

Baston Outgang Road, Baston Lincolnshire

An Archaeological Evaluation



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December 2008

Report no. **855**

Summary

Between 21st and 23rd October 2008 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken in advance of gravel extraction on a 2.4 hectare plot of land located on the south side of the Baston Outgang Road opposite Baston Fen, Baston nr. Langtoft in Lincolnshire. Five 50m long evaluation trenches were dug to sample this area, but no archaeology, apart from a small undated pit or posthole and a possible ditch was found. Likewise the natural features such as the tree throws and palaeochannels contained no trace of archaeological remains (worked flint or flint working waste).

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation were undertaken by the CAU between October 21st – 23rd 2008 on a 2.4 hectare plot on the side of the Baston Outgang Road opposite Baston Fen, near Langtoft in Lincolnshire (NGR 512700 314795). Five 1.8m wide trial trenches were excavated, each of them 50m long, in total forming a sample area of approx. 810 square metres (Figure 1).

This work was undertaken as part of a condition of planning for gravel extraction, the Proposed Development Area (PDA) being an extension to the existing Freeman's Quarry. The area is currently used as a store for vehicles, the western half of the field being largely empty. Bordering onto this is a compound occupied by Elliot Hire, whilst beyond this lie the Manor Farm Quarry workings of CEMEX Ltd. To the south and east of this are areas from which gravel had already been extracted; both of these contain flooded pits, one of which was in the process of being turned into a fishing lake.

The PDA is to be found on the First Terrace Gravels of the River Welland overlying a subcrop of the Oxford Clay; the latter is situated approximately 1 mile west of the outcrop of Older Marine Alluvium and Nordelph Peat to be found on the former fen edge between 2.00-3.00m OD. The Drift geology of the area is dominated by course of the River Welland and its associated interconnected alluvial belts within which are to be found numerous palaeochannels (the site lies approximately 2.5km due north of the Welland). The majority of the current site lies at c.3m AOD.

Archaeological background

The aerial photographic evidence recorded from the area of Baston Fen, immediately to the north of the PDA, and again from Langtoft to the south, suggests the presence of busy multi-period landscapes. Archaeological work has since confirmed the presence of features which include scattered Early Bronze Age pits, round barrows and ring ditches, cremations and inhumations (Hutton 2008c), but mostly Middle Bronze Age to Romano-British field systems and enclosures (Higbee 1998 & 1999; Hutton 2008a and 2008b).

The archaeological background of the Langtoft environs and wider context was fully presented in the report of the Whitfield and Glebe excavations (Hutton 2008a and 2008b). It was noted, for instance, that the Middle Bronze Age field system and associated features which had previously been recorded on the Whitfield and Glebe continued into Freeman on the same orientation. This field system covered an extensive area and was probably constructed by a community that lived within that system. The settlement that was recorded at Glebe represents a small farmstead which was occupied by an extended family that formed part of that community (Hutton *ibid.*).

Successive excavations by the CAU within the Langtoft Quarry have provided evidence for settlement spanning later prehistory through to the Romano-British

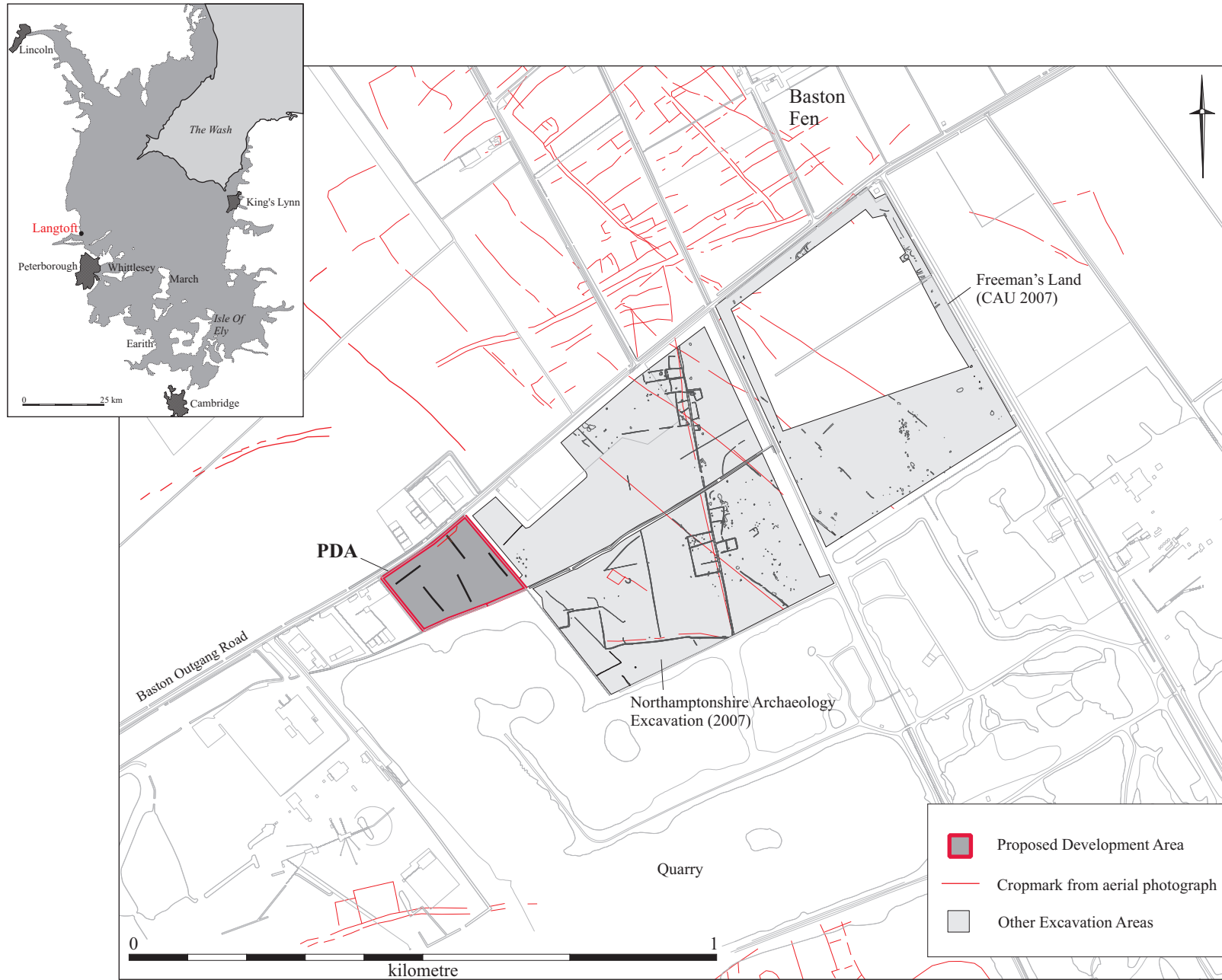


Figure 1. Site location

period (Hall 1998; Webley 2004; Hutton 2007). Three watching briefs carried out immediately south of the Whitfield Land in 1998 and 1999 revealed archaeological remains consisting of a smaller number of pits, postholes and linear ditches. None contained any dateable artefacts, except for one pit which contained asherd of prehistoric shell-tempered pottery (Higbee 1998; 1999).

Extensive excavations on the Meadow Lands 2.5km southwest of the present site (in Areas A to D) have revealed Late Bronze Age and Middle to Late Iron Age features (Hall 1998; Webley *forthcoming*). A cluster of discrete features in the northern part of the Meadowlands consisted of three posthole structures, 18 large pit/wells, and several smaller pits, all of which contained Deverel-Rimbury pottery.

An excavation carried out by Archaeological Project Services 1.34km to the north-east of Freeman Land (a site located 500m to the east of the PDA), revealed the remains of a Middle Bronze Age settlement that included pits, postholes, hearths and traces of fire together with material culture which consisted of flint tools, pottery and faunal remains with signs of butchery marks (APS 1998). A barrow was also recorded with an upstanding mound (HER 34191). Closer to the PDA, and on the south side of the Baston Outgang Road, an archaeological watching brief and excavation was undertaken by the CAU between July and August 2007 at Baston no.1 Quarry (Hanson Aggregates Plc) on an area known as Freeman Land (Hutton 2008c). This revealed a fieldsystem of Middle Bronze Age date which included pits, wells and postholes containing associated domestic debris. In addition, the remains of two ring ditches, associated cremations and a crouched inhumation with which was associated with two cannel coal or jet toggles suggested an occupation spanning the Early-Middle Bronze Age. A piece of re-used timber with evidence of clearly tooled slots was found preserved within one of the waterlogged pit wells.

Immediately adjacent to the PDA on its eastern side an excavation of about 9-10 hectares was undertaken by the Northamptonshire Archaeological Unit in 2007 (see Figure 1). A range of features were recorded here, the remains being predominantly Roman, although a Middle Bronze Age field system continued through this area towards the north-west. The evidence for archaeology thinned towards the western edge of this area where it abutted the current PDA, though a series of pits or postholes were noted within 50m of the position of Trench 2 (described here).

Method

The trenching was carried by a 7 ton 360° machine with a 1.8m wide ditching bucket. Topsoil and subsoil were placed together on the outside of the trenches as it was not planned to reinstate the land for agriculture. Potential features were hoed and cleaned before examining these by means of half-section (for pits and postholes) or 1m wide slots (ditches) dug by hand. Occasional bucket samples of trench spoil were scanned visually in order to examine these for pot or worked flint/ flintworking waste, and also scanned with a metal detector.

The trenches were base planned at 1:50 using GPS in order to record archaeological/natural features, whilst sections through ditch slots or pits were accurately drawn at 1:10. All archaeological or natural features (i.e. tree throws and palaeochannels) were

photographed, whilst measured sketch sections only were drawn of the non – archaeological features, all of which were sampled.

Trench sheets were recorded for each trench, recording the depth of topsoil, sub-soil, and the depth to natural for each 5m interval, alongside variations in the underlying geology (marly gravel patches, silt bands etc.). Representative sections of these trenches were drawn at the same scale. The degree of truncation of the natural and any buried soils was recorded in each case. GPS survey levels (both metres OD and OS coordinates) were taken for each of the four corners (top and bottom) of the trenches, and from intervals along their sides.

Results (see Figures 2 and 3)

Trench 1

Topsoil (0.2-0.4m depth) appeared to directly overlie the natural (mixed orange sand and gravel) at the southern end of this trench. Despite the shallowness of the natural sub-crop here there appeared to be no particular evidence for truncation over much of the trench distance. Pockets of sub-soil, however, were noted about 15m from the south end, also at 25m, whilst at 22m the presence of N-S plough cuts suggested some small-scale modern truncation. The most obvious and deepest truncation was noted at the north end of the trench (between 33m and 50m from the south end) where an excavation carried out within the last 20 years had removed gravel to a depth of 2.5m approx. for the purposes of building a gravel track nearby (Andrew Freeman (Quarry Manager) *pers. com.*). This hole was subsequently backfilled with concrete, tarmac and brick rubble up to surface, beneath which the water table seemed to remain artificially high. The steep edge of this machine cut into the gravel could be seen at about 35m from the south end.

The only possible archaeology encountered was the terminus of a linear ditch or shallow pit (**F.1**), the end of which was exposed in the trench and east-facing section some 1.5 – 2.5m from the south end. It seemed probable that this was a modern feature, given that the uppermost fill of this (01) merged into the topsoil of the trench section. The basal fill (02) was more carbonaceous, containing fragments of burnt coke and charcoal. This filled an irregular cut (03) which was approximately circular in plan, but not clearly defined, and shallow with gently sloping sides and top and bottom breaks of slope. Though probably modern (?19th-20th century) in origin, the function of this could not be discerned, except to say that it was probably agricultural, and related to the disposal of burnt rubbish.

Trench 2

For the most part the recorded trench sections show a similar profile to those in Trench 1, with 0.3-0.4m of topsoil directly overlying the natural; here the natural consisted of orange sand and gravel, in places with rootlet holes, and elsewhere with patches of whitish marl-rich gravel. No pockets of sub-soil were noted, though plough cuts and truncation were noted 25m from the north end of the trench. Truncation of the natural may have occurred elsewhere, although the presence of tree throws as well as other features at either end of this trench suggests that the truncation is unlikely to have removed archaeology.

Possible archaeology was noted at the far northern end in the form of a NW-SE aligned linear feature (**F.2**) about 0.9m wide and 0.41m deep. A section through this revealed a cut [06] with steeply concave (almost vertical sided) and slightly asymmetric U-shaped profile. This cut contained two sterile fills; an upper layer (04) consisting of a mid-orange sandy silt, and a lower layer (05) of light orange sandy gravel (Figure 3). These had the appearance of being either slumped or washed-in (but sorted) natural, or else rapidly redeposited backfill. It remained uncertain whether or not this was a dug feature, or a

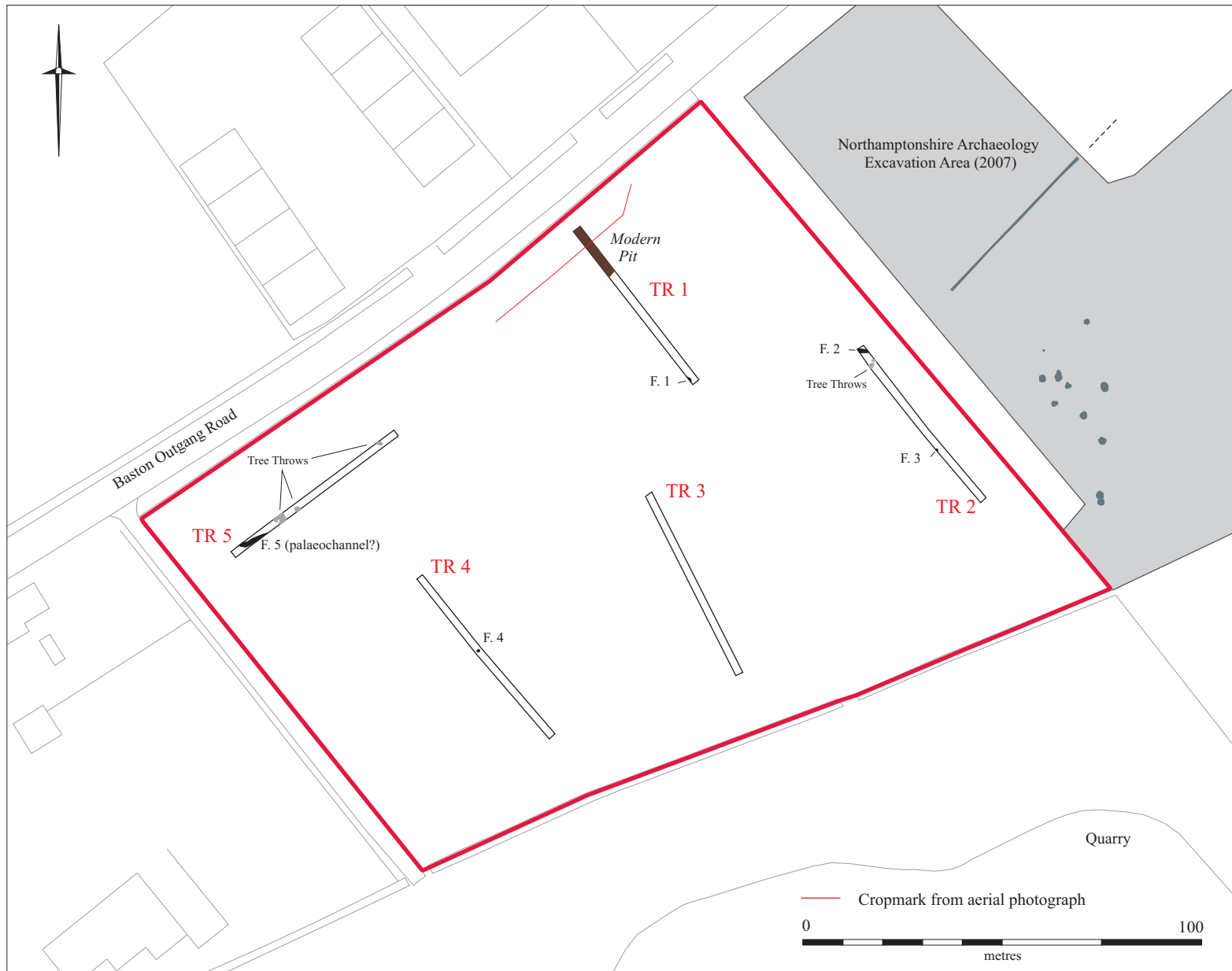


Figure 2. Location of trenches and archaeological features

particular straight and clean section of palaeochannel. However, the likelihood that this represented any significant archaeology seemed remote.

Just a few metres to the south lay another slightly elongate feature. This was interpreted as being a tree throw (up to 1.5m long and 0.5m wide) which contained a rather similar silt fill. The latter was sampled to check for residual flint, but was not recorded. Although sterile (except for a small amount of very slightly burnt (reddened) flint), it is certainly possible that the tree throw here was ancient.

Some 20m beyond this lay another feature; the bottom of a small (0.4m wide and 0.14m deep) circular pit or shallow posthole (**F.3**) which was subsequently sampled. This had gently sloping concave sides and a rounded base [08], and was filled with a dark greyish brown sandy silt (07) which included rare charcoal flecks (Figure 3). Other than this there was no finds or dating evidence. This feature was interpreted as a possible posthole, although in the absence of any other similar features, it seemed impossible to ascribe a period or proper function to it.

Trench 3

Here a marginally greater depth of topsoil (average 0.4m) overlay a more similar geology of orange sand and gravel with whitish marly gravel patches, plus areas of mottled silt indicative of rootholes. The absence of a sub-soil was once again quite characteristic. Plough marks, also suggestive of truncation, were detected at the north end (between 40-50m, although the absence of archaeology, or even of natural features such as tree throws or channels, could not be put down to truncation.

Trench 4

The junction between the topsoil (0.3-0.42m deep) and the underlying natural ranged from sharp to diffuse, the geology here being considerably more varied with a range of different sand and silt bands, possibly relict channels, cutting the gravel. 'Modern' plough truncation (N-S striations) was quite evident 15-25m from the south end, although this had not removed any potential archaeology. Within this area a single archaeological feature (**F.4**) consisting of a small circular pit (0.7m diameter and 0.31m deep) was sectioned and sampled. The cut [11] for this was bowl-shaped, and moderately symmetrical in profile, with steep concave sides (Figure 3). Both the fills ((09) and (10)) consisted of a grey brown sandy silt with rare inclusions of charcoal, but other than this they were sterile. The feature was recognisably archaeological, and given the surrounding landscape, quite possibly prehistoric. However, little more could be said of this other than that this appeared to be a pit, or the base of a shallow posthole.

Trench 5

Over much of the length of this trench the topsoil (0.3-0.5m deep) was found to be overlying a layer of silty brown to chalky and gravely sub-soil of variable depth (0.05 – 0.25m thick), but frequently with an uneven sharp-diffuse topsoil/ sub-soil boundary. Plough disturbance and truncation was much more evident at the eastern end of this. A much higher density of tree throws prevailed in this area of the site. Four were sectioned and sampled from east to west along the trench, though none of these produced any residual flintworking debris, or for that matter any other finds; the only possible anthropogenic indicators being a small amount of burnt (reddened) flint. One of these tree throws at the east end held a core of organic material. At the west end a >5m long curvilinear feature (**F.5**) which possessed a shallow and uneven undulating base was sampled in two 1m slots, approx 2m apart (Figure 3). The profiles of these showed the irregularity and also poor definition of the cut [13], and also the poorly diffuse boundary which lay between this and the contained orange and grey silty sand fill (12). The latter was quite sterile, the likely interpretation being that this was a natural fill, suggesting that the original feature was most likely to be a small, sinuous, relict palaeochannel. Thus despite first appearances, there is a very low likelihood of this now being archaeological.



F.5



F.2



F.4

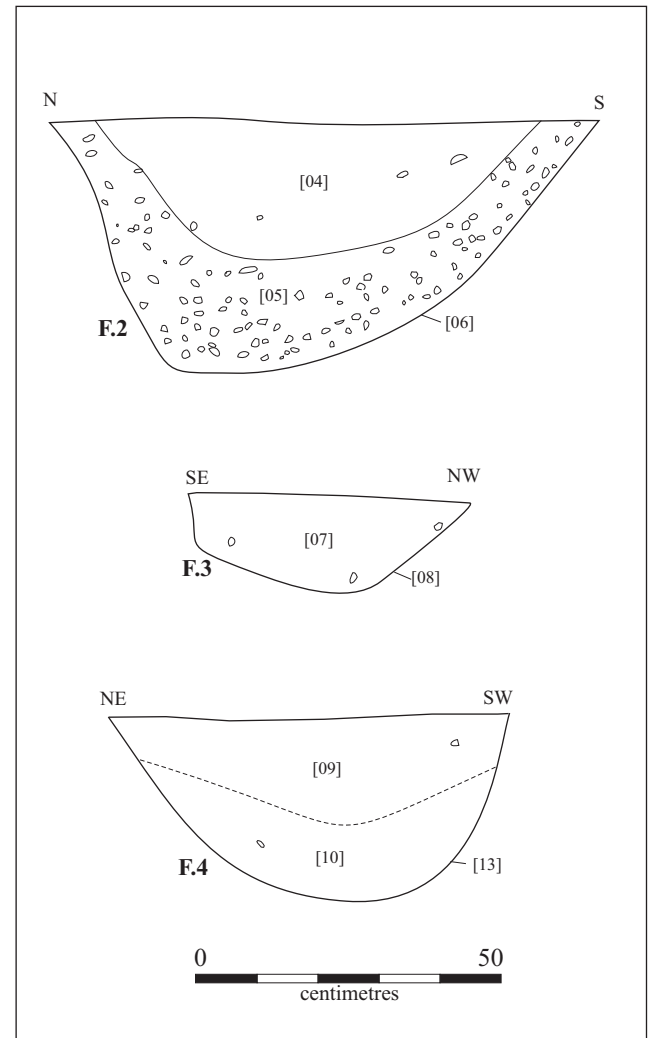


Figure 3. Photographs and sections of selected archaeological features

Discussion

The presence of one, possibly two probable archaeological features, and another possible feature, all of them widely dispersed over this 2.4 hectare area, would seem to confirm the relative absence of archaeology here; particularly when one compares this relatively empty area to that of the surrounding busy prehistoric landscape. Given the very few as yet undated features excavated, the only possible link that can be drawn between this site and the larger area immediately to the east of this investigated by Northamptonshire Archaeology would seem to be a correspondence between the location of a group of pits/ postholes present within the north-west corner of the latter, and Features 3 and 4 (Trenches 2 and 4 respectively) on the current site. In theory, these two pits or postholes (both quite similar in their form and fill) could be part of the same or a similar alignment. However, this link remains tenuous, the argument being weak for any significant continuation of archaeology into this area.

There appear to be no obvious environmental reasons (such as seasonal dampness or flooding) to explain the absence of occupation in this area. Instead what we may be seeing here is an outfield area to this Middle Bronze Age field system; one without any ditches, or else with a significantly low density of boundaries or other features to show up within the excavated evaluation trenches.

Acknowledgements

Kerry Murrel assisted with the evaluation and Donald Horne undertook the GPS trench survey. Andy Hall produced the graphics. David Gibson was CAU Project Manager. The work was undertaken for the client Mr Andrew Freeman, landowner and quarry manager. Louise Jennings of Lincolnshire County Council (Planning Archaeology) monitored the evaluation. Ted Clove was the planning consultant.

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Appendix 1

Feature descriptions

F.1 Trench 1. A shallow cut [003] with an irregular profile, but not well defined, partially exposed on edge of trench. Circular in plan (1.8m diameter), and 0.36m deep, with concave and shallow sides, and a slightly concave base, with gentle top and basal breaks of slope. Upper fill (001) consists of a yellowish brown sandy silt, moderately soft, with no inclusions. The basal fill (002) consisted of a dark greyish brown mottled silt with patches (inclusions) of dark grey, possibly burnt or charred silt, softly compacted, with a diffuse basal boundary. This contained no finds, except for a small amount of coke and charcoal. Uncertain function, possibly a small pit, but almost certainly modern (19th-20th century).

F.2 Trench 2. A linear cut [006] forming a slightly asymmetrical U-shaped ditch 2.3m+ long, 0.9m wide, and 0.41m deep. This was sampled in a single 1m slot. The sides were almost vertical (slightly concave) with a sharp top break of slope and a concave base. This contained two sterile fills, the upper fill (004) consisting of a mid-orange sandy silt, moderately soft, with rare small gravels, and a diffuse basal boundary. The lower fill (005) consisted of a light orange sandy gravel, loose and friable, without any other inclusions. This looked very much like redeposited gravel. It was uncertain whether this was a natural feature, such as a straight section of palaeo-channel, or else a rapidly infilled ditch containing backfilled natural. No finds or any anthropogenic material was recovered. (Figure)

F.3 Trench 2. A small circular cut [008] for a pit or posthole, 0.4m in diameter and 0.14m deep, with shallow concave sides with a moderate top break of slope and a concave base. The single fill (007) consisted of a dark greyish brown soft sandy silt containing rare charcoal flecks, and possessing a clear basal boundary. No dating evidence was available. An interpretation as a posthole seems most likely. (Figure)

F.4 Trench 4. A small bowl-shaped pit 0.7m in diameter and 0.31m deep, circular in plan, with steep concave sides with a sharp top break of slope and a concave base [011]. This contained two fills, an upper fill (009) consisting of a mid greyish brown, moderately soft sandy silt, with a diffuse basal boundary. This contained rare charcoal flecks. The lower fill (010) consisted of a mid/dark greyish brown, moderately soft sandy silt, with a sharp basal boundary. Likewise this contained rare charcoal flecks. Although relatively sterile, the appearance of this suggested an archaeological rather than a modern feature. A small pit of unknown function. (Figure)

F.5 Trench 5. An undulating curvilinear feature (broadly E-W in orientation) without any well defined cut, but with irregular sides and a base [013]. Approximately 1.1m

wide and around 0.3m deep, this could be traced for over 5m to the west. This was sampled in two slots, approx. 2m apart. In both cases the sides were variable and shallow, and the profile asymmetrical and concave. The westernmost slot was the shallowest of the two (0.2m deep). The fill (012) consisted of a mottled and moderately soft, orange and grey silty sand without any inclusions, and with a diffuse basal boundary. There were no finds, the fill material here being completely sterile. The most likely interpretation of this was that this was a natural feature, most probably a silt-filled palaeochannel, although a partly dug origin for it could not be completely excluded.

Appendix 2

Trench logs

Trench 1 (sections from S. end)

- 0m Topsoil 0-0.32m
Natural 0.32-0.72m (mixed orange sand and gravel)
- 5m Topsoil 0-0.4m
Natural 0.4-0.6m (mixed orange sand and gravel)
NB natural silt band 0.5m wide crosses gravel in a NW-SE direction
- 10m Topsoil 0-0.2m
Natural 0.2-0.4m (mottled orange brown sand and gravel with marly patches and rootlets)
- 15m Topsoil 0-0.2m
Sub-soil 0.2-0.3m
Natural 0.3-0.45m (gravel is more marly here, incl. chalk pebbles)
- 20m Topsoil 0-0.3m
Plough cuts (striations)
Natural 0.3-0.45m
- 25m Topsoil 0-0.25m
Sub-soil (tree throw?) 0.25-0.3m
Natural 0.25-0.35m
- 30m Topsoil 0-0.2m
Chalky sub-soil 0.2-0.4m
Natural 0.4m (marly gravel)
- 35m Rubbly topsoil (incl. brick) 0-0.15m
Natural 0.15-0.6m (orange sandy gravel incl. marly lens, grey sandy gravel from 0.6m)
- 40m Rubbly topsoil 0-0.3m

Redeposited earth and rubble backfill of modern quarry cut 0.3- 1.5m+

Trench 2 (sections from N end)

- 2.5m Topsoil 0-0.3m
Natural 0-0.46m (orange sand and gravel)
- 7.5m Topsoil 0-0.3m
- 15m
Natural 0.3-0.5m (orange sand and gravel with sandy patches and marly rich lenses + rootholes)
- 20m Topsoil 0-0.4m
Natural 0.4-0.53m (same mottled orange-brown gravel)
- 25m Topsoil 0-0.3m
Natural 0.3-0.43m (plough disturbance on top, more marly sand and gravel beneath)
- 30m Topsoil 0-0-0.25m
Natural 0.25-0.48m (marly gravel)
- 35m Topsoil 0-0.35m
Natural 0.35-0.45m
- 40m Topsoil 0-0.32m
Natural 0.32-0.42m (more distinct boundary on top, darker orange sand and gravel)
- 45m Topsoil 0-0.35m
Natural 0.35-0.51 (distinct boundary, orange sand and gravel below)
- 50m Topsoil 0-0.37m
Natural 0.37-0.48m (fine orange sand and gravels)

Trench 3 (sections from S. end)

- 0m Topsoil 0-0.4m
Natural 0.4-0.47m (N-S plough striations on upper surface, mottled marly sand and gravel beneath)
- 10m Topsoil 0-0.38m
Natural 0.38-0.46m (distinct upper boundary, orange sandy-silty gravel and more clayey beneath)
- 20m Topsoil 0-0.4m

Natural 0.4-0.48m (diffuse upper boundary, becomes increasingly sandy and silty, and more orange northwards)

- 30m Topsoil 0-0.33m
Natural 0.33-0.43m (unclear boundary, more marly sand and gravel beneath)
- 40m Topsoil 0-0.42m
Natural 0.42-0.51m (unclear boundary with added plough striations on top, sands and gravels beneath are slightly mottled with root holes)
- 50m Topsoil 0-0.48m
Natural 0.48-0.61m (unclear junction with topsoil, very mottled due to root holes, and also plough disturbance underneath)

Trench 4 (sections from S end)

- 1.5m Topsoil 0-0.34m
Natural 0.34-0.5m (mixed on upper boundary, more chalky gravel beneath)
- 5m Topsoil 0-0.4m
Natural 0.4-0.53m (less disturbed upper junction with topsoil, chalky gravel beneath)
NB just to south of this lies a marly sand and silt, whilst immediately to the north the natural is more gravelly and less sandy
- 10m Topsoil 0-0.3m
Natural 0.3-0.45m (the junction with topsoil is mixed, below this is a more chalky gravel)
NB at 12m S there is a 1m wide band of orange silt (NE-SW aligned), possibly a relict channel
- 15m Topsoil 0-0.42m
Natural 0.42-0.55m (mixed upper boundary, orange sandy gravel below)
- 20m Topsoil 0-0.4m
Natural 0.4-0.45m (upper boundary quite sharp, but surface shows N-S plough striations, orange sandy gravel below)
- 25m Topsoil 0-0.4m
Natural 0.4-0.45m (sharp upper boundary, N-S plough cuts, orange sand and gravel below)
- 30m Topsoil 0-0.3m
Natural 0.3-0.4m (sharp upper boundary, orange sand and gravel)
- 35m Topsoil 0-0.35m
Natural 0.35-0.41m (fine orange silt, sand and gravel, with orange silt/sand beneath) NB fine sand lensing (NW-SE) crosses trench 35m-40m from S end

- 40m Topsoil 0-0.4m
Natural 0.4-0.45m (sharp upper boundary, with orange sand and gravel beneath)
- 45m Topsoil 0-0.35m
Natural 0.35-0.46m (sharp upper boundary)
- 50m Topsoil 0-0.42m
Natural 0.42-0.55m (mixed upper boundary, pale yellow-orange sand and gravel)

Trench 5 (sections from W end)

- 0m Topsoil 0-0.4m
Natural 0.4-0.54m (mixed upper boundary, orange-yellow sand and gravel with mottled brown rootholes)
- 5m Topsoil 0-0.35m
Sub-soil 0.35-0.5m
Natural 0.5m (fine gravel and orange sand)
- 10m Topsoil 0-0.32m
Sub-soil 0.32-0.56m (brown grey soil with reddish-orange root holes
Natural 0.56m (white chalk mixed with yellow sandy gravel)
- 15m Topsoil 0-0.3m
Sub-soil 0.3-0.56 m (uneven junction with topsoil, beneath this is a earthy, gravely and chalky sub-soil)
Natural 0.56-0.7m (orange sand and gravel)
- 20m Topsoil 0-0.5m
Sub-soil 0.5-0.55m (uneven junction on top; beneath is a earthy, gravely and chalky sub-soil)
Natural 0.55-0.65m (orange sand and gravel with marly lenses)
Adjacent to section and cutting into natural is a tree throw (TT 4)
- 25m Topsoil 0-0.4m
Sub-soil 0.4-0.52m (uneven but sharp boundary with topsoil, chalky gravel sub-soil underneath)
Natural 0.52-0.66m (a yellow grey marly sand and gravel, rootlet holes penetrate)
- 30m Topsoil 0-0.35m
Sub-soil 0.35-0.55m (very mixed clay and silty-sandy sub-soil)
Natural 0.55 (yellow orange and mottled brown (rootlet) fine sand and gravel with varying sandier and gravely patches)
- 35m Topsoil 0-0.4m
Sub-soil 0.4-0.54m (silty brown sand)
Natural 0.54m (orange brown silty sand)

- 40m Topsoil 0-0.4m
Natural 0.4m (variable orange to white chalky sand and gravel)
NB notable NE-SW bands of silty sand and chalky sandy gravel
- 45m Topsoil 0-0.35m
Sub-soil 0.35-0.45m (chalky gravely soil)
Natural 0.45-0.57m (orange to white chalky sand and gravel)
- 50m Topsoil 0-0.2m
Lens of sand and gravel 0.2-0.3m (plough disturbance)
Lower topsoil 0.3-0.5m
Natural 0.5m (upper boundary is disturbed, below this is orange sand and gravel)