



LAND NORTH WEST TO 7 BRIDGE ROAD, MEPAL, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION



Report Number: 1283

November 2020



LAND NORTH WEST TO 7 BRIDGE ROAD, MEPAL, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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Site Code	ECB6374	NGR	TL 44215 81188
Project No.	P1330	Museum ACC	-
Planning Ref.	18/01743/OUT	OASIS	britanni1-407177
Approved By:		Date	November 2020



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Abstract

On the 17th November 2020 Britannia Archaeology Ltd (BA) undertook an archaeological evaluation at Land North West to 7 Bridge Road, Mepal, Cambridgeshire (TL 44215 81188) on behalf of Gary Johns Architects Ltd. The archaeological work was undertaken as a condition of planning application 18/01743/OUT in advance of the construction of a single dwelling.

The site had a high potential for medieval activity relating to the adjacent shrunken village and for post-medieval activity relating to the drainage of the fens. There was a moderate potential for Prehistoric, Roman, and Saxon finds and features.

The evaluation revealed four phases of activity within the sites bounds despite the paucity of archaeological features.

The first phase was agricultural top and sub-soils 1005 and 1003 respectively: these stratigraphically dated to the post-medieval period.

The second phase was modern: late 20th century. A demolition layer within trial trench 1 revealed CBM fragments relating to outbuildings on the site during the latter half of the 20th century.

The third phase was a modern yard surface with trial trench 1, relating to a yard surface visible on the 1999 AP.

The fourth and final phase was modern garden topsoil 1000. This garden soil is likely contemporary with the modernising and construction of 7 Bridge Road; the site is currently being utilised by this property as gardens.



1.0 INTRODUCTION

On the 17th November 2020 Britannia Archaeology Ltd (BA) undertook an archaeological evaluation at Land North West to 7 Bridge Road, Mepal, Cambridgeshire (TL 44215 81188) on behalf of Gary Johns Architects Ltd. The archaeological work was undertaken as a condition of planning application 18/01743/OUT in advance of the construction of a single dwelling (Fig. 1).

The evaluation was undertaken in response to a design brief issued by Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team (CHET) (Robinson Zeki. L, 24th September 2020) which required a programme of linear trial trenching to sample the area threatened by the development. The trenching comprised two trenches, both measuring 20.00m x 1.80m (Fig. 4).



2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION (Fig. 1)

The site is situated on the north edge of the village of Mepal, located c. 9.5km east of Ely. The site is currently in use as a garden and is bound on the east by Bridge Road, to the south and west by agricultural fields, and to the north by a residential property. The New Bedford River is located c.250m to the northwest.

2.1 Site Geology

The underlying bedrock geology is described Ampthill Clay Formation - Mudstone. This Sedimentary Bedrock was formed approximately 157 to 164 million years ago in the Jurassic Period when the local environment was previously dominated by shallow seas (BGS, 2020).

No superficial deposits have been recorded in this area.



3.0 PLANNING POLICIES

The archaeological investigation is to be carried out on the recommendation of the local planning authority, following guidance laid down by the *National Planning and Policy Framework* (NPPF, DCLD 2019). The relevant local planning policy is the *East Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2015)*.



4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND (Figs. 2 & 3)

The following archaeological background draws on the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER) (1km search centred on the site), English Heritage PastScape (www.pastscape.org.uk), and the Archaeological Data Service (www.ads.ahds.ac.uk) (ADS) (Figs. 2 and 3).

4.1 Prehistoric

Evidence of Iron Age to Roman settlement has been identified c.180m northwest of the site MSC26922, see below). In addition, a Bronze Age Palstave was ploughed up in 1958 c.590m south of the site (05806) and a Neolithic polished axehead was found c.740m northwest of the site (08042).

4.2 Roman

An Archaeological evaluation carried out c.180m northwest of the site revealed undated and Iron Age to Roman ditches, pits, and post holes (MCB26922). Subsequent investigations identified a dense spread of Iron Age to Roman features, including enclosure/boundary ditches and a number of pits suggesting that the site may have been located within or close to an area of contemporary settlement. The lack of fine wares in the pottery assemblage found during investigation could indicate a low status/rural farmstead. In addition, Roman pottery and metalwork was found during metal detecting activity c.760m northeast of the site (MCB16264).

4.3 Saxon & Medieval

Earthworks of a possible medieval shrunken village have been identified in the field adjacent to the west boundary of the site (05831). The earthworks include parts of a possible moat with related hollow ways, house platforms, and other very degraded features. The Grade II listed Saint Mary's Church (CB14893, DCB978) is situated within the area of these cropmarks and has its origins in the 13th century.

A programme of archaeological intervention was undertaken c.250m south of the site, prior to the conversion of a series of farm buildings; this included an earthworks survey



and an archaeological trenched evaluation (MCB20932). The earthworks survey identified a series of ditches creating a square platform. A second platform may have extended underneath the current farm buildings. The evaluation identified ditches and pits of medieval date.

An evaluation c.330m south of the site identified postholes, pits and ditches of a largely medieval date (MCB27794). An evaluation c.510m southwest of the site identified a series of ditches and pits of a late Saxon to 12th century date (MCB29264). Ridge and furrow of a medieval or post-medieval date has been identified c.620m south of the site but was severely eroded (11923). In addition, metal detecting identified Saxon metalwork c.760m northeast of the site (MCB16264).

4.4 Post-Medieval & Modern

The post-medieval development of Mepal is evidenced by a number of post-medieval listed buildings located within the village core to the south of the site along with evidence from early OS maps showing locations for post-medieval public houses and shops no longer extant.

The Old Bedford River is located c.520m northwest of the site (MCB23933). The river was cut c.1631 in response to an agreement to drain the Great Level of the Fens originally made in 1600 but not implemented until later. Concerted efforts to reclaim land at a national level began in 1539 but it wasn't until 1600 that the first Act was passed, mentioning the Fens as one particular location. Despite this, it was thirty years before progress was made when Francis, the 4th Earl of Bedford (the river's namesake) pledged to drain the southern Fenland under what was known as the Lyn Law. The first major phase of drainage in Cambridgeshire included the Old Bedford River. A break in drainage then occurred until 1651 when a fresh wave of cuts were made including the New Bedford River. The Old Bedford River is a tributary of the River Great Ouse in the Fens of Cambridgeshire. It was constructed by Cornelius Vermuyden in the 1630s. The original intention of the cut was to provide dry summer grazing for cattle, however it was not entirely successful and later a more ambitious project to provide permanent drainage was commenced. This led to the construction of the New Bedford River (MCB23934) located c.240m northwest of the current site which runs in an almost straight line across the Fens, joining the Great Ouse River with the sea at King's Lynn and so helping to drain the Fens. It was constructed circa 1650 by Cornelius Vermuyden for the Duke of Bedford.



4.5 *Archaeological Potential*

Given the above, there was a **high** potential for medieval activity relating to the adjacent shrunken village and for post-medieval activity relating to the drainage of the fens. There was a **moderate** potential for Prehistoric, Roman, and Saxon finds and features.



5.0 PROJECT AIMS

The CHET brief stated that the evaluation should aim to determine, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development. An adequate representative sample of all areas where archaeological remains were potentially threatened was studied (Robinson Zeki, L. 2020, Brief, Section 3.1).

All aspects of the trial trenching will be undertaken in accordance with the *CIfA Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation, 2020* and *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England, 2003*.



6.0 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Research objectives for the project are in line with those laid out in *Research and Archaeology Revisited: a revised framework for the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 24 (Medlycott, 2011).

Specific objectives outlined in the brief (section 3.4) stated that a particular importance be placed on:

- the presence or absence of a palaeosol and old land surface soils/deposits
- the character of deposits and their contents within negative features
- palaeochannels
- site formation processes



7.0 FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

The CHET brief required a programme of linear trial trenching to sample the site ahead of the construction of a single dwelling. This was achieved by excavating two trenches, both measuring 20.00m x 1.80m.

The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with *Cifa Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations, 2020* and *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England, 2003*.

A 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket was used to machine down to the first archaeological horizon, thereafter all excavation work was undertaken by hand.

The trenches characterised the full archaeological sequence down to the natural deposits. In the interests of reproduction of the results, a single context planning methodology was used.

The archaeology was recorded using pro-forma record sheets, drawn plans and section drawings and appropriate photographs were taken.



8.0 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS (Fig. 5 - 7)

A professional metal detector was used to scan the trenches locations prior and post excavation along with the spoil heaps. Bucket sampling was undertaken whereby a total of 90 litres of spoil from the topsoil was hand sorted at 2 points along each trench. Only demonstrably modern finds were present, which were not retained. Similarly all stratigraphic layers were scanned for metal and non-metal finds and only finds of demonstrably modern date were recovered.

8.1 Trench 1 (Fig.4 - 6)

Trench 1 was located medially within the site on a SW-NE orientation and measured 20.00m x 1.80m. No archaeological features were present within the trench, and no finds were recovered other than modern CBM (a single sample retained – see below) and bailing twine (not retained).

8.2 Trench 2 (Fig. 4 - 6)

Trench 2 was located east side of the site on a NW-SE orientation measuring 20.00m x 1.80m. A single large fen drain was present at the north end of the trench. No archaeological features or finds were present within the trench.



9.0 DEPOSIT MODEL (Fig. 6-7)

The deposit model was consistent across the site bar the addition of yard surface **1001** and associated demolition layer **1002** in trial trench 1.

At the top of the stratigraphic sequence in trench 1 and 2 was modern garden topsoil **1000**. It comprised a dark grey/brown, loose, silty clay present to a maximum depth of 0.15m in sample section 2. The layer represents the modern garden soil.

Beneath garden soil **1000** in trial trench 1 was yard surface **1001**. It comprised a light grey/white, compact, silty clay with frequent sub-angular small, poorly sorted flint pebbles (<0.05m diam.). This layer represents a levelling yard layer associated with buildings present on the site within the modern period.

Below yard surface **1001** in trial trench 1 was topsoil/demolition mix layer **1002**. This comprised a dark grey/brown, compact, silty clay with moderate CBM fragment and small sub-angular flint pebble inclusions. This layer represents a mix of original topsoil **1005** (present in trial trench 2) and a demolition event of 19th century/modern buildings.

Below modern garden soil **1000** in trial trench 2 was buried topsoil **1005**. This comprised a dark grey/brown, compact, silty clay with small sub-angular flint pebble inclusions. This represented the original agricultural topsoil layer.

Beneath buried topsoil **1005** in trial trench 2 and topsoil/demolition mix layer **1002** in trial trench 1 was agricultural sub-soil **1003**. This comprised a mid grey/brown, compact, silty clay with small sub-angular flint pebble inclusions and occasional mid orange/brown silty sand mottling. This layer represented the original agricultural sub-soil across the whole site.

At the base of the stratigraphic sequence in both trenches was natural geology **1004** comprising a mid orange/brown, compact, silty clay with occasional sandy small gravel and chalk patches.



10.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The site had a high potential for medieval activity relating to the adjacent shrunken village and for post-medieval activity relating to the drainage of the fens. There was a moderate potential for Prehistoric, Roman, and Saxon finds and features.

The evaluation revealed four phases of activity within the sites bounds despite the paucity of archaeological features.

The earliest phase can be related to post-medieval ploughing activity. Buried topsoil **1005** and sub-soil **1003** have their origins in agricultural practices within the post-medieval period. This can be evidenced by the presence of plough scarring visible on the surface of natural sub-soil **1004** within trial trench 2's bounds. Sub-soil **1003** was also present within trial trench 1, with buried topsoil **1005** absent only due to mixing with demolition material forming demolition layer **1002**.

The second phase of activity is represented by modern buried topsoil/demolition layer **1002**. This layer was formed by the mixing of demolition material with the existing topsoil deposit (**1005** within trial trench 2). This layer was likely formed by demolition of structures present within the sites bounds from the latter half of the 20th century (see Fig. 6). A brick sample was taken from this layer and is suggested it dates from the latter half of the 19th century (Fawcett, this report), although may have been reused as no structures appear within the site bounds until the 1952 6" OS map, with these structures being demolished sometime in the 1980's/1990's. During the 19th century the site appears to have been utilised as an orchard (Fig. 6).

The third phase relates to the modern period. This is represented by yard surface **1001** within trial trench 1. This yard surface is likely contemporary to the introduction of the Nissen hut extant directly south of the current site. This hut does not appear on the 1954 6" OS map, but does on the 1974 6" OS map. Visible on the 1999 AP are the remnants of yard surface 1001, servicing a small amount of hard standing directly to it's north (Fig. 6).



The fourth and final phase is modern garden soil **1000**. This layer likely was laid during construction and modernising of 7 Bridge Road to the south. The site is currently utilised as the garden for this property.



11.0 ARCHIVE DEPOSITION

The final archive will be deposited following the acquisition of the transfer of title. The deposition will be made with Cambridgeshire County Council's Archaeological Archive Storage Facility – Deep Store, subject to agreement with the legal landowner where finds are concerned. An appropriate accession number will be obtained in advance of deposition. The digital archive will be stored with the Archaeological Data Service (ADS).



12.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Britannia Archaeology would like to thank Gary Johns Architects Ltd for commissioning and funding the project.

We would also like to thank Leanne Robinson Zeki of CHET for their help and advice throughout the project.

The site was excavated by Dan McConnell and Alice Schute of Britannia Archaeology Ltd.



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Archaeological Data Service (ADS) www.ads.ahds.ac.uk

English Heritage National List for England

www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/protection/process/national-heritage-list-for-england

DEFRA Magic



APPENDIX 1 – DEPOSIT TABLES

TRENCH 1

Trench No	Orientation	Height AOD	Shot ID
1	NE – SW	4.26m	1
Sample Section No	Location	Facing	
1	NE end, SE side	NW	
Context No	Depth	Deposit Description	
1000	0.00-0.13m	Modern Garden Soil: dark greyish brown, loose, silty clay.	
1001	0.13-0.44m	Yard Surface Layer: mid greyish white, compact, silty clay.	
1002	0.44m-0.73m	Topsoil/demolition layer: dark greyish brown, compact, silty clay.	
1003	0.73-0.93m	Subsoil: mid greyish brown, compact, silty clay.	
1004	0.93m+	Natural: light orangish brown, compact, silty clay	

TRENCH 2

Trench No	Orientation	Height AOD	Shot ID
2	N – S	3.85m	3
Sample Section No	Location	Facing	
2	N end, W side	E	
Context No	Depth	Deposit Description	
1000	0.00-0.16m	Modern Garden Soil: dark greyish brown, loose, silty clay.	
1005	0.16-0.36m	Buried Topsoil: dark greyish brown, compact, silty clay	
1003	0.36m-0.66m	Subsoil: mid greyish brown, compact, silty clay.	
1004	0.66m+	Natural: light orangish brown, compact, silty clay	



APPENDIX – 2 SPECIALIST REPORT

The ceramic building material (CBM) from Land north-west to 7 Bridge Road, Mepal, Cambridgeshire (ECB 6374): An assessment report

Andy Fawcett

A single and only slightly abraded half brick (1816g), was retrieved from the Demolition layer context 1002 at Bridge Road.

The brick is in a white fabric (Ws) that contains few other inclusions, except for fairly fine abundant quartz.

It has a depth of 65mm and a width of 108mm and exhibits a broad and shallow frog. There are no traces of mortar on any of the brick surfaces, however both faces of the brick are sooted.

The brick is dated from around 1850 to 1900, however although unproven, it may well too have been saved and used, or even reused at some point during the 20th century.



APPENDIX – 3 OASIS FORM

11/26/2020

OASIS FORM - Print view

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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OASIS ID: britanni1-407177

Project details

Project name Land North West to 7 Bridge Road, Mepal, Cambridgeshire
Short description of the project Trail Trench Evaluation
Project dates Start: 17-11-2020 End: 17-11-2020
Previous/future work No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes P1330 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes ECB6374 - HER event no.
Type of project Field evaluation
Site status None
Current Land use Other 5 - Garden
Monument type LAYER Modern
Monument type YARD SURFACE Modern
Monument type PLOUGH SOIL Post Medieval
Significant Finds NONE None
Methods & techniques ""Sample Trenches""
Development type Rural residential
Prompt National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF
Position in the planning process After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country England
Site location CAMBRIDGESHIRE EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE MEPAL Land North West to 7 Bridge Road, Mepal, Cambridgeshire
Postcode CB6 2AR
Study area 1564 Square metres
Site coordinates TL 44215 81188 52.40925886742 0.120429076355 52 24 33 N 000 07 13 E Point
Height OD / Depth Min: 3.22m Max: 3.42m

<https://oasis.ac.uk/form/print.cfm>

1/3



11/26/2020

OASIS FORM - Print view

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Britannia Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Lousia Cunningham
Project director/manager	Dan McConnell
Project supervisor	Dan McConnell
Type of sponsor/funding body	client
Name of sponsor/funding body	Gary Johns Architects Ltd

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire HER
Physical Archive ID	ECB6374
Physical Contents	"Ceramics"
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire HER
Digital Archive ID	ECB6374
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic", "Survey"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Spreadsheets", "Survey", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire HER
Paper Archive ID	ECB6374
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic", "Survey"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Correspondence", "Drawing", "Map", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report", "Section", "Survey"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Land North West to 7 Bridge Road, Mepal, Cambridgeshire: Archaeological Trial Trenching
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Author(s)/Editor(s)	McConnell, D.
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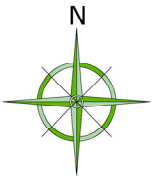
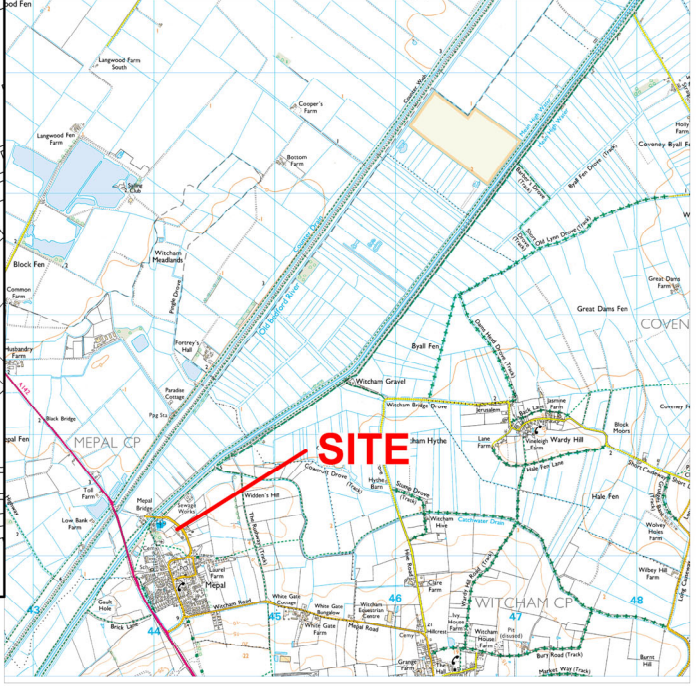
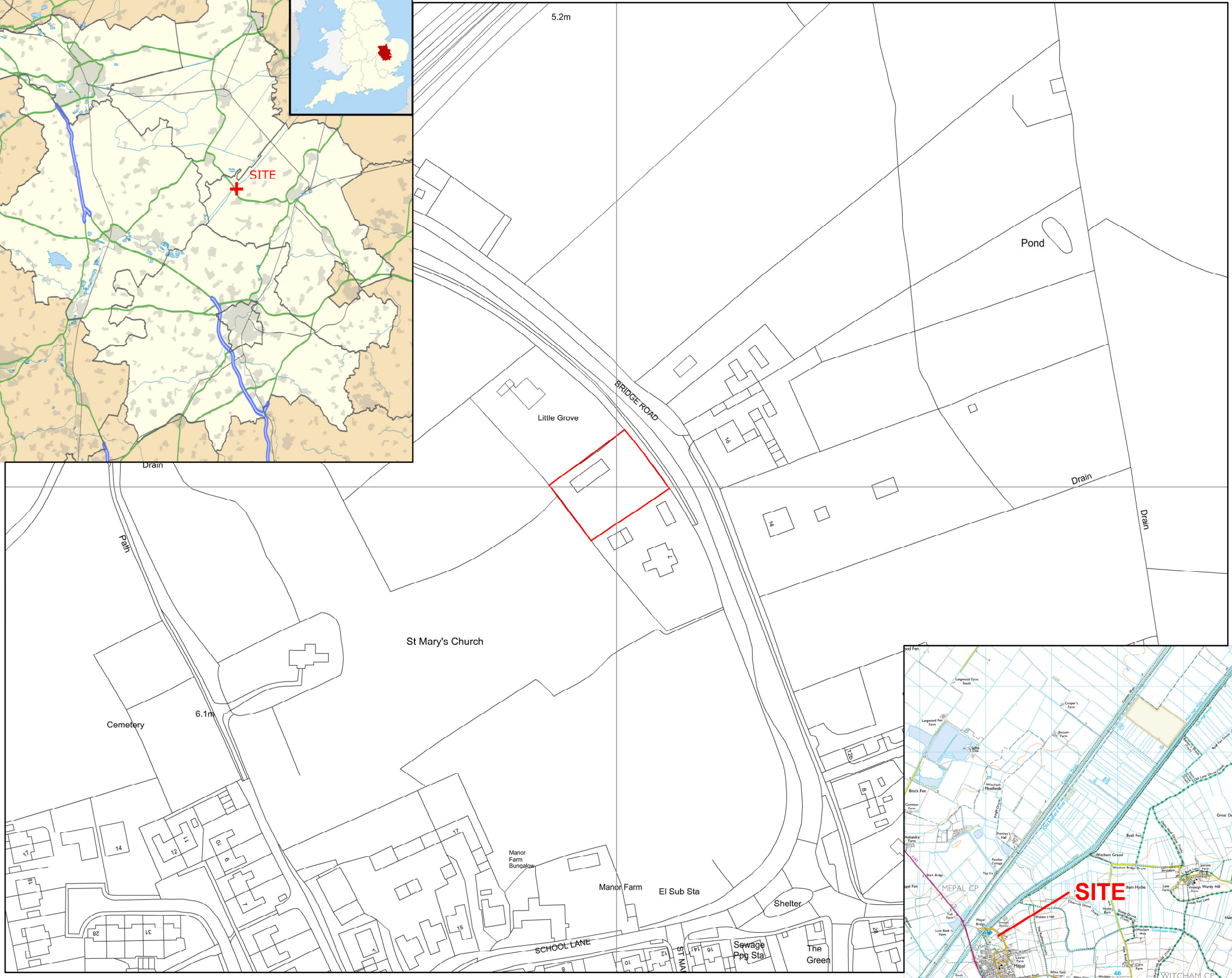
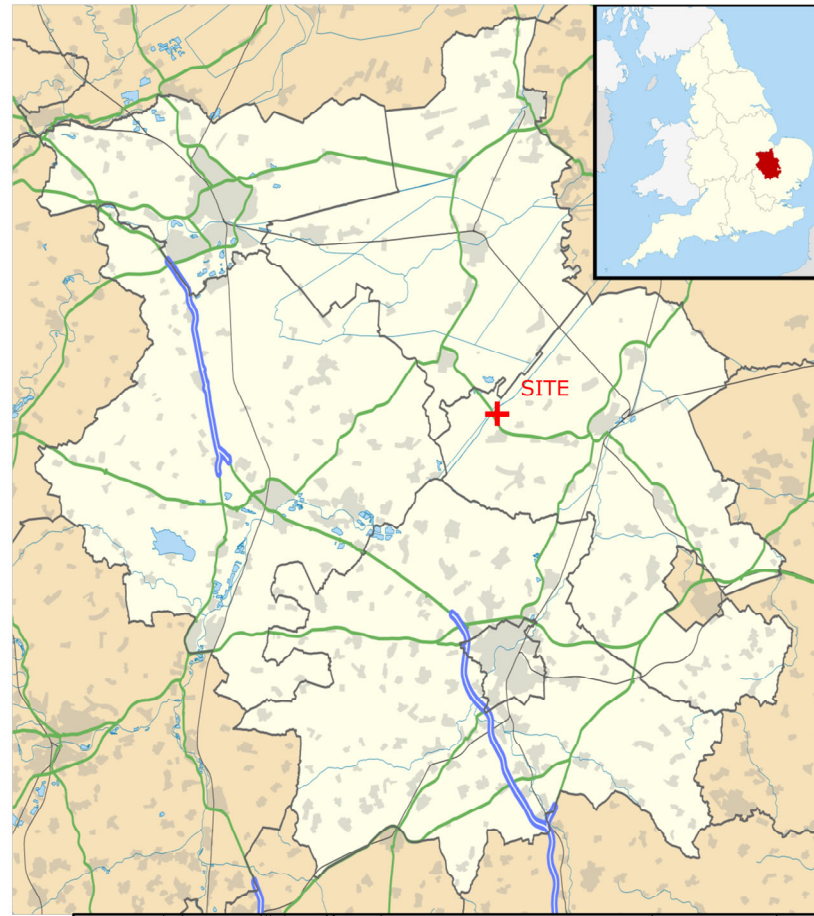
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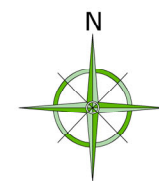
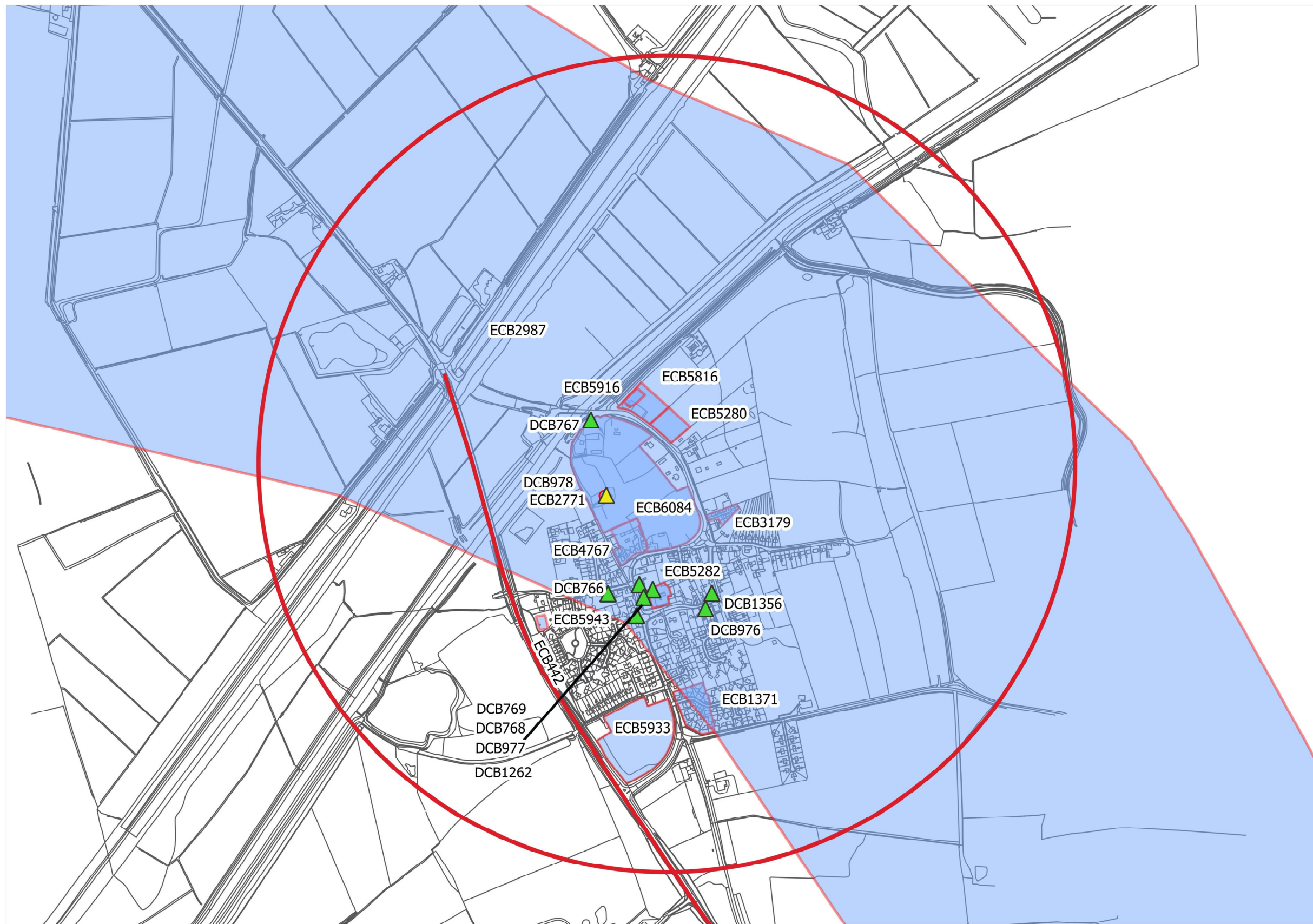
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Site Boundary

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PROJECT:	LAND NORTH WEST OF 7 BRIDGE ROAD, MEPAL, CAMBRIDGESHIRE		
DESCRIPTION:	GENERAL LOCATION PLAN		
CLIENT:	GARY JOHNS ARCHITECTS		
BRITANNIA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD			
 UNIT 2 THE OLD WOOL WAREHOUSE ST ANDREWS STREET SOUTH BURY ST EDMUNDS SUFFOLK IP33 3PH T: 01284 630057 E: info@brit-arch.com W: www.britannia-archaeology.com © Copyright Britannia Archaeology Ltd 2020			
DATE:	NOV 2020	PLOT:	A3
		VERSION:	1
AUTHOR:	DPM	FIGURE:	1
APPROVED:	MB		

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- HER Search Area
- Site Boundary
- Archaeological Event
- Grade I Listed Building
- Grade II* Listed Building
- Grade II Listed Building

0 1:10000 500m

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(WGR: 544217 281186) (REF: R1283)

PROJECT: LAND NORTH WEST OF 7 BRIDGE ROAD, MEPAL, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

DESCRIPTION: HER DATA - EVENTS & LISTED BUILDINGS

CLIENT: GARY JOHNS ARCHITECTS

BRITANNIA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD



UNIT 2
THE OLD WOOL WAREHOUSE
ST ANDREWS STREET SOUTH
BURY ST EDMUNDS
SUFFOLK
IP33 3PH

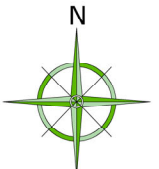
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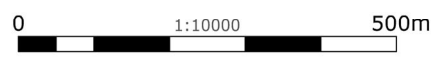
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AUTHOR: DPM FIGURE: 2

APPROVED: MB



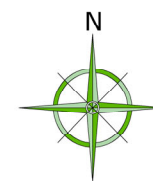
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- Site Boundary
- Uncategorised Record



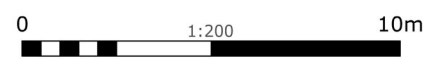
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WGR: 544217 281186	REF: R1283
PROJECT: LAND NORTH WEST OF 7 BRIDGE ROAD, MEPAL, CAMBRIDGESHIRE	
DESCRIPTION: HER DATA - MONUMENTS	
CLIENT: GARY JOHNS ARCHITECTS	
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DATE: NOV 2020	PLOT: A3	VERSION: 1
AUTHOR: DPM	FIGURE: 3	
APPROVED: MB		



- Site Boundary
- Trench
- Sample Section



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PROJECT: LAND NORTH WEST OF 7 BRIDGE ROAD, MEPAL, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

DESCRIPTION: TRENCH LOCATION PLAN

CLIENT: GARY JOHNS ARCHITECTS

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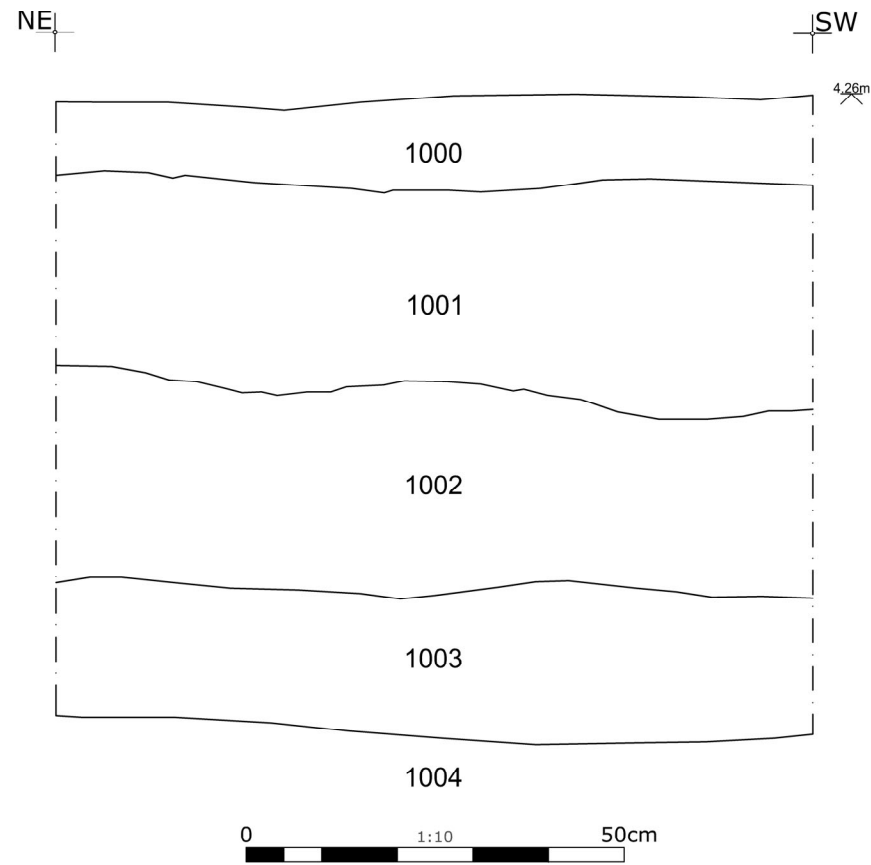
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AUTHOR: HG
APPROVED: DPM

FIGURE: 4

TRENCH 1 - SAMPLE SECTION 1



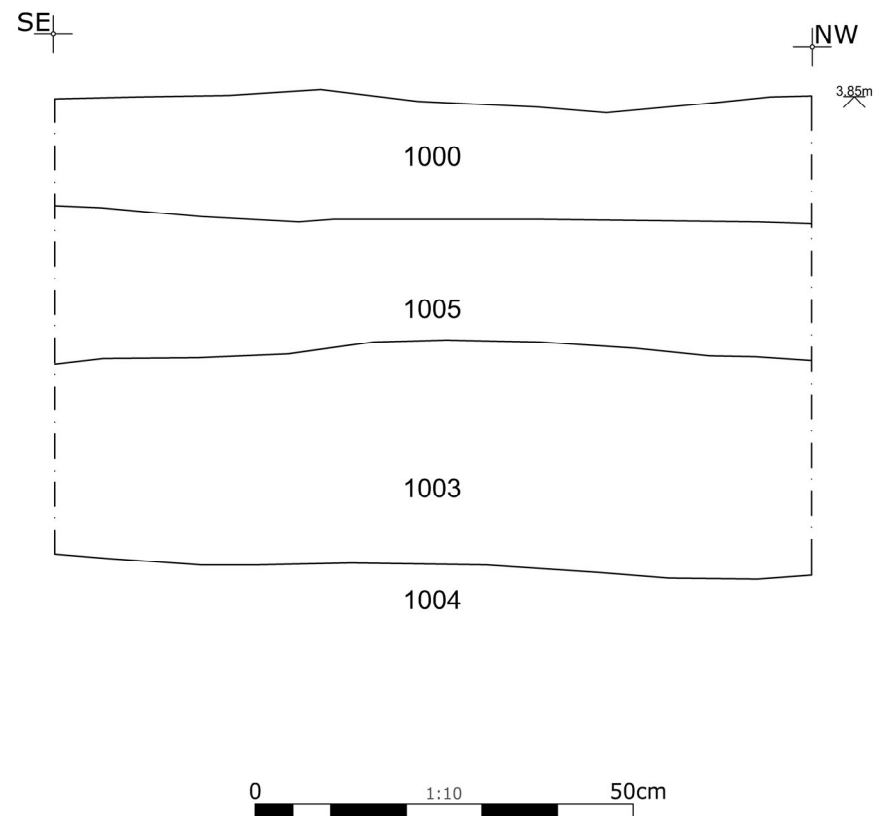
DP1 - SAMPLE SECTION 1 - VIEW SE



DP2 - TRENCH 1 - VIEW NE



TRENCH 2 - SAMPLE SECTION 2



DP3 - TRENCH 2 - VIEW SE



DP4 - TRENCH 2 - VIEW SW



(WGR: 544217 281186) (REF: R1283)

PROJECT: LAND NORTH WEST OF 7 BRIDGE ROAD, MEPAL, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

DESCRIPTION: TRENCH 1 AND 2 - SECTIONS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

CLIENT: GARY JOHNS ARCHITECTS

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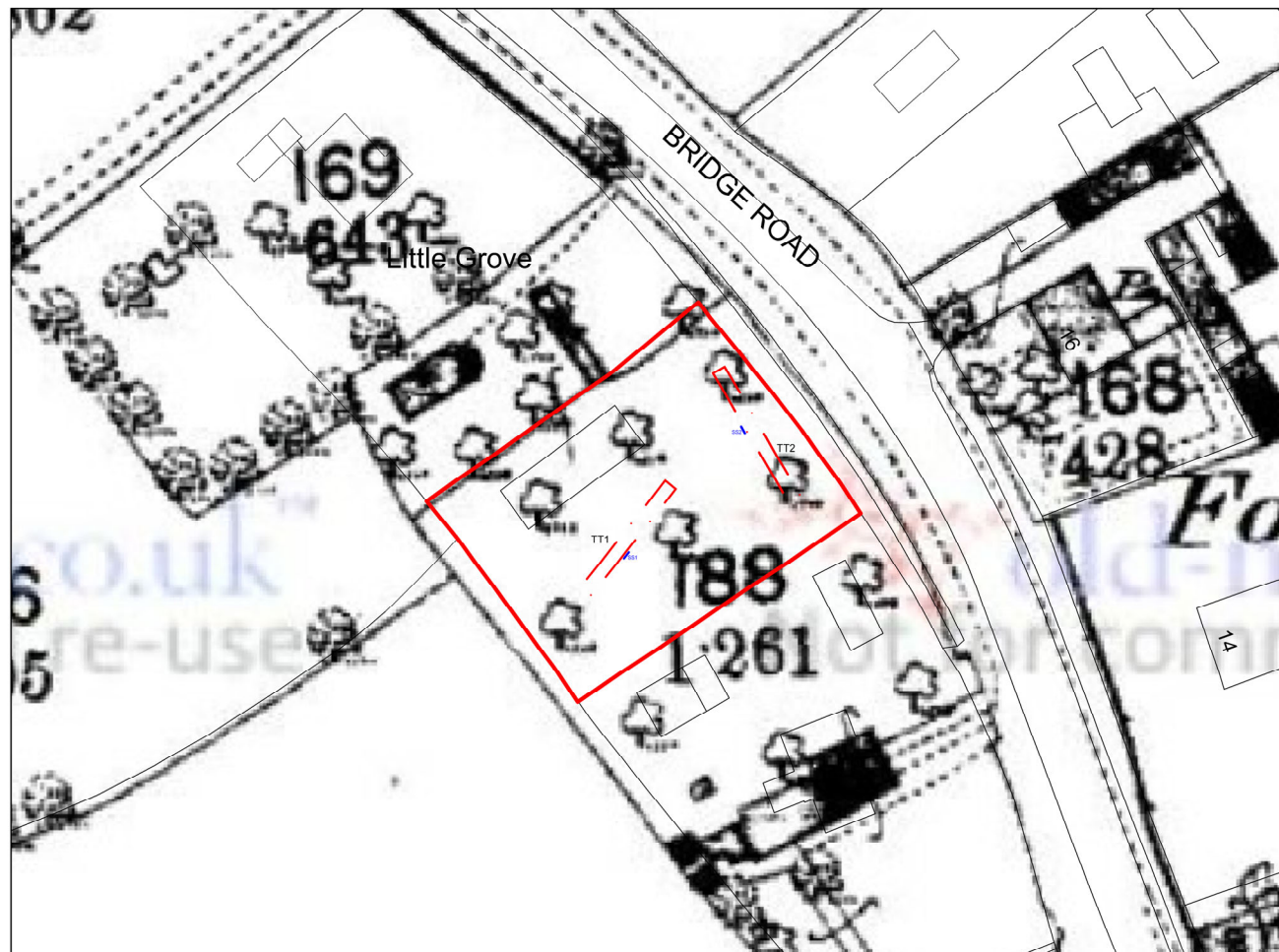
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AUTHOR: HG APPROVED: MB

FIGURE: 5



1887 6" OS Map



1952 6" OS Map



1979 6" OS Map



1999 AP



(WGR: 544217 281186) (REF: R1283)
 PROJECT: LAND NORTH WEST OF 7 BRIDGE ROAD, MEPAL, CAMBRIDGESHIRE
 DESCRIPTION: TRENCH PLAN OVER 6" SERIES OS & AP
 CLIENT: GARY JOHNS ARCHITECTS
BRITANNIA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

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DATE:	NOV 2020	PLOT:	A3	VERSION:	1
AUTHOR:	DPM	FIGURE:	6		
APPROVED:	MB				