

Archaeological Field Unit

**Post-Medieval Remains at 9 Bridge Street,
Chatteris, Cambridgeshire
(ECB 1879)**

Spencer Cooper

April 2005

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. 801
Commissioned by *Mr. M. Prior*



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SUMMARY

On the 31st March, 2005 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at 9 Bridge Street, Chatteris, Cambridge (TL 3905 8671) by staff of the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council. The proposed development includes construction of several dwellings on 0.037 hectares of land. The project was commissioned by Mr. M. Prior.

The work was carried out in accordance with a Brief for an archaeological evaluation issued by Kasia Gdaniec of the Cambridgeshire County Council Planning and Countryside Advice Office (Planning Application No F/YR04/3700/D).

The evaluation has demonstrated the presence of modern overburden and a number of Victorian rubbish pits.



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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 _____	Archaeological feature 
Top Surface _____	Excavated slots 
Break in Section - - - - -	Cut Number 118
Cut Number \ 118	
Deposit Number 117	
Ordnance Datum $\frac{18.45\text{m ODN}}{\times}$	

Post-Medieval Remains at 9 Bridge Street, Chatteris, Cambridge (TL 3905 8671)

1 INTRODUCTION

On the 31st March 2005 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at 9 Bridge Street, Chatteris, Cambridgeshire (TL 3905 8671) by staff of the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council. The proposed development includes construction of several dwellings on 0.037 hectares of land. The project was commissioned by Mr. M. Prior.

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The site is to the north of the medieval town of Chatteris and close to a late medieval landing place (hythe).

This evaluation had the potential to assist in establishing whether there was Roman or medieval occupation in the development area.

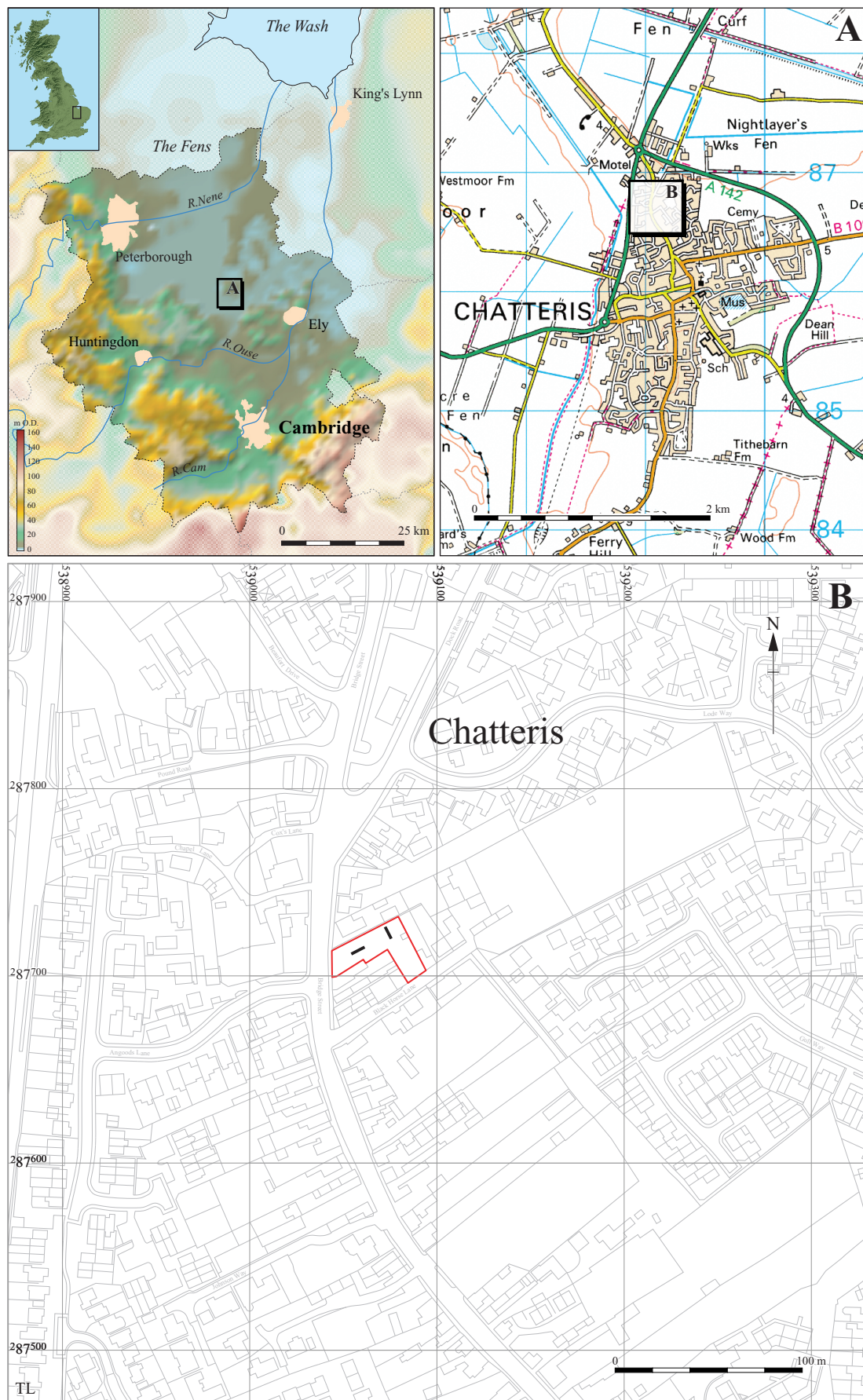
2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Chatteris is situated on an island of Ampthill clay with patches of March and terrace gravels. The island is surrounded by fen deposits, including peats sealed by marine clays laid down during the Early Bronze Age. During the Bronze Age peat fen crept up the gentle slopes of Chatteris island and by the Iron Age it covered an area approaching that of the medieval period (Hall 1992). Colluvium occurs at the medieval fen edge. Since the 17th century drainage most of the peat has wasted leaving tracts of gravelly soils.

Recent use of development area consisted of a Victorian Infants School and associated land.

3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Although no archaeological remains are currently known from the site itself, a considerable amount of archaeological remains are evident the surrounding area.



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Figure 1 Location of evaluation trenches (black) and development area (red).

During the Neolithic period a major river channel with associated tributaries ran close to the northern edge of the island with tidal or intertidal marsh between the tributaries. Much of the island was dry land although the soils were too heavy to attract settlement (Hall 1992). Apart from a flint scatter and a Neolithic axe to the west of the modern settlement and a polished axe from Delve Terrace (SMR no. 12004) the majority of finds (polished green-stone axes, flint scatters and pottery) and settlement evidence comes from the southern and eastern part of the island.

During the Bronze Age the peat fen encroached, covering the marine sediments. A considerable amount of Bronze Age metalwork has been reported from Chatteris, possibly as a result of cemeteries being disturbed by agriculture. Much of the land at this time was relatively dry. A dispersed barrow-field is the chief monument, occupying the eastern half of the island (towards the fen edge): this comprises at least 15 barrows. Fewer settlement sites have been identified but these appear to be closer to the modern settlement, on the slightly higher ground (Hall 1992).

Intensive Iron Age occupation has been found close to the church (Roberts 2000; Cooper, forthcoming). Chatteris appears to have been an important area in the Roman period with occupation of the island and at several large sites in the surrounding fen, with the local economy being based on stock rearing.

Saxon and early medieval remains have been found during excavation close to the church and it is possible that the present town is built over the Saxon settlement. The main island was subjected to Midland type strip cultivation forming ridge and furrow earthworks, but much of this has been ploughed out in recent years. Water communication to March and Elm was via Fenton Lode and Slade Lode during the 13th century. The medieval landing place (hythe) was probably on Chatteris island north of, or at, Slade Lode. It is thought likely that the medieval hythe is located close to the subject site.

Recent excavations have revealed medieval and post-medieval remains some 70m to the north-west and it may be anticipated that remains of a similar date are present on the proposed development site.

4 METHODOLOGY

Two trenches, totalling 15m in length and 1.6m wide, were excavated using a mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket. The position of the trenches is shown in Fig. 1. After machining was completed each trench was cleaned by hand, photographed and recorded using the AFU standard system. In addition all of the spoil heaps from the trenches were scanned visually for artefacts.

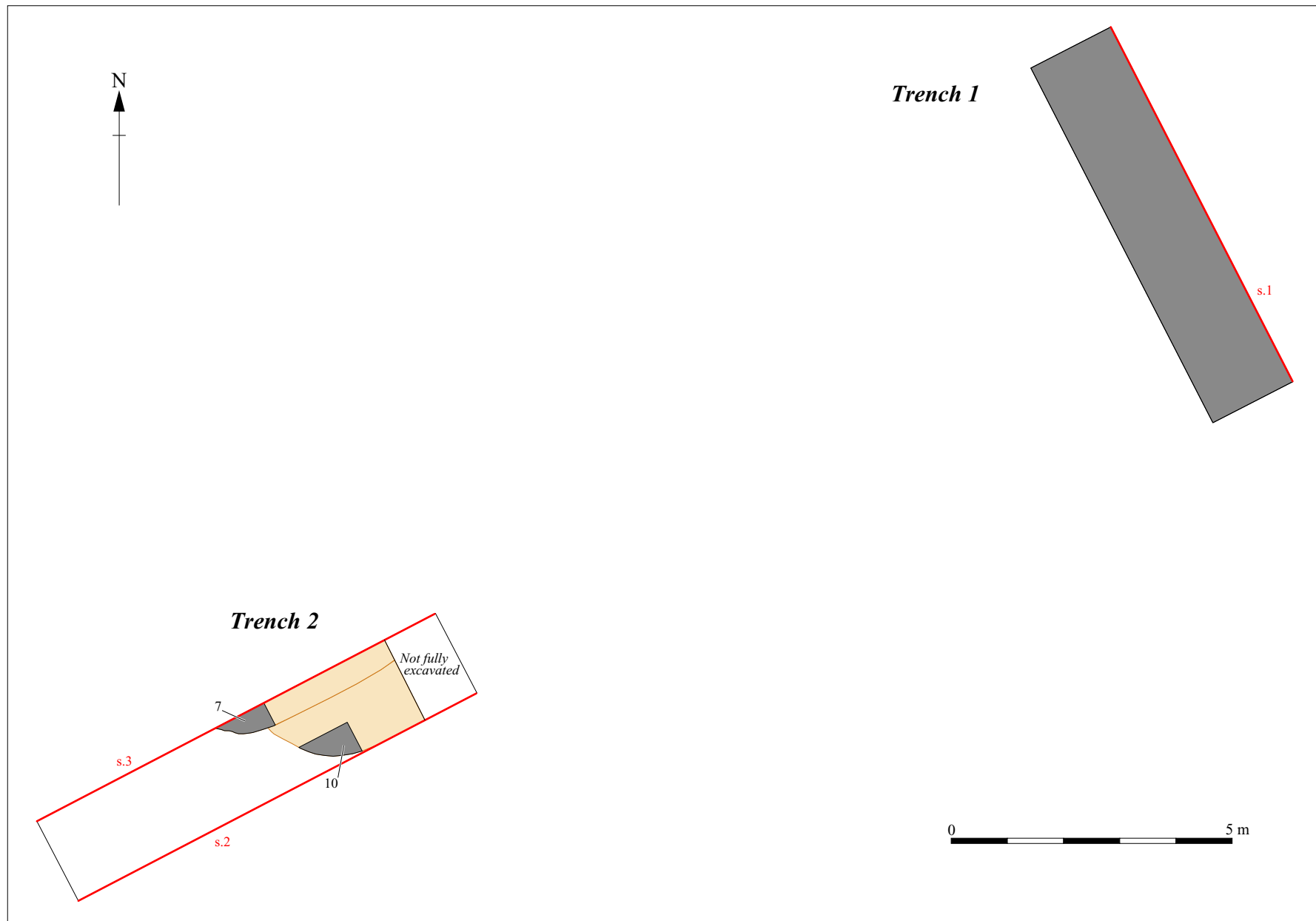


Figure 2 Excavation trenches. Scale 1:100.

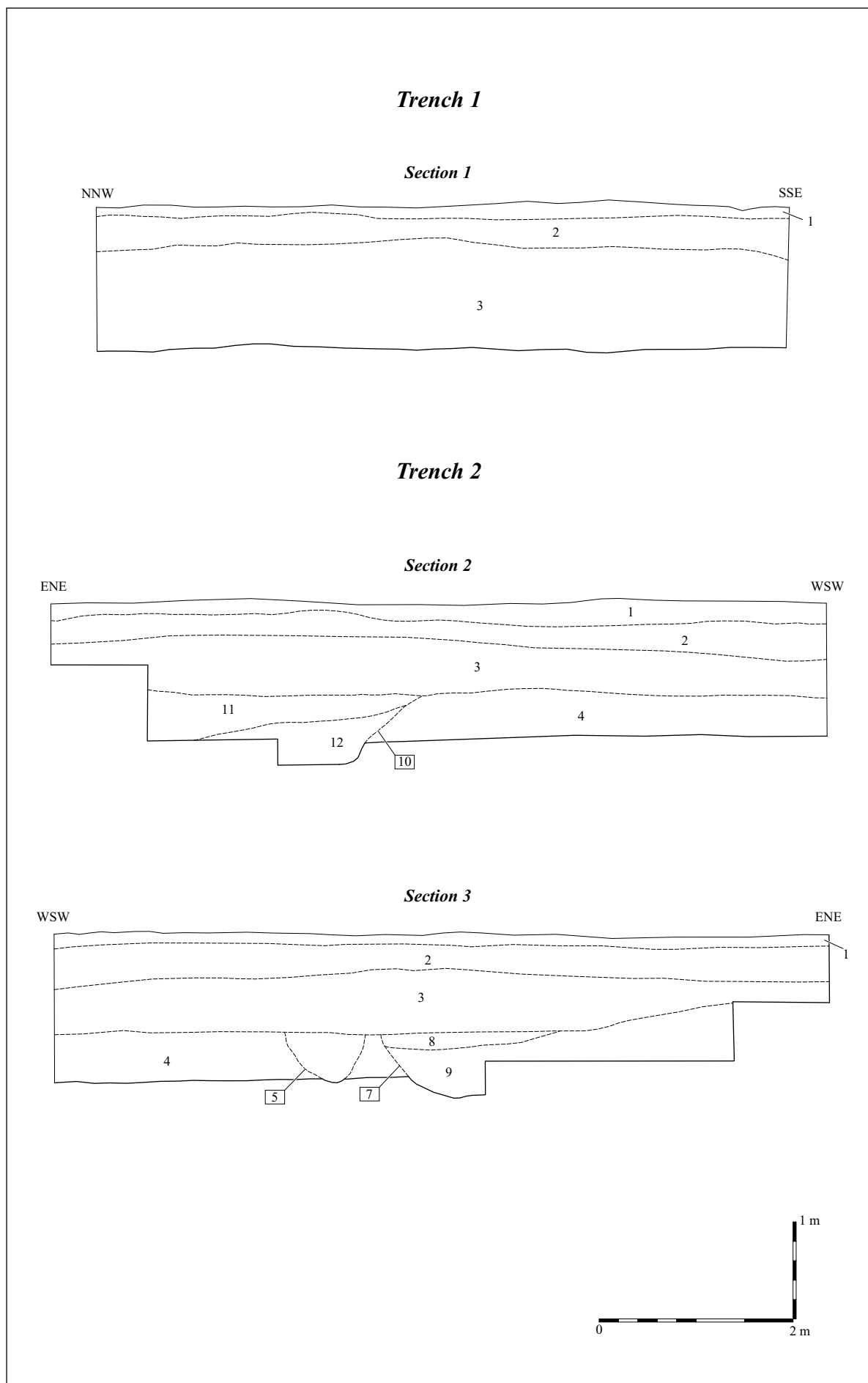


Figure 3 Section drawings.

5 RESULTS

Trench 1

Trench 1 was 7m long and 1.5m deep on a north to south alignment (Fig. 2). No archaeological features were observed in this trench. The overburden consisted of three layers (1, 2 and 3 Fig.S 3). Layer 1 was 0.1m deep and consisted of dark grey silty clay with frequent gravel. Layer 2 was an orange/brown gravel which was 0.40m deep. Layer 3 was 1.0m deep and consisted of light brown grey silty clay with occasional gravel. Underlying layer 3 was an orange brown natural gravel which was encountered at a depth of 1.5m.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was 8m long and 1.5m deep on a north-east to south-west alignment (Fig. 2). The overburden consisted of four layers.(1, 2, 3 and 4 Fig. 3). Layer 1 was 0.1m deep and consisted of dark grey silty clay with frequent gravel. Layer 2 was an orange/brown gravel which was 0.40m deep. Layer 3 was 0.50m deep and consisted of light brown grey silty clay with occasional gravel. Layer 4 was a dark grey silty clay which was 0.50m deep. All features in Trench 2 cut through layer 4. Underlying layer 4 was an orange brown natural gravel which was encountered at a depth of 1.5m.

In the western part of the trench a pit (5) was observed in section. This was 0.80m wide and 0.40m deep and contained a single fill (6) of greyish brown silty clay which contained post-medieval tile.

In the centre of the trench another pit (7) truncated an earlier feature.

Pit 7 was 3m wide and 0.60m deep and contained two fills (8 and 9). Fill 8 was a light brown silty clay which varied 0.10m to 0.20m in depth. Fill 9 was 0.40m deep and consisted of a dark brown silty clay, from which fragments of Victorian glass bottles were recovered.

Pit 10 was 3m wide 0.58m deep and contained of two fills (11 and 12). Fill 11 was a dark grey clay silt which was 0.18m deep. Fill 12 was a dark grey silty clay which was 0.50m deep and contained Victorian bottles.

6 DISCUSSION

The evaluation has revealed post-medieval activity within the site. The three pits recorded in Trench 2 all represent Victorian rubbish pits. The overburden

in both trenches represents modern and post-medieval activity possibly relating to the Victorian School, which is located within the development area.

Layer 4, which was truncated by the Victorian rubbish pits, may represent an 18th century make-up deposit.

There was a significant absence of Roman and medieval artefacts within the development area. The absence of such material mirrors the results from the Blackhorse Lane site which is located 50m to the south of the development area.

7 CONCLUSION

The aim of the project was to establish the character, date, state of preservation, and extent of any archaeological remains within the site. Given the existing state of the archaeology in Chatteris it is surprising that Roman and/or medieval remains have not been encountered within the evaluation.

This evaluation has identified modern deposits which relate to the Victorian School. It may be the case that activity of this date removed medieval and Roman remains or that the site was close to the fen edge and was not used until drainage of the fens made occupation on this part of the island possible .

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Mr. M. Prior who funded the archaeological work. The Brief for archaeological work was written by Kasia Gdaniec (Cambridgeshire County Council Planning and Countryside Advice Office) and the evaluation was monitored by Adrian Scruby (Countryside Officer). The project was managed by Judith Roberts.

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