



Archaeological Field Unit

Christchurch Park, Ipswich
An Archaeological Evaluation of a Former Pond F11

Rob Atkins and Dennis Payne

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Cambridgeshire County Council

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SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation, comprising two trenches was undertaken by the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council on the 19th and 20th January 2005. The evaluation took place in an area of waterlogging within Christchurch Park, Ipswich thought to be the area of a former pond. The proposals are to possibly recreate the pond as part of the restoration of the park. The pond, which is first shown on a map dated 1735, may date to the middle of the 16th century. Documentary evidence shows that in 1567 Edmund Withypoll built at least one new pond near his house.

Two trenches (32m in length) were excavated through the waterlogged area. Map evidence showed that the earlier pond was further to the north than was realised, though the southern edge of the pond would have been within the northern ends of both trenches. None of the pond survived though large amounts of brick fragments recovered from trench 1 may have been from the former southern pond lining, and deposited after the pond was removed and the site landscaped. The bricks are identical to the bricks from the Mansion house which dates to at least 1550.

Late 19th and early 20th century map evidence combined with evidence from the evaluation shows that the present terrace was built from landscaping works in this part of the park.

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Suffolk (centred on TM6504500)

1 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological evaluation by the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council took place during 19th to 20th January 2005 on a former pond (F11) on land at Christchurch Park, Ipswich, Suffolk. The work was commissioned by Ipswich Borough Council as part of Heritage Lottery Funded restoration of Christchurch Park (Landscape Design Associates 1999; Breen 2003). An archaeological desktop study had previously been undertaken to consider the archaeological component in the context of the restoration plan proposals and in terms of their amenity potential (Spoerry 2003). Features of archaeological potential were recorded F1-F22 (Spoerry 2003; table 2). The area under present investigation is former pond F11 which was recorded as a “lost post-medieval pond with its own springs” (Spoerry 2003, 22). It was thought by some people that there may be a wellhead at this site and that the springs could have been used by the former medieval priory as a water supply (pers. comm. Shaun Taylor).

The purpose of the archaeological investigation was to evaluate former pond F11 in order to resolve persistent waterlogging that had blighted this area of the park for the last 10 or so years (pers. comm. Shaun Taylor). The hope was that the drainage problems would be removed by the recreation of the former pond, perhaps through the removal of recent fills and the refurbishment of the revetment and/or pond walls, possibly restoring the pond to its Victorian splendor (pers. comm. Shaun Taylor). An archaeological specification was written prior to fieldwork taking place (Spoerry 2005).

The objectives listed in the specification were to seek to establish the character, date, state of preservation and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed development area, paying particular attention to the possibility of surviving structural components of the 18th century pond, and any features that can be equated with elements in the medieval monastic water management and supply system. In the event that archaeological remains were present the evaluation would seek to consider appropriate methodologies and suitable resourcing levels for preservation and an appropriate level of record. The possibility of re-using and/or reconstructing elements from the historic pond, and perhaps from earlier water management features, were to be positively highlighted, although not at the expense of the integrity of surviving remains (Spoerry 2005).

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The archaeological evaluation was within a flat sub-rectangular terrace measuring *c.* 40m by *c.* 20m at 26m AOD, with the land rising steeply adjacent to the north and a gradual slope to the round pond adjacent to the south. The natural topography is a major feature of this parkland, the ground rising from south to north from around 15m OD by Soane Street to perhaps 53m OD at its northern extremity, a rise of around 38m. Within this landscape there are several terraces, perhaps natural in origin but substantially reworked, and the western part of the park is bisected from south to north by a natural valley that would have carried streams at least seasonally. Springs are known to rise in a band running east-west across the park between the 20m and 25m contours. These currently feed all of the existing ponds (Spoerry 2003).

The geology of the Orwell Valley around Ipswich is quite complex, being a chalk basin overlain in several places with drift deposits (glacial) of clay, crag, sand and gravel (HMSO 1961). The surface deposits change as one ascends from south to north through the parkland, with the spring line lying on a bed of impermeable clay, with sands and gravels above. The natural in the evaluation trenches consisted of a yellowish orange sandy silt.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Medieval

The present park is within the grounds of the former Augustinian Priory of the Holy Trinity, with its foundation in the twelfth century. Included in the park is a significant portion of the precinct of the post-Conquest religious house. Breen (2003, 13) has raised the possibility that a building from the former Priory survives in the foundations of the present Mansion house (brick work surviving in the cellars). Some of the present parkland lakes and terraces probably originated in this medieval period. Documents indicate that former medieval ponds supplied the monks with carp, trench, roach and gudgeon (Breen 2003). Among the details at the dissolution there was a reference to “*several fishings iij ponds and stewes within the scite of the late house very comodius and well replenysed with fissue*” (quoted in Breene 2003, 6). These ponds seem to relate to fish ponds shown along Dairy Lane in the Speed map as well as the later Kirby map of 1735 (Fig. 2).

There is no documentary evidence for the source of water which supplied Holy Trinity Priory itself but it was very probably taken from very nearby (Allen 2001, 33). Allen suggests that the supply could have been from the former Bolton Lane water house which had stood in the 19th century behind the Mansion, abutting on the boundary wall adjoining the present-day Bolton Lane (Fig. 2).

Figure 1 location plan

Figure 2 1735 Kirby map with positions of water supply for the town and former Priory after Allen 2001, fig.8

3.2 Post –Medieval

In 1536, during Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries, the priory was suppressed and its estates seized by the Crown. Paul Withypoll, a successful London merchant, bought the site in 1545 and in 1548 his son Edmund began to build a house on the ruins of the priory. The grade 1 listed building that now stands here is known as Christchurch Mansion, an almost complete and original brick-built building of the period. In 1567/68 a suit was heard in the chamber between Ipswich Corporation and Edmund Withypoll due to flooding from Edmund's land. This flooding seems to have been caused by the creation of at least one new pond (Breen 2003, 9). John Ropkyn and Robert Sallowes gave evidence of the construction of one pond causing the flooding although John Newman stated that, "*Mr Withepole hath made certen newe pondes near his house.*" (quoted in Breen 2003, 6). Breen suggests the building of the Wilderness pond caused this flooding though evidence may also suggest that pond F11 in our development area may have been built at this same time.

Allen suggests that the water supply for this part of the town was probably from a conduit head just to the west of the Wilderness pond (Allen 2001; Fig. 2). The park itself was opened to the public in 1724 by the then owners. The 1735 Kirby map shows the landscape design of the park in this period (Fig 2). In 1894 it was given to the council and became a public park.

3.3 Map Evidence of pond F11

Introduction

The early maps of Ipswich, Speed (1610) and Ogilby (1675) only include the extreme southern part of Christchurch Park and both unfortunately stop before pond F11. The pond is located on six maps from 1735 to 1878. Five maps show the pond on the northern periphery of the present terrace where the pond is thought to have been (the sixth, a tithe map of 1849, is very inaccurate and the pond could not be located with any precision). Five maps from 1884 to the present day shows the site after the pond had gone out of use and landscaping had occurred within the development area. A representative sample of the maps are illustrated to show the main changes to the development area (Figs. 3-6).

Fig. 3 John Kirby Estate Map (1735)

Fig. 4 Edwin White Survey map (1848)

Fig. 5 1st Edition 25" Ordnance Survey Map 1884

Fig. 6 3rd Edition 25" Ordnance Survey Map (1927)

John Kirby Estate Map, 1735 (Figs. 2 and 3)

The earliest map that shows the pond under investigation is John Kirby's Estate Map of 1735. The 1735 map seems fairly accurate with the round pond and the south eastern corner of the wilderness pond located well (although the orientation of the latter is slightly out). Former pond F11 is on the northern periphery of the site. The two archaeological trenches would have just entered the southern edge of the pond.

The pond is sub-rectangular in shape approximately 30m x 18m. Comparing this map with the later maps of 1848 (Fig.3) and 1867 shows the pond to be orientated slightly differently – more to an east-west alignment rather than a slightly more northwest-southeast alignment. The probable reason for this is that the 1735 map was less accurate.

Edwin White Survey map, 1848 (Fig. 4)

The 1848 map seems to be very accurate with the round pond and the wilderness pond accurately located. This would give a lot of credence to the 1735 map which also places pond F11 on the northern periphery of the site. The pond (F11) is clearly shown as sub-rectangular c.25m by 13m. An east to west fence (shown in plate 1) stops near the north-east corner of the pond. There are no trees recorded in the proximity to the pond.

Monson map, 1848

The Monson map also was fairly accurately located and records the pond as sub-rectangular c. 30m by 16m in size on the northern periphery of the site.

Tithe map, Ipswich St Margaret's 1849

The tithe map is very inaccurate in the location of its various features and is stylised in the drawing. The pond is drawn as a straight rectangle. When the map is expanded to c. 1: 1000 scale, the pond measures 30m by 14m in size.

Edwin White Survey map, 1867

The Edwin White Survey 1867 map locates the pond in the same position as his 1848 map although the pond is less rectangular in shape with the eastern side being more rounded. The east to west fence has been extended across north boundary of the pond (see Plate 1) and trees planted to the north of the pond and fence.

Cowell map of Ipswich, 1878

The Cowell map has the pond in the same location as the previous maps although the pond is substantially longer than the above maps measuring c. 40m by 14m in size.

1st Edition 25" Ordnance Survey Map 1884 (Fig. 5)

The 1884 Ordnance Survey Map clearly shows that the pond had gone. What is shown in its place is an area of trees (which has been expanded) with a footpath just to the south and east of the former pond.

Plan of Christchurch Park Estate (1894)

The 1894 map shows the site had not changed from the 1st Ordnance Survey map.

2nd Edition 25" Ordnance Survey Map, 1904

The second OS map shows the site has had a certain amount of landscaping after 1894 (see Fig.6). The area once occupied by the pond is under trees. The pathway shown on the 1884 and 1894 maps has gone to be replaced by a much larger sub-rectangular terraced parthway area *c.* 40m by 20m in size. This coincides with the present area today (Fig. 1). The 1904 map shows a network of pathways and established trees to the north of the site showing that widespread landscaping had occurred in this area of the park.

3rd Edition 25" Ordnance Survey Map 1927 (Fig. 6)

This map shows that the site had not changed from the 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey Map.

3.4 Circa 1850 photograph (Plate 1)

The photo must have been taken between *c.* 1848 and *c.*1867 as the fence in the foreground has extended from its 1848 position (Fig. 4) to run across the northern boundary of the pond shown on the 1867 map. The lack of trees in the foreground may imply a date nearer 1848. The pond edge is vertical and this may imply the pond was lined. This lining would seem to be several courses in depth as the water level looks to be about a metre below the top of the pond.

Plate 1 Circa 1850 photograph showing F11 in the foreground and mansion in the background

Fig. 7 Section of trench 1

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

A mechanical excavator with a 1.6m wide ditching bucket was used to excavate two trenches under archaeological supervision (Figs. 1 and 7). The trenches were located away from mature trees and were excavated down to the natural sand silt geology. Due to the depth of deposits both trenches had to be widened and stepped down. Heavy waterlogging on the site impeded the excavation works and a pump had to be used to remove water flowing into the trenches from the springs. Parts of the trench sides collapsed from the pressure of the water of the springs flooding into the trench. The evaluation shows that the natural water table is less than 1m below the present ground level.

The trenches were planned at 1:50 and sections drawn at 1:20. All features and deposits were recorded using the AFU single context system. Each distinct cut, fill, and layer was allocated individual numbers. The photographic record comprised monochrome and colour slides supplemented by digital images. In the text cut numbers are in **bold** and deposit numbers in plain text.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 7)

Trench 1 was 18m long and ran north to south through the middle of the terrace. Natural silty sand was exposed below 0.6m of deposits on the northern side of the trench to 1.6m of deposits at the southern part. The deposits consisted of eleven layers of silt deposits (Table 1). These layers were very different deposits in both colour (from yellow to black as well as from very organic to clean redeposited natural). It seems that the deposits were largely dumping layers coming from several different locations as well as some possible fluvial material consistent with run-off from the springs.

The layers were clean of material except a large amount of 17th century or 18th century bricks dumped within part of layers 7 and 8 in a 1.2m wide area and 0.22m deep (Fig. 6). The bricks originally had been part of a structure as lime mortar was still adhering to them. A couple of modern glass fragments were found in the topsoil and subsoil.

Context No.	Colour	Composition
1 (Tr 1)	Light grey	Sandy silt
2 (Tr 1)	Orangey grey	Sandy silt
3 (Tr.1)	Mid grey	Sandy silt

4 (Tr.1)	Brownish grey	Sandy silt
5 (Tr.1)	Dark grey	Sandy silt
6 (Tr.1)	Greyish brown	Sandy silt
7 (Tr.1)	Yellowish orange	Sandy silt
8 (Tr.1)	Black	Organic sandy silt
9 (Tr.1)	Black	Organic sandy silt
10 (Tr.1)	Yellowish grey	Sandy silt
11 (Tr.1)	Orange	Sandy silt
12 (Tr.1)	Yellow	Silty clay
13 (Tr.2)	Fill of 14 Dark greyish brown	Sandy silt
14 (Tr.2)	Cut of tree bowl	
15 (Tr.2)	Mid grey	Silty sand
16 (Tr.2)	Dark greyish brown	Silty sand
17 (Tr.2)	Light orangey brown	Silty sand

Table 1 layers and tree bowl in Trenches 1 and 2

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was 14.4m long, ran roughly north to south and was located on the eastern extremity of the terrace. The deposits were 1m deep on the north side increasing up to 1.5m on the south side. Below the topsoil there were just three layers within the trench. None of the layers were organic and they ranged from a light orange brown to a mid grey silty sand (Table 1). On the extreme south side the layers were cut by a large tree bowl (14).

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation did not find any evidence for the pond F11 surviving *in situ*. The large quantity of bricks recovered from trench 1 in a two metre wide area may have been from the former pond lining and deposited after the pond was removed in the 19th century. The complete bricks were taken with only partial bricks left. The position of the bricks is directly to the south of the southern edge of the pond located in the maps (Figs. 3. and 4). The mid 19th century photo shows this pond lining (Plate 1). The pressure of the springs would have necessitated the pond being lined (the evaluation trench sides collapsed from the weight of water). Some of the bricks had mortar on all four edges implying that the lining was of at least three course width (thickness). The strength of the springs would have kept the ponds full as evaluation found that the natural water table is less than 1m below the present ground level. The mid 19th century photo shows a similar water level.

The bricks are identical to bricks in the mansion house, both on the outside of the house and in the cellars. The bricks are therefore likely to date to at least the middle of the 16th century. The date of the bricks would tie in with the

documentary evidence which shows that in 1567 Edmund Withypoll built at least one new pond near his house (see above). Unfortunately the pond(s) were not named and there is no early post-medieval map of the area to prove the case. We know the pond had been built by the time of the Kirby map and it is a possibility the pond was early 18th century in date reusing 16th century bricks.

Study of the five pre-1884 maps shows that the original pond on the northern periphery of the present terraced area. The pond is therefore further to the north than was thought. It seems too much of a coincidence that these five maps all show the pond in the same location and it implies landscaping of the area has occurred. It is probable that the area directly to the north, including the former pond, was taken and deposited to the south to create a large flat terrace (which presently locates on the site). This can be seen within the evaluation trenches where there was a series of dumping layers both of organic content and redeposited natural. The natural in the northern area of the trenches was only between 0.6m and 1m below ground level implying the pond had been removed in this area compared to the large build up of layers (including subsoil and topsoil) up to 1.6m thick in the southern area. The map evidence shows the pond was infilled/removed between 1878 and 1884 with more landscaping taking place on the site between 1894 and 1904 to create the present terrace and pathway system.

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APPENDIX 1 FINDS

Bricks by Rob Atkins

A selection of the larger bricks were recovered from context 7. None of the bricks were complete to measure a complete profile. It seems the complete bricks had been removed for reuse. The most complete brick length was 19cm+ long. The bricks were 11cm wide and between 4 to 4.5cm thick. All the bricks were mid to dark red and fairly well made. Some of the bricks were external to the structure with some headers and stretchers not mortared on exterior edges. Other bricks had been used in an interior capacity with lime mortar on all four sides of the brick. This means the structure was at least 3 courses wide. The bricks were identical to the mansion house bricks (exterior walls and basement) and means that they must date from at least *c.* 1550.

Floor tiles and a roof tile by Dr Paul Sperry

Two unglazed medieval floor tile fragments (297g) from layer 15, Trench 2. The tile has a chamfered edge and is 26mm thick. It is a soft orange red sandy micaceous fabric.

There is one peg roof tile (127g) from context 7, Trench 1. The tile is 12mm thick.