The site of the Proposed New Arthur Rank Hospice, Cambridge

An Archaeological Evaluation

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) at the proposed site of the new Arthur Rank Hospice, near Cambridge. The fieldwork comprised trial trenching, which revealed two undated pits and a periglacial hollow.

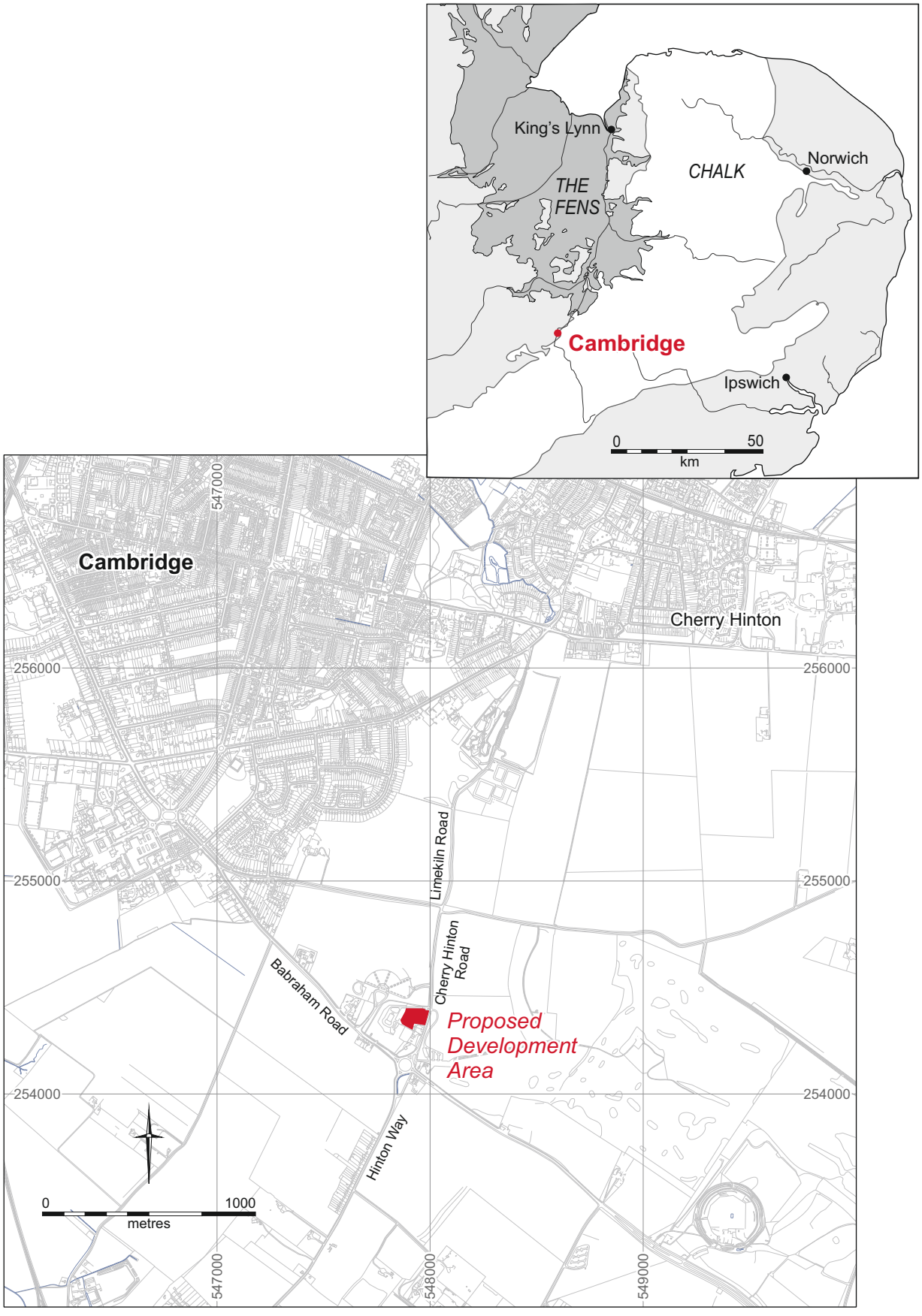

Figure 1. Location map

INTRODUCTION

Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) undertook a trench-based evaluation within a 0.8ha area of land located adjacent to Babraham Park and Ride near Cambridge. The PDA is centred on TL 4790 5435.

The evaluation was designed to assess the potential impact of the proposed construction of the new Arthur Rank Hospice. The investigation was commissioned by Northmore Associates, on behalf of the Arthur Rank Hospice. The work was undertaken in accordance with a specification produced by Emma Beadsmoore (2014) of the CAU in response to a brief issued by Dan McConnell of the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team.

Geology and Topography

The Proposed Development Area (PDA) is located off Cherry Hinton Road, at Gonville Farm on land that has long been fallow. It is largely overgrown with grasses, brambles and small trees. The PDA is flat (29m OD). However it is situated in rolling chalk down land.

The underlying geology consists of the Zig Zag Chalk, which is a strata of the lower or grey chalk formation.

Archaeological Context

Early prehistory

The PDA is located adjacent (east) to the Babraham Park and Ride archaeological site (Hinman 2001). This excavation uncovered a number of significant, yet unusual prehistoric features, the earliest of these being a grouping of small pits, which yielded a significant assemblage of Grooved Ware and associated domestic materials. A further Grooved Ware pit site was discovered c.400m west of the PDA (Frere 1943). The Babraham Park and Ride site also revealed a unique arrangement of probable Early Bronze Age ditches and a possible wooden structure. A radiocarbon date from animal bone in an artefact rich deposit in one of the ditches measured 1755-1415BC. Other finds from the site included, two Early Bronze Age inhumations, a possible Neolithic burial, and two unusual chalk filled shafts, one of which contained auroch and domestic cattle bones in the basal fill, suggesting a possible Neolithic or Bronze Age date (Hinman 2001).

Early prehistoric artefacts have been discovered in the wider vicinity of the PDA from fieldwalking (Whitaker et al 2003), as chance finds in plough soil contexts, and as a residual component in the Granham's Farm evaluations (Hinman 1999 & Whitaker et al 2003). These finds indicate a general Neolithic and Bronze Age presence throughout the landscape.

Later prehistory and Roman

The landscape surrounding the PDA became intensively occupied throughout later prehistory and the Roman period. Palmer's (2002) aerial photographic assessment has

identified an extensive Iron Age/Roman settlement and field system complex. Elements of this landscape have been excavated as a part of the Addenbrooke's hospital development (Cra'ster 1969, Collins 2009, Newman et al 2010 ect.). Closer to the PDA, evaluations at Strangeways Laboratory (Whitaker 2003) (c.800m northwest of the PDA) and Granham's Farm (Whitaker et al 2002 and Hinman 1999) (c.1km south of the PDA) have also identified further Iron Age and Roman features which are presumably part of this wider network of site.

Post-Roman

There is little evidence for occupation of the land surrounding the PDA dating to the post-Roman period. A number of medieval and post-medieval artefacts have been collected from the plough soil in fields neighbouring the PDA. The Park and Ride site produced a small amount of medieval material and several possible Medieval features (Hinman 1999a). Ridge and furrow has been identified c.300m west of the PDA (Palmer 2002), and strip lynchet earthworks survive in Beechwood on the slopes of Gog Magog hill (c.500m east of the PDA), indicating that the area was largely turned over to agricultural use in the medieval and post-medieval period (Taylor 1973).

METHODOLOGY

The trial trenching programme comprised 11 trenches, a total of 185m of trenching amounting to a 0.5% sample of the PDA. Trenches were located in order to avoid trees yet provide an even coverage of the PDA.

Trial trenches were excavated using a tracked 360° excavator fitted with a toothless bucket and operating under direct archaeological supervision at all times. Trenches were located using GPS with Ordnance Datum (OD) heights obtained. Potential archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:50 and subsequently sample excavated with all archaeological finds retained. A written record of archaeological features was created using the CAU recording system (a modification of the MoLAS system) and sections drawn at an appropriate scale.

The work was carried out in full accordance with the IFA's Standard Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations.

RESULTS

The trenching revealed a uniform former plough soil (dark grey clay silt), which is clearly indicative of the sites former agricultural use prior to the construction of the current Park and Ride, School and housing. A truncated sub soil (mid brown chalky silt) was also identified, which survived to a thickness ranging from 0.45m – 0.10m.

Archaeological features

Two archaeological features were identified in the evaluation. Both were pits, and shared distinctly similar characteristics.

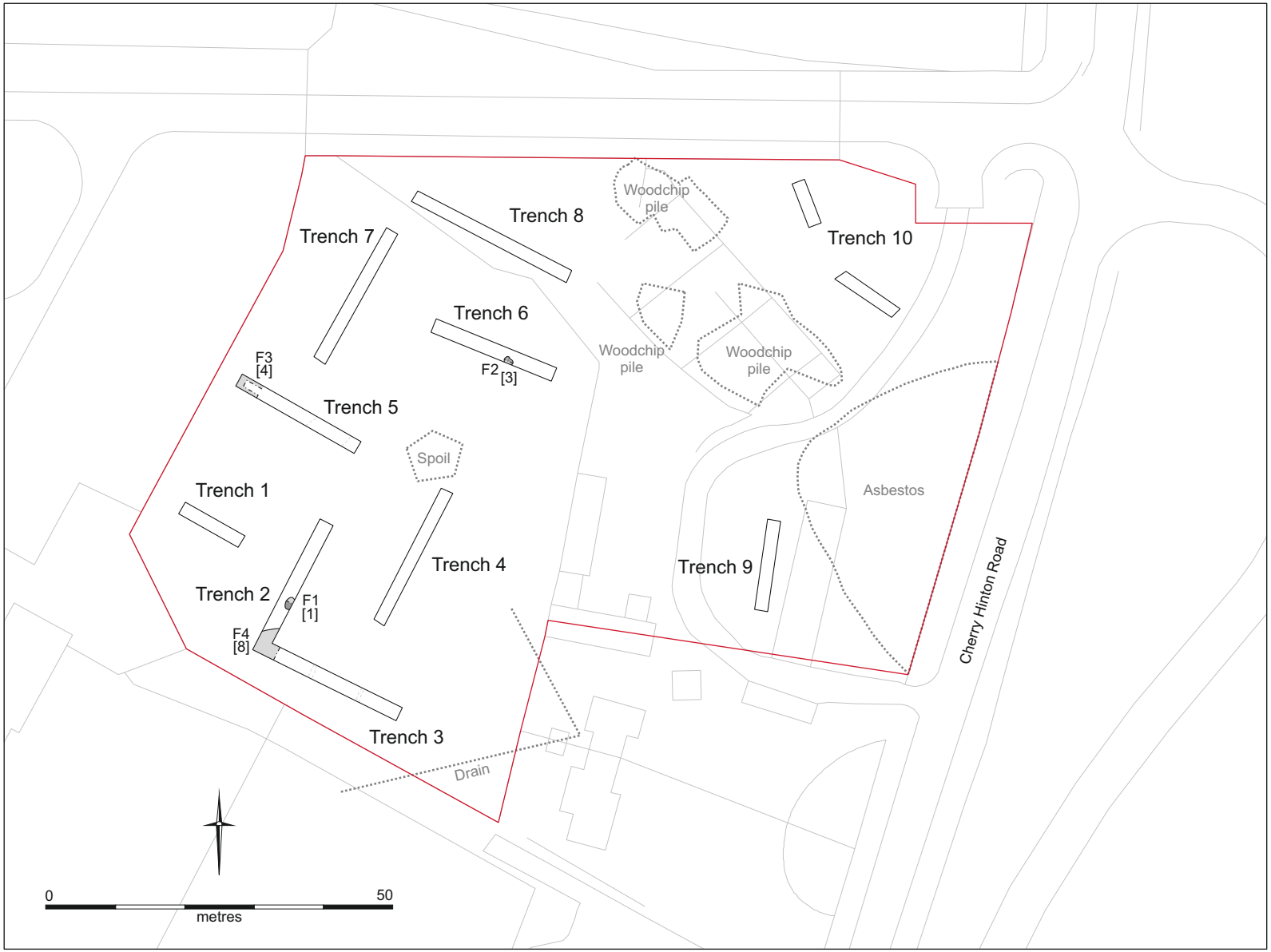

Figure 2. Site plan

F.1 [1], Trench 2 – A relatively small pit (1.62m dia. 0.28m deep). Circular in plan with a bowl shaped profile. The fill **(2)** consisted of a mid brown chalky silt with infrequent charcoal.

F.2 [3], Trench 6 – A small pit (1.25m dia. 0.37m deep). Circular in plan with an irregular bowl shaped profile. It was in filled with a mid brown chalky clay silt **(4)**.

Both features were entirely sterile of artefacts, and lacking any characteristics which might indicate their date or use.

Periglacial Hollow

Trench 5 contained **F.3**, a large natural hollow, probably formed in periglacial conditions, and is perhaps similar to a pingo or nivation hollow. The feature was 1.30m deep and over 20m in diameter. The deposits filling the hollow consisted of;

(7) a basal light grey silt, probably representing a thin terrestrial soil formation,

(6) a dark grey slightly organic silt, probably indicating intermittent waterlogging of the hollow,

(8) a mid brown chalky silt, which is probably a colluvium or sub soil gradually filling in the hollow.

The lower deposits of the feature were excavated, but no artefacts were recovered.

Periglacial hollows are common to chalk geologies in Britain, therefore, it is not surprising similar features have been identified at the Babraham Park and Ride excavation (Hinman 1999a) and Granham's Farm evaluation (Whitaker et al 2003). In both cases a small amount of prehistoric material was recovered, indicating the potential of this type of feature to produce in situ prehistoric remains.

Modern ground disturbance

F.4 in Trenches 2 and 3 appears to represent the stripping of an area of land reducing the level of natural by up to 0.55m. Subsequently the land seems to have been levelled using re-deposited chalk rubble **(8)**. This is likely to be related to the construction of the nearby and buildings at Gonville Farm and Chandos Farm. A layer of modern building rubble in Trench 9 potential relates to the same process.

Top soil sampling

As previously mentioned, the PDA lies in close proximity to Hinman's (1999a) Park and Ride excavation, but more specifically, adjacent to the area of the site containing many Late Neolithic pits. Given the low density of these pits, and that this type of archaeology is occasionally poorly served by trenched evaluations, the topsoil was sampled to determine whether the Late Neolithic pit site continued into the PDA The method consisted of sorting through two 20l buckets of top soil from the ends of every trench. In total, two diagnostically late Neolithic flints were found, both from the N end of Trench 7. This quantity of material indicates low-density background activity.

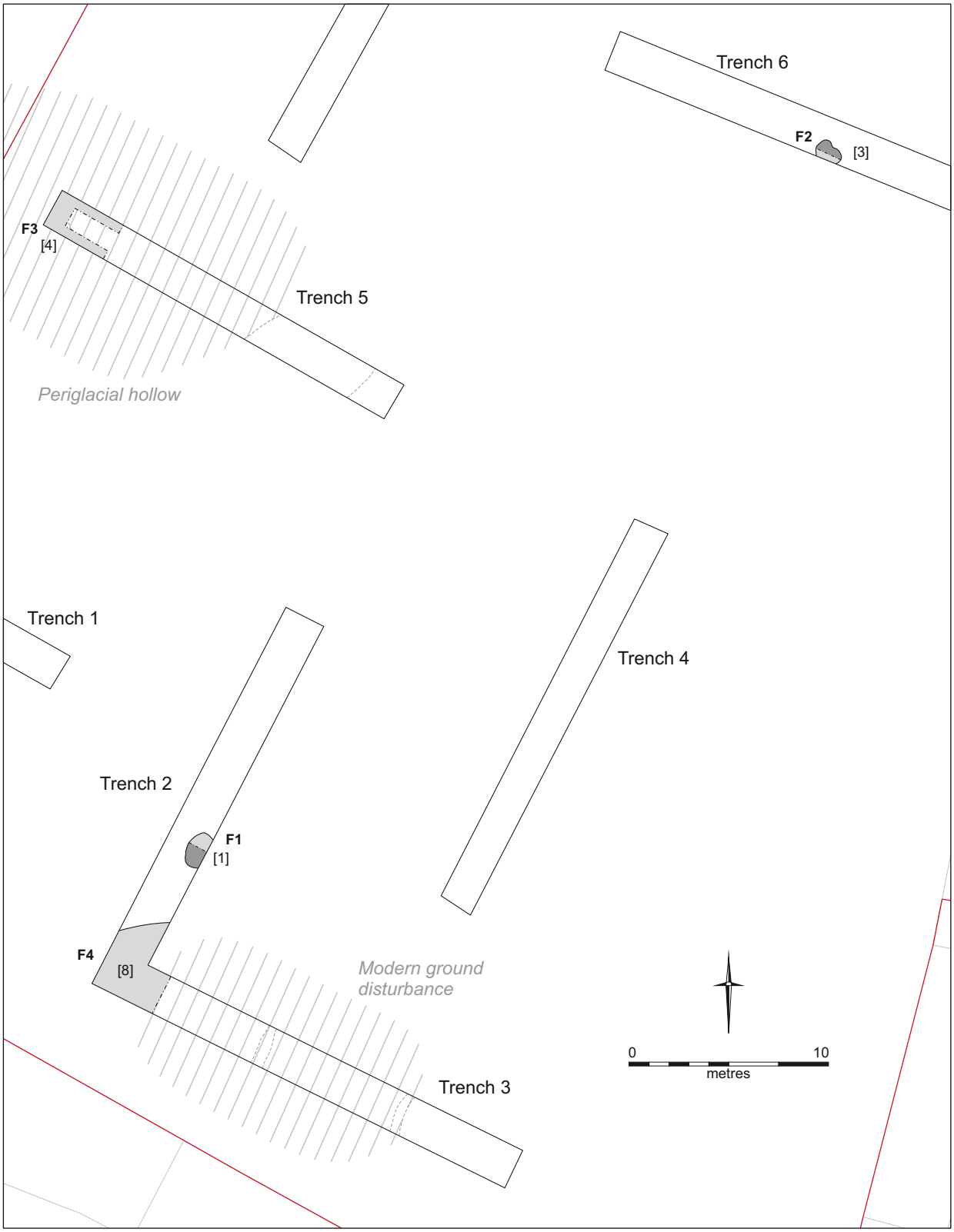

Figure 3. Close up plan of Trenches 2-6

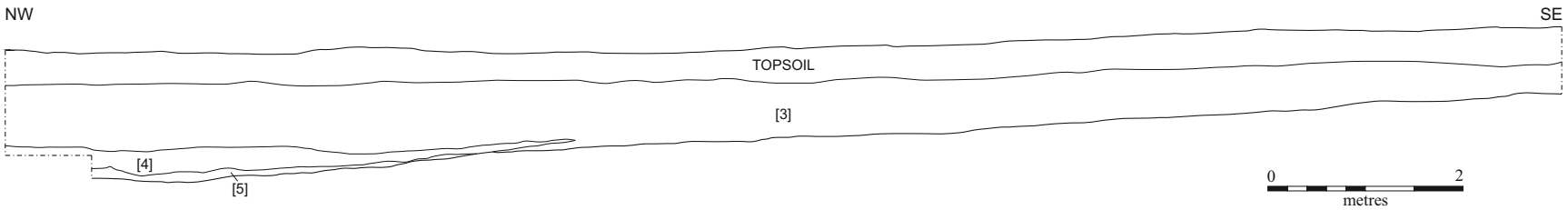

Figure 4. Section and photograph of periglacial hollow in Trench 5

Tree throws

Several tree throws were identified during the evaluation. All were partially excavated to test for residual artefacts, which may be indicative of previous occupation. No such material was found.

DISCUSSION

A small amount of archaeology was detected on the site (**F.1 & F.2**). These pits clearly represent some form of prior occupation of the site. However, the lack of material in these features suggests that the occupation was of limited significance. Sterile features of a similar form were also identified in the excavation preceding the construction of the Babraham Park and Ride (Hinman 1999a).

The sampling of top soil, tree throws and the periglacial hollow provided further evidence for the lack of archaeological activity on the site, and certainly suggests a discontinuation of the archaeology identified in the Babraham Park and Ride excavation (Hinman 1999a).

Acknowledgements

The investigation was commissioned by Northmore Associates, on behalf of Arthur Rank Hospice. The fieldwork was carried out by Alasdair Wright and Hannah Pighills. John Moller was responsible for field survey and Jane Mathews was responsible for the graphics. The project was managed by Emma Beadsmoore and monitored by Dan McConnell of Cambridgeshire Historic Environment.

SPECIALIST STUDIES

Struck Flint – Emma Beadsmoore

Two worked flints (124g) were recovered from the site, a keeled core and a fragment of a discoidal core, both of which potentially date to the Late Neolithic.

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APPENDIX

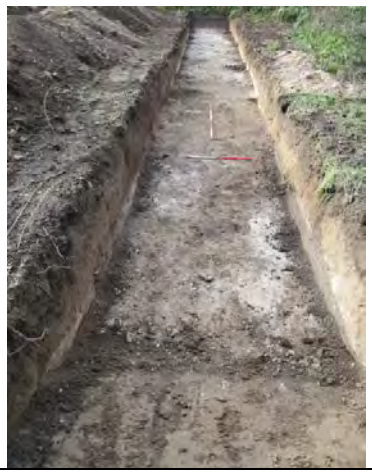
Trench 1		
	**Description**	
	No archaeological remains. One tree throw was encountered, which was sterile of material.	
	Max. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.35
	Max. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.1
	Length (m)	10
	Width (m)	1.8
	Orientation	NW-SE
	Topsoil Artefact Density	0

Trench 2		
	**Description**	
	Contains a single pit F.1.	
	Max. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.30
	Max. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.1
	Length (m)	20
	Width (m)	1.8
	Orientation	NE-SW
	Top soil Artefact Density	0

Trench 3		
	**Description**	
	No archaeological remains. A Layer of chalk rubble (8) was encountered, which is thought to be ground levelling material related to the construction of nearby farm buildings.	
	Max. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.30
	Max. Subsoil Depth (m)	0
	Length (m)	20
	Width (m)	1.8
	Orientation	NW-SE
	Top soil Artefact Density	0

Trench 4		
	**Description**	
	No archaeological remains.	
	Max. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.35
	Max. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.15
	Length (m)	20
	Width (m)	1.8
	Orientation	NE-SW
	Top Artefact Density	0

Trench 5		
	**Description**	
	No archaeological remains. A probable periglacial hollow was encountered (F.3), which was sterile of archaeological material.	
	Max. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.30
	Max. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.70
	Length (m)	20
	Width (m)	1.8
	Orientation	NW-SE
	Top Artefact Density	0

Trench 6		
	**Description**	
	Contain pit F.2, and a number of tree throws, which were sterile.	
	Max. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.35
	Max. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.35
	Length (m)	23
	Width (m)	1.8
	Orientation	NW-SE
	Top Artefact Density	0

Trench 7		
	**Description**	
	No archaeological remains. A number of tree throws and natural hollows were encountered, but proved sterile.	
	Max. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.35
	Max. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.35
	Length (m)	23
	Width (m)	1.8
	Orientation	NE-SW
	Top Artefact Density	2 FL

Trench 8		
	**Description**	
	No archaeological remains. A number of tree throws were encountered, but proved sterile.	
	Max. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.35
	Max. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.25
	Length (m)	27
	Width (m)	1.8
	Orientation	NW-SE
	Top Artefact Density	0

Trench 9		
	**Description**	
	No archaeological remains. A 0.40m layer of building rubble (brick, tile, slate and concrete) was encountered covering a former topsoil deposit.	
	Max. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.25
	Max. Subsoil Depth (m)	0
	Length (m)	15
	Width (m)	1.8
	Orientation	N-S
	Top Artefact Density	0

Trench 10		
	**Description**	
	No archaeological remains.	
	Max. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.35
	Max. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.25
	Length (m)	6
	Width (m)	1.8
	Orientation	NW-SE
	Top Artefact Density	0

Trench11		
	**Description**	
	No archaeological remains. A tree throws was encountered, but proved sterile.ghgvcg	
	Max. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.30
	Max. Subsoil Depth (m)	0.20
	Length (m)	27
	Width (m)	1.8
	Orientation	NW-SE
	Top Artefact Density	0

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

Printable version

OASIS ID: cambridg3-193998

Project details

Project name	Arthur Ranc Hospice
Short description of the project	An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) at the proposed site of the new Arthur Ranc Hospice, near Cambridge. The fieldwork comprised trial trenching, which revealed two undated pits and a periglacial hollow.
Project dates	Start: 15-10-2014 End: 17-10-2014
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	ECB4269 - HER event no.
Any associated project reference codes	ARC14 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Current Land use	Other 13 - Waste ground
Monument type	PITS Uncertain
Monument type	PERIGLACIAL HOLLOW Uncertain
Significant Finds	N/A None
Significant Finds	N/A None
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Small-scale (e.g. single house, etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS
Position in the planning process	Not known / Not recorded

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE BABRAHAM Arthur Ranc Hospice
Study area	0.80 Hectares

Site coordinates	TL 4790 5435 52.167137652 0.162788777312 52 10 01 N 000 09 46 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 29.00m Max: 29.00m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	Local Planning Authority (with/without advice from County/District Archaeologist)
Project design originator	Emma Beadsmoore
Project director/manager	Emma Beadsmoore
Project supervisor	Alasdair Wright
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer

Project archives

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Digital Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Contents	"none"
Digital Media available	"Database","Images raster / digital photography","Images vector","Spreadsheets","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Drawing","Map","Plan","Report","Section","Survey ","Unpublished Text"

Project bibliography 1

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