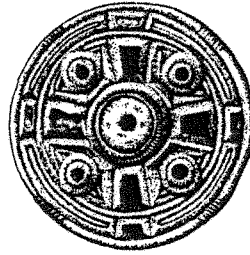


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Archaeological Field Unit

**Mitchell's Farm, Wilburton: An Archaeological
Desktop Survey**

Spencer Cooper

October 2000

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No.B78

Commissioned by L.J. Gawn Associates for the Trustees of B.S.Pell (Deceased)

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Editor : Aileen Connor



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SUMMARY

This study attempts to define the archaeological potential of land at Mitchell's Farm, School Lane, Wilburton (TL484748). It also attempts to determine the potential impact of the development proposal upon the archaeological resource.

The study was commissioned by L.J Gawn Associates on behalf of the Trustees of B.S. Pell (Deceased). The proposed development includes the construction of seven new dwellings with associated access and services within a total area of 0.56 hectares.

The study area lies within the historic medieval core of the village of Wilburton.

There is a strong possibility of locating medieval remains in the northern part of the development area.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This Desk based study was undertaken in response to a Brief issued by Cambridgeshire County Council County Archaeology Office. The Brief deals with the archaeological evaluation required for a planning application for a development which includes the construction of seven new dwellings with associated access and services within a total area of 0.56 hectares. The aim of the study is to make a preliminary assessment of the archaeological potential of the proposed development site which is located at Mitchell's Farm, School Lane, Wilburton (TL484748).

The site is located within the historic core of the village close to Burystead house which dates from 1600AD and is probably on the site of an earlier moated medieval manor. Other historic sites in the vicinity include the 16th century Tithe House which may have been a tithe barn.

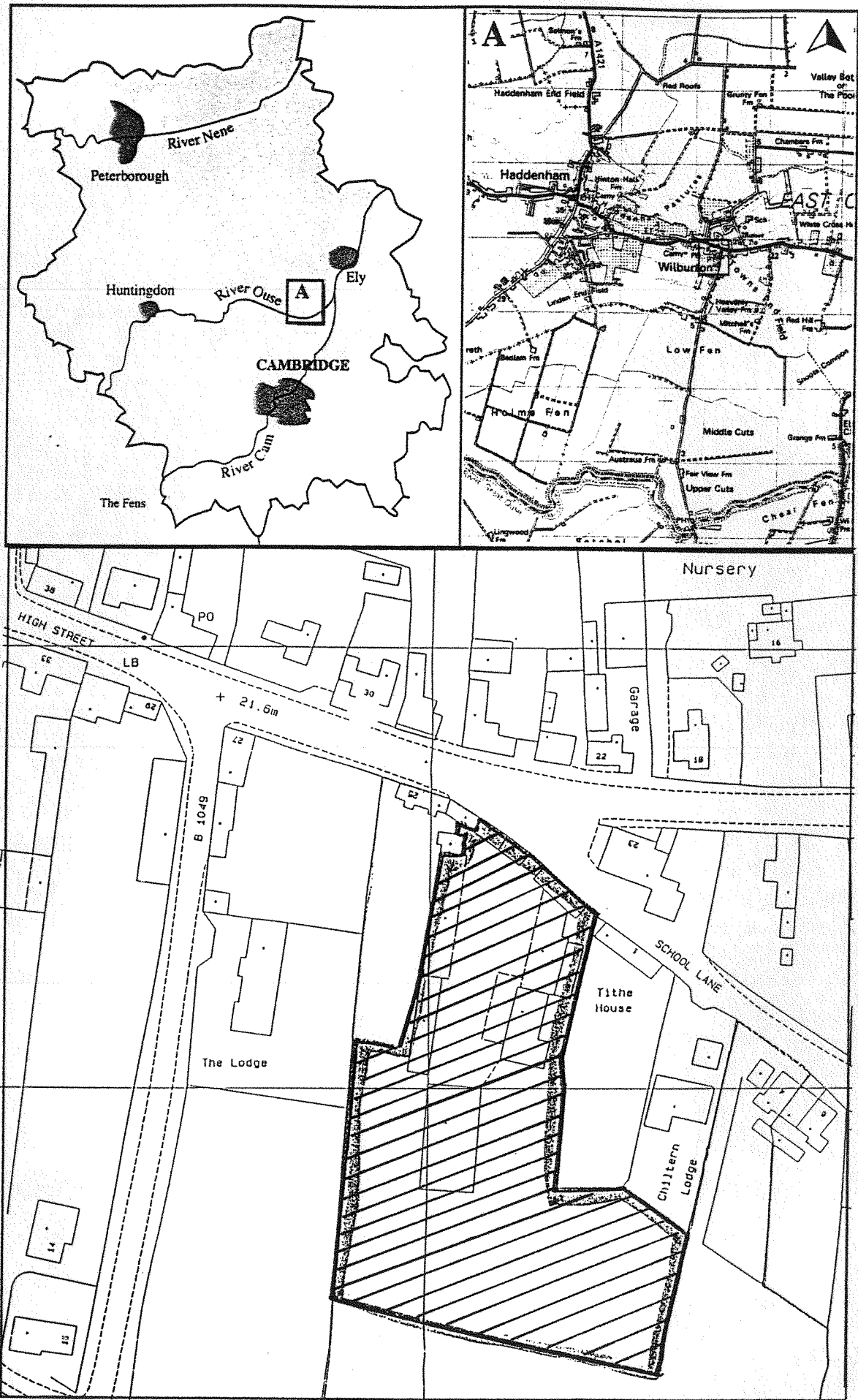
2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Wilburton village is situated on the Lower Green sand 'uplands' which forms the northern boundary of the Nene valley, and the terrace river gravels of the valley (Hall, 1996). The subject site is located within the medieval historic core on the junction of the High Street and School Lane.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Bronze Age

No finds of Bronze Age date have been recorded close to the subject site. A number of late Bronze Age metalwork hoards were discovered in the 19th century within the Wilburton area at Grunty Fen (SMR5785) and Wilburton Rush Fen (SMR5717). At Grunty Fen three palstaves and a gold torc were found in 1844. In 1882 a hoard comprising 163 objects was found at Wilburton Rush Fen. This hoard included looped



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Figure 1 Site Location Maps

palstaves, socketed axes, spearheads and a small knife. A Bronze palstave (SMR05667) was found in 1953 within the Wilburton area. Other indications of Bronze Age activity include a cropmark (SMR05827) which may be a ploughed out Barrow.

The Bronze Age metalwork from Wilburton is very important and has been used as the basis for a type series of metalwork for the period.

Roman

Roman pottery has been found nearer to the subject site to the south east (SMR5755). Roman activity was revealed during evaluation undertaken at Warren Lodge Farm to the west (Connor 2000). The evidence was limited but a pit and a ditch both contained a deposit of burnt clay and charcoal possibly indicating craft or industrial activity at the north west end of the site.

Further afield a number of stray Roman artefacts including pottery and coins have been found around the southern edge of Grunty fen to the north of the subject site (SMR5601 and SMR5626).

Medieval

Five hides in Wilburton were among the benefactions of Ethelwold and Brithnort to the church of Ely. In 1086 they contained 7 plough lands 3 of which assessed at 3 hides 1 virgate were in demense. There were 4 soke men bound to the land 9 villeins 9 cottars and 8 serfs (Pugh, 1968).

The parish was allotted to the Bishops of Ely in 1109 along with neighbouring Haddenham and Stretham. In 1251 the population consisted of 900 free tenants, 21 cutomories and virgaters and 11 cottars (*ibid*).

The church in Wilburton is probably Norman in origin but was rebuilt in the 13th and 15th centuries. The two fragments of shafts with capitals are the only remains of an earlier Norman church (SMR5869). The church consists of a chancel north vestry and organ chamber, nave, north chapel south porch and west tower. The tower and chancel arch seem to be late 13th century while the chancel vestry nave and porch can be dated to the 15th century. The tower is of three stages and dates from the middle of the 13th century. There are angle buttresses and a clamped buttress rising from the

string course. The tower was refashioned in the second half of the 15th century.

An evaluation undertaken by the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council (Connor, 2000) at Warren Lodge Farm revealed Medieval property boundaries. These property boundaries are likely to represent hedgerows or ditches along earlier property divisions. There was also a hint of ridge and furrow cultivation in places.

Post Medieval

Close to the subject site to the north is the Burystead (SMR01081), a late Elizabethan house of brick erected about 1600AD, is located on the site of a former manor house. In plan it consists of a central block with North and South wings projecting towards the east and large stair turrets in the angles. The principle gables have moulded brick copings with finials at the springs and apex. There is a string course of moulded brick dividing the two storeys which is carried over some of the windows to form a hood moulding. In terms of development it seems likely that the central portion was originally the hall and open to the roof and this would explain the two staircases, since the upper storeys in the wings would be isolated completely.

Wilburton Manor House (SMR No 07748) located to the NE of the Burystead was designed by Pugin in 1851. This building comprised of red brick with stone dressings, assymmetrically composed on all sides. The main windows had perpendicular tracery under straightheads.

The Grange to the north west of the church is a timber framed house with brick filled and tiled roofs. The ground floor is of brick while the filling in the upper stage is modern. The south wall and gable are entirely of brick. The original house was L shaped and must have been erected about 1500AD. In the 17th century a wing was added to the east making the plan roughly T shaped.

Also to the north of the church is Bell Gable House a late 17th century farmhouse of brick with curved gables and tiled roof. The windows and doorway are of later date probably mid 18th century. The only internal feature of interest is a good staircase with turned balusters.

To the west of the subject site is a post office which is a timber framed building.

Adjacent to the subject site to the east is the Tithe house (SMR05705), a 16th century

cottage which consists of a close studded timber framing with brick infill.

Historic Maps

The Tithe Map of 1823 shows School Lane as continuing in a NW-SE direction beyond the village towards an area of fields called Towns End. School Lane is not the only lane to follow this orientation, to the south are two other lanes on the same orientation and travelling to-wards the same area. These are Stone Lane and Gravel Pit Marches, the three lanes are approximately equidistant and seem to be aligned against Twenty Pence Lane which is the main road into Wilburton from the south.

The Tithe Map depicts a number of buildings within the subject site. It is difficult to determine the origins of these buildings but the road side location and the associated property boundary might suggest a medieval origin. Therefore the buildings depicted may represent later medieval ribbon development along School Lane. The fact that the properties appear to be perpendicular to the High Street is an indication that School Lane may be later than the High Street and its adjacent properties, School Lane may have cut through the properties at a later date.

The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887 shows that the subject site had been subdivided into two plots with two buildings on the School lane frontage and two long buildings set back from the frontage. On this map School lane terminates before it reaches the end of the village. The implication of this evidence is that the buildings depicted through cartographic sources show that the buildings within the development area may relate to a secondary route that was in use until 1880.

4 POTENTIAL SURVIVAL OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL DEPOSITS

Deposit depth

The survival of deposits within the area of development will be affected by the construction of houses and the insertion of associated services.

Archaeological deposits and features are likely to be encountered cutting into the natural geological horizons below topsoil and subsoil. Observations from the evaluation undertaken at Warren lodge Farm (Connor 2000) suggest that a depth of subsoil and topsoil of up to 0.7m might be expected. It is possible that horizontal stratigraphy could be encountered towards the School Lane end of the subject site, however, this must remain unconfirmed until trenching is carried out.

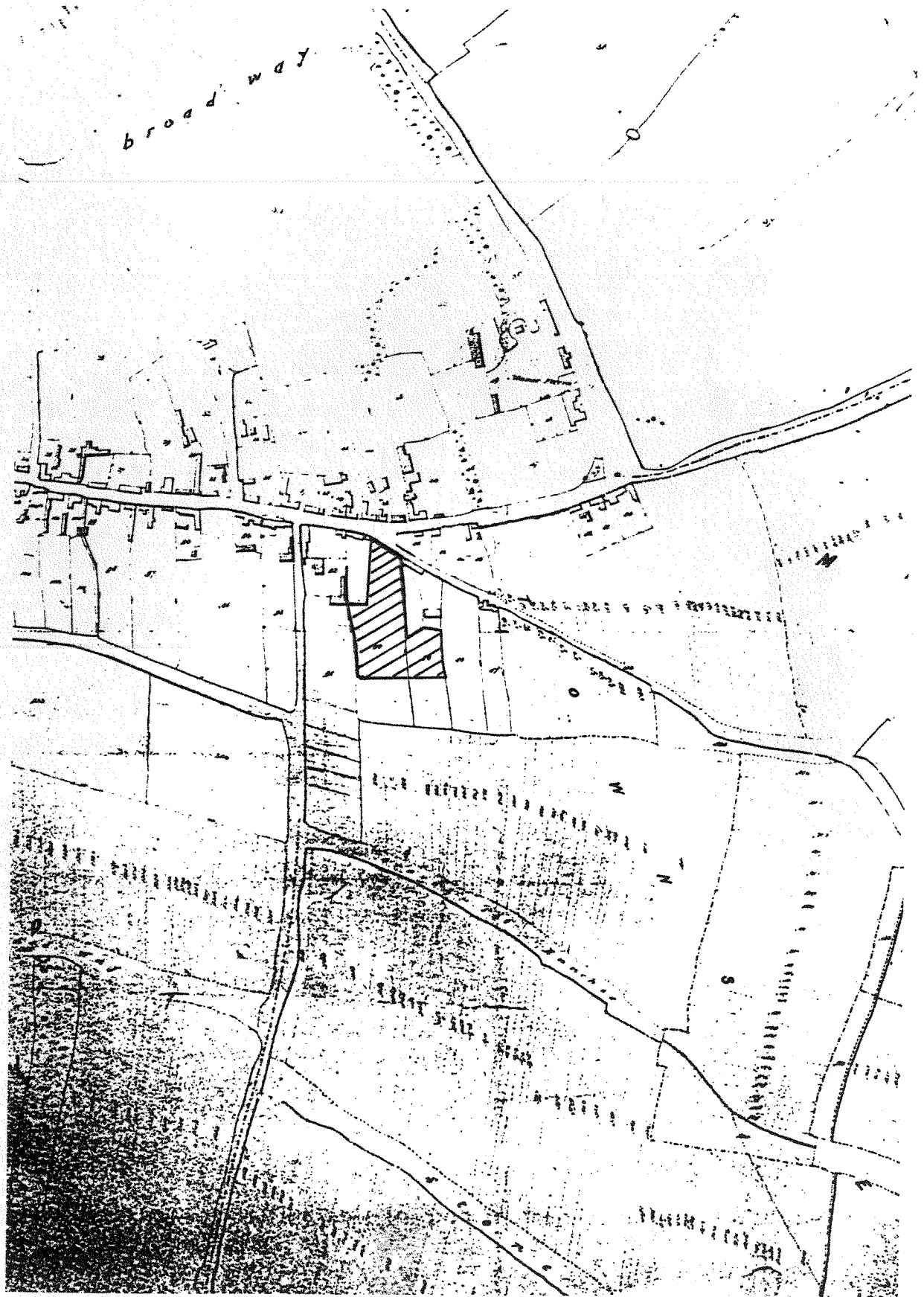


Figure 2 1823 Tythe Map

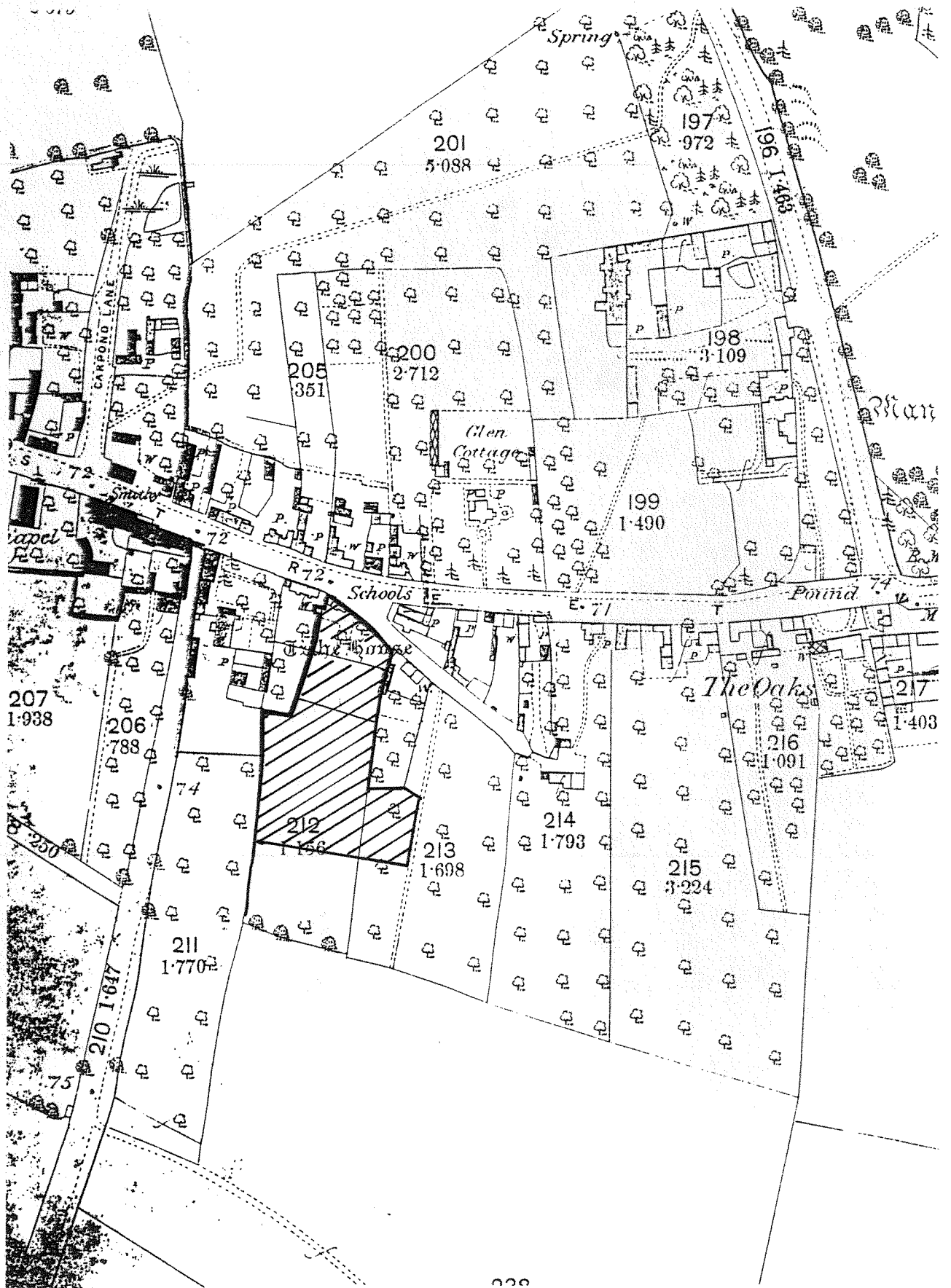


Figure 3 1887 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map

5 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL OF THE SITE

The Post Medieval and medieval periods are well represented in the record for this area. There are a number of buildings including the Tithe House and the Burystead which almost certainly have medieval origins. The Tithe house which is in the vicinity of the subject site is of particular interest.

The presence of Roman material from the evaluation (Connor 2000) at nearby Warren lodge farm indicates that there is moderate likelihood of encountering Roman remains within the development area.

Spatial Distribution of remains

Although it is possible that archaeological remains of any date may be encountered anywhere on the site, the highest potential is for remains of medieval date. The site can be divided into three zones, north, central and south.

The cartographic and archaeological background suggests that the greatest potential for medieval remains within the site will be at the northern end of the site at School Lane. The Tithe map 1823 and the first edition Ordnance Survey 1887 map depict buildings on the School Lane frontage.

It may be anticipated that medieval rubbish pits relating to the properties on the front would be located within this part of the site. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map shows that there are two buildings located within the central part of the site.

Medieval rubbish pits relating to any properties on School Lane may be located within southern part of the site.

6 POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposal has been submitted for the construction of seven new dwellings with associated access and services. Any development that involves excavation or ground work of more than minimal depth is likely to affect any archaeological remains that

potentially exist on the subject site. This means that all building foundations, service trenches and access roads are likely to have an archaeological impact

7 CONCLUSION

The desk top survey has revealed high potential for medieval remains and medium potential for Roman remains. Medieval structural remains are likely to be encountered in the northern part of the site. In the southern part of the development site it is possible that medieval rubbish pits relating to the properties on the front will be encountered.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

A programme of 5% trial trenching has been recommended by the CAO Brief to focus on areas that have demonstrated archaeological potential. Although the desk based assessment has highlighted the medieval period as being of high potential and the Roman period as having moderate potential, known sites and find spots are not specifically located within the development area. It is therefore recommended that the trial trenching is done on a regular grid pattern (whilst paying attention to practical considerations such as the position of live services, standing structures or tree preservation orders). Particular attention should be paid to the possibility of any street front activity which may be surviving along School lane.

9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank L.J Gawn Associates for commissioning this study on behalf of the Trustees of B.S. Pell (Deceased) and Dr Tim Reynolds, Senior Archaeologist at the County Sites and Monuments record for his assistance. The Brief was supplied by the Cambridgeshire County Council County Archaeology Office. Thanks are due to Aileen Connor for managing the project and Jon Cane for the illustrations.

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Cambridgeshire Sites and Monuments Record

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Tithe map of Wilburton 1823 CRO 5634



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