FORMER SAICA FACTORY SITE VILLA ROAD, HISTON CAMBRIDGESHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION





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Document Ref.	2402rep	
Report Issue Date	July 2012	
Circulation	Bellway Homes Ltd	
	CCC Historic Environment Team	

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FORMER SAICA FACTORY SITE VILLA ROAD, HISTON

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING & EXCAVATION

Client: Bellway Homes Ltd

NGR: TL 4380 6278

CHER Event No: ECB3794

FAU Project No: 2402

OASIS No: 130723

Dates of Fieldwork: 09 - 12 July 2012

SUMMARY

A programme of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was undertaken prior to the redevelopment of the former Saica Packaging Factory site at Histon. The 2.3ha site is located on the western edge of Histon and Impington, in a general area of established archaeological potential. Cropmark sites are known to its west and the remains of Late Bronze Age buildings, a Middle Iron Age ditch and elements of a Post-medieval field system were investigated in 2008 during an excavation at what is now the NIAB Research Centre site, c.400m to the north-west. Prior to the construction of the box factory in 1929, the site was agricultural land, with the eastern part used as an orchard. Additionally, it was adjacent

to and probably associated with the Chivers jam factory, itself demolished in 1986.

A total of twelve trenches were investigated across the site. Only widespread modern disturbance from the construction and/or demolition of the factory was recorded. No below-ground archaeological remains of any significance were identified. Indeed, the only unstratified or residual artefacts present were in the form of an extensive surface scatter of thousands of stoneware jar sherds - conjectured to be obsolete Victorian-period jam jars from the Chivers jam factory used as hardcore in the 1929 box factory construction works.

It is concluded that, due to the high degree of preceding ground disturbance, the redevelopment of the Saica site will not have a significant impact upon the heritage resource of this vicinity of Histon and Impington.

1

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A programme of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was undertaken by Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) prior to the redevelopment of the former Saica Packaging Factory site. The work was commissioned by Bellway Homes Ltd and carried out in accordance with a brief of works issued by the Cambridge County Council Historic Environment Team (CCC HET) and a Written Scheme of Investigation produced by ECC FAU (2012) and approved by the CCC HET.

Copies of the report will be supplied to the client and the CCC HET. The archive will be deposited at the Cambridgeshire County Archaeological Store. An OASIS online record has been created at http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/oasis/index.cfm and a digital version of this report will be accessible via the ADS website grey literature library; http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Site Description

The c.2.3ha site is located to the south of Histon and west of Impington (Fig.1) in South Cambridgeshire District (TL 4380 6278). The triangular plot is bounded to the south by an access road leading off Villa Road, to the west by a hedgerow with a drainage channel (marked on mapping as a public drain), with agricultural fields beyond both. The Cambridgeshire Guided Busway route (formerly the Cambridge to St Ives railway line) defines the third, northeastern boundary of the plot, beyond which there are modern business/industrial units.

The site was until recently occupied by a number of structures; a production building, warehouse and various ancillary structures belonging to the Saica cardboard box factory. The production building was constructed in the interwar years and various extensions added and improvements undertaken thereafter. The production and warehouse buildings had concrete floors while the remainder of the site was covered by hardstanding. All the factory buildings and the majority of the hardstanding covering the site had recently been demolished and cleared. At the time of this evaluation, only fragments of tarmac surface over rubble bedding remained along the southern peripheries of the site. A large stockpile of crushed concrete occupied the northern and western part of the site, but the remainder of the

site was flat, open and stripped onto subsoil/natural deposits - the surface of which was highly disturbed, reworked and possibly re-deposited in places.

The solid geology underlying the site is mapped by the British Geological Society (BGS) as Third Terrace drift deposits overlying Gault and Lower Greensand (Geology of Britain Viewer, BGS). Geotechnical works, carried out in 2010, before demolition and clearance, identified the following typical sequence (Merebrook 2010b, 8):

- Concrete/Tarmac, over
- Made Ground (0.05-0.25m thick), over
- Clayey/silty sands and gravels, over
- Terrace Deposits sand and gravel (0.13-0.65m thick)
- Gault Clay

2.2 Planning Background

As a result of the significant archaeological potential of the area in which the development site is situated (see section 2.3 below), an archaeological evaluation was required prior to construction as a consequence of a condition attached to planning consent (plan app: S/0809/12/FL). The results of this evaluation were to be considered by the CCC HET, as advisors to the LPA, to determine the need and type of further mitigation works required in advance of and/or during construction.

2.3 Archaeological Background

The wider archaeological context and potential of this site has already been collated and considered in a previous desk-based assessment of the cultural heritage assets within a 500m radius (Heppell 2011). As part of this study, the Cambridgeshire HER was consulted and an event number obtained (ECB3794). The pertinent information alluding to the likely archaeological potential of the site is outlined below. The locations of the most significant of these are shown on Figure 1.

There are no nationally designated heritage assets (Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens) within or close to the site. The nearest Scheduled Monument is a moated site in the vicinity of Histon Manor, located some 1km to the north (SM No. 33279). There are, however, listed buildings along the High Street and Station Road, to the north and east.

There are no previously known archaeological remains within the site area. However, there are recorded findspots of prehistoric and Saxon artefacts in the surrounding vicinity (MCB16173, CHER 5195, 10139). Known cropmark enclosure complexes are located a relatively short distance to the west (CHER 08950 and 05187), one undated the other Roman.

Of greatest relevance to the Saica site are two archaeological excavations previously carried-out in the near vicinity. The NIAB site, c.400m to the north-west, was investigated in advance of development (CHER ECB2864; Murrell 2008). The remains of Late Bronze Age buildings, a Middle Iron Age ditch and elements of a Post-medieval field system were recorded. The second, a small evaluation at Chivers Way, to the north of the Saica site, found no archaeological remains (CHER ECB2356; Rothwell 2006).

The Cambridge & St Ives branch line, now marked by the guided busway along the north edge of the site, was constructed by the Eastern Counties Railway Company in 1847.

Historic Ordnance Survey mapping shows that the Saica site was agricultural land between the late 19th century and the late 1920s, and was presumably so prior to this. Soft fruit growing was a significant part of the local agricultural economy of the area and the railway became an important means of transport of its produce. Early OS editions show an orchard in the east of the site, which probably supplied the Chivers 'Orchard Works' factory that was built in 1875. This was located immediately to the north of the railway line, opposite what later became the box factory site.

Reed Corrugated Cases Ltd built the first factory on the site in 1929 and began making corrugated fibreboard boxes, reputedly supplying the Chivers factory. This seems highly likely as Chivers were highly organised and innovative, to the extent of producing their own tin cans from 1895 onwards. Ordnance Survey mapping shows the development of the box factory complex from the 1938 edition onwards. The East Anglian Film Archive holds a fantastic 1931 promotional film of the Chivers jam factory (East Anglian Film Archive, online resource) which includes footage of the packing plant and the boxes used. Aerial views do not appear to include the box factory site.

The Chivers factory was sold to Schweppes in 1959. The main railway line closed to the public in 1967 but factory deliveries continued until 1983. The jam factory was eventually closed and demolished in 1986, and subsequently replaced by the Vision Park development. All rail activity stopped in 1992. The Saica packaging factory closed prior to 2010.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The principle aim of the archaeological evaluation was to assess the nature and potential of the site. The trial-trenching sought to establish the presence/absence, type, date, extent, complexity, survival and importance of below-ground remains in order to inform any decision-making about the need and scope of any further mitigation work required prior to, or during, the re-development.

Specific objectives of the evaluation were:

- To determine whether further remains of Late Bronze Age, Middle Iron Age and Roman date previously recorded at the NIAB site, and as nearby cropmarks, extend into the Saica site
- To understand the Post-Medieval use of the site, including its apparent association with the 19th century fruit growing and preserving industries of the locality

In the event of significant discoveries, research objectives were to be identified/ reviewed with reference to those presented in *Research and Archaeology: a Framework for the Eastern Counties, 2. research agenda and strategy* (Brown and Glazebrook 2000) and its recent revision (Medlycott 2011).

4.0 METHODOLOGY

Twelve of the thirteen proposed trenches were machine excavated under archaeological supervision. These were placed in locations previously agreed with the CHET officer and the client. The trenching array was constrained by the client's requirement that no excavations were undertaken within proposed building footprints or below an underlying layer of clay and sand that restrained the groundwater level. Trench 6 was not excavated and Trench 8 was shortened to 25m due to local constraints. Also, a large stockpile of crushed concrete occupied the northern and western part of the site (Plate 1), preventing the positioning of trenches here and limiting the length of Trench 2 to 20m. All other trenches measured c.30m x 1.8m. The evaluation therefore achieved an approximate 3% sample of the total site area.

Where necessary, and safe to do so, manual cleaning and excavation was undertaken in each of the trenches. The general depth and nature of all deposits and features of all dates exposed were investigated and recorded and, spoil checked for artefacts. Standard ECC FAU excavation, artefact collection and recording methodologies were employed throughout. The FAU uses its own recording system to record all archaeological deposits and features. In

the absence of archaeological remains, trench recording sheets were completed, augmented by photography, as a minimum.

The archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists' Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation (IfA 2008) and the Association of Local Government Officers' Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (Gurney 2003). The ECC FAU is a registered archaeological organisation with the Institute for Archaeologists.

5.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS

The former factory site had been demolished and all hard surfaces removed prior to the evaluation. Only fragments of tarmac surface over rubble bedding remained along the southern periphery of the site. Additionally, the building foundations had reportedly been machined-out to a depth of 1.0m and backfilled. The surface of the site was therefore stripped down to a mixture of natural and reworked deposits. Rubble spreads and areas of machine rutting and tracking indicated that the exposed surface of the cleared site was highly disturbed, though generally flat (Plate 1).

The twelve trenches investigated provide a good representative coverage of the site (Fig.2). The following results are described collectively, rather than trench by trench. Additional trench information is presented in Appendix 1.

The depths of the trenches ranged from 0.25m to 0.85m as the thickness of made ground overlying the natural deposits varied across the site and within the trenches. The made ground consisted of mixed soils: mid to dark greyish brown and dark orange-brown soft silty sands with frequent inclusions of modern brick fragments, pieces of concrete, tarmac and scrap metal. The mid orangey yellow-brown soft silty sand with patches of greenish grey soft plastic silty clay natural deposits were severely disturbed throughout the site by modern cuts made during the construction and demolition of the factory buildings and associated structures. It is believed that the potential archaeological horizon has been disturbed in the former and completely removed in the later process. Very few modern intrusions could be matched with mapped wall lines with any great confidence. Plates 2-7 give a representative view of the trench contents across the site.

Although no archaeological features or pre-modern artefacts were encountered within the trenches, an extensive spread of thousands of stoneware jar sherds was noted across the

surface of the cleared site. This appeared to be most intense in its western half. Clearly disturbed by recent demolition and clearance works, no source or any patterning of this material was discerned. The pottery itself is described further in Section 6.

6.0 FINDS

No stratified or unstratified artefacts of any significance were recovered from deposits within the twelve trenches excavated. However, a small but representative sample of the numerous stoneware vessels sherds that were observed to be spread across the cleared surface of the site was collected. This amounted to 21 sherds weighing 2840g.

These vessel sherds are almost certainly the remains of jars used for the storage of preserves and jams during the latter part of the 19th century. The assemblage includes substantial base, body, shoulder and rim sherds of vessels of varying size and wall thickness, though all appear to be of fairly simple shouldered jar form (Plate 8). All have typically glazed cream coloured bodies and brown tops, often with a simple beaded decoration at the shoulder. Impressed stamps on some retrieved sherds identify the two manufacturers Price, Sons & Co and George Skey & Co.

Price, Sons & Co was a major Bristol manufacturer operating as such between 1883 and 1906, thereafter becoming Price Powell & Co. A single stamped sherd reading 'PRICE 6 BRISTOL' was retrieved.

George Skey and Co was active from the 1860s onwards, producing a wide variety of ceramics, including stoneware sewer pipes, sanitary ware and vessels at its Wilnecote Works in Tamworth, Staffordshire. The five stamps collected from the box factory site variously read 'SKEY N° 1', 'SKEY TAMWORTH No 1', 'SKEY 8 TAMWORTH' or more simply 'SKEY TAMWORTH'.

The collected base sherds are predominantly from vessels of 14-15cm diameter. Two are of vessels of 22cm diameter. A 'Skey 8 Tamworth' jar with beaded shoulder decoration sold on e-bay was listed as being 23.5cm high and 14cm diameter.

None of the retrieved sherds, or any others observed on site, bore any transfer labelling indicating use or ownership/branding. It is likely that any such information would have been on paper labels attached to the jars. A Skey stoneware jar bearing an original Chivers jam

label, in Canadian ownership, was sold on e-bay in 2007. The jar appears similar to those represented by some of the collected sherds and was apparently 19cm tall by 15cm diameter (Plate 9). Its paper label reportedly read:

'Chivers & Sons Ltd., Strawberry Jam, Prepared Under Ideal Hygienic Conditions, Purveyors of... [illegible]...By Appointment to His Majesty the King, Histon, Cambridge, England.'

In view of this, it is reasonable to speculate that the stoneware jar sherds present on the Saica site came from the adjacent jam factory.

7.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Archaeological evaluation of the former Saica site has demonstrated that the whole area has been severely impacted by factory construction and demolition/clearance. If archaeological remains were once present within the site, these have been disturbed and destroyed. This said, it is noted that no artefacts of any type predating the Victorian period were retrieved, suggesting that any such presence was probably minor.

It has not been possible to determine whether the nearby cropmarks and the Late Bronze Age, Middle Iron Age and sites previously recorded at the NIAB site, extended this far south and east with any certainty. Nor have any insights into this vicinity's use during the medieval or earlier post-medieval periods been gained. While no evidence of the orchard that once occupied the eastern part of the site was discerned amongst the disturbance, its inferred association with the adjacent Chivers jam factory has been substantiated.

Although seemingly scattered across the site, and no doubt somewhat disturbed and displaced by site clearance works, the proliferation of stoneware jar sherds on this site is nevertheless significant. It is known that the Chivers jam factory originally used two, four and six pound jars to contain its produce. Glass jars were apparently in use by 1885 and there is a nice 1894 photograph recording the concurrent use of both stoneware and glass jars in the factory (*Histon & Impington Online* website), reproduced in this report as Plate 10. As the factory was also producing its own cans by 1895, the need for stoneware jars presumably diminished. It is conjectured that by the 1920s these stoneware jars were probably obsolete and so the Chivers' remaining stocks were conveniently disposed of by being used as hardcore during the construction of the adjacent, and associated, box factory.

Due to the previous disturbance wrought by factory construction and clearance and the apparent absence/non-survival of archaeological remains, the proposed residential redevelopment will have no significant impact upon the heritage resource of this vicinity of Histon/Impington. It is therefore judged that further archaeological investigation of this site would not be productive.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Bellway Homes Ltd for commissioning the archaeological work. The assistance of Mike Davey and Steve Read of Bellway Homes is gratefully acknowledged, as is guidance on geotechnical matters from Ben Winch and Ben Coulston of RSK Environment Ltd. The fieldwork was undertaken by the author. Illustrations were produced by Andrew Lewsey. The project was managed by Mark Atkinson and monitored by Dan McConnell of the CCC HET on behalf of the local planning authority.

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Appendix 1: Trench Data

All trenches are 30m long and 1.8m wide, unless stated otherwise

Trench No	Orientation (approx)	Coordinates of ends of trench		Archaeol remains?	Notes
1	E-W	543727.34 / 262768.71	543756.54 / 262761.86	No	
2	N-S	543757.31 / 262792.67	543753.60 / 262774.70	No	20m long, due to obstruction
3	WSW-ENE	543750.20 / 262747.29	543779.19 / 262755.03	No	
4	NW-SE	543793.85 / 262823.37	543809.53 / 262797.79	No	
5	NW-SE	543839.34 / 262827.79	543860.51 / 262806.53	No	
6	NNW-SSE	543827.35 / 262802.49	543838.57 / 262774.66	-	Not excavated, due to obstruction
7	N-S	543810.31 / 262778.09	543816.37 / 262748.60	No	
8	E-W	543804.95 / 262731.38	543834.88 / 262729.34	No	25m long, due to obstruction
9	NW-SE	543856.48 / 262752.37	543877.22 / 262730.68	No	
10	WNW-ESE	543863.82 / 262723.66	543889.67 / 262711.57	No	
11	NW-SE	543893.32 / 262776.10	543914.64 / 262754.99	No	
12	NW-SE	543899.03 / 262742.07	543920.35 / 262720.96	No	
13	WSW-ENE	543845.58 / 262771.65	543874.75 / 262778.67	No	

Appendix 2:

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

OASIS ID: essexcou1-130723

Project details

Project name Former Saica Factory Site, Histon

A trial trench evaluation of the former Saica box factory site established that it had been extensively disturbed by both factory construction and recent demolition. No archaeological

Short description of the

project

remains of any significance were found - apart from a spread of stoneware jar sherds, conjectured to be obsolete Victorian jam jars deriving from the adjacent Chivers jam factory and used as

hardcore in the factory construction.

Project dates Start: 09-07-2012 End: 12-07-2012

Previous/future work No / No

Any associated project

reference codes

2402 - Contracting Unit No.

Any associated project

reference codes

ECB3794 - HER event no.

Type of project Field evaluation

Site status None

Current Land use Industry and Commerce 1 - Industrial

Monument type N/A None

Significant Finds POTTERY Post Medieval

Methods & techniques "Sample Trenches"

Development type Housing estate

Prompt Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS

Position in the planning

process

After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country England

Site location CAMBRIDGESHIRE SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE HISTON

Former Saica factory site, Villa Road

Postcode CB24 9PA Study area 2.00 Hectares

Site coordinates TL 4380 6278 52 0 52 14 38 N 000 06 23 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit

Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice

(CAPCA)

Project design originator Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit

Project director/manager Mark Atkinson Project supervisor Lukasz Miciak

Type of sponsor/funding

Project brief originator

body

Developer

Name of sponsor/funding

body

Bellway Homes Ltd

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No

Digital Archive recipient Cambridgeshire Archive Repository

Digital Contents "Ceramics", "Stratigraphic"

Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography", "Text"

Digital Archive notes Report and photos on CD-Rom, with paper archive

Paper Archive recipient Cambridgeshire Archive Repository

Paper Contents "Ceramics", "Stratigraphic"

Paper Media available "Miscellaneous Material", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title Former Saica Factory Site, Histon, Cambridgeshire:

archaeological evaluation

Author(s)/Editor(s) Miciak, L.

Other bibliographic details ECC FAU rep. 2402

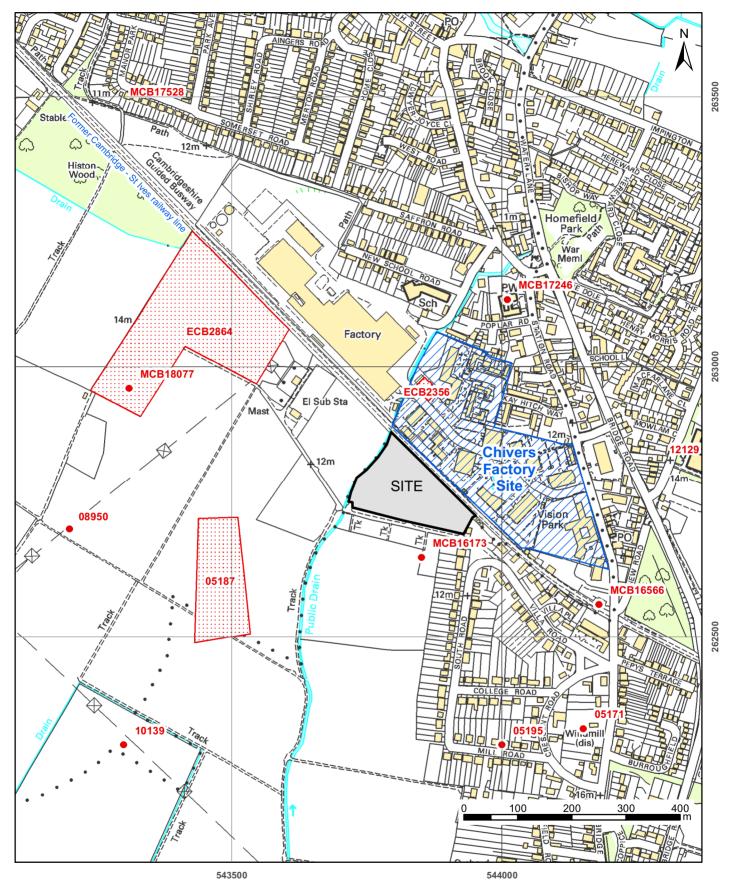
Date 2012

Issuer or publisher Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit

Place of issue or publication Braintree

Entered by Mark Atkinson (mark.atkinson@essex.gov.uk)

Entered on 24 July 2012



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1. Site location and CHER references



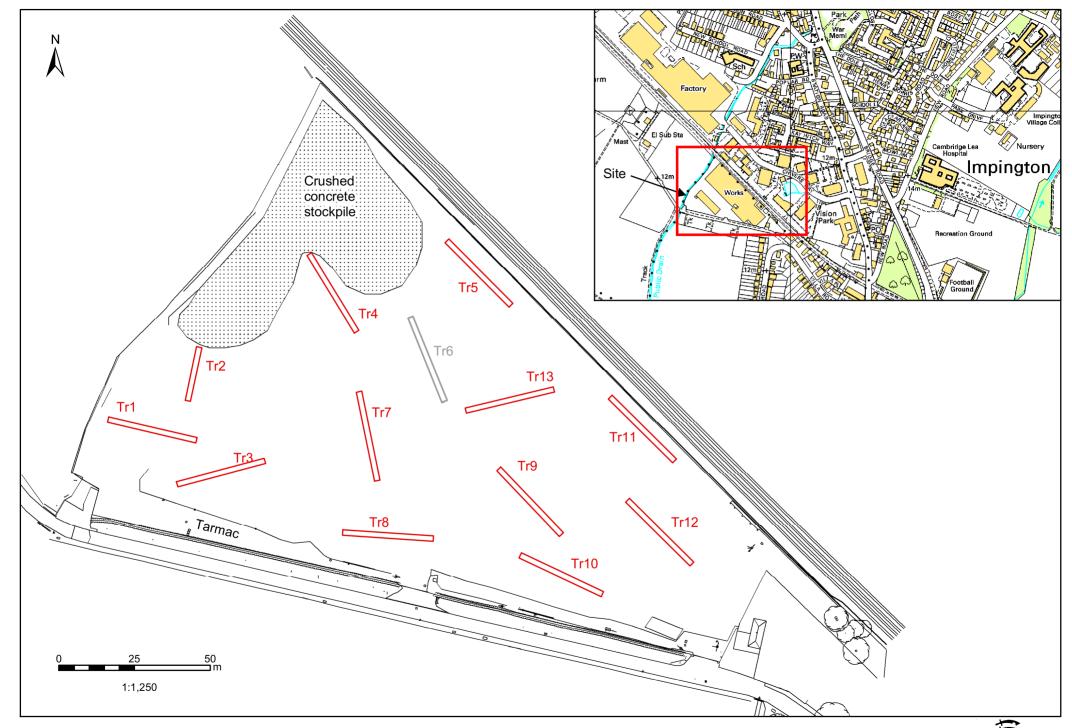


Fig.2. Location of archaeological evaluation trenches



Plate 1. General view of site (composite), looking northwest



Plate 2. Trench 3, looking southwest.



Plate 3. Trench 4, looking northwest



Plate 4. Trench 8, looking west



Plate 5. Trench 10, looking northwest



Plate 6. Trench 11, looking southeast



Plate 7. Trench 13, looking east.



Plate 8. Selected stoneware jar sherds collected from the site



Plate 9. A Skey stoneware jar bearing an original Chivers jam label



Plate 10. Stoneware and glass jars in use in the Chivers Factory, 1894