

George Matthews House, Eye Cambridgeshire.

An Archaeological Evaluation.



Adam Slater

CAMBRIDGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE



**George Matthews House, Hodney Road,
Eye, Peterborough:
An Archaeological Evaluation**

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On the 27th February 2012, Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation trenching within land associated with George Matthews House, Eye, Peterborough. 86m of trenches were excavated which contained no features of archaeological significance and demonstrated a high degree of truncation associated with landscaping and previously existing buildings on the site.

INTRODUCTION

Location and Topography

The development site is situated on the north side of Hodney Road, Eye to the north of Peterborough. The underlying geology comprises of Oxford Clay (British Geological Survey 1995). The site is approximately 0.37ha in area (TL22156 02743) and the excavated trenches were located within the footprint of proposed residential and community buildings, whilst avoiding the possible the foundations of previously demolished buildings.

Circumstances of the Project

A condition requiring the archaeological investigation was placed on the planning consent for residential and community development scheme. A brief for the Archaeological Evaluation has been issued by Rebecca Casa-Hatton (2011), Archaeological Officer for Peterborough City Council Archaeological Service (PCCAS). The Cambridge Archaeological Unit undertook a specified programme of work approved by the PCCAS, and based on the requirements outlined in the Specification for Archaeological Evaluation (Beadsmoore 2012).

Archaeological and Historical Background

The evaluation area is located in a landscape of known archaeological activity, being within the north of the Flag Fen basin and within the Fengate Environs. Excavations at Eye Quarry to the south-east of the development site further exposed the presence of prehistoric activity in the area; Bronze Age barrows and Bronze/Iron age and Romano British activity was were identified in the early 20th century by E.T Leeds (1922) during mineral extraction. 21st century mitigation excavations further exposed the extent of the prehistoric and Romano-British landscape of Eye quarry (Patten 2006).

Further quarry excavations, at Pode Hall, Thorney. 6km to the east of the development area have also revealed prehistoric archaeology, including Late Neolithic/ Early Bronze Age barrows and ring ditches and a Late Bronze Age and Iron Age settlement.

The surrounding landscape also shows evidence for Romano-British activity; the Car Dyke extends eastwards of the development area and notable quantities of Roman Tile associated with a probable wharf site were recovered from the west.

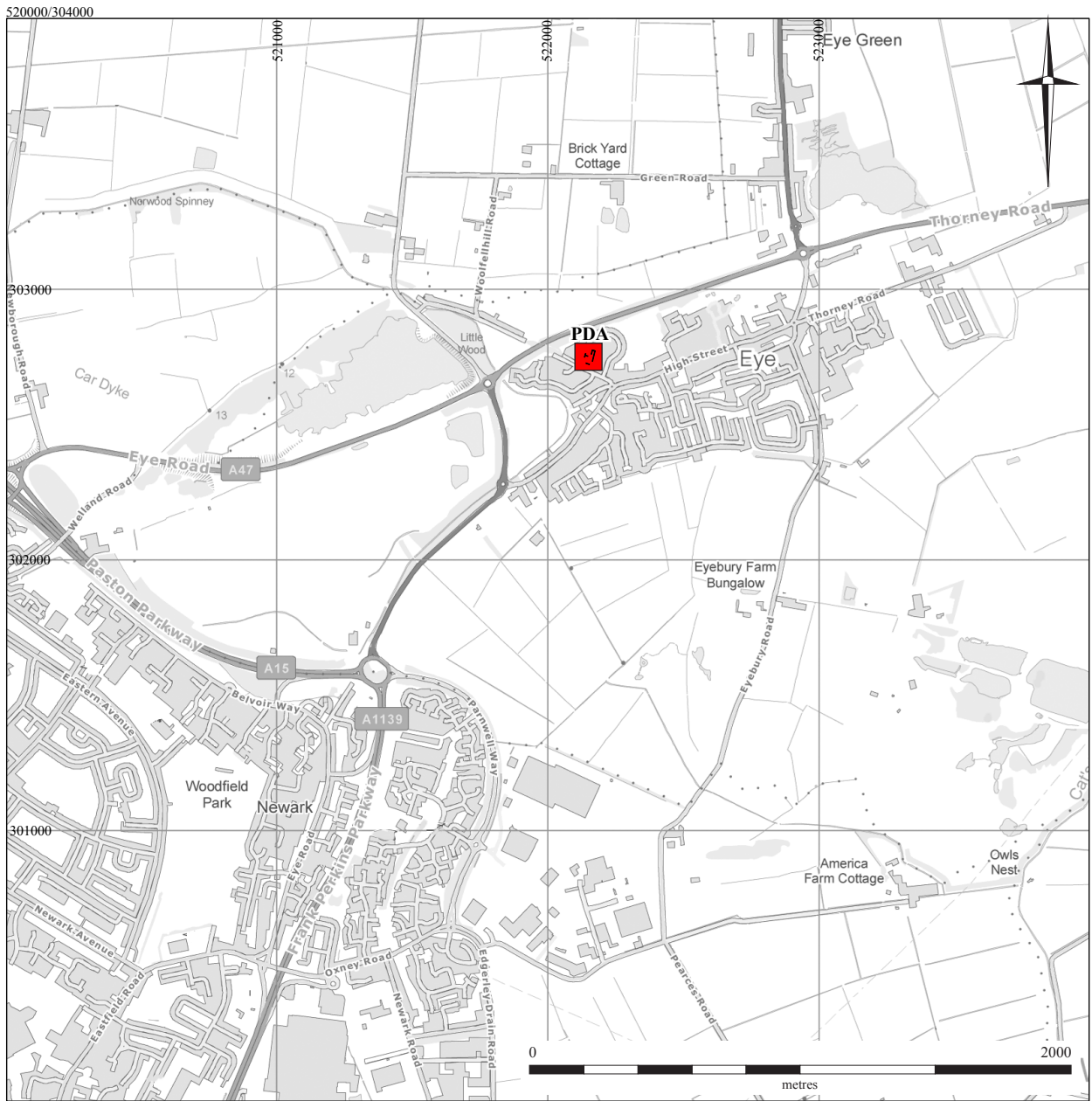
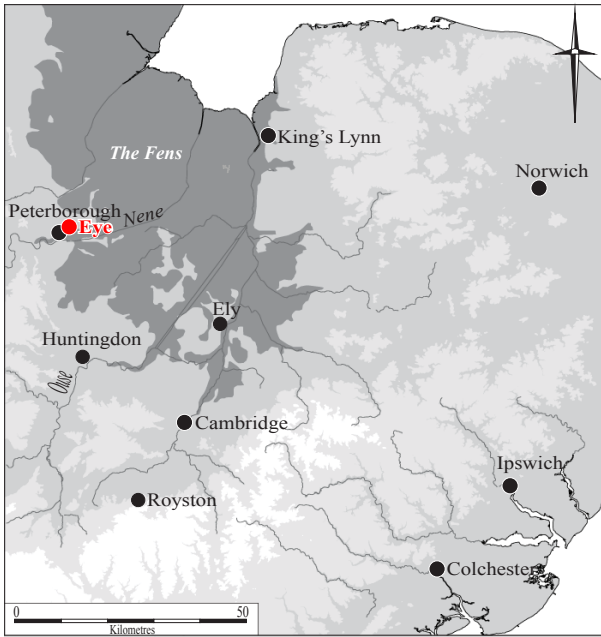


Figure 1. Location plan.

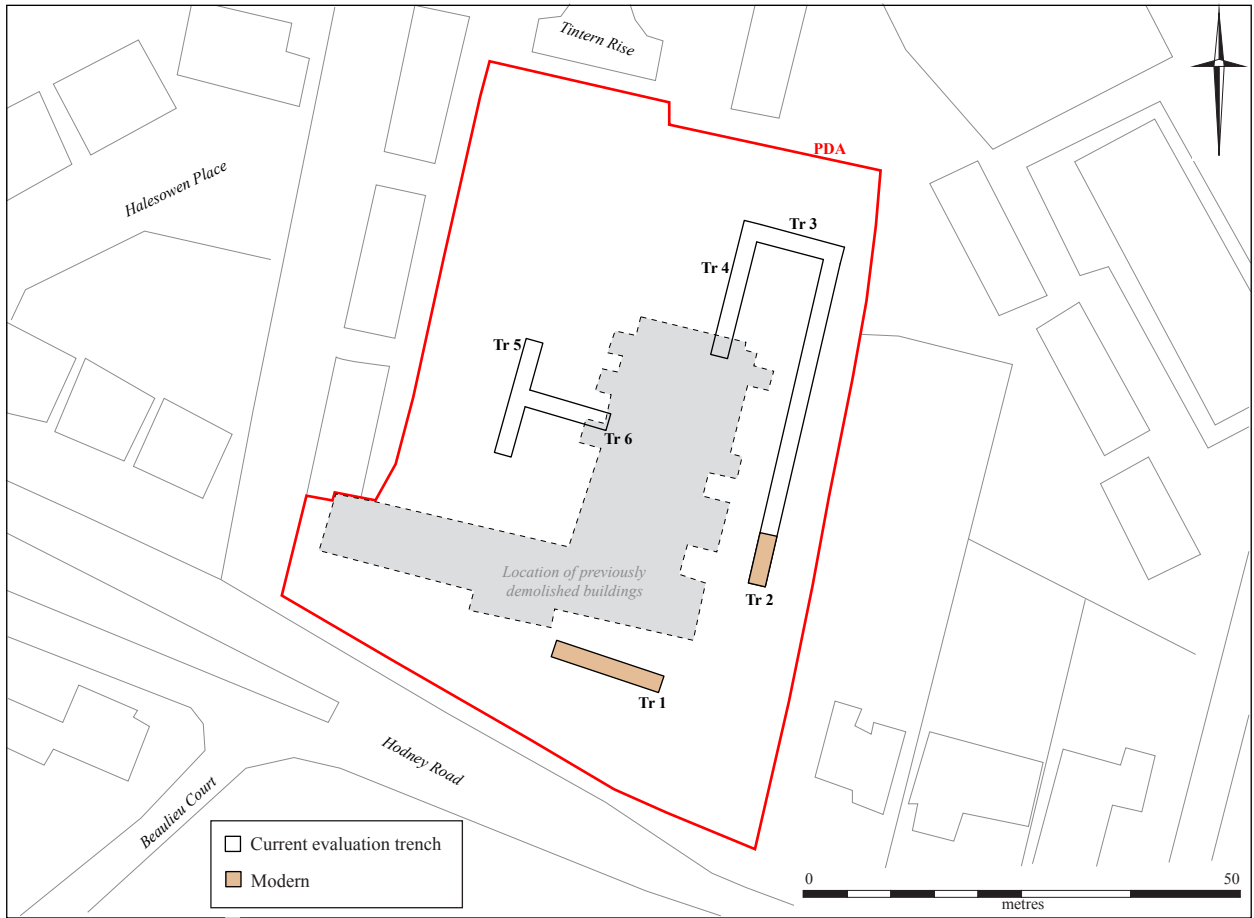


Figure 2. Trench plan with PDA.

Methodology

Six trenches of a total length of 81m, (Trenches 1-6) were laid out in accordance with the trench plan issued with the specification (Beadsmoore 2012). The presence of otherwise unknown services within the south of the site shortened Trench 1 for safety. The trenches were machine excavated using a 2m wide toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision to the depth of any visible archaeology or to the depth of geological substrata. The topsoil/ overburden and any underlying subsoil deposits were kept separate for a full metal detector survey to be carried out.

Any exposed archaeological features were to be planned at 1:50 with further detail recorded at 1:20 or 1:10 as and if needed. Each excavated feature was to be 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. The trench was photographed and a full soil profile was recorded at intervals along it. All work was carried out in strict accordance with statutory Health and Safety legislation and with the recommendations of SCAUM (Allen & Holt 2002). The site code is GMH12.

RESULTS

No archaeological features were present within any of the excavated trenches. A high degree of modern truncation was encountered associated with the construction and subsequent demolition of the modern buildings on the site. Trench 1 was almost completely comprised of foundation and service trenches, which were also encountered in the southern end of Trench 2.

The majority of Trench 2 and Trenches 3-6 were seemingly undisturbed by modern activity, allowing a full sequence of overlying deposits to be recorded and a suggestion of palaeotopography to be made. Thin, undated subsoil was present within all the trenches. Overlain by topsoil and occasionally a modern turf layer associated with lawns of the previously demolished buildings, the topsoil varying in depth and being notably thinner in the western most Trenches 5 and 6. A notable slope in the geology, rising towards the west was seen in the differing depths of Trenches 1-2, and 5-6 with a degree of disturbance seen in the subsoil in Trenches 5 and 6, suggesting that a phase of terracing or ground levelling had occurred, possibly relating to post-medieval agricultural use of the land as well as landscaping associated with the 20th century development of the area.

Trench 1	Depth: 0.6m Length: 13m Archaeology:		
Orientation E-W	Heavy degrees of modern truncation associated with late 20 th century building foundations and demolition.		
Deposit	Thickness	Description	Archaeology/ Material Culture/ date
Made ground	0-0.2m	Mid to light grey-brown, firmly compacted sandy clay with very high quantities of brick, mortar, concrete and modern detritus	Modern
Subsoil	0.2-0.6m	Mid bluey-grey, moderately compacted sandy clay. Occasional brick, mortar and modern detritus.	Undated

Table 1; Trench 1 Deposits

Trench 2	Depth: 0.55-0.58m Length: 38m Archaeology:		
Orientation N-S	Heavy degrees of modern truncation associated with late 20 th century building foundations and demolition within southern end of trench.		
Deposit	Thickness	Description	Archaeology/ Material Culture/ date
Made ground	0-0.4m (S End)	Mid to light grey-brown, firmly compacted sandy clay with very high quantities of brick, mortar, concrete and modern detritus	Modern
Lawn/ Turf	0-0.18m	Very dark grey-brown, moderately compacted silty clay	Modern
Topsoil	0.18-0.48m	Dark grey-brown, moderate to firmly compacted silty clay, occasional charcoal flecking.	Undated
Subsoil	0.48-0.58	Mid bluey-grey, moderately compacted sandy clay.	Undated

Table 2: Trench 2 Deposits

Trench 3	Depth: 0.4m Length: 10m Archaeology:		
Orientation E-W	None		
Deposit	Thickness	Description	Archaeology/ Material Culture/ date
Topsoil	0-0.3m	Dark grey-brown, moderate to firmly compacted silty clay, occasional charcoal flecking.	Undated
Subsoil	0.25-0.4m	Mid bluey-grey, moderately compacted sandy clay.	Undated

Table 3; Trench 3 Deposits

Trench 4	Depth: 0.4m Length: 10m Archaeology:		
Orientation N-S	None		
Deposit	Thickness	Description	Archaeology/ Material Culture/ date
Topsoil	0-0.2m	Dark grey-brown, moderate to firmly compacted silty clay, occasional charcoal flecking.	Undated
Subsoil	0.2-0.4m	Mid bluey-grey, moderately compacted sandy clay.	Undated

Table 4; Trench 4 Deposits

Trench 5	Depth: 0.28m Length: 10m Archaeology: None		
Orientation N-S			
Deposit	Thickness	Description	Archaeology/ Material Culture/ date
Topsoil	0-0.2m	Dark grey-brown, moderate to firmly compacted silty clay, occasional charcoal flecking.	Undated
Disturbed Subsoil	0.2-0.28m	Mid yellowy brown, moderate to firmly compacted silty sandy clay	Undated

Table 5; Trench 5 Deposits

Trench 6	Depth: 0.28m Length: 5m Archaeology: None		
Orientation E-W			
Deposit	Thickness	Description	Archaeology/ Material Culture/ date
Topsoil	0-0.2m	Dark grey-brown, moderate to firmly compacted silty clay, occasional charcoal flecking.	Undated
Disturbed Subsoil	0.2-0.28m	Mid yellowy brown, moderate to firmly compacted silty sandy clay	Undated

Table 6; Trench 6 Deposits

Discussion

The complete paucity of archaeological deposits or features in the evaluation at George Mathews House would seem to suggest a peripheral location away from settlement or intensive land use during the prehistoric and Romano-British periods. The prevalence of both prehistoric and later archaeology located on the gravel geology further to the east suggests the Oxford clay geology of the evaluation area was likely a factor resulting in it remaining peripheral until recent times. This suggests a landscape in the later prehistoric and Romano-British periods with areas of intensive settlement located on the more preferable gravel highlands divided by generally clear hinterlands, as seen close to the fen edge elsewhere locally (eg. Evans 1992, 1993) and regionally (Evans et al 2008).

Whilst no dating material was recovered from the topsoil or subsoil of any of the excavated trenches, the suggestion that the development area was part of the open fields of the medieval and post medieval village of Eye (Casa-Hatton 2012) is supported by the seemingly large scale levelling of the surviving topsoil and apparent reduction of subsoil deposits.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Oasis record

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Project details

Project name	George Matthews House, Hodney Road, Eye, Peterborough: An Archaeological Evaluation
Short description of the project	On the 27th February 2012, Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) undertook a programme of archaeological evaluation trenching within land associated with George Matthews House, Eye, Peterborough. 86m of trenches were excavated which contained no features of archaeological significance and demonstrated a high degree of truncation associated with landscaping and previously existing buildings on the site.
Project dates	Start: 27-02-2012 End: 27-02-2012
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 3 - Built over
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	'Sample Trenches'
Development type	Housing estate
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 PETERBOROUGH EYE George Matthews House, Hodney Road, Eye
 Postcode PE67YQ
 Study area 0.37 Hectares
 Site coordinates TL 22156 02743 51.7096343507 -0.231791571151 51 42 34 N 000 13 54 W Point
 Height OD / Depth Min: 7.90m Max: 8.30m

Project creators

Name of Organisation Cambridge Archaeological Unit
 Project brief originator Unitary Authority Archaeologist
 Project design originator Emma Beadsmoore
 Project director/manager Emma Beadsmoore
 Project supervisor Adam Slater
 Type of sponsor/funding body Developer
 Name of sponsor/funding body Davis Langdon

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