

University of Cambridge Sports Pitches Wilberforce Road

An Archaeological Evaluation



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University of Cambridge Sports Ground Wilberforce Road, Cambridge: An Archaeological Evaluation

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Summary

A trial trench based archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) at the University of Cambridge sports pitches and athletics track, Wilberforce Road, Cambridge (TL 4320 5851) between 11th and 18th October 2017.

The trial trenching programme consisted of two trenches (totalling 220m in length). Archaeological remains comprised a series of Roman ditches, two medieval plough furrows and a number of post-medieval–modern boundary ditches. The ditches all appear to represent land division/boundaries (although two parallel Roman ditches potentially represent a trackway or roadway) and no settlement features per se were encountered. Having said that, a number of the ditches yielded small assemblages of Roman pottery and oyster shell – with one also producing a 4th century AD coin – that appear likely to be settlement-derived. As such, the remains are interpreted as ‘edge of settlement’, with the ditches potentially marking the southern/eastern limit of a nearby settlement site, which could extend into the west of the proposed development area.

INTRODUCTION

A trial trench based archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) at the University of Cambridge sports pitches and athletics track, Wilberforce Road, Cambridge (TL 4320 5851) between 11th and 18th October 2017. The proposed development area (PDA) lies adjacent to an existing hockey pitch and athletics track and within the boundaries of the existing sports pitch site; it is currently covered by grass and areas of shrubs/trees. The planned development comprises two additional hockey pitches (Planning Ref: 17/0473/FUL).

Two trenches totalling 220m in length were excavated (Figure 1) revealing features ranging in date from the Roman to the modern period.

The project was undertaken following a request for evaluation of the PDA by the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team (CHET). Work was carried out in accordance with a project design specification (Beadsmoore 2017) produced by the CAU in response to a brief issued by CHET (Stewart 2017).

The work was commissioned by the University of Cambridge. The site code is WRS17. The site archive is currently stored at the CAU pending deposition within the Cambridgeshire County Council archaeological archive storage facility.

Location, Topography and Geology

The PDA is located at the southern end of Wilberforce Road, Cambridge, approximately 1.5km to the west of the town centre (Figure 1). It lies within the boundaries of the University sports pitches site immediately to the west of the existing hockey pitch and athletics track. It is bounded to the south and west by agricultural land/open fields whilst to the north a series of balancing ponds lie between the site and a cycle path. The PDA is currently covered by grass and defined areas of shrubs and trees.

The PDA (12m AOD) is relatively flat although an area in the north-east of the site has clearly been landscaped as part of the athletics track construction in order to create a raised bank around its western end. The underlying geology comprises Gault Formation (www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex accessed 19/10/17).

Archaeological Background and Previous Work

A large number of archaeological and historical sites are recorded in the vicinity of the PDA; these include archaeological excavations, recorded find spots and listed buildings, as well as data gathered from historic maps and aerial photographs. Previous work in the immediate vicinity of the PDA is limited to a trial trench evaluation at Grange Farm (bordering the site to the south-west), which revealed no archaeology (Roberts 2013); however, large scale excavations and evaluations to the north-west of the PDA particularly, have proven this area to be a rich archaeological landscape (Figure 2).

Prehistory

To the north-west of the PDA evidence of Iron Age activity has been recorded at both the Cavendish Laboratory site (Nano Fabrication Building; CHER MCB15890) and at High Cross (CHER ECB3234). At the former site, an Iron Age pit and a ditch both yielded Iron Age pottery (Lucas 2001; Amour 2001) whilst at the latter a number of distinct pit clusters dating to the Early Iron Age and potentially associated with a series of boundaries were recorded (Timberlake 2010).

Slightly further afield at the North West Cambridge development site, extensive landscape scale investigations also encountered Iron Age settlement alongside evidence of earlier activity dating back to the Palaeolithic. Whilst evidence of ‘early’ activity (up to and including the Early Bronze Age) was relatively scattered, the site clearly saw more intense occupation from the Middle Bronze Age onwards. Evidence included ring ditches and enclosures (some associated with cremations) as well as isolated cremations and areas of settlement, some associated with wells (Cessford and Evans 2014).

Romano-British

The centre of Roman Cambridge is located approximately 1km to the north-east of the PDA and indeed the projected route of a Roman Road heading south-west from the town runs immediately to the south-east of it (CHER 05049A). Roman burials have been found near Grange Road – presumably located along the course of the Roman Road – to the north-east of the PDA (CHER 05049B); however, once again the main evidence for Romano-British activity within the wider landscape comes from the investigations at the West Cambridge and North West Cambridge sites. Here, farmsteads, connected by trackways and field systems, occur at frequent intervals across the landscape as shown in Figure 2.

At West Cambridge, excavations at Vicar’s Farm exposed dense settlement remains dating from the 1st century to the early 5th century AD. Comprising settlement enclosures, with associated structural remains, and including two cemeteries and a probable shrine, the site produced large quantities of finds including over 12,000 sherds of pottery, some 339 Roman coins and large quantities of animal bone (Lucas and Whittaker 2001; Evans and Lucas forthcoming). To the west, elements of a field system were also recorded at High Cross (Timberlake 2010).

Further to the north, two areas of settlement – with associated cemeteries – located off a routeway and dating to the 1st-4th centuries AD, have been recorded at North West Cambridge (Cessford and Evans 2014), whilst a further two settlements and three cemeteries were excavated at the NIAB site to the north (Luke 2014).

As for Roman Cambridge itself, whilst there is some debate as to its status as a *town* (see Evans and Ten Harkel 2010), it was nevertheless a sizeable hill-top settlement and developed from a Late Iron Age ‘fort’. Excavations, although not extensive, have exposed evidence of a grid-like street plan with building remains – including a

possible *Mansio* and a number of shrines – and 4th century AD walled defences (*ibid.*).

Anglo-Saxon

A major Anglo-Saxon cemetery was excavated at St. Johns College Playing Fields in 1888 (CHER 04926). Some 30 skeletons and 100 cremations in urns were excavated at this time and found to be associated with a wide range of grave goods dating the cemetery to the 5th-7th century AD. The exact location of the site is not known with archaeological monitoring in 1991 at the approximate site failing to reveal any evidence of it (Evans 1991). Evidence of further Anglo-Saxon funerary activity is also known from the Grange Road area, most notably at 71 Grange Road (CHER 04928 and 05049B).

Medieval to present

The area was situated in the agricultural hinterland of medieval Cambridge known as the *Westfields* and an area, which has seen comparatively detailed study in the past (Hall and Ravensdale 1976). Hall and Ravensdale's plan of the *Westfields* – based on a 14th century '*Corpus Terrier*' listing all the titheable lands owned by Corpus Christi College – shows a medieval routeway known as *Coton Way* or *Sheepcote Way* located immediately to the north of the PDA whilst the PDA itself lies in open fields (Figure 3). Analysis of aerial photographs of the area (Palmer 2001; Figure 3) has recorded ridge and furrow cultivation across much of the area including within the PDA and around Grange Farm (CHER 04406). Grange Farm itself (CHER MCB20863) was located just to the south-east of the PDA and comprised a now-demolished farm complex of four buildings around a farmyard dating to the 19th/20th century. The University of Cambridge site, including the hockey pitch, athletics track and pavilion, was opened in 1994.

Methodology

The trial trenching programme consisted of two trenches, a total of 220m of trenching (Figure 4). Trial trenches were excavated using a tracked 360° nine tonne digger operating under direct archaeological supervision at all times. Trenches were located and archaeological features planned in detail using an advanced Global Positioning System (GPS) with Ordnance Datum (OD) heights obtained. Potential archaeological features were sample excavated with all archaeological finds retained. A written record of archaeological features and soil sequences was created using the CAU recording system (see below). A digital photographic record of the trenching programme was also maintained.

The CAU recording system is an adaptation of the MoLAS system (Spence 1990) designed to be more appropriate to 'extensive' rural settings and to facilitate effective organisation of stratigraphic data and finds plotting. The system uses the Feature (ditch, pit, posthole etc.) as the main interpreted entity. Each feature is assigned an individual number with a context group number (eg. 100) also being assigned to each individual slot excavated in that feature; context numbers are derived from this context group number (eg. 100.01, 100.02 etc.). The context sheet forms the basis of the written archive

but can be supplemented by Feature sheets (for complex features) as well as ‘specialist’ sheets such as skeleton and timber sheets. All sections are drawn at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20 as appropriate.

Ploughsoil sampling was undertaken across the evaluation area. This comprised ‘bucket sampling’ of trench spoil heaps, whereby 90 litres of plough soil was hand sorted for artefacts at test points situated at the end-points and mid-point of each trench. Metal detecting of spoil heaps and any exposed features was also undertaken along each excavated trench.

The work was carried out in full accordance with the CIFA’s *Standard Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations*.

RESULTS

Topsoil sampling

A plot of the topsoil sampling results is included in Figure 4. Only modern material (comprising brick/tile and a single fragment of slate) was recovered from the six test points. Likewise, metal detecting of the topsoil produced only modern material. The results of both suggest very low levels of finds in the plough soil.

Trenches 1 and 2

A total of 17 archaeological features, dating to the Roman and post-medieval period, were recorded within Trenches 1 and 2 (detailed in Appendix 1 and 2; see Figure 4). In addition, two plough furrows occupying a north-south alignment, were encountered in Trench 2 along with two modern ditches.

Roman features

At least nine ditches can be dated with relative confidence to the Roman period. Confined to the north and west of Trenches 1 and 2 respectively, they occupied three broad alignments. At the far north of Trench 1, Fs.1-4 (aligned ENE-WSW) comprised four ditch cuts, presumably representing re-cuts of the same boundary, whilst just to the south, ditch F.13 was aligned E-W. Slightly further to the south, four broadly parallel ditches F.14, F.15/16 and F.17 were aligned NE-SW.

Fs.1-4 – Ditches F.1-4 effectively represent successive phases of the same ENE-WSW aligned boundary ditch (see Figures 5 and 6). Having either rounded or V-shaped profiles, the ditches were all relatively substantial (0.75-1.4m wide by 0.41-0.68m deep) and each contained one or two silty clay fills. Finds recovered from the ditches were few and comprised just seven sherds of pottery dating to the mid 1st to early 2nd century.

F.13 – Comprising a single E-W aligned cut, ditch F.13 had a rounded profile and measured 1.63m wide by 0.42m deep (see Figure 5). It contained two fills, which yielded some 19 sherds of largely mid 1st to 2nd century pottery, mostly from the upper fill. Other finds comprised three fragments of oyster shell (see Boulton, below) and a fragment of worked bone (see Rajkovača, below).

F.14 – Ditch F.14 also appeared to comprise a single cut although a full profile of the ditch could not be exposed within the confines of the trench. Measuring at least 2.3m wide by 0.58m deep, the ditch was substantial but with a comparatively shallow rounded profile and was aligned NE-SW. It contained three fills which yielded a total of 67 sherds of largely mid 1st-2nd century pottery, whilst small fragments of oyster shell were also noted in the uppermost fill.

F.15/16 – Comprising two successive cuts of the same boundary, ditch **F.15/16** was located just to the south of F.14 and on the same NE-SW alignment. Ditch cut F.15 (0.95m wide by 0.38 deep) was the later of the two and largely truncated the earlier F.16 (0.5m wide by 0.23m deep). Just three sherds of early Roman pottery were recovered from F.15

F.17 – Again aligned NE-SW and parallel to F.14-16, ditch F.17 measured at least 1.9m wide by 0.32m deep and had a similar shallow rounded profile to F.14. It contained a single fill, which yielded 12 sherds of pottery dating the feature to the mid 1st to 2nd century.

To the south-east of F.14-17 a sequence of three ditches (Fs. 5-7) was also recorded at the western end of Trench 2 and which would appear to be a continuation of one or more of the aforementioned ditches in Trench 1. Also of significance was a potential gravel/metalled surface (F.8) running alongside ditch F.06.

Fs.5-7 – Ditches F.6 (1.35m wide by 0.55m deep) and F.7 (1.4m wide by 0.31m deep) were parallel and located just 0.2m apart; both also occupied the same NE-SW and as such they appear to have effectively marked the same boundary (see Figures 5 and 6). Each produced only small quantities of Roman pottery although ditch F.07 yielded a 4th century AD Roman coin (a nummus of the House of Constantine dating to 330-335 AD). Ditch F.5 clearly truncated F.6 and measured 0.9m wide by 0.3m deep. It contained a single fill, which yielded an assemblage of 20 sherds of mid 1st to 2nd century and 2nd-4th century Roman pottery as well as some 439g of oyster shell, which was largely deposited in a discrete dump on the western edge of the ditch. Other finds comprised an unidentifiable lump of iron and a few small fragments of animal bone.

F.8 – Gravel layer F.8 consisted of a thin layer (up to 0.06m thick) of rounded pebbles and small cobbles pressed into the underlying subsoil (of which here a remnant survived apparently within a slight hollow). The layer was apparently linear and ran parallel to ditch F.07; it was approximately 3m wide extending beyond the trench to the north and south. No finds were found directly associated with the layer but it seems most likely to be of Roman date and represent a gravel/metalled surface or a 'consolidated' area of ground adjacent to the ditches.

Given the alignment of the respective ditches it seems most likely that Fs.5-7 are a continuation of F.14 and F.15/16 in Trench 1 and this is supported by the pottery assemblages recovered from ditches F.14 and F.05 as well as the presence of oyster shell in both. Having said that, none of the ditches align perfectly and it is also possible that one of Fs.5-7 could equate to F.17, a clear continuation of which was not recorded in Trench 2 as would be expected.

Bulk environmental samples were taken from three features, F.5, F.13 and F.14. Each produced only very small quantities of cereal grains (1-3 grains; see Simmons, below) but no other plant macrofossils of note.

The only other evidence of Roman activity at the site comprised two sherds of pottery recovered as surface finds (SFs 1 and 2) from the interface between topsoil and natural subsoil and which are not therefore feature-related (see Figure 4). The sherds date to the 2nd-4th centuries and 3rd-4th centuries respectively.

Medieval – post-medieval features

Two N-S aligned plough furrows were the only medieval features present within the trenches. The furrows were approximately 2-3m wide and no more than 0.15m deep with poorly defined bases.

A single ditch (F.9 and re-cut F.12) has been dated to the post-medieval period. The ditch cuts measured 1m and 0.7m wide by 0.39m by 0.4m deep respectively. Ditch F.9 produced two sherds of 16th-18th century glazed pottery and three fragments of tile. The ditch does not correspond to any boundaries marked on historic mapping although it did run parallel to the medieval furrows.

Modern activity

Towards the eastern end of Trench 2 an in-filled ditch contained brick and concrete fragments and was still visible beyond the trench as a shallow dip; just to the west of and parallel to this a second ditch contained modern metal in its upper fill. Both equate approximately to a boundary depicted on Ordnance Survey maps from 1880 through to the 1980s.

To the east of the aforementioned ditches, an area of modern disturbance – probably caused by dumper ruts – towards the end of Trench 2 almost certainly results from activity during the construction of the hockey pitch immediately to the east in the 1990s.

Undated

Two features, both approximately N-S aligned ditches, remain undated. Ditch **F.10** (1.1m wide by 0.1m deep) and ditch terminus **F.11** (1.12m wide by 0.45m deep) were both encountered in Trench 2 but neither contained any finds or indication of date.

DISCUSSION

The evaluation has revealed evidence of Roman activity dating largely to the 1st and 2nd centuries AD in the form of a series of ditches occupying multiple alignments and therefore likely to represent multiple phases of activity (see Figure 7). In terms of the ditches themselves, they seem most likely to represent land division/elements of a field system, although the possibility that parallel ditches F.14 and F.17 defined a trackway should be considered. Indeed, whilst gravel layer (F.08) in Trench 2 is most likely to represent consolidation of the ground in areas adjacent to a boundary ditch it could potentially be an area of metalling from a road/trackway.

Only three of the recorded ditches (F.5, F.13 and F.14) yielded finds in any quantities and even here, finds were generally limited to abraded sherds of pottery, whilst animal bone was noticeably lacking in any quantities from the assemblage. As such the quantities of finds do not seem to reflect a settlement core location, yet at the same

time the broad range of pottery and the oyster shell particularly appear likely to be settlement/occupation derived. Consequently the evidence is perhaps best characterised as ‘edge of settlement’ and in this sense is of significance. Potentially the ditches mark the edge of a settlement zone to the north-west with trial trenching suggesting that the south-east of the PDA is largely devoid of Roman archaeology.

In terms of the character and date of the settlement, the pottery assemblage suggests it was established during the mid 1st century and indeed the majority of the pottery assemblage and by association the features can be dated to the mid 1st to early 2nd century (see Mazilli, below). Consequently, and based on the current evidence this can be considered the main period of occupation. Having said that, later forms present in ditch F.13 suggest activity into at least the 3rd century whilst the recovery of the 4th century *nummus* together with 2nd-4th century pottery from F.7 suggests this is a relatively late feature. Probably the most significant find from the site are the two sherds of Italian Sigillata, a comparatively rare pottery type in Britain and, in being a fine ware of particular quality, potentially indicative of a relatively high status site.

Set in the context of the wider Roman landscape, the PDA is located only *c.*300m to the south of the major Roman site at Vicar’s Farm, a settlement with associated shrines, separate cremation and inhumation cemeteries (the latter lying some 200m to the south of the main settlement), which is interpreted as an estate farm and market centre (see Evans and Lucas forthcoming). The Roman activity recorded within the PDA appears to be at least partly contemporary with Vicar’s Farm (see Mazilli, below), however, whilst it could be associated with the latter site, excavations at the Nano-Fabrication Building Site (Lucas 2001, Armour 2001) suggest that major settlement remains do not extend south of the excavated area. Consequently, and despite the fact that the alignment of the potential trackway also matches that of the Vicar’s Farm site, it seems more likely that we are dealing with a separate settlement site. Indeed, as shown by the extensive North West Cambridge excavations (Cessford and Evans 2014), farmsteads located at relatively regular intervals and linked by trackways and field systems appears to be the norm for this landscape.

Given the quantity of fieldwork around Cambridge itself, modelling the archaeological landscape is becoming more feasible and indeed successful. As highlighted by Evans *et al.* (2008), Iron Age and/or Roman landscapes occur at intervals of *c.* 300-500m across much of the region and a fuller picture of the density of rural settlement during this period is emerging. With this comes the potential to predict potential settlement locations and indeed the east-west ridge on which the PDA lies, as well as the Roman Road corridor to the south-east, have been previously identified as areas of high potential in terms of Roman settlement (see Evans and Dickens 2002; Dickens 2012).

Finally, in terms of the medieval landscape the plough furrows in Trench 2, which match the alignment of those recorded on aerial photographs (Palmer 2001), clearly reflect its ‘agricultural hinterland’ setting.

CONCLUSION

The archaeological features encountered appear likely to mark the south-eastern extent of an Early Roman settlement site; whilst the recorded ditches were probably not in themselves settlement features, the presence of settlement-derived finds assemblages within them strongly suggests occupation in the near vicinity.

As such there is the potential for further settlement/edge of settlement activity within the PDA, particularly in the north-west of the site. Furthermore, the presence of peripheral features, including potential cemeteries, cannot be ruled out. Based on the results of the trial trenching there is, however, less potential for archaeological remains in the south-east of the PDA where no Roman features were recorded and modern disturbance was recorded.

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SPECIALIST STUDIES

Pottery – Francesca Mazilli

A total of 137 Romano-British pottery sherds (880g) were recovered from nine features in the evaluation trench.

The main component of the assemblage dates from the mid 1st to the early 2nd century AD (72 sherds 539g, 52%), whilst there is also evidence of use of ceramics to the fourth century AD.

The entire assemblage has been analysed following the guidelines set out by the Study Group for Roman Pottery (Darling 1994) and the National Roman Fabric Reference Collection (Tomber & Dore 1998).

Assemblage Overview (Table 1)

Fabric Code	Fabric	No. of Sherds	Wt (g)
CSGW	Coarse sandy greyware – unsourced	17	61
CSOX	Coarse sandy oxidised ware – unsourced	12	34
FSGW	Fine sandy grey ware – unsourced	1	1
GODMAN	Godmanchester ware	19	83
HAD RED	Hadham reduced ware	1	7
HORN GW	Horningsea greyware	1	40
HORN OX	Horningsea oxidised ware	12	101
ITALIAN SIG	Italian Sigillata	2	12
GLAZ	Glazed oxidised ware (Post-Medieval period)	2	14
Q1	Medium sandy fabric, bit abrasive to touch. Frequent small quartz. Sandwich fired grey core, oxidised edges or oxidised core, black externally (Early Roman period) – unsourced	8	26
Q1b	Q1 but with no black on external surface (Early Roman period) – unsourced	7	29
Q4	Medium fine sandy, frequent silver mica (Early Roman period) - unsourced	1	1
Q5	Coarse sandy fabric with rare large flint inclusions up to 4mm, poorly sorted (Early Roman period) - unsourced	4	24
Q6	Flinty coarse sandy greyware or oxidised ware (Early Roman period) – unsourced	32	205
RED W, WEST STOW LONDON TYPE WARE)	Reduced ware, similar to West Stow ware, London type ware	14	239
SAM	Gaulish Samian ware	1	1
SAM Martres	Central Gaulish Samian ware, Les Martres-de-Veyre	2	1
SHELL	Shelly ware, early Roman	1	1
Total	Total	137	880

Table 1: Breakdown of the pottery assemblage by fabric

The minimum sherd weight (MSW) of Romano-British pottery is extremely low (6.4g), indicating a clear lack of immediacy to their deposition. Looking in detail at

the pottery assemblage, unsourced local wares dominate (96 sherds, 620g, 70%), as is typical of Romano-British assemblages in Cambridgeshire.

The majority of Romano-British sherds are mid 1st to early 2nd century unsourced oxidised and grey wares with flint, shell, quartz or limestone inclusions (72 sherds 539g, 52%). A smaller quantity of 2nd to 4th century unsourced local wares (31 sherds 131g) are also present although with no 3rd century forms. There is a strong component of early 2nd to 3rd century on the basis of diagnostic sherds of Godmanchester ware (19 sherds, 83g), and of the London type reduced ware and non-diagnostic Horningsea sherds (12 sherds, 101g), both from the 2nd century.

Apart from three extremely worn small fragments of Gaulish Samian ware (2g), there are two fragments of Italian sigillata (from ditch F.14), which are the only fine ware fragments from the assemblage. The two sherds are part of a conical cup with a ring-pedestal (most likely Form XXVII no.4); it is similar to the Gaulish Samian form Drag. 33 and was produced before the Augustan period (Pucci 1985: 393 XXVII no.4, Pl. CXXVIII, 3). This form was also found at Fishbourne (Dannell 1971: 262 fig.121, 13).

No late Roman pottery was found apart from one small fragment of Hadham reduced ware recovered from the surface (mid-3rd to 4th century). Two post-medieval glazed sherds were recovered from ditch F.9.

Forms

Only 25% of the assemblage comprises diagnostic sherds (Table 2) reflecting the overall poor quality of the assemblage. As common in Romano-British assemblages in rural settlements, the most common vessel forms are jars, followed by bowls, and the two fragments of Italian Sigillata cup. Apart from a couple of fragments of mid 1st to early 2nd century local coarse ware with everted rim, and sherds from a 2nd to 4th century local coarse ware jar with beaded everted rim, the other identifiable forms from this assemblage are from the late 1st to the early 3rd century. Two types of Godmanchester jars were identified: a jar with flat rim from the second century, and a neckless jar with pulley rim in AD 150-225 (Jones 2003: 46, 50 n.7). Thirteen fragments of London type reduced ware belong to a bowl with curved upper wall and folded over rim (13 sherds, 237g). This form seems to have been produced at Highgate Wood and is dated to AD 80-140 (Marsh and Tyers 1978 IV F.4); it is also found at Mucking, Essex (Form SCH7; Jefferies and Lucy in Lucy and Evans 2016, 177-8). Diagnostic sherds from the late 1st to the early 3rd century suggest a peak in activity at the site during this period.

Form	No. of Sherds	Wt (g)
Bowl	13	237
Cup	2	12
Jar	19	72
Unidentified	103	490
Total	137	880

Table 2: Breakdown of the pottery assemblage by form

Features

Most of the features are dated to the Early Roman period (mid 1st to early 2nd century) on the basis of the majority of pottery coming from that period, these include Fs. 1, 5, 6, 15, and 17, see Table 3). The F.14 assemblage is mainly dated to late 1st to early 2nd century but also with a 2nd to early 3rd century component. Ditch F.13 is mainly dated to late 1st to mid 2nd century. Feature 7 has hardly any fragments (three sherds), but the majority is from the 2nd to 4th century (two sherds). The Surface Finds, which come from the interface between topsoil and natural subsoil, are dated to the 2nd to 4th century and mid 3rd to 4th century respectively. Ditch F.9 is the only post-Roman feature and produced sherds dating to the 16th-18th century (R. Newman pers comm).

Feature	Chronology	No. of sherds	Wt (g)
1	Total	7	20
	C2-C4	1	1
	MC1-EC2	6	19
5	Total	20	112
	C2	3	11
	C2-C4	12	36
	MC1-EC2	5	65
6	Total	2	11
	MC1-EC2	2	11
7	Total	3	5
	C2-C4	2	3
	MC1-EC2	1	2
9	Total	2	14
	16TH-18TH C	2	14
13	Total	19	285
	80-140	12	237
	C1-C2	1	1
	C2	1	16
	C2-C4	4	30
	MC1-EC2	1	1
14	Total	67	324
	150-225	9	31
	C2	18	126
	C2-C4	8	22
	MC1-EC2	32	145
15	Total	3	6
	C2-C4	1	1
	MC1-EC2	2	5
17	Total	12	56
	C1-C2	2	1
	C2-C4	2	3
	MC1-EC2	8	52
SF	Total	2	47
	C2-C4	1	40
	MC3-C4	1	7
	Grand Total	137	880

Table 3: Feature list with dating

Discussion

The assemblage provides a coherent picture of the site and indicates the potential for significant settlement remains in the vicinity. It seems that it reflects only partially the occupation recorded at Vicar's Farm, 300m north from the evaluation. The settlement of Vicar's Farm began in AD 80 and its main phase was in AD 180-270 (Monteil in Evans and Lucas *forthcoming*: 187-9). Similar to the picture offered at Vicar's Farm, the occupation at Wilberforce Road started after the Conquest Period. However, its main occupation phase was mid 1st century to early 2nd century with a significant component from the 2nd to the early 3rd century. It seems to have terminated at least 50 years earlier than Vicar's Farm.

A couple of significant vessels identified amongst the majority of non-diagnostic sherds suggest the potential significance of the settlement that this assemblage represents.

Of particular interest is the Italian Sigillata conical cup with a ring pedestal dating to before the Augustan period, which is similar to the Gaulish Samian form Drag. 33. Italian Sigillata is not commonly found in Britain although its presence has been increasingly recorded over time, especially in central, southern and south-eastern areas, particularly Essex and Hertfordshire (Williams and Dannell 1978, 9). It has been recovered in small quantities from major Roman settlements; examples from the pre-Claudian period comprise London (15 or 16 fragments) (Davies Pryce 1928), Silchester (32 sherds; May 1919: 6 Pls. LXXVI, 8, and LXXVII, 7) and Colchester (a single sherd; Oswald and Pryce 1920 XL, 14). In addition a base of Italian Sigillata platter was recovered in the New Cemetery at Heybridge (Kenrick in Wickenden 1986, 53). In Cambridgeshire there is an example of Italian sigillata with a stamp of ATEIVS at Foxton (Oswald and Pryce 1920 II, 2) whilst this stamp was also found at Pleshey in Essex, and at Silchester and London, dated to the earlier third of the 1st century AD (Davies Price 1928).

The early production date of this vessel does not mean necessarily that it reached England and Cambridgeshire at that time; considering the high quality of the vessel it may well have been used over a long period. At Wilberforce Road, the two Italian sigillata fragments were recovered from a mid-1st to 2nd-century context (F.14).

Further investigation about this vessel and, more generically, about Italian Sigillata recovered in this evaluation within the fascinating wider network of Italian Sigillata in Roman Britain is highly recommended because of the rarity of its supply in this part of the Empire and its presence in small quantities mostly in major Roman settlements in Britain. Therefore, even its single recovery can be evidence of the significance of a potential settlement and its high status.

Other vessels of interest are two types of jars from Godmanchester (a jar with flat rim from the second century, and a neckless jar with pulley rim dated to AD 150-225) (Jones 2003: 46, 50 n.7) and London type reduced ware forms a bowl with curved upper wall and folded over rim possibly from Highgate Wood dated to AD 80-140 (Marsh and Tyers 1978 IV F.4). Even these two different pottery supplies are indicators of the potential significance of the site connected within the wider network

of trade and exchange in Cambridgeshire and further afield from the end of the 1st to early 3rd century

Metalwork – *Justin Wiles*

Copper Alloy

F.07 [7.01] SF.3. Nummus, House of Constantine, head facing right, laureate, '...NOB...', R. Two soldiers with standards, '...XERC...', Trier mintmark, '...RP', weight 2.11g, AD330-335

Iron

F.05 (5.01). An unidentifiable lump, weight 17g

Faunal remains - *Vida Rajkovača*

A small assemblage was recovered from three ditches dated to the Romano-British period. Some 17 fragments weighing 172g were recovered by hand and further 24 fragments, with a combined weight of 7g, as heavy residues following the processing of environmental bulk soil samples.

Ditch F.5 ([5.01]) contained a fragment of cow pelvis (acetabulum) and a sheep/goat proximal metatarsus, as well as a sheep-sized rib segment and a number of unidentifiable sheep-sized limb bone splinters. A single cow radius shaft fragment came from ditch F.13 ([13.01]), as well as a cattle-sized limb bone fragment that was worked into a point, though the working end is missing. Measuring 54mm in length, this mid-section of a bone point bears clear marks of modelling and slight polish.

Heavy residues came from F.5, F.13 and F.14. This material was made up of unidentifiable crumbs of mostly sheep-sized elements.

The assemblage evidently represents domestic refuse associated with a settlement; crude splitting and chop marks present are typical for the period.

Shell – *Christopher Boulton*

An assemblage of 57 shell fragments (512g) was recovered from the site during on-site hand excavation and through post-excavation processing of bulk environmental samples. Prior to analysis, the shells were weighed and quantified by feature. Where possible, any diagnostic features such as identification of valves, infestation and signs of human consumption or alteration were recorded. The entire assemblage consists of 45 fragments of oyster shell and 12 snail shells from a total of three features, which were all Roman ditches (see Table 4).

Shell Type	Total Fragment	Total Weight (g)	Fragment %	Weight %
Oyster (<i>Ostrea edulis</i>)	45	510	78.9%	99.6%
Snail (<i>Vallonia pulchella</i>)	12	2	21.1%	0.4%

Table 4: Shell assemblage breakdown

The majority of the assemblage consisted of examples of the European Flat Oyster family (*Ostrea edulis*). Of the 45 oyster shells, there are 22 confirmed left and 17 confirmed right valves with an additional six that were too degraded for an accurate identification; 31 of the total shells were whole or mostly intact, and the remaining 14 were fragmentary. This produces a Minimum Number of Individuals (MNI) for the assemblage of 22 individual oysters.

There was very little in the way of infestation markers on the shells themselves and of those that did all were too degraded for positive identification (Winder, J. 2011). However, those with signs of potential infestation comprised two shells with possible *Polydora ciliata*, one with possible Calcareous tubes and three with bore holes. There was also one fragment which appears to have the remains of a second oyster fused to its shell. Occasionally, oyster larvae, or spats, become attached to any older oysters around them; in this case, a fragment of an older right valve has the remains of second left valve attached to it.

Finally, a single shell has a ‘V’-shaped notch, associated with the breaking open of the shell.

Feature	Type of Shell	Quantity
5	Oyster	41
13	Oyster	4
5	Snail	1
13	Snail	5
14	Snail	6

Table 5: Shell by feature

As shown in Table 5, the entire assemblage is from three features which have been identified as Roman ditches. The relatively small quantities recovered are not indicative of any great on-site consumption of oyster or that they were being used for any manufacturing reasons.

The 12 snail shells present in the assemblage are *Vallonia pulchella*, a small land-based snail of the family *J. Valloniidae* and commonly found in ditches and open, damp areas (Cameron, R. 2008, 46).

No further analysis is recommended. Although it is possible to identify an oyster’s source from infestation markers (Claassen, C. 1998), the sample size within the assemblage is too small. Likewise the small assemblage size rules out any further meaningful investigation into human interference.

Plant macrofossils and wood charcoal – Ellen Simmons

Three bulk sieving samples, comprising a total of thirty litres of soil, were taken during an archaeological evaluation on land at Wilberforce Road Sports Pitch, Cambridge (NGR: TL 4320 5851) by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit. The sampled features are all provisionally dated to the Roman period. The samples were processed for the recovery of charred plant remains and wood charcoal and assessed in order to determine the concentration, diversity, state of preservation and suitability for use in radiocarbon dating, of any archaeobotanical material present. A further aim of this assessment was to evaluate the potential of any archaeobotanical material present to provide evidence for the function of the contexts, the economy of the site or for the nature of the local environment.

Recovery, processing and laboratory methods

The bulk sieving samples were processed by flotation for the recovery of charred plant remains and wood charcoal by The Cambridge Archaeological Unit using a water separation machine. Floating material was collected in a 300µm mesh, and the remaining heavy residue retained in a 1mm mesh. The flots and heavy residues were air dried.

The samples were assessed in accordance with English Heritage guidelines for environmental archaeology assessments (English Heritage, 2011). A preliminary assessment of the samples was made by scanning using a stereo-binocular microscope (x10 - x65) and recording the abundance of the main classes of material present. The low density of charred plant macrofossils was identified and quantified in full. Wood charcoal fragments greater than 2mm in size were counted. Mollusca were quantified using a scale of abundance (- = < 5 items, + = > 5 items, ++ = > 10 items, +++ = > 30 items, ++++ = > 50 items, +++++ = > 100 items).

Identification of plant material and wood charcoal fragments was carried out by comparison with material in the reference collections at the Department of Archaeology, University of Sheffield and various reference works (e.g. Cappers *et al*, 2006). Cereal identifications and nomenclature follow Jacomet (2006). Other plant nomenclature follows Stace (2010). The composition of the samples is recorded in Table 6. The seed, in the broadest sense, of the plant is always referred to in Table 6 unless stated otherwise. The abbreviation *cf.* means ‘compares with’ and denotes that a specimen most closely resembles that particular taxa more than any other.

Preservation

Preservation of the low density of charred cereal grains present in the sampled contexts was somewhat poor, with grains exhibiting puffing and distortion and retaining only fragments of epidermis. A relatively high proportion of intrusive roots were also present in the sampled contexts indicating an increased likelihood that charred material may be intrusive.

CONTEXT NUMBER	5.01	13.01	114.01
FEATURE NUMBER	5	13	14
FLOTATION SAMPLE NUMBER	1	2	3
CONTEXT TYPE	Ditch	Ditch	Ditch
PROVISIONAL DATE	Roman	Roman	Roman
SAMPLE VOLUME (litres)	10	10	10
VOLUME OF INTRUSIVE ROOTS (ml)	1	10	1
FLOT VOLUME EXCLUDING ROOTS (ml)	0.5	0.5	0.5
% Intrusive roots	67	95	67
*key - = < 5 items, + = > 5 items, ++ = > 10 items, +++ = > 30 items, ++++ = > 50 items, +++++ = > 100 items. (uc = uncharred)			
CROPS AND OTHER ECONOMIC PLANT MATERIAL			
<i>Triticum cf. spelta</i> (spelt wheat)	1	1	
<i>Triticum dicocum / spelta</i> (emmer / spelt wheat) glume base		1	1
Cereal grain indet.	1	1	
Total identifiable crop material	2	3	1
NON SEED PLANT MATERIAL			
> 4mm wood charcoal fragments	1		
> 2mm wood charcoal fragments			
Charcoal (DP = predominantly diffuse porous. RP = predominantly ring porous)	Indet.		
NON PLANT MATERIAL			
Mollusca*	-	+++	++
Sample summary information			
Sample suitable for further analysis of charred plant material	No	No	No
Sample suitable for further analysis of wood charcoal	No	No	No
Charred material suitable for C14 dating	No	No	No
Retain flots	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 6: Archaeobotanical sample assessment

Charred plant macrofossils

A single grain of probable spelt wheat (*Triticum cf. spelta*) was present in Sample 1 from ditch fill [5.01] along with an indeterminate cereal grain. A single grain of probable spelt wheat was also present in Sample 2 from ditch fill [13.01] along with a glume wheat glume base (*Triticum dicocum / spelta*) and an indeterminate cereal grain. A glume wheat glume base was present in Sample 3 from ditch fill [14.01]

Wood charcoal

Low densities of wood charcoal less than 2mm in size were present in the sampled contexts. A single wood charcoal fragment greater than 2mm in size was present in Sample 1 from ditch fill [5.01].

Radiocarbon dating

No charred material suitable for radiocarbon dating was present in the sampled contexts.

Discussion

The low density of charred cereal grain and chaff present in the sampled contexts is likely to have originated as hearth waste and therefore indicates some form of domestic activity in the vicinity of the site. The charred plant remains assemblage would be consistent with a Roman date for the sampled features as spelt wheat (*Triticum spelta*) is the predominant crop type present in Roman period archaeobotanical assemblages from the region such as at Cambourne located to the west of Cambridge (Stevens 2009).

No further conclusions regarding crop husbandry can be drawn however due to the low density of charred plant macrofossils present.

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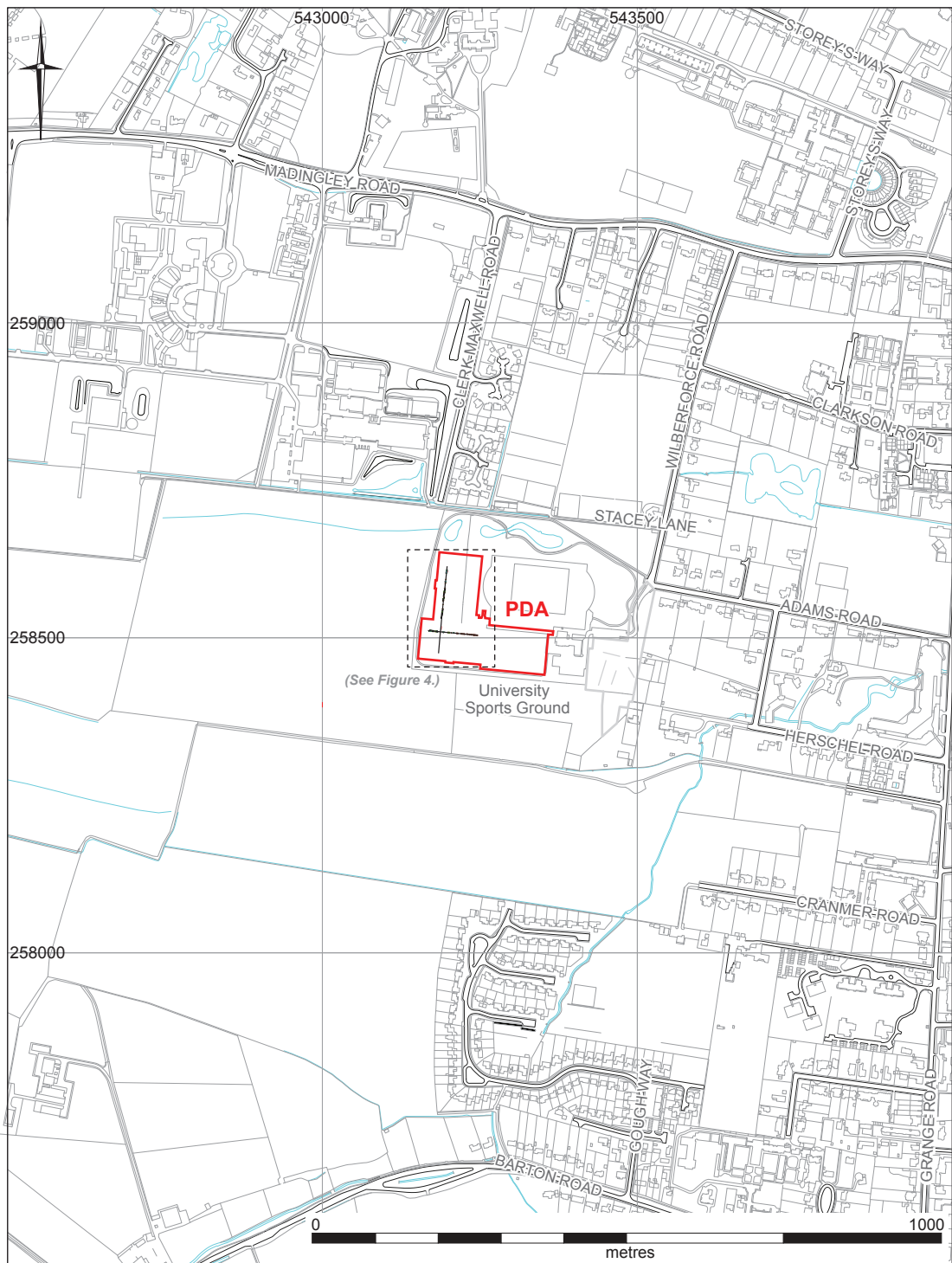
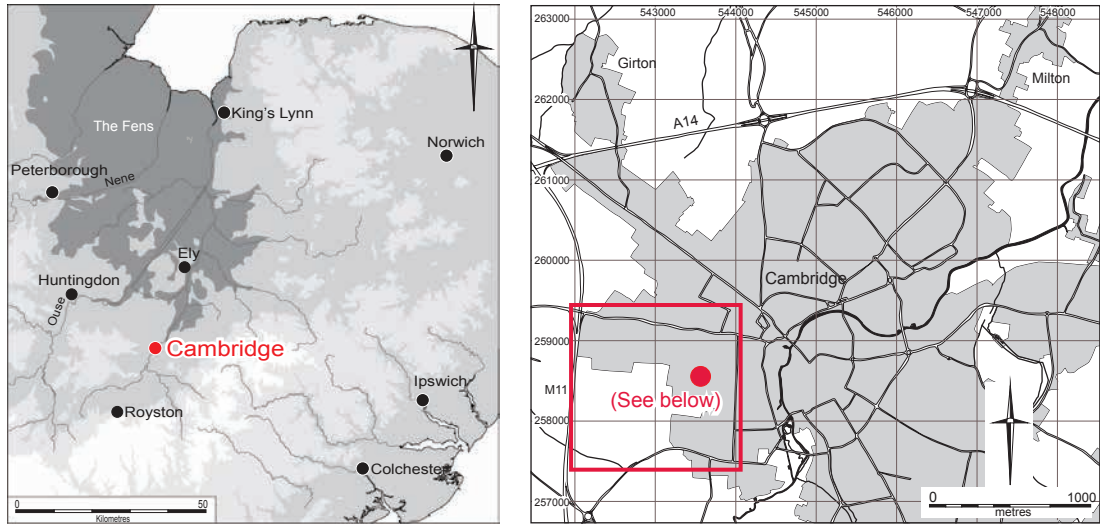


Figure 1. Location plan

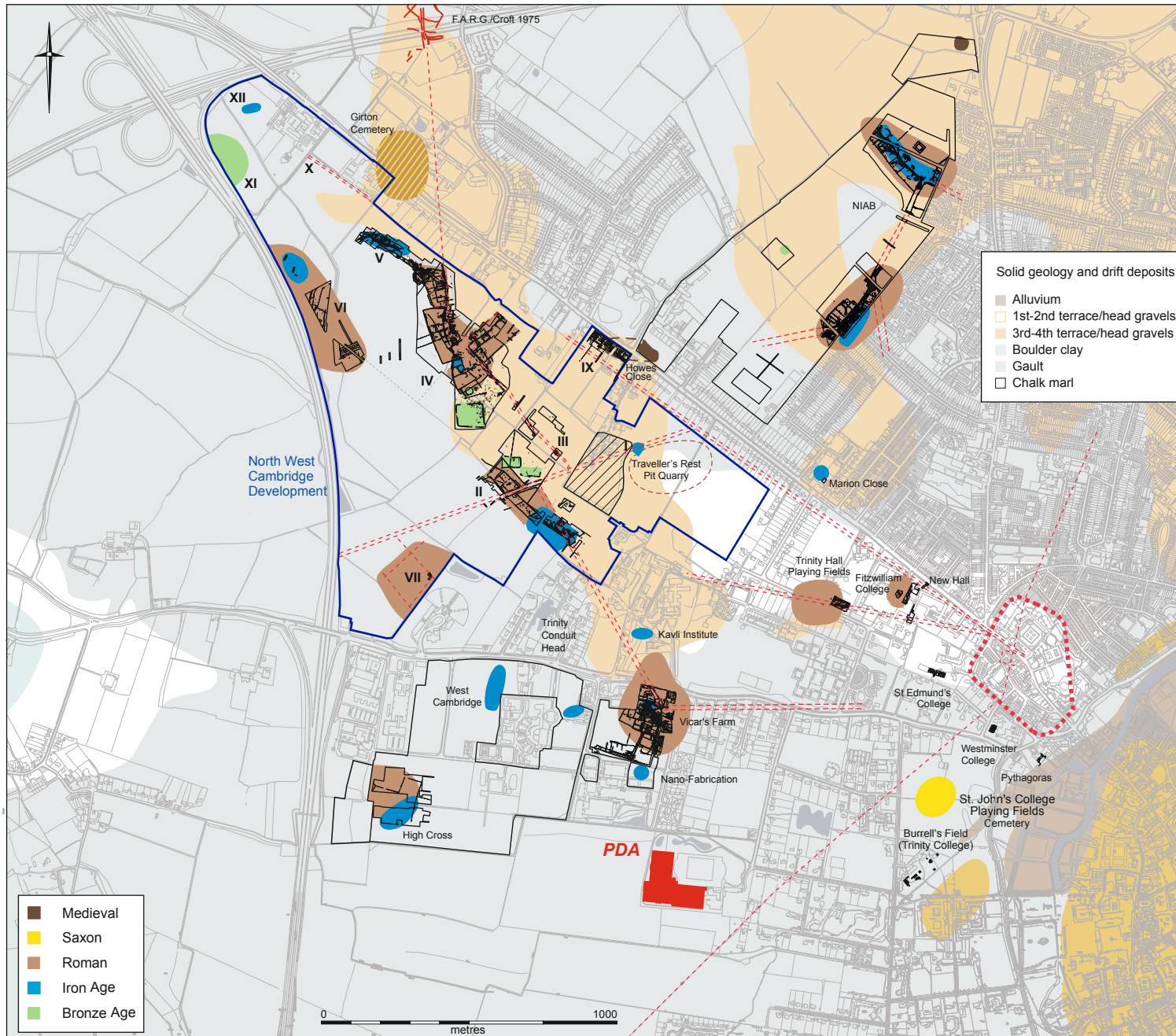


Figure 2. The West Cambridge hinterland, showing significant archaeological sites and finds

PLAN of the Lands
in
CAMBRIDGE
WEST FIELDS
as shewn in the Terraire Late of
Bennets College in the University
of
CAMBRIDGE

Scale of Chains
0 5 10 15 20

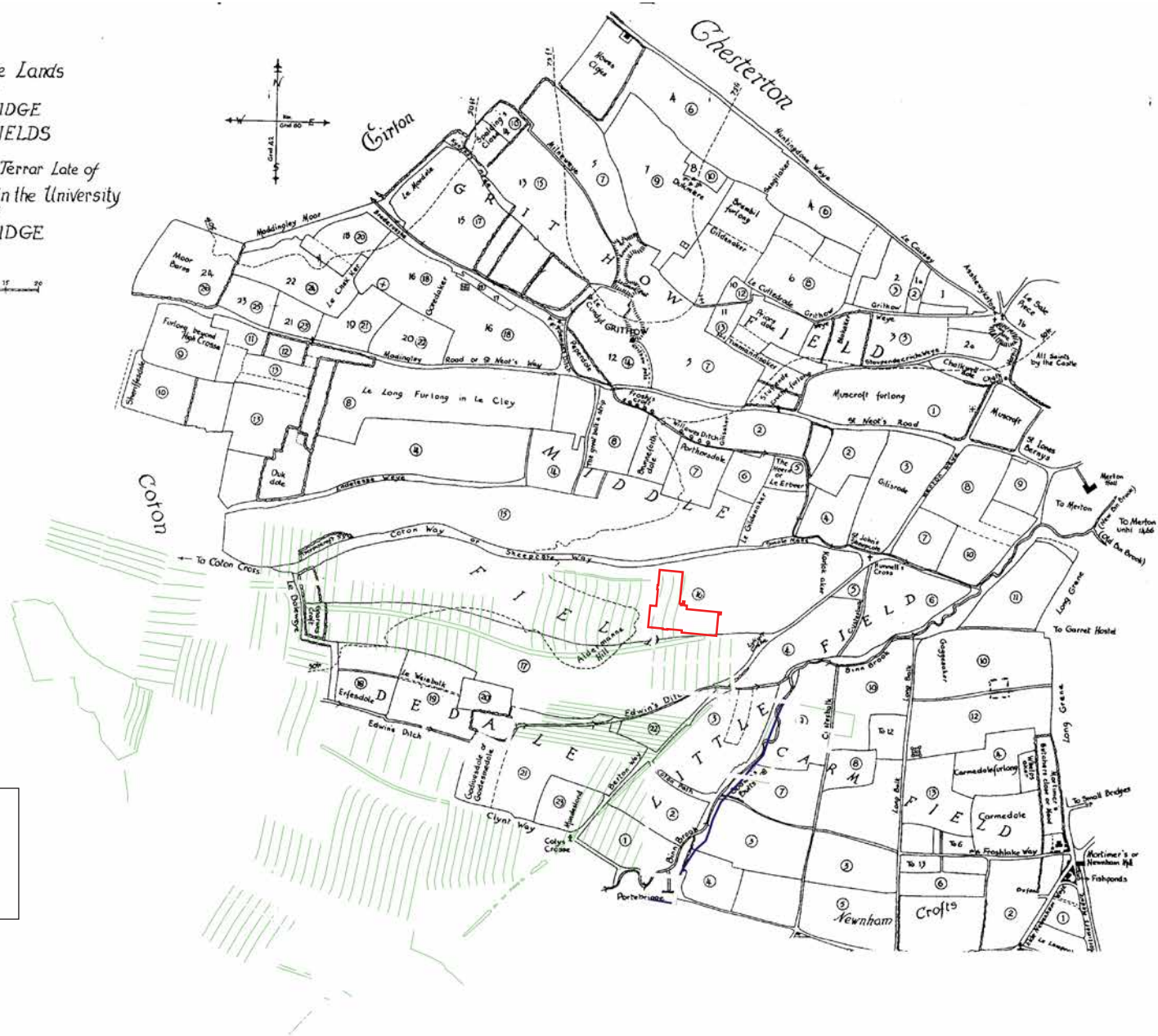
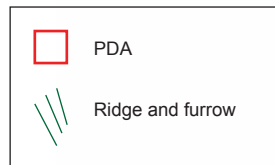


Figure 3. The West Fields of Cambridge (after Hall and Ravensdale) with ridge and furrow plotted from aerial photographs

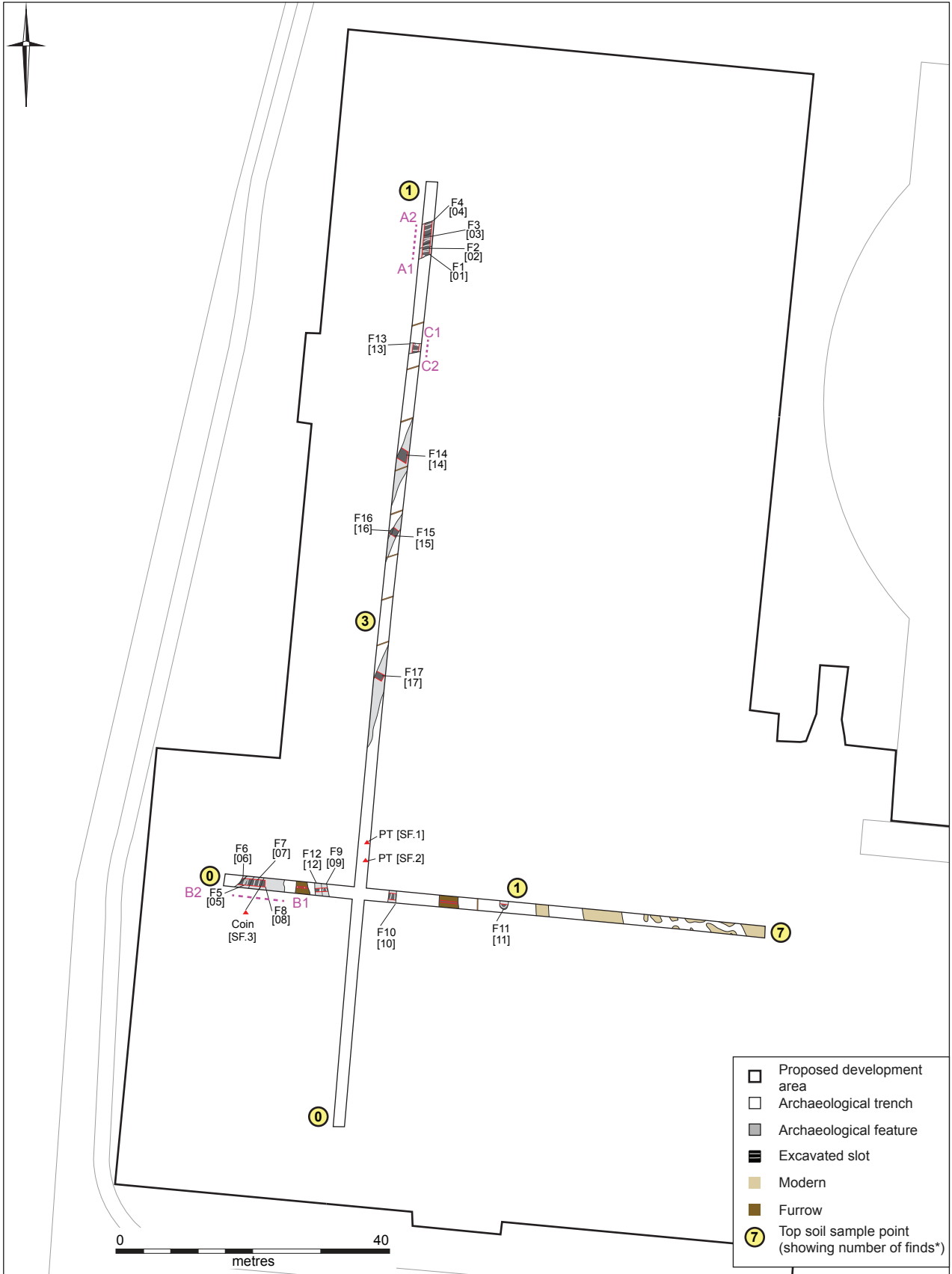


Figure 4. Trench plan (*All finds from top soil sampling = post-medieval/modern brick/tile or slate)

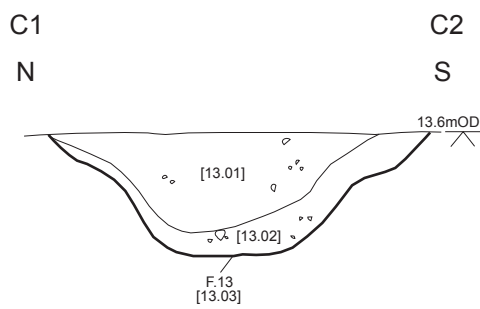
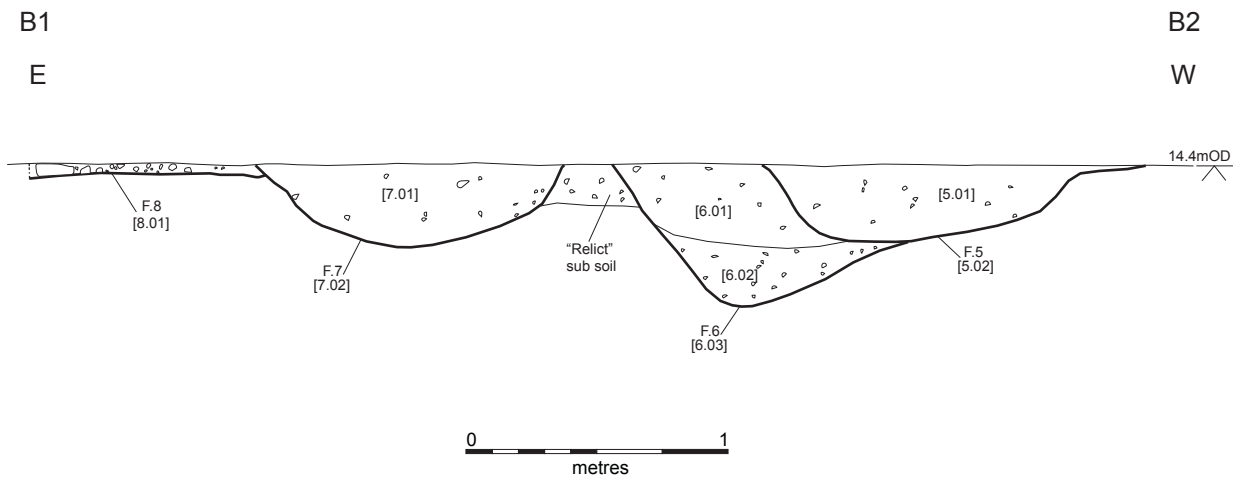
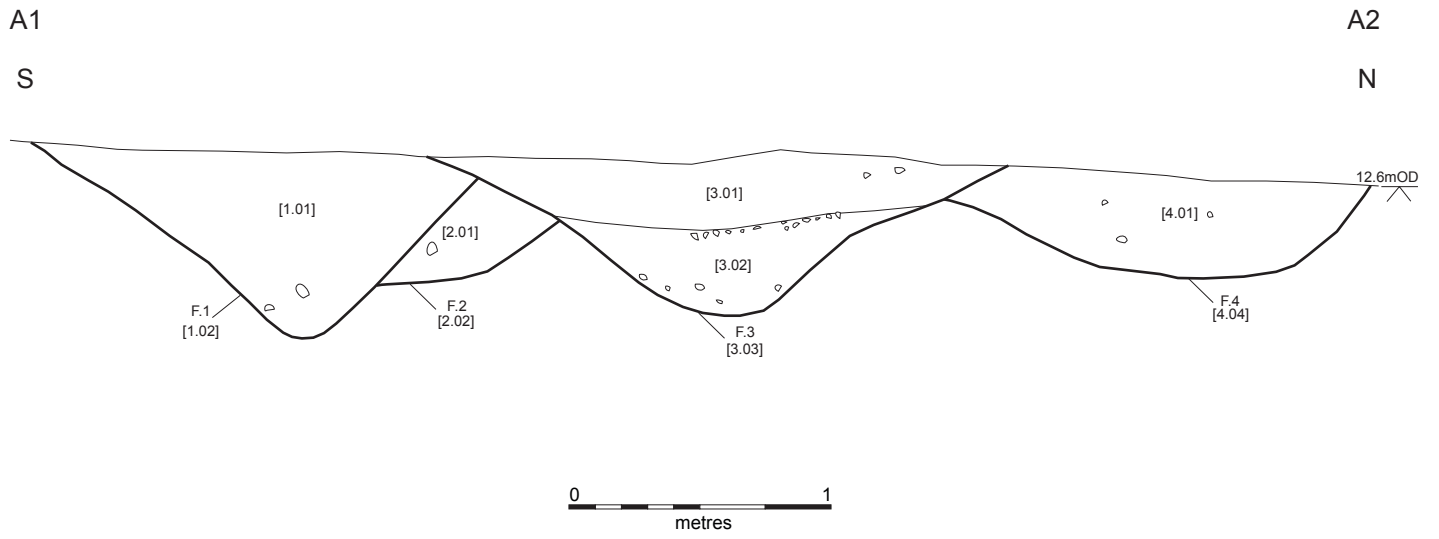


Figure 5. Key Roman ditch sections



Figure 6. Ditches F. 1-4 viewed from the southeast (top); ditches F. 5 -7 and metalled surface F.8 viewed from the northeast (bottom)

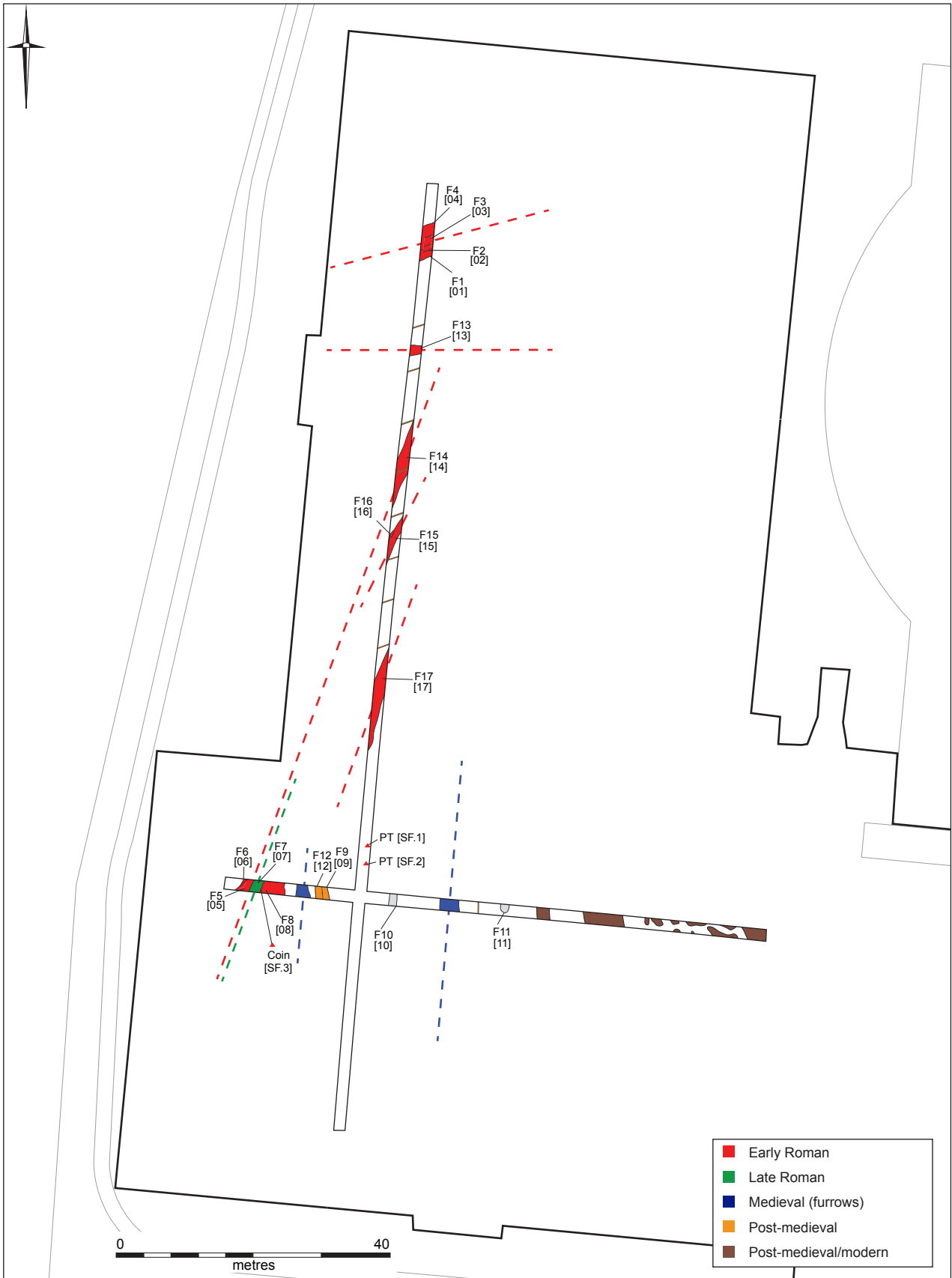




Figure 7. Phase plan

APPENDIX 1

Trench Descriptions

Trench 1		
	Orientation	N-S
	Max. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.4
	Max. Depth of subsoil/ made ground (m)	N/A
	Max. Trench Depth	0.4
	Width (m)	2
	Length (m)	140
	<p>General Description:</p> <p>Deposits comprised topsoil directly overlying orange brown clay natural. Eight archaeological features (Fs.1-4 and Fs.13-17) were exposed within the trench. All were ditches.</p>	

Trench 2		
	Orientation	E-W
	Max. Topsoil Depth (m)	0.4
	Max. Depth of subsoil/ made ground (m)	N/A
	Max. Trench Depth	0.4
	Width (m)	2
	Length (m)	80
	<p>General Description:</p> <p>Deposits comprised topsoil directly overlying orange brown clay natural. Eight archaeological features (Fs.5-12), were exposed within the trench. Of these, all but one were ditches ranging in date from the Roman period to the post-medieval period. The one exception was a potential gravel/metalled surface adjacent to ditch F.06. In addition to the recorded archaeological features, two furrows, two modern ditches and an area of modern disturbance – at the eastern end of the trench – were also present.</p>	

APPENDIX 2

Feature List

Feature No.	Trench No.	Feature Type	Context No.	Context type	Context description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Finds
1	1	Ditch	1.01	Fill	Pale grey silty clay				Roman pottery
			1.02	Cut	NE-SW linear cut. Rounded V-shape profile	1m slot	1.2	0.68	
2	1	Ditch	2.01	Fill	Mid grey silty clay				None
			2.02	Cut	NE-SW linear cut. Rounded profile	1m slot	0.75	0.45	
3	1	Ditch	3.01	Fill	Mid grey silty clay				None
			3.02	Fill	Mid orange grey sandy clay silt (redeposited natural with slight sib-soil component)				
			3.03	Cut	NE-SW linear cut. Rounded profile	1m slot	1.2	0.6	
4	1	Ditch	4.01	Fill	Mid grey clay silt				None
			4.02	Cut	NE-SW linear cut. Rounded profile	1m slot	1.4	0.41	
5	2	Ditch	5.01	Fill	Mid-dark grey brown clay silt.				Roman pottery, iron object, animal bone, oyster shell
			5.02	Cut	NE-SW linear cut. Rounded profile	1m slot	0.9	0.3	
6	2	Ditch	6.01	Fill	Mid grey brown silty clay				Roman pottery
			6.02	Fill	Light yellow brown gritty/gravelly silty clay				
			6.03	Cut	NE-SW linear cut. Rounded profile	1m slot	1.35	0.55	
7	2	Ditch	7.01	Fill	Mid grey brown clayey silt				Roman pottery, Roman coin
			7.02	Cut	NE-SW linear cut. Rounded profile	1m slot	1.4	0.31	
8	2	Layer	8.01	Layer	NE-SW linear (?) gravel/stoney spread/surface	1m slot	3	0.06	
9	2	Ditch	9.01	Fill	Pale-mid brownish grey clayey silt				Post-medieval pottery, tile
			9.02	Cut	NW-SE linear cut. Rounded profile	0.5m slot	1	0.39	

Feature No.	Trench No.	Feature Type	Context No.	Context type	Context description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Findings
10	2	Ditch	10.01	Fill	Mid grey silty clay				None
			10.02	Cut	N-S Linear cut. Shallow rounded profile	1m slot	1.1	0.1	
11	2	Ditch (terminus)	11.01	Fill	Mid grey sandy silt				None
			11.02	Fill	Orange brown sand/gravel				
			11.03	Cut	N-S linear cut (?). Profile: steep-sided with flat base	1m slot	1.12	0.45	
12	2	Ditch	12.01	Fill	Pale-mid brownish grey clay silt				None
			12.02	Cut	NW-SE linear cut. V-Shaped profile (with flat base)	0.5m slot	0.7	0.4	
13	1	Ditch	13.01	Fill	Mid grey brown silty clay				Roman pottery, worked bone, animal bone, oyster shell
			13.02	Fill	Pale grey brown silty clay				
			13.03	Cut	E-W linear cut. Profile: Moderate sides, flat base	1m slot	1.63	0.42	
14	1	Ditch	14.01	Fill	Dark grey clay silt				Roman pottery, animal bone, oyster shell
			14.02	Fill	Mid brownish grey clay silt				
			14.03	Fill	Pale grey silty clay				
			14.04	Cut	NE-SW linear cut. Rounded profile	1m slot	2.3	0.58	
15	1	Ditch	15.01	Fill	Mid brown clayey silt				None
			15.02	Fill	Pale brownish grey silty clay				
			15.03	Cut	NE-SW linear cut. Rounded profile	1m slot	0.95	0.38	
16	1	Ditch	16.01	Fill	Mid brown clay silt				Roman pottery
			16.02	Cut	NE-SW linear cut. Shallow rounded profile	1m slot	0.5	0.23	
17	1	Ditch	17.01	Fill	Pale-mid grey brown silty clay				Roman pottery
			17.02	Cut	NE-SW linear cut. Profile: moderate sides, flattish base	1m slot	>1.9	0.32	

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OASIS ID: cambridg3-299362

Project details

Project name	University of Cambridge Sports Pitch and Athletics Track
Short description of the project	A trial trench based archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) at the University of Cambridge sports pitches and athletics track, Wilberforce Road, Cambridge (TL 4320 5851) between 11th and 18th October 2017. The trial trenching programme consisted of two trenches (totalling 220m in length). Archaeological remains comprised a series of Roman ditches, two medieval plough furrows and a number of post-medieval-modern boundary ditches. The ditches all appear to represent land division/boundaries (although two parallel Roman ditches potentially represent a trackway or roadway) and no settlement features per se were encountered. Having said that, a number of the ditches yielded small assemblages of Roman pottery and oyster shell - with one also producing a 4th century AD coin - that appear likely to be settlement-derived. As such, the remains are interpreted as 'edge of settlement', with the ditches potentially marking the southern/eastern limit of a nearby settlement site, which could extend into the west of the proposed development area.
Project dates	Start: 11-10-2017 End: 16-10-2017
Previous/future work	No / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	WRS 17 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	ECB5209 - HER event no.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 14 - Recreational usage
Monument type	DITCH Roman
Significant Finds	POTTERY Roman
Significant Finds	COIN Roman
Methods & techniques	""Targeted Trenches""
Development type	Amenity area (e.g. public open space)
Development type	Sports pitch
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 University of Cambridge Sports Pitch and Athletics Track

Postcode CB3 0EQ

Study area 1.4 Hectares

Site coordinates TL 4320 5851 52.205759819028 0.095867213289 52 12 20 N 000 05 45 E Point

Height OD / Depth Min: 12m Max: 12m

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 director/manager Chris Evans

Project supervisor Jonathan Tabor

Type of sponsor/funding body University of Cambridge

Name of sponsor/funding body Univeristy of Cambridge

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Store

Physical Contents "Animal Bones","Ceramics","Metal","other"

Digital Archive recipient Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Store

Digital Contents "Animal Bones","Ceramics","Metal","Survey","other"

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

Paper Archive recipient Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Store

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