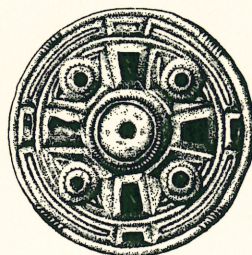


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Archaeological Field Unit

English Heritage Field Walking Programme  
Tiled House Farm, Stretham.

S. Kemp

1995

Cambridgeshire County Council

*Commissioned By English Heritage*



**English Heritage Field Walking Programme.  
Tiled House Farm, Stretham.**

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English Heritage Field Walking Programme  
**TILED HOUSE FARM, STRETHAM.**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Proposals for field walking three scheduled ancient monuments in Cambridgeshire were formulated by the Archaeological Field Unit, Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) following recommendations by H. Paterson (Field Monument Warden, English Heritage) to assess the degree of destruction resulting from ploughing on. The three sites highlighted by English Heritage were;

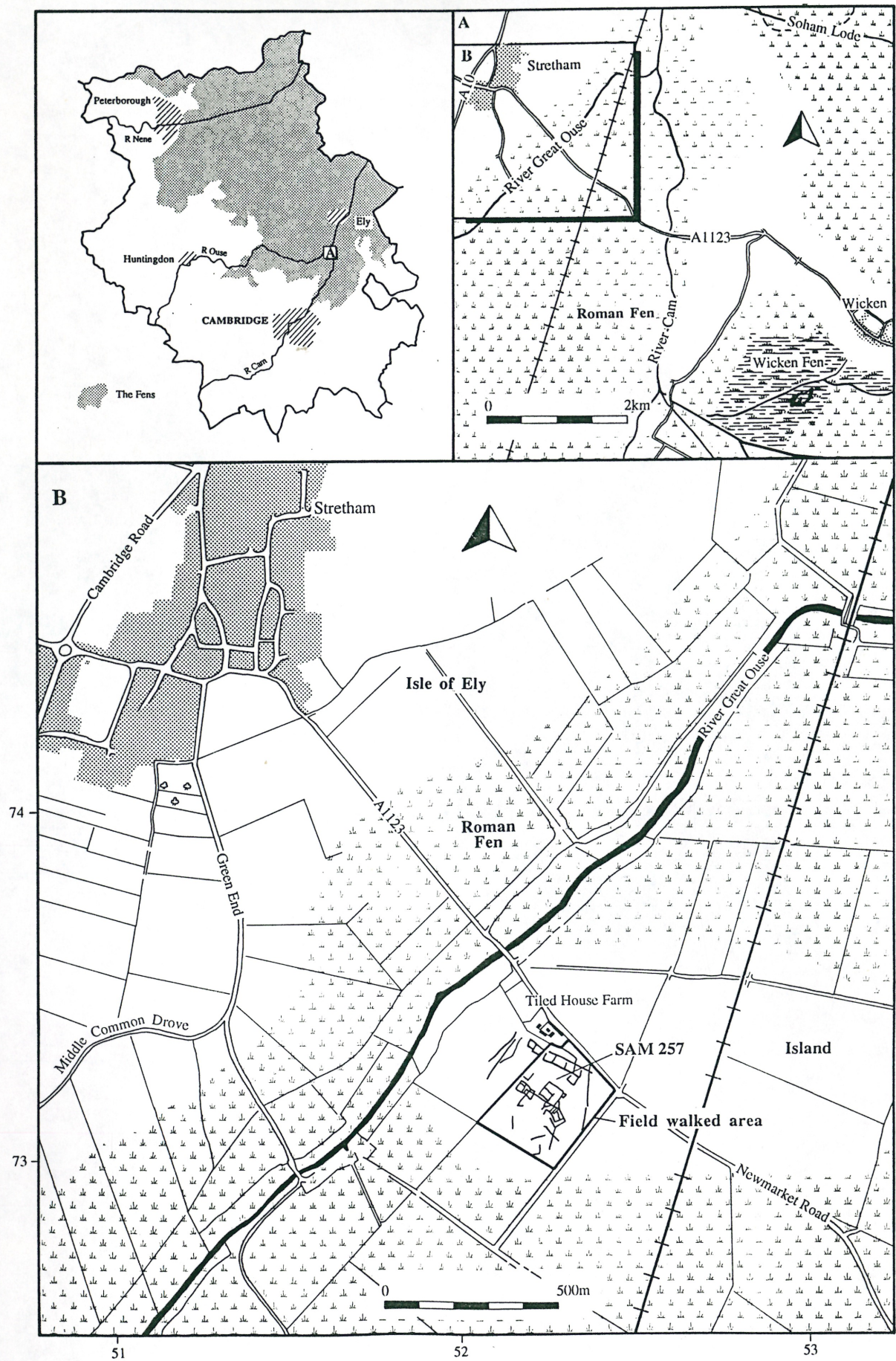
- i) Durobrivae 'southern suburbs' Chesterton (SAM 130) (Kemp 1994)
- ii) John O'Gaunts Castle Bassingbourn (SAM 88) (Kemp 1994)
- iii) Tiled House Farm, Stretham (SAM 257). Results from surface collections made during September 1994 at Tiled House Farm Stretham are detailed in this report.

## **2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

The Roman farmstead of Tiled House Farm Stretham (SAM 257) is located at TL 523733. The site lies to the east of present Great Ouse and south-east of the village of Stretham. The field highlighted for fieldwalking lies to the south and east of Tiled House Farm, adjacent to the Newmarket Road which runs between Stretham and Wicken (Fig. 1). To the west Stretham lies on the south eastern edge of the Isle of Ely. One and a half kilometres to the north-east the River Great Ouse and the Cam join at Holt Fen with the river flowing northwards, draining adjacent fenlands. Stretham Mere, an ancient freshwater lake, is now marked only by marl sediments in adjacent fields. The site lies within an area of diverse resources situated within a dynamic fenland landscape.

Tiled House Farm was scheduled on the basis of significant quantities of Roman pottery recovered during site visits, allied to aerial photographs taken in the 1950's and 1970's (CUCAP BRN 7-13 and BPU 62-65) photographs which display traces of buildings, pits and enclosures indicating a Roman farmstead. In the 1880's these buildings had been largely cleared of walls and tile in order to make foundations for a farmhouse. Collections of pottery indicate a second to fourth century Roman occupation with a period of less intense occupation during the third century (Phillips 1970). This and similar evidence from Fenland areas skirting the Cam and River Great Ouse has been used to suggest restrictions in occupation resulting from successive major floods during the Roman period (Phillips 1970). The impact of these floods appears to have been more intense westwards where lands are slightly lower. The Roman settlement at Tiled House Farm was situated on a slight greensand hillock providing some security against rising floodwaters in an area where even the matter of a single metre's elevation would have determined the distribution of Roman settlement (Phillips 1970). Worsening flood conditions towards the end of the Roman period also resulted in the retreat of settlement to higher land (Phillips 1970).





**Figure 1** Site Location



### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

Fieldwalking was conducted in 20m collection units along transects 20m apart. Transects were walked east to west. Collection units averaged 2m wide, giving an approximate field coverage of 11%. Pottery and stone artefacts were collected, while tile, burnt flint, animal bone and oyster shell were only noted on Cambridgeshire Archaeological Field Unit recording sheets. All records and finds are presently archived at the Cambridgeshire Archaeological Field Unit offices at the Community Centre, Fulbourn.

Field conditions were good for fieldwalking, having been recently ploughed following a two month period of flooding. The field was under arable cultivation.

### 4.0 RESULTS

Weather conditions for fieldwalking were excellent to good. Ground conditions were clear with the land ploughed and well weathered following wet weather and a suitable drying out period.

#### *Transect A*

Prehistoric	0
Roman	4
Tile & Brick	4
Flint artefacts	0

1 sherd of Nene valley fabric and 3 of sandy greyware sherds were recovered. Other finds included un-worked igneous rocks and oyster shell.

#### *Transect B*

Prehistoric	0
Roman	15
P.Med	2
Tile & Brick	0
Flint artefacts	1

Finds included samian, part of a dragondorff type 33 cup, and a pedestal base, Nene valley colour coats and greywares including an incipient bilobed rim of a jar.

#### *Transect C*

Prehistoric	0
Roman	47
Tile & brick	13
Flint artefacts	1

Largely sandy greyware and valley sherds from bowls and large and small jars. 1 sherd of samian from a large bowl. Over 80% of the Roman pottery was found between units 5 and 6.

#### *Transect D*

Prehistoric	0
Roman	46
P.Med	1
Tile & Brick	15
Flint artefacts	1

Sample dominated by sandy grey ware with some Nene Valley greywares and colour coated sherds. Others included an incipient rim of a jar, sherds of a flagon and pieces of a samian bowl. Over 75% of the Roman pottery was found between units 5 and 6.





Figure 2 Distribution of Roman Pottery



*Transect E*

Prehistoric	0
Roman	8
Tile & Brick	2
Flint artefacts	1

Largely of sandy greywares. sherds include a Nene valley greyware pedestal and a sandy greyware base with white internal slip and a rilled jar sherd. 1 late prehistoric, possibly Iron Age distal end scraper was recovered.

*Transect F*

Prehistoric	0
Roman	9
Tile & Brick	9
Flint artefacts	1

Largely of sandy greywares including a rim, base and shoulder of different sized jars.

*Transect G*

Prehistoric	0
Roman	24
Tile & brick	6
Flint artefacts	0

Largely of sandy greywares though included a Nene Valley Moratorium, fragment of a samian moratanium dragondorff 45 and a sherd of greyware with fine combing.

*Transect H*

Prehistoric	0
Roman	36
Tile & Brick	0
Flint	1

Largely sandy greywares including a fragment of a small Horningsea storage jar. Four sherds of samian, one of which is part of a Dragondorff type 33 cup.

*Transect I*

Prehistoric	0
Roman	4
Tile & Brick	20
Flint artefacts	2

All of greyware, two of which have traces of white slip and grooving.

*Transect J*

Prehistoric	0
Roman	3
Tile & brick	15
Flint artefacts	2

Includes one sherd with calcite inclusions and another is part of a small jar with a micaceous fabric. Flint artefacts included one end-scraper.

*Transect K*

Prehistoric	0
Roman	1
Tile & brick	0
Flint artefacts	1

Sandy grey ware square-beaded lid.

*Transect L*

Prehistoric	0
Roman	0
Tile & brick	0
Flint artefacts	2



<i>Transect M</i>	
Prehistoric	0
Roman	0
Tile & brick	1
Flint artefacts	5
<i>Transect N</i>	
Prehistoric	0
Roman	1
Tile & brick	24
Flint artefacts	1
Sandy greyware sherd.	
<i>Transect O</i>	
Prehistoric	0
Roman	0
Tile & brick	0
Flint artefacts	0

The majority of the pottery can be assigned to the late second and early third centuries on the basis of fabric and form. Later activity is evidenced by a single late third century sherd. Most of the coarse wares are of a sandy fabric, though there are also some local "Belgic" and fine "Gallo-Belgic" fabrics. Fine wares are mostly from the Valley but also with a significant amount of Samian, probably from central or eastern Gaul.

Seventeen flint artefacts were recovered during field walking. Of these 15 represent primary or secondary knapping debris which include both flakes and blades. A single bladelet was retrieved which is likely to be of mesolithic date. Two end scrapers were also found (Transects E and J), one of which may be of an Iron Age date the other is probably of a Bronze Age date. Finds distributions indicate occurrences on the eastern and western edges of transects, particularly L and M.

The Sites and Monuments Record notes the presence of Neolithic flint artefacts close to the Roman site, and although a very small number of lithic artefacts were collected, a wider time span of occupation or activity focus is indicated by these finds. This area appears to have been a focus for human activity and artefact deposition since at least the mesolithic and well into Roman times.

## 4.0 DISCUSSION

A significant quantity of Roman pottery occurs within the scheduled ancient monument to the south-east of Tiled House Farm. Two comparatively major concentrations were recognised which corresponded to areas of darker soil at the top of a slight rise within the field.

The Sites and Monuments Record notes the presence of stone buildings on this site up to the late nineteenth century, it is therefore surprising that such small amounts of building material was noticed. This could be accounted for by total robbing out of all buildings or shallow plough depth penetration which does not entail the disturbance of *in situ* deposits. As the majority of the sherds are well abraded and small in size with few fresh sherds being brought in to the plough zone this latter explanation may be supported. The main concentration of finds appears to lie adjacent the complex cropmarks, and in proximity to areas of darker soils with finds extending south-eastwards down slope from these deposits. This indicates how slope influences pottery distributions in ploughed environments. The presence of dark soils, possibly indicative of Roman



middens suggests the preservation of important archaeological remains on this site. As these sediments are located at the top of the greensand hillock these sediments are very vulnerable to plough damage, which is indicated by the finds plot (Fig.1). The absence of bone from these deposits, only five fragments were noted from the whole of the field, may be a reflection of poor preservational conditions for faunal material. The small quantities of bone and building materials recovered raises questions on the status and current understanding of the site and midden deposits.

Results from the present work have also raised questions about the dating referred to by Phillips (1970) as our fieldwalking has found evidence for second century and limited evidence for early third century occupation, but no later Roman activities. It is also interesting to note the absence of activity areas dated between the Bronze Age and late second century AD, particularly evidence for Iron Age and early Roman occupation within the field walked area.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

An 11% sample of surface finds at the Roman villa of Tiled House Farm, Stretham was undertaken by the Archaeology Field Unit, Cambridgeshire County Council. Results indicate that whilst few fresh deposits are being exposed, which suggests that archaeology beneath the plough soil is in a fairly stable condition, significant redistribution of finds within the plough soil is occurring. These deposits are judged to be in a fragile condition as a result of ploughing, with a distribution influenced by topography and source.

## **6.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I wish to acknowledge financial assistance of English Heritage which has allowed the assessment of this monument. I also wish thank the recording the field team of the Archaeology Field Unit: Simon Bray, David Mitchell, and Gavin Lucas who undertook the assessment of Roman pottery. Thanks are also due to Carole Fletcher and Melodie Paice for producing the illustrations and Tim Malim for editing this report.

I also wish to thank Mr Palmer of Palmer Farm, Stretham for allowing access to the site.

## **7.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Phillips, C.W. 1970 Fenland in Roman Times. *Royal Geographical Society. Research Series 5*. London.



## APPENDIX A

### ROMAN POTTERY FROM FIELDWALKING AT TILE HOUSE FARM, STRETHAM 1994

by  
Gavin Lucas

A small collection of fairly abraded sherds (under 200) was examined, noting fabric, form and ware where applicable, A x10 hand lens was used when necessary to help with identification. The results are set out below according to transect; a concentration seems to occur in transects C and D, and to a lesser extent in B and G. General comments on the date and nature of the assemblage can be found at the end of the report. Since there is little variation in the condition of the sherds - mostly small-medium sized and abraded - no further mention will be made of this in the catalogue below.

#### **Transect A**

- 7 1 Nene valley fabric and 2 sandy greyware sherds.
- 8 1 sandy greyware sherd

#### **Transect B**

- 0 1 samian sherd from a Drag. 33 cup, 1 sandy greyware sherd and the base? of a jar in a shell-tempered fabric.
- 1 1 sandy greyware sherd
- 5 3 sandy greyware sherds including a combed jar, and a small jar in Nene valley greyware.
- 6 1 Nene valley brown-grey colour-coat with white paint over the slip - probably from a beaker.
- 7 4 sandy greyware sherds including an incipient bilobed rim of a jar, 1 samian pedestal base probably from a bowl, and 2 post-mediaeval glazed sherds.
- 10 2 sandy greyware sherds.

#### **Transect C**

- 1 3 sandy greyware sherds, 1 with a pink slip/surface.
- 3 1 sandy greyware sherd.
- 5 8 sandy greyware sherds (large and small jars, 1 with black substance on interior), 4 sandy buff/oxidised sherds.
- 6 16 sandy greyware sherds including triangular-rimmed bowl, 1 large jar in sandy buff/oxidised fabric, 1 shell-tempered rim, 2 Nene valley greyware sherds probably from a small jar, 1 fine sandy greyware sherd and 1 samian beaded rim from a bowl.
- 7 3 sandy greyware sherds (including triangular-rimmed bowl and jar with spaced body grooves), 1 samian footing fragment from a large bowl.
- 9 1 sherd in sandy buff-brown fabric.



### **Transect D**

- 1 1 sherd from a large jar in sandy black fabric with buff-brown exterior, and 1 post-mediaeval glazed sherd.
- 3 1 samian beaded rim probably from a Drag. 32 bowl.
- 4 1 samian sherd and 1 sandy greyware sherd.
- 5 7 sandy coarseware sherds, 2 shell-tempered sherds, 2 Nene Valley greyware sherds (base of jar and grooved neck), 1 Nene valley brown colour-coat shoulder of a flagon, and 1 samian bowl sherd.
- 6 18 sandy greyware sherds (including grooved jar, 4 bases and an everted rim jar), 2 fine sandy micaceous greyware sherds (including triangular-rimmed bowl and base), 2 Nene valley grey-brown colour-coat sherds (beaker?), 1 fine grog-tempered buffware sherd, and 1 incipient bilobed rim of a jar in a sandy pink-orange fabric.
- 7 1 sandy greyware sherd, 1 sherd in coarse sandy white fabric.
- 8 1 sherd in sandy buff-brown fabric.
- 9 1 sandy greyware rim of a flared jar.
- 12 1 tile fragment in oxidised vesicular fabric.

### **Transect E**

- 3 1 samian plain rim of a mortarium Drag.45 (probably same vessel as in transect G7, but does not join).
- 4 1 sandy greyware rilled jar sherd
- 6 1 large vessel sherd in sandy buff-brown fabric, 3 sandy greyware sherds (including base with internal white slip and incipient flanged bowl rim).
- 8 1 sandy greyware sherd.
- 9 1 Nene valley greyware pedestal.

### **Transect F**

- 1 2 sandy greyware sherds (including flared rim of a small jar).
- 3 1 sherd in a sandy oxidised fabric.
- 5 4 sandy greyware sherds (including base of jar and shoulder of smaller jar), 1 sherd in a fine sandy micaceous greyware.
- 8 1 sandy greyware sherd.

### **Transect G**

- 1 1 sherd in sandy oxidised fabric, 1 base of a Nene valley mortarium with ironstone trituration and coarse red grog temper.
- 2 1 sherd in sandy oxidised fabric, 6 sandy greyware sherds and 1 samian pedestal base.
- 3 1 sandy greyware sherd with fine combing, 1 crumb, and 1 samian spall from a Drag. 33 cup with median groove.
- 4 1 sherd with fine textured but vesicular fabric.
- 7 4 sherds in sandy oxidised fabric, 1 sandy micaceous greyware sherd, 3 sandy greyware sherds with exterior slip, grooves and burnishing, 1 samian fragment from a mortarium Drag.45, with fine quartzite trituration (probably same vessel as in E3).
- 8 1 base of jar in coarse sandy buff ware, 1 sandy greyware sherd.
- 12 1 base fragment of 20th century mug.



### **Transect H**

- 1     2 samian sherds - 1 large part of the base of a Drag. 33 cup with median groove and a small beaded rim.
- 3     8 sandy greyware sherds including 1 with burnished exterior, 1 base, 1 shoulder sherd and 1 cordoned rim from a small storage jar (Horningsea).

### **Transect I**

- 1     1 sandy greyware sherd.
- 2     1 sandy greyware sherd.
- 3     1 sandy greyware sherd with traces of white slip and grooving.
- 5     1 sandy greyware sherd with traces of white slip and grooving.

### **Transect J**

- 4     1 sherd in sandy brown fabric with calcite inclusions.
- 8     1 beaded rim of small jar in a fine buff, slightly micaceous fabric.
- 11    1 sandy greyware sherd.

### **Transect K**

- 1     1 square-beaded lid in sandy greyware.

### **Transect N**

- 6     1 sandy greyware sherd.

### **UNPROVENANCED**

1 rim in shell-tempered fabric, 2 sherds in fine micaceous sandy greyware (included developed flanged bowl), 1 Nene valley brown-grey colour-coated vessel with rouletting (flagon?), 20 sandy greyware sherds, including 2 bases of jars and 1 plain-rimmed lid. and 2 samian sherds (1 bowl rim and 1 pedestal).

### **DISCUSSION**

Most of the pottery can probably be confidently assigned to the later 2nd/early 3rd century AD both on the basis of fabrics and available forms - nothing more precise can be given without contexted finds. One sherd from the later 3rd century (flanged bowl - unprovenanced) is the only indication of later activity on the site. Most of the coarsewares are in sandy fabrics, chiefly greywares and some buffwares, but there are also some in more local 'belgic' and some fine 'Gallo-Belgic' type fabrics. Shell-tempered fabrics are notably rare, which is unusual. Finewares seem exclusively from the Nene Valley and also a substantial proportion of Samian fabrics, mostly probably from Central or Eastern Gaul. The *relatively* high amount of Samian among the collection may be significant, but in general there is nothing particularly extraordinary about this assemblage.



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