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EARTHWORKS AT COTTENHAM,  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE, THE SUPPOSED SITE OF  
A ROMAN CAMP OR SETTLEMENT.

Immediately to the north of the parish Church of Cottenham is what is known as the Cottenham 'Lode,' a word used to signify a watercourse (A.S. lād, a way). This channel running in a N.E. direction joins the Old West river at what is familiar to the neighbourhood as "Twentypence Ferry." Alongside this 'lode,' or rather abutting upon it to the N.W., is an unploughed field, in which there are some remarkable earthworks, spread over a large area. Although of slight proportions so far as their present appearance is concerned, these raised ridges were doubtless at one time much more pretentious in regard to their formation and character. In this locality, from a point in the adjoining parish of Waterbeach known as Mason's farm, and within a hundred yards or so of the river Cam, there rises so as to skirt the fen above its level the ancient artificial waterway or canal, the Car-dyke, the extent and character of which has been differently viewed, and even the existence of the southern portion below Earith questioned. In the one inch Ordnance Survey Map of 1895 the Car-dyke is represented as commencing a short distance above Waterbeach where it is made to join the river Cam. A little to the S.E. of the Church, near the railway, its depressed bed crosses a field. It again appears by the "Old Tillage," a deep artificial cut, then it takes a course by the village Street, on to "Akeman Street" (the road from Cambridge to Ely), along which it runs for about a mile. After turning to the right it continues in a more or less direct course through a part

of Landbeach and Chayre Fen until it crosses the Cottenham Lode where all trace of it is lost, although as a matter of fact it continues its way until it joins the Old Ouse or West River. The latter part of its course follows a modern fen engine drain, which by somewhat altering the contour of the land has led to the omission of this part of the course on the Ordnance Survey Map. The course of the channel here seems to be identical with the Old West River, certainly as far as Earith and Benwick. Separating the County of Hunts. from Cambridgeshire it takes its way from Bodsey going on to Horsey near Peterborough skirting the high land bordering on the fens.

At the outset the particular name of the Car-dyke demands attention. It is a matter of no slight importance in regard to our investigation of the site in question. *Caer* is I imagine a corruption, or perhaps it would be more correct to say a modification of the Latin *Castra* which among the Saxons appears as *Caster* or *Chester*. It is not a little singular that we have a confirmation of this diversity of place-name in our own neighbourhood, e. g. the *Caer*-(dyke), *Chester*-ton (village), and the *Cair-graunth* of Nennius i.e. the walled city standing on high ground at Castle End, N. of the river Cam, known as Cambridge a corruption from *Granta*-bridge, *Graunth* being presumably a Celtic river name. Or, it may possibly be the case that the word *Caer* is purely Celtic and finds its true meaning in regard to a 'fortification' theory. There are quite a large number of related words chiefly place-names. Indeed I think we may find an explanation of the Celtic form in the adjacent *Chare* (or *Caer*) fen, where the Car Dyke after passing through a part of Landbeach and Cottenham, joins the ancient channel of the Old Ouse or West River. *Chare* fen is possibly so called from the distant *Caer* or town of *Caer-graunt* known to us in the modernized place-name Cambridge. *Car* is ordinarily understood to mean fen, marsh or hollow place, and there is an abundance of illustration to substantiate this. *Car* (Sansc:)=to move, implying both rapidity and circuitousness, associated in

this latter sense with Gaelic *Car* or *Char*=tortuous and A.S. *Cérran*=to turn or bend are interesting as affording some insight into probable explanations. It is also curious to mark the Gaelic and Welsh *Cam*=to bend, although no importance need to be attached to this as in any way explanatory of the quite modern *Cam* in Cambridge. It is also interesting to observe that in the name "Grunty Fen," an expanse of ground at no great distance from the Car Dyke, the '*Graunth*' of "Cair Graunth" reappears, receiving its designation in a similar way, as I conceive to be the case in respect of the Car Dyke and Chare Fen. Dr. Stukeley who particularly describes the Car Dyke, imagined that *Car* was a contraction of the name of Carausius, the Roman Emperor of Britain, (A.D. 291) to whom he traces the origin, or it may be the recovery from an inefficient condition of this ancient ditch, which is generally esteemed the work of the Romans. We are indisposed to accept the somewhat strange idea that the Car Dyke received its name from the first syllable of the cognomen of the Roman governor. Dr. Stukeley\* in attributing the construction of the Car Dyke to Carausius according to his custom in respect to most works of this kind, was not adverse to acknowledge the plausibility at all events of an earlier origin than that commonly suggested. It is not unlikely that the Car Dyke may be older than the ancient road (Akeman Street) which passed this way, indeed where it meets it, the Car Dyke is not found to have cut through the old Roman road, which may therefore be taken as plain evidence of pre-Roman date. It has been regarded by some as the last of the Roman military works. There is perhaps a tendency to overlook the earlier and less frequented ways that were traversed by the Romans when they first entered Britain, in the effort to investigate the particular line followed by the great military roads, and the vexed question of stations and distances. There are numerous indications in Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, as elsewhere, of the existence of byeways and waterways in connection with the

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\**Medallic History of Carausius.*

encampments that were widely formed by the Roman legionaries ; these have been very slightly investigated or even noticed, and scarcely anything done in the way of elaboration. It is a matter for congratulation that so far as tabulation is concerned, excellent archæological Surveys now being compiled under the auspices of the Society of Antiquaries will go far to remedy this, but what is greatly needed is distinct treatment by specialists who would undertake to cover a district, with the desirable end in view of laying bare the testimony of what is now hidden from view, and gathering up all the traces we can find of military advance which appears to have been actively pursued during long occupation. For my own part I very much question whether the Roman occupation was primarily any other but a military one—agriculture together with so-called drainage work being throughout subservient to the one ruling passion for conquest. Respecting the word Dyke (A.S. *dic*) it appears to be used alike of the mound, and the excavation or hollow. It is probably this latter use of the word 'dyke' which is here followed, although the embankment being originally of sufficient breadth and height throughout its entire course to resist the pressure of the water may have been the prominent cause of the designation. The dyke must of necessity have been so constructed as to allow for the gradual and unimpeded rise of the current. We probably owe to the successful engineering skill of the first Roman settlers an effective system of embanking which, perhaps without any leading aim in the way of restraining the waters, served the admirable purpose of preventing inundation to a greater or less extent. In this way the uplands would as a rule be secured from any overflow of water, and consequently by some the Car dyke is regarded first and foremost as a Roman drain.

The gigantic character of the Car Dyke may be understood from the fact that it was apparently no less than sixty feet wide and doubtless on either side, there were broad ways for land traffic. Villages appear to have taken their names from proximity to such dykes, *e.g.*

*Ditton*, (Ditch-town) is present with us in the names of at least two Cambridgeshire villages, viz., Fen Ditton and Wood-Ditton, (where there are Roman remains), which stand on the Fleam Dyke, and the Devil's Dyke. It may fairly be assumed that the comparative late use of the word 'dyke' does not prevent the assumption that this class of work was of Roman construction *e.g.*, we have in connection with the wall of Antoninus *Grimes Dyke*. Stukeley has made the bold suggestion that *Granta* (Cambridge) was founded by Carausius at the southern end of the Car Dyke, and I am not disposed, while marvelling at that antiquary's ingenuity, to question the probability of the assertion. Indeed, I am strongly inclined to think from all that we know of the actual condition of affairs in the time of the Romans, Stukeley was not far wrong (the opinion of eminent antiquaries to the contrary notwithstanding), and that from the point named, the Car Dyke had its commencement\*. Stukeley says, "Just below Cambridge, the artificial cut opens into the river, runs along the side of it, taking the benefit of higher water, for half a mile," but elsewhere † he says "a little above Waterbeche begins our famous *Car Dyke*. The bed of this artificial cut is very plain from hence, quite across the Fen, through Cottenham parish until it enters the Old Ouse"; passing on to Earith by Lockspit Hall, it proceeds according to Stukeley "by Ramsey to Suard's Dyke . . . then the boats passed by Benwick, where Roman coins have been found; so by Whittlesey Mere, or some cut by the side of it, to Horsey bridge, where Roman coins too are found, and so to Peterborough river." In the second part of his *Medallic History*, Stukeley further says, "At Waterbech . . . it begins with a fair and large artificial channel proceeding Northwestward." He also remarks on a prevalent notion that the Ouse originally ran by this course into the Cam. ‡ Dugdale also regarded the Car Dyke as a branch of the Cam. It is

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\* *Medallic History* Pt. I. (pp. 199, 200). Pt. II. (p. 137.) † *Paleographia* II. p. 38. ‡ *History of Embanking*, pp. 373.

right to state that the late Professor Babington \* (I think without sufficient reason) demurs to this conclusion. I must however quote from the last named writer some remarks which I deem important. "Near Waterbeche the channel of the supposed Car Dyke is still very apparent, and, after leaving the fenny land by the Cam, consists of an enormously broad and deep artificial cut, having not the least resemblance to a natural watercourse. It seems undoubtedly to be a very ancient and magnificent work." Stukeley further says that the Car Dyke "runs by Chare fen in the parish of Cottenham . . . and passes into the present river called the Old Ouse, going to the great wooden bridge upon Audrey causeway, whence it goes along the present channel of the river westwards to Earith." † Stukeley may be right in assuming that this was a navigable canal along which corn was conveyed to the great military district of York, but it can hardly have been as he suggests, formed for that express purpose. The Car dyke runs even now from Peterborough, along the edge of the upland passing the Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire fens to Lincoln, and may be traced up to Torksey on the River Trent while the more southern portion here and there furnishes much more slight indications, being in parts well nigh obliterated. This latter, while keeping the upland waters in bounds, may be regarded as only a part of a complete system of defence. It was no uncommon occurrence in former days for a vast line of communication to be adopted, having at stated distances military outposts. It is difficult to say precisely what the defensive works were, but the raised earthen lines to which I have referred, and which we are well able to distinguish, will convey to our minds some idea of the character of such an enclosure or camp as would probably be repeated throughout the entire length of the course, affording a regular chain or network of fortified places each of considerable importance.

The site to which I desire to draw attention is one of much interest, for however difficult it may be to describe

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\* *Ancient Cambridgeshire*, p. 108. † *Carausius*, i. 133.

the peculiar formation of the slight elevations to be seen in the raised earthlines, there can I think be little doubt but that they are indications of warlike contention marking an entrenched position designed for the protection of the fen district against invaders.\* Along the line of this wisely planned dyke having on the one side the impassable fen and on the other the thick woodland which effectually controlled access and restrained the foe that endeavoured to advance, were earthen fortifications calculated to frustrate the designs of an enemy. The ditch and the rampart formed the means of defence alongside of the thickly wooded district. "The Britons" writes Julius Cæsar "call it a town (*Caer*) when they have defended their intricate woods with a rampart and ditch whither they congregate in order to avoid an incursion of their enemies."† The proximity of the forest must not be lost sight of in our view of the stretch of fenland beyond; this will serve to clear up much misconception that prevails relating to the proportion of forest to fen.

In the work of fortification and clearing such woodland as stood in the way of successful military enterprise, the Romans employed such of the Britons who were brought into subjection, as the passage in Tacitus, quoted by Dugdale, seems to imply. "The Britains complained that the Romans wore out and consumed their bodies

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\*The covering of a line of country by a long extended vallum and ditch appears to have been a tactical device with the Romans. The hills known as the Gog-magog hills, show traces of a triple entrenchment, with a lofty vallum and two circular ditches, enclosing  $13\frac{1}{2}$  acres. It is called 'Vandlebury' (on the authority it would seem of Gervase) and Dr. Stukeley was of opinion that it was so named on account of the Vandals and Burgundians, who when the Emperor Probus transferred them from the Continent into Britain (A.D. 277) formed a Camp here. Roman antiquities have been unearthed on this site. Mr. Gough believed *Vandlebury* to have been "the fourth of the chain of forts which begins at the large camp on the hill where the hunting-tower stood, opposite to Audley Inn; *Littlebury* Church stands in another; the walled town of *Chesterford* is a third. To *Vandlebury* succeeded *Grantacaster*; then *Arbury*; and last *Belsar's Hills*; all within sight of one another, reaching from the woodland of Essex to the fens, and crossed by several parallel ditches quite to the Devil's ditch."

† Oppidum autem Britanni vocant cum silvas impeditas vallo atque fossa munierunt quo incursionis hostium vitandae causa convenire consuerunt. Caesar, *Bell. Gal.* v. 21.

and hands in clearing woods and in banking the fens.”\* The population of Roman Britain was of a very mixed kind formed from various races, but the adoption of the Roman language, manners and customs rendered the country essentially Roman in character. After the so-called departure of the Romans in the middle of the fifth century, that people were doubtless for generations co-existent with the Teutonic settlers. Severus, one of the Roman Emperors, is said to have visited Britain as others had done, and was the first to make causeways over the fens to enable warfare to be successfully waged. It is indeed highly probable that all embanking work even to the making of causeways such as we generally attribute to the Romans was carried out mainly with the object of defence and for strategic purposes. Much that is apt to be associated with drainage and such like work is undoubtedly to be put down to the period when the waning power of the Romans led to the raising of artificial defences or earth works, calculated to withstand the refractory hordes that poured forth from places of retreat. In order to garrison so large a number of stations, an enormous army must have been employed. The site in question at Cottenham, supposing it to have extended over, say, eight acres of ground probably had accomodation for between three and four thousand legionaries (twelve hundred being the complement of a legion) who would be occasionally relieved from the principal station at Cambridge, with which the Cottenham contingent would be in close communication. An instance of what we may I think regard as the prevailing conditions then observable may be seen in other localities that were brought under Roman influence. When Gaul in the first half of the fourth Century became a Roman province, it was necessary to defend it against the barbarians who were ever intent on crossing the boundary line that divided Rome from Germany. Consequently an immense army of Roman legionaries was told off to

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\*Bona fortunasque in tributum egerunt, annum in frumentum. Corpora ipsa ac manus silvis ac paludibus emuniendis verbera inter ac contumelias conterunt. *Agricola xxxi.*

occupy the left bank of the Rhine from Mayence to Cologné. They possessed no less than fifty fortified camps while two fleets were continually passing, bent upon taking advantage of any movement on the part of the adversary.

Although outside the Car dyke range, traces of entrenchments are not wanting at several neighbouring places in Huntingdonshire on the Ouse, *e.g.*, Godmanchester (Durolipons), Eynesbury, Holywell, and elsewhere, all at fairly equal distances,\* these I imagine would be similar to the "chain of forts" in Cambridgeshire along the course of the Car dyke, following the lines of continuous fortification, until the southern limit is reached just below the Castle Hill at Cambridge in the garden of Magdalene College, where a terrace walk is formed upon the vallum and near the undoubted head of the fens.

It was in this locality in the days when Rome was practically supreme that the ancient Britons withstood the advancing legions of the empire, failing to hold their own save only in a partial way. Extensive military operations on the part of the Romans were necessary on the one hand to maintain a position that was at all times held none too strongly, and on the other hand to resist the subtle approach of an ever wakeful people intent upon regaining undisturbed possession.

The lapse of seventeen hundred years is sufficient to obliterate traces of such military occupation, as would be seen in earthworks and the like. Many important stations indeed, have disappeared which were mighty erections, and this fact in itself is sufficient to invest the recent discovery of the Cottenham earthworks, with more than ordinary interest and importance. It is strange that the settlement of Roman legions at Cottenham should have been so entirely lost to sight. The late Rev. W. K. Clay † in dealing with the question of a

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\* Along the banks of the Nen (which separated the Iceni Cenimagni from the Iceni Coritani are remains of the fortifications thrown up by Ostorius, when he found the plan of separating these two great and powerful clans. (Gorham *History of S. Neots*, on the authority of Hutchinson's MS).

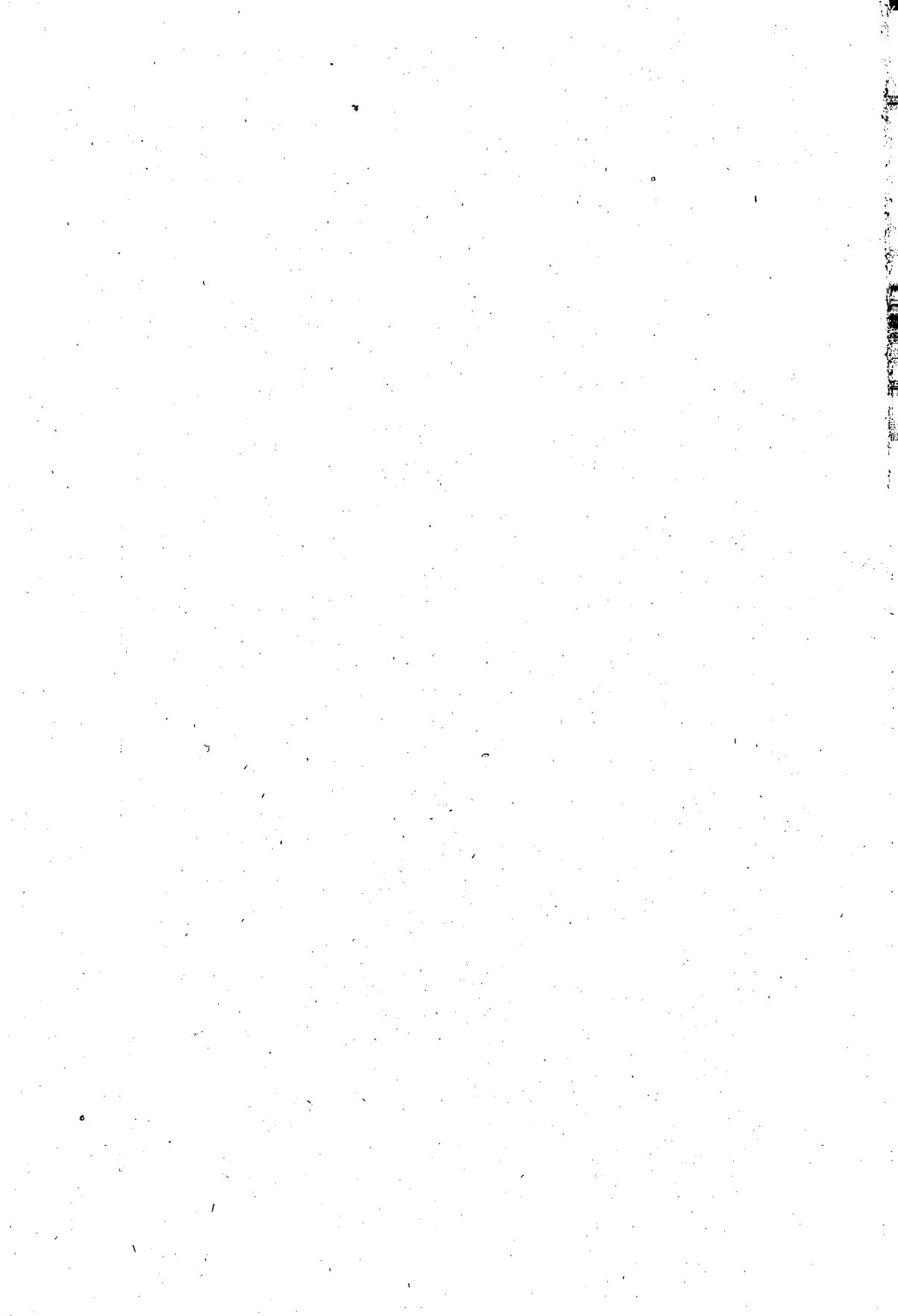
† History of Landbeach Parish. (*Camb. Antiq. Soc.*)

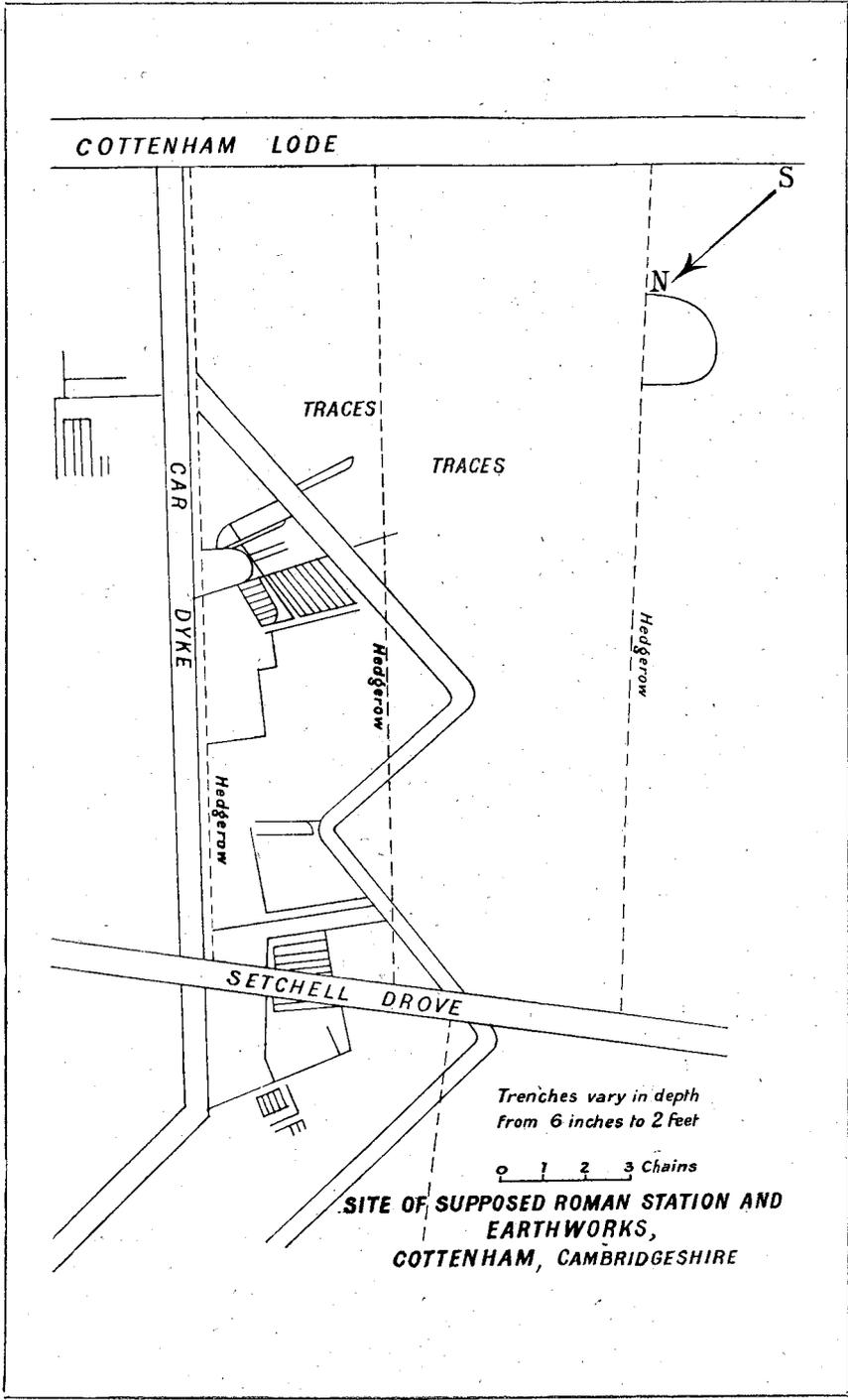
Roman settlement in this neighbourhood, says, "Roman antiquities of any kind do not often occur, so as to furnish their testimony upon the point." A former Rector of Cottenham, the late Rev. S. Banks, was possessed of several Roman vases, &c., found near the spot where our interest now centres; the site of these former discoveries is alluded to by Babington\* as "some gravel pits, rich in Roman pottery, in the parish of Cottenham, near to the borders of Landbeach parish, adjoining the supposed line of the Car dyke." Unless the site in question is identical with the place where these earthworks are found, which is improbable, seeing that there are certainly no 'gravel-pits' here, (and it is not easy to understand the earthworks being overlooked), the statement would point to the fact of a considerable extension of the settlement to the site of our present inquiry.

It has not, I believe, been sufficiently recognized that the Romans maintained considerable stations or fortified camps at various points along the borders of the Fens, least of all along the Car dyke which served the purpose of an effectual barrier. It appears to me that this was one of several such stations that existed along the entire southern boundary of the fens, for no other purpose than to keep in check the bands of Britons who lurked in the fastnesses and to protect the line of communication that extended with more or less regularity from Cambridge to Earith and of course northwards to its extreme limit by Ramsey, Worlick, Bodsey, &c. The fen district afforded opportunities of shelter and the Britons for a considerable time were consequently able to withstand their foe and in common with the outlaws of a later period, to give much trouble in attacking these exposed military outposts. This continued, more or less, long after the Romans had practically withdrawn.† Wood, thicket and marsh doubtless covered the face of the fen borderland and enabled lawless bands to congregate until

\* *Ancient Cambridgeshire*, p. 82.

† The Romans quitted Britain about A.D. 425, (they arrived under Julius Caesar, B.C. 44), and constant turmoil between Briton and Saxon ensued.





COTTENHAM LODE

TRACES

TRACES

CAR

DYKE

Hedge-row

Hedge-row

Hedge-row

SETCHELL DROVE

Trenches vary in depth from 6 inches to 2 feet

0 1 2 3 Chains

SITE OF SUPPOSED ROMAN STATION AND EARTHWORKS, COTTENHAM, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

such time as they found opportunity to sally forth with a view to plunder and harass the enemy.

It may, I think be taken for granted that among the many fortified posts scientifically placed at strategic points, e.g., Colne and Earith, the Cottenham site formed no insignificant station. It would be difficult to establish any theory of Roman occupation at Cottenham were it not for very considerable finds of Roman pottery, which without any particular search or excavation work have been brought to light. The earthworks in question furnish no precise clue as to the character of the fortified place. As far as can be ascertained from their formation and surroundings they seem to be unique, and it is difficult to express an opinion concerning them. The field containing the principal portion is known as part of "Bullock's Haste Common," and if, as I imagine, the word *haste* is identical with '*hurst*' (signifying a thick wood) it would point to the former condition of what is now a bare tract of country. The sketch plan that serves to illustrate this paper (the preparation of which I owe to our friend, Mr. Arthur Bull of Cottenham, who has evinced a lively interest in this investigation, and to whom I am indebted not only for first directing my attention to the subject, but for numerous details he has furnished and much personal attention), shews the 'Cottenham Lode' on the south-east, and the Car Dyke on the north-east, with the hitherto unploughed field of about eight and a half acres, lying between these two boundaries, and a wide road-way known as 'Setchell Drove,' (which is the way of approach from the village), running almost parallel with 'Cottenham Lode.' The large rectangular zigzag rampart which appears to have enclosed what I may designate a camp, or, if the rampart be of the nature of a community stockade (which I scarcely think likely), the homestead, extends into another field of about the same size in a southern direction, cutting the dividing hedge in several places. It also extends across the above-mentioned road, enclosing between the Car dyke and the rampart about three and a half acres of a field of about thirteen acres and a half. Outside the area of this plan in the several mentioned

fields, and also in one north of the Car Dyke, which lies beside the 'Lode,' there are traces of exact geometrically formed parallel entrenchments, terrace within terrace, in what, to some of us, appears nothing less than a vast angular outline of military defence, covering an area of over twenty acres. Thus a very extensive tract of land furnishes incontrovertible evidence of some very particular undertaking, and is without doubt at the very least an indication of early occupation, either for defensive purposes, for navigation or trading enterprise, or for habitation. If we assume the trenches to have some connection with a settlement formed on British lines then we have in one way or another to account for the zig-zag character of the rampart which seems specially to be intended for military occupation or it may be navigation purposes. Such a rampart may have been thrown up within an outer stockade on an emergency for defensive purposes, but there is not, as far as I am aware, evidence of any such construction. The sketch plan it must be remembered has no pretension to completeness of detail and furnishes no exact survey of *all* the ground which is more or less covered with indications of these unaccountable and strangely diverging marks of maze-like entrenchment lines, which may be said to resemble the bars of a grid-iron more than anything else. The outer rampart may be regarded as enclosing a definite portion, while that outside the zig-zag, whether parts of the same work, of more or less ancient origin, offer no definite plan. What seems to be a continuation, or at all events to bear a strong resemblance to these particular earthworks, may be found in a field near "Causeway End" Farm in the adjoining parish of Waterbeach and close to Denney Abbey. There are clear indications of an external ditch of irregular form and a well defined square camp with external ditch and inner bank. On its west side there runs a long narrow band of 'grid-iron' trenches parallel to and joining the bank on that side. On the south side of the camp and contained within the angles formed by the south and west in one case, and the south and east sides in the other, are two rectangular 'forts' surrounded by a single ditch. The remaining angle of

a chevron-shaped entrenchment, or what seems very much like one, cuts through the northern side of the field.† This is confirmatory of the assumption that similar defensive works were repeated at stated points throughout the entire line of communication. The irregularity of British earthworks is fully recognized, such entrenchments, forming convenient means of shelter in an emergency are by no means unlikely as an expedient. The Britons indeed made use of no particular system of fortification, and as a rule would content themselves with tribal fastnesses. The Iceni in their flat country had however many resources in regard to fortification, in which the narrow entrance to hinder the approach of cavalry was conspicuous. The Romans at the first formed all their camps as exact squares, later however, they assumed other forms. If the chevron form is as I believe unrecognized in the construction of ancient camps, it is clear enough that battles were fought on this plan and it would be difficult to devise a better method of attack. In the Chronicle of Crowland, attributed to Ingulf, we read that the few Christians who withstood the desperate onslaught of the Danes, formed themselves into one troop "*in shape like unto a wedge*, and all day long they stood firm and still, holding their wall of shields against the foeman's arrow-flight, and the dense line of the enemy." Michael Drayton in one of his *Heroical Epistles* describing the battle of Bosworth field, writes :

"Into two several fights the king contrived his strength,  
And his first battle cast into a wondrous length  
*In fashion like unto a wedge.*"

It is quite possible that the Cottenham earth-works formed an outpost to the adjacent camp (originally British) at Belsar's Hill. An earth-work of a somewhat similar character was found in the parish of Hartford near Huntingdon, where some interesting discoveries of British and Roman antiquities were made a few years since, (prominent among which were earthworks never I believe properly

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† At Denny Abbey, what might at first sight appear to be the remains of earthworks surrounded by a deep and broad moat, undoubtedly form part of the foundations of the Abbey buildings, and the embankments are probably those thrown up to control the incursion of fen waters.

investigated). In character it would appear not unlike those at Cottenham, they are described as but little above the ordinary level of the pasture, yet similarly retaining a very distinct outline. A particular formation there is said to have resembled "a turtle flattened and elongated," reminding one of the curious mounds of the valley of the Mississippi.\* There can be very little doubt but that from the North bank of the Ouse at Hartford, where there is reason to think a conflict between the Britons and Romans had been waged, a way was opened into the Fens by means of a ford.

The irregular and labyrinthine character of these earth works would be very effective in the event of an attack; if made from corresponding points in one direction and a like resistance offered from an opposite quarter, the assault would be vigorously repulsed. The trenches as far as I can make out, would seem to be well above the old water-level of the Car Dyke, and consequently if such be the case, we ought perhaps to dismiss from our minds any thought of their use as wharves or for such like employment, not to mention the apparently unsuitable nature of any such formation. Yet if I am not greatly mistaken, it was at this very point (Cotinglade) that the material for the construction of the Aldreth Causeway was brought at the time of the Conqueror's assault upon the Isle of Ely.†

A correspondent, Mr. R. M. Ivatt who resides at Cottenham, from a cursory examination of the entrenchments has expressed to me his opinion that they owe their origin to some form of commercial undertaking and that they were not defensive works. The reasons advanced for this view are as follows:

I. No weapon beyond a sling or bow and arrow was in use during the early period, and against weapons of this description, a barrier of reeds or something similar would have been just as effective as a trench, in fact more

\* *Proc. Soc. Ant.* 2nd Ser. Vol. V. pp. 34-5.

† What is known as "The Tyllinge" is a southern extension of the Cardyke, and may possibly indicate a place of lading (Twilade). It was known as "the Tyllinge" so far back as the time of Henry V.

so, inasmuch as a soldier with a spear in the bottom of a trench, would be placed at a disadvantage as against an enemy on the bank.

II. As defensive embarrasments, the trenches of so small a breadth could be easily traversed by an active man.

III. No system of defence can be devised from the plan of trenches as appearing at the present times.

IV. If the level of the bottom or floor of the trenches be taken it would be some foot or two below the normal level of the water of the Car Dyke (at that time) and therefore unsuitable for trenches as understood in our present profession of warfare.

My correspondent inclines to the opinion, that this 'encampment' was actually what might be called a 'port' on the marshland shore, by which boats of, say, two to four tons burden, could deliver the produce or merchandise of the Isle of Ely, Crowland, &c., to a point of convenience for further overland travel to Belsar's Camp, North Road, and other places. After having docked here, the boats would then continue the journey by the Car Dyke to Denny Abbey, then on to Cambridge, &c., &c. To establish this theory it would of course be necessary to ascertain the precise depth of the excavations as originally formed, and if possible the normal height of the water in the Car-Dyke. The boats, being probably flat-bottomed, would hardly draw more than eighteen inches of water. If this 'dock' theory be deemed probable we are still left in doubt as to the particular period when these earthworks or trenches were constructed. That the site was at one time a place of lading, etc., I think there can be no manner of doubt, but this in no way militates against a British or Roman, occupation for defensive purposes, seeing that although the discovery of pottery has up to the present been mainly confined to that part of the locality not actually covered by the earth-work formation, viz. to the bed of the Car Dyke, yet signs of such occupation are very much in evidence, although of course it would completely upset the idea of the trenches, &c., having

been constructed with a military end in view. In favour of the works, having been made in Roman times, even if originally carried out for commercial purposes, we have very significant testimony, I think, in the use of such terms as *e.g. Port-Way*, and *Short-port-way*, not to mention '*haven*,' &c., still used to designate localities in the adjoining parish of Rampton, that led through the southern prolongation of the Aldreth Causeway, by Belsar's fields, either to or close by the site of these earthworks. And, as I have already stated there can be no question as to the use of the site, in ever so limited a way, for wharfing and such like use, at the time of the Norman Conquest, if, as I conjecture we may identify the place in question with the '*Cotinglade*' of former days. This at any rate is sufficient to establish the importance of the site as a convenient spot for military and other like purposes.

In endeavouring to decide the question as to which people we owe the origin of these singular earth works,—whether to Britons, Romans, or Normans, or to any joint enterprise—we must necessarily defer to the judgment of experts. Earthworks of a similar character cannot be altogether unknown in other localities, and it would be well if we could pass beyond the region of conjecture in our estimate of these singular remains. This much may be broadly stated; we have here extensive remains of what we may safely characterize as earthworks hitherto unnoticed; on all sides there is being continually discovered Romano-British pottery of various descriptions, some pieces, which are nearly perfect, being very fine. An ancient waterway that forms the boundary separating the site from the fens, was flanked by a range of strongly entrenched fortifications. It is sufficient for our purpose to regard only such as may have occurred in the course from Cambridge (Magdalene College), to the '*Bulwarks*' at Earith, a strongly entrenched bastioned fort doubtless of Roman origin, that unquestionably was in close connection with the Cottenham outpost. It occupies a portion of land thrown up for defensive purposes and close by there seems to have been a projection on the

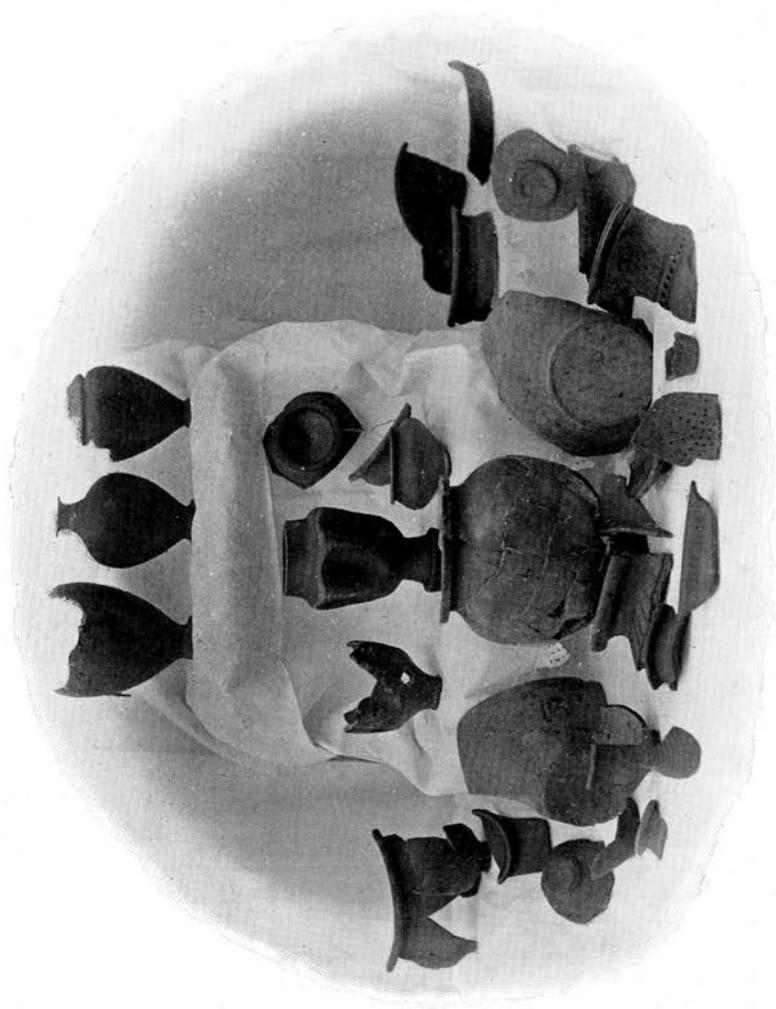
bank of the river Ouse that may have served the purpose of a landing stage. At Earith considerable remains of Roman pottery and other objects of antiquity have been found, including a remarkable bronze statuette, now in the British Museum. Singularly enough a very fine Roman bust, perhaps representing Marcus Aurelius (together with other lesser Roman antiquities) was discovered some years ago at Cottenham (a parish be it remembered that joins Akeman Street). The helmet has a human face, possibly representing an ancient Briton, with other characteristic ornamentation wrought upon it, in itself an interesting feature when it is remembered that the site where this object was found was closely related to British and Roman life as seen in conflict. The discovery of two such objects at these two connected points is remarkable and corroborative. Between Earith and Cottenham similar art work from Roman hands, consisting of beautiful bronze objects, chief among which may be named a fine military *baton*, have been found at Willingham, an adjoining parish. Roman coin in vessels, and pottery in abundance have also been unearthed at this last named place.

Extensive and continuous finds of pottery of well-nigh endless variety, in and about the dry bed of the Cardyke, adjacent to the site where the earthworks occur, form an indisputable evidence of Roman occupation. Within the ground covered by the trenches no considerable discovery of pottery or other remains worth mentioning have been made. There has however been only a very slight disturbance of the soil made in a recent examination by Mr. Arthur Bull, with the object of exposing anything in the nature of foundations, &c. With the exception of establishing the dimensions, &c., of the trenches nothing occurred to reward the enterprise of the workers. The trenches on being opened to their original depth were found to be from two feet in the 'grid-iron' trenches to three and a half feet in the larger ones, viz., below the present level, the breadth at the bottom being about one foot and a half. This would afford ample shelter and security for men in an emergency.

Probably the smaller trenches would have been from five to five and a half feet deep, when first thrown up and the larger ones six to eight feet deep. The trench marks are discernible all over the upper parts of both fields. They are mostly single, but mainly follow the same lines and angles as the marks inside the rampart. The construction of the entrenchments would be such, that the men could issue forth from the resourceful shelter at any fitting occasion, acquiring a well-nigh unassailable position. An efficiently garrisoned camp at this point would command the passage into the Isle of Ely and guard all approaches within a considerable area. It may be that this entrenched position was originally constructed as a British shelter, and subsequently appropriated, as we have good grounds for thinking, in regard to the British hill fort known as 'Belsar's' in the immediate neighbourhood, by the Romans. At one time I was a little disposed to view the site in question as a possible example of something in the nature of what we know as the Common Field system, but the conditions of the locality are unfavourable to the adoption of any such theory. We have moreover, not the narrow and regularly planned strips alone, methodically divided into several portions, but an intricate pattern worked out with apparent foresight and ingenuity. The surrounding rampart or fosse is of so severe and angular a form that it is difficult to imagine it was ever designed for any other use and purpose, than that of attack or defence, unless we regard it as a part of some kind of dock construction. It is noticeable that a raised mound exists close up to the bed of the Car-dyke, which while it may indicate some kind of fortress or stronghold into which men might pass from any point along the trenches unobserved, may point to some feature of interest in connection with a dock arrangement.

The officials of the Ordnance Survey department, have in the preparation of their new Map, very suitably indicated the characteristic outline of the earthworks, and have at my request, distinguished the ground thus covered, by the words "*Supposed site of Roman Station or Earthworks,*" a sufficiently broad description to allow of





ROMANO-BRITISH POTTERY FOUND IN OR NEAR THE SUPPOSED BED OF THE CAR-DYKE,  
COTTENHAM, CAMBRIDGESHIRE.

any slight difference of opinion respecting their character and purpose. There need then be no apprehension lest the subject of our investigation should altogether pass out of mind. It is to be hoped that additional evidence in the way of further discovery may enable us soon to arrive at some more complete and satisfactory solution of what is at present involved in considerable doubt and obscurity. Since the first preparation of these notes the site has been visited by several distinguished antiquaries, but they confess their inability to throw any light upon the subject, and content themselves with regarding the remarkable features to which I have alluded as unaccountable and very singular.

Some of the pottery already found here seems to indicate a certain measure of refinement in the daily life of the settlers. The elegance of the Durobrivian ware is seen in certain fragments, ornamented in relief with what may represent either the hind legs of an animal *courant*, or those of a large bird, dolphin or snake, and scroll work, or it may be a mythological subject. Several pieces of the lustrous Samian ware have indications of the name of the potter. Three mutilated bottoms of such vases have the potter's stamp, wholly or in part. Upon the largest piece (diameter four inches) within an oblong (one inch) appears 'IVINVMLM' on a base that rises slightly to the centre.\* Another has the oblong stamp within a circle, but the only remaining letter that is at all distinct is a single 's.' a further portion has the concluding letters 'NIM' in part of an oblong. Other fragments of Samian ware have marks of ornamentation and are of varying degrees in point of quality, the lesser pieces probably being portions of Durobrivian imitations.

The illustration that accompanies this paper will serve to explain the character of much of the pottery that has been found. Two or three of the pieces are very nearly perfect, but for the most part the pottery is

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\* *Vide* Potter's marks upon Samian ware in the collection of Hon. R. C. Neville in Wright's "Celt, Roman and Saxon." Similar fragments have been found at Comberton and Foxton, Cambs.

very fragmentary. Sufficient however has come to light to make it clear how very diverse the ware is both in material and character, ranging from the large coarse *amphoræ* of dull yellow-grey colour with heavy overhanging rims, occasionally ornamented with bands of vertical lines, or wide-mouthed, full-bodied vessels of slate-grey and unglazed, sometimes decorated with a diamond pattern formed by the intersection of lines, below which is a single band of indented holes, to the fine and delicate ware, both black and white, the latter with a dark grey coating. In one or two specimens the ornamentation is of a ribbed or fluted description with horizontal varied by oblique lines. One fragment of an amphora has an unusual type of ornament in the form of a series of straight lines going up from the collar. Then there is another example in the small wide-mouthed vessel of light or dark grey (*Query*, Upchurch) ware, from three to four inches high, the base being small and the body of the vase of considerable dimension, with a small round rim. This class of vessel standing on a flat and perfectly plain bottom with wide mouth and plain circular rim is also found of thick black ware. Other examples include vases from which the body springing from a neat base gradually swells into globular form, the sides receding, forming a short neck with overlapping rim. Such ware is usually of a dark slate hue or cream colour. One all but perfect specimen of a handsome vase of elegant form, is seven and a half inches in height and three and a half inches across the mouth. The base is about one and a half inches high and greater in diameter at the bottom than where it joins the body of the vessel. The hexagonal body itself is some five inches high, each of the six sides being deeply indented by the hand of the potter. Around these indentations there runs a band of two parallel and lightly marked lines. The upper part of the body falls in a little, in order to receive the collar or rim and is ornamented with two sharply cut lines. The colour is dull brown. The lower part of a similar vessel is of white ware coated with dark pigment. Portions of *patervæ* and other like

articles have been found, one of which is of a bright yellow colour with broad flat rim. A single fragment of an "unguentarium" of dark red colour has been found; this is ornamented with broad raised rings, having a plain and small mouth. One large portion of a colander is of dark grey ware and the holes, which apparently were made by a punch, radiate from a common centre. I venture to think that the discovery of pottery of this character affords undoubted evidence of extended occupation at a time which we may regard as the flourishing period of Roman ascendancy in Britain.

It may be worth while mentioning that at some little distance from the Cottenham site in a direct line leading on to Earith, (on land known as "Hempsall's" in Willingham parish, which has long been under the plough), we have found a large quantity of small fragments of pottery. Except so far as this mere surface yield is concerned, there are here no other traces of occupation of any kind, unless it be a kind of coarse gritstone or conglomerate also found on the surface, that would almost appear to have been at one time used for building purposes. This material is found in small broken pieces. I must confess I do not attach much importance to the matter, only that the discovery here of various Roman antiquities, to which reference has already been made, lends colour to the idea that a settlement of some importance was continuous from the position by the side of the Car-dyke at Cottenham. In a field of original pasture at Hempsall farm there is also a bank running completely through it (lost however on the cultivated land on either side), which in all probability was the work of the Roman settlers. This site is within a short distance of the Aldreth Causeway and Belsar's Encampment.

I may mention that we found a portion of what appears to be either a bone "stylus" (such as would have been used for writing on the wax tablets which the Romans carried with them) or a hair pin, that has been broken

off in the upper part where a series of notches commence. With the exception of a Roman hand-mill found in this neighbourhood some years ago, this is really the only object (barring of course the pottery) of personal or domestic use that has been found. Some pieces of Roman money have also come to light in the character of brass coins, but the only specimen in our hands is hardly decipherable.

During the progress of this paper through the press, I have visited Somersham, Hunts., which is within two miles of the Cambridgeshire boundary and on a line with the Cottenham site, and found there undoubted indications of the course of the Car Dyke in its passage towards Ramsey and onwards, together with such a continuation of the earthworks as I had all along anticipated. The peculiar angular form and "grid-iron" trenches are however wanting. Some good specimens of Roman pottery and other antiquities have been found there; indeed both in slight excavations on hitherto undisturbed pasture and on adjacent ploughed land, fragments of pottery of all kinds are plentiful.\* It is quite probable that considerable discoveries at this site await the industrious antiquary intent upon the unravelling of what is certainly something of an enigma. It would above all else be interesting to trace the continuous line of Roman occupation, and this ought now to be possible.

The entire subject must be regarded as still under investigation. It is quite possible that ere long further discoveries may lead to the elucidation if not the clearing up of some of the more difficult matters now brought forward, and it is much to be hoped that an explanation of the peculiarities of the earthworks may not remain for any length of time so completely hidden from view as at present appears to be the case.

C. H. EVELYN WHITE, F.S.A.

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\* The particular spot is adjacent to a small stream known as the 'Cranbrook' near the road leading from Somersham to Chatteris, close by which Dr. Stukeley made some interesting discoveries in 1757, (vide *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. xxxvi., pp. 118—121,) and subsequent important 'finds' have been made in the same locality.

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