

Mere View, Yaxley, Cambridgeshire

An Archaeological Evaluation



Leanne Zeki

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Illustrations by Bryan Crossan

Cambridge Archaeological Unit
University of Cambridge

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) at the proposed site of a residential development at Mere View, Yaxley. The fieldwork comprised 442.5m of trial trenching, which revealed a possible Medieval colluvium and modern disturbance relating to the construction and demolition of the industrial estate that formerly occupied the site.

INTRODUCTION

In July 2015 Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) undertook a trench-based evaluation within 2.4ha of land on the Snowcap Mushroom Site, Yaxley, Cambridgeshire. The Proposed Development Area (PDA) is located on the former site of an industrial estate, which contained several units including a scrap merchant and mushroom farm, off Mere View, Yaxley and is centred at National Grid Reference TL 1930 9296 (Fig. 1). The PDA is bounded to the northeast by residential properties situated on the Broadway, to the northwest and south by industrial buildings and to the east residential addresses on Mere View.

The evaluation was designed to assess the potential impact of the proposed redevelopment of the industrial estate into residential properties on archaeological remains. The investigation was carried out on behalf of Barnack UK Ltd. The work was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation produced by Emma Beadsmoore (2014) of the CAU in response to a brief issued by Kasia Gdaniec of the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team.

Geology and Topography

The PDA comprises land formerly used for an industrial estate which has had all standing buildings demolished and levelled. The surrounding area consists of 20th century housing, gardens and industrial buildings. The PDA is at approximately 19m OD and the underlying geology consists of glaciolacustrine deposits of unsorted clay, silt, sands and gravels over Oxford Clay formation (BGS GeoIndex accessed September 2015). The PDA is set on sloping land and the lowest point in the southeast corner would have been near to the edge of Whittlesey Mere, drained in the mid-19th century, hence the road name.

Archaeological Context

The PDA is in a landscape of known archaeological activity, evidence for which is provided by previous archaeological investigations and stray finds. This information is not reproduced here in full but the background of the area is briefly outlined in order to place the PDA securely within its wider context.

Prehistoric and Romano British

Iron Age and Roman settlement has been identified on land to the northeast of Yaxley (Brown 2008; MCB 16368), northwest of the PDA. The settlement comprises a Late Iron Age enclosure, roundhouse drip gullies and an east-west boundary ditch, as well as early Roman enclosures with internal features, which were extended in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, and a small cemetery. Evidence for a substantial building, potentially a villa, was also recovered from the later features. Further evidence for Roman activity has been provided by stray pottery finds from The Broadway (Page & Proby 1926: CHER 01353), adjacent to the site to northeast, and Hog Fen (Phillips 1970; CHER 01418) and Cow Bridge Farm to the south of the PDA (Phillips 1970; T CHER 00996).

Medieval and Post-Medieval

Limited Medieval activity has been recorded in the area. The route of the River Nene into Whittlesey Mere was canalised in the Medieval period (MCB 16925) and is to the northeast of the PDA, in the same period Yaxley Lode was also canalised (Hall 1992; MCB 16924). Medieval quarrying has been identified at 2 Park Close (Rees 2013; MCB 19939), agricultural furrows are evident at the predominantly Roman settlement site mentioned above, Medieval and Post-Medieval ditches/gullies were found at 52 Chapel Street (Peachey 2010; MCB 19283) whilst at 41 Middleton Road, a kilometre to the southwest, a selection of Medieval ditch and pit features and a Post-Medieval cobbled surface were excavated (Barlow & Thompson 2010; MCB 19286). Several buildings in the town also have Medieval or Post-Medieval structural elements (see CHER 01417, MCB 17209 and CHER 01345).

METHODOLOGY

The trenching programme comprised 442.5m of trenching in 12 trenches to evaluate the archaeological potential of the PDA (Fig. 2). The trenches were located to avoid trees and known services. The trenches were excavated using a tracked 360 excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket and operating under direct archaeological supervision at all times. Trenches were located using GPS with Ordnance Datum (OD) heights obtained. Potential archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:50 and subsequently sample excavated with all archaeological finds retained. A written record of archaeological features was created using the CAU recording system (a modification of the MoLAS system) and sections drawn at an appropriate scale.

The work was carried out in full accordance with the CIfA's Standard Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations.

RESULTS

Beneath a depth of up to 0.30 m of demolition rubble was a layer of approximately 0.20-0.40m of levelled made ground containing construction rubble associated with the building of the industrial estate. This layer is not present over the entirety of the site as it seems that in the upslope areas material was removed in order to level the ground rather than built up resulting in a scouring of the north-western part of site and a raising of the ground level in the south-eastern areas. Six modern pits cut through the made ground layer and contained bricks identical to those in the demolition layer. If these do not relate to the demolition process then they can only be associated with the modern industrial estate phase. Many of the pipe trenches and modern land drains also cut this layer where it is present. In some trenches, a layer of orange/brown clayey silt, presumed to be a colluvial deposit from the top of the hill, was present. This is concentrated in the trenches on the lower part of the slope and generally in the south-east area of the PDA.

No archaeological features were identified in the trenched area. However, 3 sherds of Medieval/Post-Medieval ceramic were found in the presumed colluvial layer at the junction of Trench 7 and Trench 8. Two 1m x 1m test pits were hand dug through this

layer, neither of which produced artefacts and no features were present (Figure 2). The layer was then completely removed in the southern half of Trench 8 to investigate any possible features masked below but no features were encountered. In other trenches (Trenches 1, 2, 3, 6, 12) the colluvial layer contained no finds or features and was removed to show no features beneath.

Larger areas of modern redeposited material in Trench 10 and Trench 12 were tested via machine excavation in an attempt to expose the base of the disturbance. These excavations reached depths of 1.4m and 1.2m respectively but neither reached the bottom of the redeposited material before having to be backfilled for reasons of safety. It is highly unlikely that any archaeological features beneath these modern disturbed areas would have remained.

DISCUSSION

No archaeological features were encountered in the trenching area. Medieval and Post-Medieval ceramic and brick in a presumed colluvial layer at the bottom of the sloping land seem to suggest that Medieval/Post-Medieval activity may have been present higher up the slope. The trenches highest up the slope towards The Broadway (Trenches 4, 5, 9, 11) all demonstrate a lack of subsoil, with sections showing a modern rubble layer directly contacting superficial geology. Presumably, these areas were scoured of topsoil and/or subsoil prior to construction of the industrial estate. Since none of the trenches exhibit an intact soil profile it is difficult to estimate how much of the area had topsoil/subsoil removed before construction of the industrial estate. It is possible that archaeological remains existing higher in the sequence may have been destroyed even in trenches where some subsoil is still present (Trenches 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12).

Archaeological features would not have survived in the scoured areas of the PDA and may also have been removed from areas where subsoil is still present. The south-east of the PDA potentially had a greater archaeological potential due to the gradually increasing depth of Medieval/Post-Medieval colluvium, however no archaeological features were found.

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Trench and Feature Index


Trench 1			
Length (m)	60	Demolition Rubble (m)	0.10-0.15
Width (m)	1.80	Subsoil (m)	0.18-0.30
Orientation	E-W	Subsoil (colluvial) (m)	0-0.15
Features (n=0)		Shallow depth of colluvium appears in eastern extent. No finds. No features. 3 modern pipe trenches containing services and 1 land drain encountered.	
			


Trench 2			
Length (m)	34.50	Demolition Rubble (m)	0.10-0.15
Width (m)	1.80	Subsoil (m)	0.25-0.30
Orientation	N-S	Subsoil (colluvial) (m)	0-0.18
Features (n=0)		Shallow depth of colluvium appears in northern extent. No finds. No features. 1 modern pipe trench containing services and 1 modern pit encountered.	
			


Trench 3			
Length (m)	20.50	Demolition Rubble (m)	0.10-0.15
Width (m)	1.80	Subsoil (m)	0.08-0.25
Orientation	N-S	Subsoil (colluvial) (m)	0-0.15
Features (n=0)		Shallow depth of colluvium appears in southern extent. No finds. No features. 2 modern pipe trenches containing services, 1 also in Tr1.	
			


Trench 4			
Length (m)	30.50	Demolition Rubble (m)	0.05-0.20
Width (m)	1.80	Made Ground (m)	0
Orientation	NW-SE	Subsoil (m)	0
Features (n=0)		Rubble directly overlying geology. No finds. No features. 1 modern pipe trench containing services, also in Tr5, plus 1 modern drain.	
			


Trench 5			
Length (m)	46.50	Gravel dump (m)	0-0.80
Width (m)	1.80	Made Ground (m)	0
Orientation	NE-SW	Subsoil (m)	0
Features (n=0)		Rubble directly overlying geology. No finds. No features. 2 modern pipe trenches containing services, 2 modern land drains, plus 1 modern hydrocarbon contaminated pit feature with brick rubble same as rubble covering rest of site.	
			


Trench 6			
Length (m)	35.50	Demolition Rubble (m)	0-0.10
Width (m)	1.80	Made Ground (m)	0
Orientation	NE-SW	Subsoil (colluvial) (m)	0.25-0.35
Features (n=0)		35m trench cut but backfilled to shorten length to 33m due to diesel contamination spilling in from modern culvert. No finds and no features. 1 modern pipe containing services and 1 land drain. Colluvial overlying geology in whole of trench area.	
			

Trench 7			
Length (m)	40.00	Demolition Rubble (m)	0.10-0.30
Width (m)	1.80	Made Ground (m)	0.2-0.35
Orientation	E-W	Subsoil (colluvial) (m)	0->0.55
Features (n=0)		Colluvium over southern extent containing 1 piece of Med/Post-Med ceramic. No features. Test pit 1 dug to test for more finds and/or features but no results. Colluvial tested to full depth in Tr.8.	
			

Trench 8			
Length (m)	16.00	Demolition Rubble (m)	0.10-0.20
Width (m)	1.80	Made Ground (m)	0.25-0.40
Orientation	N-S	Subsoil (colluvial) (m)	0.55-0.80
Features (n=0)		Colluvium present in whole extent of trench containing 2 pieces of Med/Post-Med ceramic and Med/Post-Med/Modern brick. No features. Test pit 2 dug to test for more finds and/or features but no results. Colluvial tested to full depth in Sondage 1 at southern extent of trench. Full depth 0.80m. Backfilled immediately for safety..	
			

Trench 9			
Length (m)	40.00	Demolition Rubble (m)	0-0.10
Width (m)	1.80	Made Ground (m)	0
Orientation	NW-SE	Subsoil (colluvial) (m)	0
Features (n=0)		No finds. No features. Rubble directly overlying geology. 1 modern land drain, plus 2 small areas of modern hydrocarbon contaminated disturbance with brick rubble same as rubble covering rest of site, probably associated with demolition works.	
			

Trench 10			
Length (m)	19.00	Demolition Rubble (m)	0-0.10
Width (m)	1.80	Made Ground (m)	0
Orientation	NW-SE	Subsoil (m)	0
Features (n=0)		No finds. No features. Rubble directly overlying geology. 1 large area of modern hydrocarbon contaminated disturbance with brick rubble same as rubble covering rest of site, probably associated with demolition works. Machine tested to depth of 1.4m and immediately backfilled for safety.	
			

Trench 11			
Length (m)	30.00	Demolition Rubble (m)	0.10-0.20
Width (m)	1.80	Made Ground (m)	0.20-0.35
Orientation	NE-SW	Subsoil (m)	0
Features (n=0)	No finds. No features. 1 small area of modern hydrocarbon contaminated disturbance cut from surface with brick rubble same as rubble covering rest of site, probably associated with demolition works.		
			


Trench 12			
Length (m)	70.00	Demolition Rubble (m)	0-0.10
Width (m)	1.80	Made Ground (m)	0.10-0.15
Orientation	NW-SE	Subsoil (colluvial) (m)	0-0.60
Features (n=0)	No finds. No features. 1 modern land drain, 3 modern pipe trenches containing services and 1 large area of modern disturbance tested to a depth of 1.2m. South-eastern 10m of trench exhibits gradually increasing depth of colluvium.		
			



Figure 1. Location map

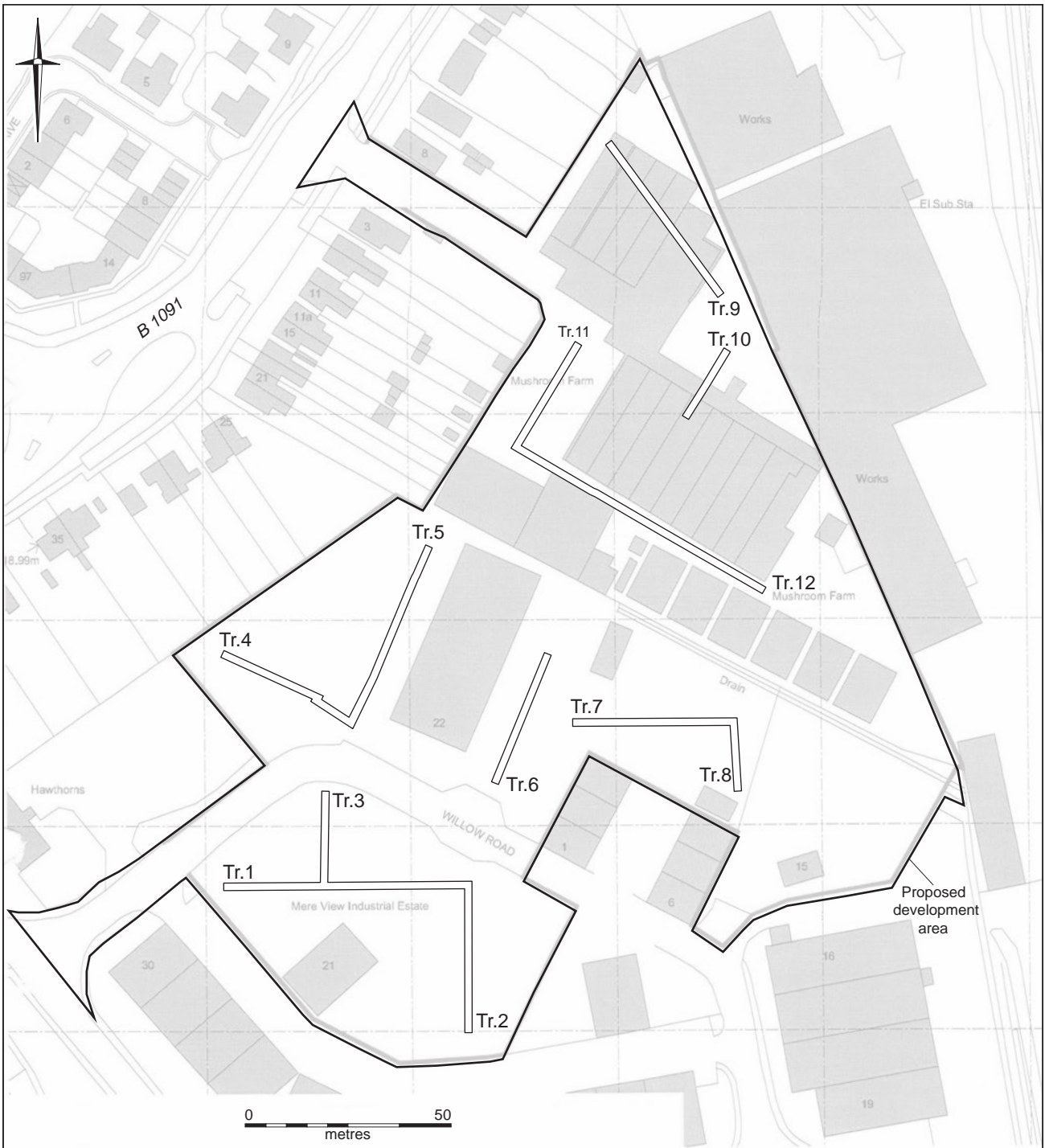


Figure 2. Trench Plan

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Project details

Project name	Archaeological evaluation at Snowcap Mushroom Farm, Mere View, Yaxley
Short description of the project	An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) at the proposed site of a residential development at Mere View, Yaxley. The fieldwork comprised 442.5m of trial trenching, which revealed a possible Medieval colluvium and modern disturbance relating to the construction and demolition of the industrial estate that formerly occupied the site.
Project dates	Start: 14-07-2015 End: 20-07-2015
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	MVY15 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	ECB4140 - HER event no.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 1 - Industrial
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	SHERD Medieval
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 HUNTINGDONSHIRE YAXLEY Mere View, Yaxley
Postcode	PE7 3EE
Study area	2.4 Hectares

Site coordinates TL 1930 9296 52.521065552939 -0.241484219417 52 31 15 N 000 14 29 W Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation Cambridge Archaeological Unit

Project brief originator Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body

Project design originator Emma Beadsmoore

Project director/manager Emma Beadsmoore

Project supervisor Leanne Zeki

Type of sponsor/funding body Developer

Name of sponsor/funding body Barnack UK Ltd

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Store

Physical Archive ID MVY15

Physical Contents "Ceramics"

Digital Archive recipient Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Store

Digital Archive ID MVY15

Digital Contents "Ceramics","Survey"

Digital Media available "GIS","Images raster / digital photography","Survey"

Paper Archive recipient Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Store

Paper Archive ID MVY15

Paper Contents "Ceramics","Survey"

Paper Media available "Context sheet","Drawing","Plan","Report","Section","Survey "

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