

Archaeological trial trench evaluation at Grove Farm, Graveley Road, Offord Darcy, Cambridgeshire December 2024

Report No. 024/139

Author: Robert Simister Falvey

Illustrator: Gosia Krawczyk

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Project Manager: Amelia Fairman
Site Code: ECB7415
NGR: TL 22114 66289

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OASIS REPORT FORM

Project: Archaeological trial trench evaluation at Grove Farm, Offord Darcy, Cambridgeshire			**OASIS No: 530498**
ACTIVITY TYPE			
Project/ Activity type	Trial trench evaluation		
Reason for investigation	Planning		
Development type	Residential		
Planning reference ID	16/01671/FUL	Planning stage	Pre-planning
PROJECT LOCATION			
National grid ref	TL 22114 66289		
Site name	Grove Farm, Offord Darcy, Cambridgeshire		
REVIEWERS/ ADMIN			
HER for project	CHET		
National organisation	Historic England		
WORK UNDERTAKEN			
Methodological summary	MOLA Stansted was commissioned by Thornhill Estates to carry out an archaeological evaluation at Grove Farm, Offord Darcy, Cambridgeshire to assess the presence/absence of any archaeological remains prior to the proposed development of the plot for residential properties.		
Previous works?	No	Future works?	No
Dates - Start date:	02/12/24	End date	06/12/24
Scientific dating done?	No	Type:	-
Enviro sampling done?	No		
BIBLIOGRAPHY			
Title	Archaeological trial trench evaluation at Grove Farm, Offord Darcy, Cambridgeshire		
Author(s)	Robert Simister Falvey		
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PEOPLE			
Organisation	MOLA		
Project manager	Amelia Fairman		
Project officer/ supervisor	Robert Simister Falvey		
Funding body	Thornhill Estates		
KEYWORDS			
Monuments found/ date	None		
Finds types found/ date	None		
RESULTS			
Description of outcomes/ summary of research framework contribution	No archaeological features or finds predating the post-medieval period were found. A single undated pit and wall of probably post-medieval/modern date were identified.		
ARCHIVES			
Accession ID	ECB7415		
Finds Archive repository	CHET	Expected date of submission:	Oct 2025
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ABSTRACT

MOLA Stansted carried out an archaeological evaluation at Grove Farm, Offord Darcy, Cambridgeshire to assess the presence/absence of any archaeological remains prior to the proposed development of the plot for residential properties. No archaeological features or finds predating the post-medieval period were found. A single undated pit and undated, but probably post-medieval wall were identified.

1 INTRODUCTION

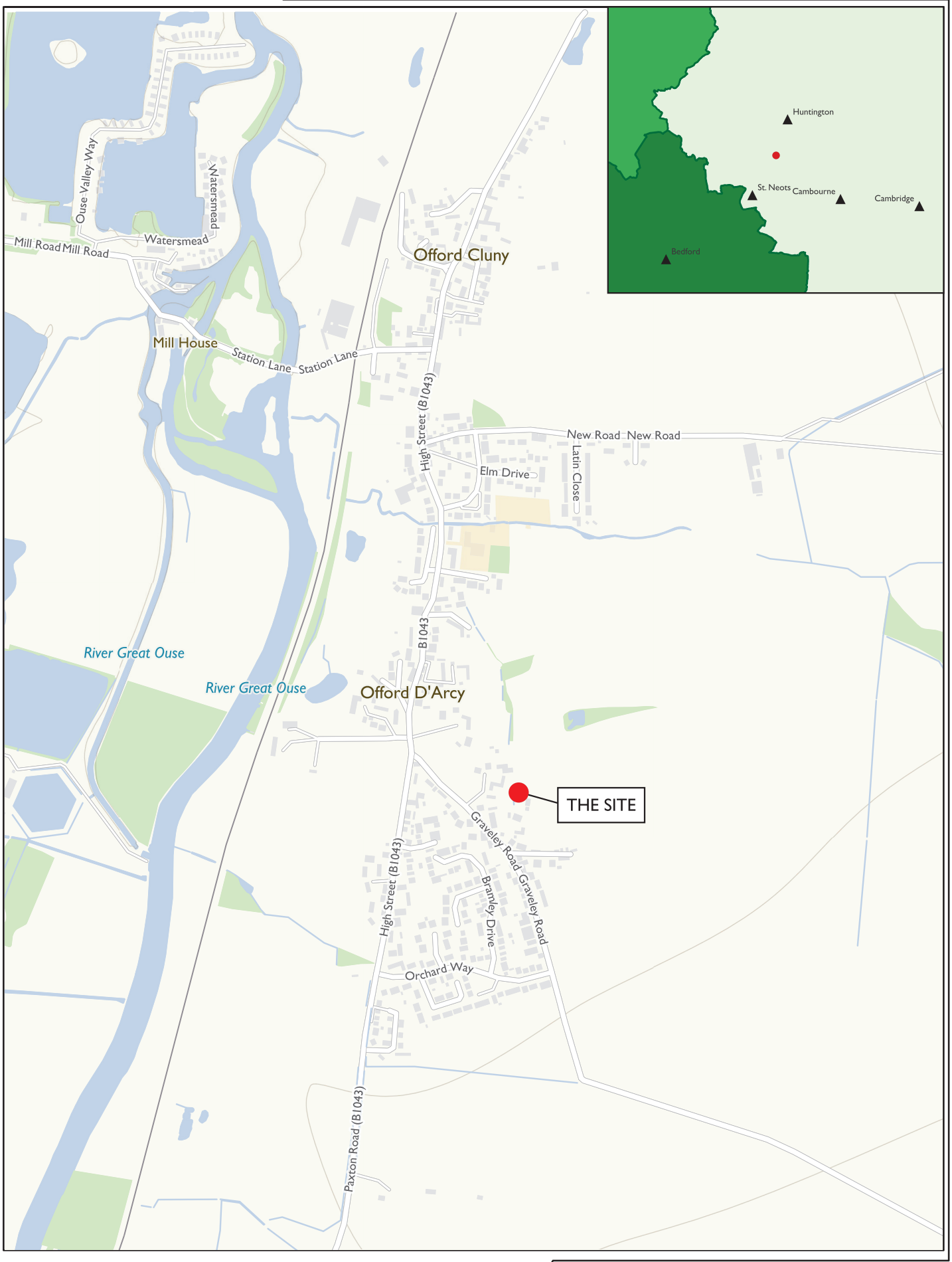
MOLA was commissioned by Thornhill Estates to undertake a trial trench evaluation to assess the presence/absence of any archaeological remains on land at Grove Farm, Graveley Road, Offord Darcy, Cambridgeshire (Fig 1; NGR TL 22114 66289, Planning Application number 16/01671/FUL). The archaeological works were carried out prior to the proposed development of the plot for residential properties.

The works took place in accordance with current National Planning Policy Framework (DLUHC 2023) and were undertaken to ensure satisfactory archaeological investigation and recording to provide further information to the planning authority and inform upon the needs of any potential archaeological mitigation.

MOLA is a Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) registered organisation. The works conformed to the methodology set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation produced by MOLA (2024) and complied with current best archaeological practice as defined by the Chartered Institute for Archaeology's *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2022), *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (CIfA 2023a), and *Universal guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2023b). as well as the Historic England procedural document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (*MoRPHE*) (HE 2015).

The event number is **ECB7415** and it was used as the site code.

FIGURE 1 // Site Location - General



0 500 m

N

PROJECT // P24-285 Offord Darcy,Grove Farm

DESCRIPTION // Site Location

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DOC REF: P24-285-AER-v1

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location, geology and topography

The development site is located to the south-east of the village of Offord Darcy, to the east of the High Street (B1043) and Graveley Road. The site is currently largely flat, comprising a redundant farmyard. The British Geological Survey (BGS 2024) indicates that the site is underlain by the Oxford Clay Formation - Mudstone. The bedrock geology is overlain by River Terrace Deposits of sand and gravel. The site is overlain by freely draining, slightly acid loamy soils (Soilscape 6; CSAI 2024).

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

Relevant historic background data from the vicinity of the site is summarised below, referenced by the monument (MCB) or event (ECB) numbers (CHET 2024).

Prehistoric

Much of the evidence relating to the prehistoric period is limited to unprovenanced find spots within the wider area. These include residual palaeolithic implements (ECB14638) and Bronze Age pottery sherds (E02025 and 02540). An evaluation and excavation at 177 High Street (ECB15038) identified three ditches of possible Bronze Age date in close proximity to All Saints Church c.850m north of the site. Two Iron Age gullies were recorded during an evaluation c.530m south-west of the site (MCB25476).

Roman

Evidence relating to the Roman period is sparse. The course of the Sandy to Godmanchester Road (MCB17569) is believed to have passed in a north to south alignment c.0.6km east of the site. Excavations as part of the A14 road improvement scheme in 2016–2018 recorded evidence of the road following the same alignment, which was formed by two parallel ditches approximately 18m apart. Crop marks on Graveley Road (02489) c.200m south-east of the site may infer the presence of a Roman Road running on a south-west to north-east alignment, which was up to 6m in width. A number of Roman coins were also noted within the vicinity but have no further information or provenance.

Roman pottery was recovered during an evaluation at Margetts Farm (ECB1431) c.1km north-west of the site. A number of undated pits and ditches may represent contemporary activity. However, the deposition of alluvial deposits suggested that the land was subject to flooding throughout its history, which may have prevented continuous or long-term settlement or land use in this area. An archaeological evaluation to the rear of the High Street (ECB17539), c.250m north-west of the site, identified a single Roman quarry pit.

Early medieval and medieval

The first documentary proof of the name Offord “Cluny” derives from a deed of agreement (07756) dated AD 1237 between Lord Abbot and the Convent of Chigney and farmers of Offord. It describes the life of a village community in the 13th century and the monetary values of cattle and corn. Churches with origins in the 12th and 13th centuries also testify to the longevity of the settlement and two such churches have been identified in the vicinity of the site. All Saints’ Church is located c.775m north-west of the site, whereas Saint Peter’s Church is positioned c.450m west of the site. All Saints’ Church at Offord Cluny (MCB02458, LB 1130281) contains elements dating

to the 13th century, followed by restoration works in the 18th century. Saint Peter's Church (MCB14897, LB 1130249) is believed to date from the 12th century. Disarticulated human remains were found during works within the churchyard, dating broadly to the medieval period. This may indicate that during this period, the site lay at the periphery of settlement focal points.

An evaluation and excavation at 177 High Street in close proximity to All Saints' Church (CB15038) identified activity relating to settlement during the Saxo-Norman period. This suggested the presence of a post-built structure, and gravel extraction. Later features of the medieval period included numerous pits, at least one long-lived boundary ditch, a ditched enclosure and further evidence of gravel extraction.

Archaeological evidence for this period within the wider area comprises a number of earthworks and moated sites. Grove Farm less than 100m west of the site, includes the remains of a small manorial site with an infilled moat which now forms part of the garden of the house (MCB02422). Traces of these earthworks are visible on LiDAR. A second moated site, also visible on LiDAR is located c.435m south-west of the site (MCB27291). The latter extends to at least 75m east-west by 40m north-south. Further potentially related earthworks are noted c.550m south-west of the site (MCB27292) and c.250m west of the site (MCB27296). Both examples are visible on LiDAR data. The former extends to at least 85m in extent north-south but has been disturbed by the extant railway line. The latter comprises a number of rectilinear enclosures.

Archaeological evaluation works within close proximity to the High Street have identified a number of features dating to the medieval period. Settlement activity has been noted to the rear of the High Street (MCB19108) c.350m north-east of the site, in the form of ditches and pits. A trial trench evaluation, c.290m north-east of the site, revealed a greater concentration of activity indicative of multi-phase settlement (ECB19558). A number of linear features and pits were investigated suggesting activity during the 13th to 14th centuries, 14th to 15th centuries and then during the post-medieval periods.

A trial trench evaluation and subsequent excavation, c.250m north-west of the site, identified further evidence of medieval occupation (ECB17539). The evaluation identified a ditched enclosure dating to the 12th century and large pond like features. The western limits of the activity were defined by a boundary ditch, and a clay lined circular pit dating to the 13th to 14th centuries was also identified. A modern sunken garden had truncated a significant amount of the north-western area. The subsequent excavation identified a possible enclosure ditch and later pitting which may relate to small scale gravel quarrying.

Post-medieval and modern

The post-medieval development of the wider area is reflected in the numerous entries relating to built structures. The HER documents numerous buildings identified from cartographic sources, which include schools (MCB22814, MCB25474), farms/farmhouses (MCB32640, MCB22815, (02446) and two dovecotes (MCB22816, MCB24157). Local industry is reflected by entries relating to a blacksmiths workshop (MCB22817), and a corn mill (MCB25470). Additional structures include houses (MCB24156), manor houses (MCB25471, MCB32651, 02444, 02445), an Inn (MCB19768) and boat houses (MCB24158, MCB24159). Religious institutions are also referenced in the Offord Darcy Baptist Chapel (MCB17186), rectories (MCB22818, MCB25472) and rectory gardens (MCB32626).

Archaeological evidence relating to the post-medieval development of the area was recorded during an evaluation c.330m south-west of the site, which identified a number of pits and ditches dating to the post-medieval period (ECB30727).