

Land to the South-East of No. 2 Short Lane, Willingham, Cambridgeshire

An Archaeological Evaluation



Adam Slater

CAMBRIDGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE



**Land to the South-East of No.2 Short Lane
Willingham, Cambridgeshire:
An Archaeological Evaluation**

Adam Slater

**© Cambridge Archaeological Unit
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE**

Report No.1077
ECB No: 3745

March 2012

Contents

	Page
SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION	1
Circumstances of the Project	1
Location and Topography	1
Archaeological and Historical background	1
Methodology	4
RESULTS	5
Discussion	8
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	9
BIBLIOGRAPHY	9
Oasis Data Collection Record	10

List of Figures & Tables

		Page
Figure 1	Location of No. 2 Short Lane	2
Figure 2	Trench Location and Exposed Archaeology	3
Table 1	Deposits within Trench 1	6
Table 2	Deposits within Trench 2	6
Table 3	Deposits and Archaeology within Trench 3	7
Table 4	Deposits and Archaeology within Trench 4	8

On the 29th February 2012, Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation trenching within land to the immediate south-east of No. 2 Short Lane, Willingham. A total of 32m of trenches were excavated in an area regarded as being of high archaeological potential. Three linear features likely of a 17-19th century date were identified as well as a largely undisturbed agricultural soil profile.

INTRODUCTION

Circumstances of the Project

Archaeological evaluation was required to determine the potential of impact by proposed development on land to the south and south-east of No. 2 Short Lane, Willingham. A brief from Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (CHET) (McConnell 2012) resulted in a Written Scheme of Investigation issued by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU), (Dickens 2012).

Location and Topography (Figure 1)

The evaluation area is situated within c. 0.15ha of land to the immediate south-east of No. 2, Short Lane, Willingham, Cambridgeshire (TL40650/ 70300). It lies behind the present frontages of both Short Lane and Long Lane at a height of 6.7m/OD. Extensive remains of horticultural glasshouses are present within the southern part of the area and much of the site is overgrown gardens with brambles. The underlying geology is of Second Terrace gravels and Ampthill Clays (BGS Cambridge and Huntingdon series sheets 187/188).

Archaeological and Historical Background.

The most significant archaeological work in the vicinity of the current evaluation was carried out on the western side of Long Lane as part of the Saxon Way housing development, which identified the presence of a Middle Saxon settlement (Dickens 1995a, 1995b, Connor & Robinson 1997). The excavation revealed eight complete post built 'halls' along with a series other settlement related features. The absence of beam-slot construction as well as the presence of Early Saxon ceramics suggests that the main phase of occupation was Early to Early-Middle Saxon in date. Middle and Late Saxon pottery (including Thetford and St Neots wares) was also recovered from pits and ditches to the north of the site, nearest to the current Church Street, possibly relating to properties fronting the roadway when Willingham was taking its current form (Connor & Robinson 1997).

The extent of the Middle and Later Saxon occupation areas has never been fully identified in Willingham; evaluations at the corner of Short Lane and Green Street revealed no archaeology (Prosser and Seddon, 2000) and excavation at 23 Green Street exposed the presence of 13th -14th century occupation which appears to have been relatively short-lived and soon ceased until the Post Medieval period, suggestive of expansion associated with 13th century population pressure and decline caused by the black death (Hickling 2005).



Figure 1. Location map



Figure 2. Trench plan

Methodology

Four 2m wide trenches (Trench 1-4) a total of 32m in length, were laid out to maximise coverage of the proposed development area whilst avoiding the still upstanding glasshouses and building footings (figure 2).

The trenches were excavated using a JCB with a 2m wide toothless ditching bucket. Under constant archaeological supervision, each stratigraphic horizon was exposed and inspected for archaeological features and material culture before being removed to the depth of any visible archaeology or to the depth of geological 'natural'. The topsoil/ overburden and any underlying subsoil deposits were kept separate for a full metal detector survey to be carried out.

Archaeological features were planned at 1:50 with further detail recorded at 1:20 or 1:10 as required. Each excavated feature was recorded using the CAU modified version of the MoLAS recording system with individual features assigned feature numbers (F.#) and individual stratigraphic sequences assigned context numbers ([context #]) with complementary section drawings at a scale of 1:10. Pertinent features and feature sets were photographed on black and white film, colour slide and digital media. Each trench was photographed and a full soil profile was recorded.

All work was carried out in strict accordance with statutory Health and Safety legislation and with the recommendations of FAME (Allen & Holt 2010) and followed the Written Scheme of Investigation (Dickens 2012). The site code is SLW12.

RESULTS

A total of four archaeological features were exposed within the trenches. Trenches 1 and 2, located furthest to the east (and furthest from Long Lane) contained no features of any antiquity; with truncation and deposits associated with the modern horticultural glasshouses and gardens.

All the trenches revealed a full developmental sequence of deposits overlying consistently sandy gravel geological substrata. A thick deposit of gravelly-clay subsoil (1005, 1008, 1012, and 1015) between 0.2 and 0.4m in thickness was present in all trenches, containing 16-17th century ceramic as well as a small quantity of animal bone within Trench 3. A dark grey silty clay horizon, likely an old topsoil or agricultural horizon (1004, 1007, 1011, and 1014) varying in thickness between 0.25 and 0.3m was also present in all trenches. No datable material culture was recovered from this deposit and no agricultural features were present within it.

The lower agricultural horizon was truncated within Trench 1 by the brick and concrete foundations of the still standing glasshouses (1003) and was sealed by a thin, compacted deposit of gravels, likely representing a path or yard surface (1002) associated with the horticulture. Overlying this surface in Trench 1 and the lower agricultural horizon within Trenches 2-4 was the current topsoil and turf, a distinct boundary visible between the two deposits. Modern agricultural and garden related detritus was frequently recovered from this deposit, suggesting it to be both a natural soil developed since the abandonment of the glasshouses and garden soil associated with No. 2 Short Lane.

Trench 3 (figure 3) exposed a shallow roughly north-south aligned gully of undetermined date (**F. 3**). The rounded terminus of a gully (**F. 2**), extending to the north-east, truncated **F. 3** and contained sherds of 16-17th century ceramic. A single posthole (**F. 4**) lay adjacent to **F. 2**, and whilst undated by material culture would appear to be associated with the terminus of **F.2**.

A single east-west aligned ditch, **F. 1** was located within Trench 4 (figure 3), which unlike the archaeology within Trench 3 was clearly shown to truncate the entirety of subsoil deposit (1015). 18th-19th century ceramics were recovered from the lower fill of this ditch.

Trench 1	Depth: 0.6-0.7m Length: 10m		
Orientation NE-SE			
Deposit	Thickness	Description	Archaeology/ Material Culture/ date
1000	0-0.1m	Sod. Very dark grey-brown, moderate to loosely compacted silty clay.	Modern Refuse
1001	0.1-0.2m	Topsoil. Very dark grey-brown to black, moderate to clay-silt.	Modern Refuse
1002	0.2-0.28m	Gravel Path: Firmly compacted light orangey-brown gravel.	Modern
1003	0.1-0.38	Modern Truncation associated with glasshouse	Modern
1004	0.2-.47m	Lower Topsoil. Very dark grey-brown, moderately compacted silty clay.	None
1005	0.47-0.7m	Subsoil: Dark orangey-brown, moderate to firmly compacted gravelly silty clay.	None
Geology	0.7+	Light yellowy-brown sandy gravels.	None

Table 1; Trench 1

Trench 2	Depth 0.65m Length 15m		
Orientation NW-SE			
Deposit	Thickness	Description	Archaeology/ Material Culture
1006	0.0.1m	Sod. Very dark grey-brown, moderate to loosely compacted silty clay.	None
1007	0.1-0.45	Topsoil. Very dark grey-brown to black, moderate to clay-silt	Modern domestic metalwork
1008	0.45-0.65	Subsoil: Dark orangey-brown, moderate to firmly compacted gravelly silty clay.	None
Geology	0.65m+	Light yellowy-brown sandy gravels with occasional darker silty lenses.	None

Table 2; Trench 2

Trench 3	Depth 0.9m Length 4m		
Orientation E-W			
Deposit	Thickness	Description	Archaeology/ Material Culture
1010	0-0.25m	Sod. Very dark grey-brown, moderate to loosely compacted silty clay.	None
1011	0.25-0.5m	Topsoil. Very dark grey-brown to black, moderate to clay-silt	None
1012	0.5-0.85m	Subsoil: Dark orangey-brown, moderate to firmly compacted gravelly silty clay.	Animal bone, 16-17th century ceramic.
Geology	0.8m+	Light yellowy-brown sandy gravels.	
Archaeology truncating geological substrata.	F. 2: Terminus of gully, aligned NE-SW.	[1018]	Concaved sides to concaved base
		(1021)	Main Fill; Mid to very dark grey, firmly compacted silty clay. 16-17th Century Ceramic.
		(1022)	Basal slump; Light orangey grey, loosely compacted sandy gravel.
	F. 3: Shallow gully, aligned NW-SE.	[1020]	Steeply sloping concaved sides to irregular concaved base.
		(1023)	Mid to dark grey moderately compacted gravelly silt.
	F.4: Circular posthole.	[1019]	Steeply sloping concaved sides to concaved base.
		(1024)	Mid to dark grey-brown, moderately compacted silty clay.

Table 3; Trench 3

Trench 4	Depth 0.85m Length 3m			
Orientalio n N-S				
Deposit	Thickness	Description	Archaeology/ Material Culture	
1013	0-0.2m	Sod. Very dark grey-brown, moderate to loosely compacted silty clay.	None	
1014	0.2-0.45m	Topsoil. Very dark grey-brown to black, moderate to clay-silt	None	
1015	0.45-0.85m	Subsoil: Dark orangey-brown, moderate to firmly compacted gravelly silty clay. Truncated by F. 1.	F.1	
Geology	0.85m+	Light yellowy-brown sandy gravels.		
Archaeology truncating Subsoil (1017) and underlying geological substrata.		F.1: Ditch, aligned E-W.	[1016]	Steep to moderately sloping generally straight sides to concaved base.
			(1017)	Mid to dark grey, moderate to firmly compacted silty clay. 18-19th century ceramic.

Table 4; Trench 4

Discussion

The presence of archaeological features within the limited trenches within the west of the evaluation area suggest a later Medieval and post Medieval focus respecting the frontage of both Short and Long Lanes. The presence of 16-17th century ceramic within the subsoil as well as cut linear features would suggest small scale domestic activity which was ultimately replaced by a larger boundary ditch by the 18-19th century.

The late, east-west orientated ditch identified within Trench 4 appears to correspond well in alignment with the modern property boundaries along Long Lane; each property boundary is approximately 22m (22 yards equalling 1 chain) in width, a common width of new plots during the medieval period and it would appear that F. 1 respects this pattern and represents the northern boundary of a property extending south along Long Lane as well as a northern (rear) boundary of a property extending east along Short Lane. Similar patterns of post-Medieval use of seemingly medieval property spacing were also identified along Green Street (Hickling 2005). The contrast between the Early and Middle Saxon activity excavated on the western side of Long Lane, and the seeming complete absence on the east, further reinforces the idea that the early medieval 'core' of Willingham was focussed to the east and north on Church Street and that Long Lane (and associated Short Lane) represents a medieval expansion of the village.

The paucity of archaeology within the two largest trenches of the evaluation, located the greatest distance away from both Short Lane and Long Lane corresponds with the apparent sterility identified during previous archaeological investigations at the eastern end of Short Lane (Prosser and Seddon, 2000). The thickness of both the present topsoil deposits and lower, still humic older topsoil, suggest a long period of agricultural use within the area from at least the 17th century, if not from much earlier and further supports the idea that this is a secondary area of expansion onto previously agricultural land.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Robert Laffling for commissioning the work. Particular thanks to Dan McConnell, Archaeological Officer Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (CHET). The CAU excavation team consisted of the author and Karl Hanson whilst survey and graphics were prepared by Bryan Crossan. The project was managed by Alison Dickens.

References

- Allen, J. L. & Holt, A. 2002. *Health and Safety in Field Archaeology*. SCAUM
- Connor, A. & Robinson, B. 1997. *Early-Middle Anglo-Saxon Settlement at High Street, Willingham. Draft Assessment and Post Excavation Project Design*. Cambridge County Council, Archaeological Field Unit Report.
- Dickens, A. 1995a. *An Archaeological Assessment at High Street, Willingham, Cambs*. CAU Report 139
- Dickens, A. 1995b. *A Second Phase of Archaeological Assessment at High Street, Willingham, Cambs*. CAU Report 149.
- Dickens, A. 2012. *A Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation at Land to the South-East of 2 Short Lane, Willingham*. CAU
- Hickling, S. 2005. *23 Green Street, Willingham, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Evaluation by Trial Trenching and Excavation*. Cambridge County Council, Archaeological Field Unit Report no 783.
- McConnell, D. 2012 *A Brief for Archaeological Evaluation at Land to the Rear of Short Lane, Willingham, Cambridgeshire*. CHET Design Brief.
- Prosser, L. & Seddon, G. 2000. *Short Lane, Willingham: An Archaeological Evaluation*. Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust Report No. 1225.

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

[List of Projects](#) | [Manage Projects](#) | [Search Projects](#) | [New project](#) | [Change your details](#) | [HER coverage](#) | [Change country](#) | [Log out](#)

Printable version

OASIS ID: cambridg3-120386

Project details

Project name	Land to the south east of no. 2 Short Lane, Willingham, an Archaeological Evaluation
Short description of the project	On the 29th February 2012, Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation trenching within land to the immediate south-east of No. 2 Short Lane, Willingham. A total of 32m of trenches were excavated in an area regarded as being of high archaeological potential. Three linear features likely of a 17-19th century date were identified as well as a largely undisturbed agricultural soil profile.
Project dates	Start: 29-02-2012 End: 29-02-2012
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	TSW12 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	ECB3745 - HER event no.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Residential 1 - General Residential
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	'Metal Detectors','Sample Trenches'
Development type	Not recorded
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS
Position in the planning process	Not known / Not recorded

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE WILLINGHAM No. 2 Short Lane
Postcode	CB24 5LG
Study area	0.15 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 40650 70300 52.3123572128 0.06348505262130 52 18 44 N 000 03 48 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 6.20m Max: 6.70m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	City/Nat. Park/District/Borough archaeologist

Project design originator	Alison Dickens
Project director/manager	Alison Dickens
Project supervisor	Adam Slater
Type of sponsor/funding body	Landowner
Name of sponsor/funding body	Robert Laffling

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Physical Contents	'Animal Bones','Ceramics'
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Contents	'Stratigraphic','Survey'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Survey','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Paper Contents	'Stratigraphic'
Paper Media available	'Drawing','Map','Photograph','Plan','Section','Unpublished Text'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Land to the South-East of No. 2 Short Lane, Willingham, Cambridgeshire; An Archaeological Evaluation
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Slater, A
Other bibliographic details	report no. 1077
Date	2012
Issuer or publisher	CAU
Place of issue or publication	Cambridge

Entered by	Alison Dickens (ad10000@cam.ac.uk)
Entered on	27 March 2012

OASIS:

Please e-mail [English Heritage](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk) for OASIS help and advice

© ADS 1996-2006 Created by Jo Gilham and Jen Mitcham, email Last modified Friday 3 February 2006
 Cite only: <http://www.oasis.ac.uk/form/print.cfm> for this page