

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN
SOCIETY

(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



VOLUME LXVI

JANUARY 1975 TO DECEMBER 1976

IMRAY LAURIE NORIE AND WILSON

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EXCAVATIONS IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE

ALISON TAYLOR

Fowlmere Medieval Site. TL 423458

A limited excavation was carried out in April 1975 by the Cambridgeshire Archaeological Committee on behalf of the Department of the Environment, under the direction of Brendan P. J. Murphy. It was a trial excavation of an area of known medieval occupation in advance of redevelopment.

The site lies in the centre of Fowlmere on the area of waste ground that separates St Mary's Church from the Round Moat, an unusually large and presumably defensive structure. Excavations were concentrated on an enclosure, fifty metres square, with water on three sides, which adjoined the moat.

Excavations showed that within the enclosure there was a loose stony platform in which were found animal bones, a considerable assortment of pottery of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and a few metal objects, including a French jetton and iron buckle, key and ounce weight. Near the base of this layer there was a chalky marl surface with some rather nebulous circular dark features and a scatter of burnt or fired clay. Beneath this there was dark, charcoal-flecked loam containing small quantities of twelfth century shelly wares including a later form of St Neots ware.

The enclosure had either been extended or revetted in the seventeenth century by a silty clay cap that sealed the medieval surface. There was also a ditch of uncertain original date parallel to the extension, whose re-cutting was associated with medieval pottery.

Apart from a little residual Roman pottery and a quantity of seventeenth century ware from the extension, all finds dated to the twelfth, thirteenth or fourteenth centuries, and their density suggests that the enclosure was in continual use in the later part of this period, but whether it was a house-platform or animal enclosure is not certain.

Hardwick Moated Site. TL 372583

Excavations were carried out in January and February 1975 by the Cambridgeshire Archaeological Committee on behalf of the Department of the Environment under the direction of L. M. Groube.

The site was thought to be a medieval homestead moat. A rectangular area 106ft by 156ft was surrounded on three sides by a ditch 13ft to 25ft wide and on the south side up to 5ft deep (Inf: RCHM, W. Cambs) until 1974, when the ditch was filled in and the site was ploughed for the first time. A trial-trench in 1974 had produced some twelfth century pottery and an area of 'paving'.

An area excavation was set out to overlap with the infilled moat, giving a half cross-section and a long transverse section along the centre of the ditch. This, it was hoped, would indicate the date, nature, and later history of the moat and produce evidence of the occupation of the interior.

The limited area of the interior that was stripped produced no features apart from drains, and the medieval sherds recovered were mixed with more recent rubbish. The excavation of the ditch was hampered by flooding, in spite of continual use of a pump. It was possible to prove, however, that the ditch came to an end in the region excavated, ramping up to the surface and giving a broad 'entrance'. This ramp was paved with large stones and bricks (post 1850). It could, of course, be part of a conversion of a pre-existing structure, but the stratigraphic evidence, strengthened by the existence of a cross-drain which was thought to be cut by the moat, and the absence of a moated site on the Enclosure map of 1837 suggest that this may not, after all, have been one of the large number of medieval homestead moats of West Cambridgeshire.

Wandlebury Hill-fort. TL 494533

A trench was excavated in the interior of Wandlebury between the stable block and the present ditch in July 1975 by the Cambridgeshire Archaeological Committee under the direction of A. F. Taylor and P. J. Woodward in advance of the laying of a water-pipe. The trench, one metre wide and 20.6m. long, covered an area sealed by the original inner bank and lying just within this bank. It was the only area along the route of the pipe-line that it was thought might possibly be undisturbed by Lord Godolphin and his successors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Excavations proved, however, that this area of the fort had been considerably disturbed, largely in connection with the construction of the stable-blocks in the early eighteenth century. Within the 0.75m depth that was liable to be disturbed, therefore, no Iron Age levels occurred, and the quantity of Iron Age pottery and possibly associated animal bones found mixed with modern features, suggest that little of the original occupation layers are intact on this side of Wandlebury.

On the positive side, a series of well-laid paths of chalk and cobbles, in one case shown on an estate map of 1890, were clearly stratified, and there were other garden features, including two regular pits containing medieval pottery, possibly dug for large and particularly important trees. Prehistoric finds included plain Iron Age body sherds, similar in fabric to those found on the excavations of 1955-6, in one case containing a grain impression, one sling-shot, a perforated chalk object and several much earlier worked flints.

It is hoped that full reports on Fowlmere and Hardwick will appear in the next Proceedings of the C.A.S.

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