

Bidwells, Maris House, Cambridge

An Archaeological Evaluation



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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) at the proposed site of a new office building at Bidwells, Maris Lane, Cambridge. The fieldwork comprised a single trial trench, which revealed undated and Post-Medieval features plus modern disturbance relating to the construction of the extant building.

INTRODUCTION

In July 2015 Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) undertook a trench-based evaluation within a 0.034ha area of land in the historic core of Trumpington, to the south of Cambridge. The Proposed Development Area (PDA) is located on the site of Bidwells LLP's offices, Maris Lane and is centred at National Grid Reference TL 4445 5492. The PDA is bound to the north and west by the gardens of residential properties on Church Lane and to the south and east by commercial buildings currently used by Bidwells LLP.

The evaluation was designed to assess the potential impact of the proposed development, comprising demolition of an ancillary storage building and construction of a new office building for Bidwells LLP, on archaeological remains. The investigation was carried out on behalf of Bidwells LLP. The work was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation produced by Emma Beadsmoore (2015) of the CAU in response to a brief issued by Kasia Gdaniec of the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team (CHET).

Geology and Topography

The PDA comprises a storage building to the east side and a small lawned area with one large tree to the west side with shrubbery along the southern and eastern edges and with a Grade II listed wall forming the boundary with the residential gardens to the north. The surrounding area consists of modern office buildings and car parks to the east and south, and gardens for residential properties on Church Lane to the north and west (Fig. 1). The PDA is at approximately 16m OD and the underlying geology consists of alluvium clay, silt, sands and gravels over West Melbury Marly Chalk formation (BGS GeoIndex accessed July 2015).

Archaeological Context

The historical and archaeological background of the site has not been discussed in a previous desk based assessment. Therefore, it is necessary to briefly outline the background of the area in order to place the PDA securely within its wider context.

Prehistoric

Earlier Prehistoric remains are sparsely scattered across the well-investigated wider landscapes to the southwest and northeast. Possible Palaeolithic flint is recorded at Royston Road pit (Salzman 1938) and two worked flints date to the Middle Palaeolithic at Trumpington Meadows (Patten 2012) while other lithic evidence at the same site indicate transhumant activity from at least the Mesolithic that continued into the earlier Neolithic. Mesolithic/ Early Neolithic flint also appears at Addenbrookes Link Road (Armour 2007), Trumpington Meadows (Brudenell & Dickens 2007) and Clay Farm (Phillips & Mortimer 2011). Undated pits and postholes at The Proposed Magistrates Court site, are thought to be Neolithic/Bronze age (Hinman 2004c) and flint in tree bowls at the John Lewis Warehouse site seem to indicate Neolithic tree clearance (Hinman 2004b). The excavations at the Park and Ride site also revealed finds dating to the Neolithic and late Bronze Age/Early Iron

Age (Hinman 2004a) and large-scale investigations at Trumpington Meadows confirm later Prehistoric presence with the presence of a Neolithic/Bronze Age monument complex and an isolated Beaker double burial.

Iron Age activity in the Park and Ride area in the form of approximately 600 pits, five enclosures, and a number of four-post structures and mortuary enclosures has been interpreted as being dedicated to funerary activity, with the pits being used in rites associated with death (Hinman 2004a, 2004b, 2004c). A continuation of this Iron Age activity at Trumpington Meadows is evidenced by in excess of 700 pits, a number of structures and a boundary ditch dating to the Early Iron Age/ beginning of the Middle Iron Age (Patten 2012).

Romano British

Roman occupation evidence has been found at several locations within approximately 1km of the PDA including settlement remains at Edmundsoles, SAM 74, the former plant breeding institute and burials within the grounds of Anstey Hall which is only a few hundred metres to the northeast of the PDA (Davidson and Curtis 1973, Millar and Millar 1982). The presence of residual Roman material in later features indicates that there were Roman buildings within the excavation areas at Trumpington Meadows which only serves to corroborate the presence of Romano-British activity in area, and as such is an extension of the results from the evaluation of the wider landscape (Patten 2012) including that observed in the landscapes to the east around Clay Farm and Addenbrookes (see Evans et al. 2008).

Saxon and Medieval

Sparsely distributed Saxon finds within the vicinity of the PDA include three strap ends recovered from Hauxton Mill. Excavations at the site of the Waitrose store, c. 300m to the south identified possible Anglo-Saxon settlement activity dated to the early or middle Saxon period, comprising three separate enclosures of undetermined function (Kenney & Hatton 2000; Hatton & Hinman 2000). Trumpington Meadows, however, exhibited clear evidence of Saxon settlement comprising sunken feature buildings (SFBs), a series of enclosures and four burials, which are interpreted as representing the antecedent for the current church and village (Patten 2012).

Evidence of Medieval activity within the vicinity of the PDA comes from several sources. At Trumpington Meadows, remnant ridge and furrow has been identified from aerial photographic surveys and this is corroborated by the results from geophysical surveys (Patten 2012). Furthermore, Haigh's Ridgeway, an early route into Cambridge, is thought to pass through the site (Haigh 1975). A Medieval silver long cross farthing (King Edward IV, 1461-1483) was recovered from excavations at the Waitrose site (Hatton & Hinman 2000). Extant buildings include the 13th/14th century church of St Mary and Michael is located approximately 100m east of the PDA.

Post-Medieval and 19th Century

Several residential buildings in close proximity to the PDA were constructed in the Post-Medieval period. Anstey Hall (MCB 19342), situated 100m to the east dates from the late 17th century. Trumpington Hall (RCHM 324) incorporates elements of a Tudor mansion, though it is substantially 18th century construction with 19th century alteration. Maris House (CHER 04942), whose garden adjoins the PDA to the east

was built c.1800 and The Old House on Church Lane (CHER 05091), which lies less than 100m north of the PDA, has its origins in the 16th century. The Grade II listed wall on the northern boundary of the PDA lies between the curtilages of these two listed buildings.

Other residential properties on Maris Lane and Church Lane, including the school house and Elm and Cedar cottages, also date to the 19th Century which situates the PDA very much in the centre of a Post-Medieval/19th century village landscape. As far as can be ascertained, little excavation has been completed relating to the Post-Medieval village but recent investigations at Anstey Hall, which are as yet unreported, may provide valuable interpretative context in the near future (forthcoming report, Oxford Archaeology East).

METHODOLOGY

The trenching programme comprised 7.5m of trenching in a single trench to evaluate the archaeological potential of the PDA. The trench was located to avoid trees, known services and the standing ancillary building (Fig. 2). The trench was excavated using a tracked mini excavator fitted with a 1m wide toothless ditching 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 1:25 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 CIfA's Standard Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations.



RESULTS

Beneath a depth of up to 0.31m of imported garden soil was a layer of approximately 0.20-0.25m of levelled made ground containing construction rubble. This layer is probably associated with a Post-Medieval/Modern construction phase as both a small pit (F.1) and a rectangular building footing (F.3) are cut through this layer. Both contained 16th/17th century brick and 18th/19th century tile (Craig Cessford, pers. comm.) with F.3 also containing pottery sherds, from 10th-12th century St Neots type through 15th century greyware and Post-Medieval glazed red earthenware to late unglazed buff dated to 18th-19th century (David Hall, pers. comm.).

Beneath the made ground, a further four potential archaeological features were identified and sample excavated: two possible post hole features (F.2 and F.6) contained Post-Medieval tile and brick (Craig Cessford pers. comm.) and were disturbed by significant amounts of rooting; one pit (F.4) containing St Neots type pottery dating to the 10th-12th century (David Hall per. comm.): one north-south ditch (F.5) containing animal bone and 18th/19th century tile (Craig Cessford pers. comm.). F.5 is cut by F.3 and F.4 and may be the earliest feature on site. Features were restricted to the western extent of the trench. In the eastern end, the only things of

note were a bore hole and a collection of Post-Medieval/Modern iron nails concentrated in the made ground layer.

Trench and Feature Index

Length (m)		7.5		Deposit Depths				
Width (m)		2		Topsoil (m)		0.25-0.31		
Orientation		NE-SW		Made Ground (m)		0.20-0.25		
								
Feature	Type	Context	Type	Shape	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Period
1	Pit	100	Fill				Made ground derived. Dark grey/brown silt, few gravel.	18 th -19 th century
		101	Cut	Sub-Oval	0.81	0.19	Straight, steep sides. Convex base.	
2	Possible Post Hole	102	Fill				Made ground derived. Mid/dark grey/brown silt rare gravel and rare charcoal.	Post-Medieval
		103	Cut	Sub-Circular	0.22	0.32	Straight, steep sides. Irregular base. Rooting	
3	Building footing	104	Fill				Backfilled. Mid grey/brown clayey silt, occasional gravel.	18 th -19 th century
		105	Fill				Backfilled. Mid grey silt with yellow sand. Frequent gravel.	
		106	Fill				Backfilled. Grey/brown clay silt with sandy patches. Few gravel, cinders and charcoal.	
		107	Fill				Backfilled. Light grey/yellow sand with frequent gravel.	
		108	Fill				Backfilled. Burnt material lens, Frequent coal/charcoal.	
		109	Fill				Backfilled. Grey/brown clayey silt with sandier patches. Occasional gravel and charcoal	
		110	Fill				Backfilled. Light yellow grey silty sand with frequent gravel. Occasional rubble.	
4	Pit	112	Fill				Made ground derived. Mid grey sandy silt. Occasional gravel and rubble.	18 th -19 th century
		113	Cut	Sub-Oval	0.5	0.1	Concave, medium steep sides. Concave base.	
5	Ditch	114	Fill				Subsoil derived. Light brown friable silt, rare gravel.	18 th -19 th century
		115	Cut	N/S Linear	0.35	0.34	Straight, steep sides. Concave base.	

6	Possible Post Hole	116	Fill				Made ground derived. Dark grey/brown silt, rare gravel and charcoal.	Post-Medieval
		117	Cut	Sub-Circular	0.30	0.25	Irregular, steep sides. Irregular base. Rooting.	

DISCUSSION

The features encountered in the trenching area demonstrate the expected continuation of archaeological activity. These features are concentrated at the western extent of the trenched area and have been approximately dated to the Post-Medieval period. There is an apparent lessening in the density of archaeological activity in the eastern extent of the trenched area.

The latest feature seems to be F.1, which cut both the backfill of the building footing (F.3) and the made ground layer. Both of these contain 18th/19th century material suggesting that F.1 may be of a similar, though slightly later date. The presence of a footing (F.3) suggests that a small outbuilding may have stood in the PDA, possibly associated with the extant 19th century residence, Maris House, within the curtilage of which the PDA lies. Two possible post hole features (F.2 and F.6) may also suggest a slightly earlier phase of building.

Initial spot-dating was undertaken by David Hall for the ceramic assemblage, with some sherds dated to the Medieval period and some to the Post-Medieval period (David Hall pers. comm.). However, the features containing the earliest Medieval ceramic sherds, F.3 and F.4, cannot comfortably be dated to the Medieval period as F.4 exhibits a cutting relationship with F.5 which only contains Post-Medieval material demonstrating it is a later feature, and F.3 also contains later Post-Medieval artefacts. These results indicate that no feature is earlier than 16th century.

These findings fit with investigations in the surrounding landscape, which demonstrate Post-Medieval settlement in very close proximity, with the PDA on the boundary between two Post-Medieval properties, Maris House, Maris Lane and Old House, Church Lane. Ordinance survey maps from 1880s, 1990s, 1920s and 1970s were investigated in an attempt to identify the building represented by the possible building footing but show no outbuilding or other structure within the PDA. This may indicate that no formal building was still standing in 1880 though it may have existed earlier.

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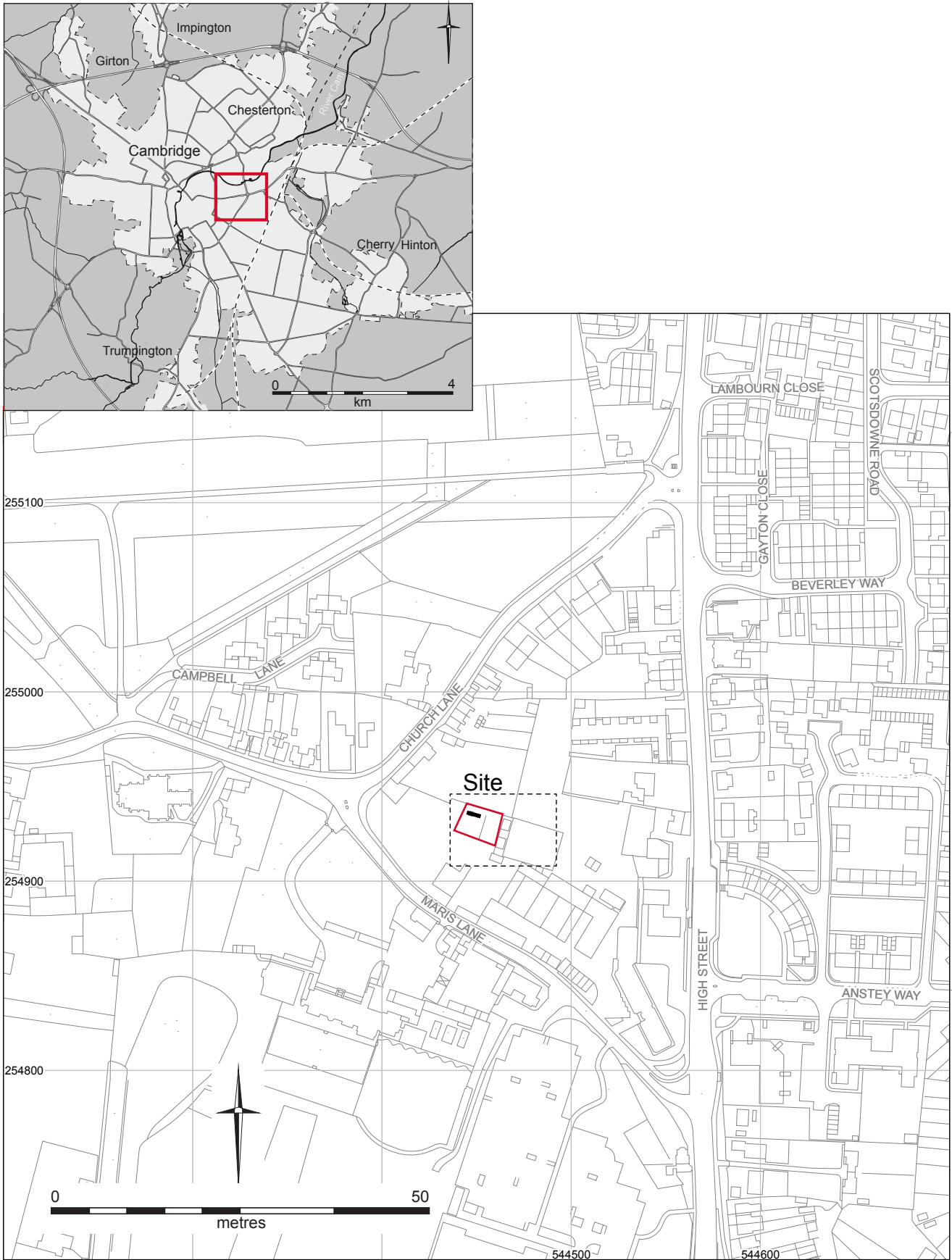


Figure 1. Location Plan

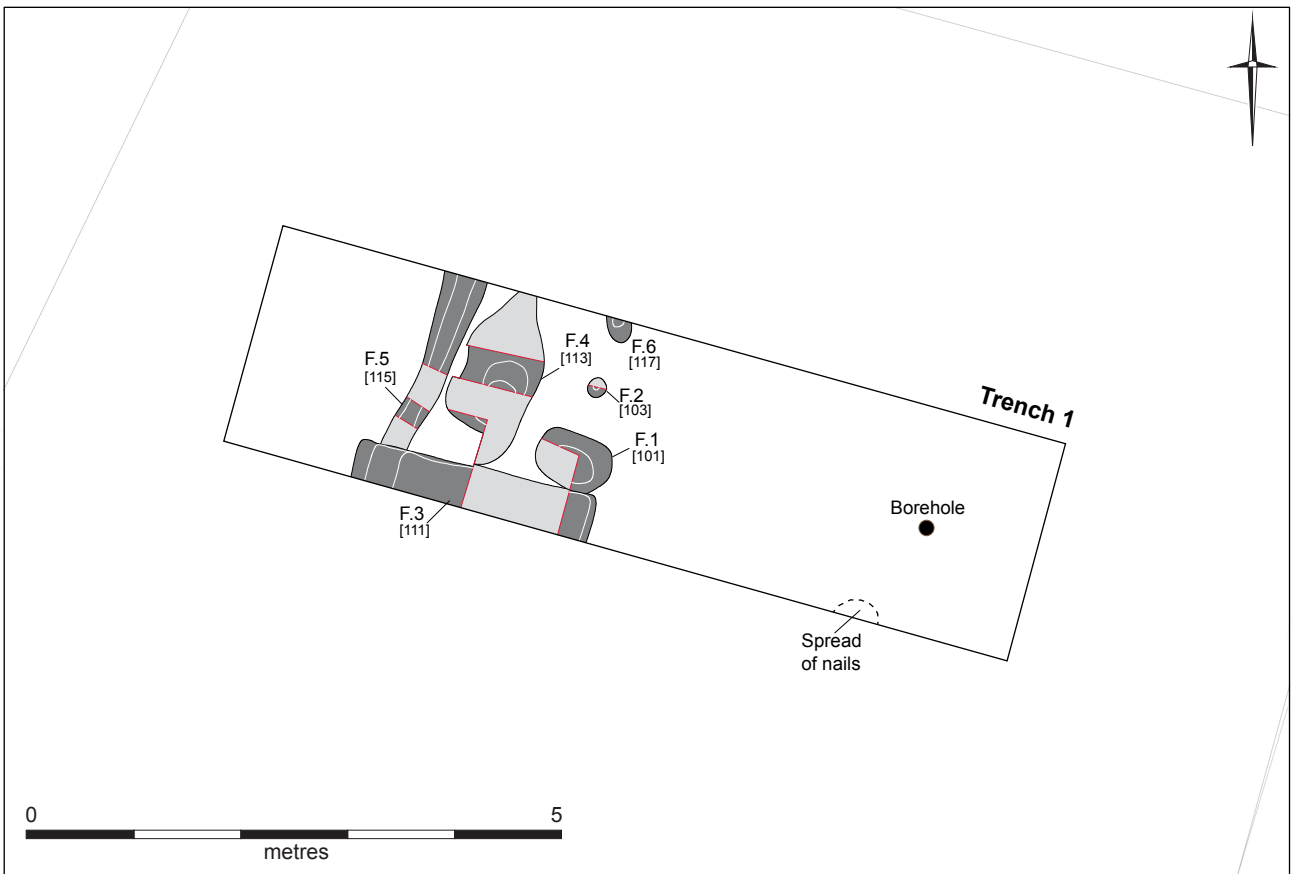
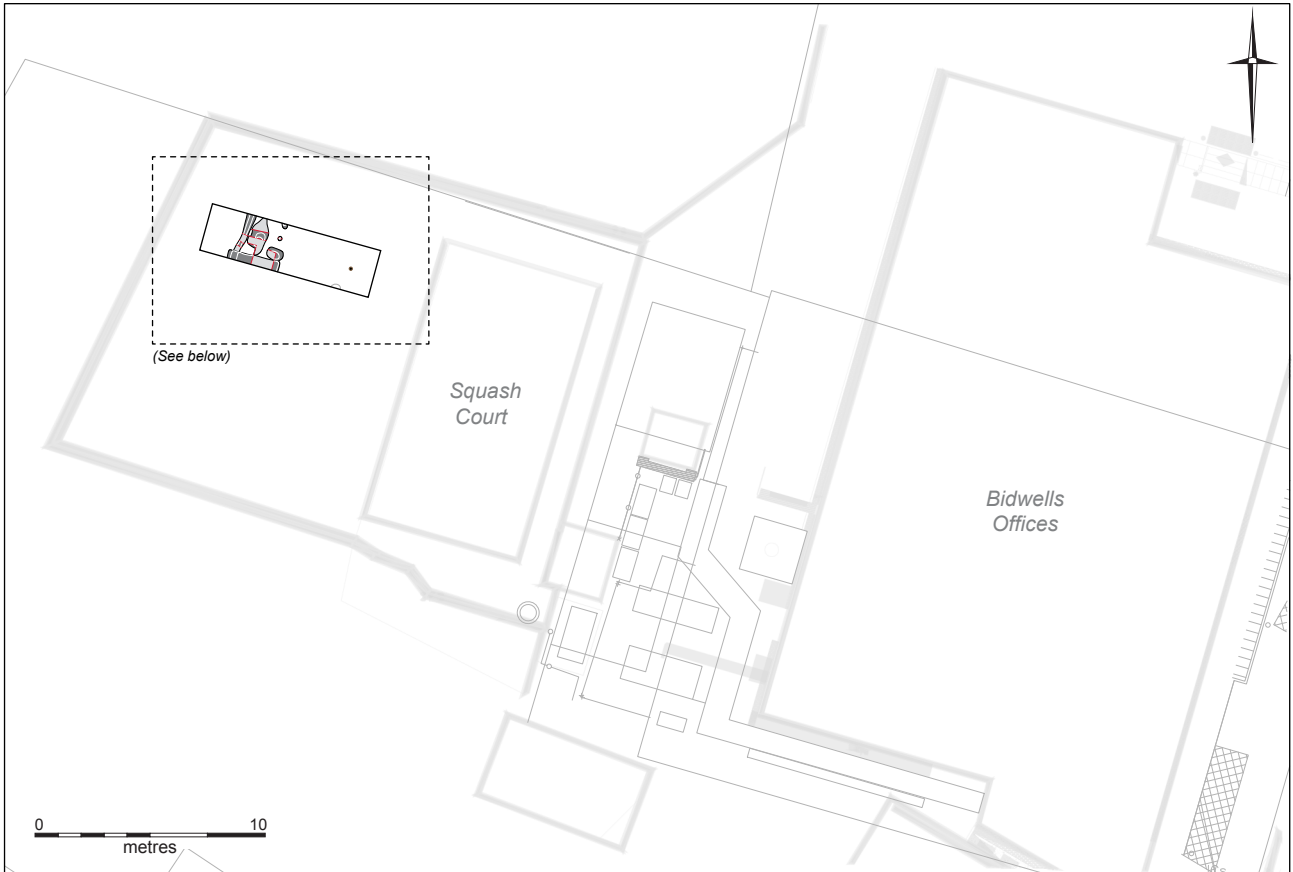


Figure 2. Trench plan

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Project details

Project name	Archaeological evaluation at Bidwells Maris Lane, Cambridge
Short description of the project	An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) at the proposed site of a new office building at Bidwells, Maris Lane, Cambridge. The fieldwork comprised a single trial trench, which revealed Post-Medieval features plus modern disturbance relating to the construction of the extant building.
Project dates	Start: 07-07-2015 End: 10-07-2015
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	BML15 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	ECB4478 - HER event no.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	PIT Post Medieval
Monument type	DITCH Post Medieval
Monument type	FOUNDATION Uncertain
Monument type	POST HOLE Post Medieval
Significant Finds	SHERD Post Medieval
Significant Finds	SHERD Medieval
Significant Finds	BRICK Post Medieval
Significant Finds	BRICK Medieval
Methods & techniques	"Sample Trenches"
Development type	Urban commercial (e.g. offices, shops, banks, etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE CAMBRIDGE CAMBRIDGE Bidwells, Maris Lane, Cambridge
Postcode	CB2 9LB
Study area	0.03 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 4445 5492 52.173175520436 0.112618556887 52 10 23 N 000 06 45 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 16m Max: 16m

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	Leanne Zeki
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Biwells LLP

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Store
Physical Archive ID	BML15
Physical Contents	"Animal Bones","Ceramics","Metal"
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Store
Digital Archive ID	BML15
Digital Contents	"Animal Bones","Ceramics","Metal","Survey"
Digital Media available	"GIS","Images raster / digital photography","Survey"
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Store
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Paper Contents	"Animal Bones","Ceramics","Metal","Survey"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Drawing","Plan","Report","Section","Survey "

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