

**Hampden Veterinary Hospital Extension,
49 Cambridge Street, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Brief
for Hampden Veterinary Hospital**

by Danielle Milbank and James McNicoll-Norbury
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code CSA08/132

October 2009

Summary

Site name: Hampden Veterinary Hospital Extension, 49 Cambridge Street, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire

Grid reference: SP 8205 1393

Site activity: Evaluation and watching brief

Date and duration of project: Evaluation: 15th –16th December 2008; Watching brief: 6th January–23rd September 2009.

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Danielle Milbank, Tim Dawson

Site code: CSA 08/132

Summary of results: A single ditch, possibly of medieval date, was revealed

Monuments identified: (Possibly) Medieval ditch

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire Museum Services in due course.

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Hampden Veterinary Hospital, 49 Cambridge Street, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire An Archaeological Evaluation and Watching Brief

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Report 08/132

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation and subsequent watching brief carried out at the Hampden Veterinary Hospital, 49 Cambridge Street, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire (SP 8205 1393) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Chris Davis of Blenheim Design and Management, The Studio, 56 Littleworth, Oxford, OX33 1TR, on behalf of Hampden Veterinary Hospital.

Planning permission has been gained from Aylesbury Vale District Council to construct an extension to the existing Veterinary Hospital. This is subject to a condition (6) which requires that a programme of archaeological work be undertaken. This is in order to mitigate the effects of development on any archaeological deposits present.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Eliza Alqassar, Archaeological Planning and Conservation Officer, of Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service and in response to a brief supplied by her (Alqassar 2009). The fieldwork was undertaken by Danielle Milbank, Henrietta Longdon, James McNicoll-Norbury and Tim Dawson between 15th–16th December 2008, 6th and 16th January 2009 and 22nd and 23rd September 2009 and the site code is CSA 08/132. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire Museum Services in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located in Aylesbury, to the south-east of the centre of the town and *c.*200m north-west of the Bear Brook (Fig.1). The site is within a commercial area of the town, and is located to the rear of the main Veterinary Hospital building on the east side of Cambridge Street, with Anchor Lane to the north-west and Britannia Street to the east (Fig.2). The site is relatively flat overall and lies at a height of *c.*88m above Ordnance Datum. It lies over the divide of underlying geology described as Portland Formation and Kimmeridge Clay (BGS 1990).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site and its environs has been highlighted in a detailed appraisal prepared by Oxford Archaeological Associates (Petchey and Collcutt 2008). In summary the site lies within the historic core of Aylesbury, within the projected extent of the Iron Age hillfort and potentially within the Saxon defensive circuit. Middle Iron Age pottery has been recovered from the hillfort ditch nearby and pits and postholes of similar date are recorded about 450m to the west. Roman occupation is also recorded 100m to the west and the line of Akeman Street Roman road runs less than 100m to the north. The site is located close to the likely core of the Saxon town which is likely to have been a late Saxon *Burh* and a Royal manor is likely to be located nearby as documented by the name 'Kingsbury'. Finally, a post-medieval clay pipe kiln was found nearby.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation and watching brief was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. The specific research aims of the project are:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;
- to determine if any late Prehistoric occupation is present on the site;
- to determine if any Roman deposits are present on the site. In particular, to determine if there are any deposits associated with Akeman Street present;
- to determine if any Saxon deposits are present on the site. In particular, to determine if there are any deposits associated with the late Saxon *burh* present;
- to determine if any medieval deposits are present on the site associated with the medieval town.

This was to be carried out by means of machine trenching, with a further component of work comprising a watching brief to be carried out primarily during excavation of foundations (ground beams) and deep service runs.

Three trenches were proposed, two 2.5m long and one 4m long, positioned in order to target the intended footprint of the extension, and to avoid the pile foundations. The trenches were also positioned to target the area of site considered to have higher potential for archaeological deposits, where the natural geology was believed to be less deeply buried by made ground deposits than other areas of the site.

The trenches were to be excavated by a JCB-type machine fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket under continuous archaeological supervision. All spoilheaps were to be monitored for finds and trenches were to be cleaned by hand where necessary.

Results

Evaluation trenches

All three trenches were dug in the positions and to the lengths intended (Fig. 3). They ranged from 2.5m to 4.10m in length, and in depth from 0.87m to 1.10m. Natural geology was encountered in Trenches 1 and 3 in the form of firm pale orange slightly clay sand. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Plates 1 and 2)

Trench 1 was aligned SE–NW, and was 1.6m wide, 4.10m long and 1.10m deep. Here, the stratigraphy consisted of recent demolition rubble (mainly crushed concrete and brick) 0.40m thick overlying dark grey sandy clay, with occasional charcoal flecks, which was 0.16m thick. This overlay a possible buried topsoil layer (50) which comprised mid to dark brown/grey, slightly organic sandy clay, 0.26m thick. This in turn overlay the natural geology, which comprised firm orange slightly clayey sand.

A test pit was excavated to 1.10m deep at the south-east end of the trench to verify the natural geology and the trench was subsequently excavated to this level throughout.

An elongated feature (1), probably a ditch, was aligned approximately northwest-southeast (Figs 4 and 5). The feature contained two fills (52 and 53). The lower fill (52) comprised a mottled dark brown/grey slightly sandy clay with very occasional limestone fragments which contained tile, a fragment of medieval pottery and a fragment of animal bone (sheep or goat). Deposit 53 overlay 52, and comprised a slightly mottled brown orange/grey sandy clay layer.

Due to the depth of the trench, the base of the feature could not be safely accessed and was not fully excavated. The depth of the feature was though established by auger. This revealed that the lower fill (52) was present to the base of the feature, at a depth of 0.74m with the natural geology encountered as a red/brown slightly clayey sand.

Trench 2 (Plate 3)

This trench was aligned SW–NE and was 2.8m long and 1.46m deep. Here, recent demolition rubble 0.50m thick overlay grey silty clay which was 0.30m thick and contained a clay tobacco pipe stem fragment. This overlay a blackish/grey silty clay with a slight organic component (a buried soil layer) with occasional charcoal fragments, which was 0.27m thick. This in turn overlay a mottled red/brown sandy clay deposit, which was thought to be the natural geology. No archaeological finds, features or deposits were encountered in this trench.

Trench 3

This was aligned SE–NW and was 2.5m long, and 0.87m deep. Here, the north-east- and south-west-facing sides showed differing stratigraphy. The south-west-facing section along the trench showed recent demolition rubble 0.26m thick, which overlay blackish/grey slightly sandy clay which was 0.19m thick. This overlay a grey slightly sandy clay which was 0.29m thick. This overlay the natural geology, which comprised patchy white and orange clayey sand with frequent angular and subangular white/grey limestone.

The north-east-facing section showed a mixed, patchy layer comprising crushed concrete and brick demolition rubble and mottled mid and dark grey silt, sand and sandy clay. This was 0.86m thick and directly overlay the natural geology. No archaeological finds, features or deposits were encountered in this trench.

Watching Brief (Plate 4)

Following the evaluation, a watching brief was carried out on other areas of the site primarily during the digging of groundbeam slots and other intrusive groundworks such as services. The slots were dug using a 360° type machine fitted with a toothless bucket, to a width of 0.80m and a depth of up to 1.00m (Fig. 3). The stratigraphy revealed comprised various layers of made ground overlying natural geology, the depth of which was observed at 0.40–0.80m below the surface level (Fig. 5). Service trenches, which were dug at a later date only reached a depth of 0.20m with a width of 0.30m. The natural geology was not observed. No archaeological finds or features were discovered during this watching brief phase of the investigation.

Finds

Pottery and Ceramic Building Material by Jane Timby

The only ceramic finds from the evaluation came from ditch 1 fill 52 and comprise a single sherd of pottery, one tile fragment and two fragments of fired clay. Both the tile and pottery are in the same fabric, a brown ware with a dark grey inner core. The paste is sandy with sparse calcareous inclusions. The sherd has a flat face suggesting it is from the base of a vessel; it is too thin (8mm) to be a tile. This would suggest it is not from a cooking pot which usually have sagged bases but perhaps a jug or pitcher. The tile fragment is also thin, 10mm, and has sand grits impressed on the underside (unlike the basesherd). Both pieces probably date to the medieval period but without further diagnostic material closer dating is not feasible.

Ceramic Building Material (Addendum) by Danielle Milbank

Further to the pottery and tile analysed by Jane Timby, a small quantity of tile fragments was recovered from deposits 52 and 53. The tile from 52 comprised 10 fragments weighing 310g, which included four pieces with a dark green mottled glaze and one with a lighter green mottled glaze. One piece was slightly uneven and fairly thin (c.10mm), while the remainder were small fragments.

The tile from context 53 weighed 866g and consisted of 16 fragments, most of them small. Three pieces had a light green mottled glaze, while the rest were plain and typically 12mm thick.

None of the tiles had peg holes, but the glaze indicates that they are of medieval or post-medieval date.

Catalogue

1. One sherd of pottery in a brown sandy ware with sparse calcareous grains. Wt. 15 g.
2. One fragment of roofing tile. Brown sandy ware with sparse calcareous grains. Wt. 38 g.
3. Two small abraded fragments of fired clay. Wt 7 g.
4. 26 fragments of varying fabric including 8 green glazed. Wt 1176g.

Animal Bone by Ceri Falys

A very small assemblage of animal bone was recovered from context 1 (52). A total of nine fragments were present for analysis, weighing 25g. The preservation of the remains was generally poor, with high fragmentation and frequent surface damage. The remains were found to represent a minimum number (MNI) of one sheep/goat individual. No further information could be derived from these skeletal remains.

Conclusion

The evaluation established that archaeologically relevant levels had survived on site as shown by the presence of the possible medieval (or later) ditch in Trench 1. However, no other features of archaeological interest or finds were found in either of the other two evaluation trenches or during the later watching brief phase carried out during digging of the foundation trenches.

References

- Alqassar, E, 2009, 'Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service Generic Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief', Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service, Aylesbury
- BGS, 1990, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 238, Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Petchey M R and Collcutt S N, 2008, 'Hampden Veterinary Hospital, 49 Cambridge Street, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire: Archaeological Appraisal and Site Testing'. Oxford Archaeological Associates report. Oxford
- PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

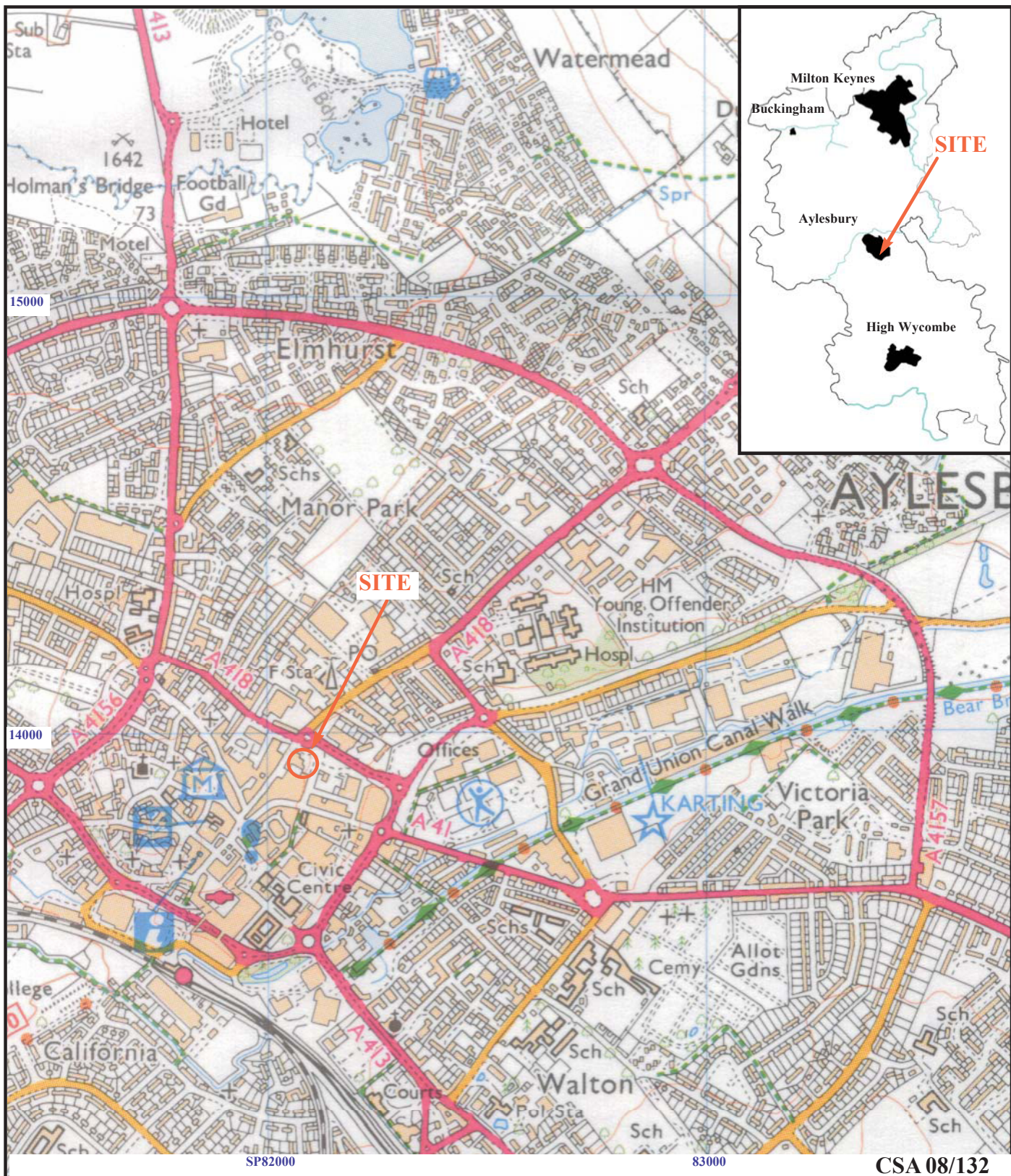
APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at S or SE end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	4.1	1.6	1.1	0-0.40m demolition rubble; 0.40m-0.56m dark grey sandy clay; 0.56m-0.82m mid to dark brown grey sandy clay; 0.82m+ firm orange slightly clayey sand natural geology. Ditch 1. [Plates 1 and 2]
2	2.8	1.6	1.46	0-0.50m demolition rubble; 0.50m-0.80m grey silty clay; 0.80m-1.07m dark black grey silty clay; 1.07m+ mottled orange/orange brown slightly sandy clay [Plate 3]
3	2.5	1.6	0.87	0-0.26m demolition rubble; 0.26m-0.45m dark blackish grey slightly sandy silty clay; 0.45m-0.74m grey, slightly sandy silty clay; 0.74m+ patchy white and orange slightly clayey sand and limestone natural geology

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1	1	52	Ditch	Medieval or later	Pottery

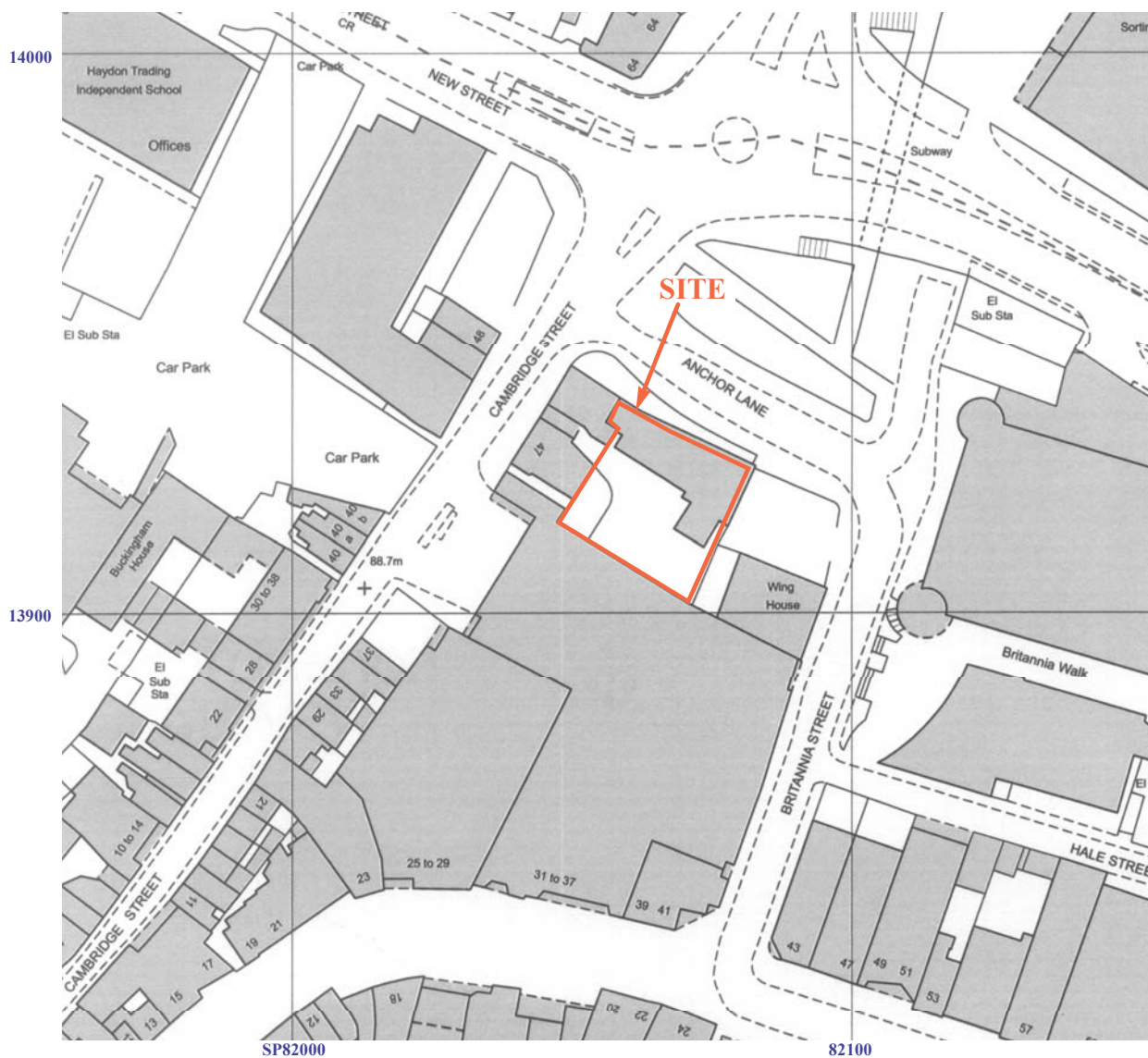


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Figure 1. Location of site within Aylesbury and Buckinghamshire.

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Archaeological Evaluation and Watching brief**

Figure 2. Location of site off Cambridge Street and Anchor Lane.

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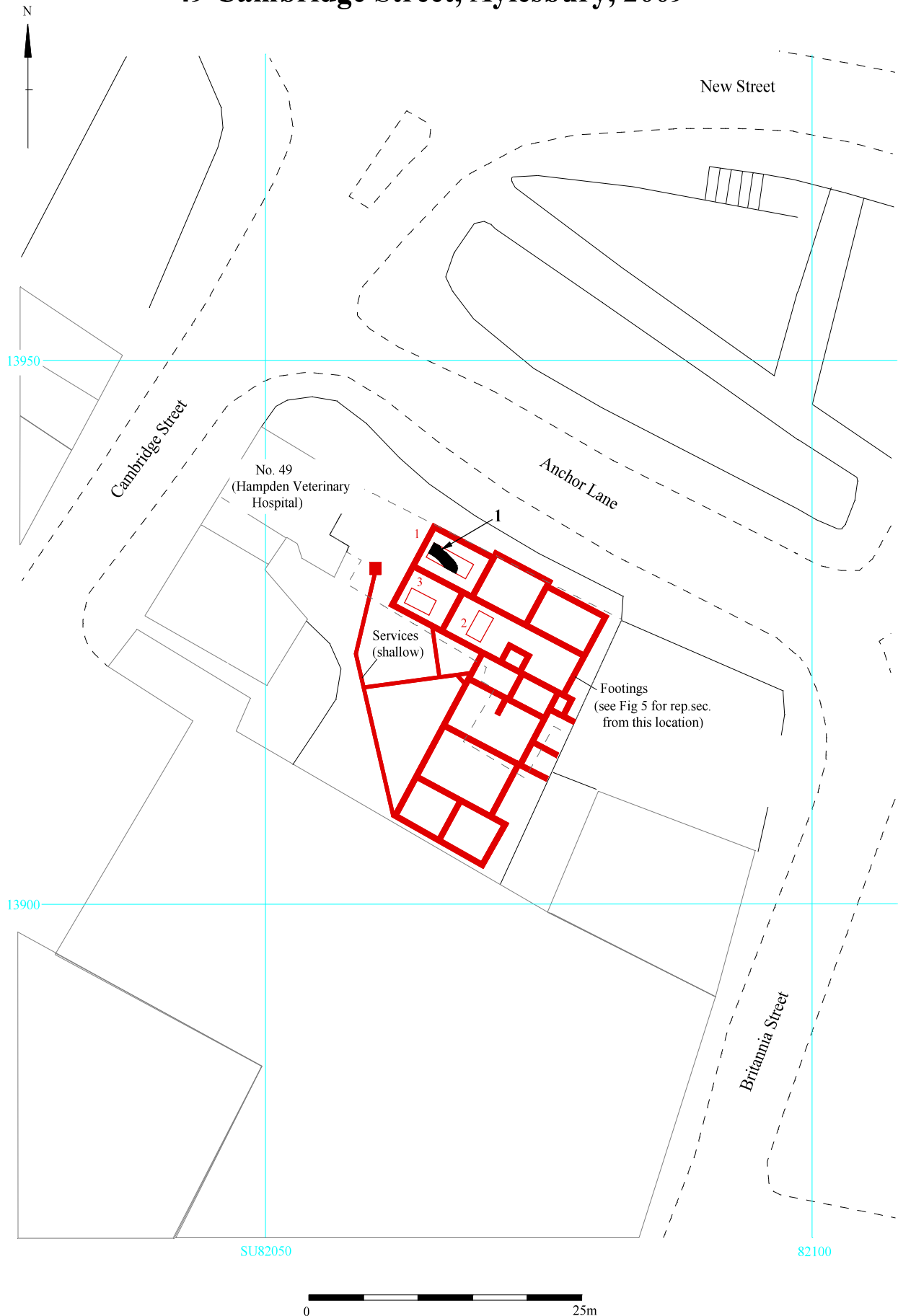


Figure 3. Location of Evaluation trenches and watching brief areas.

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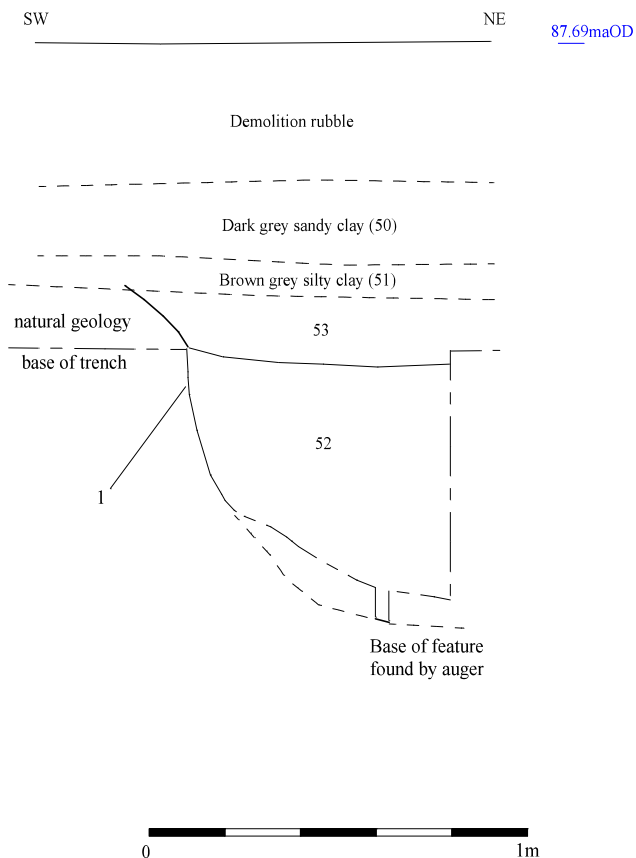
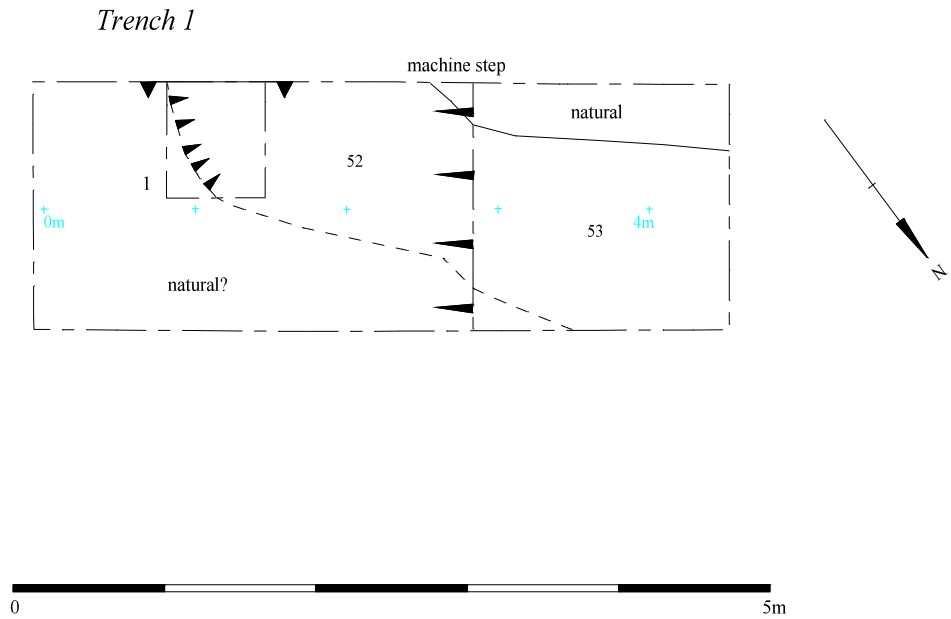


Figure 4. Detail of evaluation trench.

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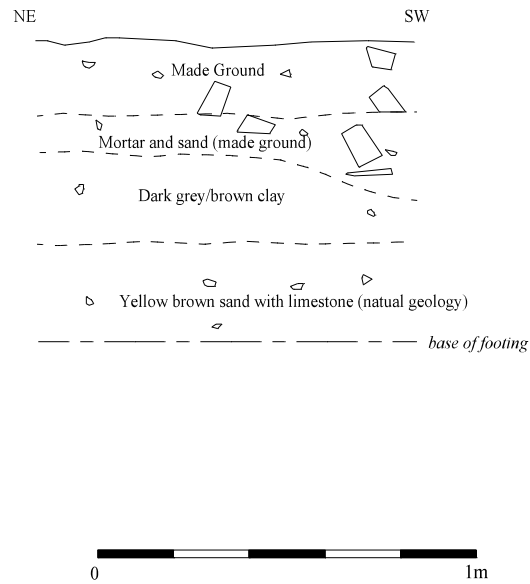


Figure 5. Representative section of groundbeam trench from watching brief.



Plate 1. Trench 1, feature 1 looking north-west; scales, 0.5m and 0.3m



Plate 2. Trench 1, looking south east, scales 0.5m, and 0.3m

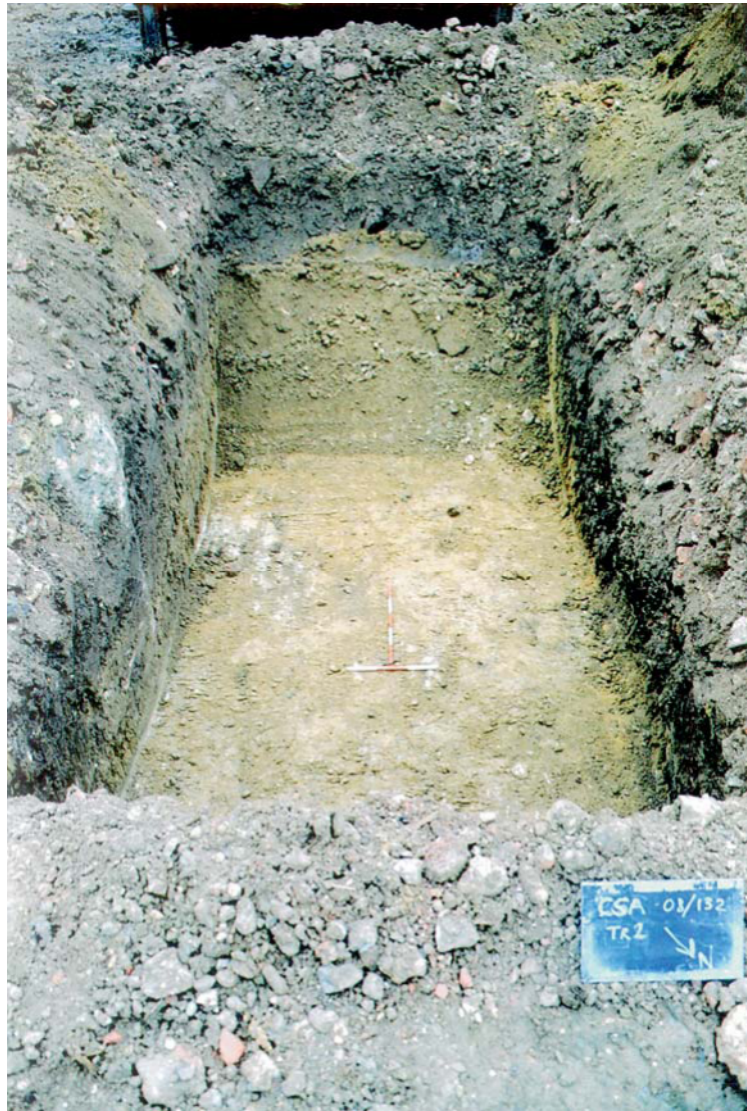


Plate 3. Trench 2, looking south west, scales: 0.5m and 0.3m.



Plate 4. Ser