

CCC AFU Report Number 875

July Racecourse, Stetchworth, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Evaluation

Glenn Bailey

May 2006

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An Archaeological Evaluation

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Summary

A very limited amount of archaeological evidence was uncovered during this evaluation. The only features identified to be the result of human activity were two square postholes, approximately 20m apart. The postholes were both less than 0.5m wide and 0.5m deep. Both postholes had clearly defined post pipes, which were filled with very similar deposits. The lack of artefacts from either the postholes or the overburden means that their date is uncertain. The postholes are most likely related to a previous phase (modern) of paddock building on the site.

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
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Drawing Conventions

Sections	Plans
Limit of Excavation - - - - -	Limit of Excavation ———
Cut ———	Deposit - Conjectured - - - - -
Cut-Conjectured - - - - -	Natural Features
Soil Horizon	Intrusion/Truncation - . - - - - -
Soil Horizon - Conjectured	Sondages/Machine Strip - - - - -
Intrusion/Truncation - - - - -	Illustrated Section S.14 ———
Top of Natural ———	Excavated Slot 
Top Surface ———	Archaeological Deposit 
Break in Section - - - - -	Natural Feature 
Cut Number 	Cut Number 118
Deposit Number 117	
Ordnance Datum $\frac{18.45\text{m ODN}}{\wedge}$	

1 Introduction

This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Kasia Gdaniec, Development Control Archaeologist of the Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and Countryside Advice team (CAPCA; Planning Application E/06/00024 and 00027/FUL), supplemented by a Specification prepared by Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit (CCC AFU).

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 CCC AFU and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

2 Geology and Topography

The site overlies Middle Chalk (British Geological Survey 1981).

The site was split into two areas approximately 100m apart. One where three of the trenches were located, was in an area of well maintained grass. The other, with the remaining two trenches was located to the southwest, on rough ground with grass cover. Both areas were on flat grassland in an area of intensive land management. The site was at c33m m OD.

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

Examination of data (by CgMs Consulting) in the Suffolk and Cambridgeshire HERs (Sites and Monuments Records) for the preparation of a desk-based assessment for the Rowley Mile Course in 2003 (with an update from the Cambridgeshire HER in March 2006) indicates that no archaeological sites or finds are recorded within the two application sites and the nearest archaeological intervention was a small-scale watching brief in the Rouse Enclosure which did not locate any archaeological evidence.

The CAPCA Brief points out that this general area has had transient occupation since the Mesolithic and multi-period occupation since the later Neolithic, evidenced today by numerous (ploughed-out) Bronze Age burial mounds and flint scatters in arable fields.

In the wider vicinity of the application sites, a suspected Bronze Age barrow cemetery is recorded at the western end of the Rowley Mile Course (SMR 00405 and 07457) and a Bowl Barrow (a Scheduled

Ancient Monument) is recorded near the A1303 Newmarket Road (SMR 27170 & SMR 07455).

Some 140m north of the Family Enclosure, the alignment of Devil's Dyke runs northwest to southeast, parallel with the July Course. The Dyke (a Scheduled Ancient Monument: SAM 5) may have prehistoric origins and is certainly documented in the Saxon period (SMR 07801).

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 a 5% sample, equating to five, twenty metre trenches, being cut over 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 that were obviously modern.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using CCC AFU'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; none were taken due to the deposits within the two small features being sterile chalk and devoid of dating evidence.

Site conditions were very good (dry and bright) for excavation and recording on chalk soils. No hazards were encountered during the machining and care was taken to avoid the small *in situ* structural supports.

The site was accessed by modern, private access roads.

5 Results

Trenches 1, 4 and 5 were devoid of recognisable archaeological remains or features. Two postholes were excavated, one in Trench 2 and one in Trench 3. No artefactual dating evidence was recovered from the topsoil, subsoil or features. The interface between the topsoil and chalk bedrock defined a subsoil composed of fine degraded chalk, chalk fragments less than 5cm in diameter and silt of the same composition as the topsoil. There was also a very small amount of unworked flint in the topsoil and subsoil.

5.1 Trench 1

20m long aligned NW to SE. The soil profile was recorded as; turf (1) 0.06m, topsoil (2) 0.34m-0.42m (thinner to the northwest and southeast), subsoil (3) 0.16m-0.26m (thinning to the northwest and southeast), chalk bedrock (excavated up to 0.10m).

No artefacts or other cultural material were recovered from this trench.

5.2 Trench 2

20m long aligned NW to SE. The soil profile was recorded as; turf (1) 0.05m, topsoil (2) 0.32m-0.46m (thinner to the northwest and southeast), subsoil (3) 0.18m-0.24m (thinning to the southeast), chalk bedrock (excavated up to 0.04m).

A small posthole, 9, was excavated in Trench 2. It was sub-rectangular in plan, with straight edges and curved corners. The sides were nearly vertical and straight; only deviating slightly from this when it was dictated by the hardness of the chalk it was cut through. A sharp break of slope leads to the flat base, which itself sloped down to the north.

The posthole measured 0.34m by 0.28m, and was aligned northwest to southeast along its longest axis. The depth was a maximum of 0.51m.

The posthole contained deposit 10, a sterile chalk soil made up of rotted and fragmentary bedrock chalk, as distinct from that observed in the subsoil. This had been used as a packing material for a post.

A centrally placed, sub-circular post pipe was evident in plan. Measuring 0.11m in diameter and 0.42m deep, it was positioned vertically within the posthole.

Deposit 12, composed of mid greyish brown gritty silt, filled the void left by the absent post.

No artefacts or other cultural material were recovered from this feature.

5.3 Trench 3

20m long aligned north to south. The soil profile was recorded as; turf (1) 0.05m, topsoil (2) 0.30m-0.32m (thinning to the north), subsoil (3) 0.18m-0.22m (thinning to the south), chalk bedrock (excavated up to 0.10m).

A single, larger posthole, 5, was located towards the northern end of this trench. It was very nearly square in plan, with straight edges and sharp corners. The sides were nearly vertical, and straight. A fairly sharp break of slope defined the base, which sloped down towards the south. The long axis of the posthole measured 0.46m and was orientated northwest to southeast. The short axis was 0.42m long. The depth below the soil-stripping level reached a maximum of 0.49m.

The posthole was filled with chalk, 6, virtually untainted by other material. This deposit represents packing material to support the post.

A post-pipe, 7, was clearly visible, set close to the centre of the posthole. The post pipe was sub-circular in plan and vertical, measuring 0.14m in diameter and 0.41m deep.

The deposit filling the post pipe, 8, was significantly darker and more humic than 6, but similar to 12 in post pipe 11. During excavation it was observed that a void was present within it. This was clearly from when the post had either been removed or rotted away, the surrounding chalk remaining solid. The gritty element of the deposit was left when the finer particles had been leached away.

No artefacts or other cultural material were recovered from this feature.

5.4 Trench 4

20m long aligned E to W. The soil profile was recorded as; grass (13) 0.03m, topsoil (2) 0.06m-0.26m (in two phases, the thinner representing a very modern topsoil, the thicker as in Trenches 1, 2 and 3), subsoil (3) 0.09m-0.27m (thinning to the south and north), chalk bedrock (excavated up to 0.14m).

A further two deposits were identified within Trenches 4 and 5. One, (14) formed a make-up layer, restricted to Trenches 4 and 5. This was of sterile re-deposited chalk, distinct from the subsoil in its composition, which was more chalky and less well sorted, evident of large scale movement rather than *in situ* degradation, as is the case with the subsoil. Stratigraphically it was below the grass (13) or secondary topsoil (2), and above deposit (15).

Deposit (15) was a buried soil represented by (2), the topsoil, in Trenches 1, 2 and 3. Stratigraphically it was above the subsoil (3).

These additional deposits were modern and brought in to build up and dry out the area, which was and still is relatively damp and low-lying.

No artefacts or other cultural material were recovered from this trench.

5.5 Trench 5

20m long aligned NW to SE. The soil profile was recorded as; grass (13) 0.05m, topsoil (2) 0.12m-0.16m (with no discernable thinning at either end), subsoil (3) 0.18m-0.24m (thinning to the south-east), chalk bed rock (excavated up to 0.04m).

No artefacts or other cultural material were recovered from this trench.

6 Discussion

The only features excavated in the evaluation were two postholes, neither of which produced any dating evidence.

7 Conclusions

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



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Figure 1: Site location showing position of trenches (black) and development area (red)



Figure 2: Trench plan showing Trenches 2 and 3

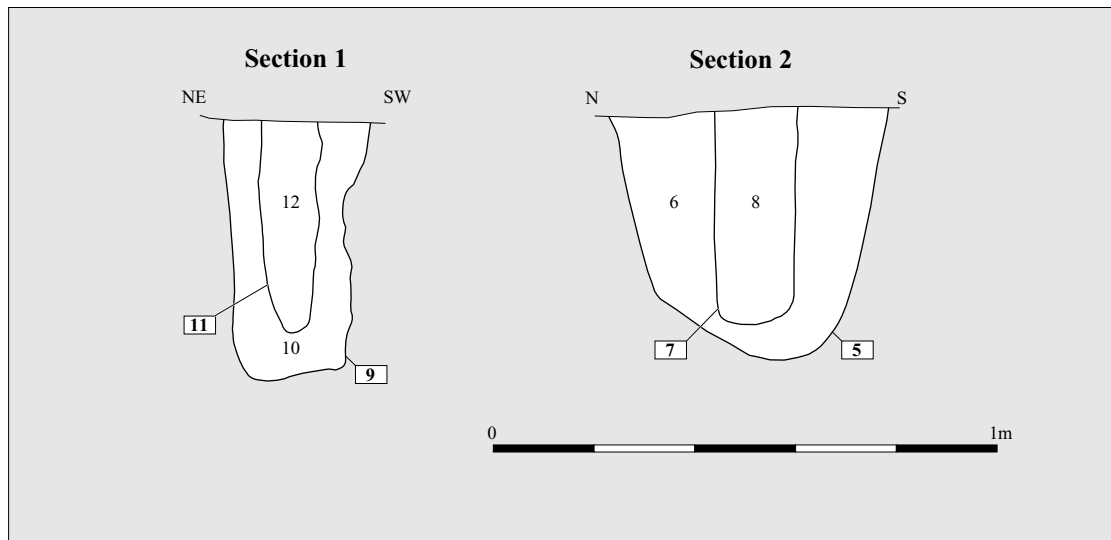


Figure 3: Section drawings

Acknowledgements

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

Bibliography

British Geological Survey 1981 England and Wales Sheet 188

Appendix 1: Context Summary

CONTEXT	TRENCH	DESCRIPTION	SECTION	PLAN
1	1-3	Turf	3-11	-
2	1-5	Topsoil	3-18	-
3	1-5	Subsoil	3-18	-
4	1-5	Chalk bedrock	3-18	-
5	3	Posthole Cut	2	2
6	3	Post packing	2	-
7	3	Post pipe void	2	2
8	3	Post pipe fill	2	-
9	2	Posthole Cut	1	1
10	2	Post packing	1	-
11	2	Post pipe void	1	1
12	2	Post pipe fill	1	-
13	4, 5	Non-turf grass	12-18	-
14	4, 5	Re-deposited chalk	12-18	-
15	4, 5	Buried soil	13-18	-

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