A Post-Medieval Ditch at Manor Court Road, Witchford, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Client: DCH Construction

OA East Report No: 1337
OASIS No: oxfordar3 119802
NGR: TL 5041 7893
A post-medieval ditch at Manor Court Road, Witchford, Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Evaluation

By Tom Phillips BA AIfA

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Report Date: March 2012
Report Number: 1337
Site Name: Manor Court Road, Witchford
HER Event No: ECB 3719
Date of Works: February 2012
Client Name: DCH Construction
Client Ref: Text
Planning Ref: 08/01046/FUL
Grid Ref: TL 5041 7893
Site Code: WFDMCR12
Finance Code: WFDMCR12
Receiving Body: CCC Stores, Landbeach

Accession No:
Prepared by: Tom Phillips
Position: Project Officer
Date: March 2012
CHECKED BY: Stephen Macaulay
Position: Project Manager
Date: March 2012
Signed: 

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Summary

On the 20th February 2012 Oxford Archaeology East conducted an evaluation on land to the north of 7 Manor Court Road, Witchford, Ely, Cambridgeshire. The site is located within the historic core of Witchford village, close to the 13th century church of St. Andrew.

Three trenches, each measuring 10m in length, were machine excavated within an area measuring approximately 35m x 25m. The only significant archaeological feature encountered was a post-medieval ditch in Trench 3, orientated north-north-east to south-south-west. The ditch represents a small boundary which can be seen on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map, where it encloses a small building, adjacent to a track which is now Manor Court Road.
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted on land to the north of 7 Manor Court Road, Witchford, approximately 3 miles west of Ely, Cambridgeshire (Fig. 1). The proposed development includes the construction of 5 houses and associated external works on land formerly occupied by garages.

1.1.2 This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Kasia Gdaniec of Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC; Planning Application 08/01045/FUL), supplemented by a Specification prepared by OA East.

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 Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010). 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 and topography

1.2.1 The site is located on Boulder Clay, which overlies Kimmeridge Clay (British Geological Society 1980). The site was relatively flat, measuring approximately 9m OD.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The development site is located within the historic core of the village of Witchford. The parish church of St. Andrew, a Grade II Listed Building, is situated 125m to the south. The oldest parts of the present church date to the 13th century (VCH 1967, 177), although it is believed the original church was Norman. Directly to the east of the church and opposite the entrance to Manor Court Road is Ivy House, which dates to the 17th century.

1.3.2 The area marked by Manor Court Road to the east and Common Road/Manor Road to the west, is based on older field boundaries. This area forms a large sub-square enclosure with the height of the land dropping off in all directions. The presence of the church at the southern edge of this area suggests this may be the oldest part of the village with the street names hinting at the location of the manor in the vicinity. The current site sits within this area.

1.3.3 The village itself was of great importance in the medieval period; Domesday Book refers to the two hundreds of Ely meeting at 'Wiceford', and the name 'Witchford Hundred' is mentioned from 1128 (VCH 1967, 176).

1.3.4 Archaeological investigations at Witchford Airfield, approximately 1.2km to the east, revealed Iron Age and Early Roman enclosures and settlement (Holmes 2008). Further evaluation uncovered additional settlement activity to the north, including a series of ditches, gullies and pits, dating from the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age to Late Iron Age (Simmonds and Mason 2008). Investigations during the construction of a water
pipeline revealed Roman settlement in the same vicinity (Hancock 2006). Larger scale excavations in advance of the new Witchford Recycling Centre, to the north of the airfield, revealed two Early Bronze Age beaker pits, a Late Iron Age boundary ditch and a possible Early Roman mortuary enclosure, which contained a cremation and two inhumations with unusual grave goods (Atkins 2011).

1.4 Acknowledgements
1.4.1 The site was excavated by Tom Phillips, managed by Stephen Macaulay and monitored by Kasia Gdaniec of Cambridgeshire County Council. Site survey was carried out by Taleyna Fletcher. The report is illustrated by Dave Brown.
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 The Brief required that a programme of linear trial trenching be carried out to adequately sample the threatened area. Three trenches, each measuring 10m x 1.6m (Fig. 1), were machine excavated to the horizon of the natural geology.

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

2.2.3 The site survey was carried out by Taleyna Fletcher using a Leica GPS 1200 system to locate the position of the trenches and record their heights.

2.2.4 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.

2.2.5 The water table was relatively high with standing water visible in the base of the trenches at approximately 8.6m OD. Otherwise, site conditions were favourable.
3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Results are described in order of trench, starting with the earliest deposit or feature in each. Full details by trench/context appear in Appendix A.

3.2 Trench 1

3.2.1 Trench 1 was located in the south of the development area, orientated west-north-west to east-south-east. It measured 10m in length. The only feature present was a large ceramic land drain extending east to west from the eastern end of the trench (Plate 1). It was visible for approximately 6m before disappearing beyond the trench edge. The geology was sealed by a layer of mid brown silty clay subsoil (3), measuring 0.3m thick. The subsoil was sealed by a layer of topsoil (2), which measured 0.3m thick and contained small fragments of brick. Sealing the topsoil was a layer of hardcore/made ground (1), measuring 0.1m thick.

3.3 Trench 2

3.3.1 Trench 2 was located in the west of the development area, orientated north-north-east to south-south-west. It measured 10m in length. No archaeological features were present. The geology was sealed by mid brown silty clay subsoil layer (3), measuring 0.15m thick. The subsoil was sealed by a layer of topsoil (2), which measured 0.2m thick and contained small fragments of brick. Sealing the topsoil in the southern end of the trench was a layer of hardcore/made ground (1), measuring 0.3m thick. The made ground did not appear in the northern end of the trench as this area had been covered in grass.

3.4 Trench 3

3.4.1 Trench 3 was located between trenches 1 and 2, orientated north-east to south-west and measuring 10m in length. The geology was sealed by mid brown silty clay subsoil layer (3), measuring 0.2m thick. The subsoil was truncated by the only archaeological feature of any significance on the site, a linear ditch (6) in the middle of the trench, orientated north-east to south-west (Fig. 2 and Plate 2). Ditch 6 measured 1.82m wide and at least 0.6m deep. Due to the high water table it was not possible to fully excavate the ditch although the angles of the sides suggest it would not have been more than another 0.3m deep. Ditch 6 contained two fills, the lower of which (5) was a light greyish brown silty clay, containing no finds. The upper fill (4) was a mid greyish brown silty clay, which contained two sherds of post-medieval glazed redware pottery (13g), 150g of animal bone and a broken bottle, no older than Victorian in date. The upper fill of the ditch was sealed by a layer of topsoil (2), which measured 0.3m thick.
4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Discussion
4.1.1 The single feature discovered, ditch 6, correlates with a boundary marked on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885. At that time, the site was located within the south-east corner of a large field which is today occupied by Manor Court Road, Meadow Close and Manor Close, and all the associated house plots. Within the south-east corner of this large field a small building is marked with an enclosing boundary. This boundary matches the position of ditch 6. Manor Court Road itself only extends a short distance from Main Street; the majority of the modern day road, including directly east of the site, is marked as a track. Ditch 6 should also have appeared in the north end of Trench 1 but was not present. Either the boundary was not ditched at that point or it diverted slightly.

4.2 Significance
4.2.1 The findings of the evaluation are of low archaeological significance. It has revealed the presence of a post-medieval boundary ditch visible on historic maps and has confirmed that the remainder of the site is devoid of archaeological features.

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

### Trench 1

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#### Contexts

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#### Contexts

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<td>Linear boundary ditch</td>
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<td>Post-medieval</td>
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APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY


Hancock, A., 2006, Archaeological Evaluation: Ely WT to Haddenham WT, Cambridgeshire. Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd: Milton Keynes


APPENDIX C. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details

OASIS Number: oxfordar3 119802
Project Name: Evaluation at Manor Court Road, Witchford, Cambridgeshire

Project Dates (fieldwork) Start: 20-02-2012 Finish: 20-02-2012
Previous Work (by OA East) No Future Work No

Project Reference Codes

Site Code: WFDMRC12 Planning App. No.: 08/01045/FUL
HER No.: ECB 3719 Related HER/OASIS No.: n/a

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt: Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS 5
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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Project Location

County: Cambridgeshire
District: East Cambs
Parish: Witchford
HER: Cambridgeshire
Study Area: 950 sq. m

Site Address (including postcode if possible):
7 Manor Court Road, Witchford, Ely, CB6 2JW

National Grid Reference: TL 5041 7893
### Project Originators

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<tr>
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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
Figure 1: Location map and trench layout. Development area outlined (red)
Figure 2: Plan of Trench 3 and detail of Section 1
Plate 1: View of Trench 1 looking West

Plate 2: View of Trench 3 looking South West