

An Archaeological Evaluation At McCain Foods GB Ltd, Funthams Lane, Whittlesey



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Funthams Lane, Whittlesey**

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With a contribution from Emma Beadsmoore

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University of Cambridge
Department of Archaeology**

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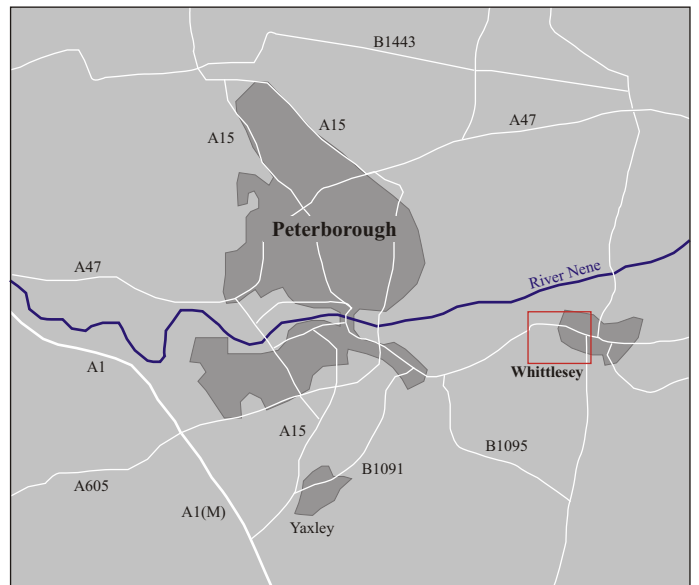


Figure 1. Site location

In January 2007 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at McCain Foods GB Ltd, Funthams Lane, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire (TL 234 9765 and 2349 9728). The site was located within a buried soil landscape at 2.86m – 3.92m OD, previously identified as a busy Bronze Age zone within the flag fen basin (Gibson & Knight 2006). Two archaeological features were recorded in one of the three trenches machined and all trenches were situated on disturbed ground.

Introduction

As part of a planning application an archaeological evaluation was carried out at McCain Foods GB Ltd, Funthams Lane, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire (TL 2374 9765 and 2349 9728) on 25th, 26th and 29th January 2007. The project was undertaken by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) on behalf of McCain Foods GB Ltd. prior to an application for planning permission for the construction of two wind turbines. This follows a previous investigation undertaken by the CAU in which a third wind turbine (2329 9750) was evaluated. The site code was MMC06

Geology and Topography

The proposed development area (PDA) is comprised of disturbed and undisturbed land beneath the existing factory and within its grounds, on 0.4262 hectares of land to the west side of Whittlesey, east of Peterborough. The site occupies a height between 2.86m OD and 3.92m OD (present land surface). The underlying geology consists of Oxford Clay overlain with first river terrace gravels and deep peat deposits as identified by mineral extraction to the north.

Archaeological Background

The archaeology surrounding the proposed development area (PDA) has been the subject of investigations since the early 19th century, the findings of which are considered in earlier desk based assessments (Edwards & Gdaniec 1997; Cooper 2005). These investigations identified archaeology spanning the Neolithic to Post Medieval periods and have led to the recognition of this area as an important archaeological landscape.

Excavations at Bradley Fen on the western edge of Whittlesey Island (Gibson & Knight 2006) was marked by a row of burnt mounds situated along the 0.8m OD contour, above which were the lower limits of a field system around the 1.00m OD contour, and settlement between 1.20m and 2.50m OD. Below this the topography fell to -0.50m OD, it was only from 0.25m OD below sea level and up to the west of Whittlesey Island that archaeology was recorded (figures 1 & 2).

In 2006 an evaluation was undertaken to the south of the PDA at Must Farm, archaeological evidence was found in the form of a raised late Bronze Age/early Iron Age settlement situated above a channel which was previously identified in

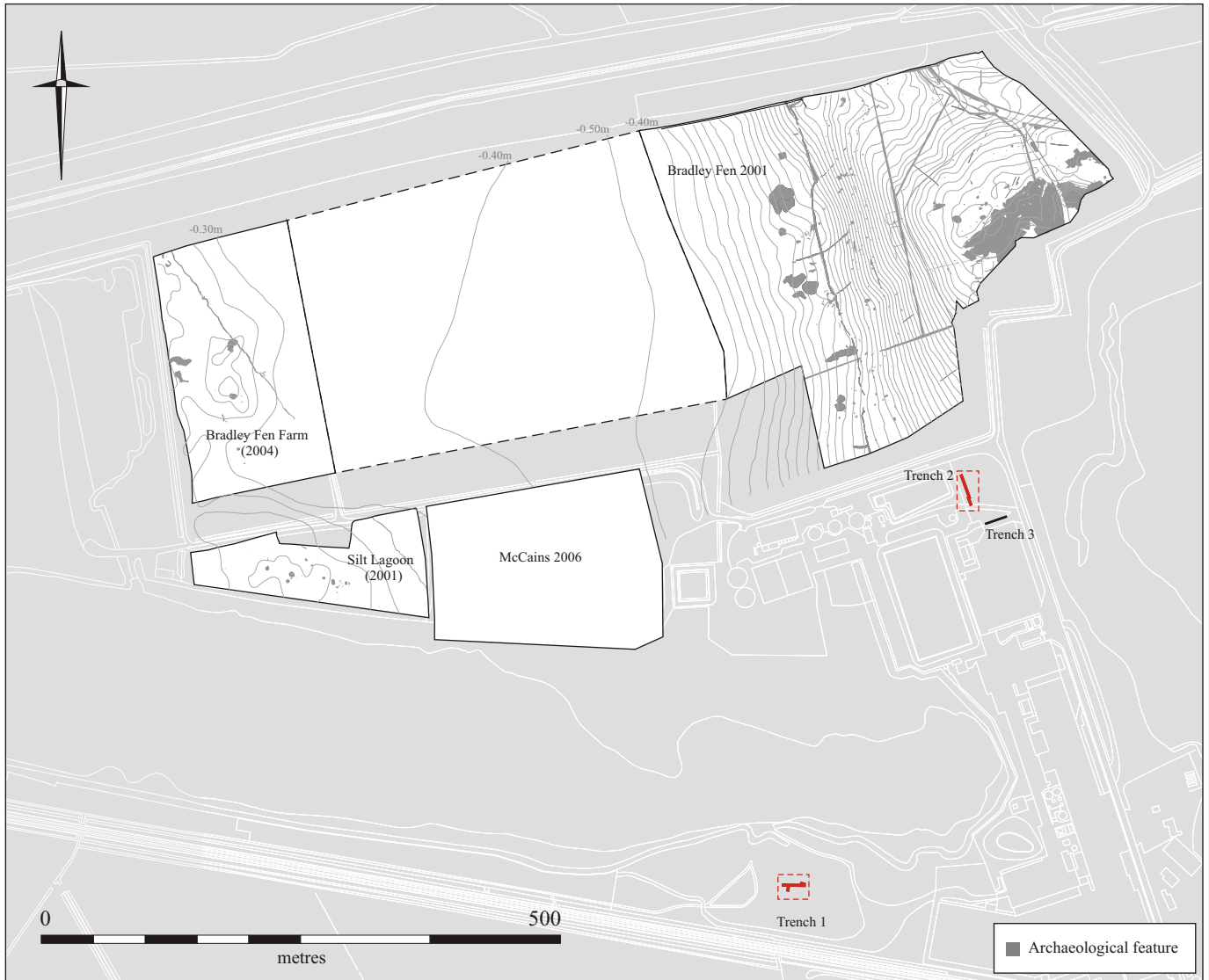


Figure 2. The McCain Foods GB Ltd, site within the Bradley Fen environment

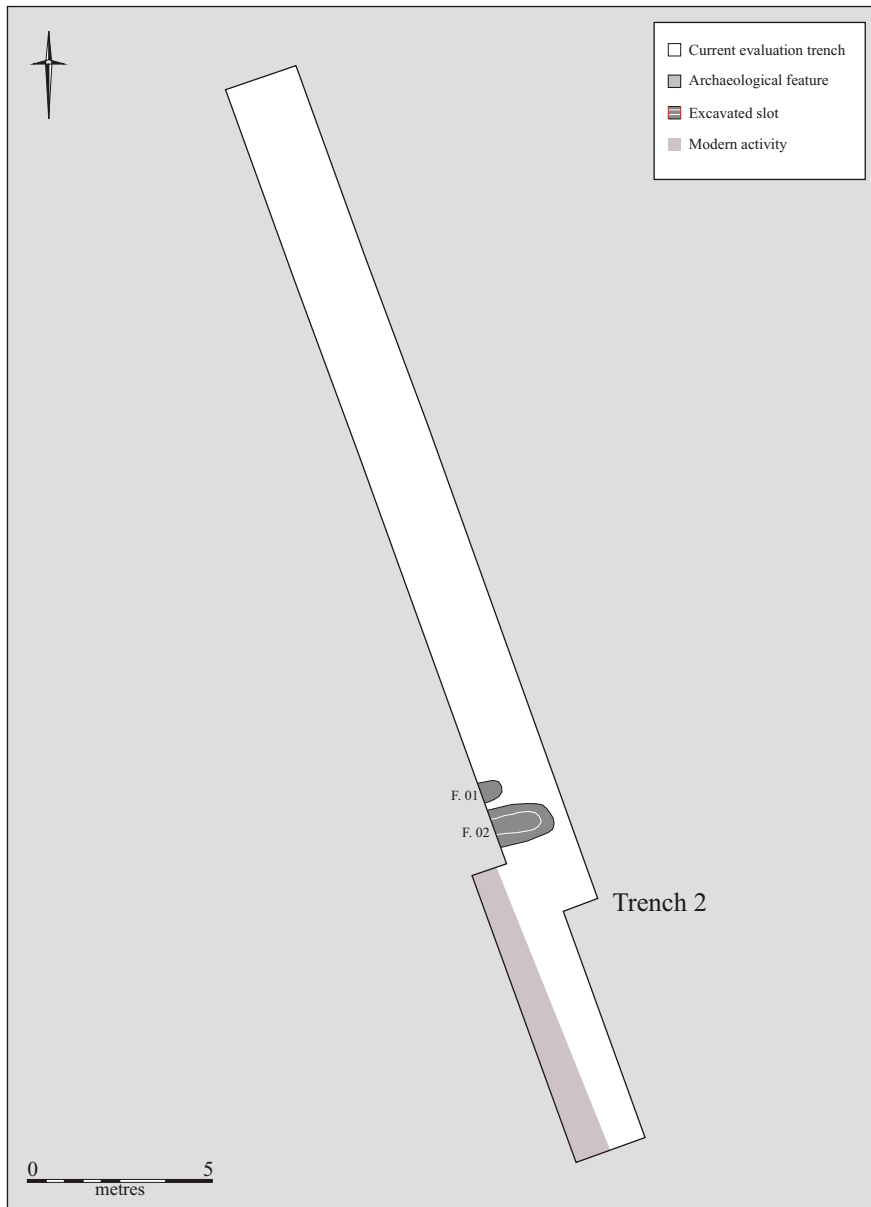
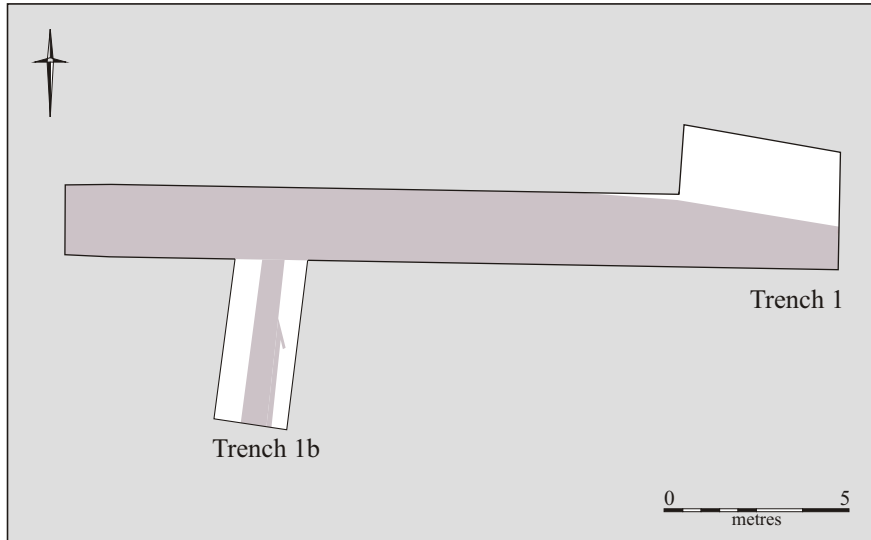


Figure 3. Trench plans 1 and 2

excavations at Must Farm (Evans et al 2005; Evans & Knight 2005). This situates the PDA within an intensively utilised Bronze Age/Iron Age landscape.

Methodology

The evaluation comprised three machine excavated 2m wide trenches with a total area of 170m² located within the proposed area of development, which amounted to a 4% sample of the overall area (0.4262 hectares). The trenches were scanned using a cable avoidance tool (CAT) to avoid damage to any unknown services. Trenches were planned at 1:50 and sections were drawn at 1:10. 1m sections were excavated across linear features and recording was conducted using the CAU modified Museum of London system. All trenches were surveyed into the OS grid using GPS.

Excavation Results

Of the three trenches excavated, only one contained archaeological features (see table 1). The maximum feature depth was 0.18m, and the majority of the trenches were truncated by modern services and landscaping.

Trench	Length (m)	Depth (m)	Height (m)OD (top of present land surface)	Archaeology
1 + 1b	21.5 + 5.0	NE 1.25 – SW 3.0	NE 3.00 – SW 2.86	No
2	30.5	N 0.8 – S 1.0	N 2.95 – S 3.41	Yes
3	22.0	W 0.9 – E 0.35	W 3.62 – E 3.92	No

Table 1: Trench Summary

Trench Descriptions

Trench 1

Trench 1 contained no archaeology, had minimal topsoil (max 0.1m) and between 0.8m-1.15m of modern brick and gravel overburden. A test pit was excavated at the south western end of the trench to evaluate the depth of the made up ground which continued to a depth of 3m before reaching fine blue silt fen deposit. A modern disused rail track and associated building foundations were identified which were comprised of concrete, brick and metal railings (see figures 3 and 4)



Figure 4. Photograph of modern rail track in Trench 1.

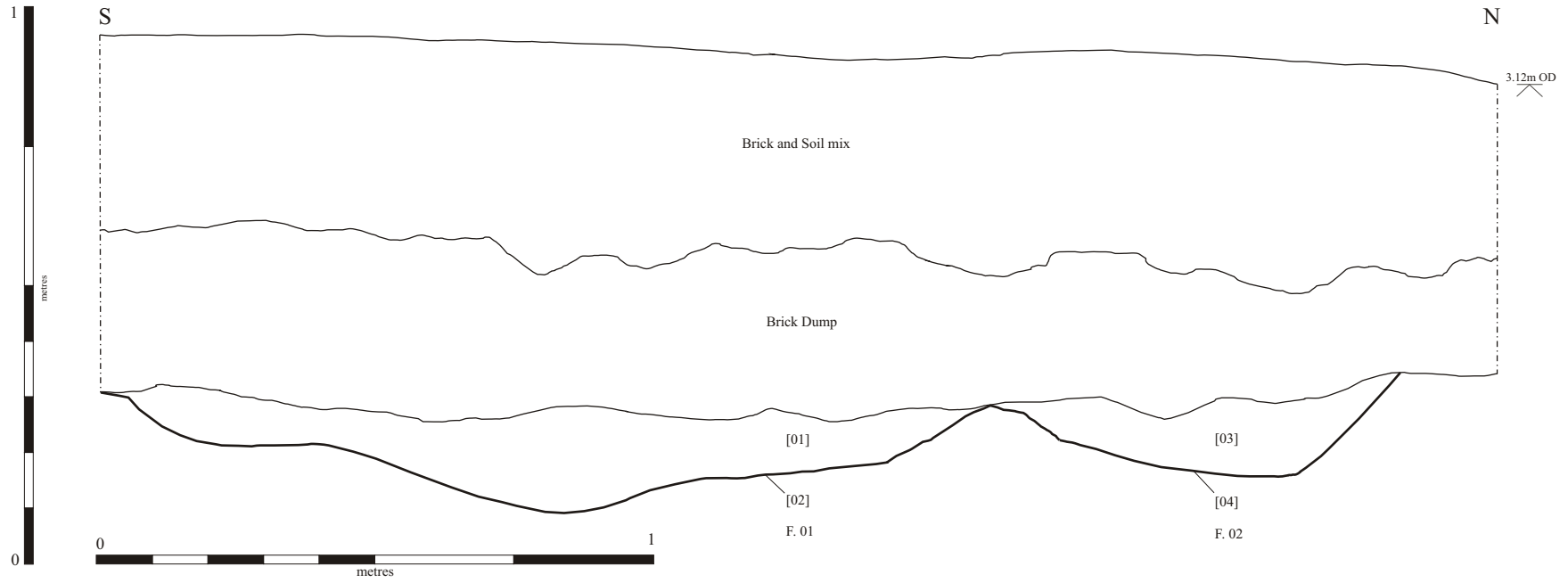


Figure 5. Photograph and Section of F. 01, F. 02

Trench 2

In response to the discovery of a brick soak away, after 6.5m of machine excavation, trench 2 was relocated 1m to the east and continued along the same alignment creating a dogleg, to avoid the disturbed ground. There was minimal topsoil (max 0.1m) and between 0.65m-0.8m of modern brick and gravel overburden with 0.1m of clay dumping at the southern end. The natural was a mid reddish yellow moderately firm silty sandy gravel. Trench 2 contained two very shallow ditches both aligned east-west and almost completely destroyed by overlaying made ground, F.01 contained a Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age flint scraper (see figure 5).

F.01 Ditch base. Cut [02] (terminal slot) E-W linear with very shallow sides and a slightly concave base (length 1.65+; width 1.05; depth 0.18m). Fill [01] mid-dark greyish orange moderately compact silt with occasional flecks of charcoal and occasional small (10-20mm) sub-rounded and sub angular stones, contained one flint scraper.

F.02 Ditch base. Cut [04] (terminal slot) E-W linear with very shallow sides and a slightly concave base (length 0.60m+; width 0.55m; depth 0.18m). Fill [03] mid greyish orange moderately compact silt with occasional small flecks of charcoal.

Trench 3

Trench 3 contained no archaeology, had minimal topsoil (max 0.12m at western end) and between 0.33m-0.78m of modern brick and gravel overburden. The natural was a mid reddish yellow moderately loose silty sandy gravel.

Discussion

The evaluation at McCain Food GB Ltd has enabled a further chance to link the archaeology of Must Farm (south of the PDA) with Bradley Fen (north of the PDA). The archaeology was limited to trench 2 which in itself was badly damaged by the overlaying made ground.

Trench 1 contained no evidence of archaeology but was located below the previously identified level of surviving features (0.25m OD, Patten 2006; Gibson & Knight 2006) at -0.14m OD and also outside the area of expected archaeology shown in figure 2, therefore no archaeology was expected here.

No buried soil was identified in trenches 2 and 3 which were located within the area of expected archaeology as shown in figure 2. Previous excavations at Bradley Fen and the preceding investigation at McCains both uncovered a buried soil (Patten 2006; Gibson & Knight 2006), however heavy truncation and resurfacing within the McCains complex has removed any surviving buried soil that may have been present. F.01 and F.02 of trench 2 are very shallow and could be mistaken for furrows, however they appear to be ditches that have been truncated, only the base remains.

Acknowledgements

The project was successfully completed with the assistance of Dan Britton. Many thanks to Gwladys Monteil for processing the finds and Bryan Crossan for producing the graphics. Thanks are extended to Harry Bond of McCains for the smooth on-site co-ordination and assistance. Kasia Gdaniec, Development Control Archaeologist at CAPCA monitored the project and the project manager was David Gibson. Carl of Lattenbury Services machine excavated the trenches.

Appendix 1 – Lithics (*Emma Beadsmoore*)

A single flint was recovered from the site. The thumbnail scraper from F.01 [01] was struck from a faceted platform, and then quite abruptly retouched into an angular ended scraper. Although the retouch is slightly unusual for a thumbnail scraper, the tool is potentially Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age.

Appendix 2 – OASIS form

OASIS ID: cambridg3-26698

Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Evaluation at McCain Foods GB Ltd, Funthams Lane, Whittlesey
Short description of the project	In January 2007 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken at McCain Foods GB Ltd, Funthams Lane, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire (TL 234 9765 and 2349 9728). The site was located within a buried soil landscape at 2.86m to 3.92m OD, previously identified as a busy Bronze Age zone within the flag fen basin (Gibson and Knight 2006). Two archaeological features were recorded in one of the three trenches machined and all trenches were situated on disturbed ground.
Project dates	Start: 25-01-2007 End: 29-01-2007
Previous/future work	Yes / Yes
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 1 - Industrial
Monument type	FIELD SYSTEM Early Bronze Age
Significant Finds	LITHICS Early Bronze Age
Methods & techniques	'Documentary Search','Fieldwalking','Metal Detectors','Targeted Trenches'
Development type	Wind farm developments
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	Not known / Not recorded

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE FENLAND WHITTLESEY McCain Foods GB Ltd, Funthams Lane
Postcode	PE7 2PG
Study area	0.43 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 2374 9765 52.5622194306 -0.174324554934 52 33 43 N 000 10 27 W Point
Site coordinates	TL 2349 9728 52.5589514016 -0.178148852743 52 33 32 N 000 10 41 W Point
Height OD	Min: -0.14m Max: 2.74m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	City/Nat. Park/District/Borough archaeologist
Project design originator	David Gibson
Project director/manager	David Gibson
Project supervisor	Kerry Murrell
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	McCains Foods GB Ltd

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
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Physical Archive ID	MMC06
Physical Contents	'Worked stone/lithics'
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Archive ID	MMC06
Digital Contents	'other'
Digital Media available	'Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Paper Archive ID	MMC06
Paper Contents	'other'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Drawing','Map','Miscellaneous Material','Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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