

Official list entry

Heritage Category: **Scheduled Monument**

List Entry Number: **1006796**

Date first listed: **14-Jun-1962**

Date of most recent amendment: **19-Oct-2018**

Location Description: Approximately 837m south-east of Sacrewell Farmhouse

Location

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

District: **City of Peterborough (Unitary Authority)**

Parish: **Wansford**

National Grid Reference: **TL0867099837**

Summary

The buried remains of seven ring ditches, a quadrilateral, single-ditched enclosure interlinked with a smaller, single-ditched enclosure, a pit alignment and pits, all visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs. The ring ditches are thought to represent the buried remains of a Bronze Age round barrow cemetery while the enclosure is believed to have originated as a prehistoric enclosed farmstead which was later reused in the Romano-British period. The features lie 837m south-east of Sacrewell Farmhouse, in a field known as Toll Bar Field, which rises gently from the River Nene in the south to the Sacrewell stream in the north.

Reasons for Designation

The cropmarks of a round barrow cemetery and a quadrilateral, single-ditched enclosure, together with pits and a pit alignment, approximately 837m south-east of Sacrewell Farmhouse, are scheduled for the following principal reasons: * Period: the round barrow cemetery and ditched enclosure demonstrate a significant sequence of development throughout the late prehistoric and Romano-British periods and offer an important understanding of the economic and social activities within the area during the period of occupation; * Survival: despite having previously subject to ploughing, aerial photographs and geophysical (magnetometer) survey have shown that archaeological features survive as buried deposits; * Potential: deposits in the infilled ditches and the buried land surface will preserve important archaeological information relating to the construction and use of the site, as well as the impact of prehistoric and Roman occupation on the wider landscape; * Finds: the abundance of Romano-British finds recovered from the site, all indicate a prolonged period of occupation; * Group value: a study of the monument and its relationship to other prehistoric and Roman sites in the area will make a valuable contribution to the understanding of later prehistoric occupation and funerary activity in the Nene Valley, along with civil and military control during its Roman occupation.

History

The lower Nene Valley is exceptionally rich in the archaeological remains of the prehistoric and Roman periods, though relatively few extant monuments now survive. Most of its known archaeological sites have been discovered either by chance or by systematic field walking, while others are only visible on aerial photographs as crop and soil marks. Few sites were known before 1945 and the majority have been discovered since 1960 by aerial reconnaissance. In 1961 a previously unknown cropmark system was recorded by Professor JKS St Joseph, Curator of Aerial Photography for the Cambridge University Committee for Aerial photography, at Sacrewell Farm, Thornhaugh. Situated in a 27-acre arable field known as 'Toll Bar Field', the cropmarks comprised seven ring ditches and a quadrilateral, single-ditched enclosure. As the features lay within the hinterland of the Roman town of Durobrivae, the scheduled remains of which lie some 2.5km to the south-east (National Heritage List for England List Entry number: 1021429), with the route of Ermine Street, the principal Roman road linking London with Lincoln, also lying some 1.6km to the east, the cropmarks were originally thought to represent Romano-British settlement activity. However, advances in aerial photographic interpretation, along with the results of a geophysical (magnetometer) survey undertaken in 2017, has now resulted in the seven ring ditches being interpreted as the probable remains of a Bronze Age round barrow cemetery, with suggestion of a pit alignment, while the enclosure possibly originated as a prehistoric farmstead which was later reused in the Romano-British period.

In general, where barrow mounds have been levelled, the most striking feature recorded from the air is the ring ditch or quarry ditch i.e. the ditch from which material to construct the barrow mound was excavated. Barrow cemeteries are groups of five or more closely-spaced round barrows containing examples of one or more of the following types: bowl barrows, fancy barrows, pond barrows and ring cairns. As they have usually accumulated over many generations the land between and around the barrows is important as it may contain evidence of paraphernalia associated with the functioning of the monument such as burials, pyres and feasting areas. Some barrow groups cluster together in small areas, while others take on a looser arrangement with groups of two or three spaced at much greater intervals. In some instances groups take on a linear form. Barrow cemeteries are sometimes found in association with other monuments that are also often assumed to have served a ceremonial or ritual purpose during the Neolithic and Bronze Age. These may include avenues, cursuses, henges, mortuary enclosures, stone and timber circles. Such relationships are little understood but the variety of spatial and chronological associations provide invaluable areas for archaeological study.

Prehistoric farmsteads are generally represented by ditched enclosures, the size and form of which vary considerably, containing evidence of a small group of circular domestic buildings and associated agricultural structures. Where excavated, these sites are also found to contain pits or rectangular post-built structures for the storage of grain and other produce, evidence of an organised and efficient farming system. The surrounding enclosures would have provided protection against cattle rustling and tribal raiding. In central and southern England, most enclosed prehistoric farmsteads are situated in areas which are now under intensive arable cultivation. As a result the majority have been recorded as cropmarks and soilmarks appearing on aerial photographs.

While the primary source of evidence for prehistoric occupation in the lower Nene Valley principally lies with air photography along with the identification of dateable remains and chance finds, evidence of Roman activity in the area is more apparent. Prior to Professor Joseph's aerial reconnaissance in the 1960s, the most comprehensive archaeological surveys of the river valley were undertaken by Edmund Tyrell Artis (1789-1847), a geologist and archaeologist who served as Steward to the Earls of Fitzwilliam between 1820 and 1828. While searching for fossils on Fitzwilliam's estates at Castor in 1821, Artis discovered a large tessellated Roman pavement. This encouraged him to conduct a series of further excavations in the locality, unusually systematic for their time, which continued until 1827. Unlike many of his contemporaries, whose main interest was in searching for ancient treasures for private collections, he meticulously measured and recorded his discoveries. He also attempted to place this information within a wider landscape context, observing how the various elements, settlements, roads, industry and temples may have related to each other, thus attempting to understand Roman society as a whole. From 1823 he produced a series of plates illustrating his discoveries, largely engraved from his own drawings, entitled 'The Durobrivae of Antoninus'. While these illustrations appeared in a single volume in 1828, the text to accompany them, which was apparently in note form at the time of Artis's death, was never published. One of his plates, however, clearly depicts two Roman buildings standing in Toll Bar Field, one placed inside the enclosure and one standing immediately to its east side.

Scatters of limestone rubble building material were discovered by field-walking in the 1980s along with Romano-British tegulae and imbrex tile fragments. Further finds indicative of Romano-British activity within and around the enclosure include the discovery of a significant amount of Grey Ware and colour coated ware pottery along with a smaller amount of Samian ware. By 1991 over 500 Roman coins had also been recovered from Toll Bar Field, of which 200 had been dated to the C1/C2 AD.

After the Romans left there is little evidence that the land at Sacrewell Farm was occupied by later settlers, though Sacrewell Mill is recorded as being in existence by the time of the Domesday Book. At this time the farm was owned by the St Medard family, as part of the Manor of Thornough, and they introduced the three-field system of farming.

In 1525 Sir John Russell, Earl of Bedford and a close advisor to Henry VIII, acquired Sacrewell Farm, with the land, by this time, being divided into individual furlongs as part of an open field system. Faint traces of ridge and furrow from this subdivision of the land are still discernible across parts of Toll Bar Field.

By 1729, as illustrated on an estate map, the majority of individual furlongs had been amalgamated to create larger fields. At this time Toll Bar Field is shown to have been formed of three separate fields: Middle Close, Middle Ground and Bridge Mill Close. The process of amalgamation continued with the Enclosures which came to Sacrewell in around 1760. Rectangular fields enclosed by hawthorn hedges were laid out and two new farmhouses, Sacrewell Farmhouse and Sacrewell Lodge (both listed Grade II), were built

In 1928 Toll Bar Field consisted of two separate fields with the northern half known as Hop Ground and the southern half Toll Bar. It eventually became a single field in the mid C20 and was farmed as arable until the late C20. It is now (2018) set aside.

Details

Principal elements: the buried remains of seven ring ditches, a quadrilateral, single-ditched enclosure interlinked with a smaller, single ditched enclosure, a pit alignment and pits, all visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs. The ring ditches are thought to represent the buried remains of a Bronze Age round barrow cemetery while the enclosure is believed to have originated as a prehistoric enclosed farmstead which was later reused in the Romano-British period. The features lie 837m south east of Sacrewell Farmhouse, in a field known as Toll Bar Field, which rises gently from the River Nene in the south to the Sacrewell stream in the north.

Description: the buried remains of the ring ditches and large, quadrilateral enclosure have all been recorded as cropmarks from aerial photographs and by geophysical (magnetometer) survey. The ring ditches are thought to represent the buried remains of a Bronze Age round barrow cemetery while the enclosure is believed to have originated as a prehistoric enclosed farmstead which was later reused in the Romano-British period.

The ring ditches, the surviving quarry ditches of seven round barrows, lie mainly in the southern half of Toll Bar Field and vary in size from 11m to 37m diameter. The southernmost and largest ring ditch is centred at NGR TL0866 9968 and abuts the southern boundary of the field. It is bivallate in form with an outer ring measuring approximately 30m in diameter and an inner ring measuring approximately 20m in diameter. A cut internal feature may represent the grave of a primary burial while a further cut feature at the eastern edge of the outer ditch line could be that of a secondary interment.

The remaining six ring ditches, which are centred at NGR's TL 0862 9985, TL 0861 9979, TL 0873 9983, TL 0871 9979, TL 0868 9976 and TL 0871 9975, respectively measure 11m, 22m, 23.5m, 37m, 25.5m and 11m in diameter. Numerous high magnitude discrete anomalies identified within the ring ditches by a geophysical (magnetometer) survey in 2017 may indicate the locations of burial pits, cremations and/or inhumations.

Situated at roughly the mid-point of Toll Bar Field, centred at NGR TL 08678 99928, is a large, quadrilateral, single-ditched enclosure. Neither the geophysical survey nor the LIDAR and aerial photograph (AP) assessment of the site offer measurements for the enclosure but from the plots of the cropmarks it is at least between 80 and 100m across

the southern edge, but is longer north to south, particularly on the east side. Geophysical survey has also confirmed a smaller, single-ditched enclosure interlinked at its south-east corner, with both enclosures containing numerous pit-type anomalies suggesting settlement activity. Thermoremanent anomalies east of the enclosure may indicate burning or industrial activity.

The discovery of Neolithic artefacts provides further evidence for the site being the focus of prehistoric activity.

Extending from the enclosures south-east corner, on a roughly east-west axis, is a short pit alignment, while a short length of ditch runs from the north-west corner of the enclosure to a smaller, rectilinear enclosure.

Although the earthworks have been levelled by ploughing, the infilled ditches and ground surface will contain valuable evidence relating to the date of construction and the function of the monuments, as well as evidence for social organisation. Funerary remains contained within burial pits may also provide evidence of the nature of the funeral rituals employed.

Extent of Scheduling: the area of protection, which is shown on the accompanying map extract, includes the buried remains of seven ring ditches, a quadrilateral, single-ditched enclosure interlinked with a smaller, single-ditched enclosure, a pit alignment and pits, all visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs.

The scheduled area is bounded to the south and west by field boundaries formed by hedge rows, while the north and east sides open onto agricultural land.

Legacy

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System number: **PE 201**

Legacy System: **RSM - OCN**

Sources

Books and journals

Artis, E, *The Durobrivae of Antonius*, (1828), Plate 1

Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, , *Peterborough New Town: a survey of antiquities...*, (1969)

Websites

Information on Edmund Tryell Artis from the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography website, accessed 26 July 2018 from [REDACTED]

Other

Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography, Oblique Aerial Photograph Reference Number ABW, 07 July 1960

Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography, Oblique Aerial Photograph Reference Number ZB46, 30 June 1959

Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography, Oblique Aerial Photograph Reference Number ZF55, 30 June 1959

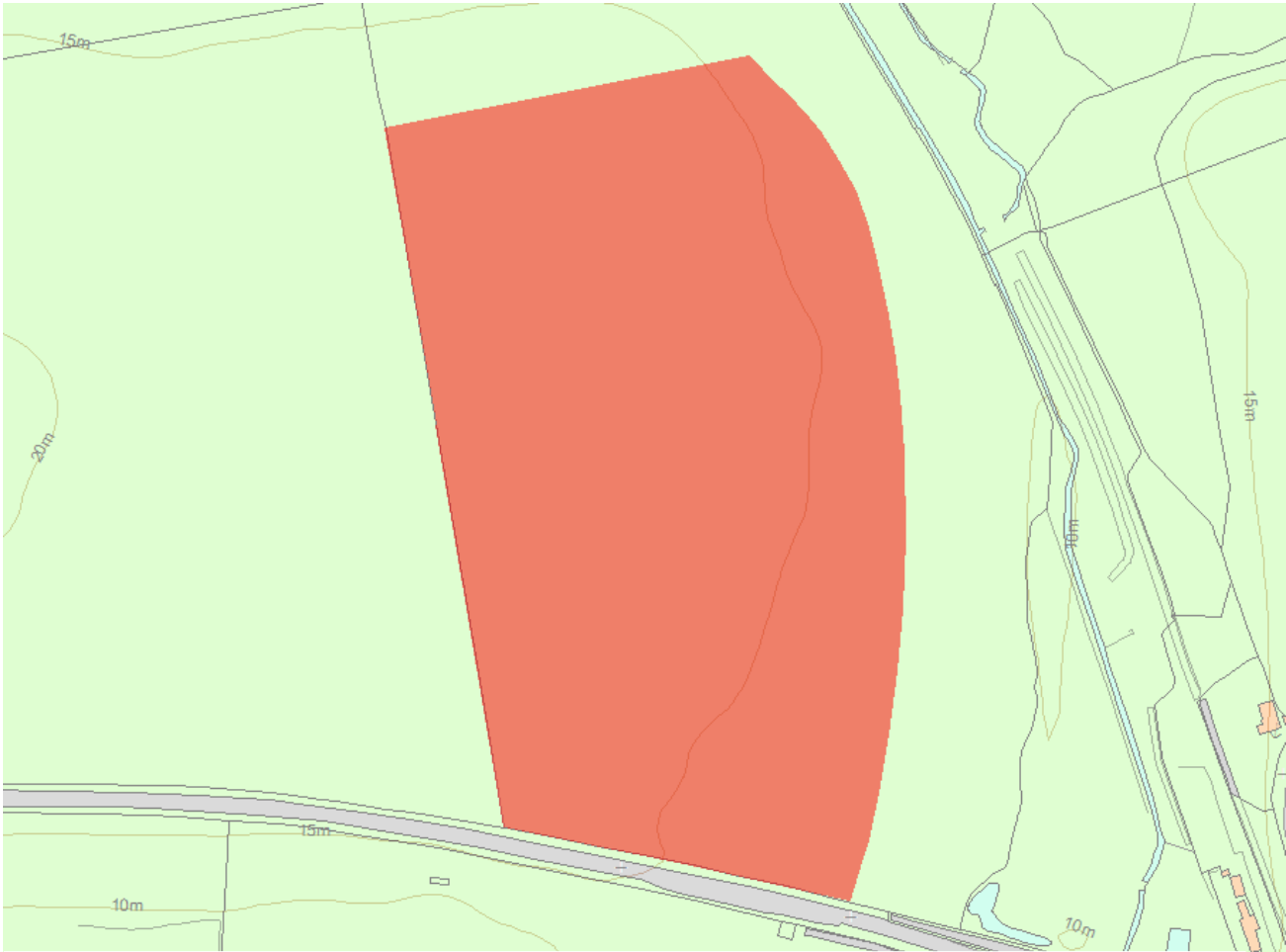
Headland Archaeology, 'A47 Wansford LiDAR and Aerial Photo Analysis for Amey', (2017)

Headland Archaeology, 'Land adjacent to the A47, Wansford, Peterborough: Geophysical Survey for Amey', (2017)

Upex, S, 'An archaeological desk-based evaluation of land along the line of the A47 road between Wansford and Sutton roundabout, to the west of Peterborough' (2018)

Legal

This monument is scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 as amended as it appears to the Secretary of State to be of national importance. This entry is a copy, the original is held by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.



Map

This map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale.
This copy shows the entry on 14-Feb-2022 at 21:59:41.

© Crown Copyright and database right 2022. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey
Licence number 100024900.© British Crown and SeaZone Solutions Limited 2022. All
rights reserved. Licence number 102006.006.

[Redacted text block]

End of official list entry