The Anglo-Saxon Village of West Stow: An Interim Report of the Excavations 1965-8

By S. E. WEST

IN THE early 1850s a pagan Saxon cemetery was discovered on West Stow Heath by men ‘raising gravel for ballast’ for barges operating on the River Lark. The site was explored by several local antiquaries and the spoils divided, some eventually reaching the Moyse’s Hall Museum, Bury St. Edmunds, and the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. The report on these discoveries which was published does not give their precise location; the evidence suggests the possibility of two cemeteries. The site of the settlement was never looked for and remained undisturbed only a few hundred yards away on the N. bank of the Lark.

In 1947 Mr. Basil Brown reported that Anglo-Saxon huts were being destroyed by gravel-working on property belonging to the Bury St. Edmunds Corporation’s sewage farm and I subsequently recorded three of the huts. In later years Miss Vera Evison of Birkbeck College, London, investigated the N. edge of the site and established that a considerable area of settlement still existed. The designation of the whole area for use as the Corporation’s rubbish-tip provided the opportunity for the entire site to be examined by the Ministry of Public Building and Works in 1965.

THE SITE

THE SITE, which is on the edge of the Breckland (fig. 1), lies on the N. bank of the River Lark on a low sandy knoll, some half a mile east of the crossing of the Icknield Way and the Lark at Lackford. The Lark valley was densely populated in Roman times with extensive settlements at Icklingham and along the S. bank in the vicinity of the Anglo-Saxon site, and the Saxon village lies on the fringe of this Romano-British settlement-area. The knoll, some five and a half acres in extent, drops steeply into the Lark flood plain on the south and lies in an old ox-bow of the river which still supports rushes and was presumably wet or marshy in Saxon times.

West Stow is important for three reasons. First, it has yielded an early Anglo-Saxon village in its entirety, unencumbered by later buildings or disturbance. Second, the excellent state of preservation of the food bones provides, for the first time, an economic as well as an archaeological history of a settlement.

Above, sketch-map showing Anglo-Saxon village (1), site of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries as marked on O.S. 25-in. maps (2 and 3), site of Roman buildings (4), and site of Roman cemetery (5). Below, on L., geological map of East Anglia showing position of West Stow, marked by solid black circle, in relation to fenland (A), chalk and gravels (B), central clay areas (C), and east coast sandlings (D); on r., map of East Anglia showing position of West Stow in relation to Icknield Way.
THE ANGLO-SAXON VILLAGE OF WEST STOW

covering the whole pagan period. Third, it is associated with a cemetery or
cemeteries which would probably repay further investigation since they have
already provided a useful group of objects, albeit now dissociated.

THE 1965-8 EXCAVATIONS

Miss Evison’s excavations combined with surface indications supported the
view that the whole of the knoll was covered by the Saxon settlement. It was
decided, therefore, to strip the site totally, moving from the most urgently
threatened areas in the east toward the western half of the knoll. In four seasons
rather more than half the site has been examined.

The subsoil is sand with relatively little gravel, making it easy to identify the
features. The occupation-levels above vary in depth from about 6 in. on the north
to 18 in. on the south. Its human occupation has been lengthy, starting with
scattered mesolithic and neolithic flakes and artefacts such as might be expected
on any Breckland site. Later periods are represented by an iron-age farmstead
with circular huts and attendant enclosures which occupied the highest point of
the knoll (its features being distinctly reddish in colour as opposed to the greys and
blacks of the Saxon ones), and by two Romano-British pottery-kilns of the late 1st
or early 2nd century which were excavated on the western end of the knoll in
1947-8,3 in a region where further evidence of Romano-British pottery-making
with dumps of waste material from kilns was found in 1968. There is no evidence
of any other Romano-British occupation here; this is important when we come
to consider the first phases of the Anglo-Saxon settlement.

The Anglo-Saxon village site was ploughed in the 12th and 13th centuries;
the ridge-and-furrow strips running north-south are dated by scattered potsherds.
The whole of the area, apparently, was covered by a violent sand blow around
the end of the 13th century, which converted the site into a great sand dune,
burying and preserving the medieval ridge and furrow, including even the actual
plough furrows, with sand varying in depth from a few inches on the N. side to as
much as 3 feet on the south. The site thereafter was abandoned, preserved from
ploughing and to a large extent from animal activity, until today, so that it
provided an unequalled opportunity for reconstructing the economy and life of
an Anglo-Saxon village.

THE PLAN

The plan (FIG. 2, facing p. 4) shows all the known Saxon features from the
early 5th to the mid 7th century. The pottery and small finds from the huts
suggest that we may discern a sequence in the pattern of settlement. Although it
would be premature to discuss the detail of the development of the village until
the whole site has been uncovered, some general observations can already be
made. The N. side of the knoll has two parallel ditch systems 65 ft. apart running
east-west and connected by two small cross-ditches. The main ditches are shallow,

3 S. E. West, ‘Romano-British pottery kilns on West Stow Heath’, Proc. Suffolk Inst. Archaeol., xxvi
composite features with two, three, or sometimes four, channels along their lengths. Since they contain little pottery, in contrast to the quantities that occur in the surrounding occupation-levels, and since later structures encroach upon them, they are probably early boundary-ditches. The main concentrations of early structures appear to lie south of this ditch system. At first glance, the distribution of the pits, post-holes and buildings appears rather haphazard; but careful examination, and a study of the pottery, show a distinct grouping of the structures.

First, in the central region, there is a concentration of twenty-two rectangular pits with nearly vertical sides and flat bottoms, often cutting into one another. The filling frequently shows traces of linings, but remarkably little else. It would appear that these pits represent a series of replacements and that the spoil from newly-dug pits was used to fill those no longer in use. The lack of pottery or bones in them seems to preclude their being rubbish-pits, and their purpose remains uncertain.

Secondly, there are four large hollow areas ranging from 30 ft. to 80 ft. long, without any trace of associated post-holes which might indicate structures. They contained quantities of very fragmentary pottery and bones, and two of them abutted on hut sites. To judge from the worn nature of many of the potsherds, these may have been temporary animal-pens.

Thirdly, the distribution of the sunken huts or Grubenhäuser, of which by the end of the 1968 season thirty-four were known from the site, suggests a positive, if rather irregular, grouping, at least in the earlier phases of the settlement. There are at present three main groups, each associated with a small hall-like structure. Each group contains huts of the 5th century and in one group the huts underwent successive rebuildings on the same sites. The huts show significant differences in structure and in contents, particularly in the quantities of pottery and food bones and also in the nature of the small finds; this indicates that they had varying functions. If this pattern can be shown to be consistent over the whole site, it could indicate social, and possibly family, grouping within the community. It is significant that the later huts tend to be distributed over the whole site, lying over the ditch system on the north and not being associated with halls. With only two exceptions, both minor buildings, all the structures are oriented east-west.

While the disposition of the pits and the loose grouping of the structures suggest there was some organization within the settlement, there is no evidence, apart from the ditch system on the north, to suggest any formal division of property, such as has been defined at the late Saxon town of Thetford.4

THE STRUCTURES

The commonest structures on the site are the sunken huts (Grubenhäuser) of the type normally associated with Anglo-Saxon settlements. Those at West Stow demonstrate a wide range of type and purpose. Of the thirty-four so far excavated, twenty-four fall into two clearly defined groups, eight having three post-holes at each end and sixteen only one. The pottery and small finds of six of the first group

WEST STOW
1965-1968

FIG. 2
WEST STOW, SUFFOLK (p. 4 f.)
General plan of excavated features

[See page 4.]
and eleven of the second, which have been analysed, indicate the pattern that is beginning to emerge. How far this pattern can be regarded as reliable must await the final analysis of the material from the whole site. With this qualification, it can be said that huts with three posts at each end belong to the 5th century and perhaps the 1st half of the 6th and that, with one exception, they are all relatively deep, being cut 2 ft. to 2½ ft. into the subsoil. Those with one post-hole at each end, however, tend to belong in the main to the 2nd half of the 6th century and to the 7th, with some in the 1st half of the 6th century. It must be emphasized, however, that while this is the trend at West Stow, this type is well known elsewhere in England and on the continent before the 6th century. The huts of this group are shallower than those of the first group, being cut 1½ ft. to 2 ft. into the subsoil. Normally this type is considered to have been of ridge-pole construction, without walls of any kind. Hut 15, however, at West Stow (FIG. 3), 19 ft. long by 15 ft. wide, and cut 1½ ft. into the subsoil, which was, apparently, a weaving-shed, since almost a hundred loom-weights were scattered on its floor, had been burnt, leaving substantial traces of charred timbers in two layers, above and below the loom-weights. The hut had had a plank floor, on which the loom-weights rested; a thatched roof supported by wattles; and vertical plank walls which had collapsed over the remains of the floor and roof. Another weaving-shed near by (hut 3, FIG. 3), also shallow, exhibited the same features, differing only in that, as well as large, single major posts in the middle of each end, the walls were supported by other posts all the way round—an arrangement so far unique at West Stow. In both these huts, if the loom-weights indeed indicate the presence of looms, these must have stood on the plank floors as there were no post-holes to suggest attachment to the ground.

FIG. 3
PLANS OF WEAVING-SHEDS, WEST STOW, SUFFOLK (p. 5)
Hut 3 after complete excavation; hut 15 showing position of fallen planks, loom-weights and wattles
FIG. 4
WEST STOW, SUFFOLK (p. 8)
Plans and sections of four post-huts. Key to symbols at bottom, from l. to r.: general cultural layer; grey, ashy soil; clay; charcoal and ash; sand.
FIG. 5

WEST STOW, SUFFOLK (p. 8)
Plans and sections of two post-huts, nos. 16 and 24, and two turf-walled huts, nos. 8 and 26. For key to symbols see caption to FIG. 4
As there is no surviving evidence of a similar kind for the deeper huts with three post-holes at each end it is difficult to say precisely how they were constructed.

Of the thirty-four Grubenhäuser examined, not one revealed an entrance to the hollow. Any kind of step down into the huts at West Stow, even if protected by wooden linings, would surely have produced a great deal of slumping of the loose sand which forms the natural subsoil. In some places pits either cut by the huts or cutting into the sites of abandoned huts were noted, but in each case they were demonstrably not contemporary with the structure.

The infilling of the huts was in two quite distinct layers. The lower one was a uniform, fine grey deposit; the upper one was a black layer, consistent in its nature with the occupation-layer covering the whole site, which filled the hollow left after the hut site was abandoned. In hut 16 (Fig. 5) complete skeletons of two dogs were found. These have a bearing on the interpretation of the huts. One, just above the base of the hut ‘floor’ area, was still articulated and the second, in the uppermost level of the grey filling, was sealed by the succeeding black deposit. The second dog, lying on the slope of the grey infilling, apparently decayed in a hollow space, as the skull had rolled down the slope away from the rest of the skeleton. It would seem likely, therefore, that the lower deposit does not represent the trampled rubbish on the floor of a hut but rather the accumulation of material in a space beneath a floor. This suggests that some, if not all, the Grubenhäuser were not strictly sunken huts, but were constructed with such a space. In the earlier, deeper, huts this space may well have been used for storage, and in hut 12 (Fig. 4) there was evidence of a wooden lining to the hole. With shallower huts the provision of an air space would have lengthened the life of the wooden floors. The normal view that these huts with one post-hole at each end always had a simple ridge-pole, tent-like construction must in any case be qualified in the light of the evidence of the plank walls in the burnt example already described (hut 15, Fig. 3). Squalor there certainly was; dead dogs, excreta and household refuse around and beneath the huts were a part of everyday life, but the huts themselves were competent structures built by craftsmen well able to work in wood.

Two huts (nos. 8 and 26, Fig. 5) stand out as unusual among the rest; both are nearly square, measuring 17 ft. by 15 ft. and 15 ft. by 13 ft. respectively, their shallow pits being defined by slight trenches with rounded corners. The first had a large post-hole in the middle of each of the four sides, whereas the second and later example had one post-hole in the middle of each shorter side only. The shallow trench with rounded corners suggests that the huts may have had a turf lining. Both were closely associated with the largest of the small ‘halls’ and were within 50 ft. of each other, the larger one succeeded by the other.

Of the structures without hollows, the most important are the two small ‘halls’ which stood in a complex of Grubenhäuser that spanned the 5th and 6th centuries. The more easterly (hall 1, Fig. 6), 27 ft. by 14 ft., was a simple rectangle outlined by a single line of posts, without any apparent partitions. The posts are fairly regularly spaced with a small gap in the short E. end and another, more

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5 Davison, *op. cit.* in note 4, p. 191.
FIG. 6
WEST STOW, SUFFOLK (pp. 8, 10)
Plan of hall 1

FIG. 7
WEST STOW, SUFFOLK (p. 10)
Plan of hall 2
obvious, entrance in the middle of the S. side, where there is evidence of strengthening or replacing of posts. The second (hall 2, FIG. 7), some 50 yards west of the first, is slightly larger than the other (33 ft. by 15 ft.) and more complex in that it has a partition at the E. end and a central hearth. This building has pairs of double post-holes along the sides, producing a plan very similar to that at Westick, near Kamen in Germany. The post-holes of both halls were relatively shallow, few being cut more than 1 ft. into the subsoil. Although hall 1 has no double post-holes suggestive of cruck construction, both halls display a lack of strength at the corners, which indicates strength in the long walls. Farther west, a third building (hall 3, FIG. 8), which may be of the same kind as halls 1 and 2,

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![Diagram of hall 3]

FIG. 8
WEST STOW, SUFFOLK (p. 10)
Plan of hall 3

was also closely associated with *Grubenhäuser* of the 5th and 6th centuries. It was 21 ft. long, but wider at the west than at the east. The two corners of the S. side were fairly clearly established but no satisfactory evidence of a continuous line of posts between the asymmetrically-placed corners could be established. The overlying occupation-level was particularly deep at this point, which might account for the lack of post-holes on the S. side.

Two small simple structures, 13 ft. by 10 ft., outlined by post-holes, lay over the ditch system on the N. side of the site; others are suggested, but are obscured by the massed groups of post-holes in several areas.

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6 J. T. Smith, 'Cruck construction; a survey of the problems', *Med. Archaeol.*, VIII (1964), 134 f., fig. 37, for discussion and plan.
OTHER FEATURES

a. Hearths. Six hearth sites were recorded. Two occurred on the sites of Grubenhäuser but were stratigraphically later, built in the hollows left by the abandoned huts. The remaining four are clearly dissociated from any structure. All consisted of an irregular area of fired clay, roughly 4 ft. in diameter, on a bed of large flints. Two of these hearths yielded samples of carbonized grain.

b. Circular ditch. On the extreme E. edge of the site a roughly circular ditch, 25 ft. in diameter and of irregular width and depth, enclosed an open area without trace of any internal structure. The only evidence for its purpose was an irregular patch of unfired clay in the centre. The recovery of three pottery-stamps made of antler, all from the E. half of the site, attests the manufacture of pottery; a reserved area for stockpiling and weathering clay for potting seems a reasonable explanation of the purpose of the area within this ditch.

THE FINDS

POTTERY

A large amount of pottery, much of it from hut sites, has been recovered. Analysis of some 12,000 sherds shows that the greater part of the pottery is of simple, plain forms with apparently little divergence from certain standard shapes of the 5th to the mid 7th centuries. The colour ranges from brown to the predominating greys and blacks. The commonest form is the cooking-pot of simple rounded shape, but bowls, small cups and vessels that may be crucibles also occur. In contrast with much of the pottery from the local cemeteries, the domestic wares from West Stow are very hard and noticeably well fired, so that they withstand immediate cleaning, yet they were made in the same way as prehistoric pottery, by being coiled or pinched, and fired under bonfire conditions. The ware is almost entirely fine-grained, with a few small grits. A very small quantity, which contains a noticeable amount of large mica flecks, is presumably made of clay from a second source. Only 2 per cent. are tempered with chaff.

Examination of the surface treatment shows that 65 per cent. of the sherds were smoothed, and 25 per cent. burnished, i.e. rubbed with a smooth tool when 'leather-hard', producing a shiny surface on firing. Varying degrees of burnishing were noted, from examples carefully treated over the whole surface to those with only perfunctory scribbling. Although the presence of three antler-stamps indicates pottery-making on the site and clay for potting was available less than half a mile away to the north, no evidence of firing has so far come to light. Presumably this was done in brushwood fires; the possibility of obtaining comparable finishes was demonstrated by experiment during the course of the excavation.7 The remaining 10 per cent. of the sherds have a rough, untreated surface.

Upright pierced lugs occur on the rims of bowls and horizontally pierced lugs on the shoulders of some of the smaller cooking-pots. Decorative motifs—lines, bosses, stamps and rustication—occur on some 6 per cent. of the sherds, of which various rusticated designs form roughly half. Rusticated ornament is apparently restricted to open bowls, often provided with upright pierced lugs on the rims. A complete example from the cemetery survives in the Moyse's Hall Museum.8

Two groups of potsherds have been selected for illustration in order to clarify the text. The first (FIG. 9, nos. 1–5) is composed of sherds from faceted-angled pots of the early 5th century with continental affinities, which were found in three huts and are

7 The method will be fully described in the final report by my assistant, Mr. G. I. Moss.
FIG. 9
POTTERY, WEST STOW, SUFFOLK (pp. 11, 13). Sc. $\frac{1}{2}$
Faceted-angled vessels (nos. 1-5) and Lackford-Illington sherds (nos. 6-11)
important as indicating an early 5th-century date for the foundation of the settlement. The second group, of stamped sherds (FIG. 9, nos. 6–11), serves to illustrate the work of the so-called Lackford-Illington potter (the 'Icklingham potter' of Lethbridge). Sherds representing at least seventy vessels by this potter have been found, more than doubling the total previously recorded. The proximity of the West Stow settlement to the Lackford cemetery makes the occurrence of this potter's wares hardly surprising. It is worth noting that the work of the Lackford-Illington potter recalls the use of stamped concentric circles and pendant loops commonly employed by the Romano-British potters of the late 1st century whose kilns have been found on the site. Although widely separated in time, there is a strong possibility that this potter was influenced by the many decorated sherds of Romano-British West Stow ware that were undoubtedly lying about the site.

**Faceted-angled vessels (FIG. 9)**

1. Lower half of a small bowl with shallow, oval facets. Portions of two circular stamps with lattice pattern exist above the facets. Hard, grey-brown fabric, rather gritty, with poorly executed burnishing. In comparison with the other faceted sherds this is much coarser in both form and fabric. From the lower level of hut 21.

2. Angled sherd with deep cut facets. On the upper angle, between each facet, is a group of three impressed dots. The upper portion has three well-cut horizontal grooves. Fine, hard, black fabric, carefully burnished both inside and out. The form is clearly an open bowl and, in contrast to no. 1, is very thin and well made. From lower level of hut 38.


4. Sherd of buff fabric with small oval facet, burnished on both surfaces. From hollow area beside hut 8.


**Lackford-Illington sherds (FIG. 9)**

6. Body sherd with lower portion of raised swastika design with impressed dots on the arms and stamped crosses between. From occupation-layer near huts 34 and 35.

7. Body sherd with single-line pendant loops below horizontal grooves, enclosing impressed concentric circles. From hut 35.

8. Sherd with double-line pendant loops below horizontal grooves, enclosing impressed cross stamps. From occupation-layer near hut 3.

9. Sherd with cross-in-circle design between grooves. From occupation-layer near huts 34 and 35.


11. Body sherd with 'hockey-stick' design. From large hollow west of hut 16.

12. Sherd with impressed S-design (not illustrated). From large hollow area near hut 16.

**THE SMALL FINDS**

Over 1,100 objects have been recovered, most of which are in an excellent state of preservation. The most outstanding single group are the **bone combs** (FIG. 10). By the end of the 1968 season eighty-five of these were represented by fragments or complete specimens. There are two types, of which the double-sided, usually with a coarse and a fine side, are the commonest. These are frequently without ornament of any kind and show no
FIG. 10
BONE COMBS, WEST STOW, SUFFOLK (pp. 13, 15) Sc. ½
Single-sided (nos. 1–4, 8) and double-sided (nos. 5–7)
THE ANGLO-SAXON VILLAGE OF WEST STOW

changes in design throughout the period of occupation. Many of the sixty found were recovered from huts, particularly hut 8, which had six, and hut 12, which had five. The second type, which is single-sided and of a triangular or rounded form, is frequently decorated with incised compass-drawn patterns or free-standing concentric rings. This type is associated in huts with double-sided combs and in hut 21 with faceted-angled sherds of the early 5th century. One single-sided type from hut 15 (FIG. 10, no. 8) is a 7th-century form. The high proportion of sheep bones from the site, the weaving-sheds and the numerous spindle-whorls and loom-weights indicate that wool-production and weaving were important factors in the local economy, and experiment has shown that the double-sided type can be used for wool-carding, although doubtless it was used for ordinary domestic purposes as well. Eight combs have been selected (FIG. 10) to show the range of forms. Triangular combs are of course known from late Roman sites, but there is evidence from West Stow, in the form of triangular rough-outs cut from red-deer antler, which proves that this type was made in the Anglo-Saxon village.

The great quantities of well-preserved food bones have yet to be studied in detail but are known to represent the whole range of larger fauna, with sheep and ox predominating. Pig and horse are also present in lesser numbers; red and roe deer, many birds and some fish are also included. As many of the huts can be assigned to a general chronological sequence, there is an opportunity to reconstruct one aspect of the economy of the village over the period of its existence.

THE COINS. By P. E. Curnow (Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Ministry of Public Building and Works)

The 123 Roman coins from West Stow are of some interest by virtue of their number, their chronological distribution and their condition. The relatively large number found on a site which does not appear to have had a Roman predecessor, although the Roman settlement of Icklingham is in the immediate vicinity, suggests active foraging and as a result provides a good sample. The range of the coinage is perhaps surprisingly close to what might be found in excavating a substantial Roman site. Two of the coins, a VICTORIA AVGG of Siscia (341-2) and a SPES REIPVB-LICAE of Constantinople (355-61), both struck for Constantius II, are not common as site finds. The histogram (FIG. 11) shows the chronological distribution of the coins.

There are, however, differences which cumulatively tend to confirm numismatically the secondary nature of the assemblage. Thus the pre-330 Constantinian coinage—amounting to 15 (12·2 per cent.), with a number of pieces in very fine condition—is quite well represented; the ratio of regular Fel Temp Reparatio (fallen horseman) coins to irregular copies (4 : 4) is high; and, as might be expected, the coinage of the House of Valentinian I—amounting to 23 (22·8 per cent.)—bulks large in the list. There is thus a tendency for the larger and perhaps better pieces to be represented. On the other hand there are six Theodosian AE 4; the condition of these, which varies from worn to good, does not suggest long continued use into the 5th century. Generally the condition and degree of wear of the coins, with the exceptions listed below, which may be attributed to post-Roman activity, is such as would be consistent with usage within the Roman period only. At present the numismatic evidence can in no way be used to suggest that there was a sub-Roman or post-Roman money economy at West Stow; on the contrary the evidence is that the coins were collected for other reasons.

The table on p. 17 lists the coins which show signs of damage and which may reasonably be regarded as post-Roman. The high proportion of coins of the House of Valentinian I (364-78) which are affected should be noted. This—the last Roman AE 3 coinage of any numerical significance to be found in Britain—would not unnaturally commend itself for reuse as ornament or charm.

The presence of Roman coins and other objects is not uncommon on occupation-
sites and in cemeteries of the pagan Saxon period. Piercing of coins, presumably for suspension, is also characteristic. A further feature is the abrading on a number of examples—sometimes the coins are rubbed smooth, but on others the surface has been abraded or filed. The filing down of coins for use as weights has been suggested and this may explain some, but can hardly account for them all. The admittedly slight evidence for chiselling and nicking, if it is in fact post-Roman, may have been to check the metal of the coin. The number of coins from West Stow with parts of their edges nicked or chiselled off, is, I think, greater than would be accounted for by normal striking faults, or Roman coin clipping.

At Abingdon\textsuperscript{11} the cemetery produced a small collection of five coins in one grave, two in another, and two or perhaps three instances of pierced coins. Of the five-coin

### TABLE

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<th>NO.</th>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>CONDITION*</th>
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<td>ANTONIVS PIVS (SESTERTIVS)</td>
<td>136-61</td>
<td>P.1</td>
</tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>CLAVDIVS II (ANTONINIVS)</td>
<td>768-70</td>
<td>P.1 very worn</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>GENIO POP ROM</td>
<td>c. 313</td>
<td>A heavily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>SOLI INVICTO COMITI</td>
<td>312-3</td>
<td>A reverse only</td>
</tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>GLORIA EXERCITVS (2 stds)</td>
<td>330-5</td>
<td>P.1 flattened flan</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>WOLF AND PROWS</td>
<td>330-7</td>
<td>A reverse only or very worn</td>
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<td>VICTORY ON PROW</td>
<td>339-7</td>
<td>A heavily</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>335-4¹</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>GLORIA EXERCITVS (1 std)</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Irregular Victoriae dd nn Aug et Cae</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>(fallen horseman)</td>
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<td>GLORIA NOVI SECVL</td>
<td>367-74</td>
<td>P.2 worn (part broken off), P.1 worn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>4th cent</td>
<td>P.2 A very worn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P.1, 1, 2, = half-pierced, pierced once, pierced twice; A = abraded; C = chiselled; N = nicked.

group two had been polished or rubbed flat and subsequently abraded. All the examples were from female graves.

At Verulamium, a female inhumation-grave yielded a work-box from which had spilled a plated denarius of Vespasian in fine condition and a two-victories type AE 3 of Constans. A second grave, also with work-box, yielded three coins, perhaps in a purse, consisting of a fine sestertius of Marcus Aurelius, a denarius of Gordian III also in good condition, and a corroded Antonine as; these coins had surely been prized collectors’ items.

At Lackford, which lies on the opposite bank of the River Lark from West Stow and Icklingham, the extensive cremation-cemetery produced at least three groups containing Roman coins, a pierced irregular Gloria Exercitus (1 std.) in an urn containing a child’s bones (49.579), two pierced coins in an early 6th-century group (50.71), and another 6th-century group containing a pierced AE 2 (50.127).

Thus, while there is a general tendency to hoard Roman objects (not just coins, but chatelaines, toilet implements, brooches, etc.) there appear to be several motives involved in the collection of coins—for ornament, as collectors’ pieces, as counters for games, and as weights or discs.

### DATING

There is sufficient material from the Grubenhäuser to enable most of them to be arranged in a broad chronological sequence; the occurrence of faceted-angled sherds in three huts indicates a date early in the 5th century for the initial Anglo-

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Saxon settlement on the site. A strap-end, a stray find from above a hut on the N. half of the site, can also be considered to be early 5th-century and is an important addition to the distribution of these objects locally. Two more are known from this immediate region, one from Icklingham close by and another from Ixworth only eight miles away. Although Romano-British pottery-kilns of the late 1st or early 2nd century have been found on the W. half of the knoll, there are no later Roman structures which would account for the late Romano-British pottery, objects and coins found in and around the Saxon huts. Of the 123 coins so far recovered, nearly 100 are of the 4th century. In the absence of late Romano-British structures, these objects must be attributed to the Anglo-Saxon village. A possible explanation is, of course, that all the late Roman material represents salvage operations at the Roman site at Icklingham although the number of pots represented would seem to suggest a more reliable source than a deserted Roman site. The true nature of this Romano-British settlement (FIG. 1, 4) is not known, but buildings and kilns have been uncovered and late Romano-British pottery and coins have been found over a wide area around Weatherhill Farm, including a lead cistern bearing a Christian monogram and a hoard of later Roman pewter vessels. A cemetery discovered in 1871 (FIG. 1, 5) contained two stone coffins, of the same type as the one found in the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at West Stow and now in the Moyse's Hall Museum, Bury St. Edmunds.

The settlement continued in use throughout the 6th century, the distribution of the later Grubenhäuser over widening the area of settlement to cover the whole of the knoll, and overlying the ditch system on the N. slope. The terminal date is fixed by the occurrence of a small quantity of cooking-pot sherds of Ipswich ware in the occupation-levels and in the ditches in the E. section of the village, although none has yet been found in any of the structures. The village site can therefore be assumed to have been abandoned at some time in the mid 7th century. There is no evidence of later occupation; the medieval ploughing, shallow and shortlived, did not disturb the Anglo-Saxon structures.

CONCLUSIONS

As might be expected anywhere in the Breckland region, scattered traces of mesolithic, neolithic and bronze-age activity occur on the site. It is not, however, until the late phases of the iron age that actual settlement can be demonstrated; the circular huts and attendant enclosures of the iron-age farmstead underlying the Anglo-Saxon settlement are fortunately fairly easily distinguishable by the colour of the filling. The Romano-British occupation is clearly early, related to the pottery-kilns and waste dumps at the turn of the 1st century A.D.

The Anglo-Saxon settlement appears to have begun at least by the early 5th

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century, but how early it began and how far it originally extended must be left for discussion after the whole site has been excavated. The concentration of the earliest material is in the centre of the knoll and toward the W. end; it is hoped that further work in this area will add further evidence.

So far there is a marked absence of great long-houses on the continental pattern, the main emphasis being on sunken huts or Grubenhäuser. The earlier huts, of the 5th and 1st half of the 6th centuries, tend to group themselves around the two or three short 'halls' and were often rebuilt on roughly the same sites. The later Grubenhäuser are much more widely spread and the pattern of their distribution differs completely from that of the earlier group. There is, in the system of parallel ditches on the N. side of the knoll, a suggestion of an initial laying out of the site with some form of boundaries which, however, did not survive into the later phases of the settlement. The loose grouping of the huts around the small 'halls' suggests the barest minimum of organization, possibly indicating the disposition of families within the community, each with its hall and associated outhouses, workshops and sheds. It is noticeable that open areas occur on the site and that the 'halls' are spaced well apart from one another.

No rubbish-pits were found and household refuse seems to have been allowed to accumulate under and around the houses in the most sordid fashion. The excellent state of the discarded food bones and the great numbers retrieved from sealed deposits may well yield most interesting information. The number of whole and fragmentary bones runs into thousands and should provide a statistical sample of real worth in evaluating the faunal economy of an Anglo-Saxon site.

We do not know why the site was abandoned. Two of the late Grubenhäuser, both weaving-sheds on the N. slope, were burnt, but there is no other evidence to suggest a disaster. It is possible that the reason was an economic one. The settlement-area, being confined by water on the south and probably by marsh on the other sides, may have become too confined, although there is little to suggest a greatly increased population. That the village was abandoned in the mid 7th century is clear, but we do not know why the people left, or where they went to.

A further problem exists concerning the associated cemetery partially excavated by local antiquaries.¹⁷ Although the published report indicates one cemetery, the Ordnance Survey marks two (Fig. 1, 2 and 3), both c. 300 yd. from the settlement, one to the west on a ridge above the river, where there are traces of an old pit, and the other to the north-east, where the ground, although farther from the river, shows signs of digging. The stone coffin recorded from the cemetery is marked on the Ordnance Survey map as coming from the NE. site. But whether there were two cemeteries or only one, it is unlikely that complete excavation took place, so that there remains a real possibility of recovering grave-material associated with this village settlement.

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