

EHER 9195 and 9179

LOCATION: WORMINGFORD AND MOUNT BURES, ESSEX

Fields either side of the boundary between the villages of Mount Bures and Wormingford, on the south side of the River Stour (Group 48 in Cropmarks of the Stour Valley) centred on NGR TL919328

Background

Current Position in Landscape: sited in wide-ish area of valley floor to south of a series of small meanders within larger bend of the Stour to north. It lies in a lower area of land surrounded by slightly higher land on all sides. The 20m contour line passes through the site. The Bures Cursus (EHER 9194) lies on other side of river directly North of this site, also on 20m contour and probably each easily visible from the other.

The soil of both areas is light and very flinty. Worked flints in both can be seen when walking the public footpath, and some burnt flint in EHER 9195.

A Public Footpath crosses N section of EHER 9195 on approx W-E alignment, and along and inside the northern hedgeline of EHER 9179.

EHER 9195 is found entirely in the parish of Mount Bures, is rectangular and bounded by a public footpath running W- E on its northern side; by a straight section of the Bures to Wormingford road (B1508) running W-E on its southern side. A straight trackway to Staunch Farm running N-S forms its eastern boundary and a series of straight boundary features running N-S form the western boundary.

Other north-south trackways, field boundaries, sections of road and also the parish boundary in this area are all fairly straight and roughly at right angles to the river (see Fig 1); the crop marks possibly indicating the field system in the area post date the other crop marks.

On the 1838 Tithe Award Map, it is divided into two fields, Great Wheaters (4 acres, 3 rods, 16 poles), owned and occupied by John Constable, and Great Field (18 acres, 0 rods, 10 poles), owned and occupied by Robert Everard. The 1st Edition OS map (1870) shows the same arrangement as the Tithe Award Map.

EHER 9179 to the east of Staunch Farm is roughly triangular. The parish boundary between Mount Bures and Wormingford runs through it north to south. The site projects into 'Metlands' (EHERs 9178 and 9181) and is enclosed on two sides by hedges and ditches with higher land levels on the southern sides of both boundaries. Staunch Farm house and buildings form the western boundary which separates the triangular area from EHER 9195

On the 1838 Tithe Award map, the whole field is called 6 Acres; the part in the parish of Mount Bures (3 acres, 1 rod, 20 poles) is owned and occupied by Robert Everard, as is the part in Wormingford (3 acres, 3

rods, 19 poles). The 1st Edition OS map (1870) shows the same field, but Staunch Farm then was marked as Boggas's Farm.

North of the fields is a meander in the River Stour which was once cut off by a channel to the north, presumably during the time the river was used to transport goods. It is not known when this cut went out of use. On the 1870 OS map, a drain is shown linking the triangular field (EHER 9179) to the river along the line of the parish boundary.

Previous Surveys

A large number of marks are visible on aerial photographs, but there appears to have been very little investigation into them, unlike the fields on either side, Metlands (EHERs 9178 and 9181) and Cowlins Field (EHER 9190). No field walks have been recorded and neither do any of the features appear to have been excavated. Ahead of a planned pipeline to be laid by Essex and Suffolk Water from Wormingford to Abberton, a programme of trial trenching was undertaken by Birmingham Archaeology. Several trenches were planned for EHER 9195, but these appear not to have been carried out. The pipeline, with a working easement of approximately 30 metres, was laid along the northern edge of the triangular field EHER 9179 and appears not to have impacted on any cropmarks in either field.

Analysis of the Cropmarks

EHERs 9195 and 9179 describe a group of cropmarks which form a continuation of EHERs 9178 and 9181 and appear to be linked to them. They are, however, quite different in character. EHERs 9178 and 9181 contain clusters of ring ditches and the long pair of linear features which may represent a bank barrow or cursus (or both). In contrast, EHERs 9195 and 9179 consist of many criss-crossing linear features and up to six ring ditches. The latter are not clustered together, apart from three, which form a line of two small and one larger (c. 19m). Close by to the east is another ring ditch of similar size to the larger one and further to the east another slightly smaller one (c. 17m). Both of these latter are cut by linear features. The other two identifiable ring ditches are small and to the north, each with a single long linear feature running away from it to the south, one of which cuts one of the larger ring ditches. A semi-circular feature lies to the east of EHER 9179, with its open side facing east, close to a double ring ditch in EHER 9178.

There are three rectangular enclosures of various sizes, each with an opening to the east. A pair of parallel linear features run south-west to north-east, widening towards the north-east and may represent a trackway. Another pair of linear ditches, possibly also representing a trackway, lies to the north of the site and runs from east to west, narrowing towards the west end. The other cropmarks show a number of linear and curved ditches which appear to have no relation to each other or any of the other features. Most of these presumably represent field boundaries and probably post-date the ring ditches.

The area has been described as a possible settlement site, and this would explain the difference in character to the other clusters of cropmarks in

the Wormingford – Bures section of the Stour Valley. However, the fields are close to the river and are low-lying, being below the 20m contour line, so must always have been at risk of flooding.

Current status: Current land use: arable



Fig 1 Cropmarks in black superimposed on OS contour lines

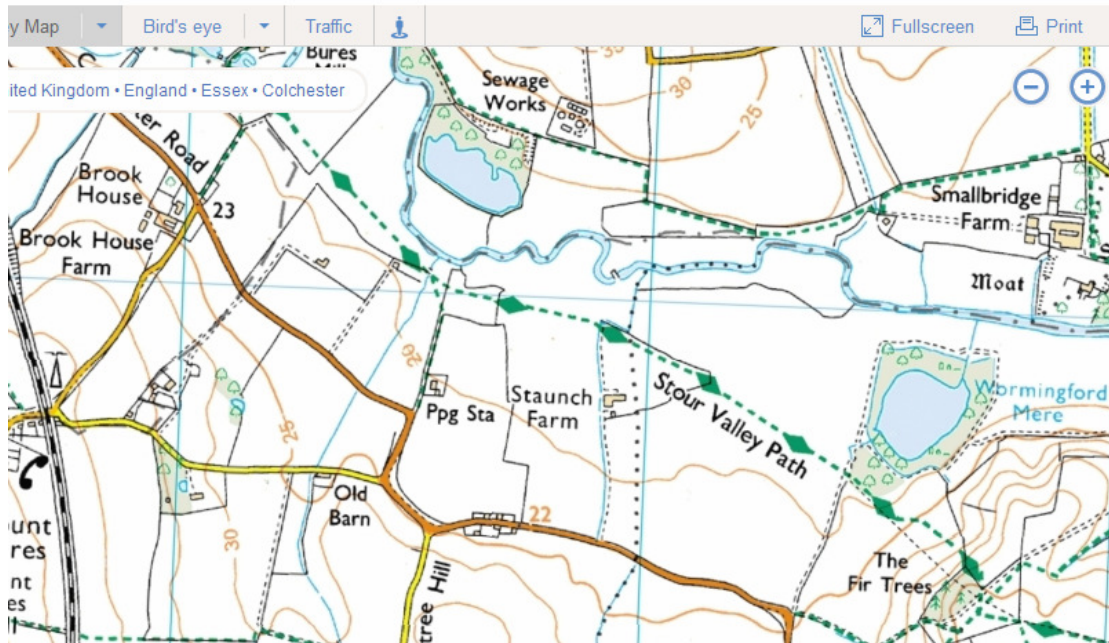


Fig 4 modern OS map



Fig 5 SMR 9179 taken from the public footpath at the north western corner of the triangular field looking south east
Photo: Sally Bartrum