

**Caxton Gibbet
Caxton
Cambridgeshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

Event Number: ECB3922

for
The Abbey Group

CA Project: 660116
CA Report: 13070

March 2013

Caxton Gibbet Caxton Cambridgeshire

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Event Number: ECB3922

CA Project: 660116
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date	5 March 2013
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signed	
date	6 March 2013
issue	01

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SUMMARY

Project name:	Caxton Gibbet, Caxton
Location:	A428 Cambridge Road/A1198 Ermine Street, Cambridgeshire
NGR:	TL 2971 6064
Type:	Evaluation
Date:	February 2013
Site code:	CAX 13

In February 2013, an archaeological evaluation, comprising the excavation of six trial trenches, was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology on a plot of land at Caxton Gibbet, at the junction of the A428 Cambridge Road and the A1198 Ermine Street, near Caxton, Cambridgeshire. The work, which was commissioned by The Abbey Group, is being carried out prior to the development of the site, which will comprise the construction of three 'drive-thru' restaurants, with associated car parking and infrastructure.

The north-west corner of the site is currently occupied by a derelict building, formerly the 'Yim Wah House' Chinese restaurant, with the remainder of the site consisting of a disused car park, areas of hard standing and waste ground, the latter largely covered in a dense thicket of scrub and small trees. The excavation of trial trenches in the car park and in the area of waste ground encountered no archaeological remains, other than a 19th-century drainage ditch containing a ceramic land drain, a relic of the site's former agricultural use. The evaluation established that the subsoil was largely undisturbed and that if any archaeological remains had been present they would have survived the development of the site in the 20th century. Modern services and refuse associated with the site's former use as a restaurant, and prior to that a public house, were recorded in three of the trenches.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In February 2013, an archaeological evaluation, comprising the excavation of six trial trenches, was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology on a plot of land at Caxton Gibbet, at the junction of the A428 Cambridge Road and the A1198 Ermine Street, near Caxton, Cambridgeshire (site centred on NGR: TL 2971 6064; Fig. 1). The work, which was commissioned by The Abbey Group, is being carried out prior to the development of the site, in accordance with the archaeological condition (Condition 11) attached to planning consent (planning ref: S/1723/12/OL). The proposed development consists of three 'drive-thru' restaurants, with associated car parking and infrastructure.
- 1.2 The archaeological condition was requested by Dan McConnell, of Cambridgeshire County Council's Historic Environment Team (CCCHET), as the site lies adjacent to Ermine Street, the major Roman road from London to York, Iron Age and Roman features have been revealed on the north side of the junction and the site of a medieval gibbet lies immediately adjacent to the site's western boundary. Given the archaeological potential of the site, it was therefore considered likely that the development would have an impact on any buried archaeological remains that may lie within the area. The scope of the investigation was set out in a *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation*, dated January 2013 (CCCHET 2013).
- 1.3 The project was undertaken in accordance with the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) issued by CA (2013), the preparation of which attended to the requirements of the brief and followed best practice, as set out in the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (IfA 2008) and the English Heritage procedural documents *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (EH 1991) and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE): Project Manager's Guide* (EH 2006).

The site

- 1.4 The site, a roughly rectangular plot of land covering c. 0.9 ha, is situated at the south-east corner of the junction between the A428 Cambridge Road and A1198 Ermine Street, approximately 2km to the north of Caxton, Cambridgeshire (Fig. 1). The parish boundary between Caxton and Elsworth passes east to west through the centre of the site.

- 1.5 The north-west corner of the site is currently occupied by a derelict building, formerly the 'Yim Wah House' Chinese restaurant, with the remainder of the site consisting of a disused car park, areas of hard standing and waste ground, the latter largely covered in a dense thicket of scrub and small trees (Fig. 2). The derelict building stands on the site of the 'The Caxton Gibbet Inn', which was formerly known as 'The Gibbet Inn' until the name was changed in the 1930s.
- 1.6 The ground is generally flat and lies close to the 65m Ordnance Survey contour. The underlying geology comprises Jurassic mudstones (undifferentiated) of the West Walton Formation and Ampthill Clay Formation, overlain by mid Pleistocene glacial till deposits (diamicton) (BGS 2013).

Archaeological and historical background

- 1.7 The Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (HER) contains records of a range of archaeological sites in the vicinity of Caxton Gibbet, dating from the Bronze Age to modern periods. There are no records for any archaeological remains within the site, although the site of Caxton Gibbet lies immediately adjacent to the site's western boundary, on the grass verge of the A1198 Ermine Street (Fig. 3).
- 1.8 A Bronze Age pit was revealed during archaeological investigations on the north side of the A428/A1198 junction (Abrams 2005) and worked flints of a similar date have been found during fieldwalking surveys in the field immediately to the west of the site (HER 11873) and c. 1km to the south-east (HER 11874), on Caxton Common (Chowne 1989).
- 1.9 Evidence for late Iron Age and Roman activity has been identified in the field immediately to the north of the site (Abrams 2005) and although undated, a ditch system of probable Roman date has been identified by geophysical survey (WYAS 2004) and evaluation (HER 03515) c. 700m to the east, near Brockley Road. The A1198 follows the course of Ermine Street, also known as the Old North Road, the major Roman road from *Londinium* (London) to *Eburacum* (York) via *Lindum* (Lincoln).
- 1.10 In the medieval period the surrounding land was divided into open fields; evidence for ridge and furrow ploughing has been identified from aerial photographs, historic maps and from trial excavation (HER 16333; 03515). At Pastures Farm,

approximately 800m to the south-west of the site, are the remains of a medieval moated manor (HER 01180), believed to be that of 'Brockholt', which was separated from the manor of Caxton between 1154 and 1400 (Palmer 1927).

- 1.11 There are records of a gibbet on Caxton Common dating back to the medieval period and it remained in use until the 18th century; it was last used in c. 1753 (HER 02470). The gibbet currently to be seen by the side of the road is probably a 19th-century replica made from the salvaged timbers from a nearby cottage or other building, although the small mound in which it is set may be original. Apparently this mound was buried under a large tip of soil dumped by a lorry in the 1980s; the soil was removed, but how closely the current mound resembles the original is debateable.
- 1.12 Historic maps show an inn, 'The Gibbet Inn', renamed 'The Caxton Gibbet Inn' in the 1930s, on the site of the current derelict restaurant from at least c. 1850 (VCH 1973); the current gibbet may have been erected at around this time to attract passing trade. The surrounding land forming the current site is shown as part of a large rectangular field. Approximately 500m to the south of the site a milestone (HER 18047), bearing the distances to London and Royston, can be seen in a ditch by the side of the A1198 Ermine Street.
- 1.13 In the 1930s part of Caxton Common immediately to the south of the site was used by the Cambridge University Gliding Club as an airfield (HER 02470). During World War II this was taken over by the RAF and used as a training airfield. It was attacked by the Luftwaffe on several occasions and a number of Tiger Moth trainers were shot down or destroyed on the ground. Remains of the airfield defences can still be seen around its perimeter. After the war the airfield was returned to the glider club.

Archaeological objectives

- 1.14 The objectives of the evaluation, as set out in the WSI (CA 2013), were to:
- establish the presence, location, extent, nature, character and date of any buried archaeological features or deposits that may be present;
 - establish the integrity and state of preservation of any buried archaeological features or deposits that may be present.

- 1.15 The results of the evaluation will assist CCHET in making an informed judgement on the significance of the archaeological resource and the likely impact upon it of the proposed development.

Methodology

- 1.16 The evaluation comprised the excavation and investigation of six trial trenches (a total of 140 linear metres; Fig. 2). With the agreement of CCHET, Trenches 4 and 5 were moved slightly to the south of their approved locations to avoid services and other obstructions, and Trench 6 was moved c. 30m to the south-west to clear a thicket of trees and scrub. The trenches were excavated using a JCB-type mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket. All machine excavation was undertaken under constant archaeological supervision, to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or the geological substrate, whichever was encountered first.
- 1.17 Following machining, features and deposits were cleaned, hand-excavated, planned and recorded in accordance with CA's *Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual* (CA 2007). Plans and sections were hand-drawn at an appropriate scale and a photographic record of the project was maintained using 35mm black & white negative film and digital images. Trenches were surveyed using a Leica 1200 series SmartRover GPS, in accordance with CA's *Technical Manual 4: Survey Manual* (CA 2009).
- 1.18 There were no finds and there were no features suitable for environmental sampling. All archaeological features and the spoil heaps were scanned with a metal detector, but this only resulted in the recovery of modern refuse.
- 1.19 The archive and artefacts from the evaluation are currently held by CA at their offices in Milton Keynes. Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner, the site archive will eventually be deposited with the Cambridgeshire County Museum Store. A summary of information from this project will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

2. FIELDWORK RESULTS

Trench 1

- 2.1 Trench 1, which was aligned roughly north to south, was located close to the western boundary of the site, adjacent to Ermine Street and the gibbet mound (Fig. 4). The geological substrate, which was encountered at a depth of 0.74m (64.87m aOD) below current ground level (bcgl) was glacial till, comprising firm, light to mid brownish-yellow clay with light blue mottles, 101. In the central part of the trench this changed to firm mid orange and yellowish-orange sandy clay.
- 2.2 Overlying the till was a layer, c. 0.25m thick, of subsoil, 102, succeeded by a layer of topsoil, 104 (Fig. 5). The latter had been partly truncated during the construction of the car park and covered with a layer of crushed building rubble and Type I stone chippings, 105, prior to the tarmac being laid, 106. A modern storm drain with plastic collars, 103, crossed the northern end of the trench on an east to west alignment.

Trench 2

- 2.3 The trench was aligned north-east to south-west and investigated the area of the car park to the south-east of the derelict building (Fig. 6). The geological substrate, which was encountered at a depth of 0.77m bcgl (64.80m aOD), occurred as firm light brownish-yellow clay with light blue mottles and moderate fine to coarse chalk pebbles, 201. The overlying subsoil, 202, was approximately 0.33m thick and had a noticeably green hue; this discolouration of the subsoil was observed in all of the trenches in the tarmac-surfaced car park (Trenches 1-4).
- 2.4 The topsoil, 205, overlay the subsoil but it was extremely degraded and had a 'mucky' appearance, suggesting that it had been churned up and partly redeposited prior to or during the construction of the car park. In the south-western part of the trench the topsoil was cut by a large, irregular pit or hollow, 203, backfilled with a mixed deposit of soil, timber, rotting branches, brick rubble and mid to late 20th century refuse. The surface of the car park was formed with a layer of Type I stone chippings and tarmac, 206 and 207 respectively.

Trench 3

- 2.5 The trench was located in the south-east corner of the car park and was aligned east to west (Fig. 7). It revealed a similar sequence of deposits to that encountered

in the other trenches in the car park, with the geological substrate, 301, lying at 0.77m bcgl (64.76m aOD).

- 2.6 Passing through the trench on a roughly east-north-east to west-south-west alignment, perpendicular to the line of Ermine Street, was a small ditch, 303, measuring c. 1.0m wide by 0.40m deep. Excavation uncovered an active ceramic land drain set in the base of the ditch, which promptly flooded the eastern end of the trench.

Trench 4

- 2.7 The trench, which was aligned east to west, was positioned to investigate the footprint of the central restaurant building, close to the northern edge of the site (Fig. 8). Having removed the tarmac and sub-base material, it was clear that the trench lay over redundant service trenches connected to the butane tanks to the east, so the trench was moved c. 2m to the south of its approved position to avoid these.

- 2.8 The geological substrate, 401, was encountered at a depth of c. 0.8m bcgl (64.9m aOD). The sequence of deposits was similar to that recorded in Trenches 2 and 3, the only variation being a substantial brick and concrete structure, possibly a manhole chamber, beneath the surface of the car park at the western end of the trench; the trench was shortened by c. 10m to avoid this obstacle.

Trench 5

- 2.9 The trench was located in a strip of soft ground between an area of hardstanding and the access road to the eastern part of the site (Fig. 9). The geological substrate, 501, was encountered at a depth of 0.82m bcgl (64.59m aOD). The subsoil and topsoil, 502 and 503 respectively, had a combined thickness of 0.67m and had not been disturbed by the modern development of the site, although a layer of redeposited topsoil, 504, and building rubble, 505, had been placed on top of the original land surface. A ceramic land drain passed through the centre of the trench (cut through the subsoil) on an east to west alignment.

Trench 6

- 2.10 The original intention, as expressed in the WSI, had been to position this trench within the footprint of the proposed building on the eastern edge of the site. However, this area is currently occupied by a dense thicket of small trees so with

the agreement of CCHET the trench was moved to the open ground to the south of the car park (Fig. 10).

- 2.11 The geological substrate, 601, which was encountered at a depth of 0.48m (64.59m aOD) below current ground level (bcgl) was glacial till, comprising firm, light brownish-yellow clay with moderate fine to coarse chalk pebbles. This was overlain by subsoil and topsoil, 602 and 603 respectively, with a combined thickness of c. 0.5m.

3. DISCUSSION

- 3.1 There were no archaeological remains in the areas investigated by the trial trenches, other than a 19th-century drainage ditch containing a ceramic land drain, a relic of the site's former agricultural use. However, the evaluation established that the subsoil was largely undisturbed across a large proportion of the site and that if any archaeological remains had been present they would have survived any development works associated with the Gibbet Inn and the later buildings that replaced it. Modern services and refuse associated with the site's former use as a restaurant, and prior to that a public house, were recorded in three of the trenches.

4. CA PROJECT TEAM

- 4.1 The fieldwork was carried out by Simon Carlyle, assisted by Dan Riley. The report was written by Simon Carlyle and the illustrations were prepared by Lorna Gray. The archive will be compiled and prepared for deposition by Derek Evans. The project was managed for CA by Simon Carlyle.

5. REFERENCES

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Chowne, P, 1989 *Swansley Wood, Caxton, Cambridgeshire: Proposed New Settlement*, Wessex Archaeology report **T0679**

Palmer, W M, 1927 *Notes on Cambridgeshire Villages No. 2, Caxton*, 43

VCH (Victoria County History) 1973 *A History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely, Volume 5*, 26-35

WYAS (West Yorkshire Archaeology Service) 2004 *A428 Caxton to Hardwick Improvements: Geophysical Survey*

APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS**Trench 1**

Context no.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
101	Geological substrate	Firm light to mid brownish-yellow clay with light blue mottles, changing to firm mid orange and yellowish-orange sandy clay in the central part of the trench.	-	-	-	-
102	Subsoil	Firm mid greenish-brown silty clay with occ. pebbles, mostly chalk.	-	-	0.25	-
103	Drain	Ceramic drain with plastic collar, aligned E-W, concrete capping.	1.6+	c. 1.0	n.e.	Modern
104	Topsoil	Soft dark grey 'mucky' silty clay containing modern building rubble and refuse.	-	-	0.24	Modern
105	Layer	Type I stone chippings.	-	-	0.18	Modern
106	Tarmac	Tarmac surface of car park.	-	-	0.03	Modern

Trench 2

Context no.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
201	Geological substrate	Firm light brownish-yellow clay with light blue mottles and moderate fine to coarse chalk pebbles.	-	-	-	-
202	Subsoil	Firm mid greenish-brown silty clay with occ. pebbles, mostly chalk.	-	-	0.33	-
203	Pit	Broad, irregular cut, aligned E-W, not excavated.	1.6+	c. 6.5	0.21+	Late C20
204	Fill of 203	Mixed deposit of dark brown soil, timber, rotten branches, building rubble and modern refuse.	-	-	0.21+	-
205	Topsoil	Soft dark grey 'mucky' silty clay containing modern building rubble and refuse.	-	-	0.17	Modern
206	Layer	Type I stone chippings.	-	-	0.18	Modern
207	Tarmac	Tarmac surface of car park.	-	-	0.08	Modern

Trench 3

Context no.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
301	Geological substrate	Firm light brownish-yellow clay with light blue mottles and moderate fine to coarse chalk pebbles.	-	-	-	-
302	Subsoil	Firm mid greenish-brown silty clay with occ. pebbles, mostly chalk.	-	-	0.40	-
303	Ditch	Linear cut, aligned WSW-ENE, edges parallel and well defined, moderately steep slope, ceramic land drain runs centrally along base of ditch.	8.0+	1.0	0.40	Modern

304	Fill of 203	Firm mid grey silty clay with occ. pebbles (stained black) with occ. rotted tree roots.	-	-	0.40	-
305	Layer	Type I stone chippings, occ. concrete kerbstone fragments.	-	-	0.30	Modern
306	Tarmac	Tarmac surface of car park.	-	-	0.10	Modern

Trench 4

Context no.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
401	Geological substrate	Firm light brownish-yellow clay with light blue mottles and moderate fine to coarse chalk pebbles.	-	-	-	-
402	Subsoil	Firm mid greenish-brown silty clay with occ. pebbles, mostly chalk.	-	-	0.40	-
403	Topsoil	Soft dark grey 'mucky' silty clay containing modern building rubble and refuse.	-	-	0.17	Modern
404	Layer	Type I stone chippings, occ. concrete kerbstone fragments.	-	-	0.20	Modern
405	Tarmac	Tarmac surface of car park.	-	-	0.10	Modern

Trench 5

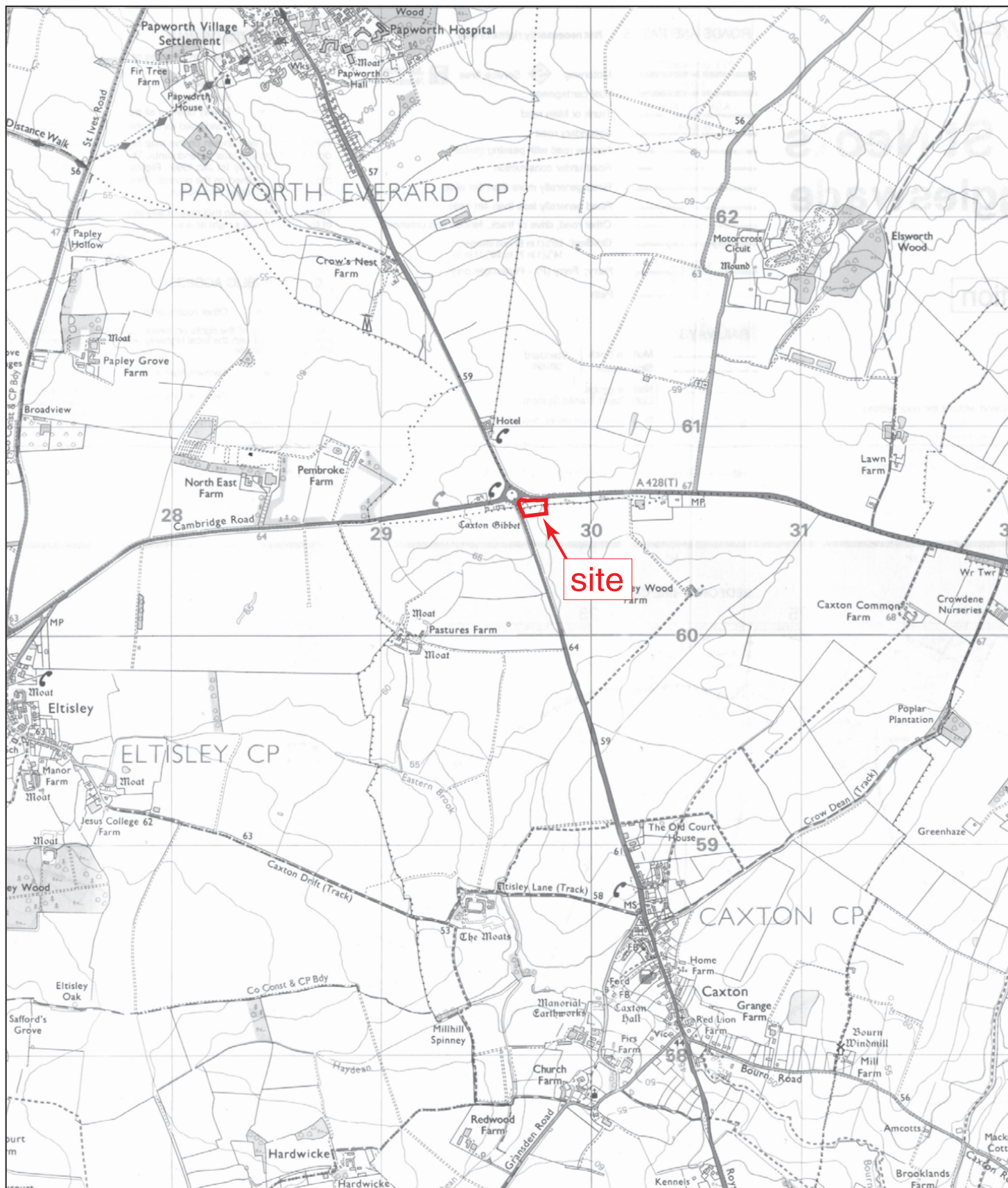
Context no.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
501	Geological substrate	Firm light brownish-yellow clay with light blue mottles and moderate fine to coarse chalk pebbles.	-	-	-	-
502	Subsoil	Firm mid greenish-brown silty clay with occ. pebbles, mostly chalk.	-	-	0.36	-
503	Topsoil	Soft dark grey 'mucky' silty clay containing modern building rubble and refuse.	-	-	0.31	Modern
504	Topsoil	Redeposited topsoil mixed with modern rubbish, dumped over original land surface.	-	-	0.24	Late C20
505	Layer	Modern building rubble and refuse.	-	-	0.26	Late C20

Trench 6

Context no.	Type	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Spot-date
601	Geological substrate	Firm light brownish-yellow clay with moderate fine to coarse chalk pebbles.	-	-	-	-
602	Subsoil	Firm mid brown silty clay with occ. pebbles, mostly chalk.	-	-	0.25	-
603	Topsoil	Soft dark grey 'mucky' silty clay containing modern building rubble and refuse.	-	-	0.25	Modern

APPENDIX B: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Caxton Gibbet, Caxton	
Short description	The north-west corner of the site is currently occupied by a derelict building, formerly the 'Yim Wah House' Chinese restaurant, with the remainder of the site consisting of a disused car park, areas of hard standing and waste ground, the latter largely covered in a dense thicket of scrub and small trees. The excavation of trial trenches in the car park and in the area of waste ground encountered no archaeological remains, other than a 19th-century drainage ditch containing a ceramic land drain, a relic of the site's former agricultural use. The evaluation established that the subsoil was largely undisturbed and that if any archaeological remains had been present they would have survived the development of the site in the 20th century. Modern services and refuse associated with the site's former use as a restaurant, and prior to that a public house, were recorded in three of the trenches.	
Project dates	11-12 February 2013	
Project type	Field evaluation	
Previous work	None	
Future work	None	
Monument type	None	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site location	Caxton Gibbet, Caxton, Cambridgeshire	
Study area	c. 0.9ha	
Site co-ordinates	TL 2971 6064	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	Cotswold Archaeology (CA)	
Project Brief originator	Dan McConnell (CCCHET)	
Project Design (WSI) originator	CA	
Project Manager	Simon Carlyle (CA)	
Project Supervisor	Simon Carlyle (CA)	
PROJECT ARCHIVE		
	Accession no: -	Content
Physical	CA stores	None
Paper		Site records
Digital	Cambridgeshire HER	Report, digital photos
Event no.	ECB3922	
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2013 <i>Caxton Gibbet, Caxton, Cambridgeshire: Archaeological Evaluation</i> . CA typescript report 13070		



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PROJECT TITLE

**Caxton Gibbet, A428/A1198 Crossroads
Cambridgeshire**

FIGURE TITLE

Site location plan

0 1km

Reproduced from the 1999 Ordnance Survey Explorer map with
 the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller
 of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright
 Cotswold Archaeology Ltd 100002109

PROJECT NO. 660116 DATE 25-02-2013
 DRAWN BY LG REVISION 00
 APPROVED BY PJM SCALE@A4 1:25,000

FIGURE NO.

1



- site
- evaluation trench
- modern feature



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PROJECT TITLE
Caxton Gibbet, A428/A1198 Crossroads
Cambridgeshire

FIGURE TITLE
Trench location plan, showing
archaeological features

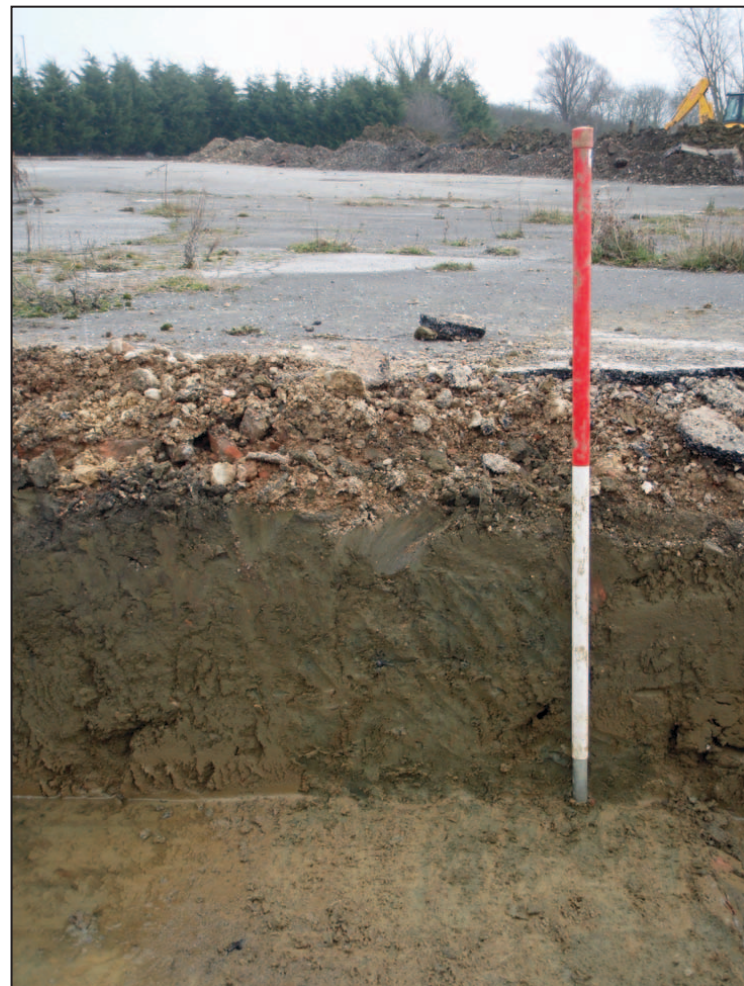
PROJECT NO.	660116	DATE	25-02-2013	FIGURE NO.
DRAWN BY	LG	REVISION	00	2
APPROVED BY	PJM	SCALE@A3	1:500	



3



4



5



6

- 3 Caxton Gibbet
- 4 Trench 1, looking north. (Scale 1m)
- 5 Trench 1, soil profile. (Scale 1m)
- 6 Trench 2, looking north-east. (Scales 1m)



7



8



9



10

- 7 Trench 3, looking west. (Scales 1m)
- 8 Trench 4, looking west. (Scales 1m)
- 9 Trench 5, looking east. (Scales 1m)
- 10 Trench 6, looking north-east. (Scales 1m)