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The Bartlow Hills in context

Hella Eckardt* with Amanda Clarke*, Sophie Hay⁺, Stephen Macaulay[^], Pat Ryan[#],
David Thornley* and Jane Timby[#]

From 2005 to 2007 geophysical surveys and selected excavation were carried out at Bartlow, Cambridgeshire, to explore the archaeological context of the famous Romano-British barrows. These have identified and dated an enclosing linear earthwork and associated settlement activity, which are discussed in conjunction with a summary of archive research and antiquarian sources. The results of an evaluation carried out in 2004 that identified part of an associated cemetery are also presented.

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Introduction

The burial mounds at Bartlow, Cambridgeshire, are the largest Roman barrows in Britain (Figs 1 & 2). The barrows contained a rich array of grave goods, all dated to the late first and second century AD. Imported vessels and organic remains such as flower petals and incense evoke the funerary feast and reflect the wealth and status of the people buried here. The dead were cremated and placed into large wooden chests or brick chambers, which appear to have been lit by lamps. However, following their excavation in the 1840s (Gage 1834, 1836, 1840, 1842), and the cursory exploration of an associated villa in 1852 (Neville 1853), little further archaeological work has been carried out on this famous site. In particular, the wider archaeological context of the mounds is still quite poorly understood, although antiquarian reports hint at further burials (Brocklebank 1913, 254) and a substantial enclosing earthwork (Gage 1834, 22; Brocklebank 1913, 255).

A lack of contextual information on associated burials and settlements hinders our understanding of Romano-British barrows generally, as most were dug by antiquarians focused solely on the recovery of gravegoods (Dunning & Jessup 1936; Jessup 1959; cf. Wigg 1993). This paper aims to remedy this situation

by presenting the results of some recent fieldwork at Bartlow, drawing on unpublished reports of an evaluation by CAMARC (Beauchamp & Macaulay 2004) and the results of a geophysical survey and excavation by Eckardt *et al.* (2006 and 2007). A topographical and geophysical survey of the four large mounds using Electrical Resistance Tomography, which examined both their ancient construction and antiquarian exploration, has already been published (Astin & Eckardt 2007). Ongoing research on the mounds aims to test these results through coring.

At Bartlow, there are four large and three small mounds arranged in two parallel lines and aligned roughly north-south (Fig. 1). The surrounding geography is mainly chalk, with a band of alluvium and gravels located near the three streams which join in the village to form the river Granta. The countryside slopes gently from the north-east to where the village is located in a valley, and then rises again to the south (Taylor 1998, 18). The Bartlow Hills (TL 586 449) are located on a minor ridge within the wider natural valley and on a slope rising from the Granta.

The two northerly large mounds were bisected by the Great Eastern Railway line from Cambridge to Mark's Tey in 1865 (Brocklebank 1913, 254), which also destroyed the northernmost of the small mounds. In addition to their antiquarian exploration and impact of the railway construction, the mounds were affected by use as World War II gun stations and subsequent landscaping (Astin & Eckardt 2007), as were the areas around the Bartlow Hills. While earlier views show the Bartlow Hills surrounded by open farmland (Fig 2; cf. Taylor 1998, cover), the immediate vicinity of the mounds is now wooded.

A magnetometry survey of the available fields and meadows to the south of the mounds and to the north of the river Granta was carried out using a Bartington 601 fluxgate gradiometer (Fig. 3); this identified a series of rectilinear features and enclosures of uncertain date, which will not be discussed here. The survey of the walled gardens to the north-west failed to reveal substantial features, probably as a result of its heavy cultivation during the nineteenth century.

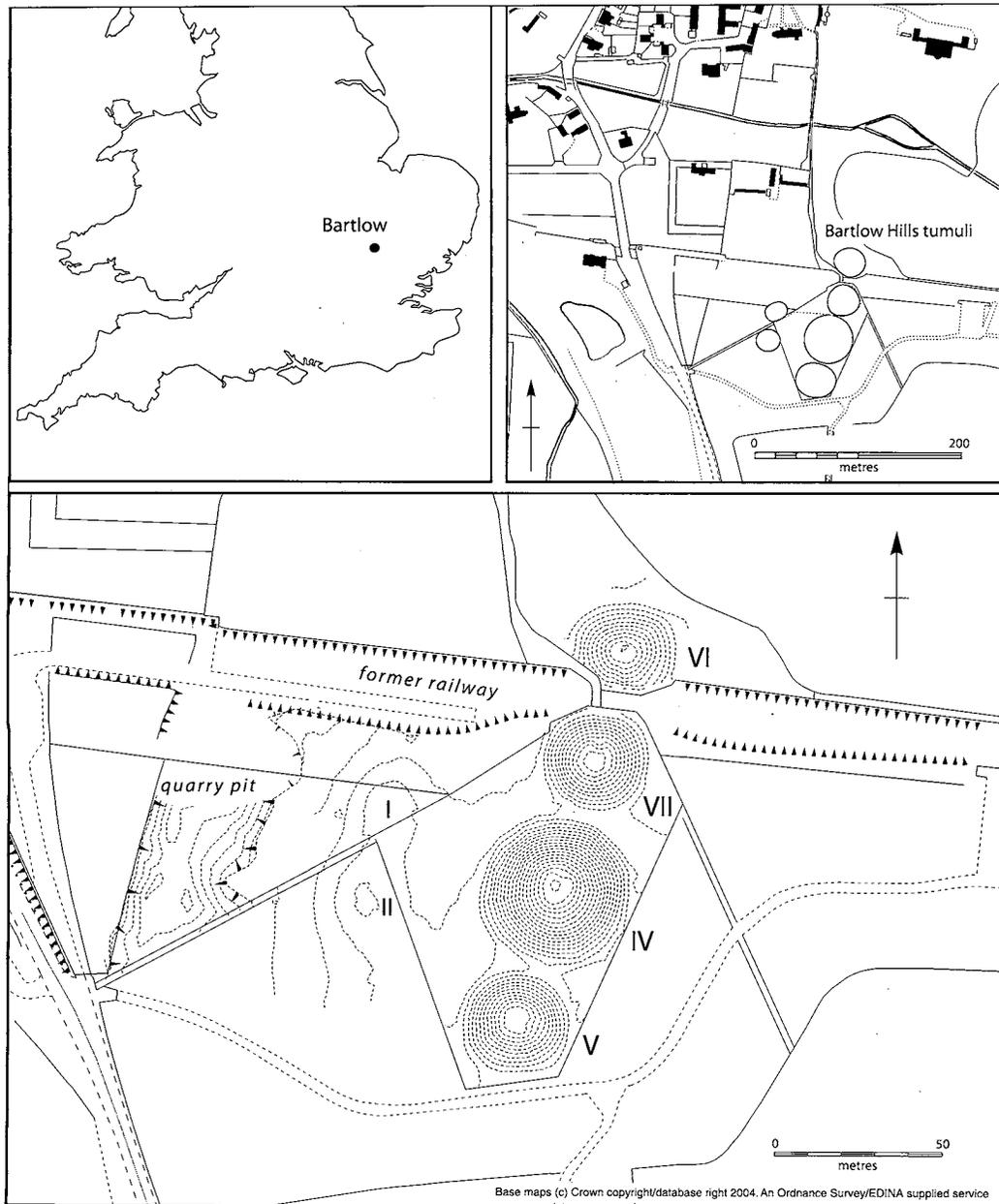


Figure 1. Location and plan of the Bartlow Hills.

Instead, this paper will largely focus on the grounds of Bartlow Park House, in particular the area defined by the Granta and a recently constructed lake to the north, and by the abandoned railway line to the south. Both a magnetometry and a resistivity survey of this area was carried out (Eckardt *et al.* 2006; *cf.* Masters 2004), identifying a number of features in this area of Bartlow Park (Fig. 3). An old field boundary, probably still marked by the remnants of iron fence posts runs NS across the area, obscuring some of the magnetometry results. Perhaps the clearest ancient feature is a substantial EW linear structure assumed to be the earthwork described by antiquarian excavators, which runs between the barrows and the Granta and

appears to enclose the mounds. This feature was also identified and surveyed in the wooded area to the north of the walled gardens.

A group of rectangular features, some containing a central high magnetic feature, are located between the northernmost mound and the linear earthwork; they may represent further burials and funerary enclosures, or settlement evidence. Another result of the magnetometry survey in Bartlow Park was the discovery of a substantial (31m diameter) circular feature immediately to the north-east of the northernmost barrow. While only seven barrows are known today, early antiquarian sources mention additional mounds (VCH 1963, 39) and this feature may thus



Figure 2. Richard Relhan, view of the Bartlow Hills from the NW. By kind permission of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society. © Kim Osborne 2006. See also Plate 1.

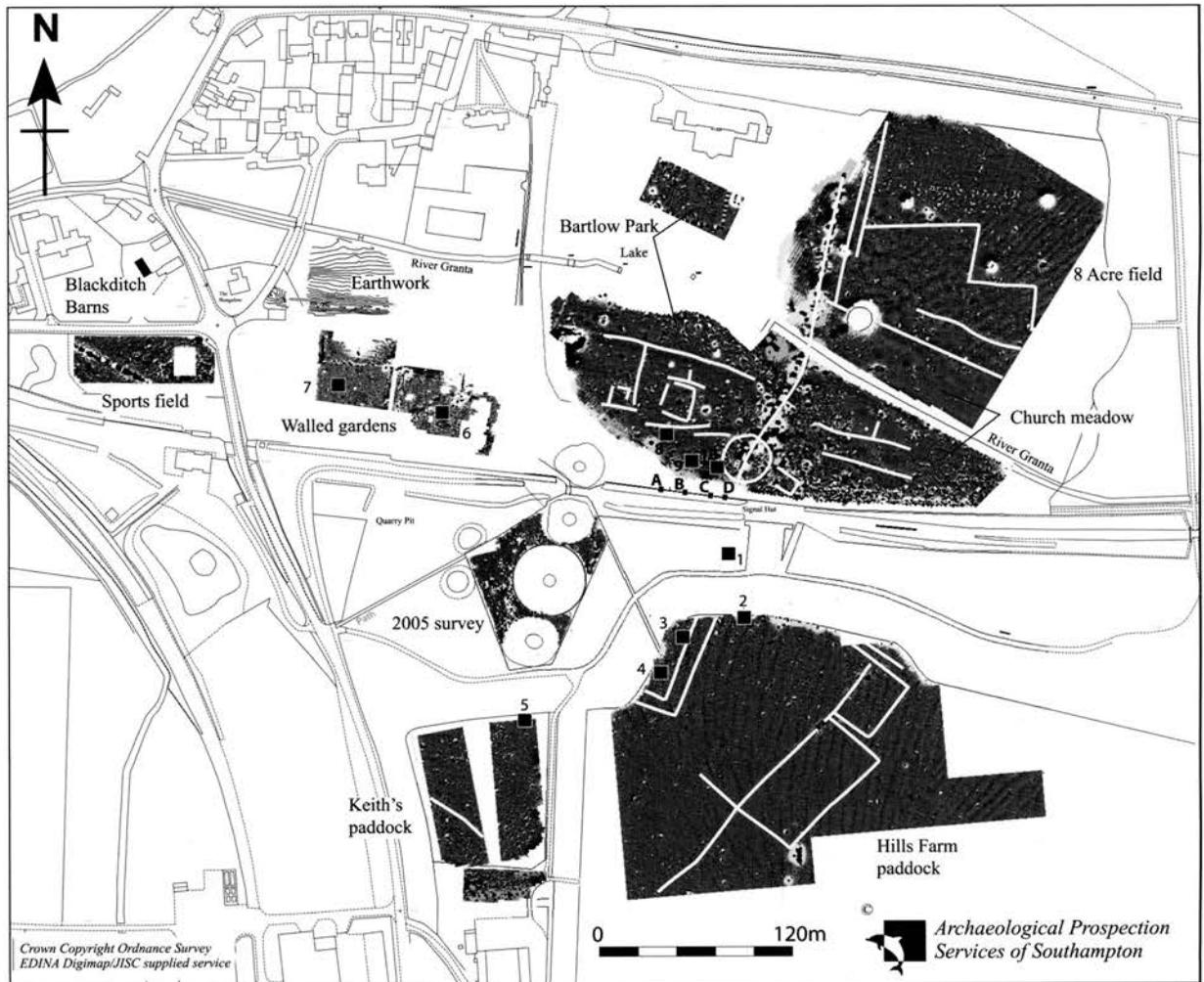


Figure 3. The results of the 2006 and 2007 magnetometry survey and location of test pits.

represent a 'lost barrow'. Finally, there are rectangular features to the east of the circular feature in a location identified by Brocklebank (1913, 254–5) and Haverfield (writing in the RCHM Essex 1916, 4) as that of Neville's villa (*cf.* VCH Essex 1963, 43).

Prior to the construction of the lake, CAMARC carried out an evaluation in 2004, and Eckardt excavated five trenches in 2007 (Eckardt *et al.* 2007). The results of the excavation will be presented in three parts: the linear earthwork, possible funerary structures and settlement evidence (Neville's villa). While the rediscovery, recording and excavation of the earthwork, and the discovery of a small cemetery, represent major steps forward in our understanding of the site, Neville's 'villa' remains elusive, and has presumably been completely destroyed.

The linear earthwork

Previous research

The earliest reference to an earthwork is by Gage (1834, 2–3 with plan), who describes its location as 'within 150 yards [137m] of the mounds to the NW in a little meadow by the brook side'. Gage (1834, 2–3) then goes on to describe an agger 317ft [96m] long from east to west, with the eastern end cut by a ditch which separates it from the Bartlow rectory garden. At its western end the agger is cut by the road and, set at an angle, it appears to end in a small rectangular enclosure measuring 120 x 63ft [36.5x19m]. This enclosure had two entrances at its eastern end and enclosed a further mound of 26ft [8m] diameter. Gage (1834, 22) investigated the agger 'in more than one part' and also opened the low barrow connected with it but made 'no discoveries deserving notice'.

The enclosure and possible barrow are described by Goddard (1899, 353) as 'overhanging the old river bank at the end near the road'; he also notes that the ditch is on the inside of the enclosure, suggesting that it is not of a defensive nature. Brocklebank (1913, 255) describes the feature as an 'ancient earthwork' that follows the south bank of a small stream for some 350 yards [320m]: running east and west and being at its nearest only about 100 yards [90m] from the most northerly of the large barrows. In its best-preserved part the ditch still measures 12ft [3.6m] across and the mound 4ft [1.2m] in height'. He also mentions that Roman pottery and coins are frequently found when gardening in this area. The 1916 RCHM plan is based on a sketch by Haverfield (Haverfield MSS in the Sackler Library: sketch plan with notes), and shows that the western edge of the linear earthwork is partially lost. Haverfield's sketch and Goddard (1899, 353) indicate that this is due to the digging of a gravel pit. Goddard (1899, 353) records that workers found Roman pottery, bones and a millstone in this quarry pit, which is marked on the 1903 OS map. The Cambridgeshire Collection in Cambridge Library also has a photo of this pit under excavation (YBartl. KO 6976).

Prior to the digging of the pit, the 1877 and 1891 OS maps clearly show a significant linear feature, running up to the road. This pre-dates the construction of the western walled garden, and is therefore unlikely to relate to a tunnel containing a miniature railway that transported coal from the road to the boiler room of the greenhouse in the western walled garden. In contrast to the antiquarian accounts and the 1916 RCHM plan, none of the OS maps shows the earthwork's continuation into Bartlow Park.

Finally, the *Victoria County History for Essex* (1963, 39) describes the same feature as an "earthwork running E-W between the hills and the Granta to the N. It cannot be traced west of the gravel pit, on the east side of the road running north from Bartlow station, but the mound and ditch can be seen intermittently, in a straight line from here to a point near the Granta, SE of Bartlow church, where it turns S and may be followed nearly to the railway. The mound was from 4 to 5ft [1.5m] high, and the ditch about as deep, the two measuring some 30ft [9m] wide overall. The present appearance is less impressive than these estimates imply. In the gravel pit the ditch was seen as V-shaped, cut some 5ft [1.5m] deep into the chalk".

Today, the earthwork is preserved as a substantial monument only in the wooded area north of the walled gardens, but it does clearly show on the magnetometry survey (Fig. 4). Within Bartlow Park, the earthwork is clearly much more denuded than to the north of the walled garden (Fig. 5), where it was recorded in 2006 for a length of 77m. But even here the maximum height difference between the bottom of the ditch and the top of the mound is only 0.7m (Fig. 5). The earthwork diminishes in height gradually towards the east, and virtually disappears at the point where the two walled gardens join and where it would have been crossed by a NS field boundary that carried on north of the Granta (Fig. 4). The topographical survey (Fig. 5) also poses the question as to the exact location of the ditch. Is it really, as Goddard (1899, 353) assumed, to the south of the bank suggesting that the enclosure is not of a defensive nature? Or is it to the north of the bank, but obscured by subsequent erosion and landscaping, in which case the dip between the garden walls and the bank may relate to the construction of, or access to, the walled gardens?

In 2007 two sections were cut through the earthwork (Trench 1 within Bartlow Park and Trench 5 north of the walled gardens: Fig. 4).

Trench 1

Today the earthwork in Bartlow Park only shows as a very slight rise but removal of the turf and topsoil very quickly began to reveal the remains of both the bank and the ditch (Fig. 6). Further excavation of a 1m wide slot on the east side of the trench revealed the earthwork in section (Fig. 7), but failed to yield conclusive dating evidence. The natural in this area consists of dark yellow river gravels, into which a substantial circular feature (1016), unfortunately containing no finds, was cut. The land surface (1017) is characterized by a distinctive reddish colour, and

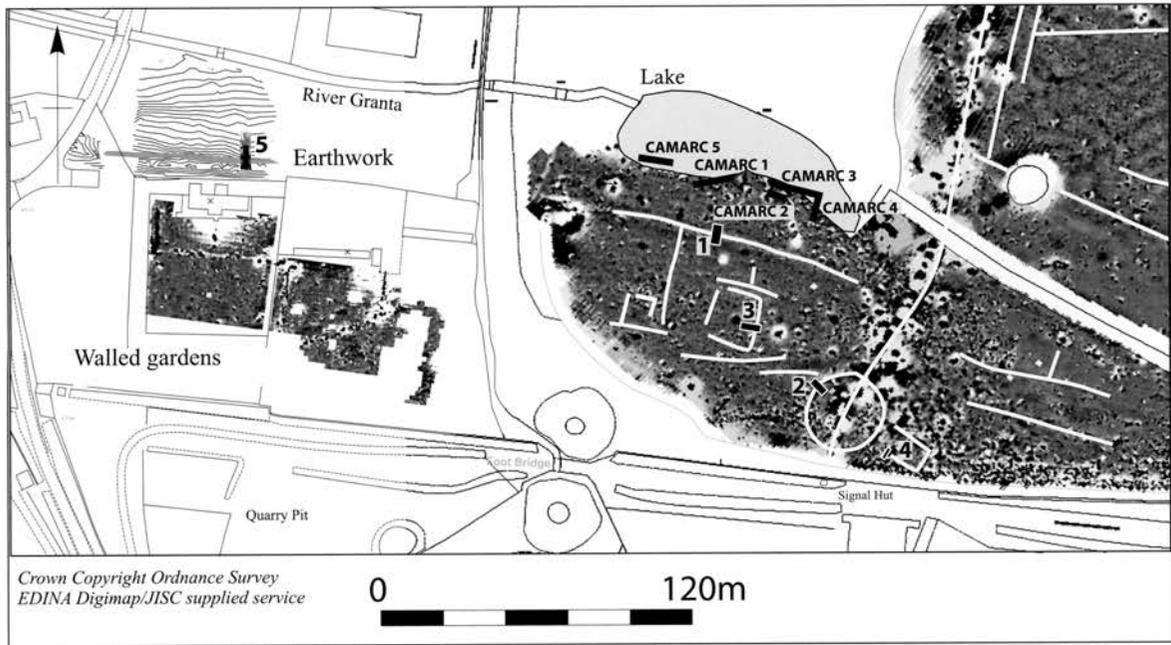


Figure 4. Excavation trenches by CAMARC 2004 and Eckardt 2007 in relation to the results of the 2006 and 2007 magnetometry surveys.

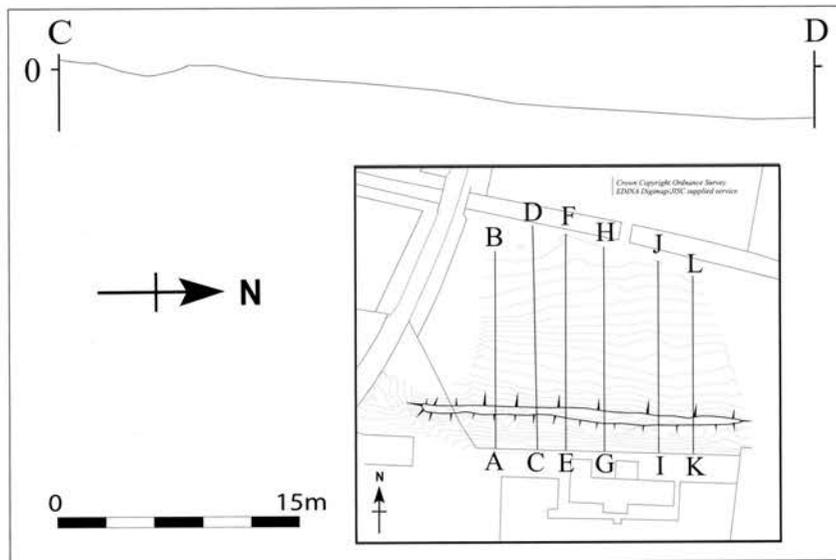


Figure 5. The topographical survey of the earthwork north of the walled gardens (Sophie Hay).

was observed at both the northern and southern end of the slot. The ditch cut (1022) is clearer at the southern end while it appears to be stepped at the much more disturbed northern side. The base of the ditch was filled with some re-deposited natural, into which two features (1019, 1020) were cut; these may well represent postholes but the features contained no datable material. The ditch appears to have been re-cut (1008), now measuring 2.30m in width and 0.5m in depth.

As observed in this section, the original ditch cut measured 0.80m in depth and 2.80 in width. The width measurement tallies well with antiquarian

observations, but they observed a V-shaped profile, which is not evident here. The overall monument was clearly much more impressive in the 1850s than it was in the early twentieth century, let alone today, and the effect of this landscaping is clearly visible in the section. While the sandy silty fill 1009 may represent natural erosion and the gradual infilling of the ditch, 1006 is clearly a deliberate and significant attempt at landscaping this area. This is a substantial deposit of yellow silty sand designed to level this area of Bartlow Park. There is some slip-off or leveling from the bank (1004, 1005), which is clearly much reduced



Figure 6. Trench 1. Top: view along the earthwork looking west; below, looking south.

in height now (0.60m) compared to the antiquarian observations. 1004 contained pottery dated to the nineteenth century. Context 1005 contained a half-penny of 1916, indicating that some of this landscaping took place during Brocklebank's time at Bartlow, but possibly after Haverfield's visit. The topsoil (1000, 1001) contained nineteenth century pottery and gun cartridges. A clay deposit (1002) at the much more disturbed northern end of the trench is interpreted as a possible garden path; this feature contained pottery dated to the seventeenth century.

It is interesting that the only context in Trench 1 that yielded only Roman pottery is 1010, a spit cut down to natural within the slot. As this was cutting through the bank and original land surface, it at least provides a possible *terminus post quem* of the fourth century for the construction of the earthwork (see pottery report below).

Trench 5

Trench 5 was located in the woodlands to the north of the walled gardens to offer a second section through

a better preserved part of the same linear earthwork. The trench (Fig. 4) was extended both N and S by 2m in a narrow slot to establish whether the ditch was on the outside or inside of the bank, and to explore the nature of the second 'bank' rising towards the brick wall of the walled garden at the southern end of the slot.

The section (Fig. 8) falls into two sharply divided parts. In the northern (*i.e.* extending towards the Granta) part of the trench, a substantial ditch was cut into natural (5009), which in this area consisted of yellowish silty sandy alluvial deposits. The ditch cut (5008) was 2.9m wide, and at least 0.7m deep. Its northern end is much less clearly defined, which may be the result of subsequent landscaping or of the original land surface sloping down towards the Granta. This ditch is filled by a deposit of clean re-deposited yellow river sands (5010), which is in turn overlain by a further leveling deposit (5007) containing a Roman and an undated sherd. The bank associated with this ditch (5002, 5003, 5004) was made of a grayish-brown silty sand with frequent large flints. Some material

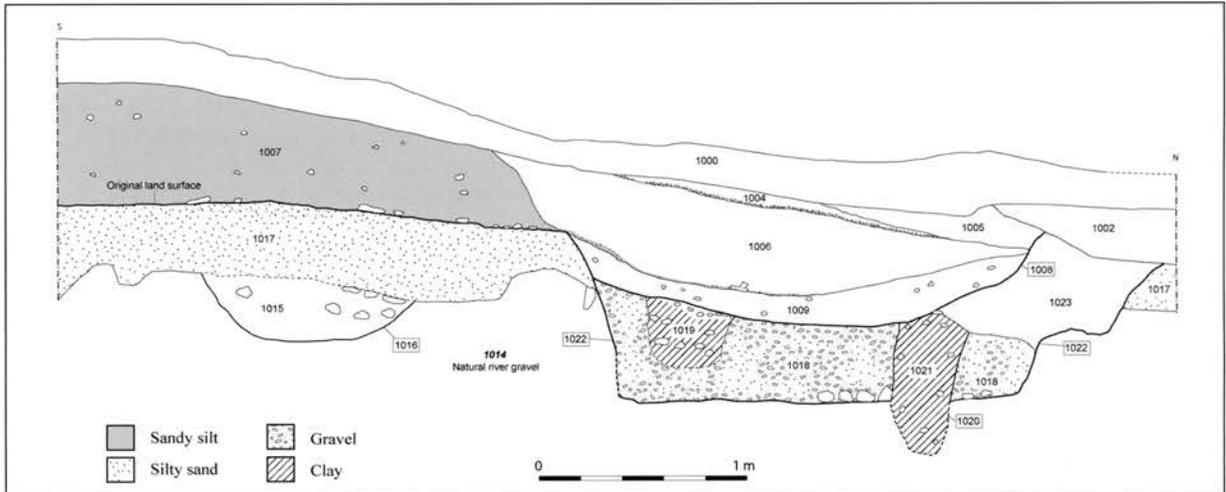


Figure 7. Section of Trench 1 (drawn by E. Aspoeck).

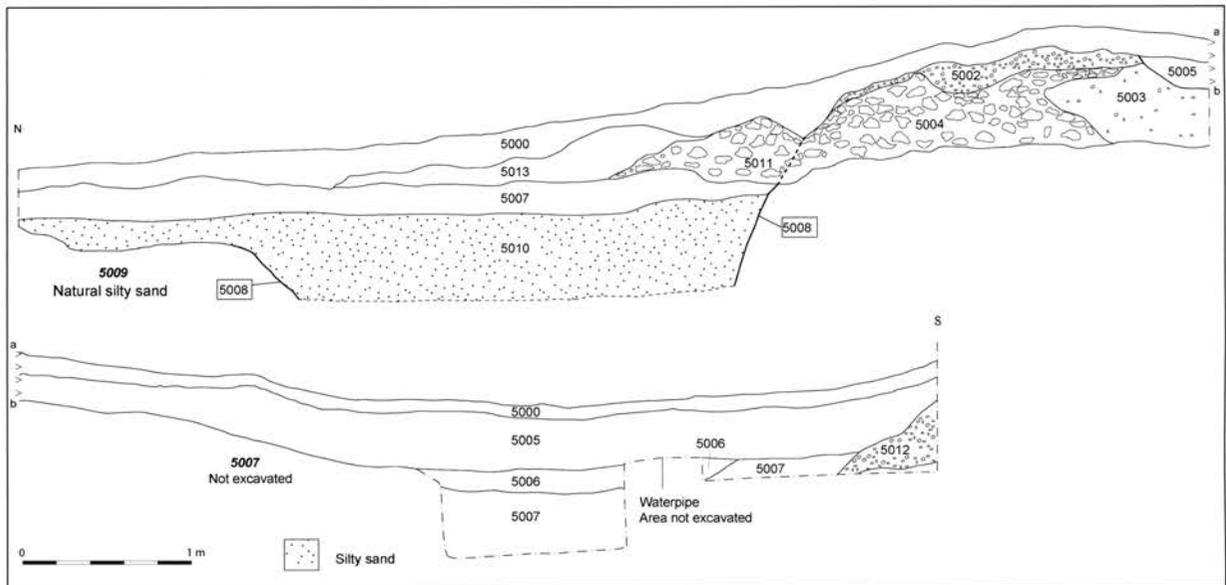


Figure 8. N-S Section of Trench 5 (drawn by E. Aspoeck).

from this bank (5011) appears to have slipped onto the ditch fill. Pottery from the apparently undisturbed part of the bank (5004) is dated to the third to fourth century AD. In the slot cut through the bank and into natural at the highest preserved point of the bank (5001), pottery dated to the second century was found. This included a possibly already residual fragment of Samian dating to the second century, and two sherds of later second-century date (see pottery report below). In contrast to Trench 1, where there was a suggestion of a fourth-century date from the slot but no securely stratified material, the pottery from the slot in Trench 5 suggests a *terminus post quem* of the later second century, and the material from the bank in Trench 5 a third- to fourth-century date. Overall, it could therefore be argued that the linear earthwork is not contemporary with the barrows but, at the earli-

est, dates to the later Roman period.

The slot extended S towards the walled garden showed a much more disturbed picture, and high levels of post-Roman activity. The bank with its large flints is cut away, ending in a sharply defined line (Fig. 8), and exposing the dark brownish light woodland soil defined as 5005. This overlay an area of more compacted lighter brown soil containing concentrations of small stones and flints (5006), which we interpret as a droveway. 5006 contained a few fragments of tile, which are not Roman, but probably post-date the sixteenth century and could be as late as nineteenth century in date (pers. com. Pat Ryan). Cut into 5006 is a modern plastic water pipe. A trial slot dug into 5006 to test its depth reached natural (5009), and gave no indication of a ditch in this area. The only context with pottery (5007) contained one Roman and

one undated, possibly post-medieval sherd. The relationship between 5007 and 5005 to the bank (5004) is not clear as the relevant area (5003 and 5002) is badly disturbed. There is a further deposit containing substantial flints at the southern end of the slot (5012), and during excavation it was thought that this could be the original continuation of the main bank (5004). However, 5012 contained seventeenth-century and later pottery, thus indicating it relates to the possible droveway.

While it is possible that both 'banks' are post-medieval, we prefer to view the evidence as indicating a third to fourth century Roman ditch and bank, which is disturbed in the post-medieval period to create a wide access path (possibly to the walled gardens) with a central compacted area and a 'bank' adjacent to the walled garden.

Funerary structures

The Bartlow Hills were erected over individual burials, with only minimal evidence for later burials having been inserted directly into the mounds (VCH 1963, 42). It is likely, however, that the barrows were surrounded by an extensive cemetery for the lower-status inhabitants of the villa estate. This is supported by the discovery of fifteen skeletons during the construction of the railway (Brocklebank 1913, 254).

Trench 3 was located to target a rectangular feature with a central circular anomaly on the geophysical survey, thought to represent a possible funerary enclosure (Fig. 4). Excavation identified a small ditch and pit, both interpreted as settlement evidence associated with the villa and therefore discussed below.

There may also originally have been more than seven Romano-British barrows at Bartlow. As discussed in the Victoria County History (1963, 39), the earliest reference to the Bartlow Hills (Holinshed Chronicle 1586 edn, i.177) refers to the destruction of a barrow (bringing the original number up to eight). A passage in Camden's *Britannia* (Gibson 1988, 352) states that 'when two others in the same place were dug up and searched we are told that they found three stone coffins and an abundance of pieces of bone in them' (VCH 1963, 39). This may be a mistake and refer to discoveries elsewhere in the area, or it may indicate the presence of other mounds at Bartlow. The geophysical survey identified a circular feature with a diameter of 31m to the north-east of the mounds (Fig. 4). Given its size and location, this was thought to represent a possible 'lost' barrow, and Trench 2 was located across a relatively undisturbed section on its NW side.

In the location predicted by the geophysical survey, a substantial curving ridge was noted in the natural chalk (see Eckardt *et al.* 2007 for detailed discussion). It is possible that this was cut on its eastern side, but there was no return cut; there was also no surviving buried land surface, or other evidence for a substantive mound. Excavation identified levelling deposits, containing late third to fourth century pottery and a

coin (SF 5, see below) of later fourth century date. It is possible that the feature represents a natural knoll, a prehistoric or an early Roman barrow. For the main mounds at Bartlow, no substantial ditches were recorded, and the date of the leveling deposits could be interpreted as the destruction and covering of an earlier mound during the main (later Roman) phase of villa use. It was not possible to extend the trench towards the (assumed) centre of the mound due to a large tree growing there; in any case the geophysical survey demonstrated the presence of an iron fence line running through the center.

The cemetery by the Granta

In 2004 an evaluation was carried out prior to the construction of a lake in the grounds of Bartlow Park (Beauchamp & Macaulay 2004, Fig. 4). The two western trenches (CAMARC 1 and 5) were devoid of finds and structures; CAMARC Trenches 3 and 4 contained ditches, possible robbed walls and pits or postholes (Fig. 9). The burials were also concentrated in the two eastern trenches, with a single inhumation in CAMARC Trench 3 and four cremations and another inhumation in CAMARC Trench 2 to the south. All were preserved *in situ*, and therefore only partially excavated and recorded.

Cremation 1 was contained in a Horningsea greyware jar associated with a samian cup (Drag 33) stamped by DOCCIUS ii. This is a potter active in Lezoux between AD 150–160 (Ward in Beauchamp & Macaulay 2004, 16). Cremation 2 was placed within a large greyware jar which was positioned on top of a Drag. 31 dish stamped CNATI M. The potter GNATIUS ii was active from AD 130–155, with the form (probably Drag 31) suggesting a date of c. AD 145 or later (Ward in Beauchamp & Macaulay 2004, 15). Cremation 3 was contained within a very large Horningsea greyware bowl. A samian vessel was placed within it, but not excavated and therefore not identified. Visible within the soil matrix contained in the greyware bowl were burnt bones and the unburnt skull of an infant or child. The inclusion of an unburnt skull in a cremation urn represents a highly unusual burial rite. Cremation 4 was placed within a greyware jar; no associated finds were recorded.

The four cremations are arranged in a semicircle (Fig. 9) and the excavator suggests that the cremations were covered by a small mound (Beauchamp & Macaulay 2004, 7). A smaller mound containing multiple cremations would represent a different practice to the burial rites in the large barrows, where a single cremation was placed at the centre of the mound. However, given the nature of the antiquarian excavations, it is of course possible that secondary burials at the perimeter of the large mounds were missed by the antiquarian excavators.

Just to the south of these cremations was an extended sub-adult burial orientated EW, with only the femur and part of the skull exposed (Fig. 9). Iron nails were discovered near the feet (east), as was a small Nene Valley cup base of second to fourth century date. The stratigraphic relationship between

the cremations and this inhumation burial was not established, but it seems likely that the inhumation represents a later intrusion into an area containing multiple, roughly contemporary cremations.

A further inhumation burial was uncovered just to the N in Trench 3 (Fig. 9), but not excavated beyond exposing the skull. This also appears to be a sub-adult, but orientated NS; a single sherd of Roman pottery and an iron nail were found. The grave was located immediately next to a small ditch.

The burials excavated by CAMARC in 2004, together with the inhumations recorded during the cutting of the railway (Brocklebank 1913, 254) suggest that the Bartlow Hills were surrounded by an extensive cemetery, both during the period of barrow construction (cremations) and probably afterwards (inhumations). Our excavation suggests that the earthwork now separating the CAMARC 2004 cremations from the mounds was constructed after the small cremation cemetery by the Granta fell out

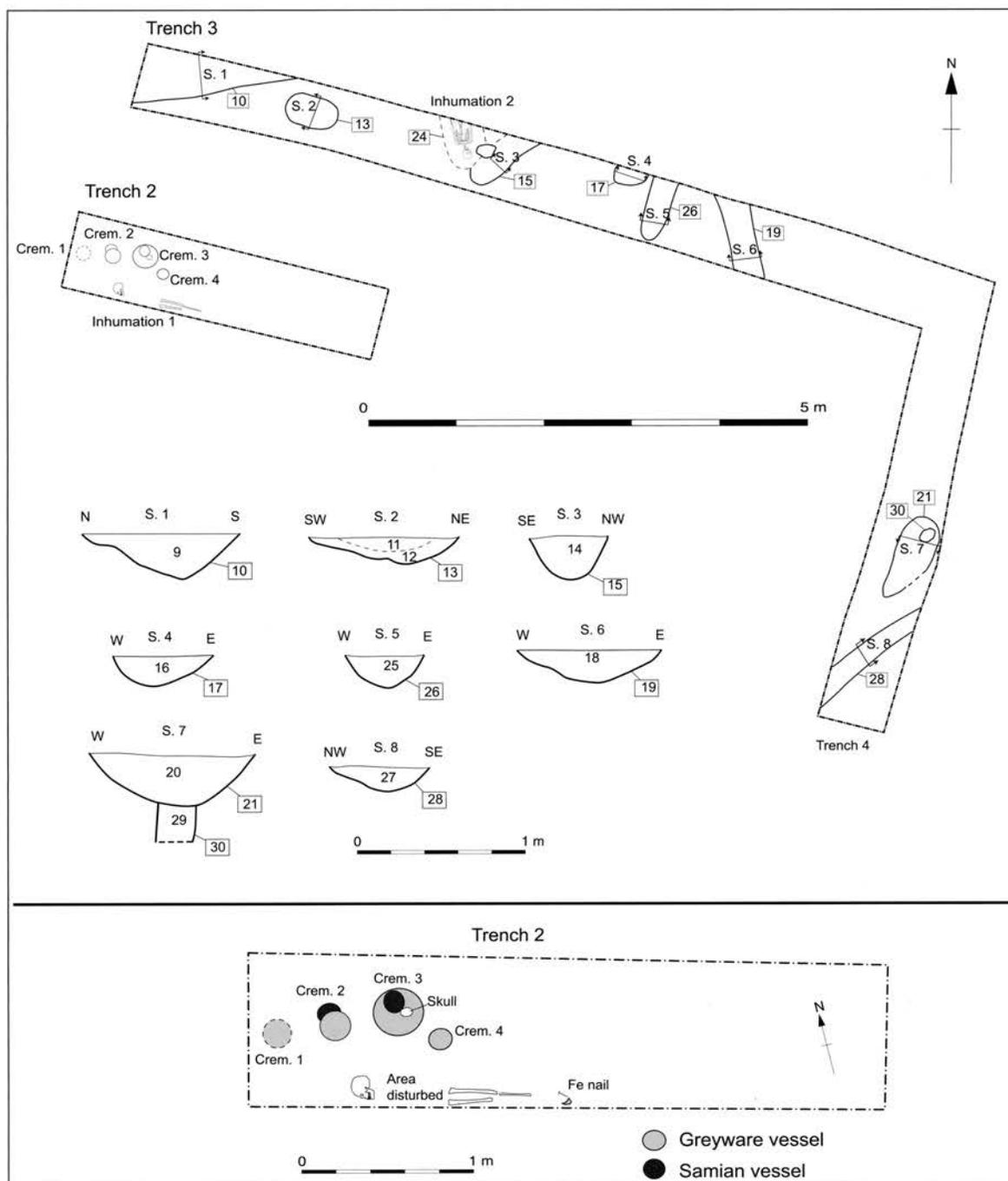


Figure 9. Plan of the 2004 CAMARC watching brief (re-drawn from Beauchamp and Macaulay 2004, fig. 2 by E. Aspoeck).

of use but that it may have functioned to demarcate an area of later Roman inhumation burials from the mounds and the elusive villa.

Settlement near the Bartlow Hills

There is extensive evidence for settlement near the mounds, consisting both of antiquarian accounts of stray finds (mainly coins) and of Neville's discovery of a bathhouse in 1852.

The villa

Richard Neville was a prominent and active local antiquarian, who had a long-standing interest in Bartlow, having been present in 1835 at the opening of the largest of the barrows (Neville 1847, 31). He had been given permission by the landowner, Viscount Maynard, to trench in the area of the Bartlow Hills but initially only found 'the bones of horses, fragments of pottery and a fine third brass coin of Urbs Roma' (Neville 1847, 30–33). Following the discovery of the bathhouse, Neville (1853, 17–21) published a very brief account of his excavation, but while the Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology in Cambridge does preserve many of his notebooks and drawings on other sites in the vicinity, none of his original notes on the Bartlow villa survive today. His findings were summarised by Fox (1923, 185), Rodwell (1978, 31; No 41), Scott (1993, 32–33, 60) and Taylor (1998, 19; see also Cambridge SMR 06164).

Neville first uncovered a substantial well, the top fill of which contained an infant skeleton, while lower fills consisted almost exclusively of building rubble (flint, tiles and wall plaster). The water table was reached at a depth of c. 10m. Just to the south were the remains of a substantial building. The building measured 48ft NS and 43ft EW, and had flint and tile walls, a lead pipe and two heated rooms. Neville was clearly confused by the NW side of the building, where an opening in the wall of the smaller hypocaust and a curved wall appear to suggest further structures, but where the chalk appeared undisturbed (Neville 1853, 19). Dating evidence comes in the form of coins (Domitian, Hadrian, Constantine & Decentius and a samian stamp (GIINI).

The exact location of Neville's villa is now lost. He describes the site as 'within 100 yards of the north-eastern base of the celebrated tumuli', in a field owned by the Rev. Mr. Dayrell; the site is labelled as 'Church Field' by Fox (1923, 185). The tithe apportionment maps of 1845 and 1869 (Cambridgeshire County Records Office, P9/27/3) show a 'Church Meadow Field' as extending either side of the Granta. Fox (1923, 189) suggests that 'the persistence of tradition or the unrecorded discovery of foundations accounts for many curious names locally attached to Roman sites; 'Church Field' or 'Sunken Church Field' are the sites of Roman houses at Ickleton, Bartlow and Hadstock (and Great Abington). These names probably date from pre-conquest times when churches only were built of stone, and it was assumed that

such foundations were ecclesiastic in character'. On the other hand, the field may simply have belonged to the nearby Church of St Mary's.

What was probably part of the same building was disturbed during the cutting of the railway line when workmen found foundations c. 100 yards east of the hills (Brocklebank 1913, 254); among the finds were a coin of Tacitus, a small bronze bell and a flint axe. Brocklebank (1913, 254) records that 'suggestive traces of buildings remain in an obviously untouched condition in the park of Bartlow House, just beside the railway', and abutting the linear earthwork. Finally, both on the original sketch and 1916 RCHM plan, Haverfield notes the remains of a Roman building near the railway. The 2006 geophysical survey failed to identify convincing evidence for the location of the villa, although possible rectangular features were identified immediately to the north of the mounds, and in the area indicated by Haverfield (Fig. 4).

In any case, the distance of 100 yards can hardly be taken to be an accurate measurement, not least because we do not know from which mound it was measured. Trenches 2 and 3 were located within a radius of 100 yards measured from the northernmost of the largest mounds while Trench 4 was positioned just outside it to target the geophysical anomalies identified in 2006.

Other settlement evidence

Large quantities of Roman finds continued to be uncovered in the vicinity of the mounds after the excavation of the bathhouse. In three weeks of further trenching, which presumably yielded no further structural remains, Neville (1853, 20) found 350 coins, mostly of late Roman date. The VCH (1963) records that Brocklebank had 305 coins ranging from Claudius to the House of Theodosius from near the Bartlow Hills and south of the stream. Brocklebank himself (1913, 255) records that gardening in the vicinity of the earthwork rarely failed to yield pottery and coins, with Constantinian coins again being among the most common. From oral histories collected by Gibson (1988, 279–299) it appears that Brocklebank paid his gardeners for the discovery of Roman coins. Brocklebank (1913, 255) also mentions rubbish pits containing abundant oyster shells, and the discovery of 18 coin moulds (for *denarii* of Severus, Julia Domna, Caracalla and Geta) in a rubbish pit on the western edge of the walled garden of Bartlow House (VCH 1963, 44; Boon 1974, 111; King 1996, 259; Robinson 1931/2, 181¹). The practice of using clay moulds impressed with the designs of official coins to produce alloyed silver or plated copper coins appears to have been common in the Severan period, perhaps triggered by the emergence of the *antoninianus* (Sutherland 1937, 42–48). Discoveries of

1 The moulds were then held in the British Museum, and are described 'per favour of the keeper and assistance of Dr Brookes, and Mr Mattingly (Coins and Medals Dept.) as one obverse of Severus, LSEPTSEV PER laureate right with blank on other side and one obverse of Severus SEVERUS PIUSAUG with other side blank'.

multiple moulds are not uncommon, with particularly large groups recorded from Lingwell Gate, York and Edington, Somerset and Ryton (Sutherland 1937, 44). Large-scale production at major centres such as York may indicate official sanction of these coins, but the discovery of multiple moulds from a rural site such as Bartlow remains puzzling.

Trench 3

Two main features were observed in Trench 3, both also identified on the geophysical survey (Fig. 4; Fig. 10). One is a shallow ditch cut (3003) running N-S, and measuring 0.2m in depth and 0.8m in width. The ditch fill (3004) contained late third century pottery. The subsoil and topsoil (3001, 3000) in this area contained nineteenth century and later pottery and a clay tobacco pipe fragment, again indicating subsequent activity within Bartlow Park.

The other feature uncovered within Trench 3 is a very substantial pit, with its cut (3015) reaching a depth of at least 1.3m; only approximately a quarter of its original diameter was excavated. The fill (3008) of black-brown silty soil contained frequent charcoal inclusions, and a large amount of finds, including pottery, ceramic building material, nails, slag, oyster shells and animal bone. This appears to be one of the few undisturbed contexts uncovered, containing pottery dated to c. AD 325–400.

While the geophysical survey may have been interpreted as a small funerary enclosure with a central burial pit, the finds clearly identify the feature as a late Roman rubbish pit.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was located to examine the geophysical anomalies identified in this area, the location of which corresponds to Haverfield's plan and which were thought to possibly represent part of the villa (Fig. 4). Trench 4 failed to yield evidence of Roman occupation or structures; a detailed discussion is provided in Eckardt *et al.* (2007). It did, however, reveal the extent of landscaping and dumping within Bartlow Park. The natural in this area is Chalk (Fig. 11), overlain by possible floor and levelling deposits containing some Roman material, including a fragment of a fourth century copper-alloy bracelet (see below). This is covered by a very substantial dumping deposit containing large quantities of modern brick and other building rubble, which in turn is covered by a per-

fectly preserved buried land surface (Fig. 11). If this is the land surface extant in 1916, it may be thought that Haverfield mistook the uneven surfaces created by these substantial dumps for the remains of a villa. However, the dating of the bricks to after 1923 (see report by P Ryan below) conclusively demonstrates this not to be the case. While this trench may have not located the villa, it does demonstrate the validity of Haverfield's observations as well as the extent of the subsequent landscaping. The post-1923 land surface is itself covered by a very substantial landscaping deposit of yellowish compacted clay, designed to level this area of Bartlow Park where the ground originally rose quite sharply towards the south. This levelling deposit contained third century pottery and a fourth century coin, and no modern material, so may have been removed from another part of the site.

Enough time elapsed between the brick dump and the clay dump for a grassy land surface to form. The dating of the bricks makes it certain that the dumping occurred after Haverfield's visit to the site in 1916, explaining why both he and Brocklebank saw substantial remains which are now completely obscured. The most likely dates for the dumping of building material in this area are wartime road building, dumping associated with the destruction of the old Bartlow Park House in the 1950s, construction of the new house in 1965, or with the dismantling of the railway in the 1960s. The extent of the dumping and landscaping in this area also has obvious implications for the interpretation of the geophysical survey.

Test pits

Given the extent of the landscaping in Bartlow Park, and the lack of modern archaeological work on the surrounding areas, ten 1 x 1m test pits were excavated to establish the depth of natural and the nature of the overlying deposits. Four sections were also dug into the sides of the railway embankment, as the railway line is thought to have cut the villa c. 100 yards [91m] east of the mounds (Fig. 3; Eckardt *et al.* 2007; 2008).

Test Pit 1 was located in the woodland to the east of the mounds and just to the south of the railway line, and thus in the vicinity of the possible villa. Beneath the topsoil a substantial (0.48m) deposit of yellowish sandy soil was observed, which appeared to continue but become more compacted at a depth of 0.8m from the surface.

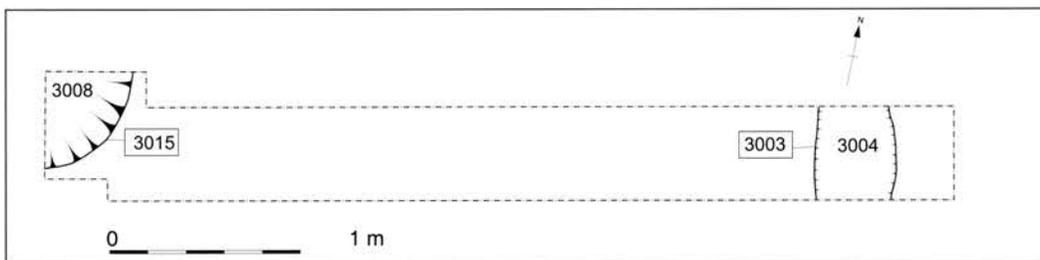


Figure 10. Plan of Trench 3 (drawn by E. Aspöck).

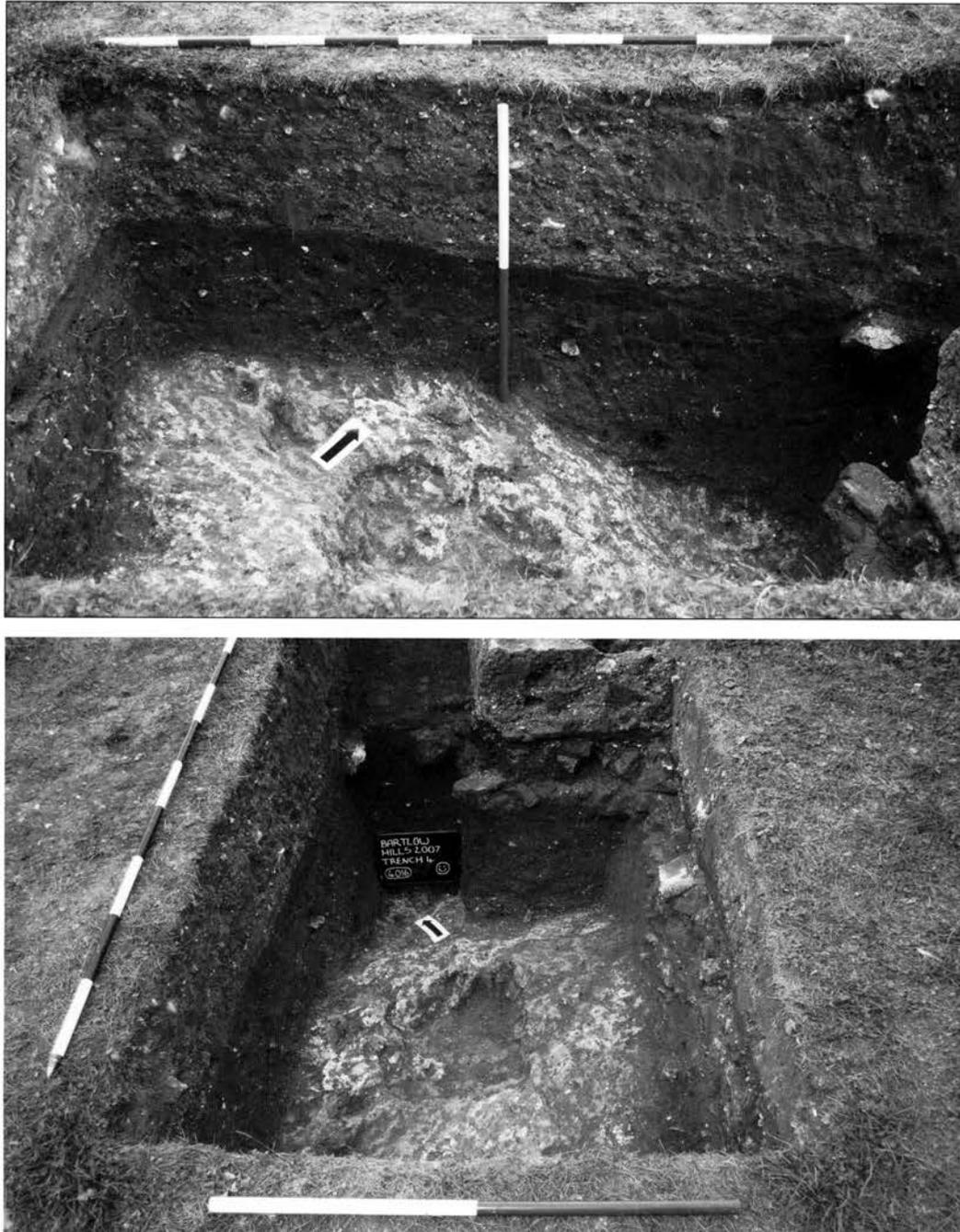


Figure 11. Top and below, views of Trench 4

Test Pit 2 was located at the northern edge of Hills Farm Paddock, the large field to the SE of the mounds. It is aligned with the substantial loading platform which may have obliterated all trace of the villa in the wooded area. This pit revealed a much more shallow overburden, with the natural Chalk reached at a depth of only 0.3m. Test Pits 3 and 4 were located on the western edge of the same field. The stratigraphic sequence in Test Pit 4 (located further away from the woodland edge) is similar to that in Test Pit 2, but the natural chalk was reached at a depth of 0.6m. Test Pit 3 was shallower, reaching natural at 0.3m. The differences in depth may relate to the effects of agriculture, or possibly the linear earthwork observed on the geophysical survey in this area.

Test Pit 5 was located in Keith's Paddock, immediately to the south of the large mounds. The topsoil and subsoil again proved to be relatively shallow in this area, with natural reached at a depth of 0.3m.

Test Pits 6 and 7 were within the walled gardens. Test Pit 6, in the older (eastern) of the two gardens, showed layers of well-worked rich garden soil, with a mid brown silty sandy deposit reached at ca. 0.7m interpreted as natural. Test Pit 7 showed similar, but slightly shallower, layers of topsoil and subsoil, with a light brown sandy natural reached at 0.5m.

Test pits 8, 9 and 10 are located in Bartlow Park, to the south of the excavation trenches near the top of the slope. While

all three yielded some Roman material, there was once again no undisturbed archaeology. The natural Chalk was reached at a depth of between 1.2m and 0.5m (Eckardt *et al.* 2008).

The railway sections were dug into the northern side of the railway embankment at a distance from the base of the northernmost mounds of 40m, 55m, 71m and 80m, taking account of railway and agricultural installations along the line. These sections were designed to examine the nature of stratigraphy in this area, and to test the antiquarian suggestion of further villa remains uncovered within a distance of 100 yards (91m) from the mounds. Only Section 2 and 3 (at a distance of 55m and 71m) yielded small quantities of Roman material, and section 3 (at 71m) contained some possible burnt occupation debris (Eckardt *et al.* 2008). However, there was no undisturbed archaeology and the natural Chalk was reached at a depth of between 0.3m and 0.6m.

Overall, the test pitting has demonstrated the elusive nature of Neville's villa, and the extent of subsequent landscaping and construction work; the railway embankment sections have confirmed possible occupation at roughly the distance recorded during railway construction. It seems most likely that the construction of the railway and loading platform have obliterated all trace of this building.

Finds

Coins

- SF 3, context 1005, Trench 1: Halfpenny of George V; 1916. Obverse: Portrait to l., GEORGIUS V DEI GRA: BRITT: OMN: REX FID: DEF: IND: IMP:.. Reverse: seated Britannia to r., HALF PENNY, 1916.
- SF 4, Context 4006, Trench 4: Obverse: helmeted Roma to the l., URBS ROMA (illegible). Reverse: she-wolf with twins; mint mark in exergue: TR P (with dot between R and P)? AD 330-335 (LRBC 65).
- SF 5, context 2002, Trench 2: Very worn coin, with legend largely illegible. Obverse: Bust of emperor with diadem facing r.; reverse: emperor l. with standard and shield (GLORIA NOVI SAECULI). Mint mark not legible, but type limited to Gratian at Arles (Reece & James 1986, 40-41) and dated to AD 367-375 (*cf.* LRBC 498-529).
- Test pit 10: very worn 1st century AD Dupondius.

Roman Bracelets

- SF 15, context 4015, Trench 4 (Fig. 12): Copper-alloy bracelet with hook-and-eye clasp, with only the hook and part of the bracelet surviving. The decoration consists of alternating notches, creating a chip-carved effect. A similar example from a grave at Colchester Butt Road is dated to AD 320-450 (Crummy 1983, 38, fig. 43.1653), and another is known from topsoil at Richborough (Bushe-Fox 1928, 50, pl. XXII.61). Swift (2000, figs. 168-9) illustrates the distribution in Roman Britain of bracelets decorated in this way.
- SF 2, Context 1000, trench 1: copper-alloy bracelet with central groove and feathering. A similar example is known from a fifth-seventh century context at Uley

(Woodward & Leach 1993, fig. 128.13); Swift (2000, fig. 206) illustrates the type's distribution.

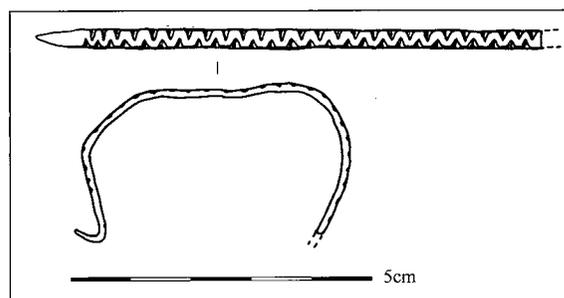


Figure 12. Bracelet (SF 15), drawn by R. Blackburn.

The Pottery from the 2007 excavation

Jane Timby

Introduction

The 2007 excavations at Bartlow resulted in the recovery of 485 sherds of pottery weighing 4,013g largely dating to the Roman and post-medieval periods. In general terms the assemblage was in very poor condition, reflected in the overall average sherd weight of just 8.2g, quite low for Roman and post-medieval material which is generally well-fired and quite robust. Following a comment on the methodology used, the assemblage is briefly described by broad period; pottery from two contexts, 5001 and 3008, the latter identified as undisturbed, is then discussed in more detail.

Methodology

The Roman assemblage was sorted into broad fabric groups based on the inclusions present, the frequency and grade of any inclusions and the firing colour. Known regional or traded wares were coded following the system advocated for the National Roman reference collection (Tomber & Dore 1998). The sorted assemblage was quantified by sherd count and weight for each recorded context. The resulting data was entered on to an Excel spreadsheet. Table 1 summarises the data for each recorded context. Dating in many cases has had to remain quite vague as many contexts produced unfeatured local wares or just single sherds, which could date to anytime after the earliest known production date. These are marked with + signs in Table 1. Some pieces could not be confidently dated to period and these remain undated.

Roman

At least 83.5% of the assemblage by sherd count dates to the Roman period, some 405 sherds, although most of this appears to be redeposited in later collections. There were at least 11 contexts exclusively with Roman material (see Table 1). The chronological bias of the assemblage is very much towards the later Roman period.

In terms of composition the assemblage is quite limited. The only continental import is Samian of which there are eight sherds. The main regional imports are from the Oxfordshire industry. Most of the remaining pieces derive from fairly local sources. A breakdown of the main wares can be found in Table 2. Reduced grey and black sandy wares account for 50.8% of the group. Some of these are Nene Valley grey wares, others are currently unsourced. The forms suggest that most of these date to the later Roman period, for example, flanged bowls and plain-rim dishes. The second commonest ware is Hadham ware (HAD OX), which accounts for 22% of the assemblage. This industry based in Hertfordshire starts around the mid third century but reaches its maximum distribution in the fourth century. Most of the vessels here are jars with at least one sherd with a pushed-out boss, and one mortarium.

Lower Nene Valley colour-coated ware (LNV CC) accounts for a further 7.6% with examples of jars, plain-rim dishes, beakers, a box and flanged bowls. Again the emphasis is on fourth century vessels. Four sherds of Lower Nene Valley whiteware (LNV WH) are also present including one mortarium piece. The other main fabrics are local shelly wares amongst which were triangular-rim jars and rilled bodysherds typical of the later fourth century. A small amount of Oxfordshire ware was present including a single whiteware mortarium (OXF WH: Young 1977, form M22) with a production date of AD 240–400 and 12 sherds of colour-coated ware (OXF RS). The latter includes Young (*ibid.*) forms C100, C75, C45 and C51, broadly dating to the same period, although the bowl C75 is considered to date to after AD 325.

The eight sherds of samian are mainly very small scraps but probably all Central Gaulish. Recognisable

Table 1. Pottery overview: dates.

Context	Roman	Med	Pmed	nd	Total no	Total wt	cbm	Date
1000	39	0	4	3	46	181	4	C19th+
1001	7	0	2	0	9	34		mid C19+
1002	0	0	1	1	2	18		C17+
1003	1	0	1	2	4	15		C18th+
1004	14	0	2	0	16	160	3	C19th+
1010	5	0	0	0	5	27	1	C4
2000	8	0	3	5	16	72	3	C16-17th
2001	11	0	0	0	11	85		C4
2002	45	0	0	0	45	303		late C3-C4
2003	13	0	0	0	13	73		late C3+
3000	2	0	7	1	10	51		C19th+
3001	130	0	7	0	137	1463	5	C19th+
3004	10	0	0	0	10	45		late C3+
3008	69	0	0	0	69	756		325-400
4000	7	0	2	0	9	60	1	C17+
4002	1	0	0	0	1	2	2	late C3+
4003	1	0	1	0	2	14		C17+
4006	4	0	0	0	4	11		C3-C4
4012	2	0	4	0	6	71	1	C19th+
4013	0	0	2	1	3	12		C18+
4015	3	0	1	1	5	34		Pmed
5000	0	0	13	0	13	51		C17+
5001	3	0	0	0	3	31		C3+
5004	5	0	0	0	5	37		C3-C4
5007	1	0	0	1	2	8	1	Pmed
5012	0	0	3	0	3	30		C17+
Test Pit 2	2	0	1	0	3	8		C19th+
Test Pit 6	0	0	2	0	2	2		mid C19th+
Test Pit 7	2	0	0	0	2	6		Roman
top earthwork	0	0	4	2	6	85	1	C20
wood/S field	17	1	0	1	19	164		Med/?Sx/Ro
Copt Hill	3	1	0	0	4	104		Med
TOTAL	402	1	60	18	481	3909	22	

forms include one decorated piece from a bowl Dr 30 (2003), one rim probably from a Dr 37 (5001) and a bodysherd from a cup Dr 33 (5004).

Most of the wares grouped under 'other' on Table 2 are anonymous oxidised wares. Of note are one sherd with spots of white painted decoration and one sherd with traces of a micaceous slip. Some may be colour-coated wares which have lost their surface.

Contexts 3008 and 5001

Context 3008, a rubbish pit, produced one of the larger assemblages with 69 sherds of Roman date. This is a good group of material with most of the typical later Roman fabrics present and several featured sherds. Amongst the wares present are six sherds of OXF RS with examples of Young (1977) forms C45, C51 and C75. The latter bowl is given a production date by Young (1977) of AD 325-400. Also present are 27 sherds of HAD OX, mainly jar, and one LNV CC jar again typically found in fourth century deposits. The shelly ware includes a triangular-rim jar and the large number of grey wares flanged bowls and plain-rim dishes. On balance a date in the mid to later fourth century would seem likely for this context.

Context 5001, the slot through the bank of the

earthwork, by contrast only produced three sherds, one rim of Central Gaulish samian probably from a bowl Dr 37 and two bodysherds, one LNV CC, the other a grey ware (LNV RE). The LNV CC sherd is from a dish, but without the rim the form cannot be determined although it is unlikely to date before the later second century, suggesting that the Samian may already be residual or curated.

Roman Quernstone

A complete upper quernstone (Fig. 13) was found by John Goodchild in the stream bed of the Granta some years ago. It is of Mayen lava (*cf.* Crawford & Röder 1955) and thus imported from the German Rhineland. Querns of this material occur on a range of sites in Britain (e.g. Shaffrey 2003, 154-156), but are perhaps especially important on first century military sites (e.g. Usk: Welfare 1995).

Roman flue tile fragments

It is clear from Neville's (1853) plan of the villa that he encountered substantial amounts of Romano-British brick and tile. Small fragments were present in most features excavated this year, with a few substantial but clearly re-deposited flue tile fragments also recov-

Table 2. Pottery overview: fabrics.

Context	Samian	LNV CC	LNV WH	HAD OX	OXF WH	OXF RS	Shell	Grey	Other	Total
1000	1	1	0	11	0	0	2	22	2	39
1001	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	7
1003	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
1004	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	9	1	14
1010	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	2	0	5
2000	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	4	0	8
2001	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	6	2	11
2002	0	2	0	18	0	2	3	15	5	45
2003	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	6	2	13
3000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
3001	2	11	3	13	0	0	9	83	9	130
3004	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	2	3	10
3008	0	7	1	27	0	7	7	20	0	69
4000	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	7
4002	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
4003	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
4006	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	4
4012	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
4015	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	3
5001	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
5004	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	5
5007	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Copt Hill	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	3
Test Pit 7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Test Pit 2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
wood/S field	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	13	2	17
TOTAL	8	31	4	89	1	12	25	206	29	405

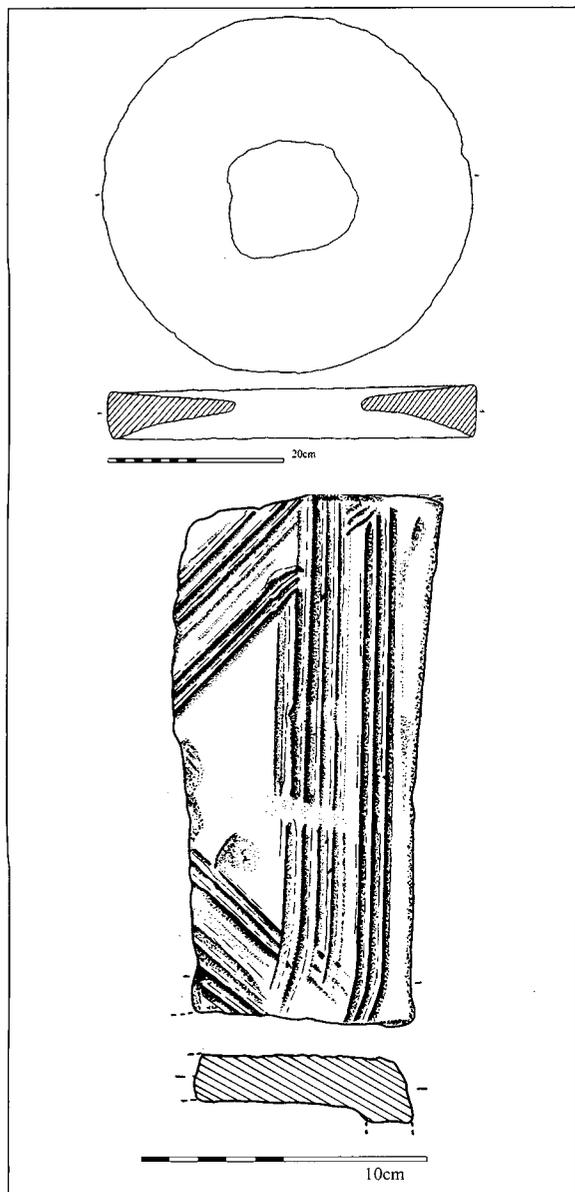


Figure 13. Quernstone and flue tile fragment (drawn by R Blackburn).

ered. The largest fragment decorated with a combed pattern (Fig. 13) was found in Trench 4, context 4014.

Both Rodwell (1982, fig. 1) and Couchman (1979, fig. 19) illustrate the distribution of tile (and pottery) kilns in Essex, with the production sites closest to Bartlow recorded at Ashdon, where two tile kilns are known. The one excavated by Neville (1853, 21–24) is thought to be located at TL 588 388 (McWhirr 1979, 123; VCH Essex, 45; Rodwell 1982, 73; Couchman 1979, 51). This was clearly a very substantial structure, with an internal size of 3.5 x 2.6m (McWhirr 1979, 104, 123–126, fig. 6.8), significantly larger than many Romano-British tile kilns (Rodwell 1982, 73; cf. McWhirr 1979, 123). On the basis of the design of the cross flues, this kiln belongs to McWhirr's Group 3, the most common Romano-British tile kiln type. While Constantinian

coins were found, their context and therefore the date of the kiln are not known. Couchman (1979, 51) also lists a possible tile kiln at TL 565 427 (ECC AR No: 54.78; Essex SMR 4843). This location is just south of Bowser's Farm, the site of another villa excavated by Neville (1853; cf. Essex SMR 4760; Scott 1993, 60, ES 4; Rodwell 1978, 31, No 40; VCH Essex, 44).

Modern bricks

Pat Ryan

The large brick dump (4012) found in Trench 4 contained a mixture of bricks, mainly of late nineteenth century date. Even where stamps are illegible or only partially preserved, such a date can be suggested for stamped bricks, as the practice of stamping the names or initials of brick-making firms in the 'frogs' of bricks is thought to have been introduced in the 1870s. Some of the bricks had a glazed white surface, suggesting they were used for bathrooms or kitchens. Several examples have travelled considerable distances, in particular those produced in the later nineteenth century in Wortley near Leeds, and stamped by Cliff & Sons (cf. Eckardt *et al.* 2008).

A number of bricks are products of the London Brick Company, founded in 1899. Of particular relevance for the dating of our feature are the bricks stamped 'LBC Phorpres'. B J Forder & Son introduced machines that gave each brick four pressings and patented the trademark Phorpres in 1901 (Woodforde 1976, 152–3). Forders was amalgamated with the London Brick Company in 1923, suggesting that the bricks showing a combination of both stamps were manufactured after 1923.

Conclusion

The excavation succeeded in testing the results of the geophysical survey, and in particular in defining the enclosing earthwork. While the earthwork has clearly been disturbed by antiquarian explorations and altered by subsequent landscaping, the excavation established its remaining profile, and suggested a likely *terminus post quem* for its construction in the later Roman (third to fourth century) period. Where evidence for occupation was encountered (Trenches 2, 4 and especially 3), a similar third to fourth century date is suggested by both pottery and coins. This is in contrast to the funerary remains, with the mounds themselves dating to the later first to early second century AD, and the cremations near the Granta dating to the mid-later second century. This contrast may suggest a change in use of the site, with an earlier ritual site gradually being replaced by settlement. On the other hand, it is almost certain that the barrow builders had a substantial home close-by, and the antiquarian reports do record first and second century coins from the site. The inhumation skeletons uncovered both by the railway cutting and by the Granta in 2004 can also be taken to suggest that even the later phases were not exclusively focused on domestic occupation. It should also be stressed that it is quite

likely that the large mounds were manipulated in the later Roman period, as indicated by finds of pottery and human remains (Taylor 1998, 19; VCH Essex 1963, 42). Perhaps their height was increased at the same time as the enclosing earthwork was constructed?

Questions remain about the exact function of the earthwork. It may have served to separate the villa from the cemetery by the river, but enclosed the barrows within this supposed settlement area. Its extension westward is especially curious, but may relate to Gage's lost barrow (Gage 1834, 2–3). It is also possible that the villa estate was located underneath the walled gardens, as indicated by the discovery of occupation debris, coins and coin moulds in that area. While we suggest a Roman date for the earthwork, it should be acknowledged that no securely stratified pottery was found on the buried land surface beneath the bank in either Trench 1 or 5, and we can therefore still not exclude the possibility that the linear earthwork is a medieval or post-medieval feature.

A major result of the excavation within Bartlow Park has been to demonstrate the extent of landscaping, and the effect this had both on the geophysical survey and the underlying archaeology. Beauchamp & Macaulay (2004, 12) already noted the 'surprising' lack of finds, which they attribute to the landscaping of the Bartlow Park gardens and the lack of recent soil disturbance. Equally, Jane Timby comments that the pottery assemblage was in poor condition, perhaps reflecting secondary deposition. Trench 4 in particular also illustrated that the depth of completely undocumented dumping is likely to obscure archaeological features on the geophysical survey.

Test pitting also failed to identify undisturbed archaeological features, suggesting that the villa is now completely destroyed, and may well have been located beneath the railway and loading platform. The apparent discrepancy between the largely third to fourth century settlement evidence and the late first to second century burials remains puzzling, as does the exact nature and function of Neville's villa. Antiquarian excavators like Neville would have struggled to recognise the timber remains of the main building, only recording the masonry remains of a bath house near the Granta. However, given the proximity of this bath building to the mounds, it is possible that the building also had a ritual function, a suggestion perhaps supported by the large numbers of coins found in the area. A similar interpretation has recently been offered for the equally poorly understood Chronicle Hills at Whittlesford, Cambridgeshire (Taylor & Arbon 2007), where a group of possibly Roman mounds is also located near the river, next to a possible bath or shrine and other settlement evidence. It is possible that the Bartlow Hills are on the site of earlier Bronze Age mounds, as significant quantities of worked flint were found, but the antiquarian excavations recorded no secure evidence for such a re-use or redevelopment of a pre-historic ritual site at Bartlow.

The Bartlow Hills are located on a minor ridge within the wider natural valley. If the villa and bath-

house/shrine were indeed located to the north-east and east, the smaller mounds would not have been visible, raising some interesting questions about their visual impact on the surrounding landscape. The wider landscape context of these striking monuments has been addressed through GIS analysis (Eckardt & Brewer forthcoming). This has plotted the distribution of all Romano-British roads, settlement and funerary evidence within a 10km radius of Bartlow, exploring whether the mounds were visible from surrounding roads and settlements. Results suggest a focus on a very local audience, with the mounds almost invisible from the major Roman roads crossing the area. Despite the difficulties of re-interpreting a site so strongly affected by antiquarian exploration and subsequent landscaping, we hope that this paper has served to put the Bartlow Hills into their local archaeological context.

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Plate 1. Richard Relhan, view of the Bartlow Hills from the northwest. By kind permission of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society. Photograph copyright Kim Osborne 2006.