

**Neath Farm Business Park, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge  
Archaeological Evaluation**

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*Between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of April 2011, Cambridge Archaeological Unit undertook a small evaluation by trial trench within the easternmost extent of Neath Farm Business Park, Cherry Hinton; immediately adjacent to Church End Road. A densely packed sequence of linear ditches and gullies of 12-14<sup>th</sup> century date was identified as well as several discrete features and pits. The evaluation was undertaken on behalf of Ventress Property Developments Ltd.*

A single 'L'-shaped evaluation trench, 17m in total length was excavated within the loading bay at the eastern extent of the Neath Farm Business Park, adjacent to Church End Road, Cherry Hinton; NGR 548868,257420 (Figure 1). This is as a result of archaeological material being exposed within an earlier phase of test pitting (Patten 2006), and follows a written scheme of investigation laid out by Cambridge Archaeological Unit (Gibson 2011).

A JCB with a rock-breaker was utilised to remove the overlying, thick reinforced concrete slab and tarmac prior to excavation commencing. Once the modern ground surface was removed, underlying material was excavated using a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision, until archaeological deposits were encountered. Each removed horizon was examined and recorded both in plan and in section and all exposed archaeological deposits and features were cleaned, planned and photographed.

The excavation of exposed archaeological features was carried out by hand; all plans were drawn at a scale of 1:50 and sections at a scale of 1:10 of each excavated feature as well as the trench profile were drawn. The recording followed a CAU modified MoLAS system (Spence 1990) with [cut] and (fill) numbers assigned to individual contexts, and feature numbers, F., to stratigraphic events. All work was carried out in strict accordance with statutory health and safety legislation and with recommendations of SCAUM (Allen & Holt 2002). The site code is NFC11 and the ECB number is 3569.

#### *Archaeological Background (Figure 2)*

The area of Church End has been the subject of several detailed archaeological investigations (Figure 2), mostly focussed to the immediate north of the current evaluation area (Murray & Vaughan 1999; Kenny 1999; Prosser 1999; Cessford & Mortimer 2003; Mortimer 2003), which revealed the presence of a probable, previously unknown manorial centre with high levels of Saxo-Norman and Medieval activity. The combined results of the previous archaeological investigations are considered in detail in a commissioned Desktop Assessment (Dickens & Appleby 2005) and published paper (Cessford & Dickens 2005), who conclude that a 'D'-shaped enclosure, located to the north of the current evaluation area provided a probable focus of the ancient manorial or thegnly centre of *Hintonia*, awarded to Count Alan following the invasion of 1066.

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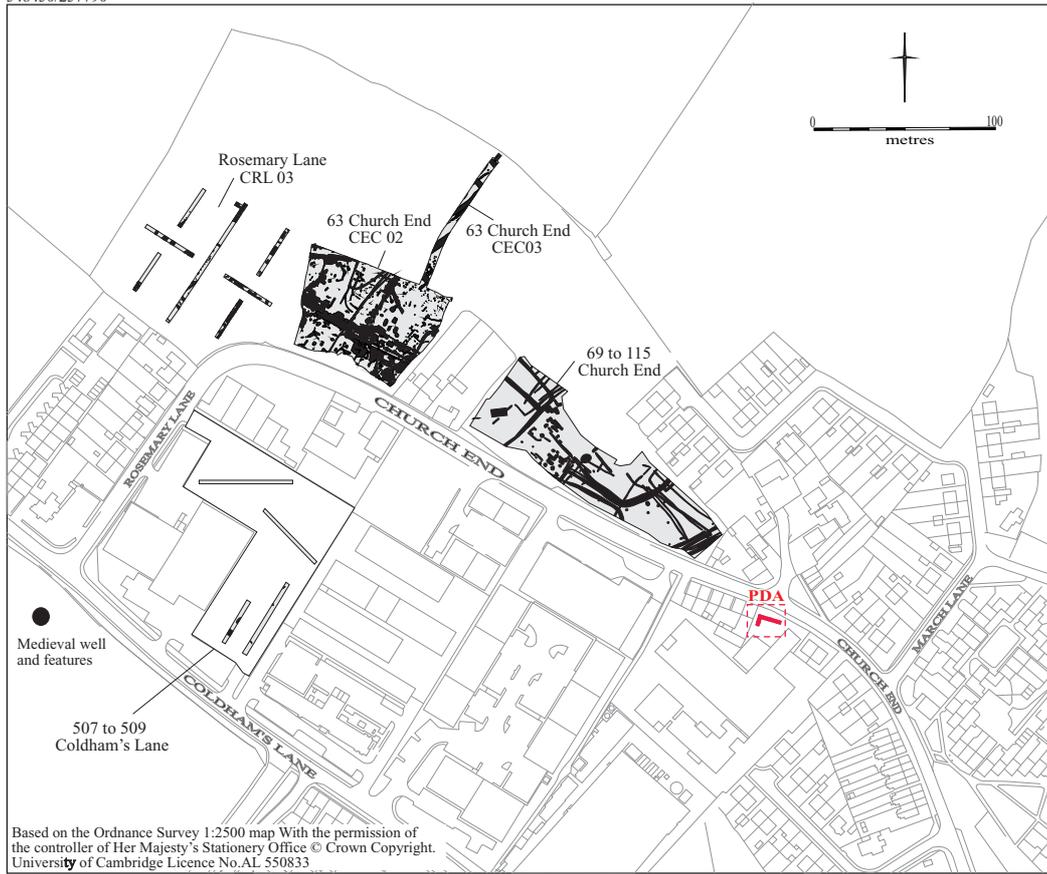


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Figure 1. Proposed Development Area within its wider landscape context

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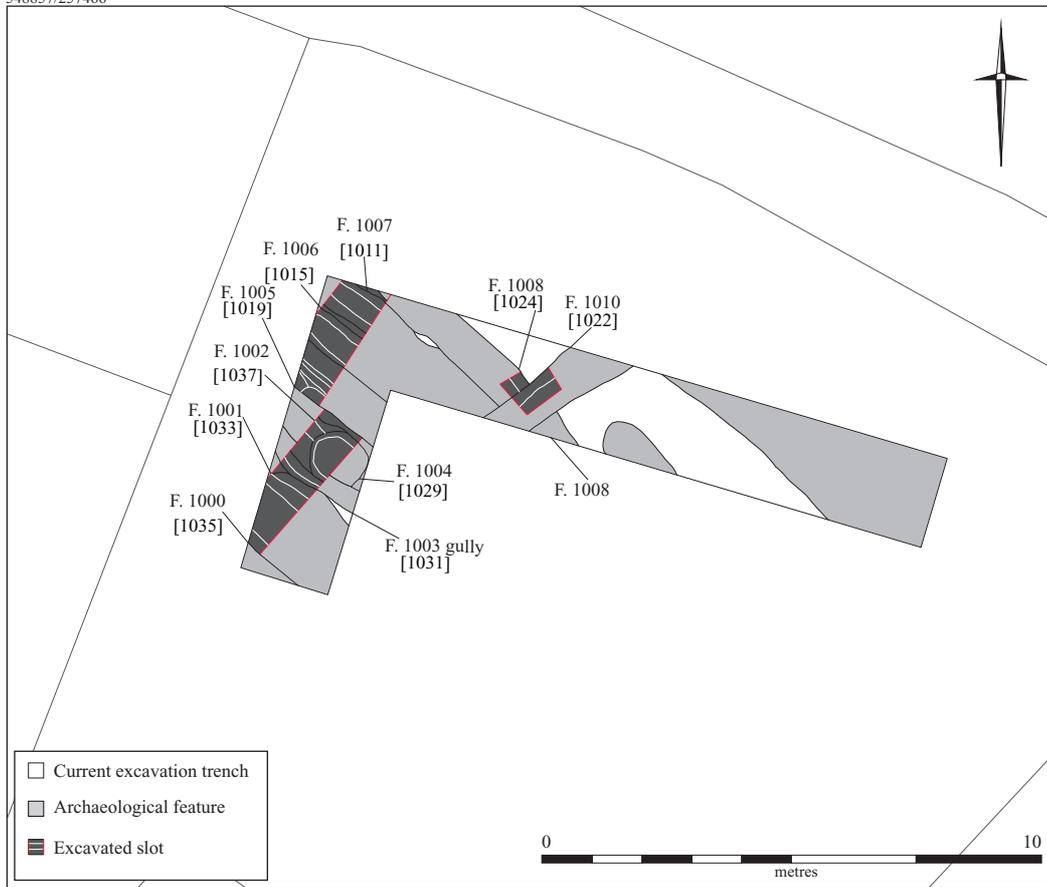


Figure 2. Location Plan and Trench Plan

A test-pitting survey undertaken across the whole Business Park, in conjunction with a Ground Penetrating Radar survey (Patten 2006), identified limited truncation across the wider area with marl geology encountered at between 0.6 and 1.3m below the current land surface. Cut archaeological features were encountered in two of the eight excavated test pits, one of which (Test Pit 8) was located within the current evaluation area; a wide shallow ditch, roughly east-west in alignment was partially exposed, the fill of which contained a single sherd of pot of a 12<sup>th</sup> century date.

## Results (Figure 2)

The excavation of the evaluation trench within the PDA exposed the presence of a series of nine inter-cutting north-west to south-east aligned ditches and gullies. Eight of these linear features were excavated in order to ascertain a date and relative stratigraphic position for each (**F. 1000**, **F. 1001**, **F. 1002**, **F. 1003**, **F. 1005**, **F. 1006**, **F. 1007**, **F.1008** & **F. 1009**). The ditches had a maximum width of 1.2m and a maximum depth of 0.6m, generally rounded profiles and a high degree of re-cutting. The fills of the ditches, comprising of silty clay with frequent marly slumping deposits contained infrequent quantities of animal bone and charcoal. Medieval ceramic was recovered from several of the linears, suggesting a 12-14<sup>th</sup> century date for the ditches (see Table 1). F. 1005 also contained several fragments of burnt/ baked clay with wattle impressions characteristic of daub or an oven lining.

A perpendicular, north-east to south-west aligned linear ditch (**F. 1010**) was clearly truncating at least some of the ditches and contained a sherd of glazed 13-14<sup>th</sup> century Ely Ware.

Two discrete sub-rounded pits were present within the trench, one of which, (**F. 1004**) was excavated. 1m in width, 1.5m in length and 0.6m in depth with a concaved profile this pit truncated potentially 12<sup>th</sup> century ditch F. 1002 and contained a single fragment of thin, hand-made red brick or tile.

Feature Type	Feature (F.)	Context (C.)	Animal bone by species and volume	Material/ Spot Date
Ditch NW-SE	1000	1034	-	Ely Ware- 14 <sup>th</sup> Century
Ditch NW-SE	1001	1033	-	Ely Ware- 13-14 <sup>th</sup> Century
Ditch NW-SE	1002	1036	Cattle, 1 fragment	Thetford Ware- 12 <sup>th</sup> Century
Gully NW-SE	1003	1031	-	Stamford Ware- 12 <sup>th</sup> Century
Pit	1004	1026	-	Brick- Medieval/ Post-medieval
Ditch NW-SE	1005	1016	Cattle, 1 fragment; Horse 2 fragments	Burnt Clay daub/ oven lining.
Ditch NW-SE	1006	1012	Horse, 1 fragment; Dog, 3 fragments	-
Ditch NW-SE	1007	1009	Cattle, 1 fragment	-
Ditch NE-SW	1010	1023	-	Ely Ware- 13-14 <sup>th</sup> Century

Table 1: Spot dates of ceramic by feature (David Hall, *Pers Comm.*) and animal bone recovered (Vida Rajkovača *pers comm.*)

The evaluation trench also allowed a record of a full developmental sequence of archaeological horizons and an assessment of the level of modern truncation of underlying deposits to be made. A compacted chalky-marl formed the geological sub-

strata into which the Medieval and post-Medieval features were cut. A distinct upward sloping of the geology towards the south-east, was noted; a factor likely to have affected the topography of the evaluated area during the Medieval period, with the trench being 1.3m in depth at the north-western end and 0.7m at the south-eastern end.

A thick deposit of mid-grey, plastic, silty clay [1003], varying in thickness from 0.3 to 0.4m formed a sub-soil horizon. No material culture was recovered from this deposit. The fills of all the excavated features were very similar and in some cases indistinguishable from this subsoil and no physical relationships between it and cut archaeological features were determined. A thin deposit of slightly darker, plastic, silty clay, [1004], a maximum of 0.12m in thickness was identified within the north-eastern (deepest) part of the trench, overlying [1003]. This may represent a locally surviving but undated topsoil horizon.

Within the north-western end of the trench, overlying subsoil [1003] and probably truncating topsoil deposit [1004], was a layer of compacted broken marly-chalk between 0.15 and 0.25m in thickness [1002]. Overlying [1002], again restricted to the north-western end of the trench, was a thick deposit of loosely compacted brown silty clay with high quantities of brick, cement and modern detritus [1001], likely representing a deliberate phase of ground raising. Redundant ceramic and brick drains were present within this deposit. Sealing the whole of the PDA was Tarmac to the north-west laid on top of [1001] and thick reinforced concrete to the south-east. The concrete and rubble foundation deposit was up to 0.3m in thickness and was laid directly onto subsoil [1003], suggesting a degree of truncation.

## **Discussion**

The evaluation adjacent to Church End road exposed archaeology of a comparable date and alignment to the later Saxo-Norman activity / occupation identified across Church End Road (Cessford & Dickens 2005); in particular a series of north-east to south-west aligned, multiply-recut linear ditches identified within the south-east of the 69-115 Church End excavations (Cessford & Mortimer 2004). These linears showed a similar sequence and profile and it is probable that they are part of a redefined boundary or enclosure system of a 12 to 14<sup>th</sup> century date. The assemblage of ceramic, bone, charcoal and burnt/ baked clay from the linears also suggest nearby occupation activity consistent with that found to the north-west.

The distinct topography revealed within the trench, showing a rise towards the south-east of the PDA, may well account for the depth of surviving subsoil (and possibly topsoil to the north-west) as well as suggest a degree of truncation by modern terracing to the south-east. Similar topography within the substrata and degrees of truncation were identified throughout the wider development area during the test pitting phase (Patten 2006).

## References

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