



Archaeological Field Unit

**A Late Post-Medieval Quarry At Burwell Village
Community School: An Archaeological Evaluation**

Rob Atkins

July 2005

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. 809

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**A Late Post-Medieval Quarry At Burwell Village Community School:
An Archaeological Evaluation**

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SUMMARY

On the 6th June 2005 the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit conducted an archaeological evaluation on land at Burwell Village Community School, The Causeway, Burwell, Cambridgeshire (TL 5881 6712) in advance of construction of a school library.

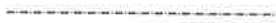









A trench totalling 14.90m in length was mechanically excavated within the c.550m² site. A large c.19th-century quarry pit more than 9.5m in length and 0.8m deep was found cutting natural lower chalk bedrock. No other archaeological features were found within the development area.

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Drawing Conventions

Sections

Limit of Excavation	
Cut	
Cut - Conjectured	
Soil Horizon	
Soil Horizon - Conjectured	
Intrusion/Truncation	
Top of Natural	
Top Surface	
Break in Section	
Cut Number	
Deposit Number	117
Ordinance Datum	$\frac{18.45m}{\wedge}$ ODN

Plans

Limit of Excavation	
Deposit - Conjectured	
Natural Features	
Intrusion/Truncation	
Sondages/Machine Strip	
Illustrated Section	
Archaeological Deposit	
Excavated Slot	
Cut Number	118

**A Late Post-Medieval Quarry At Burwell Village Community School:
An Archaeological Evaluation
(TL 5881 6712)**

1 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological evaluation was carried out at Burwell Village Community School, Burwell, Cambridgeshire (TL 5881 6712) in advance of the construction of a school library.

The evaluation was carried out by Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit (CCC AFU) on 6th June 2005 on behalf of Education Property Services, also Cambridgeshire County Council. This work was a planning condition requirement of Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning & Countryside Advice section (Andy Thomas), in advance of a proposed new library building on the site.

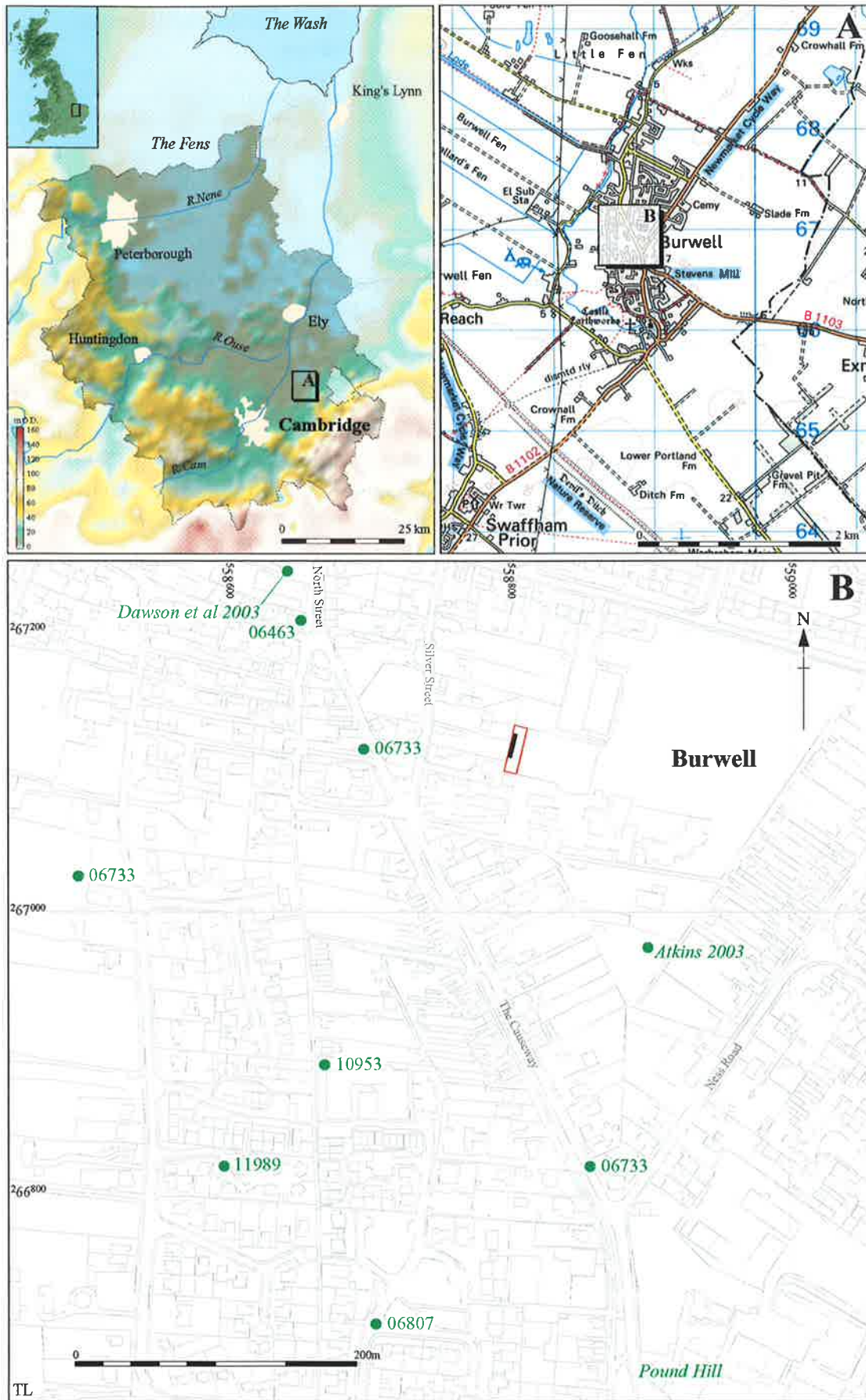
The archaeological objectives of the site were recorded in the archaeological specification for the work (Macaulay 2004). This required the evaluation to seek to establish the character, date, state of preservation and extent of any archaeological remains in the proposed development area. In the event that archaeological remains were present, the evaluation was required to consider appropriate methodologies and suitable resourcing levels for excavation.

2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The development area lies within historic Burwell. The site was 100m to the east of The Causeway within a grassed flat area adjacent to the school's tennis courts (Fig. 1). The natural geology is Lower Chalk (BGS 1974).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Archaeological and historical sources at the archives of CCC AFU and Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (HER; formerly Sites and Monuments Record) have recorded 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).



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Figure 1 Location of trench (black) with development area (red) and HER information

A Mesolithic flint scatter has been recorded less than 400m to the west of the site (HER No. 6477; Fig 1). Other stray prehistoric finds have been found further away (HER No. 6457 and No. 6458 were both 1 km to the north and HER 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 350m to the south-west, consisting of a trackway, pit and boundary ditch (HER No. 11989; Kenney 1996). Roman pottery scatters were recorded 250m to the south-west (HER No. 10953) and 400m to the south-west (HER No. 6807).

The site was *c.*400m north of the medieval settlement of High Town, which stopped at Pound Hill (RCHM 1972, 18). Another medieval settlement possibly starts *c.*150m to the north of the development site along North Street. An archaeological evaluation 250m to the north-west, off North Street, found the remains a small timber framed building, probably of medieval date, and a scatter of ditches and pits dating between the 12th and 16th centuries (Dawson *et al* 2003).

A medieval route way called The Causeway linked these two settlements (HER No. 6733; Fig 1). The development 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 (RCHM 1972, 47). The Causeway is mentioned in 1575 and was still grazed by cattle in the 1640s (Wareham & Wright 2002, 337). The only surviving pre-19th-century structure along The Causeway is an early 17th-century inn (HER No. 6463; Fig. 1). Burwell's post-medieval brick works were 2km to the north-west of the site. An archaeological evaluation *c.*150m to the south found no archaeology (Atkins 2003).

The development area is shown as open-field arable on the *c.*1800 map of Burwell (Wareham & Wright 2002, 335). The first edition 1886 Ordnance Survey map shows the development area as part of an open field off Silver Street. Silver Street, itself is not recorded on the earlier *c.*1800 map. In the 20th century, the area became part of the recreation ground for Burwell School.

4 METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

A mechanical excavator with a 1.6m wide flat-bladed ditching bucket excavated a 14.9m long trial trench under archaeological supervision within the foundations of the proposed development (Figs. 1 and 2). The trench was located along the fence to avoid services adjacent to the east.



Figure 2 *Plan of trench*

Lower Chalk was encountered in the northern third of the trench 0.8m below the ground level. A large quarry pit (4) cut the natural chalk more than 9m in length and 0.8m deep. There were two layers within the pit; the lower layer (3) was 0.6m thick and consisted of mid brown silty sand with a few small chalk patches. Three later post-medieval pottery sherds and two clay pipe stems were recovered from the fill. The upper layer (5) was 0.2m thick and consisted of a mid to light brown silty sand with a few chalk patches and a little clay.

The quarry pit and the natural chalk were sealed by a 0.6m thick subsoil layer (2) which was mid brown silty sand. The topsoil (1) 0.2m thick was a mid to dark brown sandy silt.

6 CONCLUSIONS

A large c.19th-century quarry pit was found in the evaluation trench presumably for the extraction of the natural chalk. Chalk would have been used for lime mortar in the building industry. It is likely that the chalk was used for the building of houses along The Causeway or Silver Street.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Cambridgeshire County Council who commissioned and funded the work. Stephen Macaulay managed the project, the report was edited by Stephen Macaulay and Elizabeth Shepherd Popescu and Carlos Silva produced the illustrations. Kasia Gdaniec, Development Control archaeologist, Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning and Countryside Advice (CAPCA), visited the site and monitored the evaluation.

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APPENDIX 1: FINDS

Pottery

by Carole Fletcher

Three pottery sherds and two clay pipe stems were found. The pottery consisted of a Post-Medieval Black Glazed ware *c.*1600-1800, a refined white earthenware *c.*1750+ and a Nottingham or Derbyshire stoneware dating to *c.*late 18th or 19th century.

Brick

by Rob Atkins

A complete brick was recovered from the subsoil (2). The brick is a Burwell White and is 214mm in length by 108mm width and 60mm thick. There is a crude sub-rectangular frog cut into the top of the brick 123mm in length by 50mm width and up to 15mm thick. Frogging started in the later 18th century to save money on clay as well as making the brick lighter so that it could be transported more easily. The relative crudeness and shallowness of the Burwell frog and the size of brick implies a date of *c.*1800-1850.



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