

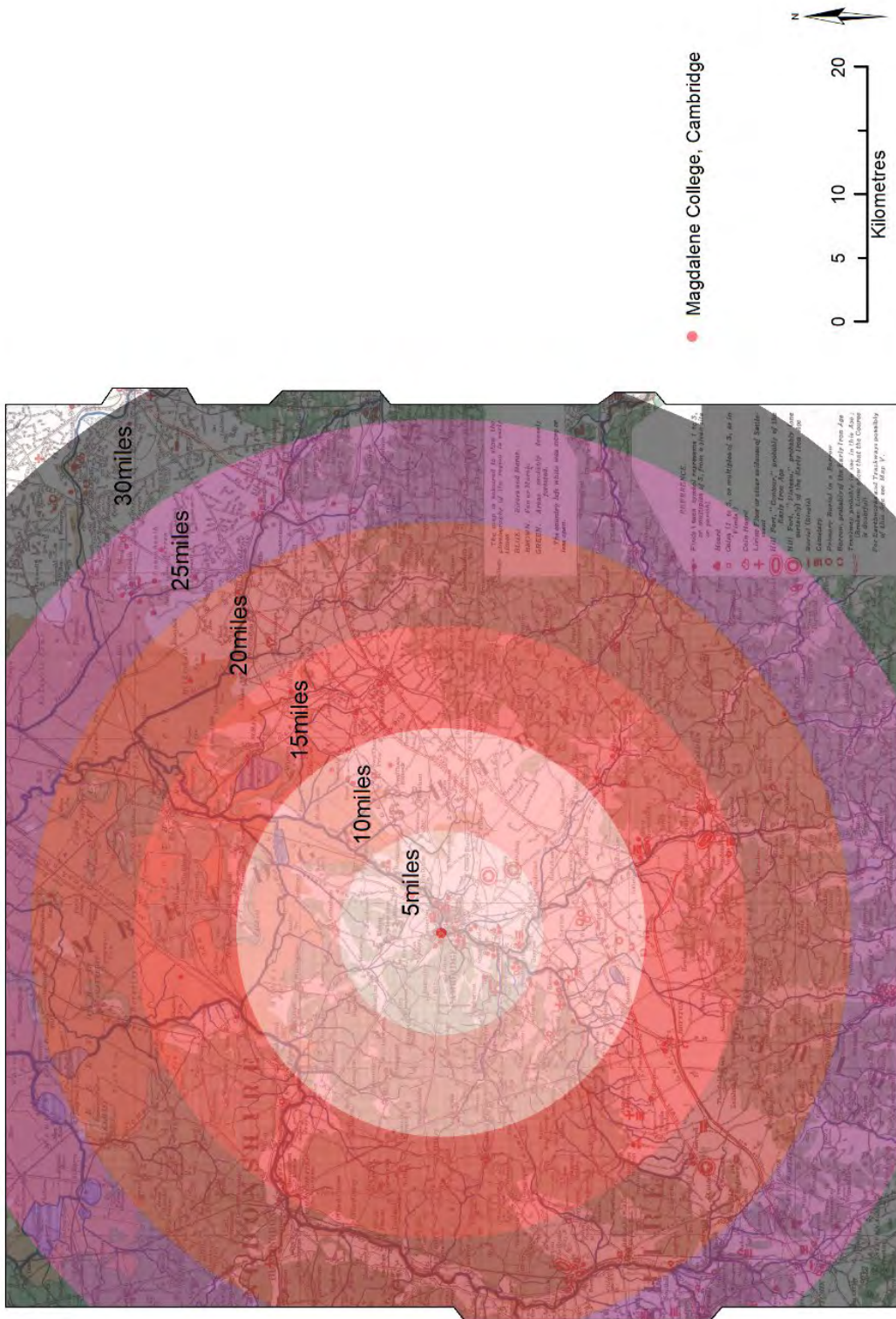
The Personality and Legacy of Fox (1923-2023)

8th November – field trip

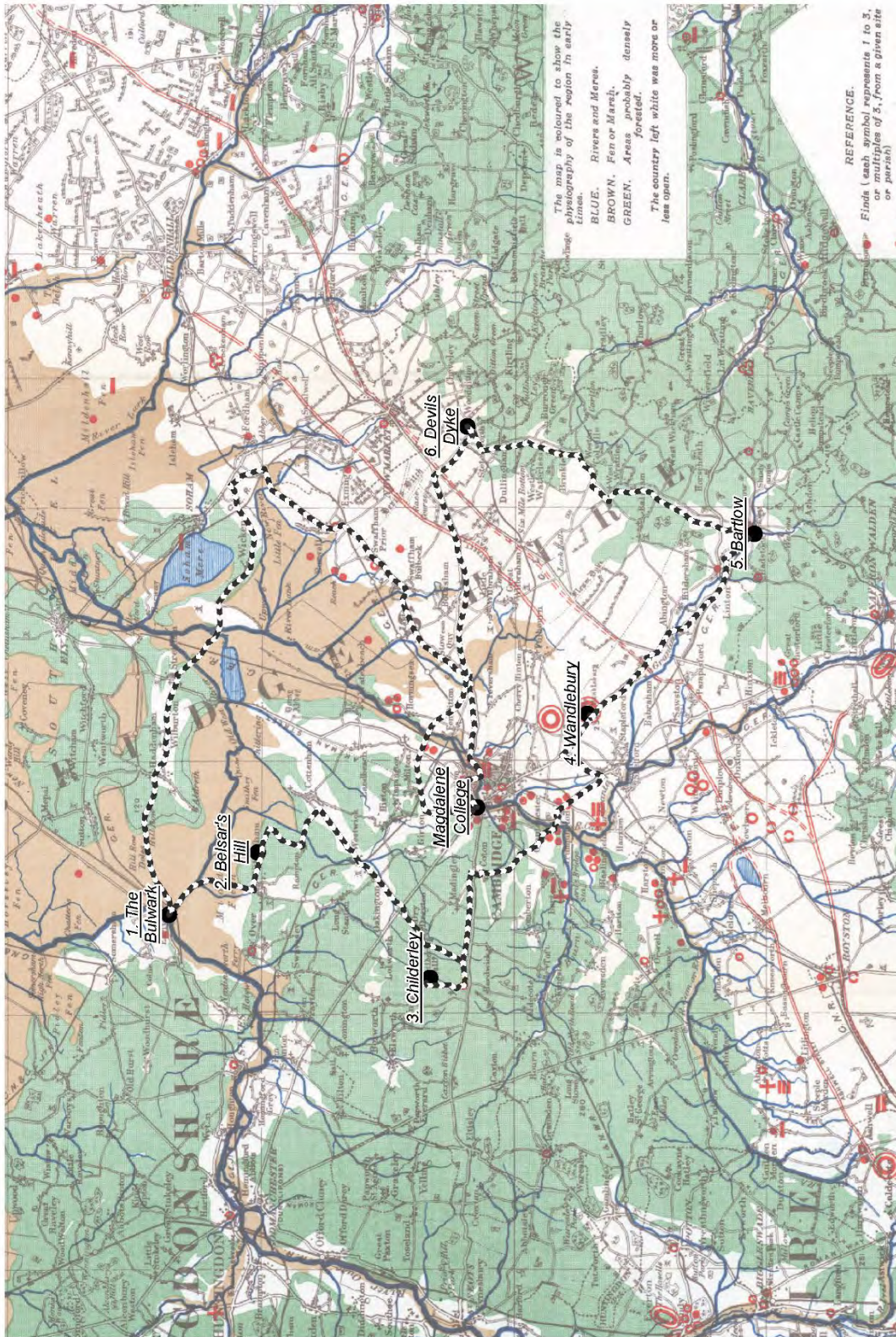
Itinerary

8.45	Meet Northampton Street/Chesterton Lane, close to Magdalene College
9.00	<i>Leave via Swaffham Bulbeck, Wicken, Stretham, Haddenham</i>
9.45	The Bulwark, Earith
10.15	<i>Leave</i>
10.30	Belsar's Hill, Willingham
11.00	<i>Leave</i>
11.30	Childerley deserted medieval village, including refreshments, biscuits & facilities
12.30	<i>Leave via Great Shelford</i>
13.00	Wandlebury
13.30	<i>Leave</i>
13.45	Lunch at Bartlow Three Hills pub Quick tour of the Roman burial mounds
15.00	<i>Leave</i>
15.15	Devil's Dyke, close to Wooditton
15.30	<i>Leave</i>
16.00	Drop-off at Northampton Street/Chesterton Lane & local refreshments at The Castle

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/ZF3eTaqh4siqxMR98>



Fox's region and cycling distance from Magdalene College, Cambridge with Map III as a background

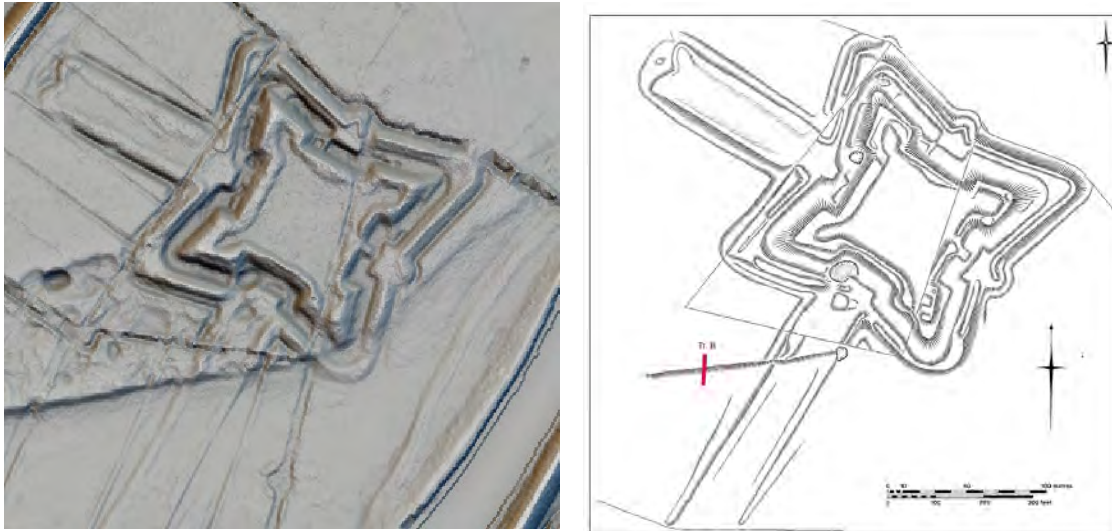


Fieldtrip route with stopping places identified against a background of Fox's Map III - 'Early' Iron Age

Traversing a variety of different landscapes

Fens (Fen or Marsh) - The Bulwark, Earith

A journey from Cambridge to The Bulwark, Earith (A Civil War fort between the Bedford Rivers) via Wicken, Swaffham Prior, Burwell, Wicken and Stretham.



Lidar (Environment Agency – 1m (hillshade 16 directions with slope (transparency 50%) (left); earthwork survey carried out by RCHME and Christopher Taylor (1999) showing CAU trench in red (right).

Not mentioned by Fox.

The Civil War fieldwork known as The Bulwark is situated to the east of Earith, within a narrow strip of land (the Hundred Foot Washes) which separates the Old and New Bedford Rivers, both of which join the Great River Ouse some 150m to the south.

The Bulwark was strategically placed to command an important river crossing at the western end of the fen causeway which linked Huntingdon to the the Isle of Ely; and to control traffic on both the River Great Ouse, and the earlier of the two artificial navigations (the Old Bedford River), constructed by the engineer Vermuyden in the 1630's. The monument includes the fieldwork with its square inner enclosure, corner bastions, perimeter defences and outworks; and a small steel-domed gun emplacement positioned within the earlier fortifications during World War II.

The central enclosure is raised about 0.7m above the surrounding ground level, measures approximately 60m square, and is located within the angle between the the River Great Ouse and the Old Bedford River which lies c.300m to the south west. The enclosure is surrounded by an earthen rampart and parapet, which varies between 0.5m and 1m in height, and between 4m and 10m in width. The parapet would originally have had a near vertical inner face supported by timber work and pierced by gun loops, but has since subsided to a rounded profile. It continues around each of the four, lozenge-shaped bastions which form diagonal projections at the north, south, east and west corners, with a single gap or entrance in the centre of the south east side. The bastions each extend for about 30m and measure

approximately 20m across the widest parts. These served as cavaliers (artillery platforms) with a wide range of fire, and allowed close quarter defence for the ramparts to either side. This central stronghold, or sconce, is surrounded by a broad ditch with steep sides and a flat base. This measures about 17m in width, descending to about 3m below the parapet, and may originally have been strengthened by a fringe of sharpened poles inserted in the inner face. Sample excavation across the northern bastion in 1906 demonstrated that the profile of the inner fortifications resulted from a single phase of construction, with the upcast gravels forming the inner rampart, clad with heavy clay from the base of the ditch. The 1906 excavation also revealed a shallow deposit of dark alluvial silts in the bottom of the ditch which indicate that when freshly cut it contained standing water. The ditch is flanked by an outer bank rising in two stages, the outer stage forming a further parapet or breastwork, with a rifle platform or covered way behind. The bank is generally 6m-8m wide and 1m high, with the breastwork covering about half its width and raising its height by approximately 0.8m. The breastwork is also thought to have subsided since the collapse or removal of an inner palisade, but even in its original condition, it would have been lower than the firing height from the parapet within the sconce. The covered way provided access to two bastions in the outer defensive circuit, located in the centre of the north eastern and south eastern arms. The former is a roughly triangular protrusion extending for c.6m beyond the line of the bank. The latter is similar in size but with a more rounded appearance. Both have narrow gaps, or sally ports, in the breastwork; and square platforms behind, providing mustering points or further gun emplacements. The north eastern platform is linked to the central enclosure by two narrow causeways across the ditch. The south eastern platform is approached by a square projection from the inner parapet which extends about half way across the ditch, thought to indicate the position of a short drawbridge. Except on these bastions, the outer face of the breastwork forms part of a single slope (or glacis), with an unrestricted field of fire, leading into the inner scarp of an external ditch. This ditch is generally 3m in width and c.0.7m deep, having been partially infilled by silts deposited during the seasonal flooding of the washes. It remains visible around the full circuit of the fortifications except at the tip of the southern corner bastion where the earthworks have been reduced and the ditch largely infilled. Along the north eastern arm it has been partially recut by a later field drain. On the north western side of the fort, the perimeter ditch extends to form a rectangular enclosure which projects for about 100m towards the Old Bedford River, providing a fortified approach or outwork. The outwork measures approximately 40m in width (the same width as the inner parapet between the corner bastions), and has indications of two further lozenge-shaped cavaliers at the far corners. Slight traces of an extension to the outer breastwork extend down each side of the outwork leaving a gap at the approach to the sconce, where a large, squared projection from the outer bank into the main ditch is thought to represent the footings for a drawbridge. A similar outwork extends from the south west side of the fort, continuing for about 150m towards the road on the north bank of the River Great Ouse. This also is accompanied by a gap in the breastwork and a square bridgehead on the outer bank of the inner ditch. Two major entrances to a fortification of this type is an extremely unusual arrangement, perhaps explained by the garrison's reliance on reinforcements and supplies by both road and river.

The Bulwark was constructed by Parliamentary forces between 1643 and 1645, during the first stage of the Civil War. It is believed to be the work of two English engineers, Richard Clamp and Captain John Hopes, although the design is largely based on the Dutch school of military fortification, then dominant on the continent. The precise date of construction is

unknown. At the onset of the war Huntingdonshire formed part of the Midlands Association of Parliamentary counties, becoming a frontier county of the Eastern Association shortly after it was formed in 1643. The Eastern Association led by Oliver Cromwell (amongst others) initially took a defensive stance, concentrating on the fortification of Cambridge and the control of major communication routes which, in the fens, largely consisted of the principal causeways and navigations. The Bulwark is unlikely to have been constructed prior to this period since, in the previous year when the Queen's troops and forces under the Marquis of Newcastle threatened the area, an officer named Tyrell Jocelyn reported that the bridge at Earith (Hermitage Pass) could be held for a week; an extremely low estimate if the fortifications were in place. Early in 1643 Cromwell embarked on a strategy to consolidate the Association's military frontier; first securing the Royalist ports of Lowestoft and King's Lynn, then moving on to take Peterborough and finally Crowland, the last Royalist outpost in the fens. In May, there was a Royalist rebellion on the Isle of Ely, which was eventually suppressed by troops from Cambridge. However, this rebellion demonstrated that the Isle would be readily defensible by a larger force should it fall to the opposition. The major approaches from the north and west were therefore strengthened, with garrisons at Wisbech and Earith, perhaps involving the construction of the Bulwark, and possibly also the large pentagonal sconce at Horsey Hill, near Peterborough. If these fortifications were not erected in response to this crisis, they may well have been built in the following year after the Parliamentary defeat at Cropredy Bridge, near Banbury, when the Association was ordered to take additional defensive measures. A further defeat at Lostwithiel in Cornwall in October 1644 resulted in Cromwell marching his forces west, leaving the eastern counties short of troops. Parliamentary fortunes improved after the battle of Naseby in August 1645. However, in retreat from the battle, Charles I turned south east briefly, taking first Stamford then Huntingdon. Although this occupation was short lived the aftermath saw renewed fortification of all the Ouse crossings, and was perhaps the last occasion on which the Bulwark might have been built.

As far as the fens were concerned this was the end of the first phase of the war, the Bulwark, like many other East Anglian fortifications, never having seen action. The second phase saw far less activity locally, the only major action in the area being a provincial uprising in Colchester in 1648. The small structure located on the southern, inner bastion is an unusual form of gun emplacement dating from World War II, known as the 'Alan-Williams' turret. It consists of a rotating steel dome 1.5m in diameter, set over a concrete lined pit with an entrance passage to the west. The dome contains space for two men, one to rotate the upper section, the other to operate a machine gun (since removed). The gun could be mounted through a square aperture in the side of the dome, or a circular aperture above. It was intended both for ground defence, covering the embankment of the New Bedford River, and against aerial attacks aimed at the bridges and sluices to the south. It is not known if it was ever used in action. All fences, fence posts and gates are excluded from the scheduling, although the ground beneath these features is included.

Scheduled Monument (Historic England)

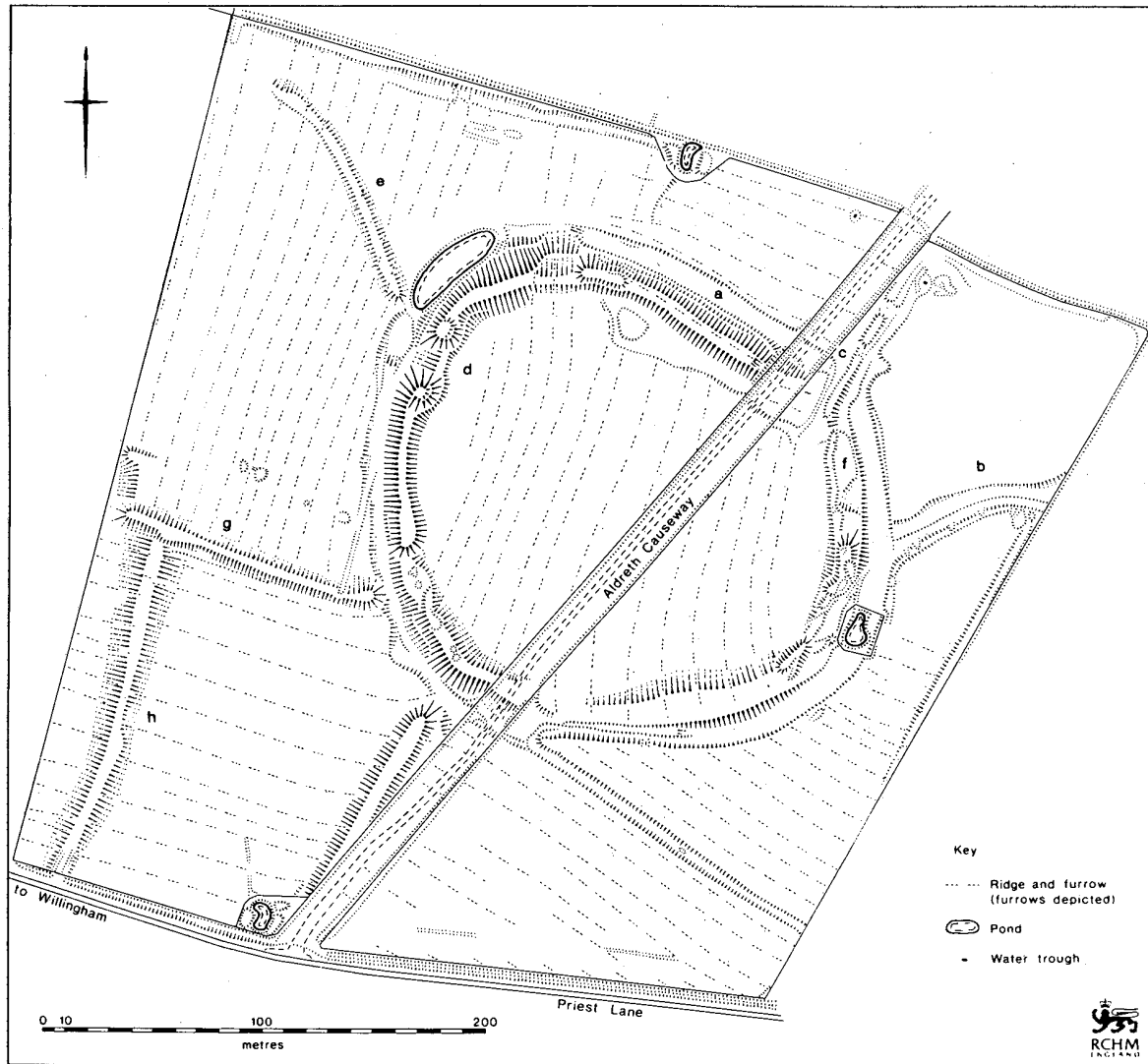
<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1013282?section=official-list-entry>

Three trenches covering an area of 350.2sqm were opened in the environs of Earith's Civil War earthworks known as the Bulwark. Positioned upon a gravel terrace of the Wash, and set between the Old and New Bedford Levels that connect with the River Ouse, the surrounding landscape is archaeologically sensitive, with extensive prehistoric and Roman sites having been excavated to the north and south of the project area. Quarrying identified in two trenches immediately south of the Bulwark may hold some broad contemporary connection to Civil War activities, with 17th century pottery coming from one of these. A geophysical survey mapped a broad but discrete distribution of this quarried area. The trenches were opened across the distinct landfall of a terrace edge that was thought to have once framed a former channel of the River Ouse. A full sequence of sediment deposits was recorded from the later Holocene to the historic era. Items of Mesolithic to Middle Iron Age attribution dominated the finds recovered from these trenches, predominantly coming from sealed 'buried soil' contexts as well as a ditch dated to the latter of this time frame. These important findings are comparable to the Over/Needingworth and Colne Fen landscapes nearby, with the northward extension of the former's Mesolithic landscape being of particular significance. The potential for an early waterlogged organic sequence was clearly identified in one of the trenches in which the edge of a former course of the River Ouse was encountered. A third trench was positioned north of the Bulwark to investigate a raised linear anomaly thought to represent the course of the Roman Car Dyke. This was found to be a silt and alluvium filled roddon that passed through a deflated boggy environment, and although no sign of the dyke was forthcoming this may have been either removed or obscured by a later channel broadly following the West Wash flood deposits.

Brittain, M. 2016. Earith Bulwark Investigations. Unpublished CAU Report No. 1331.

Fen-edge - Belsar's Hill

Belsar's Hill, Willingham (Iron Age Hillfort later reputedly re-occupied by Normans)



Belsar's Hill, Willingham. A circular ring-work 880 feet and 750 feet respectively in long and short diameter, with single vallum and ditch, lying on the edge of the fen 18 feet above O.D. The vallum is much wasted; the area is now pasture, but has been under plough. The driftway which leads to Aldreth Causeway and which is in a direct line therewith now bisects the camp. This driftway was from Norman times onwards for 600 years the chief land route into Ely from the south. Though it now goes *over* and not *through* the vallum it is not necessarily later than the earthwork; reference to the 1836 O.S. map shows that the track then skirted the camp on the east side. An original entrance lies to the west; faint traces of an eastern entrance are also to be seen. The ditch where it and the vallum are most perfect is marshy; and it must when the camp was in use have been a wet moat. Under natural conditions the site must have been very inaccessible.

(Fox 1923, 137)

THE LOWLAND RING-WORKS

Arbury, **Belsar's Hill** and Round Moats, topographically, are distinguished by their natural inaccessibility, low-lying situation and wet moats.

Excavation has given no clue to the age of Arbury or the Round Moats; **Belsar's Hill** has not been excavated.

Belsar's Hill commands an ancient causeway (and ford?) giving access to the Isle of Ely, which the Bronze Age finds near Aldreth High Bridge suggest may have been in use at an early period. Arbury lies close to the mediaeval route from Cambridge to Aldreth; and the whole length of this Way, from the fords across the Cam to Ely Island, may be prehistoric¹. Round Moats lies in a marshy valley at Fowlmere close to the line of the Street Way, but has not necessarily any connection therewith.

There is nothing in the character of Arbury or **Belsar's Hill** to suggest post-Roman construction. Concerning the Round Moats I am less confident. Circular or regularly oval moated sites with high valla of mediaeval date are uncommon, but the small size of the Round Moats certainly favours a late rather than an early period. It is unfortunate that no dateable objects were found during Yorke's excavations.

(Fox 1923, 141)

E. Aldreth Causeway. The mediaeval route to Ely from Cam-

bridge (*via* Riston-Lamb's Cross-Rampton-Aldreth) may, as has been suggested (p. 137), preserve some elements of a prehistoric track. Whether this be so or no finds of Neolithic and Bronze Age date near Aldreth High Bridge suggest that a ford existed here in pre-Roman times and the situation of the camp of **Belsar's Hill** which controls the southern approaches thereto is certainly significant.

(Fox 1923, 155)

Concerning the smaller ring-works, low-lying, inaccessible, wet moated, little can be said; Arbury and **Belsar's Hill** are probably pre-historic, but the possibility of a mediaeval origin for the small work at Fowlmere cannot be excluded.

(Fox 1923, 157)

Belsar's Hill has been claimed to be both a medieval and an Iron Age fortification; though the latter interpretation is now generally accepted (Fox 1923; Malim 1992; Evans 1992), it is worth considering both arguments. There may even be a possibility of Saxon or Norse use or re-construction, though it should be noted that Norse defences in Britain are notoriously difficult to recognise (Richards 1991: 22). The siting of the fort in relation to the natural

topography may have been significant in the early medieval period, when the Aldreth Causeway extended from the tip of the 'hard' spur across the fenland to Aldreth village. Belsar's Hill was traditionally associated with William I's campaign against Hereward the Wake (Ravensdale 1974: 35), a connection based largely on the fort's strategically dominant position in relation to the southern end of the Aldreth Causeway and the ford leading to the Isle of Ely (Ravensdale 1974: 35). The earliest recorded name of the site, 'Bellassise' (VCH 1948: 3), which appears in the Hundred Rolls (Ravensdale 1974: 35), and in documents of the Bishopric of Ely dating to 1221 and 1251 (Reaney 1943: 174), is Old French. It has been argued that the fort would not have a Norman name if it were pre-conquest in origin, given the predominance of Old English 'bury' names amongst prehistoric earthworks elsewhere in the fen-hinterland (Renn 1973: 89; VCH 1948: 3). Indirect support for medieval activity at Belsar's Hill lies in references to a 'Castle of Alrehede' (an early form of Aldreth, meaning 'landing place where there are alders': Reaney 1943) and battles for the control of the Isle of Ely between 1069 and 1071. Renn (1973: 89) considers the only two possible sites for this 'castle' to be Belsar's Hill and the square earthwork at Braham Farm, near Ely. However, Braham overlies ridge-and-furrow and is, therefore, presumably of a later date (Taylor 1974: 59). This might lend weight to the claim of Belsar's Hill to be the site of Alrehede, but it is possible that the wrong area of fenland is being considered. The geographical description of William's attack on Ely in the *Liber Eliensis* is vague, and although the attack may have come from the west it could equally have been directed from the east, where medieval artefacts have been discovered and where the fen was narrower (Blalce 1962: lvii).

A brief comparison with ringworks of a known medieval date is informative. Circular ringworks with a single bank and ditch were built in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Clarke 1984; Kenyon 1990; King 1991). They vary in form and size, but do not exceed 10 m in diameter, and usually have large defences in relation to their size (King & Alcock 1969: 95). The only known Cambridgeshire ringwork, Bourn Castle (King & Alcock 1969: 111), is 150 m in diameter (RCHME 1968: 16). Consequently, in comparison to known medieval ringworks Belsar's Hill has smaller defences in proportion to its enclosed area, which is considerably larger than even the largest known ringwork (King & Alcock 1969: 107). This suggests that Belsar's Hill was not originally built by the Normans, but it is possible that it was adapted by them as a campaign castle; Norman re-use of pre-existing fortifications has been recorded elsewhere (Davidson 1969: 43; Kenyon 1990: 8). The partial breach in the ramparts on the western side of Belsar's Hill (d), with its flanking mounds, may be evidence of re-use, but the date or nature of that reuse cannot yet be demonstrated. The relatively few known Iron Age forts in and around the fenland appear to have varied so greatly, both in appearance and function, that it is difficult to define any yardstick against which to compare Belsar's Hill (see for example Malim 1992; Evans 1992; Malim & McKenna 1993). Indeed, even those enclosures elsewhere in East Anglia, which seem in some respects to have more in common with the Wessex type sites and are therefore termed 'hillforts', are distinctly unusual, both as a group and individually (Martin 1991). The fen-edge location of Belsar's Hill, discussed above in relation to the medieval Aldreth Causeway, is common to a number of late prehistoric enclosures, including those at Stonea Camp, Borough Fen and Coveney; it is possible that the peninsularity of the sites lent the monuments a visual and strategic dominance which the level ground did not (Evans 1992). Indeed, it is possible that the

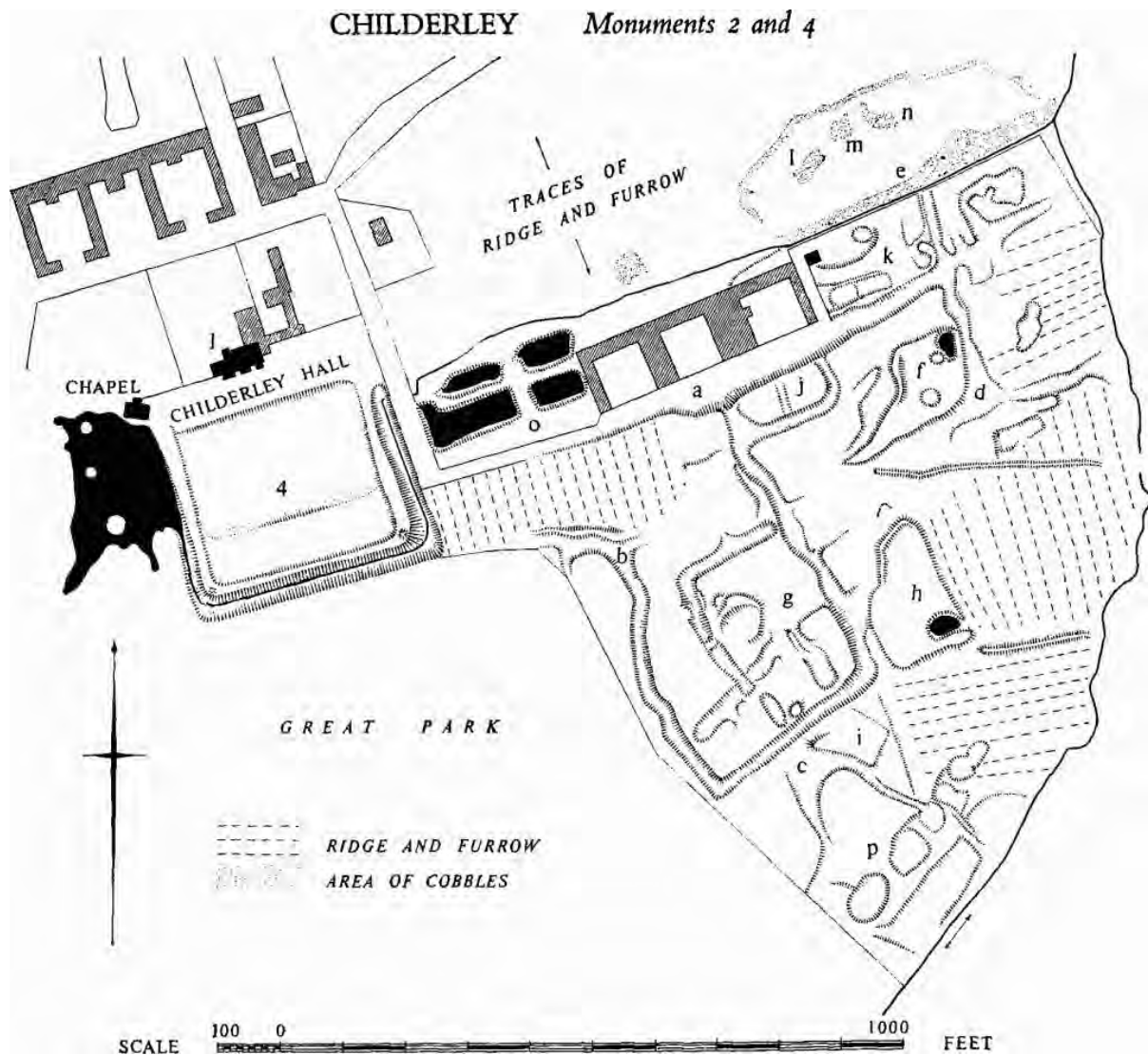
Aldreth Causeway itself originated in the prehistoric period (see below). In terms of form and size, the other known and presumed Iron Age forts tend to be predominantly sub-circular, ranging from 2 to 20 hectares in area, and located on plateaux or on low-lying gravels (Gregory & Rogerson 1991: 69). One of the closest parallels to Belsar's Hill in form, size and location is the fort at Borough Fen, or Peakirk Moor (TF 192 073), which was surveyed by RCHME in December 1993 (Fig. 4; Oswald 1994). The main earthwork is subcircular, c. 220 m in diameter, enclosing an area of 3.8 hectares, and is situated on a gravel spur on the fen-edge at 4.0 m O.D. . Archaeological investigations of Red Cow Drain, which cuts through the Borough Fen fort, revealed sections through the ditches and evidence for occupation (French & Pryor 1993; Malim & McKenna 1993). The pottery recovered was dated to the third to second centuries BC, and the quantity of occupation debris far exceeded that from comparable excavated forts in Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire, suggesting considerable variability in function (Malim & McKenna 1993). The earthwork was originally less massive than Belsar's Hill, and has been severely degraded by modern ploughing, the rampart now surviving at best as a scarp 1.2 m high. The most significant difference is that the Borough Fen fort has a second, outer enclosure, which follows the course of the inner rampart concentrically at an average distance of 28 m, and appears, by its precise replication of the course of the inner earthwork, to be contemporary with it. On the northern side of the enclosure, the RCHME survey recorded very slight traces of possible bank outside the outer ditch, whose existence was first noted by David Hall (1987), but which did not survive in the excavated sections. This, together with the breadth of the space between the inner and outer earthworks, may suggest that the fort comprised two socially or functionally distinct zones. The wide, slightly in-turned entrance through the inner rampart may be similar to the gateway at Arbury (Evans 1992), and in its easterly orientation is comparable to the majority of Iron Age forts and enclosures throughout the country. In Cambridgeshire, Arbury, and possibly Sawston (Taylor et al. 1994) and Wandlebury (Oswald & Pattison forthcoming) may have single eastern entrances.

However, the circuit of the ditch at Belsar's Hill appears unbroken, except on the northeast where bank (c) enters Belsies Hill Furlong. This may have been the site of a simple entrance, partially obscured by the later bank (c), which probably originated as a headland. Further disturbance by the Aldreth Causeway makes interpretation difficult, and the identification of an Iron Age entrance must remain tentative. In conclusion, while there are several significant differences between Borough Fen and Belsar's Hill, on balance the similarities suggest that Belsar's Hill is also Iron Age in origin.

Kenney, J. & Oswald, A. 1996. Belsar's Hill, Willingham, Cambridgeshire: a Survey by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England. *PCAS* 84, 5-14.

Claylands - Childerley

Childerley (deserted medieval village)



The modern road is a parish boundary for nearly the entire distance of 9 miles. This fact, its character as a true ridgeway (it strictly follows the watershed), and the discovery of a gold coin of Cunobelinus on its line at **Childerley Gate**, which is forest land apparently unoccupied in pre-Roman days, suggest that it may have been one of the British woodland roads to which Caesar draws attention¹.

(Fox 1923, 154)

Only one branch of topographical archaeology remains to be surveyed in order to complete our brief consideration of the Christian Anglo-Saxon period, and, in a barren archaeological period, it is the most unsatisfactory branch of all.

The fact is that while there are many earthworks in the district which *may* be of Anglo-Saxon date, there are few, if any, which can be with certainty assigned to this period. Gannock's Castle, Tempsford [B], has been ascribed to the Danes, and Edward the Elder is known to have constructed a fortress at Huntingdon, while many moated and banked enclosures and homestead moats may possibly be pre-Norman, as may also be a dyke at **Childerley**.

(Fox 1923, 301)

Childerley Dyke. **Childerley** is an upland parish 6 miles west-north-west of Cambridge. Its western boundary (see 6-inch O.S. XXXIX, N.W. and S.W.) for a distance of 730 yards is formed by a dyke of some strength, facing west; where well-marked, the crest of the vallum is about 6 feet above the floor of the ditch and the overall width is about 17 yards. An entrance, apparently original, is centrally situated. There is no evidence that the defences extended either to the north or the south beyond their present limits (see Map V). Ending "in the air," as the earthwork does, it seems useless for defence; but dense woodlands may have encompassed the settlement when the work was built and the only access thereto from the west may have been spanned by it. A cottage 700 yards to the west of the dyke, situated beside a hedge-line which leads to the gap in the defences and no doubt marks an ancient road, is called, significantly enough, Battle Gate. No tradition attaches to the site; the only recorded find, that of a chain-shot, does not seem relevant. No ancient through-road, so far as I can ascertain, traverses the parish, and it is in a wooded district where no trace of early occupation has been recorded. On the whole, I am inclined to suggest that it may have been designed for the defence of the Anglo-Saxon settlement of **Childerley**; it would thus be an earthwork of a type not known to occur elsewhere in the Cambridge Region.

Tradition would surely survive had the earthwork been constructed in the XVII century as the discovery of the chain-shot suggests. Charles I slept at **Childerley** Hall in 1647 for two nights (June 6-8) on his way from Holmby House to Newmarket when in charge of Cornet Joyce and his troopers.

(Fox 1923, 305)

In the country to the west of Cambridge, also, most of the forest villages are situated at the edge of the boulder-clay-covered area; but since in many parts of this district the boulder-clay overlies other forest-bearing clays the geological factors governing settlement are not clearly indicated on the map. The selection of village sites is certainly due in some cases to the existence of springs issuing at the junction of strata; in others to the fact that boulder-clay covers the plateaux and hill-tops, and forest settlements where possible are sited on hill slopes. In many cases both causes, doubtless, governed settlement. Be the cause what it may, close to such junctions of strata lie strings of villages; bordering the Cam Valley west of Ermine Street those of Croydon, Tadlow, Eyworth, Dunton, Millow and Edworth may be noted, and in the triangle west of Cambridge formed by Roman roads (see Maps IV and V) we find twelve villages near the edge of the boulder-clay, and only two, Hardwick and **Childerley**, deep within it.

Taking the area west of the River Cam as a whole I find that of fifty-three villages situated on ground naturally forest only fifteen are deep within a boulder-clay-covered area. We may suppose that in this part of our Region the earliest settlements were in open country on the edge of the forest; that when clearances commenced villages grew up on the slopes of the hills-the margins of the boulder-clay; where (as in the district to the east of Cambridge already analyzed) the extent of the plateau or hill country was too great for it to be utilized by dwellers on its margins, settlements sprang up within it.

(Fox 1923, 309)

(2) **Deserted Mediaeval Village** (around N.G. TL 358614, ponds only on O.S.) consists of (a) to (d) hollow-ways, (e) a cobbled street, (f) church site, (g) manor house site, (h) to (n) house or building sites, (o) fish ponds, and (p) quarries.

The remains are probably those of Great Childerley, which was depopulated by the fifth Sir John Cutt in the reign of Charles I. They lie to the E. and S.E. of the Hall, for the most part in a triangular area bounded to the N.W. and E. by streams which unite at the N. tip of the triangle. The land is highest in the centre, about 170 ft. above O.D., and slopes towards the streams; most of it is pasture but some house sites as well as the cobbled street (e) beyond the stream on the N.W. appear to have been ploughed up. The remains are variously orientated; most of them follow the E.N.E. and W.S.W. main street with variations either way of some 20°. In the following description the street is treated as if it ran E. and W., and cardinal points have been used throughout as far as possible to simplify description.

(a), the main street, survives as a hollow-way 40 ft. to 60 ft. wide, running E. and W. for 800 ft. in continuation of a farm track from the Hall and dying out 50 ft. from the E. stream. It is 20 ft. to 25 ft. wide across the bottom and 1 ft. to 1½ ft. deep but narrows to 30ft. at the E. end after intersecting with (d).

(b), S.W. of (a), encloses a roughly rectangular area on three sides. It is generally 25 ft. to 30 ft. wide and 2 ft. to 3 ft. deep. Two branches, only traceable for 30 ft., run to the E. Hollowway (b) finally joins (a), but 50 ft. from its N. end a third branch, 25 ft. wide and 9 ins. deep, runs E. for 160 ft. and then curves N. to join (a).

(c), to the S. of (b), is a pair of hollow-ways running S. and S.E. from an open area some 50 ft. across: the first is 160 ft. long, 30 ft. to 40 ft. wide, 2 ft. deep and 20 ft. to 30 ft. across the bottom; the second is slighter.

(d), in the shape of a T with its foot to the N., intersects with (a). To the N. of (a) it is 25 ft. wide, 1 ft. to 1½ ft. deep, and 10 ft. to 15 ft. across the bottom; to the S. of (a) it is a shelf 30 ft. to 50 ft. wide with scarps 2½ ft. high on the W. and 9 ins. to 1 ft. high on the E. The cross bar of the T runs W. from the E. stream; it is 30 ft. wide with a scarp 2½ ft. high on the N.; the scarps to the S. are slighter.

(e), in the ploughed area on the far bank of the N.W. stream, immediately W. of the junction with the E. stream, is an E. and W. belt of cobbles 20 ft. to 30 ft. wide which probably marks the line of another street.

(f), the reputed church site, is an irregular platform, roughly 120 ft. square and 2½ ft. high on the S. and E., with a W. spur of about 100 ft. at its S.W. corner. Some masonry is said to have been still standing in the early 19th century (F. A. Walker, *Some account of the parishes of Childerley* (1879)).

(g), probably the manor house site, is a rectangular area 265 ft. N. to S. by 180 ft. E. to W., limited to the E. and S. by (b). The N. and W. sides are formed by an irregular ditch 30 ft. wide, 2 ft. to 3 ft. deep, partly filled on the W. where another ditch, 35 ft. wide and 2 ft. deep, crosses it. A causeway 10 ft. wide crosses the W. side near its centre. The irregular interior has a rectangular building platform in the S.E. angle, 100 ft. N. to S. by 50 ft. E. to W. and 2 ft. to 3 ft. high. Along the N. half of the W. side of this platform is a ditch 15 ft. wide and 2½ ft. deep; the S. half has a later pond 30 ft. wide and 4 ft. deep.

(h), house or building site E. of the foregoing, is a platform defined by scarps 2 ft. to 3½ ft. high on the E., S., and N.W., a bank 15 ft. wide and 9 ins. to 1 ft. high on the N.W., and a scarp 9 ins. high on the W. A later pond, 2 ft. deep, cuts into the S.E. corner.

(i), house or building site S. of (g), is marked by scarps, 9 ins. to 1½ ft. high, on all sides but the W.N.W.

(j), house or building site, is bounded by (a) and a branch from (b); it is bisected by a ditch 15 ft. wide and 9 ins. deep.

(k), house or building site N. of (a) and immediately E. of the modern farm buildings, is a rectangular depression 100 ft. E. to W. by 30 ft. N. to S., 9 ins. to 1½ ft. deep and divided into two by a W. scarp 6 ins. high, 45 ft. from the W. end. **Excavations by J. Alexander** in 1962 produced, among other finds, pottery of Saxo-Norman type; there were no indications of occupation after the 14th century.

(l), (m) and (n), three house or building sites N. of the N.W. stream, each consisting of an irregular area of cobbles 30 ft. or 40 ft. across; the area in which they are placed is separated by a curving bank 600 ft. long, visible as a belt of cobbles 10 ft. to 15 ft. wide, from N. to S. ridge and furrow. **Excavations by J. Alexander** in 1961 (D.M.V. Research Group, *9th Annual Report* (n.d.), 9), revealed two cobbled areas, perhaps yards, and produced Romano-British pottery as well as sherds from the 11th to the 14th centuries; ploughing and bull-dozing had left very little stratified material.

(o), fish ponds, set in pairs at the W. corner of the village site and to the E. of the moated site (Monument (4)). The ponds, which are much overgrown, are roughly rectangular and 2 ft. to 3 ft. deep.

(p), seven irregular scarps or quarries, 3 ft. to 4 ft. deep with boggy interiors, lie to the S. of the village site and N. of the stream, cutting remains of ridge and furrow.

(3) **Village Remains** (around N.G. TL 353617, not on O.S.). Earthworks, probably remains of the village of Little Childerley, standing on a level site of boulder clay 200 ft. above O.D. and 300 yds. N.W. of Childerley Hall, were completely destroyed by ploughing between 1955 and 1959; only oblique air photographs give any idea of their appearance. There was a straight E. and W. track about 900 ft. long and 20 ft. to 30 ft. wide with a continuous line of rectangular platforms on either side and ridge and furrow running up to their outer sides;

ploughing is said to have revealed a wide cobbled strip, probably the street. Sherds of the 11th to 13th centuries occur on the site.

(4) **Moated Site** (Class B; N.G. TL 356615), on the S. slope of a shallow open valley along which a small stream once flowed to the E.; it is clearly not defensive but represents a formal garden probably contemporary with the Tudor house. The N. side of the moat, which is rectangular, 300 ft. E. to W. by 250 ft. N. to S., is formed by the terrace in front of the Hall (Monument (1)); the other sides consist of a bank 32 ft. wide, 4 ft. to 5 ft. high and 7 ft. to 12 ft. across the flat top, within a V-shaped ditch 20 ft. to 35 ft. wide and 6 ft. to 8 ft. deep. The W. bank acts as a dam for the large irregular pond to the W., and the stream now flows around the S. and E. sides. At the two S. angles are circular prospect mounds 14 ft. to 18 ft. in diameter and 2½ ft. to 3 ft. higher than the bank on which they stand, making them 9 ft. higher than the interior. The interior is flat except for a scarp facing N. 1½ ft. high S. of the centre.

(5) **Embanked Pond** (N.G. TL 349615), now drained, in Wood Walk Spinney, 200 ft. above O.D., consists of an area 100 ft. square, N. and S. of the stream which flows E. to the ponds near the Hall, with enclosing banks 20 ft. wide and 3 ft. high on the outside, and 4 ft. to 5 ft. above the interior. The interior was wet in 1808 (estate map 1808, C.U.L.).

(6) **Linear Earthwork** (N.G. TL 349622–349615), perhaps most likely to be connected with emparking in Tudor or Stuart times. A park pale is marked along its line on a map of Boxworth of 1650 (Hunts. R.O.). The site is towards the E. edge of a ridge covered with boulder clay, level to the W. and falling gently towards the Hall on the E. with a slight rise to 220 ft. above O.D. near the centre of the line of the earthwork. The remains consist of a bank and ditch facing W. with a slight counter-scarp bank, running N. from the embanked pond in Wood Walk Spinney (Monument (5)) for 720 yds. before ending on a modern hedge line. The dimensions vary considerably but, where best preserved, the bank is 37 ft. wide and 6 ft. high with a flat top 10 ft. wide; the ditch is 30 ft. wide, 3 ft. deep and 6 ft. across the bottom; the outer bank is 10 ft. wide and 1½ ft. high. The only notable features are a double bend of 30 ft. eastwards, 230 yds. from the S. end and an entrance 60 ft. wide 200 yds. further N.; here the bank and ditch have rounded ends with the N. side, partly destroyed by ploughing, 30 ft. E. of the line of the S. stretch.

(7) **Dam** (N.G. TL 361621, not on O.S.). The stream which flows N. from the deserted village site (Monument (2)) was formerly dammed 700 yds. N.E. of the Hall to form a triangular pond of 9¼ acres. This pond has been drained but the dam remains: it runs N.W. and S.E. for 618 ft. and is 62 ft. wide and 9 ft. high. On the inside, halfway down the slope, is a ledge 13 ft. wide, above which are remains of a brick revetment. The stream now flows through a cut 30 ft. wide and 15 ft. deep in the centre of the dam: the pond had already been drained by 1808 (estate map 1808, C.U.L.) when the interior was called Fish Pond Pasture; it is now covered with trees.

(8) **Moated Site** (N.G. TL 354598, not on O.S.). A ditched enclosure formerly existed on flat clay land 100 yds. W. of Childerley Gate and adjoining the Cambridge to St. Neots road, 234 ft. above O.D. The E. side remains as a wet ditch 162 ft. long, 22 ft. wide and 1½ ft. deep to the water level and a depression 30 ft. wide and 1 ft. deep marks the line of the N. side. 19th-century maps (estate map 1808, C.U.L.; tithe map 1839, T.R.C.) show that it was an

elongated rectangle with an entrance in the centre of the N. side, measuring about 450 ft. E. to W. by 160 ft. N. to S.

(9) **Cultivation Remains.** Ridge and furrow survives near the Hall (*e.g.* around N.G. TL 357618, 354615 and 359615; not on O.S.) but formerly existed over a larger area since ploughed. The remains all have straight ridges 80 yds. to 280 yds. long, 7 yds. to 9 yds. wide, 6 ins. to 9 ins. high with headlands of 7 yds. to 9 yds. An access way 20 ft. wide and 6 ins. deep runs N. and S. through the block around N.G. TL 354615. These were probably all in old enclosures.

Traces on air photographs show a few blocks of both straight and reversed-S ridge and furrow in Great Park and to the S.E. of Monument (2). Curved field boundaries suggest that fields were formed by enclosing open-field furlongs or blocks of furlongs.

¶(Ref: estate maps of 1808 and 1817 (C.U.L.); tithe map of 1839 (T.R.C.); air photographs: 106G/UK/1490 3240–2, 3345–6; 106G/UK/1953/0098–100; St. Joseph, PH 08–74, XT 89.)

RCHME 1968. *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Cambridgeshire, Volume 1, West Cambridgeshire.* London:HMSO. Pp. 44-48.

Chalklands - Wandlebury

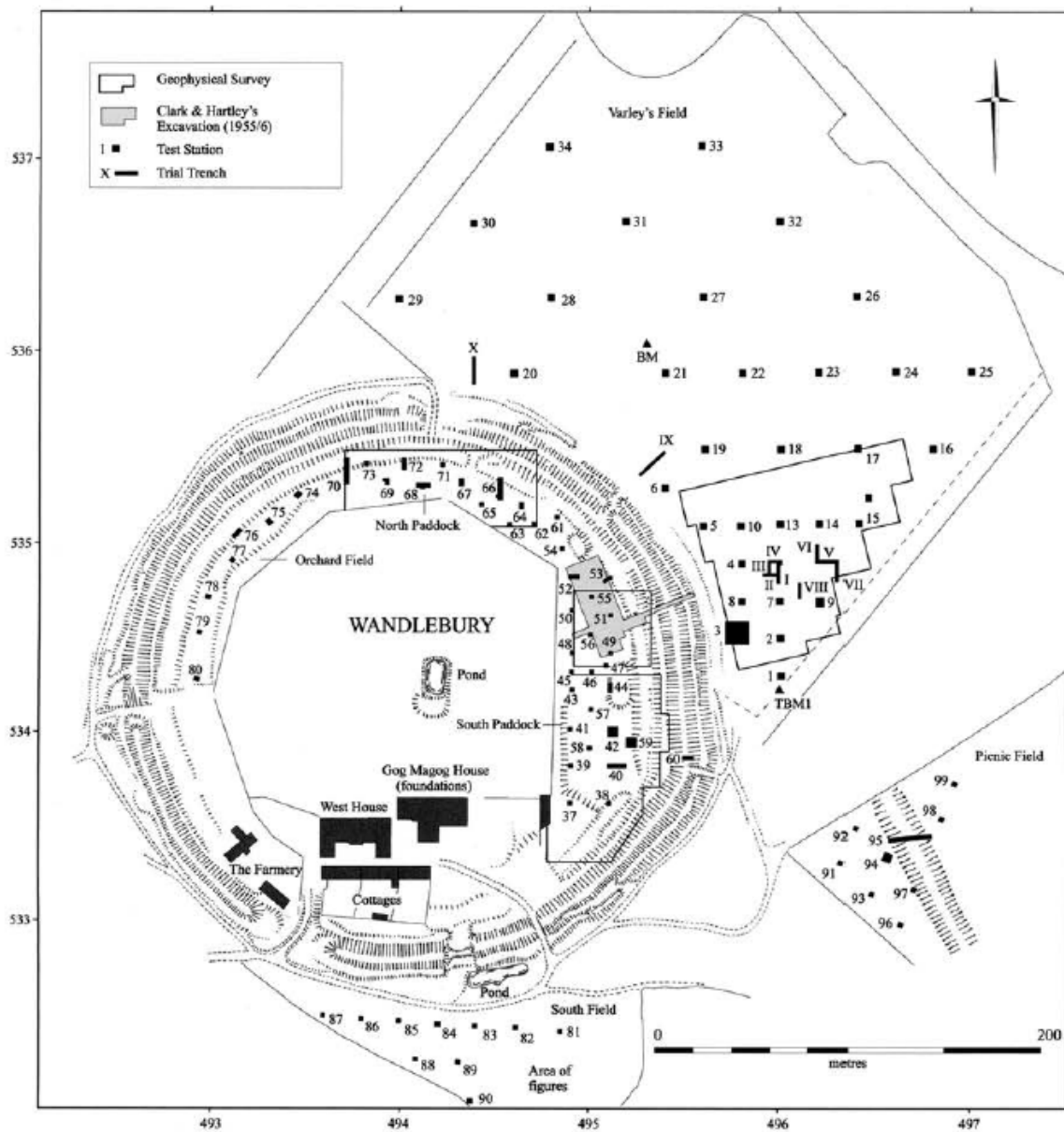


Figure 4. Location plan of the survey and excavation work carried out in 1994-7 set against the 1996 RCHME earthwork plan of Wandlebury (C French).

Caesar's Camp (Sandy [BJ], **Wandlebury** (Stapleford), and Arbury Banks (Ashwell [H]) were all occupied if not constructed during this period (Iron Age).

(Fox 1923, 109)

(b) Hilltop fortresses:

Wandlebury, Stapleford [C].

Ring Hill (Starbury), Littlebury [E].

Caesar's Camp, Sandy [B].

Arbury Banks, Ashwell [H].

War Ditches, Cherryhinton [C].

Grim's Ditch, Saffron Walden [E].

(Fox 1923, 122)

Wandlebury, in Stapleford parish, a plateau fort, circular, 1000 feet in diameter, occupies the crest of the Gog-Magog Hills about 240 feet above O.D. British coins and weaving-combs have been found within the area, and Stukeley records querns, fibulae, beads, etc. (ed. Lukis, 1883, p. 36). It is in a commanding position; anyone coming from the west and crossing the Cam by the fords at Hauxton or Grantchester would be forced to pass close to the fortress on his way eastward, Fulbourn Fen on the north side and the Bourn River on the south preventing a wide detour. Under primitive conditions the Gog-Magog ridge is a "key position."

This fortress has been described by a succession of antiquaries as being, in the words of Camden, "girt with a threefold rampire"; this was its character in the days before the hill-top was planted and a house built within the enceinte¹, but, unfortunately, it is not true to-day. The earthwork now consists of a double bank and single fosse, the fosse 6 to 9 feet deep, the ramparts 2 to 5 feet above ground level. The outer rampart is in places higher than the inner; this is probably due to the inner bank having been to some extent levelled. The distance on the slope from bottom of fosse to top of either vallum varies from 20 to 30 feet; the over-all width 70 to 80 feet.

Slight traces of the destroyed defences, which consisted of the main vallum and its ditch, are apparent inside the existing works.

The nature of the original entrance defences cannot now be determined, but it is probable that the two existing entrances on the north and south sides respectively are the points at which access to the fortress was originally obtained.

1. In 1694. **Wandlebury** formerly had "two other ditches which were levelled for lord Godolphin's plantation and gardens (Lyson 1878, 73)

(Fox 1923, 134)

We have, however, no evidence which permits us to assign an earlier date than the Early Iron Age to any of our hill camps, which are of two well-known types, "contour" and "plateau." For one of the latter, War Ditches, a date within this period may be regarded as certain; while scanty remains found within the enceinte of three others, **Wandlebury** and Arbury Banks (plateau), Caesar's Camp (contour), are in each case of the same Age.

Of Ring Hill (contour) nothing is known; in form and situation it resembles Caesar's Camp.

(Fox 1923, 139)

Wandlebury and the War Ditches bear no ascertainable relation either to the dykes or the Ickniel Way, from which they are some miles distant. Study of the district suggests, as far as **Wandlebury** is concerned, that the most suitable and central site in this downland area was chosen purely on local and tactical grounds; on the other hand, it may be that this great ring-work is to be considered as the last of the line of fortresses controlling the Thames-Stort-Cam Valley route ¹.

Since writing the above I have received an interesting letter from Mr G. Maynard, lately the curator of the Saffron Walden Museum. He says that from Ring Hill the Gog-Magog Hills can be clearly seen—and "**Wandlebury** before the site was planted with trees," also "Little Trees Hill and probably the Wandlebury camp site are visible from far up the Cam Valley beyond Audley End. It always struck me that **Wandlebury** would in early days serve as a great signalling centre for a very wide area. Signals from it could be observed far up both the Walden and Linton valleys and from the high ground by Ashdon and many other points. Any enemy movement along the escarpment could thus be easily communicated to the population of the sheltered valleys opening on to the open chalk country." Oct. 10, 1919.

¹ The relation between the forts and the dykes can be studied on Map V.

(Fox 1923, 139)

There are three observations which may, however, safely be made.

(i) One is that it is probable that these fortresses were used by the Celtic peoples in their struggle against the Romans, and that the Stort-Essex Cam Valley route was then important. The position of the Roman station of Chesterford between Ring Hill and **Wandlebury**, and at a point which blocks the northern outlet of the Stort Valley population, is suggestive.

(Fox 1923, 140)

Ring-Works. It is significant that in none of our hill-forts, whether they be contour forts (such as Caesar's Camp) or plateau ring-works (such as **Wandlebury**), have any objects been found earlier than the Iron Age; moreover, War Ditches, the only hill-fort which has been adequately examined, is certainly of this period. We can at present know nothing of the part which these fortresses played in the tribal or racial wars of the Age, or of their relations to the defensive system of the dykes ; but we can get hints from their topography; the existence of Ring Hill (and of Wallbury to the south thereof) must, for example, be largely due to the importance of the Stort-Cam Valley trade-route from the Kentish ports and the lower Thames. The increase in the population and wealth of the Ivel Valley, again, which is a marked feature of the Early Iron Age in our district,

sufficiently accounts for the appearance of Caesar's Camp, which occupies an ideal site for a hill-fort.

(Fox 1923, 156)

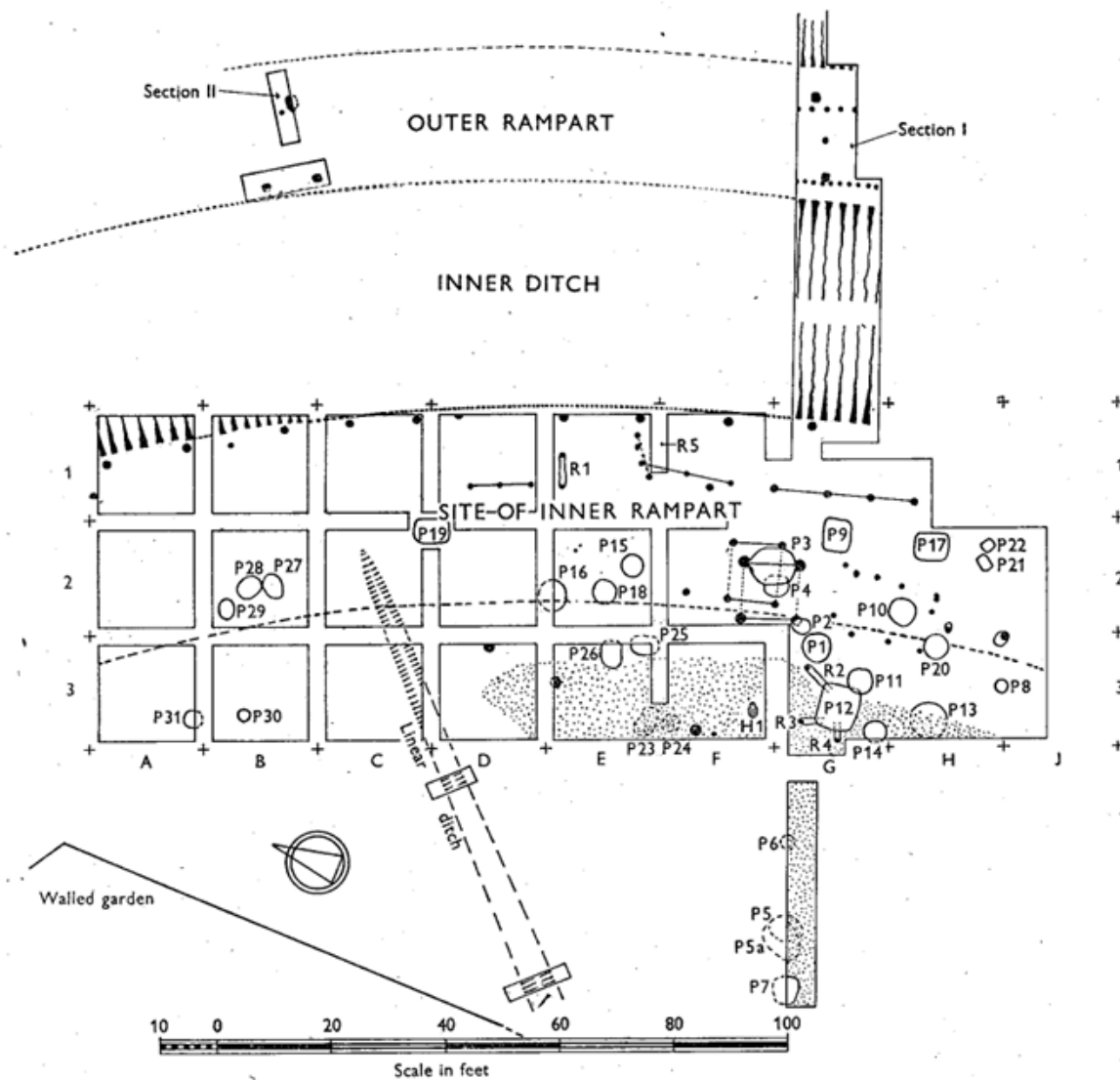


Fig. 2. Plan of Site I.

Hartley, B. R. 1957. The Wandlebury Iron Age Hill-fort, Excavations of 1955-6. *PCAS* 50, 1-28.

Evaluation investigations conducted both within and outside the Wandlebury ringwork in 1994-7 as a student training exercise by the Department of Archaeology and Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU), University of Cambridge, revealed an extensive area of later prehistoric and Romano-British settlement, both inside and outside the surviving earthworks. There is every likelihood that an earlier Iron Age settlement was located on the hill-top prior

to the construction of the first rampart and ditch at some time in the 5th century BC, and this appears to have been located outside and to the southeast of a precursor (undated but possibly of the Late Bronze Age/very Early Iron Age?) post-built wooden enclosure. Settlement activity predominated in the 5th and 4th centuries BC, but continued to a much lesser extent into later Iron Age times associated with the construction of the second rampart and ditch on the interior side of the first rampart in the 1st century BC and lasted on a less extensive scale into the earlier Romano-British period (1st-2nd centuries AD). Throughout, the circular and concentric nature of the enclosures persists, and a focus to the southeast with a main entranceway continues. Indeed fresh evidence substantiating the existence of an original entrance on the southeastern side and possible elaboration of the ramparts at this point is described. A number of new discoveries were made that give us a better idea of this hill-top in the Iron Age. Features excavated within and outside the ring consisted principally of pits, but with good hints of structures which would be revealed if open area excavations were undertaken. The pits were primarily used for the storage of grain, and some also had evidence for 'closure deposits', including articulated animals (e.g. a dog), a male skeleton (face down with his hands possibly bound), small pots, and decorative spindle whorls and bone plaques. Uniquely, evidence for repeated episodes of grain storage and handling was documented using detailed micro-stratigraphic and bioarchaeological analyses. This stored grain had probably been brought to the site from the surrounding area. Other environmental analyses suggest that the economy around Wandlebury relied on sheep husbandry in an already open chalk downland landscape throughout the Iron Age and that cattle were predominant in the Roman period. Finally, consideration of recent rescue investigations in the vicinity of Wandlebury suggest that this was but one substantial settlement in a highly developed and extensively occupied landscape in later prehistoric and Roman times.

The previous work and history of the site at Wandlebury has been thoroughly reviewed by Pattison and Oswald (1996). Accordingly, only a few salient features will be described here. Wandlebury constitutes the only 'hillfort' in Cambridgeshire. Nonetheless, there are many other Iron Age ringwork enclosure sites in fen-edge situations: Wardy Hill, Coveney, near Ely (Evans 1992 and 2003), Arbury Camp, on the northwestern side of Cambridge (Evans 1992; Evans and Knight 2002), Stonea Camp, near March (Malim 1992), Belsar's Hill, Willingham and Borough Fen site 7 near Peakirk (French and Pryor 1993; Malim and McKenna 1993). The 'defensive nature' of Wandlebury was suggested by Clark and Hartley's 1955-6 excavations (Hartley 1957). They excavated a trench across the inner and outer ramparts and ditches in the southeastern sector of the hillfort, adjacent to the current investigations (Hartley 1957: fig. 1), as well as a series of Wheeler-box trenches on the interior of the inner ditch (ibid fig. 2) Fig. 2. The first phase of defences were believed to consist of the outer rampart with wooden revetment, outer ditch and counterscarp bank, with the ditch recut at least once and the outer rampart repaired at the same time (ibid figs. 4 & 5). The inner ditch and timber revetted inner rampart were added much later; these are now substantially flattened and infilled by gardening works associated with the estate and certainly by 1808 (Lysons 1808: 73). The inner rampart sealed a variety of pits and post-holes indicative of settlement features associated with the outer defences, which also extended within the interior of the remodelled fort (Hartley 1957: fig. 2). These features produced ceramics and metalwork then dated to the 'Iron Age B' period, which would now be

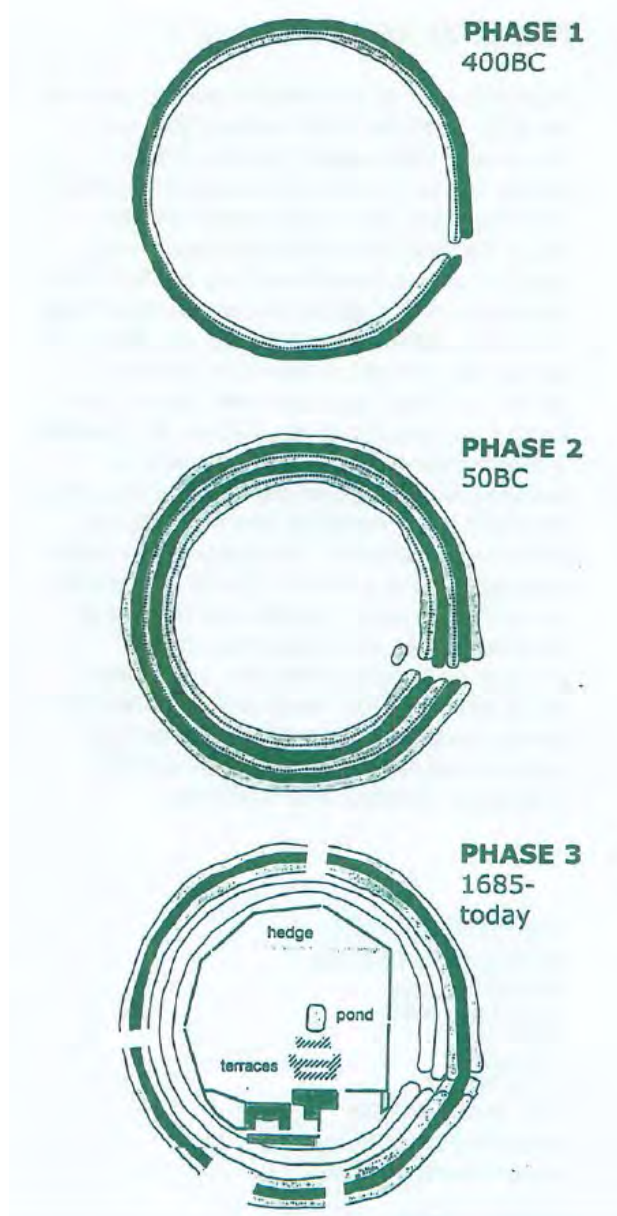
approximately equated to the 3rd-1st centuries BC (Hill 1996 & below). Well preserved faunal remains were also recovered, but remain unanalysed, and a buried soil beneath the counterscarp bank and outer rampart was recognised but not investigated further. Cunliffe (1974: 229-32) reassessed this construction sequence and suggested that Clark and Hartley's interpretation (Hartley 1957) was incorrect. He suggested that the first phase box rampart was replaced by a similar but more massive timber structure, but the associated ditch probably retained its original form at that stage. This was followed by a third phase, seen as an inner timber-revetted dump rampart and the recutting of the outer ditch, but without any super-structure on the outer bank. The variations between Hartley and Cunliffe's interpretations both make reasonable sense but are hard to prove one way or another without considerable new excavation. Nonetheless, as revealed in this report, there may be both modifications and additions to this story, and in particular, the possible existence of an earlier structure beneath the line of the inner rampart. But whatever the actual sequence, there is no doubt that in the 17th century the site was observed to be bounded by three ramparts (ie counterscarp bank, outer and inner ramparts) (Cough 1806: ii, 226) with two ditches or 'great trenches one within another' (Morris 1982), but by the early 18th century only one ditch and rampart remained (Defoe 1724).

Several minor pieces of archaeological work have been conducted on the hill-top prior to this evaluation. These include the examination of an electricity service trenches by Taylor (1976) and Alexander (1993) which revealed a few Iron Age artefacts and undatable linear features, just inside and outside the ringwork near the present bridge on the southern side of the site. Two human burials were discovered outside the rampart to the south during the extension of a cricket pitch and a further five burials revealed as a result of tree uprooting, all suspected of being Iron Age in date (Bevis et al. 1967: 107-9; Taylor and Denston 1977). In the early 1970s, a large bell-shaped pit containing sheep and human bones was discovered as a result of tree-uprooting 25m to the south of the outer rampart in Varley's Field (Cambs SMR 09264). Inside the ringwork, Roman coins were discovered in 1685 during the construction of a cellar (Gough 1806: ii, 226). Archaeological evaluation for the extension of the Gog Magog golf course just off the northeastern edge of the hill-top discovered nothing of associated significance (K Welsh, pers comm).

It is now very clear that we are dealing with a very extensive Iron Age, apparently unenclosed, settlement which either just pre-dates or is contemporary with the first ringwork at Wandlebury, probably from the mid-5th century BC. The ringwork continues to see occupation right into the 2nd century AD, but on a much less extensive scale by the later Iron Age and earlier Roman period. This open settlement appears to be concentrated in the southern third of Varley's Field and in the eastern sector of the superimposed ringwork. Re-examination of the aerial photographic record from the 1950s and 1960s would suggest that this same dense area of pits continues southwards down the hill-side and into the arable fields beyond the cricket pitch to the south and southeast of the ringwork. In future years the extent, date, relationships and forms of these features will also have to be assessed. Despite the Iron Age pottery suggesting that the main period of settlement represented is about 500-300 BC, there are strong indications of very long-lived use of the hill-top. The general scatter of prehistoric flints across Varley's Field indicates that it was at least frequented in the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC. In addition, the relatively small quantities of later Iron Age and Roman

pottery wares indicate continued use of the hill-top outside and inside the hill-fort into the earlier 1st millennium AD. Thus this evaluation has reinforced our impression of the hill-top as one of variable intensity, but long term activity and importance, and one that it is fully integrated into a much wider landscape. Further work must appraise the extent and nature of use of the hill-top and ringwork enclosures throughout the later prehistoric and Roman periods, and the constructional and settlement relationships. This must involve further larger scale, intensive survey and excavations. It needs to set out to examine the spatial aspects of the organisation of the settlement related to the earlier and later use of the hill-top, both inside and outside the ringwork, the reasons for the siting of the monument, provide comprehensive dating evidence and further elucidate the contemporary environments and land-use of the hill-top.

French, C. A I. 2004. Evaluation survey and excavation at Wandlebury ringwork, Cambridgeshire, 1994-7. *PCAS* 93, 15-66



Archaeological evidence from Wandlebury tells us that around 2,300 years ago it was inhabited by the Iceni, an ancient British tribe occupying Norfolk and parts of Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. They built a hillfort on top of the hill - a ditch enclosed by wooden ramparts. This was altered in the later Iron Age into a large multivallate hillfort (the fort was protected by two ditches). This type of hillfort is rare, with only around 50 examples recorded nationally.

Iron Age Hillforts are generally regarded as centres of permanent occupation, defended in response to increasing warfare, a reflection of the power struggle between competing elites.

In the 17th century the inner of the two ditches was back-filled with soil from one bank to level the ground for the gardens and estate but the outer ditch is still very visible with a footpath in most of it.

Human remains have been found in the Ring Paddocks and Varley's Field as well as the area outside the hillfort (games field area) which is thought to be an Iron Age cemetery. There are also remains of buildings (a small village) just outside the hillfort in Varley's Field.

Wormwood Hill at Wandlebury was once thought to be a Bronze Age structure but the gales of 1987 uprooted trees revealing a natural hill, although it is possible that there was a burial mound in the crown of the hill; so far there is insufficient evidence to say what its purpose was. There are also Iron Age features across the A1307 on Magog Down. It is clear that Wandlebury was a significant place during the Iron Age and was one of several in this area of England, such as the hillfort at Arbury Camp to the north. Wandlebury may also have formed part of a series of defended sites including Borough Hill, Arbury Banks and Ravensburgh Castle which extend across the chalk uplands to the south east.

Around 1,800 years ago Wandlebury was occupied by Romans. On the northern edge of Wandlebury is the Roman Road, which once stretched all the way to the main Roman settlement of Colchester. There is no archaeological evidence to suggest that the Romans added much to the Iron Age fort that was already in existence, however Roman coins were found in 1685 and 1752 and a ring in 1844 (now in the British Museum).

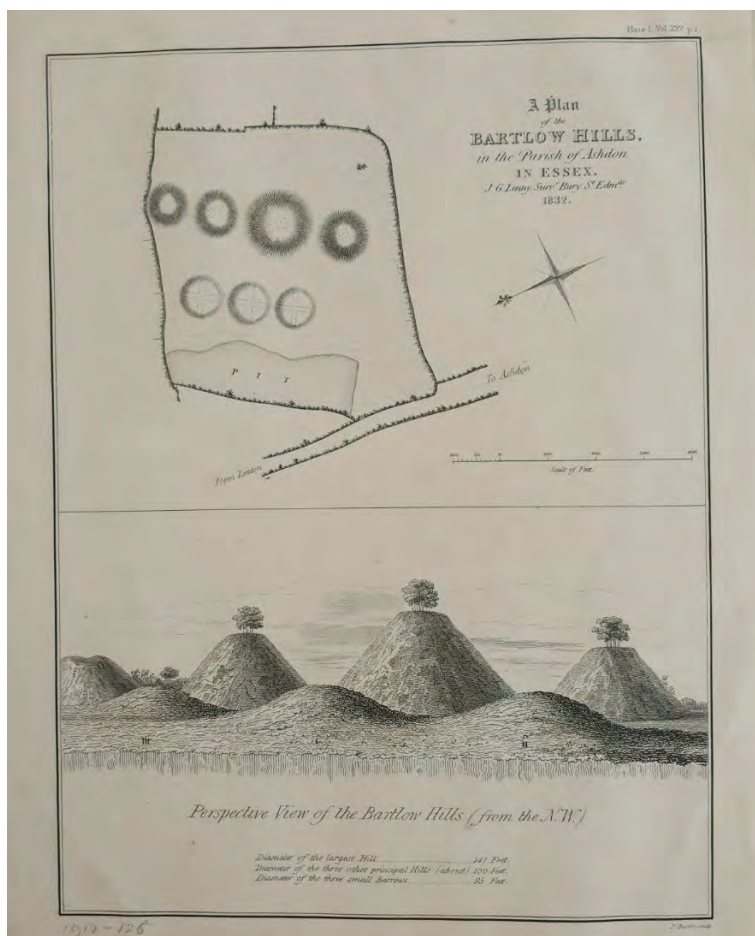
Wandlebury Archaeology Leaflet by Cambridge Past, Present, Future.

Claylands - Bartlow Three Hills



Historic England Archive: CGH01_01_0210

1892 - 1933, C G Harper Collection



A Plan of the Bartlow Hills in the Parish of Ashdon in Essex by J G Lenny Surveyor Bury St Edmunds 1832

Lumps of copper or bronze were found in twelve of the fifteen hoards attributed to founders, and no less than six depots of such metal unassociated with implements are known. The weight of metal is not often specified; but in two cases [footnote 2] there was half a hundredweight or more.

Footnote 2. Rushden (Cumberlow Green), Bally (1877); Ashdon (Bartlow Hills), J. Clark (1873, P. 280).

(Fox 1923, 49)

The significance and distribution of interments of the Stanfordbury class, associated with firedogs, amphorae, and sacrificial utensils of Italian origin is discussed by R. A. Smith in the paper already several times quoted. He notes the persistence of elements of the ritual thus exemplified in burials of Roman date at Bartlow and elsewhere which will be considered in Chapter V.

(Fox 1923, 101)

In reference to Roman Houses:

Bartlow. A small dwelling in Church Field, about 100 yards north-east of the Bartlow Hills, was excavated by Neville in 1852; "the block (43 by 48 feet) contained in the northern half two heated rooms and their furnaces; the southern half was rougher and less habitable." Coins found in a rubbish pit indicated a long occupation ending about 350 A.D. See Neville (1853, p. 17) and Haverfield (1916, p. xxiv).

(Fox 1923, 185)

The majority of Roman houses discovered in North-West Essex [footnote 1] were excavated by Neville in the middle of the XIX century. A summary by Haverfield of the evidence which these, and a house at Ridgewell excavated in 1794, afford, with plans and references, will be found in *R.C.H.M. Essex* (1916).

Here notes of three will suffice. The Ridgewell house was a fairly extensive building round a courtyard (120 by 200 feet); it had one elaborate mosaic, and several tessellated floors; and "coins show that it was occupied during most of the Roman period down to its end." Two small houses at the head of the Bourn Valley at Ashdon (17 by 52 feet) and at Hadstock (60 by 85 feet) contained, like the house over the Cambridge border at Bartlow just described, little beyond apartments for heating and bathing. Haverfield remarks that such houses may originally have included rooms built in wood or clay, besides the stone-built rooms which have alone survived. The Hadstock house yielded evidence of date; pottery of late II century and coins of 250-370 A.D. For buildings at Chesterford see pp. 173--4.

Footnote 1. There are six in all of which four are planned; those at Ridgewell, Ashdon, Hadstock and Wendens Ambo. Practically nothing is known of the dwellings at Stansted and Thaxted. The sites of two additional buildings near Bartlow have been pointed out to me.

(Fox 1923, 186)

The dwelling-houses we have examined occur usually in the fertile river valleys, as at Icklingham, Ickleton, Grantchester; sometimes near springheads as at Wymondley and Litlington. A few are on the edge of the forest, as at Hadstock and Ashdon; and one is in the woodlands at Thaxted. I have failed to find record of any on the fen islands. A southern or eastern aspect was usually chosen; but the four small houses near Bartlow are on the north slope of the valley of the Bourn River. This suggests that the domain of the builders of the Hills may have been on the south slope of the valley.

(Fox 1923, 188)

(B) IN BARROWS

There are a number of mound burials proved by excavation to be of Roman date in the Cambridge Region, which merit detailed consideration; no less than five separate barrows or groups of barrows, in addition to the Bartlow Hills series, exist within a few miles of Cambridge. Their positions are such as the Bronze Age peoples did not utilize in this district; a fact which justifies consideration, in this section, of barrows similarly sited which are either (i) destroyed, (ii) destroyed and inadequately recorded, (iii) unexplored. The regional map (IV) indicates the topographical distribution, and differentiates between those of known, and those of presumed, Roman origin.

The barrows known to be of Roman origin may first be dealt with.

(i) **Barrows in Ashdon Parish—The Bartlow Hills.**

These form two parallel rows running nearly north and south. The western row consisted probably of five small barrows of which two remain; the eastern of four steep-sided mounds the largest 40 feet high and 145 feet in diameter. Two of the destroyed barrows in the western alignment are said to have contained inhumation interments in stone coffins; but there is no contemporary record of these discoveries. See Gage (1834, p. 3-4) quoting Camden. Compare Gale's account: Roger Gale to Dr Stukeley, July 14, 1719, "Two of them were formerly opened and some chests of stone with bones in them taken up" (ed. Lukis, 1883, p. 153).

The remaining three barrows on this alignment were examined by Gage in 1832. Of these and the larger barrows subsequently opened by him an adequate record is preserved—fortunately, since the fine grave-furniture which they contained was destroyed by fire at Easton Lodge, Dunmow [E], in 1847. In each of two of the barrows first investigated (in 1832) an oak chest was found together with burnt bones, glass vessels and an iron lamp; one contained also a fine trefoil-lipped bronze jug and a patella; the other two beakers evidently of Upchurch (Belgic) ware and platters and cups of terra sigillata, one of which bearing the mark OFIC VIRILI is probably of Flavian date.

In the third was a brick tomb. In it a glass urn half full of charred human bones was found on which a second brass of Hadrian (117-138 A.D.) and a gold signet ring were lying (footnote 2). The intaglio figured two blades of corn (footnote 3). Fragments of basket-work, and of a wooden metal-bound bucket and coffer, a glass cup and a small glass vase were also found. Of the four larger barrows excavated in 1835-40 one, the largest (Gage, 1836), contained in an oak chest a large glass urn full of burnt bones, three glass vessels containing liquids, a folding chair of iron and bronze with leather seat, strigils, pottery and many fine bronzes - a globular situla enamelled in red, green and blue embodying a phyllomorphic design (footnote 4), a magnificent bronze lamp, a patella with ram's-head handle and ewer, etc. Leaning against the chest was a globular amphora containing ashes and fragments of bone.

Another (Gage, 1840) contained the usual bronze jug and patella, an iron lamp, glass and pottery vessels. The third was found to have been previously rifled. This is probably the barrow opened in 1815, the objects from which, an "iron lamp, a bronze patera and a small sickle-shaped knife" are in the Walden Museum (Goddard, 1899).

The fourth and last of this group, opened in 1840 (Gage, 1842), contained objects similar to the one last described, and several earthen-ware vessels evidently of Upchurch (Belgic) ware.

Gage remarked on the similarity of the earthenware and terra sigillata vessels in this series of interments; the Upchurch ware is probably late I century; and there is little doubt that an approximate upper limit of date for the whole is that of the coin of Hadrian found in one of the smaller barrows. An important feature is the constant presence of the sacrificial utensils, the ewer-usually trefoil-lipped with mask-decorated handle-and the handled pan or skillet (footnote 5). These, to take examples solely from our district, were seen in the Stanfordsbury vault (Plate XXVI), were associated in the Santon Downham hoard and were met with in the inhumation interment at Toppesfield (footnote 6) in Essex. R. A. Smith (1912, p. 28), discussing the Welwyn burials (where bronzes of similar use but of an earlier type were met with), remarks that these later deposits seem "to reflect the same feelings with regard to the dead, and the same ceremonial observances under Roman rule as in the days of independence."

Comparison with the Stanfordsbury interment (p. 99) is interesting also as showing the changes which half a century, it may be, has produced. The barbaric fire-dogs and spits do not occur at Bartlow, nor do pottery vessels in immoderate number and for the most part broken; but the other features are constant.

Two rich interments at Girton (preserved in Girton College and the Cambridge Museum), which can safely be dated in the Antonine period, perhaps two or three decades later than the Bartlow burials, afford another interesting comparison. The deposits were contained in wooden boxes which had perished. In each a glass jug formed the cinerary; iron lamps resembled one found in a Bartlow burial; there were glass dishes and flasks, platters and a cup of terra sigillata, and a glazed pottery vessel (p. 209); but no bronze ewer or patella (Jenkins, 1881). Another large group of objects, including a lamp, associated with a cremation interment and approximately contemporary with the Girton burial, found at Chesterford (Braybrooke, 1860, p. II8), may also be referred to in this connection.

In many respects the careful record of the Bartlow burials throws welcome light on the sepulchral rites of the period and invests the dry details with human interest. The floor of one of the chests had been strewn with branches of box; two of the lamps had charred wicks showing that they had been lighted before being placed in the tomb: and several of the vessels contained food, or liquids.

Wine is recorded also by Ransom (1886, p. 41) in flasks associated with cremation burials at Wymondley [H].

The Bartlow barrows are probably the family graves of Romano- British nobles, and the poverty and comparative unimportance of the adjacent dwelling-house (p. 185) is all the more remarkable. This may, however, have been an outlying portion only of an extensive building, for "ancient foundations" were discovered when the rail- way cutting was made close by in 1864. It is unfortunate that no detailed record of the discovery of the inhumation interments is available; these may represent the usage of mound-burial continued by the family into the IV century. Such was probably the case at Rougham east of Bury St Edmunds, where a row of four barrows, doubtless representing a series of family tombs as at Bartlow, is situated close to the foundations of a Roman house. These were explored in 1843-44; three contained cremation interments, while in the fourth was an inhumation burial in a brick chamber (see C. Babington, 1874, and G. E. Fox, 1911, p. 315).

Footnote 1. In *Archaeologia*, xxv, xxvi, xxviii and xxix

Footnote 2. An urn found at Sandy contained with the burnt bones a signet ring (bearing the device of an eagle) and a coin (Watkin, 1882, p. 272). Coins are not infrequently found in urns (see p. 188).

Footnote 3. This may be significant. An ear of corn occurs on the reverse of a coin of Cunobelin struck at Camulodunum. But the device is of classical origin; and it may be mere coincidence that an intaglio-probably imported-worn by a man of rank in Eastern Britain should present it.

Footnote 4. The remains of this vessel, salvaged from the Easton Lodge fire, are in the British Museum.

Footnote 5. In one of the Bartlow deposits the ewer was placed on its side in the patella (Gage, 1836, plate xxxiii).

Footnote 6. Walford (1803 a). A variation on the same theme occurred at Shefford; the ewer was of glass, the patella a vessel of unusual form with constricted waist; see p. 213 and Plate XXV.

(Fox 1923, 191-194)

It has already been noted that secondary interments of Roman date are known to occur in Bronze Age barrows on the chalk uplands¹; but I have found no record of a primary Roman burial in a barrow in such a situation. The barrows of proved Roman date are, as we have seen, differently disposed. They occur in the valleys, by streams, as at Bartlow, Lord's Bridge and Hildersham; those on the uplands (Emmanuel Knoll (Godmanchester), and Bourn) adjoin

Roman roads or are in forest districts not occupied by earlier peoples. The topographical distinction is striking, as comparison between Map II and the Roman map (IV) will show.

(Fox 1923, 197)

The frequent occurrence in our district of primary interments of Roman date in barrows is worthy of remark. It is especially to be noted that mound burial is not associated with any particular rite; the contents of the Bartlow Hills, though exceptional in quality, are in character similar to those occasionally met with in flat graves. The use of a wooden chest to contain the sepulchral objects is frequently recorded, and the brick tomb within one of the "Hills" is paralleled in a flat grave at Fulbourn.

(Fox 1923, 198)

One of the Bartlow barrows is described as being built of horizontal strata of black mould and white chalk. A similar structural feature was recorded by Neville (1848, p. 18) in a Bronze Age tumulus on Five Barrow Field near Royston, and also by Hughes in respect to Limlow Hill, Litlington (p. 194).

The high conical profile of the Bartlow Hills and the Hildersham barrow, on the other hand, does not occur in our prehistoric tumuli. Haverfield (1916, p. xxiv), in discussing the Bartlow Hills, pointed out that mound burial in Roman times occurs on the Continent (in Belgium) as well as in South-eastern England. He mentions examples in the counties of Essex, Suffolk, Kent, Hertford and Buckingham, but none in Cambridgeshire save Limlow Hill, Litlington, which is certainly dubious. Mr O. G. S. Crawford tells me (1920) that he has recently met with a group in Gloucestershire, so the distribution is less limited than has been supposed.

(Fox 1923, 199)

Such considerations amply account for the evidence of limited occupation which the archaeological record yields; but it must be emphasized that there is nothing to suggest a wholesale and general destruction which should have transformed the forest uplands of the Cambridge Region as a whole into prosperous corn-growing districts such as for the most part they are to-day.

I am aware that in expressing these views I am, in respect to the south-eastern part of the Cambridge Region, at variance with our highest authority on Roman Britain. Haverfield (1916, p. xxiii) pointed to the existence of Roman houses at Stansted, Ashdon, Bartlow, Thaxted, Wenden and Ridgewell and the Roman town at Chesterford as evidence that N.W. Essex was a "well populated corn-growing district." I cannot think that he had examined a topographical map with the claylands (forest) defined. The situation of Chesterford and of the majority of these houses, on chalk slopes or gravel terraces bordering rivers or streams, is such that their presence cannot afford proof that the hundred square miles and more of dense woodland in this area had been cleared. There remain only the houses at Ridgewell and Thaxted, a tile kiln at Ashdon and minor finds to sustain the argument.

(Fox 1923, 225)

The character and standard of the Roman civilization in the district would appear to have been little if at all below that normal in Southern Britain; apart from interments in the Bartlow Hills and certain discoveries at Stanfordbury and Litlington there are it is true no evidences of great wealth or luxury, but comfort and prosperity appear to have been fairly general in the more populous areas. Terra sigillata was freely imported from the middle I century onwards and is widely distributed, and fine glassware, bronze vessels, and table services of pewter are commonly met with.

(Fox 1923, 235)

There is evidence of the superimposition of Anglo-Saxon settlements on Roman sites in the Cambridge Region. Apart from Cambridge itself, Roman houses at Litlington, Bartlow, Wymondley [H] and Stansted [E] are sited in or immediately adjacent to the Anglo-Saxon village nucleus. But this is not necessarily to be regarded as evidence of continuity; it may be merely a result of the operation of economic laws (see p. 307). Not every Romano-British site in the lowlands was, however, re-occupied: in what are now the open fields between Chesterton and Milton, for example, abundant traces of a pre-Saxon settlement have been demonstrated.

(Fox 1923, 283)

The monument includes a group of six Roman barrows, known as Bartlow Hills, in two areas of protection. They are situated on a north facing slope, 150m south of the River Granta, at Bartlow. Four barrows remain preserved as steep conical mounds, while two have been largely levelled but survive as low mounds. Despite archaeological investigations in the area, no evidence of ditches surrounding the mounds has been found. The barrows form two parallel rows running roughly north to south. In the western row two mounds survive as slight earthworks after being partly levelled by agricultural activity. The northernmost mound measures approximately 24m in diameter and is 1m high. Investigation in 1832 revealed a decayed wooden chest with fittings holding a deposit of human bones and numerous grave goods, such as glass vessels, Samian pottery stamped with the potters' marks, a bronze lock and an iron lamp. The mound immediately south of it measures 23m in diameter with a height of 1m. In the centre a tile-built chamber protecting a glass cinerary urn was found, accompanied by a gold ring, a coin of Hadrian, a wooden tankard and a wicker work bottle filled with incense. The eastern row consists of four conical mounds with flat platform tops. The northernmost mound, which is in a separate area of protection, has a diameter of 30m and is approximately 6.4m high. Explorations in 1815 recovered an iron lamp-holder, a bronze patera (shallow bowl used in banquets), and a small sickle shaped knife. Immediately south of it lies a second mound with a diameter of approximately 32m and a height of 7.1m. In 1840 a tunnel was dug to the centre revealing a wooden chest protecting a green glass cinerary bottle and grave goods, including a Bronze cup and flagon, Samian pottery, and an iron lamp holding a half burned wick. In between the artifacts were the petals of roses or

poppies. Its neighbour to the south is the largest mound in the group, measuring 46m in diameter and 12.3m high. It contained a glass cinerary bottle in a wooden chest, holding the cremated remains of a small adult, possibly a female. Grave goods included an iron folding chair with a seat of leather straps, glass containers filled with liquids such as wine mixed with honey, and bronze strigils (skin-scrapers), flagons and a gilt bowl enamelled in blue, green and red. The southernmost mound measures 40m east-west and 34m north-south and is 5.2m high. Its contents included a glass cinerary bottle in a wooden chest, a bronze flagon on top of a patera, both decorated with silver and covered with cloth, a sponge, an iron lamp holder decorated with a wreath, and glass and pottery vessels, one of which contained chicken bones. The Bartlow Hills Roman barrow cemetery dates from the late first to the early second century AD and is part of a larger funerary complex. Between the two rows of barrows a flint surface dated by a coin of Valens (AD 364-78) may have served as the foundation of a monumental tomb or mausoleum. During the construction of the railway through the barrow group in 1864, 15 skeletons were uncovered, while in 1853 a former cemetery of Roman or Anglo-Saxon date was found 100m north east of Bartlow Hills. The site was of considerable economic importance, as stray finds of large quantities of rough bronze lumps, coin moulds, and hoards as large as 350 coins, indicate. Approximately 100m east of Bartlow Hills, Richard Neville discovered the remains of a Roman villa inhabited until roughly AD 350, of which no trace remains today. All fence posts, as well as the steps providing access to the highest mound, are excluded from scheduling, although the ground beneath these features is included.

Scheduled Monument (Historic England)

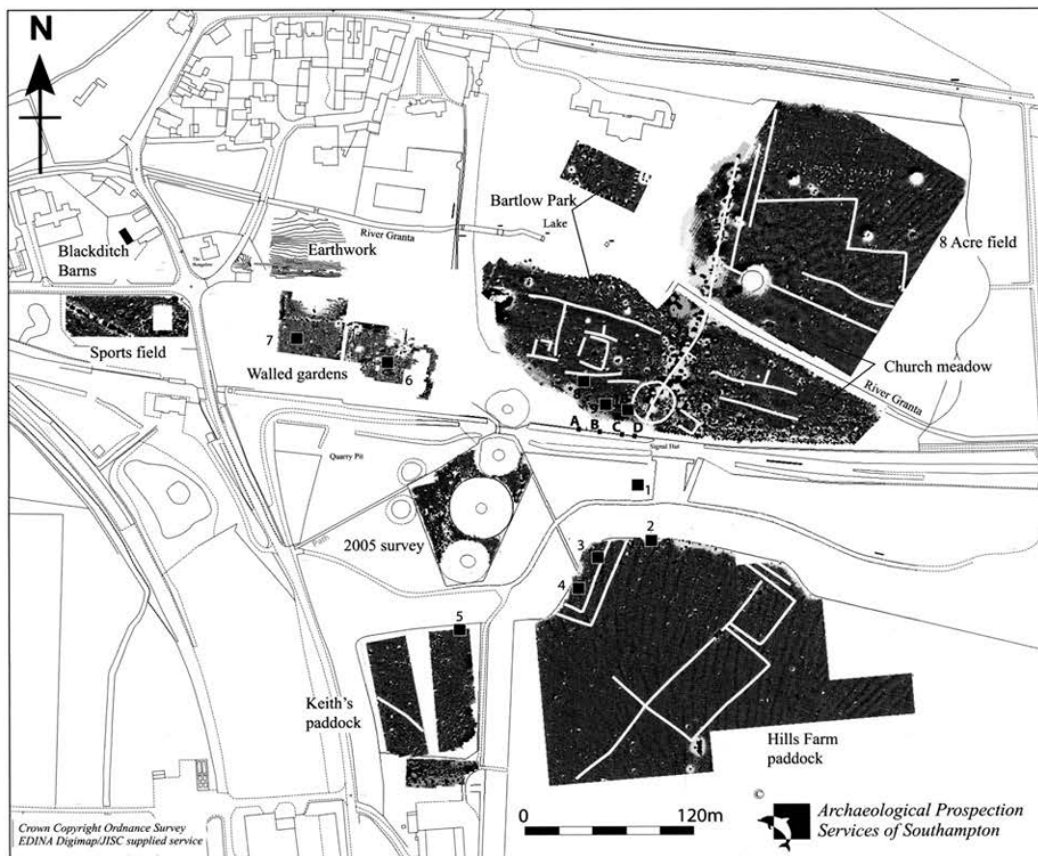
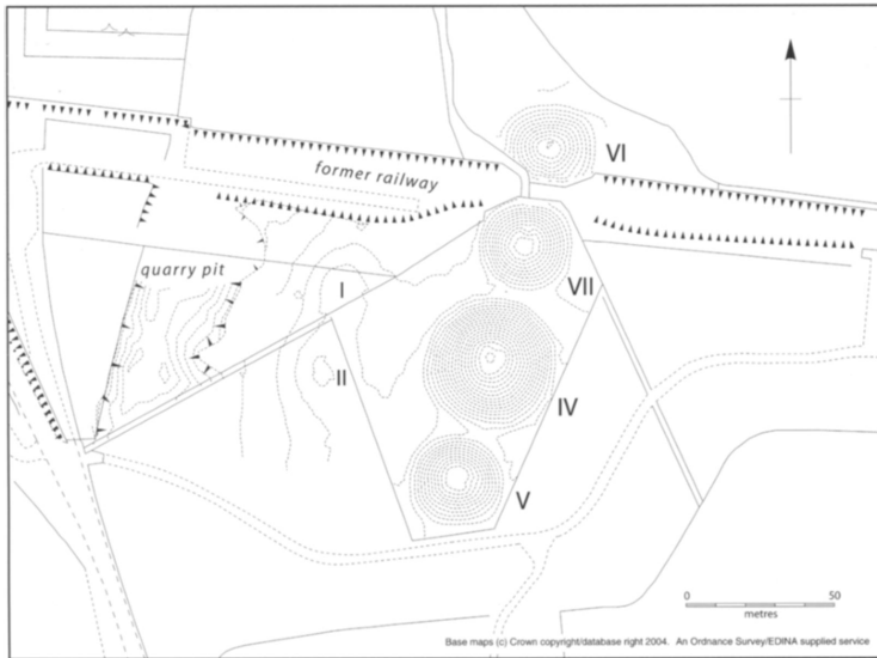
<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1018974>

From 2005 to 2007 geophysical surveys and selected excavation were carried out at Bartlow, Cambridgeshire, to explore the archaeological context of the famous Romano-British harrows. These have identified and dated an enclosing linear earthwork and associated settlement activity, which are discussed in conjunction with a summary of archive research and antiquarian sources. The results of an evaluation carried out in 2004 that identified part of an associated cemetery are also presented.

The excavation succeeded in testing the results of the geophysical survey, and in particular in defining the enclosing earthwork. While the earthwork has clearly been disturbed by antiquarian explorations and altered by subsequent landscaping, the excavation established its remaining profile, and suggested a likely terminus post quem for its construction in the later Roman (third to fourth century) period. Where evidence for occupation was encountered (Trenches 2,4 and especially 3), a similar third to fourth century date is suggested by both pottery and coins. This is in contrast to the funerary remains, with the mounds themselves dating to the later first to early second century AD, and the cremations near the Granta dating to the mid-later second century. This contrast may suggest a change in use of the site, with an earlier ritual site gradually being replaced by settlement. On the other hand, it is almost certain that the barrow builders had a substantial home close-by, and the antiquarian reports do record first and second century coins from the site. The inhumation skeletons uncovered

both by the railway cutting and by the Granta in 2004 can also be taken to suggest that even the later phases were not exclusively focused on domestic occupation. It should also be stressed that it is quite likely that the large mounds were manipulated in the later Roman period, as indicated by finds of pottery and human remains (Taylor 1998, 19; VCH Essex 1963, 42). Perhaps their height was increased at the same time as the enclosing earthwork was constructed? Questions remain about the exact function of the earthwork. It may have served to separate the villa from the cemetery by the river, but enclosed the barrows within this supposed settlement area. Its extension westward is especially curious, but may relate to Gage's lost barrow (Gage 1834, 2-3). It is also possible that the villa estate was located underneath the walled gardens, as indicated by the discovery of occupation debris, coins and coin moulds in that area. While we suggest a Roman date for the earthwork, it should be acknowledged that no securely stratified pottery was found on the buried land surface beneath the bank in either Trench 1 or 5, and we can therefore still not exclude the possibility that the linear earthwork is a medieval or post-medieval feature. A major result of the excavation within Bartlow Park has been to demonstrate the extent of landscaping, and the effect this had both on the geophysical survey and the underlying archaeology. Beauchamp & Macaulay (2004, 12) already noted the 'surprising' lack of finds, which they attribute to the landscaping of the Bartlow Park gardens and the lack of recent soil disturbance. Equally, Jane Timby comments that the pottery assemblage was in poor condition, perhaps reflecting secondary deposition. Trench 4 in particular also illustrated that the depth of completely undocumented dumping is likely to obscure archaeological features on the geophysical survey. Test pitting also failed to identify undisturbed archaeological features, suggesting that the villa is now completely destroyed, and may well have been located beneath the railway and loading platform. The apparent discrepancy between the largely third to fourth century settlement evidence and the late first to second century burials remains puzzling, as does the exact nature and function of Neville's villa. Antiquarian excavators like Neville would have struggled to recognise the timber remains of the main building, only recording the masonry remains of a bath house near the Granta. However, given the proximity of this bath building to the mounds, it is possible that the building also had a ritual function, a suggestion perhaps supported by the large numbers of coins found in the area. A similar interpretation has recently been offered for the equally poorly understood Chronicle Hills at Whittlesford, Cambridgeshire (Taylor & Arbon 2007), where a group of possibly Roman mounds is also located near the river, next to a possible bath or shrine and other settlement evidence. It is possible that the Bartlow Hills are on the site of earlier Bronze Age mounds, as significant quantities of worked flint were found, but the antiquarian excavations recorded no secure evidence for such a re-use or redevelopment of a prehistoric ritual site at Bartlow. The Bartlow Hills are located on a minor ridge within the wider natural valley. If the villa and bath-house/shrine were indeed located to the north-east and east, the smaller mounds would not have been visible, raising some interesting questions about their visual impact on the surrounding landscape. The wider landscape context of these striking monuments has been addressed through GIS analysis (Eckardt & Brewer forthcoming). This has plotted the distribution of all Romano-British roads, settlement and funerary evidence within a 10km radius of Bartlow, exploring whether the mounds were visible from surrounding roads and settlements. Results suggest a focus on a very local audience, with the mounds almost invisible from the major Roman roads crossing the area. Despite the difficulties of re-interpreting a site so strongly affected by antiquarian exploration and subsequent landscaping,

we hope that this paper has served to put the Bartlow Hills into their local archaeological context.



The results of the 2006 and 2007 magnetometry survey and location of test pits.



Richard Reiher, view of the Bartlow Hills from the northwest. By kind permission of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society (1820).

Eckardt et al. 2009. The Bartlow Hills in context. *PCAS* 2009, 47-64.

Chalklands – Devil's Dyke

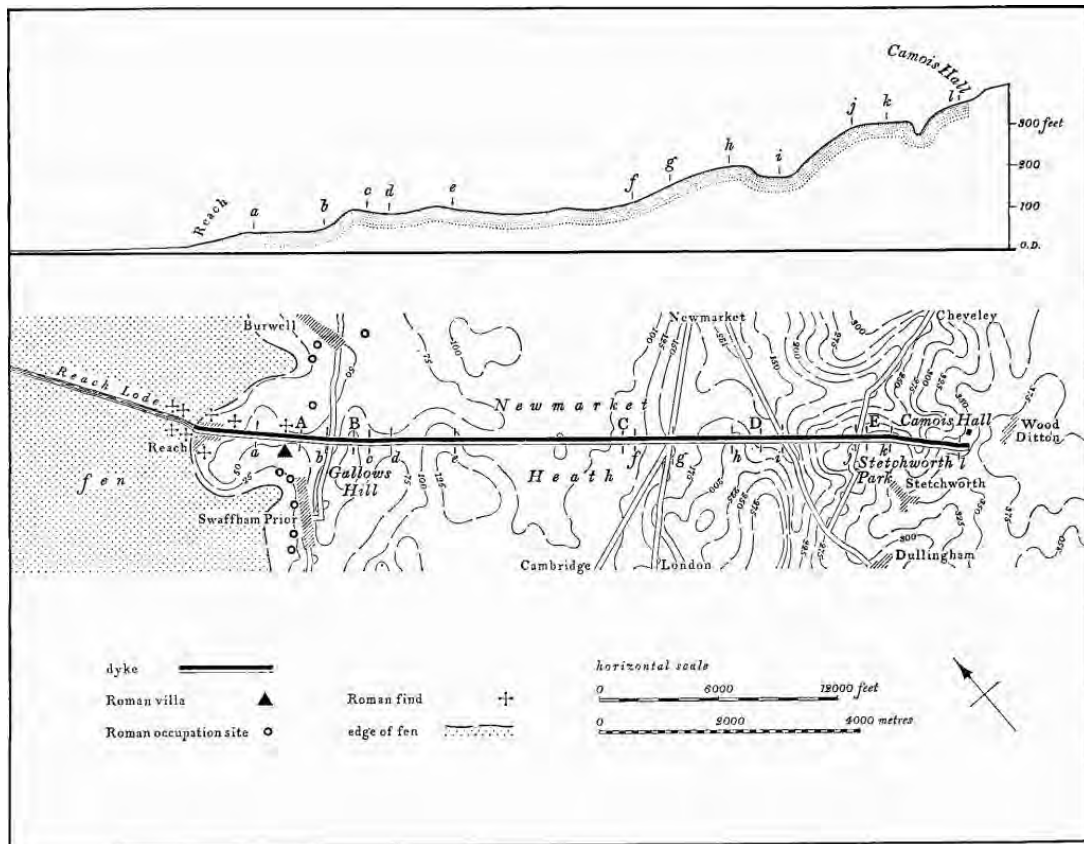


Fig. 124 The Devil's Dyke Plan and exaggerated longitudinal Profile

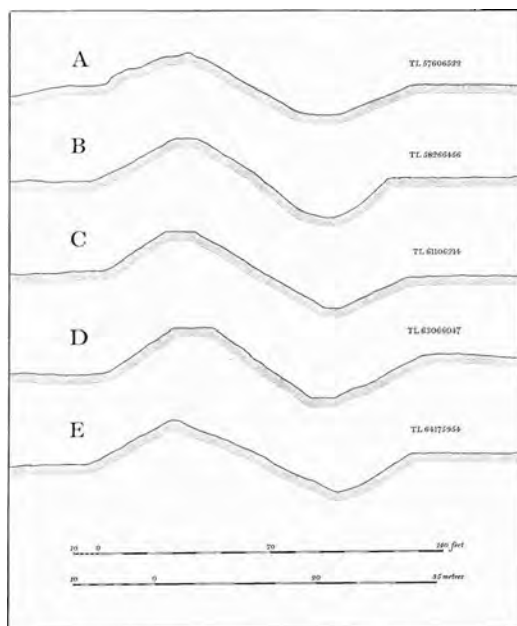


Fig. 125 The Devil's Dyke Profiles at intervals A to E

It seems certain:

- That the Icenian boundary was somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Devil's Dyke.
- That the southern fens were in Icenian territory (footnote 1).
- That there were obstacles to intercourse greater than those of political division—such as might be provided by the military barrier formed by the Devil's Dyke (footnote 2).

The boundary thus delimited is shown on Sketch-map B (p. 73).

Footnote 1. Indeed, the fens as far north as the Wash were probably Icenian. See J. Evans (1890, map).

Footnote 2. The *direct* evidence for pre-Roman date of the Devil's Dyke is of a negative character. See Hughes (1913, p. 138), and p. 128 of this book.

(Fox 1923, 90)

There is slight but definite negative evidence for the pre-Roman origin of the Devil's Dyke and, as has been noted already, the indirect evidence for its use as a barrier late in the La Tene period is very strong. It is fully described in the succeeding chapter, as are other dykes which are possibly pre-Roman.

(Fox 1923, 109)

The La Tene III period (which in Eastern Britain commenced some time in I B.C.) is marked by the appearance in the southern parts of our district of pottery of Aylesford type, and of the rite of cremation. No barrows are used; burials are occasionally isolated, but are usually massed in flat cemeteries. This culture is usually described as Belgic. Its distribution (the counties of Kent, Essex, Middlesex, Hertford, Buckingham, (southern) Bedford, and (southern) Cambridge) is not, however, coterminous with that of tribes known to be of Belgic stock, and the problem of the origin, range and mode of introduction of this cremation culture into S.E. Britain demands further research. It undoubtedly reached Cambridgeshire from the south, and failed to establish itself in the southern fens and N.W. Suffolk. Coin finds suggest that this was territory of the Iceni; and this tribe may have built the Devil's Dyke to prevent both military and peaceful penetration. The Iceni were almost certainly Brythons; of the two neighbouring tribes on the south and west, the Trinovantes, in spite of Caesar, may perhaps be considered Belgic, but whether the Catuvellauni were Brythons or Belgae cannot be considered settled, nor can the mutual boundaries of these latter tribes in our district be determined. Ethnological data give us little assistance; all Early Iron Age crania in Eastern Britain seem to be dolichocephalic.

Professor Chadwick tells me that he thinks that the various Celtic invasions were merely successive movements of the same people—probably all coming from Belgium, Holland, and N.W. Germany. Differences therefore are not to be expected, except in so far as the various invasions coincided with different waves of cultural influence from the south.

Our conclusion that the Fenland Basin is an area upon which geographical conditions impose unity of cultural character at any given period, valid for the Bronze Age and apparently for the earlier phase of the Iron Age, seems to be incorrect for the later La Tene periods. This is doubtless because we see a new culture, approaching the region from the south, destroyed before the factors we have mentioned have had time to overcome the temporary check imposed by a political barrier; the Roman conquest fixed for us the evidences of what must have been an unstable equilibrium.

(Fox 1923, 118-119)

The Fleam Dyke, the only one of the dykes which has been excavated, is, as we shall see, Roman or post-Roman. Therefore, though in my opinion indirect evidence favours pre-Roman origin for the Devil's Dyke, it is clearly inadvisable to insert this, or any of the unexcavated dykes, on a pre-Roman Period Map.

(Fox 1923, 121)

Hughes was present when the Devil's Dyke was cut through by the Mildenhall Railway in 1883-4. He made (1913, pp. 137-9) the important observation that though much evidence of Roman occupation was visible in the neighbourhood of the dyke, no Roman remains occurred under it, though a few Roman objects lay below the turf covering the bank itself. This is evidence of pre-Roman date, and though it is but slight, the later pre-history of the Early Iron Age seems to confirm it (see p. n7).

(Fox 1923, 128)

Indirect evidence pointing to the existence of the Devil's Dyke in I A.D. has already been quoted; consideration of its scale and character justifies the view that it must date from a time when the energies of a large part of the population of Norfolk and N.W. Suffolk were controlled from a single centre.

(Fox 1923, 131)

Of none of the remaining dykes is adequate information available; it may be urged that even if the Devil's Dyke be pre-Roman, the probabilities are that it is the only one; that the Reydon Ditch, Brent Ditch and the Black Ditches, like the bulk of the Fleam, are works of the historic period.

Two (the Foss Ditch and the Devil's Dyke) extending respectively from the Little Ouse river to the Wissey, and from the Wissey to the Nar, protect areas bounded on three sides by fen and marsh; the third (also called the Devil's Ditch) encloses a tongue of land between the rivers Thet and Little Ouse.

(Fox 1923, 132)

Dykes. Of the five dykes which span the chalk belt from forest to fen, preventing access to East Anglia from the Midlands, only one, the Fleam, has been excavated. The main sector of this Dyke, which is the second in point of size, has been shown to have been constructed after the Claudian conquest, and, therefore, probably in the Anglo- Saxon Age. For the date of the others we are mainly dependent on probabilities. The existence of areas protected by dykes in S.W. Norfolk, and the absence in this area of ring forts, suggest that works such as the Black Ditches, and the Fen Ditton sector of the Fleam Dyke, may be tribal defences, the work of pre-Roman people or peoples who employed similar methods in the district indicated above. On the other hand, it is held that the Devil's Dyke, by reason of its size, and the Reydon Ditch, on account of its advanced position on the chalk belt, may have been national rather than tribal works, dating from a time when the energies of a large portion of the inhabitants of East Anglia were controlled from a single centre. This period may have been the Anglo-Saxon; but a body of indirect evidence suggests that the Devil's Dyke at least is a work of the Early Iron Age, the builders being the Iceni.

(Fox 1923, 156)

That one, the Devil's Dyke, already existed, and was at some time in the pagan period in use, may provisionally be accepted, and it at first sight seems improbable that the East Anglians would trouble to construct a second. But we have seen that the Teutonic population of Eastern England must have been small for a considerable period after the conquest; and the fact that the situation of the Fleam Dyke permits the vulnerable frontier of East Anglia to be defended by less than half the number of men required for the Devil's Dyke affords an adequate reason for building a barrier at this point (see Map V).

(Fox 1923, 293)

THE DEVIL'S DYKE AND FLEAM DYKE (Northern Section)

Of the many linear earthworks or dykes in East Anglia, two exist in the general area under consideration: the Devil's Dyke and Fleam Dyke. The Devil's Dyke stretches beyond the parochial limits of the Inventory but it has been described in its entirety. The northern section of Fleam Dyke lies totally within Fen Ditton parish; the southern section, although in Cambridgeshire, is associated with the northern by name only and has consequently been omitted from the detailed description. A summary of theories which have been advanced in connection with the date and function of these earthworks is included at the end of the descriptions.

The Devil's Dyke (Fig. 124; Frontispiece)

Introduction

The Devil's Dyke, of which the N.W. half lies within the area, is a massive linear defensive earthwork 7½ miles long running N.W.-S.E. comprising a large bank with a deep ditch on its

S.W. side. It extends from the edge of the fens at the village of Reach to the upland area of south-east Cambridgeshire near Wood Ditton. It lies almost entirely upon chalk which slopes generally N.W. between 350 ft. and 10 ft. above O.D. Apart from a number of gaps for roads and railways and the destruction of its extreme N.W. end, it is in good condition. It was excavated in 1923–4 by Sir Cyril Fox. Its date and precise purpose remain unknown.

Siting

Strategically the Devil's Dyke crosses the chalklands of south-east Cambridgeshire, along which passed the ancient Icknield Way. It runs between the fens and the formerly forested boulder clay area of Suffolk and Essex and consequently prevented access into East Anglia by this natural routeway; its siting however is the result of a wider defensive plan. At its N.W. end it meets the fen at Reach which is sited on a bulb-shaped promontory (Frontispiece). The fact that it was deliberately positioned to extend on to this promontory suggests that it was intended to meet the S.E. end of Reach Lode (Swaffham Prior (74)) already in existence. Reduction in its length would have been possible if it had terminated at the fen edge half a mile to the S.W., or to the N.E., of its present position; similarly a saving of over two miles would have been made if it had been sited $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles to the S.W. (i.e. between Dullingham and Swaffham Bulbeck villages). As a result of its greater length a continuous line of defence 10 miles long from the forest in the S.E. to the River Cam in the N.W. was achieved.

Description

The Dyke consists of a massive bank, usually 12 ft. to 18 ft. high above the adjacent ground level, and up to 70 ft. wide with a large ditch up to 17 ft. deep and 65 ft. wide on its S.W. side. Except for the destroyed N.W. end it maintains its dimensions throughout its length. Minor alterations in its form have taken place resulting from digging into the bank for road metal, ploughing the ditches and natural slumping of the bank and ditch sides, but some variations in the profiles of both bank and ditch cannot be explained by later alterations whether natural or man-made. Particularly noticeable is the shape of the bank which varies between a narrow spine-shaped crest only 3 ft. or 4 ft. wide to a broad flat-topped summit up to 18 ft. across. Likewise the ditch varies between well-defined V-shape with its bottom only 2 ft. to 3 ft. wide, and a broad flatbottomed ditch up to 18 ft. across. These variations often occur within a few yards of each other and may be connected with the method of construction employed by different gangs of workers.

In general terms the Dyke is laid out in three major alignments. The central and longest section (Fig. 124, *c* to *k*), some 5 miles in length from Gallows Hill to Stetchworth Park, is approximately straight and orientated 133° E. of N. As Sir Cyril Fox pointed out, this is almost certainly because the two end points of this alignment are intervisible and thus the intermediate section could be laid out in a straight line; however, the two shorter end-sections are both deflected slightly from this main alignment. At the N.W. end the section from Gallows Hill to Reach village (Fig. 124, *d* to *a*; Plate 1), $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles long, turns northwards by 5° (138° E. of N.), while at the S.E. end the section from Stetchworth Park to Camois Hall, Wood Ditton (Fig. 124, *k* to *l*), 1 mile long, veers slightly southwards (141° E. of N.). Fox suggested that both these deflections were caused by the fact that the extreme ends were not visible from the main sighting points and therefore had been incorrectly aligned. However it is more probable that the deflection of the S.E. section was imposed upon the builders of the

Dyke for topographical reasons, particularly the existence of a broad dry valley known as Dane Bottom, orientated N.N.W.-S.S.E., E. of Stetchworth Park. If the Dyke had continued on its main alignment it would have cut across the S.W. side of this valley in such a way that the bank would have been dominated from the land to the S.W. To retain some tactical control the Dyke had to be curved slightly to remain on the edge of the valley's side. The deflection of the Dyke at its N.W. end also appears to be for tactical reasons. Again, had the main alignment been continued the Dyke would have reached the edge of the fen 350 yds. S.E. of the end of Reach Lode; its termination at the end of the Lode was clearly intentional. On the other hand, if the whole Dyke had been aligned on Reach Lode it would have then passed to the N.E. of Gallows Hill which would have dominated it; in this event the Hill, the highest point hereabouts, could not have served as a sighting point for setting out the Dyke.

Although these deviations are the largest in the alignment there are nine minor changes not hitherto recognised owing to the density of modern vegetation. The most obvious is on Newmarket Heath (Plate 1) just N.W. of the London road (A 11) gap where a variation in direction is visible (Fig. 124, *f*). Although most of these changes involve no more than one or two degrees the effect on the plan of an earthwork of this length is considerable. The changes occur in the sides or bottoms of valleys thus indicating the difficulty in keeping alignments straight where there is dead ground between the main sighting points.

There are 16 gaps of various forms and dates through the Dyke. They include two cut for railways in the 19th century, four for roads, a number for footpaths and one apparently for a watercourse. Fox was of the opinion that none of the gaps was original and that the Dyke was designed to block the whole chalk zone. He reserved judgement on the presumed line of the Icknield Way, now the London road (A 11) across Newmarket Heath. Broadly, his statement can be accepted, although certain additional points may be noted. A change in alignment at the London Road Gap (Fig. 124, *g*) of about 2° might suggest an original opening, but the Dyke is so mutilated for a distance of nearly 250 yds. that there can be no certainty in the matter. There is another change in alignment of $\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ at the point where the Dullingham–Newmarket road crosses the Dyke (Fig. 124, *i*), but the bank to the S.E. of the road would, if projected, be about 30 ft. to the N.E. of that on the N.W. of the road. At this point the Dyke is in a broad valley, draining W., in the bottom of which runs the road and a chalk stream which has a considerable flow in winter and wet weather. Possible reasons for this change in alignment are that the Dyke is in dead ground from the sighting points, or that the stream influenced its position, or that the gap is an original feature.

The N.W. end of the Devil's Dyke is on the edge of the fens where Reach village meets Reach Lode. The Dyke rises rapidly from 10 ft. to 50 ft. above O.D. (TL 56556633). Owing to alterations to the Lode and the construction of the medieval Hythe (Reach (31)) the exact relationship of the Dyke to the Lode is not ascertainable, but judging from the line of the old parish boundary between Burwell and Swaffham Prior the Dyke slightly overlapped the end of the Lode on its S.W. side.

Nothing now remains of the first 330 yds. of the Dyke, which has been destroyed to make way for the Fair Green in Reach village. The old parish boundary across the Green indicates its alignment (140° E. of N.). Until 1968 a small fragment of the bank 30 ft. wide, then $4\frac{1}{2}$ ft. high, existed in the gardens N.W. of the Green (TL 56586628), but it has now been destroyed. At the S.E. end of Fair Green the Dyke rises rapidly to its full height within 50

yds. (TL 56796606). The ditch also appears, but for a distance of 230 yds. its bottom has been ploughed, probably for many centuries, and is now flat, 12–15 yds. wide, with well-marked negative lynchets on either side. Midway along this section (TL 56936592) the Dyke changes alignment sharply to 138°E. of N. (Fig. 124, *a* to *b*). Beyond, the bank is undamaged, but the ditch has for long been ploughed over and exists only as a broad hollow 4 ft. deep with an asymmetrical profile, for a distance of 700 yds. (to TL 57366543). Immediately N. of this point the bank has been pulled down and its rear slope ploughed away for a distance of 60 yds.; it only survives as a low rise 2 ft. to 3 ft. high above the land to the N.E. and 6 ft. above the ditch bottom. This point was known as Small Path Gap in the early 19th century where a field track from Burwell to Swaffham Prior crossed the Dyke (C.R.O., Enclosure Map of Burwell, 1817).

For the next 280 yds. both bank and ditch, here on almost level ground at *c.* 50 ft. above O.D., are relatively undamaged, though the ditch bottom has been ploughed at some time in the past, and traces of Fox's excavations in 1923 (Sections IIIv and IIIF) are still visible (TL 57546528). Just beyond (at TL 57576526) the Dyke is cut by the now abandoned Cambridge–Mildenhall railway, constructed in 1884, which passes through it in a S.W.–N.E. direction, in a cutting 40 yds. wide.

Beyond the railway the Dyke continues on the same alignment for 630 yds. until it reaches the Burwell-Swaffham Prior road (TL 58006481); along this length it remains almost undamaged except for traces of Fox's sections (IV, IIv and IIF) close to the railway (Fig. 125, profile A). The Swaffham road, 15 yds. wide, cuts the Dyke almost at right angles. There is no indication that this was an original gap though the alignment of the Dyke changes to 133°E. of N. (Fig. 124, *b*) at this point; it is called the Swaffham Gap on the Burwell Enclosure Map. The proximity of the road has led to the removal of large parts of the bank for road metalling. On the N.W. side of the road almost 40 yds. of the bank has been completely removed, and on the S.E. the S.W. side of the bank has been dug away for 90 yds. producing a stepped appearance (Plate 1).

Beyond the road the Dyke climbs steeply up the N.W. side of Gallows Hill as a long low ridge orientated N.E.–S.W. with a maximum height of *c.* 110 ft. above O.D. (TL 58246459). On the summit of the Hill the Dyke is visually at its most impressive (Fig. 125, profile B).

Immediately below the Hill to the S.E. (TL 58346449) a small change in the alignment of the Dyke to 132° (Fig. 124, *c*) is clear to the eye. After 700 yds., in the bottom of a broad valley (TL 58846408) it turns sharply again back to its previous alignment of 133°E. of N. (Fig. 124, *d*). It then ascends the N.W. slope of a broad, flat-topped spur of chalk projecting N. at just over 100 ft. above O.D. On this spur and beyond it (from TL 58966391 to 59766324) the ditch has been for many centuries under cultivation, with the result that it is ploughed down and largely filled in; in at least five places there are what appear to be low causeways up to 30 yds. wide crossing it at right angles. These are probably former headlands between furlongs in the common fields of Swaffham Prior. Along this section the rear of the bank on the Burwell side has also been ploughed down and in places only the forward half, no more than 4 ft. to 5 ft. high, remains intact.

In the 18th century, judging from Chapman's Map of Newmarket Heath (*c.* 1768), two trackways crossed the Dyke in this section. One from Swaffham Prior to Exning passed over it on the N.W. edge of the spur (TL 59046392); at this point the bank is partly pulled down

but the remains indicate that the track was little more than a footpath. The other track from Burwell to Dullingham crossed the Dyke on the S.E. side of the spur (TL 59656336) where the bank has been almost cut away for 10 yds., but enough remains to indicate that there was never much traffic through the Dyke.

On the S.E. edge of the spur the Dyke again changes alignment (TL 59416355) though only by $\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ to $132\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ E. of N. (Fig. 124, *e*), and continues for almost $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles. From here the Dyke is on ground sloping S.E. after which it climbs the gentle N.W.-facing slope of Newmarket Heath. Along this section both bank and ditch are undamaged apart from occasional small quarries in the rear of the bank and four large gaps through the Dyke. The first, and largest, measures 100 yds. wide and is known as the Running Gap (TL 60156293) through which the Beacon Course passes (Fig. 5). Slight traces of both bank and ditch, detectable on the Course, show that the gap is not original; these features measure between 6 ins. and 1 ft. high. The gap certainly existed in the 18th century (Chapman's Map) and may date from the 17th century when the Beacon Course was laid out. However, the ancient 'Street way', now represented by green lanes running S.W.–N.E., is directed towards the gap suggesting that the gap may be of medieval or earlier date. A second, smaller gap, 700 yds. to the S.E., now known as the Stable Gap, was called the King's Gap in the 18th century (TL 60666250). No road, track or course is known to have passed through it; its date and purpose remain unknown but it is certainly not original. The gap through the bank and its accompanying causeway across the ditch is only 20 yds. wide, but on the S.E. side the top 8 or 10 ft. of the bank have been pushed forward into the ditch, half filling it, for a distance of 40 yds. producing a flat-topped raised terrace 2 ft. high and 15 yds. wide. The reason for this is unexplained.

A third gap, 600 yds. to the S.E. and now blocked, was always known as the Well Gap after a former nearby well (TL 61126211); 570 yds. beyond is a fourth gap known as the Cambridge Gap (TL 61506176). Both gaps have the same appearance and were originally about 30 yds. wide and with some later filling of the ditch. Subsequently most of the cutting through the bank was blocked by a narrower and lower bank leaving only a small footpath; the ditch was also completely filled by narrow causeways. All four gaps were cut to take tracks across Newmarket Heath, perhaps in the medieval period; the two last were narrowed and gated in 1763 to prevent avoidance of Turnpike Tolls (C.R.O., Minutes of Newmarket Heath Turnpike Trust, 1763–77).

Near the Cambridge Gap (TL 61446186) the Dyke again turns sharply on a new alignment (131° E. of N.) clearly visible as it climbs to a height of 100–150 ft. above O.D.; at the London Road Gap (TL 61936144) the direction again changes to 133° E. of N. (Fig. 124, *f* and *g*; Fig. 125, profile C).

The gap where the London road crosses the Dyke is only 30 yds. wide, but the Dyke is damaged and altered on both sides of the road. On the N.W., the ditch is filled in for a distance of 50 yds., and the rear of the bank is dug away in the garden of a cottage once the site of a toll house on the Newmarket Heath Turnpike. The bank has also been pulled down for 15 yds. to give access between the race courses. S.E. of the London road the bank has been almost removed by quarrying and by old tracks for a distance of 130 yds.; the ditch, largely filled in, is only visible as a depression 2 ft. deep.

At TL 62036135 the bank attains its full height and continues to climb the rising ground. At first the ditch has a wide flat bottom, 6–18 ft. deep, and has been ploughed in the past, before continuing as a deep V-shaped cutting. From this point until the Dyke reaches the summit of a rounded spur of chalk, projecting N.E. at just over 200 ft. above O.D. (TL 62696079), the earthwork is again visually impressive and largely undamaged. At TL 62226120 a stretch of the bank, 40 yds. long, is eroded by holes and small quarries; a small 5 yds.-wide gap through the bank with a narrow causeway across the ditch, is probably an old footpath although no gap is shown on Chapman's Map. Further along (TL 62426100), the ditch has been filled to a depth of about 4 ft. in two places, each 30 yds. long, but no purpose or date can be assigned to these alterations.

On the crest of the spur (TL 62696079) the Dyke changes alignment to $132\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ E. of N., and drops down the steep slope of a broad N.-draining valley until it meets the Dullingham-Newmarket road in the valley bottom (TL 63246034) (Fig. 124, *h* to *i*; Fig. 125, profile D). This section is undamaged except at two places. At the first (TL 62956056) a large rectangular 19th-century chalk pit on the S.W. side has obliterated the ditch for some 50 yds.; a further length of 50 yds., to the S.E., has been filled with quarry spoil, and the bank is also damaged. At the second (TL 63106045) the Cambridge-Newmarket railway line running N.-S. meets the Dyke at an angle. This line, constructed in 1848, runs on a low embankment and cuts through the top of the bank in a gap 30 yds. wide.

The Dyke then reaches the bottom of the valley at 160 ft. above O.D. and is crossed by the Newmarket-Dullingham road in a gap 60 yds. wide. In this gap is the usually dry bed of a small N.-flowing stream. As noted above there is a slight change in alignment at this point to 132° E. of N.; the ends of the bank are not directly opposed. Beyond this gap the Dyke climbs steeply up the S.E. side of the valley on a straight line until it reaches the edge of a flat-topped hill at 300 ft. above O.D. where it is cut by the Dullingham-Cheveley road (TL 64135957). The Dyke is almost undamaged along this section until it nears the road; about 200 yds. N.W. of the gap (TL 64005969) some 30 yds. of the forward edge of the bank have been dug away. Along this stretch an additional low bank, some 9 ins. high and 3 ft. wide, runs on the top and rear of the main bank which here forms the Stetchworth-Wood Ditton parish boundary. Immediately N.W. of the road, the bank is extensively damaged by quarrying, probably for road metalling.

At the road gap, only 40 yds. wide, the Dyke changes alignment slightly to 133° E. of N.; both bank and ditch are undamaged (Fig. 124, *j*). For the first 150 yds. beyond the road gap the form of the bank is irregular. It is only 3 ft. wide across the top (Fig. 125, profile E) and although its general alignment is straight the line of its crest has a number of sharp angles which cannot be explained by later quarrying or slumping.

Along this section (TL 64135957–64595912) the Dyke is the N.E. boundary of Stetchworth Park. Minor alterations have occurred probably connected with the use of the Park in the 19th century: N.E. of the House (TL 64405932) the forward face of the bank has been thrown into the ditch, and a little to the S.E. (TL 64435928) a narrow causeway across the ditch carries a footpath from the Park on to the bank. Further S.E. (TL 64545919) footpaths traverse the ditch diagonally.

Also N.E. of Stetchworth Park (TL 64435929) the Dyke makes its second major change of alignment, to 141° E. of N. (Fig. 124, *k*); this was probably necessary because the ground

falls away to the N.E. into Dane Bottom. Had the alignment continued on a straight line the Dyke would have been below the crest of the valley side and consequently overlooked from the S.W. On the present alignment it skirts the valley edge for a short distance before dropping into a narrow tributary valley, orientated S.W.–N.E., at c. 270 ft. above O.D.

In the centre of this valley the Dyke is broken by a very narrow gap, 1½ ft. wide at the bottom and some 20 yds. wide at the top, which allows the stream to flow through (TL 64815890). The gap is probably not original, but made later in order to restore the natural drainage which the Dyke had blocked. There is no ditch in the valley bottom; it has apparently been silted up by debris washed into it by the dammed-up stream. Just to the S.E. (TL 64835889) the Dyke is damaged by a footpath cutting diagonally across it from N. to S.

Beyond, the Dyke climbs the S.E. side of the valley to 300 ft. above O.D. Along this section the ditch is markedly wide and flat-bottomed and has apparently been under cultivation at some time, but the bank is uneven with small quarries dug into it. It continues to ascend the rising ground to the S.E., and the land changes from chalk to boulder clay. The bank is undamaged except for a footpath which crosses it diagonally; the ditch is irregular, flat-bottomed and marshy, probably as a result of receiving water from the slightly higher clay land to the S.W. At TL 65235840 the Dyke turns sharply on an alignment of 131° E. of N. (Fig. 124, *l*) and the ditch becomes its normal V-shape. After 100 yds. the earthwork ends abruptly and there is no indication that it ever extended further.

Date and Function

There have been many attempts to date the construction of the Devil's Dyke and to explain its purpose, though none has been conclusive.

The earliest-known pronouncement was by William of Malmesbury who attributed it to King Knut (*Gestd. Pontif.* Rolls Series LII, 154–5). Camden (1551–1623) suggested that it was built by the East Angles against the Mercians (Gough, *Camden* II, 213). By the end of the 19th century there was general agreement that it was of pre-Roman date and built by the Iceni tribe on the frontier of their territory (*C.A.S. Procs.* VII (1892), 200–7). This theory was supported by observations carried out in 1884 when the Cambridge-Mildenhall railway was cut through the Dyke, but the results were not published for nearly 30 years (*J.B.A.A.*, XIX (1913), 148–9). Although at this time Roman material was found in 'the surface earth of the bank', none was found under it; a pre-Roman date therefore appeared proven.

In 1923–4 the late Sir Cyril Fox undertook excavations on the Dyke near the Cambridge-Mildenhall railway (*C.A.S. Procs.* XXVI (1925), 90–129). He showed conclusively that the Dyke was erected on ground covered by Roman pottery from the nearby villa (Reach (30)). Fox thought that the pottery which he found was not necessarily later than the 2nd century A.D., although it is now regarded as 3rd-century. All the pottery was much abraded and Fox concluded that the Dyke was perhaps erected sometime after the latest date of the pottery; a late- or post-Roman date was therefore suggested. Consequently Fox reasoned that the Dyke was likely to be 7th-century and built to protect East Anglia against the attacks by Mercia under Penda.

Work by Fowler and Lethbridge (*C.A.S. Procs.* XXXIII (1933), 113–16; XXXV (1935), 90–6) on Reach Lode and the Devil's Dyke also confirmed that the Dyke was later than the Lode which is certainly Roman. Lethbridge however was less confident of the 7th-century date for the Dyke and suggested that it, together with other dykes in the area, were immediately post-Roman in date and that they were constructed to prevent Saxon raiders taking cattle back to Norfolk and Suffolk. This was rejected by Phillips (*V.C.H. Cambs.* II, 9) who favoured the theory of a 6th- or 7th-century Saxon frontier defence. Lethbridge in a later revision (*C.A.S. Procs.* LI (1958), 1–5) proposed a late 4th-century date (A.D. 367), suggesting that the Dyke was part of a late-Roman military plan to block the retreat of Saxon raiders. A recent note on the Dyke (*Arch. J.*, CXXIV (1968), 226–8) has suggested that it was either a part of a large 5th-century defence by Romano-British peoples in East Anglia, as a protection against Saxon settlers in the Cambridge area, or that it was a 6th-century construction by Saxon settlers in East Anglia against temporary British advances.

However, the date and function of the Dyke remain problematical. The date can probably be limited to between the late 4th and the 7th centuries. It is unlikely that its function was to prevent cattle-raiding. Its great size and careful planning designed to achieve strategic and tactical advantages would indicate that it was constructed essentially for military defence.

Appendix: The Devil's Dyke and Fleam Dyke', in *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Cambridgeshire, Volume 2, North-East Cambridgeshire* (London, 1972), pp. 139-147.

British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/cambs/vol2/pp139-147>

CHER Number: 07801

Name: Devil's Ditch/Dyke, Reach to Woodditton

Summary

A very large vallum and fosse extending from fen at Reach to clayland at Camois Hall, Woodditton.

Grid Reference: TL 610 622

Parish: Reach, East Cambridgeshire, Cambridgeshire; Stetchworth, East Cambridgeshire, Cambridgeshire; Swaffham Prior, East Cambridgeshire, Cambridgeshire; Woodditton, East Cambridgeshire, Cambridgeshire; Burwell, East Cambridgeshire, Cambridgeshire

Associated Events:

- Excavation at Devil's Dyke, Swaffham Prior, 1991 (Ref: SWP DD 91)
- Watching brief along Thetford aqueduct, 1991-2 (Ref: THAQ 91)
- Investigations of Devil's Dyke, 1973
- Resistivity survey of Devil's Ditch, 1988
- Watching brief on installation of steps, Devil's Dyke, 2008
- Excavation of Devil's Ditch, 1923-1924

- Test Pit Evaluation at Devils Dyke, 2015 (Ref: BUR DDF 15)
- Aerial Investigation Mapping Project, East Cambridgeshire (Ref: P7767)
- Protected Status:
- Scheduled Monument () 1003262: Devil's Ditch, Reach to Woodditton

Full description

1. In 1854, Dr Guest gave a paper in which he claimed British princes built the dykes as boundary lines. The report ascribed different dykes to different time periods and stated that Devil's Ditch dates to the Viking invasions.

4. Hughes was unable to decide if the Anglo-Saxons or the Iceni built the earthworks, and thought the smaller dykes were territorial markers while the larger examples, like Devil's Ditch, were defensive. Hughes did have the advantage of some archaeological evidence as his work included a profile of the dyke from when the railway from Cambridge to Mildenhall cut it (at TL575653) in 1884. The profile indicated a Roman coin and a sherd of amphora in a layer on top of the bank, but the finds, being near the surface, were not in context.

5. In 1913 Gosdal wrote that only Roman engineers could have built Devil's Ditch, but that the Anglo-Saxons reused it and augmented it with other earthworks like Fleam Dyke.

6. A very large vallum and fosse extending from marsh at Reach (fen) to clayland (forest) at Camois Hall, Woodditton. Probably the finest earthwork of its class in England. In very good condition for the most part, the gaps and low parts are shown on the 6in map. It is especially perfect between the Cambs - Mildenhall roadway and the S of DEVIL'S on the map XLINE. It is possible that the owners of this sector, Mr. Charles Woollard of Swaffham Prior and Mr. Charles Cole Ambrose of Swaffham Prior may intend to plough the fosse and break down the counter scarp. A special resolution was passed by the council of CAS to the effect that special efforts ought to be taken to prevent such destruction.

8. Excavations were carried out on the south-east side of the railway cutting, 330 yards from the known Roman house in 1923 and 1924. One full section of the vallum was excavated. The foot of the bank showed stratified deposits of soil, chalk mixed with soil, disintegrated chalk and chalk rubble. The rest of the vallum was composed of pure white chalk rubble. It appeared evident that the vallum had been constructed at one time, within a short period, and had not been disturbed. The only finds were that of some animal bones, identified as a small ox. The base of the vallum contained a range of objects, including 300 fragments of pottery characteristic of the Early Iron Age. One Bronze Age sherd was recovered decorated with an impressed thong pattern. 76 Roman sherds, including three Samian fragments, and six iron nails were also identified. Pottery of the Roman period was found under all points of the vallum, and since no objects were assigned a later date than the Roman period, and since the vallum did not appear to have been disturbed since it's original construction, a Roman date has been suggested.

Three sections were excavated to examine the fosse. The original floor of the fosse was found to be 5 feet below the present surface. The filling was almost entirely of chalk silt, and a variety of objects were recovered from it, including Early Iron Age and Roman pottery sherds, a human jaw bone and animal bones representing horse, sheep and ox. A mass of chalk rubble was encountered at section IIIIf, believed to be the result of modern infilling.

11. Devil's Ditch: The west end terminates abruptly; the south east end coincides with the margin of an ancient forest. A barrier (one of a series) drawn across open country from one natural obstacle to another. Five miles of the ditch are in the same straight line but each end is slightly deflected, and if ... visible from either end. The Fen termination is at Reach and thereabouts the scarp is from crest of rampart to floor of ditch 60ft. This enormous work, carried out with absolute precision reminds one forcibly of Roman genius and energy. Examination of the ditch in the neighbourhood of a Roman house (Cambs 41 NE 01) yielded numerous Roman sherds, from various points in and under the ramparts. In analysing the distribution of early Iron Age coins in the Cambs region the author found that the countryside crossed by the dyke separated the Cambs region into two districts in which coins of the Icenii on the one hand and of the Catuvellauni and the S Tribes generally on the other were commonly found. Result: N of Devil's Ditch - Icenian coins 249, others 4; S of Devil's Ditch - Icenian coins 6, others 186. It now seems to be probable that the barrier when erected - presumably by the E Anglians of the C7 - followed a political frontier of very old standing the significance of which neither Roman domination nor AS conquest had destroyed.

13. Devil's Ditch. This is the largest and most easterly of the Cambs dykes and runs in a north west to south east direction for 7 1/2 miles between the fen edge at Reach and the verge of the clay country west of Woodditton. Sir Cyril Fox has pointed out that no attempt seems to have been made by the builders to choose the shortest line for defence, since the use of the line Swaffham Bulbeck - Dullingham, 1 1/2 miles to the SW, would have effected a saving of nearly 2 miles in length. The dyke, which is remarkable for its impressive size (to which its popular name is a tribute) and regularity, is laid out in 3 straight sections. The middle one from Galley Hill, 1 mile SE of Reach, to Stetchworth House is 5 1/2 miles long in a right (sic) line, and the other two bend in opposite directions, that from Galley Hill to Reach in the E, and the Stetchworth House - Camois Hall section to the W. In neither case is the deviation sufficient to prevent the whole from being virtually straight. The preservation of the work is generally good, and the only part which has been seriously damaged is that bounding the NW corner of Newmarket Heath, where the bank has been thrown into the ditch and the site of the latter ploughed over. At this point the line remains perfectly clear, but the contour of the work has been destroyed. Where the original condition has been preserved, as S of the Swaffham - Burwell road, the overall width of the vallum and ditch is 110ft, with the ditch 15ft deep, the bank 15ft above the old ground surface, and the distance from the bottom of the ditch to the top of the bank 62ft. The two ends are abrupt, neither making any return. The existence of any original gap or gaps is uncertain. No test can be made at the point where the Icknield Way passes through, 1 1/2 miles SW of Newmarket, because the Mod London- Newmarket road exactly occupies the site. At Running Gap where the Street Way crosses the line there is an opening, but its character has never been tested by examining whether or not the ditch is continuous across the line of the Way. Before 1924 the age of the dyke was a mystery. Sir Cyril Fox had observed that the dyke, or at all events its site, marks the boundary of the Icenian coinage in its distribution SW towards the lands of the Catuvellauni and other southern tribes. This, coupled with the literary evidence for fierce Celtic inter-tribal fighting in the age of the Roman Conquest and the peculiarly good defence which such a work would afford against chariots, justified his belief at that time that this dyke might prove to be of pre-Roman origin. The matter was put to the test of the spade in 1924, when sections were cut close to the Cambridge - Mildenhall railway cutting. This spot was chosen because a Roman house was known to have stood at a point 300yds in front of the dyke here. Roman potsherd

rubbish was to be found all over the ground between the house site and the dyke, and it was reasonable to suppose that if the dyke was later than the building of the house some of this rubbish would be found on the old ground surface under the bank. This expectation was realised and the Roman or post - Roman date of the dyke demonstrated. At the moment our other evidence for the age of the dyke is confined to the uncertain testimony of the find of 2 iron axes with an iron lance head, spur and stirrup, found by a workman when levelling the dyke on Newmarket Heath in 1822. The axes and lancehead survive in the CAAM and could well have belonged to a pagan AS inhumation burial, but we have no exact knowledge of the relation of the deposit to the dyke. Nothing that we know about the political history of the Roman province provides an adequate reason for building this dyke to defend E Anglia from an enemy moving from the SW, nor is there likely to have been any need for this barrier in the confused period of the C5. The only political facts which accord in any way with the arrangement of this and the other dykes are those of the C6 and C7 AD when continual fighting was taking place between the Mercians and the E Angles. The design of the Devil's Ditch, with its meticulous regularity and commanding proportions, suggests Roman influence, but the general probability is that the E Angles threw up this line of defence on a site which had, through the operation of a variety of natural causes, been a frontier region in the last century before the Claudian conquest.

14. Meaney gives grid ref TL/61--/61--.

16. The Gas Board inserted their pipeline deep under the earthwork in a borehole so no archaeology was disturbed or uncovered.

17. The Devils Dyke is a massive linear defensive earthwork 7.5 miles long running NW - SE, comprising a large bank, 12 - 18 feet high and up to 70 feet wide with a deep ditch on the SW side up to 17 feet deep and 65 feet wide. Very good state of preservation. Coin of 350 AD found predating the construction of the bank.

18. A section was dug in advance of the building of the bypass, which uncovered a Roman coin dating to 350AD sealed under the bank and evidence of an initial marker bank.

19. Muir in 1981 in a short section of a much wider book began to ask searching questions as to the function of the dykes. He dismissed the idea the builders could man them claiming it would take 13,000 defenders to hold Devil's Ditch though he admitted the earthwork was a very useful defence against a cavalry charge. Muir wondered if the builders made the dykes to display royal power and suggested it was unlikely they were all used at the same time.

20. Aubrey in the seventeenth century noted the existence of four of the dykes and said Devil's Ditch was the western border of the kingdom and bishopric of East Anglia.

21. The earthwork extends approximately 7 miles and reaches a height of 9m from ditch bottom to bank top and 36,5m across in some places. Along its length it is crossed by 5 roads, a railway and a disused branch line. The ditch travels through agricultural land in the NW, through the Newmarket Heath racecourse in the middle portion, ending to SE in the wooded land on the Stetchworth estate. The profile is best seen to the N of B1102 and to either side of A11 where the bank is under grass. In several areas intrusive scrub is causing erosion and deterioration to the banks, this is especially noticeable to N on the S side of land owned by Mr. Woollard. Here the ditch has been filled and the bank is being undercut. To N of A45 on Mr. Chambers' land, tipping of stone and agricultural waste is altering the profile of the ditch,

this has been followed by garage waste. To the S in the Stetchworth Estate the bank supports mature elm, lime and sycamore, some dead and some felled. A footpath runs along the whole length of the bank. This appears to be used by horse riders and motor cycles as well as pedestrians, causing some erosion especially down the banks bordering the disused railway cutting.

22. Resistivity Survey carried out at Cambridgeshire Gap, Street Way, to try to determine whether there had been any break in the original dyke construction. Results were inconclusive, though indicating there may have been a gap at this point.

23. Although cartographic evidence for British dykes is almost nonexistent before the Ordnance Survey editions of the late 19th century, Devil's Dyke appears in an 1830 map of Cambridgeshire.

24. Walked the whole length of the monument, except for a few hundred yards south east of A1304 and a small section at extreme south east end in Rickmore Wood owing to failing light. In Reach 4 small trees planted on bank where it forms part of the village green, scrub dense with chalk erosion scars probably caused by children sliding. In several areas there is plough and tractor damage. Clearance N of disused railway shows good profile, with footpath to Burwell diverted from old line, but erosion still severe. From B1102 to A45 shows dramatic improvement with sheep grazing. Beyond this scrub again masks the profile and a pipeline has cut through it, with excavations to the SW at the time of the visit. Erosion of banks once again visible and further plough damage to W, especially severe in corner adjacent to A45. Cleared banks are regenerating. Section across Newmarket Heath eroded where gap occurs on the racecourse. One of structures previously noted has been removed, though concrete base left. In general this stretch is in good condition with healthy grass cover. More scrub towards A1304, though some areas cut, with heaps of wood lying in ditch. Profile continues good towards Cambridge to Newmarket railway line with bramble and hawthorn in a few areas. In woodland S of railway banks and ditch covered with scrub and many mature trees. Two drain covers noted in ditch next to Stetchworth Park. Many fallen trees in this section.

25. In October 1991 a small section (8m by 3m) was cut across the lower fill of the ditch of Devils Dyke in advance of the construction of an aqueduct from Cambridge to Euston

(Norfolk). Only 20 artefacts were recovered, none of which was chronologically diagnostic, though land mollusc remains were well preserved and have been sent for analysis. Three phases of ditch fill were revealed - initial coarse fill, stabilization (grazing) and recent elder-dominated scrub. In the centre of the ditch the total depth of silt was only 0,75m.

27. The legend of Devil's Dyke - see <http://www.reach.drakken.com/myth/mdyke.htm>

28. A set of wooden steps were installed on the slope of Devil's Dyke at Court Barns Road, Stetchworth to improve access up the bank to the footpath, and monitoring was a requirement of the SMC. 10 pairs of holes were mechanically drilled to a depth of 30cm, with some widening done by hand or to avoid tree roots. Very little chalk material came from the holes, except at the top of the steps where the route met the top of the bank. The material was all light brown topsoil and therefore was not possible to get any indication of the profile of the bank in this area.

30. Devil's Ditch is an exceptionally large and impressive south-facing earthwork that lies about three kilometres southwest of Newmarket and runs from low land at Reach southeast and uphill to Ditton Green. If the Cambridgeshire dykes are a single system, then this would be the inner dyke. It is usually assumed the reference dated 904 in the A text of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle to King Edmund harrying the territory between the River Wissey and the Dykes (dicum) in retaliation for a raid of Vikings based in East Anglia refers to this earthwork. The association of the Devil with the dyke is not recorded until 1574, previously it is just the big dyke (magnum fossatum) in thirteenth-century documents. As it lies in the bounds of St Edmund's Abbey or because it marked the boundary of the Liberty of St Edmund it is recorded as fossam Sancti Edmundi in 1354. There are also records to the name of the settlement of Reach attached to the dyke (fossam de Reche) as early as a mid-twelfth century account of Hereward the Wake and in the seventeenth century the name Seven-mile-dike was used. The dyke runs southeast for twelve kilometres (TL566662 to TL653583), all but the westernmost 1,200 metres (to TL574653) is contiguous with parish boundaries. However, the name Seven-mile-dyke would suggest a length of 11.2 kilometres, but the village of Reach probably covers the western extremity. The dyke is in three straight sections all of which are only a few degrees different from one another.

The earthwork consists of a single ditch with a single bank on the northern side. The earthwork was built in a single phase and was so well constructed that the earthwork retains much of the original profile with as little as 0.75 metres of fill in the ditch despite the absence of a berm. There is no evidence of a rampart or revetment, the lack of fill in the ditch merely being a product of the design. The ditch has a wide almost flat bottom approximately 7 metres wide with sides sloping up at about 60° to the surface and 15 to 19 metres wide at the surface and 4 to 5 metres deep. The bank is 4.5 to 5.3 metres tall and 20 to 23 metres wide. There are numerous gaps in the dyke, but there have been no successful attempts to prove archaeologically if any are original.

In 1972 an Anglo-Saxon spearhead was recovered from the inner edge of the ditch. (Recorded separately as MCB8974.)

31. Devil's Dyke is the most impressive archaeological monument in Cambridgeshire and is the largest of this type in Britain. It is 7.5 miles long running from the fen edge at Reach to Woodditton.

32. On December 1st and 2nd 2015 an archaeological investigation was carried out at Devils Dyke. A total of five hand excavated 1m square test pits were opened into the upper most fills of the ditch, three to a depth of 1m. This work was undertaken to determine if the ditch infill contained sufficient amounts of re-deposited chalk to be used to repair erosion scars on the dyke bank. No evidence of suitable chalk material was found. The materials exposed within the test pits were all modern in date, presumably derived from 20th century infilling as a result of local agriculture. No further archaeological features or finds were recovered.

33. Devils Dyke extends over a distance of 11 kms from Reach (TL5680366044) northwest to southeast to Ditton Green (TL6532458374). It is the largest of four contemporary, Anglo-Saxon linear earthworks generally referred to as the Cambridgeshire Dykes; Bran Ditch, Brent Ditch and Fleam Dyke. Recent research published in 1997 found that the earliest phase at Fleam Dyke has been radiocarbon dated to the 5th century AD with later phases dated to the 6th century. By analogy the three other dykes are assumed to be of a similar date.

Comparison of the size and design of the four dykes supports the interpretation of defensive barriers, however, routeways and land divisions are also feasible.

The bank and ditch survive as earthwork, around 4 metres below the present ground level and up to 6 metres above present ground level. It is best preserved on Galley Hill near Burwell, where it survives to a height of about 10.5 metres from the base of the ditch to the top of the bank. Excavations recorded the ditch to be flat-bottomed and 7 metres wide. Evidence from excavations indicate this was a single phase monument with a bank raised above a ditch with sloping sides. There was no evidence of it being ramparted.

34-37. A section of early medieval boundary bank and ditch known as Devil's Ditch or Devil's Dyke is visible on aerial photographs and remote sensing data as earthworks and was mapped as part of the East Cambridgeshire Aerial Investigation and Mapping project (ECB6189). Located SE of Reach village and centred at TL 57200 65640, a linear ditch up to about 13 metres wide extends SE from Fitzroy Farm about 1187 metres to the dismantled Cambridge and Mildenhall Great Eastern Railway Line. On the east side of the ditch is a flanking earthwork boundary bank that varies in width from 4 to 9 metres wide. This section of bank and ditch is part of a much longer dyke feature.

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