



Granham's Road, Great Shelford, Cambridgeshire:
archaeological evaluation

Graham Arnold
2007



archenfield archaeology ltd

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Granham's Road, Great Shelford, Cambridgeshire: archaeological evaluation 2007

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Cover Photograph: Livanos House, Granham's Road, Great Shelford



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Summary

In July 2007, an archaeological evaluation was carried out at Granham's Road, Great Shelford, Cambridgeshire, a site within a rich archaeological landscape of Romano-British, Iron Age, Bronze Age and Neolithic activity.

A program of archaeological work was recommended by Cambridge Archaeology and Planning & Countryside Service (CAPACS) (Thomas 2007). The recommendations included the monitoring of all preliminary groundworks (Sherlock, 2007a, Meadows & Arnold 2007). The current program of work is the evaluation of 514 square metres of the development site.

The stratigraphy exposed across the site showed that natural deposits were fairly shallow and the survival of archaeological features cutting them was potentially high. However, modern truncation had removed any potential archaeological deposits.

Archaeological evidence was sparse in the areas exposed, with the only identified features being tree throws, modern field drains, a possible enclosure ditch, and three post holes. However, none of the features contained any dating evidence to provide solid proof of their period or usage.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Location and description

NGR: 546220 252880

Planning authority: South Cambridgeshire District Council

Planning reference: S/1581/05/f

The site is located at Abberley House, off Granham's Close, Granham's Road, Great Shelford and lies approximately 500 metres north of Great Shelford village centre. The site forms a triangular shape between two railway lines and Granham's Road.



Figure 1: Site location plan (OS Super-plan data reproduced under licence ref 618/936200)

2.0 Planning background

McGarrell Reilly Homes Ltd has been granted permission for a residential development at the site, with a standard archaeological site investigation condition (planning ref: *S/1581/05/f*).

The proposed development will affect, or potentially affect, a site on which archaeological remains of importance may exist. The available archaeological information (Dickens & Appleby, 2004) suggested that a programme of archaeological works was necessary to fulfil the aims of the relevant sections of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and the Great Shelford Village Design Statement.

3.0 Geological, historical and archaeological background

A desk-based assessment which gives details of the archaeological and historical background of the site at Granham's Road, Great Shelford has been prepared by Cambridge Archaeological Unit and will not be reproduced here. In summary this document demonstrates that: *'the site lies in an area of rich archaeological and historical significance with a high probability of archaeological features remaining in situ on site'*. (Dickens & Appleby, 2004).

3.1 Geology and land use

The site lies over beds of Lowest and Intermediate Terrace Gravels and it lies close to a geological boundary, with Highest Terrace Gravels to the east and Lower Chalk to the north. The solid geology underlying the entire site is Lower Chalk (British Geological Survey, 1979).

The site, which comprises approximately 1.89 ha, is currently occupied by office buildings (now disused) with associated areas of tarmac access roads, car parking areas and open grass covered areas. The northern part of the site is covered by low scrub.

4.0 Fieldwork

4.1 Project aims

The principal aim of the evaluation was to determine the presence or absence of archaeology on the site and report findings to the South Cambridgeshire Planning Authority, to make an assessment of their importance within a local, national or international context.

The site specific aims of the fieldwork were to determine:

- the presence and nature of any Neolithic or Bronze Age activity
- the presence and nature of any Roman activity, with settlements in close proximity to the site
- the presence of Victorian and modern occupation of the site, associated with the railway surrounding the plot
- the degree to which the dumping of modern debris on the site has impacted on the archaeological resource.

4.2 Project objectives

The objectives were:

- to make a record of any archaeological features or deposits exposed
- to record the presence of archaeological material within the trenches and the spoil removed, to retrieve any potential dating evidence
- to make a record of all finds and any environmental material recovered
- to ensure that if any environmental evidence is preserved, that a sufficient sample be retained to allow for further analysis
- to ensure that the location and dimensions of the area excavated is accurately recorded
- to record negative evidence and to consider its implications.

4.3 Fieldwork methodology

The 14 evaluation trenches were opened using a 2 ton rubber-tracked excavator with a smooth ditching bucket. The trenches were then cleaned by hand and any features exposed were then half sectioned, planned and recorded using the standard Archenfield Archaeology Ltd field recording procedures, which follow current IFA guidelines.

5.0 Results

5.1 Trench location

A total of 14 evaluation trenches covering a total of 514 square metres were opened across the site. The trenches were positioned to coincide with the features of potential archaeological interest identified by geophysical survey (Roseveare, 2007) and to test for the survival of buried archaeological horizons or features across the areas to be directly affected by the development.

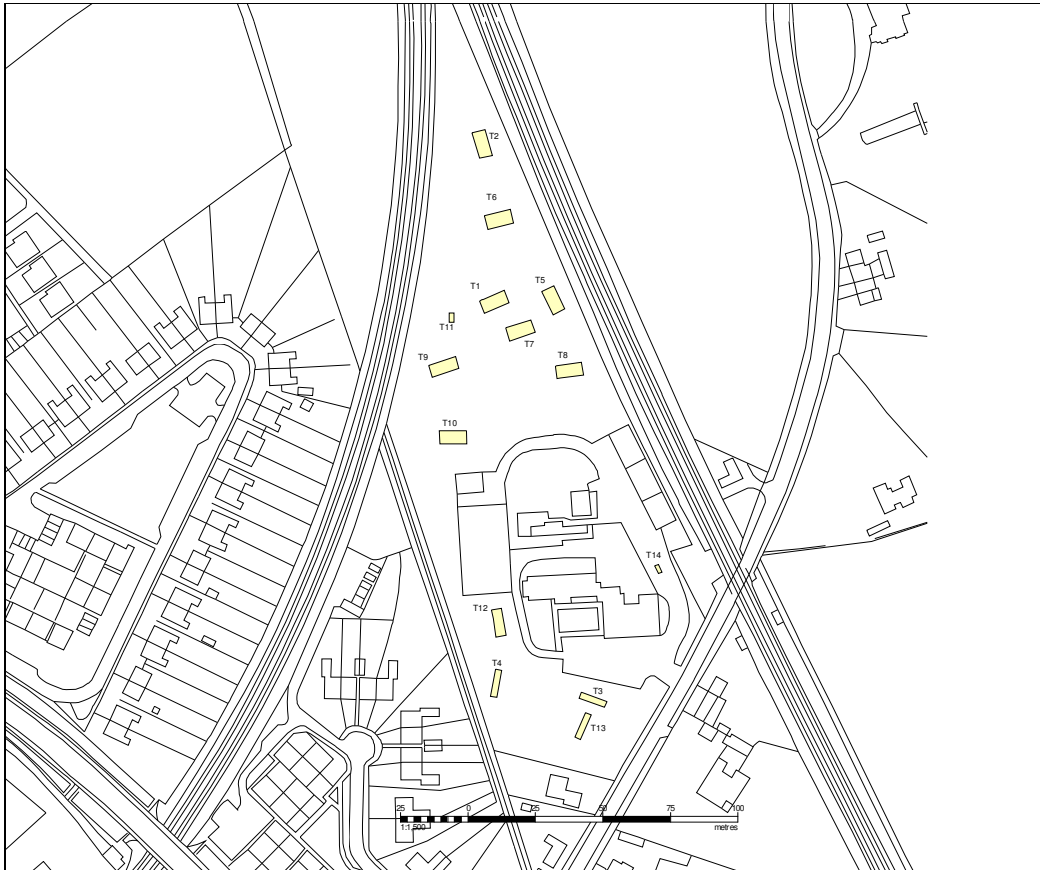


Figure 2: Trench location; scale 1:1500 (OS Super-plan data reproduced under license ref 618/936200)

5.2 Stratigraphy

Trench 1

Trench 1 measured 10 metres x 5 metres and was orientated east – west. Three possible post-holes were discovered cut into the natural compact orange sand with frequent inclusions of flint pebbles (6). A possible oval feature [41] to the west of the post-holes was a variation of the natural (42). All post-holes (33, 35, 37) were half-sectioned but no dating evidence was recovered from any of the fills (34, 36, 38). The trench was excavated to a depth of 0.6 metres (15.40 OD).

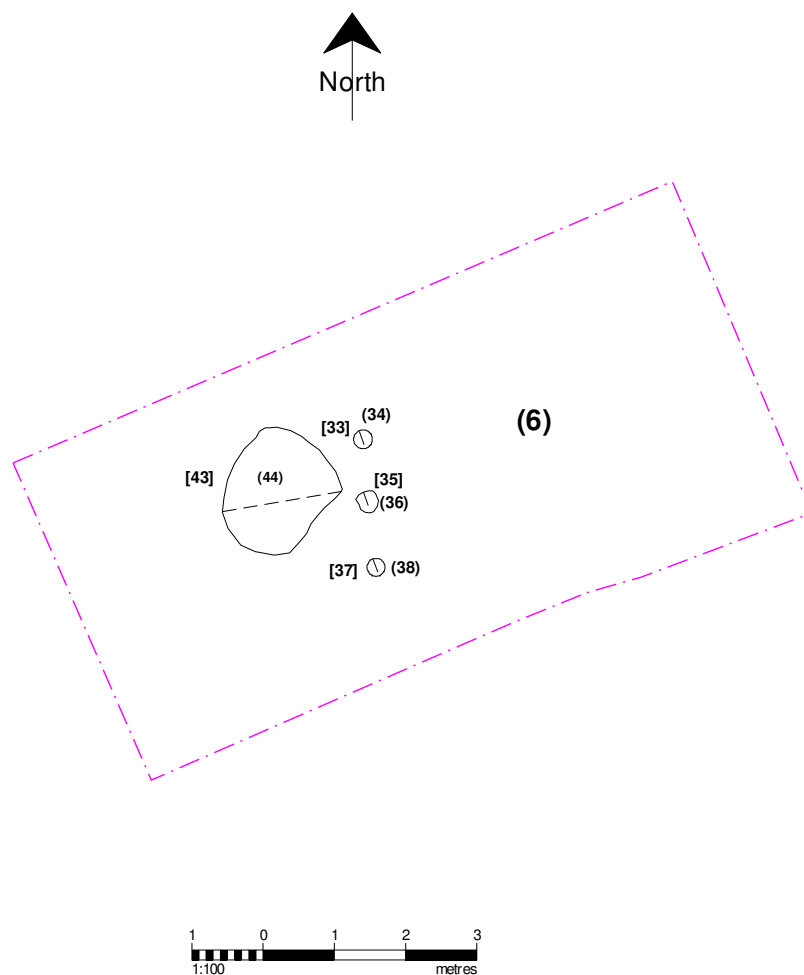


Figure 3: Plan of trench 1

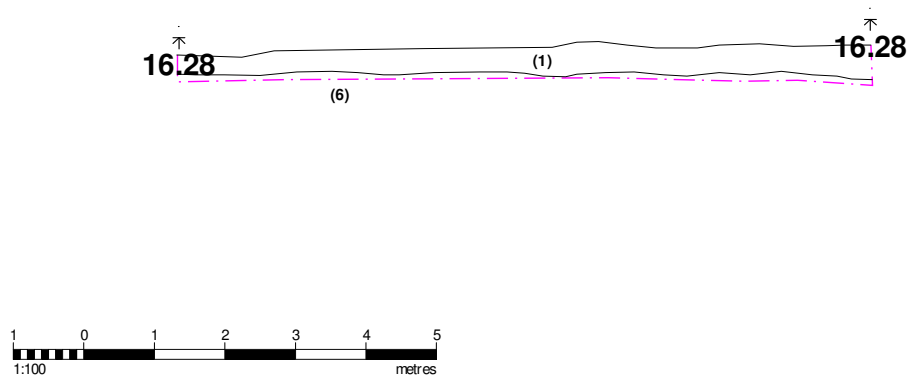


Figure 4: South-facing section of trench 1



Figure 5: (Clockwise from top-right) trench 1 pre-excavation looking west; trench 1 pre-excavation looking east; post-holes after half-sectioning; post-holes after cleaning

Trench 2

Trench 2 measured 10 metres x 5 metres and was the furthest north of all 14 trenches excavated. The stratigraphy consisted of the thin topsoil (1). This directly overlay natural horizons (2 and 6). Cut into the natural was a modern field drain [51], 1 metre wide, orientated south-west / north-east across the trench. This was filled by (52). An oval pit or ditch terminus [49] was filled with compact grey clay with flint inclusions (50). This measured 1 metre x 1.3 metres and was 0.4 metres deep, with steep sloping sides. No finds or other dating evidence was recovered. The level of the natural (6) which features were cut into was at 0.6 metres (15.26 OD).

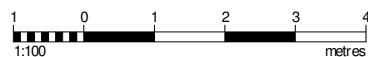
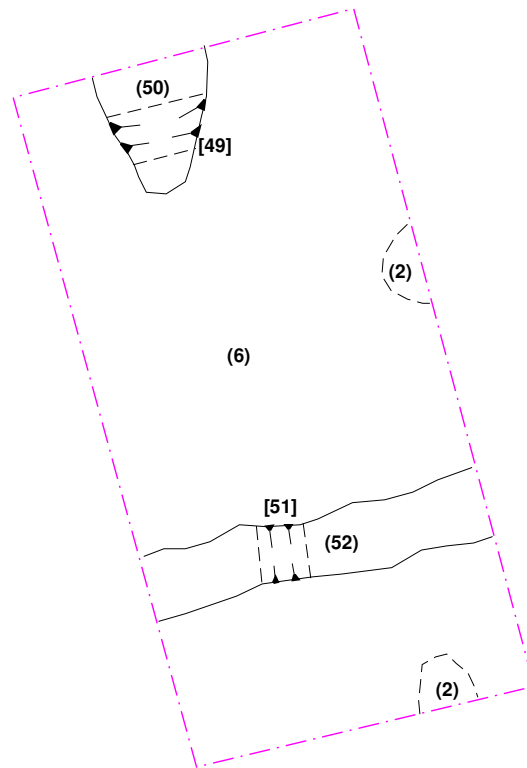


Figure 6: Plan of trench 2

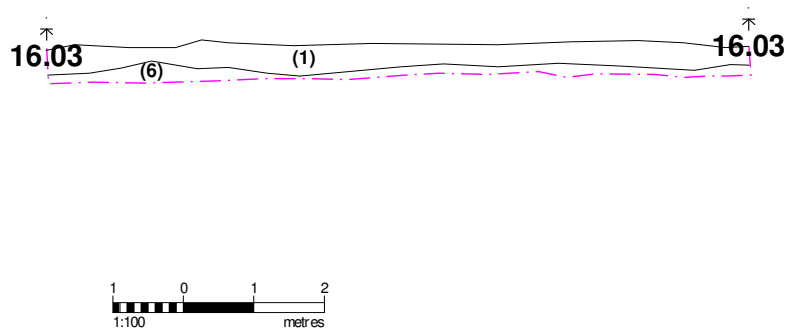


Figure 7: West-facing section of trench 2

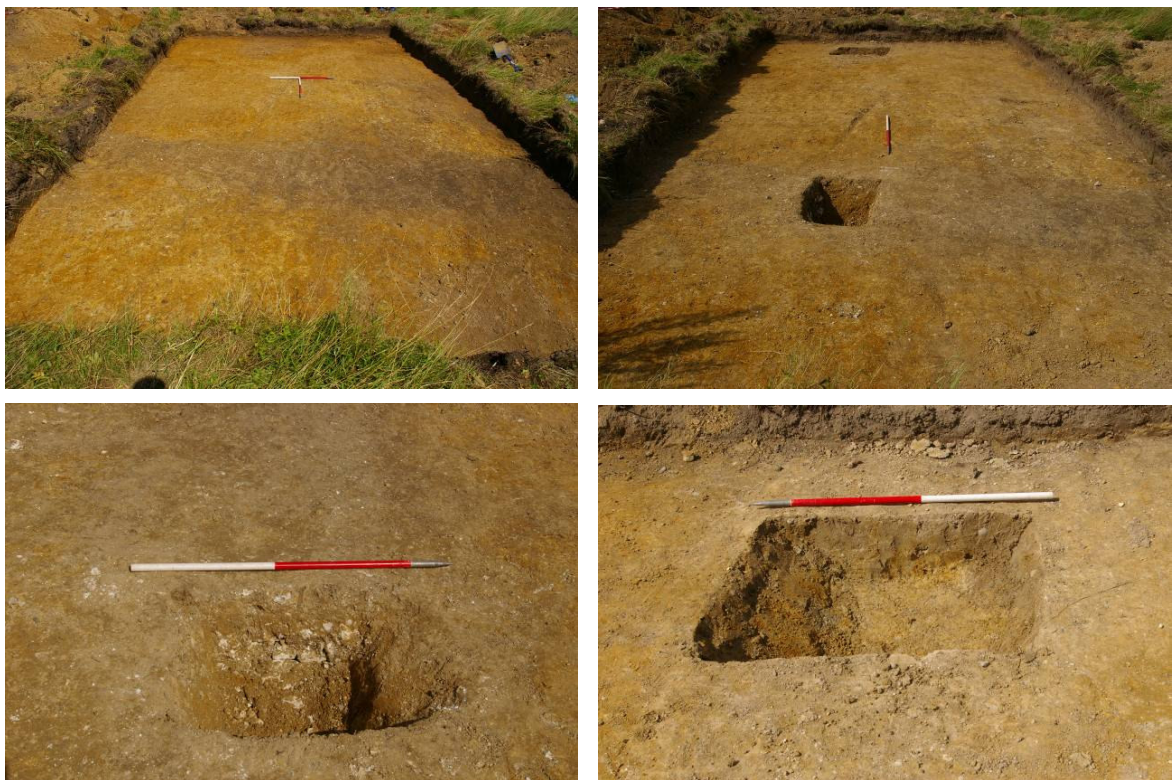


Figure 8: (Top-right clockwise) Trench 2 after cleaning, looking north; post-excavation; south-facing section of sondage through [51]; west-facing section of sondage through [49]

Trench 3

Trench 3 measured 10 metres x 1.80 metres, and was oriented east- west, within an area of open grassland that had been a garden area of the former Livanos House. No features or deposits were uncovered during the excavation of this trench. The topsoil (1) was 0.30 metres thick and contained sherds of post-medieval porcelain. The topsoil directly overlay undisturbed natural horizons (6) which continued below the limit of excavation.



Figure 9: Trench 3 looking east

Trench 4

The depositional sequence was the same as trench 3, with 0.30 metres of topsoil (1) overlying undisturbed natural ground (6). Two irregular amorphously shaped cuts were uncovered at either end of the trench (14 & 16). Both of these features continued beyond the edge of the trench and were both filled with a compact mid-grey clay with sand. No finds were retrieved from the features. The base of the trench was at 1.1 metres (15.29 OD).



Figure 10: Feature 14 (left) and 16 (right)

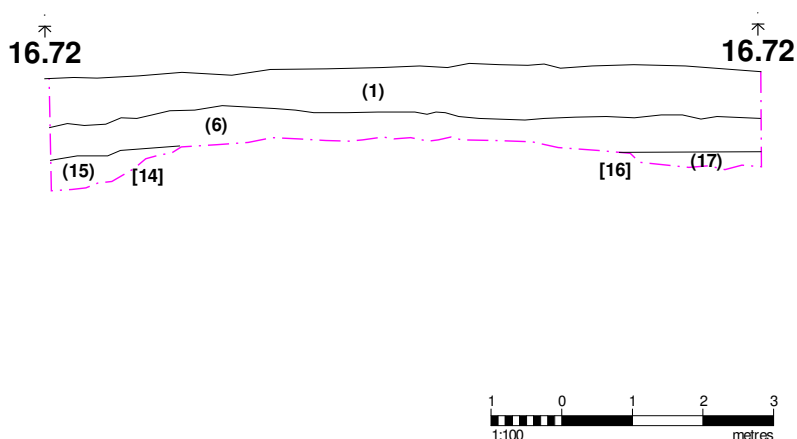


Figure 11: East-facing section of trench 4

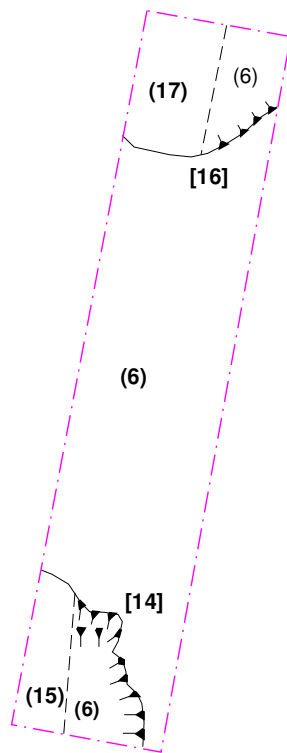


Figure 12: Plan of trench 4

Trench 5

Trench 5 was orientated north – south and uncovered the continuation of ditch [29] running east – west contained the same fill. Another sondage which cut through the ditch revealed that the sides became steeper and deeper at its eastern extent and then began to widen. The only finds recovered were snail shells, indicating that the ditch silted over a long period of time. The absence of dating evidence may occur due to the land being largely truncated and reduced when construction of the two railway lines surrounding the site began in the Victorian period. A ditch terminus (41/42) extending from the west-facing section of the trench may also be contemporary with [29] and (30). The base of the trench which the features were cut into was 0.6 metres deep (15.47 OD).



Figure 13: (top-right, clockwise) Trench 5, looking south; east-facing section of sondage through [29], a silted watercourse; ditch terminus [41] (42) half-sectioned, looking east and north-east

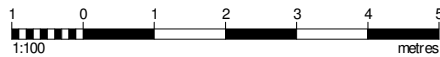
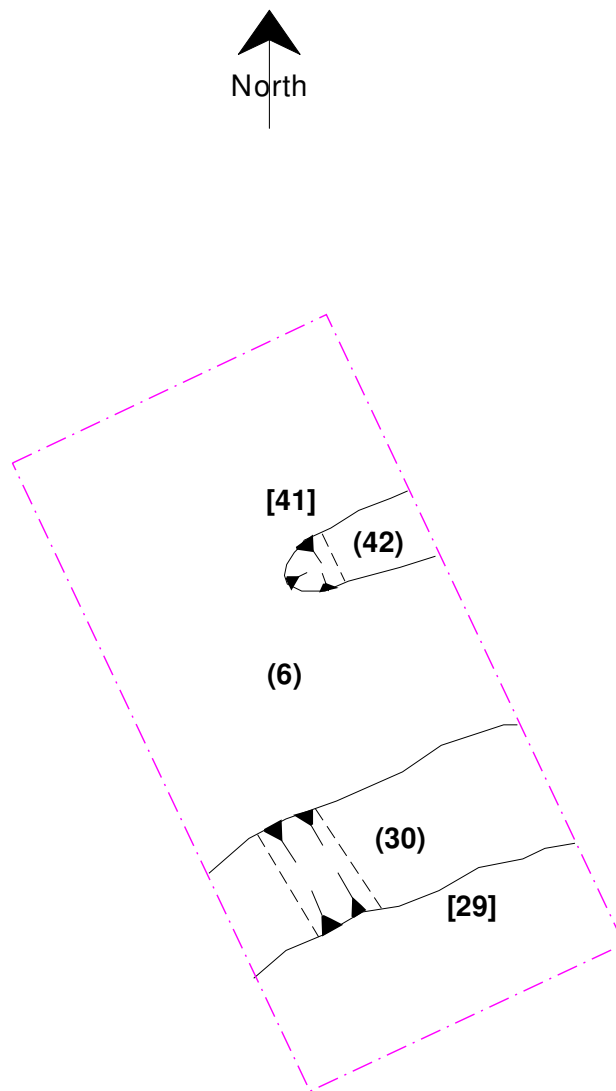


Figure 14: Plan of trench 5

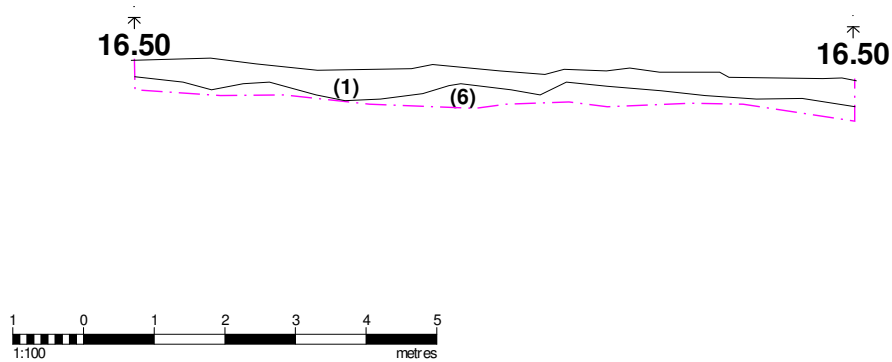


Figure 15: West-facing section of trench 5

Trench 6

Trench 6 measured 5 metres x 10 metres and was oriented east – west. No features or deposits were uncovered during the excavation of this trench. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil 0.30 metres thick (1), overlying undisturbed natural ground (6). The trench was only 0.35 metres deep (15.60 OD).



Figure 16: Trench 6, looking east

Trench 7

Trench 7 was oriented east-west and also measured 5 metres x 10 metres. The topsoil (1) was 0.30m deep and was directly above the natural (6). Cut into the natural (6), a linear feature was exposed, 1 metre wide, oriented south-west/north-east, across the whole of the trench. Three 1 metre wide sondages were excavated through the linear feature. The feature showed no evidence of being re-cut. The feature [29] was 0.45m in depth, steep sided with a concave base. The only finds included a number of snail shells, demonstrating that the ditch had filled up over a long period of time. The snail shells have been retained by Archenfield Archaeology Ltd for future analysis and a 30 litre sample of the fill (30) was taken. The base of the trench, which the features were cut into was at a depth of 0.35 metres (15.58 OD).



Figure 17: (top right clockwise) Trench 7 after cleaning looking east; feature 29/30 looking west; east-facing section of eastern sondage

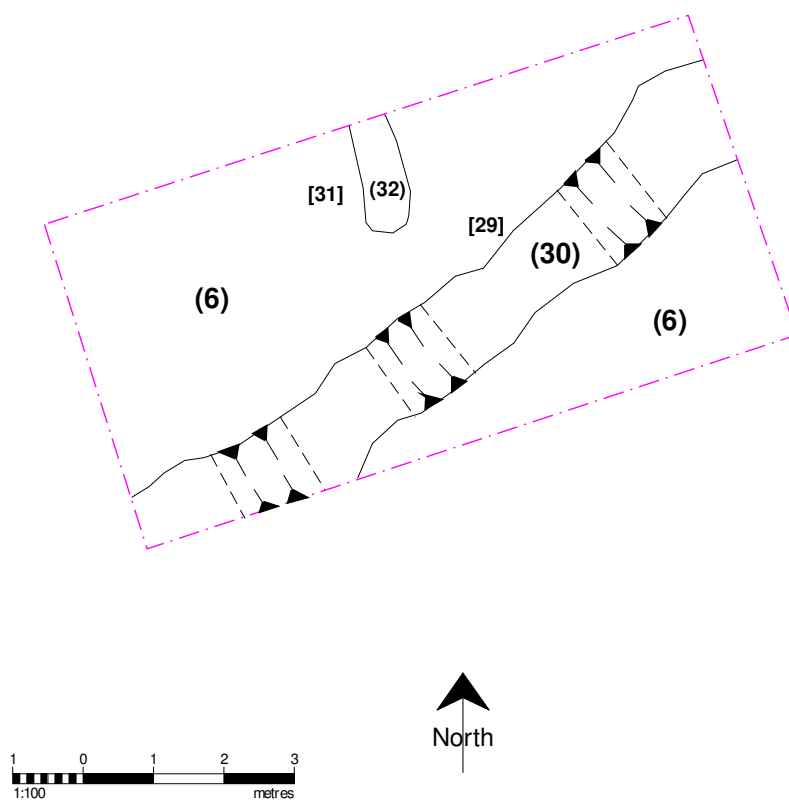


Figure 18: Plan of trench 7

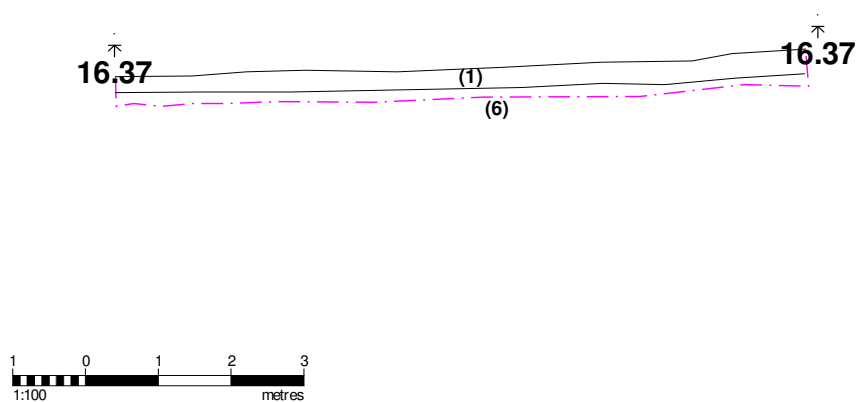


Figure 19: South-facing section of trench 7

Trench 8

Trench 8 was situated in the eastern edge of the site, measuring 5 metres x 10 metres and was orientated east-west. The topsoil (1) overlay the natural horizon (6). A large circular pit [39] was discovered at its centre, 1.4 metres in diameter. When half-sectioned, it was filled by a mixed very dark brown topsoil and industrial debris, including chicken wire, modern bricks and a large iron drum (40) measuring 1 metre in diameter. This feature was not fully excavated and all finds were discarded. The natural was at a depth of 0.5 metres (15.50 OD).



Figure 20: (left to right) Trench 8 looking east; half-section of [39] and fill (40) including all bricks and modern debris

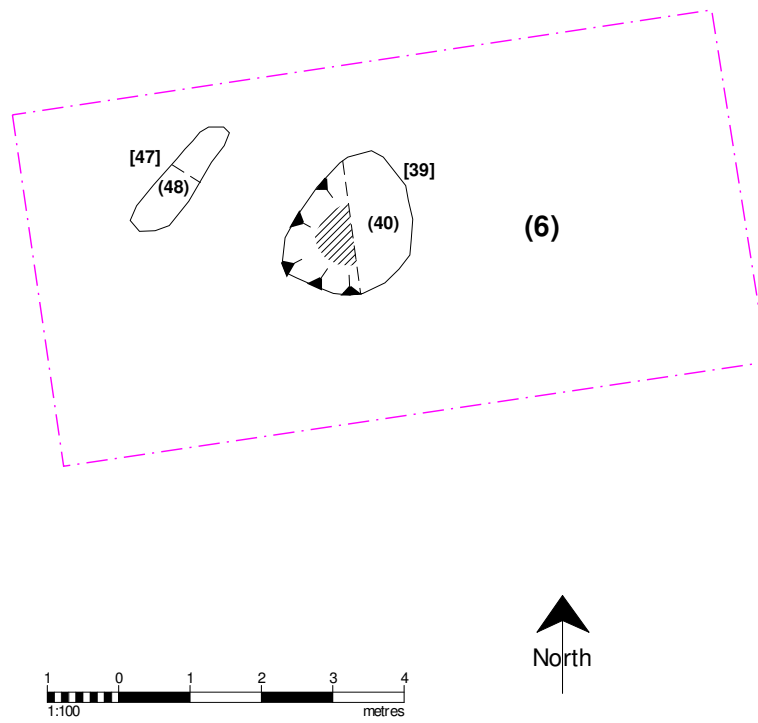


Figure 21: Plan of trench 8

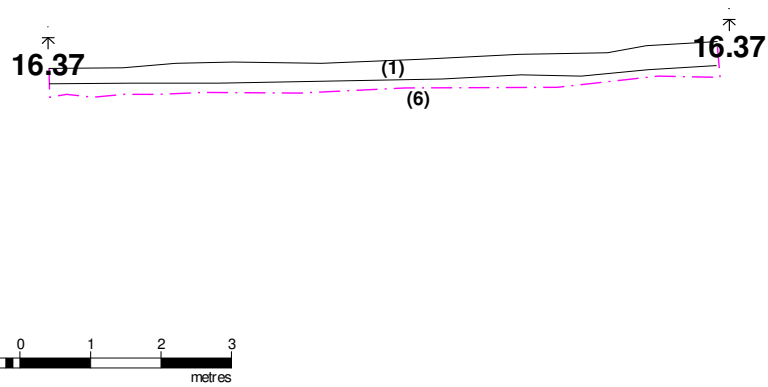


Figure 22: South-facing section of trench 8

Trench 9

Trench 9 measured 10 metres x 5 metres and was situated on the western extent of the site, orientated south-west/ north-east. The stratigraphy consisted of the natural topsoil (1) directly above the natural (6). Below this was the flint natural gravel (7). A dump of concrete in an irregular shape and form (27) was uncovered. This was assumed to be extra material remaining from the construction of a concrete structure discovered within trench 10 and deposited on rough ground. The concrete measured 3.20 metres x 2.80 metres. In the south-eastern corner a sondage 1.50 metres x 2 metres was excavated through the sandy gravel natural (6) to the natural flint gravel (7). The base of the trench was at a depth of 0.49 metres (15.89 OD). The deepest part of the sondage was measured at a depth of 1.1 metres (15.30 OD).



Figure 23: (left - right) Concrete deposit (27), looking west; sondage in south-eastern corner to natural flint gravel (7), looking north-east and south.

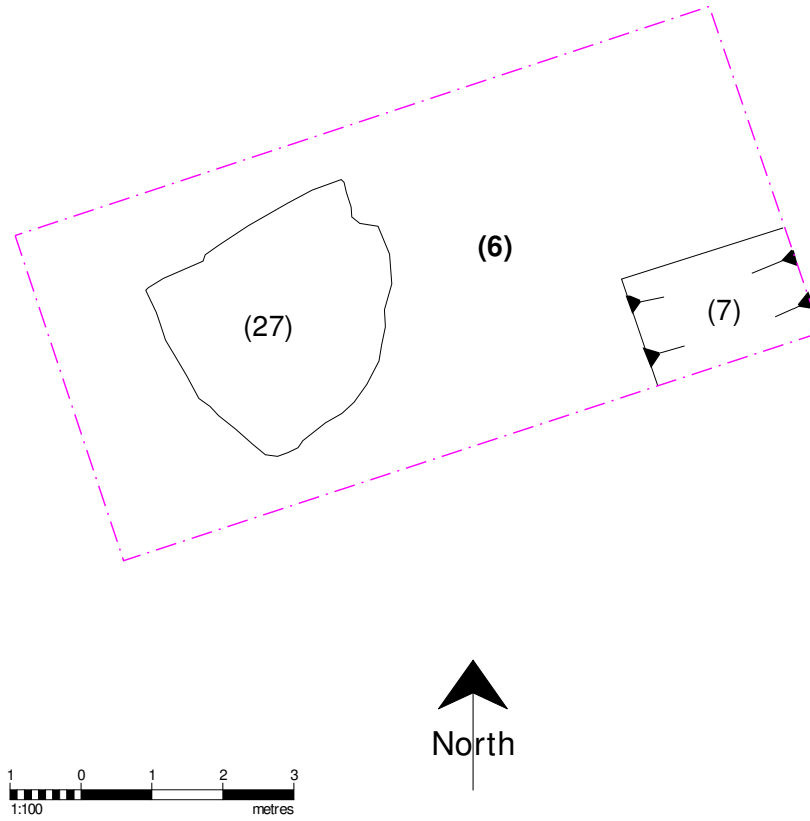


Figure 24: Plan of trench 9

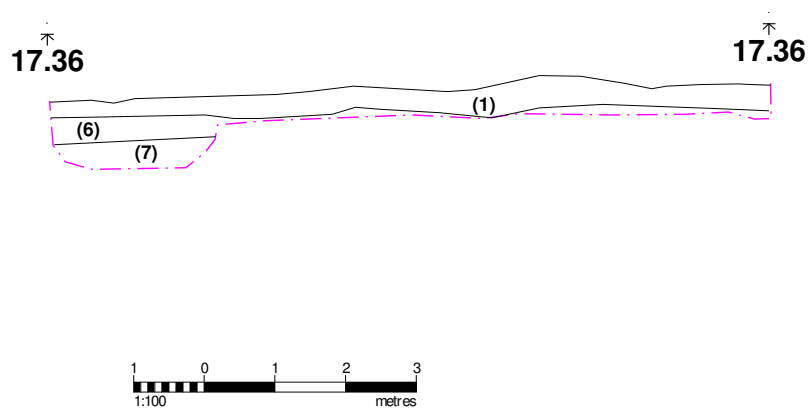


Figure 25: North-facing section of trench 9

Trench 10

Trench 10 was situated to the northwest of the present buildings, close to the old tennis court and the road surface. It measured 10 metres x 5 metres. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil (1), 0.30 metres in depth, above a spread of demolition material (45) which contained concrete debris and broken tarmac. This layer extended for 7 metres from east to west in the trench. Under the modern demolition layer (45) was a collection of concrete wall footings (46), directly inserted into the natural flint gravel (7) with lenses of the natural sandy gravel (6). These concrete wall foundation footings relate to building activity on the site in the late twentieth century. Only modern material was recovered from the trench and was later discarded. The deepest area of trench 10 was at a depth of 0.7 metres (15.49 OD).



Figure 26: Exploratory sondage through demolition rubble (45) (left); concrete wall foundations in trench 10, looking west (right)

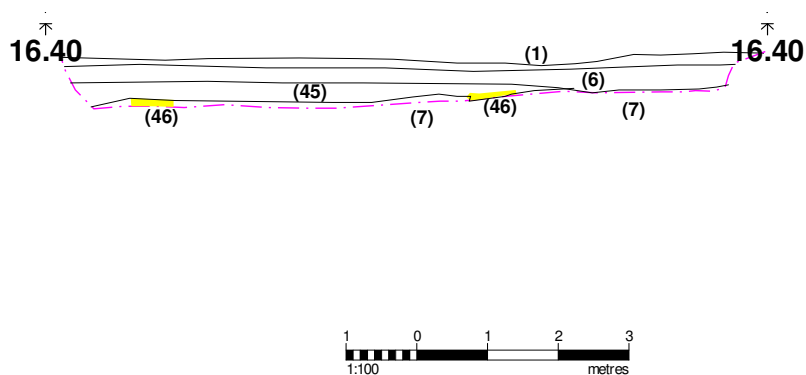


Figure 27: North-facing section of Trench 10

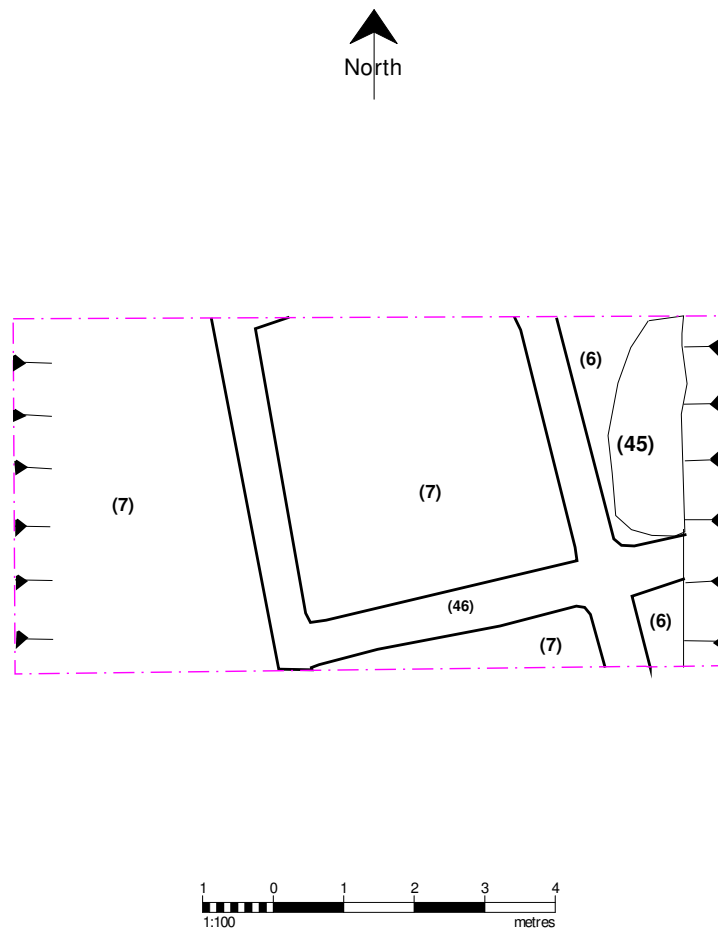


Figure 28: Plan of trench 10

Trench 11

Trench 11 was a trial hole in a depression on site. It was determined that the topsoil was very thin and had been removed, although the reason was not evident. The stratigraphy was natural (6), with no evidence of archaeological impact.



Figure 29: Excavation of trench 11 topsoil

Trench 12

Trench 12 measured 5 metres x 10 metres. This area appears to have been a sunken garden area and the topsoil horizon had been previously truncated. The depositional sequence was a very thin and disturbed topsoil horizon (1) overlying natural (6). The area was heavily disturbed by root action. The trench was excavated down to the natural at a depth of 0.4 metres (15.46 metres OD).



Figure 30: (top right clockwise) Trench 12 looking north; feature [23] looking south; feature [25] looking south; feature [23] looking south-west

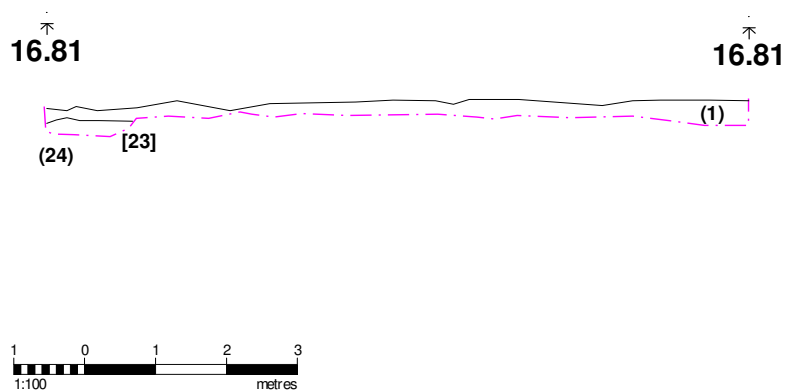


Figure 31: West-facing section of trench 12

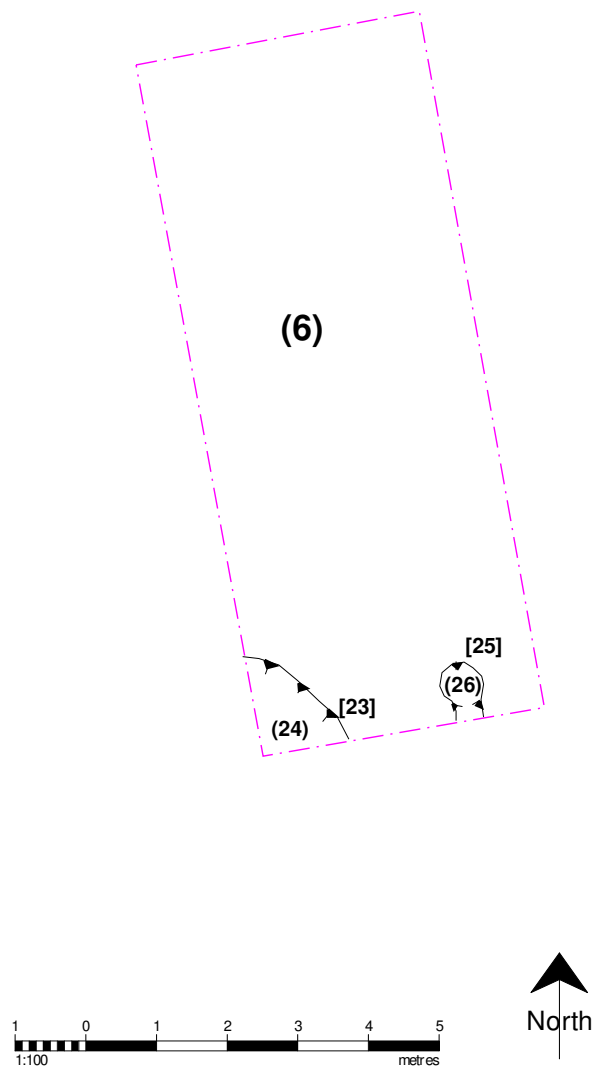


Figure 32: Trench 12 plan

Trench 13

Trench 13 was an additional trench to that previously planned in the project design and was excavated at right angles to Trench 3 and measured 10 metres x 1.8 metres. A cut for a modern pipe trench and a shallow pit containing only modern material was uncovered. The depositional sequence was the same as trenches 3 and 4. It was excavated to a depth of 0.35 metres (15.88 OD).



Figure 33: Trench 13 looking east

Trench 14

Trench 14 was excavated within an area of disturbed ground where a thick deposit of rubble had been recently spread across the area following demolition of the buildings. It was agreed with Andy Thomas, the County Council Archaeologist, during a site monitoring visit that an additional small trial trench would be opened by machine to examine the degree of truncation of the deposits in this area. The sequence of deposits recorded showed that the topsoil horizon has been lost across this area and that modern crushed brick and building debris now occupies the top 0.40 – 0.50 metres of the sequence. This overlaid natural deposits (6). A concrete pad relating to the footings of a previous building was also recorded.



Figure 34: (top right clockwise) Trench 14 looking north; trench 14 looking south; demolition area excavated, looking west; trench 14 looking west

5.2 The Finds

The only finds recovered on site were 19th and 20th century ceramics, which were recovered from the topsoil of trenches and were unstratified. Other modern bricks, ironwork and industrial waste were recovered and discarded.

Ecofacts

A 30 litre sample of the fill (30) from the linear feature present in trench 7 and trench 5 was retained, together with a number of snail shells recovered during excavation.

6.0 Conclusions

Despite the high potential for the survival of archaeological remains on the site, only ephemeral features relating to natural activity such as tree throws, root action and bioturbation and one possible truncated enclosure ditch were revealed. Two field drains also ran across the site. No archaeologically significant finds were recovered from the site.

On the site, only one significant archaeological feature was observed. This was a possible enclosure ditch in trench 7 and trench 5 running east –west across the site. However, truncation of the site means that only the base of the cut survives. The sondages demonstrated that there had been no recuts of the ditch and snails discovered within the fill indicate that this silted up over a long period of time. It is possibly a prehistoric enclosure ditch, although no dating evidence was recovered and no related features were found within the area, apart from three inconclusive post-holes. The only other features to survive intact related to modern activity and rubbish pits from industrial and agricultural activities, including the remains of concrete building foundations and rubbish pits backfilled with topsoil an oil drum and ironwork.

There was no evidence of settlement activity prior to the modern construction of the railway and 19th/20th century buildings on the site. Despite sampling and extensive excavation of the site no struck flints or other archaeological finds were recovered. The site seems to have been highly truncated in the Victorian era when the land was bought to construct the railway lines. This has damaged the stratigraphic matrix of the site and removed any potential archaeological horizons. The development should not therefore damage any archaeological deposits

7.0 Archive deposition

The primary project archive, consisting of the excavated material and any original paper records, will be prepared and stored in accordance with the guidelines laid down in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' guidelines for the preparation and storage of archives. The primary archive will be stored with Cambridge city museum.

A copy of the digital archive, stored on CD and consisting of context, artefact and ecofact data, together with the site plan and selected photographs, will accompany the primary archive.

The client, in consultation with the project manager, will make provision for the deposition of the site archive with the Cambridge City museum. On completion of the fieldwork and the processing, collation, recording and analysis of the finds from the excavation all finds will be handed over to the museum staff, along with the project archive. Arrangements will be made with the museum for the transfer of title.

8.0 Publication and dissemination

Paper copies of this report will be lodged with the Archaeological Adviser to Cambridgeshire Council, Cambridgeshire Sites and Monuments Record and Cambridge Library. A short note on the project will be prepared for publication.

CDs of this report, together with the supporting archival material will be available from Archenfield Archaeology.

9.0 Bibliography

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Thomas, A (2007)	Brief for archaeological evaluation, Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning & Countryside Advice, Cambridgeshire County Council

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