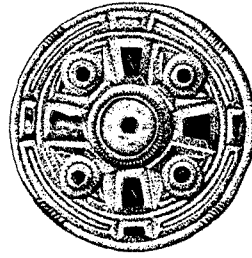
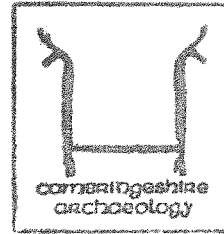


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Archaeological Field Unit



ARCHAEOLOGY FIELD OFFICE
FULBURN COMMUNITY CENTRE
HAGGIS GAP, FULBURN
CAMBRIDGE CB1 5HD Tel: 831614
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Archaeological Investigation at Elms Farm, Folksworth

A Hatton & S Leith

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Report No. A106

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A Hatton, HND, BSc &
S Leith, BA, MA, AIFA

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Editor: T Malim

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

SUMMARY

In August and September 1996, and January 1997, the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council undertook an investigation of land at Elms Farm, Folksworth (TL 144 897). The work was carried out before and during the construction of 13 dwellings, access road, services and landscaping, on behalf of Homes by Marshall Ltd.

A ditch of post-medieval date was revealed at the north end of the development area, where it was cut by a modern pond infilled in the 1970s. It has been suggested that Elms Farm was once surrounded by a moat, which had been largely obliterated by 1926. This ditch may have been part of a moat, but no other evidence for a moat was revealed within the development area. Therefore the results of this investigation do not provide any evidence to support the presence of a moat at Elms Farm.

A barn which was to be demolished as part of the development, was recorded before and during demolition. The barn was largely built of brick and constructed during the later half of the 19th century, however the later building was erected on earlier stone foundations. It is possible that these could have been contemporary with the initial construction of the farm house c. 1570 to 1600, but there was no associated dating evidence to confirm this.

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION AT ELMS FARM, FOLKSWORTH

INTRODUCTION

In August and September 1996, and January 1997, the Archaeological Field Unit of Cambridgeshire County Council carried out an investigation of land at Elms Farm, Folksworth (TL 144 897). The archaeological investigation was conducted on behalf of Homes by Marshall Ltd, in response to a brief provided by the County Archaeological Office.

The site is located in the north-west part of the village of Folksworth (Figures 1 and 2). The development area covers about 1 hectare, and includes a farm complex of post-medieval and possible late medieval date. The archaeological investigation was carried out prior to and during the development of the site, which included the construction of 13 dwellings, access road, services, and landscaping. The underlying geology of the site is boulder clay, and the farmyard soil had been more or less totally replaced with brick rubble.

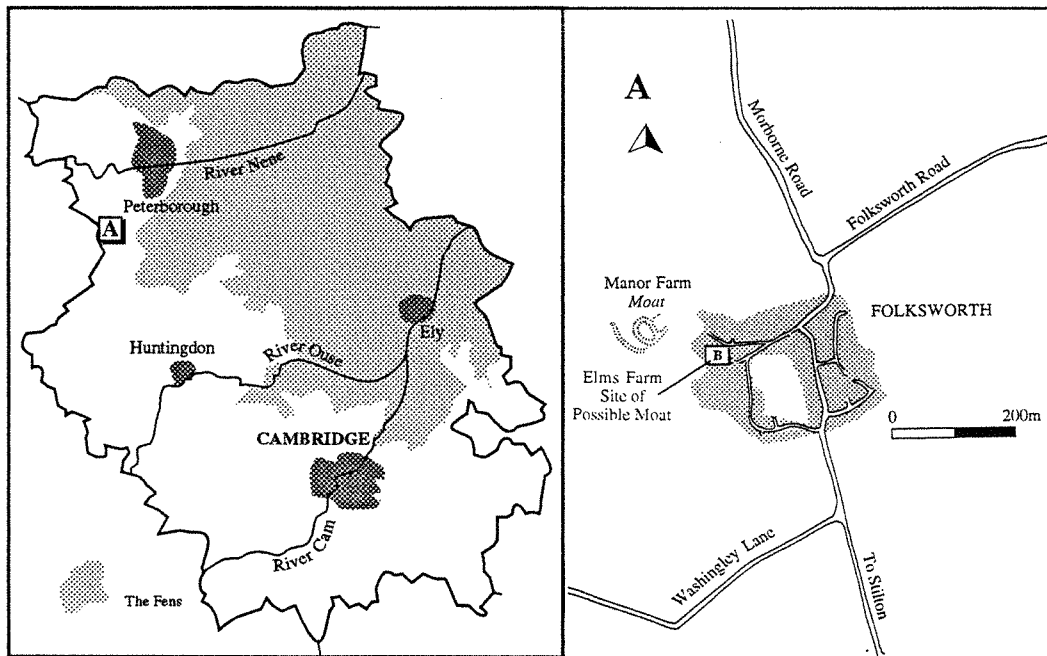


Figure 1: Site location plan

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The village of Folksworth had been established by 1086 when it was recorded in the Domesday Book, and the church, dedicated to St Helen, dates to about 1150. The development site at Elms Farm lies within a clearly defined medieval landscape. Traces of medieval cultivation in the form of earthworks of ridge and furrow are located adjacent to the development area (SMR 11613). Two medieval moats are recorded within the parish of Folksworth. The first survives as an earthwork on the land of Manor Farm, 200m to the north-west of Elms Farm (SMR 1009). This may be the

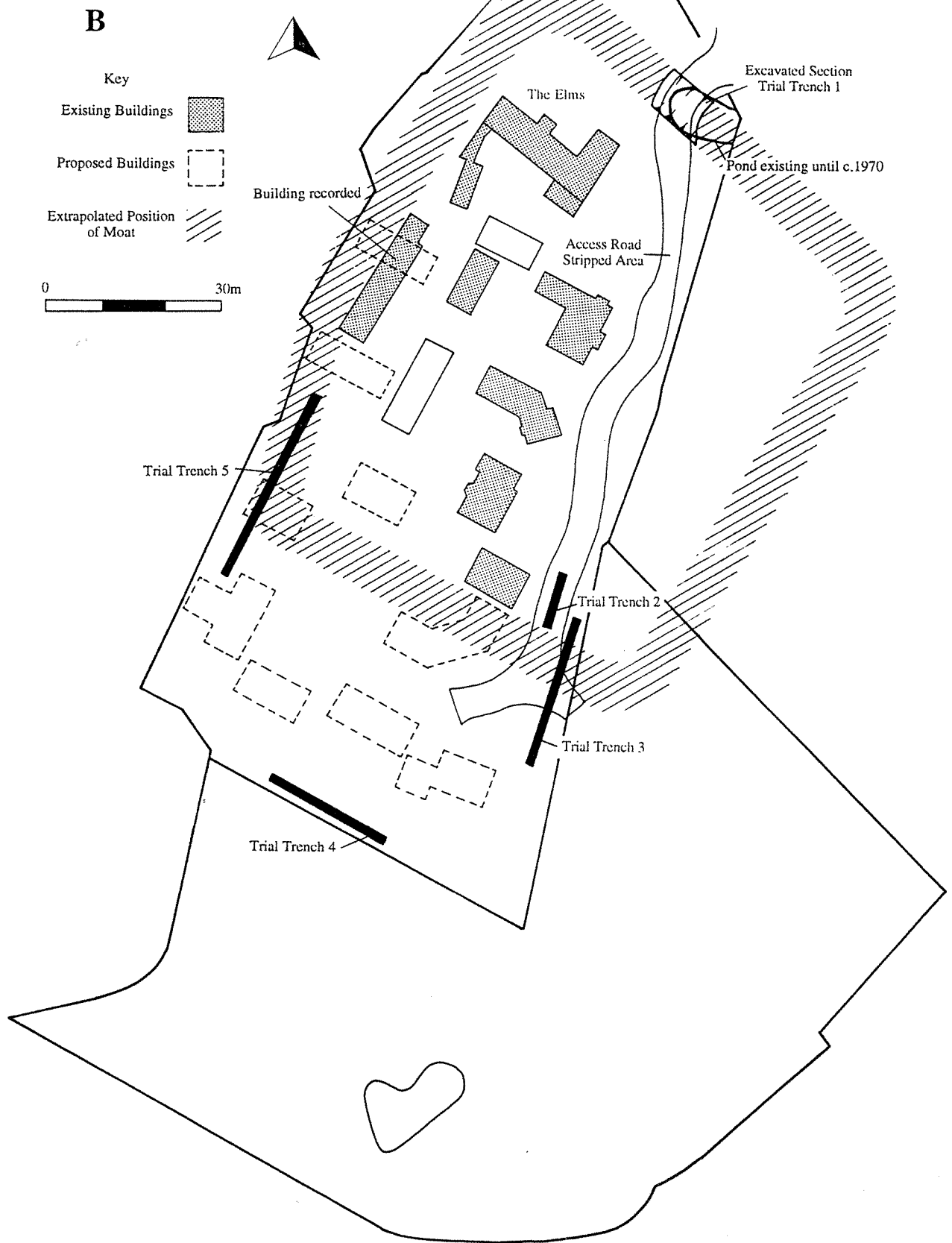


Figure 2: Trench location plan

position of the original Manor House erected c.1200 by Guy de Folksworth, who is recorded as the first tenant of the Manor of Folksworth.

The second moat is recorded at Elms Farm itself, surrounding the house (SMR 1010). The present house dates to the early 17th century. The RCHM(E) recorded the moat as largely obliterated in 1926, and it does not appear on the 1847 tithe map of Folksworth. However, a series of ponds noted on the 1926 OS map may have been remnants of the moat.

The Cambridge University Committee for Aerial Photography collection contained no photographs showing the proposed moat. However, an aerial photograph taken within the last 30 years (probably in the 1970s) owned by the farmer showed one of these ponds in the north part of the site, and the possible vestiges of the moat in the form of slight earthworks (Figure 2, Plate 4). These were very ephemeral in places, however they indicate a rectangular area of about 320 square metres, enclosed within a moat about 7m wide.

METHODOLOGY

The brief specified a phased approach to the archaeological investigation at Elms Farm. This was to include: 1) a recording brief during soil stripping for the access road; 2) evaluation trenching in the remainder of the development area; and 3) the recording of any historic structures to be demolished.

The soil stripping for the access road entailed the removal of 0.40m of soil from a 4m wide strip along the route of the road in order to provide a suitable surface for initial ground preparation. This operation was carried out by a mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket and was supervised by a member of the AFU. Where the infilled pond visible on the aerial photograph was identified, a trench was excavated by machine across the pond to ascertain its depth and dimensions (Trench 1, Figure 2). Hand excavation and cleaning was undertaken to retrieve dating evidence and complete the recording exercise.

The evaluation was intended to establish the location of the moat, and to determine the state of preservation of any remains outside the present farmyard. To this end, four trenches were located at the southern end of the development area (Trenches 2-5, Figure 2). The four trenches, with a total length of 95m, were opened by mechanical excavator, then photographed and planned.

The final phase of field work involved a photographic and measured record of a barn which was to be demolished as part of the development of the site. The barn was almost totally rebuilt during the mid to late 19th century, but still retained some evidence of an earlier building on the site. The building was recorded before and during demolition (Figure 2).

RESULTS

The Access Road Recording Brief

As a depth of 0.40m was constantly applied throughout the soil stripping, the natural underlying boulder clay was encountered infrequently, while much of the revealed surface comprised of modern (c AD1900+) build-up. Areas where natural deposits

were encountered were hand cleaned to verify the absence of archaeological features. Deposits of domestic rubbish were evident within the layer generally exposed across the stripped area, and a selection of artefacts was examined on site by the supervising archaeologist. The artefact assemblage comprised of bottles, domestic pottery, and iron objects, all of which dated from c. 1920 to 1930. One large deposit was noted at the north-east end of the stripped area, where the previous landowner indicated that he had filled in a large pond in the late 1970s. The deposit was consistent with this explanation as plastic objects and modern building materials could be observed within the matrix. These deposits were also observed in Trench 1.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located at the north-east end of the new access road, in the area of a pond previously identified from the aerial photograph (Figure 2). The pond was excavated to a depth of approximately 3m at which point the natural clay/gravel subsoil was identified. In the west-facing section, the construction of the pond appeared to have eradicated any traces of an earlier moat. Here the pond was about 10m wide and 3m deep. The lower fill was a black organic layer, about 0.80m thick. The upper fills contained modern building materials and plastic objects, and represented the infilling of the pond in the late 1970s.

The pond appeared to become shallower towards the west, and did not appear in the east-facing section. This section showed a wide ditch, 1.5m deep and 6m wide (Plate 1). The section showed the following sequence: 1) excavation of the ditch, 2) lining of the cut with a layer of pebbles and brick, 3) build-up of a black organic layer (0.30m thick), and 4) a light brown deposit (1.2m thick) with no evidence of organic material. The bricks in the primary fill dated to the 18th century (P. Copleston pers. comm.).

The wide ditch in the east-facing section, which was cut by the modern pond, may be the moat which was recorded by the RCHM(E) in 1926 as largely obliterated.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was located at the south-east end of the development area on the line of the new access road (Figure 2). The trench consisted of a 10m by 0.50m exploratory excavation across the predicted line of the moat (based on the aerial photographic evidence), in order to establish its existence. The excavation of the trench revealed no evidence for the moat's continuation at the south eastern end of the site. However subsequent examination of the aerial photograph in conjunction with a 1926 OS map showed that Trench 2 may have been positioned up to 10 metres to the north of the southern arm of the moat. Observation of topsoil/subsoil stripping to the south of Trench 2 within the extrapolated location of the moat also failed to reveal any archaeological features.

Trench 3

The location of this trench was intended to establish the existence of the southern part of the moat which had previously been identified through the use of aerial photographs.

Trench 3 was 28m long and 0.50m in wide. The topsoil depth varied between 0.80m at the northern end and 0.20m at the southern end of the trench. The increased depth in the topsoil at the northern end of the trench can be attributed to the excavation of a pipe trench, in order to aid field drainage. In section, the topsoil was shown to sit directly

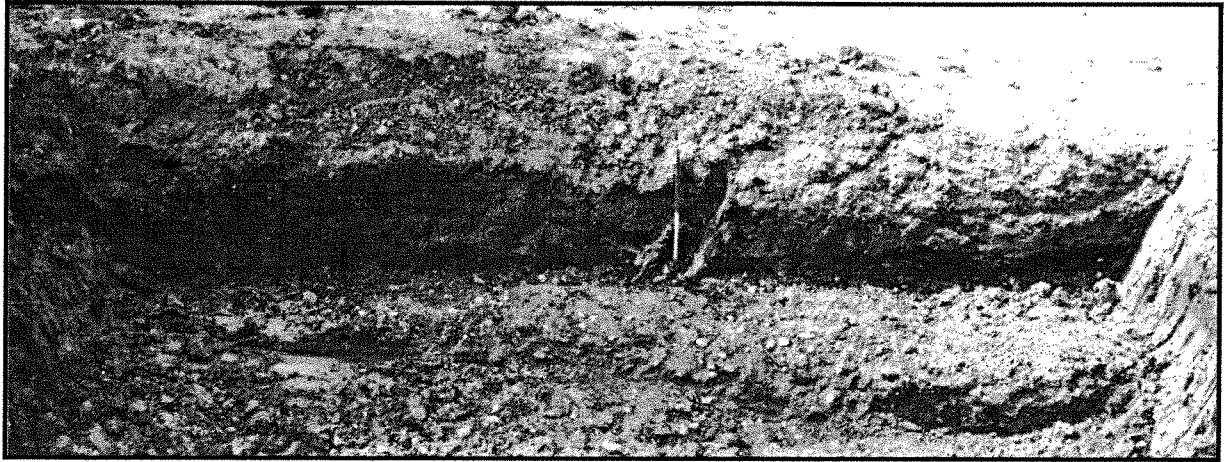


Plate 1: East-facing section in Trench 1 showing ditch

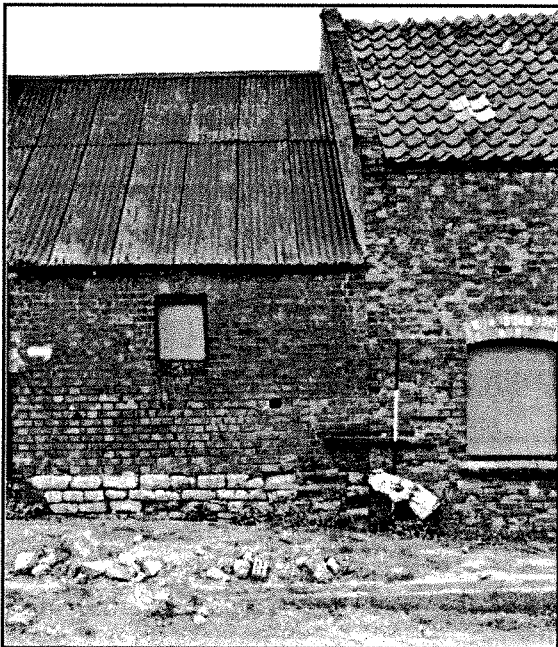


Plate 2: West wall of barn

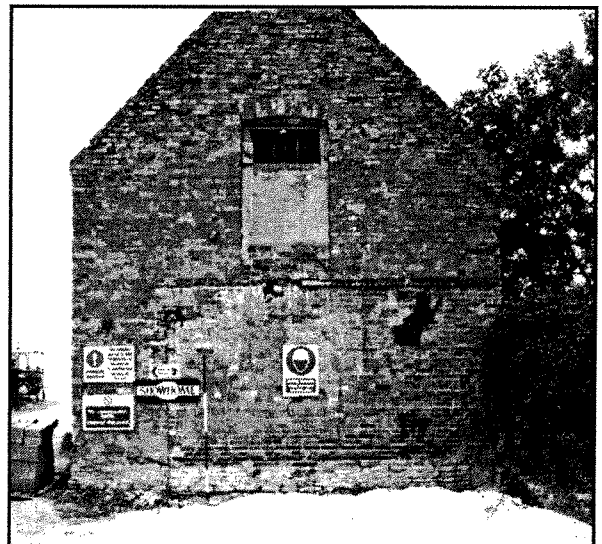


Plate 3: North gable-end of barn

on top of the natural clay/gravel subsoil. No archaeological features were revealed in Trench 3.

Trench 4

This trench was positioned alongside the southern boundary of the development area (Figure 2).

Trench 4 was 23m long and 1.5m wide. The topsoil depth at the western end of the trench was 0.30m with a further 0.25m of subsoil going down onto clay/gravel natural. The eastern end of the trench had no topsoil evident; this is due to the presence of foundations of a demolished farm building. Below the foundation remains, 0.30m of subsoil could still be identified in-situ. No archaeological features were revealed in Trench 4.

Trench 5

Trench 5 was located along the eastern boundary of the site (Figure 2). Trench 5 was 34m long and 1.5m wide. The topsoil depth at the southern end of the trench measured 0.20m thick, with a further 0.25m of subsoil going down onto boulder clay. The topsoil at the northern end of the trench varied slightly, measuring 0.18m with a further 0.25m of subsoil sitting on boulder clay. In one area, the subsoil and natural boulder clay showed signs of heavy disturbance through the excavation of a pipe trench and also the excavation of a large pit for the purpose of depositing modern debris. No archaeological features were observed during the excavation and subsequent investigation of Trench 5.

Building Survey

Only the exterior of the north gable-end and the east wall of the barn could be photographically recorded. The south gable-end was obscured by a wooden building and the west wall was covered by overgrown brambles which were on private property and could not be removed.

The barn was largely built of brick and constructed during the later half of the 19th century, however this building was erected on stone foundations from an earlier building in the same location (Plates 2 and 3). Four courses of stone work survived, and was constructed out of either Collyweston or Barnack stone. The earlier building, which had no associated evidence to suggest its date of construction, was demolished down to the foundations by 1870-1900, when the new barn was built. It would have been rectangular in plan, measuring c 24m by 5m.

The 19th century building was divided into two by a partition wall, and the two parts were constructed out of two different types of brick. The bricks were of local production with the clay being extracted from the valley approximately 1.5 km to the south of the development site (R. Griffith pers. comm.).

The barn had not been maintained over the years, which can be seen in excessive erosion of the bricks many of which have lost their smooth facing through water and frost action. The fabric of the barn showed evidence of ground subsidence in the form of extensive cracks in the north gable-end, and tie bars have been used to stop the west and east facing walls from 'bellying out'. Apart from the two doorways in the east wall, it would appear that the building was constructed without windows, the evidence for this suggestion derives from the fairly modern window jambs.



Plate 4: Aerial photograph of Elms Farm c 1970

Two different materials were used in the construction of the roof: the more northerly barn had a pan tile roof, whereas the southern barn's roof was made of corrugated iron (Plate 2). Both parts of the roof were probably erected during the 1950s. The interior roof supports had been replaced fairly recently as they showed no signs of decay. This is quite remarkable due to the fact that the pan tiles were progressively parting company with the roof laths and the corrugated iron was rusting badly, exposing the internal wooden structure of the roof to the elements.

Almost all of the floor area had been coated with a layer of modern concrete, which provided a durable surface. Removal of the concrete revealed a 0.30m thick layer of brick rubble (modern) which provided a stable foundation on to which the concrete could be poured. Below the rubble the natural boulder clay was identified. The only area of the floor which was not covered in concrete showed a cobble stone surface. This was located in the south-east corner of the building, and measured about 1.5m square. This had apparently been left undisturbed during the construction of the modern concrete floor. It is possible that the cobble floor was associated with the stone wall foundations, and that it also formed part of the earlier building constructed on the site.

CONCLUSIONS

The ditch revealed in Trench 1, which dates to the post-medieval period, may have been part of a moat surrounding the house at Elms Farm. However, no further evidence of a similar ditch has been found within the development area. This suggests that if a moat existed, it may have enclosed a larger area than was previously suggested, continuing outside the development area. It is also possible that the ditch in Trench 1 was nothing more than a large ditch demarcating the northern boundary of Elms Farm. This would also account for the lack of evidence of a moat ditch at the southern end of the development area. **The results of this investigation, therefore, do not provide evidence for the existence of a moat at Elms Farm.**

The belief that a moat formerly surrounded the house at Elms Farm probably originated with the RCHM(E), in their 1926 volume, *The Monuments of Huntingdonshire*. In it is the brief and unsubstantiated statement: "The *Moat*, formerly surrounded the house, but is now largely obliterated" (p. 98). This report is probably based on a site visit, and it may be that a number of ponds on three sides of the property, with the slight earthwork of the ditch to the north, were interpreted as the remnants of a moat.

The other evaluation trenches, and the observation of the house foundation trenches within the interior of the development area, provided no archaeological evidence of medieval or earlier activity. However, the construction of modern farm buildings and the replacement of the topsoil within the farmyard with rubble had disturbed a large amount of the development area.

The 19th century barn which was surveyed showed evidence of the reuse of earlier stone foundations, and part of a cobble stone floor which may also predate the 19th century building. This evidence indicates an earlier building on the site, of unknown date.

The primary documentary records for the parish of Folksworth are particularly poor, with only one map dating from before the end of the 19th century. This tithe map of Folksworth (HRO 2196/174) dates to 1849, and as mentioned above, shows no trace of a moat at Elms Farm. However, an early moat could well have been infilled before this date. A detailed terrier of Folksworth Manor, dating to 1550, is held at the British Library (BL Add Ms. 29611). Although there is no map with this terrier, it contains a

description of all the fields and furlongs within the parish, and should mention the moat at Elms Farm if it existed at that time. If any further work takes place within the vicinity of Elms Farm, it is recommended that this terrier be consulted to gather any evidence of whether a medieval moat surrounded the house.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Cambridgeshire
County Council

Archaeology

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