



CAM ARC Report Number 1032

Medieval Remains at Westmoreland Gardens, St John's Street, Peterborough

An Archaeological Evaluation

Spencer Cooper

June 2008

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**Medieval Remains at
Westmoreland Gardens,
St John's Street, Peterborough**

An Archaeological Evaluation

Spencer Cooper HND, BA

With contributions by Dr Alasdair Brooks, Chris Faine MA MSc, Rachel Fosberry HNC (Cert Ed) and Dr Paul Spoerry BA PhD

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PROJECT DETAILS				
Project name	Medieval remains at Westmoreland Gardens St John's Street Peterborough			
Short description	Between the 14 th and 16 th May 2008 , CAMARC conducted an archaeological evaluation at Westmoreland Gate St Johns, Peterborough. The archaeology revealed reclamation deposits overlain by Victorian and post-medieval levelling layers			
Project dates	Start 14/5/08		End 16/05/08	
Previous work	HER numbers (51406),(00997) and (03899)	Future work	None	
Associated project reference codes	PETWMG 08, Planning Application No 07/00310/OUT Event No. N/A			
Type of project	Evaluation Appendix H. Documentary Research, Environmental Survey			
Site status	None			
Current land use (list all that apply)	Derelict			
Planned development	Housing, Urban			
Monument types / period (list all that apply and use thesaurus of monument types)	Post-medieval and medieval			
Significant finds: Artefact type / period (list all that apply and use MDA object thesaurus)	Medieval pottery			
PROJECT LOCATION				
County	Peterborough	Parish Peterborough		
HER for region	Peterborough			
Site address (including postcode)	Land at Westmoreland Gardens, St. John's Street, Peterborough			
Study area (sq.m or ha)	47 square metres			
National grid reference	Easting (6 figure)	1966	Northing (6 figure)	9882
Height OD	Max OD 8.22		Min OD6.10	
PROJECT ORIGINATORS				
Organisation	Cambridgeshire County Council, CAM ARC			
Project brief originator	N/A			
Project design originator	Richard Mortimer			
Director/supervisor	Spencer Cooper			
Project manager	Richard Mortimer			
Sponsor or funding body	PDG Architects for			
ARCHIVES	Location and accession number		Content (e.g. pottery, animal bone, database, context sheets etc)	
Physical	Peterborough Museum			
Paper	Peterborough Museum			
Digital	Peterborough Museum			
BIBLIOGRAPHY				
Full title	Medieval Remains at Westmoreland Gardens, St Johns Street, Peterborough			
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Author(s)	S.COOPER			
Date	June 2008			

Summary

Between 14th and 16th May 2008, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Westmoreland Gardens near St John Street, Peterborough (TL 1966 9882) by staff of CAM ARC (formerly the Archaeological Field Unit Cambridgeshire County Council). The proposed development includes six flats on 470 square metres of land. The project was commissioned by PDG Architects on behalf of Mr Kumar of Direct Firm Ltd.

One stepped trench (7m long) was excavated to a depth of 2m below modern ground level.

The results of the evaluation revealed that modern and post-medieval layers overlay medieval waterlain deposits. Due to the limited area investigated, interpretation of the sequence was problematic but the medieval deposits are likely to represent either a silted-up river channel which would have run north to south as a tributary of the River Nene or possibly a pond.

Artefactual material recovered from the lower deposits included Lyveden Stanion and Bourn B type pottery dating to AD1200-1400. Environmental samples taken from earlier deposits provide useful data regarding the contemporary local environment

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1 Introduction

Between 14th and 16th May 2008, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Westmoreland Gardens off St John Street, Peterborough (TL 1966 9882) by staff of CAM ARC. The proposed development includes construction of six flats with associated car parking. The project was commissioned by PDG Architects on behalf of Mr Kumar of Direct Firm Ltd.

This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Specification prepared by CAM ARC, Cambridgeshire County Council (formerly Archaeological Field Unit).

The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16 - Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by Peterborough City Council Archaeology Service (PCCAS) 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.

From the outset it was hoped that this evaluation would aid in tracing Saxon and Medieval occupation in Boongate and thereby in turn aid understanding of the development of Peterborough.

2 Geology and Topography

The site lies on the 2nd terrace river gravels overlying Cornbrash. (BGS Sheet 158, 1984). The development area lies at 8.50m OD with the land falling away to c. 5.80m on the Bishop's Road some 200m to the southeast.

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 General

Little is known archaeologically of this part of Peterborough, despite its close proximity to the Cathedral precinct. The site lies in the heart of the Boongate area, 230m northeast of the Cathedral, 230m due south of St. Mary's Church and around 700m north of the River Nene. The site is close to the Junction of the north to south St. John's Street and

the east to west Eastgate. While outside the medieval core of the town, it is thought possible that an earlier, pre-conquest Saxon settlement may have occupied this area (Ben Robinson pers. comm.).

3.2 Prehistoric and Roman

The only record of prehistoric activity within the immediate area (within a 500m radius) is a find of probable Bronze Age flint implements approximately 200m to the northwest of the site (HER 51406), Iron Age and Romano-British material was found within the same area (03899) and an Iron Age Brooch 400m to the southwest (08231).

Romano-British material is somewhat more common, though still sparse, with a single coin found 150m to the east (03892) and Roman pottery some 450m to the southwest (00997 and 08220). There are also frequent Roman finds within the Cathedral precinct.

Between 1 and 2 kilometres to the east of the site is the area of Fengate where extensive Neolithic, Bronze Age and Romano-British remains have been extensively excavated along the fen edge (Pryor 2001).

3.3 Saxon and Medieval

The development area lies to the east of the cathedral and precincts and in the vicinity of the possible pre-conquest Boongate settlement and original parish church. The early church was replaced in 1407 by the present St Johns. The precincts contain archaeological remains from pre-Conquest times and retain post-Conquest standing buildings.

In the Middle Saxon period a monastery was established at *Medeshamstede* on the site of the present cathedral church of St Peter. The foundation date of the original monastery is uncertain, although Bede (*History of the English Church*) suggests a date around 653-656 AD. The monastery was probably located close to a Mercian Royal centre and became an important focus in both religious and secular life (Mackreth 1994). Its destruction by the Danes in 870 AD is unlikely to have been as catastrophic as some later writers suggest.

The monastery continued as a successful house into the Late Saxon period when the early church and some of its associated buildings were enclosed by a set of defences originally erected by Aethelwold and later refortified in stone by Cenulf. A stonewall foundation cutting

into an earlier bank may have been associated with these enclosures (Mackreth 1994).

The archaeological character of the Boongate settlement is unknown at this juncture although there is some consensus about the nature of Boongate. Both Mackreth and King (King 1981) suggest that there was an early funnel shaped market place at Boongate to the northeast of the burh. Mackreth believes that there was occupation inside the burh, precinct and early market place up until the 12th century, when a new town was founded to the west of abbey precincts (Hinman and Spoerry 1998)

A few early Saxon remains are known from within the town. An Anglo-Saxon cemetery appears to have been located to the south of the River Nene where excavations conducted between 1864 and 1920 uncovered inhumations accompanied by personal items and weapons, including brooches, spearheads, shield-bosses and knives dating from c. AD 550 (Hatton 2004). A number of finds from uncertain location in the city also suggests the presence of one or more inhumation cemeteries (RCHME 1969).

Excavations in the West Range of the precincts in 1998 revealed a monastic drain which had several phases. Late Saxon, medieval and post-medieval pottery was retrieved from this investigation (HER 51279). There have been many early medieval and medieval finds within the Cathedral precinct, the closest being some 70m from the development area (medieval wall at HER 01518) and 200m due west of the site (the Saxon Burh ditch - HER 03898).

3.4 Post-Medieval and Modern

All the early maps from Eyre's map of 1721 (with the exception of Hill's map of 1808 which shows the site empty) show the site as under housing. The Enclosure map of 1821, Burton's map of 1829 and George Smith's 1862 map of the area all show presumably brick-built terraces directly on the southern frontage of the plot along Eastgate. The entire series of Ordnance Survey maps (1886, 1900, 1926, 1957 and 1967) also show the site as built-up along the southern frontage.

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.

Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a toothless ditching bucket. Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using CAM ARC's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits. The trench was machined to a dark organic layer at a depth of approximately 2m and was stepped on all sides. Three sondages were excavated through the organic layer to ascertain depth of deposits. The natural geology of cornbrash was exposed in all sondages.

A number of environmental samples were taken from the organic deposits. Site conditions were very wet.

5 Results

Trench 1 was located in the centre of the development area on an east-west alignment (see Fig. 2). It was 7m long 1.6m wide and up to 2m deep. The remains were characterised by modern and post-medieval deposits overlying medieval deposits. The overburden consisted of material associated with the Victorian terraced houses and levelling layers.

Excavated Remains

5.1 Phase 1 - Medieval

The earliest layers were predominantly organic peaty deposits (Contexts 17, 18, 23, 24, and 29), which were revealed in all three sondages. These may represent river channel or marshland deposits. Medieval sherds dating from 1200-1400 were recovered from context 24 and from overlying deposits 15 and 16. These overlying deposits were of dark brown peaty silt mixed with cornbrash and clay and had the appearance of bank slip or dumped, redeposited material. Environmental samples taken from the early organic deposits (Contexts 18 & 23, Samples 4 & 3) contained botanical remains such as Buttercup, Chick weed and Sedges which are all good indicators of a wet environment.

Layers 10, 11, 12, 13, 22 and 27, which overlay the peaty deposits, consisted of silty gravels and silty cornbrash material, and may represent a sub-phase within the medieval deposits, though datable material was only recovered from one context – 3 Medieval sherds from layer 13. As with many of the deposits encountered these layers may represent levelling or pushed-in banking material.

Cutting into layer 12/22 was what may have been a posthole or post pipe (27). The feature was 0.30m across and c. 0.50m deep, though seen only in section, its full diameter was not clear. With a dark, silty infill it had the appearance of a post pipe, the post having either been removed or having rotted in situ. There was no posthole cut and no obvious post packing making it likely that the post had been driven into place.

5.2 Phase 2 - Victorian

Remains of a brick structure/wall (8) were uncovered in the eastern part of the section. The bricks were machine made red bricks and relate to the Victorian terrace houses that were present on the site throughout the 19th century and the early 20th century. An associated brick floor (6), directly linked to wall 8, was also recorded – the bricks were of similar manufacture.

Dump deposits 19, 20 and 22 appear to infill a large open feature (31) and may represent levelling material associated with the construction of the Victorian terraces. The few ceramics recovered from these deposits were of 19th century porcelain. These fills sat within, or up against, cut 31 which appeared near-vertical at the west and was approximately 1.50m deep and a minimum of 4.00m across – its eastern edge, if one existed, was not reached within the trench. This feature could represent either a very wide, flat-based cut into the earlier, medieval fills and layers to the west or, alternatively, the remains of a revetment wall separating the earlier material from an open or semi-open channel to the east.

Above the fills of 31 were several further levelling or build up layers (3, 4 and, 28) which consisted of brick and mortar rubble. Layer 28 appeared to underlie part of wall 8 and may represent the construction level for the buildings.

5.3 Phase 3 - Modern

This phase was represented by modern tarmac (1) and associated hardcore make up (2).

Standing Remains

A surviving wall, possibly medieval or early post-medieval in date, was recorded in the northwestern part of the development area (Plate 2). This wall had, at a later date, been incorporated as part of a Victorian building which included a fireplace on its western wall (Plate 3). The surviving wall was 4m long and 1.90m high. The wall consisted of at least 20 courses of worked cornbrash stone with some evidence of machine-made 19th century bricks incorporated within its fabric.

The western wall was 4m long and constructed entirely of 19th century brick. It had two fireplaces with separate flues, a large one on the ground floor measuring approximately 1.4m and a smaller one on the first floor (Taleyna Fletcher pers.comm.). Approximately 0.75m of the southern wall survived. It was 0.3m wide and was also constructed of brick. This building is shown on the 1886 OS map (Fig. 2).

6 Discussion

The key factor to emerge from the evaluation was the uncovering of datable medieval deposits at the western side of the base of the profile. The lower deposits (16, 23 etc) were rich in organic materials and contained small quantities of medieval pottery and bone. Above these layers were what appeared to be bank slips and/or pushed-in bank materials, coming from the western side; their eastern limit was marked by a near-vertical 'cut'. A number of possible interpretations can be posited that may explain the stratigraphic sequence exposed.

It may be that the site was part of a low lying marshy fenland area in the medieval period and that the lower layers represent waterlogged material in an area of marshland. The presence of wetland plants such as sedges and buttercups in the environmental samples reinforces the idea of low-lying fenland/marshland.

Another interpretation could see the feature as an infilled pond or fishpond associated with the Cathedral precinct. Work on the environmental remains has not been able to distinguish clearly between pond and low-lying fenland plant species and the environmental samples from the site contained no molluscs for analysis to aid interpretation.

A third interpretation of the deposits would be that they represent the western edges of a former tributary river or stream channel that would have run southwards into the River Nene. The Nene system, like most rivers, would originally have included a series of tributary streams, the majority of which would, through the post-medieval and modern periods, have become infilled, culverted or canalised.

Evidence was recorded for two possible successive revetments, the first a large post driven into the slumped bank of the medieval channel, the second the near-vertical 'cut' at the centre of the section that could represent the remains of a revetment or retaining wall, removed on the infilling of the channel.

7 Conclusions

Despite the small scale of the work this project has provided an excellent opportunity to examine an area of Peterborough that had not previously been subjected to a professional archaeological investigation.

The presence of medieval pottery in the lower deposits is significant and provides a useful reference point in attempting to characterise the archaeology of the Boongate area. However, the very low level of finds does not argue for direct occupation in the immediate vicinity.

The waterlain deposits recorded could represent the fen edge of a wider low-lying area or the edge of a previously unknown stream, a south-flowing tributary of the Nene. Perhaps a combination of these, with a stream or streams running through a low-lying fen area to the east of the cathedral is more likely. The early 18th and 19th century maps show the built-up area of the town on both sides of St John's St but not extending into the area to the east or southeast.

From the development area (St John's St to the west is at 8.50m OD) the land falls away to c. 5.80m on the Bishop's Road some 200m to the southeast. This road marks the edge of the river's flood plain and runs broadly parallel to the Nene west to east – it is possible that the area to the south of the site, immediately east of the cathedral precinct, may have lain within an inlet of fen or small side valley of the Nene.

The standing remains have been identified as a building present on the 1886 OS map (Fig. 2).

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Mr Kumar who funded the archaeological work. The project was managed and the report was edited by Richard Mortimer and revised by Alex Pickstone. I would like to thank Chris Thatcher and Tom Lyons who worked extremely hard to interpret the archaeology in very difficult conditions. Louise Bush located the trench with a GPS system and Caoimhín Ó Coileáin produced the illustrations.

The Development Control Officer for Peterborough was Rebecca Casa Hatton who visited and monitored the evaluation, and thanks are also due to Ben Robinson for his interest and archaeological input.

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Appendix 1: Context List

Context	Category	Trench	Feature Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description
1	Layer	1	Floor	7m	0.10	Modern Tarmac
2	Layer	1	Levelling layer	7m	0.47	Foundation material
3	Layer	1	Levelling layer	0.80	0.40	Levelling layer
4	Layer	1	Levelling layer	1.01	0.64	Greyish brown gravel silt with bricks
5	Drain	1	Structural	2.80	0.40	Ceramic Drain
6	Floor	1	Wall	1.20	0.40	Floor of Victorian building
7	Layer	1	Levelling layer	2.50	0.10	Dark brown gravel with frequent bricks
8	Layer	1	Levelling layer	4.01	0.10	Gravel silt with mortar and bricks
9	Layer	1	Levelling layer	3.90	0.35	Gravel
10	Layer	1	Levelling layer	2.10	0.25	Silty gravel with brick and cornbrash stones
11	Layer	1	Levelling layer	1.10	0.25	Light grey sandy gravel
12	Layer	1	Levelling layer	0.82	0.32	Dark grey clay silt
13	Layer	1	Levelling layer	0.80	0.32	Light grey silty clay
14	Layer	1	Levelling layer	0.40	0.10	Light brown silty gravel
15	Layer	1	Levelling layer	1.70	0.30	Dark brown peaty silt with cornbrash stones
16	Layer	1	Levelling layer	0.70	0.20	Dark brown peaty with some clay mottling
17	Layer	1	Levelling layer	1.40	0.12	Light brown peaty silt
18	Layer	1	Levelling layer	0.60	0.10	Greyish brown peat
19	Layer	1	Levelling layer	2.60	0.80m	Light brown orange gravel
20	Layer	1	Levelling layer	0.40	1.0	Dark grey gravel silt
21		1	Not used			
22	Layer	1	Build up	1.80	1.00	Light orange gravel
23	Layer	1	Organic layer	1.01	0.21	Dark greyish brown peat
24	Layer	1	Organic layer	0.80	0.20	Dark greyish brown peat
25	Layer	1	Organic layer	0.80	0.20	Dark greyish brown peat
26	Layer	1	Organic layer	1.30	0.10	Dark grey peat
27	Layers	1	Levelling	0.10	2.70	Dark brown gravel silt

			layer			
28	Layers	1	Levelling layer	1.98	0.21	Dark Brown silty gravel with redbrick
29	Layers	1	Organic layer	1.02	0.23	Dark brown peaty silt
30	Layer	1	Levelling layer	1.20	0.10	Light brown gravel with frequent rubble
31	?cut	1	Possible pit or channel cut	4.00+	1.50	

Appendix 2: Finds Summary

Context	Material	Object Name	Weight in kg
7	Ceramic	Vessel	0.456
19	Bone	Bone	0.213
19	Glass	Vessel	0.008
19	Ceramic	Ceramic Building Material	0.372
19	Ceramic	Ceramic Building Material	0.047
13	Ceramic	Vessel	0.016
15	Ceramic	Vessel	0.066
15	Bone	Bone	0.046
24	Ceramic	Vessel	0.011
24	Bone	Vessel	0.043
16	Ceramic	Vessel	0.023
16	Bone	Bone	0.025

Appendix 3: The Pottery

by Dr. Paul Spoerry and Dr. Alasdair Brooks

Medieval pottery assemblage

Fieldwork at Westmoreland, Gardens St John's Street Peterborough, produced a small medieval pottery assemblage of 15 sherds, from 5 contexts All of the assemblage was recovered, from medieval peaty deposit.

The pottery recovered includes Bourne B (of which some were burnt and glazed) and three sherds of Lyveden Stanion. All sherds appear to be domestic in origin

The condition of the whole assemblage is moderately abraded.

Context	Description	Qty	Context Date Range
13	Bourn B ware glazed (x1) Bourn B ware (x2)	3	1200 – c.1400
15	Bourn B ware (x1) rim and burnt Bourn B ware (x1)	5	1200 – c.1400
16	Bourn B ware (x6)	6	1200 – c.1400
24	Bourn B type	1	1200 - 1400
Total		15	

Table 1: Medieval wares

Post-Medieval pottery

Context	Qty	Weight (kg)	Context Date Range and description
7	7	0.456	Post 1840 white porcelain
19	3	0.221	19 th century, probably post-1840. Includes black-glazed earthenware, a piece of a painted hard paste porcelain plate, and a wine glass base.
Total	10	0.678	

Table 2: Post-medieval wares

Methodology

The basic guidance in the Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP2) has been adhered to (English Heritage 1991). In addition the Medieval Pottery Research Group (MPRG) documents Guidance for the processing and publication of medieval pottery from excavations (Blake and Davey 1983), A guide to the classification of medieval ceramic forms (MPRG, 1998) and Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Post-Roman Ceramics (MPRG, 2001) act as a standard.

Dating was carried out using CAM ARC's in-house system based on that previously used at the Museum of London. Fabric classification has been carried out for all previously described types. All sherds have been counted, classified and weighed. All the pottery has been spot dated on a context-by-context basis.

The pottery and archive are curated by CAM ARC until formal deposition.

No preservation bias has been recognised and no long-term storage problems are likely.

Conclusion

A small assemblage of 13th to 14th century pottery was recovered from the lower part of the eastern deposits of the section. In addition a small Victorian assemblage was collected from the western part of the section.

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Appendix 4 Environmental Assessment

By Rachel Fosberry

Introduction and Methods

Four bulk samples were taken from deposits within the evaluation trench in order to assess the quality of preservation of plant remains and their potential to provide useful data as part of further archaeological investigations.

The samples were soaked in a solution of Decon 90 for two weeks prior to processing in order to break down the heavy clay.

Ten litres of each sample were processed by tank flotation for the recovery of charred plant remains, dating evidence and any other artefactual evidence that might be present. The flot was collected in a 0.5mm nylon mesh and the residue was washed through a 1mm sieve. Any artefacts present were noted and reintegrated with the hand-excavated finds. The flot was examined under a binocular microscope

at x16 magnification and the presence of any plant remains or other artefacts were noted.

Results

Preservation is predominantly by waterlogging with the occasional charred wheat (*Triticum* sp.) grain in Samples 1 and 4 (contexts 15 & 18). Samples 1 and 4 were similar in content being largely comprised of organic matter and containing numerous seeds including buttercup (*Ranunculus* sp.), nettle (*Urtica* sp.), chickweed (*Stellaria* sp.) elder (*Sambucus* sp.) and sedges (*Carex* sp.)

Samples 2 and 3 (contexts 16 & 23) did not appear to be waterlogged on initial inspection but both samples contain uncharred seeds including goosefoot (*Chenopodium* sp.), campion (*Silene* sp.), buttercup, nettle and elder.

Fragments of animal bone were present in all of the samples.

Discussion

The samples examined produced a low abundance of charred material. Preservation was predominantly by waterlogging resulting in a bias towards the survival of woody material and more robust seeds. The assemblage provides a clear picture of the local environment of damp grassland typical of the Fen-edge.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, the assemblage appears to represent mainly a natural accumulation of plant remains from local vegetation along with a small quantity of domestic waste. No further work on these samples is required.

Appendix 5: Faunal Remains

By Chris Faine

The extremely small assemblage consisted of just 4 identifiable fragments with one unidentifiable piece. Context 15 contained the left and right metacarpals of an adult sheep with a withers height of around 54cm. Further sheep remains were recovered from context 16 in the form of a butchered distal humerus. A portion of butchered juvenile cattle metatarsal was recovered from context 24.

No further work is required on the assemblage.

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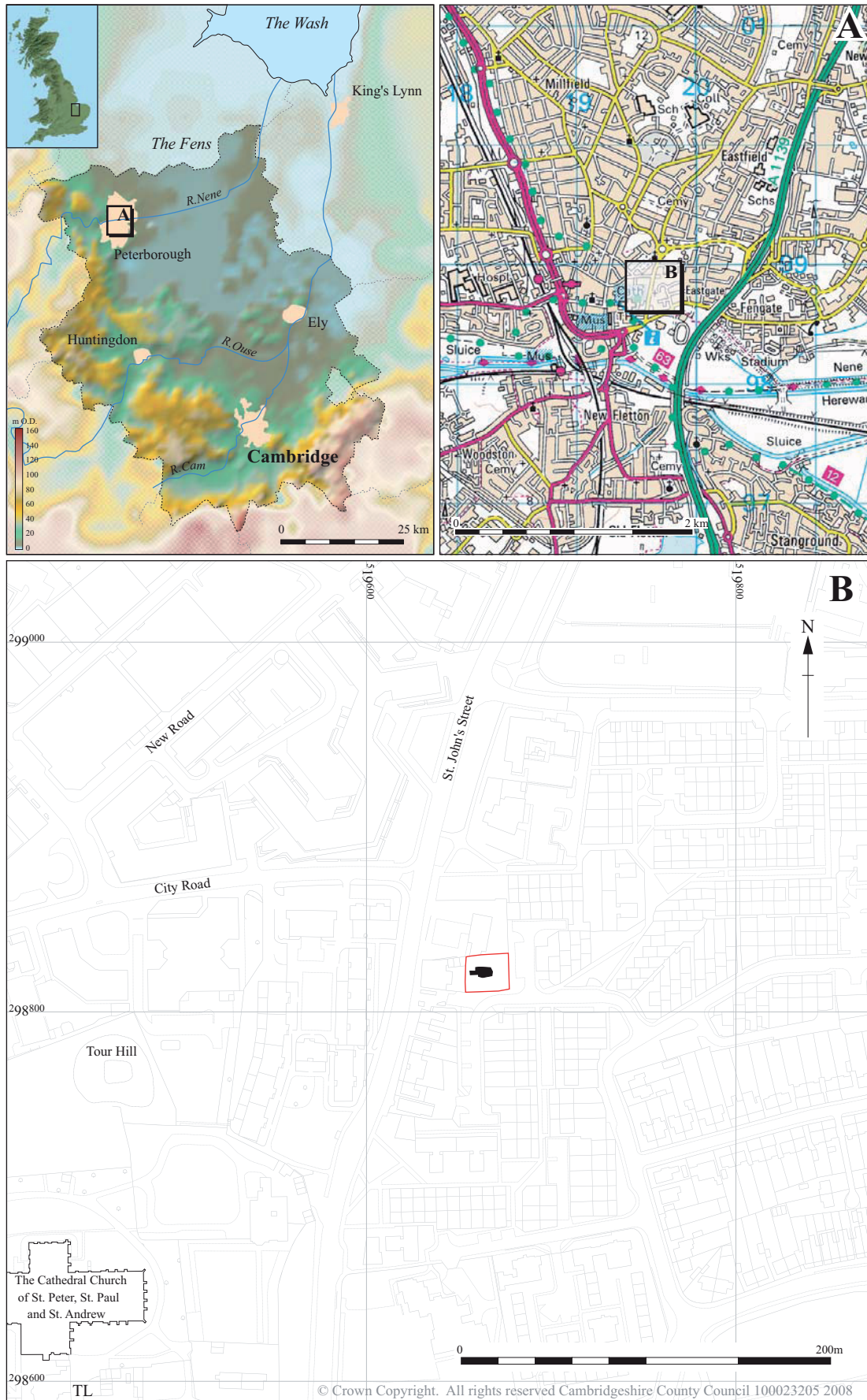


Figure 1: Location of trench with the development area outlined (red)

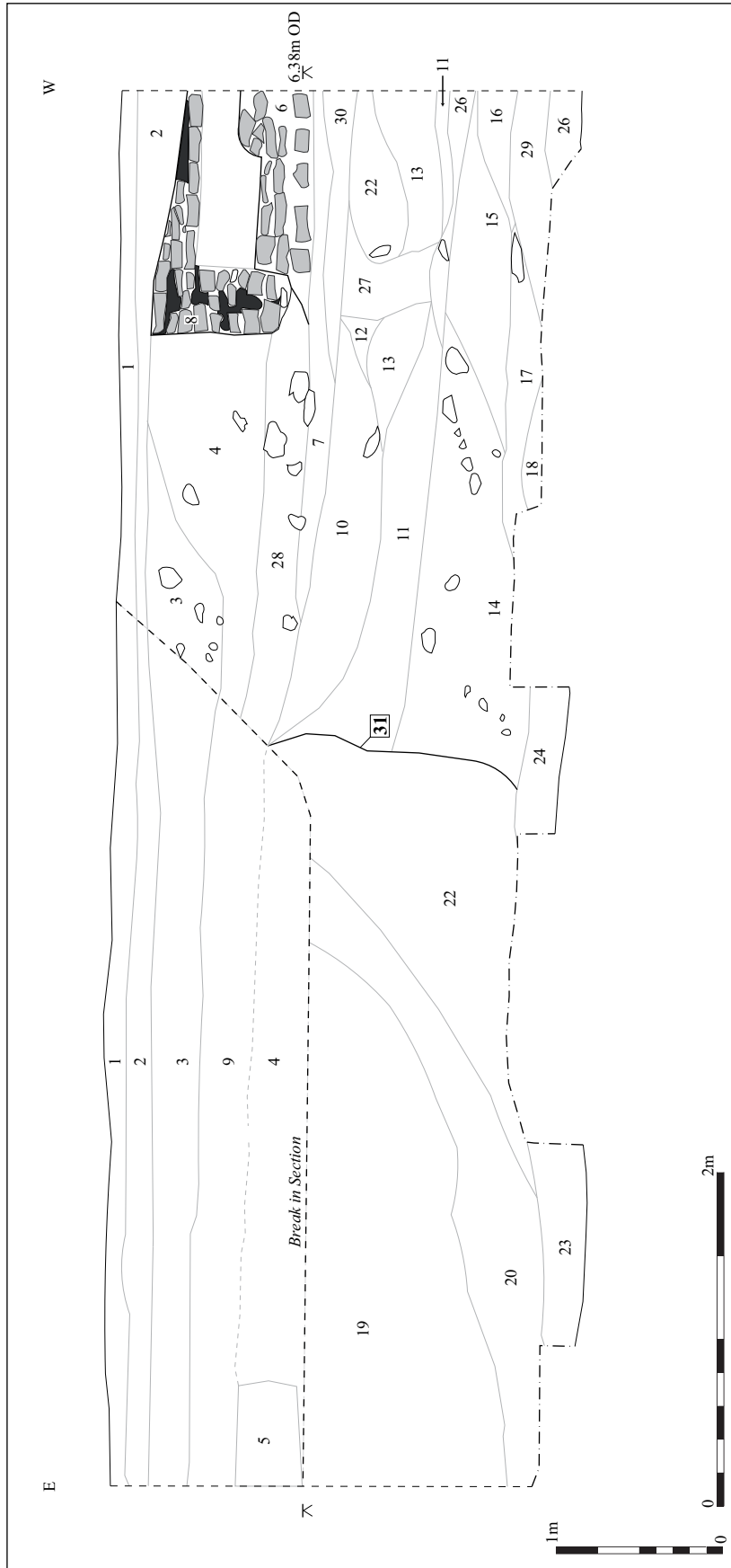
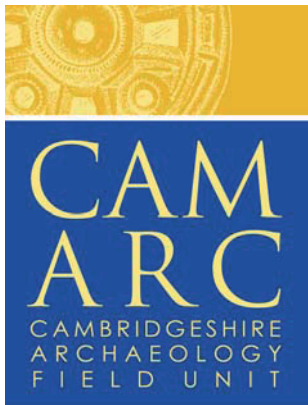


Figure 3: Section 1



Figure 2: Trench plan (scale 1:150) with location of plates



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