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# Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society

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(incorporating the Cambs and Hunts Archaeological  
Society)

Volume LXXXIII

for 1994



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Volume LXXXIII

for 1994

Published by the Cambridge Antiquarian Society 1995

ISSN 0309-3606

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## EDITORIAL

This volume of the *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* is the first by a new editor. I would like to thank, both the previous editor, Sarah Bendall, and the present officers and council members for their support and assistance.

Alert readers will observe that the style has been changed somewhat to simplify it and to bring it in line with the more usual modern practice,

This volume is predominantly archaeological. It is my hope that forthcoming volumes will also include papers of wider interest. I encourage our members — and others interested in Cambridgeshire — to submit papers with the kind of material they would like to read.

### **THE LIBRARY**

Members of the C.A.S. are reminded that, by agreement with the University of Cambridge, they are entitled to read in the Haddon Library, Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology, Downing St. The Library holds a large number of British and foreign serials exchanged for the *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, together with a wide range of archaeological and topographical books. Intending readers should apply to the Faculty Librarian, Mr Aidan Baker, and for access to, or information about, specialised collections to the Society's Librarian Dr J.D. Pickles, The Old Schools, Trinity Lane.

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# A Late Iron Age/Romano-British Settlement at Madingley, Cambridgeshire

J.B. Tipper<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Between June and September 1992, archaeological monitoring along the Coton to Longstanton trunk main pipeline discovered a Late Iron Age/Romano-British settlement c. 3.5 km west of Cambridge and c. 1 km east of Madingley village (Figs. 1 & 2a).<sup>2</sup>

Using a combination of data from field walking, limited excavation along the pipeline easement and geophysical survey, an attempt has been made to define the extent and type of site, the date of occupation, and its location in the landscape.

## Location: Topography and Geology

The site is situated on the brow of a low hill, TL4013/5987, c. 40–50 m a.s.l., with the land falling away abruptly to the north. It may best be described as a gently rolling landscape. A clunch pit for building stone immediately to the northeast (the earliest known reference dating to 1811) probably destroyed some of the site.<sup>3</sup> Finds of Roman pottery and a coin of Tetricus I are recorded from its edge.<sup>4</sup>

The site is located on the very edge of the heavy western clayland of Cambridgeshire. The local geology consists of boulder clay over chalk marl (Fig. 2b). Gleyed brown calcareous soil overlies this to the south and west of the site. Chalk marl, below the boulder clay, forms a sharp change in the angle of slope immediately to the north of the site. This is probably a naturally formed terrace, the chalk marl being eroded more quickly than the overlying boulder clay. To the north and east, below Cambridge Road,

the local geology is made up of surface-water gley soil overlying Cretaceous gault clays.

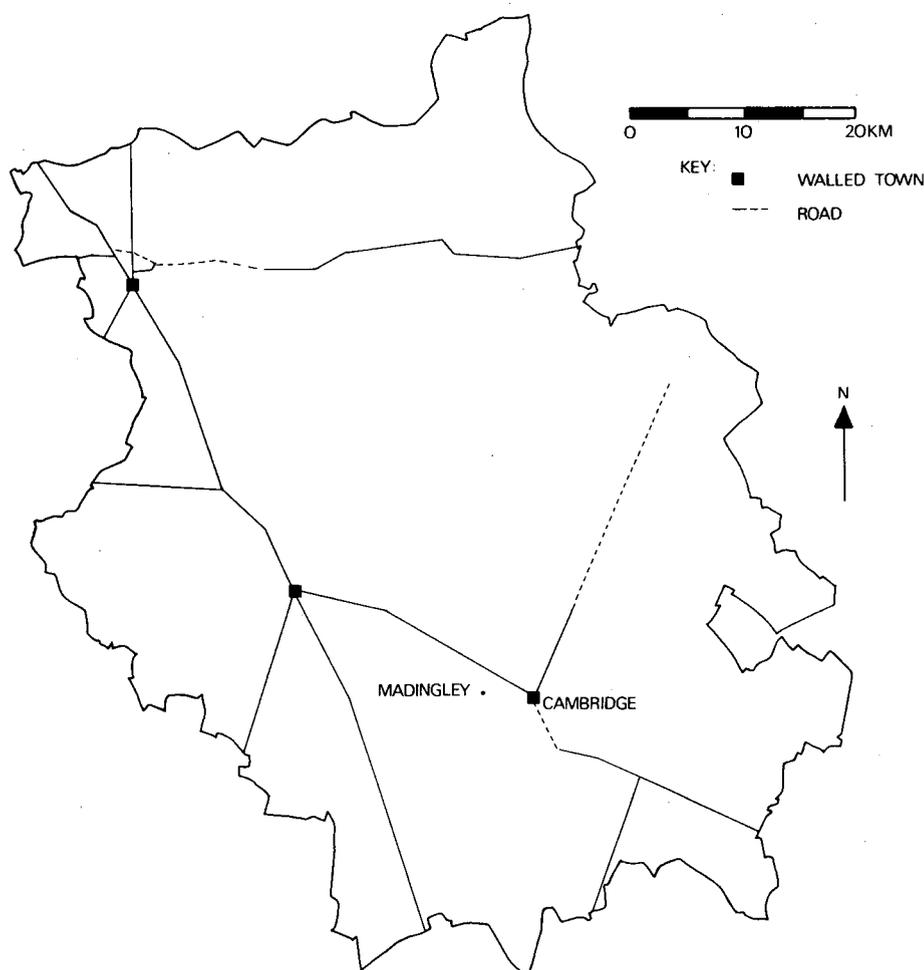
Drainage ditches may have been dug during the Late Iron Age. This would have been a necessity for farming on low lying clayland. Even today, while there are frequent drainage ditches, the land below Cambridge Road becomes waterlogged and floods during the winter, resulting in areas without crop growth. This was almost certainly an important factor for the siting of the settlement on the brow of a hill.

## Fieldwork: Methods of Study

Field walking was undertaken in 1992 by Cambridgeshire Archaeology along the pipeline easement before topsoil stripping in order to define the extent of activity. The site was brought to the author's notice by Mr Henry Hurst, who walked the stripped easement after the excavations had taken place. Further survey was carried out below the brow of the hill at TL403-/600- in an attempt to clarify occupation, which was suggested by Late Roman sherds scattered along the easement (Long 1993b).

Limited excavation by Cambridgeshire Archaeology on the brow of the hill uncovered features along a 60 m stretch of the easement, consisting of ditches, post-holes and pits with associated pottery dating to the Late Iron Age/Early Romano-British period (Welsh 1992). No relationships could be established between the larger ditches and therefore the chronology of occupation is in doubt, as is the extent of the possible settlement.

The features uncovered by excavation do



**Figure 1.** Site location: immediate context of settlement, combining data from field walking, excavation and geophysical survey. Contours enlarged from OS 1:10,000 according to OS conventions.

not show as crop marks on aerial photographs probably because they have been masked by ridge-and-furrow known from cropmarks at TL402-/599-, running in a north-south direction.<sup>5</sup>

In order to further define the size and complexity of the settlement, a magnetometer survey was undertaken in February 1993, using a Geoscan fluxgate gradiometer. The field on which the site is located was fallow land at the time of the survey and was last ploughed in October 1991, offering little interference from furrow marks. A 40 m by 40 m survey grid was set out (four 20 m by 10 m quadrants) adjacent to the excavations.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Date, Type and Spatial Extent of Occupation**

A multi-phase site is known. Geophysical survey and excavation have defined a large and complex arrangement of enclosure ditches, gullies, pits and post-holes (Figs. 3 & 4).<sup>7</sup>

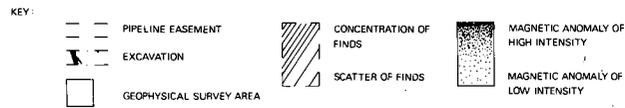
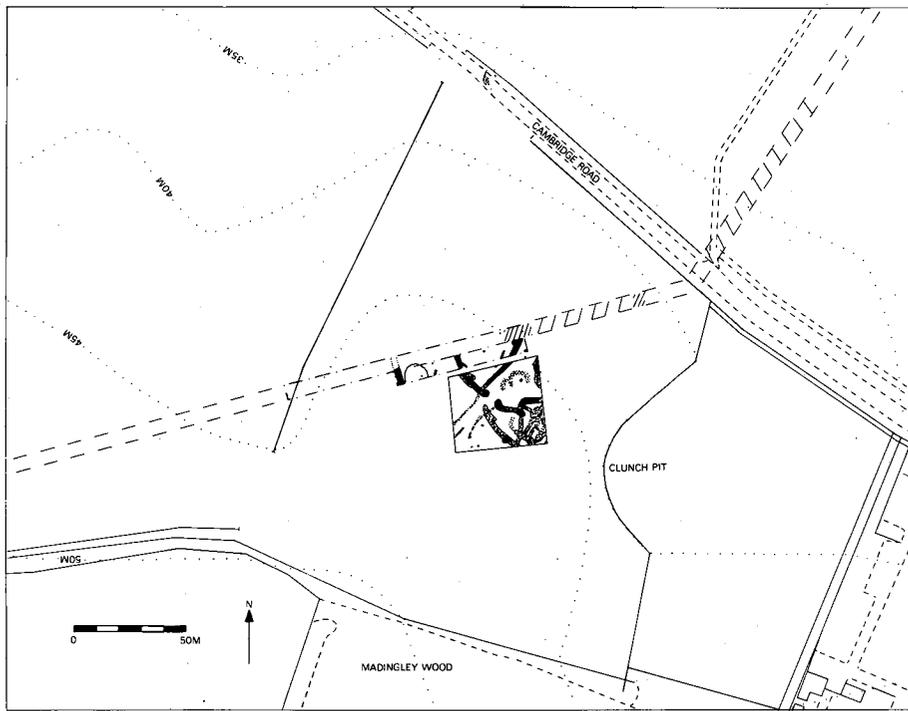
At least two ditched enclosures are known, one with a clear entrance.

The centre of activity, apparently to the south of the easement, is indicated by the high intensity of activity on the geophysical survey but this has not been examined by excavation. The diagnostic material from the 1992 fieldwork consists of a small collection of pottery, a fragment of flue-tile and a single coin.

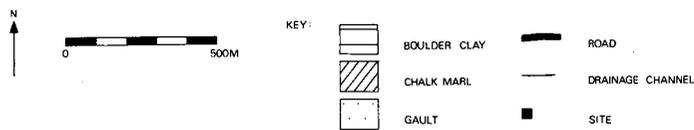
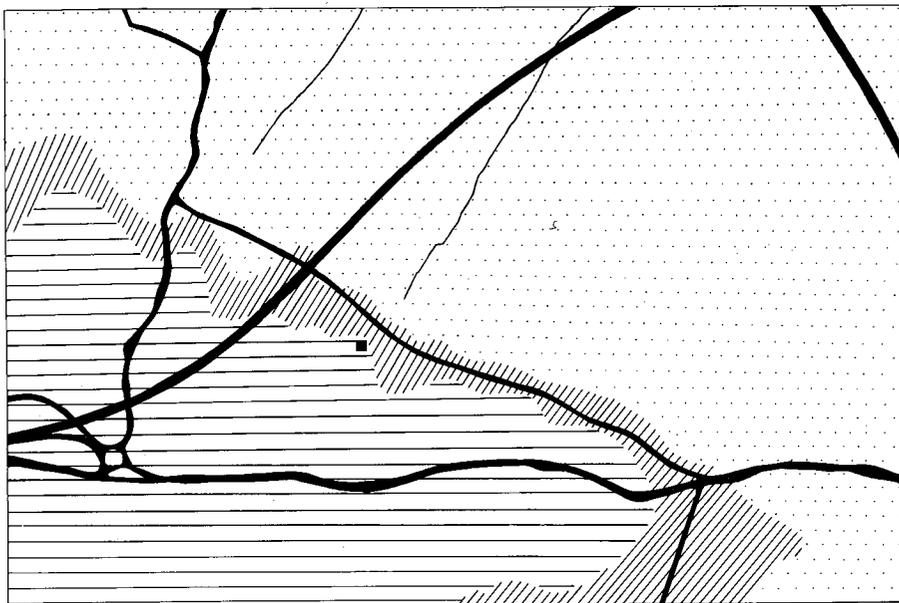
The earliest evidence of occupation consists of imprecisely dated Late Iron Age/Early Romano-British pottery found in the excavated features on the brow of the hill. The lower fill of ditch F12, containing several sherds of Late Iron Age/Iron Age tradition, represents the earliest evidence of occupation (Welsh 1992).

The upper fill of ditch F12, which is almost certainly a recut of the earlier phase, contained body sherds from three vessels: carinated, medium-mouthed jars, in coarse grey ware. Decoration in the form of oblique lines occurs on the shoulder of all three.

A



B



**Figure 2.** A) Location: relationship with the road network; B) geology of Madingley. Relationship of site to modern roads and drainage channels.

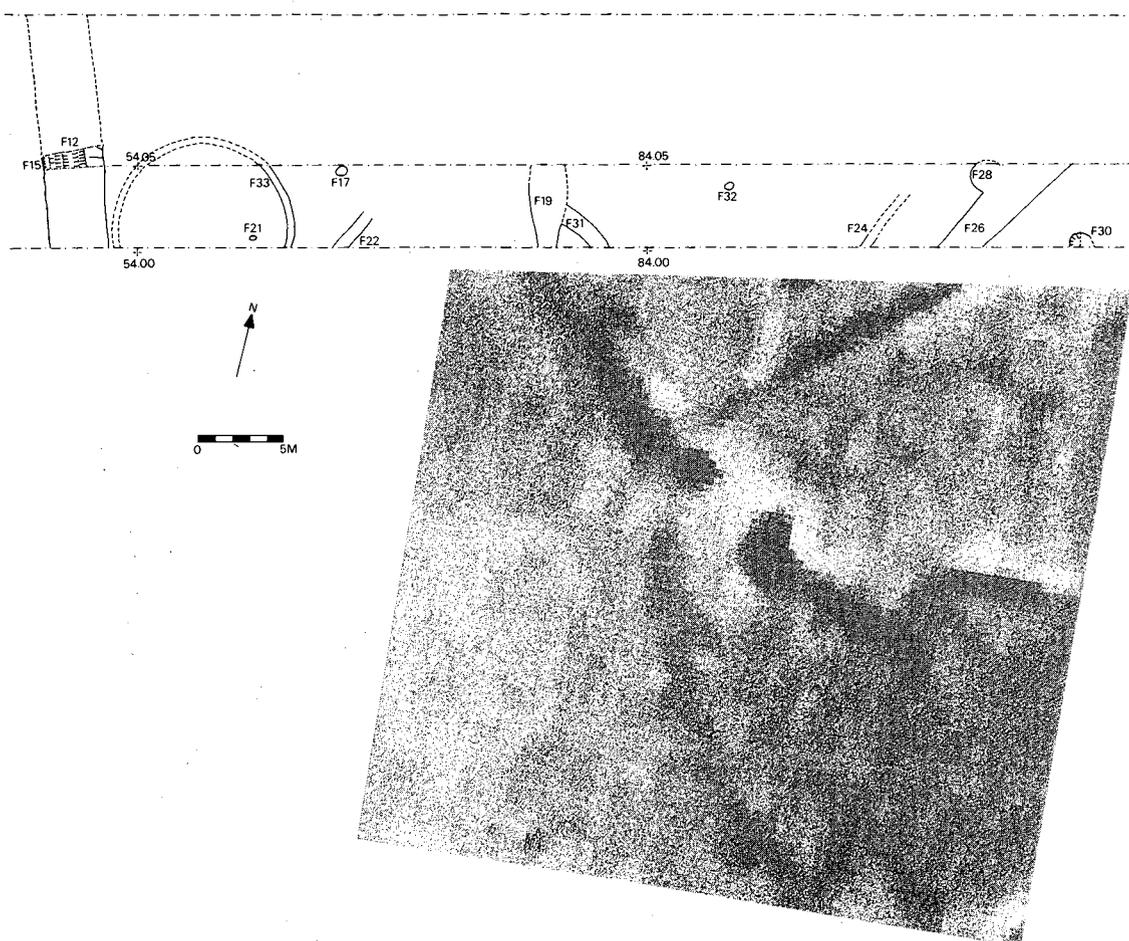
The distinctive style, part of a strong East Anglian tradition, has enabled dating to the middle of the second century AD (Long 1993a). The closest parallels, from Arbury Road, Cambridge (Frend 1955), suggests that they were produced at Horningsea, 8 km north-east of Cambridge (Hughes 1904).

Ditch F12 appears to mark the western extent of occupation and may have formed an outer boundary ditch enclosing the settlement. This limit to activity is indicated by a decrease in the intensity of magnetic activity towards the western edge of the survey area (Fig. 4). It is possible that ditch F12 could form a double ditched enclosure with F19, which appears to be on a similar alignment. However, the ditches had different shaped profiles, ditch F12 has a shallow U-shape (but this could be a consequence of recutting) while F19 is V-shaped (Welsh 1992), and they could easily represent different phases of activity. A circular structure, F33, lay outside both enclosures de-

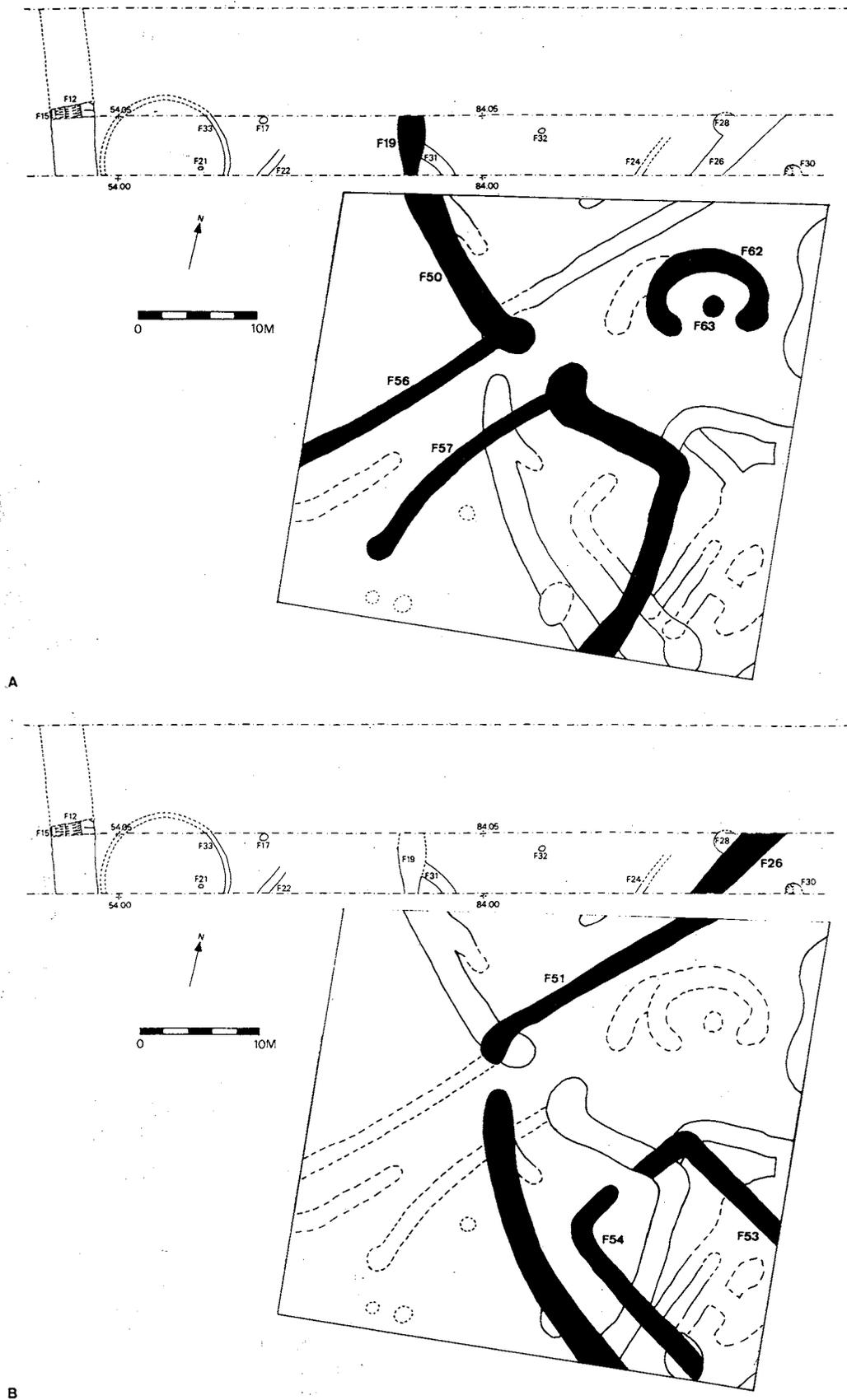
fined by the magnetometer survey but inside the outer enclosure ditch F12 and may be associated with this outer ditch (Figs. 3 & 4, see below).

The enclosure defined by ditch F19/50 would appear to be non-rectilinear, curving NW-SE (Fig. 4a). Ditch F50 appears to turn southwards through 90°, forming a corner of the enclosure. A break of c. 3 m is indicative of an entrance. Associated with the entrance are the faint indications of possible ditches or gullies, F56 and F57, fanning out in a NE-SW direction from the ditch terminals of F50 for c. 20 m.<sup>8</sup> These appear to form a narrow neck-like entrance, possibly a funnel entrance arrangement for the control of stock, or they could be drainage gullies alongside a trackway. A sub-circular feature, F62, is tentatively suggested to lie within this enclosure.

A sub-rectangular enclosure is defined by ditch F26/51, which apparently cuts ditch F19/50 (Figs. 3 & 4b).<sup>9</sup> Enclosure ditch F51



**Figure 3.** Random dot density plot of magnetometer survey located with respect to the excavations.



**Figure 4.** Interpretative plan of excavation and geophysical survey to show the sequence of enclosures: A) Phase 1, F19/50; B) Phase 2, F26/51 .

would appear to curve sharply southeast from northeast-southwest, but the continuity of the feature appears to be broken close to where it cuts F50. If this is an entrance, it might be tentatively suggested that this later enclosure, while being on a different orientation to F50, was also aligned on the same trackway. One might even go as far to suggest that there was a short space of time between the replacement of enclosure F19/50 with F26/51, but it would require clarification through further excavation. Unfortunately, the pottery has not been more precisely dated than Late Iron Age or Romano-British in both F19 and F26 (Welsh 1992). The later enclosure may contain a rectangular structure, defined by F53/54, running parallel to the enclosure ditch, which has been tentatively identified by geophysical survey.

As a result of field walking along the pipeline trench, two concentrations of finds probably define the centre of Romano-British occupation from north to south (Fig. 1). A southerly concentration of Roman pottery and a couple of pieces of tile were located in the immediate area of ditch F26. Accepting that this concentration is associated with the feature, it is suggested that the northern concentration, located above the sharp fall in the land to the north of the site, probably indicates the presence of another enclosure ditch delimiting the northern extent of occupation. Between these concentrations, c. 50–70 m apart, there was a scatter of Roman finds. Sherds of Samian pottery indicates occupation between the first and third centuries.

There was a sparsity of structural evidence, consisting of a few pieces of roof tile, a single piece of reddish coloured flue-tile and possibly some imported stone. No stone foundations have been found. There is no trace of wall plaster. Nevertheless, the fragment of relief-patterned flue-tile, 75 × 62 × 72 mm, does have mortar adhering to the relief which is suggestive of a stone building, normally indicative of a villa. This fragment has been dated to the late second century.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, the flue-tile was found on the pipeline spoil heap while field walking. There is little to indicate the structure from which it was a part but this could possibly lie beyond the area surveyed by magnetometer.

The material recovered suggests that a Late Iron Age/Early Romano-British farmstead was Romanised, possibly even transformed into a small villa. This is very specu-

lative and dating remains uncertain.<sup>11</sup> However, it is very difficult to say more without further geophysical survey or, in particular, further excavation.

A coin of Postumus (259–268), found during field-walking of the pipeline with the northern concentration of pottery, together with a coin of Tetricus I (270–273), recorded in the SMR as being found on the edge of the clunch pit along with Roman pottery, are strong evidence of third-century occupation on the brow of the hill.<sup>12</sup>

Evidence for occupation during the later third and fourth centuries is suggested by a small quantity of colour-coated ware recovered during field walking. This is significant as it was found below Cambridge Road, up to 50 m to the north of the limit of the earlier evidence, which is suggestive of a shift in occupation from the brow of the hill in the Late Iron Age/Early Romano-British period to the lower ground in the later period.<sup>13</sup> This indicates that by the early fourth century the low lying ground had been satisfactorily drained for settlement. Sufficient material has been recovered to suggest that this occurred without any significant breaks in occupation of the site. Alternatively, the distribution of late Roman pottery below the hill could easily relate to the manuring of plots for arable cultivation. Further field survey to the north of Cambridge Road proved inconclusive (Long 1993).

### Relationship to Other Sites

The Madingley site was located c. 2.2 km from the Cambridge to Godmanchester Road, c. 3.5 km from the Cambridge to Arrington Bridge road and c. 4.25 km from Cambridge (Fig. 2a). A possible road, mentioned by Browne, has been suggested to connect Cambridge with the Ermine Street at Caxton Gibbet.<sup>14</sup> If this could be proven, it would pass within 400 m of Madingley, offering direct access into Cambridge. In any case, the landscape is likely to have been criss-crossed with a network of trackways and droveways.

Cambridge was a Belgic settlement, founded in the first century BC. It is suggested that the Madingley site was possibly of a similar date, or soon after. Early Roman Cambridge was probably connected with a garrison but by the end of the first century AD the military site had become a market and administrative centre (Browne 1978). The small town would have acted as a focus for the surrounding area, providing specialized

goods and services. This may have allowed rural sites to flourish.

The eastern part of the Catuvellaunian canton was apparently sparsely occupied by villas and the Madingley site was not located in an area of great wealth. Nevertheless, to the south and west of Cambridge, villas were an important element along the upper Cam and its tributaries.

The picture of villas in the near vicinity is probably incomplete. The nearest evidence of a villa is at Girton, c. 2.5–3 km north-east of Madingley (Fox 1923). Other villa sites, all c. 5 km away, are known at Arbury Road and King's Hedges, northeast of Roman Cambridge, Comberton to the south and Grantchester to the southeast of Madingley.

Possible sites of the same period were researched in an attempt to fit the site into the settlement hierarchy. In Madingley village, c. 850 m to the northwest (context and exact location unknown), two coins of Valentinian (AD 364–75) and remains (but the SMR does not say what sort of remains) were recorded in the late nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> A fragment of box flue-tile is mentioned by Browne from New Farm, Madingley, c. 1.75 km northwest of the site, but is not recorded in the SMR (Browne 1978: 75). Pottery has been noted in the SMR c. 1.9 km to the west of the site, but neither the type nor quantity. At Dry Drayton, c. 2.9 km to the northwest, Roman material suggests the presence of a site. At Bar Hill, c. 4.1 km to the northwest, a scatter of pottery dates to the fourth century. A ditch or pit with a Samian sherd near the bottom was found at High Fields, c. 4.9 km to the west of the site.

Unfortunately, this list of sites in the SMR is almost certainly an incomplete record of the total numbers and judgements based on the distribution of chance finds can be very misleading. The evidence for the site's relationship to other local sites of all types is, at present, inconclusive.

### Summary

The evidence which has been discussed is suggestive of a Late Iron Age to fourth-century AD farmstead, probably becoming Romanised during the second half of the second century. There is no suggestion of any substantial break in the occupation of the site but there does appear to be a gradual shift in the centre of activity northwards, from the brow of the hill in the Late Iron Age to the lower situa-

tion below the terrace in the Late Roman period.

### Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Mr Ken Welsh of Cambridgeshire Archaeology for his help and access to excavation records, Mr Mark Long for his assistance in the field, Dr Colin Shell for his guidance and knowledge of geophysical survey and, finally, to Mr Henry Hurst for his encouragement and help while undertaking this project.

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> This study was submitted as part of a First Degree at Cambridge University in 1993. The pottery analysis was undertaken by Mark Long as a similar project.
- <sup>2</sup> By Cambridgeshire Archaeology for Cambridge Water Company (see Welsh 1992).
- <sup>3</sup> Plan of Estates in the Parishes of Madingley, Girton, and C. in the County of Cambridge belonging to Admiral Sir Charles Cotton, Bart. 1811.
- <sup>4</sup> Sites and Monuments Record of Cambridgeshire No. 04361.
- <sup>5</sup> SMR No. 09614. As a result of intensive agriculture, no evidence of this is visible over the site. However, because of woodland encroachment, the headland ridge is preserved behind the present bank delimiting the boundary of Madingley Wood (Rackham 1986: 169–70).
- <sup>6</sup> Readings were taken longitudinally at 50 cm intervals along the X axis, to measure the extent of features, and laterally every 25 cm along the traversed lines of the Y axis, to give clear resolution.
- <sup>7</sup> The numbers on the interpretative diagram (Fig. 4) refer to probable features in order to clarify the discussion in the text and to relate these to the excavated features. The numbers on the excavated plan refer to the excavation records in Welsh (1992).
- <sup>8</sup> Features F56 and F57 are not clearly defined in Fig. 2, which was produced using general statistical techniques which enhanced some features at the expense of others.
- <sup>9</sup> The uniformity of the magnetic anomalies making up F50 would appear to be disturbed by F51, indicating that F51 is from a later phase of construction.
- <sup>10</sup> A band of vertical lines framed by chevron belongs to Lowther's Group 1, W chevron, die 5, which has been dated to c. AD 150–75. Other sites yielding similar examples include Latimer villa, Bucks, and Boxmoor villa, Herts. (Black 1985: 353–75).
- <sup>11</sup> However, evidence from other sites, for example, at Gorhambury or Stanwick, shows that both rectangular and circular structures occurred together on Romanised villa sites. It cannot be assumed that the circular structures are necessarily early, nor that their presence shows that the site did not have a rectangular stone dwelling.
- <sup>12</sup> SMR 04361, TL 4025/5983.
- <sup>13</sup> Field walking identified a tailing out of finds up to 92 m north of Cambridge Road, c.100 m north of the site.
- <sup>14</sup> It is not shown on Fig. 2a because there is little archaeological evidence for it (Browne 1978).
- <sup>15</sup> SMR 271, TL 39-/60- (Babington 1883).

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# PROCEEDINGS OF THE CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

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**Articles:** K.R. Dark, 'Archaeological survey at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, 1984', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* 74 (1985) pp.81-4.

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# Proceedings Volume LXXXIII, 1994

Price £10 for members, £12 for non-members

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