

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at Glatton Hall,
Glatton, Cambridgeshire**

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Introduction

Between the 2nd and 3rd July 1998 an archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cambridge Archaeological Unit on land within the estate of Glatton Hall, Glatton in Cambridgeshire (TL 154 862, see Figure 1). This work was commissioned by Sally B. Schreiber in advance of the construction of one detached house and garage (planning app. no. H1117/95 & H0974/97/F). The excavation was conducted in accordance with the design brief prepared by the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Section (Kaner 1997).

Site Geology and Topography

The site is located off High Haden Road and to the south-west of Glatton Hall in the centre of the village (see Figure 2). There is a slight slope north-east to south-west across the site with the rise of Mill Hill directly to the north. The natural substrata is Oxford clay. The site at the time of excavation was open pasture/grass land.

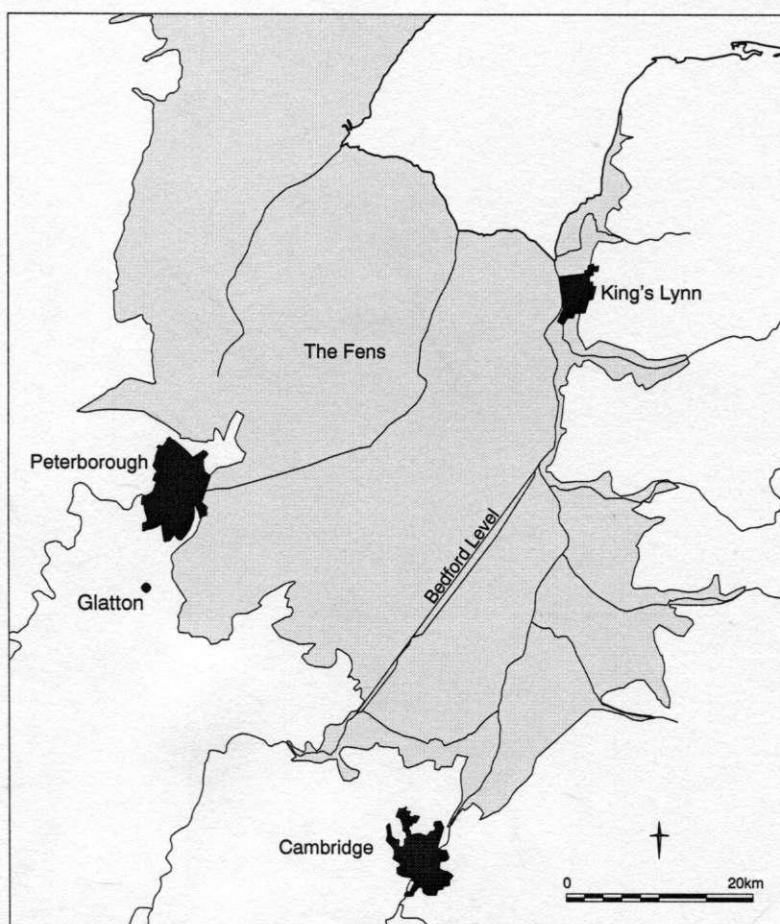
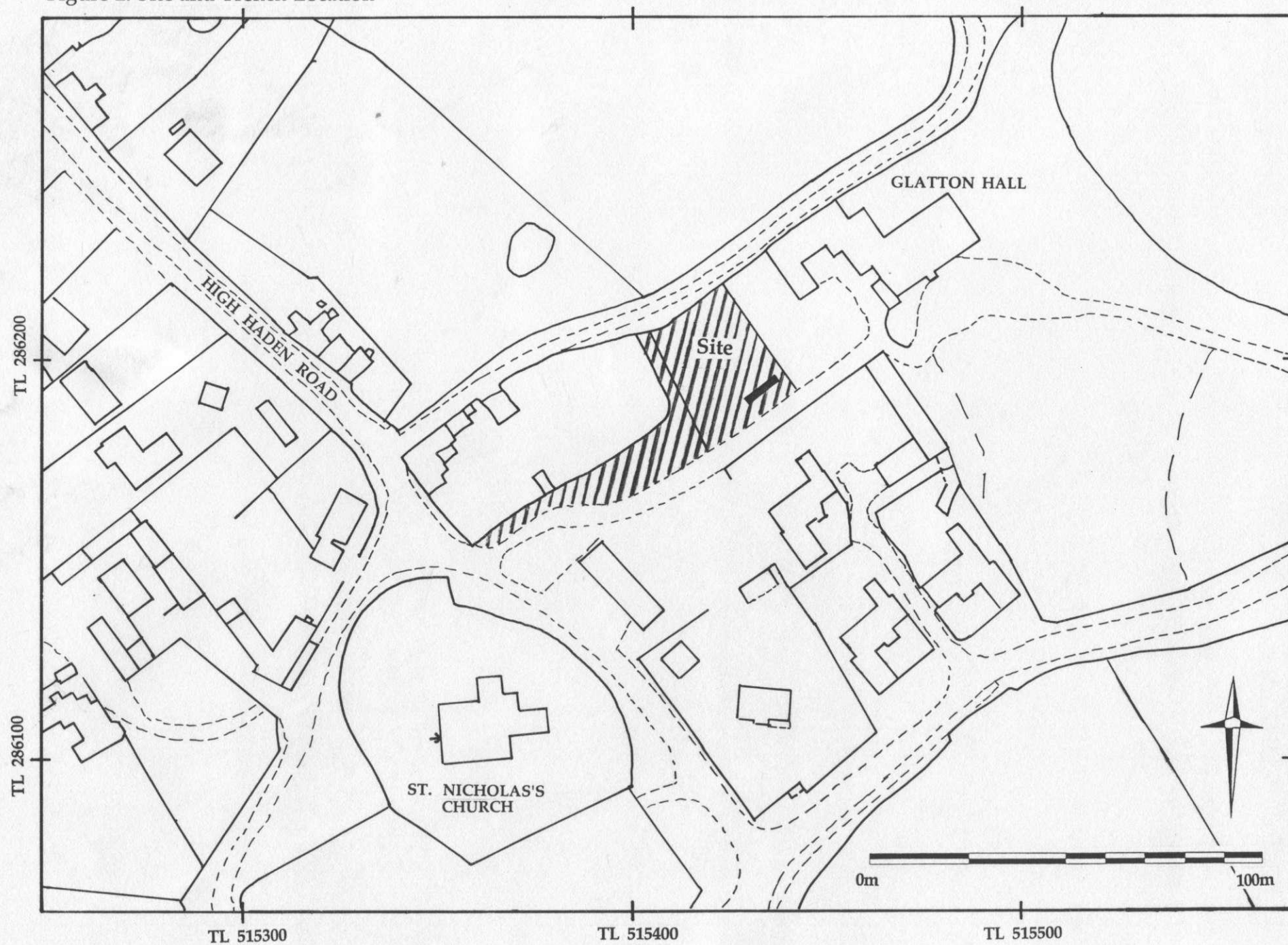


Figure 1 Location within Cambridgeshire

Figure 2: Site and Trench Location



Archaeological and Historical Background

Scattered around the Glatton environs is archaeological evidence from the Prehistoric, Roman and Medieval periods. Examples of which include; two probable Bronze Age ring ditches with aerial photographic evidence of a surrounding field system (SMR 01477, Kemp 1991); earthworks believed to be the remains of a Roman camp (SMR 01469) with the Roman road of Ermine Street not far to the north-east; and Medieval ridge and furrow systems and headlands observed as crop marks (Kemp 1991). Closer to the site Romano - British pottery (SMR 01464) was found near the rectory to the south-west, and a Roman glass cinerary urn (SMR 01463) was found to the north-west during excavation for building foundations on High Haden Road. Earthworks in the field directly north of Glatton Hall are thought to include the remains of Medieval and Post Medieval house platforms (SMR 10019), some of which are possibly related to those seen on Haufted's map of 1613 (HRO ref. TLR4040).

Located to the south-west of the site is St. Nicholas's Church where Saxon carvings have been found (SMR 01462), indicating a possible early date to the church and village origins. The church and the Manor of Glatton were mentioned in the Domesday survey (Morris 1974), though no early remains of this church have survived above ground. The church was rebuilt in the 15th century with later 19th century restoration work and only a few 12th century worked stones can still be seen (VCH 1936).

The earliest map of Glatton dated to 1613 (*ibid.*) shows the area of the site to be covered in trees, lying behind a precursor of Glatton Hall, which is slightly further south than the present location of the Hall. By 1770 a map of the 'Estates of Wm. Wells' (HRO ref. 54) locates the Hall to roughly the same area as it presently stands. The OS map of 1887 (1st Ed.) shows major alterations to the Hall with the site area in use as a garden, with a few trees and paths.

Methodology

One trench was excavated after part of the site was topsoil stripped. The trench was machine excavated by JCB, using a toothless ditching bucket, 1.55m in width.

The Unit modified version of the Museum of London recording system was employed throughout to record the archaeology found within the trench (Spence 1990). Feature numbers were assigned (e.g. F.1) as a descriptive aid in defining a posthole, pit etc. Fills and cuts were assigned

individual context numbers, indicated in the text in square brackets (e.g. [001]). Sections were drawn at 1:20, base-plans at 1:50. Features were manually half sectioned.

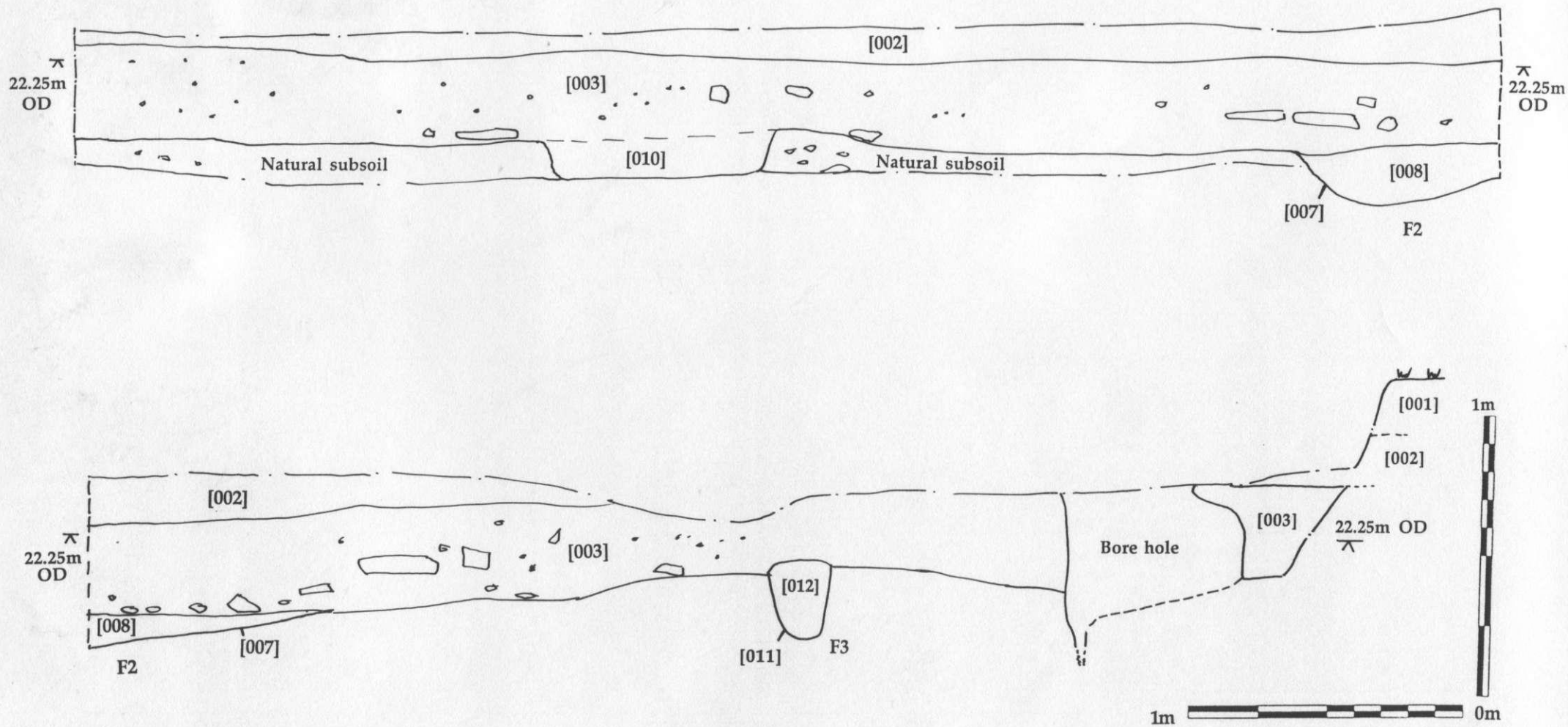
Results (see Figure 3)

The trench was 10m in length excavated in the eastern corner of the site. The depth below ground surface was 0.71m in the north-east end and 0.90m in the south-west end of the trench. The machined level dependant on when archaeological features were encountered.

The topsoil [001] a dark brown moderately compacted clayey silt (depth 0.20m) overlay an earlier garden soil [002] of mid brown moderately compacted silty clay with odd gravel, charcoal and brick inclusions (depth 0.25m - 0.30m). This overlay a layer [003] of mid brown grey slightly silty clay (depth 0.30m - 0.40m) well compacted with occasional gravel, small stones and limestone rubble inclusions; also odd brick and tile fragments (clay and collyweston tile) with rare animal bone and charcoal inclusions. On the north side of the trench this layer was heavily speckled with beige mortar, the layer petering out towards the south. One pot sherd was found, a piece of Fenware datable to the 14th/15th centuries. A stone spindle whorl fragment was also retrieved from this layer though could not be dated. The animal bone was from cattle and sheep/goat, the distal end of a cattle femur showing evidence of butchery marks. Where this layer peters out on the north-west facing section remnants of an earlier buried soil can be seen [004] an orange brown grey slightly silty clay (depth 0.20m) well compacted with odd gravel inclusions. This layer contained one small sherd of St. Neots pottery with a broad date between 850 and 1150 AD. The natural subsoil was found beneath this layer at a depth of 21.95m OD, a brown orange gravelly silty clay with patches of light blue grey Oxford clay. The water table was reached at a depth of 21.67m OD.

Two posthole features were found in the north-east end of the trench approximately one metre apart, posthole F.3 being half sectioned by the trench edge (see Figure 3). Posthole F.1 had a mid brown loosely compacted clayey silt fill [006], with odd charcoal and small stone inclusions (depth 0.06m). The cut [005] for the posthole was roughly circular in diameter (0.20m x 0.22m) fairly shallow with a rounded base. On the base of the posthole cut was a small piece of possible 15th century pot. The size of the pot making a definite date difficult. Posthole F.3 had a dark brown clayey silt fill [012] with odd small stone inclusions (depth 0.25m), three abraded brick fragments and one sheep/goat upper premolar tooth. The full dimensions of the cut [011] could not be seen but it had a width of 0.22m with fairly steep sided edges to a rounded base. The brick

Figure 3: Section Facing South East



fragments could not be dated but it is probable that these two postholes are from the same structure. They are aligned north-west to south-east which corresponds with the boundary alignments which have remained fairly constant from at least the 1600's. They could form a fence line or be part of an earlier structure predating Glatton Hall. The postholes are both sealed by layer [003] which can be dated to the 14th/15th centuries which helps confirm the date of the pot in F.1 to be also of 15th century date. The high content of building debris within [003] and its date could allow it to be associated with the destruction of the posthole structure which it seals. The rubble and clay being used to makeup the ground for the next phase of activity. This may have been the landscaping of the area to be formed into gardens for Glatton Hall in the 16th century.

An amorphic shaped feature (F.2) had a mid grey brown moderately compacted silty clay fill [008] (depth 0.25m) with moderate to heavy flint inclusions. The cut [007] had no definite edges and the fill appeared to spread following a root canal to the east. This suggests rather than a pit it was probably a naturally formed tree bowl. Similarly [010] a mid to light brown grey slightly silty clay filled feature seen only in section is probably a natural feature also.

Discussion

The earliest phase of activity is indicated by the presence of the sherd of St. Neots pot within the buried soil layer [004]. Though it was not found within a feature providing definite evidence of settlement activity in this area, its presence supports the documentary evidence of the Domesday book and provides a possible earlier date to the origins of the village.

The later Medieval postholes (F.1 and F.3) and the associated layer [003] can be dated to the 15th century. They provide evidence that there was some form of structure in this area predating the known dates of the origins of Glatton Hall. They may well be associated with an earlier Hall or else an unrelated building, possibly mirroring growth in settlement activity within Glatton when the church was rebuilt in the 15th century.

It would appear that the Glatton Hall estate is well established by the early 17th century and the archaeological evidence of a thick layer of undisturbed topsoil and earlier garden soil ([001], [002]) supports the cartographic record of the area being in fairly continuous use as a garden area for over 350 years.

Acknowledgements

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Cambridgeshire County Council SMR, Castle Court, Cambridge.