



Archaeological Field Unit

**Land South of Williams Way, Manea:  
An Archaeological Evaluation**

Dennis Payne

October 2004

**Cambridgeshire County Council**

Report No. 769

*Commissioned by Peter Humphrey Associates Ltd*

**Land South of Williams Way, Manea:  
An Archaeological Evaluation  
TL 4761 8942**

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## SUMMARY

*On 13th October 2004 the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council conducted an archaeological evaluation on land south of Williams Way, Manea, Cambridgeshire (TL 4761 8942) in advance of the construction of a housing development. The work was commissioned by Peter Humphrey Associates Ltd on behalf of Mr M. Dunkley of Superfield Developments Ltd, Manea. Four trenches were excavated totalling 50m in length, no archaeological features were revealed in any of the trenches.*

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by staff of the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council on the 13<sup>th</sup> October 2004, on land south of Williams Way, Manea, Cambridgeshire (TL 4761 8942). This work was done to fulfil the requirements of a planning application (FYR02/1060/0), in advance of a housing development.

The work was commissioned by Peter Humphrey Associates of Wisbech on behalf of Mr M, Dunkley of Superfield Developments. The work was carried out in accordance with a brief for archaeological works produced by Andy Thomas of the County Archaeology Office (CAO) dated August 21st 2004) and a project specification prepared by Stephen Macaulay dated 21st September 2004.

**2 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

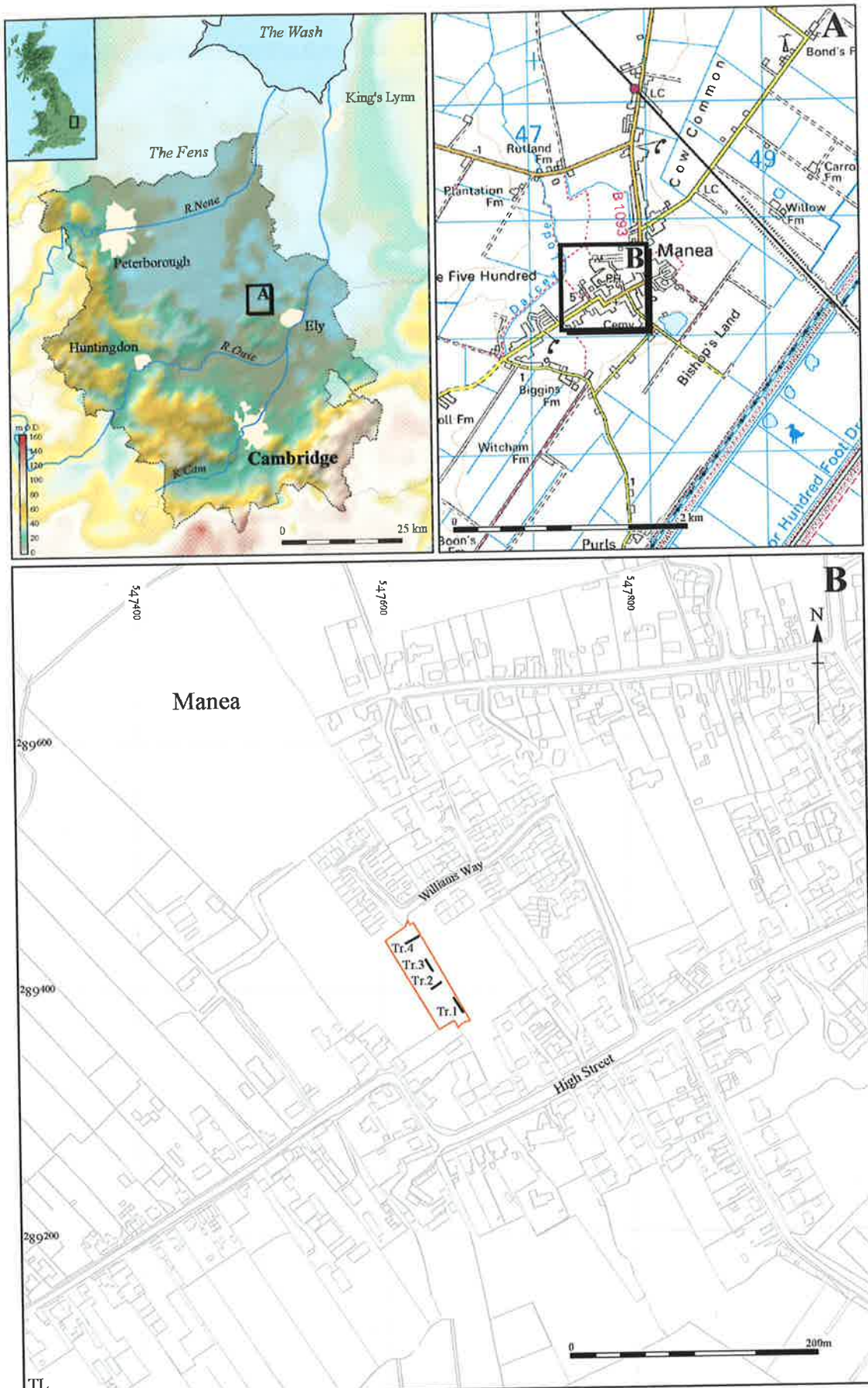
According to the British Geological Survey, the local geology consists of Boulder Clay overlying Jurassic Ampthill Clay (BGS 1980). To the south of the site, two spot heights on High Street had values of 5.2m and 5.1m respectively.

**3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The village of Manea lies 10km north west of Ely on an island rising above the fens at just over sea level. Little archaeological work has been carried out in the parish, but a number of finds have been made dating from the prehistoric to the medieval periods. In spite of the lack of archaeological work in the area, Manea has been the focus for occupation since earliest times until the present day.

**3.1 Prehistoric**

Prehistoric activity in the area is attested by a number of prehistoric tools found. These include Palaeolithic tools, and of particular note was a late Acheulian ovate handaxe from Fox's Drove (SMR 05871).



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**Figure 1** Location of trenches with the development area outlined (red)

Neolithic implements have been found in the parish of Manea: and include a Greenstone axe from Byall's Fen (SMR 05837). Evidence of the Bronze Age has been demonstrated by the discovery of a hoard of bronze implements: two bronze socketed axe heads, a spearhead, and a flanged axe (SMR 05874).

### **3.2 Iron Age and Roman**

Evidence of the Iron Age Roman period in Manea appears to be quite noticeable from local finds. F.M. Walker of Manea discovered, half a mile east of Honey Hill, a settlement of Roman date. Surface finds included bones and sherds of pottery, including a Samian vessel stamped with a potters mark (SMR 06048). This site lies just to the north of the proposed development at Williams Way by 500m. Other finds of Roman date include a Roman hoard of pewter vessels found to the north and west of Williams way, and evidence of salt-making in the form of saltern briquetage.

### **3.3 Medieval**

Manea is first recorded as *Moneia* in 1177 (Reaney 1943). There are no records of Anglo-Saxon finds, and it is not until the post-Conquest period that medieval activity is recorded through the recovery of 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century pottery (SMR 05981).

### **3.4 Post-Medieval**

In 1638 Charles I proposed the building of a town at the village of Manea, to be the capital of the newly drained middle level. The town was to be called Charlemont, the design for which was drawn up by the king. A canal was to connect the town to the River Ouse (Pugh 1953). A mound was constructed for some unknown purpose, which still exists and is sometimes called 'Charley Mount'. In 1748 it measured 20 yards across and 8ft high (SMR 05893).

## **4 METHODOLOGY**

Four trenches were excavated within the proposed area of development, using a JCB with a 1.6m wide toothless bucket. The trenches were positioned to achieve maximum coverage of the area: two on an east/west alignment and two on a N-S alignment. All trenches were opened under the supervision of an archaeologist down to the top of archaeology or natural geology. After the machining had taken place, the trenches were cleaned, photographed and recorded using the AFU standard contextual recording system. The spoil-heaps were visually scanned for artefacts, but none were recovered.

## **5 RESULTS**

### **5.1 Trench 1**

Trench 1 was 15m in length and ran on a north/south alignment. The depth of the trench averaged 0.58m. No archaeological features were observed within this trench.

The topsoil 1 in this trench had a maximum thickness of 0.34m, and consisted of dark brown silty clay with moderate pebbles c.5-10cm and angular flints c.5-10cm. The subsoil 2 had a maximum thickness of 0.24m and consisted of mid-brown silty clay with occasional chalk inclusions. The natural geology consisted of Ampthill clay with patches of sandy silt.

### **5.2 Trench 2**

Trench 2 was 10m in length and ran on an east/west alignment. The depth of the trench averaged 0.68m.

The topsoil 1 in this trench had a maximum thickness of 0.38m, and consisted of a dark brown silty clay with moderate pebbles/stones (angular and sub-angular c.5-10cm). The subsoil 2 had a maximum thickness of 0.30m and consisted of mid-brown, silty clay with chalk inclusions.

A modern dyke on a north/south alignment was noted - probably 19th century in date. In addition to the dyke, a geotechnical test pit was seen within this trench.

The natural geology consisted of Ampthill clay with patches of sandy silt. No earlier archaeology was observed in this trench.

### **5.3 Trench 3**

Trench 3 was 12m in length and ran on a north/south alignment. The depth of this trench averaged 0.60m.

The topsoil 1 in this trench had a maximum thickness of 0.30m, and consisted of dark brown silty clay with moderate stones (angular and subangular c.5-10cm) and chalk inclusions. The subsoil 2 had a maximum thickness of 0.30m and consisted of orangey brown silty clay with chalk inclusions.

A modern field drain was noted running diagonally across the trench.

The natural geology consisted of Ampthill clay with patches of sandy silt.



#### **5.4 Trench 4**

Trench 4 was 13m in length and was located on an east/west alignment. The depth of this trench averaged 0.60m. No archaeological features were observed in this trench.

The topsoil 1 in this trench had a maximum thickness of 0.30m and consisted of a dark brown silty clay loam with moderate stones (angular and sub-angular c.5-10cm). The subsoil 2 had a maximum thickness of 0.30m and consisted of brown silty clay with chalk inclusions.

The natural geology within this trench was the same as noted in the other three with the exception that the Ampthill clay was interrupted by a band of blue clay, possibly due to the close geological change to boulder clay that caps the island on which Manea is situated.

### **6 DISCUSSION**

The evaluation identified the deposition sequence in each trench as being topsoil sealing subsoil, with the exposed natural geology consisting of Ampthill clay. No archaeological remains were encountered in any of the trenches excavated.

### **7 CONCLUSIONS**

The aims of this study were to highlight the potential for the preservation of archaeological remains on the subject site and to identify any remains that may be affected by the proposed development. The development involves the excavation of foundation and service trenches for a new housing development.

The evaluation has been successful in its aims and has identified no archaeological remains.

The negative results of the evaluation possibly indicate that the area of the proposed development has never been used for occupation; this may be due to the fact that the area is low-lying and prone to flooding. For this reason the land may have been used for agricultural purposes only.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Peter Humphrey Associates who commissioned the work on behalf of their client, Mr Dunkley, the developer who funded the archaeological work. Thanks are also due to Stephen Macaulay who managed the project for the AFU, Andrew 'Bob' Hatton who directed with the work on site, and I would like to acknowledge Crane Begg, who supplied the illustrations for this report.

The brief for archaeological works was written by Andy Thomas of the County Archaeology Office, who visited the site and monitored the evaluation.

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