

**A trench-based archaeological evaluation  
at Mill Lane, Burwell, Cambridgeshire**

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Report No. 383  
August 2000

## **Summary**

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in advance of the proposed development of one field covering 0.619 hectares at Mill Lane, Burwell, Cambridgeshire (centred TL 5910 6620). Two T-shaped trenches totalling 85m in length were excavated. No archaeological features were identified.*

## **Introduction**

This trench-based evaluation was undertaken on behalf of Twigden Homes, in connection with their proposed development of the land for housing. It followed on from a desktop study (Hall 2000), in accordance with the Project Design (Gibson 2000) as approved by Andy Thomas (Senior Archaeologist, Development Control). The work was carried out during the week beginning 7th August 2000 by a team from the Cambridge Archaeological Unit.

## **Site description**

The site is situated at the junction of Green Lanes and Mill Lane within the High Town area of Burwell. It lies at a height of approximately 15m OD. The underlying geology is upper chalk. The field was heavily overgrown and undulating, due to dumps of various kinds, with a large depression at the southern end caused by clunch quarrying (see below).

Two T-shaped trenches were machine excavated, away from the areas of quarrying and trees. The trenches were 1.60m wide and a combined length of 85m, representing a total area of 136m<sup>2</sup> (2.2% of the total area). The topsoil varied between 0.35m and 0.50m in depth, and lay immediately above the natural chalk subsoil. A series of small reinforced concrete foundations was found towards the west of Trench 1. No archaeological features were uncovered.

## **Archaeological background**

This evaluation report follows on directly from a desktop study (Hall 2000) carried out prior to the excavation work. That report concluded that "the site is situated within an area rich in known archaeology and historic buildings, with a high potential for further discoveries" (ibid., 6). Indeed, Burwell is a village replete with medieval archaeology and surviving remains, and has also produced Bronze Age and considerable amounts of Roman material. It is therefore somewhat surprising that no archaeology whatsoever was uncovered during excavation.

## **Discussion**

The only conclusion to be drawn from this evaluation is that, despite the rich archaeological context in which it is situated, the area of investigation has never been developed.

The only archaeologically visible activity to have been carried out there in the past is clunch extraction. The depression created by this quarrying is still visible today, and at the time of the evaluation was in the process of being cleared of the ash 'contamination'. The finds that this work had produced suggested that the quarry was used as a bottle dump in the first half of the 20th century.

It is important to note that both the desktop study and the aerial photographic report indicated no known archaeology on the site itself. The closest SMR find spot - the site of St Andrew's Church - was 100m away. Furthermore, all of the early cartographic sources showed the area as open fields. During the later 19th century the site was split into three smaller plots, but it continued to be used as farmland. The aerial photographs provided no archaeological information. The northern half of the field was covered by mature trees, some of which survive today; the southern half was rough pasture.

## **Acknowledgements**

The excavation was funded by Twigden Homes Ltd and thanks are due to David Strike. Andrew Hall and Will Wally helped to complete the site efficiently and effectively. The topsoil stripping was handled with care by Bernard of Apex Plant Hire. Computer support and digital illustrations were provided by Marc Berger. Project management was by David Gibson. Andy Thomas of the Cambridgeshire Archaeology Office oversaw the excavations.

## **Bibliography**

Hall, A. 2000 *An archaeological desktop study of land at Mill Lane, Burwell*. CAU Report No. 381.

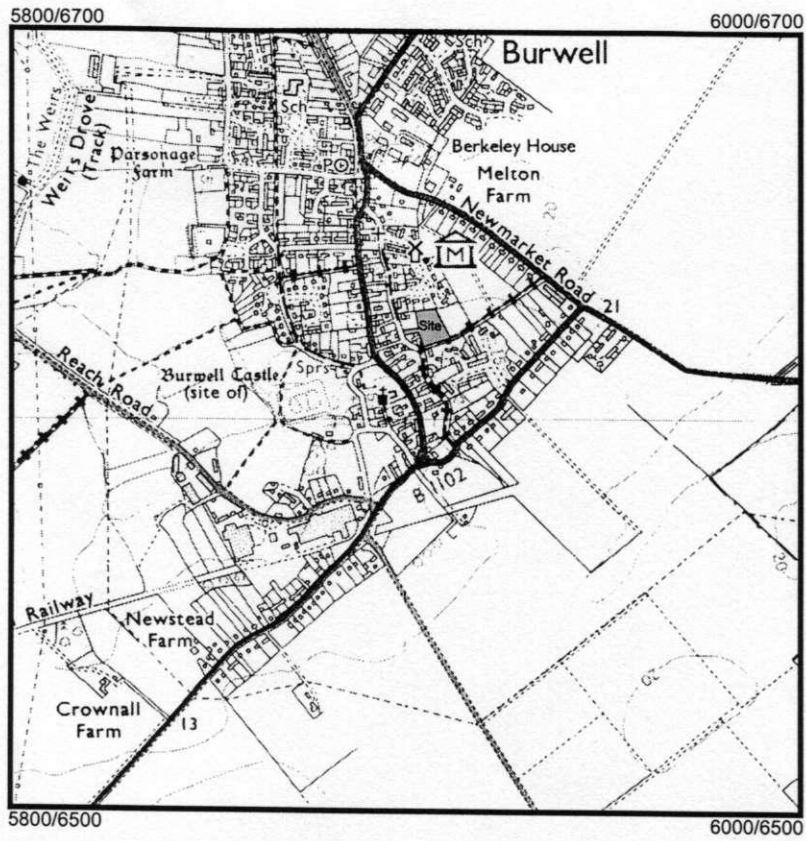


Figure 1. Site location

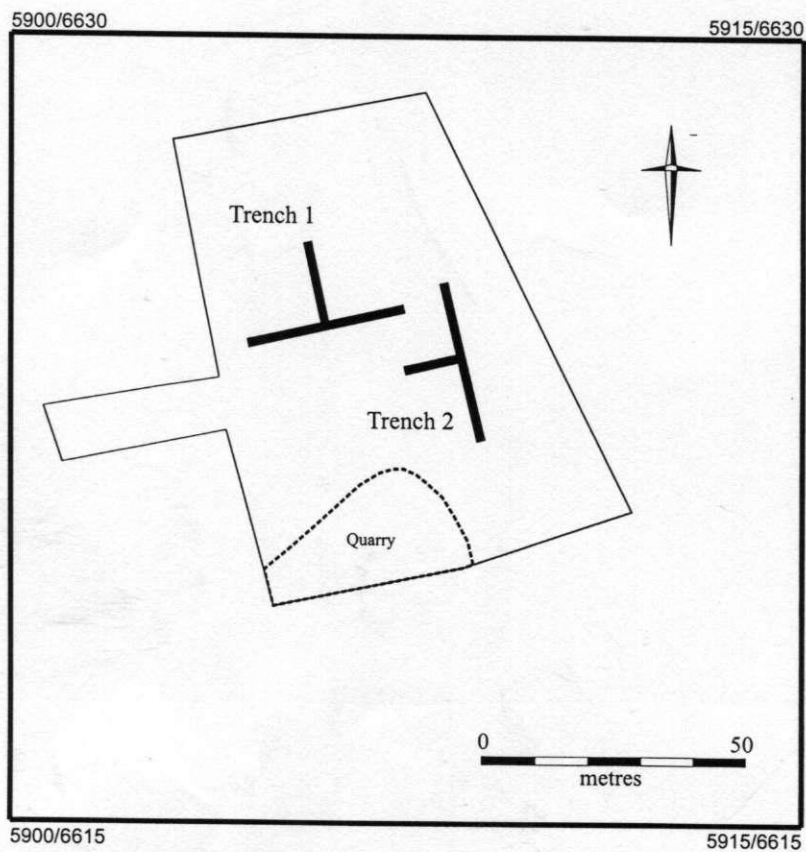


Figure 2. Trench locations