

Low Road, Burwell, Cambridgeshire.

An Archaeological Evaluation.



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An Archaeological Evaluation

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Non Technical Summary

A single trench was excavated and then widened on land adjacent to 118 Low Road, Burwell, Cambridgeshire, which revealed the foundations for a 19th/20th century wall. A quantity of Victorian and modern finds were also recovered from within the topsoil and underlying layers, but no earlier finds or evidence for archaeological activity were present.

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) between the 2nd and 4th February 2010 on land adjacent to 118 Low Road, Burwell, Cambridgeshire in advance of the planned construction of a new dwelling. Commissioned by Mr and Mrs Hill, the evaluation aimed to establish the presence, date, state of preservation and significance of any archaeological remains. The evaluation was carried out and this report was written in accordance with an archaeological specification written by the CAU in response to a brief by Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning Countryside Advice (CAPCA). The specification was approved and the site was monitored by an Archaeological Officer from CAPCA.

Location, topography and geology

The development area was centred on TL 5851 6668 and covered approximately 0.04 ha including the footprint for the new dwelling and landscaped areas. The development area's most recent function was as a part of the gardens for 118 Low Road, and the area is bordered by Low Road to the east, dwellings to the north and south and gardens to the west (see Figure 1).

The underlying geology is Lower Chalk (British Geological Survey 1981) and the development area slopes downwards slightly from 5.5m OD at Low Road to 5.1m OD at the western edge of the area.

Archaeological Background

Prehistoric activity from around the development area includes Neolithic/Early Bronze Age flints recovered to the west (CHER06388), and from a former watercourse to the southwest, which also yielded Iron Age material (MCB17708). Several Bronze Age hoards have been found in the fenland near to Burwell and include CHER06397, CHER06382, CHER06381, CHER06438, CHER06447, CHER06445 and CHER06459 and slightly nearer in the grounds of St Mary's Church (CHER06769a). An excavation to the east of the development area (MCB17427) revealed evidence for Iron Age settlement, whilst Iron Age ditches have been found to the north (CHER06736b).

Evidence for Roman activity is known from the vicinity, with artefacts being recovered from an old channel (MCB17708). A hoard of Roman bronze vessels (CHER06736) was found to the north of the development area, whilst a Roman vat containing pottery sherds was found to the south (CHER06787). Potential Romano-British settlements have been identified to the east (CHER06764a, CHER06807), south (CHER04663) and north (CHER10953) of the development area. Roman remains have also been found close by during an archaeological evaluation off Low Road to the north (CHER11989).

Anglo-Saxon activity is known from the vicinity, with a 6th-7th century AD cemetery located east of the development area (CHER06764). Excavated between 1925 and

1929, the cemetery yielded 127 skeletons with grave goods including bone and bronze pins, iron buckles and chains and beads.

The remains of an unfinished moated 12th century castle is located to the south of the development area (CHER01775), whilst Parsonage Farm just to the west is thought to be the remains of the medieval Priory of St John (CHER06864).

Methodology

Evaluation of the development area initially comprised of one 1.6m wide 10m long trench within the footprint of the proposed new dwelling, however, after consultation with the Archaeological Officer from CAPCA, this was widened to approximately 3m, giving a total excavation area of 33m².

Topsoil and underlying deposits were removed under archaeological supervision with a tracked 360⁰ machine using a 1m wide toothless ditching bucket. Both topsoil and underlying deposits were tested for finds and metal detected. All work was carried out in strict accordance with statutory Health and Safety legislation and with the recommendations of SCAUM (Allen & Holt 2007), and in accordance with a site specific risk assessment and the CAU Health and Safety policy. The site code is BLR 10 and CHER number is ECB 3334.

Archive

A total of 12 contexts from three features were excavated and recorded and a data sheet detailing the general information of the excavation area was generated. A digital photographic archive was also compiled. These records have been assembled into a catalogued archive in line with Appendix 6 of MAP2 (English Heritage 1991) and are being stored at the CAU offices.

Results

Three features were identified within the development area (see Figure 1 and Appendix 1). The dominant feature present consisted of the foundations for a sizable wall, **F.2**, orientated northeast-southwest, perpendicular to Low Road. Within the initial trench the wall appeared to turn 90 degrees, thereby suggesting the presence of a previously unidentified building, consequently after consultation with the Archaeological Officer representing CAPCA the trench was widened in order to determine the nature/alignment of the wall. Subsequent investigation showed the possible turn (**F.3**) was in fact a buttress to the northeast terminus of wall **F.2**, which was part of the wall's initial construction. Two slots, [108] and [109] were excavated through **F.2** and showed it was primarily constructed from shaped clunch blocks with 19th/early 20th century tile and brick used to infill small gaps. This suggests the feature was most likely to be a 19th/early 20th century boundary wall subdividing the plots of the cottages which previously occupied the road frontage at this location.

Adjacent to the south face of **F.2** was a clearly defined area of rubble (see Figure 1) which suggests the wall at least partially collapsed at some point. Underneath the rubble was a thin layer of preserved dark brown, silty garden soil which contained

19th and 20th century material including ceramic, metal items (including the head of a shovel and door knocker) and brick/tile. This same garden soil material was present, although much deeper, on the northern side of the wall (see section on Figure 2) and contained similar finds. The majority of this material was removed using hand tools in order to ascertain whether it contained any earlier finds but none were present, and no archaeological features were identified below this layer.

Discussion

This site was clearly heavily disturbed during the 19th and 20th centuries, with the thin topsoil across much of the site (containing only recent finds), and lack of a subsoil suggesting it may have been stripped down to the underlying chalk during that period. This could account for the absence of earlier archaeology or residual finds, despite the close proximity of the medieval and post medieval activity known at Parsonage Farm just to the rear of the development area. Alternatively, there may never have been any archaeological activity on the site and it may have been a blank area within an area of known activity.

Acknowledgements

The work was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Hill and the site was monitored by Dan McConnell (CAPCA). Emma Beadsmore was the project manager and thanks go to Hayley Roberts and Emma Rees for assisting the author on site and Donald Horne for surveying the excavation area.

Appendix 1

F.1 Oval posthole. Cut [101] had very steep sides leading to flat base. Length was 0.55m, width 0.45m and depth 0.15m. Fill [100] was pale to mid greyish brown slightly clayey sandy silt. Contained 19th/early 20th century brick fragments.

F.2 Clunch wall foundation on a northeast-southwest orientation. Visible length was 8m, with the northeast end terminating and the southwest end going beyond the area of excavation. Two slots, [108] and [109] were excavated and showed the wall foundation consisted of shaped clunch blocks mortared together, with the occasional use of a tile or brick to infill gaps. Width was a consistent 0.5m and surviving depth was 0.4m. The tile and brick within the foundations were dated 19th/early 20th century.

F.3 Short clunch and brick foundation wall perpendicular to the northeast terminus of feature **F.2**. Total length was 2.5m, width 0.4m and surviving depth was 0.15m. The foundation consisted of small, roughly shaped, clunch blocks together with occasional 19th/early 20th century bricks. This feature probably represented a buttress to the more substantial **F.2**

References

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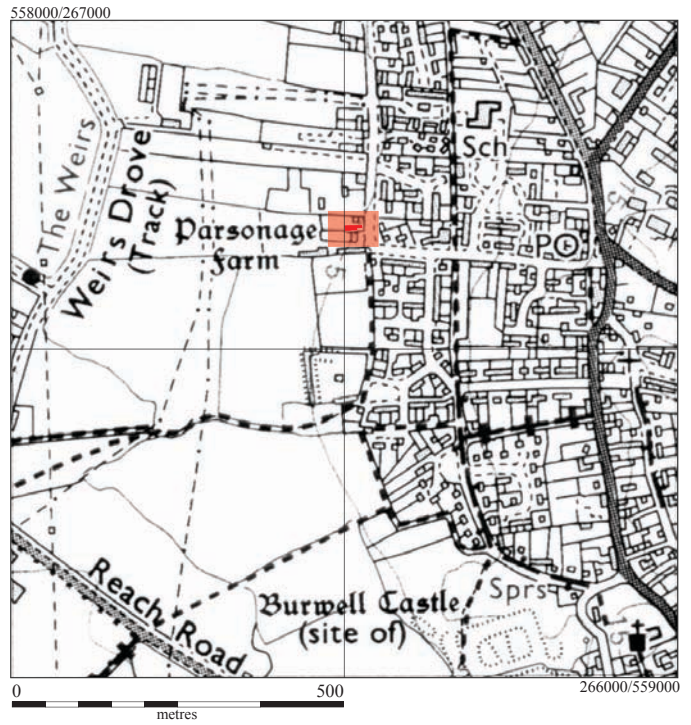
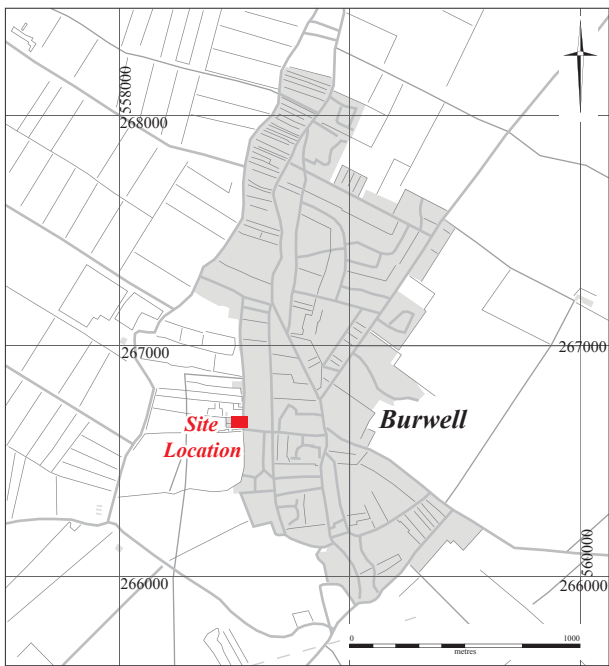


Figure 1. Location Plan (left), with Excavation Area plan (right).

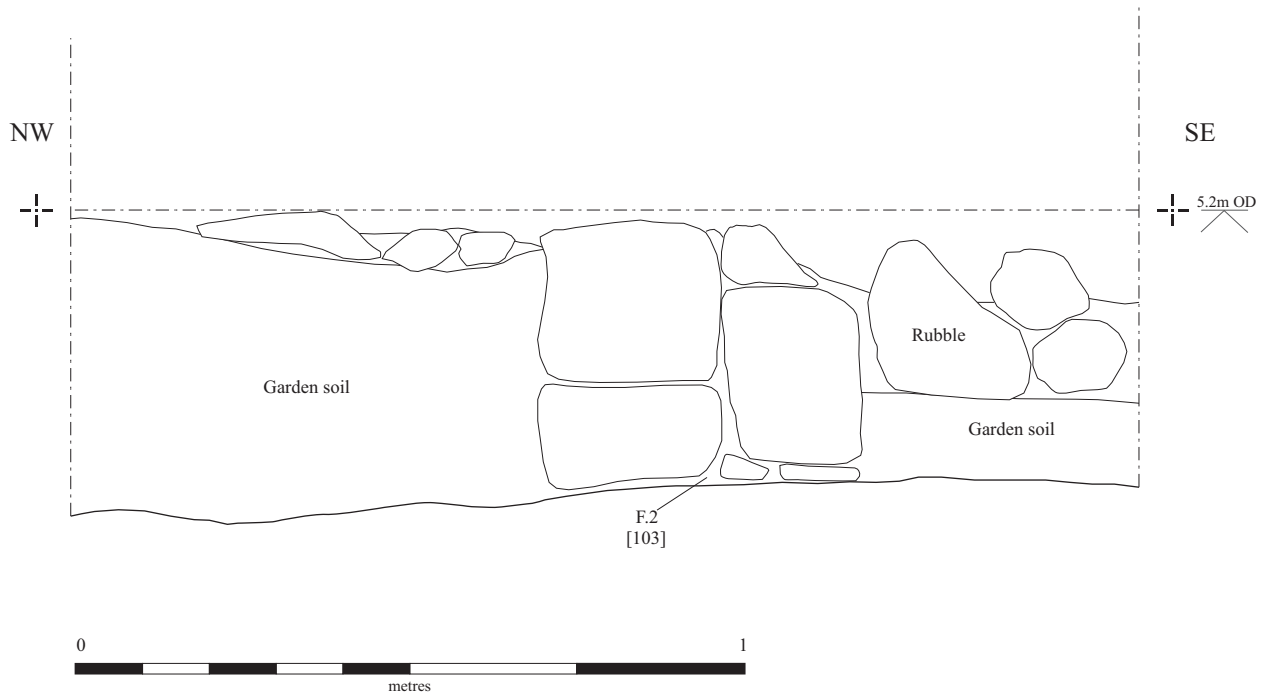


Figure 2. Photograph and Northeast facing Section of F.2

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Project details

Project name	Low Road, Burwell, Cambridgeshire An Archaeological Evaluation
Short description of the project	A single trench was excavated and then widened on land adjacent to 118 Low Road, Burwell, Cambridgeshire, which revealed the foundations for a 19th/20th century wall. A quantity of Victorian and modern finds were also recovered from within the topsoil and underlying layers, but no earlier finds or evidence for archaeological activity were present.
Project dates	Start: 02-02-2010 End: 02-02-2010
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	ECB3334 - HER event no.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Other 5 - Garden
Monument type	WALL Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval
Significant Finds	DOOR FITTING Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	'Sample Trenches'
Development type	Rural residential
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country	England
Site location	CAMBRIDGESHIRE EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE BURWELL Low Road, Burwell, Cambridgeshire An Archaeological Evaluation
Postcode	CB25 OEJ

Study area 0.04 Hectares
 Site coordinates TL 5851 6668 52.2749564947 0.323586383988 52 16 29 N 000 19 24 E Point
 Height OD / Depth Min: 5.10m Max: 5.50m

Project creators

Name of Organisation Cambridge Archaeological Unit
 Project brief originator Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
 Project design originator Emma Beadsmoore
 Project director/ manager Emma Beadsmoore
 Project supervisor Matthew Collins
 Type of sponsor/ funding body Developer
 Name of sponsor/ funding body Mr and Mrs Hill

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No
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 Digital Archive ID BLR 10
 Digital Contents 'none'
 Digital Media available 'GIS','Images raster / digital photography','Survey'
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 Paper Archive ID BLR 10
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 Paper Media available 'Context sheet','Correspondence','Drawing','Map','Notebook - Excavation','Research',' General Notes','Photograph','Plan','Section','Survey ','Unpublished Text'

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