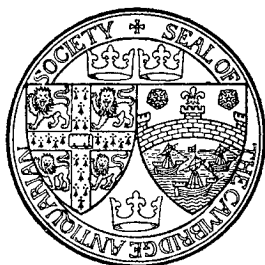


PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
Cambridge Antiquarian Society,

OCTOBER 1931—OCTOBER 1932

WITH
Communications
MADE TO THE SOCIETY



VOLUME XXXIII

Edited by E. A. B. BARNARD, F.S.A., F.R.Hist.S.

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PROCEEDINGS AND COMMUNICATIONS

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The Volumes are now marked with the **earlier serial number** only. The "New Series" number and the "Communications" number are discontinued.

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HUTS OF THE ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD.

By T. C. LETHBRIDGE, B.A., F.S.A., AND C. F. TEBBUTT.

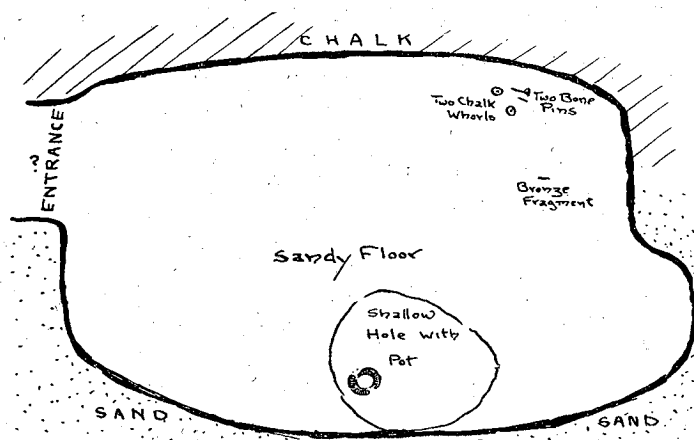
1. HUTS OF THE PAGAN PERIOD AT WATERBEACH AND WEST ROW.

By T. C. LETHBRIDGE.

The important village site which Mr Tebbutt has excavated at St Neots should be compared with other hut sites of Anglo-Saxon times which have been explored recently. I published a short note in the *Antiquaries Journal*, VII, on a hut found in the garden of the Lodge, Waterbeach, on the bank of the Car Dyke. Later two other huts were found on this site and excavated, and there were signs that others existed. The importance of this site lies in the fact that the débris from these huts lay not on the original bottom of this canal but at a higher level in the silt filling, thus proving that the canal was already old in early Anglo-Saxon times. Largely owing to Major Gordon Fowler's investigations we now know that the eastern part of the Old West River was not in existence as a navigable stream in the Roman period (my own observation of the work of the dredgers on this stretch of water brought me to the same conclusion); and it is easy to see what a great saving in distance would be achieved by cutting the Car Dyke to make a water passage from the Cam to the Ouse instead of having to go right round the Isle of Ely.

A hut of the Pagan Period was found by workmen digging a post-hole on the land of Mr Balls, at West Row, Mildenhall, in 1931; he immediately told Mr Rolfe who informed Major Fowler. The hut was situated on rising ground above the River Lark, half a mile from Jude's Ferry, and when excavated was found closely to resemble those at Waterbeach, both in plan and contents (see Fig. 1 and table).

Now the Waterbeach and West Row huts are of much the same general type as those at St Neots (cf. Fig. 5), but they differ greatly in their contents. In the former much pottery occurs, nearly all of which is exactly similar to vessels found



West Row Hut

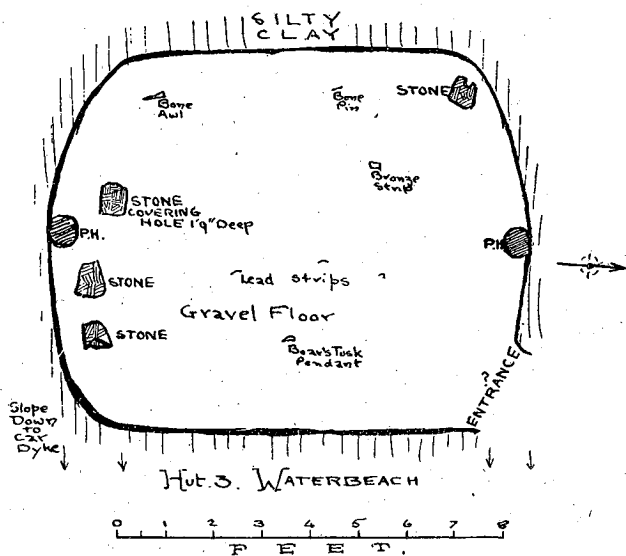
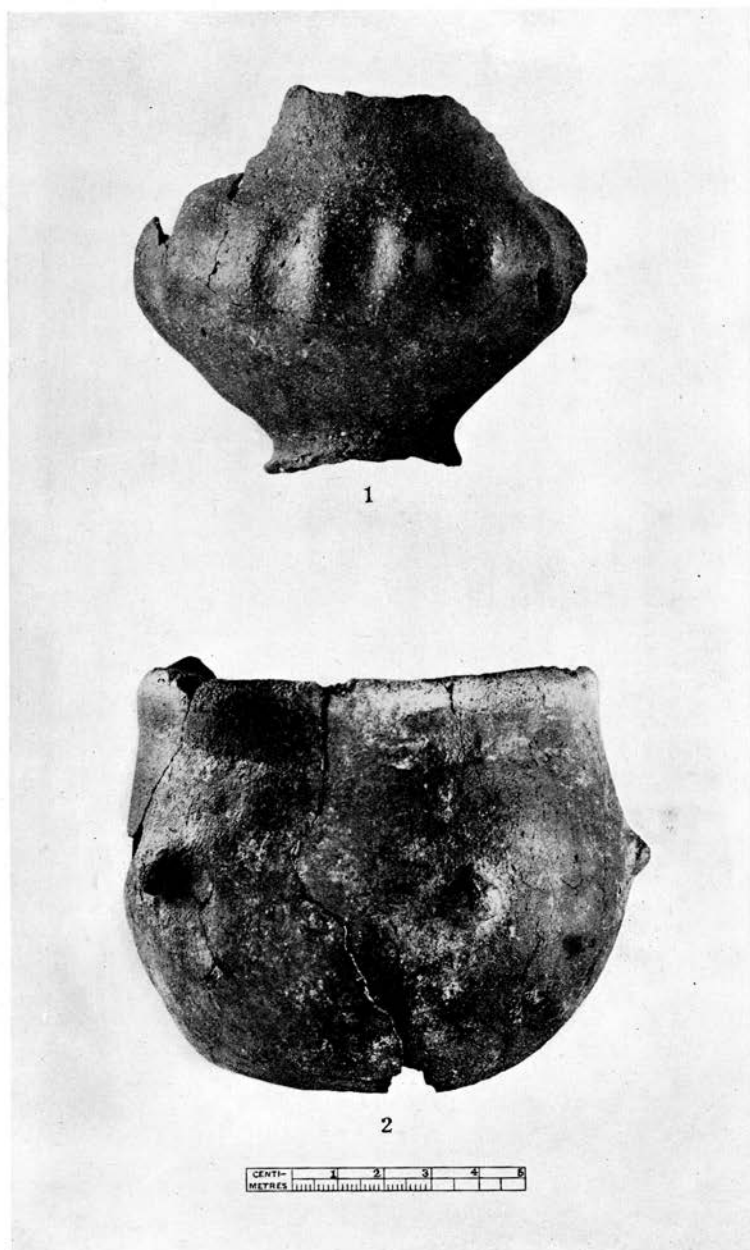


Fig. 1.



Ornamented pagan Anglo-Saxon pots. West Row hut.

Table I.

WATERBEACH														
Hut No.	Dimensions	Depth	Pots/herds				Bronze	Iron	Silver	Ivory	Bone	Pottery	Chalk	Lead
			Saxon ornamented	Saxon unornamented	R-B	Mongrel	Glass fragments							
1	6' x 9' x 10'	2' 6"	.	.	.	.	.	Nails	Disc	Armlet	2 pins	3 whorls Whorl Clay ring	-	-
2	6'	3'	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	-	-	-	-
3	10' x 8'	2'	.	.	.	.	.	Wire	-	-	Perforated pig-tooth	-	-	3 strips
West Row														
	11' 9" x 8'	2'	.	.	.	-	.	.	-	-	2 pins	-	2 whorls	-
∴ Plenty. . A few. - None.														
														A

Shape A. Rectangular, with bulging sides, rounded corners, and vertical walls. This is the commonest type discovered by Mr E. T. Leeds, F.S.A., at Sutton Courtenay, Berks. (*Archaeologia*, lxxiii and lxxvi).

B. Bowl-shaped, of round or oval plan.

C. Trapezoid. Only one was of this type; it occurred at Waterbeach (*Antiquaries Journal*, vii).

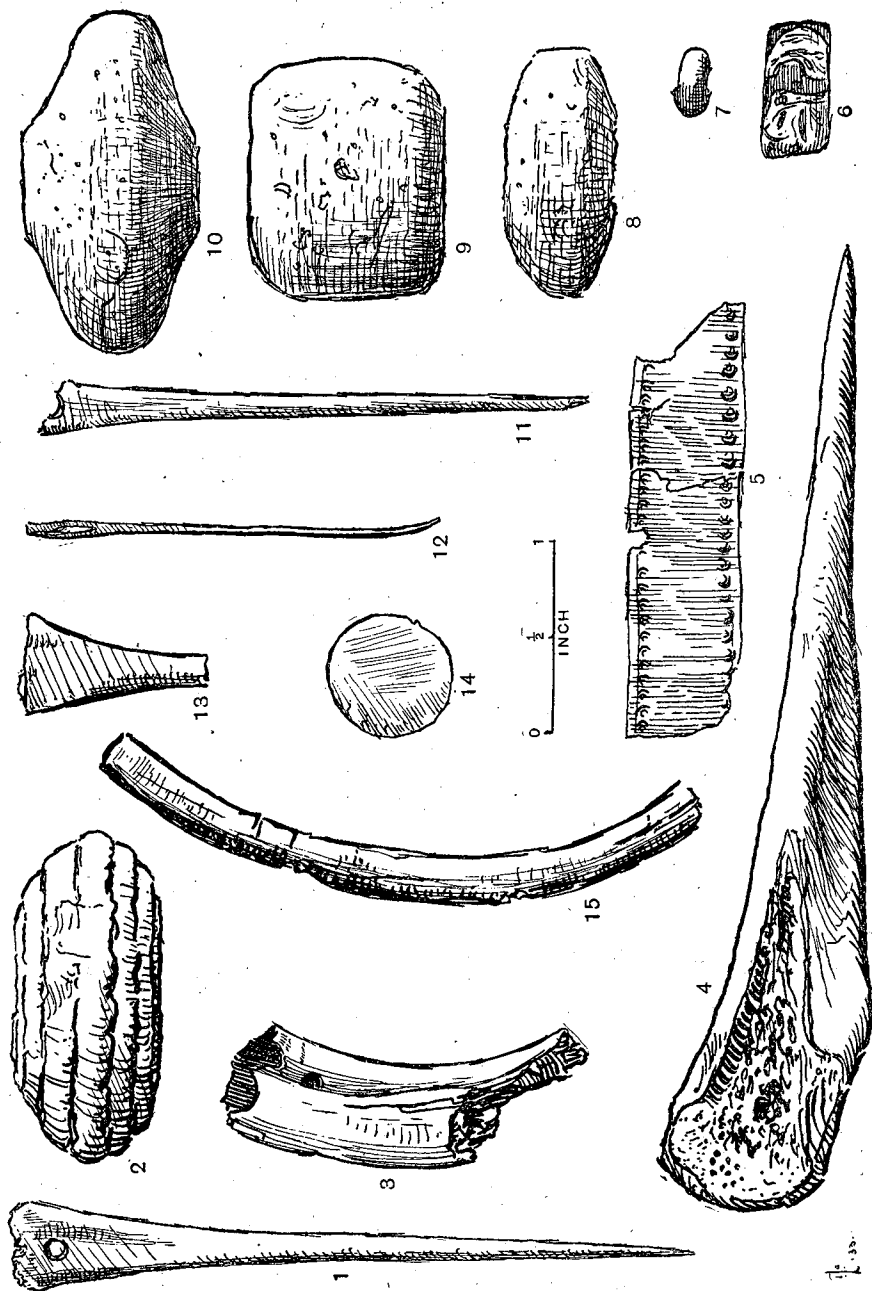


Fig. 2.

in graves of the Pagan period, but quite a large proportion of which is Romano-British. (This is also true of the hut site at West Row.) In Mr Tebbutt's huts, on the other hand, the pottery is almost all of a kind which we can best describe as Bastard Roman. It is not necessary to labour this point, but it is certain that St Neots was either a site of later date than Waterbeach and all other known Pagan sites, or that it was the home of a different race. We would hardly be surprised nowadays to learn that villages of people of Romano-British descent existed in the valley of the Ouse in the Pagan period. The old idea of the extermination of the Britons is no longer credible, and we should expect to find patches of British settlement here and there all over the country. On the other hand, the village at St Neots may be one of Christian times, about which we know virtually nothing. The axe found in Hut 1 would perhaps support this idea, if we could really convince ourselves of the value of a date based only on the typology of a form of tool which is seldom found. The danger of this kind of dating can easily be shown by a study of the weapons of various African tribes, which have sometimes altered out of recognition in a single generation and at others apparently remained unchanged for 2000 years.

II. LATE SAXON HUTS AT ST NEOTS.

By C. F. TEBBUTT.

For some years I have kept a watch on the gravel digging in the grounds of Hall Place, St Neots, Huntingdonshire (see 6-inch Ordnance Map, 1927 Edition, Hunts and Beds, Sheet XXV, South-east, Sandpit marked 200 yards east of St Neots church).

Legend to Fig. 2.

1 Bone Pin	{ West Row Hut	9 Pottery Whorl	{ Waterbeach Hut 1
2 Chalk Whorl		10 " "	
3 Pierced Tusk	{ Waterbeach Hut 3	11 Bone Pin	
4 Bone Awl		12 Bronze Pin	
5 Bronze Strip	{ Waterbeach Hut 1	13 Bone Pin	
6 Glass bead		14 Silver Disc	
7 "		15 Ivory Ring	
8 Pottery Whorl	Waterbeach Hut 2		

In January 1929 I noticed a pit showing in section on the gravel face. It was 8 ft. wide and had been dug down to the clean bedded gravel 3 ft. below the land surface. Across the pit were showing two layers of black ash, one above the other, in which I could see potsherds.

Excavation from the top showed that the pit only extended 2 ft. back from the gravel face and had already been mostly destroyed by the gravel diggers, who told me that they had dug away about 6 ft. of it. The two layers of black ash were 2-3 in. thick and extended roughly parallel across the pit, sagging to the extent of 18 in. (see Fig. 5). All the objects found were in or on these black layers.

The table on p. 139 gives a summary of the contents of this hut and of the others subsequently discovered; Figs. 4 and 5 show their distribution, plans and sections. All the pits, like those of the Pagan period described above, belong to one of three types, which we have called A, B and C.

- A. Rectangular, with bulging sides, rounded corners, and vertical walls. This is the commonest type discovered by Mr E. T. Leeds, F.S.A., at Sutton Courtenay, Berks (*Archaeologia*, LXXIII and LXXVI).
- B. Bowl-shaped, of round or oval plan.
- C. Trapezoid. Only one was of this type; one occurred at Waterbeach (*Antiquaries Journal*, VII).

REMARKS.

Pit 1. The two layers of black ash were separated by 6-9 in. of sterile soil. Lumps of clay daub with marks of wattle were found in both layers.

Pit 2. 17 ft. to the west of Pit 1.

Pit 3. Found in May, 1929, 33 ft. to the west of Pit 2. The workmen had already destroyed one side. Near the south side was a round fire-hole 18 in. in diameter and 9 in. deep, full of black ash. Opposite this on the north side were the remains of a disintegrated chalk block (the nearest chalk is 15 miles away). Scattered remains of a hearth occurred near the west side. This pit had a more distinctly level floor than Pit 1.

Table II.

ST NEOTS HUTS.

Hut	Length	Breadth	Depth	Shape	Pottery	Clay	Bronze	Iron	Bone	Lead	Stone	Animal bones
1	8'	?	3'	A	Sherds. Cooking-pot (Pl. II, fig. 2)	Daub	-	Shield-grip (Fig. 3, no. 3) Axe (Fig. 3, no. 1) Knife (Fig. 3, no. 5) Plough iron	-	-	Niedermendig lava quern	Numerous (split)
2	4' 6"		2' 9"		Sherds. Bowl (Pl. II, fig. 1) Small sherds, scarce	"	-	Scraps Hook and nail	Comb (Fig. 3, no. 4) Object (Fig. 3, no. 2)	-	Rubber	"
3	6'	7' 5"		A	Small sherds, scarce	Ring	-	Iron plate	-	-	Niedermendig lava quern. Flint flakes. Stones in holes	Scarce + gnawed human femur.
4	9'	7' 1/2"		C	Sherds	-	-	-	-	-	Niedermendig lava quern	Wolf tooth Goose bone. Domestic fowl
5	6'	?		A?	Sherds	Rings (several)	Slag and melted	-	-	-	One large stone	-
6	3'	5'	3' 6"	B	Sherds, very scarce	-	-	Pin	Trace	-	Niedermendig quern. Flint flakes.	Numerous. Oyster shells. Sparrow hawk
7	4'	4' 6"	4'	B	Sherds, scarce	-	-	-	2 tool handles	Weight	Round stones Large stones	Ox skull in hole. Oyster shells. Very numerous bones. (Human skeleton cut through by this hut)
8	9'	?		A or C	Sherds, numerous	-	Pin	Knife slag	-	-	-	-

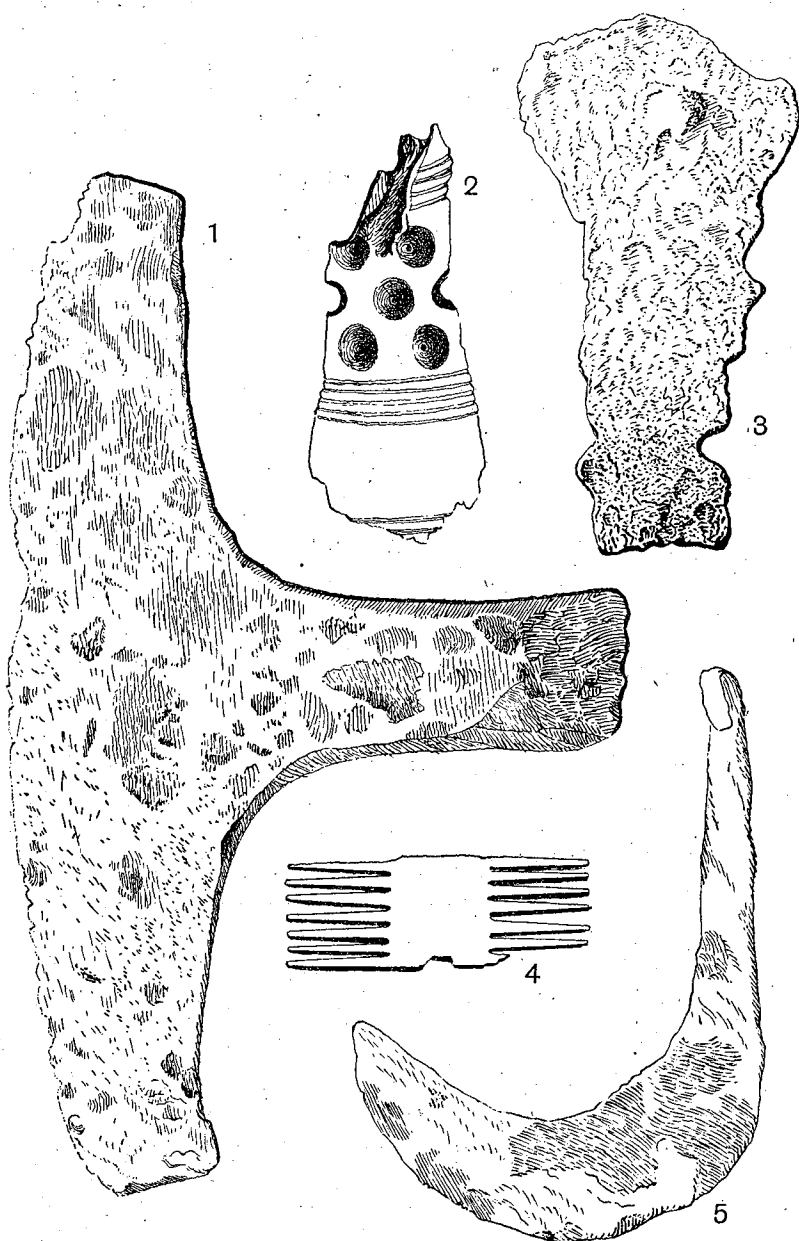


Fig. 3.

Objects from St Neots Huts. 1. Axe. 2. Bone handle. 3. Part of grip of shield boss. 4. Fragment of comb. 5. Iron knife. Natural size.

Pit 4. 10 ft. to the South-west of Pit 3. The east side had been dug into by the workmen. The pit was of oblong shape, probably 11 ft. long (9 ft. remained), 7 ft. wide at the east end, and tapering to 5 ft. wide at the west end. At the east end the workmen had partly destroyed a large round fire-hole 2 ft. 6 in. across and 1 ft. 9 in. deep, full of ash with two large stones near the top. In the ash were a few bones and lumps of metal slag. About 9 in. to the west of this was an irregular shaped hole, 1 ft. by 1 ft. 9 in. and 9 in. deep; in this were three stones set in triangle shape as if for wedging in a post. There was, however, no sign of wood in the hole. Near this were several lumps of burnt clay, black on one side, that might have been part of a crucible or metal mould. Another large stone lay on the floor 2 ft. to the north near the north side. Further west was a shallow hole 1 ft. by 9 in. by 2 in. deep, full of ash, and near it a large round stone (4 in. diameter) cracked by fire. In the north-west corner was a hole 1 ft. by 9 in. by 10 in. deep, with a large stone half-way down; the hole contained wood splinters. Near the south-west corner was yet another hole 1 ft. by 1 ft. by 6 in. deep with a large stone at one side; it was full of sand. The floor of this pit was only black near the edges.

Pit 5. Found in June, 1929, 27 ft. south of Pit 2. It had been almost entirely destroyed by the workmen before they noticed it. It was 6 ft. wide, with square corners, and had a fire-hole 2 ft. across and 1 ft. 9 in. deep; this contained ash, in which were the metal slag and fused bronze. On the floor of the pit 18 in. south of the centre of the fire-hole were the remains of several clay rings; two nearly whole ones lay together, and parts of others nearby, with pieces of a broken Niedermendig lava quern.

Pit 6. Small round pit containing nothing but a few sherds and one large stone.

Pit 7. Found in December, 1930, 20 ft. to the east of Pit 1. At 2 ft. 6 in. from the surface was a layer of greyish clay, mixed with charcoal, spread all over the pit. The pit had no floor and appeared to have been gradually filled up with rubbish.

Pit 8 I found in June, 1932 in the far south corner of the

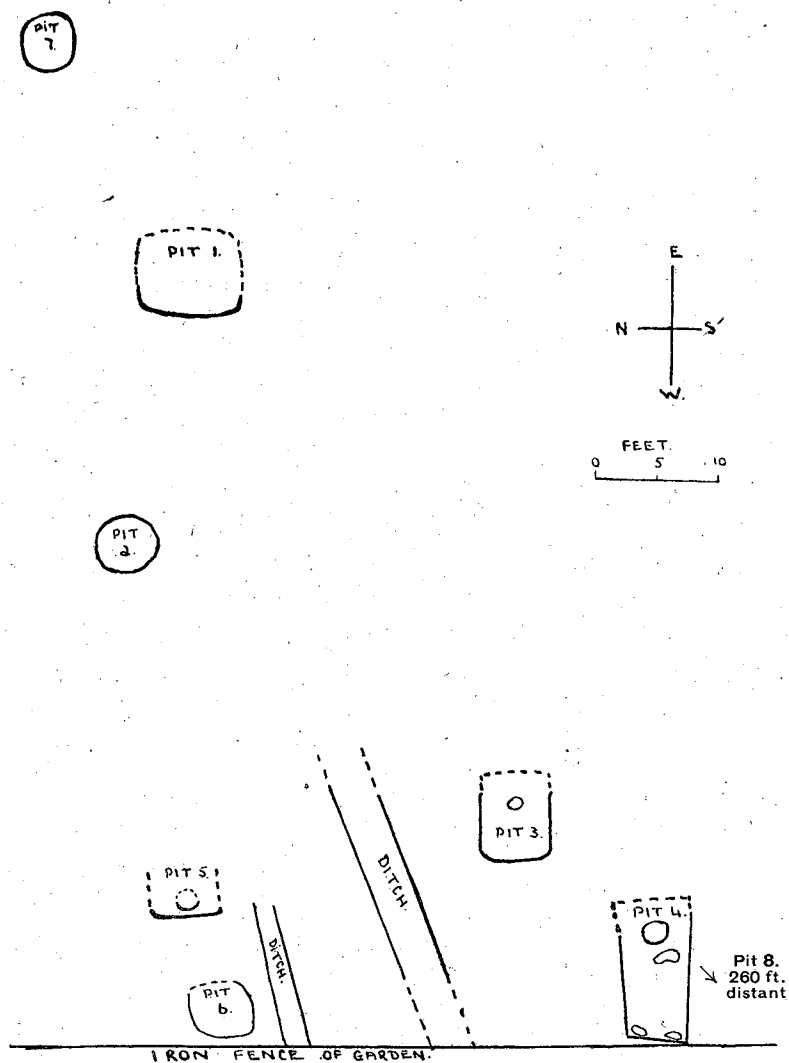
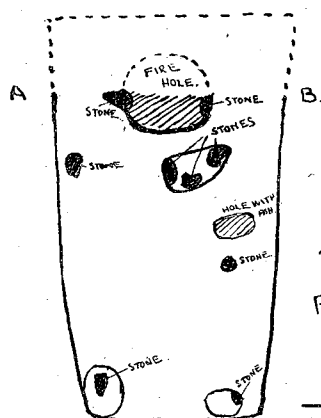
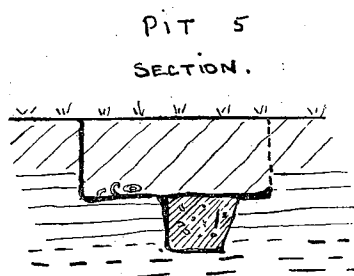
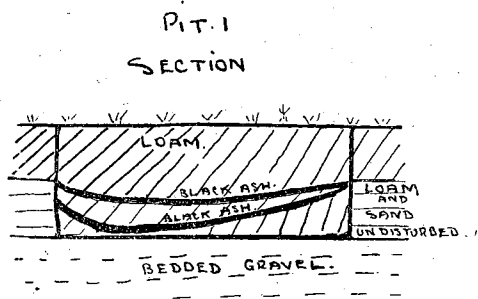
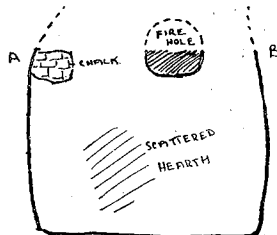
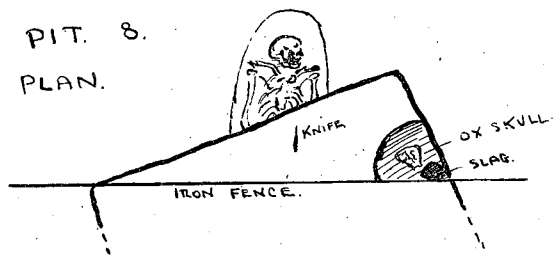


Fig. 4. St Neots Huts: distribution.



PIT. 4.

PIT. 8.
PLAN.



PIT 3.

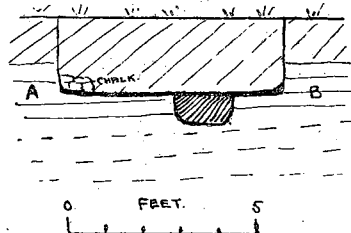


Fig. 5. St Neots Huts: plans.

field where the gravel had been dug some years previous to my visiting the workings. Owing to the removal of the gravel the field was here 2 ft. lower than the adjoining property, and in the section exposed I saw signs of another pit. It was an extremely difficult place to excavate, indeed it was impossible to do so in a really satisfactory manner. The boundary fence was on the higher ground and could not be let down, a water supply pipe crossed the pit, and numerous tree roots penetrated it in all directions. I had to tunnel under the fence so as to leave the surface undisturbed, and trench on the next property far enough back to prevent a collapse.

The pit started 45 ft. from the south-west corner of the Hall Place property along its western boundary. Its west side ran from this point under the fence at an angle into the next property and was 9 ft. long; the north side returned at a right angle to the boundary, only 3 ft. of it being left. Although such a small part of the pit remained, it had a black layer a foot thick above the floor and contained more pottery and animal bones than all the other pits put together. Its last use had, I think, been a rubbish pit, as many sherds were standing upright as if tipped in with other rubbish. At the north end was a hole in the floor 9 in. deep, containing the top of an ox skull upside down¹, several oyster shells, large stones, and a lump of iron slag weighing $4\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Six feet from the south end was a small iron knife $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. long of Saxon type, the broken end of a hollow bronze pin 1 in. long, and two bones roughly shaped for tool handles. From above the hole just described came a round lead counter or weight.

While trenching in the adjoining property, to find the west side of the pit, at 3 ft. from the surface I came upon a human skeleton lying west-north-west and east-south-east with its head to the west. It was lying on its back with its head turned to the north and its chin resting on its left shoulder. The diggers of the pit had cut across the skeleton just below the sternum, making a clean cut across the right humerus. There was no sign of the lower arms, so they had evidently been lying stretched along each side. The head had been pillowed on a mound of earth 6 in. above the bottom of the

¹ Cf. House XII at Sutton Courtenay, *Archaeologia*, LXXVI.

grave. No grave goods were found, but a fragment of black hand-made pottery rim of primitive character lay beneath the skull. It is possible that the small knife found in the pit came from the hip of the skeleton. Two or three burials were found by the gravel diggers a few yards east of this spot, and human bones have been turned up in the garden 100 yards to the west. It seems that a cemetery ante-dating the pits exists here.

Ditches. Two small ditches ran approximately east and west between Pits 5 and 6, and Pits 3 and 4, but could not be traced for more than 25 ft. They contained animal bones, a few sherds and part of a clay ring. They were probably dug to drain off surface water and prevent flooding of the pits.

Finds.

Iron. The whole dating of these huts turns on the T-shaped iron axe found in Pit 1 (Fig. 3, no. 1); but unfortunately it is difficult to date closely, as the type to which it belongs was in use over a long period. Dr Mortimer Wheeler considers it "a Frankish type which seems to have lasted long" (London Museum Catalogues, No. 1: *London and the Vikings*, p. 24) and has dated this particular specimen between A.D. 650 and 850. But Anglo-Saxon specimens are not unknown. This specimen rather resembles a larger one found by the late Professor McKenny Hughes in a pit at Hauxton (*C.A.S. Proc.* Vol. VII, Pl. VI) and now in the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, where there is also a smaller specimen from Tuddenham; and a specimen evidently related to the type was found in a grave in the Pagan Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Girtton. The Bayeux Tapestry pictures a later form being used for squaring saplings for boat building. A somewhat similar axe is used to-day for barking oak-trees.

The ploughshare is $8\frac{1}{4}$ in. long by $3\frac{1}{4}$ in. wide and weighs $2\frac{1}{2}$ lb. It has flanges, and is of a type in use in Roman and Migration times (see Guildhall Catalogue, 2nd Edition, Plate XIX, No. 4. Also "plogjern," Fig. 249 in *Vestlandske Graver fra Jernalderen*, by H. Schetelig, from a Migration Period grave in Norway). One end of the share tapers to a point, and has

indications of a sharp cutting edge. The other side is thick and blunt and was, no doubt, originally straight, the slight tapering being due to wear. This shows that it was used in a plough with mould boards, the sharp edge undercutting the sods in preparation for being turned over by the mould boards. This evidence is, I think, of interest in view of the divergence of opinion on the types of ploughs used in ancient agriculture (e.g. *Antiquity*, September 1932). The mould boards would probably be of elm; ploughs with elm mould boards are still being used on certain types of clay land in this neighbourhood.

The round lead counter or weight from Pit 8 is $\frac{1}{4}$ in. thick and $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. in diameter, and weighs 1 oz. 15 dwts. (Troy). In Faussett's *Inventorium Sepulchrale* (p. 23 and Pl. 17) are described and illustrated a series of weights found in a grave of the Saxon Period. No. 4 in this series weighed 1 oz. 18 dwts. This may be the equivalent to the one described above, the slight difference in weight being accounted for by oxydisation.

Bone pin. A double-ended bone pin 5 in. long was found by the workmen and came from either Pit 3 or 5. Similar pins have been found in Saxon huts near Peterborough by G. Wyman Abbott, F.S.A. (unpublished), and in the Sutton Courtenay village by E. T. Leeds, F.S.A., who considers they were used as weaving shuttles.

A few flint flakes occurred in all the pits and ditches, and a definite boring tool in Pit 4. I am inclined to think that flint was still being used for a few purposes besides strike-a-lights.

Animal and bird bones found include sheep, pig, ox, wolf, grey lag goose, female sparrow hawk, and domestic fowl.

The pottery is probably the most interesting part of the finds. Most of the types have been found before but have never before, as far as I am aware, been recorded in direct association with each other or with any object that is datable. It is quite different from the pottery found at Sutton Courtenay (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, *Archaeologia*, Vols. LXXIII and LXXVI). Bourton-on-the-Water (*Antiquaries Journal*, July 1932, XII, No. 3), Waterbeach and West Row (see p. 133) and Peterborough (G. Wyman Abbott, F.S.A., unpublished).



Fig. 6.

St Neots Huts: rim sections.

Sherd	Internal Diameter	Sherd	Internal Diameter	Sherd	Internal Diameter
1	8.4"	5	11.0"	9	12.0"
2	10.8"	6	8.4"	10	5.8"
3	8.2"	7	10.8"	11	5.6"
4	10.9"	8	9.2"		

Four main types of vessels could be identified as having been in common use. All these were made on the wheel. The first three types all contain pounded oyster shell in the clay, and are sometimes slightly polished on the outside. One example has what appears to be a sort of red slip on the inside. Except for one sherd with a fingerprint ornament all are entirely without decoration.

1. Deep bowls or panceons with a bold lip turned inwards, a sagging base, and sloping sides (e.g. Fig. 6, nos. 2, 3, 5 and 7). A restored specimen has a diameter of 13 in. and a depth of 6 in. (Pl. II, fig. 1). This type has been found at Bedford (see Modern School Museum) and elsewhere, but as far as I am aware no one has attempted to date it, except Dr C. Fox in *Proceedings of Prehistoric Society of East Anglia*, iv, pt. 2, 1924, Abington Pigotts; where he makes interesting suggestions as to its derivation from Roman mortaria, and tentatively assigns it to the Anglo-Saxon period.

2. Shallow basins with flat bases and hammer-head rims. The same type was noted by Dr Fox at Abington Pigotts (Fig. 3 *M*) and placed by him in the same class as that just described. He gives it a definite Roman ancestry (Pl. III).

3. Cooking pots or jars of Roman type but with sagging bases (Pl. II, fig. 2; Fig. 6, nos. 10 and 11). It is quite impossible to differentiate between these and similar Romano-British vessels, except by the sagging base. The flat base probably became unnecessary when tables were not used.

4. Hard grey-handled vessels of gritty ware, quite distinct from those just described and requiring quite a different technique in making. Some sherds had a decoration of finger-tip impressions on an applied strip running round the vessel on the outside. Unfortunately not enough was found of this type to make a reconstruction possible. The ware is definitely mediaeval in character. Complete pots of this kind are not uncommon in this neighbourhood, but their associations are unknown.

Romano-British. The base of a mortarium came from Pit 8, with some castor-ware sherds. Other fragments occurred in Pit 4. It may be noted that pottery of this period is nowhere common in the immediate neighbourhood.

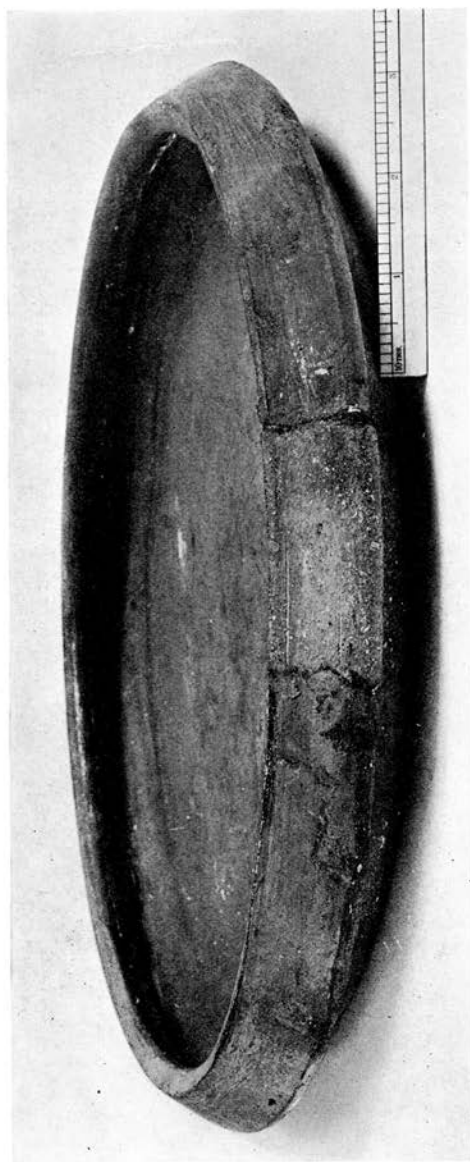


Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.

Pots from St Neots Huts.



Dish from St Neots Huts

Miscellaneous rims of vessels of which too little remains to indicate the shape are illustrated. In nearly all the pits were scraps of handmade black ware, containing mica and no pounded shell, like the pottery of the early pagan Saxon period.

Clay rings. Remains of these rings were found in Pits 3 and 5, and in the ditches. They occur on all the recorded Saxon domestic sites. It is generally assumed, but not proved, that they are loom weights.

The pits. The Sutton Courtenay pits and that at Bourton-on-the-Water were undoubtedly huts, and I think we may assume that Pits 1, 3, 4, 5 and 8 were likewise. Nos. 3, 4 and 5 had hearths, No. 1 had clay daub, and No. 4 had what appeared to be post holes. No post-holes were found outside the pits as at Bourton-on-the-Water, but this is not surprising, as owing to the nature of the subsoil it was often difficult to detect the pits themselves. The method of construction seemed to be to dig a roughly square hole down to the clean gravel, which ensured good drainage, and spread a few inches of loam to make a level floor:

The round pits Nos. 2, 6 and 7 were, I think, simply rubbish pits. It is interesting to note that No. 7 had a covering of clay, as is so often found over Romano-British rubbish pits.

CONCLUSIONS.

We have here people living in miserable huts in almost as primitive a condition as can be imagined. They had no regard for cleanliness, and were content to throw the remains of a meal into the furthest corner of the hut and leave it there. They were not nervous about ghosts, since they did not mind having a skeleton sticking out of the wall of one of their huts. Pit 1 shows two distinct layers of occupation and it is possible that when the hut became too stinking and verminous it was either abandoned for a time or a layer of soil spread over the old floor to make it sweeter. No sign of any luxury was found, and it is almost certain that the inhabitants were wretchedly poor serfs.

Of their occupations there is evidence of agriculture (ploughing in the modern way), and rough carpentry. Some

sort of metal work was being carried on in bronze and iron, the iron being smelted on the spot. Weaving, and corn grinding with imported Niedermendig lava querns, exhausts the evidence.

The pottery is the only link with the preceding civilisation. It has a definite Roman ancestry, and (except for a few scraps of black ware) owes nothing to the types associated with the pagan Saxon period. On the other hand the hard grey ware and sagging bases introduce a new and unmistakably Mediaeval element, but with no trace of glaze. There is not enough evidence to show whether the pottery-making methods, with unbroken Roman tradition, spread back from the west to supersede the badly made wares of the invaders that had temporarily ousted them; or whether the Romano-British serfs still continued to make their pots in the old way, until its superiority induced the masters to adopt the methods of the serfs.

These results seem to establish the link between Romano-British and Mediaeval pottery, the existence of which had already been suggested by the late Prof. T. McK. Hughes in the *Archaeological Journal*, LIX, and by Dr Cyril Fox in the paper previously mentioned. I have assumed all through that these finds date from the late Saxon period. The dating of the axe seems to fit the facts very well and until other similar sites are found I do not think it of much use trying to date this one more closely.

The finds will be preserved at the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. I am deeply indebted to F. E. Brightman, Esq., of Hall Place, who has given me every facility for observation and digging on his property for some years; also to Dr Harrison for permission to extend the excavation into his garden. Miss O'Reilly and Mr T. C. Lethbridge, F.S.A., have given me much help and good advice. Miss D. M. A. Bate of the British Museum has kindly identified the bird bones for me.

Mr R. U. Sayce has kindly contributed the following note on the skeleton:

The skull, which has a cranial index of 75.3, closely resembles many others that have been found in graves of

the Anglo-Saxon period. It is that of a young adult male; the coronal and sagittal sutures are open, and there are no signs of the third molar, or wisdom, teeth, though the rest of the teeth are considerably worn.

A peculiar feature of the skeleton was that three vertebrae had been displaced and were found in the mouth. The atlas had been turned through 90° on the axis and both these bones occurred in the forward part of the mouth, partially projecting beyond the incisor teeth. A third, cervical, vertebra lay flat against the inside of the right ascending ramus.

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