Durobrivae

A Review of Nene Valley Archaeology: 7
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Editor's Note

There have been several enquiries recently about the inner workings of *Durobrivae*. The Editor can only point out that the Review can only be as good as the sum of its contributors' contributions! There is nevertheless another vital ingredient: the design of Mr Colin Ashfield. His work is acknowledged each year: but in this, the seventh number for which he has been responsible, the Editor would like to pay a special tribute to him.

John Peter Wild

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The cover carries a scene from the Artis celebrations of 1978 (p.4) and the title page shows a bronze coin of Tasciovanus from Ashton (by courtesy of the Institute of Archaeology, Oxford).

Acknowledgements

The Peterborough Development Corporation's Design Group once more has the Committee deeply in its debt for substantial help with the design and layout of this Review. Credit should also be given to: the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge, for fig. 2; Miss C. Turnock for figs. 3 and 7; Mr Edward Curry for the final versions of figs. 11 and 14. Mr C. J. Parrot for photographic assistance page 14, 15.

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The Year's Work: 1978

by John Peter Wild

Early in 1978 Dr Graham Webster resigned from the chairmanship of the Nene Valley Research Committee. A founder-member of the original Waternewton Excavation Committee of 1958, he played from the start an active part in the Committee's research and excavation programme. He followed Professor Grimes to the chairmanship in 1973 when the Committee was beginning to build up its staff and seek accommodation. The success of the new Field Centre which he opened in January 1977 owes a great deal to his diplomatic gifts — indeed, the whole working pattern of the Committee bears his stamp. We look forward to continuing to have the benefit of his advice and experience in the years to come.

Our Director of Excavations, Donald Mackreth, was elected Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London this year, on which we congratulate him. We were sorry to lose in 1978 Miss Fiona Cameron, Finds Assistant at the Field Centre, and Mr Robert Boyle, our Illustrator. They have been valued members of our post-excavation team and have set high standards. Miss Anita Smart and Mr Edward Curry have been appointed in their stead.

From October 27th to 29th the Committee celebrated the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Mr Edmund Artis' famous volume, *The Durobrivae of Antoninus Identified and Illustrated* (1828). The weekend events, organised by Mrs Olive Main, began with a lecture by Mr Stephen Tomlinson and Mr Geoffrey Dannell on Artis' life and work, and continued the following day with a kiln excavation at which diggers and spectators dressed in nineteenth-century costume. On the Saturday evening a dinner was held at the Haycock, at which the Earl and Countess Fitzwilliam were the principal guests. We hope that the man himself would have approved of the style of the tribute.

The year's excavation programme was not overloaded. Two accidents of modern agriculture gave Francis Pryor's last season at *Fengate* an unexpected twist (p.11): the bank which accompanied a Bronze-Age boundary ditch survived, as did the rich occupation levels within an Iron-Age round-house. Moreover, proof was found that it was flooding that had put an end to farming in the Bronze-Age ditched enclosures.

Gravel extraction at *Barnack* in the Welland Valley has been steadily eroding the known crop-mark sites. Mr Peter Donaldson's excavations there for the Committee in 1974-76 brought to light an important Bronze-Age burial *(Durobrivae* 4, 1976, 14). Recent work by Francis O'Neill has revealed an enigmatic group of prehistoric monuments (p.23). A ring-ditch and associated pits were followed (perhaps in the early Iron Age) by a pit-alignment and a penannular ditch which carried a wooden structure. Later still a trackway crossed the site. The lack of dating evidence for these features is disappointing.

The later Roman levels in a sector of the small Roman town at *Ashton* near Oundle have been examined over the past four years *(Durobrivae* 5, 1977, 6ff.) and in 1978 the early Roman structures were investigated for the first time (p.29). A round-house with several puzzling features was uncovered; but the general picture which emerged of a hut within a ditched enclosure makes good sense in the context of late Iron-Age and early Roman settlement patterns.

Observation continued in 1978 on a variety of road construction and development sites. Work in the centre of Oundle, for instance, revealed post-mediaeval buildings and drains, but not the hoped-for Saxon occupation. Richard Hillier's buildings survey (p.30) demonstrates the frightening rate at which Peterborough's limited stock of historic buildings is disappearing.

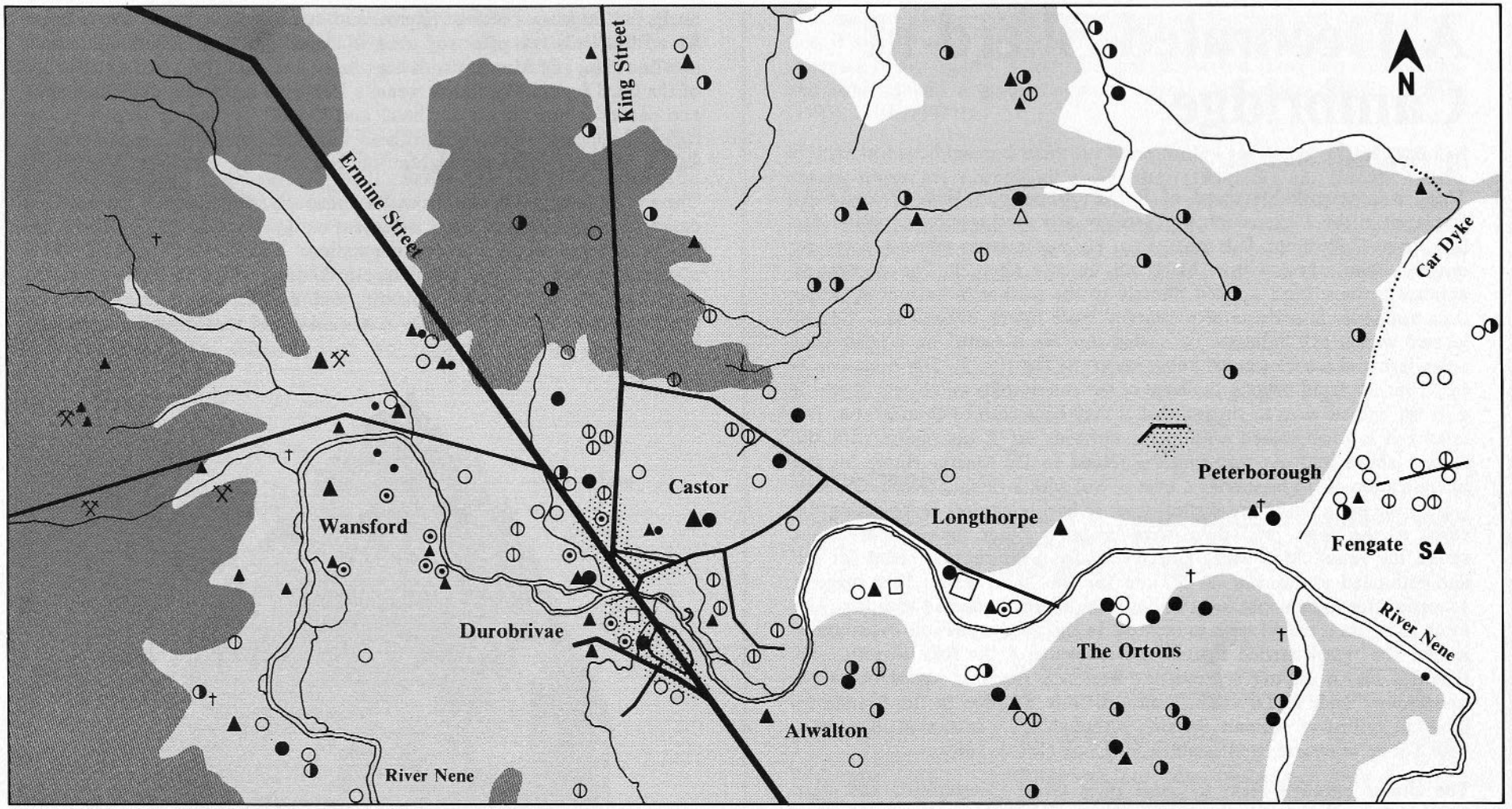

Fig 1 Map of the archaeological sites in the Nene Valley

A Decorated Sherd at Cambridge

by Graham Webster

There is a remarkable sherd of Roman pottery in Nene Valley ware displayed in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge (the Knipe Collection). It is part of the body of a large vessel in a typical creamy-white fabric with a black colour-coat (fig. 2). The decoration appears to have been applied directly to the surface in barbotine, rather than appliqué. It consists of a bearded male figure, dressed in a kind of leotard with a belt indicated by trailed slip. He is seated on a chair with cross-legs and a back curved outwards at the top (fig. 3). His right arm is bent, but the hand beyond the edge of the sherd holds an object, of which only the end survives to suggest that it may be a club or thunderbolt. His left hand is outstretched with palm upwards, as if associated with the feature above it. I am very much indebted to Dr Martin Henig for the identification of the feature as a bust of Sol with a radiate crown. On each side of the main figure are vertical lines of barbotine dots representing the edges of the panel, and there were probably other figures spaced out round the vessel. Miss Mary Cra'ster kindly measured the sherd for me and estimated a diameter of 272 mm for the lower edge. This suggests space for five figures, but only if they were tightly squeezed together. The more likely total would seem to be four. In this case a possible explanation is that the vessel carried figures and emblems of the four seasons, and that this one is Jupiter representing Summer. But this would be rather unorthodox and, as Dr Henig remarks, only possible in the 'classically ignorant milieu of Roman Britain', although the connection of Jupiter with Sol is, of course, well established (Cook (1914), 186).

The closest parallels seem to come from Great Chesterford, and were published by Roach Smith ((1857), 91-2). He illustrated two different vessels which appear to be indented beakers in a ware described as 'of a salmon-colour, covered with a dull brown glaze, which in the most prominent parts has a reddish hue'. The figures on one of these are clearly Mars and Jupiter, the former with a spear and shield, and the latter with a large vicious-looking thunderbolt in one hand and probably a sceptre in the other. Of the other vessels, there are three non-joining sherds with only the lower halves of two figures. One is identifiable by his *caduceus* as Mercury, and the other is probably Minerva, as she carries a shield. A beaker from Verulamium, Insula XVII (*Archaeologia* 90, 1944, fig. 20, no.1), has fragments of four figures, and it is calculated that there is room for a fifth. Only two offer any positive identification: Hercules with a bow and lion skin, and Mercury with his winged sandals. There is only one foot of the third figure. The fourth wears a Phrygian cap and a decorated skirt and carries a bow in his left hand and possibly a club or sceptre in his right. He appears to be Attis, a Mithraic intrusion into the classical pantheon, and a common enough feature of late Roman religious syncretism.

There is an indented beaker from Richborough in 'a fine grey ware with a darker grey polished surface' (Bushe-Fox (1932), pl.XLIII). There are five rather crude figures in the indentations described as 'moulded'. Two of them, similar without being identical, are male with radiate crowns and whips in the left hand representing Sol. A third male figure has a bare torso and thick belt. Another sherd has a leg and foot, which may belong

Fig 2 A sherd of Roman pottery in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge

to this or another figure, while another sherd shows a fragment of drapery at the side of which are the letters OGMIA. It is suggested that this could be the Celtic god Ogmios, who could be equated with Apollo (Ross (1967), 381).

The British examples are undoubtedly copies of the series of globular beakers with appliqué decoration made in Central Gaul, a few of which are illustrated by Déchelette ((1904), Series A, 169-187). Déchelette includes one with five figures in an arcade identified as Vulcan, Apollo and Fortuna. The other two are male and female without any attributes ((1904), 179f., figs. f-j). Another example with a hunting scene on the upper part of the beaker has eight main figure-types including Hercules, Bacchus, Ganymede, the Laocoon group, and a pair of gladiators. Déchelette gives details of eight other vessels, five of which have five subjects, but all are different with no apparent linking theme. They demonstrate the popularity, nevertheless, of Hercules and Venus. From this it would seem unwise to seek any particular significance in the grouping of our figures. A statistical analysis would show that some deities and subjects had a greater popular appeal than others (Audin, Vertet (1975), 121ff.; (1972)).

Figures in barbotine and paint on Nene Valley and other British colour-coated wares are not plentiful (Webster (1959), 91-95; (1966), 338-9) but there must be sherds in museum collections and from recent large-scale excavations, all of which need to be studied and published. Now that the Field Centre is well established, it may be appropriate to suggest that a full corpus of all the known material be collected and published.

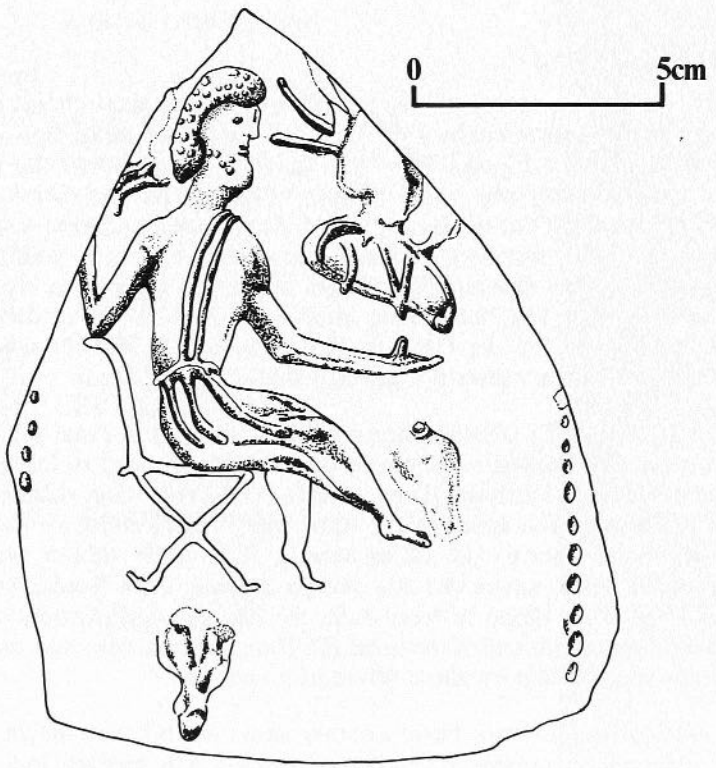

Fig 3 Drawing of the Cambridge sherd of Roman pottery

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The Early Courses of the River Nene

by Robert Evans

Because of peat wastage many silted channels which formerly drained the coastal marshes of the Fens are now clearly seen on aerial photographs taken when the soil is bare of crops. The silted channels have a lower organic content and show up as light-toned, sinuous features. They form a complex net, reflecting the former drainage pattern of the marsh (Evans (1972)).

The Soil Survey has acquired aerial photographic cover of the Fens, mainly at a scale of 1:15000. Many of these good quality photographs were taken by the University of Cambridge Committee for Aerial Photography, and are a useful aid in mapping the Fen soils; for the tonal patterns seen on them can be related to the stratigraphy seen in pipeline trenches (Evans, Mostyn (1979)), cleaned drainage ditches and auger bores and so point to the distribution of soils (Seale (1975a)). By extrapolating soils from mapped to unmapped areas the successive stages in the formation of the Fens can be delimited, and the appearance of the landscape at different times can be reconstructed.

Evidence for the evolution of a part of the Fens can only be gained by looking at soils and stratigraphy and land-surface heights over a wider area. A map of surface heights was made by interpolating contours between spot heights plotted on 1:50000 scale maps from 1:10560 maps. The spot heights on major roads and banks were ignored, and the lowest heights were given greatest weight when drawing the contours. This hypothetical surface is probably slightly higher than the actual ground surface, and discrepancies will be greatest where spot heights were in areas of deeper peat, where wastage may have occurred since the heights were levelled. It is likely that the contours give a reasonable representation of the height of the ground, especially of those areas where peat was thin or did not cover coastal deposits. Contours have been drawn for a large part of the Fens and the maps can be consulted at Cambridge. The aerial photo-interpretation has been completed for an area larger than that dealt with here.

The courses taken by the Nene prior to the construction of Morton's Leam in 1478 can be described for three periods reviewed below.

Pre-Roman Course of the Nene

This course is clearly seen on the photographs from where it leaves Whittlesey Dike to where it joins a former course of the Ouse (fig. 4). The Nene/Ouse drained to the north, and north of Guyhirn was later covered by marsh clays. There is no other evidence of a former channel across the skirtland, linking the Nene at Peterborough to the Fen Clay channels. Elsewhere in the Fens, before interference by man, the major river courses did not significantly shift their positions (Seale (1975b)) and this was probably true of the Nene.

With the rise in sea-level as the Devensian ice-cap melted the channel became tidal and gradually silted up. Silted creeks draining the Fen Clay lagoon (4500-4000 B.P. in the south) (Godwin, Vishnu-Mittre (1975)) drained into the Nene channel and were buried by later deposits. Silting of the channel probably continued to a level of about 1.2 m O.D. in the south, rising to about 0.6 m O.D. in the north. These heights relate well to those levelled by Godwin and Clifford (1939). On this surface peat formed.

The Roman Period

The early Roman course of the Nene followed the original channel, but by this time the former channel of the Nene/Ouse had silted up, as the Nene flowed south to Flood's Ferry (TL 356936) where it met the Ouse. On the aerial photographs these courses of the Nene and Ouse often have prominent light-toned banks, wider dark-toned channels and are straighter than the sinuous, thinner, dark-toned channels within the even-toned Fen Clay creeks. The courses appear to have been straightened and canalised. The Nene/Ouse canal went in a northerly direction along a distributory of the Ouse to Red House (TL 388982) where it crossed the peat to a northward draining tributary of the Ouse.

Near Lamb's Farm (TL 390999), north of Red House, the canal split into two branches. One section went north, the other to the east to unite with the Roman Rodham Farm canal and so to the Old Croft River (Cambridge Ouse) and the sea. The canal to the north may not have led to the sea, except circuitously across the silting marsh. It is likely that it reached the edge of the marsh where salt was being extracted; for a Roman saltern at about 1.5 m O.D., dated between A.D. 50-200, was found about 400 m north-north-west of the end of the canal (D. Hall, personal communication). The saltern was overlain by about 40 cm of marsh clay.

From just south of Lamb's Farm another canal led off west-north-west toward Eldernell. It crosses a number of south-north tending Fen Clay

Key

- Land above 3.6m (12 feet) OD
- Land covered by peat
- Clayey marsh deposits probably not covered by peat
- Silty or fine sandy deposits, coastal alluvium, probably not covered by peat
- Former meres
- Skirtland
- **R** Roman settlement
- • • • • • • Roman roads

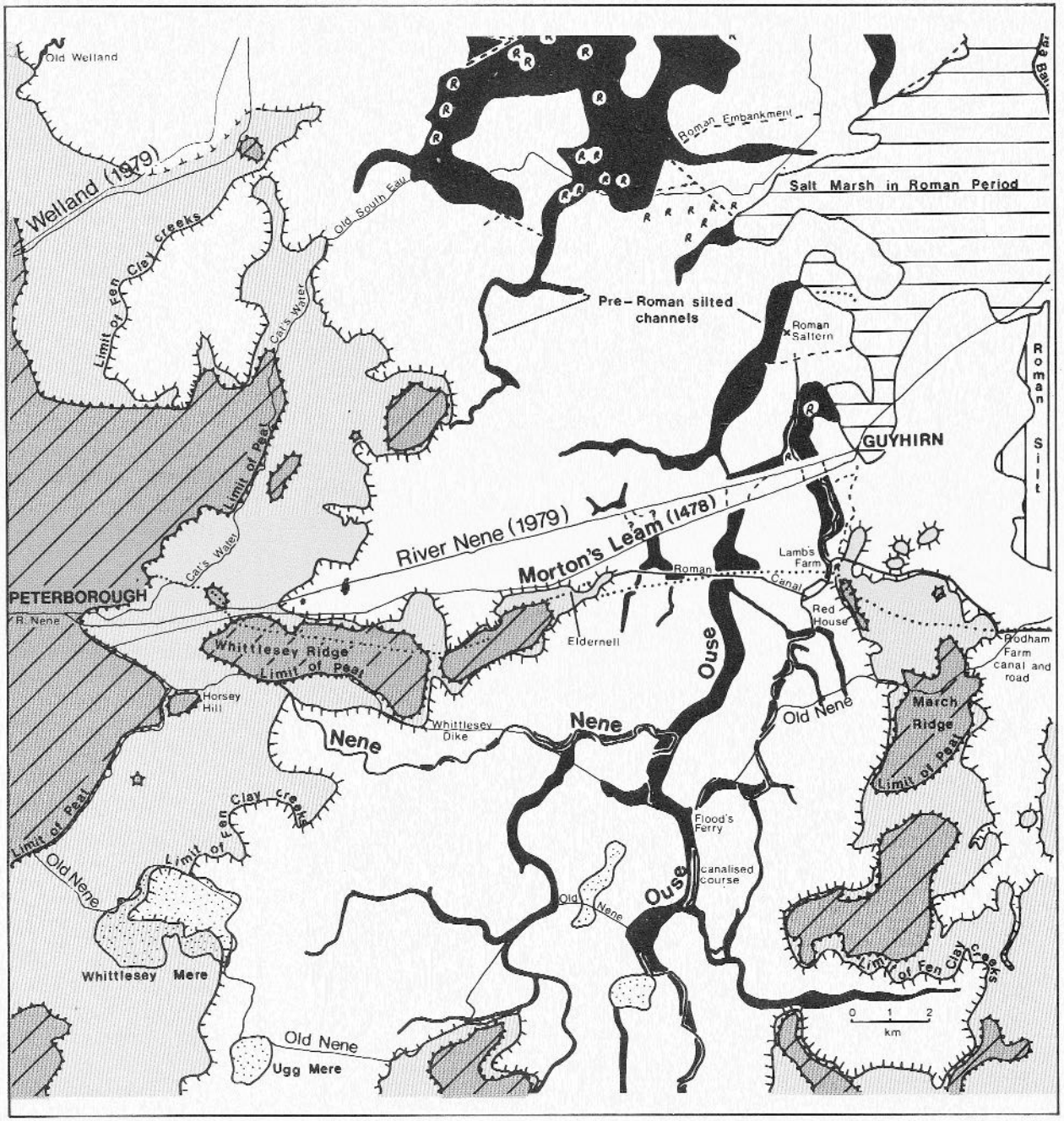

Fig 4 Early courses of the River Nene between Peterborough and March

channels, including the earlier course of the Nene/Ouse, and probably silted up from the east; for the light-toned channel is broader and more conspicuous in that direction. The canal may have been built in response to the continual silting of the Nene/Ouse canal. It seems probable that this canal, cut through peat, silted to a level of 1.5-1.8 m O.D.

There is little evidence on the aerial photographs for the Fen Causeway, and much of its route is plotted from Ordnance Survey maps. Between the Whittlesey ridge and Fengate it took a northerly course to take advantage of higher ground and to avoid crossing the Nene. But a causeway had to be built on fluvial clays to cross the wet depression at about 2.4 m O.D. Since alluviation of river-borne clays continued, the causeway had to be raised up.

Whilst the coastal marshes and creeks (and inland, the Nene) were silting up, peat was probably growing to the south, stopping the encroachment of the channel silts and marsh clays. If these had been deposited further south, the Fen Clay creek pattern would be obscured on the photographs.

By the end of the Roman period it is likely the tidal marshes and creeks had silted to about 1.8-2.4 m O.D., with the adjacent peat at a similar level.

Post-Roman Period

The course via Farcet (the 'Old Nene') linking Whittlesey and Ugg Meres and March to the Ouse at Upwell was probably cut when the level of the peat was about 3.6-3.0 m O.D. These are about the levels at Horsey Hill (TL 220960), south-east of Peterborough, and Upwell respectively. Whittlesey Dike, going east from Horsey Toll, may have been cut at the same or a later date to give a more direct course to March.

The highest level of the peat was about 3.6 m O.D. (Seale (1975a)). Cat's Water, north-east of Peterborough, coincides fairly closely with this contour in mid course and was probably built at, or near, the landward margin of the peat. It drained via the Old South Eau to the Nene/Ouse at Tydd Gate.

Conclusions

The Pre-Roman and Roman courses of the Nene can be traced on aerial photographs. Probable Roman settlements and embankments can be seen, especially in the north where the surface was not covered by later marsh clay deposits. Although the land-levels given here can only be approximate, they help in reconstructing the landscapes adjacent to the Nene in successive archaeological and historical periods. It seems likely that silting, related to rising sea-level and the growth of peat, was a continuing rather than an intermittent process.

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The Final Season at Fengate

by Francis Pryor

It hardly seems possible that the Fengate project is at last drawing to a close, after eight seasons of excavation. All that remains now is to produce the last two reports and work on these is well advanced. The *Second Report* appeared in November 1978 and is almost entirely devoted to a detailed description of the late Neolithic settlement, excavated in 1973 and 1974, in the field immediately west of Storey's Bar Road (summarised in *Durobrivae* 3, 1975, 7; its flint arrowheads are considered in *Durobrivae* 2, 1974, 10). The *Third Report* will be entirely given over to a detailed consideration of the ditched ('Bronze-Age') field or enclosure system of the second millennium B.C., described in *Durobrivae* 5, 1977, 14. Finally, the *Fourth Report* will pay special attention to the Cat's Water Iron-Age settlement (see *Durobrivae* 6, 1978, 10). It will also attempt to draw together the different strands of evidence into a coherent picture of the area's changing prehistoric past.

Now the digging has had to stop and the trowel is replaced by the typewriter. We did not, however, leave the field without a splendid final season that gives new impetus to the sometimes quite tedious work of writing. Cynics say that in archaeology citing negative evidence is another way of admitting failure. I do not agree with this, but nonetheless like to replace it with something more positive, and this we have done as the following paragraphs illustrate.

New Light on the 'Bronze-Age' Ditched Enclosure System

In 1978 our attention was divided between two different areas of the ditched enclosure system. The first was located north-east of the T-junction at the end of Padholme Road, in the Fourth Drove sub-site, and the second was within the mainly Iron-Age Cat's Water sub-site (Pryor, Cranstone (1978), fig. 3).

The Fourth Drove sub-site could not be excavated in our accustomed manner, by opening large areas of land, owing to limitations of time and money; but instead had to be dug in a series of long (*c.*100 metres), thin (*c.*10 metres) trenches. One of these trenches was placed at the lowest part of the site so far investigated. At this point, the upcast from a modern drainage dyke and the gravel *agger* of a Roman road (the Fen Causeway) met. Together they provided about a metre of thick, protective over-burden which had raised the plough above the prehistoric land surface. As the result of this unexpected protection, an equally unexpected Bronze-Age field boundary ditch survived, but, to our amazement, with its accompanying earth and gravel bank still largely intact (fig. 5).

This discovery was important for a number of reasons. First, it showed how much we can expect to lose as a matter of course through modern and mediaeval plough-damage. It should be noted here that a hedge

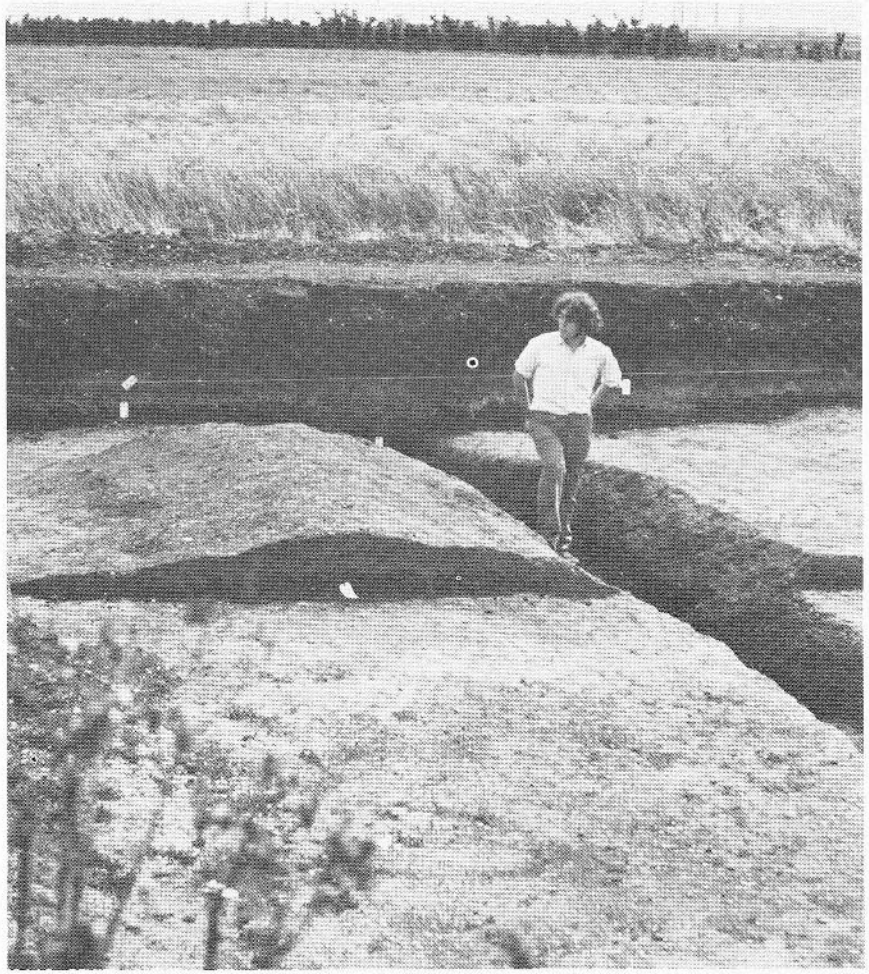

Fig 5 Ditch and bank of the second millennium B.C. at Fengate (Fourth Drove)

would probably have been planted on top of the bank to provide after a few years' growth a strong, livestock-proof barrier. Ancient hedges, like those of today, would have been regularly laid, trimmed and maintained and would have provided useful employment for the thousands of palstaves and socketed axes that fill our museums! Second, there was no evidence in the filling of the ditch that a bank had ever existed. In this regard, archaeologists generally look for layers of gravel, chalk, rubble — or whatever the local subsoil happens to be — in the fillings of ditches, in the hope that these slipped deposits will betray the one-time presence of a bank. Our ditch, however, showed none of these clues and we should be most careful, therefore, of attributing too much to negative evidence alone.

The discovery of the Bronze-Age bank below the Fen Causeway was interesting for a third reason. A close inspection of the stratigraphy around the southern edge of the road showed that a layer of fresh-water flood clay ran under the road surface, but over the Bronze-Age bank. This clay dipped into the partially filled-in ditch that accompanied the bank, and there seems little reason to doubt that flooding was a major contributory factor in the sudden abandonment of the ditched enclosure system, sometime around 1000 B.C. This discovery provided unexpected confirmation of a hypothesis I had put forward some time ago, when seriously puzzled by the rapid abandonment of so large, complex and apparently successful a system of land management. I did not dare to expect such unambiguous support for what was, at best, only an informed guess.

The Late Bronze/Early Iron-Age Missing Link

The latter half of the season was spent investigating the southern part of the Cat's Water Iron-Age settlement. Our intention at the outset of the season was merely to define the limits of settlement, which we eventually accomplished; but instead we found an amazing plethora of Bronze-Age ditches, the alignment of which neatly linked the features of 1974-77 with those found in 1971. We also found traces of the later Bronze to earliest Iron-Age settlement, which previously had eluded us. Mr G. Wyman Abbott's pre-War researches at Fengate had revealed 'Early Iron-Age' domestic pottery which is now generally accepted as having been manufactured much earlier, probably in the Late Bronze Age (i.e. the early first millenium B.C.). This material, however, was found under salvage conditions during actual gravel-digging, and it is hardly surprising that house-plans and the like were not encountered. This important pottery, now finely displayed in the new Archaeology Gallery in Peterborough Museum, provides good evidence for settlement at Fengate in the centuries between the abandonment of the ditched enclosures and the establishment of the known, probably permanent all-year-round settlement of the Iron Age proper (Cat's Water, Vicarage Farm and Padholme Road sub-sites). Our problem is that this evidence is too vague to be used in any meaningful study of settlement patterns.

We are still working on the Late Bronze-Age material found last season, so I do not want to jump the gun and make a statement I might later regret: but I am now reasonably certain that we have evidence for round-houses in this period. We also found a well which produced a beautifully preserved oak stake which had a carefully carved dovetail joint let into one side. An almost complete fineware vessel of the Late Bronze Age was found touching the stake, at the bottom of the well.

The final, again unexpected, bonus of the season was the discovery of an Iron-Age round-house which, through some accident of agriculture, had largely escaped plough-damage (fig. 6). Its external eaves-drip gully and smaller wall foundation-trench can clearly be seen in the accompanying photograph. A peculiar aspect of this structure, however, was the presence of a deep well which occupied a large part of the floor area. This hole had been deliberately back-filled with domestic rubbish,

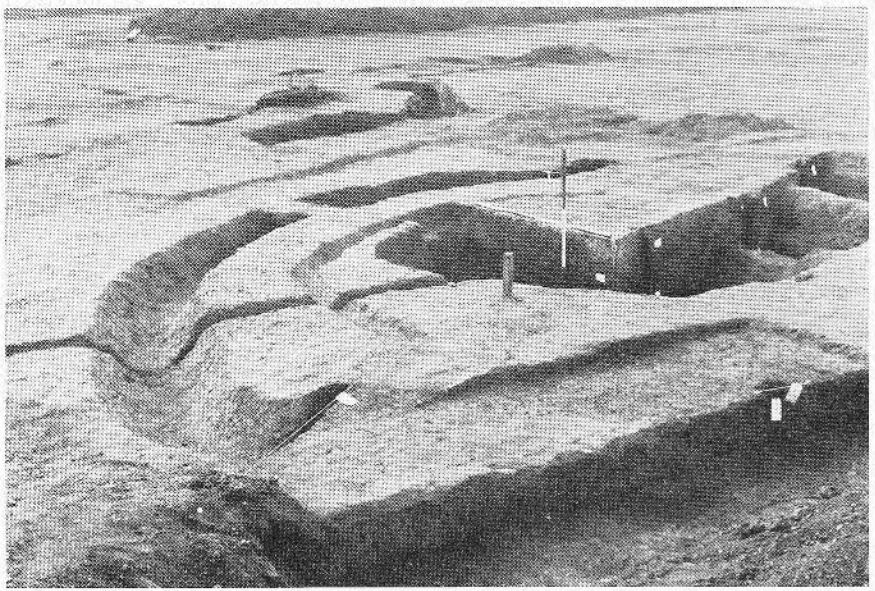

Fig 6 Fengate, Cat's Water sub-site. Iron-Age round-house showing to left eaves-drip gully, to left-centre wall foundation-trench and, centre, large in-filled well

including large fragments of animal bone and shell-gritted pottery, at the time the house was built. These loosely packed deposits soon wore down during day-to-day trample within the house, and domestic rubbish began to accumulate *in situ* on the now sunken floor. This rubbish, although composed of the same ingredients as that dumped into the well, is finely crushed and consolidated. Every bucketful of floor material revealed thousands of tiny potsherds, when passed through a fine-meshed water sieve.

This article will be the last specifically devoted to Fengate, but the project still lives on in a changed form; for we now move into a new phase of research in which particular enquiry gives way to more general study. To be more precise, we now change from a site-specific to a regional research project; but as this new programme will provide the topic for my next *Durobrivae* paper, I had better not say too much here. Wait for next year's instalment!

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Industrial and Vernacular Architecture, 1978

by Richard Hillier

In February I inspected 30-31 Long Causeway, two properties acquired for the new branch office of the Provincial Building Society (by courtesy of the manager, Mr Fish). The facade of this three-storey building was early eighteenth-century, and a lead rain-water head (dated 'ISM 1726') survived until demolition when it was acquired for the City Museum. The interior of the front building formed two distinct parts, each with an early eighteenth-century staircase. The back wall, although contemporary with the front, was a little irregular, probably because it was built against older outbuildings which were later removed. The outbuildings behind nos. 30-31 dated from the first half of the nineteenth century. Under the floor of no. 30 and part of its outbuildings was the bottom of an earlier cellar.

During 1976 the generating of electricity ceased at Peterborough Power Station. The complex consists of four successive power stations. The first (built 1898-1901) was altered and extended to make the second (1921-23). The third station was built as a separate building in 1925-29; its boiler house was demolished *c.*1972. Between 1948-51 the last station was built; the boiler house should be dismantled in 1979, but the pump-houses adjacent to the river have already been demolished.

In January the following buildings were demolished: the railway offices and stores in Priestgate (built in 1868); railway offices close to the old Crescent level crossing; the Fletton Infant and Junior School (built 1901) near Fletton Bridge; and Wentworth Street Methodist Church (built 1874). No. 10 Exchange Street was demolished and the shop rebuilt. It was a very narrow building which appeared to date to *c.*1700 and had Victorian alterations. Extensive demolition of the Co-operative Society's property in Westgate — from Tudor House (1846) on the corner of North Street almost to Park Road — took place prior to rebuilding. There were originally four separate buildings, all apparently nineteenth-century. The Victorian and Edwardian buildings of Messrs Crussell (ironmongers) and Messrs Rippon (builders' merchants) at Millfield were also demolished. Lastly, it is worth recording that the remains of the former Cattle Market (off Broadway) were destroyed for the construction of a multi-storey car park. This market was first laid out after an Act of Parliament in 1863.

The Stone of Group VI Rock from Lynch Farm: a Reconsideration

by Stephen Briggs

Two artefacts, one a polished greenstone axe, the other a large flake described as an axe-polishing stone, were found 60 m apart during rescue excavations at Lynch Farm *(Durobrivae* 1 (1973)). They were recovered from an indeterminate silt layer above the gravel. Both were examined petrographically by Dr W. A. Cummins and ascribed by him to Group VI. The possibility was advanced that these artefacts had 'travelled from the Lake District to the Nene Valley together', but there was no discussion of the mode of transport which carried them.

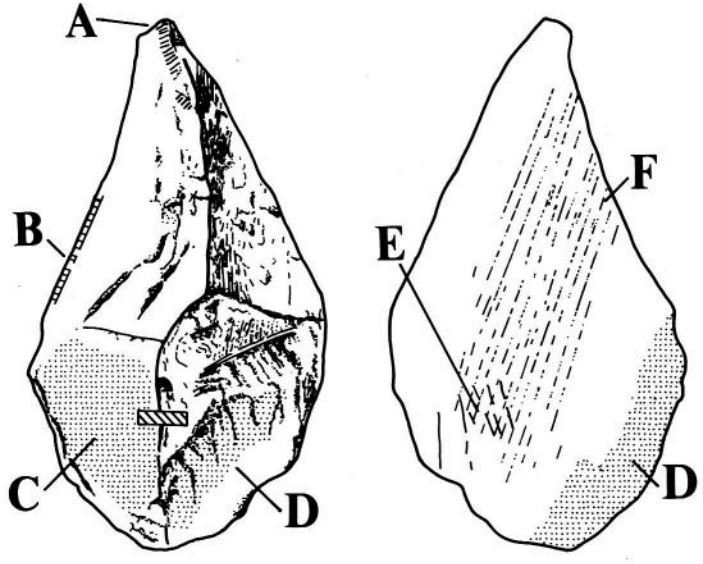
Finds of axe-polishing equipment are not common in Britain. At least a handful of concave sandstone blocks and one hone have come to light, but the polishing activity is generally believed to have been effected most commonly with quartz-rich sand or small portable sandstone rubbers, which would escape archaeological detection. Outside the Lake District discoveries of artefacts other than axes in Group VI rock are virtually unknown. The discovery of a Cumbrian stone believed to have been used in polishing axes therefore merits fuller discussion.

Description

The large stone flake (figs. 7,8) is at present 14.6 cm long, 8.3 cm wide and 3.5 cm thick. One face (possibly the bulbar) is fairly flat, the other bifacially ridged. Across the flatter face extremely fine striations run lengthwise. Close to the left-hand side of the broader end of this face are deeper, fresher scratches, running at a slightly different angle, but still lengthwise. The colour here is brown, and at the bottom left a broken edge gives the depth of the colour, demonstrating the scratching to be across a relict patina surface. There are certain small black granules, perhaps of iron pan, still adhering to this surface. Examined under a low-power binocular microscope, it was difficult to ascertain whether they belonged to a pre-working or to a post-Neolithic patina, or to both. On the edge of the artefact are at least two chips which could have resulted from damage during recovery. On the other, bifacial, surface, which in the main appears fresh and chalky-green, there is again very slight iron staining, mostly toward the wider part of the flake. It appears to be post-Neolithic, but again may not be so. A clear feature of the artefact is that polishing has taken the edge off almost 2 cm of the steep ridge immediately below the pointed end. It is however clear that the flake was patinated brown to some depth on what may have been the bulbar face of the flake before the bifacial surface was exposed. The inference is that the flake was detached from a larger rock which was patinated. It is not clear whether man or nature detached it. Neither is the function or chronology of the two sets of striations clear, although they may be glacial in origin. A more detailed microscopic examination is clearly desirable.

Function

The polishing of axes fashioned from hard metamorphic and igneous rocks demands suitable abrasives. Their availability may dictate the ultimate form of the artefact. It is probable that some rough-outs from Cumbria and elsewhere are not polished; for abrasives are lacking in those localities. The Nene Valley is well served with sandstones, and



A —Polished area
B —Exposed section of patina
C —Rock sliced here
D —Slight iron-stained patina
E —More recent scratches
F —Fine striations on patina

Fig 7 Drawing of the stone flake from Lynch Farm

boasts an extremely wide range of sands and gravels in superficial deposits, which would have provided adequate abrasives for most purposes. The finely polished stone and flint axes in the area are testimony to that. It is extremely unlikely that stone poor in silicates and lacking abrasive qualities, as is Borrowdale Volcanic, should ever have been used for polishing axes. Indeed, the presence of a Group VI axe of the same material and only about 9.5 cm long upon the same site leads one to ask why the 'axe-polishing stone', itself a good 5 cm longer, should not also have been made into an axe. Such smoothing as is visible upon the bifacial ridge is likely to have occurred from contact with an abrasive rather than through friction against a metamorphic or igneous stone implement. The most likely function for this stone flake therefore seems to the writer to have been that of an axe. For some unknown reason it was discarded soon after the work upon it had begun.

Mode of Transport

The presence of ice-borne Lake District rocks in eastern England was slowly established by geologists towards the end of the last century. Rastall and Romanes ((1909), 256) identified Borrowdale Volcanics as far south as Kingston Lodge and Cambridge. Sir Cyril Fox could see no reason why greenstone or other polished stone axes should not have been produced in the locality ((1923), 11). In the Nene Valley the abundance and variety of metamorphic and igneous rocks in the drift was demonstrated by Dr P. A. Sabine ((1949), 256-8). He recognised one specimen of the Borrowdale Volcanic series and other Cumbrian rocks, as well as material derived from North Wales, northern Britain, the Midlands and the Southwest. Early observers of Nene Valley geology were quick to note that axes could be made from boulders. Those from Edenham and Kate's Bridge were 'formed of a dark-green slate or hornstone, and neatly polished' and still showed 'portions of the original weathered surface of the boulders' (Skertchley (1877), 204-6). The availability in eastern England of Cumbrian stone is therefore an established fact (*pace* Cummins (1978)), and archaeologists have for long believed that this or other local rock was used in axe manufacture.

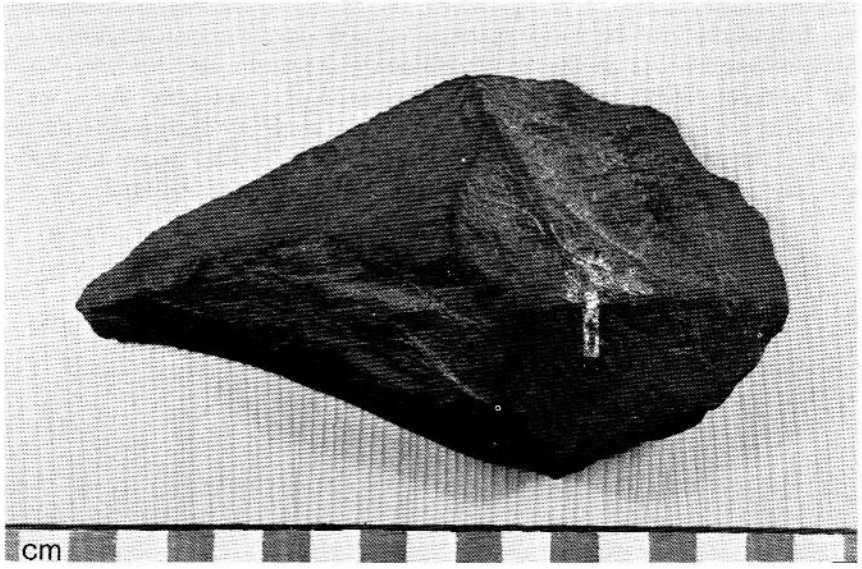


Fig 8 The stone flake from Lynch Farm

The uncertain nature of the rough-out axe in prehistoric 'trade' and the extensive presence of re-cycled Borrowdale Volcanics in northern, midland and eastern Britain (Briggs (1977); (1978)) brings into question the necessity for, or likelihood of, long-distance movement of unworked stone or finished implements in that material. At Lynch Farm we can perhaps for the first time recognise an attempt at axe making from such re-cycled rock. We are thus provided with some tangible evidence which supports the view that the economy of Neolithic Britain was geared to the utilisation of local raw materials.

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The Cambridgeshire Archaeological Committee

by Alison Taylor

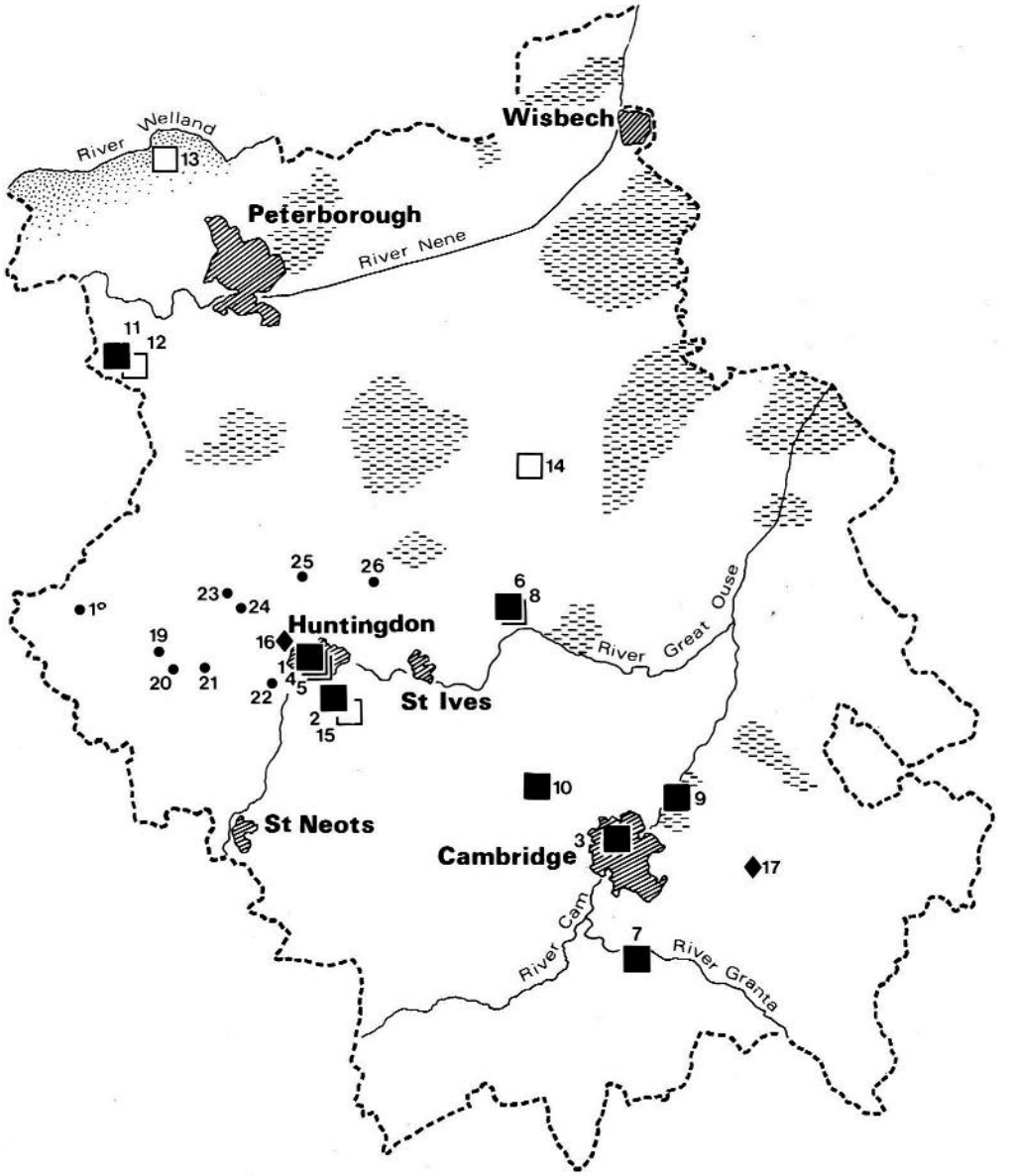
The CAC was set up in 1973 to co-ordinate archaeological activities throughout the new County and to ensure co-operation with planning authorities on archaeological matters. The first chairman was Professor Glyn Daniel (subsequently Dr John Alexander) with Dr Alexander (later Dr Kate Pretty) as secretary. Committee members represent the archaeological interests within Cambridgeshire — museums, local societies, University, NVRC, DoE and the planning authorities. As well as acting as an advisory service, policy-making body and talking shop, the Committee is able to apply for and administer grants and thus to employ officers and to initiate excavations. In November 1974 I was appointed as a county archaeological officer and in October 1976 David Hall became the Fenland field officer. Our latest appointment is Francis Pryor, well known to *Durobrivae* readers for his work at Fengate, as field officer for the Welland Valley.

My main initial function was to set up a county-wide sites-and-monuments record so that all archaeological data (stray finds, excavations, crop-marks or earthworks) could be plotted on standard map and file cards, which could be consulted and duplicated whenever necessary. This record now holds about 5000 cards and is increasing all the time. Apart from its archaeological research value it is vital for the protection of sites by scheduling, for advising planners and other public bodies involved in land-use, for satisfying public enquiries and for deciding on excavation priorities. I am also responsible for emergency excavations, when sites unexpectedly come to light and for watching construction work in areas of archaeological potential.

David Hall's brief as Fenland field officer was to make an assessment of ancient settlement patterns and landscapes in the Fens. Over the past two years he has concentrated on a selection of varied geological areas within which he has walked each field and mapped the archaeological results. Scatters of flints, pottery and other occupation debris, roddons (extinct waterways) and occasionally even slight earthworks are giving many new and surprising results on the pre-drainage history of this area. Settlements, salt-industries and round barrows are the principal discoveries, well over 100 new sites so far. In addition, observation of soil types in relation to dated archaeological remains has enabled him to identify the limits of the Fens at various periods. The areas so far examined are the silt fens around Elm and Newton, clay and gravel fen edges at Eye, Holme, Ramsey and Warboys, the chalk fen edge around Burwell and Swaffham and fen islands at Manea, Wimblington and Haddenham. About 50000 acres have been examined so far, and over the next three years the Cambridgeshire Fens will have received systematic and detailed work that can be parallelled in few other regions.

In October 1978 the Manpower Services Commission approved the appointment of 6 unemployed graduates to work for a year for the CAC. We now have three archaeologists who are doing measured surveys of mediaeval earthworks, checking on Scheduled Monuments and processing finds from recent excavations. They have examined a Roman cemetery at Horningsea disturbed by ploughing and recorded a large Roman settlement, including a kiln, that was unexpectedly uncovered by a gravel quarry near Godmanchester. Two archivists are cataloguing documentary records and old maps so that all information relevant to archaeology can be found in parish files. A clerical assistant is keeping the sites-and-monuments record up to date. Between them they have also fitted out a house for use as an archaeological centre and store.

Over the last five years the CAC has concentrated on organisation, recording, protection of sites, public relations, emergency excavations and fieldwork, but we have managed a few larger-scale excavations. Michael Green works on sites in Godmanchester twice a year, an Iron-Age and Romano-British settlement was excavated at Colne and there was exploratory work on crop-marks at Girton, a moat at Hardwick and a henge at Elton. The latter site looks very promising and a larger dig will take place there in 1979 which will be reported in *Durobrivae* in due course.



Excavations ■

1 **Huntingdon** R. Smith 1973
2 **Godmanchester** H. J. M. Green 1973-9
3 **Cambridge** J. Alexander, J. Pullinger 1973-8
4 **Huntingdon Castle** A. Taylor 1975
5 **Huntingdon High St.** T. Betts 1975
6 **Colne** S. Alexander 1975
7 **Shelford** J. Alexander et al 1975-7
8 **Colne** H. C. Mytum 1976
9 **Horningsea** H. C. Mytum 1976
10 **Dry Drayton** A. Taylor 1977
11 **Elton** A. Taylor 1978

Proposed Excavations, 1979 □

12 **Elton** A. Taylor
13 **Maxey** F. M. M. Pryor
14 **Chatteris** I. Hodder
15 **Godmanchester** H. J. M. Green

Earthwork Surveys ♦

16 **Huntingdon Castle** C. C. Taylor & S.T.E.P.
17 **Gt. Wilbraham** C. C. Taylor & S.T.E.P.

Village Surveys

S. Etchells-Butler, J. Kysow, D. Crowther

18 **Molesworth**
19 **Spaldwick**
20 **Easton**
21 **Ellington**
22 **Brampton**
23 **Alconbury Weston**
24 **Alconbury**
25 **Abbots Ripton**
26 **Broughton**

Fenland Fieldwork (1976-9)

D. N. Hall

Welland Valley Fieldwork (1979—)

F. M. M. Pryor

Fig 9 The Fieldwork Programme of the CAC (1973-March 1979)

Bog Oaks: a Key to Dating the Past

by Valerie Taylor

Bog oaks are turned up by the plough in Fenland every year. It was obvious, however, that the tree trunks being dug out of the peat at Ramsey in January 1979 were somewhat larger than usual (fig. 10). The farmer, Mr Holden, and his wife proved to be remarkably helpful, allowed access to the field and provided the information that some of these trees had been dug out from under silt roddons and that all of them were resting on the clay that underlies the peat. This means that they were buried very early in the sequence of peat formation in this part of the Fens. They are large forest trees with little side branching, which suggests that they date from an early phase when thick forest would have covered the mineral soils that underlie the peat.

The oak trunks, many of which still had their bark and sapwood, vary in length from small pieces to mature trees of 6 metres, ideal for tree-ring dating or dendrochronology. This method of dating wood uses the pattern of seasonal growth-rings in trees and dendrochronologists are gradually building up a sequence of tree rings by overlapping growth-ring patterns in samples of wood obtained from many different sources, particularly mediaeval timber framed buildings. In Britain the problem has been to obtain trees or timber of sufficient size and age to take the sequence back beyond the later part of the prehistoric period. There are very few places where conditions are such that large trees would be preserved from prehistoric times. In Britain wood is generally only preserved by very wet conditions, protected from decay by the lack of oxygen and the natural tanning agents in oak-wood and bark. It was under these conditions that the Fen oaks were preserved in the deep peat.

Tree-rings can be used directly to date building timbers. More important from the prehistorian's point of view is their value for checking radiocarbon dates. It is well known that anomalies have occurred where radiocarbon dates have been compared with other sources of dating. As a result the radiocarbon date curve needs to be checked and calibrated. An absolute check can be made by dating by radiocarbon samples of wood, the age of which has been established independently by dendrochronology. This will show up areas of irregularity and enable the necessary calibration work to be done.

After seeing the bog oaks at Ramsey we were luckily able to secure the co-operation of Mr David Haddon-Reece of the Ancient Monuments Laboratory in London. He came up to Fengate with his colleague Mr Andrew David to inspect the material and was enthusiastic about its suitability for tree-ring dating. Moreover, the roddons associated with the trees may in their view be suitable for a new dating method — magnetic silt-dating. The technique exploits the fluctuating position of the Magnetic North Pole. By plotting the alignment of magnetic particles in the silt roddons, and comparing that ancient alignment with the modern position of Magnetic North, it may be possible to calculate the date when the silt was laid down. It is possible therefore that our Fen oaks may soon be helping to tie together three important dating techniques — radiocarbon, dendrochronology and magnetic silt-dating.

Fig 10 Bog oaks from Ramsey, 1979

Durobrivae

by Donald Mackreth

The Roman town of Durobrivae has been well-known to generations of antiquarians and archaeologists ever since E. T. Artis published the first plan of the site in 1828. More recently, aerial photographs taken and published by Professor St Joseph have made some aspects of it more familiar; but there is no published plan showing in detail features visible on the photographs. The plan on the next page (fig. 11), prepared from over 1000 photographs mainly taken by Professor St Joseph and Mr S. G. Upex, can only be called an interim statement on the site.

The principal difficulty is that, without excavation, it is hard to be sure which features are specifically Roman, apart from the obvious roads, defences and buildings. (There has been no attempt to screen out any non-Roman features except modern roads, field boundaries and gravel pits. Several crop-marks which are surely prehistoric are present.) The plan in fig. 11 is part only of another fuller plan, which includes the great suburb across the Nene as well as more of the area to the west and south-west of the town.

The main lines of the plan are familiar: Ermine Street pursuing its course across the site, the most obvious limits of which seem to be the defensive circuit. The irregular street plan inside the walls is well-known and often quoted to demonstrate the difference between what was originally an informal settlement and one of higher status having a full-gridded street layout.

Another known major feature of the plan is the fort (A) by the river crossing. What may be accounted as new on fig. 11 is the direct evidence for a high degree of development inside the walls. The shape of the walled area would lead one naturally to suspect that the end by the river was the more intensely occupied and the other photographs show that this is the case. However, crop-marks at the other end of the site never show with equal clarity and occupation there cannot be dismissed as only ribbon development along Ermine Street until greater definition of the area becomes available.

The complete line of the defences is not yet visible. However, the aerial photographs show two features of interest. Firstly, the south-west gate has been known for some time to be off-set, but it was not clear, until Professor St Joseph's photographs of the south-east end of the town were examined, that at least one of the two main gates was of the same pattern and that Ermine Street was diverted to approach the gate squarely. Secondly, bastions attached to the wall can be seen frequently enough for it to appear that they were probably evenly spaced along its line. The town wall is so heavily robbed that it requires just the right conditions to show the wall-line and the surviving masonry clearly.

Work in recent years has tended to emphasise the extensive extra-mural development, which in places achieves a density not far short of that in the north-east end of the walled enclosure. Durobrivae is always considered to be an outstandingly good example of the small town, yet in many ways this is false; for it is by far the largest known, if its area within the walls is taken as a measure: some 44 acres (17.6 hectares) — and perhaps some six or seven times as big again if the external settlement is taken into account. It is clear that the town is exceptional by any standard.

The legal status of the town is known to be that of *vicus*, the lowest level of local government save for *pagi* or country districts. The evidence consists of the stamp on a mortarium — CUNOARDA FECIT/VICO DUROBRIVIS. As such it would not be surprising to discover that the town contained a *mansio*, or government staging post with accommodation for imperial officials and couriers. Inside the walls can be seen one large building (B), and what may be detected of its plan shows that it is comparable with other buildings interpreted as *mansiones*.

Mr C. E. Stevens ((1937), 199) was the first to suggest that Durobrivae had, by the fourth century, been promoted to *civitas*, a status which may very roughly be equated with that of a regional capital. His evidence was based upon the location of a milestone which appears to give the mileage from Durobrivae, a feature, he suggested, only to be found when towns had achieved this level of prestige.

The size of the settlement may be explained as being due to the exceptional industrial activity around it, coupled with a flourishing agriculture based upon good soils. However, there is one aspect which is impossible to prove, but which may account for some of the expansion, namely the Roman drainage of the Fens. While there is no direct proof that the newly settled lands there constituted an imperial estate, it is hard to imagine that any authority other than the imperial could have ordered and financed the scheme. So far as what we know of local government in Roman times is concerned, it is not clear to which regional capital the Fens would have fallen — Caistor-by-Norwich or Lincoln, or even, in part, to Leicester. The truth is that it is hard to see a single civil authority governing the whole area, if it was not the emperor himself. Is it beyond the bounds of possibility that the Fens were governed from the largest settlement on its boundaries, one well placed to serve both north and south parts, and

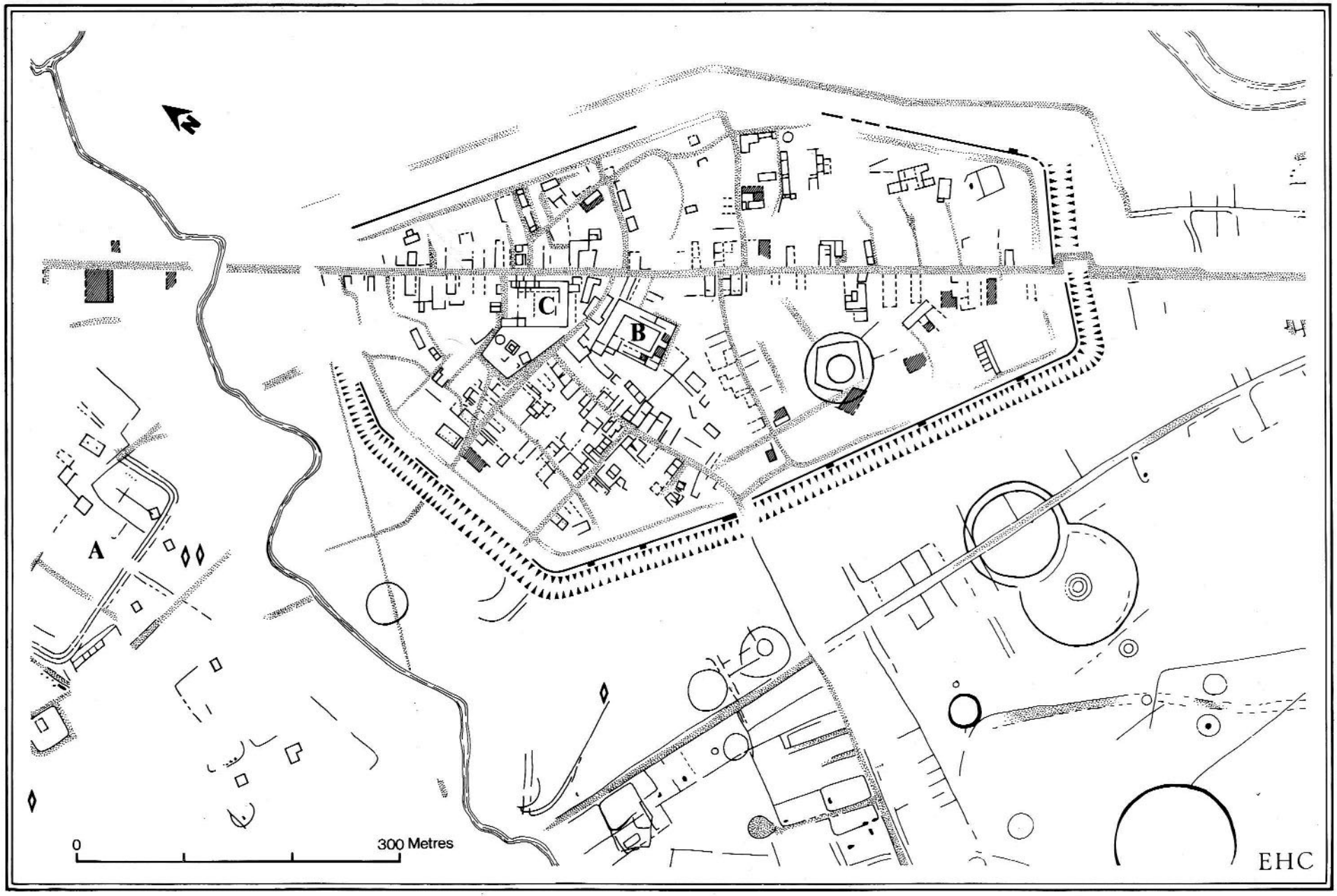


Fig 11 Plan of Durobrivae based on aerial photographs

lying on the cross-country route from the Midlands to East Anglia?

Is it possible to look at the plan of the town with this consideration in mind? I suspect that it is: the possible *mansio* has been mentioned, but there seems to be another large building aligned on Ermine Street itself (C). The details are not clear, but the perusal of many air photographs suggests strongly that there is such a single large building, apparently lying in an *insula* in the western part of which there is a group of temples. If the whole of the plan of the north-west end is examined it will be seen that there appears to have been a road entering the area from the west which leads directly to the temples. Some photographs also suggest that the area outside the probable *temenos* wall at this end was metalled. It may be that here lies the main administrative centre for the Fens and its association with temples may not be entirely fortuitous. Caution advises, however, that the large building may merely be a service structure connected with the operation of a complex cult.

Lying on the fringes of the extra-mural settlement north of the river is the very large building under Castor village, which has given rise to speculation since Artis first published his findings there. Haverfield went against the idea that it was one structure, thinking it too large and disjointed. A visit to the site, coupled with an appreciation of the work carried out by Dr Wild and Mr Dannell, shows clearly that the whole complex is of one design, carefully adapted by means of terraces to suit the hillside on which it lies. The very scale of the works is enough to suggest that it was perhaps intended for a government official of high rank rather than a wealthy private owner. While excavation does not always provide the answers to the questions which are posed, it is true to say of Durobrivae and its environs that there is no other way of seeking answers.

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Roman Ironworking and an Anvil from Nassington

by Adrian Challands

E. T. Artis located and perhaps excavated over 60 iron smelting sites (Artis (1828), pl. 1) which he attributed to the Roman period. These sites (the nearest to Durobrivae is some 5 km north-west) lie on or near iron-bearing rocks. Later work carried out by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments added to the number of sites and widened their distribution westwards along the Nene Valley. One problem is that iron smelting was carried out in the area in the Iron Age, mediaeval and possibly post-mediaeval times. Dating evidence, if any is recovered in field surveys, is often limited in its validity. However, even taking this into account, it is obvious that iron working added significantly to the prosperity of Durobrivae.

The Roman blacksmith's anvil (fig. 12) was recovered during field-walking 600 metres north-west of Nassington village. It lay within a spread of iron slag 5 metres in diameter, situated on an outcrop of Northampton Sand Ironstone, which occurs on the edge of a small valley cut by a stream running into the River Nene. The Nassington anvil is a small block of iron weighing just over 6 kg, having a working surface 12 cm square which tapers down from 12 cm to a base 6.5 cm square.

Vulcan, the god of fire and iron, was the patron deity of smiths and ironworking. Vulcan is portrayed using a simple block anvil in a number of contemporary reliefs (Manning (1976), pls. 3 and 4) which show the anvil set into what has been interpreted as a block of wood. Indeed, modern blacksmiths still place their bigger anvils on a substantial timber.

It is perhaps significant that Vulcan is often portrayed on Nene Valley colour-coated pottery vessels, usually beakers. The design is either executed in barbotine or painted. Painted wares have been dated to the third and fourth centuries A.D. The pottery fragment (fig. 13) found at Durobrivae in 1893 and now in Peterborough Museum illustrates part of a Vulcan scene which is painted on a dark brown colour-coated vessel in white clay slip with additional detail added in orange clay slip. Depicted left is Vulcan's left arm holding a pair of tongs upwards, the jaws of which are missing. In the centre is a block of wood in which a block-anvil

similar to that from Nassington is set. To its left is a separate beak anvil. In the Silchester anvil (Boon (1974), 253) the beak and flat striking surface are incorporated into a single implement as in the modern anvil. To the extreme right is what may be the hood of a raised hearth forge (Manning (1976), 6-7) with sparks rising from it.

It is unfortunate that the amount of research, backed up by modern excavation, to have been carried out on Roman iron-smelting and working sites in the Lower Nene Valley is small, considering the large scale of iron-ore exploitation and what must have been a major local Romano-British industry. To obtain more accurate information on the scale of Roman workings, in the absence of pottery dating evidence for slag scatters, it is possible that diagnostic iron artefacts such as the Nassington anvil may prove helpful.

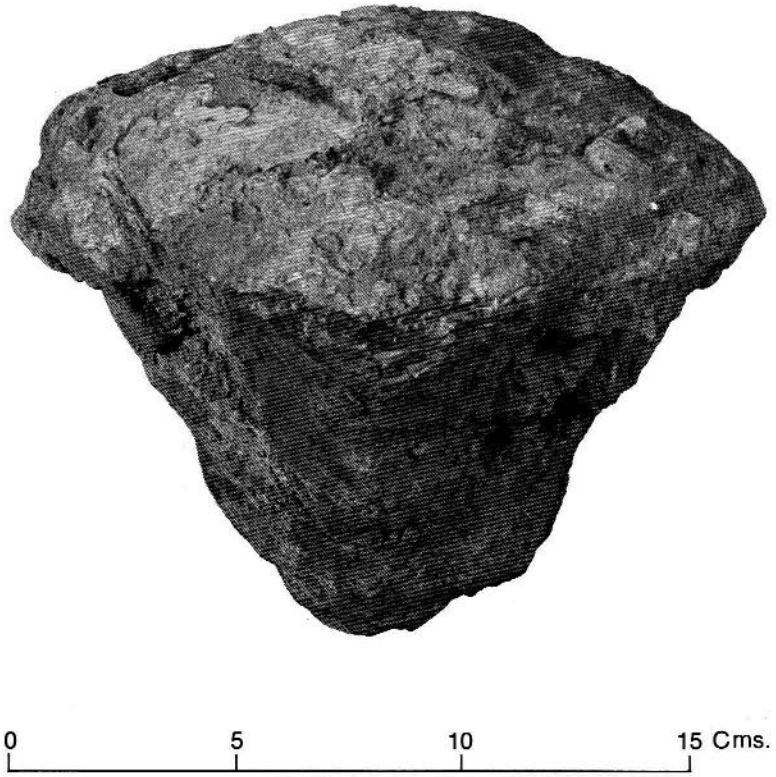

Fig 12 A Roman anvil from Nassington

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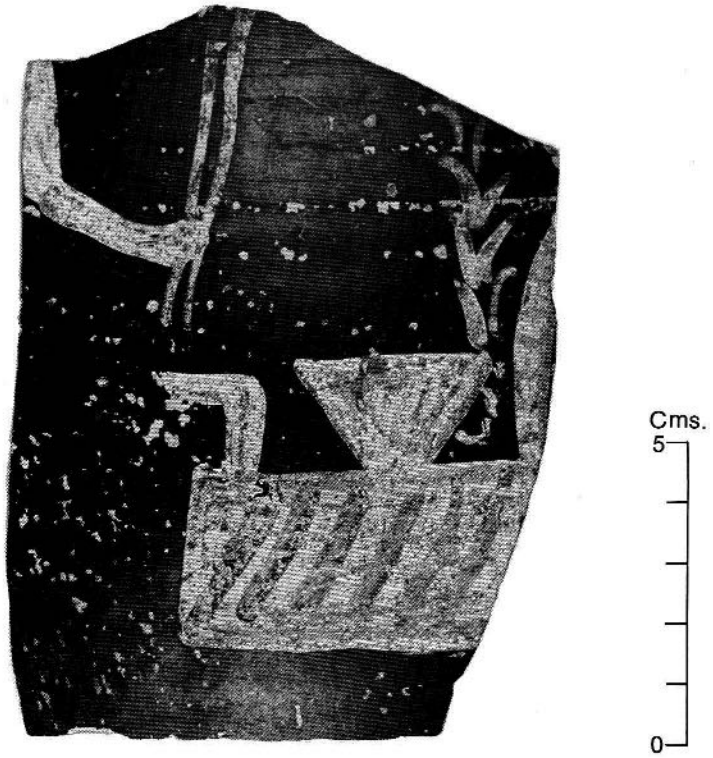

Fig 13 Ironworking scene on a Nene Valley potsherd

Barnack 1978-9

by Donald Mackreth and Francis O'Neill

Since the excavation of a barrow by Mr Peter Donaldson in a gravel pit at Barnack in 1974 (*Durobrivae* 4, 1976, 14-17; *Antiquaries Journal* LVII, 1977, 197-231) a watch has been kept on gravel extraction and, with the kind permission of the Nene Barge and Lighter Company, two further seasons of work have taken place. Although the two parts differ in character, a pit-alignment and track tie them together and provide some synchronism for elements which themselves yielded little dating evidence.

The penannular ditch (fig. 14A) was excavated by Mr Arnold Pryor after the site had been stripped by the gravel company. The site's surface as a result was much lower than the base of the plough-soil, and only the bottoms of the ditch and the pits in the alignment survived. There was evidence for post-holes in the south part of the enclosed area and some must have been lost in the grading.

The penannular ditch (shown as the next ring south-east of the barrow in fig. 8 in *Durobrivae* 4) has parallels in other parts of the Welland Valley, but its association with other archaeological features lent it an especial interest here. By examining the relationships it was hoped that comparative dates would emerge. The pit-alignment and the track-ditch were seen to cut into the penannular ditch, but only halfway across its width. From the stripped site and aerial photographs taken by Professor St Joseph, it was clear that the pit-alignment had diverged slightly from its course to take the ditch into account. At first it seemed that the ditch was earlier and may have been a surviving earthwork which had been respected.

On excavation the ditch sections showed a central vertical cleavage, the material thrown back being different on either side. In the ditch bottom traces of post-holes were found, suggesting that a standing wooden structure had been based in the ditch. The post-holes in the enclosure seem to be concentrated near the entrance, implying that this area had received special attention. However, the probable destruction of post-holes elsewhere in the enclosure almost certainly gives a false picture. Evidence for the structure in the ditch was clear in the southern part of the circuit, but became weaker towards the north. The progressive erosion of the site to the north may have created an artifical impression; but it is certain that the track and a pit inside the ring only cut up to the line of the probable structure. As it seems that the ditch was back-filled immediately after the insertion of this, there should have been no earthworks for the alignment to follow and therefore both structure and pits should be contemporary.

There was unfortunately no dating evidence from the penannular ditch, its post-holes and the pit inside. Thus the dating depends upon that of the pit-alignment, normally thought of as an Iron-Age feature. Within the graded area little of the pits survived, and finds were scarce.

Because of the damage done to the first site and the nature of the features showing on the aerial photographs, the second site, excavated under the direction of Francis O'Neill, was machine-stripped only to the top of the 'B' horizon. On cleaning and planning it became evident that the aerial photographs had, unusually, revealed virtually all that was to be seen. The main features are the ring (B), the line of pits around it, and, outside these, the sinuous course of the already-examined pit-alignment. In addition there was the trackway only partially examined in the earlier work.

The latest feature of the plan is the trackway, the northern ditch of which cut the filling of the pits in the alignment. The track itself produced no dating evidence. On the other hand, the pits contained abundant finds, mainly bone and pottery, confined to the uppermost filling, which was a topsoil developing above that resting on the angle of rest of the eroded pits. The digging of the pits probably took place some time, perhaps centuries, before pottery was at hand to be included in the filling. There was no direct dating evidence from the lower parts of the pits.

The pottery recovered appears to be Iron-Age, an opinion supported by Mr Dennis Jackson who kindly examined it. There are no scored wares and none of it shows any Belgic influence. It should be, at the latest, middle Iron-Age (before *c.*300 B.C.), and it may be that the latest date at which the pits were dug was either early in the Iron Age or even in the late Bronze Age.

On excavation most of the pits proved to have been orginally rectangular. Those nearest the penannular ditch seem to have been more oval in shape and smaller in size. The pits were too close set for there to have been mounds between, but a band of slipped gravel which occurred in all but one of the pits excavated seems to show that there had been a bank on the north side.

Although the track cut the topsoil in the pits, their hollows were probably still visible and it is likely that the pottery found arrived after the track itself was cut. It should be noted that the track runs along the edges of the pits and does not link any possibly surviving depressions.

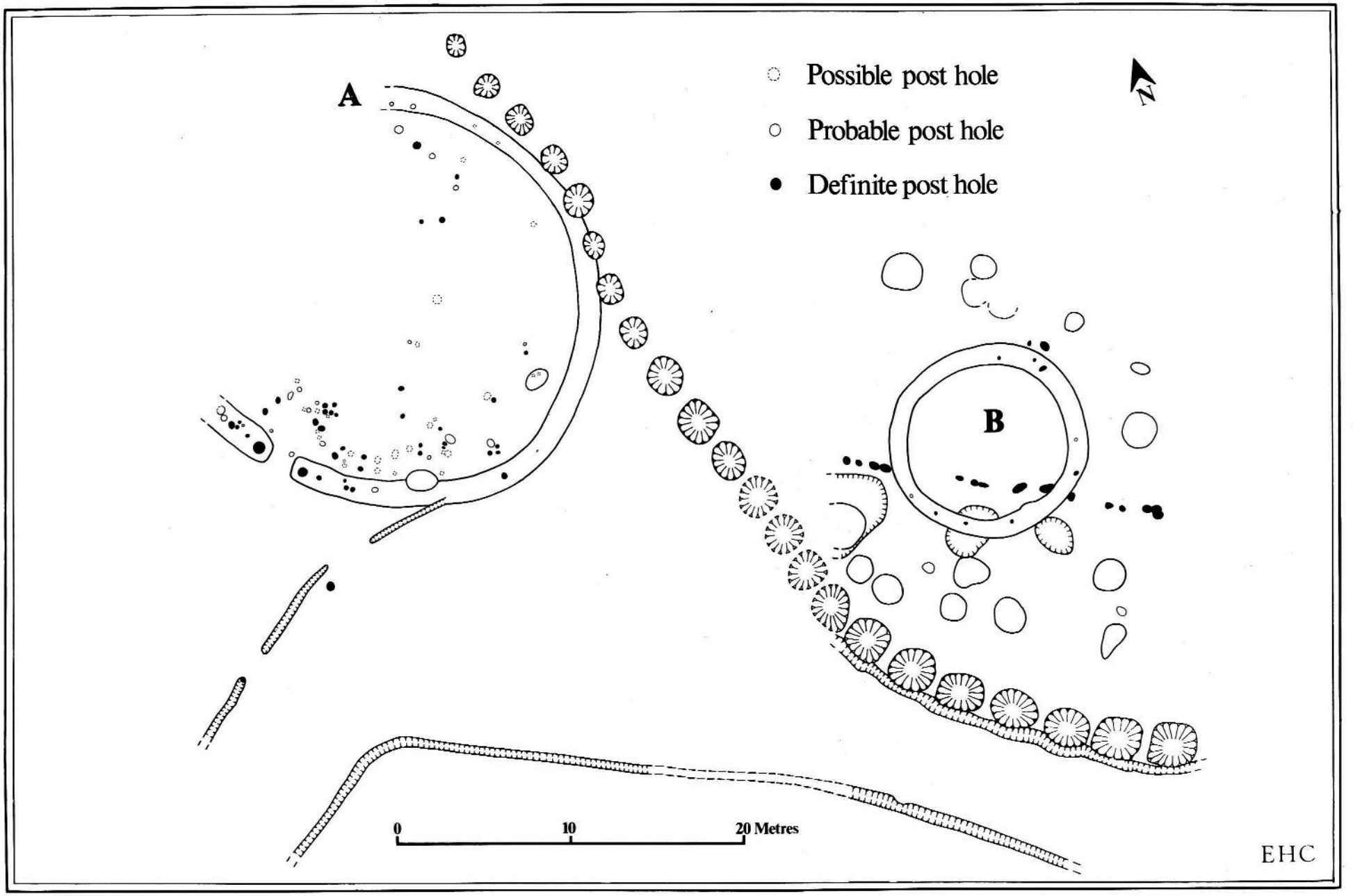

Fig 14 Plan of the excavations at Barnack 1978-9

The pit-alignment's relationship with other features found in the second season raises an interesting point. At first sight the ring is about the same diameter and width as the innermost one found on the barrow site in 1974, but, whereas that ring had been back-filled almost immediately after having been dug, this one silted up gradually. In the top of both rings was a sand deposit which, given the different basic geology of the site, may well represent the remains of a carefully-built mound. Along the bottom of the present ring was found a series of nine stake-holes forming an incomplete circle. No burial was found in the ring or on any part of the site. The pits around the ditch formed a rough ring and each had been dug to a different depth and size. Where enough survived, it was clear that no pit had been left open to weather and, apart from a small wedge of loose gravel round the sides, each had been back-filled with selected soil. The report of Mr R Macphail, the soil scientist, states unequivocally that the pits were back-filled immediately after initial digging.

There is evidently a basic problem in the interpretation of the site. While it looks as though there was a sequence (albeit interrupted) in activities which could be paralleled at the barrow site dug by Peter Donaldson (the ring and surrounding pits might conform with his stages 1 and possibly 3), excavation showed this to be incorrect. The 1974 barrow had been protected by a modern hedgerow which ran across it. The present ring was located on what seems to have been a levee of an early channel of the Welland and was thus at a higher level than most of the field. Much of the monument therefore had probably been ploughed out and any burial placed on the original ground surface or in a shallow pit could have been destroyed.

The course of the pit-alignment needs explanation. When it approached the penannular ditch, it cut into it and appeared to pass some form of standing feature; yet it curved well away from the ring with its pits. There is no outer ditch of normal type to suggest that there had been a barrow mound, yet it is possible that there had been a scraped-up mound made up of a sand core and a topsoil overburden round which the alignment ran. This might explain the apparently selected filling of the inner pits, if they had been dug through such a mound. The absence of any of the gravel dug out beneath the original topsoil suggests an unusual degree of selectivity.

From the ring itself came a flint, possibly struck as a scraper, but without any secondary working. Another find was a barbed-and-tanged arrowhead somewhat crudely but efficiently made from a single flake. Neither of these may have been used. There was one other flint flake and a scrap of pottery too small to be useful.

The ring had been preceded by three hollows which ran in a line across the site, gradually diminishing in depth towards the east so that it is possible that a fourth hollow had been ploughed out. It is tempting to associate these with a line of post-holes close by and seemingly running parallel with them. Most of the post-holes were very shallow and others could have been eroded by ploughing. No function suggests itself for either the posts or hollows.

In summary, there was activity on the site before a ring was cut, which itself seems to have been the focus for a series of pits around its perimeter. In default of any other information, all that can be said is that the ring, and probably its pits, had some ritual significance, perhaps associated with a primary burial now lost. There may have been a scraped-up mound over the whole, round which a pit-alignment later wound its way. Next to the possible mound a penannular ditch was cut to receive a wooden structure of some kind and the pit-alignment would appear to be contemporary with this. The track along the south side of both sites was probably later, but it may be argued that enough survived of other features to act as markers for its location. The absence of ordinary refuse in the lower parts of the pits in the alignment, the pit inside the penannular ditch, the complete ring and its pits suggests strongly that there had been no domestic activity here. However, it may be unwise to conclude from this that the penannular ditch was also ritual in purpose.

Aerial Photography 1978

by Stephen Upex

For all our new techniques, we are left with an old problem. The new age of expansion is now firmly established in the Peterborough area. Inevitably, many sites of archaeological importance will be destroyed; but I suspect that even more sites were lost in the pre-expansion period of Peterborough's history. The Victorian expansion of many towns not only consumed much land, but caused many acres to be dug or quarried for gravel, sand and bricks. Many important sites were never recorded, and those which were identified often received only a short written description in a local newspaper or early parish or county history.

Actual finds of material such as pottery or tools could be seen as tangible evidence of 'British' or 'Roman' sites and were often sold with minimal background information to local antiquarian collectors. Some of this material eventually found its way into local museums, while other collections seem to have been lost. At Ashton near Oundle there are brief references to Roman pottery which was found by a Mr Beals, a local landowner and antiquarian, during the construction of the railway. It is disappointing that all trace of his collection is now lost; for such finds could add much to the information about the small Roman town currently being excavated (p. 29).

In certain areas mediaeval quarries and pits have been dug into earlier sites. Between Elton and Warmington one quarry (operating before 1600) had been dug through a Bronze-Age or Iron-Age settlement, and there are many others, now hardly discernible from the ground, which have similarly obliterated archaeological sites.

Above-ground sensing devices are nowadays capable of locating burial sites and the use of aerial photography has increased our knowledge of the locations and extent of sites. At Werrington and Castor, for example, four seasons of flying have shown where many sites are situated and detailed ground work can be undertaken to glean as much information as time allows. So, although it is true to say that with present expansion proposals sites will be destroyed, we are today able to have a preview of what is to be destroyed, and to recover, if opportunity offers, that information.

Thanks are again recorded to Mr Robert Fray for piloting the aircraft and spotting new sites!

Fig 15 Oundle (TL034894)

The Oundle Middle School is now being built over this crop-mark site discovered during 1976. The small ditched enclosure surrounded by modern housing seems to have a subsidiary enclosure to the south-east. Rescue excavations during 1978 attempted to retrieve some information, but working conditions were very wet and only a limited examination was possible. The results suggest that the site is a late Iron-Age or early Roman farm. It would be very interesting to know the exact relationship between this site and the surrounding crop-mark sites including the Ashton complex, which lies about 1km away.

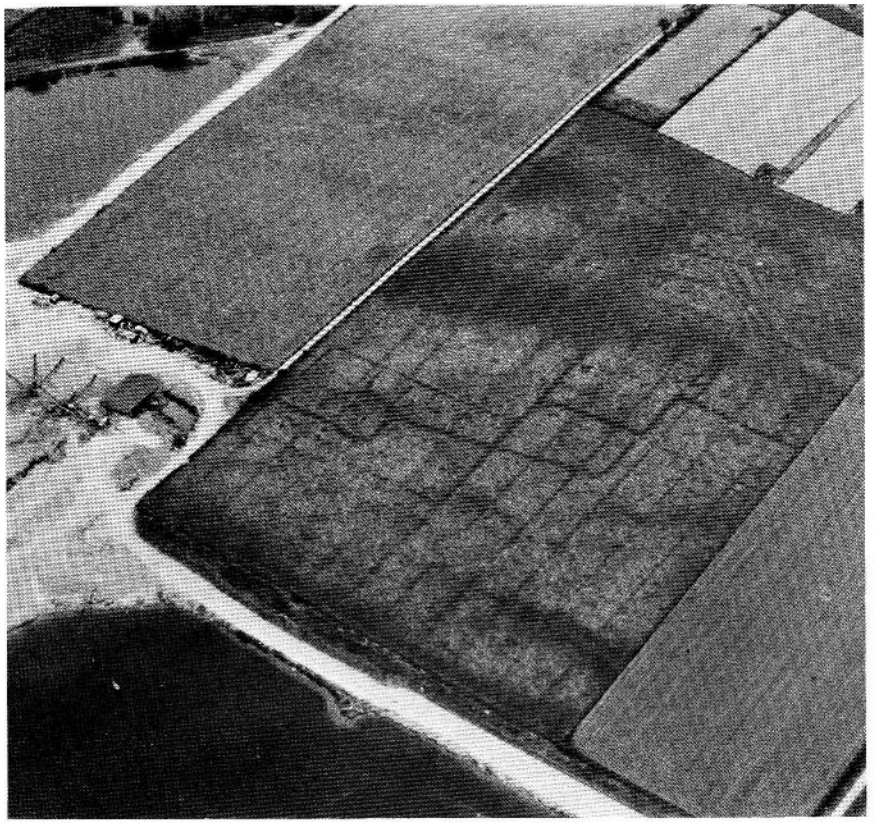

Fig 16 Maxey (TF 128077)

The Welland Valley soils drain very freely through the underlying gravel deposits. Archaeologically this is very important because it allows the development of good crop-marks for aerial photography. Unfortunately the gravel beds also provide a much-sought-after building material for modern development.

In this picture taken to the south of Maxey village the crop-marks are seen running into the quarry sites. The main field shows a series of rectilinear ditched enclosures with pits, overlain by ridge and furrow. On the left the standing buildings are part of the present quarry depot and to the upper and lower left can be seen the worked out and now flooded quarry pits.

Fig 17 Helpston (TF 118065)

Many early quarries and pits must have cut through archaeological sites. Some early accounts of the Nene Valley briefly mention 'ancient remains' being found. This photograph taken in Helpston parish shows two quarried areas, either of which may have cut through prehistoric material. The first, to the extreme right-hand side of the photograph, shows the tree-lined edge of a now flooded gravel pit. To the left of centre a much earlier quarry appears as a dark, irregular, shape. The quarry may be of considerable age; for it appears to have traces of ridge and furrow running over it. In the surrounding fields the boundary lines and ring-ditches of the prehistoric landscape can be seen.

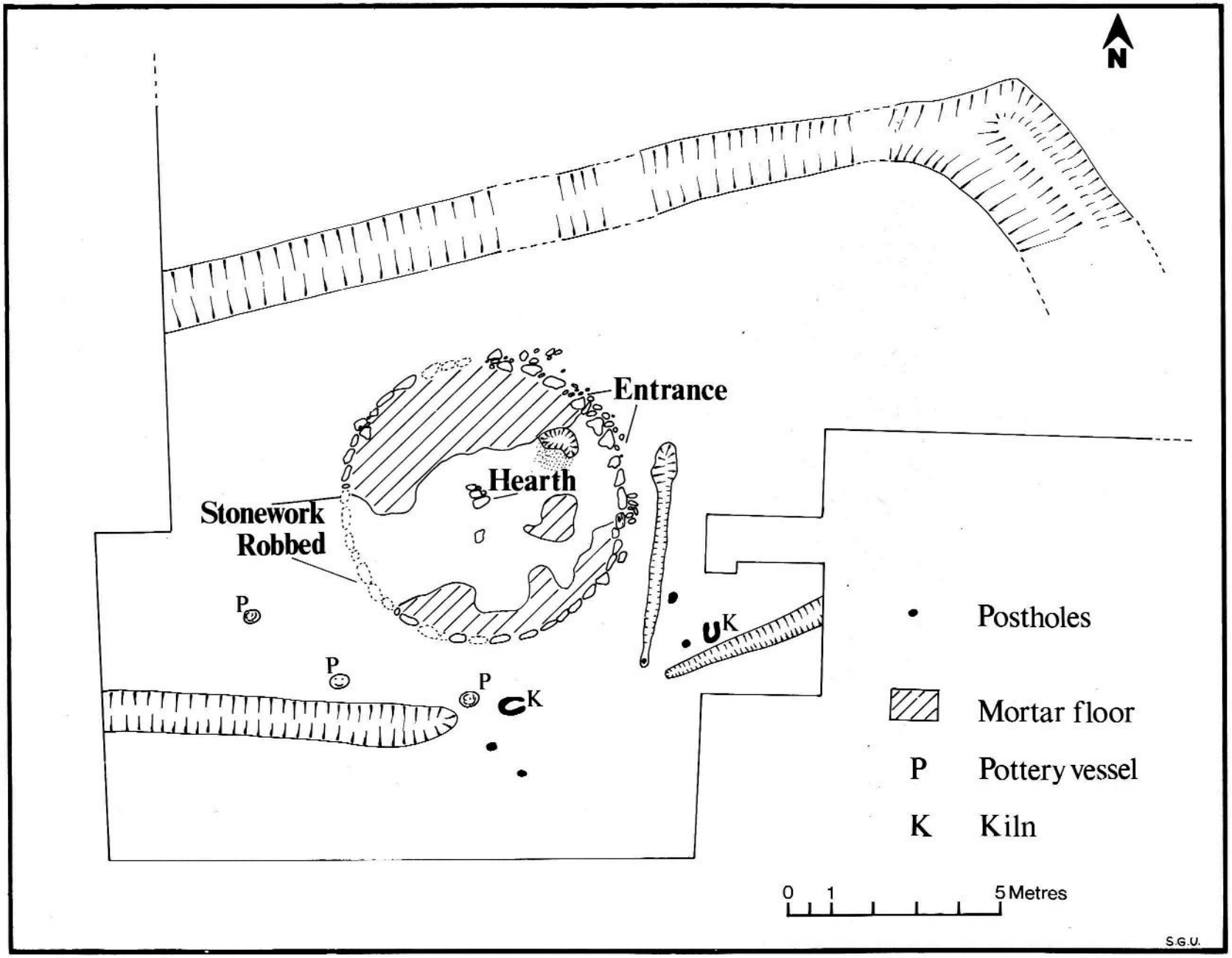

Fig 18 First-century features at Ashton, 1978

Ashton 1977-8

by John Hadman and Stephen Upex

Following the discovery in 1976 of a ditch filled with the debris of a first-century Belgic settlement, the emphasis of the last two years' excavation has been on completing excavation of the main open area to establish the date and nature of the primary occupation. Thousands of fine-ware sherds from the ditch (located south of the main excavation) point to an important Catuvellaunian centre near the borders of both Coritani and Iceni. Late Iron-Age pottery has been identified in the main area, but no structures of pre-conquest date.

The earliest features at the eastern end of the site (fig. 19) are a number of irregular hollows dug into the natural sand. A triple ditch system runs from the west of the site towards its centre, where the two inner ditches turn south. The shallow inner ditch, re-cut in part, produced first-century pottery and brooches from its upper levels of backfilling. The larger ditch (not shown on plan) later took a wall and its upper levels of filling contain ash and charcoal, which seems to come from industrial processes elsewhere on the site. Both ditches are parallel to, and turn with, the road, but their interrelationships need further investigation. The inner ditch is probably the earlier and was being filled slowly at the time the ditch skirting the road was being dug. The digging of the larger ditch may represent a reaffirmation of a property boundary near the road edge; for it is almost certain that the two ditches were not in use simultaneously.

In the south-west of the open area many features are probably contemporary with the ditches. The most obvious is a circular hut, possibly domestic, outlined by vertical limestone slabs and floored with a well packed clay or mortar flooring over a thin gravel layer and a midden deposit. This make-up contained a coin of Tasciovanus and a group of pottery deposited in the post-conquest period, but containing a great deal which may be earlier and relate to the material from the Belgic ditch. In the centre of the hut is a stone hearth. The evidence for walls was difficult to see until it was realised that most of the vertical slabs had slumped outwards into gaps left by what could only have been stakes or posts with a maximum diameter of 6-8 cm.

It was not clear from what level the vertical stones were inserted. They could have been left flush with the surface of the gravel or they could have stood clear of the contemporary surface which was later made up almost to cover them. They probably served as a retaining barrier when the clay or mortar floor material was still plastic and at the same time gave some protection at ground level to the flimsy wall. The midden deposit beneath the floor continued outside the hut and stretched almost to the southern edge of the opened area. A slightly different soil colour within the hut may be due to staining from occupation material; for the pottery seems to be contemporary.

The hut itself as defined by the slabs is not a primary feature on the site; for a stone on the eastern side, certainly re-used, had a deep cup-like depression as if it had been a door socket. The entrance to the hut was on the eastern side where the slabs were placed flat. Just inside it was an almost circular hollow, into which some of the clay or mortar had subsided. No other internal features were seen.

South and east of the hut were ephemeral remains of still earlier gullies sealed by the midden deposit. They may have been part of a drainage system to protect two small pottery kilns, which were discovered late in the 1978 excavation. One of them held the remains of kiln-furniture, but apart from their size (50 cm in diameter) there was no indication of the vessels produced in them. Several post-holes may also have been associated with these features.

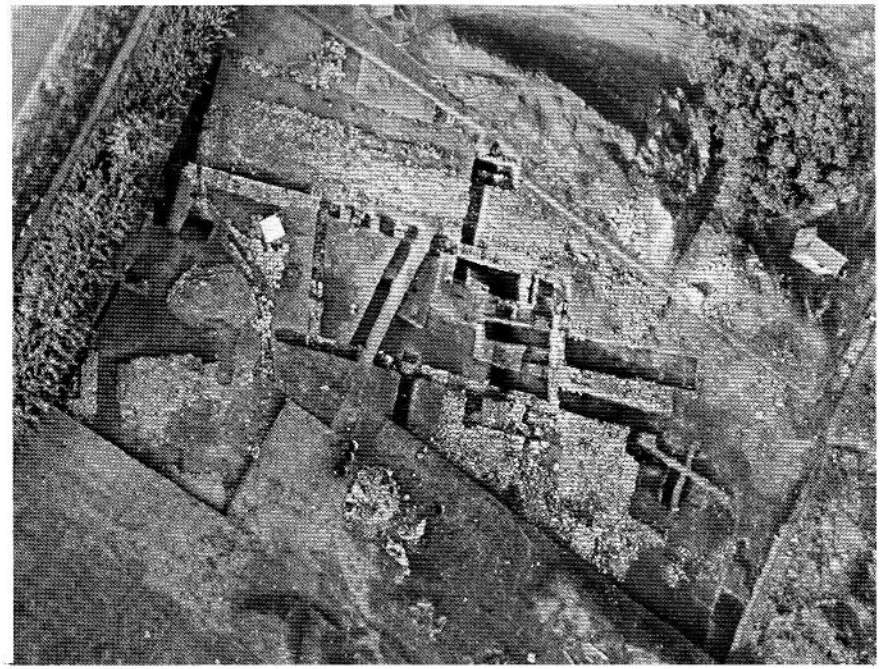

Fig 19 The Ashton excavations from the air

South-west of the hut three large calcite-gritted storage jars had been set in the ground. The level at which they had been sheared off indicates that they were damaged when the flooring of the circular hut was laid. The only link between the interior of the hut and the material outside it is a sealing layer of small limestone cobbles, acting as the courtyard surface to the later stone-built smith's workshop and its associated well.

Although much work remains to be done, the evidence for the early period so far indicates a degree of continuity from the immediate pre-conquest period to the end of the first century A.D. The circular hut has no immediate parallels in the area, although a late Iron-Age hut excavated by Mr D. A. Jackson at Aldwincle had a ring of stones placed nearly 50cm inside the wall line. The stratigraphical link between the hut and most of the other early features is not definite, but the hut is probably contemporary with the earlier inner ditch. If this is so, then this part of the site can be regarded as the corner of a standard late Iron-Age or early Roman farm. Precisely the same sort of site can be seen on the aerial photographs of the unexplored area to the west of the A605.

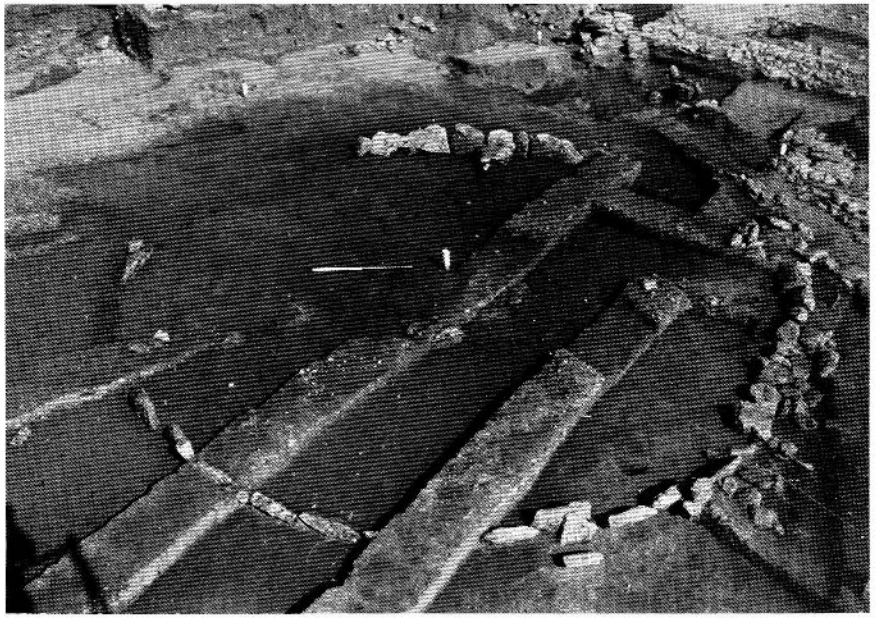

Fig 20 View of Ashton, 1978

Peterborough New Town: Ten Years On

by Richard Hillier

Peterborough New Town: a Survey of the Antiquities in the Areas of Development was published by the Stationery Office in 1969. The book consisted of two surveys: one by Mr Christopher Taylor on the archaeological sites, and one on the architecture by Mr Robert McDowall and Mr Christopher Stell. Through the members of its staff, the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) was corporate author of the book.

My task has been simply to go round and report on what survives — or what does not — ten years later. Since the original survey is of considerable importance, three points should be borne in mind when using it. Firstly, it excluded much of the former parish of Peterborough Without, effectively all of the City centre. Secondly, although the impression is given that they were to include all the buildings dating to before 1850, their survey fell well short even of those built in the decades 1820-1850. They even missed a seventeenth-century cottage at Longthorpe! And thirdly, there seems to be little or no relationship between the original survey and the schedules of Listed Buildings.

I am pleased to report that in Old Fletton, Orton Longueville and Orton Waterville there has been no change in the number of the extant buildings listed in the original survey; indeed, there has been little change to the buildings themselves. In most of the villages, however, at least one thatched cottage has been damaged by fire and subsequently demolished, and farm buildings have naturally been vulnerable to encroaching urbanism. The amount of housing development has also visually altered many of the villages.

In the following inventory of demolished or altered buildings (correct to March 1979), the headings and numbering are taken from the original (1969) survey.

Peterborough Within

(2) St John's Close, former Union Workhouse (demolished about 1973) with school and chapel behind (demolished in 1975).

Peterborough Without

Dogsthorpe

(3) Cottage (behind The Blue Bell), demolished *c.* 1971/2.

(4) House, 36-38 Welland Road, demolished (with pigeon house) in 1975.

Newark

(7) House, semi-derelict.

(8) Cottage, north of (7), destroyed by fire and demolished *c.* 1970.

Longthorpe

(5) Dairy Farm, completely derelict.

(8) The Old House, partly damaged by fire and demolished 1971.

(22) Cottage, near Grove Farm, destroyed by fire 1975/6 and demolished.

New Fletton

(1) Fletton Tower, stone gateway facing Oundle Road, was demolished in 1974.

(2) Peterborough East Station, completely demolished in 1972.

(5) Windmill, rear of The Peacock, demolished in 1974.

Paston

(4) Great Knabbs Farm, demolished before 1976.

Walton

(2) House, 'St. Bedes', no. 1066 Lincoln Road, demolished.

Werrington

(2) The Primitive Methodist Chapel noted under the entry for the 1835 Methodist Chapel has been demolished.

(5) Green View Cottages. Renovation has uncovered a datestone in the west gable: EN 1707, followed by an arrowed heart.

(15) Cottages, two, demolished.

(24) Cottage, demolished.

(35) Hamfield Farm, house, barn and bridge, all demolished *c.* 1977.

Ailsworth

(14) House and barn, presumed demolished and not in any way incorporated in modern stone houses on the site.

(15) Cottage, north wall discernible as incorporated in modern stone house, otherwise assumed demolished.

(16) Barn, demolished.

(17) Cottages, three, demolished.

Alwalton

No change to Lynch Farm, but now used as a riding school.

Castor

(7) Manor Farm, the barns to the east have been demolished.

(38) Barn, demolished.

Old Fletton

No change, but note that (3), the carved stone, came from the Manor House demolished in 1922.

Orton Longueville

No change: (13) Cottages, two, are still derelict.

Orton Waterville

No change, but note that the farm buildings immediately north of (24) are now much altered.

Stanground

(8) Cottages, 66-68a North Street, demolished in 1976/7.

Of the early nineteenth-century buildings mentioned under Stanground but not numbered, the following have been demolished: the terrace in Church St. dated 1830; 1-7 Mount Pleasant; 44-52 South St.; 62-64 North St.; and nos. 26, 27 and 27a have been modernised or altered.

Sutton

(8) Houses, have much modern alteration.

(12) Barns, three, demolished together with the whole set of farm buildings.

(15) Cottage, extensive modern additions to north and east.

Woodston

(4) Old Manor House, demolished.

(5) Cottage, in grounds of (4), demolished.

From the Museum

by Martin Howe

Archaeology is a difficult discipline to explain to the passer-by. The technical terms and methods so familiar to the archaeologist are not generally understood by the layman. Excavation remains a mysterious process, mostly because excavators cannot spare the time to explain in detail what they are doing while they are digging. The public image of archaeology in this country is shaped by object-orientated museum displays created by archaeologists who, on occasion, are blinkered by their own knowledge. Their displays may be good illustrations of such topics as typology, but boring to the visitor.

When work began on the Museum's new Archaeology Gallery the present writer was keenly aware of such pitfalls and both the gallery and the case-displays were designed to enable the visitor to relate the objects on display to the way of life of the people who made them and used them.

The first problem was how to convert a high Victorian room, which housed an ageing collection of stuffed birds, into a gallery whose varied shape and content would attract the visitor. After consultations between the present writer and Mr L. Threadgold of the City Architect's Department, it was decided that a walk-round gallery of varying shape was the most appropriate. The visitor enters the gallery through a vestibule containing cases explaining the natural and scientific processes of archaeology and he can then follow the chronological development of human activity in the Nene Valley from the Neolithic to the Victorian Age (see fig. 21).

A ground-plan and working drawings were produced and the construction work commenced in October 1977. Originally, it had been proposed that a false ceiling should be inserted lowering the height of the room which tended to overawe visitors and distract their attention from the displays. However this proposal was abandoned due to the cost and it was demonstrated that the same effect could be obtained by painting the upper part of the room dark brown. Track-lighting was hung from the existing light fittings and the long neon tubes which formerly lit the room were transferred into the tops of the existing bronze-bound wall cases to provide case lighting. Thus it was possible to free money to fit out the interiors of the cases and provide features which would otherwise have been beyond our budget.

The project was jointly financed by the Peterborough City Council and the Peterborough Development Corporation with grant aid for such items as new cases from the Area Museum Service for South Eastern England. Total expenditure was £8442 and the gallery was opened by the Mayor, Councillor Ben Franklin, on May 18th, 1978.

It was an easy task to turn the illustrative material into a gallery-guide designed as an aid to classroom teaching, which helps school children to get as much benefit as possible from an organised study trip to the gallery. Many Peterborough schools have taken advantage of this and their comments and reactions to the gallery have been most helpful in shaping the future development of the displays.

The introductory vestibule contains three cases explaining the processes which lead to the formation of archaeological sites, their detection and excavation and a flow diagram showing how information gained by excavation is turned into a finished report. A wall-mounted relief map showing the extent of archaeological sites in the area completes the basic information which the visitor needs in order to understand the reasons why people in antiquity settled where they did and to appreciate the significance of the displays dealing with specific sites.

Fig 21 The new archaeology gallery of Peterborough Museum

Prehistory is represented by material recovered from the important Fen-Edge settlement at Fengate backed up by finds from other important sites such as those at Stanground and Fletton. By including material from other sites it is hoped that the visitor will appreciate that the Nene Valley was extensively exploited by human beings from the earliest times.

The intention of giving an overall view has been applied to each of the other chronological sections. Reconstruction models have been widely used throughout the displays. The post-holes and ditches excavated at Fengate can be readily explained by recreating the settlement of which they are the last remains. The north gateway of the Roman fortress excavated at Longthorpe can similarly be recreated in order to make the past live, especially to children, with whom the models are great favourites.

The Longthorpe case, with its display of military equipment and pottery from the site, is an introduction to the Roman section of the gallery which contains cases devoted to the local Roman industries of salt extraction, iron and stone working and above all, the large scale manufacture of pottery. A case dealing with objects of religious significance forms part of the everyday life display and to this will shortly be added a case on Roman costume.

Grave goods from the Pagan Anglo-Saxon cemeteries at Nassington and Woodston bring the visitor into the Anglo-Saxon and mediaeval section of the gallery. The use of wall-mounted explanatory material has proved most useful as, to date, Mediaeval Peterborough, although known from historical sources to have been a rich and prosperous town, has left relatively little compared with earlier periods. Finally, two cases containing post-mediaeval objects such as German stoneware bottles and Victorian lemonade bottles bring the story up to the turn of this century.

The new gallery was designed to be completely flexible, not only in display areas, but also in its layout. It will be possible not only to change the objects on display, but also physically to change the shape of the gallery itself. Eventually an audio-visual unit, with taped commentary, intended to take the visitor on site, will be located behind the Roman industry cases. Replicas of the Waternewton early Christian silver, made by the British Museum, will be displayed in close proximity.

The intention behind the design of this new gallery is to make the people of Peterborough aware of their rich archaeological heritage. The present writer hopes that a visit to the new gallery will not only be informative, but will also be fun.

The author wishes to acknowledge the help of the following individuals and organisations without whom the Gallery could not have been created: Mr D. J. Constant, Leisure and Amenities Officer, Peterborough City Council; Mr P. Welton, Deputy Leisure and Amenities Officer, Peterborough City Council; Mr D. Bath, Chief Planning Officer, Peterborough Development Corporation; Mr T. Cross, Curator, City Museum and Art Gallery; Mr L. Threadgold and Mr G. I. Goodman of the City Department of Architecture, and the members and staff of the Nene Valley Research Committee.

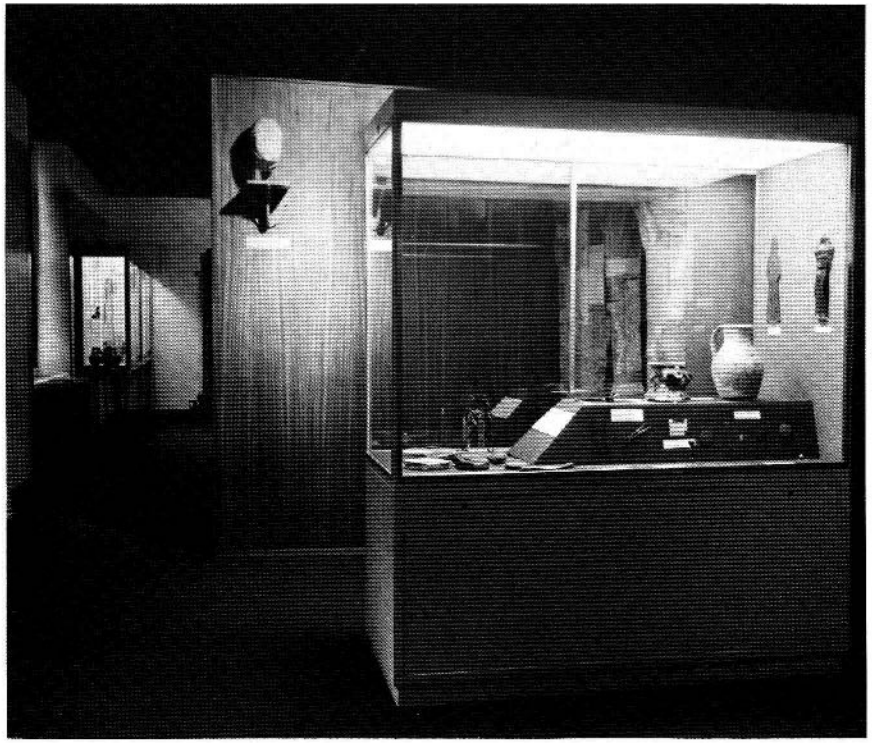

Fig 22 The medieval and post-medieval section of the new archaeological gallery.

A Roman Intaglio found near Durobrivae

by Martin Henig

A cornelian gemstone was found near Durobrivae by Mr S. Lindsey who subsequently presented it to the Peterborough Museum (acc. no. L317). The stone (fig. 23) is oval in shape (Henig (1974), i, fig. 1, flat 2) and has sides which bevel outwards. It is 3mm thick and the lower face measures 12mm by 10mm. Its upper face (9.5mm by 8.75mm) is cut with the device of an eagle standing on a ground-line in profile to the left, but with its head turned towards the right (as it would appear on an impression). The bird holds a wreath in its bill, but this is represented in a rather indistinct manner.

Both the device and the coarse and schematic style of cutting (Maaskant-Kleibrink (1975), 227-34) are matched on a cornelian from Great Chesterford, Essex, and on an onyx found in London (now in a private collection). The latter was set in a ring of late second-century date (Henig (1974), ii, 91, 690). A yellow jasper from the late Flavian or Trajanic cache of gemstones from Bath and a cornelian found in a Trajanic context at Holditch, Staffs, are cut more carefully and show eagles in the same stance as the bird on the Durobrivae stone. They have additional attributes emblematic of prosperity — a corn-ear and poppy in one case and a cornucopia in the other (Henig (1974), ii, 91, pl. xxi, 689, 694).

Eagles were of course the birds of Jupiter and this connexion with the 'ruler of gods and men' is sometimes stressed on gems, such as an agate found at Aldborough depicting an eagle perched on a thunderbolt (Henig (1974), ii, 115, pl. xxvi, app. 69). For the Romans the eagle of Jupiter was a symbol of their own military power, one particularly associated with the legions. Several gems portray eagles standing between maniple standards, including a cornelian from Southwark found in a second-century context and another cornelian excavated at Witcombe villa in Gloucestershire, set in a third-century ring (Henig (1974), ii, 93, pl. xxii, 707; (1975), 243). In both cases the style of cutting is not dissimilar to that of the gem under discussion.

It is unfortunate that we know nothing more about the context of the intaglio. The device would obviously have appealed to a soldier, for whom it might have appeared as a victory charm. However, it is perhaps more likely in the present instance both on the grounds of probable date and of the evident garbling of the wreath that it belonged to a civilian who merely wished to invoke the protection of the god.

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Henig (1975) — M. Henig, 'Eagle and Standards Intaglio from St Thomas St, Southwark', *London Archaeologist* 11, 1975, 243.

Maaskant-Kleibrink (1975) — M. Maaskant-Kleibrink, *Classification of Ancient Engraved Gems,* 1975.

Fig 23 Roman gemstone found near Durobrivae

Publications

The Nene Valley Research Committee has published the following works:

J. P. Wild, *The Romans in the Nene Valley* (1972)
Price 30p

F. M. M. Pryor, *Prehistoric Man in the Nene Valley*
First edition (1973) out of print; second edition in press
Price on application

D. F. Mackreth, *The Saxons in the Nene Valley* (1978)
Price 35p

F. M. M. Pryor, *Earthmoving on Open Archaeological Sites, Nene Valley Archaeological Handbook* 1, 1974
Price 45p

Durobrivae 1, 1973 (out of print)
Durobrivae 2, 1974 Price 75p
Durobrivae 3, 1975 Price 90p
Durobrivae 4, 1976 Price £1.15
Durobrivae 5, 1977 Price £1.25
Durobrivae 6, 1978 Price £1.25

F. M. M. Pryor, *Excavation at Fengate, Peterborough, England: The First Report, ROM Archaeology Monograph* 3, 1974
Price £1.50

F. M. M. Pryor, *Excavation at Fengate, Peterborough, England: The Second Report, ROM Archaeology Monograph* 5, 1978
Price £6

(Prices above include postage and packing.)

These publications, together with this Review for 1979, are available from the Secretary, Archaeological Field Centre, Ham Lane, Orton Waterville, Peterborough, PE2 0UU.