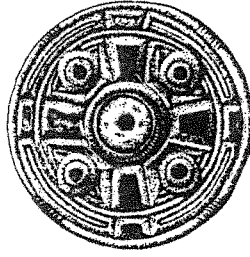


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**An Archaeological Evaluation at Burwell Early
Learners Centre, Burwell, Cambridgeshire**

Rob Atkins

January 2003

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. B113

Commissioned by Burwell Early Learners Centre

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Burwell, Cambridgeshire**

Rob Atkins

2003

Editor: Judith Roberts
Illustrator: Crane Begg



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©Archaeological Field Unit
Cambridgeshire County Council
Fulbourn Community Centre
Haggis Gap, Fulbourn
Cambridgeshire CB1 5HD
Tel (01223) 5762014
Fax (01223) 880946

Arch.field.unit@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
<http://edweb.camcnty.gov.uk/afu>

SUMMARY

On the 20th January 2003 the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council conducted an archaeological evaluation on land at Burwell Primary School, The Causeway, Burwell, Cambridgeshire (TL 5889/6697) in advance of construction of a school building.

Trenches totalling 63.9m in length were mechanically excavated within the 0.22 hectare site. Directly below topsoil there was natural lower chalk bedrock. No archaeological features were found within the development area.

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**An Archaeological Evaluation at Burwell Early Learners Centre, Burwell,
Cambridgeshire
(TL 5889/6697)**

1 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological evaluation was carried out at Burwell Primary School, Burwell, Cambridgeshire (TL 5889/6697) to fulfil requirements of a planning application (E/00/0653) in advance of the construction of an Early Learners Centre close to the Primary School building. A visit to the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) as part of the evaluation took place on 14th January 2003. The evaluation was carried out by the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council on 20th January 2003.

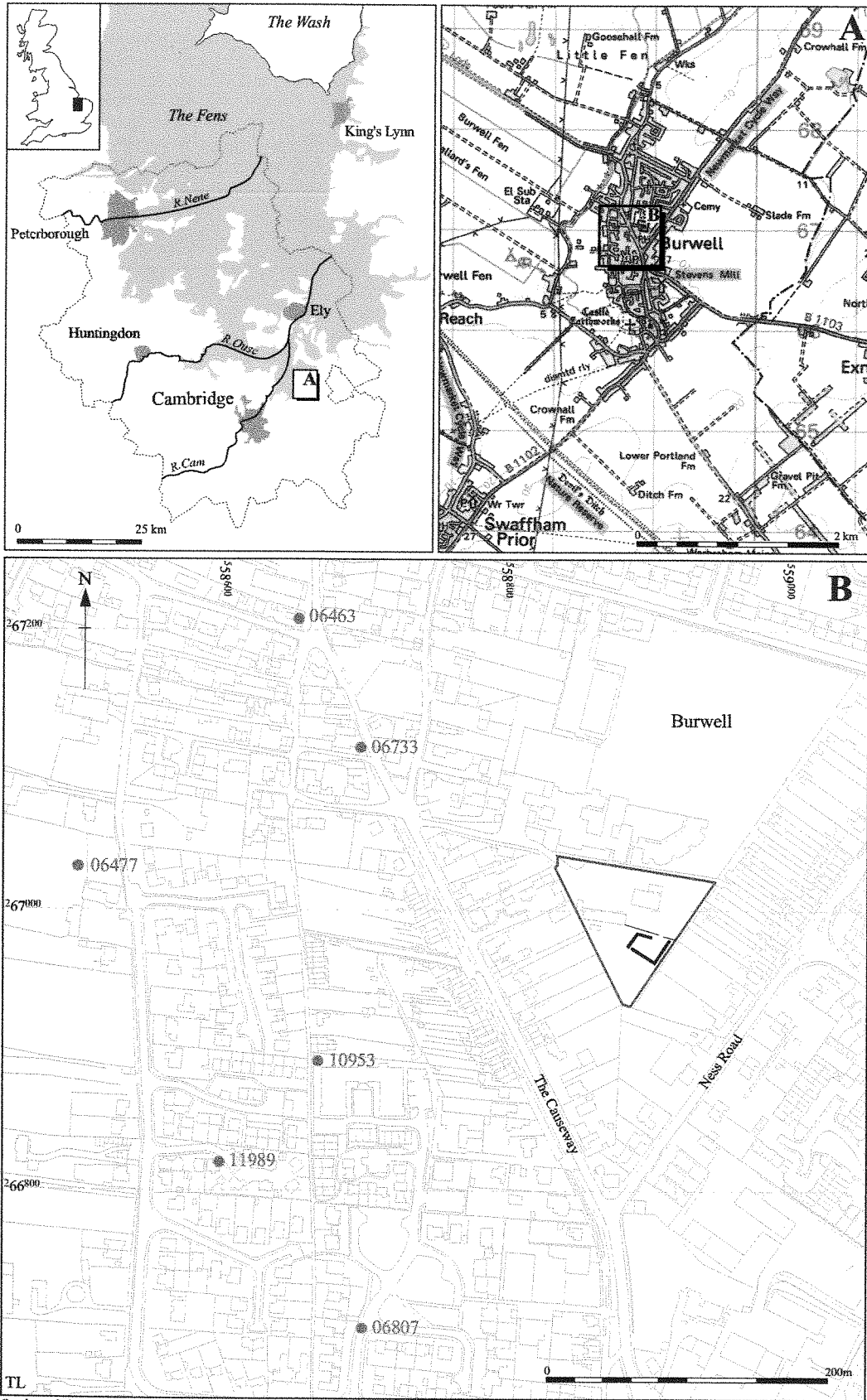
The archaeological objectives of the site were recorded in the Design Brief for the evaluation (Thomas 2001). This Brief required that the evaluation establish the character, date, state of preservation and extent of any archaeological remains within the areas to be affected. In the event that archaeological remains were present, the appropriate methodologies and suitable resourcing levels for excavation were to be included in the evaluation report. An archaeological specification for the work was written detailing the proposed archaeological working for the site (Roberts 2002). This specification and the proposed location of the archaeological trenches were approved by the County Council Archaeological Office before the start of the evaluation.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The development area lies within historic Burwell. The subject site was 100m to the east of The Causeway within a grassed area used as a recreation area for the school at 11m Above Ordnance Datum (Fig 1). The natural geology is Lower Chalk (BGS 1974). The land sloped gently from approximately 14m AOD to the west to 8.8m AOD along The Causeway.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Fig 1)

In accordance with the archaeological brief for the site (Thomas 2001), archaeological and historical sources were consulted at the archives of the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit and Cambridgeshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). These have recorded



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Figure 1 Location of Trenches with Development Area and SMR information.

previous archaeological work, any archaeological finds reported and the historic documentation for the area. Although no archaeological remains are recorded from the site itself, a considerable amount of archaeology is known from the surrounding area (Fig 1).

A Mesolithic flint scatter has been recorded c.400m to the west of the site (SMR No. 6477; Fig 1). Other stray prehistoric finds have been found further away (SMR No. 6457 and No. 6458 were both 1 km to the north and No. 6478 800m to the west). These prehistoric finds 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.

Roman settlement remains are well attested to the south-west of the development site. Roman features were found during an archaeological evaluation some 300m to the west. These consist of a track way, pit and boundary ditch (SMR No. 11989; Kenney 1996). Roman pottery scatters were recorded 250m to the west (SMR No. 10953) and 350m to the south-west (SMR No. 6807).

The site was c.250m north of the medieval settlement of High Town, which stopped at Pound Hill (RCHM 1972, 18). Another medieval settlement was over 300m to the north of the development site along North Street. A medieval route way called The Causeway linked these two settlements (SMR No. 6733; Fig 1). The site lies c.100m to the east of this route way. It is thought that The Causeway originated as a headland within the common fields and only became a road when North Street developed, perhaps in late medieval times (RCHM 1972, 47). The Causeway is mentioned in 1575 and was still grazed by cattle in the 1640s (VCH 2002, 337). The only surviving pre-nineteenth century structure is an early seventeenth century inn (SMR No. 6463; Fig 1).

The development area is shown as open-field arable on the c.1800 map of Burwell (VCH 2002, 335). The first edition 1886 Ordnance Survey map shows the development area as part of an open field. In the twentieth century, the area became a recreation ground for Burwell School.

4 METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

A mechanical excavator with a 1.6m wide flat-bladed ditching bucket under archaeological supervision excavated trial trenches within the foundations of the proposed development (Fig 1). The proposed trial trench layout was slightly redrawn on site in order to leave undisturbed a mature hedge on the northern side as well as trees and children's play equipment on the southern side.

In the event, a roughly 'U'-shaped trench area was excavated through grass and topsoil directly onto chalk bedrock. The topsoil comprised dark grey brown silty clay sand containing no archaeological finds.

The depth of overburden varied from 0.32m in the easternmost trench to 0.48m in the western trench. The variation in depth may be due partly to hillwash from the higher land to the west.

No archaeological features were noted on the site and no artefacts were recovered from the spoil.

5 CONCLUSION

No archaeological features were found by this evaluation. Since there is no evidence for truncation it must be concluded that these results indicate the absence of traceable occupation activity for all periods. It is, therefore, highly unlikely that any archaeological features exist within the development area.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Burwell Early Learners Centre who commissioned and funded the archaeological work and especially to Maggie Church for her helpful advice. Judith Roberts managed the project. The illustrations were produced by Crane Begg.

The brief for archaeological works was written by Andy Thomas, Development Control Officer, from the County Archaeology Office (CAO). Kasia Gdaniec, Development Control Officer, monitored the evaluation. Sarah Poppy, SMR Officer, kindly supplied information for Fig 1.

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The Archaeological Field Unit
Fulbourn Community Centre
Haggis Gap
Fulbourn
Cambridge CB1 5HD
Tel (01223) 881614
Fax (01223) 880946