

## **EHER 9191 and 9192**

**LOCATION: Mount Bures, Essex, Field to the north west of Cambridge Brook, centred on NGR TL905334**

### **Background**

The cropmarks in this area, in recent aerial photos, consist of two double ring ditches and two parallel lines. The lines both run in an east to west direction, seemingly heading towards the river. The one to the north of the site is quite thick and may be a double line. The one to the south is heading straight towards a large circular crop mark just over the river in area HER 9199 and near to Nether Hall.

Neither of the linear marks corresponds to the field boundaries on the 1838 Tithe map, which shows the site to be divided into two fields (see map 1). Both fields were arable, owned by Colonel John Rolt and occupied by Hugh Pettit. The field to the north was called Middle Field and to the south Brook Field. This latter has the Cambridge Brook running along its southern boundary. Brook House Farm, which is nearby was called Pudneys in 1805 according to the Cassini Historical Map No.168.

### **Previous surveys**

Although recent aerial photographs show only two rings ditches (see Photo 1), the larger of the two was excavated and reported on by Ida McMaster in 1967 (CAG Bulletin, Vol. 10, 1967, No. 4). She describes three circular marks and two parallel lines joining the two larger ones – see site A on her map (Map 2). The diameter of the barrow was found to be 87 feet. There was a dark core in the centre and excavations revealed a *“roughly four sided enclosure immediately below the ploughed soil....the walls of this were made of a white clay mixture, one or two feet thick. In between, it was filled with soft sand, and at the base was hard undisturbed gravel.”* (see plan 1). The finds from the excavation were a flint scraper, a barbed and tanged arrowhead and two sherds of Bronze Age pottery. The arrowhead and scraper were in the possession of the farmer Mr. Webber but were passed on to Leigh Alston of Bures. (See Photo 2).

This area has also been reported on by Essex County Council's Unlocking Essex's Past with fourteen photographs. Cambridge University Committee for Aerial Photography (CUCAP) have also some photographs of this area. See References and Bibliography.

The most recent aerial photo was taken by Philip Cunningham in the summer of 2013 and shows only the larger ring ditch clearly (see Photo 3).

### **Analysis of the cropmarks**

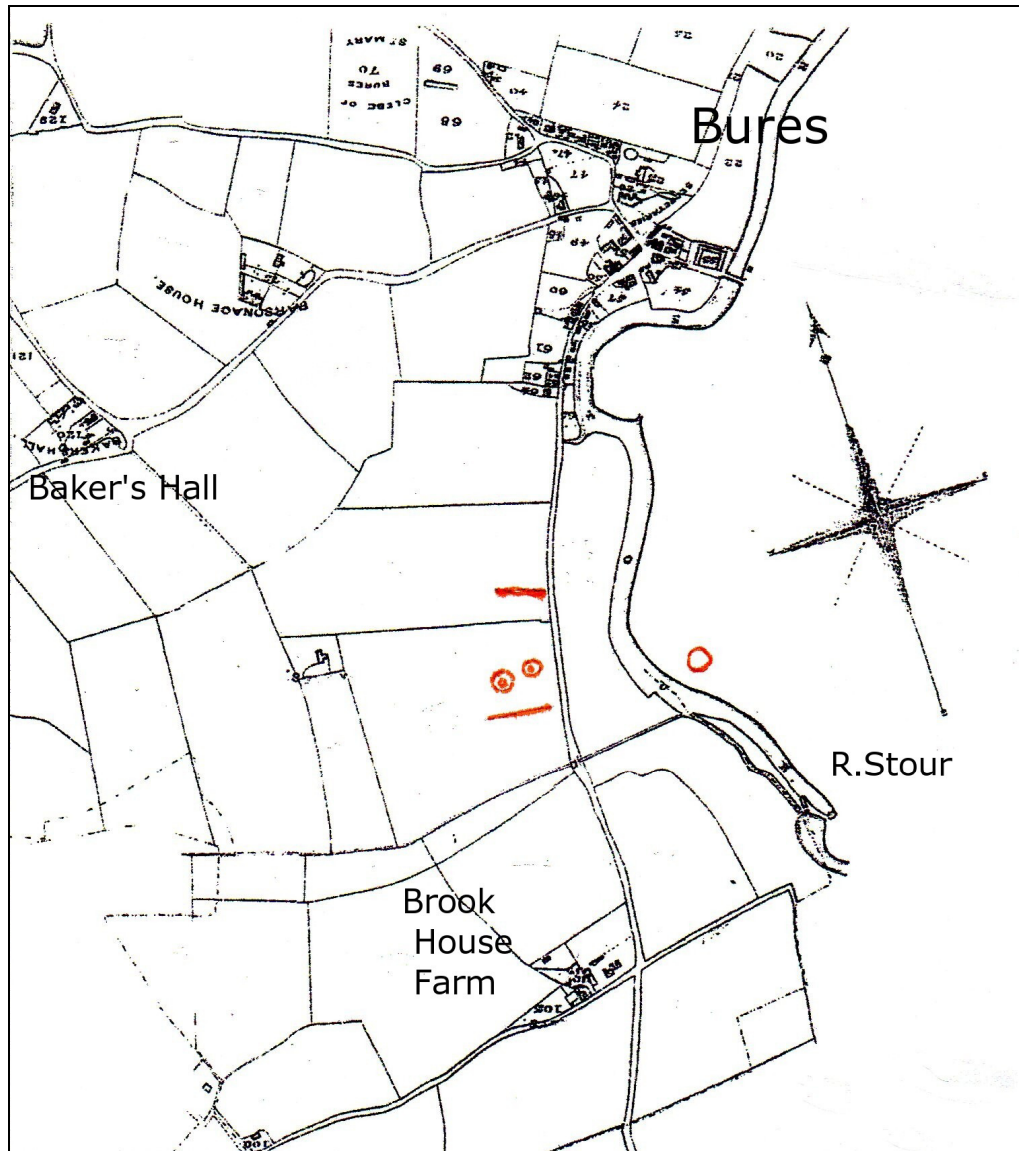
The site lies on top of a sloping mound with good visibility of the river Stour to the east and of the whole valley including Bures to the north east. The only higher ground is to the south beyond the railway line and near Mount Bures, which is just over half a mile away, and the horizon to the east across the river. The larger of the cropmarks is almost touching the 25m contour line and would seem to be the highest in this area. The smaller one is nearer to the 20m contour line, as are most

of the cropmarks on the south of the river as far as HER 9189 and 9193 which, when linked up, seem to form a connection across the large looped bend in the river – assuming it ran on the same course when the monuments were created. The cursus at HER 9194 is also just above the 20m contour and as Brown and Saunders noted in their report of 2005, would have been intervisible with HER 9189 and 9193 *“assuming there was no extensive tree cover...their similar orientation and siting reflecting symbolic associations with the river, and perhaps patterns of human movements within the valley”* (Brown and Saunders 2005, p4).

After looking carefully at the whole area of cropmarks south of the river it seems that many of the linear cropmarks at HER nos. 9190 and 9193 lead almost directly to this double ring ditch complex at HER 9191, and stretching the theory even further, could they follow on from the linear cropmarks at HER 9178 near to the Mere? Perhaps these linear marks are the remains of old droveways. Our present footpath still follows a similar route. (see map 3). There is a theory that the monument at 9178 was a cursus, and should this be the case, is it possible that at a later date it was used as a droveway? Admittedly the parallel lines are quite wide apart but drover's roads “were at least 40 feet (12m) and up to 90 feet (27m) wide”. (Addison, 1980, p. 70-78)

Dr. Francis Pryor, writing about Bronze Age Fenland noted that *“an intensive style of animal husbandry was employed in which dryland fields were mainly occupied in winter, and in summer the flocks and herds were grazed on the lush natural water-meadows of Fenland. Bronze Age droveways for sheep...led down to the fen. (Phosphate analysis shows beyond doubt they were droveways: they were deep in prehistoric manure.) Medieval maps show that exactly the same farming system was used in the Fens some 3,000 years later”*. (Pryor 1998)

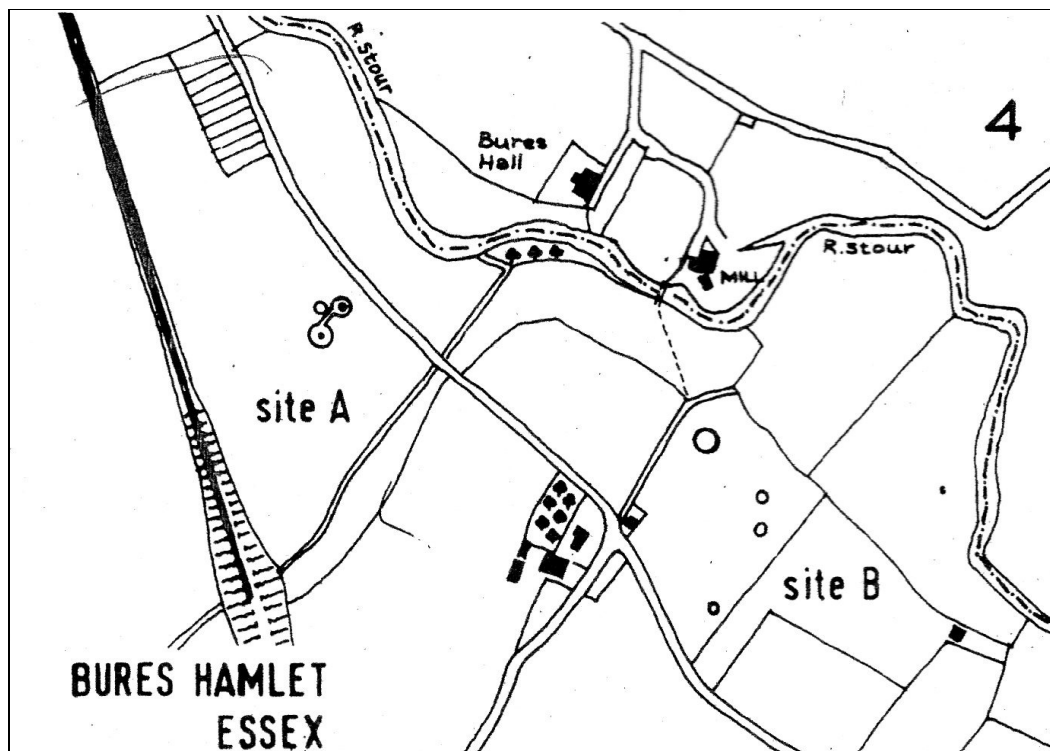
Blaise Vyner writing about the Ferrybridge area in Late Neolithic times says *“It appears from the evidence of distinctive artefacts that these were the locations of social gatherings for people who travelled long distances, probably with herds of cattle.”* (Vyner 2008, p7). So perhaps even as early as Late Neolithic times our ancestors were walking along the same routes that we take to-day.



Map 1. Tithe Map 1838 with Crop marks in red.

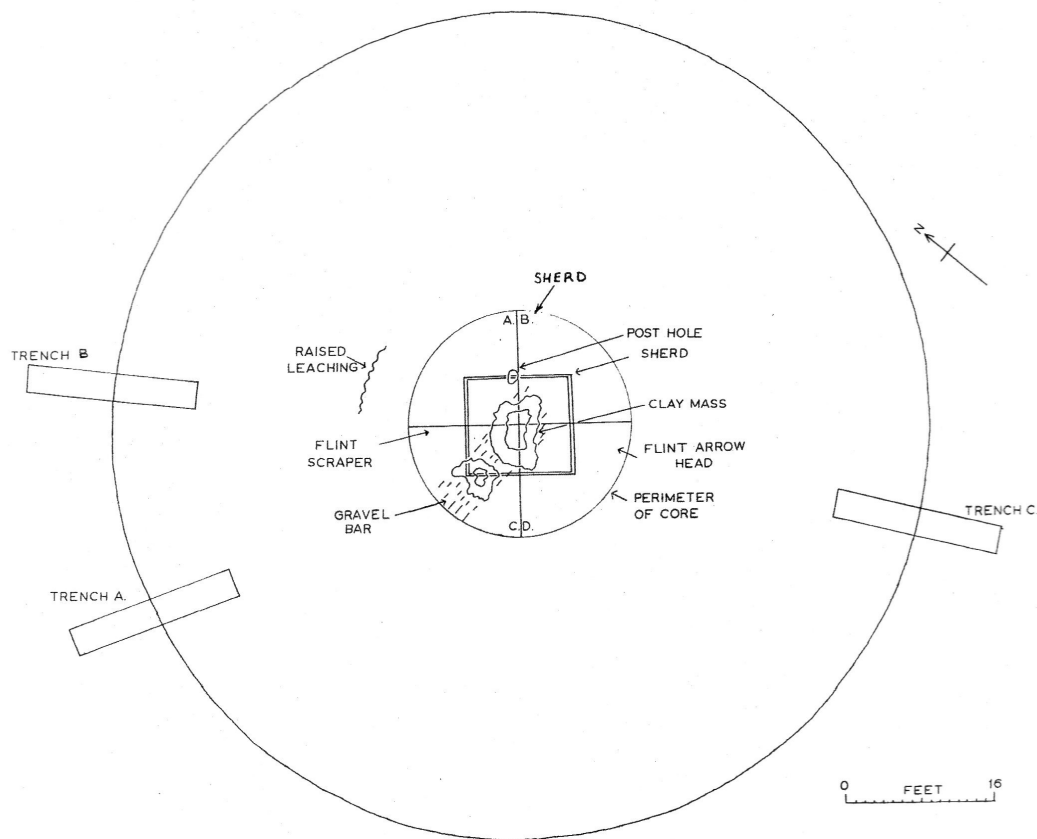


Photo 1. ECC HER 9191/9192.

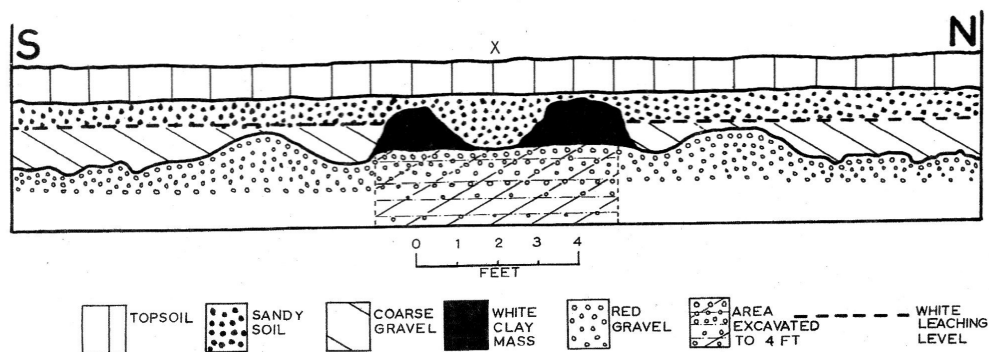


Map 2. By Ida McMaster (CAG Vol 14 Page 7 ).

# PLAN: BURES HAMLET, ESSEX .



# SECTION: BURES HAMLET, ESSEX.



Plan 1. By Ida McMaster (CAG Vol. 10 No.4 Page 48).

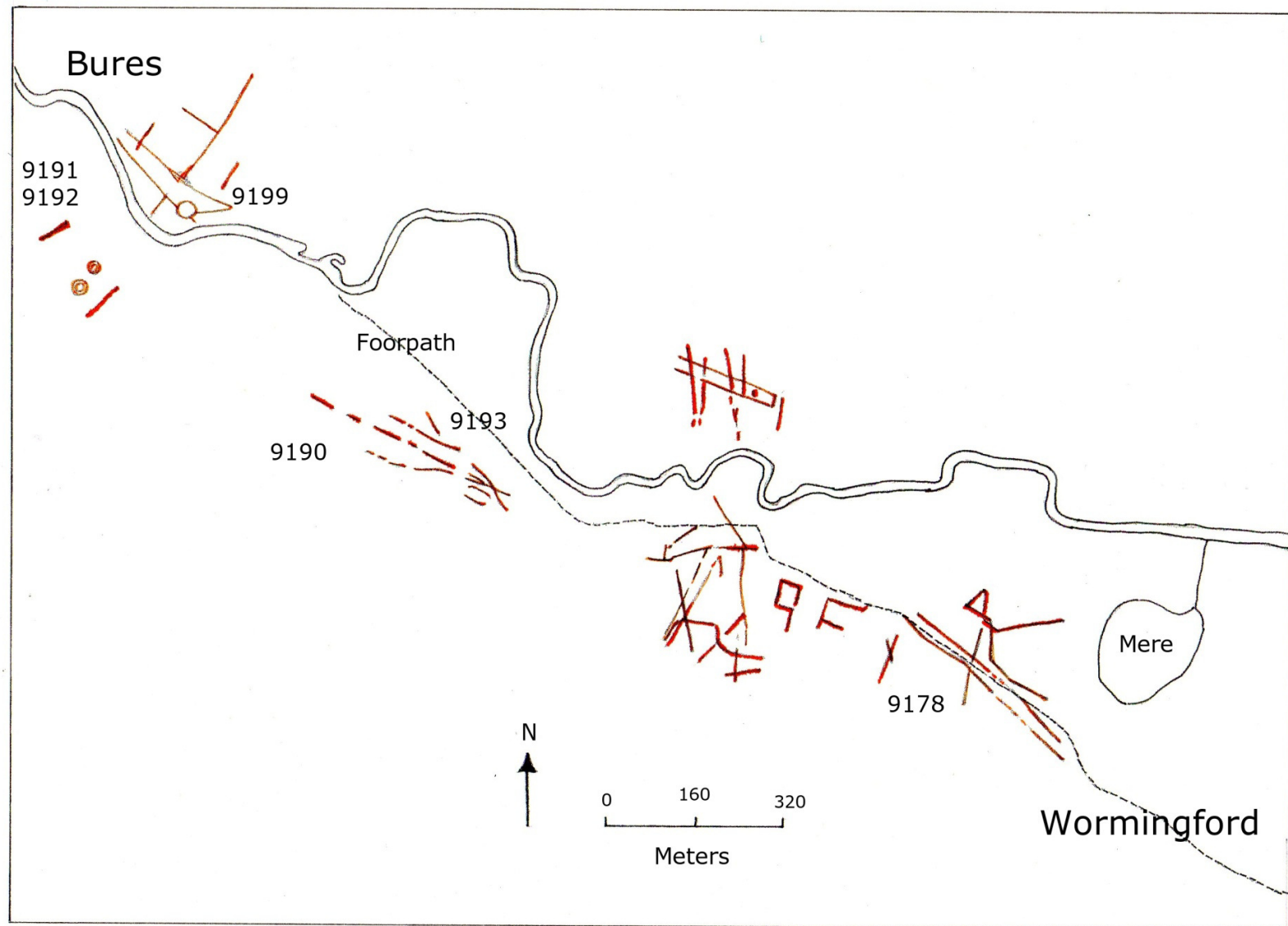


Photo 2. Arrow Head & Scraper Found by Ida McMaster, Photo Ellie Mead.





Photo 3, Philip Cunningham



Map 3. Crop marks in red – Carol Wheeldon 2014



