CAM ARC Report Number 949

Green Hedges School, Stapleford, Cambridgeshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

Tom Phillips

April 2007

Commissioned by Hill Residential Ltd

CAM ARC Report Number 949

Green Hedges School, Stapleford, Cambridgeshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

Tom Phillips BA

With contributions by Rachel Fosberry HNC (Cert Ed) AEA

Site Code: STA GHS 07
CHER Event Number: 2552
Date of works: 16th-17th April 2007
Grid Ref: TL 4740 5193

Status	Approved		
Author	Tom Phillips		
Checked By	James Drummond-Murray		
Authorised By	James Drummond-Murray		

Editor: James Drummond Murray BA, MIFA
Illustrator: Louise Bush MA

CAM ARC OASIS Report Form **OASIS Number: 26558**

PROJECT DETAILS				
Project name	Evaluation at Green Hedges School, Stapleford, Cambridgeshire			
Short description	An evaluation comprising 8x20m trenches was carried out on former land of Green Hedges School, Stapleford. Due to disturbance from modern constructions preservation was poor. Only three archaeological features of unknown date were encountered.			
Project dates	Start	16/04/07	End	17/04/07
Previous work	No		Future work	no
Associated project reference codes	STA GHS 07, ECB 2552, Planning Application S/2236/06/F			
Type of project	evaluation			
Site status	Area of Archaeological Importance			
Current land use (list all that apply)	School site			
Planned development	Residential			
Monument types / period (list all that apply)	Ditch, pit			
Significant finds: Artefact type / period (list all that apply)	none			
PROJECT LOCATION				
County	Cambridgeshire	Parish	Stapleford	
HER for region	Cambridgeshire			
Site address (including postcode)	Green Hedges School, Bar Lane, Stapleford, Cambridgeshire, CB2 5BJ			
Study area (sq.m or ha)	0.5ha			
National grid reference	TL 474 519			
Height OD	Min OD	16.52m	Max OD	17.12m
PROJECT ORIGINATORS				
Organisation	CAM ARC			
Project brief originator	Andy Thomas			
Project design originator	James Drummond Murray			
Director/supervisor	Tom Phillips			
Project manager	James Drummond Murray			
Sponsor or funding body	Hill Residential Ltd			
ARCHIVES	**Location and accession number**		**Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone, database, context sheets etc)**	
Physical	Cambridgeshire County Store		No finds	
Paper	Cambridgeshire County Store		Context sheets, site registers, plans, photos	
Digital	CAM ARC		photos	
BIBLIOGRAPHY				
Full title	Green Hedges School, Stapleford: An Archaeological Evaluation			
Author(s)	Tom Phillips			
Report number	949			
Series title and volume				
Page numbers	?			
Date	April 2007			

Summary

Between 16th and 17th of April 2007 CAM ARC, Cambridgeshire County Council (formerly Archaeological Field Unit) conducted an evaluation on the site of the demolished Green Hedges School, Stapleford, in advance of the construction of a residential development. Eight trenches were excavated within an area of 0.46ha, only two of which contained archaeological features. In the other six trenches modern disturbance and levelling had truncated away any archaeological remains.

Contents

List of Figures

List of Plates

List of Appendices

1 Introduction

Between 16th and 17th of April 2007 CAM ARC, Cambridgeshire County Council conducted an evaluation on the demolished site of Green Hedges School, Stapleford.

This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Andy Thomas of the Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and Countryside Advice team (CAPCA; Planning Application S/2236/06/F), 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 site overlies chalk according to the available source (British Geological Survey 205, 2002) although in reality a mixture of chalk or river terrace deposits sitting over chalk was encountered.

The topography was affected by demolition work prior to the evaluation. The site varied between 16.52m OD (in the footprint of the old school where truncation was worst) and 17.12m OD (in the north of the site on less disturbed ground).

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

The village of Stapleford lies in a landscape that has been occupied since the Mesolithic period onwards.

The Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record includes references to known archaeological finds and investigations in the area. A geophysical survey (ECB1894), fieldwalking survey (ECB 1893) and evaluation (ECB2337) at Dernford farm to the south of the village revealed flintwork from the Mesolithic to Bronze Age periods, Iron Age features (including pottery, ditches and a hearth) and Roman pottery (Eddisford *et al* 2005).

Neolithic and Bronze Age flint implements have been found to the west of the village (HER 04790). An iron shackle/padlock found south of the village (HER 04766) is thought to be Roman.

Undated enclosures to the east of the village have been revealed by air photography (HER 08344 & 08348).

Extensive medieval features including earthworks (HER 11272 & 11273), ponds (HER 11255,11274 & 11275) and hollow ways (from Greenhedges farm opposite the school – HER 09897) have come from the village and its immediate surrounds. Most notably a moated site (HER 01004) lies 85m to the south-west of the site. It comprises a trapezoidal island surrounded by a wet wide ditch, covering 0.25ha in total.

Post-medieval features in the vicinity include a dovecot (HER 10455) and WWII pill boxes.

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 at least 5% of the development area should be subject to trial trenching. In total 160m of trenches were excavated, within an area of 0.46ha (Fig. 1).

Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a 1.6m toothless ditching bucket.

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.

One 20L environmental sample was taken to assess the possible survival of micro- and macro-botanical remains.

The positioning of trenches was constrained by the presence of demolition rubble in the north and south-east of the site, and by the positioning of site cabins on the east of the site. Site conditions were hampered by the level of modern truncation and by a relatively high

water table, even after a few weeks of dry weather, which was encountered approximately 0.8m below ground level.

5 Results

Eight 20m trenches were excavated in total. Only trenches 3 and 6 contained archaeological features that were not definitely modern. The other trenches either contained no archaeological features or modern features such as the remains of wall footings.

Topsoil and subsoil were not present in all of the trenches. For example, in trenches 4, 5, 7 and 8 both had been completely truncated away leaving a layer of disturbed natural (9). Each trench is described below with details of trench depths. Full context descriptions can be found in Appendix 1.

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was located in the west of the site, orientated north-east to south-west. Natural was sealed by layer 3, a greyish black silty clay measuring 0.35m in depth which was very compact and modern in date. This in turn was sealed by a layer of gravel and sand (2) measuring 0.2m deep, representing levelling for the school yard.

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was located close to the western boundary of the site, orientated north-east to south-west. At the southern end there was modern disturbance measuring 0.7m deep. This was sealed by topsoil layer 4, a mid brown clayey silt measuring 0.12m deep. In the north the natural was sealed by the topsoil alone making it surprisingly shallow. This suggests modern construction had not affected the ground in this location.

5.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was located close to the southern boundary of the site, orientated west-north-west to east-south-east. A wide and relatively shallow hollow (**8**) was encountered in the middle of the trench (Fig. 2 and Plate 1). It measured 5.5m wide and 0.56m deep with undercut edges and a flat base. Its fill (7) was a dark brown clayey silt that contained frequent molluscs but no datable artefacts. The environmental sample yielded several charred wheat grains and a single small pea/large vetch. Due to incoming water it was only partially excavated. This hollow may be a natural feature formed in the soft chalk under wet conditions. It was truncated by a modern wall.

Hollow **8** was sealed by subsoil 6, an orangey brown clayey silt measuring 0.36m deep. This was sealed by topsoil layer 4 measuring 0.43m deep.

5.4 Trench 4

Trench 4 was located to the east of trench 3, orientated north-south. Natural was sealed by subsoil layer 6 measuring 0.45m deep. This was sealed by topsoil layer 4 measuring 0.3m deep. Truncating the topsoil in the south was a rubble dump.

5.5 Trench 5

Trench 5 was located in the centre of the development area, orientated east to west. This trench was within the footprint of the old school building. Therefore, apart from modern intrusions such as wall footings and rubble deposits only a layer of disturbed natural survived (9), measuring 0.4m in depth. This was an orangey brown sandy silt which contained occasional modern brick and probably represents disturbance caused during demolition.

5.6 Trench 6

Trench 6 was located close to the northern boundary of the site, orientated east to west (Fig. 2 and Plate 2).

Pit **11** was located at the eastern end of the trench and was only half visible. It was circular in plan with gently sloping sides and a concave base, measuring 0.73m wide and 0.1m deep. No datable artefacts came from its fill (10).

Ditch **16** was a steep sided flat based linear feature, orientated north-east to south-west, running across the trench 5.5m from the western end of the trench. It measured 0.8m wide and 0.48m deep. It contained a lower fill (15), a light grey clayey silt, and an upper fill (14), a mid greyish brown clayey silt that contained one piece of post-medieval tile. The tile was sitting on the surface and could have come from the subsoil.

Truncating ditch **16** was tree bowl **13**, a large sub-circular feature, measuring 2.5m in diameter and 0.3m deep although it was only partially excavated so the full depth is not known. Its fill (12) was a dark greyish brown clayey silt that was very loose and organic suggesting a recent date.

Natural feature **18** was irregular in plan and profile, measuring 0.31m in width and 0.08m deep. Its fill (17) contained a sherd of 18th/19th century slipware. This feature was truncated by a field drain.

Gully **20** was a shallow flat based linear feature, orientated north to south, running across the western end of the trench. It measured 0.38m wide and 0.04m deep. Its fill (19) contained no datable artefacts.

Sealing all features was subsoil layer (6) measuring 0.48m in depth. This was sealed by topsoil layer (4), measuring 0.23m in depth.

5.7 Trench 7

Trench 7 was located to the south of trench 6, orientated north-west to south-east. Only a disturbed layer of natural (9) was present, measuring 0.6m in depth.

5.8 Trench 8

Trench 8 was located to the east of trenches 5 and 7, orientated north-north-east to south-south-west. Modern disturbance had affected the ground to a depth of 0.75m, below which no archaeological features were encountered.

6 Discussion

The level of disturbance and truncation caused by construction and demolition in modern times means that any archaeology within the development area has now been destroyed. It is difficult to put the few archaeological features encountered in to a wider context because they are so sparse and there is a lack of datable artefacts.

An important consideration is the relatively high water table. If the ground here has always been susceptible to water it would make settlement and the practice of agriculture very difficult. Hollow **8** may be proof that the land has been water-logged in the past; a depression created in the soft chalk through the actions of water. However, this argument doesn't hold up considering the known archaeological activity in the vicinity and the environmental evidence from the hollow which suggests possible settlement nearby. Modern disturbance, therefore, is the more likely explanation for the scarcity of features.

7 Conclusions

Despite the archaeological potential of the site this evaluation has shown that, due partially to modern disturbance, archaeological activity within the development area is very limited.

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

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Hill Residential Ltd who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by James Drummond Murray, who also edited the report. The site was excavated by the author and Will Punchard. Gareth Rees carried out the surveying, illustrations were done by Louise Bush and Rachel Fosberry looked at the environmental sample.

The brief for archaeological works was written by Andy Thomas, who visited the site and monitored the evaluation.

Bibliography

British Geological Society	2002	*England and Wales Sheet 205 Saffron Walden, Solid and Drift Geology Map*
Eddisford, D. *et al.*	2005	*Evaluation at Dernford Farm, Sawston, 2004* Archaeological Solutions Report 1741

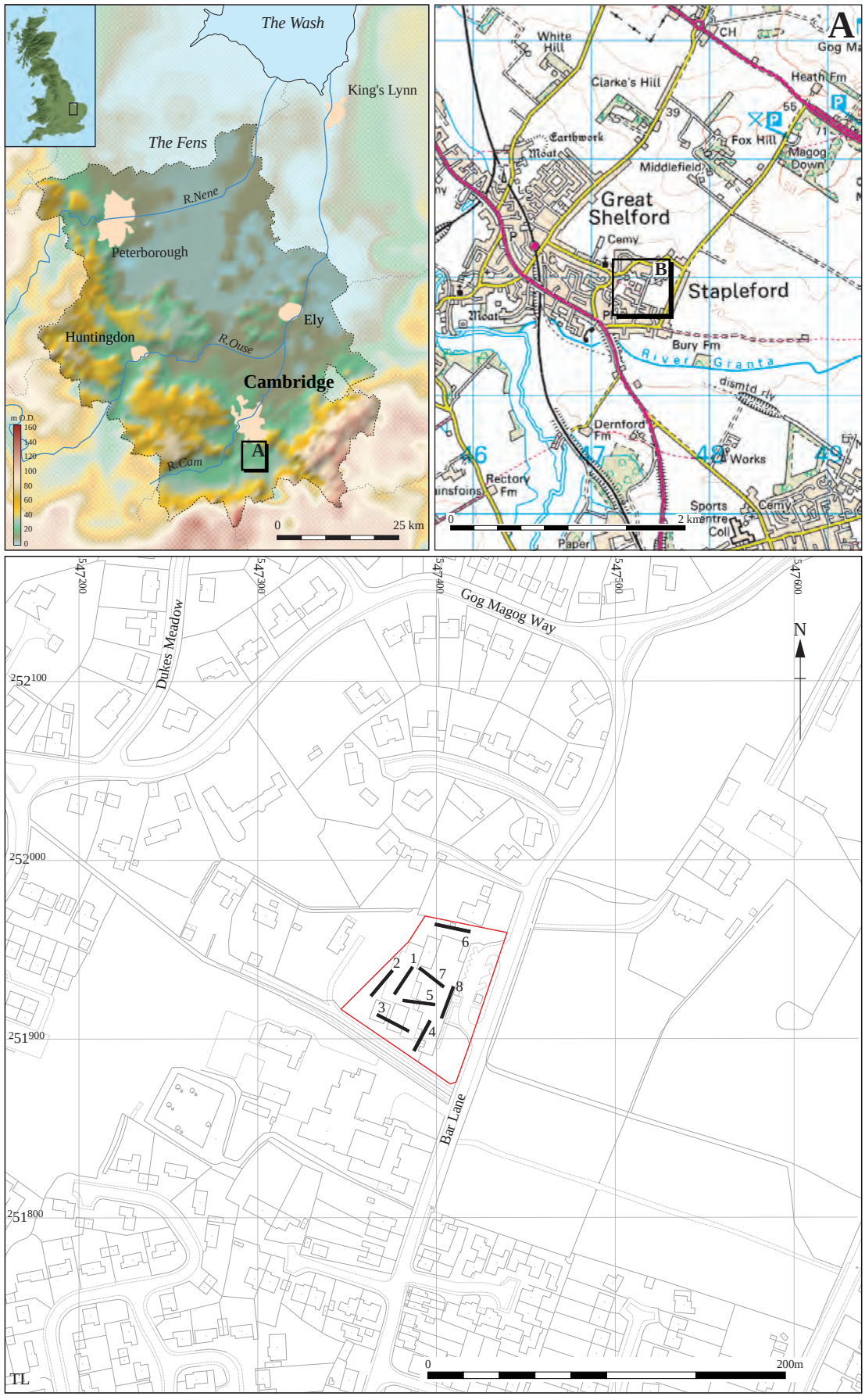
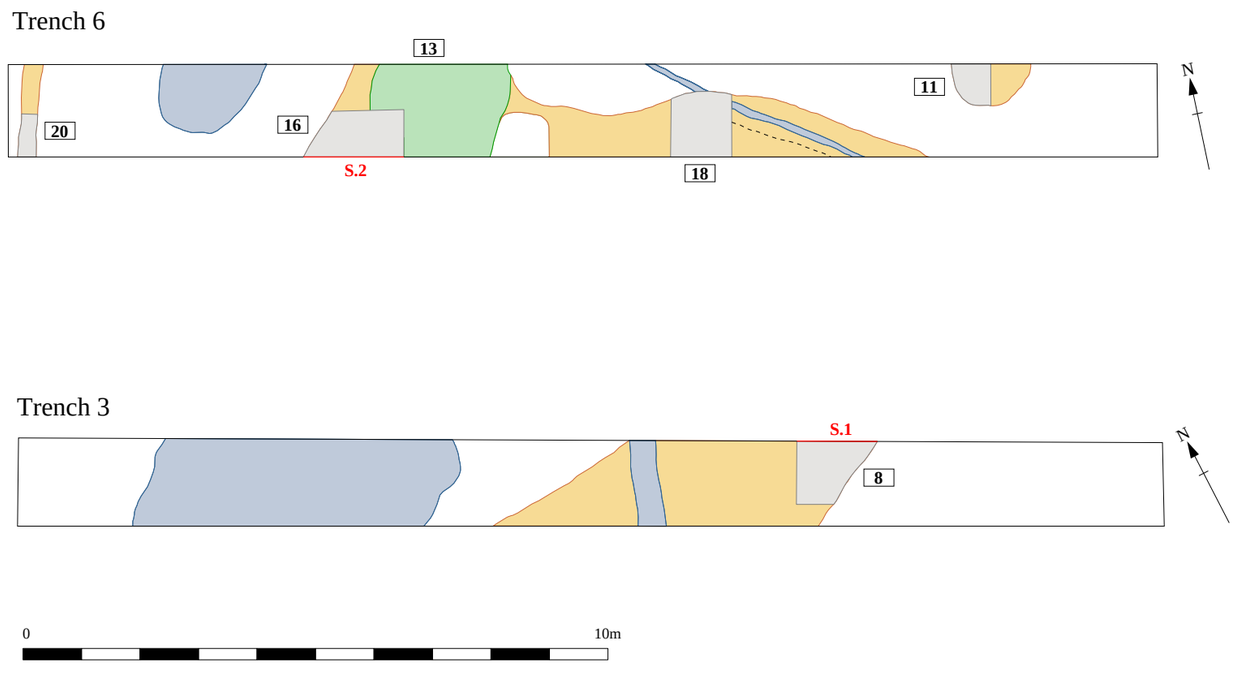
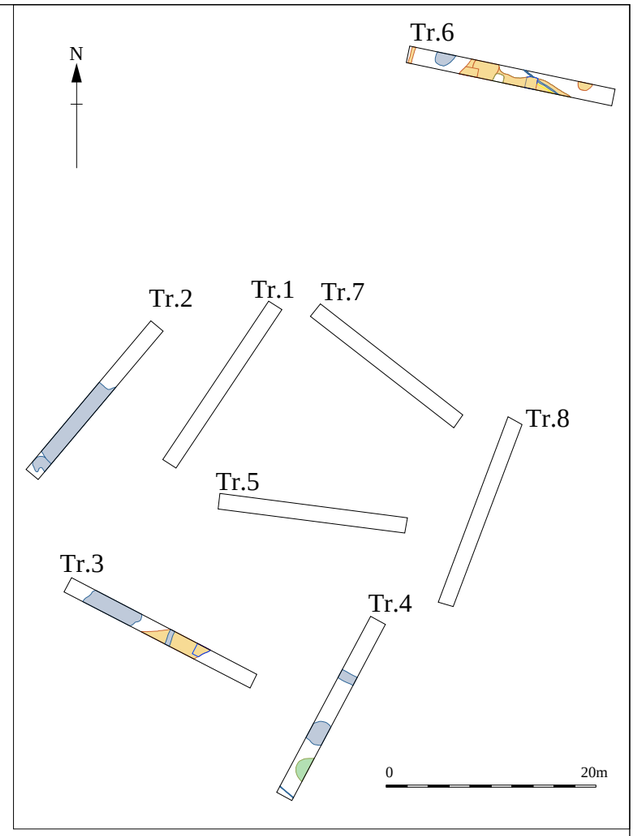


Figure 1 Location of trenches (black) with the development area outlined (red)





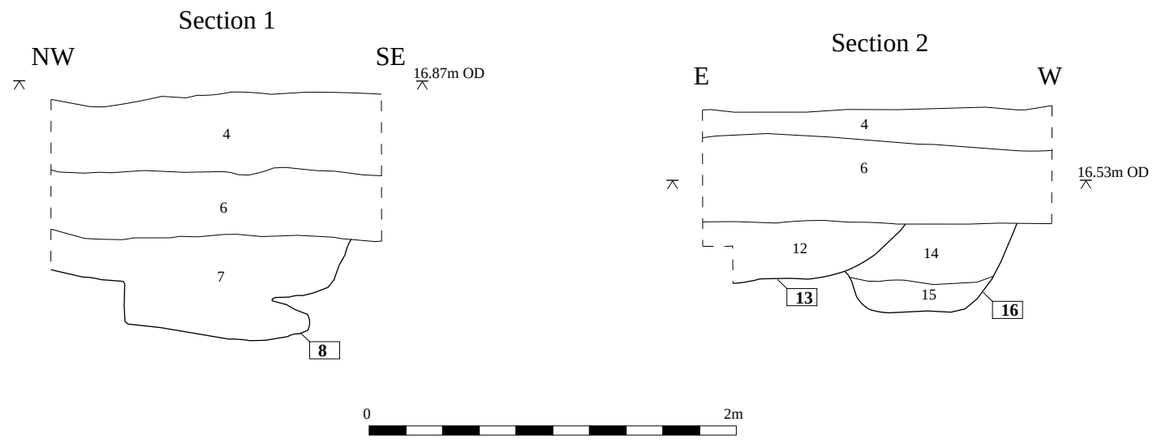


Figure 2: Plan of trenches 3 and 6 and section drawings 1 and 2

Plate 1: Trench 3, looking west

Plate 2: Trench 6, looking east

Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Cut	Trench	Category	Feature type	Colour	Fine composition	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Shape in Plan	Side	Break of slope	Base
1		Various	Layer	Natural								
2		1	Layer	Rubble	Yellowish brown	Sand and gravel		0.2				
3		1	Layer	Modern	Greyish black			0.35				
4		Various	Layer	Topsoil	Mid brown	Clayey silt		0.43				
5 (void)												
6		Various	Layer	Subsoil	Orangey brown	Clayey silt		0.48				
7	8	3	Fill	Natural hollow	Dark brown	Clayey silt	5.5	0.56				
8	8	3	Cut	Natural hollow			5.5	0.56	Unknown	Undercut	Sharp	Flat
9		Various	Layer	Disturbed natural	Orangey brown	Sandy silt		0.6				
10	11	6	Fill	Pit	Mid brown	Silty clay	0.73	0.1				
11	11	6	Cut	Pit			0.73	0.1	Circular	Gently sloping	Gradual	Concave
12	13	6	Fill	Tree bowl	Dark greyish brown	Clayey silt	2.5	0.3				
13	13	6	Cut	Tree bowl			2.5	0.3	Sub-circular	Gently sloping	Gradual	Irregular
14	16	6	Fill	Ditch	Mid greyish	Clayey silt	0.62	0.31				

					brown							
Context	**Cut**	**Trench**	**Category**	**Feature type**	**Colour**	**Fine composition**	**Width (m)**	**Depth (m)**	**Shape in Plan**	**Side**	**Break of slope**	**Base**
15	16	6	Fill	Ditch	Light grey	Clayey silt	0.8	0.17				
16	16	6	Cut	Ditch			0.8	0.48	Linear	Steep	Gradual	Flat
17	18	6	Fill	Natural feature	Dark brown	Silty clay	0.31	0.08				
18	18	6	Cut	Natural feature			0.31	0.08	Irregular	Irregular	Gradual	Irregular
19	20	6	Fill	Gully	Mid brown	Silty sand	0.38	0.04				
20	20	6	Cut	Gully			0.38	0.04	Linear	Imperceptible	Imperceptible	Flat

Appendix 2: Environmental Appraisal

by Rachel Fosberry

1 Introduction and Methods

A single bulk sample was taken from a truncated, undated feature, context (7), from within the evaluated area of the site in order to assess the quality of preservation of plant remains and their potential to provide useful data as part of further archaeological investigations.

Ten litres of the sample was processed by tank flotation for the recovery of charred plant remains, dating evidence and any other artefactual evidence that might be present. The flot was collected in a 0.5mm nylon mesh and the residue was washed through a 1mm sieve. Both flot and residue were allowed to air dry. The dried residue was passed through 5mm and 2mm sieves and a magnet was dragged through each resulting fraction prior to sorting for artefacts. Any artefacts present were noted and reintegrated with the hand-excavated finds. The flot was examined under a binocular microscope at x16 magnification.

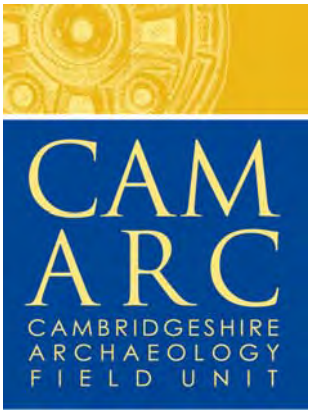
2 Results

The sample contains both charred plant remains and organic plant matter preserved by waterlogging. The charred plant remains include several wheat grains and a single small pea/large vetch. No weed seed or chaff elements are present. The organic matter consists of roots and twigs but seeds are absent. Insect fragments were noted in the flot and snails were abundant in both flot and residue.

3 Conclusions and Recommendations

The feature sampled has been tentatively identified as a natural hollow, which is consistent with the results obtained. The water table is high in this area of the site, which explains the waterlogged remains. The charred plant remains imply settlement nearby although domestic waste of burnt grain/pulses could have been discarded into the ditch upstream.

In conclusion the sample showed only a low abundance of plant macrofossils that are not considered worthy of further analysis.



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