

# PROCEEDINGS

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Report by the Rev. A. C. YORKE on excavations carried out at Fowlmere.

### THE ROUND MOAT AT FOWLMERE.

In his *History of Cambridgeshire* (p. 14) Mr Conybeare speaks of the Round Moat at Fowlmere as a British earthwork. This opinion was corroborated by Professor Ridgeway, who in 1899 visited the spot at my invitation. The members of the Society made an excursion to it in 1904, and the former opinions were confirmed by those qualified to judge. As a consequence of this visit the Society granted £10 for the purpose of excavation. A little more than half of this sum has been expended during the last six weeks; but owing to lack of labour the digging has been very limited. The following information may be of interest.

The Moat lies close to the brook. This brook is the unworthy survival of the "Wardington River," which geologists tell us fashioned so much of the country in the neighbourhood. The broad bed underlies the ground enclosed by the moat. At a depth of not more than 10 ft. the water is struck.

On the Parish Enclosure map the Moat is called "White's Close"; and one, Robert White, appears on the rent roll of A.D. 1447 (Addit. Charters 27; 338). It is meadow land, and there can be small doubt that it was part of the Domesday Book "*pratium omnibus carucis.*" To this it no doubt owes its survival to the present day; the Bran Ditch, two miles distant, having been ploughed out since enclosure in 1845. But its immemorial pasturage has not saved it from large disturbance. The bank and moat are heavily timbered; and in the Jubilee year (1887) the present owner, Mr. Edward Wedd of Great Wakering, planted some forty trees within the circumference of the moat; of which, however, only some three or four

survive. Two men, who worked at this Jubilee planting, visited our excavations; the one telling us of a sort of "well" into which had been thrown a lot of "broken drain pipes" (?), the other saying he had seen unearthened a sort of yard "all paved with cobble-stones." But neither could tell us of the spot, or even of the probable situation. "In them days we didn't think of such things": and our excavators have failed to light upon them. Somehow a sort of tradition has sprung up that once a large house stood within the moat: but no sign of foundation has been discovered.

On its north side the channel of the moat was cleaned out, some six years ago, for use as a pond. The rest of its circumference is silted up, as we found, to a depth of about 6 ft. Professor Hughes had warned me that the best results would be attained by digging in this silted moat. But as our labour was limited—for most of the time we had only one man—it was thought better to keep to the lighter work of exploring the area inside the moat. Thus only one hole was sunk in the bed of the ditch.

The measurements of the earthwork are as follows:

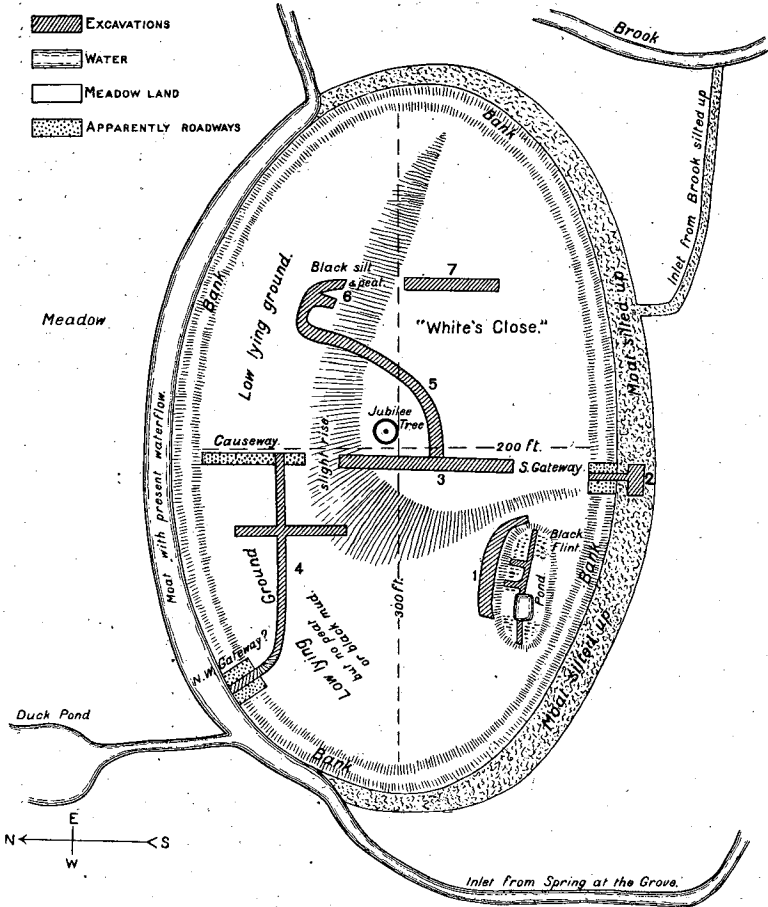
Length E. to W., more or less,	300 ft.
Breadth N. to S.	200 ft.
Base of bank,	35 ft.
Height of bank from natural level,	7 ft. to 12 ft.
Ditch, width at top,	20 ft.
Present bottom, below natural level,	5 ft.
Actual bottom below silt,	6 ft.
Area, by survey,	1 a. 22 poles.

On the S. side, about 100 ft. from the W. extremity, is a gap in the bank, possibly an old entrance. Inside the moat between this gap and the W. end is a pond, about 51 ft. long, by 9 ft. wide; at present generally dry. Professor Ridgeway thought that this might represent the original water supply for the camp. It is planted with trees on the banks.

At the N.W. curve is another gap, which suggests a gateway towards Ashwell Street. A modern cutting reveals a section of the bank about halfway down the N. side. The

material exposed is marl and flint; probably the stuff thrown out in making the moat.

Ashwell Street, which I have just mentioned, crosses the brook about 1/3 mile below the camp, on the N. side. It then



ROUND MOAT, FOWLMERE, and Excavations: October, 1906.

follows the brook up, and bends towards Triplow not much more than 200 yards to the E. of the camp. At its nearest point a lane, called Lynch Lane, leads southerly; and, before

the 1845 enclosure of the Parish, passed, as the trees still shew, not more than 30 yards from the moat. If the gap on the S. bank were, as I have suggested, a gateway, it must have given upon this Lynch Lane. The N.W. gap, if a gateway, would get to Ashwell Street by the lane, which starts from the corner of the Rectory garden, known as Rectory and Moule's Lane, and which passes out to Long Lane and Shepreth Road, where it falls into Moor Lane, as Ashwell Street is there known.

Inside the bank, under the N. and W. sides, the ground is low. The slight rise in the middle is continued to the S.E. corner of the enclosed area. From this raised ground on its N. side a narrow strip of made ground runs like a causeway to the bank, but without apparent exit. To the E. of this "causeway," at about four feet down, was a deposit of black mud and peat; shewing the existence, in old times, of a small swamp within the area.

Our first operation was to cut a trench round the interior front of the pond, in the hope of finding either pottery or some track that might lead us to the site of the huts. In both these we were disappointed; as we found nothing save a few bone fragments, although we went down to the bed clunch. Then we opened a trench from either end of the pond. Removing about 2 ft. of silt, a bed of small and broken black flint was laid bare; apparently artificial, though of this I cannot speak positively. It was followed to the centre, where it ended at the edge of some soft mud. Sinking a foot through this mud we came to water, with a bed of flint breccia and drift, through which we were able to push a bar for quite two feet. But of archaeological yield nothing. The water stood at about 10 ft. below the natural surface of the ground, and the flint bed was found to extend to the bank at two places, where we made drives on the N.

The engagement of a second man enabled us to put him on at the gap on the S. side. A trench cut to the bed clunch through the gap shewed a floor of flint, perhaps four or five inches thick. If this be a paving, then the gap was a gateway. But if it be only the lower course of the bank then the gap is

perform a more modern cutting. Just above the clunch, but below this flint, a small cylindrical stone hammer was unearthed. A yard or two further on a large and heavy stone hammer, with triangular side, was turned up<sup>1</sup>. The trench was continued right on to the moat, following the batter of the slope. In the silt of the moat were found at various levels some half-dozen horse-shoes of antique shape, without clips or calkins. At a depth of 6 ft. through the silt, water was reached: but just above the water were found two very large and heavy stones, as if thrown from the bank into the water. They may be the artillery of the early encampment. A few broken and discoloured bones were found at intervals along the trench.

The other man was set to open a trench through the central ridge. Fifteen yards of this proving barren of result, although in the likeliest spot for opening out hut circles, or other traces of habitation, he was set to open a trench from this, E. and N.E., so as to avoid the disturbed ground round the "Jubilee Tree" in the middle of the camp. Along this some small and much broken pieces of pottery were found; generally of poor quality, and apparently of British make. One or two were tooled.

This man left us after his second day's work at this trench.

Meanwhile from the gateway on the N.W. the other man was breaking ground with little result. Occasionally he turned up some small pieces of broken pottery; just enough to shew that they were possibly British. He made a cross drive to the left and right, i.e. to the low ground and the high, without finding anything of interest: and his drive was continued to the ridge from the high ground across the low. This had apparently been raised as a track, for it consisted of broken flint.

After the departure of the other, we put this man on to continue the trench behind the "Jubilee Tree." When it dipped with the slope of the ridge to the low ground, at a depth of about 4 ft. was opened out a stratum of black soil and peat. This was almost at water level; and in it was found the best evidence of habitation, in numerous pieces of broken

<sup>1</sup> But see penultimate paragraph.

pottery and split bones. This was interesting as shewing that the swamp was there while the camp was occupied.

Just before deciding upon stopping the work, we put this man to open the ground on the high ground to the E. of the "Jubilee Tree"; but nothing was found save a few burnt flint stones.

The result of the digging has therefore been to leave the origin of the Round Moat, in Professor Hughes' words, "one of the enigmas of our county." The stones I thought to be hammers he disallows, attributing their shape and marks to accident. The Professor also says that the fragments of pottery and bones may be early mediaeval, and not British. Only the spade can solve our enigma.

If at any time the work is resumed it must be in the moat itself. But the digging there is so heavy that it is useless to attempt it without a plentiful supply of labour.

A. C. YORKE.

The thanks of the Society are due to Mr E. Wedd, the owner, and to Mr W. Jackson, the lessee of the Round Moat, for permission to dig there. Also to Mr Rotter, one of our members, who has kindly acted as paymaster during the operations.

A. C. Y.

# CONTENTS

## OF PROCEEDINGS, No. XLVIII.

### VOL. XII. (NEW SERIES, VOL. VI.) No. 1.

	PAGE
Sixty-sixth Annual Report (for 1905—6) . . . . .	1
Appeal for New Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology . . . . .	20
Herculaneum. (With one Figure in the text and Plate I.) By Professor HUGHES . . . . .	25
Historical Notes on Fowlmere. By Rev. ALEXANDER CAMPBELL YORKE . . . . .	94
The Decay of Artistic Handicrafts. By S. PERKINS PICK, F.R.I.B.A. . . . .	95
(1) Neolithic Dewponds. (2) Neolithic Man in the Hills and Plains. By Messrs A. J. and G. HUBBARD . . . . .	95
Vetus Liber Archidiaconatus Eliensis. By Rev. C. H. EVELYN WHITE . . . . .	95
Some Notes on the Gold Armilla found in Grunty Fen, together with Mr Isaac Deck's original account of its discovery in 1844. (With one Figure in the text and Plates II, III.) By Baron A. VON HÜGEL . . . . .	96
The Dancing Towers of Italy and India. By Mrs WHERRY . . . . .	105
The Plains of Mesopotamia, the Forests of Pontus, and the Highlands of Kurdistan. By Capt. MARK SYKES . . . . .	105
Sixty-seventh Annual General Meeting . . . . .	106
The Arretine Vase in the Cambridge Archaeological Museum. (With Plates IV, V.) By H. B. WALTERS, Esq. . . . .	107
The Morning Star Ceremony of the Pawnee. By A. C. HADDON, Sc.D., F.R.S. . . . .	113
The Round Moat at Fowlmere. (With one Figure in the text.) By Rev. A. C. YORKE . . . . .	114