

CAM ARC Report Number 946

Post-medieval Remains at Market St, Ely

An Archaeological Watching Brief

Spencer Cooper

June 2007

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PROJECT DETAILS				
Project name	Ely Market Street; A Watching Brief			
Short description	Between 9/1/07 and 20/2/07 Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit (CAM ARC) conducted monitoring and a watching brief on land on and around Market Street, Ely. It was initially envisaged that that this watching brief would identify medieval urban deposits. In the event, however the watching brief revealed limited evidence of post-medieval activity.			
Project dates	Start	9th January 2007	End	20th February 2007
Previous work	DCB 727		Future work	No
Associated project reference codes	ECB54 Butchers Lane,			
Type of project	Watching Brief			
Site status	None			
Current land use (list all that apply)	Urban environment Townhouse No 60 Public House			
Planned development	Sewerage system			
Monument types / period (list all that apply and use thesaurus of monument types)	None			
Significant finds: Artefact type / period (list all that apply and use MDA object thesaurus)	None			
PROJECT LOCATION				
County	Cambridge	Parish	Ely	
HER for region	Cambridgeshire,			
Site address (including postcode)	60-64 Market St Ely			
Study area (sq.m or ha)				
National grid reference	Easting (6 figure)	5410	Northing (6 figure)	8046
Height OD	Max OD	20,7	Min OD	19.75
PROJECT ORIGINATORS				
Organisation	Cambridgeshire County Council, CAM ARC			
Project brief originator	CAMARC			
Project design originator	Cambridgeshire County Council			
Director/supervisor	Spencer Cooper			
Project manager	Aileen Connor			
Sponsor or funding body	Anglia Water			
ARCHIVES	Location and accession number		Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone, database, context sheets etc)	
Physical	Cambs County Store		None	
Paper	Cambs County Store		Watching brief recording sheets	
Digital	CAM ARC		Report, illustrations	
BIBLIOGRAPHY				
Full title	Post-medieval Remains at Market St, Ely			
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Date	June 2007			

Summary

Between 9th January 2007 and 20th February 2007 Cambridgeshire Archaeology of Cambridgeshire County Council (CAM ARC) conducted monitoring and a watching brief on land to the front and rear of No 60 Market Street, Ely.

It was initially envisaged that this watching brief would identify medieval urban deposits. In the event, however the watching brief revealed limited evidence of post-medieval activity in all trenches observed.

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1 Introduction

Between 9th January 2007 and 20th February 2007 CAM ARC conducted a monitoring and watching brief in and around Market Street, Ely, Cambridgeshire.

This archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Andy Thomas of the Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and Countryside Advice team (CAPCA; Planning Application N/A) 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

According to the British Geological Survey, (BGS 1980) the centre of the city lies on the Lower Greensand which caps the Ely island, the bulk of which is composed of Kimmeridge Clay. The site lies at almost the highest part of the island at approximately 20m OD.

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

Lying 23km north-northeast of Cambridge on the river Great Ouse, Ely was mentioned in Domesday as a small agricultural settlement, however, its origins are much earlier and archaeological work has shown that occupation on the island begins as early as the Neolithic. The name means very much what it sounds like, being derived from the Old English *æġ-ge*, or “eel-district”.

Ethelbert I, (who reigned from 560-616) founded a church to the honour of the Virgin Mary in a village named Cratendune. Later that church was destroyed in the war between Anna, King of E Anglia, and Penda, King of Mercia. When Anna's daughter, Etheldreda, adopted a religious life, she chose a more attractive site a mile further north and built a monastery there in 673. This site later became the town of Ely, populated by the people of Cratendune after they abandoned their village and rebuilt it around the monastery. The site of Cratendune has

not been established, although several candidate sites have been proposed over the decades; the most recent being a site adjacent to West Fen Road on the west side of Ely (Mortimer et al 2005).

The religious house founded by Etheldreda was laid waste by the Danes in 870, refounded by Ethelwold, Bishop of Winchester, as a Benedictine abbey in 970, and dedicated to St Peter and the Blessed Virgin by Dunstan in 974 (Pugh 1967). Nothing now remains of the church and conventual buildings of Etheldreda's foundations and even their site in relation to the present Cathedral is uncertain.

Ely's development as an important medieval town began after the construction of the cathedral, which began in 1081 and the canalisation and diversion of the river, which probably occurred between 974 and 1035 (Owen 1993). This new transport route provided important trade links with Cambridge and Littleport, and by extension, to the seaport at Lynn when that was established some time before 1180. The status of the town was further enhanced when the Bishopric was created in 1108/9, which brought the Episcopal establishment and its attendant bureaucracy.

In the later twelfth century, a castle was constructed on the orders of King Stephen during the chaotic civil wars known as the "Anarchy", and traces of it survive at Cherry Hill, to the south of the Cathedral.

The medieval hospitals of St John the Baptist and St Mary Magdelene, parts of which still survive in buildings at the top of St John's Road, and were both probably constructed in the twelfth century. The earliest mention of an "ancient" hospital is in 1169, but no name is mentioned, however by 1228, the Hospital of St Mary Magdelene had been given the rectory of Littleport, and around 1240 the two hospitals were amalgamated under the name St John the Baptist. They probably lay outside the medieval town, being most likely leper hospitals, but their use would have changed with the decline of leprosy in the later medieval period. The hospitals persisted in some form until the Dissolution caught up with them eventually in 1561, when they were given to Clare Hall, Cambridge.

The town continued to thrive throughout the medieval period and beyond, with even the dissolution of the priory in the 1530's having little effect upon the burgeoning commercial trade that continued to dominate its financial fortunes.

Ely is well known as a pottery production centre in the medieval and post-medieval periods, and quantities of the local wares have been recovered from sites all over the city.

Market Street

The ground works affect the medieval core of Ely, particularly in streets to the north of the Cathedral and West of the market place. A number of small archaeological investigations and observations have taken place in the vicinity of the works, including Lynn Road in 1998 where a medieval cess pit and hearth were discovered (ECB54) and at Butchers Lane where post-medieval deposits were encountered (ECB1192).

At the corner of High Street and Market Street medieval and post-medieval structural and industrial remains have been found (ECB512). In this Watching Brief (Montague and Spoerry 2000) the earliest deposits appear to date to the 13th to 14th centuries, for which period features cutting into natural geology were found. In the northern part of the site (Market Street) medieval remains were mostly confined to the western part, signifying less dense activity or greater post-medieval truncation within 5 Market Street compared with No.3. Shoe and offcut fragments suggest 'cobbling' in perhaps the late medieval period, whilst 17th century ceramics imply the presence of a chemists shop. Much pitting characterises the later post-medieval period. In the southern part of the site (High Street) most of the earlier deposits have been truncated away by post-medieval and early modern cellarge. Nonetheless, in the centre of the site a small area of complex medieval deposits remains, which could represent the demolition of 13th-14th century buildings and associated features including a ditch. At the High Street frontage a small area of surviving deposits hints at a sequence of buildings from the medieval period onwards.

Elsewhere on the High Street Post-medieval building remains have been uncovered (ECB1078).

4 Methodology

The objective of this Watching Brief 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.

Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a mini digger 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 that 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.

5 Results

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was located to the rear of No 60 Market Street close to the alleyway. This trench measured 1.8m by 1.8m and was 3m deep. The earliest deposit encountered was natural green sand (4). Above this was a Victorian / post-medieval wall (3) which was 0.80m high, 0.40m wide and consisted of unfrosted bricks. This wall may relate to a Victorian cellar or an outbuilding. Layer 2 was dark grey silty clay that was 0.50m thick and contained modern bricks. Layer 2 was overlaid by 0.30m thick modern concrete (1).

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was located to the east of trench 1 at the rear of No.60 (Townhouse) Market Street. This was orientated on an east to west axis and was 3.4m long and 1m wide. This trench was excavated to a depth of 1.1m and revealed two modern walls (6 and 7). Also modern backfill deposits 14 and 8 were uncovered. No significant medieval or earlier archaeological remains were uncovered in this trench.

5.2 Trench 3

Trench 3 was located opposite No 64 (Townhouse) in the road at Market Street. This was 3m by 3m and was 2.2m deep. No significant medieval remains were uncovered in this trench. The earliest deposit encountered was natural green sand. Above this was dark grey silty clay (11), which was 0.40m thick. Layer 10 was a modern dark brown silty clay deposit that was 0.50m thick. A modern pipe trench (13), which measured 1m wide and 0.90m deep, was observed in the eastern part of the trench. Layer 9 consisted of the road and associated make up.

6 Discussion

The lack of medieval deposits observed in all three trenches is due to the presence of services and post-medieval activity in the form of walls and deposits.

The results are a little disappointing considering that the trenches were located within the core of the historic town and west of the market place. It is believed that this area would have formed part of a large medieval suburb to the north of the cathedral precinct

7 Conclusions

The project has made a limited contribution to constructing a deposit model for the archaeology of Ely. No deposits earlier than post-medieval were observed in the three trenches. All the artefacts that were noted were post-medieval in date. The results of this watching brief to a certain degree fit in with nearby investigation undertaken to the south at Butchers Row, which produced post-medieval layers.

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

Acknowledgements

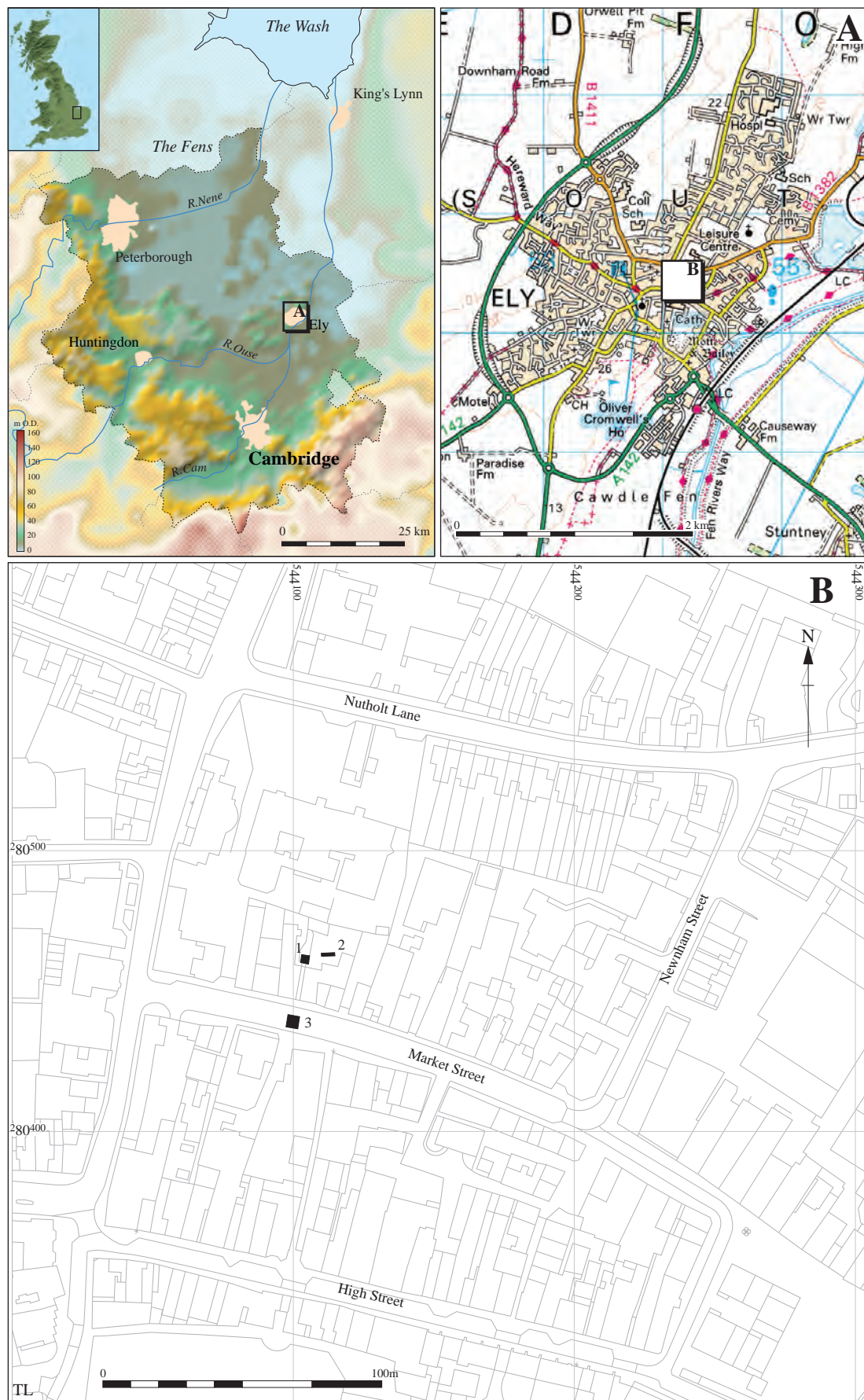
The author would like to thank Anglian Water who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by Aileen Connor.

Also I would like to thank Dan Hounsell and Neil Wright who aided in the recording of the site and Crane Begg for the illustrations.

The brief for archaeological works was written by Andy Thomas.

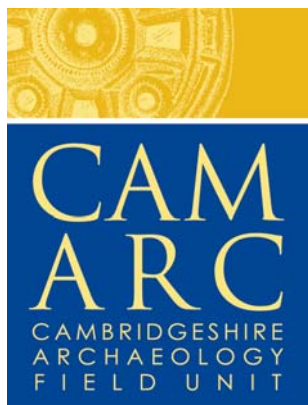
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Figure 1 Location of the trenches investigated



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