



# Durobrivae

A Review of Nene Valley  
Archaeology : 1  
1973



# Durobrivae: a review of Nene Valley Archaeology

## Editor's Note

'By the advanced state of the arts and the general demand for archaeological information, antiquarian publications have been rendered less hazardous than formerly.'

These words sum up well our feelings in issuing this first review of Nene Valley archaeology; but they were written in about 1846, probably by Edmund Artis, the first Nene Valley archaeologist. The book which he was advertising — a companion to his famous *Durobrivae of Antoninus* — unfortunately never appeared.

We hope that our review *Durobrivae* will go some way to meet the 'general demand for archaeological information' about the current programme of excavation in the Nene Valley and its main discoveries.

John Peter Wild

Nene Valley Research Committee

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The Nene Valley Research Committee wishes to record its thanks to the following: Mrs Jenny Coombs for the drawings of the Perio finds, Mr. Michael J. Snelgrove for the drawings of the tools from Lynch Farm, and Professor S.S. Frere for permission to use his published plans of the Longthorpe fortress in the general plan of the Longthorpe Scheduled Area. The Royal Ontario Museum kindly provided the photographs of the Bedford Purlicus pot (ROM copyright reserved).

Particular thanks are due to the Peterborough Development Corporation Design Group for much practical help with design and layout.

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*The cover shows the colour-coated Hunt Cup found near Wansford in the Nene Valley (see page 27).*

# The Year's Work: 1972

By John Peter Wild

1972 marked a turning-point in archaeological research in the Nene Valley. For the first time the threat to archaeological monuments posed by the development of Greater Peterborough made a practical—and unwelcome—impact on several major archaeological sites. Not just the archaeology, but in places even the geology of the Valley was changing—or so it seemed! Excavations took place for the first time, not with two years' grace, but under the shadow of the contractors' earth-moving machinery.

Emergency excavation is nothing new in the Nene Valley. In the days of private patronage, Mr E.T.Artis, Steward to the Earls Fitzwilliam from about 1820 to 1847, made himself the leading British expert on Roman pottery and its production through his excavations in the Nene Valley. It is interesting for us to note that in 1844-5 he mentions his salvage excavations as the railway builders came up the valley, cutting through some important Roman sites in their path. The tale has a familiar ring!

The first large-scale threat to sites in modern times, the widening of the A1 road in 1957-8, caused national concern. At the instigation of the Council for British Archaeology the Waternewton Excavation Committee (now the Nene Valley Research Committee) was set up. Its members represent many universities, museums and national and local organisations. The Committee has strong support locally from the Archaeological Field Section of the Peterborough Museum Society and the Middle Nene Archaeological Group. Together they cover the Lower and Middle Nene from Peterborough to Thrapston.

The planning of the New Town of Greater Peterborough in 1966 caused renewed pressure on archaeological resources. A survey of the antiquities in the designated area of the new town was undertaken by Mr C.C.Taylor and his colleagues at the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments and published in 1969. The most important sites were scheduled as Ancient Monuments by the (now) Department of the Environment.

The financial aspect of the necessary archaeological work caused most problems. The Nene Valley Research Committee decided at the outset to create an Archaeological Establishment, headed by a full-time Director of Excavations, and sought help from the Department of the Environment, the Peterborough Development Corporation, the Peterborough City Corporation and the Huntingdon and Peterborough County Council. All four bodies contributed, after a fairly lengthy period of negotiations. A national appeal was launched in 1972 and has raised so far over £3,000 in

donations and under covenant; but the bill for 1973 alone will be over £30,000.

In the first years of the emergency the excavations were directed on a part-time basis by G.B.Dannell and J.P.Wild, joined later by A.Challands and F.M.M.Pryor. In October 1972 D.F.Mackreth was appointed full-time Director of Excavations, so one of the Committee's original goals has been achieved. The participation of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, was an unexpected and most welcome contribution to the common effort.

This short survey of work before 1972 and its organisation can serve as a prelude to a brief review of excavations undertaken in 1972. Many of them are described in greater detail later in this journal.

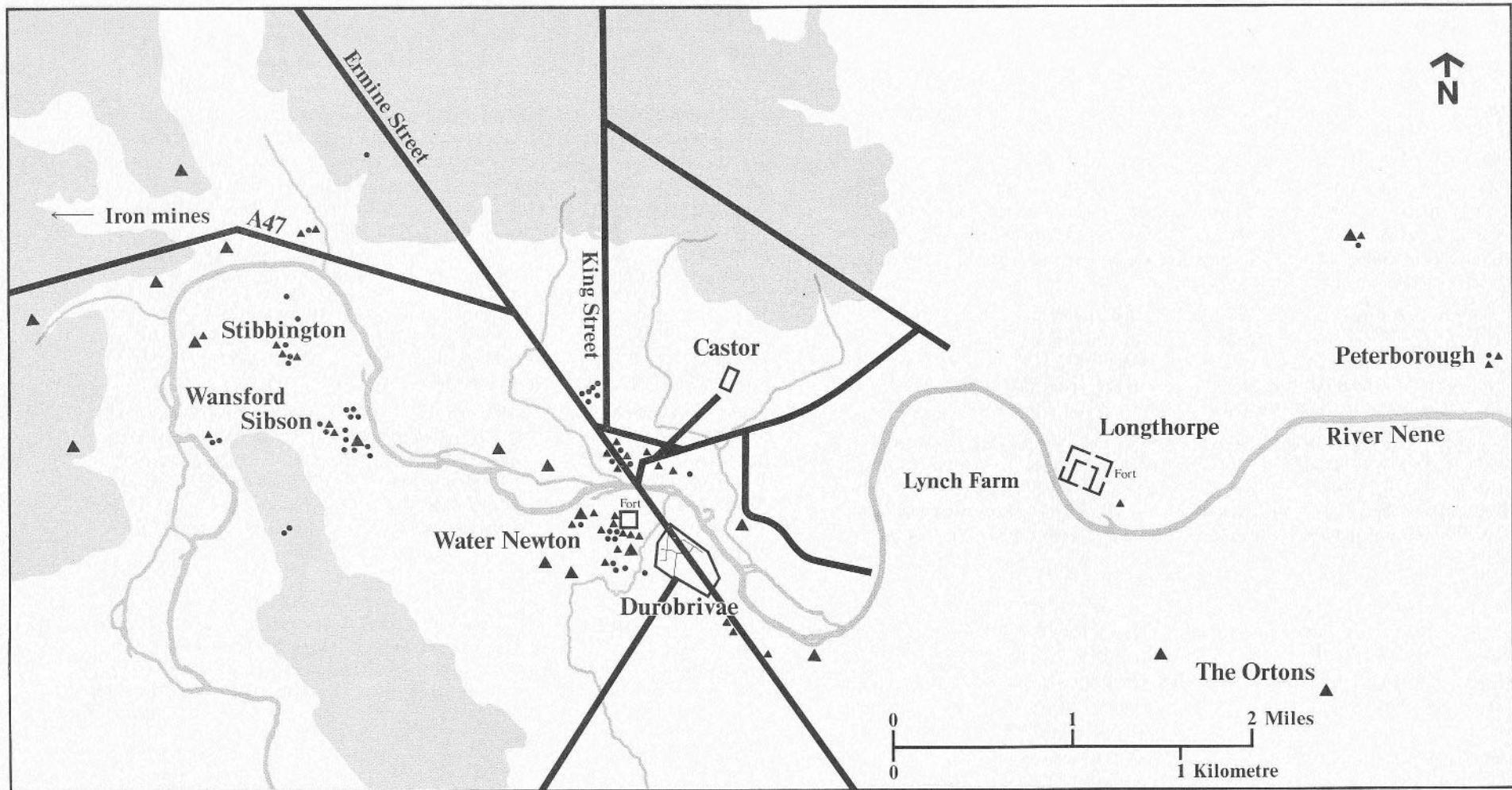
The prehistoric sites at *Fengate* in Peterborough, threatened by rapid industrial expansion, fulfilled their promise in 1972. Excavation from May to September by F.M.M.Pryor for the Royal Ontario Museum revealed a neolithic house (see p.18), the first in England. Nearby was evidence of dense occupation throughout the Iron Age. A series of waterlogged pits here were unusually rich in organic material, which will give a rare insight into questions such as that of the diet in the Iron Age.

At *Maxey* in the Welland Valley A.Challands was able to record 7 ring-ditches with cremation burials before they were destroyed by gravel extraction. The growth of Peterborough will clearly bring with it similar threats to archaeological remains outside the designated area of the new town, as material for road construction and building is sought.

At *Lynch Farm* in the Ferry Meadows, Orton Waterville, an artificial lake is currently being created as a centre for watersports. It affected three sites in 1972 (see p.4). A major prehistoric site has long been known here from aerial photographs. So far as possible, this is to be preserved; but work outside its Scheduled Area was in hand throughout the year under A.Challands. His report (p.22) indicates the long occupation of the area, from neolithic till Late Roman times. Its importance and size is only rivalled by *Fengate*.

In the course of mechanical clearance an extensive Roman site was revealed outside the protected area at Lynch Farm. Emergency excavation here (see p.7) by G.B.Dannell and J.P.Wild, lasting from May to August, recovered the details of a Roman drainage scheme, a fishpond and some interesting half-timbered buildings. Whether these belong to an estate of villa type is





- ▲ Villa or large Roman building
- ▲ Small Roman building
- Potter's kiln
- Land over 100 feet (height)
- Roman roads

Fig 1 Map of archaeological sites in the Nene Valley

not yet certain; but recent fieldwalking of the Scheduled Area has revealed some well-built Roman structures there which may belong to the same establishment.

The third team working at Lynch Farm in 1972 under R.F.J.Jones excavated part of the stockyard of what may be the same Roman farm, and its cemetery (see p.13). There are still some outstanding problems at Lynch Farm, particularly relating to the early Roman features, perhaps military, which underlie the agricultural settlement.

Traces were noted over 100 years ago of an extensive Roman settlement on the western side of Peterborough City. A small excavation was directed by A.Challands off the *Fulham Road* at Easter 1972, when he was able to show that first-century timber buildings were succeeded by much more substantial stone buildings on the site.

At *Longthorpe* the Roman fortress found in 1961 is well-known. Further work was undertaken in 1972 in the military depot found in 1970 east of the fortress. The Scheduled Area at Longthorpe, as recent excavations have shown (see p.9, fig. 2), has a much greater significance that was realised when it was taken into guardianship by the Department of the Environment.

No archaeological exploration of mediaeval Peterborough could be undertaken until October 1972 when D.F.Mackreth began work on the site of the Development Corporation's new office block in *Tout Hill Close*. A huge twelfth-century quarry pit was found to have been backfilled and in due course to have carried later mediaeval housing. Peterborough was a relatively small place in the Middle Ages, and so every piece of new development, as D.F.Mackreth has pointed out, destroys a correspondingly higher proportion of the archaeological evidence.

In *Castor* D.F.Mackreth examined, during building work, a group of mediaeval buildings at Potter's Oven at the top of the hill. He suggests (see p.14) that a humbler dwelling of the eleventh century was eventually succeeded by what may have looked like a small manor.

These are the results of excavation in 1972, when for most of the year the Nene Valley had no full-time archaeological staff. Development already promised for 1973-4 is wide-ranging—and to the archaeologist horrifying. The same questions of finance, of personnel, of publication and of greater protection for the most important sites will recur in a more acute form. The Nene Valley Research Committee will need all the local, national and international support which it can raise.



# Longthorpe, an essay in continuity

By John Peter Wild

The area at Longthorpe scheduled as an Ancient Monument by the Department of the Environment contains in microcosm all Nene Valley archaeology. Within the 100 acres in guardianship lies at least one representative of virtually every class of archaeological feature or site found elsewhere in the valley. Most are unusually good examples of their type, and one monument, the Roman fortress with its attendant pottery kilns, is unique in western Europe.

In 1972 road construction work made serious inroads into the eastern sector of the Scheduled Area. Building development on a further 8 acres is promised for 1973-4. While these threats to a major monument are clearly unwelcome, the Nene Valley Research Committee has nevertheless managed to keep abreast of the problem so far. The western half of the area containing the Roman fortress has now been laid down to golf-links, giving it some measure of protection.

In the light of these developments it seemed appropriate to review the known archaeology of Longthorpe and emphasise those aspects which are important.

## The Sites

The Scheduled Area is characterised by a low sandy ridge running E-W and capping deposits of gravel and clay. Most of the sites recognised so far lie at about 40-45 feet OD, just clear of the winter flood-level. Although aerial photography has produced some remarkable results in the area under suitable crop-conditions, excavation shows that this is merely the tip of the iceberg.

## The First Settlers

A persistent scatter of flint implements, including a fine leaf-shaped arrowhead and worked flints, on the eastern end of the ridge show that there was a settlement here in the neolithic period (before 3000 B.C.). No structure has been found, but the ridge gives a view across the Nene towards Lynch Farm where there was another neolithic site (see p.22).

Three ring-ditches were detected on the aerial photographs on the south-east slope of the ridge. One, measuring about 25 metres across, was excavated in 1970, but no dating evidence was obtained. In 1712, it is said, the burial-mounds in the centre of the rings were still visible.

## The Iron-Age Farms

Aerial photographs revealed clearly the ditched enclosures of a small, but complete, Iron-Age farm (Farm I) at the eastern end of the ridge. This was excavated in 1970-72. Another farm (Farm II) of similar type lies about 250 metres further north-west, but has not yet been examined on the ground.

Farm I comprised two conjoined enclosures, the larger measuring just under  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre. The surrounding ditches were about 3 metres wide and 2.50 metres deep and had an irregular V-shaped profile. From the northern enclosure a driveway led down towards the river. Hand-made calcite-gritted pottery from the site, supported by a few better-quality sherds in Belgic style, suggest a Late Iron-Age date for the establishment.

The enclosures may have been stockyards rather than arable fields; for they seem too small for growing crops. The northern enclosure had a stout palisade set around the *outside* of its ditch. No buildings were found, despite a careful search.

The farm was notable for its burials—at least three crouched burials of young people, and four dogs. The Romans may have been responsible for at least two of the deaths.

## The Fortress

An unexpected discovery at Longthorpe, made from the air in 1961, was a 27 acre Roman fortress. It lies in a strong tactical position on the ridge with wide views north and south. Recent excavations by Professor S.S.Frere and Dr J.K.S.St Joseph have revealed something of its defences and internal arrangements.

The dump rampart of the fortress, now ploughed away, was protected externally by a pair of ditches, each 2 metres deep and 4 metres wide. There were four gates, of which the north and east gates have been excavated. They have double portals 4 metres wide and are flanked by guard-chambers 3.30 metres square.

The internal buildings were all of timber and their plans can be recovered from the sleeper-trenches in which the wooden uprights were set. The fortress evidently faced south towards the Nene, although no road is known leaving the fortress in that direction. The headquarters building in the centre, set around a courtyard, measured 53.6 by 48.8 metres. Immediately

west of it there are traces of what may have been the Commandant's House. In the northern sector of the fortress two granaries, a barrack-block and a large courtyard building which may have been a storehouse have been recorded. It has not yet proved possible to dig south of the Headquarters Building where most of the barrack accommodation may have lain.

The fortress was founded soon after the invasion of A.D. 43. It may have held a legionary detachment responsible for keeping a discreet watch on the semi-independent kingdom of the Iceni in East Anglia. If this was the role of the Longthorpe garrison, it failed. The revolt of Boudicca in A.D. 60 could not be nipped in the bud.

The troop-movements of A.D. 60 and 61 were not without effect at Longthorpe. A single ditch enclosing the central buildings of the fortress and cutting across existing structures may have been dug by a small Roman force on the defensive. However, the defeat of the Iceni and their allies restored peace and allowed the evacuation of Longthorpe in about A.D. 65.

### **The Military Pottery**

Excavation of the Iron-Age Farm I in 1971 and 1972 brought evidence of unexpected Roman activity on the site. Soon after their arrival, the Romans backfilled the western enclosure-ditches of the farm and all along the outer edge built batteries of pottery kilns. They survive today as circular reddened patches of gravel with a scatter of burnt clay, about 1.30 metres across. There is often a slight indication of a shallow, soot-filled, stokehole, but nothing more substantial.

We dismissed these features as ovens on first discovery, but potsherds found in pits and ditches nearby were so uniform—and so different from the known Nene Valley types—that the conclusion was forced upon us that they were pottery kilns, built on the contemporary ground surface. This hypothesis was confirmed by the finds of 1972.

So far over 30 of these surface-built kilns have been excavated. It has been plausibly suggested that their walls were constructed of turves. A mushroom-shaped terracotta object found in 1972 may be a prefabricated pedestal supporting the intermediate floor of firebars. A few fragments of such firebars have been found on the site, but out of context.

A short emergency excavation at Easter 1972 added a great deal of new information. On the line of a proposed contractor's road a group of three

pottery kilns was located, linked to a common stokehole (fig.3). Two of the kilns were of a type not encountered at Longthorpe before, but normal elsewhere. They were dug below ground level. The third kiln was much shallower, perhaps intermediate between the dug and surface-built types.

The larger of the two dug kilns was 56 centimetres deep and 110 centimetres in diameter. Its circular firing-chamber was lined with clay, and a central bollard supported the wedge-shaped firebars of the oven floor. The bollard was made of round fire-bricks, luted together with clay.

The sequence of kilns around the stokehole suggests that the dug kilns may be the earlier type, but both dug and surface-built kilns are dated by the associated samian ware to the years A.D. 50-65. The pottery which they were firing was superb. It is characterised by a fine oxydised fabric, pink or pinkish cream on the surface. The range of vessels includes double- and single-handled flagons and small jars with neat cavetto, beaded or everted rims. There are small unstamped mortaria and close copies of the samian dish form 15/17 with a red slip inside and out. Cheese presses throw an interesting sidelight on the soldiers' diet.

From the pits and ditches came an important series of small bronzes, many of them military equipment. The kilns lie only 500 metres from the south-east corner of the fortress, and the conclusion that they were run by the military is inescapable. The potters, however, may have been civilian, but not British; for their repertoire stems from the Rhineland.

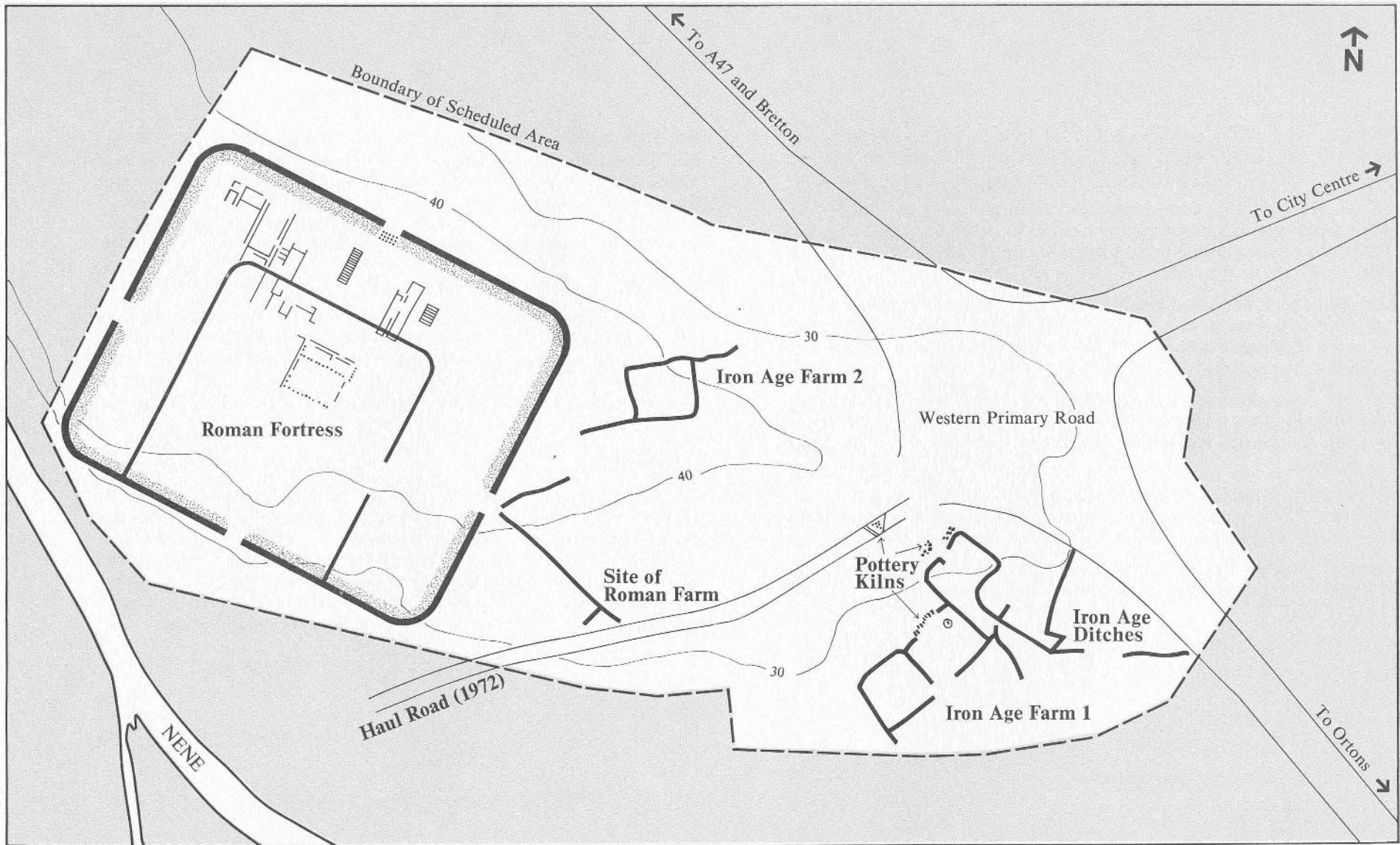
A works-depot of this kind is a rare find in the western Roman provinces. At that date it is so far unique.

### **The Roman Farm**

In the Roman period the Nene Valley presented an unbroken vista of agricultural holdings of all shapes and sizes. Farming paid—and was the main livelihood of the local population, whether they worked on the land or supplied the farmers' needs in the market-town of *Durobrivae* (Chesterton).

When the fortress was evacuated, the land was sold—or let—to a Roman farmer. The main enclosure ditches of the Iron-Age farm had accumulated layers of greeny-grey material, apparently weathered clay from the military potters' activities. They were deliberately filled in; for the small yards of the Iron Age were out of keeping with the needs of more sophisticated farming methods.





The Ancient Monuments at Longthorpe, showing the Roman fortress, the Iron-Age ditches and the military pottery kilns. The modern roads are shown in outline.

Fig 2 Longthorpe: the Scheduled Area

Before the end of the second century the eastern ditches of the lower enclosure had additionally been capped with limestone to prevent subsidence and allow carts across. There is no sign of any structure here.

Indications that there were substantial farm buildings at Longthorpe dating to the third and fourth centuries came in 1970 and 1971 in the form of debris dumped into the tops of large pits. In 1972 surviving structures were found for the first time.

The contractor's haul-road cut at Easter 1972 passed straight through a later Roman farmyard. In it was a stone-built corn-dryer and a smithing furnace. The whole area was criss-crossed with drainage ditches to carry off the surface water from the hillside.

The corn-dryer measured 3.45 by 3.60 metres overall. A single stone-lined flue-channel passed round three sides of a central masonry platform. Its stokehole, cut into the natural clay, had been reduced in size after an initial period of use.

The smithing furnace was closely similar to those discovered at Lynch Farm in 1972. A small clay-lined chamber was linked to the soot-filled firebox by a long narrow flue.

South of these features at least four burials in a small cemetery were uncovered. They date to the fourth century, and presumably belong to the farm.

There was no sign of a farm-building on the haul-road line, but north of the

corn-dryer unplanned stripping by the contractors revealed the well-built walls of a rectangular building. This could not be fully recorded, but must relate to the farm. Surface scatters of pottery, tile and stone in the same area hint that there was an extensive building complex there. Longthorpe, it seems clear, bore a flourishing agricultural holding in the fourth century, similar to the many 'villas' further west up the Nene.

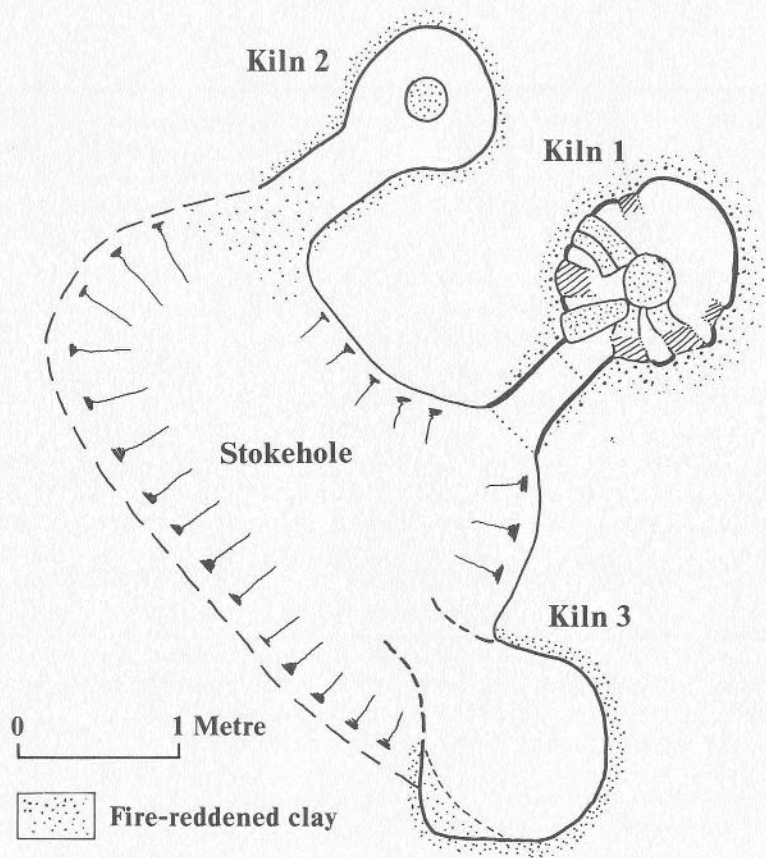
### **The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery**

On the site of the Roman fortress at the western end of the Scheduled Area part of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery was excavated by Professor Frere and Dr. St Joseph in 1968. Dating probably to the sixth century, it has produced so far 22 cremation burials in pots and 2 inhumations. There is no trace of the settlement to which the Anglo-Saxons belonged, but it need not be far away.

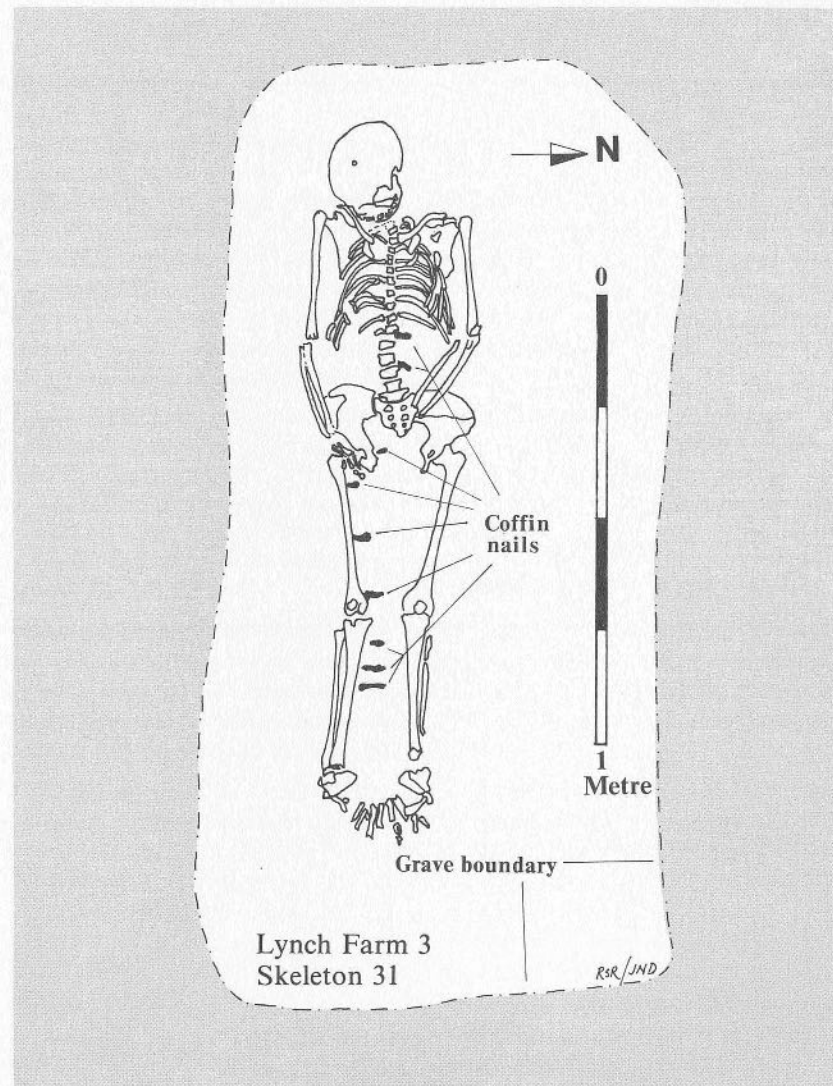
### **Prospect**

The monuments in the Longthorpe Scheduled Area illustrate brilliantly the processes of political, social and economic change in antiquity. They are above all impressive proof of the extent to which the fertile land of the Nene Valley attracted and held settlers, with few breaks, for several thousand years. The present destruction of these and similar monuments is the destruction of the Nene Valley's roots; and archaeologists of the future, equipped with new techniques, will regret this more than we do.





**Fig 3 Plan of three Roman pottery kilns found at Longthorpe at Easter 1972**



**Fig 4 Burial No. 31 in the Lynch Farm cemetery**

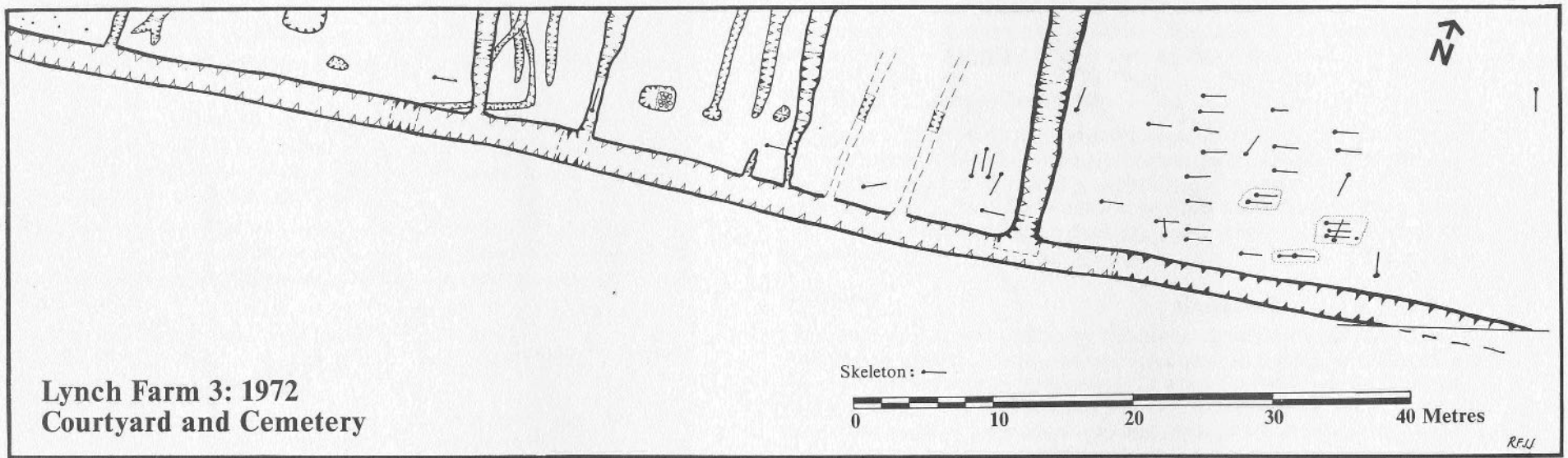


Fig 5 Lynch Farm 3, courtyard and cemetery



# A Romano-British Cemetery and Farmstead at Lynch Farm

By Richard Jones

Among the various sites excavated in 1972 in advance of the creation of the Nene Park Lake was the edge of an extensive series of features revealed by aerial photographs. It was intended by the Department of the Environment that the whole complex should be preserved as an Ancient Monument, but a slight miscalculation of its area meant that the zone of destruction in fact encroached upon its southern limits.

The main features seen from the air on the edge of the complex were revealed in our excavations as the ditches of a Romano-British farm. A surprise, however, came in the discovery during stripping of the topsoil of a substantial inhumation cemetery, showing possible Christian characteristics. It was contemporary with the farm and probably contained its inhabitants.

Unfortunately many burials had been much damaged by ploughing, down to a depth of about half a metre. As a result, only about 21 out of a total of at least 51 burials could be regarded as complete. All but one of the burials were inhumations. The single cremation was contained in two, almost complete, colour-coated pots, which were probably placed inside a wooden casket, since some iron nails were found with them.

The cemetery had a clear nucleus, where about 35 burials were laid out in at least four rows. They lay mostly on an east-west alignment with heads to the west. The other graves were spread over the site, and two were actually in the ditches. Generally, there was very little overlapping of graves, which suggests that there was a system for marking them. In four cases there seemed to be some special attraction to particular spots, perhaps family plots. In one pit were the remains of six adults and a baby, with each interment ruthlessly cut through the earlier ones. Evidence for wooden coffins came from 16 graves. Grave-goods, however, were rare. Only three graves contained them: one a bronze finger-ring, one a bone bracelet and bone comb, and one a small colour-coated beaker. Only the beaker need have had a specifically funerary purpose. The skeletal remains themselves are at the time of writing being analysed by Dr. D.H. Fulton of Kings Cliffe.

The amount of plough damage meant that only the lowest parts of the farm's pits and ditches had survived. Nevertheless, there was enough evidence to confirm the suggestion (Taylor (1969), 32) that the main feature was a 'courtyard' enclosure. This was defined by ditches much larger than the others, up to 3 metres wide, and it contained signs of quite intensive activity in the form of pits and small ditches. In contrast, on the east was what seemed to be an extension of the main courtyard. In the south-west corner of this annexe lay the cemetery nucleus, but otherwise it was barren and featureless, and may perhaps have been a stockyard. Many animal bones were found in the ditches, but little more can yet be said about the kind of farming undertaken here.

Apart from one pit producing Late Iron-Age pottery all the features appeared to be of roughly the same period, that is, from the third until well into the fourth century. It seems clear that the farm and the cemetery were in operation at the same time and we may assume that it was the people from the farm who were buried there. Perhaps the cemetery began in the nucleus, but then such orderliness was given up and the burials spread across the whole area.

The scarcity of grave-goods may reflect the poverty of peasant farmers, but the predominance of east-west alignments makes it more likely that Christian burial fashions had been adopted by the local community; for Christians were traditionally buried without the grave-goods which the pagans felt they might need in the afterlife.

This site appears to be broadly contemporary with the aisled barn and fishpond to the east across Ham Lane. However, it seems clear that the two sites formed distinct foci of settlement, the cemetery lying between them. Thus despite their close proximity their relationship must remain a matter for further research.

## Bibliography

Taylor (1969) — C.C. Taylor, *Peterborough New Town: A Survey of the Antiquities in the Areas of Development, 1969.*

# Potter's Oven, Castor

By Donald Mackreth

The field named Potter's Oven lies in the north-east angle of High Street at the highest point of Castor village and appears to be land taken in from the open fields of Castor. At the end of 1972 the site was being developed for housing and the first stage was to use a machine to scrape away the topsoil from the intended road-lines. Fragments of stone and Roman tile were noted there by Mr F.Sismey, but, contrary to the hopes which these brought, the site proved to be mediaeval.

There was little pottery which dated definitely to before the Norman Conquest, but parts of the site examined could go back to Saxo-Norman times. There seems to have been a slow development from what could be described as a peasant's house to something which must have looked like a small manor. The original buildings were entirely in timber and there were at least two phases of these. The final one was a conversion to a slightly more substantial house, using stone in places to make the wall-bottoms firm. That the walls were not just clad in timber is inferred from their great width. This suggests that the walls may have been of cob throughout. The plans of the earliest buildings look like long-houses, except that no traces of internal divisions were found.

When Building I was converted into a more solid-looking structure, the site was already becoming more complex than a peasant's dwelling. Unfortunately the slow growth from this phase through to the final recognisable layout cannot be described, as so much lies hidden under the turf left behind for pavements and gardens by the contractors. Evidence for the intervening periods therefore is slight. Moreover, there were no real foundations to any walls at that time, and once the walls themselves had been robbed or had disintegrated, there was only a slight mark left on the original ground surface, easily eliminated by later activity.

The development of the site was towards the north of Building I, and its final form was of a house along the north side with ancillary buildings of unknown plan down the east side. The house had what could be described as a 'best chamber' at the west end with a fireplace set in the east wall. Very little can be told about the plan of the room owing to the general lack of walls; its limits are roughly indicated by an outside surface around the probable north-west corner. There may have been a door through the wall on the north side of the fireplace.

This room should have been the main chamber of the house, but unfortunately the site was heavily disturbed here and nothing was found of

a south wall or of any partitions or posts. There were certainly no major partition walls running south from the north wall between the 'best chamber' and the kitchen complex. It is very tempting to read into the plan a screen passage at the east end, entered from the south and opening into the east end of what should be a hall. But there was no proof that this was the arrangement. Ideally, there should have been a door from the kitchen directly into the passage, with some signs that there was a buttery and pantry attached; but there was no real indication that such a formal layout existed.

The most impressive remains belonged to the kitchen. Because of the fire-risk and the necessity of providing good structural backing for the internal fittings, this room was of stone throughout the lower part and was presumably stone all the way to the roof. The only certain entrance was at the west end of the south wall, where a stone surface was laid through the wall and across the kitchen in its latest phase. In the north wall was a fireplace set between two ovens, with a third built into the east wall next to the north-east oven. These ovens were graded neatly in size: the largest lay to the left of the fireplace, the next largest to the right, while the one in the east wall was strictly a 'petit four'. This was the original internal arrangement, but at some stage it became plainly inadequate and another large oven had been added in the south-east corner. This, however, went out of use before the last phase, as it was deliberately demolished and a floor laid over it.

To the east, again, was another room, this time timber-framed. The floor was badly damaged at the south and north, and heavily worn in the centre, but the east edge was laid to a very neat border, probably against a timber ground-sill.

There were traces of extra rooms attached to the south of the east end of the building, but these were heavily damaged and largely obscured by the unremoved turf. The date-range for the habitation of the site seems to be from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries. Thereafter no other buildings seem to have existed and the site was left open and untouched, except for the digging of at least one gravel-pit in the south-east corner of the field and at least one pond in the area of the possible hall—the pond removing the vital evidence for the interpretation of the latter. A series of other holes was dug along the north and east of the complex, possibly for surface-water drainage; for the ground falls away here. It is tempting to think that, had



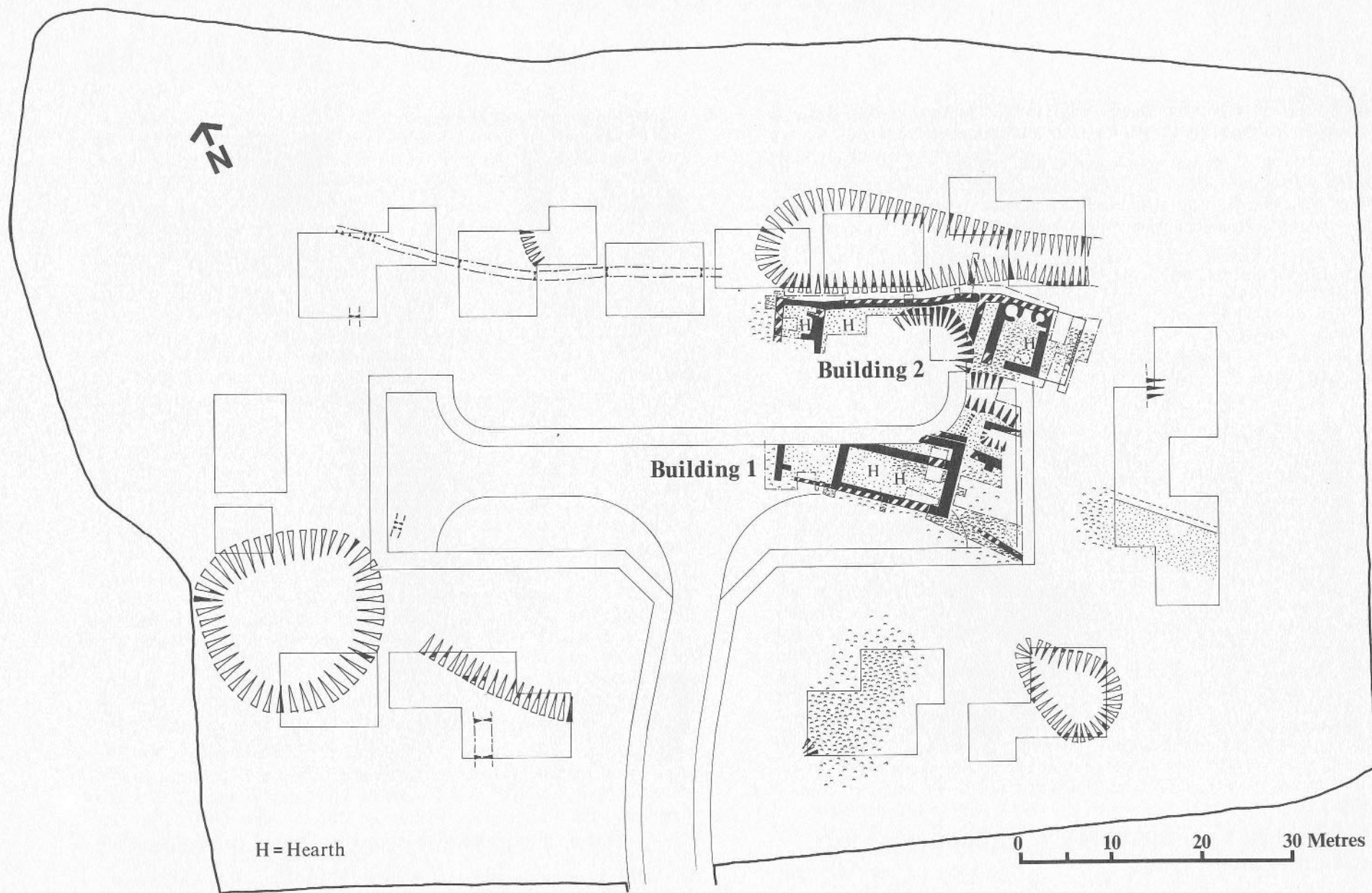
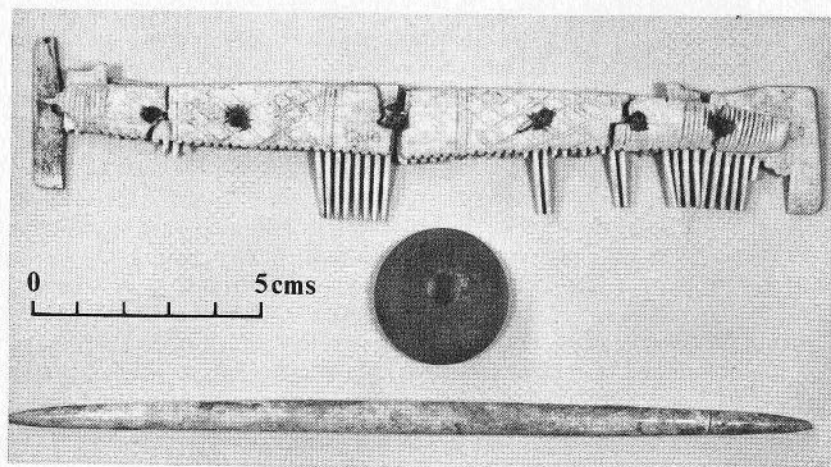


Fig 6 General plan of the mediaeval site at Potter's Oven, Castor

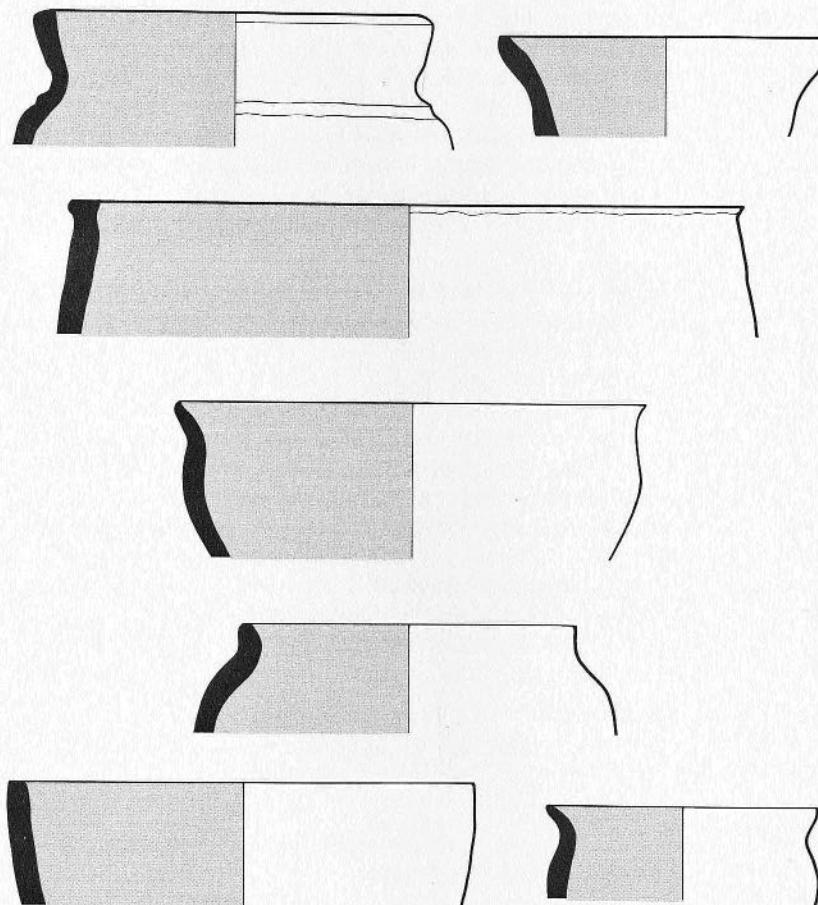
the site continued with more and more of these large ponds being dug, it would have eventually looked like a partially moated site.

The existence of the site demonstrates that caution is needed before one interprets similar enclosures attached to the core of a village as intakes from the open fields. No sign was found here of early agriculture and it is clear that Potter's Oven should be seen as an abandoned part of Castor.

I am very grateful to the Netherton Construction Company and especially to Mr N.Holver and his bulldozer driver for their help during the rescue work.



**Fig 7**  
A decorated bone comb from the nunnery at Castor and other small finds



**Fig 8**  
Some 7th and 8th Century pottery from the nunnery at Castor. In the top left hand corner is a vessel in 'Ipswich Ware', the rest are hand made locally.



# The Nunnery of St Kyneburgha at Castor

By Carolyn G. Dallas

Small-scale excavations by Dr J.P.Wild and Mr G.B.Dannell in a private garden (Elmlea) in Castor village have produced positive evidence of Anglo-Saxon and Mediaeval occupation over the north wing of a large Roman building. The site is situated just north of Castor church.

The church is dedicated to St. Kyneburgha, and she is reputed to have founded a nunnery at Castor in the mid seventh century. This foundation is not one of those mentioned in the church history of Bede, written before A.D. 731, which is the only trustworthy pre-Conquest source. He names a Kyneburgha, daughter of Penda the heathen king of Mercia, who is married to Alhfrith of Northumbria by A.D. 653. Alhfrith and his father King Oswui were Christian, and they killed Penda in battle in A.D. 654. All Penda's children were Christian, and Bede tells us that he had allowed the new faith to be preached in his kingdom. It is unlikely, however, that any monastic foundations would have existed in his kingdom before his death in A.D. 654.

A twelfth-century document which seems an authentic copy of a charter granting land in Ailsworth dated A.D. 948 refers to Castor as 'Kyneburga caestre'. Mediaeval historians, such as William of Malmesbury, tell us that Kyneburga, daughter of Penda, became an abbess but, except for a 'Kineburga's castrum' in a later appendix to the chronicle of Florence of Worcester, they do not name the place. Unfortunately, it is not until the fourteenth century that a historian appears with all the credentials we now require. John of Tynemouth, when a monk at St. Albans c. A.D. 1325-48, assiduously gathered material for a collection of English saints' lives. He had difficulty with Kyneburgha and her sister Kyneswytha, but in their story he amalgamates the information given by previous writers and then goes on to trace the position of the nunnery by the name 'Kyneburga's castrum'. He says the place is not far from the river Nene 'about two miles from Peterborough and is called by its inhabitants simply Castre'. It is on his account that all later works are based.

There is considerable confusion among the mediaeval historians about the end of this nunnery, but it seems almost certainly to have been destroyed by the Danes. The original foundation probably met its end in the ravages of A.D. 870, although there may have been some form of survival until renewed Danish violence in A.D. 1010 and 1013. The archaeological evidence from 'Elmlea' does not at the moment support the latter view, as Mr John Hurst in his examination of the pottery has noticed a dearth of sherds of Late Saxon date. The material fits a context of about A.D. 655-870.

The Middle Saxon occupation at 'Elmlea' has unfortunately been much disturbed by mediaeval and later activity. But there are traces of structures and some remarkable small finds.

Two features cut through earlier Roman flooring may be interpreted as sunken huts (*Grubenhäuser*). One produced two sherds of undatable shelly pottery, the other another sherd of this ware and a rim-sherd of hand-made Middle Saxon pottery.

The most interesting and productive Saxon feature, however, is a pit, of which roughly a quarter has been excavated. The total diameter will probably be about 3 metres. The lower levels contained bone and were very productive of Middle Saxon pottery. At the bottom was greenish clayey material which has so far produced only Roman pottery. This might be a Roman latrine-pit, either silted over naturally or covered in clean material, and then used later by the Saxons as a rubbish-pit.

The pit has yielded over 80 Middle-Saxon potsherds (fig.8). The total for the site is now over 200, an unusual quantity for such a small area excavated. The fabrics consist of wheel-made 'Ipswich ware' (87), hand-made shelly wares (77) and a range of local hand-made wares (52). The shelly rims are straight, and have usually been flattened at the top. The local fabrics vary, but are basically thick sherds of a rough fabric and thinner, reduced, sherds in a finer ware.

Saxon small finds, mainly from the pit, were unexpectedly rich, and show that the nuns, many from the upper class of Saxon society, were far from ascetic. Finds include iron knives, a pair of shears, a fine bronze triangular wrist-clasp, a lathe-turned stone spindle-whorl, a bone pin-beater for weaving, fragments of bone comb, bone pins and two possible glass vessel-fragments. Pride of place must go to a complete, double-sided bone comb with incised decoration (fig.7).

In 1957-58 the late Charles Green discovered Middle Saxon occupation while excavating in the proposed southern extension to the churchyard. The site lay some 130 metres to the south of 'Elmlea'. It seems possible that the settlement is continuous between the two sites. If so, St Kyneburgha's nunnery and the quarters of her attendant servants were of considerable extent and importance. Further excavation can be expected to throw much more light on this question.

We are grateful to Mr and Mrs F. Sismey for allowing the excavations in their garden and for many other acts of kindness.

# A Possible House of the Neolithic period at Fengate

By Francis Pryor

Excavations at Fengate, near Peterborough, have revealed in the midst of an extensive prehistoric settlement site a rectangular arrangement of ditches measuring about 7 by 8.5 metres. There were also traces of more substantial corner posts and slight evidence for a central row of posts (fig.9). Very similar arrangements of ditches or posts have been found at Haldon, Devon and Ballynagilly, County Tyrone, where the features have been confidently interpreted as the remains of houses. Both of these sites date to the early neolithic period, a time when farming was being introduced to the British Isles. It is also interesting to note that at Fengate, Haldon and Ballynagilly the finds were concentrated along the outside walls, a phenomenon that has been noted on many other ancient house sites. Although the remains of the Fengate 'house' are very slight, we may suppose the walls to have been post- or plank-built and probably reinforced with wattle (woven pliant twigs) and daub (thickly smeared clay). The sloping roof would probably have been thatched with reeds from the nearby Fens, or straw. Although no traces of a hearth were found, some of the flints from the foundation trenches had been burnt, so there must have been a fire somewhere nearby.

Samples of wood from the foundation trenches have given two radiocarbon dates:  $3010 \pm 64$  bc, GaK-4196, and  $2445 \pm 50$  bc, GaK-4197 (the term 'bc' is used to distinguish a 'radiocarbon year' from a true year). These dates are broadly comparable with those from Ballynagilly mentioned above, and agree well with the only other date for the early neolithic period in our area, that from Holme Fen, Hunts.,  $2998 \pm 130$  bc.

Artefacts in themselves mean little. Their significance lies in what they allow us to deduce about the way of life of the people who used them. The pottery from Fengate (fig.9) is quite fine, vegetable-tempered, and apart from the slight internal fluting of no.5, undecorated. These and other stylistic traits allow us to assign the Fengate pottery to the wide-

spread early neolithic 'Grimston-Lyles Hill' series. Pottery of this tradition is found along the whole length of the east coast of England and Scotland, also in south-west Scotland and Ireland. The site at Ballynagilly, for instance, produced pottery of this series. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Grimston-Lyles hill pottery is its longevity: it seems to have been in more or less continuous use from c. 3500 B.C. to 2500 B.C. and later.

Apart from pottery, the Fengate 'house' also yielded a large quantity of worked flint tools (fig.9). Some of these were made from local gravel pebbles, but the majority used material that must have originated outside the area, as the Nene gravels do not produce black flint of such high quality. All the flint artefacts illustrated are made from this 'imported' flint. A wide variety of tool types were encountered, including scrapers (nos. 9-12, fig.9), utilized flakes (nos. 13-23, 26, fig.9), a single-piece sickle (no. 3) and part of a composite sickle (no. 4, fig.9). Both sickle fragments show signs of 'silica gloss' where the cutting edges have been polished by wear. Like other earlier neolithic communities in Britain, the people at Fengate seemed to have selected the longer, more slender flakes for use. In later neolithic times a preference was shown for short, squat flakes. The production of slender blades was a skilful process involving knapping techniques that could concentrate and control the amount of pressure required.

Finally, the excavations produced two rather unusual finds. The long flake, no. 27, must have been struck off a polished axe of stone from Great Langdale, Westmorland (see no. 9, fig.9) and the material (a type of lignite) of the split jet bead, no. 29, must have originated outside our area. A recent study has shown these beads to be a characteristic artefact of the British early neolithic period. The significance of these 'exotic' materials is that they demonstrate that the early neolithic communities in the area were in contact with one another, possibly on a regular basis. Future work will try to define the changing nature, significance and extent of these contacts.



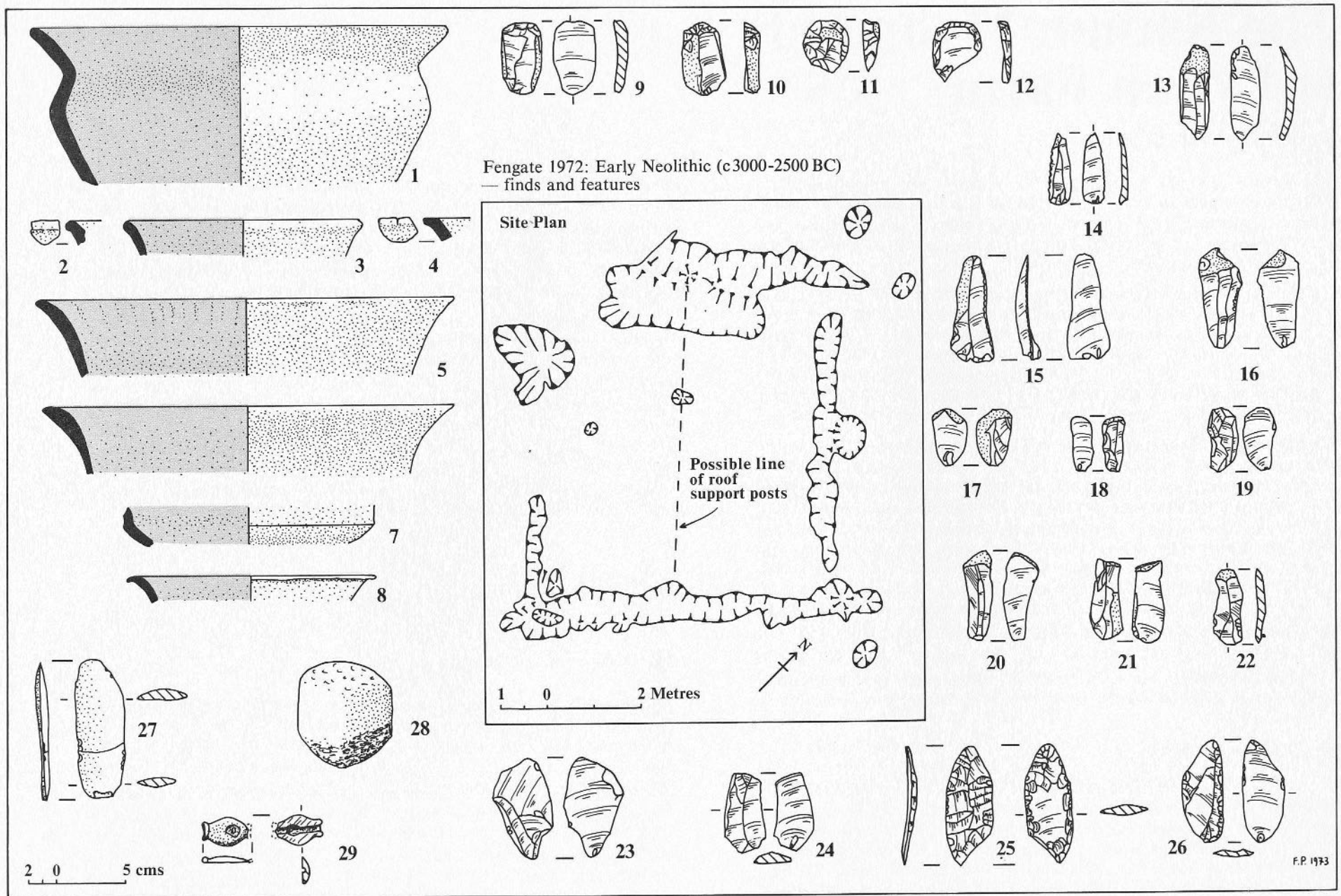


Fig 9 The Neolithic house at Fengate and some of the finds from it

# The Roman Fishpond at Lynch Farm

By John Peter Wild

Documentary records relating to the Abbey of Ely show that in the eleventh century the monks were liberally supplied with eels from the monastic manors in the surrounding Fenland. The figures quoted suggest that eel—smoked, stewed or in pies—must have been served in the refectory with monotonous regularity!

It would be odd if the Romans had not tapped the same ready source of food, but until 1972 we had no indication that they did. Roman authors mention artificial ponds linked to the sea in which wealthy Italians raised fish for the table, but they do not refer to Roman Britain. However, emergency excavations by the Nene Valley Research Committee in 1972 near Lynch Farm, Orton Waterville, brought to light an extensive Roman agricultural settlement which boasted a large fishpond.

The fishpond and the establishment to which it belonged were discovered in May 1972, as the contractors' machines were stripping topsoil in preparation for the new Nene Park Lake. Thanks to the good offices of the Peterborough Development Corporation and the kind forbearance of the contractors a respite was granted during which G.B. Dannell and the writer could organise an excavation to record the remains before destruction. In the event, the Development Corporation decided to preserve the part of the site which contained foundations of an aisled barn, with the intention of laying it out for public exhibition after excavation has been completed. The rest of the site, including the pond, was removed on schedule by the contractors.

The site was found to have three main elements: a network of drainage channels, a timber aisled barn on stone foundations and a large stone-revetted fishpond.

## The Drainage Channels

The drainage channels were first noticed when the contractors' box-scrapers sank into them. They cover an area of at least 7 acres, and represent a systematic attempt by Roman farmers in the second and third centuries to drain large tracts of water-meadow. The grid pattern of channels was modified as frost played havoc with the ditch sides, although they were often revetted with timber shuttering and clay. The dimensions of the channels varied, but the largest, an outfall to the Nene, was 1.50 metres wide and 60 centimetres deep.

The ditches were filled for the most part with sticky black organic deposits, all that survives of the household rubbish which was dumped into them in the fourth century when they had fallen into disuse. The great quantity of locally-produced pottery, colour-coated wares and grey wares, together with some pieces of fine metalwork, give an indication of the high standard of living enjoyed by the local farming community in the later Roman period.

The prime purpose of the channels must have been to drain land for pasturing sheep and cattle. The 'fields' between the channels (only a few metres across) were surely too small for growing cereals. Many parallels for the drainage system can be quoted from Roman sites in the Fenland, and in a sense the Lynch with its high water-table and seasonal flooding is a typical fen site.

## The Aisled Barn

On higher ground west of the drained land a series of farm outbuildings was revealed. The latest and most impressive structure, which overlay more

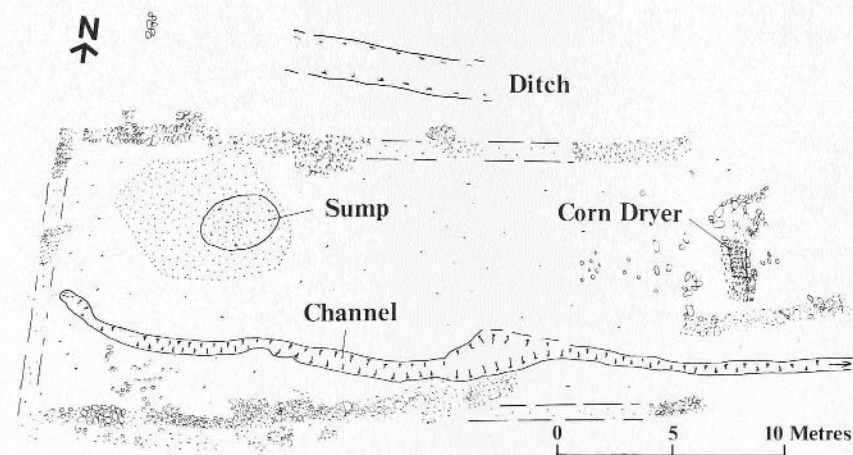
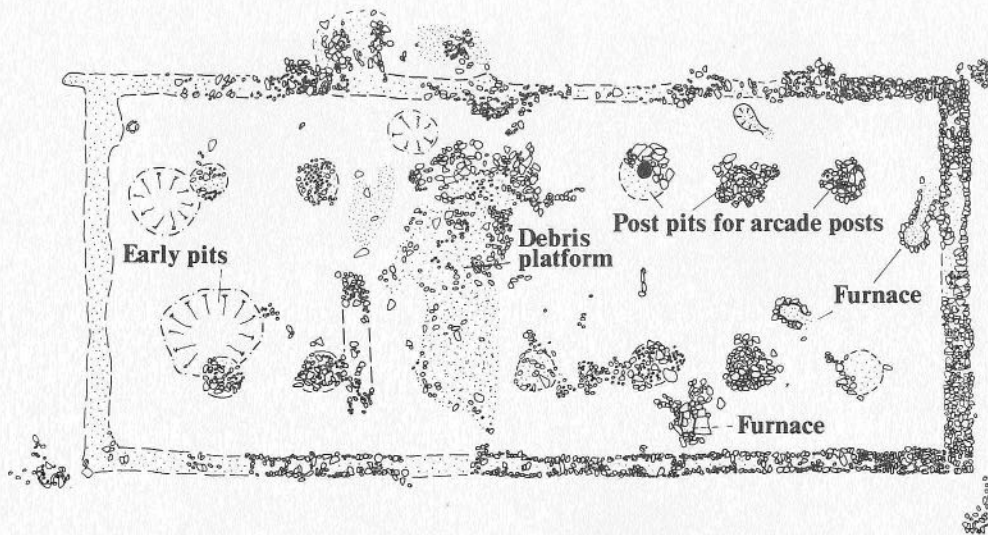


Fig 10 The Roman Fishpond at Lynch Farm





**Fig 11 The aisled barn at Lynch Farm**

modest predecessors, was an aisled barn, measuring overall 26 metres long by 11.6 metres wide. It had been of timber on stone footings (fig.11) and inside the weight of the roof was carried on two rows of arcade-posts which divided it into a nave and two aisles.

The most striking internal features, apart from the stone-packed pits for the arcade-posts, were small furnaces of various shapes and sizes, mostly situated at the eastern end of the barn. They were probably used for the final stages in the production of domestic and agricultural ironwork. The tools discussed by W.H.Manning (on p.29) were found on the floor of the barn, and could well have been made in these furnaces.

Other buildings which can be traced on the ground north of the aisled barn will be investigated, it is hoped, at a later date.

## The Fishpond

Eighteenth-century farming manuals recommend that marshland for which no useful agricultural purpose could be found should be turned into fishponds. The Romans practised this already. At Lynch Farm a stone-revetted tank, probably a fishpond, was laid out over the north-west corner of the drainage system during the early third century (fig.10). Its edges were marked by a low wall, and the pond was a rectangle measuring 35 metres by 13 metres. An outflow channel at its western end was carefully lined to prevent the water undermining an existing—and functioning—corn-dryer. The pond was shallow, but the naturally high water-table would have kept it topped up, except in the driest summers.

The fishpond complex now being excavated at the Roman villa of Shakenoak near Oxford provides a welcome parallel to the Lynch Farm pond. At Shakenoak commercial fish-rearing has been presumed, but at Lynch Farm the fish were probably for the local community's own consumption.

## The General Picture

The barn, the fishpond and the drainage scheme uncovered in 1972 must relate to a larger farming settlement; for there were no living quarters there. The cemetery excavated by R.F.J.Jones (see p.13) may have been the last resting place of these people. A few months ago traces of substantial buildings were noted some distance north-west of the cemetery and fishpond. They may not amount to a traditional villa, but the whole complex must spread over many acres.

The most tantalising feature of the 1972 excavations was the hint of earlier occupation under the later farm buildings. Two pits yielded a group of mid first century pottery, and three cremation-burials in pots made in the Longthorpe military kilns (see p.11) were found nearby. This does not add up to military occupation—yet. But it starts an interesting line of thought.

# The Lynch Farm complex: the prehistoric site

By Adrian Challands

The construction of an artificial lake for recreational activities within a northerly meander of the Nene impinged in 1972 on Ancient Monument No.101, known as the Lynch Farm Complex (Taylor (1969), 18f.). It spreads from the parish of Alwalton into Orton Waterville and Orton Longueville, and is by any standard an exceptional monument. Fortunately, its core is to be preserved.

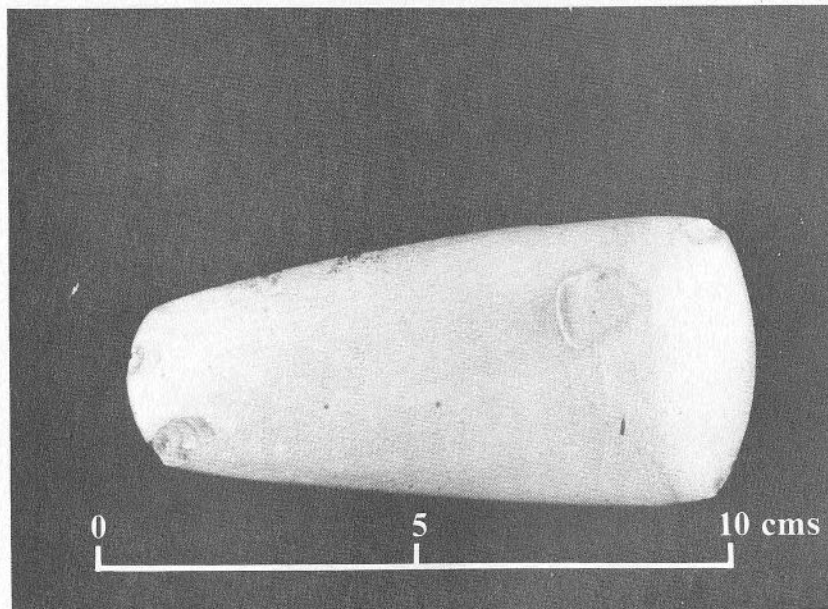
Emergency excavation to meet the current threat has been concentrated on the linear ditches described by Christopher Taylor on the southern, landward, side of the Complex. In addition, we have examined a small area at the most northerly point of the settlement zone.

The main linear ditches run parallel NE-SW for 900 metres, and are 11 metres apart, centre to centre. They average 2.5 to 3 metres wide by approximately 1 metre deep, but the most southerly of the four is only 1.5 to 2.25 metres wide by 0.5 metres deep. Great variation in profile was noted. The ditch-system here effectively defends the landward approach to the meander.

Few finds were made in the ditch fillings, with the exception of certain areas of our Layer (1), the top 0.3 metres. Here, late Iron-Age pottery was found in some quantity and appeared to represent a deliberate infilling of the partially silted ditch.

Cut into the upper filling of each of the two central ditches was a cremation burial within a rectangular pit measuring 1.50 by 1.65 metres and approximately 0.25 metres deep. Pottery associated with both cremations was of the same type and fabric as that made in the military pottery kilns at Longthorpe (see p.11) dated to A.D. 50-65. A fragmentary 'thistle-brooch', also recovered, fits this dating. The only other small finds were a plain bronze ring and a hob-nail. Around the lip of one pit the ditch filling was burnt; perhaps the final stage of the cremation rite took place over the pit and the remains fell into it.

Another set of quadruple linear ditches butts up against the main ditches at the centre of their run. They are considerably less impressive than the main ditches, being between 0.75 and 2 metres wide by an average of 0.3 metres deep. However, they display greater complexity; for no less than 7 entrances were noted, most of which were staggered and in- or out-turned.



**Fig 12 The polished greenstone axe from Lynch Farm**

One of these entrances had an outward crank of 2 metres, then continued in the same direction for 5 metres and ended with a slight inturn. On the old alignment after a gap of 1.50 metres was a beam-slot 0.3 metres wide and 11 metres long. This arrangement perhaps comprises a 'baffle' entrance.

Little dating evidence was recovered from these ditches, but there is no reason to suggest a constructional date much later than that of the main ditch-system. They may represent a 'town expansion' or give additional protection to grazing land. A certain number of pits and post-holes was excavated near the ditches. Many of them proved to be natural silt-filled hollows, a proportion of which contained charcoal, pot-boilers and in one instance a small fragment of Beaker pottery in a pit cut by a linear ditch.



Work is at present continuing on the most northerly section of the settlement zone where there is less plough-damage to features. The area contains a complex sequence of pits, ditches and post-holes. Towards the centre is what appears to be an oval gully, measuring 20 metres by 15 metres. A short ditch runs from it into a soak-away. Several hearths lie within the oval, which may therefore represent a hut-emplacement. Further work should clarify this. Pottery recovered from some of the excavated pits is of Late Iron-Age date, but certain finds—notably a greenstone polished axe (fig.12) and some rusticated neolithic pottery—indicate earlier occupation on the spot.

In 1973 it is hoped to concentrate on the settlement areas and try to determine their relationship with the linear ditches.

### **A Neolithic Axe from Lynch Farm**

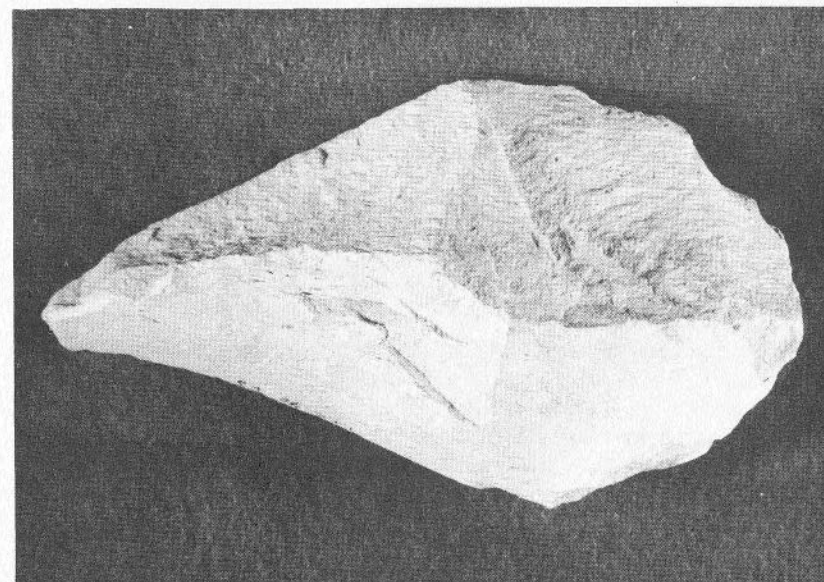
A polished greenstone axe of neolithic date (before 3000 B.C.) was found in a silt layer over the gravel at the most northerly point of the site (fig.12). Some 60 metres away an axe-polishing stone was recovered in a similar deposit (fig.13). Both implements fall within group VI, and are from the Langdale Pike 'axe-factories' in the Lake District.

The polishing stone is a coarse-grained variety of the same type of volcanic tuff as that from which the axe was manufactured. Perhaps the most interesting feature of these finds is the association, albeit loose, of a polishing stone and an axe, suggesting the possibility that they travelled from the Lake District to the Nene Valley together.

I am indebted to Dr W.A.Cummins of Nottingham University for the identification and petrological examination.

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**Fig 13 The axe-polishing stone from Lynch Farm**

# An Early Bronze Age burial at Perio

By John Hadman

Excavations were carried out by the Middle Neolithic Archaeological Group in October 1972 on a prehistoric site close to the deserted mediaeval village of Perio in the parish of Southwick, Northamptonshire. The aerial photographs had indicated to us that the south-eastern end of a large enclosure here was bounded by two wide ditches some 22 metres apart. Each ditch was broken by several gaps or entrances. Pottery from our excavation of the ditches dated them to the Iron Age.

Midway between the ditches an oval pit was discovered which proved to be a dug grave containing a crouched inhumation-burial laid on a compacted gravel surface (fig.14). Accompanying the body was a bronze dagger (fig.15a) which placed the burial in the Early Bronze Age. A sherd of Beaker (fig.15b) was found in the upper filling.

Close examination of aerial photographs showed that a narrow gully midway between and parallel to the wide ditches was broken about 4 metres on either side of the burial pit. Remains of a shallow ditch suggested that there had been a ring-ditch surrounding the grave. If a barrow-mound had existed, no other trace of it remained.

The body had been placed in a crouched position on its left side with the dagger close by the right hand. Stains on the gravel suggested a wooden handle.

The bones of the skeleton were in a highly fragile state and very delicate cleaning procedures had to be employed. A styrene monomer resin was used to harden the bones before they were lifted for examination.

Parallel stains in the clay filling of the grave, together with charcoal fragments, indicated a collapsed wooden cover over the body. Additional evidence for this came from the body itself. The skull, pelvis and rib-cage were flattened and the right upper arm had been separated from the bones of the lower arm.

Apart from the dagger, the only other find accompanying the burial was the leg bones of a sheep.

Dr.D.H.Fulton of Kings Cliffe kindly reported that the body was that of a male in his early thirties, about 1.60 metres tall. The lumbar region of the spine showed signs of advanced arthritis and there was a slight abnormality in one leg. The teeth, although in good condition, were badly worn down.

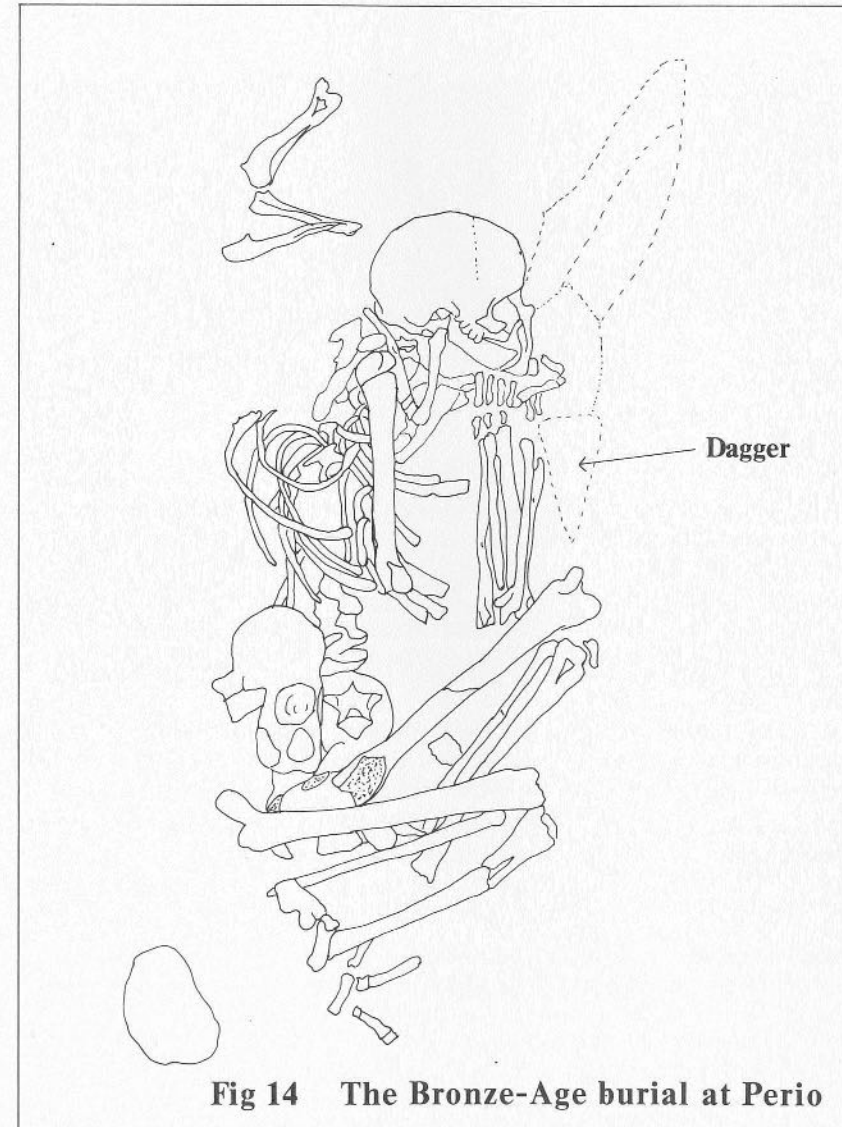


Fig 14 The Bronze-Age burial at Perio



# Perio – the finds

By David Coombs

## The Beaker

The sherd (fig.15b) is from a beaker in the Southern British tradition in David Clarke's classification, somewhere within the Developed (S2) to Final Southern Beaker groups (S4). The fine red surface fabric, light gritting and use of careful comb impression rather than incision, would marginally favour an attribution within the Developed or Late Southern Beaker groups (S2 or S3). The design motif appears to be well executed floating lozenges within reserved undecorated bands which is characteristic of S2 or S3 Beakers. The beaker may have resembled the ones from Ysgwennant, Denbighshire (Clarke (1970), fig. 895) and Winterbourne Monkton, Wiltshire (Clarke (1970), figs. 897 and 898).

Due to the position of the beaker sherd in the grave filling there can be no question of an association between the burial and the beaker. Although chronologically such an association would be possible, as round-heeled three-riveted daggers are also known from an S2 association at Aldro (Clarke (1970), fig. 888) and with an S3 beaker at East Kennet (Clarke (1970), fig. 948), the position of the sherd might suggest old occupation debris or a disturbed burial that had become incorporated in the grave filling. Daggers with three rivets have also been found with S4 beakers at Linlathen, Angus (Clarke (1970), fig. 1018), and Methilhill, Fife (fig. 1016) and with Finger Pinched beakers at Eynsham, Oxford (fig. 1038) and Pentraeth, Anglesey (fig. 908) as well as with a number of post-beaker period burials.

Clarke illustrates five beakers from Fengate of his S2 tradition (figs. 855-859) and one of his S3 tradition (fig. 937). Recent excavations at the Padholme Road site, Fengate, have produced sherds of S2 or S3 beakers as well as sherds of S4 (Final Southern Beaker tradition). The presence of timber remains in the grave might suggest that originally the body had been buried in either a coffin or a timber-lined grave. For a discussion of such burials the reader is referred to Ashbee (1960) and Elgee (1949).

## The Dagger

At present the dagger (fig.15a) is 135mm. long and the maximum width across the heel is 67 mm. The dagger is best described as a round-heeled dagger with three rivets, with an ogival blade. The edges of the rivet holes have been torn, but it is clear that they were once holes, and not rivet notches. The three rivets are present, and when found were in position. As

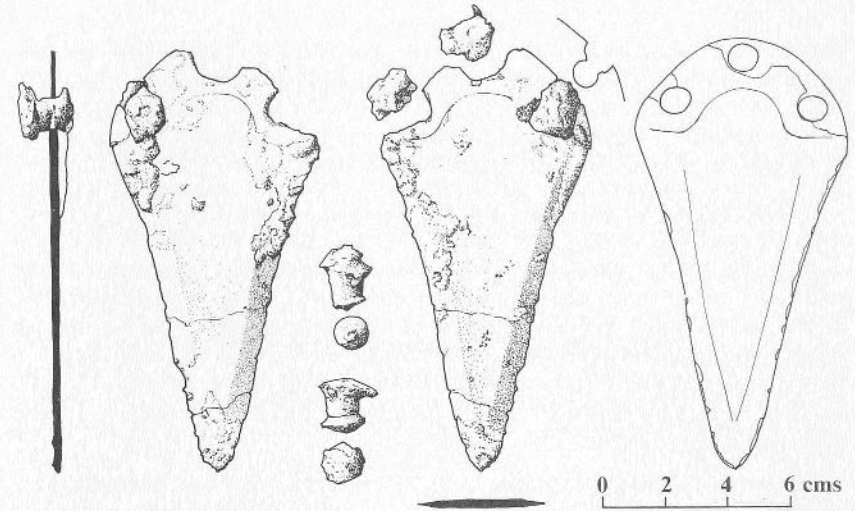


Fig 15 (a) The dagger from Perio



Fig 15 (b) The Beaker potsherd from Perio

the broken fragments from around the rivet holes were not found it might suggest that the blade was rehafted before burial. Sharpening along the edges can be clearly seen and the original hilt-line was clearly discernible on the surface of the heel. The hilt-line was omega-shaped with rounded corners. The section of the blade is flat with no trace of a midrib.

The dagger falls into a well known class of daggers which were current during the Beaker period and Early Bronze Age in the British Isles and Europe. Three-riveted round-heeled daggers associated with beakers are referred to above. Similar daggers belong to the Corkey type of Harbison (1969), (figs.14-40) in Ireland, some of which have ogival blades, others triangular forms. Piggott (1963) illustrates a number of similar daggers from the British Isles (fig.17, i, 11, v) as well as the European ones (fig. 18), and Henshall (1968) illustrates daggers from Scotland which are of the same general type.

A date within the sixteenth century B.C. would perhaps best fit the dagger, but this must be regarded as only a very rough date.

I would like to thank Dr. D.L.Clarke for kindly supplying notes on the Beaker sherd, and my wife Jenny for drawing the dagger and the sherd.

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**Fig 16** The colour-coated Hunt Cup in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. Found at Bedford Purlieus, Northamptonshire.



# A colour-coated Hunt Cup in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto

By Alison Harle Easson

An outstanding colour-coated hunt cup of the late 2nd or early 3rd century A.D. was presented to the Royal Ontario Museum in 1920 by Sir Robert Mond of London. Professor J.M.C. Toynbee has called it 'the most elaborate surviving instance of a *venatio* rendered *en barbotine*. The large beaker was found in 1841 in a cremation burial at Bedford Purlieus near Wansford, north of the River Nene. It is in Nene Valley colour-coated ware.

It measures 28 centimetres in height with a maximum belly diameter, excluding the figures, of 21.4 centimetres. Its height exceeds that of most known hunt cups: an example in the Guildhall Museum is 22.8 centimetres tall while the Colchester Vase measures 21.6 centimetres.

Two *venatores* (huntsmen) are represented: one is about to spear a stag; the other, armed with a whip, baits a bear. Rows of beading border the frieze above and below and diagonally frame each figure. Two narrow rouletted bands encircle the beaker below the decoration.

The cup was wheel-made with applied decoration and the human figures are in quite high relief. They appear to have been moulded in negative stamps, then applied to the pot and the faces subsequently tooled. Dots of clay form the hair and eyes, a technique also used for the head of Hercules on a fragment of Castor ware from Welney, Norfolk. Details of the costumes and equipment were added *en barbotine* as were the ground-lines and simple foliate scrolls. The animals may have been created with the same mixture of techniques as the *venatores*.

In 1963, the hunt cup was exhibited at the Nelson Gallery and Atkins Museum in Kansas City, Missouri, in conjunction with the Eighth Wedgwood International Seminar. At that time, it was considered to have been mould-made in two sections joined horizontally. However, regular wheel marks on the interior do not substantiate this belief.

The paste of the beaker is creamy buff with a moderately shiny black colour-coat on the interior and exterior. This has worn off the high points of the relief so that the decoration now is accented by the light colour of the paste.

The cup was reassembled from large fragments and sections of the rim and body are restorations painted black. Except for small parts of the figures'

legs, no attempt has been made to reconstruct missing elements of the decoration.

*Venatio* scenes depicting combat between men and animals appear on many hunt cups. A notable example, the Colchester Vase, shows both bear-baiting and gladiatorial combat. On the Toronto hunt cup, however, the action is on a single plane and restricted to two pairs of figures. The only filler decoration is the foliate scrolls; the ground-lines are an essential part of the composition.

The *venator* baiting the bear wears ankle-guards and a padded protector on his left forearm. On the Colchester Vase, the bear-baiter is similarly equipped and wears a lighter guard on his right arm holding the whip. The right arm is missing on the Toronto hunt cup, but probably also was protected.

He is enraging the bear with a 'tease' probably of leather. It served the same purpose as the matador's cape in modern bull-fighting; that is to draw the bear's attention away from the man's body to his heavily protected arm. A similar 'tease' appears in a bear-baiting scene on the tomb of Scaurus at Pompeii.

The *venatores*' brief, tight-fitting, two-piece costume has the appearance of leather decorated with slash-work, ornamental studs and trimmed with fringe. The high-cut shorts have decoration and fringe similar to *subligacula* worn by gladiators. The costume may be the uniform of a troupe of *venatores*.

Other grave goods found with the hunt cup included fragments of glass and pottery, three of which were samian dishes stamped by the 2nd century Central Gaulish potters Avitus, Mettius and Ruffus. There also were two stone torsos believed to have formed part of the funeral monument for the burial. They became part of the Duke of Bedford's collection.

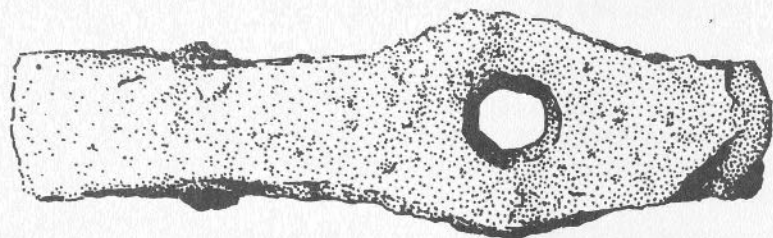
Prior to Sir Robert Mond's donation of the hunt cup to the Royal Ontario Museum, it was owned by the late Bennett Goldney of Canterbury.

The technical and artistic merit of the hunt cup, with its fluid yet vigorous composition, makes it the most prominent object in the Romano-British collection of the Royal Ontario Museum.

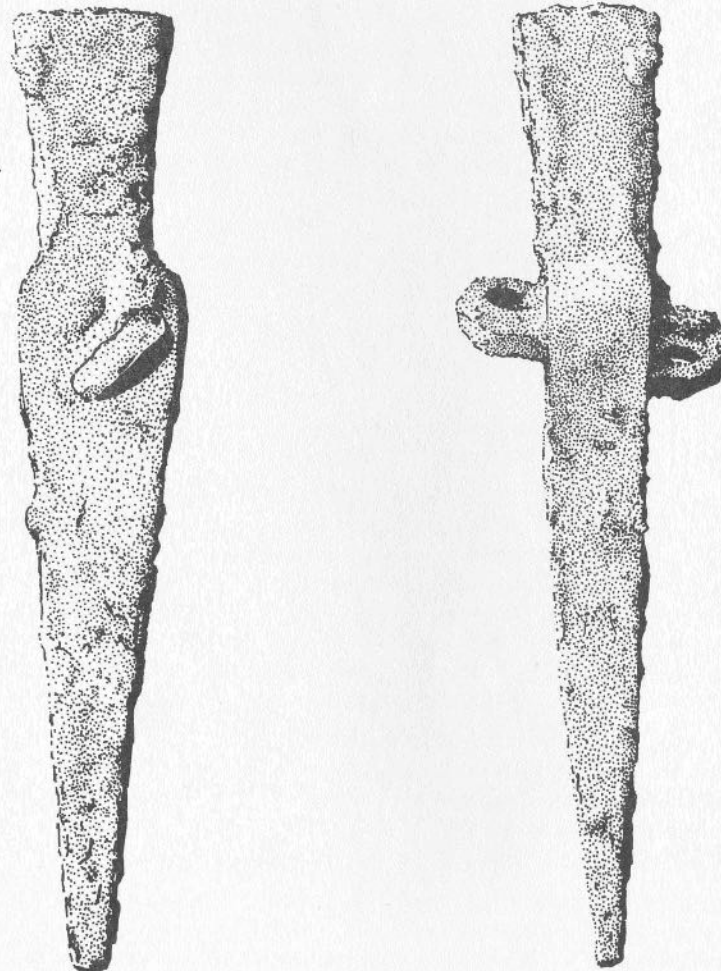
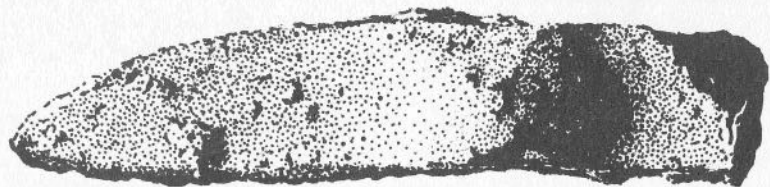
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The finds were reported in *Archaeologia* XXXII, 1847, 1-13;  
*V.C.H.Northamptonshire* I, 1902, 190, fig.18; *V.C.H.Huntingdonshire* I,  
1926, 226 note 2,240,242-3, pl.VI, figs.1-2.

For the cup alone: C.G.Harcum in *American Journal of Archaeology*  
XXIX, 1925, 280-1, figs.3-4



**Fig 17** Iron tool from Lynch Farm  
A Smith's hammer



**Fig 18** Iron tool from Lynch Farm  
A Mower's anvil



# Three Iron tools from Lynch Farm

By William Manning

This small group of tools—a mower's anvil, a smith's cross-pane hammer, and an axe—were found in the fourth-century aisled barn during the excavations of 1972 (see p.21). In themselves the tools are typical of their types, but an added significance is given by the fact that they were found in a group. Hoards of ironwork are not uncommon in south-eastern England and East Anglia in the fourth-century A.D.; a large and important one comes from Sibson, near Peterborough (Peterborough Museum), and others are known from Lakenheath and Worlington (Suffolk), Great Chesterford (Essex), Sandy (Bedfordshire), and Dropshort (Bucks). But almost all of these are considerably larger groups and in most cases they can be shown to have been intentionally concealed, usually in wells or deep pits, probably as votive offerings (Manning (1972)). The Lynch Farm group differs in being much smaller and in having been found within a building, both facts which suggest that it was not deliberately hidden but probably accidentally covered and forgotten, an only too probable event in an ill-lit workshop.

As a group, however, it has a certain coherence. The mower's anvil (fig. 18) is a tool taken into the field to rest the scythe on when hammering out dents in the blade caused by accidentally striking stones while mowing. In use it was pushed into the ground, with the side loops acting as stops to prevent it being driven too far. Similar tools were still being made in Birmingham at the end of the nineteenth-century. Although the cross-pane hammer (fig. 17) is primarily a smith's tool, it seems probable that here it formed a pair with the anvil. A stone would serve as a hammer in an emergency, but if the mower had the foresight to take the anvil into the field with him he would probably think of a hammer as well. In this context it is significant that the face of the hammer is badly damaged and would be almost useless to a smith, although still useable for such crude work as knocking out dents in the scythe. The axe (fig. 19), which is no more than a hatchet, too light for any heavy work, fits into this group as an obvious tool for a farm worker. It might be taken out at the same time as the others or it may merely have been kept with them, but there is no reason to doubt that they all belonged to the same man. The damaged face of the hammer and the dents in the edge of the axe show that they had been well used, but, while they may have been put aside as scrap, neither the anvil nor the axe are badly damaged and it is more likely that they were simply misplaced. It would certainly be most

unwise to suppose that they form a small votive hoard comparable with the others from this general region.

## Catalogue

*Mower's anvil* with a single pair of coils. The stem is separated from the head by an unusually pronounced neck. Both head and stem have a rectangular cross-section. The working face has the normal slight doming. Length 19.6 centimetres.

It is a common type which was probably introduced with the scythe into Britain by the Roman army. The earliest is probably from Newstead (c. A.D. 100+) (J. Curle, *A Roman Frontier Post and its People: The Fort of Newstead*, 1911, 284, pl. LXII.1), but they are particularly common in the fourth-century hoards from Sandy, Beds. (*Beds. Arch. Journ.* II, 1964, 55, fig. 3.8), Great Chesterford, Essex (five examples: *Arch. J.* xiii, 1856, 3, pl. 1.8), and Silchester, Hants. (1890 Hoard—four examples, two with four coils: *Arch.* LIV, 1894, 143. 1900 Hoard—eight examples: *Arch.* LVII, 1901, 246)

*Hammer.* Cross-pane hammer with a small round eye. The cross-pane is rounded and unworn, but the face is damaged. Length 22.4 centimetres.

The cross-pane was the common hand hammer of the Roman smith; of the thirteen hand-hammers in the two fourth-century hoards from Silchester, for example, only one was not cross-paned. This example differs slightly from the majority in having a relatively slight expansion about the eye (although this can be paralleled in the hammers in the Great Chesterford hoard), and in having an unusually short stem between the face and the eye, which makes the head distinctly unbalanced. The eye is usually placed at the centre of the head for obvious reasons, and this imbalance and the rough, broken edges of the face (which are in marked contrast to the well-formed cross-pane), suggest that this is not the original face, but a secondary one formed after the head had broken, perhaps as a result of a flaw in the welding.

Cross-pane hammers of this general type come from the two Silchester hoards (fourth-century) (*Arch.* LIV, 1894, 145; *Arch.* LVII 1901, 246); the Great Chesterford hoard (fourth-century) (*Arch. J.* XIII, 1856, 6, pl. 1.3-6);

Caerwent, Mon. (undated, Newport Museum); Hockwold, Norfolk (undated, Norwich Museum); and the Eckford, Roxburghs. hoard (first—second century) (P.S.A.S.LXXXVII, 1953, 27. fig.6. E13).

Axe with a strongly curved blade and oval eye. Length 14.0 centimetres. Weight 1 lb. 3 oz.

Fourth-century axes frequently show this degree of curvature, although it is not common in the early Roman period; the type is clearly related to the Saxon *francisca* or throwing-axe. The rear of the edge shows two marked dents, the result of misuse. Axes of generally similar size and shape come from the fourth-century hoards from Dorchester, Oxon. (*Arch.J.*CXIX, 1962, 114) and Silchester (*Arch.*LIV, 1894, 147-8), while two more from the Saxon Shore fort at Burgh Castle (Norwich Museum) have a similar curvature but slightly wider blades.

#### Bibliography

Manning (1972) — W.H.Manning, 'Ironwork Hoards in Iron Age and Roman Britain', *Britannia* III, 1972, 224ff.

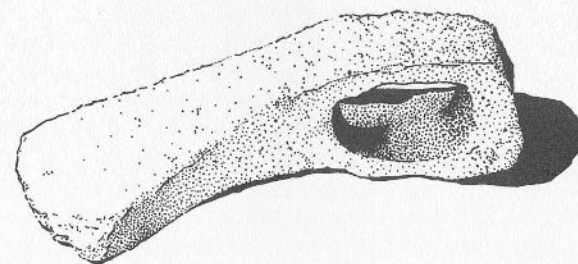
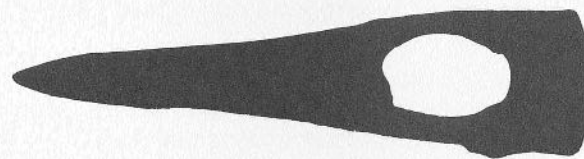
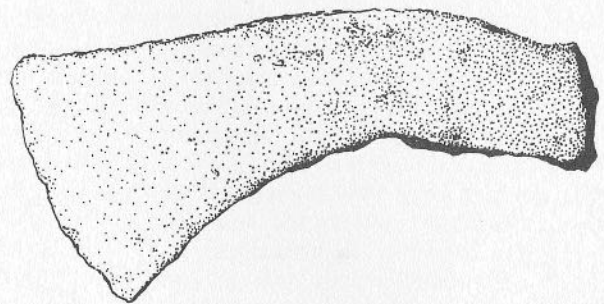


Fig 19 Iron tool from Lynch Farm  
An axe



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