

Trinity Hall Boat House, Cambridge

An Archaeological Evaluation



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**CAMBRIDGE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT**



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

**TRINITY HALL BOATHOUSE,
CAMBRIDGE**

An Archaeological Evaluation

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Summary

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Summary

A single test pit (c. 2x2m) was excavated by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) in order to evaluate the archaeological potential of the site of a new boathouse extension at Trinity Hall Boathouse, Cambridge (centred on TL 4576 5911). The test pit revealed a deep alluvial sequence (extending to over 4m below the current ground level) capped by a series of dumped soil layers containing 16th–17th and 19th–20th century pottery and presumably representing a process of reclamation and utilisation of this riverside zone during the post-medieval period.

INTRODUCTION

A single test pit (c. 2x2m) was excavated by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) in order to evaluate the archaeological potential of the site of a new boathouse extension at Trinity Hall Boathouse, Cambridge (centred on TL 4576 5911). The test pit evaluation was undertaken on the 23rd June 2014.

The project was undertaken in order to address a condition placed upon planning consent for the construction of a new extension to the existing Trinity Hall boathouse. Work was carried out in accordance with a project design specification (Dickens 2014) produced by the CAU in response to a brief issued by Dan McConnell of the Historic Environment Team, Cambridgeshire County Council.

The work was commissioned by Tiger Hill Ltd. on behalf of Trinity Hall.

Location, Topography and Geology

Trinity Hall Boathouse is located c.800m to the west/north-west of the historic core of Cambridge on the northern bank of the River Cam (Figure 1). The site is bounded to the north by residential flats and to the south by the River Cam, whilst the land to the east and west is occupied by further college boathouses. The site of the proposed extension comprises an area immediately to the west of the existing boathouse, which is currently gravelled.

The site is situated c. 10m from the northern bank of the River Cam at a height of c. 5m AOD. The underlying geology comprises Gault Formation mudstone.

Archaeological Background

Archaeological sites and finds within the immediate vicinity of the site are few. Evidence for prehistoric and Roman activity is sparse and limited to a small number of finds in the general vicinity, including some from the river. In the wider area, Roman, Iron Age and earlier remains are recorded at Jesus College to the west of the site, whilst Roman burials have been found in the vicinity of Park Street and Jesus Lane.

In being located c. 800m from the historic core of Cambridge the site lies some distance from the medieval town whilst the Augustinian priory and medieval settlement at Barnwell are c. 500m to the south-west.

Previous work along the banks of the River Cam

Investigations have taken place at a number of locations along the banks of the River Cam (discussed at greater length in Newman 2008a). Of most significance are the investigations at Thompson's Lane, which identified an alluvial sequence extending from the Mesolithic/Early Neolithic through to the medieval period with reclamation

and utilisation of the riverside zone occurring from the 14th – early 16th century (Newman and Cessford forthcoming). Approximately 300m to the west of Trinity Hall Boathouse, test pits excavated at Gonville and Caius Boathouse, represent the nearest recorded sequence to the present site. Here, a substantial peat deposit up to 3m in depth has been interpreted as evidence of a potential medieval water management feature/sluiice at the site (Newman 2008b).

Methodology

The test pit was excavated by a 360 tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket operating under archaeological supervision at all times. Hand augering was undertaken using a Dutch auger. The test pit section was drawn at a scale of 1:10 and a written record of the depositional sequence created. A digital photographic record of the evaluation was also produced. The test pit was located using an advanced Global Positioning System (GPS) with Ordnance Datum (OD) heights obtained.

RESULTS

The test pit (measuring 2.2m x 2m) revealed a sequence of dumped soil deposits overlying undisturbed alluvial silts (Figure 2). The sequence is described below from the top down (0m = 5.17m AOD):

A	0 – 0.32m	Topsoil
B	0.32 – 0.72m	Mid dark grey brown clayey silt with clayey lenses, occasional small stones, flecks of charcoal, post-medieval pottery and oyster shell.
C	0.72 – 0.87m	Mid grey brown clayey silt with moderate small stones, occasional flecks of charcoal and coal.
D	0.87 – 1.18m	Mid orange brown, oxidised clayey silt with occasional mollusc shells.
E	1.18m – 1.6m	Mid grey clayey silt with occasional waterlogged wood fragments.
F	1.6m	Coarse silty sand.

Having reached a depth of 1.6m a hand auger was used to test the depth of the underlying alluvial deposits. The augering revealed that the alluvial deposits continue to a depth of at least 4.1m below ground level (1.07m AOD). As expected the deposits became more saturated with depth. The underlying Gault deposit was not encountered during augering and therefore must occur at a depth of greater than 1.07m AOD.

No archaeological features were exposed within the test pit. The only finds comprised six sherds of 19th–20th century pottery from dumped soil deposit (B) and a single sherd of 16th–17th century glazed red earthenware from dumped soil deposit (C).

A small amount of pottery, totalling seven sherds weighing 373g, was recovered. This material was entirely post-medieval and modern in date. A single sherd of 16th-17th century glazed red earthenware, weighing 17g, was recovered from deposit C. Deposit B produced five sherds of transfer-printed refined white earthenware, weighing 345g; this latter material dates from c. 1830 to c. 1950.

DISCUSSION

The deposits recorded at Trinity Hall Boathouse represent a deep alluvial sequence capped by a series of dumped soil layers. The lower of these dumped deposits (C) yielded a single sherd of 16th-17th century pottery and therefore can date to no earlier than the post-medieval period. The upper dumped deposit (B) contained 19th-20th century pottery and is therefore relatively recent in origin. Both deposits almost certainly represent an attempt to 'reclaim' or consolidate the riverside zone during the post-medieval period.

The underlying alluvial sequence is relatively deep (greater than 4m below the current ground level) and as a result perhaps appears more likely to be filling a palaeochannel – a former course of the River Cam – rather than representing flood plain deposits. No deposits that would obviously equate to the substantial peat layer recorded in boreholes at Gonville and Caius Boathouse (Newman 2008b) were encountered.

STATEMENT OF POTENTIAL

No archaeological remains or clear archaeological horizons – such as buried soils or occupation horizons – pre-dating the post-medieval period were exposed within the single test pit excavated at Trinity Hall Boathouse. The archaeological potential of the upper part of the sequence, therefore, appears to be relatively low. Having said that, the full depth of the alluvial sequence, which extends to over 4m below the current ground level, was not determined and deposits at a depth of greater than 1.6m could only be broadly characterised by means of hand augering.

Acknowledgements

The work was commissioned by Kate Grose of Tiger Hill Ltd. on behalf of Trinity Hall. The on-site contractor was F. A. Valiant and Son Ltd. The project was managed by Alison Dickens and Emma Beadsmoore, and monitored by Dan McConnell of Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team.

REFERENCES

Dickens, A. 2014. *A Specification for Archaeological Evaluation at Trinity Hall Boat House, Cambridge*. Cambridge Archaeological Unit.

Newman, R. 2008a. *24 Thompsons Lane, Cambridge. An Archaeological Investigation*. Cambridge Archaeological Unit Report No. 809.

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Newman, R. and Cessford, C. Forthcoming. *The Thompsons Lane sequence*.

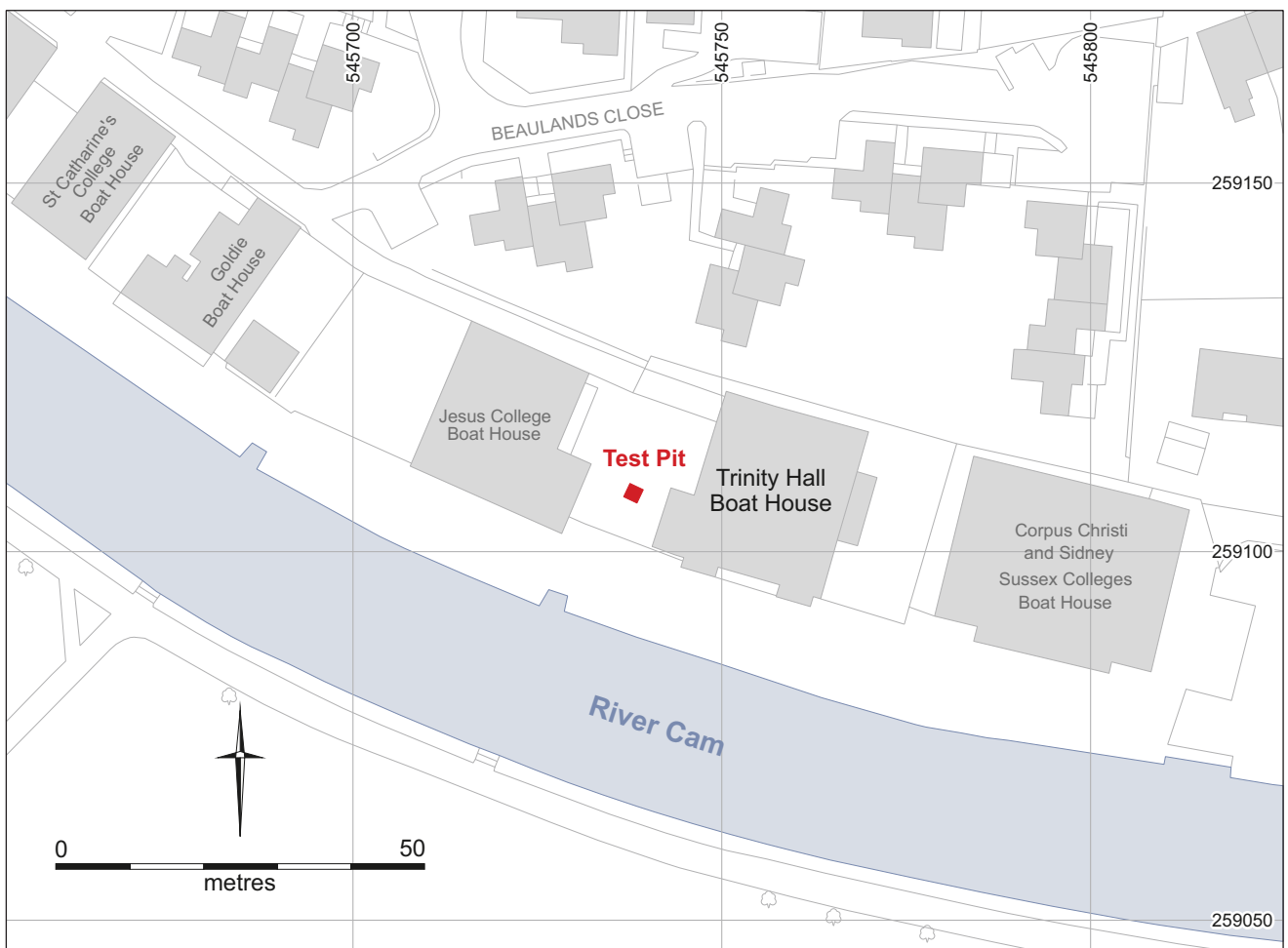
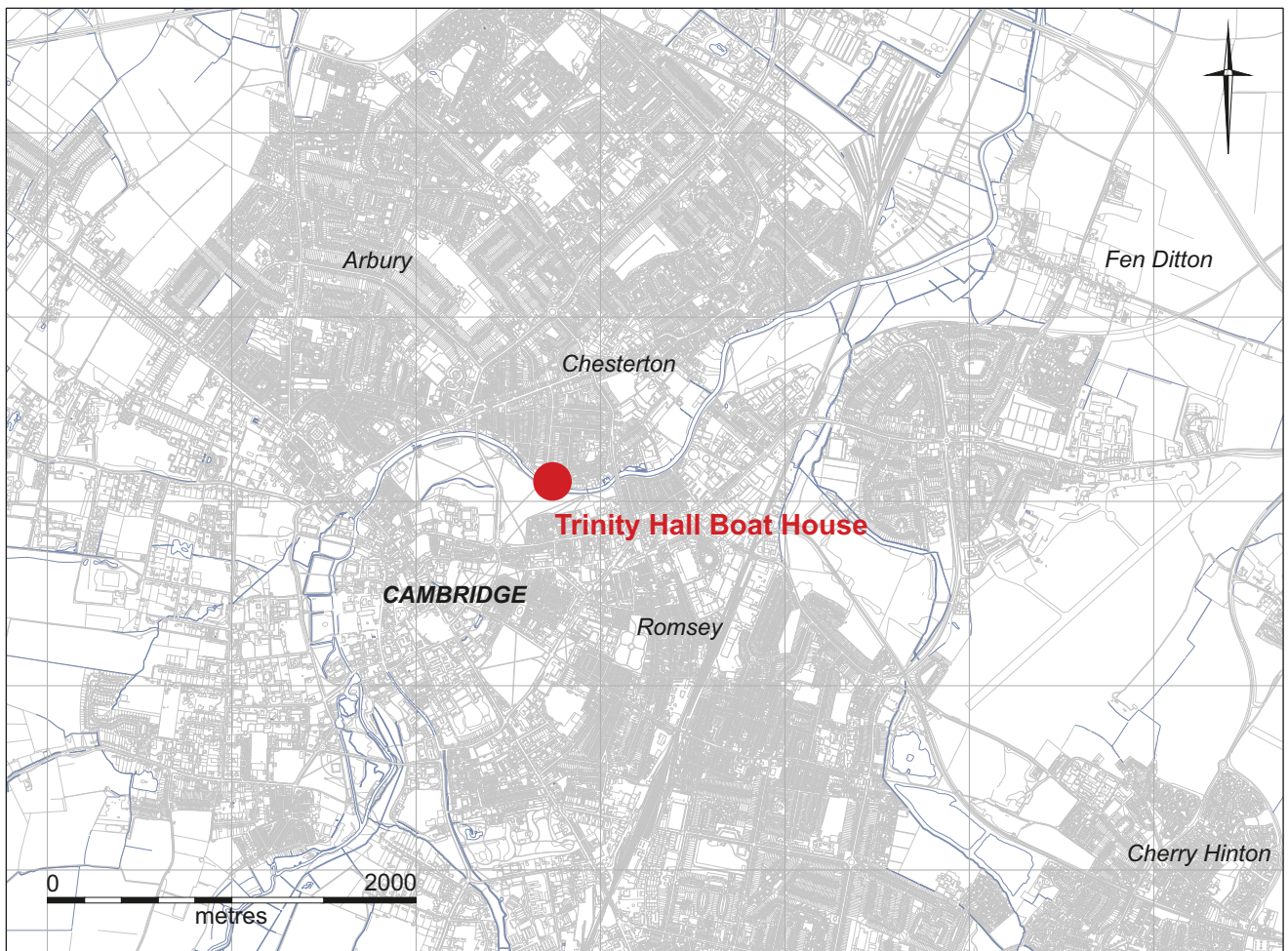


Figure 1. Site location



Figure 2. Test pit showing upper part of alluvial sequence and post-medieval capping deposits

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Project details

Project name	Trinity Hall Boathouse. An Archaeological Evaluation
Short description of the project	A single test pit (c. 2x2m) was excavated by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) in order to evaluate the archaeological potential of the site of a new boathouse extension at Trinity Hall Boathouse, Cambridge (centred on TL 4576 5911). The test pit revealed a deep alluvial sequence (extending to over 4m below the current ground level) capped by a series of dumped soil layers containing 16th-17th and 19th-20th century pottery and presumably representing a process of reclamation and utilisation of this riverside zone during the post-medieval period.
Project dates	Start: 23-06-2014 End: 23-06-2014
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	THB14 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Community Service 2 - Leisure and recreational buildings
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	""Test Pits""
Development type	Small-scale extensions (e.g. garages, porches, 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 Trinity Hall Boathouse
Postcode	CB4 1JA
Study area	0 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 4576 5911 52.2104780556 0.133565699639 52 12 37 N 000 08 00 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 5.17m Max: 5.17m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Alison Dickens
Project director/manager	Emma Beadsmoore
Project director/manager	Alison Dickens
Project supervisor	Jonathan Tabor
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Trinity Hall, Cambridge

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Archive ID	THB14
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Survey","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Paper Archive ID	THB14
Paper Media available	"Report","Section"

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