

West Lodge Road, Sutton, Cambridgeshire

An Archaeological Evaluation



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**West Lodge Lane, Sutton, Cambridgeshire
An Archaeological Evaluation**

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Between 17th-18th March 2011 the Cambridge Archaeological Unit carried out an archaeological evaluation (c.120m of trenching) within 0.5 ha of garden on the east side of West Lodge Lane, Sutton. The garden lies within a hollow on the slope overlooking South Fen on the south side of Sutton village. The northernmost trench commenced higher up the slope revealed clay geology close to the surface with a thin covering of gravel which thickened towards the base where evidence for Postmedieval (probably mid-19th century) quarrying and subsequent backfill was apparent. Towards the upper end of this trench an E-W linear feature (possibly a ditch or earlier quarrying feature) was found from which probable 16th-17th century pottery was recovered. All of the remaining five trenches were dug across the bottom and sides of the hollow; these revealed evidence for nineteenth century quarrying in the shape of shallow backfilled scoops, and in places islands of unexcavated gravel forming the higher ground in between. A scatter of burnt limestone pebbles across the site may relate to evidence for former lime burning, perhaps using the ubiquitous limestone present as cobbles and pebbles within the gravel. The level of truncation caused by quarrying, planting and the burial of domestic rubbish would probably have removed any traces of earlier archaeology had this been present.

Introduction

This archaeological trench evaluation was carried out between 17th-18th March 2011 as a condition of planning consent in advance of the construction of five houses with associated services and access within the former garden of this large Late Georgian brick house (West Lodge, No.125 High Street, Sutton) centred on TL 4372 7864 (Figure 1).

The project was commissioned by SGS Associates. Work was carried out in accordance with a project design specification produced by the CAU (Beadsmoore 2011) and approved by Kasia Gdaniec of the Historic Environment Team. The specification was in response to a brief issued by the HET (Gdaniec 2011).

Geology and topography

The approximate site elevation is 20m AOD (West Lodge itself is at 22m whilst the lowest part of the garden lies below the 15m contour). The underlying geology at this point is a fairly localised outcrop of Pleistocene Glacial Sand and Gravel. The spread of this small gravel outlier on the southern side of the ridge is defined by the limits of quarrying (and hence hummocky ground) within the neighbouring gardens. Immediately underlying this shallow gravel spread is the Upper Jurassic Kimmeridge Clay, and below that on the edge of South Fen, the top of the Ampthill Clay. On the north side of the High Street the top of Sutton is capped by Boulder Clay (glacial till) and yet more Glacial Sand and Gravel (British Geological Survey 1980) Sheet 173 Ely Solid & Drift 1:50000).

Archaeological background

Within 500m of the PDA are archaeological remains dating from the Late Iron Age to the Post-medieval period.

At Bellairs, Sutton (TL 439 788) the eastern edge of a Late Iron Age to 5th century AD Romano-British farm settlement was found [MCB 17411] centred around a waterhole, and with evidence of LIA Belgic ware pottery. Close by (at TL 441 791) was another Middle Iron Age – Romano-British settlement centred around a Middle Iron Age waterhole with evidence for crop processing. Other evidence of prehistoric activity along this ridge includes the find of a single re-touched Early Bronze Age flint within an area of quarry pits behind nos. 8-10 The Row (TL 442 786 [MCB 16488]). From this same site came a small amount of Roman pot, as did from the garden of no. 105 The Row (TL 435 784 [MCB 166661]). Other Roman finds were made at Oates Lane [MCB6992] – most of these discoveries being associated with gravel digging. The single most important find was of a pewter hoard [CHER 05884].

Evidence for medieval settlement is commonest along this side of the ridge, and this is reflected in the archaeology. Medieval pot was recovered from the archaeological evaluation of a quarry pitted area of land to the rear of 8-10 The Row (TL 442 786 [MCB 16488]), and also from the garden of 105 The Row (TL 435 784 [MCB 166661]), including fragments of a 13th-century jar. Other medieval finds included a

Medieval iron sword pommel found in the garden of Victoria Place (TL 440 786 [MCB 16660]). A number of Medieval earthwork features are to be found within garden areas, and also incorporated into existing buildings (an example being the Medieval (14th century) chapel incorporated into the listed building of Burystead Farm (TL 433 789 [CHER 05700]). Within the gardens of the same farm lies a Medieval moated site consisting of a raised elongate rectangular earthwork (TL 434 789 [CHER 01070a]). The house and Medieval fishponds lie close to the fen edge at TL 433789 [CHER 11992]. A Medieval burial ground (site only – no gravestones) is to be found at TL 433 790 [CHER 05674]. Sutton High Street appears to have been well settled throughout the Medieval period. At 31 High Street domestic settlement remains were found to extend to the Saxo-Norman period.

Early Post-medieval (16th-17th-century) quarry pits (probably for gravel) were found on land to the rear of nos, 8-10 The Row during the course of an archaeological evaluation (Atkins, R. 2005). Finds from this included pottery and a 17th-century brick.

Method

Six 1.5m wide trenches (total 120m) were dug within the area of garden to the rear of the house; where possible these were cut at right angles to each other to sample the open areas in between existing trees and hedgerows (Figure 2). The limits of the trenches were set to avoid the canopy/ root diameters of all the existing trees. The trenches were machine dug using a 1.5m wide ditching bucket. Both topsoil and subsoil were removed down to the top of the underlying gravel or clay. The trenches were all sketch planned and photographed and the side sections logged, then base planned at 1:50, and in the case of Trenches 2 and 3 the sections were partly drawn and recorded (Trench 2 at 1:20 and Trench 3 at 1:10). The three features in Trench 1 and one feature in Trench 2 were cleaned and dug by hand (half sectioned and then drawn at 1:10). A small number of finds were collected from the trenches themselves, whilst the spoil from the machining was also visually scanned and bucket sampled. The trenches and spoil were also metal detected.

Results (see Figure 2)

Trench 1

This 44m long NNW-SSE oriented trench was cut approx. parallel to the eastern property boundary, but was slightly curvilinear. At the north (upslope) end the natural gravel was exposed at a shallow depth (0.34m) below the turf. Here 0.1m of turf/ rooted topsoil (A) overlay a mid-brown humic topsoil (B) (depth 0.2m) above the top of the natural gravel (C) (0.34m deep). Immediately beneath the gravel lay light grey-blue clay (the top of the Kimmeridge Clay). For the first 25m this appeared as patches or bands within the gravel; presumably formed as periglacial ice-wedges. At 25m the depth of original gravel cover had marginally increased; beneath the turf (A) lay a thicker topsoil with inclusions of (redeposited) clay (D) (at 0.22m depth) lying directly on top of natural (Kimmeridge Clay). One metre from the south end there was a much thicker development (0.48m depth) of brown topsoil (B) overlying gravel. The

gravel here was deeper, but of unknown depth. There were no finds except for some cobbles of burnt limestone and fossils from the natural/ topsoil interface.

Two small features were encountered cut into the top of the gravel some 7-9m from the north end of the trench.

F.1 was a small sub-circular pit (0.8m x 0.35m diameter and 0.17m deep) possessing a bowl-shaped profile (02) and filled with a mid-dark reddish brown humic sandy silt with rare flint gravel (01) – possibly a pit associated with quarrying, backfilled with humic topsoil. This feature had been cut into another shallow ditch or quarry feature (F.2).

F.2 was an E-W linear 1.3m wide and c. 0.19m deep, with shallow sloping sides and a flat base (04) cut into natural gravel and clay. This ditch had been filled with a similar humic silt to 01 but with inclusions of rare medium sub-rounded stones (03). Two unabraded fragments of the same Early Post-medieval (16th-17th century) glazed earthenware vessel were recovered from the fill of this feature, and appeared to be contemporary. Sealing both features was a thick layer of stiff mid-bluish brown silty clay mixed with humic material (05).

F.3 was a large irregular-shaped hollow within the more thickly developed gravel, the north end of which is some 29-30m (south) from the upslope end of the trench. This now partly machined-out feature (of unknown width) was approx 10m long, and at its maximum, 0.32m deep (Figure 4). Most likely oval-shaped, this incompletely exposed N-S aligned feature had gently sloping sides and a flat base (08) and was cut into the sand and gravel, probably a shallow quarry (here referred to as a ‘quarry scoop’). was hand dug in two places to try and establish its nature and infill. The lowest fill (07) consisted of a mid-reddish brown humic sandy silt with occasional small-medium gravel inclusions, above this a loose poorly sorted mid-brownish orange gravelly sand with small-medium size gravel inclusions (06), and on the top, a sub-soil (09) consisting of a mid-light firm reddish-brown sandy silt-humic horizon with rare inclusions of small stones. The small handful of finds recovered from these quarry fills included some redeposited (16th-17th century) pot and the stem of a 19th-century (?) clay pipe.

Trench 2

This was a 19.8m long E-W trench cut across the lowest point of the garden at right angles to the south end of Trench 1. The natural base of this over its whole length consisted of a stony sand and gravel. Between 13m and 19m from the east end, at the lowest point, was a thin lens of damp ponded sediment consisting of a shallow mid-dark grey silt with pebbles overlying the top of the gravel. At this point the natural surface lay at a depth of between 0.65 and 0.75m. Overlying this was a firm mid-reddish brown humic garden soil (0.65 – 0.28m deep), a humic mid-brown topsoil (B), and a turf (A). At the east end the underlying gravel natural was shallower (at 0.48m), the reddish-brown garden soil lying between 0.48m – 0.26m deep, overlain by a brown topsoil (B) and turf (A).

F.4. A possible small quarry pit (or less likely a dug and backfilled planting hole) dug into the gravel was encountered on the south side of the trench between 4.5m and 9m

from the eastern end. Some 4.55m length of this was exposed. The hollow was at least 0.8m in diameter and 0.27m deep; an oval-shaped cut with shallow sides and a concave base. The humic fill of this consisted of a firm mid-reddish brown humic sandy silt with rare small gravel inclusions. Some late Post-medieval (possibly 19th-century) glazed red earthenware came out of this, as well as some tile and an iron nail.

Trench 3

A trench 13m long cut through a deep soil-filled area of garden close to the SE corner. The underlying gravel was 0.45m deep at the east end, but over 1.2m deep at the west end (this was not bottomed). At the east end (north-facing section) 0.1m of turf (A) overlay backfill/quarrying made ground consisting of: between 0.1-0.22m a mid brownish sandy clay (B), 0.22-0.27m a bright yellow gravelly sand (redeposited natural (C)), and from 0.27 – 0.45m a dark brown humic sandy silt (redeposited garden soil (D)). At the west end of the trench this backfill stratigraphy consisted of turf (A) overlying a bright orange (redeposited) gravel (E) on top of a thick sequence of undifferentiated humic and gravel lenses (F). This section was drawn and recorded in detail (fills (14) – (23)). From these backfill horizons both tile, brick, pottery (19th century porcelain) and glass (bottles) were recovered. Part of the original cut for the quarry pit (24) could be seen cutting the base of the natural sands and gravels in one place. On account of its depth and extent this stepped quarry pit appears to be amongst the largest on the property. This suggests that the depth of gravel was deepest at this point.

Trench 4

A short stretch of trench (4m) was cut across the top of a mound (presumably the quarry edge) to establish the nature of a possible pre-quarry ground surface here, part of which might have had traces of earlier archaeology. Natural gravel was encountered at a depth of around 0.5m with no trace of anthropogenic disturbance. A horizon of turf and roots (A) overlay a thin lens of bright orange sand and gravel (B) at the eastern end (0.1-0.2m), above a layer of mid-dark brown humic garden soil (C) (0.1/0.2-0.5m) on top of gravel. The east end of the trench was cut to a depth of 0.7m.

Trench 5

Some 14m of N-S trench monitored the area between the former high point in the SW corner of the garden and the entrance to the site from West Lodge Lane. This trench was interesting in that it bore no resemblance to the stratigraphy of Trench 4, only 1m away. The south end of the trench appeared to be in a large modern buried rubbish pit. This was not bottomed but extended to a depth of at least 1.15m (in section this consisted of >1.05m of rubbish fill) with broken glass, barbed wire, chicken wire, slate and brick. It appears that this pit (minimum 6m long and of unknown width) was probably dug by machine to a depth of up to 2m, and the material then pushed in and rammed down, perhaps from the clearing away of a shed or outbuilding. The northern end of the trench seems to be in an earlier shallow quarry pit (scoop), this consisting of 0.75m of backfilled quarry gravel and soil (i.e. 0.1-0.35m of mid yellow brown sandy gravel (C) overlying a dark black humic soil (D), a dark grey silty clay (E), and a mid reddish-brown silty clay with occasional-frequent gravel (F)). A single tree-throw was encountered within the underlying natural gravel.

Trench 6

A 17.5m long trench was cut in a SW-NE orientation downslope from just inside the gated entrance onto West Lodge Lane to 4m west of the preserved box hedge. Within the base of this 0.65m deep trench the outline of two large quarry pits (or scoops) could be seen cut into the natural gravel (at 3m-15m and 16.5-17.5m respectively). The trench sections were logged and small test pits (0.88m and 0.96m max depth) cut into the base of each quarry feature to try to assess depth. These did not prove the base of these quarry features, thus it can only be assumed that like the quarry pit in Trench 3, these scoops were probably 1m+ deep. The stratigraphy of these quarry pit fills were similar to those encountered in the other trenches: 0.2m of turf+roots and topsoil (A) overlay a mid-dark brown humic sandy silt (0.35/0.45-0.55m (B)) and 0.35-0.65m of mid orange-brown firm humic clay - silty sand (C). Both horizons B and C were part of the redeposited quarry backfill/ made-up ground.

Pottery: The narrow neck (350mm) and upper part of the handle of a small mid-brown coloured lead-glazed red earthenware jug or flagon (perhaps a tableware item of a type which continued to be made locally from the 16th to early 19th centuries) was recovered from context 03 of the small excavated linear (F.2) in Trench 1. Given the form of this ceramic, it seems much more likely that this is 16th-17th century AD in date (*pers. com* C. Cessford).

Discussion

No evidence for Medieval or earlier archaeology was uncovered during the fairly extensive archaeological evaluation of this garden. All of the features identified appear to relate to Post-medieval gravel quarrying on the side of this clay ridge, or else to more modern garden features such as cultivation soil, tree throws, planting pits, or else pits full of buried garden rubbish.

What appears to be an earlier phase of quarrying found higher up on the ridge (a shallower depth of gravel but much closer to the house) could be indicated by the presence of shallower features such as F.2 located in Trench 1. The nature of this feature was slightly confusing since it appeared to be a linear, possibly a ditch which could have been following the contour across the slope of the garden (therefore a path or ditch associated with a garden terrace), though the fill itself was very reminiscent of gravel quarry backfill. One possible explanation would have been surface gravel quarrying immediately upslope, the absence of gravel here now simply reflecting its earlier removal. Certainly the occurrence of unabraded 16th-17th century domestic pottery in this feature suggests localised dumping, and possibly therefore, contemporary quarrying activity. Similar evidence of 17th-century gravel quarrying on this side of the ridge was found in the gardens of nos. 8-10 The Row, Sutton (Atkins 2000). Most likely this was associated with the building of grander houses along the front of the High Street, and thus a locally sourced demand for sharp sand for mortar, and also gravel for road metalling and foundations. It is interesting also to speculate at this point on whether or not the abundant limestone pebbles/cobbles present within this outlier of Glacial Sand and Gravel were extracted at the same time for local lime burning (given the evidence for some of this limestone having been burnt). Thus apart from local bricks, which may or may not have been manufactured

locally from the Kimmeridge Clay, we have on site or nearby all the ingredients necessary to supply the needs of 17th century or later building.

The analysis of finds from the main (or later) phase of quarrying which took place on the lower slopes and towards the south end of the garden effectively dates this extraction to around the middle of the 19th century. Most of the digging which took place below the (now removed) main gravel horizon can be recognised in the form of large 5-10m long oval (1m+) deep quarry scoops, the bottom of which cut down into the thicker (up to 2m deep) basal bed of gravel. These deeper excavations were then probably backfilled by hand using a mixture of overburden topsoil and the poorer quality rejected stony gravel spoil derived from sieving and grading. The suggested period of quarrying, given the types of finds recovered and the 1874 date of the Sutton Estate plan (by which point all quarrying here appears to have ceased), is of around 1850-1870. It also seems likely that the gravel was carted out from the pits to the south of the garden via a wagon-way onto The Row. There is no suggestion of an entrance at this time off of West Lodge Lane.

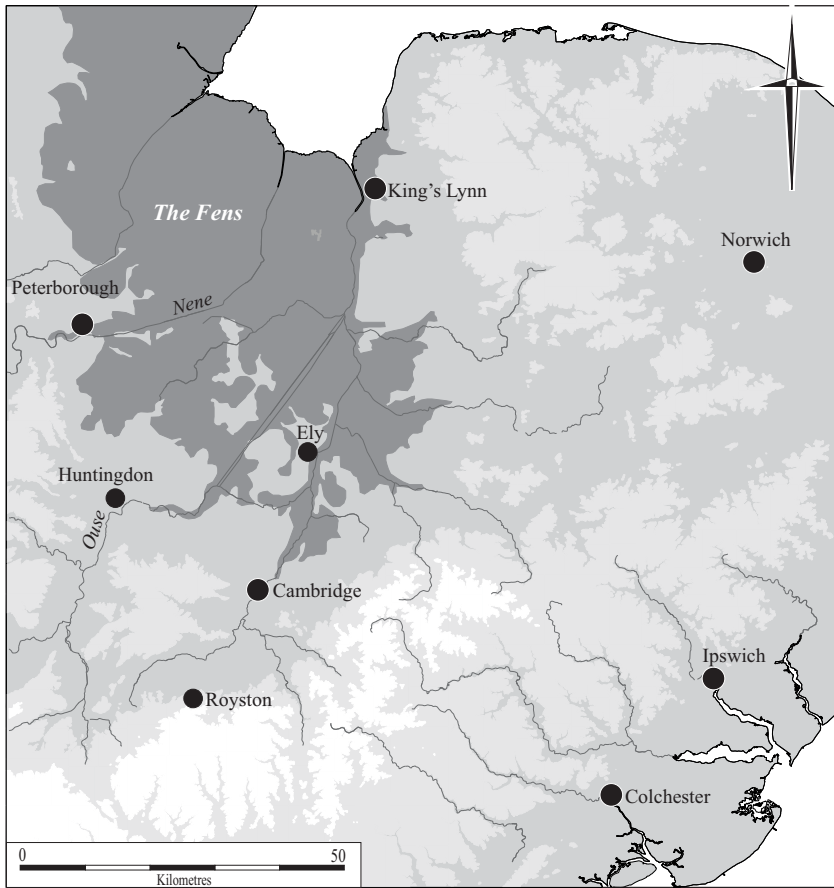
The March 19th 1874 map (Figure 3) accompanying the auction sale of West Lodge and its gardens (Lot 1) and narrow strip of fen (Lot 2) is interesting in that it reveals the former existence of a gravel quarrying hollow in the shape of the gardens, with trees surrounding what would appear to be a lower hollow corresponding to the known topography of the grounds – in fact the latter arrangement of trees surrounding an open area is not much different from how we find this today. Another interesting observation here is the existence of a long building(s) at the south end of the garden – perhaps stables or sheds. There would appear to be no trace of these now, and it is tempting therefore to suggest that the large rubbish pit with building material in it found during the digging of Trench 5 could represent the remains of whatever was demolished.

Conclusion

No traces of earlier archaeology were found, the surviving evidence being of possible traces of 16th-17th century quarrying higher up on the slope, the latter overlain by mid 19th century digging for gravel dating perhaps to the period c. 1850-1870 which forms the lower hollow and disturbed ground which was later landscaped as part of the gardens of this large Georgian house,

Acknowledgements

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Figure 1. Location Map

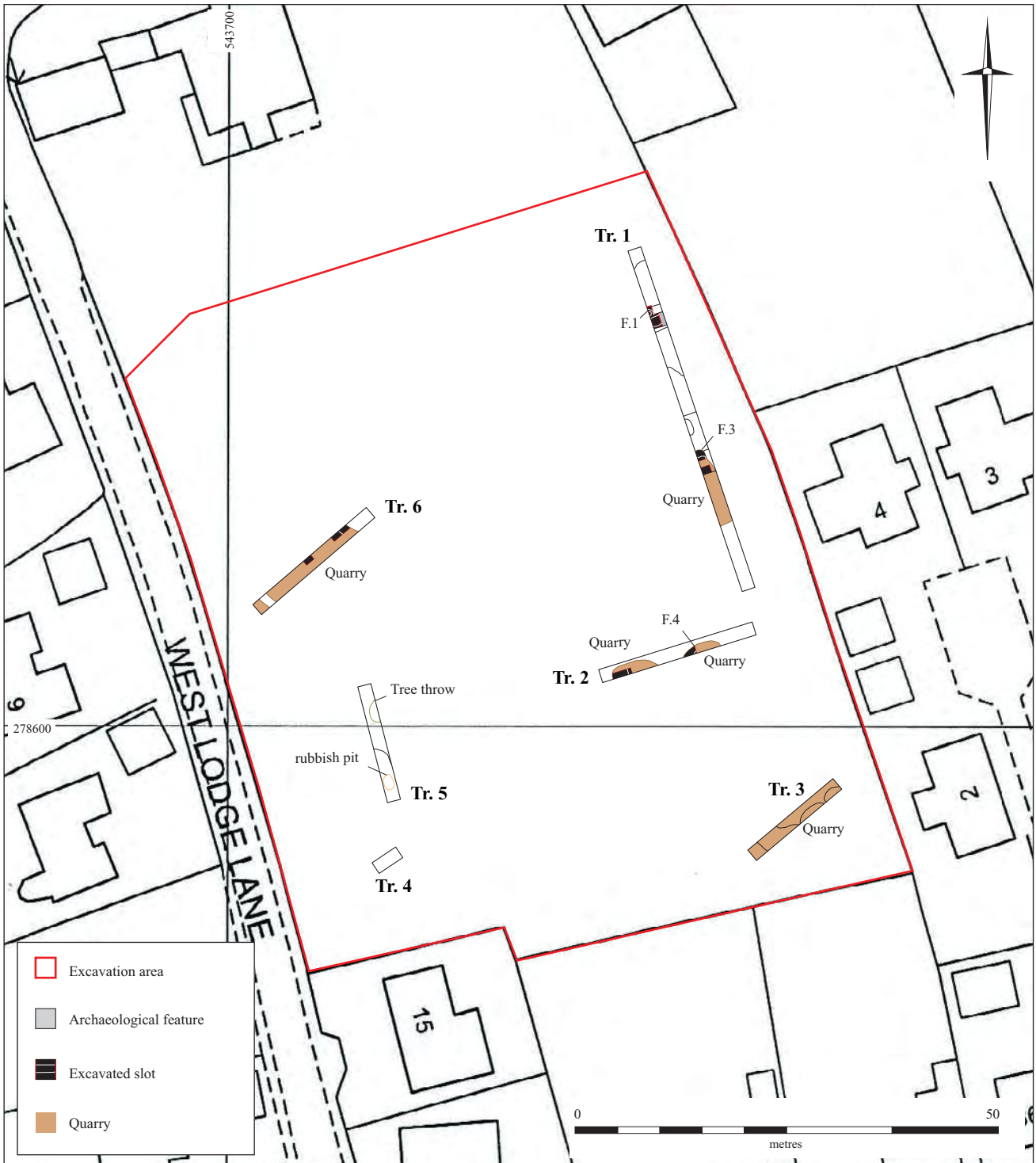


Figure 2. Trench Plan

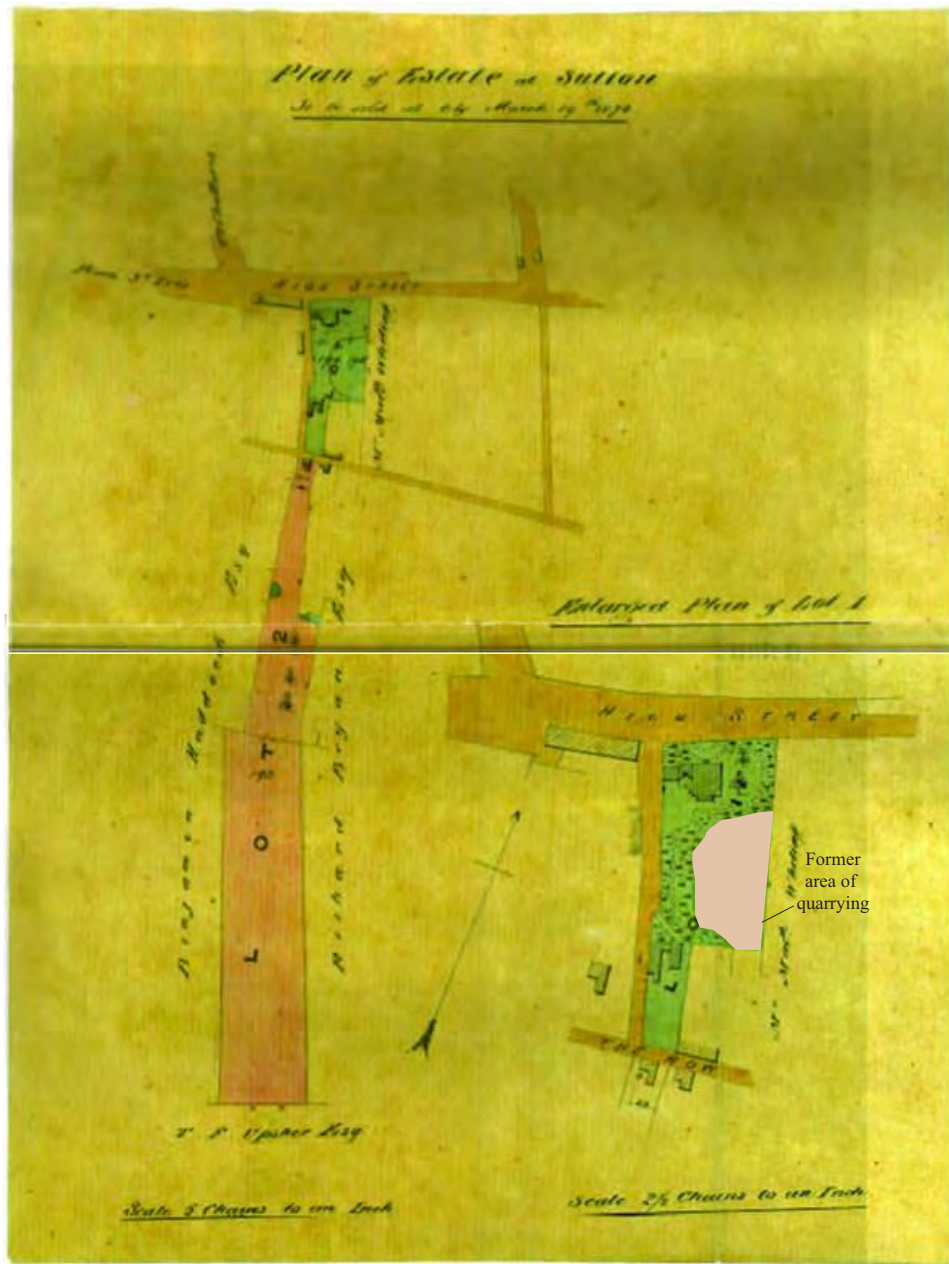


Figure 3. Historic Map - March 19th 1874 auction sale showing landscaping of former area of quarrying within gardens



Figure 4. Photograph of a shallow backfilled 19th-century quarry scoop at the southern end of Trench 1

References

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British Geological Survey 1980 Sheet 173 Geological Map Ely Solid & Drift (1:50000).

Gdaniec, K. 2011 Design Brief for Archaeological Evaluation: Rear of West Lodge, 125 High Street, Sutton, Historic Environment Team, Cambridgeshire County Council, February 11th 2011

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OASIS ID: cambridg3-98665

Project details

Project name	West Lodge Lane, Sutton, Cambridgeshire
Short description of the project	Between 17th-18th March 2011 the Cambridge Archaeological Unit carried out an archaeological evaluation (c.120m of trenching) within 0.5 ha of garden on the east side of West Lodge Lane, Sutton. The garden lies within a hollow on the slope overlooking South Fen on the south side of Sutton village. The northernmost trench commenced higher up the slope revealed clay geology close to the surface with a thin covering of gravel which thickened towards the base where evidence for Postmedieval (probably mid-19th century) quarrying and subsequent backfill was apparent. Towards the upper end of this trench an E-W linear feature (possibly a ditch or earlier quarrying feature) was found from which probable 16th-17th century pottery was recovered. All of the remaining five trenches were dug across the bottom and sides of the hollow; these revealed evidence for nineteenth century quarrying in the shape of shallow backfilled scoops, and in places islands of unexcavated gravel forming the higher ground in between. A scatter of burnt limestone pebbles across the site may relate to evidence for former lime burning, perhaps using the ubiquitous limestone present as cobbles and pebbles within the gravel. The level of truncation caused by quarrying, planting and the burial of domestic rubbish would probably have removed any traces of earlier archaeology had this been present.
Project dates	Start: 17-03-2011 End: 18-03-2011
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	WLS11 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	ECB3546 - HER event no.
Type of project	Field evaluation

Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	GRAVEL PITS Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	'Sample Trenches'
Development type	Small-scale (e.g. single house, etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE SUTTON West Lodge Lane
Postcode	CB6 2NR
Study area	0.50 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 4371 7863 52.3863888889 0.111944444444 52 23 11 N 000 06 43 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 15.00m Max: 22.00m

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	Simon Timberlake
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	SGS Associates

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
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Physical Contents	'Ceramics'
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Archive ID	WLS11
Digital Contents	'Ceramics'
Digital Media available	'GIS','Images raster / digital photography','Survey','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
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Paper Contents	'Stratigraphic','Survey'
Paper Media available	'Section','Survey ','Unpublished Text','Plan','Map','Photograph'

Project bibliography 1

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