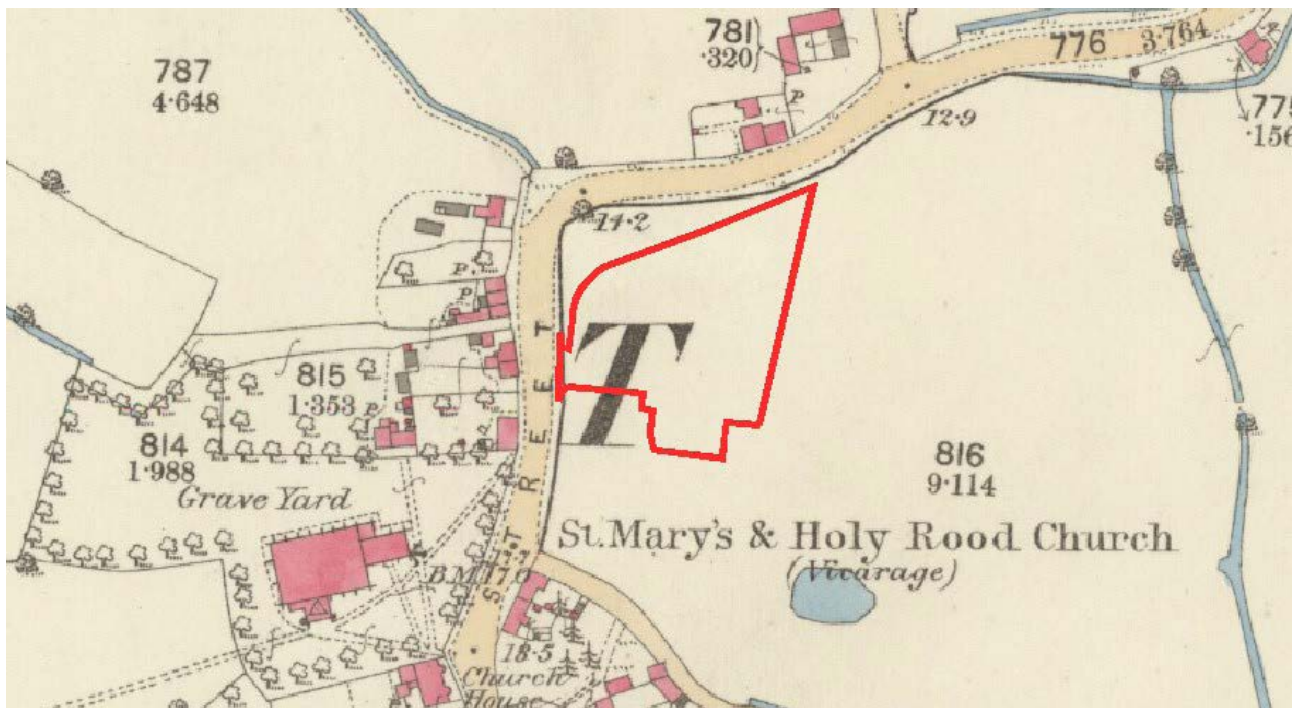


Land East of Church Street and South of Bicker Road, Donington, Lincolnshire

An Archaeological Evaluation



Len Middleton

Land East of Church Street and South of Bicker Road, Donington, Lincolnshire.

An Archaeological Evaluation Assessment

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Summary

The Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) was commissioned by Burmor Construction to undertake a trenched evaluation on land East of Church Street and South of Bicker Road, Donington, Lincolnshire (TF 2092 3601) to assess the archaeological potential of the site prior to a proposed development. The evaluation was carried out between the 5th and 7th July 2021, and identified a series of ditches and pits of 10th to 15th century date.

Introduction and Background

The Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) were commissioned by Burmor Construction to undertake a trenched archaeological evaluation on Land East of Church Street and South of Bicker Road, Donington, Lincolnshire, ahead of a proposed development of two retail units, a car park, landscaping and associated works, including the demolition of current buildings (Planning Reference: H04-0208-20). The evaluation took place between 5th and 7th July 2021 and followed on from a Desk Based Assessment (DBA) carried out by Archaeological Project Services (APS 2020). A CAU written scheme for investigation (Patten 2021) was issued in response to a brief by the Lincolnshire County Council Historic Places Team (Marshall 2021), who also approved and monitored the works. The Museum confirmed Site Code is CBDS21 and the Museum Accession Number is LCNCC :2021.89.

Location, Topography and Geology

The Proposed Development Area (PDA) is located on land East of Church Street and South of Bicker Road, Donington, Lincolnshire. It is situated on the northern part of Donington, close to the nearby church of St. Marys and the Holy Rood, and is within 50m of the northern limit of the existing settlement.

The PDA centres on (TF 2092 3601) and extends over approximately 0.34 hectares, which at the time of evaluation was a vacant commercial premises (a vehicle sales company) and associated parking areas comprising gravel, concrete/tarmac, and grass areas. The topography of the site is relatively flat at c. 4.m OD. The underlying geology is a bedrock comprising of Oxford Clay Formation that is overlain with Tidal Flat deposits of clay and silt (British Geological Survey; <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>; accessed April 2021). The natural geology the features were cut into in the evaluation trenches were Tidal Flat silts.

Archaeological Background

There have been no previous archaeological investigations within the PDA. There is a grade I Listed building within 1km of the site, the Church of St. Mary and the Holy Rood (ML22493; List no. 1064449), and a Grade II* Listed building Church House (MLI94316; List no. 106448), with three Grade II Listed buildings between 100-200m of the PDA.

Prehistoric

No confirmed prehistoric finds or features have been identified within the PDA, and indeed, there is very little evidence for any activity in the wider area up to the end of the Bronze Age, with the exception of a small number of Middle Bronze Age flints recovered to the west of the village. Up until the Bronze Age the area was subject to a series of marine inundations that left several metres of alluvium deposits.

Roman

Donington lies to the Eastern End of the Roman thoroughfare known as the Salter's Way that connected it to Saltersford near Grantham (Margary 1973). Despite this, little evidence for Roman activity has been recorded within the vicinity of the PDA.

To the northwest a substantial amount of Roman pottery was discovered but never investigated, while to the southwest a silver antoninianus coin of Emperor Gallienus (AD 253-268) was found.

Early Medieval

It is likely that Donington village had been founded by the latter part of the Early Medieval period due to its inclusion in the Domesday Book, although no finds of this period have been recovered from within 500m of the PDA.

Medieval

The village is first recorded in the Domesday Book as *Donnicture* or *Duninctune* (homestead of the Dunn(a)) (Cameron 1998). The land was owned by the Abbott of Peterborough and contained c. 22 saltpans and 54 acres of meadow.

The church of St. Mary and the Holy Rood, built in 1228, is located 60m southwest of the PDA with the edge of the churchyard 15m away. It is thought the medieval village of Donington extended into the southern part of the PDA, however, this is purely speculative.

West of the church several sherds of medieval pottery and a silver penny of Edward I (1272-1307) were recorded. Some 13th to 14th century pits were excavated during an archaeological evaluation undertaken along Church Street (Peachey 2010). The pits were sealed by layers of alluvium that were in turn cut by late medieval and post-medieval features.

Post-Medieval and Modern

18th century maps show no activity within the PDA, although these maps lack any detail. The 1973 Ordnance Survey map is the first to show buildings present within the boundaries of the PDA.

Project Aims and Methodology

The work was carried out in accordance of the Written Brief prepared by Lincolnshire County Council Historic Place Team (2021), ClfA's *Code of Conduct* (2014) and *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (ClfA 2014), and the Lincolnshire County Council *Archaeological Handbook* (Jennings 2019).

The trenched evaluation of the PDA aimed to '*identify, assess and record*', any archaeological features, remains and deposits within the PDA. To achieve this, three trenches were machined totalling 80m (see fig.2).

The trenches were cut using a 16-ton tracked excavator using a 2m wide toothless ditching bucket. Topsoil and underlying deposits were removed under the direct supervision of an experienced archaeologist and the removed overburden was placed in separate stacks on either side of the trenches.

After machining, each trench was planned digitally using GPS, and all spoil heaps and identified features were scanned with a metal-detector. Excavation of all features was carried out using hand-tools, with one-metre slots excavated in linear features at suitable intervals, pits and post-holes were at least half-sectioned and natural/ambiguous features tested. All work was carried out in strict accordance with statutory Health and Safety legislation and within the recommendations of FAME (Allen & Holt 2010) and in accordance with a site-specific risk assessment and the CAU Health and Safety policy.

Recording System

Recording of archaeological Features and Deposits followed a CAU designed system that was developed for extensive rural projects. Context numbers are indicated in the text in square brackets (e.g. [100]) and feature numbers are denoted by the prefix F. (e.g. F.1), these are assigned to stratigraphic events such as ditches, pits and postholes. All sections were drawn at either 1:10 or 1:20 scale; bulk environmental samples were taken where appropriate; and a digital photographic archive was assembled.

Archive

This trenched evaluation produced varying quantities of archival material as outlined in Tables 1 and 2. All documentary records and accompanying artefacts have been assembled into a catalogued archive in line with Appendix 6 of MoRPHE (Lee, 2015) and, at the time of writing, are being stored at the CAU offices.

<i>Archive Item</i>	<i>Total Number</i>
Archaeological Features	9
Archaeological Slots	8
Environmental Samples	4
Graphic Sheets	1
Archive Files	1

Table 1: Archive

<i>Artefact Type</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Weight (g)</i>
Pottery	11	240
Animal bone	14	572
Total	25	812

Table 2: Artefact Totals

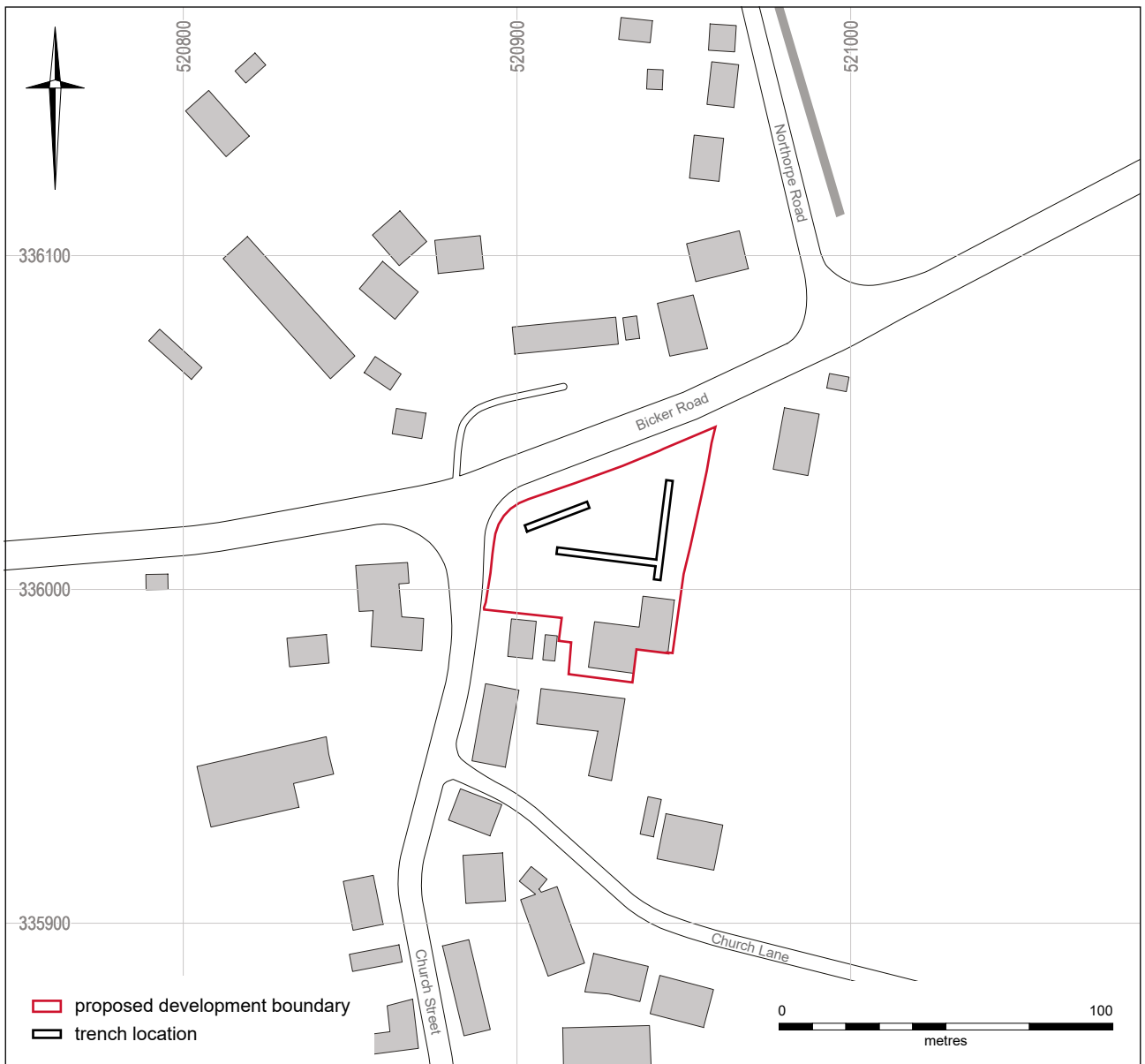
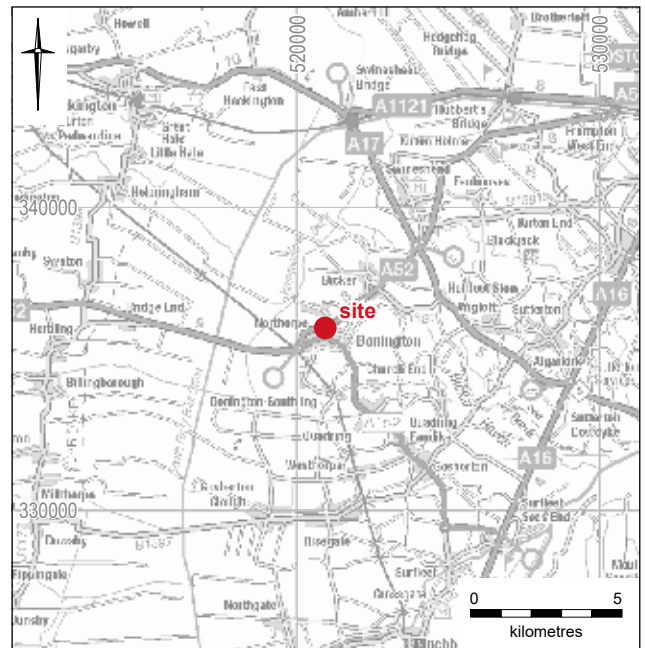
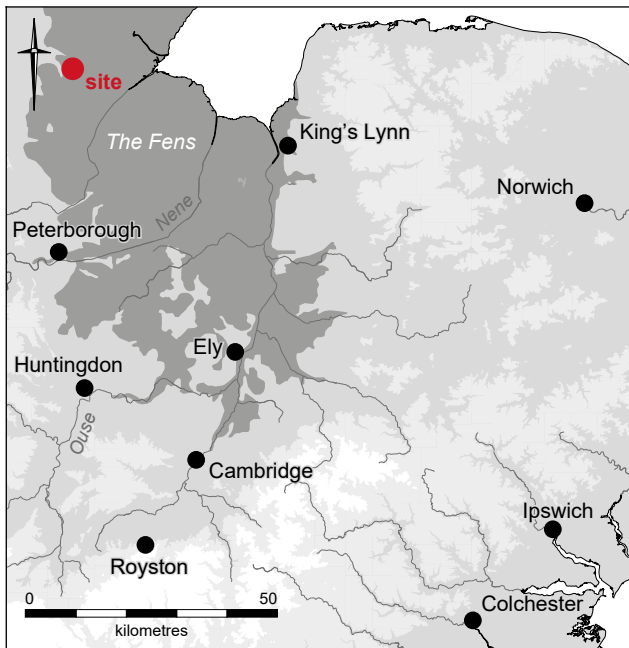


Figure 1. Site location

Results

The Proposed Development Area was evaluated by three trenches totalling 80m in length (at 2.0m wide), which equated to approximately 5% of the 0.34 hectares site. The evaluation indicated limited disturbance to the archaeological levels by the construction of modern drainage on site, but, overall, the potential for archaeological survival was moderate. All of the archaeological features encountered in the evaluation were medieval in date, from the 10th to 15th centuries. The following sections outline the results from various components of the evaluation, including the results from bucket sampling, metal detecting and the trenches themselves.

Metal Detecting Survey

Metal detecting was carried out on the surface of the features and subsoil heaps; no material was recovered. The topsoil was not metal detected as this had been disturbed by the construction of the gravel and concrete parking within the PDA. A visual inspection saw a substantial amount of later 20th century refuse within the topsoil; this was not retained.

Bucket Sampling

Ninety litres of samples were taken from the topsoil and subsoil in all three trenches and these were hand sorted to look for finds. The topsoil in all three trenches had a significant amount of late 20th century material present, probably related to the construction of the current commercial buildings and associated parking on site; this material was not retained. No material culture was recovered from the subsoil.

Trenches

The following sections give an overview of the results from the individual trenches, and the archaeological features identified within them. A tabulated overview of the results is also presented in Appendix 1. The machining of the trenches demonstrated a fairly consistent area of made ground comprising of gravel on top of a crushed and compacted layer of hardcore/concrete covering most of the area investigated, except for the eastern end of Trench 1 (see Figure 5). This made ground was fairly consistent in depth with around 0.1m of gravel over 0.25m of crushed hardcore/concrete. Modern intrusions were present and these were of sufficient depth to truncate the archaeological level (see Figure 2). In Trench 3 two large concrete drains were present towards the centre and western end, whilst an electrical cable was discovered at the eastern end. The electrical cable was CAT scanned and gave off no signal, but in the interests of safety a baulk was left either side of it and above it. A large concrete slab of unknown purpose was discovered in Trench 2. Below the made ground, both topsoil and subsoil was present; albeit the top half of the topsoil was heavily disturbed during the construction of the commercial buildings currently on site. The depth of both topsoil and subsoil was consistent across all three trenches with the topsoil and subsoil each averaging around 0.30m in depth.

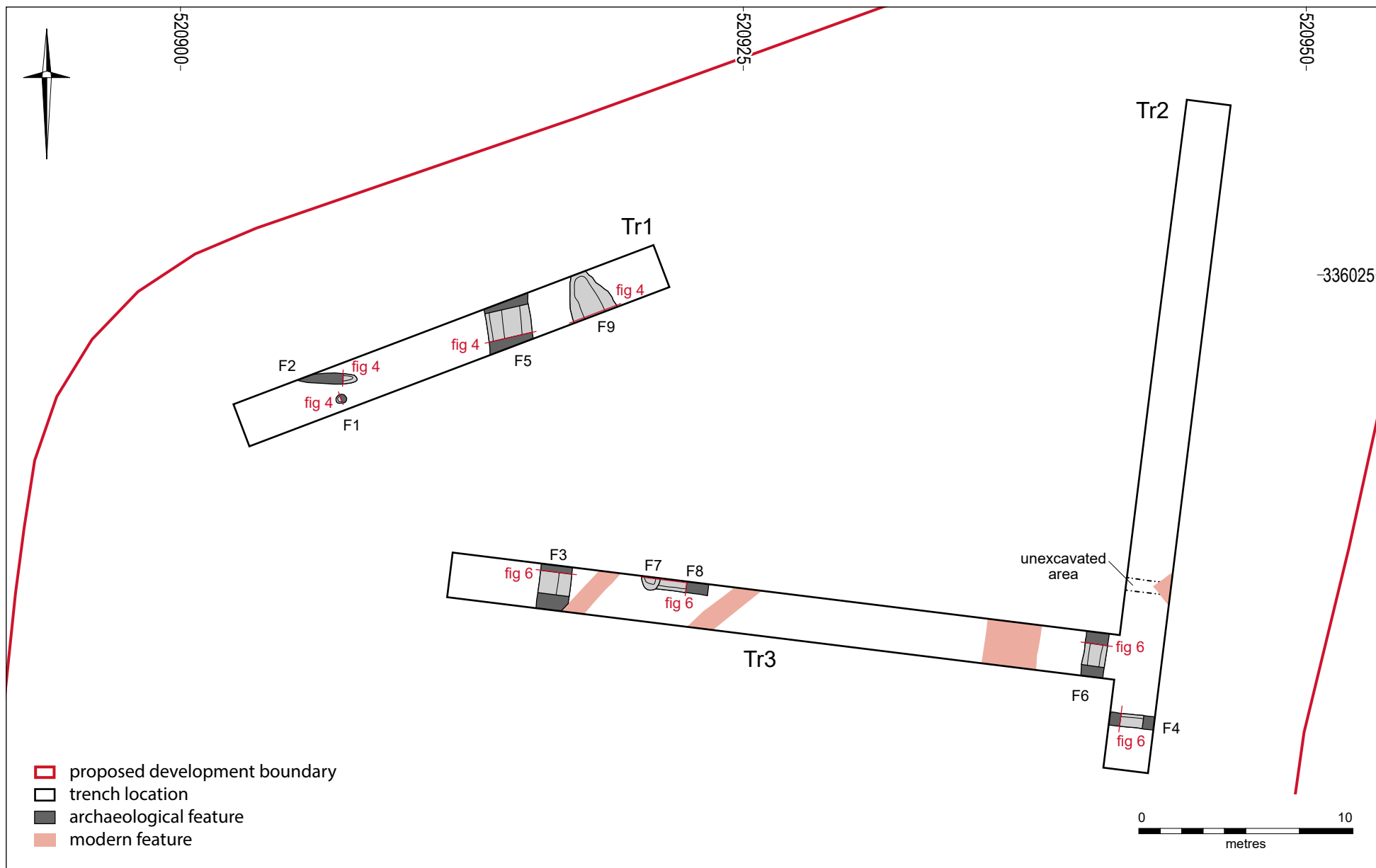


Figure 2. Site plan

The results from the trenches indicate the area was clearly settled in the Medieval period with a series of ditches aligned north-south or east-west, forming possible rectilinear enclosures or plots. The pottery evidence suggests the area may have already been in use in the 10th century, although this evidence is limited (just one sherd), and continued to be in use up until the 15th century. There is no evidence of activity on the PDA from the 15th century up until the construction of the current commercial buildings and associated parking on the area in the latter half of the 20th century. This fits a wider pattern in Donington, with a shift of settlement focus towards the south after the medieval period.

Trench 1 (Figures 3 and 4)

Trench 1 was 20m in length and oriented northeast to southwest, and was 0.94m deep. Four features were identified; three ditches (**F.2**, **F.5** and **F.9**) and a post-hole (**F.1**) cut into the underlying Tidal Flat silts.

F.1 [1.02] A circular post-hole measuring 0.39m in diameter with a depth of 0.20m. It had steep straight sides with a concave base and was filled with light brownish-grey, sandy silt (1.01). No material culture was recovered from this feature.

F.2 [2.02] The terminus of an east-west orientated ditch of at least 2.5m in length, terminating at its eastern end within the trench. It was 0.1m in depth with a width of 0.52m and had moderate straight sides with a concave base. It was filled with a light greyish-brown sandy-silt with no inclusion (2.01). No material culture was recovered from this feature.

F.5 [5.03] A north-south orientated medieval ditch. It was 2.20m wide and 0.57m deep with moderate concave sides and a concave base. The fills were a light grey/grey-brown sandy-silt with no inclusions. 1 sherd of Grimston-ware pottery dating from the 13th to 15th century was recovered, along with a small amount of animal bone.

F.9 [9.03] The terminus of a northwest-southeast orientated ditch, terminating at its northwest end within the trench. It was 1.90m wide and 0.52m deep with moderate straight sides and a flat base. It was filled with a light brownish-grey/greyish-brown sandy silt with no inclusions. A small amount of animal bone was recovered., including a horn core from a cow with chop marks at the base (see Table 4).

Trench 2 (Figures 5 and 6)

Trench 2 was 30m in length and orientated north-south. It was machined to a maximum depth of 0.95m revealing one ditch (**F.4**) cut into a geology of Tidal Flat silts. It was truncated by 1 modern feature (see Figure 2), a large concrete slab, whose purpose was unknown.

F.4 [4.02] An east-west orientated medieval ditch. It was 0.62m wide and 0.05m deep with shallow sides and a concave base and was filled with a yellow-grey sandy-silt that had no inclusions. A small quantity of animal bone was recovered.

Trench 3 (Figures 5 and 6)

Trench 3 was 30m in length and orientated east-west. It was machined to a maximum depth of 0.95m revealing three ditches (**F.3**, **F.6** and **F.8**) and one pit (**F.7**) cut into a

geology of Tidal Flat silts. It was truncated by three modern features (see Figure2), two drains at its western end and an electric cable to its eastern end.

F. 3 [3.04] A north-south orientated medieval ditch. It had a width of at least 1.31m (its eastern side was truncated by a modern drain that prevented excavation of its full width) and was 0.75m deep. Its sides were moderately sloped and straight and its base was flat. Its fills were largely mid-brown sandy-silts with no stone inclusions. One fill [3.03] had moderately dense concentrations of mussel shells. Small amounts of animal bone were recovered as well as 6 sherds of pottery dating from the 10th to the 15th centuries.

F.6 [6.02] A north-south orientated medieval ditch. It measured 0.93m wide and 0.21m deep with moderately sloped straight sides and a concave base. It was infilled with a grey-brown sandy silt with no inclusions. A single sherd of shelly ware pottery was recovered, of possible 13th/14th century date.

F.7 [7.02] A sub-circular pit that cuts F.8. It measured 0.77m wide and 0.26m deep, with moderately sloped, curved sides and a concave base. Its fill [7.01] was a mid-brown, sandy-silt, with some inclusions of highly fragmented mussel shells. No other material culture was recovered.

F.8 [8.02] An east-west orientated ditch that is cut by **F.7**. It was at least 0.34m wide and 0.15m deep. It had moderate curved sides and a flat base with a grey-brown sandy-silt fill. No material culture was recovered from this feature.



Photograph of Trench 1 from east



Photograph of Feature 1 from south-west

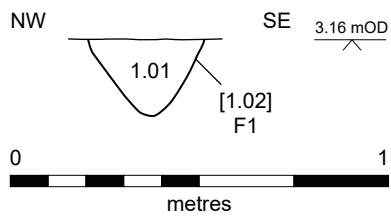


Photograph of Feature 5 from north

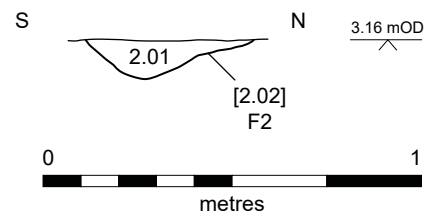


Photograph of Feature 9 from north-west

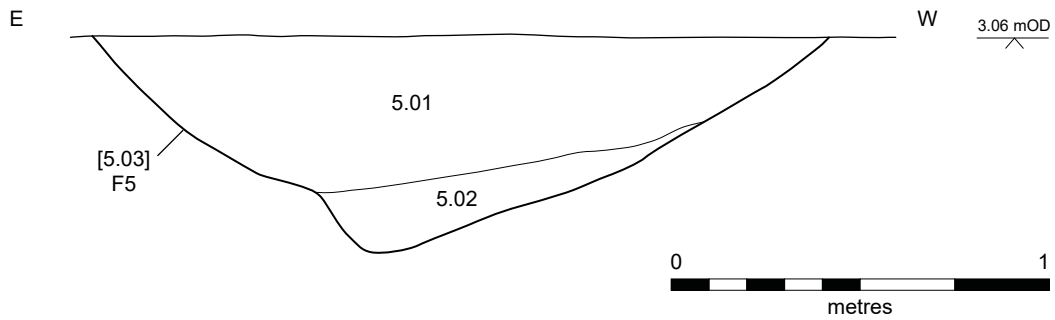
Figure 3. Photographs from Trench 1



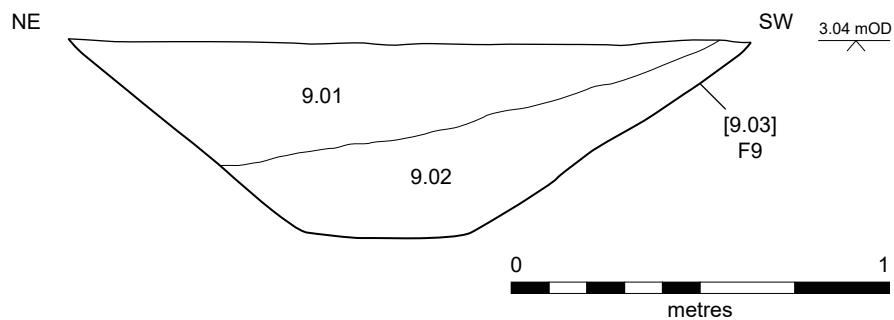
South-west facing section of Feature 1



East facing section of Feature 2



North facing section of Feature 5



North-west facing section of Feature 9

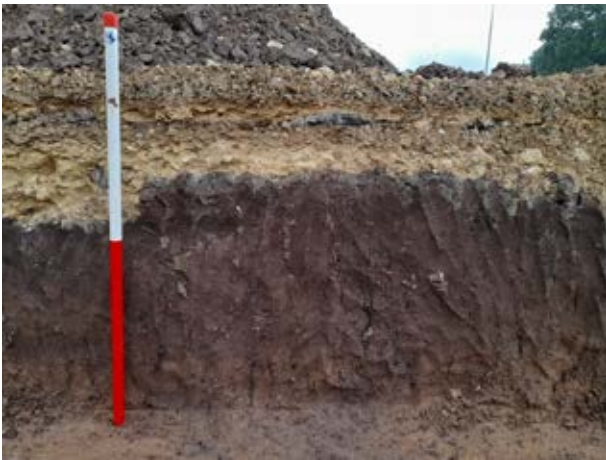
Figure 4. Sections of features in Trench 1



Photograph of Trench 2 from north



Photograph of Trench 3 from west



Trench section showing made ground over Trenches 2 and 3

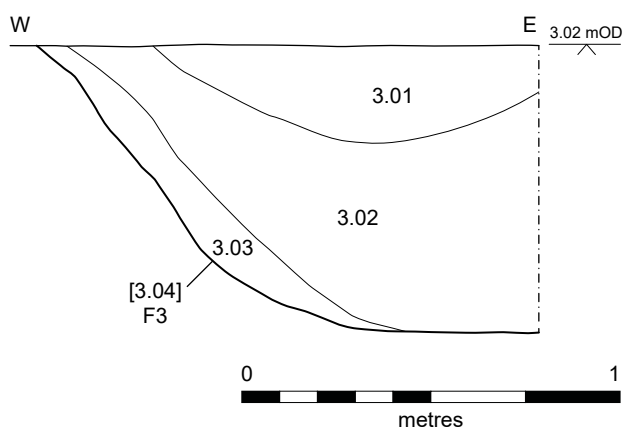


Photograph of Feature 3 in Trench 3 from south

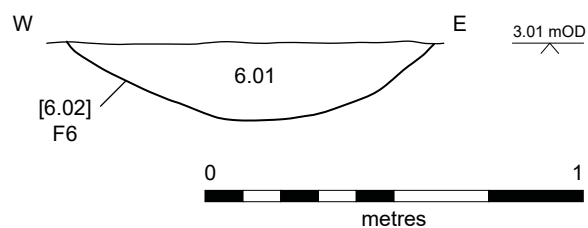


Photograph of Features 7 and 8 in Trench 3 from south

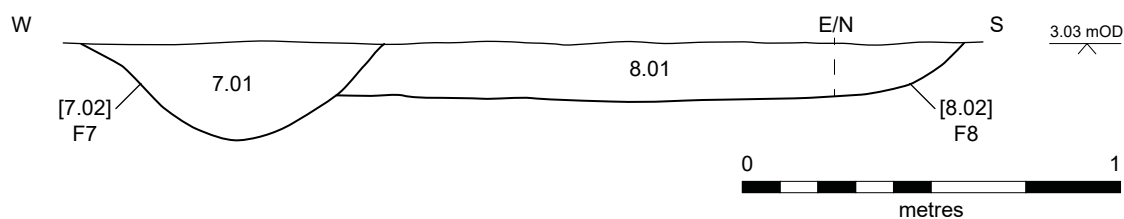
Figure 5. Photographs from Trenches 2 and 3



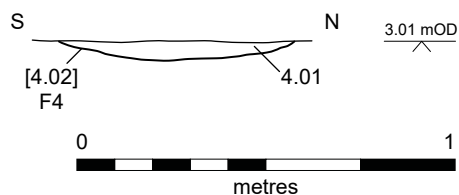
South facing section of Feature 3



South facing section of Feature 6



South and west facing section of Features 7 and 8



East facing section of Feature 4

Figure 6. Sections of features in Trenches 2 and 3

Specialist reports

As previously set out in tables 1 and 2, the only artefactual material recovered was a small amount of animal bone and pottery. Environmental samples were also taken from some of the features and, four samples were processed and analysed. The results from these analyses are presented below.

Pottery Report

(note by Craig Cessford)

A total of 11 sherds of pottery, weighing 240g, were recovered from three features in two trenches. All of the pottery dates to between the 10th and 15th century AD (Table 3). Although there are few sherds, the assemblage is generally large and unabridged, indicative of settlement material rather than a rural scatter. Further, more detailed analysis of the assemblage should be undertaken if the site were to be excavated.

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Feature</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Weight (g)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>
3	3	3.02	4	132	Stamford Ware	10 th – 12 th
3	3	3.02	1	4	Medieval coarseware	13 th – 15 th
3	3	3.02	1	22	Possible Stamford Ware or later glazed ware	10 th – 15 th
5	5	5.01	4	62	Grey fabric with a green glaze; possible Grimstone ware	13 th – 15 th
3	6	6.01	1	20	Shelly fabric	13 th 14 th

Table 3: Pottery quantities and dates

Faunal Remains
Vida Rajkovača

Recovered from three trenches, this small assemblage amounted to a raw count of 14 fragments and a total weight of 572g. Overall, some 11 assessable specimens were recorded, six of which were identified as cow (NISP=4), sheep/ goat (NISP=1) and horse (NISP=1). Further five elements were cattle-sized and sheep-sized ribs and limb bone fragments, impossible to assign to species. Material is heavily fragmented and it is showing signs of gnawing. Of note was the cow horn core from F.9 with clear cut and chop marks at the base, created to detach the horn.

<i>Record ID</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Species</i>	<i>Element</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1	3.02	COW	SCAP	1	
2	3.02	ULM	RIB	1	
3	3.02	COW	PAT	1	
4	3.02	UMM	RIB	1	
5	4.01	SG	LT	1	
6	5.01	UMM	RIB	2	
7	5.01	UMM	LF	1	
8	9.01	COW	HC	1	Chop marks near base
9	9.01	COW	RAD	1	
10	9.01	HOR	PEL	1	

Table 4: Fauna counts

Palaeoenvironmental assessment report

Gemma Warham

(Sheffield Archaeobotanical Consultancy, University of Sheffield, Department of Archaeology, Minalloy House, 10-16 Regent Street, Sheffield, S10 2TN.)

A series of bulk samples were taken by Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) during an archaeological evaluation on land east of Church Street and south of Bicker Road (A52), Donington, Lincolnshire (NGR: TF 2092 3601). Four samples were processed by the CAU for the recovery of charred plant macrofossils and wood charcoal and submitted to Sheffield Archaeobotanical Consultancy for assessment. The archaeological trial trench investigation revealed evidence for Medieval period activity in form of a possible series of enclosures or field boundaries, with finds of mussel shell, faunal remains and pottery recovered from the excavated features (CAU 2021). The site lies approximately 300m away from the medieval church that is situated on the edge of the modern settlement of Donington, and the underlying geology of the site is Lincolnshire Fenland Silt Geology (CAU 2021). The bulk sieve samples ranged in volume between 8 and 10 litres and were taken from four features associated with Medieval activity, including three ditches and a pit (Table 5).

The objectives of the assessment were:

- To determine the concentration, diversity, state of preservation and suitability for use in scientific dating, of any palaeoenvironmental material present in the samples.
- To evaluate the potential of any palaeoenvironmental material present in the samples to provide evidence for crop plants and/or wild plant foods.
- To evaluate the potential of any palaeoenvironmental material present in the samples to provide evidence for the local environment.

The samples were processed by CAU using a water separation machine. Floating material was collected in a 300µm mesh and the remaining heavy residue retained in a 1mm mesh. A total of 36 litres of sediment was processed in this way. The flots and heavy residues were air-dried and the >4mm fractions of the heavy residues were sorted for ecofacts remains and artefacts, and the <4mm fractions checked for charcoal and charred plant macrofossils.

The samples were assessed in accordance with Historic England guidelines for environmental archaeology assessments (Campbell *et al.* 2011). A preliminary assessment of the samples was made by scanning using a stereo-binocular microscope (x10 - x65) and recording the abundance of the main classes of material present. All material found in the samples was quantified using a scale of abundance (- = < 10 items, + = 10-29 items, ++ = 30-49 items, +++ = 50-99 items, ++++ = 100-499 items, +++++ = > 500 items).

Preliminary identifications of plant material were carried out by comparison with material in the reference collections at the Department of Archaeology, University of Sheffield and various reference works (e.g. Cappers *et al.* 2006). Cereal identifications

and nomenclature follow Zohary *et al.* (2012). Other plant nomenclature follows Stace (2019). The composition of the samples is recorded in Table 5. The seed, in the broadest sense, of the plant is always referred to in Table 5, unless stated otherwise. The abbreviation *cf.* means 'compares with' and denotes that a specimen most closely resembles that taxon more than any other. Information relating to the ecology of various plant taxa was sourced from Stace (2019) and Preston *et al.* (2002).

The flots are small and range in volume between 2ml and 10ml (excluding root material), with only one flot exceeding 5ml. The majority of the flots contain recent root material, with the volume of roots ranging in volume between 2.5 and 10 ml, indicating that the deposits have been subject to some degree of bioturbation. Further evidence for bioturbation is indicated in samples 2, 3 and 4 by the presence of *Cecilioides acicula* (Müller), a blind burrowing snail that is suspected to be a recent introduction to Britain (Davies 2008, 117). Sample 2 in particular, from the fill (7.01) of pit [7], yielded a high concentration of *Cecilioides acicula* shells. In addition, occasional small nematode capsules, occasional remains of both intact and disarticulated insects (Arthropoda), and small numbers of untransformed seeds, including birch (*Betula* sp.), elder (*Sambucus nigra* L.) and sow-thistle (*Sonchus* sp.) were recorded in the flots (Table 5). Given the presence of recent roots and *Cecilioides acicula* in the flots, the untransformed plant seeds, nematode capsules and insect remains from are likely to be derived from intrusive material. Aquatic indicators, including possible ram's horn snail shells (*cf. Planorbis* sp.), duckweed (*Lemna* sp.), small vertebrate bones provisionally identified as amphibious remains, and possible fish scales are present in the ditch fills (Table 5). However, given the evidence for soil disturbance and the overall small size of the assemblages, it cannot be ruled out that the small vertebrate, aquatic plant and possible fish remains are also intrusive.

Preservation of plant macrofossils and wood is by charring. Preservation of charred plant macrofossils is variable; many of the cereal grains and wild/weed species recovered from the samples are abraded and distorted in appearance, which will impede further identification, although it was possible to identify hulled and potentially 'twisted' grains of barley (*Hordeum*). The wood charcoal tends to consist of low concentrations of comminuted charcoal that rarely exceeds 2mm³, much of which is also silted in appearance, which limits the potential of selecting material suitable for identification. For the most part, the wood charcoal assemblages are derived from the sample retents (>2mm fraction).

Low concentrations of cereal remains are present in all of the feature fills, in the form of cereal grains (Table 5). No cereal chaff is present in samples. Provisional identifications of the cereal grains include wheat (*Triticum* spp.) and barley (*Hordeum* sp.) and where preservation permitted, free-threshing wheat was recorded, and the slight twisted appearance of several hulled barley grains indicates possible six-row hulled barley (*Hordeum cf. vulgare* L.). The overall abraded and distorted appearance of the cereal grain will prevent further identification. Occasional wild/weed plant seeds are present in fill (3.03) of ditch [3] and fill 7.01) of pit [7], with provisional identifications indicating the presence of stinking chamomile (*Anthemis cf. cotula* L.), cabbage/mustard (*Brassica/Sinapis*) and sedges (Cyperaceae).

Sample No.	Trench	Context / Feature No.	Context type	Prelim date	Sample vol (L)	Flot vol (ml) Incl. roots/ excl. roots	Grain/ chaff	Wild or weed plant material	>2mm charcoal from flot	>2mm charcoal from residues	Molluscs	Notes
1	3	(3.03)/ [3]	Ditch fill	10 th -13 th Century	10	10/10	-/0	-	0	-	+++	CPR: <i>Hordeum</i> sp. (including hulled grain), <i>Anthemis</i> cf. <i>cotula</i> . WC: Silted, comminuted charcoal <2mm ³ . Molluscs: predominantly cf. <i>Planorbis</i> sp. UC: <i>Lemna</i> sp., <i>Betula</i> sp., <i>Sonchus</i> sp. (+). Arthropoda: disarticulated remains (-).
2	3	(7.01)/ [7]	Pit fill	10 th -13 th Century	8	6/5	++/0	-	0	0	++++	CPR: <i>Hordeum</i> sp. (including hulled and possible twisted grains), <i>Brassica/Sinapis</i> sp(p), Cyperaceae, <i>Anthemis</i> cf. <i>cotula</i> . Molluscs: predominantly <i>Cecilioides acicula</i> . Arthropoda: disarticulated remains (-).
3	3	(6.02)/ [6]	Ditch fill	10 th -13 th Century	8	2.5/2	-/0	0	0	-	++	CPR: <i>Hordeum</i> sp. (including hulled grain). WC: Silted, comminuted charcoal <2mm ³ , some DP noted. Molluscs: includes <i>Cecilioides acicula</i> , all <2mm. UC: <i>Betula</i> sp., <i>Sambucus nigra</i> , indet. sp. (+). Arthropoda: intact insect (-), small nematode capsules (+). Other: small (amphibious?) bones (-); possible fish scales (-).
4	1	(5.01)/ [5]	Ditch fill	10 th -13 th Century	10	10/5	-/0	0	-	0	+	CPR: <i>Triticum</i> sp(p). (including free-threshing grain), <i>Triticum/Hordeum</i> sp. WC: Silted, comminuted charcoal <2mm ³ . Molluscs: includes <i>Cecilioides acicula</i> , all <2mm. UC: <i>Sonchus</i> sp. (-). Arthropoda: intact insect (-), small nematode capsules (+). Other: small (amphibious?) bones and indet. burnt bone frags (-); possible fish scales (-).

key - = < 10 items, + = 10-29 items, ++ = 30-49 items, +++ = 50-99 items, ++++ = 100 - 499 items, +++++ = > 500 items. CPR = charred plant remains, WC = wood charcoal, WPR? = possible waterlogged plant remains, DP = diffuse porous charcoal, RP = ring porous charcoal, uc = uncharred.

Table 5: Archaeobotanical sample assessment

The wood charcoal assemblages consist of small quantities of comminuted charcoal, with one or two diffuse porous fragments noted. The scarcity of fragments >2mm³ and the poor state of preservation of the remains means that there is insufficient material from ditch fill deposits (3.03), (6.02) and (5.01) to provide a representative sample of the wood charcoal assemblage (i.e. the minimum required one hundred >2mm³ charcoal fragments).

The charred plant macrofossil assemblages from pit (F.7) and ditch features (F.3), (F.5) and (F.6), provide some evidence for the types of crops consumed at the site during the Saxo-Norman period, but limited scope for further economic reconstruction due to the relatively small quantities of charred crop remains. The cereal crops recovered from the fills of ditches (F.3) and (F.6) and pit (F.7) from Trench 3 appear to be exclusively barley, including hulled six-row barley, whilst free-threshing wheat and wheat/barley were recovered from the fill of ditch (F.5) in Trench 1. Free-threshing wheat and hulled six-row barley are consistent with the range of cereals cultivated and consumed during the Saxo-Norman period in the midland counties of England (Carruthers and Hunter-Dowse 2019). The greater frequency of barley compared to wheat recovered from the features is also in keeping with the dominant crop types associated with the Lincolnshire Silt Fens; it is thought the predominance of barley reflects an economic strategy associated with the cultivation of saline soils (Carruthers and Hunter-Dowse 2019). The wild/weed plant species associated with the charred cereal assemblages from the fill [3.03] of ditch (F.3) and fill [7.01] of pit (F.7) may be derived from crop processing residues, but are in such small quantities that further interpretation is very limited. Stinking chamomile is commonly associated with heavier soils under cultivation and disturbed/waste ground (Stace 2019) and the presence of sedges may indicate the cultivation of damp soils. It cannot, however, be ruled out that the relatively small quantity of charred cereal residues from these features may be residual in character, which will limit further interpretation. Due to the small quantities of wood charcoal recovered from ditches (F.3), (F.5) and (F.6), these assemblages have no potential to provide evidence for the availability and exploitation of local woodland and/or scrub during the Saxo-Norman period.

The presence of aquatic indicators from the fills of ditches (F.3), (F.5) and (F.6), in the form of the mollusc assemblage dominated by possible ram's horn from ditch (F.3), as well as the presence of uncharred seeds of duckweed and the small vertebrate remains, provides some scope for palaeoenvironmental reconstruction. If contemporary with the features, and not derived from reworked material, these palaeoenvironmental remains suggest the presence of standing/slow moving water in the ditch features.

The charred plant macrofossil assemblage from pit feature (F.7) and ditches (F.3), (F.5) and (F.6) is of regional research significance as evidence for crop types in the Saxo-Norman period (Carruthers and Hunter-Dowse 2019). The presence/absence data of stinking chamomile is also of regional significance as a potential indicator of the cultivation of heavier soils during the Medieval period (Carruthers and Hunter-Dowse 2019).

Recommendations for further work:

The small size and poor state of preservation of the charred plant macrofossil assemblages means that further identification would not provide significant additional evidence for palaeoeconomic reconstruction. Further analysis, therefore, of the plant macrofossils from samples 1, 2, 3 and 4 is not recommended. However, presence/absence data may be used to compare with other local sites in terms of the regional importance of hulled six-row barley and free-threshing wheats, and the potential cultivation of heavier soils on the Lincolnshire Silt Fens during the Saxo-Norman period.

There is no potential for further work in terms of the wood charcoal assemblages due to insufficient quantities of charcoal fragments $>2\text{mm}^3$.

There is potential for the mollusc assemblage from fill [3.03] of ditch (F.3) to provide evidence for palaeoenvironmental reconstruction, perhaps in comparison with the small assemblages from fills [5.01] and [6.02] of ditches (F.5) and (F.6) respectively and the mollusc assemblages recovered from the sample retents. Further analysis of the mollusc assemblage retained in the flot from fill [7.01] of pit (F.3) is not recommended, however, due to the dominance of the burrowing snail *Cecilioides acicula*.

Confirmation of the provisional identifications of the small vertebrate remains from fill [5.01] of ditch (F.5) and fill [6.02] of ditch (F.6) may provide some further insight into the conditions of the ditches, but there is a possibility these small assemblages recovered in the flot may be derived from intrusive material.

Due to the paucity of charred plant macrofossils and the absence of short life round wood charcoal, in combination with the evidence for bioturbation, there is no charred material suitable for scientific dating from any of the sampled features.

I should like to thank Ellen Simmons for the provisional identification of the *Planorbis* sp. snail shells and comments on their ecological significance.

Discussion

To date, very little archaeological investigation has been carried out in and around Donington, except for a small evaluation on Church Street that revealed pits dating to the 13th-14th centuries. The only evidence of any pre-medieval activity was a few Middle Bronze Age Flints, a 3rd century Roman coin, and 3rd to 4th century Roman pottery scatter. The evidence within the PDA is even more scarce with no pre-medieval evidence present; the pottery suggests a date range that may have started in the 10th century at the earliest.

The evidence from the evaluation indicates medieval settlement, with a mixture of shallow and deep ditches that were orientated north-south and east-west suggesting rectilinear plots with the larger ditches F.3 and F.6 being boundary ditches. The pottery is indicative of settlement material, rather than a rural scatter, with very few abraded sherds in the assemblage suggesting nearby settlement dating from the 10th to the 15th century. Although there was a paucity of material it does suggest that the known limits of Medieval Donington extended not only further north than previously thought, but had origins in the Early-Medieval period.

The environmental data is typical of this area of Medieval Lincolnshire with barley dominating wheat, there is also the suggestion that the ditches had either slow moving or standing water within them. The animal bone shows the presence of cow, sheep, and horse in the PDA but it is found in too low a volume to suggest anything other than low scale domestic activity. The large quantity of mussel shell within F.3 is a further indication of possible domestic waste.

From the 15th century the area is likely to have been fields, with the settlement of Donington shifting slightly to the south. The absence of ridge and furrow could indicate that the area was not used for agriculture.

Conclusion

The evaluation has highlighted low scale settlement activity within the PDA from the 10th to the 15th centuries. Further excavation of the site would allow us to understand more fully its form and function, and it would be a useful link in understanding the formation and development of Donington from its Early-Medieval origins until the present day.

Appendix 1 – Trench and Feature Tables

Nb: The feature Primary Fill Type and Profile codes are listed at the end of this Appendix.

Trench 1											
Trench 1 contained one post-hole (Feature 1) and three ditches (Features 2, 5 and 9).							Trench Orientation			NE-SW	
							Height (m) OD at Base of Trench			3.04	
							Trench Width (m)			2.0	
							Trench Length (m)			20.0	
							Average Topsoil Depth (m)			0.35	
							Average Subsoil Depth (m)			0.35	
							Average Made Ground Depth (m)			0.21	
							Overall Depth (m)			0.91	
Feature No.	Feature Type	Slot No.	Shape/ Orientation	No. of Contexts	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Primary Fill Type	Profile	Artefacts	Archaeological Period
1	Post-hole	1	Circular	2	1.0	0.39	0.2	1.3.3	3.2	n/a	Medieval
2	Ditch	2	E-W	2	1.0	0.52	0.1	3.2.3	2.2	n/a	Medieval
5	Ditch	5	N-S	3	1.0	2.20	0.57	1.2.3	2.2	PT, BN	Medieval
9	Ditch	9	NW-SE	3	1.0	1.90	0.52	1.3.3	2.1	BN	Medieval

Trench 2											
Trench 2 contained on ditch (Feature 4) and the corner of a modern concrete slab.							Trench Orientation			N-S	
							Height (m) OD at Base of Trench			3.01	
							Trench Width (m)			2.0	
							Trench Length (m)			30.0	
							Average Topsoil Depth (m)			0.27	
							Average Subsoil Depth (m)			0.27	
							Average Made Ground Depth (m)			0.35	
							Overall Depth (m)			0.95	
Feature No.	Feature Type	Slot No.	Shape/ Orientation	No. of Contexts	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Primary Fill Type	Profile	Artefacts	Archaeological Period
4	Ditch	4	E-W	2	1.0	0.62	0.05	3.3.3	1.2	n/a	Medieval

Trench 3											
Trench 3 contained one pit (Feature 7) and three ditches (Features 3, 6 and 8). It was truncated by 2 large modern concrete drains and an electric cable.							Trench Orientation			E-W	
							Height (m) OD at Base of Trench			3.01	
							Trench Width (m)			2.0	
							Trench Length (m)			30.0	
							Average Topsoil Depth (m)			0.3	
							Average Subsoil Depth (m)			0.3	
							Average Made Ground Depth (m)			0.35	
							Overall Depth (m)			0.95	
Feature No.	Feature Type	Slot No.	Shape/ Orientation	No. of Contexts	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Primary Fill Type	Profile	Artefacts	Archaeological Period
3	Ditch	3	N-S	4	1.0	>1.31	0.75	3.2.3	2.1	BN, PT	Medieval
6	Ditch	6	N-S	2	1.0	0.93	0.21	3.2.3	2.2	PT	Medieval
7	Pit	7	Sub-Circular	2	>0.4	0.77	0.26	3.2.3	2.3	n/a	Medieval
8	Ditch	8	E-W	2	>2.0	>0.34	0.15	3.2.3	2.1	n/a	Medieval

Primary Fill types:

Shade	No.	Colour	No.	Composition	No.
Pale	1	Orange	1	Sand	1
Pale/Mid	2	Brown	2	Silty Sand	2
Mid	3	Grey	3	Sandy Silt	3
Mid/Dark	4	Black	4	Silt	4
Dark	5			Clay Silt	5
Very Dark	6			Silty Clay	6
				Sandy Clay	7
				Clay	8

Slot Profile types:

Sides	No.	Base	No.
Shallow	1	Flat	1
Moderate	2	Rounded/Concave	2
Steep	3	V-shaped/pointed	3
Vertical	4	Irregular	4

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CAU Site Team

Project Manager: Ricky Patten

Project Supervisor: Len Middleton

Site Survey: Jon Moller

Excavation Team: Haaroon Ahmed

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Project details

Project name	Land East of Church Street and South of Bicker Road, Donington
Short description of the project	The Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) was commissioned by Burmor Construction to undertake a trenched evaluation on land East of Church Street and South of Bicker Road, Donington, Lincolnshire (TF 2092 3601) to assess the archaeological potential of the site prior to a proposed development. The evaluation was carried out between the 5th and 7th July 2021, and identified a series of ditches and pits of 10th to 15th century date.
Project dates	Start: 05-07-2021 End: 07-07-2021
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	LCNCC : 2021.89 - Museum accession ID
Any associated project reference codes	CBDS21 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	H04-0208-20 - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 2 - Offices
Monument type	DITCHES Medieval
Monument type	PITS Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Medieval
Significant Finds	ANIMAL BONE Medieval
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Rural commercial
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	After outline determination (eg. As a reserved matter)

Project location

Country	England
Site location	LINCOLNSHIRE SOUTH HOLLAND DONINGTON Land East of Church Street and South of Bicker Road
Postcode	PE11 4XP

Study area	0.34 Hectares
Site coordinates	TF 2092 3601 52.907565722399 -0.201775255724 52 54 27 N 000 12 06 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 4m Max: 4m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Ricky Patten
Project director/manager	Ricky Patten
Project supervisor	Len Middleton
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Burmor Construction

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	The Collection: Art and Archaeology in Lincolnshire
Physical Contents	"Animal Bones","Ceramics","Environmental"
Digital Archive recipient	The Collection: Art and Archaeology in Lincolnshire
Digital Contents	"Survey"
Digital Media available	"Database","Images raster / digital photography","Spreadsheets","Survey","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	The Collection: Art and Archaeology in Lincolnshire
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Drawing","Section"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Land East of Church Street and South of Bicker Road, Donington, Lincolnshire. An Archaeological Evaluation Assessment
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