

**THE HALL, ABBEY CLOSE,
BURWELL,
CAMBRIDGSHIRE.**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING

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Produced for:
Kathie Neal
The Hall,
Abbey Close,
Burwell,
Cambridgeshire.



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Preface

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this document to provide as complete a summary as possible within the terms of the method statement. All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

This report has been prepared by and Dan Hounsell (Project Supervisor) and edited by Hester Cooper-Reade, the Project Manager. The fieldwork was undertaken by Dan Hounsell (Project Supervisor). The project was under the overall management of the Project Manager, Hester Cooper-Reade. Joan Lightning (CAD Technician) produced the figures.

Albion Archaeology is grateful to Kathie Neal of The Hall, Burwell for commissioning the project. We would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Kasia Gdaniec (Cambridgeshire County Council, County Archaeology Office) who monitored the works.

*Albion Archaeology
St Mary's Church
St Mary's Street
Bedford, MK42 0AS
☎: 01234 294006
Fax: 01234 294008
e-mail: office@albion-arch.com*

30th November 2004

Structure of the Report

After the introductory Section 1, and a general overview of the historical background of the site (Section 2) there is a summary of the results of the programme of archaeological monitoring and recording in Section 3, followed by a brief conclusion (Section 4). Section 5 is a bibliography and Appendix 1 contains an archaeological context summary..

Key Terms

Throughout this report the following terms or abbreviations are used:

<i>Client</i>	Mrs Kathie Neal
<i>IFA</i>	Institute of Field Archaeologists
<i>CAO</i>	County Archaeology Office (Cambridgeshire County Council)
<i>SMR</i>	<i>Sites and Monuments Record</i>
<i>Procedures Manual</i>	<i>Procedures Manual Volume 1 Fieldwork, 2nd Edition 2001. Bedfordshire County Council</i>



Non-Technical Summary

In October 2004 Albion Archaeology was commissioned to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording at The Hall, Burwell, Cambridgeshire, required as part of an archaeological condition placed on the planning consent for the construction of a new stable block.

The Hall building itself (SMR 00112a) is medieval in origin, and The Hall, and its associated grounds lie on a platform enclosed within a medieval moat (SMR 01122). The Hall has undergone substantial alteration over time. The building once had a large western 'wing' and a number of outbuildings (including an original stable block) within the grounds. None of these buildings now exists and a modern extension has replaced the west wing. A 13th-century Friary, demolished during the Dissolution (1533), was located in the adjacent field, to the north of The Hall.

The ground works comprised the mechanical excavation (by wheeled excavator) of a foundation trench, approximately 0.75m and 0.80m deep, around the outline of the proposed new building. The new building formed a L-shape – the long axis was aligned E-W and measured 19.5m long x 4.5m wide, the short axis 8.5m long and 4.5m wide.

The archaeological monitoring uncovered part of the infilled moat (105) and evidence for the demolished and heavily robbed outbuildings once associated with The Hall (114 and 116). The earliest features noted was a ditch, (103) running to the south of, and parallel with the infilled moat.

The moat had been, at least partially, backfilled with 'demolition' material comprising large quantities of broken clunch (107). It is likely that this material derived from one or more of the outbuildings associated with the The Hall, although it is possible that the material could relate the demolition of the near by Friary following the Dissolution (1535/6). None of the stone observed during the watching brief was worked.

Two, heavily robbed, remnants of wall foundation (114 and 116) indicate the presence of earlier stone-built buildings on the site, part of a range of outbuildings associated with the nearby house.

Ditch [103/117], the earliest feature noted, contained a sherd of pottery dated to the 13th/14th century. Other than a small piece of animal bone from the same ditch and some fragments of unworked clunch, these were the only finds recovered. Despite a number of nearby find spots of Roman pottery and prehistoric flint, there was no evidence of remains dating to these periods. . However, it should be noted that the ground works, and thus the area of archaeological monitoring, were very limited in scale.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

East Cambridgeshire District Council granted planning permission (04/00974/FUL) for the construction of a stable block at The Hall, Abbey Close, Burwell. As there is a high potential for the presence of remains of archaeological significance on the site, an archaeological condition was placed on the consent, which required the implementation of a scheme of works in accordance with the brief produced by the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Office (CAO).

At the request of the client, only limited research into the archaeological background of the site was undertaken, although the known archaeology in the immediate area was discussed with the CAO.

1.2 Site Location and Description

The development site was located within the grounds of The Hall, Abbey Close, Burwell. The Hall and its grounds lie within medieval moated platform (SMR 01122). The site is centred around NGR TL 5850 6648. (fig. 1).



2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 General Historic Overview

The Hall building itself (SMR 00112a) is medieval in origin, but has been substantially altered over time. The original building had a large western ‘wing’ with a number of outbuildings (including an original stable block) within the grounds. The western wing was destroyed by fire and subsequently demolished in the 19th century, whilst the outbuildings gradually fell out of use and were robbed of stone and demolished throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

The Hall, and its grounds lie on a platform enclosed within a medieval moat (SMR 01122). The moat is partially extant along the western edge of the platform. To the west of the moated platform the fields surrounding the site contain silty deposits indicative of the incursion and stagnation of water and the development of the fen. Despite the increased depth of deposits in this area, finds of prehistoric flints, Roman pottery and medieval artefacts are known. A number of water courses braid across this western area, some draining off the higher village marls and supplying the various moats in the area. The field which bounds the northern edge of The Hall contains the remains of a 13th century friary, which was abandoned and demolished following the Dissolution Of The Monasteries (1535/36).



3. RESULTS OF OBSERVATION AND RECORDING

3.1 Introduction

The programme of archaeological observation was undertaken during October 2004. Turf and vegetation had been cleared from the development area prior to archaeological monitoring of the groundworks.

Detailed technical information on all the deposits and archaeological features discussed below can be found in Appendix 1.

3.2 Methodology

The excavation of the foundation trenches for the stable block was undertaken by a wheeled excavator, which was operated under close archaeological supervision. The programme of archaeological observation was carried out in accordance with the Brief, specifically Section 4, Field Methods, (Cambridgeshire County Council 2004) and subsequent Written Scheme of Investigation (Albion Archaeology, 2004). The methodology is summarised below:

- 1 All excavation of footings or service trenches and stripping of overburden was monitored in order to identify *in situ* archaeological deposits.
- 2 All disturbed soil was scanned for artefacts.
- 3 Archaeological deposits were investigated to determine stratigraphic relationships and to recover artefactual material.
- 4 Archaeological deposits were assessed for environmental evidence, taking into account quality of preservation, dating evidence, risk of contamination and the potential of the material. The guidelines set out in English Heritage's *Environmental Archaeology: a guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation* (2002) were adhered to.
- 5 All excavated features and deposits were fully recorded in accordance with Albion's *Procedures Manual* and the detailed requirements in section 3 of the *Brief*.
- 6 All archaeological observations were recorded at a suitable scale on base plans that were tied in to the OS national grid.
- 7 Significant features were recorded using a digital camera.

The project was carried out in accordance with the standards set out in the Institute of Field Archaeologists Codes of Conduct and Guidance documents (specifically *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief*, 1999) and Albion Archaeology's *Procedures Manual*.

3.3 Extent and Nature of Development

The ground works associated with the development consisted of the mechanical excavation of a narrow (0.75m wide) foundation trench to a depth of c.0.80m. The outline of the new building formed an L-shape, with the long axis aligned east-west. The long axis of the L-shaped block measured 19.5m x 4.5m wide, the short arm 8.5m long x 4.5m wide.



3.4 Deposit Model

The overburden was uniform across the area of the archaeological works. The topsoil (100) was a dark brown, clayey silt which was typically 0.20m thick. Beneath the topsoil was a relatively uniform subsoil layer (101), comprising mid-brownish grey silty clay. Subsoil (101) was c. 0.38m thick and overlay the natural geology, a creamy-white chalky clay (102).

3.5 Results of the Archaeological Monitoring

The monitoring revealed the presence of several archaeological features within the foundation trenches (fig 2.), including part of the infilled moat along the northern edge of the moated platform. Other than unworked clunch pieces, finds were only present in one of the features, ditch (103/117). The finds comprised animal bone fragments (3g) and a few small sherds of medieval pottery (2g). None of the deposits were suitable for environmental sampling due to the inorganic nature of the fills, lack of dating evidence, and the incomplete and fragmentary nature of the material uncovered.

3.5.1 The Stratigraphic Evidence

An east-west aligned ditch (117/103) running parallel to the southern site of the infilled moat was encountered within the foundation trenches for the eastern range of the stable block. Stratigraphically the earliest feature on the site, ditch (117/103) was observed below the subsoil layer (101), whilst the infilled moat was clearly seen to cut it. Although stratigraphically earlier than the moat, the 13th-/14th-century, medieval pottery from the fill of the ditch (104) suggests that it is probably broadly contemporary in date.

Part of the infilled moat (105) was observed running along the northern edge of the new stable block. Only the southern edge of the moat was seen, although it was at least 4.5m wide (the northern edge of the ditch extended beyond the northern boundary of the ground works). Although the foundation trench only cut into the top layers of the moat, what could be seen of its profile, indicated a substantial ditch with a steep sides and a number of different fills, indicative of several episodes of infilling. The lowest observable fill contained a greater percentage of mixed calcareous clay derived from the natural subsoils and it is likely that this represents natural slumping of material from the edges of the feature. Layer 108 comprised a dark, silty clay, probably formed as the result of gradual silting up of the moat or the collection of material in a hollow left by previous infilling. Above this, layer (107) appeared to represent a dump of material containing large quantities of broken clunch and sand within a clayey silt matrix. Another layer of dark silty clay (106), similar to layer (108) was seen above layer (107), presumably representing soil that had collected in a hollow formed by the top of the infilled moat.

Remnants of wall foundations were found to the south of the infilled moat. Although the wall remnants (114 and 116) gave the appearance, in section, of cutting through the fills of feature (119), it is more likely that (119) represented a trench that had been dug up to and around the buried walls of which (114) and (116) are remnants.



Walls (114) and (116) comprised large (typically 0.20m x 0.15m x 0.17m), irregular, blocks of roughly hewn and randomly coursed clunch set within a sandy, clayey, matrix. No mortar was noted as present although the sandy, clay matrix was relatively hard-packed. Foundation (114) was clipped by the south western corner of the excavations, whilst (116) was only visible in the east facing section of the baulk. Surviving to a greater depth (0.67m) than [115] (0.40m), wall foundation (114) was more substantial and clearly defined. Both features represent small remnants of a wall or walls that have been largely robbed out.

Feature (119) was a large, amorphous, roughly L-shaped feature, observed cutting through subsoil layer (101) at the southern end of the eastern range of the new building. The limited nature of the groundworks meant that the shape and dimensions of this feature were not clear, although it was possible to establish its depth as 0.50m. The limits of each of the wall remnants continue up to, but not beyond, the edges of feature (119). This suggests that (119) is a robber trench which had been excavated up to and around the edges of the buried walls. The remnants of wall which survived robbing were the ones encountered during the current works.

3.5.2 The Finds

Context	Artefact description	Frag no : Wgt (g)
104	Animal bone (misc long bone frag)	3:311
	Pottery (13 th – 14 th century misc sand tempered body sherds)	2:12
107	Unworked clunch pieces	2:520
114	Unworked clunch pieces	2:856



4. SYNTHESIS

4.1 Interpretation and Summary

Despite nearby finds spots noted on the SMR, there was no evidence for any Roman, or prehistoric activity on the site. However, it must be noted that the ground works, and thus the archaeologically assessed area, was very limited in scale.

The archaeological work undertaken did, however, uncover further evidence for the known medieval remains in the vicinity of the development. Although the observed area was limited in scale part of the infilled northern arm of the moat and earlier outbuildings associated with The Hall were found. A shallow ditch was encountered on an east-west alignment and apparently running parallel to the moat. Stratigraphically earlier than the moat, the ditch was probably broadly contemporary, although the small sherds of medieval pottery (dated to the 13th/14th century) found within its fill are not necessarily reliable as dating evidence.

Large quantities of ‘demolition’ material, mostly broken clunch, had been dumped into the moat. It is likely that this material derived from the demolition of one or more of the outbuildings associated with The Hall, although it is of course possible that some may have come from the nearby Friary. No dating evidence was found nor any worked stone that may have given clues about the buildings from which the stone came.

The foundation remnants [114] and [116] confirmed the presence and general location of earlier outbuildings associated with The Hall, although the plan form and alignment of these buildings was unclear. The relationship between the foundation remnants and probable robber trench (119) was difficult to establish within the confines of the excavated footings, although it is likely that this represents an area dug up to and around the walls during the process of ‘robbing’ stone for re-use elsewhere.



5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Albion Archaeology, 2000, *Procedures Manual, Volume 1: Fieldwork*. 2nd Edition.

Albion Archaeology, 2004, *The Hall, Abbey Close, Burwell, Cambridgeshire; Written Scheme of Investigation for Basic Archaeological Investigation*. (Albion report 2004/104)

Cambridgeshire County Council, 2004, *Brief for Basic Archaeological Investigation at The Hall, Abbey Close, Burwell, Cambridgeshire*.

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1999, *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*,



6. APPENDICES

6.1 Context Summary



Trench: 1

Max Dimensions: Length: m. Width: m. Depth to Archaeology Min: m. Max: m.

Co-ordinates:

Reason:

Context:	Type:	Description:	Excavated:	Finds Present:
100	Topsoil	Friable dark brown clay silt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
101	Subsoil	Compact mid brown grey silty clay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
102	Natural	Compact light yellow white chalky clay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
103	Ditch	Linear E-W sides: concave base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.54m, max depth 0.34m, min length 0.75m Likely represents the eastern end of a long linear feature, also recognised by [117] (western end).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
104	Fill	Compact mid grey brown clay silt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
105	Ditch	Linear E-W sides: convex dimensions: min breadth 4.5m, min depth 0.85m, min length 20.m Large linear feature, possibly southern edge of known moat feature. The depth and position of the footings meant that the feature was not bottomed, nor was the the northern edge of the feature revealed.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
106	Fill	Friable dark brown clay silt frequent small stones Upper fill of Moat feature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
107	Fill	Compact mid yellow white silty limestn	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
108	Fill	Firm dark brown silty clay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
109	Fill	Firm mid grey silty clay frequent small-medium chalk	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
110	Fill	Hard mid brown yellow silty limestn	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
113	Foundation		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
114	Foundation	Hard mid brown yellow silty limestn This context refers to foundation remains, which consists of large, irregular, limestone blocks (many badly broken) laid in irregular courses and set in a sandy, silty matrix.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
115	Foundation		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
116	Foundation	Hard light brown yellow silty limestn This context refers to foundation remains, which consists of large, irregular, limestone blocks (many badly broken) laid in irregular courses and set in a sandy, silty matrix.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
117	Ditch	Linear E-W sides: concave base: concave dimensions: max breadth 0.88m, max depth 0.56m, min length 0.75m Likely represents the western end of a long linear feature, also recognised by [103] (eastern end).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
118	Fill	Compact mid grey brown clay silt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
119	Pit	sides: convex base: flat dimensions: min breadth 2.7m, max depth 0.54m, min length 6.m Large "dump" pit, irregular in plan and cut by later foundations [113/115].	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
111	Fill	Compact mid brown grey silty clay frequent small stones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
112	Fill	Compact dark brown silty clay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PLATES

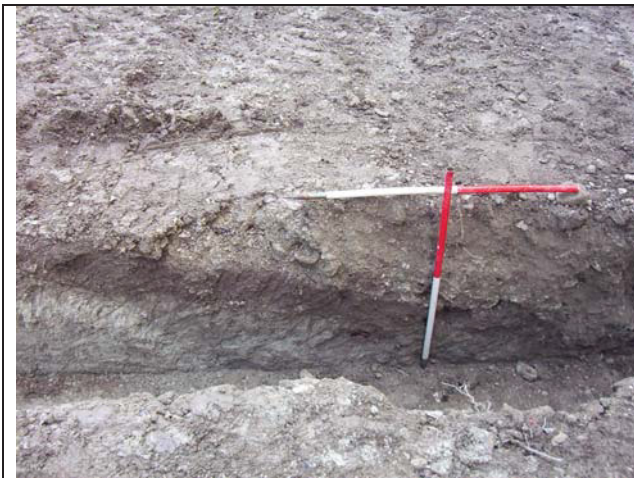


Plate 1: Moat, feature [105]

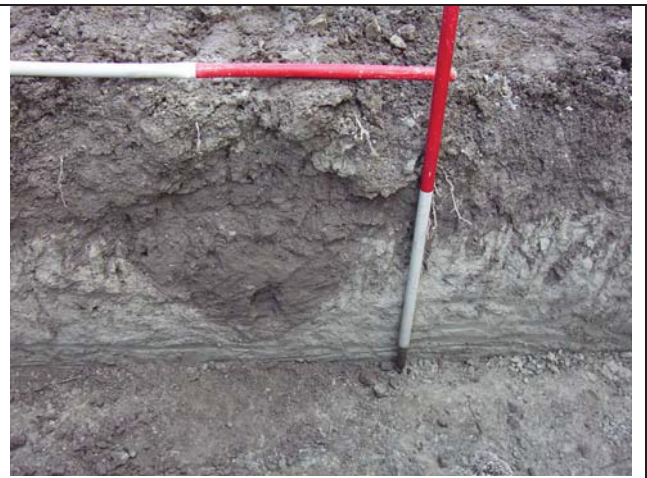


Plate 2: Small ditch, feature (103)



Plate 3: Remnant early wall foundation, feature [113]



Plate 4: General view of footings – looking east

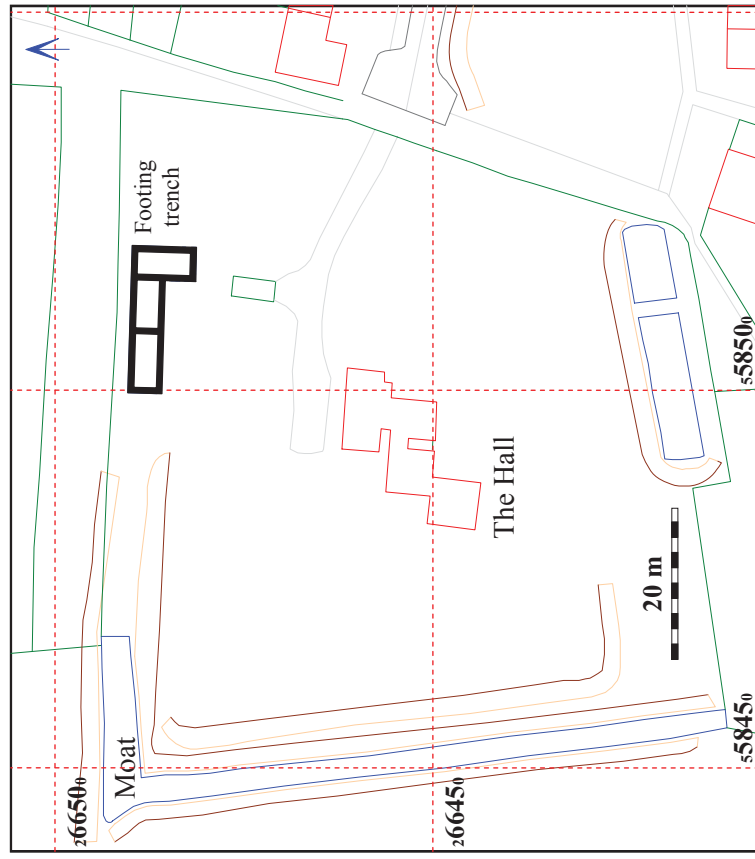
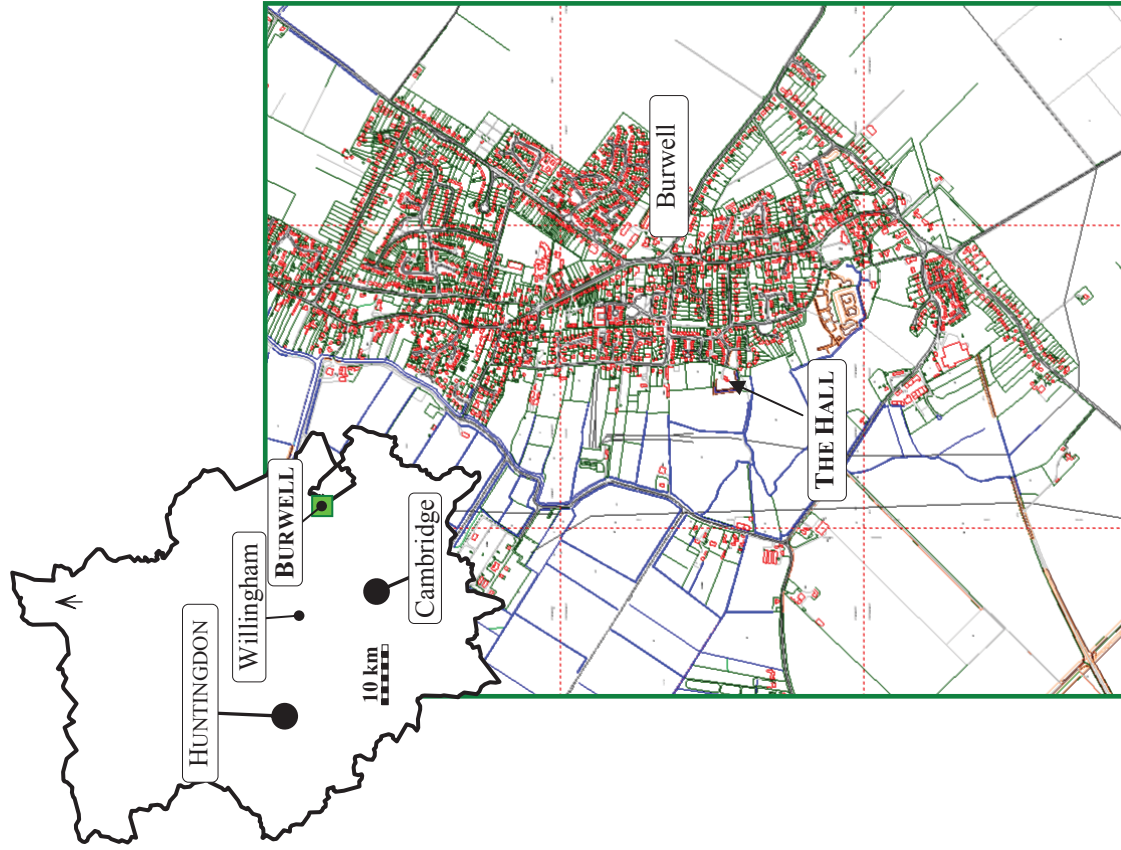


Figure 1: Site location

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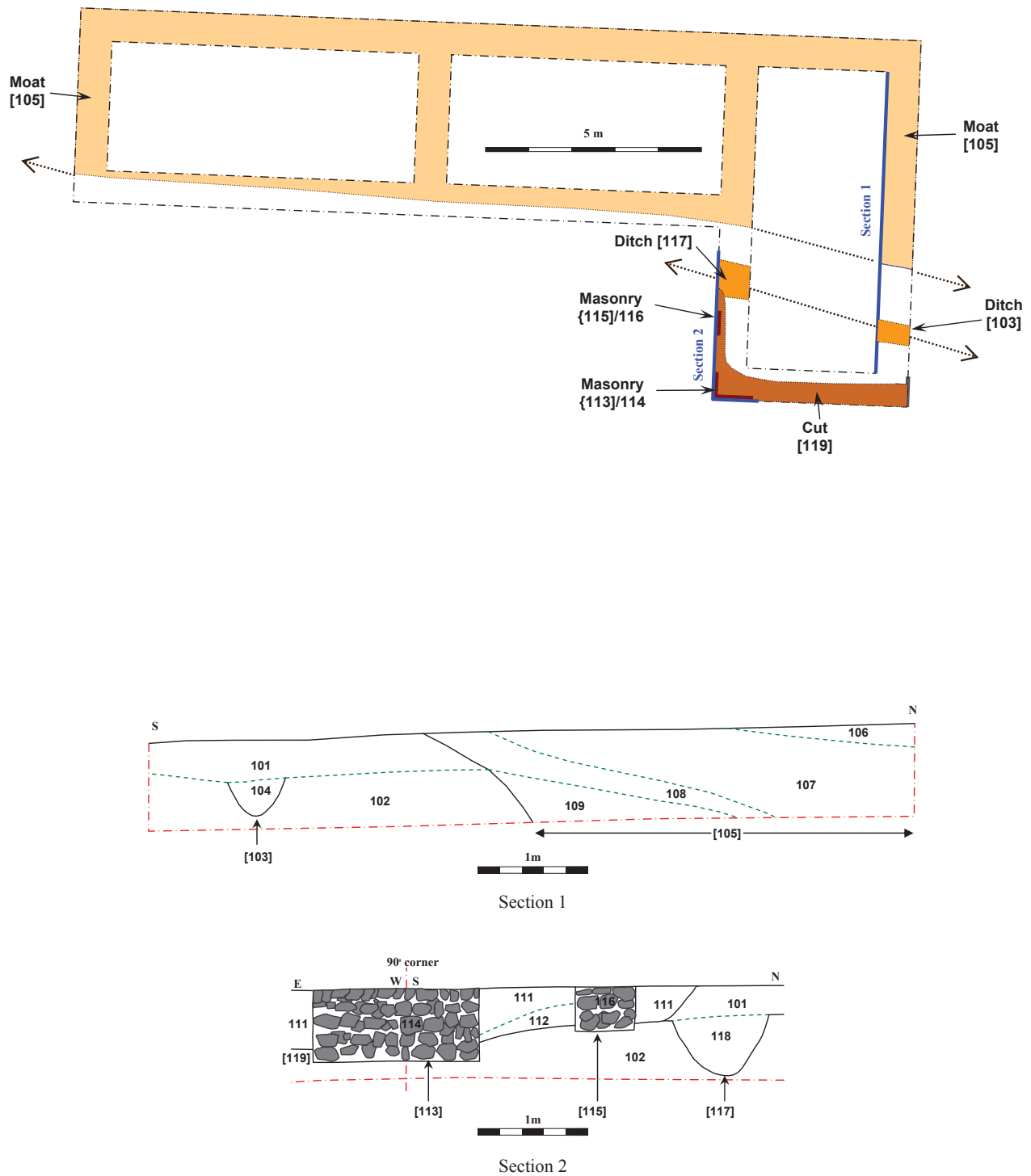


Figure 2: All features