

Summary

- A programme of archaeological trial trenching was undertaken in advance of an industrial development on land off Wisbech Road in Littleport, Cambridgeshire.
- The site is situated on a slight outcrop of glacial boulder clay and was identified as having the potential to expose settlement evidence of the later prehistoric and Romano-British periods.
- Six trenches were excavated, exposing a series of linear features, evidencing episodes of land division and drainage. For the most part, these features were undated, although small amounts of worked flint and a sherd of possible Late Iron Age pottery suggest a limited degree of prehistoric activity. A large ditch of 18th/19th century date also ran across the site.

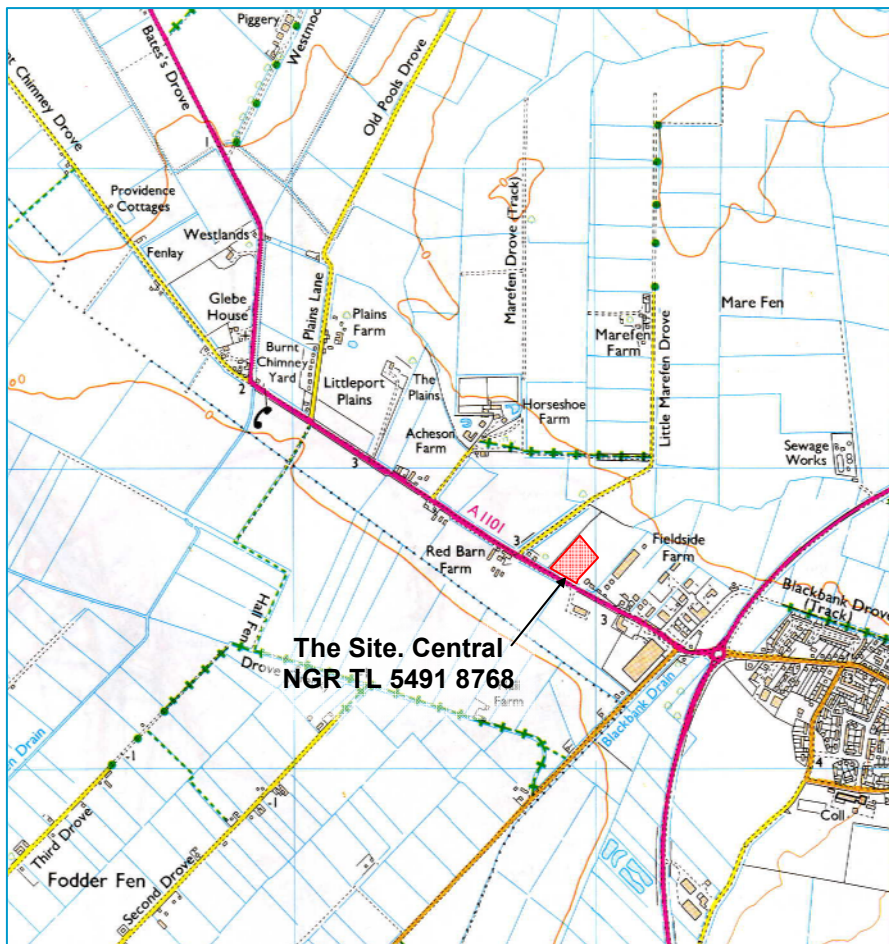


Figure 1: Site location at scale 1:25,000

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Allen Archaeological Associates was commissioned by Peter Humphrey Associates on behalf of their client Thurlow Nunn Standen Limited to carry out a programme of archaeological trial trenching in advance of an industrial development on land off Wisbech Road, Littleport, Cambridgeshire.
- 1.2 The fieldwork, recording and reporting conforms to current national guidelines, as set out in the Institute for Field Archaeologists '*Standards and guidance for archaeological field evaluations*' (IFA 1999), and the regional standards defined in '*Standards for field archaeology in the East of England*' (Gurney 2003). The methodology for this project conforms to a brief prepared by the Principal Archaeologist for Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice (hereafter CAPCA) (Thomas 2006), and a specification prepared by this company (Clay 2006).
- 1.3 The archive will be submitted to Cambridgeshire County Archaeological Store within six months of the completion of the project, under the Event Number ECB2450.

2.0 Site location and description

- 2.1 Littleport lies within the fenlands of Cambridgeshire, approximately 31km north-north-east of central Cambridge. The site is to the north-west of the town, on the north-east side of Wisbech Road. It is bounded by agricultural land to the north-west and north-east, with industrial units to the south-east.
- 2.2 The development area comprises a predominantly flat block of disused ground of approximately 1.2ha, which lies at approximately 2m above Ordnance Datum. The site centres on NGR TL 5491 8768.
- 2.3 The local geology comprises drift deposits of glacial boulder clay, overlying a solid geology of Kimmeridge Clay (British Geological Survey 1980).

3.0 Planning background

- 3.1 A planning application was submitted to Fenland District Council in 2005 (Planning Ref. 05/01386/FUM), for the construction of a new agricultural machinery and service centre, on a site of approximately 4ha. Planning permission has since been approved with conditions on a reduced area of c.1.2ha. As one of the conditions of the planning permission, CAPCA (who advise Fenland District Council on archaeological planning matters) recommended that an archaeological evaluation be carried out on the site in order to provide information concerning the potential impact of the development upon the archaeological resource. A brief produced by CAPCA outlining the requirements of this evaluation (Thomas 2006).

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

- 4.1 Throughout the majority of the parish, Mesolithic and Neolithic activity has been shown to be sealed by the Nordelph Peat, and the silt accumulations of the Terrington Beds; an alluvial process beginning c.4000 years ago (British Geological Survey 1980). Despite this, small numbers of worked flints recovered from the area around Littleport indicate that human activity was occurring at this time. A Neolithic polished flint axe was found approximately 100m north of the site (Archaeology Data Service ref. NMR_NATINV-375240).

- 4.2 The expansion of the peat fens throughout the Bronze Age would have restricted settlement to higher ground, such as the outcrop of glacial boulder clay that forms the Littleport 'island'. Two scatters of Bronze Age flint identified to the south-east of the proposed development area are perhaps evidence of this (Hall 1996). Excavations in advance of residential development to the south of Littleport, at Highfield Farm, exposed a series of possible ritual pits, spanning the Neolithic to Iron Age (R. Holt *pers. comm.*).
- 4.3 In the Romano-British period, salt making became an important industry in the region, with sites scattered along the line of the Old Croft River, to the north of the site. A site producing both Iron Age and Romano-British pottery has been identified on the same boulder clay ridge occupied by the current site, approximately 500m to the north-west (Hall 1996). Further possible Late Iron Age and Romano-British field systems were excavated at the Highfield Farm site (R. Holt *pers. comm.*).
- 4.4 At Camel Road in Littleport, a partially excavated high status building producing Antonine pottery has been interpreted as a possible *mansio*, on the line of Akeman Street, running north-eastwards from Cambridge through Ely and Littleport to join the Fen Causeway to the north-east (Malim 2005).
- 4.5 Dating evidence from the Romano-British field systems at the Highfield Farm site, suggested a possible continuation of activity into the Anglo-Saxon period. The site also produced approximately 60 inhumation burials, some of which were dated to the mid 6th century AD by shield bosses recovered from the graves.
- 4.6 At the time of the Domesday Survey, the principal landowner was the monastery at Ely (Williams & Martin 1992). The manor included meadow and pasture, as well as fisheries producing 17,000 eels at the time.

5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 The programme of trial trenching required the excavation of six trenches, each 50m long and 2m wide. The locations of the trenches were agreed in advance with CAPCA, and accurately located using differential GPS surveying (accuracy c. +/-1cm)
- 5.2 Machine excavation of the trenches was carried out using a 360° tracked excavator fitted with a 2m wide toothless dykeing bucket. Topsoil and subsoil deposits were removed in spits not exceeding 0.1m in depth, always under close archaeological supervision by the site supervisor, until the first archaeologically significant horizon was exposed. All further excavation was then carried out by hand.
- 5.3 Archaeological features were sample excavated in order to determine their depth, profile, orientation and where possible, date and function. This comprised:
 - 1m wide slots across the full profile of all ditches, gullies and other linear features
 - A 50% sample of discrete features such as pits and postholes up to 1m diameter
 - A 25% sample of discrete features such as pits and postholes in excess of 1m in diameter
 - Intersections of all linear features, where the relationship was not visible in plan
- 5.4 A full written record of all archaeological features and deposits was made on standard Allen Archaeological Associates recording sheets, accompanied by plan and section drawings at scales 1:50 and 1:20. A full photographic record was also maintained, and selected prints have been included as an appendix to this report.

- 5.5 The fieldwork was carried out by a team of four experienced field archaeologists, supervised by the author, from Monday 11th to Friday 15th December 2006.

6.0 Results

6.1 Trench 1

- 6.1.1 Machine excavation removed approximately 0.3m of a dark brown silty clay topsoil, 100, which directly overlay the natural geology, 101, a mixed deposit of orange brown sandy clay with lenses of sub angular gravel.
- 6.1.2 A series of undated linear features were exposed in the trench. Towards the south-west end of the trench, two parallel ditches, 102 and 104, ran across the trench on a north-west to south-east alignment. Both were moderately steep sided with a concave base. 102 measured 1.28m wide and 0.54m deep, and contained a natural silting deposit of dark grey silty clay, 103. Ditch 104 was smaller, at 0.65m wide and 0.3m deep, and was filled with a single homogenous silting deposit of light grey sandy clay, 105.
- 6.1.3 A further series of three parallel ditches following the same alignment as 102 and 104 were excavated towards the centre of the trench. The largest of the three, 107, was 0.95m wide and 0.4m deep, and was largely filled by a silting deposit of grey sandy clay, 108. The secondary fill of the ditch was a thin lens of slightly organic dark grey silty clay. Both fills were undated.
- 6.1.4 To the south-west of 107 were two steep sided ditches, 110 and 112 that were intercutting in plan, but had no visible relationship in section. Both ditches were filled by undated identical grey silty clay deposits, indicative of gradual natural silting caused by waterborne deposition.

6.2 Trench 2

- 6.2.1 The topsoil in this trench, 200, was a 0.3 – 0.35m deep deposit of dark grey/brown silty clay, sealing the natural clay, 207.
- 6.2.2 A single undated linear feature, 206, ran on a north-west to south-east alignment across the north-east end of the trench. It contained a single homogenous fill of grey silty clay, 205.
- 6.2.3 To its south, a possible palaeochannel was identified, comprising two components, 202 and 204. Channel 202 was between 0.95 and 1.4m wide, meandering slightly on a north – south alignment. 204 was 0.6m wide and ran north-westwards from the west side of 202. Both were filled with light grey brown silty clay, indicative of natural silting. Deposit 201 produced a small burnt pebble and a fragment of bone from the skull of an unidentified large mammal.
- 6.2.4 A soil sample was taken from deposit 201, the fill of 202, for environmental processing. It produced little of interpretative value, other than a single snail shell of a species common in grassland environments, and small quantities of charred grain and seed.

6.3 Trench 3

- 6.3.1 Trench 3 was sealed by a grey/brown silty clay topsoil, 300, that was up to 0.4m deep. Machine excavation of the topsoil exposed a series of linear features, all of which were cut into the natural sandy clay, 310.

- 6.3.2 At the north-west end of the trench a narrow ditch, 330, ran across the trench on a north-east to south-west alignment. It survived to a depth of 0.18m, and contained two fills. The primary fill, 331 was a mixed deposit of grey/brown and orange/brown clay, and was sealed by 332, a silting deposit of dark brown/grey silty clay. This deposit produced one flint flake of Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age date and one blade-like flake of Late Mesolithic/Early Neolithic date. A single small sherd of pottery was also recovered, which was possibly of later Iron Age date, although the lack of diagnostic features makes this far from certain. A soil sample from this deposit contained another very abraded pottery sherd of the same fabric, as well as a small quantity of charred cereal grain and seed. The palaeoenvironmental remains included a fragment of charred emmer wheat, a type of cereal grown throughout the later prehistoric. A single snail shell from the sample was indicative of a grassland environment.
- 6.3.3 Approximately 4.25m to the south-east of 330 was ditch 327, also running north-east to south-west. It was 0.65m wide and 0.28m deep, and was filled by two undated natural silting deposits, 328 and 329.
- 6.3.4 A further 4m south-east of 327, a possible ditch with terminus, 321, extended 1.9m into the trench from the south-western edge. It was 0.8m wide and 0.2m deep with a clearly defined sub-rectangular terminus. It was filled by an undated natural silting deposit, 322. The feature also appeared to have been recut, as defined by 324. This contained a grey silty clay deposit, 325, which was also undated.
- 6.3.5 Ditch 319 was a narrow linear feature located 3.2m to the south-east of 324. It contained an undated deposit of grey silty clay and ran north-east to south-west, parallel to the adjacent ditch 311. This feature also remains undated and was filled by a natural silting deposit of grey sandy clay. It was cut on its south-east side by a modern ceramic land drain.
- 6.3.6 Broadly within the centre of the trench was a large linear feature, 301, orientated north-north-east to south-south-west. A single recut, 303 was evident, which had largely truncated the primary cut, 301. The total width of the feature was 2.1m and it was 0.8m deep. The fills of this feature were noticeably different from the other features in the trench. The initial cut 301, had a single surviving fill, 302, a dark grey/brown silty clay that produced two fragments of unidentified animal bone. The recut 303 had three identifiable fills. The primary fill, 304, was a grey/brown sandy clay, which was sealed by a thin lens of dark grey sandy clay, 305, containing moderate quantities of charcoal and ash and a single fragment of post-medieval/modern brick, likely to represent a deliberately dumped deposit. It was sealed by a final fill of brown/grey sandy clay, 306, that contained a single residual flint flake of Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age date, and a fragment of possible daub of an unknown date. The ditch was cut on its north-west side by the cut for a ceramic land drain.
- 6.3.7 Another narrow linear feature, 313, ran north-east to south-west across the trench, approximately 2.4m south-east of 303. It was 0.65m wide and 0.25m deep, and was filled with grey silty clay, 315, that produced no dating evidence.
- 6.3.8 Approximately 13.5m from the south-east end of the trench, a section was excavated through ditch 316. The ditch was aligned north-east to south-west and contained three distinct fills. The primary fill, 317, comprised soft grey clay, possibly indicative of waterborne deposition. It was overlain by 318, a darker grey silty clay with occasional charcoal flecks. This in turn was sealed by 314, very dark grey, slightly organic silty clay. No dating evidence was recovered from any of these deposits.
- 6.3.9 The final feature exposed in this trench was a very narrow linear feature, 333, running on a north-west to south-east alignment from the easternmost corner of the trench. A slot excavated through the feature showed it survived to approximately 0.05m, and contained a fill of undated

grey silty clay, 334. The ditch could be traced for approximately 17m, beyond which it was too faint to detect. It was cut by ditch 316.

6.4 Trench 4

- 6.4.1 The uppermost deposit in this trench was a 0.3 – 0.4m deep topsoil deposit of dark grey/brown silty clay, 400, which sealed a natural deposit of orange/brown silty clay, 401.
- 6.4.2 At the south-west end of the trench, a slightly irregular ditch, 412, ran on a south-east to north-west alignment. It was 2.1m wide, and 0.5m deep and for the most part exhibited a shallow profile, except for a steep sided slot at its base. Two fills were recognised within the ditch. The primary fill, 413, was a mixed orange/brown and grey silty clay that predominated on the south-west side of the feature. This has been interpreted as bank material that has collapsed from this side of the ditch, a deliberate dump of redeposited natural, or possibly a natural inwashing of material from this side of the ditch. It was sealed by a brown/grey silty clay, 414, suggestive of gradual natural silting.
- 6.4.3 Towards the centre of the trench, three pit-like features were identified. Upon excavation, 408 and 409 appeared to be little more than shallow natural hollows filled by gradual natural silting. 402 was slightly more substantial, measuring 2.8m by 1.25m in plan (although its full extent was not exposed in the trench), and was 0.3m deep. The fill, 403 was a dark grey sandy clay that was undated, but produced a tooth and tibia from an adult horse.
- 6.4.4 A small sinuous gully, 406, was investigated towards the north-east end of the trench. It was approximately 0.45m wide and survived to a depth of only 0.05m. The fill, 407, was a grey clayey sand silting deposit that was devoid of finds. It was cut at both its north-east and south-west ends by ditches 410 and 404 respectively. The date and function of this feature were not established.
- 6.4.5 Ditch 410, at the north-east end of the trench was considered to be the same as ditch 301/303 in Trench 3, and hence was not excavated, following approval by CAPCA.
- 6.4.6 Ditch 404, which was aligned broadly north – south had a similar fill to ditches 410 and 301/303 and is likely to be part of the same feature, which dog-legs to the west of Trench 4. A slot through the ditch was 1.4m wide and 0.5m deep with steep sides and a concave base. The fill, 405, was a dark brown sandy clay that contained a sherd of 17th/18th century tin-glazed ware, and a sherd of late 18th/19th century Pearlware.

6.5 Trench 5

- 6.5.1 Trench 5 was sealed by 500, a topsoil deposit of dark grey/brown silty clay that was 0.38m deep. At the south-west end of the trench, the topsoil sealed a layer of brown sandy silt, 506, 0.2m deep at the end of the trench, shallowing gradually until it disappeared approximately 7.5m to the north-east within the trench. This undated deposit was interpreted as a deliberately imported material, to raise/level the ground surface in this area.
- 6.5.2 506 sealed an irregular linear feature, 504. The north-west edge of the ditch ran north-east to south-west, while the opposite edge followed the same alignment briefly, before turning to a north – south alignment. The feature could not be excavated due to extensive flooding, but is considered to part of the early modern ditch 301/303, 404, 410 exposed in Trenches 3 and 4. This also suggests a recent date for the overlying deposit 506.

- 6.5.3 A second linear feature, 502, was exposed in the middle of the trench and was aligned north-east to south-west. It was 0.7m wide and 0.36m deep, with steep sides and a concave base. The fill was undated grey/brown silty clay, indicative of gradual natural silting, cutting the natural geology, 505.

6.6 Trench 6

- 6.6.1 The topsoil in this trench was a dark greyish brown silty clay, 600, which was up to 0.35m deep. It sealed two linear features that cut the natural geology, 601 (yellow brown slightly sandy clay).
- 6.6.2 At the south-west end of the trench ditch 602 was aligned north-west to south-east and survived to a depth of 0.55m. The primary fill, 604, was a natural silting deposit of grey sandy clay, possibly indicating waterborne deposition. A soil sample was taken from this context for environmental processing. It contained a small piece of possibly intrusive prill and a possible flint flake, as well as small quantities of charcoal, and a single grain of barley. The secondary fill, 603, was a narrow band of very dark grey slightly organic sandy clay, only 0.1m deep. Both deposits were undated.
- 6.6.3 Ditch 607 was 13m further to the north-east and was 0.9m wide and 0.46m deep with steep sides and a concave base. It contained a single undated fill of light grey sandy clay, 608, identified as being identical to fill 604 in ditch 602.
- 6.6.4 A single undated pit-like feature, 605 was also identified in the trench. It was irregular in plan and section and was only 0.16m deep, and was interpreted as a probable natural hollow.

7.0 Discussion and conclusion

- 7.1 The earliest evidence for human activity on the site was represented by a single flint flake of Late Mesolithic/Early Neolithic date. This was probably residual in the upper fill of ditch 330, and represents little more than evidence of very limited activity in this period. A second flint from this ditch, and one from ditch 303, were both of Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age date. The flints may represent a single episode of activity on the site during the early 3rd millennium BC (J. Rylatt, Appendix 2). The limited evidence however, makes further interpretation impossible.
- 7.2 Ditch 330 produced the only dating evidence before the early modern period, represented by two small abraded sherds of pottery of possible later Iron Age date, and two probably residual worked flint flakes. The small abraded nature of the sherds makes the date of the ditch far from certain.
- 7.3 Although the dating of ditch 330 remains tenuous, the shared orientation and the similarity of the grey alluvial fills that predominated in the series of small ditches in Trench 3 suggests that they may represent a broadly contemporary phase of land division and drainage. Further linears following this alignment, and with similar fills, were recorded in Trenches 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 (running north-east to south-west, or north-west to south-east), namely 102, 104, 107, 110, 112, 206, 412, 502, 602 and 607. This similarity suggests a coherent system of land division was established, covering the entire site. The small assemblage of snails from the soil samples indicates a predominantly grassland environment at the time, and as such, the area may have been exploited for pasture. The lack of dating evidence from these features however makes any hypothesis uncertain, and limits the interpretative potential of the site.

- 7.4 Several of the linears appear to run between the trenches. For example, ditch 311 in Trench 3 aligns closely with ditch 502 in Trench 5. Likewise, ditches 607 and 412 may be part of the same feature, the alignment of which can be continued to the north-west to tie in with the group of ditches in Trench 1 defined by 107, 110 and 112. Ditch 104 also aligns with 602.
- 7.5 The only other dated features on the site were ditches 303 and 404, which produced pottery and ceramic building material suggesting an 18th/19th century date. It seems likely that these two linears were part of the same feature, along with ditch 410. The three cuts have largely similar dimensions and fills. 303 and 410 are aligned north-east to south-west, and 404 runs broadly north – south, suggesting that the ditch changes direction to the west of Trench 4. It seems likely that 504, the unexcavated feature in Trench 5 formed another component of this ditch. This feature is not apparent on the 1890 First Edition Ordnance Survey map of the area (figure 10), suggesting it had gone out of use by this time.

8.0 Effectiveness of methodology

- 8.1 The trial trenching methodology employed was appropriate to the scale and nature of the development. It demonstrated that a number of archaeological features were present across the proposed development area, representing probable agricultural land division and drainage features. These features were on the whole well preserved, although there is likely to have been some truncation by recent ploughing. The archaeological potential of the site is however limited by the lack of dating evidence recovered.

9.0 Acknowledgements

- 9.1 Allen Archaeological Associates would like to thank Peter Humphrey Associates for this commission. The author would also like to thank the site staff; Alex Beeby, Jonathan Onraet and Richard Woolley.

10.0 References

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11.0 Site archive

- 11.1 The documentary and physical archive is currently in the possession of Allen Archaeological Associates. It will be submitted to Cambridgeshire County Archaeological Store within six months, under the Event Number ECB2450

Appendix 1: Colour Plates



Plate 1: Trench 1 pre-excitation, looking north-east



Plate 2: Ditches 102 and 104, Trench 1. Looking south-east.



Plate 3: Ditches 107, 110, 112, Trench 1. Looking south-east.



Plate 4: Possible palaeochannel 202, Trench 2. Looking north.



Plate 5: Trench 3, pre-excitation. Looking north-west.



Plate 6: Ditches 301 and recut 303, Trench 3. Looking south-west



Plate 7: Ditch 316, Trench 3. Looking south-west



Plate 8: Ditch terminus 321 and recut 324, Trench 3. Looking south-west



Plate 9: Ditch 330, Trench 3. Looking south-west



Plate 10: Ditch 404, Trench 4. Looking south



Plate 11: Ditch 406, Trench 4. Looking north-east



Plate 12: Ditch 412, Trench 4. Looking north-west



Plate 13: Ditch 502, Trench 5. Looking south-west



Plate 14: Ditch 602, Trench 6. looking north-west



Plate 15: Ditch 607, Trench 6. looking north-west

Appendix 2: Worked lithic materials report

Wisbech Road, Littleport, Cambridgeshire LIWR 06

Lithic Materials: Assessment

Report by Jim Rylatt – January 2007

1.0 Introduction

This report describes four pieces of worked or modified lithic material recovered during recovered during an archaeological evaluation at Wisbech Road, Littleport, Cambridgeshire.

2.0 Method of study

All of the artefacts that were submitted were physically examined in order to create an archive catalogue. The attributes of each piece were noted to determine its position in the reduction sequence, any observable characteristics of the reduction technology and an assessment of its functional potential. The catalogue also records the presence of patination, cortex, and whether any piece has been burnt. Additionally, metrical data was recorded for complete flakes and each piece was weighed. Some artefacts were also examined with a x3 hand-lens to determine whether there was any evidence of localised modification indicative of use.

3.0 Catalogue

Context	Type	Dimensions	Description
201	Pebble	- 38.9g	Pebble fragment, surface worn & abraded with well-developed cortex; pebble burnt resulting in discolouration, granular structure, insipient fractures and separation of flakes; no flake surfaces or evidence of working; flint
306	Notched fl	- 3.6g	Medial fragment of tertiary flake from multi-platform core (unpatinated); broad end snapped off; proximal end appears to have been relatively narrow and was detached by blow from ventral surface creating notch 10mm wide – possible slight wear along margin of notch?; both lateral edges are chipped, irregularity suggesting that there has been a deliberate retouch, although use of longer edge as cutting flake is possible; brown translucent flint. L.Neo/EBA
332	Flake	45x32mm 15.2g	Thick, irregular, hard hammer flake (tertiary); dorsal scars indicate removals from multiple platforms, piece has some platform edge preparation (small flakes removed from platform edge); platform is flat, with crushing at point of impact, pronounced irregular and hinged termination; slight chipping to margins suggests post-depositional damage; greyish-brown semi-translucent flint. L.Neo/EBA
332	Blade-like	30x21mm 2.8g	Blade-like tertiary flake, with dorsal scars of similar removals from single platform edge preparation (trimming and abrasion); all having long lateral edges running off platform; platform is flat, with diffuse bulb and feathered termination; small areas of abraded cortex – covers less than 10% of dorsal surface; slight chipping to lateral margins suggests possible post-depositional damage; reddish-brown semi-translucent flint. L.Mes/E.Neo

NB: measurements are given only for complete flakes. The first figure relates to the maximum length, measured perpendicular to the striking edge; the second to maximum breadth, measured at a right angle to the length – the third to maximum thickness (where indicated).

4.0 Dating

The blade-like flake recovered from ditch fill (332) has morphological traits indicative of the bladelet production that characterises late Mesolithic and early Neolithic industries. Morphological attributes include the creation of parallel-sided pieces, structured removal from curated cores and careful platform edge preparation. It is difficult to provide a more precise date for this piece, but certain attributes are suggestive of the latter end of the date range. The other two pieces of worked flint have morphological traits typical of later Neolithic to early Bronze Age industries. Both were detached from multiple-platform cores producing relatively large, broad flakes and at least one, from (332), was detached by hard hammer.

5.0 Comments

The three pieces of worked flint could form a palimpsest reflecting activity that potentially spans four or five millennia. It is also possible that the collection could relate to a more focussed episode of human activity centred on the technological transition from early to late Neolithic core reduction strategies (i.e. a middle Neolithic episode occurring around the beginning of the 3rd millennium BC). The existing assemblage is far too small to determine which scenario is most likely. The minimal quantity of worked lithic artefacts suggests there was no sustained activity or occupation on the site and that visits during this period were very sporadic and brief.

The fire-cracked flint pebble could also be a residue of this phase of activity, but it is equally possible that it was a 'pot-boiler' utilised in a domestic or craft activity toward the end of the prehistoric period, when stone tools had been largely superseded.

Appendix 3: Prehistoric pottery report

Land off Wisbech Road, Littleport, Cambridgeshire.

Sarah Percival

A single sherd weighing 4g was recovered from the fill of a ditch [330] during evaluation trenching at Littleport. The heavily abraded sherd is made of a dense sandy fabric with small rounded quartz grains visible. The exterior and interior surfaces of the sherd are red and the matrix is black. Dating of the sherd is uncertain, but it is possible that it is later Iron Age.

Appendix 4: Post-Roman pottery and CBM report

Anne Boyle

Pottery

context	cname	sub fabric	form type	sherds	vessels	weight	decoration	part	description	date	condition
405	TGW	cream	?	1	1	4		BS	blue tinged glaze; abraded	17 th to 18 th	TGW
405	PEARL		jug	1	1	9	internal blue transfer print	rim + handle	small oval strap; upright rim	late 18 th to 19 th	PEARLWARE

CBM

context	cname	fabric	sub type	frags	weight	decoration	description	date	condition
305	BRK	gault clay		3	136		near end; coarsely bedded; mortar on at least two surfaces; sunken mid length; 82mm+ wide x 41mm deep	post medieval to modern	
306	FIRE CLAY	oxidised; fine sandy + fe		1	32		organic impressions in fabric; leached; possible daub ?		

Appendix 5: Animal bone report

Wisbech Road, Littleport, Cambridgeshire (LIWR 06)

The Animal Bone

By Jennifer Kitch

Introduction

A total of 6 (713g) fragments of animal bone were recovered by hand during trial trench excavations undertaken by Allen Archaeological Associates at Wisbech Road, Littleport, Cambridgeshire. The remains were recovered from an undated possible palaeochannel [202], and undated ditch [302] and undated pit [402].

Results

The remains were generally of a good overall condition, with exception of the remains recovered from [202], which were much poorer in condition and quite abraded. The abrasion noted maybe due to travelling within the palaeochannel water course before the final silting occurred. Where as the remaining fragments are quite well preserved and are probably at the site of primary deposition and/or potentially more recent.

Context	Taxon	Element	Side	Quantity	(g)	Notes
201	Large Mammal Size	Skull- Temporal	X	3	12	Poor condition, abraded
302	Cattle	Radius	R	1	156	Good Condition, fresh break, unfused distally
302	Medium Sized Mammal	Rib	X	1	1	Moderate condition
402	<i>Equid</i> (Horse Family)	Tooth	L	1	70	Upper premolar/Molar, 63mm high
402	<i>Equid</i> (Horse Family)	Tibia	R	1	474	Fully Fused

No evidence of butchery, pathology or gnawing was noted on any of the remains.

The tooth wear stage of the *equid* tooth suggests the remains were from an animal aged 5 ½ -8 years of age.

Little further information can be gained from such as small assemblage save the presence of the identified species on site.

Appendix 6: Environmental report

Land off Wisbech Road, Littleport - LIWR06 Environmental Archaeology Assessment

NGR: TL 5491 8768

Introduction

An evaluation excavation conducted by Allen Archaeological Associates at Land off Wisbech Road, Littleport, uncovered a series of ditches and a possible palaeochannel. Three samples were collected during excavation from Trenches 2, 3 and 6 of the evaluation. The sample from Trench 2 (201) is the fill of a possible palaeochannel, that from Trench 3 (332) is the secondary fill of a ditch of probable prehistoric age and the sample from Trench 6 is the primary fill of a ditch. The samples were submitted to the Environmental Archaeology Consultancy for processing and assessment.

Table 1: Land off Wisbech Road, Littleport. Samples taken for environmental analysis

sample no.	context	trench	sample volume (l)	feature	date
1	604	6	20	primary fill of ditch 602	undated
2	201	2	20	fill possible palaeochannel 202	undated
3	332	3	20	secondary fill of ditch 330	prehistoric?

Methods

The soil samples were processed in the following manner. Sample volume and weight was measured prior to processing. The samples were washed in a 'Siraf' tank (Williams 1973) using a flotation sieve with a 0.5mm mesh and an internal wet sieve of 1mm mesh for the residue. Both residue and flot were dried and the residues subsequently re-floated to ensure the efficient recovery of charred material. The dry volume of the flots was measured and the volume and weight of the residue recorded. A total of 60 litres of soil was processed in this way.

The residue was sorted by eye, and environmental and archaeological finds picked out, noted on the assessment sheet and bagged independently. A magnet was run through each residue in order to recover magnetised material such as hammerstone and prill and a count made of the number of flakes or spheroids of hammerstone collected. The residue was then discarded. The flot of each sample was studied using x30 magnifications and the presence of environmental finds (i.e. snails, charcoal, carbonised seeds, bones etc) was noted and their abundance and species diversity recorded on the assessment sheet. The flots were then bagged and along with the finds from the sorted residue, constitute the material archive of the samples.

The individual components of the samples were then preliminarily identified and the results are summarised below in Tables 2-3.

Results

Context 201.

This sample derives from the fill of a possible palaeochannel. No archaeological finds were recovered from the sample although a single flake, probably natural, of flint was present. Charcoal was more abundant in this sample than the other two with a couple of identifiable fragments but the sample has yielded no data of interpretive value. A single shell of the genus *Vallonia* sp. was recovered. This is a genus characteristic of grassland habitats.

Table 2: Land off Wisbech Road, Littleport. Finds from the processed samples

Sample no.	context	Sample vol. l.	Residue vol. (l)	pot no/wt (g)	Flint no / wt. g	Fired Earth wt. g.	coal/cinder wt. g.	Slag wt. g.	hammer-scale no.	bone wt. g.	Others
1	604	20	0.17		1/<1						1 piece prill?
2	201	20	0.18		1/1						
3	332	20	0.2	1/1							

Context 332.

This sample was taken from the secondary fill of ditch 330. A single piece of very abraded coarse sand tempered pottery was recovered, but no other archaeological finds. Fragments of unidentifiable charred grain were present in the flot and a single fragment of charred emmer wheat, *Triticum dicoccum*, suggests a possible prehistoric date for the deposit. A single shell of *Vallonia excentrica* is also present, again a species of open grassland environments.

Table 3: Land off Wisbech Road, Littleport. Environmental finds from the processed samples

Sample no.	context	Sample vol. (l)	Flot vol. (ml)	char-coal \$	Charred grain *	chaff *	cha seed *	un-charred seed *	snail	comment
1	604	20	<1	1/2	1		1	1	1	cf <i>Hordeum</i> sp.
2	201	20	2	2/3	1		1	1	1	<i>Vallonia</i> sp.
3	332	20	1	1/2	1	1	1	1	1	<i>Triticum dicoccum</i> , <i>Vallonia excentrica</i>

*frequency 1=1-10; 2=11-50; 3=51-150; 4=151-250; 5=>250; . \$ frequency of >2mm/<2mm fractions of charcoal

Context 604.

This sample was taken from the primary fill of ditch 602. A single possible flake of flint was recovered, a small piece of prill and no other archaeological finds. The flint may be unworked and the prill could have travelled down through the soil from deposits above. The charred remains included a little charcoal, an unidentifiable seed, and two fragments of cereal grain, one of which is assigned to barley, *Hordeum* sp.

Discussion and recommendations

All three samples were very poor in terms of archaeological finds, although this is not unusual for prehistoric samples. Only sample 3, context 332 produced any indication of the date of the deposits, and besides the poorly preserved pottery sherd the presence of a fragment of emmer chaff, a cereal typically grown during the 3rd to 1st millennia BC (Hillman 1981), suggests a prehistoric date for the ditch. Single terrestrial snail shells in each sample do not permit any confident comment on the palaeoenvironment although the only identifiable taxa are characteristic of grassland environments. The occurrence of charred cereal, weed seeds, charcoal and a pot sherd clearly indicate some settlement activity on the site but the density of remains in the samples is so low that the information potential of the deposits is poor, unless deposits directly associated with any settlement can be found.

No further work is recommended upon the samples.

Acknowledgments

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Bibliography

- Hillman, G. 1981 Reconstructing crop husbandry practices from charred remains of crops. in R. Mercer (ed) *Farming Practice in British Prehistory*. Edinburgh Univ. Press, 123-162
 Williams, D. 1973 Flotation at Siraf, *Antiquity*, 47, 198-202

Appendix 7: List of archaeological contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
Trench 1		
100	Layer	Dark brown silty clay. Topsoil
101	Layer	Orange brown sandy clay. Natural
102	Cut	Linear ditch cut, aligned NW – SE. Contains 103
103	Fill	Light grey sandy clay. Natural silting of 102
104	Cut	Linear ditch cut, aligned NW – SE. Contains 105, 106
105	Fill	Light grey sandy clay. Primary natural silting of 104
106	Fill	Slightly organic dark grey silty clay. Secondary silting of 104
107	Cut	Linear ditch cut, aligned NW – SE. Contains 108, 109
108	Fill	Light grey sandy clay. Primary natural silting of 107
109	Fill	Slightly organic dark grey silty clay. Secondary silting of 107
110	Cut	Linear ditch cut, aligned NW – SE. Contains 111
111	Fill	Light grey sandy clay. Natural silting of 110
112	Cut	Linear ditch cut, aligned NW – SE. Contains 113
113	Fill	Light grey sandy clay. Natural silting of 112
Trench 2		
200	Layer	Dark brown silty clay. Topsoil
201	Fill	Light grey brown silty clay. Natural silting of 202
202	Cut	Slightly irregular linear feature, aligned north – south. Possible palaeochannel.
Contains		
		201. Part of same feature as 204
203	Fill	Light grey brown silty clay. Natural silting of 204
204	Cut	Slightly irregular linear feature, aligned NW - SE. Possible palaeochannel. Contains
203.		
		Part of same feature as 202
205	Fill	Grey silty clay. Natural silting of 206
206	Cut	Linear ditch cut, aligned NW – SE. Contains 205
207	Layer	Orange brown sandy clay. Natural
Trench 3		
300	Layer	Dark brown silty clay. Topsoil
301	Cut	Linear ditch cut, NNE – SSW aligned. Contains 302.
302	Fill	Dark grey/brown silty clay. Natural silting of 301. Cut by 303
303	Cut	Linear ditch cut, NNE – SSW aligned. Contains 304, 305, 306. Recut of 301
304	Fill	Grey/brown sandy clay. Primary natural silting of 303. Sealed by 305
305	Fill	Dark grey sandy clay, moderate charcoal and ash. Dumped deposit in 303. Seals 304, sealed by 306.
306	Fill	Brown/grey sandy clay, final silting of 303. Seals 305.
307	Cut	Cut for ceramic land drain, cuts 304, 305, 306
308	Fill	Dark grey brown sandy clay. Backfill of land drain cut 307
309	-	Number not used
310	Layer	Orange brown sandy clay. Natural
311	Cut	Linear ditch cut, NE – SW aligned. Contains 312
312	Fill	Grey sandy clay. Natural silting of 311. Cut by land drain cut.
313	Cut	Linear ditch cut, NE – SW aligned. Contains 315
314	Fill	Dark grey/black silty clay. Final silting of 316. Seals 318
315	Fill	Grey sandy clay. Primary natural silting of 313.
316	Cut	Linear ditch cut, NE – SW aligned. Contains 317, 318, 314
317	Fill	Soft grey clay, primary silting of 316. Sealed by 318.
318	Fill	Dark grey silty clay. Secondary silting of 316. Seals 317, sealed by 314
319	Cut	Linear ditch cut, NE – SW aligned. Contains 320
320	Fill	Grey sandy clay. Natural silting of 319
321	Cut	Linear ditch cut, NE – SW aligned. Terminus at NE end. Contains 322
322	Fill	Grey silty clay. Natural silting of 321. Cut by 324
323	-	Number not used
324	Cut	Recut of ditch 321. Contains 325

325	Fill	Grey silty clay. Natural silting of 324
326	-	Number not used
327	Cut	Linear ditch cut, NE – SW aligned. Contains 328, 329
328	Fill	Grey silty clay. Primary natural silting of 327. Sealed by 329
329	Fill	Grey/brown silty clay. Secondary natural silting of 327. Seals 328
330	Cut	Linear ditch cut, NE – SW aligned. Contains 331, 332
331	Fill	Grey/brown silty clay. Primary natural silting of 330. Sealed by 332
332	Fill	Grey silty clay. Secondary natural silting of 330. Seals 331
333	Cut	Linear ditch cut, NW – SE aligned. Contains 334
334	Fill	Grey silty clay. Natural silting of 333
Trench 4		
400	Layer	Dark brown silty clay. Topsoil
401	Layer	Orange brown sandy clay. Natural
402	Cut	Sub-oval pit cut, contains 403
403	Fill	Very dark grey sandy clay. Natural silting of pit 402
404	Cut	Linear ditch cut, aligned N – S. Same as 410?. Contains 405
405	Fill	Dark brown sandy clay. Natural silting of 404
406	Cut	Irregular curvilinear ditch, aligned NE – SW. Contains 407
407	Fill	Grey clayey sand. Natural silting of 406. Cut by 404, 410
408	Feature	Slightly irregular shallow sub rectangular feature. Probable natural feature
409	Feature	Very shallow sub circular feature. Probable natural feature
410	Cut	Linear ditch cut, aligned NE – SW. Contains 411. Unexcavated
411	Fill	Dark brown sandy clay. Natural silting of 410. Unexcavated
412	Cut	Linear ditch cut, aligned NW – SE. Contains 413, 414
413	Fill	Orange/brown and grey silty clay. Primary fill of 412. Possible collapsed bank material/redeposited natural
414	Fill	Brownish/grey silty clay. Secondary natural silting of 413
Trench 5		
500	Layer	Dark brown silty clay. Topsoil
501	Fill	Grey/brown silty clay. Natural silting of 502
502	Cut	Linear ditch cut aligned NW – SE. Contains 501
503	Fill	Dark brown silty clay. Natural silting of 504. Unexcavated
504	Cut	Irregular linear feature, contains 503. Unexcavated
505	Layer	Orange brown sandy clay. Natural
506	Layer	Brown sandy silt. Recent ground raising/levelling deposit, sealed by 500
Trench 6		
600	Layer	Dark brown silty clay. Topsoil
601	Layer	Orange brown sandy clay. Natural
602	Cut	Linear ditch cut, aligned NW – SE. Contains 603, 604
603	Fill	Very dark grey slightly organic sandy clay. Secondary silting of 602
604	Fill	Grey sandy clay. Primary natural silting of 602
605	Cut	Irregular, sub-rounded probable natural feature. Contains 606
606	Fill	Dark grey sandy clay. Natural silting of 605
607	Cut	Linear ditch cut, aligned NW – SE. Contains 608
608	Fill	Light grey sandy clay. Natural silting of 607