

Medieval pits on land to the rear of 1 The High Street, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



January 2009

Client: Dudley Developments

OA East Report No: 1080
OASIS No: oxfordar3-53378
NGR: TL 4868 5628

**Medieval pits on land to the rear of 1 The High Street, Cherry Hinton,
Cambridge**

Watching Brief

Site Code: CAM HIN 08

CHER No. ECB3069

Date of Works: 4th and 8th December 2008

Report No: 1080

Excavator: Rob Atkins

Client: Dudley Developments

Report Date: January 2009

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Fig. 2 Location of pits within footings of building

Summary

On the 4th and 8th December 2008, OA East carried out an archaeological watching brief at land to the rear of 1 The High Street, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge (TL 4860 5628). The monitoring was carried out during excavation of footings for a single block of 10 new flats. Two c.13th century pits were found about 16m to the west of the present High Street cutting a medieval levelling layer. These pits were probably within a later medieval back plot. They were situated within the same area as three medieval pits in the 2008 evaluation. The unabraded pottery recovered from one of the pits implies domestic occupation was nearby, presumably fronting the High Street.

1 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 1.1.1 The site overlies upper beds lower chalk, (British Geological Survey 1985, sheet 205), towards the southwestern edge of the Cherry Hinton peninsula. Immediately to the west of the site lies Cherry Hinton Hall and its associated grounds. To the south-west the ground rises sharply up to the war ditches monument (as outlined below), and Cherry Hinton High Street runs parallel to the east of the development area.
- 1.1.2 The site is centred around TL 4860 5628 and lies at 12 to 13m OD (Fig. 1).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1.1 The site lies immediately to the northeast of the Spring Head, a water source exploited since at least the Bronze Age and with a system of leats and streams constructed in the medieval and later periods.
- 2.1.2 An Early Bronze Age barbed and tanged arrowhead (CHER 04827) was found on the Netherhall Lower School site during the digging of Allotment Gardens, prior to the construction of the Lower School. Two disc or bell barrows (CHER 04964, 04965) were recorded during quarrying 150/200 yards from the War Ditches monument (CHER 04963a). Grooved ware and Beaker pottery was also recovered.
- 2.1.3 The War Ditches monument is/was located to the south-west of the proposed development site. Identified first during quarrying in 1893 and partially excavated between 1893 and 1903 (ECB601) by Crawley and Tebbutt and later by Prof. T McKenny Hughes. It was again excavated by TC Lethbridge in 1939 (ECB617) and between 1949 and '51 (ECB603). The War Ditches was clearly an important Iron Age settlement site and is significant in the understanding of Iron Age Cambridgeshire and the tribal boundaries of the southern fen edge, notably its location between the territories of the Catuvelunai and Trinovantes. However, it is unclear whether the monument was of Iron Age or earlier origins. The site is known to have been occupied in the 3rd century BC and it may have been destroyed (with possible evidence for a massacre) in the mid 1st century BC. Excavations at the site have uncovered earthwork defensive banks and ditches, pits, postholes for wooden structures, skeletons, stone, bone, ivory and horn objects as well as pottery.
- 2.1.4 A Roman settlement was recorded on the War Ditches site (CHER 04963b) dating to the 1st-2nd centuries AD. This included at least two buildings, a palisade and ditches, a well, pottery kiln and pits. In addition inhumation burials were also recorded. 'Celtic fields' are also recorded 500 yards to the south-east (CHER 04830). Roman pottery and a skeleton were also found to the west of War Ditches (CHER 05126, 05126a) during quarrying.
- 2.1.5 A 6th/7th century Saxon cemetery (CHER 04965a) was also excavated at the War ditches site, these were secondary inhumations within the Bronze Age barrows and contained a range of grave goods including spears, knives, Fe and Cu alloy objects, bone combs, pottery and a crystal ball mounted on bronze.
- 2.1.6 Cherry Hinton has had, throughout its post-Roman history, two foci – around the church at the north and around the springhead at the south, with the High Street running between the two.

- 2.1.7 While the early Ordnance survey maps show no structures on the site the area immediately to the north was occupied by a Smithy until relatively recent times.
- 2.1.8 A planning application by Dudley Developments was submitted to Cambridge City Council which proposed demolishing the modern house standing on the plot and erecting 10 new apartments (No. 08/0084/FUL). Archaeological work was one of the conditions on the planning application consent. Oxford East (formerly CAM ARC) was commissioned to evaluate the site in May 2008 (Punchard 2008). Just over 6% of the development site was investigated by trial trenching. This revealed several layers representing land reclamation, and modern land levelling. Also 3 small pits were found indicating activity on the site close to the previous medieval street. Prehistoric remains were present in the form of a previous land surface, which contained animal bones, Bronze Age flint flakes and one piece of disarticulated human bone.
- 2.1.9 As a consequence of the evaluation, Andy Thomas of Cambridgeshire Archaeology, Planning and Countryside Advice asked for a watching brief on further work (Thomas 2008). This was supplemented by a Specification by Oxford East (Mortimer 2008).

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1.1 The objective of this watching brief 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.
- 3.1.2 The brief required that there was archaeological monitoring of the initial stages of construction, to include all ground works (Thomas 2008).
- 3.1.3 The area of investigation was located within the footings of the proposed apartment. Machine excavation was carried out under archaeological supervision with a wheeled JCB-type excavator using a 0.6m wide bucket. The topsoil was removed first. Then on the 4th December just over half of the footings on the western part of the development were excavated by machine to a depth of up to 1.6m below the new ground level. The soil was removed by lorry from the site. About 0.6m of cement was deposited within the exposed footings. The remainder of the footings were then excavated and this was completed on the 8th December.
- 3.1.4 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Digital photographs, colour slides and black and white photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
- 3.1.5 Site conditions were dry although extremely cold

4 RESULTS

4.1 Watching Brief

- 4.1.1 The watching brief uncovered the land reclamation layers previously seen across the site although they were fairly shallow on the northern part of the site with natural chalk exposed 0.35m below the new ground level.

- 4.1.2 Two medieval pits (**102** and **104**), dating to the 13th century, were recorded cutting the medieval and prehistoric cultivation layer on the south eastern part of the site nearest the High Street (Fig. 2). These two pits were in the vicinity of the three pits (**7**, **9** and **14**) recorded in evaluation trench 1 (Punchard 2008). Pit **102** was c.1.8m by 1.6m in diameter and 0.65m deep. It had relatively steep sides and a flat base. The primary fill was a mid to dark grey brown sandy chalk silt with an occasional charcoal fleck. An assemblage of 19 relatively unabraded medieval pottery sherds was recovered, the material dating up to the 14th century. The top of the pit was sealed by a redeposited chalk deposit 0.8m in diameter and up to 0.21m deep. Pit **104** less than 5m to the west of pit **102** was 0.90m in diameter and 0.50m deep. It had steep edges and a slightly rounded base. It was filled with a mid grey brown sandy chalk silt. Two small medieval pottery sherds and an unidentifiable animal bone fragment were recovered from this deposit.
- 4.1.3 Two modern 20th century bottles and a fragment of Roman tegula were recovered as unstratified finds.

4.2 Artefacts

Bottles by Alasdair Brooks

- 4.2.1 The first is a blown-in-mould interior screw finish bottle from the 'E. Lacon and Co.' brewing company of Great Yarmouth. According to the Blackfriars Brewery Company, the current owners of the premises, the Lacon firm took the 'and Co.' form from 1894. Given that the bottle is of a manufacture type that died out in the second decade of the 20th century, the bottle most likely dates from between 1894 and 1910.
- 4.2.2 The second bottle is a fully machine made reinforced extract finish 'California Fig Syrup Co.' bottle. This San Francisco-based company manufactured a mild laxative that was highly popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This particular bottle dates from c.1900-c.1920.

Pottery and tegula by Carole Fletcher

- 4.2.3 A Tegula in a red sandy fabric (335g) was found unstratified.
- 4.2.4 The pottery assemblage from pit **102** comprised 19 sherds (442g). It was moderately unabraded, and though there was some breakage the sherds had not travelled far before being deposited into the pit. The majority of the sherds were from cooking pots, and some had sooting present on their external surfaces. There were also two single sherds from jars.
- 1 sherd (7g) Green glaze (jar) ?Grimston c.1200-1350
 - 1 sherd (27g) Orange slip on a sandy fabric (jar) ?Hedingham c.1200-1350
 - 10 sherds (224g) medieval sandy grey ware ? Essex 1150-1250/75
 - 5 sherds (74g) Transitional. Early medieval sandy grey wares c.1100-1275
 - 2 sherds (38g) Unidentifiable sandy ware.

- 4.2.5 Pottery from pit **104** comprised 2 sherds (9g) of medieval sandy ware. Essex 1150-1250/75

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Sub-heading

- 5.1.1 The watching brief found no artefacts from the prehistoric or medieval land reclamation layers. It is tempting to suggest that the medieval levelling layers were deliberately deposited to make this area usable prior for occupation. Two further c.13th century pits were found in the watching brief in the same location as the previous three pits in the 2008 evaluation. These pits clearly cut the earlier medieval levelling layer. It is therefore extremely likely this development area was part of a later medieval back plot. The unabraded nature of the pottery from pit **102** suggests that domestic occupation was very nearby, presumably from a house fronting onto the High Street.
- 5.1.2 The Roman tegula came presumably from a nearby Roman settlement.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1.1 The author would like to thank Dudley Developments who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by Richard Mortimer.
- 6.1.2 The brief for archaeological works was written by Andy Thomas and the specification by Richard Mortimer. Carole Fletcher commented on the pottery and Alasdair Brooks on the two bottles.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Mortimer, R., 2008 Specification for archaeological monitoring and recording Oxford East (unpublished)

Punchard, W., 2008 Land to the rear of 1 The High Street, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CAM ARC report No 1034 (unpublished)

Thomas, A., 2008 Brief for archaeological monitoring and recording at Land rear of 1 High Street, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge Cambridge County Council (unpublished)

APPENDIX A. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details

OASIS Number	Oxfordar3-53378			
Project Name	Medieval pits on land to the rear of 1 The High Street, Cherry Hinton			
Project Dates (fieldwork)	Start	04-12-2008	Finish	08-12-2008
Previous Work (by OA East)	Yes		Future Work	No

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	CAM HIN 08	Planning App. No.	08/0084/FUL
HER No.	ECB 3069	Related HER/OASIS No.	Cambridg1-43772

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt: Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Field Observation (periodic visits)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Record
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Excavation (100%)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Field Walking
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Recorded Observation	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Metal Detector Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Test Pit Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Open-Area Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Excavation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Watching Brief

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
pits	Medieval 1066 to 1540	pottery	Medieval 1066 to 1540
	Select period...	tile	Roman 43 to 410
	Select period...	bottles	None

Project Location

County	Cambridgeshire	Site Address (including postcode if possible)	
District	Cambridge City	1 The High Street Cherry Hinton Cambridge CB1 9HY	
Parish	Cambridge		
HER	Cambridgeshire		
Study Area	575sq.m	National Grid Reference	TL 4860 5628

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	Andy Thomas
Project Design Originator	Richard Mortimer
Project Manager	Richard Mortimer
Supervisor	Rob Atkins

Project Archives

Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
CCC Store, Landbeach	Oxford East	CCC Store, Landbeach
CAM HIN 08	CAM HIN 08	CAM HIN 08

Archive Contents/Media

	Physical Contents	Digital Contents	Paper Contents
Animal Bones	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Human Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Survey		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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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"/>
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Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Digital Media	Paper Media
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<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysics	<input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence
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	<input type="checkbox"/> Plans
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	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey

Notes:

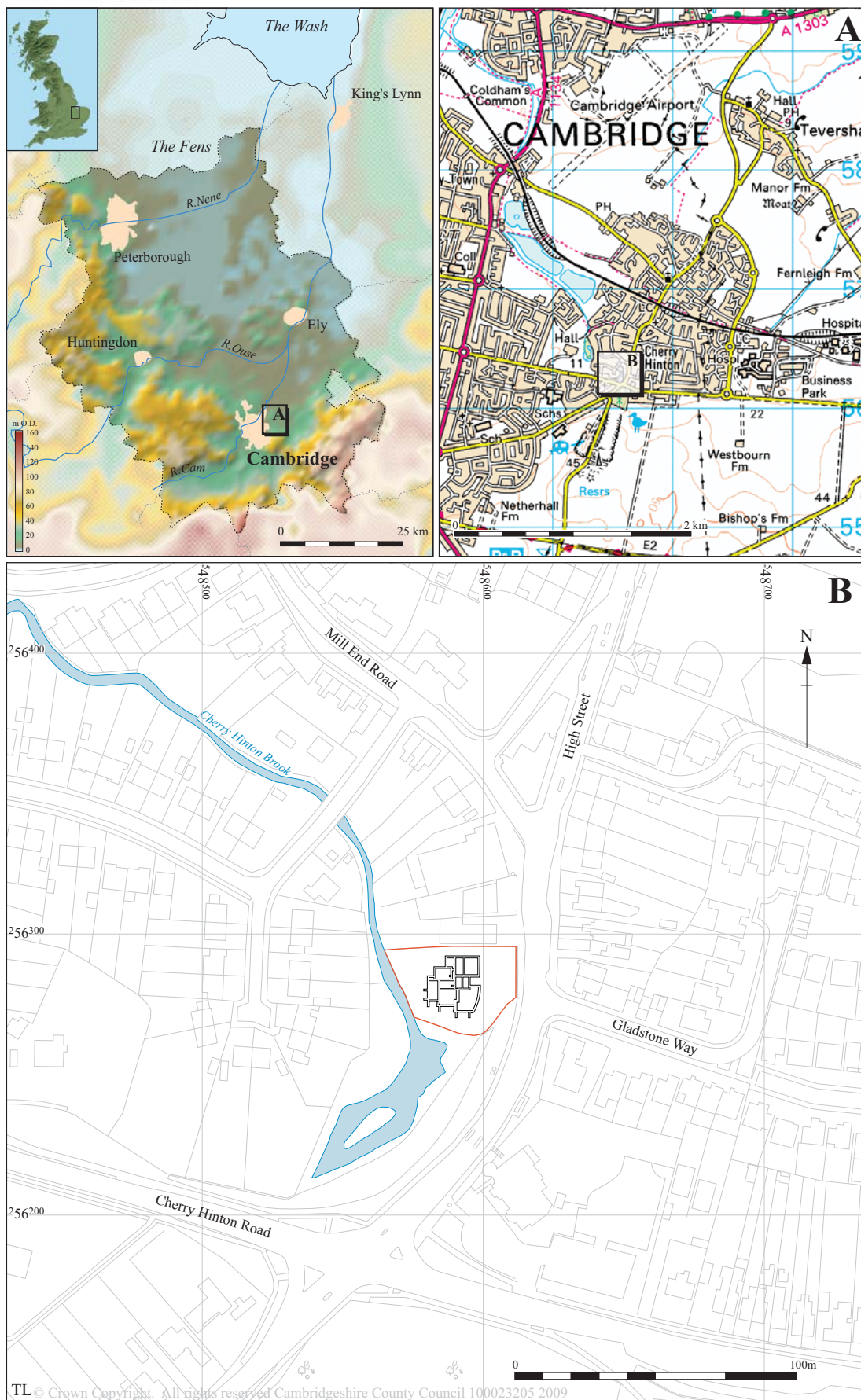


Figure 1: Location of the watching brief with development area outlined (red), and new building foundations (outlined black)

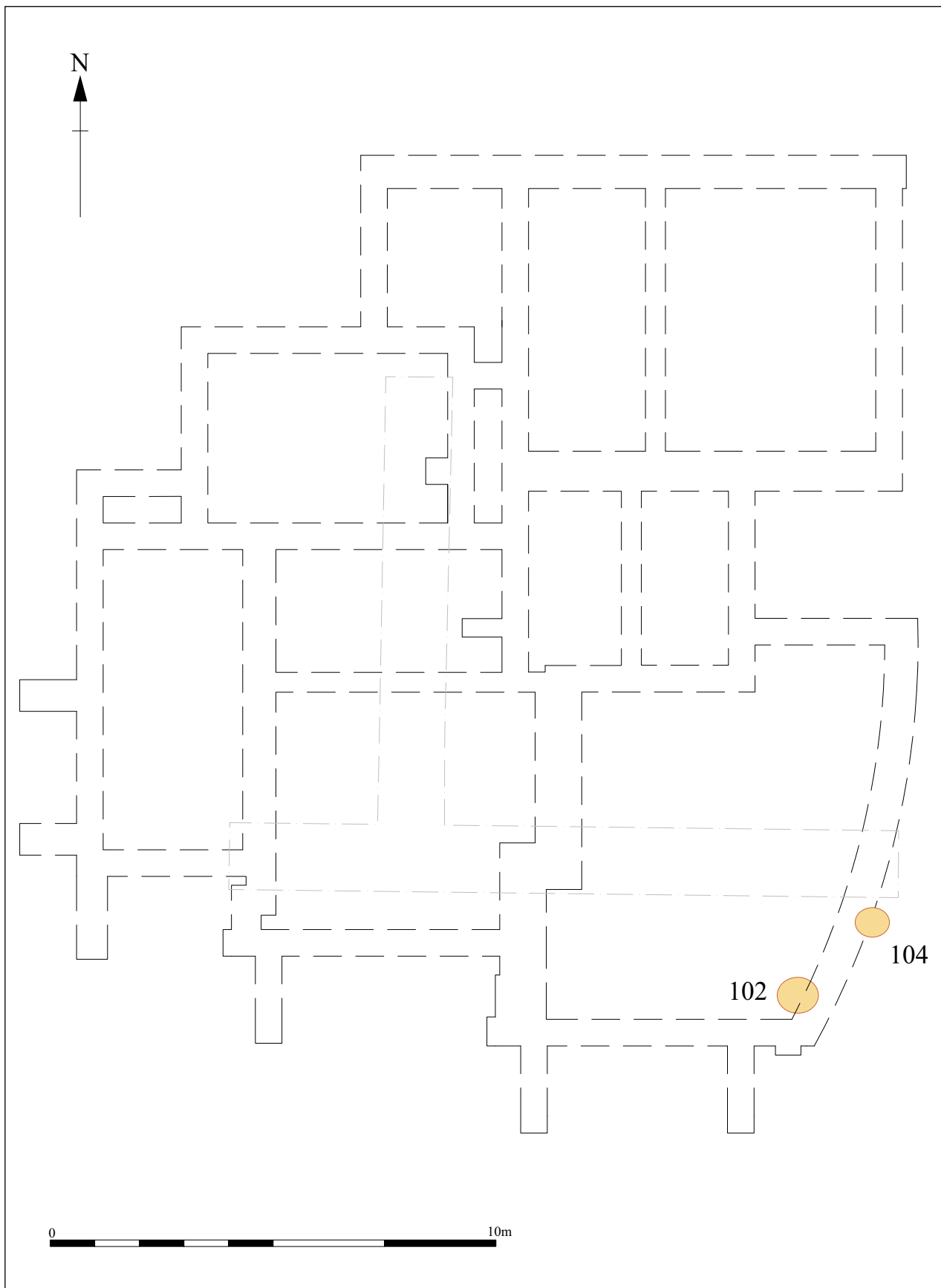


Figure 2: Location of pits within footings of building



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