

Archaeological Field Unit

**Iron Age Settlement and Post Medieval Features at  
36b St Johns Road, Ely.  
An Archaeological Evaluation**

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**Cambridgeshire County Council**

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**Iron Age Settlement and Post Medieval Features at 36b St Johns Road, Ely.  
An Archaeological Evaluation**

TL 5337 8024

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2000

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## **SUMMARY**

*An archaeological evaluation was carried out at 36B St John's Road, Ely, Cambridgeshire (TL 5337 8024) to inform the planning process in advance of the construction of nine dwellings and associated garages. The work was carried out by the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council between 27<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> November, 2000.*

*A total of 5 Trenches were excavated, four contained archaeological features. A series of ditches, pits and postholes and a possible roundhouse were observed some of which produced artefacts dating from the late Iron Age. An assemblage of late Iron Age Plain Ware pottery was recovered, which is characteristic in sites of this period in the Southern Fens. In addition well preserved plant remains including spelt, emmer wheat, six-row barley and various wild taxa were recovered from two pit contexts. A pit containing bricks from the late medieval period/post medieval period, adjacent to a post medieval well was also found.*

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**NGR (TL 5337 8024)**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

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**2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

The site lies on the western side of the centre of Ely, 500m southwest of the Cathedral and within 50m of the site of the medieval hospitals of St John the Baptist and St Mary Magdelene. The site is located on uneven ground, sloping downwards from 20.82m OD, in the southern part of the site, to 20.48m OD to the north. The temporary benchmark located in the centre of the site was 21.03m OD.

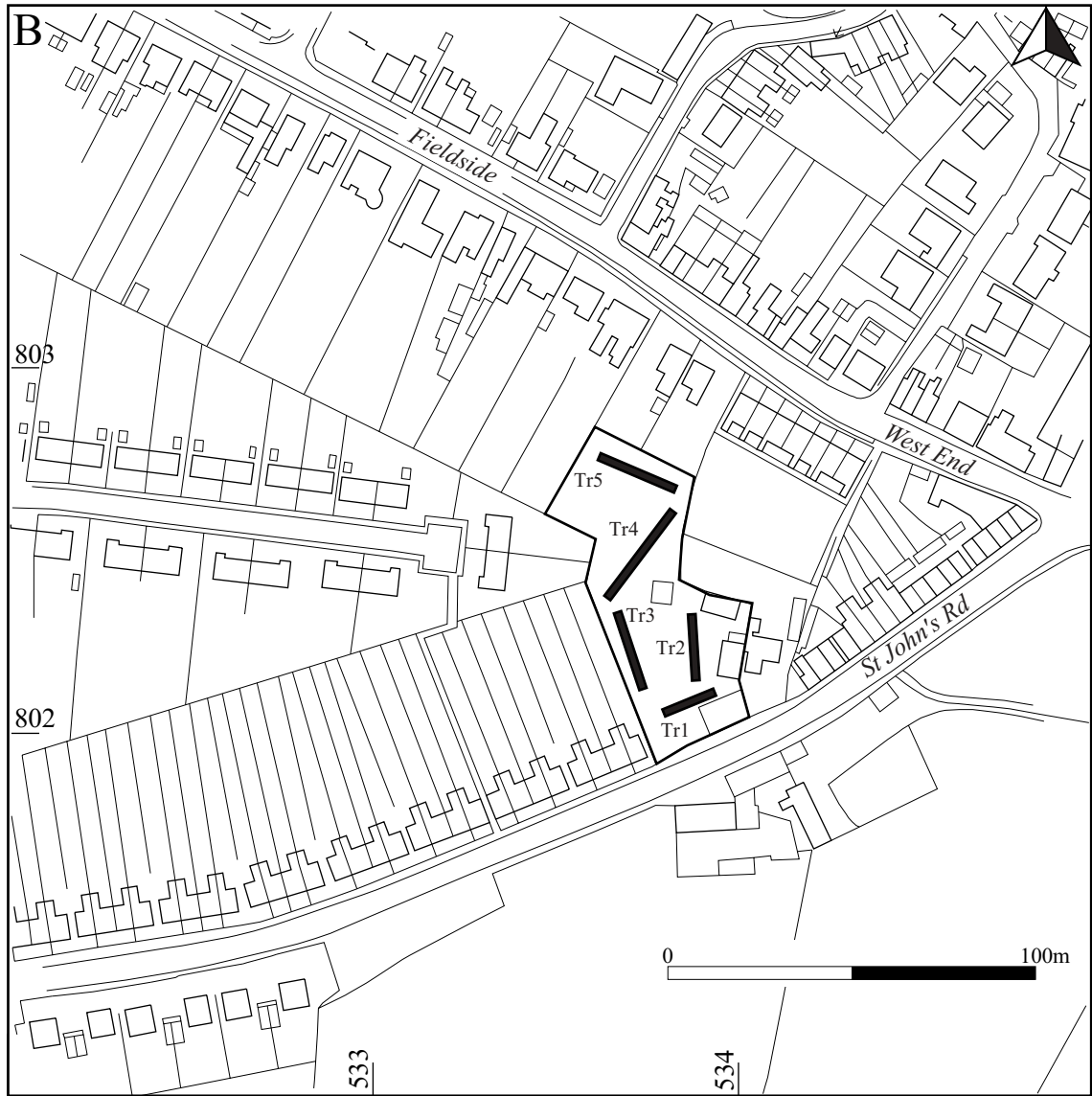
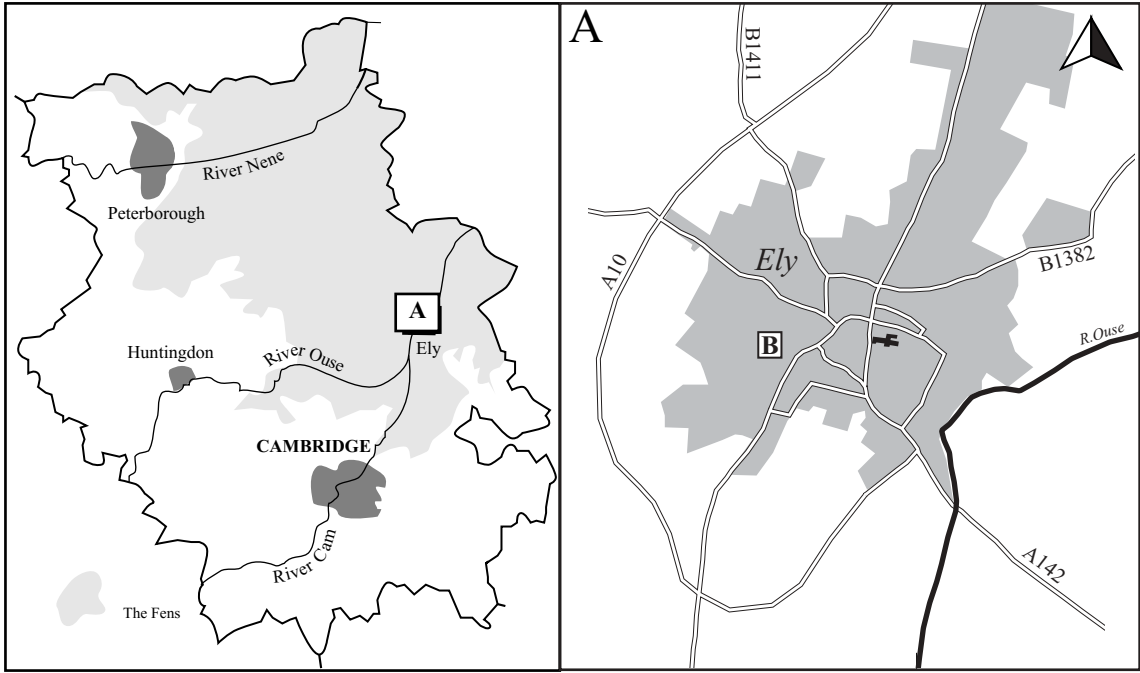
The subject site was bordered on its northern, eastern and western edges by the gardens of adjacent residential properties. In the south it was bordered by St Johns Road.

The local geology is Lower Greensand.

**3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (from SMR, VCH, & Owen 1992)**

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 *ael-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 N and built a monastery there in 673. This site



TL

**Figure 1** Site Location Map

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later became the town of Ely, because the people of Cratendune 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 (Mortimer 1999).

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. 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. 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, (directly opposite the site), 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 which continued to dominate its financial fortunes.

St John's Road runs into West End to the north, which itself joins St Mary's Street to the east. Cambridge Road is recorded as *Stanweye* in 1319, and a section of it is part of the probable course of a Roman road. West Fen Road was formerly known as "Cow Lane" and St John's Road was not named on John Speed's map in 1610. He shows what appears to be a walled enclosure around major buildings on the eastern side at the junction of St John's Road and West End, with some smaller domestic buildings on the western corner opposite. The approximate area of the site is shown as open land.

## **4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

The earliest evidence for occupation on the summit of the Ely island is in the form of Neolithic flint artefacts from the Bray's Lane excavation (SMR 10475a). Bronze Age features were also found on the same site (SMR 10475b). Later occupation from the Iron Age was uncovered just southeast of the Cathedral (Hunter 1991). The Iron Age features consisted of substantial enclosure ditches and probable eaves drainage/ house gullies, with few other features. The material recovered from these features consisted of pottery with 'early' and 'late' characteristics, two phases of Iron Age occupation were identified stratigraphically (Mudd 2000). Further extensive Iron Age, Roman and Saxon occupation has been revealed by excavations at West Fen Road during 1999-2000 (Evans & Knight, 2000, Masser & Evans, 1999, Mortimer, 2000, Regan, 2000 and Regan forthcoming). Middle and late Saxon pottery was found at 2 West End, just to the southwest of the present site (Kenney 1999). A very similar assemblage was recovered from the excavation at the former Red, White and Blue public house, Chief's Street (Kenney, forthcoming). A middle Saxon presence has recently been identified during excavations at Broad Street (Alexander, forthcoming). Late Saxon pottery was found in the earliest features during investigations at Upherds Lane (Taylor-Wilson 1992). A single sherd of middle Saxon pottery along with late Saxon pottery was found at St Mary's Lodge in St Mary's Street (Robinson 2000). Late Saxon pottery was also found at Chapel Street (Hinman 1996). What is not known is the exact extent and form of middle and late Saxon Ely. Recent work within the city at West End and Chief's Street has revealed a middle Saxon presence in this area. Excavations at the Lady Chapel produced an important assemblage of mid-late Saxon ceramic (Regan forthcoming). Excavations at West Fen Road have also produced evidence of this period, suggesting that the area around Etheldreda's monastic foundation was not the only focus of settlement at this time. Numerous excavations in Ely have produced medieval finds, and evidence has been found in several locations of surviving fragments of medieval structures. Some standing buildings have medieval fabric within them, including the farm buildings at the northern end of St John's road, formerly the hospitals of St John the Baptist and St Mary Magdelene (SMR 07342, a, b, c, SMR 08435). 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. Over the past few years, several production sites have been examined and the local wares are currently the subject of detailed analysis, (Spoerry, forthcoming).

## **5 METHODOLOGY**

Five Trenches totalling 106.95m in length, were located within the area of a proposed development, consisting of nine dwellings and associated garages. This gave a 5.3% sample of the affected area. Topsoil and modern overburden were removed using a wheeled mechanical excavator with a flat bladed



ditching bucket to a width of 1.50m. This was carried out under the full time supervision of an archaeologist. Trenches were located to give a representative sample of the available area.

After machining each Trench was photographed. A sample of every archaeological feature was excavated by hand in order to determine date and character. The AFU's single context based recording system was used to record all the archaeological features and deposits, sections were hand drawn at a scale of 1:10 for features, and 1:50 in the case of entire evaluation Trench sections. Plans were hand drawn at a scale of 1:50. In addition all the spoil heaps from the Trenches were scanned for artefacts by eye and a metal detector was used to scan for metal artefacts.

In this report deposit numbers are shown in plain text and cut numbers are in **bold** text. Detailed descriptions of the character and morphology of each feature are listed below the main text for each Trench.

## **6 RESULTS**

All the features discussed below were sealed by subsoil 64, except the post medieval features **44**, **52** and **76** (Trenches 1, 2 & 4 respectively) that clearly truncated it. However some mixing between this subsoil and the deposits within these features is likely in all cases, as the boundary between the subsoil and the features concerned was imperceptible.

### **6.1 Trench 1**

Trench 1 was 15.00m long 1.50m wide and 1.00m to 1.05m deep and aligned east-north-east to west-south-west (see Fig 2). Trench 1 contained four archaeological features cutting into the natural geology.

#### **6.1.1 Iron Age**

Pit **46** was adjacent to the extreme eastern end of Trench 1. The full extent of this feature was not revealed. It contained one fill 45 from which sherds of late Iron Age pottery and fragments of animal bone were recovered.

#### **6.1.2 Post medieval**

Circular Pit **48** contained two fills 47 and 49 both of which contained brickwork and mortar finds which date to the later medieval/early post medieval period. Feature **44**, a post medieval well, truncated the northwest part of **48**. This stratigraphically later feature was only partially revealed by the Trench, however part of the well construction cut **44**, with its backfill 43 and the internal post medieval brickwork 74 was clearly visible in the south facing baulk of Trench 1. It is possible that feature **48** is actually an earlier

well rather than a pit, which was replaced in the post medieval period by well **44**.

It is also possible that although the upper (visible) part of well **44** is clearly post medieval, it may have been built on the foundations of an earlier well. However, the fact that the well construction cut of **44** truncates the late medieval pit **48**, would suggest that the construction date for **44** is indeed post medieval.

The latest feature in Trench 1 was posthole **62**, which truncated both **48** and **44**, making it post medieval in date. Its location on the southern periphery of the construction cut **44**, suggests that it may be associated with the well, possibly part of a structure built over the well. Open area excavation would be necessary to confirm whether other postholes exist to support the existence of such a structure.

### **6.1.3 Detail of layers and features**

The topsoil 68 was a mid-brown fine sand layer 0.20m to 0.25m deep, with frequent inclusions of modern building rubble this was of recent origin. Below this was a series of modern demolition/dumping deposits. Layer 69 was a layer of 20<sup>th</sup> century bricks and mortar 0.10m to 0.15m deep. Layer 70 was a mid brown fine sand with frequent modern red brick fragments, This sealed layer 71 which was another layer of 20<sup>th</sup> century bricks and mortar 0.05m to 0.10m deep. Below this was layer 64 a dark brown, fine sand layer with occasional small pebbles, this well sorted, organic rich layer may represent a former garden or agricultural soil. Layer 64 was 0.50m deep. The natural geological layer 72 was a dark orange medium gravel and coarse sand. This was encountered at a depth of 1.00m in Trench 1.

**44**, 1.20m long, 0.30m wide, visible depth at least 1.00m (not fully exc), semi-circular In plan, near vertical sides, contained two fills:

Fill 43, olive mid brown silty clay, frequent rounded medium pebbles.

Fill 74, post medieval brick and mortar lining of well 44. Bricks were laid in regular courses, and were dark red in colour, slightly thinner than the most modern bricks at 0.06m.

**46**, 1.20m long, 0.80m wide, 0.35m deep, rounded pit shape in plan, irregular sloping sides, contained one fill:

Fill 45, greenish grey silty clay, occasional small angular pebbles, pottery and bone fragments.

The full extent of feature 46 was obscured by the edges of Trench 1, full dimensions not known.

**48**, 2.40m long, 1.50m wide (within the Trench), rounded pit/well shape in plan, contained two fills:

Fill 47, mid brown silty clay, frequent brick and mortar fragments.

Fill 49, orangeish light brown silty clay, occasional brick and mortar pieces.

**62**, 0.50m diameter, circular shape in plan, contained one fill.

Fill 61, light brown silty clay, moderate amounts of rounded pebbles.

## 6.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was 18.00m long 1.50m wide and 0.87m deep and aligned north-south (see Fig.2). Trench 2 contained 5 features recorded cutting into the natural geology.

### 6.2.1 Iron Age

A ditch **58** was located at the northern end of the Trench, on a northeast-southwest alignment. This ditch contained no artefactual evidence, however it shares a very similar fill to features **11**, **13**, **17**, and **31** in Trenches 4 and 5, all of which contained pot sherds of late Iron Age date. While this does not confirm that these features are contemporary, similarities in morphology and character can suggest a similar date for discrete features, any association would have to be confirmed through open area excavation.

Three postholes **50**, **55** and **56** were recorded within the Trench. Posthole **50** was located 0.15m from the southern end of the Trench. Posthole **55** was located 2.50m from the northern end of Trench 2, and posthole **56** was located 1.00m from the northern end of Trench 2. None of these features produced any artefactual evidence, however **56** was located very close to ditch **58** with which it shared an almost identical fill.

### 6.2.2 Post Medieval

Depression **52** delimited a series of compressed post medieval layers 53 and extended c13.00m from the southern end of Trench 1 Layer 53, a very compacted mid/dark grey sandy silt deposit, contained frequent lenses of ash, modern brick fragments and re-deposited natural gravel and sand. It was present directly below the modern topsoil 68 at the southern end of the trench. Lenses of modern brick fragments were observed as tip lines particularly in the eastern end of Trench 1. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this part of the site was used in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (post WWII) for tracking heavy military vehicles, particularly tanks across. Continued passage of such vehicles across the same patch of land would have the effect of churning upper soil layers and compacting lower layers. This may well have led to the 0.15m 'truncation' into the natural geology, which feature **52** has created.

### 6.2.3 Detail of Layers and Features

The topsoil 68 was a mid-brown fine sand layer 0.20m to 0.25m deep, with frequent inclusions of modern building rubble this was of recent origin. Below this was layer 64 a dark brown, fine sand layer with occasional small pebbles, this well sorted, organic rich layer may represent a former garden or agricultural soil. Layer 64 was 0.60m deep. The natural geological layer 72 was a dark orange medium gravel and coarse sand. This was encountered at a depth of 0.85m in Trench 2.

**50**, 0.25m diameter, 0.11m deep, circular shape in plan, contained one fill:  
Fill 51, mid greyish brown silty sand, very occasional small gravel.

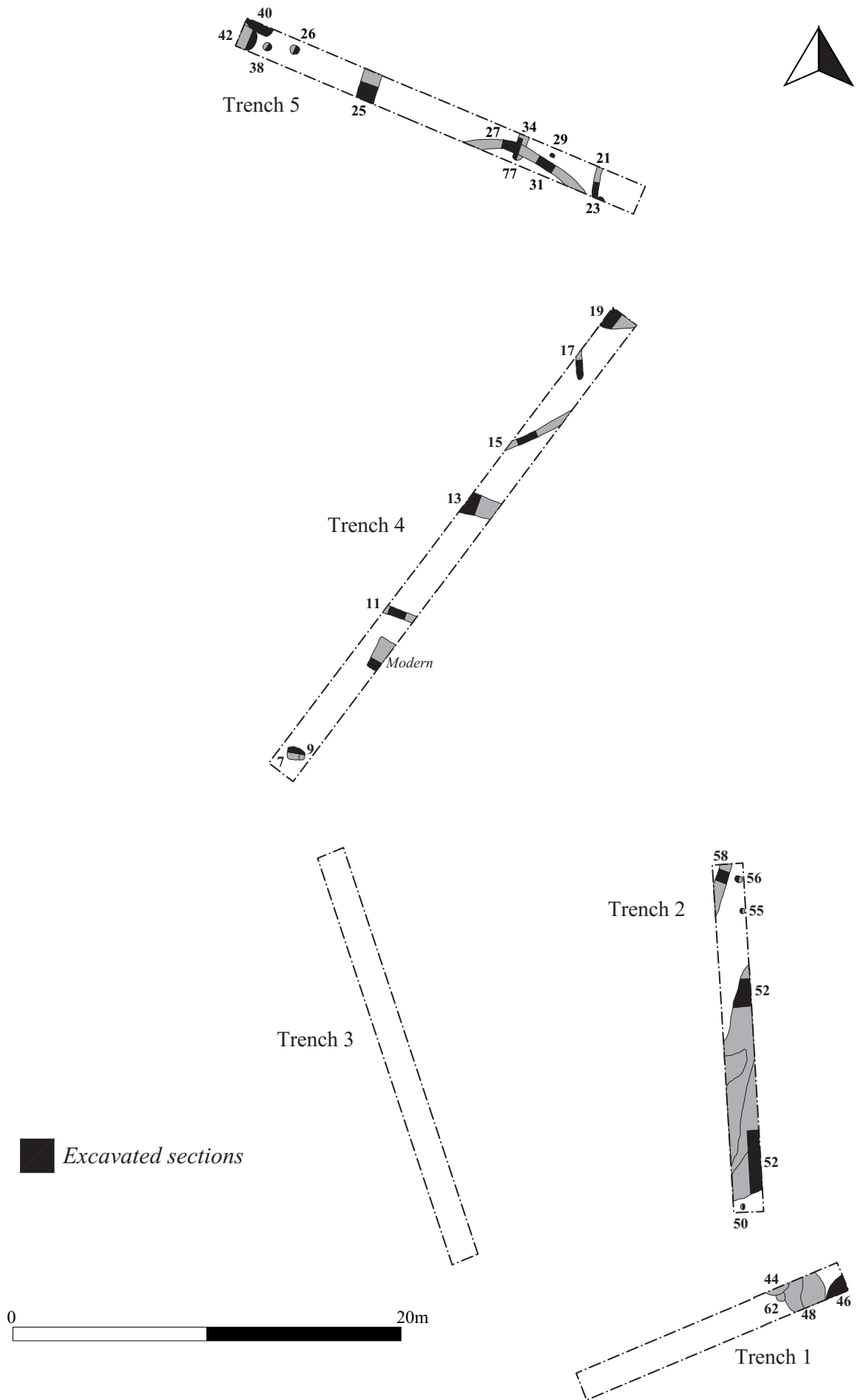


Figure 2 Trench plans

**52**, 12.00m wide, 0.15m deep, linear ditch shape in plan, sloping sides, flat, undulating base, contained one fill, aligned northeast-southwest:

Fill 53, grey/brown sandy silt, frequent small gravel, moderate amounts of modern brick fragments in lenses.

**54**, 0.27m diameter, 0.06m deep, circular shape in plan, convex sloping sides, convex base, contained one fill:

Fill 55, mid yellowish brown silty sand, occasional small gravel.

**56**, 0.38m long, 0.33m wide, 0.29m deep, sub square shape in plan, near vertical sides, slightly convex base, contained one fill:

Fill 57, orangeish mid-brown silty sand, occasional small gravel.

**58**, 0.65m wide, 0.17m deep, ditch shape in plan, steep/flat sides, flat base, northeast-southwest alignment, contained one fill:

Fill 59, orangeish mid-brown silty sand, occasional small gravel.

### **6.3 Trench 3**

Trench 3 was 22.00m long 1.50m wide and 1.10m to 0.80m deep aligned southeast-northwest (see Fig.2). Trench 3 contained no archaeological features.

#### **6.3.1 Detail of Layers**

The topsoil 68 was a mid-brown fine sand layer 0.25m to 0.30m deep, with frequent inclusions of modern building rubble this was of recent origin. Below this was layer 66, a mid-orange, medium sand deposit with no inclusions, 0.10m deep. This deposit was recorded extending 5.00m from the northwest end on Trench 3, and is likely to be associated with modern building surfaces. Below this layer 65 was a dark brown fine sand with modern brick fragments this was a depth of 0.15m to 0.10m deep. Sealed by this was 64 a dark brown, fine sand layer with occasional small pebbles, this well sorted, organic rich layer may represent a former garden or agricultural soil. Layer 64 was 0.50m deep. A further deposit 73 was recorded, this light-brownish orange deposit measured 0.30m deep in the southeastern end of Trench 3, and tapered to the northwest, disappearing 2.00m from the northwestern end of the Trench. This layer contained some dark brown mottling due to bioturbation. The natural geological layer 72 was a dark orange medium gravel and coarse sand. This was encountered at a depth of 0.95m in Trench 3.

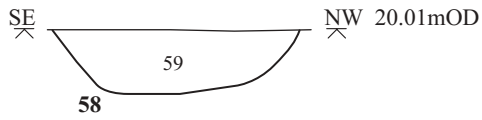
### **6.4 Trench 4**

Trench 4 was 29.80m long 1.50m wide and 0.50m to 1.00m deep, and aligned southwest to northeast (see Fig.2). Trench 4 contained 6 archaeological features recorded cutting into the natural geology.

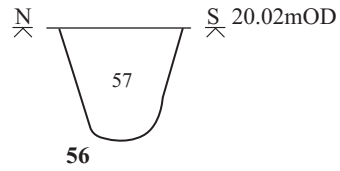
Section 1



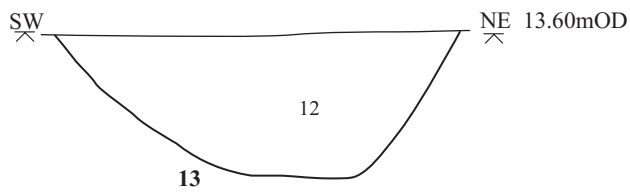
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Section 3



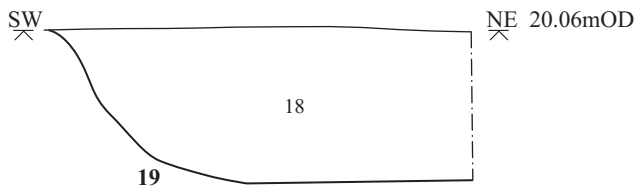
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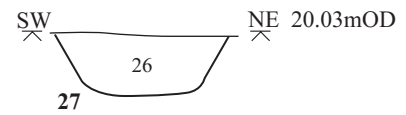
Section 5



Section 6



Section 7



Section 8



Figure 3 Sections

### 6.4.1 Iron Age

Pit 7 and posthole 9 were located 0.80m from the southwest end of the trench. Posthole 9 truncated deposit 6 (within 7), which contained late Iron Age pottery. Ditch 11, located 10.00m from the southwestern end of Trench 4 contained one fill 10, which produced an 'Aucissa' brooch dating to the late pre Roman Iron Age (between 43 – 50 AD C Montague *pers comm*), pottery sherds dating to the late Iron Age and worked flint. Ditch 13 was located 16.50m metres from the southwestern end of Trench 4. This was aligned east-north-east to west-south-west and produced pottery dating to the late Iron Age, and one sherd of Roman date. Located 20.50m from the southwestern end of Trench 4 was ditch 15, this contained no artefactual evidence, however the deposit 14 shared similarities with other features within Trench 4. Ditch terminal end 17 located 26.50m from the southwestern end of the Trench contained late Iron Age pottery and one sherd of Roman pottery, it is possible that this feature shares an alignment with ditch 27 in Trench 5 (see Discussion below). Pit 19 located at the extreme northeastern end of the Trench contained late Iron Age pottery, the full extent of 19 was not revealed by this Trench.

### 6.4.2 Modern

Pit 76 contained modern building material, this feature is of no archaeological interest.

### 6.4.3 Detail of Layers and Features

The topsoil 68 was a mid-brown fine sand layer 0.15m to 0.25m deep, with frequent inclusions of modern building rubble this was of recent origin. This extended 12.00m where it merged with 63 a mid-brown fine sand layer, 0.25m deep, essentially the same deposit as 68, this layer contained no building rubble, it is a modern garden soil. Below this layer 67 this extended 6.50m from the southwestern end of Trench 4, a dark brown fine sand with frequent rounded flint pebbles this deposit was 0.10m deep. Below this layer 66 a mid-orange, medium sand deposit with no inclusions measured 0.10m deep, this extended 8.00m from the southwestern end of Trench 4. Layer 65 lay below this and extended the same distance, it was a dark brown fine sand containing frequent modern brick fragments. All the above deposits are likely to be associated with modern building activity in the southwestern end of this Trench. Sealed by these deposits was 64 a dark brown, fine sand layer with occasional small pebbles, this well sorted, organic rich layer may represent a former garden or agricultural soil. Layer 64 was 0.25m to 0.50m deep. The natural geological layer 72 was a dark orange medium gravel and coarse sand. This was encountered at a depth of 0.50m to 1.00m in Trench 4.

7, 0.70m wide, 0.13m deep, sub-rectangular in plan, sloping sides, slightly convex base, contained one fill, aligned northwest-southeast:

Fill 6, a mid-greyish brown silty sand, occasional small gravel, very occasional charcoal flecks.

Feature 9, truncates deposit 6

**9**, 0.32m wide, 0.45m long, 0.13m deep, sub rectangular in plan, steep sided, slightly convex base, contained one fill, aligned northeast-southwest:

Fill 8, a mid-orangeish brown silty sand, occasional small gravel.

**11**, 0.55m wide, 0.10m deep, ditch shape in plan, sloping slightly convex sides, slightly convex base, contained one fill, aligned east-north-east to west-south-west:

Fill 10, a mid greyish brown sandy silt, occasional pottery sherds and bone fragments.

Deposit 10 contained small find 1, an 'Aucissa' brooch, this dates to 43 – 50 AD.

**13**, 1.08m wide, 0.98m deep, ditch shape in plan, steep concave sides, v-shape base, contained one fill, aligned east-north-east to west-south-west:

Fill 12, a mid greyish brown sandy clay, occasional pottery sherds and bone fragments.

**15**, 0.37m wide, 0.09m deep, ditch shape in plan, steep sides, flat base, contained one fill, aligned northeast-southwest:

Fill 14, a mid greyish brown sandy silt, no inclusions.

**17**, 0.33m wide, 0.07m deep, ditch terminal end shape in plan, sloping sides, slightly concave base, contained one fill, aligned northwest-southeast:

Fill 16, a mid greyish brown sandy silt, occasional pottery sherds and pieces of slag.

**19**, 1.20m wide (within Trench), 0.45m deep, circular shape in plan, flat base, contained one fill.

Fill 18, a light brown silty clay, occasional small pebbles, contained pottery and bone.

**76**, 1.75m long, 0.80m wide, square shape in plan, steep flat sides, contained one fill:

Fill 75, mid brown fine sand, moderate amounts of modern building material.

## **6.5 Trench 5**

Trench 5 was 22.15m long 1.50m wide and 0.30m to 0.50m deep, and aligned southeast to northwest (see Fig.2). Trench 5 contained 10 archaeological features recorded cutting into the natural geology.

### **6.5.1 Iron Age**

Posthole **23** and ditch **21** were located at c2.00m, share identical fills and appear to be contemporary. Both features contained late Iron Age pottery, **21** also contains bone fragments and **23** contains slag. The slightly curvilinear north-south alignment and morphology of **21**, suggests that if a wider area were opened up this feature may curve round to form a roundhouse gully, to the southeast of Trench 5.

Ditch slots **77** and **34** are part of the same ditch, **77** being its terminal end. They are aligned northeast-southwest, and appear to be contemporary with **27/31**, with which they share identical fills. Feature **34** contained late Iron Age pottery. A curvilinear ditch through which two segments **27** and **31** were excavated truncated this ditch.

Ditch slot **31** contained pottery dating to the late Iron Age. Slot **27** contained no finds, however both slots have identical fills and profiles (see Fig.3). This curvilinear feature may also continue beyond the confines of the Trench to become an enclosure or possible roundhouse feature, to the south of Trench 5.



A posthole **29** was recorded c0.25m north of the curvilinear ditch described above. This contained one fill 28, which contained no finds but appeared contemporary with the other features in its vicinity.

Two other postholes were recorded further to the northwest, **36** and **38**. These were identical in character and morphology, and although they contained no finds, appear to be part of the same phase of activity as those features containing late Iron age artefacts.

At the extreme northwestern end of the Trench, two pit features were located. Pit **40** truncated **42**. Again they appear broadly contemporary, sharing similar fills and both producing pottery of late Iron Age date along with bone and daub fragments. They possess dark grey/black fills which is in contrast to the other features in Trenches 4 and 5. This can suggest the presence of ash, and with it carbonised archaeobotanical remains. For this reason environmental samples were taken from both features (sample 1 – **39**, sample 2 – **41**) see appendix 2 for more details.

### **6.5.2 Medieval**

Located at 15.00m in the Trench was **25**, a heavily truncated linear feature, possibly a furrow filled by one deposit, 24, which produced a sherd of medieval pottery.

### **6.5.3 Detail of Layers and Features**

The topsoil 63 a mid-brown fine sand layer, 0.10m to 0.15m deep, it is a modern garden soil. Sealed by this was 64 a dark brown, fine sand layer with occasional small pebbles, this well sorted, organic rich layer may represent a former garden or agricultural soil. Layer 64 was 0.30m to 0.40m deep. The natural geological layer 72 was a dark orange medium gravel and coarse sand. This was encountered at a depth of 0.45m in Trench 5.

**21**, 0.33m wide, 0.14m deep, ditch shape in plan, sloping sides, slightly concave base, contained one fill, aligned north-south:

Fill 20, mid-yellowish grey/brown silty sand, occasional small gravel, contained pottery and bone.

**23**, 0.36m long, 0.18m wide (within Trench), 0.13m deep, semi-circle shape in plan, convex sloping sides, convex base, contained one fill:

Fill 22, mid-yellowish grey/brown silty sand, occasional small gravel, contained pottery and bone.

**25**, 1.00m wide, 0.10m deep, ditch shape in plan, convex slightly sloping sides, flat base, contained one fill:

Fill 24, mid brown silty sand, occasional small gravel, contained pottery

**27**, 0.45m wide, 0.15m deep, curvilinear ditch shape in plan, flat sloping sides, flat base, contained one fill, aligned northwest-southeast:

Fill 26, light-mid orangeish grey/brown sandy clay silt, no inclusions.

**29**, 0.17m diameter, 0.10m deep, circular shape in plan, steep sides, slightly convex base, contained one fill:

Fill 28, mid-dark grey/brown sandy clay silt, occasional mineralised wood fragments.

**31**, 0.45m wide, 0.15m deep, curvilinear ditch shape in plan, flat sloping sides, flat base, contained one fill:

Fill 30, light-mid orange-ish grey/brown sandy clay silt, contained pottery.

**34**, 0.50m wide, 0.13m deep, ditch shape in plan, sloping sides, contained one fill, aligned northeast-southwest:

Fill 33, 0.12m deep, light grey/brown sandy clay silt, no inclusions.

**36**, 0.45m diameter, 0.20m deep, circular shape in plan, vertical sides, flat base, contained one fill:

Fill 35, light-mid orangeish grey/brown sandy clay silt.

**38**, 0.40m diameter, 0.16m deep, circular shape in plan, vertical sides, flat base, contained one fill:

Fill 37, light-mid orangeish grey/brown sandy clay silt

**40**, 1.50m long, 0.50m wide, 0.07m deep, sub semi-circle shape in plan, sloping sides, flat base, contained one fill:

Fill 39, dark greyish black sandy clay silt, frequent charcoal, occasional pot, daub, burnt bone and burnt stone.

**Sample 1** was taken from deposit 39 (see appendix 2)

**42**, 1.20m long, 0.90m wide, 0.15m deep, sub-square in plan, steep sides, flat base, contained one fill:

Fill 41, mid-dark grey sandy clay silt, occasional pottery sherds, bone fragments and pieces of daub.

**Sample 2** was taken from deposit 41 (see appendix 2)

**77**, 0.45m wide, 0.12m deep, terminal ditch shape in plan, sloping sides, contained one fill, aligned northeast-southwest:

Fill 32, 0.12m deep, dark brown/black sandy clay silt, contained fragments of mineralised wood.

## **7 DISCUSSION**

Three phases of activity were identified dateable to the late Iron Age (c100BC-50AD), late Medieval (c1350-1550 AD) and the Post medieval period (1550+).

Trenches 4 and 5 in the northern part of the subject site recorded the highest density of archaeological features. These features share similar artefactual assemblages, and a similar character and morphology. Such characteristics suggest they may be contemporary. In particular features **7, 11, 13, 17, 19, 21, 23, 31, 36, 40** and **42** all contained late Iron Age pottery. They also shared very similar character fills, and feature morphology. Features **9, 15, 27, 29, 34, 38** and **77** did not produce any artefactual evidence, however they share similarities in character and morphology, which suggest that they may be contemporary with the first group.

Of particular interest is the curvilinear ditch represented by **27** and **31** in Trench 5, which may link up with ditch features **17** and **15** in Trench 4 (see

Fig 2) to form a ditched enclosure. Curvilinear feature **21** (Trench 5) contained a range of late Iron Age ceramics and is reminiscent in term of size and shape with the eaves drip gully of a roundhouse. The presence of pits, postholes and enclosure ditches with associated assemblages of domestic debris quantity of pottery is indicative of settlement. Of course open area excavation would be necessary to confirm whether projected alignments between features within Trenches 4 and 5 are correct.

The southern part of the site in which Trenches 1, 2 and 3 were located did not contain the same level of intensity in features. However, features **56** and **58** (Trench 2) possessed similarities in fill character and feature morphology with all the above features discussed in relation to Trench 4 and 5. Pit **46** in Trench 1, also produced pottery dating to the late Iron Age, indicating that activity relating to this period may not be limited to the northern part of the proposed development area.

All features dateable to the Iron Age were sealed by a layer of dark brown sandy clay silt 64 which was probably indicative of agricultural activity on the subject site during the medieval period. The heavily truncated remains of a possible furrow, containing a single sherd of medieval pottery was recorded within Trench 5.

The presence of post medieval remains within the southern portion of the development area probably accounts for the lower density of earlier features across this part of the site.

## **8 CONCLUSION**

The site contains significant evidence of Iron Age activity. In the northern part of the subject site (Trenches 4 and 5) potential settlement features were recorded. These contained significant quantities of artefactual evidence from the period. In the southern part of the site (Trench 1), close to the course of St Johns Road, evidence of later activity was recorded, the most significant of which is a post medieval well with late medieval/early post medieval pitting activity directly adjacent to it.

Trenches 1, 2 and 3 in the southern part of the site revealed a lower density of archaeological features than Trenches 4 and 5. It was anticipated that medieval features associated with the hospital of St John the Baptist may have been picked up here, however none were present. This may in part be due to later activity in the post medieval period.

Environmental samples from the site have produced well preserved remains of spelt, emmer wheat, six-row barley, and wild taxa. These samples taken from late Iron Age pits, correspond well with samples taken from similar contexts elsewhere within Ely. The high quality of preservation indicates that should

excavation take place on the site further samples should be taken (see Appendix 2).

Pottery analysis has identified a ceramic assemblage predominantly dateable to the late Iron Age although some contexts also produced a limited number of Romano-British sherds. This material is characteristic of the local area with comparable, but larger assemblages known from other sites in the vicinity, such as Watsons Lane, Little Thetford, and Wardy Hill, Coveney (Evans *et al* forthcoming).

Due to the local character of late Iron Age sites on the Ely peninsula, such as that excavated at Little Thetford, the presence of Romano-British pottery, and the Aucissa brooch (see section 6.4.1), in combination with late Iron Age pottery. Suggest that occupation of the site occurred towards the end of the Iron Age (c50 BC – 50 AD).

This land was probably used for agricultural purposes during the medieval period and that activity relating to the hospital was confined to the other side of St Johns Road.

## **9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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The project was carried out in response to a brief written by Andy Thomas from the County Archaeology Office (Development Control), who visited and monitored the site.

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**Maps consulted**

John Speed's map of Huntingdonshire (Showing Ely City Map) 1610

Tithe Apportionment Map 1846

British Geological Survey 1:50000, sheet 173, Ely, Solid and Drift Edition, 1980

## Appendix 1 - Context List

Trench No	Context No	Fill of	Filled by	Context type
4	6	7	-	Pit fill
4	7	-	6	Pit cut
4	8	9	-	Posthole fill
4	9	-	8	Posthole cut
4	10	11	-	Ditch fill
4	11	-	10	Ditch cut
4	12	13	-	Ditch fill
4	13	-	12	Ditch cut
4	14	15	-	Ditch fill
4	15	-	14	Ditch cut
4	16	17	-	Ditch fill
4	17	-	16	Ditch cut
4	18	19	-	Pit fill
4	19	-	18	Pit cut
5	20	21	-	Ditch fill
5	21	-	20	Ditch cut
5	22	23	-	Posthole fill
5	23	-	22	Posthole cut
5	24	25	-	Ditch fill
5	25	-	24	Ditch cut
5	26	27	-	Ditch fill
5	27	-	26	Ditch cut
5	28	29	-	Posthole fill
5	29	-	28	Posthole cut
5	30	31	-	Ditch fill
5	31	-	30	Ditch cut
5	32	77	-	Ditch terminal end
5	33	34	-	Ditch fill
5	34	-	33	Ditch cut
5	35	36	-	Posthole fill
5	36	-	35	Posthole cut
5	37	38	-	Posthole fill
5	38	-	37	Posthole cut
5	39	40	-	Pit fill
5	40	-	39	Pit cut
5	41	42	-	Pit fill
5	42	-	41	Pit cut
1	43	44	-	Fill of well cut
1	44	-	43, 74	Well cut
1	45	46	-	Pit fill
1	46	-	45	Pit cut
1	47	48	-	Pit/well fill
1	48	-	47, 49	Pit/well cut
1	49	48	-	Pit/well cut
2	50	51	-	Posthole fill
2	51	-	50	Posthole cut
2	52	-	53	Ditch cut
2	53	52	-	Ditch fill
2	54	-	55	Posthole cut
2	55	54	-	Posthole fill
2	56	-	57	Posthole cut
2	57	56	-	Posthole fill
2	58	-	59	Ditch cut
2	59	58	-	Ditch fill

<b>Trench No</b>	<b>Context No</b>	<b>Fill of</b>	<b>Filled by</b>	<b>Context type</b>
1	61	62	-	Posthole fill
1	62	-	61	Posthole cut
4, 5	63	-	-	Topsoil
1, 2, 3, 4, 5	64	-	-	Subsoil
3, 4	65	-	-	Modern demolition layer
3, 4	66	-	-	Modern construction layer
4	67	-	-	Modern construction layer
1, 2, 3, 4	68	-	-	Topsoil with building rubble
1	69	-	-	Modern demolition layer
1	70	-	-	Modern demolition layer
1	71	-	-	Modern demolition layer
1, 2, 3, 4, 5	72	-	-	Natural Geology
3	73	-	-	Subsoil
1	74	44	-	Brick lining of Well
4	75	76	-	Pit fill
4	76	-	75	Pit cut
5	77	-	32	Ditch terminal end cut



## Appendix 2 Archaeobotanical and Environmental Sampling Results

### The Archaeobotanical Remains, 36b St.Johns Road, Ely.

Rachel Ballantyne

*Relatively well preserved charred remains of spelt and emmer wheat, six-row barley, and wild taxa are present in the two samples. The cereal types are characteristic of Iron Age assemblages, and correspond quite closely to those of similar period at West Fen Road, Ely (Regan forthcoming). Many of the wild taxa may have been weeds of the cereal crop, although it seems that other sources such as scrub and fen vegetation must account for some of the charred remains. From the two samples examined it appears that there is good potential for further archaeobotanical study of the identified late Iron Age features.*

### Methodology

Two samples were submitted for analysis from the late Iron Age pit contexts **39** and **41** within Trench 5 at the north of the assessment site.

The flots had been collected over a 300µm sieve and dried prior to submission for analysis. Both were 10 litre sub-samples that had been flotation sieved from original 20 litre bulk samples.

Each flot has been sorted and all identifiable components quantified. Cereal grains and grass seeds are summarised as ‘number of embryo ends’ in order to overcome fragmentation. Items such as charcoal, non-botanical remains, and intrusive material have been quantified by the following scheme:

+++	‘abundant’	more than 50 cases
++	‘moderate’	between 10 and 50 cases
+	‘some’	up to 10 cases
-	‘negligible’	1 or 2 cases

All plant nomenclature follows Stace (1997), and identifications have been made using the reference collection of the Pitt-Rivers Laboratory, Dept. of Archaeology, University of Cambridge. The results are summarised in Table 1.

### Preservation

Charred remains of cereal grain and chaff, wild plant seeds, and vegetative material including wood charcoal are present in both samples. There is no indication of preservation by waterlogging or mineralisation within either context.

Preservation by charring is generally good, with limited distortion of the plant components. However there are varying degrees of surface abrasion and pitting, which has particularly affected identification of the cereal grain and some smaller seeds. Fragmentation does not appear to be significant within either sample.

Both contexts contain quite large amounts of intrusive root material, which is accompanied by a small number of uncharred, apparently modern, seeds and clearly intrusive entomological remains. It is therefore possible that movement of plant remains, including contamination from other contexts, may have occurred within the ground.

## Results

### Late Iron Age pit 39

There are only a few cereal remains, the sample being comprised mainly of charred seeds and wood charcoal. One grain of barley (*Hordeum* sp.) accompanies three of wheat (*Triticum* sp.) which are not identifiable to species. A further two grains could not be distinguished between barley and wheat. A single spelt wheat glume base (*Triticum spelta*) is the only item of cereal chaff recovered.

The wild taxa are mainly small-seeded types associated with disturbed or arable environments. There are numerous Chenopodiaceae, mostly of fat-hen (*Chenopodium album*), which are usually associated with nitrogen-rich soils. The other numerous seed-type is of clover and medicks (*Trifolium/Medicago* spp.) which, as legumes, tend to have an advantage on poorer soils. The presence of these legumes, and of lesser stichwort (*Stellaria graminea*) is suggestive of light relatively well-drained soils.

There are also a small number a taxa usually associated with damper conditions. The common spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*) often occurs within archaeobotanical assemblages, and seems to have potentially been an arable 'weed' on damp soils. In contrast, the black bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*) grows upon very wet, peaty soils, and it seems unlikely that it could be associated with arable land.

### Late Iron Age pit 41

The charred plant remains are more numerous, and better preserved, in this context compared to 39. Many of the taxa discussed above are again present.

There are many more cereal remains, and the preservation is occasionally very good. Four of the seven barley grains are clearly hulled, and two of these hulled grains are also twisted. One six-row barley rachis internode was also recovered. Together the grain and chaff suggest that hulled six-row barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) is represented, a species commonly cultivated during later prehistory in Britain (Greig 1991).

The wheat remains are more mixed. Whilst only one grain is preserved well enough to be suggestive of spelt wheat (*Triticum spelta*), several glume bases are clearly of the same species. A small amount of emmer wheat chaff (*Triticum dicoccum*) appears also present. Both wheat species were cultivated during the Iron Age, with spelt being the more common in southern Britain (*ibid.*).

Wheat chaff occurs at a ratio of 3:1 glume bases to grain. An intact spikelet of emmer or spelt usually has a ratio of 1:1. The ratio of components within this context suggests that debris from cleaning of grain may be present, particularly when preservational bias against chaff is considered (Boardman and Jones 1990).

A greater number and diversity of wild taxa are also represented within **41** compared to **39**, and are mostly characteristic of arable or disturbed ground. Numerous fat-hen seeds are again present, although slightly fewer of clover. Legumes are however also represented by small-seeded vetch (*Vicia* sp.). There are a number of brome grass seeds (*Bromus* sp.), of which only one case was present in **39**. Brome grasses are often found in arable and grasslands, and can be difficult to remove from a cereal crop due their similar morphology to grain. Taxa associated with damper soils are occasionally present, including blinks (*Montia fontana* spp. *chondrosperma*), and great fen sedge (*Cladium mariscus*). Great fen-sedge is found on wet, peaty soils, and like the black bog-rush (discussed earlier) seems unlikely to be an arable weed.

Two Rosaceae thorns make interesting inclusions within the charcoal. One is of the hooked, triangular form commonly found on brambles (*Rubus* spp.), the other the long, thin form characteristic of plum and hawthorn types (*Prunus/Crataegus* sp.). It seems that scrubby material was burnt in addition to the wood clearly present. A fragment of a charred small and rounded *Prunus* sp. stone, probably sloe (*Prunus spinosa*) or cherry (*Prunus avium/padus*), could be associated with this scrub burning, or could be the remains of a fruit collected as food.

## Discussion and Conclusions

The assemblages within each pit compliment each other, although that from **41** has provided most information, due largely to the better preservation here. The close proximity of the two contexts (pit **40** truncates fill **41** of pit **42**) means it is possible that some of the plant remains within fill **39** may have been reworked at the time of its formation from the earlier fill **41**. Such a process would explain why similar but fewer, and more poorly preserved (abraded during movement) charred plant remains are present in **39**.

The cultivation of spelt wheat and six-row barley, with to a lesser extent emmer wheat is characteristic of later prehistoric, and especially Iron Age sites in southern Britain. These remains also correspond well to those within sampled Iron Age contexts at West Fen Road, Ely (Regan forthcoming), although free-threshing wheat (*Triticum aestivum sensu lato*) also occasionally occurred there. From the mainly small seed and wheat chaff based assemblage in **41** it seems that debris from a later stage of crop processing is represented.

The range of wild taxa is suggestive of generally nutrient-rich light soils, with occasionally damper conditions. It is possible that some input from non-crop sources is also present, as suggested by black bog-rush and great fen sedge. Great fen sedge is well documented from the mediaeval period onwards as an important fen resource, being used particularly for fire-lighting and thatching (Friday (ed.) 1997). Perhaps the limited remains here represent collected plants.

In addition to the moderate wood charcoal present, the two thorns suggest the burning of scrub plants, probably brambles and either sloe or hawthorn. This may relate to clearance or maintenance of an area, since these plants often quickly colonise disturbed, open soils.

In conclusion it seems that there is good potential for the recovery of further charred remains at the site, both relating to cereal cultivation and processing, and to other possible uses of plant resources. The location of the site on the western side of Ely provides good comparison with Iron Age remains at West Fen Road (Reagan forthcoming), and so far suggests very similar forms of cereal cultivation between the sites. Further work should aim to cover a range of context types and locations during sampling, and the processing of all 20 litres of each sample should be attempted.

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**Table 1: summary and quantification of flot contents.**

sample number		<1>	<2>
context		[39]	[41]
description		pit fill	pit fill
phase/date		late I.A.	late I.A.
sample volume/ litres		10	10
flot fraction examined		1/1	1/1
hulled, twisted <i>Hordeum</i> sp. grain	6-row hulled barley grain		2
hulled <i>Hordeum</i> sp. grain	hulled barley grain		2
<i>Hordeum</i> sp. grain	barley grain	1	3
<i>Triticum</i> c.f. <i>spelta</i> grain	spelt wheat grain		1
<i>Triticum spelta/dicoccum</i> grain	spelt/emmer wheat grain		19
<i>Triticum</i> sp. grain	wheat grain	3	
<i>Triticum/Hordeum</i> sp. grain	wheat/barley grain	2	
6-row <i>Hordeum</i> rachis internode	6 row-barley chaff		1
<i>Triticum spelta</i> glume base	spelt wheat chaff		14
<i>Triticum</i> c.f. <i>spelta</i> glume base	spelt wheat chaff	1	
<i>Triticum dicoccum</i> spikelet fork	emmer wheat chaff		1
<i>Triticum</i> c.f. <i>dicoccum</i> glume base	emmer wheat chaff		2
<i>Triticum spelta/dicoccum</i> glume base	spelt/emmer chaff		41
<i>Triticum spelta/dicoccum</i> spikelet fork	wheat chaff		2
cereal indet. culm node	straw joint		1
cereal culm fragments	straw		
<i>Chenopodium album</i>	fat-hen	12	14
<i>Chenopodium polyspermum</i>	many-seeded goosefoot	2	
<i>Chenopodium ficifolium</i>	fig-leaved goosefoot	1	1
<i>Atriplex patula/prostrata</i>	common/spear-leaved orache	1	
<i>Montia fontana</i> ssp. <i>chondrosperma</i>	blinks		1
<i>Stellaria media</i>	chickweed	1	
<i>Stellaria graminea</i>	lesser stichwort	5	
large Caryophyllaceae indet. (>3mm)	large Pink Family seed		1
medium Caryophyllaceae indet. (1-3mm)	medium Pink Family seed		2
small Caryophyllaceae indet. (<1mm)	small Pink Family seed	1	
<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>	knotgrass	1	1
<i>Rumex sanguineus/conglomeratus/obstusifolius</i>	small-seeded dock	2	1
<i>Rumex</i> sp. kernel	dock kernel		1
<i>Rumex</i> sp.			1
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	bramble	1 c.f.	
<i>Rubus</i> sp. thorn	bramble thorn		1
<i>Potentilla</i> sp.	cinquefoil	1 c.f.	
small <i>Prunus</i> sp.	sloe/cherry		1 (fragment)
<i>Prunus/Crataegus</i> sp. thorn	plum/hawthorn thorn		1
small <i>Vicia</i> sp. (<2mm)	vetch/wild pea		7
medium <i>Trifolium/Medicago</i> spp. (2-3mm)	medium-seeded clover	5	
small <i>Trifolium</i> spp. (<1mm)	small-seeded clover	3	5
small Apiaceae indet. kernel	small Carrot Family seed	1	
<i>Solanum nigrum</i>	black nightshade		1
<i>Odontites vernus</i>	red bartsia		1
small <i>Galium</i> sp. (<2mm)	small-seeded goosegrass		4
<i>Tripleurospermum inodorum</i>	scentless mayweed		2
<i>Senecio</i> sp.	ragwort		1
small Asteraceae indet.	small Daisy Family seed	1	
<i>Eleocharis palustris</i>	common spike-rush	3	
<i>Schoenus nigricans</i>	black bog-rush	1	
<i>Cladium mariscus</i>	great fen sedge		1
<i>Poa</i> c.f. <i>pratensis</i>	smooth meadow-grass		1
<i>Avena</i> sp.	oat	1	
<i>Phleum bertolonii</i>	lesser cat's-tail	3	4
<i>Bromus</i> c.f. <i>secalineus</i>	rye brome	1	26
medium Poaceae indet. (c. 4mm)	medium Grass Family seed	1	
small seed indet.		15	10
stem base with roots			2
stem fragment			1
small charcoal (<2mm)		+++	+++
med. charcoal (2-4mm)		++	+++
large charcoal (>4mm)		+	++
- vitrified charcoal		-	-
fired clay			-
small bone fragments			+ (incl. burnt)
Anuran bone	amphibian bone		2 (1 burnt)
intrusive roots		+++	+++
uncharred seeds, probably intrusive		-	+
unharred entomological remains, intrusive			+

***The Prehistoric Pottery - St. John's Road, Ely***  
by Sarah Percival

**Introduction**

Excavations at Ely, St. John's Road, produced a pottery assemblage consisting of 74 sherds weighing 1136g. The majority of the assemblage (953g) was dated to the Late Iron Age. Medieval and Romano-British sherds were also found (see Table 1 below). The pottery was collected during an evaluation excavation. The assemblage was retrieved from fourteen excavated contexts consisting of ditch sections, pits and a posthole. A small quantity of sherds was collected from surface cleaning. The preservation of the sherds was mixed, although some were moderately large and well preserved, a number were too small to be properly identified. No complete vessel profiles were recovered.

Table 1: Quantity and weight of pottery by date.

Pottery date	Quantity	Weight (g)
late pre-Roman Iron Age	65	953
Romano-British	6	128
medieval	1	31
post medieval	1	23
undiagnostic	1	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>1136</i>

**Methodology**

The assemblage was analysed in accordance with the Prehistoric Ceramic Research Group. *Guidelines for the Analysis and Publication* (PCRG 1992). The total assemblage was assessed included and a full catalogue is produced (Appendix III). The sherds were examined using a binocular microscope (x10 magnification) and divided into fabric groups defined on the basis of inclusion types present. Fabric codes were prefixed by a letter code representing the main inclusion present (F representing flint, G grog and Q quartz, SL shelly limestone). Vessel form was recorded (R representing rim sherds, B base sherds, D decorated sherds and U undecorated body sherds) and the sherds were counted and weighed to the nearest whole gram. Decoration and abrasion were also noted. The pottery and archive are curated by Cambridge County Council, Archaeological Field Unit.

**The Iron Age Pottery**

Sixty-five sherds of pottery weighing 953g were identified as being of Iron Age date. Iron Age pottery was recovered from thirteen features including pits, ditches and a post-hole. The assemblage was dated to the late pre-Roman Iron

Age and consisted of dense sandy fabrics in slack shouldered forms with upright rims which broadly dates to c.300-100BC.

### ***Fabric***

Six fabric types were identified, all contained quartz sand with various additions (see table 2 below). The fabrics were all dense and hard fired and ranged in colour from dark grey to orange buff.

Table 2: Quantity and weight of pottery by fabric.

Fabric code	Fabric description	Quantity	Weight (g)
F1	Common, medium to course calcined flint; moderate to common quartz sand. Course, hard	1	1
O1	Common organic voids, occasional medium to fine flint, moderate quartz sand. Fine, hard.	2	13
Q1	Common, quartz sand. Fine, hard	20	187
Q2	Common, quartz sand, occasional red iron oxide, rare calcined flint Course, hard	22	510
Q3	Common, common quartz sand, occasional small quartz pebbles, rare red iron oxide. Course, hard.	7	173
Q4	Common, quartz sand rare ?organic voids. Fine, hard.	12	65
U	Undiagnostic	1	4
<i>Total</i>		<i>65</i>	<i>953</i>

The majority of the fabrics are almost certainly representative of clays being collected from a local source, though without petrological analysis this cannot be certain. The clay sources probably do not differ greatly over time and therefore it is difficult to construct a meaningful chronology based on fabric types alone. Dense sandy fabrics are particularly characteristic of mid to later Iron Age sites on the southern Fen (Braddock and Hill forthcoming, Hill and Horne forthcoming). The sandy fabrics Q1-Q6 from St. John's Road are found in slack shouldered course jar forms (R1-R7) which indicate a Later Iron Age date.

### ***Form, Surface treatment and Function***

The assemblage is characterised by slack shouldered vessels with upright flat-topped rims in a range of dense hand made sandy fabrics. No wheel-made forms are present. All the sherds, including the seven rim sherds recovered are from medium sized, open jar forms. These probably represent domestic wares for use in cooking and food preparation. No large, course storage vessels were identified within the assemblage. This limited range of durable and practical utilitarian forms appears to have had a long currency within some areas such as the southern fens where the adoption of wheel made forms was perhaps as late as 10AD (Hill *pers com.*)

The assemblage contained only a restricted range of surface treatments, this too is a characteristic of later Iron Age assemblages. Of the 74 sherds present thirteen sherds, probably from a single vessel were combed, one small sherd was scored, seven sherds were burnished. No fingertip impressed sherds were

found. The combed jar, found within ditch 21 and posthole 23, suggests a date in the latest pre-Roman Iron Age for the assemblage. A similar example of combed decoration was found during excavations on Castle Hill, Cambridge (Farrar, Hull & Pullinger 1999, Plate XXXIX 109) where the assemblage has been dated to post 10BC.

### ***Distribution and Deposition***

The majority of the assemblage was recovered from five pits, contexts 19,40,42 & 46, which contained 533g of pot or 55% of the total assemblage. No single pit produced more than 242g of pottery. The remainder of the assemblage came from ditch fills. Four sherds from a combed jar, found within the fills of posthole 23, appear to be from the same vessel as those found in ditch 21, suggesting that these features are contemporary. The pottery from both the pits and the ditches is in moderately large sherds and is mostly unabraded suggesting that there is little redeposited material within the assemblage.

### ***Conclusion***

The late pre-Roman Iron Age pottery assemblage consists of a limited range of slack shouldered jar forms in small to medium sizes. Rims are slightly everted and have flattened tops. The use of decoration is restricted to combing on one vessel and one scored sherd. Burnishing and smoothing is present on some vessels. Larger contemporary assemblages found at Watson's Lane, Little Theford, Ely (Braddock and Hill forthcoming a) and at Wardy Hill, Coveney (Hill and Horne forthcoming) exhibit a similar range of small to medium jars with both unfinished surfaces and finer, burnished and closed surfaces. These may represent distinct cooking and serving forms. Plain Ware assemblages are characteristic of pottery in use in the southern Fens during the period c.300 to 100BC before the introduction of wheel-made pottery to the area in the first century AD. The presence of the combed decorated jar suggests that this assemblage lies towards the very end of this period probably around the 1st century BC.

### **The Romano-British Pottery (identified by Alice Lyons)**

Romano-British sherds were recovered from three features. Pit 7 contained two sherds of pre mid 2nd century AD greyware and a single sherd of Horningsea Reduced ware (Tomber & Dore 1998, 116). This feature contained no material of other period and therefore appears to be of Romano-British date.

Romano-British sherds were also recovered from features which produced earlier pottery; ditch 13 contained one small sherd of unsourced Roman oxidised ware dating to the 1st to 3rd centuries AD and ditch 17 contained a single sherd of Oxfordshire red colour coat of the early to mid-4th century. This material appears to be intrusive.



## **Bibliography**

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## The Iron Age Pottery from St John's Road, Ely.

Rim Forms.

Form	Form Typology Code	Comment
R1	D2	
R2	A2	
R3	A4	
R4	D2	
R5	A2	
R6	A1	
R7	D1	
B1	8	wheel turned, beaded, flat base



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