

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

**Report No. 391**

January 1996

**43-45 Church Street, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation 1996**

by A.E. Jones

with contributions by

L. Moffett, S. Pinter Bellows and S. Ratkai

*For further information please contact:*  
Simon Buteux, Peter Leach or Iain Ferris (Directors)  
Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
The University of Birmingham  
Edgbaston  
Birmingham B15 2TT  
Tel: 0121 414 5513  
Fax: 0121 414 5516  
E-Mail: BUFAU@bham.ac.uk  
Web Address: <http://www.bham.ac.uk/BUFAU>

**43-45 CHURCH STREET, ST. NEOTS, CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

**An Archaeological Evaluation 1996**

**CONTENTS**

1.0	Summary
2.0	Introduction
3.0	Methodology
4.0	The study area and its setting
5.0	The archaeological results
6.0	Specialist reports
7.0	Discussion
8.0	Implications and proposals
9.0	Acknowledgements
10.0	References and sources

**Figures**

1A	St. Neots and the study area
1B	The study area: areas of archaeological evaluation
2	Sections: Trenches 1, 3, 5 and 7. Plan of Trench 4
3A	Ordnance Survey map, 1882/7
3B	Ordnance Survey map, 1901
3C	Ordnance Survey map, 1927

## **43-45 CHURCH STREET, ST. NEOTS, CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

### **An Archaeological Evaluation 1996**

#### **1.0: SUMMARY**

The archaeological potential of an area proposed for a housing development, (hereinafter called the study area), was tested by an evaluation involving a desk-top study of cartographic sources, followed by targetted trial-trenching.

The evaluation identified a sequence of alluvial deposits overlain by modern levelling-up horizons on the Church Street frontage. A ditched boundary was recorded to the east of a former builders' yard. A significant quantity of animal bone recovered from alluvial deposits may be waste from the former brick tannery factory located within the study area, although it may derive from earlier tanning activity.

#### **2.0: INTRODUCTION**

This report describes the results of an archaeological assessment of approximately 0.3ha. of land, located at 43-45 Church Street, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire (centred on NGR. TL185600: Fig 1A-B). Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit was commissioned to undertake the archaeological evaluation by McCarthy and Stone (Developments) Limited, in accordance with the guidelines laid down in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (November 1990). The methodology of this assessment conforms to a design brief prepared by the County Archaeology Office, Cambridgeshire County Council (Austin 1995), and a Research Design/ Specification for an Archaeological Evaluation (Jones 1996).

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any archaeological remains which may be affected by the proposed development, and to provide a basis for a series of recommendations and suggestions to mitigate the impact of the development. In particular this evaluation was intended to determine the potential for:

- (1) evidence of waterfront structures, of Saxon or medieval date adjoining the Hen Brook/Fox Brook frontages.
- (2) evidence of structures of medieval or post-medieval date, adjoining the Church Street frontage.
- (3) evidence of rubbish disposal, plot boundaries and small-scale industrial activity dating to the medieval and post-medieval periods in the area to the rear of Church Street.
- (4) evidence of the continuation of the Late Saxon settlement recorded by Addyman (1973) and Tebbutt (1956) to the northeast of the study area.

#### **3.0: THE STUDY AREA AND ITS SETTING**

##### **3.1: Introduction (Fig 1B)**

The study area lies approximately 0.6km to the east of the River Great Ouse, and to the north of the confluence of the Hen Brook and the Fox Brook. The Hen Brook is a tributary of the River Great Ouse and drains a lowlying area of approximately 40 square kilometres, while the river at this point has a catchment area of approximately 2500 square kilometres. The underlying geology of the area is Tertiary in age, comprising Jurassic Oxford Clay consisting of clay and shales, with Jurassic Kellaway beds which are mainly sands (Edmonds and Dinham 1965). The

lower areas are covered in chalky glacial till dating to a pre-Devensian glaciation (Jones and Keen 1993, 149). Deposits adjacent to the river are river terrace deposits, described as first or second river terraces (Edmonds and Dinham 1965), probably dating to the early Devensian. The river terraces overlie the chalky till. Alluvium is mapped either side of the river in a strip up to 1km in width.

### **3.2: The archaeological setting**

Research by Addyman (1973, 45-99) has provided information concerning the location of settlement pre-dating the medieval settlements at St. Neots and Eynesbury, drawing on earlier work by Tebbutt (1933). Although evidence of localised settlement in the Roman period has been found in the St. Neots area (eg Addyman 1973, 58), evidence of the first extensive settlement which may have extended over an area of 8 ha., dates from the Late Saxon period. This settlement was focused to the north of the Hen Brook (Addyman 1973, 49), and it has been argued that this settlement was defined on its west side by the line of Cambridge Street and Church Street.

Evidence of possible later settlement outside this nucleus has also been found notably on the east bank of the river near to the St. Neots bridge and at Eynesbury. This river crossing lay close to the site of the Priory, which will have generated economic prosperity for the town. The position of the town at the hub of the local road network will also have enhanced its prosperity; it lay at the convergence of roads from Kimbolton, Bedford, Godmanchester, Cambridge and Sandy. The market established in the 12th century will have further enhanced its wealth, although the majority of the historic housing stock belongs to the 17th-century, when the town was at the peak of its prosperity, following the dredging of the River Great Ouse (VCH 1932, 338).

It has been argued that the close proximity of the church of St. Mary Eynesbury, recorded in the Domesday survey to the centre of St. Neots could indicate that Eynesbury was a further Saxon settlement focus, a hypothesis supported by a 10th-century grant of land in Eynesbury to St. Neots priory (Addyman 1973, 51).

Recent fieldwork (Jones forthcoming) has identified evidence of medieval activity in the angle between St. Mary's Street and the Hen Brook, to the southwest of the study area. This medieval activity was represented by stakeholes, post-holes, and an oven probably used for crop processing. The investigations also identified a tanning complex, comprising a group of pits of varied form, mostly filled with lime, and associated deposits of animal bone waste, dating to the 17th-18th century, located to the rear of properties fronting onto St. Mary's Street (Jones forthcoming). It is also possible that this waterside zone could have been used for tanning from the medieval period onwards.

A second river crossing, over the Hen Brook, at Eynesbury Bridge, adjoining the extreme southwestern corner of the study area may also have provided a focal point for early settlement. A bridge here is referred to in a document of 1540 (VCH 1932), and the remains of an earlier wing wall over the ford were found during service trench excavations. Tebbutt (1956, 81) describes the infilling of the natural valley surrounding the Hen Brook with dumped soil up to a depth of 1m, which was recorded along St. Mary's Street southwards to St. Mary's Church, Eynesbury. Tebbutt dated this episode of flood prevention to the 17th century, which suggests this levelling-up could have been a preparation for the construction of the present dwellings along St. Mary's Street.

### 3.3: The Study Area

The study area comprises part of the former premises of Tebbutts Builders Merchants yard (latterly of Erith PLC). At the time of the archaeological evaluation, part of the study area was occupied by brick buildings and was unavailable for trial-trenching. The western zone of the study area comprised the former builders' yard, adjoining the Church Street frontage. The eastern zone of the study area, adjoining the Cemetery Road frontage, was grassed and largely overgrown. The area immediately adjoining the Fox Brook frontage was occupied by a modern flood defence bank.

No sites of archaeological interest are presently recorded in the Cambridgeshire Sites and Monuments Record within the study area. However, its proximity to the identified Late Saxon settlement to the northeast, and the inclusion within the study area of zones adjoining the Church Street frontage and the Hen Brook/Fox Brook suggested some potential for archaeological discoveries here.

Church Street is first referred to in a document of the 13th century, when it was known as St. Mary's Street (VCH 1932, 338). Church Street contains a few houses of 17th century date, possibly including one originally large residence constructed on the angle with Cemetery Road. The First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1882 (Fig 3A) indicates that the Church Street frontage was largely built-up, with the exception of an access-way in the northwest corner of the study area, which remains in use to the present. Buildings on the street frontage included a Public House. Part of the Hen Brook/ Fox Brook frontage was occupied by a building which joined the surviving range of brick buildings in the centre of the study area. The eastern zone of the study area was marshy and contained a number of trees, while the Cemetery Road frontage was occupied by a terrace of small houses. By 1901 (Fig 3B) the building on the Hen Brook/ Fox Brook frontage had been demolished, although the eastern zone appeared unchanged. The Ordnance Survey map of 1927 (Fig 3C) indicates that the western zone of the study area was a sawmill; the eastern zone remained undeveloped to the present. An aerial photograph dated 1929 indicates that the eastern zone of the study area was heavily overgrown with trees.

The firm of Tebbutts purchased the site before the Second World War (Tebbutts Ltd 1949). At that time the two storey brick building on site, a former tanning factory (Fig 1B: now a listed building), was converted to stables.

### 4.0: METHODOLOGY (Fig 1C)

As a first stage in site evaluation, a desk-top study of relevant cartographic and archaeological sources was undertaken to provide information concerning site history and land use.

Trial-trenches were positioned to examine the area proposed for development as widely as possible, and to determine the degree of disturbance caused to archaeological features and deposits by previous land use. A total area amounting to approximately 4% of the footprint of the proposed building was examined by trial-trenching.

Trench 1 was originally positioned to examine the area immediately adjoining the street frontage, but was re-positioned 5m to the west to avoid the route of live services laid just inside the western study area boundary. Trenches 2 and 7 were located to test the area adjoining the Hen Brook/Fox Brook frontages. Trenches 2-3 were positioned to examine the area to the rear of the Church Street frontage, where evidence of rubbish disposal, property boundaries and industrial activities was sought. Trenches 4-7 were located to test the archaeological potential of the eastern

zone of the study area to contain evidence of a continuation of the Late Saxon settlement recorded to the northeast.

In each trench the overburden, comprising the topsoil, modern levelling material and building debris was removed by a mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket, to expose the archaeological deposits at their uppermost horizons or the uppermost level of the alluvium. Because of the depth of the overlying deposits, the definition and examination of the underlying alluvial and gravel horizons was often restricted by safety considerations. In each trench the machined horizon was cleaned in an attempt to define any features present. A sample of the features present was selectively hand-excavated, to define their form and preservation, and to provide datable artifacts and samples for environmental analysis, as appropriate.

Recording was by means of printed pro-forma recording sheets, supplemented by plans, sections and photographs, held in the archive.

## **5.0: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS (Figs 2-3)**

### **5.1: The western zone (Trenches 1-3)**

#### Trench 1 (Fig 2)

Trench 1 measured 5m in length and was aligned approximately east-west. The earliest deposit recorded was a dark grey-black alluvial silt-clay flecked with charcoal (1010: not illustrated), recorded at a depth of 1.3m below the modern surface (at 13.95m AOD). Deposit 1010 was sealed by an alluvial layer of mottled orange and grey silt-clay (1009). This layer was sealed by a build-up deposit of light-brown silt-sand (1006), measuring 0.35m in depth, which was overlain by a layer of orange silt-clay (1005), containing fragments of brick and tile. Above was a layer of light brown clay-silt (1004), flecked with creamy-white mortar, sealed by a deposit of dark grey-brown clay-silt (1003). A layer of light brown clay-silt (1002) above was cut by two service trenches (F100, F101), the only features recorded in this trench. Layer 1002, and the infilled features F100 and F101, were sealed by a black silt layer (1001), recorded below the modern gravel surface (1000).

Layer 1010 contained three fragments of pottery dating to the 16th century.

#### Trench 2 (Not illustrated)

Trench 2 was formed of two cuttings (Trenches 2A and 2B), separated by a distance of 1.5m. The earliest level recorded in a hand-excavated sondage in the north of Trench 2A was the uppermost horizon of a layer of gravel (2011), recorded at a depth of 1.2m below the modern surface (at 13.86m AOD). This gravel was sealed by a layer of brown clay-silt (2004), measuring 0.35m in depth, in turn overlain by a layer of buff-brown clay-silt alluvium (2001), exposed at a depth of 1.1m below the modern surface (at 14.21m AOD). Layer 2001 was sealed by a deposit of dark brown clay-silt (2003), including mortar, brick and tile fragments, which sealed a cobble surface (2007). Above was a layer of tile, brick and crushed stone fragments (2002), overlain by a deposit of brown clay-silt (2001), recorded below a layer of gravel (2000).

The earliest layer exposed in Trench 2B, to the south of Trench 2A, was a mixed make-up deposit composed of orange-brown clay-silt (2010), measuring 0.6m in depth. This deposit was sealed by a layer of mortar, brick and tile (2009), measuring 0.25m in depth, sealed by a gravel surface (2008), equivalent to surface 2000 in Trench 2A.

No features were recorded in Trenches 2A or 2B.

#### Trench 3 (Fig 2)

Trench 3 measured 8m in length, and was aligned approximately northeast-southwest. The earliest horizon recorded was a light-grey silt-clay alluvium (3005), exposed at a depth of 1.3m below the modern surface (at 13.85m AOD). Layer 3005 was sealed by a layer of grey silt-clay alluvium (3004), which measured 0.25m in depth. This layer was sealed by a light brown clay-silt (3003), containing flecks of charcoal, overlain in turn by a levelling-up deposit consisting of light brown silt-clay (3002), containing fragments of brick, tile, and patches of mortar. Above was an orange gravel surface (3001), recorded below the modern tarmac surface (3000). Layer 3001 was cut by a service trench (F300), the only feature recorded in the trench.

### **5.2: The eastern zone (Trenches 4-7)**

#### Trench 4 (Fig 2)

Trench 4 measured 8m in length, and was aligned approximately northwest-southeast. The uppermost horizon of a layer of alluvial brown silt-clay (4001) was exposed in the base of the trench at a depth of 0.5m below the modern surface (at 14.56m AOD). A sondage was excavated through this deposit, but its base could not be found for reasons of safety. Layer 4001 was cut by a drainage or boundary ditch (F400; Fig 2), which followed the orientation of the trench. It was U-shaped in profile, measuring a maximum of 0.8m in width and 0.5m in depth, and was filled with dark brown clay-silt (4002-3). Layer 4001 and infilled ditch F400 were sealed by a layer of clay-silt (4005), possibly a build-up deposit, which was recorded beneath the modern topsoil (4000).

Layer 4001 contained a single sherd of pottery of 16th century date.

#### Trench 5 (Fig 2)

Trench 5 measured 11m in length, and was aligned approximately east-west. A sondage dug at the western end of the trench exposed the uppermost horizon of a gravel layer (5005) at a depth of 1.5m below the modern surface (at 13.64m AOD). This gravel was sealed by a layer of brown silt-clay alluvium (5001), exposed by machining at a depth of 0.85m below the modern surface (at 14.40m AOD). Layer 5003 was sealed by a build-up deposits of dark grey-brown clay-silt (5002-3), flecked with creamy-white mortar, and was cut by a disused service trench (F500), the only feature recorded in this trench. Layer 5002, and infilled feature F500, were sealed by the topsoil (5000).

Layer 5001 contained two sherds of pottery of 16th century date, and a single sherd of 14th-15th century date.

#### Trench 6 (not illustrated)

Trench 6 measured 9m in length, and was aligned approximately north-south. The uppermost horizon of a silt-gravel (6004) was exposed in the northern half of the trench, at a depth of 1.1m below the modern surface (at 14.08m AOD). It was sealed by a layer of brown silt-clay alluvium (6003), which measured a maximum of 0.25m in depth, and was in turn overlain by a further alluvial deposit, consisting of light brown silt-clay (6002). Above was a layer of brown silt-sand (6001), recorded below the topsoil (6000). No features were recorded in this trench.

### Trench 7 (Fig 2)

Trench 7 measured 6m in length, and was aligned approximately north-south. The uppermost horizon of a layer of gravel (7006) was recorded in a sondage dug at the southern end of the trench, at a depth of 1.3m below the modern surface (at 13.63m AOD). Above was a layer of alluvial dark grey silt-clay (7005), which measured 0.3m in depth. This layer was sealed by a further alluvial deposit, composed of light brown silt-clay (7004), recorded at a depth of 0.8m below the modern surface (at 14.18m AOD). Above was a light brown clay-silt (7003), also of alluvial origin. Layer 7003 was sealed by a brown silt-clay (7002), which was cut by a shallow disturbance (F700), sealed in turn by a deposit of light brown silt-sand (7001), recorded below the modern topsoil (7000). A disused service trench (F700), cutting layer 7001, was the only feature recorded in this trench.

## **6.0: SPECIALIST REPORTS**

### **6.1: Animal bone by Stephanie Pinter Bellows**

For the purposes of assessment, the faunal assemblage of 339 bones was briefly examined. The bones are in excellent condition. Table 1 provides an approximate count of the bones which provide the most information, i.e. jaws, loose teeth, and a selected number of long-bone ends, etc. (Davis 1992), including those with useful measurements (M).

The assessment shows the assemblage almost entirely consists of sheep/goat (only sheep identified at this time) metapodia and phalanges with some horncores. There are a few cow (again mainly metapodia and phalanges), and horse and dog bones. No wild species were noted. The character of the assemblage suggests that it is made up of tanning waste. There are no noticeable differences between this assemblage and that from the nearby excavation at St. Mary's Street (Jones forthcoming).

The bone assemblage from ditch F400 in Trench 4 is of particular interest. Excavation of one cutting (F400.1) across this feature produced a wider range of cattle skeletal elements, including vertebra, rib, and mandible fragments, but the overriding character of the feature was that of tanning waste. A second cutting (F400.2) across the same ditch contained a partially articulated young adult dog skeleton, which comprised the skull, right and left humerus and scapula, proximal right radius, upper vertebral column and ribs, and a fragment of innominate. The dog had three fractures of the upper right ribs. Cutting F400.2 also included a partially articulated sheep/goat ankle and a sheep/goat metacarpal.

Taken in isolation, the assemblage is outside the limits which can give useful data, although it could usefully be compared with the data from the St. Mary's Street site. The 17th-18th century was the period when improved breeds were being introduced, though not much is known about this through archaeological studies. The excellent condition of the bones makes it possible to take more measurements than is often the case. These bones could be added to the database of measurements and observations concerning the tanning industry which has been researched (Pinter-Bellows forthcoming). Counts of the numbers of metapodials and phalanges would provide an approximate estimate of the numbers of adults and sub-adults being used in the tannery operation, the ratio of males to females, and morphological characteristics for information about breeds. The study of the patterns of breakage of the metapodials would provide some indication of the patterning of bones left with the skin and/or how they were removed at the tannery. There are also individual points of interest that are worth noting - for example, a large cattle



horncore was found with the distal end removed (Trench 5, layer 5001), giving an indication of the disposition of the animal and of husbandry techniques.

The excellent condition of the bones and their importance for gathering information about breeds and the tannery industry suggests that further recovery and analysis of this tannery waste could be worthwhile.

**Table 1: Approximate Quantification of Animal Bone**

	T2	T3	T4	T5	T7
<b>Cattle</b>					
Jaws	-	-	-	-	-
Loose teeth	-	-	-	-	-
L-b ends etc.	1	2(1)	2(1)	2	2(1)
<b>Sheep/goat</b>					
Jaws	-	-	-	-	-
Loose teeth	-	-	-	-	-
L-b ends etc.	53(36)	3(2)	15(11)	1(1)	-
<b>Horse (not subdiv)</b>	1	-	-	2(2)	-
<b>Dog (not subdiv)</b>	3(2)	-	6(5)	2(2)	3(3)
<b>Total informative</b>	58 (38)	5 (3)	15 (11)	7 (5)	5 (4)

## 6.2: Plant macrofossils by Lisa Moffett

Three 10 litre soil samples were collected. The samples were processed by water flotation. The resulting flots were assessed by being briefly scanned under a binocular microscope (12x magnification).

### Sample 1, T.1 layer 1010

This sample contains a quantity of snails, pieces of coal and twigs. Two unidentifiable fragments of charred plant remains were recorded. The sample also contained two uncharred seeds, one of buttercup, the second of sloe.

### Sample 2, T.4 ditch F400.1 fill 4002

This sample contains a number of snails, modern root fragments, and a few fragments of wood charcoal.

### Sample 3, T.7 layer 7005

This sample contains a large quantity of uncharred elder seeds, a large quantity of snails, and some modern root material. One charred grain of wheat was also recovered.

## 6.3: Pottery by Stephanie Ratkai

### T.1 layer 1010

3 sherds of 16th century date.

### T.4 layer 4001

1 sherd of 16th century date.

## **T.5 layer 5001**

2 sherds of 16th century date, one sherd of 14th-15th century date.

This very small assemblage mainly comprised early post-medieval domestic wares, bowls and other un-diagnostic hollow wares. Red sandy wares and grey wares were represented.

## **7.0: DISCUSSION**

### **7.1: The natural environment**

The uppermost surface of the underlying natural gravels was recorded in Trench 5 (5005, at 13.64m AOD; 1.5m below the modern surface), and in Trench 6 (6004, at 14.08m AOD; 1m below the modern ground surface). These levels could suggest that the surface of the gravels was undulating. An exposure of gravel in Trench 2 (2011), is probably no more than a lens of gravel within an alluvial deposit, as no continuation of this gravel horizon could be recorded in the adjoining Trench 3, to the north. The gravels were exposed at between 13.7-13.9m AOD at the nearby St. Mary's Street excavation (Jones 1994). It would be expected that the gravel surface would dip considerably towards the Hen/Fox Brook frontages, but the underlying gravels could not be located in this area.

Alluvial horizons were exposed in Trenches 2-7. Alluvium could not be exposed in Trench 1 because of the depth of overburden. A single alluvial horizon was exposed in Trenches 4, 5 and 6. Trench 3 exposed three discrete alluvial horizons (3005-3003), and two layers of alluvium were recorded within Trench 2 (2004, 2001) and in Trench 7 (7005, 7004), adjoining the confluence of the Hen and the Fox Brook. The limited pottery dating evidence obtained suggests that alluvial horizons 4001 and 5001 (Trenches 4 and 5, respectively), may be dated to the 16th century, although it is possible that this material could be residual.

The limited information available for the study of alluviation along the River Great Ouse (Robinson 1992) suggests that the Saxon period was characterised by flooding but no deposition of alluvium. Extensive alluviation in the medieval period was followed by flooding but no alluviation. Roseff (forthcoming) has proposed a model for alluviation along the Hen Brook, based on data from excavation. This model proposes that the Hen Brook was a wide shallow stream, possibly divided into several channels, winding through a marshy area during the pre-medieval period. Following alluviation in the medieval period, the Brook may have been confined to a single channel, subject to seasonal flooding in the post-medieval era. This model has important implications for an understanding of the potential of the site to contain evidence of settlement and activity.

### **7.2: Settlement and activity**

No datable features of Saxon or medieval date were recorded, nor were any residual artifacts of Saxon or medieval date recorded in later contexts.

The model of alluvation proposed above may suggest the area immediately adjoining the Hen Brook may have been marshy and too low-lying for settlement nearby in the Saxon period. The deposition of alluvium, tentatively dated to the medieval period, may have restricted the Hen Brook to a narrow channel, and the area adjoining the Brook may have been more attractive to settlement. Medieval activity within the study area could have been focused along Church Street, established by the 13th century. A particular impetus to the establishment of house

plots along the Church Street frontage could have been provided by the nearby bridgehead established by 1540 (VCH 1932).

Comparison of the heights of the uppermost alluvial horizons across the study area suggests that the historic ground level may have sloped downward towards the Ouse in the west, which perhaps provides an explanation for the ground build-up recorded in Trench 1 (1006-1010).

Of particular importance is the use of the site in the post-medieval period as a tannery. The most obvious reminder of this industry is the two storey brick tanning factory which survives to the present. This industry is also represented by the recovery of a quantity of tanning waste, indicated by the predominance of sheep/goat metapodia and phalanges (See Section 6.1 above). The largest assemblage of this material was recovered from Trench 2. This evidence for tanning *in situ* complements the earlier discoveries from the St. Mary's Street site (Jones forthcoming). It evidences the spread of tanning industry along the Hen Brook, which would have allowed easy access for the raw materials by boat, and provided a supply a water. Perhaps more importantly, tanning, which involved the use of urine and faeces was often confined to liminal positions on the edges of towns because of the noxious smells produced. Tanning may have originated along the Hen Brook frontage in the medieval period, while the well-sealed tanning deposits at St. Mary's Street were mainly datable to the late-17th-early-18th century. The information from the study area extends the chronology of this activity into the later post-medieval period. The recovery of a number of horncores could also indicate nearby horn working, a trade which was often conducted 'symbiotically' with tanning.

The final use of the western zone of the study area, as part of Tebbutts Builders Merchants is represented by build-ups of soil, and the construction of an extension to the main north-south range of brick buildings, forming a sawmill (Fig 3C).

Ditch F400 (Trench 4), which is undated, may have been dug for drainage or to define a property boundary.

## **8.0: IMPLICATIONS AND PROPOSALS**

### **8.1: Implications**

Despite the limitations necessarily imposed on this evaluation, a number of important discoveries have been made which have the potential to add to our understanding of the development of this area, in particular of industry and of changes in the Hen Brook environs.

The most important discovery is the association of the study area with the tanning industry, although a clear chronological context for this activity could not be defined. The study of such industry is has been identified as a research priority (English Heritage 1991, 37, 42). Important information has also been obtained concerning the extent of later post-medieval disturbance of earlier archaeological deposits. The depth of the build-up deposits recorded in Trench 1 could indicate that any medieval/ early post-medieval structural remains on the Church Street frontage could be relatively well preserved, despite being built over by a terrace of houses in the 19th century.

Although the potential for archaeological features and deposits sealed beneath the alluvium is presently undefined, it is possible that the depth of the alluvial deposits may have afforded some protection against truncation from later activity. The recorded sequence of alluvial deposits is another potential source of information concerning the development of the Hen Brook environment.

Any cut archaeological features, such as pits or ditches, could contain waterlogged deposits, including pollen and insect remains, which would provide important information concerning the development of the Hen Brook environment.

## **8.2: Proposals (Fig 4)**

The results of the present evaluation suggest that construction groundworks limited in depth to between 1m and 1.2m below the modern surface may not disturb important archaeological deposits.

However, it should be noted that an examination of the archaeological potential of the interior of the standing buildings, the car park area in the northeast of the study area, and the access in the northwest of the study area was outside the scope of the present exercise.

**If the areas of carparking in the northeast of the study area, and the access-way in the northwest of the study area are to be affected by construction groundworks, it is recommended that a trial-trench measuring 5m by 1.6m be excavated in each area, to test their archaeological potential, and allow a suitable mitigation strategy to be defined in advance of construction groundworks.**

Groundworks cut to a depth greater than between 1m to 1.2m may affect significant archaeological deposits.

For the purpose of framing proposals for further archaeological work the study area is divided into three zones (A-C).

### **ZONE A: CHURCH STREET FRONTAGE**

This area could include the remains of structures of medieval/post-medieval date, and evidence of early bridge builds could also be recovered. Trench 1 has suggested that such remains could be relatively well preserved. Archaeological deposits in this zone may be particularly well preserved in the northwestern corner of the study area, which has not been recently developed (Fig 3A-C).

### **ZONE B: NORTHEAST OF SITE**

This area could possibly contain the buried remains of a southward continuation of the Late Saxon settlement recorded to the northeast. Trenching suggests that alluviation could have afforded some protection from later disturbance, and the cartographic evidence suggests the area was largely undeveloped.

### **ZONE C: FOX BROOK FRONTAGE**

This area could contain evidence of waterfront structures, and has been largely undisturbed.

### **PROPOSED ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESPONSE**

**Provision should be made for the archaeological monitoring and/ or salvage recording of any groundworks in ZONES A-C which exceed a depth of between 1m to 1.2m below the modern surface.**

**A contingency should be allowed for more detailed archaeological hand excavation and recording, if required, in respect of ZONES A AND B.**

On completion of such further archaeological works, it may be appropriate to prepare an assessment of the significance of the findings, in accordance with Management of Archaeology Projects (English Heritage 1991a), with a view to further analysis and publication of the results in a local archaeological journal.

## 9.0: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was sponsored by McCarthy and Stone (Developments) Limited. It was directed by Alex Jones, with the assistance of Richard Cuttler. The report was edited by Iain Ferris, and the illustrations were prepared by Nigel Dodds. The project was monitored for Cambridgeshire County Council by Louise Austin.

## 10.0: REFERENCES AND SOURCES

Addyman, P. 1973. Late Saxon Settlements in the St. Neots Area. *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* LXIV, 45-99.

Alexander, M. 1994. *Medieval Burials at 25-27, Market Square St Neots*. Cambridgeshire Archaeology Report No 89. Cambridgeshire C.C.

Austin, L. 1995. *Design Brief for Archaeological Evaluation at 43-45 Church Street, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire*. Cambridgeshire C. C., unpublished.

Davis, S. 1992. *A Rapid Method for Recording Information About Mammal Bones from Archaeological Sites*. HBMC AM Laboratory Report 19/92.

Edmonds, E A and Dinham, C. H. 1965. *Geology of the Country around Huntingdon and Biggleswade*. Memoirs of the Geological Survey of Great Britain.

English Heritage. 1991. *Exploring Our Past. Strategies for the Archaeology of England*.

English Heritage 1991a. *The Management of Archaeology Projects*.

Jones, A. E. 1994. *St. Mary's Street, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation 1994*. BUFAU Report No. 299.

Jones, A. E. 1996. 43-45 Church Street, St. Neots: Research Design/ Specification for Archaeological Evaluation. BUFAU, unpublished.

Jones, A. E. forthcoming. *St. Mary's Street, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire: Archaeological Investigations 1994-5*.

Jones, R. L. and Keen, D. H. 1993. *Pleistocene Environments in the British Isles*.

Pinter Bellows, S. forthcoming. *The animal Bone* in Jones, A. E. forthcoming.

RCHM 1926. *Huntingdonshire*.

Robinson, M. 1992. Environment, Archaeology and Alluvium on the River Gravels of the South Midlands, in Needham, S. and Mackling, M. G. (eds). *Alluvial Archaeology in Britain*. Oxbow Monograph No. 27, Oxford.

Roseff, R. forthcoming. *The Soils and Sediments*, in Jones, A. E. forthcoming.

Tebbutt, C. F. 1933. Late Saxon Huts at St. Neots. *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* XXXII, 137-151.

Tebbutt, C. F. 1956. Excavations at St. Neots, Huntingdonshire. *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*. XLIX 79-87.

Tebbutts Ltd. 1949. *Diamond Jubilee of C. G Tebbutt, Ltd., St. Neots, Hunts, 1889-1949*. Unpublished pamphlet.

Tebbutt, C. F. 1961. An Early 12th-century Building at Eynesbury, Huntingdonshire. *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* LIV, 85-9.

VCH 1932. *Huntingdonshire*.

### MAP SOURCES

1882/7 Ordnance Survey map 25 inches/mile

1901            Ordnance Survey map

1927            Ordnance Survey map

### PHOTOGRAPH

1929            Aerofilms Ltd. PH69C/22 (28950)