

Archaeological Field Unit

**Medieval Remains at 96-98 Great Whyte,
Ramsey, Cambridgeshire:
An Archaeological Evaluation**

Spencer Cooper

September 2005

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. 824

Commissioned by *Fauxward Homes*

**Medieval remains at 96-98 Great Whyte, Ramsey, Cambridgeshire:
An Archaeological Evaluation
(TL 2855 8543)**

Spencer Cooper HND, BA

September 2005

Editor: Elizabeth Shepherd Popescu BA, MIFA and Paul Spoerry PhD, BTech, MIFA

With contributions by Alan Clapham, Rachel Fosberry and Paul Spoerry



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*©Archaeological Field Unit
Cambridgeshire County Council
Fulbourn Community Centre
Haggis Gap, Fulbourn
Cambridgeshire CB1 5HD
Tel (01223) 881614
Fax (01223) 880946*

*arch.field.unit@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/archaeology>*

SUMMARY

Between the 18th and 22nd July 2005, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at 96-98 Great Whyte, Ramsey Cambridge (TL 2855 8543) by staff of Cambridgeshire County Council's Archaeological Field Unit (CCC AFU). The proposed development includes construction of several dwellings. The project was commissioned by Fauxward Homes.

The work was carried out in accordance with a Brief for an archaeological evaluation issued by Kasia Gdaniec of Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice (Planning Application No F/YR04/3700/D).

The evaluation has demonstrated the presence of medieval and post-medieval activity relating to land reclamation of the fen edge. In addition a small number of late medieval domestic features were uncovered in Trench 1. These lie within the sequence of peat deposition that pre-dates reclamation

A group of medieval fishing lead weights can be viewed within a wider context that stresses the importance of fishing in this part of the fens. Samples taken from peat and occupation deposits provide useful data regarding the natural environment at the time of reclamation and during the episode of domestic occupation.

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Drawing Conventions

Sections	Plans
Limit of Excavation -----	Limit of Excavation _____
Cut _____	Deposit - Conjectured -----
Cut-Conjectured -----	Limit of Development Area
Soil Horizon	Intrusion/Truncation - - - - -
Soil Horizon - Conjectured	Sondages/Machine Strip -----
Intrusion/Truncation - - - - -	Illustrated Section S.14 _____
Top of Natural _____	Sondage
Top Surface _____	Archaeological Deposit
Break in Section -----	Excavated Slot
Cut Number 118	Natural Feature
Deposit Number 117	Cut Number 118
Ordnance Datum $\frac{18.45\text{m ODN}}{\times}$	

**Medieval Remains at 96-98 Great Whyte, Ramsey, Cambridgeshire:
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1 INTRODUCTION

Between 18th and 22nd July 2005, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at 96-98 Great Whyte, Ramsey Cambridgeshire (TL 2855 8543) by staff of the Archaeological Field Unit (CCC AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council. The proposed development includes construction of several dwellings on 0.037 ha of land. The project was commissioned by Fauxward Homes Ltd.

The work was carried out in accordance with a Brief for an archaeological evaluation issued by Kasia Gdaniec of the Cambridgeshire County Council Planning and Countryside Advice Office (Planning Application No F/YR04/3700/F) (Gdaniec 2003).

The site lies close to the junction of the Nordelph Peat and the chalky Boulder Clay till of the island on which Ramsey lies. There is alluvium to the south-east.

This evaluation had the potential to assist in establishing the development of medieval Ramsey and in particular to answer questions concerning the impact of the Great Whyte medieval canal on this particular part of Ramsey.

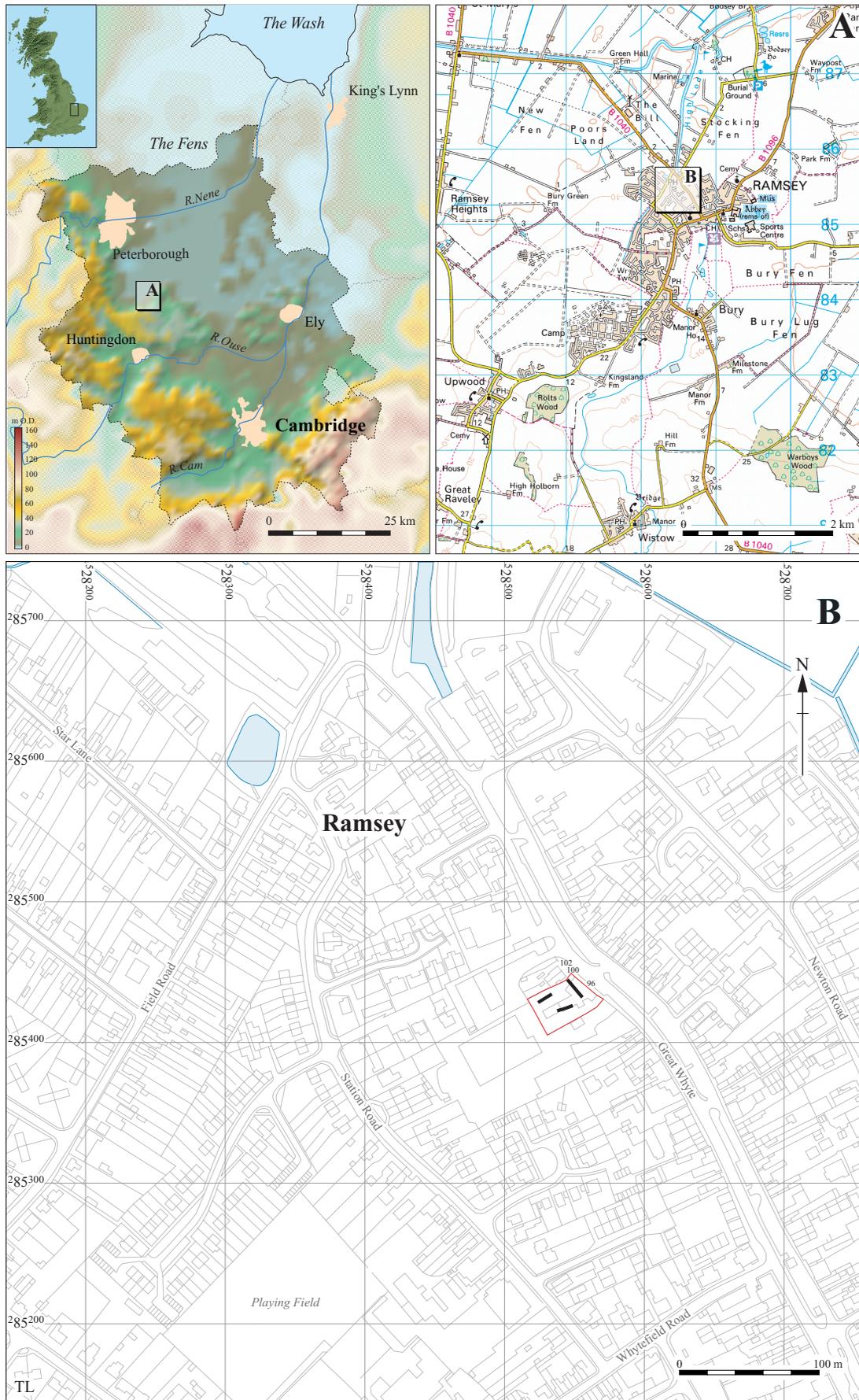
2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Ramsey lies on a slightly elevated peninsula of boulder clay till overlying Oxford Clay (BGS 1995) which projects 4km from the south-western fen edge. Areas of gravel are present around the margins of the peninsula.

3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Ramsey Abbey

The site is located on the edge of the historic town of Ramsey, which owes its existence to Ramsey Abbey. The Abbey was founded as a regular Benedictine monastery in AD 969 by Ailwyn (foster brother to King Edgar), and by



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Figure 1 Site location showing position of trenches (black) and development area (red)

974 a wooden church was recorded and dedicated (Page *et al*, 1932). Substantial land grants led to the church becoming one of the richest not only in the fens, but in the whole country, and was to earn it the name of 'Ramsey the Golden'. The abbey continued to flourish throughout the 11th century, surviving both the Danish invasion and Norman Conquest. In the 12th century the monastic buildings and the church were rebuilt using stone from Barnack (near Peterborough). It was also in the twelfth century that the monastery was seized by the Essex Baron Geoffrey de Mandeville, in the period known as the 'Anarchy' (1140-4). In 1998 an archaeological excavation was undertaken on the early monastic buildings (Macaulay 1999). Investigation uncovered remains from the late 10th to 11th century and a 12th-century (probable Anarchy) fortification ditch. In addition evidence of metalworking was uncovered on the 1998 excavation.

3.2 The Medieval Town

The early history of Ramsey is obscure and the town is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey. The town was recorded in the mid-12th century and by the 13th century had been granted a weekly market and annual fair. Ramsey was a small market town serving the Abbey and north-east Huntingdonshire (Page *et al* 1932). Situated on the edge of the fens, the town was not on a main traffic route and as a result never rose above the position of a small market town.

The Fenland Survey noted that by the medieval period fen deposits were encroaching into the area of the town from the north and east (Hall 1992).

Jonas Moore's 1860's map of Ramsey is the first map showing the whole town. Within the subject site it depicts houses that front onto the Great Whyte and shows the Stokin Fen to the north.

A number of small-scale evaluations have been carried out within the town. An evaluation at 30 Great Whyte (to the south of the evaluation site) revealed a ditch which contained Grimston ware pottery dating from 1350-1500. The ditch represented a burgage plot boundary that developed alongside the Great Whyte canal in the medieval period (Cooper 2003, CHER 15038).

A recent evaluation at Newton Green revealed medieval strata cut by a pit of medieval date (12th to 14th century) covered by over a metre of modern overburden (Pearson and McDonald 2000). Layers directly overlying the peat contained 12th- to 14th-century pottery.

A Recording Brief at Marriots Yard found no archaeological remains (Membury and Hatton 1996, CHER11975). A building at 88 Great Whyte, demolished in 1980, is recorded as having been a 15th-century structure with deeply stratified earlier medieval deposits.

An archaeological evaluation undertaken on land at Ramsey Garden Centre,

Great Whyte, revealed a sequence of medieval and post-medieval deposits containing sparse quantities of shell, metalwork, animal bone and late medieval tile. The layers probably represent attempts at land reclamation in the early and later post-medieval period. The only archaeological feature present was an early post-medieval ditch (Last 2002).

There have been further archaeological investigations at 50-52 High Street (Gdaniec pers. comm.) and south of the site at 46-48 High Street (Atkins 2004). These evaluations have shown that there is good survival of evidence for Saxo-Norman and medieval Ramsey. They also demonstrate attempts during the medieval period to reclaim wet, low-lying areas that may indicate a period of expansion and high land prices.

At 50-52 High Street Saxo-Norman and medieval occupation was uncovered including a stone structure. Organic remains within the layers (and presumably feature fills) encountered show there is a strong possibility that food waste/processing waste, industrial/craft debris may be recovered that could hint at activities undertaken in the vicinity (Kasia Gdaniec, pers. comm.). The evaluation of 46-48 High Street showed that horizontally stratified deposits dating to the 13th or 14th century overlaid natural waterlogged organic remains and an early post-medieval structure dating to the 15th or 16th centuries was built on these deposits. The author characterised the activity there as medieval reclamation on marginal land (Atkins 2004).

3.3 The Great Whyte

The Great Whyte was known as *la wihte* in the 13th century. Its present width is due to the former presence of an artificial watercourse running within it discharging into the High Lode and then the Nene to the north. Dating back to at least the 13th century, it was culverted in the 19th century and still exists under the present road. The burgage units laid out at right angles to the Great Whyte represent secondary development of the settlement.

4 METHODOLOGY

Three trenches, totalling 38m in length and 1.6m wide, were excavated using a mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket. The position of the trenches is shown in Fig. 1. After machining was completed each trench was cleaned by hand, photographed and recorded using the CCC AFU standard system. In addition all of the spoil heaps from the trenches were scanned visually for artefacts.

5 RESULTS

5.1 General

The sequence was very similar in all trenches with a series of levelling or rubble layers sealing a peat layer. The only archaeological features identified were a series of intercutting pits, a ditch and a posthole in Trench 1.

Artefactual material recovered from the levelling layers includes medieval lead fishing weights (Appendix 4, Fig.4), medieval pottery, oyster shells and animal bone.

A number of environmental samples were taken from the levelling layers, which revealed substantial information about the fen edge environment, the way it was being exploited, and how land was being reclaimed (Appendix 2). In addition hammerscale and slag material recovered from the samples indicates metalworking in the vicinity.

5.2 Trench 1

Trench 1 was located in the north-western part of the site adjacent to the east-west modern property boundary (Fig. 2). It was 11m long and 1.5m deep on a northeast-southwest alignment. The remains here were characterised by an overburden or levelling sequence overlying peat deposits within which was a horizon that included cut features.

The earliest deposit was natural peat, as characterised by Layer 10 which was revealed at the base of the cut features and in the sondages at each end of the trench. At the centre of the trench this natural peat layer (10) was covered by a rather indistinct lens of yellowish brown clay (20) which was 0.15m thick. A series of intercutting pits (**6**, **9** and **12**), a ditch and a posthole cut into layer 20. Despite the efforts of the excavators the edges of this layer could not be properly defined and where sondages were cut through it is could only be imprecisely identified in section. It is thus not planned on Figure 2, but from Section 3 on Figure 3 its upper margin can be seen, whilst Section 1 shows the pit group cutting 20, which overlies, or merges into, peat layer 10.

The earliest feature in the sequence of pits was Pit **6** which measured 0.95m wide and 0.26m deep. This pit contained a single fill (5) which consisted of a dark grey silty clay and contained burnt stone, shell and pottery. Pottery recovered from this context included Bourne D and Ely ware which together provide a date of perhaps 1430-1500.

Pit **9** cut Pit **6** on its south eastern edge. It was 0.95m wide and 0.23m deep and contained two fills 7 and 8. Fill 8 was a mid-grey silty clay which contained pre-1500 pottery with a soft calcareous fabric. Fill 7 was a mid-grey silty clay with orange mottling and contained large brick fragments.

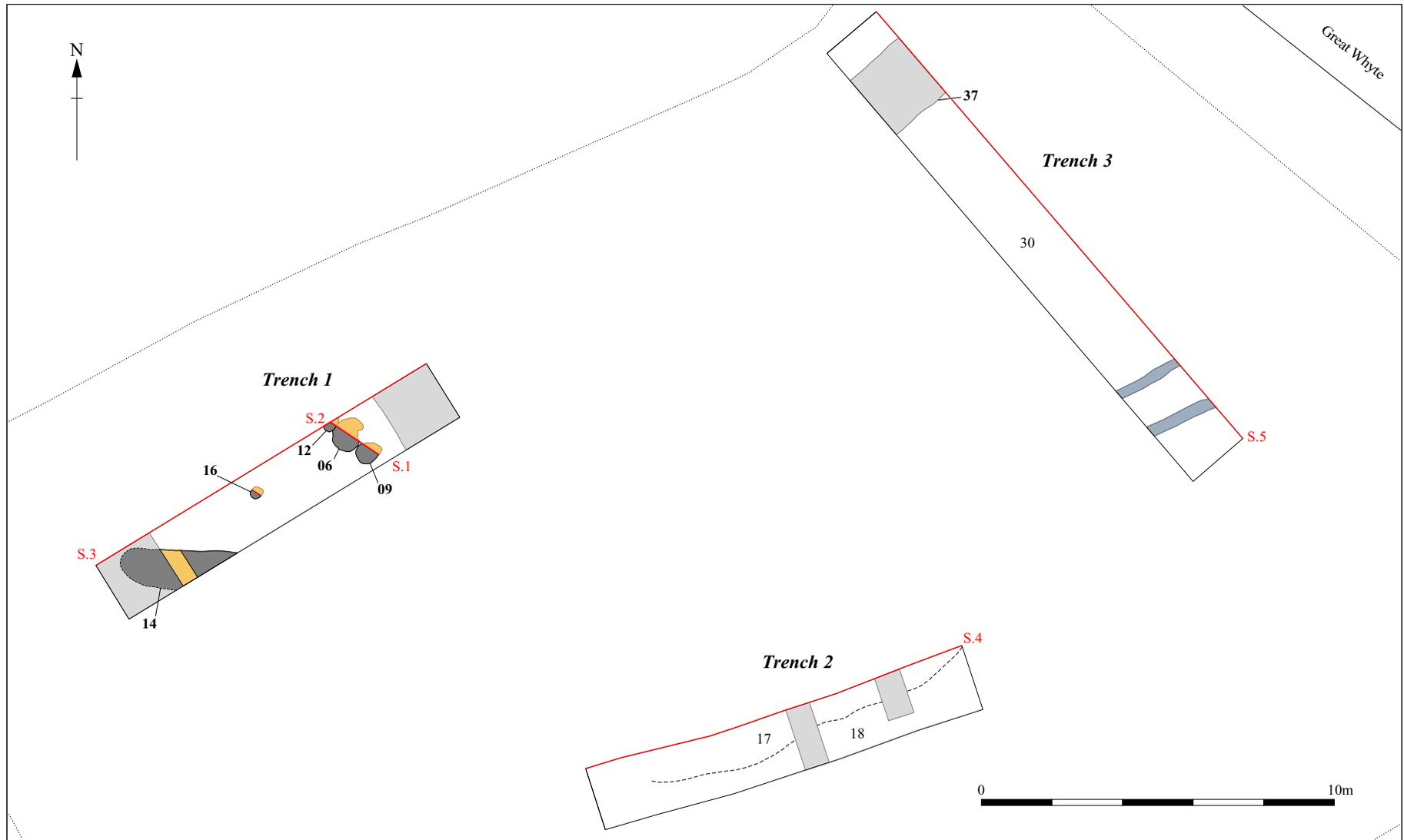


Figure 2 Trench plans

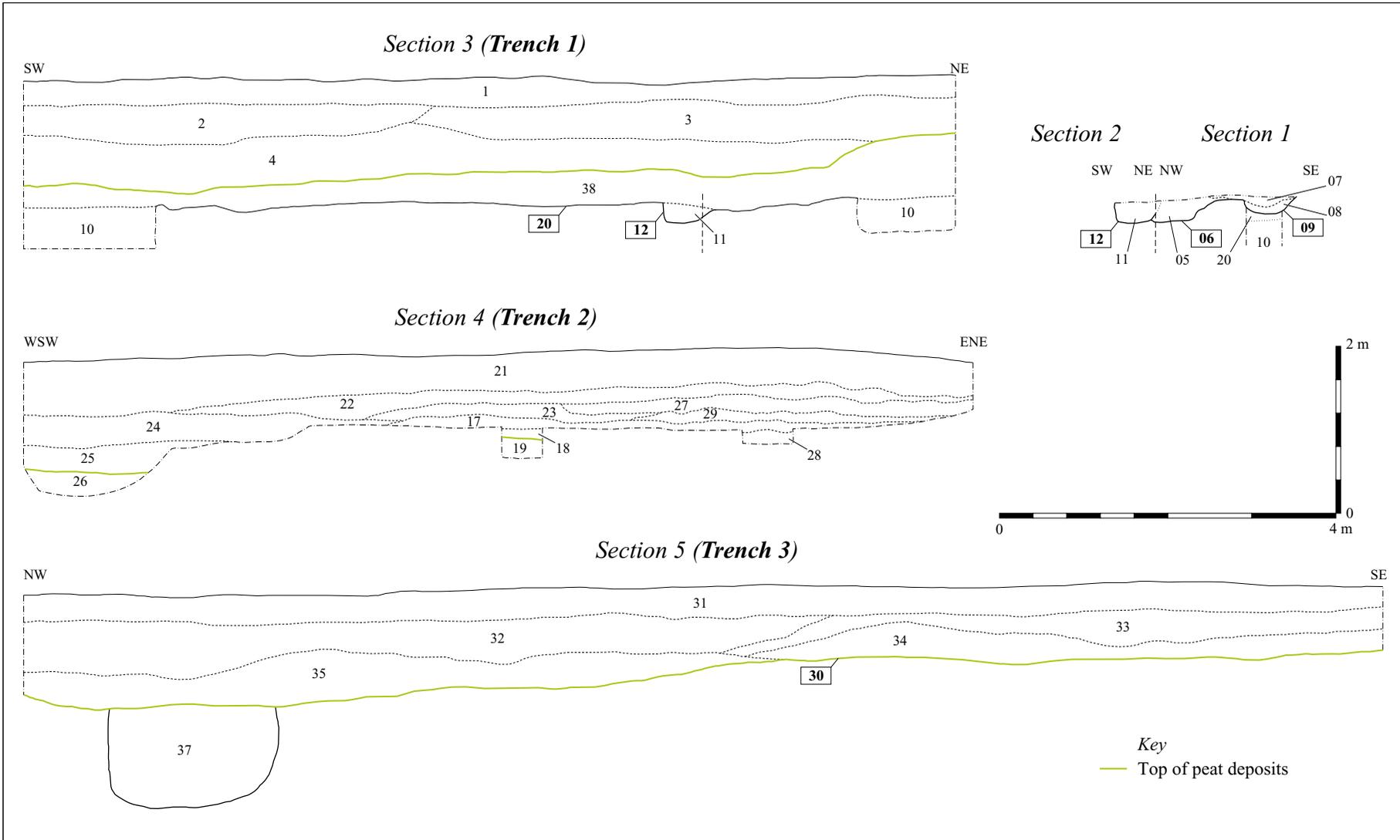


Figure 3 Section drawings

Pit 12 cut Pit 6 on its north eastern edge. It was 0.70m long by perhaps 0.3m wide and 0.15m deep and contained one fill 11, a mid-grey silty clay.

A sub-square posthole (16) circa 0.38m across and 0.17m deep was recorded in the centre of the trench. It had one fill (15), a light grey silty clay.

A shallow, flat-bottomed ditch (14) was identified in the south-western part of the trench. Ditch 14 was 1.1m wide and 0.11m deep and contained a single fill of dark grey silty clay (13) which contained frequent stones. Pottery recovered from this context included Bourn D and Saintonge white ware which together provide a date of perhaps 1430-1550. Ditch 14 became difficult to see on the surface as it progressed westwards. A sondage was cut through it and the surrounding peat by machine and following this the ditch could not be seen in the northern and western trench sections.

Above layer 10 and the features cut into layer 20 was a further peat deposit (38), which was at least 0.35m deep, rising towards the eastern end of the trench. Pottery recovered from this layer includes Bourne D and Ely ware, which together provide a date of perhaps 1430-1500.

This was overlain by a dark grey silty deposit (4), *circa* 0.5m deep, in turn sealed by a deposit 0.35m deep consisting of light brown grey silty clay with occasional gravel (3).

The next deposit was a light grey silt clay (2), which was 0.40m deep, and above this was a 0.25m deep deposit of dark grey silty clay (1) with frequent brick.

5.3 Trench 2

Trench 2 was located in the south-eastern part of the site parallel to the modern northern property boundary. It was 11m long and 1.6 m deep and on an east-west alignment (Fig. 2). The earliest layers observed (26, 28 and 19) probably represent sondages into the same black peat layer, 0.26m deep.

In the central and north eastern sondages above this peaty layer was a dark brown silty clay (18=28) which was 0.20m deep and contained no artefacts. Layer 18 was overlain by a yellowish brown clay (17) which was 0.15m deep and contained several sherds of Late medieval Ely ware dating from 1350-1500. An environmental sample taken from this context contained carbonised remains and hammerscale (Appendix 2). Above Context 17 was a dark grey silty clay (29) which was 0.30m deep and a greenish grey brown silty clay (23) which was 0.25m deep .

In the north western machine-cut sondage the peat was overlain by a dark brown silty clay (25) which was 0.38m deep and which is probably the same

deposit as 18=28. This was succeeded by a greenish grey brown silty clay (24) which was 0.58m deep. Three medieval lead fishing weights were recovered from this context (Appendix 4, Fig. 4).

A sequence of further deposits include layers 23, 27, 22 and 21. Layer 23 was a greenish grey-brown silty clay 0.25m deep. Layer 27 was a yellowish brown clay which was 0.25m deep. Above this was a dark brown silty clay (22) which was 0.32m deep. This layer contained Collyweston roof tile and other post-medieval building material. The latest layer in the sequence was a light grey silty clay (21) which was 0.60m deep.

5.4 Trench 3

Trench 3 was located in the eastern part of the site fronting onto the Great Whyte (Fig. 2). It measured 16m long and 1.1m deep and was located on a northwest-southeast alignment. The overburden or build-up consisted of six layers. The earliest layer encountered was a black peaty fen type layer (30=37). Context 37 represents a machined sondage through the peaty layer which was over 1m deep. Above the peaty layer was a brownish grey silty clay (35) which was 0.40m deep and a dark grey silty clay (34) which was 0.45m deep. A sequence of further deposits includes layers 33, 32 and 31. Layer 33 was 0.35m deep and consisted of light brown grey silty clay with occasional gravel. Layer 32 was a light greyish brown silt clay which was 0.40m deep. Layer 31 was a light grey silt clay which was 0.40m deep.

6 DISCUSSION

Spencer Cooper and Paul Sperry

The evaluation has revealed medieval and post-medieval activity relating to land reclamation on the fen edge. Each trench was machined down to a peat layer, which was rich in organic remains. This deposit implies the presence of standing water which shows that the site was within the fen, being perhaps a small expanse of water or a secondary channel adjacent to or feeding into the Great Whyte which runs parallel to the site.

The three trenches demonstrate late medieval and early post-medieval reclamation layers overlying the peat layer. The ceramic evidence suggests that there was no reclamation activity before the late 14th century at the earliest, and more probably the 15th century, within this part of Ramsey. This lack of pre-15th century deposition seems to fit in with the documentary evidence that suggests the Great Whyte canal is 13th century in origin (Hall 1992). Only once it was cut did further activity gravitate here, and then it expanded only gradually along the banks of the new channel.

The features recorded in Trench 2 were initially thought to represent possible late medieval or early post-medieval industrial activity. Evidence from the

environmental assessment of soil samples tends, however, to suggest otherwise (Appendix 2). Flotation and analysis of sieved residues suggests that Feature 6 contained burnt wattle and daub building remains whereas the fill of Feature 9 included domestic rubbish mixed with seeds from locally growing vegetation and cereal grains. These remains are of late medieval date. These features all lie on what appears to be a stabilisation deposit or working surface within the still developing peat sequence, suggesting late-medieval activity on the periphery of the town adjacent to a water course, and/or the open fen, prior to reclamation in the form of dumping to raise the land above the constant threat of flooding.

The presence of fishing lead weights (Appendix 4, Fig 4) and associated strips of lead is of some significance since these finds indicate some activities undertaken within the Ramsey area in the late medieval and early post-medieval periods. There is no doubt that fishing would have been significant activity within this area since there are at least three major medieval fisheries (Holme Fen, Whittlesea Mere and Ramsey Mere) located within a 10 mile radius of Ramsey (Lucas 1998). Documentary evidence suggests pike was the major fish being exploited in these fisheries although a 12th-century statute from Ramsey Abbey shows 1,000 eels valued at 6s 8d (Page, Proby and Ladds 1932).

Evidence of lead working and ferrous metalworking has been noted on other archaeological investigations undertaken in the town. The regular frequency of metalworking on local excavations and evaluations is underpinned by the presence of the Abbey. It is tempting to view large scale ecclesiastical sites such as Ramsey Abbey as a catalyst and a centre for craft activities. There may also be a link between the manufacture and use of lead fishing weights in the vicinity, however, the only direct evidence for archaeometallurgy from this site is hammerscale from smithing found in Context 17, a possible 'reclamation layer' in Trench 2. The lead weights were recovered from the next deposit in the sequence and one higher up.

The only dateable finds recovered from this evaluation were pottery sherds (Appendix C) and one unstratified medieval architectural fragment (SF8). The pottery is all of late medieval or early post-medieval date.

The lack of earlier material implies that the initial phase of dumping was in the 15th century, with the domestic activity represented by the excavated features in Trench 1 also being late medieval in date, but perhaps a little earlier and representing a horizon of occupation within the later peat formation sequence and prior to reclamation. This was followed by more dumping and levelling, presumably to raise the ground surface above the wet fenland.

The absence of any later material in subsequent deposits tends to support idea that the majority of made ground was created here by the 16th century, with little subsequent disturbance. It is tempting to link this to the major changes experienced in Ramsey during the 16th century following the Abbey's dissolution.

7 CONCLUSION

The aim of the project was to establish the character, date, state of preservation, and extent of any archaeological remains within the site. The results of the evaluation have made an interesting contribution to the understanding of the development of medieval and post-medieval Ramsey.

This evaluation has identified late medieval domestic-type activities taking place whilst peat was still forming. Following further peat deposition late medieval/early post-medieval land reclamation is present in the northern part of the site. The presence of fishing weights and some smithing waste provide subtle indications of activities, whilst the sampling of peat deposits has yielded indications of a quite variable local flora in the vicinity of the Great Whyte. Problems with the level of groundwater as much as attempts to expand the settlement may explain the episodes of reclamation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Fauxward Homes who funded the archaeological work. The Brief for archaeological work was written by Kasia Gdaniec (Cambridgeshire County Council Planning and Countryside Advice Office) who also monitored the evaluation. The project was managed by Paul Sperry.

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APPENDIX 1: FINDS SUMMARY

Context	Object Name	Ceramic	Fe	Metal	Organic	Pb	Stone
5	Bone				0.006		
5	Fired clay	0.04					
5	Lead inlay or fitting					0.002	
5	Nail		0.006				
5	Shell				0.046		
5	Stone						1.54
5	Vessel	0.126					
8	Vessel	0.011					
13	Nail		0.011				
13	Vessel	0.165					
17	Bone				0.071		
17	Vessel	0.668					
18	Bone				0.1		
18	Slag			0.008			
18	Vessel	0.162					
21	Lead fishing weight					0.058	
22	Artefact		0.001				
22	Bone				0.064		
22	Fired clay	0.001					
22	Stone						1.761
22	Vessel	0.026					
24	Lead fishing weight					0.086	
24	Lead inlay or fitting					0.003	
24	Nail		0.002				
30	Ceramic Building Material	0.199					
30	Shell				0.006		
30	Stone						0.912
30	Vessel	0.055					
99999	Architectural fragment						6

APPENDIX 2: ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

by Rachel Fosberry, with identifications by Alan Clapham

1 Introduction and Methods

Eight samples were taken from across the evaluated area and were submitted for appraisal. Five of the samples appeared reasonably dry and were processed using the CCC AFU standard flotation machine. Flots were collected in 0.5mm meshes and residues were retained in a 1.0mm mesh. The flot was examined under a binocular microscope and the presence of any plant remains or other artefacts is noted in Table 1. The residues were sorted and any artefacts were reintegrated with the hand-excavated finds. A further three

waterlogged samples were wet sieved through 5mm, 2mm and 1mm meshes and were also examined at x8 magnification.

2 Results

Samples 1, 4, 5 and 8 were preserved by charring. Sample 2 contained a mixture of charred and waterlogged material and Samples 3, 6 and 7 were all preserved by waterlogging. Preservation of the charred material was moderate.

Pit fills 5 and 7 (Samples 4 and 5) had appeared very similar in plan, showing evidence of *in-situ* burning. Both samples contain substantial quantities of burnt daub but Sample 4 produced considerably more charcoal than Sample 5. Sample 5 contains the remains of a substantial variety of plants compared to Sample 4 which only contained wood charcoal and charred reeds. Similarly samples 6 and 7, which were both taken from the same peat layer, both yielded different results. Sample 6 is extremely rich in plant remains whereas Sample 7 consists only of humified peat roots and monocotyledon and woody fragments.

Sample 2 contains several moderate sized pieces of slag and abundant flake hammerscale and spheroidal hammerslag. Flake hammerscale is also present in Sample 1. Other artefacts recovered from sample residues include pottery sherds from Samples 2, 4, 5 and 8 and animal bone from Samples 1, 2, 4, 5 and 8. Fishbone and scales are present in Samples 2, 4, 5 and 8. Sample 8 also contained several fragments of stone tiles. Sample 1 contained numerous fragments of the fossilised shell *Gryphaea* (Devil's toe-nail).

Sample No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Context No.	17	19	26	5	7	30	30	22
Feature type	layer	layer	layer	pit	pit	layer	layer	demolition layer
Cereals								
<i>Hordeum</i> sp. (grains)					+			
<i>Triticum</i> sp. (grains)					+			
plant macrofossils								
<i>Pisum sativum</i>								+
<i>Agrostemma githago</i>					+			
<i>Chenopodium album</i>		+			++			
<i>Lolium</i> sp.					++			
<i>Rorippa</i> sp.					+			
<i>Rhianthus</i> sp.					+	+		
Small Poaceae indet.						+		++
Wetland plant macrofossils								
<i>Cladium mariscus</i>						+		+
<i>Eleocharis</i> sp.	+				+			++
<i>Alisma plantago-aquatica</i>			++			+		
<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>			+					
<i>Oenanthe aquatica</i>			++			+++		
<i>Sambucus nigra</i> (w/l)		+			+			
<i>Lemna</i> sp.		+				+		
<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>			+		+	+++		
<i>Carex</i> sp.			+			++		
<i>Rumex maritimus</i>						+		
<i>Mentha aquatica</i>						+++		
<i>Ranunculus</i> subgenus <i>Batrachium</i>						+		
<i>Ranunculus sceleratus</i>						+		
<i>Nuphar lutea</i>						+		
<i>Lycopus europaeus</i>						+		
<i>Scirpus lacustris</i>						+		
<i>Sparganium</i> sp.						+		
<i>Stellaria</i> sp.						+		
<i>Aphanes aevensis</i>						+		
<i>Urtica dioica</i>						+		
Other plant macrofossils								
Charcoal <2mm	++	+		+++	++	++		++
Charcoal >2mm	+			+++	++	+		++
Reed Culm nodes				+++	++			
Leaf fragments						+		
Moss fragments						+		
Monocot. Roots and stems		+	+++	+	+++	+++	+++	+N41
<i>Phragmites</i> rhizomes						+		
Other materials								
Daphnia egg cases						+++		
worm cocoons		+	++			+++		
Insect remains			++		+	+++		
Hammerscale	+							
Fishbone				+				+
Fish scale		+		+				
Cadis fly larval case						+		

+ = 1 – 10 specimens ++ = 10 – 100 specimens +++ = 100+ specimens

Table1: Plant remains from environmental samples

3 Conclusions and Recommendations

These samples provide substantial information about the fen edge environment, the way it was being exploited and how land was being reclaimed. There is evidence of industrial activity in the form of iron smithing

and there is also evidence of the use of reeds for thatching and possibly as fuel. Several deposits contained small quantities of fishbone, fishscale and edible shellfish indicating that these resources were also being exploited. Sample 1 consists of a redeposited natural that had presumably been spread over an area for reclamation of the seasonally wet land surface.

Sample 2 represents a mixture of industrial and domestic waste. Smithing waste in the form of slag and hammerscale has been dumped in this pit along with other domestic refuse including mussel shells and animal bone. The depth of this feature has kept the contents wet.

Sample 3 represents a silty layer, close to the waters edge, that has periodically been wet and then dried (as signified by the presence of worm cocoons). It provides a typical picture of the fen edge environment consisting of Water plantain in or close to the edge of the fen, with sedges and *Solanum dulcamara* (Woody nightshade) on the slightly drier ground.

The local plant environment is best described by Sample 6, which contains the seeds of numerous wetland plants including many varieties of sedges (*Cladium mariscus* (Saw-sedge), *Carex* sp.), reeds (*Phragmites* sp. (Common reed), *Sparganium* sp. (Burr reed), and rushes (*Scirpus lacustris* (Bull rush) all of which would have provided useful material for thatching, floor coverings and fuel. Other plants include Water plantain, *Oenanthe* sp. (water cress), *Rhinanthus* sp. (Yellow rattle), *Nuphar lutea* (Yellow water lilly) and *Rumex maritimus* (Golden dock).

The spatial variation between samples 6 and 7 is highly significant as both samples were taken from the same layer of peat however both yielded very different results. Sample 7 consisted entirely of humified material showing a transition from Sample 6 from wetter to drier ground. This could possibly be evidence of land reclamation by drainage or may just be representing higher ground.

Samples 4 and 5 are also informative as both show evidence of burnt building material. Sample 4 contains large lumps of daub containing large, cylindrical vesicles indicating clay mixed with reeds. Smaller fragments of the same material are also found in sample 5. The substantial amount of burnt material in sample 4 represents a mixture of burnt reeds and wood, presumably from a thatched building. Sample 5 represents domestic rubbish mixed with seeds from locally growing vegetation. There is evidence of agriculture in the form of grains of *Hordeum* sp. (barley) and a single *Triticum* sp. (wheat) grain however there is no evidence of crop processing other than a single seed of *Agrostemma githago* (corncockle) which was a common crop contaminant and is a large seed that would often survive the crop processing stages, being of a similar size to the cereal grains. It is thus likely that crop processing was not taking place in the vicinity.

Sample 8 is described as a demolition layer that is confirmed by the presence of tile fragments and domestic debris. The presence of a single pea is inconclusive.

In conclusion, this small assemblage confirms the utilisation and exploitation of fen-edge land and provides some evidence of agriculture, the dumping of destruction material and a detailed description of the local vegetation.

APPENDIX 3: POTTERY SPOTDATING

by Dr Paul Spoerry

This is a late medieval to early post-medieval assemblage. The domination of Cambridgeshire wares in the fabric assemblage is apparent and it is clear that pottery is being imported to Ramsey from Ely and its environs, and forms the main body of the assemblage. The vessel types are standard domestic forms used for storage and cooking with some serving vessels.

Context	Feature	Description	Total Wt.	Context Date Range
5	Layer	3x overfired LMEL jar rim 1x BOND	120g 6g	1350-1500 1430-1650 context date 1430-1500)
8	Layer	1x UNK smooth, soft, calcareous pre 1500	10g	Pre 1500
13	Ditch	2x BOND 2x UNK misc calcereous 1x SAIN unglazed	27g 43g 7g	1430-1650 1350-1500 context date 1430-1550
17	Layer	10x LMEL (large base jug)	670g	1350-1500
18	Layer	10x LMEL 2 GRIM 1x GRIM (decorated)	130g 17g 14g	1350-1500 1250-1500 1350-1500 context date 1430-1550.
22	Layer	1x RAER	27g	1480-1550
30	Layer	1x LMEL	15g	1350-1500

Codes RAER=Raeren Stoneware
LMEL=Late Medieval Ely Ware
GRIM=Grimston Ware
BOND=Bourne D Ware
SAIN=Saintonge White ware

APPENDIX 4: SMALL FINDS

by Spencer Cooper

1 Quantification

Small Find No.	Context No.	Material	Object Name	Total no. items
1	24	Pb (lead)	Weight	1
2	21	Pb (lead)	Weight	1
3	24	Pb (lead)	Artefact	1
4	5	Fe (iron)	Nail	1
5	5	Fe (iron)	Nail	1
6	13	Fe (iron)	Nail	1
7	22	Fe (iron)	Artefact	10
8	99999	Stone	Architectural fragment	1
9	24	Pb (lead)	Weight	1
Total				18

2 Metalwork

The most notable Small Finds were the lead medieval fishing weights and associated strip metal. These finds emphasise the importance of fishing and fish in the medieval period in this part of the fens. A major group of 538 lead weights and associated lead fragments from a medieval fishing ‘cote’ on the former edge of Whittlesea Mere was published in 1998 (Fryer 1998). The most common weights found there were rolled or part-rolled weights which were made out of strip lead. SF3 and SF9 are probably raw or waste material from rolled weights, or perhaps from folded or crimped weights. These lighter examples are believed to have been used in the sleeves or ‘wings’ of seine nets. SF1 is a variation on the conical weights seen at Whittlesea Mere, whilst SF2 is a tubular weight similar to others in that assemblage. These heavier items were probably used in the centre of seine nets.

Description

SF1 Conical, irregular profile , with circular perforation. 24 x 35 x 21mm. Weight 86g

SF2 Tubular weight with circular perforation. 25 x 22 x 25mm. Weight 58g

SF3 Rectangular lead sheet with fold in the centre. 21 x 12 x 2mm. Weight 2g

SF9 Rectangular lead sheet with fold in the centre. 25 x 15 x 3mm. Weight 3g

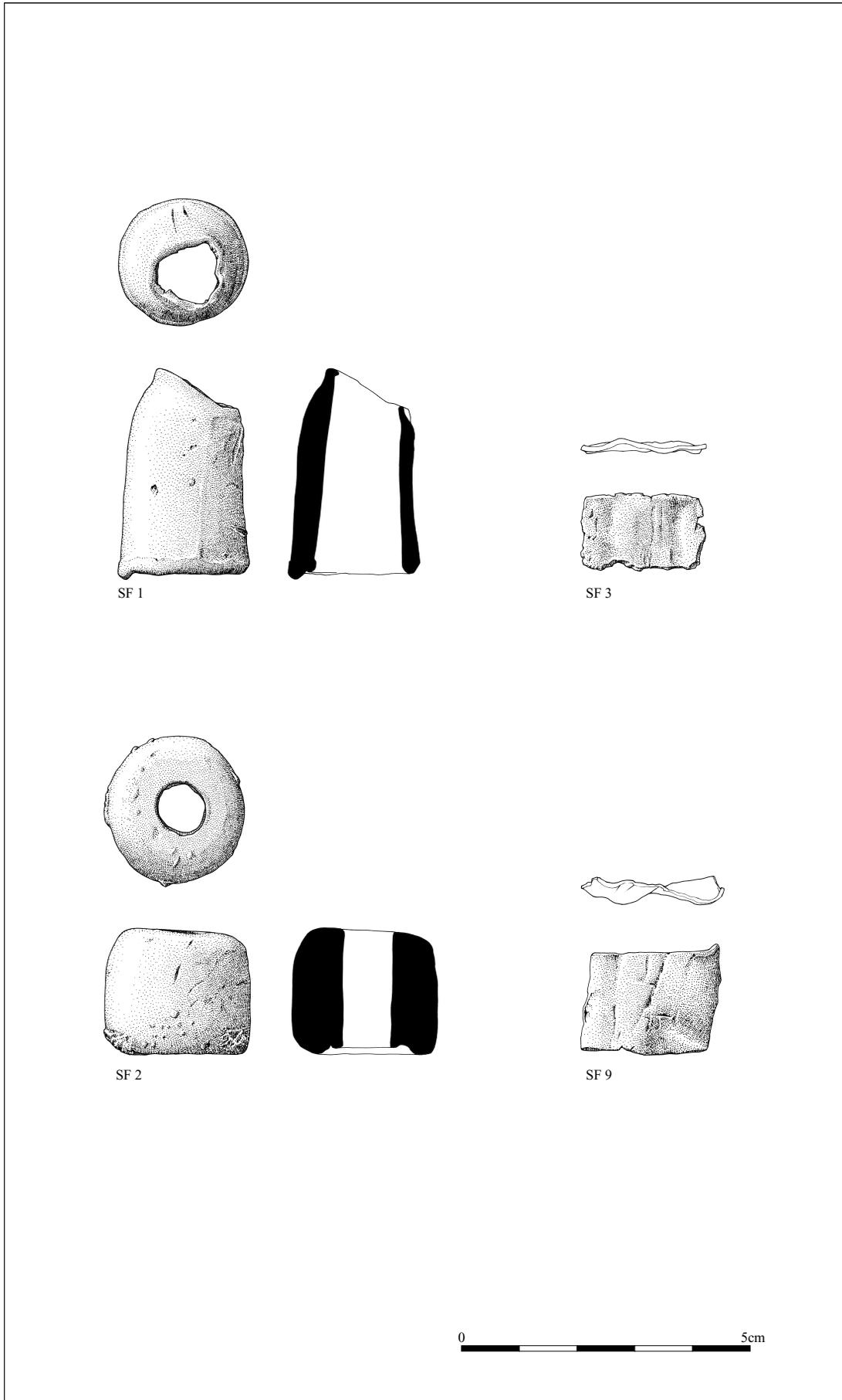


Figure 4 Lead fishing weights. Scale 1:1

3 Architectural Fragment

A large architectural fragment was recovered from an unstratified context. This fragment was of Barnack stone and undoubtedly originated from a high status building such as a very substantial medieval house or more probably part of Ramsey Abbey. The fragment may be a part of a door jamb.



*The Archaeological Field Unit
Fulbourn Community Centre
Haggis Gap
Fulbourn
Cambridge CB1 5HD
Tel (01223) 881614
Fax (01223) 880946*