

# AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT BURBAGE HALL, BUXTON, DERBYSHIRE

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In January 2005, Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was contracted by John Samuels Archaeological Consultants, on behalf of Oldfield Design Ltd (themselves contracted by Longedge Developments Ltd), to undertake an evaluation in advance of construction of 16 houses and seven apartments at Burbage Hall, 95 and 97 Macclesfield Road, Buxton, Derbyshire (NGR SK 04567294; planning application HPK/2004/0186).

The site lies within an area of considerable archaeological potential, with sites of national importance in the vicinity (Fig. 1). The most significant of these is the Mesolithic and Neolithic occupation site of Lismore Fields (SK 04957320/SM DR 278), c.400m to the north-east of Burbage Hall and dated by radiocarbon assay to around 3500 Cal BC. Excavations in 1984, in advance of a housing development, recorded at least two timber-built rectangular structures with associated pits and hearths, along with nine circular structures defined by closely spaced post-holes or slots (Garton 1991). Two small concentrations of Later Mesolithic flint were also recovered during archaeological mitigation works at Otterhole Farm (SK 04707326), c.200m to the north-west of Burbage Hall (BUFAU 2003). Buxton (*Aqua Arnemetiae*) is known to have been an important Roman centre, and it is thought that a Roman road followed part of the line of Green Lane, c.60m south of Burbage Hall.

The evaluation within the garden at Burbage Hall was designed to determine the quality, extent and importance of any archaeological remains on the site and comprised the excavation of 37, 1.2m by 1.2m test pits, distributed across the site on a 10m grid, and excavated in 0.1m–0.15m spits to the level of the natural subsoil (Fig. 2). Spoil from each spit was sieved to 10mm and, where more than three lithic artefacts were found in any test pit, in order to establish the size of the artefact scatter, a further four pits were excavated at the cardinal points, 5m from the initial pit. This action was only necessary in the case of Test pit 23, bringing the total of test pits to 41.

The evaluation showed that large areas of the site had been truncated through substantial landscaping. Nineteen pieces of worked flint/chert dating to the Late Mesolithic to Early Neolithic were recovered from the subsoil, including a straight end-scraper on a blade, measuring 31mm by 13mm, and a broken borer/awl, both struck from bipolar cores. The remainder comprised waste flakes, but indicated the working of prepared cores from several sources. The majority of these artefacts were recovered from the central part of the site, in an area of surviving subsoil measuring approximately 15m by 10m. In total, 49 other artefacts were dated to between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries, mostly pottery and clay tobacco pipe but also including ceramic building material and glass.

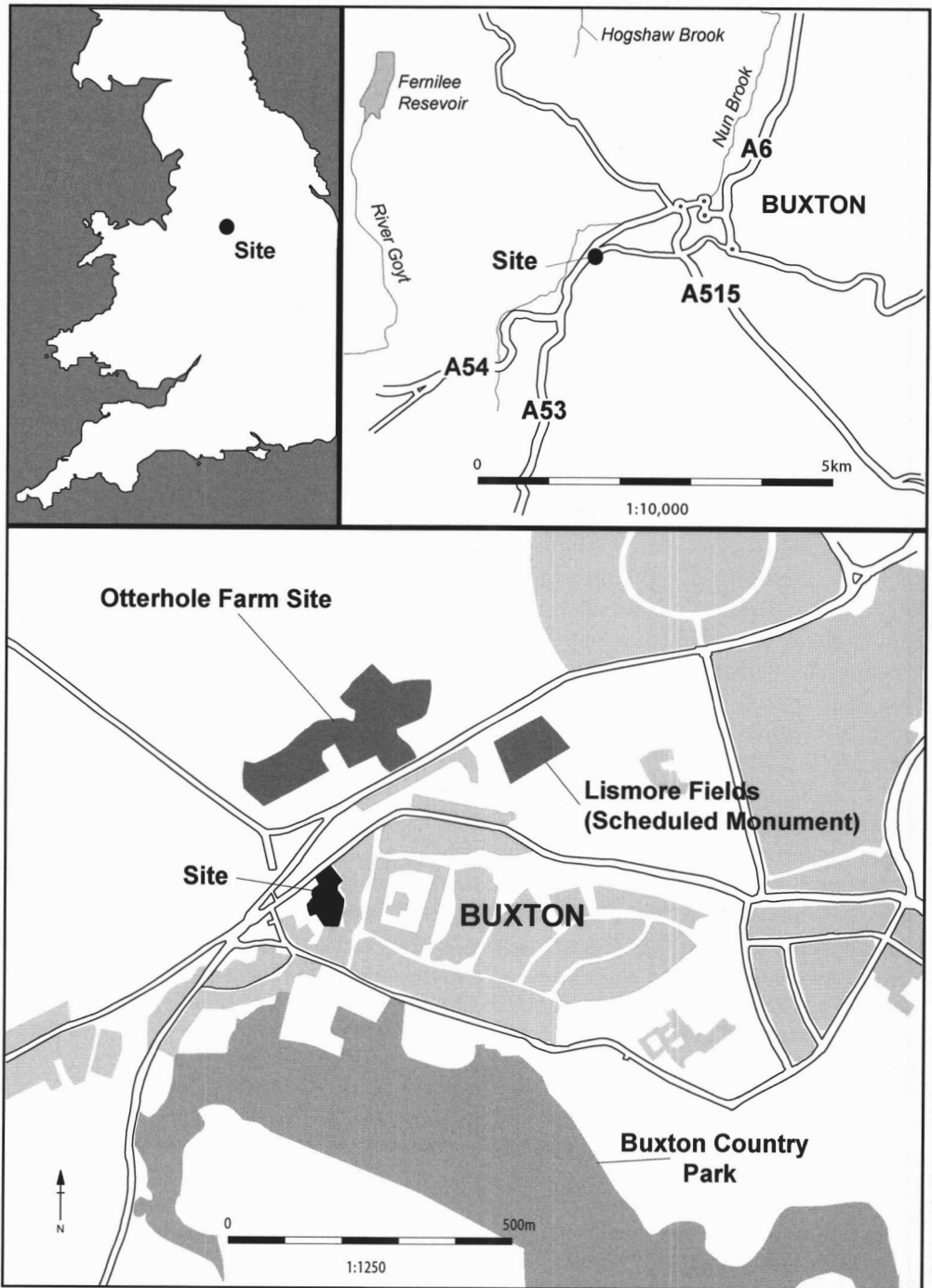


Fig. 1: Location map for the Archaeological Evaluation undertaken at Burbage Hall, Buxton, Derbyshire.

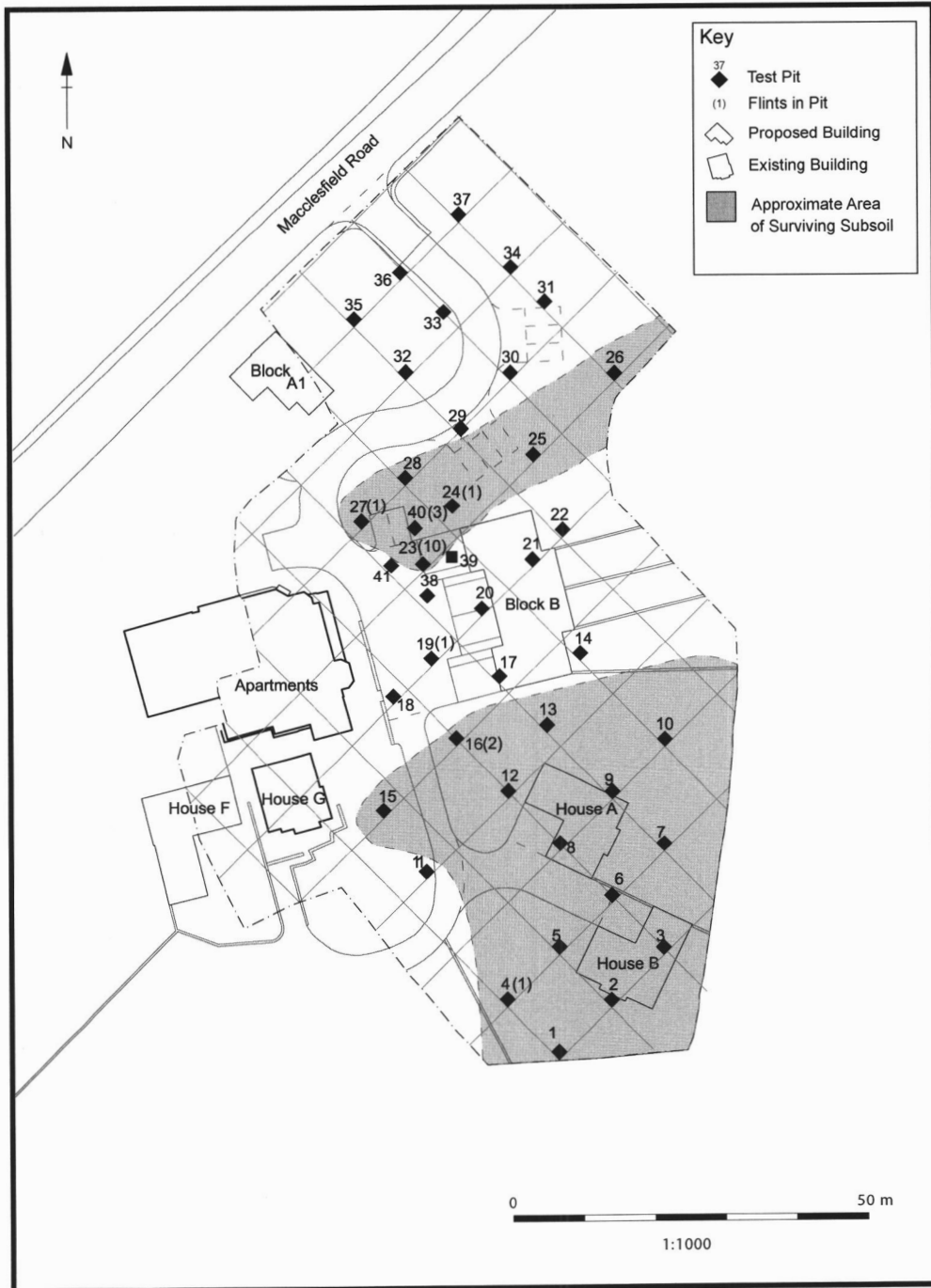


Fig. 2: Test pit location plan, showing the site grid superimposed onto a plan of proposed and existing buildings at Burbage Hall, Buxton.

Although no features were identified, the lithic distribution indicates a distinct area of activity. Unfortunately, the finds are insufficiently diagnostic to closely date the activity, although assemblages containing elements of Late Mesolithic and Early Neolithic technology are not uncommon (Clay 2001) and could be interpreted as indicative of a transitional period in which a hybrid economy was practised, involving hunting, gathering and small-scale agriculture. Although small, the Burbage Hall assemblage makes a useful contribution to the distribution of contemporary activity represented by Lismore Fields and Otterhole Farm.

The results of the evaluation were fully recorded graphically, on *pro-forma* sheets and photographically. The archive is stored at the Derbyshire County Record Office, the finds at the Buxton Museum, and a copy of the report has been submitted to the Derbyshire SMR. The current plans for the proposed development show that the area containing the lithic concentration is to become a small car park, and this should not impact upon the archaeological remains.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) would like to thank Simon Mortimer of John Samuels Archaeological Consultants for commissioning the project and also Dr Andrew Myers, Archaeological Advisor to High Peak Borough Council, for his help and advice. The illustrations were produced by Marie Rowland and Adam Parsons.

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*The society gratefully acknowledges the financial support of John Samuels Archaeological Consultants and Oxford Archaeology North in the publication of this paper.*