

EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Gisleham Manor moated site, 400m south west of White House Farm

PARISH: GISLEHAM

DISTRICT: WAVENEY

COUNTY: SUFFOLK

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 30579

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): TM51378794

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument includes the double moated site of Gisleham Manor, located about 550m south of Holy Trinity Church and adjoining what was at one time the northern edge of Gisleham Common, enclosed in 1799. The two moats are roughly concentric and surround rectangular enclosures, the overall dimensions being approximately 175m WSW-ENE by 157m. The inner moat is water-filled and ranges in width from 8m to 12m on the north, west and east sides and up to 18m on the south side, where it has been enlarged externally to create a horse pond. It surrounds a rectangular central platform measuring approximately 41m NNW-SSE by 36m WSW-ENE internally which is understood to be the site of the medieval manor house and is raised about 1m above the prevailing ground level. Rubble from a building or buildings was recorded on the surface of the platform in the 1970s when the area was under cultivation. A causeway across the south eastern corner of the moat provides access to the interior but is probably not an original feature. According to the local historian, Suckling, the foundations of a drawbridge were removed around 1794 and two metal balls engraved with coats of arms found beneath the timbers.

The outer enclosure which surrounds the inner moat has internal dimensions of approximately 161m WSW by 144m and is bounded by a partly silted moat measuring around 6m in width and open to a depth of up to 1.8m. Trenches excavated across the southern end of the western arm and the eastern end of the southern arm have demonstrated that the full depth is approximately 2.6m and produced fragments of pottery which provide evidence for occupation during the medieval period. The house and associated buildings of Manor Farm, now demolished, occupied an area on the south side of this enclosure and extended across the line of the southern arm of the outer moat where it is thought to have been infilled. This infilled section will, however, survive as a buried feature and is included in the scheduling. The farmhouse appeared externally to be of late 18th or early 19th century date, but the rear wall incorporated timbers of a 16th or 17th century building which may have replaced the central medieval manor house. A short length of flint walling which adjoined the north west corner of the house and is thought to be of early date still stands and is included in the scheduling.

Gisleham Hall manor is recorded from the 13th century onwards and the lordship was held by a number of families in succession. In 1282 it was held by William de Gisleham and in 1311 by Sir Edmund de Hemegrave. By 1356 it was vested in

Sir John de Ulveston, and subsequently passed to Sir William Argentein (died 1418) and then to Thomas Latymer. From the early 16th to the mid-17th century it was held by the Hobart family, and in 1749 came by marriage to Richmond Garneys. Suckling recorded that the tenant in the early 19th century remembered manorial courts being held on the site, though these were subsequently adjourned to the Hall (now Hall Farm).

A barn which stands to the east of the inner moat, all fence and gateposts and the surface of a track are excluded from the scheduling, although the ground beneath these features is included.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Around 6,000 moated sites are known in England. They consist of wide ditches, often or seasonally water-filled, partly or completely enclosing one or more islands of dry ground on which stood domestic or religious buildings. In some cases the islands were used for horticulture. The majority of moated sites served as prestigious aristocratic and seigneurial residences with the provision of a moat intended as a status symbol rather than a practical military defence. The peak period during which moated sites were built was between about 1250 and 1350 and by far the greatest concentration lies in central and eastern parts of England. However, moated sites were built throughout the medieval period, are widely scattered throughout England and exhibit a high level of diversity in their forms and sizes. They form a significant class of medieval monument and are important for the understanding of the distribution of wealth and status in the countryside. Many examples provide conditions favourable to the survival of organic remains.

The moated site of Gisleham Manor, with its two concentric moats, is a good example of a comparatively rare type within this class of monument and, although it has undergone some superficial disturbance as a result of cultivation in the past, it will retain archaeological information concerning its construction and occupation during the medieval and post-medieval periods, including details of the house which stood on the central platform. Organic materials, including evidence for the local environment in the past, are likely to be preserved in waterlogged deposits in the outer moat, and it is probable that buried soils beneath the raised surface of the central platform will provide evidence, also, for land use predating the construction of the moat.

MONUMENT INCLUDED IN THE SCHEDULE ON 03rd July 2000