

**41 Madingley Road, Cambridge:
An Archaeological Evaluation**

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SUMMARY

Between 11th and 12th July 2005, the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit carried out an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching at 41 Madingley Rd (TL4347 5911) in advance of a residential development.

This evaluation revealed a single undated feature in Trench 4 which may be part of an Iron Age or Roman field system. The rest of the site has been truncated by later activity.

The evaluation has made a limited contribution to the understanding of the archaeology of the area and has demonstrated the presence of post-medieval and modern remains across the subject site and the relative absence of Iron Age or Roman material.

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Drawing Conventions

Sections

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Limit of Excavation | ----- |
| Cut | ————— |
| Cut - Conjectured | ----- |
| Soil Horizon | ----- |
| Soil Horizon - Conjectured | ----- |
| Intrusion/Truncation | ----- |
| Top of Natural | ————— |
| Top Surface | ————— |
| Break in Section | ----- |
| Cut Number | 118 |
| Deposit Number | 117 |
| Ordnance Datum | $\frac{18.45\text{m ODN}}{\times}$ |

Plans

| | |
|------------------------|-------|
| Limit of Excavation | ————— |
| Deposit - Conjectured | ----- |
| Natural Features | ----- |
| Intrusion/Truncation | ----- |
| Sondages/Machine Strip | ----- |
| Illustrated Section | S.14 |
| Deposit | |
| Excavated Slot | |
| Modern Deposit | |
| Cut Number | 118 |

41 Madingley Rd, Cambridge; An Archaeological Evaluation (TL 4347 5911)

1 INTRODUCTION

Between 11th and 12th July 2005, Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit (CCC AFU) conducted an archaeological evaluation at 41 Madingley Rd, Cambridge (TL 4347 5911; Fig.1). The work was carried out at the request of Hill Partnerships in order to fulfil a *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation* issued by Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice (CAPCA).

The site is located to the west of the city of Cambridge. The development includes the construction of apartments and associated services on the site of the former McDonalds at 41 Madingley Rd. The brief called for a minimum of 5% sample excavation of the area to evaluate any archaeological remains on the site.

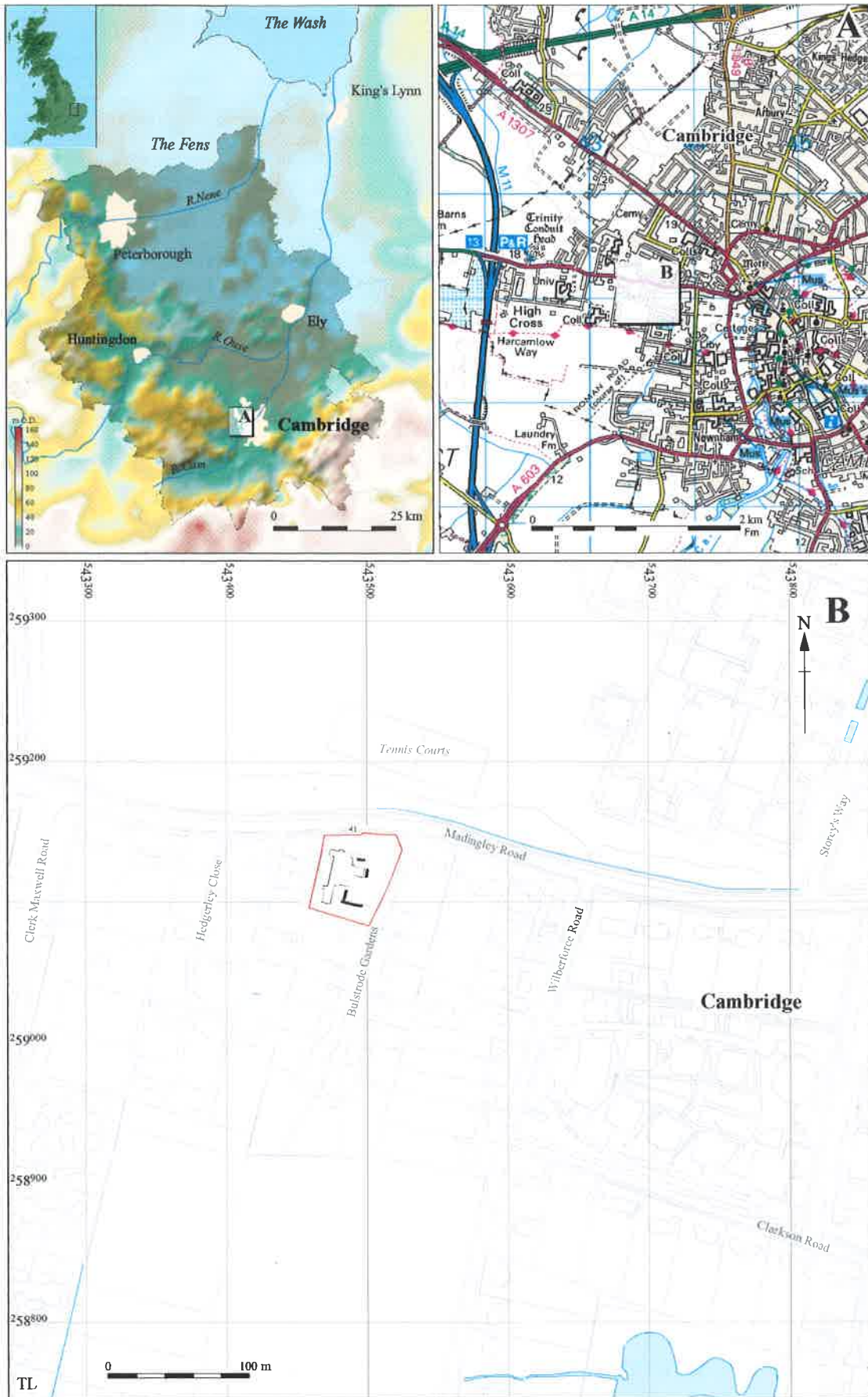
From the outset it was hoped that this evaluation would identify activities associated with the nearby large Iron Age and Roman settlement at Vicars Farm, located to the west.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The proposed site is on 1st Terrace River Gravels overlying Gault Clays and is within the flood plain of the River Cam (Worssam & Taylor 1969). A north flowing meander loop of the River Cam is at just over 1km distance to the east of the development area, which occurs on Gault Clay. No drift deposits are known to occur here, although terrace sands and gravels fringe the town and river to the south, east and north, with small outlying 'islands' or banks closer to the development area. Glacial head moraines and dumps occur in proximity to the north-west and although colluvial hillwash deposits were recorded in recent excavations to the west they are not expected to have reached this far east.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The development area is fringed by a significant distribution of sites and stray finds. Excavated evidence is dominated by settlements of the Late Iron Age and Roman periods, such as that known from the former Vicars Farm



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Figure 1 Site location showing position of trenches (black) and development area (red)

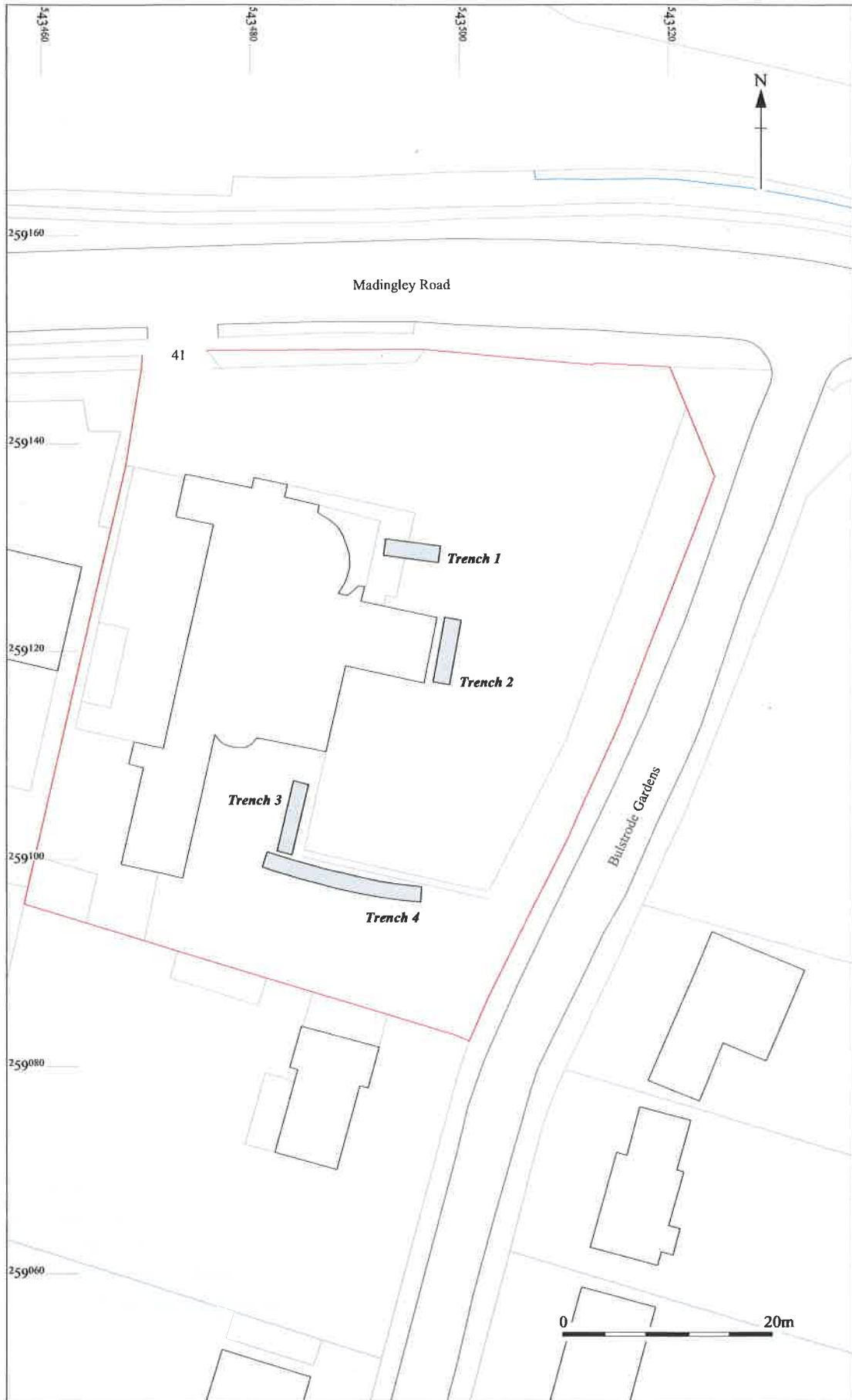


Figure 2 Location of trenches within the development area (red)

area which is presently the Microsoft Research Institute, the Whittle Laboratory and the William Gates Building (CHER ref: ECB1014 &1015), and the Hoyle Building (ECB1150) and Castle End Farm (MCB6377).

Investigations at Vicars Farm (Whittaker & Evans 1999) revealed an important 4th century settlement. An early urned cremation cemetery and a probable Roman inhumation were also discovered. In addition a small quantity of prehistoric flint work was recovered and features relating to the late medieval/ post-medieval Willowes Ditch were recorded.

The excavation revealed Roman activity, which consisted of ditched enclosures and open fields. Two cemeteries (one inhumation and the other cremation) were located at the fringes of the settlement.

High Cross (ECB154) forms an outlying settlement from the principal contemporary 'urban' settlements located on Castle Hill in Cambridge, 1 km to the northeast. Excavated evidence east of the development area, beneath the new Centre for Mathematical Studies (ECB991), lacked this Iron Age-Roman presence and instead yielded evidence of the Medieval West Field system, a well-documented part of the cultivated land surrounding the medieval settlement.

4 METHODOLOGY

Four trial trenches (Fig 2) were excavated under archaeological supervision using a JCB fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket. The modern demolition layers, surfaces and post-medieval garden soil were stripped down to the level of the archaeological horizons or the natural geology, whichever appeared first.

All exposed features and deposits were excavated and recorded according to CCC AFU standards and practises.

5 RESULTS

The overburden in all trenches consisted of topsoil (1), a dump layer (2), and subsoil (3). The topsoil (1) was a light grey silty clay with modern material, varying depth from 0.20-0.30m. The underlying layer (2) was a dark grey silty clay with a frequent modern masonry, varying in depth from 0.30-0.40m. The subsoil (3) was a greyish green silty clay, varying in depth from 0.20-0.30m.

Service trenches were identified in Trenches 1, 2, 3 and 4. All trenches were machined down to a greenish grey Gault clay.

Trench 1

This trench was 5.30m long, 1.6m wide and 1m deep. It was located on an east-west alignment in the southern part of the development area. No archaeological features were observed in this trench.

Trench 2

This trench was 6.30m long, 1.6m wide and 1m deep. It was located on a north-south alignment in the centre of the development area. No archaeological features were observed in this trench.

Trench 3

This trench was 7m long, 1.6m wide and 0.95m deep. It was located on a north-south alignment in the southern part of the development area. This trench contained no archaeological features.

Trench 4

This trench was 15m long, 1.6m wide and 1.50m deep. It was located on an east-west alignment in the southern part of the development area. Two features (4 and 6) were identified in this trench (Fig.3). Pit 4 was a large Victorian pit located in the western part of the trench. Pit 4 was 4.50m wide and 1.08m deep and contained bricks and glass. The most significant feature uncovered was a shallow truncated ditch (6) in the centre of the ditch. This ditch was 0.50m wide and 0.10 and was undated. The most likely interpretation of this feature is that it represents a truncated Iron Age or Roman field ditch similar to the ones revealed at the nearby site at Vicars Farm.

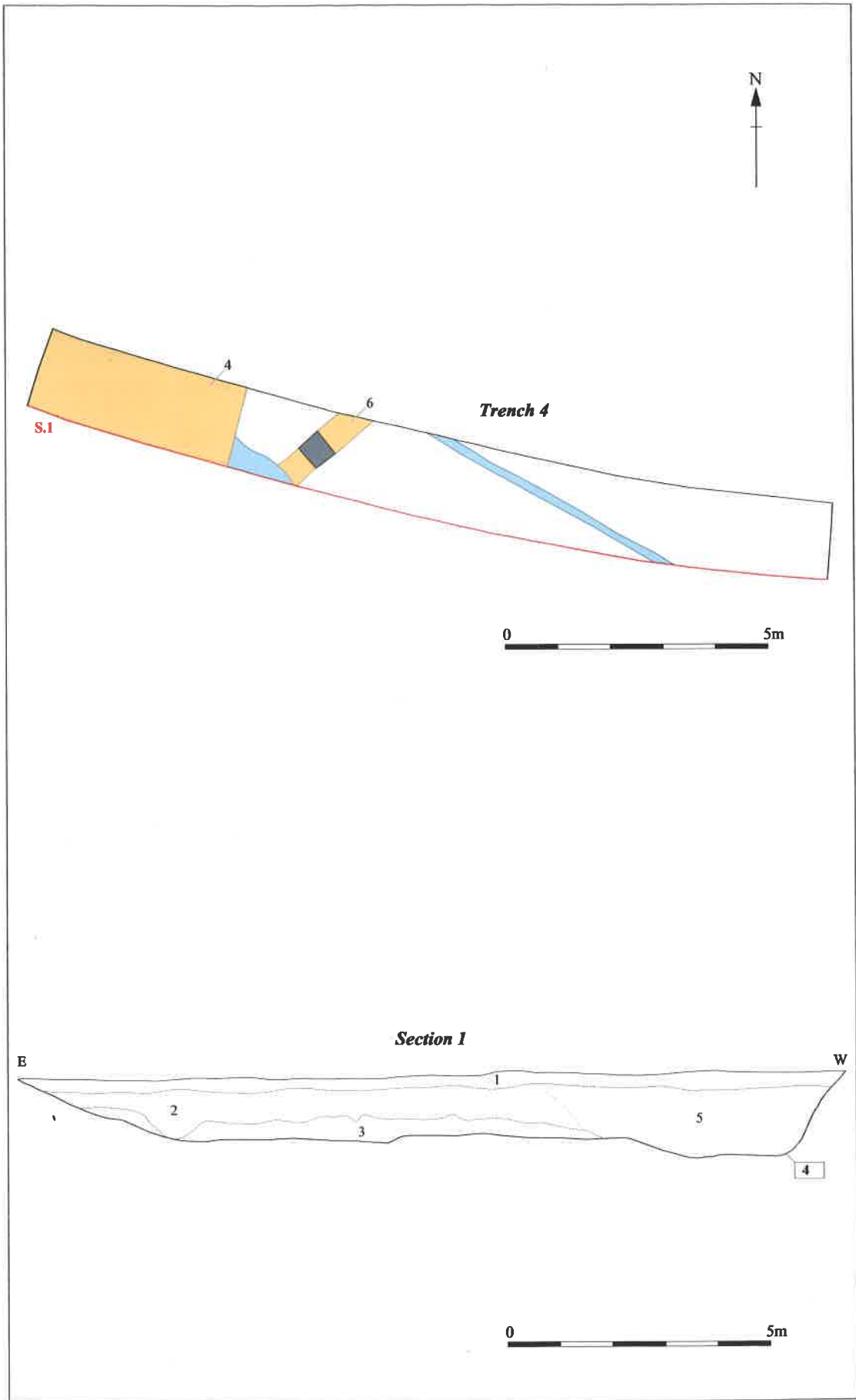


Figure 3 Trench 4 plan and section drawing

6 DISCUSSION

The results of the evaluation indicate an absence of considerable Iron Age and Roman remains, which is surprising considering its close proximity to a large Iron Age and Roman farm at Vicars Farm. All the trenches demonstrate that there was considerable modern and post-medieval activity in the form of the overburden which reached a depth of 1m in all trenches.

The most significant feature encountered in this evaluation was a north-south running truncated field boundary which may be Iron Age or Roman in origin.

The other feature uncovered in Trench 4 was a large Victorian rubbish pit.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation has made a limited contribution to the understanding of this part of Cambridge. The most notable observation to emerge from the results of the evaluation was the presence of a possible field ditch. Despite the lack of archaeological remains from the evaluation this work will aid the construction of a deposit model for the landscape of Roman Cambridge.

The results from this evaluation may show that the density of activity represented at Vicars Farm did not extend as far east as the current subject site. However, the disturbed nature of deposits at 41 Madingley Road may indicate that these remains have been removed by later truncation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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