

208 Green End Road, Chesterton Cambridge

An Archaeological Evaluation.



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Summary

An 'L-shaped' trench measuring 22m² in area was excavated at 208 Green End Road, Chesterton, Cambridge, between the 6th and 7th of September 2011. This revealed that the site had previously been subject to intensive gravel quarrying activity. Although no earlier, pre-quarry features had survived, two distinct types of quarry pit were identified. The first of these consisted of a series of haphazardly arranged sub-oval features, one of which contained abraded sherds of Medieval pottery. Subsequently, however, during the Post-Medieval period, the site became the focus of more intensive 'strip-type' extraction techniques. A minimum of sixteen linear quarries were inserted, all of which were aligned northeast to southwest. Between them, these features removed almost all of the remaining natural gravel. Finally, a number of additional features relating to the most recent phase in the site's usage were also present. These included a sub-rectangular pit, a rubble-filled soakaway and a lead water pipe that were all associated with the construction of a nearby bungalow in the mid 20th century. In addition, the topography of the area suggests that a program of landscaping/terracing may also have been undertaken at this time.

Introduction

An archaeological trench-based evaluation was conducted by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) at 208 Green End Road, Chesterton, Cambridge, between the 6th and 7th of September 2011. The Proposed Development Area (PDA), which is centred on TL 4678 6015, is situated on the suburban outskirts of the city (see Figure 1). At present, the PDA – which measures 55.2m by 41.8m in extent, and covers an area of 1399m² – is occupied by a single bungalow that is set within a landscaped but overgrown garden. The evaluation trench was situated upon an area of open lawn to the south of the building, in as close proximity as practicably possible to the footprint of the proposed new replacement structure. It should be noted, however, that the trench's precise location was restricted by the presence of numerous mature trees and also by a diffuse but strong CAT scan result that was detected across the western half of the lawn area. The trench itself was 'L-shaped' in form, and measured 22m² in area (see Figure 1). This project followed the specification issued by the CAU (Beadsmoore 2011) and was monitored by Kasia Gdaniec, Development Control Archaeologist at Cambridgeshire's Historic Environment Team (CHET). The work was commissioned by Moody Homes Limited, in advance of redevelopment.

Landscape, Geology and Topography

The PDA is located in the midst of an area of residential housing that lies on the eastern periphery of the Medieval core of Chesterton (see Figure 1). In geological terms, the site is situated upon 2nd Terrace River Gravels overlying Gault Clay (British Geological Survey, Sheet 188). In topographical terms, within the PDA there is a marked slope downwards from Green End Road to the west (which lies at 6.70m OD) onto the lawn area to the east (which varies between 5.55m and 5.45m OD). In addition, the abrupt nature of this transition – allied with the level uniformity of both the bungalow and its lawn – strongly suggests that the area may have been partially landscaped/terraced prior to the commencement of construction in the mid 20th century. The highest surviving natural gravels were encountered at 5.06m OD.

Methodology

During the course of the evaluation, topsoil and subsoil layers were removed by a 360° mechanical excavator with a 1.0m wide toothless bucket; this material was then visually inspected and metal detected. Following this, all archaeological features were excavated by hand and recorded using the CAU-modified version of the MoLAS system (Spence 1994). Base plans were drawn at a scale of 1:20, whilst sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10. A digital photographic archive was also compiled. Throughout the following text, context numbers are indicated by square brackets (*e.g.* [01]) and feature numbers by the prefix F (*e.g.* F.01).

Historical and Archaeological Background

The historical and archaeological background of Chesterton has been covered in depth in a recent desktop assessment (Cessford & Appleby 2011), and has also been discussed in a number of recent publications (Wright 1989; Taylor 1999, 121-26; Cessford with Dickens 2004; Mackay 2009). For this reason, the information will not be repeated in detail here. Nevertheless, it is necessary to briefly outline the background of the area in order to place the site securely within its wider context.

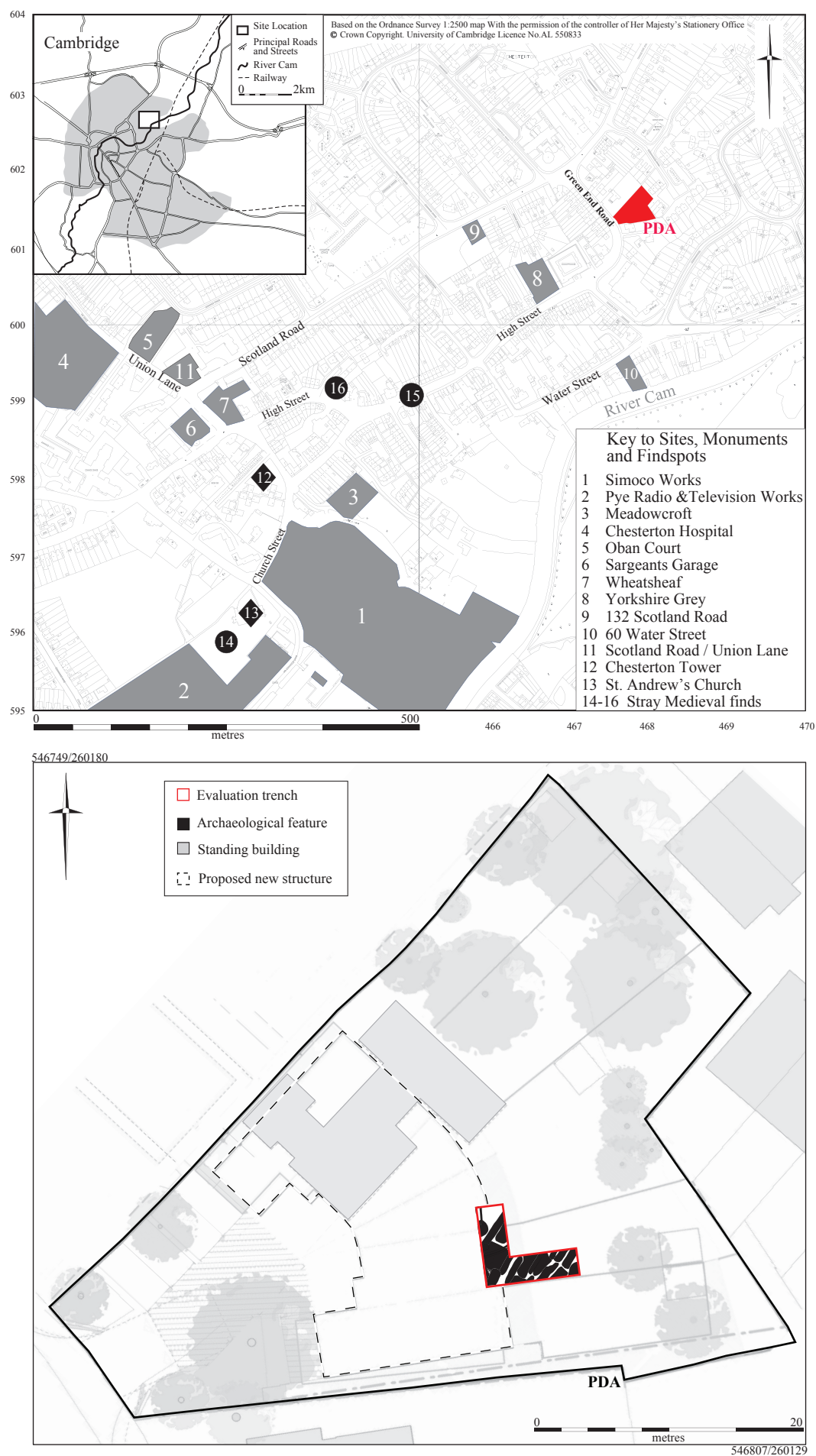


Figure 1. Location plan.

Three large-scale excavations have previously been undertaken in the Chesterton area. The first of these, at the former Sargeants Garage site (Figure 1, 6), was situated on the western side of the junction of High Street and Union Lane (Alexander 1998; Hall 1999). The second, at the former Wheatsheaf public house (Figure 1, 7), was situated on the eastern side of the same junction (Armour 2001b; Masser 2000) and the third, at the former Yorkshire Grey public house (Figure 1, 8), was located some 450m to the northeast on the northern side of the High Street (Mackay 2001a; Mackay 2001b). In addition, smaller-scale work of note has also been undertaken at the Chesterton Hospital site (Figure 1, 4), which is situated on the western side of Union Lane (Armour 2001a; Hatherley 2001; Mackay 2000). The results of these excavations – when taken in conjunction with those of a number of additional small-scale watching briefs, evaluations and isolated find spots, whose locations are also shown in Figure 1 – have allowed a general model of the history of the village to be adduced. Although small quantities of residual Prehistoric and Roman material were recovered at a number of these sites, the earliest definite evidence of settlement activity is Late Saxon in date. The royal *vill* of *Cestretone* was most probably founded in the 8th century, when the area was subdivided from the newly established *burh* of Cambridge (Cessford with Dickens 2004, 125-6). A polyfocal settlement then developed, with centres of activity being identified at both the Wheatsheaf and Yorkshire Grey sites, complementing a postulated core situated in the vicinity of St Andrew's Church (*ibid.*, 127). In the Post-Conquest period the level of occupation expanded markedly, and there is evidence for a planned settlement with an intensive layout of property plots and a main axis running perpendicular to the River Cam (*ibid.*, 127-30). This settlement continued to expand during the 13th century, when the main axis shifted to become parallel to the river. Although the village then appears to have contracted somewhat during the 14th century, it partially recovered during the 15th and 16th centuries before expanding markedly once again during the 17th century (*ibid.*, 130-35). From this period onwards, Chesterton was gradually incorporated into Cambridge's rapidly expanding suburban fringe (see Bryan 1999).

The PDA is located approximately 140m to the northeast of the former Yorkshire Grey public house. Here, evidence of near continuous occupation from the Late Saxon period onwards was identified (see Mackay 2001a; Mackay 2001b). Furthermore, both the High Street and the southern portion of Green End Road, which lies directly to the west of the present site, are known from documentary sources to have been established during the Medieval period. But the PDA also lies some considerable distance from St Andrew's Church, very much towards the eastern extremity of the known Medieval village. Cartographic evidence, for example – in the form of the draft Inclosure Plan of 1838 (Cessford with Dickens 2004, fig. 9) – indicates that the site remained unoccupied during the early 19th century, at a time when the area is known to have been more widely and densely settled than ever before. The only find that has previously been recorded in the immediate vicinity – a Roman coin (CHER 05578) – may well have been discovered during gravel quarrying activity. Numerous extraction pits have been recorded during excavations at nearby sites (*e.g.* Mackay 2001a; Patten 2003), and intensive quarrying is known to have been undertaken further to north on Green End Road in the 19th century (Browne 1974, Map 14 No.'s 24-26).

Results

The earliest surviving features to be identified at the site comprised a minimum of three pits that shared both a distinctive fill and a similar morphology. These features were all sub-oval in form and contained distinctly higher quotients of subsoil within their matrices than many of the succeeding horizon of intensive quarry pits. Although their distribution appears to have been somewhat irregular (see Figure 3), this may in part be a result of later obfuscation and truncation. Only one feature, **F.08**, produced any datable material, in the form of two sherds of abraded Medieval coarseware. Given their location, and the absence of any associated refuse material, it is probable that these three pits originally functioned as gravel quarries. Their limited number and relatively small size, however, suggests that in its initial form this activity was somewhat sporadic in nature.

Excavated examples of this quarry type, which included **F.07** and **F.08**, varied between 0.98m+ to 1.98m in length and 0.86m+ to 1.82m+ in width and were of irregular sub-oval form. Both contained very similar banded deposits of mid orangey brown sandy silt, mid grey silt with frequent gravel inclusions and mid yellowish brown silty sand with occasional mid grey sandy silt mottles. They had irregular, very steeply sloping sides and varied in depth between 0.48m+ to 0.53m+, although both had been at least partially truncated by later 'strip' quarries.

By far the most common feature-type to be encountered during the evaluation was the so-called 'strip' quarry, of which at least sixteen examples were identified (see Figures 3 and 5). These features are characterised by their elongated, sub-rectangular form and close parallel alignment. Their distinctive shape appears to have been created via a process of worm-like excavation, during which waste material was discarded to the rear of an ever advancing working-face. In effect, therefore, they represent the vestiges of an early form of open-cast mining. For this reason such features are frequently associated with large-scale, often commercial gravel extraction. The strip quarries at 208 Green End Road each contained relatively similar dark humic deposits that contained occasional to frequent ash and CBM inclusions. In terms of their date, two sherds of 16th to 17th century pottery were recovered from quarry **F.03**, although once again – given their abraded state – it is possible that this material was residual.

Excavated examples of this quarry type – which included **F.01**, **F.02**, **F.03**, **F.05** and **F.06** – varied between 1.23m+ to 3.02m+ in length and 0.48m to 0.82m in width and were of elongated northeast-southwest oriented sub-oval form. They contained very similar deposits of mottled and patchy mid to dark brown sandy clay silt with occasional gravel, pea grit, ash and CBM fragment inclusions. In general, they had steeply sloping to vertical sides leading to relatively flat bases and varied in depth between 0.10m+ to 0.38m+, although all appeared to have been at least partially truncated by later, 20th century terracing activity. It is notable that the base of every excavated example of this feature-type terminated at the boundary between the natural gravels and the upper surface of the underlying Gault Clay (see Figure 5), thereby confirming that they had specifically targeted this gravel layer.

In addition to the gravel quarries, a number of modern features – associated with the construction of the adjacent mid 20th century bungalow – were also present. These included a sub-rectangular pit, a rubble-filled soakaway and a lead water pipe. Furthermore, a layer that overlay all of the preceding features – **[008]**, which contained mid 20th century ceramics – was identified across the entire trench, lying directly beneath the topsoil. This was most probably associated with the widespread landscaping/terracing of the site.



Figure 2. The excavated trench, pre-ex, facing northeast.

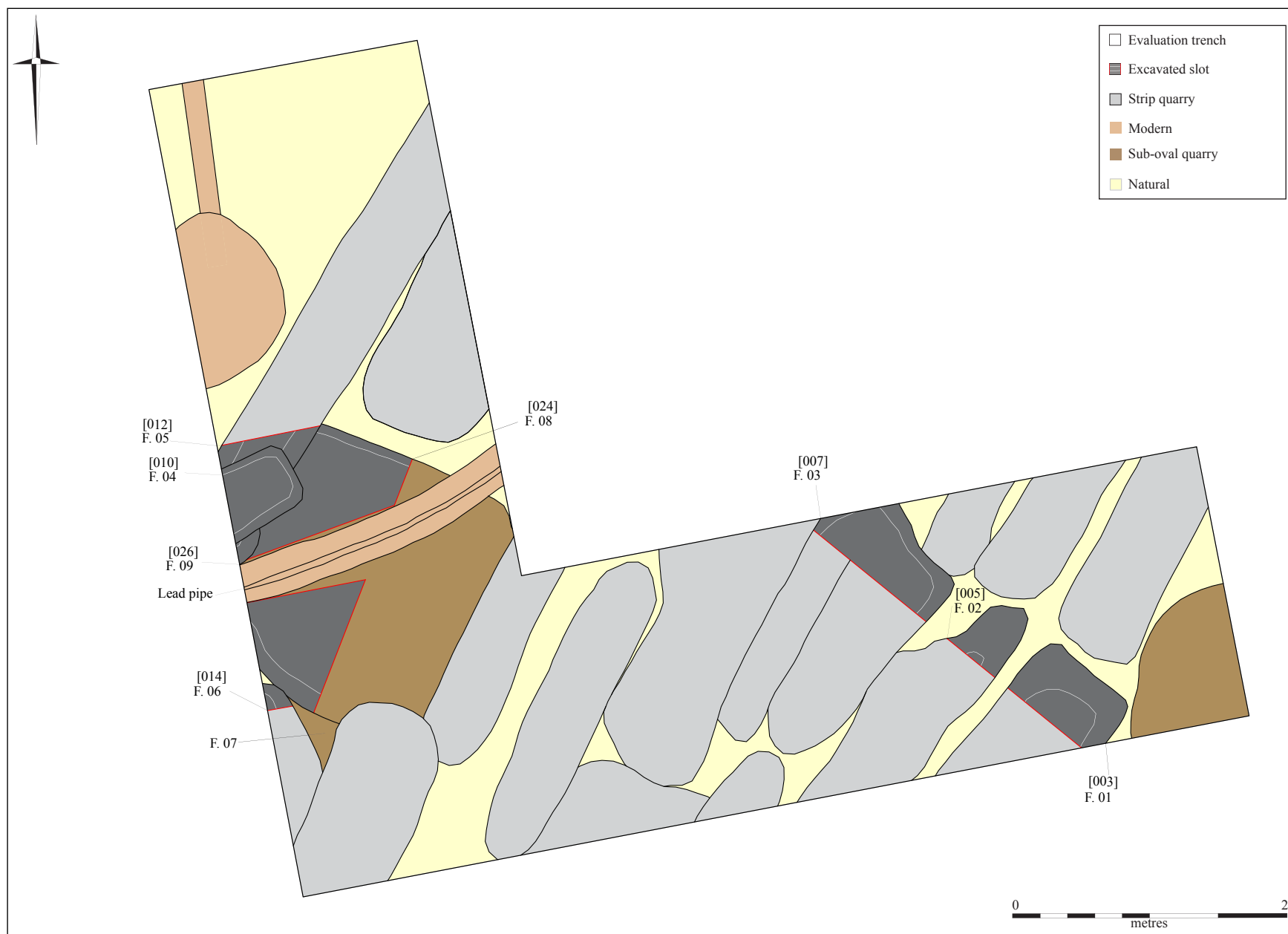


Figure 3. Trench plan.

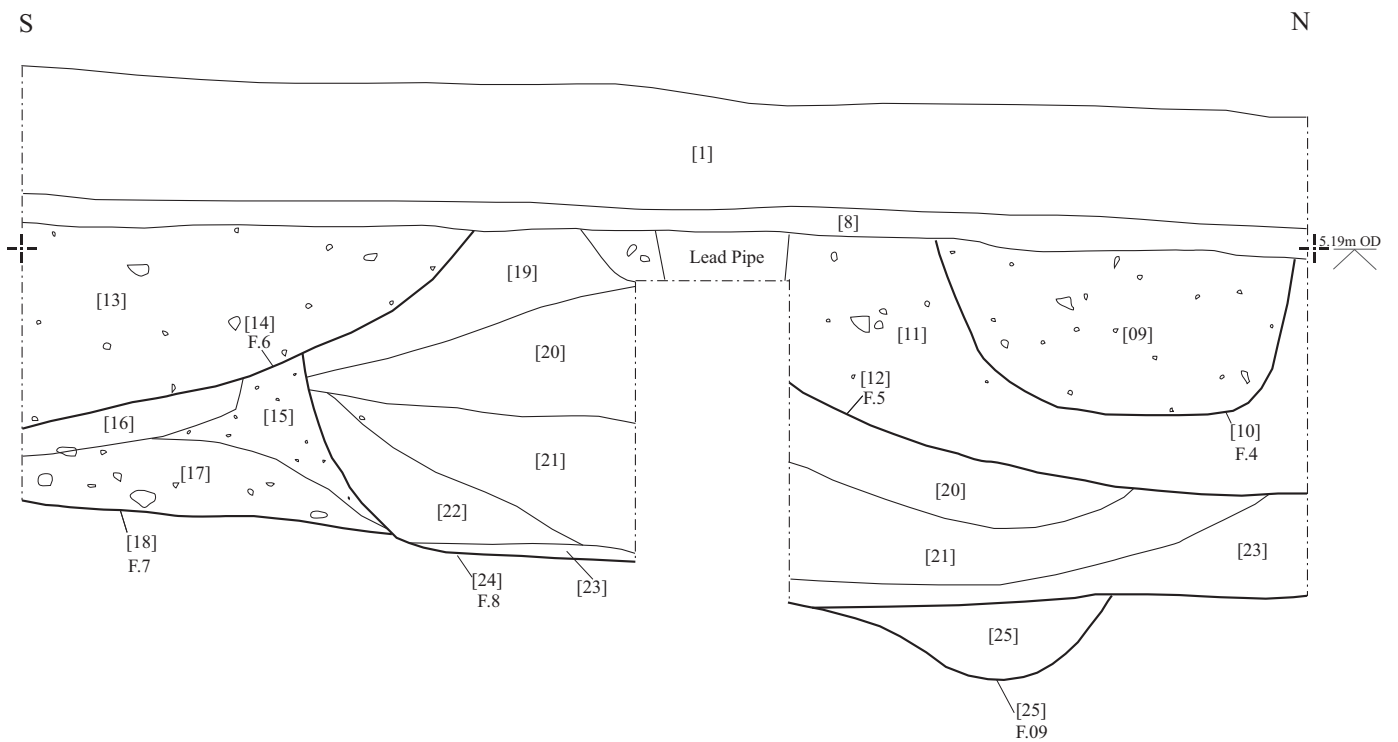


Figure 4. Photograph and section of features F.04 - F.09.

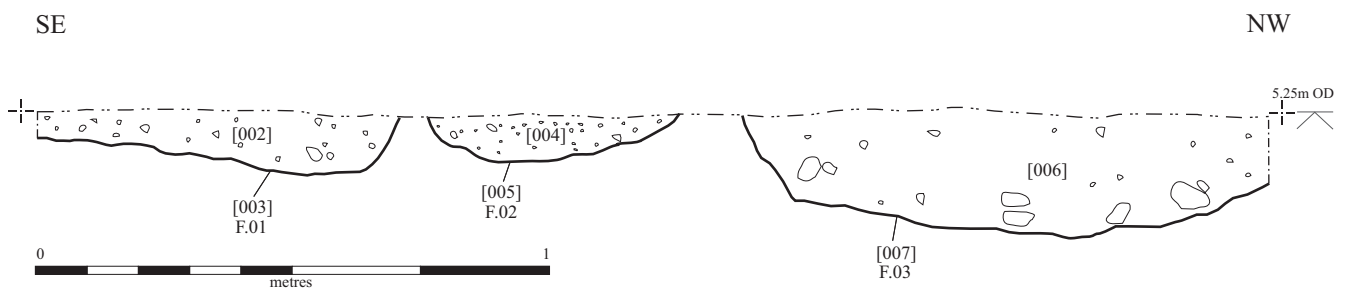


Figure 5. Photograph and section of strip quarries F.01-F.03.

Sub-rectangular pit **F.04** measured 0.62m+ by 0.50m in extent and was 0.28m deep. Its cut, **[010]**, had steeply sloping concave sides leading to a partially concave base. Its fill, **[009]**, consisted of mixed black silt with very frequent ash and charcoal inclusions. Nearby, soakaway **F.10** measured 1.16m by 0.78m+ in extent and was 0.20m+ deep. Its cut, **[028]**, had steeply sloping to vertical sides; its base was not reached. Its fill, **[027]**, consisted of fragmentary brick rubble and hardcore that was packed around a ceramic salt-glazed drain pipe. This was clearly aligned with the downpipe from the gutter of the adjacent building. To the south, the lead water pipe was not further investigated as it appeared to be live. Overlying all of these features, as well as the preceding horizon of quarry pits, was layer **[008]**. This consisted of mixed mid to pale brown sandy clay silt with occasional gravel and charcoal fleck inclusions, and measured between 0.10m and 0.15m thick.

Material Culture

A small assemblage of material culture was recovered during the evaluation at 208 Green End Road. This group – which includes pottery, glass and clay tobacco pipe – has been subdivided by material type and is discussed in detail below.

Pottery

A small pottery assemblage – consisting of only 16 sherds, weighing 139g – was recovered from the evaluation at the Green End Road site. Of this group, the majority (comprising 11 sherds, weighing 80g) are mid 20th century in origin. The earliest material, which is 13th to 15th century in date, was recovered from **[021]**, **F.08**. Here, two sherds of Medieval coarseware, weighing 7g, were present. These were accompanied by two sherds of 19th to 20th century refined white earthenware, however, which weighed 3g. These latter sherds were most probably intrusive, and may well have been derived from one of the large number of overlying features. Three features contained Post-Medieval material of 16th to 18th century date. These included **[006]**, **F.03**, which contained a sherd of plain red coarseware weighing 4g, and a sherd of glazed red earthenware weighing 15g. In addition, **[009]**, **F.04** contained a further sherd of glazed red earthenware, weighing 33g, whilst **[013]**, **F.06** contained a sherd of plain red coarseware weighing 2g. Finally, nine sherds of refined white earthenware, weighing 77g, were recovered from **[008]**. Based upon their fabric, form and decoration, these are most probably mid 20th century in date.

Glass

A small glass assemblage – consisting of only 8 fragments, weighing 224g – was recovered during the evaluation. In the first instance, six fragments, weighing 97g, were present in **[009]**, **F.04**. These included a knob handle and several body shards derived from a single large vessel. This was machine moulded, and most probably dates to the late 19th or 20th century. Secondly, two small complete bottles were recovered from layer **[008]**. These were again machine moulded, with screw-top lids, and are clearly mid 20th century in origin. They measure 100mm and 66mm high, and weigh 75g and 52g respectively.

Clay Tobacco Pipe

A single stem fragment was recovered from **[021]**, **F.08**. In general, the presence of clay tobacco pipe fragments in a context indicates a date between late 16th to early 20th centuries (c. 1580-1910). Only bowls, however, can be more closely dated on typological grounds (Oswald 1975). The date of this fragment is therefore unclear.

Discussion

A very similar pattern of quarrying activity – in which an initial phase of haphazard, sub-oval pits was later succeeded by features indicative of a more intensive, ‘strip-type’ extraction technique – has recently been identified on the north-western outskirts of Cambridge. Here, at the Kavli Institute for Cosmology site, a number of features dating to the 15th to 17th centuries were investigated (Newman 2008, 10-17).

The earliest pits in this sequence, much like those at the present site, appear to have been created on a relatively infrequent basis. But, by the 17th century, these irregular features had been succeeded by a much more formalised pattern of linear strip quarries. It therefore appears that the prime agricultural land upon which the site was situated, on the fringe of the West Fields of Cambridge, was gradually sacrificed in order to satisfy the burgeoning demand for construction materials in the urban core of the town (Hall & Ravensdale 1976, 27-30). It is very likely that a similar pattern of encroachment is represented by the sequence at 208 Green End Road. In the latter location, however, this activity potentially occurred somewhat later than at the Kavli Institute for Cosmology site. This is indicated in part by the regularity of the constituent strip quarries, which are more akin to the regimented 19th century examples previously encountered at Haddenham (Evans & Hodder 2006, 300-301) than to the more ‘organic’ layout of the features at the former site. As the extremely haphazard 12th to 14th century extraction pits identified at Church End, Cherry Hinton testify (Cessford & Mortimer 2004, 37-40), it appears that the layout of such features became increasingly formalised – or industrialised – over time. Secondly, a much smaller assemblage of datable material culture was recovered from the present site, thereby increasing the possibility that some or all of this material is residual in nature. Finally, the quarries encountered during a nearby evaluation conducted at 132 Scotland Road were demonstrably 18th to 19th century in date (Patten 2003, 5-7; Figure 1, 9). As this site was situated a comparable distance from the primary locus of contemporary occupation, it is highly likely to have comprised part of the same expanding ‘fringe’ of mineral exploitation.

Regardless of the precise date of the quarrying activity, however – which must have occurred at some time between the 16th and 19th centuries – it is clear from these results that the PDA was located some distance outside the Late Saxon and Medieval settlement. The dearth of associated material culture, which was absent even within residual contexts, strongly indicates that the site has not previously been subject to intense anthropogenic activity. Whilst this does not of course preclude the possibility that it was subject to occasional usage either before or during these periods, any potential evidence of such activity has been extensively truncated by both the Post-Medieval quarrying and later, 20th century landscaping/terracing. The further archaeological potential of the site is therefore minimal.

Acknowledgments

The project was commissioned by Moody Homes Limited and the fieldwork was monitored by Kasia Gdaniec, Development Control Archaeologist at Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team (formerly CAPCA). The project was managed for the CAU by Emma Beadsmoore and the evaluation was directed by Richard Newman. It was undertaken in the field with the assistance of Marcus Brittain. The graphics for the report were produced by Bryan Crossan.

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Oasis Form

OASIS ID: cambridg3-110557	
Project Details	
Project name	208 Green End Road, Chesterton
Short description of the project	An 'L-shaped' trench measuring 22 square metres in area was excavated at 208 Green End Road, Chesterton, Cambridge, between the 6th and 7th of September 2011. This revealed that the site had previously been subject to intensive gravel quarrying activity. Although no earlier, pre-quarry features had survived, two distinct types of quarry pit were identified. The first of these consisted of a series of haphazardly arranged sub-oval features, one of which contained abraded sherds of Medieval pottery. Subsequently, however, during the Post-Medieval period, the site became the focus of more intensive 'strip-type' extraction techniques. A minimum of sixteen linear quarries were inserted, all of which were aligned northeast to southwest. Between them, these features removed almost all of the remaining natural gravel. Finally, a number of additional features relating to the most recent phase in the site's usage were also present. These included a sub-rectangular pit, a rubble-filled soakaway and a lead water pipe that were all associated with the construction of a nearby bungalow in the mid 20th century. In addition, the topography of the area suggests that a program of landscaping/terracing may also have been undertaken at this time.
Project dates	Start: 06-09-2011 End: 07-09-2011
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	ECB 3661 - HER event no.
Any associated project reference codes	GEC 11 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed
Monument type	GRAVEL QUARRY Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	'Sample Trenches'
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
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 CAMBRIDGE CAMBRIDGE 208 Green End Road, Chesterton, Cambridge
Postcode	CB4 1LU
Study area	22.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 4678 6015 52.2195510388 0.148935752033 52 13 10 N 000 08 56 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 5.45m Max: 6.20m
Project Creators	
Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body

Project design originator	Emma Beadsmoore
Project director/manager	Emma Beadsmoore
Project supervisor	Richard Newman
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Moody Homes Limited
Project Archives	
Physical Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Physical Archive ID	GEC 11
Physical Contents	'Ceramics','Glass'
Digital Archive Exists?	No
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Paper Archive ID	GEC 11
Paper Contents	'Ceramics','Glass','Stratigraphic'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Photograph','Plan','Section'
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