

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

Cambridge Antiquarian Society,

LENT TERM. 27 JANUARY—16 MARCH 1908.

WITH

Communications

MADE TO THE SOCIETY.

No. L.

BEING No. 3 OF THE TWELFTH VOLUME.

(SIXTH VOLUME OF THE NEW SERIES.)



Cambridge :

DEIGHTON, BELL & CO.; BOWES & BOWES.

LONDON: G. BELL AND SONS.

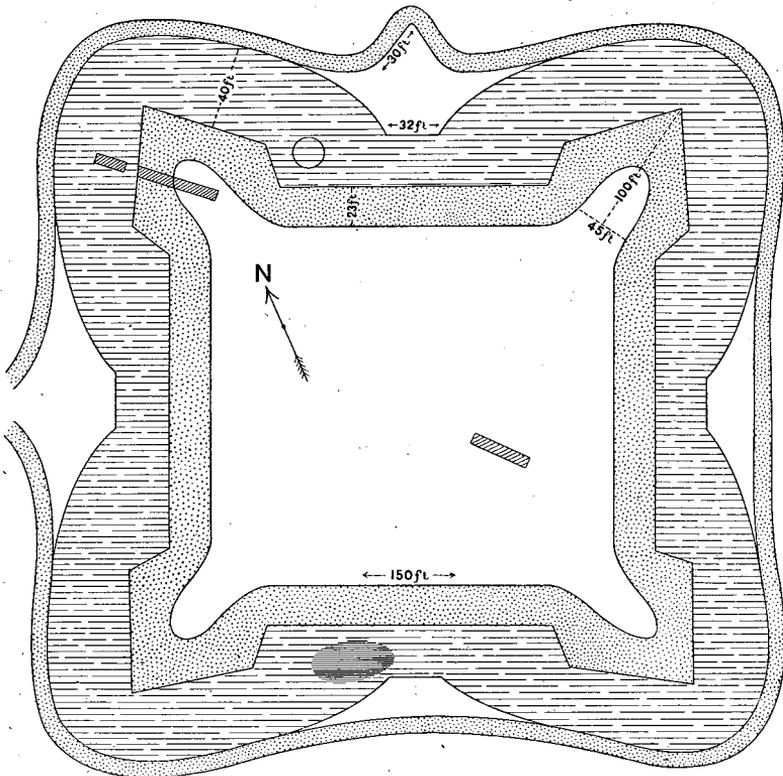
1908

Price Five Shillings net.

EXCAVATIONS AT EARITH BULWARKS.

BY G. L. KEYNES and H. G. EVELYN WHITE.

The earthwork known as the 'Bulwark' at Earith lies in the angle formed by the junction of the Hundred Foot Drain with the Old West River, that is, on the lowest slope of the very slightly raised bank of gravel on which Earith and Blun-tisham stand. Geological and Fenland maps represent the Bulwark as lying within the boundary of the fen and not on



this gravel bed, but excavation has shown such maps to be inaccurate.

Although the Bulwark is such a conspicuous and oddly shaped object, only the vaguest possible statements have been made regarding it, and there is no record of any systematic investigations having ever been made there. Specimens of such statements may be found in Miller and Skertchley's *Fenland* as follows: "The neighbourhood (of Earith).....is one of the promontories which the highland throws out upon the great level of the East Anglian Fen and was most appropriately occupied by the Romans with a strongly intrenched fort on a spot which still bears the name of the Bulwark, and yields from time to time pottery of early date." [Rev. S. S. Lewis, 1870.] Or again: "In addition to those permanent stations the Romans erected many encampments such as Earith Bulwark; this construction may have been adapted to a subsequent mode of defence. Colne (Colonia) lies two miles west of the Bulwark; the latter commanded the river."

Professor Babington gives us very little help; he refers to a theoretical Roman road—the Sawtrey Way—which may have passed through Earith, and records the discovery of fragments of Roman pottery in a field near Earith and of the well-known statuette at Earith Bridge. He does just mention the Bulwark and remarks that it "may perhaps have been a Roman work," but here again one is baulked by his curiously apathetic vagueness.

All the references I have so far quoted assume the Bulwark to have been a Roman work, but in Brayley's *History of the English Counties* it is suggested that this earthwork may be of much later date and may possibly have been thrown up during the Civil Wars. This fits in with local tradition, which states that it was from here that Cromwell's artillery pounded Ely Cathedral. One cannot, however, attach much importance to such traditions, for the Cathedral is ten miles distant, and in this part of the country every earthwork is invariably assigned either to William the Conqueror or to Cromwell, or even to both, under the title of "Cromwell the Conqueror."

I may mention that Roman remains have been found close

by at Haddenham; Colne was probably a Roman station, and there was a Roman settlement at Somersham, but this seems to complete the external evidence as to the date of the Bulwark and it is absolutely inconclusive.

As the work is not generally accurately described it may be worth while to give the results of a careful examination, illustrated by the accompanying diagram. The main part of the work is a rectangular enclosure defined by a thick rampart. At the four corners are projecting lozenge-shaped bastions, which constitute its most peculiar feature. Outside is a moat following the contours of the rampart.

The chief measurements are as follows: length of the inner rampart between the bastions, 150 feet; the bastion projects nearly 100 feet and the outside measurement of its face is 120 feet. The thickness of the rampart on the top varies from 23 to 5 feet. The moat is from 30 to 40 feet broad. In the south moat is a small pond fed by a spring.

Outside the moat is a slight but unmistakable earthen breastwork enclosing the whole; this breastwork has rounded corners, and on the north side opposite the centre of the inner rampart, where the moat, following the contour of the inner work, leaves a large platform, it juts out into a triangular projection, each side of which measures 30 feet. This is a most peculiar and significant feature, as will be seen later.

Before we began excavations a rough sketch plan was submitted to Professor Haverfield, who suggested that it might be a Norman fort or castle. It is also, he said, rather like a late fourth or fifth century Roman fort of a type found in Egypt, Africa, and many places, even in Gaul, but not hitherto in Britain. Such a fort would be built of stone.

Excavations were carried on for three days during last July, and were then discontinued as there seemed little prospect of obtaining definite results. The work can be dealt with briefly. A trench was first cut through the west face of the north-west bastion, revealing a complete section. The rampart was found to be 30 feet in thickness, its outer face being more sloped than the inner. The top was approximately flat and was 8 feet from the original surface level. No remains of any kind

were found, and certainly no masonry. It was clear that the rampart had weathered very little, the detritus at its foot being inconsiderable. The rampart was formed of a mixture of the gravel subsoil with the stiff surface clay thrown up from the moat, and it was noticeable that the masses of the various materials shown in the section were of pyramidal form, evidently lying as they had been cast. Now as each of these represented a considerable amount of soil it is clear that something larger than a basket, perhaps some form of wheelbarrow, must have been used as a means of transport from the bottom of the moat to the top of the rampart, and this tends to confirm the idea that the work is of fairly recent origin.

After completing this section without any more tangible result, a trench was cut from the rampart to the centre of the moat. This showed that the shape of the bottom had undergone practically no alteration, the untouched clay being only overlaid by some four or five inches of black mud, such as is usually found beneath stagnant water.

An attempt was next made upon a spot in the north moat, which seemed by surface indications to be a rubbish pit; it proved to be such, but was offensively modern.

Finally a diagonal trench was cut in the centre of the main work to try conditions there, but here also no result was obtained; the normal layer of dark soil overlay the gravel and there was no sign of any artificial deposit.

After this it was decided to suspend operations. It appeared certain that the occupation of the earthwork had been exceedingly short and had left no datable remains, and that it was therefore useless to continue excavation.

An hypothesis may, however, be based upon the shape of the works. The peculiar bastions and the triangular projection in the outer breastwork backed by a platform, would certainly seem to have been designed for artillery, and this breastwork, while admirably adapted for defence against musketry fire, would be ludicrously inadequate for the hand-to-hand fighting of earlier days.

The small amount of evidence at our disposal all seems therefore to favour the idea that the Bulwark was thrown up

during the Civil Wars of the seventeenth century, though I am painfully aware that we have done little towards dispelling the mists of uncertainty that hang over the site. Perhaps experts in ancient fortifications or historians with a detailed knowledge of the period can offer some criticism.

Mr F. J. SEBLEY exhibited a hoard of coins found in the river Cam in 1876, upon which the Reverend W. G. Searle, M.A., commented.

REPORT OF THE BELGIC CONGRESS.

Twentieth Congress of the *Fédération Archéologique et Historique de Belgique* held at Ghent, August 2—7, 1907.

Report of the delegate of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, Mr H. G. FORDHAM.

We were received by the authorities and inhabitants of Ghent with a splendid and admirably arranged hospitality; the congress numbering no less than 1512 members, of whom 165 were foreigners. The *compte-rendu* shows that 56 societies were officially represented. Of these England was represented by the Cambridge Antiquarian Society alone, and (in the unfortunate absence of my colleague, Mr J. W. Clark) the honour of bearing the burden and responsibility of that representation devolved upon me. Unfortunately, also, the International Congress on School Hygiene; held in London, recalled me to England on the evening of August 5, and I was thus unable to participate in the latter part of the proceedings at Ghent. This fact, and the absence of my more competent colleague, must be my excuse for the following very summarised and bald report.

In general, the Congress was notable for its activity and *entrain*. Sitting in three sections: (i) *Préhistoire et Proto-histoire*, (ii) *Histoire*, (iii) *Archéologie*, a very large number of communications of the greatest interest and value in every branch of these extensive subjects were read and discussed. The discussions were a marked feature, their value being

CONTENTS

OF PROCEEDINGS, No. L.

VOL. XII. (NEW SERIES, VOL. VI.) No. 3.

	PAGE
Cambridge outside Trumpington Gates before the foundation of Peterhouse. By Rev. H. P. STOKES, LL.D.	147
A Fourteenth Century Wall-Painting in Lolworth Church, representing the Incredulity of S. Thomas. (With Plates XI and XII.) By G. MONTAGU BENTON	148
I. The Cartography of the Province of France, 1570-1757. II. Cambridgeshire Maps. II. Maps of the Nineteenth Century. (With four Figures in the text.) By Mr H. G. FORDHAM	152
Serb and Albanian in the Balkans. By Miss DURHAM	231
The Rings under the Eaves of Old Houses. (With four Figures in the text.) By G. E. WHERRY, M.A., M.C.	232
The Senate House Yard and early Cambridge Stationers. By J. W. CLARK, M.A., and J. E. FOSTER, M.A.	240
On two Bookcovers, with chains, found in the Tower of St Benedict's Church, Cambridge. (With Plate XIII.) By J. W. CLARK, M.A.	241
On the part of King's Hall lately restored to Trinity College. By W. D. CARÖE, M.A.	243
Open Meeting	243
Stone Coffins and Skeletons discovered at Thetford, Norfolk. (With Plate XIV.) By G. MONTAGU BENTON	249
A Wall-Painting in Babraham Church. (With Plate XV.) By Rev. T. D. GRAY, M.A.	253
Excavations at Earith Bulwarks. (With one Figure in the text.) By G. L. KEYNES and H. G. EVELYN WHITE	257
Report of the Belgic Congress	261
Antwerp Celebration	263