

Milton Landfill, Cambridgeshire

An Archaeological Excavation Interim Assessment



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Milton Landfill, Cambridge
A Post Excavation Interim Statement

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April 2013

Report No.1155
ECB No.3875

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Non-Technical Summary

Cambridge Archaeological Unit undertook an open-area excavation at Milton Landfill between the 13th November 2012 and 22nd January 2013 in advance of its expansion. This phase of excavation identified significant evidence for Early Iron Age activity including an enclosure ditch, several four-post structures and a number of pits, which were partially overlain by a series of Romano-British agricultural planting beds. An extensive area of intercutting probable Romano-British quarry pits was also identified together with the northern boundary for the planting beds.

Milton Landfill, Cambridge – Post Excavation Interim Assessment

Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) was commissioned by the Waste Recycling Group (WSG) to undertake an archaeological investigation of land at Milton Landfill, Butt Lane, Milton, Cambridgeshire (see Figure 1) in advance of its expansion.

The area was excavated between 13th November 2012 and 22nd January 2013 and was investigated in order to mitigate the impact on archaeological remains of the landfills expansion by means of '*preservation by record*'. This phase of excavation identified the northern extent of previously identified Romano-British planting beds together with evidence for Early Iron Age settlement and related activity. Also present were a several truncated medieval/post-medieval furrows which overlaid the earlier archaeological features.

Introduction and Background

Milton Landfill is located to the north of Cambridge and the excavation area centred on TL 4625/6298. The area under investigation was bisected by a haul-road which, in consultation with a senior officer from the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team (CHET), was left *in-situ*, with the southern area measuring 0.20 ha and the northern one measuring 0.81 ha, (see Figure 2). Underlying geology was Gault Clay overlain with areas of Third Terrace gravel and sand deposits from the River Cam (British Geological Survey 1995), which became increasingly thinner and patchier towards the east. The area sloped gently upwards from 10.7m OD in the southeast corner to 11.27m OD within the central part of the area before sloping downwards slightly to 11.15m OD in the northwest corner.

The excavation at the landfill is a continuation of archaeological investigations dating from the early 1990's. Previous phases of work to the south have identified Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age flints and residual finds suggesting transitory or low density usage of this landscape during those periods. Whilst also to the south, a pattern of scattered Iron Age settlement activity, together with a probable Romano-British villa with associated field-systems has been identified (Connor 1997) together with a significant area of intercutting quarry pits which also dated to the Romano-British period. Directly adjacent to the southern boundary of this phase of investigation were two previous excavations which uncovered evidence for Early Iron Age activity overlain by Romano-British planting beds and Medieval/post-Medieval furrows (Connor 1999, Collins 2012). The projected route of the Roman road Mere Way is also purported to extend parallel the western edge of the landfill.

Methodology

Topsoil and underlying deposits were removed under the supervision of an experienced archaeologist with a tracked 20-ton 360° machine using a 2.1m wide toothless ditching bucket. All exposed features were scanned by metal detector and a digital photographic archive was compiled. Excavation of archaeological features was carried out using hand-tools, with 1m slots excavated in ditches, pits/postholes half sectioned and ambiguous natural features tested. Bulk environmental samples were

also taken where appropriate. The recording followed a CAU modified MoLAS system (Spence 1990) whereby feature numbers, F. were assigned to stratigraphic events and numbers [fill] or [cut] to individual contexts. The area was planned at a scale of 1:50 and individual sections were drawn at 1:10. All work was carried out in strict accordance with statutory Health and Safety legislation and with the recommendations of FAME (Allen & Holt 2010) and in accordance with a site specific risk assessment and the CAU Health and Safety policy. The CAU assigned site code is MLF 12 and the event number is ECB 3875.

Results

A total of 609 contexts from 187 archaeological features were excavated and recorded across the excavation area (see Figure 3). The excavated features included three, four-post structures, a post alignment (see Figure 5) and a scatter of individual postholes and small to moderate sized pits which all dated to the Early Iron Age. These features are likely to be a continuation of the dispersed settlement identified in previous excavations (Collins 2012). Many of them contained significant quantities of pottery and animal bone suggesting the presence of domestic activity, and were characterized by dark grey/black, potentially environmentally rich fills. Also identified were two sides of a substantial Early Iron Age enclosure (see Figure 5) with an entranceway. This feature contained a small quantity of artefacts, and no contemporary features were identified within its confines.

Partially overlaying the Early Iron Age archaeology was a series of 30 Romano-British planting beds which were also present in the previous excavations, and a possible trackway which defined the northern extent of these features. Several groups of intercutting Romano-British quarry pits were also identified, and these truncated the planting beds and probable trackway. Very few artefacts were recovered from the Romano-British features suggesting they are some distance from any related settlement activity.

Medieval/post-medieval furrows, orientated northwest-southeast, crossed the excavation area, although these were heavily truncated, and no other contemporary features were identified. Figure 4 shows the archaeological phasing for the identified features from this excavation and the two previous areas, and Appendix 1 details the number, and type, of artefacts recovered from them.

Discussion

As with previous phases of excavation at Milton Landfill, very limited evidence for pre Early Iron Age activity was identified, and largely consisted of small quantities of residual worked flints, which suggests only background or transitory use of the immediate landscape during earlier periods.

The continuation of Early Iron Age settlement activity suggests there was widespread usage of this landscape during that period, although, as with previous phases of excavation, the number of features declines markedly towards the east, where the ground slopes gradually downwards. The presence of a substantial Early Iron Age

enclosure is unusual as no similar features have been identified in any of the previous excavations at Milton Landfill (Conner 1997-1999, Collins 2012). The apparent lack of internal features and low density of artefacts recovered from it does however; indicate it is most likely a stock enclosure.

The two parallel, northwest-southeast Romano-British ditches that define the northern extent of the planting beds are probably a trackway along the field edge. The planting beds cover a considerable area (see Figure 2), and clearly represent organised cultivation probably linked to the nearby villa located towards the south (Conner 1998).

Appendix 1 – Artefact Types and Quantities (2010-2012)

Table 1 below indicates the types and quantities of artefacts recovered from both the 2012 excavation, and the two previous phases of work carried out by the CAU.

	MLF 10	MLF 11	MLF 12	Total
Finds Type				
EBA Pot Sherds	0	0	10	10
EIA Pot Sherds	1877	707	480	3064
MIA? Pot Sherds	0	1	5	6
Roman Pot Sherds	5	3	4	12
Total Pot Sherds	1882	711	495	3088
Burnt Clay Fragments	38	15	5	58
Animal Bone Fragments	2029	478	270	2777
Worked Bone	1	0	0	1
Worked Flint	9	20	8	37
Burnt Flint	14	0	1	15
Slag	9	0	3	12
Burnt Stone	30	36	11	58
Worked Stone	0	0	1	1
Metal	2	0	0	2

Table 1: Artefact Types and Quantities.

Key: EBA – Early Bronze Age. EIA – Early Iron Age. MIA – Middle Iron Age.

Acknowledgements

The work was commissioned by Waste Recycling Group (WSG) and monitored on behalf of CHET by Andy Thomas. CAU project managers were Emma Beadsmoore and Alison Dickens, and site staff were Matt Jones, Chris Wakefield, Lizzie Middleton and Leanne Zecki. Thanks also to Bryan Crossan who surveyed the site and digitized the site plans.

References

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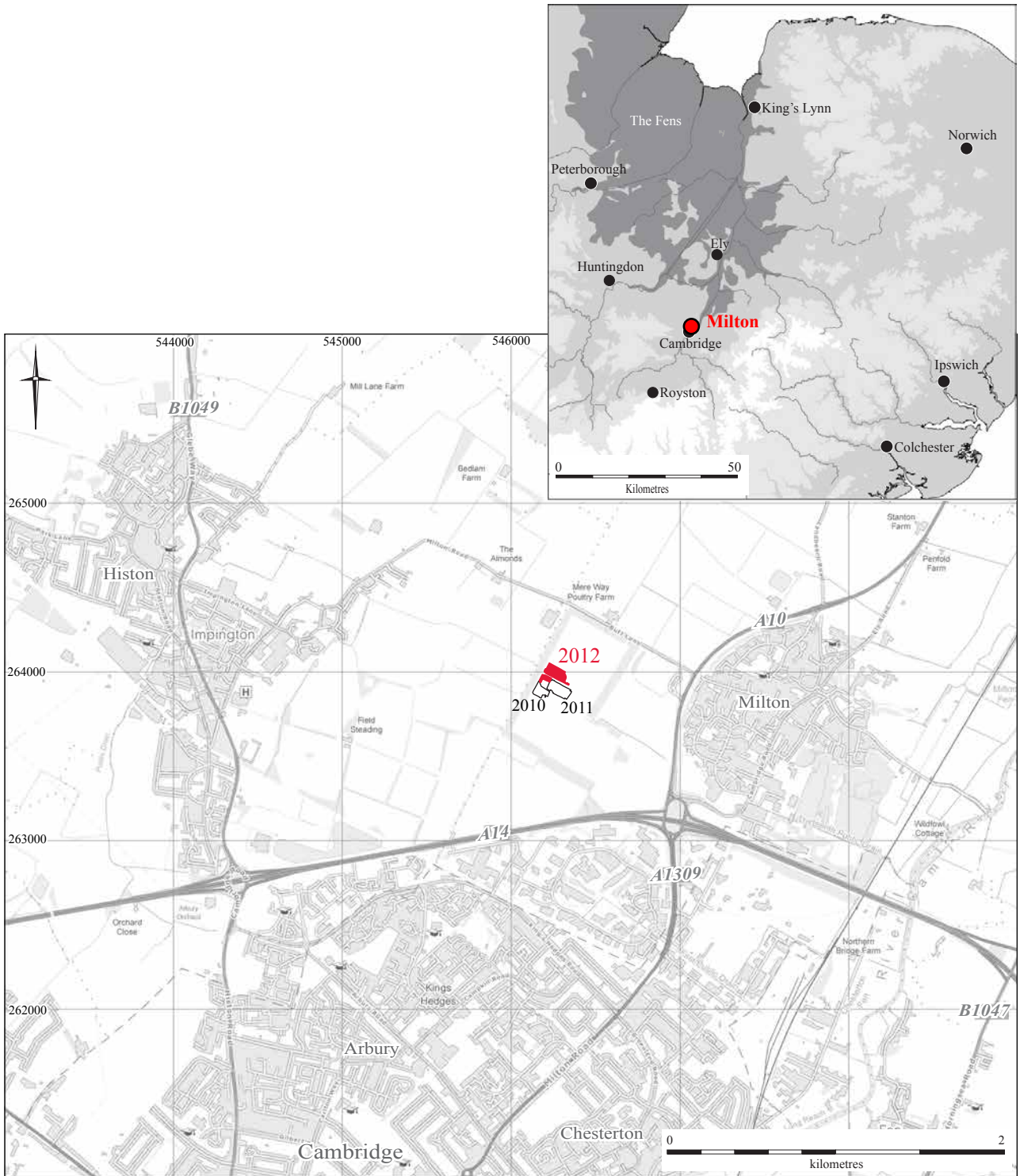


Figure 1. Location Plan

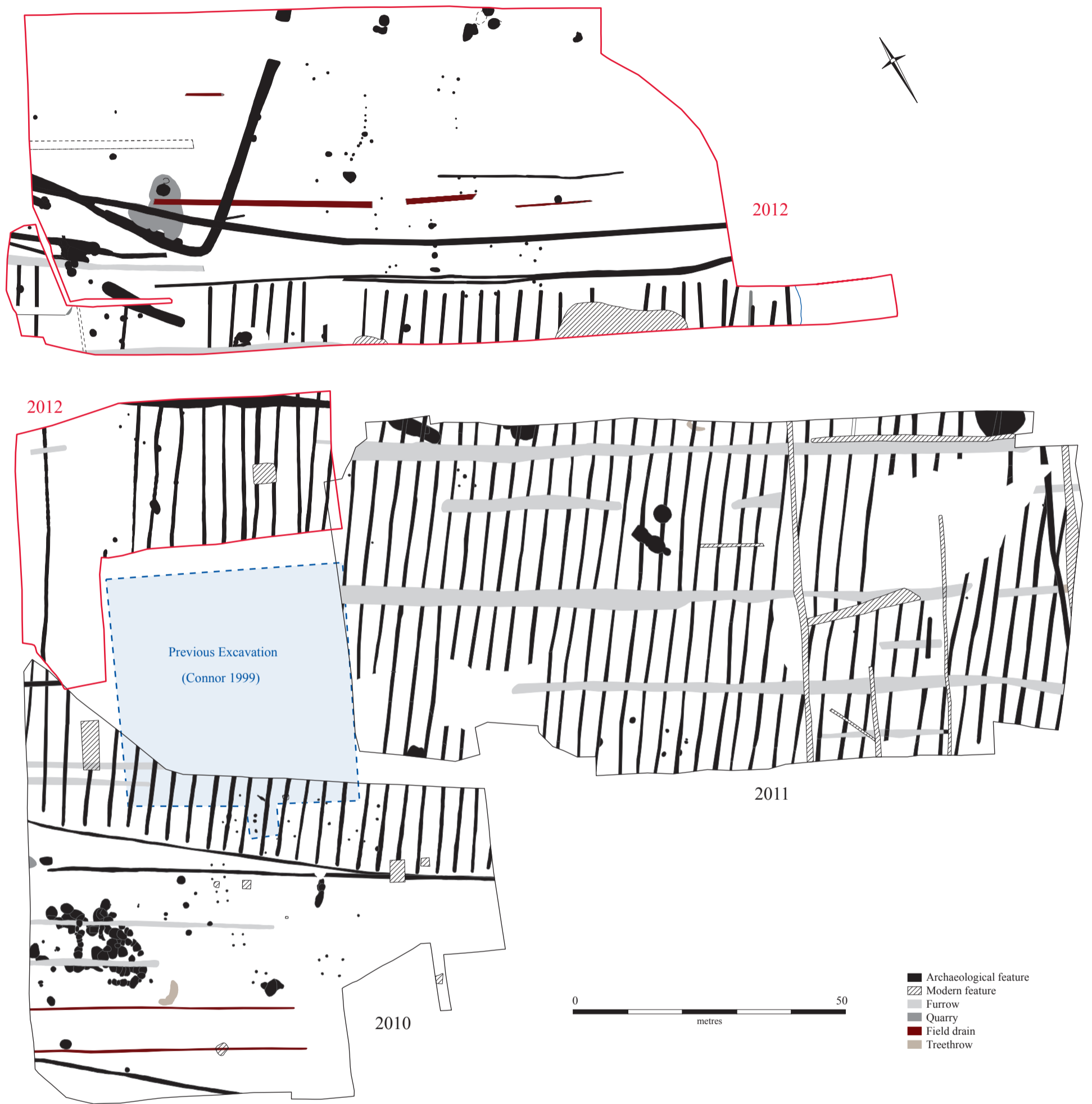


Figure 2. Plan of the 2012 excavation areas (red) also showing previous investigations

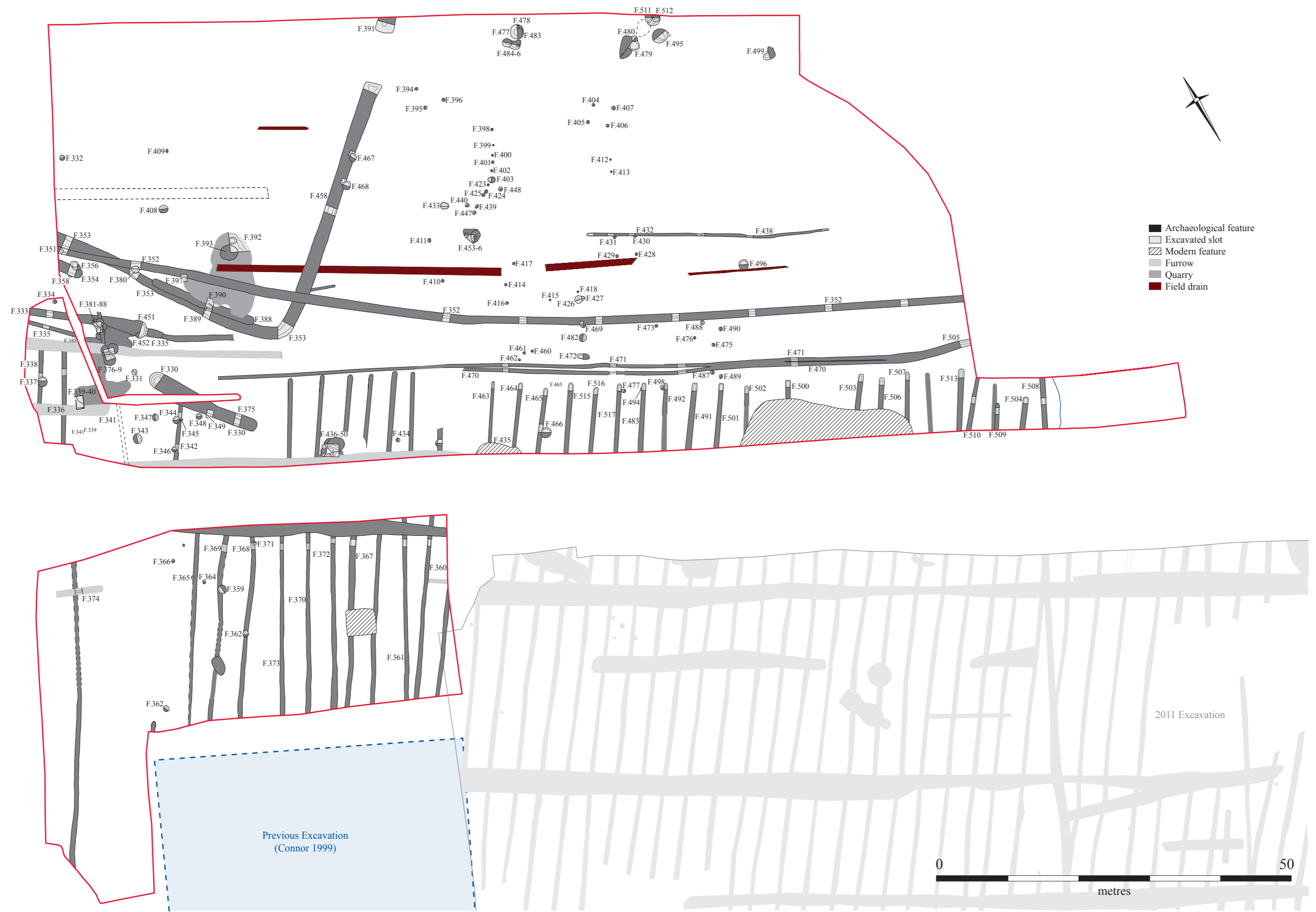


Figure 3. Plan of all 2012 features

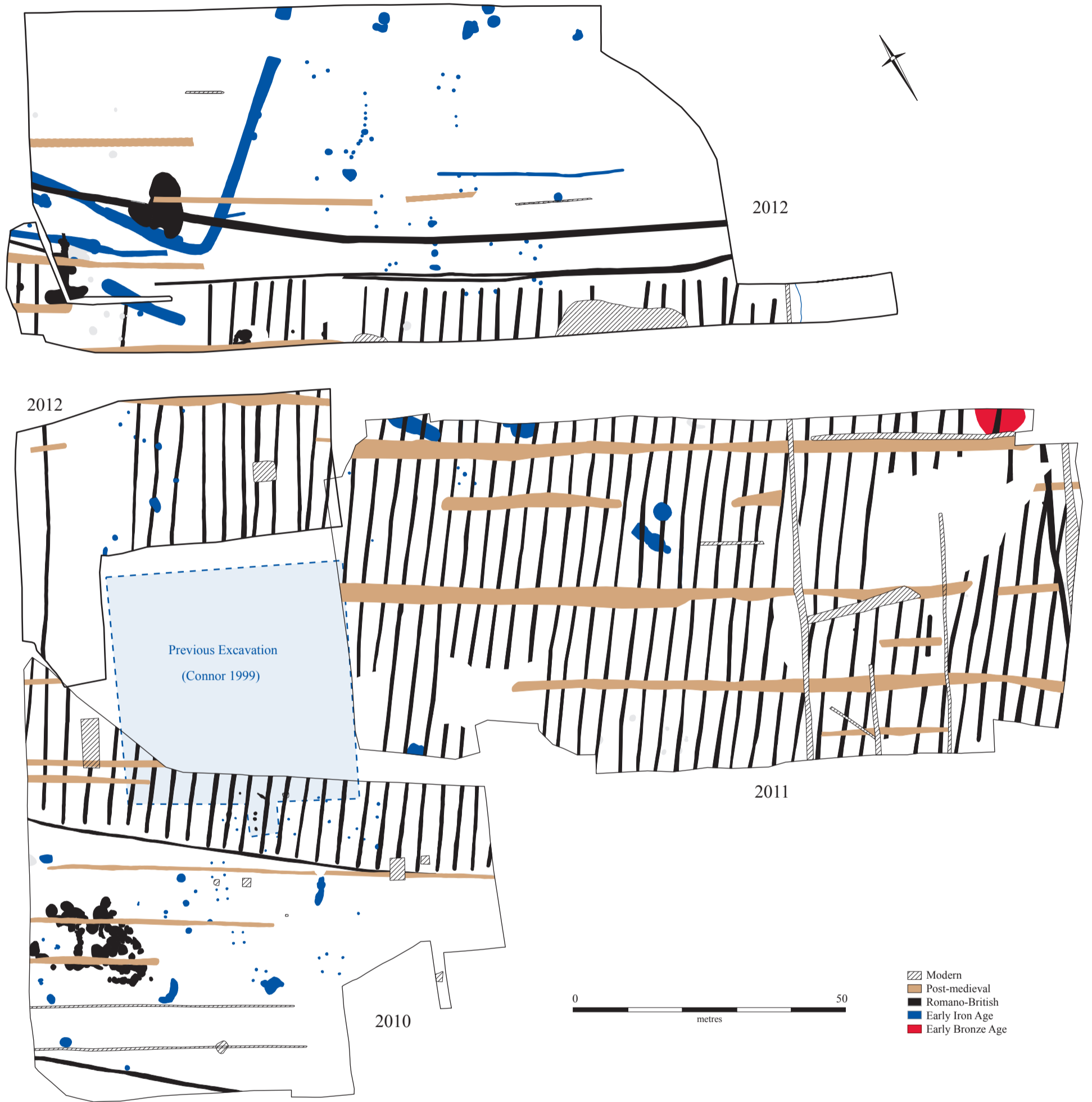


Figure 4. Phase plan of the 2010-2012 excavation areas



Figure 5. Feature F.458 (top) and Post Alignment consisting of F.398 to F.403

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Project details

Project name	Milton Landfill, Cambridge A Post Excavation Interim Statement
Short description of the project	Cambridge Archaeological Unit undertook an open-area excavation at Milton Landfill between the 13th November 2012 and 22nd January 2013 in advance of its expansion. This phase identified significant evidence for Early Iron Age activity including an enclosure ditch, several four-post structures and a number of pits, which were partially overlain by a series of Romano-British agricultural planting beds. An extensive area of intercutting probable Romano-British quarry pits was also identified together with the northern boundary for the planting beds.
Project dates	Start: 13-11-2012 End: 22-01-2013
Previous/future work	No / No
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Cultivated Land 4 - Character Undetermined
Monument type	STRUCTURE Early Iron Age
Monument type	PITS Early Iron Age
Monument type	AGRICULTURAL DITCHES Roman
Monument type	TRACKWAY Roman
Monument type	QUARRYING Roman
Monument type	ENCLOSURE Early Iron Age
Significant Finds	POT Early Iron Age
Significant Finds	ANIMAL BONE Early Iron Age
Investigation type	"Full excavation"
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE MILTON Milton Landfill, Cambridge
Postcode	CB4 6DQ
Study area	1.01 Hectares

Site coordinates TL 4625 6298 52 0 52 14 42 N 000 08 32 E Point

Height OD / Min: 11m Max: 11m
Depth

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 Alison Dickens

Project director/manager Emma Beadsmoore

Project supervisor Matthew Collins

Type of sponsor/funding body Landfill Operations Company

Name of sponsor/funding body Waste Recycling Group

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient Cambridge Archaeological Unit

Physical Archive ID MLF 12

Physical Contents "Animal Bones","Ceramics","Environmental","Industrial","Worked stone/lithics","other"

Digital Archive recipient Cambridge Archaeological Unit

Digital Archive ID MLF 12

Digital Contents "none"

Digital Media available "GIS","Images raster / digital photography","Survey","Text"

Paper Archive recipient Cambridge Archaeological Unit

Paper Archive ID MLF 12

Paper Contents "none"

Paper Media available "Context sheet","Map","Photograph","Plan","Report","Section","Survey ","Unpublished Text"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title	Milton Landfill, Cambridge A Post Excavation Interim Statement
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Collins, M.
Other bibliographic details	1155
Date	2013
Issuer or publisher	CAU
Place of issue or publication	CAU
Description	A4 Booklet. Pdf File

Entered by Matthew Collins (mc459@cam.ac.uk)

Entered on 10 April 2013

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