An Archaeological Evaluation at Nene Valley Service Station, Wansford, near Peterborough, 1993

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On Behalf of
Heron Garage Properties

Cambridgeshire County Council
ABSTRACT

In May, 1993, Cambridgeshire Archaeology completed an archaeological evaluation of land on the flood plains of the River Nene to the north of the A47 (fig. 1 (TL0843/9960)). Six trenches were opened using a mechanical excavator. No significant archaeological remains were encountered.

Figure 1 - Location of Site
1.0 INTRODUCTION

From the 4th - 6th May 1993 work was carried out to assess the archaeological potential of six acres on the floodplains of the River Nene adjacent to the A47 (fig. 1). The work was completed for Heron Garage Properties who plan to extend an existing service station on to the site.

The site is located to the immediate south of the A47 on the northern floodplains of the River Nene. The archaeological potential of the site was indicated by known concentrations of Roman material in the immediate vicinity. The proximity of the River Nene and a Roman road suggest the possibility that the site could have been used for purposes associated with the storage, transfer and transportation of goods in the Romano-British period.

2.0 BACKGROUND

The site is located on the floodplains of the River Nene and lies on second terrace river gravels. Situated in the parish of Wansford, 7.5 miles to the north-east of Peterborough, the site is immediately to the south-west of the A1 which follows the course of Ermine Street, a principal Roman road.

The parish of Wansford is particularly well documented on the County's sites and monument record (SMR), which shows extensive evidence of Romano-British settlement. Of particular interest is an extensive scheduled ancient monument (SAM 201(fig. 2)), located 200 metres to the north-east of the area under study and described as a cropmark complex, which is comparable in plan to other Roman settlements and field systems. To west of the site traces of a Roman building are recorded and to the south, immediately across the River Nene, several Roman burials have been excavated.

In addition there is more limited evidence of prehistoric, medieval and post-medieval activity in the immediate vicinity (fig. 2).

The area proposed for development is adjacent to the River Nene, is mostly flat, and is currently under pasture. In the south-east corner of the site, on the bank of the Nene, a large mound is extant in the field and will be levelled by the development.

3.0 METHODOLOGY OF EXCAVATION

Six trenches were opened by a mechanical wheeled excavator with a 1.6 metre wide toothless ditching bucket. The trenches were positioned across the area proposed for development (fig. 1). The exposed areas were cleaned by hand and any archaeological features were sampled and recorded using Cambridgeshire Archaeology's single context recording system.
Figure 2  Gazetteer of Archaeological Sites and Find Spots

00059 - Roman metal working site
00059a - Roman villa, coins, wall plaster
00059c - Roman gravestone
00120 - Anglo Saxon spearhead
00121 - Bronze Age cist burial
00122 - Roman building, iron working site
00128 - Post-medieval inn
00129 - Anglo Saxon spearhead
00131 - Roman building
00170 - Roman pottery kiln, building, well, rubbish pit, cemetery
00173 - Post-medieval great house
00173b - Fishponds
00174 - Roman coffin, urn, skeleton
00176 - Bronze Age cist burial
00177 - Roman burial, pottery, coin
00178 - Bronze Age ring ditch, barrow
00178a - Roman fort
00179 - Roman vase, manicure implement
00189 - Roman money box, pottery, mortar, coffin, horseshoe
00190, a, b - SAM 201 - Cropmark complex, possibly Roman field system
00224 - Post-medieval rectory
00225 - Post-medieval dovecote
00226 - Medieval church
00227 - Ring ditch, linear feature
00230 - Post hole
01570 - Roman pottery
01571 - Roman pottery
01970 - Neolithic worked flint
01972 - Neolithic knife
01975 - Roman pottery, tile
01976 - Neolithic, Bronze Age worked flint
01979 - Neolithic, Bronze Age worked flint
01982 - Neolithic worked flint, Roman pottery
01985 - Roman coin
01986 - Ring ditch
01989 - Roman coin
01991 - Roman pottery, glass, coin, tile, wall plaster
04474 - Enclosure
05648 - Mound
07695 - Roman pottery
10043 - Cropmark
10044 - Cropmark

N.B. Numbers refer to the Cambridgeshire Sites and Monuments Record
4.0 RESULTS

Within the area examined there was limited evidence of archaeological activity. Two 20th century drains were found aligned north/south, running from the A47 to the River Nene. Alongside one of the gullies, in Trench III, two contemporary postholes were identified. A trench through the mound in the north-eastern corner of the field showed it to be an accumulation of debris which included large quantities of unopened freshwater mussels, coal, bone, 17th century pottery, river silts and gravels. The nature of the deposit suggests that the mound is a result of periodic dredging of the Nene during the Post-medieval period to maintain the navigability of the river.

Common to all the trenches, immediately below the topsoil, a thick, compact homogenous clay deposit was recorded. Excavation through this layer found it to be over a metre deep, sterile and overlying a compact grey/blue clay. These deposits were sampled in Trenches I & II and were found to be over 2 metres deep, the actual depth of the layers was not reached due to the waterlogged nature of the site which made deep excavation unsafe. Both layers were found to be sterile, compact and are likely to represent post-glacial flooding of the River Nene.

5.0 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

On the basis of the results it seems that the river bank at this point was not subject to significant activity in the Romano-British period. The many finds of this date from the area probably indicate the presence of a Roman cemetery on the opposite, south, side of the River Nene, as well as settlement and agricultural activity upslope from the site on the north bank of the river. The activities associated with these locations do not appear to have extended down to the current riverside area, and it may well be that this was always rather waterlogged and therefore an unsuitable location for either settlement or burial practises.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

No features of archaeological significance were identified within the depths to be affected by the proposed development. It is recommended that no further work or mitigation strategy are required.

A full site archive has been completed. This is held by Cambridgeshire Archaeology, along with all artefactual material.

Copies of this report have been lodged with the County Archaeological Office and Peterborough City Planning Department.

10/05/93
Simon Bray
## Appendix A - List of Contexts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ctx. No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Nature</th>
<th>Finds</th>
<th>Above</th>
<th>Below</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>001</td>
<td>Topsoil</td>
<td>Dark brown compact silt</td>
<td>mussels &amp; animal bone</td>
<td>2,3,4,6,12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>002</td>
<td>Midden, F010 deposit</td>
<td>Light brown with slight orange staining</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>003</td>
<td>Clay deposit</td>
<td>Mid orange/brown occ. mid yellow mottling</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>004</td>
<td>Fill of gully [5]</td>
<td>Light yellow/brown, clay</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>005</td>
<td>Cut of drainage gully</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>006</td>
<td>Fill of gully [7]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>007</td>
<td>Cut of drainage gully</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>008</td>
<td>Midden deposit</td>
<td>Mid Reddy Brown sandy/gravel</td>
<td>mussels, animal bone</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>009</td>
<td>Primary fill of ditch [5]</td>
<td>Mid brown with occ. yellow mottling, silt,clay</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F010</td>
<td>Midden</td>
<td>Post-Medieval Midden from dredging the Nene contains deposits 2,8,11</td>
<td>P.Med. Pot</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>011</td>
<td>Midden, F010, deposit</td>
<td>Mid brown clayey silt</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>012</td>
<td>Fill of [13]</td>
<td>Mid brown compact clay</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>013</td>
<td>Cut of posthole</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>014</td>
<td>Clay deposit</td>
<td>Blue/grey compact clay</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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