

CAM ARC Report Number 942

**Post-Medieval Remains at 23
Bassenhally Road, Whittlesey**

An Archaeological Evaluation

Spencer Cooper

April 2007

Commissioned by TP Snitch Brickworks Ltd

CAM ARC Report Number 942

**Post-medieval remains at 23
Bassenhally Road Whittlesey**

Evaluation Report

Spencer Cooper HND BA

Site Code: WHS BHR 07
CHER Event Number: ECB 2496
Date of works: March 2007
Grid Ref: TL 1234 5678

Status			
Author	Spence Cooper		
Checked By	James Drummond-Murray		
Authorised By	T.P Snitch Brickworks		

Editor: Eizabeth Popescu PHD, MIFA
Illustrator: Crane Begg BA

CAM ARC OASIS Report Form

OASIS Number: cambridg1-26044

PROJECT DETAILS				
Project name	Post- Medieval remains at 23,Bassenhally Road, Whittlesey			
Short description	<p>Between 6th and 8th March 2007 staff of CAM ARC (formerly the Archaeological Field Unit) conducted an archaeological evaluation at 23 Bassenhally Road, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire (TL 2708 9763).</p> <p>The remains uncovered in the evaluation represent a small number of post-medieval boundary ditches, which relate to back plot development. The other major point to emerge from the evaluation was that despite the proximity to the Fen Causeway no Roman remains were identified. Observations of the trenches were extremely hindered by the high water table in all trenches.</p>			
Project dates	Start 6/3/07		End 11/3/07	
Previous work	None		Future work	no
Associated project reference codes	Include CAM ARC site code (not finance code) and HER Event number			
Type of project	An Evaluation			
Site status	None			
Current land use (list all that apply)	Domestic Gardens			
Planned development	Housing Estate			
Monument types / period (list all that apply and use thesaurus of monument types)	Post-Medieval ditch system			
Significant finds: Artefact type / period (list all that apply and use MDA object thesaurus)	Post- Medieval pottery			
PROJECT LOCATION				
County	Cambridgeshire	Parish	Whittlesey	
HER for region	Cambridgeshire,			
Site address (including postcode)	23 Bassenhally Road, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire.			
Study area (sq.m or ha)	40 sqm			
National grid reference	Easting (6 figure)	TL2708 9763	Northing (6 figure)	
Height OD	Max OD 5.6 M		Min OD 5.2	
PROJECT ORIGINATORS				
Organisation	Cambridgeshire County Council, CAM ARC			
Project brief originator	CAPCA			
Project design originator	CAM ARC			
Director/supervisor	Spencer Cooper			
Project manager	James Drummond-Murray			
Sponsor or funding body	T.P Snitch Brickworks Ltd			
ARCHIVES				
	Location and accession number		Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone, database, context sheets etc)	
Physical			Pottery	
Paper			Plans, sections, proforma sheets	
Digital				
BIBLIOGRAPHY				
Full title	Post-Medieval Remains at 23 Bassenhally Road, Whittlesey ; An Archaeological Evaluation			
Report number	942			
Series title and volume	CAM ARC Report Numbers 942			
Page numbers	10			
Author(s)	S. Cooper			
Date	March 2007			

Summary

Between 6th and 8th March 2007 staff of CAM ARC (formerly the Archaeological Field Unit) conducted an archaeological evaluation at 23 Bassenhally Road, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire (TL 2708 9763).

The remains uncovered in the evaluation represent a small number of post-medieval boundary ditches, which relate to back plot development. The other major point to emerge from the evaluation was that despite the proximity to the Fen Causeway no Roman remains were identified. Observations of the trenches were extremely hindered by the high water table in all trenches.

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Geology and Topography	1
3	Archaeological and Historical Background	1
	3.1 Prehistoric	1
	3.2 Roman	2
	3.3 Medieval	3
	3.4 Post-Medieval	3
4	Methodology	3
5	Results	4
	5.1 Trench 1	4
	5.2 Trench 2	4
	5.3 Trench 3	4
	5.4 Trench 4	5
	5.5 Trench 5	5
6	Discussion	5
7	Conclusions	5
	Acknowledgements	7
	Bibliography	7

List of Figures

- Figure 1: Location of trenches with the development
Figure 2: Trench plans 1-4
Figure 3: Sections

List of Appendices

- Appendix 1: Finds Summary 9

1 Introduction

Between 6th and 8th March 2007 staff of CAM ARC (formerly the Archaeological Field Unit) conducted an archaeological evaluation at 23 Bassenhally Road, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire (TL 2708 9763). This archaeological work was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by of the Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and Countryside Advice team (CAPCA; Planning Application supplemented by a Specification prepared by CAM ARC, Cambridgeshire County Council (formerly Archaeological Field Unit).

The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with 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 CAPCA, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority; with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found. The site archive is currently held by CAM ARC and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

2 Geology and Topography

The underlying geology of the fen basin at Whittlesey consists of Jurassic Oxford Clay that crops out around the later (Pleistocene) March Gravels. The March Gravels consist of sand and gravel of marine/estuarine origin, which form the first terrace deposits of the River Nene. The two gravel islands of Whittlesey (west island) and Eastrea with Coates and Eldernell (east island) are surrounded by Flandrian Lower peat. Later marine transgression caused the deposition of silty clay Barroway Drove Beds. Barroway Drove clay is clearly exposed between Whittlesey and Eastrea (Horton 1989).

The parish of Whittlesey extends over 9010 hectares. The town is c ten kilometres east of Peterborough and fifteen kilometres west of March. The proposed development site lies at approximately 6m OD.

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

Prehistoric

Prehistoric finds are known from the area around Whittlesey, their distribution along the fen-edge placing emphasis on the economic

significance of the fen as an essential grazing resource. The early prehistoric period is mainly represented by lithic scatters and stray finds.

The Bronze Age is characterised by both ritual activity and settlement. Barrow mounds have been identified at Eldernell and Suet Hill (to the south of Whittlesey).

Recent excavations between Whittlesey and Fengate have revealed evidence for settlement and ritual activity. At King's Dyke West excavations revealed the presence of a short-lived late Bronze Age open settlement consisting of five round houses, four-post structures and pits. A cluster of pits in one of the structures contained remains of butchered lambs. Outside the structures pits contained pottery and pig bones. Similar pottery had been incorporated into the floors of buildings. The upland limit to the settlement distribution was around the 4m contour (Knight 1999). Further work at Bradley Fen revealed early and late Bronze Age occupation. The late Bronze Age settlement was concentrated between 1.5 and 4m OD – closer to the fen edge than the present development site.

Iron Age settlement around Whittlesey is represented by two occupation areas with dark soil and sherds of pottery (Hall 1987). Iron Age finds have been reported from the brick clay quarry c 2km to the west of the development site (Hall 1987).

Roman

The projected course of the Roman Fen Causeway from Peterborough to Grandford (near March) crosses the north of Whittlesey (SMR11048). It comes onto the island from Flag Fen and Northey, where parts of the road have been identified. Further parts have been exposed at Eldernell and Eastrea (Hall 1987). Recent excavations at Stonald Field (east of the present development site) have confirmed the route of the Roman road. Dating evidence indicates it was built in the first century AD and subsequently attracted occupation such as paddocks, enclosures, industrial activities and some settlement (Mortimer 1996 and Knight 2000). A large number of rural sites have been identified through cropmarks (Hall 1987) and recent reassessment shows the presence of a possible marching camp (Palmer in Heawood 1997). Excavations at Bradley Fen (above) revealed the course of a secondary route, parallel to Fen Causeway, at Stonald Field (Knight 2000).

Medieval

The name Whittlesey is first recorded c. 972 in an Anglo-Saxon Charter, as '(W)itlesig', meaning 'Wittel's Island' (Reaney 1943). *Witil* is the name of a moneyer, and is a diminutive of *Witta*. Saxon settlement

has been identified to the north (HER 04281) and a Saxon cemetery was found to the west (HER 10594).

Two manors at Whittlesey belonged to the Saxon monasteries of Thorney and Ely, with the land roughly divided into east and west, with the Ely manor largely on the west. These manors became parishes that were united in 1850 for civil purposes, but continued as separate entities for ecclesiastical matters. Later medieval finds have been discovered from the centre of Whittlesey. There are no visible remains of early ridge and furrow systems but the boundaries of medieval fields survive as banks of the Midland type (Hall 1987). Three main areas of open fields retain their original names: Stonald Field, Bassenhally and Lattersey Field. Bassenhally is the name of the continuation of Stonald Road, east towards the town.

Post-Medieval

The two prosperous parishes of St Mary's and St Andrew's were unified after the Dissolution. The economic importance of the town continued in the seventeenth century when Whittlesey ranked second among the towns of the Isle, Ely coming first. The right to hold a market was granted in 1715 (Pugh 1967). Drainage of the fens started at the beginning of the eighteenth century followed by the enclosure of large portions of land.

A number of archaeological evaluations have been undertaken recently in the vicinity of the subject site which exposed post-medieval remains. Approximately 500m to the west, on the north side of Stonald Road (the westerly continuation of Bassenhally Road), an evaluation revealed only post-medieval furrows (ECB410 – Casa Hatton, 2001). On the south side of Stonald Road 150m to the west of the development, an evaluation produced post-medieval quarry pits (ECB1821 – Lyons, 2004). Further to the west, on the south side of Stonald Road, an evaluation only revealed modern features (ECB898 – Cooper, 2002).

4 Methodology

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

The Brief required that 5% of the subject site should be examined. Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a 1.6m toothless ditching bucket. Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds

were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using CAM ARC's *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.

All observations of the trenches were hampered by a high water table and ground water.

5 Results (Figs 1 and 2)

Five trenches were excavated across the site (Figs 1 and 2). The overburden consisted of a dark grey brown silty clay 1 which was 0.30m-0.32m deep, overlying a dark brown silty clay subsoil which was 0.31m-0.32m across the site.

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was located on an east to west alignment and measured 10m long and 0.60m deep. No archaeological features were encountered in this trench. Flooding and a high water table hampered observations in this trench.

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was located on a north to south alignment and measured 15m long and 0.61m deep. An east-west ditch (4) that had concave sides and flat base was observed in the southern part of the trench. It measured 1.3m wide and 0.40m deep and contained a dark grey silty clay (3). Large body sherd of green glazed post-medieval pottery was recovered from this fill. Flooding and a high water table hampered observations in this trench.

5.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was located on a north to south alignment and measured 15.8m long and 0.60m deep. A single east to west aligned ditch (6) was encountered in the southern end of the trench. This ditch was 0.60m wide and 0.21m deep and contained a dark grey silt clay (5) Flooding and a high water table hampered observations in this trench.

5.4 Trench 4

Trench 4 was located on an east-west alignment and measured 10m long and 0.64m deep. No archaeological features were encountered in this trench. Flooding and a high water table hampered observations in this trench.

5.5 Trench 5

Trench 5 was located on an east-west alignment and measured 10m long and 0.60m deep. A north to south ditch (**8**) was identified in the western part of the trench. This ditch measured 0.40m wide and 0.21m deep and was filled by a dark grey silty clay (**7**). Post-Medieval brick was observed in the fill of this feature. Observations were extremely limited by flood water.

6 Discussion

The evaluation shows that post-medieval and modern remains were present in trenches examined in the evaluation. No medieval or Roman remains were encountered within the evaluation.

Post-Medieval

Post-medieval features were present in trenches 2, 3 and 5. In Trench 2 an east to west ditch (**4**) which represents a post-medieval field boundaries. A large body sherd of green glazed post-medieval pottery was recovered from this field boundary. This ditch may relate to the feature (**6**) in Trench 3 since they are on a similar east to west alignment. A north to south ditch (**8**) was uncovered in trench 5 which may link in with an east-west alignment (ditches **4**, **6** and **8**) to form part of a contemporary system of land division.

7 Conclusions

The aim of the project was to establish the character, date, state of preservation, and extent of any archaeological remains within the site. The results of the evaluation have made a limited contribution to the understanding of Roman and medieval landscape of Whittlesey.

The results of the evaluation indicate an absence of Roman and medieval remains and artefacts in the development area. This is surprising considering the proximity of the medieval town of Whittlesey and known Roman activity to the north. Despite the absence of

significant remains the results of this evaluation will aid the construction of a deposit model for the archaeology of Whittlesey.

Recommendations for any future work based upon this report will be made by the County Archaeology Office.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank developer TP Snitch Brickworks who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The brief for the archaeological works was written by Andy Thomas who visited the site and monitored the evaluation. The project was managed by James Drummond-Murray. Thanks also due to Will Punchard who assisted with the fieldwork, and Rachel Clarke who conducted the survey.

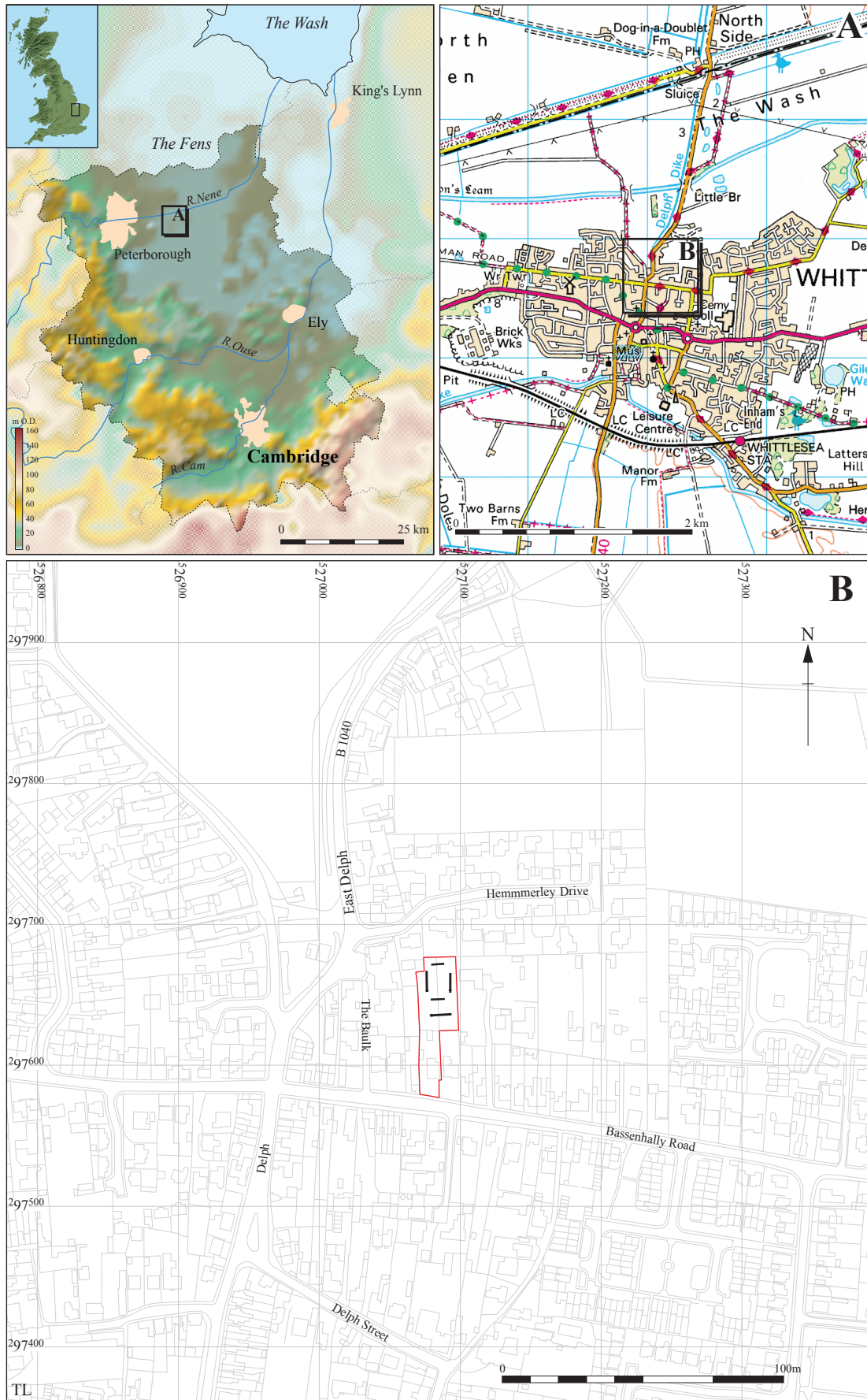
Bibliography

- | | | |
|---------------------|------|--|
| Casa-Hatton, R | 2001 | <i>Post-medieval remains at Land off Stonald Road, Whittlesey</i> CAM ARC (formerly AFU) Report No B093 |
| Cooper, S | 2002 | <i>Modern Activity at Land to the South West off Stonald Road, Whittlesey. An Archaeological Evaluation</i> AFU Report No B104 |
| Hall, | 1987 | <i>The Fenland Project No. 2: Fenland Landscape and Settlement between Peterborough and March.</i> EAA No. 35. |
| Heawood, R.
1997 | 1997 | <i>Two Sites East of Eldernell Lane, Whittlesey: An Archaeological Desktop Study.</i> Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit Rep. No. A112. |
| Horton, A | 1989 | <i>Geology of the Peterborough District.</i> BGS, Peterborough Sheet Memoir 158, England and Wales (1:50 000). |
| Knight,M | 1999 | Knight, M. 1999, <i>Prehistoric Excavations at King's Dyke, West Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire.</i> Cambridge Archaeological Unit Rep. No. 301. |
| Knight, M., | 2000 | <i>Whittlesey Pits. The Bradley Fen Site: An Archaeological Evaluation, Phase 1.</i> Cambridge Archaeological Unit Rep. No. 389. |
| Lyons,T | 2004 | <i>Post-medieval activity on Land to the south of 11 Stonald Road, Whittlesey</i> CAM ARC (formerly AFU) Report No 739 |
| Mortimer, R | 1996 | <i>An Archaeological Evaluation at Kings Dyke Pit, Whittlesey (Area A).</i> CAU report no. 576 |

- | | | |
|---------------|------|---|
| Pugh | 1967 | <i>The Victoria History of the Counties of England. Cambridge and the Isle of Ely.</i> Vol. IV, University of London, London. |
| Reaney, P. H. | 1943 | <i>The Place-Names of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely.</i> English Place-Name Society, Vol. XiX. CUP. |

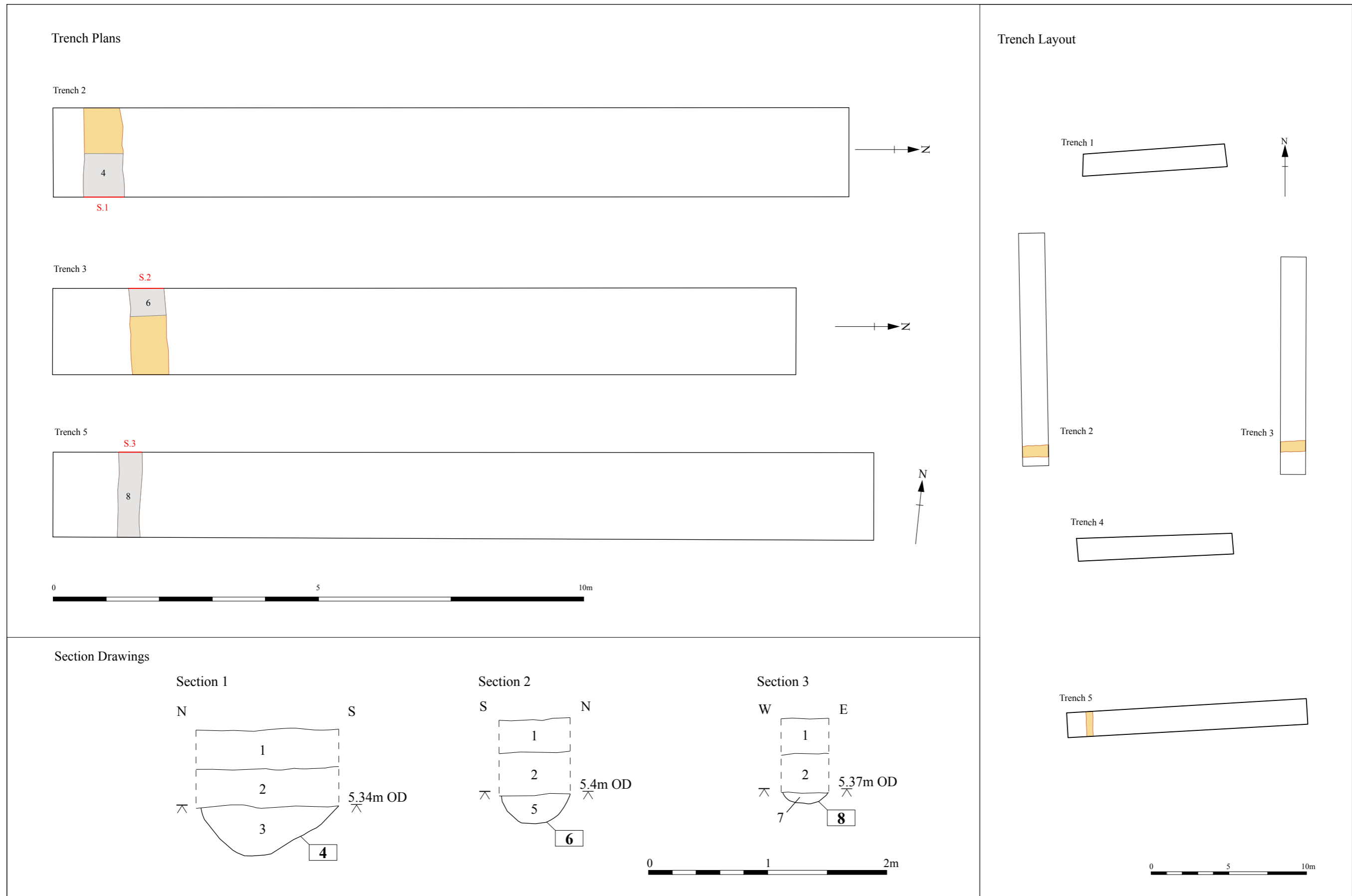
APPENDIX 1 FINDS

The only artefact of any significance recovered from this evaluation was a body sherd of post-medieval green glazed pottery which dated from 1650-1800 AD (Sperry per comms).



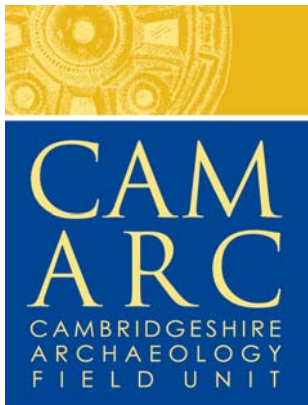
© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved Cambridgeshire County Council 100023205 2007

Figure 1 Location of trenches (black) with the development area outlined (red)



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved Cambridgeshire County Council 100023205 2007

Figure 2: Trench Layout, trench plans and section drawings



CAM ARC,
Cambridgeshire County Council,
15 Trafalgar Way,
Bar Hill,
Cambridgeshire,
CB3 8SQ

General Enquiries: 01954-204191
Fax: 01954-273376

<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/archaeology>