

**35A PETERBOROUGH ROAD,  
CASTOR,  
PETERBOROUGH,  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

**NGR REF: TL 12440 98340**



***ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION***  
**(OASIS ID: independ1-397513)**

**JUNE 2020**

**PREPARED BY CHRISTER CARLSSON**

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## Summary

*An archaeological evaluation was conducted by Independent Archaeology Consultants at 35A Peterborough Road, Castor, Cambridgeshire. Two evaluation trenches were opened up in the garden in front of the existing property, but no archaeological features were uncovered. A few sherds of Roman, Saxon and Medieval pottery were however collected from the subsoil in Trench 1.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The site was located at 35A Peterborough Road, Castor, Cambridgeshire (NGR: TL 12440 98340) (Figure 1-2). Two evaluation trenches were opened up within the proposed development area. The project was carried out in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014), as well as discussions with Rebecca Casa Hatton, Archaeological Officer at Peterborough City Council. The project was based on a WSI, which complies with the principles of the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework 2012).
- 1.2 Independent Archaeology Consultants is an archaeological consultancy company based in Peterborough, Cambridgeshire. The company subscribes to the *Code of Conduct, the Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation* (CIfA 2014), *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (EAA Occasional Paper 14) and *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a revised framework for the East of England* (EAA Occ. Paper No 24, 2011). All relevant CIfA Codes of Practice were adhered to throughout the course of the project.

## 2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Planning Permission has been granted (18/01875/FUL) for a new development at 35A Peterborough Road, Castor, Peterborough. The development comprised the erection of a new residential development.
- 2.2 The development site was located about 5km northwest of central Peterborough, in the village of Castor. It enclosed an area of some 900m<sup>2</sup> at an average height of 10m AOD. Castor is located between the clay capped limestone uplands and the terrace river gravels of the valley.
- 2.3 The site was situated within an area of archaeological potential, as defined by Peterborough HER. Therefore, an archaeological evaluation was required prior to any construction on the site. This condition was mentioned in the Planning Permission granted by Peterborough City Council, and was in line with standards described in NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework).

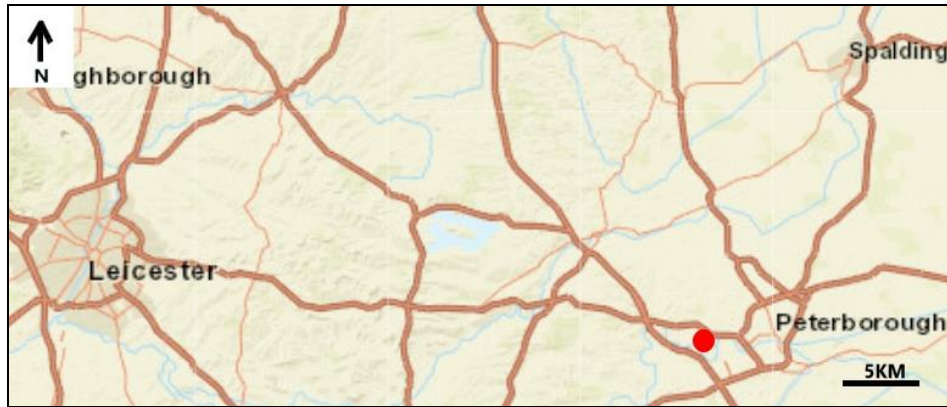


Figure 1. The location of Castor in England.

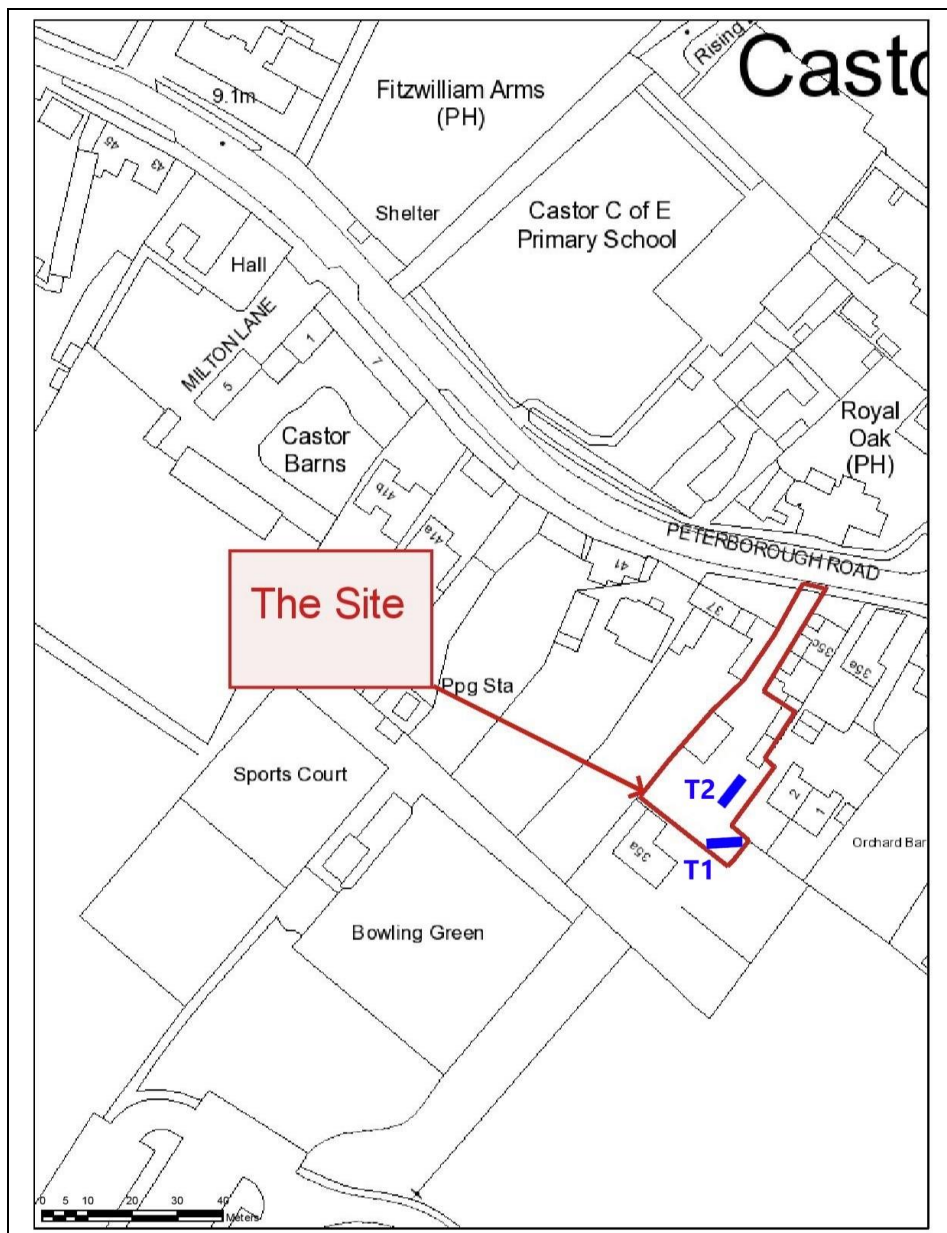


Figure 2. Site Outline and Trench Locations in Castor.

### 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The proposed development site falls within an area of archaeological interest. Extensive Roman settlement remains, including high status buildings, have been recorded in the vicinity, some of which are protected within the boundaries of Scheduled Monument PE 93.
- 3.2 The site, therefore, had high archaeological potential, with particular reference to the Roman and medieval period. Cartographic evidence indicated the site had been used as a garden since at least the post-medieval period.
- 3.3 The village of Castor has been the subject of a number of archaeological investigations since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. E. T. Artis was the first to excavate elements of this complex during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A series of illustrations published in his *Durobrivae of Antoninus* (1828) depicts the on-going excavation of substantial masonry buildings in the vicinity of Castor church. A plan of the building ranges that he revealed in this area (*ibid*, plate xiii, plan 1) suggested a very large building based on an open courtyard, with east and west wings that projected down slope to the south-west. He mapped a range of Roman rooms (possibly an extension of the palace's west wing). A very fine, near complete, mosaic was found in the middle of the central room. This was transferred to Milton Hall (Artis 1828).
- 3.4 Subsequent investigations have corroborated Artis's results, and have confirmed that a large part of the complex may constitute a single great later Roman 'palatial' building (or *praetorium*, as Artis called it), possibly the seat for an (as yet) unidentified Roman dignitary (Mackreth 1984; Upex 2008). The monumental aspect of the complex is apparent in the scale of the building foundations, their prominent location, and evidence for the methodical terracing of the hillside on which they sit.
- 3.5 Further to the south there is evidence for a series of dispersed Roman buildings, which appear to pre-date the main palatial structure. During his excavations Artis revealed a bathhouse in the south-west corner of the school playing field. He recorded more Roman building ranges close to No. 26 Peterborough Road, within the grounds of the Royal Oak Pub and south of Peterborough Road.
- 3.6 Excavations carried out in the grounds of 'Elmlea' (north of Church Hill) during the 1970s and 1980s confirmed the location of the main range of Artis's palatial Roman building (Upex 2008; *Id.* 2010). Artis's mapping, though perhaps questionable in certain areas, was also found to be quite accurate during the excavation of a service trench across the churchyard. A substantial Roman end wall and cement sub-floor was found to be almost exactly where Artis mapped an end wall of a room within palace's west wing.
- 3.7 Though Artis's work in Castor was evidently extensive, subsequent excavations have demonstrated that there are other substantial Roman building

remains that he did not note. Excavation during the 1950s in advance of an extension of the churchyard immediately north of the school field revealed hitherto unrecorded substantial well-preserved Roman building foundations (Green et al 1988).

- 3.8 A small excavation in advance of construction of an office at the school exposed more Roman building remains and a Roman period inhumation (Meadows 1991). Archaeological deposits (at a depth of some 0.50m) were well sealed by modern construction layers and topsoil. Trial pit excavation in advance of the construction of access ramps and play equipment revealed a similar depth of overburden at the east side of the school field area (Wall 1997).
- 3.9 An evaluation across the school grounds (Hatton & Spoerry 2000) revealed substantial *in situ* Roman building remains immediately below turf level in the north-east quadrant of the playing field. Adjacent to the (south side) of the main school block building remains were sealed beneath modern tarmac and make-up levels and a buried garden soil at over 0.30m below current ground level.
- 3.10 Some light has also been shed on the post-Roman history of the complex. Evaluation during 1998 in advance of the construction of the church Benefice Centre produced late Roman building remains, together with evidence of early Saxon occupation and the robbing of Roman masonry during the Middle Saxon period (Lucas 1998). The remains of a late Saxon or post-Conquest timber building and a later grave were also revealed. These elements of the complex archaeological stratigraphic sequence were sealed by a garden soil up to 0.80m thick.
- 3.11 Evidence of Middle Saxon settlement was revealed within and outside the area of the Roman building excavated in the churchyard extension (Green et al 1988, 109-148).
- 3.12 Several of the other excavations have produced Early and Middle Saxon settlement evidence, some of which is consistent with high status occupation (Dallas 1973). Castor is historically associated with the nunnery that is said to have been founded in the 7<sup>th</sup> century by St Kyneburgha.
- 3.13 St Kyneburgha's is a very fine 12<sup>th</sup> century church. A dedication inscription above the south door of the chancel records its consecration in 1124. Fragments of decorated stone and cross indicate a pre-conquest ecclesiastical presence on the site. Castor parish included the hamlets of Ailsworth, Milton, Upton, and Sutton. The central role of St Kyneburgha's, its antiquity and architectural splendour, further suggest the early significance of this site.

- 3.14 A trial trench and test pit evaluation undertaken on part of the Castor Barns site by Archaeological Project Services during March 2006 (Mellor 2006) hinted at the presence of Roman buildings within the site boundaries.
- 3.15 This was confirmed by a watching brief and small excavation carried out in 2007 and 2008 (Cope-Faulkner 2009). Excavation following topsoil removal in part of the yard area revealed Roman structural remains and features, including the remains of a hypocaust heated building. This was recorded and then preserved beneath the new yard surface.
- 3.16 The evaluation and subsequent recording also revealed that medieval stone post pads, pits and post holes also survive at the site, and that early post-medieval moulded masonry pieces had been used in the foundations of a barn (Mellor 2006; Cope-Faulkner 2009). Buried post-medieval cobble surfaces were noted within the barns and in the open yard. In some instances, these probably pre-date the existing buildings.
- 3.17 Recent investigations at Castor Barns have revealed remains of walls possibly associated with a further Roman building. These have been recorded and preserved *in situ*. Finds included ceramic building material and occasional sherds of pottery. Later, post medieval activity was represented by a cobbled surface and a yard associated with the barns. In particular, investigations carried out at nearby 35 Peterborough Road between 2000 and 2010 produced evidence for Roman and medieval activity (Prentice 2010).
- 3.18 In 2017 an archaeological evaluation with test trenches was carried out by Independent Archaeology Consultants adjacent to the site. A Roman ditch was found and Roman pottery, animal bones and building material was collected (Carlsson 2017).
- 3.19 In summary, the site was located within an area of very high archaeological potential at a location where sequences of important archaeological remains spanning the Roman period to the Late Medieval period are known to survive in a good state of preservation.

## 4 AIMS

- 4.1 The aims of the archaeological evaluation were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:
- Provide a record of archaeological remains whose preservation *in situ* is threatened by the proposed work. If applicable, remains that can be preserved *in situ* will be recorded and prepared for re-burial. Therefore, steps will be taken to ensure construction and future maintenance do not threaten preserved remains

- Provide detailed information regarding the date, character, extent and degree of preservation of all excavated archaeological remains
  - Define the sequence and character of activity at the site, as reflected by the excavated remains
  - Interpret the archaeology of the site within its local, regional, and national, archaeological context
- 4.2 The evaluation also considered the general investigative themes outlined by: Medlycott, M. 2011 (ed.) *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a Revised Framework for the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24; *Research and Archaeology: A Framework for the Eastern Counties* (Glazebrook 1997; Brown & Glazebrook 2000), *English Heritage Archaeology Division Research Agenda* (1997); *Discovering the Past, Shaping the Future: Research Strategy 2005-2010* (English Heritage 2005).
- 4.3 Specifically, the following investigative aims were accommodated in the programme of archaeological work:
- \*characterisation of the site in the broader landscape;
  - \*characterisation of the activities identified on the site;
  - \*characterisation of changes affecting land-use through time

## **5 METHODOLOGY**

### **5.1 Trial Trenching**

- 5.1.1 It was suggested that two 5m long machine cut trenches, both with a width of 2m, were going to be excavated under constant archaeological supervision using a flat bladed ditching bucket. The total length of trenching was therefore 10m and the trenches were covering a total area of 20m<sup>2</sup> (Figure 2).
- 5.1.2 The location of the trenches targeted areas of proposed ground disturbance and provided representative sample coverage. The location of the trenches were slightly flexible, and took into consideration potential above- and below-ground constraints and/or hazards, such as trees, utility trenches, overhead cables and areas of modern disturbance.
- 5.1.3 The trenches were excavated to the upper interface of secure archaeological deposits or, where these were not present, to the upper interface of natural deposits. Thereafter, hand-excavation was required to sample any features exposed.

### **5.2 Metal Detecting**



- 5.2.1 Thorough metal detector sweeps of exposed features and spoil heaps were carried out in advance of, and during, the excavation process.

### **5.3 Hand Excavation**

- 5.3.1 All man-made features were investigated. Apparently natural features (such as tree throws and natural strips of clay in the natural) were sampled sufficiently to establish their origin and to characterise any related human activity. Hand excavation and feature sampling were sufficient to establish the date and character, and to allow appropriate levels of recording.
- 5.3.2 Deposits and layers (including buried horizons of top- and subsoils) were sampled sufficiently to enable a confident interpretation of their character, date and relationships with other features. Thereafter, mechanical removal and visual scanning for artefacts was accepted. The evaluation provided a representative sample of the site's archaeology at no significant cost to the value or integrity of the archaeological remains therein.

## **6 RECORDING**

- 6.1 A numbered single context-based recording system, written on suitable forms and indexed appropriately, was used for all elements of the archaeological recording programme.
- 6.2 Measured plans were produced that show all exposed features (including natural features, modern features, etc.) and excavated areas. Individual measured plans and sections in the scales 1:20 and 1:50 were produced for all excavated features and deposits. These were accurately tied into trench plans/trench location plans that in turn were accurately related to the Ordnance Survey grid and to suitably local features (boundaries, buildings, roads, etc.). All sections and plans were related accurately to Ordnance Datum.
- 6.3 A photographic record comprising monochrome and digital photos formed part of the excavation record. A selection of digital photos was also included in this report.

## **7 RESULTS**

### **Trench 1**

- 7.1 Trench 1 was orientated east-west, was 5m long, 2m wide and up to 0.90m deep. The lowest level encountered in the trench was the Natural deposits, which consisted of light yellow, soft sandy silt with occasional small stones (Figure 4).

- 7.2 Sealing the Natural deposits was the up to 0.60m deep subsoil (102), which consisted of light brown, soft silty clay with occasional limestone. The subsoil also contained occasional sherds of Romano-British, Saxon and Medieval pottery. The uppermost deposit in Trench 1 was the up to 0.30m thick topsoil (101) of dark brown, soft silty clay with occasional roots.

### **Trench 2**

- 7.3 Trench 2 was orientated northeast-southwest, was 5m long, 2m wide and up to 1.10m deep. The lowest level encountered in the trench was the Natural deposits, which consisted of dark brown, semi compact gravel (Figure 5).
- 7.4 Sealing the Natural deposits was the up to 0.50m deep subsoil (202), which consisted of light brown, soft silty clay with occasional limestone. The uppermost deposit in Trench 2 was the up to 0.60m thick topsoil (201) of dark brown, soft silty clay with occasional roots.



*Figure 4. Trench 1. Overview. South east facing photo.*



Figure 5. Trench 2. Overview. North east facing photo.

## 8 FINDS AND SAMPLES

### The Pottery (By Paul Blinkhorn)

The pottery assemblage comprised 6 sherds with a total weight of 115g. It all occurred in the subsoil layer context (102) and is a mixture of Romano-British and medieval wares typical of the area.

#### *Romano-British*

The Romano-British pottery was recorded using the conventions of the National Roman Fabric Reference Collection (Tomber and Dore 1998). The following fabric types were noted:

**LRSH:** South Midlands Shell-tempered Ware, 3<sup>rd</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> century. 1 sherd, 13g.  
**NVG:** Nene Valley Grey Ware, 3<sup>rd</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> century. 1 sherd, 26g.

#### *Saxon and Medieval*

The Saxon and medieval pottery was recorded using the system of codes and chronologies suggested by Spoerry (2016) for Cambridgeshire, as follows:

**DEST:** Developed Stamford Ware, AD1150-1200. 1 sherd, 13g.  
**LYST:** Lyveden/Stanton 'B' Ware, AD1200-1400. 1 sherd, 11g.  
**LYVA:** Lyveden/Stanton 'A' Ware, AD1150-1400. 1 sherd, 9g.  
**STAM:** Stamford Ware, AD875-1200. 1 sherd, 43g.

The whole assemblage consisted of bodysherds apart from the fragment of DEST, which is from a strap handle with thumbled and combed edges, and the sherd of STAM, which is a rimsherd from a bowl with a thumbled applied strip on the top of the bead. The latter are generally of 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century date (Kilmurry 1980, 138).

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## 9 DISCUSSION

- 9.1 The archaeological evaluation at 35A Peterborough Road, Castor, Peterborough consisted of two 5m long and 2m wide trenches. None of the trenches contained any archaeological features, but in Trench 1 a few sherds of Roman, Saxon and Medieval pottery were collected from the subsoil.
- 9.2 During an evaluation at 35 Peterborough Road, Castor, a site which was located some 10m east of the site described in this report, medieval pits and a ditch was uncovered. This ditch was interpreted as a boundary ditch and, just as was the case at the 2020 investigation, the features contained some older Roman finds mixed in with the medieval finds (Prentice 2010).
- 9.3 A similar mix of Roman and medieval finds were also collected from the ditch which was found during the archaeological evaluation some 20m south of the site in 2017 (Carlsson 2017).
- 9.4 The fact that residual Roman finds are found in the fills of later archaeological features in the area is not surprising as Castor is known to have contained substantial Roman buildings, as well as a Roman pottery production centre to the south-west of the site.
- 9.5 The fact that pottery from the medieval period was found during the 2020 investigation is interesting, as this may be an indication that a re-organisation

of the plots along Peterborough Road may have occurred in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. All pottery from the ditch found in 2010 seems to have been early medieval and the 2020 pottery from the subsoil in Trench 1 was contemporary.

- 9.6 The investigation that was carried out in June 2020, therefore, gave a very similar result as earlier investigations in the area. All investigations contributed to a better understanding of the division into different plots in the medieval village, and all investigations have given an idea of the sizes of the plots in early- and late medieval periods.

## 10 ARCHIVE

The archive consists of the following:

### Paper Record

The project brief	The project report
Written Scheme of Investigation	The primary site records
The photographic and drawn records	Finds

The archive is currently maintained by Independent Archaeology Consultants.  
The archive will be transferred to:

The Archaeological Collections at Peterborough Museum.

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## APPENDICES

### CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context nr	Depth (m)	Description	Younger than	Older than
		<b>Trench 1 (5m x 2m)</b>		
(101)	0.30	Dark brown, soft silty clay with occasional roots	(102)	-
(102)	0.60	Light brown, soft silty clay with occasional limestone. Occasional Roman, Saxon and medieval pottery	Natural	(101)
Natural	-	Light yellow, soft sandy silt with occasional small stones	-	(102)
		<b>Trench 2 (5m x 2m)</b>		
(201)	0.60	Dark brown, soft silty clay with occasional roots	(202)	-
(202)	0.50	Light brown, soft silty clay with occasional limestone	Natural	(201)
Natural	-	Light yellow, soft sandy silt with occasional small stones	-	(202)



**OASIS ID: independ1-397513**

Project details

Project name 35A Peterborough Road, Castor, Cambridgeshire. Archaeological Evaluation

Short description of the project A two trench evaluation for a new development.

Project dates Start: 22-06-2020 End: 23-06-2020

Previous/future work No / No

Any associated project reference codes PRC20 - Sitecode

Any associated project reference codes 18/01875/FUL - Planning Application No.

Type of project Field evaluation

Site status Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area

Monument type N/A None

Monument type N/A None

Significant Finds SN CL BT Roman

Significant Finds SN CL BT Medieval

Methods & techniques "Sample Trenches"

Development type Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)

PromptPlanning condition

Position in the planning process After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country England

Site location CAMBRIDGESHIRE PETERBOROUGH CASTOR 35A Peterborough Road, Castor

Postcode PE5 7AX

Study area 900 Square metres

Site coordinates TL 12440 98340 52.570877628973 -0.340732340022 52 34 15 N 000 20 26 W Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 9m Max: 11m

Project creators

Name of Organisation Independent Archaeology Consultants

Project brief originator Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body

Project design originator Independent Archaeology Consultants

Project director/manager Christer Carlsson

Project supervisor Christer Carlsson

Type of sponsor/funding body Developer

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient Peterborough Museum

Physical Contents "Ceramics"

Digital Archive recipient Peterborough Museum

Digital Contents "Ceramics"

Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography","Images vector"

Paper Archive recipient Peterborough Museum

Paper Contents "Ceramics"

Paper Media available "Context sheet","Photograph","Plan","Report","Section"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title 35A Peterborough Road, Castor, Cambridgeshire. Archaeological Evaluation

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