LAND NORTH OF WOODVILLE, WISBECH ROAD, MARCH, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:
FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLANNING APPLICATION NUMBERS:
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PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY

Land North of Woodville, Wisbech Road, March, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation

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ABSTRACT

The evaluation identified a small number of pits and ditches, with a focus towards the south-west within the site, nearer the route of the modern Wisbech Road/A141. Dating evidence recovered from the features was generally sparse.

The features identified closer to Wisbech Road generally consisted of ditches, which produced three fragments of small, abraded pottery of an early Roman date and were aligned following the extrapolated boundary between March Island and the fen in this period. As such these features may represent a longer-lived boundary or trackway, located where March Island falls away into the fen, or field systems aligned parallel to this natural boundary. Alternatively, the ditches were parallel to Wisbech Road and may represent later roadside ditches.

The nature of the fills found within and the finds assemblages recovered from the features located further away from Wisbech Road indicates they are post-medieval in date. One ditch revealed in Trenches 3 and 4 can be correlated with a ditch on the 1885 OS map dividing the current plot into two equal parts.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 A programme of archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (PCA) on land North of Woodville, Wisbech Road, March, PE15 OGB (centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (NGR) TL 40045 98269) from the 27th to the 28th of March 2019 (Figure 1; Plate 1).

1.2 The archaeological work was commissioned by Mr G. Clandillon in response to an archaeological planning condition attached to the proposed residential development of the site, encompassing nine residential dwellings with associated parking and landscaping (Planning Reference: F/YR16/0436/0). This was due to high archaeological significance of the proposed development area (PDA). The work was undertaken in line with National Planning Policy Framework 2019, Section 16 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'.

1.3 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Ben Hobbs of PCA (Hobbs 2019) in response to a Brief for archaeological evaluation issued by Gemma Stewart (Stewart 2019) of Cambridgeshire County Council's Historic Environment Team (CCC HET).

1.4 The aim of the evaluation was to determine the location, date, extent, character, condition and quality of any archaeological remains on the site, to assess the significance of any such remains in a local, regional, or national context, as appropriate, and to assess the potential impact of the development proposals on the site's archaeology.

1.5 A total of five trenches (1 x 50m, 2 x 45m and 2 x20m long) evaluation trenches totalling 360m² were excavated and recorded (Figure 2).

1.6 This report describes the results of the evaluation and aims to inform the design of an appropriate archaeological mitigation strategy. Following Transfer of Title, the site archive will be deposited at the Cambridgeshire County Archaeological Store.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

2.1 Geology

2.2 The underlying bedrock geology is recorded as West Walton Formation and Amptill Clay Formation (undifferentiated) - Mudstone; detrital, coarse to fine-grained sedimentary deposits of shallow-marine origin formed in the Jurassic Period in a local environment previously dominated by shallow seas.

2.3 The overlying superficial geology is Oadby Member - Diamicton; detrital, glacigenic deposits created by actions of ice and meltwater associated with glacial and inter-glacial periods within the Quaternary period in a local environment of ice age conditions (British Geological Survey 2019). This deposit was identified during the course of the evaluation as (3), a firm, mottled light greyish-yellow clay-with-flints/light brownish-orange sandy gravel.

2.4 Topography & Site Location

2.5 The proposed development area is located to the east of the A141 Wisbech Road, March, Cambridgeshire, at the north edge of the Market Town of March and currently comprises a rectangular open field of overgrown scrubland approximately 0.660ha in area. (Figure 1).

2.6 The site is bounded to the west by the A141 Wisbech Road and to the north by a thick hedge and tree-line and thereafter St Mary's church hall and St Mary's churchyard. To the south of the site there are residential properties and light industrial buildings along Woodville Drive and to the immediate east is a small area of tended grass, leading onto the industrial buildings and lorry park of March Foods Ltd.

2.7 The site lies at an approximate height of 3.0m above Ordnance Datum (AOD), with the land within the site falling away from a high of 3.28m to the north-east to 2.88m to the south-west, a fall of 0.4m. The site is located along the west edge of an area of natural raised gravel headland that descends into fenland to the west, initially to -1.0m on the west side of the Wisbech Road. The land rises slightly to 4.0m to the east into the area of March Town, declines to 1.0m to the

north and to -2.0m at the old course of the River Nene, c.1.2km to the south of the site.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

General

3.1 The following archaeological background is taken from the Archaeological Brief (Stewart, 2019) and the search of the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER) data provided with the brief. Numbers in brackets refer to CHER asset numbers.

3.2 The archaeological assessment established that the study area has a medium-high potential for Prehistoric and Roman remains and a low potential for Saxon and medieval settlement remains and post-medieval activity.

Prehistoric

3.3 The proposed development area (PDA) lies on the fen edge, on the extreme western edge of March 'island', an area of sand and gravel rising slightly above the level of the surrounding fenland. Geoarchaeological study undertaken in the area with associated carbon dating has identified Mesolithic and Neolithic peat deposits (MCB 20077) 440m to the west of the proposed development area.

3.4 A late Mesolithic and early Neolithic lithic assemblage was recovered from land 960m east of the PDA (MCB18211). In the same area a possible Bronze Age field system was found with evidence of late prehistoric structures (MCB18213). During an archaeological evaluation in an area 730m north-east of the PDA significant Bronze Age remains including a ditch, posthole, pit and possible cremation cemetery were revealed (MCB18212).

3.5 Bronze Age flint implements were recovered from land 250m to the southeast of the proposed development area (04548) and in an area 207m to the north an archaeological trenched evaluation located an early Iron Age roundhouse with associated pottery (MCB20432).

Roman

3.6 Roman occupation in the wider area of March is demonstrated by the line of the fen causeway (CB15033) located approximately 3km to the west of the proposed development area. Excavations associated with this feature have

revealed Romano-British features including a road surface and ditches, a kiln, an inhumation, a ring ditch and structure, interpreted as a shrine associated with the road.

3.7 Further Roman activity in the general area includes possible field systems located 960m east of the PDA (MCB18213); c.740m north-east with associated pottery (08973) / (05906) and possible Roman field boundaries 983m northeast (CB15692).

3.8 Evidence for a Roman settlement has been found c.700m to the north of the PDA including pottery, bone and linear features (08440). Further remains from this period including an enclosure, trackway, ditch and field system have been located near Westry Farm, 445m to the north (08441). These features may be associated with the Roman fort and later settlement of Grandford, located 1km to the north (MCB2570). Roman pottery consisting of a stamped handle has been found on the outskirts of March, 930m to the south-east of the PDA (05905).

Saxon and medieval

3.9 March is recorded in Domesday as Merche and was originally two settlements, Merche and Mercheford, probably established on a ford over the River Nene on a route across the fens between Wisbech and Ely. The late Saxon settlement was quite large, comprising 29 houses and was owned by the abbey of Bury St Edmunds. In the medieval period March retained its importance as a river crossing and was in addition a small port for trade along the Nene river.

3.10 There are no entries in the CHER describing remains from the Saxon or medieval periods within the study area around the proposed development area.

Post-medieval

3.11 There are several monuments dating to the post-medieval period listed in the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record in the vicinity of the proposed development area. The church of St Mary (03749) located 107m north of the PDA was built in 1873 and is listed Grade II (NHLE no. 1216492). The church was gutted by fire in 2010 and subsequently largely rebuilt, being completed

four years later. The churchyard and lych gate (MCB16848) are located around and to the south-west of the church.

3.12 St Mary's 19th century rectory and formal gardens (12167) is located c.280m to the north of the PDA. Westry House located 335m north of the PDA is a 19th century structure although significantly modified in the modern period (MCB21964). An archaeological evaluation at the site of Eastfield House, 870m to the north (MCB18416) found structural features and pottery of the post-medieval period.

3.13 The site of a former 19th century house, 'The Wrangles' (MCB22917), as depicted on the 1885 Ordnance Survey map is located 427m to the east of the PDA. The site of a former Baptist chapel (MCB21966) as recorded on the 1885 OS map is located 895m south of the PDA. Two public houses are noted within the study area as depicted on the 1885 OS map, the first the Horse and Jockey (MCB21959) is now demolished and formally stood on a corner of Whittlesey Road, c.655m to the south. The Golden Ball pub (MCB21958) is located 775m north of the PDA along Wisbech Road.

3.14 An archaeological evaluation on land 96m to the north-east of the PDA (MCB20095) found evidence of a possible brick-built linear feature, possibly a path, with the bricks dating from the 17th to 19th centuries. Another evaluation on land at Eliot Road, approximately 1km to the south of the proposed development area located two large pits, probably refuse pits, containing pottery dating from the 16th and 17th centuries and fragments of brick, clay pipe and glass (MCB25885).

3.15 The 1885 OS map also depicted the location of several water pumps around March, the site of one is located 983m to the south of the PDA (MCB22921). The Great Eastern Railway (Ely & Peterborough Branch) was opened in 1847 linking Peterborough to Norwich and London (MCB24025): The line is located 475m south of the PDA and is still in use.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 General

4.1.1 The archaeological evaluation comprised five trenches (1 x 50m, 2 x 45m and 2 x 20m long) evaluation trenches totalling 360m². These were distributed evenly across the site in order to provide a representative sample of the development area (Figure 2).

4.2 Excavation methodology

4.2.1 Ground reduction during the evaluation was carried out using a 14 ton 360° tracked mechanical excavator. Topsoil and other overburden of low archaeological value was removed in spits down to the level of the undisturbed natural geological deposits where potential archaeological features could be observed and recorded.

4.2.2 Exposed surfaces were cleaned by trowel and hoe as appropriate and all further excavation was undertaken manually using hand tools.

4.3 Recording and Finds Recovery

4.3.1 The limits of excavations, heights above Ordnance Datum (m OD) and the locations of archaeological features and interventions were recorded using a Leica GS014 GPS rover unit with RTK differential correction, giving three-dimensional accuracy of 20mm or better.

4.3.2 Deposits or the removal of deposits judged by the excavating archaeologist to constitute individual events were each assigned a unique record number (often referred to within British archaeology as ‘context numbers’) and recorded on individual pre-printed forms (Taylor and Brown 2009). Archaeological processes recognised by the deposition of material are signified in this report by round brackets (thus), while events constituting the removal of deposits are referred to here as ‘cuts’ and signified by square brackets [thus]. Where more than one slot was excavated through an individual feature, each intervention was assigned additional numbers for the cutting event and for the deposits it contained (these deposits within cut features being referred to here as ‘fills’). The record numbers assigned to cuts, deposits and groups are entirely arbitrary

and in no way reflect the chronological order in which events took place. All features and deposits excavated during the evaluation and excavation are listed in Appendix 2. Artefacts recovered during excavation were assigned to the record number of the deposit from which they were retrieved.

4.3.3 Metal-detecting was carried out during the topsoil and subsoil stripping and throughout the excavation process. Archaeological features and spoil heaps were scanned by metal-detector periodically. Only objects of modern date were found and were not retained for accession. Topsoil and subsoil layers were also bucket-sampled for finds, with c. 90 litres of spoil being sorted per layer at 25m intervals along the trench. As with the metal detecting survey, only modern objects were found and were not retained for accession.

4.3.4 High-resolution digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits and were used to keep a record of the excavation process.

4.4 Sampling Strategy

4.4.1 Discrete features were half-sectioned, photographed and recorded by a cross-section scaled drawing at an appropriate scale (either 1:10 or 1:20).

4.4.2 Linear features were investigated by means of regularly-spaced 1m wide slots. Where stratigraphic relationships between features could not be discerned in plan, relationship slots were also excavated and recorded.

4.5 Environmental Sampling

4.5.1 A total of three bulk samples were taken to extract and identify micro- and macro-botanical remains. The aim of this sampling was to investigate the past environment and economy of the site, the diet of the ancient inhabitants and the agricultural basis of the settlement. An additional aim of the sampling was to recover small objects that are not readily recovered by hand-collection, such as metalworking debris and bones of fish and small animals. These samples were taken from sealed deposits.

5 QUANTIFICATION OF ARCHIVE

5.1 Paper Archive

Context register sheets	2
Context sheets	38
Plan registers	1
Plans at 1:50	4
Plans at 1:20	0
Plans at 1:10	0
Plans at 1:5	0
Section register sheets	1
Sections at 1:10 & 1:20	12
Trench record sheets	5
Photo register sheets	2
Small finds register sheets	0
Environmental register sheets	1

5.2 Digital Archive

Digital photos	73
GPS survey files	1
Digital plans	1
GIS project	0
Access database	1

5.3 Physical Archive

Struck flint	1
Burnt flint	0
Pottery	6/24g
Ceramic building material (CBM)	1
Glass	0
Briquetage	0
Small Finds	0
Slag	0
Animal bone	5
Shell	0
Environmental bulk samples	3
Environmental bulk samples (10 litre buckets)	6
Monolith samples	0
Other samples (specify)	0
Black and white films	0
Colour slides	0

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS BY TRENCH

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 The trenches are described below in numerical order, with technical data tabulated (Appendix 2). Features and deposits are first split into feature type, and then described in numerical cut order. Archaeological features and deposits were sealed by the subsoil, unless otherwise stated.

6.1.2 The principal result of the fieldwork was the identification of a series of ditches and pits, the full extents of which could not be defined within the excavated area. Only very small finds assemblages of datable artefactual material were recovered from some of the features, making precise dating difficult. Allowing for these limitations, it was possible to assign the features located to the north-east within the site to the post-medieval period, whereas the features located to the south-west, near Wisbech Road were early Roman (c. AD40-120) in date (Figure 2).

6.2 Trench 1

6.2.1 Trench 1 (Plate 2) contained five ditches and a single possible drain, all bar one of which were aligned approximately north-west to south-east, with the remainder orientated north-east to south-west. The trench also contained a single pit, which extended beyond the limit of excavation. Apart from the possible drain, all the features located within Trench 1 are considered to be early Roman in date.

6.2.2 Ditch [5] (Plate 3, Figure 4; Section 1) was moderately wide and shallow, measuring c. 0.47m wide by 0.21m deep. It contained a single fill (4), a dark brownish-grey silty clay which contained no finds.

6.2.3 Ditch [7] (Plate 3, Figure 4; Section 1) was wide and shallow, measuring c. 0.66m wide by 0.25m deep. It contained a single fill (6), a dark brownish-grey silty clay which contained a single fragment of animal bone, deriving from a cattle-sized animal. The feature was cut by Ditch [34], to the north-east.

6.2.4 Ditch [9] (Plate 4, Figure 4; Section 2) was wide and shallow, measuring c. 1.34m wide by 0.18m deep. It contained a single fill (8), a mid-brownish-grey

silty clay which contained a single fragment of animal bone, derived from a horse. The feature was cut by possible Drain [11] and cut Pit [36], to the north-east.

6.2.5 Ditch [13] was wide and shallow, measuring c. 0.75m+ long by 0.84m wide by 0.25m deep, terminating within the trench to the south-west. It contained a single fill (12), a dark brownish-grey silty clay which contained no finds.

6.2.6 Ditch [34] (Plate 3, Figure 4; Section 1) was wide and shallow, measuring c. 0.75m wide by 0.25m deep. It contained a single fill (33), a dark brownish-grey silty clay which contained a single sherd (1g) of grog tempered early Roman pottery, a single fragment of fish bone, as well as a small quantity of wood charcoal and terrestrial snail shells, recovered from sample <1001>. The feature cut Ditch [7], to the south-west.

6.2.7 Possible Drain [11] (Plate 4, Figure 4; Section 2) was narrow and shallow, measuring c. 0.22m wide by 0.22m deep. It contained a single fill (10), a dark brownish-grey silty clay which contained a single fragment of animal bone, derived from a sheep or goat. The feature cut Ditch [9], to the south-west and Pit [36], to the north-east. Due to its comparatively sharp profile, slightly differing alignment and stratigraphically late position within the trench, this feature is thought to be a later possible drain, as opposed to forming part of the early Roman boundary line the ditches in the trench represent.

6.2.8 Pit [36] (Plate 4, Figure 4, Section 2) was not fully visible in plan (c. 1.23m wide by 0.21m deep), extending beyond the limits of excavation to the north-west. It had a single fill (35), a mid-brownish-grey silty clay which contained a single sherd (6g) of early Roman sandy coarseware pottery, a single fragment of animal bone, derived from an unidentified mammal as well as a small quantity of wood charcoal and terrestrial mollusc shells, recovered from sample <1002>. The feature was cut by Ditch [9] and possible Drain [11], to the south-west.

6.3 Trench 2

6.3.1 Trench 2 contained no archaeological features or deposits.

6.4 Trench 3

6.4.1 Trench 3 contained a single ditch, which was orientated north-east to south-west. This feature is considered to be post-medieval in date.

6.4.2 Ditch [15] (Figure 4; Section 4) was wide and shallow, measuring c. 1m wide by 0.33m deep. It contained a single fill (14), a mid-brownish-grey silty sand which contained a single sherd (1g) of a pottery saucer, dating to 1794-1900 AD and a single piece of clay tobacco pipe. After the feature had gone out of use a large field drain had been inserted into its partially infilled extent. Based on shared alignment and appearance, the feature is considered to be the same ditch as Ditch [38] in Trench 4.

6.5 Trench 4

6.5.1 Trench 4 (Plate 5) contained three ditches, one of which was aligned approximately north to south, with the remainder being orientated east-south-east to west-north-west. The trench also contained four pits, two of which extended beyond the limit of excavation. All the features located within Trench 4 are considered to be post-medieval in date.

6.5.2 Ditch [17] was wide and shallow, measuring c. 2.35m+ long by 1.1m wide by 0.18m deep, terminating within the trench to the west. It contained a single fill (16), a mid- to dark grey silty sand which contained no finds.

6.5.3 Ditch [19] was moderately wide and shallow, measuring c. 1.25m+ long by 0.8m wide by 0.26m deep, terminating within the trench to the south. It contained a single fill (18), a mid- to dark grey silty sand which contained a single sherd (9g) of refined whiteware pottery, dating to 1789-1900 AD.

6.5.4 Ditch [38] was moderately wide, measuring c. 0.7m wide. It contained a single fill (37), a mid-brownish-grey silty sand which contained no finds. After the feature had gone out of use a large field drain had been inserted into its partially infilled extent. Based on shared alignment and appearance, the feature is considered to be the same ditch as Ditch [15] in Trench 3. The feature was not excavated.

6.5.5 Pit [21] was not fully visible in plan (c. 0.85m wide by 0.24m deep), extending

beyond the limits of excavation to the south-east. It had a single fill (20), a mid- to dark grey silty sand which contained a single piece (8g) of Ceramic Building Material.

6.5.6 Pit [23] was circular in plan (c. 0.22m wide by 0.06m deep). It had a single fill (22), a mid- to dark grey silty sand which contained no finds.

6.5.7 Pit [25] was not fully visible in plan (c. 1.01m wide by 0.2m deep), extending beyond the limits of excavation to the south-west. It had a single fill (24), a mid- to dark grey silty sand which contained no finds.

6.5.8 Pit [27] was circular in plan (c. 0.28m wide by 0.2m deep). It had a single fill (26), a mid- to dark grey silty sand which contained a single sherd (1g) of sandy redware, dating to 1600-1900 AD.

6.6 Trench 5

6.6.1 Trench 5 contained a single short length of ditch, which was aligned approximately north-west to south-east. This feature is considered to be early Roman in date.

6.6.2 Ditch [29/32] (Plate 6, Figure 4; Section 12) was wide and shallow, measuring c. 6.3m+ long by 1.2-1.29m wide by 0.36-0.42m deep, terminating within the trench to the north-west and south-east. It contained up to two fills, a basal fill (31), a mid-grey clayey silt which contained small quantities of wood charcoal and moderate quantities of terrestrial and freshwater molluscs, recovered from sample <1000> and an upper fill (28/30), a mottled dark to mid-grey clayey silt which contained a single sherd (4g) of early Roman pottery, which probably derived from a beaker.

7 THE FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

7.1 Roman Pottery

By Katie Anderson

Introduction

7.1.1 A small assemblage of early Roman pottery, totalling three sherds weighing 11g was recovered from the evaluation. All of the pottery was examined and recorded in accordance with the guidelines laid out by the Study Group for Roman Pottery (Perrin 2011) and using the standard terminology and codes advocated by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (Symonds 2002).

Assemblage Composition

7.1.2 The assemblage comprised small, abraded sherds of pottery, reflected in the very low mean weight of 3.6g.

7.1.3 The assemblage dates to the earlier Roman period (AD40-100), and comprises one grog-tempered sherds, and two sandy coarsewares (Table 1). The sherds all comprise body sherds, although the black-slipped ware sherd is probably from a beaker.

Context	Cut	Trench	Fabric	No.	Wt(g)	Form	Context Spotdate
33	34	1	GROG	1	1	Unknown	AD40-100
30	32	5	BLKSL	1	4	Beaker	AD40-120
35	36	1	CSGW	1	6	Unknown	AD40-100

Table 1: Roman Pottery Quantification by Context

7.2 Post-Roman Pottery

By Chris Jarrett

Introduction

7.2.1 A total of three sherds/three estimated number of vessels (ENV)/13g of post-Roman pottery were recovered from the archaeological work, none of which is unstratified. The pottery was collected by hand and from two environmental samples. The sherds all belong to the post-medieval period. The pottery is in a very fragmentary state and very few of the sherds could be confidently assigned to a vessel type. The pottery shows evidence of either abrasion or lamination and was deposited under tertiary conditions, while some of the material, if not

all, has the characteristics of being subjected to agricultural activity. The pottery was quantified by sherd count (SC), estimated number of vessels (ENV) and weight. Pottery was recovered from three contexts as small sized groups (fewer than 30 sherds): each context produced a single sherd.

7.2.2 The assemblage was examined macroscopically and microscopically using a binocular microscope (x20), and recorded in a database format file by fabric, form and decoration. The later industrial fineware types have been catalogued according to the coding system used by the Museum of London (2014): no official coding system exists for later pottery types in the Cambridgeshire area. The pottery is discussed as an index ordered by trench and context.

Context	Cut	Spot Date	Description
14	15	1794-1900	1 sherd, 1 MNV, 1g, form: saucer. Base sherd with a foot ring and of a mid-late 19th century (possibly later) date
18	19	1789-1900	Refined whiteware with under-glaze transfer-printed decoration (TPW), c. 1780–1900, 1 sherd, 1 MNV, 9g, form: Plate. Rim sherd with Willow pattern, introduced c. 1789
26	27	1600-1900	1 sherd, 1 MNV, 1g, form: unidentified. Small, laminated fragment with glaze surviving on one surface. Local fine sandy pale redware of an 18th-19th century date

Table 2: Post-Roman Pottery Index

Significance, potential and recommendations for further work

7.2.3 The assemblage is of no significance as the material is small in quantity, fragmentary and includes abraded or laminated sherds and therefore the pottery is difficult to assign any meaning to. The assemblage has both a regional and a national ceramic profile. The pottery has only the potential to date the deposit it was recovered from. There are no recommendations for further work on the material.

7.3 Animal Bone

By Karen Deighton

Introduction

7.3.1 A small assemblage of animal bone was collected from 5 contexts during evaluation. Material from the residues (2mm and 10mm mesh) of two

environmental samples was also examined.

Method

7.3.2 Material was analysed using standard zooarchaeological methods (see Binford, 1981 and Schmid, 1972)

Preservation

7.3.3 Fragmentation was fairly heavy with bone at the fragment or shaft stage. Surface condition was reasonable. Chop marks were noted on a single cattle-sized rib fragment. No evidence on canid gnawing was noted. Evidence for burning was restricted to a single fragment from context (35) of Pit [36].

Context	Cut	Cattle sized	Horse	Sheep/goat	Indet mammal	Indet fish	Total
6	7	1					1
8	9		1				1
10	11			1			1
33(Sample <1001)	34					1	1
35(Sample <1002>)	36				1		1
Total		1	1	1	1	1	5

Table 3: Animal Bone Taxa by Context and Sample Number

Potential and recommendations

7.3.4 Potential and significance are severely limited by the small size of the assemblage, therefore no further work is recommended. However, should further work take place bone should be collected and analysed along with sampling to maximise the recovery of fish bone.

7.4 Plant Macrofossils

By Kate Turner

Introduction

7.4.1 This report summarises the findings of the rapid assessment of the environmental remains in three bulk soil samples collected during the archaeological evaluation of land on Wisbech Road, March. These samples were taken from the fills of two ditches, [32] and [34], and a pit, [36], the context information for which is given in Table 4.

The aim of this assessment is to:

1. Give an overview of the contents of the assessed samples;

2. Determine the environmental potential of these samples;

3. Establish whether any further analysis is necessary.

Context No.	Cut No.	Environmental Sample No.	Trench	Context Type	Feature Type
31	32	1000	5	Fill	Ditch
33	34	1001	1	Fill	Ditch
35	36	1002	1	Fill	Pit

Table 4: Environmental Sample by Context

Methodology

7.4.2 Three environmental bulk samples, of between thirteen and seventeen litres in volume, were processed using the flotation method; material was collected using a 300 µm mesh for the light fraction and a 1 mm mesh for the heavy residue. The heavy residue was then dried, sieved at 1, 2 and 4 mm and sorted to extract artefacts and ecofacts. The abundance of each category of material was recorded using a non-linear scale where '1' indicates occasional occurrence (1-10 items), '2' indicates occurrence is fairly frequent (11-30 items), '3' indicates presence is frequent (31-100 items) and '4' indicates an abundance of material (>100 items).

7.4.3 The light residue (>300 µm), once dried, was scanned under a low-power binocular microscope to quantify the level of environmental material, such as seeds, chaff, charred grains, molluscs and charcoal. Abundance was recorded as above. A note was also made of any other significant inclusions, for example roots and modern plant material.

Results

7.4.4 For the purposes of this assessment samples will be discussed individually, in order to assess environmental potential. Cultural material collected from the heavy residues has been catalogued and passed to the relevant specialists for further assessment. A full account of the sample contents is given in Table 5.

Sample <1000>, context (31), fill of ditch [32]

7.4.5 A single bulk sample was collected from the fill of a linear ditch, [32]. Recovery

of archaeobotanical remains was poor from this deposit; a minimal amount, <30 pieces, of fragmented wood charcoal was extracted from both the flot and the heavy fraction, none of which was of a suitable size for species to be identified (<4 mm in length/width). A low concentration of weed seeds was also reported, including specimens of bramble (Rubus spp.), elder (Sambucus spp.) and goosefoot, which, based on the overall condition, have been interpreted as modern intrusive material. In addition, a significant proportion of the flot was comprised of non-contemporary roots and rootlets.

7.4.6 Shells of terrestrial and freshwater molluscs were recorded in moderate amounts, with a greater range of taxa observed in the latter category. Whilst snails from the genus Anisus, occupy a wide range of aquatic environments, Bithynia tentaculata, Bithynia leachii, Planorbis planorbis and Valvata piscinalis are all common to low-velocity habitats, such as lakes or slow-flowing rivers (Kearney, 1999). In terms of the terrestrial specimens, both Vallonia spp. and Cecilioides acicula are often found in areas of open ground, with the latter, a sub-terranean species, being non-native, and thus often interpreted as a sign of burrowing activity when found on archaeological sites such as this. Further evidence of post-depositional disturbance was found in the form of modern insect remains and worm cases.

Sample <1001>, context (33), fill of ditch [34]

7.4.7 Sample <1001> was taken from the fill of ditch cut [34]. Wood charcoal was recovered from this feature; however, the overall abundance was small, and only a single specimen was determined to be of suitable size for species identification. Intrusive seeds and roots were, again, present, as were 'modern' insect remains. The small snail assemblage consisted entirely of terrestrial specimens, those native to open ground (Vallonia spp. and Cecilioides acicula) and exposed places (Pupilla muscorum), along with indeterminate juvenile specimens and fragments of broken shell.

Sample <1002>, context (35), fill of pit [36]

7.4.8 Sample <1002> was collected from the fill of a circular pit, [36]. The remains

recovered from this sample were similar to those found in the sampled ditches; a small concentration of wood charcoal was recorded, none of which was of significant size, as well as intrusive seeds, roots and rootlets, and other non-contemporary plant and insect remains. The molluscs were, again, or terrestrial origin, with the same species profile as in feature [34].

Sample No.		1000	1001	1002
Context No.		31	33	35
Feature No.		32	34	36
Volume of bulk (litres)		13	17	16
Volume of flot (millilitres)		25	35	25
Method of processing		F	F	F
Heavy Residue				
Charcoal				
Charcoal >4 mm			1	
Charcoal 2 - 4 mm		1	1	1
Charcoal <2 mm				
Molluscs	Habitat			
Gyraulus laevis	Clean water	1		
Vallonia spp.	Open ground		1	1
Fragments (indet.)		1	2	2
Juveniles (indet.)			1	1
Bone				
Animal bone (burnt)				1
Fish bone			1	
Other remains				
Pottery			1	1
Hammer-scale			R	R
Flot Residue				
Charcoal				
Charcoal >4 mm				
Charcoal 2 - 4 mm		1	1	1
Charcoal <2 mm		2	2	2
Suitable for ID?		x	x	x
Seeds (intrusive)	Common name			
Aethusa cynapium	Fool's parsley	1		
Chenopodium album	Fat-hen	1	1	2
Chenopodium spp.	Goosefoots	1		
Carduus crispus	Welted thistle		1	1
Persicaria spp.	Knotweeds			1
Rubus sp.	Brambles	2		
Rumex spp.	Docks		1	
Sambucus sp.	Elder	1		1
Solanum spp.	Nightshades			1
Seed coat (indet.)			1	

Sample No.		1000	1001	1002
Context No.		31	33	35
Feature No.		32	34	36
Volume of bulk (litres)		13	17	16
Volume of flot (millilitres)		25	35	25
Method of processing		F	F	F
Other plant macrofossils				
Modern plant remains		1		2
Roots/tubers		4	4	4
Molluscs	Habitat			
Anisus spp.	Wide aquatic range	1		
Bathyomphalus contortus	Small water bodies	1		
Bithynia cf. tentaculata	Slow moving water	1		
Bithynia cf. leachii	Slow moving water	1		
Cecilioides acicula	Open ground	2	2	3
Planorbis planorbis	Lowland aquatic	1		
Pupilla muscorum	Dry, exposed places		1	2
Vallonia spp.	Open ground	1	1	1
Valvata piscinalis	Slow flowing/still water	2		
Vertigo spp.	Various			1
Operculum (cf. Bithynia)		1		
Snail eggs		1		
Juveniles		1	2	3
Broken shell		3	1	2
Other remains				
Insect remains		1	1	1
Insect eggs/worm cases		1	2	
Black vitrified material		2	1	2
Coal			1	2

Table 5: Assessment of Environmental Remains

Key: 1- Occasional, 2- fairly frequent, 3- frequent, 4- abundant. 'R' = residue retained

Conclusions and Recommendations

7.4.9 A rapid assessment of the environmental remains in the Wisbech Road bulk samples has suggested that preservation of ecofacts on this site is poor. There is also substantial evidence for bioturbation in the sampled deposits, which may have led to post-depositional disturbance of smaller remains. Due to the lack of diagnostic material recovered, no further specialist work is suggested, and these samples can be discarded. A summary of this assessment should be included in any future publications.

8 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Early Roman (AD 40-120)

8.1.1 The principal result of the evaluation consists of a series of ditches and a single pit, found exclusively in the south-western portion of the site area (Trenches 1 and 5). Finds assemblages recovered were meagre in quantity and were limited to pottery and animal bone, found in three of these features. Excluding a single example, which was positioned at a broadly complimentary right-angle to the others, all of the ditches were aligned north-west to south-east and probably formed a part of the same ditch-line, which had been subject to repeated recutting. Although the percentage of the ditches present within the trenches, and therefore the percentage sampled, was low, the general lack of artefactual material suggests these features were not located close to settlement.

8.1.2 Therefore, although any inferences drawn from such limited evidence can only be tentative, the repeated recutting of this boundary may indicate that it formed a part of a more significant, longer-lived marker than just a field division, such as a local track or droveway at the edge of the fields.

8.1.3 The location of the site, on the western edge of the March island would support this hypothesis; with the suggested extent of the fen in the Roman period almost exactly mirroring the location of the main ditch line present on the site (Hall 1987, 40-46). Although they cannot be directly linked, it is possible that this boundary marked the outer limit of the field systems associated with the Roman settlement, focussed around a double ditched enclosure identified at Westry Farm, c.450m north of the current site (CHER 08441).

8.1.4 Alternatively, the ditches are parallel to Wisbech Road and may be associated with an earlier version of this road. The Roman pottery within the features was sparse (3 fragments weighing a total of 11g) and very abraded, and therefore does not provide a reliable Roman date for those features. The ditches may represent later roadside ditches.

8.2 Post-medieval to modern (AD 1540-present)

8.2.1 The remainder of the features present on the site consisted of further small

ditches and pits, some of which could be conclusively dated to the post-medieval period based on the small quantity of finds they. In some cases, features assigned to this broad period did not contain any finds assemblages but were assigned to this period based on similarities in fill appearance and/or profile. The main ditched boundary of this period was aligned north-east to south-west, passing through the centre of the site. This boundary is visible on the 1887 OS map, defining two narrow plots between Wisbech Road and Gipsey Lane and appears to have been maintained until it was infilled and used as a drain at some point after 1958.

8.2.2 The evaluation has revealed evidence for possible early Roman, and post-medieval activity, consisting of ditches and pits. The results are in keeping with the known archaeology of the local area.

9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Mr G. Clandillon for commissioning and funding the work. PCA are also grateful to Gemma Stewart of Cambridgeshire County Council's Historic Environment Team for monitoring the work on behalf of the Local Planning Authority. The project was managed for PCA by Christiane Meckseper and was supervised by Lawrence Morgan-Shelbourne. The author would like to thank the site team, Cleve Roberts, for his hard work. Figures accompanying this report were prepared by Rosie Scales of PCA's CAD Department.

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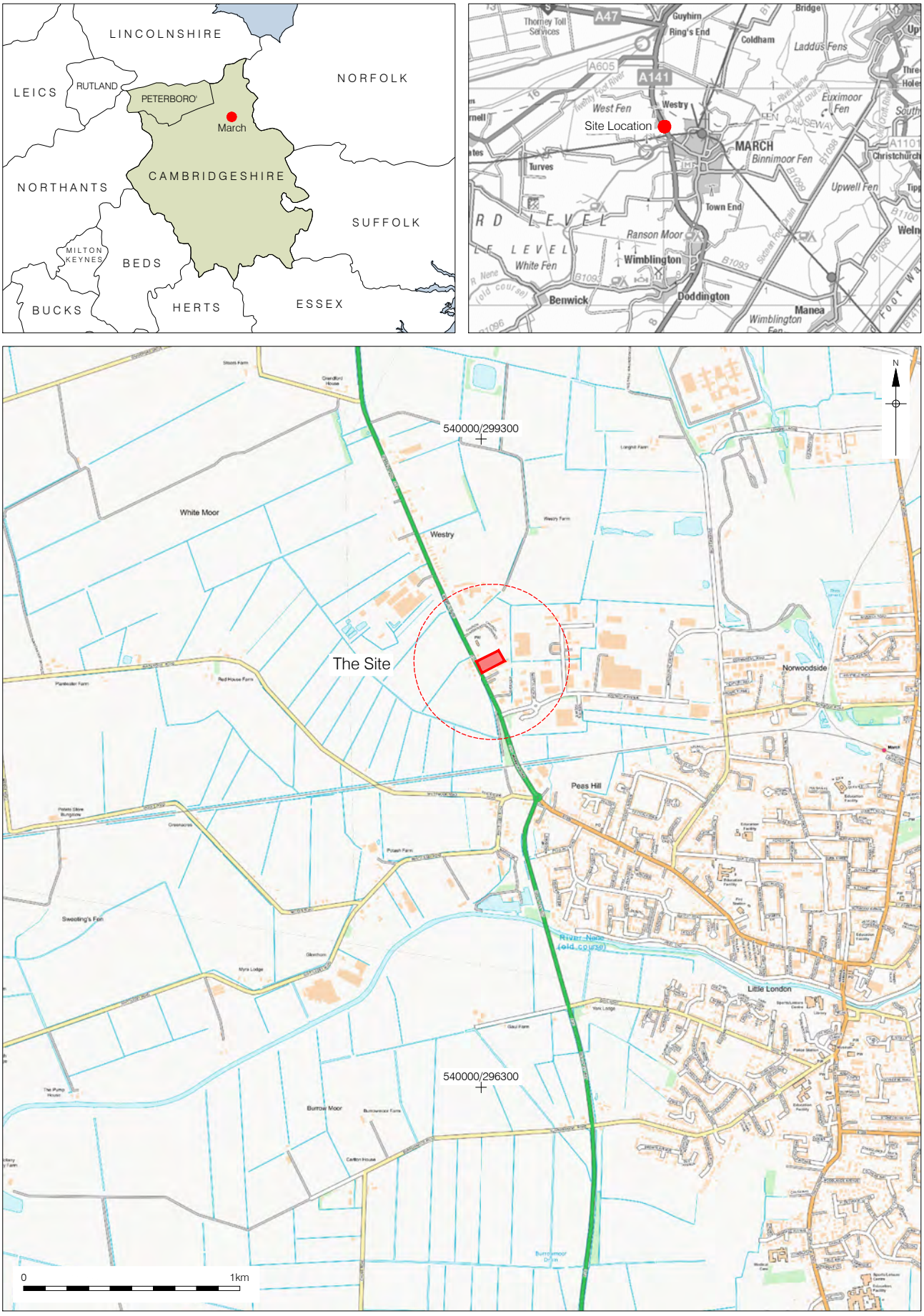
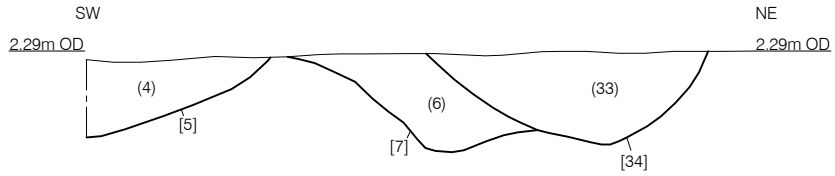


29/03/19 RS

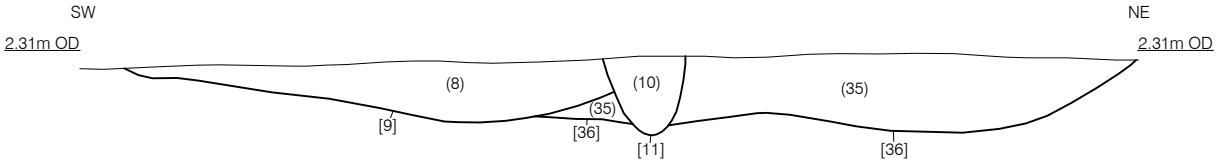
Figure 1
Site Location
1:2,000,000, 1:250,000, 1:25,000 at A4

29/03/19 RS

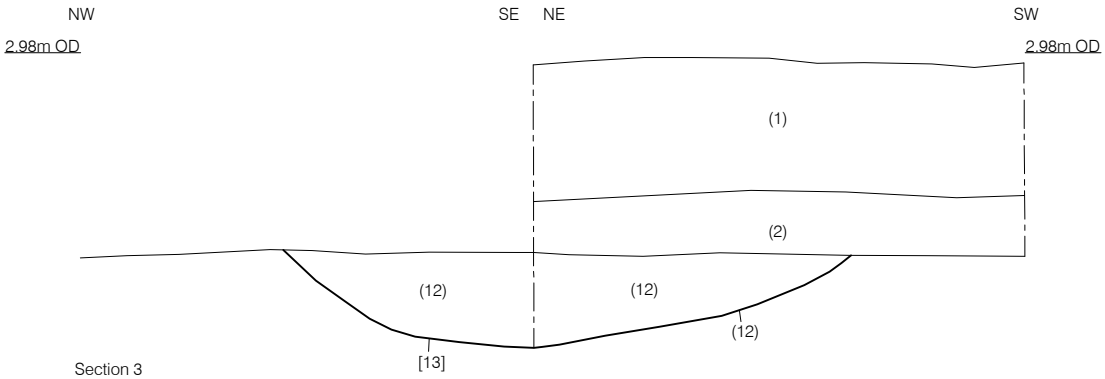
Figure 2
Trench locations and all features plan
1:625 at A4



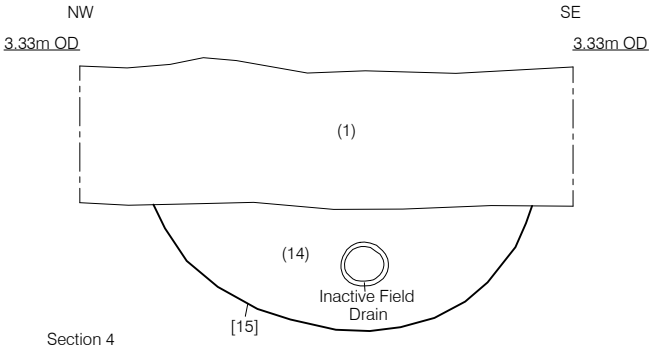
Section 1
Trench 1
Southeast Facing



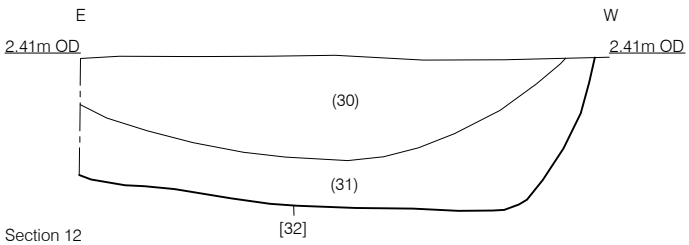
Section 2
Trench 1
Southeast Facing



Section 3
Trench 1
Southwest and Northwest Facing



Section 4
Trench 3
Southwest Facing



Section 12
Trench 5
North Facing

29/03/19 RS

Figure 3
Selected Sections
1:20 at A4

12 APPENDIX 1: PLATES

Plate 1: The site, pre-excavation view south-west

Plate 2: Trench 1, pre-excavation, view north-east

Plate 3: Ditches [5], [7] and [34], Trench 1, view north-west

Plate 4: Ditch [9], Pit [36] and possible Drain [11], Trench 1, view north-west

Plate 5: Trench 4, pre-excavation, view south-west

Plate 6: Ditch [32], Trench 5, view south

13 APPENDIX 2: TRENCH DETAILS AND CONTENTS INDEX

			End 1	End 2
Trench	1			
Alignment	NW-SW	**Topsoil depth (m)**	0.38	0.35
Trench length (m)	20	**Subsoil depth (m)**	0.41	0.45
Max machine depth (m)	0.47	**Natural depth (m OD)**	0.42	0.47

Summary of archaeological features

4 Ditches, 2 Pits, 1 Drain

Context	Cut	Type	Category	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description
4	5	Fill	Ditch	1	0.47	0.21	Firm, dark brownish-grey silty clay
5	5	Cut	Ditch	1	0.47	0.21	Linear in plan, moderate sides, concave base
6	7	Fill	Ditch	1	0.66	0.25	Firm, dark brownish-grey silty clay
7	7	Cut	Ditch	1	0.66	0.25	Linear in plan, moderate sides, concave base
8	9	Fill	Ditch	1	1.34	0.18	Firm, mid-brownish-grey silty clay
9	9	Cut	Ditch	1	1.34	0.18	Linear in plan, gentle sides, concave base
10	11	Fill	Drain	1	0.22	0.21	Firm, dark brownish-grey silty clay
11	11	Cut	Drain	1	0.22	0.21	Linear in plan, steep sides, concave base
12	13	Fill	Ditch	0.75	0.84	0.25	Firm, dark brownish-grey silty clay

13	13	Cut	Ditch	0.75	0.84	0.25	Linear in plan, moderate sides, concave base
33	34	Fill	Ditch	1	0.74	0.25	Firm, dark brownish-grey silty clay
34	34	Cut	Ditch	1	0.74	0.25	Linear in plan, moderate sides, concave base
35	36	Fill	Pit	0.7	1.23	0.21	Firm, mid-brownish-grey silty clay
36	36	Cut	Pit	0.7	1.23	0.21	Circular in plan, gentle sides, concave base

			End 1	End 2
Trench	2			
Alignment	NE-SW	**Topsoil depth (m)**	0.31	0.38
Trench length (m)	50	**Subsoil depth (m)**	0.39	
Max machine depth (m)	0.42	**Natural depth (m OD)**	0.42	0.4

Summary of archaeological features

None present

Context	Cut	Type	Category	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description

			End 1	End 2
Trench	3			
Alignment	NW-SE	**Topsoil depth (m)**	0.33	0.37
Trench length (m)	45	**Subsoil depth (m)**		
Max machine depth (m)	0.41	**Natural depth (m OD)**	0.37	0.41

Summary of archaeological features

1 Ditch

Context	Cut	Type	Category	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description
14	15	Fill	Ditch	1	1	0.33	Moderate to firm, mid-brownish-grey silty sand
15	15	Cut	Ditch	1	1	0.33	Linear in plan, moderate sides, concave base

			End 1	End 2
Trench	4			
Alignment	NE-SW	**Topsoil depth (m)**	0.41	0.34
Trench length (m)	45	**Subsoil depth (m)**		
Max machine depth (m)	0.44	**Natural depth (m OD)**	0.44	0.36

Summary of archaeological features

3 Ditches, 4 Pits

Context	Cut	Type	Category	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description
16	17	Fill	Ditch	1	1.1	0.18	Moderate, mid-dark grey silty sand
17	17	Cut	Ditch	1	1.1	0.18	Linear in plan, steep to undercutting sides, flat base
18	19	Fill	Ditch	1.25	0.8	0.26	Moderate, mid-dark grey silty sand
19	19	Cut	Ditch	1.25	0.8	0.26	Linear in plan, moderate to gentle sides, concave base
20	21	Fill	Pit	0.35	0.85	0.24	Moderate, mid-dark grey silty sand
21	21	Cut	Pit	0.35	0.85	0.24	Circular in plan, steep to moderate sides, concave base
22	23	Fill	Pit	0.21	0.22	0.06	Moderate, mid-dark grey silty sand
23	23	Cut	Pit	0.21	0.22	0.06	Circular in plan, gentle sides, concave base
24	25	Fill	Pit	0.3	1.01	0.2	Moderate, mid-dark grey silty sand

25	25	Cut	Pit	0.3	1.01	0.2	Circular in plan, moderate to gentle sides, concave base
26	27	Fill	Pit	0.33	0.28	0.2	Moderate, mid-dark grey silty sand
27	27	Cut	Pit	0.33	0.28	0.2	Circular in plan, gentle sides, concave base
37	38	Fill	Ditch	4.3	0.7	0	Moderate to firm, mid-brownish-grey silty sand
38	38	Cut	Ditch	4.3	0.7	0	Linear in plan, not excavated

			End 1	End 2
Trench	5			
Alignment	NW-SE	**Topsoil depth (m)**	0.39	0.43
Trench length (m)	20	**Subsoil depth (m)**	0.5	0.56
Max machine depth (m)	0.58	**Natural depth (m OD)**	0.52	0.58

Summary of archaeological features

1 Ditch

Context	Cut	Type	Category	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description
28	29	Fill	Ditch	1	1.2	0.36	Moderate, mottled dark to mid grey clayey silt
29	29	Cut	Ditch	1	1.2	0.36	Linear in plan, moderate sides, concave base
30	32	Fill	Ditch	1	1.29	0.28	Moderate, mottled dark to mid grey clayey silt
31	32	Fill	Ditch	1	1.29	0.21	Firm, mid-grey clayey silt
32	32	Cut	Ditch	1	1.29	0.42	Linear in plan, steep sides, flat base

14 APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-349062

Project details

Project name	Land North of Woodville, Wisbech Road, March, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation
Short description of the project	The evaluation identified a small number of pits and ditches, with a focus towards the south-west within the site, nearer the route of the modern Wisbech Road/A141. Dating evidence recovered from the features was generally sparse, although the nature of the fills found within and the finds assemblages recovered from the features located further away from Wisbech Road indicates they are post-medieval in date. The features identified closer to Wisbech Road generally consisted of ditches, which produced small finds assemblages of a early Roman date and were aligned following the extrapolated boundary between March Island and the fen in this period. As such these features may represent a longer-lived boundary or trackway, located where March island falls away into the fen, or field systems aligned parallel to this natural boundary.
Project dates	Start: 27-03-2019 End: 28-03-2019
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	ECB5833 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 13 - Waste ground
Monument type	DITCH Roman
Monument type	PIT Roman
Monument type	DITCH Post Medieval
Monument type	PIT Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Roman
Significant Finds	FLINT Late Prehistoric
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval

Significant Finds	CBM Post Medieval
Significant Finds	TOBACCO PIPE Post Medieval
Significant Finds	ANIMAL BONE Roman
Significant Finds	ANIMAL BONE Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Rural residential
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE FENLAND MARCH Land North of Woodville, Wisbech Road, March, Cambridgeshire
Postcode	PE15 OGB
Study area	360 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 40045 98269 52.563820195294 0.066342844795 52 33 49 N 000 03 58 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 0.41m Max: 0.58m
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	PCA
Project brief originator	Gemma Stewart
Project design originator	PCA Central
Project director/manager	Christiane Meckseper
Project supervisor	Lawrence Morgan-Shelbourne
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Mr G. Clandillon
Project archives	
Physical Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Council
Physical Contents	"Animal Bones","Ceramics","Environmental","Worked stone/lithics"

Digital Archive recipient	CCC County Archaeology Store
Digital Contents	"Animal Bones","Ceramics","Environmental","Worked stone/lithics"
Digital Media available	"Database","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Council
Paper Contents	"Animal Bones","Ceramics","Environmental","Worked stone/lithics"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Miscellaneous Material","Photograph","Plan","Report","Section","Survey "
Project bibliography 1	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Land North of Woodville, Wisbech Road, March, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Morgan-Shelbourne, L
Other bibliographic details	R13659
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