PROCEEDINGS

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Cambridge Antiquarian Society,

20 OCT. 1905—28 MAY 1906.

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Communications

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Monday, 12 February, 1906.

The Reverend the President in the Chair.

The following papers were read by Professor HUGHES:

I. ON A SECTION IN THE ALLUVIUM OF MELBOURN.

There is one question of great importance, with a view to working out the history of the Cambridge district, which has not received the attention it deserves, and that is the geographical changes which have been brought about by natural and artificial operations along the course of our rivers. The direction of roads and routes has been determined by the necessity of avoiding swamps which have since been converted into pasture land; and sites for houses and villages have been chosen with regard to conditions of water supply and geographical features which have since been changed. It is important therefore to place on record any sections which may be from time to time exposed which tell of the raisings of alluvial plains by the deposition of silt and the growth of soil. In no part of our district does this line of enquiry appear likely to lead to more important generalisations than in the basin of the Rhee and its tributaries, whether we regard it in its lower reaches near Cambridge, where there is evidence of depression of 16 feet or more since the river silt at the backs of the Colleges was deposited, or in its upper feeders under the chalk hills north-east of Royston, where the Brant Ditch runs across the open downs from Heydon to Melbourn Common, and there ends. Why should this be? Why, if the ditch was a defensible boundary, should not the aggressors from the south get round the end of it by Meldreth and Melbourn? The answer is that the stream, which drains Melbourn Common and runs out by the mill to Dunsbridge Gate, then ran through a swamp, and so did the stream which carried off the waters of Rights Moor.

By the courtesy of Mr E. Hope, of Melbourn, I have had an opportunity of examining a section exposed in digging the foundations for the extension of his premises at Melbourn.

This section, which I now place on record (fig. 1), shows that the surface of this alluvial flat has been raised between 5 and 6 feet in recent times, not by earth movements but by the gradual addition to the surface of silt and soil in the ordinary course of natural operations of denudation and deposition.

The surrounding district shows signs of occupation in banks and ditches and traces of dwellings; and in other communications I have offered reasons for believing that there were numerous settlements here, at any rate as far back as the time of the early Romanised British.

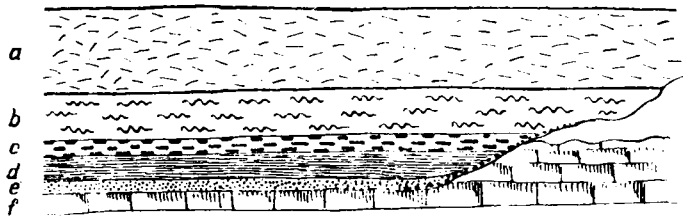

Fig. 1. Section seen in digging foundations of Mr E. Hope's extension of premises at Melbourn. Scale 8 feet to 1 inch.

a. Made ground.
b. Clay with thin layers of carbonaceous matter and pieces of blackened wood.
c. Peat and peaty silt. *d*. Clay passing down into *e*.
e. Sand with bones of domestic animals. *f*. Chalk.

II. On some Ancient Trenches and Interments near Shepreth.

Many years ago[1] I drew the attention of the Society to a number of ancient remains, of various kinds, and not necessarily connected with one another, which occurred north of the village of Shepreth. There were the foundations and floors of some Roman houses which we covered up again and, which are still, we hope, safe, at a small depth below the surface of the ground

[1] *Report Camb. Ant. Soc.* Nov. 9, 1885, p. 60.=*R.* xlvi. p. 60.=No. xxviii. p. 60.=Vol. vi. No. 2, p. 60.

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