



Archaeological Field Unit

**Late Iron Age and Early Roman Remains
at Alconbury Airfield:
An Archaeological Evaluation, Stage 2**

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Alconbury Airfield: An Archaeological Evaluation, Stage 2

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SUMMARY

Between 14th March and 27th April 2001 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken on three hectares of land within Alconbury Airfield (centred TL 2100 700) by staff of the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit. The work was carried out as part of Stage 2 of an evaluation project, in advance of a Public Inquiry into the proposed re-development of the Airfield.

Seven trenches were excavated across the airfield to further clarify the presence or absence of archaeological features. The investigation revealed the presence of archaeological remains (namely ditches and postholes) in two of the seven excavated trenches, Trenches 2B(ii) and 2C(i) at TL 2600 7650. The five trenches with no archaeological features had been disturbed by twentieth century activity.

Trenches 2B(ii) and 2C(i) were located within Area 2 of a geophysical survey undertaken prior to Stage 1 of the evaluation. Despite tipping of soil and the presence of service trenches and cables, Area 2 had not suffered from the same level of disturbance that had affected the other investigated parts of the Airfield.

The results from the geophysical survey indicated the presence of possible archaeological features together with a number of generic 'trends'.

The excavation of Trench 2B(ii) revealed the presence of a narrow ditch of uncertain function on a north-east to south-west alignment. It contained one fill that produced an post-medieval tile. By contrast, the geophysical 'trends' observed in the southern part of the trench were found on excavation to correspond to natural variations in the clay background.

Trench 2C(i) revealed the presence of six linear ditches, four postholes and a gully/slot that seem to have belonged to at least two phases of rural activity in the area. Most features matched the geophysical anomalies predicted in Area 2 and described as 'possible archaeology' and generic 'trends'.

Phase I (late Middle Iron Age) consisted of two broad and deep ditches that corresponded to a large enclosure-like feature (for livestock management?) revealed by the geophysical survey and described as generic 'trends'. One of the enclosure ditches had been truncated by a series of postholes and by a gully/slot possibly representing a semicircular post-built structure of uncertain function. A further ditch may have formed part of a smaller sub-rectangular enclosure. Finally, two ditches parallel to each other and adjacent to the large enclosure were interpreted as representing the remains of a co-axial field system of late Middle Iron Age date similar to that identified in Stage 1 (Rail Link) of the evaluation. The two ditches had not been detected during the geophysical survey.

Phase II consisted of a linear ditch located by the geophysical survey to the south of the small late pre-Belgic Iron Age enclosure. It may have also been part of an enclosure that was dated to the Late Iron Age (Belgic)/early Roman period.

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**Alconbury Airfield:
An Archaeological Evaluation, Stage 2
(National Grid Ref. TL 2100 7700)**

1 INTRODUCTION

Between 14th March and 27th April 2001 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken on three hectares of land within Alconbury Airfield (centred TL 2100 7700) by staff of the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit (Fig. 1). The work was carried out as part of Stage 2 of an evaluation project.

As with Stage 1, the project was commissioned by Alconbury Developments in advance of a proposed re-development of the airfield. The work was carried out according to a Specification produced by Stephen Macaulay (Feb 023/01.) in response to a Brief for Archaeological Evaluation issued by Cambridgeshire County Council County Archaeology Office (Thomas 2000). The work was monitored by the Cambridgeshire County Archaeology Office and CgMs Consulting.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Alconbury Airfield is situated on a plateau of slightly higher land (c.40m OD) to the north of Huntingdon, adjacent to the villages of Little and Great Stukeley. The site lies on the Boulder Clay overlying Oxford Clay. The glacial deposition of the Boulder Clay has resulted in the formation of chalky marl deposits and patches of gravel occurring across the site.

The nature of the natural topography within the airfield is now unclear due to the extent of excavation and landscaping which has occurred there since the Second World War.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The content of this section is based upon the archaeological and historical background information for, and results of, Stage 1 of the evaluation project (Macaulay 2000).

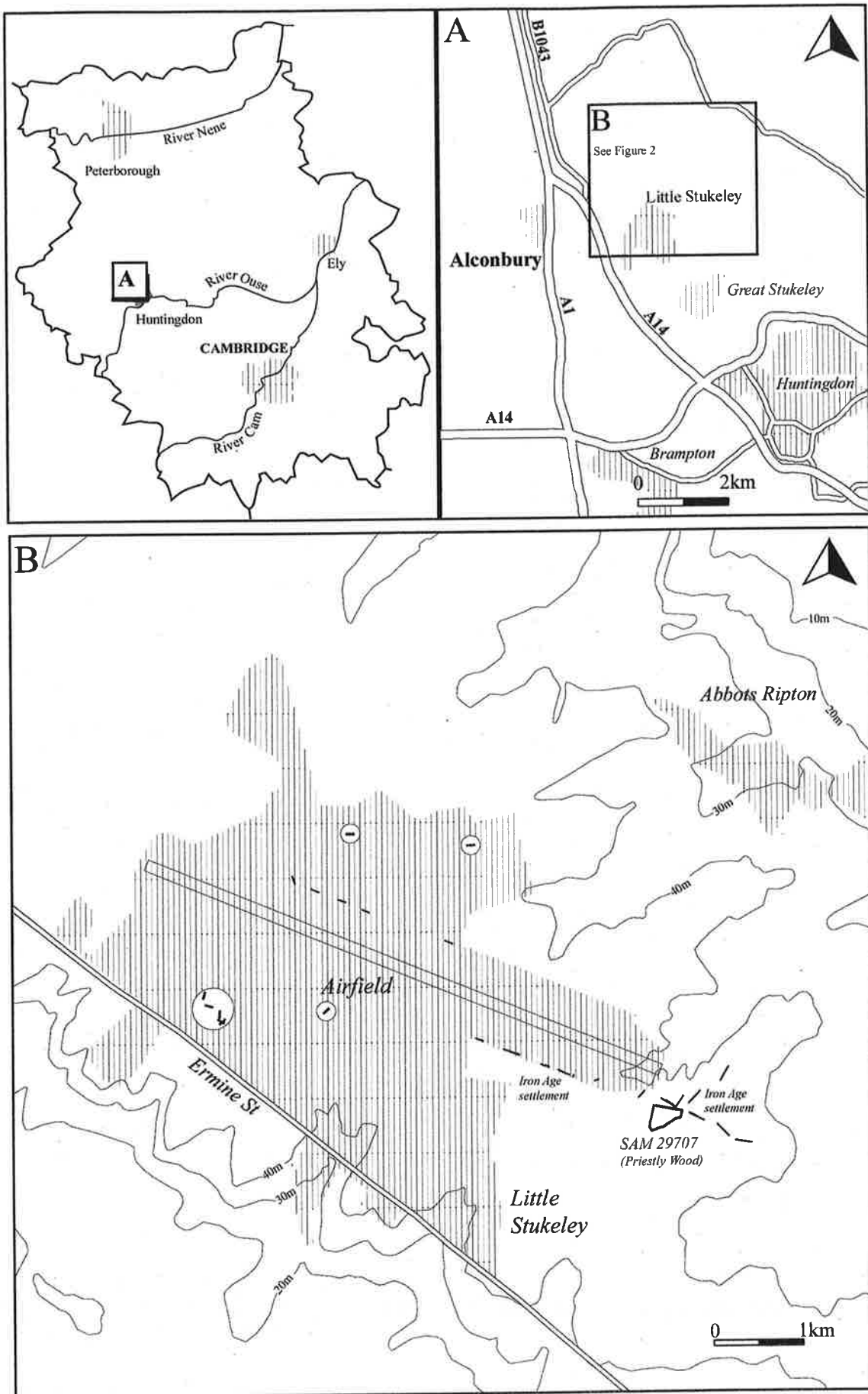


Figure 1 Location plan showing built up areas, contours and zones of archaeological activity. Archaeological trenches are shown thus: ▨ Trenches excavated in 2001 are ringed.

Prehistoric

There is only limited evidence of Prehistoric activity in the area, represented by lithics and pottery scatters from a presumed Iron Age settlement 750m to the north of the development area (SMR No: 04291; TL 2300 7658). There has been an increasing number of Iron Age (and earlier Prehistoric) sites discovered on the Cambridgeshire clay 'uplands' (Bryant in Glazebrook 1997, 25).

An area of Iron Age activity has been identified to the east of the airfield (Rail Link and Southern Sidings) during Stage 1 of the evaluation (Macaulay 2000). Excavation of the exposed surfaces in all undisturbed evaluation trenches revealed a significant number of archaeological features (pits and postholes) suggesting the presence of at least two early/middle Iron Age settlements with associated outlying fields enclosed by ditches. The two settlements appear to have been separated by a long-lived boundary ditch.

Roman

The area around Alconbury and more importantly The Stukeleys contains a number of important Roman sites. Roman burial mounds are known within Great Stukeley (SAM Nos: 118 & 119) situated on both sides of Ermine Street Roman road which runs through the village, some 1.5km to the south of the rail link development area (Macaulay 2000).

During Stage 1 of the evaluation, evidence of small-scale gravel quarrying was observed in the north-east corner of the development area where a gravel outcrop (the result of boulder clay glacial deposition) had only a very thin layer of topsoil and no subsoil. Gravel extraction appears to have taken place during 2nd century AD, being possibly linked to the construction and/or maintenance of the nearby Roman road of Ermine Street through The Stukeleys.

Medieval

The evaluation site is flanked by the medieval villages of Alconbury, Abbots Ripton, Little and Great Stukeley, located over 1.5km from the development area. Closer to the site is the moated site at Prestley Wood (SAM No: 29707),

The aerial photographic assessment produced in advance of Stage 1 of the evaluation (Air Photo Services, *Alconbury Airfield, Cambridgeshire, Aerial Photographic Assessment May 1998*) identified ridge and furrow (aligned north-south, northwest-southeast and northeast-southwest) in the fields to the south, east and northeast of the Airfield, as well as within the development. During Stage 1 of the evaluation remnants of ridge and furrow were identified near Prestley Wood (Macaulay 2000).

Post-medieval

The desk-based assessment undertaken prior to commencement of Stage 1 (Marsden *et al* 1998) reviewed the available historical and cartographic data.

The Alconbury enclosure map of 1791 and the Little Stukeley Enclosure Map of 1773 both show the land after it was apportioned into a number of fields. The later 1852 Tithe map of Alconbury and Alconbury Weston does not include any of the development area. The First Edition 25" and 6" OS maps in 1890-91 also shows the area to consist of fields, with little change in the 1902 or 1926 editions. The airfield was in existence prior to WW2 but most development took place between 1939-1959.

Twentieth Century

The desk-based assessment (Marsden *et al.* 1998) describes and records at length the Second World War and Cold War development of the airfield and this will not be repeated here.

4 METHODOLOGY

Stage 2 of the evaluation aimed to establish the presence of archaeological features and deposits within the development area, and to establish the degree of modern disturbance.

Seven evaluation trenches (Trenches 1, 2B(i), 2B(ii), 2C(i), 2C(ii), 3 and 4) were excavated using a mechanical excavator with a toothless 1.60m wide ditching bucket (Fig. 2). The length of trenching was 400m, totalling 640sqm. Geophysical surveys (Gradiometer) were undertaken as part of Stage 1 evaluation project (*Alconbury Airfield, Cambridgeshire-GBS Prospection 2000/86*). The surveys covered 12 areas of open grass of which 1, 2B and 2C correspond to two of the four areas evaluated in the course of Stage 2. Within the surveyed areas, Trenches 1, 2B(i), 2B(ii), 2C(i) and 2C(ii) were located to correspond with geophysical anomalies in order to establish their nature (Fig. 5). The remaining trenches (Trenches 3 and 4) were located more generally across the areas to be affected by the proposed development in order to obtain a wider coverage (Fig. 2). The location of the trenches within the airfield was determined mainly by the presence of utility services. Running parallel to the runway are live high voltage electric cables and storm drains. In addition, there are a number of service trenches and cables, gas, jet fuel, water and minor electric cables, which cross the area (Figs. 3 and 4).

The modern topsoil, subsoil and disturbance layers (when encountered) were removed to a depth where the natural clay or clay-chalk marl deposits were noted, between 0.27m and 1.60m below the present ground surface.

All trenches were located using a Zeiss RecElta 15 Total Station and described with details of topsoil, subsoil and modern deposits. Trench spoil and the excavated surfaces of the trenches were scanned by eye in order to recover artefacts. Finally, digital base plans of the site were produced with Pro-surveyor mapping software. They have been inserted in this report.



Figure 2 Area locations (shown in tone) and trench positions (shown in black) within them. For details of each area see Figure 3. (Earlier trenches are similarly shown but are not numbered)



Figure 3 Area plans showing archaeological trenches, constraints on trench positioning and geophysical survey area in area 2 (Geophysical results are shown in detail in Figure 4)

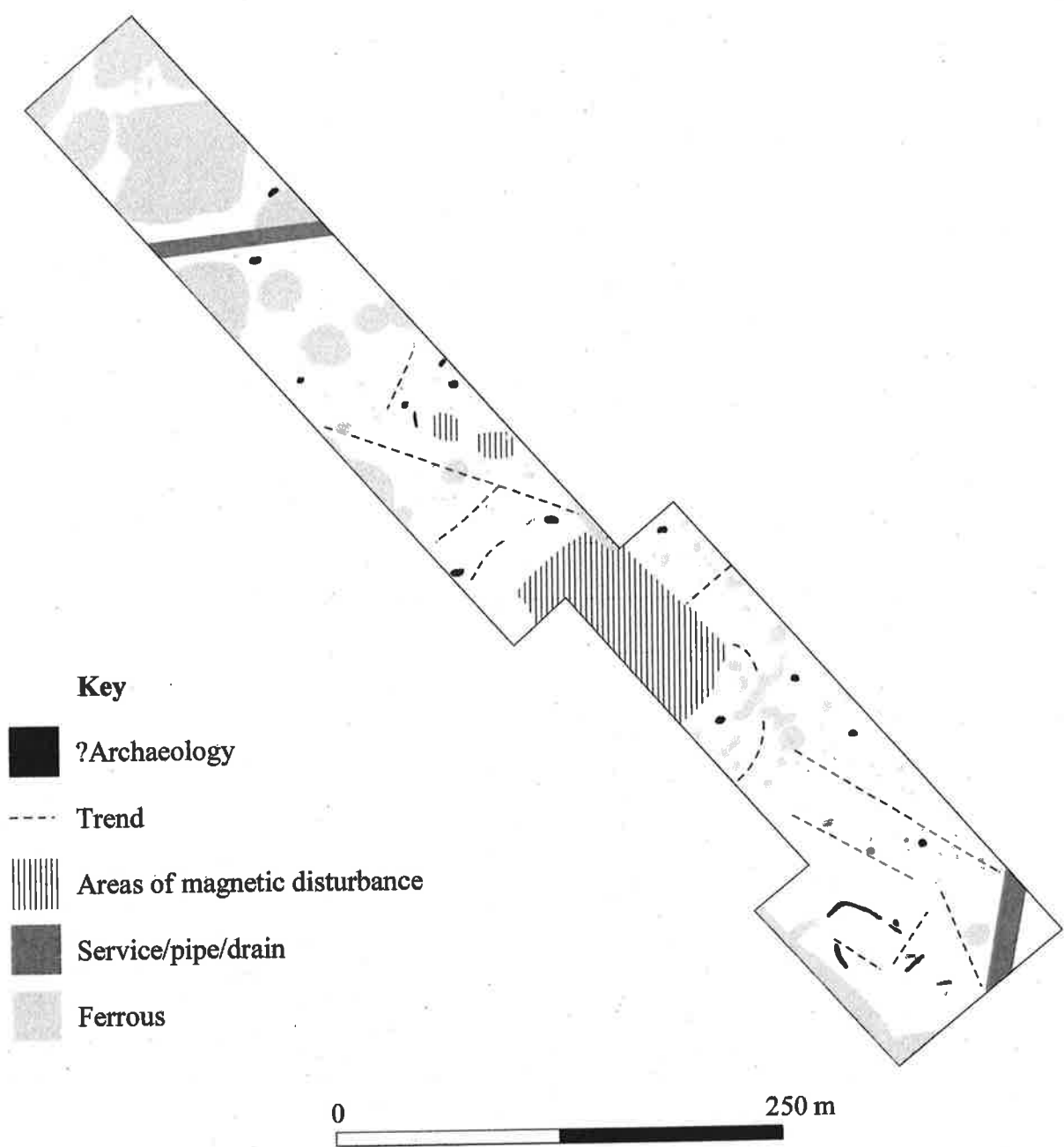


Figure 4 Geophysical survey results in Area 2

Due to adverse weather conditions and flooding of the areas under investigation, together with unsuccessful attempts to drain the trenches (using a 2" centrifugal petrol pump), the archaeological work had to be temporarily suspended. Following a site meeting with the CgMs Consulting and the CAO (Andy Thomas), it was decided to leave the site to dry out. The final works were completed in April, although even then the trenches still had to be pumped and the conditions for excavation were far from ideal.

During the evaluation, all archaeological features visible in the trenches were sample-excavated and recorded using the pro-forma recording sheets of the Archaeological Field Unit. Where possible, record photographs of all trenches and features were taken as part of the documentary archive.

Due to the sterile nature of the clay-fills of the features on site, sampling for macro-environmental analysis was confined to one specimen (below).

5 RESULTS (see Figs 5 & 6)

Trench 1

Trench 1 was 50m long and ran north-east to south-west. It was located within Area 1 of the geophysical survey, immediately to the south of the main runway (presently disused). The trench was excavated to a depth of 0.34m (north-east end) and 0.58m (south-west end). The removal of the topsoil (0.15m thick) at the north-east end exposed a layer of clay with modern rubble some 0.19m thick. At the south-west end, the topsoil (0.20m thick) overlay remnants of a modern subsoil (0.18m thick) that contained building debris. The subsoil sealed the same layer of contaminated soil observed at the north-east end.

No archaeological features or deposits were encountered during excavation of Trench 1, undoubtedly due to the high degree of modern disturbance caused by levelling of the whole area. Modern disturbance may have affected the results of the geophysical survey, producing false anomalies.

Trench 2 B(i)

Trench 2 B(i) was 50m long and ran west to east. It was located in the south-west corner of the disused portion of the Airfield, south of the former main runway, within Area 2 of the geophysical survey. The trench was excavated to a depth of 0.40m (south-west end) and 0.28m (north-east end). The removal of the topsoil (some 0.18m thick) exposed a modern subsoil that contained building debris (brick, glass, fragments of concrete blocks, unburnt coal, tar, *etc.*). The subsoil sealed modern pits, postholes and linear features cut through the natural clay. Some of these features were detected as anomalies during the geophysical survey.

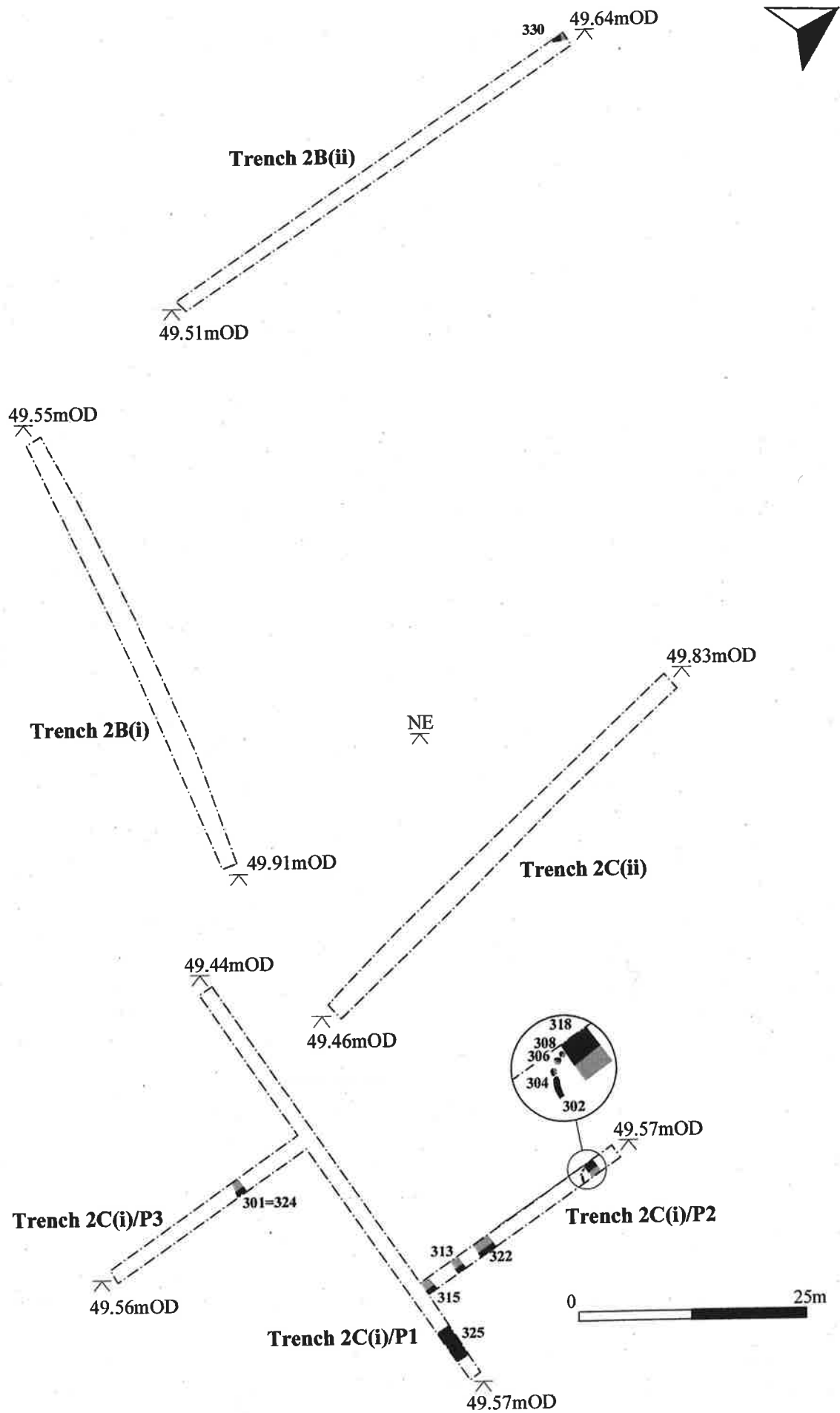


Figure 5 Trench plans (Area 2)

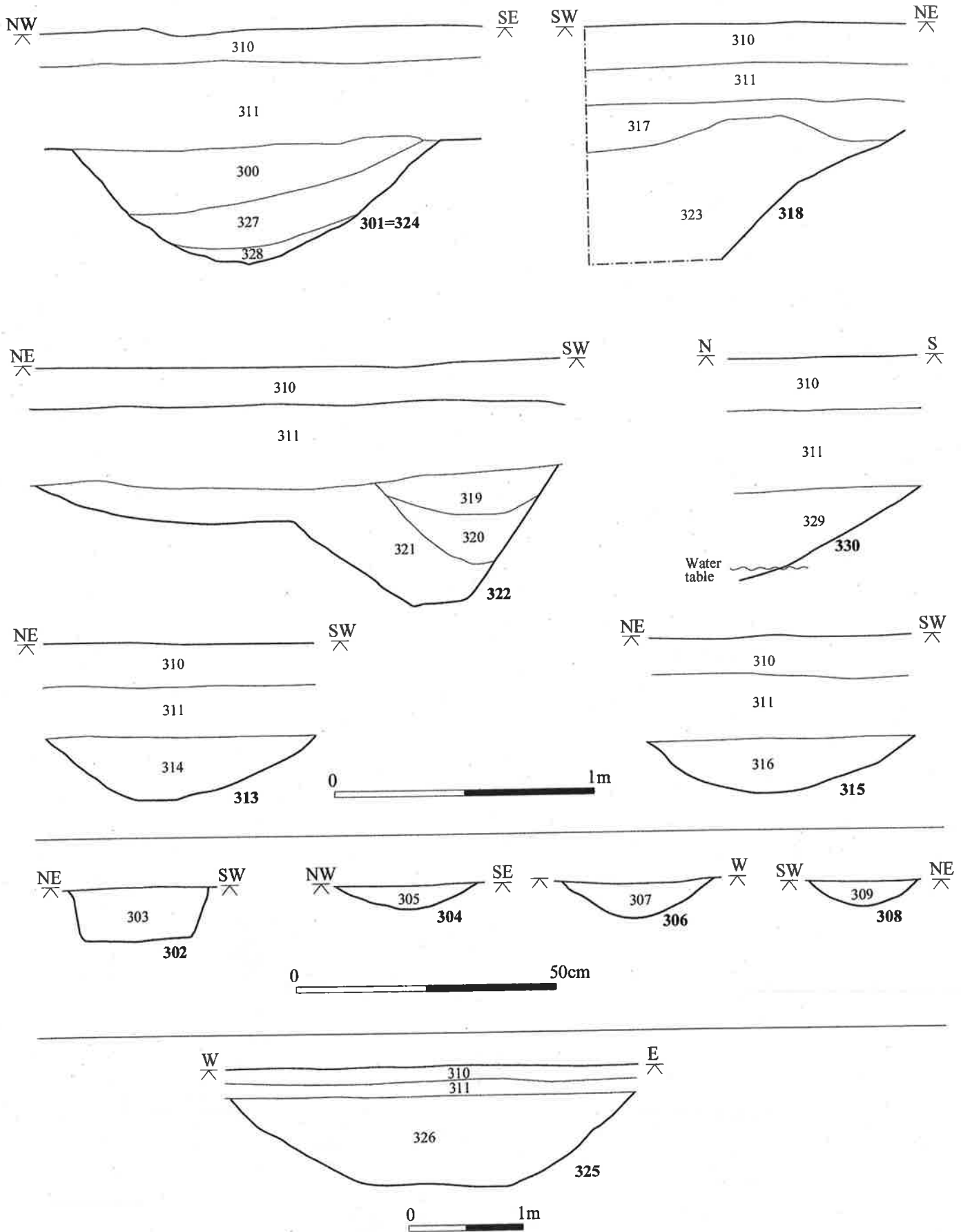


Figure 6 Sections of excavated features (Area 2)

No archaeological features or deposits were encountered during excavation of Trench 2 B(i), undoubtedly due to the high degree of modern disturbance caused by excavation and subsequent levelling of the surrounding area.

Trench 2 B(ii)

Trench 2 B(ii) was 50m long and ran north to south. It was located within Area 2 of the geophysical survey, immediately to the north of Trench 2 B(i). The trench was excavated to a depth of 0.32m (south-west end) and 0.56m (north-east end). The removal of the topsoil (0.15m thick) and modern subsoil at the north-east end exposed an ill-defined ditch on a north-east to south-west alignment.

The removal of the topsoil (0.22m thick) and subsoil at the south west end of the trench exposed natural clay deposits. No archaeological features or deposits were uncovered in the southern portion of the trench, their absence being likely to reflect an area devoid of archaeological evidence.

Cut 330, linear ditch 0.70+m wide and 0.35+m deep (from the base of the trench), on a north-east to south-west alignment. It contained one fill, 329. Fill 329, a mid-brown silty clay with occasional flint inclusions. A post-medieval tile fragment was recovered from this fill.

Trench 2 C(i)

Trench 2 C(i) was located within Area 2 of the geophysical survey, to the south of Trenches 2 B(i) and 2 B(ii). It comprised three portions, p1, p2 and p3. Portion p1 was 50m long, on a west to east alignment. The second portion (p2) was 25m long, on a north to south alignment. It stemmed from the northern side of p1. The third portion (p3) was 25m long, on a north to south alignment. It stemmed from the southern side of p1. The trench was positioned to test anomalies detected in the geophysical survey (see Figs 3 & 4).

The removal of the topsoil (0.18m thick) and subsoil (between 0.22m and 0.30m thick) in p1 revealed the presence of natural variations in the clay and root disturbance originally thought to represent possible archaeological features, namely ditches and postholes. Towards the eastern end of p1 there was evidence of a wide ditch on a north-south alignment, **325**. This was interpreted as representing part of a rectangular enclosure together with ditch **318** in portion p2 (below).

The removal of the topsoil (0.14m thick) and subsoil (0.28m thick) in p2 revealed the presence of well-defined archaeological features. These consisted of four parallel ditches on a north-west to south-east alignment, and a series of postholes and a gully/slot possibly part of the same semicircular feature.

Cut 302, flat based gully/slot, curvilinear in plan, 0.26 wide, 0.10m deep, with one fill, 303. It truncated ditch **318**.

Fill 303, a mid-brown silty clay with occasional flint inclusions. It produced no finds.

Cut 304, circular posthole, 0.25m in diameter and 0.05m deep, with one fill, 305. It was cut through ditch **318**.

Fill 305, a greyish-brown silty clay, with occasional flint inclusions. It contained one un-diagnostic river-cobbled, hard-hammered flint flake (*debitage*).

Cut 306, circular posthole, 0.28m in diameter and 0.07m deep, with one fill, 307. It was cut through ditch **318**.

Fill 307, a greyish-brown silty clay, with occasional flint inclusions. No finds were recovered.

Cut 308, circular posthole, 0.20m in diameter and 0.04m deep with one fill, 309. It was cut through ditch **318**.

Fill 309, a greyish-brown silty clay, with occasional flint inclusions. No finds were recovered.

Cut 313, flat based V shaped linear ditch on a west to south alignment, 0.87m wide, 0.22m deep (from the base of the trench). It contained one fill, 314.

Fill 314, a greyish-brown silty clay, with occasional flint nodules. No finds were recovered.

Cut 315, 0.90m wide, 0.20m deep, flat based V shaped linear ditch on a west to east alignment. It contained one fill, 316.

Fill 316, a greyish-brown silty clay with occasional flint nodules. No finds were recovered.

Cut 318, at least 2.00m wide and 0.80m deep, steep sided U shaped ditch, linear in plan, on a west to east alignment, possibly part of an enclosure (see **325**). It contained two fills, 317 and 323. Postholes **304**, **306** and **308**, and gully/slot **302** were cut into 317, the upper fill of this feature.

Fill 317, upper fill, a dark brown silty clay, with occasional chalk marl. No finds were recovered.

Fill 323, a mid-brown slightly silty clay, with occasional chalky marl. No finds were recovered.

Cut 322, flat based irregular profiled linear ditch on a west to east alignment 2.00m wide and 0.48m deep. It contained three fills, 319, 320 and 321.

Fill 319, upper fill, a yellow-brown silty clay with occasional <2% gravel. No finds were recovered.

Fill 320, a mid-grey silty clay with organic content that was sampled for macro-environmental analysis. Contained a single sherd of combed decorated Late pre-Belgic Iron Age pottery (18g) (*Appendix A*).

Fill 321, basal fill, a mid yellow-brown silty clay with occasional small gravel. No finds were recovered.

Cut 325, flat based U shaped ditch 3.60m wide and 0.90m deep, on a north to south alignment, possibly part of an enclosure (see **318**). It contained one fill, 326.

Fill 326, a mid-brown slightly silty clay with frequent pea-size gravel. Contained daub (30g), Late pre-Belgic Iron Age pottery (11g) (*Appendix A*) and animal bone of a large mammal, probably cattle (264g).

Finally, portion p3 contained some modern features and a north-west to south-east aligned. Posthole-like features at the junction of p3 and p1 were found on excavation to be the result of root disturbance.

Cut 324=301, rounded based V shaped linear ditch, on a west to east alignment, 1.38m wide and 0.46m deep. It contained three fills, 300, 327 and 328.

Fill 300, upper fill, a mid-brown silty clay. It contained 18 sherds of Late Belgic Iron Age/early Roman pottery (169g); including a number of comb decorated pots and a hand made bowl, and animal bone from a large mammal, a cow or a horse (152g).

Fill 327, a dark grey-brown slightly sandy silty clay. It contained 32 sherds of Late pre-Belgic Iron Age pottery (151g) (*Appendix A*), daub (65g) and animal bone from both large and small mammals (99g).

Fill 328, basal weathering fill, a mid-brown silty clay. No finds were recovered.

Trench 2 C(ii)

Trench 2 C(ii) was 50m long and ran north to south. It was located within Area 2 of the geophysical survey, immediately to the south-east of Trench 2 B(i) and north of Trench 2C(i). The trench was excavated to an average depth of 0.35m. The removal of the topsoil (between 0.10 and 0.14m thick) exposed modern subsoil that contained building debris (brick, glass, fragments of concrete blocks, coal, tar, *etc.*). In the northern portion of the trench the subsoil sealed modern pits, postholes and linear features cut through the natural clay. They were characterised by the presence of a very dark clay fill that contained modern debris (brick, concrete, glass, *etc.*). Some of these features were detected as anomalies during the geophysical survey. The modern deposits were removed by JCB to test for the presence of possible archaeological features sealed beneath them. However no remains were detected, with landscaping and soil dumping activities having removed both the original subsoil and the upper horizon of the natural clay.

Besides the presence of a mid twentieth century land-drain, the southern portion of Trench 2C(ii) appeared to have escaped modern disturbance. No archaeological features or deposits were uncovered, their absence being likely to reflect an area devoid of archaeological evidence.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was 50m long and ran west to east. It was located to the north of the main runway (presently disused). The trench was excavated to a depth of 0.60m

(west end) and 1.10m (east end). Within the trenches, three test pits were excavated to the depth of the uncontaminated natural clay deposits, i.e. 1.55m (Test Pit 1), 1.60m (Test Pit 2) and 1.30m (Test Pit 3), in order to assess the impact caused by modern intervention on the landscape. Below the topsoil (0.20m thick), three layers of clay with modern debris (brick, concrete, plastic, glass, *etc.*) appear to have been artificially built-up in order to raise the ground. Remnants of well preserved roots in the natural clay at the bottom of the test pits may suggest that the area was originally covered by marshy woodland vegetation, very similar to the vegetation that still survives to the north of the trench at a lower (and wetter) level.

No archaeological features or deposits were encountered during excavation of Trench 3, undoubtedly due to the high degree of modern disturbance caused by levelling of the whole area.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was 50m long and ran east to west. It was located in the north-east corner of the disused portion of the Airfield, north of the former main runway. The removal of the topsoil to a depth of 0.40m (west end) and 0.32m (east end) revealed the natural clay deposits and outcrops of small gravel. Periglacial features were visible at the base of the trench.

No archaeological features or deposits were encountered during excavation of Trench 4. The relatively shallow depth of this latter, together with the absence of subsoil and other deposits below the topsoil, may indicate that the area to the north of the trench was re-landscaped (i.e. lowered and levelled) in recent times. Furthermore, the natural clay exposed at the base of the trench was very clean, suggesting that the interface had been removed. An artificial embankment to the south could be part of the same landscaping activity, explaining the removal of soil further north.

6 DISCUSSION

Evaluation trenching has been able to determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits and confirm the predictions of the geophysical survey. The detailed nature of this occupation (prehistoric) cannot be fully determined from evaluation sampling alone. However Iron Age occupation has been identified.

Trenches 1, 2B(i), 2C(ii), 3 and 4

No pre-twentieth century features were found in Trenches 1, 2B(i), 2C(ii), 3 and 4 due to the impact of Second World War and more recent ground disturbance during the development of the Airfield. All trenches had suffered from the

removal of original soil horizons above the natural with the frequent tipping of later building debris. Service-pipes, trenches and cables had also disturbed most of the areas under investigation.

Trenches 2B(ii) and 2C(i)

Trenches 2B(ii) and 2C(i) were located within an area (Area 2) of open grassland in the south-west part of the Airfield. Despite the presence of service trenches and cables and tipping of soil (as in trench 2B(ii), for instance), the area had not suffered from the same level of disturbance that had affected other parts of the Airfield (above).

The results from the geophysical survey of the area indicated the presence of possible archaeological features together with a number of fainter 'trends' of uncertain interpretation (GSB Prospection 2000).

The excavation of Trench 2B(ii) revealed the presence of a narrow ditch of uncertain function on a north-east to south-west alignment. It contained one fill that produced a fragment of post-medieval tile. The ditch was found outside the area of the geophysical survey. By contrast, the geophysical 'trends' observed in the southern part of the trench were found on excavation to correspond to natural variations in the clay background.

Trench 2C(i) revealed the presence of six linear ditches, four postholes and a gully/slot that seem to have belonged to at least two phases of settlement activity in the area. Most features matched the geophysical anomalies predicted in Area 2 and described as 'possible archaeology' and generic 'trends' (see Figs. 3 and 4).

Phase I (late Middle Iron Age) consisted of two broad and deep ditches with steep sides, **318** (west to east oriented) and **325** (north to south oriented) in p2 and p1, respectively. Their projected lines would be consistent with a large enclosure-like feature that was revealed by the geophysical survey and interpreted as a series of generic 'trends'. The very high clay component of the fills against the geological clay background would explain the weak signal detected. Contrary to the results from the geophysical survey, ditch **318** did not continue in Trench 2C(ii) where a mid twentieth century land-drain on a similar alignment had been described as a 'trend'. Ditch **318** was truncated by postholes **304**, **306** & **308**, and by gully/slot **302** that were interpreted as representing a semicircular post-built structure of uncertain function. One of the postholes contained an un-diagnostic flint flake. Pottery recovered from 326 in **325** was of late Middle Iron Age date (*Appendix A*).

A further ditch, **322** in p2, may have formed part of a smaller sub-rectangular enclosure with a gap representing a possible entrance. The enclosure was predicted in the geophysical survey and denoted by darker lines (see Fig 3 and 4). It produced pottery dating to the late Middle Iron Age (*Appendix A*).

Finally, ditches **313** and **315** in p2 ran parallel to each other on the same west to east alignment, adjacent to the large enclosure (above). They shared similarities in terms of profile, dimensions and composition of the fills. The two features were interpreted as representing the remains of a co-axial field system of late Middle Iron Age date similar to that identified in Stage 1 of the evaluation (Macaulay 2000). They were not detected during the geophysical survey (Fig.3).

Phase II consisted of a linear ditch to the south of the small pre-Belgic Iron Age enclosure. It may have also been part of an enclosure that was dated to the Late Iron Age/early Roman period (*Appendix A*).

Topographically, Area 2 is located on the highest point on the Alconbury plateau, at approximately 50m OD. The natural geology consists of firm clay with no gravel or chalky marl that are present to the east at a deeper level. The area is also located near Ermine Street Roman road which passes less than 300m to the south of Trench 2C(i).

The features in Area 2 produced a relatively large quantity of animal bone, predominantly from large mammals (cows and/or horses). The much larger area evaluated in Stage 1 along the perimeter of the main runway produced only 103g while Area 2 (with far fewer features) produced some 600g. Similarly, the pottery assemblage from Area 2 was small, but diagnostic sherds were recovered from most features. The total assemblage weighted *c.* 349g (*Appendix A*). As noted above, the assemblage dates predominately to the late Middle Iron Age, Belgic and early Roman periods.

As a whole, the results from Stage 2 of the Evaluation would conform with the evidence from Stage 1 (Macaulay 2000) indicating phases of rural activity throughout the Late Iron Age and Early Roman periods. This activity appears to have been characterised by a mixed economy in the form of arable fields and managed livestock. The evidence is comprised of cut features, no banks or buried soils survive, due perhaps to past and recent ploughing and the development of the airfield.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The objective of Stage 2 of the evaluation project was to establish the character, date, state of preservation and extent of any archaeological remains within selected parts of the site likely to be affected by development. The information from the evaluation is designed to allow an assessment to be made of the proposed development's archaeological implications and to inform an appropriate mitigation strategy.

The project has been successful in achieving its objectives. Archaeological remains were uncovered in Trenches 2B(ii) and 2C(i), although no

archaeological features were identified in the remaining trenches (1, 2B(i), 2C(ii), 3 and 4). The archaeological features identified in 2B(ii) and 2C(i) suggest Late Iron Age and early Roman occupation. As a whole, the results from the evaluation confirm the predictions of the geophysical survey.

The density and nature of the remains identified have made it possible to make some predictive models.

Within areas to be impacted by the proposed development, geophysical survey and evaluation trenching have been targeted at grassed areas apparently undisturbed by Airfield development. Despite this targeted approach, Trenches 1, 3 and 4 contained no archaeological remains, due to the impact of recent ground disturbance during the construction and on-going developments in the Airfield. The trenches had suffered from both the removal of soil deposits above the natural clay and tipping of later building debris. In addition, the high concentration of service pipes, trenches and cables has contributed to the disturbed nature of the area generally precluding geophysical survey and restricting the siting of evaluation trenches. Finally, it is apparent from the evidence in Area 2 that in some localised undisturbed areas archaeological deposits will survive. Overall, however, undisturbed areas within the areas of the proposed development are likely to be discrete.

The condition and character of archaeological features located in the Stage 2 evaluation are broadly similar to those identified on the Rail Link Stage 1 evaluation. And it is likely that these archaeological features will require further mitigation.

As noted in Stage 1 evaluation (Macaulay 2000), there has been an increasing number of Iron Age and earlier Prehistoric sites discovered on the Cambridgeshire clay 'uplands'. Indeed the findings of Stage 2 at Alconbury Airfield confirm with the Iron Age sites already recorded further to the east within the Airfield (Stage 1 Macaulay 2000).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Paul Chadwick of CgMs Consulting is monitoring the project for Alconbury Developments and Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Office is monitoring Stage 2 of the evaluation project.

Scott Kenney has produced the illustrations and Spencer Cooper and Andrew Hatton has helped with the preliminary recording on site.

The project was managed by Stephen Macaulay.

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Appendix A - Alconbury Airfield (ALCAF01)

Pottery Summary

Fifty-three pottery sherds, weighing 349g were recovered from three features (Table 1), the majority deriving from the fills of ditch [324]. Sherds are generally small, undiagnostic and abraded, with an average weight of 6g. Most vessels are represented by single sherds.

Trench	Context	Feature	Feature type	Spotdate*	Pottery
2C(i)	300	324	Ditch	Late Belgic IA/early Roman	18:169
	327	324	Ditch	Late Belgic IA/early Roman	32:151
	320	322	Ditch	Late pre-Belgic Iron Age	1:18
	326	325	Ditch	Late pre-Belgic Iron Age	2:11
Total					53:349

* based on date of latest fabric type present in context
see also **Table 3** for breakdown of fabric types by context.

Table 1: Pottery by trench and context (sherd count:weight in g)

The assemblage dates predominantly to the late Belgic Iron Age/early Roman period, with a small quantity of late pre-Belgic Iron Age material. Thirteen fabric types were identified using common names and type codes in accordance with the Bedfordshire Ceramic Type Series, held by Albion Archaeology. Fabrics are listed in Table 2, in approximate chronological order.

Common name	Fabric Type	Sherd No
<u>Late pre-Belgic Iron Age (c.300-100BC)</u>		
Non-specific Iron Age	F	1
Grog and sand	F03	2
Fine sand	F28	1
<u>Late Belgic Iron Age (c. 100BC-AD50)</u>		
Fine Grog	F06A	3
Medium Grog	F06B	4
Coarse Grog	F06C	15
Shelly	F07	1
Sand and Grog	F09	7
Sandy	F34	6
<u>Roman (c. AD50-350)</u>		
Fine whiteware	R03E	9
Fine greyware	R06C	1
Micaceous greyware	R06D	1
<u>Unknown</u>		
Unidentified ware	UNID	1

Table 2: Pottery type series

Pre-Roman fabrics are predominantly grog and/or sand tempered, with a small quantity of coarse shell tempered sherds. Roman types are sand tempered comprising either grey or white wares, the former probably of local manufacture.

Details of forms and decoration are listed in Table 3. Diagnostic forms of late Belgic Iron Age and Roman date comprise a platter, possible butt-beaker, cordoned and narrow-necked jar, and an everted rim jar. Combed sherds in coarse grog and shell tempered fabrics may derive from cooking pots or large storage vessels.



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Fine sand	F28	1
<u>Late Belgic Iron Age (c. 100BC-AD50)</u>		
Fine Grog	F06A	3
Medium Grog	F06B	4
Coarse Grog	F06C	15
Shelly	F07	1
Sand and Grog	F09	7
Sandy	F34	6
<u>Roman (c. AD50-350)</u>		
Fine whiteware	R03E	9
Fine greyware	R06C	1
Micaceous greyware	R06D	1
<u>Unknown</u>		
Unidentified ware	UNID	1

Table 2: Pottery type series

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Details of forms and decoration are listed in Table 3. Diagnostic forms of late Belgic Iron Age and Roman date comprise a platter, possible butt-beaker, cordoned and narrow-necked jar, and an everted rim jar. Combed sherds in coarse grog and shell tempered fabrics may derive from cooking pots or large storage vessels.

Feature	Context	Common name	Ware	Comments	Sherd	Weight
322	320	Non-specific Iron Age	F	coarse shell + combed decoration	1	18
324	300	Coarse Grog	F06C	Oxidised -cross context 1	1	7
324	300	Unidentified ware	UNID	Random combing, sand tempered -abraded	1	47
324	300	Fine greyware	R06C	Rouletted -abraded	1	1
324	300	Micaceous greyware	R06D	Dish/bowl base	1	10
324	300	Shell	F07	Abraded	2	10
324	300	Coarse Grog	F06C	Abraded -cross context 1	1	12
324	300	Sand and Grog	F09	Footring base from platter	1	10
324	300	Coarse Grog	F06C	1 vess abraded, combing	3	14
324	300	Coarse Grog	F06C	Abraded	1	2
324	300	Fine Grog	F06A	Everted rim jar	1	2
324	300	Medium Grog	F06B	Combing -horizontal or vertical	2	33
324	300	Fine Grog	F06A	Micaceous	1	1
324	300	Sand and Grog	F09	?bowl rim	1	9
324	300	Grog and sand	F03	Hand-made	1	11
324	327	Fine whiteware	R03E	Rouletted zones -butt beaker, abraded	7	22
324	327	Coarse Grog	F06C	1 vessel, horizontal groove, oxidised	8	56
324	327	Medium Grog	F06B	Necked jar	1	10
324	327	Sand and Grog	F09		2	11
324	327	Sand and Grog	F09	Horizontal groove, cordon	3	19
324	327	Fine Grog	F06A	Sliver	1	2
324	327	Medium Grog	F06B	Abraded	1	3
324	327	'Belgic' sandy	F34	1 vessel -abraded	4	13
324	327	Fine whiteware	R03E		2	2
324	327	Coarse Grog	F06C	Abraded	1	5
324	327	'Belgic' sandy	F34	1 with vertical combing -abraded	2	8
325	326	Fine sand	F28	Vessel with upright rounded rim	1	7
325	326	Grog and sand	F03	Abraded	1	4

Table 2: Pottery type by Context

Jackie Wells 03/05/01





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