

No. 39 Shelford Road, Cambridge

An Archaeological Evaluation



Matthew Collins

CAMBRIDGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE



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Matthew Collins

Illustrations by Jane Matthews

Cambridge Archaeological Unit
University of Cambridge
Department of Archaeology

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Non Technical Summary

Three trenches were excavated in the grounds of No. 39 Shelford Road, no archaeological features were present and only Victorian and modern finds were recovered from within the topsoil and subsoil.

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by Cambridgeshire Archaeological Unit on the 17th August 2009 at No. 39 Shelford Road, Cambridge in advance of the demolition of the current dwelling and proposed redevelopment of the site. Commissioned by George Davison, Chartered Architect, the evaluation aimed to establish the presence, date, state of preservation and significance of any archaeological remains. The evaluation was carried out and this report written in accordance with an archaeological specification written by the CAU (Dickens 2009) in response to a brief by Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning Countryside Advice (CAPCA). It was approved and monitored by a Senior Archaeological Officer from CAPCA.

Location, topography and geology

The Proposed Development Area (PDA) is centred on TL 4472 5462 and extends over 2600m² or 0.26ha. The site currently incorporates a 20th century bungalow with outbuildings and mature gardens. It fronts onto Shelford Road, immediately to the south and has adjoining properties to the north, west and east (see Figure 1).

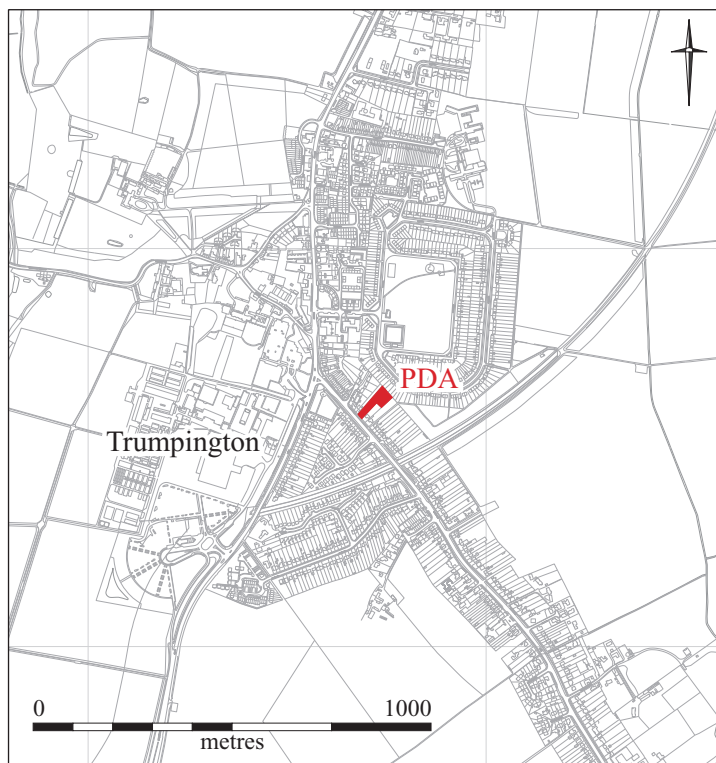
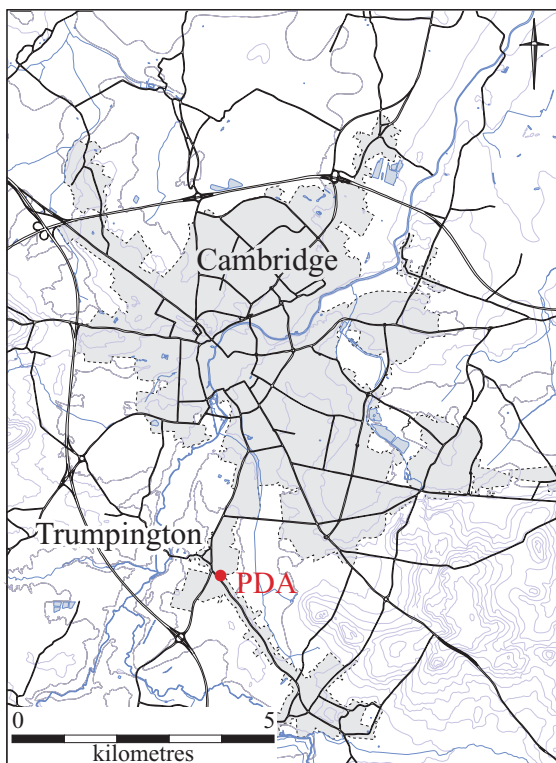
The modern ground surface of the PDA averages 17.5m OD and the underlying geology is 3rd Terrace sands and gravels overlaying Gault Clay.

Archaeological Background

The area surrounding this site has been subject to extensive study by Cambridge Archaeological Unit over the preceding few years and includes a number of desktop assessments (Appleby 2004, Dickens 2002), evaluations (Cessford & Mackay 2004, Evans, Mackay & Patten 2005) and excavations (Collins & Dickens 2009, Timberlake 2007), their relevant findings are briefly detailed below.

An aerial photographic survey of the fields at Clay and Glebe Farms just to the east of the PDA showed a dense pattern of crop-marks, including possible trackways and rectangular enclosures, which expand north and east for some distance. Subsequent evaluations in 2004 and 2005 (Cessford and Mackay 2004, Evans, Mackay & Patten 2005) dated these crop-marks primarily to the Late Iron Age and Roman periods, and suggested they probably formed a series of small rural settlements with associated in-field systems. To the east, off Shelford Road, a CAU excavation (Timberlake 2007) revealed scattered Bronze Age burnt pits along with Late Iron Age and Roman outfield paddocks, Roman horticultural beds and drove-ways/tracks. Further evaluations and excavations of the eastern fields of Clay Farm and the fields around Addenbrookes hospital have also shown a pattern of Prehistoric and Roman field-systems and settlement (Evans and Mackay 2005).

Approximately 200m to the east of the PDA, an excavation, again carried out just off Shelford road (Collins & Dickens 2009), showed evidence for a Late Iron Age/Early Roman field system, along with an earlier phase of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age activity. Although on the western half of this site, the point closest to the PDA, archaeological activity appeared to peter out.



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Figure 1. Locations of PDA and trenches

Methodology

Evaluation of the PDA was carried out by excavating three trenches, totalling 62.2m in length (4.3% of the site area), in the gardens towards the rear of the current bungalow. In order to avoid damaging trees and their roots, and due to the overgrown nature of the garden, the three trenches were placed where access permitted (see Figure 1).

Topsoil and underlying deposits were removed under archaeological supervision with a tracked 360° machine using a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket and both topsoil and subsoil were tested for finds. All work was carried out in strict accordance with statutory Health and Safety legislation and with the recommendations of SCAUM (Allen & Holt 2007), and in accordance with a site specific risk assessment and the Cambridgeshire Archaeological Unit Health and Safety policy. The site code was SRD 09 and CHER number was ECB 3248.

Archive

A data sheet recording the general information of each trench was generated and a digital photographic was compiled. These records have been assembled into a catalogued archive in line with Appendix 6 of MAP2 (English Heritage 1991), and are being stored at the Cambridge Archaeological Unit offices.

Results

Trench 1

Trench 1 was 21m in length on a northwest-southeast orientation. Topsoil was an average depth of 0.35m, and subsoil 0.25m. A square cut, modern rubbish pit was partially exposed approximately mid way along the northeast edge of the trench but no other archaeological features were present and the only finds visible within the topsoil and subsoil were either Victorian or later.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was 28.2m in length on a northeast-southwest orientation. Topsoil was an average depth of 0.40m, and subsoil 0.25m. No archaeological features were present and the only finds within the topsoil and subsoil were either Victorian or later.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was 13m in length on a northeast-southwest orientation. Topsoil was an average depth of 0.40m and subsoil 0.25m. No archaeological features were present and the only finds within the topsoil and subsoil were either Victorian or later.

Discussion

The absence of archaeological features within the trenches and pre 19th century artefacts within the topsoil/subsoil across the PDA supports the findings of the excavation carried out just to the east (Collins & Dickens 2009) in that the dense pattern of archaeology known to exist within the surrounding landscape did not extend to this part of Shelford Road.

This area of negative evidence for archaeological activity could represent a gap or break in the Iron Age and Roman rural settlement pattern observed elsewhere in this landscape, and furthermore, that prior to the construction of Shelford Road and expansion of Trumpington this area was probably only utilised for agricultural purposes.

Acknowledgements

The work was commissioned by George Davison and the site was monitored by Andy Thomas (CAPCA). Emma Beadsmore was the project manager and thanks go to Laura James for assisting the author on site and Donald Horne for surveying the trenches.

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