

**Land off MOORFIELD ROAD
DUXFORD
CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION BY
TRIAL TRENCHING**



**Essex County Council
Field Archaeology Unit
September 2005**

**Land off MOORFIELD ROAD
DUXFORD
CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

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TRIAL TRENCHING**

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As part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content or the presentation of this report.

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**Land off MOORFIELD ROAD
DUXFORD
CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
TRIAL TRENCHING**

SUMMARY

Client: Carter Manning on behalf of Rusfer Properties Limited
FAU Project No.: 1410
NGR: TL 4779 4645
Planning Application No.: S/1410/03/O
Site Code: MRDX 05
Cambridgeshire HER event No: ECB 2037
Date of Fieldwork: 6th September 2005

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by ECC FAU on behalf of Carter Manning on the site of a proposed new residential development on Land off of Moorfield Road at the northern end of the village of Duxford, Cambridgeshire . The site was formerly a plant nursery and was partially concreted over. To the north and east of the site were two medieval moated sites.

Four trenches were excavated, each within the footprint of a proposed building. It was established that the site has been subject to significant ground reduction, which cut into the natural geological deposits, prior to being built back up with modern rubble and ballast. The truncated surface lay at c.24.87m OD which was approximately 0.5m below the surrounding ground surface. No archaeological features were identified, and no finds collected.

Although the results of the evaluation are negative, the amount of localised ground reduction and disturbance does not give a clear picture of whether earlier remains may survive in the general area.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A planning application was made by Carter Manning on behalf of Rusfer Properties Limited for the construction of four residential properties on land off Moorfield Road, Duxford, Cambridgeshire. The Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Office (COA) advised the local planning authority that an archaeological condition be placed on the application, in line with PPG 16 (DoE 1990). Consequently, Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (FAU) was commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching in the development area. This report presents the results of the evaluation. The archive will be deposited with Cambridgeshire County Council.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and Topography (Figure 1)

The proposed development area comprises a roughly rectangular plot covering approximately 2500 sq m (NGR TL 4779 4645, centred). It lay on the northern edge of the village and was situated approximately 100m behind the eastern frontage of Moorfield Road. The east side of the site is bounded by modern residential properties while the other three sides are open fields. Prior to the commencement of works the site a plant nursery and was largely concreted over.

In general the land around the site slopes southeastwardly towards the river and away from a ridge along which runs the A505.

2.2 Geology

The whole site was covered by modern rubble and ballast and no topsoil or subsoil was present in any of the evaluation trenches. Immediately below the rubble and ballast lay the undisturbed natural geological deposit which was a pale brown white chalky silt that overlies the solid chalk geology of the area.

2.3 History and Archaeology

The earliest mention of the village of Duxford is in the will of Theodred, Bishop of London, dating to AD 952 (Duxford Parish Council 2005). It is also mentioned in the Domesday book of 1086 as lands being held by Count Eustace and Robert Gernon (Morns 1981). The earliest extant structure in the village is the 12th century church of St Johns (SMR 04698). A number of other structures and remains in the area also may have origins in the medieval period. Two moated sites, Lacey's Manor (SMR 01263) and Coldham's Moat (SMR 01007), and a number of putative earthworks (SMR 10841, 09976, 10842), suggest a semi-organised landscape during this period presumably with the church as a focal point.

A number of archaeological investigations have taken place in the immediate vicinity of the site. To the south of the site adjacent to the river channel a scatter of Mesolithic and Neolithic flints were uncovered on the top of a peat layer (MCB 13902). Fieldwalking and evaluations on the land immediately to the north and west of the site (ECB 362 and 1187) revealed a Neolithic quarrying pit, lithic scatters dating to the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, a co-axial Romano-British field system, and medieval ditches associated with Coldham's Moat. Despite the apparent Saxon origins of the village, very little in the way of Saxon material has been uncovered with only a few features of late Saxon date identified at the junction of Moorfield Road and St John's Street (MCB 13756).

The site itself seems to have been open fields until relatively recently when a plant nursery was built on the site. Immediately prior to the commencement of this project the structures and concrete hardstanding associated with the nursery were demolished.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The general aim of the project was to locate, identify and record any surviving remains and to provide an archaeological assessment of the potential of the development area. The more specific research aim was to establish whether the site lies in an area of medieval settlement or activity and to determine any relation to the nearby moated site.

4.0 METHOD

The modern overburden was removed from the trenches using a JCB excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under archaeological supervision. All archaeological features and deposits were then excavated by hand using standard ECC FAU procedures, with plans being drawn at 1:20 and sections at 1:10. Finds were collected for dating and characterisation purposes. A photographic record, consisting of monochrome prints and colour transparencies, was maintained on selected individual features as well as general trench shots. Levels were taken of ground levels on and around each of the trenches as well as on individual features. The positions of the trenches were located by measuring to points marked on the OS map.

IFA standards and by-laws and ALGAO's Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney, 2003) were adhered to during the fieldwork, which was monitored by Ms K Gdaniec of the Cambridgeshire Archaeology Office on behalf of the local planning authority.

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS (Figure 2)

Four trenches were excavated to the top of the undisturbed natural geology across the area. All of the trenches were devoid of archaeological features and finds. All of the trenches were approximately 1.85m wide and excavated to the top of the undisturbed natural geology, a pale brown white chalky silt. Each trench is described briefly below with further information located in Appendix 1. Trench locations are shown on Figure 1 with a more detailed plan on Figure 2.

Trench 1

Running approximately north-south in the southwestern corner of the development area, Trench 1 was 8.5m long and c.0.3m deep. Above the undisturbed natural geology was a 0.3m thick modern layer of mid brown sand and gravel. No topsoil was present in this trench. It is likely that the ground level had been reduced, presumably during either the construction of the buildings that formerly occupied the site or during their demolition.

Although two putative cut features were investigated they were shown to be geological in origin. No archaeological features were identified in this trench and no finds collected.

Trench 2

Trench 2 ran approximately east-west in the northwestern corner of the development area. It measured 7m long and was approximately 0.9m deep. The overburden was a mid brown 0.9m thick layer of sand and gravel which was probably of recent origin. This trench was heavily disturbed by modern services and a large concrete block. No archaeological features or finds were identified.

Trench 3

Orientated approximately east-west this trench lay in the northeastern corner of the site. Trench 3 measured 10m long and c.0.56m deep. Above the undisturbed natural geology was a layer of modern building debris 0.50m deep which was covered with degraded tarmac. One feature was investigated in this trench but it proved to be geological in nature. No archaeological features or finds were identified.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was aligned east-west in the southeastern corner of the development site. It was excavated to a depth of 0.65m and was 8m in length. The undisturbed natural geology was covered by modern building rubble to a depth of 0.2m which was in turn covered by a 0.45m thick layer of mid brown sandy gravel of modern origin. No archaeological features were identified or finds collected.

6.0 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL MATERIAL

No finds were collected and no environmental samples taken.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

Given the amount of archaeological activity in the vicinity of the site it is likely that prior to the construction of the nursery it extended into the development area. However, the modern disturbance and the reduction in the ground level, by approximately 0.5m, has completely removed any archaeological features or finds once present.

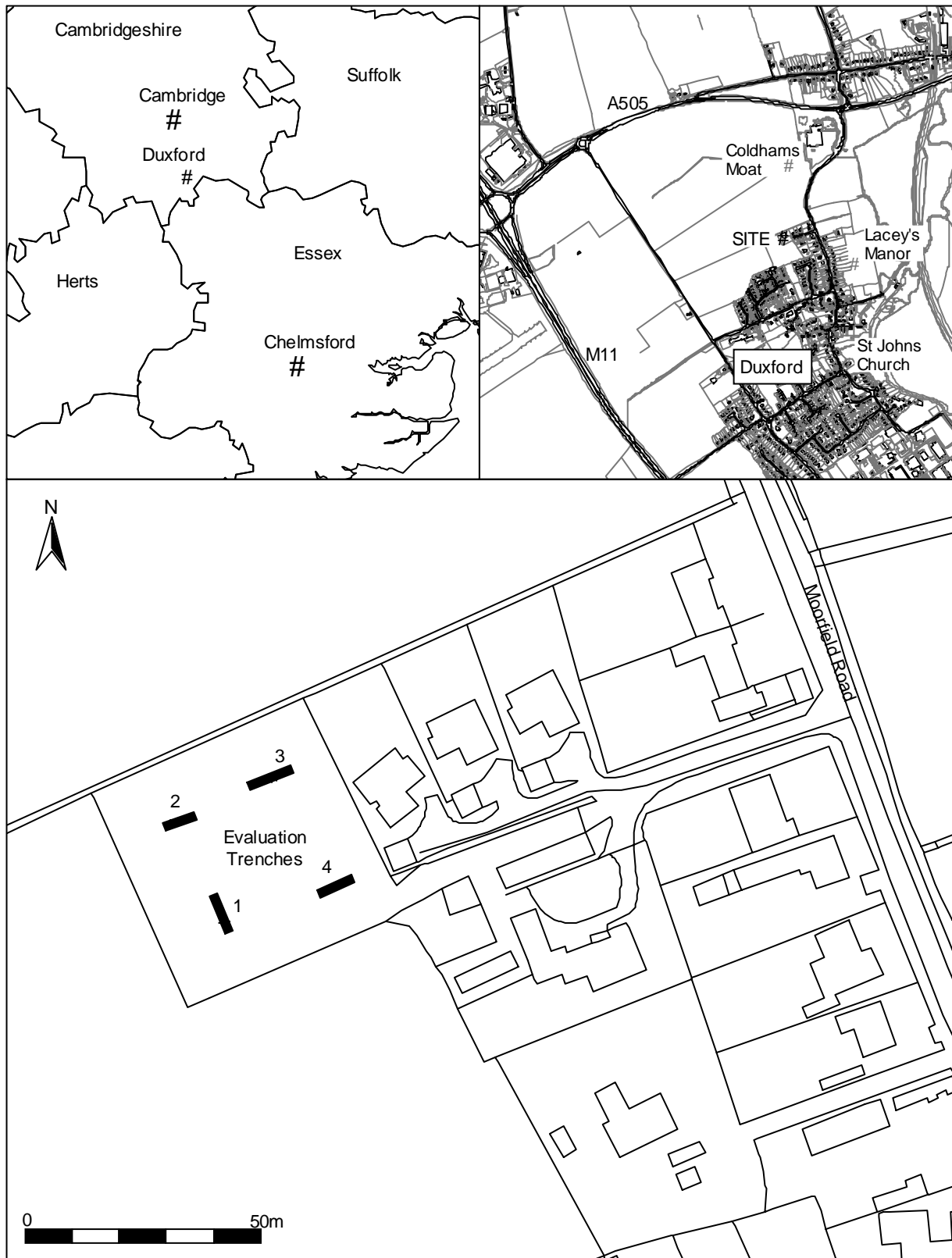
The amount of disturbance to the site and the lack of any archaeological remains in the trenches suggest that the proposed development will have little or no impact on the archaeological resource of the area.

Acknowledgements

This project was commissioned and funded by Carter Manning on behalf of Rusfer Properties Limited. Especial thanks go to John Carter of Carter Manning for his help throughout the project. The author was assisted by C Down during the fieldwork, the illustrations were prepared by A. Lewsey and the documentary research undertaken by J Archer. The project was managed by P. Allen and K Gdaniec of Cambridgeshire Archaeology Office monitored the fieldwork on behalf of the local planning authority.

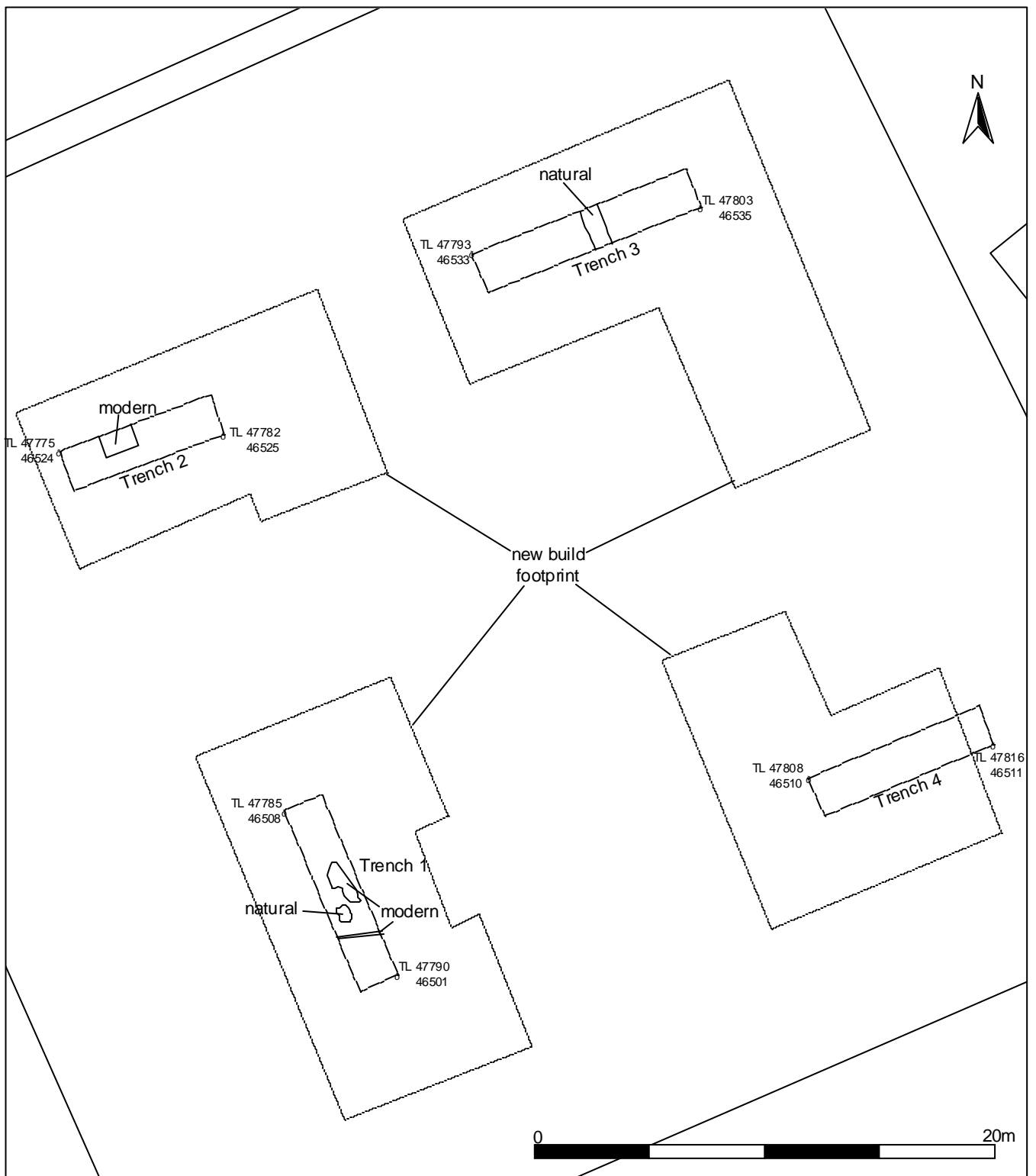
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Fig.1. Site location



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Fig.2. Evaluation trenches

APPENDIX 1: FIELDWORK DATA

All dimensions are given in metres.

Trench	Contexts	Length	Breadth	Depth
1	-	8.5	1.85	0.3
2	-	7	1.85	0.9
3	-	10	1.85	0.56
4	-	8	1.85	0.65

APPENDIX 2: ARCHIVE INDEX

Land off MOORFIELD ROAD, DUXFORD, CAMBRIDGESHIRE (MRDX 05)

Index to the Archive

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Brief for Evaluation
- 1.2 WSI

2. Research Archive

- 2.1 Evaluation Report

3. Site Archive

- 3.1 4 x Trench sheets
- 3.2 2 x Photographic Registers
- 3.3 4 x Black and White Prints
- 3.4 4 x Colour slides
- 3.5 2 Plan and section sheet (A5)

No finds

APPENDIX 3: CHER SUMMARY SHEET

Site Name/Address: Land off Moorfield Road, Duxford, Cambridgeshire	
Parish: Duxford	District: Cambridge
NGR: TL 4779 4645 (centred)	Site Code: MRDX 05
Type of Work: Evaluation by Trial trenching	Site Director/Group: Andrew Robertson ECC FAU
Date of Work: 6th September 2005	Size of Area Investigated: Development area: 2500m ² Trenching: 4 trenches = 62m ²
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Cambridgeshire County Council	Funding Source: Carter Manning for Rusfer Properties Limited
Further Work Anticipated? No	Related CHER Nos:
Final Report:	
Periods Represented: None	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:	
<p>An archaeological evaluation was carried out by ECC FAU on behalf of Carter Manning on the site of a proposed new residential development on Land off of Moorfield Road at the northern end of the village of Duxford, Cambridgeshire . The site was formerly a plant nursery and was partially concreted over. To the north and east of the site were two medieval moated sites.</p> <p>Four trenches were excavated, each within the footprint of a proposed building. It was established that the site has been subject to significant ground reduction, which cut into the natural geological deposits, prior to being built back up with modern rubble and ballast. The truncated surface lay at c.24.87m OD which was approximately 0.5m below the surrounding ground surface. No archaeological features were identified, and no finds collected.</p> <p>Although the results of the evaluation are negative, the amount of localised ground reduction and disturbance does not give a clear picture of whether earlier remains may survive in the general area.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports: None	
Author of Summary: Andrew Robertson	Date of Summary: September 2005