ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

REPLACEMENT DWELLING & GARAGE, ACORN FARM, PADGETT'S ROAD, CHRISTCHURCH, MARCH, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

CHER NO. ECB 4108

Authors: Gareth Barlow (Fieldw	
Peter Thompson (Back	(ground)
NGR: TL 4859 9659	Report No: 4543
District: Fenland	Site Code:
Approved: C Halpin MIfA	Project No: P5586
	Date: March 2014
Signed:	

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CONTENTS

		S SUMMARY MARY
1	INTR	ODUCTION
2	DESC	CRIPTION OF THE SITE
3	THE	EVIDENCE
4	METH	HODOLOGY
5	DESC	CRIPTION OF RESULTS
6	CONF	FIDENCE RATING
7	DEPC	OSIT MODEL
8	DISC	USSION
9	DEPC	SITION OF THE ARCHIVE
ACKNOW	LEDG	EMENTS
BIBLIOGE	RAPHY	•
APPENDI APPENDI APPENDI	X 1	CONCORDANCE OF FINDS SPECIALIST REPORTS

OASIS SUMMARY SHE	ET							
Project name	Replacement	Dwelling	&	Garage,	Acorn	Farm,	Padgett's	Road,
	Christchurch,	March, Cai	nbr	idgeshire.				

In March 2014 Archaeological Solutions Limited (AS) carried out an archaeological trial trench evaluation at Acorn Farm, Padgett's Road, Christchurch, March, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 4859 965. The evaluation was undertaken in compliance with an archaeological condition attached to planning approval for the construction of a dwelling and garage (Planning Ref. F/YR13/0790/F), based on the advice of Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (CCC HET), advisors to the Local Planning Authority.

The site lies on the western edge of a distinct pattern of cropmarks showing enclosures thought to be of Roman date and differing from other enclosure systems associated with Romanised farmsteads. These cropmarks are believed to be in the form of 'Centuriation'; land granted to retiring senior ranks in the Roman Army. The parish in general has a significant potential for remains of Roman date.

The evaluation at Acorn Farm produced only features of modern date. Those features in Trench 1 relate to structures/fencing of the farm yard belonging to the current farm house, whilst those in Trench 2 relate to the disposal of domestic animals and fowl.

Project dates (fieldwork)	April 2014		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	N	Future work (Y/N/?)	N
P. number	5586	Site code	ECB 4108
Type of project	Archaeological Ev	valuation	
Site status	None		
Current land use	Farm		
Planned development	Replacement dwe	elling & garage	
Main features (+dates)	None		
Significant finds (+dates)	None		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	Cambridgeshire	Fenland	Christchurch
HER for area	Cambridge Histor	ic Environment Record (C	HER)
Post code (if known)	PE14 9PJ		
Area of site	-		
NGR	TL4859 9659		
Height AOD (min/max)	c.2m AOD		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	Cambridgeshire C	County Council Historic En	vironment Team
Project supervisor/s (PO)	Archaeological Sc	olutions Ltd	
Funded by	Mr A Sparrow and	d Miss N Rose	
Full title	Replacement Dwe	elling & Garage, Acorn Fai	rm, Padgett's Road,
		rch, Cambridgeshire Archa	neological Evaluation.
Authors	Peter Thompson		
Report no.	4543		
Date (of report)	April 2014		

REPLACEMENT DWELLING AND GARAGE, ACORN FARM, PADGETT'S ROAD, CHRISTCHURCH, MARCH. CAMBRIDGESHIRE

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

SUMMARY

In March 2014 Archaeological Solutions Limited (AS) carried out an archaeological trial trench evaluation at Acorn Farm, Padgett's Road, Christchurch, March, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 4859 965. The evaluation was undertaken in compliance with an archaeological condition attached to planning approval for the construction of a dwelling and garage (Planning Ref. F/YR13/0790/F), based on the advice of Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (CCC HET), advisors to the Local Planning Authority.

The site lies on the western edge of a distinct pattern of cropmarks showing enclosures thought to be of Roman date and differing from other enclosure systems associated with Romanised farmsteads. These cropmarks are believed to be in the form of 'Centuriation'; land granted to retiring senior ranks in the Roman Army. The parish in general has a significant potential for remains of Roman date.

The evaluation at Acorn Farm produced only features of modern date. Those features in Trench 1 relate to structures/fencing of the farm yard belonging to the current farm house, whilst those in Trench 2 relate to the disposal of domestic animals and fowl.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In March 2014 Archaeological Solutions Limited (AS) carried out an archaeological trial trench evaluation at Acorn Farm, Padgett's Road, Christchurch, March, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 4859 9659; Figs. 1 2). The evaluation was undertaken in compliance with an archaeological condition attached to planning approval for the construction of a dwelling and garage (Planning Ref. F/YR13/0790/F), based on the advice of Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (CCC HET), advisors to the Local Planning Authority.
- 1.2 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a brief issued by CCC HET (Kasia Gdaniec dated 23/12/2013) and a specification prepared by AS (dated 3rd January 2014), approved by CCC HET. The project adhered to appropriate sections of Gurney (2003) 'Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England', *East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper 14*, and the Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* and *Standard* and *Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (revised 2008).

1.3 The aim of the archaeological evaluation was to determine, as far as was possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development. In addition it was hoped to clarify the nature and extent of existing disturbance and intrusions and hence assess the degree of survival of buried deposits and surviving structures of archaeological significance.

Planning policy context

- 1.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012) states that those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are heritage assets. The NPPF aims to deliver sustainable development by ensuring that policies and decisions that concern the historic environment recognise that heritage assets are a non-renewable resource, take account of the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits of heritage conservation, and recognise that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term. The NPPF requires applications to describe the significance of any heritage asset, including its setting that may be affected in proportion to the asset's importance and the potential impact of the proposal.
- 1.5 The NPPF aims to conserve England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, with substantial harm to designated heritage assets (i.e. listed buildings, monuments) only permitted in exceptional circumstances when the public benefit of a proposal outweighs the conservation of the asset. The effect of proposals on non-designated heritage assets must be balanced against the scale of loss and significance of the asset, but non-designated heritage assets of demonstrably significance may be considered subject to the same policies as those that are designated. The NPPF states that opportunities to capture evidence from the historic environment, to record and advance the understanding of heritage assets and to make this publicly available is a requirement of development management. This opportunity should be taken in a manner proportionate to the significance of a heritage asset and to impact of the proposal, particularly where a heritage asset is to be lost.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

2.1 Christchurch is a small village located 7.3km east of March in the Cambridgeshire Fens. Acorn Farm is situated approximately 650m west of Christchurch and comprises a dwelling and several ancillary buildings set in a small rectangular grassy land plot. The site is fronted by Padgett's Road (B1100).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Acorn Farm is located at 2m AOD on the fen with the Sixteen Foot Drain 620m to the west, and the Old Croft River 1km to the northeast. The area comprises silt fen deposits overlying Ampthill and Kimmeridge clays.
- 3.2 The Cambridgeshire fens were exploited throughout much of prehistory with particular focus around the fen islands and deeper water channels. However, there is little evidence for occupation within 1km of Acorn Farm bar eight flint flakes found near Christchurch (CHER 06003). In the later prehistoric and Romano-British periods the fen was exploited for its salt, and Christchurch parish contains the largest area of Romano-British saltern sites which cover over 60ha. These are often associated with areas of parallel cuts representing from infilled turbaries (Potter 2000). The closest known saltern site to Acorn Farm is 1.2km to the south-east in Upwell Fen (CHER 03796A).
- 3.3 The Fen Causeway (CHER CB15033), located approximately 1.1km north of Acorn Farm was a Roman military road running across hostile territory linking Denver in Norfolk with the Water Newton area. Roadside forts are known at Grandford and Eldernell. The area is thought to have been developed in the Roman period by Hadrian who had an interest in marginal lands, and villages of approximately 10-20ha set in large field systems crossed by roads appear from this time (Potter 2000). The largest such area has been identified at Christchurch where over 85ha of field systems and roads have been identified.
- 3.3 In particular, there is a large area of cropmarks centred on the north-west of Christchurch, but with outliers reaching to within approximately 150m north-east of Acorn Farm. The cropmarks indicate a large system of rectangular ditched fields of probable Roman date located in the bend of a roddon, with ditches also located either side of the roddon which may have had assisted with water management. Other field systems appear to respect the Fen Causeway (CHER 10629, 06848, MCB17930). The field pattern appears to be in the form of a 'centuriation' of uniform enclosures thought to derive from land given to retired soldiers, or senior ranks of the Roman army in the post-conquest period, in an effort to Romanise key areas.
- 3.4 An archaeological evaluation carried out 550m east of Acorn Farm revealed a series of undated ditches running east to west cut into a roddon that dominated the site. The deposits underlying the roddon were exposed, and the full sequence of fluvial deposits making up the roddon were recorded. In its latest phase probable channels of natural origin were recorded, and these were subsequently reinforced and/or replaced by ditches on similar alignments. A very small assemblage of material remains including animal bone and 17th -18th century pottery was recovered from the ditches, but despite no dateable finds of

Romano-British date it is highly likely the re-cut ditches were part of the larger Romano-British agricultural landscape around Christchurch (CHER MCB 17930).

3.5 In the mid 19th century Acorn Farm was in the parish of Upwell for which there was no tithe map, and the rural portion of the March tithe map did not extend as far east as the site. The 1888 and 1903 OS maps show Acorn Farm set in the group of small rectangular, ditch lined fields that exist today (Fig's 3 & 4). The 1927 OS map shows buildings have appeared just across Padgett's Road where High Lots Farm is located (Fig. 5). The 1950 OS map shows no change to the immediate vicinity of Acorn Farm (Fig. 6).

4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The brief required an archaeological evaluation of the site by trial trenching. Two trenches each 15m long and 1.6m wide were excavated using a back acting 180° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket.
- 4.2 Undifferentiated overburden was removed under close archaeological supervision using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Thereafter, all further investigation was undertaken by hand. Exposed surfaces were cleaned as appropriate and examined for archaeological features and finds. Deposits were recorded using *pro forma* recording sheets, drawn to scale and photographed. Excavated spoil was checked for finds and the trenches were scanned by metal detector.

5 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

Individual trench descriptions are presented below.

Trench 1 (Figs. 2 & 7)

Sample section Southeast end,		st facing
0.00m = 1.64m	AOD	
0.00 – 0.28m	L1000	Topsoil. Firm, dark grey brown silty sand with very occasional small and medium angular and subangular flints.
0.28m+	L1001	Natural deposits. Firm, pale yellowish orange silty fine sand with Very very occasional small and medium angular and sub-angular flints.

Sample section	1B	
Northwest end,	northeas	t facing
0.00m = 1.53m	AOD	-
0.00 – 0.30m	L1000	Topsoil. As above.
0.30m+	L1001	Natural deposits. As above

Description: Trench 1 contained only modern features; five pits (F1004, F1006, F1014, F1023, and F1027) and 12 post holes. A sample of the post holes was excavated (F1002, F1010, F1012, F1016, F1018, and F1020).

F1002 was a square post hole (0.25 x 0.25 x 0.20m), located towards the southeast end of the trench, with vertical sides and a flat base. It cut Pit F1004. Its fill (L1003) comprised mixed lenses of firm mid orangey grey (c.60%) and dark grey brown (c.40%) silty sand. It contained no finds.

F1004 was a sub-circular pit $(0.60 \times 0.35 \times 0.32\text{m})$ with steep sides and a concave base. It was cut by Post Hole F1002 and Pit F1006. Its fill (L1005) comprised mixed lenses of firm, pale brownish grey (c.50%), bark grey brown (c.30%), and pale-mid brownish orange (c.20%) silty sand with very occasional small and medium angular and sub-angular flints. It contained no finds. Although containing no finds, the mixed fill is similar to other features of modern date suggesting this too is modern.

F1006 was a sub-rectangular pit $(1.20 \times 1.00 \times 0.60 \text{m})$ with vertical sides and a flat base. It cut Pit F1004. Its lower fill (L1007) was a firm, mid orangey grey silty sand with very occasional small and medium angular and sub-angular flints. It contained no finds. Its middle fill (L1008) comprised mixed lenses of firm, pale yellowish grey (c.40%), pale orangey grey (c.30%), mid brownish grey (c.25%), and dark grey brown (c.5%) silty sand with very occasional small and medium angular and sub-angular flints. It contained no finds. Its uppermost fill (L1009) was a firm, mid brownish grey silty sand with moderate small and medium charcoal fragments and very occasional small and medium angular and sub-angular flints. It contained a modern iron gate hinge and iron nails (839g).

F1010 was a sub-circular post hole $(0.35 \times 0.30 \times 0.12 \text{m})$, located near the middle of the trench, with vertical sides and a flat base. It cut Post Hole F1012. Its fill (L1011) was a firm, dark grey brown silty sand. It still contained the base of a square wooden post, no other finds were present.

F1012 was a square post hole $(0.30 \times 0.20 \times 0.12m)$ with vertical sides and a flat base. It was cut by Post Hole F1010. Its fill (L1013) comprised mixed lenses of firm, mid brownish grey (c.50%), pale orangey grey (c.30%), and dark grey brown (c.20%) silty sand with

very occasional small and medium angular and sub-angular flints. It contained modern CBM (85g).

F1014 was an elongated oval pit $(1.00 \times 0.30 \times 0.28m)$, located near the middle of the trench, with vertical northeast and southwest sides, but a stepped northwest side, and a flat base. Its fill (L1015) comprised mixed lenses of firm, dark grey brown (c.70%) and pale yellowish grey (c.30%) silty sand with very occasional small and medium angular and sub-angular flints. It contained a modern iron fragment (12g).

F1016 was a square post hole $(0.30 \times 0.30 \times 0.10 \text{m})$, located near the middle of the trench, with vertical sides and a flat base. Its fill (L1017) was a firm, dark grey brown, with occasional small lenses (< 10%) of pale brownish orange, silty sand with very occasional small and medium angular and sub-angular flints. It contained modern CBM (18g).

F1018 was an oval post hole (0.50 x 0.40 x 0.35m), located near the middle of the trench, with vertical sides and a flat base. It cut Post Hole F1020. Its fill (L1019) comprised mixed lenses of firm, dark brownish grey (c.80%) and pale yellowish brown silty sand with very occasional small and medium angular and sub-angular flints. It contained modern iron nails (63g).

F1020 was an oval pit, or post hole, (0.50+x~0.5~x~0.20m) with vertical sides and a concave base. It was cut by Post Hole F1018. Its first fill (L1021) comprised mixed lenses of firm, dark grey brown (c.50%) and pale yellowish brown (c.50%) silty sand with very occasional small and medium angular and sub-angular flints. Its second fill (L1022) was a firm dark grey brown, with occasional small lenses (<5%) of pale yellowish brown, silty sand with very occasional small and medium angular and sub-angular flints. It contained a modern iron fragment (3g).

F1023 was a large pit, or linear feature (1.60+ x 0.75+ x 0.42m), located at the extreme northwest end of the trench, and extending beyond it. It cut Pit F1027. Its shape is unknown; however, its south eastern side was straight and moderately sloping. Its base did not lie within the trench. Its lowest fill (L1024) was a firm, very dark grey brown organic sandy silt. It contained no finds. Its middle fill (L1025) was a firm, mid brownish grey sandy silt with occasional small and medium angular and sub-angular flints. It contained modern CBM (48g). Its upper fill (L1026) was a firm, very dark grey brown organic sandy silt. It contained no finds.

F1027 was a large rectangular pit, or linear feature (1.60+ x 1.25 x 0.60m), located at the extreme northwest end of the trench, and extending beyond it. It was cut by F1023. Its northwest and southeast sides were vertical and its base was flat. Cut into the base and running parallel to the sides was a narrow trench, 0.20m wide containing a

small plastic pipe. A primary fill (L1028) of firm pale greyish orange silty sand with occasional small and medium angular and sub-angular flints, was present in the northern corner of the slot only. It contained no finds. On the south eastern side fill L1029 comprised a firm, mottled pale brownish orange (c.80%) and mid grey brown (c.20%) silty sand with very very occasional small sub-angular flints. It contained no finds. The main fill (L1030) was a firm, dark grey brown (c.70%), with occasional large lenses of mixed pale yellowish grey and pale brownish orange, silt sand with very occasional small and medium angular and sub-angular flints. It contained a modern glass fragment (7g), slate (13g) and an iron fragment (7g). At the top the main fill was L1031. This comprised firm, mottled pale yellowish grey (c.60%) and pale brownish orange (c.40%) silt sand with very occasional small and medium angular and sub-angular flints. It contained no finds. On the south eastern side only was L1032, a firm, dark grey brown sandy silt with very occasional small and medium angular and sub-angular flints. It contained no finds.

Trench 2 (Figs. 2 & 7)

Sample section Southwest end,		st facing.
0.00m = 1.83m	AOD	
0.00 - 0.33m	L1000	Topsoil. As Trench 1.
0.33m+	L1001	Natural deposits. As Trench 1.

Sample section	2B	
Northwest end,	southwes	st facing.
0.00m = 6.94m	AOD	
0.00 – 0.33m	L1000	Topsoil. As above Tr.1
0.33m+	L1001	Natural. As above Tr.1

Description: Trench 2 contained two modern pits (F1033 & F1035).

F1033 was a sub-oval pit $(0.30 \times 0.25 \times 0.10 \text{m})$, located near the southwest end of the trench, with steeply sloping sides and a flat base. Its fill (L1034) comprised mixed lenses of firm, dark grey brown (c.70%) and pale yellowish brown (c.30%) silt sand with very occasional small and medium angular and sub-angular flints. It contained the semi-articulated bones of a cat. The preservation of bone in such a sandy environment is likely to be poor, and as these bones were in good condition it would suggest a modern date for the burial.

F1035 was a rectangular pit $(0.50+ \times 0.35 \times 0.15m)$, located near the middle of the northeast-southwest arm of the trench, with vertical sides and a flat base. Its fill (L1036) comprised mixed lenses of firm, dark grey brown (c.70%) and pale yellowish brown (c.30%) silty sand with very occasional small and medium angular and sub-angular flints. It

contained modern pottery (2g), animal bone (549g), and an iron nail (5g).

6 CONFIDENCE RATING

6.1 It is not felt that any factors restricted the identification of archaeological features or finds.

7 DEPOSIT MODEL

7.1 Uppermost was Topsoil L1000, firm, dark grey brown silty sand with very occasional small and medium angular and sub-angular flints, 0.30m thick. This directly overlay the natural deposits (L1001), a firm, pale yellowish orange silty fine sand with sparse small and medium angular and sub-angular flints.

8 DISCUSSION

8.1 The individual features recorded in each trench are tabulated below:

Trench	Context	Description	Date
1	F1002	Post hole	Modern
1	F1004	Pit	Modern
1	F1006	Pit	Modern
1	F1010	Post hole	Modern
1	F1012	Post hole	Modern
1	F1014	Pit	Modern
1	F1016	Post hole	Modern
1	F1018	Post hole	Modern
1	F1020	Post hole	Modern
1	F1023	Pit	Modern
1	F1027	Pit	Modern
2	F1033	Pit	Modern
2	F1035	Pit	Modern

- 8.2 The site lies on the western edge of a distinct pattern of cropmarks showing enclosures thought to be of Roman date and differing from other enclosure systems associated with Romanised farmsteads. These cropmarks are believed to be in the form of 'Centuriation'; land granted to retiring senior ranks in the Roman Army. The parish in general has a significant potential for remains of Roman date.
- 8.3 The evaluation at Acorn Farm produced only features of modern date. Those features in Trench 1 relate to structures/fencing of the

farm yard belonging to the current farm house, whilst those in Trench 2 relate to the disposal of domestic animals and fowl.

8.4 The topsoil produced no finds of earlier than modern date either. This combined with the solely modern features revealed within the trenches suggest that the potential for activity of Roman, or other date, on this site is not realistic.

9 DEPOSITION OF ARCHIVE

9.1 Archive records, with an inventory, will be deposited at the Cambridgeshire County Store. The archive will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency. In addition to the overall site summary, it will be necessary to produce a summary of the artefactual and ecofactual data.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Solutions Limited would like to thank the clients, Mr Andrew Sparrow and Miss Nicola Rose for their co-operation and funding of the evaluation, and for assistance

AS would also like to acknowledge the input and advice of the Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team and Historic Environment Record, in particular Ms Kasia Gdaniec.

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Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983 Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales. Harpenden

APPENDIX 1 - CONCORANCE OF FINDS

AS1660, Acorn Farm, Christchurch Concordance of finds by feature

Feature	Context Trench	Trench	Description	Spot Date	Pottery	CBM (g)	Pottery CBM (g) A.Bone (g) Other	Other	
1006	1009	1	Fill of Pit					Cu. Alloy Frag (1) - 7g	
								Fe. Frag (7) - 839g	
1012	1013	1	Fill of Posthole			98			
1014	1015	7	Fill of Pit					Fe. Frag (1) - 12g	
1016	1017	1	Fill of Posthole			18			
1018	1019	_	Fill of Pit/Posthole					Fe. Frag (7) - 63g	
1020	1022	_	Fill of Pit					Fe. Frag (1) - 3g	
								Slag (3) - 17g	
1023	1024	1	Fill of Pit				111	111 Glass (1) - 13g	
	1025	_	Fill of Pit			48			
1027	1030	1	Fill of Pit					Fe. Frag (1) - 7g	
								Glass (1) - 2g	
								Slate - 13g	
1035	1036	2	Fill of Pit	Early Modern/Modern	(1) 2g		549	549 Fe. Frag (1) - 5g	

APPENDIX 2 - SPECIALIST REPORTS

The Ceramic Building Materials

Andrew Peachey MIfA

The evaluation recovered a total of six fragments (151g) of highly fragmented, abraded modern CBM. Pit F1023 (L1025) contained fragments of field drain or sewer pipe, while Postholes F1012 and F1016 contained small fragments of brick rubble, possibly used as packing material. At the earliest the CBM has Victorian origins, but is probably entirely of 20th century origin, re-use and deposition.

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



General view of Acorn Farm showing Trench 1 in area of old farm yard. Looking southeast.



General view of Acorn Farm from Padgetts Road, showing Trench 2. Looking west.



3
Excavation of Trench 2 in progress.



Trench 1 post exc, Looking southeast.



Post hole F1002 and pits F1004 and F1006. Trench 1, looking northeast.



Post holes F1010 and F1012. Trench1, looking northeast.



Pits F1023 and F1027. Trench 1, looking northeast.





Trench 2 post exc. Looking northeast.



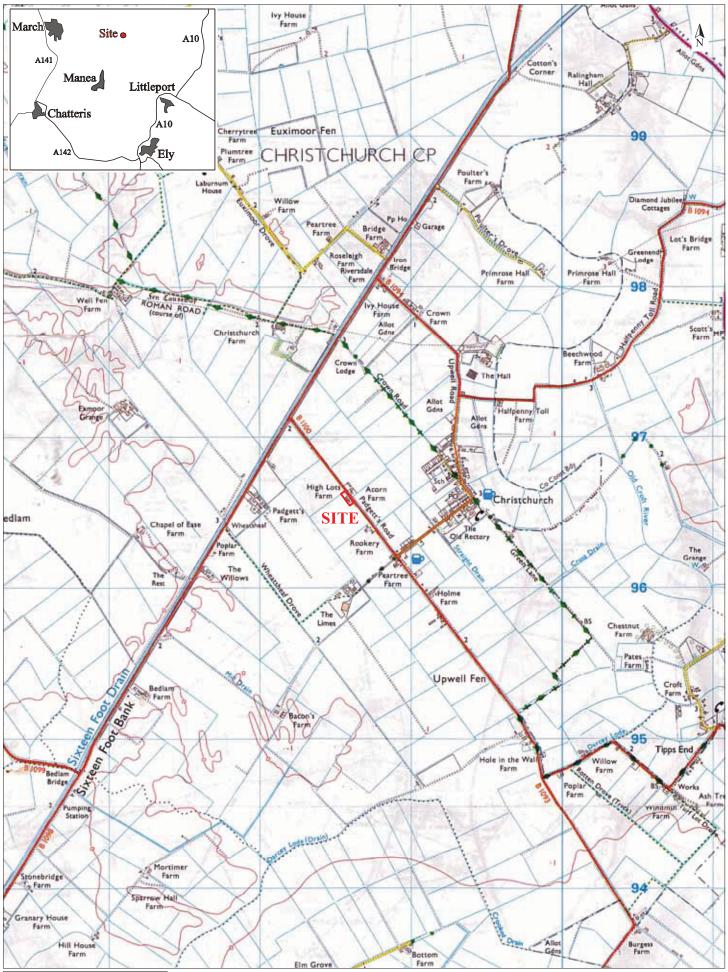
10
Sample section 2A. Trench 2, looking southeast.



11 Pit F1033. Trench 2, looking northeast.



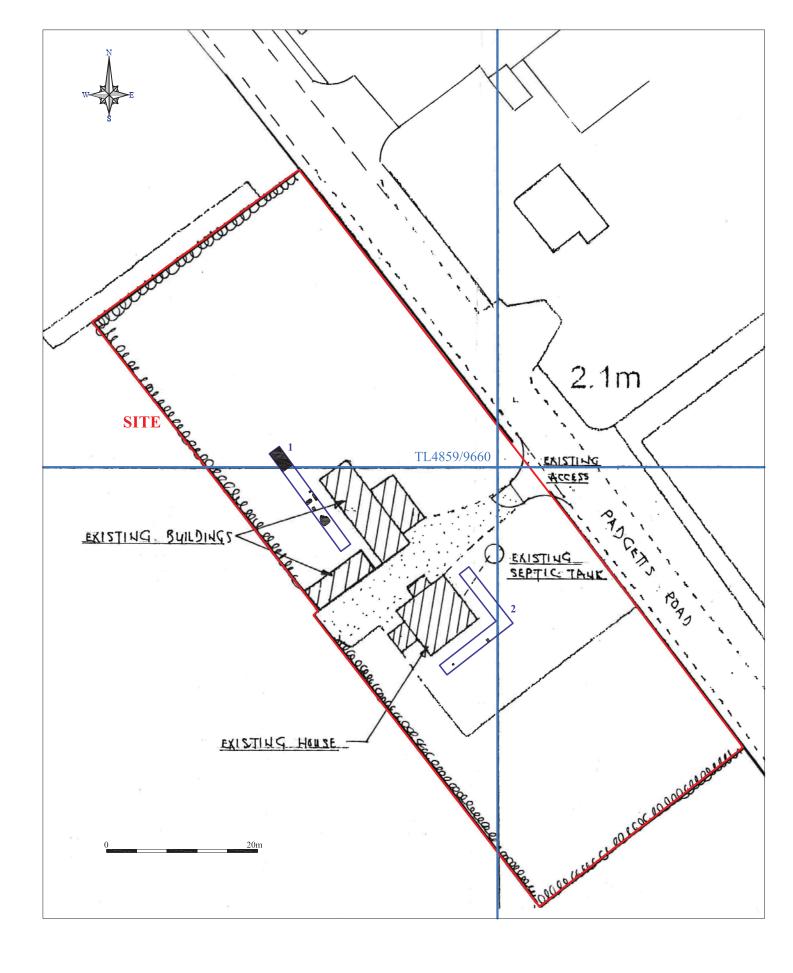
12 Pit F1035. Trench 2, Looking southeast.



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Fig. 1 Site location plan
Scale 1:25,000 at A4



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Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan

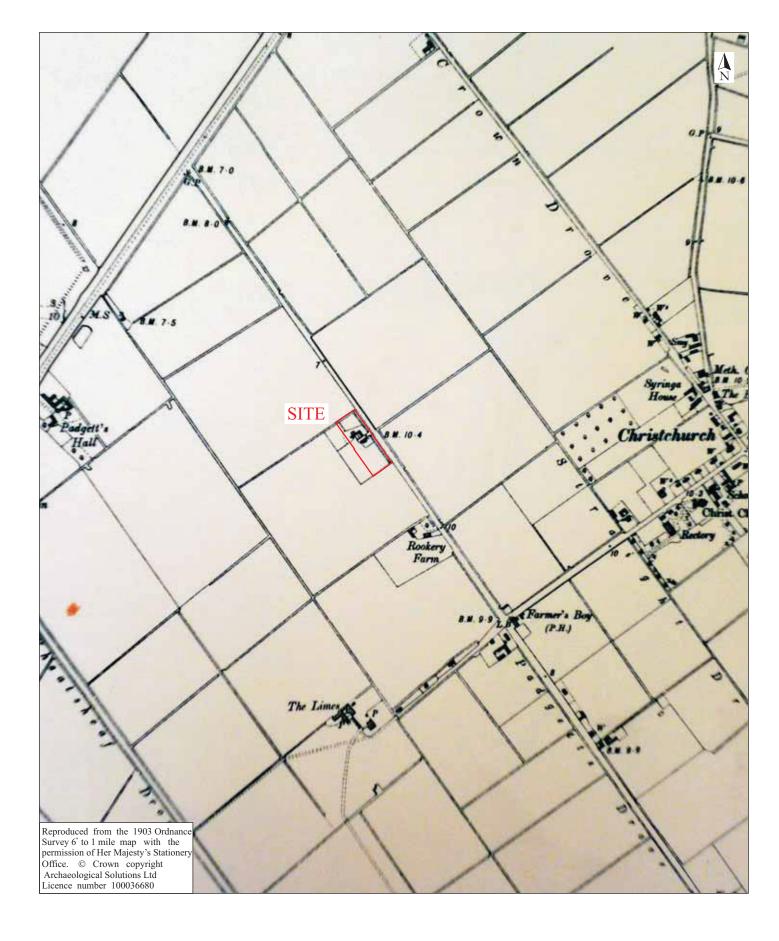
Scale 1:500 at A4



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Fig. 3 OS map, 1886

Not to scale



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Fig. 4 OS map, 1903
Not to scale

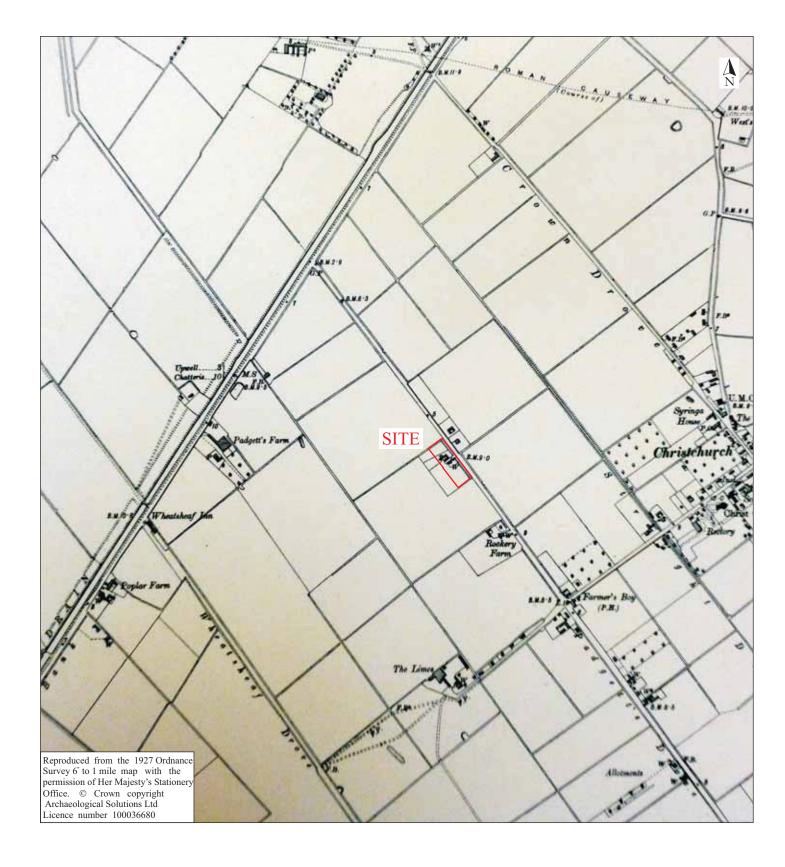


Fig. 5 OS map, 1927
Not to scale

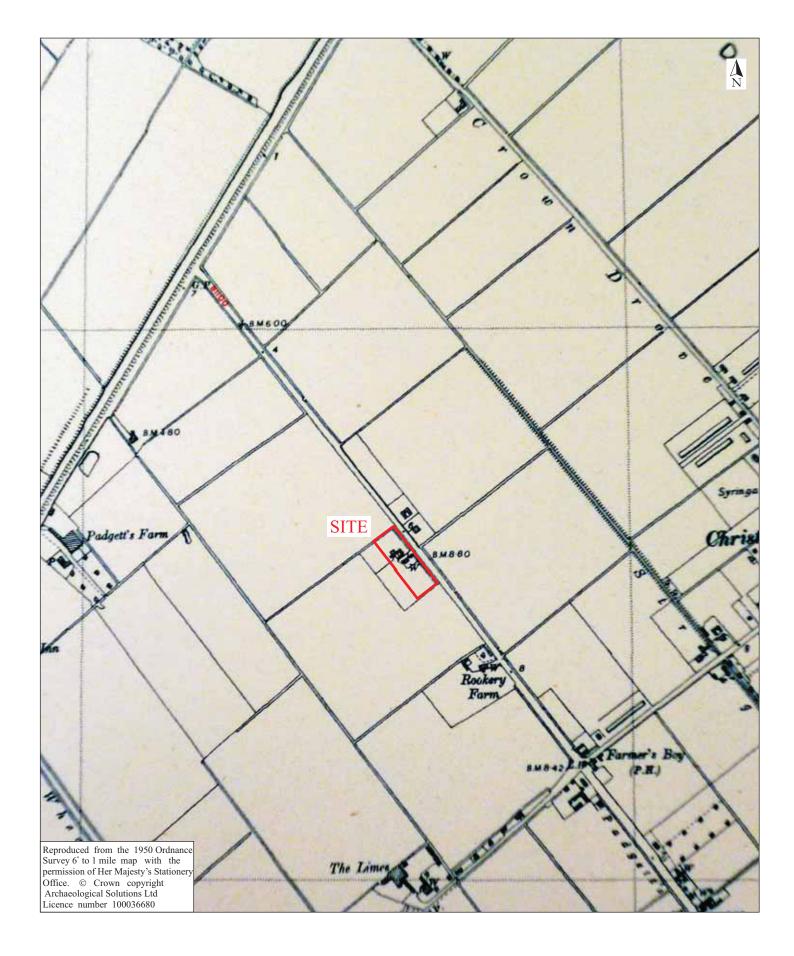


Fig. 6 OS map, 1950
Not to scale

