

An Undated Ditch to the rear of No. 10 Park Lane Little Downham Cambridgeshire



Archaeological Evaluation Report



June 2011

Client: Norman and Nicholas Ltd

OA East Report No: 1263

OASIS No: Oxfordar3-102184

NGR: TL 5201 8394

**An Undated Ditch to the rear of No. 10 Park Lane, Little Downham,
Cambridgeshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

By Rob Atkins BSocSc DipArch

Editor: Rachel Clarke BA AIfA

Illustrator: Andy Corrigan BA

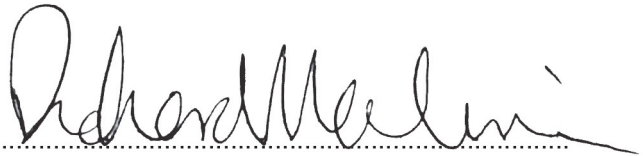
Report Date: June 2011

Report Number: 1263
Site Name: Rear of No. 10 Park Lane, Little Downham
HER Event No: ECB 3585
Date of Works: May 2011
Client Name: Norman and Nicholas Ltd
Client Ref: 13112
Planning Ref: 04/00831/OUT
Grid Ref: TL 5201 8394
Site Code: DOWPALL11
Finance Code: DOWPALL11
Receiving Body: CCC Stores, Landbeach

Accession No:

Prepared by: Rob Atkins
Position: Project Officer
Date: June 2011

Checked by: Richard Mortimer
Position: Senior Project Manager
Signed:



Disclaimer

This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and should not be relied upon or used for any other project without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and prior written authority of Oxford Archaeology being obtained. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for the consequences of this document being used for a purpose other than the purposes for which it was commissioned. Any person/party using or relying on the document for such other purposes agrees and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Oxford Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting there from. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any party other than the person/party by whom it was commissioned.

Oxford Archaeology East,
15 Trafalgar Way,
Bar Hill,
Cambridge,
CB23 8SQ

t: 01223 850500
f: 01223 850599
e: oaeast@thehumanjourney.net
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net/oaeast>

© Oxford Archaeology East 2011
Oxford Archaeology Limited is a Registered Charity No: 285627

Table of Contents

Summary	5
1 Introduction	7
1.1 Location and scope of work.....	7
1.2 Geology and topography.....	7
1.3 Archaeological and historical background (Not illustrated).....	7
1.4 Acknowledgements.....	8
2 Aims and Methodology	9
2.1 Aims.....	9
2.2 Methodology.....	9
3 Results	10
3.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 3).....	10
4 Discussion and Conclusions	11
4.1 Overview	11
4.2 Significance.....	11
4.3 Recommendations.....	11
Appendix A. Bibliography	12
Appendix B. OASIS Report Form	13

List of Figures

Fig. 1	Site location with development area outlined red
Fig. 2	Location of the trench (black) with the development area (outlined red), showing new buildings (green)
Fig. 3	Trench plan and section drawing

Summary

On 12th May 2011 Oxford Archaeology East conducted an archaeological evaluation on the site of a new residential development comprising four new houses to the rear of No. 10 Park Lane, Little Downham (TL 5201 8394). The archaeological work comprised a 7m long evaluation trench within which a single undated ditch was identified aligned roughly north to south. It is likely the ditch was part of a Roman field system which was found adjacent to the east of the site in a previous archaeological evaluation (Cooper 2007).

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was conducted at the rear of No. 10 Park Lane, Little Downham, Cambridgeshire (Figs. 1 and 2). This archaeological evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Dan McConnell (McConnell 2010) of Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC; Planning Application [04/00831/OUT]), supplemented by a Specification prepared by OA East (Morgan 2011).
- 1.1.2 The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010). The results will enable decisions to be made by CCC, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.
- 1.1.3 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The British Geological Survey has mapped the development area's drift geology as Boulder Clay (Till) overlaying Kimmeridge Clay (BGS 1980). The evaluation trench uncovered boulder clay consisting of a light brown clay with some small chalk pieces within which were occasional small yellow-brown silty clay patches.
- 1.2.2 The village of Little Downham is located approximately 4km to the north-west of Ely, on a 15-20m high knoll. The current development area is located on fairly flat land within the back plot of No. 10, over than 50m to the south of Park Lane.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background (Not illustrated)

- 1.3.1 The sand and gravel resources of the knoll top have been periodically exploited for building and road materials, during which activities a number of prehistoric and Roman sites have been destroyed or partly backfilled into the later quarry pits. Evidence of this was recently found during evaluation work ahead of development 400m to the south-east of the current site at Cannon Street/Pond Lane. Here, Roman pottery and Neolithic flints were found as residual material backfilled into late medieval and post-medieval extraction pits (CHER MCB 17493; Grassam *et al* 2004). Similarly prehistoric flints were found in post-medieval extraction pits 200m to the south at Oak Farm, Cannon Street (CHER MCB 17064; Woolhouse and Schofield 2006). This adds to material uncovered during extraction at the beginning of the 20th century when workmen found Bronze Age Collared Urn cremations at Hopkins Pit, 300m to the south-west of the application area (CHER 07340; Lethbridge 1930; Hall 1996, site 4). A few years later a Beaker was found in a nearby location (Lethbridge *et al* 1935).
- 1.3.2 The glacial sand resource was deposited in a linear E-W band on the ridge of high land on which Little Downham is located, the northern end of which is demarcated by Main Street. It is unlikely that quarrying extended into the northern part of the village, where boulder clay-based substrates occur. To the north of Main Street, 500m to the east of the site, a Late Mesolithic flint scatter was found within a buried land surface during an evaluation at Feoffees Primary school (CHER 11905; Last 1996). This evaluation

recovered a few sherds of later prehistoric and Roman pottery, which may suggest a settlement of this date was located nearby. Another Iron Age to Roman settlement was found c.500m to the west of the current site where two adjacent pottery concentrations were identified during field walking (Hall 1996, site 3).

- 1.3.3 Close by a Roman field system was uncovered in an evaluation adjacent to the south and south-east of the current site (Fig. 1; CHER MCB 17853; Cooper 2007). A number of sparse features were revealed within the five evaluation trenches, comprising a paddock type arrangement in trench 1 with equally spaced ditches aligned north to south. Field boundary ditches were found in all trenches. Only five Roman pottery sherds (67g) were recovered from these features suggesting that the focus of domestic settlement lay beyond the evaluation area.
- 1.3.4 A Saxon cemetery was found in the vicinity of the application site (CHER 07150). Exposed at various times between the 1880s and 1930s, possibly during the construction of the Baptist Church and in connection with Chamber's Pit. It has never been fully excavated, but other shallow graves occur 230m to the east of the development area (on the west side of Nos. 4 and 6 Chapel Lane; Hall 1996, site U1). At No. 85 Park Lane, to the north-west of the site boundary, further inhumations were found which were either of Roman or Saxon date.
- 1.3.5 By the 12th century, a Bishop's Palace had been established some 300m to the north-west of the current site, which by the 14th century had a 250 acre park (CHER 07154). The palace was rebuilt in the 15th century by Bishop Alcock and a large series of fish ponds occupied the land to the south of the palace (MCB 1346; Hall 1996, site 13; Spoerry 2006). Evidently a desirable palace for the Bishops of Ely, it can be assumed that a sizeable secular community thrived in the village, owing its fortunes to its ecclesiastical masters.
- 1.3.6 The current development site probably lay beyond the medieval village, with the medieval church being located more than 500m to the east, fronting onto the main road through the village. This road extended from Ely to Coveney; with the site located c.80m to the north of this road. No medieval features (or pottery) were found in the adjacent evaluation to the east/south-east (Cooper 2007), suggesting that the site lay within the field system of the medieval settlement.
- 1.3.7 The 1" Ordnance Survey map published in 1836 (map sheet 54) shows that Little Downham was essentially a linear village with most buildings along one main road (now called Main Street). The site is within a large field bounded by a route way to the north (now called Park Lane). This situation does not change for the next 100 years with the 1st Edition (1886), 2nd Edition (1902) and 3rd Edition (1927) OS maps showing the same details. The 1952/3 OS map has houses for the first time to the south of, and fronting onto, Park Lane. These houses still stand and the site is to the rear of No. 10.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 The author would like to thank the client, Norman and Nicholas Ltd, for funding the project. Richard Mortimer managed the project for OA East and the fieldwork was carried out by Rob Atkins. Rachel Clarke edited the report and the illustrations were drawn by Andy Corrigan.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The Brief required that a 7m long trench be located within a 294 m² plot to the rear of No. 10 where a house, adjacent to the east, is being constructed with its footings already built (Fig. 3). Within the planning application there were three further houses to be built but these were not part of the archaeological requirement for the site. At the time of the evaluation, two of these houses (to the south of the trench) were nearly complete although construction of the third (to the west) had not yet begun.
- 2.2.2 The machine excavation of the trench was carried out under constant archaeological supervision with a tracked Kabotta type excavator using a toothless ditching bucket. The archaeological feature and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. The site plan and section were recorded at 1:50 and 1:10 respectively and photographs were taken of the single feature uncovered and other deposits. The work took place during warm sunny weather. No artefacts were recovered and no environmental samples were taken due to the sterile nature of the site's only feature.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

- 3.1.1 A single trench was excavated adjacent to the west and roughly parallel to the partly constructed house (Fig. 2). This trench was exposed for 7.8m and was aligned roughly north-east to south-west. A single undated shallow ditch (5) was revealed within the southern part of the trench orientated roughly north to south and was roughly perpendicular to Park Lane. It measured 0.7m wide and 0.22m deep with steep (c.60°) sides and a flat base (Fig. 3, S.1). The ditch was filled with a single sterile deposit (4), which consisted of a mid grey slightly orangey brown silty clay. This fill had virtually no inclusions except very rare small stones or charcoal flecks.
- 3.1.2 Ditch 5 was sealed by a possible former topsoil layer (3), 0.15m thick, which compromised a mid brown silty clay with very few inclusions. Overlaying this layer was a probable modern make up layer (2). This was a dark grey brown silty clay between 0.10m and 0.14m thick with very small brick fragments and very rare small stones collectively compromised <1% of the total deposit. This layer in turn was sealed by a very recent make up deposit (1) which was 0.5m thick on the southern side and 0.3m thick near the north baulk. This layer consisted of a dark grey brown loam containing large quantities of 20th century machine frogged brick, frequent tarmac and other modern inclusions.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 The evaluation revealed a single undated shallow sterile ditch. This ditch, which was orientated perpendicular to Park Lane, was similar in size, shape and alignment to many of the Roman features found at the adjacent archaeological evaluation to the east (Cooper 2007). It is likely this feature is part of this Roman field system.
- 4.1.2 All maps up to 1952/3 show the current site as being part of a large field. The site is located at least 80m to the north of the main village road and the evidence seems to suggest it lies beyond the medieval settlement, possibly within its open field system.

4.2 Significance

- 4.2.1 The evaluation results indicate that the Roman field system probably extended further to the west into the current site. It is uncertain where the domestic centre associated with the field system was located, or its overall size.

4.3 Recommendations

- 4.3.1 Recommendations for any future work based upon this report will be made by the County Archaeology Office.

APPENDIX A. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- British Geological Survey (BGS), 1980 Geological survey of Great Britain (England and Wales) Ely sheet 173 1:50 000 series solid and drift edition
- Cooper, S., 2007 *Roman remains at Little Downham, Cambridgeshire* CAM ARC report 913 (unpublished)
- Grassam, A., Thompson, P. and Weston, P., 2004 *Cannon Street, Little Downham, Ely, Cambridgeshire: an archaeological evaluation* Archaeological Solutions report (unpublished)
- Hall, D., 1996 *The Fenland Project, No. 10: Cambridgeshire Survey, The Isle of Ely and Wisbech* E. Anglian Archaeol. 79
- Last, J., 1996 *A Late Mesolithic Flint Scatter at Feoffes School, Little Downham*, CCC AFU report 126 (unpublished)
- Lethbridge, T.C., 1930 'Bronze Age Burials at Little Downham, Cambridgeshire', *Antiq. J.* 10, 162-4
- Lethbridge, T.C., O'Reilly, M. and Leaf, C.S., 1935 'Archaeological notes', *Proc. Cambridge Antiq. Soc.* 35, 141-6
- McConnell, D., 2010 Brief for archaeological evaluation rear of Nos. 2-10 Park Lane, Little Downham dated November 15th 2010 Cambridgeshire County Council
- Morgan, M., 2011 Specification for archaeological evaluation; plots off Park Lane, Little Downham, Cambridgeshire (TL 5201 8394) Oxford Archaeology East
- Spoerry, P., 2006 Specification for Archaeological Evaluation, Main Street, Little Downham CAM ARC (unpublished)
- Woolhouse, T. and Schofield, T., 2006 *Oak Farm, Cannon Street, Little Downham, Ely, Cambridgeshire: an archaeological evaluation* Archaeological Solutions report (unpublished)

APPENDIX B. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details

OASIS Number	Oxfordar3-102184			
Project Name	An undated ditch at Park Lane, Little Downham, Cambridgeshire			
Project Dates (fieldwork)	Start	12-05-2011	Finish	12-05-2011
Previous Work (by OA East)	No		Future Work	No

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	DOWPALL11	Planning App. No.	04/00831/OUT
HER No.	ECB 3585	Related HER/OASIS No.	-

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS 5
Development Type	Housing Estate

Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - interpretation	<input type="checkbox"/> Grab-Sampling	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photography - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Gravity-Core	<input type="checkbox"/> Sample Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Annotated Sketch	<input type="checkbox"/> Laser Scanning	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure
<input type="checkbox"/> Augering	<input type="checkbox"/> Measured Survey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Targeted Trenches
<input type="checkbox"/> Dendrochronological Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Metal Detectors	<input type="checkbox"/> Test Pits
<input type="checkbox"/> Documentary Search	<input type="checkbox"/> Phosphate Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Topographic Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/> Photogrammetric Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Vibro-core
<input type="checkbox"/> Fieldwalking	<input type="checkbox"/> Photographic Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit)
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Rectified Photography	

Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
Ditch	Uncertain		Select period...
	Select period...		Select period...
	Select period...		Select period...

Project Location ²

County	Cambridgeshire	Site Address (including postcode if possible)
District	East Cambridgeshire	Land to the south of 10 Park Lane, Little Downham, Cambridgeshire
Parish	Little Downham	
HER	Cambridgeshire	
Study Area	294sq.m	National Grid Reference TL 5201 8394

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	Dan McConnell, CCC
Project Design Originator	Matthew Morgan, Oxford Archaeology South
Project Manager	Richard Mortimer, Oxford Archaeology East
Supervisor	Rob Atkins

Project Archives

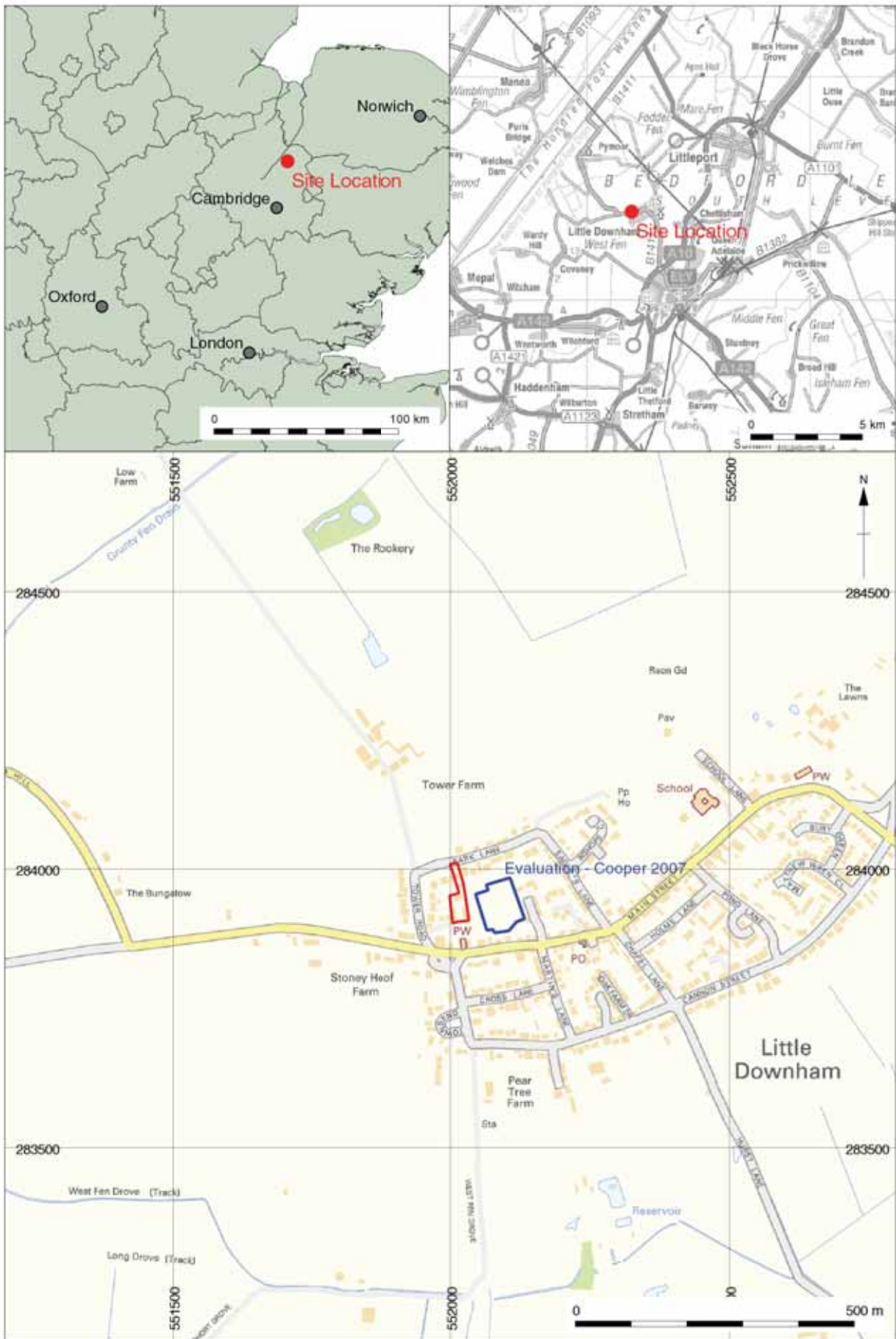
Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
Location ...	OA East	County Stores, Landbeach
None	DOWPALL11	DOWPALL11

Archive Contents/Media

	Physical Contents	Digital Contents	Paper Contents
Animal Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stratigraphic		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Textiles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Bone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Stone/Lithic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Digital Media	Paper Media
<input type="checkbox"/> Database	<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photos
<input type="checkbox"/> GIS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Context Sheet
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Correspondence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Images	<input type="checkbox"/> Diary
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illustrations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drawing
<input type="checkbox"/> Moving Image	<input type="checkbox"/> Manuscript
<input type="checkbox"/> Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/> Map
<input type="checkbox"/> Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Matrices
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Text	<input type="checkbox"/> Microfilm
<input type="checkbox"/> Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/> Misc.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Research/Notes
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photos
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plans
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey

Notes:



Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2011

Figure 1: Site location with development area outlined red



Figure 2: Location of the trench (black) within the development area (outlined red), showing new buildings (green)

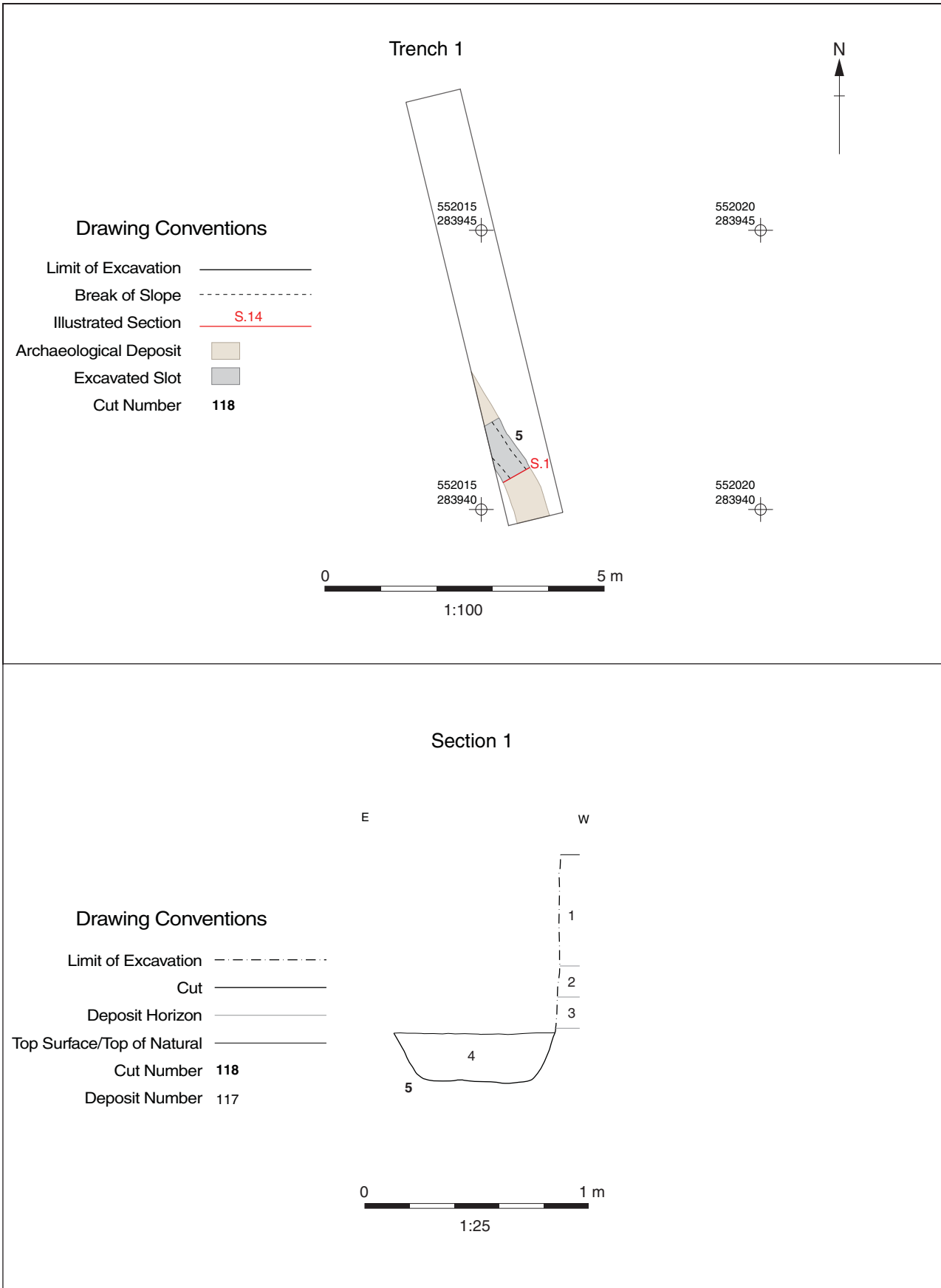


Figure 3: Trench plan and section drawing



Head Office/Registered Office/ OA South

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496
e: info@oxfordarchaeology.com
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane
Lancaster LA1 1QD

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606
e: [oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridgeshire
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850500
e: [oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>



Director: Gill Hey, BA PhD FSA MCIFA
*Oxford Archaeology Ltd is a
Private Limited Company, N^o: 1618597
and a Registered Charity, N^o: 285627*