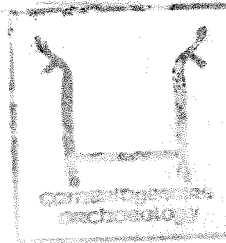
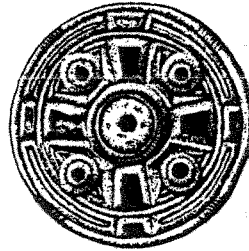


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Archaeological Field Unit

**Land between 47 and 59, Hall Barn Road, Isleham:
An Archaeological Desktop Assessment**

Rebecca Casa Hatton

April 2001

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No. A178

Commissioned by Isleham Pound Lane Free Church

**Land between 47 and 59 Hall Barn Road, Isleham:
An Archaeological Desktop Assessment
(TL 6395 7385)**

Rebecca Casa Hatton PhD

2001

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SUMMARY

This Desktop Assessment was undertaken by Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit as part of the requirements prior to residential development of a plot of land between 47 and 59 Hall Barn Road, Isleham (TL 6395 7385).

The development site comprises a rectangular area of 0.51 hectares to the east of Hall Barn Road. It is located to the south west of the medieval vill of Isleham.

The present study shows that the area lies within a rich archaeological landscape, being surrounded by sites of prehistoric and Roman date, albeit not in the immediate vicinity. Although no finds are known from the subject site itself, its archaeological potential can be considered moderate to high, with particular reference to the Roman period.

The area does not appear to have been affected by modern development or disturbance. The state of preservation of any archaeological remains and deposits that might be encountered during excavation should be good.

**Land between 47 and 59 Hall Barn Road, Isleham:
an Archaeological Desktop Assessment
(TL 6395 7385)**

1 INTRODUCTION

This Desktop assessment was undertaken by Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit as part of the requirements prior to development of a plot of land between Nos. 47 and 59, Hall Barn Road, Isleham (TL 6395 7385) (Fig. 1). It was commissioned by Isleham Pound Lane Free Church.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Planning Background

A Planning Application (Planning Application No. E/00/0865) was submitted by Pound Lane Free Church. The proposal is for residential development on land located between numbers 47-59, Hall Barn Road, Isleham. Given the known background of the area (below), the possibility of there being archaeological remains determined the requirements for an evaluation. A Design Brief was issued by Andy Thomas, Development Control Officer, Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Office (Thomas 25 January 2001). In response to it, a Specification was produced by Judith Roberts, Project Officer (FEB028/01).

2.2 Topography and Geology

The village of Isleham lies at the south-eastern Fen edge, at a height ranging from 18m OD in the southern part of the parish to 7m OD towards the northern fen-edge. It sits on the Lower Chalk ridge of south Cambridgeshire. The far north of the parish has a basal peat overlain by 'fen clay', a grey clayey marine deposit (Hall 1996, 82; Gallois 1988).

In relation to Isleham, the development site is located to the south-west of the medieval vill and east of Hall Barn Road. It comprises a rectangular area of 0.51 hectares between developed plots (dwellings and gardens) to the north and south. To the west and east are undeveloped fields (Fig. 1).

2.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

For this report a documentary search of the area within 1km radius was undertaken. Information was obtained from the following: Cambridgeshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record Office (SMR), Cambridgeshire County Council Record Office (CRO).

SMR Parish Files and overlay maps of aerial photographs were consulted, and the results from archaeological interventions in the area integrated with the SMR entries.

Cartographic evidence was integrated with the available documentary sources.

Finally, an aerial photographic appraisal was commissioned from Air Photo Services. The results have been produced in the *Appendix* of this report (Palmer 2001).

Prehistoric

Early prehistoric activity from the Mesolithic period is documented by stray finds and finds scatters, namely lithic implements, to the north of the development site, i.e. along the fen-edge.

Mesolithic/Neolithic and later Neolithic material has been found in major concentrations at several sites that may indicate settlement occupation (Hall 1996, *Appendix 3*) (e.g. SMR11852: Mesolithic worked flint, and a arrowhead, MR07590: worked flint, SMR10965: worked flint and pottery, SMR10966: worked flint, SMR10967: worked flint and pottery, SMR10883A: an axe and worked flint, SMR10861: worked flint, SMR10862: worked flint pottery and bone, SMR07534: an axe, SMR10864: saddle quern). The material comprised flint tools and *débitage*, together with pottery, pot boilers and calcined flint possibly representing cooking sites. The earliest sites (Mesolithic/earlier Neolithic) appear to be located mostly at the periphery of the dry land (Hall 1996, 86).

During the Bronze Age, the sites were concentrated around the sandy peninsula running from Knave's Acre Drove to Windy Hall, between the rivers Snake and Lark (e.g. SMR07533: a rapier, SMR07557: a beaker, SMR07932: worked flint, SMR10883B: an axe and worked flint). Finally, evidence of Bronze Age occupation was uncovered at Chalk Farm (Sites 4/Is. 3, Is. 2: enclosure and neolithic flints; and Site 5/SMR 7569: Romano-British pottery and tile scatters) where cropmarks of ring-ditches (below) and barrows are known from aerial photographs (Gdaniec 1994). There, evidence emerged for a multi-period site consisting of Neolithic pits, Bronze Age round houses and pits, Iron Age pits and a medieval/post-medieval farmstead (Gdaniec 1994a, 4-5; Gdaniec 1994b, 30-34).

Although further away from the development site, it is worth mentioning the Bronze Age hoard known as 'the Isleham hoard' that was found just over the parish boundary at Fordham (SMR07592). It contained over 6500 pieces of bronze, representing the largest such collection in Western Europe. The hoard could have represented the stock of bronze smith, votive material or material hidden in times of trouble (Leith & Reynolds 1993)

Prehistoric finds of uncertain date include worked flint (SMR10859 and SMR 07588). Ring ditches visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs may belong to the Bronze Age, as in the case of SMR09020 (Hall 1996, Is. 3, 86-88) and SMR11125 to the south-west of the proposed development.

Very little is known of the Iron Age period. Evidence for Iron Age (and earlier) occupation in the form of storage pits was recovered at Chalk Farm (above), some 700m south-west of the development site (Gdaniec 1994a, 4-5; Gdaniec 1994b, 30-34).

Roman

Roman activity in the area is well documented. A broad-ditched rectangular enclosure associated with a villa is located some 700m to the north-west of the development site, off Temple Road. There quantities of hypocaust and box-flue tiles together with fragments of painted wall plaster, tessellated floors and *tesserae* were recovered during an excavation in 1936 (Lethbridge 1937) (SMR05704). Immediately to the east, roof tiles, pottery and coins were noted (SMR11661). To the west, masonry debris may have belonged to an ancillary building within the villa-estate (SMR10326). Further finds of Roman date include coins (SMR07559) and metal work, namely a pewter hoard (SMR01592) and a copper fibula (SMR07558). These finds spots are located between the development site and the Roman villa. A brooch (SMR 10863) and quern stones (e.g. SMR10860) indicating agricultural activity and were found further north.

The Isleham-Ely Water-Pipe excavations have revealed the presence of two shallow ditches at Hall Barn Road, near the find spot described as 'Roman pottery' (SMR10866) immediately to the south-west of the proposed development. The ditches may have represented a droveway on a north-west to south-east alignment dating to the first-second century (SMR11894). Together with rectangular enclosures further west (SMR11213a and, possibly, SMR11124), the ditches may have been part of a field system (Gdaniec 1994a, 3; Gdaniec 1994b, 22).

Saxon

Saxon Isleham remains elusive. Stray finds in the area are limited to a coin (SMR07612) and a brooch (SMR11691) less than 1km south and north-west of the development site respectively, away from the village nucleus.

The village itself may have Saxon origins, as suggested by documentary sources. Known as Yselham in 895, it is referenced in Domesday Book as Gyselham (Reaney 1943) in the context of the royal estates centred on Soham. The extant parish church of St Andrews (fourteenth century) (CCCSMR07591) is thought to stand on the site of a wooden Saxon precursor that was presented to the Bishop of Rochester by King Alfred (*Anon.*). Isleham was later conquered by the Danes in 984.

Medieval

In the course of the Middle Ages Isleham developed as a nucleated vill that benefited from its location near the fen-edge. The alien Benedictine priory is evidence of the importance of the site following the Norman Conquest. The priory was founded early in the Norman period. In 1254 the monks were moved to the sister cell in Linton and the priory became a manor. At the beginning of the fifteenth century the land was seized by the King and the conventual church turned into a barn. The only standing priory building is the Chapel of St Margaret of Antioch (SAM28, SMR07529) to the north of which lie the buried foundations of the conventual buildings. Earthwork remains to the north include fishponds and linear divisions (SAM61, SMR07528). Recent archaeological works have uncovered ditches and earthworks associated with the priory (Knight 1997, *Id.* 1998), and small property boundaries associated with the medieval settlement (Macaulay 2000).

Further earthworks of medieval date are located to the west of the priory near Hall Farm. There are no certain medieval remains away from the village.

Remains of a moat survive to the south of the Roman villa (above) (SMR05704a), off Temple Road. The name of the road and the surrounding area (commonly referred to as 'The Temple') originate from the *Manerium Templi* that was held by the Master of the Templars in 1279 (Reaney 1943, 193). However, the moat does not appear to be associated with the *Manerium*. Pottery recovered in the past would suggest a fourteenth century date for the earthwork.

Medieval pottery has also been found to the north of the moat (SMR 11574 and SMR11074).

The boundaries of the medieval fields are visible as large linear earthworks (ridge-furrow systems and headlands) that form a rectangular network (Hall 1996, 88). An aerial photographic assessment of the site has evidence of a medieval/post-medieval headland (Palmer 2001).

From the later medieval period onwards, drainage of land began on a major scale. The process was accompanied by both intensification of agricultural practices and industrial development. During the later part of the Middle Ages a water-filled channel which gave its name to the present road of Waterside linked a former quay (one of at least three situated along the north side of Isleham) with the River Lark to the north. A further canal ran westwards at the rear of properties on the north side of the village which gave them their own access for waterborn trade (Oosthuizen 1996).

Post-medieval

A post-medieval Scheduled Site is represented by a series of nineteenth century lime kilns on the east side of High Street (SMR07489), south of a quarry shown on the Enclosure Map (Draft) (SMR11214). Some 50m to the east of the development site, the location of a post-medieval windmill (SMR07611) is also known from cartographic evidence (Enclosure Map, Draft).

A number of early maps for Isleham exists, including John Buller's Map (1787-1790), the Tithe Map (1848) and the Inclosure Map (1854).

The pre-Inclosure survey of 1808-1822, as on the OS Map Sheet 54 of 1865 (reprint of the 1st edition of the 1 inch OS Map), refers to the area to the south of Isleham as 'Iseham Field'. It shows the development site as part of a large triangular plot comprised between two tracks (later known as Hall Barn Road and Fordham Road). Hall Barn Road first appears on the The Tithe Map of 1848 (Fig. 3) where the development site is depicted as a square plot (No. 15) to the east of Hall Barn Road (Fig. 3). The road may have derived its name from Isleham Hall on the pre-Inclosure survey map (Fig. 2). It was known as Hall Farm from 1840 (Reaney 1943, 193). Based on cartographic evidence, the development area does not appear to have been substantially altered, having comprised arable and pasture land since the middle of the nineteenth century.

3 ASSESSMENT

The aim of the background research was to obtain information to be analysed in order to determine the location, extent, survival and significance of the known archaeological and historical remains in the vicinity and within the

development area. All available local sources were consulted (above) and are discussed below.

4 CONFIDENCE RATING

Notwithstanding the impact caused by chance discovery (namely metal-detecting and ploughing) on the distribution of prehistoric finds away from the nucleated village, systematic fieldwalking in recent years has shown that the location of sites by the fen-edge at Isleham forms a consistent pattern (Hall 1996). Cropmarks visible on aerial photographs are undated. However, ring ditches may be prehistoric in date. Given that the development site sits on the higher ground further south, the potential for the recovery of prehistoric remains is relatively low.

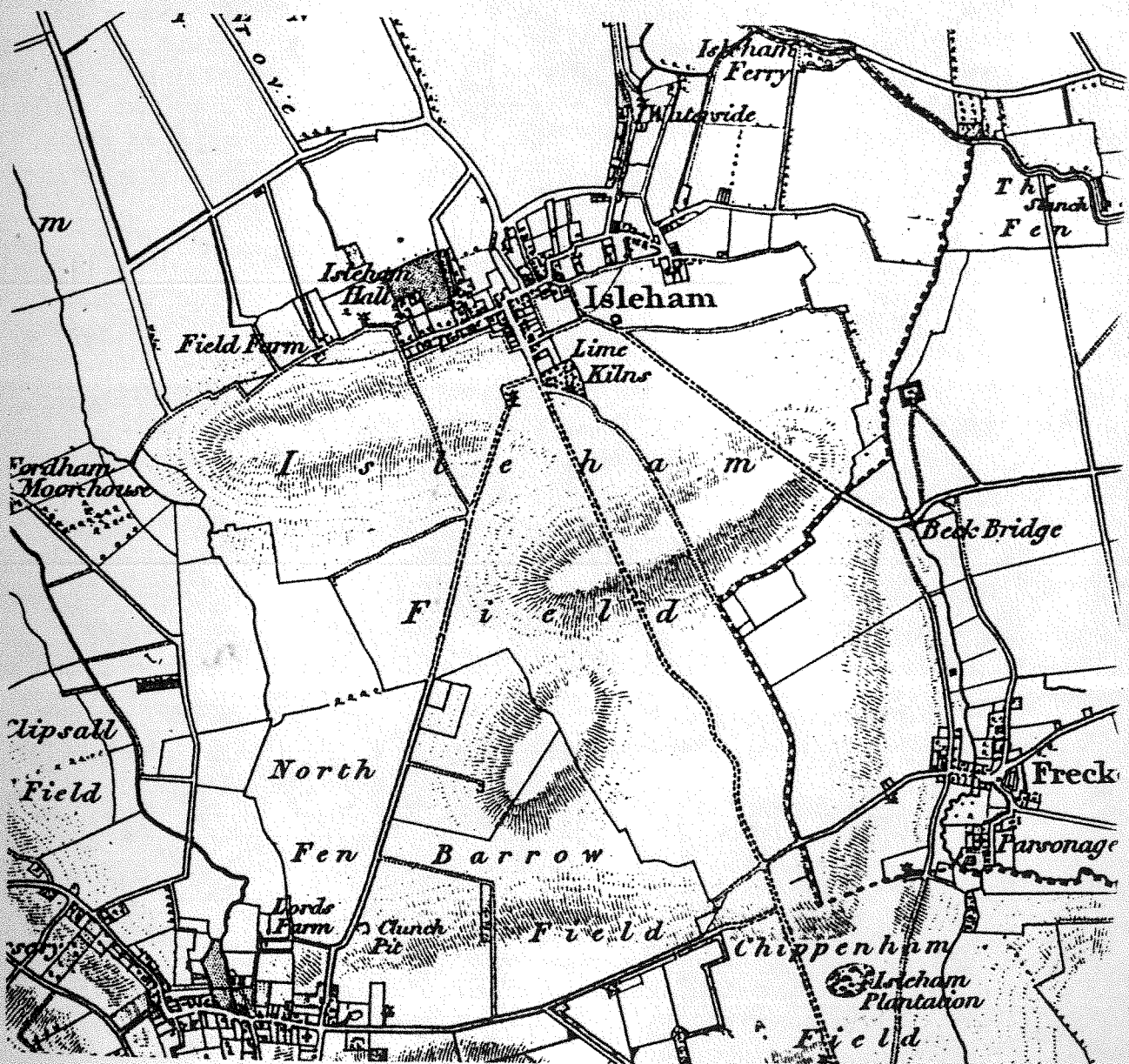


Fig. 2: Extract from OS Map Sheet 54 (1865)

partly responsible for the fragmentary picture concerning the Iron Age period, as the finds from Chalk Farm would suggest.

With reference to the Roman period, the presence of an excavated villa, together with scatters of finds and the recent discovery of Roman ditches during an evaluation, may indicate that the development site lies either in the context of a villa estate, or in an area of relatively intense Roman activity. Enclosures visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs may belong to the Iron Age/Roman period.

Little is known of Saxon Isleham. Finds are limited to chance discovery and do not represent significant evidence for Saxon occupation away from the medieval and post-medieval nucleated village further north. Based on continuity, Saxon remains are likely to be located closer to the core of Isleham, i.e. by the church of St Andrew that may have Saxon origins.

The survival of medieval and post-medieval remains on the site is highly probable, with particular reference to evidence for agricultural practices, as suggested by the presence of a headland visible as an earthwork on aerial photographs (Palmer 2001) and by cartographic evidence.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

Based on the assessment of the archaeological potential of the development site (above), rating can be described as follows:

Mesolithic/Neolithic/Bronze Age	moderate
Iron Age	low/unknown
Romano-British	moderate/high
Anglo-Saxon	low/unknown
medieval	moderate/high
post-medieval	moderate/high

The present study shows that the site lies within a rich archaeological landscape, being surrounded by sites of prehistoric and Roman date, albeit not in the immediate vicinity. Although no finds are known from the subject site itself, its archaeological potential can be considered moderate to moderate/high, with particular reference to the Roman period.

The development area does not appear to have been affected by modern development/disturbance. The state of preservation of any archaeological remains and deposits encountered during excavation should be good, notwithstanding the possibility of some degree of truncation caused by ploughing during the medieval and post-medieval period.

6 CONCLUSIONS

An assessment of the surrounding archaeology would suggest that the proposed development is in an area with substantial archaeological potential, with particular reference to the evidence for Romano-British field-systems.

An aerial photographic assessment of the site produced negative evidence except for the presence of a medieval/post-medieval headland (Palmer 2001). Given the potential of the development area and the lack of disturbance by modern interventions, an archaeological evaluation aimed at areas most likely to be affected by the proposed development should provide confident results.

Geological conditions and expected archaeology might be conducive to reasonable results with magnetometry, but resistivity survey would not be recommended for study of an extensive field-system.

There is no guarantee that pre-trenching magnetometry would resolve features deriving from agricultural rather than occupational origin. It may therefore be more appropriate to only consider use of geophysics following particularly positive results from trial trenching.

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MAPS

Estate Map of c. 1790 by John Buller

Tithe Map of 1848

Enclosure Map of 1854 (no scale)

OS Sheet 54 Cambridge and Ely (1865). Reprint of the 1st ed. of the one inch of England and Wales.

OS 1984, TL 67 SW, 1:10000 and SMR AP Overlay.

BGS 173 1:50000

Appendix: Aerial Photographic Appraisal (by Rog Palmer)

HALL BARN ROAD, TL639738, ISLEHAM.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE:

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC APPRAISAL

INTRODUCTION

This appraisal of aerial photographs was commissioned to examine an area of about one hectare (centred TL63927383) in order to identify archaeological features and thus provide a guide for field evaluation. Mapping was to be at 1:2500 if relevant.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND NATURAL FEATURES FROM AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

In suitable cultivated soils, sub-surface archaeological features – including ditches, banks, pits, walls or foundations – may be recorded from the air in different ways in different seasons. In spring and summer these may show through their effect on crops growing above them. Such indications tend to be at their most visible in ripe cereal crops, in June or July in this part of Britain, although their appearance cannot accurately be predicted and their absence cannot be taken to imply evidence of archaeological absence. In winter months, when the soil is bare or crop cover is thin (when viewed from above), features may show by virtue of their different soils. Upstanding remains, which may survive in unploughed grassland, are also best recorded in winter months when vegetation is sparse and the low angle of the sun helps pick out slight differences of height and slope.

The most informative aerial photographs of archaeological subjects tend to be those resulting from specialist reconnaissance. This activity is usually undertaken by an experienced archaeological observer who will fly at seasons and times of day when optimum results are expected. Oblique photographs, taken using a hand-held camera, are the usual product of such investigation. Although oblique photographs are able to provide a very detailed view, they are biased in providing a record that is mainly of features noticed by the observer, understood, and thought to be of archaeological relevance. In the collections searched, no obliques were held of the assessment area.

Vertical photographs cover the whole of Britain and can provide scenes on a series of dates between (usually) 1946-7 and the present. Unfortunately these vertical surveys are not necessarily flown at times of year that are best to record the crop and soil responses that may be seen above sub-surface features. Vertical photographs are taken by a camera fixed inside an aircraft and adjusted to take a series of overlapping views that can be examined stereoscopically. They are often of relatively small scale and their interpretation requires higher perceptive powers and a more cautious approach than that necessary for examination of obliques. Use of these small-scale images can also lead to errors of location and size when they are rectified or re-scaled to match a larger map scale.

PHOTO EXAMINATION AND MAPPING

Photographs examined

Cover searches were made at the Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs and Cambridgeshire Record Office. Photographs were all taken during routine vertical surveys.

Source: Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs

Vertical photographs

RC8-EA 168-170	23 March 1982	1:10000
RC8-HW 100	10 July 1985	1:10000
RC8-KnBP 24, 26	30 August 1988	1:10000

Source: Cambridgeshire Record Office

Vertical collection

106G/UK/1589: 6082-6083	21 June 1946	1:10000
Fairey: 202395-202396	late summer 1949	1:6000
Run 3: 32462-32464	summer 1962	1:10000
MAL/69056: 033-034	1969	1:10500

Base maps

A base map at a scale of 1:10560 was available and used for this rapid appraisal.

Photo interpretation and mapping

All photographs were examined using a 1.5x magnification stereoscope. The feature identified was sketched on the 1:10560 working map.

COMMENTARY

Soils

The Soil Survey of England and Wales (SSEW 1983) shows the area to be chalky drift and chalk (soil association 511e) on which sub-surface features may be expected to be visible from the air when conditions are appropriate.

Archaeological features

The only feature visible is a headland, visible as a slight earthwork, that extends the Site's northern boundary to the east. This has not been mapped for this report.

The headland is likely to remain from medieval fields such as have been mapped elsewhere in and around the parish.

Non-archaeological features

None were identified but traces may remain of a former east-west hedged boundary that divided the present single field into two parts (see below).

Land use

In 1946 the Site was in use as two small holdings divided by a hedged boundary. Similar small plots were to the north and south and small buildings lay south by the track leading to Chalk Farm. This use continued but by 1969 houses had been built to the north and the Site was then managed as a single unit. Houses had extended to the south by 1982 but the Site continued in arable use and appeared to be in cereal in 1988, the latest date of photography.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that no further examination of aerial photographs is undertaken for this assessment.

REFERENCE

SSEW, 1983. *Soils of England and Wales: sheet 4: Eastern England (1:250,000)*. Soil Survey of England and Wales, Harpenden.



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