

NAU Archaeology

Report No. 1313

An Archaeological Evaluation at land adjacent to Ely House, 1 Redman Close Ely Cambridgeshire

CHER ECB 2645

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Project over seen by: | Please tick |
| David Whitmore | |

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August 2007

BAU 1590

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| Project checklist | | Date |
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Location: 1 Redman Close, Ely, Cambridgeshire.
District: Fenland
Grid Ref: TL 5499 8175
CHER No: ECB 2645
Date of fieldwork: 18th to 20th July 2007

Summary

NAU Archaeology carried out an evaluation by Trial Trenching within the site of the proposed development of five houses with associated access roads and services at land adjacent to Ely House, 1 Redman Close, Ely, Cambridgeshire.

Two evaluation trenches were excavated and produced evidence of a linear ditch of post-medieval or modern date, a dog burial and modern make-up deposits.

1.0 Introduction

NAU Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation within the site of the proposed construction of five new dwellings with associated access roads and services, at land adjacent to Ely House, 1 Redman Close, Ely, Cambridgeshire. The development encompassed an area of 3670/ sq.m

This project was commissioned and funded by Robert Hale of Beres Developments Limited, 68 Queen Street, Sheffield. The machining and reinstatement of the evaluation trenches was undertaken by Bryn Williams Civil Engineering and Groundworks, Rollesby, Norfolk.

This archaeological programme was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set by Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice (Planning Application Number: E/07/00113/OUT) and in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NAU Archaeology (Ref: BAU1590/DW) and a Brief issued by Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice (Kasia Gdaniec, 18 June 2007)

The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16 — Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is currently held by NAU Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Store's Project accession number and in accordance with Cambridgeshire Historic Environmental Record requirements for archive preparation, storage and conservation (in accordance with document HER 2004/1).

2.0 Geology and Topography

The underlying solid geology is of Kimmeridge clay and the overlying soil consists of Cretaceous sands with occasional pockets of chalky till clay.



Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:10,000

Local Authority No.100019340

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The site is situated c. 1.7km north of the medieval core of Ely. The site is situated on a higher tract of land ranging between 20m to 25m OD before sloping north and north-east towards the Bedford Level. The nucleus of the present day settlement in Ely is predominately located to the south of the proposed development site.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

The Isle of Ely is an area rich in archaeological and historic evidence with numerous find spots listed in the Cambridgeshire Historical and Environmental Records (CHER), However, only the find spots listed within the immediate environs are included below.

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| CHER 06136: | To the south of the site, a Bronze Age barrow is visible as a crop-mark. A Beaker burial, excavated in the 1950s, is that of a child approximately 9 years old and is associated with a finely decorated pot. |
| CHER 07186 | Located to the south-east of site was a prehistoric flint scraper. |
| CHER 14805 | Situated to the south of the site archaeological excavations at Prickwillow Road produced evidence of part of a rural settlement, possibly occupied from the 5th or 3rd centuries BC through to the 4th century. |
| CHER 15160 | To the west of the site are an RAF hospital, a water tower and a military depot. |

4.0 Methodology

The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence or absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

A total of two evaluation trenches were excavated. Trench 1 measured 30m in length by 1.8 wide and Trench 2 measured 10m in length by 1.8m wide (totalling 72 m²). The western end of Trench 1 was moved from its original intended position because of unforeseen obstructions.

Machine excavation was carried out with a tracked hydraulic 360° excavator using a 1.20m toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds, other than those which were obviously modern, were retained for inspection.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NAU Archaeology *pro forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

Due to the lack of suitable deposits, no environmental samples were taken.

Site conditions were good with clear access onto the site and around the evaluation trenches. The weather conditions were favourable during the project, although the sunny conditions cast shadows into the trenches making the photography problematic.

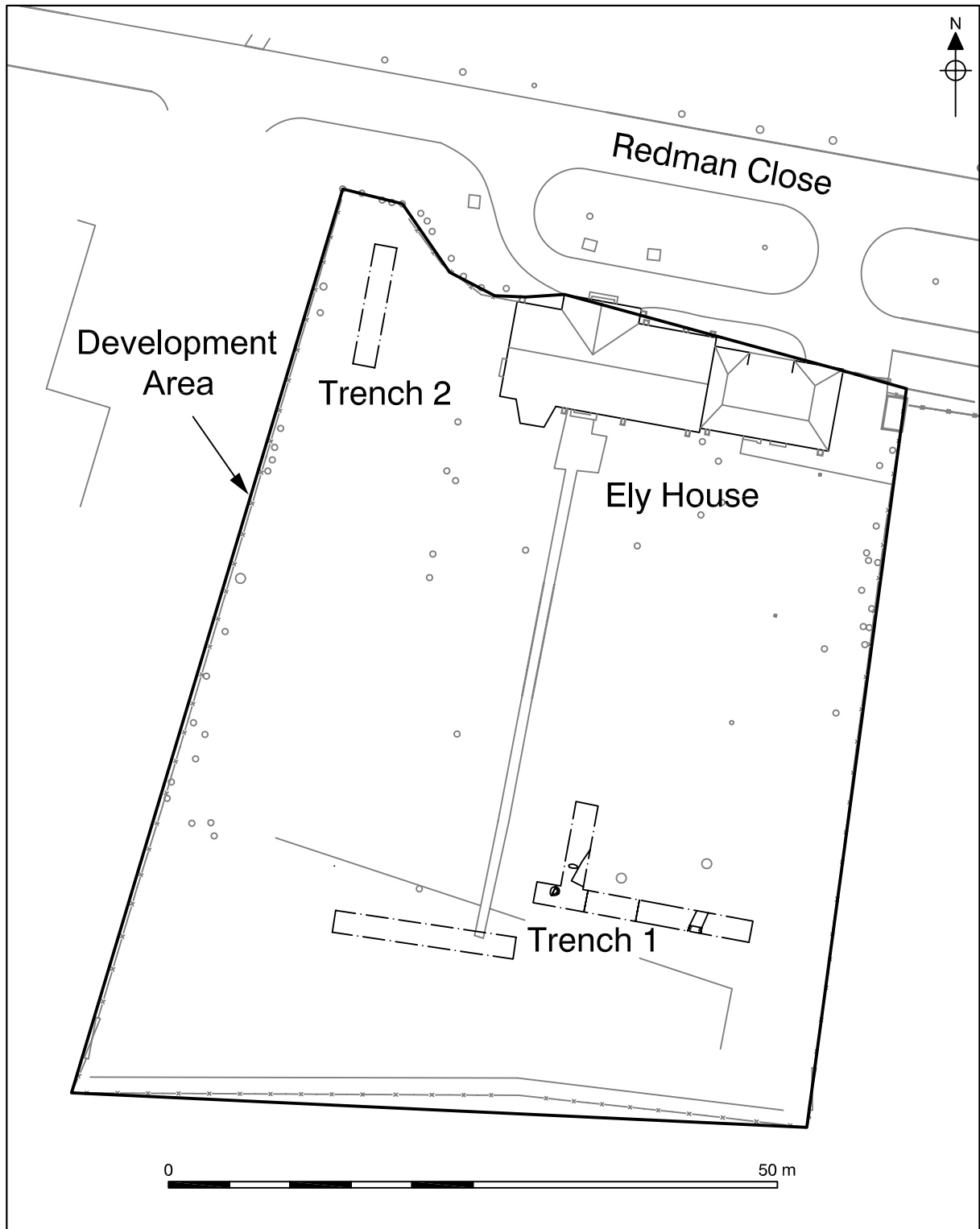


Figure 2. Trench location. Scale 1:500

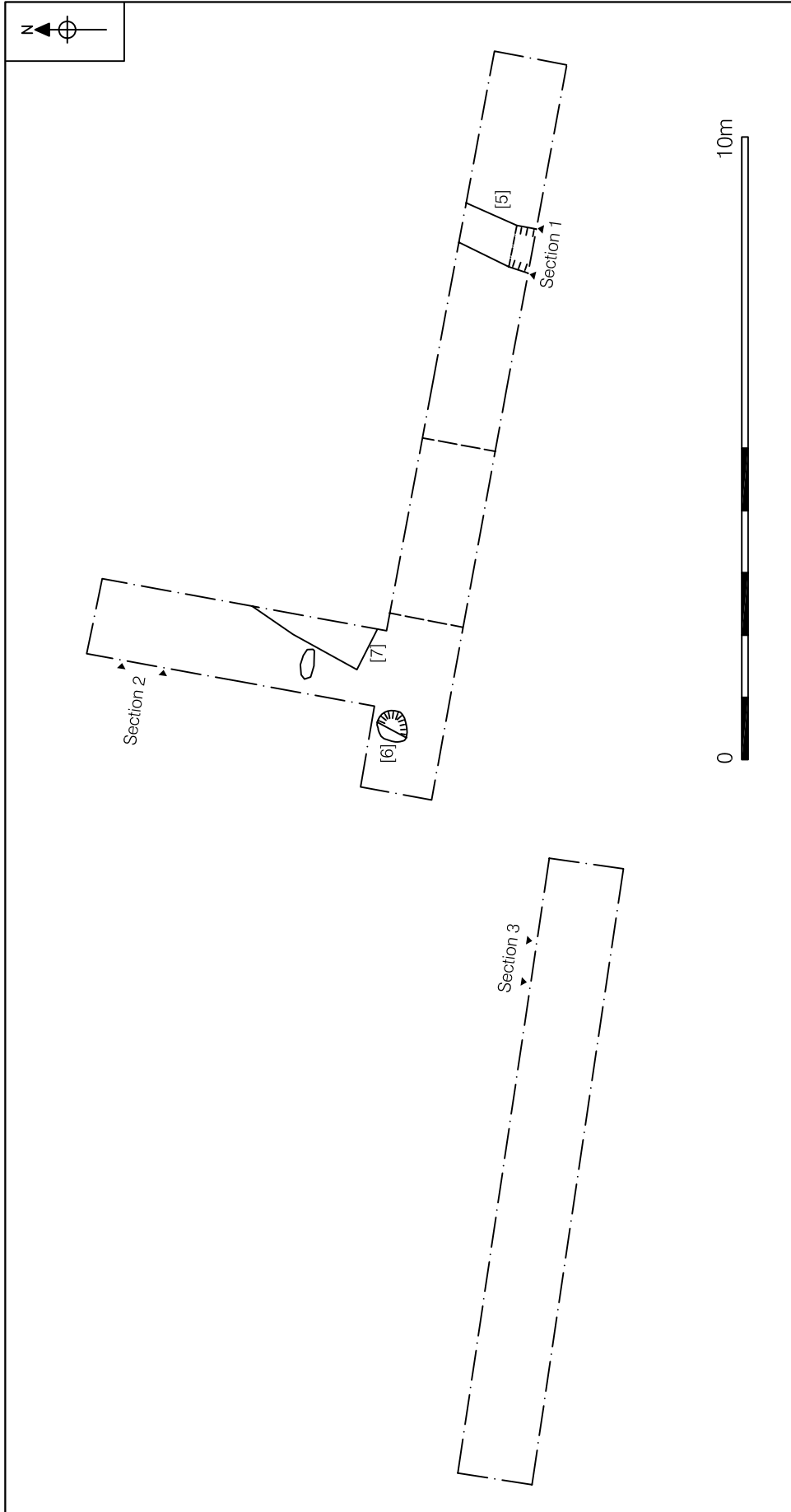


Figure 3. Plan of Trench 1. Scale 1:100

5.0 Results

Trench 1 was located on the southern part of the site and was excavated in a reversed “T” shape. The north-to-south alignment measured c. 7m in length by 1.80m wide and was excavated to a depth of c. 0.7m. The east-to-west alignment measured c. 33m in length by 1.80m wide and was excavated to a depth ranging between 0.6m (eastern end) and 0.7m (western end).

The eastern end of the trench contained three make-up deposits ([1], [2], and [3]). The upper deposit ([1]) measured c. 0.3m in depth and consisted of heavily rooted topsoil with frequent flint nodules. Deposit [2] measured c. 0.23m in depth and consisted of light orange-brown silty sand. Deposit [3] measured c. 0.28m and consisted of a light grey-brown silty sand with frequent chalk and flint inclusions.

Below deposit [3] was a north-to-south ditch ([5]) which measured 1.1m wide by 0.2m in depth and contained a single fill ([4]). Deposit [4] consisted of light to mid greyish-black silty sand, from which nine fragments of ceramic building material, a sherd of late post-medieval unglazed ware and a probable gun-flint were recovered. The finds indicate a date ranging between the 19th and 20th centuries.

Two deposits ([11] and [12]) were recorded in the north-to-south aligned part of Trench 1. The upper deposit ([11]) measured c. 0.46m in depth and consisted of mixed deposits of heavily rooted topsoil with frequent brick and flint inclusions. The lower deposit ([12]) measured 0.2m in depth and consisted of clayey silty sand. The lower deposit was seen to lie directly above natural gravels and clays.

The western end of Trench 1 revealed three make-up deposits ([13], [14] and [15]) totalling a depth of 0.7m. The upper deposit ([13]) measured c. 0.20m in depth and consisted of heavily rooted topsoil (same as deposits ([1] and [11])). Deposit [14] measured 0.4m in depth and was similar in appearance to deposit [13]. The lower deposit ([15]) measured 0.1m and was truncated natural clays.

A dog burial ([6]) was located in the central part of the trench. The burial appeared to be complete with the exception a few bones which were recovered in the spoil. All bones recovered were placed back with the skeletal remains. During a monitoring visit by Kasia Gdaniec (Senior Archaeologist) of Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice, it was decided to leave the dog remains *in situ*. Also located in the central part of the trench was a tree bowl ([9]); although it appeared to be a natural occurrence it was excavated to try and determine if the tree roots had utilised a deposit contained within a cut archaeological feature.

A rectilinear feature ([7]) was located in the central northern part of trench 1 and measured (at least) 1.13m in length by (at least) 0.8m wide. This feature was clearly modern, as two iron stakes were recorded within its fill ([8]).

Trench 2 was located on the north-western part of the site and aligned north-to-south. It measured c. 10m in length by 1.8m wide and was excavated to a depth of 0.75m. It contained three make-up deposits ([13], [14] and [15]).

The upper deposit ([13]) measured 0.25m in depth and consisted of mid brown silty sand (topsoil) with frequent fragments of red brick and the occasional flint nodule. Deposit [14] measured 0.50m in depth and consisted of a mixed deposit of mid ginger-brown silty sand with frequent brick and flint inclusions. The lower deposit

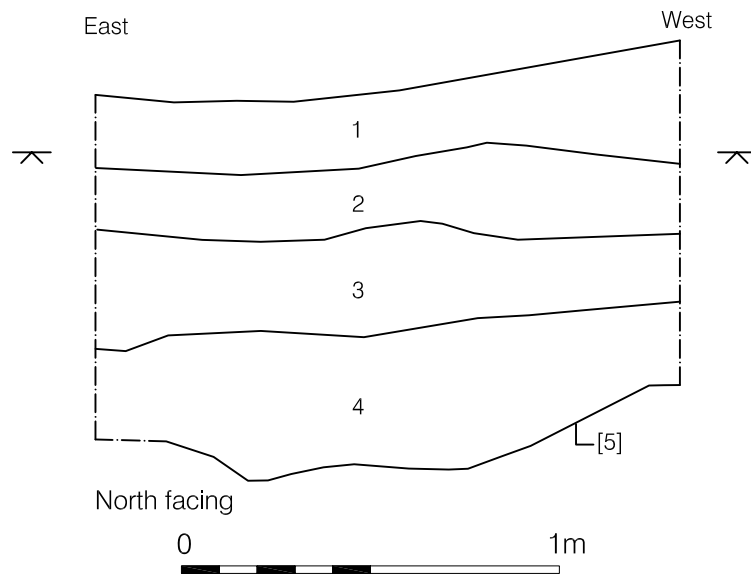


Figure 4. Section 1. Trench 1. Scale 1:20

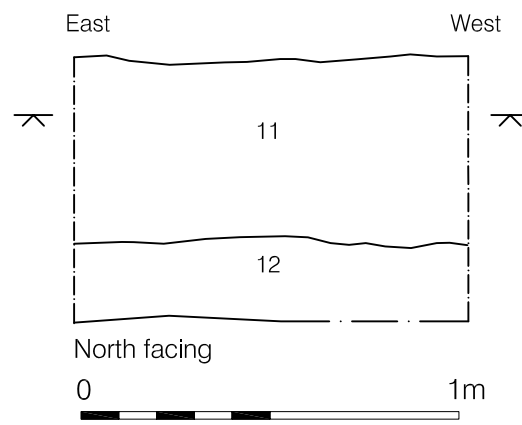


Figure 5. Section 2, Trench 1. Scale 1:20

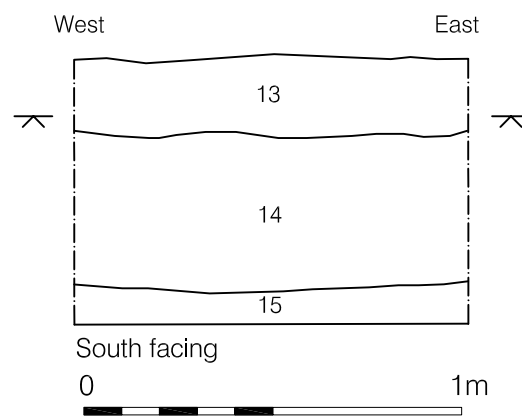


Figure 6. Section 3, Trench 1. Scale 1:20

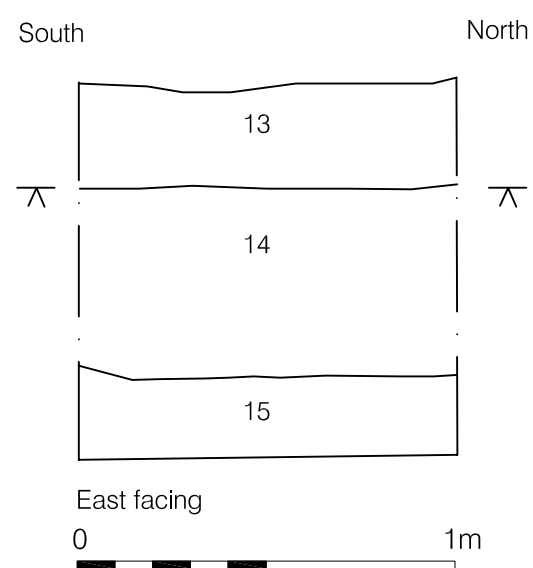
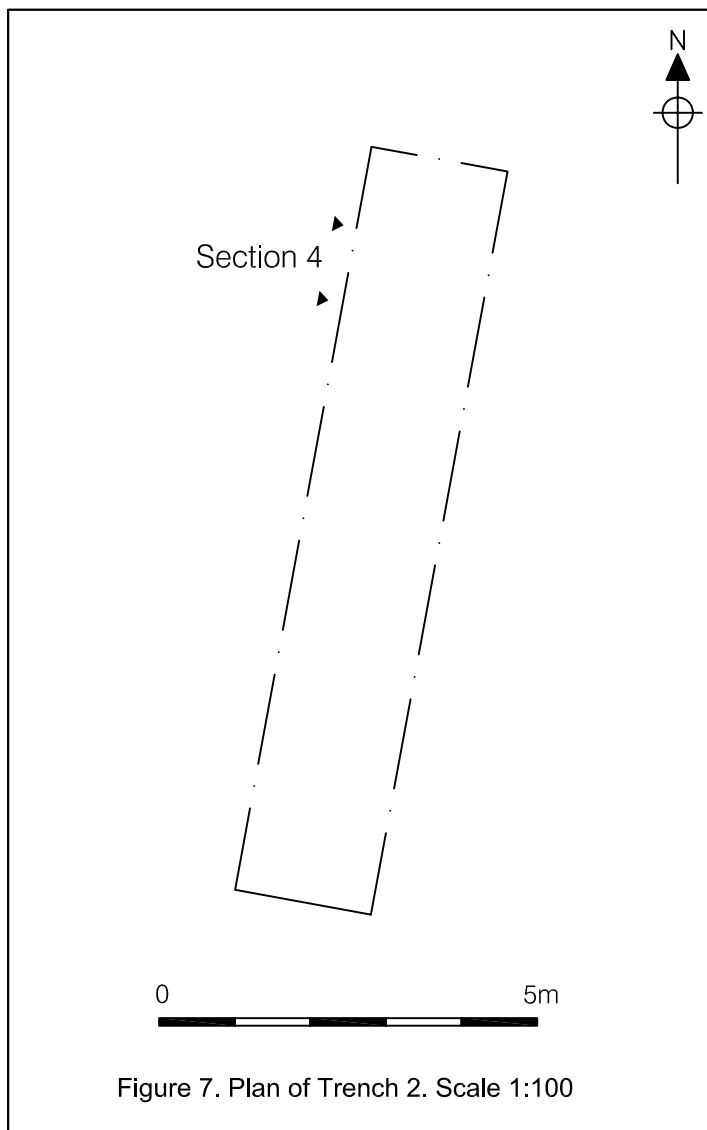


Figure 8. Section 4, Trench 2.
Scale 1:20

([15]) measured 0.25m in depth, was situated directly above the natural gravels and consisted of light to mid brown silty sand with frequent brick and chalk lumps.

6.0 The Finds

The Pottery

Three sherds of pottery (weighing 0.043kg) were collected from context [4] in Trench 1. Table 1 shows the quantification by fabric.

All fabric and form types represented in this group are most commonly found in the late 18th to early 20th centuries, although the plant pot fragment could be later. The group is too small for further interpretation.

Ceramic Building Material

Nine fragments (0.936kg) of ceramic building material were recovered from context [4]. They consisted of three pieces of brick (0.820kg), four fragments of roof tile (0.072kg) and two pieces of field drain (0.044kg). All were in the same basic fabric, which consisted of poorly mixed white and red-firing clays with sparse quartz sand, ferrous material and shell. Most of the fragments have a yellow surface. A large fragment of brick measured 108mm in width and was 44mm thick with a fine buff lime mortar 14mm thick adhered to one surface.

Although the fragments are superficially similar in appearance to the estuarine clay 'early bricks' and roof tiles used in medieval buildings in East Anglia, ceramic building material of this type was made and used in the Fens in the post-medieval period. If the brick and tile in this group represents demolition rubble, then it may be slightly earlier than the pottery with which it was found, but a 17th to early 20th-century date is most likely.

7.0 Environmental Evidence

No environmental samples were taken due to unsuitable deposits.

8.0 Conclusions

The evaluation revealed no evidence of ancient features or deposit; therefore little can be added to the archaeological understanding of the surrounding environs. However, the 19th to 20th-century pottery and the 17th to 20th-century ceramic building materials recovered from the linear ditch demonstrate that cultural activity was taking place within the vicinity of the development area.

Considering that the site was situated on the higher tracts of land bordering the fenlands, it could be anticipated that subsoil deposits may have survived within the proposed development area. The negative results, however, suggest that the site may have been truncated during the construction of the buildings within the vicinity of Ely House., removing traces (if any existed) of earlier occupation.

Recommendations for future work based upon this report will be made by Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Robert Hale of Beres Developments Limited for commissioning and funding the project.

The following NAU Archaeology staff were involved with this project: the author and Tim Denton undertook the site works; plans and sections were digitised by Tim Denton; Lucy Talbot processed the finds; the flint was commented upon by Sarah Bates; the report was illustrated and formatted by David Dobson and edited by Martin Smith; the site works were overseen by David Whitmore.

Sue Anderson of CFA Archaeology reported on the pottery and ceramic building materials.

Thanks are also given to: Kasia Gdaniec (Senior Archaeologist) for monitoring the work on behalf of Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice and to Sarah Poppy of Cambridgeshire Archaeology for supplying the information from the Cambridgeshire Historic and Environmental Record (CHER).

Machine excavations and reinstatement were undertaken by Bryn Williams, Civil Engineering and Groundworks, Rollesby, Norfolk.

Appendix 1a: Context Summary

| Context | Trench | Category | Description | Period |
|---------|--------|----------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | 1 | Deposit | Topsoil | Modern |
| 2 | 1 | Deposit | Make-up | Modern |
| 3 | 1 | Deposit | Make-up | Modern |
| 4 | 1 | Deposit | Fill of ditch [5] | 17th to 20th century |
| 5 | 1 | Cut | Linear ditch | 17th to 20th century |
| 6 | 1 | Skeleton | Dog burial | ?Modern |
| 7 | 1 | Cut | Rectilinear feature | Modern |
| 8 | 1 | Deposit | Fill of [7] | Modern |
| 9 | 1 | Cut | Tree bowl | Modern |
| 10 | 1 | Deposit | Fill of [9] | Modern |
| 11 | 2 | Deposit | Topsoil | Modern |
| 12 | 2 | Deposit | Make-up | Modern |
| 13 | 2 | Deposit | Make-up | Modern |
| 14 | 2 | Deposit | Make-up | Modern |
| 15 | 2 | Deposit | Natural clay | Modern |

Appendix 1b: OASIS feature summary table

| Period | Feature type | Quantity |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Post-medieval (1540 to 1900AD) | North-to-south linear ditch | 1 |
| Modern (1900 to 2050 AD) | Rectilinear feature | 1 |
| | Dog burial | 1 |

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

| Context | Material | Quantity | Weight (kg) | Period |
|---------|---------------------------|----------|-------------|---------------|
| 04 | Pottery | 3 | 0.043 | Post-medieval |
| 04 | Ceramic building material | 9 | 0.936 | Post-medieval |
| 04 | Flint - worked | 1 | - | Post-medieval |

Appendix 2b: NHER finds summary table

| Period | Material | Quantity |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|----------|
| Post-medieval (1540 to 1900AD) | Gun flint | 1 |
| | Pottery | 3 |
| | Ceramic building materials | 9 |
| | | |

Appendix 3: Pottery

| Context | Fabric | No. | Wt/g | Description | Spot date |
|---------|--------|-----|------|---|-----------|
| 4 | REFW | 1 | 1 | Small frag of industrial slipware tankard | 19th c. |
| | REFR | 1 | 22 | Brown-glazed thick-walled sherd | 19th c.+ |
| | LPME | 1 | 20 | Rim of plant pot | 19th c.+ |

Key: REFW – refined whitewares; REFR refined redwares; LPME – late post-medieval unglazed earthenwares.

Appendix 4: Ceramic Building Material

| Context | Total by context | Weight by context (kg) | Form | Period |
|---------|------------------|------------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| 4 | 3 | 0.820kg | Brick | 17th to 20th century |
| | 4 | 0.072kg | Roof tile | 17th to 20th century |
| | 2 | 0.044kg | Field drain | Modern |

Appendix 5: Flint

| Context | Type | Quantity |
|---------|-----------|----------|
| 4 | Gun flint | 1 |