

Report 2814



nps archaeology

Archaeological Evaluation of Land North of 69-79 Back Road, Murrow, Cambridgeshire

ECB 3681



Prepared for
c/o Swann Edwards Architecture
Elveden House
Gull Road
Wisbech
Cambridgeshire
PE13 4ER



NPS Archaeology

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www.nps.co.uk

PROJECT CHECKLIST		
Project Manager	Nigel Page	
Draft Completed	Nigel Page	21/10/2011
Graphics Completed	David Dobson	25/10/2011
Edit Completed	Jayne Bown	25/10/2011
Signed Off	Signed Off	25/10/2011
<i>Issue 1</i>		

NPS Archaeology

Scandic House
85 Mountergate
Norwich
NR1 1PY

T 01603 756150

F 01603 756190

E jayne.bown@nps.co.uk

www.nau.org.uk

BAU2814

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Contents

<i>Summary</i>	5
1.0 Introduction	5
2.0 Geology and Topography	5
3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background.....	7
4.0 Methodology	8
5.0 Results.....	10
6.0 Conclusions	13
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	14
<i>Bibliography</i>	14

Figures

Figure 1 Site Location

Plates

Plate 1 Trench 1

Plate 2 Trench 2

Plate 3 Trench 3

Plate 4 Trench 3, western edge of drain

Location:	Back Road, Murrow, Parson Drove, Cambridgeshire
District:	Fenland
Planning Ref.:	F/YR10/0200/O
Grid Ref.:	TL 3779 0726
HER No.:	ECB 3681
OASIS Ref.:	112558
Client:	Private clients c/o Swann Edwards Architecture
Dates of Fieldwork:	20 September 2011

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was conducted for [insert client] ahead of construction of three new houses at Back Road, Murrow, Cambridgeshire.

Three trenches were opened, all of which were blank. No archaeological features or deposits were present and no archaeologically significant finds were recovered

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This work was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set Cambridgeshire County Council (Ref. F/YR10/0200/O) and a Brief issued by Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team. The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NPS Archaeology (Ref. NAU/BAU2814/NP) This work was commissioned by Swann Edwards Architecture, on behalf of private clients.

This programme of work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (2010). The results will enable decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority about the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is currently held by NPS Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with the Cambridgeshire County Store, following the relevant policies on archiving standards.

2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The solid geology is mudstone (West Walton and Ampthill Clay formations) which is overlain by clay and silt (designated as ‘tidal flat deposits.1’ i.e. soft silty clay, with layers of peat, sand and a basal gravel sometimes desiccated at the surface) (www.bgs.ac.uk). The surface of the site prior to this work was grassed.

The development site is located adjacent to new build residential development.

The village of Murrow is a linear settlement that appears to have developed along a roddon in the silt fen and is represented mainly by the parallel streets of Front Road and Back Road. The proposed development site is located on the north side of Back Road. Most of Murrow lies within the parish of Wisbech St. Mary to the south however the location of the development site places it just over the parish boundary in Parson Drove.

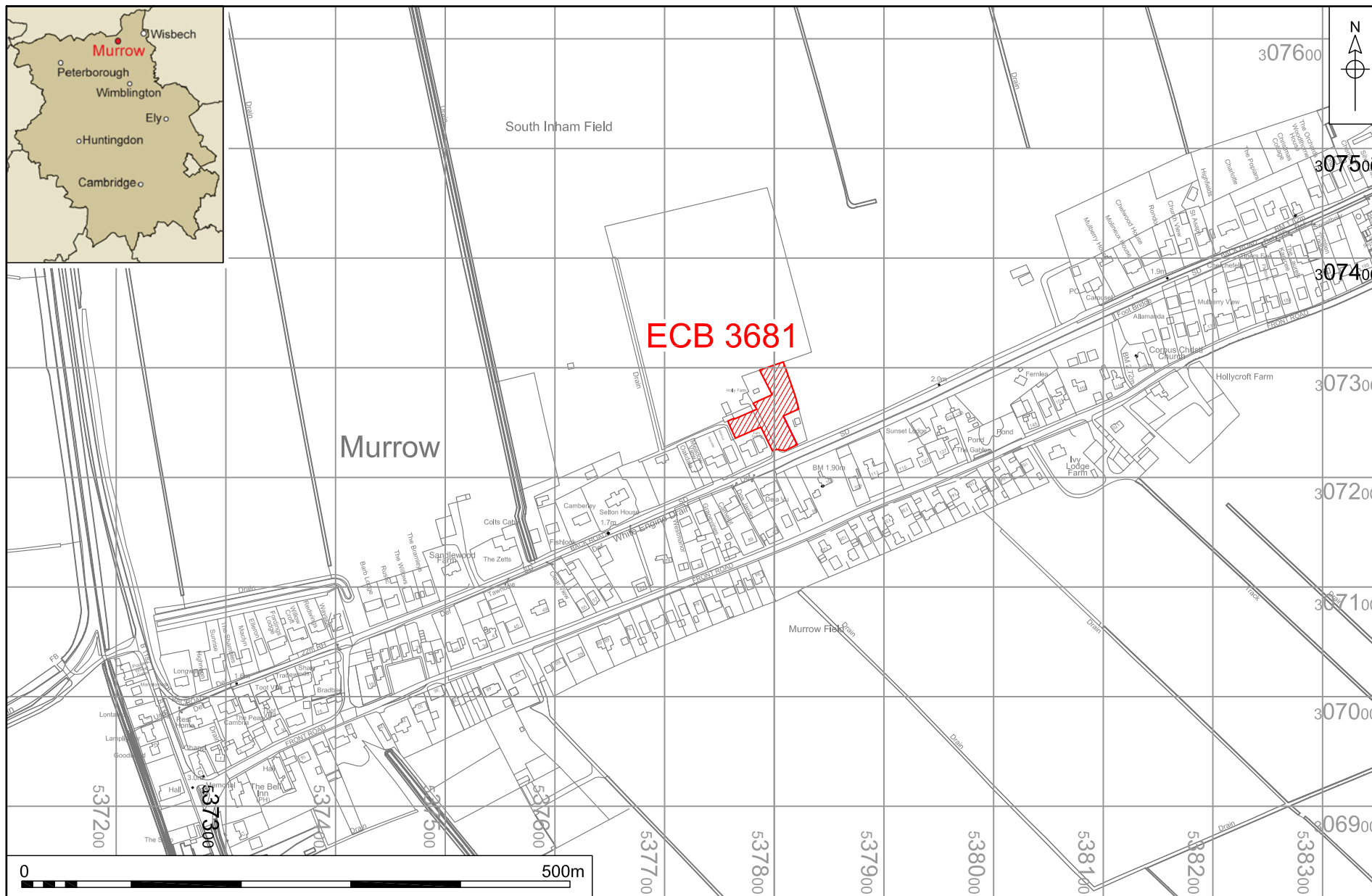


Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A search of the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment record returned a number of recorded sites in the vicinity of the proposed development site which are summarised below ordered by proximity to the development site.

Roman

Just 200m north of the proposed development area is site 03805, a cropmark complex containing ditched enclosures (a possible Romano-British field system), ring ditches and possible long houses of later date. A drove road appears to be cut by the modern settlement

Grey and shelly sherds of Roman pottery (10932) were found 250m south-east of the development site in possibly an area of darker material.

Large scatters of Roman pottery have been recovered as surface finds from on and nearby the cropmarks recorded as 03872 700m south-east of the site

A small Roman site (10931) noted as a darkish area on the edge of a roddon 850m south-east of the development site.

Medieval

Pottery of 13th- to 15th-century date (07875) was found just 100m to the north-east of the development site on a roddon along with bright red briquetage which may be the remains of an oven.

Fieldwalking and evaluation trenching (MCB14659) 150m south-east of the development site revealed 13th- to 15th-century trackways and medieval domestic debris.

Limited medieval artefacts found from topsoil above post-medieval features described below from site 17693.

Evaluation (MCB16313) carried out in the grounds of Holly Croft farmhouse some 400 east of the development site revealed at least two phases of substantial medieval-early post-medieval boundary ditches, and a possible medieval pond. The ditches contained some medieval domestic waste suggesting settlement perhaps nearby.

Medieval pottery of 13th- to 15th-century date (07888) was recovered from salt works near Sea Dyke (some 500m east of the development site).

Metal finds including two medieval coins, three post medieval jettons, a medieval/post-medieval double-looped buckle frame and a post-medieval handle escutcheon (MCB19505) were found by metal detecting 600m east of the development site.

Large scatters of medieval pottery have been recovered as surface finds from on and nearby cropmarks recorded as 03872 700m south-east of the site

Post-medieval and modern

Archaeological features (17693) were visible in trench sections monitored during construction works some 250 south-west of the development site which are unlikely to represent significant settlement or activity relating to nearby salt-working sites.

Corpus Christi church (CB14894) was erected in 1857 and is located 300m east of the development site.

Three sides of a possible rectangular enclosure (MCB17860) located 900m north-east of the development site have been mapped from aerial photographic evidence however it is aligned with modern boundaries which may indicate that the features are of relatively recent origin.

Undated

The site of Park House (122540) is noted some 150m east of the development site although no remains of the building or grounds are apparent.

Linear ditches and 'splodges' (10656) recorded just to the north-west of site 03872 may be continuation of that site.

Site 03872 represents an extensive area of ditches, trackways, enclosures and circular features 700m to the south-east of the site associated with salt working and including salterns alongside a former river channel.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence or absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

The Brief required that 5% of the proposed development area be evaluated, which required the excavation of three trenches, two 10m x 1.8m and one 11m x 1.8m (Fig. 2).

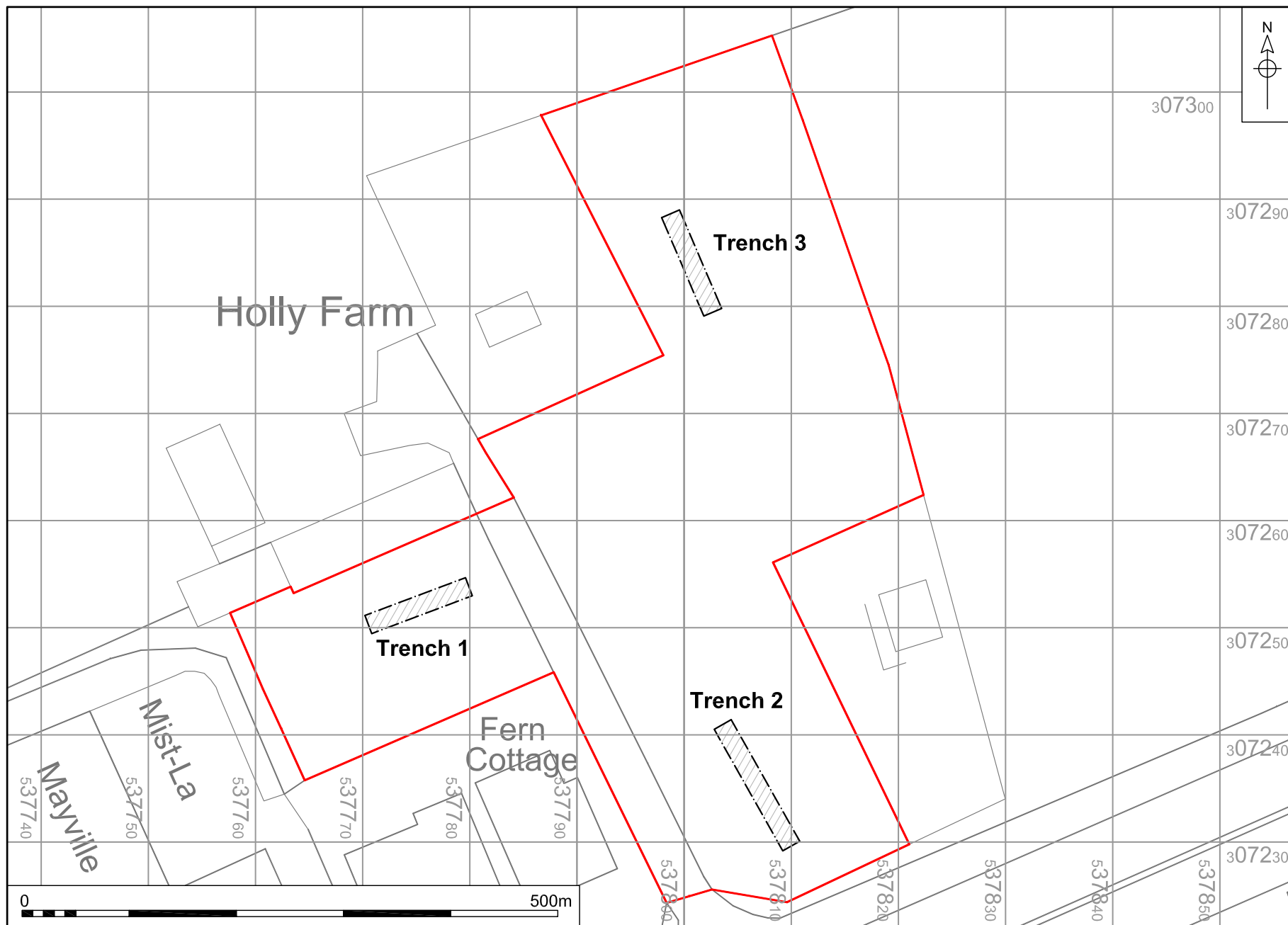
Machine excavation was carried out with a wheeled JCB-type excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket and operated under constant archaeological supervision.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal-detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds, other than those which were obviously modern, were retained for inspection.

No environmental samples were taken.

All deposits were recorded using NPS Archaeology pro forma. Trench locations were recorded at appropriate scales. Monochrome and colour digital photographs were taken of representative deposits where appropriate.

Site conditions were good, with the work taking place in fine weather.



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Figure 2. Trench locations. Scale 1:500

5.0 RESULTS

5.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was positioned on an east-west alignment in the westernmost plot and it measured 10m x 1.8m. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.4m at its east end, although the average depth of the trench was 1.0–1.1m.

Excavation stopped at the top of stiff blue/grey clay, which very quickly oxidised to brown on exposure. The sequence of deposits overlying the clay was consistent along the length of the trench and consisted of a layer of fairly compacted brown loam topsoil and building rubble 0.5m thick, that overlay a layer of cream silt and blue grey clay that contained some brick fragments, tile and wood.

Peat was exposed at the east end of the trench at a depth of 1.4m and was not investigated further.

No archaeological features were present and all the finds in the upper deposits were modern and not retained.



Plate 1. Trench 1

Trench 2

Trench 2 was positioned in the front, southern, plot and measured 11m x 1.8m. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.3m at its southern, although the average depth of the trench was c.1.1m.



Plate 2. Trench 2

The sequence of deposits exposed in the trench sides was similar to that encountered in Trench 1 with a layer of topsoil and building rubble, up to 0.75m thick, overlying a 0.2m thick layer of mottled brown/cream/yellow sand and silt that contained a few brick fragments.

The excavation stopped at the top of a layer of yellow sand.

No archaeological features or deposits were present and all the finds in the upper deposits were modern and not retained.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was positioned north-south in the north-east plot and was intended to be 10m x 1.8m, but in the event it was excavated to a length of 5.4m as it turned out to be aligned along a large infilled drain, which meant that further excavation was essentially meaningless. Therefore, agreement was reached with the archaeological curator to terminate the trench at approximately half its length.



Plate 3. Trench 3



Plate 4. Trench 3, western edge of drain

Only the west edge of the drain was exposed as it extended beyond the east side of the trench (Plates 3 and 4). The part of the drain that was exposed had a steeply sloping side, which became almost vertical with depth (NPS). A large wide hollow in the field to the north appears to be the continuation of the line of the drain. It was assumed prior to excavation that the hollow in the field to the north stopped at the site boundary, but it now seems that the hollow originally extended further south, possibly as far as Back Road.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

Despite the presence of roman cropmarks and medieval saltworking and settlement evidence in the vicinity, no archaeological features or finds were present in the three evaluation trenches excavated at the site.

Recommendations for future work based upon this report will be made by Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Swann Edwards Architecture who commissioned this work on behalf of their client.

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David Dobson prepared the figures and Jayne Bown edited the report

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