



CAM ARC Report Number 943

Undated Features at Yarrow Close, March, Cambridgeshire:

An Archaeological Evaluation.

Thomas Lyons

March 2007

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Close, March, Cambridgeshire:**

An Archaeological Evaluation

Thomas Lyons BA

Site Code: MAR YAR 07
CHER Event Number: ECB 2501
Date of works: February 2007
Grid Ref: TL 4065 9732

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PROJECT DETAILS			
Project name	Evaluation at Yarrow Close, March		
Short description	An archaeological evaluation at Yarrow Road March revealed large undated features, though small flint fragments suggest they may be prehistoric.		
Project dates	Start	27/2/07	End 1/3/07
Previous work	No	Future work	no
Associated project reference codes	MAR YAR 07 ECB 2501		
Type of project	Evaluation		
Site status	None		
Current land use (list all that apply)	Unused		
Planned development	Housing		
Monument types / period (list all that apply)	Pit, ditches		
Significant finds: Artefact type / period (list all that apply)			
PROJECT LOCATION			
County	Cambridgeshire	Parish	March
HER for region	Cambridgeshire		
Site address (including postcode)	Yarrow Close, March, Cambridgeshire. PE15 8BN		
Study area (sq.m or ha)	1700sq.m		
National grid reference	TL 4065 9732		
Height OD	2.9m	Max OD	3m
PROJECT ORIGINATORS			
Organisation	CAM ARC		
Project brief originator	Andy Thomas		
Project design originator	James Drummond-Murray		
Director/supervisor	Thomas Lyons		
Project manager	James Drummond-Murray		
Sponsor or funding body	FE Peacock Construction Ltd		
ARCHIVES			
	Location and accession number		Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone, database, context sheets etc)
Physical	Cambs. County store		Flint burnt bone
Paper	Cambs. County store		Site report Site records/archive
Digital	CAM ARC		Drawn archive Digital photos
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
Full title	Undated Features at Yarrow Close, March, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation.		
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Summary

Between the 27th of February and the 1st of March 2007 CAM ARC undertook an archaeological evaluation on land at Yarrow Close, March, Cambridgeshire.

Five 10m long trenches were opened over the site. All were excavated to natural drift geology immediately beneath the topsoil. Three of the trenches contained no archaeology. One trench contained a substantial ditch while another contained a ditch and a pit. All three features contained single, undiagnostic struck flints, insufficient for accurate dating of the features although they may be Prehistoric.

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1 Introduction

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 F/YR05/1031/O), 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 lies on boulder clay till deposits (British Geological Survey 1995, sheet 159). The land is flat and relatively low-lying (c. 3m OD) and has not seen any use or activity in recent times. An 1885 map shows the site within an open field.

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

The site is located on the west side of March, just north of the river Nene. Whilst there has been no substantial archaeological works in the immediate vicinity, several find spots have been recorded on the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER).

3.1 Prehistoric

Flint artefacts dating from the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods have been discovered to the south of the river. These include single flints (CHER 08455, 08455A and 5210A) as well as flint scatters (CHER 5210 and 10913A). The closest prehistoric features identified are located to the north east of Yarrow Close at the Northern Office where excavation revealed Bronze Age and Iron Age ditched field systems (CHER CB15299; O'Brien, L. 2003).

3.1.1 Roman

A single find spot is the only evidence for Roman activity in the vicinity. This was to the north of Yarrow Close where a stamped ceramic handle was recovered (CHER 05905). Further to the east at the Northern Office excavation revealed several features containing Roman pottery (CHER CB15267; O'Brien, L. 2003).

3.1.2 Medieval and post-medieval

There exists little archaeological evidence for Medieval and post-medieval activity in this part of March. The Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record shows three entries located to the east in the Historic centre of the town, all ditches or pits (CHER CB15268, CB15693 and CB14604).

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:

Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a 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.

The proposed development site covered an area of 1700sqm. Five 10m trenches were opened across the site on east-west and north-south alignments using a 1.6m wide bucket. Topsoil was between 0.3m and 0.5m thick and trenches were machined to a depth of up to 0.6m. No subsoil was present and immediately beneath the topsoil was natural drift geology.

No environmental samples were taken due the large amounts of contaminated groundwater on site which quickly flooded all trenches and archaeological features.

The trenches were planned at 1:50 scale and were located using a Leica Total Station Theodolite.

Conditions were made difficult by the large amount of groundwater on site. A two-inch pump was successfully used during excavation and recording of features in trenches 5 but was less successful in trench 2 where complete excavation of feature [7] became impossible.

5 Results

5.1.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was located at the northern end of the development area and aligned east-west. At its lowest it was machined to a depth of 0.45m. No archaeology was encountered.

5.1.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was located in the north-western part of the development area and aligned north-south. It was machined to a depth of 0.5m. A large ditch was revealed running at right angles to the trench [7], on an east-west alignment. This was filled with a single, homogenous brownish grey silty clay and was 3.65m wide. A 0.7m wide slot was excavated against the east facing baulk across the width of the ditch which to a depth of 0.6m whereupon the wet conditions proved too difficult. The base was reached a further 0.4m down using a small shovel-dug sondage, giving a total depth of 1m. No artefacts were recovered save for a small piece of struck flint, most likely prehistoric, but which, alone, did not allow for a secure enough dating of the ditch fill.

5.1.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was located in the centre of the development area and aligned east-west. At its lowest point it was excavated to a depth of 0.64m. No archaeology was encountered.

5.1.4 Trench 4

Trench 4 was located in the south-eastern part of the development area and was aligned north-south. It was excavated to a depth of 0.55m. No archaeology was encountered.

5.1.5 Trench 5

Trench 5 was located at the southern end of the development area and was aligned east-west. At its lowest point it was excavated to a depth of 0.6m. Two archaeological features were revealed. A linear ditch ran obliquely across the trench on a south-west north-east alignment [4]. A 1.1m slot was excavated at the south west end against the north facing baulk giving a depth of 0.23m and a width of 0.5m. The fill was a sterile thick grey clay which contained one piece of prehistoric struck flint. A large [5] pit was located to the west of ditch [4], the other half of which extended beneath the south facing baulk. This feature was half-sectioned and excavated to a depth of 0.85m at the base. A single piece of struck flint was again recovered as well as a small piece of burnt bone. Like ditch [4], pit [5] was filled by a grey clay with few inclusions. The relative pale colour of both features is suggestive of a prehistoric date.

6 Discussion

The width and depth of feature [7] in trench 2 suggests that it is likely to be delineating an important boundary. The complete absence of any artefacts from the ditch suggests a prehistoric date as any feature of this size from the Roman period onwards would be expected to yield more material. However, its distance from any known settlement and activity might also account for such few finds.

Within trench 5 the south-west north-east alignment of ditch [4] is in contrast to the east-west alignment of ditch [7] in trench 2, which as well as their clear difference in size and depth, suggests that they were of a different date and function

Pit [5] in trench 5 has been interpreted as a pit although its continuation beneath the south facing baulk means it is conceivably a terminating ditch. Both fills in trench 5 were relatively pale, increasing the likelihood that they are prehistoric in date.

The absence of any similar archaeological remains within this part of March makes accurate interpretations difficult. It is possible that features found in trench 5 could be an extension of field systems encountered to the north and east of Yarrow Close (CHER CB15299, O'Brien, L. 2003) and that they could extend further south towards the flood plain.

7 Conclusions

This evaluation has revealed the existence of archaeological features in an area of March only previously known for individual find spots. Preservation levels were good with no modern intrusions and little visible plough disturbance. The lack of artefactual material from excavated features means they remain undated, although circumstantial evidence suggests they were cut in prehistory.

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

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank FE Peacock LTD who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by James Drummond-Murray.




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

Bibliography


- | | | |
|---------------------------|------|---|
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| British Geological Survey | 1995 | Sheet 159 |

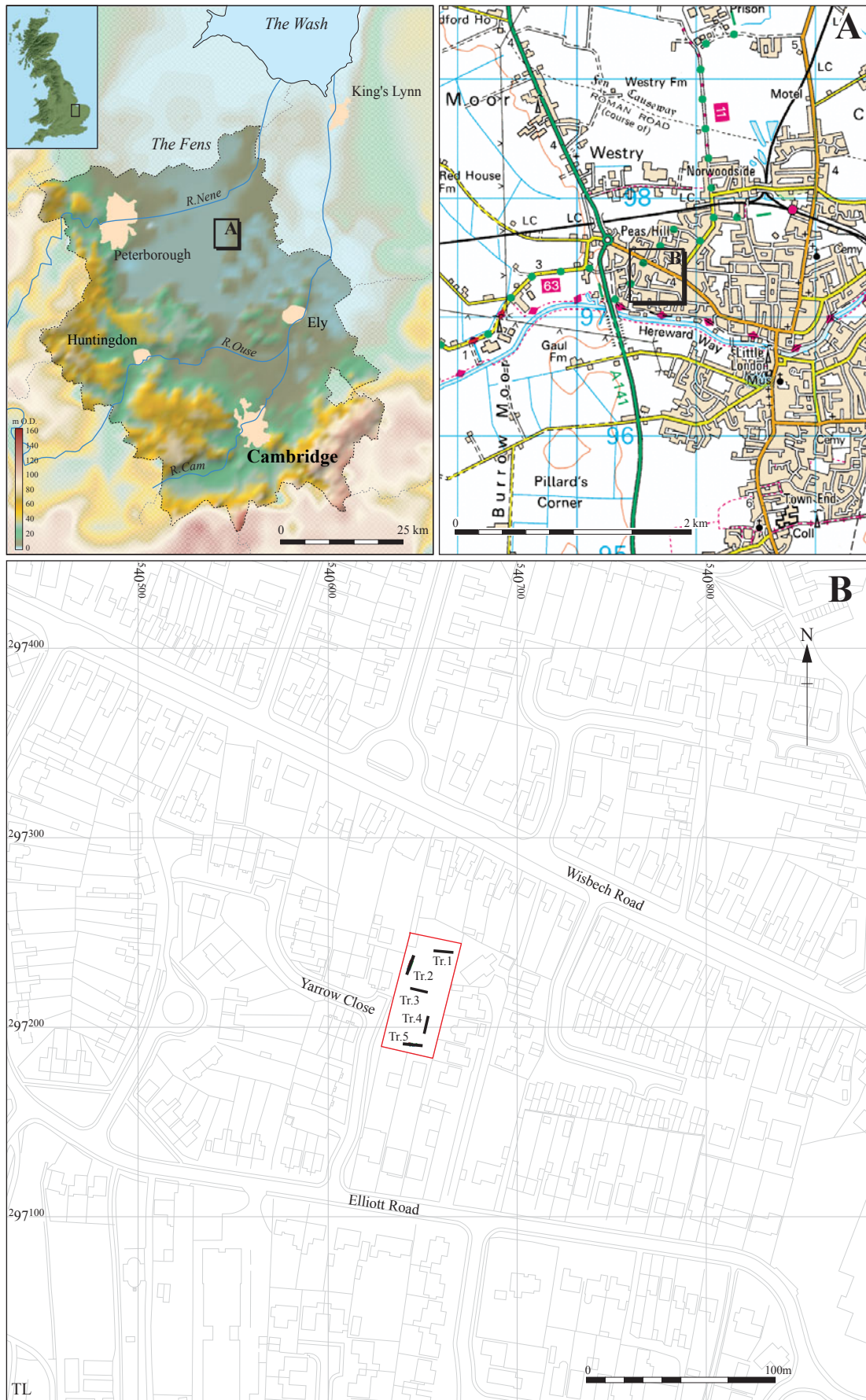
Drawing Conventions

Plans

Limit of Excavation	_____
Deposit - Conjectured	-----
Natural Features	_____
Sondages/Machine Strip	- - - - -
Intrusion/Truncation
Illustrated Section	<u>S.14</u>
Archaeological Deposit	
Excavated Slot	
Modern Deposit	
Cut Number	118

Sections

Limit of Excavation	-----
Cut	_____
Cut-Conjectured	-----
Deposit Horizon	_____
Deposit Horizon - Conjectured	-----
Intrusion/Truncation
Top Surface/Top of Natural	_____
Break in Section/ Limit of Section Drawing	- - - - -
Cut Number	118
Deposit Number	117
Ordnance Datum	18.45m OD ^
Inclusions	



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

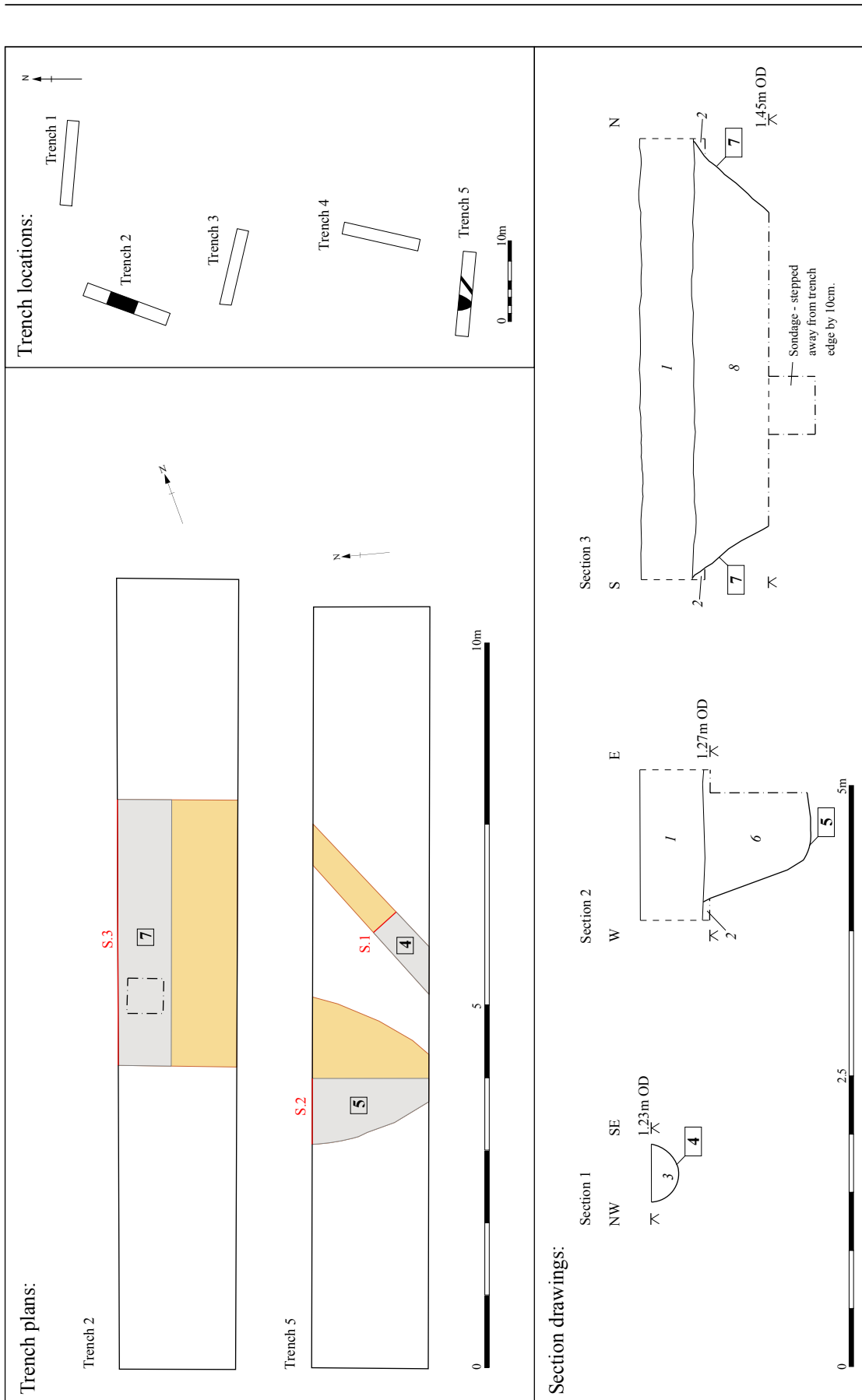
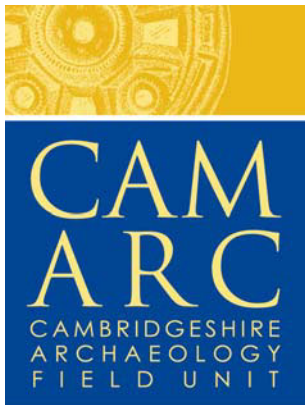


Figure 2: Trench layout, trench plans and section drawings



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