

Witham Archaeology

A Report to Morton & Hall Consulting Ltd on behalf of Mr M Topping

September 2014



LAND SOUTH OF 5 MILL HILL LANE, MARCH, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Trial Trench Evaluation

G Trimble

LAND SOUTH OF 5 MILL HILL LANE, MARCH CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Event Number: ECB 4257
OASIS ID.:withamar1 - 190009
Planning Application No.: F/YR13/0561/F
NGR: TL 4105 9479

Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation

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LAND SOUTH OF 5 MILL HILL LANE, MARCH, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION

SUMMARY

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Witham Archaeology on the site of a proposed new housing development on land immediately south of 5 Mill Hill Lane, March, Cambridgeshire.

The proposed development site is situated within an area rich in archaeological remains. Evidence from aerial photography, archaeological survey work and excavations has revealed evidence of settlement within and around the town of March from the Late Bronze Age onwards. Evidence for Roman and medieval settlement, agricultural and industrial activity lies in close proximity to the site.

Two evaluation trenches, each measuring 15m x 1.60m were excavated. Each was located within footprint areas of the proposed dwellings. No archaeological features or deposits were recorded during the work and no artefacts were retrieved.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of an archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation undertaken by Witham Archaeology on the site of a proposed new housing development on land located south of 5 Mill Hill Lane, March, Cambridgeshire. The project - commissioned by Morton and Hall Consulting Engineers on behalf of Mr Michael Topping – was carried out in response to a planning condition (Application F/YR13/0561/F) requiring a programme of archaeological works imposed by Fenland District Council. The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation produced by Witham Archaeology and approved by the Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team. Fieldwork for the Trial Trench Evaluation was undertaken on the 27th August 2014.

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

2.0 SITE LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY & GEOLOGY (FIGS. 1&2)

The market town of March is the administrative centre of Fenland District Council, Cambridgeshire and lies approximately 14 km southwest of the town of Wisbech and 22km east of Peterborough. The site at NGR TL 4105 9479 lies in the southern outskirts of the town and is located immediately south of 5 Mill Hill Lane. The area is currently flat scrubland lying at 3.40m above Ordnance Datum. It is bounded to the north by a private house and its associated garden and to the west and south by paddocks. The line of Mill Hill lane skirts the eastern boundary. The proposed development site forms an approximately triangular plot of land measuring around 0.13 hectares in area. Underlying solid geology in the area comprises Ampthill Clay deposits (British Geological Survey, 1:50,000 Solid and Drift).

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Information provided by the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER) indicates that the site lies within an area rich in archaeological remains dating from the Bronze Age through to the post-medieval period. March lies on the route of the Fen Causeway, a Roman road which links Denver in Norfolk with Peterborough. Before the draining of the fens starting in the 17th century, March was effectively an island within the surrounding fens. It was formed from two settlements *Merche* and *Mercheford* and the town probably owes its origins to the ford on the course of the old River Nene where the road between Ely and Wisbech crossed the river.

There is plentiful evidence of settlement within and around the higher ground of March from the Bronze Age onwards, represented by numerous findspots and cropmarks revealed through aerial photography, as well as evidence derived from excavation. Excavations at the Neale Wade Community College (MCB20107) located c. 650m northeast of the current development site revealed evidence of Late Bronze Age wells along with medieval ditches and pits associated with industrial activity. Iron Age to medieval ditches were identified during trial trenching close by (MCB 19571) whilst Late Bronze Age pits were recorded during archaeological work at Jobs Lane (MCB18116), alongside a ditch of Roman date. Iron Age and Roman settlement evidence has been recorded on Church Street in the form of ditches and gullies (CB14807).

An archaeological assessment, evaluation and excavation covering 16 hectares (CB15352) established the location of medieval cultivation remains, a ditched enclosure system of probable Iron Age/Roman date and a building which may have formed part of a villa. Evidence for Roman salt making, metal working and pottery production were also recorded. The area of this work lies to c.450m east of the development area. A perpendicular arrangement of ditches, probably representing a field system of uncertain date, is visible as cropmarks at a location c.660m to the west (MCB18511).

Two fields of extant medieval ridge and furrow lie just 200m southwest of the current development site (CHER11644) whilst evidence for a shrunken medieval village represented by artefact scatters and ploughed out earthworks lies 250m to the northwest (CHER 08442).

Numerous Late Iron Age and Roman coin hoards have been discovered in March, the closest to the site being a Roman hoard located just 180m to the north (CHER 05915).

4.0 AIMS & OBJECTIVES

The principal objectives of the project, as set out in a Witham Archaeology specification for evaluation by trial trenching of 1st May 2014 were to:

- *provide information on the presence/absence, nature, date and quality of survival of archaeological deposits and remains which might be contained within the site, at the depth of proposed construction disturbance, and to assess the importance of such remains in terms of their local, regional and national context.*
- *assess the possible scale of development impact on any remains and provide information which might influence development design so that impact on any remains can be avoided or minimised.*
- *provide information that will allow the local planning authority to reconcile development proposals with their policy for preserving archaeological remains and make an informed and reasoned decision on a planning application.*
- *provide site specific archaeological information which (if necessary) would allow for the design and integration of timing and funding of any further archaeological work (or other mitigating strategy) which might be required in advance of or during any subsequent development programme.*
- *produce a project archive for deposition with the appropriate museum and from which the potential for further study and academic research could be assessed.*
- *provide information for accession to the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (HER).*

5.0 METHODOLOGY (FIG. 3)

The proposed development site was assessed through the excavation of two trenches, each measuring c. 15m long and 1.6m wide. The trenches targeted the footprint areas of the two proposed houses. The position of the trenches (Fig. 2) was agreed with the Historic Environment Team, Cambridgeshire County Council in advance of fieldwork.

Topsoil and other recent deposits were removed by means of a mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket. The bases of the resulting trenches were cleaned by hand and photographed. Features of potential archaeological origin were then investigated by hand excavation to determine character, extent and date.

General plans of the trenches were produced at scale 1:20 and sections were drawn at scale 1:10. The photographic record, including general views of the area and views of specific features as excavated, was compiled in 35mm monochrome and digital colour. Context descriptions were made on *pro forma* recording sheets. The positions of the trenches were located by reference to fixed points on the neighbouring house and boundaries.

6.0 RESULTS (see Figs. 3-4 & Plates 4-7)

Trench 1 (Figs. 3-4, Plates 4-5)

Trench 1 was located in the northern and central area of the site. It measured 15m in length, 1.6m in width and was orientated NNW-to-SSE. No archaeological features or deposits were identified in the trench. Geological deposits took the form of mottled mid orange and beige sandy silts (102). The silts contained patches of mottled light blue and orange clay. The natural deposits were encountered at a depth of around 0.45m below existing ground level. Above the natural silts and clays was a subsoil deposit (101) which measured 0.15m in maximum depth and was comprised of light to mid orangey brown sandy silts. Two land drains spaced 8.00m apart truncated the subsoil and were orientated on a southwest-to-northeast alignment. One of these [103] was recorded in section (Fig. 4). It measured 0.20m in width as recorded in plan and was filled by a mixture of redeposited mid to dark grey sandy silt topsoil and lumps of mid orangey brown silt (104). The topsoil (100) measured 0.28m in depth and consisted of mid to dark grey sandy silt.

Trench 2 (Figs. 3-4, Plates 6-7)

Trench 2 was located within the southeast area of the development site. It measured 15m in length and 1.6m in width and was orientated east-to-west. No archaeological features were identified in the trench. Geological deposits were encountered at a depth 0.46m below the present ground surface and took the form of mottled mid orange and beige sandy silts (203). The silts contained patches of mottled light blue and orange clay. Above the natural silt deposits was subsoil deposit (202) which measured 0.17m in depth and was comprised of light to mid orangey brown sandy silts (201). This was overlain by the topsoil (200) which measured 0.28m in depth and consisted of mid to dark grey sandy silt.

7.0 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The archaeological evaluation did not identify any features or deposits of archaeological interest and no artefacts were recovered. This suggests that the site lies outside any areas of occupation. Furthermore, remnants of earthwork ridge and furrow in an adjacent field, indicate that during the medieval period the site lay within an area covered by open fields.

8.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author of this report would like to thank; our client, Mr Michael Topping, Matthew Hall of Morton and Hall Consulting Engineers and Mr Dan McConnell of the Historic Environment Team at Cambridgeshire County Council for their assistance in ensuring a successful outcome to the project.

9.0 PROJECT/ ARCHIVE DETAILS

9.1 Project Information

PLANNING APPLICATION No.: F/YR13/0561/F

FIELD OFFICER: G Trimble

NGR: TL 4105 9479

CIVIL PARISH: March

HER EVENT NO.: ECB 4257

DATE OF INTERVENTION: 27th August 2014

TYPE OF INTERVENTION: Trial Trench Evaluation

UNDERTAKEN FOR: Mr. Michael Topping

OASIS ID.: withamar1-190009

9.2 Archive Details

PRESENT LOCATION: Witham Archaeology, Unit 6, Sleaford Station Business Centre, Station Road, Sleaford, NG34 7RG

FINAL LOCATION: The Archaeology Store, Cambridgeshire County Council

MUSEUM ACCESSION No.: - NA

ACCESSION DATE: Dec 2014

The Site Archive Comprises:

Context Records	8
Section Drawings at Scale 1:20	2
Colour Digital Photographs	10
Monochrome Photographs	10
Set of Site Notes	1

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

COLOUR PLATES



Plate 1. View of site from Southeast corner facing Northeast.



Plate 2. View of site from Mill Hill Lane facing west.



Plate 3. View of site facing east.



Plate 4. Trench 1 facing north. Scales 2 x 1m.



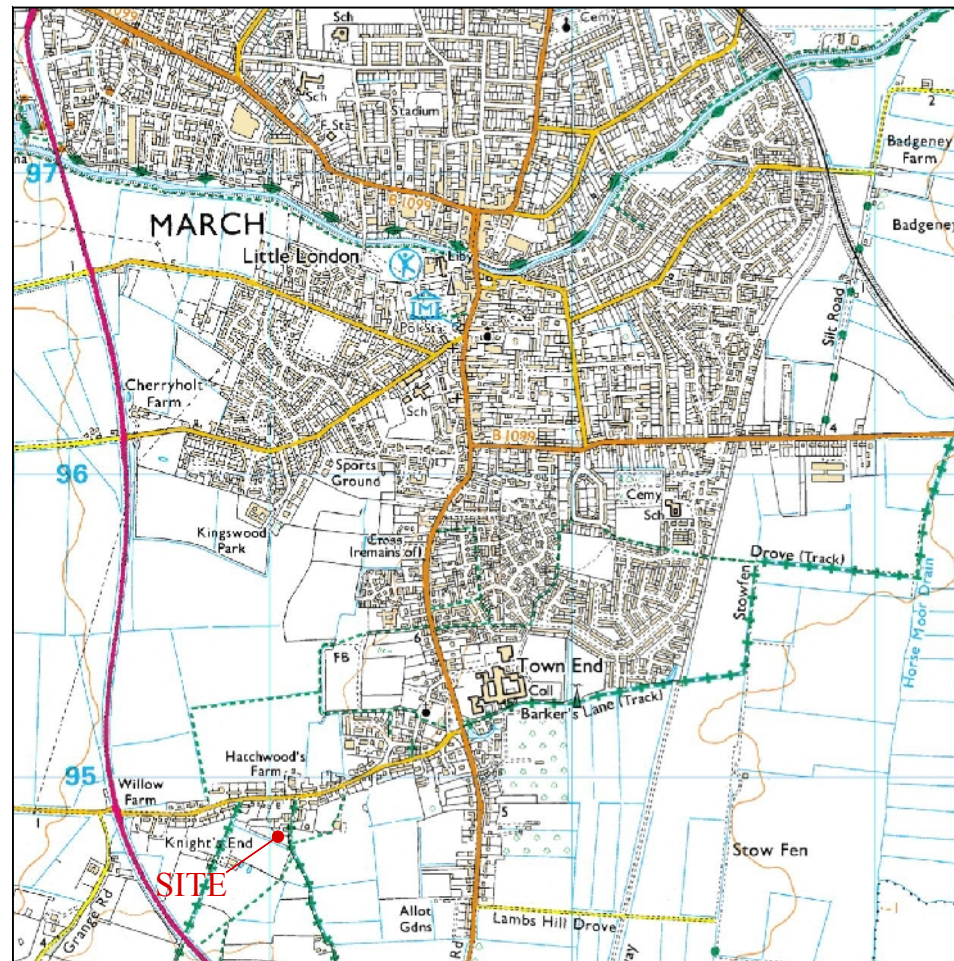
Plate 5. Trench 1. East facing section. Scale 1m.



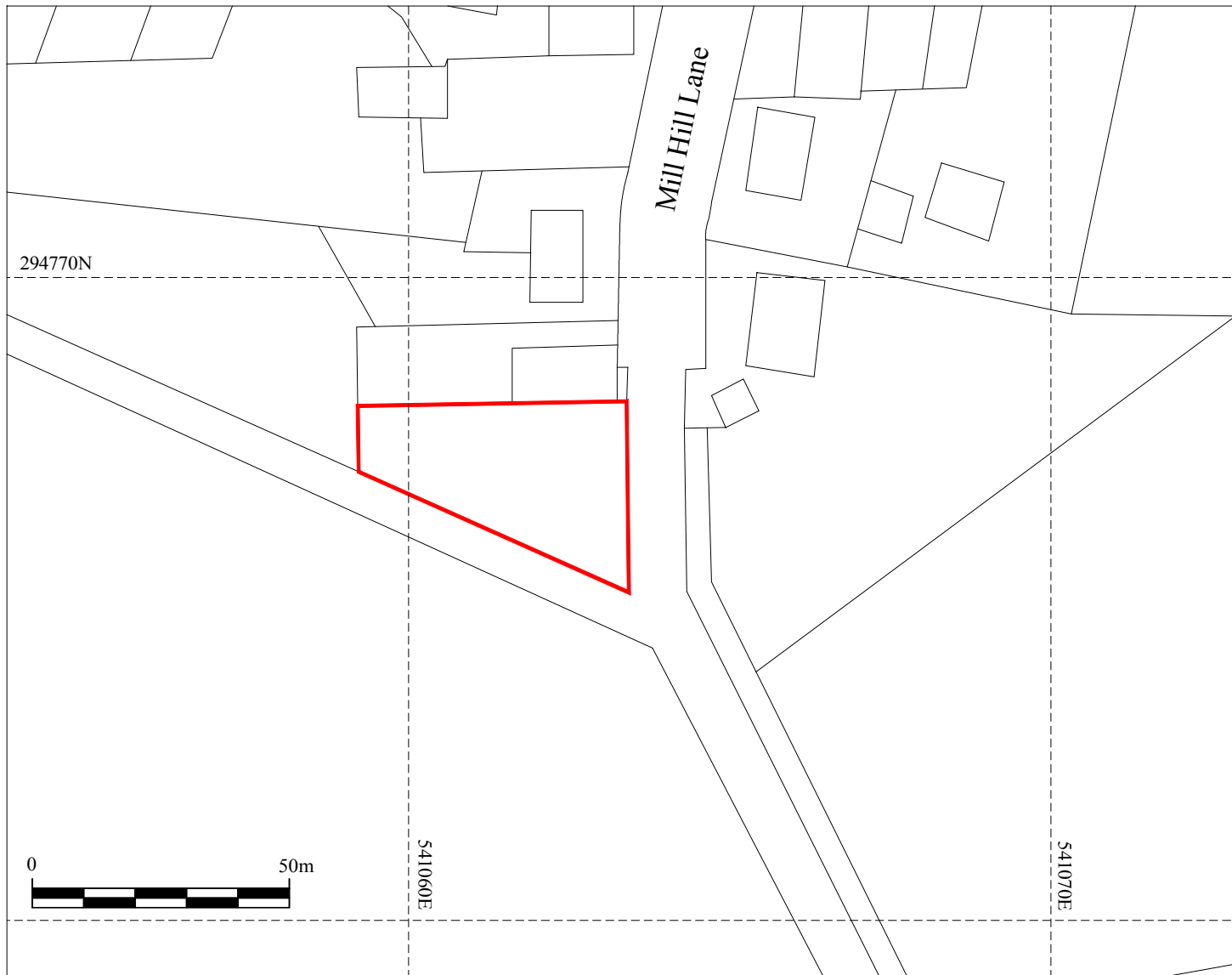
Plate 6. Trench 2 facing west. Scales 2 x 1m.

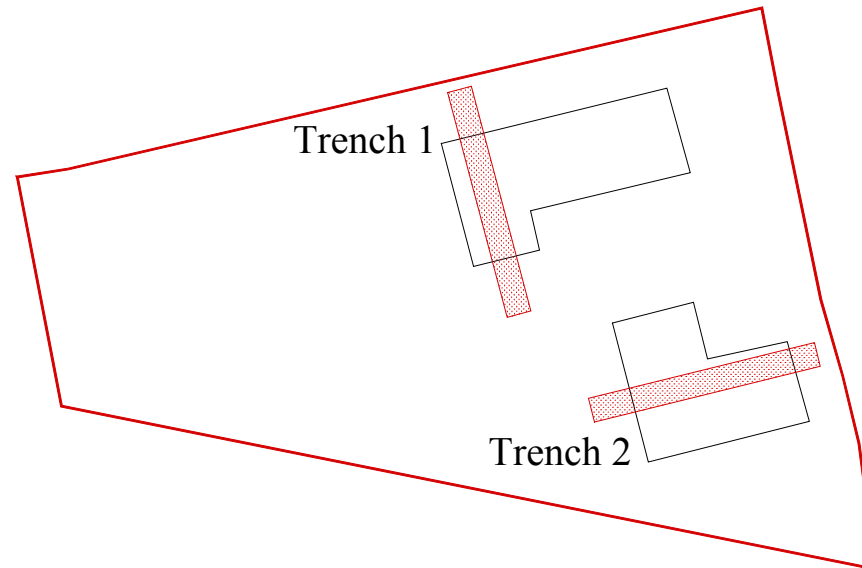


Plate 7. Trench 2 north facing section. Scales 2 x 1m



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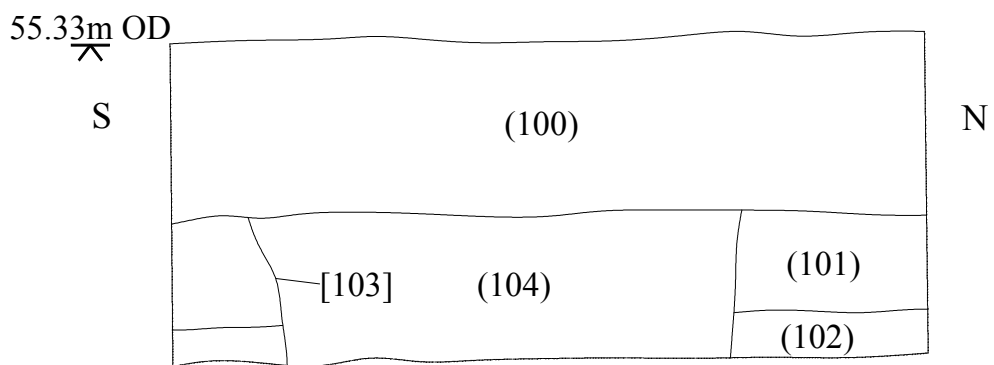




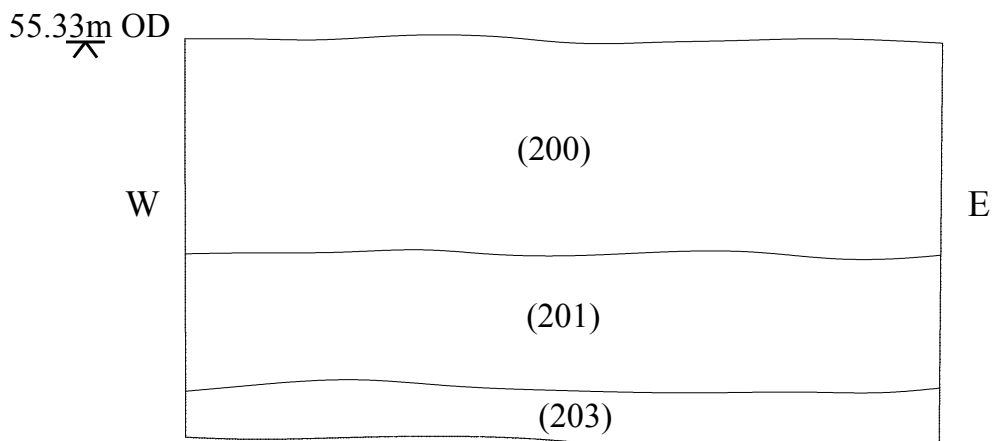
Trench 1

Trench 2





Trench 1 Section



Trench 2 Section



APPENDIX A - CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

<i>Context</i>	<i>Trench</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Description</i>
100	T1	Topsoil	Mid to dark grey sandy silt.
101	T1	Subsoil	Light to mid orangish brown sandy silts.
102	T1	Natural deposits	Mottled mid orange and beige sandy silts. The silts contained patches of mottled light blue and orange clay.
103	T1	Cut for land drain	Linear cut with vertical sides.
104	T1	Fill of land drain [103]	Dark grey sandy silt mixed with lumps of mid orangish brown silt.
200	T2	Topsoil	Mid to dark grey sandy silt.
201	T2	Subsoil	Light to mid orangish brown sandy silts.
202	T2	Natural deposits	Mottled mid orange and beige sandy silts. The silts contained patches of mottled light blue and orange clay.

APPENDIX B
OASIS DETAILS

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

[List of Projects](#) | [Manage Projects](#) | [Search Projects](#) | [New project](#) | [Change your details](#) | [HER coverage](#) | [Change country](#) | [Log out](#)

Printable version

OASIS ID: withamar1-190009

Project details

Project name	Trial Trench Evaluation at 5 Mill Hill Lane, March, Cambridgeshire
Short description of the project	Two trial trenches were excavated on land at 5 Mill Hill Lane, March, in the site of a proposed small scale housing development. The site lay in close proximity to known settlement remains of Roman and medieval date. Fieldwork revealed no finds or features of archaeological significance and it was concluded that the site lay outside any areas of medieval or earlier occupation.
Project dates	Start: 27-08-2014 End: 27-08-2014
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	ECB4257 - HER event no.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Rural residential
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE FENLAND MARCH Land at 5 Mill Hill Lane, March, Cambridgeshire
Postcode	PE1 59QB
Study area	0.13 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 4105 9479 52.532301286 0.0796821554049 52 31 56 N 000 04 46 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Witham Archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Dale Trimble
Project director/manager	Gary Trimble
Project supervisor	Gary Trimble
Type of sponsor/funding body	Landowner
Name of sponsor/funding body	Mr Michael Topping

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Store
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Images vector", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Store
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Drawing", "Notebook - Excavation", "Research", "General Notes", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report", "Section", "Survey "

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Land South of 5 Mill Hill Lane, March Cambridgeshire. Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Trimble. G
Other bibliographic details	Report No. 64
Date	2014
Issuer or publisher	Witham Archaeology
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