
Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society

(incorporating the Cambs and Hunts Archaeological Society)

Volume XCIV
for 2005



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THE CONDUIT: *local history and archaeology organisations and events*

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**Volume XCIV
for 2005**

Editor Alison Taylor

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Editorial

These Proceedings take us on the usual chronological tour of Cambridgeshire's past, from scant traces of Neolithic occupation at Fenstanton to the impact of 19th century entrepreneurship and 20th century planning on Cambridge's Victorian New Town. As ever, we aim to bring you the most significant results of the latest archaeological excavations, together with the Society's parallel interest in historical and landscape studies. Residents of Cambridge should feel especially well served by the painstaking work represented both in Philomena Guillebaud's reconstruction of the events and effects of enclosure of the West Fields, and Bryan and Wise's analysis of one area of post-enclosure development — as they say, a microcosm of development quite typical of Cambridge in an exceptionally dynamic age. Anthea Jones literally lets the past speak for itself, through the letters of the wife of an Ely bishop, whose domestic concerns were little affected by her husband's daunting ecclesiastical responsibilities.

Outside the normal running of an active local society, CAS has been involved in a peripheral but deeply concerned way with the heritage service (including archaeology, archives and museums) of the County Council. Regular readers will be aware of the concerns we have expressed over the years at what we have seen as a general failure to support excellent staff by providing the right resources. This spring, financial matters became significantly worse, and CAS joined a substantial body of protest which at least postponed for one year one tranche of cuts (worth £100,000). This cut will however go ahead in 2006, leaving Heritage Services to face a 30% budget reduction from £927,000 to £650,000, even though Cambridgeshire is already well below neighbouring counties in funding these services. A consultants' (Kentwood Associates) discussion paper notes among other things that one decision that has caused most damage to the Council's reputation is the abolition of the post of the County Museums Officer, and CAS knows how much John Goldsmith, a vastly effective supporter of local museums since 1975, would be missed (August 2005). They note too that proposed cuts will require far-reaching policy decisions to withdraw from non-statutory services which would have 'a major impact, both for the public directly and on the ability of those services to lever additional — and often substantial — funding from external sources'.

The consultants are particularly flattering about archaeology. 'We believe this to be an outstanding example of a County Council Archaeology Service. Its archaeology and countryside advice services are held in high regard by planners, developers, other local authorities, and regional and national organisations. The service has an enviable track record in obtaining external funding... The outreach programme — particularly work with schools — is exemplary.' The report is concerned that such work is not put at risk, and it is critical of the current short opening hours of the County Record Office, of the County's failure to provide public access to historic buildings information since 2002, and the loss (August 2005) of a valued mentor for small museums. It is also worried that, if a proposed new Historical Resource & Cultural Centre is built with PFI money, there would not be funding to staff it adequately for the hours the public would reasonably expect.

There are clearly frightening times ahead, not least for our small, mostly voluntary, museums. This is very sad at a time when there is so much public enthusiasm for the past and so many new sources that can be tapped if the right support and advice are available. CAS has already filled some gaps, for example by taking responsibility for *Conduit* and publishing 'Recent Fieldwork' without grant support, and we are hoping to reinstate some financial support for local archaeological groups. We will continue of course to co-operate with the County Council through advice, by offering joint working and by fruitful liaison with their over-worked staff. We hope this coming year will see some solutions rather than additional problems, and a better atmosphere of hope and confidence. CAS is certainly willing to give all the support it can.

Just as these *Proceedings* were going to press, we heard the sad news that Rev Prof William Frend had died, at the age of 89. His had been a long and distinguished career (or perhaps series of careers, as theologian, soldier, priest and archaeologist), and he did outstanding work on early Christianity. In his later years in Cambridgeshire he impressed and worried us in turn with his continuing excavations, which were fruitful to the last. He has already submitted the results of this work to CAS for publication, and I am guilty in not having yet edited them for publication. The next *Proceedings* (2006) will include a full obituary for William, with his excavations at Great Wilbraham and accounts of Christian artefacts from Roman Cambridgeshire.

Alison Taylor
Editor

Reviews

Alison Taylor and Tony Kirby

Durobrivae: a Roman town between fen and upland **Garrick Fincham 2004**

Tempus Publishing 192 pp £17.99 pb

Durobrivae (Water Newton) was a town of considerable regional importance which, unusually, avoided development in later periods, as settlement moved across the river to Peterborough. Preservation is therefore excellent, and evidence from early excavations, aerial photography and (we have to admit it) metal-detecting is outstanding. Recent excavations and fieldwork outside the walled area, principally by the Nene Valley Research Committee and the Fenland Survey, have provided massive evidence for settlement, industry (notably the nationally important pottery industry), military and religious activity, burial, transport etc.

Starting as an-extra-mural vicus outside a small fort, the town developed an irregular street pattern in the early 2nd century and was walled (why? Local pride really is not much an answer considering what we now know of Roman administration) in the late 2nd or 3rd century, then contracted and was perhaps abandoned in the 4th. Its principal importance to archaeologists must surely be its pottery industry, though iron production, its position as the centre of a mosaic school, and its high level administrative significance are all exceptional. The town itself is mostly a scheduled monument where excavation is avoided, so the book concentrates on its suburbs and the area around, especially the Fens. He dismisses (in my view, with little good evidence) the imperial estate and other modern interpretations of Roman political geography.

Unfortunately, rich archaeological evidence seems to be deliberately downgraded in favour of a landscape based approach that works well in some areas but is disappointing in this context. The area suffers from a lack of fully published excavation reports, though those that exist are under-used and could have reasonably been amplified by data from sites and monuments records, popular series, and the rashly-dismissed 'grey literature'. Where he suffers too is from a lack of illustrations of artefacts in museums, which may not be his fault. There is for example only one unrepresentative flask from the stunning Water Newton treasure

(the most important Christian hoard from Britain), a few sherds of Nene Valley pottery, and none of the important figurines and military equipment or mosaics are represented. Important resources of aerial photographs, not to mention excavations in progress, have also been omitted. It is disappointing to have a book of this nature produced that does so little justice to the wealth of evidence gathered by many scholars and field-workers who have studied the region

Alison Taylor

The Anatomy of a Victorian Village: Whittlesford **1800–1900.**

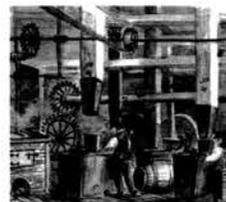
Tony Carter 2004

Whittlesford Victorian Group, xi + 158 pp £15 (inc p & p) from Jack Sutcliffe, 34 Maynards, Whittlesford, Cambridge CB2 4PN

In spite of its proximity to the M11, the A505 and the Cambridge–Liverpool Street railway line, Whittlesford remains one of Cambridgeshire's most attractive villages. Thanks to Nathan Maynard (1806–63) and his son George Nathan (1829–1904) it is also one of its best documented. Nathan was a minor entrepreneur, owning shops in Whittlesford and Duxford and kept a detailed diary of local events and personalities. George Nathan continued and expanded this, collecting documents relating to Whittlesford and surrounding villages. He sold the shops in 1873 and, after a brief period in London and on the strength of an established reputation as an antiquarian, became curator of Saffron Walden Museum. He remained here for the rest of his life. In later years, his material was put into scrapbooks, most of which are in the Cambridgeshire CRO although some material remains in Saffron Walden.

George Nathan's methods would appal modern

The Anatomy of a Victorian Village
Whittlesford 1800–1900



Tony Carter

archivists. He thought nothing of pasting documents into the scrapbooks: but without this and his careful transcriptions, much of Whittlesford's history would have been lost. It was from the scrapbooks, and other sources, that Tony Carter (a long-time Whittlesford resident and a geographer by profession) set out on this ambitious reconstruction of the topography, economy, society and mores of the community in the 19th century. Sadly, he died before seeing the fruits of his work, but thanks to Tony Cartwright, Jack Sutcliffe and Pat Carter, who undertook the necessary editorial work, we have a unique insight into the life of a Victorian village.

There are four sections. The first describes the landscape of Whittlesford down to Enclosure and helps explain why any walk from the centre of the village produces a variety of ecologies. The second looks at village life and social organisation. The strength of nonconformity is evident: half the population were Baptists in 1825 and in 1897 two-thirds were Dissenters. The poverty and deprivation that were the lot of most Victorian villagers are well described, together with the efforts the better-off could make when faced with a real crisis, such as the 1871/2 smallpox outbreak: thanks to a makeshift isolation hospital, there were no fatalities.

Part 3 looks at both the leading players on the village stage, the Hollick-Tickells, Raynors, Thurnalls and the Maynards themselves, and the cast of tradesmen and workers. Like most Victorian villages, Whittlesford was well supplied with local goods and services. It also had an agricultural engineering works, owned by another branch of the Maynard family, although many, especially women, were employed in the paper and leather works at nearby Sawston.

The final section is two guided tours of the village, in 1841 and 1881. Here we find out where families with whom we became familiar earlier in the book lived and worked: anyone who has ever tried to repopulate a 19th century village from census and directory material can only marvel at how well this has been achieved. The village was already changing in 1881: some old families had died out or emigrated, although the small settlement at Whittlesford Bridge had grown rapidly since the arrival of the railway in 1845. A walk around modern Whittlesford acquires a new dimension thanks to these chapters and accompanying maps.

Completing Tony Carter's work was 'a tribute to a man who did so much for the village he loved'. A fitting tribute indeed: the book deserves to become a classic of local history.

Tony Kirby

Stonea and the Roman Fens.

Tim Malim 2005

Tempus Publishing 272pp £19.99

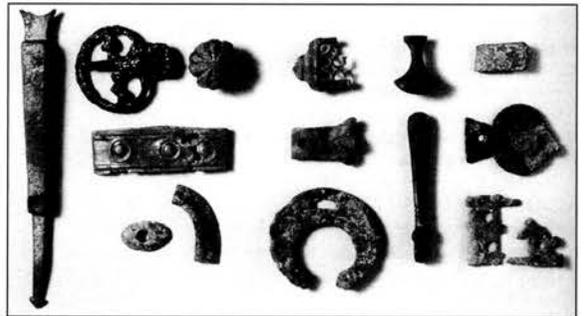
This ambitious work is more broadly spread than the title offers, though long-overdue discussions of Stonea Camp (an Iron Age fort near March) and an update of

the extensive work undertaken (partly by the author) on the Roman Fens should provide a sufficient challenge. Tim Malim worked for the Fenland Survey and then for several years for the County Council, where he surveyed, excavated and organised management of many archaeological sites, especially those owned by the County, foremost of which was Stonea Camp.

The book begins with a round up of the background to studies of the Fens in the 19th and 20th centuries, followed by a review of the distinctive prehistoric evidence, including comparisons with other Iron Age forts. These comparisons extend into adjoining uplands, including discussion of Cambridgeshire's unusual circular forts, such as Wandlebury. This background to Iron Age tribal boundaries is necessary before we begin to understand this low-lying multi-phased fortification which, by 1980, was little more than white marks in the bare fen soil of autumn.

The centrepiece of the book is the author's excavation and management work on the fort itself, and the British Museum's extensive excavations of the Roman town that adjoins it. Discussions include how the town fits into a pattern of state intervention. Also included is Michael Green's (to my mind) convincing alternative explanation of the famous Stonea tower as a Roman-Celtic temple, with similarities for example at Godmanchester. The later history of Stonea saw its use in the Civil War, and there is a sad account of its fate due to the barbarous agricultural subsidy system of the 1960s.

Military metalwork from Stonea.



There is a useful round up of evidence for Roman roads in the Fens, incorporating (and illustrated by) much new evidence from excavations across the region. Ben Robinson's aerial photographs are an invaluable addition to this discussion, as to much of the book, and give a superb impression of the Fen landscape. Other discussions cover Durobrivae, seen as intricately connected with colonisation and exploitation of the fens, the economy (again drawing on much recently excavated material), and the first publication of some new evidence for Christianity in Cambridgeshire. The author then goes beyond his remit to discuss Anglo-Saxon settlements, dykes and cemeteries, all topics that were producing impressive new evidence in the years he was working in Cambridgeshire.

Alison Taylor

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