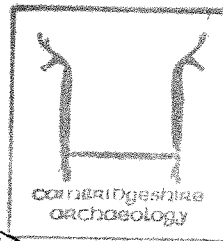
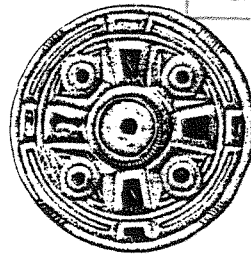


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Archaeological Field Unit

Medieval ridge and furrow at Townsend Way, Folksworth

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Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. B21

Commissioned by Twigden Homes

Summary

Archaeological monitoring and evaluation was carried out at Townsend Way, Folksworth by the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council during February and March 1998. The archaeological work was a condition of planning consent granted to Twigden Homes for the construction of housing on approximately two hectares on the outskirts of the village of Folksworth. The site had upstanding ridge and furrow earthworks present. Unfortunately the archaeological work was not undertaken until after the development began. An archaeological recording brief was instigated immediately and the digging of foundation trenches for houses, buildings and services was observed. A narrow strip through the centre of the site had fortuitously survived due to the presence of overhead power lines. This strip was surveyed to provide a sample of the ridge and furrow that had survived on the field until the development began. A 20 metre long trench was excavated in this strip to check for the presence of surviving archaeological deposits and features. Other than the ridge and furrow, no archaeological features were found to have survived, no artefacts of any kind were recovered from either the 20 metre trench or the trenches excavated for the development. It seems likely that the heavy boulder clay on the site was not attractive to occupation.

Medieval ridge and furrow at Townsend Way, Folksworth
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INTRODUCTION

During February and March 1998 members of staff from the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council visited the site of the housing development to carry out archaeological monitoring and evaluation during groundwork at Townsend Way, Folksworth. The work was commissioned by Twigden Homes.

The development involves construction of up to 30 houses. The site covers an area of approximately 2 hectares. By the time archaeological work began, work on site had already started and foundation trenches had been dug for several properties. It was agreed with the County Archaeology Office and Twigden Homes representative that subsequent house foundations and service trenches should be excavated under archaeological supervision until more adequate evaluation could be undertaken in an (as yet) undisturbed area of the site. The site of the development is on the south-western edge of the present village of Folksworth, situated on the north-eastern slope of an area of chalky boulder clay (BGS Solid and Drift edition, sheet 172, 1995) at approximately 37mOD.

BACKGROUND

The site lies on arable land to the south-east of the village of Folksworth which contains various medieval earthworks (Scheduled Ancient Monument 210) and buildings (Sites and Monuments Record no. 1010). Roman buildings remains, together with pottery and a burial have been recorded less than a kilometre to the south. The general area abounds in medieval remains but evidence of occupation in earlier periods is sparse, suggesting the boulder clay land was not a favoured location for settlement.

METHODOLOGY

An aerial photographic assessment was not carried out although clear medieval ridge and furrow agriculture was noted on the subject site and in the surrounding area.

A limited documentary search was carried out concentrating on Ordnance Survey maps, which suggests the land has been farmed since the medieval periods with a property built in the western part of the field.

Excavation of the foundations of two houses and a garage, and trenches for electricity cables in the north-west area of the site were supervised by an archaeologist prior to evaluation. All trenches were excavated by a JCB with a 0.5m wide toothed bucket. Trenches varied in depth between 0.5m to 1.5m. The remainder of the site was unavailable for archaeological intervention.

A strip of land approximately 15 metres wide by 90 metres long remained undeveloped at the time of the archaeological intervention. This was entirely fortuitous due to the presence of overhead electricity wires which needed to be removed prior to undertaking any excavation. Ridge and furrow earthworks partially survived on this area.

The remaining areas of ridge and furrow were surveyed using a Zeiss RecElta 15 Total Station, and a digital base plan of the site was produced with Prosurveyor mapping software.

A 20 metre long evaluation trench was dug by a JCB with a 1.6m toothless ditching bucket through the topsoil and subsoil. The trench was planned at 1:50 and a section drawn at 1:10 of part of the ridge and furrow profile. Black and white and slide photographs were taken on two separate visits.

RESULTS

Observation of foundation and service trenches revealed that the ridge and furrow had existed in the north-west area of the site. No finds were recovered from any of the trenches and no features were observed. The topsoil had already been removed prior to the archaeological observation, all the foundation and service trenches revealed sticky clay subsoil overlying Boulder Clay.

The evaluation trench in the hitherto undisturbed area revealed topsoil approximately 0.2m deep. Beneath this was a layer of yellowish brown clay with occasional pebbles and large stones. This layer sealed undisturbed boulder clay with fragments of chalk and larger stones. Cutting through two furrows and into the underlying clay were ceramic field drains running down slope to the north-east. No archaeological features were noted and no material remains were recovered from the spoil in spite of careful examination.

CONCLUSIONS

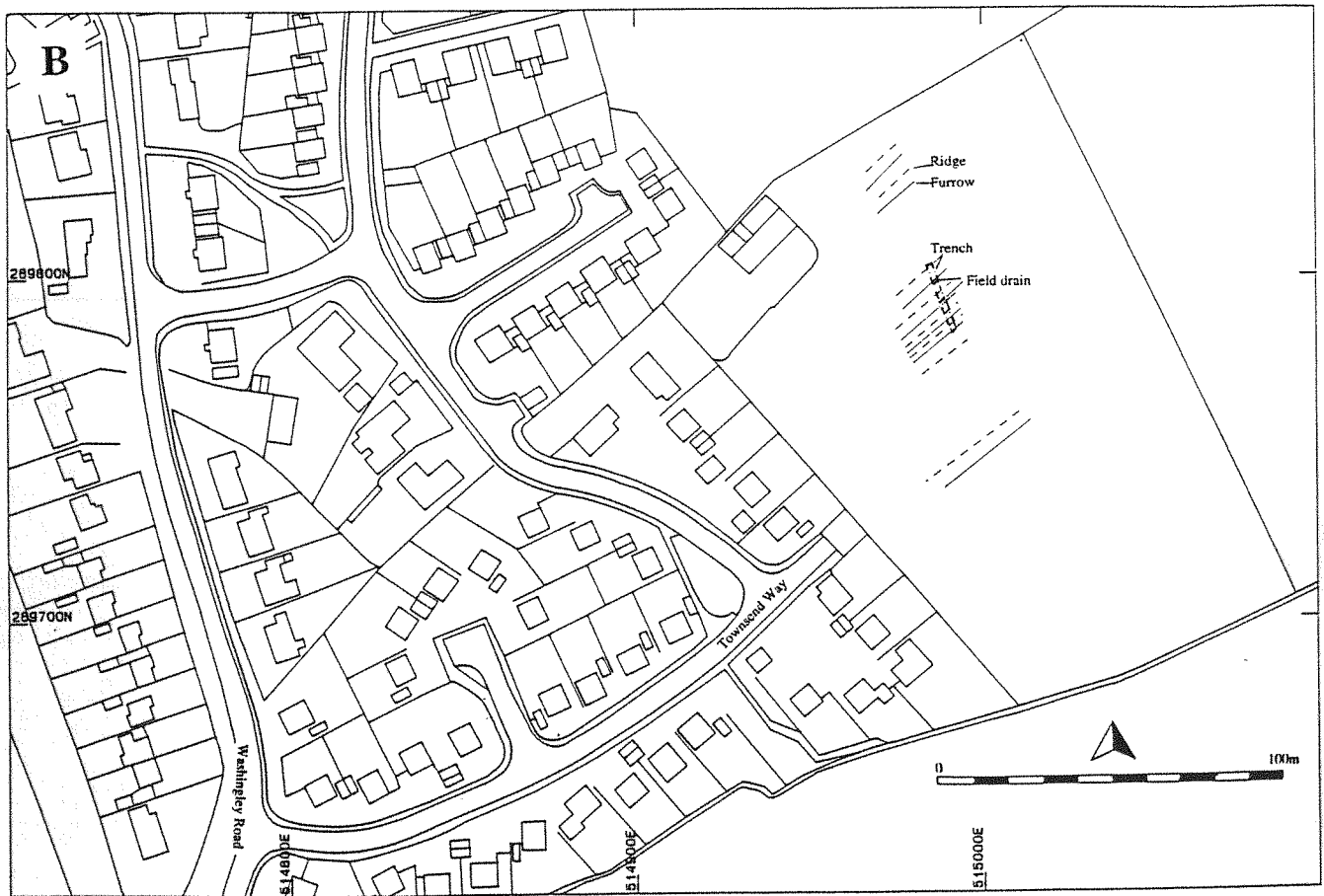
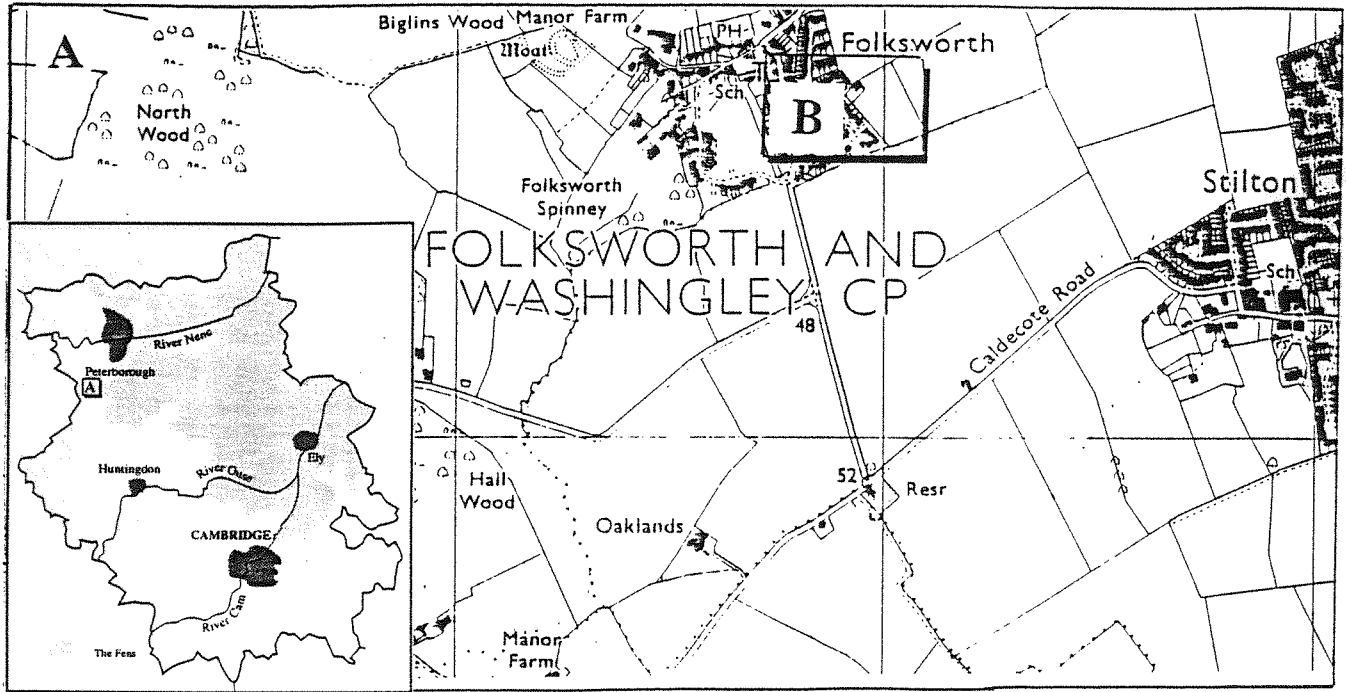
The area of land off Townsend Way Folksworth was under undisturbed ridge and furrow earthworks prior to Twigden Homes housing development. This site would normally have

been subject to a full earthwork survey and archaeological evaluation prior to the start of groundwork for the development, however, this was not possible on this occasion.

No finds or archaeological features were observed in either the monitored groundworks or the evaluation trenches, however, it should be noted that only the north-west part of the site was available for evaluation, and these result can not be extrapolated to the whole area with any confidence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Twigden Homes who commissioned the work and their construction staff on site who co-operated fully during visits. Thanks also to Aileen Connor who liaised with Twigden Homes and carried out the initial site visits, Scott Kenney who surveyed and produced the plot of the earthworks and to Simon Kaner of the Development Control Office of Cambridgeshire County Council who monitored the project.



Site location plan showing areas of ridge and furrow agriculture



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