

**RED HOUSE SITE,
STATION ROAD
CAMBRIDGE**

NGR: TL 460 573

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

July 2006

Report No. 497

Quality Assurance

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Figure 1: Site Location

Figure 2: Trench Locations

SUMMARY

During July 2006 Foundations Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation at the Red House Site, Station Road, Cambridge (NGR: TL 460 573). The project was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd. on behalf of O'Callaghan Hotels.

The evaluation comprised the excavation and recording of three trenches across the proposed development area.

Modern and late post-medieval disturbance was present throughout the southeastern part of the site. This area roughly corresponds to the railway landholding in the late 19th century, although the entire site was occupied by the railway by 1903. The available cartographic evidence provides no indication of any significant ground disturbance at any period, but it is likely that the reduction took place as part of a railway related activity.

Natural gravels were identified within the eastern and central part of the site. Trench 1 revealed natural gravels at an average depth of 0.85m and a small area of natural gravel was also identified at the southwestern end of Trench 2 at 0.96m from the modern ground surface. Undisturbed natural gravels clearly survive within these parts of the study area at a minimum depth of 15.23m OD and these are overlain by intact subsoils and buried topsoils. No archaeological features or finds were revealed during the course of the investigations. However, a single small irregular feature, which almost certainly comprised a natural variation in the natural substrate, was noted in Trench 1.

GLOSSARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Archaeology

For the purpose of this project, archaeology is taken to mean the study of past human societies through their material remains from prehistoric times to the modern era. No rigid upper date limit has been set, but AD 1900 is used as a general cut-off point.

CBM

Ceramic Building Material.

Medieval

The period between the Norman Conquest (AD 1066) and *circa* AD 1500.

Natural

In archaeological terms this refers to the undisturbed natural geology of a site, in this case 3rd terrace river gravels.

NGR

National Grid Reference from the Ordnance Survey Grid.

OD

Ordnance datum; used to express a given height above sea-level. (AOD Above Ordnance Datum).

OS

Ordnance Survey.

Post-Medieval

The period after *circa* AD 1500.

Roman

The period between AD 43 – *circa* AD 410.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Foundations Archaeology during July 2006, on the Red House Site, Station Road, Cambridge (NGR: TL 460 573). The project was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd on behalf of O'Callaghan Hotels.
- 1.2 The work was undertaken in accordance with a Specification of Works (CgMs Consulting 2006) prepared to a brief issued by Cambridge County Council (2006). The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations* issued by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994, revised 2001). The code of conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists was adhered to throughout.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The proposed development area is located in the Peterfield Ward of Cambridge. The site is bounded to the east by Great Eastern House, to the south by Station Road and to the north and west by yards and industrial buildings (Figure 1). The study area is currently a derelict and contains a number of buildings, including the Red House and associated hardstandings. The underlying geology consists of 3rd terrace gravels.
- 2.2 The archaeological background of the site has been previously detailed in a desk-based assessment undertaken by CgMs in 2002. This information is given below.
- 2.3 No prehistoric finds or sites have been recovered in the vicinity of the study area. The site lies on river terrace gravels, which were generally favoured for prehistoric occupation and activity. Flint artefacts associated with prehistoric activity have been recovered from the wider general area.
- 2.4 The desk-based assessment established that the site lies within an area of potential Roman remains, although there are no records of any Roman remains from within the study area. A Roman settlement is known to have been present on the north bank of the River Cam in the area of Cambridge Castle. Hills Road, to the west of the site, approximately coincides with a Roman road known as the *Via Devana*. The exact line of this road is uncertain but it would appear to be c. 30m north of, but parallel to, Hills Road. A possible section of this road was exposed during trenching within the back gardens of properties fronting onto Hills Road immediately to the west of the site (HER 04614), which raised the possibility of remains of the road and/or associated settlement features being present within the western fringes of the site.
- 2.5 A former earthwork from which Roman pottery was recovered is recorded south of the proposed development site near to Hills Road Railway Bridge and the Cattle Market, before the building of the goods station (HER 04814 and HER 05145). The actual function of this site is uncertain, but it has been interpreted as a marching camp or settlement site. A previous evaluation at the

Cattle Market by the Cambridgeshire Archaeological Unit (CAU) site did not find any evidence of the earthworks, although a gravel extraction pit was located, from which a significant assemblage of Roman pottery was recovered (CB 159). The CAU report suggested that it was unlikely that there were earthworks within the Cattle market site and that the Roman camp might be located to the north. It was possible therefore, that the camp may have been partly, or completely, within the study area.

- 2.6 A number of other Roman finds have been located within the general vicinity. These comprise a harp-shaped fibula from Thoday Street approximately 300m to the south of the site (SMR 04702) and a coin from the Botanic Gardens approximately 400m to the west of the site (SMR 04613).
- 2.7 The proximity of the site to a Roman road and a possible marching camp resulted in the site having a moderate/high potential for the recovery of information dating to that period.
- 2.8 There are no records of any Saxon, early Medieval or Medieval sites or finds within 500m radius of the study area. The site lies within the Cambridge Urban Archaeological Database Level 1 monument 13, which comprises the Barnwell or East Field of Cambridge. This was an area of predominantly marsh pastureland to the southeast of Cambridge, divided into four fields, which were largely owned by the Church or the Colleges. There are no known archaeological remains associated with these fields, either within the site or its immediate vicinity. An archaeological evaluation undertaken by Foundations Archaeology at the Triangle site identified two, or possibly three, Medieval or Post-medieval features, which may have formed either part of a boundary or furrow bases. These could not be examined during the evaluation due to ground contamination. The features lay predominantly outside the areas examined in the later watching brief, and were not subsequently identified.
- 2.9 There are no known pre-19th century post-Medieval remains within the study area. The enclosure map of the parish of St. Andrew the Lesser dates to 1811 and shows the site as lying within a single large field labelled as being 'allotments of the master, fellows and scholars of Jesus College, leased to John Butler. No structures are marked on the map, either within or in the near vicinity of the site.
- 2.10 The railway was opened in 1845. The Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 25" map of 1888 shows the southeastern corner of the site as being within the railway holdings, but not used as sidings. The remainder of the site comprised part of a larger field. The existing Red House, with a single outbuilding to the rear, had been constructed by 1903 in the southwestern corner of the site. A number of additional railway sidings had also been built by this time, but did not extend into the site. By 1927 the Red House had been extended and two additional outbuildings constructed; the remainder of the site being unchanged. By 1967 the Red House had been further extended and the original outbuildings had been demolished and replaced by other outbuildings. The 1977 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 plan shows a further rationalisation of the outbuildings to the

rear and east of the Red House. The site has remained unchanged since this date and still contains the now derelict Red House.

- 2.11 The study area therefore contained the potential for the preservation of archaeological features and deposits, predominantly associated with the Roman period. This in no way prejudiced the evaluation works against the recovery of finds or features relating to other periods.

3 AIMS

- 3.1 The aims of the archaeological evaluation were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of archaeological deposits, in order to provide sufficient information to establish the nature, extent, preservation and potential of any surviving archaeological remains. In turn this would allow reasonable planning decisions to be taken regarding the archaeological provision for the areas affected by the proposed development.

- 3.2 These aims were achieved through pursuit of the following specific objectives:

i) To define and identify the nature of archaeological deposits on site, and date these where possible;

ii) To attempt to characterise the nature of the archaeological sequence and recover as much information as possible about the spatial patterning of features present on the site;

iii) To recover a well dated stratigraphic sequence and recover coherent artefact, ecofact and environmental samples.

4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The archaeological specification required the excavation of three trenches measuring 20m long by 1.8m wide.

- 4.2 On-site constraints resulted in the relocation of all three trenches from their initially planned positions. Trenches 2 and 3 could only be excavated for lengths of 11.4 and 13.4m respectively and Trench 1 for a length of 23m, although Trenches 1 and 2 were excavated for a width of 2.45m in an attempt to compensate. Final trench locations are detailed on Figure 2.

- 4.3 Hardstanding layers and non-significant overburden were removed, under constant archaeological supervision, to the top of the archaeological deposits or the underlying natural sands and gravels, whichever were encountered first. This was achieved through the use of a JCB-type mechanical excavator with a toothless grading bucket. Thereafter cleaning and excavation was conducted by hand. Spoil tips were scanned for finds.

- 4.4 All excavation and recording work was undertaken in accordance with the Specification supplied by CgMs Consulting and the Foundations Archaeology Technical Manual 3: Excavation Manual.

5 RESULTS

- 5.1 **Trench 1** (23m by 2.45m) was aligned approximately east-west and northeast-southwest and was excavated onto the natural sands and gravels at an average depth of 0.85m (15.30m OD) from the modern ground surface. The trench was excavated in two sections to avoid a substantial modern service run (Figure 2). The natural sands and gravels were sealed beneath a mid brown sandy flint gravel subsoil (107), up to 0.37m thick. This was sealed by a dark brown sandy clay layer with occasional small flints (106), up to 0.30m thick. At the eastern end of the trench, layer (106) had been partly cut away and replaced with a layer of crushed chalk (105) up to 0.14m thick, beneath a layer of yellow sandy gravel hardcore (104), up to 0.09m thick. A layer of black sandy gravel and clinker (103), up to 0.15m thick sealed layer (104) and overlay (106) throughout the remainder of the trench, where not cut away by later service trenches and a geophysical test-pit. This layer was in turn overlain by a patchy layer of yellow gravel (102), beneath a thin layer of tarmac (101).
- 5.2 The trench was crossed by two substantial service runs, both on approximately north-west alignments. A number of modern intrusions were also present, which cut through to the top of the natural substrate. A small irregular patch of mid yellow brown sandy gravel in the northwest corner of the trench was excavated to test whether it represented a feature. It measured approximately 0.31m long by 0.26m wide by 0.11m deep with sloping sides and a rounded base and contained no anthropomorphic material. A sample of the fill was retrieved for environmental processing.
- 5.3 **Trench 2** (11.40m by 2.45m) was aligned approximately northeast-southwest and was excavated onto the natural sands and gravels at a depth of 0.96m (15.24m OD) from the modern ground surface. The natural sands and gravels were present only in the southwest corner of the trench and were sealed beneath a light brown clay sand with gravel inclusions (205). This was sealed in turn beneath a dark brown clay sand (204) representing a buried topsoil. The remainder of the trench fell within a large cut or natural depression. A wall cut [206] containing a substantial slighted brick wall (209), which partly sat on a concrete footing (211) was present on a north-south alignment close to the southwestern end of the trench. A thick layer of black gravel hardcore with clinker, concrete blocks and brick (210) was present from the northeastern side of the wall to the end of the trench. This layer was tested by excavation to 0.5m below the top of natural deposits and showed no differentiation. It is understood that the geotechnical survey revealed that this deposit is in excess of 2.5m thick. The buried topsoil (204), wall remains [206] and layer (210) were sealed beneath a yellow brown sandy layer with concrete and brick rubble inclusions (203) up to 0.16m thick. This layer was in turn overlain by a tarmac surface (202) up to 0.08m thick. A layer of black humic soil (201) up

to 0.11m thick had either accumulated or been dumped across the tarmac layer. No significant archaeological features were present within this trench.

- 5.4 **Trench 3** (13.40m by 1.80m) was aligned NNE-SSW and was excavated onto a layer of black gravel hardcore with clinker, concrete blocks and brick (304) at an average depth of 0.64m (15.82m OD) from the modern ground surface. This layer, equivalent to (210) in Trench 2, was tested by excavation to a depth of 1.06m (14.89m OD) without locating the natural substrate. It was overlain by a yellow brown gravel hardcore (303) up to 0.47m thick, beneath a tarmac surface (302) up to 0.17m thick. A layer of black humic soil (301) up to 0.12m thick had either accumulated or been dumped across the tarmac layer. No archaeological features were present within this trench.
- 5.5 The trench was bisected by a modern service trench on an east-west alignment.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Modern and late post-medieval disturbance was present throughout the southeastern part of the site. This area roughly corresponds to the railway landholding in the late 19th century, although the entire site was occupied by the railway by 1903. The available cartographic evidence provides no indication of any significant ground disturbance at any period, but it is likely that the reduction took place as part of a railway related activity.
- 6.2 Natural gravels were identified within the eastern and central part of the site. Trench 1 revealed natural gravels at an average depth of 0.85m and a small area of natural gravel was also identified at the southwestern end of Trench 2 at 0.96m from the modern ground surface. Undisturbed natural gravels clearly survive within these parts of the study area at a minimum depth of 15.23m OD and these are overlain by intact subsoils and buried topsoils. No archaeological features or finds were revealed during the course of the investigations.
- 6.3 A small possible feature in Trench 1 has been interpreted as a natural feature due to its irregular morphology, clean fill and absence of any anthropomorphic evidence. A bulk sample from this feature was processed using a flotation technique to separate the lighter material (flot) from the mineral portions of the soil sample. Both the flot and residue were to be recovered on 500µm mesh, although in the event no flot was present. The residue was examined using a MTL10 stereomicroscope but revealed no plant or animal macrofossils or charred plant remains.
- 6.4 The evaluation has demonstrated that the Roman marching camp did not fall within the study area. Preservation conditions were good for parts of the site, although the southwestern corner has clearly been previously reduced and no archaeological features would survive in that area.

7 NATURE OF THE RECORD

8.1 The stratigraphic archive for the site consists of the following elements:

Context Sheets
Sections
Plans
Photographs
Index Sheets

8.2 The on-site methodologies used to recover any evidence were set out in the Specification prepared by CgMs Consulting (2006). In summary the following excavation methods were utilised; observation of all groundworks associated with the construction of the new building. All site recording was undertaken in accordance with the Specification. The records are available in the archive.

8.3 Following the completion of the project an ordered, indexed, and internally consistent site archive has been compiled in accordance with Appendix 3 of The Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage 1991). This archive is currently held at Foundations Archaeology and will be deposited at an appropriate museum within six months.

8.4 A summary of the contents of this report is available from Project OASIS at <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/>

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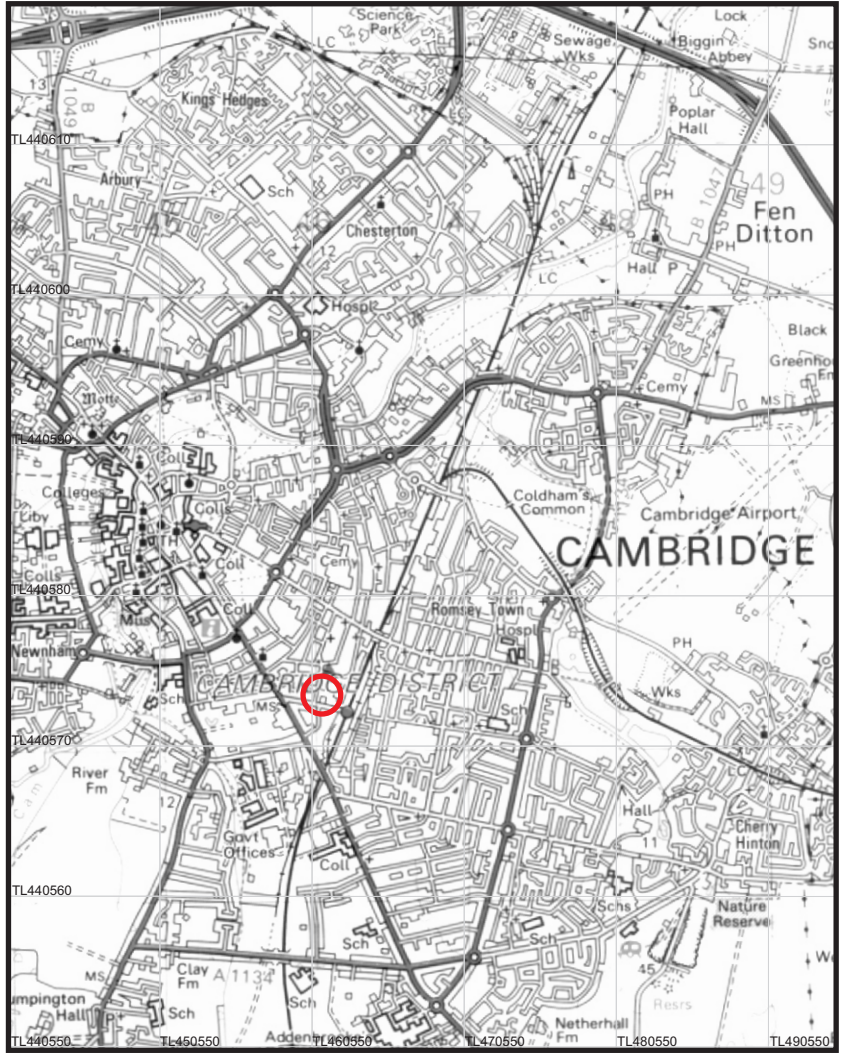
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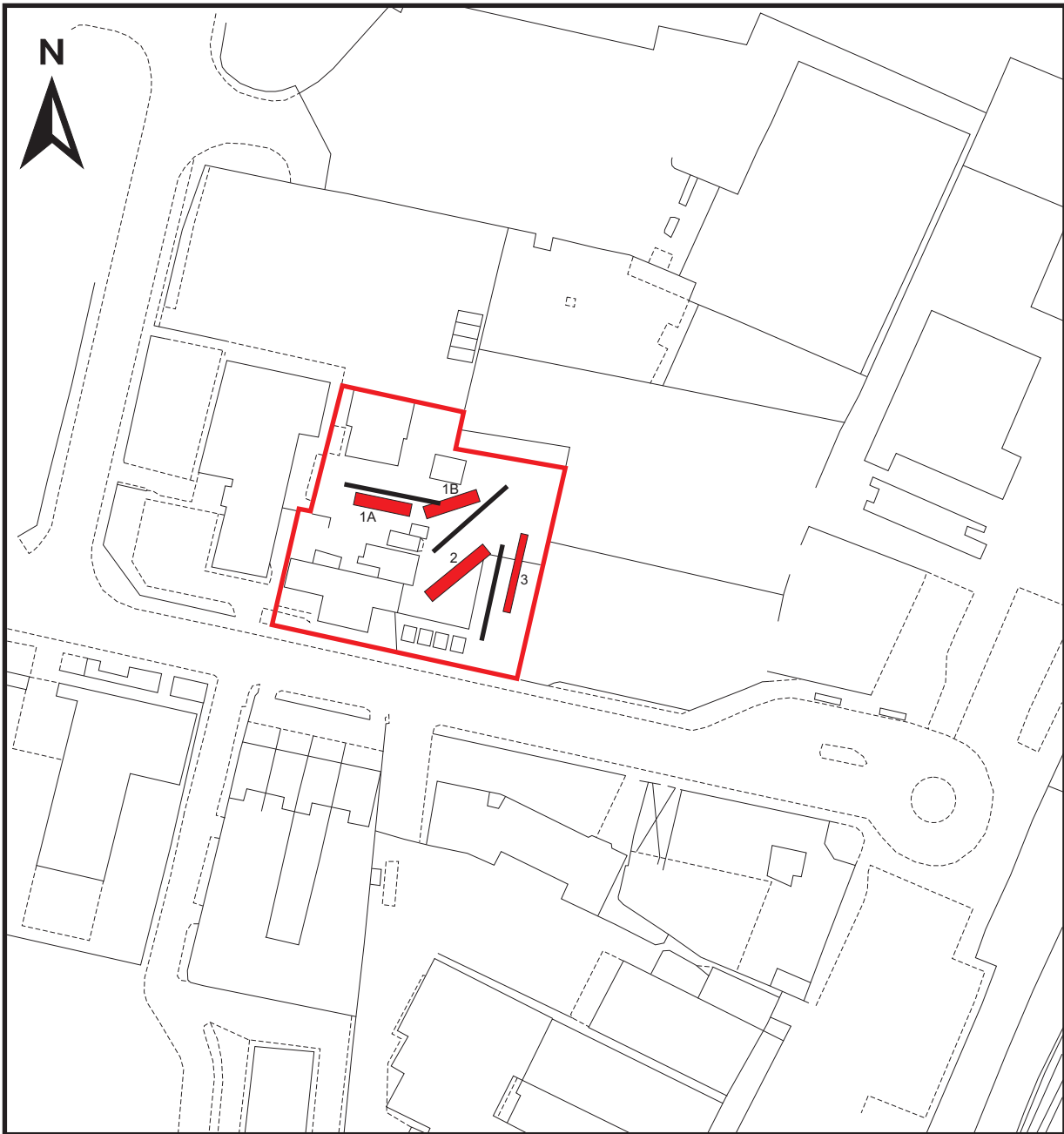
9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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FIGURE 1: Site Location



0m 50m




KEY	
	PROPOSED TRENCH LOCATIONS
	FINAL TRENCH LOCATIONS
	SITE BOUNDARY

FIGURE 2: Trench Locations