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New work on old sites: Somersham and Pampisford revisited

Christopher Taylor

Aspects of the landscape of two Cambridgeshire villages, either ignored or simplified in earlier papers, are here examined in detail. At Somersham the possibility that the village originated as a tenth or eleventh-century planned settlement is put forward. At Pampisford the evidence for Roman, medieval and later reclamation of an area of ill-drained marsh, some of which is also connected to the two deliberately planned villages there, is analysed.

Introduction

There can hardly be a greater contrast between the large fen-edge village of Somersham, in the old county of Huntingdon and Pampisford, a small rural settlement in south Cambridgeshire. The link between them is that both have figured in papers on the history of their landscapes by the present writer (Taylor 1989; 2003). In both of these papers aspects of the villages were used as examples of two very different landscape features, the recognition of which had implications both within and, more importantly far beyond, our county. As a result, in order to present the broader issues involved, it was inevitable that many of the finer details of these landscapes, as well as aspects not directly concerned with the main arguments, were simplified or ignored. Yet some of these details are not only of local interest but are themselves also of wider significance. The writer thus decided that it might be of value to future historians of Cambridgeshire if the details were published in *PCAS*.

Somersham

The village of Somersham is situated on the fen-edge, midway between St Ives and Chatteris. It was mentioned briefly in a paper that was written at an early stage in the discovery of what later became known as 'medieval designed landscapes' (Taylor 1989; 2000). These landscapes, seeming to comprise extensive grassland, woods, lakes, ponds and gardens, were recognised first as archaeological sites that contained

the earthworks of former ponds, dams, moats, terraces and park pales. Their existence was subsequently confirmed both in the documentary record and in later medieval paintings and literature (Harvey 1981, *passim*). Such landscapes were found once to have surrounded many castles, manor houses, and even monastic establishments from at least the twelfth century. They were recognised as the precursors of the better-known designed landscapes and parklands created in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The discovery of such designed landscapes of medieval date was not only important for the history of gardens and parks, it also coincided with the re-examination of the function and use of medieval castles, and their position as status symbols and administrative centres, rather than as or in addition to their use as defensive structures (Coulson 2003; Liddiard 2005).

The medieval designed landscape at Somersham was an early discovery, hence the ambiguous title of the paper that described the remains (Fig. 1). In fact it turned out to be a very good example of the type, well over a hundred of which are now known from Britain and Western Europe. It lies immediately to the south of Somersham village, and surrounds the site of a palace that belonged to the bishops of Ely from 1109 until 1600, although the manor of Somersham had been in the hands of the abbey since 991. The main period of use of the palace was between the later twelfth and the fourteenth centuries and it has been assumed that the surrounding designed landscape was created soon after the acquisition of the manor by the bishop. Certainly gardeners are recorded there as early as 1167–77.

The Somersham designed landscape included an extensive deer park, ponds, terraces, a moated gazebo, gardens and orchards, evidence for all of which survives as archaeological earthworks. But, it is that part of the designed landscape that lay between the palace and the village to the north that is discussed here. For in that area there was a very formal approach to the palace from the village that can still be appreciated. It comprised a long straight drive that probably passed through various paddocks, in one of which stood

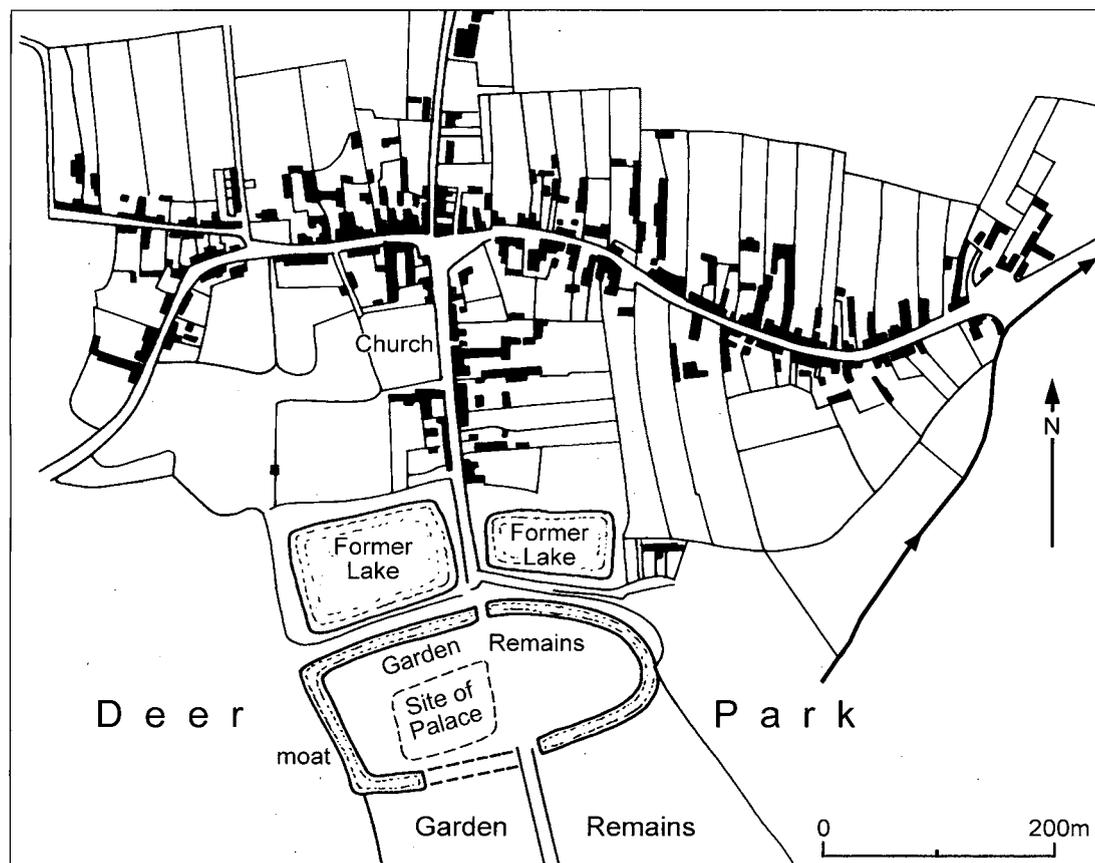


Figure 1. Somersham village. The plan of the village is based on the 1842 Tithe Map. The plan of the palace and gardens is based on Taylor (1989).

the present parish church. This was rebuilt on a lavish scale, presumably by one of the bishops, in the mid-thirteenth century, perhaps as much as an enhancement to the landscape as an improvement to a building dedicated to the glory of God (RCHME 1926, Somersham (1); Pevsner 1968, 342–4). As the drive approached the moat around the palace and its inner gardens, it was flanked by two large rectangular embanked lakes that were intended to give visitors the impression of crossing sheets of water, a feature noted elsewhere in medieval designed landscapes (Everson *et al* 1991, Stow (3), (4); Lofthouse 1997). The dams and retaining bank of the larger of these lakes still survive while those of the other have been destroyed only recently.

All of the above were described in detail in the original paper on the Somersham designed landscape. In addition it was pointed out that to make the long approach drive, and indeed to create the two lakes, the earlier village of Somersham that had lain on both sides of what was to become the drive – then its main street – had been bodily removed to its present position further north, leaving only the parish church to mark its original site. This remarkable occurrence, which perhaps took place in the early twelfth century, was not emphasised in the paper, despite it being one of the earliest, if not the earliest, known examples of

village removal for landscaping in Britain.

The principal evidence for this removal was in some of the curving property boundaries along the present main east to west High Street of the existing village (Fig. 1). These indicated that they had been laid out on top of former open field strips, a well-known feature noted in a number of places including Caxton in Cambridgeshire (Taylor 1979, 129–30; 1983, 158, 162; RCHME 1968, Caxton (24); 1981, Yelvertoft (4)). Further, the indented northern boundary of the village follows what seem to be five or six separate rectangular blocks of former strips. These are presumably earlier north to south furlongs incorporated bodily into the new layout of the village. A further piece of evidence, not examined in the earlier paper, is that the presumed original main street of Somersham, later the formal drive to the palace, was part of a road system that probably pre-dates both the palace and its landscape. To the north it continues for 3.5 km to Somersham High North Fen where it must have joined, or become, the road to Chatteris. To the south it must have run across the rising ground to Wood End in Bluntisham (VCH 1932, 223.) Such a situation would place the predecessor of the bishop's palace, the abbey's manor house if on the same site, at the south end of the village as it then was.

The removal of the village to its new position on the

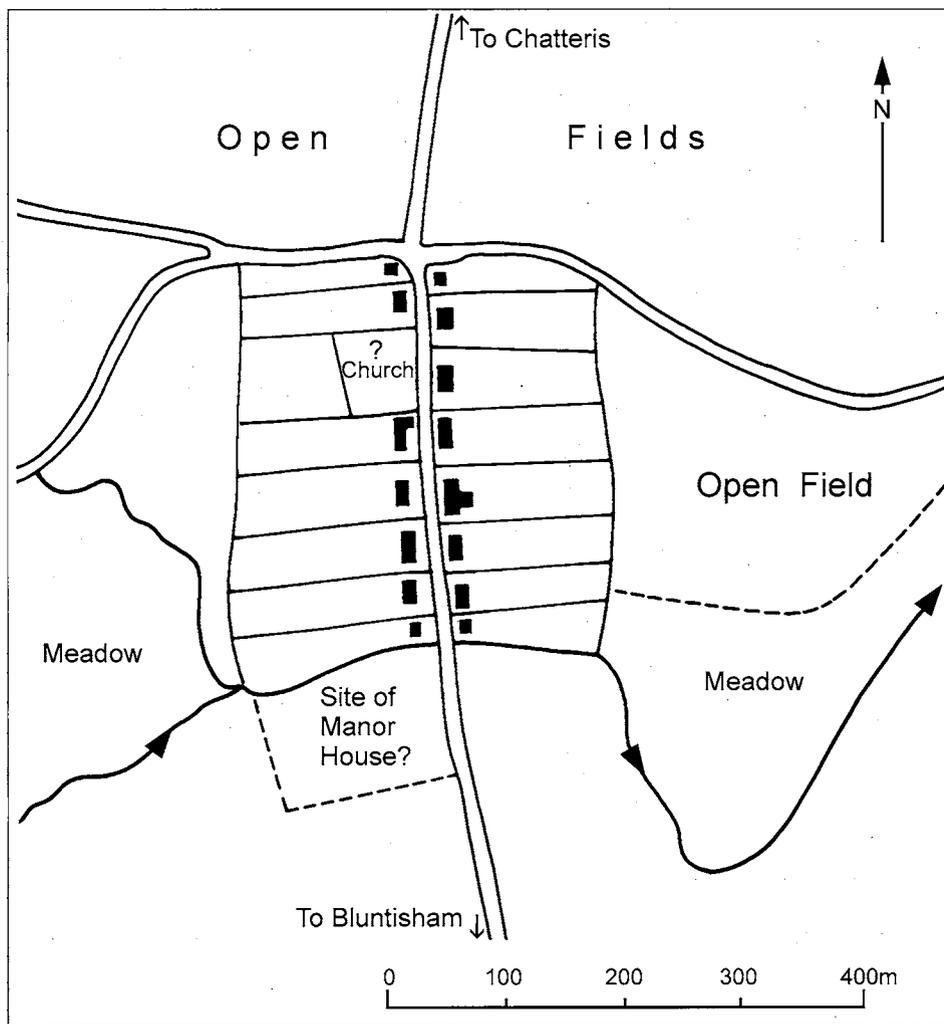


Figure 2. Somersham village in the early 11th century: a tentative reconstruction.

east to west road perhaps took place soon after 1109 to make way for the formal approach to the palace. It is unlikely to have been later than 1190 for in that year the Bishop of Ely was granted the right to hold a weekly market at Somersham. This market was traditionally said to have been held at the wide triangular open space in the centre of the existing village where a market cross once stood (VCH 1932, 223–4). This situation and date, particularly after a major change in the village siting, is by no means uncommon in the case of these relatively minor medieval market grants (Taylor 1982). Confirmation of the early relocation of the village was produced by an excavation carried out in 1996 on a site south of and towards the western end of High Street. One of a group of property boundaries there was found to date from around 1100 (Roberts 1996).

Apart from the results of the excavation, this history of Somersham village is a shortened version of that published in 1989. What was then ignored because it formed no part of the story of the designed landscape was the development of the settlement *before* its relocation, beyond the fact that it had been

arranged along the north to south road. However, the reconstruction of the layout of the village prior to its removal in the twelfth century is possible and adds much to both its history and to the history of medieval settlement in Cambridgeshire (Fig. 2).

As a result of the nineteenth-century expansion of Somersham back along the former main street or drive, and more particularly recent housing development along and to the east of it, it is difficult to appreciate the landscape as it was when the approach drive was complete, let alone the appearance of the earlier village there. However, there are two plans dating from before the modern expansion that allow a possible reconstruction of the earlier arrangements. The first edition 1:2500 OS map (1886) shows as earthworks the boundaries of the two former lakes that lay on the north side of the designed landscape. This is of considerable value as the site of the eastern lake has now been built over and nothing survives on the ground. The Tithe Map of 1842 is even more informative. For, although it does not show the remains of either of the lakes, it does depict the overall outline or 'envelope' of what must represent the original village,

to the south of the market place. This is an almost rectangular area of roughly playing-card shape 380 m long and between 325 m and 345 m wide. Its north side bows slightly outwards, a line that the later east to west main street of the village takes, while its south side curves inwards, probably following the original course of the brook that was later used to fill the two lakes. The road to the palace, earlier the main street of the village, ran north to south, bisecting the envelope and thus producing two almost equal parts. The parish church stood in the western half, one third of the way along it. Any former dwellings along this street thus would have had crofts behind them, almost all of exactly the same length. And to judge from the four crofts surviving on the eastern side in 1842, the original ones may all have been roughly 30 m to 45 m wide.

If this interpretation is correct it means that the pre-twelfth-century village of Somersham was of a type known as a regular two-row settlement. This form of village is widespread, particularly in the north and north-east of England where it is usually considered to be the result of deliberate planning (Roberts 1972; Taylor 1983, 131). However, while most regular two-row villages, as well as other forms also interpreted as being the result of planning, are indeed in the north, they have also been recognised in almost every other part of England, although in fewer numbers. Even in Cambridgeshire there are excellent examples, including Hinxton, Reach and Little Shelford (Taylor 1995, 2002, 2006). Further at least 28 other Cambridgeshire villages have features that suggest that all or part of them were planned (CT personal knowledge). The same is true of Northamptonshire where the process of village planning has also been identified and dated to the late Saxon period (Brown and Foard 1998, 77–92). Here too the present writer has calculated that at least a quarter of the villages in the county have elements of regularity in their layouts.

Such estimates are crude and subjective. More detailed work in Dorset has indicated that at first sight perhaps as few as eight per cent of existing villages there had regular plans. Yet, after an examination of all of the deserted settlements in that county, almost all of which had regular plans, it was concluded that as many as half and perhaps more of Dorset villages were originally regular in form. The deserted settlements were merely illustrating what had been a common layout before the late-medieval and later alterations (Taylor 1994). Thus the relatively low number of possibly planned villages in the southern and midland counties of England compared with those in the north is the result of subsequent change. Many of these changes have been on such a scale as to have destroyed or obscured any original regular features. Furthermore, however imprecise these figures may be they show that villages with regular plans were relatively common in all of those parts of England dominated by nucleated settlements. It is thus not surprising that an undistinguished fen-edge village has a layout that indicates that it too once had a regular plan and that this plan was probably

the result of deliberate design. As usual it is easier to see what has happened in the landscape than to explain or to date it (Taylor 2006, 121). The regular village of Somersham must have existed well before the designed landscape around the bishop's palace was laid out, or at least completed, for the two lakes that formed the northern part of that landscape could not have been constructed until the village had been relocated.

The implication of this relationship, together with the usually accepted theory that most regular villages seem to date from the later Saxon or early Norman periods is that the village of Somersham was laid out between 991 and 1109 during the tenure of the abbey of Ely. This is not to suggest that the abbey necessarily was responsible for the new village. It may well have been but this is not certain. The question of the responsibility of individuals and institutions and of their motives in the emergence of planned villages remains a matter of intense academic debate even after nearly fifty years of research (Taylor 1983, 133–48; Lewis *et al* 1997, 202–23; Jones and Page 2006, 10–15). Nor can any suggestion be made for the location or form of the presumed even earlier settlement of Somersham. Archaeological evidence for pre-nucleated settlements elsewhere in Cambridgeshire and beyond would suggest that there may have been a dispersed pattern of settlement of farmsteads and hamlets scattered across the parish and especially along the fen edge (Hall & Martin 1979; Malim 1993; Shaw 1993).

Pampisford

The origins of Pampisford were discussed in a paper concerned with the reasons for the appearance of nucleated villages in South Cambridgeshire (Taylor 2002). The two villages at Pampisford – one is now virtually deserted and thus largely unknown – seemed to be good examples of planned settlements of the type already discussed at Somersham, but set in a hitherto unrecognised environment (Fig. 3).

In many places in the south of the county large shallow basins of poorly drained former meadow or pasture seem always to have attracted a dispersed pattern of settlement around them. This type of settlement, comprising individual farmsteads and small hamlets, lay around the edges of these basins certainly from late prehistoric times and probably much earlier, their inhabitants presumably exploiting the adjacent grassland (Fig. 5). This dispersed settlement, stable in form if not in location, existed for at least 2000 years. Then, apparently in mid to late Saxon times, it was replaced by the nucleated villages that mostly survive today. Examples of this presumed settlement development have been recognised at nearby Hinxton and Stapleford, as well as elsewhere, although the best instance is at Pampisford where a particularly large basin, as well as a much smaller one to its south-west, survive in part (Taylor 2002, 60–7).

At Pampisford the changes, involving the origins

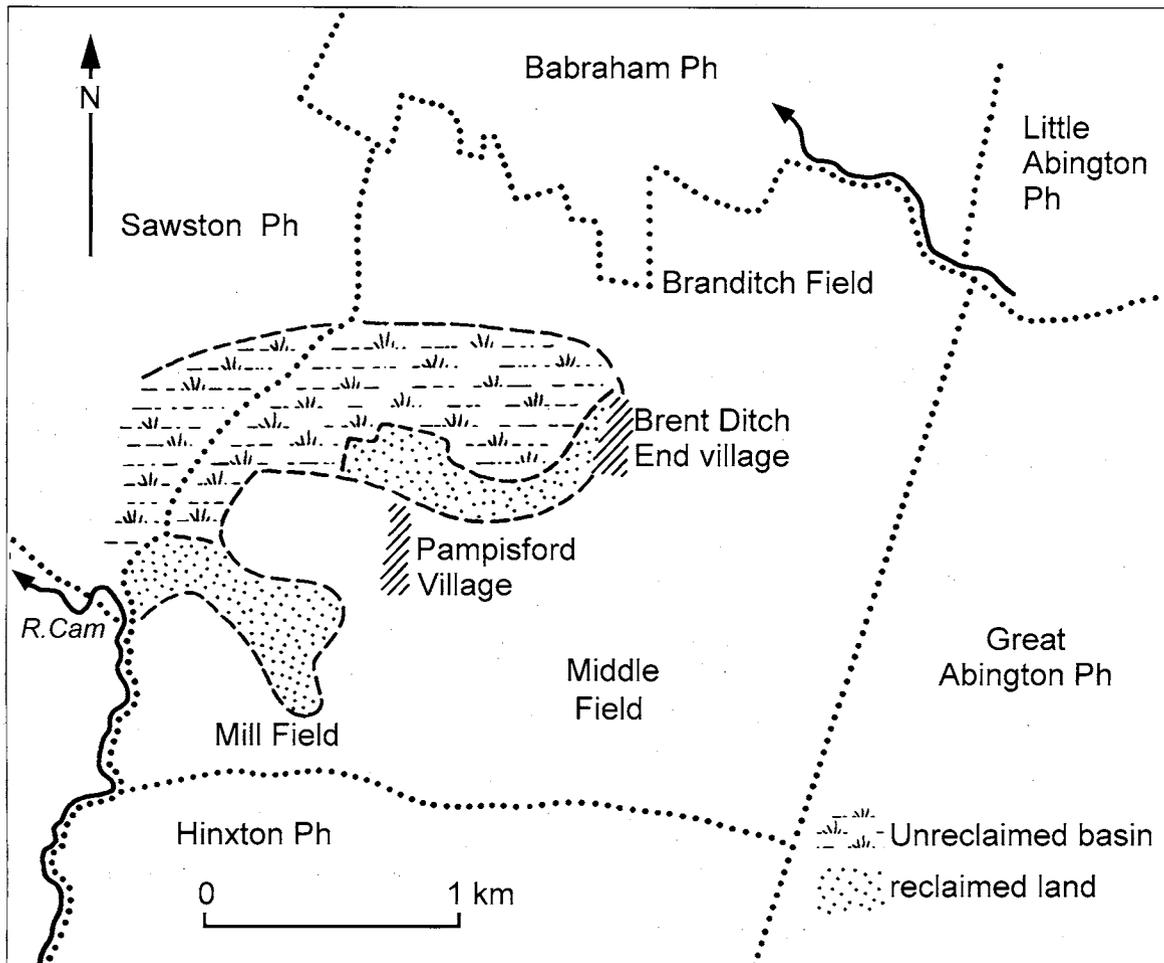


Figure 3. Pampisford parish in the medieval period.

of both of the villages that replaced the earlier but unproven Saxon dispersed settlement there, were described and analysed in the original paper (Taylor 2002, 57–60). However, in order to emphasise the importance of the larger of the two marshy basins there, its outline was simplified in the accompanying diagram and the existence of the smaller basin was ignored. Nor was its subsequent history examined in detail, all of these matters having been judged irrelevant to the principal subject of the paper, involving as it did village origins throughout England. In fact the later changes to both of the basins are complicated and have their own historical interest.

The larger, roughly east to west, elongated basin at Pampisford lies across the centre of the parish and extends south-west into Sawston parish (Fig. 4). Although much of it is now permanent arable land, some of it occupied by tree plantations and in Sawston built over, its original area can be established with reasonable certainty. The uneven ground with depressions and raised ridges created by freeze-thaw action within waterlogged land at the end of the last Ice Age (Taylor 1981) marks out part of its former extent. In some places this hummocky ground remains virtually intact, except for later drainage ditches, in

permanent pasture. Good examples of this are in the fields to the south-west and east of College Farm and to the north-west of Manor Farm. Elsewhere traces are visible as crop or soil marks on aerial photographs (RAF 1946; CUULM RC8-A 211–12, RC8-DH 54 198, RC8-DY 192–3, BLQ 46).

The lowest, central part of this main basin is recognisable from the existence of a small west-flowing stream named as a Public Drain in 1799 (CRO Q/RDz6) and into which most of the modern drains flow. It is likely that this stream was part of the original natural drainage of the area. The northern and north-western boundaries have long since been incorporated into fields that were established across them on enclosure in 1799. But its actual line is still marked by the remains of degraded low scarps or by slight changes in height.

It is much more difficult to ascertain the original eastern and southern boundaries of the basin. In the 2003 article this boundary was confidently illustrated as curving south from the north-east corner along the western edge of the now deserted village at Brent Ditch End. It was then shown as running west, passing the northern end of Pampisford village and continuing west and south-west (Fig. 5). There were good

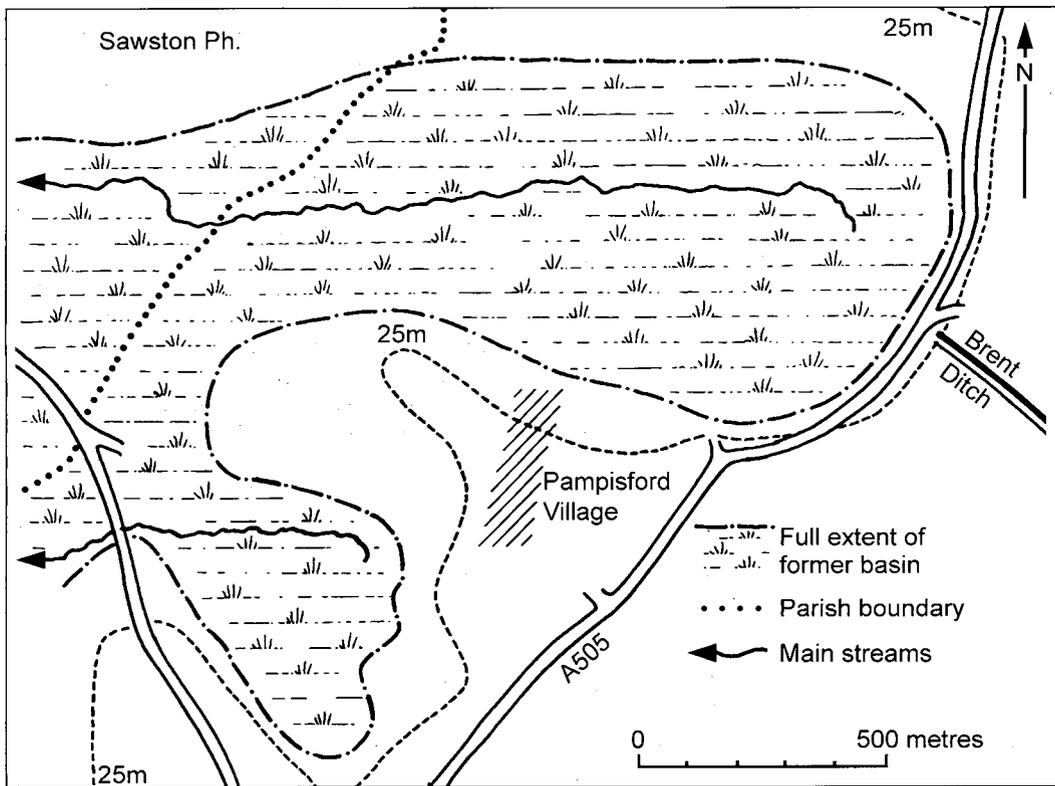


Figure 4. Pampisford: original extent of the basins.

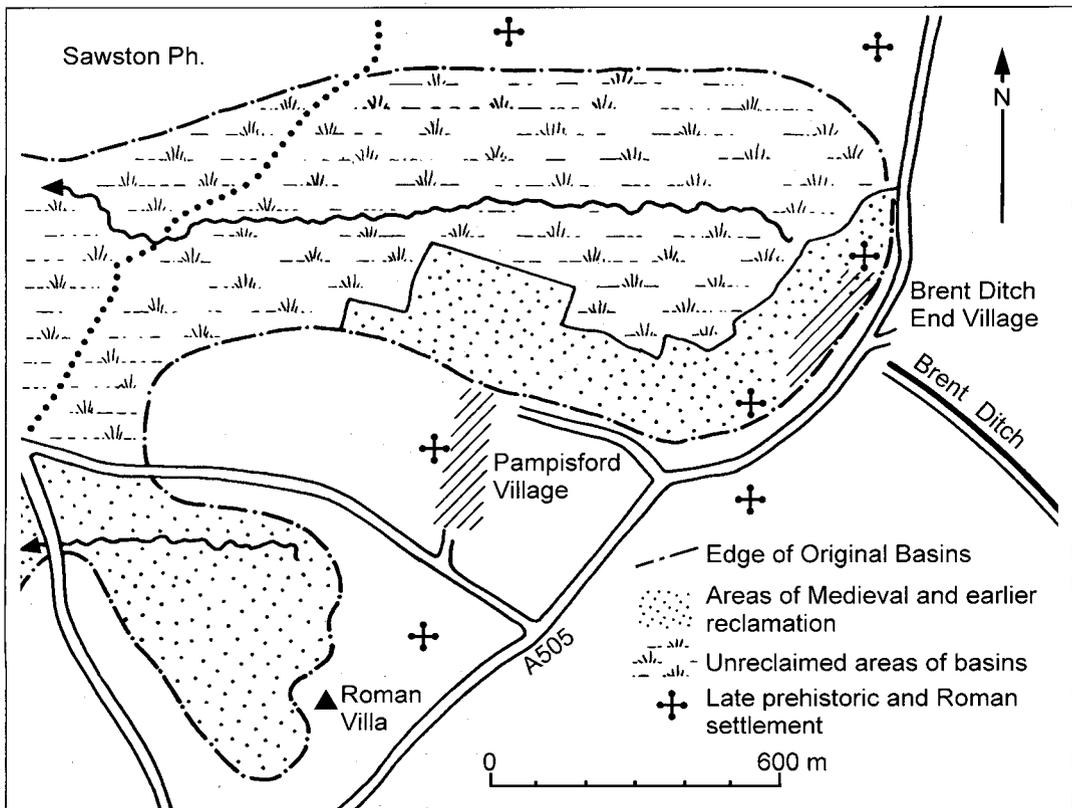


Figure 5. Pampisford: extent of the medieval and earlier reclamation.

reasons for this confidence, not least because of rising ground to the south on which the village is situated and, in particular, the extent of the ground-ice hollows extending south and west as far as the edge of Beech Lane and to the north-west of the village. However, the actual southern and eastern boundary of the basin today, and as shown on the 1799 Enclosure Map (CRO Q/RDz6), is far from this simple curving line. On the south side it is marked by a series of drains or deep ditches projecting northwards into the basin thus producing a markedly stepped northern edge (Fig. 6). These ditches form the boundaries of a group of rectangular paddocks that clearly have encroached into the basin. At two places trackways, one now abandoned, pass between the paddocks and link what remains of the basin with the village to the south. The westernmost track is a continuation of the main village street and leads directly north to Manor Farm which stands within one of the paddocks. After reaching the farm buildings this track turns sharply west and then north. Although nineteenth-century

changes have obscured the earlier picture, in 1799 the northern part of this track opened out into a funnel shape as it reached the basin. The eastern track ran east from its junction with the western one near the end of the village street and along the southern side of the paddock in which Manor Farm lies. It then curved north and as another funnel-shaped ditched track passed between the Manor Farm paddock and one to the east, now and in 1799 occupied by the buildings of College Farm.

This pattern of small rectangular ditched paddocks separated by droveways has all of the characteristics of marshland reclamation, although here on a very small scale compared with elsewhere (Silvester 1988, *passim* and plate II). The location of these paddocks close to the northern end of the village and seemingly part of its overall plan, suggests that the reclamation may have been undertaken by its inhabitants. There is no documentary evidence for the date or of the instigators of this reclamation. All there is is the evidence on the ground and on the Enclosure Map. This

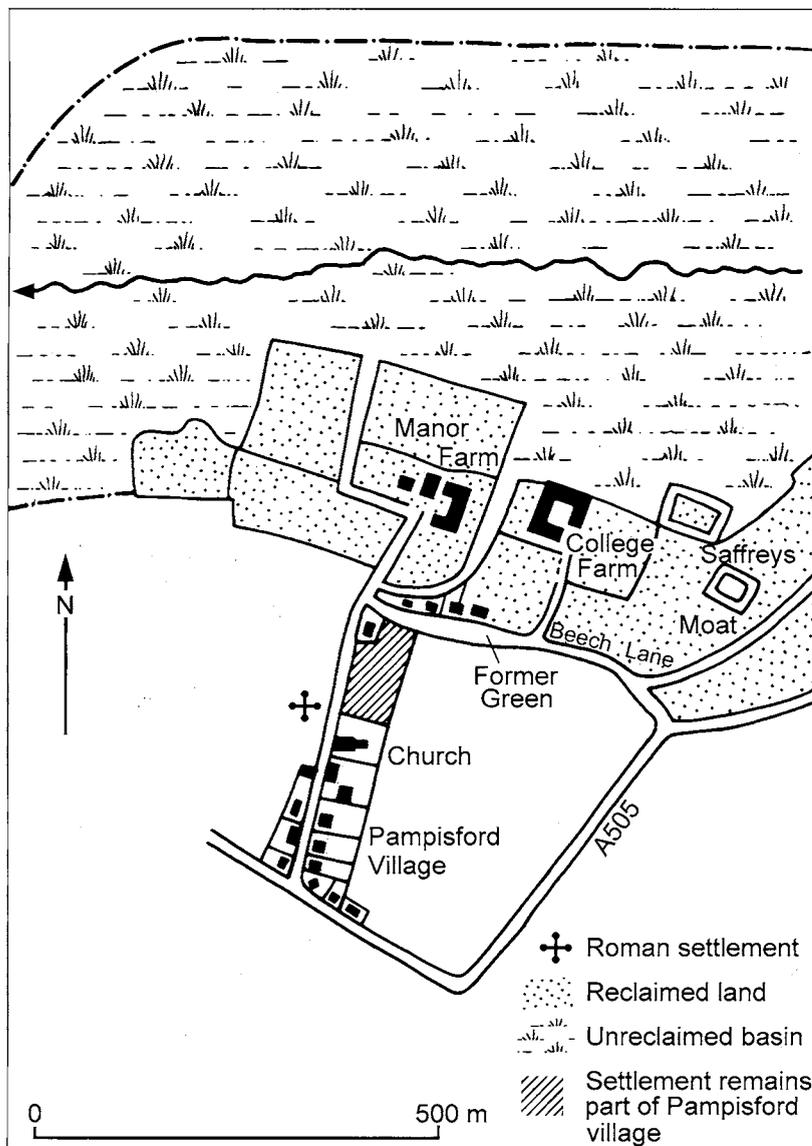


Figure 6. Pampisford: detail of reclamation around Manor Farm and College Farm, based on the 1799 Enclosure Map.

seems to indicate that the reclamation of this part of the basin at Pampisford may have begun at an early date and be connected in part with the origins of the village.

Here a comparison with other villages in the area may be useful. The layout of Pampisford is both very similar and yet slightly different from most of the surrounding villages (Fig. 7). These include Ickleton, Duxford, Whittlesford, Sawston, Great and Little Shelford, Great and Little Abington and Hildersham, all in Cambridgeshire, and Littlebury and Great and Little Chesterford in Essex. All have or had their main streets aligned roughly south-west to north-east. These streets lead to crossing places or fords on branches of the River Cam in one direction and extend as axial parish roads, or longer distance routes, in the other (Taylor 1979, 106–8; Taylor 2006).

Pampisford is similarly orientated but there is a difference. The village lies well away from the River Cam and thus has no connection with any ford across it. The 'ford' element in its name is an instance of the relatively common occurrence of the change in the name *worth*, meaning 'enclosure', to *ford*. Indeed the original enclosure belonging to *Pampe* at Pampisford is likely to have been the central marshy basin which

perhaps was used primarily for grazing stock, as has been suggested elsewhere, for example in Surrey (Reaney 1943, 92–3, 111, 305; Costen 1992; Taylor 2002; English 2002; Faith 2006, 14). And of course it is to this basin or enclosure that the northern end of the village street and the funnel-shaped trackways lead.

Another similarity between Pampisford and its neighbours is their probable origin. All of the examples given above, and others, are or were regular two-row settlements suggesting that they were planned at a relatively late date. Indeed, both Hinxton and the southern part of Duxford, St Peter's Street, were laid out over parts of earlier Saxon settlements (Taylor 2002, 55–6; Roberts 2003, 217–18; personal observation CT). Pampisford was originally a single-row settlement with the church and twelve house plots confined to one side of its main street. This arrangement is even better evidence for its planned origin and the theory is supported by Domesday Book that records twelve villeins on the principal manor in 1086 (Rumble 1981, 5.18; Taylor 2002, 57–8).

The position of the principal manor house at Pampisford and at many of its neighbours is also significant. At Whittlesford, Harston, Little Shelford and Little Chesterford the manor houses all stood close to

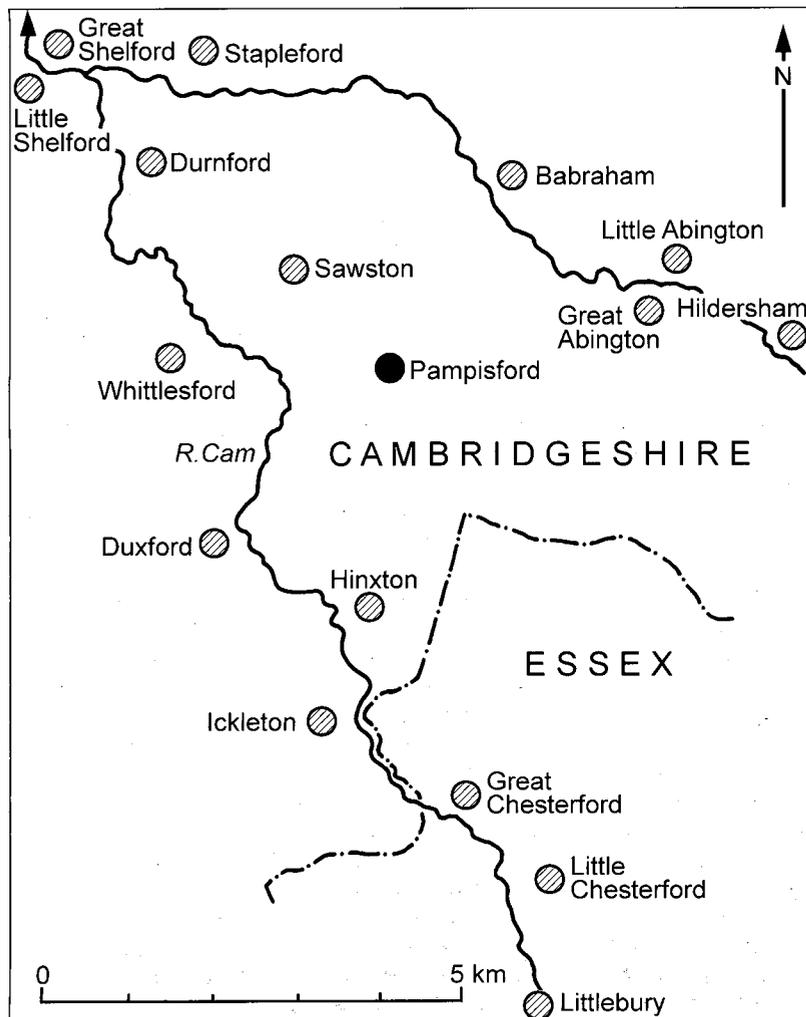


Figure 7. Pampisford: location of neighbouring villages mentioned in the text.

the river and meadowland with the village extending along the main street away from them. At Duxford too the moated sites of two of the main manors are in similar positions at the river ends of St John's and St Peter's Streets. At Pampisford, Manor Farm, traditionally the site of the principal manor house, is also situated at the end of the village, albeit on former pasture or meadowland of the basin (Fig. 6). This holding can be traced directly to 1086, when it was in the hands of the abbot of Ely, precisely the time when the village seems to have come into existence (VCH 1978, 106-7; Rumble 1981, 5.18; Taylor 2002, 58). However, if the interpretation of the former extent of the basin is correct, then this manor house lay within one of the rectangular ditched paddocks reclaimed from the basin.

Further, the rectangular nature of these paddocks, the relationship of their outer boundaries to those of the village and the position of the farmstead at the end of the track, itself an almost straight continuation of the village street to the south, might be interpreted as the result of a more extensive piece of planning than merely a new village. That is, the reclamation of the paddock, the construction of the manor house and the laying out of the village and its church could be a single development. But, if this was so, then one other possibility follows. The inclusion of the manor house and paddocks with the planning of the late eleventh-century village might suggest that the instigator of the whole scheme actually was the abbey of Ely. Whether this is so is impossible to prove, but the idea might add something to the ongoing discussion on the origins of the English nucleated village.

There is another piece of evidence in the landscape that could be used either to support or to reject this last hypothesis. Towards the western end of Beech Lane where it meets the northern end of the village street are two timber-framed and thatched cottages, both probably sixteenth or seventeenth-century in date. They stand just inside the former basin between Beech Lane and the western end of the eastern trackway that formerly ran north-east as a funnel-shaped way. At this point, the Enclosure Map of 1799 shows Beech Lane widening out to form a long, narrow 'green'. The map also shows four buildings, perhaps all dwellings, on its north side and thus on reclaimed land (Fig. 6). There is no indication of any buildings on the south side, but the former edge of the green here is still partly visible as a curving scarp, some ten metres south of the present road and outside the bounds of the original basin. In the earlier paper the author ignored this group of buildings and its green, being more interested in the fact that the thirteen almost equal-sized plots that once made up the eastern side of the village, one of which contained the parish church, may have had some relation to the twelve villi and the priest recorded in Domesday Book (Rumble 1981, 5.18, 41.6). This fact seemed to confirm the late eleventh-century date for the village. The existence of five bordars and three serfs was largely forgotten and the possible location of their homes relegated to a position south-west of the main village

on the road to Sawston. However, Dr Ros Faith has suggested (*pers com*) that the predecessors of the cottages on the 'green' on Beech Lane could actually have been the site of the homes of the bordars and/or serfs, the latter in particular being dependant on the nearby manorial farm for their livelihoods. Thus this minor settlement might also have been part of the late eleventh-century planning, set between the village and the manor house and partly on reclaimed land.

On the other hand, it is possible to see this 'green' settlement perhaps as being the remnants of something even older, probably a survival of the late Saxon dispersed settlement pattern that once lay around the basin, most of which was removed and the inhabitants relocated in the new village. Such a suggestion does not, of course, preclude Dr Faith's idea of its subsequent use in the late eleventh century. It merely indicates the depth of complexity in the history of settlement here with the possibility that reclamation occurred before the late eleventh century. The discovery of Roman pottery (CT *pers obs*), a little to the south-west (Fig. 6), adds to this complexity.

The rectangular paddocks of Manor Farm are not, of course, the only ditched reclaimed ones there. To the west of the farm, on the other side of the western funnel trackway leading into the basin, are traces of two more and, on the Enclosure Map, three are depicted, all bounded by ditches. The relationship between these three paddocks, the trackway and the Manor Farm paddock suggests that they are later in date than the trackway and the farm paddock. Therefore this area could be interpreted as belonging to a post-late-eleventh century period of reclamation and, because of its location close to the site of the Manor Farm, perhaps the result of an expansion of the demesne land there.

To the east of the Manor Farm paddock and also separated from it by the eastern funnel-way is another group of paddocks or small fields with deep ditches on their northern sides. The two rectangular western paddocks lie side by side and were only divided by a hedge in 1799. The northernmost of these is separated from Beech Lane by an area of well-marked hummocky ground that is, presumably, an area of partly reclaimed marshland. The northern paddock is now occupied by another farmstead, College Farm (Fig. 6). It is the history of this farm and its land that holds the clue to the complex reclamation of the south-eastern end of the basin.

The farmhouse and its buildings are all modern. The house was erected in 1927 after a fire and neither the date nor the architecture of its predecessor are certain. However, to judge from photographs taken immediately after the fire, it was a large timber-framed building, perhaps seventeenth-century or earlier. If so it is likely to have been the house recorded in the 1664 Hearth Tax Returns with seven hearths, the largest in Pampisford, and occupied by a lessee of Queens' College, Cambridge. It was perhaps also the 'tenement' in Pampisford recorded in 1530 and 1571 as belonging to the College. Queens' certainly held a farm here from at least the early sixteenth century

to the nineteenth, hence its name (VCH 1978, 106-8; Evans and Rose 2000, 187).

The pre-sixteenth-century history of Queens' College land is not so well documented. Much of it was originally known as *Saffreys*, a name it took from the Saffrey family who had held it from before 1235 until about 1400. The 1571 record of the 'tenement' locates it next to Saffrey Grove, then surrounded by a hedge and a ditch. As the VCH (1978, 107) pointed out, this suggests that Saffrey Grove was a former moated site. And only 100 m east of College Farm is a small rectangular moat, with a wooded interior, as it was in 1799 (Fig. 6). The area in which it lies is still known as The Grove and the name Saffrey Grove is recorded in the Enclosure Award. It is thus very likely that this moated site was the centre of the Saffrey estate in later medieval times and the predecessor of the present College Farm. It is situated within an area of hummocky ground which is crossed by deep ditches, presumably the result of long-term attempts at improving the drainage during earlier reclamation. Only 40 m to the north-west is another moat, rectangular in plan and with much less well defined ditches. It lies on the edge of the hummocky ground that surrounds the first moat and actually projects into the lower, central, part of the former basin. Its ditch was fed by a drain that in 1799 still marked the outer edge of the reclaimed land. The slightness of its ditches suggests that it was not a separate inhabited site but merely an adjunct to the main moat, perhaps a garden, barnyard or paddock.

The identification of the main moated site with the Saffrey estate places that estate back in the earlier medieval period, not least because most moated sites of this type seem to date from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries (Aberg 1978, *passim*; Le Patourel 1981, 7-9). More conclusive is the admittedly unsatisfactory documentary record. The Saffrey family who held the land by 1235 were probably non-resident for they also held small estates in Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire (*Cal IPM* 1916, no 282, 283). However in 1279 Robert Saffrey's land in Pampisford, comprising 60 acres or perhaps half a hide, was held of John de Camoys, lord of Hinxton. The 1235 holding of an earlier Robert Saffrey was also half a hide in extent. The link with Hinxton is significant for, in 1086, there was a three-quarter hide estate in Pampisford held by Picot the Sheriff who also held the largest manor in Hinxton which later descended directly to John de Camoys (Rumble 1981, 32.3, 4; VCH 1978, 107).

It therefore seems likely that there is a direct connection between the Saffrey half-hide and the Picot three-quarter hide holdings. The missing quarter of a hide of 1086 is explained below. Thus, while the Saffrey estate, later College Farm, might have been interpreted as originating from the reclamation of marshland in the thirteenth century, a time of agricultural prosperity, the reality is perhaps different. It seems to have been in existence by the late eleventh century with some of its associated land already having been taken from the marsh.

The most complex area of reclamation in the large

Pampisford basin is at its curved eastern end (Fig. 8). The first problem is to identify accurately the original edge of the basin here. The evidence from the Enclosure Map suggests that, by 1799, the division between the basin proper and the drier land to its south-east, east and north-east were two major drains that curved north-east and south-west and then joined the principal central west-flowing water-course of the basin. But much of the land south-east of these drains, around and to the north-east of the southernmost moated site, is extremely uneven as a result of the existence of the ground-ice hollows, with large depressions up to 1.5 m deep. These features are cut through by deep drainage channels that must be the result of attempts to improve the land here either for meadow or pasture after it had been reclaimed from the basin. Further south-east, between the south-eastern edge of this former marshy area and the modern road, the land is now arable. The division between the marsh and the arable is an irregular scarp. This scarp must also have marked the edge of the basin at some time, the more so since in 1799 it was also the edge of a trackway running south-west from the site of the second medieval village in Pampisford, now known as Brent Ditch End, to the bend in Beech Lane. Because, as was discussed earlier, the original basin extended up to edge of Beech Lane further west, because the trackway can be seen as a continuation of Beech Lane and most importantly because at its north-east end it became the main street of the now largely deserted village of Brent Ditch End, it seems at first sight likely that the trackway or its scarp was the edge of the original basin. However, if this is so, then it is difficult to explain the former broad south-eastwards curve of the, now re-aligned, main road (A505) and its continuation north as the road to Babraham. This road must always have been a through route. As the modern A505 it runs from Royston to the crossing of the River Cam at Whittlesford Bridge. Its route then by-passed Pampisford and ran north through Babraham to join the present A11 at Worstead Lodge. The straight section of the A505 that runs north-east along the edge of the park of Pampisford Hall was created only in 1799 and, although perhaps the replacement or re-alignment of an older road, could never have been as important as the route through Babraham. The only explanation for the curious curve of this road at Pampisford in what must have been, by medieval times, an important route, is that it was avoiding the marshy land of the basin. Thus its alignment must be on, or very close to, the original south-eastern and eastern edge of that basin. This theory is made the more convincing by the fact that the northern end of the curve in the Babraham Road begins to turn north-west. The continuation of this bend would bring it close to the presumed northern edge of the basin as defined on the basis of other evidence (see above).

This complicated argument ending in the apparent establishment of the south-eastern edge of the Pampisford basin as being originally along or near to the curve in the A505 is convincing, except for one

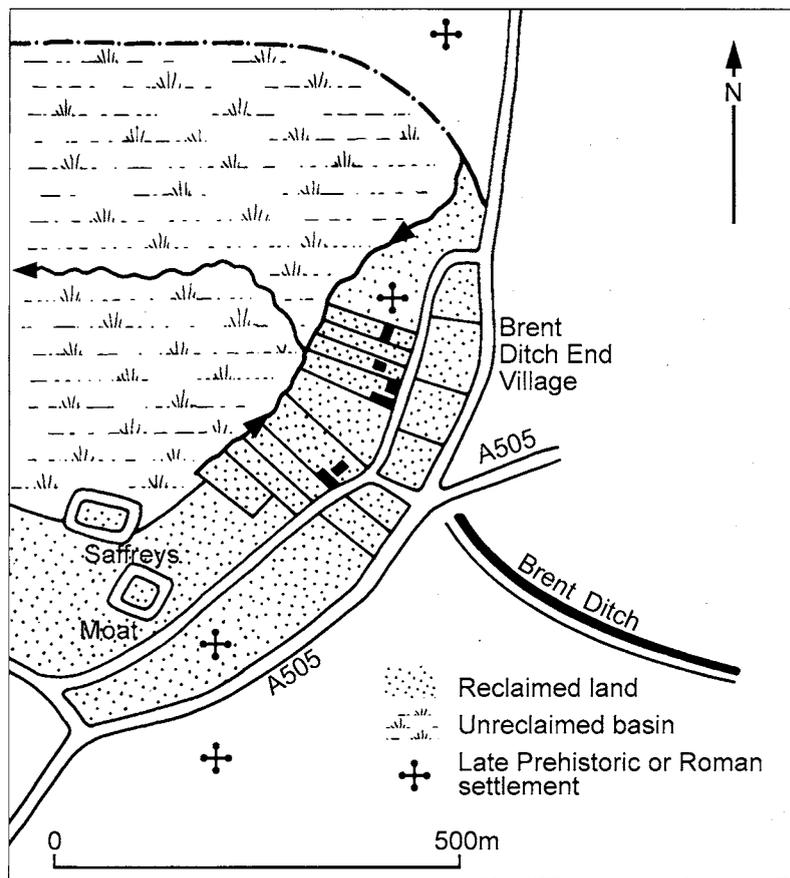


Figure 8. Pampisford: detail of reclamation at Brent Ditch End, based on the 1799 Enclosure Map.

feature. The placing of the edge of the basin on this alignment means that the now deserted village of Brent Ditch End and the former trackway running south-west to Beech Lane both lie on former marshland that has been reclaimed at some time (Fig. 8). This seems to be another extraordinary situation.

The details of the layout and the history of the Brent Ditch End village were summarised in the earlier paper (Taylor 2002, 59). It was there explained that the now abandoned lane that ran roughly parallel to and west of the northern part of the curving through route (A505) and that was still part of a road to the main Pampisford village until 1799 was once the main street of the Brent Ditch End village. The site of this village is depicted on the Enclosure Map with eight, perhaps originally nine, long narrow plots on the western side of the street, extending to the then edge of the basin and with four with buildings within them. This led to the suggestion that Brent Ditch End had originally been a regular single-row settlement. Thus, perhaps like its neighbour, Pampisford, it was planned. This in turn might mean that it was relatively late in date.

The relationship of this village to the post-Roman defence work of Brent Ditch itself was also noted in the earlier paper. There it was assumed that the edge of the basin was formerly further west than suggested here and that, to fulfil its defensive function the

Ditch once must have extended to the then edge of the basin. Thus the village could only have been laid out *after* the north-western 200 metres of the ditch had been removed. And, although the date of the Ditch is not known, by analogy with the neighbouring Fleam Dyke, it may have been abandoned by AD 700. If so, then its north-western termination could have been removed at any time after this, perhaps to allow the main road to cross its line and for the village to be established. However, if the proposal here, that the basin edge was close to the line of the later main road, unless the reclamation was earlier than the construction of the Ditch, then the Brent Ditch would have terminated just alongside it and not further north-west. Therefore the establishment of the village could have taken place at any time after the reclamation of the land on which it stood. The documented history of this village is, as usual, poor. Even its name is unrecorded until 1821 (Reaney 1943, 112). It is probable, however, that the settlement is listed in Domesday Book in 1086 as the second estate in Pampisford of one hide and 22 acres held by Count Alan with a recorded population of only seven (Rumble 1981, 14, 17). This holding can be traced through its successive lords until 1319 when it was united with the main manor.

The evidence for a possibly planned, single-row settlement at Brent Ditch End, perhaps established in

later Saxon times on newly reclaimed land, is circumstantial but compelling. However, there are two other pieces of evidence that turn this theory on its head. These are, first, the discovery in the garden of the existing cottage at the northern end of the Brent Ditch End settlement of considerable quantities of Roman pottery (Fig. 8). This included Nene Valley type wares and very large pieces of jars of Horningsea wares. More pottery, as well as roof tiles, were found there subsequently. There can be little doubt that all this material came from a substantial Roman settlement. Second, are the crop-marks of two small rectangular enclosures of late prehistoric or Roman type immediately south and east of the Saffrey moated site (CUULM BE 56; Fig. 8). If the thesis put forward earlier is correct, both this Roman settlement and the crop-marks lie on reclaimed land. A number of matters thus follow from this. The first is that at least some, and perhaps much, of the reclamation identified around the eastern end of this basin could be Roman or even earlier in date and not Saxon or medieval. Another is that, if the reclaimed land already existed in Saxon times then the Brent Ditch is likely to have continued across it to reach the then edge of the basin. Otherwise the defensive purpose of the Ditch would have been compromised. This in turn means that the Ditch must have been flattened to allow the laying out of the Brent Ditch settlement, a situation that once more suggests the possibility that it is of later Saxon date. In any case the destruction of part of one of the Cambridgeshire dykes to allow the creation of a planned settlement would not be unique. Reach, at the north-western end of the Devil's Dyke is another example (Taylor 1995).

This theory presupposes that the Brent Ditch End settlement was laid out on a then empty site, which had been abandoned as a habitation at the end of the Roman period. But it is also possible that occupation was continuous from Roman times and that, prior to the later Saxon planned village, there had been an early to mid Saxon settlement on one or both sides of the Brent Ditch. This settlement would have been part of the dispersed pattern that lay around the basin. The subsequent planned village could have been part of a later reorganisation of occupation there, a process that has been recognised in Northamptonshire (Brown and Foard 1998, esp. 73–82). The small settlement around the 'green' between Pampisford village and Manor Farm, partly on reclaimed land as well (Fig. 6), may also be the site of a Saxon settlement, in that case having survived and changed its social make-up by the late eleventh century. The moated site near College Farm, if indeed it represents the later modification of the documented eleventh-century holding, again may have originated as part of a Saxon or earlier dispersed pattern of settlement but, yet once more, within the area of the former basin. Although much of this is supposition, at least the suggestions made will be able to be tested eventually by excavation or fieldwork. Indeed the latter has already produced results in that a watching brief on building work within the western extension of the Pampisford

basin in Sawston parish has led to the discovery of Saxon occupation there (Cambridgeshire SMR). In the meantime, this hypothesis of dispersed Saxon settlement around the basin can be taken further.

The commonest forms of entry in Domesday Book, at least in eastern and central England, are places with multiple names. That is, there are often a number of separate holdings all with the same place-name. Ever since Maitland (1897) studied Domesday Book in the late nineteenth century, such multiple entries have been interpreted as describing nucleated villages with multi-manorial structures. But this interpretation was based on the assumption that all nucleated villages were early Saxon in origin. However, with the evidence from recent research, that nucleation of villages is certainly much later, it is possible that there another explanation. Separate entries with the same settlement name could be describing separate places. Thus the term normally used 'in x' and not 'at x' might mean that Domesday Book is recording distinct settlements within the *vill* or township (in Cambridgeshire, usually the parish) of that name, not just in a particular settlement that happens still to exist. Subsequently many or most of these different places could have been abandoned, reorganised, replaced or have gained a different name.

This is not a new idea and these processes can be seen to have taken place in many parts of England. At nearby Sawston the isolated hamlet of Durnford in the north-west of the parish is certainly the centre of the two-hide manor held by the Abbot of Grestain of the Count of Mortain in 1086, but there recorded as 'in Sawston' (Rumble 1981, 12.1; Teversham 1942, 21–2, 44–7). Further afield, in Bedfordshire, Domesday Book has six entries described as 'in Thurleigh' or 'in the same vill'. It has been established that while the large three-hide holding there does indeed refer to the village, all of the remainder can be identified with hamlets and farmsteads scattered across the parish (Brown & Taylor 1989, 61–9). Pampisford appears to be similar. Seven holdings are recorded in Domesday Book, all described as 'in Pampisford' (Rumble 1981, 5.18–19, 14.17, 25.2, 26.12, 26.55, 32.3, 41.6). It has been pointed out already that the largest of these holdings (5.18) was the main village held by Ely, and another was the Brent Ditch settlement (14.17), both probably new at that time. It has also been suggested that part of a further holding (32.3) may have become the Saffrey estate that was later called College Farm. This leaves four other small estates unaccounted for. Two, of only ten and thirty acres, were held by Hardwin de Scales, one of five acres was held by Eudo the Steward and one of fifteen acres was held by Countess Judith. There is also the matter of the quarter hide of land that belonged to Picot. All of these could have been isolated farmsteads, which either disappeared shortly after 1086, were subsumed by other settlements in the parish or acquired new names that can still be traced.

It seems that two of these holdings can indeed be identified as separate settlements. One is the fifteen acres held by Countess Judith (Rumble 1981,

41.6). In 1066 it was in the hands of a sokeman, but by 1086 it was held by a priest. He was perhaps the first member of the clergy that Pampisford had for the parish church seems to have been erected as part of the planned village there (Taylor 2002, 58). This fifteen acres, or half virgate, had become the rectorial holding of 32 acres by 1279. In 1377 the parish church was appropriated by the Benedictine nunnery of Blackborough in Norfolk which retained the rectory and appointed a vicar. The rectory farm was held and leased separately from the church ever afterwards and it survives today as a working agricultural unit. The present Rectory Farm lies a little to the west of the southern end of the main village street and, until eighteenth-century and later expansion, except for two cottages opposite, stood almost alone on the road to Sawston (Fig. 9). The surviving farmhouse, although much altered, is at least sixteenth-century in date, as was one of the associated cottages that survived until 1968 (VCH 1978, 106, 110). While this farm is distant from the large marshy basin under discussion in this paper, it actually stands on the former edge of the other much smaller area of ill-drained land that covers some 50 acres (20 ha) to its south-west. It seems possible that Rectory Farm is the site of the centre of Countess Judith's 1086 holding and thus is a remnant of the Saxon pattern of dispersed settlement at Pampisford. Whether the large Roman building, sometimes described as a villa, together with a cremation cemetery, that has been found a little to the south of the farm is related to it is unknown. Certainly this villa and its associated paddocks and trackways also lies on the very edge of this small basin (JRS 1956, 138; CBA 1955, 2; CUULM BVA 61).

The identification of an early settlement related to the smaller basin at Pampisford leads directly to the discovery of another there. It was noted earlier that of the three-quarters of a hide held by Picot in Pampisford in 1086 (Rumble 32.3), half a hide probably became the small estate that was held by the Saffrey family from 1235 until after 1400 and that subsequently became Queens' College Farm. It is possible that the unaccounted for quarter of a hide was also a separate estate with its own associated settlement. For, when in 1279 Robert Saffrey held sixty acres of land in Pampisford of John de Camoys, lord of Hinnton and the successor to Picot, a John Martin held thirty acres there, also of de Camoys. Martin was still holding this land in 1302–3, as was a relative of his in 1346 (VCH 1978, 107). This land can certainly be traced to 1428 and seems to be that later known as Cockfarnams or Cock Farm which was also in the hands of Queens' College by 1524.

The location of Cockfarnams is known. It lay on the northern edge of the smaller basin at Pampisford, along the road to Sawston, 150 m west of Rectory Farm (Fig. 9). The farmhouse still stood there in 1799, was called Cockfarnams and was still owned by Queens' College (CRO Q/RDz6 Enclosure Map plot 24 and Award). It was demolished at some time in the nineteenth century but its site is still marked by earthworks. A probable sixteenth-century cottage,

that presumably housed the employees of the farm, stood on the opposite side of the road, was burnt down in 1916 and never replaced (Mayo 2008). The value of these earthworks for future excavation that could support or disprove the thesis here proposed cannot be over-emphasised. The results of such an excavation would be of interest at a parochial level but, far more importantly, would help to prove or otherwise the existence of early dispersed settlement around all the Cambridgeshire basins.

One other possible link with the Saxon period has been noted. In 1086 Countess Judith's estate was held by a sokeman. And of the four other small estates, one was held by two sokemen in 1066 (Rumble 1981, 26.12), while two others were held by men who were free enough to withdraw from their land if they wished (25.2 26.55). The possible correlation between sokemen and other 'freemen' and dispersed farmsteads or small hamlets, has been noted before at neighbouring Hinnton. There it seemed to be part of the social structure of the parish *before* the dispersed settlement pattern was replaced by a nucleated village (Taylor 2002, 56–7; see also Morris 1977, appendix). Whether this correlation is valid and has a real meaning in terms of settlement history must await further research.

Two final points require emphasis. The first relates to the date of the reclamation around both of the Pampisford basins. One of the most striking features to emerge is that some of the medieval and presumed Saxon settlements associated with the larger basin are actually on land reclaimed from it. Manor Farm, at least part of the 'green' settlement north of the village, the two moated sites and the Brent Ditch End village all lie on land that had been enclosed and drained before their establishment. All of these settlements may be late Saxon or even earlier. In addition, the Roman settlement at Brent Ditch End and the cropmark site to the south are also on reclaimed land. The implication of this is that most of this reclamation had taken place by the end of the eleventh century and some of it was very much earlier. This is perhaps unexpected, not least because the reclamation of wastes and marshland, together with moorland intakes and forest clearances, is usually said to date from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a time of agricultural prosperity and expansion and of a rising population.

Nor, apart from the nineteenth-century drainage works, could post-medieval farming activity have been involved in the reclamation process. The total area of the original larger Pampisford basin can be calculated as about 250 acres (105 ha). The area that was later enclosed and improved by drainage is about 100 acres (41 ha). Thus, what remained of the basin before the nineteenth-century changes extended to some 150 acres (62 ha). In addition there was also an estimated 50 acres (20 ha) of undrained land in the small basin south-west of the village. But, in the sixteenth century, as well as 20 acres of riverside meadows intercommoned with Whittlesford, Pampisford parish was said to contain a 'moor' or common of

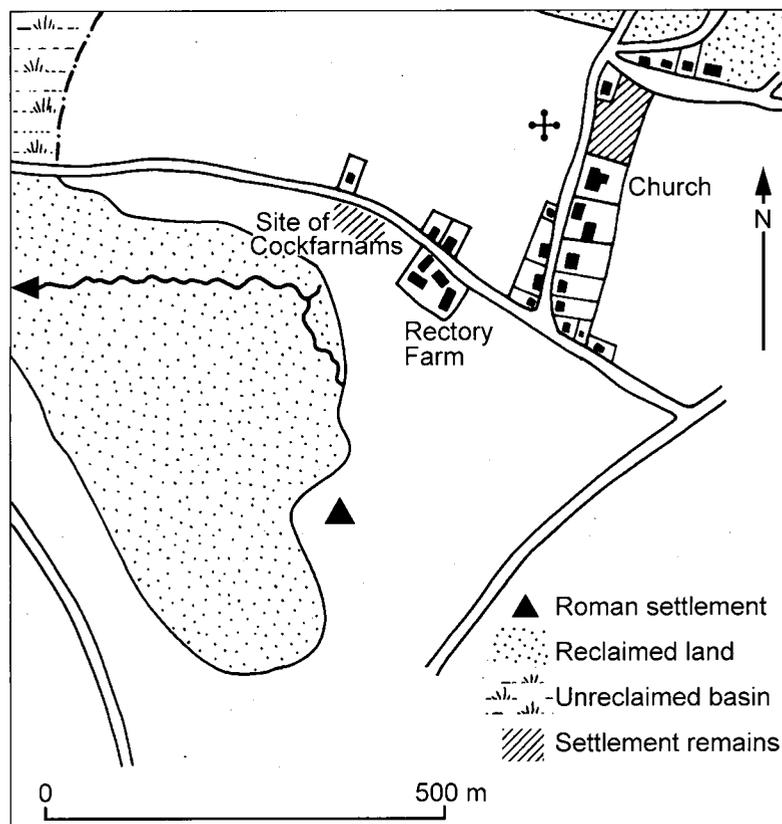


Figure 9. Pampisford: detail of reclamation at Rectory Farm and College Farm and Cockfarnams, based on the 1799 Enclosure Map.

about 150 acres (62 ha) on which cows and horses were pastured in summer and sheep in winter. In the later eighteenth century 155 acres (64 ha) of pasture were recorded in Pampisford, of which 51 acres (21 ha) were intercommoned with Sawston (VCH 1978, 109; Vancouver 1794, 66–7). All this seems to suggest that, except perhaps for the paddocks to the west of Manor Farm, almost all of the reclamation of the larger basin at Pampisford had taken place by the twelfth century. These figures for the acreages of meadow and pasture in the larger basin, as well as for the parish as a whole, also indicate that the smaller basin had certainly been reclaimed entirely before the late eighteenth century and presumably by the sixteenth century. The existence of the two medieval farmsteads of Rectory and Cockfarnams on its north side might suggest that its reclamation had taken place even earlier and, as with the larger basin, perhaps by the twelfth century. Why was there no reclamation after this? The answer may lie in a combination of a continuing low population in Pampisford, and the usually non-resident lordships with relatively small estates. Both may have limited the usual pressures to exploit land in later medieval times (VCH 1978, 105–7).

The undrained land within the larger basin is usually described as pasture, a situation that confirms the hypothesis that such areas or ‘enclosures’ were indeed always used for grazing (English 2002), although it was probably also used as meadow.

Surprisingly perhaps, very little meadow is actually documented at any date for Pampisford. Only two and a half acres are recorded in 1086 but such a small area is not unusual for south-east Cambridgeshire. The problem with the Domesday Book entries for meadow in the county was discussed by Darby (1957, 300–2) who concluded that no significance could be attached to the figures. Even the 20 acres of riverside meadow intercommoned with Whittlesford in the late eighteenth century seems small (Vancouver 1794, 67). Nevertheless the evidence such as it is suggests that after the early reclamation, perhaps beginning in Roman times, there was never such a shortage of either arable or meadow as to have required major changes to the land use in the basin at Pampisford until the nineteenth century. On the other hand there may have been a good agricultural reason for the early work of reclamation of as much of both of the basins as was possible. In 1794 Vancouver (67) advocated the completion of the drainage and the improvement of the pasture of the main basin because ‘at present it is extremely obnoxious to rot in cows which frequently happens’.

Conclusion

At the end of this investigation into the minutiae of the landscape, what conclusions may be drawn? At Somersham the recognition of yet one more apparently planned late Saxon village in the county is of some interest if only at a local level. Pampisford is more important for a number of reasons. The closer examination of the two basins, with settlement around them from at least late prehistoric times, has confirmed that they were areas of, perhaps communal, grazing some of which survived until the nineteenth century. Although different in character from the 'greens' of Norfolk and Suffolk, as well as from those recognised in Lincolnshire, the Pampisford basins, and probably the others in south Cambridgeshire, seem to have fulfilled the same function (Wade-Martins 1980; Taylor 2002; Stocker and Everson 2006, 65–6). These Cambridgeshire basins are thus not as unique as was originally thought, but merely illustrate the use of a local natural phenomenon for a basic necessity of medieval and earlier agriculture.

The two planned villages at Pampisford had already been recognised, both significantly close to the 'frontier' of medieval nucleated settlements in eastern England. What is new is, first, the associated planned manorial site there that appears to be part of the original village layout. Such arrangements have been found elsewhere, for example in Lincolnshire, but not on reclaimed land (Everson *et al* 1991, 41–2; Stocker and Everson 2006, 61, 64, 67–8). The discovery of this reclaimed land around the edges of the marshy basin is also a new feature, although not perhaps unexpected. This having been found, similar reclamation can be suggested elsewhere. For example, some of the ten small demesne closes immediately south of Sawston Hall, recorded by name in 1580 and probably the 'lord's closes' of 1349 and 1413, lie on land that seems to have been taken in from the former marsh, the remains of which still lie immediately to the south (Teversham 1942, 21; 1947, 45, 47; VCH 1978, 254).

However, what is perhaps unexpected is the early date for this reclamation. Some of it is at least Roman or even earlier, much of it is before the twelfth century and some is connected with the postulated late eleventh-century laying out of a manor house and village. Most remarkable of all is the siting of a planned village, Brent Ditch End, on this reclaimed land. There is no lack of evidence elsewhere in Britain for extensive drainage, reclamation and subsequent settlement in Roman times (eg Rippon 2006; Silvester 1988, 154 and *passim*). But this is the first time that small areas such as these, with medieval settlement on them, have been identified in southern Cambridgeshire. Yet such a phenomenon is not unique in our county. Two other examples have been noted recently, albeit in the fens. Excavations at Ramsey have identified twelfth or thirteenth-century reclamation on the fen edge there. This was built on soon afterwards (Nicholson 2006). Work at the medieval inland port of Downham Hythe at Little Downham, first recorded in 1251, has shown that at least part of the settlement there was

established on reclaimed land (Taylor forthcoming). What it means in terms of the early history of agriculture and settlement in the county is as yet not fully known. Perhaps the most interesting of all, especially for an historian who has always been fascinated by the origin and development of settlement, is the age and complexity of such settlements revealed in a parish that, superficially, only contained one small medieval nucleated village. One is reminded of the perceptive remark made by W G Hoskins (1977, 12–13) 'Everything in the landscape is older than we think'. One might also add, and much more complicated too.

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