Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological evaluation at HFL Sports Science Newmarket Road, Fordham, Cambridgeshire August 2012

Northamptonshire Archaeology
2 Bolton House
Wootton Hall Park
Northampton NN4 8BE
t. 01604 700493 f. 01604 702822
e. sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk
w. www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk

Northamptonshire County Council

Jason Clarke

Report 12/164

August 2012

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REGISTERED ORGANISATION IfA

STAFF

Project Manager:	Ed Taylor BSc
Text:	Jason Clarke BSc MA AIfA
Fieldwork:	Jason Clarke Adam Meadows BSc
Worked flint	Andy Chapman BSc MIfA FSA
Illustrations	Amir Bassir BSc PIfA

QUALITY CONTOL

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Pat Chapman	*PC*	
Approved by	Andy Chapman	*AC*	

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS	**OASIS No: 133724**	
Project title	Archaeological evaluation of land at HFL Sport Science, Newmarket Road, Fordham, Cambridgeshire 2012	
Short description	In August 2012, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology, on behalf of Chaplin Farrent Ltd, on land at HFL Sports Science, Newmarket Road, Fordham, Cambridgeshire. A possible late Neolithic/early Bronze Age relict soil was present within the trenches. A thick layer of modern made ground was present throughout the development area, indicating previous disturbance. No archaeological features were present within the trial trenches	
Project type	Trial trench evaluation	
Previous work	None	
Current land use	Paddock	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type and period		
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Cambridgeshire	
Site address	Newmarket Road, Fordham	
Easting Northing	SP 744 867	
Area (sq m/ha)	0.3 hectres	
Height aOD	13.00mAOD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team	
Project Design originator	NA	
Director/Supervisor	Jason Clarke (NA)	
Project Manager	Ed Taylor (NA)	
Sponsor or funding body	Chaplin Farrent Ltd	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	15/08//2012	
End date	15/08/2012	
ARCHIVES	**Location (Accession no.)**	**Contents**
Physical	ECB3824	Flint
Paper		Site records (1 archive box)
Digital		Client report PDF. Survey Data, Photographs
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Title	Archaeological evaluation of Land at HFL Sports Science, Newmarket Road Fordham, Cambridgeshire, August 2012	
Serial title & volume	12/164	
Author(s)	Jason Clarke	
Page numbers	7 text, 4 figs	
Date	September 2012	

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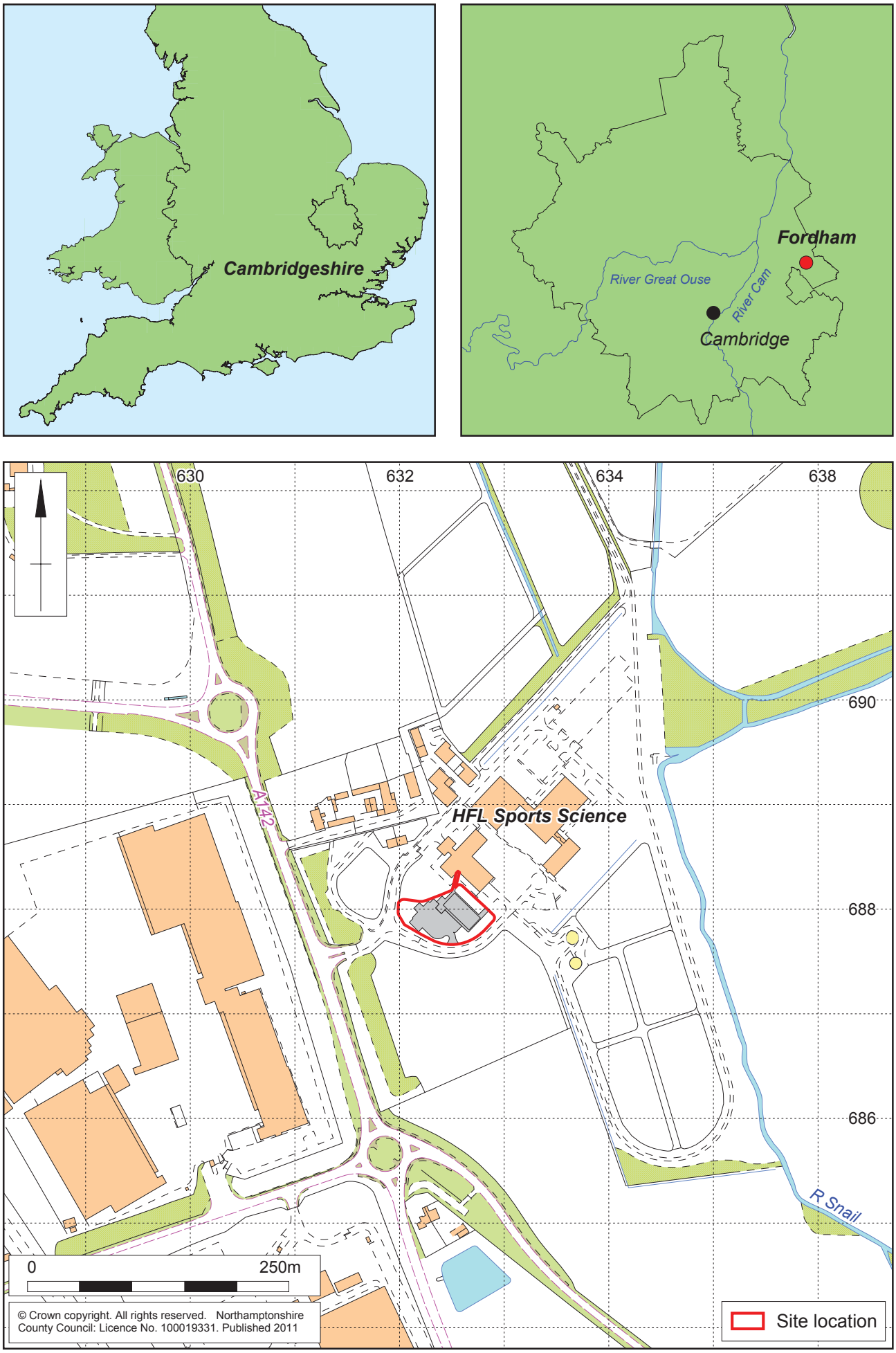


Scale 1:5000

Site location Fig 1

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF LAND AT HFL SPORTS SCIENCE, NEWMARKET ROAD, FORDHAM CAMBRIDGESHIRE AUGUST 2012

Abstract

In August 2012, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology, on behalf of Chaplin Farrent Ltd, on land at HFL Sports Science, Newmarket Road, Fordham, Cambridgeshire. A possible late Neolithic/early Bronze Age relict soil was present within the trenches. A thick layer of modern made ground was present throughout the development area, indicating previous disturbance. No archaeological features were present within the trial trenches.

1 INTRODUCTION

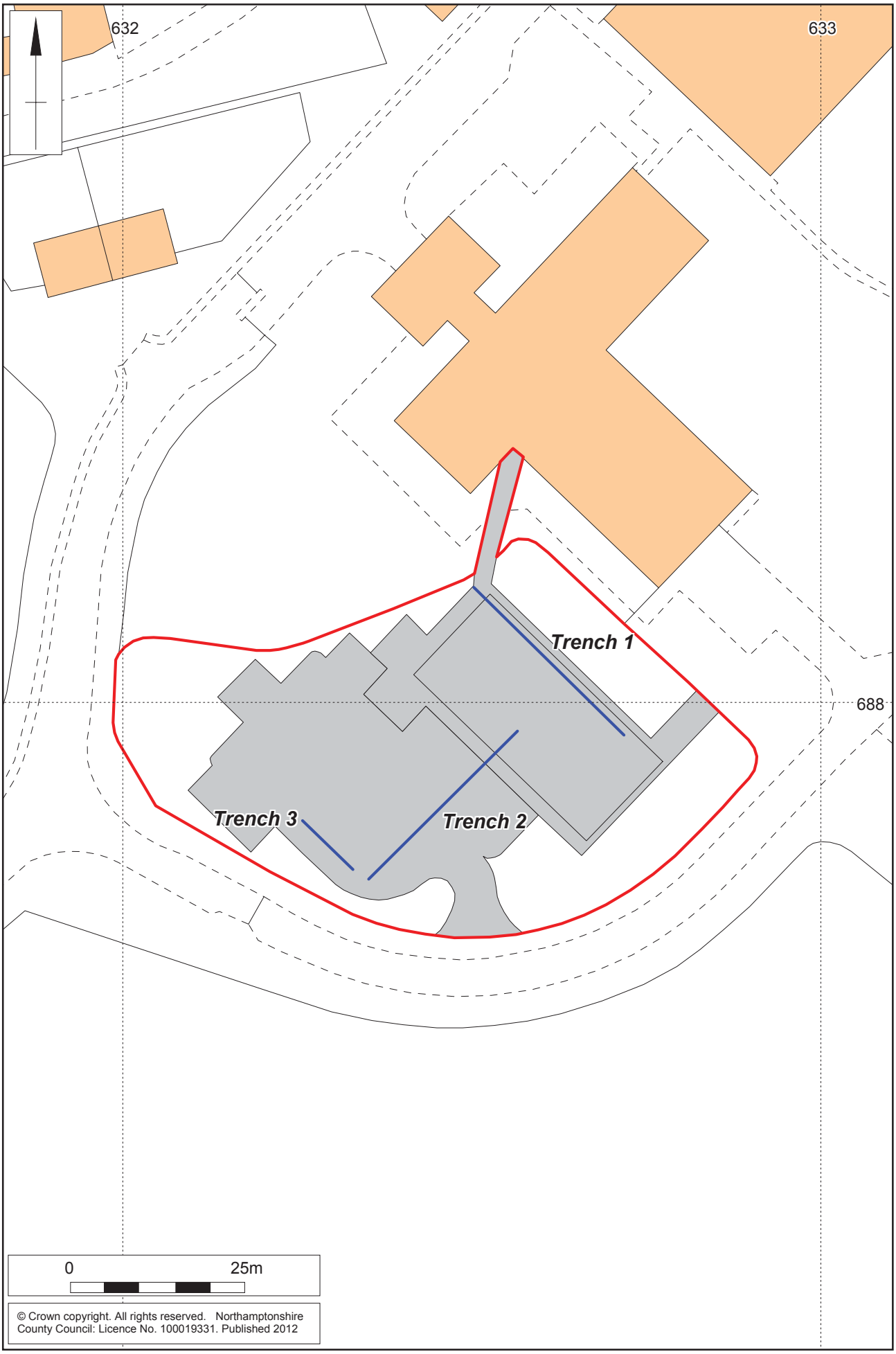
In August 2012, an archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) on land at HFL Sports Science, Newmarket Road, Fordham, Cambridgeshire (NGR: TL 6323 6880; Fig 1). The work was commissioned by Chaplin Farrent Ltd, and was undertaken to inform a forthcoming planning application (ref: 12/00104/FUM) for the proposed construction of a new office building, covered link and associated landscaping.

The scope of works was outlined and detailed in the Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA 2012) in accordance with the Brief issued by Cambridgeshire County Councils Historic Environment Team (HET) (Thomas 2012). The objectives of the evaluation were to determine the presence of any archaeological features or deposits within the application area and to date and characterise their extent, depth of burial and state of preservation.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and geology

The site lies to the south of the village of Fordham. The development area is situated within grounds of HFL Sports Science facility and comprises a former paddock area of overgrown scrub vegetation, 0.3ha. The River Snail lies to the east and the A142 to the west. The underlying geology for the area consists of upper cretaceous chalk.



Scale 1:750 (A4)

Trench location plan Fig 2

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

Three possible Mesolithic flints were found *c* 200m to the west of the proposal area where the office buildings on the western side of the A142 Newmarket Road (Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record ref 07433A), whilst evidence for Neolithic occupation in the form of pits and flint scatters was found to the west and north of the site during the construction of the A142 Fordham bypass (Hatton and Kemp 2002; Mortimer 2005; MCB 14997). There are records of ring ditches and flint scatters of probable Bronze Age date being found near Fordham House approximately 600m to the north-west, although it is not clear how many of these features were investigated (Hall 1996a, 89), whilst cropmarks of undated 'sub-elliptical enclosures' might be further ring ditches or other prehistoric features (HER refs 07433, 09025 and 09026).

Approximately 500m south-west of the proposal area, Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age settlement remains were excavated in 1996 to the south of the Landwade Road and Newmarket Road junction (HER ref. MCB 16109), and included post-built roundhouses, 4-6 post structures and storage pits, with thermoluminescence dates from some of the pottery recovered indicating 6th century BC dates. A Bronze Age spearhead and a socketed axe were found some 300m to the north-west of the proposal area (Hall 1996a, 89). Roughly 300m to the north-west of the site, archaeological investigations ahead of the A142 Fordham bypass found evidence for a Bronze Age cremation cemetery, and traces of prehistoric timber buildings, fences and a ditched field system likely to be of Late Bronze Age and Iron Age date (Hatton and Kemp 2002; Mortimer 2005; HER ref. CB 14997).

To the east and south-east of the proposal area *c* 400-700m away in Snailwell Fen, Iron Age and Romano-British finds of pottery, beads, metalwork and coins were made during the Fenland Survey, and may reflect the existence of one or more settlements in this general area (Hall 1996a, 93, 1996b, 99; HER refs 07434, 07745A, 07746, 07446A). The Scheduled Ancient Monument of Snailwell Roman villa is located 400m to the south of the application area, alongside the River Snail with painted plaster, hypocaust tiel fragments and later Roman pottery discovered during the 1970s (Cra'ster 1973; NMR SAM 80; HER refs 07483, CB 80). Roman or post-Roman road surfaces, ditches and a burial were also revealed during the Fordham bypass investigations (Hatton and Kemp 2002; HER refs MCB 16946).

One of the earliest documentary references to Fordham dates to the 970s when Beorhtnoth, Abbot of Ely, bought *c* 2⅓ hides at Fordham from Grim son of Oswulf. There were two manors in Fordham in 1066 and 1086, the largest of 5½ hides belonging to the royal demesne, and held by many different families over the centuries. From the mid-12th century onwards it was also used to support royal servants, who from the 1170s each received equal shares of its income (Wareham and Wright 2002, 395-396). In 1086 Fordham was probably inhabited by 24 peasants and one *servus*, and by 1279 the village contained *c* 140 houses, occupied by 135 manorial tenants.

Fordham's other manor as recorded in Domesday of 1086 was 4½ hides in extent and held by Count Alan, lord of Richmond, and for a time it was also held by the Bassingbourn family. In 1509 the manor was sold to Lady Margaret Beaufort, and she then included it in the endowment of her foundation of St John's College, Cambridge, the college then retaining the estate until the late 20th century (Wareham and Wright 2002, 398-399). Besides the land belonging to the two manors, the north-west of Fordham also contained from the 13th century much land held as freehold and by customary tenures of another Crown manor in Soham which became the Duchy manor there. The population of Fordham grew rapidly from the 1570s, possibly doubling by the mid-17th century. From a peak in *c* 1680 the population may have fallen by a third or more by the mid-18th century, only recovering from the 1760s.

Fordham Priory was originally founded as a hospital in *c* 1205 by Henry, Dean of Fordham, but assigned from the late 1220s to the Gilbertine order of Sempringham.

Various gifts of land increased the priory's holdings, which by the 16th century was known as Biggen priory (Wareham and Wright 2002, 402-403), and may have been surrounded by a ditch or moat. It was destroyed by fire in *c* 1419 and was finally suppressed during the reign of Henry VIII in 1538. Philip Parys of Linton was granted the whole of the Fordham property in 1540, but it then passed back to the Crown who held it (fn. 4) leased it out for 60 years in 1542, then apparently returned the priory estate to the Crown, which held 'Fordham rectory' until 1600 and the Biggen demesne until 1588. By 1618 Biggen manor had been acquired by Sir William Russell, Lord of Chippenham (ibid), and by 1682 it was called Fordham Abbey. It remained in the Russell family until 1711 when it was sold off to pay debts, and it was at this time that the large Baroque-style manor was built, with formal walled gardens (ibid). The property then passed through the hands of several notable families, being sold in 1730, 1790 and 1808. Listed Building 49044, an 18th-century building, is located to the immediate north of the application area. Known as Biggen Stud Farmhouse, it is one of four buildings of this date on the Fordham Abbey estate. The Baroque mansion was dismantled, and a new grand house built in Palladian style, surrounded by wooded parkland (Wareham and Wright 2002). The house was the seat of the Dunn Gardner family from the 1820s until the 1920s.

A map produced showing Fordham before enclosure in *c* 1800 indicates that the proposal area was within one of the large open arable fields belonging to the village, called Biggen or Budgate Field (Wareham and Wright 2002). On the 1884 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map, the area is depicted as a field with hedged boundaries to the south-east of Biggen Cottage, and likewise on the 1890-92 and 1903 1:10560 Ordnance Survey maps. Indeed, there are no significant cartographic changes until the 1972 1:10000 map, by which time some simplification of the field boundaries has taken place, and Biggen Stud and Biggen Cottages are named as separate entities. The 1:10000 1984-1990 Ordnance Survey map does not show much change, as the more recent office buildings constructed on either side of the A142 Newmarket Road to the immediate east and to the west of the site had not yet been constructed.

3 METHODOLOGY

Three trial trenches were excavated in accordance with a trench plan prepared by Northamptonshire Archaeology and approved by Andy Thomas (Senior Planning Archaeologist, Cambridgeshire County Council) (Fig 2).

The trenches measured 30m long by 1.60m wide. The proposed total area excavated was 144m^{2,} a 5% sample of the study area. Trenches were positioned using a Leica system 1200 GPS. On approval of the Planning Archaeologist Trench 3 was reduced to 10m long reducing the sample area 120m^2

A JCB mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.60m wide ditching bucket was used to remove overburden to archaeological levels or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first. The trenches were cleaned sufficiently to enable the identification and definition of archaeological features and were related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Archaeological deposits were examined by hand excavation to determine their nature. Recording followed standard NA procedures as described in the *Fieldwork Manual* (NA 2011). Deposits were described on *pro-forma* sheets to include measured and descriptive details of the context, its relationships, interpretation and a checklist of associated finds. Context sheets were cross-referenced to scale plans, section drawings and photographs. Photography was with 35mm black and white film and colour slides, supplemented with digital images. Sections were drawn at scale 1:10 or 1:20, as appropriate and related to Ordnance Survey datum. Spoil heaps and features were scanned with a metal detector to maximise the recovery of metal objects.

All works were conducted in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of conduct* (IfA 2010) and *Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 1994, revised 2008).

4 THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

4.1 General stratigraphy

The underlying geology of chalk was encountered between 0.70-1.25m below the modern ground surface. Hollows within the chalk were infilled with mid orange-brown sandy clay and were possibly a relict soil up to 0.25m thick, surviving from the later Neolithic/early Bronze Age The subsoil was light grey-brown sandy clay, overlaid by modern made ground comprising of compacted clay with brick, concrete and plastic inclusions. The topsoil was mid greyish-brown sandy clay.

4.2 The trial trenches (Figs 2 -4)

The trench locations are shown in Figure 2 and an inventory of contexts is provided in the Appendix. The topsoil had an average depth of 0.15m overlying made ground, averaging 0.60m deep and subsoil of 0.10m. Patches of possible relict soils, infilling hollows within the chalk geology was present within all the trenches. A small cortical flint flake was recovered from the relict soil within Trench 3. No archaeological features were present within the trenches and no other finds were recovered.

Trench 1, showing relict soils within hollows in the chalk, looking north-west Fig 3

Section showing deposits within Trench 2, looking north-west Fig 4

5 WORKED FLINT by Andy Chapman

From the possible relict soil (304) there is a small cortical flake hard-hammer struck from a small prepared core. The raw material is grey vitreous flint with a brown cortex. It may be broadly dated to the later Neolithic/early Bronze Age.

6 DISCUSSION

The trial trenching demonstrated that the development area had previously been stripped of topsoil and probably used as the spoil tip for previous development on the site. The made ground containing modern material was probably the remnants of the spoil tip, levelled during reinstatement of the area.

The soil infilling the hollows within the natural chalk geology was a possible relict soil. A single small cortical flake recovered from the material dates to the late Neolithic to early Iron Age and may broadly date the possible relict soil.

No archaeological features were present within the trenches and no further finds were recovered.

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APPENDIX: CONTEXT INDEX

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
1	**30m x 2.0m NW-SE**	**SP**	**12.90m aOD**	**m aOD**
Context	***Context type Feature & type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
101	Topsoil	Mid brown-black sandy clay	0.15m thick	
102	Made ground	Mid brown sandy clay with frequent brick, concrete and plastic inclusion	0.18m thick	
103	Subsoil	Mid orange-brown sandy clay	0.36m thick	
104	Relic Soil	Light orange-brown sandy clay	0.10m thick	
105	Natural	Chalk		

Trench No	Length, width & alignment	NGR	Surface height	Depth & height of natural
2	**30m x 2.0m NE-SW**	**SP**	**13.42m aOD**	**12.15aOD**
Context	***Context type Feature & type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
201	Topsoil	Mid brown-black sandy clay	0.16m thick	
202	Made ground	Mid brown sandy clay with frequent brick, concrete and plastic inclusion	0.56m thick	
203	Subsoil	Mid orange-brown sandy clay	0.30m thick	
204	Relic Soil	Light orange-brown sandy clay	0.25m thick	
205	Natural	Chalk		

Trench No	**Length, width & alignment**	**NGR**	**Surface height**	**Depth & height of natural**
3	**10m x 2.0m NE to SW**	**SP**	**14.79m aOD**	**13.61m aOD**
Context	***Context type Feature & type***	***Description***	***Dimensions***	***Artefacts/ Samples***
301	Topsoil	Mid brown-black sandy clay	0.13m thick	
302	Made ground	Mid brown sandy clay with frequent brick, concrete and plastic inclusion	0.70m thick	
303	Subsoil	Mid orange-brown sandy clay	0 27m thick	
304	Relic Soil	Light orange-brown sandy clay	0.08m thick	Flint
305	Natural	Chalk		

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