

SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY COTTAGES AT BABINGLEY, NORFOLK

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EARLY in April 1956 Mr. Bernard Campbell noticed that a field to the north of the church of the deserted village of Babingley had been ploughed during the winter.¹ A few days later Mr. Campbell visited the site with Dr. P. Jewell and Mr. J. Letham and collected medieval and post-medieval pottery from the freshly ploughed land. The Norwich Castle Museum and the Ministry of Works were informed. The farmer, Mr. T. Neill said that the site had been ploughed during the autumn of 1955, for the first time within living memory. As the site was now under crop, it could not be examined until January 1957 when it was ploughed for the second time. Mr. J. O. H. Nicholls arranged a survey party but unfortunately recording was difficult as the field had just been limed. Extensive remains of foundations were, however, encountered, and on 14 March a survey of the remains was made by Dr. P. Jewell, Mr. and Mrs. B. Campbell and the writer.

The foundations showed up very clearly as the recent weather had broken up the soil and the rain had washed the foundations clean. A metalled road was seen going north across the field. On either side buildings were plainly visible. On a second visit, in March 1958, after the third ploughing of the site, the stones had now been very much more scattered and, except for the discovery of a new house site (House 5), little of note was recorded, but more pottery was collected. The road, however, was more prominent as the plough had now cut deeply into it bringing up the road metalling.

Little information is available as to what the site was like before ploughing. Air photographs show that there was the usual pattern of sunken roads and rectangular crofts, though they are not clear enough to pick up much detail. The revealed foundations were in the eastern part of field 51 immediately to the north-east of the ruined church, about half way between the moat around Hall Farm and the church, fig. 1.

SUMMARY

There was a road with carstone metalling running straight across the field from south to north. Along this were the foundations of seven buildings, five on the east and two on the west, fig. 1. The pottery ranges from Saxo-Norman times until the eighteenth century so from this evidence the buildings were still occupied until the middle of the eighteenth century at least. A water-colour of 1841 (Pl. 1). shows cottages still surviving just to the north of the church. eighteenth-century pottery was collected in this area but there were no clear

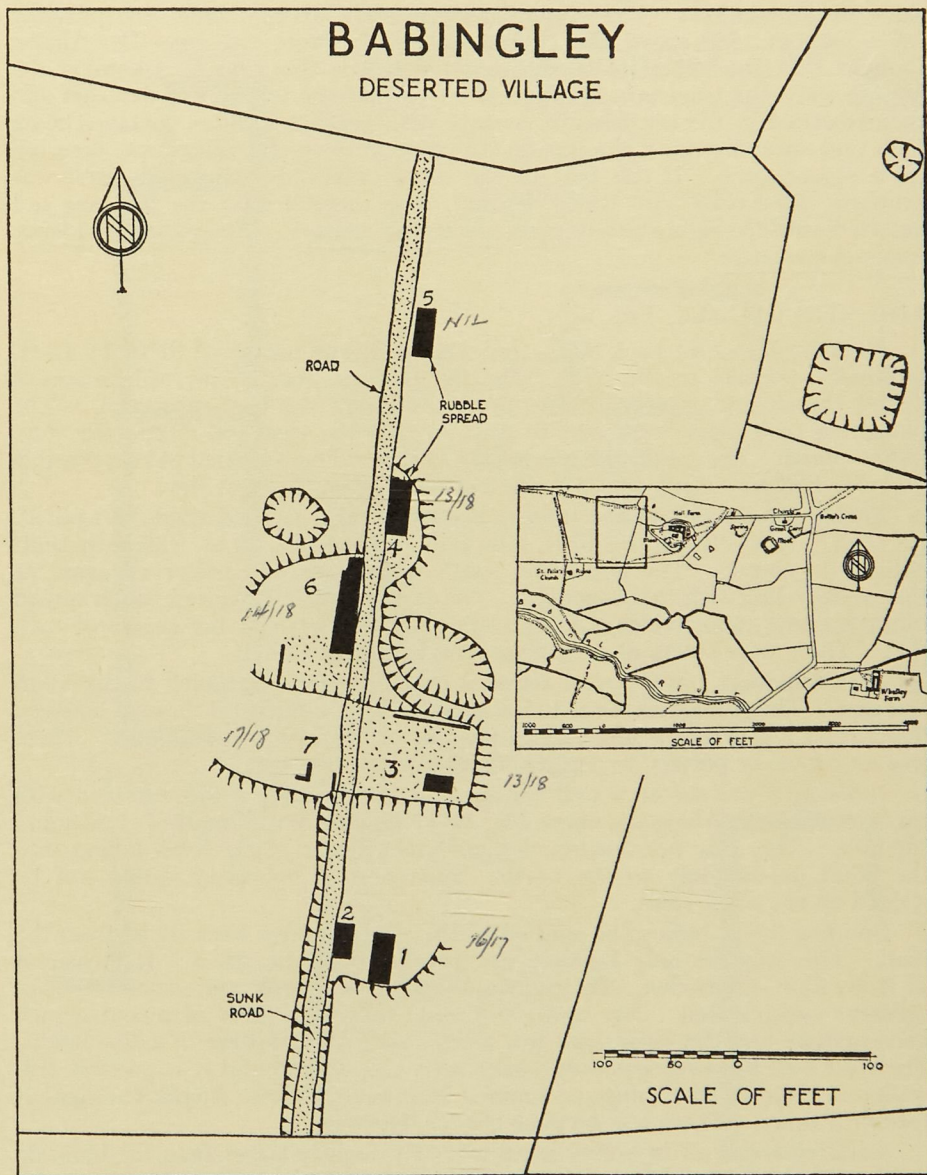


Fig. 1. Plan of the eastern half of field 51 showing the line of the road and the buildings on each side. The small inset plan shows how this is situated between the church and Hall farm.

signs of foundations. The sixteenth-seventeenth-century finds are puzzling for a map of 1588 shows the church isolated.² From this map Dr. Allison thought that the village had been deserted before this time.³ Assuming the map to show the true state of affairs it seems that the village was deserted and then resettled in the seventeenth century with perhaps a dozen cottages being built and surviving until the nineteenth century when the village was deserted for a second time. If this part of the survey was only schematic (as it was primarily concerned with Castle Rising), it is possible that the site was not deserted until the eighteenth or early nineteenth century. The pottery evidence suggests the latter.

THE STRUCTURES, FIG. 2.

Building 1 was set back 30 ft. from the road, and measured 31 ft. by 13 ft. internally, parallel to the road. The foundations were 18 in. wide made of mixed clunch and carstone. The north wall was the best preserved as the ploughing took place from east to west so that the east and west walls were much spread. The south wall was hardly visible. There seemed to be a possible doorway half way along the east side but no door on the west side.

Building 2 was set in the same enclosure parallel to, and right up against, the road. It was $24\frac{1}{2}$ ft. by 10 ft. internally. The walls, 18 in. wide were built entirely of clunch. The north and south walls were well preserved again as they were in line with the ploughing. The east and west walls were much spread but there was clear evidence of two opposing doorways in the centre of each side. There were traces of a carstone floor in the south half.

Both buildings 1 and 2 were set on a raised platform dropping to the south and east. The ground was level to the north and it is not clear if the area between buildings 1 and 2 and 3 was part of the toft of the first two buildings. There was no rubble or pottery to suggest another house between.

Building 3 was set on a well defined platform forming a toft surfaced with carstone rubble. Along the north edge was a boundary wall built of clunch and carstone. This was presumably designed to prevent cattle from falling into the pond immediately to the north. Such a solid boundary would not be needed on the other sides.

Building 3 was built gable end on to the street and set back 50 ft. from the road. This was the only building not parallel with the street. It measured 17 ft. by $9\frac{1}{2}$ ft. internally. The walls were again 18 in. wide and seemed to be of different construction. The south and east walls were built of mixed clunch and carstone and the north wall was similar with the addition of a few bricks. The west wall however was only visible as a clay spread and it is possible this wall was built in clay lump, a common technique in East Anglia throughout medieval times. There was no evidence for doorways.

Building 4 was set in a very small toft only slightly larger than the building itself. The toft formed a platform sloping on three sides. A rectangular rubble area covering the house was observed 40 ft. by 15 ft. but no details of walls could be observed as the ploughing had gone deeper here and spread all the

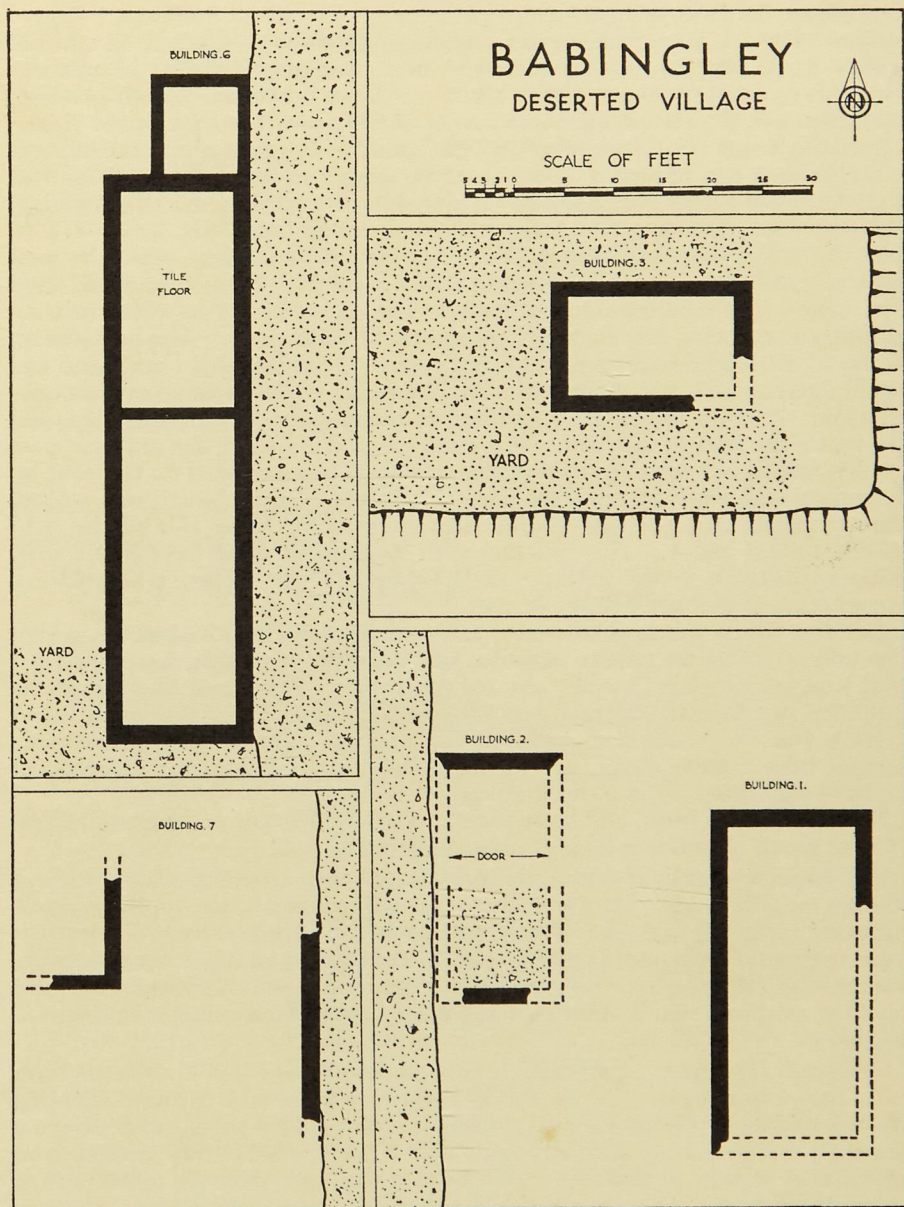


Fig. 2. Detailed plans of buildings 1—3 & 6—7.

foundations. In 1958, after the third ploughing, the walls of buildings 1-3 gave the same effect, so presumably these foundations were very shallow. It was not possible to do any excavation after the first ploughing and the second was enough to remove all stones still in situ. As house 4 was on a small platform it is likely that the plough cut more deeply coming over the edge of the rise.

Building 5 was not observed in 1957 but after the third ploughing a rectangular rubble area was observed 35 ft. by 15 ft. similar to building 4. There was no obvious sign of the toft boundaries, nor sign of a yard round this building.

Building 6. This was the largest building found being $53\frac{1}{2}$ ft. by $11\frac{1}{2}$ ft. internally. The east wall was a mixture of clunch and brick, while the west wall was built entirely of seventeenth-century bricks. The outer walls were 18 in. wide. The building was divided into two rooms by a 1 ft. wide partition the south room being $30\frac{1}{2}$ ft. long and the north 22 ft. long. The north room was paved with eighteenth-century paving tiles.⁴ Added on to the north end was a small outshut with 1 ft. thick walls 9 ft. by $7\frac{1}{2}$ ft. There was no evidence for doorways. As with buildings 2, 4, 7 and 5, building 6 was set parallel to, and right up to, the edge of the road. It was on a raised platform, the southern part of which was paved with carstone rubble, the yard being defined on the west by a boundary wall set back from the edge of the toft. To the north was a small hollow or pond similar to, but smaller than that on the other side of the road between tofts 3 and 4. This building with its outshut must have had a very similar appearance to the cottages by the church (Pl. 1). There is no evidence as to whether it was one cottage or two.

Building 7 was set in a toft on a terraced platform which showed no sign of metalling. Two fragments of walls, built mainly of clunch, were observed but it was not possible to make any coherent plan. It seemed likely that the foundation parallel with the road was a boundary wall and that the corner found set back was the south-east corner of a building. There was however surprisingly little rubble about and it is possible this building was constructed mainly of clay lump, as was the west wall of building 3.

No signs of structures, and little pottery was found to the north of building 6 or to the south of building 7 on the west side of the road.

The Road ran straight across the field from south to north with tofts and buildings on either side. At the south end it was sunken in the typical manner of deserted medieval villages.⁵ At the toft boundary of houses 3 and 7, however, it rose to ground level and for the rest of its course was largely traceable by its carstone metalling. This was very much more pronounced after the third ploughing as the plough had bitten more deeply into it and brought up more of the stone.

Cottages by the church. Surprisingly enough there was no sign of any structures where the water-colour (Pl. 1) shows that there were still cottages standing until the middle of the nineteenth century. There was a little rubble, but no more than in this part of the field generally. There was however a thick concentration of pottery in this area but none of it was later than the middle of the eighteenth century. There was no willow pattern or victoriana and it is thought that the cottages could not have been much inhabited during their later life.

Dating. There was a scatter of pottery dating from Saxo-Norman times until the middle of the eighteenth century. There were clearly medieval cottages in the field but no traces were visible on the surface and it is likely that they were built of clay lump or timber. The medieval village presumably covered quite a large area from the church and the moats to Butler's Cross on the main road. The pottery with buildings 1 and 2 was sixteenth and seventeenth century; with building 3, thirteenth to mid-eighteenth century; with building 4, thirteenth to mid-eighteenth century. No pottery was found with building 5. The pottery with building 6 ranged from the fourteenth century to the mid-eighteenth century; with building 7 the pottery was seventeenth and eighteenth century. Late medieval pottery was rare but there appeared to be continuity and there was no evidence for the gap in settlement suggested by the map of 1588.

All the pottery was unstratified and collected from the surface. No excavation was done. The best pieces have been illustrated in figs. 3-4. But it is not possible to say what period in the sixteenth-seventeenth or eighteenth century the coarse pottery may be dated.⁶

THE POTTERY

FROM THE SITE OF COTTAGES NORTH OF THE CHURCH

Thetford Ware, Saxo-Norman

- ✓ Fig. 1. Rim of a typical small cooking pot with simple rounded rim. As GP.I. A49 at Thetford (H.M.S.O. report forthcoming).
- ✓ Fig. 2. Rim of small Thetford cooking pot with angular inverted rim sharply hollowed inside and undercut outside. GP.I. A35 at Thetford.
- ✓ Fig. 3. Rim of a large straightsided bowl with inturned rim, diamond notch roulette along the top. Outside of rim roughly thumbed down along part of the edge. GP.I. B33 at Thetford.

Thetford out-turned rim and lid, these are not common.

Medieval and later, found 1956

- ✕ Thirteenth-century sherd with white slip decoration.
- Base of strap handle centrally thumbed and hollowed rim of a jug in hard red ware with white outer slip. Fourteenth century.
- Grey sherds, green glazed inside and out with patterns of girth grooves and applied thumbed band under the rim. Fifteenth century.
- Base rough grey ware with brown surfaces, bung hole with applied collar erratically slashed. Fifteenth century.
- Pipkin foot grey ware with brown outer surface, pale green inside glaze and dark green mottled orange outer glaze. Eighteenth century.
- Dark brown combed ware. Eighteenth century.
- Fragment of sack bottle, window glass. Seventeenth or eighteenth century.
- Fragment Siegburg stoneware. Sixteenth century.
- Fragment Frechen stoneware. Seventeenth century.
- Base of handle and handle of Fulham stoneware. Eighteenth century.
- Six fifteenth-century sherds and numerous seventeenth-century sherds.

*In the sample
no pottery as
storing at
from House 2*

*The only
SIXTEENTH
pottery
1000 years old
is STONEMARE
SIEGBURG
FRECHEN
CONCERN*

? shere

7

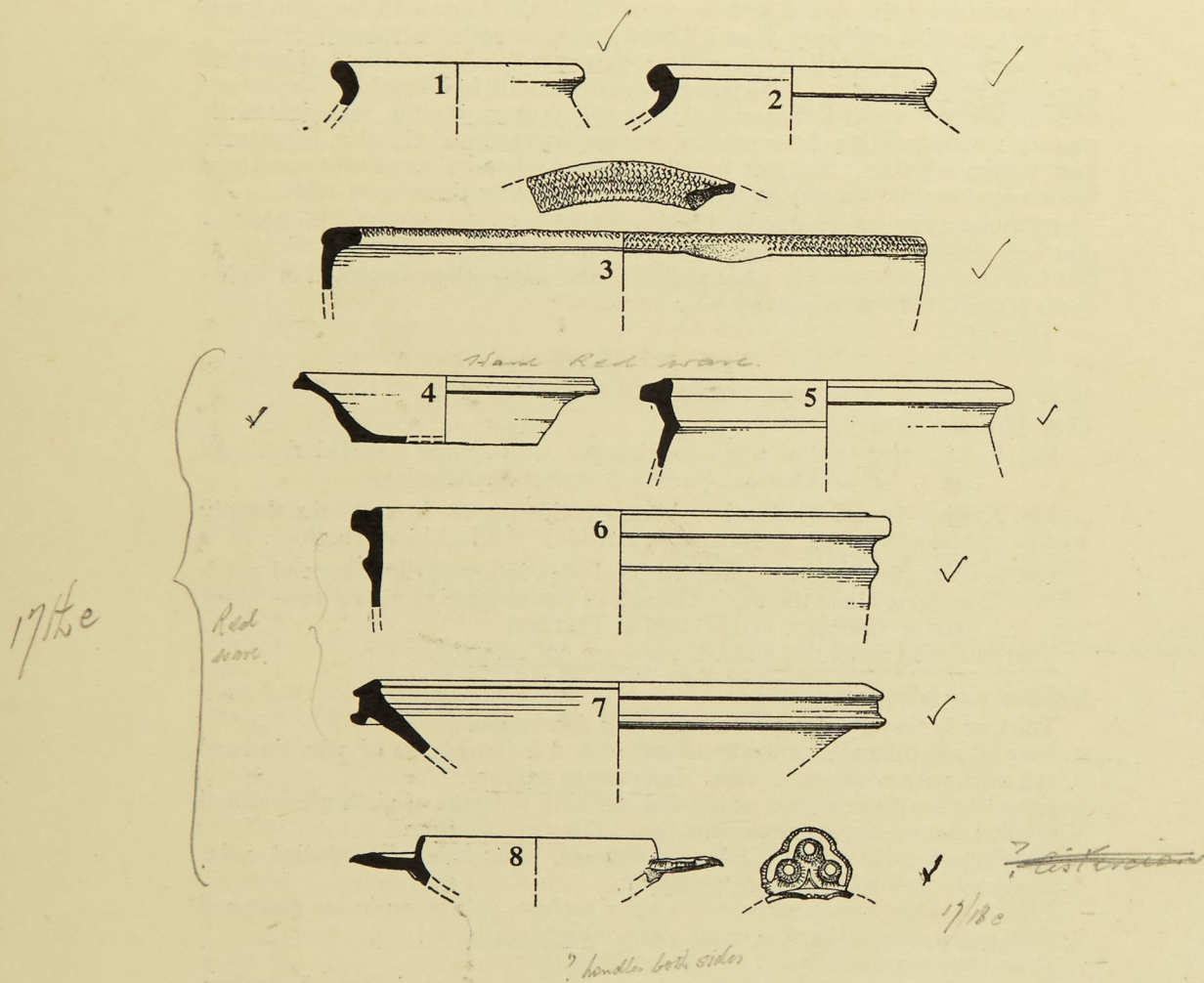
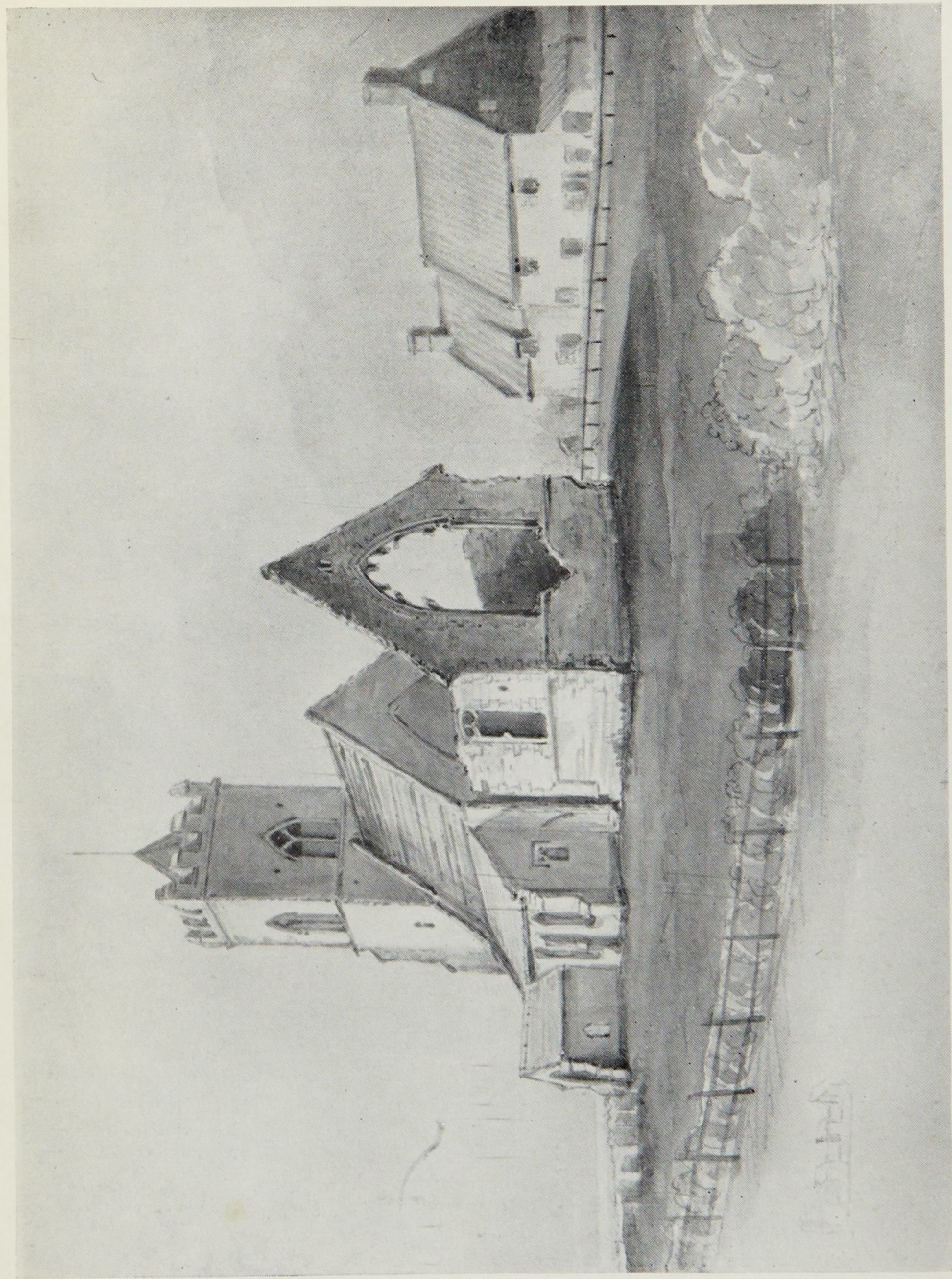


Fig. 3. Nos. 1—3 Thetford ware; Nos. 4—8 17th century pottery from various places in the field. (4)



Pl. 1. A water colour of 1841 show Babingley church with cottages still surviving to the north.

Found 1957-58

- Thirteenth-century glazed sherd. Fifteenth-century sherd.
- Twenty-six miscellaneous seventeenth-century sherds, including three rims.
- Eighteenth-century black glazed sherd.
- Bellarmine sherd, seventeenth century.
- Westerwald sherd, late seventeenth century.
- Rim Nottingham stoneware, eighteenth century.

Pottery collected during 1956-58 from various places in the field

- ✓ Fig. 4. Small open bowl hard red ware with brown surfaces and internal brown/green glaze. Outer surface much worn. Flat base slightly concave in centre. Side of uneven thickness, expanded rim with central hollow, seventeenth century.
- ✓ Fig. 5. Hard red ware cooking pot with mottled brown/yellow glaze inside and out. Expanded rim with sharp shoulder and internal beading.
- ✓ Fig. 6. Straight-sided deep bowl or storage vessel with flanged rim and cordon. Red ware with brown outer surface and brown glaze inside and out much worn.
- ✓ Fig. 7. Heavily moulded flanged bowl with internal grooves. Red ware with external white slip and brown glaze inside.
- ✓ Fig. 8. Small bowl with two horizontal handles. Hard red ware with dark brown glaze inside and out and patterned in yellow slip. Form copied from Delft bowl. ? 18c
- Two late medieval jug bases. Pipkin foot. Seventeenth century.
- Sherd. Fifteenth century. Sherd. Seventeenth century.

? Staffordshire
? Blacking cups

House 1—1956

Siegburg base. Sixteenth century. Cologne plain sherd. Sixteenth century.
Six fifteenth-century sherds. Pipkin base. Seventeenth century. ?

House 3—1956

Sagging base. Thirteenth century. Handle. Fourteenth century.
Eight fifteenth-century sherds. Three seventeenth-century sherds.
Fulham stoneware neck. Eighteenth century.

House 3—1957-58

- ✓ Sherd. Thirteenth century.
- ✓ Green glazed strap handle. Fourteenth century.
- ✓ Two late medieval jug bases. Handle and rim. Seventeenth century.
- ✓ Fig. 9. From the yard of *House 3—1957*
Large storage jar in red ware with patchy green/brown glaze. Simple inturred rim and row of deeply thumbbed hollows round the neck.

House 3 Yard—1956

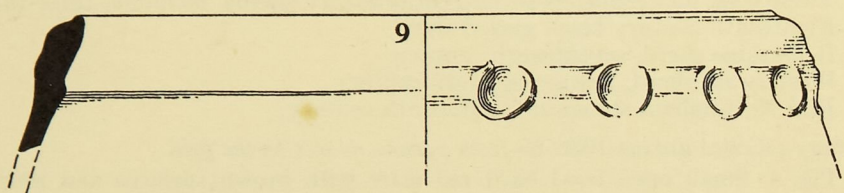
Two curved ridge tiles. Flat base. Fourteenth century.
Five fifteenth-century sherds. Eight seventeenth-century sherds.
Brown mottled Staffordshire posset pot, early eighteenth century.

House 3 Yard—1957-58

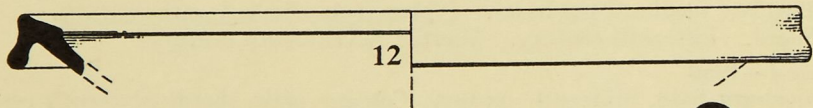
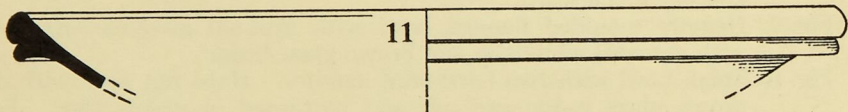
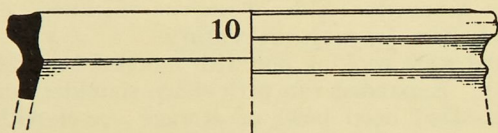
- ✓ Green glazed jug base. Fourteenth century. Two sherds, fifteenth-century

16/17
13/18 mid

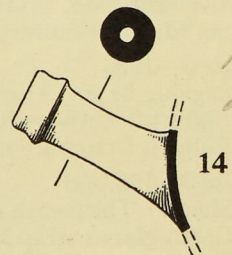
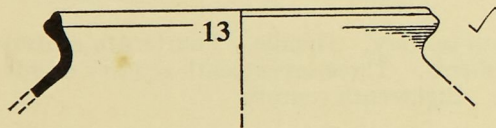
*Red ware
partly green/brown
glaze.*



*Hard red
ware
glazed
17/18c*



*Hard red ware
17c*



*Pipkin
handle
orange ware
glazed
on
body
not handle
17/18c*

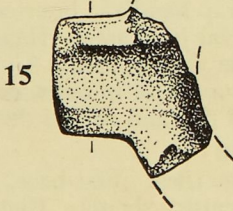


Fig. 4. No. 9 pottery from House 3; Nos. 10—12 pottery from House 4; Nos. 13—14 from House 6. No. 15 mortar from House 2. (†)

SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY COTTAGES AT BABINGLEY, NORFOLK 341.

jug with girth grooves.

✓ Strap handle. Fifteenth century. Rim. Seventeenth century.

✓ Mottled brown sherds. Eighteenth-century Staffordshire Tankard.

House 4—1956

|| Three sherds. Fifteenth century.

|| Nottingham stoneware. Eighteenth century.

House 4—1957-58

✓ Sherd. Thirteenth century. Glazed jug sherd. Fourteenth century.

✓ Sherd jug. Fifteenth century. Tudor rim.

✓ Fig. 10. House 6. Rim of storage jar with squared rim and cordoned below. Hard red ware with dark brown surfaces and dark brown/green glaze inside and out.

✓ Fig. 11. House 6. Rim of large bowl with rounded rim and small flange sharply cut, internal beading. Hard red ware with brown glaze inside.

✓ Fig. 12. House 6. Large bowl with deep flange. Hard red ware with brown outer surface and brown glaze inside.

House 6—1956

Sherd. Fifteenth century.

Clay pipe stem.

Twenty-seven seventeenth-century sherds.

Bellarmino sherd. Seventeenth century.

Stafford blob posset pot. Eighteenth century.

German slipware. Mid-seventeenth century.

Staffordshire ribbed tankard. Early eighteenth century.

Fulham blue painted stoneware. Eighteenth century.

House 6—1957-58

— Round jug handle. Fourteenth century.

— Base and sherd. Seventeenth century.

✓ Fig. 13. House 6. Pit in yard. Fairly simple rim of a cooking pot hollowed outside and internal beading. Hard red ware with worn brown glaze with patches of green. Despite the excessive mouldings on most seventeenth-century pottery some rims return very closely to the early medieval forms as in this instance.

Four seventeenth-century sherds.

Numerous cockle shells.

✓ Fig. 14. House 6. Yard. Pipkin handle. Orange ware with green and orange internal glaze and dark mottled green and orange glaze on the body but not on the handle outside.

House 7—1958

— Frechen stoneware sherd. Seventeenth century.

— Nottingham stoneware rilled neck. Eighteenth century.

Other Finds

House 2

✓ Fig. 15. Fragment of a mortar of shelly limestone, the origin of which is almost impossible to localize with certainty.

The finds have been deposited in the Norwich Castle Museum.

13/ mid
18

14/ mid
18

17/18

16/17

N/A

17/18/18

N/A

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Mr. B. Campbell for reporting the initial ploughing ; to Mr. and Mrs. B. Campbell and Messrs. P. Jewell, J. Letham and J. O. H. Nicholls for their help with the survey ; to the farmer, Mr. T. Neill for his co-operation in making the survey possible. Mr. B. Campbell kindly made a copy available of the nineteenth-century water-colour in his possession, Pl. 1. The pottery fig. 3. and fig. 4. was drawn by Mr. P. Ewence and the plans figs. 1. and 2. were traced by the Ancient Monuments Drawing Office of the Ministry of Works.

¹National Grid TF/670263. O.S. 25 in., XXII—12, Field 51.

²Illustrated in H. L. Bradfer-Lawrence *Castle Rising* (1932) p. 100. For original see P.R.O. E164/46 FO. 145.

³K. J. Allison, *Norf. Arch.*, Vol. XXXI (1955), pp. 142-3.

⁴Col. S. E. Glendenning, *Norf. Arch.*, Vol. XXXI (1955), p. 109.

⁵For other Norfolk examples see *Norf. Arch.*, Vol. XXXI (1955), Pls. I-VI.

⁶See *Norf. Arch.*, Vol. XXXI (1955), pp. 76-85 for discussion of this type of pottery.