

School of Veterinary Medicine West Cambridge

An Archaeological Evaluation



Jacqui Hutton

CAMBRIDGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE



**Vet School, Student Block, Madingley Road, Cambridge;
An Archaeological Evaluation**

Jacqui Hutton

Illustrations by Bryan Crossan

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Department of Archaeology
University of Cambridge

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An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by a team from Cambridge Archaeological Unit on a site off Madingley Road at the Veterinary School of Medicine, University of Cambridge. The trenches produced evidence of furrows that correlate with cropmarks of medieval ridge and furrow to the north of the site. The lack of other archaeological features from earlier timeframes implies that the site lies outside the known settlement areas recorded from previous excavations carried out within the surrounding landscape.

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Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken within the grounds of The School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Cambridge (NGR TL 542824/259237) from 2nd June to 3rd June 2010 to address a condition placed upon planning permission for the construction of a student block. The evaluation trenches were excavated across the development area to determine the presence/absence of any archaeological remains and to investigate their extent, date, character, significance and state of preservation. The investigations followed a project specification set out by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) (Standring 2010) in response to a design brief that was issued by Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice (CAPCA 2010).

The trenches revealed archaeological remains that comprised of three furrows on a north-south orientation. These were disturbed by the dumping of building rubble on top of the overlying subsoil which disturbed the underlying deposits; compressed wheel marks could be seen on the surface of the furrows in addition to building rubble being pressed into these contexts.

Topography and Geology

The proposed development area (PDA) is currently a fenced horse paddock and bounded by grassed areas to the east and south, various outbuildings associated with the school to the west and Madingley Road to the north. The underlying geology is Gault Clays and the surface of the ground slightly undulates across the area due to recent disturbances (British Geological Society 1978). The area extended over approximately 200 square meters and was approximately between 18.63m and 19.14m OD.

Archaeological and Historical Background

Abundant archaeology is known from the surrounding landscape and the site lies in an area of archaeological potential for the Iron Age and Roman periods. The archaeological background of the sites environs was fully presented in the Archaeological Desk Based Assessment and will consequently only be summarised here (Alexander 1996). An archaeological evaluation 0.29km to the west of the site revealed archaeological remains pertaining to ridge and furrow agricultural system that contained pottery from between the 16th and 19th centuries (Hutton 2009). An archaeological excavation that previously took place in the fields to the south of the Vet School provided evidence of Middle to Later Iron Age and early Roman settlement (Timberlake 2010). Recently a programme of trenches on land to the north of Madingley Road for the Northwest Cambridge evaluation revealed settlement activity from the Middle Iron Age through to the Roman period and included a villa site (Evans *et al* 2010).

Original Research Aims

The principle objective of the excavation was to determine the presence, absence and extent and nature of archaeological activity and to assess the degree of preservation of

any features and environmental remains and how this could impact upon any future development. More broadly, the evaluation aims were;

- To determine the degree of preservation and chronological range of archaeological remains
- To assess the presence or absence of a palaeosol, or a 'B' horizon and with potential truncation of said deposits
- To assess the environmental potential of the site through the examination of suitable deposits
- To identify 'sites' within the development area and determine the relationship of those sites within the broader archaeological landscape
- To assess the regional context of the site and to highlight any relevant research issues within a regional and national research framework

Investigation Strategies

The excavation area was stripped with a 360° tracked excavator with a 1.80m wide toothless ditching bucket, which removed the topsoil down to an archaeological level, under the careful supervision of an experienced archaeologist. The unit modified version of the MoLAS recording system was used; all relevant archaeological and geological features were planned at 1:50 and 1:20, with sections drawn at 1:10 and augmented by a colour digital imagery and black and white film photographic record. Small pits were half sectioned and linear features sampled at appropriate intervals. Archaeological features were assigned a unique number (e.g. **F.100**; bolded upon introduction within the text) and each stratigraphically distinct episode (e.g. a cut, a fill) was recorded with a unique context number (e.g. [001]).

The exposed archaeological features and trench-excavated topsoil and subsoil were metal detected using a Tesoro Laser Rapier metal detector. The site was surveyed into the Ordnance Survey Grid and Ordnance Datum by means of an RTK GPS unit. All work was carried out with strict adherence to Health and Safety legislation and within the recommendations of SCAUM.

In total 4 features were sampled during the excavation, 2 were recorded with 4 separate contexts assigned. The artefacts and accompanying documentation have been compiled into a stable, cross-referenced and indexed archive in Accordance with MoRPHE (English Heritage 2006). The archive is currently stored at the offices of the Cambridge Archaeological Unit under the project code VSB 10.

Results

The layout of the trenches were positioned across the location of the foundations for the proposed building. The two trenches varied in length; Trench 1 was 14.35m in length; Trench 2 was 12.10m in length. Archaeological features were recorded on both trenches. The features recorded pertained to medieval furrows; these were wide, shallow features that contained little material culture. The fill matrix was similar to the overlying subsoil; this context was interspersed with material from a layer of dumped material (soil, building rubble and post-medieval material culture). The dumping of this material by mechanical methods over the area resulted with the wheels penetrating the subsoil and consequently the soft fills of the furrows, pushing

the debris into the furrow matrix. Details of the trenches and features can be found in Tables 1 and 2 below. No other archaeological features were recorded within both trenches. The metal detector survey produced a nail and button that represented fairly modern material.

Table 1: Trench 1

General Description						Orientation		E-W
Trench contained two archaeological features; both of them furrows. Both were sampled although only one was recorded.. There was also evidence of a field drain within F.1. The natural geology was orange and grey clay which was overlain with light orange/						Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)		0.09
						Avg. Rubble Depth (m)		0.17-0.19
						Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)		0.09-0.13
						Approx. Width (m)		1.80
						Approx. Height m OD		18.40
						Length (m)		14.35
Contexts								
Feature No.	Feature Type	Context No.	Cut/Fill/ Layer	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Artefacts	Comments	
1	Linear	1	F			None	Medieval Furrow	
		2	C	1.95	0.11	None		

Table 2: Trench 2

General Description						Orientation		E-W
Trench contained two archaeological features; both of them furrows. Both were sampled although only one was recorded. The natural geology was orange and grey clay which was overlain with light orange/brown silty clay subsoil. This was overlain by a depos						Avg. Topsoil Depth (m)		0.09
						Avg. Rubble Depth (m)		0.22-0.27
						Avg. Subsoil Depth (m)		0.14
						Approx. Width (m)		1.80
						Approx. Height m OD		18.40
						Length (m)		12.10
Contexts								
Feature No.	Feature Type	Context No.	Cut/Fill/ Layer	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Artefacts	Comments	
2	Linear	3	F			None	Medieval Furrow	
		4	C	1.45	0.15	None		

Discussion

The juxtaposition of this evaluation site within the previously recorded settlement pattern has provided potential evidence of the wider landscape during the Iron Age and Roman periods. However, the lack of complimentary archaeological features and residual artefacts pertaining to these periods implies an absence of archaeology in this area. This has placed the site outside of the area of known settlement and associated field systems.

The material recovered from the furrow, such as coal, tile etc. suggests the redeposition of topsoil or loam from elsewhere, along with rubble. Most of this material was deposited towards the southern end of the field.

The furrows recorded on this site correlate with the cropmarks of furrows to the north of Madingley Road which appear to be on the same orientation. The site lies partly in a field known as 'Le Long Furlong in Le Clay' which probably refers to the underlying geology of the area, the primary documentary resource for this part of

Cambridge during the Medieval period being the Corpus Terrier (or *Terrarium Cantabrigiae*), a manuscript recording tithes due from the west fields of Cambridge which was compiled c. 1360. This document appears to have been a 'working copy' extracted from the more extensive Barnwell Tithe Books, which today comprises the earliest known extant record of this information (Hall & Ravensdale 1976).

Acknowledgements

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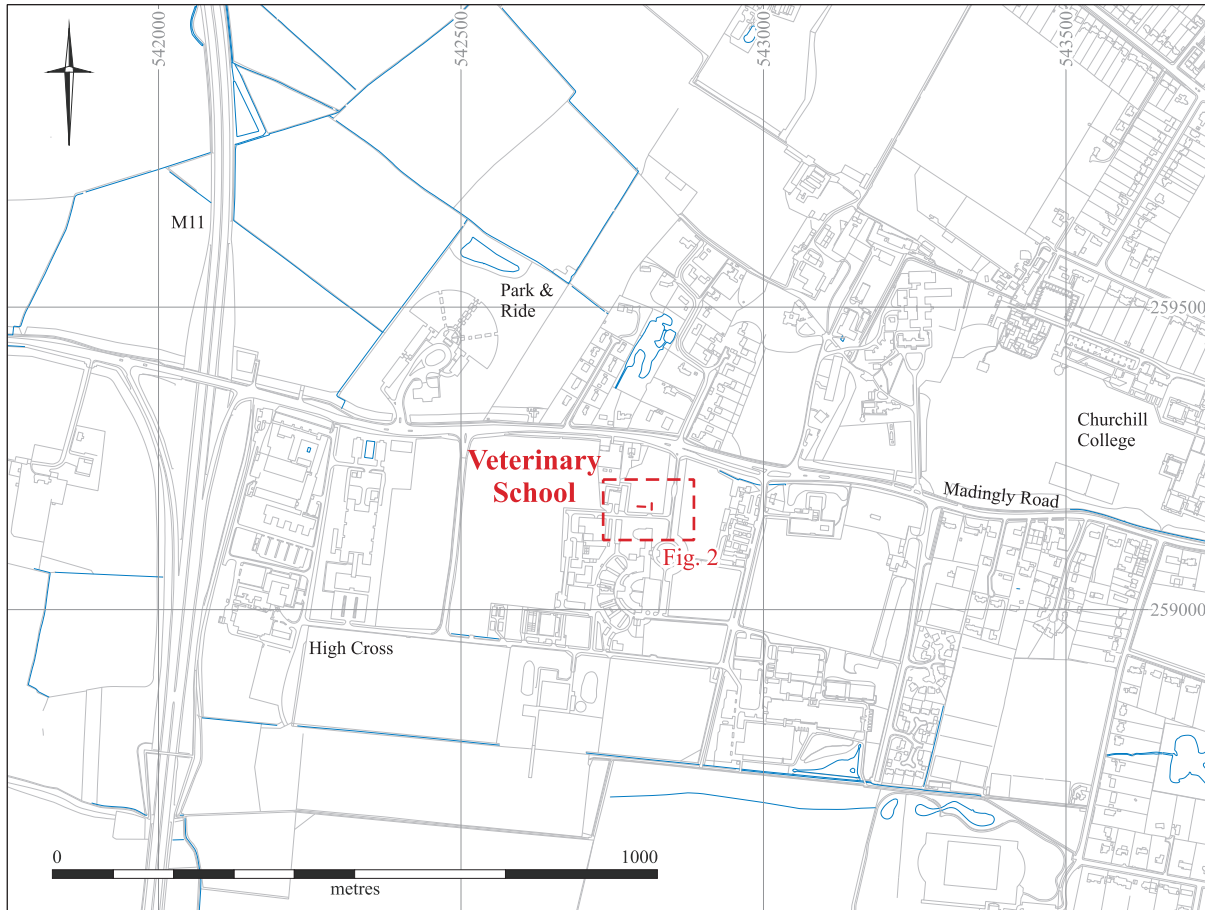
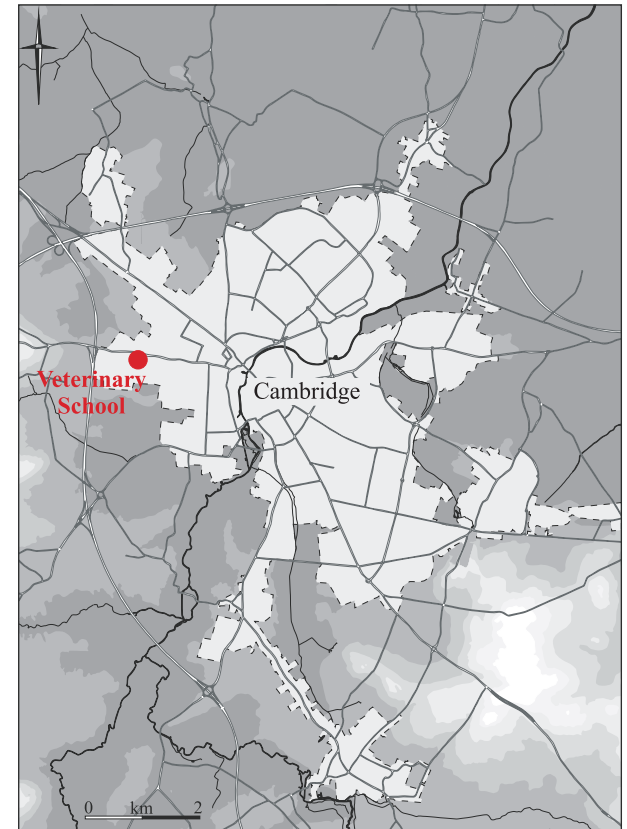


Figure 1. Location map



Based on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map
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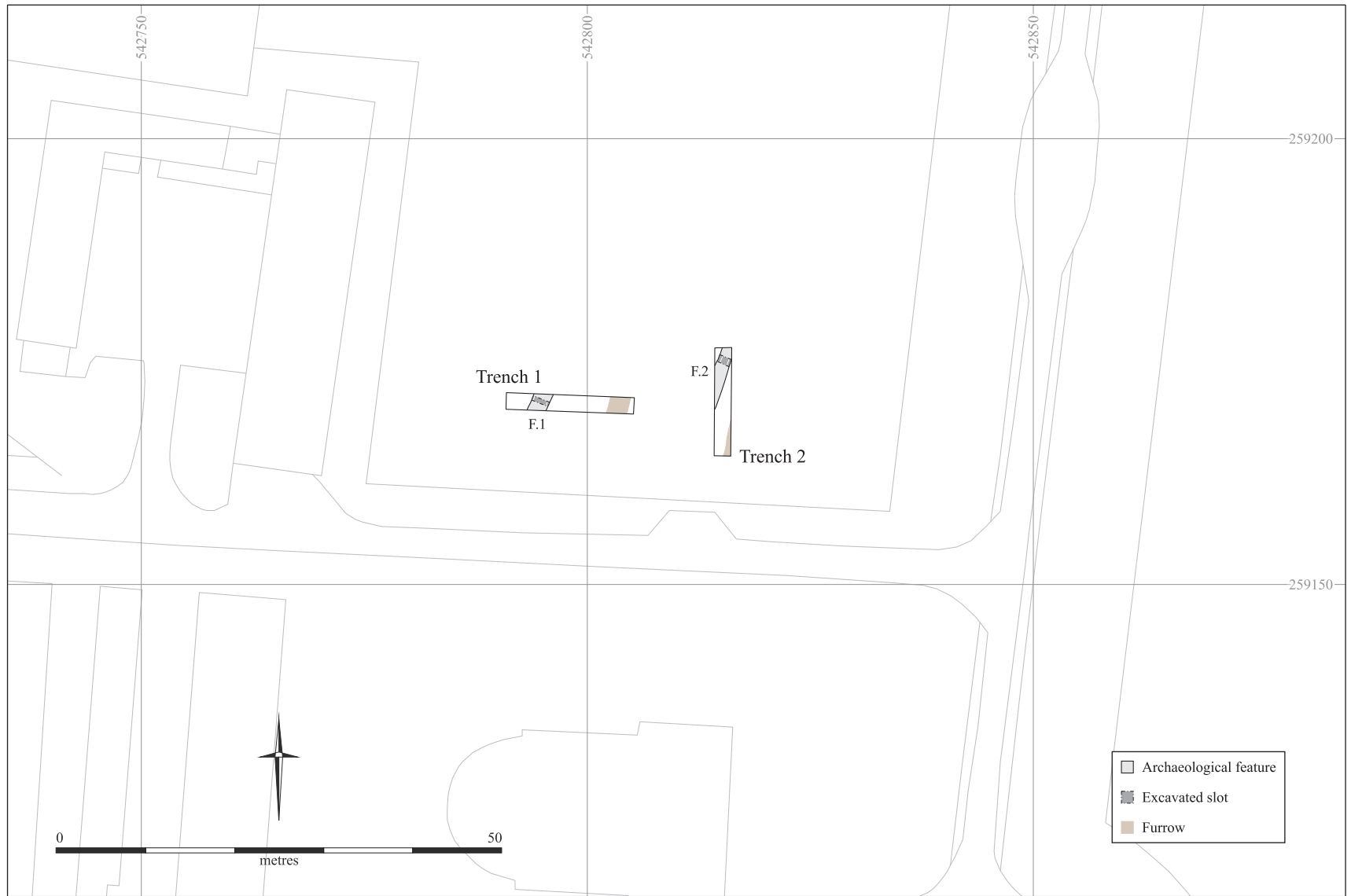


Figure 2. Trench plan

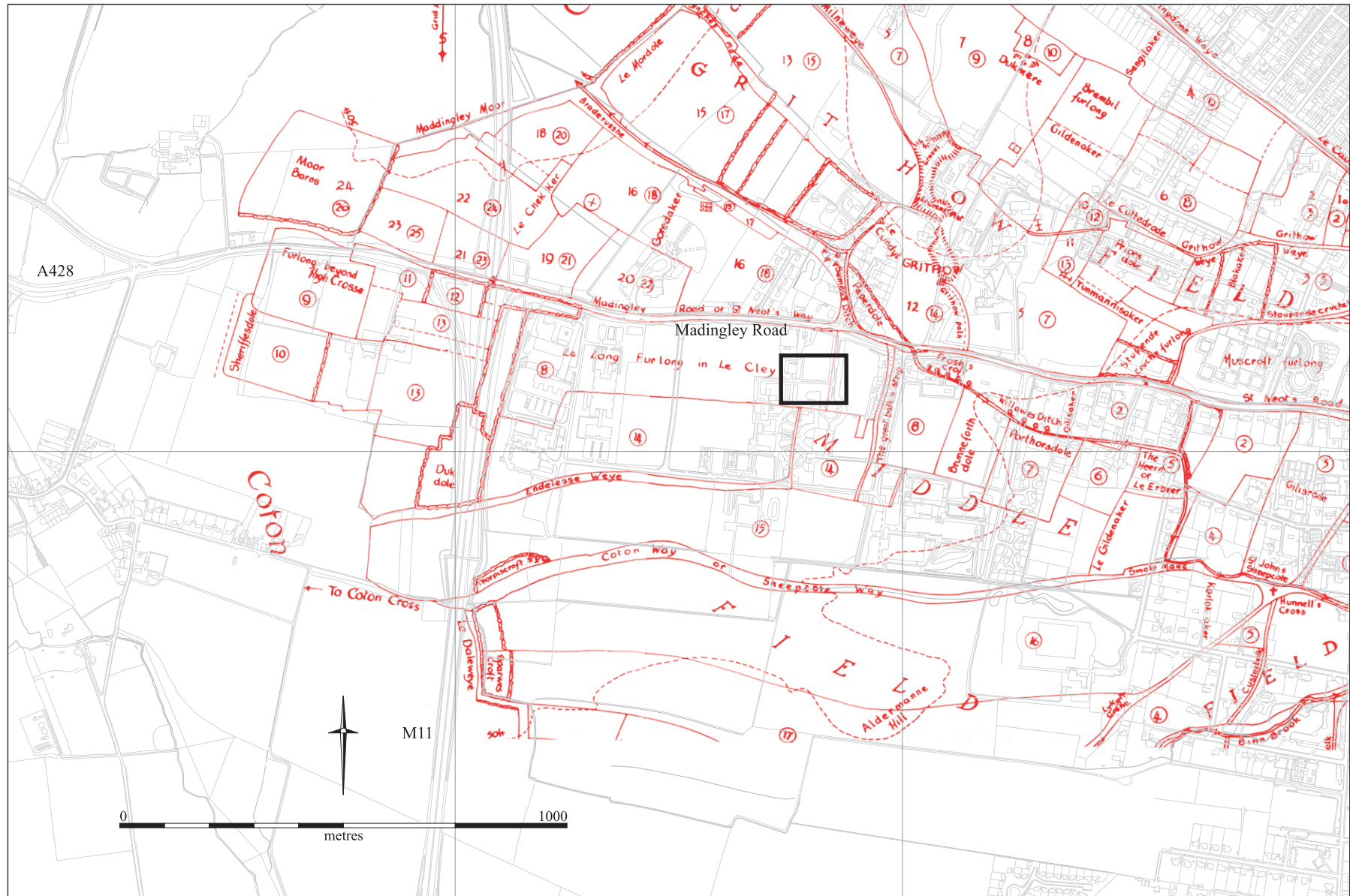


Figure 3. Area of evaluation overlaid on Hall and Ravensdale's plan of the West Fields of Cambridge



Figure 4. Photographs of F.1(top) and F.2 (bottom)

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Project details

Project name	Vet School, Madingley Road, Cambridge: An Archaeological Evaluation
Short description of the project	An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by a team from Cambridge Archaeological Unit on a site off Madingley Road at the Veterinary School of Medicine, University of Cambridge. The trenches produced evidence of furrows that correlate with cropmarks of medieval ridge and furrow to the north of the site. The lack of other archaeological features from earlier time-frames implies that the site lies outside the known settlement areas recorded from previous excavations carried out within the surrounding landscape.
Project dates	Start: 02-06-2010 End: 03-06-2010
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	VSB 10 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	ESB 3391 - HER event no.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 15 - Other
Monument type	FURROW Medieval
Methods & techniques	'Metal Detectors','Targeted Trenches'
Development type	Public building (e.g. school, church, hospital, medical centre, law courts 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 CAMBRIDGE CAMBRIDGE Vet School, Maddingley Road, Cambridge
Postcode	CB3 0ES
Study area	200.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 54272 25890 51.9097222222 0.243055555556 51 54 35 N 000 14 35 E Point
Lat/Long Datum	Unknown
Height OD / Depth	Min: 18.00m Max: 18.45m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	Local Planning Authority (with/without advice from County/District Archaeologist)
Project design originator	Robin Standing
Project director/ manager	Robin Standing
Project supervisor	Jacqui Hutton
Type of sponsor/ funding body	Developer

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Physical Archive ID	VSF 10
Physical Contents	'Ceramics','Metal','other'
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Archive ID	VSF 10
Digital Contents	'Ceramics','Metal','Survey','other'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Images vector','Spreadsheets','Survey','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Paper Archive ID	VSF 10
Paper Contents	'Ceramics','Metal','Survey','other'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Map','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section','Survey '

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