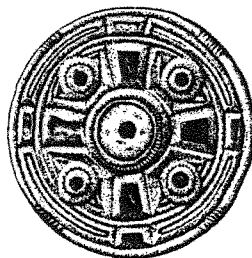




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Archaeological Field Unit

Archaeological evaluation at Town Farm, Whaddon

Judith Roberts

1999

Cambridgeshire County Council

Report No.B52

Commissioned by County Farms Estate, Cambridgeshire County Council

**Archaeological evaluation at
Town Farm, Whaddon**

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June 1999

Editor Tim Malim

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SUMMARY

Evaluation at Town Farm, Whaddon in June 1999 revealed post-medieval building remains and field drains. A single feature of possible prehistoric date was found. Three small, abraded sherds of prehistoric pottery were recovered during surface cleaning. No clear evidence for Saxon or medieval occupation of the area was discovered in spite of the presence of a medieval moated site nearby.

It would appear that much of the site has been disturbed but there may be preservation of archaeological remains below the existing buildings and associated hard-standing.

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Archaeological evaluation at Town Farm, Whaddon

TL 3488/4632

INTRODUCTION

In June 1999 the Archaeological Field Unit (AFU) of Cambridgeshire County Council undertook an evaluation to reveal archaeological remains at Town Farm, Church Street, Whaddon (TL3488/4632) (Figure 1). The work was carried out on behalf of the County Farms Estate of Cambridgeshire County Council before sale of the land for development.

GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site lies on chalk, overlying Gault Clay (British Geological Survey 1985), on a low rise sloping down from west to east, from 21.37m OD on the western edge of the site. Two hundred metres west of the site the land rises above 25m OD. Immediately overlying the chalk natural was a narrow layer of subsoil much of which had been disturbed by foundations and contained fragments of brick and post medieval debris.

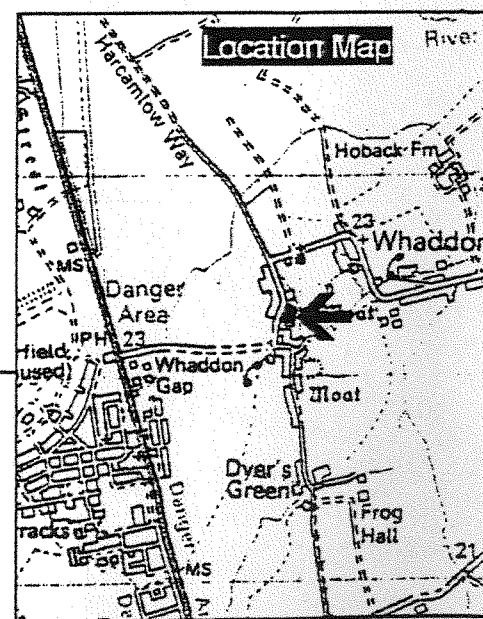
ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Cambridgeshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) records prehistoric flint tools from a few metres to the west (SMR no. 11810) and from Whaddon Green (SMR nos. 9848 and 10338) and flints 1 km to the east of green (SMR no. 9613). Iron Age settlements in this area are known to be concentrated mainly on river valley gravels or on well drained chalk areas near water courses and Iron Age pottery is noted along Whaddon Road (SMR no. 3221) and immediately to the west of the present site (SMR no. 11810) (Roberts 1996). The site is less than 1km from the Roman road (Ermine Street), less than 3km from the Roman road-side settlement at Arrington Bridge, while three Iron Age round houses (dated from the first century BC to first century AD) (Taylor, Malim and Evans, 1995) have been found on higher ground approximately 3km to the north.

The remaining SMR records for the parish are dated to medieval and post-medieval periods. The parish of Whaddon contained at least eight medieval moated sites (Malim, 1990), with four in the village itself. It is possible there was a sizeable settlement at Whaddon in the Late Saxon period (48 inhabitants of Whaddon were recorded in the Domesday survey). Historical evidence suggests the parish had three centres of settlement: Whaddon village south and west of the manor house; Whaddon Green to the east of Dyers Green on the southern boundary; and by the eighteenth century cottages between the village street and Dyer's Green. Pre-conquest features can be seen in the landscape round Dyer's Green with an irregular boundary (crossing the parish boundary with Meldreth) dated to a tenth century manor belonging to the

[illegible]

— — — — — ♦ — — — — — O/H Electricity Line
 - - - - - Water Supply
 Foul Drain



Awarded for excellence



Archaeological features

Abbey of Ely. A more detailed archaeological/historical background is given in the Victoria County History 1982, Oosthuizen 1994, Hatton 1995 and Roberts 1996.

The brook along the eastern edge of the site has been largely silted up but previously flowed from the medieval moated site at Turpins, immediately to the south of Town Farm. The moated site is approximately 23m square with the brook forming its eastern side.

The 1841 tithe map of Whaddon shows structures along the street front of the site but the nature of these buildings is not clear from the copy available. The present buildings on the site have probably been built since the mid-nineteenth/early twentieth centuries. The former tenant, Mr. K. Green, pointed out the presence of subterranean slurry pits in the farm yard which were studied by local members of *Subterranea Britannica* in 1981. These were identified as being of a type illustrated in 1821 but built of late nineteenth/early twentieth century materials (Doig, Doig and Beamon 1982). The slurry pits are recorded on the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR no. 3093) 200m north of the farm yard.

METHODOLOGY AND CONSTRAINTS

Agricultural buildings and concrete hard standing cover much of the site. The area available was further limited by the need to maintain access routes and avoid both underground and overhead services. Dense vegetation around the edge of the site, disused farm machinery and dumped rubbish also reduced the area available for evaluation.

The total area opened by machine was approximately 55 sq.m, equivalent to approximately 5% of the available area. The trenches were planned, photographed and recorded using the standard techniques of the AFU. Context numbers for cuts are shown in bold, e.g. **15**, fills and layers in normal type. Modern intrusive features, such as postholes relating to the agricultural buildings, were recorded in plan but not excavated.

RESULTS

The health and safety implications of asbestos roofing material in all trenches meant that only basic recording was carried out.

Trench 1

Trench 1 (16.4m long) was located close to the southern edge of the site, approximately parallel to the fence line and 2m east of the barn marked A on the plan (see Fig. 1). A considerable amount of asbestos roofing material was found along the trench. Naturally fractured chalk was found along the base of trench. At the western end of the trench 0.3m of topsoil with red brick rubble and modern debris appeared to lie immediately over a chalky clay subsoil. Two metres from the western end was a

patch of loose silty clay, context 2, (4.5m long, 1m wide and extending beyond the southern edge of the trench) which contained brick and coal fragments. Extending north-east from this was a patch of very degraded chalk, context 4.

Extending beyond the north-eastern corner of the trench was an area of disturbed chalky clay, context 6 (2.5m long and 0.9m wide) which contained a high density of flint fragments and nodules. This feature, 5, had a well defined southern edge but the northern part had brick rubble pressed into it. Investigation showed it to be at least 0.1m deep. None of the flint appeared to have been worked and no artefactual material was found during the investigation. At the eastern end of the trench there was 0.6m of made ground with rubble and post medieval debris.

Trench 2

Trench 2 varied in depth between 0.7m at the western end and 1.2m at the eastern end. Red brick foundations were noted at the eastern end of the trench. These foundations, 7, cut into the underlying chalk and comprised very sandy red bricks (60mm x 120mm x 230mm). They were truncated 0.8m below the present ground surface and sealed by a layer of silty subsoil with fragments of rubble, coal, glass and iron. The trench was sealed by a layer of asbestos roofing fragments up to 0.2m thick. Within three metres of the western end of the trench was a field drain, context 9 (yellow clay, 310mm long, diameter 90mm), running approximately north-west-south-east and cut into the chalk natural. To the west and parallel to the field drain was a shallow linear feature, 10 (0.6m wide), no more than 0.05m deep in its excavated section. The fill, 11, was a silty chalk clay and contained an abraded fragment of prehistoric pottery together with flecks of brick and coal.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was dug parallel to the High Street to determine the survival of earlier street front properties. There is a considerable drop from the High Street (approximately 1m) and no evidence of buildings was found in the trench. The trench was 8.7m long beyond a drain which was noted when the machine was clearing surface debris. A field drain, 12 (yellow clay, 320mm long, 60mm diameter), ran the length of the trench, parallel to the road. There was also a modern post hole, 13, containing fragments of decayed wood and brick. There was 0.25m of decayed chalky clay over the chalk natural and this was sealed by 0.3m of silty topsoil containing plastic, metal, brick and asbestos roofing material.

DISCUSSION

The presence of field drains in trenches 2 and 3 suggests this land was not part of the farm yard until the middle of the nineteenth century. The presence of brick footings and flint nodules visible in the floor of barn A suggests remnants of the structures shown of the 1841 tithe map still survive and it is probable that the brick rubble noted in trench 1 comes from demolition of these buildings. Similarly the foundations in trench 2 indicate survival of remains that pre-dated the existing barn D.

Apart from a few fragments of very abraded prehistoric pottery there was no evidence for prehistoric features although feature 5 in trench 1 has a very similar fill to early prehistoric features found during excavations to the west in 1995.

Colluvial action across the site may account for the movement of Iron Age material from the possible settlement to the west and may have occurred soon after that settlement fell into disuse. The lack of Saxon material and medieval and post-medieval debris (typically found as residue from manuring) are indicative of use of the land for pasture rather than arable activity.

Aerial photography and previous field work has done little more than indicate Iron Age occupation of the higher ground to the west with more scattered remains on the valley floor. The present excavations suggest that the Iron Age settlement was restricted to the slightly higher land to the west. Until the barns, hard standing and modern contamination are removed the full extent of surviving archaeology will not be clear but the density noted in excavations to the west does not appear to extend on to the subject site.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank the Estate Management Unit, Cambridgeshire County Council which funded the project, Tim Malim, Project Manager and Mr. Ken Green who gave background information regarding the site.

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SMR SITES IN AND AROUND THE PARISH OF WHADDON

TYPE	SMR NO.
Crop mark	9523
Earthworks	10713
Earthworks	9911
Soil mark	8603
Mesolithic/Neolithic flints	11810
Mesolithic axe	10984
Neolithic axe	10145
Prehistoric flint	9613
Prehistoric flint	9849
Prehistoric flint	10338
Iron Age finds	11810
Iron Age pottery	3221
Medieval church	3935
Medieval moated site	1224
Medieval moated site	1241
Medieval moated site	1242
Medieval moated site	1243
Medieval moated site	1244
Medieval moated site	1245
Medieval moated site	1274
Medieval moated site	5852
Medieval stray find	3095
Medieval pottery	9849
Medieval & post-med farmhouse	3140
Undated quern fragments	10144
Post-medieval dovecote	10466
Ridge and furrow	9524
Slurry tanks	3093



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