

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
At Strangeways Laboratory, Worts Causeway  
Cambridge, Cambridgeshire**

Paula Whittaker

**Cambridge Archaeological Unit**  
University of Cambridge

JUNE 2002

NO: 487

## Summary

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Cambridge Archaeological Unit on land to the rear of Strangeways Laboratory, Worts Causeway, Cambridge, Cambs. (TL 471/550). This was carried out in advance of Laboratory extensions. Only one trench revealed archaeology, two parallel ditches of probable Roman date relating to a rural field system.*

## **Introduction**

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken between the 17th and 20th June 2002 on land to the rear of Strangeways Research Laboratory, Worts Causeway (TL 471550), located in the southern hinterland of Cambridge just east of Addenbrookes Hospital (Figure 1). The work was carried out by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU), on behalf of Fielden & Mawson Architects in advance of extensions being carried out to the Laboratory. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with a specification of works (Evans 2002) and monitored by the Development Control Office of Cambridgeshire County Council.

### *Site Topography and Geology*

The site is located in the garden area surrounding the southeast end of the Laboratory, bounded by houses and gardens to the southeast, Worts Causeway and Babraham Road to the north and south. The area appears to have a natural sloping contour of c. 19.30m in the north east to 18.20m in the southwest, which has been altered slightly by the landscaping around the buildings.

The geology encountered varied slightly, in the area furthest to the northwest a chalk marl subsoil was apparent at 18m OD, this lowered following the slope of the land to the south to 17.10m OD. In the area to the east of the building features were found cutting through the natural marl subsoil exposing the cleaner chalk substrata which was lying at 17.20m OD.

### *Archaeological Background*

The site lies within a landscape of known Iron Age and Early Roman settlement. Approximately 400m to the northwest at the Addenbrookes site, rescue excavations in the 1960s during the hospital's construction found evidence of a late Iron Age settlement (Cra'ster 1969). This was added to by aerial photographs showing cropmarks of the settlement continuing to the north west of the hospital (Bacilieri & Palmer in Hall 2001), and more recently a geophysical survey (Johnson 2001) showed this area had been settled on a fairly large scale. An evaluation last year in the Downing College Playing Fields/Robinson Way Hospital Car Park (Armour 2001), and last month on Long Road (Whittaker 2002) found features of late Bronze Age, late Iron Age and early Roman date. Another Iron Age settlement located c. 1km to the southeast of the site was found during construction of the Babraham Road Park and Ride, which also had Neolithic and Bronze Age features surviving beneath the later settlement (Hinman 1999). A recent appraisal of the aerial photographs of the Addenbrookes environs indicates the intensity of archaeological cropmarks in the fields just south of Babraham Road (Palmer in Evans & Dickens Forthcoming) The site lies adjacent to a Roman road, thought to have run along the same alignment as Worts Causeway.

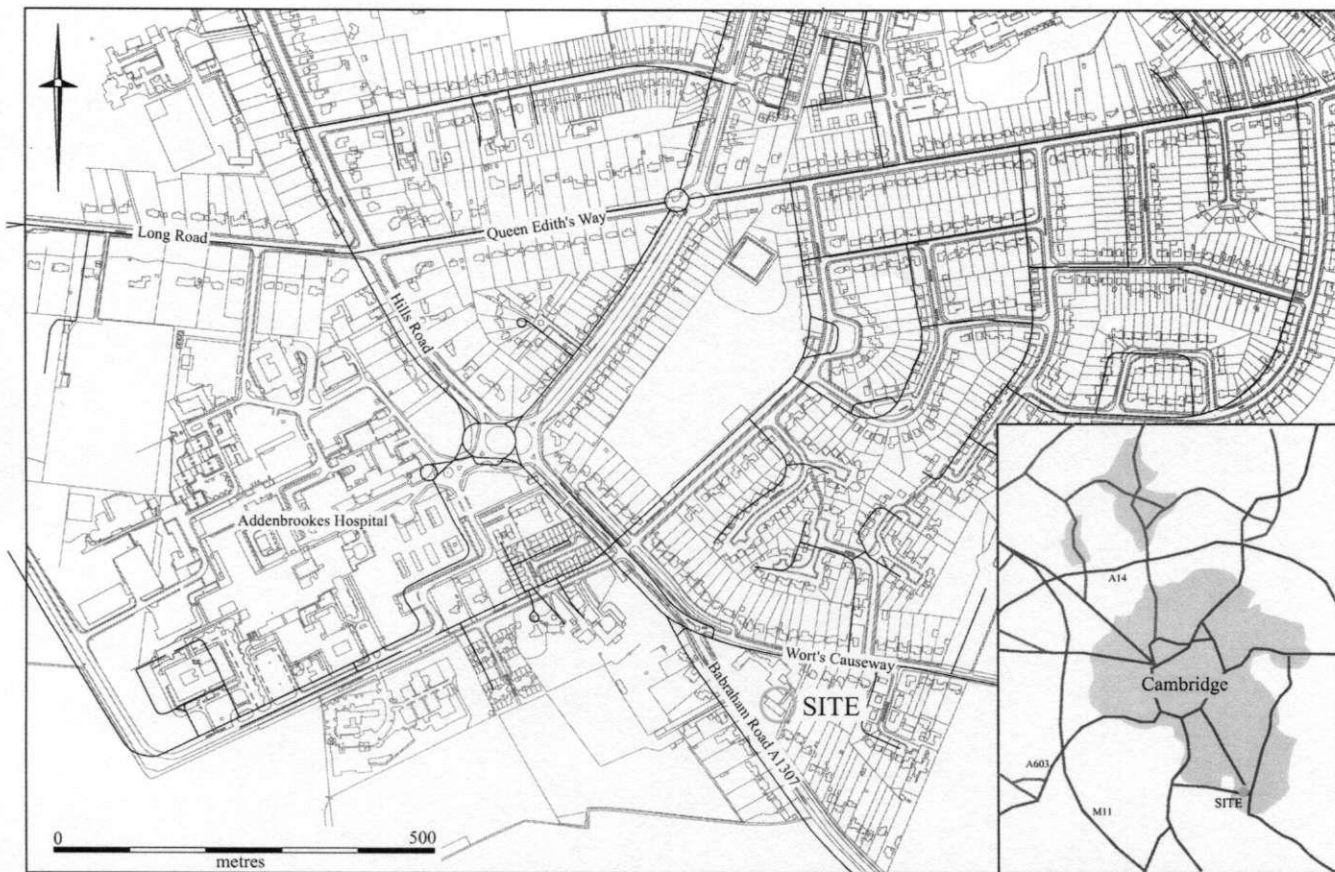


Figure 1: Site and Trench locations

## Methodology

The evaluation consisted of four trenches (Figure 1), comprising a total length of 31.5m. Primary excavation removing the topsoil and post-medieval soil horizons was carried out by a mini digger using a toothless ditching bucket, 1m in width.

The Unit modified version of the Museum of London recording system was employed throughout to record the archaeology found within the trenches (Spence 1990). Feature numbers were assigned (e.g. F. 1) as a descriptive aid in defining a ditch, pit etc. Fills and cuts were assigned individual context numbers, indicated in the text in square brackets (e.g. [001]). Sections were drawn at 1:10 or 1:20, base-plans at 1:50. Features were manually half sectioned or a 1m segment was dug, whichever was more appropriate. The animal bone was assessed by Andy Clarke and the pottery was spot dated by Gwladys Monteil. The site code was STR 02.

## Results

### *Trench 1- 3*

Trenches 1- 3 contained no archaeology, the average depth of these trenches was 1.1m, cutting through the topsoil and subsoil, an orange brown silt that was seen at varying depths up to 0.8m deep where it was lying down slope in Trenches 2 and 3. Trench 1 contained what appeared to be natural features of probable animal burrows in its western end and a modern post alignment lying parallel to the building. Only one sherd of Roman pottery (2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> c.) was found in the subsoil of Trench 1 and one small fragment of prehistoric pottery (flint tempered, probably Neolithic, Knight pers. comm.) and two pieces of worked flint from the subsoil in Trench 2.

### *Trench 4 (Figure 2)*

Trench 4 held a greater depth of subsoil (1.1m) which meant the trench had to be expanded to a double width so that the natural could be reached at a safe depth to climb into the trench. Due to the lack of room aside the building and boundary hedge, as well as a disused soakaway making machining difficult, only a 3m area of the base of the trench could be exposed. At a depth of 1.7m two ditch features were revealed though their dimensions not fully exposed. Ditch F. 1 had a width of > 1.4m, depth of 0.4m and ditch F. 2 had a width of > 0.7m, depth of 0.4m (Figure 2). Both ditches were parallel aligned southeast - northwest. F. 1 was filled with a primary natural silt subsoil wash in of cream/off-white silt [018] and a mid brown slightly clayey silt [014] with a pale yellowy brown [013] sealing silt layer washing in from the southwest, implying there may have been some sort of bank on this side. Only one scrap of pottery was found in these fills, an abraded redware that appears Roman in date (Monteil pers. comm). Ditch F. 2 was infilled with a pale beige brown slightly clayey silt, with occasional chalk fragments and marl flecks [016], the upper fill was a mid brown slightly clayey silt [017] which was difficult to discern from the sealing subsoil probably due to later plough disturbance. Two pieces of worked flint were found in the lower fill.

Section and plan of trench 4  
 Illustrating the two Ditches

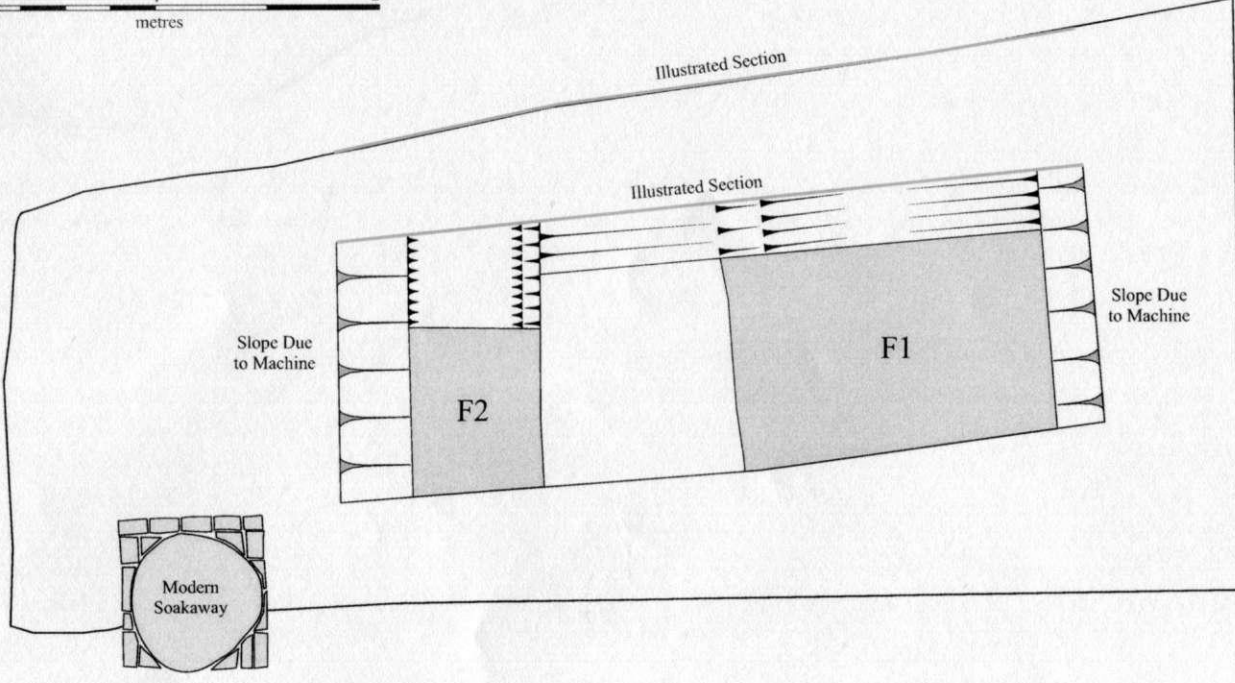
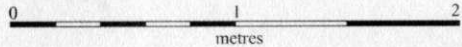
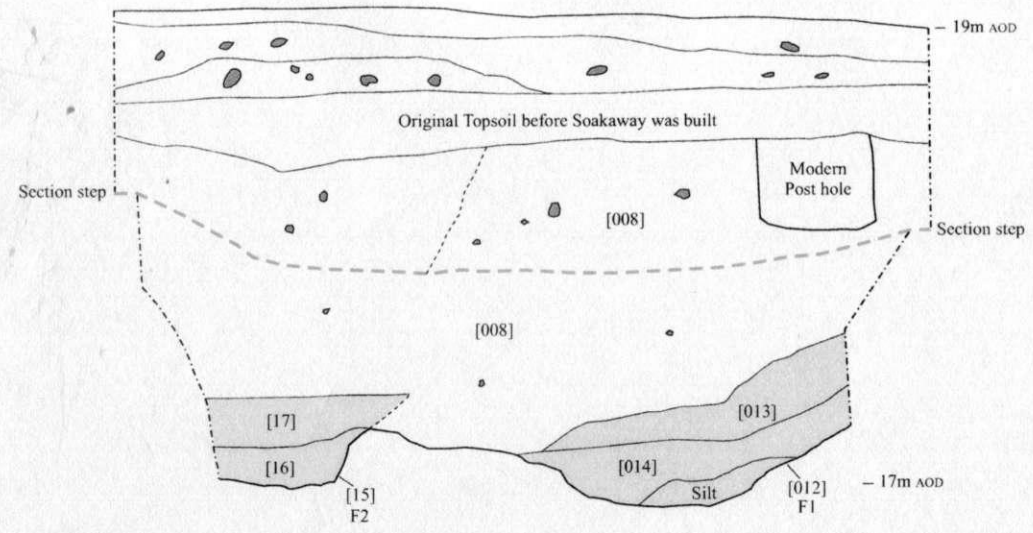


Figure: 2

## Discussion

The tiny scrap of Roman pottery that was found in ditch F. 1 provides a tentative date for the parallel ditches; though they do not run in alignment to the Roman road they could be forming the back edge of a field boundary that possibly predated the road. From the lack of finds in the ditch fills it could be suggested that they are related to a field system a considerable distance away from a settlement. The scrap of probable Neolithic pottery found in the subsoil confirms that there is some prehistoric activity in the area also.

## Acknowledgements

The evaluation was funded by Strangeways Laboratory, co-ordinated by Bruce Daniels and Gavin Mcfarlane of Fielden & Mawson Architects. The site assistant was Taleyna Fletcher; Norma Challands processed the finds, Andy Clarke and Gladys Monteil identified the bone and pot; Marcus Abbott produced the graphics and Chris Evans was the project manager. The project was monitored by Jeremy Parsons, from the Archaeology Section of Cambridgeshire County Council. Thanks are also accorded to the staff of the adjacent laboratory and especially Terry and Frank Price for accommodating us.

## References

- Armour, N. 2001. *An Archaeological Evaluation at Downing College Sports Field, Long Road, Cambridge*. Cambridge Archaeological Unit, Report No. 452.
- Bacilieri, C & Palmer, R. 2001. *Downing College Sports Ground, TL462553 Cambridgeshire - Aerial Photographic Assessment*. Air Photo Services, Report no. 2001/08, in Hall, 2001.
- Cra'ster, M. D. 1969. New Addenbrookes Iron Age Site, Long Road, Cambridge. *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, Vol. LXII.
- Evans, C. 2002. *Strangeways Laboratory, Worts causeway, Cambridge - Project Specification for Archaeological Evaluation*. Cambridge Archaeological Unit Specification Document.
- Hall, A. 2001. *An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment of Downing College Sports Field, Long Road, Cambridge*. Cambridge Archaeological Unit, Report No. 418.

Hinman, M. 1999. *Prehistoric activity and Inhumations at land adjacent to Babraham Road, Cambridge*, Cambridgeshire County Council Field Archaeological Unit report PXA 10.

Johnson, A.E. 2001. *Downing College Sports Field: Magnetometer (Gradiometer) Survey*. Oxford Archaeotechnics Limited., in Hall 2001.

Palmer in Evans & Dickens Forthcoming. *An Archaeological Desktop of the Addenbrookes Environs*. Cambridge Archaeological Unit.

Spence, C. 1990. *Archaeological Site Manual*. London: Museum of London.

Whittaker, P. 2002. *An Archaeological Evaluation at 28 - 30 Long Road, Cambridge* Archaeological Unit, Report no. 483.