
Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society

(incorporating the Cambs and Hunts Archaeological Society)

Volume LXXXVI
for 1997



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Christopher Evans, Gavin Lucas, Tim Malim, Tim Reynolds & Twigs Way: *Field-work in Cambridgeshire: April 1996–July 1997*

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**Volume LXXXVI
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Editor Alison Taylor

Published by the Cambridge Antiquarian Society 1998

ISSN 0309-3606

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Editorial

My first task in this volume is to thank and pay tribute to the retiring editor, Audrey Meaney. She took the Proceedings through several difficult years, from 1993-7, coping in particular with new publishing technology and increasingly complex archaeological reports. In this time she made tremendous efforts to catch up with annual publication, so that, by September 1998, we are only nine months behind the date for which the issue is intended. This is despite the size and professional standards required for the only vehicle for regular reporting of most archaeological discoveries to a wide local and international readership in Cambridgeshire, as well as publishing historical and other antiquarian research.

1996-7 once again had a well-filled programme for the Society, with two conferences, on Fenland Waterways in March and on recent archaeological excavations in November. There was an impressive programme of lectures, headed by Barry Cunliffe and our own ex-President Christopher Taylor, and some enjoyable excursions. It was also a year when the Council, and in particular its President and Secretary, were involved in efforts to protect local services for archives, archaeology and local studies. Sadly, just as this volume was being prepared for the press, we heard of the deaths of two of our stalwart members and supporters. Nesta Rooke, for many years Sites and Monuments Officer for Cambridgeshire, and Brian Charge, Director of the Haverhill and District Archaeological Group, died in July 1998.

This volume contains a few minor changes in design, principally with the intention of making better use of expensive space, and it follows the usual format except for the revival, after several years, of a Reviews section. As a first attempt it perhaps appears rather incestuous, but I hope that in future we will receive a wider range of books, and I would also welcome offers of suitable reviews by other writers. This is an important way to bring works that might easily be missed to the attention of members, and to entice them to read reports which are often more interesting than their titles suggest.

Alison Taylor

Reviews

Alison Taylor & John Alexander

Orton Hall Farm; A Roman and Early Anglo-Saxon Farmstead

D.F. Mackreth, 1996, 255 pp. plus microfiche, East Anglian Archaeology 76. £35

This excavation by the Nene Valley Research Committee in the early days of Peterborough New Town has long been recognised as the site which produced important new evidence for the crucial years spanning late Roman and very early Anglo-Saxon settlements, and this immensely detailed report does full justice to this and other significant aspects of the work that was carried out at that time.

The site consisted of a fully working Roman farm-

stead which included 4 aisled barns, one very large rectangular building, a mill-house, 5 driers, and assorted features interpreted as furnaces, hearths and ovens. It was in use from the 1st century AD, with many of the structures belonging in the very late 4th century. Then, without any breaks, the still-functioning farm and its buildings were used by people using Anglo-Saxon pottery, some of which was even made in Roman styles, as if to satisfy traditional requirements for equipment such as mortaria. Subsequently there were changes to the whole layout of the farmstead. Because of the quantities of residual Roman pottery on the site it was not always easy to disentangle later features, but it seems that at least one, and possibly three, rectangular houses, one sunken-floored building, a granary, hearths (one of which may have been used for smithing), and various fences definitely belonged in this phase, which ended in the early 6th century. The site was subsequently used for open fields, and ridge and furrow survived.

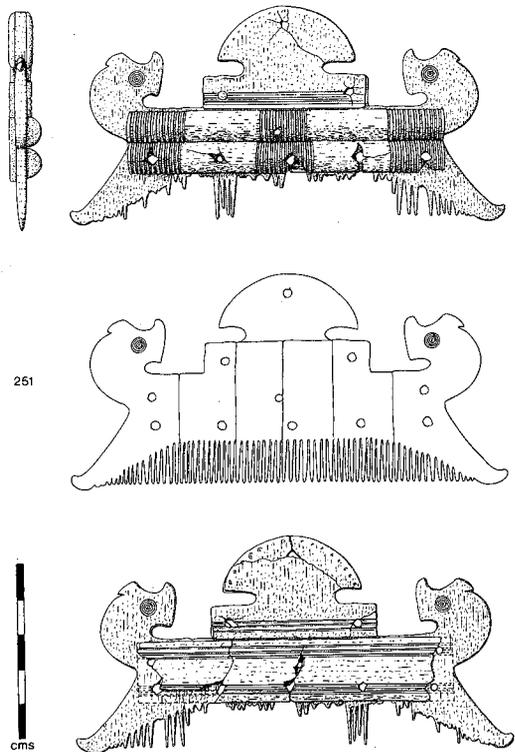
There are several useful discussions within the publication which help our understanding of similar issues elsewhere. These include the long use of some pots in a rural context (up to 50 years, sometimes followed by re-use of broken or adapted sherds in the Anglo-Saxon period), cattle management and brewing on the late Roman farm, and the use of Car Dyke as the boundary to an Imperial estate.

Alison Taylor

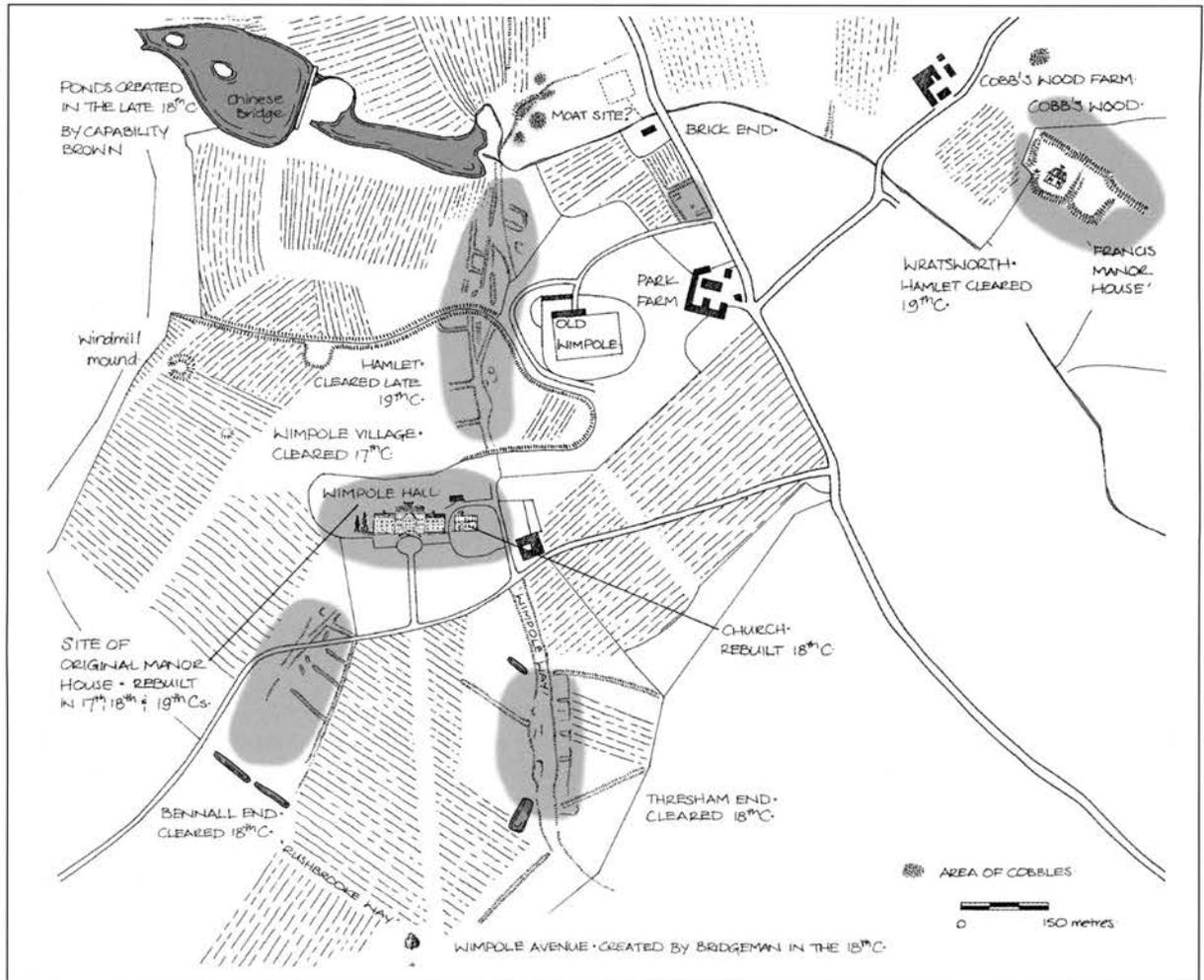
Archaeology of Cambridgeshire: Vol I South West Cambridgeshire

Alison Taylor, 1997, 136 pp, Cambridgeshire County Council. £9.95

This volume is the first of a series which will cover the whole County and which will make the recent, and greatly increased, knowledge of the human past in the region available in a reliable and attractive way. The County Council and author are to be complimented on having achieved their aim by matching a clearly written text which synthesises the available knowledge with carefully chosen and colourful paintings, drawings, photographs and maps. These maps, drawn by



A Frisian Barred Zoomorphic comb from Orton Hall Farm.



The development of Wimpole, from The Archaeology of Cambridgeshire Volume I.

Sarah Wroot and showing the development of the villages from Saxon times, are particularly valuable.

Sixty villages to the west of the Cam are covered in this volume. After a general introduction which sets the important aspects of each period in a wider context, the author groups her material by village, giving evidence for the rise and sometimes the decline of each of them alongside the evidence of archaeological remains, documents and surviving buildings. Routeways in different periods are mapped and, whilst buildings and farming systems, fortifications and funeral monuments dominate the physical remains, due attention is paid to excavations and casual finds. Sites and finds cover all periods from the Palaeolithic up to the late 20th century, making this an invaluable reference work for local historians and historical geographers as well as to archaeologists and all those who are interested in Cambridgeshire's past.

John Alexander

Cambridgeshire from the Air

Susan Oosthuizen, 1996, 118 pp, Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd. £19.99

There are two important parts to this book, both of which will fascinate all students of local history and archaeology. Firstly, of course, there are the air photographs, 142 of them, mostly reproduced in full colour. These have been carefully chosen from the world-famous collection held by Cambridge University and give a matchless view of Cambridgeshire's historic sites and their landscapes. All the old favourites are here – Iron Age forts of Wandlebury, Belsar's Hill and Stonea, castles at Burwell and Rampton, burial mounds at Bartlow, a Roman settlement at Bullocks Haste and the deserted medieval village at Clopton. Many lesser known sites are included, with some exceptional views that give insights into some of the ways the past has influenced the world still around us. Amongst these I would single out the Saxon estate around Balsham church, changes to medieval East Hatley which can be seen dramatically from the air, and the Victorian suburbs of Cambridge, laid out over medieval open fields.

However, this should not be treated just as a pic-

ture book, for each photograph is accompanied by a mini-essay which explains the significance of the monument in its historical context. Many of these give novel interpretations which will help other archaeologists understand the contexts of their data, discussions of many planned towns and villages being particularly significant.

There are a few problems with the production of this book. Firstly, the colour reproduction is not as good as it might be. The serious reader will also find the lack of an index a problem, especially as the arrangement makes it difficult to predict where a site might be included. Finally, it is frustrating not to know *when* the photographs were taken, nor to have reference numbers so that one can consult them easily at the Cambridge University Collection of Air Photographs. These omissions suggest that the publisher underestimated how useful this book would be and how closely it would be studied.

Alison Taylor



The Civil War Fort at Earith from Cambridgeshire from the Air.

A Study of the Impact of Imparkment on the Social landscape of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire from c. 1080 to 1760

Twigs Way, 1997, 380 pp, BAR British Series 258. £48

This massive publication, the result of a PhD thesis, includes considerable descriptive and historical information about 99 historic parks in Cambridgeshire, and also an analysis of the social and economic effects the creations of these 'enclosed pieces of land held privately, for pleasure' had on land in each parish, both in terms of their agricultural value and their central location within villages. It was often important and fertile areas in the village that was used for these pleasure grounds, and therefore they could lead to severe settlement disruption and depopulation, an effect sometimes still visible today. At whatever period parkland creation took place, it seems that areas of housing, land previously held in common, (often re-

vealed as well-preserved ridge and furrow), and resources where villagers once had common rights, such as woodland, may all be privatised in this way.

This work catalogues and analyses signs of social stress that were recorded at the time, usually through court actions, and also the effects on individual village landscapes, concentrating in particular on the positions of churches and moated sites in relation to the medieval villages and later manor houses. A major factor which needs to be understood by those looking at the historical geography of Cambridgeshire (and other areas) is therefore explained in valuable detail.

Alison Taylor

The Archaeology of the St. Neots to Duxford Gas Pipeline 1994

J. Price, I.P. Brookes, D.J. Maynard, 1997, 160 pp, BAR British Series 255. £34.

The route of this pipeline from Duxford in Cambridgeshire to Little Barford in Bedfordshire was devised so that it would *avoid* known archaeological sites but nonetheless, due to good fortune and careful reconnaissance by the Gas Board's archaeologists, several important sites did come to light and repaid extensive excavations. The results of eight separate sites are included in this volume. Some are typical of the types of information found during this kind of work anywhere in lowland Britain, but some unexpected results make this a particularly important report.

The most interesting site was at Foxton, adjacent to a Roman villa. Some of the pits were Neolithic in date, and others were Mid-Late Iron Age. There was a 1st century AD building with a flue system, and a military-style ditch; a 3rd to 4th century cemetery which included one body in a lead-lined coffin with buckle, pottery and bones of chicken and geese, and 23 other bodies, many with coffins, food bones and pottery; a small temple; a hoard of 113 items, mostly of iron, of 4th century date; and 5th century pots and possible sunken floored structures marking the sites final, post-Roman phase. At Wimpole, Iron Age huts and early Roman ditches were discovered; at Duxford there was a Middle Iron Age settlement and a possible Roman military camp, and at Little Barford there were the outlying features of a Roman villa. The hints of military presence in this area are very important, and the burials comprise the only cemetery excavated in Cambridgeshire since Guilden Morden in the 1930s. The contents of the ironwork hoard, the second largest to be found in Britain, are also exceptionally important.

Alison Taylor

Excavations at Stonea, Cambridgeshire 1980–85.

R.P.J. Jackson and T.W. Potter, 1996, 749 pp, 32 plates, British Museum. £195

This massive and magnificent work is the result of one of the most fruitful long-term excavations in Cambridgeshire, run by the British Museum. Visits to the excavations were always one of the highlights of my summers in the early 1980s, and it is very satisfying to see the finds that caused so much excitement at that time described, interpreted and illustrated in such style. The site, principally a Roman town, was discovered by David Hall while field-walking as part of the Fenland Project. Today it is just a ploughed field close to the Iron Age fort of Stonea Camp, ravaged by arable agriculture and metal-detectors like so many fenland sites. Its history, however, unravelled in the course of the British Museum's work, has proved to be crucially important in many periods.

The earliest feature was a probable Neolithic cursus. This lead towards a Bronze Age barrow which Tim Potter dug thirty years ago and which the latest evidence suggests was preceded by a henge. Artefact scatters show that Stonea island was inhabited or visited for much of the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods, but the first real settlement dated to the Late Bronze Age. From this time there was no identifiable hiatus in occupation until the end of the Early Anglo-Saxon period. Settlement features of the Early and Middle Iron Ages culminated in a high status site, perhaps an *oppidum*, identified by finds of decorative metalwork, brooches and coins. Many other Iron Age coins found in the area, including the discovery of 872 silver coins at March also published in this volume, substantiate this interpretation of the site at this time.

The major part of the volume is, of course, concerned with the Roman town. This was probably designed on the orders of Hadrian, an ultimately unsuccessful demonstration of the power of Rome which nonetheless must have played an essential role in Roman management and exploitation of the Fens. The most spectacular feature of this period was a tower, thought to be three storeys high, built at least in part of stone, with glazed windows, ornately painted plaster on the walls and all the other comforts of Roman luxury. Tidy, proto-urban town-planning marked the settlement in this period, but was replaced by a less organised land-use in the 3rd and 4th centuries, when ovens, pits, wells and latrines were more familiar features for Cambridgeshire archaeologists. Other highlights of the Roman occupation include a temple, probably built over an Iron Age predecessor; a huge waterlogged sump that had preserved items such as a hay rake, withy bundles, shingles, a spade, planks and writing tablets that, alas, have proved impossible to read; evidence for short-lived military use of the site; infant burials under floor boards, and pits containing virtually complete pots, often of decorated samian or Nene Valley wares. Examination of the well-preserved environmental evidence of the site provides plentiful data for the whole area, down to the fig pips and lentils found in latrines.

Like many Roman sites that are looked at carefully, one of its most exciting phases comes at the end when, apparently without any gap in land-use, a small Anglo-Saxon village was constructed along a Roman road. Plans of four buildings of this date are a welcome addition to our meagre supply of Early Anglo-Saxon settlements. After this there really does seem to have been no particular settlement at Stonea until the 16th century, apart from in the 9th or 10th century when there was a building on a low mound. Post-medieval evidence has yet another interesting story to tell, this time about the economy of a pioneering farming community in this strange environment. Sledge runners and wine bottles are unusual features of this finds report.



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A handle in the form of Minerva, from Excavations at Stonea, Cambridgeshire 1980–85.

A great number of specialists have contributed to the high standard of individual aspects of the publication, and the opportunity has been taken to let some of them write useful essays that synthesise data from the region as well as explaining the Stonea material. Notable amongst these are Amanda Chadburn's discussion of Iron Age coins and Martin Welch on Early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in the Fens. Anyone interested in Roman pottery or environmental evidence will find a huge amount of data here.

Some of the best finds from these excavations are on display in new galleries in the British Museum. This is very good news, especially as the one drawback of the report is the price. At £195 it will be beyond the reach of most of us. It will be an essential research tool in libraries, however, and any archaeologist able to acquire a discounted copy will find it an important reference work for many years to come.

Alison Taylor

Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society

Notes for contributors

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Articles in books: Hines, J. 1998. 'The sixth-century transition in Anglian England: an analysis of female graves from Cambridgeshire'. In J. Hines (ed), *Studies in Early Medieval Chronology*. Oxbow Monographs.

Articles in Journals: Moorrees, C.F.A, E.A. Fanning & E.E. Hunt. 1963. Formation and resorption of three deciduous teeth in children. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 21, 205-13.

Theses: Mortimer, C. 1990. *Some Aspects of Early Medieval Copper-Alloy Technology, as illustrated by a Study of the Anglian Cruciform Brooch*. Oxford University D. Phil. thesis, unpublished.

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