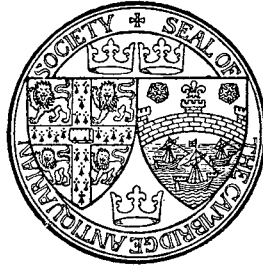


PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
**Cambridge Antiquarian Society,**

OCTOBER 1936-DECEMBER 1937



VOLUME XXXVIII



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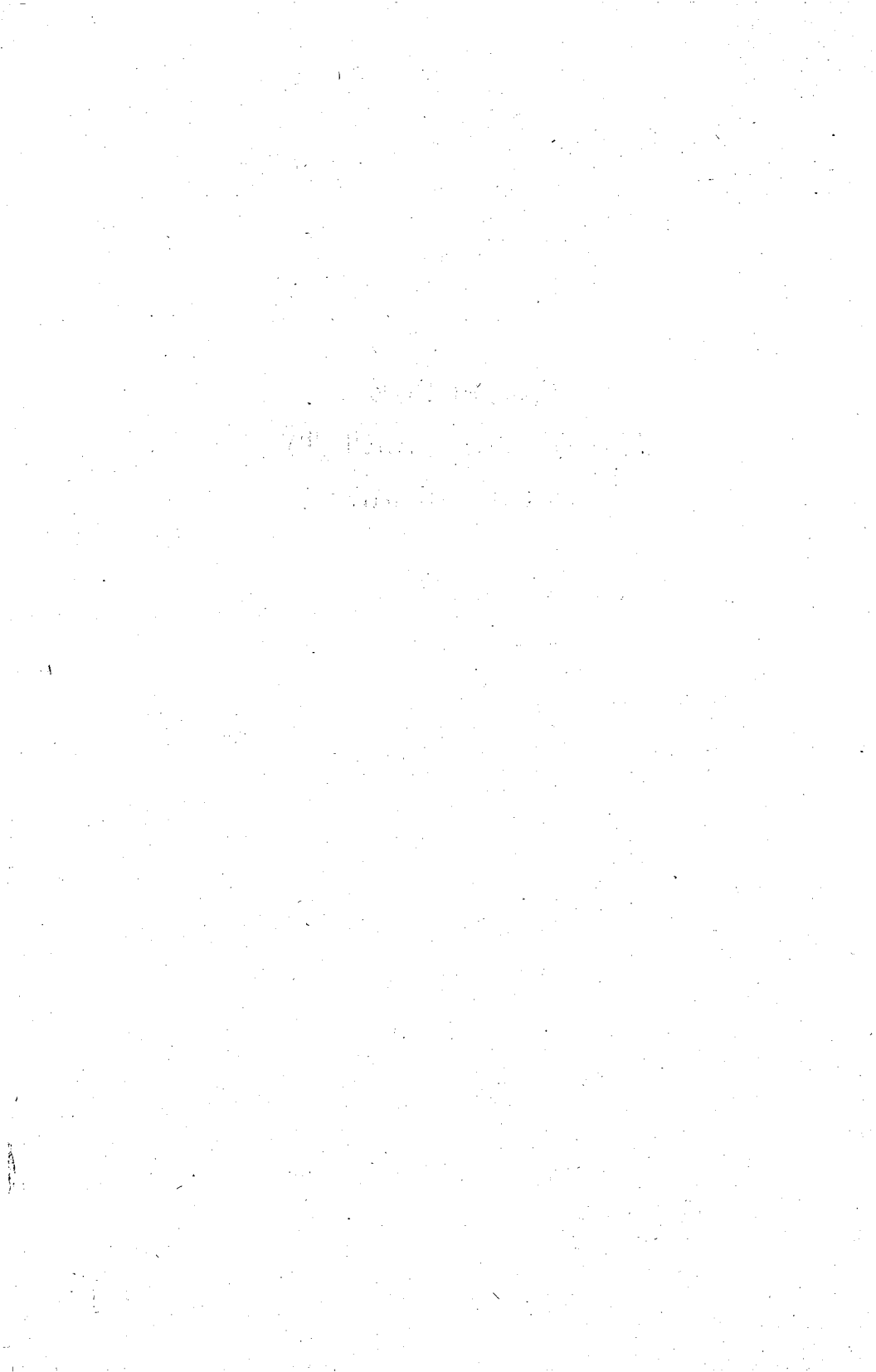
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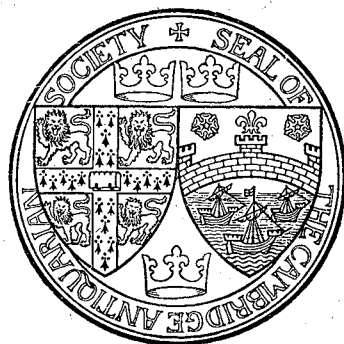
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## SOUTHOE MANOR

### PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATIONS OF AN EARLY MEDIÆVAL MOATED SITE AT MANOR FARM, SOUTHOE, HUNTS

By T. C. LETHBRIDGE, M.A., F.S.A.

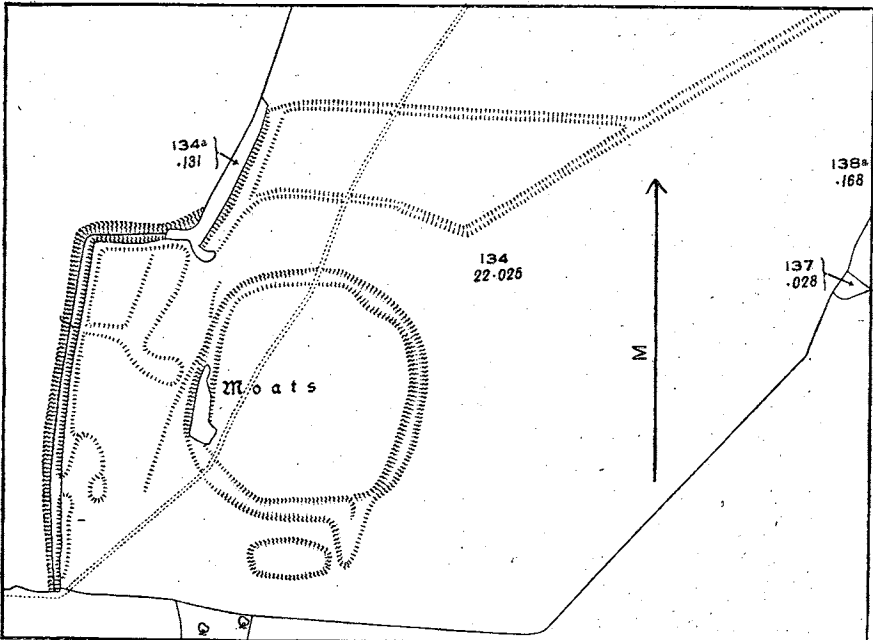
AND C. F. TEBBUTT

THE two circular moats at Southoe are described in the *Victoria History of Huntingdonshire*, vol. I, p. 304, by Mr Inskip Ladds. In this note we are concerned only with the more southerly one, which has recently been ploughed up. The character of the site has been considerably altered in the last few years, but fortunately a careful plan had been made by Mr Ladds before this occurred (*loc. cit.* p. 305).

An examination of the site after the land had been under cultivation for a year or more showed two areas where the plough had revealed considerable traces of ancient occupation. The first of these was on the eastern lip of the circular ditch which is the most characteristic feature of the earthwork (see plan, Fig. 1). Here we found numerous pieces of shelly-paste pottery similar to that recovered on what are thought to be late Saxon sites at St Neots, Great Paxton, Flambard's Manor, etc. (cf. *C.A.S. Proc.* vols. XXXIII and XXXV). At the same time an iron buckle of unusual form was also found on the surface (Pl. I, fig. a); similar buckles no doubt exist but at present we have not found a parallel and until one is found it seems reasonable to date this buckle tentatively in the eleventh century, to which most of the pottery is thought to belong.

Since the owner, Mr C. Davison, had kindly given permission for test excavations to be carried out on the site, a short trial trench was dug here. It was demonstrated that another ditch existed outside the big circular trench, but since it was obviously a work of some considerable size and contained green-glazed pottery at a low level it was decided to leave it for the present. A second and apparently more important occupation-area had been observed within the circumference of the circular ditch itself. Here a roughly

rectangular area nearly 100 ft. long but rather less in width was bounded by a scattered belt of Collyweston tiles. This area gave the impression of having once been some form of court surrounded by sheds or buildings roofed with these tiles which on the decay of the rafters had fallen in the manner now observed. The base of a stone mortar<sup>1</sup> and numerous potsherds were picked up at the western end of



*Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Map, with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.*

Fig. 1

this site. A trial trench was then dug through the tiles and straight across the longer axis of the area. The western portion was found to include a very complex series of post-holes and pits which would need an excavation on a considerable scale to elucidate them. The major portion of the enclosure was, however, shown to be something in the nature of a farmyard, partially paved with fragments of Collyweston tiles set on a thin stratum of burnt clay. This stratum was

<sup>1</sup> Cf. L. Cobbett and E. S. Peck, "A stone bowl, etc." *C.A.S. Proc.* vol. xxxvii.

10 in. thick in places, burnt red, and resting on the undisturbed subsoil. At the point where our trench cut through the tile belt it was found that the tiles lay in a low heap on the inner side of a very slight bank of yellowish loamy soil, which would have been taken for undisturbed subsoil had it not been for the presence in it of occasional fragments of pottery or bone and pieces of charcoal. It was furthermore found to cover a thick occupation-layer. In spite of the indefinite character of this bank it seems quite possible that it represents the weathered remains of a wall of sun-dried bricks. The buildings here can hardly have been built of this material, as we found no traces of inner walls. It is indeed likely that there was in reality a rectangular enclosure with some form of wooden buildings roofed with stone tiles round its inner face. Probably the farmhouse itself stood on posts above some form of undercroft. The numerous irregularities and pits which were found among the post-holes in the small area which we examined can hardly represent floor levels inside a house at ground level. It is much to be hoped that further investigations will be possible here, for many problems of the Late Saxon and Norman periods might be solved. At one point we uncovered a pit which in other surroundings would have been called a Saxon hut but which in reality can hardly have been anything but a latrine pit. Our investigations here have already made us begin to wonder whether some of the pit-like hollows which we are at present regarding as the main part of Anglo-Saxon dwellings are not in reality structures in the undercrofts of much larger wooden buildings. Certainly Harold's manor house at Bosham as shown in the Bayeux tapestry was a building with an undercroft, and it is probable that we have begun to investigate something of a similar character here.

The tiled enclosure almost certainly dates from before the Norman conquest, if we may judge from the character of the shelly-paste pottery which was found all over the area investigated. The latrine pit mentioned above contained this type of pottery exclusively, with the exception of the handle of a yellow-glazed jug (Fig. 1, 7), and some sherds of later date in a smaller pit which was cut into one corner of the larger one. The jug handle is of especial interest, for it confirms a

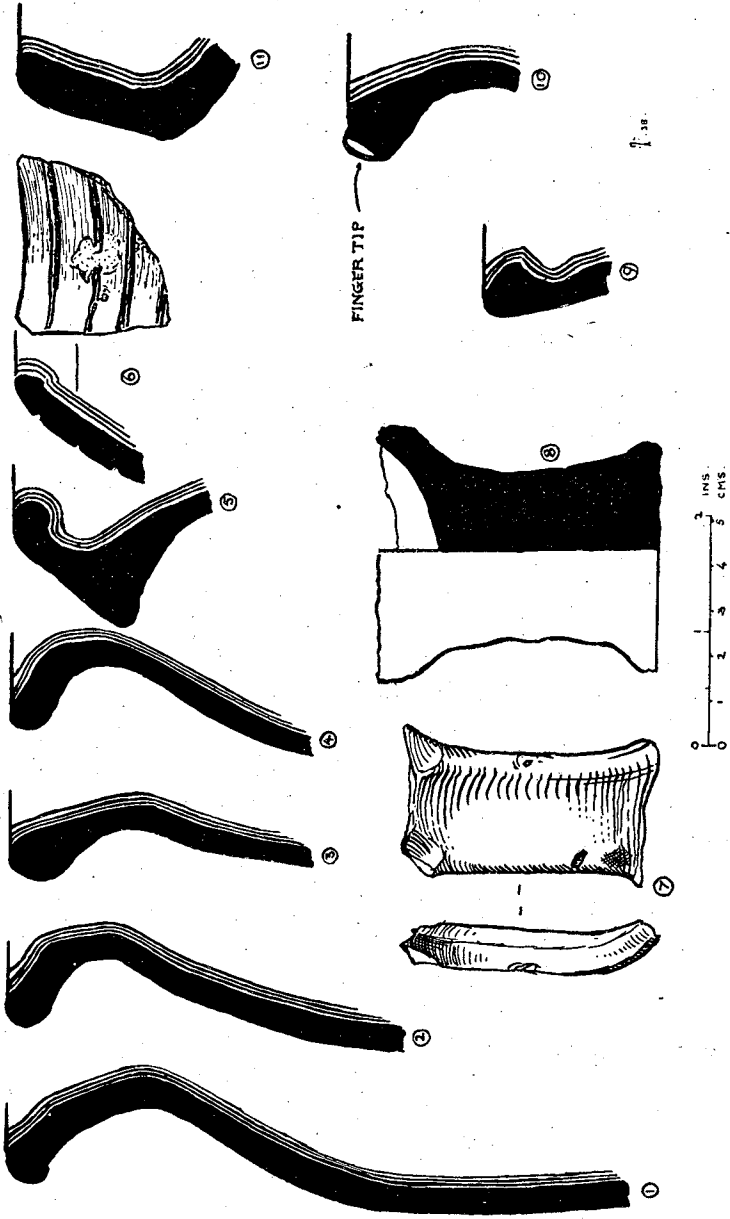


Fig. 1. Sherds from Southhoe Manor Excavations, etc. Nos. 1-4, latest types from intrusive pit. No. 5, "Late Saxon" type from post-hole. No. 6, yellow-glazed fragment, Flambard's Manor. No. 7, yellow-glazed handle from Southhoe latrine pit. No. 8, "Late Saxon" type base, surface trenching. Nos. 9-11, "Late Saxon" types latrine pit.

suggestion made on the strength of a fragment which we recovered from a similar pit at Flambard's Manor, Meldreth (*C.A.S. Proc.* vol. xxxv), that yellow-glazed pottery was in use at the same time as the shelly-paste Late Saxon pottery. The handle is apparently from a vessel of the shape of certain forms similar to those figured by Dr M. Wheeler in *London and the Saxons*, Fig. 33, no. 1. There is reason, however, for thinking that the use of yellowish glaze was practised in this country by the Anglo-Saxons themselves. Mr G. Wyman Abbott has kindly shown us a very remarkable bowl-shaped vessel, thickly covered with stamped impressions in the Pagan Saxon manner and covered with a greenish-yellow glaze which he obtained from a pre-Norman Conquest level. The fragment from Flambard's Manor (Fig. 1, 6) is probably from a not very dissimilar vessel. The smaller pit was filled with large quantities of reddish or greyish wares of types well known from Rayleigh Castle, Essex (*Trans. Essex Arch. Soc.* vols. v and xii), which probably indicate approximately the lower limit of the intensive occupation of this site. It should be noted that normal green glaze which is found in quantities on most mediaeval sites is of great rarity here. There is, therefore, reason for thinking that this particular site was first occupied towards the end of the Late Saxon period and remained in occupation during Norman times. Miss M. E. Simkins tells us of the division of the Southoe manor into three about 1219 (*V.C.H. Hunts.* vol. II, pp. 347 ff.). It seems probable from the small amount of evidence so far collected that this particular property fell into decay after the division. The buildings would no doubt remain in casual use for many years, but the occupation of the dwelling-house by the lord of the manor may be thought to have ceased.

The diet of the people living on this site appears to have included some rather unexpected elements, for while the usual domestic animals are represented by a considerable number of the bones of ox, sheep, pig, and horse, bones of aquatic birds are relatively very numerous. Duck are quite common. Shells of oysters and edible mussels are comparatively numerous also, and snails appear to have been eaten in considerable numbers. The thinness of the shells of the mussels suggest that they had been collected from a not very



Fig. *a*

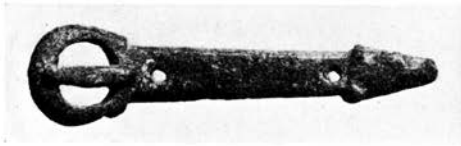


Fig. *b*

Two buckles from Southoe Manor excavations:

- a.* Iron buckle, surface find.
- b.* Bronze buckle, probably Norman.

exposed habitat. A piece of red deer antler was obtained. The quantity of bird bones recalls the scene on the Bayeux tapestry where numerous birds are being handed to the Normans feasting at Hastings.

**LATRINE PIT.** This was a hole 6 ft. long, 3 ft. 9 in. wide and 6 ft. deep. There were small post-holes on either side of one end and a kind of shute on one side which ended 2 ft. above the floor. At the opposite end to the post-holes a later hole had been dug so that it destroyed part of the end wall of the earlier pit, but did not reach the bottom. The potsherds from the later pit were all of approximately one date and pattern, simple sagging-based cooking pots (Fig. 1, 1-4) of red or grey ware.

A number of bird bones<sup>1</sup> were also found in this pit. The pottery from the main portion of the big pit itself was mostly in a rather abraded condition and was all, with the exception of the glazed handle mentioned above, of the shelly-paste, slightly soapy-textured "Late Saxon" type. Fragments of bowls and broad platters with incurved rims, as described from the St Neots huts (*C.A.S. Proc.* vol. xxxiii), were found (Fig. 1, 9-11). At the bottom of the shute were one or two fragments which were probably the last additions to the pit; these are of a paste more like the later "Norman" wares. Both types of pottery were found at all levels over the rest of the area explored, the ground being too much honey-combed with pits and post-holes for stratification to be observed. One piece of the earlier ware was recovered from the bottom of a post-hole (Fig. 1, 5).

**METAL OBJECTS.** Few of these were found, with the exception of numerous nails apparently used for fastening the Collyweston roof tiles. A bronze buckle which was not found in association with any other object (Pl. I, fig. *b*) is of an unusual form and probably Norman in date.

**PAVING.** An area 3 ft. 3 in. long by 2 ft. wide just under the plough level had been paved with red tiles which were now in a fragmentary condition. This may possibly have been the place where a beer barrel or some similar object once stood. It probably belonged to a late period of the occupation.

<sup>1</sup> These comprised bones of at least three birds, probably a goose and two chickens.



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