

Archaeological Field Unit

**A Medieval Quarry at 9 Mandeville, Burwell: An Archaeological  
Evaluation**

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**Cambridgeshire County Council**

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**A Medieval Quarry at 9 Mandeville, Burwell:  
An Archaeological Evaluation**

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## 1 SUMMARY

*An archaeological evaluation approximately 0.11ha in area was undertaken on land between Church Lane and Mandeville, Burwell, Cambridgeshire (TL 5893 6600). This was carried out prior to a proposed housing development, in response to a brief set by the County Archaeology Office (CAO).*

*Four trenches were opened and a single archaeological feature observed in one of them. This feature, a Quarry for chunch extraction contained diagnostic pottery sherds, provisionally dated to the medieval period. It was located adjacent to Church Lane and is in keeping with the phase of medieval village development associated with the Ancient Church of St. Mary.*

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**A Medieval Quarry at 9 Mandeville, Burwell:  
An Archaeological Evaluation  
(TL 5893 6600)**

**INTRODUCTION**

Between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of June 2003, the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council (AFU) carried out an archaeological evaluation on land between Church Lane and Mandeville, Burwell, Cambridgeshire (TL 5893 6600). The work was carried out at the request of Solo Design, in response to a brief set by the County Archaeology Office (CAO); the author carried out all excavation and supervision on the site.

The site is situated on the property presently occupied by No.9 Mandeville, bound to the east by Church Lane, south and west by Mandeville and to the north by two properties. The plot is sub-rectangular in plan, approximately 0.11ha in area.

The presence of archaeology was considered likely by the CAO due to the proximity of major historic sites including the Ancient Church of St. Mary (smrCB433) and Burwell Castle (smrCB14471, Scheduled Ancient Monument 29382).

Weather conditions during the fieldwork were good, dry and sunny, allowing the work to be carried out safely and without delay. The suitability of conditions allowed for a high confidence rating of results.

**GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

In reference to the Institute of Geological Sciences (Sheet 188), the site is located to the western edge of the Upper Beds of Cretaceous Lower Chalk within the historic village of Burwell.

The site is located at approximately 15mOD on level ground. It is situated 1-2m above the road surface of Mandeville which borders it to both south and west.

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The 1817 enclosure map (Q/R DC 29 (R86/12 tracing) show the site was not built up, but was occupied by small enclosures, crofts and tofts. The 1842 Tithe map again shows small enclosures but also with street front buildings to the west.

The site is located within the core of the medieval village of Burwell to the south of the Church of St Mary (smrCB433). Close by to the west is the 12<sup>th</sup> century Burwell Castle (smrCB14471, Scheduled Monument 29382). The castle is of national importance; excavations revealing that it had never been completed. Beneath the castle laid the remains of Anglo-Saxon buildings. An extensive Roman settlement, perhaps a villa is located immediately to the south of the castle.

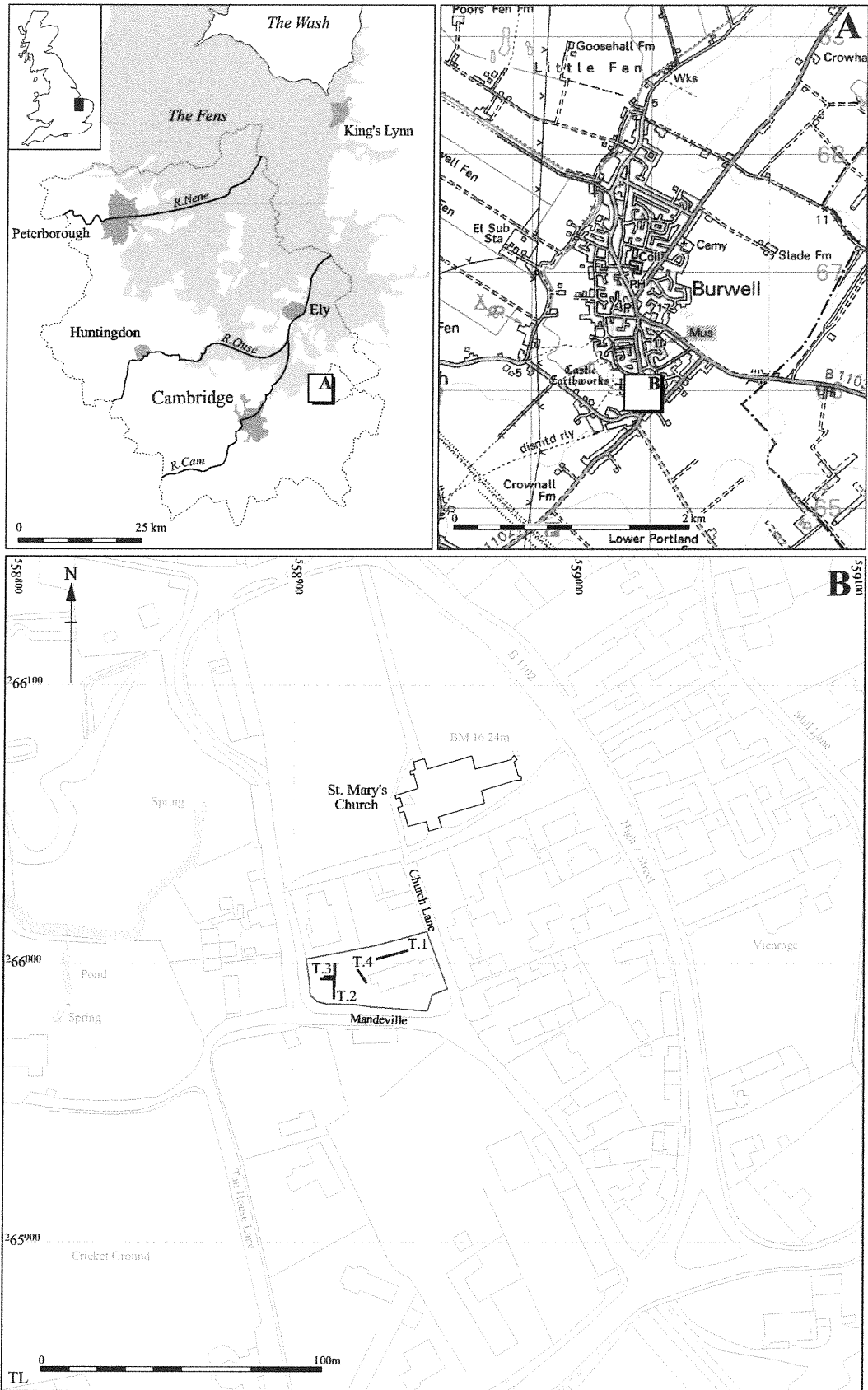
An archaeological investigation at Pembroke Farm suggested that quarrying and 19<sup>th</sup> century landscaping had destroyed archaeological remains in that area.

The SMR indicates that the area to the north and west had several recorded archaeological features and finds, all of which were from within 250m. These were, in chronological order; a palaeolithic axe, an antler implement of unknown date, a hoard of late Bronze Age objects, an early 14<sup>th</sup> Century house, a 16<sup>th</sup> Century house, a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Manor house and a 19<sup>th</sup> Century farm.

Recent archaeological excavation in advance of Housing development on Reach Road to the southwest revealed extensive remains dating from the Anglo-Saxon to medieval periods. The village of Burwell may therefore have extended further than had been thought. Remains included both settlement and industrial/craft related features as well as evidence of an ancient waterway and possible Roman Road. (Archaeological Field Unit, work in progress).

## **METHODOLOGY**

Four trenches, totalling 34.65m in length, were opened using a mechanical excavator with a 0.8m toothless ditching bucket, under the direction and supervision of an archaeologist (see Fig. 1). The trenching scheme was designed to allow maximum coverage of the site and identification of any archaeological features therein. The presence of an extant house, mature trees under Preservation Orders (T.P.O.'s), and health and safety issues constrained the positioning of these trenches. Where any potential features were revealed, the trench was widened to ascertain continuation or associated features. This again was subject to the above factors.



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**Figure 1** Location of Trenches with Development Area outlined.

The trenches were cleaned using hand tools where appropriate, photographed, planned and located to the Ordinance Survey. Each trench, irrespective of presence of features, was subject to hand-drawn sections/profiles and recorded according to standard AFU methodologies. This also included photography using monochrome, colour manual and colour digital cameras. No bulk samples were taken due to the near total absence of archaeological features.

## **RESULTS**

### **Trench 1**

Trench 1 was 11.3m long and contained one feature, 10. Beyond this, to the west the chalk bedrock rose closer to the present ground surface and was devoid of archaeological features.

Quarry 10 was at least 0.8m wide, over 1.65m deep and in excess of 3m long. This quarry, for clunch extraction contained diagnostic pottery sherds, dated to the medieval period. It was located adjacent to Church Lane and is in keeping with the phase of medieval village development associated with the Ancient Church of St. Mary. The presence of a partially worked clunch block in Trench 4 adds to the supposition that it was being quarried for building works. Contexts within this feature (18-24) consist of reasonably well-defined silty chalk deposits, all sloping down towards the east, back-filling the quarry. Context 22, a deposit of clunch blocks with many voids, contained secure pottery sherds, provisionally dated as medieval.

### **Trench 2**

Trench 2 was 12.85m long and contained no discernable archaeological features. The profile was similar to Trench 1, but somewhat deeper.

The average depth of overburden, above the chalk bedrock was 1m, increasing to 1.1m where an area of small voids was in evidence. Upon investigation these were concluded to be naturally occurring fractures in the chalk exacerbated by water and root disturbance.

A few finds, including medium-sized mammal bones (sheep or goat) were found 0.5m below the current ground surface. Other finds include ceramics dating from the last two centuries, and were well mixed. i.e. not in chronological order. The profile of this trench was consistent with an area undisturbed by cut features. Very high percentages of small to large roots were in evidence throughout the soils, although with a noticeable concentration in certain deposits. These deposits were shown to be similar to one another and were once or at present representative of topsoil. The present property owner, living there for nearly forty years, said the area into which Trench 2 and 3 were cut was until relatively recently an orchard. Recovery of walnuts and unidentified stone fruit from excavated soils confirmed this.



### **Trench 3**

Trench 3 was 4.75m long, up to 1.6m wide and 1.05m deep, forming a "T" shape with Trench 2. The initial eastern 1 metre of trenching revealed some potential features, resembling postholes. In response to this, the trench was doubled in width, revealing, in total three potential archaeological features. Upon excavation, these features turned out to be natural dips in the fairly flat upper horizon of the chalk bedrock. Two features did contain finds: - in one, a partial juvenile pig molar, one small glazed pottery fragment (<2cm) and very small clinker fragments. In another, two post-medieval pottery fragments (<2cm) and very small clinker fragments. These finds were similar to those at other depths and in different contexts of the profile, which also contained modern glass, ceramics and plastic. This would indicate that the confidence level one can assign to these being "real" would be low to negligible. The depth of the features did not exceed 5cm and taking into account the level of root intrusion, they can be dismissed.

### **Trench 4**

Trench 4 was 5.75m long, 0.8m wide and 1.10m deep (max.). Situated to the west of the extant building, running roughly at right angles to Trench 1. No archaeological features were observed here. Finds retrieved included one block of partially worked clunch, and several large fragments of modern broken bottle glass and ceramic tile. The profile of this trench was almost identical to that found in Trench 2. The exceptions to this lay at either end of the trench; a midden, rich in modern finds (listed above), was observed extending 1m from the northern end of the trench. The lower horizon of which was 0.40m from surface, the upper horizon (0.20m) was sharp and overlain by topsoil and turf.

## **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of the evaluation was to establish the range of archaeological remains, in terms of character, date and degree of preservation. The site was expected to show some of the elements of mediaeval development relating to either the nearby church or the Castle. The limited amount of pottery retrieved was in a secure context and included diagnostic rim sherds, provisionally dated as medieval.

The east end of the plot, facing onto Church Lane, was expected to have more intense archaeology. The quarry exposed here was in fact the only feature on site. As quarrying is also recorded for the area previously occupied by Old Pembroke farm, on the eastern side of Church Lane it may be concluded that the quarry was fairly extensive and destroyed most, if not all earlier archaeological features in this area.

The contexts throughout the site can be banded into five equivalent and successive deposits. These are, from the lowest upwards; a firm, slightly silty marl represented by 6, 12 and 17. A firm silty marl (5, 11, 16) containing occasional charcoal fragments and a few post-medieval. Above this a relatively loose chalky and stony silt, possibly representing former topsoil, (4, 9, 15). This deposit contained the

majority of finds; animal bones, modern pottery and building materials. Above this a firm chalky silt with relatively little organic material and no finds (8, 14) found in trenches 3 and 4 only. Penultimately a firm, slightly clay silt (2, 3, 7, 13), containing occasional small stones and slate fragments. This represents a subsoil-type deposit. Finally there is topsoil similar to 4 etc. measuring 26-44cm in depth. This deposit is thickest towards Church Lane, a result of increased dumping of domestic waste. Modern pottery and animal bone fragments were found in this deposit along with a single partially dressed clunch block.

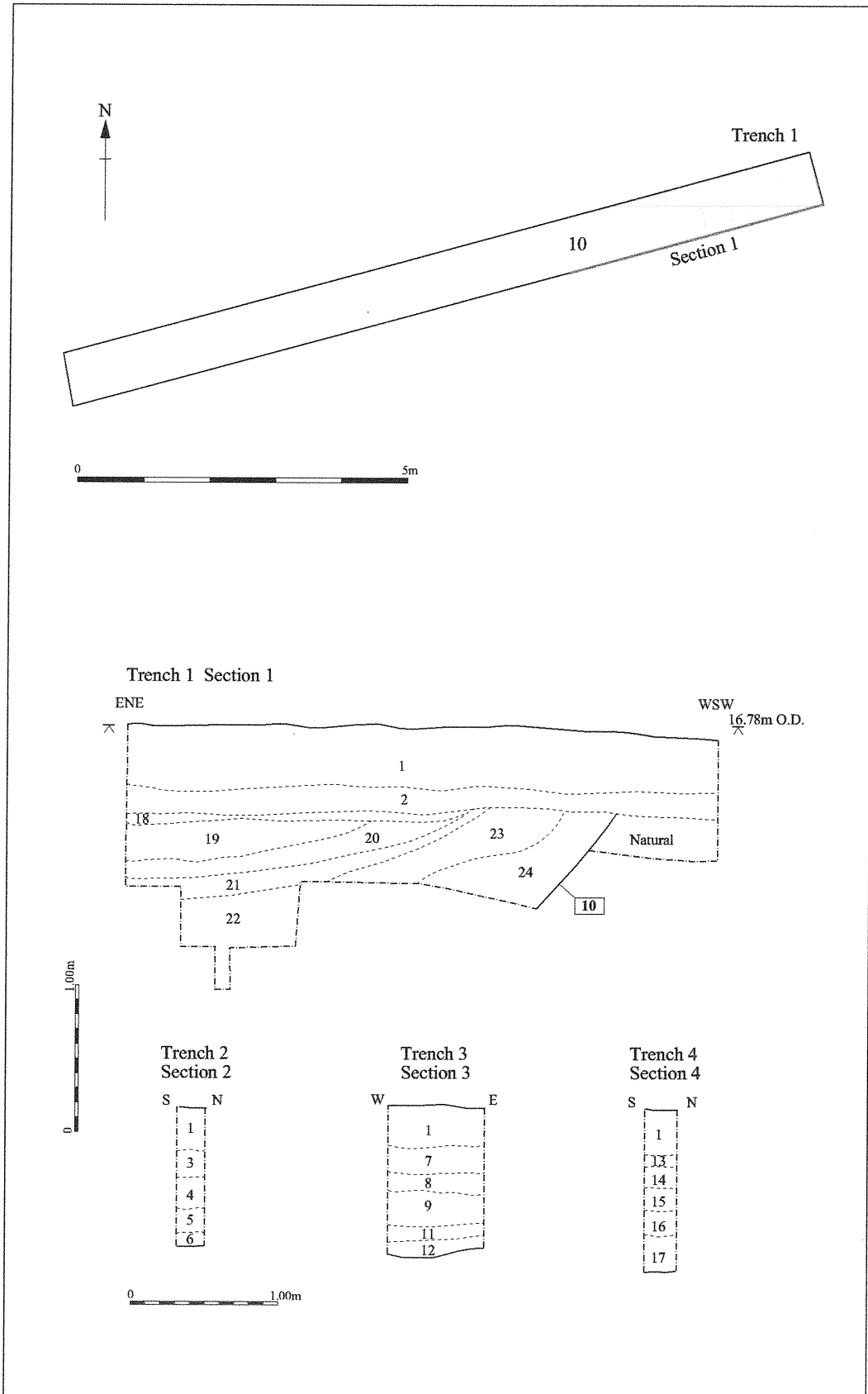


Figure 2

## **CONCLUSION**

This site showed the continuation of quarrying from Old Pembroke farm during the medieval period. Beyond that, there was a build-up of soil, presumably the consequence of both building work and soil improvement measures. The sequence of finds shows an incorporation of earlier material into higher deposits which seal any earlier topsoil.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Andy Thomas, County Archaeology Office, wrote the brief for archaeological works. Kasia Gdaniec visited and monitored the evaluation on behalf of the CAO.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Cambridge County Council Sites and Monuments Record

Institute of Geological Sciences Cambridge (Sheet 188)



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