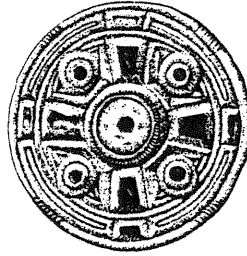


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Archaeological Field Unit

Land adjacent to Clayton School, Orton Malborne,
Peterborough

Judith Roberts

1998

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. A142

Commissioned by Hunting Gate Construction plc

Land adjacent to Clayton School, Orton Malborne, Peterborough

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SUMMARY

In December 1998 the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit conducted an archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to Clayton School, Orton Malborne, Peterborough (centred on TL1660 9580). The work was commissioned by Hunting Gate Construction plc in response to a brief issued by Peterborough City Council Archaeological Service in advance of the development of the site as a medical centre.

The evaluation was designed to examine the site for archaeological remains which may have been sealed beneath medieval ridge and furrow (visible as cropmarks in aerial photographs taken between 1945 and 1976). A brief assessment of documentary and cartographic sources indicated that the land had remained in agricultural use since the medieval period.

Trenches were located to sample the area that will be affected by the foundations of the proposed building and to sample the remainder of the field for archaeological remains.

All trenches appeared to be devoid of archaeological features although two possible features were excavated. No dating evidence was recovered from these features and the trench was widened in this area but no further features were exposed. Natural variations in the gravels occurred and pipe trenches were noted in two trenches. There was also evidence for modern disturbance (topsoil removal or quarrying) in the south-western part of the site.

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**Land adjacent to Clayton School, Orton Malborne, Peterborough
(TL 1660 9580)**

1 INTRODUCTION

A brief for archaeological field evaluation was issued by Peterborough City Council Archaeological Service (Robinson 07/10/98), following a planning application (no. 98/00693/FUL). The application was made by Hunting Gate Construction plc who wish to build a medical centre on land adjacent to Clayton School, Orton Malborne. The site covers an area of approximately 0.6ha which was formerly agricultural land.

The presence of palaeolithic and other prehistoric artefacts have been recorded all over the surrounding area. The Scheduled Ancient Monument 123, a few hundred metres to the south, includes Iron Age and Roman remains and Anglo-Saxon settlement has been revealed a few hundred metres to the north. A Middle Saxon brooch has been found close to the site's northern boundary.

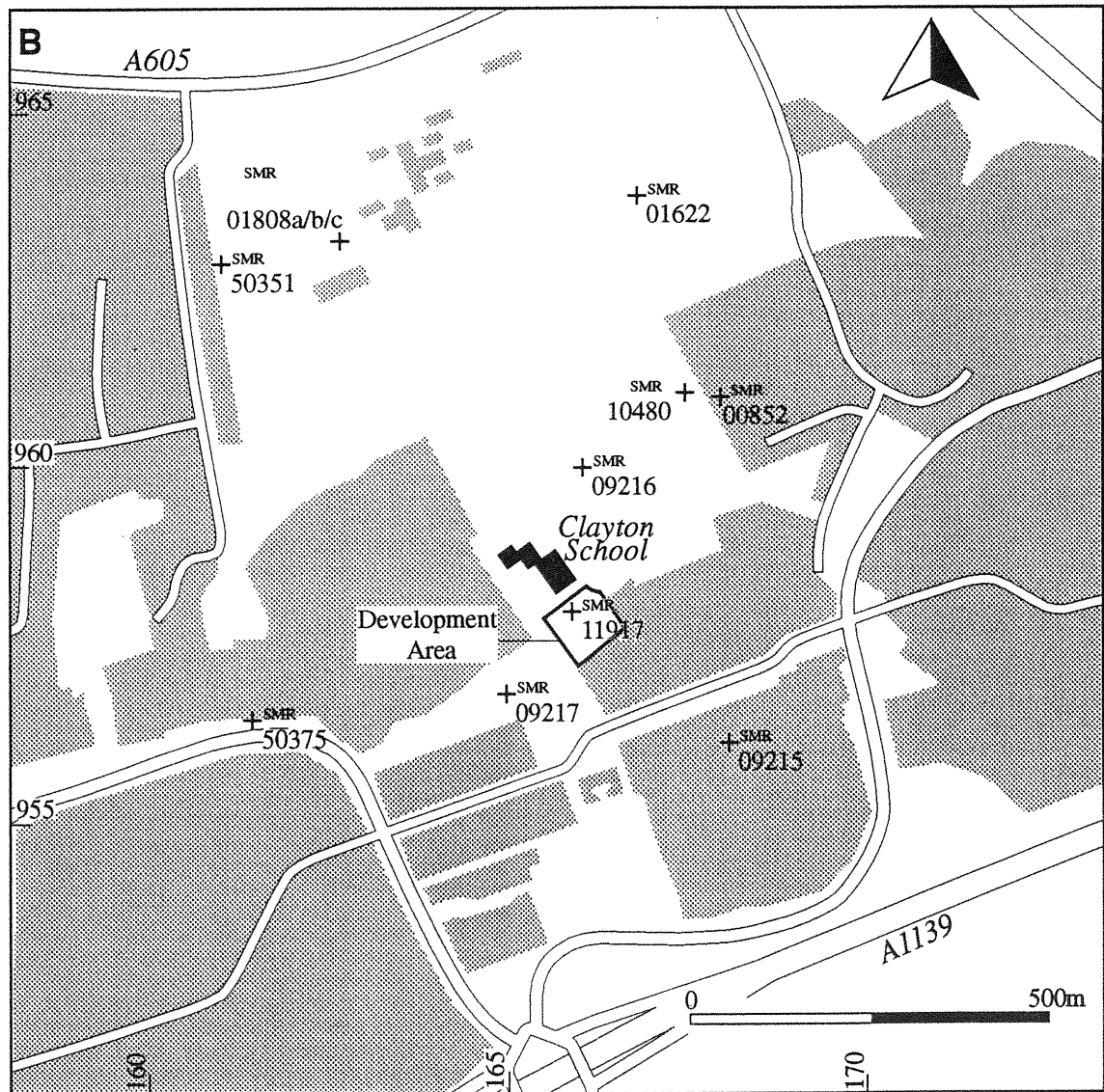
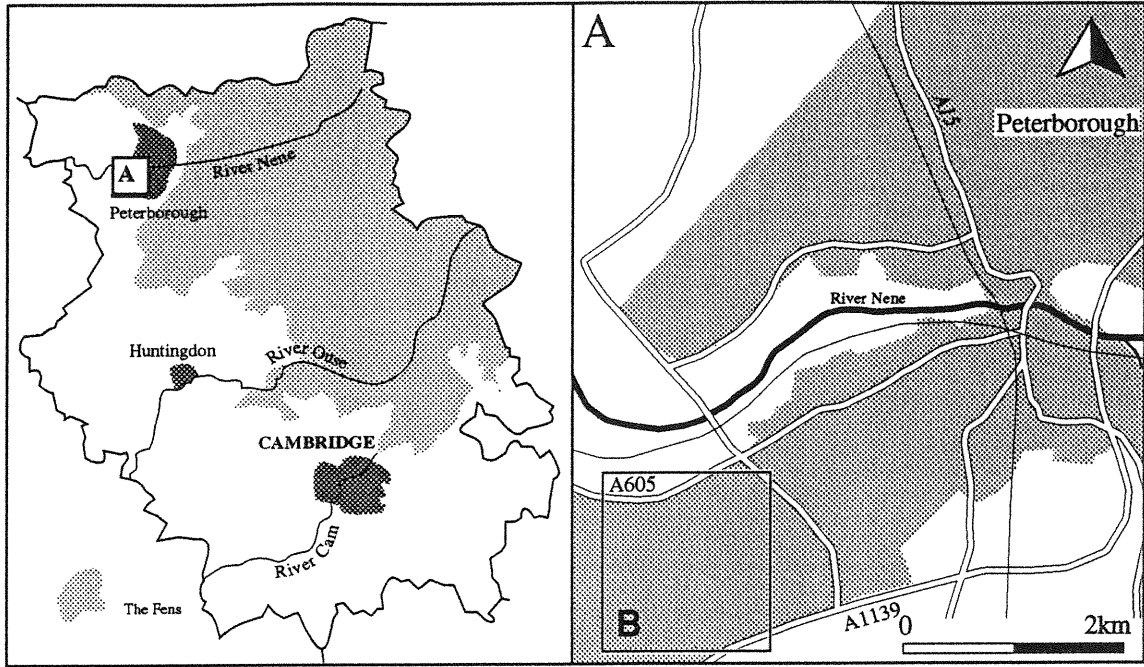
The aerial photographic assessment of the site (Palmer 1996) identified enclosures nearby and ridge and furrow agriculture on the site.

Trenches, located to sample the field and assess potential for archaeological remains under the proposed building, failed to reveal anything other than modern and natural features.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site lies on third terrace gravels, south of the River Nene, overlying areas of Oxford Clay (BGS Sheet 172, 1995). The gravels appear to be shallow in this area and patches of Oxford Clay were noted in the base of the trenches. This may be due to human activity but their irregular shape and sterile nature suggest that this due to cryoturbation. The present ground surface lies at approximately 15mOD but it was not possible to verify this as we were unable to locate a benchmark.

The land appears to have been agricultural until the recent development of Peterborough when it became rough grassland. The south-western part of the site appears to have been heavily disturbed and it has very little topsoil – perhaps as a result of quarrying or topsoil removal during the development of the area.



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TL

Figure 1 Location plan (with Peterborough Sites and Monuments Record numbers)

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The modern settlement of Orton Malborne lies between the parishes of Orton Longueville and Orton Waterville and was built as part of the development of Peterborough New Town in the latter part of the twentieth century.

Nineteenth century estate maps show the area to have been agricultural and the site was obviously so in the medieval period as ridge and furrow (Peterborough City Council Sites and Monuments Record No. 11917) was noted from aerial photographs taken between 1945 and 1976.

Anglo-Saxon settlement remains have been reported in the vicinity (SMR no. 1808c). 'Domestic pottery, house sites and an iron bucket handle' were reported from gravel pits to the north of the site (RCHM 1969). An Anglo-Saxon trefoil brooch was found in the 1980s by metal detecting 350m to the north-east of the development site (SMR no. 10480).

A Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 123, SMR no. 1434), less than 700m to the south of the development site, contains an extensive area of cropmark enclosures and settlement evidence dating from the late Iron Age and into the early Roman period (between 100BC – AD140) with an inhumation cemetery in the corner of one of the enclosures. Further Roman settlement remains (SMR no 1808b) were found approximately 600m to the north of the development site during the early part of the twentieth century.

A number of undated cropmark enclosures (SMR nos. 9215, 9216 and 9217) have been noted from aerial photographs of the area taken before recent development.

Palaeolithic and other prehistoric implements (SMR nos. 1808a and 50376) have been found on the gravels to the north and south of the site respectively in the early part of the twentieth century.

4 METHODOLOGY

The field evaluation aimed to determine the extent, distribution and character of archaeological remains and palaeo-environmental deposits across the site, and to place the site within its local, regional and national archaeological context.

Four trenches were opened by machine. The depth of trenches was determined by the deposits. The location of trenches and features was measured by hand. Anomalies in the trenches were cleaned by hand to determine their nature. Groundwater seeped into the lower parts of trenches and the base of excavated features. All spoil heaps and the surface of the site was scanned by metal detector. Features were recorded using standard AFU techniques.

5 RESULTS

Other than modern coins and aluminium no artefacts were found during metal detecting of the spoil, trenches and over the site generally.

Trench 1

Trench 1, on the north-eastern part of the site (Fig. 2), was 24m long. There was 0.38m of compact silty clay topsoil with very occasional small stones and extensive root action just below the turf line. Below the topsoil was 0.15m of homogeneous, compact sandy clay with gravel and moderate flint pebbles. This subsoil sealed a sandy gravel natural deposit with areas of clay. The water table was reached at approximately 0.5m below the present ground surface as water seeped into the base of the trench. No archaeological features were noted in this trench.

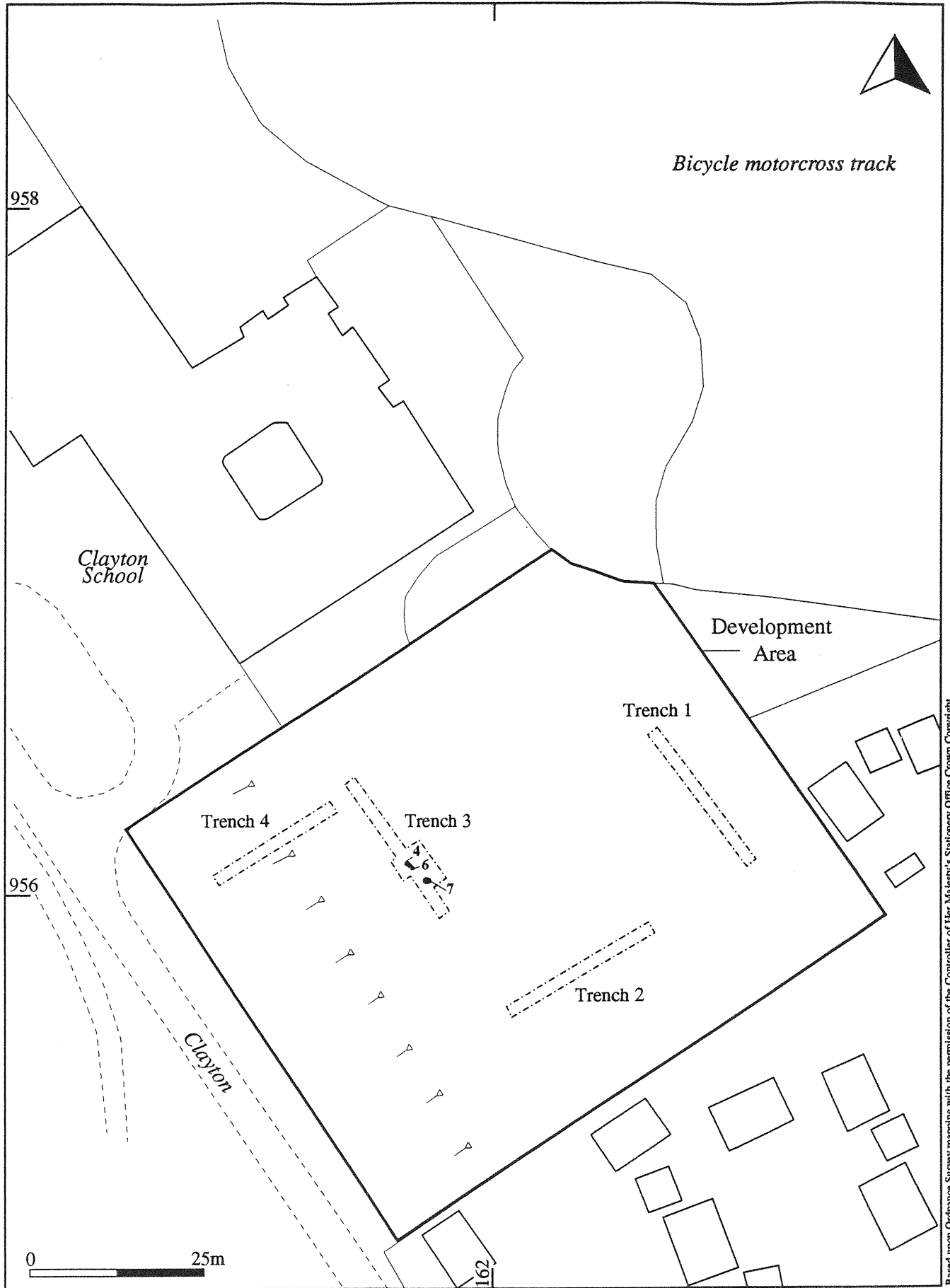
Trench 2

Trench 2, approximately parallel to the south-eastern boundary of the site, was 24m long with 0.38m of topsoil (as in trench 1) and 0.22m of subsoil which was similar to that in trench 1 but with slightly more angular flint gravel. The natural in the base of the trench was a sandy gravel with fewer clay patches. Again no archaeological features were noted cut into the subsoil or the gravel.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was 24m long with 0.36m of topsoil (as in trench 1). The subsoil was 0.24m thick and similar to that in trench 1. A modern pipe-trench crossed the trench 10m from its northern end. The pipe-trench appeared to cross the site in an approximately east-west direction connecting with the manhole in the western part of the site and was visible in trench 4. Beyond the pipe trench (14m from the northern end of the trench) there was an area of clay silt with features visible in it. The trench was expanded at this point (2m x 3m to the south-west and 4m x 6m to the north-east) to try and define the edges of this patch of clay silt. The base of the trench was composed of sandy gravel with occasional patches of clay.

All features were investigated. These included an oval pit, 4, 0.32m deep, 0.9m wide and 1.2m long. Its fill, 3 was a compact greyish brown silty clay with occasional small, angular, flints. No finds were recovered from this feature. Immediately to the east of pit 4 was an irregular, shallow depression, 6, 0.08m deep and 0.35m wide. The fill, 5, was a brown silty clay with occasional small sub-angular flints. Both of these features penetrated a yellowish brown clay silt which appeared to fill a natural shallow depression in the gravel. This depression had very gently sloping sides and was 0.15m deep and extended north-eastwards beyond the edge of the trench. To the east of this patch, and cut into the gravel, was a shallow pit, 7, 0.22m deep and 0.5m wide with concave sides and base. There were two fills: the primary fill, 9, was a compact light yellowish brown clay, 0.15m deep, with occasional small sub-angular flints on the eastern side of the pit. This may represent



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Figure 2 Location of trenches and archaeological features within the development area

material slumping into the pit. The secondary fill, 8, was a compact yellowish brown silty clay with occasional small angular flints. No finds were recovered from this feature.

Trench 4

This trench was 20 long and contained 0.4m of topsoil at its north-eastern end and 0.20m of subsoil (see trench 1 for descriptions). The topsoil at the western end of the trench was shallow and very mixed, possibly as a result of topsoil stripping, and there were two modern pipes crossing the trench (see Trench 3 above). There were no archaeological features in this trench.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The site is in an area of high archaeological potential with a large number of cropmark enclosures and Iron Age and Roman settlement remains nearby. The subject site and its immediate surrounds contained cropmark evidence of medieval ridge and furrow agriculture, visible in aerial photographs between 1945 and 1976. The evaluation trenches suggest the area has been levelled and heavily disturbed in the south-western part by modern service trenches and activity related to the development of Orton Malborne in the 1980s.

Most of the features in trench 3 appear to be natural, probably caused by tree roots, although one possible pit was identified in trench 3.

The degree of disturbance and the relative lack of archaeological features suggest that the development of the site is unlikely to encounter archaeological remains.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Hunting Gate Construction plc who commissioned the work. The field staff were Spencer Cooper, Bob Hatton and Chris Montague. Thanks are also due to Ben Robinson, Peterborough City Council Archaeological Officer who wrote the brief for Field Evaluation, monitored the archaeological work and provided much useful information from the PCCSMR and to Bob Hatton who gathered background information for this report. The specification for the evaluation was prepared by Aileen Connor, the illustration was prepared by Jon Cane and advice was given by Tim Malim, Project Manager .

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Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) 1969 Peterborough New Town: A survey of the antiquities in the areas of development. HMSO

The following sites are recorded on the Peterborough City Council Archaeological Service Sites and Monuments Record as being in the vicinity of the development site, those in bold are on the site itself.

| SMR No. | Description |
|----------------|---|
| 852 | Ridge and furrow |
| 9215 | Undated crop mark enclosure, field system |
| 9216 | Undated crop mark enclosure, field system |
| 9217 | Undated crop mark enclosure, field system |
| 1434 | Iron Age and Roman settlement remains (SAM 123) |
| 1808a | Palaeolithic artefacts |
| 1808b | Roman settlement remains |
| 1808c | Anglo-Saxon settlement remains |
| 10480 | Anglo-Saxon brooch (stray find) |
| 11917 | Medieval ridge and furrow |
| 50375 | Medieval ridge and furrow |
| 50376 | Prehistoric flint implements |



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