

Further Work at The Red Lion Hotel, Whittlesford, Cambridge

An Archaeological Watching Brief



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Summary

During April and May 2011, the Cambridge Archaeological Unit undertook a phase of monitoring, excavation and recording at the Red Lion Hotel, Whittlesford, Cambridgeshire (TL 4848 4725) during groundworks associated with the extension of the hotel, including a new car park and services. The remains of two probable Medieval skeletons, and several post-medieval wells and pits were found during the course of the project.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Archaeological monitoring, excavation and recording were undertaken at the Red Lion Hotel in Whittlesford (TL 4848 4725) in April and May 2011 during groundworks associated with the extension of the hotel. The project was commissioned by Plan for the Past on behalf of the property owner, and followed a specification set out by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) (Beadsmoore 2011) in response to a brief issued by Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team CHET (Gdaniec 2010). The brief also included a request for a program of historic building recording to be completed at the Red Lion and to accompany the archaeological fieldwork. This work was commissioned separately by the client and will consequently not be included in this report.

1.1 Topography and Geology

The development area is situated on first terrace river deposits overlying Holywell Formation Chalk, at an approximate height of 25m AOD, with the River Cam located 200m to the south. The immediate development area is bordered by a railway line to the west, Station Road East to the north, a large car park to the east and the A505 to the south.

1.2 Archaeological and Historical Background

The archaeological background of this site was outlined in the Desk-Based Assessment commissioned in 2008 (Anderson 2008) and summarised in the 2008 and 2010 reports (Hutton 2010; 2008). Only the most pertinent information will therefore be referenced here.

Immediately east of the Red Lion Hotel is the site of a 13th century hospital, the only extant remnant of which is the chapel (Duxford Chapel). The structure was used as a barn from the late 16th century onwards, and was partially restored in the 20th century. The chapel is now scheduled (SAM 24432).

The Red Lion itself originated as a coaching inn during the 15th/16th century (Listed Building No. 52912) and cartographic sources from the 19th century indicate several

outbuildings once stood to the south of the hotel and chapel, of which the extant dovecote is the only above-ground surviving structure. The oldest surviving parts of the Red Lion are the street frontage and adjoining sections to the rear cross-wings at either end (QuBE Planning Ltd 2008). The extant Medieval street frontage indicates that Station Road follows the course of a Medieval routeway. Furthermore, documentary sources provide evidence of a small Medieval hamlet at Whittlesford Bridge. A World War Two bunker also existed on the site.

1.3 Previous Work

The evaluations and excavations undertaken at the Red Lion during 2008 and 2009 revealed a thick deposit of cultivation soil associated with a Medieval headland, which contained a mixture of artefacts including Late Mesolithic/Early Neolithic flints, Saxon and Medieval pottery and Medieval metalwork. This soil overlay several Medieval (13th to 15th century) ditches and gullies, probably the remains of small cultivation plots, and a larger, probable Medieval boundary ditch. Post-medieval features were also recorded across the site. Very little material culture was recovered from these cut features, despite their proximity to both the Red Lion and the chapel. The prehistoric finds attest to activity in this general area, although the level of ground disturbance, and the location of the site at the base of a hill, suggests the material may have migrated through natural and cultivation processes.

2.0 RESEARCH AIMS

The principle objective of the archaeological monitoring, excavation and recording was to define the extent of any pertinent Medieval and/or post-medieval activity at the Red Lion Hotel. More broadly, the aims were;

- To determine the extent, character and date of the archaeological deposits and features revealed through the designated area.
- To determine, as far as possible, the origins, development, function and status of the site.
- To establish the stratigraphic sequence of the site, the date of the features and the 'occupation' horizons, and the natures if the activities carried out at the site during the phases of its occupation.
- To place the findings of these aims in both regional and national research contexts.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The construction activities at the Red Lion involved several stages of work, all of which were monitored by a competent archaeologist.

Prior to any groundworks, the area comprised stone paving and small brick walls associated with the pub garden. These features were first broken and removed, before the underlying layers of tarmac, concrete and hardcore were broken using a 360° tracked excavator fitted with a toothed bucket. Using a toothless bucket, the area was then stripped to a reduced level of *c.* 0.5m below the pub floor surface (TBM 25.290m). Any archaeological remains exposed at this level were hand excavated and recorded before a series of foundation pits for post-pads (approximately 1m by 1m) were machine excavated through the reduced level to a depth where a substantial deposit of the natural gravel substrate was visible.

A wall foundation trench was then machine excavated along the southern and eastern edge of the reduced strip. This trench measured 0.5m wide, and was excavated, as far as possible, to a consistent depth of approximately 1.4m. Any features encountered in the foundation pits or foundation trench were hand excavated where possible and/or recorded in section. All deep holes were filled with concrete immediately after archaeological investigation and recording was completed. An associated soakaway was also excavated through the tarmac surface close to the Medieval chapel.

All archaeological features were hand excavated where possible and recorded using a modified version of the Museum of London Archaeological Services (MoLAS) system. Site plans were drawn at a scale of 1:50 and sections were recorded at an appropriate scale (1:10 or 1:20). Significant finds were retained and digital photographs were taken of archaeological features and of the stages of work associated with the development. The extent of the groundworks and development area were located using Global Positioning System (GPS).

4.0 RESULTS

On stripping the site to the reduced level it was evident that the upper ploughsoil had been removed prior to the deposition of the made-ground layers (which included re-deposited soils, hardcore, concrete and tarmac). A thin and patchy remnant of disturbed subsoil was exposed on the western side of the site, but elsewhere, no subsoil deposit had survived.

4.1 Reduced Level Strip

Immediately south of the pub entranceway, and partly obscured by it, two large circular, intercutting pits were exposed (**F.1** and **F.2**), and were seen to cut into the subsoil layer. Upon excavation, both pits were seen to be very shallow, measuring up to 0.15m in depth, and both contained fragments of early post-Medieval pottery (16th to 17th century), as well as a few residual late Medieval sherds. The backfill of the pit had a distinctly greenish hue, perhaps indicative of cess content, and it is likely that the pits represent a phase of post-Medieval waste disposal, heavily truncated by later construction activity.

The upper fills of a robbed-out wall foundation or possible well-feature (**F.3**) were exposed at the southwest edge of the reduced level strip. This feature was partially excavated by hand, before Foundation Pit 1 was machine excavated through it (see below). No material culture was recovered from the feature.

4.2 Foundation Pits

Foundation Pit 4

Foundation Pit 4 was machine excavated through features F.1 and F.2, first to an approximate depth of 0.25m below the reduced strip, at which level the base of a heavily truncated chalk and clunch wall (**F.4**) was revealed. This remnant of wall also yielded fragments of 16th-17th century pottery.

Upon hand excavation of F.4, two pit features (F.5 and F.6) were partially exposed beneath the wall. The foundation pit was then machine dug to its required depth of approximately 0.6m below the reduced level. At this level, F.6 was only visible in section, and was clearly cut by F.5. The latter was a vertical-sided feature, most likely a pit-well, and was hand-excavated to a depth of 1.2m. A few sherds of 14th-15th century pottery were recovered from a lower fill of F.5, although later material (15th-16th century pottery) was found in its upper fills, suggesting the former is a residual component. The fills of pit F.5 demonstrated intermittent episodes of slumping/edge collapse, and a more organic deposit, probably indicative of waste disposal associated with domestic activities. No material culture was retrieved from F.6 although it is likely to be broadly contemporary given the prevalence of late Medieval/post-Medieval activity associated with the Red Lion site.

Foundation Pit 1

Foundation Pit 1 was located over F.3, and was machine excavated through this feature to a depth of approximately 1.5m. Large fragments of roughly hewn clunch and rounded flint nodules found toward the lowermost exposed edge and basal limit imply that this feature may have been a robbed-out wall foundation for a substantial wall, or possibly a collapsed well. This feature was only partially exposed and yielded no material culture, although a clunch and chalk construction implies it is in keeping with the late Medieval/post-Medieval activity.

4.3 Foundation Trench

4.3.1 Wells

East of F.3 a largely in tact well (**F.7**) was partially exposed in the foundation trench, located immediately beneath the made-ground layers, and slightly truncated at its southern limits by the shallow pit F.8. The feature comprised a large vertical construction cut and a well-preserved wall made up of courses of shaped clunch blocks and flint nodules. The type of well construction, and the presence of red brick and tile fragments

found in the well-shaft backfill, and the backfill of the construction cut imply a post-medieval date (15th-16th century, see Newman, below). The well was augered to approximately 1.2m, but rubble backfill in the shaft prevented any further investigation.

Further east along the foundation trench, a second well was exposed (**F.9**), although the superstructure of this well had been robbed out, leaving only the lower well structure visible at a depth of 1.8m below the original ground level. As with F.3, the upper structure of the well could have been dismantled post-use of the well. The well comprised shaped clunch blocks with a single course of early post-medieval tile at the uppermost intact layer. Fragments of building stone found in F.9 as well as traces of mortar on the tile recovered from F.7 imply that the material employed for the construction of these wells may have originated from nearby buildings. No dating evidence was found in the well-shaft or construction cut backfill. The construction cut for F.9 appeared to cut another large pit feature (**F.10**) which contained a thick, burnt-clay-rich deposit, but no material culture.

4.3.2 *Other features*

Several additional features were seen along the foundation trench at its southern and eastern limits (**F.8, F.11, F.12, F.13, F.14, and F.15**). The narrow foundation trench meant characterising these features as pits or ditches was difficult, however, variations in opposing section profiles suggests they are likely to be pits. No dating material was recovered from these features, with the exception of a posthole (F.14) which contained modern debris. The backfill of most of these features was extremely sterile, and likely to have derived from a now truncated subsoil deposit, which could infer a broadly contemporary date with features F.1 and F.2. The pits were generally very large, and cut into the underlying gravel substrate, implying phases of localised quarry activity, perhaps for road or rail ballast. With the exception of pit F.8, which truncated the edges of F.3 and F.7, no meaningful stratigraphic relationships were discernable in the foundation trench.

4.3.3 *Human Remains*

At the northeast segment of the foundation trench, a pit feature (**F.16**) was partially exposed in section. Within this feature, at a depth of approximately 0.9m below ground level, the partial remains of two skeletons were revealed (SK. 1 and SK. 2). It is likely that the two skeletons were contained in separate grave cuts, however the upper portion of F.16 was heavily truncated by modern activity and subsequently, distinct grave cuts were not visible.

Skeleton 1 was aligned east-west with the head located at the west end of the grave. The skeleton comprised the partial remains of a skull, most of the left arm and shoulder girdle as well as several fragments of ribs and sternum. Skeleton 2 was also aligned east-west, with the head at the west end. Both the right and left lower leg bones were recovered, as well as the partial remains of both feet. The surviving bones were in good condition, and although insufficient remains were present to determine the sex of the skeletons or to

identify any pathological details, both individuals appeared to have died in their late teens/early twenties (see Dodwell below).

5.0 DISCUSSION

The groundworks at the Red Lion Hotel exposed several features likely to be directly associated with the history of the inn. A pit-well, and two stone-lined wells were exposed, as well as a possible fourth robbed-out well/partial wall foundation. Several large pits were also exposed and may be associated with small-scale quarry activities. Two partial skeletons were also revealed at the northwest corner of the site, just a few meters from the extant Medieval chapel, and are undoubtedly associated with it. Where the 2010 excavations found evidence for 15th century activity, but very little that could be linked directly with the inn, the reverse is true of the 2011 watching brief; where the majority of exposed features are of 16th-17th century (or later) date, and are indicative of activities directly associated with the history of the Red Lion.

Medieval Activity

The two partial skeletons were located *c.*10m from the extant chapel, the only surviving portion of a 13th century hospital. These skeletons are likely to have been part of a larger cemetery associated with the original hospital, and are therefore likely to be of Medieval date.

Post-Medieval Wells

The pit-well (F.5) and two stone-built wells (F.7 and F.9) suggest that this area has provided water to the Red Lion and neighbouring houses since at least the early post-medieval period. The fragments of tile and stone building materials in the backfill of F.7 and F.9 suggest the re-use of immediately available resources from disused structures. Similarly, the act of robbing-out the well superstructures, and the probable wall F.3, implies a continuing trend of dismantling and removing higher quality stone for re-use in later phases of construction activities, either on site, or in the immediate vicinity.

Post-Medieval Quarry Activity

Other large pit features exposed during the groundworks likely pertain to phases of localised quarry activity for the extraction of ballast for roads or later railways. Although very little dating evidence was retrieved from the pits and well features, the material that was recovered, and the relationship of some features with the subsoil suggests the features are all post-medieval in date. A residual component of Medieval pottery was found in a few features (F.2, F.4 and F.5), and attests to the known Medieval activity in the vicinity (Hutton 2010).

Other Post-Medieval Features

F.3 at the southwest corner of the site could represent the remains of a large, robbed-out wall foundation. Although only partially exposed, if this was indeed a wall, it would have been aligned north-south. A parallel wall was found in the 2008 evaluation trench at the southeast corner of the existing car park (Hutton, 2008), and it is possible that these

features are not only contemporary, but that they represent remains of outbuildings identified on the 19th century cartographic sources. However, given the existence of three well features immediately adjacent to F.3, it is equally possible that it is simply another robbed-out well. The fragments of clunch and flint nodules in the backfill of F.3 are suggestive of post-medieval building debris, and infer a post-medieval date for this feature.

6.0 STATEMENT OF POTENTIAL

The Red Lion itself dates from the 15th-16th century and has seen several phases of restoration and modification over the last 600 years. The various wells and pits of post-medieval date are probably directly associated with the inn and its long history, whilst the skeletons are likely to have been connected with the Medieval hospital chapel.

Further work on the limited material culture recovered during the watching brief would not yield additional information regarding the site's history. Similarly, the two skeletons are too partial to provide any pathology and thus require no future analysis.

7.0 SPECIALIST REPORTS

Pottery *Richard Newman*

A small assemblage of pottery – comprising 25 sherds, weighing 349g – was recovered during the watching brief at the Red Lion site (see Table 1).

Fabric	Date	Count	Weight (g)	MSW (g)
Grey coarseware	13 th to 15 th century	5	21	4.2
Glazed red earthenware	16 th to 17 th century	8	240	30
Plain red coarseware	16 th to 17 th century	12	88	7.3
		25	349	13.9

Table 1: The Red Lion pottery assemblage by fabric.

The earliest material in this group consisted of grey coarseware of probable 14th to 15th century date that was recovered from [014] in pit/well F.05. The upper fill of this feature, however – [011] – contained plain red coarseware of probable 15th to 16th century date, implying that the earlier material may be residual. The remainder of the assemblage predominately consisted of glazed red earthenware along with sherds of plain red coarseware that may well have been derived from the unglazed portions of glazed red earthenware vessels. These fragments, which were recovered from F.01, F.02 and F.04, are most probably 16th to 17th century in date. A small quantity of grey coarseware of 13th to 15th century also occurred residually within these features.

Building Materials *Richard Newman*

A total of 23 fragments of tile, weighing 2244g, were recovered from the site. These were recovered from two separate features, F.07 (which contained 7 fragments, weighing 78g) and F.09 (which contained 16 fragments, weighing 2166g). In each instance these fragments consisted of coarse red earthenware peg-tiles, many of which still bore traces of mortar. This indicates that they were recovered from demolished buildings prior to being incorporated into their respective features. Tiles of this type were widely produced from the 14th century onwards, although these particular examples appear likely to be 15th or 16th century in origin. In addition, two types of building stone were also identified at the site. The first of these consisted of a fine grained chalk ('clunch') that is known to have been quarried from a variety of locations in the Cambridgeshire region. A sample of this material was recovered from [045] in F.09. The second type of building stone consisted of a pale grey spar-prominent oolitic limestone that was most probably quarried near Barnack, Lincolnshire. A sample of this material was recovered from [001] in F.01.

Human Remains *Natasha Dodwell*

The partial remains of two skeletons, buried in east west graves were identified and lifted during excavations at the Red Lion Pub next to Whittlesford Parkway station. Given the proximity of the skeletons to Duxford chapel, the only surviving structure

of the Hospital of St John founded soon after 1200, it is probable that both skeletons date to the medieval period and were originally interred in the hospital cemetery.

Skeleton 1 comprised of most of a left arm and shoulder girdle, fragments of skull, ribs and sternum. Skeleton 2 comprised of both lower legs (also distal femora) and feet. Although partial and fragmentary the surviving bones are in excellent condition. Lines of epiphyseal union are still just visible on several bones from both individuals suggesting that they died in their late teens or early twenties (Schaefer *et al* 2009).

Faunal Remains *Vida Rajkovača*

Only two fragments of animal bone were recovered from the watching brief at the Red Lion Hotel.

A fragment of cow pelvis was found in the post-medieval pit F.1 [1] and a vertically split sheep/goat metatarsal was found in the pit-well F.5 [18].

References

Schaefer, M., Black, S., and Scheuer, L. 2009 Juvenile Osteology: A laboratory and Field Manual Academic Press, London

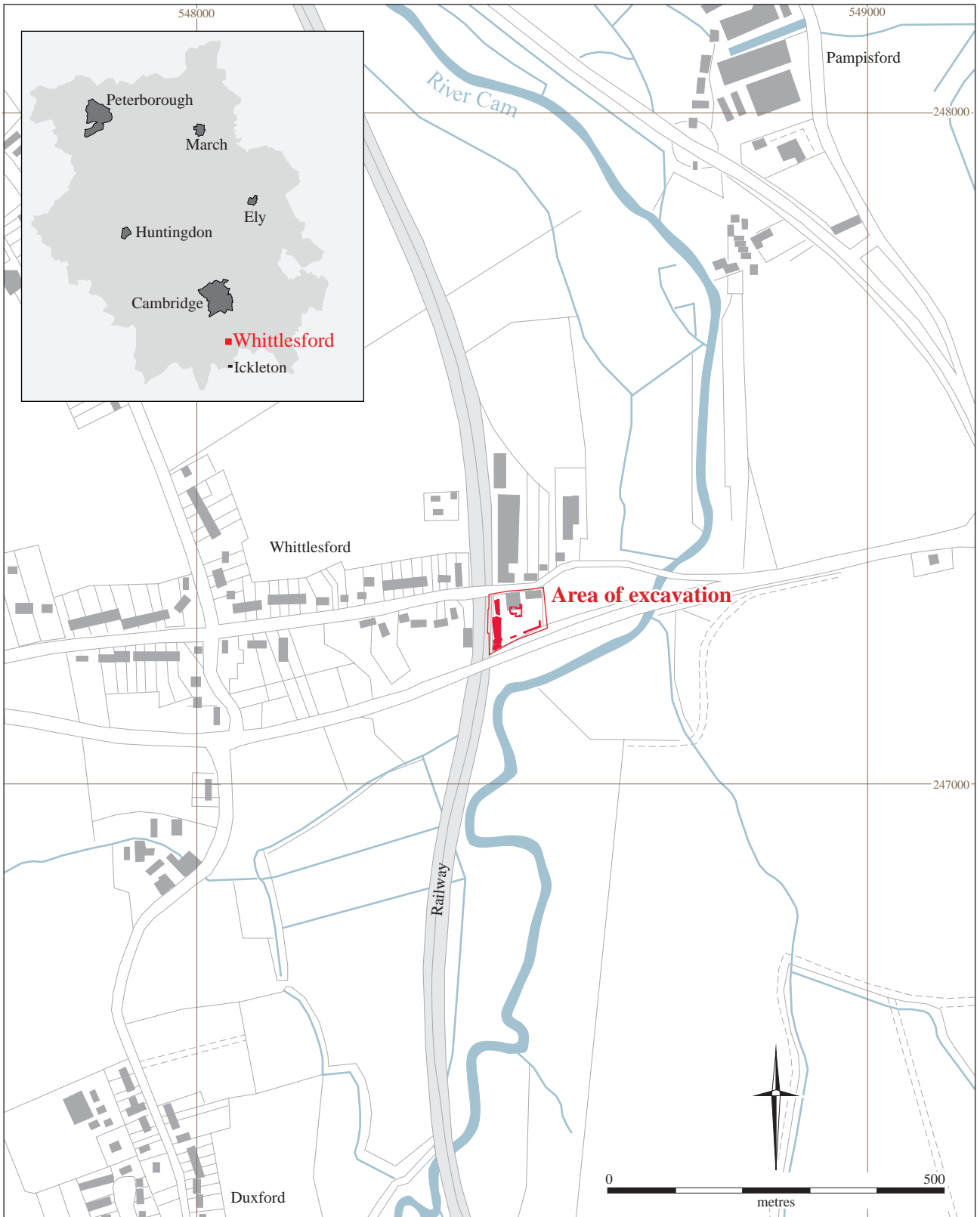


Figure 1. Site location

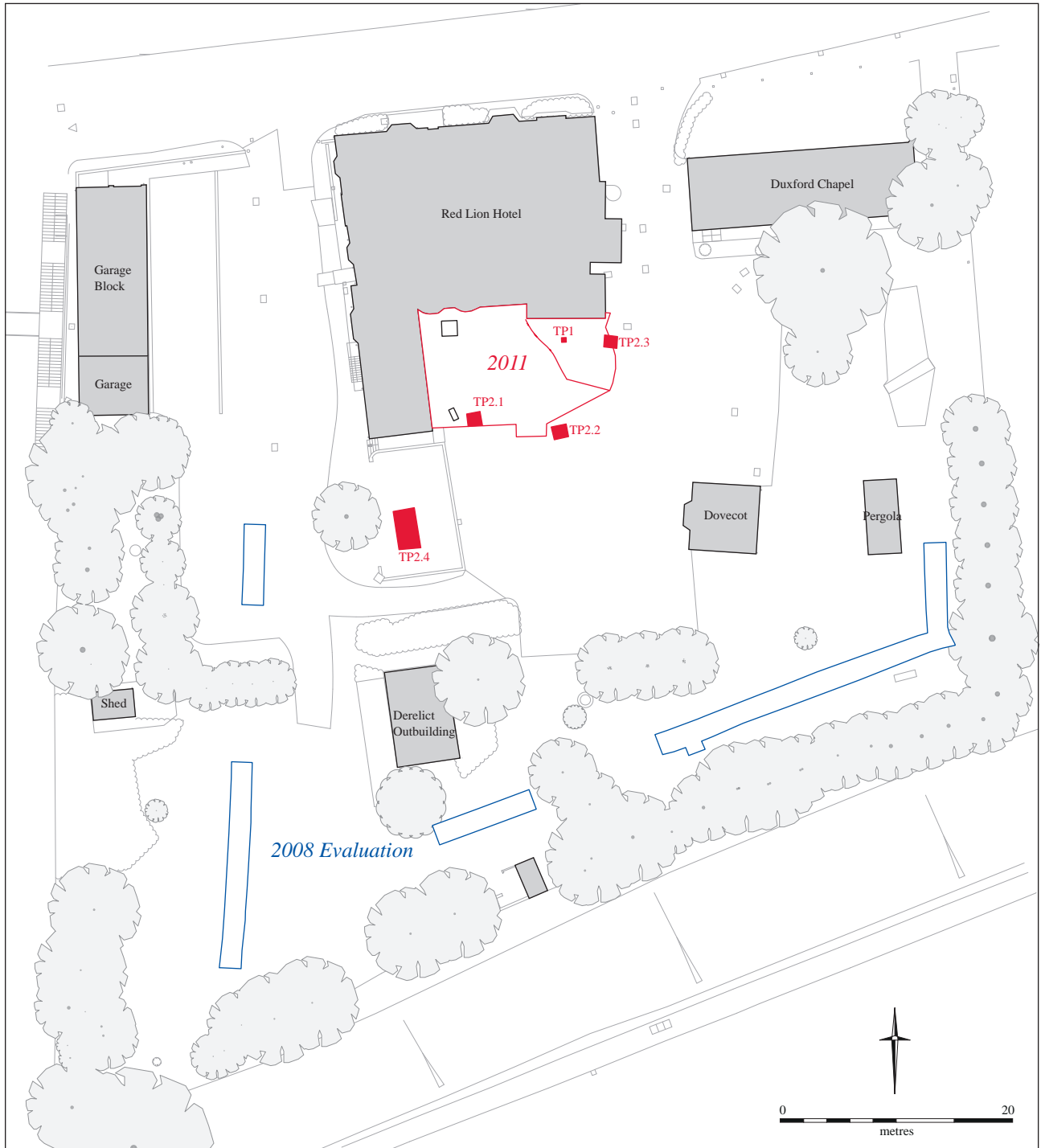


Figure 2. Test pit plan

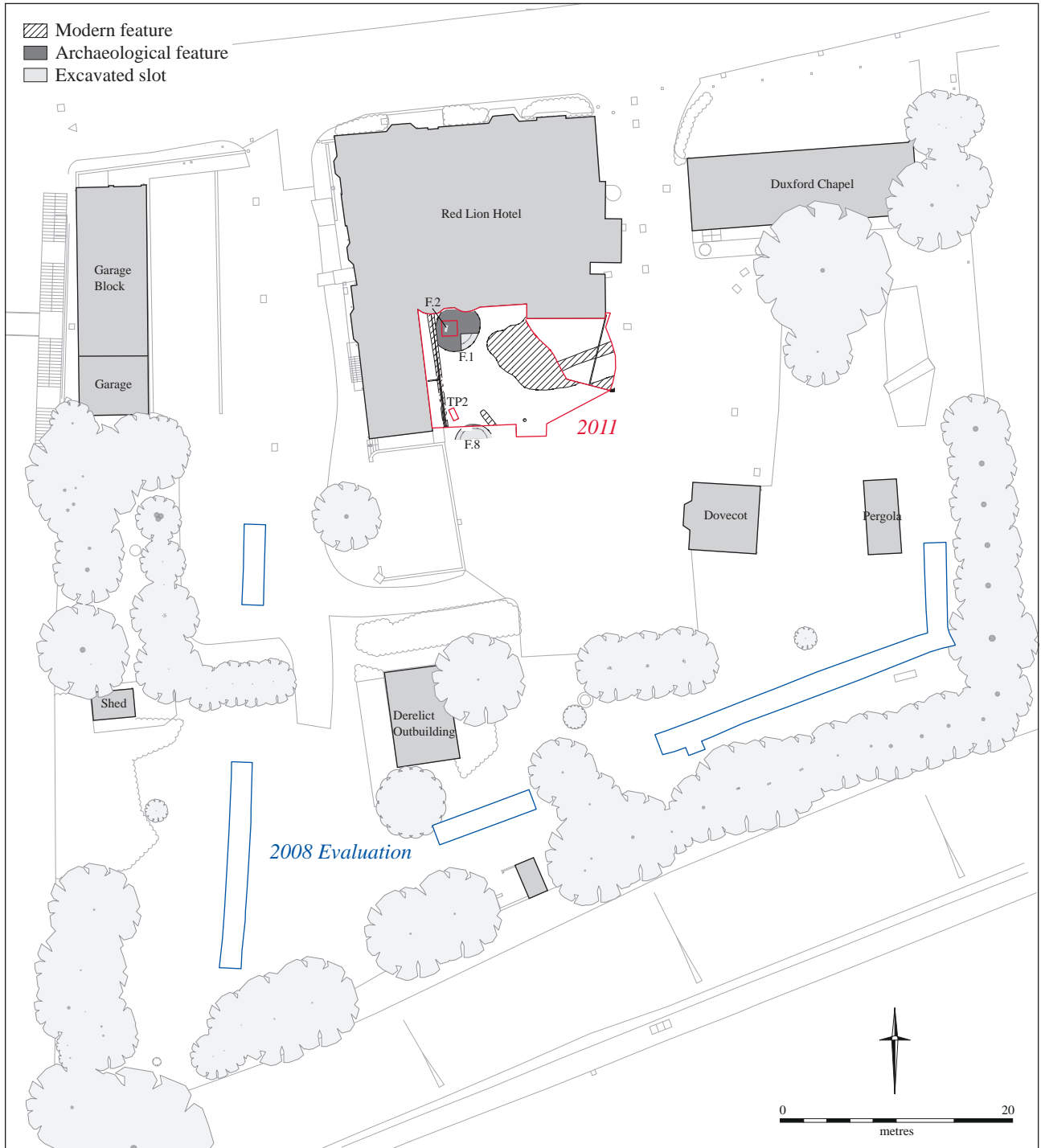


Figure 3. Plan of late Post-Medieval and Modern features

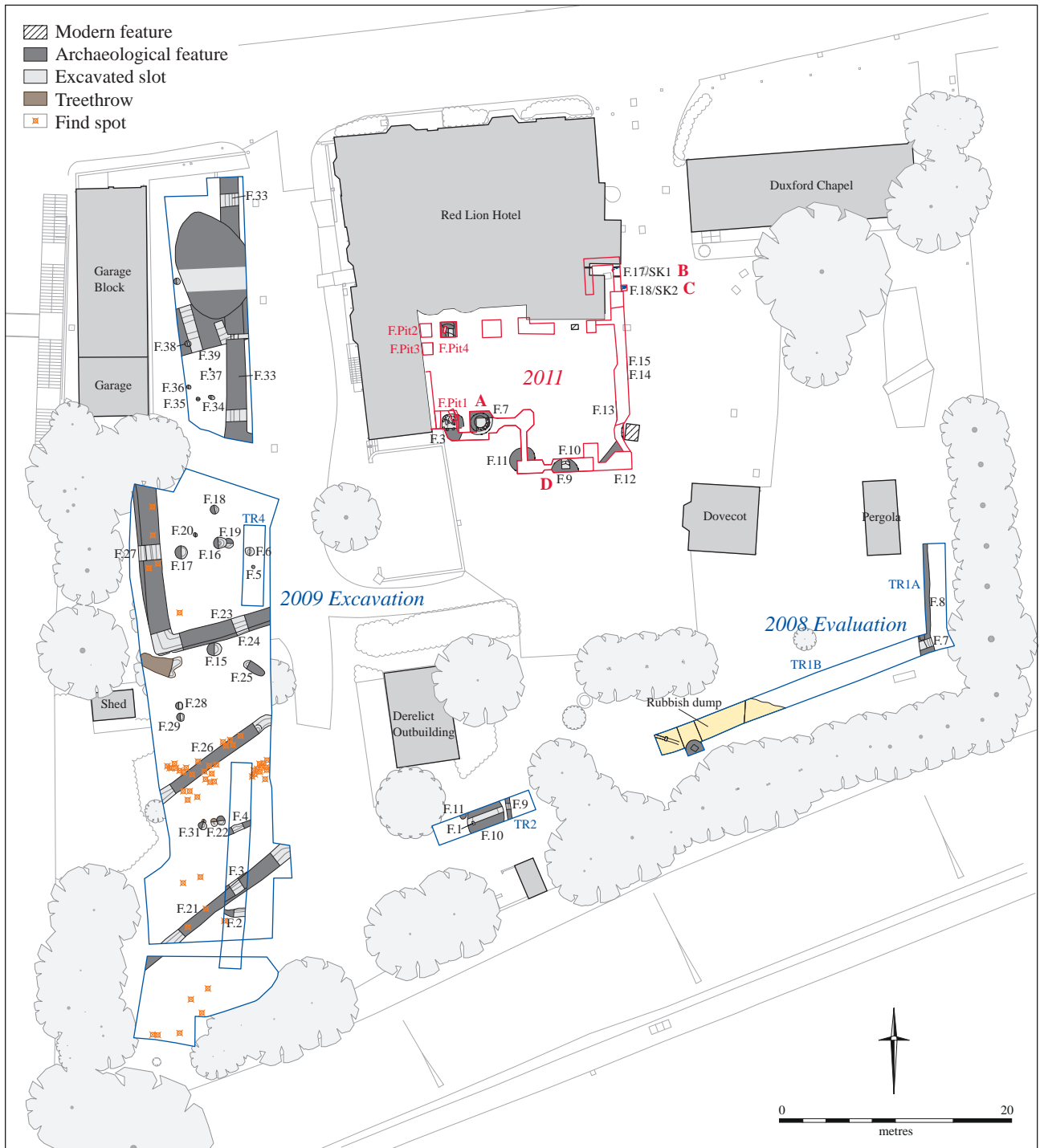


Figure 4. Plan of all archaeological features from the 2008 evaluation, 2009 excavation and 2011 watching brief (areas marked A-D in red are shown in further detail in Fig. 5)

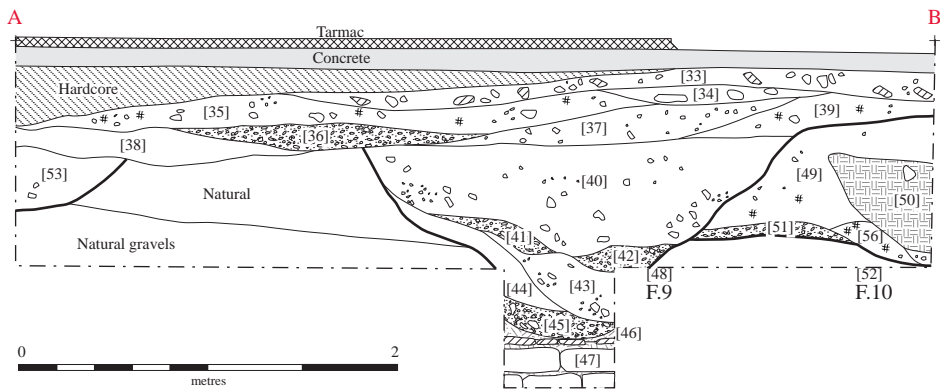
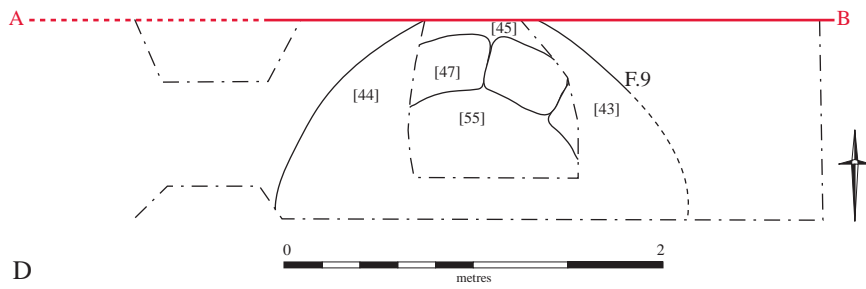
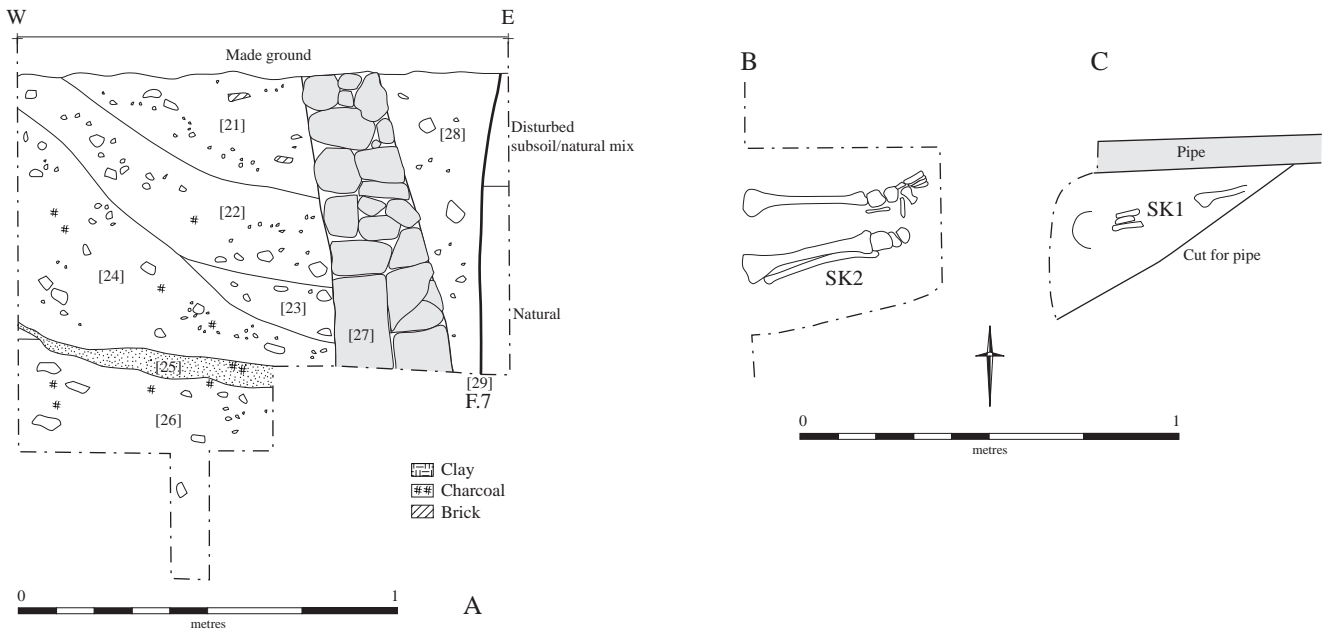


Figure 5. Features from 2011 program of work

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Project details

Project name	Further Work at The Red Lion, Whittlesford, Cambridgeshire
Short description of the project	During April and May 2011, the Cambridge Archaeological Unit undertook a phase of monitoring, excavation and recording at the Red Lion Hotel, Whittlesford, Cambridgeshire (TL 4848 4725) during groundworks associated with the extension of the hotel, including a new car park and services. The remains of two probable Medieval skeletons, and several post-medieval wells and pits were found during the course of the project.
Project dates	Start: 28-04-2011 End: 24-05-2011
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	RLD 11 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Listed Building
Current Land use	Other 15 - Other
Monument type	WELLS Post Medieval
Significant Finds	BRICK, POTTERY Post Medieval
Significant Finds	HUMAN BONE Medieval
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE WHITTLESFORD Red Lion Hotel, Whittlesford, Cambridgeshire
Postcode	CB22 4WL

Study area	180.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 4848 4725 52 0 52 06 11 N 000 10 05 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	Emma Beadsmoore
Project director/manager	Emma Beadsmoore
Project supervisor	Shannon Hogan
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
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Digital Media available	"Survey", "Text"
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Paper Media available	"Photograph", "Report", "Section", "Survey "

Project bibliography 1

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