

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
EVALUATION OF LAND AT  
ST JOHN'S BUSINESS PARK,  
SPITTALS WAY, HUNTINGDON,  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

**January 2007**

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**PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY**

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**Land at St. John's Business Park, Spittals Way, Huntingdon:  
An Archaeological Evaluation**

**Site Code: ECB 2455**

**Central National Grid Reference: TL 2325 7369**

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**January 2007**

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## 1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 During December 2006, Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. carried out an archaeological evaluation for The Churchmanor Estates Company on land at St. John's Business Park, Spittals Way, Huntingdon. Ten trial trenches measuring 10m by 1.8m were excavated and recorded.
- 1.2 Trenches 1 and 2 were located in the northeast corner of the site, directly north of a fossil hedge and ditch that represented part of a former field system. Only modern features were present in these trenches - a series of stakeholes, pipe trenching, some possible postholes, and two pits.
- 1.3 Trenches 3 and 4 were located in the eastern third of the site. Trench 3 contained evidence of a ridge and furrow field system running east-west across the site. Trench 4 had no archaeological horizons.
- 1.4 Trenches 5, 6, and 7 were positioned in the centre of the site. All three trenches showed the continuation of the ridge and furrow system. In Trench 7 a pit containing an articulated animal skeleton and residual Saxon pottery truncated one of the furrows.
- 1.5 Trenches 8, 9, and 10 were located down the western third of the site. Trenches 8 and 9 had a continuation of the ridge and furrow system. Trench 10 contained a N-S aligned field drain, and a section of a possible ditch.
- 1.6 Apart from one very abraded sherd of medieval pottery all finds associated with the ridge and furrow were post-medieval in date, showing that the earliest evidence on the site for agricultural practices was from the post-medieval period, with subsequent modern ploughing truncating the tops of the ridges and creating the current topsoil. No earlier archaeological horizons or features were evident in the evaluation. The pottery from the ditch and field drain in Trench 10 are interpreted as being residual due to their (and other unidentifiable fragments) very abraded appearance. It is also likely that these ditches have removed any trace of the ridge and furrow. However, the residual presence of a well preserved sherd of Saxon pottery suggests some level of activity from this period in the area, and it was noted that older artefacts, if highly abraded, were only found at the southern limit of the site.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 During the period of the 4<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> December 2006 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. carried out an archaeological evaluation on land at St. John's Business Park, Spittals Way, Huntingdon (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by The Churchmanor Estates Company, and was carried out to support a planning application for the development of the site consisting of the construction of business units, carparking areas, services, and landscaping. The evaluation consisted of the excavation and recording of ten trial trenches (Fig. 2).
- 2.2 The site was bounded to the east by Spittals Way, the Powermarque Development and Washingley Road to the north, an estate road to the west, and grassland to the south. Spittals Roundabout was located a short distance to the west of the site. There was a lack of prior archaeological work in the vicinity to the site, with the HER results and Northbridge Park fieldwork being some distance away. Therefore it was difficult to determine the precise potential of the site, and it was considered at best to be little potential for post-Medieval and Saxon activity, and some potential for prehistoric, Roman, and Medieval activity.
- 2.3 The archaeological and historical background to the site has been set out in the desktop assessment prepared by Joanna Taylor of Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (Taylor, 2006). The specifications for an archaeological evaluation were prepared by Peter Moore of Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (Moore, 2006). Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning & Countryside Advice prepared a brief for the archaeological evaluation (Thomas, 2006). The site was supervised by the author and project managed by Peter Moore.

### **3 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

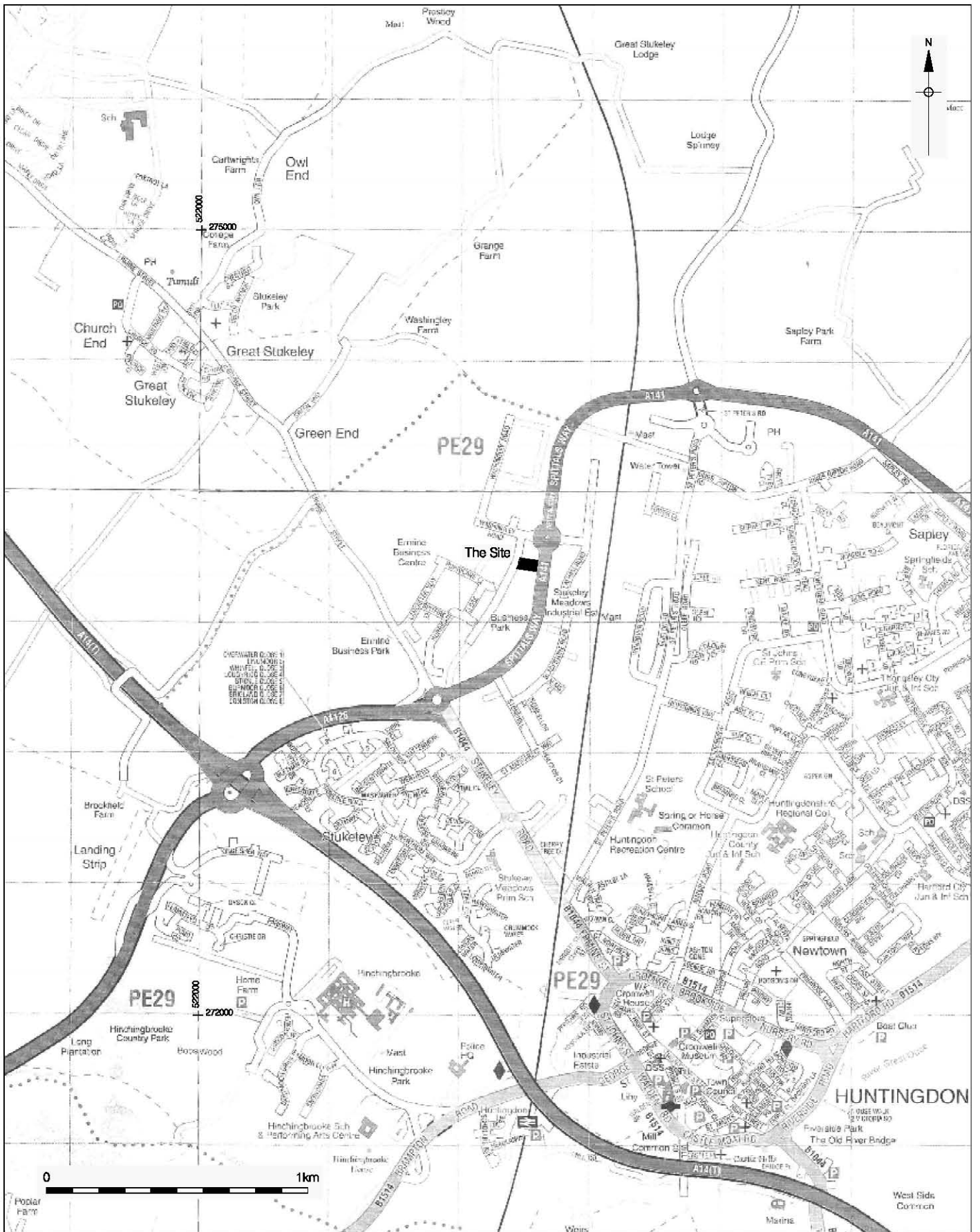
#### **3.1 Geology**

3.1.1 The site is situated on solid deposits of Grey Mudstones, with infrequent stone bands dating to the Jurassic era and drift deposits of Glacial Boulder Clay of the Pleistocene era. The upper natural deposits were typified by orange brown silty clay. This in turn was sealed by a surface covering of topsoil with an average thickness of 0.37m.

#### **3.2 Topography**

3.2.1 The site was located on a natural gradient, being located in the upper part of the valley of the River Ouse. It sloped continually from the north-west downward to the south-east. It varied in elevation from 30.85m OD in the north-eastern corner to 28.00m OD in the south-eastern corner.

3.2.2 The site was bounded to the east by Spittals Way, the Powermarque Development and Washingley Road to the north, an estate road to the west, and grassland to the south. Spittals Roundabout was located a short distance to the west of the site. A ditch and hedge ran east-west across the north of the site indicating the location of a previous field pattern.

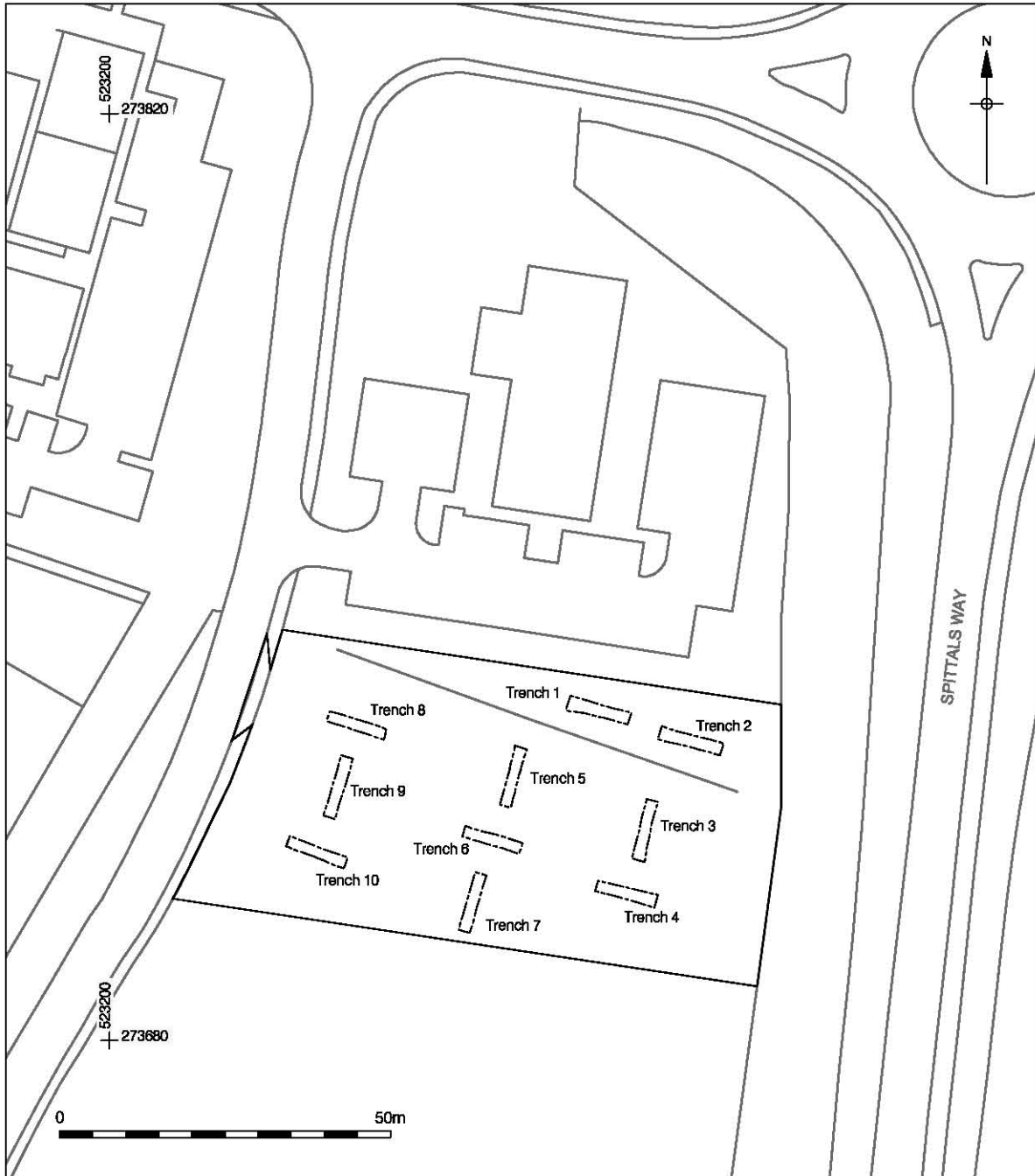


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Figure 1  
Site Location  
1:20,000 at A4





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Figure 2  
Trench Location  
1:1,000 at A4

## **4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **4.1 Prehistoric**

- 4.1.1 Numerous prehistoric sites are known in Huntingdonshire and the wider Ouse Valley region, including a Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age ceremonial complex at Brampton (a short distance to the southwest). This can suggest that the region was attractive for exploitation by prehistoric populations<sup>1</sup>.
- 4.1.2 Archaeological work at Northbridge Park (MCB16363), to the west of the site, revealed concentrations of pits, gullies, and postholes that contained quantities of Bronze Age material. There was a predominance of linear features suggesting that the site was utilised for the management of animal stock in the Bronze Age. Numerous undated features were also recorded, including a ring ditch, watering hole, and additional pits and gullies, and it is probable that these are contemporary to the Bronze Age features<sup>2</sup>.
- 4.1.3 The HER search showed little additional prehistoric evidence in the vicinity. The only finds listed are an unprovenanced Neolithic flake (HER01690A - location unknown) and an unprovenanced Palaeolithic flint blade and hand axe (HER01690 - location unknown).

### **4.2 Roman**

- 4.2.1 The Roman thoroughfare between London, Lincoln, and York, known as Ermine Street, passes a short distance to the west of the study site, from which it passes south through Huntingdon, and crosses the River Ouse heading towards the Roman town of Godmanchester. Ermine Street is known to have been important during the Roman period, but Roman activity seems to have been focused in Godmanchester (3.5 km to the southeast) or on a small scale in Huntingdon<sup>3</sup>, with little evidence for activity within the vicinity of the study site.
- 4.2.2 The archaeological investigations at Northbridge Park found no evidence relating to the original location of Ermine Street, or any buildings leading from its supposed

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<sup>1</sup> Cotswold, 2004

<sup>2</sup> Cullen, 2005

<sup>3</sup> Page, 1932

route<sup>4</sup>. Therefore it is possible that the modern line of Ermine Street may have shifted to the west, with the original line of the road being located to the east.

4.2.3 Archaeological investigations at Northbridge Park did find some evidence of utilisation during the Roman period. An evaluation in 2005 investigated a square ditched enclosure, and found a double ditched enclosure and associated features. These were interpreted as being associated with the management of animal stock. A geophysical survey identified a concentration of features in the west of the site, which probably date to the Roman period and may also indicate an associated settlement.

4.2.4 The HER search yielded few other entries from the Roman period. Residual Roman pottery was recovered during excavations at the Spittals roundabout (HER03598A). There were also two Roman burial mounds approximately 1km to the north of the study site, and unprovenanced Roman coins from the Great Stukeley area. This suggests that the general area was subjected to some utilisation during the Roman period.

### **4.3 Saxon**

4.3.1 Huntingdonshire owes much of its importance to Huntingdon's location at the junction of the river Ouse and Ermine Street and it is probable that a timber bridge was constructed between Huntingdon and Godmanchester during the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Goods would have been brought in from overseas, via the Wash and Kings Lynn, and traded and passed through the town<sup>5</sup>.

4.3.2 The former Parish of Great Stukeley, in which the study site is located, was first mentioned in the Domesday Book (1086). The name derives from *styfic-leah* meaning "stump clearing", suggesting an area of felled woodland. From its inclusion in the Domesday Book it is possible to assume that the area was in use by the end of the Saxon period, possibly earlier, with a number of agricultural holdings in Great Stukeley being recorded<sup>6</sup>.

4.3.3 By the time of the Norman Conquest in 1066 Huntingdon was an established town, with a market and a mint. The HER search is assumed to cover an area within the hinterland of Saxon Huntingdon, however there were no recorded entries dated to the Saxon period. It is possible that the lack of archaeological investigations in the developments surrounding the study site may have obscured the potential survival of Saxon archaeology.

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<sup>4</sup> Cullen, 2005

<sup>5</sup> Page, 1932

<sup>6</sup> Page, 1926

#### 4.4 Medieval

- 4.4.1 Soon after the Conquest of 1066 William the Conqueror passed through Huntingdon *en route* to York, and built a castle in the area now known as Castle Hill. In the following years Huntingdon appears to have gone through an economic collapse, and by the early 12<sup>th</sup> century the taxable value of the borough was halved. The reign of Henry II saw the return of economic prosperity, and Henry of Huntingdon describes in a 12<sup>th</sup> century account the beauty and comeliness of the area and praises the wealth of game and fish available<sup>7</sup>.
- 4.4.2 In the 13<sup>th</sup> century there are known to have been 16 parishes and 6 religious houses within the vicinity of Huntingdon. Three religious houses were located within the borough boundary - St John's Hospital, St Giles Hospital, and an Augustinian Friary. The other three were beyond the boundary - St Mary's Priory to the east, Hinchingbrooke Priory to the west, and St Margaret's Hospital to the north<sup>8</sup>.
- 4.4.3 Huntingdonshire underwent a steady decline throughout the 14<sup>th</sup> century, which continued through the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. This drop in population and prosperity resulted in only 4 parish churches and 2 priests remained by the late 1500s. This decline was due to a number of factors, including the construction of a bridge at St Ives, the poor state of the early 14<sup>th</sup> century stone bridge in Huntingdon, the obstruction of the main stream of the River Ouse by millponds and sluices, and the impact of the Black Death<sup>9</sup>.
- 4.4.4 Construction work at the Spittals Roundabout in 1987 noted at least 20 skeletons and significant quantities of medieval pottery. 1993 saw further work being undertaken and uncovered a large number of burials, once tightly bound in cloth. The remains were shown to represent 55-60 individuals of assorted ages, many with signs of leprosy. These were concluded to be from the cemetery associated with St Margaret's Leper Hospital (HER03958)<sup>10</sup>. The extent of the cemetery is unknown, and the Northbridge Park excavations showed no evidence of the cemetery.
- 4.4.5 Aside from the religious houses associated with St Margaret's the region of the study site was probably agricultural in the medieval period, with a number of manors and farmsteads recorded within the Parish of Great Stukeley. A farm recorded in "A Survey of Huntingdon, 1572" lies a short distance to the south of the study site.

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<sup>7</sup> Page, 1932

<sup>8</sup> Page, 1932

<sup>9</sup> Page, 1932

<sup>10</sup> Mitchell, 1993

Evidence of a farmstead, moat, drain, small building, and ridge and furrow field systems of a NW/SE aligned axis are thought to have been part of this farm (HER01054). Ridge and furrow field systems are known elsewhere in the vicinity of the study site, having been seen via both aerial photography and excavation at Northbridge Park (MCB16938).

#### **4.5 Post-Medieval**

- 4.5.1 No post-medieval entries were found via the HER search. It would appear that the area was being used as farmland throughout this period. Documentary research failed to reveal any notable evidence of significant activity on the study site or in the surrounding area. This is also supported by map regression evidence. The earliest detailed land use is seen in the Great Stukeley Inclosure Map of 1816. This records the study site being in an area known as Eastfield, with the majority being owned by a 'Vicar', and the northeast being owned by St John's College. The still existing field boundary is seen on the map, though it is unknown when this was first established.
- 4.5.2 The Ordnance Survey of 1885 shows an additional central east-west field boundary, an alteration to the field boundary in the southwest, and the presence of a field drain running along the northwest. The Great North Railway is now seen to the east, and the Spittals Almshouse lies on the opposite side of Ermine Street. The only changes shown in the 1900 Ordnance Survey is the lack of the above field drain. The area remains the same until 1958 when the central east-west boundary is removed. By 1975 the Spittals Almshouse no longer exists, and the east of the railway has been heavily developed.
- 4.5.3 The 1983 Ordnance Survey shows that the Spittals Roundabout and part of Spittals Way had been constructed, and partial development has occurred in the area south of the site. By 1993 the present boundaries of the site are established, and large amounts of development has occurred around the study site. The only apparent change to the site itself is the construction of a lake to the southwest. By 2001 significant development has occurred around the study site, leaving it to be one of the last areas of open space in the business park.

## 5 PLANNING BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 5.1 The proposed development site covers a 3, 445m<sup>2</sup> area of land at St. John's Business Park. The redevelopment of the site will include the excavation of strip foundations and the construction of business units, a lift shaft, new services, a parking area, and landscaping. The finished foundation levels will range between 28.90m OD and 29.20m OD. As part of this the existing hedge and ditch, which formed part of the property boundaries seen on early 19<sup>th</sup> century maps, will be removed.
- 5.2 The lack of development on the site has seen it remain open ground to the present day, and a 19<sup>th</sup> field boundary is still evident in the present ditch and hedge. It is likely that modern landscaping and previous ploughing and agricultural activity will have impacted upon any archaeological horizons on the site.
- 5.3 The proposed development could have a significant impact upon any buried archaeological horizons. No details are available at present regarding the depth and extent of the impact of the proposed scheme, however it can be anticipated that any below ground work carries the risk of damaging any archaeological horizons. The removal of the hedge and ditch boundary will also have a notable impact on any associated archaeological horizons.
- 5.4 In order to support the planning application an archaeological evaluation was carried out following the *Specification for Archaeological Evaluation of Land at St. John's Business Park, Spittals Way, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire*<sup>11</sup>, and in line with the guidance contained within *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation*<sup>12</sup> written by Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning & Countryside Advice.
- 5.5 The Huntingdonshire District Local Plan contains policy statements in respect to protecting the archaeological resource:

7.24 Pressures for development including new buildings, roads and mineral excavations can have a detrimental effect on sites of archaeological interest. Many of these sites are destroyed and damaged each year before any records of the site have been made.

**En11 The district council will normally refuse planning permission for development that would have an adverse**

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<sup>11</sup> Moore, 2006

<sup>12</sup> Thomas, 2006

**effect upon a scheduled ancient monument or an archaeological site of acknowledged importance.**

7.25 The desirability of preserving archaeological remains and their setting is a material consideration in determining planning applications. The needs of archaeology and development can be reconciled if discussions take place at an early stage to establish the importance of the site and its contents. When it is likely that significant archaeological interests exist, a supporting statement, determining impact and providing justification, should accompany a planning application. Where planning permission is subsequently granted, appropriate conditions will be imposed to safeguard archaeological interests.

**En12 Planning permission for development on sites of archaeological interest may be conditional on the implementation of a scheme of archaeological recording prior to development commencing. The district council would need to approve a written programme of such archaeological recording and satisfy themselves that a suitably qualified archaeological organisation would be retained to implement the programme. In appropriate cases it may be necessary to ensure the preservation of archaeological deposits within the development through sympathetic foundation design or changes to the development layout.**

**En13 Where development is proposed in areas of archaeological potential the district council may require planning applications to be accompanied by the results of an archaeological field evaluation or desk-based assessment to help define the character and extent of archaeological remains.**

5.6 The archaeological evaluation aimed to:

- Locate, define, record, and date any surviving archaeological deposits, features, or finds on the site.
- Locate and define previous activities that have truncated earlier archaeological remains.

- Locate and define any existing foundations, and any foundations of former buildings and services.
- Locate and define any medieval or post-medieval settlement, industrial practices or other activities on the site.

5.7 The following research objectives were also put forward to be investigated:

- If found, what is the nature and function of any prehistoric or Roman activity on the site and how does it relate to any already known from the area and region?
- The site gives the opportunity to explore the Roman landscape east of Ermine Street. Can it help define the nature of the rural landscape (including field evidence for intensively worked areas and other resources such as woods), rural settlement and local industries? Will the site fit into a wider pattern of settlement and exploitation along this major route?
- What medieval and post-medieval activities took place on the site?
- Is there any evidence for activities relating to the leper hospital being present on the site?



## 6 METHODOLOGY

- 6.1 The evaluation was carried out according to a method statement<sup>13</sup> based on information contained within an archaeological desk-based assessment of the site<sup>14</sup>, and according to an evaluation specification<sup>15</sup>. The evaluation followed the Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning & Countryside Advice evaluation design brief<sup>16</sup>. The archaeological evaluation conformed to the IFA Code of Conduct.
- 6.2 A 5% evaluation sample of the study site was required. To achieve this ten trenches measuring 10m x 1.8m were located across the site:
- Trench 1 was located at the north edge of the site, to the east of the centre, and ran parallel to the fossil hedge on a NW-SE alignment.
  - Trench 2 was located on the same NW-SE alignment as Trench 1, again positioned parallel to the fossil hedge, towards the northeast corner of the site boundary.
  - Trench 3 was central in the eastern third of the site. It was located approximately 5m south of the fossil hedge, and was aligned N-S.
  - Trench 4 had its central point 5m below the southern end of Trench 3, and was aligned E-W in the southeastern corner of the site.
  - Trench 5 was located approximately 5m south of the fossil hedge. It was aligned N-S and ran down the approximate centre of the site.
  - Trench 6 had its centre 5m south of the southern end of Trench 6. It was aligned E-W in the approximate centre of the site.
  - Trench 7 continued the same line as Trench 5 down the approximate centre of the site, but at the southern end. It was aligned N-S, with the northern end being 5m from the centre point of Trench 6.
  - Trench 8 was in the northwest corner of the site on an E-W alignment to the south of the fossil hedge.
  - Trench 9 was aligned N-S in a central position on the western edge of site. Its northern end was approximately 5m from the centre of Trench 8.
  - Trench 10 was located in the southwest corner of the site. It was aligned E-W, with its centre 5m from the southern end of Trench 9.
- 6.3 All trenches were machine excavated to the top of archaeological deposits, or the top of natural deposits where no archaeology was evident. All machining was undertaken by a 180° wheeled excavator using a toothless bucket, under archaeological

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<sup>13</sup> Moore, 2006

<sup>14</sup> Taylor, 2006

<sup>15</sup> Moore, 2006

<sup>16</sup> Thomas, 2006

supervision. Thereafter the trenches were cleaned and excavated by hand by archaeologists.

- 6.4 All archaeological features were sufficiently excavated to gain an understanding of their extent, depth, and to see if any earlier remains survived underneath. They were investigated and fully recorded to inform future design works and to fully understand the archaeological sequence and the development of the site. Cut features were excavated to gain an understanding of earlier stratigraphy where relevant. Linear features were evaluated with 1m wide slots. All other features were evaluated in half sections (quadrants not having been appropriate), unless deemed worthy of complete excavation by the County Archaeologist, Andy Thomas. There was no requirement to excavate all archaeological deposits to natural levels.
- 6.5 Following ground reduction, all trench faces that required examination or recording were cleaned using the appropriate hand tools. The investigation of archaeological levels was done by hand, and involved cleaning, examination, and recording both in plan and section.
- 6.6 All archaeological features were recorded using standard single context recording methods. This included the use of pro-forma recording sheets, recording in plan at 1:20 and in section at 1:10. Where appropriate photographs were taken in colour transparencies and black and white negatives.
- 6.7 All finds from excavated features were recovered in order to aid in the identification and dating of archaeological deposits.
- 6.8 Three temporary benchmarks were established on the site (values 30.79m OD, 30.76m OD, and 28.80m OD). As the nearest Ordnance Survey benchmark was located too far away to be practical, two of the temporary marks were located on service covers with known heights gained from surveyors' plans. Archaeological staff on site established the third by traversing from the aforementioned temporary marks to a fixed point in the carpark to the north of the site.

## **7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE**

### **7.1 Trench 1**

- 7.1.1 The earliest deposit in this trench was the moderately compacted mid orangey brown silty clay (02) that comprised the natural on this site (highest elevation 28.71m OD). At the north of the trench the natural was cut by a modern pipe trench (+), aligned east-west, which was not excavated. It extended beyond the west trench edge, and had a width of 0.20m. On the east trench edge it was truncated by recent root disturbances (14) that extended beyond the limits of the trench.
- 7.1.2 Approximately half way along the southern edge of the trench the natural was cut by an oval shaped possible posthole [04]. It was 0.24m long, 0.16m wide, and extended beyond the trench edge. It was 0.20m deep with straight, vertical sides and a rounded base with a gradual break of slope.
- 7.1.3 Also in the southern area a series of stakeholes, [06], [08], [10], and [12], cut the natural. These were all circular with a diameter of 0.04m and ranged in depth from 0.10m to 0.18m. All had straight, vertical sides and a pointed base. No finds were evident. These run approximately in line with the existing hedgerow, and may have formed part of a fenceline.
- 7.1.4 This sequence was capped by a 0.39m thick layer of modern topsoil (01).

### **7.2 Trench 2**

- 7.2.1 The earliest deposit in this trench was a moderately compacted mid orangey brown natural silty clay (02) (highest elevation 28.35m OD). Along the southern edge of the trench this was cut by root disturbance [43], possibly from a pre-existing hedge line.
- 7.2.2 On the eastern edge of the trench, the natural was cut by a north-south aligned ditch [45]. It extended beyond the north, south, and east edges of the trench. It had a length of 1.90m, a width of 0.60m, and a depth of 0.38m. The visible side was moderately steep and concave. The base was not seen within the area of excavation.
- 7.2.3 A modern pipe trench [+] runs on an east-west alignment across the trench. It can be assumed that this is a continuation of that seen in Trench 1. It extended beyond the western trench edge, and had been recut [+] along the same line to the east where it continued beyond the trench edge. This eastern recut truncated ditch [45]. It also

truncated an additional length of modern pipe trench [+] in the northeast area of the trench.

7.2.4 The pipe trench was truncated by a modern borehole [+], which lay in the central northern area of the trench. The recut of the pipe trench was truncated by a square pit [+] to the north. This pit extended beyond the northern trench edge. A shallow modern pit [+], which also extended beyond the northern edge, in turn truncated this.

7.2.5 The trench was capped by a 0.49m thick layer of modern topsoil (01).

### **7.3 Trench 3**

7.3.1 The earliest deposit in this trench was a moderately compacted mid orangey brown natural silty clay (02) (highest elevation 28.23m OD). This was truncated by two plough furrows. These comprised part of the ridge and furrows system that was evident across the site (Figure 3). The northernmost furrow [21] was aligned east-west, and had dimensions of 2.10m by 1.95m, and had a depth of 0.24m. The sides were slightly concave with a gradual break of slope at the top, and no perceivable break of slope at the base, which was concave. It extended beyond the trench edges to the north, east, and west. A sherd of very abraded medieval pottery and some animal bone were recovered from the fill but the pottery is likely to be residual and the fill post-medieval in date.

7.3.2 The second plough furrow [23] lay to the south, on an east-west alignment. It measured 3.20m by 1.75m, with a depth of 0.31m. There was a gradual break of slope at the surface, and the sides were slightly concave. The base was slightly concave with no break of slope from the sides (Figure 4). The fill was typical of these furrows on this site - moderately compact, light brownish grey clayey silt, with inclusions of pebbles, chalk, and charcoal. It also contained small amounts of pottery, glass, and ceramic building material with a late 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date.

7.3.3 The trench was capped by a 0.29m layer of modern topsoil (01).

### **7.4 Trench 4**

7.4.1 The earliest deposit in this trench was a moderately compacted mid orangey brown natural silty clay (02) (highest elevation 28.13m OD). This was overlain with a 0.36m thick layer of modern topsoil (01). No archaeological features were evident in this trench.

## **7.5 Trench 5**

- 7.5.1 The earliest deposit in this trench was a moderately compacted mid orangey brown natural silty clay (02) (highest elevation 28.89m OD). This was truncated by two east-west aligned plough furrows.
- 7.5.2 The northern plough furrow [33] had dimensions of 2.15m by 1.75m and a depth of 0.30m. The sides were slightly concave, with a gradual break of slope at the top and no break of slope at the base, which was concave.
- 7.5.3 The southern plough furrow [35] had dimensions of 3.02m by 1.65m, and a depth of 0.54m. The sides were slightly concave. There was a gradual break of slope at the top and no perceivable break of slope at the base. The base was slightly concave.
- 7.5.4 The sequence in the trench was sealed by a 0.37m layer of modern topsoil (01).

## **7.6 Trench 6**

- 7.6.1 The earliest deposit in this trench was a moderately compacted mid orangey brown natural silty clay (02) (highest elevation 28.67m OD).
- 7.6.2 The natural was truncated by a singular east-west aligned plough furrow [37], which covered all but the southwest and northeast corners of the trench. It extended beyond all four of the trench edges. The furrow had dimensions of 8.50m by 1.65m and a depth of 0.51m. There was a gradual break of slope from the surface, the sides were slightly concave, and the base was also slightly concave with no perceivable break of slope from the sides.
- 7.6.3 The trench was covered by a 0.40m layer of modern topsoil (01).

## **7.7 Trench 7 (Figure 4)**

- 7.7.1 The earliest deposit in this trench was a moderately compacted mid orangey brown natural silty clay (02) (highest elevation 28.74m OD). The natural was truncated by two east-west aligned plough furrows.
- 7.7.2 The southern furrows [27] had dimensions of 1.84m by 1.72m. It extended beyond the south, east, and west edges of the trench. The northern furrow [25] had dimensions of 1.62m by 1.70m and extended beyond the east and west trench edges.

As other trenches had provided a representation of plough furrows on the site it was agreed with Andy Thomas that neither of those in this trench were to be excavated.

7.7.3 Furrow [25] was truncated by a linear pit [19]. It was aligned north-north-west to south-south-east, and had a length of 1.88m, a width of 0.56m and a depth of 0.41m. The sides were straight with a minor slope (slightly more sloped at the northern end). There was a sharp break of slope with the surface, and a gradual break of slope at the base. The base was flat, though was cut slightly deeper at the northern end. This feature contained an articulated dog skeleton (18). The head was to the north, just beyond the centre point of the cut. The bones were in poor-moderate condition with splintering of the bone evident prior to being lifted. The fill of the pit contained small amounts of disarticulated animal bone and shell. It also contained a singular fragment of residual 5<sup>th</sup> to early 6<sup>th</sup> century Saxon pottery.

7.7.4 The trench was covered by a 0.37m layer of modern topsoil (01).

## **7.8 Trench 8**

7.8.1 The earliest deposit in this trench was a moderately compacted mid orangey brown natural silty clay (02) (highest elevation 29.86m OD). This was truncated by an east-west aligned plough furrow [16]. This had dimension of 3.05m by 0.66m, and a depth of 0.06m. The sides were concave, with the west having a more gentle slope and the top break of slope being gradual. The bottom break of slope was gradual and the base was flat. This furrow appears to either be a termination or alternatively that it has been truncated by overlying unseen activity (hence the shallow depth). The fill contained small amounts of ceramic building material and also a copper alloy decorative fitting (Small Find number 2).

7.8.2 The trench was covered by a 0.34m thick layer of modern topsoil (01).

## **7.9 Trench 9**

7.9.1 The earliest deposit in this trench was a moderately compacted mid orangey brown natural silty clay (02) (highest elevation 29.50m OD). The natural was truncated by two east-west aligned plough furrows.

7.9.2 The northern furrow [39] had dimensions of 1.98m by 1.80m and a depth of 0.30m. The sides were slightly concave, with a gradual break of slope at the surface and no perceivable break of slope at the base. The base was slightly concave. The furrow extended beyond the north, east, and west edges of the trench.

7.9.3 The southern furrow [41] had dimensions of 2.85m by 1.80m, with a depth of 0.56m. The sides were slightly concave, as was the base. There was a gradual break of slope at the top and no perceivable break of slope at the base. It continued beyond the south, east, and west edges of the trench.

7.9.4 The trench was sealed by a 0.38m layer of modern topsoil (01).

## **7.10 Trench 10**

7.10.1 The earliest deposit in this trench was a moderately compacted mid orangey brown natural silty clay (02) (highest elevation m 29.41OD).

7.10.2 The natural was truncated at the western end of the trench by a possible ditch [31]. It had dimensions of 2.68m by 2.74m and a depth of 0.48m. Both the east and west sides were straight and sloped, with the west side having a steep slope, whilst the east was more gentle. It extends beyond the north and south edges of the trench. The base was flat, with a gradual break of slope. This feature appeared to possibly be aligned north-south, based on the sides being east and west facing, though it was difficult to be fully certain. The fill (30) contained abraded sherds of prehistoric/Saxon pottery and a very worn fragment of probable ceramic building material and some animal bones.

7.10.3 To the east of [31] the natural was truncated by a north-south aligned field drain [29]. This had a length of 1.64m, which then extended into the north and south trench edges. The width was 0.52m, and the depth 0.30m. The surface break of slope was sharp, with the sides being straight slopes. The break of slope at the base was gradual, and the base was flat. The fill again contained some abraded prehistoric/Saxon pottery and animal bone.

7.10.4 There was no trace of the ridge and furrow in this area and it is assumed that the agricultural activity associated with the ditch and drain destroyed any evidence of them.

7.10.5 The trench was sealed by a 0.35m thick layer of modern topsoil (01). This had been truncated by a recent machine cut [+], which had truncated though to the underlying natural.

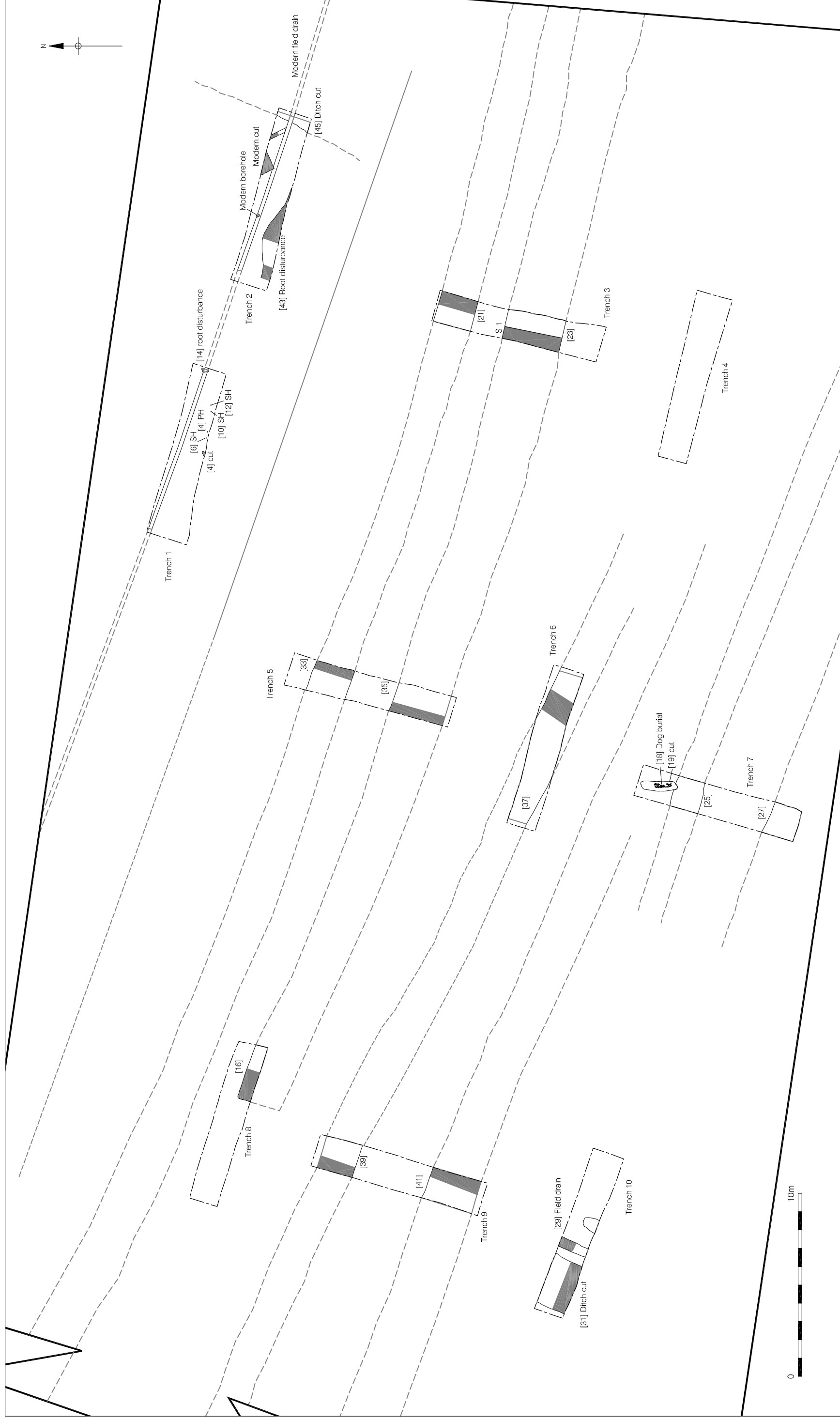
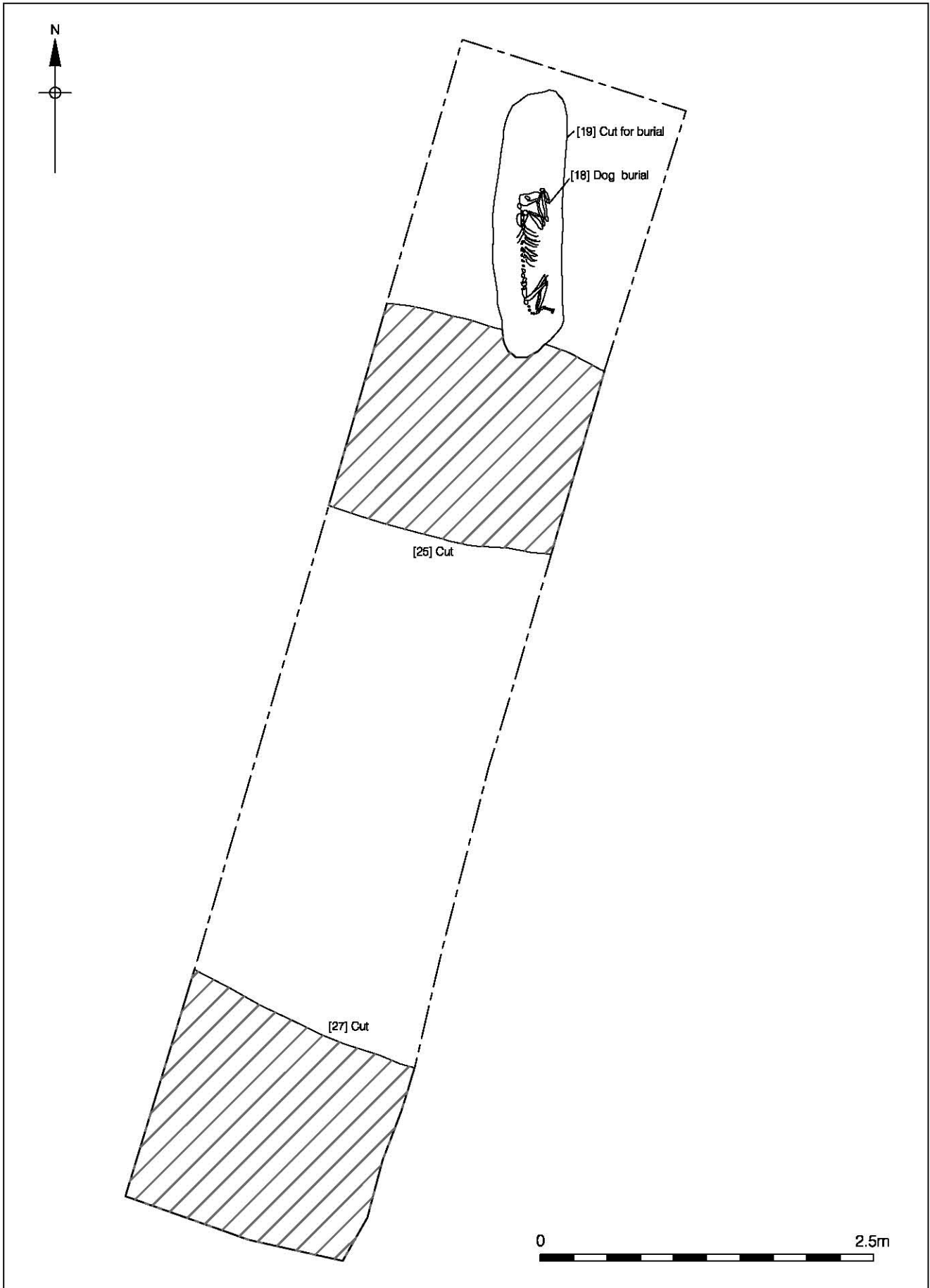


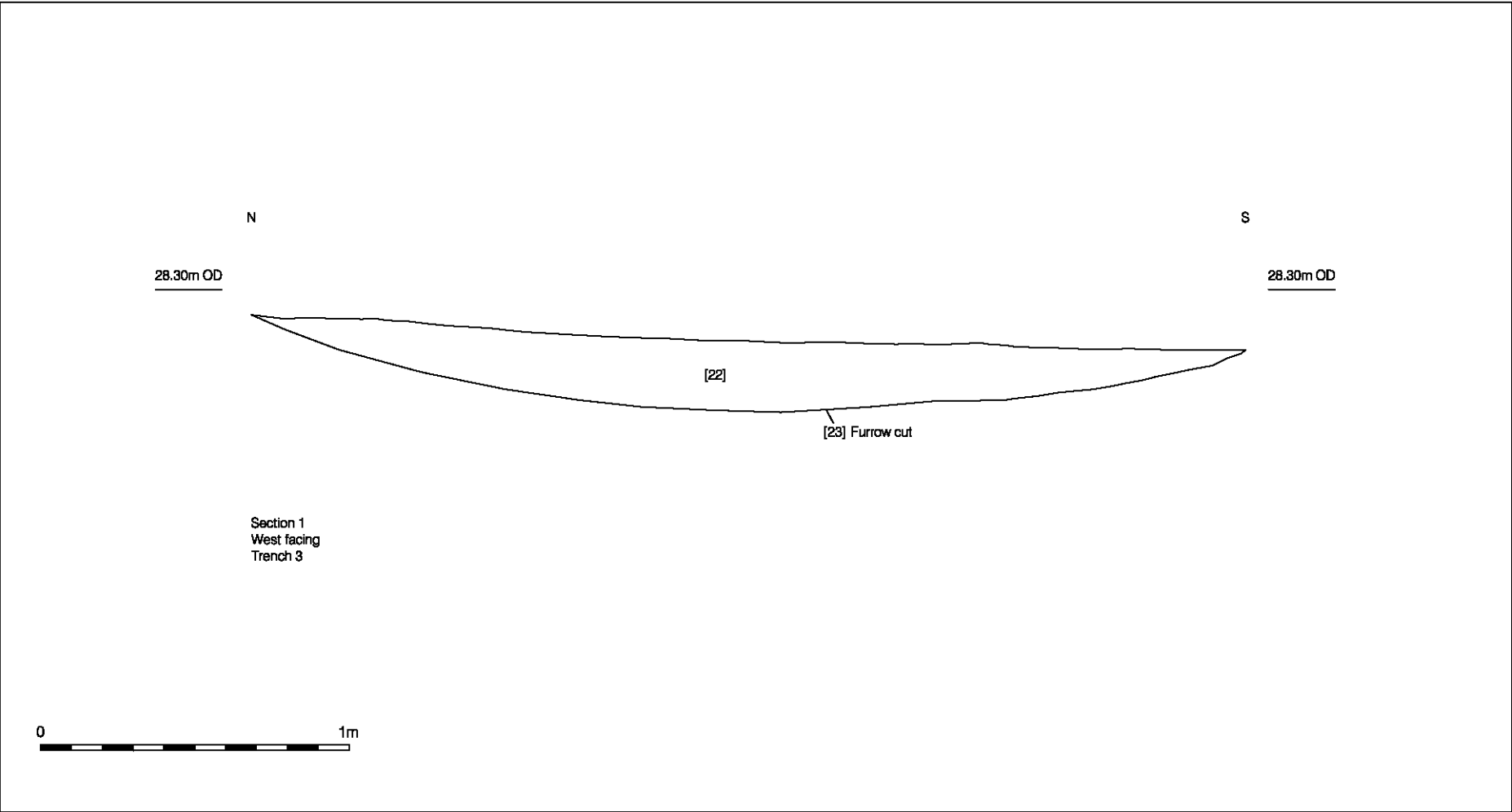
Figure 3  
Detailed Trench Location with Ridge and Furrow Conjecture  
1:200 at A3





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Figure 4  
Trench 7 Detail  
1:40 at A4



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Figure 5  
Section 1  
1:20 at A4

## 8 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The evaluation showed that there had been notable agricultural activity across the site south of the fossil hedge and ditch boundary line. This took the form of a ridge and furrow field system which could be seen clearly in Trenches 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. Similar ridge and furrow field systems, dating to the medieval period, are known from evidence of a farmstead (HER01054) a short distance to the south of the study site, and were also seen in aerial photographs and excavations from the nearby Northbridge Park (MCB16938).
- 8.2 The evidence seen of this system was the preserved layer of the furrows. The ridges were all truncated by modern ploughing which left no surface trace of the ridges and furrows. They were also truncated by a dog burial in Trench 7. The furrows of this field system are also likely to have impacted upon any earlier shallow deposits or features. No stratigraphically earlier features were seen in the slots that were excavated in the furrows.
- 8.3 Recent machine activity on the site was evident at the modern surface level, and as shown in Trench 10, extended to the natural.
- 8.4 Further evidence relating to the land's agricultural function was seen in the ditch and field drain in Trench 10, which although containing some very abraded prehistoric/Saxon pottery were interpreted as being post-medieval. In date and of the associated agricultural activity as having destroyed any evidence of the ridge and furrow.
- 8.5 In the area to the north of the fossil hedge and ditch boundary in Trenches 1 and 2 only modern activity was evident. This took the form of a series of stakeholes, possibly representing an earlier fenceline, and a possible posthole in Trench 1. Trench 2 contained a posthole and square pit. A pipe trench was seen running through both Trenches 1 and 2.
- 8.6 No prehistoric or Roman activity was evident in the evaluation. A piece of definite Saxon pottery dated from the 5<sup>th</sup> to early 6<sup>th</sup> century was present in the fill (17) of the pit for the animal burial, but as this truncated part of the furrow system it is obviously residual. Some pottery was found in the southwest of the site but was too abraded to be definite as to whether they were prehistoric or Saxon in date. This does however suggest at least some Saxon activity in the vicinity of the site.

8.7 While ridge and furrow systems have been dated to the medieval period elsewhere there is no dating evidence for that here. The single sherd of medieval pottery found in the furrow fills was very abraded and is likely to be residual as all the other finds in the furrow fills were post-medieval in date. The subsequent ploughing which truncated the ridges and created the homogenous topsoil layer extended right up to the present period.

## **9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd would like to thank John Harvey of The Churchmanor Estates Company for commissioning the work, and also Andy Thomas from the Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning & Countryside Advice for his assistance and advice.
- 9.2 The author wishes to thank Peter Moore for his project managing and editing, Dave Harris for the illustrations, and Berni Sudds for assessing the finds. Thanks are also extended to Rick Archer for his on-site excavation work.

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## Appendix 1

### Context Index

Context No.	Trench	Type	Plan	Section	Photo	Sample	Phase	Comments
1	1-10	Layer	-	-	No	-	Modern	Modern Topsoil
2	1-10	Layer	Tr 01-10	-	No	-	Natural	Natural
3	1	Fill	Tr 01	-	No	-	Post-Medieval	Fill of possible posthole [04]
4	1	Cut	Tr 01	-	Yes	-	Post-Medieval	Possible posthole
5	1	Fill	Tr 01	-	No	-	Post-Medieval	Fill of stakehole[06]
6	1	Cut	Tr 01	-	Yes	-	Post-Medieval	Stakehole
7	1	Fill	Tr 01	-	No	-	Post-Medieval	Fill of stakehole [08]
8	1	Cut	Tr 01	-	Yes	-	Post-Medieval	Stakehole
9	1	Fill	Tr 01	-	No	-	Post-Medieval	Fill of stakehole [10]
10	1	Cut	Tr 01	-	Yes	-	Post-Medieval	Stakehole
11	1	Fill	Tr 01	-	No	-	Post-Medieval	Fill of stakehole [12]
12	1	Cut	Tr 01	-	Yes	-	Post-Medieval	Stakehole
13	1	Fill	Tr 01	-	No	-	Post-Medieval	Fill of root disturbance [14]
14	1	Cut	Tr 01	-	Yes	-	Post-Medieval	Root disturbance
15	8	Fill	Tr 08	-	Yes	-	Post-Medieval	Fill of plough furrow [16]
16	8	Cut	Tr 08	-	Yes	-	Post-Medieval	Plough Furrow
17	7	Fill	Tr 07	-	No	-	Uncertain	Fill of pit [19]
18	7	Skeleton	Tr 07	-	Yes	-	Uncertain	Articulated animal skeleton in pit [19]
19	7	Cut	Tr 07	-	Yes	-	Uncertain	Pit for animal burial
20	3	Fill	Tr 03	-	Yes	-	Post-Medieval	Fill of plough furrow [21]
21	3	Cut	Tr 03	-	Yes	-	Post-Medieval	Plough furrow
22	3	Fill	Tr 03	1	Yes	-	Post-Medieval	Fill of plough furrow [23]
23	3	Cut	Tr 03	1	Yes	-	Post-Medieval	Plough furrow
24	7	Fill	Tr 07	-	Yes	-	Post-Medieval	Fill of plough furrow [25]
25	7	Cut	Tr 07	-	Yes	-	Post-Medieval	Plough furrow
26	7	Fill	Tr 07	-	Yes	-	Post-Medieval	Fill of plough furrow [27]

27	7	Cut	Tr 07	-	Yes	-	Post-Medieval	Plough furrow
28	10	Fill	Tr 10	-	Yes	-	Uncertain	Fill of field drain [29]
29	10	Cut	Tr 10	-	Yes	-	Uncertain	Field drain
30	10	Fill	Tr 10	-	Yes	-	Uncertain	Fill of possible ditch [31]
31	10	Cut	Tr 10	-	Yes	-	Uncertain	Possible ditch
32	5	Fill	Tr 05	-	No	-	Post-Medieval	Fill of plough furrow [33]
33	5	Cut	Tr 05	-	No	-	Post-Medieval	Plough furrow
34	5	Fill	Tr 05	-	No	-	Post-Medieval	Fill of plough furrow [35]
35	5	Cut	Tr 05	-	No	-	Post-Medieval	Plough furrow
36	6	Fill	Tr 06	-	No	-	Post-Medieval	Fill of plough furrow [37]
37	6	Cut	Tr 06	-	No	-	Post-Medieval	Plough furrow
38	9	Fill	Tr 09	-	No	-	Post-Medieval	Fill of plough furrow [39]
39	9	Cut	Tr 09	-	No	-	Post-Medieval	Plough furrow
40	9	Fill	Tr 09	-	No	-	Post-Medieval	Fill of plough furrow [41]
41	9	Cut	Tr 09	-	No	-	Post-Medieval	Plough furrow
42	2	Fill	Tr 02	-	Yes	-	Post-Medieval	Fill of root disturbance [43]
43	2	Cut	Tr 02	-	Yes	-	Post-Medieval	Root disturbance
44	2	Fill	Tr 02	-	Yes	-	Post-Medieval	Fill of ditch [45]
45	2	Cut	Tr 02	-	Yes	-	Post-Medieval	Ditch







## Appendix 3

### The Finds

Context	Material	No.	Comment	Spot date
15	CBM	1	Small fragment, moulding sand.	Undated
	Pottery	1	Very small, abraded and non-diagnostic	Undated
17	Pottery	1	Decorated, Saxon body sherd. Burnished, deep horizontal grooves to shoulder. Sand and organic temper.	5 <sup>th</sup> or 6 <sup>th</sup> C
	Shell	2	Fresh water mussel shell	
18	Animal bone	-	Articulated canine burial. Medium or large dog breed; bitch?	-
20	Pottery	1	Sand and shell tempered sherd. Surfaces abraded. Partially vesiculated.	?Medieval
	Animal bone	3	1x LAR: long bone frag., large animal. 2x LAR: scapula, large animal.	
22	CBM	3	Brick frags. Abraded.	Undated  L.18 <sup>th</sup> – 19 <sup>th</sup> C
	Fe	1	Nail.	
	Glass	1	Bottle base with kick-up (17 <sup>th</sup> – 18 <sup>th</sup> C).	
	Pottery	1	Transfer-printed pearlware (L.18 <sup>th</sup> – M.19 <sup>th</sup> C). Post-medieval black-glazed redware (17 <sup>th</sup> C), residual. Midlands purple ware (L.15 <sup>th</sup> – M. 18 <sup>th</sup> C) , residual.	
28	Animal bone	7	BOS (cow) humerus, distal end, fused.	LBA/IA or SAX
		6	BOS (cow) metapodial, mid-shaft fragments.	
		6	LAR unspecified. Bone in poor condition - ?chemical weathering	
	Pottery	6	Abraded base sherds.	
30	Animal bone	1	SUS (pig) mandible, right side M3 worn.	Post-medieval? LBA/IA or SAX
		1	SUS (pig) humerus, mid-shaft.	
		1	SAR long bone frag.	
		4	SAR frags.	
		3	LAR frags.	
		2	Unidentified frags.	
	CBM	1	Small fragment; no surfaces remain.	
	Pottery	2	Con-joining shoulder	
	Stone	1	Medium grained laminated sandstone. Worn.	
	Fired clay	4	Unidentified.	

On balance it is perhaps more likely that the pottery broadly identified as prehistoric or Saxon is actually early Saxon in date. The decorated body sherd from context [17] is typical of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century vessels, particularly of the east-Anglian region, but the technique is not unknown in the Iron Age. The use of sand, calcareous and organic temper, present in the sherds from site, is common to both periods although there is an absence of calcined flint, characteristic of the earlier period. Unfortunately, the method of manufacture and certain form types can also be found in both periods and so with small non-diagnostic sherds the dating remains ambiguous. The sherds are few in number, relatively small and mostly abraded indicating re-deposition. It is possible they found their way on to site through field-marling.

## Appendix 4

### The Small Finds

Number	Context	Object Type	Material	Comments	Period
1	+	Button	Cu Alloy	From topsoil of Tr 10	Post-medieval
2	15	Decorative fitting?	Cu Alloy	From fill of plough furrow [16]	Post-medieval
3	+	Button	Cu Alloy	From topsoil of Tr 10	Post-medieval

## **Appendix 5**

### **OASIS Form**

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## Printable version

**OASIS ID: preconst1-21526**

### Project details

Project name	St. John's Business Park, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire
Short description of the project	An archaeological evaluation of land at St. John's Business Park, Spittals Way, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire.
Project dates	Start: 04-12-2006 End: 13-12-2006
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	ECB 2455 - HER event no.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Grassland Heathland 3 - Disturbed
Monument type	RIDGE AND FURROW FIELD SYSTEM Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Early Medieval
Methods & techniques	'Sample Trenches'
Development type	Urban commercial (e.g. offices, shops, banks, etc.)

Prompt Planning condition

Position in the planning process After full determination (eg. As a condition)

### Project location

Country England

Site location CAMBRIDGESHIRE HUNTINGDONSHIRE HUNTINGDON St. John's Business Park, Spittals Way, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire

Study area 3445.00 Square metres

Site coordinates TL 2325 7369 52.3470137652 -0.190400711850 52 20 49 N 000 11 25 W Point

Height OD Min: 28.00m Max: 30.85m

### Project creators

Name of Organisation Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd

Project brief originator Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice

Project design originator Pre-Construct Archaeology

Project director/manager Peter Moore

Project supervisor Sarah Hoad

Type of sponsor/funding body Churchmanor Estates

Name of sponsor/funding body The Churchmanor Estates Company

### Project archives

Physical Archive Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Store

recipient

Physical Contents 'Animal Bones','Ceramics','Glass','Metal'

Digital Archive recipient Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Store

Digital Contents 'Animal Bones','Ceramics','Glass','Stratigraphic','Survey'

Digital Media available 'Images raster / digital photography','Spreadsheets','Survey','Text'

Paper Archive recipient Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Store

Paper Contents 'Stratigraphic','Survey'

Paper Media available 'Context sheet','Correspondence','Drawing','Manuscript','Matrices','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section','Survey','Unpublished Text'

### Project bibliography 1

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Author(s)/Editor(s) Sarah Hoad

Date 2007

Issuer or publisher Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited

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Description Unpublished developer report.

Entered by Peter Moore (pmoore@pre-construct.com)

Entered on 16 January 2007



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