

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN
SOCIETY

(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



VOLUME LXVIII

1978

IMRAY LAURIE NORIE AND WILSON

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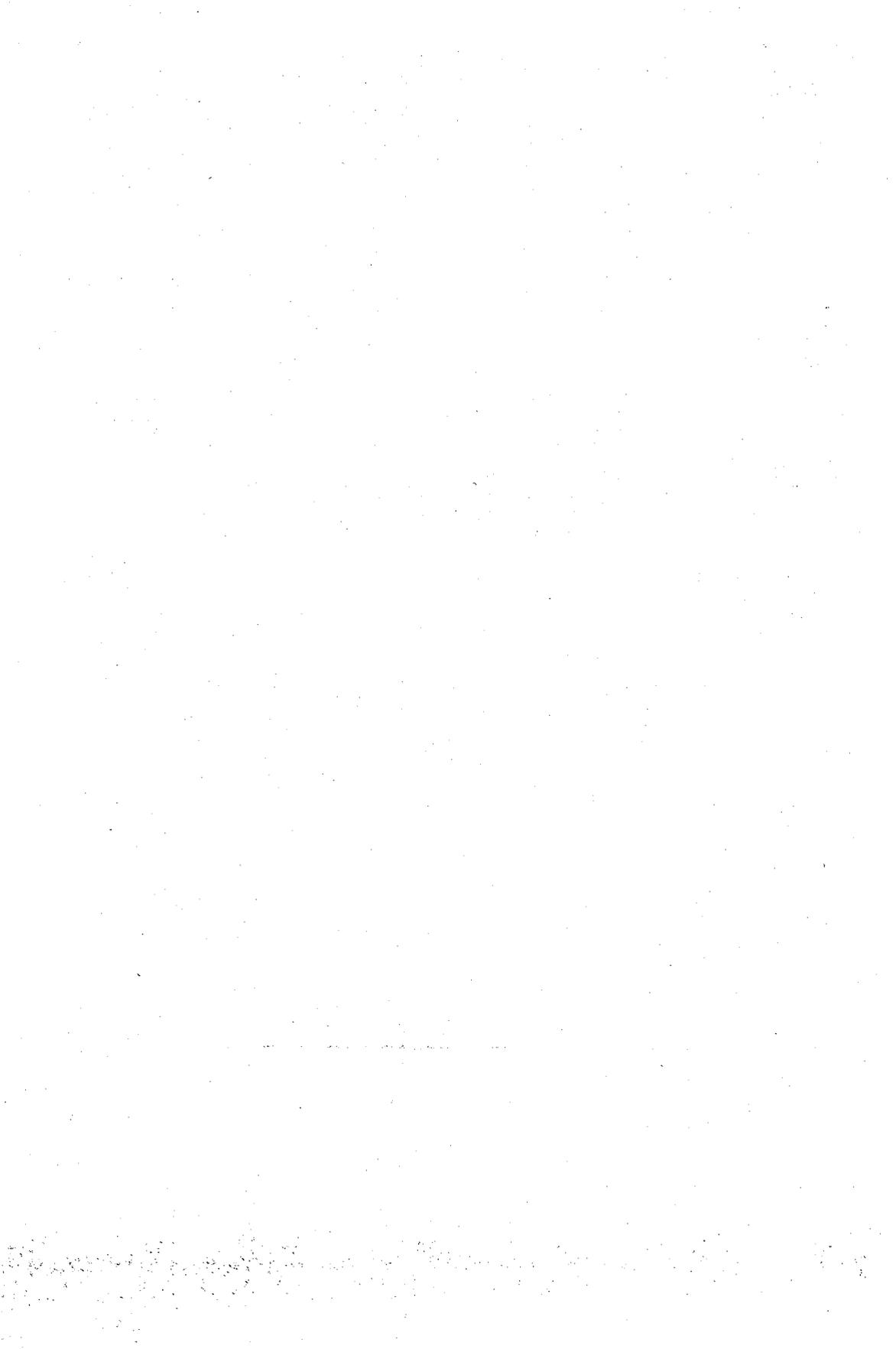
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CAMBRIDGESHIRE EARTHWORK SURVEYS III

A.E. Brown and C.C. Taylor

This paper is a continuation of the two previous ones, whereby plans of extant earthworks in the county are published with brief descriptions. All but three of the plans in the present paper have been produced by students attending courses organized by Leicester University Adult Education Department. The moats at Duxford were surveyed by pupils of Duxford Church of England Primary School, under the direction of one of the authors and with the help and co-operation of Mr. P.K. Chivers, Headmaster, and Miss F. Dale, organizer of the school archaeological club. The site at Landbeach was surveyed by students attending a course run by London University Extra-Mural Department.

DESERTED VILLAGE OF COPPINGFORD (TL 165801) (Fig. 1) lies in the parish of Upton, 3 km. south of Sawtry. It is situated on the top of a broad flat clay ridge at about 50 m. above OD. The village is first mentioned in Domesday Book where it is recorded as being held by Earl Hugh with sixteen villeins and two borders. A church and a priest are also listed there¹.

The next indication of its size is in 1327 when 28 people paid the Lay Subsidy². In 1523, 18 people from Coppingford paid the Lay Subsidy³. In the 1674 Hearth Tax Returns, Coppingford is included with the neighbouring village of Upton. These show that 16 people living in one or other of the villages paid the tax⁴ but by then Coppingford was, presumably, deserted.

By 1716, (map of Coppingford, Boughton House, Northants., copy in Hunts. R.O.) there were only three dwellings in the village. Two of these lay on the east side of the present road, at the S.E. end of the original village, and their sites are occupied today by a cottage and its outbuildings.

The third building, later called Top Farm, lay a little to the N.W. The same situation existed in the early 19th century⁵ except that the farm buildings, which still stand to the S.E. of Top Farm, had been erected. By the late 19th century⁶ only the farm and one of the cottages to the S.E. of it remained, though a terrace of three cottages had been built a little to the south. Since then the farm-house itself has been demolished but three other houses have been added along the road north to Sawtry. Before its demolition Top Farm was recorded by the Royal Commission⁷. It was described as a timber-framed and plastered structure built in the first half of the 17th century. Fragments of moulded stone and part of an early 17th-century door-head noted by the Commission still remain in the paddock to the N.E.

The most prominent feature of the surviving earthworks is a somewhat battered but unusually wide hollow-way which extends across the site from N.W.-S.E. ('a'-'b' on

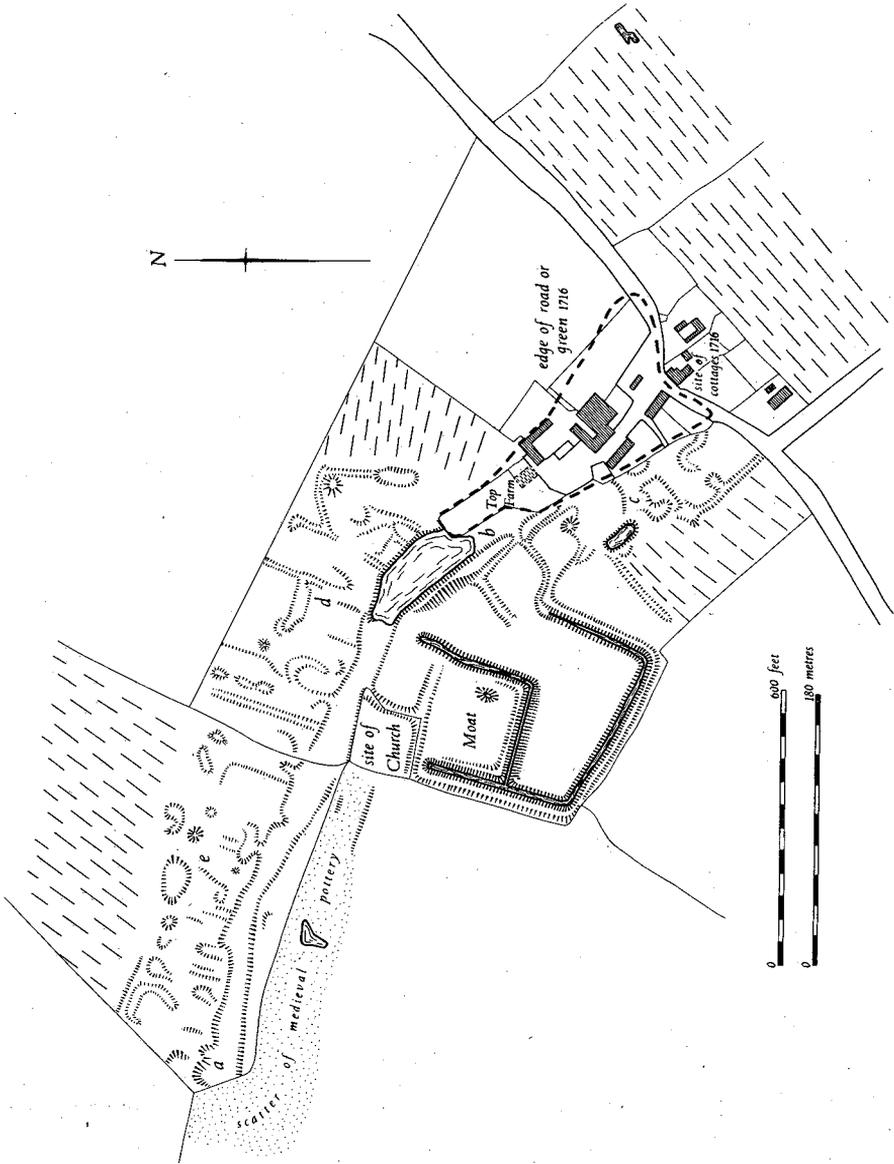


Fig. 1. Coppingford, deserted medieval village.

Fig. 1). At its S. E. end it is now occupied by a large pond and beyond to the S. E. no trace of it survives as the area is covered by modern farm buildings. However, on the 1716 map not only is the S. E. part of the hollow-way marked as a track but its continuation is shown curving further S. E. and opening out to form a wide triangular 'green' at the S. E. end of which were the two cottages. Top Farm already stood at the N. W. end of this green in 1716 and thus partly blocked the road into it from the N. W. The present road already ran along the S. E. side of the green in 1716. This hollow-way and green were the main street of the medieval village alongside which houses presumably once stood. The very fragmentary remains of these buildings still survive in three places. S. E. of the existing farm buildings ('c' on Fig. 1) are a few mutilated low scarps and banks with, beyond a shallow ditch which presumably marked the limits of the village here, the N. E. ends of a block of ridge-and-furrow. These remains, which lay in Harrison's Close in 1716, are apparently the sites of former houses and closes lining the S. W. side of the green.

Further north ('d' on Fig. 1) and on the north side of the hollow-way is another area of very disturbed earthworks which may also be the sites of houses and closes. To the west ('e' on Fig. 1) also north of the hollow-way, are other fragmentary earthworks of a similar character, with ridge-and-furrow beyond. This area was called Town Close in 1716. The land on the south side of the hollow-way at the west end of the site is now under permanent arable. Here for the whole length of the hollow-way and beyond is a wide area covered with considerable quantities of medieval pottery. Most of it is of 13th and 14th-century date, and though there is nothing that is definitely earlier than the late 12th century, there are small amounts of late medieval and post-medieval pottery.

In the centre of the site, and now the best-preserved part of it, is a double-moated enclosure. This has been much altered in antiquity, but it appears to have once consisted of a small rectangular enclosure bounded by a continuous wet ditch, with an outer L-shaped enclosure on its south and east sides, also bounded by a wet ditch on the south, west and parts of the east sides. There is no trace of any ditch on the north side of this outer enclosure, its boundary here being the edge of the main hollow-way. The general appearance of this moated site and the existence of a sharply defined outer bank along the west, south and east sides of the outer enclosure give the impression that it is not only considerably changed since its original medieval use, but that some of these changes might be connected with an attempt to turn the site into some form of post-medieval garden, perhaps of late 16th or 17th-century date. However this cannot be proved. In the N. W. corner of the moated site is a small rectangular area bounded by a shallow ditch on the east and south and by the hollow-way on the north. This is traditionally the site of the parish church of Coppingford. This church, dedicated to All Hallows, was certainly destroyed before 1707⁸.

The most interesting and unusual aspect of the remains of Coppingford is the hollow-way which is extraordinarily wide for a relatively small and insignificant village. A possible explanation for this is that it was once not merely a village street, but part of one of the main roads between London and the North. This is not the place for a full discussion of the medieval road pattern of the area but, briefly, there is evidence to

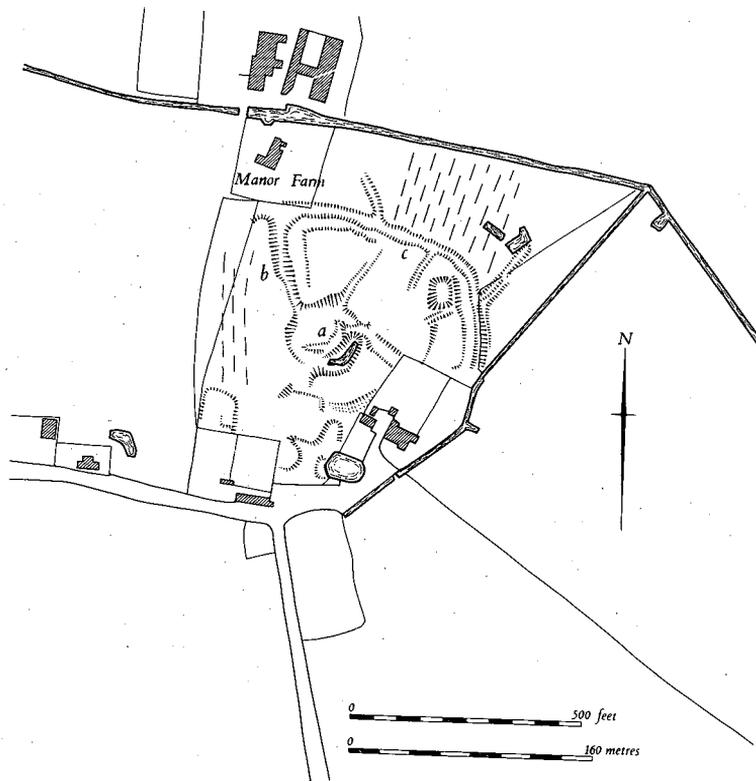


Fig. 2. Woodwalton Castle.

suggest that in the 14th century at least, as well as the present A1 route 1.5 km. to the east, an alternative route left the Great North Road at Alconbury Hill, passed through Upton and Coppingford and ran on N. W. along what are now minor lanes, driftways and footpaths to Ongutein Manor in Washingley parish and so to the crossing of the R. Nene at Wansford. If this is so, then the wide hollow-way at Coppingford can be seen to be the result of its use as a major trunk route of medieval times.

WOODWALTON CASTLE (TL 211827) (Fig. 2) lies almost 2 km. N. of Woodwalton village and 600 m. north of the isolated parish church, on clay at 7 m. above OD. It is situated on the northern tip of a promontory which projects north into Woodwalton Fen. The site though tactically strong appears to have no strategic importance. However this view may be unjustified, for Monks Lodge, an artificial fenland canal dug or recut soon after 1147 by the first monks of Sawtry but possibly Roman in origin, terminates a little to the west of the castle⁹. Though this lode was certainly used by Sawtry Abbey 1.5 km. to the west, it could have also been of use to the inhabitants of Woodwalton and the surrounding villages. Thus the castle's position protecting the fen edge of the lode may be significant.

Nothing is known of the history of the castle but it was presumably built in the late 11th or 12th century. It may have been erected by the de Bolebec family who held the manor of Woodwalton between 1086 and 1134, or by the Abbey of Ramsey which was granted Woodwalton by Walter de Bolebec in 1134. In the latter case it could have been built by the abbey during the Civil War of 1143-4 when a series of castles were constructed in the county, or by the sons of Aubrey de Sellea, who seized the manor from the abbey at the same period, though the abbey later recovered it¹⁰.

The first accurate survey of the site was made by the Ordnance Survey in the late 19th century and the resulting plan was published on successive editions of the 1:2500 county series. However, the Ordnance Survey depicted the low rounded natural hill, on which the main motte stands, with close-set hachures, giving the impression that the whole hill was the motte. This unfortunate cartographic convention was repeated by the Royal Commission¹¹, although the Commission recognized that the hill was indeed natural. One result of this was that the details of banks and ditches on the slopes of the hill were not drawn in detail by either the OS or the Commission. The present survey has omitted the hachures on the hill in order to give a better impression of the earthworks.

The main feature of the site is the motte itself, but this has been so badly damaged and altered that only a fragment remains. It appears to have once consisted of either a conical mound or a ring work on the hilltop, surrounded by a deep wide ditch. Now only the S. E. part of the motte survives ('a' on Fig. 2) as an irregular curved bank 1.5 m. high. Below it to the S. E. is one fragment of the original ditch which is 2 m. deep, but which has probably been made deeper than it once was by later quarrying. To the west and north a low curving scarp only 0.5 m. high is probably the outer side of the motte ditch there. From the N. W. corner of the motte a broad shallow ditch, now partly filled in, ('b' on Fig. 2) extends down the hill. At its north end it joins a well-marked ditch 0.5 m. deep which runs around the base of the hill on the north, N. E.,

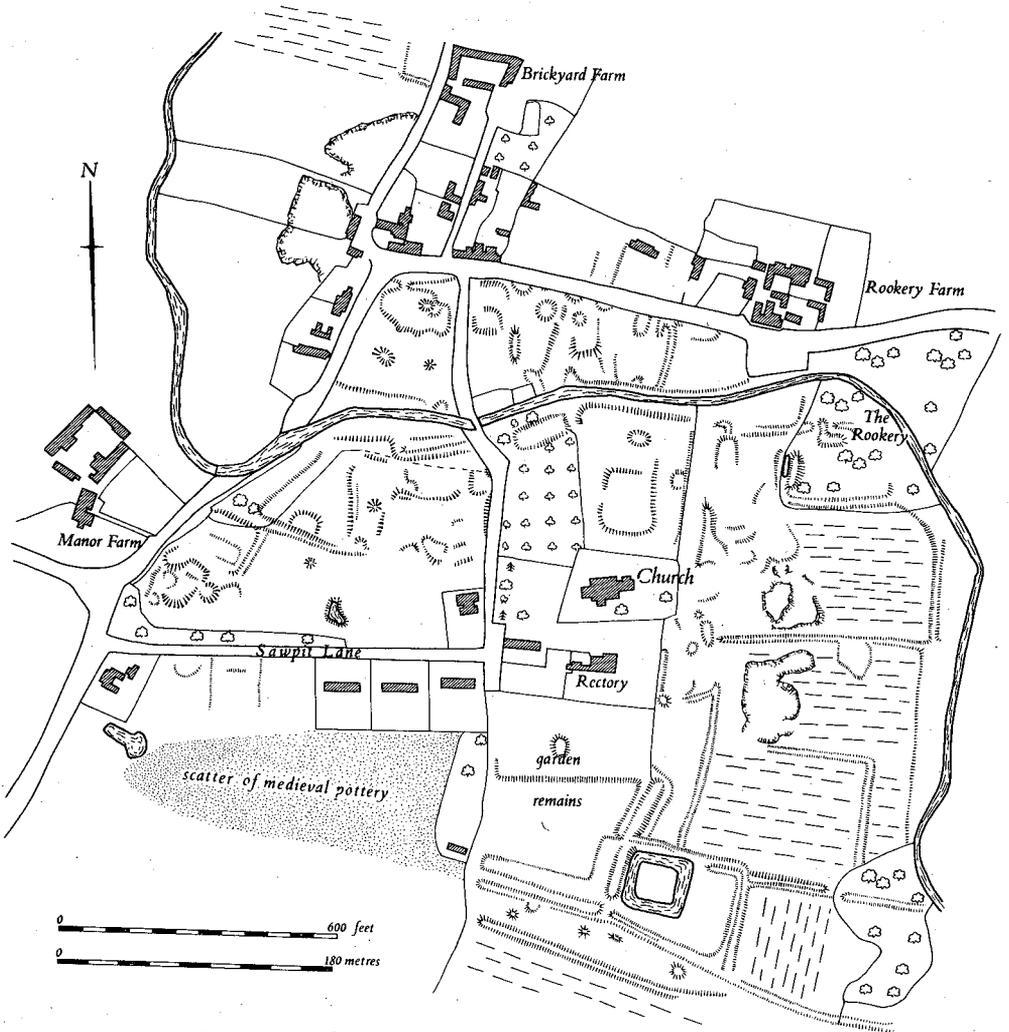


Fig. 3. Hamerton: settlement remains.

east and S. E. sides ('c' on Fig. 2). This ditch has been much altered by later drains, and it is no longer possible to trace it around the south and west sides of the hill, if indeed it ever existed there. It may be all that remains of the boundary of an outer enclosure or bailey, though it is possible that it is a later feature unconnected with the motte. Between the motte and the ditch on the north are a number of small shallow ditches, low scarps and a rectangular pond 0.5 m. deep. No purpose or date can be assigned to these. There are further indeterminate earthworks south of the motte and a rectangular platform 0.25 m. high to the S. W. The latter is probably only part of an abandoned garden of a house which once stood to the south. Slight traces of ridge-and-furrow lie to the north of the site, and on the west side of the hill below the motte.

SETTLEMENT REMAINS, HAMERTON (centred T L 135796) (Fig. 3), formerly part of the village, lie in and around Hamerton, in the valley of the Alconbury Brook on clay between 20 m. and 35 m. above OD. The first indication of the size of Hamerton is in 1086, when Domesday Book lists it as a fifteen-hide manor with a recorded population of twenty-eight¹². In 1327, 27 people paid the Lay Subsidy Tax², but thereafter there is no record of the size of the village until the late 17th century. Then in 1674, 26 people are listed in the Hearth Tax Returns for Hamerton⁴.

The earthworks in and around the village are extensive, but form little coherent pattern. In the centre of Hamerton, along both sides of the Alconbury Brook, is a continuous spread of low banks, scarps and ditches, none of which have any clear overall form though the remains of one or two former closes can be identified. It is possible that all these earthworks are the sites of former houses and gardens which once lined the brook and that subsequently the village moved both north and south on to the higher ground. If this is so, then there are parallels for this type of movement in the area. At Luddington, to the N. W., in Northants., the process is documented as occurring in the 19th century¹³. However if this happened at Hamerton it certainly took place many centuries ago. One argument against this idea, is the extensive spread of medieval pottery, mainly of the 13th and 14th centuries which, together with much stone rubble, was discovered during the survey in the arable land south of Sawpit Lane, on the S. W. side of the village. This indicates a dense occupation here in the medieval period. The material recovered from Hamerton adds to the evidence from elsewhere in indicating the complexities of change and movement in medieval villages which, at the moment, we know little about.

GARDEN REMAINS, HAMERTON (TL 137795) (Fig. 4) lie immediately S. of the church and rectory on a gentle southern slope, on clay at 30 m. above OD. The remains, though previously described as a moated site, are those of an abandoned garden, probably of late 16th or 17th-century date, though no details of its history are known. It was presumably laid out behind the old manor house which stood on the site of the present rectory, perhaps by the Bedell family who held the manor of Hamerton between 1565 and 1643. In the latter year the manor was divided between the two daughters of the last of the Bedells. One of these daughters sold her interest to her sister Elizabeth who had married Sir Francis Compton. He sold the manor house in

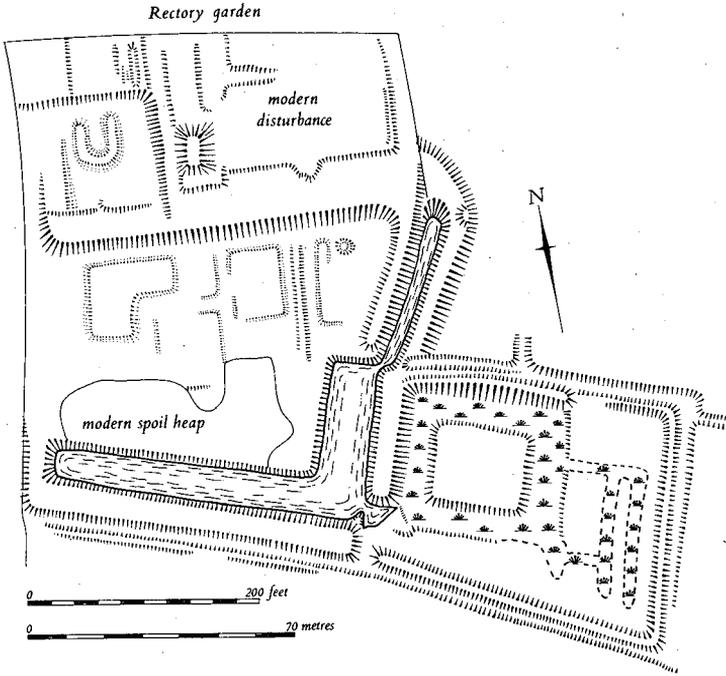


Fig. 4. Hamerton: garden remains.

1669 and the rest of the estate in 1683. The particulars for the sale of the house give some details of the garden as they then existed: 'one large mansion house ..., one faire court before it, and several yardes behind it, and ponds of water, with a great garden and other lesser gardens and faire orchards well planted with good fruit, consisting of about ten acres'¹⁴. There is no doubt that this description refers to the existing earthworks.

The earliest plan of the area is a map of 1838 (in the Huntingdon Record Office) which is probably a copy of the now lost Enclosure Map. This shows a large farm and outbuildings on the site of the rectory, with the field to the south, which now contains the large mound, called Mount Close. The S. E. part of the site lay in a very large field then known as Ram Close. The earthworks can be divided into two distinct parts, each of which presumably represents a separate section of the original gardens. Immediately south of the rectory is a broad rectangular area bounded on the south by a straight scarp 0.5 m. high. This area is much disturbed by later activity but the slight outlines of what may be the edge of walks or flowerbeds survive, especially at the west end, in the form of low scarps nowhere more than a few centimetres high. In the centre is a large rectangular mound almost 2 m. high which appears to be composed of brick and stone rubble. The bricks are of 17th-century type.

Below the scarp is another flat area. The southern part has been covered with spoil removed from the pond to the south, but on the remaining open section is again a series of rectangular features edged by scarps less than 10 cm. high. These also may be the remains of flowerbeds and walks. To the south again, bounding this section of garden, is a long rectangular pond or canal, with a wide flat-topped terrace walk on its south side. The pond extends north at its east end to bound part of the east side of the garden and terminates abruptly. From its N. E. corner a narrow ditch with a low bank on each side runs N. E.

The second section of the garden lies to the S. E. of the above. It consists of a trapezoidal area bounded by a low bank and external ditch. The west part is occupied by a low, flat, square island only 0.25 m. high surrounded by a wide shallow ditch, now marshy but presumably once filled with water. From the east and S. E. sides of this ditch run a series of other marshy depressions of generally rectangular form. This whole area is perhaps some form of elaborate water garden.

Though obviously only part of the original 17th-century garden, the extant remains are a good example of the traditional garden of this time with its rectangular compartments and geometrically laid-out paths and flowerbeds, as well as still-water canals, ponds, raised terraces and a mount. It is another interesting addition to the growing numbers of sites of this type which have been recorded in recent years.

MOATED SITE, ARCHER'S WOOD, SAWTRY (TL 175183) (Fig. 5). This site lies within and north of Archer's Wood, towards the southern end of Sawtry parish, on level clayland at 30 m. above OD. Details of its history and of a small excavation on the main moat have already been published in these proceedings¹⁵, and little can be added to what has been written there apart from a description of the earthworks themselves. The present plan indicates that the enclosures associated with the main

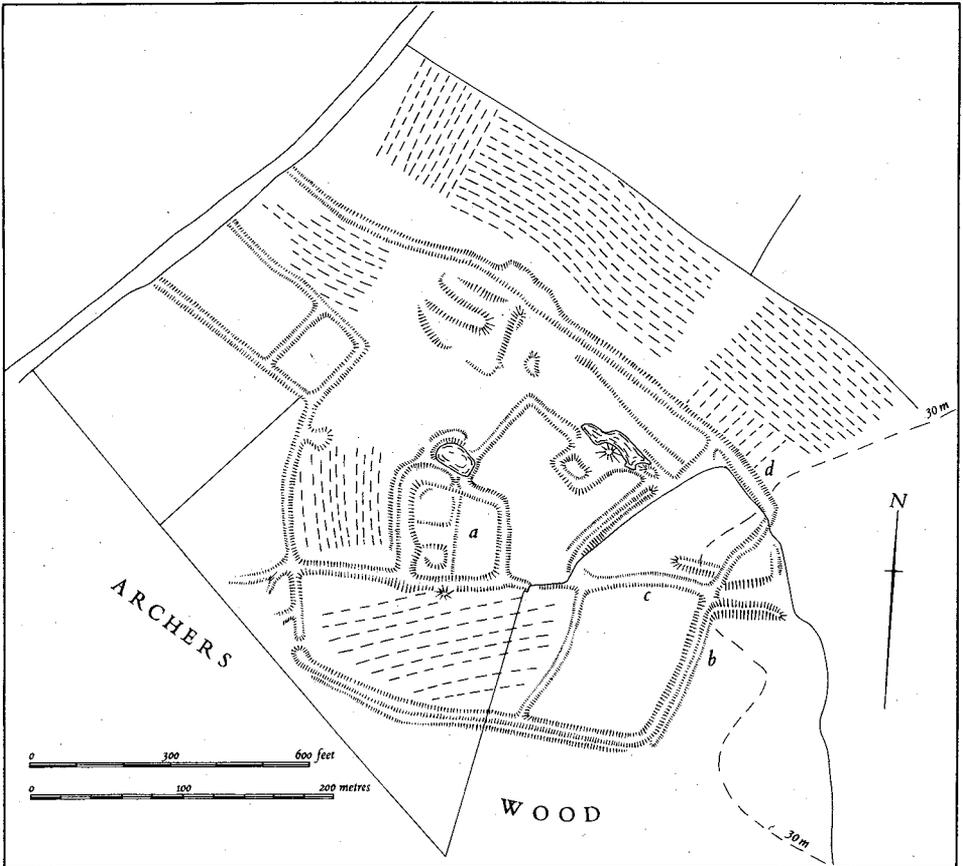


Fig. 5. Sawtry: Archer's Wood moated site.

moat ('a' on Fig. 5) are far more complex than has hitherto been appreciated and that some have ridge-and-furrow within them. In addition it is clear, from field evidence alone, that not all these enclosures are of the same date. For example the ditch which forms the east side of the main outer enclosure ('b' on Fig. 5) is later than the internal ditch to the west of it ('c' on Fig. 5) which once extended further east and has been cut by the main enclosure ditch. Further, the main enclosure ditch on the N. E. side ('d' on Fig. 5) has cut across pre-existing ridge-and-furrow.

MOATED SITE, DUXFORD (TL 481464) (Fig. 6) is situated at the N. end of Duxford village, just east of the east end of St. John's Street and close to the R. Cam, on river gravel at 24 m. above OD. Little is known of its detailed history, but something of its historical setting can be inferred. Duxford village is a good example of what has been termed a polyfocal settlement¹⁶. That is, it made up of at least three separate focal points, which have grown together to form one nucleated village. All these centres are still clearly visible in the present village. There is the present St. Peter's Street which has the parish church at its east end, and St. John's Street which has the now redundant church of St. John in its centre; between the two parallel streets is a third focus centred on a small rectangular green which was clearly once much larger. These foci are probably to be identified with three of the four separate large manors recorded under Duxford in Domesday Book, the fourth entry there being perhaps a separate settlement north of the village, now deserted, though its site was, until recent destruction, marked by another small moat. Each of the three foci which make up the present village has a moated site near its east end, though that of the central one is now reduced to two ponds S. E. of Temple Farm and even on the enclosure map of 1822 (in Cambridgeshire Record Office) was shown only as a three-sided moated enclosure much altered by that date. The three moats may be seen as the sites of the manor houses of the three parts of the village. The moat being described here is thus the site of the manor house of the north, or St. John's Street, part, the manor of which was held by the Lacey family in the 13th and 14th centuries¹⁷. Nothing is known of the later history of this moat. The earliest depiction of it is not until the 19th century when it is shown on the enclosure map as a sub-rectangular island, orientated north-south and completely surrounded by a water-filled ditch. The map also shows the ditch on the east side extending south beyond the island for a short distance and marks an entrance across the ditch or moat in the centre of the west side. This plan is at variance with the OS version of the site, apparently made in 1952 just before a housing estate was laid across the western part. The OS plan¹⁸ shows the same main rectangular enclosure, but also indicates that the ditch to the south turned west at its south end. The plan also marks an entrance in the centre of the northern side but none on the west. Only half of this moated site now remains and so the problem of the entrances on the north and west cannot be resolved. However, the surviving earthworks do suggest that the moat once consisted of two conjoined rectangular enclosures, bounded on all sides by a wide wet ditch. The surviving ditch is about 1 m. deep and still partly wet. The section of the interior that still remains is flat and featureless except for some slight scarps which appear to be of relatively recent origin.

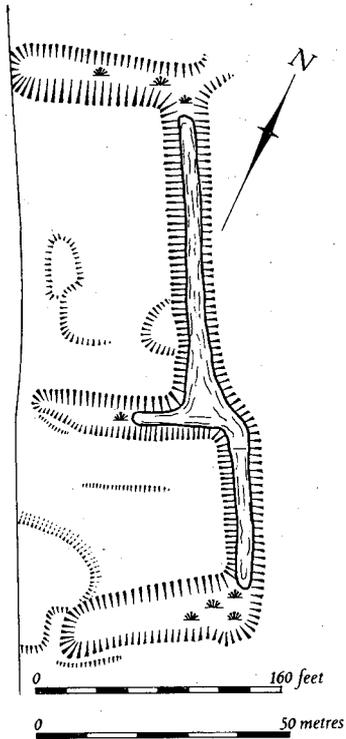


Fig. 6. Duxford: moat (Lacey's Manor).

MOATED SITE, DUXFORD (TL 482459) (Fig. 7) lies in the S. E. corner of the village, immediately S. E. of St. Peter's Church, at the east end of St. Peter's Street. It is situated adjacent to the R. Cam on gravel and alluvium at 24 m. above OD. Its general historical setting has already been discussed above, and there is no doubt that the site is that of the medieval manor house of the southern focus of Duxford village. As far as can be ascertained, this was the manor held by Hardwin de Scalers in 1086, which eventually passed to the Le Groyz family in the 12th century and remained with them until at least the late 13th century¹⁷. The moat described here was therefore almost certainly constructed by a member of the this latter family.

The site is first shown on the Enclosure Map of Duxford of 1822 with almost exactly the same overall plan that it has today, though with all the ditches and the long ditch to the south apparently filled with water. It consists of a rectangular flat-topped island with no interior features beyond a slight mound 0.25 m. high in the S. W. corner. This is entirely surrounded by a wide ditch, now dry, up to 1 m. deep. In the N. W. corner the ditch widens and runs west and is cut up to 2 m. deep into the rising ground. It then fades out and a low scarp continues its southern side as far as the modern road. On the southern side of the site is a broad V-shaped ditch, also now dry, up to 2 m. deep with a low outer bank on the south. At its east end this ditch is cut by the present course of the R. Cam. However, the river here is not on its original course which, to judge from the parish boundary between Duxford and Hinxton lay 250 m. to the west. The present river, actually the inlet channel for Duxford Mill, may not have existed in medieval times.

MANORIAL EARTHWORKS, LANDBEACH (TL 477655) (Fig. 8). These earthworks lie at the north end of the existing village, in permanent pasture, on gravel at 7 m. above OD. The present Manor Farm and the church are situated immediately to the west. The remains are only partly depicted on OS maps and they are described as a 'moat'. In addition the Ordnance Survey marks 'Site of Manor House' immediately east of the church, though on what evidence this is based is not known. The existing Manor Farm seems to be on the site of the medieval manor of Chamberlains, which was acquired in the 14th century by Corpus Christi College¹⁹. The survey published here suggests that the remains are not a moat at all but the outer part of the medieval manorial farmstead.

The main feature of the site is a set of multiple ditches which survive on the north and east of the area. These consist of two main ditches, up to 1.5 m. deep, separated by a low bank and with a slight outer bank on the north side. The ditches have been destroyed in the centre of the east side by a later farm track and the west end of the north side has recently been filled in. There is no trace of a south side to the enclosure, north of the Rectory, nor of the west side. However the fact that part of a corner of the inner ditch survives in the N. W. ('a' on Fig. 8) suggests that the enclosing ditches may have extended along the west side. The purpose of these enclosing ditches is not entirely clear. The best explanation is that, in a generally low-lying area close to the fens, they were necessary for drainage.

Within the enclosure are a number of features probably connected with the Manor

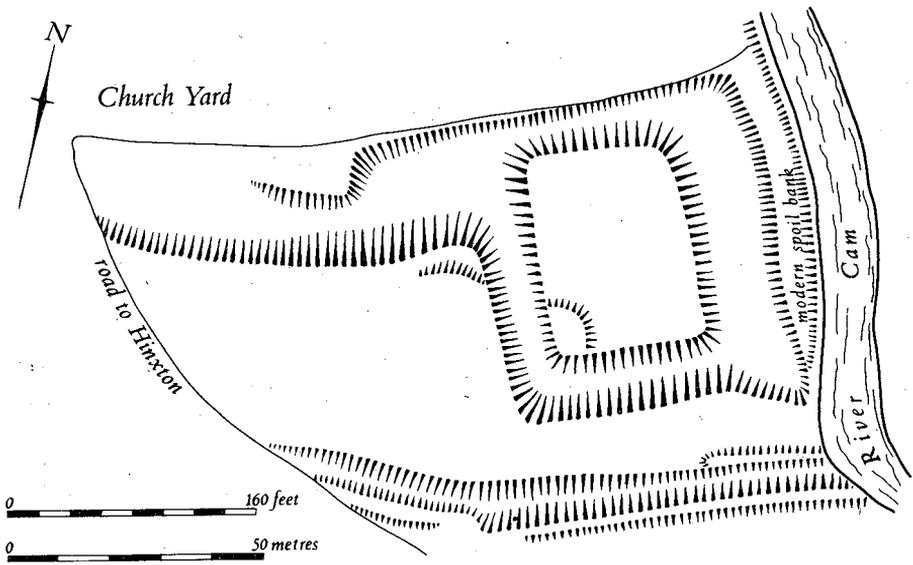


Fig. 7. Duxford: moat (St. Peter's church).

Farm. The most obvious is the large rectangular pond, now dry, 2 m. deep ('b' on Fig. 8), close to and parallel with the north side of the main enclosure. Further to the S. E. of this pond is a broad ditch which is connected to the inner ditch of the main enclosure to the north and which runs due south in a markedly sinuous curve. The southern end is largely destroyed but it appears to terminate at a modern pond within the existing farmyard.

Between this ditch and the east side of the outer enclosure is a block of well-marked ridge-and-furrow. It consists of fourteen ridges less than 0.25 m. high and only 30 m.-36 m. long. This is not only extremely short for medieval ridge-and-furrow, but placed as it is within a manorial enclosure it is an unusual feature. In the southern part of the site, immediately east of the church, is a series of other indeterminate earthworks which are difficult to interpret. They appear to be the sites of former buildings, but their general appearance suggests that they are perhaps of no great antiquity.

The recognition of these remains as part of a manorial farmstead is perhaps of limited value in purely archaeological terms. Such earthworks are extremely common and are well known from elsewhere in Cambridgeshire. However in terms of topographical history they do have additional interest. The apparent existence of a roughly rectangular enclosure belonging to the medieval manorial farm, with the church and churchyard lying in one corner, is a feature recognized in Cambridgeshire and elsewhere. At Abington Pigotts in S. W. Cambridgeshire, the parish church lies in the corner of a large rectangular paddock belonging to the manor farm²⁰, while at Grantchester the church has a similar relationship to the manor farm there²¹. The churches at Harlton and Toft are further examples²². This situation of churches apparently being within and in the corners of manorial enclosures may indicate that they were founded and set up by Saxon lords on land which belonged to these lords.

One other feature of the earthworks is perhaps quite unrelated to the manorial remains. This is a narrow ditch which passes along the east side of the enclosure and runs north beyond it ('c', 'd' and 'e' on Fig. 8). This ditch can be traced for a mile to the north where it meets the Car Dyke, an artificial canal of Roman date. The purpose of this ditch is not entirely clear. As it now exists it is no more than a drain, and where it passes along the east side of the manorial enclosure it appears to be no more than another, third ditch to that enclosure. The possibility that it was for drainage is further strengthened by the way it meets the N. E. corner of the manorial enclosure where it runs into the outer ditch on the east side as well as bending round it. On the ground, at least, it seems to be little more than a way of removing surplus water from parts of the enclosure ditch.

However there are a number of records which refer to a navigable water-course in the area²³. Such lodes or canals are common on the south side of the Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire fens. The best are in east Cambridgeshire where Reach, Swaffham Bulbeck and Bottisham Lodes are well documented as medieval and later canals. These have been interpreted as being of Roman origin, constructed to connect the south-western Cambridgeshire uplands with the R. Cam²⁴. In the same area, Burwell Lode was apparently a 17th-century canal cut for a similar purpose. Further west Cottenham Lode still survives, connecting Cottenham and Rampton villages to

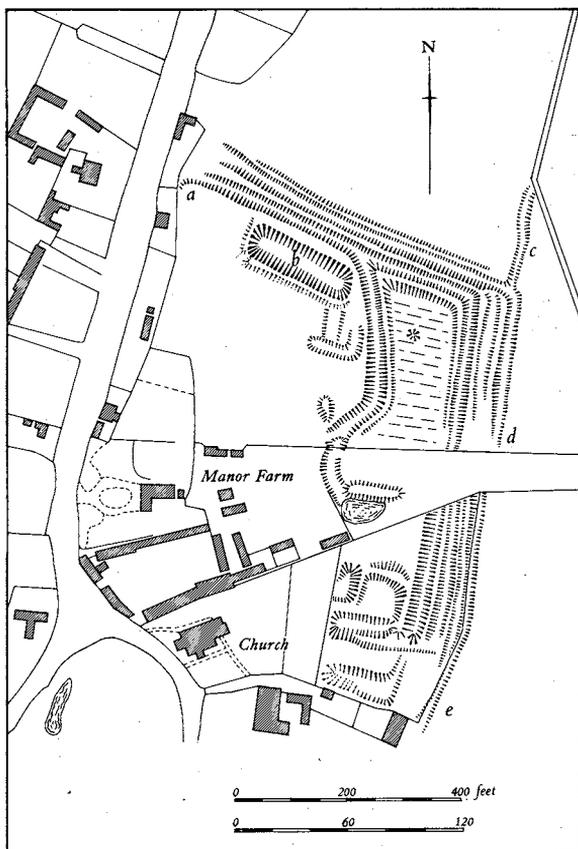


Fig. 8. Landbeach: manorial earthworks.

either the Car Dyke or the Old West River, while in Huntingdonshire Monk's Lode connects Sawtry Abbey to the R. Nene, and Holme Lode links the village of Holme to the same river.

It is therefore possible that the ditch on this side, in spite of its present form, is all that remains of a similar lode or canal, probably of medieval date, connecting Landbeach to the R. Ouse. There is in fact a branch of this ditch which runs S. W. to a point just north of the earthworks here described. Here a shallow basin has been interpreted as an old wharf²⁵. Only excavation on the line of this ditch could prove that it is in fact a canal, but the possibility should be borne in mind.

NOTES

1. VCH *Huntingdonshire* I (1926), 347
2. PRO, E179/122/4
3. PRO, E179/122/100
4. PRO, E179/249/2
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