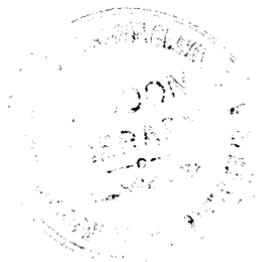


PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
**Cambridge Antiquarian Society,**

JANUARY 1943—DECEMBER 1947



VOLUME XLI



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even edge, possibly in order that it might be retained in use. The pot may therefore be considerably older than the Samian ware. Three small sherds, one with finger-tip ornament and another with stamped ornament, have been classed by Mr Philip Corder as first century.

The presence of a well-made floor, the close packing of the sherds, the abundance of Samian ware (especially when compared with the paucity on the main site), the absence of ill-made coarse ware, all indicate a purposeful disposal rather than a casual rubbish dump.

*Cratendune: A Problem of the Dark Ages.*

BY GORDON FOWLER, F.S.A.

ABOUT twelve years ago Colonel Archer of Ely drew my attention to a passage in Bentham's *History of the Cathedral Church of Ely*, a book published in 1771. It quoted what the *Liber Eliensis* had to say about a pre-Ely village named Cratendune situated about a mile south of Ely. All Bentham could add to the story was that he knew of a field named Cratendune in that area.

The gist of the story of Cratendune, taken from all available sources, appears to be as follows:

In the first dawn of Christianity among the Saxons, Ethelbert I, King of Kent and Chief of the Saxon Kings (who reigned from 560 to 616), founded a Church to the honour of the Virgin Mary in a village named Cratendune. Later that Church was destroyed in the war between Anna, King of East Anglia, and Penda, King of Mercia. When Anna's daughter, Etheldreda, adopted a religious life, she first intended to repair the old church at Cratendune, but on second thoughts chose a more attractive site a mile farther north and built a monastery there in 673. This site later became the town of Ely, because the people of Cratendune abandoned their village and rebuilt it around the monastery. At the time when the *Liber Eliensis* was written in the latter part of the twelfth century, the site of the village of Cratendune was hardly discernible, but many iron utensils, coins of various kings and other indications of it once having been inhabited had been found.

Colonel Archer and I then made many attempts to locate this lost village, but without success. What we did find, however, were Romano-British pot-sherds sparsely scattered along the crest and northern sides of the 50-ft. contour from approximately Bedwell Hay Farm just west of the Ely-Cambridge Road via Ely Fields Farm and

Emery Barn Farm to Hole Farm on the Ely-Witchford Road. The then owner of the latter farm showed me the following eight late first- to late fourth-century Roman coins, which he or his men had picked up on that part of his farm which is situated south by east of the Ely-Witchford road on the same 50-ft. contour.

A 2nd brass. Lupondres I, probably Domitian, A.D. 81-96.

A 2nd brass. Marcus Aurelius, A.D. 161-80.

A 3rd brass. Salonia, wife of Gallienus, A.D. 260-8.

A 3rd brass. Crispus, A.D. 317-26.

A 3rd brass. Constantine I, A.D. 307-37.

A 3rd brass. Valentinian I, A.D. 364-75.

A 3rd brass. Fourth century, but indecipherable.

An indecipherable Roman coin.

This 50-ft. contour high ground is impermeable boulder clay overlying Kimmeridge clay and therefore most unlikely as a habitation site for a village community requiring water from wells. Also, of course, there are no spring-fed streams on it. Neither are there any below it where the immediate lowland is impermeable Kimmeridge clay of great depth.

Three-quarters of a mile north by east of Ely Fields Farm another 50 ft. contour occurs, the southern tongue of which is about one mile south of Ely Cathedral. It consists of Lower Greensand overlying Kimmeridge clay, and provides water if shallow wells are dug in it. Therefore, one would expect that would be the most likely site for the lost village of Cratendunè, but we found no object there of any antiquity earlier than seventeenth-century pot-sherds probably carried there from farmyard dung heaps of the period.

I was very surprised therefore when Dr Margaret Murray of Cambridge last year very kindly drew my attention to a cemetery on the lower slope of the 50 ft. contour just north of Mr Robert Driver's Ely Fields Farm (52° 22' 33" N., 0° 14' 15" E., reference on the military grid L. 977965) and about 1½ miles south south-west of Ely Cathedral where she had seen skeletons and from which she had obtained some pagan Anglo-Saxon grave goods.

I found a ten-ton American Bulldozer levelling off the ground. In the course of doing so it was shattering skeletons in graves which had originally been about 3 ft. deep and which had no particular orientation. As it was urgent war-work I could not stop that awful kind of archaeological excavation, which will always be remembered by me as one of the minor horrors of this war.

The objects recovered from about thirty graves were as follows, and are according to descriptions provided by Mr T. C. Lethbridge, M.A., F.S.A.:

Iron sword, with a pattern welded central band. This is probably early and is known locally only on a piece of a sword-point from the Cam near the tollbridge at Waterbeach and on a second from a burial near Quy. It is common in the finds from the Danish bogs a century before the invasion of Britain. (Pl. XVIII.) The ancestry and construction of these interesting weapons is discussed in the accompanying note by Mr Herbert Maryon of the British Museum.

Two saucer brooches with debased provincial Roman ornament. Possibly fifth century, probably later. (Pl. XIX.)

Two fragments of a large square-headed brooch. Very debased ornamentation, probably seventh century. (Pl. XIX.)

Wheel-shaped brooch, unusual type. Possibly a Roman survival.

Small annular brooch, very common. Local type.

Small string of amber beads. I have suggested that strings of amber beads are sixth century and not earlier.

Several glass 'melon' beads of a type derived from Roman forms.

Large plum-coloured glass bead, probably a button, inlaid with white rosette. These are found singly in most cemeteries. (Pl. XIX.)

One or two glass beads composed of several colours twisted together.

One large amber bead.

Two fragmentary spear-heads.

Three iron buckles } Ordinary types.  
One bronze buckle }

One knife.

A bronze girdle hanger.

A number of small amber beads.

Mr Lethbridge has told me that these finds are of a type normal to pagan Anglo-Saxon cemeteries of about the period A.D. 450-650. They are now in the possession of the University Museum of Archaeology. The skeletons from the southern or uphill side of this cemetery had no grave goods with them as far as I could see.

Incidentally, the supposed, but only in places recognizable, course of a Roman Road leading north from Cambridge passes about 200 yards west of this site.

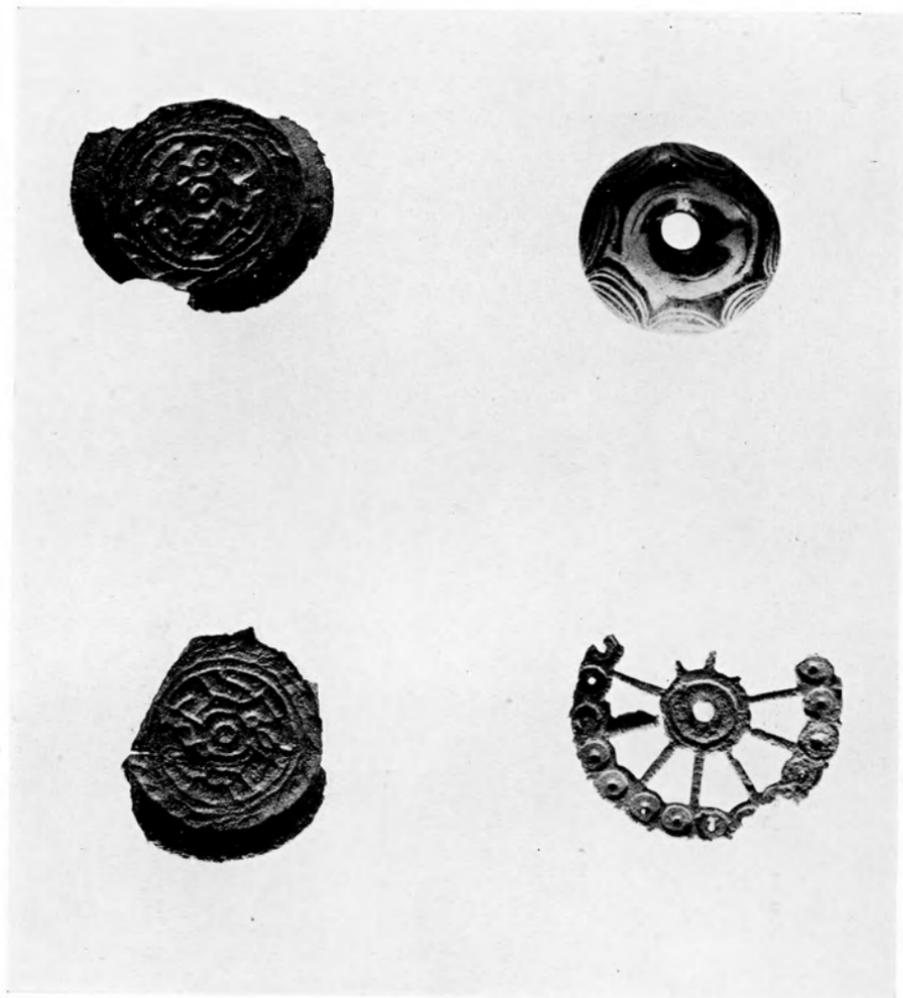
Can the cemetery be associated with the lost village of Cratendune, and, if so, where is its site likely to be? If it were not for the lack of water in the high land at the top of the 50-ft. contour just south of

PLATE XVIII



Iron sword, from Ely Fields Farm cemetery

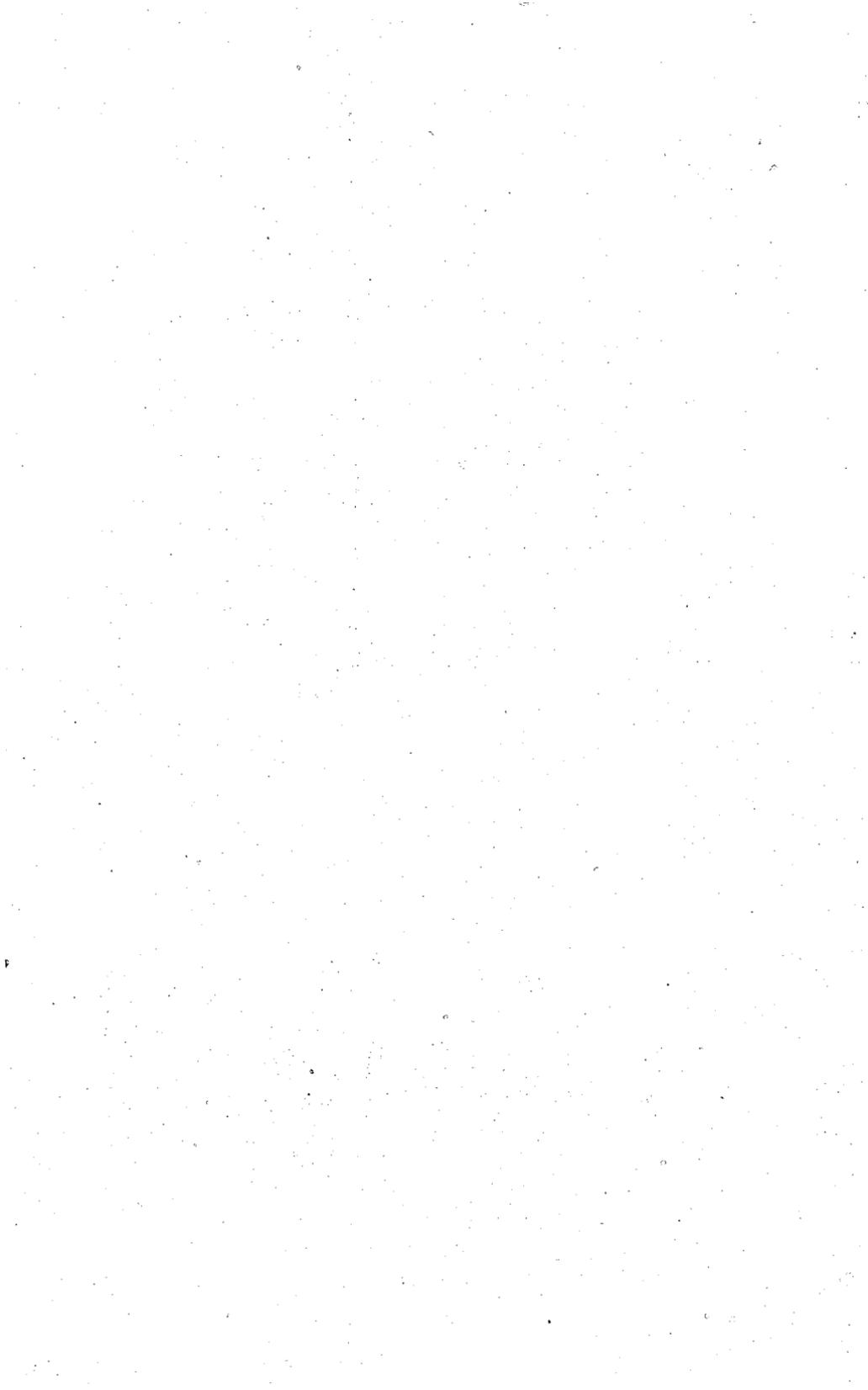
PLATE XIX



Saucer brooches, wheel-shaped brooch, and glass bead,  
from Ely Fields Farm cemetery



String of amber beads, from Ely Fields Farm cemetery



the cemetery, I should expect to find some traces of the village there, but, so far, I have had no time to look for it properly.

I am indebted to Dr Margaret Murray for having drawn my attention to this cemetery, and also to Mr Robert Driver of Ely Fields Farm for having helped to collect the objects, many of which were his personal finds, as he spent a lot of time on the site.

*A Sword of the Nydam Type from Ely Fields Farm,  
Near Ely*

BY HERBERT MARYON

THE early iron of North Germany and Scandinavia was made from bog-iron ores. These have a high phosphorus content and can be reduced at a low temperature. The result is a very soft iron product.<sup>1</sup> The earliest iron swords from Northern Europe were less efficient than contemporary weapons of bronze. We read of the battle in Swanfirth against Snorri and his folk, when Steinhthor found that 'the fair-wrought sword bit not whenas it smote armour, and oft he must straighten it under his foot'.<sup>2</sup> This was a very common experience with early Scandinavian weapons. It is heard of for the first time in history at the Battle of Aquae Sextiae, B.C. 102, between Marius and the Teutons. The sagas abound in anecdotes about the exceeding desire for a good weapon evinced by Northern warriors, whatever its place of origin might have been. Exceptionally good weapons bore famous names and traditionally came from the hands of the gods or giants. It would seem that northern smiths who could forge laminated steel weapons were rare, and the stories imply that these fine weapons came from afar.

Very little seems to be known about the place of origin of these blades. Both Horace and Ovid refer to the high quality of Noric iron. The Noric kingdom corresponds with Styria and Carinthia, on the Upper Danube. Baldwin Brown believed that the Viking swords came from Noricum or the Pyrenaean region, and that the Nydam swords came from the partly Romanized district of Germany on the middle and lower Rhine, where, later, under the Frankish empire, the manufacture and export of sword blades was a staple industry.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. Louis. Iron and Steel Institute, May 1929.

<sup>2</sup> *The Story of the Ere-Dwellers*. Trans. by W. Morris and E. Magnusson, p. 120.

<sup>3</sup> *The Arts*, Vol. III, p. 215.

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