



University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

**An Archaeological Field Evaluation
at St. Neots Camping & Caravanning
Club, Hardwick Road, Eynesbury,
Cambridgeshire.
NGR: TL 1781 5934**



John Thomas


ULAS Report No. 2011-158
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Hardwick Road, Eynesbury
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For: Colliers International

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ULAS Report Number 2011-158
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Event Number ECB 3684

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**An Archaeological Field Evaluation at St. Neots Camping &
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Summary

An archaeological field evaluation was undertaken on land at St. Neots Camping and Caravanning Club, Hardwick Road, Eynesbury, Cambridgeshire by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) between the 13th & 15th of October 2011. Four trial trenches were excavated in response to proposals to construct a new internal access road and 16 associated hard-standing areas, as proposed under Planning Application number 100167FUL.

The results of the archaeological evaluation were negative, with all four trenches containing alluvial deposits laid down during flood episodes of the nearby River Great Ouse.

A scatter of finds recovered from the upper levels of the alluvium reflected a broadly 19th century+ date for the later episodes of flooding revealed during the work. A single worn medieval sherd was also present but this may have been residual given the other related finds.

The archive will be deposited with Cambridgeshire County Council under Event Number ECB 3684.

Introduction

In accordance with PPS5 (Planning and the Historic Environment, 2010), this document presents the results of an archaeological field evaluation (AFE) on land at St. Neots Camping & Caravanning Club, Hardwick Road, Eynesbury, Cambridgeshire (Figure 1). The evaluation was undertaken by University of Leicester Archaeological Services in response to development proposals for improvements to the Caravan site including construction of a new internal access road and 16 associated hard-standing areas (Planning Application No. 100167FUL).

Following Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5) Policy HE6, Cambridgeshire County Council, *Archaeology Planning & Countryside Advice* (CAPCA), as archaeological advisors to the planning authority, required an evaluation by trial trenching. This is detailed in their *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation* (CAPCA 10.12.2011)

The proposed development site comprises a camping and caravan park located west of Hardwick Road, Eynesbury, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire (TL 1781 5934). The site lies close to the eastern bank of the River Great Ouse, situated on alluvial clays at a height of c.14m OD.

The proposed development site was evaluated with four trial trenches that were located on a north-south orientation along the suggested route of the new road.

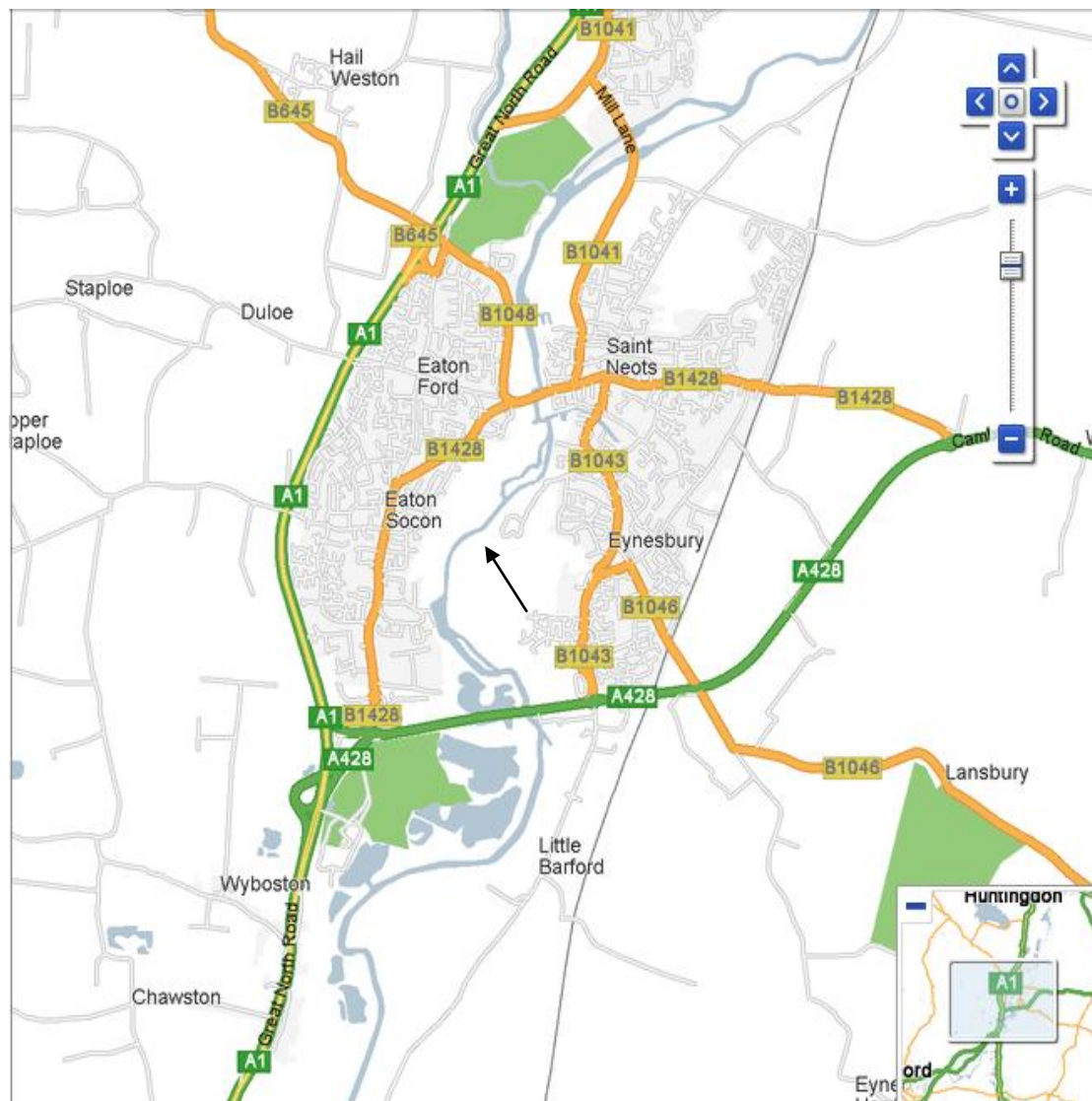


Figure 1 Location of site (arrowed)
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Background

The site is situated within a landscape of known archaeological potential, with sites and finds representing human occupation and ceremonial/funerary activity from the prehistoric through to the post-medieval periods. Directly to the east of the site, fieldwalking and excavation has located the site of a Roman villa, (HER No. MCB888), represented by stone buildings and associated ditches and pits (Alexander 1993). Extending south of this site is a large prehistoric monumental landscape (centred around HER No. MCB494) which includes a cursus, hengiform ring-ditch, long barrow and other prehistoric enclosures (Ellis 2004). These prehistoric remains run up past the eastern boundary of the application site and possibly into the area itself.

Archaeological Objectives

The main objectives of the evaluation, as set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological work (WSI) (ULAS 2011) were:

- To identify the presence/absence of any archaeological deposits identified by the geophysical survey.
- To identify the presence or absence of any archaeological deposits and remains not previously identified by geophysical survey.
- To establish the character, extent and date range for any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed ground works.
- To produce an archive and report of any results.

Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the evaluation was to establish the nature, extent, date, depth, significance and state of preservation of archaeological deposits on the site in order to determine the potential impact upon them from the proposed development. From this an appropriate method of dealing with any archaeological deposits can be formulated or an appropriate mitigation strategy developed.

Trial trenching is an intrusive form of evaluation that will demonstrate the existence of earth-fast archaeological features that may exist within the area.

Methodology

All work followed the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Code of Conduct in accordance with their *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2008).

Topsoil and subsoil was removed in level spits, under continuous archaeological supervision, down to the uppermost archaeological deposits by a JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. All spoil heaps were inspected for unstratified archaeological material. All trenches were excavated to a width of 1.6m and down to the top of archaeological deposits or the natural substratum in the absence of any archaeological deposits. After recording, the trenches were backfilled and levelled during the course of the evaluation.

Trenches were examined by hand cleaning and any archaeological deposits located were planned at an appropriate scale and sample-excavated by hand as appropriate to establishing the stratigraphic and chronological sequence. All plans were tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Spot heights were taken as appropriate.

Each trench was recorded on a standard ULAS pro-forma trench recording sheet noting soil depths and descriptions. One longitudinal face and the base of each trench was recorded in this way. Trench locations were recorded and tied in to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

A photographic record of the investigations was prepared illustrating in both detail and general context the principal features and finds discovered. Colour digital and black and white 35mm photographs were taken throughout the evaluation. The photographic record also included 'working shots' to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.

Results

All four evaluation trenches were laid out on a north-south alignment along the line of the proposed new road (Figure 2). All trenches measured *c.*30m in length x 1.6m wide.

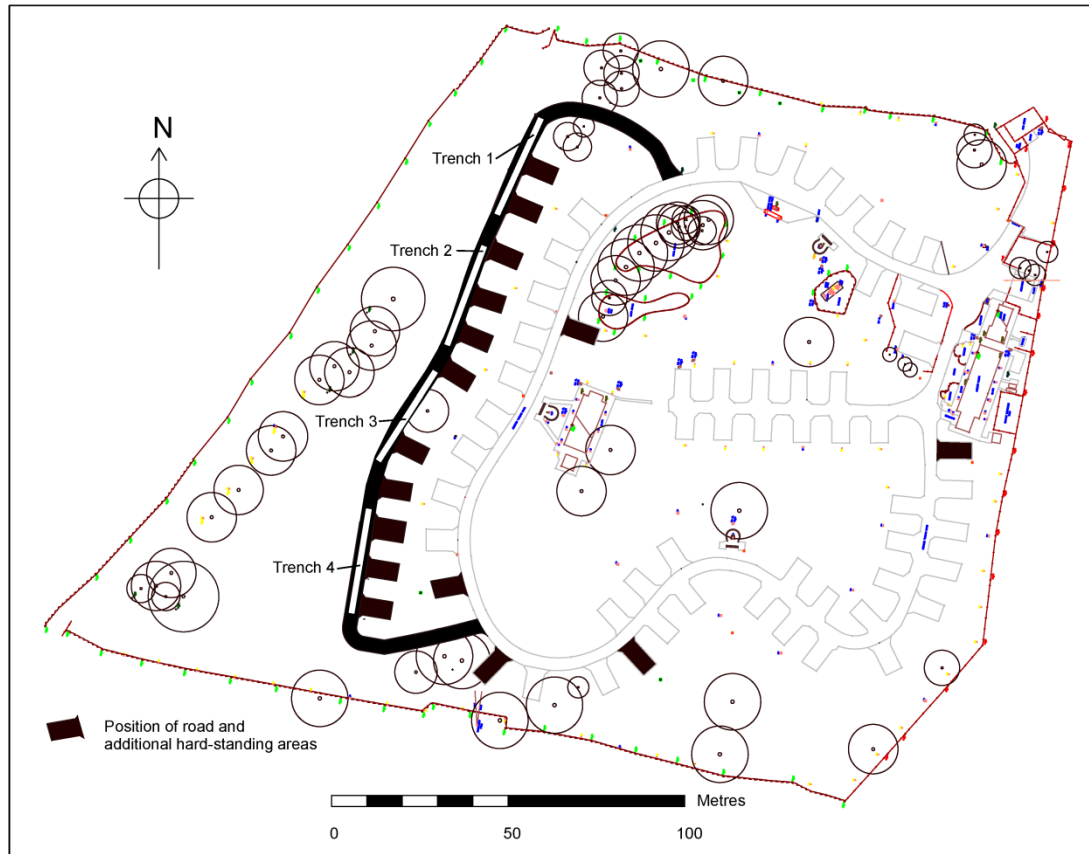


Figure 2 Trench Location plan showing the caravan site and areas of proposed development (shaded black).

Trench 1 (Figure 3)

Trench 1 was located towards the northern end of the proposed roadline and measured *c.*30m x 1.6m wide. A layer of mid-yellowish brown silty alluvial clay (102) was revealed along the length of the trench at approximately 0.40m below the present ground level (*c.*14.59m OD). A test slot excavated through (102) in the centre of the trench revealed the layer to be *c.*0.46m thick. This overlay another alluvial layer (103) which consisted of greyish brown/blue-grey organic silty clay containing plant matter and freshwater snail shells. The test slot was excavated to a depth of 1.20m but the full depth of (103) was not revealed. The alluvial layers were covered by a *c.*0.10m thick subsoil layer (101) comprising firm greyish brown silty clay with frequent small pebbles/gravels. This was in turn overlaid by a *c.*0.20m thick topsoil layer of friable, dark greyish brown silty sandy clay (100). Three ceramic artefacts, including a worn probable medieval pottery sherd and two pieces of modern (19th century+) building material and freshwater mussel shells were found in the upper levels of layer (102).



Figure 3 Trench 1 viewed from the south

Trench 2 (Figure 4)

The second trench lay approximately 10m south of Trench 1 and was excavated to an average depth of 0.50m below present ground level (c.14.63m OD). A similar stratigraphic sequence was encountered, with topsoil (200 – c.0.22m thick) and subsoil (201 – c.0.14m thick) layers overlying an alluvial layer (202) consisting of mid-yellowish brown silty clay. No finds were associated with this trench.



Figure 4 Trench 2 viewed from the south

Trench 3 (Figure 5)

Trench 3 was situated *c.*8m to the south of Trench 2 and had an average depth of *c.*0.50m beneath present ground level (*c.*14.71m OD). As with the previous trenches, topsoil (300 – *c.*0.24m thick) and subsoil (301 - *c.*0.10 thick) layers overlay an alluvial deposit of mid yellowish-brown silty clay (302). Tree roots in this trench had disturbed the upper levels of (302) resulting in a slightly diffuse interface with the overlying subsoil. Two fragments of modern (19th century+) ceramic building material were recovered from the upper levels of layer (302). A *c.*2m area towards the northern end of the trench was not excavated due to the discovery of a live electrical cable only *c.*0.10m beneath the turf.



Figure 5 Trench 3 viewed from the south

Trench 4 (Figure 6)

Trench 4 was the southernmost trench, located approximately 14m from Trench 3. This was excavated to a depth of *c.*0.50m below the present ground level (*c.*14.70m OD). As with the other three trenches mid yellowish-brown alluvial clay (302) was revealed beneath subsoil (301 – *c.*0.10m thick) and topsoil (300 – *c.*0.25m thick) layers. Two fragments of modern (19th century+) ceramic building material were recovered from the upper levels of (302).



Figure 6 Trench 4 viewed from the south

Discussion

The evaluation trenches targeted the line of the proposed new road within the caravan site. All four trenches encountered similar alluvial deposits at an average depth of 0.40-0.40m below the present ground level. Given the proximity to the River Great Ouse (*c.*30m from the bank) this is not altogether surprising, and the finds recovered from the top of the alluvium suggest a relatively recent date for the layers formation. A second layer of alluvium was revealed in a test slot in Trench 1 (Figure 7). This contained more organic remains than the overlying deposit, although no datable evidence was recovered.

The test slot through the upper alluvial deposit indicated a *c.*0.50m depth for the layer. The presence of the layer in all four trenches indicates that it is a consistent deposit across the site. No evidence for later archaeological intrusion was revealed in the trenches and given the suggested depth of the proposed new road (*c.*0.25m) the evaluation has shown that it will not have an impact on any surviving remains.



Figure 7 Recording alluvial layers in Trench 1

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was carried out by John Thomas and Andrew Hyam. The finds were identified by Nicholas J. Cooper. ULAS would like to thank the site managers, Pete and Pam Miles for their co-operation and assistance during the work, Dawn Adams and Daniel McConnell for their help with the project. The project was managed by Dr Patrick Clay.

Site Archive and Results

The archive consists of:

This report,

4 pro-forma trench recording sheets,

1x 35mm black and white negative film and corresponding contact sheets,

52 colour digital photographs,

Photographic record sheets,

1 small box of finds

1 compact disc of this report and the digital photographs.

The site archive will be deposited with Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Store under the archaeological event number ECB3684. A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of The Cambridgeshire Antiquarian Society* in due course. An OASIS record will also be produced and this report will be uploaded on to the Archaeology Data Service website.

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18.10.2011

Appendix I: The Finds (identified by Nicholas J. Cooper)

Trench	Context	Comment	Date
One	(102)	2x modern building material, 1x medieval pottery (worn), 2x freshwater mussel shell	19thC+
Three	(302)	2x modern building material	19thC+
Four	(402)	2x modern building material	19thC+

Appendix II OASIS Information

OASIS INFORMATION	
Project Name	Hardwick Road, Eynesbury, Cambs
Project Type	Evaluation
Project Manager	P Clay
Project Supervisor	J Thomas
Previous/Future work	none, unknown future work
Current Land Use	Camping & Caravan park
Development Type	Internal access road and hard-standing areas
Reason for Investigation	Pre-determination evaluation
Position in the Planning Process	Preliminary
Site Co ordinates	TL 1781 5934
Start/end dates of field work	13.10.2011-14.10.2011
Archive Recipient	CAPCA
Study Area	-

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