

An Archaeological Watching Brief at Hudson Barn, Flag Fen Archaeological Park, Peterborough



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Flag Fen Archaeological Park, Peterborough**

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Summary

This report represents the results of a watching brief carried out by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) on 25th and 26th February 2013 within Hudson Barn at Flag Fen Archaeological Park, Peterborough (TL 22731 98938). The works involved monitoring the removal of the compacted barn floor prior to the construction of a cold store and a subsequent metal detector survey of the resultant exposed deposits. No archaeological deposits, features or artefacts were encountered during the watching brief. The work was commissioned by Vivacity Culture and Leisure.

Introduction

A programme of archaeological monitoring was carried out in advance of the construction of a refrigerated storage facility within Hudson Barn, situated within the newly scheduled Flag Fen Archaeology Park (Figure 1) at a height of between 1.36mOD and 1.49mOD. This purpose built structure is designed to house and conserve the eight logboats that were excavated and retrieved from the nearby Must Farm investigations between 2011 and 2012 (Murrell 2012). In order to support the weight of the cold store and its archaeological contents it was necessary to reinforce the barn floor by compression piling the footprint of the structure and laying a new concrete slab base. The building work was designed by RAC Kettering in consultation with York Archaeological Trust (YAT) and commissioned by Vivacity Culture and Leisure. The archaeological monitoring followed a brief designed by Peterborough City Council Archaeological Services (PCCAS) (Casa-Hatton 2013) and a resultant written scheme of investigation (WSI) designed by the CAU (Gibson 2013). Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) consent was obtained from the department of culture, media and sport (DCMS) as a condition of the brief, prior to the commencement of any works. The site code is FFN13.

Background

As the works lie within a scheduled ancient monument it was necessary to monitor all ground works in order to characterise any exposed archaeology or significant deposits. More specifically, Hudson Barn is located within the projected edge of the 'Flag Fen Platform', initially identified in the eastern side of the Mustdyke in 1982 (Figure 2). This discovery represented the largest single area of the Bronze Age platform exposed and was characterised by a stretch of approximately 500 timbers spanning 72m (Pryor 2001). In 2012 an auger survey situated to the north-west of Hudson Barn was designed with the objective of 're-defining' the physical extent of the proposed edge of the platform (Wilkins *et al* 2012), the results from which are forthcoming.

Prior to the commencement of works a borehole survey was conducted within Hudson Barn in conjunction with this watching brief. No archaeological artefacts or ecofacts were recovered within the boreholes (*Per comms* Dr Steve Boreham); however the full report including the results from the detailed geochemical and palaeoenvironmental analyses should be read along side this statement (Boreham forthcoming). The locations of the boreholes are illustrated in Figure 2.

Methodology

The existing compacted barn floor was removed within the footprint of the cold store using a tracked mini-digger with a toothless ditching bucket and was monitored by an archaeologist at all times. Visual inspection of the deposits was occasionally slightly obscured by the low light levels within the barn; however at no time was this considered prohibitive. As a significant quantity of Prehistoric metalwork have previously been discovered within close proximity to the barn, and given the potential sensitivity of the location of Hudson Barn, a full metal detector survey was also undertaken once the barn floor was removed. The metal detector was an ADX 150 which securely detected to a depth of 0.35m.

General site photographs were taken together with close ups of the exposed deposits. All deposits were recorded using the CAU recording system (a modified version of the MoLAS system). The eleven boreholes were surveyed into the OS grid using an electronic distance measure (EDM) and Global Positioning System (GPS). A summary of the results of the borehole survey were also considered before commencement of works.

As piling commenced during the watching brief stage of the construction, it was immediately possible to assess the impact/ potential for encountering archaeological deposits during this process. Due to the method of compression piling, it was immediately apparent that deposits would not be visible.

Monitoring Results

The average depth of excavation was 0.25m which invariably came down on to a fully humified peat [B] which in places was dry and cracked. There was no topsoil within the barn as this had previously been removed and replaced with compacted mud [A], (the barn floor) when the barn was constructed. The barn floor therefore created an interface with the peat below with the exception of a small area towards the eastern side where concrete slabs [C] had been laid. In this incidence a fine layer (< 5mm) of sand had been laid in the interface between the slabs and peat. A description of, and a summary table of the deposits encountered can be seen below and overleaf which should be considered together with Figure 2 depicting the location of the points recorded.

- A) Compacted Mud Floor – light yellowy brown, very firm, dry and dusty sandy silt with frequent small and medium (2mm-30mm) mixed stoned inclusion.
- B) Peat – dark reddish brown, firm, dry and moderately desiccated and cracked but compact peat completely humified (i.e. no visible reed, plant remaining).
- C) Slabs – square concrete slabs, 500mm² and 50mm thick.

Point	Overall Depth (cm)	Deposits (cm)		
		A	B	C
1	25	14	11	
2	25	6	19	
3	33	7	26	
4	25		20	5
5	25		20	5
6	25		20	5
7	25		20	5
8	26		26	
9	27		27	
10	25	15	10	

Table 1: Summary of deposits encountered within the footprint of the cold store

No archaeological features or deposits were encountered throughout the duration of the watching brief and no metal finds were discovered during the metal detector survey (Figure 3). The only disturbance to the surface of the peat was the backfill around the base of the posts which formed the main structural framework of the barn itself. As the modern timbers of the barn were still in place it was not practical, safe or relevant to investigate this disturbance. As no archaeology was discovered it was not necessary to excavate any further trenches or test pits in order to refine or further characterise the site.

Although Hudson Barn is situated within the projected area of the Flag Fen platform, there was no evidence to substantiate this within the watching brief, nor was there any immediate evidence from the borehole survey. In addition, the auger survey of 2012 designed to re-define its boundary, also failed to locate the platform's edge. Therefore it is possible that the platform does not extend as far as previously proposed, and may instead stop nearer to, or at Mustdyke where it was originally identified in 1982.

References

- Casa-Hatton, R. 2013. *Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief at Flag Fen Archaeological Park*. Planning Services, Peterborough City Council.
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- Murrell, K. 2012. *Must Farm, Whittlesey 2011-2012; Palaeochannel Investigations. Interim Statement*. CAU Report 1136.
- Pryor, F. 2001. *The Flag Fen Basin; Archaeology and Environment of a Fenland Landscape*. English Heritage.
- Wilkins, B., Britchfield, D. & Bamforth, M. 2012. *Flag Fen Lives, Project Design for an Archaeological Evaluation*. Dig Ventures Ltd, London.

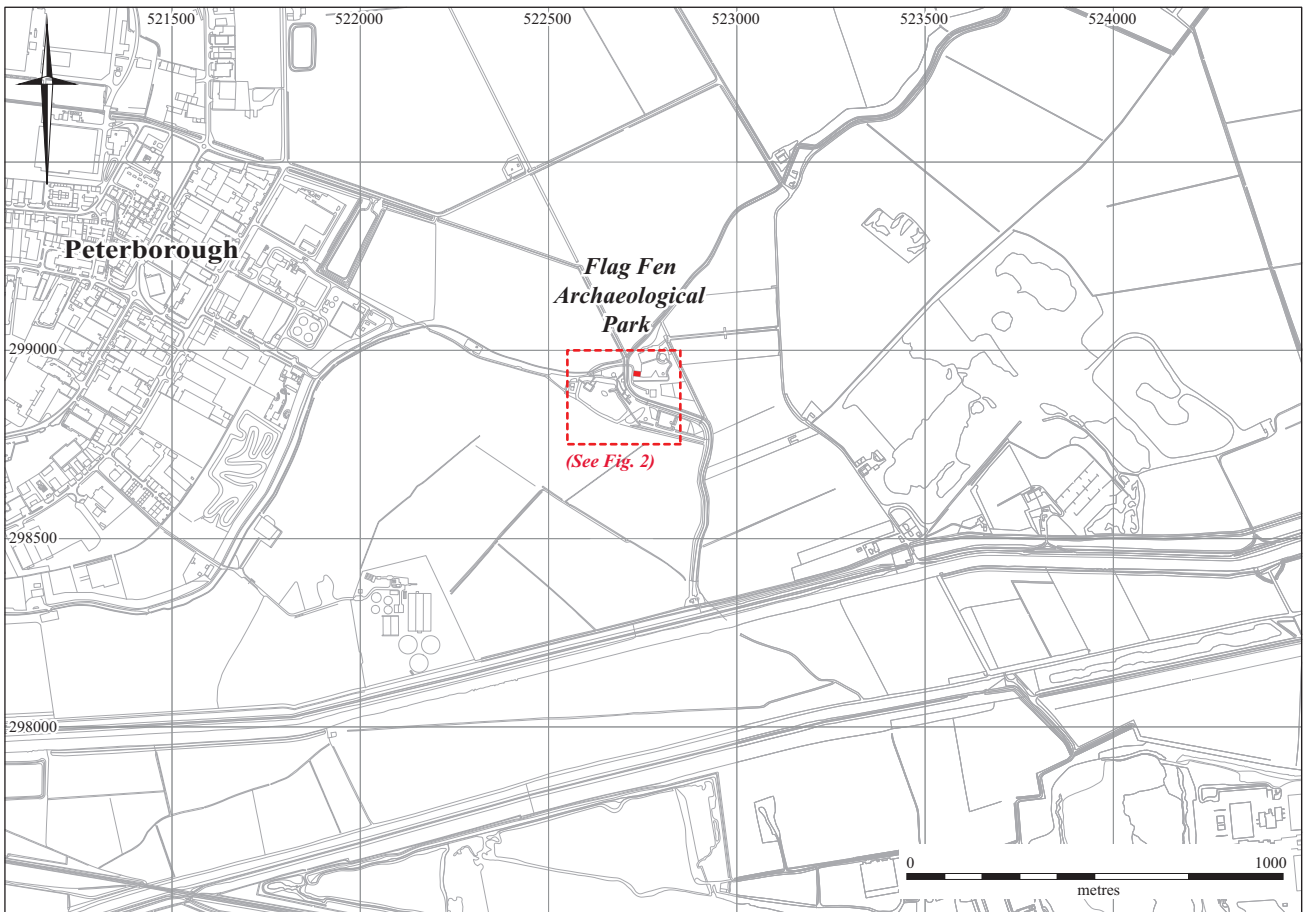
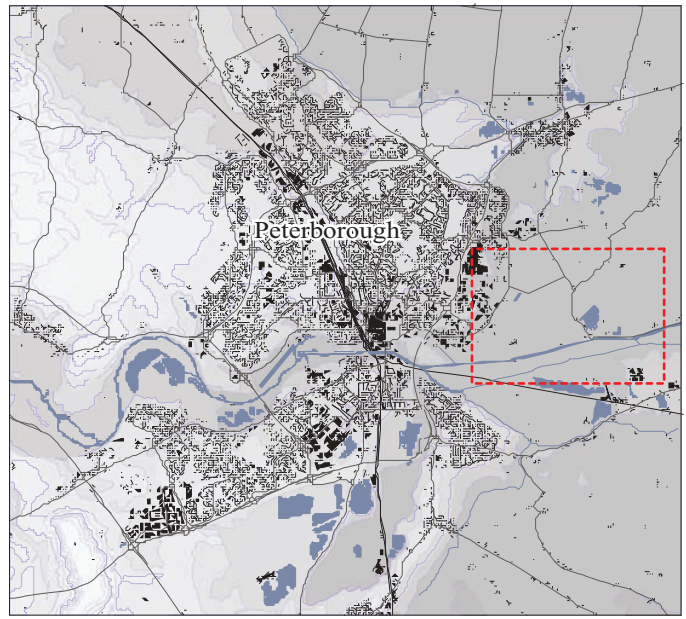
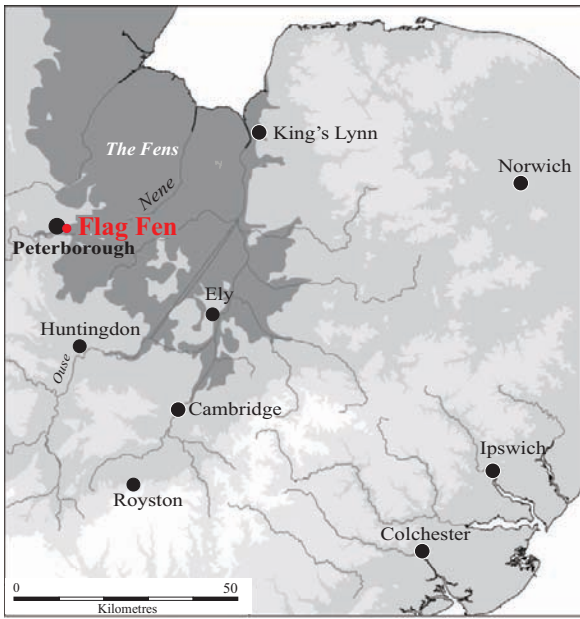


Figure 1. Location Plan.

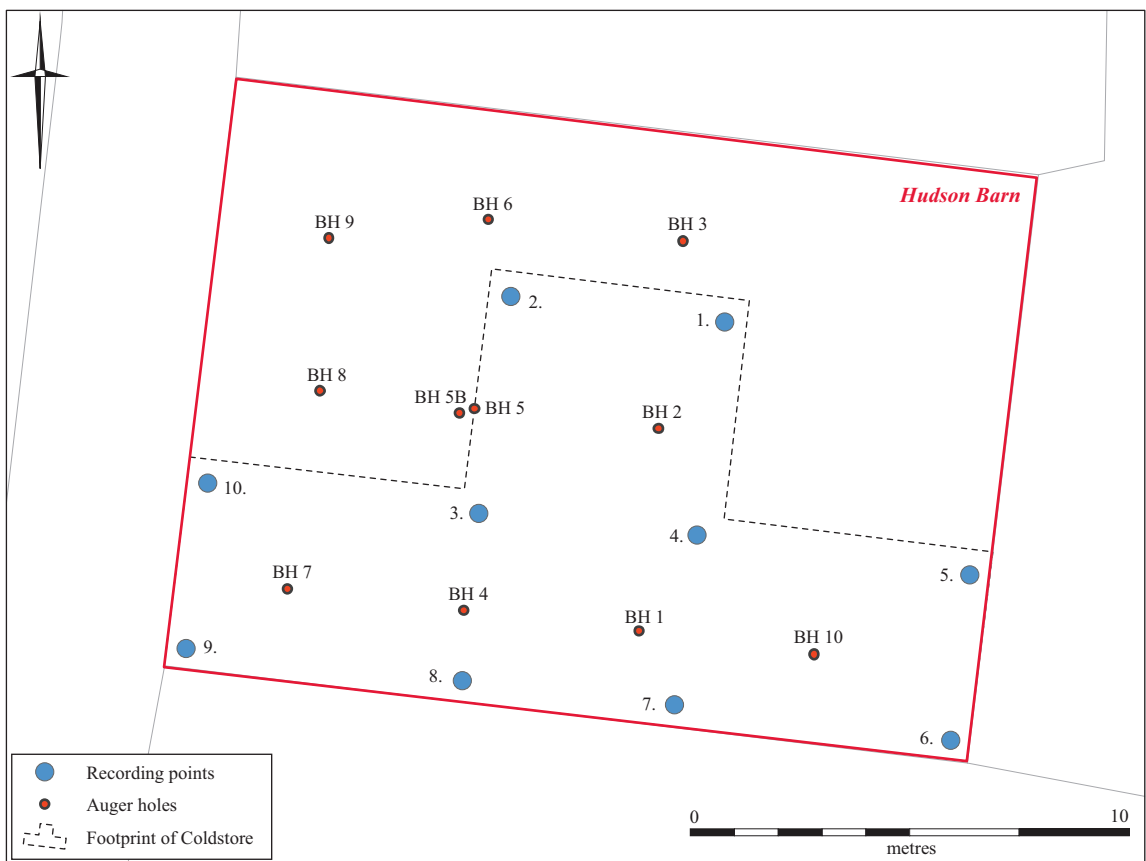
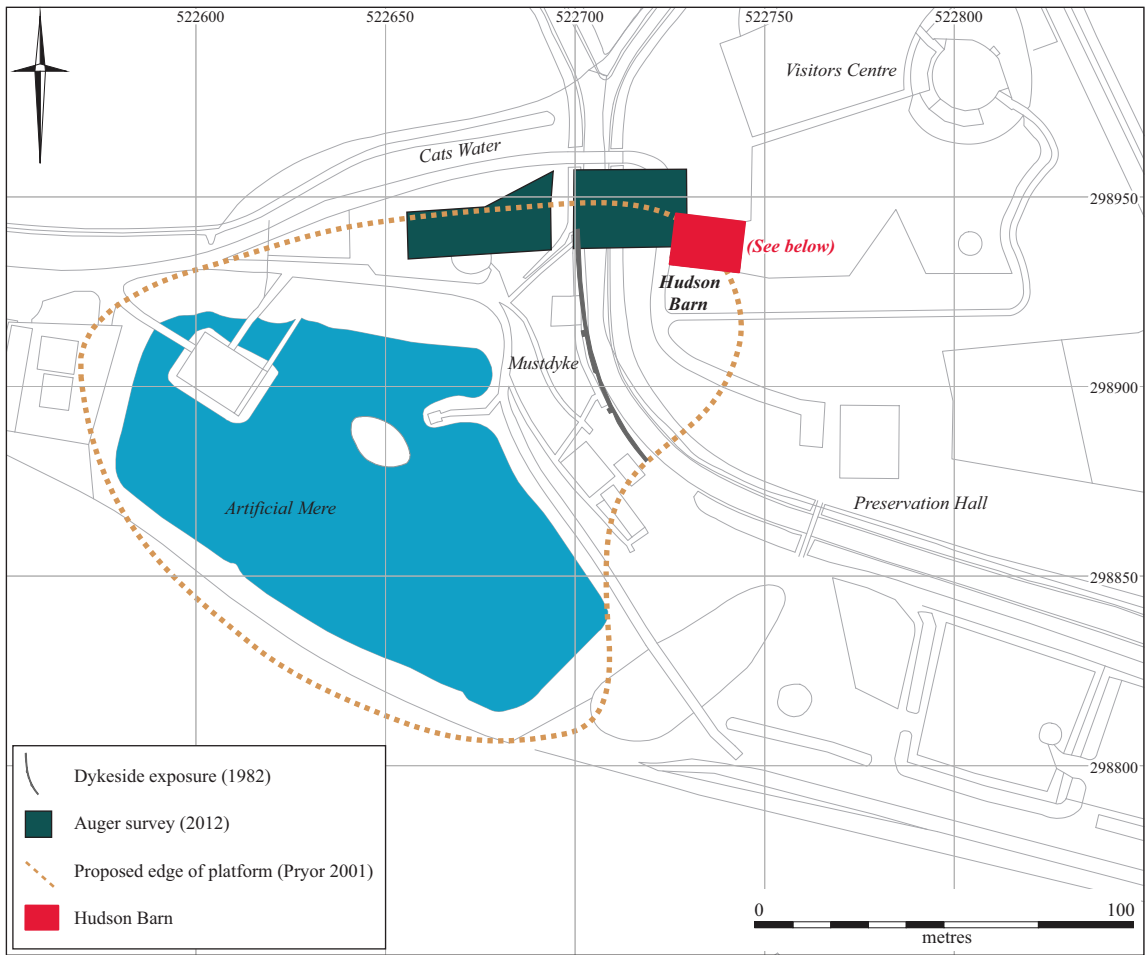


Figure 2. Plan of proposed Platform, Auger Survey and close up of Watching Brief.



A



B



C



D



E

Figure 3. A) Hudson Barn prior to removal of the floor, B) Hudson Barn positioned near to Mustdyke, C) The compacted mud barn floor, D) Excavations underway, E) Exposed peat below the barn floor.

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Project details

Project name	Flag Fen 2013: Hudson Barn Watching Brief
Short description of the project	This report represents the results of a watching brief carried out by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) on 25th and 26th February 2013 within Hudson Barn at Flag Fen Archaeological Park, Peterborough (TL 22731 98938). The works involved monitoring the removal of the compacted barn floor prior to the construction of a cold store and a subsequent metal detector survey of the resultant exposed deposits. No archaeological deposits, features or artefacts were encountered during the watching brief. The work was commissioned by Vivacity.
Project dates	Start: 25-02-2013 End: 26-02-2013
Previous/future work	Yes / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	52491 - HER event no.
Any associated project reference codes	FFN13 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Scheduled Monument (SM)
Current Land use	Other 8 - Land dedicated to the display of a monument
Monument type	N/A None
Significant Finds	N/A None
Methods & techniques	"Augering", "Metal Detectors", "Visual Inspection"
Development type	refurbishment of barn
Prompt	Scheduled Monument Consent
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE PETERBOROUGH PETERBOROUGH Flag Fen Archaeological Park
Postcode	PE6 7QJ
Study area	0 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 22731 98938 52 0 52 34 26 N 000 11 19 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 1.00m Max: 1.00m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	David Gibson
Project director/manager	David Gibson
Project supervisor	Kerry Murrell
Type of sponsor/funding body	Other Charitable Trust
Name of sponsor/funding body	Vivacity Culture and Leisure

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Physical Archive ID	FFN13
Physical Contents	"Environmental"
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Archive ID	FFN13
Digital Contents	"Environmental"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Survey","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Paper Archive ID	FFN13
Paper Contents	"Environmental"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Map","Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes","Photograph","Plan","Report","Survey "

Project bibliography 1

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