Land at 103
Cottenham Road
Histon, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Jan 2009
Client:

OA East Report No: 1079
OASIS No: oxfordar3-52558
NGR: TL 4407 6457
Archaeological Evaluation on land
at
103 Cottenham Road, Histon.

By James Fairbairn

With contributions by William S Wadeson and Rachel Fosberry

Editor: Richard Mortimer MIFA

Illustrator: Crane Begg B.sc Hons

Report Date: January 09
Report Number: 1079
Site Name: 103 Cottenham Road, Histon.
HER Event No: ECB3077
Date of Works: November 08
Client Name: Amber Developments (St Ives) Ltd
Client Ref:
Planning Ref: S/2350/07/F
Grid Ref: TL 4407 6457
Site Code: HIS COR 08
Finance Code: HIS COR 08
Receiving Body: Cambs County Stores, Landbeach
Accession No:
Prepared by: James Fairbairn
Position: Supervisor
Date: December 08
Checked by: Richard Mortimer
Position: Project Manager
Date: December 08
Signed:

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was conducted on land at 103 Cottenham Road, Histon, prior to the construction of two residential dwellings and following the demolition of an existing building.

OA East was commissioned to excavate 27m of trenching representing a 5% sample of the entire development site. Three archaeological features were found consisting of a small pit, a linear ditch and a possible furrow.
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted at 103 Cottenham Road, Histon, Cambridgeshire.

1.1.2 This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Eliza Gore of Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC; Planning Application S/2350/07/F), supplemented by a Specification prepared by OA East (formerly Cambridgeshire County Council's CAM ARC).

1.1.3 The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in Planning and Policy Guidance 16 - Archaeology and Planning (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by CCC, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

1.1.4 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

1.2 Geology

1.2.1 The area lies on Third Terrace River Deposits overlying Gault Clay and the site is located at approximately 10m AOD.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

The site lies in an area of some archaeological potential with extensive cropmark sites of unknown, but probable Iron Age or Roman date, to the north and southeast of the site (Historic Environment Record Numbers 16216 & 11453). Monitoring and Recording along an electricity cable to the east of the site in 2006 revealed archaeological remains dating from the Roman and post-medieval periods (HER MCB16772, 16770, 16769, ECB2064). The medieval core of Histon lies some way to the south, but post-medieval settlement is known to have extended north along Cottenham Road. Post medieval structures have been recorded both as standing buildings (17th Century cottage - HER 002811) and as archaeological remains uncovered through excavation (HER MCB17320, ECB2170).

1.4 Acknowledgements

1.4.1 The Author would like to thank Neil Roe of Amber Developments (St Ives) who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by Richard Mortimer. James Fairbairn carried out the evaluation. Rachel Clarke surveyed the site and the illustrations were produced by Crane Begg. Richard Mortimer edited the report and Andy Thomas from CAPCA monitored the evaluation.
2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims
2.1.1 The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

2.2 Methodology
2.2.1 Three trenches totalling twenty-seven linear metres were excavated within the property boundaries.

2.2.2 Machine excavation was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a 1.60m wide toothless ditching bucket.

2.2.3 The site survey was carried out using a Leica GPS which is located on the ordnance survey grid. Levels were also recorded on the top and bottom of each trench and on section drawings with the GPS. Drawn plans were incorporated with the survey data to accurately plot the position of the trenches.

2.2.4 Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds were retained for inspection, other than those which were obviously modern.

2.2.5 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's pro-forma sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

2.2.6 A total of 30L of bulk soil samples were collected.

The total volume of each sample was processed by water flotation for the recovery of charred plant remains, dating evidence and any other artefactual evidence that might be present. The flots were collected in a 0.5mm nylon mesh and the residues were washed through a 1mm mesh. Both flot and residue were allowed to air dry. The dried residues were passed through 5mm and 2mm sieves and a magnet was dragged through each resulting fraction prior to sorting for ecofacts (e.g. animal bone, fish bone, charcoal, shell, etc..) and artefacts. Any artefacts present were noted and reintegrated with the hand-excavated finds. The flot was examined under a binocular microscope at x16 magnification. Identifications were made by the author without comparison to the OA East reference collection and should be seen as provisional. Nomenclature for the plant classification follows Stace (1997).

2.2.7 Site conditions were dry and sunny
3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction
3.1.1 Trench 1 was orientated NW-SE and was located at the front of the plot close to the Cottenham Road. Trench 2 was orientated NE-SW and ran southwest from the northern boundary of the plot. Trench 3 was orientated N-S and was located at the westernmost end of the development area. Trenches are discussed in numerical order.

3.2 Trench 1
3.2.1 Two archaeological features were recorded in trench one, a small pit 105 truncated a SSW-NNE aligned ditch 107.
3.2.2 Ditch 107 was broad and relatively shallow, with a depth of 0.50m and an approximate width of 2.20m. Visible edges in section suggested gently sloping sides and a slightly concave base. It contained a single fill (106) consisting of a mid to light brown sandy silty clay which had very similar characteristics to that of the sub soil layer 102 so exact edge dimensions were difficult to ascertain. A single sherd of domestic Roman grey ware (not closely datable) was recovered from fill 106 (see appendix B). The ditch was cut through the subsoil layer 102.
3.2.3 Pit 105 had a width of 0.62m and a depth of 0.23m. It had steep sides and a slightly concave base and contained a single fill (104) consisting of a dark silty clay very similar to that of the top soil layer (102). No finds were recovered from this fill. The feature was cut from within the topsoil layer 101 (see Fig 3, Section 1).
3.2.4 This area of the evaluation is capped by a modern car parking area made up of a hardcore base and a gravel surface to a maximum depth of 0.28m.

3.3 Trench 2
3.3.1 No archaeological features were recorded in Trench 2. A topsoil layer 101 existed to a depth of 0.40m and a subsoil layer 102 to a depth of 0.30m. (see Fig. 3, Section 2).

3.4 Trench 3
3.4.1 A possible furrow 109 was recorded at the southern end of Trench 3. It had a width of 2.60m, a depth of 0.15m with an uneven base. The fill of this feature (108) consisted of a light brown silty sand. No finds were recovered from the excavated section. The interface between this fill and the subsoil layer above 102 was not readily apparent. Topsoil and subsoil depths were as those in Trench 2.

3.5 Finds Summary
3.5.1 Although all fills were scanned by eye and with a metal detector for artefactual evidence no finds other than obvious modern objects were found within the trenches with the exception of a single abraded sherd of domestic Roman Grey ware. This pottery was recovered from ditch 107 in Trench 1.
3.6 **Environmental Summary**

3.6.1 Flots from environmental samples from the two features in Trench 1 produced no charred plant remains. The material from the residues is indicative of relatively modern garden soils.
4 Discussion and Conclusions

4.1 Discussion
4.1.1 The excavation area produced little in the way of archaeological finds or features. However, the ditch 107 recorded in Trench 1 may possibly have had some relationship to the forerunner of the present day Cottenham Road, which runs roughly on the same orientation. The abraded state of the single piece of Roman pottery recovered from ditch 107 suggests it was residual and so does not date the ditch. Due to disturbance of the topsoil layer and truncation by the modern day hardcore and gravel layer overlying this area there was no evidence for a bank remaining on either side of ditch 107.

4.1.2 Ditch 107 truncated the subsoil layer 102 suggesting that it represents a cultivation layer or plough soil, probably of medieval origin, although the paucity of finds makes this difficult to prove. The possible furrow 109 recorded in Trench 3, which runs perpendicular to the road, adds weight to the suggestion that the evaluation area was part of a medieval agricultural landscape.

4.2 Significance
4.2.1 This evaluation has provided results that show the area of land recently occupied by 103 Cottenham Road was probably part of a wider medieval agricultural landscape, which itself lay within an area of limited earlier Romano-British activity.

4.3 Recommendations
4.3.1 Recommendations for any future work based upon this report will be made by the County Archaeology Office.
### APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

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<td>103</td>
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<td>Sandy gravel natural</td>
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<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>Fill</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>Dark silty fill of 105</td>
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<td>105</td>
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<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>Fill</td>
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<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>Fill</td>
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<td>0.15</td>
<td>Brown silty clay fill of 109</td>
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APPENDIX B. FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Pottery

By William S Wadeson

B.1.1 The evaluation at Cottenham Road, Histon produced a single Romano-British sherd (10g) of Sandy Grey ware. Undiagnostic in form, the fragment, which is substantially abraded, can only be roughly dated to the Roman period locally produced (but unsourced), the sherd is typical of utilitarian domestic coarse wares of this region.

APPENDIX C. ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

C.1 Environmental samples

By Rachel Fosberry

C.1.1 Methodology and Results

The total volume of each sample were processed by water flotation for the recovery of charred plant remains, dating evidence and any other artefactual evidence that might be present. The flots were collected in a 0.5mm nylon mesh and the residues were washed through a 1mm mesh. Both flot and residue were allowed to air dry. The dried residues were passed through 5mm and 2mm sieves and a magnet was dragged through each resulting fraction prior to sorting for ecofacts (e.g. animal bone, fish bone, charcoal, shell, etc.) and artefacts. Any artefacts present were noted and reintegrated with the hand-excavated finds. The flot was examined under a binocular microscope at x16 magnification. Identifications were made by the author without comparison to the OA East reference collection and should be seen as provisional. Nomenclature for the plant classification follows Stace (1997).

C.1.2 A total of 30L were taken for bulk sampling, 20L from fill (106) and 20L from fill (105). When processed both samples produced results indicative of garden topsoils and subsoils, including cinder, charcoal and small fragments of coal.
APPENDIX D. OASIS REPORT FORM
All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

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**Type of Project/Techniques Used**

- Prompt: Planning condition
- Development Type: Rural Residential

**Please select all techniques used:**

- Aerial Photography - interpretation
- Aerial Photography - new
- Annotated Sketch
- Augering
- Dendrochronological Survey
- Documentary Search
- Environmental Sampling
- Fieldwalking
- Geophysical Survey
- Grab-Sampling
- Gravity-Core
- Laser Scanning
- Measured Survey
- Metal Detectors
- Photographic Survey
- Photogrammetric Survey
- Rectified Photography
- Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
- Sample Trenches
- Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure
- Targeted Trenches
- Test Pits
- Topographic Survey
- Vibro-core
- Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit)

**Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods**

List feature types using the NMR Monument Type Thesaurus and significant finds using the MDA Object type Thesaurus together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state “none”.

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## Digital Media

- Database
- GIS
- Geophysics
- Images
- Illustrations
- Moving Image
- Spreadsheets
- Survey
- Text
- Virtual Reality

## Paper Media

- Aerial Photos
- Context Sheet
- Correspondence
- Diary
- Drawing
- Manuscript
- Map
- Matrices
- Microfilm
- Misc.
- Research/Notes
- Photos
- Plans
- Report
- Sections
- Survey
## Drawing Conventions

### Plans
- **Limit of Excavation**
- **Deposit - Conjectured**
- **Natural Features**
- **Sondages/Machine Strip**
- **Intrusion/Truncation**
- **Illustrated Section**

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### Sections
- **Limit of Excavation**
- **Cut**
- **Cut-Conjectured**
- **Deposit Horizon**
- **Deposit Horizon - Conjectured**
- **Intrusion/Truncation**
- **Top Surface/Top of Natural**
- **Break in Section/ Limit of Section Drawing**

<table>
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<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
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</table>

### Cut Numbers
- **Cut Number**

### Other Elements
- **Deposit Number**
- **Ordnance Datum** 18.45m OD
- **Inclusions**
Figure 1 Location of development area outlined (red)
Figure 2: Trench plans at 1:100
Figure 3: Section drawings (Scale 1:50 and 1:20)

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Section 1

Section 2

Section 3

Gravel surface

9.56m OD

Foundation of gravel surface

10.07m OD

Water Pipe

10.08m OD

Section drawings (Scale 1:50 and 1:20)

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Plate 2