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**Buttermel Meadow,
 Godmanchester
 Earthworks Survey**


 Cambridgeshire
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 Rural Strategy



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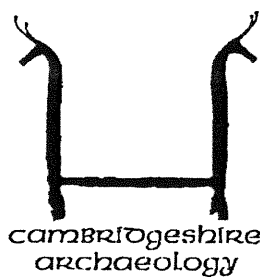
Lesley Hoyland and Steve Kemp

December 1991

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Buttermel Meadow, Godmanchester Earthworks Survey

Report no. 35



Buttermel Meadow Earthworks Survey

1. Introduction

The area of Buttermel Meadows, Godmanchester has been proposed for redevelopment. This will involve the levelling of the area for the creation of a playing field associated with a Twigden Homes housing development scheme. The area overlies part of a Roman cemetery, a number of graves from which were discovered during the excavation of house footings by Twigden Homes. Information and finds recovered from that site are presently archived with Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Section. Other earthworks known to lie within the meadow are presumed to be the village earthworks of Buttermel Meadows.

The area will be levelled by using imported topsoil to cover the site. This report details the earthwork survey of Buttermel Meadows carried out prior to the burial of the site.

2. Survey

The 1.15 hectare site lies on the southern side of London Road, Godmanchester (TL 2465/7011).

Reports following earlier visits by project officers from C.C.C Archaeology Section described the site of the village earthworks of Buttermel Meadows, as comprising of a hollow way with an associated series of house platforms and enclosures defined by scarps banks and ditches.

Figure 1 shows a sketch plan made on one of these earlier visits.

A detailed field survey was called for by C.C.C to accurately record these earthworks prior to their burial.

i. Survey Method

The survey was carried out by two members of the County Archaeology Section on the 21st October 1991. A theodolite was used to survey the earthworks. Following systematic recording final plans were produced off-site.

ii. Site Description and Interpretation

(See Figure 2 for site location and earthwork survey)

The northern side of the site shows traces of ill defined earthworks (1X) marked as parchmarks on the original sketch plan (Fig. 1). The area has low gradient slopes lying next to the north and west fence boundaries with a well defined bank on which the abandoned stable block sits. These

earthworks may represent the remains of north/south trending ridge and furrow with a hollow way and field boundary on the eastern side of the survey.

Fig. 1 shows a hollow way (2X) located near the stable block. This was not observed during the present field survey as the development had already encroached on this area the features had already been largely destroyed. The bank and ditch (4X) may mark the remnants of this trackway This would suggest that the hollow way terminated within Buttermel Meadows, however the sketch plan marks 2X as continuing southwards. The evidence indicates that the hollow way lay further to the east. The approximate alignment of features 2X and 4X suggest that one is likely to pre-date the other. The earthworks probably represent a multi-period concentration of activity.

Area 3X is a depression lying against the fence in the north western section of the meadow and bounded to the east by a bank of almost 0.50m in height. The bank is divide into two parts with a division of about 1m in width. Little of this feature survived in the survey area making it difficult/impossible to define the features original shape or extent. This feature may mark a pond with a channel leading into the feature; the course of this channel could not be traced. Alternatively this may have been a simple earthen bank defining an enclosure with or without internal structures.

Area 5X is marked as house platforms on the sketch plan (fig.1). The platform is approximately 50m across and extends approximately 40m westwards from the housing development area. The area is 'topped' by a curvilinear bank to the east (6X) with smaller mounds above. There is a low platform on the southeastern corner of the mound. The large mound may possibly be a house/building platform but appears to have been affected by later tipping/dumping episodes (6X).

Platform 7X lies in the southwest corner of the site, flat topped with very gentle slopes. The feature is likely to have once extended beyond the present bounds of Buttermel meadow. 7X has been interpreted as a house platform during previous visits, and may be associated with 5X. The feature would appear to be rather large for a standard house platform, with the preserved area measuring approximately 30m x 20m. The platform could mark a large building, but it is possible that the feature represents a spoil heap or tip associated with occupation or agricultural activities. However the flat top argues against such an interpretation and one or more structural features may be preserved beneath this mound.

A bank runs off westwards from the northeast corner of platform 5X, and a further bank runs southwest to northeast from the southwest corner joining the mound to 7X. The relationships between these banks and the mounds is unknown.

A further bank running east to west lies to the south of 5X and to the east of 7X. This bank appears to be cut by a pit and the feature is probably damaged.

4. Interpretation.

The earthworks at Buttermel Meadows appear to be the remains of a multi-period site.

There are three readily identifiable phases of alteration.

- i. The most recent phase would appear to be an episode of pitting and dumping. This comprises of the disturbance at 6X and the creation of the pit within the bank to the south of 5X.
- ii. The second is represented by the activities associated with the two large platforms 5X and 7X.
- iii. A possible earlier phase with works including banks and ditches on various alignments lying largely in the northern part of the meadow.

Due to the complex nature of the field works it is likely that several episodes of (possibly) agricultural use have created this 'montage' of landscape features.

I would suggest that the earthworks in their **primary** state represented part of an agricultural landscape, with ridge and furrow, and headlands or field boundaries. This landscape is likely to have been superseded in a more recent period by the development of the two large flat topped mounds which may be earthworks associated with structures such as barns, out-buildings or a large house. Later stages of activity include the dumping of spoil, garden and house refuse onto the site. Until recently the meadows were used as a childrens play area.

The possible house platforms (5X and 7X) may be the only remains of the village earthworks mentioned earlier. The preservation of earlier earthwork remains on the site suggests that this represents village fringe settlement.

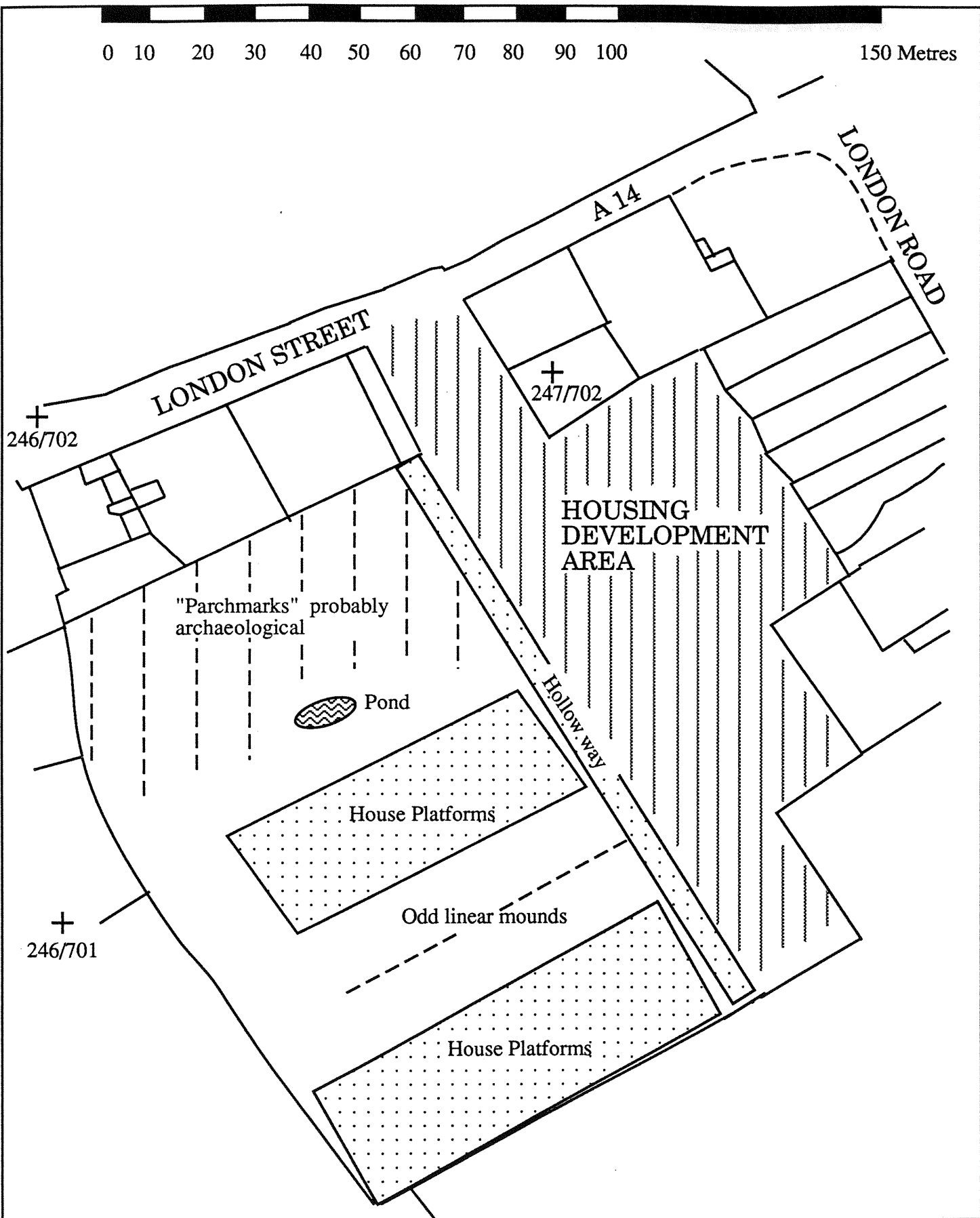
This interpretation is based on the earthwork survey and previous site visits. No historical or archaeological investigations have been associated with this survey.

5. Conclusion

As with many areas near to urban and residential centres the meadow appears to have been an activity area since the Roman period. The 'landscape montage' appears to represent several phases of activity, in which areas have been disturbed or disguised by subsequent developments.

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

150 Metres





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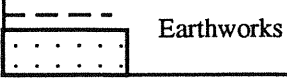
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Figure 1. Buttermel Meadows.

 Interpretive Sketch Plan of the earthworks

 made on earlier visits to the site.



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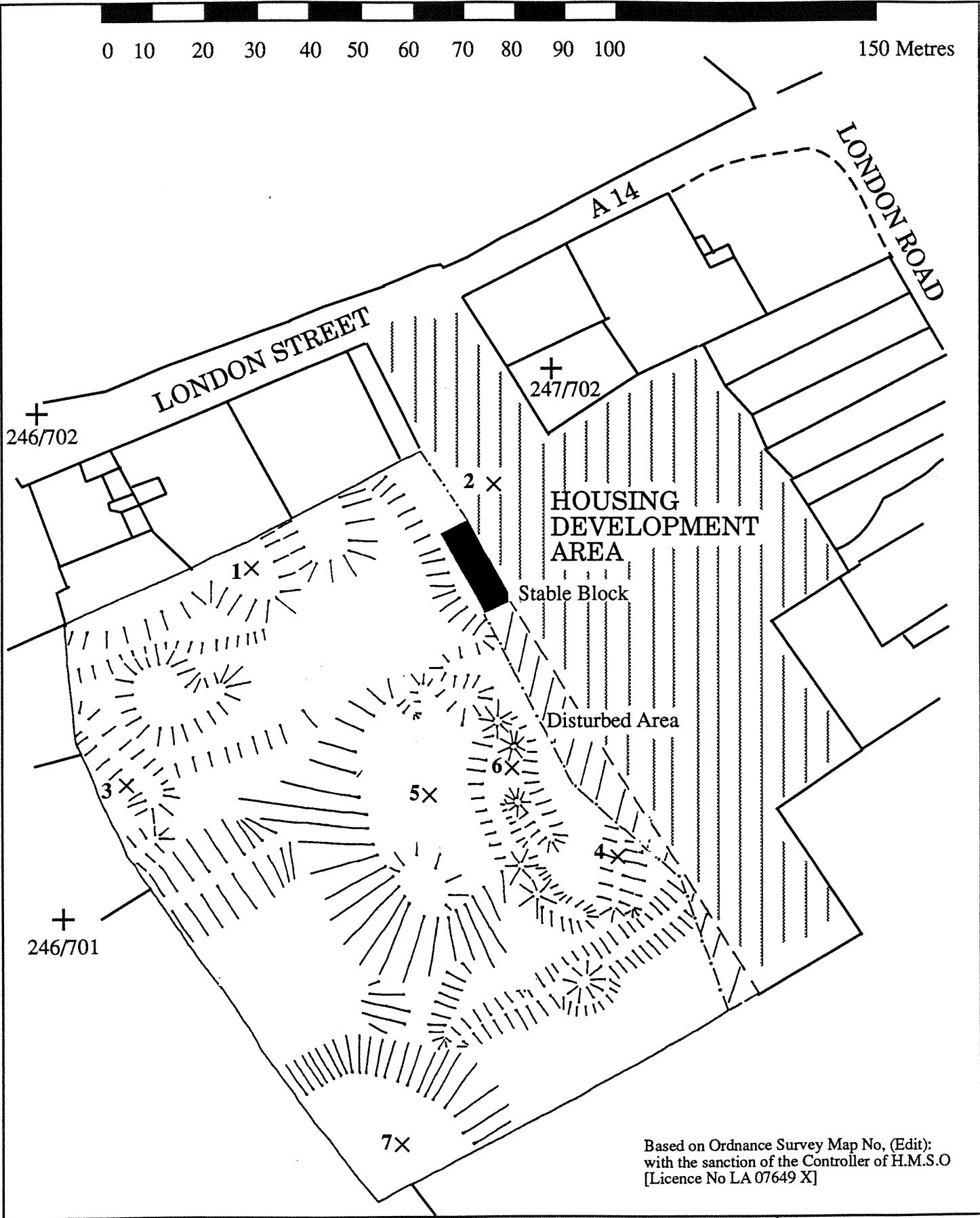
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150 Metres



Based on Ordnance Survey Map No. (Edit):
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Figure 2. Buttermel Meadows.
Site Location and Earthworks Survey

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