

Archaeological Field Unit

Archaeological Evaluation at 6 High Street, Burwell

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Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. B105

Commissioned by WCP on behalf of Dr. and Mrs. R. Dyer

**Archaeological Evaluation at
6 High Street, Burwell
(TL 5910 6595)**

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SUMMARY

On 30th August 2002 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land to the east of no. 6 High Street, Burwell (TL 5910 6595) by staff of the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council. The project was commissioned by the Whitworth Co-partnership on behalf of Dr. and Mrs. R. Dyer in advance of construction of a garage, workshop, shed and store with hard-standing and a driveway. The work was carried out in accordance with a Brief issued by Andy Thomas of the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Office.

The evaluation revealed nineteenth deposits only. No remains relating to the nearby fourteenth century house were detected.

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1 INTRODUCTION

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The evaluation revealed nineteenth century deposits only. No remains relating to the nearby fourteenth century house or the later building which ran parallel to Isaacson Road were detected although a nineteenth century pit may have been associated with these properties.

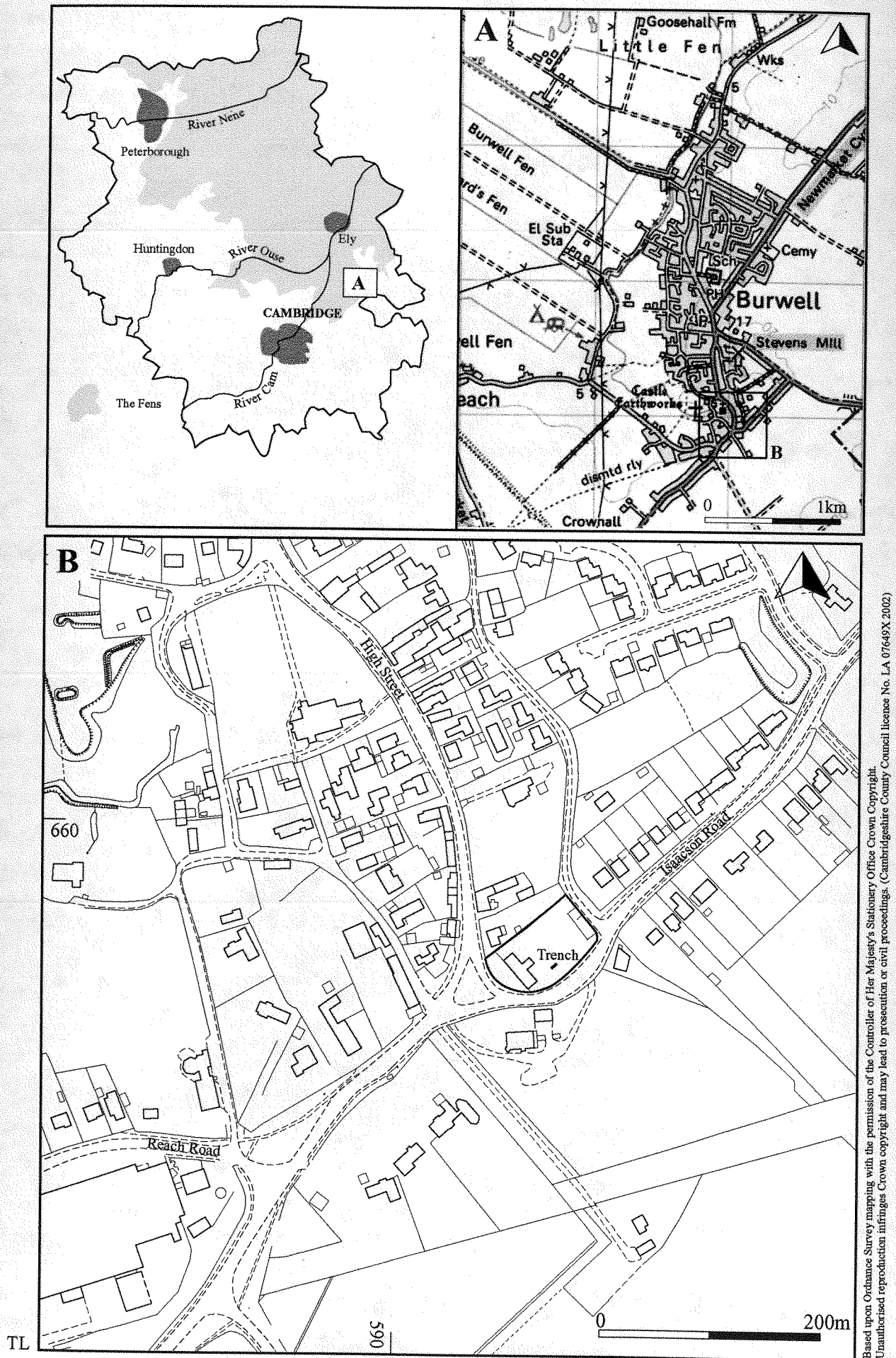
2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The land lies on Lower Chalk, at a height of approximately 13m OD, and has been used as a garden in the past few decades.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The village of Burwell lies close to the fen edge and extends for nearly two miles in a north-south direction. Prehistoric finds are recorded in the area in the Cambridgeshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record (SMR 4337, 6458 and 6478). These tend to be scatters of flint tools from the mesolithic and neolithic periods although a bronze axe is recorded in the 'fen' to the south-west and a Bronze Age axe was found close to the church of St. Mary.

Iron Age and Roman settlement is well attested to the south-west of the development site, particularly to the west of Burwell castle. These again are mainly stray finds, including pottery and tile and also earthworks or cropmarks. Roman remains were found during excavation some 300m to the west (SMR 11989) and during excavation at Reach Road (Connor, forthcoming).



Late Saxon and early medieval settlement remains were found during excavation in advance of development at Reach Road, Burwell (Connor, forthcoming).

No. 6 High Street is in the southern part of Burwell, known as High Town, 200m south-east of the medieval parish church of St. Mary's and extensive earthworks of Burwell castle (Scheduled Ancient Monument 29382). The construction will take place within the garden of no. 6 High Street, formerly known as 'The Old Manor House' or 'Isaacson's'. The main part of the house dates from the early to mid fourteenth century (Haigh 1988) and may have been built as a range of lodgings. It is built of limewashed clunch with plain tile roofs and has local eighteenth century brick chimneys. There are three ground floor and three first floor rooms (each with a garderobe). An extensive description of the house may be found in RCHME, Vol. 2, 1972. The house was modified in the seventeenth and eighteenth century and is currently being renovated.

Late nineteenth century Ordnance Survey maps show buildings along the southern boundary of the property. These were demolished during the twentieth century.

4 METHODOLOGY

A single trench 6m long and 1.6m wide was excavated using a JCB with a flat bladed bucket. The position of the trench was determined by the proposed layout of the garage and workshop (Fig. 1). After machining the trench was cleaned, photographed and recorded using the AFU standard contextual recording system. The spoil heap was scanned visually for artefacts.

5 RESULTS

The topsoil was composed of a dark grey/brown silty clay, 0.60m thick with clunch blocks. The topsoil sealed the natural geology (chalk/clunch).

Trench 1

Excavated on an east-west alignment in the 'foot-print' of the proposed building the trench contained a single, shallow, pit (2m wide and 0.10m deep) which contained a dark brown clay silt with nineteenth century domestic debris (including glass and glazed pottery).

6 DISCUSSION

Deposits encountered in the evaluation represent nineteenth century domestic debris from either the house to the west (6 High Street) or the former buildings along Issacson Road. The amount of clunch in the topsoil indicates redeposition of topsoil, sealing a Victorian pit. The lack of archaeological deposits suggests the area has been a yard or garden during most of its history.

7 CONCLUSION

In spite of the proximity of the trench to the medieval building no remains pre-dating the nineteenth century occupation of the site were found. The nineteenth century debris may have derived from the buildings which fronted onto Isaacson Road or from 6 High Street.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank WCP who commissioned the work on behalf of Dr. and Mrs. R. Dyer. The project was managed by Judith Roberts and the illustrations prepared by Emily Oakes. The brief for archaeological works was written by Andy Thomas, County Archaeology Office, and the site was monitored by Jeremy Parsons.

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