

CAMBRIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECTS LTD.

# St. James Hospital, Portsmouth

Archaeological Watching Brief



By  
*Ken Owen*



CAP Report No 536

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

## St. James Hospital, Portsmouth

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## Non-Technical Summary

*This report results from work undertaken by Cambrian Archaeological Projects Ltd (CAP) for RSK Environment Ltd. and Kier Southern. It involved a watching brief on land within the North-Eastern boundary of St. James Hospital, Milton, Portsmouth.*

*Centred on NGR 467368 100164, an area of roughly 100x70m, the area under investigation is for a proposed new hospital complex and car parking areas.*

*The watching brief did not provide any archaeological evidence dating before the Devine Villa of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in this area, the ground level above natural seems to have been primarily made up of demolition deposits from the hospital complex. Residual flint was found within the demolition and natural interface.*

### 1 Introduction

#### 1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 On 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008 Cambrian Archaeological Projects (CAP) began to carry out an archaeological watching brief on behalf of RSK Environment Ltd. for Kier Southern, at the site of a proposed hospital extension and car parking facilities at St. James Hospital, Milton, Portsmouth, Hampshire (Fig.1).

1.1.2 The work involved a controlled strip on specified areas within an area of roughly 100x70m in size (Pl.1), with a N-S orientation, and also a watching brief on the cutting of the foundation trenches (Pl.3). The site is located within the boundary of the existing hospital grounds, near the NE periphery, centred at NGR 467368 100164 (Fig.2).

1.1.3 The complex is located on the site of the former Devine Villa, a late Victorian psychiatric hospital wing of St. James Hospital, and other structures dating to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Fig.3).

#### 1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The Sedimentary formations of this area are primarily Tertiary deposits, Barton beds underlain by London clay of the Eocene, these in turn overlie Reading beds of the Palaeocene, above a Cretaceous Chalk. The later post-glacial deposits are of alluvial clays and sands.

#### 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The first known occupation of this area is the building of the former Portsmouth Lunatic Asylum, known as Devine Villa (Fig.3), which was commissioned in 1879. The name of the complex was changed to the Borough of Portsmouth Mental Hospital in 1914 and stayed open until at least 1926. This structure was demolished and replaced by another structure associated with the hospital complex (Fig.3) between 1932 and 1938.

- 1.3.2 There was another more modern foundation at the North of the site, which seems to date from the late 1950's. This structure had also been totally demolished and is represented by a concrete foundation trench (Fig.3)(Pl.2). There was no information about this phase in the DBA but it was very likely another newer phase associated with the hospital complex.
- 1.3.3 One Bronze Age hoard was found within the grounds of the hospital, during construction work, Site 2 on (Fig.2) the Site Location Within Hospital plan.

## 2 Aims and Objectives

### 2.1 Watching Brief

- 2.1.1 To monitor all the topsoiling and foundation trenching work undertaken on the site.
- 2.1.2 To record any archaeological features/finds revealed during the course of the said groundwork's, and provide a written report within a reasonable timescale.
- 2.1.3 To accurately plot the locations of any archaeological features/finds.

## 3 Watching Brief Methodology

### 3.1 Scope of Fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The groundworks that required archaeological supervision covered an area of roughly 100x70m, within specific boundaries. The intervening areas were not going to be impacted upon and had been covered with hardcore that had been brought to the site, and used as haul roads, and for the storage of plant and equipment (Fig.3).
- 3.1.2 The general depth of the groundworks was between 0.25m and 0.40m, and approximately 0.70m during the foundation trench excavation.
- 3.1.3 All the relevant surface areas were machined using an 18T excavator with a flat ditching bucket, and were stripped under strict controlled supervision to a clayey sand natural. This was followed by the cutting of the foundation trenches (Pl.3), with a 5T excavator and flat ditching bucket, this procedure was initially watched but later deemed unnecessary.
- 3.1.4 The watching brief was undertaken by Ken Owen and Hywel Keen (CAP). All the areas under investigation were photographed using high-resolution digital photography, at various phases of the ongoing work.
- 3.1.5 All works were undertaken in accordance with both the IFA's *Standards and Guidance: for an archaeological watching brief* and current Health and Safety legislation.

### 3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 A small number of flints were recovered, mainly from the northern area during the topsoil excavation. The only significant find was a possible Early Neolithic blade (SF01), at the northern edge of the site (Fig.3).
- 3.2.2 All finds were analysed in house; for the lithics report see Appendix III. Some of the flints show evidence of being subjected to heat, although we cannot be sure if this was a deliberate act.
- 3.3 **Palaeo-environmental evidence**
- 3.3.1 No deposits suited to environmental sampling were located during the watching brief.

## 4 **Watching Brief Results**

### 4.1 **Soils and ground conditions**

- 4.1.1 The weather during the watching brief was generally changeable, it varied from very warm and dry conditions to either heavy rain or showers. Generally due to the sandy nature of the natural this did not have a serious impact on the progress made, although we did lose an afternoon of machining during exceptionally heavy rain.
- 4.1.2 The watching brief involved the inspection of the soils after removal of the imported topsoil (001) and the underlying post-medieval spread which contained demolition debris and other waste dating to the late Victorian period (002). The total depth of the post-medieval spread was between 0.25m and 0.60m.
- 4.1.3 Below the post-medieval spread we encountered an orangey-yellow clayey sand which had very few inclusions, mainly the very occasional nodule of flint (Pl.4). This deposit had an average depth of c.0.70m and is part of the natural alluvial deposits within this area (003).

### 4.2 **Distribution of deposits**

- 4.2.1 The topsoil (001) generally reached a depth of between 0.10m and 0.15m, and contained a frequent amount of root material towards the north of the site, and also inclusions of late Victorian pottery, animal bone, glass, metal and building materials.
- 4.2.2 Below the topsoil was a layer of mid yellowish grey sandy silt (002) containing a large volume of post-medieval waste material, including brick and slate demolition, metal, pottery and glass bottles. This layer also included large volumes of oyster and scallop shells at the base of the layer. This layer was fairly consistent throughout the investigative area.
- 4.2.3 The layer below the demolition spread was a fairly light natural orangey-yellow clayey sandy natural (003), slightly silty and containing the rare flint at surface level in the northern sector (Pl.3), and also root penetration from the upper levels. This layer had an average depth of c.0.70m. and was underlain by a shale layer (004) (Pl.4).

- 4.2.4 These naturally deposited alluvial layers were fairly consistent throughout the site, all the finds were recovered from the topsoil and the post-medieval spread, or immediately below on the horizon with the natural. There were no archaeological features that required further investigation. The only features that were tested for their authenticity were root boles containing late Victorian debris, these were noted on record but did not require full recording.

## 5 Discussion and Interpretation

### 5.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 5.1.1 The excavation of the groundworks established that there had been no structural occupation within the investigative area, beyond the well recorded late Victorian Devine Villa mental institution complex dating to 1879 (Fig.3).
- 5.1.2 The evidence of one flint blade of an Early Neolithic date and a few possible cores may suggest that the site was visited by prehistoric hunter-gatherer groups in the archaeological past (Fig.3).

### 5.2 Overall interpretation

- 5.2.1 The results of the watching brief indicated that there had not been any structured occupation in this area until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 5.2.2 The demolition/debris layer above the present natural is entirely made up ground. There is the possibility that the original ground surface had been removed, possibly by machine during groundwork's for the Devine Villa complex.

### 5.3 Significance

- 5.3.1 The result of the watching brief seems to suggest that there are no surviving archaeological sites within the investigative area.
- 5.3.2 The ongoing work on the new hospital complex will not impact on any archaeology and is therefore regarded as having a low archaeological potential.

## 6 References

'Devine Villa, St. James Hospital, Portsmouth'. (2008) Initial Desk-Based Archaeological Appraisal. RSK Group Plc.

'Devine Villa, St. James Hospital, Portsmouth'. (2008) Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief. RSK Group Plc.



'Devine Villa, St. James Hospital, Portsmouth'. (2008) Archaeological Watcing Brief.  
RSK Group Plc.



## **APPENDIX I:**

# **Figures and Illustrations**

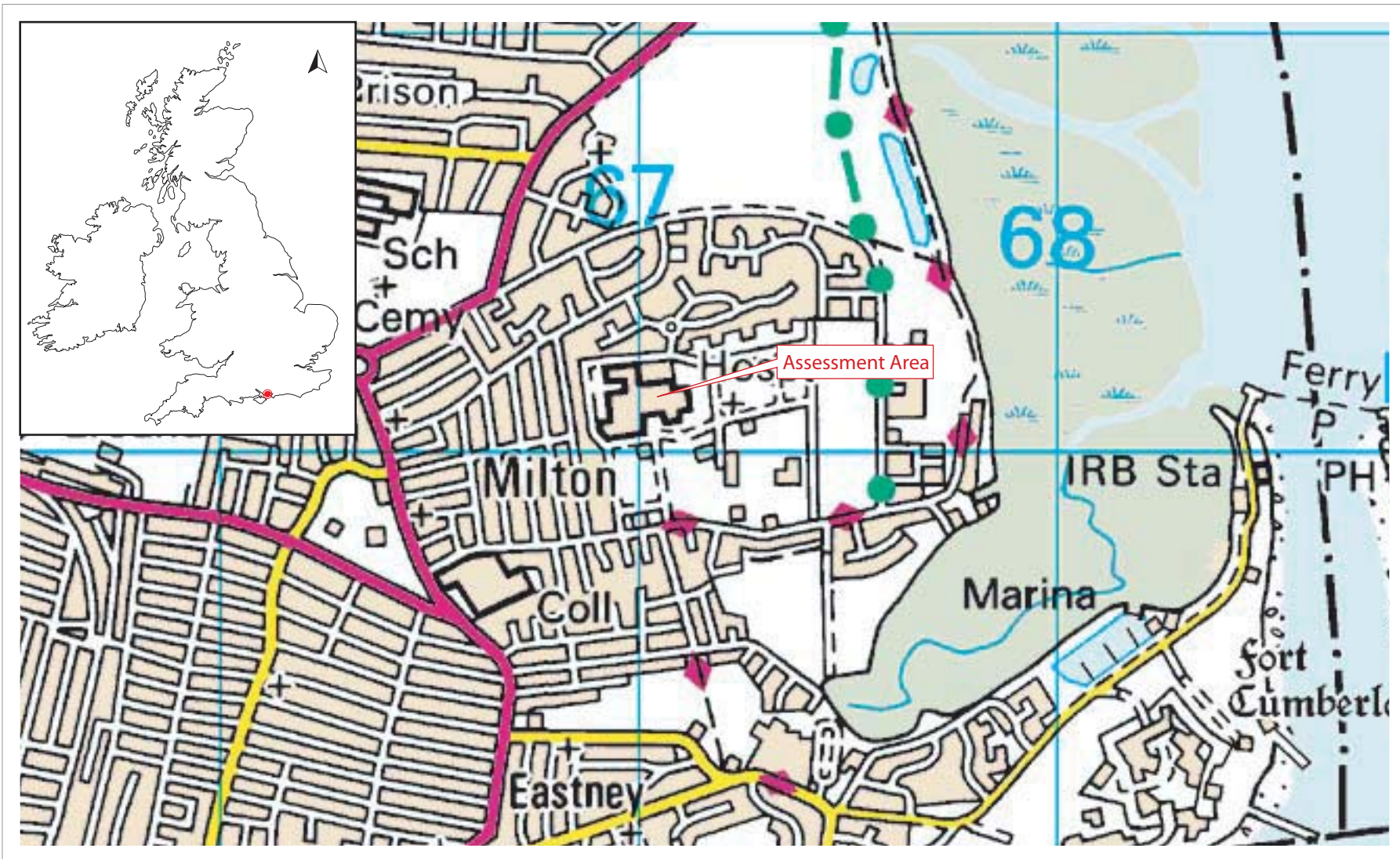



Fig 01: Map showing location of assessment area




-  Site Boundary
-  Archaeological Site
-  Conservation Area

<b>Job Title:</b>	St. James Hospital
<b>Drawing Title:</b>	Detailed Site Location
<b>Date:</b>	19/11/2008
<b>Drawn By:</b>	After RSK
<b>Scale:</b>	1:35,000

**Figure 02:**

**Cambrian Archaeological Projects Limited**



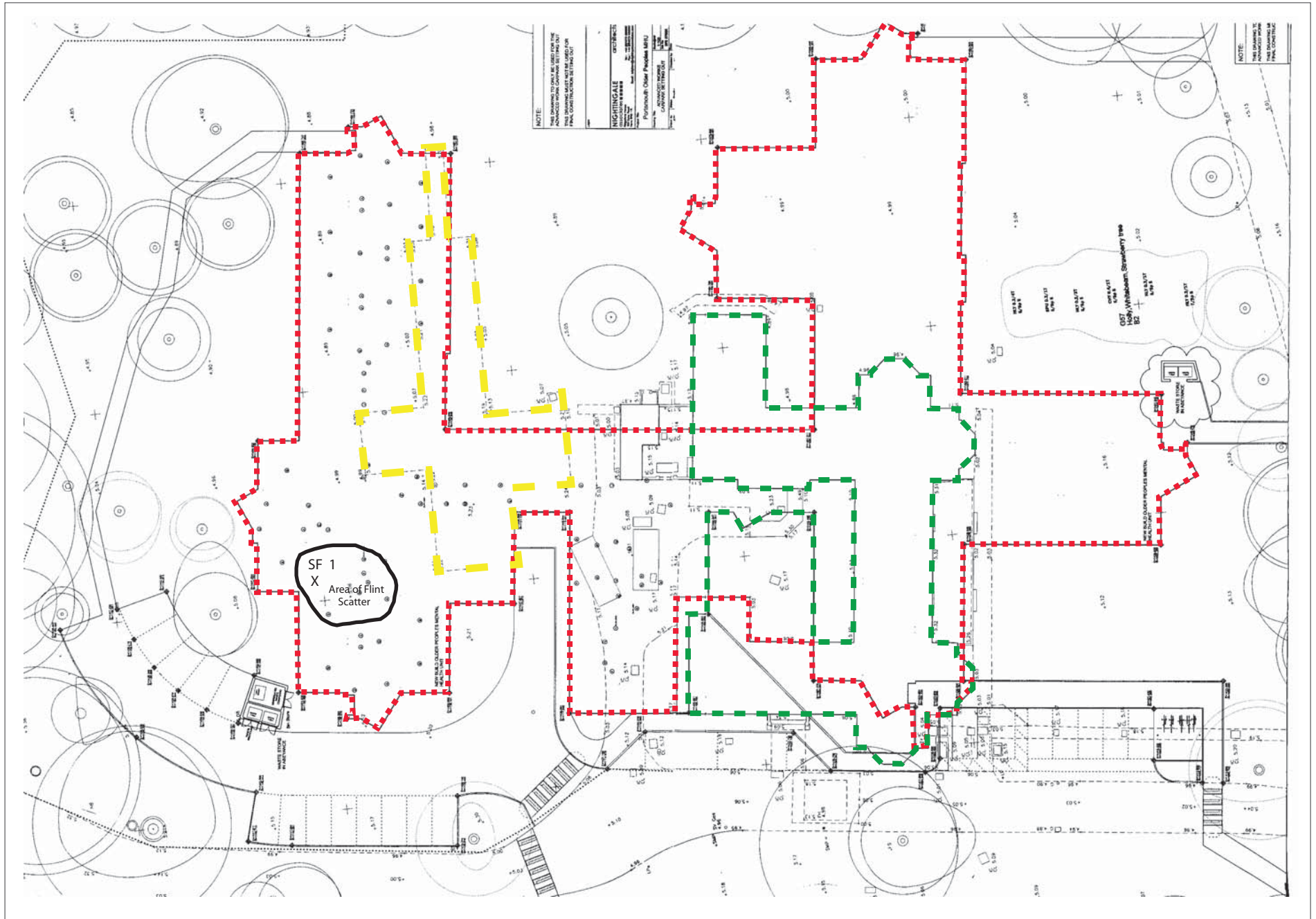


Figure 3. Site Plan

Excavated Areas



Devine Villa



Modern Structure





## **APPENDIX II:**

### **Photo plates**



Plate 1 North-Eastern Sector



Plate 2 19th and 20th Century Foundations



Plate 3 Northern Area after Foundation Trenching



Plate 4 Soakaway at East of Site, Imported Hardcore





Plate 5 Modern Foundation Trenches



Plate 6 20th C. Foundations and 19th C. Boiler House



**APPENDIX III:**  
**Lithics Report**

## Lithic assessment report

Dr Amelia Pannett

The assemblage comprised 14 lithics recovered from the subsoil (02) in an area of tree throws. The table below summarises the assemblage material:

<b>Material</b>	<b>Character</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Date</b>
Burnt flint	Not retouched	Rolled pebble	U/N
Burnt flint	Not retouched	Chunk	U/N
Burnt flint	Not retouched	Chunk	U/N
Burnt flint	Not retouched	Flake	U/N
Burnt flint	Not retouched	Chunk	U/N
Burnt flint	Not retouched	Chunk	U/N
Flint	Not retouched	Chunk/rough core	LN/EBA
Flint	Not retouched	Chunk	U/N
Flint	Not retouched	Chunk	U/N
Flint	Not retouched	Core trimming flake	U/N
Flint	Not retouched	Flake	U/N
Flint	Not retouched	Flake	U/N
Flint	Retouched	Flake with rough retouch/denticulation along one edge.	LN/EBA
Flint	Retouched	Flake struck from blade core with platform preparation and retouch along one edge	Meso/EN

The rough and undiagnostic nature of the majority of the assemblage means that there is very little that can be said about the nature of the activities involved in its production. The presence of burnt pieces may point to the occurrence of fires on or near the site, perhaps indicative of occupation. The three diagnostic pieces recovered demonstrate the presence of people in this part of the landscape in the Mesolithic/early Neolithic and later Neolithic/early Bronze Age periods, but cannot provide any information about what activities were being undertaken.

No further work is necessary on this assemblage.



## **APPENDIX IV:**

## **Archive cover sheet**

## ARCHIVE COVER SHEET

Site Name:	St. James Hospital
Site Code:	SJH/08/WB
PRN:	-
NPRN:	-
SAM:	-
Project Number	962
Other Ref No:	CAP Project No 536
NGR:	SU 67368 00164
Site Type:	Hospital Complex
Project Type:	Watching Brief
Project Manager:	Kevin Blockley
Project Dates:	September 2008
Categories Present:	None
Location of Original Archive:	-
Location of duplicate Archives:	-
Number of Finds Boxes:	-
Location of Finds:	-
Museum Reference:	-
Copyright:	CAPLtd
Restrictions to access:	None



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