

## Land to the rear of 8 New Street, Godmanchester

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Cambridgeshire  
County Council  
Environment &  
Community Services

Commissioned by Exchange Developments

**Archaeological Monitoring and Recording at Land to the rear of 8,  
New Street, Godmanchester  
(TL 524675 270434)**

**Site Code: GODNES07**  
**CHER No.**  
**Date of Works: 29<sup>th</sup> August 2007**  
**Report No: 974**  
**Excavator: Will Punchard**  
**Client: Exchange Developments**

## **Summary**

On the 29<sup>th</sup> August 2007, CAM ARC of Cambridgeshire County Council carried out an archaeological watching brief at the land to the rear of 8 New Street, Godmanchester (TL 524675 270434). The monitoring was carried out in order to observe the placement of a foundation raft and two drainage soakaways for a small bungalow.

Three areas were excavated by machine, revealing stratified Romano-British remains in two of these areas.

A large quantity of artefacts were recovered from the site, mainly from soakaway 1. The artefacts date predominantly to the late 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, and include Roman pottery and a large quantity of animal bones (including dog and horse skulls).

The quantity of artefacts was not unexpected considering the site lies in the centre of Roman Godmanchester, immediately adjacent to Ermine Street, and that previous evaluation trenches revealed a large quantity of material (Phillips 2007).

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>				
Project name	Archaeological Monitoring and Recording at Land to the rear of 8, New Street, Godmanchester			
Short description	Machine excavation of a foundation raft and two drainage soakaways revealed stratified roman deposits up to 1.4m below ground level. The main foundation raft area revealed no archaeological evidence as it only penetrated the surface by 0.5m. The two soakaway's revealed two ditches and at least two pits of probable Roman date. These subsequently sealed other layers/features that contained large quantities of Roman artefacts including pottery, bone, oyster shell and metallic objects.			
Project dates	Start	29/08/2007	End	29/08/2007
Previous work	CAM ARC Report. 974		Future work	No
Associated project reference codes	GODNES 07, HER Event No. ECB 2491, Planning Application no. 0602981FUL			
Type of project	Watching Brief			
Site status	Area of Archaeological Importance			
Current land use (list all that apply)	Garden			
Planned development	Residential			
Monument types / period (list all that apply)	Roman settlement/town			
Significant finds: Artefact type / period (list all that apply)	Roman pottery, large quantity of animal bone and metallic objects			
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>				
County	Cambridgeshire	Parish	Godmanchester	
HER for region	Cams			
Site address (including postcode)	8, New Street, Godmanchester, PE29 2JQ			
Study area (sq.m or ha)	30sq m			
National grid reference	TL 524675 270434			
Height OD	Min OD	10.37	Max OD	10.51
<b>PROJECT ORIGINATORS</b>				
Organisation	CAM ARC			
Project brief originator	Kasia Gdaniec			
Project design originator	Paul Spoerry			
Director/supervisor	Will Punchard			
Project manager	Paul Spoerry			
Sponsor or funding body	Developer/Exchange Developments			
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location and accession number</b>	<b>Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone, database, context sheets etc)</b>		
Physical	Cambridgeshire County Store	Pottery, animal bone, shell, small finds.		
Paper	Cambridgeshire County Store	Context sheets, site registers, plans, photo's		
Digital	CAM ARC	Photo's, Report, Finds Database		
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>				
Full title	Archaeological Monitoring and Recording at Land to the rear of 8, New Street, Godmanchester			
Author(s)	William Punchard			
Report number	974			
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Date	October 2007			

## **1 Geology and Topography**

The site lies on Oxford Clay, overlain by 1st and 2nd Terrace gravel deposits of the Great Ouse system. (British Geological Survey 1975).

## **2 Archaeological Background by T Phillips**

The development is situated in the core area of the Roman town of Durovigutum, close to the town centre and to the east of the Roman line of Ermine Street. Extensive published material is available regarding the development of the town and the long history of archaeological work that has taken place there (e.g. Green 1977). With regard to the current site, a watching brief was undertaken during the redevelopment of the front plot in 1978, which revealed a boundary ditch (potentially of 2nd century date), rubbish pits (1st and 2nd century date) and possible foundation slots for a timber-framed building. This was interpreted as a back yard plot belonging to tenements fronting onto Pinfold Lane, with the usual domestic rubbish pitting and other activities associated with such a location. More recently increased understanding of the likely extent of surviving deposits in this central part of the town and reassessment of Green's hypotheses regarding the 'Mansio' has been achieved through further small investigations at Pinfold Lane (Hinman 1998). The subject site lies close to the former line of Ermine Street and in a location where, as in 1998, complicated building sequences could be revealed immediately under topsoil. This potential, and the lessons learnt govern planned evaluative strategy.

Between 6th and 7th and 21st and 22nd of February 2007 CAM ARC, Cambridgeshire County Council (formerly Archaeological Field Unit) conducted an archaeological evaluation on land to the rear of 8 New Street, Godmanchester. A single trench, 10 metres in length, was excavated, revealing stratified Roman remains including pits, boundary ditches and layers dating predominantly to the 2nd and 3rd centuries. The site was particularly rich in artefacts, including coarse and fine ware pottery, glass and an ornate copper object. The density of archaeology was not unexpected given the location, in the centre of Roman Godmanchester, immediately adjacent to Ermine Street. It is possible the subject area is a backyard plot for a property fronting on to the main road, (e.g. Figure 4 ; Phillips 2007).

## **3 Methodology**

The objective of this watching brief was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within key areas relating to the deepest remaining development impacts and to ensure their appropriate record.

The Brief required that all ground penetrating works undertaken by the client would be observed by a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist, exposed archaeological features would be cleaned and excavated where safe to do so and any archaeological features exposed during ground works would be recorded and interpreted to an acceptable standard.

The work planned by the client included excavation for the construction of a foundation raft c.14.5m x 8m and positioned at a depth of 0.41m below ground level, and two drainage soakaways. Soakaway 1 was 1.70m x 1.80m and to a depth of 1.40m below ground level, Soakaway 2 was 1.60m x 1.60m and to a depth of 1.10m below ground level.

Three investigation areas were opened on the site using a wheeled type JCB with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket as described below.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using CAM ARC's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales, digital, colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

Site conditions were good with no adverse weather conditions and access to the site was clear at all times.

## **4 Results**

Layer 100 was assigned to the topsoil, a dark greyish brown sandy silt, which had a maximum depth of 0.45m.

Layer 101 was the subsoil, a mid brown silty sand with a maximum depth of 0.30m, which sealed archaeological deposits.

### **4.1 Foundation Raft (Trench 10)**

The foundation raft (recorded as Trench 10), was 16.5m x 8m and excavated by machine to a depth of up to 0.41m. Due to the nature of the proposed construction it was not necessary to excavate any deeper, thus only deposits 100 (topsoil) and a small amount of 101 (subsoil) were revealed. No archaeological features were encountered.

### **4.2 Soakaways**

Two soakaways were excavated by machine in order to let rainwater and ground run-off drain away from the proposed building.

Soakaway 1 was located to the Northern extreme of the site and Soakaway 2 located at the southern end of the excavation area (see fig. 2)

#### 4.2.1 Soakaway 1 (Trench 11)

This soakaway, located to the north of the excavation area, was 1.70m x 1.80m and excavated to a depth of 1.40m below ground level, natural geology was still not visible at this depth.

Several archaeological features were noted during the machining of this trench.

Pit **300** was only visible in section. It was a wide u-shape in profile, measuring 1.40m wide and 0.26m deep and containing three fills. The upper fill of the pit was (301), a mottled black and brown silty sand, with a depth of 0.16m. Below this was (302), a light white-ish grey ash deposit, 0.05m thick and containing flecks of charcoal. (303). The primary fill of **300** was an orangey brown sand with a maximum depth of 0.05m. Unfortunately there was no dateable material found within this pit, however it does overly layers known to be Roman in date.

Layer 304, a greenish brown silty clay, was visible in all sections of the trench. It had a maximum depth of 0.40m and sealed layer 305. It contained a small amount of animal bone but no dateable material.

Layer 305 was a light orangey brown deposit with a depth of 0.08m, visible in all sections of the trench; this may represent an occupational build-up or levelling layer. It contained a small amount of animal bone and late 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> century pottery.

Layer 306, a dark greenish brown silty sand clay deposit, was 0.3m in depth and contained some animal bone and late 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> century pottery. This layer sealed **307**, a circular feature only partially revealed in this trench. Machining was halted at this level as this feature was clearly visible and yielding a significant quantity of artefacts. Contexts 308 and 309 were interpreted as fills of **307**. 308, a light greenish/yellow silty sand contained some animal bone. 309, a dark brown silt, was very loose and contained a large amount of animal bone (c. 6.5kg's), including dog, horse and cattle bones along with a dog skull and a horse skull. This context also produced late 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century pottery and two iron objects. This feature was not excavated due to the depth reached and to time limitations.

#### 4.2.2 Soakaway 2 (Trench 12)

This soakaway was located to the southern end of the excavation area (see fig.2) and measured 1.60m x 1.60m, with a depth of 1.10m below ground level.

Ditch **310** ran north to south through the full extent of the trench and was planned before machining continued. It measured 0.60m wide and 0.26m deep and had a u-shaped profile. Its fill 311, a mottled orangey brown silty sand, contained no artefacts.

Ditch **312** ran parallel to **310**, north to south, along the extent of the trench. It measured 0.70m wide and 0.23m deep and had a u-shaped profile. It was filled by 313, a greyish brown silty sand which contained no artefacts.

Both ditches truncated layer 314, an orange gravel layer that extended throughout the trench and measured up to 0.22m deep. This could have been a levelling deposit. It contained no artefacts and it sealed layer 315.

Layer 315 was only partially excavated, to a depth of 0.05m, by machine and it was present throughout the entire trench. It was a greyish brown silty sand and contained one fragment of animal bone.

## **5 Discussion and Conclusion**

The excavation area yielded a high density of archaeological features for its size, suggesting a large amount of activity on the site and evidence of occupation over a long period of time.

The occurrence of dense Roman activity was not unexpected on the basis of the earlier evaluation results and given the location of the site in the centre of Roman Godmanchester close to public buildings such as the basilica and next to Ermine Street where occupation was most concentrated (Phillips 2007).

It is difficult to determine the function of most of the archaeological features found due to the small area excavated.

Pit **300** is the latest feature in the sequence, although it yielded no finds, the ashy layer 302 may represent hearth or fire waste, dumped into the pit.

Layers 304, 305 and 306 may represent occupational build up from domestic activity. The high quantity of animal bone found on the site and in these deposits suggests that there was domestic activity nearby.

Pit **307** contained a large amount of animal bone including dogs. This must be considered alongside the group of 30 pits found outside the kitchen of the *mansio* in 1970 (Green, in prep.) and is in addition to the articulated dog remains found in the evaluation trenches at this site (Faine in Phillips 2007). At the *mansio* nearly every pit had two dogs buried at the bottom and in many cases only part of the carcass was present. Green suggests they were buried for sacrificial purposes. In Cambridge a series of at least 13 deep shafts dating to the 3rd and early 4th centuries were discovered inside the Roman town. Each contained the burial of a mature dog of fox terrier size and the remains, often only a few bones, of an infant burial (Alexander and Pullinger 2000). Miranda Green (1992) has suggested deep shafts are used to communicate with the Otherworld with dog/hounds acting as guardians

for the infant after death (Phillips 2007). Despite such deposits elsewhere in Godmanchester and in Cambridge, Pit **307** is perhaps more likely to be some sort of rubbish pit rather than an example of these complex burials, mainly due to the mixture of disarticulated animal bone species within the fill, and despite a possibly ritualised explanation being suggested for the dog remains recovered in the earlier trenches here (Faine op. cit.). The pit also yielded some very interesting pottery, including part of a possible North African Amphora, and an example of late Romano British painted white ware from Oxford (Lyons, Pers comm.)

Ditches **310** and **312**, within Trench 12, ran parallel to each other and extend at a 90° angle to the suggested line of the Roman street plan of Godmanchester. This may indicate that they were boundary ditches marking out plots of land, however as neither produced any dateable evidence it is difficult to pinpoint an exact function and date. Alongside this they cut layers 314 and 315 but these also had no diagnostic artefacts within them and thus no date range is obtainable.

In conclusion this watching brief has shown that there is a significant amount of Roman archaeological activity on the development area that is probably of a domestic nature. However the adoption of a mitigation strategy whereby the proposed development is built on a foundation raft has ensured that minimal archaeology has been damaged or disturbed, enabling the rest to remain preserved *in situ*.

## Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Exchange Developments who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by Paul Spoerry.

The brief for archaeological works was written by Paul Spoerry.

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# Godmanchester (GOD NES 07), Cambridgeshire

## An Assessment of the Romano-British Pottery

By Alice Lyons

### *Introduction*

A total of 29 sherds, weighing 0.892kg (0.35% EVE) of Romano-British pottery were recovered during a watching brief to observe the placement of a foundation raft and two drainage soakaways for a small bungalow at land to the rear of 8, New Street, Godmanchester. This pottery is relatively fresh, with a large average sherd size of c. 31g. Evidence for use and wear has survived, indicating low levels of post-depositional disturbance (such as middening, ploughing and water damage). The pottery found was exclusively Roman-British in date.

The majority of datable pottery originates from the mid-to-late Roman period (2<sup>nd</sup> to early 4th centuries) and consists of locally produced coarse wares and fine wares imported from a variety of regional and European sources.

The majority of the assemblage (c. 70% by weight) was recovered from a possible pit (Table 1), with lesser amounts recovered from layers and the topsoil.

Feature	Quantity	Weight (kg)	EVE	Weight (%)
?Pit	18	0.626	0.29	70.18
Occupational build-up/layer	3	0.117	0.39	13.12
Layer	4	0.093	0.14	10.42
Topsoil	4	0.056	0.35	6.28
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>0.892</b>	<b>1.17</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 1. The feature types from which the assemblage was retrieved, listed in descending order of pottery weight (%).

### *Methodology*

The assemblage was assessed in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Study Group for Roman Pottery (Webster 1976; Darling 2004; Willis 2004). The total assemblage was studied and a preliminary catalogue was prepared.

The sherds were examined using a hand lens (x20 magnification) and were divided into fabric groups defined on the basis of inclusion types present. The fabric codes are descriptive and abbreviated by the main letters of the title (Sandy grey ware = SGW). Vessel form was recorded. The sherds were counted and weighed to the nearest whole gram. Decoration and abrasion were also noted.

## ***The Romano-British pottery***

(Tables 2 & 3; Appendix 1)

A total of sixteen Romano-British pottery fabrics were recovered during this watching brief, some in very small quantities.

### ***Coarse wares***

Shell tempered wares form the most common class of coarse ware. This product was produced in the Lower Nene Valley (Perrin 1999, 116-124) between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries. Only four jars sherds were recovered, one of which was a lid-seated jar.

Two fragments of Black Burnished Ware 1 (Tyers 1996, 182-6) produced in Dorset, constituting a jar with a cavetto rim and a straight-sided dish were also recovered. These were both burnished and wiped and are consistent with a production date of the late 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

<b>Fabric</b>	<b>Code (Appendix 1)</b>	<b>Vessel types</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Weight (kg)</b>	<b>EVE</b>	<b>Weight (%)</b>
Amphora	AMP		2	0.224	0.00	25.11
Shell tempered ware	STW	Lid-seated jar	4	0.150	0.12	16.83
Mancetter-Hartshill	MAH WAH	Mortarium (bead and flange)	1	0.126	0.00	14.13
Black burnished ware 1	BB1	Dish	2	0.079	0.16	8.86
Painted white ware	PWW	Jar/flagon	1	0.063	0.00	7.06
Trier colour coat	TrierCC	Beaker	2	0.055	0.00	6.17
Lower Nene Valley grey ware	LNVGW	Beaker with an everted rim and a medium mouthed jar with a bi-folded rim	4	0.053	0.32	5.94
Black burnished ware 2	BB2	Jar with cavetto rim	1	0.040	0.15	4.48
Sandy grey ware	SGW		3	0.035	0.00	3.92
Samian (EG)	SAM(EG)	Mortarium	1	0.015	0.14	1.68
Samian (CG)	SAM(CG)	Cup	2	0.012	0.13	1.35
Sandy oxidised ware	SOW		2	0.011	0.00	1.23
Gritty oxidised ware	OW(gritty)	Lid	1	0.010	0.06	1.12
Colchester colour coat	ColCC	Cornice rimmed beaker with roughcast decoration	1	0.007	0.05	0.78
Nene Valley colour coat	NVCC		1	0.007	0.00	0.78
Samian (SG)	SAM(SG)	Dish	1	0.005	0.04	0.56
<b>Total</b>			<b>29</b>	<b>0.892</b>	<b>1.17</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table 2. The Romano-British pottery quantified by fabric and listed in descending order of percentage of weight.**

Grey wares were well represented with four fragments of Lower Nene Valley grey ware (Perrin 1999, 112-116) found in the form of a beaker with an everted rim and a medium mouthed jar. Material of this type was produced

between the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> and early 4<sup>th</sup> centuries and was commonly distributed around the Fen-land basin.

The remaining grey wares include a Black Burnish ware 2 jar (Tyers 1996, 186-187) with a cavetto rim and several undiagnostic Sandy grey ware jar fragments. It is likely that both these fabrics were locally produced.

Other locally produced coarse wares include two small fragments of a Sandy Oxidised fabric and a gritty oxidised ware jar lid. The gritty oxidised ware may have been produced within Godmanchester as similar gritty wares have been found associated with kilns in the immediate locality (400m to the north at Park Lane; HER 01537).

### *Finewares*

Samian was relatively common in this small assemblage (3.59% by weight). A single South Gaulish dish was identified, as well as central Gaulish cup fragments and the remains of an East Gaulish mortarium. Samian (Tyers 1996, 105-114) is a distinctive red glossy fabric imported into Britain between the mid 1<sup>st</sup> and mid 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD. It was an expensive table ware indicative of the Roman way of life.

Other fine wares were also relatively well represented in this small assemblage, both local and imported.

A single Nene Valley colour coated sherd from a folded beaker was found. Vessels of this type were produced between the late 2<sup>nd</sup> and late 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The pottery production centre in the Nene Valley (Tyers 1996, 174-174) is the closest known to Godmanchester. It was a huge industry and supplied a lot of central-south England between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Also found was a single rim sherd from a Colchester colour-coat cornice rimmed bag shaped beaker, with roughcast decoration (Tyers 1996, 167-168). Vessels of this style were produced in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and distributed principally in East Anglia, the London basin and southern Britain.

Two base sherds from a small pedestal beaker produced in the Trier Valley (Tyers 1996, 138-139) in Germany, close to the border with north-west France, were identified. The vessel is has a dark glossy colour coat decorated with white paint and fine rouletting. These vessels are widespread in Britain as they were imported between the late 2<sup>nd</sup> and mid 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD.

### ***Specialist wares***

Although a small assemblage it contained several specialist vessels.

Two body sherds from a North African lime poor amphora were recovered (Tomber and Dore 1998, 102; Tyers 1996, 104). Vessels of this origin are not commonly found in this region and are therefore of particular interest. They were used to import olive oil and fish sauces from the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, but most commonly during the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.

Another sherd of interest was a Painted white ware body sherd, probably from a large (?amphora-class) flagon. This self-coloured fragment has a white slip decorated with a design in red paint. Vessels of this type are probably local copies of the late Roman Oxfordshire flagons (Tomber and Dore 1998, 176, C8.7), although a particularly close parallel and possible source can be found at the late Roman production centre at Two Mile Bottom (near Thetford) in Norfolk (Lyons 2003, 84-85, fig 54 1.12).

Also found was a single sherd from a bead and flange mortarium, produced in the Mancetter-Hartshill production centre on the Warwickshire/Leicestershire border (Tomber and Dore 1998, 188-189; Tyers 1996, 123-124). Mortarium were traded extensively throughout the Midlands during the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> to early 4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. A vessel of this type is consistent with production during the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> to early 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

## ***Discussion***

This is a small, well preserved assemblage that is closely datable and largely recovered from stratified deposits. The material within it dates from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to early 4<sup>th</sup> century, with the very latest Roman wares notably missing from this assemblage.

Situated on Ermine Street and the River Great Ouse (Jones 2003, 3) Godmanchester was ideally located to receive traded ceramics from Roman Britain and the wider empire. The range of fabrics and forms found during this watching brief reflect this with a high proportion of traded fine and specialist wares.

Analysis of this ceramic assemblage is relevant to the research aims of this region and will add to our understanding of this small town (Going 1997, 37). Analysis of this assemblage is also relevant to the research aims of the Study Group for Roman Pottery which directly identifies Godmanchester as key to understanding the production of Oxidised gritty wares in this region (Martin and Wallis, 2006, 3.7.1, iii and iv).

## ***Recommendation for further work***

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- |                           |      |  |
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## Appendix 1. The pottery catalogue

**Key:** C=century, E=Early, M= Mid, L=Late. R= rim, U= undecorated body sherd, D= decorated body sherd, B= base.  
The key to the fabric codes is shown in Table 2

Context	Cut	Feature	Fabric	Description	FORM	Quantity	Weight (g)	Rim Diameter	EVE	Abrasion	Spot date
100		TOPSOIL	SAM(CG)	R	CUP	1	10	14	13	Y	E-MC2
100		TOPSOIL	SAM(SG)	R	DISH	1	5	16	4	Y	M-LC1
100		TOPSOIL	OW(GRITTY)	R	LID	1	10	22	6	Y	C2-C3
100		TOPSOIL	LNVGW	R	JAR	1	31	14	12	Y	LC2-C3
304		LAYER OCCUPATIONAL BUILD-UP/LAYER	SAM(EG)	F	MORT	1	15	14	14	Y	LC2+
305		OCCUPATIONAL BUILD-UP/LAYER	STW	R	JAR	14	12	12	Y	N	C2-C3
305		OCCUPATIONAL BUILD-UP/LAYER	BB1	R	DISH	63	20	12	Y	N	C2-C3
305		OCCUPATIONAL BUILD-UP/LAYER	BB2	R	MJAR	40	12	15	YY	N	C2-C3
306		LAYER	TRIER CC	DB	BEAK	2	55			Y	LC2-MC3
306		LAYER	SGW	U	DISH	1	23			YY	C2-C4
309	307	?PIT	NAF AM 2	U	AMP	2	224			YY	C2-C3
309	307	?PIT	MAH WAH	R	MORT	1	126			YY	C2-C4
309	307	?PIT	STW	U	JAR	1	15			YY	LC2-EC4
309	307	?PIT	LNVGW	RU	BEAK	3	22	11	20	YY	C2-C4
309	307	?PIT	SGW	D	JAR	1	6			Y	C2-C3
309	307	?PIT	SOW	B	JAR	1	7			Y	C2-C4
309	307	?PIT	SOW	U	JAR	1	4			YY	C2-C4
309	307	?PIT	SAM(CG)	U	BOWL	1	2			Y	C2-C4
309	307	?PIT	STW	U	JAR	2	121			YY	C2-C4
309	307	?PIT	COLCC	R	BEAK	1	7	5	5	YY	C2-EC3
309	307	?PIT	BB1	R	DISH	1	16	22	4	YY	LC2-EC3
309	307	?PIT	PWW	D	JAR/FLAG	63			Y	N	C3
309	307	?PIT	SGW	U	JAR	1	6			Y	C2-C4
309	307	?PIT	NVCC	D	BEAK	1	7			Y	LC2-EC4

# **The faunal remains GODNES07**

Chris Faine

## **Introduction**

A total of 63 “countable” bones were recovered from the New Street, Godmanchester site with 26 fragments being unidentifiable to species (29.2% of the total sample). Fragments were obtained primarily from a probable pit context discovered during a watching brief. The condition of the assemblage is extremely good, with the majority of fragmentation being attributed to butchery rather than any taphonomic processes.

## **Methodology**

All data was initially recorded using a specially written MS Access database. All elements identifiable to species and over 25% complete were included in the database. Loose teeth, caudal vertebra and ribs without proximal epiphyses were noted but not included in any quantification. Elements not identifiable to species were classed as “large/medium/small mammal” but again not included in any quantification. Initially all elements were assessed in terms of siding (where appropriate), completeness, tooth wear stages (also where applicable) and epiphyseal fusion. Tooth wear was assessed using Grant (1982). Completeness was assessed in terms of percentage and zones present (after Dobney & Reilly, 1988). Initially the whole identifiable assemblage was quantified in terms of number of individual fragments (NISP) and minimum numbers of individuals MNI (see table 1).

Any instances of butchery were noted and recorded using a separate table from the main database. The type of lesion, its position, severity and direction were all noted. The presence of any further taphonomy, i.e. burning, gnawing etc was also noted. A separate table for any pathology, giving the position and type of lesion was also used.

## **The assemblage**

As mentioned above the vast majority of faunal remains were recovered from one context (**309**). These primarily consisted of the remains of two adult dogs (i.e. 1 ½ to 2 years of age). Examples of almost post-cranial elements were recovered, although it was only possible to calculate withers height for one individual, that being around 44cm at the shoulder. This is at the smaller end



of the size range given for dogs from other sites in Godmanchester (Harcourt, 1972, 1974 & Philips, 2007). Although metrical analysis was not possible on the other specimen, the size of the lumbar vertebrae suggests a much larger animal than the first. Two of these vertebrae show extensive osteophyte activity on their plantar articular surfaces and one healed fracture of the spinous process. Whilst these could be age related, the isolated nature of these lesions on just two elements could suggest a response to trauma (Teegen, 2002). This is borne out by the presence of partially healed rib fracture also seen on this specimen. The remainder of the faunal remains from this context consist of two heavily shattered cattle skulls from one male and one female individual, both around 3 years of age. An atlas associated with one of the skulls shows severe chop marks indicative of removal of the head.

Only two identifiable fragments were recovered from the remaining two contexts (**304 & 306**), consisting of butchered portions of cattle maxilla and inominate respectively.

## Conclusions

The presence of dog remains in this assemblage is not surprising given the results of past archaeological work in the area (Harcourt, 1972 & Phillips 2007). The use of dog remains in ritual contexts is well documented throughout Roman Britain and indeed the Roman world as a whole. Dogs can be associated with particular cult centres, such as Lydney, Gloucestershire, or offered as sacrifices at particular festivals, such as the *Lupercalia* (De Grossi Mazzorin & Minniti, 2002). Dog remains have also been found associated with building foundations in Caerwent and Chester le Street (Ibid). The presence of dog remains in pits, be they deliberately cut shafts or rubbish pits (as may be the case here) have been interpreted as offerings to the underworld (dogs being associated with the underworld throughout prehistory, Green, 1992). As mentioned earlier the contexts under consideration here need not specifically represent ritual deposition, but instead could be refuse deposits that took on ritual aspects with the addition of the dog remains. Although extremely small, this assemblage is at least in part associated with the ritual activity suggested by past archaeological work in the immediate area.

## References

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


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Species	NISP	NISP%	MNI	MNI%
Dog ( <i>Canis familiaris</i> )	44	69.9	2	25
Cattle ( <i>Bos</i> )	17	26.9	4	50
Sheep/Goat ( <i>Ovis/Capra</i> )	2	3.2	2	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1: Species distribution for the entire assemblage.

## Drawing Conventions

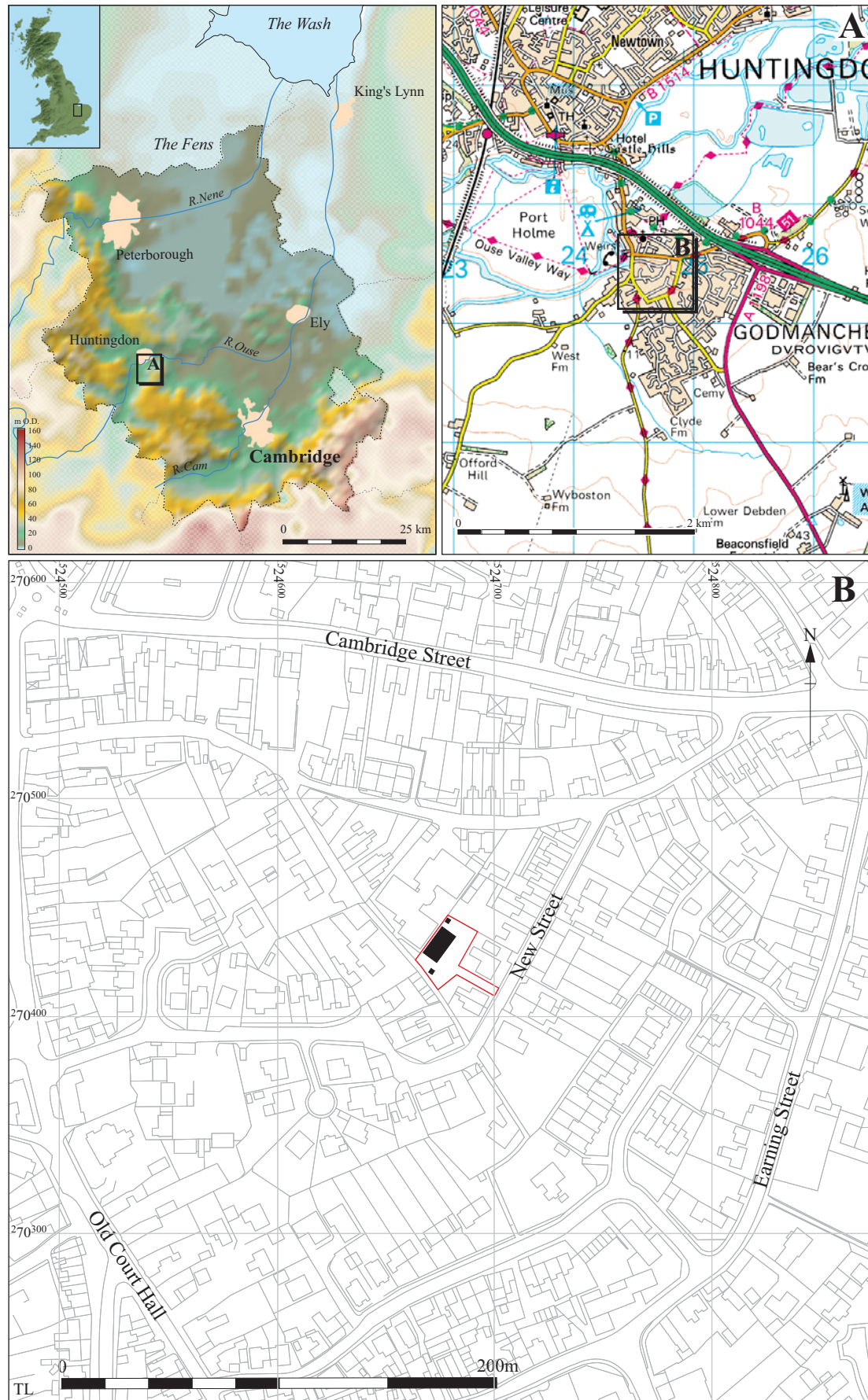
## Plans

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

## 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	<b>118</b>
Deposit Number	117
Ordnance Datum	18.45m OD ^
Inclusions	h

Figure 1: Convention key



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Figure 2: Location of trench (black) with the development area outlined (red)

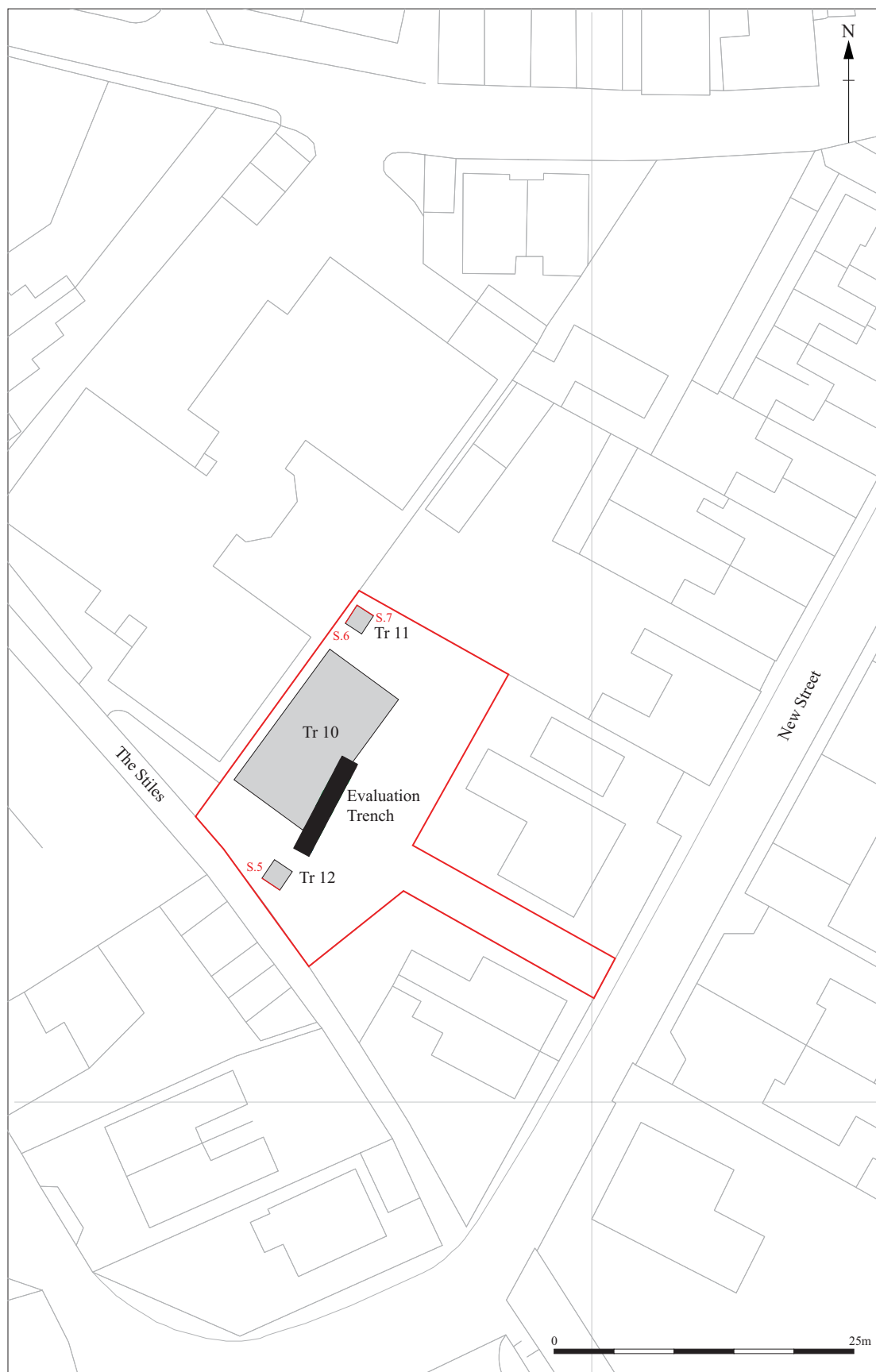


Figure 3: Location of watching brief trenches (grey) in relation to evaluation trench (black) within development area (red)

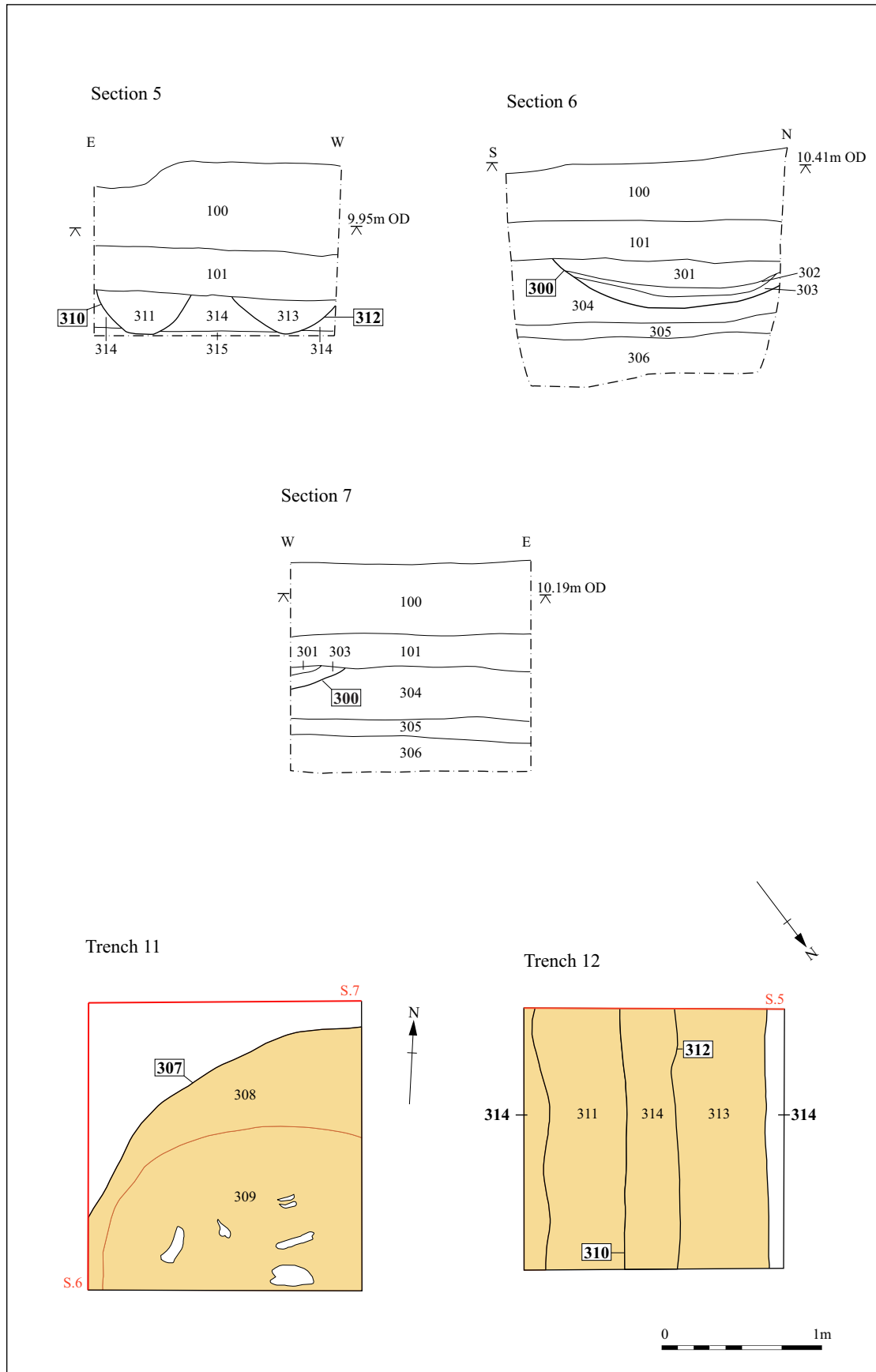


Figure 4: Trench plans and sections



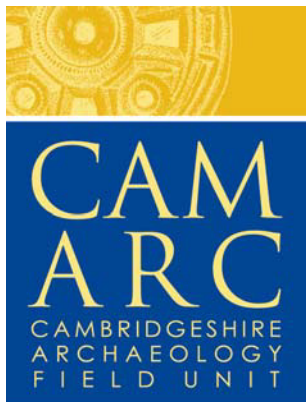


*Plate 1: Soakaway 1 (Trench 11) showing section 6  
looking west*



*Plate 2: Soakaway 2 (Trench 12) showing section 5, looking south*





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