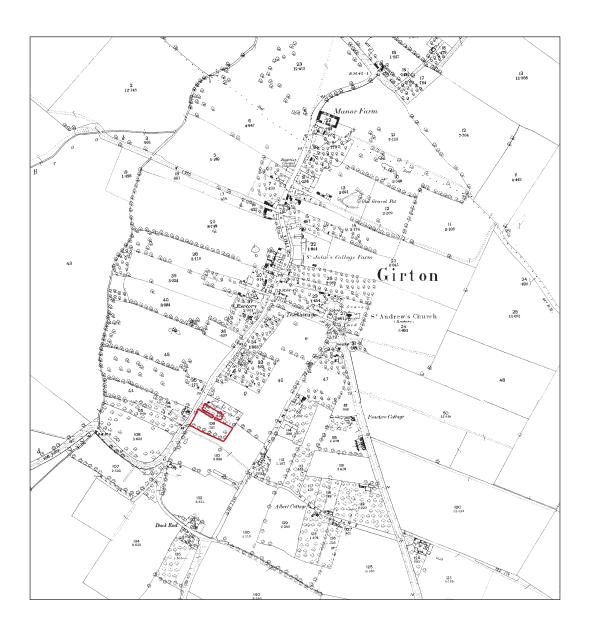
16-22 High Street, Girton

An Archaeological Evaluation



Tom Bourne





ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF 16-22 HIGH STREET, GIRTON, CAMBRDIGE

commissioned by Northmores on behalf of Girton Town Charity

April 2020

Project Team:

Project Manager Emma Beadsmoore / Author Tom Bourne/ **Graphics Jane Matthews**

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Summary

A trial trench-based evaluation was carried out by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) on land at 16-22, High Street, Girton, Cambridgeshire, between 26th and 28th February 2020.

Archaeological remains encountered comprised ditches, pits and postholes dating to between the 10th-15th centuries AD. Two phases of activity were identified; firstly, a 10th-12th century phase, focused at the front of the plot, and secondly a 13th-15th century phase which included numerous ditches representing internal plot divisions and boundaries.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 An archaeological trial trench-based evaluation and watching brief was undertaken by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) on land at 16-22 High Street, Girton, Cambridge between the 26th-28th February 2020. The development area is currently almshouses comprising six bungalows and associated gardens and covers an area of 0.32ha (centered on TL 4209 6209). The planned development comprises an apartment block and an office building.
- 1.1.2 Four trenches totalling 43m in length were excavated revealing features dating to the Late Saxon–Late Medieval period (Figure 1).
- 1.1.3 The project was commissioned by Northmores on behalf of the Girton Town Charity. The work was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation set out by the CAU (Beadsmoore 2019), in response to a brief issued by Andy Thomas, on behalf of the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team (Thomas 2019). The site code for this evaluation is GTC20.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The proposed development area (PDA) is located within the centre of the village of Girton, and 4 km northwest of the historic core of Cambridge. The PDA is bordered by the High Street to the west, residential housing to the northeast and southwest and a tree/shrub boundary to the east. The PDA is located at approximately 17m AOD and overlies Gault Formation-Mudstone Geology (www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex accessed 04.03.2020).

1.3 Archaeological background

- 1.3.1 The PDA sits within a landscape of known archaeological activity, with a number of archaeological finds and investigations having taken place around Girton.
- 1.3.2 There is little evidence for prehistoric activity within the landscape, with finds limited to a Palaeolithic handaxe 270m to the northwest, (HER 05032), prehistoric flints (CHER 05284), a possible Bronze Age ditch, 700m to the north (Neil 2015), and Iron Age pottery, 500m to the east (CHER 08890).
- 1.3.3 The Roman period is slightly better represented. The village of Girton lies 0.5km north of the *Via Devena* Roman road (now the A14), which linked Cambridge and Godmanchester. A number of sites developed along this route and those close to the PDA include one at Girton College, 1km to the southeast, where Roman burials and carved stone sculptural fragments were found indicating a possible high status settlement nearby and a series of rectilinear enclosures, seen as cropmarks, that were subjected to brief rescue excavations in the 1970's (CHER 09527).

Closer to the centre of the village, Roman pottery has been identified in the vicinity of St Andrews Church.

- 1.3.4 The Anglo-Saxon and Medieval periods are particularly well documented in the landscape. An Anglo-Saxon cemetery comprising over 250 burials, both cremations and inhumations, was excavated at Girton College (CHER 05274). Immediately north of the PDA Saxon pottery was recovered from small-scale excavations (MCB 18595), and Saxon pottery was also found during archaeological evaluation around the Church of St Andrew's (HER CB15607).
- 1.3.5 The village is recorded in the Doomsday book as *Greton*, meaning 'gravel farm'. It is unclear how the village developed but, there was certainly a focus around St Andrew's church, which itself dates to at least the 12th century AD, possibly earlier (Taylor 1997, 53). Just 50m to the southwest of the PDA, archaeological investigations off the High Street encountered 12th–15th century remains comprising postholes, ditches and yard surfaces (Gilmour 2011),

2 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1.1 The initial phase of trial trenching comprised four trenches totaling 43m in length, which were laid out to avoid upstanding buildings and services. Trial trenches were excavated using a 360° mechanical excavator, with a toothless ditching bucket, operating under archaeological supervision at all time. Trenches were located using an advanced Global Positioning System (GPS) with Ordnance Datum (OD) heights obtained.
- 2.1.2 Potential archaeological features were sample excavated with all archaeological finds retained. A written record of archaeological features and soil sequences was created using the CAU recording system (see below). A digital photographic record of the trenches was also maintained.
- 2.1.3 The CAU recording system is an adaptation of the MoLAS system (Spence *et al*) designed to be more appropriate to 'extensive' rural settings and to facilitate effective organisation of stratigraphic data and finds plotting. The system uses the Feature (ditch, pit, posthole etc.) as the main interpreted entity. Each feature is assigned an individual number with a context group number (eg. 100) also being assigned to each individual slot excavated in that feature; context numbers are derived from this context group number (eg. 100.01, 100.02 etc.). The context sheet forms the basis of the written archive but can be supplemented by Feature sheets (for complex features) as well as 'specialist' sheets such as skeleton and timber sheets. All sections are drawn at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20 as appropriate.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Topsoil and subsoil sampling

- 3.1.1 Prior to the evaluation high levels of modern material, including broken glass, bricks, wood and other debris was noted within the topsoil following the demolition of the properties on site, the topsoil was consequently not sampled for artefacts due to health and safety concerns. Also due to tight area constraints within the development area, it was not possible to separate the subsoil from topsoil for sampling within Trench 3, however, where encountered within trenches 1,2 and 4, the subsoil was sample sorted for artefacts; no material was recovered.
- 3.1.2 Metal detecting of all features and surviving subsoil layers was undertaken during the evaluation. No metal detecting was undertaken on the topsoil/spoil heaps due to the large amounts of modern and potentially dangerous material present. Metal artefacts recovered were limited to a single iron nail recovered from two ditches (see below).

3.2 Trench 1 (Figure 2)

3.2.1 Trench 1 was machined to a depth of 0.53m. The sequence comprised mainly topsoil straight on to the natural clay geology, but in a few places a thin band of silty clay subsoil survived. No archaeological features were encountered within this trench.

3.3 Trench 2 (Figure 2)

- 3.3.1 Trench 2 formed an 'L' shape arrangement with Trench 1, abutting Trench 1 at its northern end, and was machined to an average depth of 0.59m, revealing two gullies. Overlying deposits were similar to the adjacent Trench 1 although, subsoil deposits survived to a more substantial depth.
- 3.3.2 Gully **F.13** extended along the length of the trench on a northwest-southeast alignment. The gully measured 0.41m wide by 0.08m deep and had gently sloping sides and a concave base, with a sterile grey clayey silt fill. At the northwestern end of the trench, a second gully (**F.14**) terminated within the trench and extended beyond the edge of the trench to the northeast. The gully was more substantial than F.13, measuring 0.41m wide and 0.42m deep with steeply slopped sides and a concave base (Figure 3). Finds were only recovered from F.14 and comprised three fragments (5g) of animal bone. Despite the lack of dating, it is probable that these gullies are contemporary and relate to the Medieval activity identified within Trenches 3 and 4 (see below).

3.4 Trench 3 (Figure 2)

3.4.1 Trench 3 was machined to a maximum depth of 0.67m at its midpoint rising to 0.46m at the southeastern end. About a quarter of the trench, at its northwestern end could not be machined down to the natural due to the presence of a modern drain that was still active. The deposit sequence

comprised topsoil and subsoil overlying the natural Gault clay. Three features, two ditches and a pit, were revealed within the trench.

Two ditches (**F.2** and **F.3**) aligned at right angles and abutting each other (F.2 aligned northwest-southeast: F.3 aligned northeast-southwest), were probably contemporary and potentially form part of an enclosure or compound. Neither ditch was fully exposed but both had moderately sloped sides and concave bases with minimum recorded dimensions of 0.62m wide by 0.22m deep (F.2) and 0.8m wide by 0.25 m deep (F.3). In terms of finds, F.3 yielded 9 sherds (128g) of 10th-12th century pottery and three sherds (29g) of 13th-15th century pottery and both ditches yielded a very small quantity of animal bone (totalling just 13g combined). Ditch F.2 also contained an iron nail. These ditches are on a differing alignment to most of the features within Trench 4 (see below) that date to the 10-12th century, which suggests these ditches relate to a second phase of activity probably dating from the 13th century.

In addition to the ditches, a pit (**F.1**) extended beyond the southern edge of the trench and cut ditch F.2. This pit (1.25m in diameter by 0.42m deep) had a very dark charcoal rich fill and contained numerous charred seeds (see Boulton below). Other finds included 59g of worked clay and 2 sherds (15g) of 14th-15th century pottery.

3.5 Trench 4 (Figure 2)

- 3.5.1 Trench 4 was machined to a maximum depth of 0.78m at the southern end, rising to 0.48m at the northern end. Nine features, comprising three postholes, two pits and three ditches, were exposed along the length of the trench. Overlying deposits at the northern end included topsoil and subsoil, however at the southern end there was a levelling deposit comprising a thin layer of made up ground (0.2m thick), which extended 6m along the trench, sealing the original topsoil and subsoil.
- 3.5.2 Ditch **F.12** and probable pit **F.10**, both located at the northern end of the trench were the earliest recorded features, both dated by pottery to the Saxo-Norman period. Ditch F.12 (Figure 3) was heavily truncated, aligned northeast-southwest and extended beyond the edge of the trench to the northeast, similarly F.10 was only partially exposed and whilst likely representing a pit, it could also be the corner of a ditch. Both features yielded 10th-12th century pottery, totaling six sherds (103g) and F.12 also contained a single fragment of animal bone (16g). One further feature in this area was a small pit (**F.14**), which was heavily truncated and may be contemporary.
- 3.5.3 Located centrally within the trench, three postholes (**F.4, F.6** and **F.9**) and an associated gully (**F.5**) may also date to the Saxo-Norman period. Two of the postholes (F.4 and F.6) were located within gully F.5, the third was 2m to the northwest. All of the postholes were sub-oval with steeply sloping sides and concave bases (length: 0.48-0.54m, width: 0.28-0.38m, depth: 0.08-0.2m). Only F.4 yielded any finds; a mix of 10-12th (3 sherds,

30g) and 13-15th century pottery (2 sherds, 9g) and a single animal bone fragment. The differing alignment of these features from the later 13-15th century ditches and gullies, suggests that these can be considered Saxo-Norman in date and that the 13-15th century pottery within F.4 is likely to be intrusive.

3.5.4 Further features within the trench include a pit (**F.7**) and a ditch (**F.8**) located at the southwestern end. The pit (F.7) extended beyond the edge of the trench and measured at least 1.12m wide and 0.25m deep with steeply sloping sides and a flat base (Figure 4). Three sherds (14g) of 14th -15th century pottery were recovered, as were two fragments of slag (634g). Ditch F.8 (Figure 3) was aligned northwest-southeast and had gently sloped sides and a concave base (width: 0.74m, depth: 0.15m). No finds were recovered from this ditch.

3.6 Watching Brief (Figure 2)

3.6.1 A watching brief, in which no archaeology was encountered, was conducted during the removal of foundations from the bungalow located between Trenches 3 and 4 (see Figure 2). At the northeastern end the foundations were cut to a depth of 0.5m and truncated the underlying Gault clay, however along the central portions of the southeastern and northwestern foundations the geology was not truncated suggesting that any potential archaeological features remain undisturbed. At the southwestern end of the bungalow, a concrete block, which appears to represent secondary underpinning of the foundations, had truncated 1.5m into the underlying geology destroying any archaeology within this area.

4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1.1 Archaeological activity at 16-22 High Street is represented by a series of pits, ditches and postholes, which date to between the 10th-15th centuries. Two phases of activity have been identified; one dating to the 10th-12th centuries and a second broadly dating to the 13th and 15th centuries.
- 4.1.2 The earliest phase of activity belongs to the Saxo-Norman period and was only definitely identified within Trench 1. This phase was represented by ditch F.12 and probable pit F.10, both of which contained pottery suggesting they potentially represent settlement-related activity, possibly associated with the street frontage. It is likely that postholes F.4, F.6 and F.9 and gully F.5 are related to a structure, which given the presence of 10th-12th century pottery within F.4, but also the differing alignment of these features compared to the later 13th-15th century ditches, probably dated to the Saxo-Norman period.
- 4.1.3 The later phase of activity dates to the 13th century through to the 15th century and is seen within all of the trenches. It is unclear what function these ditches had; however it is likely that they represent internal plot divisions/small internal enclosures. Within this phase there is at least one sub-phase; pit F.1 cut ditch F.2 and also contained slightly later dated

pottery (14th-15th century as opposed to the 13th -15th century generally seen within these features). The ditches and gullies themselves, including F.8, F.13 and F.14, which contained no dating evidence, all aligned on or at right angles to the modern plot boundaries and the current High Street, suggesting the plot layout and the High Street date from the Medieval period. This evidence corresponds well with that excavated c.60m to the southwest where 12-15th century archaeology was exposed and was similarly aligned with or perpendicular to the High Street.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1.1 The evidence from 16-22 High Street demonstrates activity spanning the Saxo-Norman period through to the later Medieval periods and is likely associated with activates relating to properties along the High Street. Domestic activity is suggested by the relatively un-abraded nature and moderate size of the pottery assemblage as well as the presence of large quantities of charred seeds within pit F.1.
- 5.1.2 Archaeological preservation was variable over the site as a whole and no features survived to any real depth, however the lack of quarry pits towards the rear of the property as is typically seen on Medieval village sites suggests that the layout of the plot as a whole may survive relatively intact and provide evidence for activities away from the street frontage (Cessford *pers comm*).
- Very few archaeological investigations have taken place within Girton and the site at 16-22 High Street has the potential to further our understanding of the origins and size of the Late Saxon settlement and also the layout, expansion and character of the village in the Later Medieval period.

5.2.1 Acknowledgements

The work was commissioned by Northmores on behalf of the Girton Town Charity. The project was managed for the CAU by Emma Beadsmoore and was monitored by Andy Thomas on behalf of the CHET. The author was assisted on site by Charlotte De Bruxelles. Site Survey was undertaken by Jonathan Moller and the report graphics are by Jane Matthews.

6 SPECIALIST REPORTS

6.1 Medieval Pottery- Craig Cessford

6.1.1 A small assemblage of pottery was spot-dated; comprising 28 sherds weighing 342g (Mean Sherd Weight (MSW) 12.2g). In general, the sherds are in good condition, of moderate size and unabraded, suggesting that they were rapidly deposited and provide reasonable dating evidence for the features they were recovered from. The assemblage spans the 10th–12th to 14th–15th centuries, with most of the material dating to the 10th–12th centuries. The 10th–12th century pottery consists of St. Neots-type ware (19 sherds, 280g, MSW 14.7g). The later 13th–15th century wares comprise a range of local coarsewares, Essex Redware and orange glazed ware. The spot dates for the features containing pottery are included in Table 1 below:

Feature No.	Spot Date
F.1	14th–15th century
F.3	13th–15th century.
F.4	10th-12thcentury/13th-15th century
F.7	14th–15th century.
F.10	10th–12th century.
F.12	10th–12th century

Table 1: Medieval pottery spot dates by feature.

6.2 Animal Bone - Vida Rajokavča

6.2.1 A small assemblage of nine fragments with a weight of 46g was recovered from six features. Following the analysis, six assessable specimens were recorded, two of which were identified as cow loose tooth and sheep/ goat radius. Aside from a pig-sized rib fragment from Trench 1-2, all the bone came from Trenches 3 and 4. Good surface preservation meant it was possible to record a chop mark on one of the long bone fragments, gnawing marks and burning. As it is, the assemblage holds minimal or no potential for future work. It is difficult to assess the assemblage of this size any further beyond stating the presence of these two species.

6.3 Preliminary Environmental Assessment - Christopher Boulton

- 6.3.1 Five samples, with a total volume of 44 litres, were processed by flotation for the recovery of environmental remains using a water separation machine (Table 2). Any floating material was collected in a 300µm mesh and heavy residues were retained by a 1mm mesh.
- 6.3.2 Three samples produced charred seeds with, Sample 4 (Pit F.1) producing more than 10. There were very limited amounts of charcoal, most of which comprised small fragmentary pieces. Further analysis of these flots should be included within any future phases of work.

Sample Feature No. No.		Context Trench No. No.		Feature Description.	Volume (Litres)	
1	7	7.01	4	Ditch	10	
2	10	10.01	4	Ditch	8	
3	12	12.01	4	Ditch	10	
4	1	1.02	3	Pit	10	
5	14	14.01	1	Ditch	6	

Table 2: Sample information including description and volume in litres

6.4 Other Finds

A total of five fragments (63g) of worked/burnt clay were recovered from this evaluation. Three of the fragments from F.1 are worked.

A small assemblage comprising two iron nails was recovered from Medieval pit F.1 and Medieval ditch F.2 both located within Trench 3.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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8. ILLUSTRATIONS

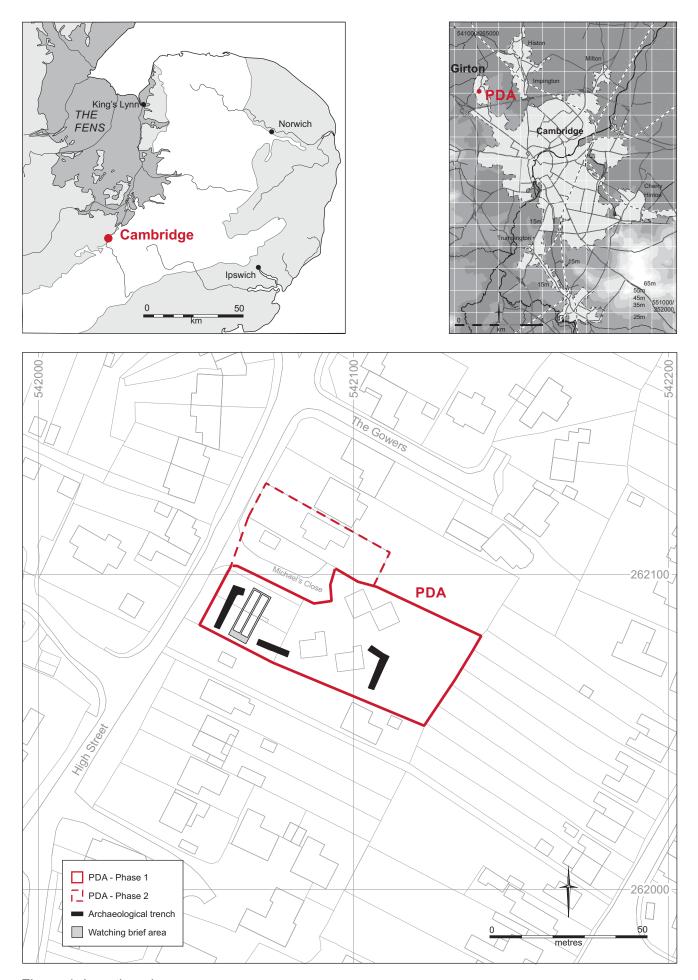


Figure 1. Location plan

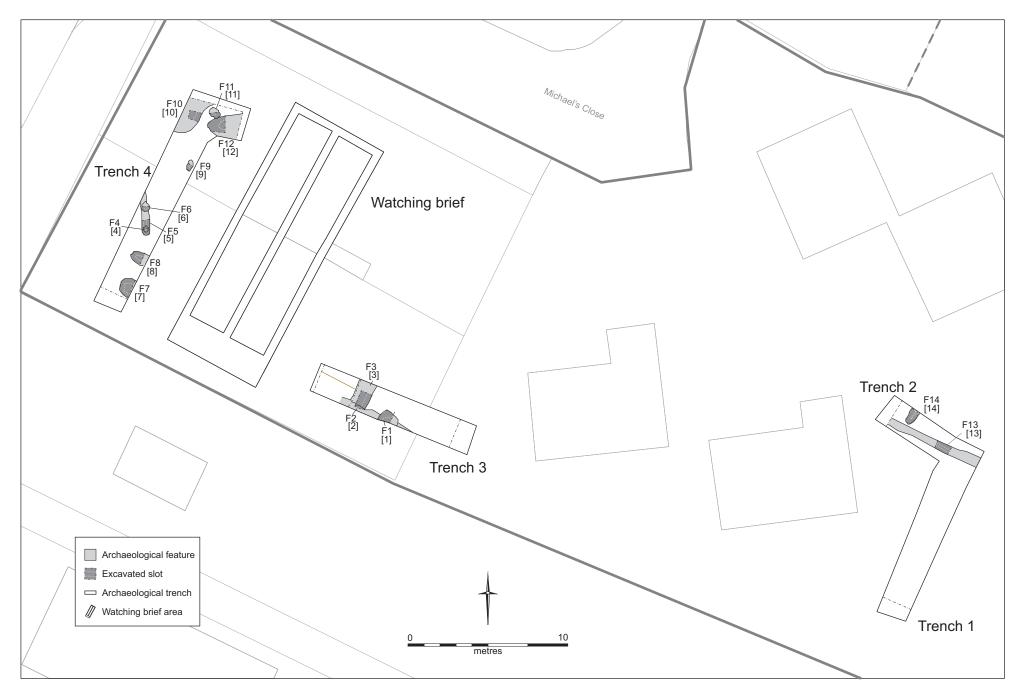
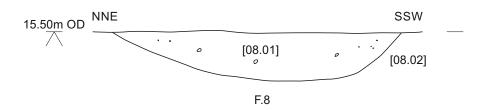
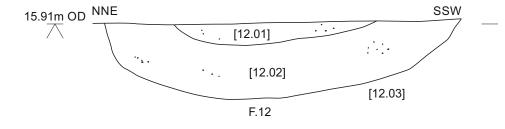


Figure 2. Trench plan



F.1 (NW facing)





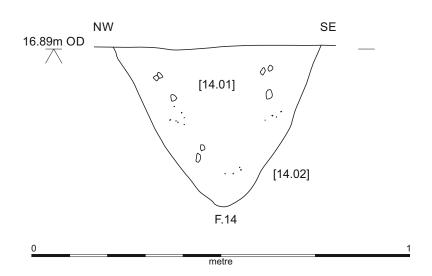


Figure 3. Photograph and sections



(WNW facing)

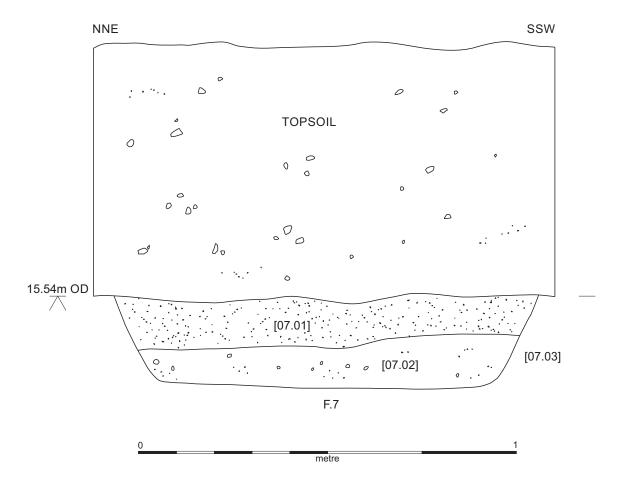
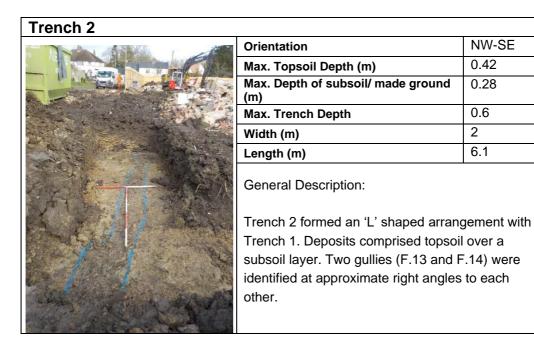


Figure 4. Photograph and section of F.7

9 **APPENDIX 1**

Trench Descriptions

Trench 1				
	Orientation	NE-SW		
	Max. Topsoil Depth (m)			
A Comment	Max. Depth of subsoil/ made ground (m)	0.19 0.54		
	Max. Trench Depth			
	Width (m)	2		
	Length (m)			
	General Description:			
	Trench 1 formed an 'L' shaped arrangement w Trench 2. Deposits comprised a topsoil overlyi a patchy thin subsoil layer. No archaeological features were exposed.			



NW-SE

0.42

0.28

0.6

6.1

2

Tre	nch 3

Orientation	NW-SE
Max. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.3
Max. Depth of subsoil/ made ground (m)	0.41
Max. Trench Depth	0.67
Width (m)	2
Length (m)	9,6
I and the second	

General Description:

The sequence comprised deposits of topsoil over a thick subsoil layer, which sealed three features; a pit (F.1) and two ditches (F.2 and F.3)



Orientation	NE-SW
Max. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.2
Max. Depth of subsoil/ made ground (m)	0.44
Max. Trench Depth	0.78
Width (m)	2
Length (m)	13.5

General Description:

The sequence comprised deposits of topsoil over a thin made up ground layer (c.0.2m thick) at the southwestern end, overlying the original topsoil and subsoil. Nine features were exposed comprising three pits (F.7, F.11 and F.10), three postholes (F.4, F.6 and F.9) and three ditches (F.8, F.5 and F.12).

%\$*****APPENDIX 2

Feature Descriptions

Feature No.	Context No.	No. of Contexts	Feature Type	Trench No.	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Orientation	Spot Date
1	1	3	Pit	3	1.25+	0.58+	0.42	Sub-oval pit		14-15th
2	2	2	Gully	3		0.28+	0.22	Linear ditch	NW-SE	
3	3	2	Ditch	3		0.8+	0.25	Linear ditch	NE-SW	13-15th
4	4	2	Posthole	4	0.48	0.28	0.09	Oval posthole		10-12th/13- 15th
5	5	2	Gully	4		0.35	0.03	Linear gully	N-S	
6	6	2	Posthole	4	0.58	0.38	0.2	Oval posthole		
7	7	3	Pit	4	0.8+	1.12+	0.25	Sub-rectangular pit		14-15th
8	8	2	Ditch	4		0.74	0.15	Linear ditch	NW-SE	
9	9	2	Posthole	4	0.54	0.33	0.08	Oval posthole		
10	10	2	Pit?	4	0.62+	0.6+	0.35	N/A		10-12th
11	11	2	Pit	4	0.7	0.4	0.1	Sub-oval pit		
12	12	3	Ditch	4		0.95	0.22	Linear ditch	NE-SW	10-12th
13	13	2	Ditch	2		0.41	0.08	Linear ditch	NW-SE	
14	14	2	Ditch	2		0.55	0.42	Linear ditch	NE-SW	

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Project details

Project name 16-22 High Street, Girton, Cambridge

Short description of the project

A trial trench-based evaluation was carried out by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) on land at 16-22, High Street, Girton, Cambridgeshire, between 26th and 28th February 2020. Archaeological remains encountered comprised ditches, pits and postholes dating to between the 10th-15th centuries AD. Two phases of activity were identified; firstly, a 10th-12th century phase, focused at the front of the plot, and secondly a 13th-15th century phase which included numerous ditches representing internal plot

divisions and boundaries.

Project dates Start: 26-02-2020 End: 28-02-2020

Previous/future

work

No / Yes

Type of project Field evaluation

Site status None

Current Land use Community Service 1 - Community Buildings

Monument type DITCH Medieval

Monument type PIT Medieval

Monument type POSTHOLE Medieval

Significant Finds POT Medieval

Significant Finds ANIMAL BONE Medieval

Project location

Country England

Site location CAMBRIDGESHIRE SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE GIRTON 16-22 High Street, Girton,

Cambridge

Study area 0.32 Hectares

Site coordinates TL 4209 6209 52.238215748998 0.081136805667 52 14 17 N 000 04 52 E 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 Tom Bourne Type of Developer

sponsor/funding body

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient

Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Store

Physical Contents Digital Media

"Animal Bones", "Ceramics", "Metal"

available

"Spreadsheets", "Survey", "Text"

Paper Media available

"Context sheet","Plan","Report","Section"

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