

Great Eastern House, 21 Station Road, Cambridge

Archaeological Evaluation and Monitoring



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**Great Eastern House, 21 Station Road,
Cambridge:
Archaeological Evaluation and Monitoring.**

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University of Cambridge
Department of Archaeology

Report No. 979

ECB No: 3574

January 2011

CONTENTS

SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION	
Landscape and Topography	2
Methodology	3
Archaeological and Historical Background	5
RESULTS	
Evaluation Trenches	12
Geotechnical Bores and test pits	14
DISCUSSION	16
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	21
BIBLIOGRAPHY	22
COPY OF OASIS DATA FORM	23

GRAPHICS AND TABLE LIST

Figure 1;	Location of Great Eastern House	3
Figure 2;	Location of Evaluation Trenches and Geotechnical Interventions	4
Figure 3;	1830 Bakers Map	7
Figure 4;	1886 OS 1:500 Series	8
Figure 5;	1927 OS 6" Series	9
Figure 6;	1946 LNER Map	10
Figure 7;	1940 Luftwaffe Aerial Reconnaissance Photograph	11
Figure 8;	Trench 1, Plan and Section	18
Figure 9;	Trench 3, Plan and Section	19
Figure 10;	Photograph of sleeper beds Trench 1	20
Figure 11;	Photograph of sleeper beds Trench 3	20
Table 1;	Evaluation Trench Details	12
Table 2;	Archaeological Features and Deposits within Trenches 1-3	14
Table 3;	Stratigraphic deposits encountered during Geotechnical Interventions	14

Summary

Between the 9th and 15th of December 2010, The Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) undertook a small evaluation within land to the north of Great Eastern House at 21 Station Road Road, Cambridge. Archaeological monitoring of geotechnical investigations was also undertaken within the surrounding area. A full sequence and extent of 19th and early 20th century railway activity within the evaluated area was recorded. No earlier deposits or artefacts were recovered although a preserved agricultural soil horizon was found.

INTRODUCTION

Landscape, Geology and Topography (Figure 1-2)

The evaluated area was located to the immediate north of the current Great Eastern House building at 21 Station Road, Cambridge (TL5460/2573). A series of geotechnical test pits and bore holes were also monitored around the footprint of the building.

The underlying geology within the evaluated area comprised of 3rd Terrace gravels overlying Lower Chalk and was between 13.86m and 15.04m OD (Ordnance Datum). At the time of excavation the area of investigation comprised of a tarmac car-park to the north of and overgrown gardens to the west and south of Great Eastern house.

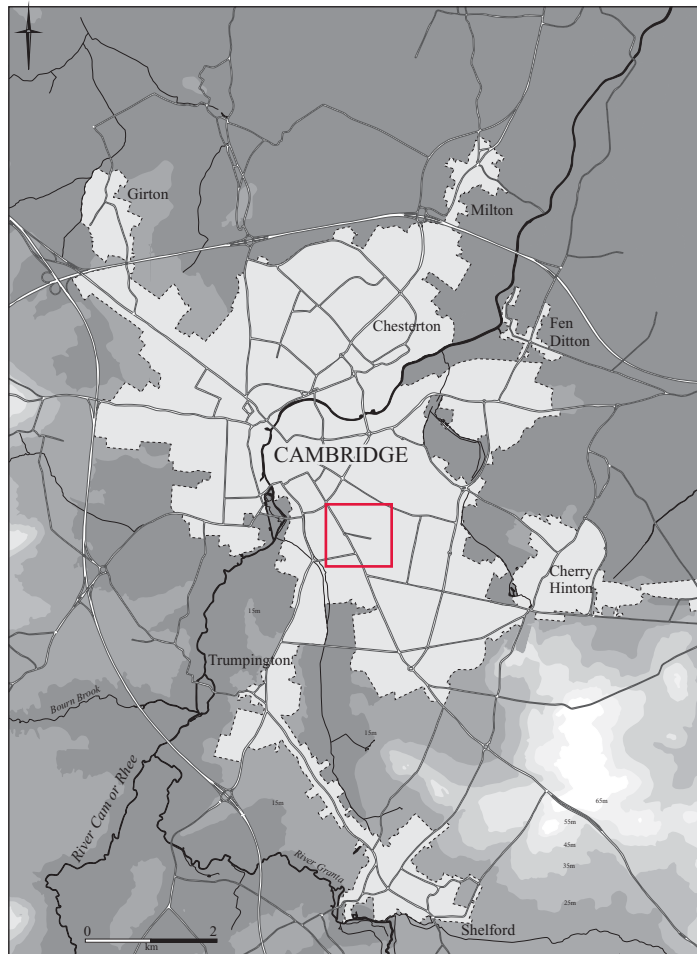
Methodology

Three evaluation trenches (T1-3) were excavated within the tarmac car-park to the immediate north of Great Eastern House; Trenches were located to avoid a variety of buried services. The outline of the trenches was primarily sawn through the tarmac and a 15 tonne tracked machine was used to remove the modern surface and its bedding deposits. Using a toothless 2m wide bucket, and under constant archaeological guidance overburden was removed until archaeological deposits were encountered. This was then cleaned, planned and photographed prior to its removal, to expose earlier deposits within the stratigraphic sequence. The excavation was stopped once geological natural was encountered.

Each contextual change was recorded in plan and a programme of 'bucket sampling' was undertaken; eighty litres of each stratigraphic horizon was searched every 5m along each trench to identify the presence and quantity of material culture. A metal detector survey was also undertaken.

Concurrently with the Archaeological Evaluation, the digging of a series of geotechnical bore holes, test pits and test trenches were closely monitored by an experienced archaeologist: the archaeological sequence where possible was recorded for each intervention (Figure 2).

The excavation of all encountered archaeological features was carried out by hand. All plans were drawn at a scale of 1:50 and sections at a scale of 1:20 were recorded for each evaluation trench. The recording followed a CAU modified MoLAS system (Spence 1990) whereby numbers (fill) and [cut] were assigned to individual contexts and feature numbers, F., to stratigraphic events. All work was carried out in strict accordance with statutory health and safety legislation and with recommendations of SCAUM (Allen & Holt 2002). The site code is GEH10.



Based on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map With the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office
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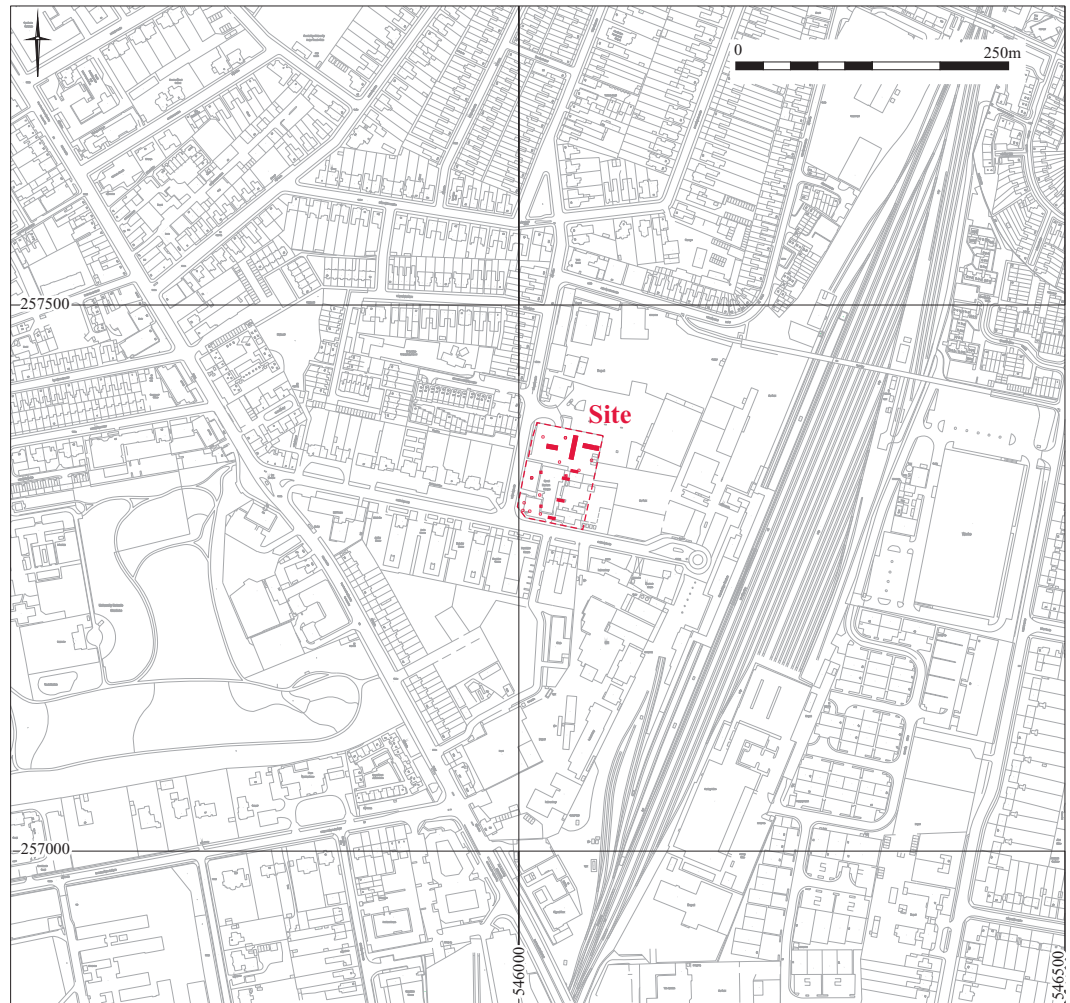


Figure 1. Site location



Figure 2. Trenching and geotechnical interventions

Archaeological and Historical Background

The vicinity of the Cambridge railway station has previously been the subject of a Desktop Assessment (Dickens, Evans & Webley 2003), which highlighted the historical and archaeological potential for the whole of the CB1 redevelopment area, of which the demolition and re-use of the land of Great Eastern House is part. Only a brief overview of the previous Archaeological investigations, results and historical framework shall therefore be covered here.

No strong evidence of prehistoric occupation within or near to the development area has been identified; several pits excavated near to Brooklands Avenue (Dickens & Patten 2003) may be of a prehistoric origin.

Until recently, the accepted understanding of the early occupation of Cambridge is that of a centre at Castle Hill (Alexander & Pullinger 1999). However more contemporary fieldwork has demonstrated a significant Roman and Romano-British presence to the north-west and south-west of this military and infrastructural hub (Evans 1995, 1996). The south of Cambridge has been shown to contain Roman activity (Dickens 1999, Kenny 2000). It is certain that the extent of Roman settlement on the Eastern bank of the River Cam was much more widespread than previously supposed and that the southern hinterland, in which the Great Eastern House site lies, was extensive if poorly understood. Hills Road, running generally north-to south has for many years been assumed to be on the line of the *Via Devana* one of the main Roman Roads into Cambridge, a suggestion supported by the identification of a series of probable Roman quarry pits adjacent to Hills Road (Slater 2010) and a probable Roman quarry pit near the junction of Cherry Hinton and Hills Roads (Mackay 2001) and a group of so-far unexcavated earthworks noted in the 19th century as being located on the south-east of the railway line to the south of the current area of investigation. A series of undated features of a possible Romano-British origin have previously been identified to the immediate north of the current area of evaluation (Dickens et al 2003).

Very scarce medieval activity has been identified within the vicinity of the evaluated area: Possible Medieval ridge and furrow agriculture was identified at Brooklands Avenue (Dickens and Patten 2003) and Cherry Hinton/ Hills Road (Newman 2009) and a phase of Medieval gravel quarrying was seen adjacent to Hills road (Slater 2010).

The Post-Medieval activity within and around the evaluation area is, until the late 19th century largely restricted to farming. The construction of the railway first built by Eastern Counties Railway around 1845 (Gordon 1968) and expanded by other companies during the 1860's led to a large area of sheds, goods yards and depots extending south from the current area of excavation. The cartographic sources (*see below*) for the current area of investigation do not show the railway or associated lands expanding onto it until the late 19th/ early 20th centuries.

An extensive programme of evaluation and monitoring of geotechnical bore holes was undertaken across the railway redevelopment (CB1) area (Mackay 2006) which

identified areas of post-Medieval truncation of potential archaeological areas as well as demonstrating the general sterility of the development area: with the only archaeological features being the Romano-British quarry pits excavated in 2010 adjacent to Hills Road. Three archaeological test pits were dug within the vicinity of the current evaluation trenches (AP712, 713, 714) with no pre-Medieval or Medieval features or deposits identified. A thick deposit of gravelly railway ballast, clinker, ash and occasional compacted chalk overlay an agricultural soil (*ibid*).

Cartographic Sources

The earliest reliable depiction of the current area of investigation is that of the 1807 Inclosure Map which shows the site to be open farmland to the east of Hills Road, and is annotated with “*First Allotment*” of Jesus College, “*In lease to John Butler*”. The same is depicted on the 1830 Bakers Map (Figure 3) with the line of the present Station Road marked by a field boundary. The 1880 Quarter session plan and the 1886 Ordnance survey, both show the first development of the railway, yards and station located to the south and east of Station Road, with the current area of excavation still being open fields (Figure 4).

In contrast, the 1927 Ordnance survey 6” series map shows the evaluated area to contain the terminus of six railway lines extending from the main lines to the north-east (figure 5) as well as several small buildings. A more detailed depiction of the railway termini was depicted on the 1946 Plan of LNER facilities (figure 6, after Hawkins and Reeve 1987), which shows an increase in the number of lines and buildings within the area as well as showing areas designated for 'Coal' and 'Stock' between the lines.

An aerial photographic survey by the Luftwaffe of the evaluated area dated 31st August 1940 (Figure 7) not only highlighted the strategic importance of the railway but also complimented the 1927 and 1946 cartographic sources (Figures 4 & 6), with the same buildings and line orientation shown.

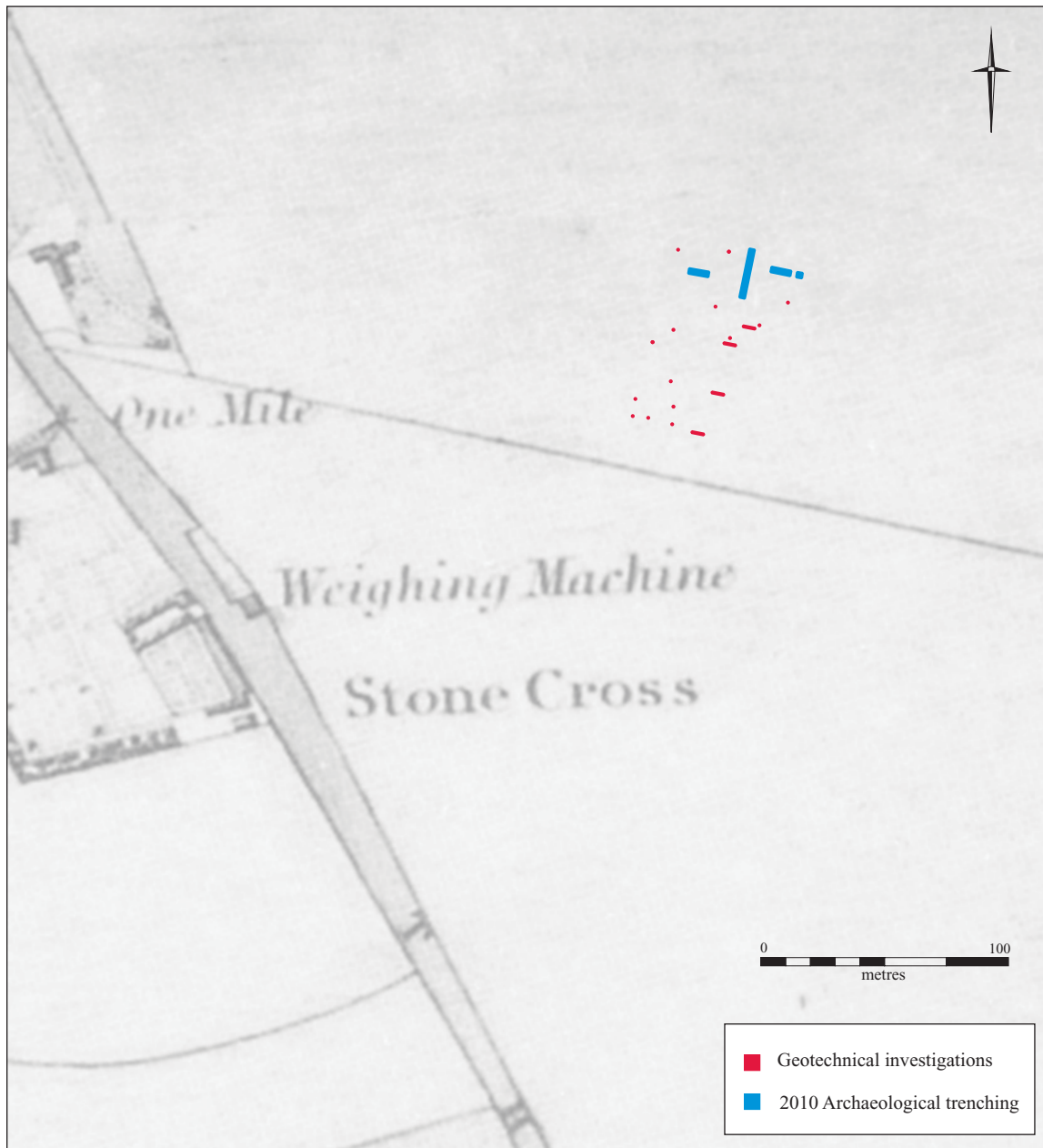


Figure 3. Baker's map of Cambridge 1830

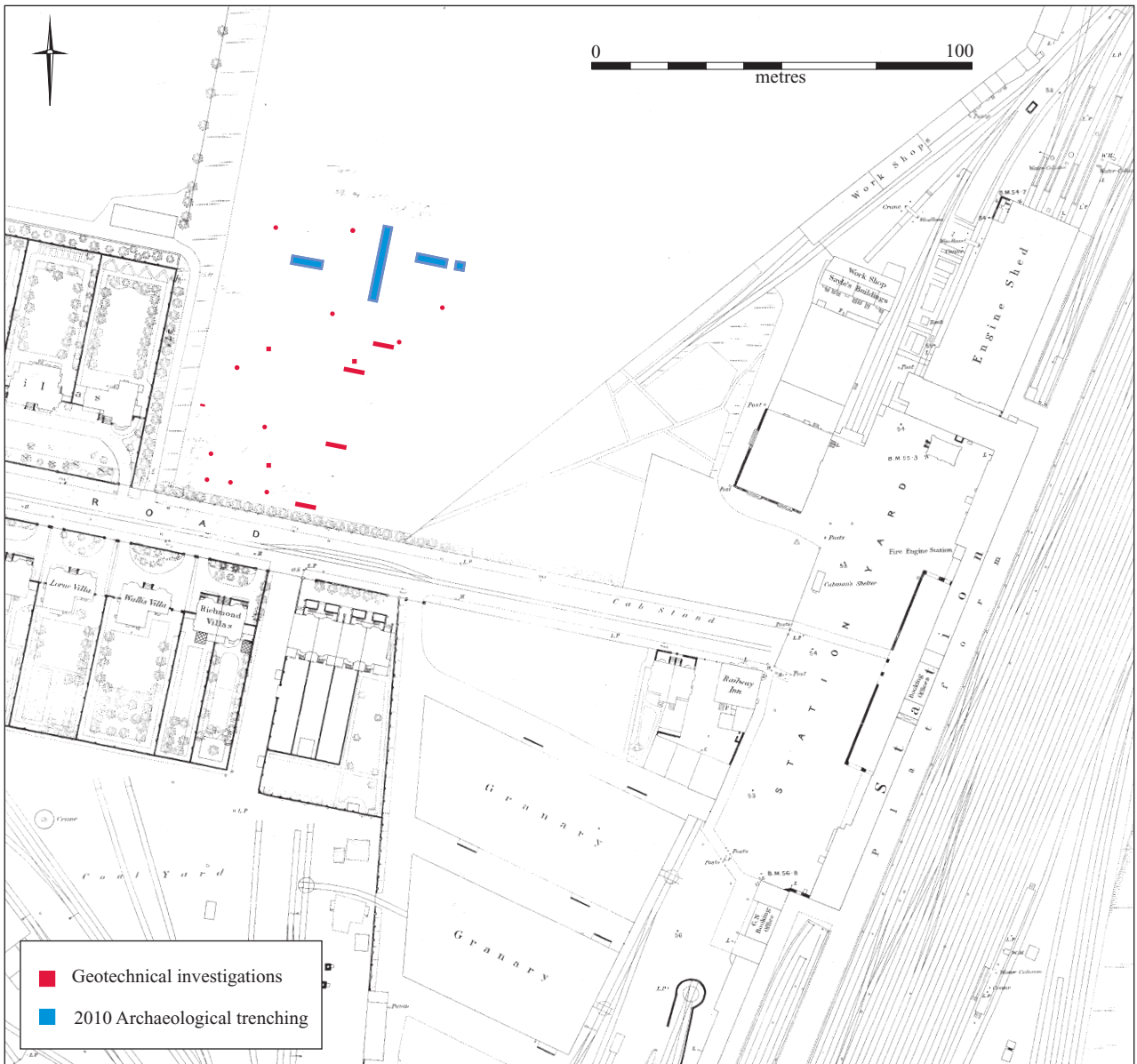


Figure 4. Ordnance Survey first edition 1:500 1886

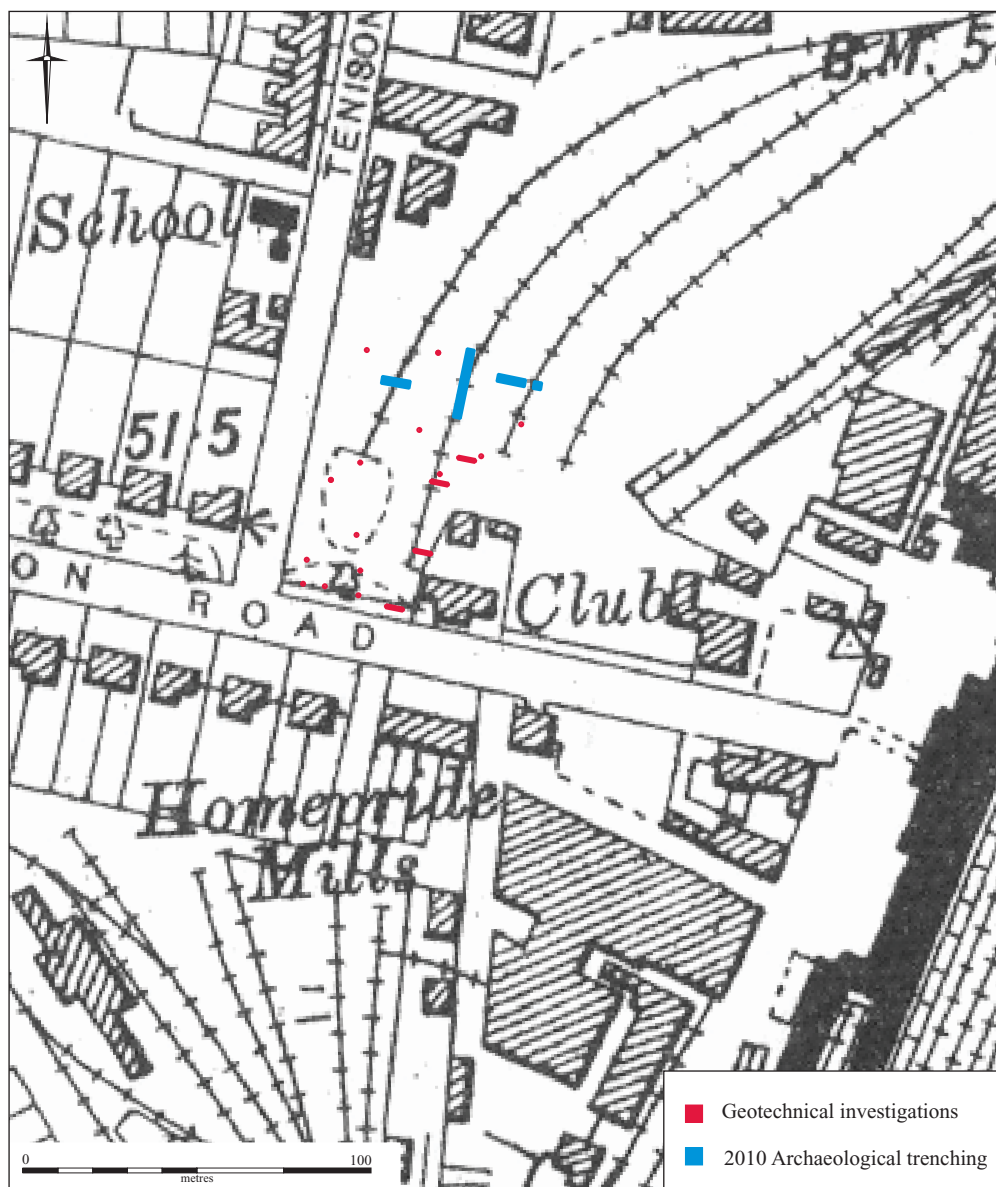


Figure 5. Ordnance Survey 6" series 1927

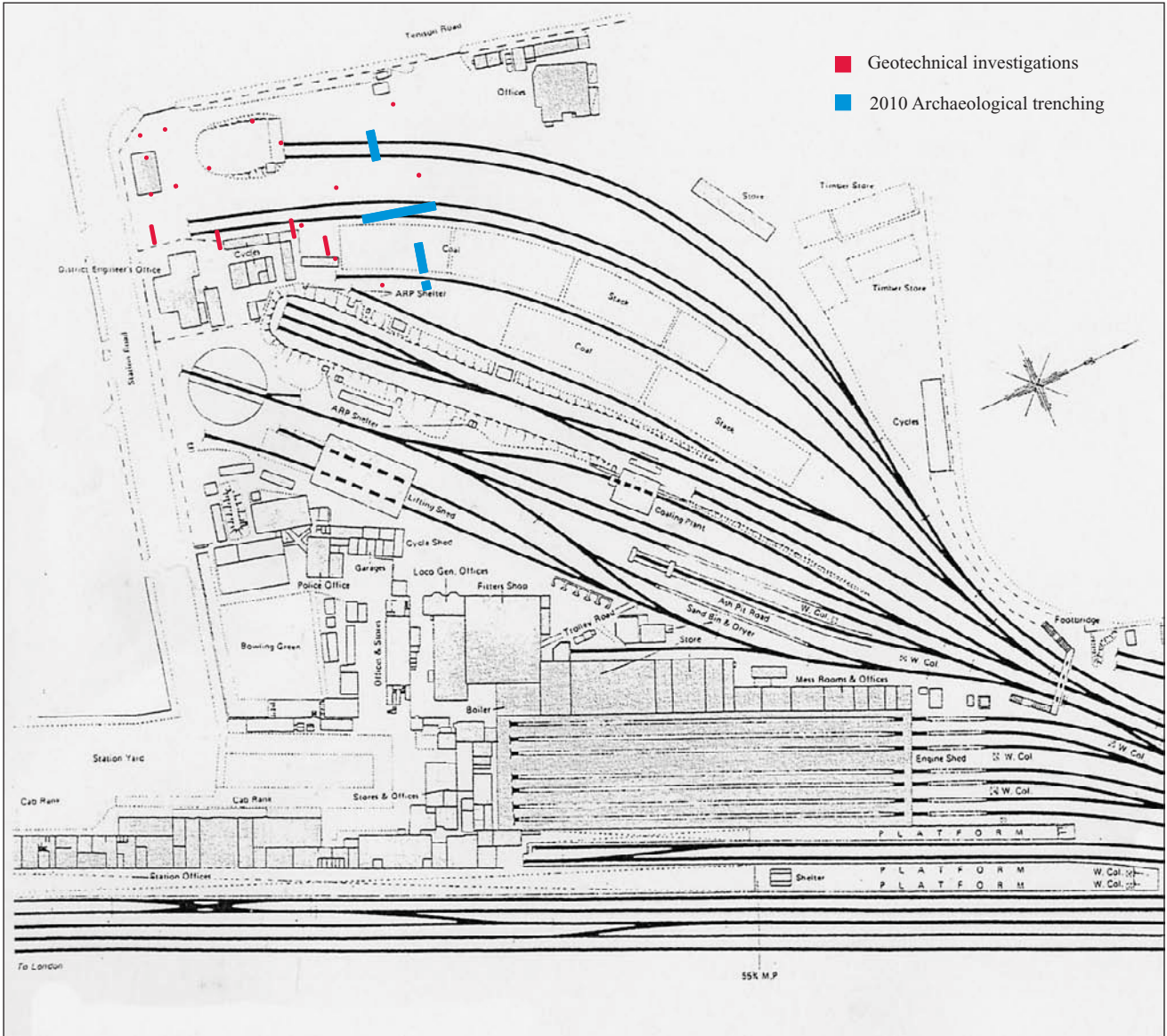


Figure 6. Plan of LNER facilities at Cambridge station c. 1946 (reproduced by Hawkins and Reeve 1987)

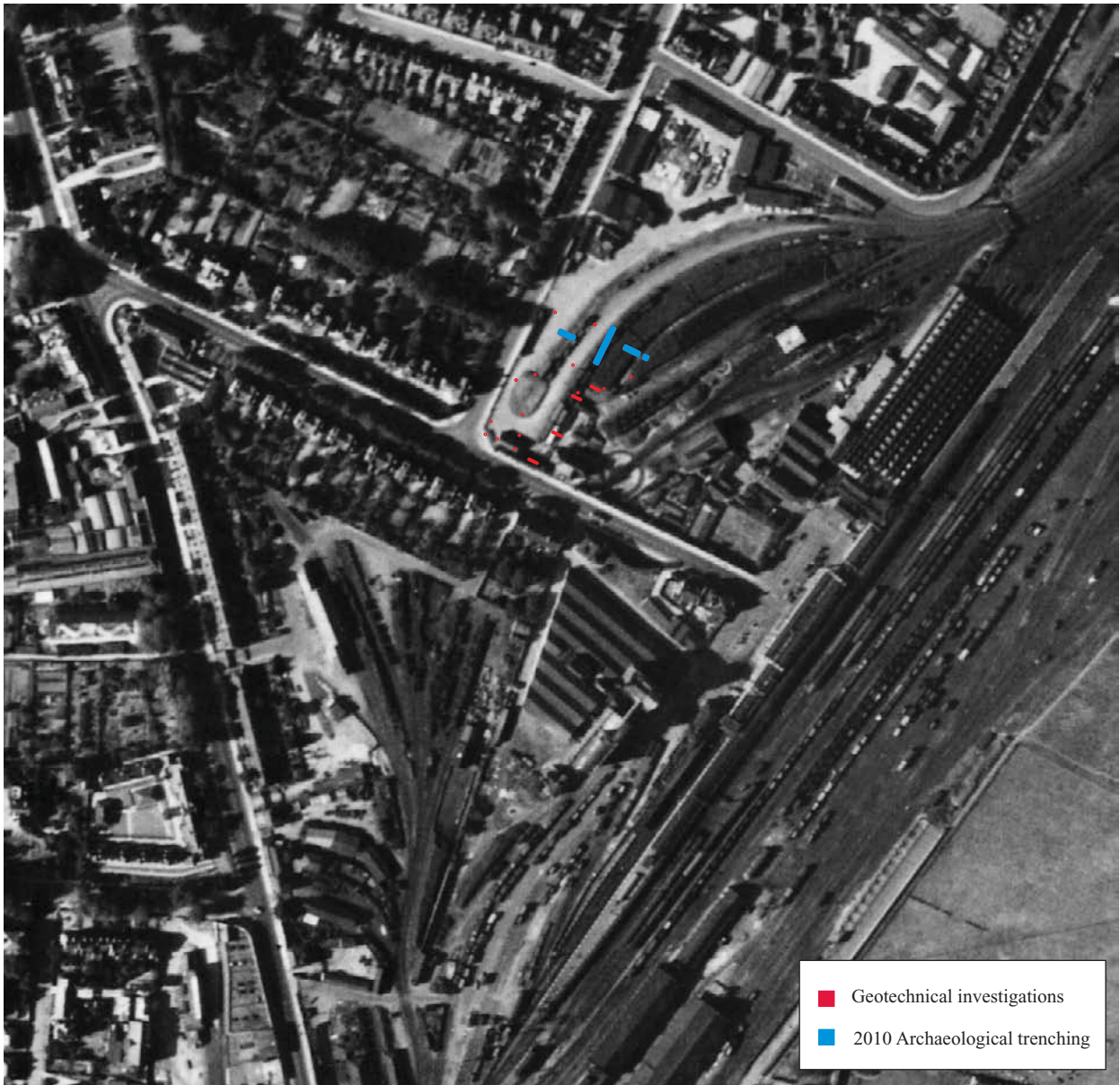


Figure 7. 1940 (31st August) Luftwaffe Aerial Reconnaissance Photograph.

RESULTS

Evaluation Trenches

Three evaluation trenches were excavated within the tarmac car park located to the north of Great Eastern House. The trenches, 48.9m in total length were located to avoid the numerous live services identified within the evaluation area (Stratascan 2010).

Trench No.	Length (m)	Max Depth (m)	Orientation.
1	10.25	0.93	East-West
2	23.25	0.9	North-South
3	15.4	0.9	East-West

Table 1: Evaluation Trench Details

The high likelihood of the upper deposits within the trenches being related to the development and use of the railway required the careful removal of encountered deposits in a stratigraphic sequence. This was achieved by machine and hand, and each deposit was planned and/ or photographed prior to its removal.

It was evident following the excavation and recording of each trench that a comparable sequence of deposits was present within all three trenches, all of which relate to the development and use of the nineteenth century railway and to its abandonment in the late 20th century. Because of this, those deposits that could be seen to represent the same stratigraphic event within two or more of the trenches were assigned the same number allowing an inclusive developmental sequence to be recorded across the whole evaluated area.

The developmental sequence; (Figures 8-11)

All excavated contexts and their locations is recorded in Table 2: Geologically, the natural within all three trenches was mid orangey yellow, third terrace gravel. No cut archaeology was present within the natural. An overlying deposit of mid to dark reddish brown, compacted silty clay [1000] was present within all three trenches, which varied from 0.43m to 0.22m in thickness, representing an accumulative agricultural deposit. A single sherd of 19th century glazed red earthenware was recovered from this deposit within Trench 2. A thin deposit of a darker silty, sandy clay [1001] overlay [1000] within Trench 2 representing a localised upper agricultural soil.

Within Trench 3, a single circular pit, F. 3 was present within the agricultural deposit [1000]. Straight sided, with a flat base, [1016], the cut of F. 3 extended from the top of the agricultural horizon, and the fill [1017] whilst being devoid of material culture was loosely compacted silty clay indicative of a relatively recent deposition. An 18-19th century date for its use; likely associated with the agricultural use of the area can be suggested.

Truncating agricultural soil deposits and crossing Trenches 1 and 3 were two wide, shallow linears; both aligned roughly north-east to south-west: F. 1 within Trench 1 was 6.45m in width with steeply sloping sides to a flat base and was cut a maximum

of 0.33m into agricultural deposit [1000]. F. 2, within Trench 3 was a maximum of 4.8m wide, with steeply sloping sides extending 0.35m into the agricultural horizon.

No corresponding cut was identified within Trench 2: However, the depth of the top of agricultural horizon [1000] throughout the length of the trench was significantly lower than that within Trenches 1 and 3, suggesting that the trench was located laterally along a similarly orientated cut.

The deposits contained within both F. 1 and F. 2, as well as immediately overlying the seemingly truncated agricultural soil within Trench 3 followed the same sequence: A primary deposit of light yellowy-orange compacted sandy gravels, [1005], a maximum of 0.14m in thickness filled the base of the cuts and representing a primary railway ballast deposit. Within the upper horizon of [1005] a series of shallow depressions, left by the removal of railway sleepers could be identified (figure 10-11) traces of two parallel sets of tracks were present within Trench 1, two within Trench 2 and a single line within Trench 3. The tracks were all aligned in a north-east to south-west direction and whilst they were most clearly represented in plan in Trenches 1 and 3, were represented strongly in the sections of Trench 2.

Contemporary with primary ballast [1005] and the laying of the tracks was a thick deposit of compacted white chalky clay [1002] which was laid immediately on top of agricultural deposit [1000] at either side of cuts F. 1 and F. 2. This deposit, a maximum of 0.2m in thickness, was identified within Trenches 1 and 3 and appears to represent a deliberate ground raising and sealing deposit between the lines of tracks. [1002] within Trench 1 was itself capped by a thin deposit of compacted light orange sandy gravel [1010], which may suggest a further desire to stabilise the track-edges.

A thin deposit of silty clay, containing frequent coal, ash and occasional clinker, [1013] immediately overlay primary ballast deposit [1005] in all three trenches. [1013] appeared to represent an accumulative deposit which built-up around and between the tracks and sleepers, representing the use of the railway. A final sealing deposit of dark grey, oily, coal and clinker rich upper ballast [1006] a maximum of 0.3m in thickness was recorded in all three trenches. This deposit overlay the tracks, accumulative deposit [1013] and the chalky sealing deposit [1002] and likely represents the exposed upper surface of railway activity, levelled and spread following the final abandonment and removal of the tracks.

All three trenches demonstrated the final abandonment of the railway and use of the area as car park; A thick deposit of broken bricks, mortar and other building detritus [1011] was deposited within Trench 1, likely as a ground consolidation deposit, and may reflect demolition of late 20th century buildings in the vicinity. Tarmac [1008] and gravel bedding deposit [1007] was laid immediately onto the back levelled upper ballast [1006] within Trenches 2 and 3.

The 'bucket sampling' programme recovered a single, abraded sherd of 18/ 19th century Glazed Red Earthenware from agricultural horizon [1000] within Trench 2. No artefacts of an earlier date were recovered.

C. No.	F. No.	Type	Trench No.	Description.	Date
1000	n/a	Deposit	1, 2, 3	Agricultural soil	Pre-19 th cent
1001	n/a	Deposit	2	Agricultural soil	Pre-19 th cent
1002	n/a	Deposit	1, 2, 3	Chalk-clay capping of [1000]/ [1001]	19 th cent
1005	n/a	Deposit	1, 2, 3	Primary gravel ballast	19 th cent
1006	n/a	Deposit	1, 2, 3	Dark grey, upper ballast.	19 th cent
1007	n/a	Deposit	1, 2, 3	Bedding for modern tarmac	Modern
1008	n/a	Deposit	1, 2, 3	Modern Tarmac	Modern
1010	n/a	Deposit	1	Gravel surface associated with [1002]	19 th cent
1011	n/a	Deposit	1	Brick/ rubble ground consolidation	Modern
1012	n/a	Deposit	1	Bedding for Tarmac	19 th cent
1013	n/a	Deposit	1, 2, 3	Silty gravel ballast	19 th cent
1014	F.1	Cut	1	Cut through [1000] for railway.	19 th cent
1015	F.2	Cut	3	Cut through [1000] for railway	19 th cent
1016	F.3	Cut	3	Circular pit	Post-Medieval
1017	F.3	Fill	3	Fill of pit F. 3	Post-Medieval

Table 2: Deposits and features exposed within Evaluation trenches 1-3.

Monitoring of Geotechnical test pits/ bore-holes

During the phase of evaluation, a team of geotechnical engineers dug a series of exploratory bore-holes, hand dug test pits and short trenches. These were all archaeologically monitored and allowed further investigation of the archaeological and geological deposits throughout a larger area (Figure 2).

The geotechnical interventions were either Bore-Holes (BH), a maximum of 0.4m in diameter which were bored to a depth of between 20 and 30m below present ground surface. Shallow bores (WS) which were a maximum of 0.3m in diameter and bored to a maximum of 4m below the present ground surface. Where possible, the upper, archaeological deposits and the uppermost sequence of geological sub-strata was recorded, although inundation of water restricted this within the deeper Bore-Holes.

Three Hand Dug Test Pits (HDTP) were dug, primarily to identify the depth and nature of the foundations of Great Eastern House; approximately 0.6m square, these varied in excavated depth between 0.6 and 1m. A series of four Hand Dug Test Trenches (HDTT), dug primarily to expose the location of modern services were also recorded: Approximately 3m in length and a maximum of 0.6m in width, these varied in depth from between 0.8 and 1m.

Intervention	Description	Depth Below Surface (m)
BH2101	Tarmac and bedding deposit	0-0.2
	Dark grey railway ballast	0.2-0.6
	Mid brown silty clay Agricultural soil	0.6-0.85
	Gravelly Clay	0.85-1.6
	Compacted gravels	1.6+
BH2102	Dark brown humic garden soil	0-0.25
	Light grey chalk	0.25-0.9
	Sandy gravel	0.8-1.45+
BH2103	Tarmac and bedding	0-0.15

	Dark grey, gravely railway ballast	0.15-0.28
	Light grey compacted chalk	0.28-0.44
	Dark brown compacted agricultural deposit	0.44-0.8
	Clayey gravels	0.8-1.2+
WS2201	Tarmac and bedding deposit	0-0.2
	Dark grey railway ballast	0.2-0.7
	Mid brown silty clay Agricultural soil	0.7-0.9
WS2202	Tarmac and bedding deposit	0-0.2
	Dark grey railway ballast	0.2-0.6
	Mid brown silty clay Agricultural soil	0.6-0.85
WS2203	Tarmac and bedding deposit	0-0.15
	Dark grey railway ballast	0.15-0.6
	Mid brown silty clay Agricultural soil	0.6-0.8
WS2204	Tarmac and bedding deposit	0-0.2
	Dark grey railway ballast	0.2-0.6
	Mid brown silty clay Agricultural soil	0.6-0.85
WS2205	Concrete slab and sand bedding	0-0.2
	Dark brown agricultural soil	0.2-0.8
	Clayey gravels	0.8-1.2
	Sandy gravel	1.2-2+
WS2206	Mid to dark brown humic garden soil	0-0.28
	White firmly compacted chalky clay.	0.28-0.9
	Sandy gravel	0.9-1.45
	Gravelly Sand	1.45+
WS2206-A	Tarmac and bedding deposit.	0-0.15
	Compacted deposit of rubble hard-core	0.15-1.2+
WS2206-B	Mid to dark brown humic garden soil	0-0.15
	White firmly compacted chalky clay.	0.15-0.7
	Sandy gravel	0.7-1.45
	Gravelly Sand	1.45+
HDTP2301	Concrete slab and bedding deposit	0-0.15
	Mid to dark grey railway ballast	0.15-0.55
	Dark brown compact Agricultural soil	0.55-0.9
	Clayey Gravel	0.9-1+
HDTP2302	Concrete slab	0-0.05
	Light grey mortar/ rubble backfill	0.05-0.27
	Dark brown silty clay: redeposited agricultural soil.	0.27-0.6+
HDTP2303	Concrete slab	0-0.15
	Reinforced concrete	0.15-0.4
	Light grey compact chalk	0.4-0.6+
HDTT2401	Tarmac and bedding deposit	0-0.15
	Dark grey gravely railway ballast	0.15-0.3
	Light grey clay	0.3-0.35
	Yellowy brown sandy gravel	0.35-0.5
	Dark brown agricultural soil	0.5-0.8

HDTT2402	Tarmac and bedding deposit	0-0.15
	Redeposited geological gravels	0.15-0.9
	Modern Services	0.9+
HDTT2402-A	Concrete slab and bedding deposit	0-0.15
	Dark grey-brown humic garden soil	0.15-0.4
	Dark brown Agricultural soil	0.4-0.9
	Clayey gravel	0.9-1+
HDTT2403	Tarmac and bedding deposit	0-0.15
	Mixed gravely clay service trench backfill	0.15-0.9

Table 3: Stratigraphic deposits identified during Bore-holes and test pits/ trenches.

Discussion

The absence of any Prehistoric, Romano-British or Medieval cut features within the evaluated area corresponds with the paucity of archaeology in the vicinity of the Station Road/ Tenison Road/ Hills Road area; with the focus of the majority of identified archaeological activity being centred on the probable line of the *Via Devana*; This further suggests a 'quiet' hinterland landscape of extensive rather than intensive activity, likely associated with farming (Dickens 2007).

The use as farmland prior to the railway was attested to by the thick deposit of agricultural soil identified across the whole of the evaluated and monitored area and the single pit F. 3 within Trench 3 stratigraphically pre-dated the railway development but appeared high enough within the agricultural soil to be of post-Medieval date. The almost complete sterility of the agricultural horizon, even following an intensive bucket sampling every 5m along each trench (with one abraded sherd of Glazed Red Earthenware), further supports the suggestion of the evaluated area being away from areas of occupation: A similar scarcity of material culture being noted within the previous test-pitting phase (Mackay 2006).

The construction of the segment of railway yard within the evaluated area at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries seemingly followed a constructional sequence designed to reinforce the base of the tracks as well as to provide a well drained bed for the lines: a trench dug through the agricultural soil allowed water to soak into the underlying gravels, whilst a thick deposit of compacted sandy gravel ballast formed a stable foundation for the laying of the track sleepers.

The presence of compacted chalk-clay between the sets of tracks and seeming to be a capping deposit on top of the agricultural soil appears to represent a large importation of material onto the site during the constructional phase. The thicker presence of this material at the west end of Trench 1 corresponds well with the outside edge of the westernmost track and it would seem likely that a higher bank would have been located here to demarcate the edge of the railway from Tenison Road. BH2103 at the west of the current Great Eastern House showed a similar profile, with the chalky clay a maximum of 0.16m in thickness sealing the agricultural soil below.

A thicker deposit of an identical chalky clay material was located within Boreholes WS-2206 and WS-2206-B located within the south-western corner of the evaluated area at the junction of Station and Tenison Roads; corresponding with a raised mound

or bank on the 1927 and 1946 maps and clearly visible on the 1940 Luftwaffe photograph likely forming a reinforced buffer at the end of the track.

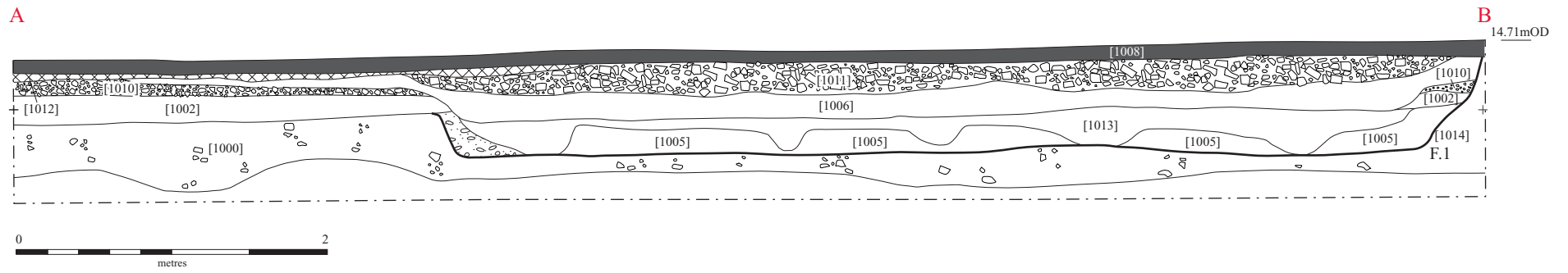
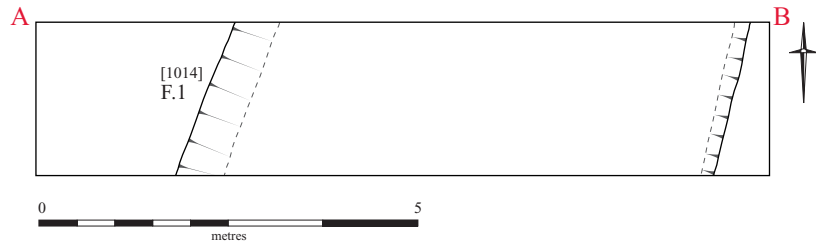


Figure 8. Trench 1 Plan and Section

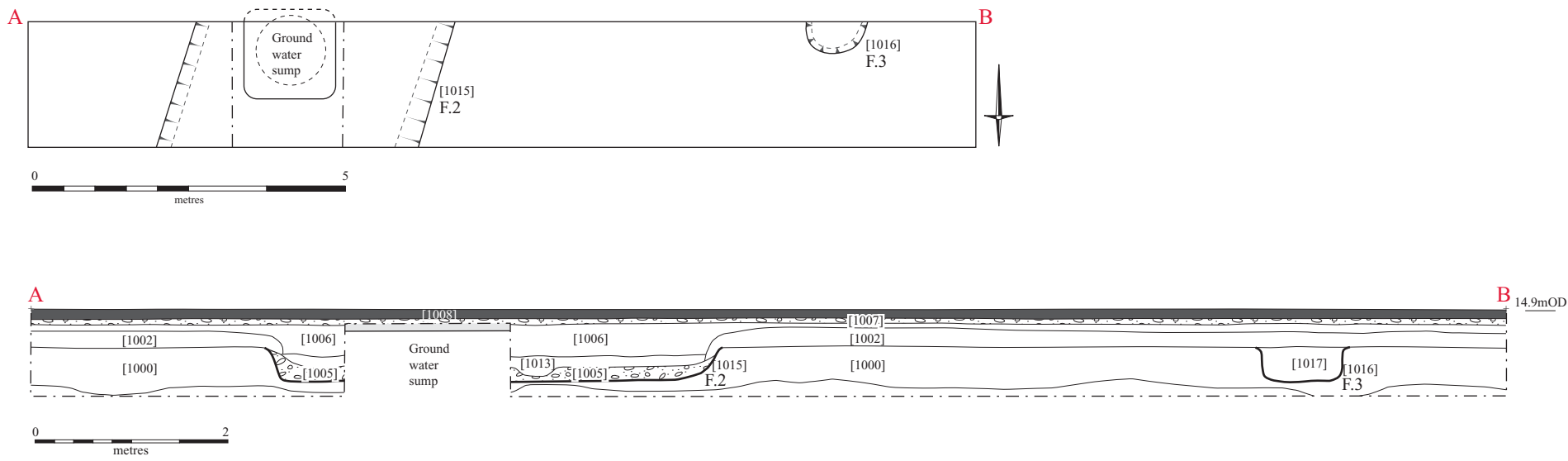


Figure 9. Trench 3 Plan and Section



Figure 10. Trench 1 photograph of sleeper beds



Figure 11. Trench 2 photograph of sleeper beds

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Nick Jones of Brookgate and Lucy Bethell of Mott McDonald who co-ordinated the project. Special thanks are given to Clive Lange of Geotechnics Ltd for patience and understanding. The excavation team comprised of Dave Webb and Shannon Hogan; surveying was carried out by Donald Horne and Bryan Crossan and graphics were produced by Vicki Herring. The project was managed by Robin Standing.

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Project details

Project name	Greah Eastern House, Station Road, Cambridge. An archaeological Evaluation and Watching Brief
Short description of the project	Between 9th and 15th December 2010, The Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) undertook a small evaluation within land to the north of Great Eastern House at the corner of Station Road and Tenison Road, Cambridge. A watching brief of Geotechnical investigations was undertaken concurrently. Trenching identified a post medieval agricultural horizon with the late 19th and early 20th century development of the railway.
Project dates	Start: 09-12-2010 End: 15-12-2010
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 2 - Offices
Monument type	RAILWAY STATION Post Medieval
Significant Finds	VESSEL Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	'Aerial Photography - interpretation','Grab-sampling','Measured Survey','Sample Trenches'
Development type	Urban commercial (e.g. offices, shops, banks, 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 Great Eastern House, Station Road

Postcode	CB12HN
Study area	1000.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 5460 2573 51.9081545062 0.247744263128 51 54 29 N 000 14 51 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 13.86m Max: 15.04m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Robin Standing
Project director/ manager	Robin Standing
Project supervisor	Adam Slater
Type of sponsor/ funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/ funding body	Brookgate

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Physical Contents	'Ceramics'
Digital Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Digital Contents	'Stratigraphic','Survey'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Survey','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Cambridge Archaeological Unit
Paper Contents	'Stratigraphic','Survey'
Paper Media available	'Aerial Photograph','Context sheet','Drawing','Photograph','Report','Section','Survey '

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Great Eastern House, Station Road, Cambridge. an Archaeological Evaluation and Watching brief
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Slater, A.
Other bibliographic details	CAU report no. 979
Date	2011
Issuer or publisher	Cambridge Archaeological Unit

Place of issue or publication Cambridge Archaeological Unit

Entered by Adam Slater (as813@cam.ac.uk)

Entered on 7 January 2011

OASIS:

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