ROMAN SETTLEMENT AT HINXTON
An Archaeological Assessment 1991
TL487466
Dr Gerald A Wait AIFA

Archaeology Section
Property Department
Shire Hall  Castle Hill
Cambridge CB3 OAP
Tel. (0223) 317312

Report no. 38
Contents

Introduction
Summary of Known Archaeology
Methodology
Overview of Results
Detailed Results - Features and Finds
Discussion of Results
Recommendations

Figures
1. Site Location plan
2. Area of proposed borrow pit
3. Results of fieldwalking superimposed on cropmarks
4. Trench location plan superimposed on cropmarks
5. Plan of trenches 1, 2 and 3
6. Plan of trenches 11 and 12
7. Plan of feature [026]; possible corn drier

Appendices
1. Analysis of Aerial Photographs by C Cox, Air Photo Services
2. Report on the Roman Pottery by Gavin Lucas (to follow when completed)
Archaeological Assessment of a Roman Settlement at Hinxton, Cambs

Gerald A Wait DPhil, AIFA

Summary

An archaeological field assessment was undertaken on behalf of Mineral Resources Ltd, from 25 November to 6 December 1991 on an area of about 8 hectares, as part of the process of planning application for a proposed borrow pit for gravel extraction (Figures 1 and 2).

The area (see fig 1) is located on first-second terrace gravels in the valley of the River Cam, to the north of Hinxton village and due east of Duxford. The underlying solid geology is chalk.

The topography of the area is essentially flat, but a variation in elevation of about 1.0 to 1.5 metres was observed across the width of the field. The soils of this area belong to the Moulton series, characterised by the Soil Survey as well-drained stony (locally very stony) brown sandy loams. These soils were classified as grade 3a agricultural land.

A probable paleo-channel of the Cam is located immediately to the west of the area (see air photo evidence, figs 3, 4 and appendix 1).

Known Archaeology

The area was investigated on the basis of two known archaeological sites, Cambs SMR numbers 09738 in the northwest corner and 08822 in the southeast corner, with some apparent field boundary ditches and droveways linking the two complexes. SMR site 04225, a reference to the discovery of finds of Roman date, is immediately adjacent to the western boundary of the area. The general morphology of the two cropmark complexes suggested that the sites were likely to be of Roman date, and possibly form farm settlements or even a "villa" establishment.

The cropmark evidence was more than sufficient to justify an archaeological field evaluation; a "villa" would be likely to be of regional or even national importance and thereby merit preservation in situ, which would require serious modification or abandonment of proposals to site a borrow pit in this area.

In general, the valley of the Cam produces good evidence, both as cropmarks and as finds scatters, for prehistoric and Romano-Celtic occupation. A Romano-British villa is located about a kilometre to the south (TL 488/451; SMR no. 04210) represented by cropmarks and an extensive artefact scatter. A Romano-British cemetery at TL 496/477 just south of Pampisford (SMR no. 04169) also probably relates to a settlement. It may be argued that settlement and intensive arable farming was focussed on the river valley gravel terraces, with upland chalk hills devoted to pasture and extensive arable farming, and riverside lowlands for pasture.

Methodology

The brief set by the County Archaeology Office called for fieldwalking, geophysical survey, and trial trench excavations in order to determine the date, nature, and preservation of archaeological remains in the area. This information would be used to
make advice to the planning authority on the best planning means of safeguarding the archaeological resource.

The fieldwalking and trial trench excavations were implemented. The geophysical survey was not, as it was not possible to arrange for a specialist company to undertake the work within the time frame. Geophysical survey may be implemented later if deemed appropriate, although it is argued below that the information produced by the rectified replotting of the cropmarks and the trial trench excavations render this unnecessary.

The results of the computer rectified aerial photographic evidence is presented below in figures 3 and 4, and in appendix 1. The fieldwalking was implemented by using transects at 25 metre intervals, with finds collection units every 25 metres. The trial trenches are shown below in figures 4, 5 and 6. The trial trenches were topsoil and subsoil stripped by mechanical digger. Thereafter excavation was by hand, with all features planned. Most were sample sectioned by hand, although two ditches were machine sectioned with the spoil sorted by hand to recover artefacts. All sections were drawn and photographed.

**Overview of Results**

The fieldwalking programme was strikingly unproductive (see figure 3). Only a very few prehistoric or Roman artefacts were collected. Post-medieval tile was scattered widely over the field in relatively low density, corresponding to the distance of the area from known late medieval and post-medieval settlements.

The trial trench excavations confirmed the presence of the two cropmark complexes of archaeological features (mostly of ditches) as indicated by the aerial photographic evidence. There is a very high congruence between the archaeological activity represented by cropmarks and that found by excavation - the cropmarks appear to give an accurate reflection of the archaeology present. The features are, where dated by artefacts, all of Roman date. It is likely that all the undated features are also of Roman date, with the possible exception of the ditches in Trench 4, which may mark a boundary of an earlier extent of the small wooded copse to the west of the area. The trial trenches did not produce any evidence to suggest that a "villa" type settlement is located in the area investigated, although it is clear that less prestigious farm settlements are represented by the cropmark complexes.

**Detailed Results**

**Fieldwalking Survey (Figure 3)**

The results of the fieldwalking are presented in Figure 3. There were only 16 artefacts of Medieval or earlier date. Post-Medieval tile and brick fragments were much more common and more widely scattered. However, the distribution of neither class appeared to correspond to the distribution of archaeological features plotted from the aerial photographs, nor could they be linked to the distribution of archaeological remains excavated. Few conclusions can be drawn from so limited evidence.

**Trial Trench Excavations (figures 4 - 6)**

A total of 850 linear metres of trench were excavated, equalling some 1400 square metres. Within this area 25 archaeological features were recognised and excavated. A
further half dozen features were recognised and planned but not excavated. The excavated features are summarised below.

### Summary of Excavated Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature No.</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Fills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trench 1, 2 and 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>005</td>
<td>DITCH</td>
<td>E-W</td>
<td>006, 007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>009</td>
<td>DITCH</td>
<td>E-W</td>
<td>010, 011, 019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>012</td>
<td>DITCH</td>
<td>N-S</td>
<td>013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>018</td>
<td>UNCERTAIN</td>
<td></td>
<td>014, 015, 016, 017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>025</td>
<td>CORN DRIER?</td>
<td></td>
<td>026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>027</td>
<td>DITCH</td>
<td>N-S</td>
<td>028, 029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>070</td>
<td>DITCH</td>
<td>N-S</td>
<td>071, 072, 073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trench 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>043</td>
<td>DITCH</td>
<td>NW-SE</td>
<td>044, 045, 046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>049</td>
<td>DITCH</td>
<td>NW-SE</td>
<td>047, 048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>050</td>
<td>GULLY</td>
<td>N-S (phase I)</td>
<td>051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>052</td>
<td>GULLY</td>
<td>E-W (phase II)</td>
<td>053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trench 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>074</td>
<td>GULLY</td>
<td>NW-SE</td>
<td>075, 076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trench 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>020</td>
<td>GULLY</td>
<td>E-W</td>
<td>021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trench 10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>064</td>
<td>DITCH</td>
<td>N-S</td>
<td>055, 056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trenches 11 and 12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>035</td>
<td>DITCH</td>
<td>N-S</td>
<td>037, 038, 032, 039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>077</td>
<td>GULLY</td>
<td>N-S</td>
<td>040) second phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>078</td>
<td>GULLY</td>
<td>N-S</td>
<td>069) second phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>079</td>
<td>GULLY</td>
<td>N-S</td>
<td>080) second phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>033</td>
<td>GULLY</td>
<td>N-S</td>
<td>054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>030</td>
<td>GULLY</td>
<td>N-S</td>
<td>031, 085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>061</td>
<td>DITCH</td>
<td>E-W</td>
<td>063, 065, 066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>086</td>
<td>DITCH</td>
<td>N-S</td>
<td>067, 068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>084</td>
<td>GULLY</td>
<td>N-S</td>
<td>083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>087</td>
<td>DITCH</td>
<td>E-W</td>
<td>088, 064; second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>phase of 061</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Trench 13   |             |             |                     |
| 022         | POSTHOLE    |             | 023                 |
Detailed Description of Features

Key: B= Brown, YB= Yellow brown, DYB=Dark yellow brown, GB=Grey brown
Occ=Occasional, Freq=Frequent, Mod=Moderate, Rel=Relatively

Trenches 1, 2 and 3

005 Ditch, E-W, 174/660; 2.10x1.10m deep
  006 B sandy silt, occ gravel
  007 DYB sandy silt, occ to freq flint gravel, larger
     nodules on bottom  
     Section drawing 7

009 Ditch, E-W, 127/669; 2.2m x 0.95m deep
  010 DYB sandy silt
  011 DYB sandy silt
  019 DYB sand, freq flint gravel
     V shaped profile
     Produced 10% of pottery artefacts from site.

012 Ditch, N-S, 131/674; 2.3m x 0.50m deep
  013 B sandy silt, mod flint gravel  
  Section 5

018 Uncertain feature, 132/673;
  014 Black sandy charcoal
  015 White rammed chalk
  016 Pink-grey silty clay (heat affected)
  017 Flint nodules in silty clay matrix  
  Section 5

025 Corn drier? 158/675
  026 DYB sandy silt, freq large flint nodules
     and chalk fragments, very mixed

  Plan 2 Section 3, [Figure 7]

027 Ditch N-S, 141/673; 1.70m x 0.46m deep
  028 B silty sand
  029 YB silty sand, rel more flint gravel
     V shaped profile  
     Section 8

070 Ditch, N-S, 201/675; 1.10m x 0.46m deep
  071 VDB sandy silt, little flint gravel
  072 DYB silty sand, freq small flint gravel
  073 DYB sand, freq flint gravel
     Rounded U profile  
     Section 9

Trench 4

043 Ditch NW-SE, 126/550; 2.60m x 0.68m deep
  044 DYB silty sand, freq small rounded flint
  045 DYB sandy silt, occ small flint gravel
  046 DGB sandy silt, occ to freq flint nodules
  Broad U profile, cut by 049  
  Section 11
049 Ditch NW-SE, 127/550; 2.20m x 0.70m deep
047 DYG silt, occ small flint gravel
048 DB clayey silt, small flint gravel and occ flint nodules
Broad U profile, cuts 043
Section drawing indicates a recut on W side, which
was not followed in field.  

050 Gully, N-S, 118/550; 1.2m x 0.38m deep
051 DB sandy silt, occ small flint
Shallow broad U profile, rel 052 uncertain

Trench 5

074 Gully E-W, 210/549; 0.63m x 0.25m deep
075 DYG sandy silt, occ flint gravel
076 B sandy silt, occ flint gravel
V profile

Trench 7

020 Gully, E-W, 224/625; 0.72m x 0.20m deep
021 B-DB silty sand, occ small flint gravel
Broad U profile

Trench 10

054 ditch, N-S, 314/317; 2.70m x 1.10m deep
055 YB sandy silt, occ small flint gravel
056 YB sandy silt, mod-freq small flint gravel
Broad U profile, poss recut?

Trenches 11 and 12

035 Ditch N-S, 326/452; 3.4m x 1.50m deep
037 DYG sandy silt, occ small gravel
038 DYG " "
032 DYG sandy silt, freq small flint gravel
039 YB silty sand, occ small flint gravel
First pass, with three recuts (077, 078, 079)
Layers 032 and 038 produced quantities
of Roman pot, V profile. Layer 032
suggests silting from internal, eastern bank.
Produced 61% of pottery artefacts.

077 Gully N-S, 326/450; 1.2m x 0.50m deep
040 DYG silty sand, freq small flint gravel
U profile
078 Gully, N-S, 326/450; 0.84m x 0.44 m deep
069 DYB silty sand, freq small flint gravel
U profile

079 Gully, N-S, 326/450; 1.32m x 0.48 m deep
080 DYB Silty sand, occ small flint gravel
U profile

033 Gully, N-S, 358/446; 1.2m x 0.40m deep
034 DB-DYB sandy silt, occ large flint nodules
Broad shallow U profile, cut by 030

030 Ditch, N-S, 360/446; 1.95m x 0.48m deep
031 B sandy silt, occ large flint nodule
085 LB sandy silt, 0cc to freq small flint gravel
Broad shallow U profile

061 Ditch, E-W, 360/411; 2.4m x 1.10m deep
063 DB sandy silt, occ-freq small flint gravel
065 YB sandy silt, occ-freq small flint gravel
066 Yb sandy silt, freq small flint gravel
Recut of earlier ditch 087, sharp V profile

086 Ditch terminal, N-S, 1.0m 0.50m deep
067 YB sandy silt, occ small flint gravel
068 YB sandy silt, freq small flint gravel
Nr vertical sides, broad rounded bottom

084 Gully, N-S, 399/400; 0.50m x 0.30m deep
083 DYB sandy silt, mottled grey, occ small flint gravel
V profile

087 Ditch, E-W, 360/411; 2.60m x 0.88 m deep
088 DB sandy silt, freq small flint gravel
064 B sandy silt, freq small flint gravel
Earlier phase of 061, V profile

Trench 13

022 Posthole 131/375; 0.28m x 0.20m deep
023 GB sandy silt, mod to freq flint gravel
larger stones nr base, steep vertical sides
rounded base

Comments on Pottery by Gavin Lucas

This is a collection of early Roman pottery, of first to second century AD.
The majority is locally made, with the exception of a few sherds of Gaulish Samian
and Nene Valley beaker. Almost all the sherds are from domestic coarsewares
including bowls and jars, and Belgic-type carinated bowls. One Gallo-Belgic copy of a
butt beaker was noted. In summary this suggests a small scale domestic settlement. [A
full archive report is forthcoming] GML 17/12/91.
Pottery

Ditch 35  176 sherds
  5    9 sherds
  61   26 sherds
  9    42 sherds
  12   50 sherds
  25   1 sherd (possible corn drier)
  64   1 sherd
Total 7 contexts  306 sherds

Animal Bones

Animal bones were recovered from the following contexts:
  Ditch 64   8 fragments
  Gully 30   6 fragments
  Ditch 27   12 fragments
  Ditch 12   1 fragment
  Ditch 35   77 fragments
  Ditch 5    2 fragments
  6 Contexts 106 fragments of animal bone.

No detailed analysis will be attempted on this collection. If further excavations occur these fragments should be included in the analysis.

Discussion of Results

The field assessment has provided much new information about the two sites previously identified on the Cambs SMR. No new sites were located in the area examined. The close agreement between the aerial photographic and excavation evidence has been noted. Also the apparent blank area in the centre of the field investigated is confirmed as an "archaeological blank", rather than an absence of information.

The site in the northwest corner (SMR no 09738) comprised a series of rectilinear ditched enclosures. The aerial photographs indicate some internal features. One internal feature excavated is tentatively interpreted as the foundation for a corn drying oven. The archaeological features in this area produced a moderate density of artefacts (117 objects, 28% of the total). These suggest a Roman date for the enclosures and occupation (possibly focused on the area of the intersection of trenches 1 and 2), probably a Roman farmstead and associated garden plots, paddocks and infields. The large boundary ditch [008] and [009] is markedly V shaped in profile, which tends to suggest that it was allowed to fill-in without repeated cleaning (which leads to a broader U profile in gravel sub-strata).

The site in the southeast corner (08822) is similarly composed of rectilinear enclosures, though here the layout is markedly less regular than in the other site. Only ditches were located within the sample trenches. However, the excavated sections of these ditches did produce a relatively higher density of artefacts (294 objects, 72% of the total), including both pottery (of Roman date) and animal bone, similarly suggesting a domestic use of this area. Again an agricultural focus for the settlement is probable. Several of the ditch sections showed a markedly V profile, suggestive of relatively short term use, with little or no recutting and cleaning of the ditches.
The two sites investigated appear on present evidence to be single phase sites - that is both appear to be simply Romano-British settlements with no evidence for Iron Age or post-Roman occupation. This conclusion is supported by the simple regular layout recorded by the aerial photographs, with none of the complexity expected of sites with long histories of occupation.

The tracks and droveways identified from the aerial photographs were not investigated in the field assessment.

**Recommendations**

The sites investigated are, on present evidence, not sufficiently rare in nature or date to be classed as of national importance. The evaluation suggests no convincing argument for preservation in situ. However, rural farm settlements of the early Roman period are not a well known class of site in Cambridgeshire, and it is likely that the County Archaeology Office, acting as Curators of the County's heritage, would require a programme of sample excavation to record the sites in advance of destruction by quarrying operations.

There are two options for further action. Although in the author's view there is no strong archaeological reason to preserve the sites in situ, there may be a financial motive. One choice is therefore to alter the boundaries of the proposed borrow area in order to leave the two settlement areas in place and unaffected. A plan of the area is attached showing the areas which should be left in situ.

The second option is to commission further excavation and recording work, which would preserve the sites by record. A detailed programme of excavation would have to be agreed with the County Archaeology Office.

In either case provision should be made for a low level watching brief to be maintained over the balance of the area. Two particular archaeological features should be recorded by sample excavation - the possibly recent ditched enclosure along the western site boundary associated with the wooded copse, and the presumptively Romano-British tracks and droveways which were not investigated in the evaluation.
Cambridgeshire
County Council

Department of Property
Archaeology Section

Based upon Ordnance Survey Map No. (Edit) with the sanction of the Controller of H.M.S.O. [Licence No LA 07649 X]

SITE LOCATION
PROPOSED BORROW PIT

CROWN COPYRIGHT RESERVED
PREPARED BY: GW
DATE: 12/91
SCALE: 1:50000
PLAN NO.: 1
HINXTON
RESULTS OF FIELDWALKING

Cambridgeshire
County Council
Department of Property
Archaeology Section

Based upon Ordnance Survey Map No. (Edn). 51601
with the sanction of the Controller of H.M.S.O (License No LA 07649 X)

CROWN COPYRIGHT RESERVED
PREPARED BY: GW 12-91
SCALE: 1:2500
PLAN NO. 3

KEY
CROPMARK
ROMANO BRITISH / PREHISTORIC FINDS
○ = 1
● = 2
●● = 3

MEDIEVAL / POST-MEDIEVAL FINDS
X = 1 - 5
X = 6 - 10
X = 11+
A/O = 100E / 700N

For identification purposes only
HINXTON
LOCATION OF TRIAL TRENCHES

Based upon Ordnance Survey Map No. (Edi): 4640
with the sanction of the Controller of H.M.S.O. (Licence No LA 07649 X)

Cambridgeshire County Council
Department of Property

HINDBY 91
FIGURE 4

KEY
- CROPMARK
- TRIAL TRENCH
- AREA OF DARKER SOIL

For identification purposes only

PREPARED BY: GW
DATE: 12-6
SCALE: 1:2500
PLAN NO: 4
TL4846 – TL4946
HINXTON, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC ASSESSMENT

AIR PHOTO SERVICES
CHRIS COX MA MIFF ROG PALMER BA MIFF
7 EDWARD STREET CAMBRIDGE CB1 2LS
0223 316393

COMMISSIONED BY
CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, ARCHAEOLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF PROPERTY
SHIRE HALL
CASTLE HILL
CAMBRIDGE CB3 0AP

NOVEMBER 1991
This assessment was carried out using all available oblique and vertical aerial photographs covering the assessment area from the Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs (CUCAP). Photographs held in the National Library of Air Photographs could not be made available for consultation within the timescale of this assessment.

Photos were interpreted, digitally rectified and mapped at 1:2500 using the Bradford aerial photographic rectification software Aerial 3.3. Accuracy of photo to map control point matching was under 3m in all cases. The accompanying map is the result of the combination of data from multiple photographs, some of which were highly oblique.

Soil differences have been mapped where relevant to the archaeological interpretation, and to indicate the type of features which may be encountered during field investigation.

This report discusses the interpretation of each SMR individually, and is illustrated by a reduction of the final plan. The archaeological landscape of the assessment area is then summarised.
Photographs Consulted

CUCAP

Obliques:  
ZQ 60-61
BJJ 79, 81-82, 84-87
BNM 68
BNX 29
70H R-33

4 July 1959
7 July 1972
22 June 1973
3 July 1973
30 April 1974

Verticals:

RC8-CK 149
RC8-DY 123-125

16 November 1977
23 September 1981

Best illustration: BJJ 84, ZQ 60 (site detail)

Digitally rectified photographs: BJJ 84-85, BNM 60, 70H R-33

Comment

Archaeological features mapped from aerial photographs at this location comprise linear ditches aligned NW-SE, with abutting conjoined enclosures, pits and a ring ditch.

The enclosure complex spans the north end of the assessment area, and crosses a modern field boundary to its west. The features are bounded on the west by alluvium (where they either end or become invisible on aerial photos) as the land dips to the nearby River Cam, and on the east by a band of deeper soil.

The enclosure complex adjoins and lies on the same axis as a double ditched linear feature running from TL48604683 to TL48854673 which follows a similar alignment to linear features mapped for this assessment to the south and south east.

A linear ditch runs parallel to this ditch 16m to the south, forming a possible track or droveway abutting and possibly accessing an enclosure at its western end at TL48724677. At this point, the linear ditch angles south east to form an asymmetric funnel shape, indicating either a widening to an entrance or its possibly being the corner of another, unseen, conjoined enclosure. The ditch of the western abutting enclosure breaks at this point, and the gap is spanned by a much narrower ditch, shown on print number ZQ 60. This is suggestive of modification and recutting of the ditch and possible entrance. The apparently blank areas to the south of the main complex contain further archaeological features, indicated by small sections of ditch mapped in this area, and the alignment of a small segment of linear ditch which abuts the main linear feature at TL48744675.
The enclosure centred TL48654675 contains evidence of internal double ditched straight divisions and other internal ditches. Two areas of apparently deeper soil in this enclosure are indicated by darker toned and partially lodged crop, on prints ZQ 60 and BJJ 86. These may be internal settlement features, similar to those within an enclosure at TL48834646 described below under SMR 08822.

The majority of the linear ditches are precisely and straightly cut, with squared corners where alignments change. Pits occur in and around the enclosures.

The ditches continue across the modern field boundary to the west, where they are 'lost' in the alluvium. A ring ditch lying within the enclosed area shows clearly on print number 70H R-33, but is partly obscured by the modern field boundary to its east.

Part of a ditched enclosure, TL48624655, shows clearly on all prints which cover its location. This feature is not aligned with other archaeological features in the vicinity. The enclosure shows as a light mark on verticals RC8-CK 124-125, and as a ditch on the obliques. It is possibly a woodland boundary, indicating the former extent of the small wood to its immediate west. The enclosure is the same length as, and respects, the alignment of this wood. However, its archaeological origin cannot be firmly discounted from aerial evidence alone.
Photographs consulted

CUCAP

Obliques:  
- ZQ 55-59, 62  4 July 1959
- BJJ 80, 82, 88-89  7 July 1972
- BNM 66-67, 69  22 June 1973
- BNX 27-28  3 July 1973
- 70H R-34 - 7  30 April 1974

Vertical:  
- RC8-CK 149  16 November 1977

Best illustrations: ZQ 62, BJJ 88, 70H R-37

Digitally rectified photographs: ZQ 62, BJJ 88, 70H R-36 - 37

Comment

A large complex of similarly aligned ditched enclosures, trackways and linear features extends over two modern fields, centring upon TL489464. The eastern field shows extensive amorphous geological features which are not mapped due to their complexity.

Long linear ditches in this part of the assessment area continue the NW-SE alignment seen to the north at TL486468 SMR 09738, suggesting that the two complexes form part of the same archaeological landscape.

A series of conjoined ditched enclosures runs N-S, from TL48854653 to TL46754615, abutting NW-SE aligned linear ditches and trackways.

The enclosure at TL48854645 has rounded corners, an entrance in its west side, and a central square shaped internal feature (showing on prints ZQ 62 and BJJ 82). A linear ditch runs NW from the SW corner of the enclosure, which is abutted at right angles by a single ditched feature which may delineate two sides of a newly identified enclosure. Other linear ditches immediately to the north of the round cornered enclosure were identified on print ZQ 62. These additional ditches provide strong evidence for the existence of further archaeological features between the known foci of enclosures.

Further enclosures making up this N-S aligned group contain internal ditches and pits and are integral with NW-SE aligned tracks and linear ditches.

A double ditched track running N-S through a small enclosure at TL48794635, meets the NW-SE aligned track as a single ditch at TL48794626. The NW-SE track respects the north side ditch of an enclosure centred TL48794623. The track curves around the NW
corner of this enclosure, and continues its alignment into the adjacent modern field to the east, where it is abutted by further enclosures.

The relationship of the two tracks and the surrounding enclosures suggests that the N-S track was superseded by the NW-SE track when an enclosure was built over its alignment which can be seen within the enclosure.

A further linear feature runs NW-SE crossing a ring ditch, but is not visible within the ring ditch.

Pits are present both within and outside the enclosures and beside the NW-SE track, showing extent of landuse and possibly settlement into the middle of the modern field.

A sinuous linear feature beyond the western modern field boundary is, in my opinion, caused by the interface of the alluvium and the adjacent soil. It is shown in heavy red stipple on the accompanying map, as deep soil, and must be treated with caution if it is interpreted as an archaeological feature.

The site continues into the adjacent field to the east where the archaeological features show clearly on only one highly oblique photograph, 70H R-37. Further enclosures, some with internal divisions and pits, abut NW-SE aligned linear ditches at TL48864625, TL48954624 and in N-S alignment TL48904647-TL48874637.

At the northern end of the field, a curvilinear enclosure TL490465 is abutted by two divergent linear ditches running approximately SW-NE, which are crossed by linear ditches following the general NW-SE alignments. Evidence of ditch superimposition can be seen at TL49044647.

A track runs NE from TL48904655, changing direction to the east at TL48954662, respecting the shape of the curvilinear enclosure 70m to its east. A further linear ditch follows the NE line of this track from TL4904655, but cannot be traced to or beyond the modern boundary due to its appearing in the background of a highly oblique photo.
SUMMARY

The common alignments of linear ditches, tracks and enclosures within the whole assessment area are strongly indicative of a linked, cohesive archaeological landscape representing a small 'village' set around trackways and linear boundaries. Evidence of development and superimposition suggests a reasonably long occupation span.

The relationship of the two identified ring ditches to the enclosures is unclear. The ring ditches are different sizes, the northernmost being probably associated with settlement features, whilst the southern ring ditch is linked only with a linear feature of no proven contemporaneity.

There is a high probability that the area between the two foci of enclosures, centered TL48754660, contains further archaeological evidence. It is therefore suggested that field investigation/trial excavation in the area between the settlement foci may provide further archaeological evidence, and that similar tests within the known settlement areas be carried out to date and compare the two areas. The area between the 'sites' contains positive evidence of possible further enclosures and linear ditches, and is crossed by four linear ditches which are integral with, and possibly form land boundaries to, settlement areas of which the limits are unknown.

The vertical photo RC8-CK 149 shows geological features in the south east of the assessment area which are not apparent in the western field adjacent to the river. The soil in this western field may therefore be deeper, thus masking further archaeological features which are likely to be present in its centre.

Chris Cox, November 1991
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC ASSESSMENT OF SMRs 09738 AND 08822

APPENDIX

This note appends the above aerial photographic assessment carried out by Air Photo Services for Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology.

Upon receipt of oblique photographs loaned by the National Library of Air Photographs at RCHME, Swindon, the assessment has been checked and completed.

The following NLAP photos showed the assessment area:

| TL4846/3, 192-193 | 15 May 1976 |
| TL4846/1 | 1930s |
| TL4947/1 | 1930s |
| TL4846/6-8, 2004-2007 | 1 July 1985 |

Comment

The photographs from NLAP were checked and compared to interpretations made from the CUCAP photos, in the presence of those prints. The NLAP photos added very little to the information interpreted from CUCAP photos, on which the archaeological features showed with more clarity and to a far greater extent.

However, possible linear ditches were seen on print number TL4846/7 which may be the west and east side ditches of a possible further enclosure at TL48674635. The possible alignments of the north and south ditches, if this feature is indeed an enclosure, are masked by cultivation lines in the field. The ditches have been added to the plan, but should be regarded as of possible, not definite, archaeological origin. Their position in the middle of the field, following the same general alignment as the other enclosures again suggests the extent of settlement features over the whole area.

The previously noted ditch at TL48624655 (page 3 main report) showed on photos of this area, notably on prints TL4846/1 and TL4947/1, from the Crawford collection, taken during the 1930s. I had interpreted this feature as a possible wood boundary, but it shows on these prints as a buried ditch, with the wood to its west as it does on later photos, indicating no shrinkage of the wood during the last 60 years. Possible internal ditches which I had noted on the plan also showed clearly on prints TL4846/6, 2006-2007 clarifying their interpretation as definite internal divisions extending to the SW boundary of the main 'enclosure, which may, in the light of this evidence, be a valid archaeological feature.

Chris Cox, 6 December, 1991