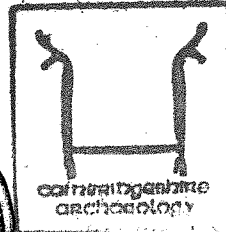
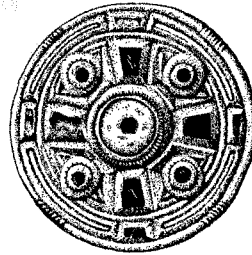


OFFICE COPY.

A66



ARCHAEOLOGY FIELD OFFICE
FULBURN COMMUNITY CENTRE
HAGGIS GAP, FULBURN
CAMBRIDGE CB1 5HD Tel: 221512

Archaeological Field Unit

Archaeological Evaluations at Cromwell Road, Wisbech.

S.N.Kemp

1995

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. A66

Commissioned By Maxey & Son

**Archaeological Evaluations
at Cromwell Road, Wisbech.**

(TF 450077)

Steve Kemp BA MSc AIFA

1995

Editor Ben Robinson BSc MA
Illustrator Melodie Paice BSc

Report No A66

Archaeological Field Unit
Cambridgeshire County Council
Fulbourn Community Centre
Haggis Gap, Fulbourn
Cambridgeshire CB1 5HD
Tel (01223) 881614
Fax (01223) 880946

SUMMARY

Archaeological field evaluations were undertaken at Cromwell Road Wisbech (TF 450077), by the Archaeological Field Unit, Cambridgeshire County Council. Trenching exposed a series of drainage ditches or dykes over 2.20m in width which lay beneath very low west-north-west to east-south-east aligned ridges. These land divisions known as darlands are associated with medieval arable cultivation within the reclaimed silt fenlands. Periodic re-excavation of these ditches has limited the potential for the retention of deposits relating to initial ditch construction and infilling, however, sherds of sixteenth-nineteenth century pottery were retrieved from the upper fills. OS map evidence indicates that these features had disappeared by 1888. The abandonment of the system may correspond with a relatively recent episode of landscape alteration associated with enclosure and the development of a new drainage pattern which forms the present field boundaries.

Sediments within these ditches indicate a gradual infilling with organic and non-organic sediments with intermittent flooding depositing fine grained alluvial sediments. Following episodes of flooding, ditches were recut, indicating maintenance of the drainage and agricultural system.

Historical records for the town indicate a number of significant breaches of coastal defences and river banks during the medieval period, these may relate to flood deposits recognisable on-site.

Prehistoric and Romano-British sites were not found within the development area. The roddon system recorded along the Wisbech southern by-pass (A47T) close to the development area was also shown to be absent.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	SITE DESCRIPTION	1
3	TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY	1
4	ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	1
4.1	Archaeological Background	1
4.2	Historical Background	3
5.0	METHODOLOGY	3
6.0	RESULTS	4
6.1	Outline of Archaeology	4
6.2	Trench details	5
	Trench 1	
	Trench 2	
	Trench 3	
	Trench 4	
	Trench 5	
	Trench 6	
	Trench 7	
	Trench 8	
7.0	DISCUSSION	7
8.0	HISTORICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT	8
9.0	CONCLUSION	10
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	10
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	11
	APPENDIX 1: List of Context	12
 LIST OF FIGURES		
Figure 1	Location Plan	2
Figure 2	South facing section through ditches 31, 25, 26 Trench 6	6

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATIONS AT CROMWELL ROAD, WISBECH.

1 INTRODUCTION

Archaeological evaluations were undertaken on land adjacent to Cromwell Road, Wisbech (TF 450077) following the guidelines of a brief prepared by the County Archaeology Office (Development Control) (CAO). Fieldwork was undertaken by the Archaeological Field Unit, Cambridgeshire County Council (AFU) on behalf of Maxey & Son, Wisbech.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site consisted of approximately 2 hectares of pasture adjacent to Cromwell Road. The topography of the site was marked by a series of west-north-west to east-south-east aligned ridges approximately 8m wide and 12m apart. These ridges were very low and could often only be traced as vegetational changes; the ridges being covered with nettles. The south-east corner of the site appeared to be very disturbed. A large amount of building material, brick rubble and concrete had been dumped over earthworks which are recorded on the 1888 and 1927 maps for the area (Ordnance Survey map sheet VII.7). These features averaged 9m wide separated by baulks of 5m wide. The system though irregular indicates some linearity in their alignment.

3 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The natural landscape is characterised by silt fen, interspersed with roddons (relict stream channels). Pre-Flandrian geology is dominated by sands and gravels at -15.34m OD (Alderton and Waller 1994;228). In this area roddons and remnants of tidal creeks at the periphery of the former Wash estuary are commonly associated with Romano-British salterns (Johnson 1986;51). The closest roddon lies only 150m to the south of the development area, it was believed to extend into the site, and therefore, significant archaeological remains were predicted by the CAO.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Archaeological Background

Cambridgeshire's Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) records the presence of two Roman sites in close proximity to the evaluation area. Both were discovered during the construction of the Wisbech By-pass in 1983. At TF 45010743 lies a scatter of first to fourth century Roman pottery lying on a roddon. At TF 45530748 excavations exposed ditches (SMR 09238) which were thought to be part of a water management system associated with a

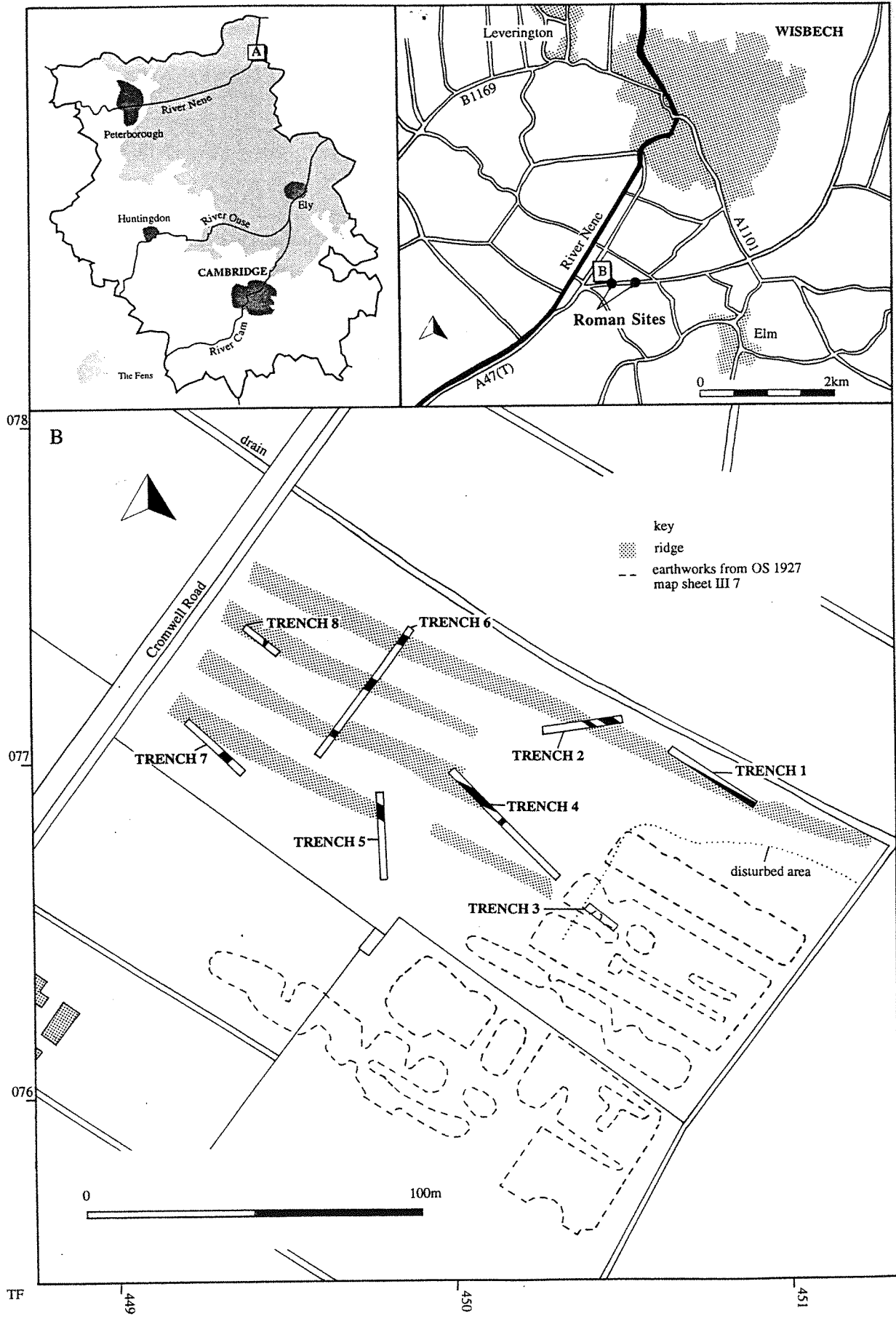


Figure 1 Site Location

Roman salt-making site. As no dating material was found it is equally possible that these are darland dykes associated with medieval strip cultivation.

The local stratigraphy consists of peat, marine silts and clays. The peat started to form during the late Bronze Age, radiocarbon dating at TF 45200744 indicates a date range between $2,710 \pm 60$ and 2100 ± 50 BP, and continued to form into the Roman period (Alderton and Waller 1994;150). This was followed by a period of marine flooding. Based on evidence of occupation for the area this transgressive phase is thought to have lasted only a couple of hundred years (Johnson 1986;51, Alderton and Waller 1994;250).

These local environmental conditions obviously have important implications for occupation of the region during these periods. They also affect the ability of the archaeologist to detect archaeological remains. The development of fen peats, and the deposition of alluvium and marine sediments during the post-glacial blanketed archaeological remains, inhibiting recognition by surface collection and remote sensing techniques such as fieldwalking and aerial photography. Survival characteristics of such deposits may be excellent since they are protected from ploughing and are often at sufficient depth to remain waterlogged.

Aerial photographic techniques have proved ineffective in mapping extent of the roddon or recognising other archaeological remains within the immediate environs of the site (Palmer pers. comm.).

4.2 Historical Background

Cromwell Road was constructed adjacent to Licking's Drove after 1888 but before 1927, and now links Wisbech with the A47 (T). Prior to the construction of Cromwell Road the development site formed part of a larger field extending westwards to the River Nene.

The Ordnance Survey (OS) map of 1927 and of 1888 record the presence of earthwork hollows, each about 9m wide and orientated northeast to southwest. These earthworks lay in the southeast corner of the site extending southwards into adjoining fields. Similar features are shown lying to the north where they are known as fishponds. However the orientation, irregularity in form and the well defined boundaries to these earthworks, as depicted by the OS is likely to indicate quarrying of land lying between darland dykes.

5 METHODOLOGY

Eight trenches were excavated across the development site using a 360° excavator with a 1.80m wide ditching bucket. This provided a 2.3% sample of the development area. Trenches were aligned to assess aspects of the broad ridge and furrow running across the site and, once the nature of these remains was understood, to assess the remaining areas of archaeological potential. Due to the dumping of building rubble in the south-east corner of the site machine trenching was restricted to a single trench of 11m in length.

Large ditch features were machine sectioned and recorded in section. Two ditches in Trench 2 were hand excavated.

The site archive is held by the Archaeological Field Unit at its Fulbourn Offices.

6.0 RESULTS

6.1 Outline of Archaeology

Trenching showed that the low west-north-west to east-south-east orientated ridges were aligned with a series of infilled ditches. These were excavated by machine and recorded in section (Fig. 1). No dating was retrieved from primary or basal fills, however, a single piece of nineteenth century pottery was recovered from upper fills of ditch 6 in Trench 2. The longevity of maintenance is indicated by the recutting of the ditches (Fig. 2). The significant depth of flood deposits within and external to the main ditches suggests that the development and maintenance of an extensive drainage system was required for the stabilization of the area for agricultural practices. Though, it is possible that these ditches occupied different temporal and spatial scales, this seems unlikely given their orientation and the correlation of sediments across the site. It is much more probable that they form a system of darlands, which would have provided a drainage function whilst also acting as land divisions within a medieval open field system.

A less substantial ditch on a similar alignment was encountered in Trench 2, this cut down onto the top of the peat. Deposits within the ditch indicate local derivation of sediments and slow moving water, with no apparent erosion of the peat though the ditch cuts down close to the upper horizon of this layer. On the basis of its stratigraphic association this ditch may relate to the same phase of darland activity discussed above though the ditch contained no dateable artefacts. In Trench 8 a modern foundation trench was exposed indicating the presence of a post-1927 building in the vicinity which is not marked on any maps.

Cartographic evidence indicates that this field originally extended westwards to the River Nene. Rather than running as a single strip of land to the river a ditch perpendicular to the main alignment (24/32) may indicate that the land was further divided in to a series of parcels, each perhaps over 160m in length.

Augering established that little remains of the original fills of the features recorded by the OS (Cambs VII.7, 1927) and no surface traces of these features survive due to the recent dumping of building materials. These ditches are recorded as being much wider than the darland ditches and separated by narrow baulks of land. Figure 1 indicates strong evidence for association with darland dykes by alignment, though the size and form of these features as portrayed by the OS is likely to indicate clay extraction from land lying between ditches. This may be supported by the stratigraphic sequence obtained from augering within these features which indicates a relatively rapid infilling of organic and non-organic (including building rubble) deposits.

Similar earthworks to those lying in the south-east corner also lie to the north of the site (OS Cambs. VII.7, 1927), here they are called fishponds. These may also be the remains of extraction pits for local brickworks.

6.2 Trench details

Trench 1

Trench 1 contained a single ditch which was aligned with the vegetation mark of nettles and slight ridge extending along the field. These ditches were filled with clays and silts with no evidence for intentional backfilling and leveling. The trench ran down one side of this feature so its full width could not be assessed. No further recording of this ditch occurred as it corresponded with ditch 6 in Trench 2.

Trench 2

Trench 2 crossed the most northern ridge within the field. Two north-west to south-east oriented ditches were encountered in alignment with the vegetation mark and slight ridge. Both ditches were hand excavated and found to contain dry organic sediments which included leaves, bark and root matter in the basal fills. Post-medieval pottery was retrieved from the upper fills of the eastern most ditch (6), these included sherds of Frenchen stoneware (approximately 1550-1700 AD) and Westerwald stoneware (approximately 1600-1800 AD). This ditch was over 0.80m in depth and 3.60m in width. The other (3), a very straight sided ditch cut down close to the peat horizon lying at 0.76m O.D. No finds were retrieved. Ditch (3) contained lenses of fine laminated silts indicative of periodic flooding in an already abandoned, largely infilled ditch. Unlike other ditches within the development site this feature does not appear to have been re-excavated or cleaned out.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was located on the western margins of the disturbed ground (Fig.1), an area known to contain earthworks in 1927. Machine excavation and augering showed that disturbed ground lay to a depth of 1.46m below topsoil, and comprised of a loose and silty clay matrix with brick and tile fragments. Below this lay up to 0.20m of highly organic sediment and a natural deposit of blue sandy silty marine clays. Augering and machine excavation elsewhere in the development area indicated a single fibrous peat layer (0.10-0.15 m thick) extending across the site at a depth of about 0.80m below topsoil.

This work indicated that the earthwork features in this area were little over 1.60m in depth from the present ground surface with a basal fill of only 0.20m, overlain by a single backfill deposit which includes modern brick and tile. These features cut down through the Roman marine clays, prehistoric peats, and into the underlying prehistoric marine clays.

Trench 4

Trench 4 continued the line of Trench 3, extending outside the visible bounds of disturbance. Two ditches were recognised but not excavated as they appeared to be part of the system of ditches described above. The northern most was oriented east-west and was between 3 and 4m wide. The second was north-east to south-west aligned, approximately on the same alignment as the ridge, and about 2m wide.

Trench 5

Trench 5 was located to test for the presence of archaeology on the southern side of the field. A single ditch west-north-west to east-south-east orientated ditch was exposed, again aligned with a slight ridge where the vegetation was dominated by nettles. This ditch was not examined further.

Trench 6

Trench 6 was located to cut across the west-north-west to east-south-east aligned ridges. Three ditches were recognised in alignment with these ridges, one of which was machine excavated and recorded. The fill sequence is dominated by organic sediments, though sedimentation is occasionally interrupted by the deposition of inorganic flood deposits (alluvium).

These ditches appear to have been re-excavated or cleared out following flood events which deposited alluvium across the local landscape. Originally the ditch was over 3m in width (31), this had been reduced to approximately 2.70m by cut 25 and 2.50m by cut 26. The final ditch (26) was therefore steeper sided and smaller in width and possibly depth than its original form (31) (Fig.2). It is possible that this represents an increasing difficulty in maintaining this system either in the 'cost' of labour, geomorphological problems associated with re-excavation, or worsening environmental conditions.

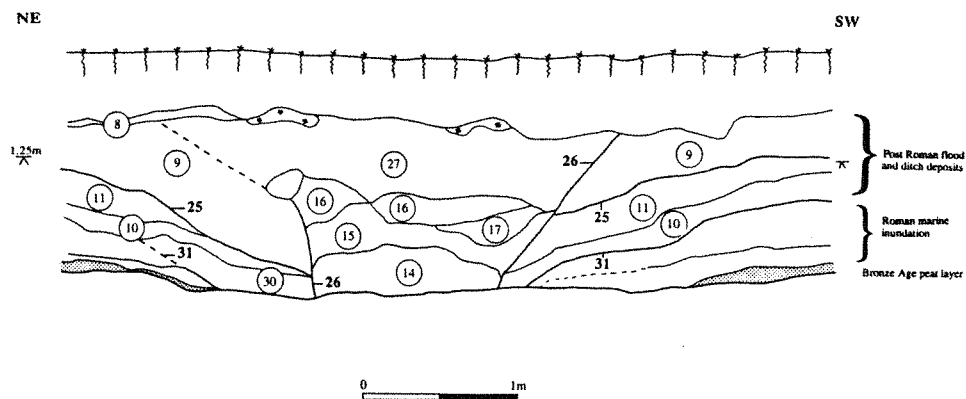


Figure 2 South facing section through ditches 31, 25, 26 Trench 6

Trench 7

Trench 7 was located to test for the presence of archaeology in the south-west corner of the site and was set-up to run parallel to the west-north-west to east-south-east aligned ridges. Here a north-east to south-west oriented ditch was exposed; this was excavated by machine and the section recorded. Two cuts were recognised in section. The initial ditch (24) was about 2.10m wide and heavily truncated by (32) a re-cut ditch on the same alignment the upper fill of which contained brick and tile. These ditches contained a similar sequence of deposits to those seen in the west-north-west to east-south-east oriented ditches suggesting that it functioned as part of the same darland system, however, no dating evidence was retrieved. No traces of this feature were visible in the surface topography or vegetation of the site.

Trench 8

Trench 8 was located close to Cromwell Road. Two features were exposed which indicate the presence of buildings on this site. Though no finds were recovered, the fill type and step cut foundation trench suggests a recent date for buildings in this location, though no such buildings are marked on any of the recent OS maps.

7.0 DISCUSSION

Trenching revealed that the slight linear ridges marked by nettles were the remains of drainage ditches. It is possible that the ridges were formed by a 'roddon' effect, the adjacent peat deposits having wasted or become compacted, leaving the ditch silts standing proud. There is little evidence to suggest intentional levelling following the abandonment of the system. Trench 7 indicates a transverse ditch alignment which may be of similar origin, but appears to have been levelled more recently. Given the correlation of heights between the primary and tertiary phases of ditching it is possible that this ditch is synchronous with the darland system, however, this interpretation pays no consideration to possible local variations in the palaeo-topography of the development area.

The west-north-west to east-south-east parallel ditches divided the lands into strips for arable production in a similar way to the Midland strip cultivation (ridge and furrow). Strips in this particular case were approximately 12m wide and extended from the eastern boundary of this field to the River Great Ouse, a distance of about 0.5 km, possibly in enclosures of over 160m in length. Features marked as fishponds on the 1927 OS may indicate that the darland system extended northwards closer to Wisbech, alternatively they could indicate fishponds excavated within the dykes or quarry extraction within the parcels of land demarcated by dykes. Quarrying activities are believed to have led to the formation of the earthworks recorded by the OS in the south-east corner of the development area, these probably date to the nineteenth century.

Darlands are commonly between 12 and 20m wide and bounded by dykes with fields occasionally extending up to 1.5 km in length in reclaimed areas (Hall and Coles 1994;146). These feature were common on the silt fen throughout Wisbech, Leverington and Newton parishes during the medieval period, and up to the nineteenth century (Hall and Coles 1994;146). The alignment of the darland system on the development site corresponds with the mapping undertaken by Hall and Coles (1994;146).

Sections through the natural depositional sequence shows the deposition of alluvial deposits beyond the bounds of these ditches. These inorganic alluvial sediments are likely to result from flooding of these lands and a failure of the darland system to drain adjacent lands. Following these flood events ditches were recut and the former system re-instigated.

Unfortunately no dateable material could be extracted from the lower fills of the ditches which might have given an indication of the date for the foundation of the darland system in this area. Periodic re-cutting of the ditches is likely to have limited the potential of encountering secure deposits dating from this period.

8.0 HISTORICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

Historical research by Watson (1827), Walker and Craddock (1849), the Victoria County Histories (Pugh 1967) and Darby (1983) indicate the vulnerability of the Fens to flooding during the medieval and post-medieval periods and therefore a need for major investment in drainage. In 1236 flooding destroyed the Norman castle and market at Wisbech. In 1647 14,000

acres were drowned , whilst prior to 1331 30 miles square were drowned yearly (Walker and Craddock 1849;103). The problems involved in organising suitable defensive strategies were handicapped by variation in source of these inundations. In 1613 the sea drowned most of the hundred, whilst in 1614 thawing snow caused freshwater flooding. In 1667, 1763, 1765 and 1770 silting-up of the river system and drainage ditches resulted in flooding as the upland waters were unable to flow northwards to the sea (Pugh 1968;264, Walker and Craddock 1849, Watson 1827). It appears that some flooding resulted from the mismanagement of the natural environment and was recognised as such by the local population. Construction of a dam at Outwell resulted in annual drowning 30 miles square of fenland between Benwick and Outwell prior to 1331. The dam was demolished following an outcry by inhabitants of the region (Walker and Craddock 1849;103).

The blame for these catastrophes has been firmly placed on the mismanagement of the major river systems, the Great Ouse, Nene and Welland Rivers, which were the main drainage routes for the Fens during the Flandrian. Diversion of waters from Wisbech, the original outfall for the Fens, to Kings Lynn had major implications for the region, resulting in the decline of Wisbech as a trading port and the development of a major environmental problem which took centuries to rectify (Walker and Craddock 1849;97). The remaining waters running through Wisbech were insufficient to maintain a channel through the tidal sediments, resulting in increased silting of the lower reaches of the River Nene and the damming of the system. In 1437 the Session of Sewers at Wisbech decided to restrict activities which might impede the flow of the river (Walker and Craddock 1849;111). By this time the river at Wisbech was so silted that it was no longer possible to use this course for drainage and culverts were laid to transfer water to Leverington. Silting of the river shifted the economic focus of the region to Kings Lynn where rivers remained navigable though due to a narrow channel, heavy seasonal discharges were prone to lead to the destruction of banks resulting in further flooding of the Fenlands (Darby 1983;31-34, Walker and Craddock 1849). It is apparent that such catastrophes would have had major implications for the development of local economies and communities.

The Victoria County Histories (1967;263-265) paints a slightly different picture of the affects of the river and drainage systems on the economic development of Wisbech. In 1566 the port of Wisbech traded from keeled vessels of up to 12 tonnes, by 1680 Wisbech was considered to be independent of Kings Lynn with a major increase in traffic, up to the early nineteenth century. Shipbuilding was also carried out in Wisbech (Pugh 1967;263-264). Drainage and embankment works appear to have been monitored by the Corporation with the intent of safeguarding the navigation of the river. Though in 1751 it was possible to walk along the river bed beneath Wisbech Bridge and vessels had to be unloaded at Cross Keys or Foul Anchor. Major episodes of silting of the river or flooding are portrayed as very occasional events particularly after the systematic drainage which began in the seventeenth century.

The endeavours to drain the Fens during the medieval and post-medieval periods need to be set against an environmental background of climatic deterioration known as the Little Ice Age. This cold period had a major effect on storm frequencies, flooding, precipitation and temperatures across Europe (Jones and Keen 1993). Analysis of grape harvests in France indicate great fluctuations in environmental conditions particularly during the seventeenth century at a time which corresponds to an increase in the number of recorded floods for the Fens (Ladurie and Baulant 1981, Pfister 1981, Walker and Craddock 1849). Similar work in lowland Britain indicates that temperatures

averaged almost 1°C lower than present in 1500, combined with alterations in precipitation and seasonality. The growing season of 1400 was 3 weeks shorter than present, by the seventeenth century the growing season this was reduced by a further 2 weeks (Grove 1988).

Lower temperatures and consequent reduction in evaporation which were most marked for March and June during this period resulted in increased wetness (Pfister 1981). In continental and Scandinavian Europe this led to a fattening up of glaciers and subsequent advance resulting in flooding, landslides and destruction of farmland and property by bulldozing ice (Grove and Battangel 1983). In lowland Britain where no such storage facilities existed increased precipitation would have been transferred rapidly into the river systems, which in a degraded and mismanaged state (as indicated by Walker and Craddock 1849) would have resulted in flooding and further stress to the local economy. Added to this the increased sediment stored within the riverine landscape from medieval agricultural expansion during the preceding climatic optimum would have aided the development of sluggish, incompetent river systems which may not have been able to contain rising flood waters.

It is apparent from the wealth of proxy climatic and economic data for medieval and post-medieval Europe that a period of environmental fluctuation would have had a significant affect on the anthropogenic and natural systems. Human alterations to the regional landscape must therefore been seen in light of these climatic changes, which would also have had a major impact on fluvial activity.

Though no dates for the development of the darland system were recovered during the course of these excavations Hall and Coles (1994;147) suggest that such systems were being developed as early as the thirteenth century. It is possible that such a darland agricultural system developed as a result of rising sea levels during the thirteenth century and the need to maintain cultivatable lands during the medieval period (Darby 1983;10). The alluvial deposits associated with these dykes in the development area were probably deposited during a period of increased flooding resulting from the combined affects of the mismanagement of the natural drainage system combined with increased precipitation associated with climatic change and a relative sea level rise.

9.0 CONCLUSION

Archaeological trenching on fields adjacent to Cromwell Road revealed the remains of a darland field system composed of parallel ditches extending westwards to the river dividing the land into strips of approximately 12m wide. This system appears to have suffered from intermittent flooding, depositing sufficient sediment to require the re-excavation of its dykes. It is clear that these major flood events did not result in the abandonment of the system. The darland system was definitely out of use by the late nineteenth century and was probably abandoned at a much earlier date.

Roman sites in this area are commonly found in association with roddons. Two Romano-British sites lie close to the development area (Fig.1), however, no Roman remains were encountered on-site. The roddon observed during excavations within the A47 corridor was also not encountered. It is likely that any Roman remains in the immediate vicinity of the site would have been disturbed by excavation of the darland system. This would have resulted in

narrow strips (12m wide) with a potential of *in situ* preservation. Where such remains exist may have a high potential for the preservation of organic remains due to a substantial capping of flood sediments and lying close to the water table.

The absence of prehistoric remains in the region can be accounted for by the prevalence of marine conditions in the area for much of this period. Only during the late Bronze Age and possibly prior to 6850 BC was this area above sea level though here brackish and freshwater environments during peat formation may not have been conducive to human settlement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Maxey and Son for their support in excavation and recording of these archaeological remains. Thanks are also due to the recording team of the Archaeological Field Unit; Helen Finigan and Charlie Miller as well as Ben Robinson for his advice during the course of this project. Illustrations were by Melodie Paice.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alderton, A. and Waller, M. 1994. The Wisbech Bypass (Camb/Norfolk). in *Flandrian Environmental Change in Fenland* (Waller, M.) E.A.A 70. Cambridge.
- Darby, H.C. 1983. *The Changing Fenland*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge
- Grove, J.M. 1988. *The Little Ice Age*. Methuen. London
- Grove, J.M and Battangel, A. 1983. Tax Records from Western Norway, as an Index of Little Ice Age Environmental and Economic Deterioration. *Climatic Change*, 5, 265-282.
- Hall, D. and Coles, J 1994. *Fenland Survey. An Essay in Landscape and Persistence*. Archaeological Report 1. English Heritage.
- Johnson, A.M. 1986. Wisbech and West Walton Highway Bypass. An Archaeological Survey. *PCAS Vol LXXV*. 50-51.
- Jones, R.L. and Keen, D.H. 1993. *Pleistocene Environments in the British Isles*. Chapman and Hall. London,
- Ladurie and Baulant 1981. Grape Harvests from the Fifteenth through the Nineteenth Centuries. *Climate and History: Studies in Interdisciplinary History*. Cambridge University Press. London.
- Pfister, C., 1981. The Little Ice Age: Thermal and Wetness Indices for Central Europe. *Climate and History: Studies in Interdisciplinary History*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.
- Pugh, R.B (ed) 1967. *The Victoria History of the Counties of England. Cambridge and Isle of Ely*. Vol.IV. University of London. London.
- Walker, N. and Craddock, T. 1849. *The History of Wisbech and the Fens*. Wisbech.
- Watson, W. 1827. *An Historical Account of the Ancient Town and Port of Wisbech*. Wisbech.

APPENDIX A

List of Contexts in stratigraphic order by Trench

Trench 1 28m Length

west-north-west to south-south-east aligned ditch partially exposed within the trench. No excavation occurred.

Trench 2 25m length

3 a flat based, straight sided north-west to south-east aligned ditch. Up to 0.70m in depth and 1.40m wide. In approximate alignment with low west-north-west to south-south-east aligned ridge within the field.

filled with

3/19 7.5YR 4/3 brown

Mottled yellow brown silty clays with a high organic component which includes root, bark and reeds. Deposit coarsens upwards to a brown sandy silty clays with a smaller organic component. Deposit contains occasional lenses of laminated silts and clays.

6 north-west to south-east aligned ditch 3.60m in width, excavation was incomplete due to a high ground water level. Approximately aligned with low west-north-west to south-south-east aligned ridge within the field. Finds include sherds of Frechen and Westerwald stonewares and clay pipe fragments

filled with

7 10YR 4/2 dark greyish brown

clays with high organic component including wood. Excavation incomplete.

5 10YR 4/2 dark greyish brown

sandy clayey silts up to 0.52m in depth. Has a high organic component which included birch leaves. Finds include post-medieval sandy and glazed white wares, Frechen and Westerwald stoneware.

Trench 3 11m length

Machine excavation and augering showed that disturbed ground lay to a depth of 1.46m below topsoil. This comprised of a loose sandy silt and clay with building rubble; largely brick and tile with some concrete at the surface. 0.20m of a highly organic amorphous sediment lay at the base of the feature. The feature had cut into blue grey sandy clays of marine origin.

Trench 4 44m length

Two ditches were recognised but remained unexcavated. one was orientated east-west whilst the other north-east to south-west was aligned with a low west-north-west to south-south-east aligned ridge.

Trench 5 26m length

A single ditch was recognised which aligned with a low west-north-west to south-south-east aligned ridge. This feature remained unexcavated.

Trench 6 47m in length

31 west-north-west to east-south-east aligned ditch cutting down from about 0.95m OD. This feature was about 2.20m wide and over 0.30m in depth. The base of the feature was not exposed and deposits contained within this initial cut were heavily truncated by later re-excavation along the same alignment.

filled with

30 10YR 4/3 dark yellowish brown
mottled orange brown clays and silts about 0.12m in depth.

10 7.5R 5/1 grey
blue grey clay with occasional orange mottling about 0.10m in depth. Similar to the more homogeneous underlying natural clays.

11 10YR 4/4 dark yellowish brown
silty sandy clays up to 0.14m in depth.

25 west-north-west to east-south-east aligned ditch cutting down from 1.27m OD through the fills of [31]. This feature was less than 2.20m wide and over 0.70m in depth and cuts through deposits 11 and 10.

filled with

9 10YR 3/4 dark yellowish brown
silty clays with charcoal flecks and the occasional brick and tile fragment. Up to 0.40m in depth.

26 west-north-west to east-south-east aligned ditch cutting down from 1.37m OD through fills of [25]. This feature was about 2.40m wide at its widest point and over 0.80m in depth. Final cut to the drainage systems; sediments indicate gradual infill as maintenance of the darland system was discontinued.

filled with

14 10YR 3/2 very dark greyish brown
homogeneous clayey silt deposit at least 0.50m in depth. Excavation incomplete.

15 10YR 3/2 very dark greyish brown
homogeneous silty clays up to 0.40m in depth.

17 10YR 3/4 dark yellowish brown
clayey silts with brick and tile fragments up to 10mm in size and occasional charcoal flecks. Up to 0.16m in depth.

16 10YR 3/3 dark brown
clayey silts with occasional organics. Inclusions include brick and tile fragments. Up to 0.25m in depth.

27 7.5YR 3/2 dark brown
silty clays with inclusions of brick, tile and coal.

8

layer of charcoal and burnt clays lying below the top-soil and above the infilled ditch.

Trench 7 25m length

24 north-east to south-west orientated ditch cutting down from 0.98m OD. This ditch was about 2.10m wide and over 0.60m in depth. The base of the feature was not exposed and the fills were heavily truncated by re-excavation of the ditch.

filled with

34 10YR 5/2 grey brown
silty clays up to 0.25m in depth truncated by ditch **32**.

33 7.5YR 5/1 grey
blue grey clays with yellow brown (10YR 5/4) mottles up to 0.14m in depth.

32 north-east to south-west orientated ditch cutting down through the fills of [24] from 1.40m OD. The ditch was at least 1.80m wide and over 1.10m in depth.

filled with

23 7.5YR 5/1 grey
blue grey clays with brown (10YR 4/3) mottling. Over 0.80m in depth, excavation was incomplete.

22 10YR 4/2 dark grey brown
sandy silty clays with inclusions of brick, tile and drain fragments.

Trench 8 13m length

Two modern features were recognised. These consisted of a small foundation trench cut by a narrow pipe trench.



Cambridgeshire
County Council

Archaeology

The Archaeological Field Unit
Fulbourn Community Centre
Haggis Gap
Fulbourn
Cambridge CB1 5HD
Tel (01223) 881614
Fax (01223) 880946