



CAM ARC Report Number 973

Home Farm, High Ditch Road, Fen Ditton, Cambridgeshire

Evaluation

Scott Kenney

December 2007

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**Home Farm, High Ditch Road,
Fen Ditton, Cambridgeshire**

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Site Code: FDI HDR 07
CHER Event Number: ECB
Date of works: December 2007
Grid Ref: TL 4879 6019

Status			
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PROJECT DETAILS				
Project name	Evaluation at Home Farm, High Ditch Road, Fen Ditton			
Short description	An archaeological evaluation has been undertaken on land adjacent to Home Farm, High Ditch Road, Fen Ditton, Cambridgeshire (TL 4879 6019). Three trenches were opened up that revealed no archaeological features.			
Project dates	Start	11/12/07	End	11/12/07
Previous work	NA		Future work	no
Associated project reference codes	Site Code: FDI HDR 07 CHER Event Number: ECB			
Type of project	Evaluation			
Site status	None			
Current land use (list all that apply)	Farm yard			
Planned development	Housing			
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	Cambridgeshire	Parish	Fen Ditton	
HER for region	Cambridgeshire			
Site address (including postcode)	Home Farm, High Ditch Road, Fen Ditton Cambridge			
Study area (sq.m or ha)	2500 sq m			
National grid reference	Easting (6 figure)	548790	Northing (6 figure)	260190
Height OD	Max OD	14.3m	Min OD	12m
PROJECT ORIGINATORS				
Organisation	Cambridgeshire County Council, CAM ARC			
Project brief originator	Kasia Gdaniec			
Project design originator	Aileen Connor			
Director/supervisor	Scott Kenney			
Project manager	Aileen Connor			
Sponsor or funding body	Richard Fison			
ARCHIVES	Location and accession number		Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone, database, context sheets etc)	
Physical				
Paper	FDI HDR 07		Context sheets, indices, photographs	
Digital	FDI HDR 07		Database, digital photo's	
BIBLIOGRAPHY				
Full title	Home Farm, High Ditch Road, Fen Ditton, Cambridgeshire			
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Author(s)	Scott Kenney			
Date	December 07			

Summary

An archaeological evaluation has been undertaken on land adjacent to Home Farm, High Ditch Road, Fen Ditton, Cambridgeshire (TL 4879 6019). Three trenches were opened up that revealed no archaeological features.

The trenches had been placed to reveal a ditch seen in a previous evaluation on the adjoining plot in 2006 and thought likely to continue into the present subject area. It now seems likely that the ditch formed part of the boundary to the adjacent area, formerly called Townsend Farm Allotment, and that the ditch either terminated or turned towards the road.

In either case, no evidence was found for any ditch crossing the present subject area, clearly demonstrating the erroneous nature of the 'Northern Fleam Dyke' hypothesis.

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Geology and Topography	1
3	Archaeological and Historical Background	1
	3.1 Archaeological Background	1
	3.2 Historical Background	3
4	Methodology	5
5	Results	5
	5.1 Trench 1	5
	5.2 Trench 2	5
	5.3 Trench 3	5
6	Discussion	5
7	Conclusions	6
	Acknowledgements	7
	Bibliography	7
	List of Figures	
	Figure 1: Location map	8

1 Introduction

CAM ARC, Cambridgeshire County Council (formerly Archaeological Field Unit) has conducted an archaeological evaluation on 0.53ha of land adjacent to Home Farm, High Ditch road, Fen Ditton, Cambridgeshire.

This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Kasia Gdaniec of the Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and Countryside Advice team (CAPCA; Planning Application S/0970/05/F), supplemented by a Specification prepared by CAM ARC.

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 the Lower Beds of the Cretaceous Lower Chalk (British Geological Survey 1975). The BGS map also shows an area of Fourth Terrace River Gravels to the south of High Ditch Road, and this stratum was also encountered during the evaluation as a very thin layer overlying the chalk.

The site is divided by a gentle scarp running roughly east to west. To the north of this the ground is at about 14.3m OD and to the south it is about 1m lower. An Ordnance Survey benchmark is located on the opposite side of High Ditch Road and has the value 13.72m OD.

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 Archaeological Background

The Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER) records numerous sites and findspots within Fen Ditton, with the majority of these being medieval and post-medieval.

The Cambridgeshire Dykes have attracted much attention and debate over many years, a summary of which can be found in PCAS LXXXV

(Malim 1996, 27-122). Discussion has largely centred around their date and purpose. Three separate monuments are named Fleam Dyke and it is possible (although unproven) that they are part of a single boundary (*ibid.*, 58). The main part of the Dyke (also known as Balsham Ditch) runs from Dungate Farm, Balsham to Shardelow's well at Fulbourn. Here, the monument still exists as a major visible earthwork comprising ditch and bank. To the north of Shardelow's well is a putative extension which dog legs towards Great Wilbraham Fen, but is now entirely filled in and can only be seen as a cropmark, little intrusive investigation has been carried out on this section of the Dyke. The third monument, and the subject of this report, is the High Ditch at Fen Ditton. Put together the three would form a lazy **Z** shape across the landscape in contrast to the other dykes, which are all quite straight. High Ditch itself is indicated on a map of 1731/2 (CRO TR626/P1), lying south of the road to Quy that cut High Ditch Field in two. On later Ordnance Survey maps the ditch is shown on the north side of High Ditch Road, although there is little visible today.

Fox (1923, 34) notes that the Fen Ditton Fleam Dyke was most probably a local defensive earthwork when it was first constructed, forming the southern boundary to the tongue of land on which Horningsea stands, with Quy Water forming its eastern boundary and the river Cam to the west. He suggests (*ibid*) that the ditch was subsequently incorporated into the larger system that includes the Fulbourn section of the Dyke, but that this may have been in name only.

3.1.1 Prehistoric and Roman

To the southeast at Greenhouse Farm, excavations and other investigations revealed extensive Iron Age occupation (CHER 13023, CB14592) and conquest period kilns. In the field to the north of the present site, abraded sherds of Roman pottery were found during fieldwalking for the A45/A14 construction (CHER 11201A).

3.1.2 Saxon and medieval

There have been no finds of Saxon date from the vicinity of the current site although the village name has its origin in that period, meaning 'farm by the ditch'. The Church of St Mary the Virgin (CHER 00325) dates from the 12th century, although no standing fabric survives and the current building is mostly later.

The hypothesis of a northern arm to the Fleam Dyke (here called High Ditch), running eastwards from the river Cam at Fen Ditton to Teversham Fen is an idea that draws together several nominative sources, including the line of High Ditch Road and its name and the Saxon name of the village. Woodditton is similarly thought to be named for its proximity to Devil's Dyke. The name makes its first recorded

appearance (as *Heyditch*) in a 13th century document held at St John's College, Cambridge (Reaney 1943).

Mrs V. Pritchard found and recovered human remains and associated artefacts during widening of Newmarket Road at the Bottisham Fen end of the hypothetical northern section of the Fleam Dyke in 1957 (Lethbridge 1958). The exact location is not published but Lethbridge was confident that the burials were Early Anglo-Saxon in date and that they were buried in the top of a large ditch. This is the only archaeological investigation that has been carried out on the line of the putative northern arm of Fleam Dyke, although there have been several campaigns on the southern section e.g. Fox and Palmer 1921, 1922; Smith 1971; Taylor 1976; Wait 1991; Pelling 1992 (Malim 1996, 104).

3.1.3 Post-medieval and modern

Home Farm (CHER 05488) and the dovecote that stands in the farmyard (CHER 10411) are both 18th century although the house may have earlier origins.

3.1.4 Previous Archaeological Work

An evaluation on the adjacent plot to the east in 2006 revealed an 18th century ditch along the line described on the OS as 'line of Fleam Dyke'.

3.2 Historical Background

Fen Ditton sits within Flendish Hundred and is mentioned in land transactions before AD991 and the name itself means 'farm by the ditch' in Anglo-Saxon. The medieval village ran north adjacent to the river Cam with the church being its southern end and the manor house of the Bishops of Ely at the northern end. Only in the post-medieval period was the village extended eastwards along the road to Quy Mill (Wareham & Wright 2002).

High Ditch Road is so named by 1821, although the medieval field at the eastern end of the parish was referred to by this name earlier than this and High Ditch itself is indicated on a map of 1731/2 (CRO TR626/P1), lying south of the road to Quy that cut High Ditch Field in two.

The earliest known record of Fleam Dyke is *Flemesdich*, c.1260 referring to a ditch in the parish of Teversham (Reaney 1943, 35). None of the recorded names appear to directly relate to the segment of ditch found in Fen Ditton. By 1825 the Ditch was variously known as Queens, Fleam Dyke or Balsham Ditch. It is believed that Flendish Hundred is named after Fleam Dyke, which forms its northeastern boundary where it passes between Fulbourn and Great Wilbraham. By

the time it reaches Fen Ditton, however, the ditch does not form a boundary either for the Hundred or even the parish.

Fleam Dyke seems most commonly to have been referred to as the Ditch or the Great Ditch (Reaney 1943) and the early variants of Fleam are thought to be derived from Old English *fliem* (flight) or *flieming* (fugitive) (Banham 1996, 100). Reaney also notes (1943, 141) that a Fleame was the watercourse or race of a mill stream – the channel of water from the main stream to the mill, below which the streams unite, and that it also describes a large trench to carry water in order to drain meadows. Reaney dismisses this latter interpretation as unlikely to be the original meaning for Fleam Dyke, but it is perhaps worth reconsidering.

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 site was trenched in order to evaluate the presence or absence of archaeology.

Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a 360° tracked excavator using a toothless ditching bucket 1.8m wide.

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.

Environmental samples were taken from fills of different types of features and from those of different dates.

Site conditions during the evaluation were good and there were no factors that may have had an impact upon the validity of the results and conclusions. Consequently, the confidence rating to be applied to these results is high.

5 Results

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was 15m long, 0.3-0.4m deep and contained no archaeological features. The overburden removed by machine contained modern rubble and directly overlay natural chalk.

5.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was 12m long, 2.5m deep and contained no archaeological features. Dark greyish brown silty clay topsoil 0.3m thick overlay at least 2.5m of rubble and rubbish including plastic sheeting, 20th century bricks and non-rusted metal objects.

5.3 Trench 3

Trench 3 was 20m long, 0.7-1.0m deep and contained no archaeological features. Dark greyish brown silty clay topsoil 0.3m thick overlay a layer up to 0.4m thick containing topsoil mixed with rubble and hardcore.

6 Discussion

The hypothetical northern arm of Fleam Dyke has been extensively discussed in the 2006 report on the adjacent plot of land and will not be reiterated at length here (Kenney 2006).

Work on the subject site has reinforced the idea presented in 2006 that no major ditch or dyke of any great antiquity crosses the zone to the north of High Ditch Road, in contrast to what is currently indicated on all Ordnance Survey maps.

If no such Dyke existed, either of Saxon or earlier construction, what might the name Ditton mean in this particular context, or to what might it refer? As has been stated earlier in this report, the name Ditton is formed from two Saxon words *dic-tun*, and the meaning is usually given as 'farm by the ditch or dyke'.

While the derivation of the modern name Ditton is not always identical, other examples found throughout England also attest to the fact that not all villages so named are adjacent to a ditch or dyke. Ditton Priors in Shropshire is at a considerable elevation in the shadow of Clee Hill and the name is interpreted as 'place near a hill' (Currie 1998). Thames Ditton in Surrey is on the banks of the Thames as the name indicates, and the 11th century spelling (*Ditone*) is almost identical to the 10th century spelling for Fen Ditton (*Dittone*), probably indicating the same derivation (Malden 1911). Ditton in Kent, while given the same interpretation as Fen Ditton, is explained as having a stream

running through it, this presumably being the 'ditch or dyke'. Hasted's *History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent* states that 'Westward from Allington lies the parish of Ditton, called in antient records, Dictune. It takes its name from the Saxon words *dic* and *tune*, which signify the village situated on the dike, or trench of water' (Hasted 1798).

Thus it may be that the location of the ancient part of the village on the bank of the River Cam lent its name to the settlement, perhaps as a rather wry joke. Honey Hill after all is a common name for a very muddy place (Reaney 1943).

7 Conclusions

The evaluation has demonstrated that no archaeology earlier than 20th century exists within the development area. The scarp that runs across the site may have originally been natural and was later modified, although there is no evidence to indicate that it was related to the putative northern arm of Fleam Dyke. In this particular area, there is some evidence that a certain amount of landscaping has taken place to enhance and accentuate the scarp and the flat zone to the north of it.

It seems clear from this work and the previous evaluation undertaken in 2006 that there is no longer a case for suggesting that the scarp seen to the east of Fen Ditton is anything other than natural. At this point, the only remaining remote possibility is that the line of the northern arm of Fleam Dyke lies precisely below the modern road, an extremely unlikely proposal.

It is rather more likely that there never was a major dyke across this landscape, that the road takes its name from the medieval field, and that the features identified as part of the course of the 'dyke' were overenthusiastically interpreted in the past without any sound basis.

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

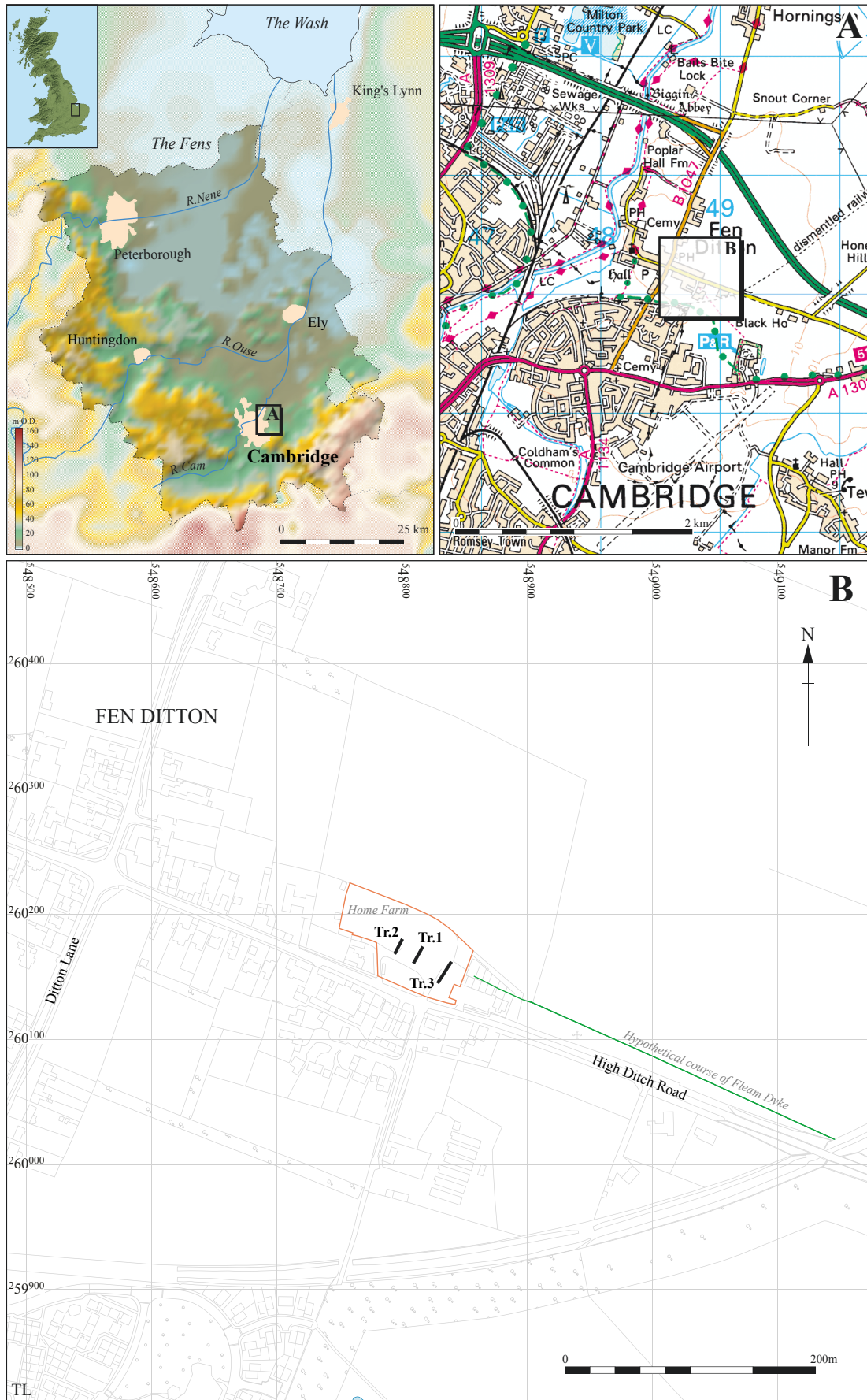
Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Richard Fison who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by Aileen Connor who also edited the report. Séverine Bézie produced the illustrations.

The brief for archaeological works was written by Kasia Gdaniec, who monitored the evaluation.

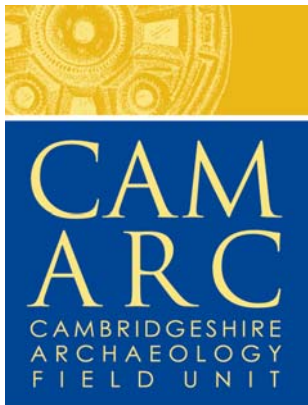
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Figure 1: Location of trenches (black) with the development area outlined (red)



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