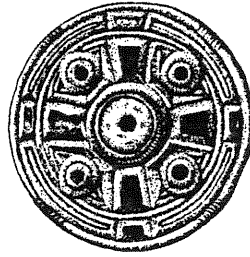


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Archaeological Field Unit

**Middle Iron Age Activity at 90 Glebe Road,
Cambridge: Further Investigations**

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September 2000

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. A160

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Middle Iron Age Activity at 90 Glebe Road, Cambridge: Further Investigations

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2000

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SUMMARY

Archaeological evaluation and excavation was carried out by the Archaeological Field Unit in the grounds of 90 Glebe Road, Cambridge in April and July 2000. The work was carried out on behalf of Berkeley Homes (Eastern) Limited.

Six trenches were placed within the proposed development area. Trench 5 contained a small number of archaeological features of Middle Iron Age date. The remaining trenches all contained ditches, some of which were dated by finds to the post-medieval period although a number contained no dating evidence. These latter features may be inferred to be post-medieval based on their alignments.

In July four trenches were positioned to the west of evaluation trench 5 in order to investigate for the presence of continued archaeological remains in this area. Four small pits or post holes and a narrow, shallow ditch were exposed in the trenches, but although all the features were excavated no finds were present. The features were all sealed beneath a layer of sub soil and may be assumed to belong with the same phase of possibly Iron Age activity discovered in trench 5 during the first phase of work.

The middle Iron Age activity may continue beyond the impact area of the development to the south and west but would appear to be very sparsely scattered.

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**IRON AGE PITS AND POST-MEDIEVAL DITCHES:
ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT 90 GLEBE ROAD,
CAMBRIDGE.**

1 INTRODUCTION

A scheme of archaeological work was required as a condition of planning consent for the construction of housing at 90 Glebe Road, Cambridge. The first stage of this work was an archaeological desk-top report carried out in response to a Brief set by the County Archaeology Office (Roberts, 2000). The second stage of this work was an archaeological evaluation. The Archaeological Field unit of Cambridgeshire County Council undertook this second stage of work between the 10th and 14th of April 2000 (Connor 2000). The third and final stage of work was a series of additional trenches placed to investigate the possibility of continued Iron Age activity in the south-west corner of the development area. This report details the results of the third stage of investigation.

2 GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY

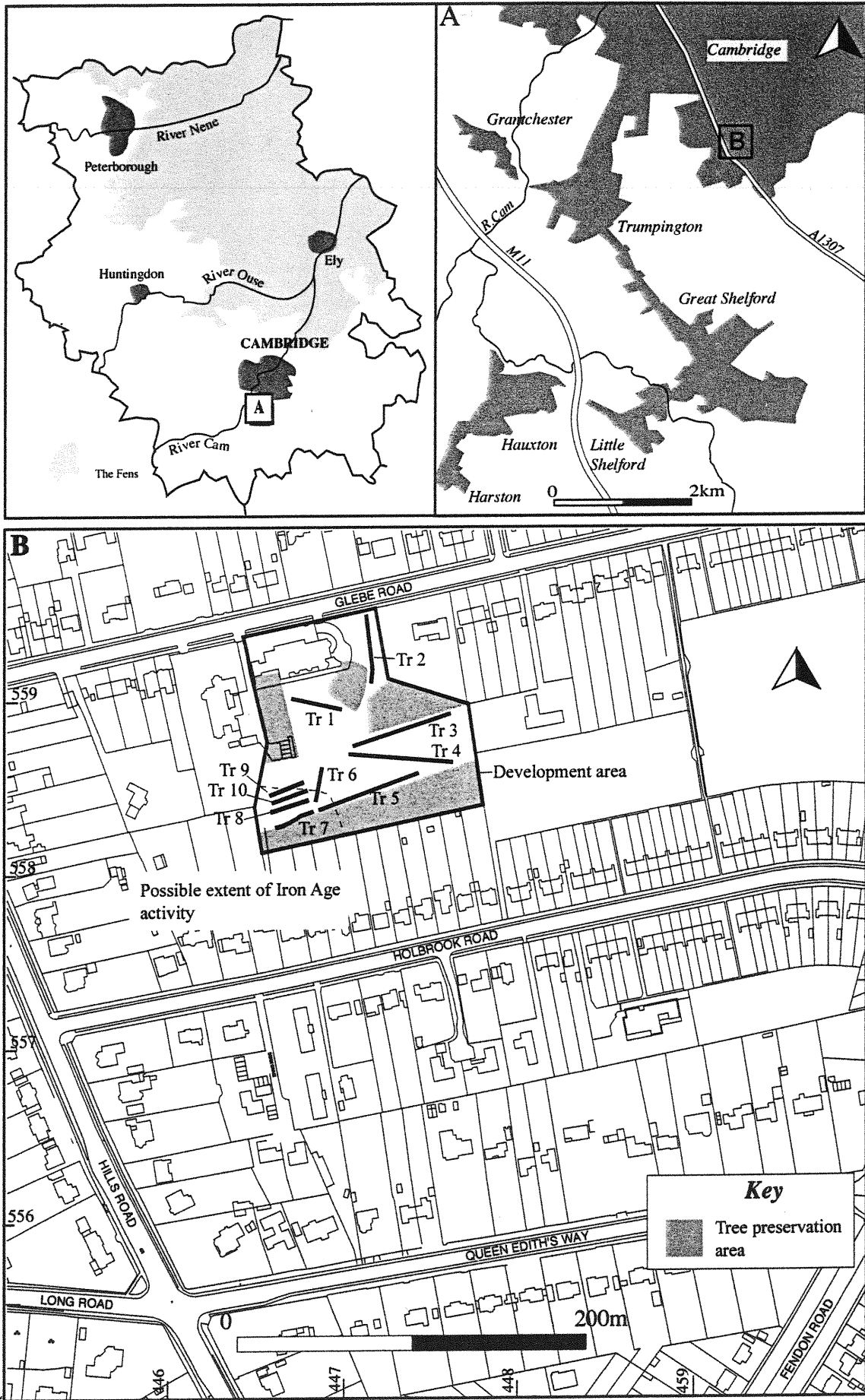
Glebe Road is located on lower chalk (Worssam & Taylor 1969). The site is located at TL 447 559, the nearest Benchmark is on Hills Road at 15.7m OD. A Temporary Bench Mark was set up on the site at 10.46m OD. The site is generally level, and surrounded by trees, including several that are subject to tree preservation orders (fig. 1). For this stage of the investigations the housing development on the site was already underway. Piling had already been completed over the whole of the site including the area of the archaeological investigation, and foundation trenches had been dug on several of the plots.

3 HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

A desk based assessment (Roberts 2000) concluded that the site lies within a rich archaeological landscape, surrounded by sites of prehistoric and Roman date, although not within the immediate vicinity. No archaeological sites or finds were known from the site itself, although given the surrounding landscape the potential for finding archaeological remains was considered to be moderate.

4 METHODOLOGY & CONSTRAINTS

Four 20m long x 1.8m wide trenches were placed within the area of possible Iron Age activity in the south-west corner of the development site. Since piling at approximately 3m intervals had already taken place in this area, the archaeological trenches had to be positioned between these. The trenches were



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Figure 1 Site location

aligned on an approximately east west orientation using a tracked mechanical excavator with a flat bladed ditching bucket. The location of the trenches for this and the previous investigation are shown on figure 1.

Groundwater was very high on the site and trenches were subject to flooding, the natural chalk geology was made extremely sticky by these conditions and excavation was therefore difficult. In addition a layer of brick rubble had been laid over the topsoil prior to excavation, this caused the tops of the trenches to be somewhat unstable.

5 RESULTS

Trenches 1 to 6

The evaluation trenches are described in full elsewhere (Connor 2000), evaluation trench 5 was the only trench to contain archaeological features of possible Iron Age date. These were one small pit, a narrow ditch and a shallow irregular pit at the west end of the trench which may be Iron Age in date.

Trenches 7-10

All the trenches were approximately 20m long and 1.8m wide. Each trench had 0.3m depth mixed topsoil and brick rubble which overlay 0.3m depth of light yellowish brown clay subsoil 701/801/901/1001. These layers were all removed by mechanical excavator

Trench 7

Subsoil 701 overlay and sealed a narrow ditch **703**. Ditch **703** was 0.4m wide and 0.18m deep. It had a flat base, sloping down towards the east with steep, even sides. The ditch was filled by 702 a single deposit of very pale whitish brown clay with occasional manganese flecks and tiny mollusc fragments. The ditch had an approximately south-west north-east orientation and is thought to be the same ditch as **504** observed in trench 5 during the evaluation. No finds were recovered from the ditch in either trench. No other archaeological features were present in trench 5.

Trench 8

Subsoil 801 overlay and sealed two small pits **803** and **806**. Pit **803** was 1.5m long, 0.7m wide and 1.17m deep. It was sub-rectangular in plan with a flat base on an east west orientation. The pit was filled by mid greyish brown clay 802 and pale yellowish brown clay 804. The function of the pit is uncertain, it was very shallow and in the absence of any other characteristics may have had a structural function. Adjacent to the east end of pit **803** was a small circular pit **806**. It was 0.6m in diameter and 0.13m deep filled by mid greyish brown clay 805. The pit may have held a post. There were no finds from any of the fills.

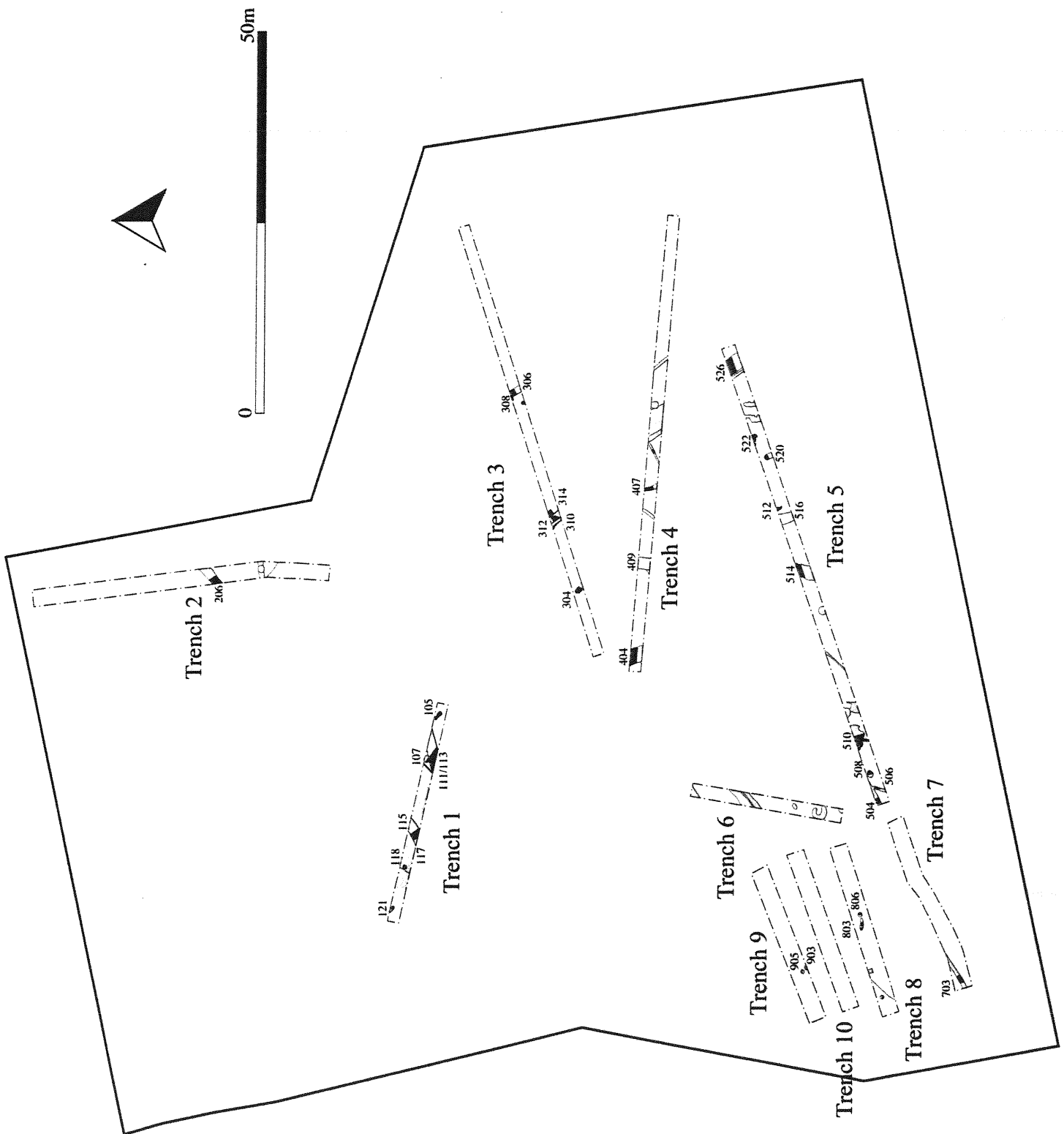
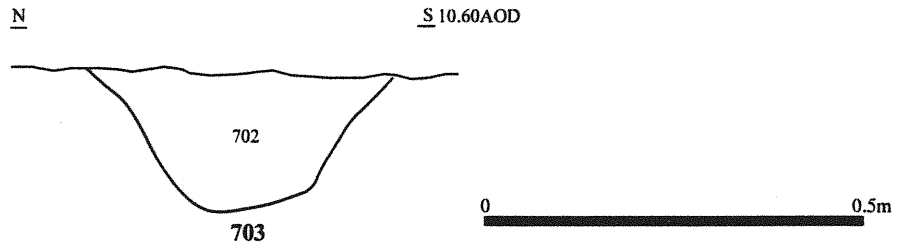
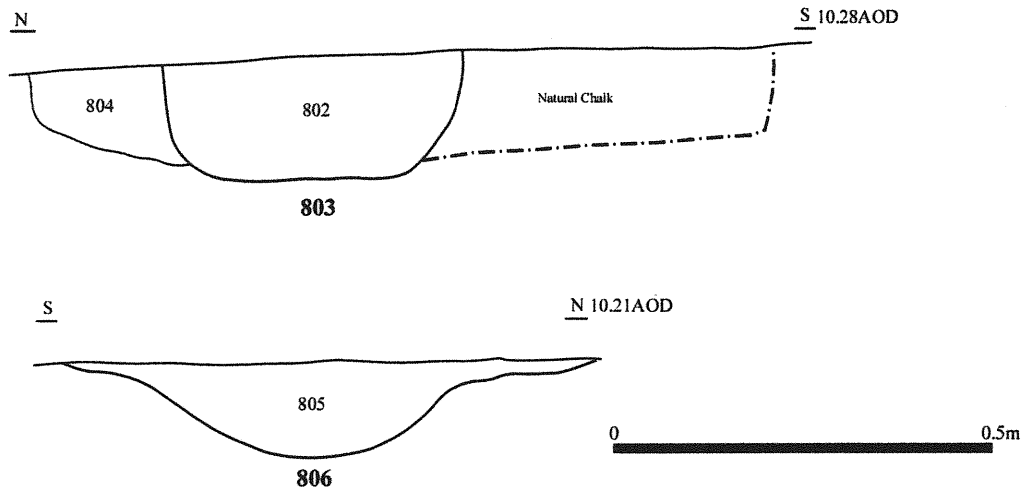


Figure 2 Plan of excavated trenches

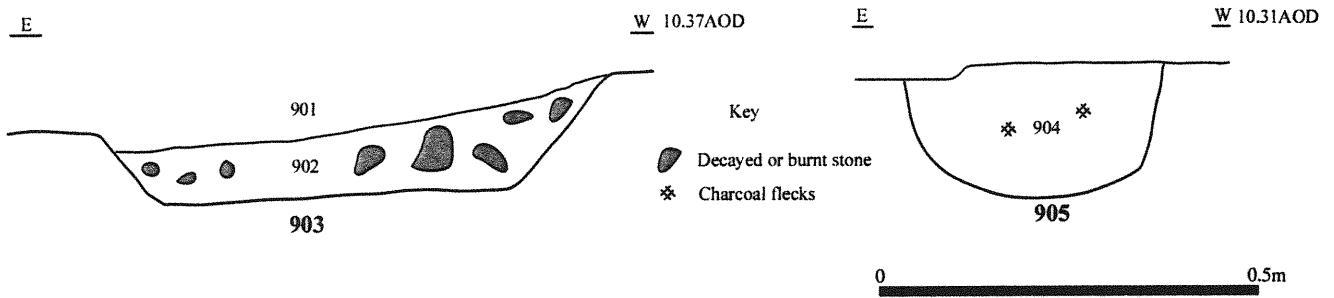
Trench 7



Trench 8



Trench 9



Trench 5

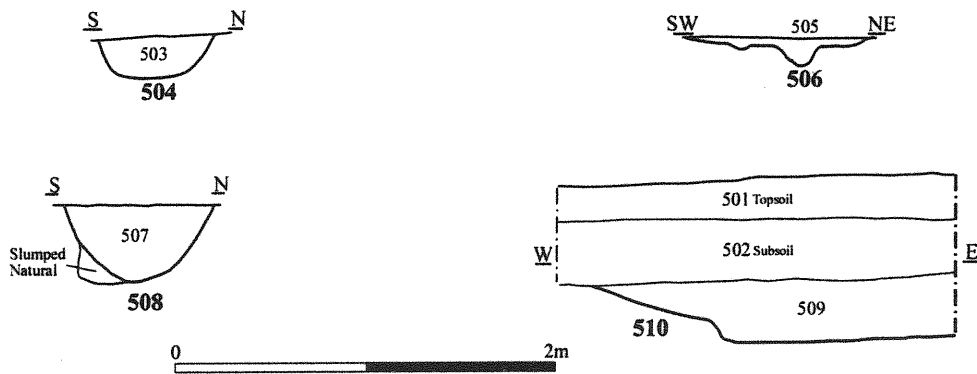


Figure 3 Sections

Trench 9

Subsoil 801 overlay and sealed two small pits **903** and **905**. Pit **903** was 0.6m wide, at least 0.25m long (the feature continued beyond the edge of the trench), and 0.15m deep. It was filled by pale greyish brown clay 902 which contained frequent soft decayed chalk stone fragments. The function of this pit is uncertain, the presence of decayed stone in the fill suggests the possibility that the feature may have had a structural function, the stone possibly acting as packing or a base for a post. Pit **905** was 0.35m in diameter and 0.17m deep, it was filled by mid greyish brown clay 905. The pit may have held a post. Neither feature contained any finds.

Trench 10

Trench 10 contained no archaeological features

6 DISCUSSION

Middle Iron Age Activity

Demonstrably middle Iron Age features were present in the westernmost 15 metres of trench 5 in the south-west corner of the subject site. This activity may continue a few metres to the north into trench 6 and to the west into trenches 8 and 9 where possible post holes were present, but no dating evidence. The possible post holes in trenches 6, 8 and 9 may represent the presence of structures. The fact that they were so scattered and had no artefacts directly associated with them suggests that there may have been temporary or seasonal shelters perhaps for animal rather than human habitation. The ditch observed in trench 5 almost certainly continued into trench 7 and may have been a field boundary or for drainage. It is uncertain whether this ditch was associated with the structural features noted in trenches 8 and 9 or the pit in trench 5. It is possible that the evidence for Iron Age activity continues to the south of the trenches beyond the development area. There was only a very limited pottery assemblage and other finds were absent. The pottery sherds were small and moderately abraded, but came from fills of features and are therefore likely to indicate the presence of nearby scattered farming activity of Iron Age date. This activity may be part of the wider Iron Age landscape demonstrated by numerous cropmark sites in the vicinity, and the known hill forts at Wandlebury and War Ditches (SMR 4830 and 4963). Rescue excavations were carried out to the south of Long Road in 1967 which showed that a substantial Iron Age settlement was located nearby (Cra'ster 1969) in a location which is now under Addenbrookes Hospital. The features observed as part of the current investigation may represent farming activities in the outlying fields around the settlement discovered prior to the construction of Addenbrookes Hospital.

7 CONCLUSIONS

One trench had demonstrably Middle Iron Age features, this was trench 5 in the south-west area of the site, further trenching suggested that the activity did not continue to the north but that it may have continued to the south and west. South of the trench is a tree preservation area and as such will not be affected by the development scheme and was not investigated. The area to the west contained further evidence of past human activity but it was undated, and although it is possible and perhaps likely that this activity was contemporary with the middle Iron Age pit in trench 5 such a hypothesis could not be confirmed.

8 ARCHIVE

The complete archive is currently stored at the AFU offices at Fulbourn Community Centre, Haggis Gap, Fulbourn under the code CAM GR 00.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Berkeley Homes (Eastern) Limited for funding the work. Andrew Thomas of the County Archaeology Office supplied the Brief. Aileen Connor and Christina Robinson undertook the fieldwork for the AFU.

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APPENDIX 1 List of All Finds

(Pottery Identifications by Sarah Percival, Norfolk Archaeological Unit)

Trench No.	Context No.	Description	No. of Sherds	Weight in grams
3	311	Post-medieval pottery	1	1
5	507	Iron-Age pottery	22	85
5	509	Iron-Age pottery	2	13
5	525	Post-medieval pottery	1	3
5	525	Field drain	5	64
5	525	Post-medieval glass	2	18
5	525	Clay tobacco pipe	1	1

APPENDIX 2

List of All Contexts Recorded

Trench No.	Context No.	Fill of	Filled by	Context type
1	101	NA	NA	Topsoil
1	102	NA	NA	Subsoil
1	103	105	NA	Pit fill
1	104	105	NA	Pit fill
1	105	NA	103, 104	Pit cut
1	106	107	NA	Pit fill
1	107	NA	106	Pit cut
1	108	111	NA	Ditch fill
1	109	111	NA	Ditch fill
1	110	111	NA	Ditch fill
1	111	NA	108, 109, 110	Ditch cut
1	112	113	NA	Ditch fill
1	113	NA	112	Ditch cut
1	114	115	NA	Ditch fill
1	115	NA	114	Ditch cut
1	116	117	NA	Feature fill
1	117	NA	116	Feature cut
1	118	NA	119	Pit cut
1	119	118	NA	Pit fill
1	120	121	NA	Gully fill
1	121	NA	120	Gully cut
2	201	NA	NA	Topsoil
2	202	NA	NA	Subsoil
2	203	206	NA	Ditch fill
2	204	206	NA	Ditch fill
2	205	206	NA	Ditch fill
2	206	NA	203, 204, 205	Ditch cut
3	301	NA	NA	Topsoil
3	302	NA	NA	Subsoil
3	303	304	NA	Ditch fill
3	304	NA	303	Ditch cut
3	305	306	NA	Ditch fill
3	306	NA	305	Ditch cut
3	307	308	NA	Pit fill
3	308	NA	307	Pit cut
3	309	310	NA	Land drain fill
3	310	NA	309	Land drain cut
3	311	312	NA	Pit fill
3	312	NA	311	Pit cut

Trench No.	Context No.	Fill of	Filled by	Context type
3	313	314	NA	Ditch fill
3	314	NA	313	Ditch cut
4	401	NA	NA	Topsoil
4	402	NA	NA	Subsoil
4	403	404	NA	Ditch fill
4	404	NA	403, 405	Ditch cut
4	405	404	NA	Ditch fill
4	406	407	NA	Ditch fill
4	407	NA	406	Ditch cut
4	408	409	NA	Ditch fill
4	409	NA	408	Ditch cut
5	501	NA	NA	Topsoil
5	502	NA	NA	Subsoil
5	503	504	NA	Ditch fill
5	504	NA	503	Ditch cut
5	505	506	NA	Post hole fill
5	506	NA	505	Post hole cut
5	507	508	NA	Post hole fill
5	508	NA	507	Pit cut
5	509	510	NA	Post hole fill
5	510	NA	509	Pit cut
5	511	512	NA	Pit fill
5	512	NA	511	Pit cut
5	513	514	NA	Ditch fill
5	514	NA	513	Ditch cut
5	515	516	NA	Ditch fill
5	516	NA	515	Ditch cut
5	517	518	NA	Feature fill
5	518	NA	517	Feature cut
5	519	520	NA	Feature fill
5	520	NA	519	Feature cut
5	521	522	NA	Feature fill
5	522	NA	521	Feature cut
5	523	NA	NA	Natural deposit
5	524	NA	NA	Natural deposit
5	525	526	NA	Ditch fill
5	526	NA	525	Ditch cut
7	701	NA	NA	Subsoil
7	702	703	NA	Ditch fill
7	703	NA	702	Ditch cut
8	801	NA	NA	Subsoil
8	802	803	NA	Pit fill
8	803	NA	802, 804	Pit cut
8	804	803	NA	Pit fill
8	805	806	NA	Pit fill
8	806	NA	805	Pit cut
9	901	NA	NA	Subsoil
9	902	903	NA	Pit fill
9	903	NA	902	Pit cut
9	904	905	NA	Pit fill

Trench No.	Context No.	Fill of	Filled by	Context type
9	905	NA	904	Pit cut



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