

# Babraham Proposed Building B570

An Archaeological Trench Evaluation and Watching Brief



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CAMBRIDGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT  
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE



**Babraham Research Campus, Proposed Building  
B570  
An Archaeological Trench Evaluation and Watching Brief**

**INTERIM STATEMENT**

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With a contribution by Katie Anderson

**Cambridge Archaeology Unit**  
University of Cambridge  
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**ECB 3576**

*Between 19th April and 3rd May 2011 the Cambridge Archaeological Unit carried out an archaeological evaluation (74 m of trenching) followed by monitoring, sampling and recording at the Babraham Research Campus prior to the construction of a single building (B503) some 200m to the north of the river and to the east of the Hall. Two undated NE-SW ditches plus a number of ill-defined Roman and Late Medieval features were found that were considerably truncated by modern foundations. The Late Medieval features included two NW-SE ditches and a pit. The Roman features consisted of two sections of a shallow and sinuous NNW-SSE oriented gully in which was found a concentration of well-preserved broken vessels including at least one Samian bowl, and a 4m-wide NE-SW trending boundary ditch which lay adjacent to the south-eastern edge of the excavation. The latter ditch appears to be more or less in line with the westernmost edge of a group of ditches associated with the Roman Road previously excavated beneath the ARES Building Car Park in 2006.*

## **Introduction**

The archaeological evaluation and watching brief was carried out in advance of the construction of Buildings B570 (Figure 1). Prior to demolition this was the site of c.1950-60s Institute of Animal Physiology research building. The archaeological work was undertaken by the CAU between 19th April and 3rd May 2011 on behalf of Babraham Bioscience Technologies in accordance with a project design approved and monitored by the Archaeological Officer at Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team (CHET).

The site lies just above the edge of the floodplain close to the 25m OD contour (TL 5092 5061). Geologically this corresponds with the junction of the First and Second Terrace gravels of the River Granta (BGS 2002). This marl-rich gravels represented calcareous (tufa) spring lines. The basal Melbourn Rock may lie a short distance below the surface.

## **Archaeological background**

Since 1994 the CAU has carried out a significant amount of archaeological work within the grounds of Babraham Institute (Butler 1994; Robinson 1995; Regan 1995; Wills 2004; Swaysland 2005; Armour 2006, 2007; Timberlake & Armour 2006; Timberlake *et al.* 2007; Armour *et al.* 2007; and Collins 2007). Prior to the main phase of archaeological excavation (i.e. the period 2003 – 2007) the archaeological background to this site was covered by a CAU desktop-assessment (Hall 2003). However, a much more detailed account of the archaeology can be found in the forthcoming East Anglian Archaeology monograph *Babraham – A Roman Cemetery and its Associated Settlement* (Timberlake *et al.* *forthcoming*).

Of particular relevance to the archaeology of the current excavation was the previous discovery of 1st-2nd century AD ditches within this same area of the floodplain edge during the digging of Trenches 6-8 of the Riverside Site evaluation (Timberlake & Armour 2006).

A major Roman-Post-medieval road was identified during the ARES Building Car Park excavation (Armour 2007). The direction of this suggests that it would have met the river just to the west of St.Peter's Church. This may correspond therefore with the area defining the easternmost boundary of the present construction site.

This road also seems to have continued in use throughout the Medieval-Postmedieval period, the latter possibly as one of the main Hall Roads (Timberlake *et al.* *forthcoming*).

Prehistoric archaeology within this vicinity is limited to evidence for the *ad hoc*. Neolithic – Early Bronze Age exploitation of flint on the gravel terraces located close to the edge of the former palaeo-channels of the river (Timberlake and Armour *ibid.*). These sites of flint extraction lie less than 75m west of the current evaluation.

## Methodology

The development area was evaluated with three 2m-wide trenches (Trenches 15-18) totalling 70m in length. This sample area represents approx. 5% of the PDA. The trench sites were CAT-scanned for services then excavated by tracked 360° machine using a 2m wide toothless ditching bucket. All of the archaeological features were metal-detected, and the archaeological features were dug by hand. The work was carried out in strict accordance with statutory Health and Safety legislation and with the recommendations of SCAUM (Allen & Holt 2007). The CAU site code was RCB 11(1).

## Results

The evaluation revealed archaeology only within the northern and eastern half of the development area, a distribution due perhaps to the level and location of modern truncation and disturbance. At the northern end of the site (Trench 18) two NE-SW oriented ditches (F.2 + F.3) some 5m apart were sampled yet proved to be devoid of dateable finds. However, the course of one of these (F.2) was shown to curve westwards 4m to the south of this point, where it was examined during the watching brief. Within Trench 17 two NW-SE ditches of probable Late Medieval date were identified on the basis of finds of small sherds of 14th-15th-century coarseware with some residual St. Neots ware (C.Cessford *pers.com.*) and Roman pot. Both of these ditches (F.1 and F.9) were parallel in orientation and similar in profile, the most southerly of the two (F.9) being truncated by a Postmedieval garden feature. Some 2.5m further south was encountered a similarly dated pit or ditch terminal (F.4) containing animal bone and some Late Medieval plus residual Saxo-Norman and Roman pottery sherds (C.Cessford *pers.com.*). This feature had largely been destroyed by the insertion of cuts for modern concrete foundations. In order to further examine this feature a small area was boxed out on the western side of the trench, but due to the presence of further foundations, less than a metre more of this feature could be seen.

At the south end of Trench 17 a 1m wide NNW-SSE ditch/gully with steep sides and a slightly sinuous base was encountered which contained mid 2nd-3rd-century Roman pottery. The possible continuation of this same curvilinear feature (F.7) was recognized in the eastern end of Trench 16. At the western end of Trench 16 modern disturbance including culverts for old iron heating pipes, the foundations for a wartime Anderson shelter, and a brick-lined Post-medieval will have obliterated any archaeology present. However, the eastern half of this trench appears undisturbed and here we find two of the most finds-rich Roman features. This includes the previously mentioned narrow, and 0.25m deep, sinuous NNW-SSE trending gully (F.7), and at the south-eastern end of the trench, a 4m-wide NE-SW trending ditch (F.6) aligned at right angles to the trench, and with a shallow stepped base. A 1m slot cut through ditch gully (F.7) revealed a significant concentration of broken Roman vessels including a greyware bowl and Samian Ludowici Tg Dish (mid 2nd-3rd century AD) dish/bowl, whilst from the fills of the boundary ditch F.6 which lay just 3m to the east came smaller amounts of bone and pottery including greyware jars and sherds of a hooked rim mortaria..

## **Discussion**

The presence of 2nd-century AD ditches including a curvilinear gully within this riverside area appears consistent with what was found in 2006 during the Riverside evaluation, namely evidence for occupation of this floodplain edge area relatively early in the history of the Roman settlement, followed perhaps by partial abandonment of this area later in the 3rd-4th century AD as periodic flooding affected the lower ground on the banks of the River Granta. In this respect the current small window into the archaeology of this corner of the Babraham settlement simply confirms the existing model for the layout of the settlement in this area. It would be no surprise also perhaps that at the far eastern end of Trench 16 a major NE-SW boundary ditch was encountered just where it was expected; the ditch being aligned on the main Roman-Postmedieval road excavated within the ARES Car Park in 2006 (Armour 2007). It is interesting that the Roman ditches associated with this road are to be found both to the east and west of it beyond the extent of later metalling and rutting. This ditch therefore could be one of those following the course of the road down to its crossing at the river.

Of greater surprise was the encountering of Late Medieval (14th/ 15th-century AD) archaeology within this area. It is uncertain what these features represent. They appear to be related, given their tight location within the centre of this site, though there seems to be little evidence (given the nature of the finds) of any immediately local dwellings. Perhaps what it can tell us is that here we are still within the outermost fringe (perhaps the very edge) of the Medieval settlement; a not surprising fact when we extrapolate that less than a 100m north-east of here Medieval archaeology has recently been found within the new car park, and 100m due east lies the edge of Babraham Hall. In some respects the survival of Roman and Medieval features within this area is surprising on account of the level and depth of modern building and foundations and previous trenching for services.

## **Acknowledgements**

Archaeological evaluation here was undertaken for the client Babraham Bioscience Technologies (BBT). Chris Chapman (BBT) commissioned the project. Machining was undertaken by the contractor Keir Marriot who also helped facilitated our work on site. The archaeological work was monitored by Kasia Gdaniec (CHET). Emma Beadsmoore was CAU Project Manager. Donald Horne (CAU) undertook the surveying whilst Vikki Herring produced the graphics for this report.

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## **RBC11 (1) Roman Pottery – Katie Anderson**

Roman pottery was recovered from two features, totalling 92 sherds weighing 2393g. 26 sherds, weighing 502g were recovered from Feature 6. This included three sherds from a hooked rim mortaria and three sandy greyware jars, dating mid 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Feature 7 contained a total of 66 sherds (1891g) with a relatively high mean weight of 28.7g. A number of the sherds were noted as being large with fresh breaks, although one or two were more heavily abraded. Pottery from this feature dates 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century AD, and included a beaded, flanged greyware bowl, and a large, but abraded sherd from a Samian Ludowici Tg Dish (mid 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> AD). Several of the sherds had usewear evidence including sooting and interior pitting, symptomatic of an acidic liquid. The pottery therefore suggests that Feature 6 is somewhat earlier in date than Feature 7.



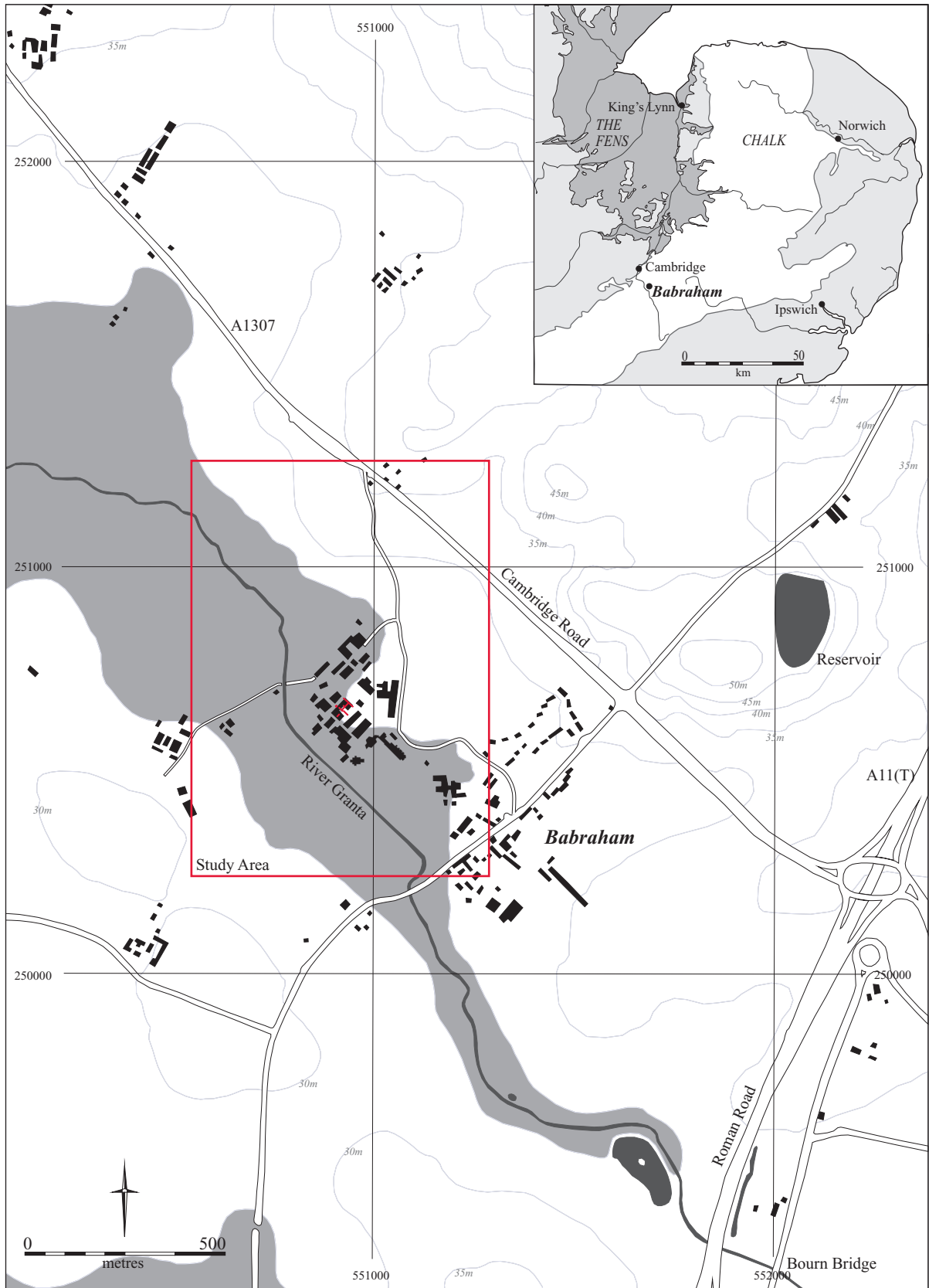


Figure 1. Location map

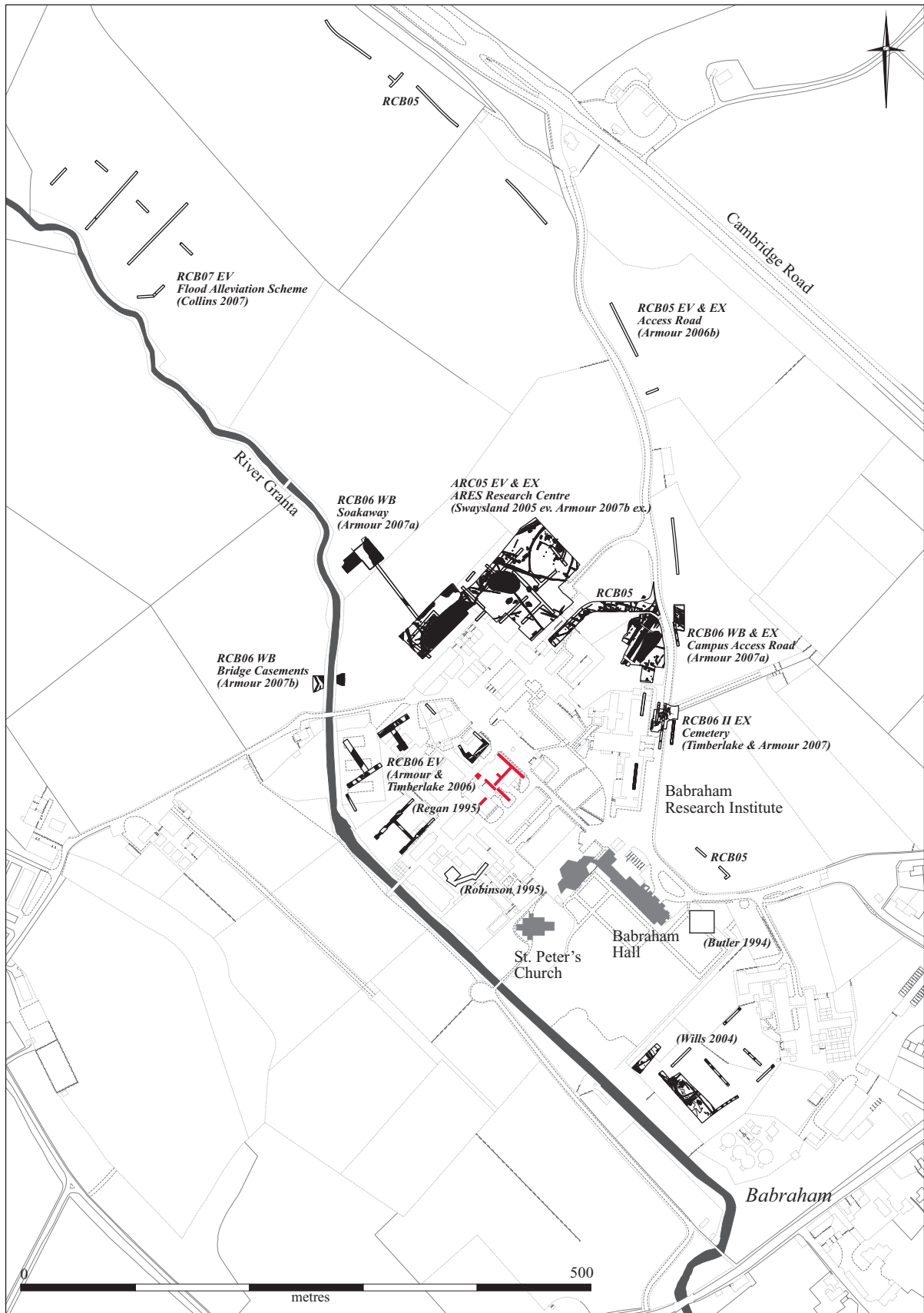


Figure 2. Location of site showing previous excavations in the area

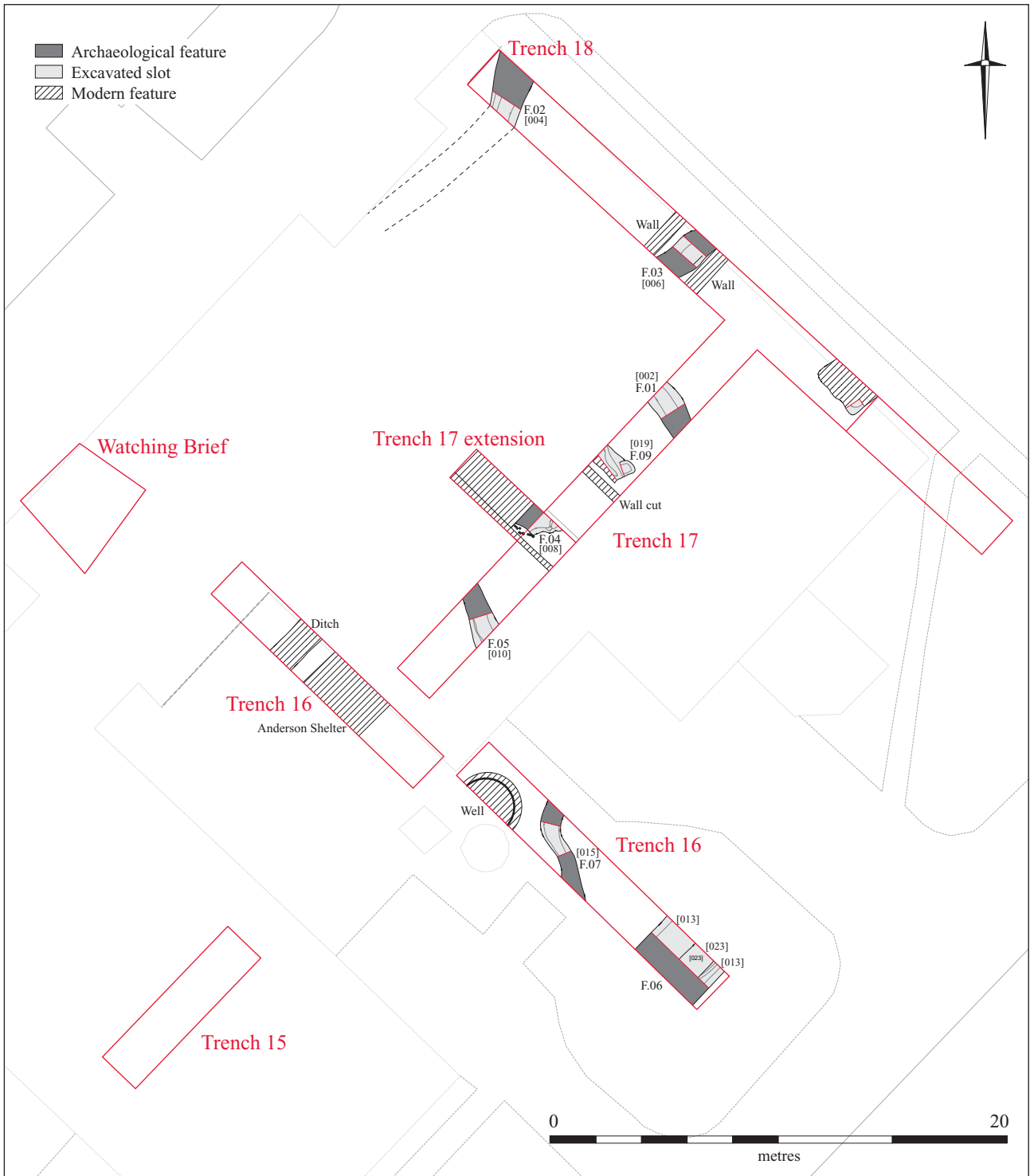


Figure 3. Plan of Trenches showing archaeological and modern features



Figure 4. North facing gully (F.7) with recovered 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century AD pottery, including Samian



Figure 5. South facing section of ditch gully F.6



Figure 6. 1st-2nd century AD pottery from gully F.7

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**OASIS ID: cambridg3-109724**

### Project details

Project name	Babraham Research Campus, Building 570
Short description of the project	Between 19th April and 3rd May 2011 the Cambridge Archaeological Unit carried out an archaeological evaluation (74 m of trenching) followed by a watching brief at the Babraham Research Campus prior to the construction of a single building (B503) some 200m to the north of the river and to the east of the Hall. Two undated NE-SW ditches plus a number of ill-defined Roman and Late Medieval features were found that were considerably truncated by modern foundations. The Late Medieval features included two NW-SE ditches and a pit, whilst the Roman features consisted of two sections of a shallow and sinuous NNW-SSE oriented gully in which was found a concentration of well-preserved broken vessels including at least one Samian bowl, and a 4m-wide NE-SW trending boundary ditch which lay adjacent to the south-eastern edge of the excavation. The latter ditch appears to be more or less in line with the westernmost edge of a group of ditches associated with the Roman Road previously excavated beneath the ARES Building Car Park in 2006.
Project dates	Start: 19-04-2011 End: 03-05-2011
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	RCB11(1) - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	ECB 3576 - HER event no.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Protected sites under the Protection of Military Remains Act 1986
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 2 - Offices
Monument type	DITCH + GULLY Roman
Monument type	DITCHES + PIT Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Medieval

Significant Finds	POTTERY Roman
Methods & techniques	'Targeted Trenches'
Development type	Rural commercial
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE BABRAHAM Babraham Research Campus, Building 503
Postcode	CB22 3AT
Study area	140.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 5090 5058 52.1325 0.2050 52 07 57 N 000 12 18 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 25.00m Max: 25.00m

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Robin Standring
Project director/manager	Emma Beadsmoore
Project supervisor	Simon Timberlake
Type of sponsor/funding body	Local Arch. Society/Amateur Archaeologist
Name of sponsor/funding body	Babraham Bioscience Technologies

### Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Physical Archive ID	RCB11(1)
Physical Contents	'Animal Bones','Ceramics'
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Archive ID	RCB11(1)
Digital Contents	'Animal Bones','Ceramics','Stratigraphic','Survey'
Digital Media available	'GIS','Images raster / digital photography','Survey','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Paper Archive ID	RCB11(1)
Paper Contents	'Animal Bones','Ceramics','Stratigraphic','Survey'

Paper Media available 'Context sheet','Map','Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section','Survey '

## Project bibliography

1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Babraham Research Campus, Proposed Building B570: An Archaeological Trench Evaluation and Watching Brief (INTERIM STATEMENT)
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Entered on 12 September 2011

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