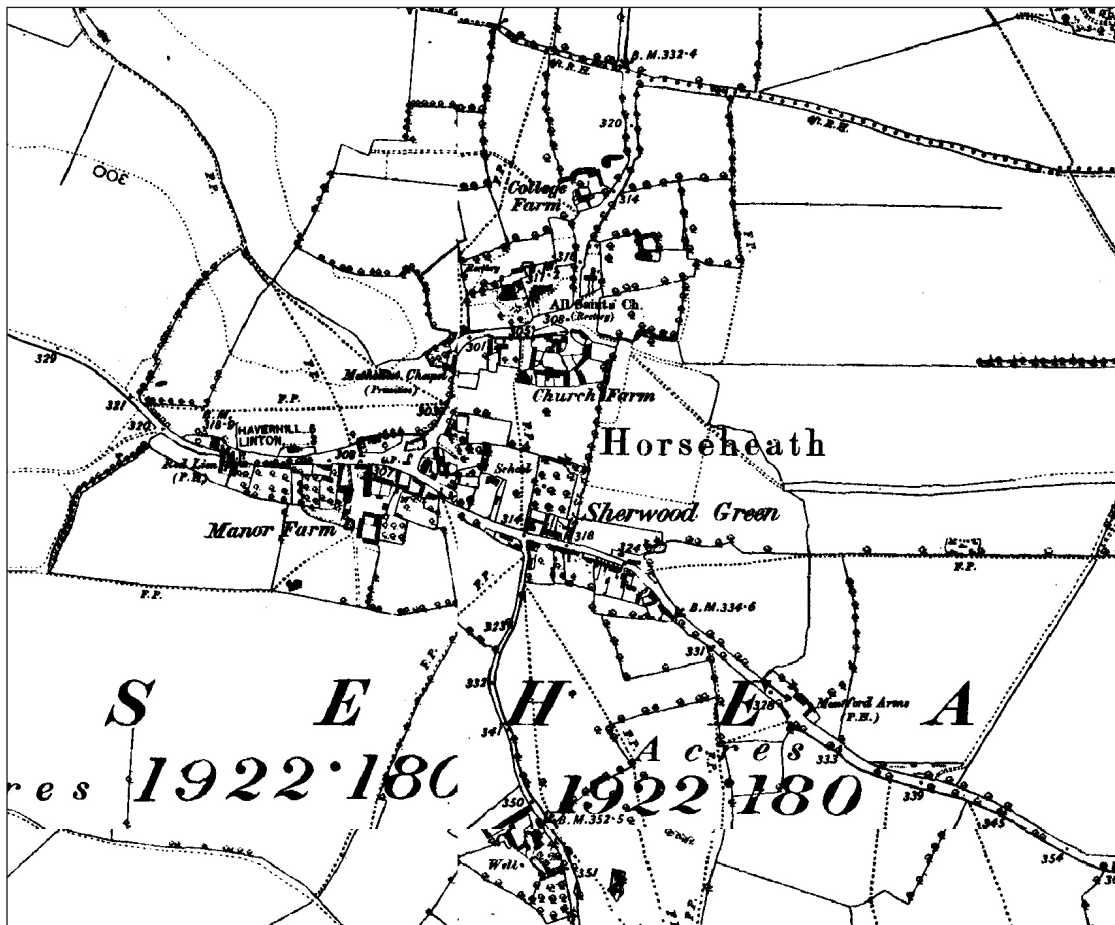


# ORCHARD HOUSE, HORSEHEATH, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

An Archaeological Evaluation



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**ORCHARD HOUSE, HORSEHEATH,  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

**An Archaeological Evaluation**

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With contributions from Katie Anderson, Chris Swaysland  
and Anne de Vereilles.

**CAMBRIDGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT**

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## ***Summary***

*Cambridge Archaeological Unit undertook an archaeological evaluation within the proposed footprint of a residential development at Orchard House, Horseheath, Cambridgeshire in January 2007. The evaluation consisted of four trenches with an overall length of 40m that revealed Romano-British activity as well as several post-medieval features.*

## **Introduction**

The archaeological evaluation was commissioned by the executors of the estate of Mrs P.J Howell in response to a condition of planning permission in advance of residential development. The trial trenching at Orchard House was undertaken by archaeologists from Cambridge Archaeological Unit between the 23rd and 26th of January 2007. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a project design approved and monitored by Senior Archaeologist, Andy Thomas at Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and Countryside Advice (CAPCA).

### *Location and topography*

The proposed development area (PDA) comprises 0.129 ha of land on the eastern side of West Wickham Road, Horseheath, Cambridgeshire (centred 561448 247469) Figure 1. The underlying geology is chalky, sandy, stony clay till (British Geological Survey 2002), and the site lies at a height of 95m OD.

### *Archaeological background*

The PDA lay in proximity to several known monuments and significant archaeological sites that date from the Iron Age to the post-medieval periods. Early to late Iron Age pottery, including “high status Belgic-wares” (Parsons 1931), were found at two locations to the northwest of the PDA (**HER 07328A – MCB8847** and **HER 07373a – MCB8912**), providing evidence for the earliest archaeological activity recovered from within a 500m radius of the PDA.

Known Romano-British activity in the vicinity is more plentiful. The Worstead Street Roman road is thought to run east-west 250m north of the site (**HER 07970 – MCB9602**), forming part of the *Via* joining Haverhill to Godmanchester (Fox 1923), which potentially originated in Colchester. It has been suggested that it was constructed following a prehistoric Ridgeway (Malim 2000), although this has yet to be proved archaeologically. A section of the Roman road and associated ditches were exposed during excavations in advance of work on the A11, to the northwest of the PDA (Wait 1992). Roman artefacts and potential subsurface features have also been exposed and collected around the postulated route of the road (**HER 07373 – MCB8911**).

Potential Romano-British occupation sites were exposed to the northwest and to the west of the PDA, revealing areas of pebble paving and Roman artefacts including pottery (**HER 07328 – MCB8846** and **HER 07375 – MCB8914**) It has also been suggested that the area of Hanging Hill, to the northwest of the PDA may be the site of a probable Roman Villa (Walker 1910), whilst an isolated cluster of Roman pottery was also found to the north of the PDA in West Wickham (**HER 07343 – MCB8871**).

The most visible evidence for medieval activity in the surrounding area is provided by All Saints' Church, immediately across the West Wickham road from the PDA. All Saints' dates from the medieval through to the modern periods (**HER 07341 – MCB8865**), and consists of a chancel and aisle-less nave with a western tower. The majority of the masonry is mortared field stones with ashlar dressing and quoins, and fragments of 12th century Barnack masonry, identifiable from the typical incised chevrons visible in the fabric of the building (Elrington 1978). Barnack stone was commonly used in the construction of ecclesiastical buildings such as the abbeys and cathedrals at Peterborough, Crowland, Ramsey, Sawtry and Bury St Edmunds. The closure of the source quarry in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century halted the use of the stone.

The church was substantially rebuilt in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, which is apparent from the decorative brass work of this period, including a figure of William de Audeley dating to 1365 (Le Strange 1984). Medieval Graffiti can also be seen on the south-western perpendicular styled window of the nave dating to between the 14th and 16th century (Leyland 1984). The remains of a medieval socketted stone cross, potentially originally a market cross, are visible within the church grounds (**07341A-MCB8866**). The cross was moved from immediately outside the village Post-Office to the churchyard in the mid 20th century, suggesting its original position was also an area of medieval activity. A medieval moat is located to the northeast of the PDA within the grounds of College Farm (**HER 01169 – MCB1512**) and several medieval earthworks, including a hollow way, house platforms, a pond and boundary marker, are located to the west (**HER 07339 – MCB8862**). The medieval village is known to have moved towards the main road during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century (**HER 08168 – MCB9811**) when part of the medieval village street was enclosed within Horseheath Park (Oosthuizen 1985).

Evidence for earlier post-medieval activity in the vicinity of the PDA was provided by a post medieval brick kiln identified to the west (**HER 07339A – MCB8863**) within the medieval earthworks. Several buildings in the village also date from this period: Forge Cottage, The Old Rectory, Church Farmhouse and Chapel View to the southwest of the PDA and Hartford House to the west, all have 17<sup>th</sup> century origins, whilst Norfolk House was built in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Lyndale Cottage to the southwest was built slightly later, in the late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century, whilst Manor Farm, also to the southwest dates to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and Horseheath lodge has a 19<sup>th</sup> a century foundation (**HER 07338 – MCB8861**).



Figure 1. Location plan

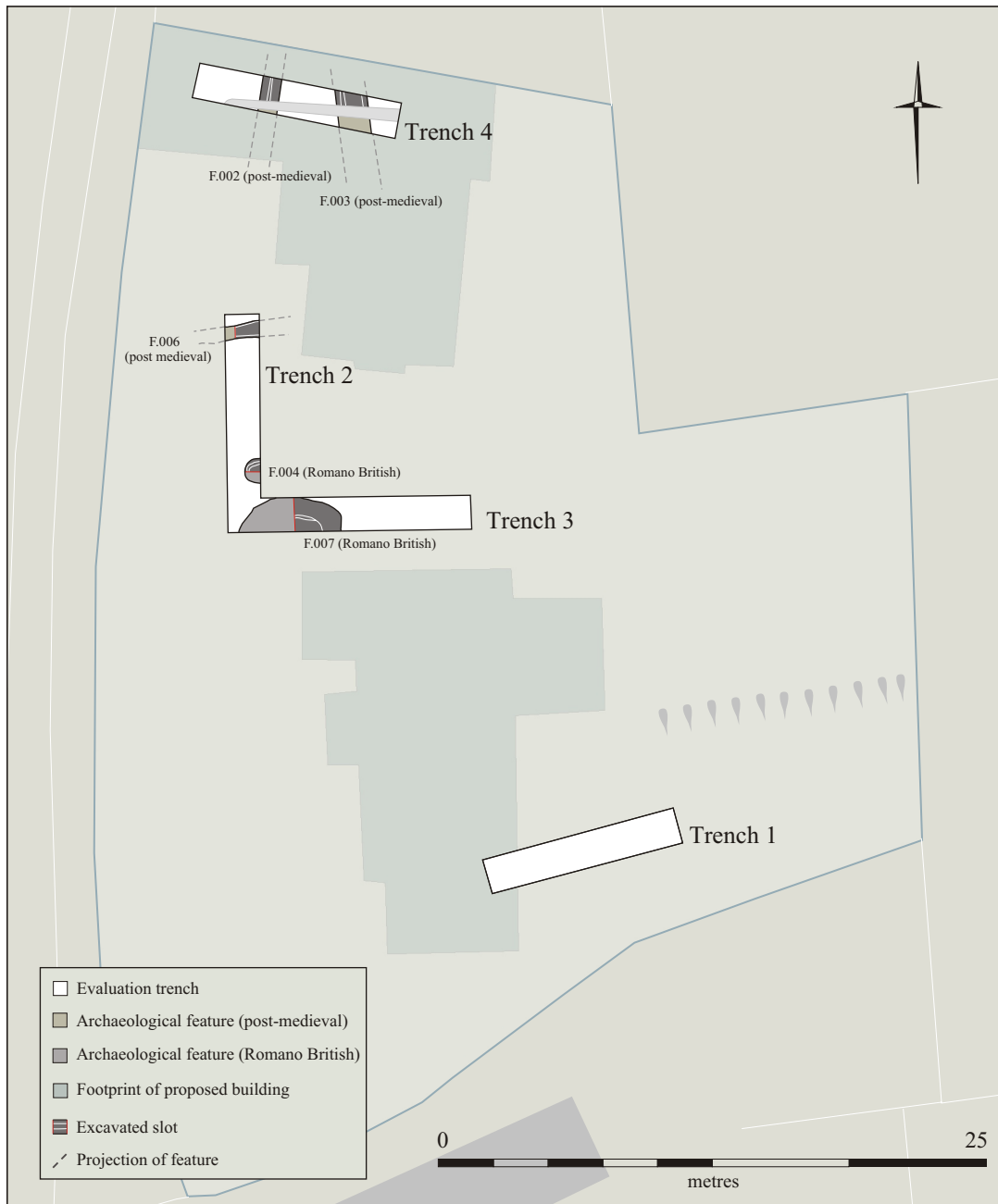


Figure 2. Trench location plan

## *Methodology*

A tracked machine with a 1.8m wide ditching bucket excavated four trenches with an overall length of 40m, a maximum of 72 square metres, which was approximately a 4% sample of the proposed development area. Topsoil and/or overburden and subsoil were machined, under constant archaeological supervision, to expose the geological 'natural' and any underlying archaeological features.

The machined trenches were planned immediately at 1:50. Discrete archaeological features were half sectioned and 1m slots were excavated in less physically bounded features. Excavation was carried out by hand and all finds were retained. The recording followed a CAU modified MoLAS system (Spence 1990); assigning feature numbers, F., to stratigraphic events, and numbers, (fill) or [cut], to individual contexts. Base plans were drawn at 1:50, sections at 1:10. A representative range of features were environmentally sampled. All work was carried out in strict accordance with statutory Health and Safety legislation and with the recommendations of SCAUM (Allen and Holt 2002). The site code was HOR07.

## **Results**

A total of four trenches were opened within the PDA, three of which contained archaeological features (Figure 2). The geological 'natural' throughout the site was light brown sandy clay with large quantities of chalk and flint nodules.

### *Trench 1*

Trench 1, in the southern part of the PDA, was 9m long, orientated east-west and was a maximum of 1.1m deep. The upper deposit was a 0.7m thick layer of dark grey to black silty clay topsoil with large quantities of roots and occasional post-medieval pottery and brick fragments. This garden soil overlay a 0.4m deposit of firmly compacted light to mid-grey silty clay sub-soil with high levels of loose sandy gravel inclusions. The 'natural' sloped noticeably to the south. No archaeological features were identified within Trench 1. A very modern brick structure was exposed near the surface of the eastern section of the trench and probably was a garden feature.

### *Trench 2*

Trench 2 was centrally placed within the PDA. The east-west orientated trench was 11.2m in length and was a maximum of 0.7m deep. A 0.4m deep deposit of dark grey to black silty grey topsoil overlay a 0.3m thick deposit of light to mid-grey silty clay sub-soil containing large amounts of modern disturbance related to the construction of the adjacent house. Several irregular depressions in the 'natural' throughout the trench were identified as tree-throws. One archaeological feature was exposed in the western end of the trench dating to the early Romano-British period.

**F007** [014] (Figure 3), was a large sub-rounded pit, emerging from the southern baulk of the trench. 4.8m in overall length and an exposed width of 1.8m, with irregular, moderately sloping sides that steepened towards the base. The base was irregular and generally flat and was a maximum of 0.6m in depth. A basal fill [017] was a compacted, mid to dark brown,

silty clay with occasional charcoal flecking. No datable artefacts were recovered from this fill.

The upper fill was a moderately compacted mid to light brown silty clay with occasional charcoal flecking. Two fragments of first or second century, Romano-British pottery (Appendix 1) and one fragment of horse metatarsal (Appendix 2) were found.

### *Trench 3*

Trench 3 was 10m long and was orientated north south from the western end of Trench 2. Trench 3 was a maximum of 0.7m deep with a 0.4m deep deposit of dark grey to black silty grey topsoil overlaying a 0.3m deposit of light to mid-grey silty clay sub-soil. Several irregular sub-circular depressions within the 'natural' were identified as tree throws. Two archaeological features were revealed within Trench 3, dating to the Romano-British and post-medieval periods:

**F006** [012], was an east-west aligned linear ditch crossing the trench with a maximum width of 0.8m. It had sharply sloping sides leading to a flat base, a maximum of 0.24m in depth. The fill of the ditch [011] was a mid brown, moderately compacted sandy clay with occasional charcoal flecking and root activity. Mottling by occasional small, very eroded fragments of post-medieval brick and mortar identified within this fill, and it was thought that F006 represented a post-medieval agricultural feature.

**F004** [008] was a sub-rounded pit 0.6m in diameter, with sharp, almost vertical sides becoming rounded towards a flat base. A single fill of mid grey, moderately compacted sandy clay [007] contained a single sherd of Samian ware, suggesting an association with F007 immediately to the south within Trench 2.

### *Trench 4*

Trench 4 was the northernmost trench in the evaluated area; 9m in length and aligned east-west. Trench 4 was a maximum of 0.6m deep, with a 0.25m deep deposit of dark grey to black silty grey topsoil overlying a 0.35m deposit of light to mid-grey silty clay sub-soil. Two post-medieval features were exposed in Trench 4 as well as a modern south-west to north-east aligned service trench. The presence and location of the modern service trench restricted the quantity of the post-medieval features available for excavation.

**F002** [004], was a north-south running linear ditch crossing the trench, 1.1m in maximum width, with moderately steep, sloping sides leading down to a rounded 'V' shaped base a maximum of 0.32m in depth. Large unworked flint nodules regularly protruded from the edges and base. A single fill [003] was a moderately compacted, mid to dark brown silty clay with occasional loose unworked flint and gravels and high quantities of roots.

**F003** [006], was a north-north west to south-south east running linear ditch crossing the trench, a maximum of 1.35 in width. The south-south west side was straight, almost vertical, whilst the north-north east side was steeply sloped. The base was generally flat with a slight concavity, a maximum depth of 0.4m. F003 contained one fill, [005], which was a moderately compacted, mid to light brown sandy clay with occasional charcoal flecks and very occasional roots. The fill of F003 was almost identical to the natural subsoil, and the cut of the feature could be seen in the section as cutting through the subsoil. This suggested a later post-medieval date for this feature.

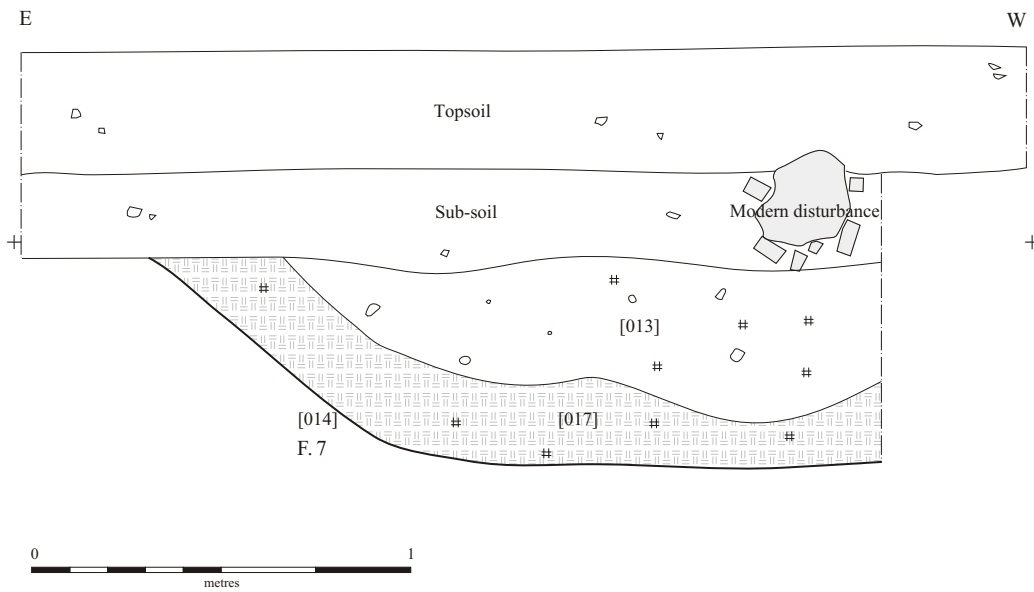


Figure 3. North facing section, F. 7, Trench 2.

## Discussion

No prehistoric material was recovered during the evaluation, which corresponded with recorded archaeological evidence in the vicinity of the proposed development area. The earliest phase of activity exposed at the site was Romano-British, no Saxon or medieval features were revealed, and the remaining three features were post-medieval.

### *Romano-British activity*

Evidence for Romano-British activity at the site was provided by a large pit (F007) in Trench 2. Two sherds of Romano-British pottery were recovered from the pit; a Greyware rim dating from the 1st to 2nd century A.D, and a small, eroded unidentifiable sherd dating more broadly to the Romano-British period. A second, smaller pit, F004, within Trench 3, lay adjacent to F007 and produced a single sherd of mid to late 1st century A.D Samian (Appendix 1). The similarity of dates between the two features suggests that some form of Romano-British settlement or activity was in the vicinity of the PDA. However, as no other Romano-British features were exposed during the evaluation settlement may have been focussed elsewhere, with F007 and F004 representing the settlement periphery.

### *Post-medieval activity*

Three features identified during the evaluation could be dated to the post-medieval period, all three were shallow ditches. F002 within Trench 4 (Figure 2), was aligned north-south, parallel to the road and following the slope of the natural contours of the land. F002 was a probable drainage gully potentially associated with post-medieval agricultural practices. The east-west aligned ditch F006 within Trench 3 was at right angles to F002, suggesting a possible association. Red brick and mortar mottling within the fill indicated a post medieval date. The ditch may have been a drainage gully aligned towards a roadside ditch to the west. A second ditch within Trench 4, F003, was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east and was another potential drainage or boundary ditch. F003 cut through the lowest 0.2m of sub-soil, a material that seemed to have been re-deposited as fill into the cut itself, which indicated a post-medieval date, suggests the ditch may have been the most recent archaeological feature exposed at the site.

The large quantity of root and tree-throw disturbance throughout the site corresponds with the known post-medieval use of the PDA as an orchard, a land use that potentially accounts for the drainage ditches found throughout the evaluated area. An orchard is still visible within the property immediately to the north of the site.

The 0.45m difference in the depth of topsoil between Trench 4, the northernmost of the trenches and Trench 1, the southernmost of the trenches indicated a phase of post-medieval ground levelling. The original contours of the site were visible immediately to the east of the PDA, an area approximately 1m higher than the current ground surface, that slopes steeply to the south. This higher eastern area appears to have been

the original ground surface that was levelled over the rest of the evaluated area, reduced in the northern part and raised in the southern part. The steep slope of the West-Wickham road immediately to the west seems to follow the original ground contours, as does the much lower house immediately to the south of the PDA. 18-19th century post-medieval pottery and brick was noted within the topsoil throughout the evaluated area, but was seen in greater concentrations within the deeper material to the south, suggesting that the overburden was imported from the northern part of the site to consolidate the ground.

## **Conclusion**

The evaluation at Orchard House has complimented and added to the understanding of the multi-period activity in and around the village of Horseheath. The Romano-British pits indicate that some form of occupation during this period, that was probably associated with the route of the Roman road 250m to the north of the evaluated area. However the character and density of the Romano-British features suggests that they were not part of a densely occupied area, but are more likely to represent the periphery of activity, the focus of which was potentially centered around the road.

## **Acknowledgements**

The evaluation was commissioned and funded by the estate of Mrs P.J. Howell. Hayley Roberts carried out the site work, Iain Forbes, Vicki Herring and Bryan Crossan provided the graphics, Donald Horne surveyed the site and the site-work was monitored by Andy Thomas (CAPCA). Emma Beadsmoore managed the project.

**Appendix 1:*****Roman Pottery – Katie Anderson***

Three sherds of Roman pottery were collected from the HOR07 evaluation. Feature 007 [013] contained two sherds, comprising one coarse sandy greyware jar, with a flat topped beaded rim, dating between mid 1<sup>st</sup> to mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. There was also one small oxidised sandy sherd weighing 1g, which could only be dated as Romano-British.

Feature 4 contained one Southern Gaulish Samian sherd, weighing 1g, dating mid-late 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

The quantity of pottery is too small to be able to make many assumptions about the potential nature of the site. However, the similarity in date of the two datable sherds, suggest occupation (on any scale) was during the first half of the Roman period.

**Appendix 2:*****Animal Bone- Chris Swaysland***

One bone was recovered from context [013], F.007 dated to the Romano-British period. The bone was in a reasonable condition and was identified as a left proximal horse metatarsal.

**Appendix 3:**  
***Assessment of Bulk Environmental Samples***  
*Anne de Vareilles*

**Methodology**

The three samples collected from Horseheath were processed using an Ankara-type flotation machine at the Cambridge Archaeological Unit. The flots were collected in a 300µm mesh and the remaining heavy residues washed over a 1mm mesh. The flots were dried indoors and scanned for the presence of charred plant remains and molluscs.

Sorting and identification of macro remains were carried out under a low power binocular microscope. Identifications were made using the reference collection of the George Pitt-Rivers Laboratory, McDonald Institute, University of Cambridge. All environmental remains are listed in the table below.

**Preservation**

All plant remains were preserved through carbonisation. All samples contained intrusive modern rootlets and wild plant seeds, indicating some bioturbation with the possible mixing of contexts and loss of plant remains.

**Results**

Sample	<1>	<2>	<3>
Feature	7	2	3
Context	[13]	[3]	[5]
Volume – litres	3.5	7	5
Charcoal			
>4mm	-	-	-
2-4mm	-		-
<2mm	+	+	++
Parenchyma			-
Slag?	+	+	

As the table shows, the only plant macro remains found were a few pieces of charcoal and one small lump of undifferentiated plant storage tissue (parenchyma).

The possible fragments of slag have a soft, shiny surface texture and are quite heavily pitted with vacuoles.

Key: ‘-’ 1 or 2, ‘+’ >10, ‘++’ 10-50 items

**Conclusion**

Such small quantities of charcoal are probably residual, and do not categorically indicate human domestic activities in those areas surrounding the features sampled.

**Appendix 4:**  
***Submitted Oasis Data.***

Oasis ID: cambridg5-23855

**Project Details:**

Project Name: Orchard House, Horseheath, Cambridgeshire.  
Short Description of Project: Archaeological evaluation prior to small residential development. Four trenches totalling 40m in length revealed two features of a Romano-British Date and three of a post-medieval date.  
Project Dates: Start: 23-01-07 End: 26-01-07  
Previous/ Future Work: No/No  
Type of Project: Field Evaluation  
Current Land Use: Garden  
Significant Finds: Pottery; Roman  
Methods and Techniques: Environmental Sampling, Photographs, Test Trenches.  
Development Type: Landowner Pre-sale planning application.  
Prompt: Direction from local planning authority.  
Position in Planning Process: After full determination.

**Project Location:**

Country: England  
Site Location: Cambridgeshire, South Cambridgeshire, Horseheath, Orchard House.  
Postcode: CB21 4QA  
Study Area: 0.13 Hectares  
Site Co-Ordinates: TL 561448-247469  
51.8988894022 0.269739873838  
51 53 56 N 000 16 11 E  
Height OD: Min 95.00m Max 95.50m.

**Project Creators:**

Name of Organisation: Cambridge Archaeological Unit  
Project Brief/ Originator: Local Authority Archaeologist/ Planning Authority.  
Project design: Emma Beadsmoore  
Project director: Emma Beadsmoore  
Project Supervisor: Adam Slater  
Type of Funding Body: Landowner.

### **Project Archives:**

Physical Archive Recipient:	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Physical Archive ID:	HOR07
Physical Contents:	Ceramics, Animal Bones, Environmental.
Digital Archive Recipient:	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Archive ID:	HOR07
Digital Contents:	Animal Bones, Ceramics, Environmental, Stratigraphic, Survey
Digital Media Available :	Digital Photography, Text
Paper Archive Recipient:	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Paper Archive ID:	HOR07
Paper Archive Contents:	Stratigraphic, Survey
Paper Media Available:	Context Sheets, Correspondence, Diary, Drawing, Photographic, Plan, Report

### **Project Bibliography:**

Publication Type:	Grey Literature (Unpublished Manuscript)
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Details:	CAU Report Number 757.
Date:	2007
Issuer or Publisher:	Cambridgeshire Archaeological Unit
Place of Issue:	Cambridgeshire Archaeological Unit

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