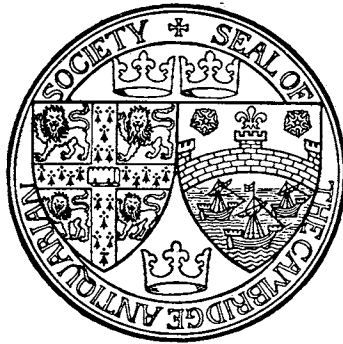


PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN
SOCIETY

(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



VOLUME LXVII

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IMRAY LAURIE NORIE AND WILSON

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EXCAVATIONS NEAR THE ROUND MOAT, FOWLMERE, CAMBRIDGESHIRE. TL444458

BRENDAN P. J. MURPHY

SUMMARY

IN advance of the construction of ninety-six houses in the centre of Fowlmere, a rescue excavation by the Cambridge Archaeological Committee on behalf of the Department of the Environment examined a large enclosure area. No definite structure was unearthed but the medieval pottery, whose diverse assortment was plentiful, provides a basic outline of a vernacular pottery tradition.

THE SITE

There are two moats in Fowlmere, a small square one and a very large, round, presumably defensive moat a hundred metres from the parish church of The Blessed Virgin. It was in the area between the larger moat and the church that the excavation was centred (Fig. 1).

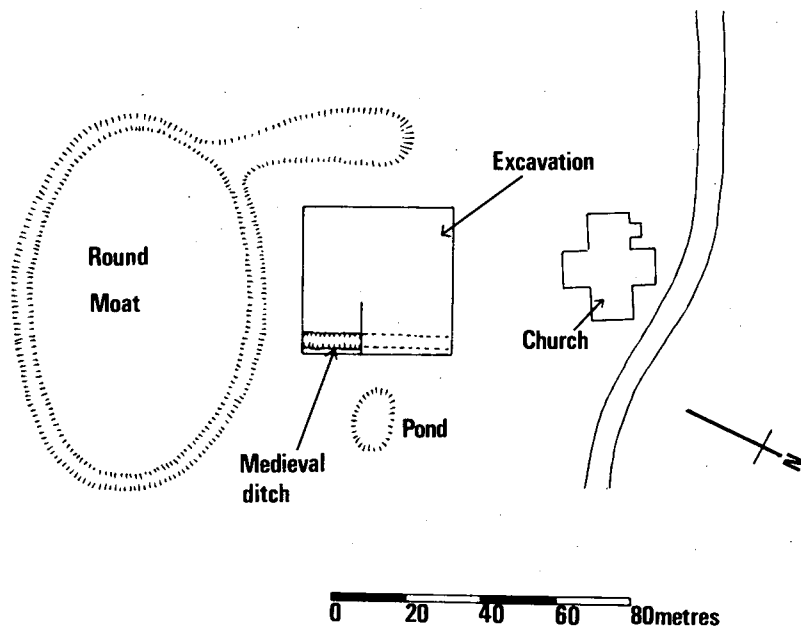


Fig. 1. Fowlmere. Site of excavation.

The enclosure, referred to in the Inclosure Award map of 1845 as 'Cassander's Close', has water on three sides; to the east a pond, to the west a forty-metre extension of the moat, and to the south the moat itself. An excavation in 1906 was undertaken by the 'Cambridge Antiquarian Society within the moat, (Rev. A. C. Yorke, P.C.A.S., 1906-9, vols 12, 13), and '... some small pieces of broken pottery; just enough to shew that they were possibly British,' were recorded.

The water table in the area is very close to the surface, and the soil is a springy clay overlying chalk and gravel deposits.

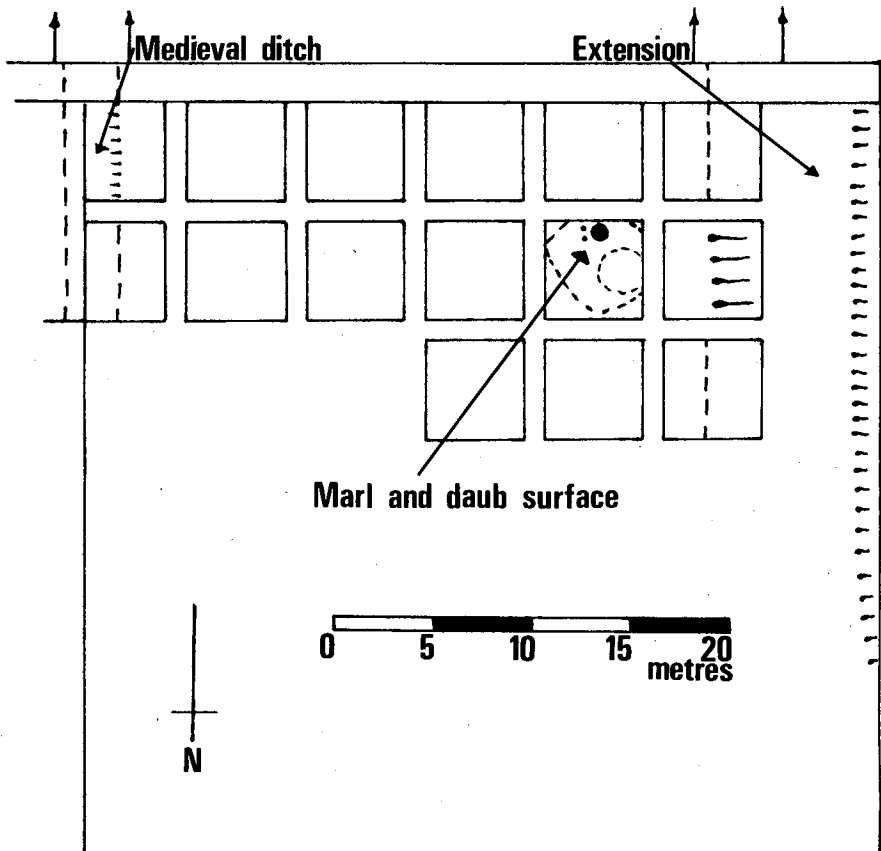


Fig. 2. Fowlmere. Plan of excavated area.

THE EXCAVATION

An area approximately 40 metres square was mechanically stripped of topsoil to within some 10 metres from the edge of the moat. Trowelling discovered a loose stony surface associated with medieval pottery of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The most noticeable find and striking feature here was the large quantity of snail shells which, with numerous fragments of sheep and cattle bone, were found to frequent a layer 20 centimetres thick. At the base of this layer, a dark almost black surface with charcoal flecks appeared, consisting of a very fine loamy soil containing small quantities of early medieval shelly wares, including a later form of St Neot's ware.

Over this dark soil a chalky marl surface was found, with some dark circular features. Subsequent sectioning revealed two stake holes 8 centimetres in diameter and 15 centimetres apart, slanting at an angle of 70 degrees from a larger feature 65 centimetres in diameter, and 40 centimetres deep. An extensive scatter of fired, or burnt clay, possibly daub, was evident around these features. The marl was on average 5 centimetres deep and covered an area approximately 3 metres by 5 metres. These features were very nebulous and only a tentative inspection could take place.

To the west of the enclosure the medieval infill is sealed by some 45 centimetres of a silty clay cap (Fig. 2), on the surface of which sherds of Staffordshire slipware and Delft were stratified. This may be interpreted as an effort in the seventeenth century either to widen the extension orrevet the enclosure. On the east side, a ditch of uncertain original date runs parallel to the extension, and a recutting containing medieval pottery suggests contemporaneity with the enclosure's main period of use, (Fig. 3). Some Roman buff and grey ware bases together with a few potsherds of Samian ware were found in the lower areas, but their presence was probably residual.

In general there were few finds from the third century to the mid-twelfth century, and occupation ceases after the late fourteenth century with the exception of the western bank. The pottery (Fig. 3) found in the thick medieval layer suggests that the enclosure was continually in use during the second period, but whether it be a house platform or animal enclosure remains uncertain. The vast quantity of pottery, the coin, the buckle, the key, and weight (Fig. 4) would point to the former use, but because of the brief time allotted to the excavation neither was proven.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the property developers for permission to excavate on their land, to Dennis Mynard for assistance with the pottery, to Mr G. O. Vinter for his help on historical research, to Miss R. Luff and Miss S. Stallibrass, and to the Department of the Environment whose grant enabled the work to be undertaken.

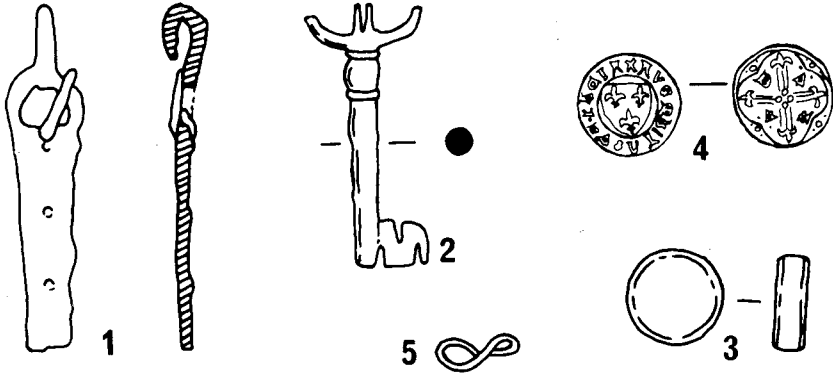


Fig. 3. Fowlmere. Small finds. Scale 1/2.

THE FINDS

The excavation at Fowlmere produced a number of small finds, all of which were stratified on the mediaeval surfaces (Fig. 3).

1. An iron buckle or clasp 90mm long 12mm wide and 3mm thick. Three rivets appear at 20mm intervals. The eye is 14mm diameter internally from the end of which protrudes a 15mm long hook.
2. An iron key 70mm long and 6mm in diameter.
3. An iron ounce weight 22mm in diameter and 9mm thick.
4. A French jetton, 27mm in diameter and 1mm thick, with Fleur de Lys motifs on both sides.
5. A bronze link from a small chain, 23mm long and 9mm wide.

THE POTTERY

The pottery has been divided into fabric types from the enclosure's main period of use.

Of the 17lbs. 12 oz. of mediaeval pottery, the oxidized/reduced ratio was 42.4% and 57.6% respectively, and the shelly ware comprised 7% of the total.

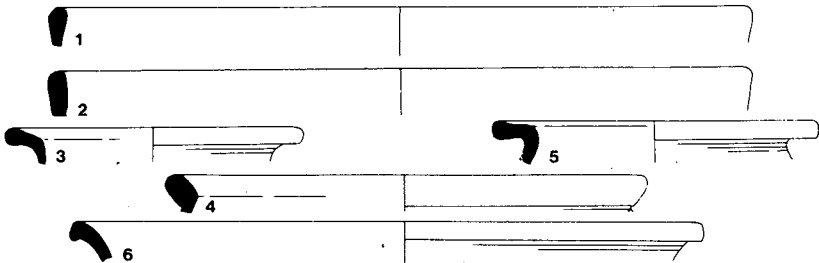


Fig. 4. Fowlmere. Medieval Shelly wares. Scale 1/4.

Early Medieval Shelly Ware

11th–12th century. (Fig. 4)

A fine shelly ware with smooth surfaces, light to dark grey brown in colour.

1. Rim of bowl. Diam. 38cms.
2. Similar rim but thickened internally. Diam. 38cms.
3. Everted rim of cooking pot, very dark almost black. Diam. 16cms.
4. Cooking pot rim, light buff brown. Diam. 26cms.
5. Similar cooking pot rim to no. 3, but lighter with red undertones. Diam. 17.5cms.

Late Medieval Shelly Ware

13th–14th century. (Fig. 4)

A hard-fired shelly ware with lime-stone and shell grits; tempering is sparser than above.

6. Rolled-over rim of bowl, rougher texture than those above. Diam. 36 cms.

Medieval Sandy Wares.

(Fig. 5)

Coarse Sandy 11th–12th century.

7. Very thick rim of cooking pot. Diam. 28 cms.
8. Similar but smaller rim and slightly lighter in colour externally. Diam. 28cms.
9. Rim from cooking pot more rounded than above. Diam. 26cms.
10. Rim of jug, coarse pink surface with grey core. Diam. 14cms.

Medium Grey Sandy Ware

13th century

Hard-fired smooth textured ware.

11. Rim of large bowl, thickened internally. Diam. 40cms.
12. Rim of cooking pot, off white. Diam. 18cms.
13. Cooking pot rim. Diam. 34 cms.
14. Rim of bowl, finer texture than no. 11. Diam. 30cms.
15. Cooking pot rim, blackened externally. Diam. 14cms.
16. Cooking pot rim with a slight internal groove. Diam. 32cms.
17. Rolled over rim of cooking pot. Diam. 20cms.
18. Rim of cooking pot. Diam. 28cms.
19. Rim of cooking pot blackened externally. Diam. 14cms.
20. Cooking pot rim with a deep groove around the head. Diam. 24cms.
21. Square-headed rim of cooking pot, thumb designs on the outside of the rim are widely spaced and spasmodic in application. Diam. 20cms.
22. Wall sherd with thumb impressions running horizontally.
23. Wall sherd with applied thumb strip, heavily blackened externally.
24. Wall sherd with circular grooved patterns.
25. Rim of cooking pot. Diam. 22cms.
26. Cooking pot rim with a pink internal surface, grey core. Diam. 25cms.
27. Similar slightly larger rim, with deeply cut lines externally under the rim. Diam. 26cms.
28. Large bowl rim thickened internally, very dark surface. Diam. 14.5cms.
29. Rim of cooking pot, similar to no. 25. Diam. 26cms.
30. Hard fired rim of cooking pot, buff grey. Diam. 24cms.
31. Slightly oxidized base of strap handle with grey core.

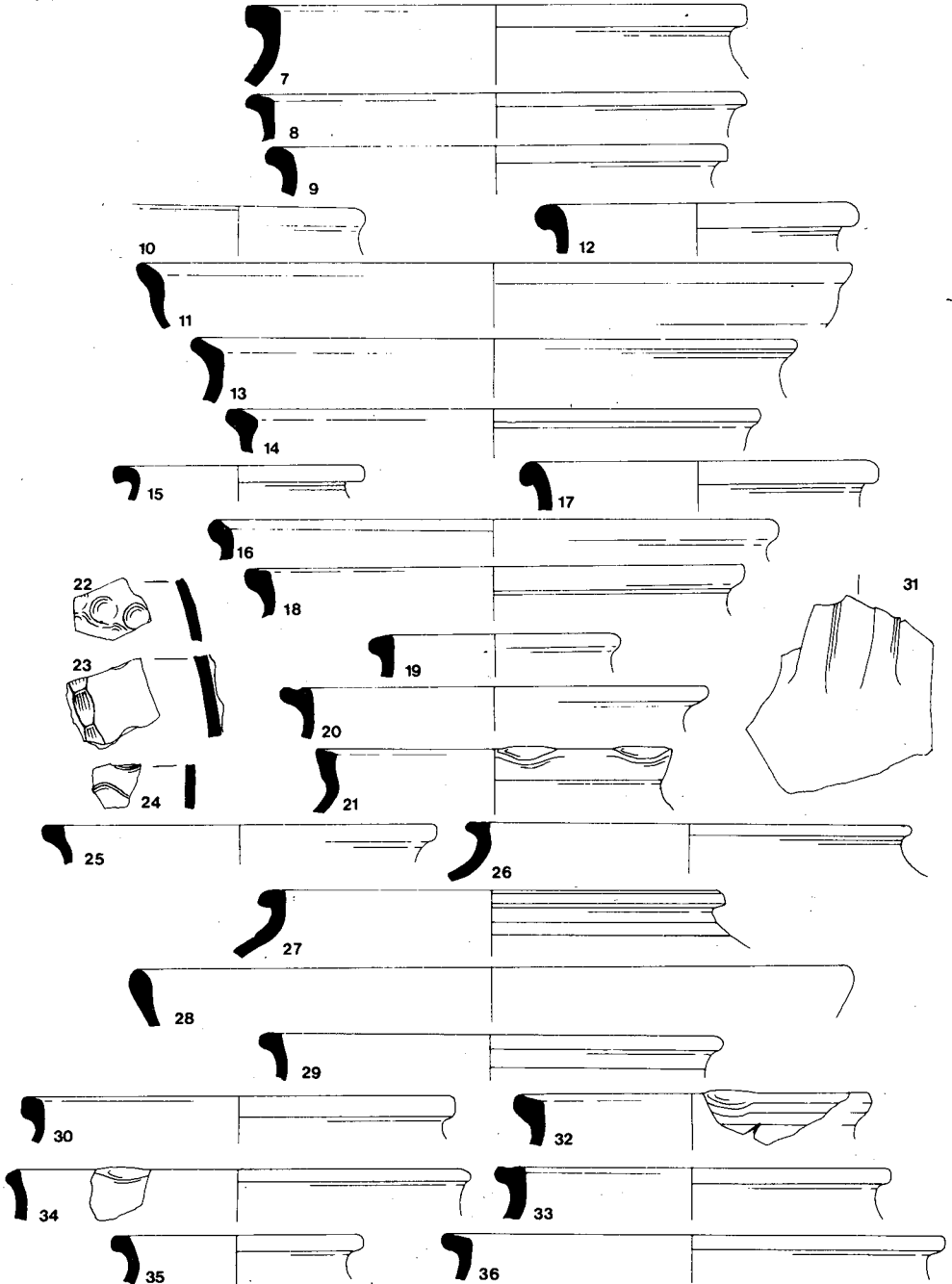


Fig. 5. Fowlmere. Medieval Sandy wares. Scale 1/4.

32. Cooking pot with thumb impressions on the outer rim; the under side of the rim has been stabbed. Diam. 20cms.
 33. Rim of cooking pot with an internal groove. Diam. 22cms.
 34. Cooking pot rim with thumbing internally. Diam. 36cms.
 35. Rim of cooking pot, similar to nos. 25 and 29. Diam. 14cms.
 36. Thin flanged rim of cooking pot. Diam. 36cms.
 37. Jug rim, finer texture than those above. Diam. 15cms. (Not illustrated).

Medieval Glazed Wares

13th–14th century. (Fig. 6)

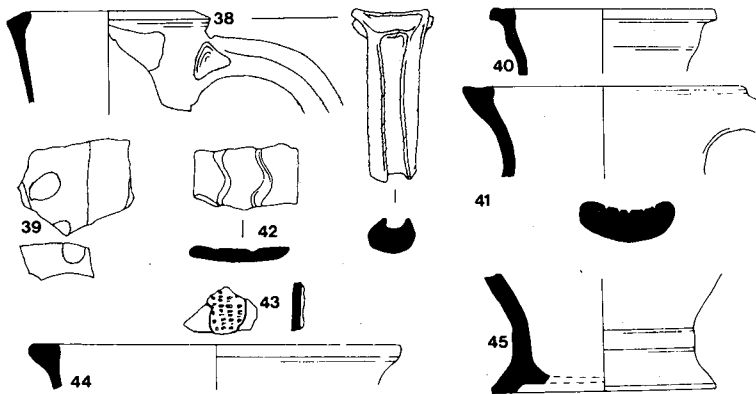


Fig. 6. Fowlmere. Medieval Glazed wares. Scale 1/4.

Orange Glazed Ware

38. Pointed rim and rod handle of small jug. A white slip trail over the smooth fabric runs horizontally around the underside of the rim. The handle has a deep vertical groove. Diam. 11cms.
 39. Two wall sherds from the above jug. The slip trails here run vertically with spots between the strips.
 40. Rim of jug with iron-spotted decoration in the glaze. Diam. 12cms.
 41. Jug rim with slashed strap handle. Diam. 12cms.
 42. Part of strap handle with incised wavy line decoration running vertically.
 43. Wall sherd from jug with rouletted applied stamp.
 44. Rim of bowl with slight traces of glaze externally. Diam. 20cms.

Green Glazed Ware

45. Raised flat base of jug, medium grey fabric with olive green glaze. Diam. 12cms.
 A few wall sherds of buff brown fabric with slightly grey core bearing a green glaze over white slip trails were also found. This is not Lyveden ware, though their similarities may indicate a comparable decorating technique in use in Cambridgeshire during the same period.

BONE REPORT

R. LUFF *and* S. STALLIBRASS

THE bone has been considered in four chronological groups, in accordance with the associated pottery finds: medieval, seventeenth century, disturbed, and undated. The fragments have then been allocated to one of three types: first class joints (thorax and upper limbs), second class joints (head and lower limbs), and loose teeth. They have been separated into adult and juvenile; no remains of newborn animals were found.

All the possible food-providing species show a slight bias towards fragments from second class joints with the exceptions of roe deer (one first class and one second class fragment) and horse/pony. The horse/pony remains consist of three phalanges, four metapodials and two teeth, all of which may represent two or three animals from the medieval period and one from the seventeenth century. Their social/economic functions cannot be inferred from such scanty evidence and there are no associated finds such as horseshoes or harness fittings/decorations. The total sample of bone from the site is very small and therefore the bias towards non-meaty (second class) joints may be due to factors such as soil acidity: this was quite high and likely to destroy ribs and vertebrae rather than metapodials, teeth etc. An hypothesis that the site was used for slaughtering rather than consumption may be put forward only tentatively. Very few juvenile animals were represented: one medieval calf, a young sheep/goat from the seventeenth century and a young pig whose remains were found in a disturbed context. This paucity may reflect a form of husbandry in which animals were kept until they were fully-grown when they could provide a continual supply of wool/milk/traction or at least a larger amount of meat and hide.

Horse/pony, cow, pig and sheep/goat are all represented in both medieval and seventeenth century contexts, sheep/goat being slightly more common than any other species in both periods. Roe, deer and rat were only found in medieval contexts and dog in medieval and disturbed. The one cat bone was associated with seventeenth century pottery.

Table of the Distribution of Bone Fragments

Species	Total no. frags.	1st class joints		2nd class joints		Loose teeth	Minimum no. animals		
		A	J	A	J		A	J	
MEDIEVAL									
Horse	5			3		2	1		
Pony	3			3			1 (or 2)*		
Cow	24	9		12	2	1	1	1	
Roe deer	2	1		1			1		
Pig	8	2		2		4	1		
Sheep/goat	26	8		13		5	3		
Dog	2			2			1		
Chicken	1	1					1		
Rat	5						1		
	<hr/> 76	<hr/> 21		<hr/> 36	<hr/> 2	<hr/> 12	<hr/> 11(12)	<hr/> 1	
17th CENTURY									
Horse	1			1			1		
Cow	2	1		1			1		
Pig	5			1		4	1		
Sheep/goat	6	2			2	2	1	1	
Cat	1	1					1		
Cockerel	1	1					1		
	<hr/> 16	<hr/> 5		<hr/> 3	<hr/> 2	<hr/> 6	<hr/> 6	<hr/> 1	
DISTURBED									
Cow	1					1	1		
Pig	1				1			1	
Sheep/goat	7	2		3		2	1 (or 2)*		
Dog	45	from one incomplete inhumation						1	
	<hr/> 54	<hr/> 2		<hr/> 3	<hr/> 1	<hr/> 3	<hr/> 3(4)	<hr/> 1	
UNDATED									
Cow	3	1		1		1	1		
Sheep/goat	1					1	1		
	<hr/> 4	<hr/> 1		<hr/> 1		<hr/> 2	<hr/> 2		

A—Adult.
J—Juvenile.



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