

# Land Off Orwell Road, Barrington.

An Archaeological Evaluation.



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# **Land off Orwell Road, Barrington, Cambridgeshire**

*An Archaeological Evaluation*

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## *Summary*

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken to address a request from Cambridgeshire Archaeology and Planning Advice (CAPCA) in support of a planning application at Orwell Road, Barrington, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 386 497). The evaluation comprised three trenches, which yielded evidence for 19<sup>th</sup> quarrying.*

## **Introduction**

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on behalf of Mr and Mrs Brunner from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2010. The investigation was commissioned to define the potential for, and extent of, archaeological remains within the proposed development area (PDA). This work was part of a pre-determination condition for a planning application for the construction of stables, a manege and a barn, with associated services and access. The project followed a specification set out by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (Beadsmoore 2009) in response to a brief for an archaeological evaluation issued by Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice (CAPCA; McConnell 2009).

### *Location, Topography, Geology*

The site is located in Hoopers Field, east of Orwell Road, to the north-west of Barrington village, and adjacent to Hillside Farm (Figure 1). The underlying geology was Grey Chalk (British Geological Survey 1978). The PDA is situated just off the crest of a low chalk ridge, at approximately 20m AOD, extending over an area of 0.33 ha and centred on TL 386 497. The site was located in a pasture field, bordered by Orwell Road to the west, Hillside Farm to the south, and by ploughed fields to the north.

### *Archaeological Background*

Despite a lack of apparent settlement evidence, pre-Iron Age activity is well demonstrated in the wider landscape (Dickens *et al.* 2006). Neolithic finds have been recovered from both Orwell and Barrington (Taylor 1997); whilst six barrows located on Money Hill, in conjunction with numerous finds from Barrington, and the surrounding area attest to activity during the Bronze Age (Taylor 1997: 65). Two additional Bronze Age monuments were recently identified during the evaluations at Barrington cement quarry to the north of the PDA (Dickens *et al.* 2006). These evaluations also yielded evidence for Iron Age and Roman settlement (*ibid*). At Edix Hill, immediately west of the study area, further evidence of Neolithic and Bronze Age activity has been recorded, including a possible Bronze Age burial mound and later Iron Age settlement (Malim 1998).

More noteworthy are the adjacent Anglo-Saxon cemeteries at Edix Hill and Hooper's Field, known as Barrington A and Barrington B respectively. The PDA is situated within the known vicinity of the latter cemetery, which was discovered in 1879 during extensive coprolite mining (MCB5870, ECB860, MCB861). Grave goods from disturbed burials were identified and an undisclosed number of burials removed prior to an official excavation, in which 114 graves were discovered dating to the 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>

centuries AD (Foster 1881). In his report, Foster also refers to a number of variably-sized pits, linears and a substantial possible sub-rectangular enclosure (*ibid*). Pottery recovered from these features was allegedly Roman in date, and many were purportedly cut by the graves. Some of the information regarding these features, such as their scale, is dubious, and would be more fitting of later Medieval/post-Medieval quarrying. Nevertheless, the multi-period evidence from Edix Hill implies Barrington B may also have been located amid an area of earlier archaeology activity.

The neighbouring Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Edix Hill, 500m west of the PDA, was excavated between 1989 and 1991 with a total of 149 burials recorded (Malim *et al.* 1998). Stray Anglo-Saxon finds have been recovered from Barrington, including pottery, loom weights, studs, bowls and brooches (CHER 03215 and 03219); however, there is a dearth of settlement evidence in the immediate area. The location of Barrington B is described as “on the south slope of some rising ground in a field which goes by the name of Hooper’s Field, at the west end of the village of Barrington” (Foster 1881:6). Thus, the precise location of Barrington B is unclear, Hooper’s Field having recently been sub-divided. The presence of intact burials at Barrington A, in an area also heavily quarried, suggests that burials may survive within the locality of the PDA. Indeed, the aerial photography survey of the PDA highlights areas of potential coprolite mining with large areas appearing undisturbed (Palmer 2009).

### *Methodology*

Three trenches were excavated by a mini-digger using a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket and supervised by an experienced archaeologist. The trenches were machine excavated to a level where any and all archaeological features would be visible; these would then be planned and hand excavated by a team of skilled archaeologists. All spoil was carefully metal-detected by a trained archaeologist.

Trench sheets were completed to record section profiles and geological variances. Accompanying scale plans were made of the trenches (at 1:50), and, where necessary, sections of the excavated features were drawn at 1:10. Digital photographs were taken of the trenches and pertinent archaeological features. The Unit-modified version of the MoLAS recording system was employed throughout with all excavated stratigraphic events assigned feature numbers (F.#) and all contexts assigned individual numbers ([context #]). The trenches were fixed to the Ordnance Survey (OS) grid. The site was identified as ORB 10.

### **Results**

The three trenches comprised a total of 67.3m (Figure 2). The depths of the trenches were comparable, with an average topsoil depth of 0.34m. The north-western end of Trench 1 revealed no subsoil, although a subsoil deposit was recorded to the south-western end of Trench 1 and throughout Trenches 2 and 3. The geology of Trenches 1 and 2 was predominantly chalk with areas of clay and blue-green sandy clay derived from Cambridge Greensand. Trench 3 was predominantly clay mixed with blue-green Cambridge Greensand with seams of orange sandy clay.

### *Trench 1*

A single quarry pit, **F.5**, was located in Trench 1, cut into the clay. The exposed area of the pit measured approximately 4m and was partially excavated (to a maximum depth of 0.66m) to determine if any earlier archaeological activity may have been disturbed or truncated. The pit had a shallow sloping southern edge and a severely undercutting northern edge with the base dropping steeply to the west. The pit fills contained finds typical of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including fragments of oyster shell, china, clay pipe, brick, tile and iron nails. Three residual worked flints and a small sherd of abraded, probable Iron Age pottery, (pers.comm. M. Knight 2010), from the uppermost fill [9], attest to a prehistoric presence within the general area. However, there was no evidence to suggest any earlier archaeological activity had occurred within the vicinity of Trench 1.

### *Trench 2*

The edge of a possible quarry pit, **F.6**, was identified at the eastern end of the trench. Two exploratory sections were excavated and fragments of iron nails and red brick were recovered. The sides of the feature sloped steeply and had been backfilled with a mix of re-deposited chalk and subsoil. This suggests the feature may relate to the 19<sup>th</sup> century quarrying, however, it could also be the remains of a large animal burrow, given the nature of a redeposited chalk fill [12]. A few fragments of 19<sup>th</sup> century brick, china and iron nails were noted in the top- and subsoils. The ambiguity of F.6 and the lack of any other archaeological evidence or material from this trench imply a lack of activity within the immediate locality of Trench 2.

### *Trench 3*

Trench 3 was located toward the base of the hill, considerably lower than the other trenches, where the geology was predominantly pale blue-grey clay with occasional seams of orange sandy clay. The trench was prone to flooding and excavated features filled rapidly with water.

A third quarry pit, **F.7**, was identified at the western end of the trench, with approximately 7m visible in the trench. A small section was excavated, and revealed a similarly undercutting side to that of F.5, the features also had comparable uppermost fill and finds; F. 7 yielded red brick and china fragments.

A series of very shallow linear segments, orientated approximately north-south were also identified in Trench 3, (**F.1**, **F.2** and **F.3**). The terminals of these features were excavated and produced finds of probable 20<sup>th</sup> century date, including china, brick and window glass. F.1 was cut into the top of the quarry pit F.7, forming a segmented linear with F.3 and running parallel to F.2. Two modern wooden posts also flanked the terminals of features 1 and 3 suggesting that these collectively formed an old field boundary/fence alignment.

Cut into the southern terminal of F.3 was a small canine grave, **F.4**. The dog was placed on its right side, with its head to the south, and the hind legs spread. Fragments of china and modern window glass found mixed with the bones indicates the burial

was roughly contemporary with the segmented linear. In light of the recent age of the burial, the dog was left *in situ*.

No traces of earlier archaeological activity were identified in Trench 3. Given the rapidity of flooding at the base of the hill, archaeological remains are perhaps less likely to exist at this level, favouring the higher, drier areas of the landscape.

#### *Metal-Detecting*

The topsoil and subsoil spoil from each of the trenches, along with the excavated fills from archaeological features were carefully metal-detected. No significant metal finds were made; the majority of finds were late Post-Medieval and modern iron nails. The top- and subsoil layers were largely sterile, with only a few pieces of brick, tile and china noted.

### **Discussion**

The PDA is located in an area of high archaeological potential, within the environs of two major Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, and an area relatively rich in earlier prehistoric and Roman activity. Despite this, the PDA only yielded evidence for sporadic 19<sup>th</sup> quarrying, and a later field boundary system. A few residual prehistoric finds from F.5 support the known prehistoric activity within Barrington; however, nothing was revealed during the evaluation to suggest any earlier activity had occurred within the immediate vicinity.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century excavation report of the Barrington B Anglo-Saxon cemetery site implies that all of the known burials and other archaeological features were removed or destroyed by the quarrying. Furthermore, the description of the quarrying indicates that vast areas of the hillside were dug out, thus obliterating any earlier activity. The evaluation revealed only two, possibly three small quarry pits, with large swathes of undisturbed ground in between. It is therefore probable that the cemetery and quarry site were located further up the slope to the north/northwest of the PDA.

### **Conclusion**

There is no evidence to suggest that any significant archaeological remains exist within the PDA.

### **Acknowledgements**

The project was commissioned and funded by Mr and Mrs Brunner. Dan McConnell (Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice) oversaw and monitored the development control of the investigation. Emma Beadsmoore (CAU) was the Project Manager, and the fieldwork was carried out by the author with Selina Brierley. The site surveying was carried out by Donald Horne.

## Appendix

<b>Trench 1</b>							
<b>General Description</b>					<b>Orientation</b>		NW-SE
Trench contained one quarry pit toward the northwest end. The northwest end of Trench 1 exposed clay natural, whilst toward the middle and southeast end, the geology was chalk marl with areas of blue-green sandy clay.					<b>Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)</b>		0.36
					<b>Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)</b>		0.11
					<b>Width (m)</b>		1.6
					<b>Length (m)</b>		28.2
<b>Contexts</b>							
<b>Feature No.</b>	<b>Feature Type</b>	<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Cut/Fill/ Layer</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>	<b>Selected artefacts</b>	<b>Comments</b>
5	Sub-circular(?) quarry pit	9	f			N/A	19 <sup>th</sup> century quarry pit. Partially excavated.
		10	f			N/A	
		11	c	4.0	?	N/A	

<b>Trench 2</b>							
<b>General Description</b>					<b>Orientation</b>		NE-SW
Trench contained one possible quarry pit edge at the northeast end. Trench 2 was predominantly chalk, with an area of blue-green sandy clay natural located to the west end of the trench.					<b>Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)</b>		0.35
					<b>Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)</b>		0.055
					<b>Width (m)</b>		1.6
					<b>Length (m)</b>		19.6
<b>Contexts</b>							
<b>Feature No.</b>	<b>Feature Type</b>	<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Cut/Fill/ Layer</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>	<b>Selected artefacts</b>	<b>Comments</b>
6	Sub-circular(?) quarry pit	12	f			N/A	Possible quarry pit edge. Only partially exposed.
		13	f			N/A	
		17	c	c.2.0	?	N/A	

<b>Trench 3</b>							
<b>General Description</b>					<b>Orientation</b>		NE-SW
Trench contained one quarry pit toward the northwest end.					<b>Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)</b>		0.32
					<b>Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)</b>		0.165
					<b>Width (m)</b>		1.6
					<b>Length (m)</b>		19.5
<b>Contexts</b>							
<b>Feature No.</b>	<b>Feature Type</b>	<b>Context No.</b>	<b>Cut/Fill/ Layer</b>	<b>Width (m)</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>	<b>Selected artefacts</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1	N-S linear terminal	1	f			N/A	19/20 <sup>th</sup> century field boundary/fence system.
		2	c	0.66	0.06	N/A	
2	N-S linear terminal	3	f			N/A	19/20 <sup>th</sup> century field boundary/fence system.
		4	c	0.46	0.05	N/A	
3	N-S linear terminal	5	f			N/A	19/20 <sup>th</sup> century field boundary/fence system.
		6	c	0.52	0.07	N/A	
4	Dog burial	7	f			N/A	Small dog burial, probably 20 <sup>th</sup> century
		8	c	0.45	0.2	N/A	
7	Quarry pit	14	f			N/A	19 <sup>th</sup> century quarry pit
		15	f			N/A	
		16	c	c.7.0	?	N/A	



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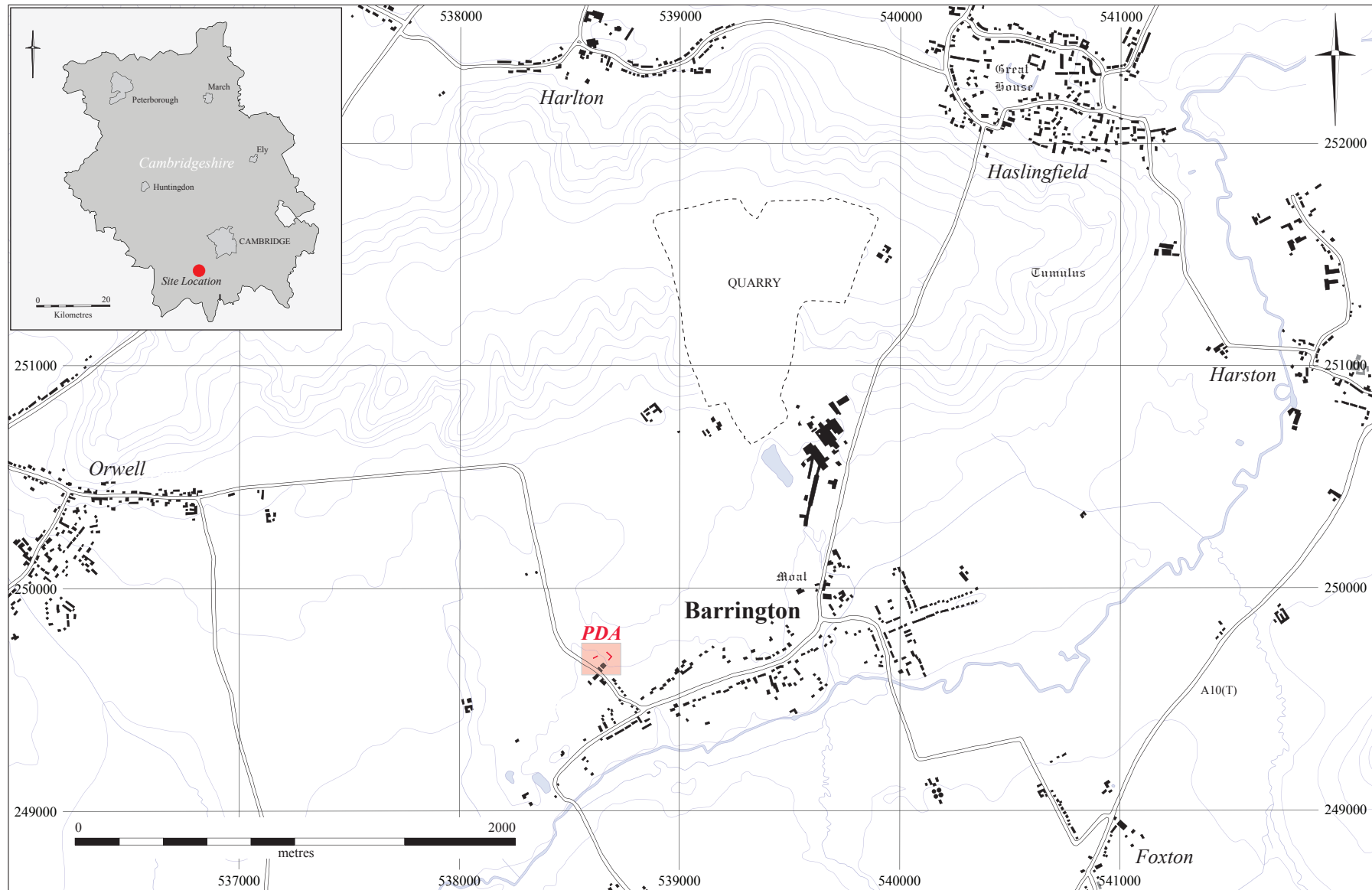


Figure 1. Location plan.

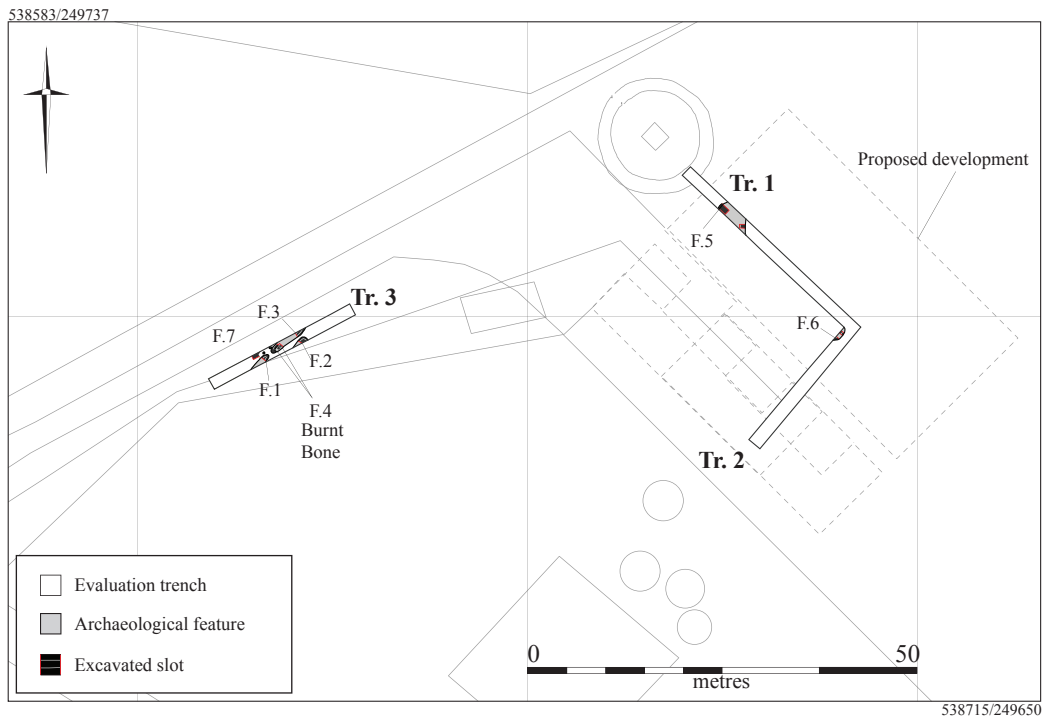


Figure 2. Location plan (top), with trench plan (bottom).

**OASIS ID: cambridg3-71057****Project details**

Project name	An Archaeological Evaluation at Orwell Road, Barrington, Cambridgeshire
Short description of the project	An archaeological evaluation was undertaken to address a request from CAPCA to provide the necessary level of information in support of a planning application for the construction of stables, a manege and a barn, with associated services and access, off Orwell Road, Barrington, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 386 497). The evaluation comprised three trenches, which yielded evidence for 19th and later activity.
Project dates	Start: 20-01-2010 End: 22-01-2010
Previous/future work	No / No
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Cultivated Land 1 - Minimal cultivation
Monument type	QUARRY PITS Post Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	'Aerial Photography - interpretation','Targeted Trenches'
Development type	Farm infrastructure (e.g. barns, grain stores, equipment stores, etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

**Project location**

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE BARRINGTON Orwell Road, Barrington
Postcode	CB2 5
Study area	0.33 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 386 497 52.1277736062 0.02498986281210 52 07 39 N 000 01 29 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 20.00m Max: 20.00m

**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	Shannon Hogan
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Mr & Mrs Brunner

**Project archives**

Physical Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Physical Archive ID	ORB 10
Physical Contents	'other'

Physical Archive notes	No finds retained
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Archive ID	ORB 10
Digital Contents	'Survey'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Survey'
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Paper Archive ID	ORB 10
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Paper Media available	'Aerial Photograph','Context sheet','Drawing','Plan','Survey ','Photograph'

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