

Land East of The Silverings, 114 Main Road, Parson Drove, Cambridgeshire Archaeological Evaluation Report

February 2021

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Land East of The Silverings, 114 Main Road, Parson Drove, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Written by Kathryn Blackbourn BA ACIfA

With illustrations by David Brown BA

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Summary

On the 12th of January 2021 Oxford Archaeology East conducted an archaeological evaluation at Land east of The Silverings, 114 Main Road, Parson Drove (TF 38010 08730). A total of seven trenches, each measuring 20m in length and 1.8m wide, were excavated. No archaeological features were present. A dump of modern rubbish was uncovered at the north-west end of Trench 2, the location of which corresponds with an agricultural building shown on Ordnance survey maps into the middle of the 20th century.



Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Harmony Roofing for commissioning this project. Thanks are also extended to Leanne Robinson-Zeki who monitored the work on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (CHET).

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Nick Gilmour. The fieldwork was directed by Kathryn Blackbourn, who was supported by Phil Hill. Survey and digitising was carried out by Tom Houghton and David Brown.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology East (OA East) was commissioned by Harmony Roofing to undertake a trial trench evaluation at Land east of The Silverings, 114 Main Road, Parson Drove, Cambridgeshire (TF 38010 08730; Fig. 1).
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref. F/YR19/0971/O) related to a proposed small residential development. A Brief (Robinson-Zeki 2020) was set by the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team (CHET) and supplemented by a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by OA East (Blackbourn 2020) detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to inform the planning process. The decision on the need for any further work/mitigation will be made by CHET following the results of the evaluation. This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The site is located east of the historic core of Parson Drove, on relatively level ground at a height of approximately 1-2m OD (Fig. 1). The site is currently an arable field and is bounded to the north by Main Road (on slightly higher ground), to the east by Silvers Lane and by residential dwellings to the west.
- 1.2.2 The geology of the site is mapped as West Walton Formation and Ampthill Clay Formation bedrock with sand and silt Tidal Flat superficial deposits (BGS map viewer http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html; accessed 13/01/2021).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The following provides a summary of the archaeological background for the area surrounding the site, based on a 1km search (License No 20-4378) of the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER; Fig 1).

Prehistoric

1.3.2 Analysis of environmental evidence, notably foraminifera (single-celled organisms), has demonstrated that prior to the Iron Age the area around Parson Drove was dominated by tidal marsh, which was drained by a system of tidal creeks (Godwin 2001, 452). There is no evidence for finds or features dating to this period within 1km of the proposed development area.

Roman

- 1.3.3 Parson Drove saw an influx of activity during the Roman period. Three skeletons have been uncovered, alongside beads and pottery including samian ware, 1.1km to the west south-west of the site (CHER 03802a). Roman pottery sherds have also been found 330m to the south-east (CHER 06325).
- 1.3.4 A series of cropmarks thought to be Roman in date have been identified 1.1km southwest of the site comprising possible ring ditches, rectilinear enclosures, a field system



and possible trackway (CHER 03805; not illustrated). An excavation 600m to the west of the site revealed evidence for Roman rural settlement spanning the 1st to 3rd centuries AD (ECB 1330, 2131). The excavated remains included an enclosure with associated roundhouses, a trackway and several ditches and gullies containing dumps of briquetage associated with salt-working. An adjacent evaluation (ECB 3339) revealed a single ditch tentatively dated to the Roman period.

Medieval

- 1.3.5 The linear village plan of Parson Drove owes its layout to the late medieval/early post-medieval reclamation of land and reorganisation associated with the drainage of this part of the Cambridgeshire fenland.
- 1.3.6 Settlement remains dating to the medieval period are often situated on roddons (dried raised beds of former watercourses) which in Parson Drove roughly coincides with the modern-day Main Road. A medieval settlement has been identified 600m to the west of the site (ECB 1330, 2131) which originated in the 12th century but saw its peak in the 13th to 14th centuries. The site comprised two trackways, associated enclosures and a series of pits and ditches that were thought to be associated with salt production. An evaluation took place adjacent to this site (ECB 3339) which revealed six ditches dated to the medieval period, the most substantial of which had a horse burial placed in its uppermost fill.
- 1.3.7 Further medieval settlement was identified 700m to the east (ECB 3966) which comprised two phases of activity. Features dating to the mid 13th to 14th centuries included a ring gully and a number of pits. In the mid 14th to 15th century phase a single-bay roughly square domestic building with a possible internal hearth was constructed over the former ring gully. Postholes and pits were also identified dating to this phase.
- 1.3.8 The church of Emmanuel is located 800m to the west of the proposed development area and a watching brief (ECB 3970) undertaken here identified several pits, which in addition to medieval pottery recovered from the subsoil, suggests the presence of activity of a possible domestic nature in the area.

Post-medieval

- 1.3.9 A woad mill (CHER 05173) was located 850m east along Main Road and is thought to be one of the last of its kind to have remained in operation in England. Drainage ditches dating to the post-medieval period have been identified 1km to the west of the site (ECB 4390), which contained a small quantity of brick, clay pipe and a horseshoe.
- 1.3.10 Several buildings are recorded within 1km of the site that date to the post-medieval period, including Woadmills Farm (MCB 26613), a Wesleyan Methodist Chapel (MCB 27099), a former blacksmiths workshop (MCB 27103), Inham House (MCB 27105), a former brewery (MCB 27106) and The Butchers Arms public house (MCB 27107).



2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:
 - To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains on the site, characterise where they are found (location, depth and extent), and establish the quality of preservation of any archaeology and environmental remains;
 - ii. To provide sufficient coverage to establish the character, condition, date and purpose of any archaeological deposits;
 - iii. To provide sufficient coverage to evaluate the likely impact of past land uses, and the possible presence of masking deposits;
 - iv. To provide in the event that archaeological remains are found sufficient information to construct an archaeological mitigation strategy, dealing with preservation, the recording of archaeological deposits, working practices, timetables, and orders of cost.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 All works were carried out in accordance with the WSI (Blackbourn 2020), approved by CHET, and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (2014a) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation*.
- 2.2.2 A total of seven trenches measuring 20m long and 1.8m wide were excavated across an area roughly measuring 3500m² (Fig. 2). Excavation was undertaken using a 14 tonne 360-type mechanical excavator using a 1.8m wide ditching bucket. All machine excavation was monitored by a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist.
- 2.2.3 Features were excavated by hand in accordance with the WSI. Archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's pro-forma sheets and plans and sections were drawn at appropriate scales. Photographs were taken of all trenches using a DSLR camera.
- 2.2.4 Surveying was conducted using a Leica GS08 dGPS system fitted with "smart-net" technology with an accuracy of 5mm horizontal and 10mm vertical.
- 2.2.5 The spoil heaps of every trench were metal detected by a competent detectorist, only very modern metalwork was recovered and this was discarded on site. Bucket sampling was also conducted with 50L of topsoil and 40L of subsoil from each trench sifted through to recover any finds, of which none were recovered.
- 2.2.6 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered during the evaluation.



3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are presented below. The full details of all trenches with dimensions and depths of all deposits can be found in Appendix A.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 The soil sequence in the trenches was fairly uniform. The natural geology, comprising a light mottled orange grey clay, was overlain by a light brown grey subsoil which measured between 0.3m and 0.78m thick (being thickest in Trench 2). This was overlain by a dark brown grey clayey silt topsoil, which measured between 0.3m and 0.35m thick.
- 3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the evaluation were generally poor with all trenches quickly filling with water once excavated, due to a high groundwater table.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 All seven trenches were devoid of archaeological features.

Trenches 1 to 3

- 3.3.2 Trenches 1 to 3 were located in the western part of the site at heights of between 1.3m to 1.55m OD, with each trench excavated to depths of between 0.9m to 1.13m.
- 3.3.3 At the north-west end of Trench 2, the 0.78m-thick subsoil (201) was cut by a modern rubbish pit (**202**). This was not further investigated but contained plastic, metal and screw top bottles, all of which were discarded on site (Plate 1). It was sealed beneath topsoil (200) which measured 0.35m thick.

Trenches 4 to 7

3.3.4 Trenches 4 to 7 lay in the eastern part of the site at heights of between 1.08m and 1.8m OD. They were excavated to depths of between 0.64m to 0.85m (Plates 2, 3 and 4), and were also found to be devoid of archaeology.



4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

4.1.1 The seven trenches excavated provided a 5% sample of the proposed development area in order to adequately characterise any archaeological remains within the site. Although water ingress was an issue, any archaeological features present would have been easily discernible against the light mottled orange grey clay natural.

4.2 Conclusion

- 4.2.1 It is clear that the site lies away from the roddon, thought to partially follow the line of Main Road which runs through the village of Parson Drove and which is known to have been a focus of settlement throughout the Roman and medieval periods. The site itself contained no archaeological features, with only a modern rubbish dump being uncovered in one of the trenches (Trench 2). The latter appears to correspond with a rectangular structure, presumably an agricultural building, which is shown on Ordnance survey maps up until the late 1950s, but had disappeared by the late 1970s (viewable at https://www.old-maps.co.uk).
- 4.2.2 Despite Roman and medieval remains having been identified at sites to the east (ECB 3966) and west (ECB 1330, 2131, 3339), the absence of features and any non-modern finds suggests that the current site was not a focus of settlement or associated activity during these periods.



APPENDIX A TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1										
General description Orientation										
Trench was devoid of archaeology and the natural geology Length (r										
consisted of a		th (m)	1.8							
Avg. depth (m)										
Context No.	Туре	n	Finds	Date						
100	Layer	-	-	0.35	Topsoil					
101	Layer	-	-	0.55	Subsoil					
Trench 2										
General descr	iption					Orie	ntation	NW-SE		
Trench was de	evoid of arc	haeolo	gy althou	ıgh a moder	n dump was	Leng	gth (m)	20		
noted at the north-west end of the trench. The natural geology Width (m)										
consisted of a light mottled orange grey clay. Avg. depth										
(m)										
Context No.	No. Type Fill Width Depth Description Finds Of (m) (m)									
200	Layer	-	-	0.35	Topsoil					
201	Layer	-	-	0.55	Subsoil					
202 Cut/fill - 8 - Modern rubbish										
dump										
Trench 3										
General descr	iption					Orie	ntation	NNW- SSE		
Trench was de	evoid of arc	haeolo	gy althou	ıgh a layer o	f clay was	Leng	gth (m)	20		
present betwe	een the top	soil an	d subsoil.	. The natural	geology	Width (m)		1.8		
consisted of a	light mottle	ed ora	nge grey	clay		Avg.	depth	1.13		
Context No.	Type	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Descriptio		Finds	Date		
300	Layer	-	-	0.35	Topsoil					
301	Layer	-	-	0.78	Subsoil					
Trench 4								ENE-		
General description Orientation										
	. 1 . 6				_		.1. ()	WSW		
Trench was de				_	ology	Length (m)		1.8		
consisted of a light mottled orange grey clay Width (m)										



Land Last of The Silven		- au, i ai s	5 5101c, car								
						_	depth	0.65			
						(m)					
Context No.	Туре	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	n	Finds	Date			
400	Layer	-	-	0.3	Topsoil						
401	Layer	-	-	0.35	Subsoil						
Trench 5											
General description Orientation											
Trench was de	void of arc	haeolo	gy and th	ne natural ge	ology	Leng	gth (m)	20			
consisted of a	light mottle	ed ora	nge grey	clay		Wid	th (m)	1.8			
						Avg.	depth	0.64			
Context No.	Туре	Fill	Width	Depth	Description		Finds	Date			
	,,	Of	(m)	(m)	·						
500	Layer	-	-	0.34	Topsoil						
501	Layer	-	-	0.3	Subsoil						
Trench 6											
General description Orientation											
Trench was de	void of arc	haeolo	gy and th	ne natural ge	eology	Leng	gth (m)	20			
consisted of a	light mottle	ed ora	nge grey	clay		Wid	th (m)	1.8			
						Avg. (m)	depth	0.85			
Context No.	Type	Fill	Width	Depth	Descriptio	n	Finds	Date			
		Of	(m)	(m)							
600	Layer	-	-	0.3	Topsoil						
601	Layer	-	-	0.55	Subsoil						
Trench 7											
General descri	iption					Orie	ntation	NNW-			
								SSE			
Trench was devoid of archaeology and the natural geology Length (m)											
consisted of a light mottled orange grey clay Width (m)											
Avg. depth											
(m)											
Context No.	Туре	Fill Of	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	n	Finds	Date			
700	Layer	-	- (111)	0.35	Topsoil						
701	Layer	_	_	0.33	Subsoil						
,01	Layer	<u> </u>		0.5	2003011		l				



APPENDIX B BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX C	SIT	E SUM	MARY [ET	AILS /	OASI	S RE	PORT FORM		
Project Details										
OASIS Number	oxfordar3-414001									
Project Name	Land E	ast of Th	ne Silverin	gs,	114 Mai	n Road,	Parso	on Drove		
Ctant of Fieldmank	12/1/	21			ا دیا ہ	بلا ⊏: ما ما، .	باسم	12/1/21		
Start of Fieldwork	12/1/2	<u>/1</u>			_	of Fieldwork ee Work		12/1/21		
Previous Work	no				_ Futur			no		
Project Reference	Codes									
Site Code	ЛR20			Plann	ing App	. No.	F/YR19/0971/O			
HER Number	390			Related Numbers		bers	, , ,			
Prompt		NPPF								
Development Type		Rura	l residenti	al						
Place in Planning Pr	ocess	Not	known/No	t re	corded					
≠ coloreta in a constate			.1. \							
Techniques used (1 ☐ Aerial Photograph		tnat ap	PIY) Grab-sam	nling				Remote Operated Vehicle Survey		
interpretation	,		0.40 04	PC				nemete operated vemore survey		
☐ Aerial Photograph	•		Gravity-co				\boxtimes	Sample Trenches		
☐ Annotated Sketch			Laser Scar	nning	5			Survey/Recording of		
☐ Augering		П	☐ Measured Surv✓ Metal Detector					Fabric/Structure Targeted Trenches		
☐ Dendrochonologic	cal Survey							Test Pits		
☐ Documentary Sea						_	Topographic Survey			
☐ Environmental Sa					Survey \square		Vibro-core			
☐ Fieldwalking			0 1					Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit)		
☐ Geophysical Surve	ξÀ		Rectified I	Phot	ography					
Monument	Pe	riod			Objec	t		Period		
Pit		odern (19	901 to	1 1	none			None		
		esent)	-							
		oose an i	item.					Choose an item.		
		oose an i				-		Choose an item.		
Project Location				,						
County	Cambi	ridgeshir	e			Addre	ss (ind	cluding Postcode)		
District	 nd				Land east of The Silverings 114 Main					
Parish	n Drove				Road					
HER office Cambridge				Parson Drove						
Size of Study Area 3500m ²					PE13 4	1LA				
National Grid Ref TF 38010 08730			'30							
Project Originators	s									
Organisation	Oxford	Oxford Archaeology East								
Project Brief Origina	Leann	Leanne Robinson-Zeki								
Project Design Orig	Nick G	Nick Gilmour								
Project Manager	Nick G	Nick Gilmour								
Project Supervisor	Kathry	Kathryn Blackbourn								



Project Archives

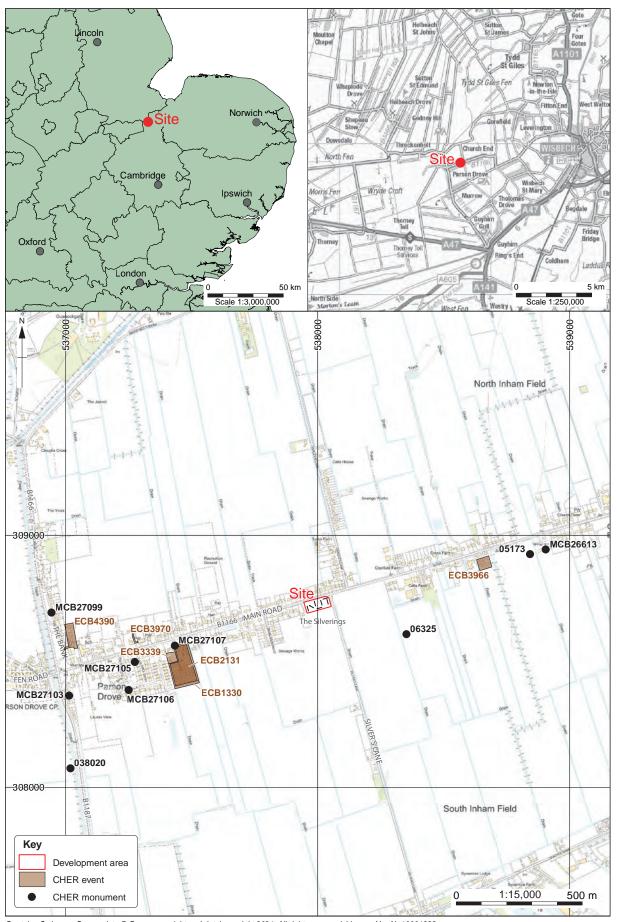
Physical Archive (Finds) Digital Archive Paper Archive

Location	ID
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OAE	PDRSMR20
CHET	ECB 6390

Physical Contents	Present?	Digital files associated with Finds	Paperwork associated with Finds
Animal Bones Ceramics Environmental Glass Human Remains Industrial Leather Metal Stratigraphic Survey Textiles Wood Worked Bone Worked Stone/Lithic None Other			
Digital Media Database GIS Geophysics Images (Digital photos) Illustrations (Figures/Plat Moving Image Spreadsheets Survey Text Virtual Reality	tes)	Paper Media Aerial Photos Context Sheets Correspondence Diary Drawing Manuscript Map Matrices Microfiche Miscellaneous Research/Notes Photos (negatives/prints) Plans Report Sections Survey	/slides)

Further Comments





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Figure 1: Site location, with selected CHER entries



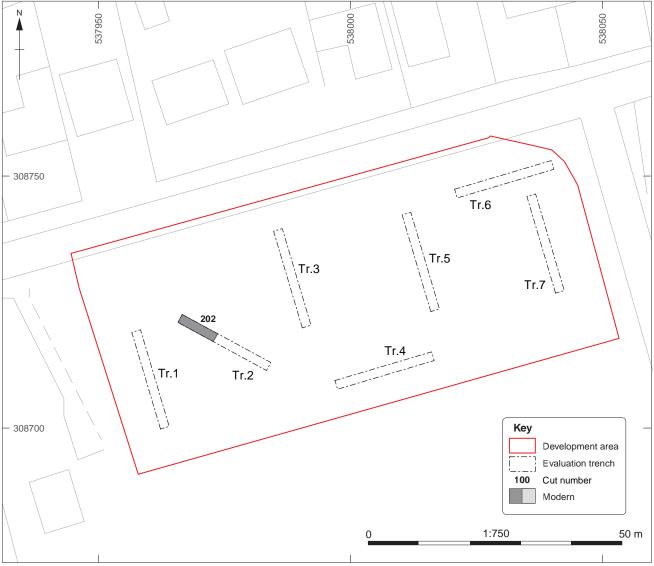


Figure 2: Trench plan

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Plate 1: Trench 2, looking north-west



Plate 2: Section of Trench 4, looking south south-east





Plate 3: Trench 6, looking west south-west



Plate 4: Trench 7, looking south south-east

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