

An Archaeological Watching Brief at
The King's School
Ely
TL 5405 7993

Cassian Hall

Cambridge Archaeological Unit
University of Cambridge
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Introduction

Planning permission has been granted for construction of a link corridor between two buildings of the King's School, Ely, to improve boarding accommodation. Cambridgeshire County Council Development Control Office required that the initial stages of construction were archaeologically monitored to fulfil a condition placed on the planning consent (E/98/0926/LB). This document is a report of observations made during the stripping of the area and the digging of three footings for walls that will be built as part of the link corridor.

Background

Site Description

The site is located within the historic town of Ely, within the presumed area of medieval settlement. The underlying geology is Kimmeridge Clay.

Previous Work

No work is known from the immediate vicinity of the proposed works, but extensive investigation has been carried out over the wider area at various times. The base of Cherry Hill, supposedly a Norman Motte, lies only about 25m from the site. If this feature were a Motte then the site would almost certainly fall within the postulated Bailey area.

The Investigation

Topsoil Strip

Stripping works were observed the on 19th July 1999. The area (shown on figure 2) was approximately 45m², stripped using a mini-digger with a toothed bucket. The topsoil ranged from 0.35 – 0.45m in depth. The strip removed 0.30 – 0.40m of overburden which barely cleared the topsoil over most of the area. Subsequently no archaeological features could be identified. Within the matrix of the topsoil were a variety of brick and tile fragments, occasional coal pieces and occasional glass fragments. At the northern end of the area the remains of a 19th century wall could be seen that had clearly been demolished in order to make way for the new buildings erected in 1960. It is likely that this material derived from that phase of demolition.

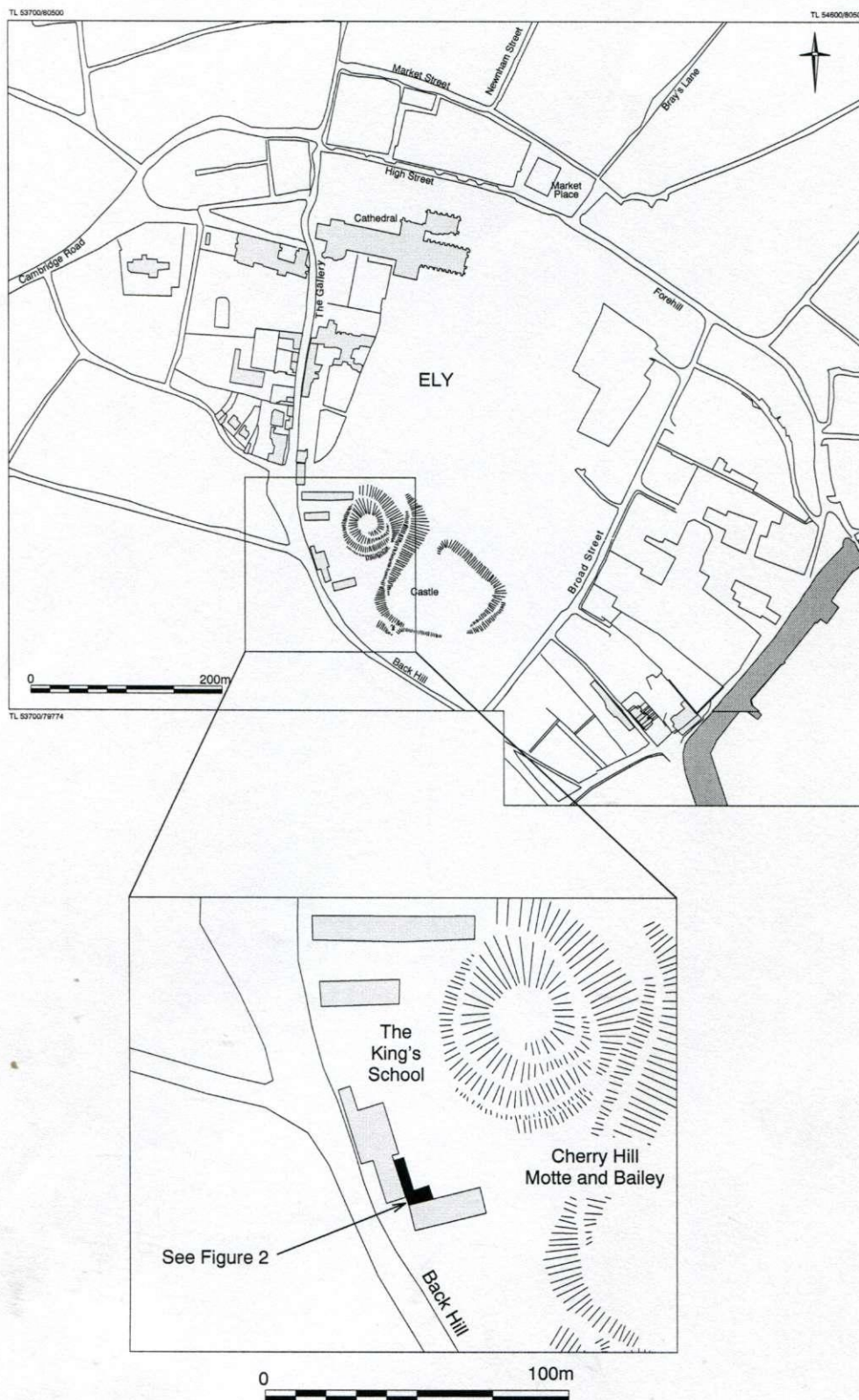


Figure 1 Site Location

Excavation of the footings

Three wall footings were excavated, all 0.50m in width and 1m deep. The two at the terminals of the area stretched across the width of the stripped area. The third was between the corners of the two standing buildings. Footing A (at the east of the 'L') was positioned adjacent to a manhole and thus half of the trench simply followed the cut for the recent drain. In the other half of the trench a dark brown sandy clay silt was observed throughout. Within it could be seen broken brick fragments, occasional flint cobbles and two fragments of tobacco pipe stem. No cut could be seen within the area. It is likely that this again relates to the 19th century activity on the site.

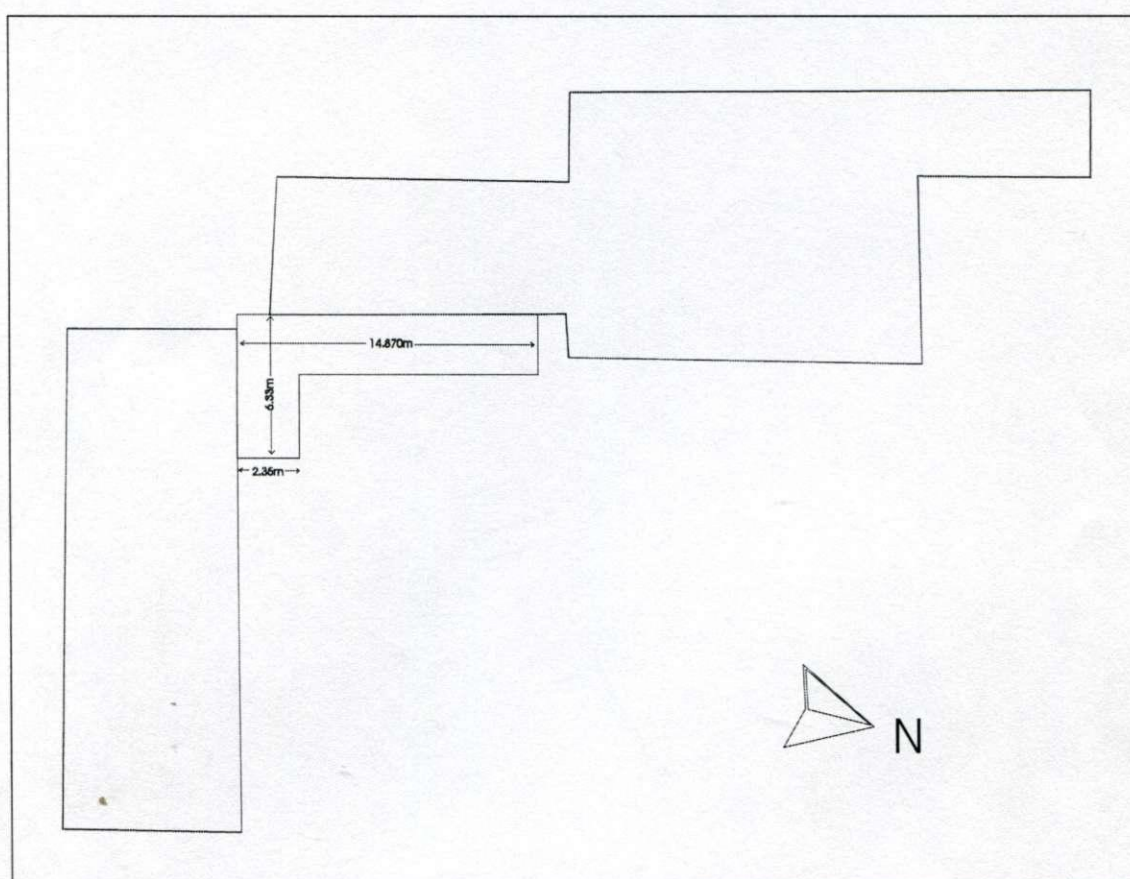


Figure 2 Trench Position

Footing B, to the north of the area, encountered a series of drains, predominantly modern, with one 19th century. Parallel to the 1960's wall at the south end of the footing trench was the remnants of the 19th century wall (see above) and alongside it were dumps of lime mortar possibly associated with its construction.

Footing C (between the buildings) was predominantly within the 1960's foundation trenches and was truncated by a deep set concrete patio. No archaeology was visible.

Conclusion

The stripped area did not cut deep enough to affect any archaeological features that may have been there. The positioning of the footings was such that they only encountered relatively recent deposits. No significant archaeological deposits were observed.