

Cocks and Hens Tennis Club Relocation, Grantchester Road, Cambridge

An Archaeological Evaluation



Simon Timberlake

**CAMBRIDGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE**



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Between 14th-16th January 2013 an archaeological trench evaluation was carried out on 3.5 hectares of former agricultural land owned by Trinity College to the west of Grantchester Road, Cambridge, and in advance of a development to re-locate tennis courts and construct a clubhouse and access road. Some 375m of trenching onto the Gault Clay revealed almost no evidence of archaeology, the single feature being a field ditch of unknown date, from which charcoal but no pottery or other finds were recovered.

Introduction

Between 14th-16th January 2013 the Cambridge Archaeological Unit carried out an archaeological trench evaluation on 3.5 hectares of former agricultural land owned by Trinity College located just to the west of Cambridge Rugby Club's playing field on the west side of Grantchester Road, Cambridge (TL 4331 5710) (Figures 1 and 2). This work was undertaken in order to assess the presence/ absence of archaeology in advance of the proposed development (PDA) of a lawn tennis club (the re-located Cocks & Hens Tennis Club) with its associated clubhouse, facilities and access road. Approximately 375 metres of 2m-wide trenches were dug to sample the northern 1.5 ha area of this field where the proposed development will take place. In effect this formed a 5% sample of the area to be impacted.

Topography

The topography of the area is characterised by flat-lying agricultural fields to the south and west, and by a small and shallow valley oriented approximately southwest-northeast, and which falls from c.15m AOD to c. 10m AOD across the area, with the local drainage flowing north-north-east. A small stream, the Prickwillow Brook, follows the southern boundary of this field, then turns sharply north adjacent to its eastern boundary, eventually joining the Bin Brook at Stone Bridge on the Barton Road. The higher land of the chalk lies a further 2 kilometres to the west, whilst the River Cam and its floodplain lies just 0.6 km to the east of the site.

Geology

The underlying solid geology beneath the PDA consists of Gault Clay, with the base of the Lower Chalk (West Marlbury Marly Chalk Formation) overlying this a short distance to the west and south of the site. Some 500m to the east of here lies the 3rd Gravel Terrace of the River Cam and beyond that the alluvium-filled flood plain (BGS 2002). Although not indicated on the Solid & Drift geological map, the trench results suggest the presence of a thin smear of diamicton (boulder clay + fluvioglacial deposits) which in places overlies the Gault. This would explain the patchy presence of sand and gravel, either as cryoturbated inclusions within the clay, or as else the remains of former run-off channel deposits.

Archaeological background

This has been provided in some detail already within the desk top assessment of this site produced by Grahame Appleby in April last year (Appleby 2012). Suffice it to say the closest structure of (more recent) archaeological significance is that of a WWII Type 22 thin-walled pillbox located in the south-eastern corner of the field, immediately adjacent to the PDA. Less than 100m to the east of this, Medieval ridge and furrow has been found beneath Selwyn College Sports Ground (RCAHM 1959). Apart from that, the nearest archaeological sites and findspots (of Roman – Medieval date) lie almost 0.5 kilometre to the north of here on both sides of the Barton Road, and further eastwards into Newnham. The Iron Age sites of Trumpington Meadows (Patten 2012) and High Cross, West Cambridge (Timberlake 2010)

lie between 1-2 kilometres to the south-east and north (respectively) of this site, whilst the other important Romano-British settlement of Vicar's Farm (Whittaker & Evans 1999) is located some two kilometres to the north.

Methodology

The locations for eight north-south and east-west evaluation trenches were sited using GPS, leaving a 20m E-W corridor in the centre of the field, as a stand-off either side of an existing buried water main. After further CAT scanning for services, these trenches were dug using a 360° 20-ton tracked excavator, both topsoil and subsoil being separated, and then dumped either side of each excavation. All archaeological or potentially archaeological features exposed were then investigated by hand-digging. The recording of features and deposits was carried out using standard CAU trench and context sheets, using an amended version of the Museum of London system (Spence 1994). Archaeological sections were recorded at a scale of 1:10, whilst other plans and trench sections in the field were recorded by means of measured sketches. A full digital colour photographic record of the work was compiled.

Results (Figure 3)

The eight evaluation trenches were logged and recorded photographically, with depths of topsoil, subsoil and natural recorded, basic soil descriptions, and with any significant modern, natural or archaeological features sketched-in, and then included as measurements within the tables below. Some basic information on the sub-surface geologies were similarly noted.

Generalised soil descriptions:

- Topsoil = A moderately firm, mid to dark slightly greyish-brown silty clay, with frequent angular stone (flint) inclusions. Average depth c.0.3m.
- Subsoil = A moderate to fairly firm, mid orange-brown clay with an occasional blue-grey mottling and rare patches of medium-coarse sand and fine gravel. Includes rarer small angular stone (flint).
- Natural = Varies between a mid (mid-dark) coloured, firm bluish-grey clay (Gault Clay), and a slightly lighter grey and less firm clay diamicton (boulder clay?), the latter including some rare to occasional patches of yellow to mid-orange coarse sand and finer (pea-grit size) gravel.

Trench 1 (40m long S-N orientation)

Sections recorded	Depth of trench	Depth to natural	Topsoil (thick)	Subsoil (thick)	Natural (geology)	Archaeology	Possible features tested	Modern features
5m	0.94m	0.54m	0.31m	0.23m	fine sandy gravel patch within clay			
35m	0.64m	0.61m	0.32m	0.29m	clay			
Measured sketch plan					mostly grey clay	none	none	E-W gravel-filled drain cuts @ 23.8m + 26m from N end + N-S land drain

Trench 2 (50m long W-E orientation)

Sections recorded	Depth of trench	Depth to natural	Topsoil (thick)	Subsoil (thick)	Natural (geology)	Archaeology	Possible features tested	Modern features
5m	0.51m	0.51m	0.26m	0.25m	clay			
46m	0.64m	0.52m	0.29m	0.23m	clay with gravel	F.1		
Measured sketch plan					mostly grey clay	F.1 – a ditch linear @ 44.1 to 44.95m from W end	F.1 by a 1m wide slot	3 N-S land drains at 13m + 47.8m E-W drain @40.8m

Trench 3 (30m long NNE-SSW orientation)

Sections recorded	Depth of trench	Depth to natural	Topsoil (thick)	Subsoil (thick)	Natural (geology)	Archaeology	Possible features tested	Modern features
2m	0.63m	0.63m	0.3m	0.33m	grey clay + blue-grey clay			field drain
28m	0.61m	0.59m	0.30m	0.29m	clay			
Measured sketch plan					mostly blue-grey clay	none	sandy patches @ 8.5m -9.9m and 10.55m from S end - negative	3 E-W clay pipe land drains at 12.2m and 16.3m + 1 N-S drain at 0m

Trench 4 (50m long E-W orientation)

Sections recorded	Depth of trench	Depth to natural	Topsoil (thick)	Subsoil (thick)	Natural (geology)	Archaeology	Possible features tested	Modern features
3m	0.71m	0.71m	0.38m	0.33m	blue-grey clay			
45m	0.68m	0.56m	0.30m	0.26m	grey clay + blue-grey clay			

Measured sketch plan					mostly blue-grey clay	none	sandy patches @ 38.4m and 39.4m from E end - negative	3 E-W clay pipe land drains at 10.7m, 20.6m + 46.6m
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Trench 5 (35m long N-S orientation)

Sections recorded	Depth of trench	Depth to natural	Topsoil (thick)	Subsoil (thick)	Natural (geology)	Archaeology	Possible features tested	Modern features
5m	0.55m	0.53m	0.27m	0.26m	blue-grey clay + grey clay			
30m	0.64m	0.49m	0.27m	0.22m	blue-grey clay			
Measured sketch plan					mostly blue-grey clay	none		1 E-W clay pipe land drain surviving @ 33.4m

Trench 6 (48.5m long E-W orientation)

Sections recorded	Depth of trench	Depth to natural	Topsoil (thick)	Subsoil (thick)	Natural (geology)	Archaeology	Possible features tested	Modern features
3m	0.67m	0.55m	0.27m	0.28m	grey clay			
45m	0.77m	0.57m	0.28m	0.29m	blue-grey clay			
Measured sketch plan					mostly blue-grey clay	none	shallow linear @ 7.95-8.6m from E end tested, but proved to be a land drain trench	3 N-S land drains survive @ 8m, 15.5m + 48m. Also another E-W drain @ 8m.

Trench 7 (34m long N-S orientation)

Sections recorded	Depth of trench	Depth to natural	Topsoil (thick)	Subsoil (thick)	Natural (geology)	Archaeology	Possible features tested	Modern features
3m	0.68m	0.58m	0.30m	0.28m	grey clay			
30m	0.71m	0.45m	0.24m	0.21m	blue-grey clay			
Measured sketch plan					mostly blue-grey clay	none		2 E-W land drains survive @ 1.5m and 7.4m

Trench 8 (40m long E-W orientation) See Figure 4

Sections recorded	Depth of trench	Depth to natural	Topsoil (thick)	Subsoil (thick)	Natural (geology)	Archaeology	Possible features tested	Modern features
5m	0.68m	0.56m	0.30m	0.26m	blue-grey clay			
36m	0.72m	0.54m	0.25m	0.29m	blue-grey clay			
Measured sketch plan					mostly blue-grey clay	none		

Archaeological features:

Trench 2

F.1 NNW-SSE oriented linear exposed at the E end of Trench 2. Approx. 4m of this 0.9m wide and c.0.22-0.26m deep ditch was visible, through which a 1m-wide slot was cut (Figures 5a+5b). This revealed a slightly truncated ditch section with an irregular flattish, but very slightly concave profile to the cut ([004]), slightly convex in the middle. This profile was asymmetric, possessing a slightly shallower eastern side with a moderate basal break of slope, and a much steeper (near vertical) western side, with a sharp break of slope. The longitudinal profile of this shallow flat-bottomed ditch was also slightly sinuous, although the straightness of this could have been masked by the truncation of the upper part of this ditch (to a depth of 0.3m) due to the slight overcut of the trench. The natural underlying the fairly clean cut of this ditch consisted of a light grey boulder clay with an inclusion of fine sandy gravel. The upper fill (001) consisted of a light brown silty clay with occasional patches of a thick light grey clay, flecks of chalky material, rare rounded flint pebbles and stones, and mottled patches of a reddish-brown sand. This contained no artefacts, but occasional chunks of slightly burnt (reddened) flint and moderate amounts of charcoal as flecks. Occasionally these consisted of

identifiable pieces up to 5-10mm in diameter. Two lenses of similar sediment (002), only containing increased amounts of chalky material and clay, but with proportionately less charcoal, abutted both sides of this ditch. The basal fill (003) was quite similar to (001), but was slightly more reddish, and a little more silty-sandy in composition.

No date could be ascribed to this feature, yet it was clearly earlier than the overlying clay-rich subsoil which contained sherds of c.19th-century ceramic, tile, and fragments of coal.

Discussion and conclusions

This 5% sample (375m of trenching) carried out at the PDA revealed no dateable archaeology. Most of the features encountered at the interface between the subsoil and the underlying clay consisted of 19th-20th century agricultural drainage (narrow-bore clay pipe land drains and coarse gravel-filled drain fills cut into the clay). Meanwhile, the majority of the potential features examined by hand-digging turned out to be natural, whilst other potential linears proved to be deeper modern drains. Just one feature (F.1) at the east end of Trench 2 turned out to be an earlier (and probably pre-19th century) ditch. However, this revealed no dateable evidence, although small lumps of charcoal and burnt flint within this served to distinguish it from the overlying sub-soil. The depth of subsoil (typically between 0.5-0.7m) and the scatter of modern finds this contained suggested only 19th-20th century ploughing and perhaps later (20th century) allotment activity, there being no evidence at all for the continuation of Medieval ridge and furrow (previously reported from the Selwyn College Sports Field) in this direction. The faint N-S to SSW-NNE ridging detected on the surface of this fallow field prior to trenching would appear to relate to previous (but modern) deep ploughing, and also to the digging, laying and subsequent burial of the land drains.

The single and potentially archaeological ditch (F.1) lay also lay on a SSW-NNE alignment, but one different to the land drains. The ditch was much wider, and had been carefully dug by hand, but showed indications of moderately rapid infill, without any evidence for there being standing water or organic accumulation. Unfortunately the projected continuation of this ditch to the north passed through the unsampled ground between Trenches 6 and 7. The most likely explanation is that this was part of a pre-late 19th-century field boundary, indeed a sizeable ditch of this type does not appear on any of the historic maps. It is certainly possible therefore that this could be of early Postmedieval or Medieval date.

This evaluation would appear to confirm the low potential of surviving archaeology within this clayland landscape lying to the south of the Barton Road, and to the north of the village of Grantchester.

Acknowledgements

The work was carried out at the request of the Cocks & Hens Tennis Club, and the owners Trinity College, Cambridge. CAU Project Manager was Alison Dickens, whilst Dan McConnell monitored the site for CAPCA. Emma Rees helped with the digging and recording and Bryan Crossan (CAU) the surveying, Vicki Herring prepared the illustrations. Lattenbury Services undertook the machining of the trenches.

References

Appleby, G. 2012 *Cocks and Hens Tennis Club Relocation, Grantchester Road, Cambridge*, CAU Report no.1087, April 2012, University of Cambridge

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Figure 1. Location Plan.

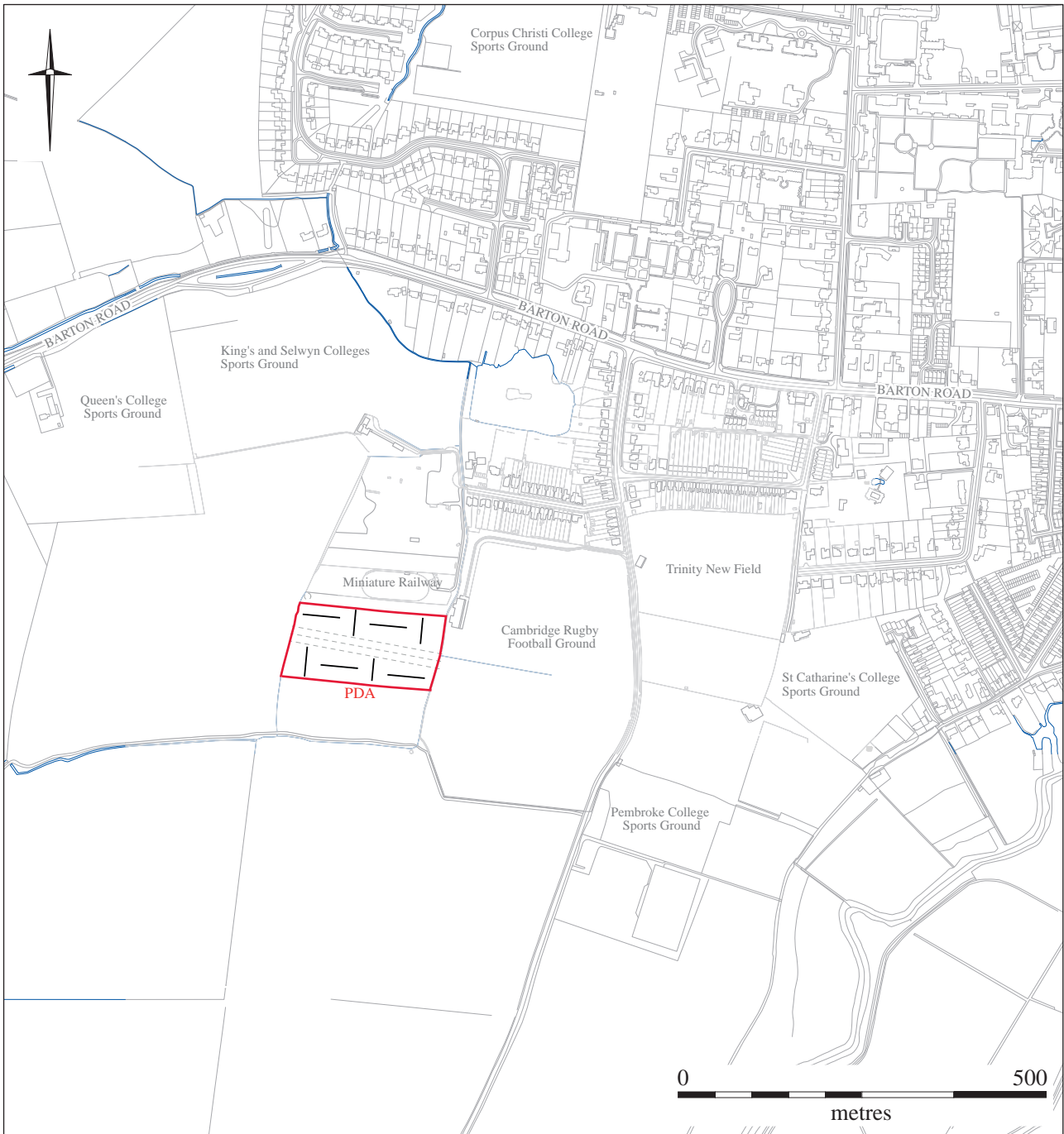


Figure 2. Detailed site location.

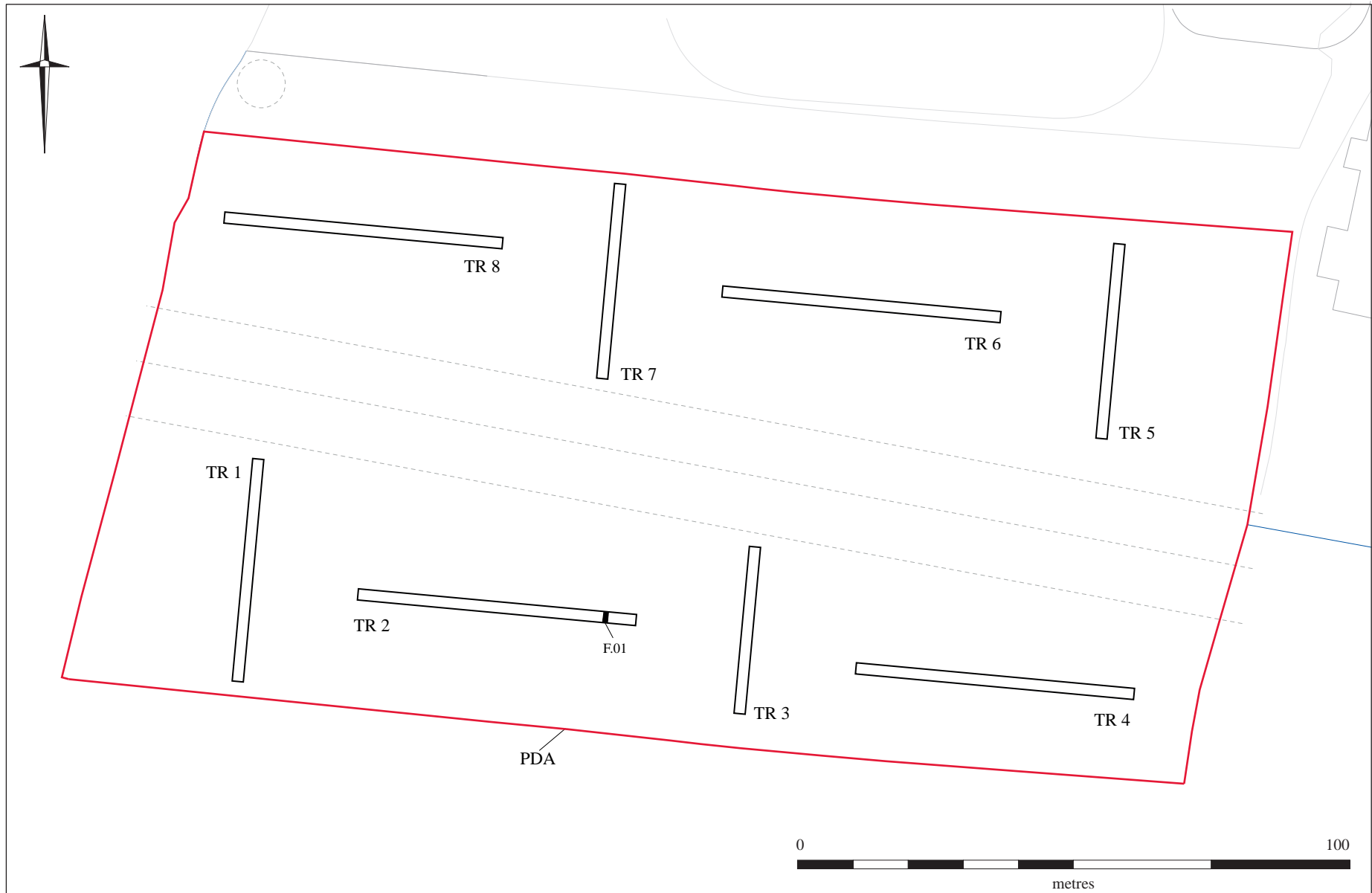


Figure 3. Trench Plan.



Figure 4. Photograph of Trench 8.



Figure 5a. F.1 ditch slot in Trench 2, looking West.

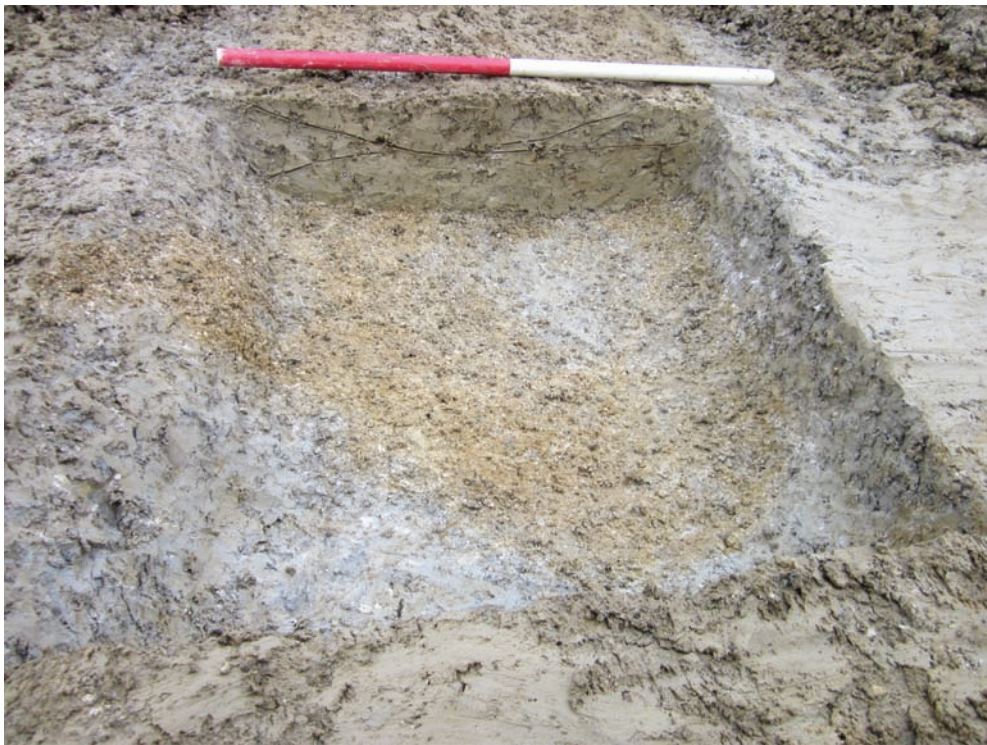


Figure 5b. Section through F.1.

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OASIS ID: cambridg3-141359

Project details

Project name	Cocks and Hens Tennis Club Re-location, Cambridge
Short description of the project	Between 14th-16th January 2013 the Cambridge Archaeological Unit undertook an archaeological trench evaluation on 3.5 hectares of former agricultural land owned by Trinity College to the west of Grantchester Road, Cambridge, and in advance of a development to re-locate tennis courts and construct a clubhouse and access road. Some 375m of trenching onto the Gault Clay revealed almost no evidence of archaeology, the single feature being a field ditch of unknown date, from which charcoal, but no pottery or other finds were recovered.
Project dates	Start: 14-01-2013 End: 16-01-2013
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	CHT13 - Sitecode ECB3916 - HER reference
Any associated project reference codes	S/1808/12/FL - Planning Application No.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Cultivated Land 1 - Minimal cultivation
Monument type	FIELD DITCH Uncertain
Significant Finds	N/A None
Development type	tennis courts and clubhouse
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 CAMBRIDGE CAMBRIDGE Trinity College land, Grantchester Road
Postcode	CB3 9ED
Study area	750.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 4330 5710 52 0 52 11 35 N 000 05 48 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 10.00m Max: 15.00m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body

Project design originator	Alison Dickens
Project director/manager	Alison Dickens
Project supervisor	Simon Timberlake
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Trinity College

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Physical Archive recipient	N/A
Physical Archive ID	CHT13
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Archive ID	CHT13
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic", "Survey"
Digital Media available	"GIS", "Images raster / digital photography", "Survey", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Paper Archive ID	CHT13
Paper Contents	"Stratigraphic", "Survey"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Map", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report", "Section", "Survey "

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