

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
Cambridge Antiquarian Society,

OCTOBER 1928—OCTOBER 1930

WITH
Communications
MADE TO THE SOCIETY

VOLUME XXXI

Edited by E. A. B. BARNARD, F.S.A., F.R.Hist.S.



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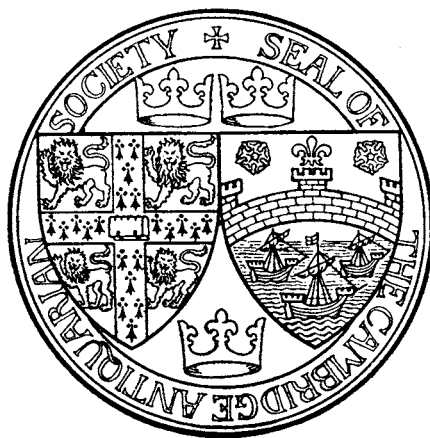
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Carolingian type (cf. P. Reinecke, *Mittheilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, XXIX, 1899, p. 35). Photographs of the weapon have been sent to the Curator of the Mainz Museum and to Dr Jan Petersen of Stavanger, both of whom have kindly given their opinions of its date and origin. The former says: "The spearhead is, according to our finds, Carolingian and we should place it about 900 A.D. We have many such spearheads with side-wings, so-called *Knebellanzen*, but none of them has the plait ornament seen on yours." Dr Petersen says: "I don't doubt that the spearhead... is from the 10th century and preferably the first half of this century, the silver inlay seems to show that too. It is more difficult to decide the origin of this spearhead. It is a well-known type in Norway, but it may very well be made by the Northmen in England. It was very usual that the sword-hilts with entrelace ornament are made in the western countries, and that may be the fall here too."

The spearhead has been kindly presented to the Museum by Major Gordon Fowler, to whom it is much indebted, as also to Mr A. Rowden through whom the discovery was first brought to its notice.

AN ATTEMPT TO DISCOVER THE SITE OF THE BATTLE OF ALDRETH.

By T. C. LETHBRIDGE, B.A., F.S.A.

In August 1930 an effort was made to see whether the disaster to King William's troops which is so graphically described in *De Gestis Herwardi Saxonis* had really taken place at Aldreth High Bridge as is generally supposed. It was thought that if so it was almost certain that numerous objects would be found, for however keen the then local "scroungers" may have been to recover lost weapons and the like, it would have been exceedingly difficult to recover them from several feet of slime or peat bog. Trenches were cut all round the bridge and across the line along which the Causeway would have led, had it not swung a little to the present bridge site. Nothing whatever was found remotely suggesting that this was the battlefield. There was

evidence of a medieval landing place on the Aldreth bank; a few scraps of pottery of all ages from Roman to Elizabethan, a padlock and some animal bones including the canine tooth of a small bear. Nearly all these objects seem to have been dumped as rubbish to form a hard bank; they had been placed directly on bundles of sedges laid on the peat, and kept in place by thin stakes driven through the peat into the clay bottom. Much coal was found, suggesting that sea-coal was landed at this hithe.

Although the evidence is by no means conclusive, it seems highly probable that this is not the site of the battle at all; it does not really correspond to the description in *De Gestis*, and the only relic we know of which seems as if it might really have been lost in this fight, is a sword-blade found nearly half a mile down stream from here (*C.A.S. Proc.* Vol. xxx, p. 111). It has always seemed inconceivable that such a great military expert as William should have made that long narrow causeway from Belsar's Hill through the swamp. It is much more probable that he ferried his men from island to island, and made his preparations on the firm ridge where Smithy Fen Farm now stands. The breadth of this position is almost the 4 stadia mentioned in *De Gestis*, a remark which makes nonsense when applied, as it was by Kingsley in *Hereward the Wake*, to the distance between Belsar's Hill and Aldreth. William's Causeway probably ran from Smithy Fen island to the river. It may be more than coincidence that on this stretch the dredger threw out many bones of animals, late Saxon pottery and a sword blade. We hope that the kindness of Mr Graves will allow us to test this possibility some day.

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