

tion maps at face value, and that a weighting should be applied based on the level of metal-detecting activity. This, in Norfolk, is particularly important, given the wealth of artefactual and coin evidence within the Sites and Monuments Record from nearly twenty-five years of data collection.

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SEDFORD HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROJECT, 1996: FIRST INTERIM REPORT

edited by Neil Faulkner

This is a long-term multi-period research project aimed at investigating human settlement and land-use in a north-west Norfolk parish. A full range of historical and archaeological techniques are used: archive, cartographic and place-name research; field reconnaissance and survey; field-walking and metal-detecting; geophysical survey; air-photographic research; standing-building recording; archaeo-environmental research; exploratory test-pitting; and large-scale, open-area excavation. Work is concentrated in a six-week summer season, but many activities, such as historical research, fieldwalking and post-excavation, take place during the rest of the year. The project is an exercise in democratic archaeology: it is run by lecturers, students and other skilled volunteers; it provides training, experience and full participation for undergraduate students and other volunteers; it allows open access to the site for all visitors at all times; it aims for local curation and display of material; and, on a shoe-string budget, it is almost entirely dependent on generous contributions in kind from the local community.

Field-historical research *by* Steven Barnett *and* Janet Hammond

This season's work has shown the importance of the River Heacham and its environs to the medieval economy of Sedgeford. Riverine resources were exploited for food, materials for building, and other domestic usages. Documents from the 12th century onwards also report the use of the river for trade to and from the port of Heacham and further afield. The location of two recorded moated courts at the Priory Manor of Sedgeford is being ascertained by field reconnaissance, air-photography, resistivity survey, and a 17th-century estate map. Reconnaissance near the deserted medieval hamlet of Eaton has revealed possible canals linking Eaton and Sedgeford. Nearby there are also the remains of a medieval undershot water-mill with a bypass lock, important for determining the maximum size of river punts. Next season will see further documentary and field investigation of the construction and management of the manorial reed-dam, an artificial lake stocked with pike, where a commercially-important crop of reed was grown. Another priority will be to increase our understanding of river transport at Sedgeford and its relationship with coastal ports and the Fenland river systems. We await archaeological evidence to pinpoint buildings mentioned in the written record, and to build a picture of Saxon river usage at 'Old Sedgeford' south of the river.

Archaeo-environmental research *by* Stacey Hennessy

Work was directed towards a feasibility study that would allow efficient targeting of all future environmental input to

the project. Effort, therefore, focused on the collection of bulk soil and sediment samples from three distinct landscapes within the Heacham river-valley system: the natural chalk downland; the glacial sands and gravels; and the complex sequence of peats and silts along the river channel itself. Results of analyses are still awaited. However one elementary factor, discernible in the field, is worth noting here in brief. The micro-environment which had developed along the banks of the river can be viewed as an intricate relationship between natural events and human intervention. Of particular note is a homogeneous layer of calcareous clay within the river sequence which would appear to have been laid down in a single event. This was probably caused by a flood occurring after the initial damming of the river in the construction of the reed-dam. Modification of the channel has resulted in silting and subsequent development of a wet woodland. It is just such examples of the interaction between past inhabitants and the natural environment which will be explored in greater detail in future seasons.

The parish church of St Mary the Virgin by Susan Fielding

This season started a long-term recording project on Sedgeford church in order to produce a complete structural history. The work consisted of a gravestone survey, a ground plan, the beginning of a stone-by-stone record, and general recording of other features. The gravestone survey involved a written and visual record of each stone within the cemetery. Those dated range from 1700-1890 (after which a new cemetery came into use). The main concentration occurred in the period 1780-1890, with particularly large numbers in 1790-1800 and 1840-80. Not all graves could be dated or sexed, but the frequency of males was slightly higher than females at a ratio of 66 to 51. Only seven children were present compared with 106 adults; all were male. The church consists of many architectural phases, mainly of high medieval date. The earliest feature is the round tower, containing two triangular windows, one of which is now blocked off. This may suggest a foundation date in the Late Saxon period, but there are reasons to suspect that the tower is actually early Norman (late 11th-early 12th century). Much of the rest may be dated stylistically to the 13th-15th centuries, with some possible rebuilding in the Tudor period.

Test-pitting and geophysical survey at West Hall by Andrea Cox and Peter Carnell

West Hall paddock lies south of the church and west of West Hall Farm. Random test-pitting and an electrical-resistivity survey were undertaken. Four trenches were excavated. Trenches 1 and 2 revealed deep occupation deposits (pot, bone and shell), and also a peaty deposit containing preserved plant remains. Trench 3 yielded a wall with collapsed painted plaster and a cobbled surface to its north. Excavation in Trench 4 was not completed due to time restrictions. With such small-scale excavations, interpretations remain largely conjectural. However, the wall represents a collapsed structure, the surface perhaps a track, and the pottery ranges in date from the Saxo-Norman to the later medieval periods. Two resistivity surveys were conducted. The high-density survey in the paddock revealed a complex structure beneath the soil: the road/wall (before excavation), large rectangular features, and distinct wetter 'pits'. Two higher-conductivity areas astride the road/wall suggest the presence of a gateway. All of the above possibly relate to the medieval manor complex, while the survey east of the farm showed a linear feature whose width, position and gradient suggest the southern arm of the moat. False-colour imaging and 3D correlations of the geophysics and the excavations should further improve visualisation of the site.

The Late Saxon Christian cemetery on Boneyard by Nicholas Cooke and Andrew Gardner

The main focus of the season's work was the preliminary investigation of a field, close to Sedgeford but south of the Heacham, known locally as 'Boneyard'. Excavations in 1957-58 by Dr Peter Jewell had revealed evidence of Middle and Late Saxon occupation and a Late Saxon Christian inhumation cemetery. A 20m x 15m trench was opened between two areas of known inhumations, with the aim of investigating the cemetery further. In addition to burials, the excavations also revealed a complex series of ditches, gullies and pits dating from the Middle Saxon to Early Medieval periods.

Middle Saxon activity. Preliminary analysis suggested at least three phases of Middle Saxon linear features, the latest of which was a large V-shaped ditch, aligned north-west to south-east and over 1.4m deep. Three rubbish pits were found, the largest of which contained an unusual deposit: the upper half of a high-quality Ipswich Ware pitcher had been used as an ad hoc container, with a base and sides of raw clay, and within it were two distinct burnt deposits.

Late Saxon/Saxo-Norman activity. Excavations in the western half of the site uncovered a portion of the cemetery. This appeared to be bounded by a shallow gully running west-to-east across the site. In all, 19 skeletons were uncovered, with 15 being fully excavated. All lay W-E in a supine position. They were all cut into the top of a layer of natural orange subsoil, but grave cuts were often difficult to identify given the nature of the surrounding matrix. The density of inhumations was greater further down the slope, and in some cases coffin nails were present. Five small pits were also dated to this period.

Early Medieval activity. The dominant feature of this period was a large north-to-south ditch, possibly associated with the southern ditch of the reed-dam. It appeared that the excavation of this ditch had disturbed graves in the cemetery,

since its fill contained human remains. The fill of the ditch had been cut by a stone-packed gully (possibly a footing-trench), which was in turn cut by a narrow east-to-west gully. The only other feature dating to this period was a small pit. Excavations in 1997 will focus further on the cemetery, and on defining the extent of the two large ditches.

The Boneyard skeletons by Raoul Bull, Meredith Thompson and Russell Wigglesworth

In addition to a large quantity of fragmentary, unarticulated human bone, thirteen relatively complete undisturbed skeletons were excavated. Preliminary study suggests twelve adults, exhibiting a reasonable degree of sexual dimorphism, and one juvenile aged 8-9 for whom gender identification was impossible. Very little pathology was evident, with the exception of four possible cases of osteoarthritis in older individuals (three of the lumbar spine and one of the radial articulation of the right elbow). There was no evidence for other pathological conditions or trauma. It was noted that, as a rule, the individuals buried were quite tall in stature. There were three isolated instances of *in situ* articulated leg, ankle and foot bones where the remainder of the skeleton had not survived. The skeletons were generally well preserved, although there was some loss of cortical bone, and signs of later disturbance. The teeth examined had extensive wear on their occlusal surface, and dentine exposures would probably have occurred within a few years of eruption. Decay was not common and, when found, was generally associated with impacted wisdom teeth. Abscesses were associated with exposed dentine from wear as opposed to dental decay. Gum disease was stable, although large calculus deposits were very common.

Test-pitting in the Reed-dam by Gabor Thomas

Five test pits were excavated in the area of the medieval reed-dam, situated in the valley bottom south of the current river channel and north of Boneyard. All but one (test pit 2) were excavated to the natural subsoil, revealing a clear sequence of deposits across much of the site. This included a Middle Saxon occupation level characterised by rubbish deposits containing large quantities of Ipswich Ware and animal bone. Other diagnostic artefacts from this phase included several decorated fragments of bone comb. This deposit was immediately overlain by an archaeologically sterile, chalky-clay deposit of variable thickness, possibly associated with the original construction of the reed-dam in the 13th century. The Middle Saxon midden deposits in turn overlaid an earlier phase of activity represented by archaeological features which included small ditches and gullies cut into the natural sandy subsoil. One of the most interesting features of this phase, a large pit over 1m in depth and filled with layers of rammed chalk and flint packing, was possibly the foundation or footing for a substantial timber structure. The dating of this phase is uncertain, but a shallow pit from one of the test-pits contained a decorated fragment of a Late Iron Age flanged bowl.

Results and Prospects

Work in the river valley near Sedgeford has shown that this area is rich in archaeological evidence for the Middle Saxon period onwards. South of the river Heacham, on the Boneyard and Reed-dam sites, there is evidence for an extensive Middle to Late Saxon settlement – now better defined by preliminary results from the fieldwalking and metal-detecting survey, a substantial Saxo-Norman cemetery, and large-scale hydraulic engineering to develop the river for communications, boundaries, drainage, irrigation, and faunal resources. These results, combined with evidence at the church and West Hall, may indicate a shift of settlement focus from Middle to Late Saxon ‘Old Sedgeford’ south of the river to Saxo-Norman ‘New Sedgeford’ to the north; alternatively, this change may indicate a shift from an earlier dispersed settlement to a later nucleated one. These issues raises many related research questions which will be the focus of work in the Boneyard, Reed-dam and church/West Hall areas in 1997 and beyond. A major feature of the project henceforward will be the Parish Survey, an exploration of both downland arable and river-valley pasture and woodland using non-destructive methods. This is being done by means of air photography (with the assistance of RAF Marham), fieldwalking, metal-detecting and shovel-testing, field-historical research methods, and by electrical-resistivity survey (which we hope to motorise). The foundation given to the project in its first year will also enable us to increase opportunities for education, training and practical experience for students, volunteers and visitors in the 1997 season. Those who may wish to contribute are invited to establish contact by joining The Friends of the Sedgeford Historical and Archaeological Research Project

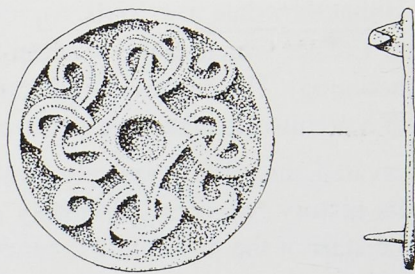


Fig. 1

Late Saxon brooch found during fieldwalking and metal-detecting survey (winter 1996/97) near the site of the Mid-Late Saxon settlement and Saxo-Norman cemetery, Sedgeford.

Scale 1:1

(application forms are available from Janet Hammond, Project Co-ordinator, Hill Farm, Church Lane, Sedgeford, Hunstanton, Norfolk, PE36 5NA).

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BLOODGATE HILL, SOUTH CREAKE: A RECENTLY DISCOVERED EARLY SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY MAP

by Andrew Rogerson *and* Steven Ashley

An important and hitherto unrecorded map of the north-west part of South Creake parish, which shows the Iron Age hill fort on Bloodgate Hill (Co. no. 1910), has recently been brought to Norfolk Landscape Archaeology's attention and saved for posterity, through the vigilance of Philip West who has deposited it at the Norfolk Record Office (NRO NC 691/1).

Measuring 910mm by 720mm and drawn at a scale of 1" to 20 perches (1:3960), the newly discovered map is contemporary with, and exactly conjoins, another one which depicts most of the north-east segment of the parish (NRO BL 35). Although neither is signed or dated, Robert Silvester, who is making a study of William Haiwarde, considers that they are working copies in