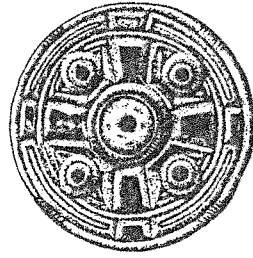


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**Warren Lodge Farm, Wilburton: An Archaeological
Evaluation**

Aileen Connor

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Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No.B73

Commissioned by Construct Reason Limited

Warren Lodge Farm, Wilburton: An Archaeological Evaluation

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2000

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SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was carried out at Warren Lodge Farm, Wilburton TL 483 748 to inform the planning process. The work was carried out by the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council between the 13th and the 18th of July 2000.

Six trenches totalling 143.7m in length were located within the 0.7 hectare area of a proposed housing development. Four trenches (1, 2, 4 and 5) contained features of possible archaeological origin, two trenches (3 and 6) contained no archaeological features at all. Trench 2 contained features of possible medieval date, the remaining features were undated but were probably associated with property divisions and cultivation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY	1
ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	3
METHODOLOGY	3
RESULTS	4
DISCUSSION	9
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	10
BIBLIOGRAPHY	10
LIST OF FIGURES	
Figure 1 Site Location Plans	2
Figure 2 Detail of Trenches 1, 2 and 4	5
Figure 3 Section Drawings	6
LIST OF APPENDICES	
Appendix 1.	10

Warren Lodge Farm, Wilburton: An Archaeological Evaluation

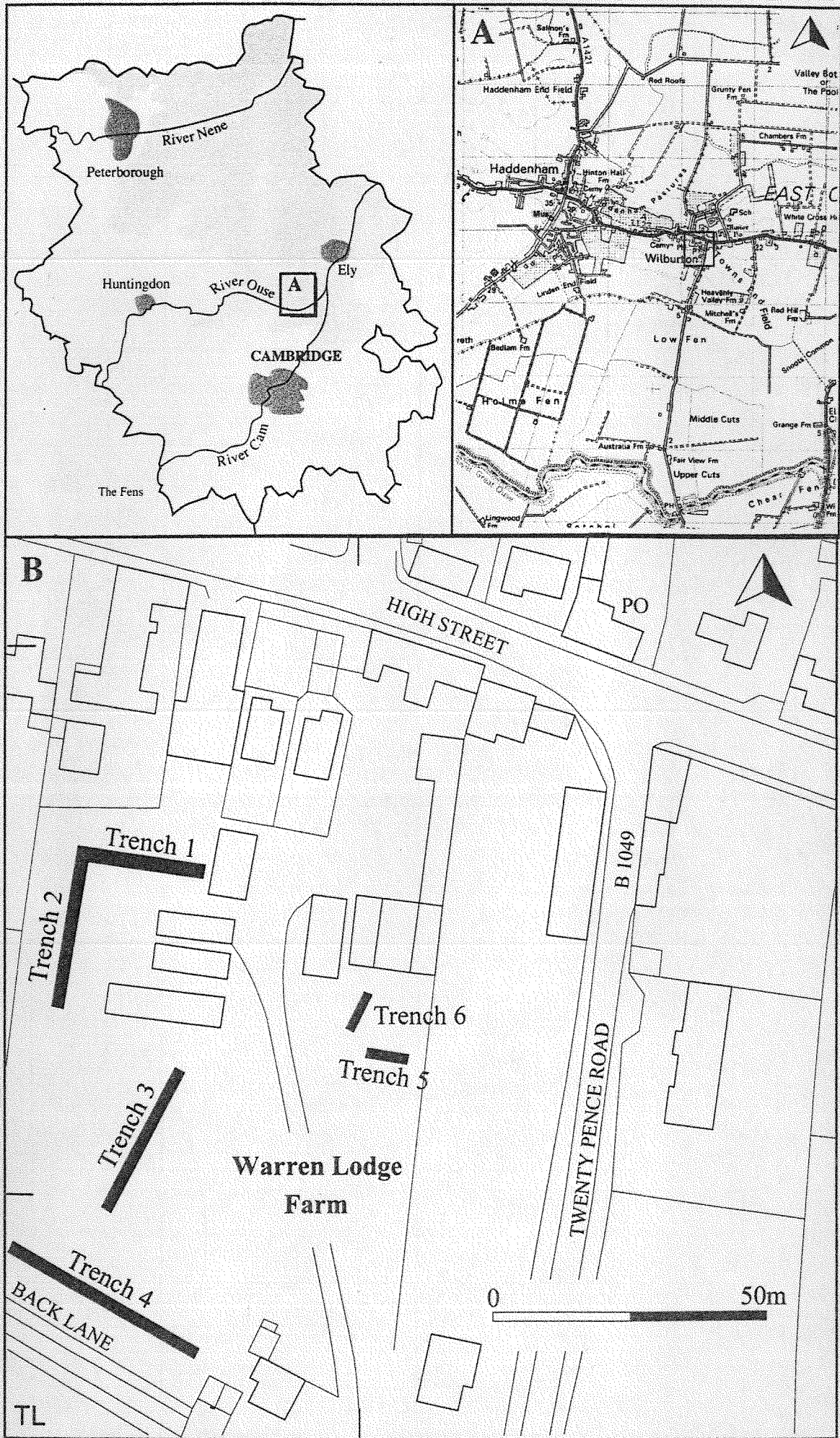
TL 483 748

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological evaluation was carried out at Warren Lodge Farm, Wilburton to inform the planning process. The work was carried out by the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council between the 13th and the 18th of July 2000.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 2.1 The main area of the subject site appeared to be fairly level, but sloped down gradually towards Twenty Pence Road on its eastern edge. Much of the site was covered with tall grasses and nettles which may have obscured minor undulations. Modern dumps of scrap metal and manure lay about the site forming heaps and mounds in the general topography. The site was bordered on the west by the back gardens of a row of modern bungalows. A hedge along Back Lane bordered the south. On the north the site was bordered by the walls and fences belonging to houses on the High Street, several of which may be 18th century or earlier in date, although open spaces had been infilled with modern houses. The eastern edge of the site was bordered by a crumbling wall and fence to the neighbouring garden, except at the proposed access route which led directly onto Twenty Pence Road.
- 2.2 The geology on the site changed from the north end, where it was mainly sand and sandy gravel, to the south end where it became clay. The overlying topsoil and subsoil in trenches at the north end of the site were approximately 0.45m deep up to 0.75m at the southern end of the site.



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Figure 1 Site Location Plan

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In a wider context Wilburton is situated on the Haddenham Ridge on a narrow band of Greensand which was attractive to medieval and possibly earlier settlement (Hall, 1996). The clay and fen areas which cover much of the parish were probably much less attractive to settlement. The parish is best known for the late Bronze Age hoards of metalwork discovered in the 19th century in Grunty Fen (SMR 5785) and Wilburton Rush Fen (SMR 5717), pottery (SMR 5894) and a ploughed out barrow (SMR 5827) have also been found.

A number of stray Roman objects including pottery and coins have been found around the southern edge of Grunty Fen to the north of the subject site (SMR 5601, 5626, 5726, 6965) but not enough to indicate whether there was any settlement. Roman pottery has also been found nearer to the subject site to the south east (SMR 5755). To the south west a group of mounds has been speculatively attributed to the Roman period but would seem equally likely to be Post-medieval (SMR 5939).

Other than the church which was probably Norman in origin but was rebuilt and has a late 13th century tower and chancel arch, there are few medieval remains in Wilburton. The parish was allotted to the Bishops of Ely in 1109, along with neighbouring Haddenham and Stretham and there was certainly a manor house on the site of the Burystead, a late Elizabethan brick house a short distance to the north east of the subject site.

The Warren Lodge Farm site is located in a potentially archaeologically sensitive part of Wilburton. There was every reason to suppose that the site would reveal evidence of medieval activity given its proximity to the medieval High Street and Back Lane which may well have served the rear of properties fronting onto the High Street in Medieval times.

4 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 Six trenches totalling 143.7m in length were located within the 0.7 hectare area of a proposed housing development. Topsoil and modern overburden was removed in the trenches using a wheeled mechanical excavator with a flat bladed ditching bucket under the full time supervision of an archaeologist. Trenches were located to assess as much of the proposed area as possible, but were restricted by the presence of two barns still standing on the site and areas of concrete and farm debris.
- 4.2 A sample of every archaeological feature was excavated by hand in order to determine date and character. The AFU's single context based recording system was used to record all the archaeological features and deposits, sections and plans were hand drawn at a scale of 1:10 and 1:100 respectively. One

environmental sample was recovered from a layer of burning at the base of cut **21** in trench 2, this contained a large quantity of charcoal.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Trench 1

Evidence of deep, relatively recent pitting **2** and **4** was observed in the eastern most 12 metres of trench 1. The pits were cut from close to the surface and contained recent animal remains, fragments of brick and a battery. A small sample was excavated and contained small fragments of brick. It is likely that this pit was a relatively recent feature dug to dispose of rubbish associated with the farm.

A shallow linear feature **6** was located to the west of the modern pitting and followed an approximately north-south orientation. The feature was shallow, irregular and heavily rooted, it may be the remains of a boundary ditch or possibly a hedge row. Two modern post holes **8** and **10** were located to the west of **6**.

Feature **12** was shallow and its shape in plan was difficult to determine. It may have been linear, but was so irregular that it could equally have been subcircular. Rooting was present throughout the fill of the feature, suggesting that it may have been an old hedge line or tree bowl. At the west end of the trench was a shallow pit **14**. The pit was aligned with a linear feature **28** in trench 2, it contained no finds.

5.1.1 Description of Archaeological Deposits

Feature **2** was at least 8m wide and 0.45m deep, its western side was gradual and irregular in plan. The feature cut through subsoil and was sealed by topsoil, it was filled by brown sandy silt 1 which contained fragments of brick, animal bone and obviously modern rubbish including batteries. Immediately to the west was feature **4**, which was 1m wide and had an irregular linear shape. The cut was filled by an olive brown sandy silt which included small fragments of brick. It cut through subsoil and was sealed by topsoil. Both features may be part of the same phase of relatively recent dumping activity, probably associated with the modern farm.

Ditch **6** was located to the west of **4** and followed a north-south alignment (similar to the alignment of the property boundaries leading off the High Street and in current use). The ditch was approximately 0.6m wide but was very shallow, less than 50mm. It was filled by brown sandy silt 5 which contained no finds.

Post holes **8** and **10** were approximately square in shape and 0.25m square, both were less than 60mm deep. They were filled with a very dark brown loose sandy silt 7 and 9 with frequent fresh roots. No finds were present but the fills were very similar to the overlying topsoil giving them a very modern character.

Feature **12** may be a pit or ditch, it was 1.5m wide and 0.2m deep. It was filled by dark grey clayey silt 11, frequent fresh roots and a sherd of post-medieval pottery. The feature may have been caused by tree roots.

Feature **14** was a shallow pit or pits, it had an irregular shape in plan with irregular, gradually sloping sides. It was filled by dark brown sandy silt with 1 sherd of medieval pottery.

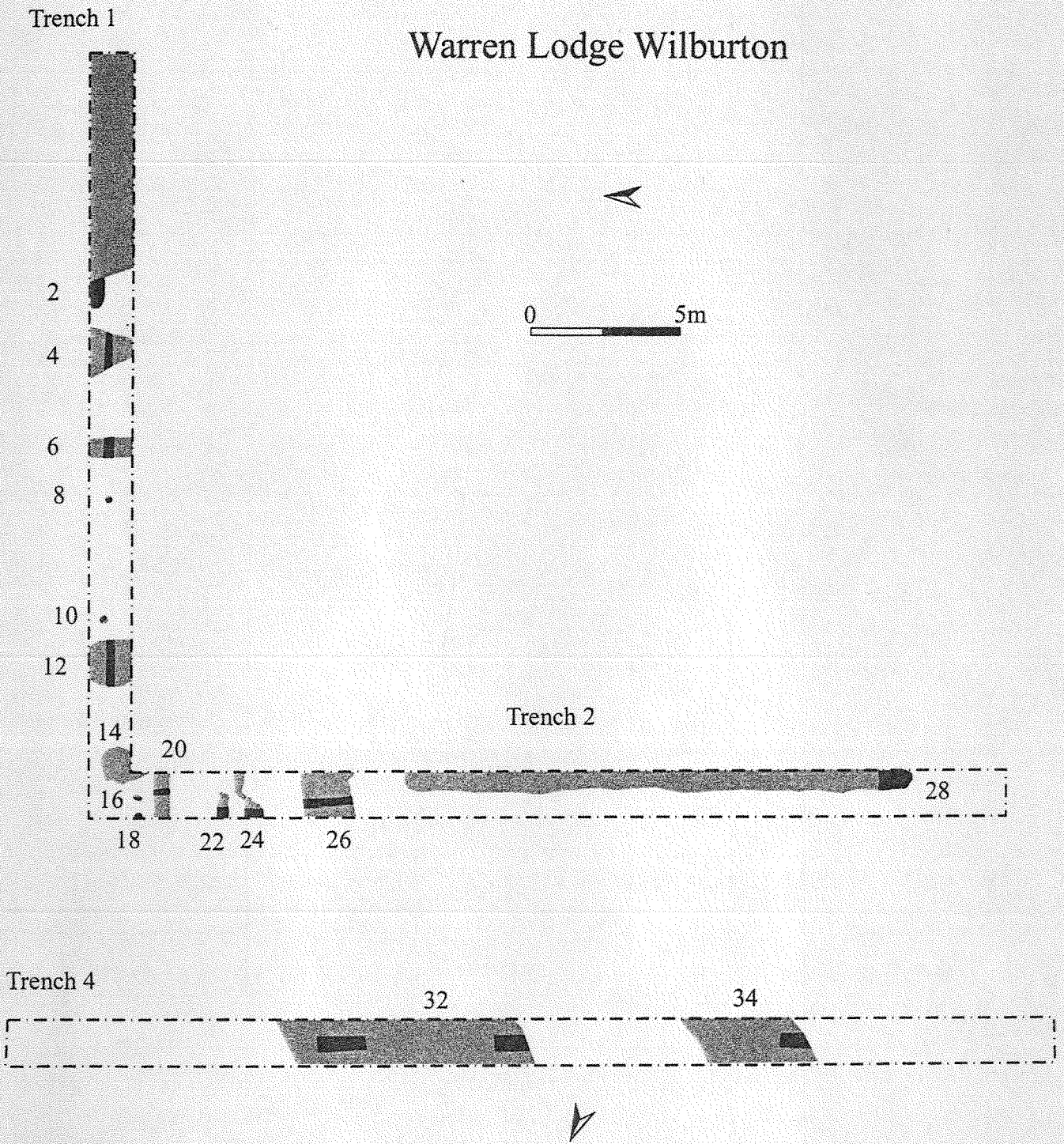


Figure 2 Plans for Trenches 1, 2 and 4

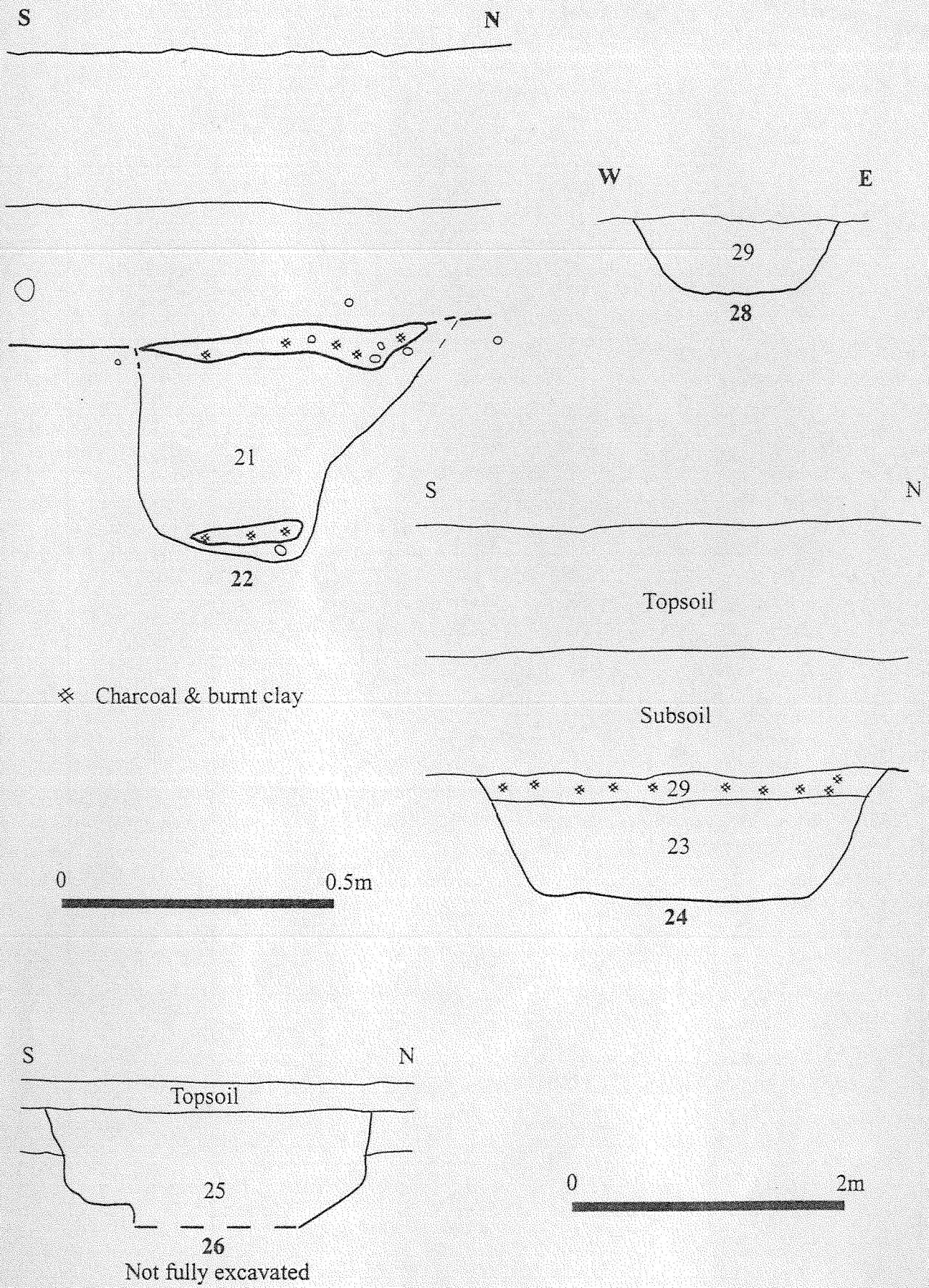


Figure 3 Sections Through Features 22, 24, 26 and 28

5.2 Trench 2

At the north end of the trench were two post holes **16** and **18**. These were aligned with a very shallow linear feature **20** on an east west orientation. No finds were recovered from any of these features. Their alignment with the current property boundaries to the rear of the High Street suggests that they may represent an earlier property boundary of unknown date. To the south of **20** was a group of features, **22** and **24** which may be medieval in date. **22** and **24** both contained a layer of charcoal and burnt clay, deposited after the features had largely been filled in, whilst **22** also contained a similar layer towards the base of the feature. **22** may be the butt end of a linear feature and **24** appeared to be a small pit. The two features may be associated with one another. The only find was a relatively large unabraded sherd of Roman pottery from the fill of **22**. By inference, the features may thus be Roman in date. A modern animal burial (sheep) was located close to these features. To the south of **24** was a large pit or pits **26**, the pit was cut from just below the topsoil and contained fragments of post medieval pottery in its upper fills, although a few fragments of earlier post-medieval and later medieval pottery were recovered from its lower fills. The pit had irregular, vertical sides and was cut into sand. The fact that the sides remained vertical even though cut through soft sand suggests that it was backfilled almost as soon as it had been dug, it was probably a quarry pit. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a similar pit was found during the construction of the adjacent bungalow. To the south of pit **26** was a linear feature **28** on a north south orientation, which was very shallow and appeared to terminate, or had been truncated before it reached the end of the trench. One tiny sherd of possibly Roman pottery was recovered from the feature and its irregular shape and the quantity of roots in it may suggest it was a hedgerow rather than a ditch.

5.2.1 Description of Archaeological Deposits

Post holes **16** and **18** were circular in plan with U-shaped profiles, they were 0.25m in diameter and 80mm deep. Both were filled by a brown sandy silt deposit but contained no finds. The two features were parallel with ditch **20** to the south and may indicate the presence of a former fence, possibly delimiting the rear of properties fronting onto the High Street.

Ditch **20** was linear in plan on an approximately east west alignment. It 0.5m wide and 70mm deep with a broad shallow U-shaped profile. It was filled by a light brown silty clay containing no finds. The ditch may have been formed to mark the same property division as that represented by the two adjacent postholes. It is possible that the ditch represents the location of a hedged boundary.

Feature **22** was linear in plan and on the same alignment as ditch **20**, it was 0.5m wide and 0.4m deep. The feature terminated within trench **2** and continued westwards beyond the confines of the trench. The feature had steep, almost vertical, sides and a near flat base, it was filled by **21**, a light brown sandy clay from which Roman pottery was recovered. **21** was sandwiched between two very thin layers of charcoal and burnt clay, occurring at the top and the base of the deposit. The shape of the cut and the presence of the burnt deposits within it indicate the possibility that this feature was the remnant of a structure in the near vicinity. The feature may be associated with an adjacent pit **24** which also contained a layer of burning, **29**, at the top of the feature. The alignment of feature **22** suggests that it may have been associated with the possible property division marked by ditch **20**.

Pit **24** was sub-circular in plan, it was 0.7m wide, at least 0.5m long and at least 0.18m deep. The feature was filled by light brown silty clay **23** sealed beneath a 50mm thick layer of charcoal and burnt clay **29**. The presence of a very similar layer of burning in the tops of features **22** and **24** may indicate their association with one another, however, it is equally likely

that the burning episode occurred after both features were largely filled in. Only further excavation to the west of trench 2 would help to clarify matters.

Feature 27 was an irregular linear feature close to pit 24, it was not excavated as it appeared to have been formed by a tree root or burrowing animal.

Feature 26 was a large pit or linear feature, it had very steep sides which undercut in places, it was 1.1m wide, at least 1.6m long and at least 0.8m deep. The feature was filled with mid grey brown slightly silty sandy clay containing fragments of pottery and animal bone. The undercutting sides of the feature suggest that it was most likely a pit, possibly dug to extract sand. It was cut through the subsoil layer which suggests that the feature was cut relatively recently and that the pottery found in it was probably residual.

Ditch 28 was a shallow linear feature on a north-south alignment and perpendicular to ditch 20. It was approximately 0.5m wide and 0.15m deep, it was filled by light brown silty clay 29, no finds were recovered from it. The ditch had a flat based U shaped profile, but was somewhat irregular in plan and may have contained a hedge. It is likely that it had been part of the same property divisions represented by ditch 20.

5.3 Trench 3

No archaeological features were observed in trench 3, the geology in the trench changed from sand at the north end to clay at the south end.

5.4 Trench 4

The geology in trench 4 was clay. Two very broad features were observed in this trench, they appeared to be linear, both appeared to be relatively shallow from the machine excavated surface but could be seen to have been cut from near the topsoil. Redeposited clay was much in evidence in both features with fragments of brick and glass near the top of the fills. A few sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the lower fills of one of the features. The disturbed nature of the deposits filling these features suggests that they were backfilled all in one go and possibly relatively recently. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a clay bank was located near the trench in living memory and that this end of the trench was an orchard until the current owner bought it and turned it to pasture with the rest of the field. The two underlying linear features were roughly aligned with the current property boundaries and may represent medieval ridge and furrow which has been levelled. No other archaeological features were present in trench 4.

5.4.1 Description of Archaeological Deposits

Feature 32 was 8m wide by 0.3m deep it may be a shallow ditch or pit. It was filled by redeposited blue grey clay 31 and yellow brown sandy clay mottled with red and black streaks 30. The feature appeared to have been cut from just below the topsoil, through the sub-soil and contained fragments of modern glass and brick, indicating that the feature was backfilled relatively recently. It also contained two sherds of presumably residual Roman pottery.

Feature 34 was on a similar alignment to 32 but was only 4m wide and 0.25m deep. It was filled by mixed redeposited clay and mid yellowish brown sandy clay 33. This feature was also cut from just below the topsoil and contained fragments of brick in its upper fills, it is therefore thought to be a relatively recent feature. It also contained 1 sherd of medieval and 1 sherd of Roman pottery, both are presumably residual

5.5 Trench 5

The geology in trench 5 was sand. One very shallow linear feature **36** on an approximately north-south alignment was located in trench 5, it may represent an earlier property boundary of possibly medieval date. Other small shallow irregular features in the trench are likely to be the result of action by animals or plants.

5.5.1 Description of Archaeological Deposits

Ditch **36** was 0.45m wide and 60mm deep with a very gently sloping sides and a slightly concave base. It was filled with very pale brown very sandy clay from which 1 sherd of Medieval Ely Ware was recovered. The feature was similar to the ditches noted in trench 2 and may belong to the same phase of activity, that is very low level rear garden activity evidenced only by shallow ditches indicating the course of previous property divisions.

Feature **38** was a very small circular feature, 0.15m in diameter and 30mm deep filled with very pale yellowish brown very sandy clay and no finds. Although the feature may be evidence of a post in this position it is equally likely that the feature was created by root action.

5.6 Trench 6

The geology in trench 6 was sand. No archaeological features were observed in this trench.

6 DISCUSSION

Where archaeological features were present these were largely shallow and undated linears. Although occasional fragments of pottery hint that these were medieval in date, they are likely to represent hedgerows or ditches along earlier property divisions for example in trenches 1, 2 and 6. There was a hint of ridge and furrow cultivation having been present on the site in trench 4, but much more recent ground disturbance was also in evidence, as the presence of post-medieval brick and glass testifies. Pit **26**, towards the northern end of trench 2 may have been dug during the medieval period, although it was cut from just below the topsoil and had post-medieval pottery in its upper fill. Two features at the far north end of trench 2 indicate some activity was occurring during the Roman period in the north-west area of the site. These features, a pit **24** and possible ditch **22**, both contained a deposit of burnt clay and charcoal possibly indicating craft or industrial activity nearby.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The brief for archaeological works was written by Andy Thomas, County Archaeology Office, who visited the site and monitored the evaluation.

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SMR. Sites and Monuments Record of Cambridgeshire County Council

Appendix 1 Finds List

Context	Finds category	Date/description	Quantity
1	Brick	Post-medieval	5 fragments
1	Mortar	Post-medieval	3 fragments
5	Pottery	1200-1400	1 sherd
7	Animal bone	Small mammal	partial skeleton
7	Pottery	1200-1400	1 sherd
7	Pottery	1600-1800	1 sherd
11	Brick	Post-medieval	3 fragments
11	Pottery	1200-1500	1 sherd
11	Pottery	1820-1900	1 sherd
13	Brick	Post-medieval	2 fragments
13	Plaster	Post-medieval	2 fragments
13	Pottery	1200-1400	1 sherd
21	Pottery	Roman	1 sherd
25 (upper)	Pottery	Post-medieval	2 sherds
25	Pottery	Late medieval	5 sherds
27	Pottery	Roman	1 sherd
30	Pottery	Roman	2 sherds
33	Pottery	1200-1400	2 sherds
35	Pottery	1200-1400	1 sherd



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