

PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN  
SOCIETY



VOLUME XLV

JANUARY 1951 TO DECEMBER 1951

CAMBRIDGE  
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# EXCAVATIONS ON THE CASTLE SITE KNOWN AS 'THE HILLINGS' AT EATON SOCON, BEDFORDSHIRE<sup>1</sup>

T. C. LETHBRIDGE, M.A., F.S.A. AND C. F. TEBBUTT, F.S.A.

THE Hillings are at present a series of grass-covered earthworks situated on an old gravel terrace on the west bank of the river Ouse. They lie about half-way between St Neots and the village of Tempsford. The site might be compared topographically with that of Cambridge or Huntingdon castles. A wide river flows at the foot of a low bluff and on the farther bank lie broad water-meadows before the opposite gravel terrace is reached. In company with many other local fortresses, the site has lost its original name. Burwell castle, for instance, is now known as Spring Close, while Rampton castle bears the name of the Giant's Hills.

The Eaton Socon earthworks, which I prefer to think of as a castle, consist of a large horseshoe ditch enclosing on the river side two more or less rectangular wards. These are also separated by a ditch from one another and are ditched round on the landward side which, in the case of the northern ward, meets the enclosing horseshoe ditch at right angles and in the southern ward runs right round to the river flat. The northern ward is the lower of the two and has a high earthen rampart on its northern and western sides. The southern ward is several feet higher than the northern and has a slight bank on its northern, western and southern edges. Farther than this it has a low mound resembling a Bronze Age barrow, or the base of a windmill, more or less centrally placed within it. The interior of the northern ward is very uneven and presents an unfinished appearance. A small rectangular enclosure abuts on the rampart at its north-eastern corner, and a circular depression ringed with earth suggests the base of a wooden turret in the north-western angle, though it is improbable that it was ever a turret.

The site has points of resemblance both to Burwell and Rampton castles, and even perhaps to the great mounds at Caxton Moats. An account of it will be found in the *Victoria County History*, together with a plan by Lysons. From this it appears that on the river side a bank formerly existed which has since been levelled off. Skeletons with long iron swords are said to have been found near the entrance, but the swords have disappeared and it is uncertain which entrance is meant. There appears to have been a way into the southern ward near its south-western corner, which may have had an original bridge. There is also a narrow trackway into this ward at its north-eastern angle, which is almost certainly a secondary feature.

<sup>1</sup> Map reference 84/626781.

Miss Joyce Godber of the County Record Office, Bedford, has kindly provided us with such details as are known of the Saxon and Norman lords of Eaton Socon and we include her notes here, down to A.D. 1367. It seems clear, however, from the results obtained by trial excavations, conducted by Mr Tebbutt and supervised by myself in 1949, that the history of the site probably goes back much further than the days of Ulmar, the thegn of Edward the Confessor, and that its life as a fortress had ended before it came into the hands of Engayne in A.D. 1343.

*Ulmar of Eaton Socon*: a thegn of King Edward: held Eaton Socon, Sandy, Stanford, Little Barford. His men held four hides in Tempsford, one hide in Chicksands, 2½ hides in Stondon.

*Eudo dapifer*: son of Hubert de Rie who had helped William when young. One of several brothers who attained eminence after Conquest. Farmer of the city and constable of the castle of Colchester. About 1096 founded the Abbey of St John in Colchester. For the last fifteen years of his life was blind, and lived at his castle of Preaux, dying there in 1120. Married Roheise, daughter of Richard son of Count Gilbert of Brionne, the founder of the great house of Claye, but left no direct heir. His extensive holding in Bedfordshire was built up mainly from that of Ulmar, but in this as in some lands in other counties his immediate predecessor was Lisois de Moustiers (*B.H.R.S.* 4 to ser. 1, p. 92). At Domesday: Eaton, Wyboston, Chawston, Tempsford, Sandy, Sutton, Southill, Stanford, Blunham, Beeston, Northill, Clifton. (Some of these are small holdings only, but the main ones—Eaton Socon twenty hides and Sandy sixteen hides—and some of the smaller holdings were ones which had previously been Ulmar's (*V.C.H.* 1, pp. 234-6).

1120-56: complicated history, for which see *B.H.R.S.* 11, pp. 61 ff.

*Beauchamp of Eaton*: Hugh, occurs 1155-6, died on Crusade 1187, succeeded by grandson, Hugh. Hugh (founder of Bushmead Priory), grandson of above, died by 1217-18, succeeded by brother Roger. Roger, brother of above succeeded 1217-18, died 1220-1. And so on, till Eaton sold to Engayne, 1343. The Engayne line ended with three heiresses in 1367, after which there were many changes.

Mr Tebbutt's section across the northern ward revealed a remarkable state of affairs. His trench cut through a graveyard, which had obviously been in use for a considerable period. Later burials had disturbed earlier ones in a manner which suggests that the place had been used for centuries. Much of it had, however, been covered up by a hard layer of stones and mortar, which appeared to have been the debris of a building destroyed at the time the ditch was cut between the northern and southern wards. This supposition is confirmed by pieces of human bone occurring here and there on the southern ward, on to which they had evidently been cast when material from this ditch was thrown up on to it. The skeletons therefore are older than the castle in its present form. There is little doubt that they lie deeply buried beneath the surface of the southern ward, although this needs to be checked by future excavation. Relatively early glazed mediaeval pottery was found above the burials in the northern ward.

The interest in these burials lies, not so much in their antiquity, as the evidence they give of having in some cases come to a violent end. Mr Tebbutt observed about forty skeletons in a single trench. Out of these, two, in each case disturbed and



therefore relatively early in the burial series, had had their skulls split during life by some heavy cutting weapon. A third and undisturbed burial at a great depth had apparently been burnt to death or burnt after death in a blazing building. Falling beams, as we think, had charred off his skull and the middle portion of his body. It is surely too much of a coincidence to suppose that these people met their ends in the ordinary rough and tumble of village life and we must look round for something rather more drastic to account for it. This event, if it were a single event, must have taken place long years before the cemetery became disused and the castle assumed its present form. There is no reason to suppose that a Norman baron in an emergency would hesitate to destroy a Saxon church and desecrate its cemetery if he wished to use the site for building a castle. He would not, however, commit this sacrilege without good reason. The site is not so remarkably different from the rest of the gravel terrace in the neighbourhood and it seems more probable that the castle builder chose it because the horseshoe ditch was already there. The castle is of at least two dates. There is the outer horseshoe ditch; there are the ditches round the two wards and there is the ditch separating the two wards. All these ditches have the appearance of having been constructed either at different times, or in such a hurry that they were not properly linked up. The two wards are probably the latest military constructions on the site, for it seems likely that the circular mound within the southern one is only the base for a late mediaeval windmill. On this southern ward stood buildings with foundations of boulder stones packed in clay. These were the earliest buildings on the completed ward, which was faced with clay to prevent the gravel from slipping. Pottery fragments found in the occupation layers of these buildings consist of green glazes on a white paste and coarse shell-grit wares. The few bronze objects (Fig. 1, nos. 1-4) recovered are at present undatable, but are probably Norman. It is improbable that any of the pottery from this occupation is as late as the middle of the thirteenth century. In our present state of knowledge, it seems much more likely to date from about the middle of the twelfth century. If this is correct, we arrive at a period when Eaton Socon belonged to the Beauchamps and the first Hugh de Beauchamp was, as Miss Godber informs us, connected, either by marriage or obligation, with Geoffrey de Mandeville. Once again, as in the case of Burwell,<sup>1</sup> we have a castle, with one ward apparently never completed (the northern ward) and even the second presenting a rather disorganized appearance, which seems to be linked in some way with the war between de Mandeville and King Stephen. De Mandeville died of a wound received at Burwell in A.D. 1144.

It does not appear as if stone walls were ever built at the Hillings castle. The whole thing was run up in a hurry. A graveyard was desecrated, a mortared building levelled. Fragments of dressed stone found from time to time on the site probably come from a demolished Saxon church. A piece of a pilaster was actually found during the excavations. The buildings built on top of the southern ward were, however, plastered, for much of it was found, and they may have been burnt, for some of it presents a reddened appearance. We need not go too deeply into the matter of two

<sup>1</sup> C.A.S. xxxvi, 1936.

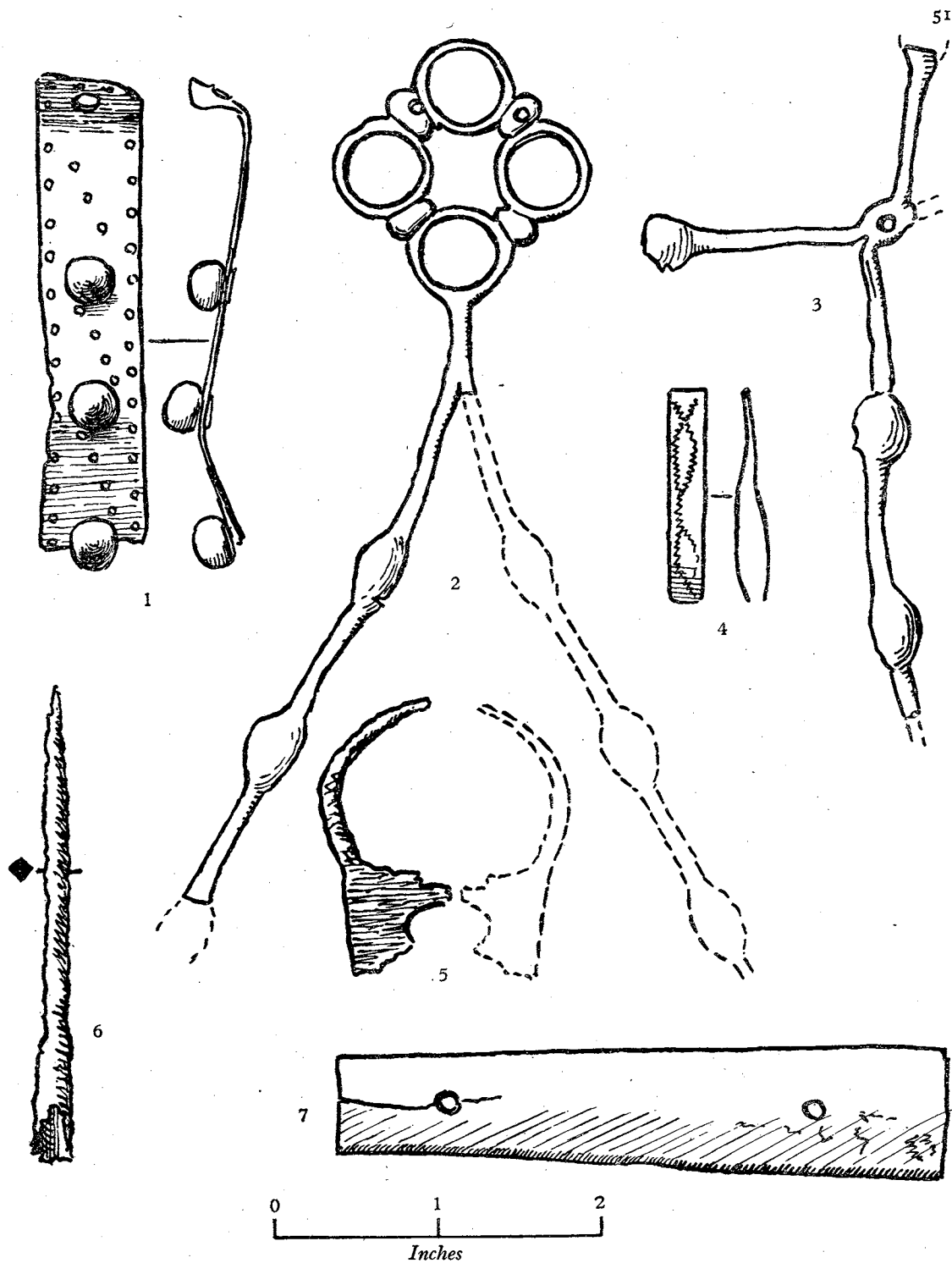


Fig. 1.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| No. 1. Heavy gilded-bronze strip.          | } Stratified in first occupation layer on southern ward. |
| Nos. 2 & 3. Gilded-bronze mounts.          |  |
| No. 4. Bronze tweezers.                    |  |
| No. 5. Part of iron buckle.                | No. 6. One of two unstratified iron arrowheads.          |
| No. 7. Plate from bone 'whip-handle' comb. |  |

unstratified iron arrowheads (Fig. 1, no. 6) found during the excavations, although from what little is known of such objects these might well date from the twelfth century.<sup>1</sup> Later mediaeval pottery at a higher level in the southern ward may well have come from mill buildings.

All this, however, has nothing to do with the burials in the northern ward. The castle on the southern ward may have been destroyed by Stephen's men, but some of the persons buried beneath the other ward had met violent ends long years before. There is good reason for supposing that this happened in Saxon times.

Under the year A.D. 921 the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Giles edition) has the following entry:

At that same time went out the army from Huntingdon and from the East Angles, and constructed the fortress at Tempsford, and abode, and built there; and forsook the other at Huntingdon, and thought that from thence they could, by warfare and hostility, get more of the land again. And they went forth until they arrived at Bedford; and then the men who were there within went out against them, and fought with them and put them to flight, and slew a good part of them. Then again, after that, a large army once more drew together from East Anglia and from Mercia, and went to the town at Wigmore, and beset it round about, and fought against it the greater part of the day, and took the cattle thereabout. And nevertheless, the men who were within the town defended it; and then the army left the town and went away. Then, after that, in the same summer, much people, within king Edward's dominion, drew together out of the nearest towns, who could go thither, and went to Tempsford, and beset the town, and fought against it till they took it by storm, and slew the king, and Toglos the earl, and Mann the earl, his son, and his brother, and all those who were there within and would defend themselves; and took the others, and all that was therein. Then, very soon after this, much people drew together during harvest, as well from Kent as from Surrey and from Essex, and from each of the nearest towns, and went to Colchester, and beset the town, and fought against it until they mastered it, and slew all the people there within, and took all that was there, except the men who fled away over the wall. Then after that, once again during the same harvest, a large army drew together out of East Anglia, as well of the land-force as of the pirates whom they had enticed to their aid; and they thought that they should be able to avenge their wrongs. And they went to Maldon, and beset the town, and fought against it until more aid came to the help of the townsmen from without; and then the army left the town and went away. And then the men from the town went out after them, and those also who came from without to their aid; and they put the army to flight, and slew many hundreds of them, as well of the pirates as of the others. Then, very shortly after, during the same harvest, king Edward went with the forces of the West Saxons to Passoham, and sat down there while they encompassed the town at Towcester with a stone wall. And Thurferth the earl, and the captains, and all the army which owed obedience to Northampton, as far north as the Welland, submitted to him, and sought to him to be their lord and protector. And when one division of the forces went home, then another went out, and took possession of the town of Huntingdon, and repaired and rebuilt it, by command of king Edward, where it had been previously demolished; and all who were left of the inhabitants of that country submitted to king Edward, and sought his peace and his protection. And after this, still in the same year, before Martinmas, king Edward went with the forces of the West Saxons to Colchester, and repaired the town, and rebuilt it where it had been before broken down; and much people submitted to him, as well among the East Anglians as among the East Saxons, who before were under the dominion of the Danes. And all the army among the East Anglians swore union with him, that they would all that he

<sup>1</sup> *London Museum Mediaeval Catalogue*, fig. 16.

would, and would observe peace towards all to which the king should grant his peace, both by sea and by land. And the army which owed obedience to Cambridge chose him specially to be their lord and protector; and confirmed it with oaths, even as he then decreed it.

This fortress at Tempsford has never been identified. The names given to battles are often those of places several miles from the actual scene of conflict; Hastings is a typical example. A little earthwork farther up the river towards Bedford could not have contained anything like the force of the army from Huntingdon. It might have held a hundred men, but certainly not the hutments and the like which are implied in the *Chronicle*. The Danes were building a fortified town for themselves, their women and children. It seems most probable that this fortified town, which Edward the Elder stormed and in which he slew all those who would defend themselves, was on a site similar to that of Huntingdon, although placed for tactical reasons nearer to Bedford. To us it seems almost certain that the outer horseshoe ditch was dug to protect this town and that there the Danes were buried where they fell; the site being used afterwards as the village graveyard. There a Saxon church was probably erected in memory perhaps of Edward's great feat of arms. It may have decayed and fallen down, but its ruins were ruthlessly levelled by a Norman lord in a new age of unrest. Now nothing whatever is remembered of any of it.

It may be thought that I have built too large a structure on too flimsy evidence, but, however weak the evidence may be, nothing whatever was known of the site before we started work. This reconstruction of events is based not only on what Colonel Alfred Burne calls 'inherent military probability', but also on the results of excavation. Much more excavation would, however, have to be undertaken before the theories put forward above could either be proved or disproved. T. C. L.

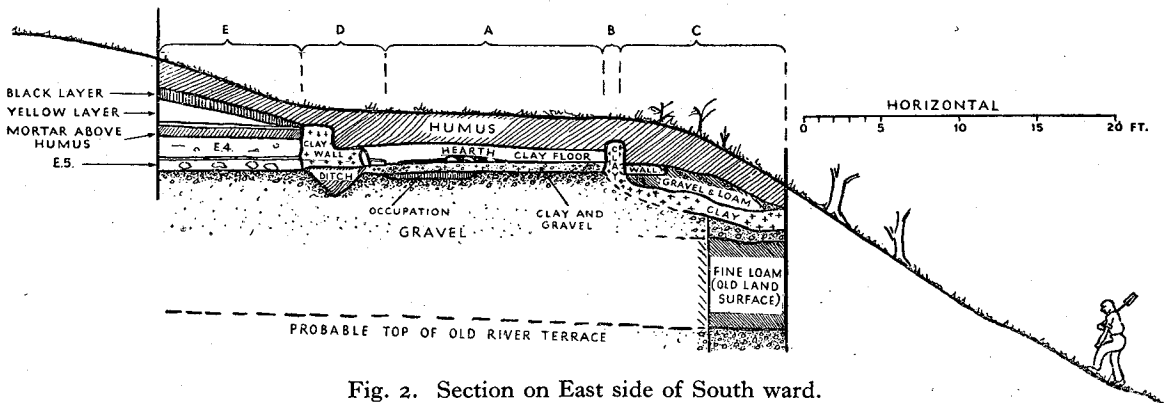


Fig. 2. Section on East side of South ward.

For many years I have been finding sherds of unglazed pottery, turned out by rabbits, on the river slope of the south ward of the Hillings, Eaton Socon, while on the north bank of the great ditch separating the north and south wards other rabbits are continually exposing human bones.

In the hope that excavation might throw some light on late Saxon or early mediaeval archaeological problems, digging was started towards the end of 1949 and

continued in 1950. The necessary permit was obtained from the Ministry of Works and permission to dig generously given by Mr A. W. McNish, owner of the site. Mr T. C. Lethbridge gave general supervision, and much hard work was done by Mr W. Key, of St Neots, as well as by parties from Wimpole Park Training College and Kimbolton School.

The south ward has steep sides but a relatively flat top, except that on it, in an approximately central position, is a low round mound. It was decided first to open a trench running almost east and west, on the east side of this ward between the round mound and the east or river slope. This part of the trench was lettered Zone A. An eastward extension of this trench down the steep slope passed through Zones B and C; while another to the west brought it to the edge of the round mound at D, and under the mound at E.

The ward itself was found to be built up with an admixture of gravel and loam with layers of clay to give stability. The steep outside slope was of clay to prevent slipping. A short way down the slope, in Zone C, a pit was dug 9 ft. deep through material of the ward to the old land surface. This, when reached, was found to be resting on natural unmoved gravel, and on it were found several late-Saxon sherds of St Neots type.

#### ZONES A AND B

Zone A was 16 ft. wide and appeared to have been occupied by a building or open shed, the floor of which was 3 ft. below the present surface. At the east end was the 4 ft. wide clay foundation of a wall (Zone B), in which were set layers of large gravel stones. This foundation was at the extreme edge of the top of the ward and probably formed the base of the wall surrounding the ward. The building at A could therefore have been a penthouse built up against it on the inner side.

The floor at A was of clay and on it had accumulated several inches of black wood-ash. Near the centre the wood-ash layer was thicker and lay on a hearth, 2 ft. wide, of cobble-stones set in the clay floor. The stones were all cracked by fire and the clay burnt red. From this floor came many bones of food animals including birds and fish, oyster and mussel shells, and numerous pottery sherds. Relatively quick and easy water transport from the Wash oyster fisheries would seem to be implied from the numerous shells found all over the site.

Below the clay floor, and between it and the material of the ward, was a slight hollow 6 in. deep by 6 ft. wide. This was filled in with dark soil mixed with wood-ash, food bones and especially large oyster shells. The small amount of pottery it contained did not differ in type from that found on the clay floor above. I would suggest that it derived from the workmen engaged on the building of the castle.

#### ZONE D

West of A, Zone D consisted of a mass or bank of irregularly shaped clay about 7 ft. wide, in which, as at B, were set large stones. Part of this was undoubtedly again a wall foundation, but its great bulk seemed to suggest that here we had also a collapsed

clay wall. This view was strengthened by the fact that besides slightly overlapping the floor of A, it sealed below it a small V-shaped ditch found to be filled with the same kind of domestic rubbish and pottery as found on the floor at A. While it is possible that the wall D was the west wall of the building A, it seemed more probable that it belonged to another building separated from A by a small yard drain.

#### ZONE E

West of D our trench was cut into the low central mound and was continued for a further 10 ft. By this time 6 ft. of the top soil had to be removed to reach undisturbed occupation layers and it was decided to dig no further.

The mound itself seen in section had quite clearly been imposed on the old land surface of the south ward at a relatively late date. The material used to form it had been taken from the earth banks on the north and west sides of the ward. In it was found a range of pottery from late Saxon St Neots ware to late mediaeval glaze, as well as some scraps of mediaeval coloured window glass and an iron arrowhead of Type 7<sup>1</sup> (Fig. 1, no. 6).

Below the mound the old land surface was plainly visible as a clear-cut black line with some 6-9 in. in depth of turf, which must indicate the lapse of some considerable time between the abandonment of the castle, the grassing over of the top of the ward, and the throwing up of the mound.

From this old surface level came pottery sherds as from A, including examples of bright green glaze which was subsequently found at all levels in this section. Other finds included a gilt bronze ornament (Fig. 1, no. 2), many small oyster shells and one clam, iron slag, a broken glazed floor-tile and many large stones.

Below the old turf layer, stony loam containing much evidence of occupation lay to a depth of 26 in. directly on the original surface of the ward. At the top of this were many lumps of lime mortar and plaster. The plaster all lay face-side up and most of it had been whitewashed. Some was of a pink colour on the surface, indicating burning. With this building rubbish were a number of short lath nails. All the mortar and plaster lay near the top, but throughout the layer were numbers of food-animal bones, mostly sheep and pig, but also those of fish and birds. Part of a red deer antler was found among these and a tine of roe deer sharpened to form a meat skewer. Metal objects were notably a pair of bronze tweezers (Fig. 1, no. 4), a gilded bronze strip (Fig. 1, no. 1), and several 'fiddle key' horseshoe nails.

Eight inches from the bottom of this occupation layer a thin white layer of mortar extended all over the section. This was found to have continued eastward just far enough to underlap the clay floor of the building at A. It had however been cut into by the small ditch dug below the clay bank at D.

Below this thin mortar layer the remaining lowest level of the section contained nothing to distinguish it in date from those above.

I would suggest that after the ward was built there occurred a short occupation by workmen before permanent building took place. On the arrival of builders the mixing

<sup>1</sup> *London Museum Mediaeval Catalogue*, fig. 16, p. 66.

of mortar on the ground accounted for the thin layer, and subsequently a building with plastered walls and coloured glass windows was erected. At the same time the building or penthouse represented by A was built with a small yard drain between them. The whole living site did not last long enough for pottery styles to change, and was burnt and the buildings collapsed.

Long after the site was abandoned and grassed over, a mound was made on the top of the ward, probably on which to raise a mediaeval post windmill for use when the river stream was too slack to drive the adjoining water-mill. The two graded tracks leading up to the south ward from the south-east and north-west corners were probably made at this time to enable pack-horses to be led up to and back from the windmill.

It was decided to dig two short trial trenches on the same ward north of the original trench A-E.

The first of these, named F, was on the possible line of the supposed clay wall foundation found at D, presuming it to run parallel to the west side of the ward. This presumption proved to be correct and the foundation was found at the depth of 1 ft. In this trench just east of the wall and at its level was found another part of the gilt bronze ornament found at E, as well as part of a bone 'whip-handle' comb (Fig. 1, nos. 3 and 7).

Farther north still another short trench G was dug to determine if the clay wall foundation had turned at right angles, to follow the line of the north edge of the ward. At the expected depth this was found to be the case.

#### THE NORTH WARD

Trenches were also dug in the north ward from the south slope of which human bones had come. The first and longest of these, Z, was dug right across the west side of the ward from south to north. This cut through the slight bank on the southern edge of the ward and finished at the inner foot of the large bank that defends it on the outside north edge.

At about 1 ft. below the present surface there was found to be a layer of large stones, many 6-8 in. in diameter, tightly packed together.

At the south end this layer was 1 ft. thick, but it got thinner as the trench progressed northward, practically disappearing by the time the north bank was reached. Most of the stones were natural gravel stones that had formed part of a building as many had mortar adhering, and among them were some of Bedfordshire sandstone as well as broken Collyweston stone slates.<sup>1</sup> With these were a few pieces of coloured window glass and pottery, some with green glaze, comparable with that found in the occupation levels of the south ward. 'Fiddle key' horseshoe nails and part of a horseshoe of wavy edge type<sup>2</sup> were also found. The layer of pottery continued right along the trench, sherds being rather more numerous at the north end where the

<sup>1</sup> Collyweston slates were used in Roman times in this area, and were found in abundance on the early mediaeval earthworks at Southoe, Hunts (C.A.S. xxxviii).

<sup>2</sup> See *London Museum Mediaeval Catalogue*, p. 113.

stones ceased. This layer of stones and pottery was unbroken and undisturbed and obviously later than the graves that were found below.

The section cut through the rather slight south bank of this ward proved quite conclusively that this bank was made subsequent to the destruction and spreading of material of the building in which the stones were used. The stone layer passed right under the bank and indeed enough time had elapsed for a layer of turf to be formed over the stones before the bank was made. At one time a fence or palisade had topped the bank as a hole with remains of wood, large enough for a 6 ft. post, was found driven through the clay and gravel material of the bank into the stones below.

Along the whole length of trench Z the section was consistent. Below the stone or pottery layer an old land surface could be faintly detected and below this mixed yellowish loam continued down to undisturbed gravel at approximately 5 ft. from the present surface.

At about 1 ft. below the stone layer we began to find disturbed human bones and skulls. These belonged to graves disturbed by later burials. Most of the graves had been dug down to the gravel or just into it. They were closely packed together and it is estimated that the remains of at least forty individuals were found in the trench, the majority disturbed.

No large stones were found in the grave fillings nor a single sherd of pottery of the type found in the layer above or other occupation areas of the earthwork. Several small pieces of Bedfordshire sandstone and pottery were however found at or near the bottom of undisturbed graves. The pottery was all of black or brown paste with shell grit of Pagan Saxon or St Neots type, with the exception of one piece of hard grey micaceous paste comparable with that from Saxon Thetford. This pottery was presumably lying on the land surface when the graves were filled in.

The skeletons all lay east and west in the Christian manner, and consisted of men and women, young and old, as well as children. All were carefully excavated but no grave goods were found with the exception of the badly rusted remains of an iron buckle at the waist of a young man. At least two skulls from disturbed burials had sword or axe cuts that must have caused death, while in an undisturbed grave a body had been carelessly thrown in leaving it half on its side with one arm behind its back and the other in front.

The most remarkable burial was of a male showing marks of severe burning. The leg bones were cremated to a black and blue colour, while one arm had the hand burnt off at the wrist and the elbow charred. The skull was completely cremated and lay in fragments from the breast to the knees. There was a coating of black ash over the bones and the sand at the bottom of the grave was burnt red.

In the south-east corner of the north ward a very slight bank enclosing a rectangle was noticed, and a trench, W, running north and south was cut across this. The slight banks were found to be the base of a wall covered by much collapsed rubble consisting of large stones, mortar and whitewashed plaster. As the soil appeared to be disturbed inside the building, the trench was deepened and an undisturbed skeleton



was found at a depth of 5 ft. Like the others it lay east and west and had no grave goods. Unlike the other graves in trench Z large stones from the building were found in the grave filling, and it is possible that the building predated the burial. Not a scrap of pottery or other objects were found to give a clue to its date.

Short trial trenches were also dug in the round turret-like enclosures in the north-east and north-west corners of the north ward. The material forming the ward was reached without finding any sign of occupation, and it is doubtful if they were ever completed or occupied.

It would seem to be quite evident that this extensively used cemetery in the north ward has nothing to do with the earthwork, at least in its present post-Conquest form. Indeed the great ditch between the north and south wards disturbed many burials now being turned out by rabbits along its slope. One is tempted to guess that on this spot Eaton Socon Saxon church stood, surrounded by its graveyard, in which, at some period, had been buried persons involved in war and destruction. The Norman lord had no hesitation in pulling down the church and removing it to its present site when he decided to build his castle there.

C. F. T.

#### METAL OBJECTS FOUND DURING THE EXCAVATIONS

The most important objects are of course those actually found in the primary occupation on top of the completed or nearly completed southern ward. They were found in a layer of dark soil representing the actual living surface directly on top of the gravel of the mound and inside the buildings which were first built on it. As is usual in the case of mediaeval excavations it is hard to fix an exact period for any of them, but they show resemblances to Late Saxon objects and it may be reasonable to conclude that they belong to Norman times.

(1) Several fragments of gilded bronze lattice work (Fig. 1, nos. 2 and 3). These are ornamented in a style which recalls Late Saxon keys and book-clasps. The bosses on the straight pieces are made by hammering out cups in the metal rods. It is probable that they formed part of an eight-pointed star which covered the front of some large book, or more likely a wooden box. It is possible that they may have ornamented a portable altar of the type associated with St Cuthbert.<sup>1</sup>

(2) A strip of gilded bronze with punched dot ornament and with spherical rivets inserted in it at intervals along its length (Fig. 1, no. 1). This may possibly have formed part of the binding of the wooden object to which the lattice work was fixed.

(3) A small pair of bronze tweezers resembling common Roman forms but ornamented with zigzag lines engraved on it. This type of ornamentation occurs on buckles and other objects of types apparently ranging from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries.

(4) Two socketed iron arrowheads (Fig. 1, no. 6) with awl-like points of diamond cross-section were found unstratified. Until a proper classification of mediaeval arrowheads is worked out, little can be said with regard to their dates. It may be

<sup>1</sup> See *Antiquaries Journal*, xxx, pl. xix.

observed, however, that the numerous arrowheads found at Trelleborg in Denmark, which were probably of eleventh-century date, although fitted with a spike and not a socket, were mostly of this awl-like form. Similar arrowheads to those from Eaton Socon were found unstratified in the Roman castle at Richborough, which was occupied long after the Roman period. It is probable that contrary to the views expressed by some authorities this awl-pointed type is earlier than the barbed and winged long-bow arrowheads which are found from time to time. The Eaton Socon arrowheads have such small sockets that it seems unlikely that they were used with the long bow. The evidence, such as it is, points to a relatively early date for these specimens.

*Iron Buckles* (Fig. 1, no. 5). One specimen is of mediaeval type but otherwise cannot be accurately dated. A second specimen consisting of a fragmentary simple bow which might belong to any period was found with one of the skeletons on the northern ward.

*Bone*. The bone plate, flat on one side and gently keeled on the other (Fig. 1, no. 7), was found in the earliest occupation layer on top of the southern ward. It appears to be the side plate of a 'whip-handle' bone comb of the type in common use in Late Saxon times. It is not a knife handle. Although this type of comb<sup>1</sup> may have persisted into Norman times it does not appear to be known on later sites.

#### POTTERY

The fragments recovered from the primary occupation layer are all too small to be of much value for illustration purposes. By comparison with other local specimens, however, it is possible to see the kind of vessels from which they were derived. The more important classes are as follows:

(a) GREEN GLAZE WARE. This is fine mottled green and yellow glaze on white paste. It has been ornamented with a comb-like instrument.<sup>2</sup> It can now be shown that fine green and mottle green glaze occurs on many pot forms in eastern England which are also found covered with pale yellow glaze, and was obviously in use at the same time. (It is hoped to make a more extensive study of this pottery in the next volume.) There is no reason therefore why the date of the Eaton Socon glazed ware should not be quite close to the Late Saxon period. The castle at Faringdon Clump in Berkshire, described by Mr E. T. Leeds, F.S.A., in *The Antiquaries Journal* for April 1936, produced forms of this glazed ware. This castle was apparently destroyed by King Stephen after its capture in A.D. 1145. There is good reason, therefore, for believing that our glaze from Eaton Socon is not later than mid-twelfth century in date.

(b) COARSE WARE. Three types could be recognized from the small fragments. The first are fragments of vessels made of the red shell-mixed wares characteristic of the Bedford-Stamford areas at the end of the Saxon period. One pot form was that of a jug with rows of rectangular rouletting all down the neck. A jug neck from

<sup>1</sup> See *London Museum Guide*, 'London and the Saxons', fig. 30.

<sup>2</sup> See *C.A.S. Proceedings*, vol. XLIII, coloured plate I, no. 1.

the King's Ditch at Cambridge shows what the original form was like. It was a large vessel with a slightly everted hammer-headed rim and provided with a large and wide strap handle. A piece of this type of handle in grey gritted Late Saxon ware is shown in *C.A.S. Proceedings*, vol. XLIII, fig. 1, no. 1. We have been calling jugs of this type 'Late Saxon' but it is becoming clear that the Late Saxon pottery forms persist without radical change into the Norman age.

Another type consists of fragments of bowls with interned rims made from the kind of paste used by the potters who made the pots found by Mr Tebbutt and myself at St Neots, Great Paxton, Burwell Castle, Flambards Manor and other places in the Cambridge area. It is a brownish, rather soapy ware, and we have been regarding it as a Mercian counterpart of the grey grit ware found farther east at Cambridge and Thetford.

The third type consists of the remains of jars (*ollae* in Roman times) with everted rims sliced with a knife to give a pie-crust appearance all round the rim. These fragments are made from the Bedford-Stamford paste but are not so red as the jugs. This type of jar is believed to be of twelfth-century date derived from Late Saxon prototypes.

It will be seen from the above that all the evidence for the dating of the pottery of the first occupation of the southern ward points to a date close up to the Late Saxon period, but not actually in that period.

*Higher level:* the pottery from this level consists of very hard-baked, reddish vessels of the type associated with later mediaeval sites. It may be ascribed to the period of the mound which we think must have been the base of a windmill situated well above the primary occupation layer in the southern ward. *Old ground surface below the southern ward:* some small fragments apparently of Pagan Saxon ware were found in the cut made into the old ground level on which the southern ward was constructed. Other fragments were mixed up with skeletons in the northern ward.

*Window glass.* Some minute fragments of window glass were found in the primary occupation layer and probably came from windows in the castle buildings. Window glass was until recently regarded as a late feature in mediaeval times, but this is no longer the case.

*Summary of finds.* When the general character of all the small finds from the excavations is considered, it becomes clear that we are dealing with a primary occupation of buildings on top of the southern ward in which everything is of a homogeneous date. Everything resembles Late Saxon forms, but is apparently a little later than that period. It may be that it is not safe to ascribe the construction of the southern ward and the desecration of the cemetery on the northern ward to the troubles of King Stephen's reign, but it is at least evident that the castle assumed its present outline in the twelfth century.

*Bird bones.* These were kindly identified by Miss Platt at the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, as follows: Goose (small, could be domesticated or wild), domestic fowl (numerous), Mallard, Woodcock, Merganser, Pochard, Shoveller and Golden Plover.

T. C. L. & C. F. T.

# ROMAN FINDS AT ARRINGTON BRIDGE<sup>1</sup>

T. C. LETHBRIDGE, M.A., F.S.A.

MR F. W. MURFIT of Guilden Morden kindly drew my attention to the construction of a new bridge on the supposed line of the Ermine Street and informed me that wooden piles were being discovered beneath the modern roadway during the demolition of the existing bridge. Arrington Bridge is on the presumed site of the Armingaford, which has always interested the students of place-names. The ford, the village of Arrington and Ermine Street all derive their names from the Earningas, who owned the land through which the road passes (see Reaney, *Place-Names of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely*, p. 23).

I went out to look at the excavations for the foundations of the new bridge and examined some of the piles *in situ*. These were of much the same size as an ordinary telephone pole and presumably supported a wooden bridge, but it is unlikely that this was of any great antiquity. It had the appearance of having been the bridge in use at the time the recently demolished brick bridge was built and may well have been less than three hundred years old.

Beneath the bridge and roadway ramps, however, was a gravel ford and it appears that it was from the surface of this ford that various objects of the Roman period were subsequently recovered. The more important of these consist of an iron spearhead, two 'hippo-sandals', a brass coin of Antoninus Pius and the neck of a pale buff-ware jug. The spearhead (Plate XII, *a* and *d*) has a leaf-shaped blade characteristic of those in use in the Roman army in Britain in the earlier part of the period of occupation.<sup>2</sup> It is the only weapon of its kind so far recovered in this neighbourhood.

The two hippo-sandals (one of which is illustrated in Plate XII, *b* and *c*) are in far better condition than is commonly the case and their construction can be well seen. One at any rate is far too small to have been used as a shoe for any pony. A recent comparison has been made between these hippo-sandals and the irons strapped beneath men's boots when digging in order to prevent the chafe from the spade on the sole of the boot. This might have been a reasonable suggestion if men dug with the toe of their boot pressing on the spade, but of course a digging iron goes under the instep. It is impossible to see how these sandals could be used in such a manner. We are forced back once more to Pitt Rivers's suggestion<sup>3</sup> that hippo-sandals were used as shields for the bottom ends of sledge-poles drawn on either side of a pony; shoes for poles and not for men or horses. It is most reasonable to expect such objects to become detached when crossing a ford. One specimen is, in fact, actually broken.

<sup>1</sup> Map reference Nat. Grid. 52/334486.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Curle, *Newstead, a Roman Frontier Post and its People*, pl. XXXVII.

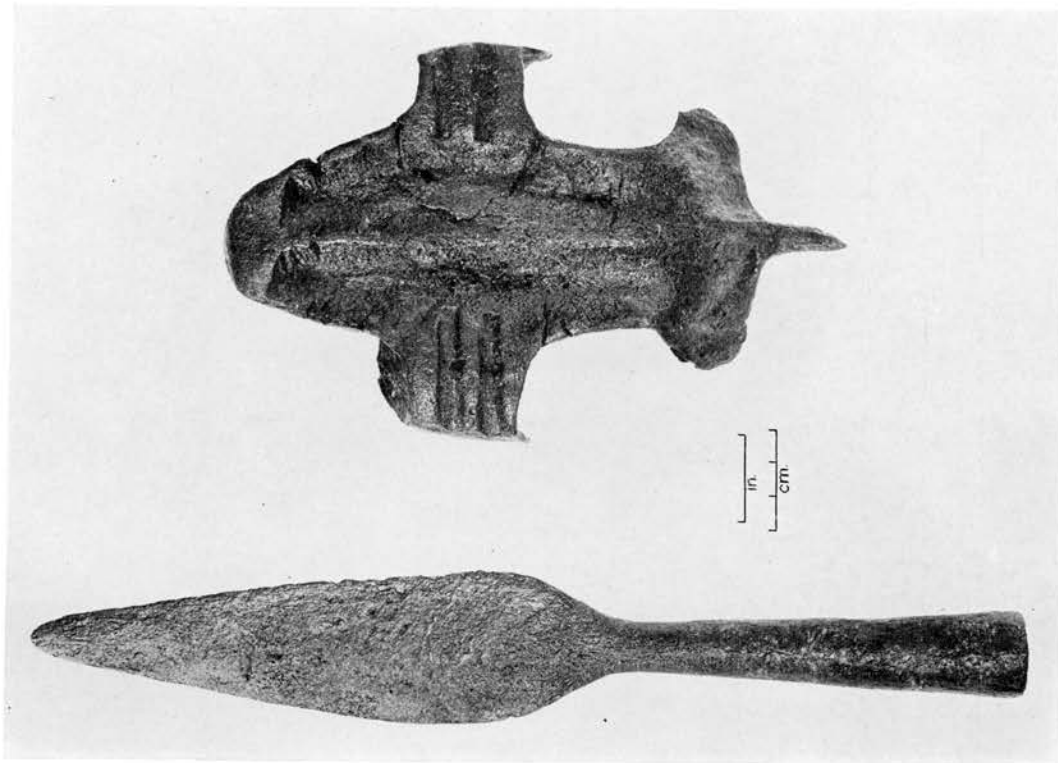
<sup>3</sup> *Excavations in Cranbourne Chase*, vol. 1, p. 78.

The trefoil-lipped buff-ware jug neck is probably datable to the second century of our era. The coin of Antoninus Pius (A.D. 138-61) in good condition may have been dropped at much the same time.

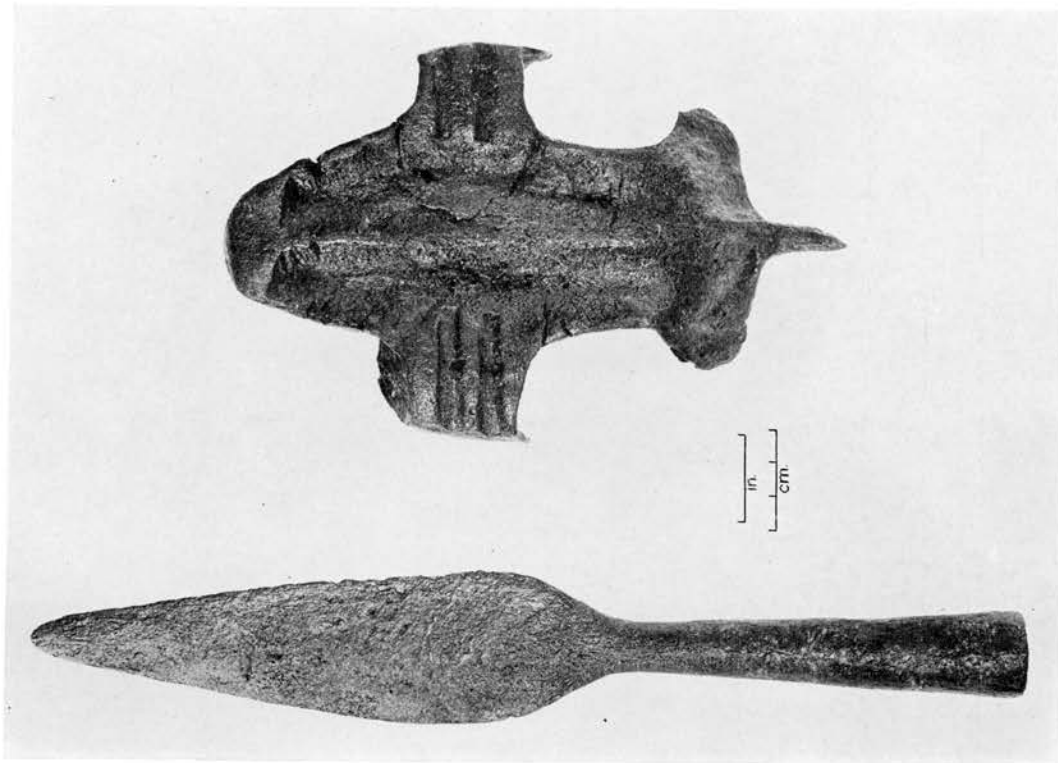
The only other objects of interest recovered from this site are a square-ended knife in a bone handle and an ox-goad. The knife has a projecting guard at the end away from the haft and was perhaps used for cutting leather straps. It may not be altogether fanciful to see it as having been used in connexion with the attachment of hippo-sandals. I do not, however, know an exact parallel and it may be of more recent date.

It will be seen from the above note that the ford was certainly in use in the first half of the Roman period and appears to have carried considerable traffic. It may, however, be of importance to observe that no objects of Saxon or mediaeval date have as yet been recovered from it. This may not be the Armingaford, although it was clearly the crossing of the Cam by the Ermine Street.

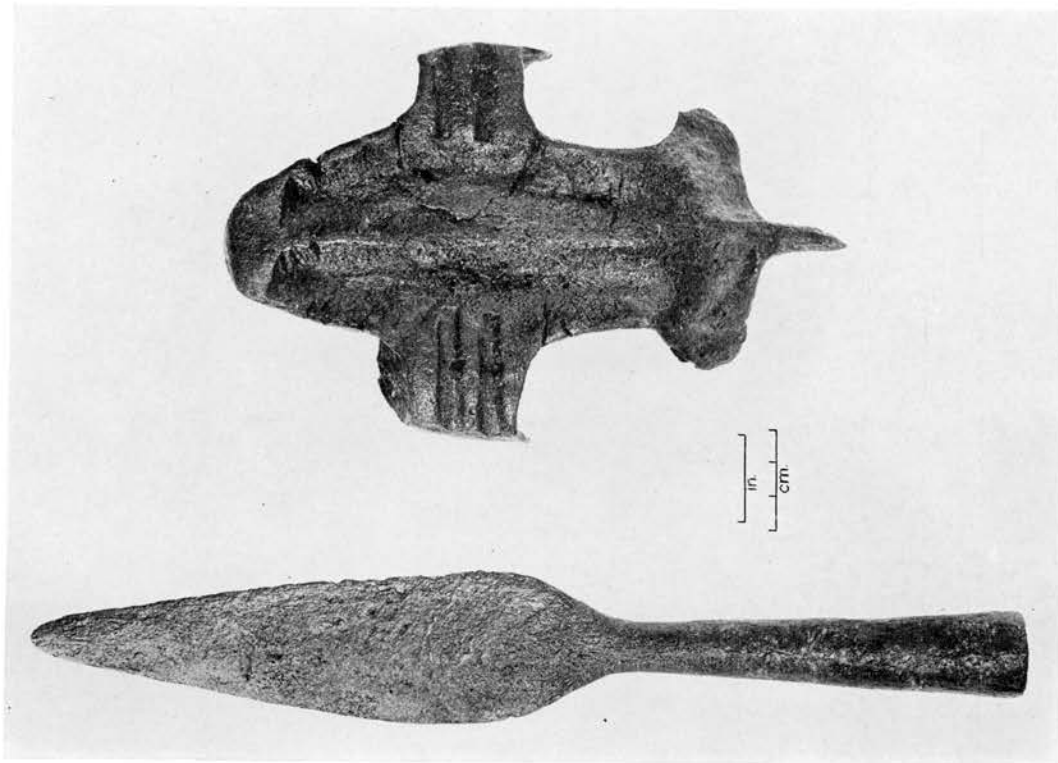
The damaged hippo-sandal is in the University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, and the remainder of the finds are in the possession of the County Surveyor's Office, Shire Hall, Castle Hill, Cambridge.



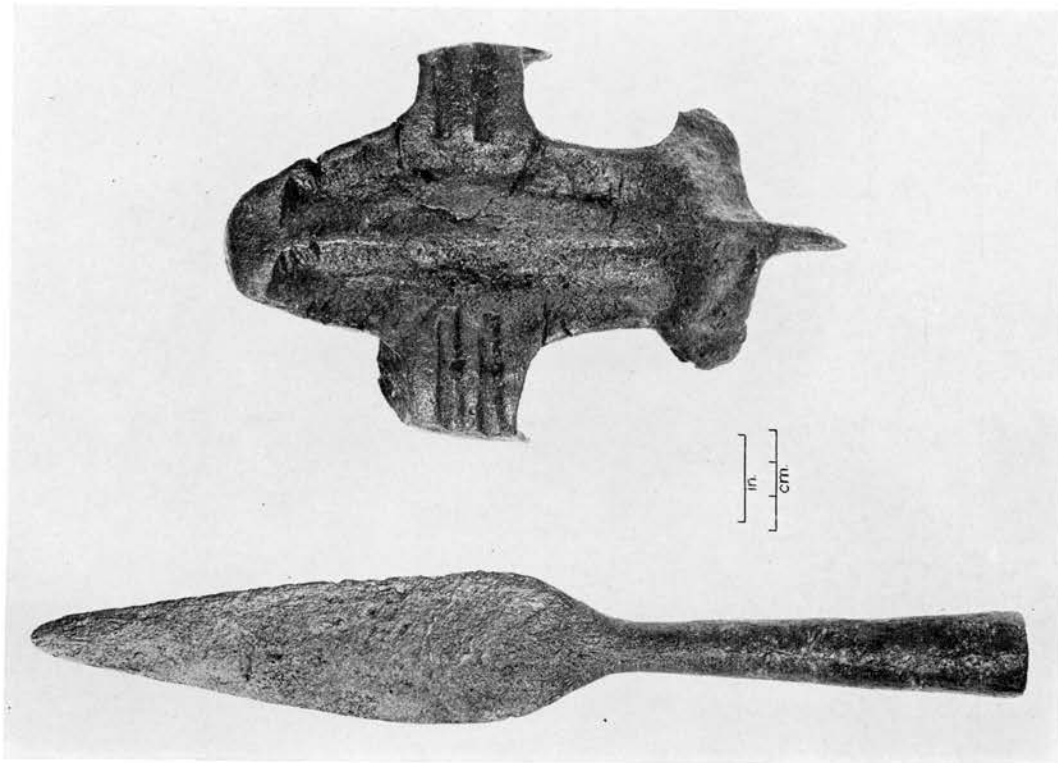
(a)



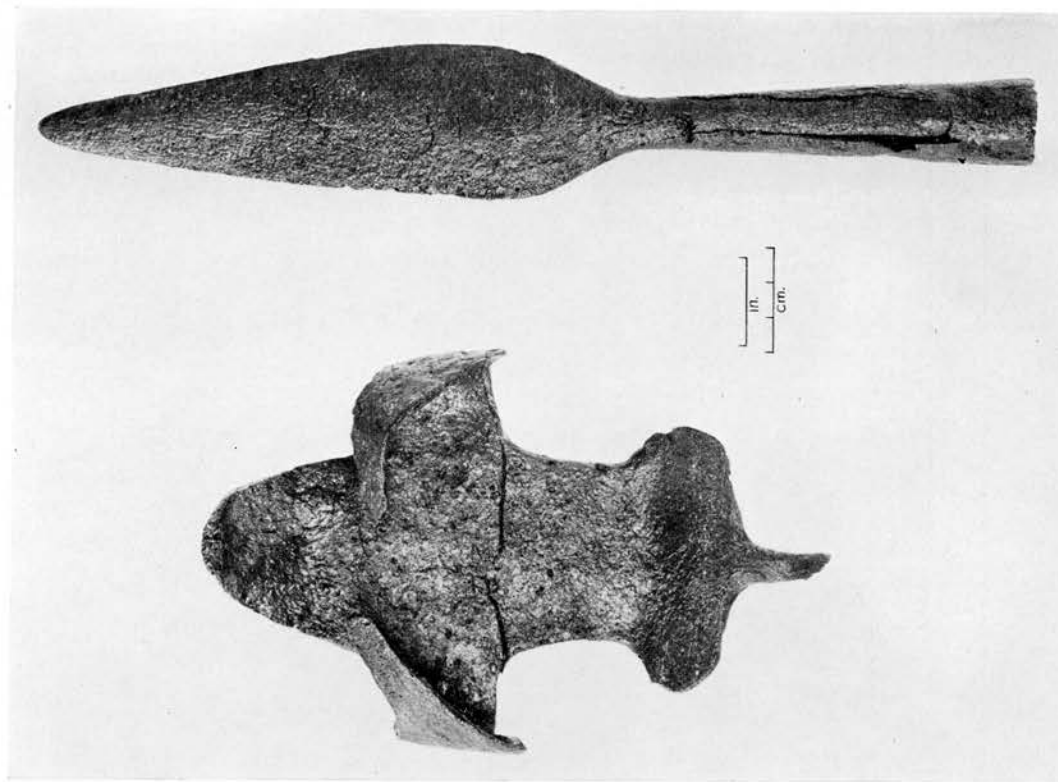
(b)



(c)



(d)



Iron Spear-head and 'Hippo-sandal' from Arrington Bridge



*a.* Early Bronze Age Food-Vessel  
*b.* Open-work Bronze Disc from Haslingfield  
*c.* Fourth Century Jar from Freckenham, Suffolk

# PROCEEDINGS OF THE CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

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