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(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS  
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IMRAY LAURIE NORIE AND WILSON

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## CAMBRIDGESHIRE EARTHWORK SURVEYS

C. C. TAYLOR

FOR the last three years, students of Archaeological Field Survey courses, organized by the Cambridge University Extra Mural Board and London University Extra Mural Department, have been helping the writer to carry out surveys of archaeological sites in Cambridgeshire for the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England). This work has been undertaken for two reasons. First, as the Commission is not now going to complete the county of Cambridgeshire, there is a need to record some of the more important or interesting sites there, many of which are or will be threatened with destruction or damage. Secondly, in view of the nationwide destruction of archaeological sites, the necessity of training more people in the basic techniques of field survey is becoming vital. The co-operation between the Commission and the University has helped in a small way to achieve both these aims. Some of the plans which have been made over these years are published here. It is hoped that more will follow in the future.<sup>1</sup>

### ROMANO-BRITISH SETTLEMENT SITE, CHITTERING (TL 498702) (Fig. 1)

The site lies due north of the hamlet of Chittering, in Waterbeach parish, alongside the Cambridge-Ely road (A 10), 1¼ miles south of its crossing of the Old West River.<sup>2</sup> It is situated near the centre of a broad N.E. projecting piece of land which divides the Waterbeach Fens from those of Cottenham. Most of the site is on Lower Greensand at about 10 ft above O.D., and is at present under permanent pasture.

The site, covering 5½ acres, is now bounded on the west by the modern road, though it probably originally extended further west to the Roman road from Cambridge to Ely which ran on the west side of the modern one. On the east and south it is bounded by shallow double ditches, only about 1 ft to 2 ft deep, separated by a low bank, though on the south most of this has been destroyed by a modern pond and a garden. On the north side a modern farm has destroyed the continuation of the site in this direction, though beyond the farm, in another grass field, further shallow ditches are probably part of it. The interior of the site is divided into a number of sub-rectangular areas bounded by shallow ditches no more than 2 ft deep, within

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed here are of course the writer's own and not necessarily those of the Commission.

<sup>2</sup> C. W. Phillips (ed.), *The Fenland in Roman Times*, R.G.S. Research Series No. 5 (1970), p. 214, no. 4970.

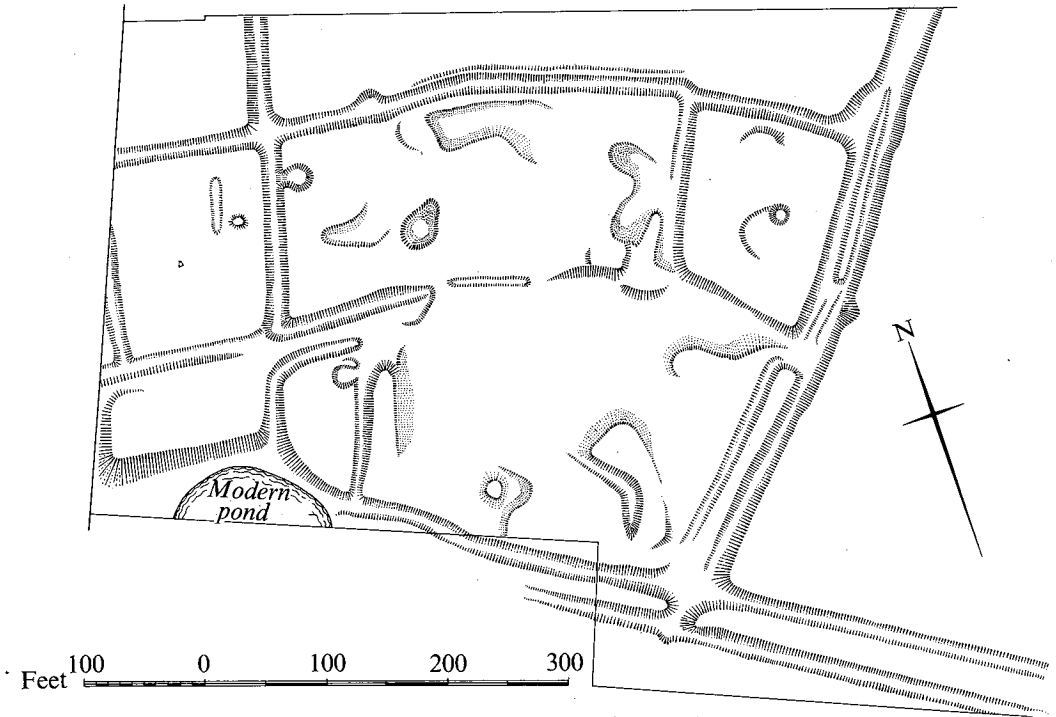


Fig. 1. Chittering; Romano-British settlement.

which lie various shallow depressions or platforms, some of which may be the remains of buildings.

Though the site is clearly only a fragment of what it originally was, it is of some importance in that it is one of the now all too rare examples of an upstanding Romano-British settlement site in the county. A large number of similar sites are known from air photographs, but very few now remain as earthworks. It is of particular interest to be able to see on the ground features, which are well known from air photographs, of now destroyed sites, such as the double-ditched boundary which surrounds this and many others.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R.C.H.M. (Eng.), *Peterborough New Town* (1969), Orton Longueville (4) and Orton Waterville (9); G. Webster and B. Hobly, 'Aerial Reconnaissance over the Warwickshire Avon', *Arch. J.* CXXI (1965), 1-22, nos. 5, 11, 12 and 17.

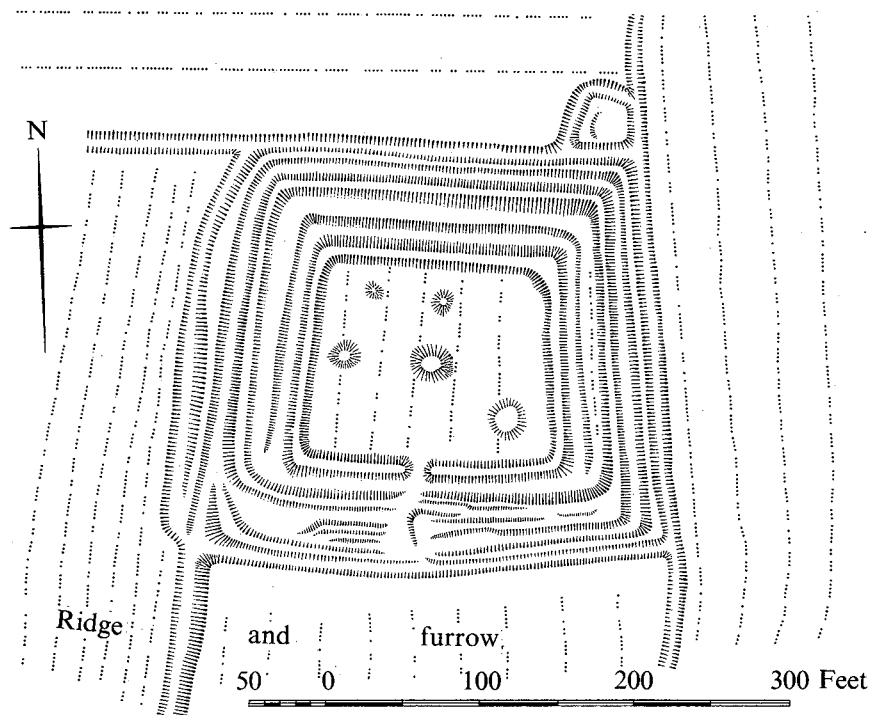


Fig. 2. Braham Farm, Ely St Mary.

ENCLOSURE, BRAHAM FARM, ELY ST MARY (TL 533777) (Fig. 2)

This enclosure lies in a pasture field 200 yd N.W. of Braham Farm, in the S.E. of the parish.<sup>1</sup> It is situated on almost level ground close to the fen edge at about 15 ft above O.D.

It consists of a small rectangular area, apparently bounded by triple banks and ditches whose height or depth is nowhere more than 2 ft. The enclosure is surrounded by ridge and furrow, which is also traceable not only within it but also between the inner and centre banks on the west side. Five small mounds in the interior, all under 1½ ft high, overlie the ridge and furrow, and there is an original entrance on the south side. The banks and ditches on the south side are now extensively damaged and almost obliterated. This is the result of excavation with a tractor-shovel carried out some years ago. This work followed earlier and somewhat more scientific excavation when a number of small trenches were cut through the banks and in the interior. Neither effort produced any evidence of date or function.

<sup>1</sup> *V.C.H. Cambridgeshire* II (1948), 30.

The result of the survey indicates that the enclosure is medieval or later, and was constructed on top of and around existing ridge and furrow. Each block, or furlong, of ridge and furrow in the immediate area is bounded by shallow ditches which presumably functioned as field drains. The enclosure has been fitted into one such furlong, producing the triple-banked appearance; although in fact it consists of only a double bank and ditch. However, on the west side the original furlong ditch appears to have been re-cut further west. The ditch featured in the N.W. corner is also the result of re-cutting.

This type of medieval or later enclosure, while apparently rare in Cambridgeshire, is common all over the British Isles.<sup>1</sup> Most of the recorded ones are equally small, and although the majority are bounded by single banks and ditches, double- and triple-banked variants are known.<sup>2</sup> They are extremely difficult to date accurately and excavation is usually unrewarding. The purpose of these enclosures is unknown although various explanations have been put forward, ranging from 'bee gardens' to pig-styes. The most likely explanation is that they are for penning stock, though whether cattle, sheep, pigs or rabbits is unknown. Only detailed research on relevant documents, if they exist, might provide the answer, though even then there is usually no clear evidence.<sup>3</sup>

MOTTE AND BAILEY CASTLE AND DESERTED VILLAGE, CASTLE CAMPS  
(TL 626425) (Figs. 3 and 4)

In view of the previously inadequate treatment of the massive fortifications of Castle Camps and the existence of an unrecognized deserted village adjacent to it, the whole complex has been re-examined.<sup>4</sup> The castle lies near the S.E. end of Castle Camps parish in a now remote situation and in a position of no strategic importance and little tactical strength. It is entirely on Boulder Clay about 380 ft above O.D. at the end of a low N.W. projecting spur between two small valleys. The castle commands extensive views to the north, east and west, but is overlooked by the rising ground to the S.E.

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<sup>1</sup> R.C.H.M. (Eng.), *Dorset*, III (1971), Alton Pancras (18) and (19), Milborne St Andrew (38), Piddletrenthide (63) and (64); P. J. Fowler, J. W. G. Musty and C. C. Taylor, 'Some Earthwork Enclosures in Wiltshire', *Wiltshire Arch. Mag.* LX (1965), 52-74; H. Ramm, 'Survey of an Earthwork at Kingsterndale', *Derby Arch. J.* LXXVII (1957), 53 etc.

<sup>2</sup> E. Gardner, 'A Triple Banked Enclosure on Chobham Common', *Surrey Arch. Coll.* xxxv (1924), 105.

<sup>3</sup> G. Crompton and C. C. Taylor, 'Earthwork Enclosures on Lakenheath Warren, West Suffolk', *Proc. Inst. Suffolk Arch.*, xxxii Pt. 2 (1971), 113-20.

<sup>4</sup> V.C.H. *Cambridgeshire* II (1948), 21.

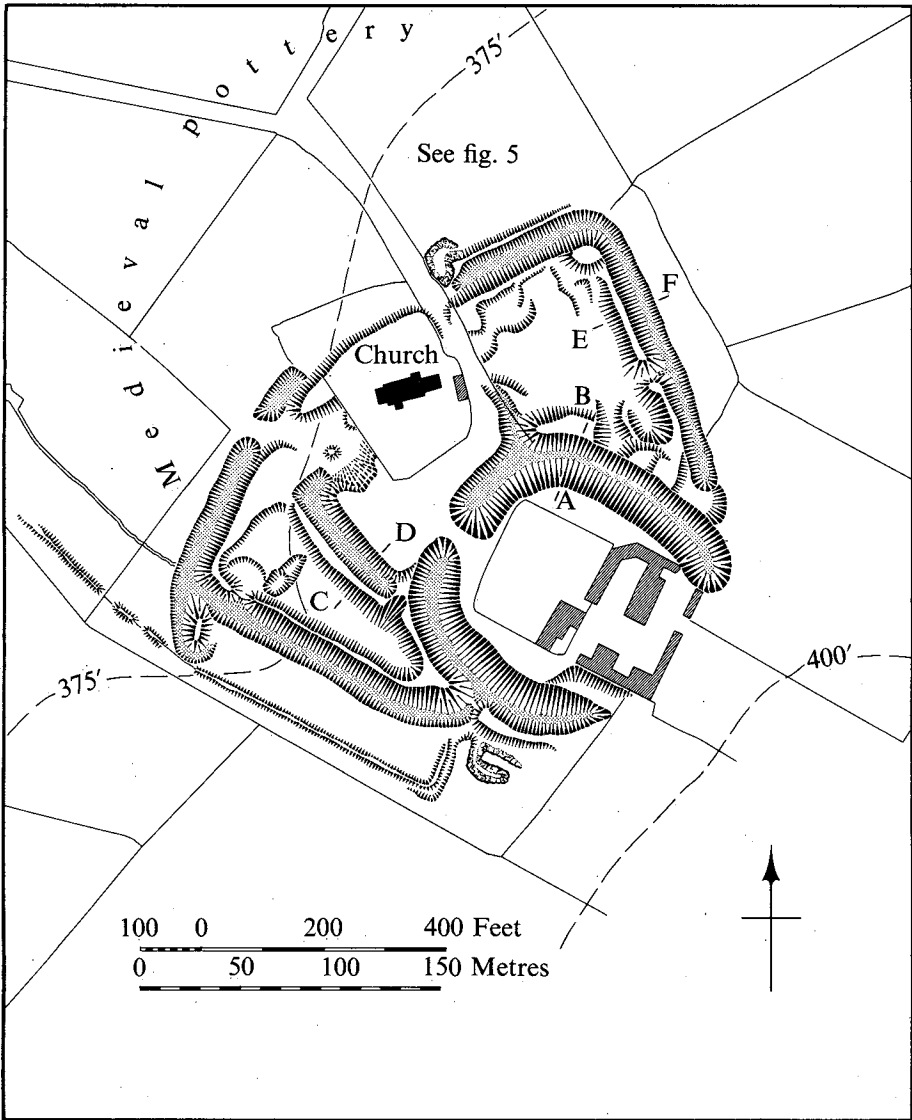


Fig. 3. Castle Camps: the castle.

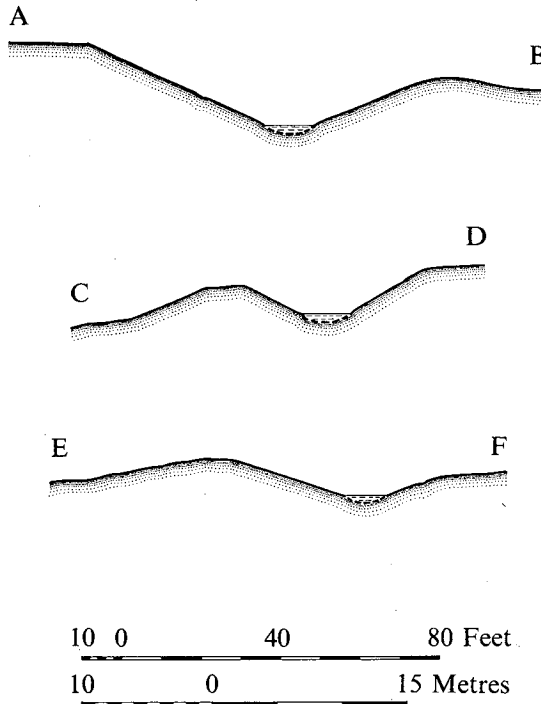


Fig. 4. Castle Camps; profiles of the castle ditches.

The main feature of the site is a very large motte whose flat top covers just over an acre. It is encircled by a wide ditch 10–15 ft deep on all but the S.E. side, where it has been completely filled in. The motte is level with the ground to the S.E. but stands 10 ft above that to the N.W. (Profile A–B). It is now entered by a wide causeway in the N.W. side, but this is a modern replacement for a bridge which is alleged to have existed until relatively recently. To the N.W. of the motte are the much-mutilated remains of a small bailey. Only the S.W. side of this is still complete as a deep ditch with a large outer bank (Profile C–D). However, slight remains of the rest of the filled-in ditch indicate that it curved N.E., ran through the present churchyard and passed under the existing church before turning S.E. to meet the ditch of the motte. Part of the junction of the bailey ditch with that of the motte still survives. Beyond this inner bailey is a much larger outer bailey, bounded by a rampart and deep outer ditch (Profile E–F). This is virtually intact, except to the N.W. of the church where the ditch has been filled in. Within this outer bailey are various low scarps and platforms, some undoubtedly the sites of former buildings. Beyond the



outer bailey to the S.W. are traces of a low bank, only 1 ft high, which continues in a N.W. direction beyond the castle.

This castle, the largest medieval fortress in the county, was undoubtedly built by Aubrey de Vere, soon after the Norman Conquest, as the administrative centre of his large estate. This included not only Castle Camps itself, but land in Babraham, Abington, Hildersham, Horseheath, Wilbraham and elsewhere, as well as other lands in Essex.<sup>1</sup> The castle as it apparently then existed is notable for its small bailey, but the size of the motte is especially interesting for it is almost exactly the same as that at the De Veres main stronghold at Castle Hedingham, Essex.<sup>2</sup> The date of the enlargement of the bailey to its present form is unknown. There are records of work being carried out in the castle between 1265 and 1331, and it has been suggested that this could refer to the construction of the new bailey. This is, however, by no means certain.<sup>3</sup> The fact that the present parish church is partly over the ditch of the first bailey means that it could not have been built until that bailey was out of use. However, the church is almost entirely fifteenth century and therefore can hardly be used to date the extension of the castle, which must have taken place well before this. There is a reset thirteenth-century priest's door in the south side of the chancel, and this, together with a thirteenth-century font, suggests the existence of an earlier church in the area, but not necessarily on the exact site of the present one. No record exists of the castle ever being used for military purposes, and it remained largely a private residence for the De Veres throughout the medieval period. It was sold in 1558 to Thomas Skinner, a London merchant, and later passed to Charterhouse, in whose hands it still remains.

There is no trace of any medieval building *in situ* on the motte, except for a small piece of flint walling near the N.E. angle of the house. Within the garden are two large pieces of Barnack-type stone, one of which is part of a moulded cornice which may be medieval. On an engraving of 1730 a high tower and a large gabled range, probably of sixteenth-century date, are depicted. The tower fell down in 1738 and soon afterwards the existing farm, an L-shaped mid-eighteenth-century structure, was erected, which was then altered in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. The garden wall to the N.E. of the house is largely of sixteenth- or seventeenth-century brick.

#### THE DESERTED VILLAGE (TL 626426) (Fig. 5)

The former village of Castle Camps once lay in a broad arc outside and below the outer bailey ditch to the N.E. of the castle. All but a small area of earthworks has now been destroyed, but medieval pottery has been found over a wide area indicating its

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<sup>1</sup> *V.C.H. Cambridgeshire* 1 (1938), 389-90.

<sup>2</sup> *R.C.H.M. (Eng.), Essex* 1 (1916), Castle Hedingham (3).

<sup>3</sup> See p. 38, n. 4.

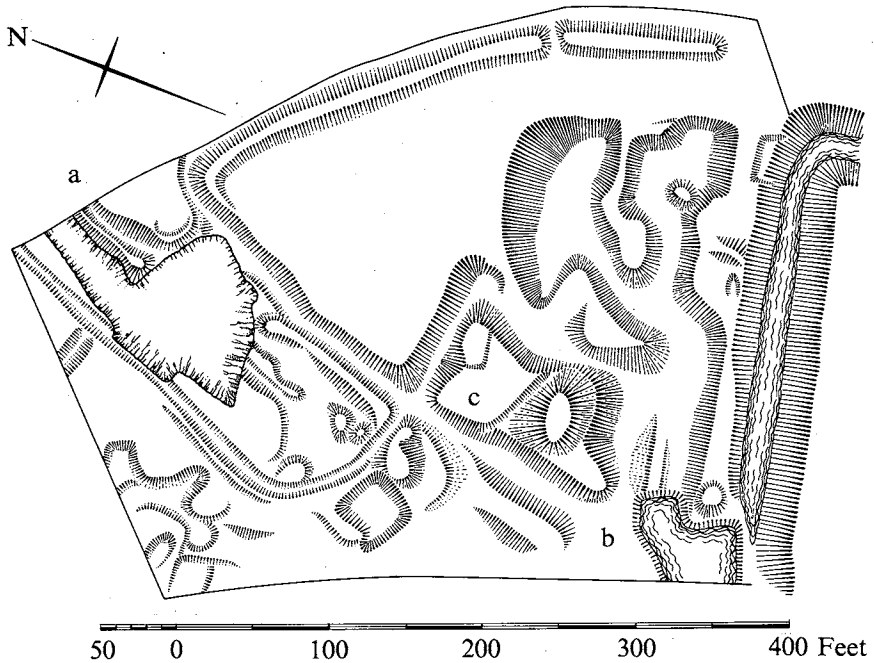


Fig. 5. Castle Camps: the deserted medieval village.

former extent. The existing remains are confined to a small pasture field north of the church and these are much damaged by later activities. The main feature of the site is a narrow hollow-way or former street up to 3 ft deep which crosses the site from north to south (*a-b* on Fig. 5). On its east side near the south end is a rectangular platform (*c*), possibly a house site, while another lies across the hollow-way to the west. A low bank on the N.E. side of the field is probably the boundary of a paddock or close and a shallow ditch in the western part of the field may have enclosed further building sites. A number of indeterminate depressions near the bailey ditch may be the result of quarrying.

The existence of a village near the castle is of some interest, in that the site is unusual for a primary settlement in this part of Cambridgeshire. It is probable that the village grew up after 1066 as a direct result of the building of the castle and is not an early settlement there. When the castle fell into disuse, perhaps towards the end of the medieval period, the village then decayed and its inhabitants moved away to a more conveniently situated place at Camps Green, three-quarters of a mile away to the N.E., where it still remains.

Neither the actual size of the village nor its date of desertion can be ascertained from documents, for it lies in an area of early dispersed woodland settlement, and such population figures that exist are useless. This writer has described elsewhere the problems inherent in dating deserted settlements in this type of area,<sup>1</sup> but briefly the difficulty is that all recorded population figures refer not only to the village itself, but to all the other farms and hamlets in the parish, of which there were at least twelve by the thirteenth century at the latest. In addition, as the population moved away to a place still within the parish, the surviving figures show no overall decrease which would indicate the actual period of desertion. Finally, the records themselves are defective as a result of evasion, or deterioration of the documents.

Thus the statistics as they exist are of little value. Domesday Book (1086) gives a recorded population of forty-nine for 'Camps', but as this includes Shudy Camps parish and perhaps Bartlow as well, it cannot be compared with later figures.<sup>2</sup> In 1279 sixty-seven tenants are listed for the manor of Castle Camps, certainly indicating an increase over the 1086 figure but fairly typical elsewhere in the county.<sup>3</sup> The 1327 Subsidy Rolls name forty-four taxpayers in the parish. This certainly indicates a sharp fall in population, but is again common everywhere in Cambridgeshire at this time and has no special significance here.<sup>4</sup> The 1377 Poll Tax<sup>5</sup> records the names of at least forty people over the age of fourteen, but the Roll is much damaged and apparently not complete. The 1524 Subsidy Roll<sup>6</sup> is intact and lists thirty-three taxpayers, but by this time evasion had increased greatly and no reliance can be placed on the figures. All the subsequent Subsidy returns are of even less value as evasion of tax grew. Thus there is no real indication of when the village of Castle Camps was deserted.

One other feature which still remains near the castle and village is a large earthen dam which spans a shallow valley 600 yards N.E. of the castle (TL 630429). It is 180 yards long and 10 ft high in the centre. It is now broken through to allow a small stream to flow, but formerly must have produced a lake of some 8 acres. This is perhaps the site of the medieval fishpond recorded as being at Castle Camps on the De Veres estates.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> C. C. Taylor, 'Three Deserted Medieval Settlements in Whiteparish', *Wilts. Arch. Mag.* LXIII (1968), 39-45.

<sup>2</sup> *V.C.H. Cambridgeshire* I (1938), 340.

<sup>4</sup> P.R.O. E. 179/81/6.

<sup>6</sup> P.R.O. E. 179/81/34.

<sup>3</sup> *Rot. Hund.* II (1818), 424-5.

<sup>5</sup> P.R.O. E. 179/81/7.

<sup>7</sup> *Cal. Pat. Rolls* (1313-17), p. 63.



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