

Report 2291



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## An Archaeological Evaluation at the Central Building, Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge

ECB 3319



### Prepared for

Edmond Shipway  
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on behalf of Fitzwilliam College



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February 2010

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## Contents

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<i>Summary</i> .....	1
1.0 Introduction .....	1
2.0 Geology and Topography .....	1
3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background.....	3
4.0 Methodology .....	3
5.0 Results.....	5
6.0 The Finds .....	6
6.1 Pottery .....	6
6.2 Ceramic Building Material.....	7
6.3 Shell .....	7
6.4 Clay Tobacco Pipe .....	7
6.5 Glass .....	7
7.0 Conclusions .....	7
<i>Acknowledgements</i> .....	8
<i>Bibliography</i> .....	8
Appendix 1a: Context Summary .....	9
Appendix 2a: Finds by Context .....	9
Appendix 2b: Oasis Finds Summary Table.....	9
Appendix 3: Pottery.....	10
Appendix 4: Ceramic Building Material .....	10

## Figures

- Figure 1      Site Location  
Figure 2      Trench Location

## Plates

- Plate 1      View of the evaluation trench, looking south-west.  
Plate 2      The various deposits can clearly be seen in the sides of the trench.



Location:	Central Building, Fitzwilliam College
District:	Cambridge
Grid Ref.:	TL 4395 5950
HER No.:	ECB 3319
Client:	Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge
Dates of Fieldwork:	8–9 December 2009

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## **Summary**

*In December 2009, NAU Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation for Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, ahead of construction of an extension to the college's central building. No archaeological features were identified within the trench. The earliest layer identified was a layer of compacted, olive brown clay overlying the undisturbed natural and containing medieval pottery.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In December 2009, NAU Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation for Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, ahead of construction of an extension to the college's central building (Fig. 1). This work was commissioned by Edmund Shipway on behalf of Fitzwilliam College and funded by Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, with a view to building a lift shaft and rooms adjacent to the north-west corner of the dining hall building. The area to be affected is relatively small, measuring only about 190m<sup>2</sup> in total, half of which is already represented by a building.

The work was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set by Cambridge City Council (Planning Application Ref. 09/0672/FUL) and a Brief issued by Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice (Dan McConnell, 16 October 2009). The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NAU Archaeology (Ref. BAU2291/NP).

This programme of 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 Note 16: Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority about 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 the Cambridgeshire County Store, following the relevant policies on archiving standards.

## **2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

Cambridge lies on a bend in the River Cam, on a stretch of fenland between chalk geology to the south-east and a clay plateau to the north-west. Much of the solid geology is masked by thin drift deposits of boulder clay, but the river valley contains soilfluction material formed of sand and stone over chalk, and gravels (Sheail 2000).

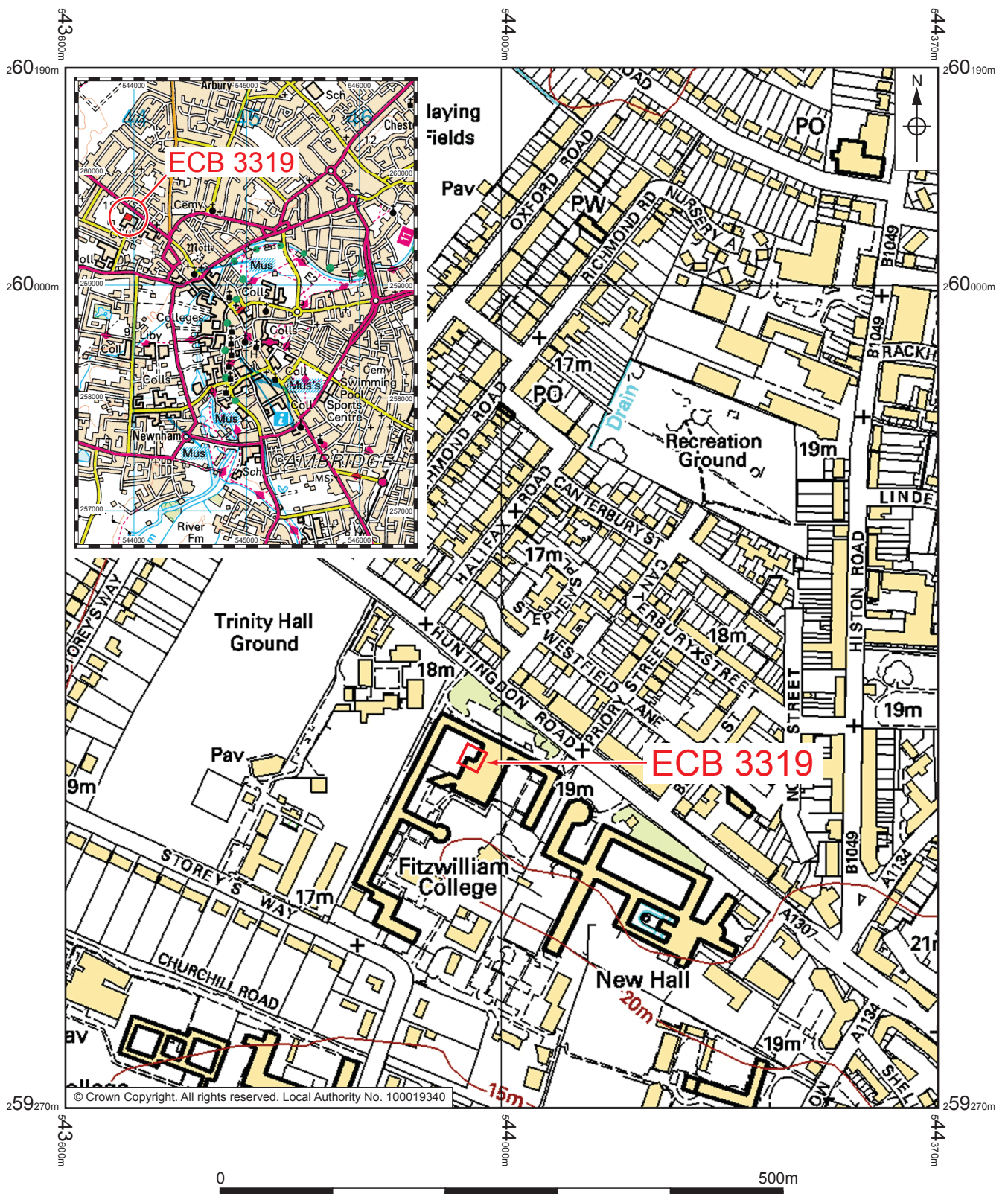


Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

The site evaluated here was located in an urban area, on the north-western side of the city (Fig. 1). It lay at the edge of a flat lawn in a quadrangle to the north-west of the dining hall at Fitzwilliam College (Fig. 2). The fine and dry weather meant that the drainage of the site was not tested, however the clayey nature of the natural substratum suggested that drainage would not be ideal in wet weather.

### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Fitzwilliam College was founded by the reform movement in the 19th century and moved to its present location between Huntingdon Road and Storey's Way in 1960.

There is evidence of human activity in the Cam valley from the Neolithic period onwards and an extensive Iron Age settlement, dating from the 1st Century BC, has been uncovered approximately 400m to the south-east of the present site, on the slopes overlooking the river. This settlement later became absorbed into a Roman town (Alexander and Pullinger 1999; Frere 1984, 296–7) and Huntingdon Road (along which Fitzwilliam College lies) is thought to be located on the line of the Roman road to Godmanchester.

The Roman town (known as 'Durolipons' or 'Duroliponte') was never very large and did not act as an administrative centre (Adams and Penn 2001). Its location continued to be important into the Early Saxon period, however, when cemeteries were established in the area around the Roman walls. The town was refortified in the late 8th century and was extended south of the river around AD 900 by the construction of further defended areas, but the Fitzwilliam College site appears to have remained outside the Saxon and medieval town, lying within the 'West Field'. The 1789 Bennet's College map shows this as a large open parcel of land called Dukmere or Wylmere (Hall and Ravensdale 1976).

Recent work in the area of Fitzwilliam College has been carried out with differing results. In 1994, excavations at New Hall, 100–150m south-east of the current development area, revealed a large number of Roman features, along with evidence for Iron Age settlement and Bronze Age activity (CHER ECB1448; Evans 1996). Excavations carried out in 2008, just 100m to the south-east of the current site, also revealed evidence of Bronze Age, Iron Age and Romano-British settlement (CHER ECB2825; Slater 2008), but subsequent evaluation trenches, opened just 100–150m from those sites and 100–200m from this one, produced only pottery and scattered finds of medieval to post-medieval date and evidence of quarrying (Adams and Penn 2001; Crawley 2009).

### **4.0 METHODOLOGY**

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

A single 2.5m by 1m trench was hand excavated to a depth of 0.60m. All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NAU Archaeology pro forma. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales. Colour, monochrome and digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits. All finds, other than those which were obviously modern, were retained for inspection. No environmental samples were taken.

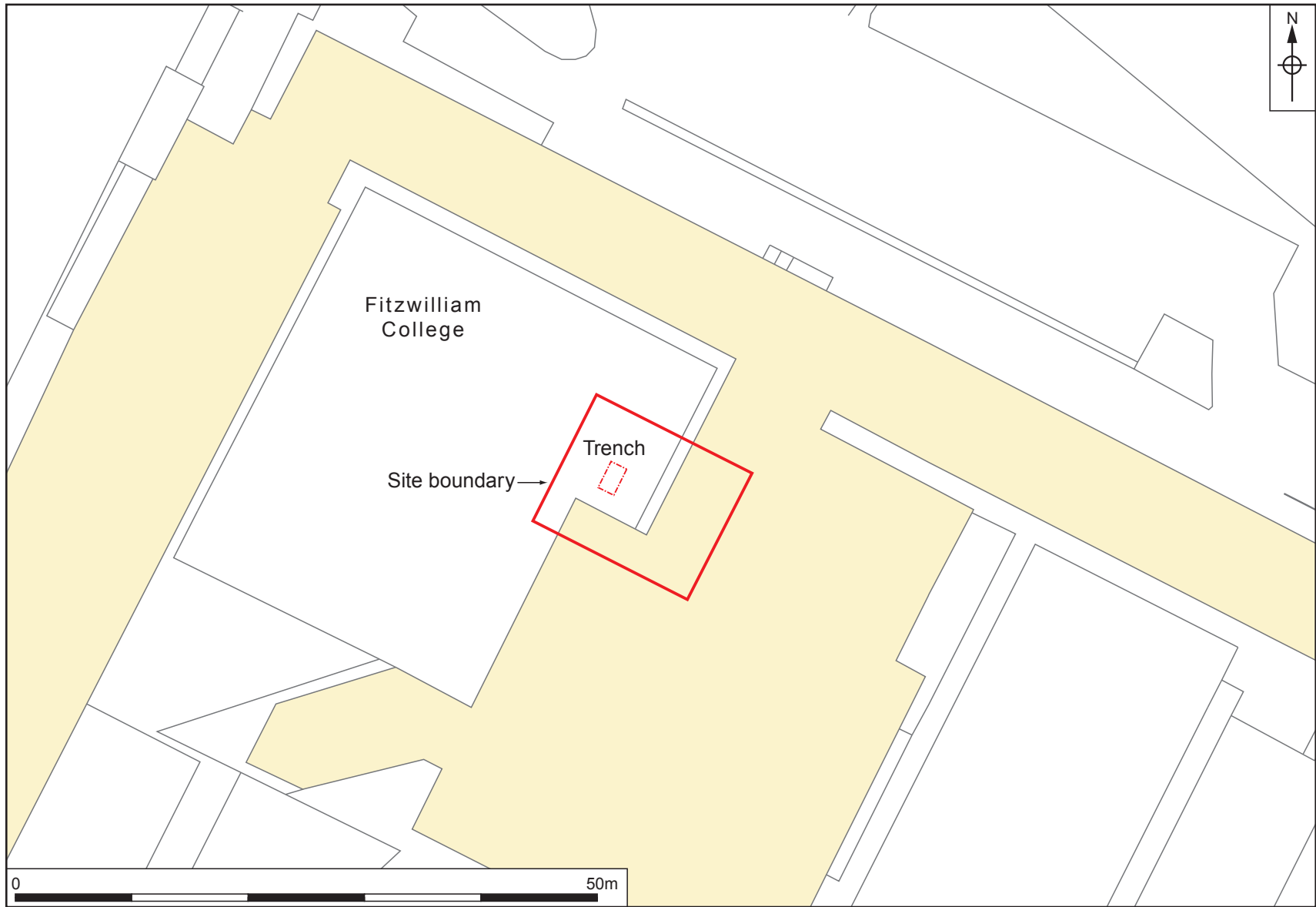


Figure 2. Trench location. Scale 1:500





Plate 1. View of the evaluation trench, looking south-west.

## 5.0 RESULTS

A 2.5m by 1m trench was opened by hand (Fig. 2). The turf was removed by the Fitzwilliam College gardening staff and the topsoil and subsoil deposits were then excavated by staff from NAU Archaeology. The topsoil (01) was a dark, humic brown loam 0.15m deep (including the turf). Beneath this lay a greyish-black layer of gritty clay (02) 0.1m deep and containing fragments of clay tobacco pipe, ceramic drain pipe, blue and white transfer-printed pottery, fragments of brick, and lumps of mortar. At the north-eastern end of the trench, a deposit of stiff, light grey clay (03) was identified beneath this. It was 0.15m deep and contained occasional fragments of brick and tile, flint, and coal. Underlying this and deposit (02) was a layer of very stiff and heavy, olive to brown clay (04) 0.2m to 0.25m deep and containing flint, medieval pottery, and ceramic building material. This graduated into a mid-brown to light grey patchy clay (05) containing flint. This latter clay was fairly well compacted, but was much less heavy than the overlying deposit (04) and was very slightly sandy. It was believed to represent the natural, undisturbed geological soil horizon and excavation stopped at this level.

No archaeological features were identified within the trench, although several fragments of medieval pottery were recovered from the clay layer (04).



Plate 2. The various deposits can clearly be seen in the sides of the trench.

## 6.0 THE FINDS

### 6.1 Pottery

The excavation produced nine sherds of pottery weighing a total of 189g and ranging in date from the 12th–19th centuries (Appendix 3). Medieval pottery was only found in layer (04) and comprised a large body sherd and part of a strap handle in unglazed Grimston Ware, a Bourne Ware body sherd, and a lid-seated rim and body sherd from a small Ely Coarseware jar. The range of fabrics found is similar to those found within the medieval assemblages from Forehill and other sites in Ely (Hall 2006, table 2) and shows that pottery was being imported into Cambridge from sources in Norfolk and Lincolnshire and more locally from the potteries at Ely. The presence of Grimston Ware within the assemblage perhaps suggests a post-13th-century date for the assemblage as it was at this time that these better quality wares began to take over from the less desirable Ely Wares (Hall 2005, 13).

The remainder of the assemblage comprised a mix of post-medieval English stonewares, a fragment of factory-produced white-glazed earthenware, and a piece of flowerpot.

Fabric	Date	Quantity	Weight (g)
Bourne Ware	12th–14th c.	1	5
Grimston Ware	L.12th–14th c.	2	90
Ely coarseware	12–15th c	2	6
English stoneware	17th–19th c	2	79
Flowerpot	L.18th–20th c.	1	6
Refined white earthenware	L.18th–20th c.	1	3
Total		9	189

Table 1. Quantity and weight of pottery by date.

## **6.2 Ceramic Building Material**

The small assemblage of building material showed a mix of sandy roof tile fragments including two pieces of modern pan tile and four pieces from possible peg tile, along with some scraps of brick in fine and medium sandy fabrics (Appendix 4).

## **6.3 Shell**

Six pieces of oyster shell weighing 20g came from contexts (02), (03) and (04).

## **6.4 Clay Tobacco Pipe**

Five pieces of clay tobacco pipe, weighing a total of 10g, were recovered from context (02). The assemblage comprised one small bowl fragment and four pieces of stem and is not closely datable.

## **6.5 Glass**

A single fragment from a Victorian glass bottle marked with the letters 'IDGE' was found in context (03).

## **7.0 CONCLUSIONS**

Despite the proximity of the Roman remains previously found around Fitzwilliam College (ECB 1448; Slater 2008), no archaeological features were identified in the course of this work. The earliest layer identified was a compacted, olive brown clay (04) overlying the undisturbed natural (05) and containing medieval pottery. Five medieval potsherds were identified from this layer, with none of any later date. There were also two fragments of roof tile of uncertain date (identified as either medieval or post-medieval). The wares all seem to come from Ely and from Norfolk and Lincolnshire. Three of the potsherds date from the 12th–14th centuries, while two date from the 12th–15th centuries, suggesting that the assemblage dates from the late medieval period.

Overlying deposit (04), at the north-eastern end of the trench, was a localised deposit of grey clay (03) within which was found fragments of post-medieval ceramic building material, oyster shell and a piece of Victorian glass. The glass was imprinted with the letters 'IDGE', probably representing the end of the word 'Cambridge' and being a local product. Overlying this and the remainder of clay layer (04) was a gritty, rubbly layer of soil (02) which contained post-medieval pottery, ceramic building material and fragments of clay tobacco pipe. As much of this material pre-dates the Victorian glass found in the layer beneath it, it is likely that this is an imported deposit, brought in to make-up the level of the ground prior to the laying of good quality garden topsoil. The topsoil layer (01) is certainly a modern deposit and likely to post-date the surrounding buildings.

The findings from this work reinforce those of previous evaluations by NAU Archaeology at Fitzwilliam College, which only uncovered medieval to post-medieval remains (Adams and Penn 2001; Crawley 2009).

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

## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks are due to Richard Secker and the gardening staff at Fitzwilliam College for facilitating the evaluation work. Thanks are also due to Peter Crawley and David Adams of NAU Archaeology for information regarding the geology and archaeology of the area.

Fieldwork was carried out by Nigel Page and Suzie Westall. The finds were processed by Lucy Talbot and analysed by Sarah Percival. The report was illustrated by David Dobson and edited by Richard Hoggett.

The work was commissioned by Edmond Shipway of Cambridge, on behalf of Fitzwilliam College.

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## Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
1	Deposit	Topsoil	Modern
2	Deposit	Subsoil – gritty, greyish-black clay	Post-medieval
3	Deposit	Stiff, light grey clay at north-east end of trench	Post-medieval
4	Deposit	Stiff, heavy, olive to brown clay	Medieval to post-medieval
5	Deposit	Mid-brown to light grey patchy, sandy clay.	Unknown

## Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Qty	Wt	Period	Notes
2	Pottery	4	86g	Post-medieval	
2	Ceramic Building Material	2	50g	Medieval	Roof tile
2	Ceramic Building Material	2	47g	Post-medieval	Brick
2	Clay Pipe	5	10g	Post-medieval	x4 stem x1 bowl fragment
2	Shell	1	1g	Unknown	Oyster
3	Glass	1	44g	Post-medieval	Bottle glass
3	Ceramic Building Material	1	10g	Post-medieval	Brick
3	Ceramic Building Material	2	14g	Post-medieval	Roof tile
3	Shell	2	9g	Unknown	Oyster
4	Pottery	5	101g	Medieval	
4	Ceramic Building Material	2	21g	Med./Post-Med.	Roof tile
4	Shell	3	10g	Unknown	Oyster

## Appendix 2b: Oasis Finds Summary Table

Period	Material	Quantity
Medieval (1066–1539)	Pottery	1
Post-medieval (1540–1900)	Ceramic Building Material	4
	Clay Pipe	1
	Glass	1
	Pottery	1
Unknown	Shell	3

### Appendix 3: Pottery

Context	Fabric	Form	Qty	Wt (g)	Date
2	ESW		1	6	17th–19th
2	ESW		1	73	17th–19th
2	REFW		1	3	L.18th–20th c.
2	FLWR		1	6	L.18th–20th c.
4	ELCW		1	2	12–15th
4	ELCW	jar	1	4	12–15th
4	GRIM		1	49	L.12th–14th c.
4	GRIM		1	41	L.12th–14th c.
4	BOUA		1	5	12th–14th c.

ESW English Stoneware; REFW Refined White Earthenware; FLWR flowerpot; ELCW Ely coarseware; GRIM Unglazed Grimstone coarseware; BOUA Bourne Ware

### Appendix 4: Ceramic Building Material

Context	Fabric	Type	Form	Qty	Wt (g)	Date
2	MSFFE	LB		2	46	Post-medieval
2	FS	RT	pantile	2	51	Post-medieval
3	FS	RT		2	14	Post-medieval
3	FSGFE	LB		1	10	Post-medieval
4	MSFFE	RT		1	10	Med./Post-Med.
4	MSF	RT		1	11	Med./Post-Med.

Fs: Fine sandy; Fsgfe: fine sandy with grog and ferrous inclusions; Msf: medium sandy with flint; Msffe: medium sandy with ferrous and flint inclusions