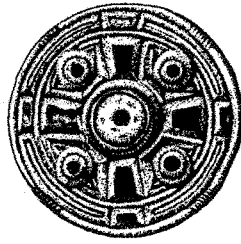


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Archaeological Field Unit

**An Archaeological Evaluation at Bank Farm, Long  
Drove, Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire**

Rob Atkins

2003

**Cambridgeshire County Council**

Report No. B116

Commissioned by Mr. J. Reynolds

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Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire**

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## SUMMARY

*On the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> May 2003 the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council conducted an archaeological evaluation on land at Bank Farm, Long Drove, Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire (TL 511/681) in advance of construction of a fishing lake.*

*Trenches totalling 300m in length were mechanically excavated within the 2.4 hectare site. Directly below topsoil there was natural sands and gravels and clay deposits. No archaeological features were found within the development area.*

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**An Archaeological Evaluation at Bank Farm, Long Drove, Waterbeach,  
Cambridgeshire  
(TL 511/681)**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

An archaeological evaluation was carried out at Bank Farm, Long Drove, Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire (TL 511/681) to fulfil requirements of a planning application (S/0682/02/F) in advance of the construction of a fishing lake. A visit to the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) as part of the evaluation took place on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2003. The evaluation was carried out by the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> May 2003.

The archaeological objectives of the site were recorded in the Design Brief for the evaluation (Thomas 2002). This Brief required that the evaluation establish the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains on the site through trial trenching and or test pitting a minimum 2% sample of the site. In the event that archaeological remains were present the evaluation was to consider appropriate methodologies and suitable resourcing levels for excavation. The evaluation report was to include a suitable level of documentary research to set the results in their geographical, topographical, archaeological and historical context.

An archaeological specification for the work was written detailing the proposed archaeological working for the site (Connor 2003). 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 more than 2km to the north-east of Waterbeach. The natural geology is 1<sup>st</sup> Terrace River Gravels (BGS 1974). Within the evaluation trenches the natural subsoil consisted mostly of orange sands and gravels. There were also patches of white/grey sand, some small irregular blue grey clay and occasional small peat patches. Deep deposits of peat are known closer to the River Cam and also to the north.



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**Figure 1** Location of Investigation Area (red) and SMR Numbers (green).

### **3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Fig 1)**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In accordance with the archaeological brief for the site (Thomas 2002), 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 previous archaeological work, any archaeological finds reported and the historic documentation for the area.

This part of Waterbeach parish has only been subject to non-intrusive archaeological work in particular field walking by David Hall which found no archaeological finds in the area (Hall 1996). The landowner, Mr. John Reynolds and his brother have regularly flown the site including the drought year of 1975 and they have looked at aerial photographs and in all cases no cropmarks were seen on the development site (pers comm. Mr. J Reynolds). The site has also been metal detected (pers comm. Mr. J Reynolds) and field walked (see below) on several occasions and no finds have been recovered. Separately, several prehistoric finds have been reported over the years by the landowners including five findspots within a kilometre of the site (Fig 1).

#### **3.2 Prehistoric**

The site was on the fen edge in the prehistoric period with the fen a few hundred metres to the east (Hall 1996, fig 66, 122). Known prehistoric sites are c.1.5km to the north-west (Hall 1996, 122).

Two late Neolithic stone axes may have come from the site itself (SMR No. 6735). They were ploughed up in 1951 and in 1952 presented to the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in Cambridge. A report on the axes stressed that only an approximate map location could be given for the location of the axes as TL 513682 (Fell and Liversidge 1954, 38-9). Near to the site several Neolithic finds have been found. About 300m to the west a polished Neolithic stone axe was found (SMR No. 6358), c.500m to the north-west another polished Neolithic stone axe was found (SMR No. 6357) and 1km to the south a flint Neolithic chisel and a possible Langdale axe were found (SMR No. 6507 and SMR 6838).

The stone axes and chisel mentioned above are part of a scatter of Neolithic implements recorded in Waterbeach parish in the gravelly fens north-east of Waterbeach Lane (Hall 1996, 119). By 1996 this area had recorded nine flint axes and three of stone as well as a flaked stone chisel all dated to the Neolithic period. These finds spots were all investigated in fieldwalking but there were no other artefacts or lithic scatters in the areas, even though the soils were gravelly. This led David Hall to conclude that the axes probably

represent a background usage by people living at nearby Swaffham Fen (1996, 119).

In addition to the above finds, five Neolithic stone and flint axes and a Bronze Age Palstave axe have been recently reported in the above area including a stone axe possibly from Cornwall and an unused highly polished axe from a non local source (Critchley and Atkins 2003). It should be pointed out that while some of these axes from the area had been used before deposition others were highly polished and unused with examples originating from afar including probably Cornwall, Langdale and Charnwood Forest. It is possible that these may have been disposed of for "ritual" reasons.

### **3.3 Post prehistoric**

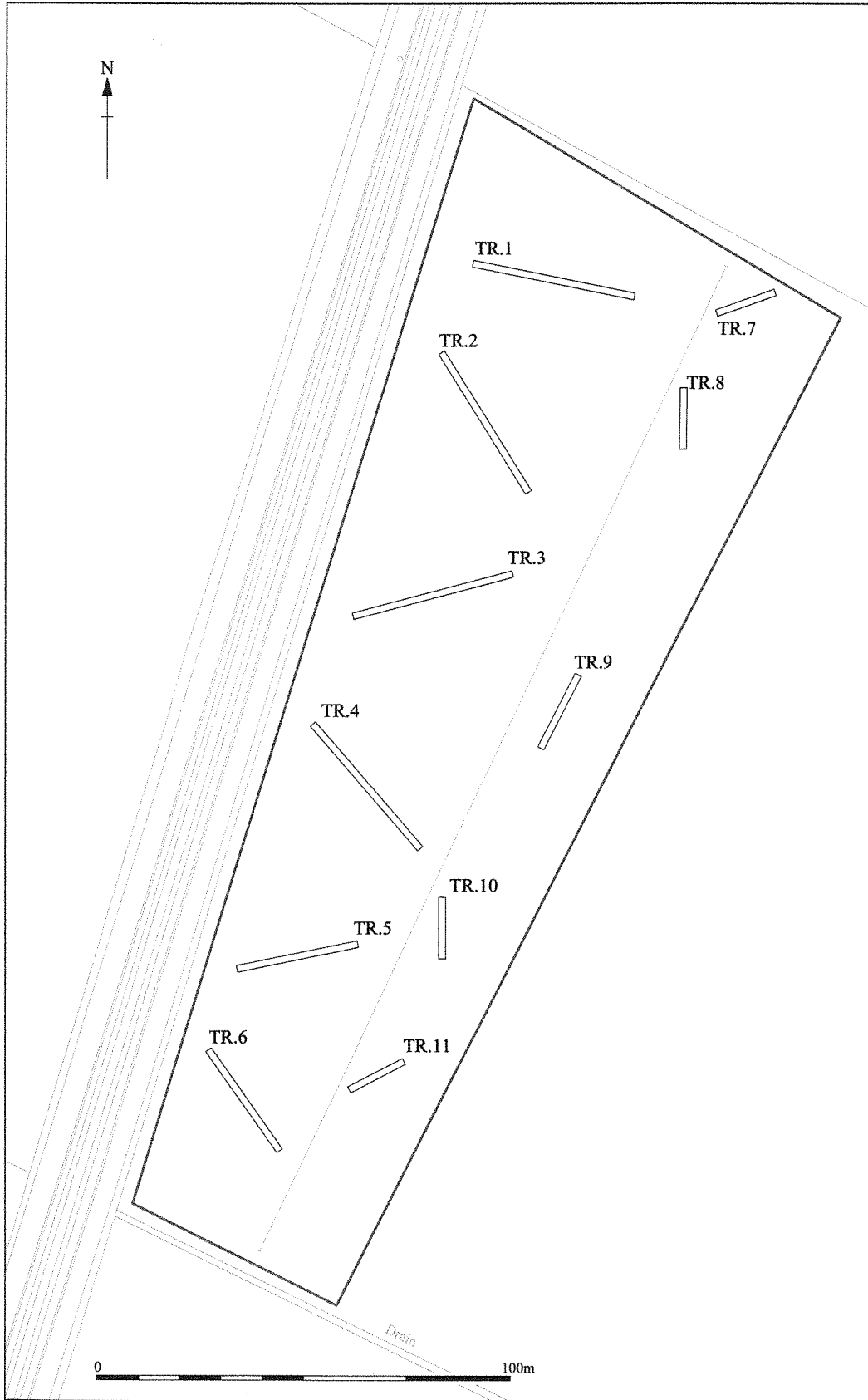
In the Roman period the fen was a few hundred metres to the east of the site (Hall 1996, fig 66, 122) though by the medieval period the site had become part of the Fen (Hall 1996, fig 68). The present evaluation has shown that little physical remains to indicate the presence of the former fen with only a thin lense of denuded peat at the base of the topsoil.

Although numerous Roman finds are known from the parish of Waterbeach including the Car Dyke Roman Canal, they are concentrated over a kilometre away to the south and west of the subject site. No Saxon or medieval finds are known within a kilometre of the site.

By the post-medieval period c.1500 the site was in the area call Geist (later Joist) Fen, so named from the practice of agisting (stealing) outsider's cattle (VCH 1989, 252). About 1600 Joist Fen was said to cover almost 1100 acres of which one sixth was often flooded. The eastern half of Waterbeach parish remained fen pasture (common) until after 1800. In 1814 the area was Inclosed and by the 1840's had been divided into small farms. The 1865 first edition 1" Ordnance Survey Map shows that Long Drove had already been built but was called Middlehill Drove. The railway line (west boundary of the site) had also been built though the site was empty and was part of a large field. A large drainage channel running north to south divides the present site into two with the western area has been left fallow and the eastern area part of a large pea field (Fig 2). In recent years the site was ploughed deeper and natural sands and gravels have been turned over (pers comm. Mr. J Reynolds).

## **4 METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS (Figs 1 and 2)**

A mechanical excavator with a 1.6m wide flat-bladed ditching bucket under archaeological supervision excavated trial trenches within the site (Fig 2). The trenches were between 15m and 40m in length totalling 300m in all and 1.6m



**Figure 2** Trench Plan



wide. The trenches were spaced to give an even representation of the area to be developed. The trench area was excavated through the topsoil directly onto natural subsoil. The topsoil comprised a very dark grey brown loamy sand and in places a lense of denuded peat containing no archaeological finds. The depth of overburden varied from 0.34m to 0.51m depending partly on how deeply it had been ploughed.

No archaeological features were noted in the trenches and the only feature was single brush drain which the landowner helped to dig when he was a child (pers comm. Mr. John Reynolds). Test holes through several areas of natural variations were carried out.

## **5 CONCLUSIONS**

No archaeological features were found by this evaluation. Since there is no evidence for truncation (apart from slightly deeper ploughing in places) 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.

The evaluation seems to add credence to Hall's that the Neolithic finds within the general area of the site represent a background usage by people from afar possibly Swaffham Fen.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The author would like to thank John Reynolds who not only commissioned and funded the archaeological work but also drove the JCB during the evaluation. Aileen Connor 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). Andy Thomas also monitored the evaluation. Adam Lodoen, kindly supplied information from the SMR.

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