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SETTLEMENT-EARTHWORKS
AT QUEMERFORD, WILTS

SURVEY REPORT

Settlement earthworks at Quemerford, Calne, Wiltshire

County: Wiltshire

District: North Wiltshire

Parish: Calne Without

NGR: SU 01006995

NMR No: SU 06 NW 66

Surveyed by: N Smith & D Field

Report by: D Field

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2000

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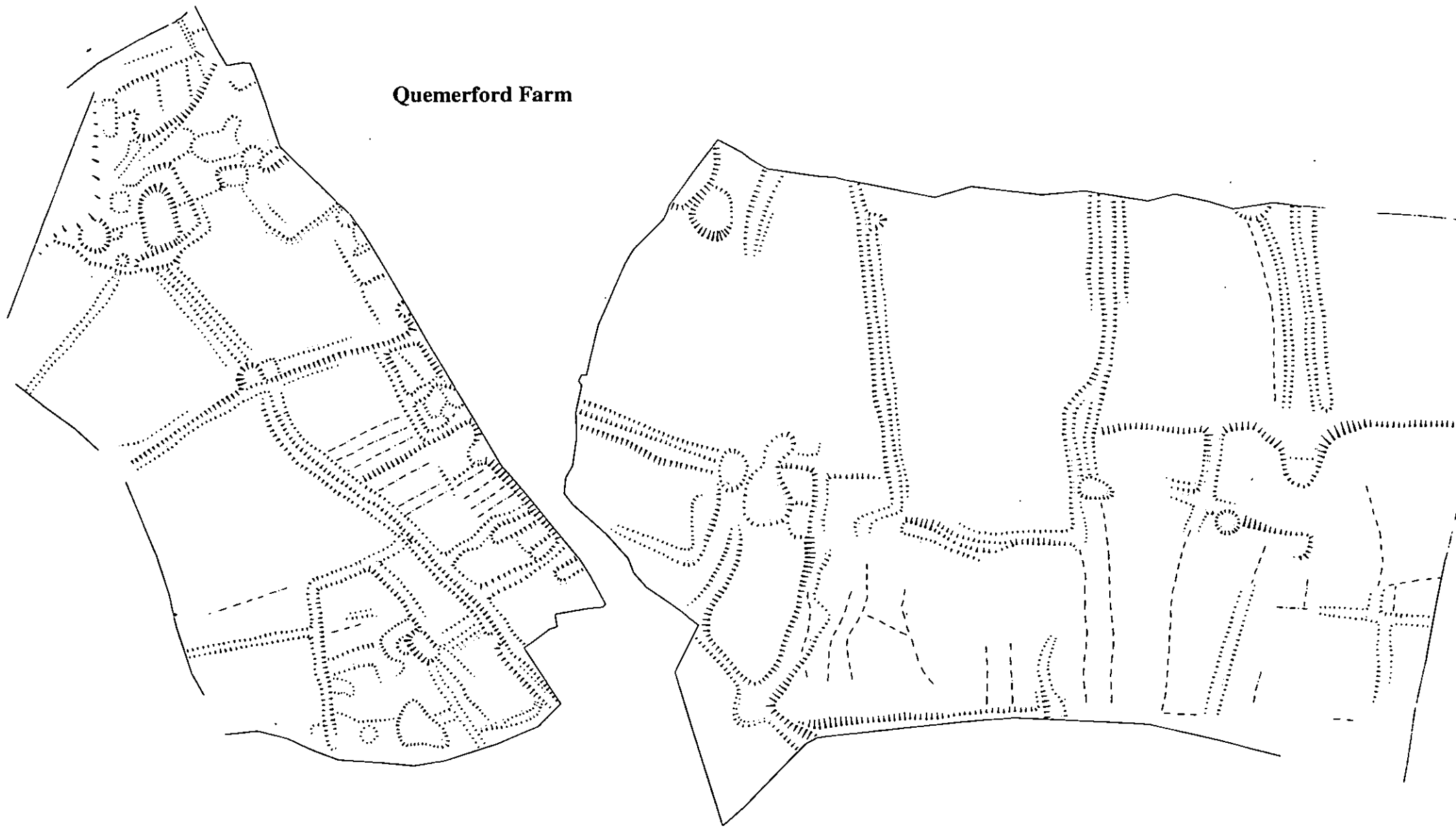
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frontispiece Plan of earthworks at Quemerford Farm

1 Location plan

Quemerford Farm



Frontispiece: Plan of earthworks at Quemerford Farm, Wiltshire

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INTRODUCTION

Summary

Survey of earthworks situated within two fields at Quemerford Farm, Calne, revealed traces of former buildings and closes. These may represent post-medieval encroachment and enclosure of part of Quemerford Common, at an important focal point and fording position where clothing industry based on the River Marden is recorded in the late 16th century. However, an earlier origin cannot be ruled out. Cartographic evidence provides support for shifting, essentially short-lived settlement throughout the 18-19th centuries. The former agricultural centre of Quemerford is shown to have been over 1km distant on the slopes of the Chalk/Greensand escarpment close to Cherhill. In common with much of the surrounding low-lying area, the site shows evidence of a sequence of drainage activities, many of which give a corrugated ridge-and-furrow like effect.

Location

Earthworks at Quemerford, Calne, Wiltshire were surveyed by English Heritage in August 2000 at the request of Roy Canham, Wiltshire County Archaeologist, in order to provide additional archaeological data that might inform response to any housing development proposals that occur as part of the expansion of Calne. The earthworks investigated are contained in two fields at Quemerford Farm currently in pasture and owned by Mr A Whinney. A third field containing earthworks situated to the east of the present farmhouse was not inspected. The site lies within the parish of Calne, in the administrative district of North Wiltshire, and is situated at NGR SU 0100 6995. It is recorded in the National Monuments Record as SU 06 NW 66, and the Wiltshire Sites and Monument Record as SU 06 NW 453. Part of the site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, English Heritage No 28997. To the west lies the Borough of Calne, its boundary demarcated by the River Marden, which separates the Borough from the site. The town centre itself is some 1.5 km distant. To the north-east lie the village and lands of Compton Bassett, while the dispersed settlement of Blacklands

lies to the south-east with its church little more than 0.5 km distant, and other nearby villages, Cherhill, Calstone Wellington and Heddington situated at the foot of the chalk escarpment lie to the east, south-east and south respectively. Immediately to the south the A4 London to Bath Road itself is currently the landscape feature of greatest influence.

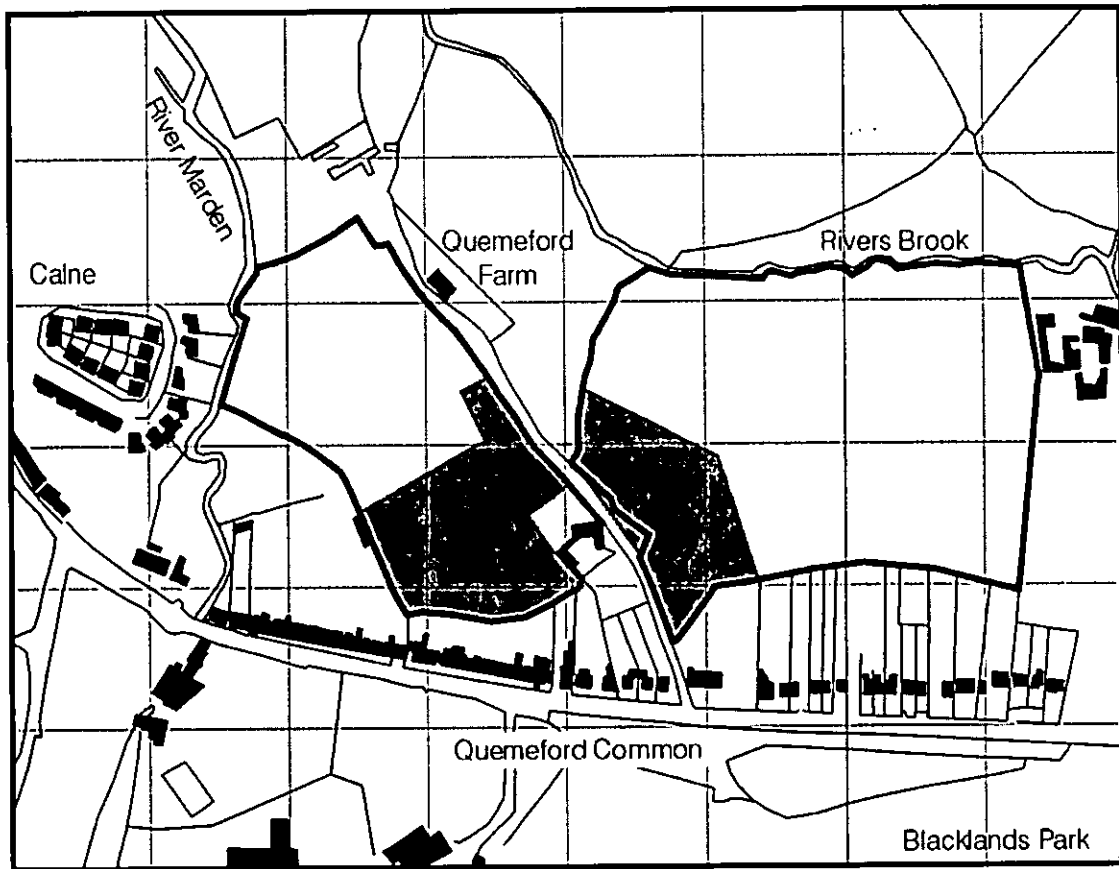


Fig 1 Location plan of the eastern part of Calne, Wiltshire, showing development alongside the A4 in the area now known as Quemerford. The fields outlined are those containing surveyed earthworks, while the shaded areas are those that are Scheduled.

Geography, Geology, and Topography

The site lies at the confluence of the River Marden with the Rivers Brook, and occupies the saddle between two small but locally prominent hills, part of a weather resistant ridge of Coral Rag that stretches alongside the River Marden. The highest of these small hills is now occupied by Quemerford Farm while the A4 road utilises another. Soils are loams of the Wickham Series situated over heavy clay. To the south-east the ground is much lower and is formed by Kimmeridge Clay, supporting

Denchworth clay soils that are susceptible to seasonal waterlogging, particularly where they slope towards the Rivers Brook.

The streams are two of a number that rise at the foot of the prominent Chalk Downs escarpment some 2.5 km to the east, and which coalesce to form damp areas on the heavy impervious soils. Place-names within the vicinity, Knights Marsh Farm, Dykes Farm, Cherhill Marsh, indicate the extent to which much of the area remained marsh until historic times. Within this environment small knolls and local areas of higher ground less susceptible to flooding might indicate where more permanent subsistence activities could take place.

Historical background

The higher ground to the south of the site, referred to as Quemerford Common, is now occupied by the course of the A4, the London to Bath Road. Ribbon development alongside the road, a relatively recent turnpiking, has obscured the nature of early settlement of Quemerford and, lacking a parish church and obvious focus, its original position is by no means clear. Latterly, at least, it appears to have been a tithing of Calne, although the south-easterly orientation of the track leading from Quemerford Farm hints that the parish church of St Peter at nearby Blacklands formerly had a more important role to play. The unusual place-name of Quemerford was felt by Gover *et al* (1939, 258) to refer to a confluence (cymmer- confluence), although Aubrey thought that the term was a personal one and referred to 'Cynemaer's Ford' (Jackson 1862, 37), which allowed him to link the site with a battle mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, a view which Ekwall (1974, 377) subsequently accepted. The event is now thought to have taken place at Kempsford in Gloucestershire (Garmonsway 1975, 55). Whichever interpretation one adopts it points to the importance of the stream to early occupation, and natural features such as fordable positions or well-drained or prominent vantagepoints might be considered to be foci around which settlement might develop. The preponderance of Celtic place-names in the vicinity (e.g. Smith 1884, 58-60) might indicate that the area retained British influence until relatively late, while other names infer a wooded environment and it

has been suggested that the area lay within the bounds of the Forest of Selwood, and subsequently Brayden, during the early medieval period (Grant 1959, 407).

Quemerford is first mentioned in documents at the very end of the 12th and in the first half of the 13th century, in 1199 and 1204 as Camerford, 1226-8 as Kemerford, and in 1240-5 for the first time as Quemerford (Gover et al 1939, 258; Ekwall 1974, 377). Despite the suggested early association of 'Nigrarve' mentioned in the Domesday Book (Jackson 1862, 31) with nearby Blacklands (there are a number of other Blacklands names around the foot of the chalk scarp), Blacklands itself is not mentioned until 1194 (Ekwall 1974, 47). Its riverside church incorporates architectural features said to be of 13th century date (unpublished parish church leaflet), and it may be that conditions were right for expansion of settlement into the wetlands at that time. Certainly assarting of the forest waste was taking place by the late 13th century (Grant 1959).

The influence of the early road pattern is of importance here. Diversion of the London to Bath road through Calne had clearly become commonplace by 1675 when Ogilby published his road maps (Ogilby n.d.). Quemerford, however, is neither named or depicted on these; the only feature mentioned is 'Gurnarvate Bridge' which lay approximately in the position of the present bridge across the River Marden.

The importance of wool to the Wiltshire economy is apparent here too. Reference to the presence of wealthy clothiers at Quemerford (in 1598 Roger Vince, clothier to Yatesbury; in 1680 Chivers, a clothier had an estate at Quemerford worth £1000 a year) (Jackson 1872, 58; Mann 1959, 149) perhaps indicates industrial activity focused on the use of mills. Certainly Lower and Upper Mills were present at Quemerford in the early 19th century (eg NMR Nos SU 06 NW) and it is likely that both had a firm pedigree.

Archaeological background

Little archaeological investigation has taken place at Quemerford, or at nearby Blacklands for that matter. The cutting edge of a Neolithic ground flint axe and a

barbed and tanged arrowhead was recovered from Blacklands (Anon 1901, 275), but discovery of a skull of *Bos longifrons* within a gravel terrace near Marsh Lane, Cherhill (Smith 1884, 49) in about 1839, emphasises that the nature of shifting silt over millennia could mean that prehistoric deposits lie at some depth within the valleys. A single silver coin of Ethelbert or Egbert's reign (AD 802-839) was found about 1683 while grubbing up an old elm tree at Blacklands (Fowles 1980, 958). The surrounding area features fields of ridge and furrow (SU 06 NW 147, 148 and 150; SU 07 SW 48, 49, and 53), much of which is possibly post-medieval and deliberately contrived in order to assist drainage, rather than part of an open field system.

An earlier archaeological survey of the Quemerford Farm area carried out in 1986 isolated a disturbed area shown by documentary research to represent a former building amongst a series of drains (Youngs *et al* 1987, 168).

THE EARTHWORKS

The earthworks surveyed lie in two fields to the south-east and south-west of Quemerford Farm. Although there are similarities between them they appear to be unconformable and the two fields can be treated as separate entities.

Drainage of the south-west field is influenced by the presence of the River Marden. Local summits in the north-west and south-east drain to the low-lying central part of the field from where water is channelled into the river. This channel has in the past served as a field division with the field to the north being proudly lynchetted up to c0.9m high, and silt from this has in turn partially obscured the drain. The back scarp is likely to represent material accumulated from repeated clearing out of the drain. While this and other scarps respect the natural topography, others are aligned parallel with, or at right angles to the private roadway to Quemerford Farm. These comprise a former boundary running almost the length of the field that mirrors the course of the lane and provides a common link between the north and south elements in the field. On the low lying ground to the south of the lynchet this bank is enhanced and may have acted as a causeway, for there is traffic wear through the lynchet at the point where they meet.

Other features on this alignment comprise a series of scarps alongside the present lane that appear to delimit a series of small units sometimes defined by ditches, elsewhere by shallow raised banks and platforms. Despite the fact that nowhere are these more than 0.2m in height, they almost certainly mark the position of former buildings. At several points wear indicates the position of access points from the lane. The original number of buildings is uncertain since drains and cultivation have obscured detail, but if the wide drains were contemporary and represent close boundaries, at least five may have been present. Given this scenario the linear bank and ditch that leads north-west through the centre of the field would have acted as a back lane.

On the higher ground to the north of the dividing lynchet, the earthworks take on a different character. Here the most prominent feature is a large sub-rectangular depression 25m by 15m, and 0.9m deep. The regularity perceived, particularly within a surrounding three-sided feature oriented on the lane, encourages the view that this

represents the stance of a former building of relatively large proportions. To the east of this, between it and the lane, are a series of raised sub-rectangular areas with attendant hollows that may represent gardens and outbuildings. The large sub-rectangular area to the north *could* represent the site of a further building but it is preferred here to see it as a yard associated with the main building. To the west, situated along the crest of a natural slope down to the River Marden lie a series of smaller depressions, and the rectangular form of two of these hint that they too are building stances. A circular depression some 12m across by 0.6m deep, situated right on the lip of the natural scarp also appears to be associated with this building complex. Circular buildings are not unknown in such contexts and may represent anything from a dovecote to a grain silo. Its position, little more than 10m directly in front of the large depression, however, indicates that the two are linked by proximity if not contemporaneity. A tall structure here would limit the view if the main structure were a house. Both could of course be agricultural or industrial rather than domestic.

Two linear features focus on this area. One, approaching from the south-west and no more than 4m in width and 0.15m deep, has the appearance of a hollowed footpath rather than a drain. Secondly a shallow ditch with low bank either side approaches from the south-east. This is an extension of a similar feature noted above as in the area to the south of the dividing lynchet, and forming the 'back lane' mentioned above. It appears to have been of dual function, forming both field boundary and drain, as well as access way.

At the most northerly point foundations of a curving wall cut off the corner of the field and this may have once formed part of the boundary of the existing farmyard to the north.

A more regular kite-shaped compound formed by wide drainage ditches lies in the south of the field, the east perimeter of which incorporates but underlies the aforementioned backlane. At the centre of this is a hollowed rectangular building stance, 15m by 9m by 0.8m deep, and despite the presence of a number of other amorphous hollows and drainage ditches nearby, its central position would suggest

that the compound formed a single domestic unit. Disturbance towards the southern field boundary has obscured detail.

Most of the earthworks in the south-east field are drainage ditches of one kind or another. Some of them are quite substantial and may have been re-cut on a number of occasions, but there is much variation and others are much more ephemeral. Some change in their nature from proud extant examples to being barely visible over the course of a few metres, presumably as a result of past agricultural regimes and revised drainage systems. Toward the lower part of the field close to the stream, parallel shallow drains (not surveyed) give a corrugated, ridge-and-furrow like appearance. Some of the adjacent spoil-banks may have held hedges; in particular there is discontinuous scarping along the centre of the field at the point where the angle of slope down to the stream changes, and this may represent the position of a former hedgeline.

Amorphous hollows of unknown function occur in several places, leaving a number of angular platform-like pieces of raised ground. They could represent the position of former buildings or yards, or indeed agricultural activities. The smaller examples may even represent wear from around cattle troughs. Disturbed ground interrupting a median fieldbank hints at the presence of a structure. Corrections in the alignment of drains in the higher southern part of the field indicate at least one change in local field layout. The most noticeable is at the southern extremity where a hollow way continues the line of the present lane. Two sinuous ditches, 30m apart, come off this almost at right angles, their former course visible as right angled rebates. There are no further indications but areas defined in this way to the west of the lane are thought to be house building platforms and some caution is required here.

A large disturbed amorphous hollow 20m by 16m by 1m deep close to the Rivers Brook in the north-west of the field may equally be a result of farming operations, but the presence of a bank downstream of it introduces the greater possibility that it may have resulted from activities related to ponding of the adjacent stream.

A third field on the high ground in the angle between the two surveyed contained at least two apparent building platforms but did not form part of the present survey.

DISCUSSION

The main feature on the site as a whole is a drainage network consisting of linear ditches, often five or more metres wide with spoil bank alongside. Many of these once formed small closes or units and perhaps represent encroachment on and enclosure of part of Quemerford Common for pasture. The remnants of a number of buildings are present in the south-west, aligned along the present lane, with a further, evidently earlier, example within its own compound, and a more substantial unit in the north close to the present farmhouse. Most of these earthworks are of relatively sharp profile and give the impression of relatively recent, perhaps post-medieval or modern, activity. Other potential building platforms lie dispersed in the south-west field.

Perhaps the most interesting landscape feature is the knoll on which the present farm stands. Not only is this locally prominent, standing proud above the immediate landscape, but it also lies at the confluence of two streams, a favoured settlement location particularly in prehistory. Here the lane, according to early maps present on this line since at least the middle of the 18th century, leads directly to the knoll, and it is worth bearing in mind one interpretation of the name Quemerford, as meaning the ford at the confluence (Gover *et al* 1939, 258). A well-engraved hollow way descends to the stream from immediately in front of the present farmhouse and may mark the site of such a crossing, as much as a way to a mill or other structure. If that is so, the well-marked ways to the small hill may point to the position of earlier settlement.

A good sequence of maps of the area is available, dating from c1730 onwards (see Appendix), and these provide confirmation of the purpose of some earthworks and in some cases demonstrate the presence of buildings where the earthwork evidence is less clear. John Overton's undated but evidently early 18th century *Map of lands at Quimberford* (Bowood House archives), for example, depicts a simple farmhouse and barn at the upper end of the lane belonging to a Mr Serjeant. By 1763 both farmhouse and outbuildings had become more substantial, for Andrews' and Dury's *Map of Wiltshire* of 1773 (WANHS 1952) depicts a significant holding on the site of the present farm which by 1867 had still not adopted the position that it currently occupies.

The date of the large building platform and appurtenances just south of the present farmhouse is unknown, but its importance is partly indicated by the 'backlane' that leads directly to it. The fact that it appears to have had this access may indicate that it once formed part of an earlier settlement (former lanes often appear to be utilised as back lanes as settlement shifts). However, that its outline remains sharp perhaps indicates that it is nevertheless not of great antiquity and a post-medieval date might still be comfortably postulated. The building almost certainly is that marked on John Overton's undated early 18th century map, but this appears to have been levelled by 1763 for it does not feature on maps of that and subsequent dates. A second building is depicted on Overton's map, to the east of it, lying close to the lane, and this property appears to undergo a number of structural changes and ground plan layouts for it is recorded differently on maps of 1763, 1776, and 1810, finally disappearing by 1867.

The map evidence supports the idea of ribbon settlement along the lane, although this could easily be a very late development related to increased use of Quemerford Common and the various mills that the streams supported. The 1763 map depicts buildings either side of the lane, one within a field called Hockets, the other in Barne Close. Nearer to the Common, enclosures are shown without buildings but depicted as gardens and orchards. A series of buildings are shown at the south end of the lane of which the barn and stables survive. On the opposite side of the lane, one building is depicted as present in 1763, two in 1776 when the field is described as 'homestead'.

Just ten years later Andrews and Dury (1773) show four buildings alongside the western flank of the lane leading to the farm, interestingly with two buildings on the opposite side at the point where the lane curves away from the London Road (ie the south-east of the two fields surveyed here).

Robertson's map of the road from London to Bath, surveyed in 1792, depicts only two buildings transversely situated at the upper end of the lane. The position had evidently changed again less than thirty years later for Greenwood's map of 1820 depicts four buildings, the two previously recorded by Robertson close to the position of the present farm, and two others alongside the lane. By 1884, the two at the end of the

lane had disappeared but two others now existed alongside the lane on the west, with a further example on the opposite side of the lane (Smith 1884).

To the east in the south-east field at the point where the earthwork 'hedgerow' was recorded as being disturbed (above), a house and garden is depicted standing within its own field (Mr Wix's Close) before 1763 and 1776, but it had disappeared by 1867 when the field was referred to as 'Home Ground'.

The study of these early maps also makes it clear that rather than being situated close to Calne, the focus of Quemerford settlement lay over 1km to the east, on the slopes of the Labour in Vain Hill. The open fields lay here, either side of the London to Bath Road, and a small number of buildings clustered either side of the road, with others dispersed among the open North Field served by what is now Marsh Lane, Cherhill. The settlement of Quemerford then, formerly lay at the west end of what is now Cherhill. The proximity and prosperity of the village of Cherhill, then clustered around its church, appears to have resulted in expansion that subsumed the original Quemerford settlement to its west. Quemerford Gate, towards the lower end of the Labour in Vain Hill, and marked on a number of maps, led from the open fields onto a Common that stretched for a considerable distance westwards, as far as the Calne township boundary.

Like other nearby villages, Calstone, Cherhill, Compton, Heddington, and Blacklands, Quemerford was situated on the springline around the lower slopes of the Downs, where the well drained Greensand bench and flint free Lower Chalk could be cultivated and the lower ground, the clays, used for pasture; the classic Wiltshire chalk and cheese. Smith's (1884) interpretation of the place-name as 'ford by the coombes' is better served here.

Quemerford was never a large settlement. North and South Fields were relatively small as was the portion of open field on Boar Down above Cherhill. Comparison of taxation and population returns with those of neighbouring villages suggests that it was half the size of the more prosperous, though compared favourably with Blacklands (Table 1).

Table 1

Name	1334	1377		1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1931
Blacklands	35s	41		48	142	44	65	81	72	54	59	50		
Calne Borough	110s	156												
Cherhill	96s	98		304	289	346	404	635	396	364	334	290	277	
Compton Basset	160s	126												
Heddington	160s													
Quemerford	64s	45						635						
Yatesbury	108s	55		234	218	234	274	251	251	231	238	211	148	140

The population of settlements around Quemerford (data taken from Beresford 1959 a,b and c, 298, 307, Saunders 1959, 341). 1334 data is fifteens and tenths: 1377 refers to poll-tax payers. Quemerford has no separate list of census returns but appears to be incorporated with Cherhill until the late 19th century, when Quemerford Common was incorporated into Calne figures. In 1831 the Parish of Calne included Berwick Basset, Blackland, Bowood, Calne, Calstone Wellington, Cherhill, Compton Basset, Heddington and Yatesbury. Calne Rural District was formed in 1872. Blackland, Bowood, Calstone Wellington, Highway, were all dissolved in 1890; Calne Without created 1890: Bremhill, Cherhill, Compton Basset, Heddington, Hilmarten, Yatesbury.

If Quemerford formerly lay in what is now part of Cherhill, what of Quemerford as we know it? Early maps depict the area to the west of the Marden river and alongside the London to Bath road as Wessington, a separate tithing of Calne. The site surveyed here then lay on Quemerford Common at the furthest extent possible from its parent village, immediately adjacent to the boundary with Wessington. The earthworks represent small homesteads set within closes each of which underwent a number of changes, and which probably became established in response to favourable markets coupled with improved methods of agricultural drainage. Kerridge (1969,131) noted how enclosure of the cheese country resulted in a 'proliferation of family farms'.

It would appear from this that, aside from the farm itself, any associated settlement was transient and throughout the 18-19th centuries in sporadic but general decline. Instead, buildings were increasingly sited alongside the London Road, which had been turnpiked in 1708 and was of increasing importance as Calne was incorporated in the London to Bristol coach route. Indeed Davis (1811, 171, 174) considered that the process of turnpiking itself would encourage local road improvement and consequently greater enclosure of the clay lowlands. The date of these latter enclosures is difficult to determine from field survey alone. Many of the boundaries bear sharp profiles, but they could be the result of re-cutting and cleaning out over centuries. Despite the indication from Davis that enclosure of these areas was a late phenomenon, the maps consistently indicate that the clays were enclosed before the chalkland. Stukeley's illustration of the landscape around Heddington in 1723 supports this too, enclosures on the clay being depicted as bounded by apparently mature hedgerows (Stukeley 1776, 142), and it is worth bearing in mind the documentary evidence of medieval assarting of the forest in this context (Grant 1959).

Ribbon development from Calne had reached the Borough boundary, the Marden river, by 1773, and was beginning to spread onto Quemerford Common. Andrews and Dury depict two buildings alongside the road on the Common at that date, and Greenwood four. The turnpike trustees were authorised to widen the road, erect bridges and embankments and, at Quemerford, cut drains (Tyler 1980, 10). This activity appears to have completely changed the focus of settlement. Quemerford Common and the area either side of the road bridge close to the turnpike cottage became the new centre of activity.

METHOD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

R Canham of Wiltshire County Council originally requested the investigation and the site was surveyed in August 2000 by N Smith and D Field. A control framework using Total Stations EDM Wild 1610 was established and archaeological detail added graphically by use of measured offsets. D Cunliffe kindly assisted with the illustrations while the report itself was researched and written by D Field. N Smith, M Bowden and G Brown most helpfully commented on an earlier version of the text. Mr A Whinney, the owner of the site, provided every facility and is thanked for allowing access. The Marquis of Lansdowne kindly allowed access to maps and plans in his archive at Bowood House, and K Fielden provided helpful guidance to the archive there.

APPENDIX

Maps of the Quemerford area containing detail relevant to the site

Date	Cartographer	Title	Location
1675	John Ogilby	Road maps of England and wales from Ogilby's 'Brittannia'	Facts ed: Reading: Osprey
1728		Survey of Calne (Tythable lands)	Bowood Estate Archives
nd	John Overton	A map of lands at Quimberford	Bowood Estate Archives
1763	John Powell	A topographic map or plan of the Manors of Calne late in the possession of Thomas Duchet Esq., with Bowood Park	Bowood Estate Archives
1763	John Powell	Topographical Map or Plan of several farms with two cottage houses situated in the Mannor and Parish of Calne and county of Wilts belonging to the Right Honourable William Petty, Earl of Shelbourne	Bowood Estate Archives
soon after 1763	Nathaniel Wallis	A Map or plan of Caln and Calston late in the possession of Thomas Duchet Esq., with Bowood Park	Bowood Estate Archives
1773	J Andrews & A Dury	A Map of Wiltshire	Wilts Record Soc 8
1776	Joseph Dickens	A map of the Manors of Calne And Calstone in the County of Wilts (parts taken from Powell 1763)	Bowood Estate Archives
1792	A Robertson	Road from London to Bath	Wilts Record Soc 52
1810		Terrier & plans (no title)	Bowood Estate Archives
1812-13		An Act for Inclosing lands in the several parishes of Calne, Calstone Wellington and Blackland in the County of Wilts	Wilts Record Office EA110
1820	C Greenwood	Map of the County of Wilts from actual survey made in the years 1819 and 1820	Wilts Record Soc 52
1867		Map of the Marquis of Landsdowne's Wilts estates	Bowood Estate Archives
1880-90		Plan of the Borough and Local Board District of Calne 1880-90	Wilts Record office G/133/IPC
1884	Rev A Smith	Map of One Hundred square miles around Abury showing the British and Roman stone and earthworks of the Downs of north Wilts	
1886	Ordnance Survey	1 st edition 25" map	Wilts Record Office
1900	Ordnance Survey	2 nd edition 25"	Wilts Record Office

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