

*Wessex Archaeology*

# Riversfield Mill, Little Paxton Cambridgeshire

Archaeological Evaluation

Ref: 54046

*September 2003*

**RIVERSFIELD MILL, LITTLE PAXTON  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

Prepared on behalf of  
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**Contents**

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	PROJECT BACKGROUND .....	1
1.2	TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND LAND USE.....	1
1.3	ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.....	1
<b>2</b>	<b>FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1	AIMS .....	2
2.2	METHODS.....	2
<b>3</b>	<b>RESULTS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
3.1	INTRODUCTION .....	3
<b>4</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>PROJECT ARCHIVE .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>4</b>

**APPENDIX 1: Trench Summaries**

**Figures**

**Figure 1: Location of Site and Trenches**

## **Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by PRC Fewster Architects Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation of land at Riverside Mill, Little Paxton, St Neots, Cambridgeshire, centered on NGR TL 185 620.

The evaluation was planned to comprise thirteen trenches, however, due to the presence of services and standing buildings it was not possible to excavate four of these trenches.

No archaeological features or deposits were found in any of the trenches. The evaluation revealed that the north-east corner of the plot may have been levelled in order to create a football pitch and that the north-west corner had been subjected to disturbance for the placement of services and the extraction of gravels.

## **Acknowledgements**

The project was funded by PRC Fewster Architects Ltd. The work was monitored on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire County Council.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Kevin Ritchie with the assistance of Caroline Appleton and Dave Budd. This report was compiled by Kevin Ritchie with illustrations prepared by Mark Roughley. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Rob Wardill.

# RIVERSFIELD MILL, LITTLE PAXTON CAMBRIDGESHIRE

## Archaeological Evaluation

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by PRC Fewster Architects Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation of land at Riversfield Mill, Little Paxton, St Neots, Cambridgeshire, centred on NGR TL 185 620 (Figure 1), hereafter referred to as the Site. The proposed development is for mixed residential/commercial purposes.

1.1.2 The evaluation was undertaken to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains so that the archaeological implications of the proposed development can be considered on a sound and justifiable basis. This procedure is in accordance with government guidelines as set out in the Department of the Environment's *Planning Policy Guidance 16* (PPG16 – Archaeology and planning, November 1990).

1.1.3 The archaeological fieldwork was carried out from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 2003.

#### 1.2 Topography, geology and land use

1.2.1 The Site comprises a rectangular area of c.11 hectares and lies at between 17.40m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at the north and 14.20m aOD at the south. It is bounded to the north by the Great North Road, to the east by Mill Lane and to the south by the River Great Ouse.

1.2.2 At the time of the evaluation the southern half of the plot was occupied by a working paper mill and industrial complex and the northern half by a football pitch and lawn area.

1.2.3 The British Geological Survey map for the area (sheet 187) indicates that the underlying geology of the site consists of 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> River Terrace Gravels with Alluvium along the southern boundary, the course of the River Great Ouse.

#### 1.3 Archaeological background

1.3.1 There are no records of archaeological finds within the confines of the evaluated area. Numerous archaeological investigations along the Great Ouse Valley have yielded remains dating from the prehistoric through to the post-Roman periods. The nearest of these investigations to the site is the excavations at Little Paxton Quarry, Diddington, c.3½ km to the north where activity from the Mesolithic through to the post-Roman periods were recorded (A. Jones 1994 & 2000), (A. Jones & Iian Ferris 1992 - 93).

- 1.3.2 Little Paxton and Great Paxton were mentioned in the Domesday Book as *Pachstone (1086)*. Probably ‘farmstead of a man called \**Paecc*’ in Old English plus *tún* (Mills, A.D. 1991).

## **2 FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Aims**

- 2.1.1 The principal objective of the field evaluation was to determine, as far as was reasonably possible, the location, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains on the site.
- 2.1.2 The evaluation also sought to clarify the extent of modern disturbances and to assess the degree of archaeological survival of buried deposits. This information will then be available to the County Archaeological Office and the client for use in the formulation of any further archaeological mitigation which may be required prior to the commencement of construction.

### **2.2 Methods**

- 2.2.1 The evaluation consisted of thirteen trenches numbered 1 – 13 and ranging from 5m x 5m areas to 1.8m wide trenches 50m in length. The location of the trenches within the site were positioned to target areas where survivability of archaeological remains were considered highest, and where impact of the proposed construction works would be greatest.
- 2.2.2 The trenches were located employing a Total Station measuring instrument with co-ordinates set to the National Ordnance Survey Grid.
- 2.2.3 Prior to machine excavation the location of each trench was scanned for services using a Cable Avoidance Tool.
- 2.2.4 Due to the presence of services and standing buildings it was not possible to excavate trenches 1 to 4.
- 2.2.5 The evaluation trenches were excavated under constant archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked excavator. Deposits were removed by machine in a series of level spits down to a maximum depth of 1.20m, or to the top of *in situ* archaeological or geological deposits, whichever was encountered first.
- 2.2.6 Upon completion of machine excavation the spoil from each trench was scanned for artefacts visually and with a metal detector.
- 2.2.7 All features and deposits requiring clarification were cleaned, recorded and excavated by hand. Written, drawn and photographic records were compiled in accordance with the Wessex Archaeology Field Recording Manual.

### **3 RESULTS**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

- 3.1.1 A detailed description of the deposits recorded within each trench can be found in Appendix 1 of this report. Their location within the site is shown on Figure 1.
- 3.1.2 For all trenches the topsoil comprised a light to mid grey brown sandy loam, with varying amounts of modern building debris inclusions.
- 3.1.3 Underlying the topsoil and overlying the natural Terrace Gravel's in all trenches, was a mid to light yellow/ orange brown silty sand containing some small rounded and sub-rounded gravel inclusions.
- 3.1.4 No features of archaeological interest were identified in any of the trenches. Post-medieval and modern disturbances for services and limited gravel extraction were present in trenches 11, 12 and 13.
- 3.1.5 The only finds recovered from the evaluation were metal objects that were subsequently identified as modern, and a single flint scraper of a prehistoric date (from subsoil in Trench 5). All other material was identified on site as modern building debris and was discarded.

### **4 CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 The evidence from the trenches indicates that buried archaeological remains are not present in the evaluation area.
- 4.2 Modern disturbances in the form of service trenches and limited gravel extraction recorded in trenches 10, 11 and 12 show that the north-eastern corner of the evaluation area has been severely truncated.
- 4.3 Trenches 5-10 in the north-west corner of the evaluation area revealed no obvious signs of modern disturbance. The subsoil recorded in this area contained fragments of modern building debris and a single flint scraper (trench 5). The mixed nature of these artefacts may indicate that this area has been disturbed or possibly material has been imported for levelling to create the football pitch.



## 5 PROJECT ARCHIVE

4.1 The project archive is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Salisbury, under the project code reference 54046. It is anticipated that it will be transferred to the Cambridgeshire County Council storage facility at Landbeach near Cambridge.

4.2 The archive currently comprises the following components:

File/Roll no.	NAR Cat.	Details	No.of sheets	Format
1	-	Index to archive	1	A4
1	A	Evaluation Report		A4
1	A	Day book entries	7	A4
1	B	Trench record sheets	9	A4
1	B	Survey records	5	A4
1	B	Graphics register	1	A4
1	B	A4 Graphics	5	A4
1	B	A1 Graphics	1	A1
1	D	Photographic record	5	A4
1	D	B & W Contact print sheets		
1	D	B & W Negatives		
1	D	Colour Slides in plastic hangers		
1	D	Digital photographs.	42	
		Project specification	17	A4

## 6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Jones, A. 1994 Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society. *Little Paxton Quarry, Diddington, Cambs.: Archaeological Excavations 1992-3*, p7-22
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- Jones, A. 2000 Prehistoric, Roman, and Post-Roman Landscapes of the Great Ouse Valley. *A River Valley Landscape: Excavations at Little Paxton Quarry, Cambridgeshire 1992-6, An Interim Study* p 131-142.

**APPENDIX 1: Trench Summaries**

M aOD = metres above Ordnance Datum (Newlyn)

Depth (m) indicates the approximate depths of the context from the current ground level

<b>Trial Trench: 5</b>		<b>50m x 2m</b>	<b>Maximum Surface Height: 16.789m aOD</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>	
500	Topsoil/turf. Light greyish brown sandy loam, occasional flint inclusion, some modern CBM fragments noted.	0 – 0.25m	
501	Subsoil, light orange brown silty sand with sparse flint inclusions.	0.25 – 0.60m	
502	Natural light orange brown silty sands and gravels.	0.60m --	

<b>Trial Trench: 6</b>		<b>25m x 2m</b>	<b>Maximum Surface Height: 16.789m aOD</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>	
600	Topsoil/turf. Light greyish brown sandy loam, occasional flint inclusion, some modern CBM fragments noted.	0 – 0.19m	
601	Subsoil, light orange brown silty sand with sparse flint inclusions.	0.19 – 0.58m	
602	Natural light orange brown silty sands and gravels.	0.58m --	

<b>Trial Trench: 7</b>		<b>25m x 2m</b>	<b>Maximum Surface Height: 16.722m aOD</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>	
700	Topsoil/turf. Light greyish brown sandy loam, occasional flint inclusion, some modern CBM fragments noted.	0 – 0.26m	
701	Subsoil, light orange brown silty sand with sparse flint inclusions.	0.26 – 0.56m	
702	Natural light orange brown silty sands and gravels.	0.56m --	

<b>Trial Trench: 8</b>		<b>5m x 5m</b>	<b>Maximum Surface Height: 16.764m aOD</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>	
800	Topsoil/turf. Light greyish brown sandy loam, occasional flint inclusion, some modern CBM fragments noted.	0 – 0.25m	
801	Subsoil, light orange brown silty sand with sparse flint inclusions.	0.25 – 0.54m	
802	Natural light orange brown silty sands and gravels.	0.54m --	

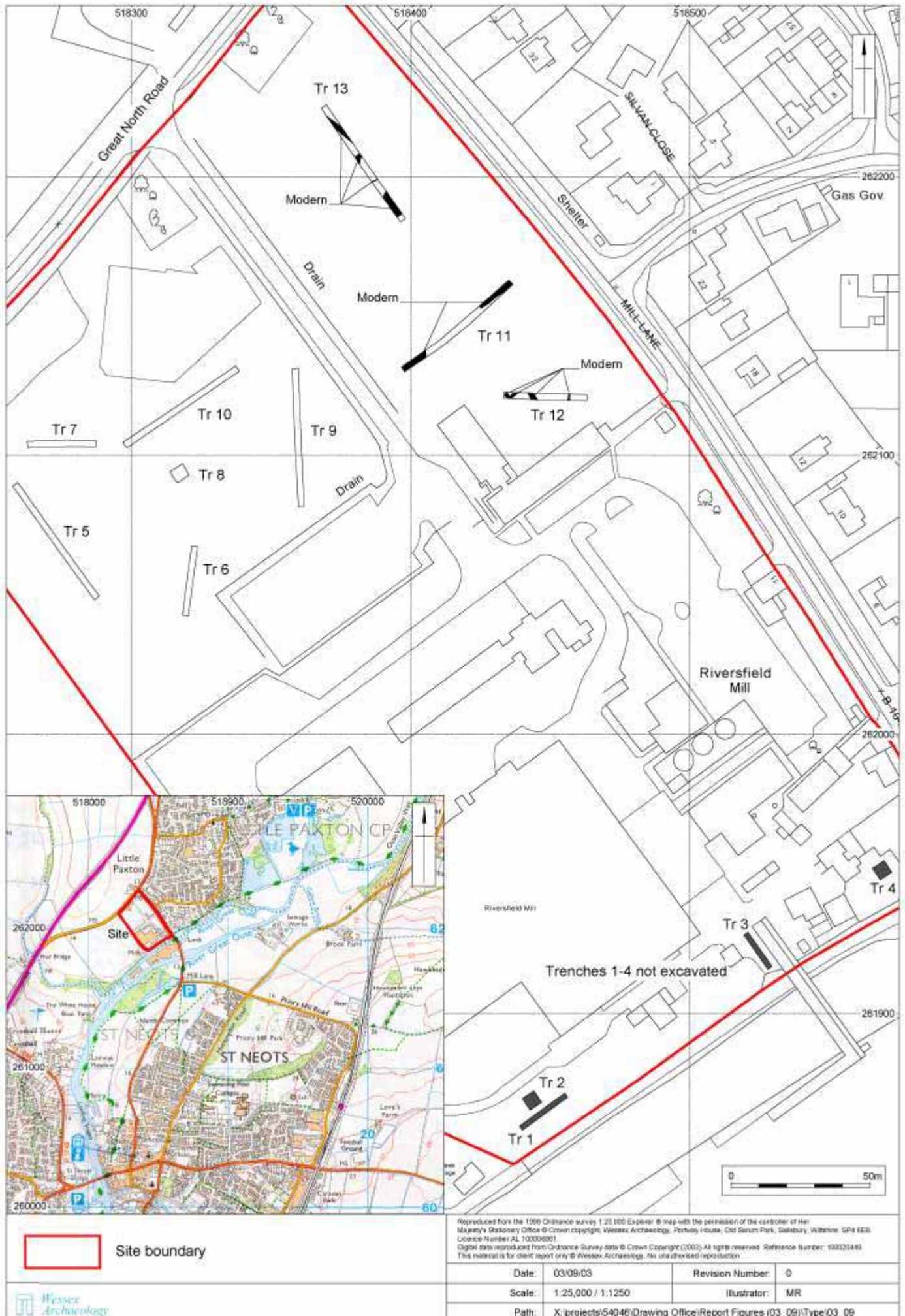
<b>Trial Trench: 9</b>			<b>50m x 2m</b>	<b>Maximum Surface Height: 16.856m aOD</b>	
<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>			<b>Depth (m)</b>	
900	Topsoil/turf. Light greyish brown sandy loam, occasional flint inclusion, some modern CBM fragments noted.			0 – 0.33m	
901	Light yellow brown silty sand with sparse gravel inclusions.			0.33 – 0.77m	
902	Natural mid – dark orange brown silty sands and gravels.			0.77m --	

<b>Trial Trench: 10</b>			<b>50m x 2m</b>	<b>Maximum Surface Height: 16.73m aOD</b>	
<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>			<b>Depth (m)</b>	
1000	Topsoil/turf. Light greyish brown sandy loam, occasional flint inclusion, some modern CBM fragments noted.			0 – 0.25m	
1001	Subsoil, light orange brown silty sand with sparse flint inclusions.			0.25 – 0.66m	
1002	Natural mid – dark orange brown silty sands and gravels.			0.66m --	

<b>Trial Trench: 11</b>			<b>50m x 2m</b>	<b>Maximum Surface Height: 17.18m aOD</b>	
<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>			<b>Depth (m)</b>	
1100	Topsoil/ turf, mid greyish brown sandy loam.			0 – 0.31m	
1101	Very little survives within trench due to truncation. Mid orange brown silty sand.			0.31 – 0.40m	
1102	Natural dark orange brown sands and gravel.			0.40m --	
1103	Large post-medieval gravel quarry infilled with grey loams and building debris.			0.40m --	

<b>Trial Trench: 12</b>			<b>30m x 2m</b>	<b>Maximum Surface Height: 17.506m aOD</b>	
<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>			<b>Depth (m)</b>	
1200	Topsoil/ turf, mid greyish brown sandy loam.			0 – 0.30m	
1201	Mid orange brown silty sand with rare gravel inclusions.			0.30 – 0.47m	
1202	Natural mid orange brown sands and gravel.			0.47m --	
Note	Modern service trenches cut subsoil and natural. Services not exposed at the level of the natural.			0.47m --	

<b>Trial Trench: 50m x 2m</b>		<b>Maximum Surface Height: 17.169m aOD</b>
<b>13</b>		
<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>
1300	Topsoil/ turf, mid greyish brown sandy loam.	0 – 0.20m
1301	Mid orange brown silty sand with rare gravel inclusions.	0.20 – 0.48m
1302	Natural mid orange brown sands and gravel.	0.40m --
Note	Modern service trenches cut subsoil and natural. Services not exposed at the level of the natural.	0.40m --



Location of site and trenches

Figure 1



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