
Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society

(incorporating the Cambs and Hunts Archaeological Society)

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for 2009



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Index to the Contents of the Cole Manuscripts in the British Museum

George J Gray with a preface by John Pickles 2003
CUP facsimile reprint 170pp. with illustrations £5.00

William Cole of Milton

W M Palmer with a foreword by John Pickles
CUP facsimile reprint 178pp. with illustrations £16.50
Both available from Dr J Pickles, 27 Cavendish Road,
Cambridge, CB1 3AE

In *The Tyranny of the Discrete* John Marshall (1992) describes antiquarianism as 'negative, anti-human, escapist, killing curiosity as it romanticises the past', and antiquarians according to Marshall are 'uncritical, unselective, and lacking in conceptualisation' and today the term antiquarian is often used as an insult. Perhaps because of this opprobrium levelled against antiquarians, a recent book celebrating William Dugdale, the Warwickshire Antiquity, is careful to describe him throughout as a 'historian' (Dyer and Richardson 2009). However, W.G. Hoskins starts his definitive work, *Local History in England*, by discussing the work of antiquarians, who he sees as being at the root of academic local history. We could ask where would the local historians of today be without the descriptions, transcriptions and collections of the antiquarians of the past? Of particular relevance to Cambridgeshire was William Cole of Milton, whose biography was written in the 1930s by another antiquarian, Dr William Palmer M D.

Palmer starts by describing Cole's life, habits and his house, based on Cole's own manuscripts with referencing in detail. We see the antiquarian at work visiting every church in the county, copying monumental inscriptions and transcribing manuscripts in the University Library. Cole's interest was not confined to Cambridgeshire and in 1738 he travelled to Lisbon, Flanders, Normandy, Paris and Scotland. He was rightly celebrated in his time.

The book includes extracts from his diary for 1765–1770, and an account of his library, but perhaps his best known and most valuable contribution to the history of Cambridgeshire is his 'parochial antiquities', which are reproduced in this book. These consist of descriptions and drawings of the parish churches as he saw them in the eighteenth century, an invaluable record of Cambridgeshire parish churches at that time, which show Cole as an assiduous recorder of his time.

The index of the contents of his manuscripts shows the other side of the antiquarian, as a collector. The manuscripts, which are now in the British Library are an eclectic collection that not only contains a great deal of information about Cambridgeshire but also covers a wide range of antiquities from England, Scotland and abroad; and includes records of plays, surveys of cathedrals, pedigrees of noble families and much else besides. The entry for Dr Palmer's home town of Linton in Cambridgeshire, for example, includes arms and inscriptions; antiquities; extracts from the parish registers; notes on the estate map; accounts of priors,

rectors and vicars; notes and pedigrees on the Coney family and verses on Mrs Coney.

Cole and Palmer's work are evidence that antiquarians played a crucial role in the formation of local history as both an academic discipline and a popular pastime. Dr Pickles is to be congratulated on arranging for these reprints to be published, and for his scholarly preface and foreword to them.

Evelyn Lord

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References

- Dyer C and C Richardson (eds) 2009 *William Dugdale Historian, 1605–1686* Woodbridge: The Boydell Press.
Hoskins, W G 1959 *Local History in England* Harlow: Longman.
Marshall, J 1992 *The Tyranny of the Discrete* London: Scolar Press, 2.

Early Anglo-Saxon Communities in the Landscape of Norfolk

Mary Chester-Kadwell 2009

BAR British Series 481 Archaeopress, Oxford xii + 235pp, illustrated throughout with figures, maps, plans, inc. 6 colour plates; ISBN 9781407304168 £50.00

This volume represents publication of Chester-Kadwell's recent PhD thesis, slightly slimmed down for a wider audience, and is a valuable contribution to the fields of early Anglo-Saxon landscape, settlement and burial research. Focusing her efforts on a defined geographical area, she employs a wide range of evidence in order to address topics as diverse as the inter-relationships of cemeteries and settlement, the interpretation of different forms of archaeological data, and the nature of Anglo-Saxon communities. Among the innovative aspects of the research is the considered use of the excellent metal-detector finds data for which Norfolk is renowned (built up over the course of the last thirty years through close communication with local detectorists; a pioneering approach now adopted nationwide through the Portable Antiquities Scheme). This data is critically treated, and given extra value through Chester-Kadwell's interviewing of Norfolk metal-detectorists, as she has attempted to determine where has and has not been detected (*i.e.* does a lack of known finds correspond with a lack of detection, or is it, in fact, a real pattern). A key finding is that metal-detector scatters have 'signatures': over 25 metal finds from a site very strongly suggests the presence of a cemetery, for example. This data is then combined with information on sites and monuments as recorded in the Norfolk HER through the medium of a geographic information system (GIS).

Before embarking on detailed analysis, a balanced and useful overview is given of early Anglo-Saxon archaeological evidence and its possible interpretations; this is followed by a 'case study' chapter that reviews a number of the major sites nationwide in terms of their