

Long Road 6th Form College, Cambridge

An Archaeological Evaluation Assessment



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Contents

Summary	3
Introduction	3
<i>Location and Topography</i>	3
<i>Methodology</i>	3
<i>Archaeological and Historical Background</i>	4
Results	5
Discussion	6
Conclusion	7
Acknowledgements	8
References	9
Graphics	10

Summary

An Archaeological Evaluation was carried out at Long Road Sixth Form college, Cambridge between 17th to the 21st February 2014 by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU). The work was a response to Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Service request for a programme of trial trenching to evaluate the land south of the college. The work was undertaken as part of the construction of an all-weather sports pitch. The development area was within an area of known archaeological interest with sites to the east, north and south revealing Iron Age and Roman enclosures and field systems (Evans, Mackay, Webley 2004). Three trenches were excavated within the development area, with a total area of 270 square meters, revealing seven features, which included five linear ditches and two small pits. Most of the features were on similar alignments to the Late Iron Age/Early Roman field systems/enclosures, found at the Hutchinson site (excavated by the CAU) to the east, including two parallel ditches in alignment with the Roman road.

Introduction

Location and topography

An Archaeological Evaluation was undertaken on land to the south of Long Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge, on the current playing fields. The work was carried out as part of the construction of an all-weather sports pitch. Work commenced on February 17th and finished on February 21th 2014.

The development area is located south of Cambridge centred at National Grid Reference TL 45999 55348 and c.15m AOD. (Figure.1).

Geologically, the site was located on chalk with surface natural of chalky marl patches within orange gravelly silt; the excavation area was at a height of between 16.31m and 15.45m OD (Ordnance Datum).

Methodology

The trial trenching comprised of three 50m trenches, with a width of 1.80m, totalling an area of 270m². Two of the trenches were east-west aligned, whilst the middle trench was north-south (Figures 2 and 3). The area was CAT scanned prior to machining, in order to identify the presence of any active services of which there were none.

The topsoil (0.26m-0.40m) and subsoil (0.24m-0.40m) were removed under constant archaeological supervision by a tracked 360° machine using a 1.80m wide toothless bucket. The evaluation trenches were surveyed into the OS grid and a contour survey was undertaken with an Electronic Distance Measurer (EDM) and Global Positioning System. Recording followed the standard CAU trench and context sheet using the CAU modified Museum of London system (Spence 1994). Supplemented

by hand drawn plans at a scale of 1:50 and sections at a scale of 1:10. A digital photographic record was compiled of all features and trenches.

All features were excavated by hand, with a minimum of 50% of any discrete features and 1.0m slots through all linear features. All work was carried out in strict accordance with the Health and Safety legislation in line with the FAME Manual of Health and Safety in Field Archaeology 2010.

Archaeological and Historical Background

Long Road Sixth Form College is in an area of known archaeological activity. Documented in a Desk Based Assessment (Abrams 2008), and as a result only briefly summarised below. Evidence for prehistoric activity is indicated by a background of Mesolithic and Neolithic finds from surrounding sites to the west, east and south (CHER 16139, CHER 04738, CHER 17843, CHER 17847). Whilst Middle Bronze Age remains comprise a settlement and triple ditched enclosure (CHER 15770, CHER 17915), with another enclosure just to the south at the MRC site (Collins 2009), which also exposed an Iron Age and Early Saxon settlement.

However it is the Iron Age and Roman remains that have more pertinent to the development area, due to the known activity from the Hutchinson site to the east (CHER 17888, Evans, Mackay, Webley, 2004) and an excavation undertaken by Cambridgeshire County Council on the site of the Sixth Form College (Abrams, 2000). A Late Iron Age settlement was identified in the west and central areas of the Hutchinson site composed of a series of curvilinear ditched enclosures as well as at least two roundhouses and a series of U-shaped enclosures (Evans et al 2008). However the main interest lay in the Roman remains, particularly the Roman road identified by two parallel ditches and thought to continue into the development area (Figure 2). The Roman road identified was expected in the north-south aligned trench of the evaluation. The Roman road may have been predated by an Iron Age track-way. A Roman field-system was also identified, representing at least two phases of activity, on a north/northeast to south/southwest alignment and a east/northeast to west/southwest alignment, these ditches were agricultural in nature and consisted largely of drove-way related ditches, whilst the boundaries were wide and shallow.

The site further west on the site of Long Road Sixth Form College revealed a series of northeast to southwest, east-west to north-south aligned ditches, which fit well with the Iron Age field systems and enclosures. Roman field systems were also identified, including two parallel ditches, in line with the Roman road ditch system (Abrams, 2000), (Figure 2).

Results

Trench 1

Trench 1 was east-west aligned, 50m long and 1.80m wide, with a depth of 0.7m at the western end to 0.65m at the eastern end. The topsoil was dark grey brown silt, with occasional angular stones and a friable compaction. The subsoil was mid-orange brown sandy silt, with moderate angular stone inclusions and a friable compaction. The natural geological layer was orange brown sandy gravel with chalky marly seams and mid-brown silty patches, (Figure 3 for trench plan).

Four features were located within Trench 1; two ditches, **F.1** and **F.2** and two small pits **F.5** and **F.6**.

F.1 was a north-south aligned linear, 3.80m wide and 0.25m deep. (Figure.4&5). The wide, shallow ditch is reminiscent of the Roman north-south aligned drove-way ditches on the Hutchinson site. The fill was mid-red/brown silt containing two finds, a piece of Roman box tile and a cattle sized limb shaft fragment, most likely tibia. The shallowness of the ditch could be due to levelling of the land at the time of the playing field's construction. The ditch had been cut by a small concave pit, F.6. 0.35m x 0.81m in width and 0.26m in depth. No finds were recovered from the pit but the feature may have been part of a series of Roman pits along with F.5.

It seems likely that F.2, a northwest-southeast aligned gully, extended from F.1, however the relationship between the two lay outside the trench. The ditches are comparable to the Early Roman field systems on the Hutchinson site (Evans, Mackay, Webley, 2004). F.2, the gully, probably acted as some sort of drainage system. It contained one piece of Roman pottery. In the northern part of the trench, gully F.2 was cut by F.5, a shallow concave pit, 0.64m x 1.10m in width with a depth of 0.25m. The pit contained a mid orange silt fill with occasional stones and charcoal inclusions. Similar in its nature to F.6, the feature could potentially be part of a series of Roman pits. (Figure 4).

Trench 2

Trench 2 was north-south aligned, 50m long, 1.80m wide and 0.52m deep at the northern end and 0.56m at the southern. The topsoil was dark grey brown silt, with occasional angular stones and a friable compaction. The subsoil was mid-orange brown sandy silt, with moderate angular stone inclusions and a friable compaction. The natural geological layer was orange brown sandy gravel with chalky marly seams and mid-brown silty patches, becoming more gravelly towards the south.

Three features were located within the trench; three ditches, two of which were northwest-southeast aligned, **F. 3** and **F.7**, whilst the third ditch, **F.4**, was aligned east-west. (Figure.3).

F. 3 is a northwest to southeast aligned ditch, with a v-shaped profile, 1m wide and 0.28m deep, containing no finds, (Figure.5) It is along the same alignment as one of the Roman road ditches located on the Hutchinson site. It seems likely that the ditch represents the base of the southern-most ditch of the Roman road, however there was no evidence of an agger or road surface to the north so it could have been more of a track-way rather than anything substantial. The ditch resembles one located further west, in the County Council evaluation (Abrams, 2000), **F.101**. Despite the ditch being slightly smaller in width, a similar alignment and its proximity to **F.103**, laying 7.0m apart bears similarities to the relationship between F.3 and F.7, (although these sit 12m apart). Further east on the Hutchinson site, the ditches were approx. 15m apart suggesting that the trackway/road is narrowing as it extends east (See Figure 2).

The corresponding ditch to this road/track-way, F.7 is also northwest to southeast aligned, however it had gradual sloping sides and a flat base, which again bears a resemblance to F. 103 identified in the County Council evaluation (Abrams, 2000). It was 1.15m wide and 0.27m deep. It has been heavily obscured almost to the point of being hidden by a silty hollow. No finds were recovered in either of the ditches.

Between F.3 and F.7 lies F. 4, an east -west aligned ditch. A smooth concave ditch with a rounded base, 0.75m wide, 0.27m deep. The ditch probably pre-dates the Roman track-way and could potentially be an earlier phase, dating from the Late Iron Age. Again the ditch was truncated and yielded no finds. (See Figure.3 for trench plan).

Trench 3

Trench 3 was east-west aligned, and 50m long, 1.80m wide and 0.63m deep to the west and 0.64m to the east. It contained no features and the natural geological layer was an orange brown sandy gravel with chalky marly seams and mid-brown silty patches all along its length. The topsoil was dark grey brown silt, with occasional angular stones and a friable compaction. The subsoil was mid-orange brown sandy silt, with moderate angular stone inclusions and a friable compaction. (See Figure. 3 for plan).

Discussion

The series of ditches and pits that were revealed in the evaluation at Long Road Sixth Form College have added to the understanding of the archaeology to the south of Cambridge. The density of archaeology did not match that exposed at the Hutchinson site, although some features potentially extended from the site into the development area. The parallel ditches, F.3, F.4 and F.7 identified in Trench 2, in particular, seem to be a continuation of the Late Iron Age/Conquest Period track-

way/Roman road identified at the Hutchinson site (Evans et al, 2004). The location and profile of the ditches correlates, therefore suggesting that this 'Road' continues westwards. The evaluation undertaken by the County Council (Abrams 2000) also revealed two parallel ditches on the same alignment. The ditches were also northwest-southeast aligned, however the Road seems to be narrowing as it progresses westwards. The ditches were 12m apart within Trench 2 of the evaluation, widening to 15m on the Hutchinson site and narrowing again to the west, to 7m, (See Figure 2).

The ditches revealed in Trench 1 bare a resemblance to the Early Roman field systems identified at the Hutchinson site (Evans, Mackay, Webley, 2004). F.1 was wide and shallow, and could be a drove-way ditch, or some sort of boundary; it certainly seems that the archaeology is denser to the east of the ditch. All the artefactual evidence from the site was recovered from the ditches in Trench.1. The Roman box tile, from within F.1 had grooving, on which plaster was applied, and was probably from the heating system of a building. However not enough evidence was recovered to confirm a building near the development area.

The land was relatively flat, ranging from 15.45m to 16.31m OD, and the shallow nature of the features suggests that levelling of the land had taken place when the playing fields were constructed.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the evaluation at Long Road Sixth Form College added to our archaeological understanding of the area south of Cambridge. The features revealed confirmed the presence of Iron Age ditch systems and Conquest Period/Early Roman communication routes. The track-way/road suggested by the parallel northwest-southeast aligned ditches was consistent with those identified to the east at the Hutchinson site (Evans, Mackay, Webley, 2004) and the New Addenbrooke's site, (Cras'ter 1967). In addition to bearing a resemblance to ditches identified in the County Council evaluation further to the west (Abrams, 2000).

The lack of archaeology to the south may be due to the location of the trenches, rather than the absence of any, as sites further south such as MRC (Collins, 2009) revealed Middle Bronze Age, Iron Age and Early Saxon settlement and ditch enclosures. The truncation of the land may also contribute to the low density of features.

The evaluation can contribute to the broader understanding of the archaeological landscape, with the evidence supporting the presence of a Roman road and potentially an earlier Iron Age track-way, and Late Iron Age/Early Roman field systems. The evaluation also helps define the extent of archaeological activity and supports existing interpretations of activity within the landscape.

Acknowledgements

The archaeological work was commissioned by Gary Woolley on behalf of Long Road Sixth Form College and requested by the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Service. The Project Manager was Emma Beadsmoore, and the archaeology was excavated by Jack Outram. The evaluation was monitored by Dan McConnell of Cambridgeshire County Council. The site was surveyed by Jonathon Moller and the graphics produced by Bryan Crossan.

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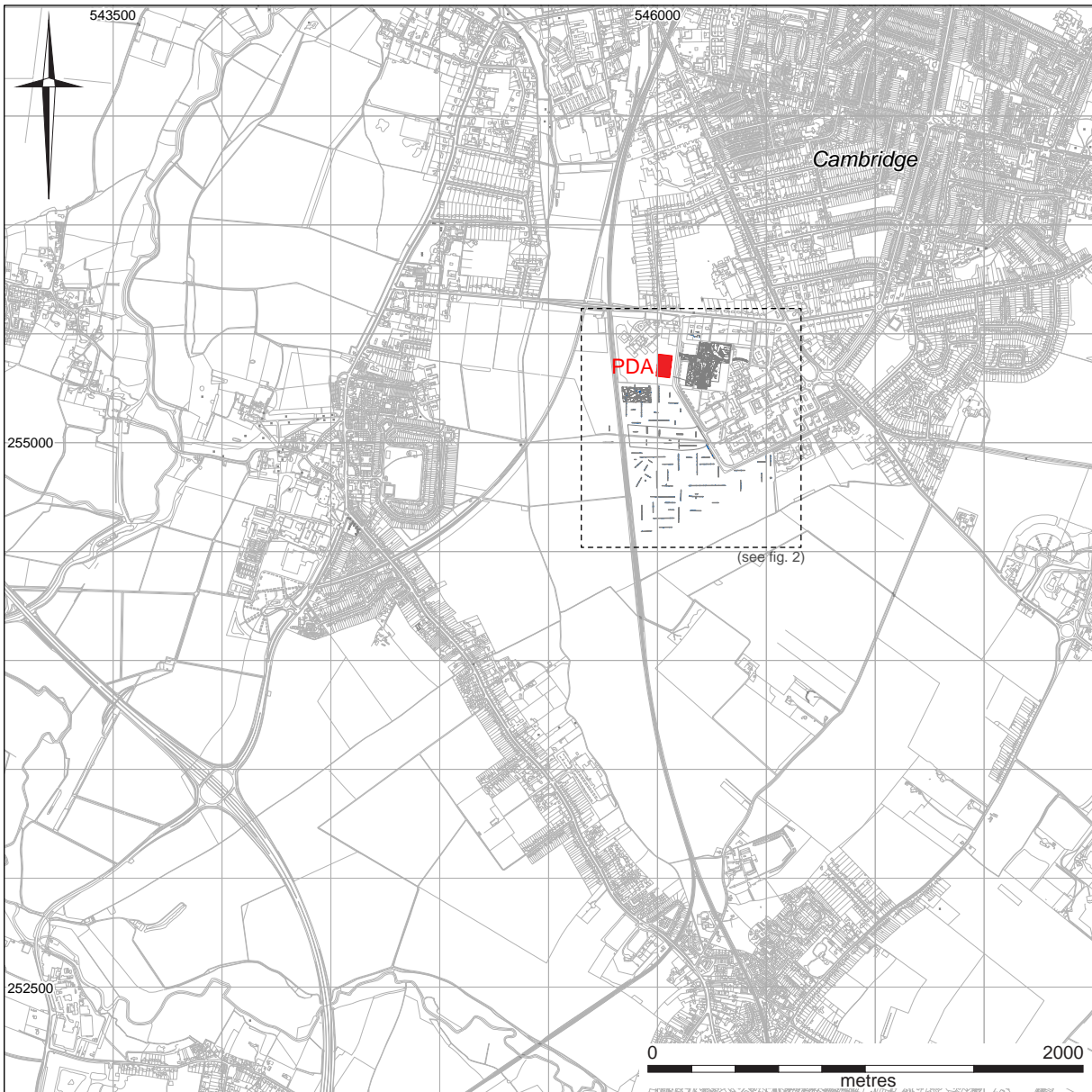
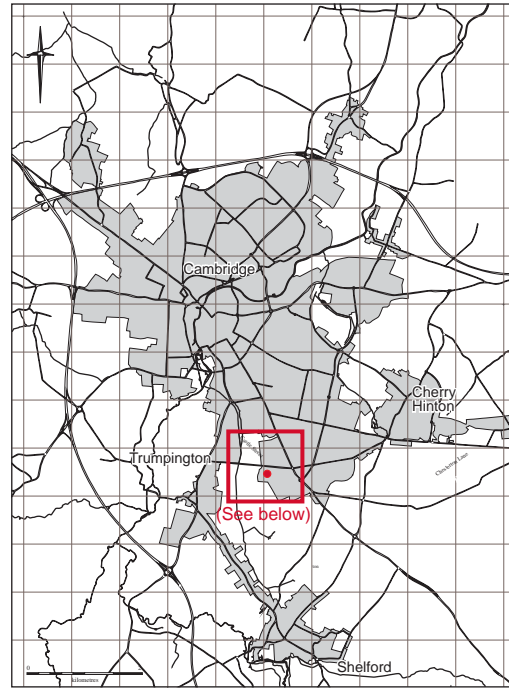
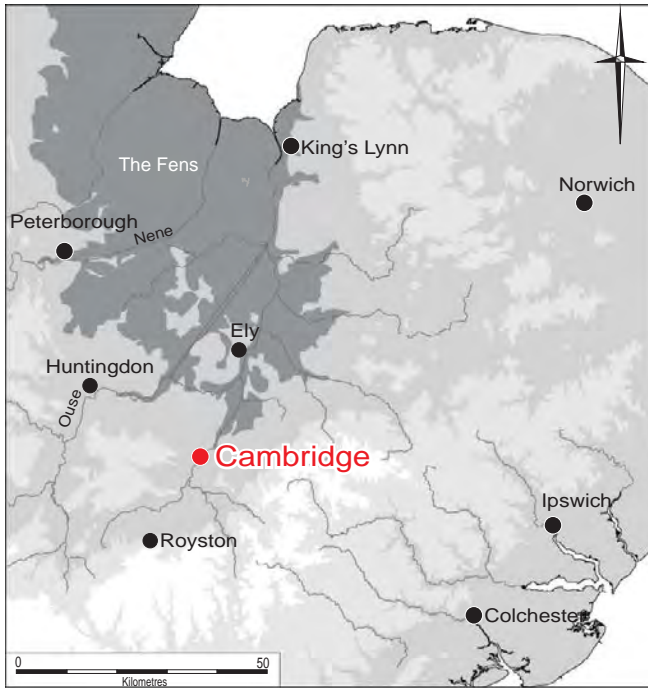


Figure 1. Location Plan.

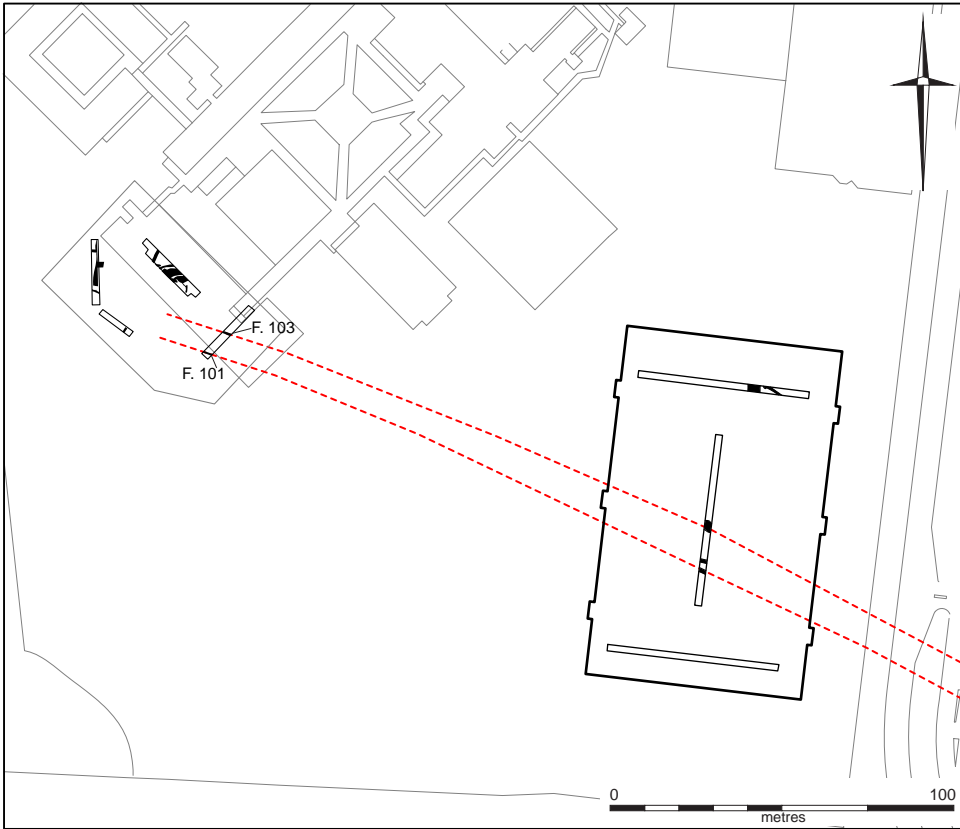
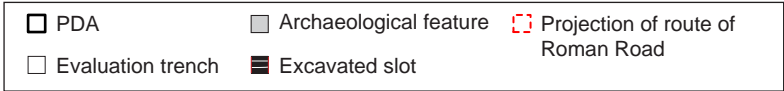


Figure 2. Trench Plan.

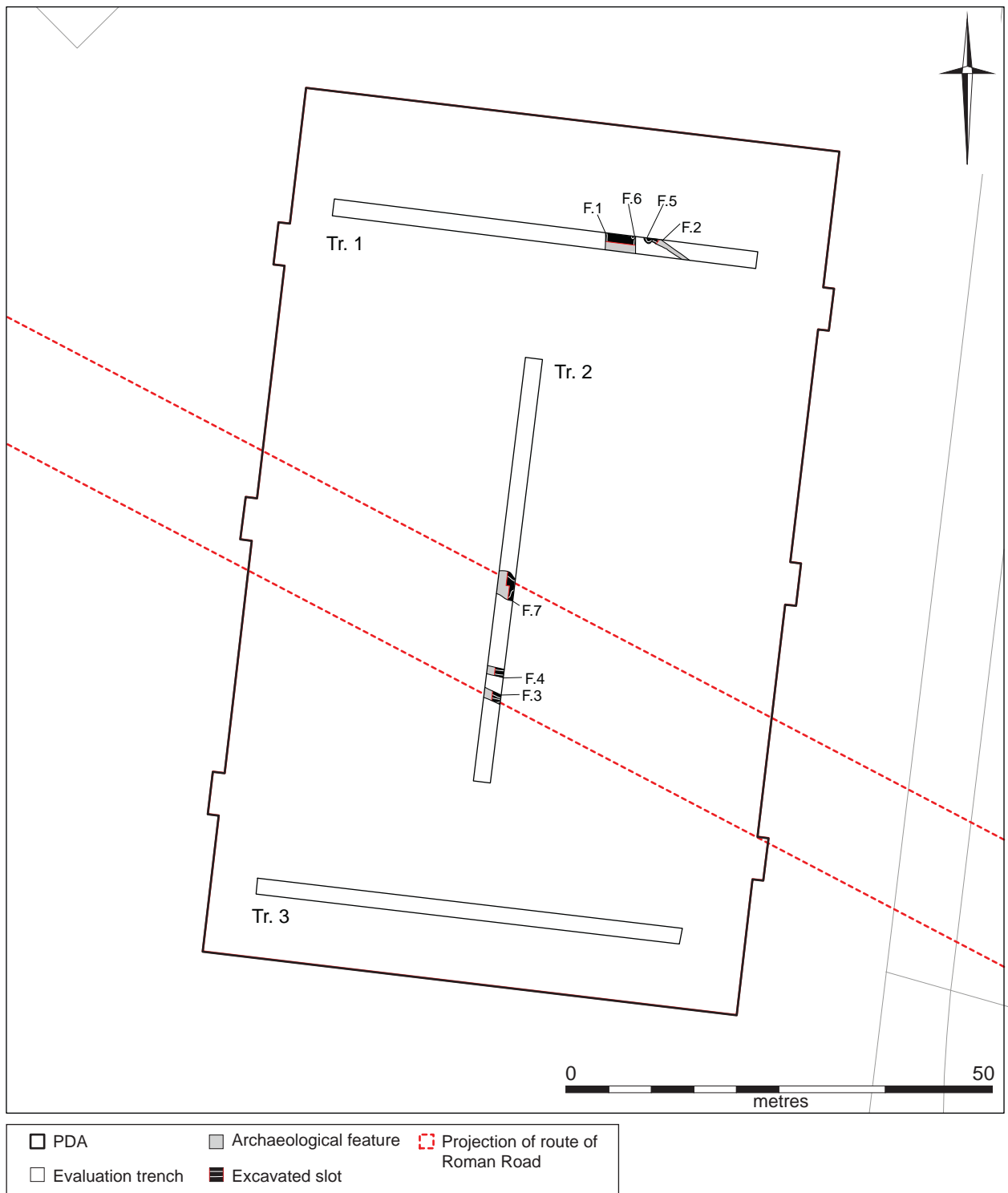


Figure 3. Trench Plan.

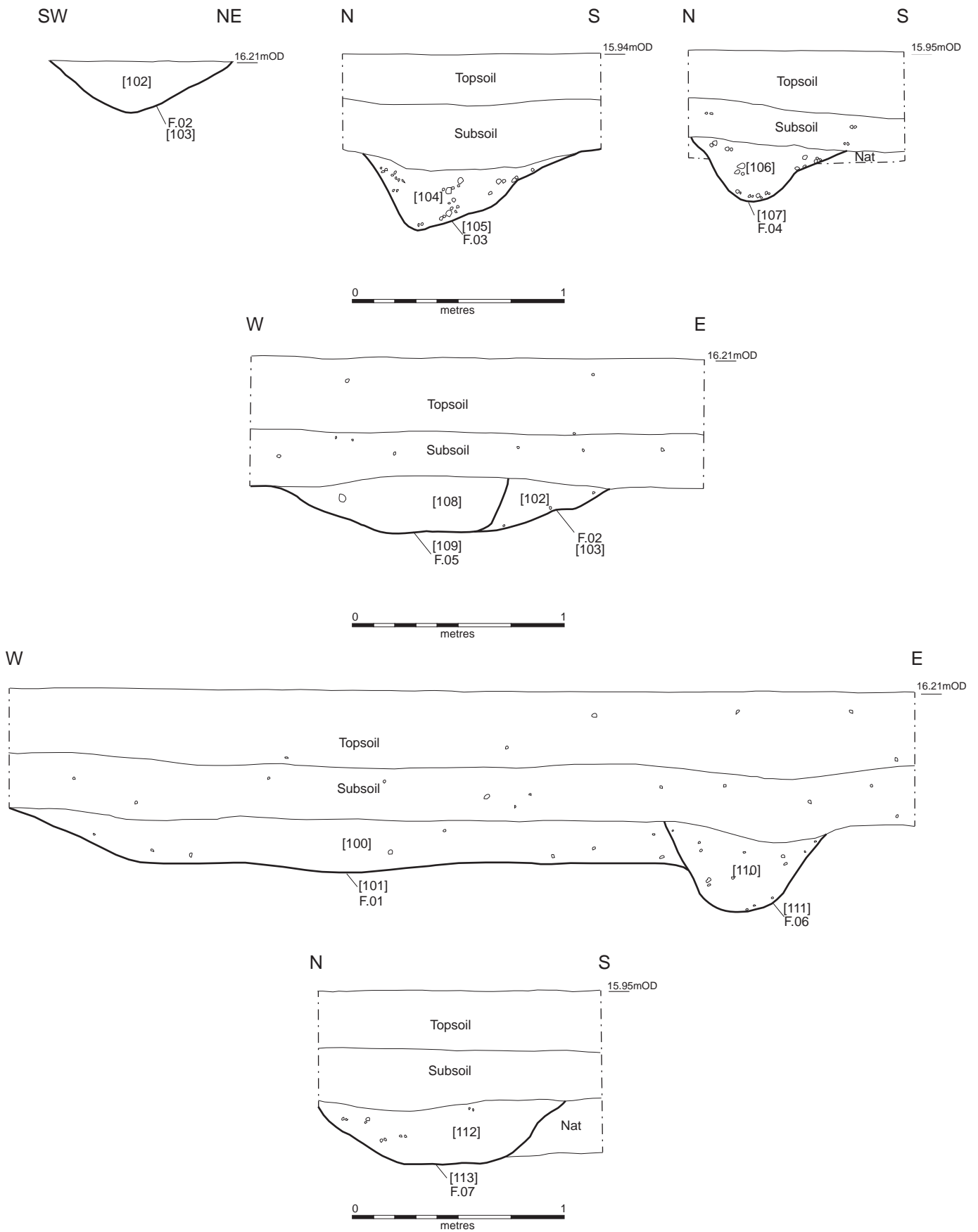


Figure 4. Selected sections.



Figure 5. Photographs of ditch F. 1 and Pit F.6 in Trench 1 (Top) and F.3 in Trench 2 (Below).

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OASIS ID: cambridg3-173600

Project details

Project name	Long Road Sixth Form College
Short description of the project	An Archaeological Evaluation was carried out at Long Road Sixth Form college, Cambridge between 17th to the 21st February 2014 by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU). The work was commissioned by The Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team and a programme of trial trenching was required to evaluate the land south of the college. The work was undertaken as part of the construction of an all-weather sports pitch. This was in an area of known archaeological interest with sites to the East, North and South revealing Iron Age and Roman enclosures and field systems (Evans, Mackay, Webley 2004). A total of three trenches were excavated with an area of 270 square meters, which revealed seven features. These included five linear ditches and two small pits. Most of the features were on similar alignments to the Late Iron Age/Early Roman field systems/enclosures, as found at the Hutchinson site (excavated by the CAU) to the East. Including two parallel ditches in alignment with the Roman Road.
Project dates	Start: 17-02-2014 End: 21-02-2014
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	LRC14 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	ECB4124 - HER event no.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 14 - Recreational usage
Monument type	ROAD/ TRACK-WAY Roman
Monument type	BOUNDARY DITCHES Roman
Significant Finds	TILE Roman
Significant Finds	POT Roman
Methods & techniques	"Targeted Trenches"
Development type	Public building (e.g. school, church, hospital, medical centre, law courts etc.)

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 Long Road Sixth Form College

Postcode CB28PX

Study area 270.00 Square metres

Site coordinates TL 45988 55320 52.1763888889 0.135277777778 52 10 35 N 000 08 07 E Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 16.14m Max: 16.91m

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 Lizzy Middleton

Type of sponsor/funding body Developer

Name of sponsor/funding body Long Road Sixth Form College

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient Cambridge Archaeological Unit

Physical Archive ID LRC14

Physical Contents "Animal Bones","Ceramics"

Digital Archive recipient Cambridge Archaeological Unit

Digital Archive ID LRC14

Digital Contents "Stratigraphic","Survey"

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

Paper Archive recipient Cambridge Archaeological Unit

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Paper Contents "Stratigraphic","Survey"

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

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