23-33 Wimblington Road, March, Cambridgeshire. CCC AFU Report A218 (SCB18112)	An evaluation revealed features that may be linked to a Roman farmstead or possible nearby villa. Evidence from the pottery found indicates occupation since the late Iron Age.
ECB1474	AP assessment, land adjacent to 22-23 Wimblington Road, March, 2003	Air Photo Services (Cambridge) Palmer, R. 2003. Land Adjacent to 22-23 Wimblington Road, March, TL415948, Cambridgeshire: Aerial photographic assessment. Air Photo Services (Cambridge) Report 2003/03 (SCB18672)	An Air Photographic assessment was carried out over 16 hectares, revealing a number of archaeological features to the W and S of the development area, comprising medieval cultivation remains, a ditched enclosure system of probable Iron Age/Roman date and possible building, perhaps a Roman villa.
ECB1475	Excavation of land at Wimblington Road, March, 2003	CCC AFU Atkins, R. 2004. Iron Age and Roman-British Settlement at Land off Wimblington Road, March: Post-Excavation Assessment, Part 1. CCC Archaeological Field Unit Report PXA 43 (SCB18673) Atkins, R. 2004. Iron Age and Roman-British Settlement at Land off Wimblington Road, March: Post-Excavation Assessment, Part 2. CCC AFU Report (post-ex assessment) 43 (SCB18674)	Excavation was carried out over 0.2 ha, revealing part of a settlement dating to the 1st century BC to early 3rd century AD. Some evidence for cereal processing, pottery and salt production was recovered dating to the mid Roman period. Two early post-medieval quarry pits were also located at the NW corner of the site.

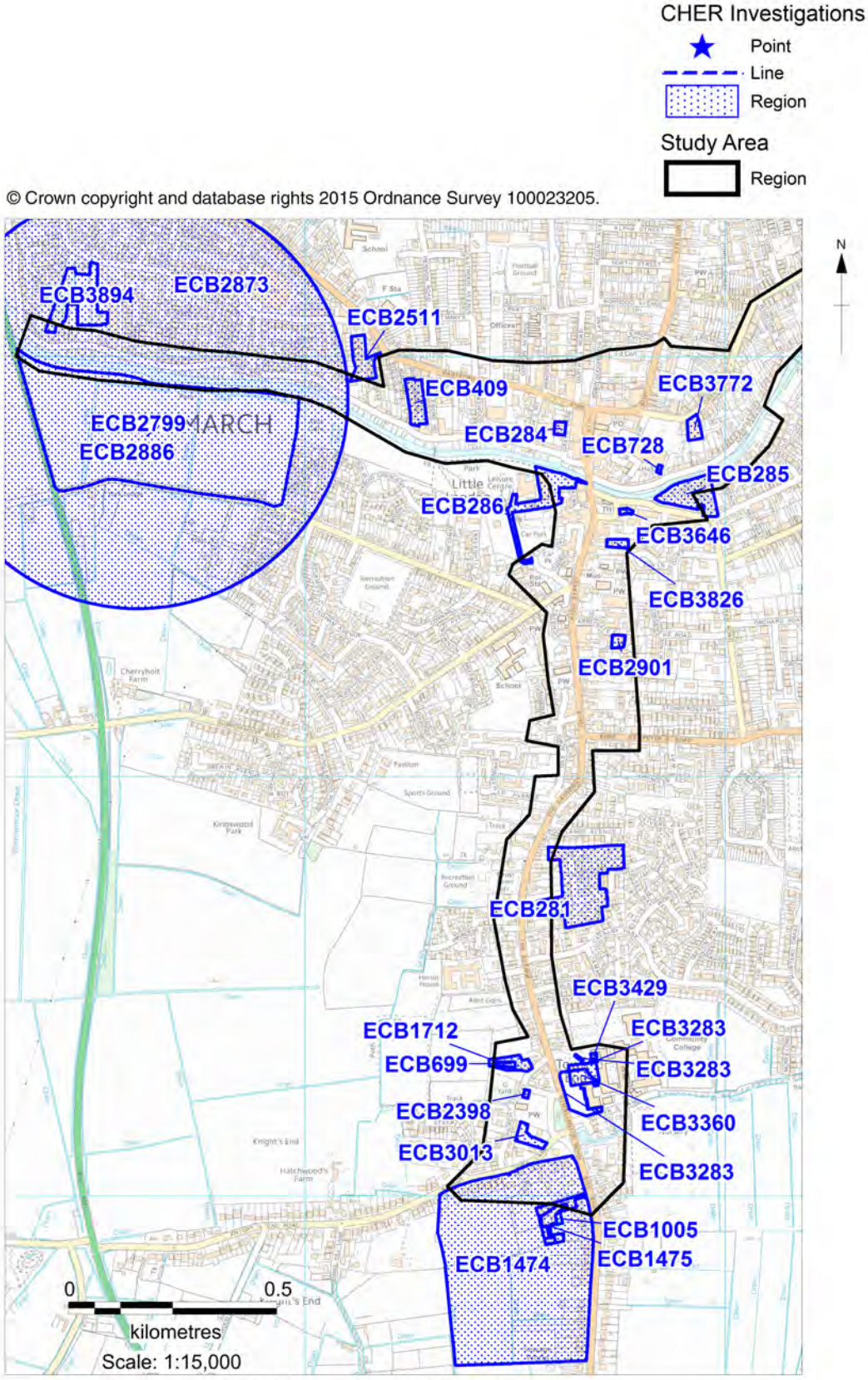
ECB1712	Excavation at 9 Church Street, March, 2004	Archaeological Solutions Williams, J. and Williamson, I. 2004. 9 Church Street, March, Cambridgeshire. An Archaeological Excavation. Interim Site Narrative. Archaeological Solutions Report 1550 (SCB19005) Grassam, A. 2004. 9 Church Street, March, Cambridgeshire. Archaeological Excavation. Archive Report. Archaeological Solutions Report 1808 (SCB19263)	An excavation was carried out in advance of the construction of 4 detached houses. A number of features were identified, many of which were relatively recent or undated. The dated features comprise a late Iron Age pit and Post-Medieval post-holes and gravel quarry. A number of Iron Age and Roman residual finds were also recovered, indicative of activity in the vicinity. Two of the ditches contained fragments of later Saxon/early Medieval pottery.
ECB2398	Watching brief at The Church Hall, Church Lane, March, 2006	APS Mellor, V. 2006. Archaeological Watching Brief on Land at The Church Hall, Church Lane, March, Cambs. APS Report 185/06 (SCB20043)	A watching brief revealed activity on the site spanning the prehistoric to post-medieval periods. Three sherds of Iron Age pottery, and a loom weight of possibly the same date, indicate Iron Age settlement in the vicinity. Medieval occupation of the site is indicated by a pit, occupation horizons and a cess pit dating to the 12th and 13th centuries, and a further undated pit and post hole may be of a similar or perhaps earlier date. A single burial was recorded, comprising a wooden coffin within a brick built vault of probable late 19th century date.
ECB2511	Evaluation at Land West of Dartford Road, Phillips Chase & South of Elliot Road, March, 2007	Archaeological Solutions Hogan, S., Barton, T., Hallybone, C., Weston, P. and Woolhouse, T. 2007. Land West of Dartford Road and Phillips Chase and South of Elliot Road, March, Cambridgeshire.	The evaluation revealed archaeological features consisting of eight ditches, five quarry pits, a small pit, one brick-built outhouse with its construction cut, one quarry pit/ditch and an area of modern disturbance. Dated features comprised a Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pit, two medieval ditches, post-medieval quarry pits, a post-medieval outhouse and two post-medieval ditches. The medieval ditches constitute interesting evidence of medieval land division in this area of March. The ditches were aligned perpendicular to the artificial channel of the river Nene, located 60m south of the site, and may have been dug to aid drainage.

		Archaeological Solutions Report 2206 (SCB20268)	
ECB2799	Fieldwalking and AP assessment at Land North of Gaul Road, March, 2007	APS Hall, R. 2007. Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment on Land North of Gaul Road, March, Cambridgeshire (MAGR07). APS Report 146/07 (SCB20698)	Desk-based research demonstrated that the site lies on the edge of March island, and early use of this area is attested by flint scatters of Mesolithic and Neolithic date. No evidence for later activity was identified, and cartographic evidence suggests that the site has been agricultural/pastoral land since at least 1680.
ECB2873	AP assessment, Gaul Road, March, 2007	Air Photo Services (Cambridge) Palmer, R. 2007. Gaul Road, Area centred TL 406969, March, Cambridgeshire. Aerial Photographic Assessment. Air Photo Services (Cambridge) Report 2007/21 (SCB20699)	Aerial Photographic assessment was undertaken to identify and map any archaeological, recent and natural features. No archaeological remains were identified, although the location of roddons and areas of silt deposits was noted. The site lies on the edge of March island, and the silt deposits may represent areas of local high ground.
ECB2886	Evaluation of Land North of Gaul Road, March, 2008	APS Peachey, M. 2008. Archaeological Evaluation Land at Gaul Road, March, Cambridgeshire. APS Report 85/08 (SCB20980)	An archaeological evaluation comprising trial trenching and fieldwalking was undertaken. Flint scatters were located during fieldwalking in the south-western area of the site. The evaluation confirmed the presence of two areas of Mesolithic activity located on the island either side of the low valley of a small stream. A prehistoric buried soil containing further Mesolithic and Neolithic flint survived on the sides of this valley and several features of probable later prehistoric date containing residual flint were revealed. A radiocarbon date indicates peat began forming above the buried soil in the Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age as the water table rose. Post-medieval ditches and marling pits were the only other archaeological features revealed.
ECB2901	Evaluation at Old Court Place, High Street, March, 2008	CAM ARC Cooper, S. 2008. Post-Medieval Boundary ditch at Old Court Place, March,	Three evaluation trenches totalling 28m were excavated in advance of proposed development, revealing a post-medieval boundary ditch that produced a small early 19th century pottery assemblage. A possible 19th century gravel pit was also identified, together with modern postholes and ditches.

		Cambridgeshire. An Archaeological Evaluation Report. CAM ARC report 1020. (SCB20791)	
ECB3013	Evaluation on land at 12 Jobs Lane, March, 2008	Archaeological Solutions Adams, M. 2008. 12 Jobs Lane, March, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation. P3230 Archaeological Solutions Report 3185 (SCB21131)	The evaluation revealed a broad range of features including an Early Bronze Age pit containing worked flint and two distinct types of Beaker pottery, a V-shaped ditch of Roman date running roughly north to south across the site, a number of medieval pits and the evidence of several modern building demolition layers.
ECB3283	Evaluation at Neale Wade Community College, 2009	OAE Gilmour, N. 2009. Iron Age and Medieval activity at Neale Wade College, March, Cambridgeshire: Interim archaeological evaluation report. OAE Report 1142 (SCB21530)	The evaluation uncovered several Iron Age and medieval ditches. The majority of the pottery assemblage is medieval, but there was also a small number of unabraded Iron Age sherds. A small watching brief was carried out afterwards on fifteen test pits which revealed two possible quarry pits with one containing animal bone and pottery dating to the 14th and 15th centuries.
ECB3360	Excavation at Neale Wade Community College, 2010	OAE Pickstone, A. 2010. Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age wells and medieval occupation at Neale Wade Community College, March. Interim Excavation report and post-excavation assessment. Draft. (SCB21726)	Excavation uncovered a series of Late Bronze Age wells dug into a modified natural hollow and a single possible Iron Age ditch. Preserved timber and an antler pick were recovered from the well, along with rich environmental samples. Three phases of medieval activity was identified, dating from the 12th to mid 16th centuries. Preliminary results show a series of potential boundary ditches with a later phase of large potentially industrial pits dug along the largest boundary ditch.
ECB3429	Historic building	OAE	The house and cellar were surveyed, and two phases of development were identified: the

	recording at Eastwood House, March, 2010	Fletcher, T. 2011. Eastwood House, Neale Wade Community College, March, Cambridgeshire: Historic Building Survey. OAE 1199 (SCB21908)	construction of the original Eastwood House in the 19th century and alterations during the 1960s when the building was adapted to accommodate a school.
ECB3646	Evaluation at 14 Market Place, March, 2011	NAU Archaeology Crawley, P. 2011. Archaeological evaluation at 14 Market Place, March, Cambridgeshire.. Draft NAU Archaeology Report 2737 (SCB22106)	The evaluation revealed evidence of Roman salt production, and a sequence of largely naturally deposited layers that had probably formed on the edge of a channel in the earlier medieval period. A layer of peat had also formed on the edge of the channel in the 12th-14th centuries, which may mark the original course of the River Nene. Evidence of the ground being deliberately raised in the 17th to 19th centuries was also identified.
ECB3772	Evaluation at Creek Road, March, 2012	Allen Archaeological Associates 2012. Archaeological evaluation report: trial trenching on land off Creek road, March, Cambridgeshire. Allen Archaeological Associates Report 2012053 (SCB22255)	An evaluation consisting of four trial trenches was carried out. Within two of the trenches a number of linear features were revealed dating to the 18th-19th centuries. There was also one modern pit and one undated pit within these two trenches. Pottery dating to the 18th-19th centuries were uncovered along with some animal remains and three fragments of Clay tobacco pipes.
ECB3826	Evaluation at land east of 36 High Street, March 2012	OAE Phillips, T. 2012. 36 High Street, March, Cambridgeshire: Archaeological Evaluation.OAE Report 1400 (SCB22306)	Two trial trenches were excavated, of which only one contained archaeological features. Trench one contained Post-Medieval plough scars and a pit containing a cow skeleton with pottery dated to the late 17th-18th centuries. A ditch was also uncovered dating to the 16th -mid 17th centuries.

ECB3894	Evaluation and Excavation at Elliot Road, March, 2013	Archaeological Solutions Lichtenstein, L 2012. Evaluation at Elliott Road, March. Archaeological Solutions Report 4207 Quinn, S 2013. An Archaeological Excavation at Elliot Road, March. Archaeological Solutions Report 4354 (SCB38985)	An evaluation consisting of eleven trial trenches was carried out. The majority of the features were located on the west of the site consisting of pits and ditches dated post-medieval or early modern by pottery recovered from the features. Discrete Early Bronze Age features were also recorded with an Early Bronze Age pottery sherd recovered from a ditch.



HER Events in the Historic Core