

Land Adjacent to Wilberforce Road Cambridge

An Archaeological Evaluation Assessment



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Land off Wilberforce Road, Cambridge (the former Grange Farm site)

An Archaeological Evaluation

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Summary

In December 2013 the Cambridge Archaeological Unit cut four evaluation trenches on land off Wilberforce Road, Cambridge, the site of the former Grange Farm. Other than modern features, presumably associated with the former farm buildings and farmyard, no archaeological evidence was found.

Acknowledgements

Cambridge Archaeological Unit were commissioned by the Cavaleri Partnership on behalf of St. John's College.

Alison Dickens was the CAU Project Manager. The author and Matt Collins excavated the site, Jon Moller surveyed the trenches and Bryan Crossan made the graphics.

Introduction

On the 2nd – 4th December 2013 Cambridge Archaeological Unit undertook a programme of evaluation at the former Grange Farm site, Wilberforce Road, Cambridge. The work was commissioned by the Cavaleri Partnership on behalf of St. John's College and carried out in response to a brief issued by the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team (McConnell 2013) and a Written Scheme of Investigation from CAU (Dickens 2013).

Location, topography and geology

Centred on grid reference 543468/258449 the site is located at the southern end of Wilberforce Road, on the western edge of the city of Cambridge (see figure 1). The area of the PDA is on a gradual incline; the land gradually sloping down c. 1.5m from the northern towards the southern edge of the area. The underlying solid geology is Gault Clay and Upper Greensand (BGS GeoIndex in Appleby 2013).

Archaeological Background

The archaeological background has been previously documented in an Archaeological Desktop Assessment (Appleby 2013) so only a brief summary is provided here.

Prehistoric (up to 43AD)

Within the wider landscape there is scant evidence for early prehistoric activity; a few find spots are recorded on the Cambridge Historic Environment Record (e.g. 8691 & 8693) and sporadic features have also been identified in nearby excavations e.g. University Library bookstore (MCB5923), with a small amount of residual late Bronze Age pottery and flint work also discovered during the High Cross evaluation nearby (ECB1014, ECB1015, MCB15361, MCB15362, MCB15891).

Iron Age settlements have been found in the vicinity of the proposed development area e.g. Vicars Farm (Lucas 2002; Lucas & Whittaker 2001, Whittaker & Evans 1999), Queens College Ports Ground (Mackay 2002) and Highcross (Armour 2001).

Romano-British (43- c450AD)

A Roman road crosses the PDA northeast-southwest (CHER 04405 MCB5338; Palmer 2001a, 2001b). In the wider landscape little Roman material has been discovered apart from the significant site at Vicars Farm. Here settlement spanning the 1st to the 5th centuries, along with associated shrine and cemeteries, has been excavated (Lucas 2002; Lucas & Whittaker 2001, Whittaker & Evans 1999).

Medieval (c450-1539)

No known settlement sites from the early medieval period have been discovered close to the PDA however find spots and Saxon features suggestive of nearby settlement have been discovered within the landscape, e.g. Leckhampton House (Timberlake 2011).

There is extensive evidence for ridge and furrow across the west fields of Cambridge (Hall and Ravensdale 1976) and is visible in aerial photographs immediately adjacent to the PDA.

Post Medieval (1540- present)

The earliest evidence for a farm on the site is on Bakers map (1830AD), buildings are then visible in the cartographic and photographic evidence until the 1990s (Appleby 2013).

Methodology

Four trenches were machine excavated with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket. The trench locations were strategically placed due to services, trees and other practical limitations on the ground. Each trench was planned and recorded in full accordance with Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs and Excavations (Gurney 2003).

Trench sheets were completed recording section profiles and geological variances. Scale plans at 1:50 were drawn and digital photographs were taken.

Results

Four trenches totalling 112.5m in length were excavated. Apart from modern features, presumably associated with the former Grange Farm buildings and farm yard, no archaeological evidence was found.

The total depth of deposits was comparable within all trenches but the deposits themselves varied across the site. The topsoil was an average of 0.3m deep, beneath this a thin subsoil was present in all four trenches, as was a pale greyish brown silty clay alluvial layer. This alluvium varied from a depth of 0.21m in trench 3 to 0.55m in trench 2. Trenches 1 and 2 contained layers of made up ground, often replacing the alluvium. The underlying geology was blue grey clay with yellow sand mottling.

The natural topography of the site slopes down towards the southern edge of the PDA. The majority of the modern building remains were located in Trench 1 & 2 toward the top of the slope, along with the made up ground.

Trench 1

42.6m long this trench was orientated north-south. The trench contained two modern ditches, two modern pits, three modern walls and 3 service pipes, see figure 2. No archaeological features of any antiquity were discovered. The height differential between the two ends of this trench illustrates the gradient within the proposed development area 12.13 (northern end) 10.55 (southern end).

Trench 2

28.4m long this trench contained 4 modern services pipes and associated ditches, and three modern walls. The natural clay was only visible in the western half of the trench due to the number of modern services and walls in the western half. No archaeological features of any antiquity were discovered.

Trench 3

24m long this trench contained 1 modern ditch, 3 modern pits, including a modern small animal burial (not excavated), and a large culvert or drain. No archaeological features of any antiquity were discovered.

Trench 4

17.5m long this trench contained no archaeological features of any date.

Discussion

Despite the proximity of the Roman Road and surrounding archaeological landscape no archaeological features were discovered. Grange Farm has clearly left a large imprint within the ground; the buildings and other associated features are still very apparent, some only just beneath the topsoil. The limitations of the services and their truncation by the farmhouse may have affected our ability to identify any archaeological remains.

Excavating in the fields of west Cambridge it is usually expected that some presence of furrows or agricultural practises would be visible however at Grange Farm the depth of the alluvium and the nature of trenching has prevented this from being the case.

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Appendix: Trench descriptions

Trench 1		
General Description	Orientation	N/S
The trench contained two modern ditches, two modern pits, three modern walls and 3 service pipes. No archaeological features of any antiquity were discovered.	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.27
	Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.25
	Avg. Alluvium Depth (m)	0.8
	Avg depth of made up ground (m)	0.26
	Width (m)	1.8m
	Length (m)	42.6
	Avg. Height mOD	11.34

Trench 2		
General Description	Orientation	W/E
This trench contained 4 modern services pipes and associated ditches, and three modern walls. The natural clay was only visible in the western half of the trench due to the number of modern services and walls in the western half. No archaeological features of any antiquity were discovered.	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.27
	Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.15
	Avg. Alluvium Depth (m)	0.55
	Avg depth of made up ground (m)	0.55
	Width (m)	0.8
	Length (m)	28.4
	Avg. Height mOD	12.04

Trench 3		
General Description	Orientation	N/S
This trench contained 4 modern services pipes and associated ditches, and three modern walls. The natural clay was only visible in the western half of the trench due to the number of modern services and walls in the western half. No archaeological features of any antiquity were discovered	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.33
	Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.23
	Avg. Alluvium Depth (m)	0.25
	Avg depth of made up ground (m)	-
	Width (m)	1.8
	Length (m)	24
	Avg. Height mOD	10.78

Trench 4		
General Description	Orientation	NW/SE
This trench contained no archaeological features of any date	Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.2
	Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.26
	Avg. Alluvium Depth (m)	30.5
	Avg depth of made up ground (m)	-
	Width (m)	1.8
	Length (m)	17.5
	Avg. Height mOD	10.8m

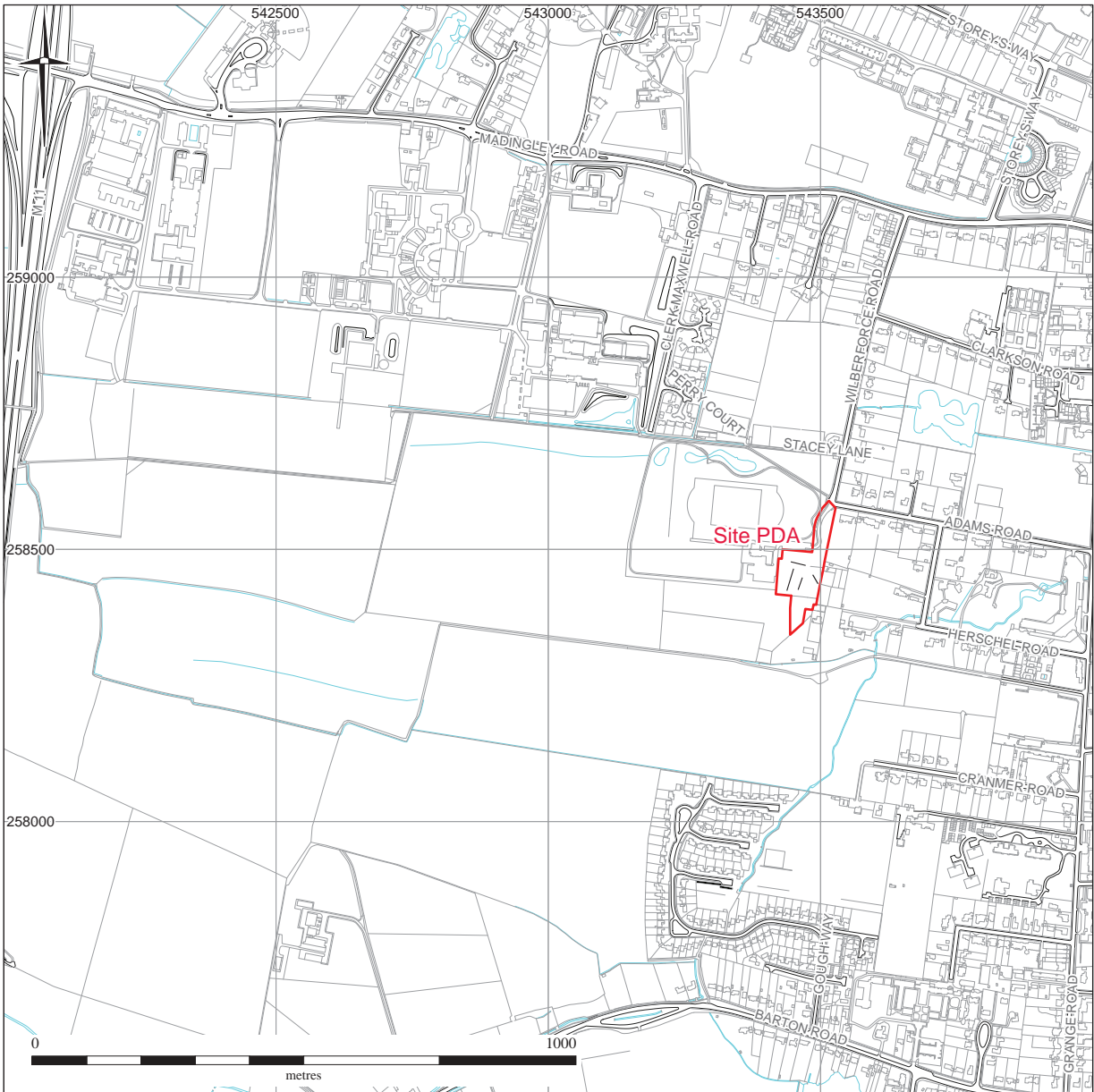


Figure 1. Location plan

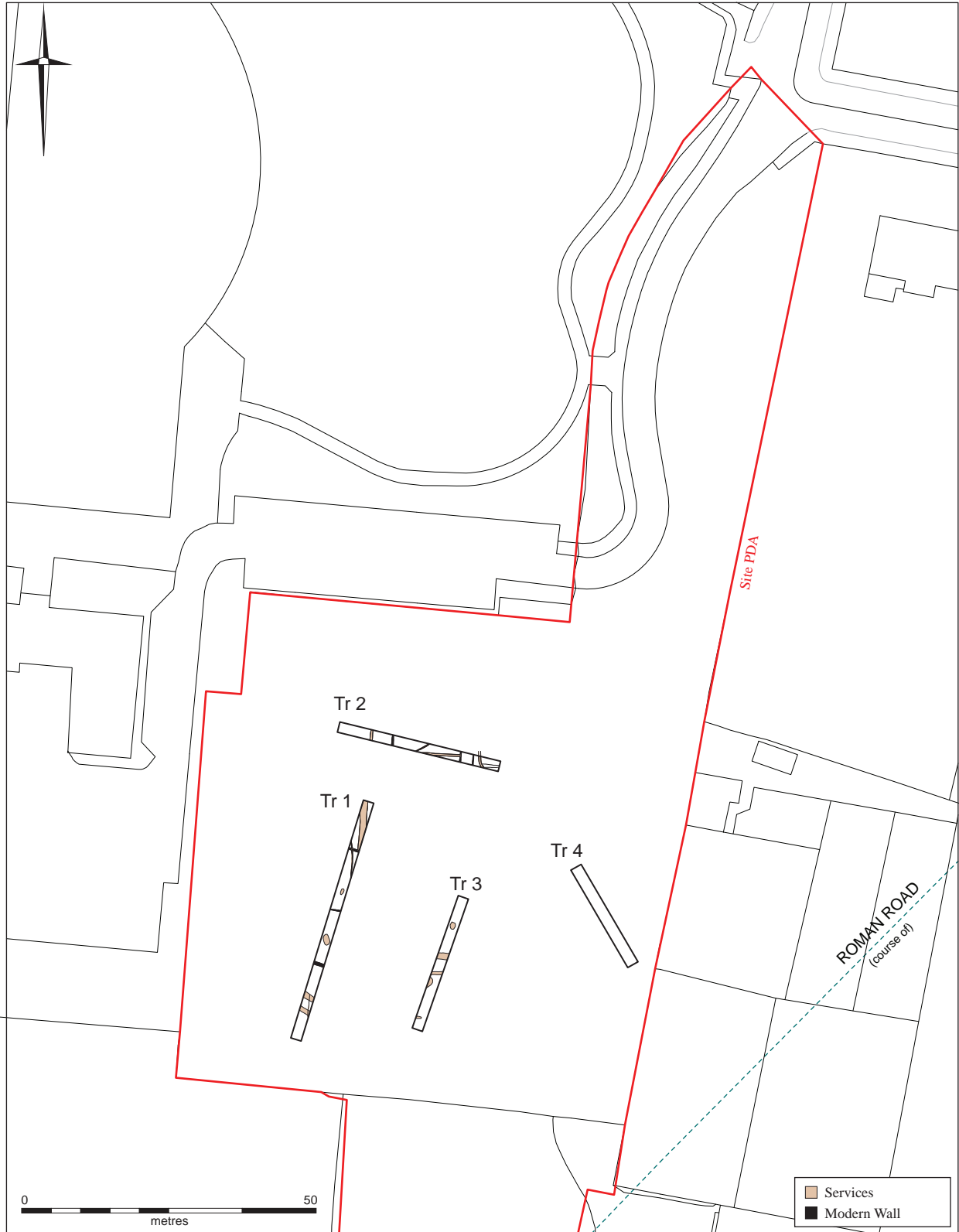


Figure 2. Trench location plan.



Figure 3. Photograph of trench 1.

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Project details

Project name	Land adjacent to Wilberforce Road, Cambridge. An Archaeological Evaluation
Short description of the project	On the 2nd December 2013 Cambridge Archaeological Unit undertook a programme of evaluation at Grange Farm, Wilberforce Road, Cambridge. With a view to testing the archaeological potential of the proposed development area four trenches were cut. No archaeological features were found.
Project dates	Start: 02-12-2013 End: 04-12-2013
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	WIR13 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 15 - Other
Monument type	FARM HOUSE Modern
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	""Sample Trenches""
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF
Position in the planning process	Pre-application

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE CAMBRIDGE CAMBRIDGE Grange Farm, Wilberforce Road
Postcode	CB3 9AD
Study area	0 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 543468 258449 51 0 51 54 33 N 000 14 38 E Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 10.55m Max: 12.13m

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	Matthew Collins
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Physical Archive recipient	N/A
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Store
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"GIS", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Store
Paper Contents	"none"
Paper Media available	"Photograph", "Plan", "Report"

Project bibliography 1

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