

Introduction

Between the 13th and 18th August 2003, the Cambridge Archaeological Unit conducted an archaeological evaluation in the grounds of Jesus College, Cambridge (NGR 545116/259058). The fieldwork was undertaken anticipating the construction of a new Maintenance Workshop and Gardener's Compound. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a specification of works and was monitored by the Development Control Office of Cambridgeshire County Council.

The c. 580sqm plot lies on second terrace gravels just above the floodplain of the River Cam immediately exterior to the historical core of Cambridge (TL 45526191). It falls in the northwest quarter of the College's grounds, away from any known early College and/or Nunnery buildings.

Archaeological Background

Jesus College was founded in 1496 and adopted the buildings of the Nunnery of St Radegund (12th century foundation). During the course of the 1990s much recording work was undertaken within the College, which is summarised in Evans *et al.* 1998 (see also Whittaker 1998). More recently, investigations on Jesus Lane and Park Street have revealed extensive evidence of Cambridge's lower Roman town, including a major cemetery (see Dodwell 2002 and Alexander *et al.* forthcoming), and it was possible that related settlement features and/or agricultural systems might extend into the current site. The area also had the potential for 'typical' lowland river valley terrace-usage (i.e. prehistoric remains).

Methodology

The evaluation consisted of three trenches, comprising a total length of 20m. The topsoil and subsoil was stripped by a JCB machine, using a toothless bucket, 1.50m in width. The topsoil sealed the archaeology at an average depth of between 0.20m and 0.40m.

Metre square test pits were taken from the northernmost ends of Trenches 1 and 3 to further extend the CAU's topsoil/make-up sampling programme of the College's ground (see Evans *et al.* 1998).

Throughout the text archaeological features (e.g. a ditch or pit) are referred to with an 'F' prefix and are highlighted (e.g. **F. 1**); individual contexts are bracketed (e.g. [001]). Feature descriptions are recorded here in Appendix 1 and full descriptions are kept as part of the archive at the CAU office (site code JCW03).

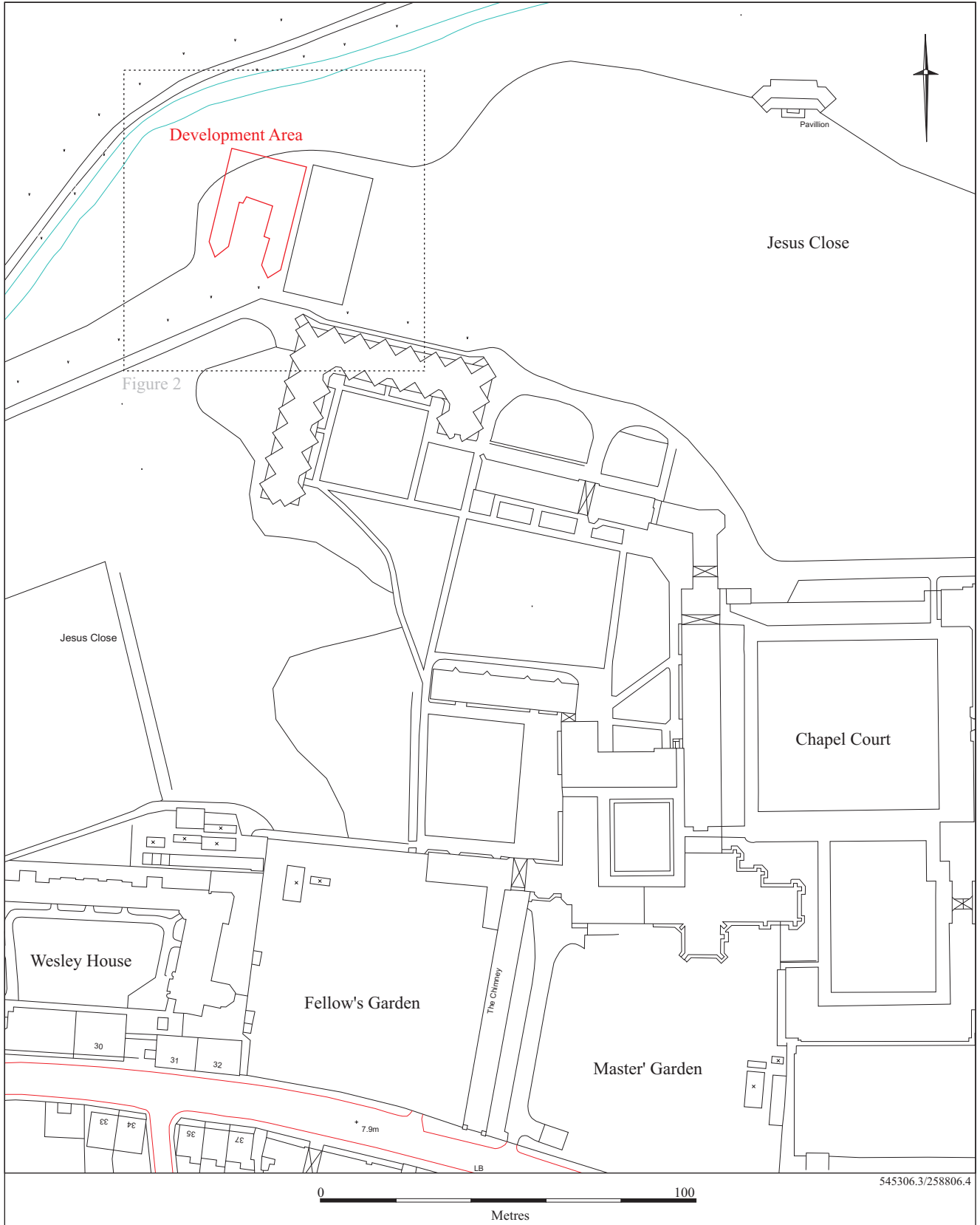


Figure 1: location map

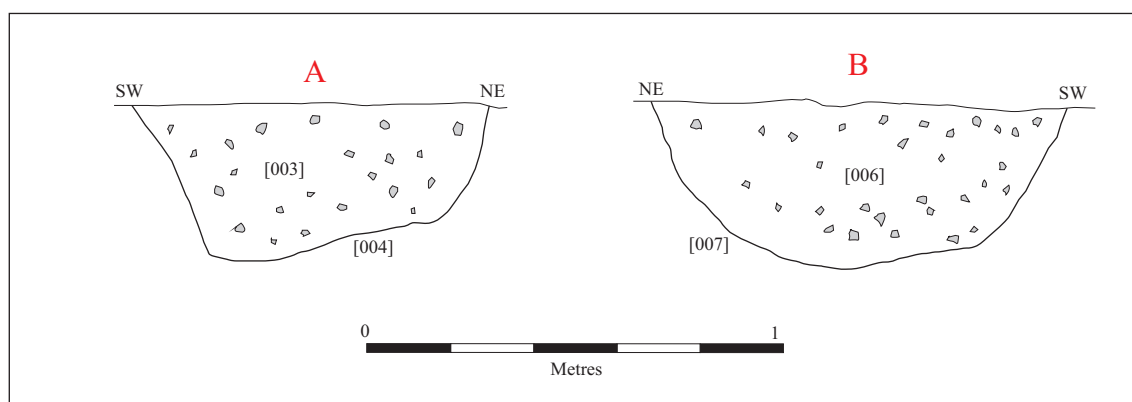
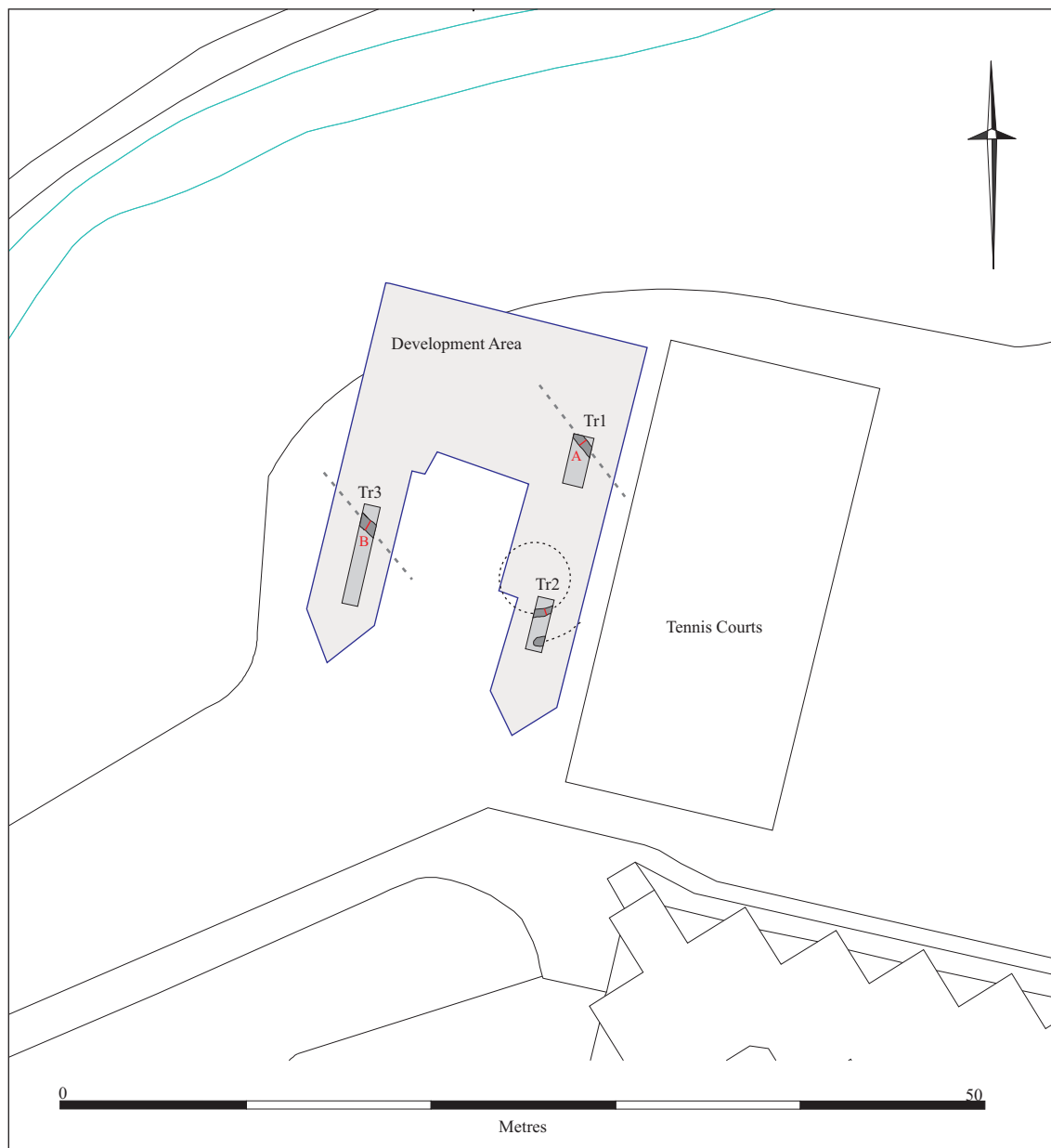


Figure 2: Trenches and Sections

Results

Four linear features were recovered, one being a probable ditch terminus. Two of these were definitely of post-Medieval date (F. 1 & 4), with the other two being of Iron Age attribution (F. 2 & 3). The depth of the topsoil was consistent across the site. The trenches were stripped to a level where the features were clearly visible.

Appendix 1 gives a brief description of each feature; however below a more detailed description follows by trench.

Trench 1

Only one feature was present representing a ditch running northwest-southeast (**F. 1**). From the section the ditch appeared to be cut through the lighter coloured subsoil suggesting a modern feature. This was confirmed by the presence of modern gun cartridges at the base of its profile.

A metre square test pit was also hand-dug from the north end of this trench, but again only produced late finds such as clay pipe stem and iron objects.

Trench 2

Two features were present in this trench. A ditch in the northern end of the trench was on a slightly curved southwest-northeast alignment (**F. 2**). In plan this was 0.60-80m wide and c. 0.35m deep ([002]; in full section profile it survived 1.30m wide and to 0.60m depth); it was filled with iron pan mottled mid brown sandy silt. At the southern end of the trench was what appeared to be the eastern sub-circular terminal of another ditch/gully, **F. 3** ([009]); 0.80m wide and 0.20m deep in plan, in the upper section it was 2.25m across and 0.70m deep. Its fill consisted of light grey-brown slightly sandy (and ashy) silts with gravels ([008]).

These features appeared to be sealed by the subsoil and gravel banding, the latter possibly derived from river/stream scouring. Both produced relatively large quantities of finds. Forthcoming from F. 2 were 10 sherds of Iron Age pottery and 18 animal bones; a sherd of Iron Age pottery and 16 animal bones were recovered from F. 3. Given this, and their stratigraphic relations, there can be no doubt of their 'early' attribution, and both probably represent Iron Age house gullies.

Trench 3

Only one feature was present, a ditch running northwest-southeast (**F. 4**). As with F. 1, the section showed that it cut through the lighter coloured subsoil. Sherds of both later Neolithic/Early Bronze Age Beaker and also Roman Samian pottery were recovered but, accompanied by post-Medieval pottery and iron garden tools (18/19th century), the ditch would also seem to be of recent attribution.

A metre square test pit was hand-dug from the northern end but produced only a few finds of 'late' date.

Trench 2

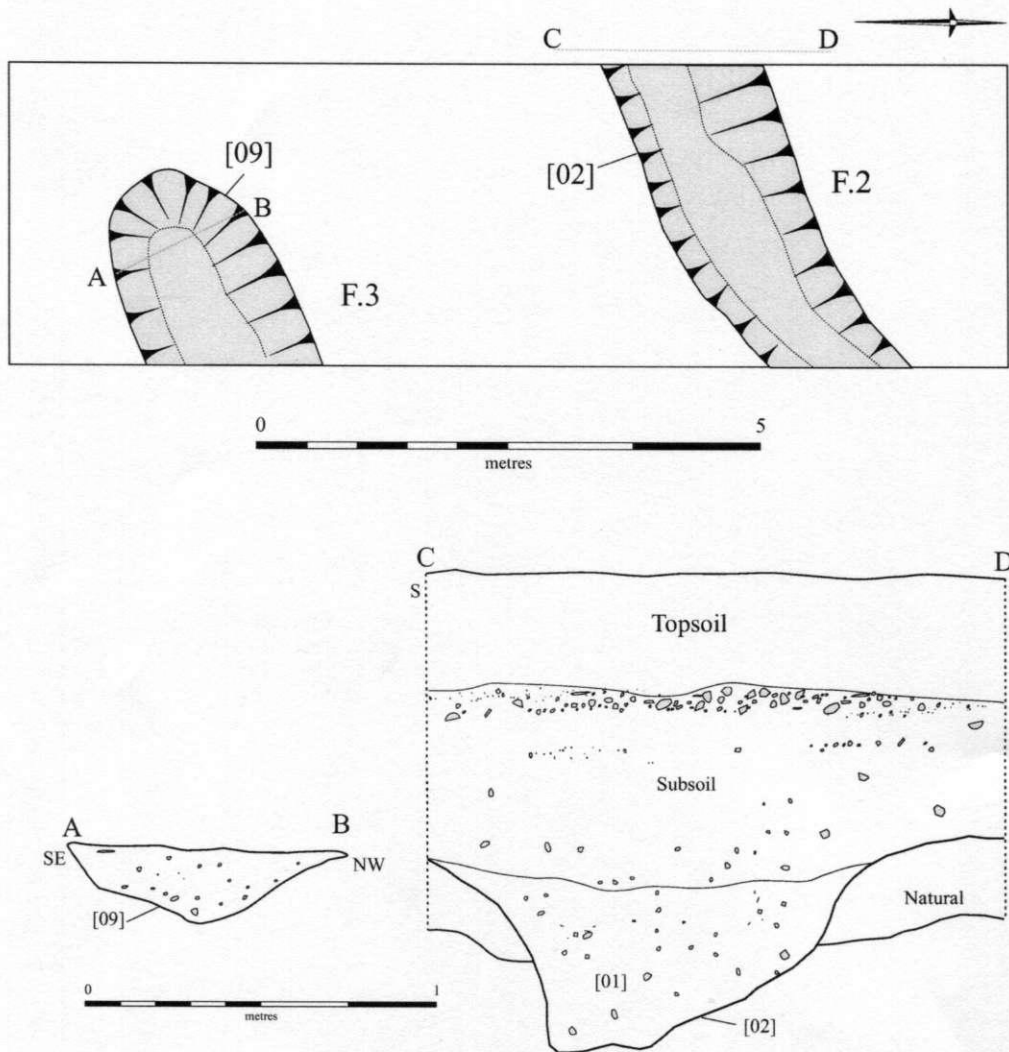


Figure 3: Plan and Sections of features within Trench 2

Prehistoric and Roman Pottery L. Webley

Neolithic/Bronze Age

A single sherd (6g) of pre-Iron Age pottery was recovered from [006]. This is a rim sherd in a fairly soft, brown fabric with moderate sand. The rim profile is slightly everted. Two horizontal cord-impressed bands are present immediately below the rim. This seems most likely to be of Beaker attribution.

Iron Age

Eleven sherds (215g) of handmade Iron Age pottery were recovered from two contexts. [001] contained ten sherds, nine of which are from one vessel, while [008] contained only a single sherd.

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The vessel represented by nine sherds (206g) from [001] is in a hard, reduced fabric with common fine to medium sand and sparse voids from plant material. Most of the sherd edges are very fresh showing breakage upon excavation. Five of the sherds refit to form a substantial rim and wall fragment, 15cm high. A slight flaring of the vessel wall at the lower end suggests that the profile is complete almost the base. Wall width is generally 1.1cm. Too little of the rim diameter survives for accurate measurement, but it seems to be 20cm or more. The vessel can be described as a coarseware bowl of 'saucepan pot' type with an upright rim and slack shoulder. The rim profile varies along the sherd, at one end being of a simple rounded form, and at the other being irregularly thickened both internally and externally to give a slightly T-shaped profile. The upper surface of the rim is embellished with fingernail impressions, placed diagonally to give a 'cabled' effect. The outer surface of the pot has a rough feel, and at the shoulder is actually fairly irregularly formed.

The remaining sherd (6g) from [001] is a rim in a hard fabric with common fine to medium sand and sparse medium to coarse chalk. This is a simple upright flat-topped rim with no decoration.

Context [008] meanwhile contained a single small sherd (3g) in a hard sandy fabric similar to the vessel from [001]. This appears to be a base angle sherd.

In form and fabric the bowl from [001] is characteristic of the later Iron Age (after c. 300 BC) of eastern England. The other two sherds are consistent with this. The 'cabled' rim decoration is not in itself very chronologically specific as it is found in the local area throughout the Iron Age (e.g. New Addenbrooke's and Wandlebury).

Roman

A single sherd (9g) of Samian with rouletted decoration was found as residual material in [005]/[006]. Identified by K.Anderson, this is a fragment of a Central Gaulish 18R dish (1st-2nd century AD).

The Animal Bone from F. 2 & 3 C. Swaysland

A small assemblage of animal bone was recovered from the Iron Age cut features. A total of 29 fragments was examined of which 13 were identified to species or broad size category. The bone was analysed on order to gain an insight into the species present and to highlight any patterns evident in element distribution, age profiles, butchery and spatial distribution. Quantification is by Number of Identified Specimens (NISP) only; any fragments that refitted as a result of fresh breaks were only counted once.

| SPECIES | NISP | NISP % |
|---------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Cattle | 5 | 38.5 |
| Sheep/goat | 3 | 23.1 |
| Pig | 1 | 7.7 |
| Medium sized mammal | 3 | 23. |
| Large sized mammal | 1 | 7.7 |

Table 1: Number of identified specimens by species

The small size of the sample limits any interpretation that may be made. The only conclusion that may be made with any confidence is that cattle, sheep and pig were present on the site. One sheep/goat mandible indicated an age at death of less than 21 months. 30.8% of bones showed evidence of carnivore gnawing.

Discussion

The recovery of evidence of Iron Age settlement within the grounds of the College must be considered 'incidental'. It essentially relates to Cam river valley distributions in general and not the development of Cambridge as such (i.e. as a 'place'). This being said, it falls just east of what is now known to be the (lower) town's Roman core as has recently been identified through the Jesus Lane and Park St. investigations (Dodwell 2002; Alexander *et al.* forthcoming). Although this represents the first indication of Iron Age occupation within the area of the lower, eastern Cam-bank town, it further adds to the corpus of settlement of that period within the immediate Cambridge area. This includes not only the Castle Hill findings (Alexander & Pullinger 2000) and the New Hall, Vicar's Farm and Barton Road South sites (Evans 1996; Lucas & Whittaker 2001; Mackay 2002), but also the enclosure at Marion Close (Mortimer & Evans 1997); the 'great' settlement complex at Greenhouse Farm on Newmarket Road (Gibson & Lucas 2002) and the 'fort' at Arbury (Evans & Knight 2002) lying slightly further afield. Based on contemporary cemetery evidence, the Cambridge area is thought to have been a significant regional 'centre' during the earlier Late Iron Age, only thereafter falling into decline in favour of a more southern focus (Hill *et al.* 1999). However this picture may well require re-addressing through recent fieldwork in the Addenbrooke's environs.

Having high artefact densities, in all likelihood Features 2 and 3 in Trench 2 both represent the eavesgullies of Iron Age roundhouses. Apart from this observation, little more can be said of the character of this settlement without further exposure. It does, nevertheless, warrant notice that no later prehistoric material whatsoever was found within the other two trenches. Whilst suggesting that the occupation might have been quite localised (and/or only extending southwards), the evidence of water scouring within the soil profile might account for the lack of more widespread surface material/finds.

Otherwise, the recovery of Beaker pottery (in residual context) can only be considered a 'background' find and generally reflective of later Neolithic/Early Bronze Age activity on the riverside terrace; worked flint has been recovered from the previous Jesus College excavations (e.g. Evans *et al.* 1998; Whittaker 1998). The finding of a 'scrap' of Roman pottery from the evaluation trenches probably relates to Romano-British agricultural practices (i.e. manuring) and not settlement *per se*. In this regard it is comparable to the results of the 1992/3 College Library site and the 1998 Accommodation Block excavations (Evans *et al.* 1998; Whittaker 1998). The recovery at both of a few of sherds of Romano-British pottery (possibly relating to otherwise unattributable field boundary ditches) suggest that in Roman times the area lay in fields and fell immediately 'behind' the Jesus Lane/Park St. lower town core (though related settlement may well extend into the western margins of the College's grounds).

Finds List

| Cat. No | Context | Mat. | No. | Area | Location | Notes | Wt(g) |
|---------|---------------|------|-----|-------|------------|---|-------|
| 001 | 001 | PT | 13 | Tr. 2 | | | 232 |
| 002 | 001 | BN | 18 | Tr. 2 | | teeth in situ | 126 |
| 003 | 003 | PT | 1 | Tr. 1 | | Roman | 5 |
| 004 | 003 | BN | 4 | Tr. 1 | | | 48 |
| 005 | 003 | TL | 1 | Tr. 1 | | | 15 |
| 006 | 006 | PT | 2 | Tr. 3 | | Beaker? | 6 |
| 007 | 006 | SL | 1 | Tr. 3 | | | 1 |
| 008 | 006 | OT | 3 | Tr. 3 | | cinders | 13 |
| 009 | 006 or 005 | PT | 4 | Tr. 3 | | 1 Samian, 3 18th/19thc whites | 23 |
| 010 | 007 | BN | 1 | Tr. 3 | | | 1 |
| 011 | 007 | TP | 1 | Tr. 3 | | | 3 |
| 012 | 007 | BT | 1 | Tr. 3 | | | 1 |
| 013 | 008 | PT | 2 | | | Iron Age | 3 |
| 014 | 008 | BN | 16 | | | | 367 |
| 015 | | PT | 3 | Tr. 1 | Test pit 1 | 1 plant pot, 1 blue and white early 19thc. 1 abraded sandy-Roman | 21 |
| 016 | | BN | 3 | Tr. 1 | Test pit 1 | | 6 |
| 017 | | TP | 2 | Tr. 1 | Test pit 1 | | 2 |
| 018 | | TL | 3 | Tr. 1 | Test pit 1 | | 122 |
| 019 | | BR | 1 | Tr. 1 | Test pit 1 | | 25 |
| 020 | | BF | 1 | Tr. 1 | Test pit 1 | | 18 |
| 021 | | GL | 1 | Tr. 1 | Test pit 1 | | 2 |
| 022 | | ST | 1 | Tr. 1 | Test pit 1 | slate | 6 |
| 023 | | BS | 1 | Tr. 1 | Test pit 1 | finely dressed oolitic limestone | 507 |
| 024 | | OT | 16 | Tr. 2 | | coal - sample | 21 |
| 025 | | SL | 4 | Tr. 2 | | sample | 14 |
| 026 | | BN | 4 | Tr. 3 | Test pit | 1m sq | 11 |
| 027 | | TL | 1 | Tr. 3 | Test pit | 1m sq | 17 |
| 028 | | TP | 1 | Tr. 3 | Test pit | 1m sq | 2 |
| 029 | | OT | 2 | Tr. 3 | Test pit | 1m sq oyster shell | 1 |
| 030 | | PT | 1 | | surface | early 19thc. drain pipe frag | 55 |
| 031 | 001 | MT | 3 | | surface | Fe - 1 nail, 1 hook? | 20 |
| 032 | 001 | MT | 6 | Tr. 1 | | Fe - nails | 12 |
| 033 | 003 | MT | 3 | Tr. 3 | | Fe - ? | 19 |
| 034 | 005 | MT | 10 | Tr. 3 | | Fe - fork frag, wire and nails | 183 |
| 035 | | MT | 4 | Tr. 1 | Test pit 1 | Fe - 3 nails, 1 screw | 48 |
| 036 | 001 | MT | 2 | Tr. 1 | | Cu alloy - bullet cases | 21 |

Feature descriptions

| Context | Feature | Plan | Section | Cut/fill | Type | Shape/orient. | Description | Length | Width | Depth | Sides | Base | Notes |
|---------|---------|------|---------|----------|-------|---------------|--|--------|-------|-------|-----------|---------|---|
| 1 | 2 | 6 | 1&2 | F | | | mid brown with orange mottling, sandy silt with frequent sm-med stone and gravel inclusions. Mod loose and friable | | | | | | |
| 2 | 2 | 6 | 1&2 | C | ditch | linear NE-SW | IA ditch | 1.70+ | 0.80 | 0.39 | mod steep | concave | runs SW towards brook |
| 3 | 1 | 7 | 3&4 | f | | | dark brown slightly sandy silt with large gravel inclusions, mod compact but quite friable | | | | | | |
| 4 | 1 | 7 | 3&4 | C | ditch | linear NW-SE | post-Medieval ditch | 2.50+ | 0.84 | 0.36 | mod steep | concave | poss an earlier ditch that was later re-dug and re-used |
| 5 | 4 | 8 | 9&10 | F | | | dark brown black , sandy silt with mod to freq sm-med stone inclusions, compact and only slightly cohesive | | | | | | |
| 6 | 4 | 8 | 9&10 | F | | | dark brown black with occasional orange mottling, sandy silt with freq sm-med stone inclusions, compact and only slightly cohesive | | | | | | |
| 7 | 4 | 8 | 9&10 | C | ditch | linear NW-SE | post-Medieval ditch | 1.80+ | 1.00 | 0.38 | gradual | concave | poss an earlier ditch that was later re-dug and re-used |
| 8 | 3 | 6 | 11&12 | F | | | light grey brown, slightly sandy ashy silt, moderately compact and very slightly cohesive with mod to freq sm-med stone inclusions | | | | | | |
| 9 | 3 | 6 | 11&12 | C | pit | oval | oval pit or ditch terminus | 1.00+ | 0.80 | 0.21 | gradual | concave | continues into baulk so unclear whether pit or ditch terminus |

Acknowledgments

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