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(incorporating the Cambs and Hunts Archaeological Society)

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Editorial

After two themed volumes these Proceedings return to the usual PCAS format of mixed papers, covering excavations, local history, landscape archaeology, architecture and historical geography. Indeed, in the finest antiquarian tradition many of the papers involve more than one of these disciplines. There should therefore be something to interest all members in this miscellany.

Two departures from recent practice are the inclusion of Conference synopses and an abbreviated Conduit. The synopses are by popular request, rising from a realisation that many members would be grateful to have a lasting reminder of these important papers. We are grateful to the authors who supplied copy so conscientiously after the event (naturally we had not thought of this in advance), and to Derek Booth who collected them all together. Conduit had to be an even more last-minute construct, when it became clear that the County Council could no longer keep up with the necessary production time-scale. This year's approach is a bit of an experiment, and it will be useful to know what reaction we have both from members and from affiliated societies.

Alison Taylor

President's Address

Two years as President is too short a time to see through any substantial programme of reform for CAS. When I was elected there were a number of initiatives I wanted to start in the hope they would mature in another President's time. To this end Derek Booth as Secretary and I put out a questionnaire in the year 2000 to profile our membership and to canvass opinion on possible changes.

It has been a central part of my Presidency to re-imbue the Society and its membership with confidence in its right to express opinion on heritage issues. It is essential that there remains a well-informed independent Society to safeguard archaeological and related services at a time when other pressures and agenda take precedence within local and central governmental organisations which we perhaps naively assume will be acting in our best interests in protecting the past. It is particularly regrettable that CAS has been excluded from representation within long-established fora to discuss and scrutinise public heritage services within Cambridgeshire at this time.

Another issue I hoped we could address was to reverse the decline of amateur archaeology, perhaps by re-establishing the Society's post of Director of Fieldwork, and to encourage research-led investigation in the County once more. This latter still awaits the right person and opportunity, but I am pleased there are encouraging signs in the way local groups have attracted grants which will give them solid research foci and draw in new members. Notable amongst these are Thriplow Society, Fulbourn Village History Society, Haverhill and District Archaeological Group and Cambridge Archaeology Field Group.

We asked members if it would be beneficial for CAS to develop other venues for meetings, and would there be interest in workshops on current research topics. We have developed the workshop idea with this year's conference dedicated to the archaeology, architecture and history of Ely, a town that has had considerable investigation in the past ten years, with some startling new discoveries but little co-ordination or academic discussion. Synopses of the talks are published within this volume. From October we shall be holding our monthly meetings in more comfortable and more accessible surroundings, in the newly built Divinity Faculty at the Sidgewick Site.

Other positive steps are that, after two years I can report that the Web page is now complete and will shortly appear at www.Cambridge-Antiquarian-Society.org.uk, and that the Society has taken back full ownership of Conduit which, over the past ten years, had been produced jointly with Cambridgeshire County Council.

In summary there has been good progress over the past two years and the Society will continue to build upon its strengths as the paramount amenity society guarding Cambridgeshire's heritage. Government policies at central and local level are capricious and we cannot afford to put faith in them without constant scrutiny and challenge. With the advent of regional government and root and branch reform of the planning system, a Cambridgeshire focus for our heritage provided by CAS will be ever more imperative. The Society is therefore essential and I thank you all for continuing to support and contribute to it. I am pleased to leave it in the capable hands of your secretary Liz Allan, and new President, Tony Kirby.

Tim Malim
Summaries of papers presented at the Spring Conference

Ely – archaeology, architecture, and historical perspectives

Ely and its place in the history of Western Monasticism.

Philip Dixon

The earliest monks are to be found in the deserts of Egypt and Syria, ascetics from the impurities of daily life, and later increasingly escaping, as refugees from a world which was collapsing. In the west, the initial piecemeal and ad hoc arrangements for religious communities were codified and systematised by St Benedict and his followers, and by the later part of the first millennium the largest number of religious houses followed the Benedictine rule. When Ely was initially founded, this process was in its infancy, and Aetheldreda’s monastery is likely to have been an irregular collection of churches and living accommodation, like the contemporary site excavated at Jarrow. After the Viking destruction the monastery was re-founded during the great renewal of religious houses led by St Dunstan. At this time the new and regularly ordered monasteries which were characteristic of the Carolingian renaissance were fashionable. It is likely that the new buildings at Ely formed a cloister with dormitory and refectory laid out around it, south of the church, in the style of the Norman monastery, part of which still survives.

Who were the monks of Ely?

Joan Greatrex

Only a few biographical details of a small number of the monks of Ely cathedral priory have been preserved among the medieval muniments. It is possible, however, to compensate, at least partially, for this unfortunate loss by focusing on the monks’ names. The reason for this is that most of the monks between 1109 and 1539 were known by their baptismal name followed by the name of the village where they had previously lived; this usually took the place of their family or surname. Thus, we have William de Wisbech and so on. It must be said, however, that this kind of onomastic analysis is to be used with caution, for medieval families could and did move from one location to another and in some cases were known in their new setting by the name of their earlier domicile.

With a map of Cambridgeshire and the adjoining counties as an aid in locating the toponyms, the term used to describe surnames derived from place names, we observe that the majority of monks appear to have been of local or regional origin. In a few instances we are supplied with both the parental name (patronym) and the toponym, for example, Robert Horold de Isleham, one of five monks who probably came from the village of that name. East Anglian towns and villages differ from those in the Midlands in that they are often, like Isleham, unique and therefore present less difficulty in identification.

At least twenty-four monks, between 1109 and 1539, bore the toponym Ely: a surprisingly high percentage from a small urban centre especially when we contrast it with the figure of only fifteen monks named Norwich at Norwich cathedral priory where both monastery and town were substantially larger. Is there an explanation for this divergence or is it mere chance?

In a few cases, most noticeably among the Ely priors, it is possible to go one step beyond identifying the probable family home base to filling in a few details of the social status of their kinsmen. Prior William de Whittlesey (c.1510-15) for example whose patronym, Folyot, almost certainly indicates his connection with the family of that name who were prominent landowners in Whittlesey. Preliminary research suggests that although men from more humble backgrounds formed the majority in the cathedral’s monastic community in the late middle ages the monks continued, until the Dissolution, to choose priors whose family connections were with the landed gentry.

Saxon and early medieval evidence from Ely

Alison Dickens, Mary Alexander, Richard Mortimer

Cambridge Archaeological Unit: University of Cambridge

The paper fell into three parts. The first was an examination of the nature of Saxon archaeology. Early
The three most common vessel types of the period, jars (often cooking pots), bowls and jugs dominate the Ely ware assemblage, with extensive stabling and slashing of jug handles, both rod-sectioned and strap, and on the rims of deep, often wide-angled bowls being characteristic. Most vessels show evidence of turntable finishing on otherwise hand-formed bodies. A late medieval fabric was finer and more often wheel-made.

Study by Alan Vince of the petrology and chemical make-up of Ely ware suggests most vessels were made in Ely, but a few probably came from elsewhere. Initial evidence might suggest a second source in the Huntingdonshire Fenland for this material. These studies have also shown that 'Grimston Software', excavated and described at Kings Lynn in the 1960s is in fact Ely ware.

The Ely pottery industry appears have been confined to the economic heart of the medieval 'lower' town close to the waterfront. It was a wide-based urban industry spanning several centuries and likely to have included more than one pottery at any given time.

Why here? Post-Conquest medieval Ely was a new regional centre on an upward economic curve. The presence and patronage of the Abbey and Cathedral in moving the river closer to the existing settlement and setting up the new 'lower' town was of paramount importance. This lower town has all the hallmarks of a medieval craft or industrial suburb, but proximity to the new river, and the new short-cut to Lynn, meant that it had potential to develop.

It was to Lynn that much of the Ely ware that was produced in the 12th to 13th centuries appears to have been transported. Study of the distribution of the ware suggesting it was confined to the southern Fenland and Fen edge, and major settlements directly accessible through the main southern Fenland waterways. The role of pottery supply to the town of Ely itself should not be overlooked, however, it was the revision of the river systems by the Abbey authorities that was the key to the success of the town and pottery industry.

**Ely Cathedral: some new thoughts on the building chronology of the eastern arm**

**John Maddison**

Following a summary of the known archaeology of the Norman choir, evidence was put forward to demonstrate the survival of the Norman aisle walls below and within those of Bishop Hotham's three 14th-century western bays; an external base chamfer of the Norman work being clearly visible on the north side and detectable on the south. An internal mast in the southwest bay – sometimes thought to be 14th-century – was shown to be Norman by its survival above the 14th-century vault. The fragmentary remnant of a pointed vault in the tribune of the same bay implied an early modification of the Norman south aisle. It also suggested that the difference (approximately 1 metre) between the tribune floor level in the

**Medieval pottery production, marketing and the growth of urban forms and functions: evidence from Ely**

**Paul Spoerry**

Ely ware is the generic name for a quartz sand and calcareous tempered group of utilitarian pottery fabrics, manufactured from perhaps 1150 until the 19th century. The form and decorative characteristics of Ely ware are couched in both late Saxon Thetford ware traditions and display features seen in other eastern English post-Conquest sandy wares.

The two views of evidence from Ely were offered, the first from the City centre. How does the location of the medieval city articulate with known evidence for Saxon activity within the city environs? Middle and late Saxon evidence from excavations next to the Lady Chapel and the south side of the Cathedral suggest high status occupation. In the light of this evidence, the location of the pre-Conquest monastic foundation beneath the Cathedral seems increasingly likely. Elsewhere in the city, current knowledge suggests dispersed rural activity, although closely spaced ditches with middle Saxon occupation evidence recently found at Jewson's Yard, Broad Street hint at the possibility of other nuclei of activity beneath the city.

Secondly, evidence from the edge of Ely was considered. Excavations along West Fen Road have revealed settlements from the Iron Age onwards. Most, however, belong to the Saxon and early medieval periods. The Middle Saxon settlement (starting in the 7th century) covered a large area with evidence extending beyond the confines of the excavated site. Settlement continued through to the Conquest and beyond with clear decline only from the 13th century – a time when the town around the Cathedral appears to expand. Following consideration of the site itself map and aerial photography, evidence was used to suggest a model of extensive but widespread settlement extending towards the City and to the west towards the Fen. Modern regular field divisions and trackways may be relic evidence of a planned land-use pattern dating to the medieval period.
present east arm and that of the nave and transept tribunes might pre-date the work of Bishop Northwold. An overlooked chevron-decorated wall bench in the aisle below was either supporting evidence of the early modification of the Norman south aisle or possibly an 18th-century reuse of a moulding from the demolished pulpitum.

In Bishop Northwold’s presbytery (1234-52) revisions in detail, indicative of the design process, were contrasted with the essentially even progress of its construction. This magnificent building powerfully influenced the masons who built the three western bays of the surviving Norman choir for Bishop Hotham in 1324-37. Three principal building phases of Hotham’s work were shown in colour-coded photogrammetric drawings.

The later medieval alteration of Northwold’s presbytery was shown to commence in the tribunes with the rebuilding of his failed upper buttresses and with the introduction of new windows. It was proposed that a secondary alteration of the north tribune in two bays next to the medieval high altar could be connected with a previously misunderstood document of 1357/8. This interpretation would mean that the primary remodelling of Northwold’s tribunes was extant by then.

The introduction of new windows into the presbytery aisles was shown to begin with five identical designs recorded as the donation of Bishop Barnet (1366-73). Bishop Gray (1454-78) and others contributed further windows but all, like Barnett, reproduced the earlier tracery of Bishop Hotham, in the interest of architectural unity and in defiance of contemporary fashion.

Some of these issues are discussed in a chapter on the Gothic work at Ely in the forthcoming book of essays on the history of the cathedral edited by Peter Meadows and Nigel Ramsay.

The Norman Cathedral at Ely
E C Fernie

After his appointment as abbot in 1081 or 1082, Simeon, prior of Winchester, began to build a completely new church at Ely. Following Simeon’s death in 1093 there was an interregnum under William II until the appointment of Abbot Richard in 1100, who continued the work until the east arm was ready for the translation of the body of St Etheldreda in 1106. In 1109 the abbey became a cathedral. Dendrochronological evidence indicates that construction had reached the west transepts by the 1120s, and Bishop Ridel (1173–89) is recorded as having completed the new work.

The east end of Simeon’s church is located by the pair of shafts surviving between the two phases of later Gothic work in the east arm. The high altar stood in the bay beyond the shafts and the shrines in the bay beyond that, in the apse known from excavations.

In the transepts, there is evidence for an aisle supporting a platform at the end of each arm. The alteration of pier and column differs in the north arm from the south, presumably to solve a problem of supporting the corners of the platform. Simeon’s work is clearly identifiable in the main arcades of both arms by its volute capitals and plain unmoulded arches. The break in construction of 1093 runs like a gash across the building from the northeast corner of the north arm to the northwest corner of the south. The work of after 1100 west of the break and in the storeys above it, is characterised by cushion capitals and moulded arches.

The nave elevation continues that of the transepts, with a strong stress on the vertical produced by the relationship between width and height and by the shafts running up the nave faces of the supports. Ely is unique among Norman buildings in England in having a main wall which is thicker at clerestory level than in the storeys below. This ‘oversailing’ permits a wide wall passage to be carried on slender piers. The carved doorways in the south wall of the aisle belong with the building of the nave and hence were up by the late 1120s. Their style is related to the contemporary painting in the vault of a bay in the south aisle. The west transepts are by far the most richly decorated parts of the building, chiefly because it was the latest part to be constructed.

The design of the church is based on that of Winchester, one of a group of the largest buildings of the age which approach the scale of the Early Christian churches of Rome such as St Peter’s.
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