



War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge 1854-2008

Michelle Bullivant, 2010 in revision 2024



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DRAFT

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forthcoming

Introduction

This report details the discovery of the War Ditches archaeological site, situate within East Pit nature reserve on Lime Kiln Hill, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge. It follows in chronological order the discovery of the archaeological remains on the site and details their excavation, destruction, and subsequent rediscovery along with the interactions of the people involved with the excavations and archaeological investigations over the last 115 years. This report merely begins to disentangle the wealth of disjointed site notes, excavation reports and material available about the site, of which there is a surprisingly large amount. Recommendations for further research are made at the end. It is hoped that this report will also go some way towards creating a thorough history of East Pit itself for which the background stretches from at least the Bronze Age period and has seen activity ever since, in one form or another, from settlement to agriculture, from burial site to heavy industry and is undergoing yet another transformation and use at this time, as it becomes a nature reserve and public space for all to enjoy. Accompanying this report are two documents (Literature Review and Primary Resources Review) which are collections of primary and secondary material relating to the site which will aid further research.

Discovery, The War Ditches 1854 - 1918

1854

On May 27th, 1854, a discreet article appeared in the Cambridge Chronicle newspaper. It described how the workmen who were excavating the reservoir for the Cambridge Waterworks, on the very top of Lime Kiln Hill, to the immediate south boundary of East Pit, discovered around nine skeletons embedded in the chalk. They stated that the skeletons were lying nearly together in various positions but the suggestion which caused the most interest was that several of the skeletons were described as ‘remains of men who reached a greater height than ordinary men in the present day’.¹

This sparked local interest as to a possible race of giants having once lived upon the hills, fuelled by the already suggestive names of the village pond being called ‘Giant’s Grave’ and the hills upon which the discovery was made being named after the famous giant Gog Magog.

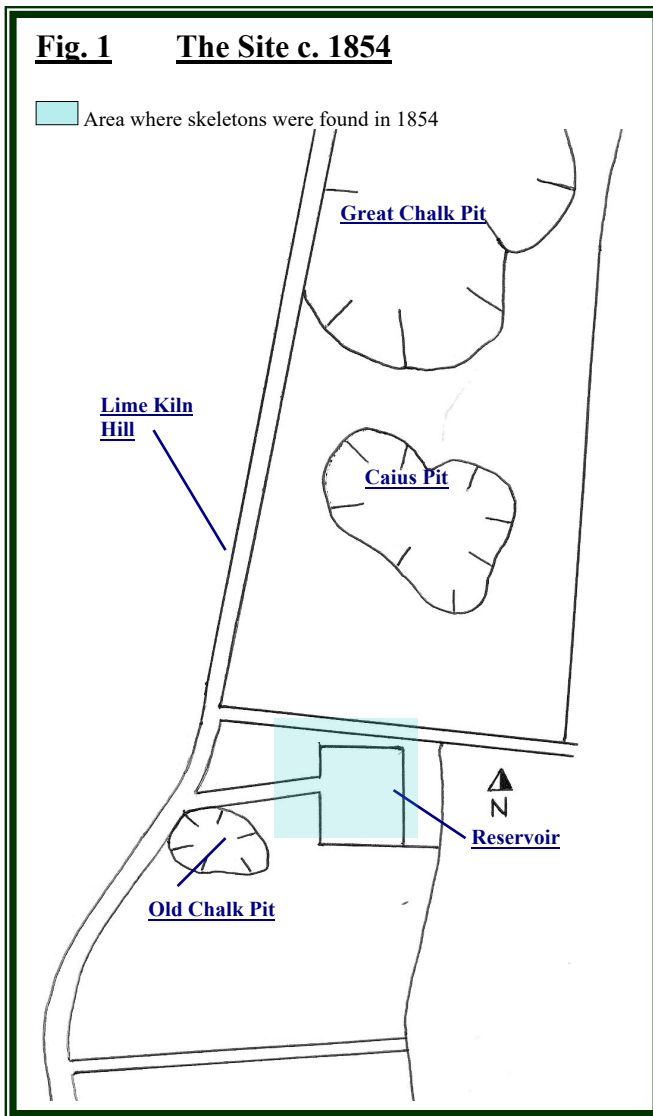
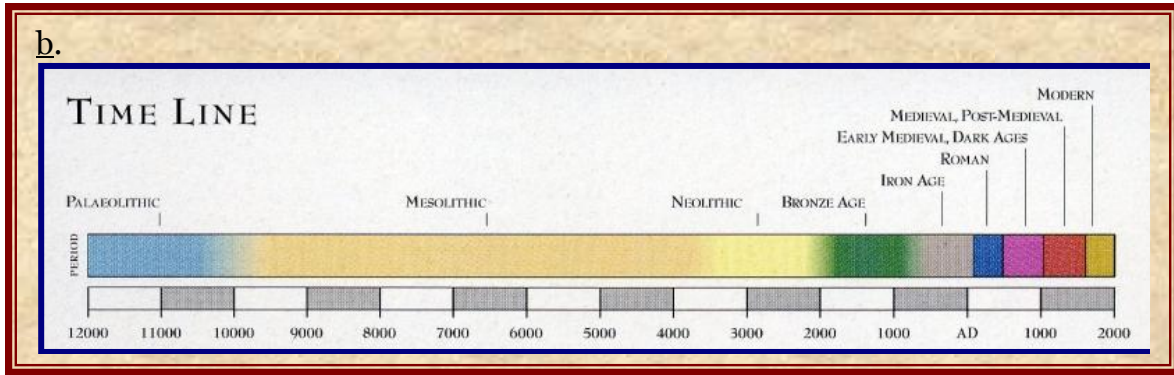
There has been no further record found of what happened to these skeletons after their discovery and no further information other than the newspaper article to give more details. The workmen on the site no doubt uncovered other articles and possibly more skeletons as their work continued but they may not always have realised that they had uncovered something important, especially if it was ‘just a piece of broken pottery’. This newspaper article is the first known record of discoveries relating to the archaeology of the site.

It was almost another forty years before anything of the archaeology of the site was noted and recorded. During this time the excavations for the reservoir, chalk quarrying and lime burning continued on and around the site. Damage to archaeological features and finds must have been common as we now have a much better idea of just how rich and full this area was in archaeological remains dating from at least the Bronze Age.

a.

The Cambridge Chronicle Newspaper was one of the Cambridge Newspapers which ran from 1762-1934 (There are more than 30 various Cambridge newspaper titles archived). The newspapers are available at the Cambridgeshire Collection. The Chronicle was published weekly and leant politically towards the Conservative party and religiously towards the established church. There are many village chronicles which have been compiled and published by taking the relevant articles from the main chronicle and other newspapers. A collection of Cherry Hinton material was published as the *Cherry Hinton Chronicle* in 1995.

¹ Filby, E. (Trans.) (1995) ‘*Cherry Hinton Chronicle 1751-1899*’, Private



The quarrying and industrial use of the site has gone on since at least Roman times due to the high-quality chalk and clunch (superior chalk). This clunch was often called Burwell Rock, as Burwell was the other main center of quarrying for clunch. It was also known as Totterhoe Stone, as the seam of this quality chalk ran from Totterhoe in Bedfordshire along the chalk hills to Cherry Hinton and on to Burwell. Cherry Hinton clunch was used, during medieval times, in buildings such as Ely Cathedral and the Cambridge Colleges, in particular Peterhouse College and Gonville and Caius College. Many of the Cambridge Colleges had their own chalk pits in Cherry Hinton and there were several parish chalk pits to enable local people to get the raw materials they needed for building, repairs and for other uses. Quarrying and lime burning at the site continued at the site well into the 20th century.

1893

In May 1893, Mr Crawley, who was a resident of Cherry Hinton and lived just off Coldham's Lane at Church End, had been digging a new pit at the site, on the north side of the reservoir above the great chalk quarry. Mr Crawley made the discovery of a skeleton along with some pottery in the cutting as he made a road to his new pit. This was the first recorded mention of pottery being found at the site. Mr Crawley reported his findings to Professor Thomas McKenny Hughes of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society (CAS). And he was able to give Hughes some detail of the position of the skeleton, stating that the head was to the north and that it had an ornamental pot beside it, along with other fragments of pottery. This was useful as it not only gave clues as to the dating of the skeleton but also indications of beliefs and perhaps the suggestion that some care had been taken over the burial as it appeared to have associated grave goods.

Mr Crawley gave the Hughes the pottery which Hughes, in turn, placed in the Museum of Archaeology soon after. In a report to CAS Hughes go on to state that *'The bones were, unfortunately, dispersed, and the head, having projected into the roadway, was removed. Some of the pottery also had been taken away, and we have not been able to trace it.'*²

The pottery was mostly of the same kind and apparently baked in a not very hot smother-kiln into which smoke could be introduced for blackening the pottery during the firing process. The best-preserved pot was ornamented on the outside with series of dots and half rings. Hughes suggests that this skeleton was a burial with food vessels, probably of late Roman or Romano-English age. This was the first indication of a date for the archaeological activity on the site and a suggestion as to the use of the area at the top of the hill for burial.

Hughes goes on to mention that there was a large quantity of fragmentary Roman pottery in the earth used for filling the ditch which they couldn't account for. He does not say if this refers to an archaeological feature, e.g., a ditch on or around the said discovered skeleton or if it refers to another ditch, perhaps Crawley's roadway ditch.

² Hughes, T. Macalister & Duckworth, W H L (1894) *'On a Newly Discovered Dyke at Cherry Hinton'*, PCAS 36, CAS

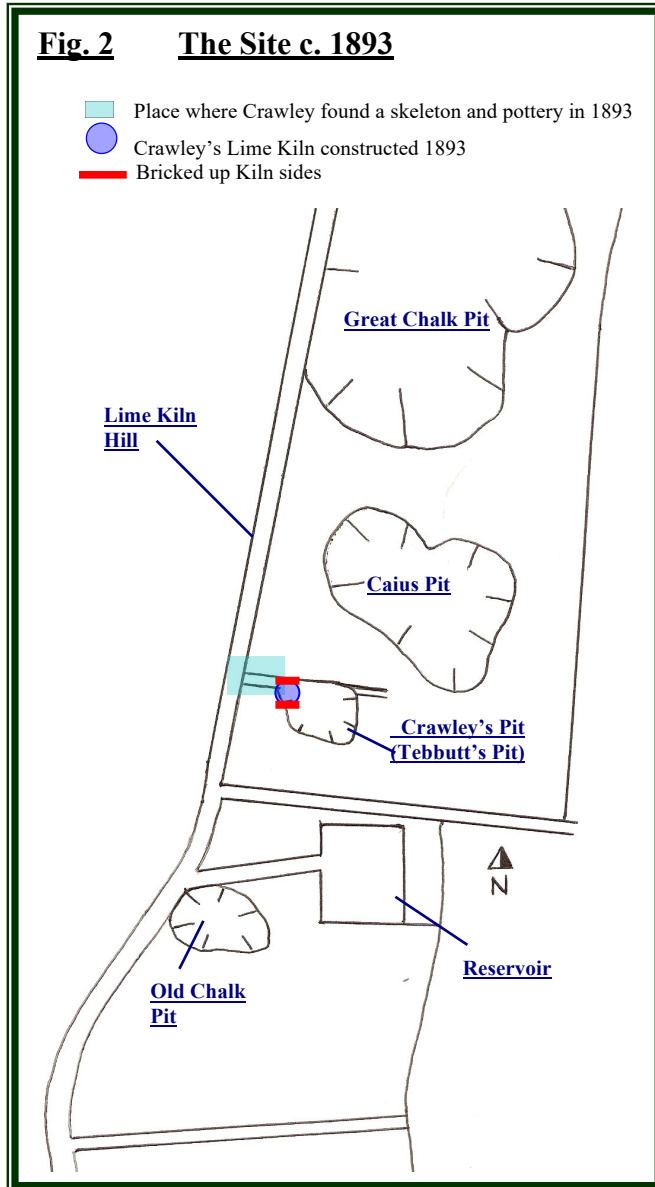
C.



Thomas McKenny Hughes (1832-1917) was Woodwardian Professor of Geology at Cambridge University 1873-1917, President of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society (CAS) 1879-80 and 1889-90 and usually held either office or council positions within the society for the 40 years before his death in 1917. He is one of the greatest names in CAS and made many contributions for publication within the societies *Proceedings*. He was responsible for and involved with many archaeological excavations around Cambridgeshire and made fieldwork a normal part of CAS activities.

(Photo M Bullivant, original in Earth Science Dept. Cambridge University)

At this point, in May 1893, the site hadn't been thoroughly investigated and at this time it was the first known involvement of archaeologists/antiquarians being invited to the site to explain and investigate what was being discovered. To begin with, Hughes was dealing with the most notable items uncovered i.e., the skeleton and pottery brought to the



attention of CAS by Mr Crawley. However, it appears that with Mr Crawley's invitation subsequent visits to the site were made by Hughes and an interest was created and knowledge shared about the site, which lead to more features and finds being noticed and reported by those working on and around the site. It also began the long-standing interest and involvement of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society with the site which still continues today.

In 1894 Hughes published a report in the *Proceedings of Cambridge Antiquarian Society (PCAS)*³, which was one of the main vehicles of publication for the society, describing the new discoveries at the site and the archaeological investigations that he had carried out at the site since he first visited it in May 1893.

Hughes described that on the south side of the cutting (presumably the new road cutting which Mr Crawley had made) a new lime kiln was sunk into the ground at a depth of 15 feet and the approach to it was on the east down steps.

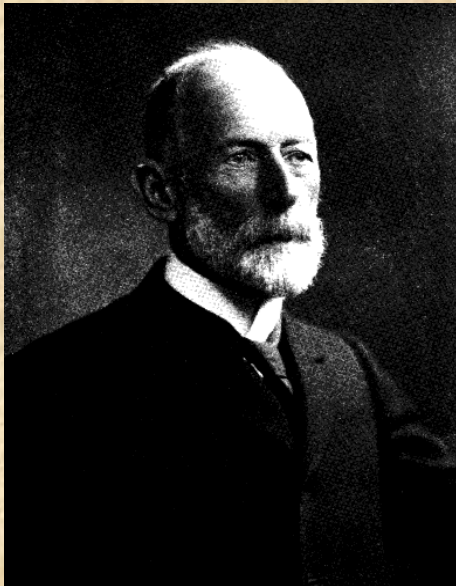
Hughes goes on to state *'The sides of this pit stood by themselves, where the excavation was made in solid chalk; but, along the approach to the pit, a deep trench was crossed extending down to the depth of the kiln, and filled with loose chalk rubble and surface*

³ Hughes, T. Macalister & Duckworth, W H L (1894) *'On a Newly Discovered Dyke at Cherry Hinton'*, PCAS 36, CAS

soil, so that it had to be bricked up on both sides. This walling approximately marks the width and depth of the trench. A skeleton was found in digging through it, but of the exact circumstances of this find we have no information.⁴

This was a very significant discovery as it gave the first indications as to major archaeological features of the site and not just isolated finds of skeletons and pottery. Hughes described a 'deep trench' that was crossed by the approach to the kiln pit and that it was at least 15 foot deep and had contained at least one skeleton. Given the nature of the previous finds and initial dating of the pottery it was natural to surmise that this very large ditch could be of a similar date.

d.



Professor Alexander Macalister (1844-1919), the famous Cambridge anatomist, was born in Dublin, where he was educated at Trinity College. He qualified at the Irish Royal Colleges in 1861. He held the first full time chair of anatomy at Downing. Macalister was a brilliant anatomist with an international scholarly reputation. He was determined to make Cambridge University's Anatomy Department the best in its field. He was a member of CAS and president of CAS in 1885.

(Picture: J Anat. 1919 October; 54(Pt 1): 96-99.)

A cutting for a new chalk pit was made (which soon became known as Tebbutts Pit), further north-east and parallel to the approach to the kiln, the continuation of the ditch was touched, suggesting a very deep, linear ditch running roughly north south.

On October 13th, 1893, the *Cherry Hinton Chronicle*⁵ reports a sale of land and estate belonging to Messrs. Crawley and Son who were leaving England and it says of the land on Lime Kiln Hill "*and is admirably adapted for building sites on account of its healthy and elevated position, overlooking the borough of Cambridge.*" Luckily the land on Lime Kiln Hill was not sold to build houses but instead the chalk pit business passed to Mr Louis Tebbutt who, it seems, worked for the East Anglian Cement Company which provided a specialised cement that matched old mortar and was made specifically for the repair of old buildings including St Paul's Cathedral in London. This would tally as some of the chalk pits on the site were owned by Cambridge Colleges including Peterhouse and Gonville and Caius.

Mr Tebbutt allowed Hughes to go on-site during 1893-1894 and investigate the great ditch more thoroughly. More pottery and skeletons were excavated, this time by the Hughes himself, along with assistance from A Macalister, R A S Macalister, Mr Atkinson (secretary of CAS and specialist in architecture) and W L H Duckworth.⁶

⁴ Hughes, T. Macalister & Duckworth, W H L (1894) 'On a Newly Discovered Dyke at Cherry Hinton', PCAS 36, CAS

⁵ Filby, E. (Trans.) (1995) 'Cherry Hinton Chronicle 1751-1899', Private

⁶ Hughes, T. Macalister & Duckworth, W H L (1894) 'On a Newly Discovered Dyke at Cherry Hinton', PCAS 36, CAS

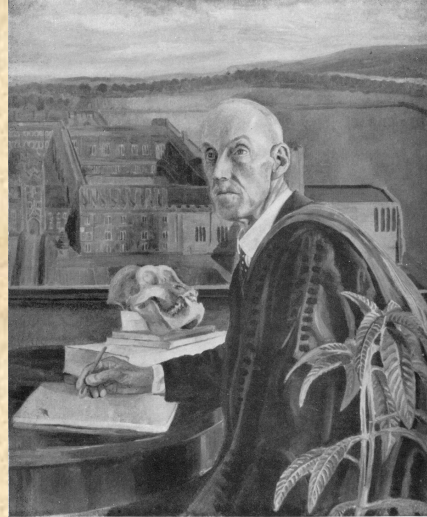
e.



Professor R.A.S. Macalister (1870-1950)

Robert Armstrong Stewart Macalister was born into a Scottish family in Dublin and studied in Cambridge where his father was Professor of Anatomy from 1883. He served as pioneering Director of Excavations for Palestine Exploration Fund, he had a great interest in the archaeology of Ireland but is best known for his work on biblical archaeology 1900-09 Professor of Celtic Archaeology UCD (1909-1943) He retired in 1943 and went to live with his sister in Cambridge where he died in 1950. (Picture: www.ucd.ie/archaeology/schoolhistorydetails/professorrasmacalister/)

f.



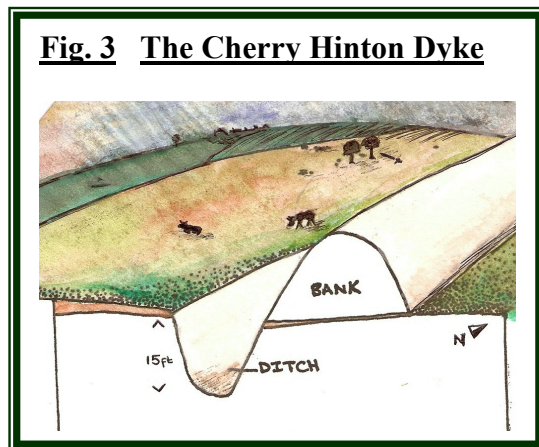
Dr W H L Duckworth 1870-c.1956.

Wynfrid Laurence Henry Duckworth, Master of Jesus College, Cambridge. Reader in human anatomy at Cambridge 1920-1940 also had an interest in anthropology and archaeology. He gave much of his own collection to the Duckworth laboratory in the School of Anthropology and Archaeology. He often examined skeletal remains for CAS. (Portrait in the possession of Jesus College, Cambridge.)

These further limited investigations found that the large ditch was about 15 ft deep along the two sections seen and excavated so far; it tapered down with increasing steepness towards the base. Hughes observed that it seemed to have gradually filled up naturally but that it appeared to have been partially but deliberately filled in on at least two occasions by throwing back the chalk which had been dug out of it, mostly from the southeast side. This then, suggested a possible bank for the large feature which had the ditch on the outer side facing the brow of the hill and its bank on the inner side of the hill.

Hughes and his team discovered more skeletons about halfway down in the large ditch, this time undisturbed by the quarrying works at the site, so they were able to gather more information about the nature of these skeletons. It appeared that the skeletons had not been buried in the initial fills of the ditch but that the bodies had been laid in the ditch and the material thrown in on them from either side. From the position of the skeletons, it was suggested that the ditch had not been completely filled over them. The skeletons were those of both sexes and mostly young. They had been laid in the length of the ditch, generally on their back with the legs extended, and the arms at the side of the body with the heads mainly to the northeast and a couple with the heads to the southwest. As for

dating the base of the ditch, Hughes commented that they couldn't say for certain that some of the pottery found in the base hadn't fallen into the ditch before the bodies were deposited in it.



Hughes noted that the pottery excavated from the ditch was fragmentary and looked as though it had been knocked about and trampled on suggesting that it had previously laid on the surface surrounding the ditch and it was of sufficient quantity to suggest that there was once a Romano- English settlement upon the site, perhaps even with an associated cemetery, surmised due to the evidence of disturbed graves and broken cinerary urns found in the ditch and graves found outside of the ditch previously.

The abundance and type of pottery fragments discovered suggested that the site had belonged to a poor settlement of late Roman date. However, the skeletons found in the ditch appeared to have been deposited there at a much later date, and Hughes suggested that they may have belonged to quite recent times, he was probably inferring to the Saxon period.

Given the natural geology of the site and the continued use of it for quarrying chalk and lime burning kilns it would not be surprising to also suggest that there may well have been pottery production on the site also, since early periods.

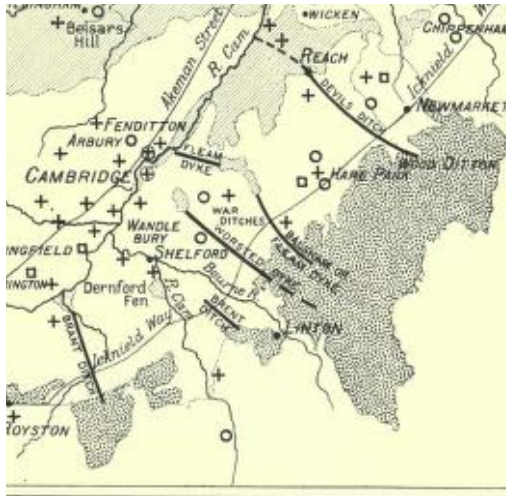
Numerous bones of domestic animals, among which the most common were the small shorthorn ox, the horned sheep, and pig, were also uncovered by the team during this investigation.

Hughes was very good in the role of a true antiquarian because he didn't just settle for examining individual finds and features and describing them but went further by studying the landscape around him and trying to understand how everything could fit together and relate. He was one of the original landscape archaeologists and he had a good knowledge of surrounding topography and other sites of interest. He took the time to try and work out links between sites and archaeological activity across the areas he worked in.

To this end, Hughes began his interpretation of the discoveries he and his team had made and, in particular, the interpretation of the great ditch that had been revealed. At this time only two sections of the great ditch on the site had been noted and it appeared from these two points that there was a very large ditch running in a straight line roughly south-east – north-west which was about 15 feet deep and which had possibly had a bank on the south-east side, which may have been quite large given the depth of the ditch and the natural material that would have been excavated out from it originally.

In Cambridgeshire, there are several great dykes cutting across the landscape. Some of these dykes are very large, the two grandest examples being Fleam Dyke and Devils Dyke. The dykes are banked and ditched earthworks running in a southeast-to-northwest direction across Cambridgeshire, often running along parish boundaries.

Fig. 4 Position of Cambs Dykes & Ickneild Way



(Hughes T M & Hughes M C, 1909 'Cambridge County Geographies CAMBRIDGESHIRE', CUP)

Many people believe the dykes to be of Early Saxon date and construction (c.AD 410 - 600); others believe that they could have been constructed during the prehistoric period. A general theory is that these features were of Bronze Age date, probably territorial markers as well as defensive barriers which were then re-cut and enhanced during the Saxon period. Whatever the case, the dykes do seem to be asserting some control over the Ickneild Way, which is a prehistoric routeway/corridor running straight through the center of the dykes.

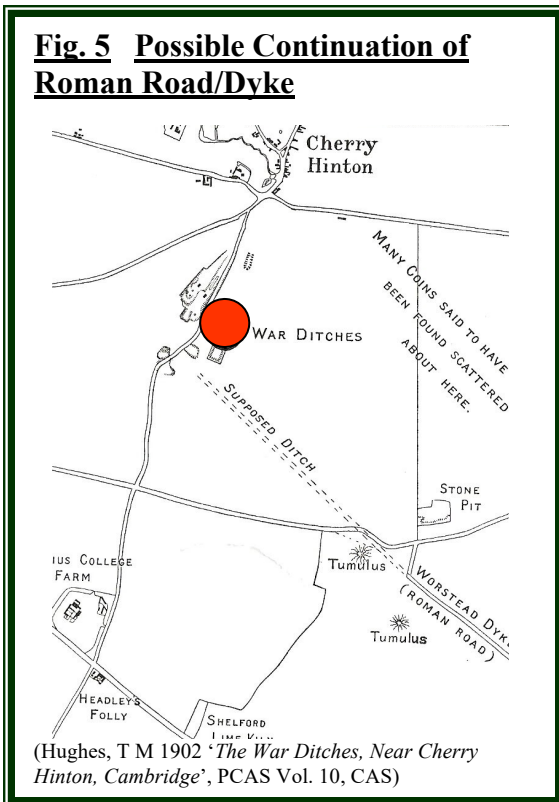
In the late 1800s, with the interest in landscape archaeology growing and groups such as CAS becoming established, these ancient features of the landscape were

getting a lot more attention. As mentioned, several theories were suggested for use, date and purpose of these great dykes. Even today there is still much debate about these features and the riddle of the dykes continues.

One of these possible dykes is a linear earthwork feature which runs in a straight line from about the village of Horseheath, near Haverhill to Worts Causeway in east Cambridge and is today known as The Roman Road rather than as one of the dykes. Whilst investigations still continue into the true nature and date of this particular feature today, in the late 1800's it was still regarded as very much a possible dyke, that had at some later point been utilized by the Romans and metalled to create a Roman routeway.

In drawing together the theories of the nature of the large ditch, which had been discovered after their limited excavations on the site at Lime Kiln Hill, and from the previous information offered up by the site workers, Hughes began to study the landscape surrounding the site. By referring to a map of the area around the site he noted that *'the great dyke known as the Roman Road points directly for this spot. If, as we suppose, that earthwork was one of those drawn across the open ground between the Woodland and the Fenland, and interrupted where a patch of wood or a swamp already presented sufficient barrier, then we should expect to find it resting on some earthwork at its termination on the brow of the hill above Cherry Hinton, where it will be noticed that a*

strip of swampy ground connects the springs with the fens. It may not have been continuous from the top of Worts Causeway to the reservoir'⁷



It was a very good theory, as indeed if you look at a map of the Roman Road today you can see it would appear to make sense that this Roman route way would lead across in a straight line to connect with the site, not only that but as a dyke it would have also had made topographical sense and fitted in with the pattern and style of the dykes we already know about. In addition, the Roman Road also aligns with parish boundaries just as the dykes do and it is lined with Bronze Age burial mounds at points along its course. It could mean that this feature we now call the Roman Road would have continued over the hill in a straight line to terminate at the site, finishing, just as the other dykes do, at a point just before marshy, fenny ground. Again, this is a much-debated theory and still unproved today.

Today, as in 1893, there is no trace above ground, in the fields east of the site, of a continuation of the Roman Road/possible dyke but the Hughes stated in his 1894 report that: *'The absence of any trace of the dyke along the line where we should expect to find it is, however, not sufficient proof that it did not exist, for it is remarkable how entirely every trace of the Cherry Hinton ditch had been obliterated over the ground where we dug in and found it, although in the adjoining field some ridges run in the same direction.'*

Hughes believed, at this time, that he may well have found some evidence of the dyke on the crest of Lime Kiln Hill, with the discovery of the deep ditch on the site which appeared to suggest a compatible link with the Roman road/dyke, it was a good theory but it still had to be proved conclusively. It did however lead to the Hughes announcing by the title of his 1894 report to CAS that there was a *'Newly Discovered Dyke at Cherry Hinton.'*

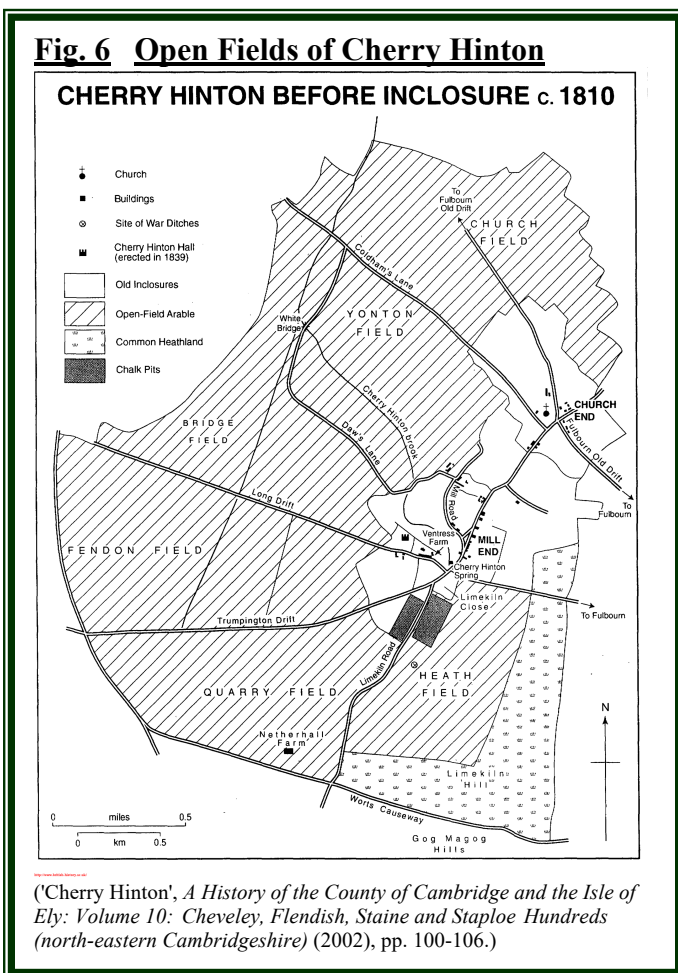
A further significant part of the investigations of the site at this time came from local information given to Hughes: *"When the reservoir was made, ditches and hollow places, with human bones and other articles, were found, but it seemed probable that these were crossed nearer the road, when laying the pipes from the water-works to the reservoir. Richard Mason, of Cherry Hinton Hall, an old man of 87 years of age, remembers these "ditches" being open, his use of the plural probably implying that parts of the ditch were*

⁷ Hughes, T. Macalister & Duckworth, W H L (1894) 'On a Newly Discovered Dyke at Cherry Hinton', PCAS 36, CAS

filled, leaving parts of the same ditch open at intervals. They were known by the name of War Ditches, as mentioned by the writer in the Cambridge Weekly News.⁸

Here we have the first known published use and naming of the features at the site as ‘War Ditches’ – note though, that the site, as a whole, was not known as War Ditches – as it is today – but that the ditches (again note: not just one ditch but ‘ditches’) were known as War Ditches. Hughes suggests, however, that the ditches were probably all part of the same ditch that had been partially filled in places leading to its segmentation and apparent ‘ditches’ which were all one and the same feature. He does not state clearly whether Mr Mason of Cherry Hinton Hall also actually called these ditches he talked about ‘War Ditches’ but he does imply that the name ‘War Ditches’ is mentioned by the writer in the Cambridge Weekly News.

However, the article in the Cambridge Weekly News does not mention the name ‘War Ditches’ at all. The newspaper article, dated Friday, May 5, 1893 notes the interesting discoveries being made at the chalk pits by Hughes, his team and the quarry workmen and goes on to suggest interesting links between the discoveries and the old field names of the site. The writer states:



“Here, for instance, is a local name with a hitherto unsuspected meaning. To “The Quarry Field” we have given the subtitle “Aceldama” or “The Field of Blood.”Taking the name “Quarry” to be a corruption of the Old English quare, which, like querre, it’s modern French Equivalent, means war, it is interesting to find that local tradition, bears out the interpretation, that asserts that the place was once a battlefield.”⁹

The writer does not mention ‘War Ditches’ as a set name but does say that the old open field system name, for which the site is within, called Quarry Field, is also known as ‘Aceldama’ or ‘The Field of Blood’, whether this is by the writers own titling or if it is a local name given to the fields is, again, unclear. It would not be surprising

⁸ Hughes, T. Macalister & Duckworth, W H L (1894) ‘On a Newly Discovered Dyke at Cherry Hinton’, PCAS 36, CAS

⁹ Anonymous ‘Cambridge Weekly News’, Friday 5th May 1893

if such names had continued through local tradition, either from the time of the activity upon the site or more likely, had developed from the local people occasionally making or hearing of skeletons being discovered on the hill. It is an interesting theory that the writer of the article presents by taking the old field name of Quarry field and suggesting it is a corruption of the Old English 'quare' meaning war, as such, interpreting that the site was once a battlefield. However, given the fact that industrial uses of the site and area have involved quarrying in the general sense from at least the Roman period, it is far more likely and probable that Quarry Field is a practical place name stating exactly what was happening there. This is not to dismiss the likelihood of there ever having once been a great battle or bloodshed at the site, as you will see further on, this was also the case.

The newspaper article goes on to suggest that there is a relation between the Roman Road/Dyke and the site, as Hughes had done and it states:

*“And in the very field we are speaking of there is still on evidence a cutting into one of those old defensive ditches or trenches which played so important a part on the tribal frontiers of this country. This ditch was filled up until a few years ago, within memory of some who are known to the writer”*¹⁰

This is interesting as the writer appears to have had some local knowledge and/or knew local people from whom he had gleaned this information, all around the time that the site was being investigated by Hughes, but as Hughes states he did not know the identity of the author of the article at this time, it seems he could therefore, not have passed on details about his investigations.

The article was placed in the Cambridge Weekly News in May 1893 exactly the date when Crawley first found a skeleton on the site when making his roadway and reported it to Hughes. This then suggests that the author of the article must have been very quick off of the mark to pen his thoughts and would have known or heard about the finds from Crawley, or site workers at the quarry, perhaps the finding of the skeleton in 1893 was made much more public upon its discovery, at least within the village of Cherry Hinton and this could have been how the unknown author found out about the finds and was inspired to write his thoughts on the site.

Hughes summarised his report of 1894 to CAS by stating that in the line of the Roman Road/dyke he had discovered a strong earthwork consisting of a large ditch with evidence that it once had a bank and from the analogy and similarity of the other local great dykes, that this newly discovered feature should be considered of the same type and class and that it should be considered as pre-Roman Briton in date.

He goes on to say that *‘The Romans occupied the ground at the north-west end of it, and probably used it as a road as far as it went. They buried their dead near, and the occupation of the site continued long after the withdrawal of the legionaries. The inhabitants were exterminated or driven into the towns in early medieval times, and the banks crumbled down, and vegetable mould grew over the surface of everything. At some*

¹⁰ Anonymous 'Cambridge Weekly News', Friday 5th May 1893

*unknown but much later time bodies were disposed of in the half-filled ditch, and a little of the bank pushed in to cover them. Again nature covered all over with a carpet of vegetation. Within comparatively recent times, the hill top was levelled, and in the process the old surface soil, with its Roman and Romano-English remains, was disturbed and scraped into the ditch, and the dim tradition of its existence was only revived when the ancient fosse was accidentally exposed by lime burners last year.*¹¹

Hughes concludes by saying that he hoped to return to it on some future occasion, and he had reserved the measured sections and illustrations until then. These site illustrations and sections have not yet been found anywhere.

Today the question still remains as to the true nature and extent of the Roman Road and it has not yet been conclusively proved that this feature did not originally run across the fields in a straight line towards the site but it can be said that later excavations on the site by Hughes, after the 1893 excavations, of the large ditch, proved that the ditch in question was not straight, as once suspected, but that it curved and was a different kind of feature than initially thought.

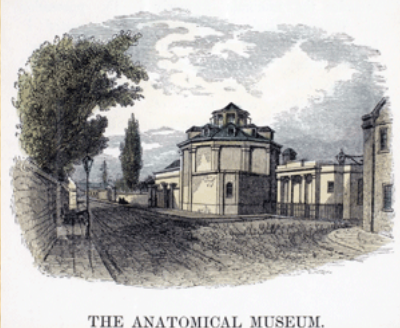
The human remains from the 1893 excavations were submitted to Prof. Macalister and Dr Duckworth. Macalister & Duckworth both make contributions to Hughes 1894 report by looking at the skeletons discovered. Macalister's description of the skeletons found in the 'dyke' states that they were of both young, old, male and female and showed no signs of violence, probably dying a natural death; he suggests that they were probably of a Saxon date perhaps the fifth century, before the conversion of Saxons to Christianity. Macalister had two of the skeletons mounted and displayed them, presumably at the Cambridge Anatomy School as well as to CAS. The skeletons were then placed in the Museum of Anatomy.

From the descriptions of the skeletons found within the 'dyke' by the professors, during this measured excavation, none of the skeletons excavated were particularly tall – the tallest being about 5ft 8 unlike the earliest recorded skeletons mentioned for the site which were apparently of a great height. Not being able to trace these earlier discovered skeletons means there is no way of knowing the true height of them and having been excavated by workmen it cannot be entirely taken for granted that they were anything other than average height – they may have just appeared taller to the workmen who discovered them, being inexperienced of excavating and seeing human remains. It was quite common, particularly on chalk quarry sites, for people to believe that they had found the remains of a giant, when what they had really dug up was some large ancient dinosaur bone. However, as around nine skeletons were uncovered in 1854 it is certain they would have been human remains for such a number to have been claimed and now we know that there have been so many human remains discovered on the site since, we cannot doubt the claim, we can only question the detail.

¹¹ Hughes, T. Macalister & Duckworth, W H L (1894) 'On a Newly Discovered Dyke at Cherry Hinton', PCAS 36, CAS

Hughes later reported the difficulties in carrying out precise excavation and recording during the 1893 excavations due to being ‘*dependent upon the progress of excavations which were being carried on for other purposes than those of archaeological research*’¹² indicating the co-operation and negotiation needed between Hughes, his team and the quarry workers.


g.



THE ANATOMICAL MUSEUM.

School of Anatomy was situated at the corner of Downing Street and Corn Exchange Street. The Museum of Anatomy no longer exists, its collections were merged and taken over mainly by the Zoology Museum. The first director of the new Museum of Comparative Anatomy (as it was then called) was John Willis Clark (1833-1910) from 1866 to 1890, followed by Sidney Frederick Harmer (1862-1950) until 1908. The greatest part of the collections of the museum were added during the years of their tenure. A few collections were added during the twentieth century. The Duckworth Laboratory (which includes skeletal remains from War Ditches) is now housed at The Leverhulme Centre for Human Evolution in Cambridge, which is one of the major human biological collections in the world.
(Picture Deck, 1861)

h.



SIR GEORGE MURRAY HUMPHRY (1820-1896)-- Cambridge University Surgeon. *“some here present will recall the playful humour and the scientific acumen with which he enlivened the discussion when the two mounted skeletons from the Cherry-Hinton dyke were exhibited by Professor Macalister little more than three years ago. I do not find that he ever read an original paper at our proceedings, but whenever the researches of the excavator and the discovery of human remains furnished material for a Communication, his criticism was invaluable.”*
(Picture: Tribute to Sir Humphry PCAS 1896)

Tebbutts pit apparently didn’t yield the results required by its owners and was soon given up. As it was within this particular pit that much of the industrial/commercial work was being done, and hence could have revealed more of the archaeology allowing for Hughes to extend his investigations from the pit, the inactivity meant that there were no more excavations by the Hughes and his team for a further 8 years on the site.

During the 1890’s a number of communications and reports appeared in *PCAS* relating to a site at Horningsea which was being investigated by the antiquarians around this time. It was a significantly large, early Roman pottery production site which appeared to have

¹² Hughes, T. Macalister & Duckworth, W H L (1894) ‘*On a Newly Discovered Dyke at Cherry Hinton*’, *PCAS* 36, CAS

gone on in use for a very long time, with a suggestion that it may even have continued as a site of local pottery production into the early medieval period. A mention of this site in *PCAS* in 1899 states that some of the pottery found there, during investigations, were samples of the common ware found at War Ditches and at Chesterford¹³, giving a connection between the site at Horningsea and War Ditches, and indeed perhaps Chesterford.

By 1901 Professor Hughes was reporting more about Horningsea and suggested that the material found at Horningsea, which gave the examples of common-ware found at War Ditches and Chesterford, showed that the War Ditches material was of a much later date than that of Chesterford.¹⁴

¹³ Hughes, T. (1899) '*Communications: On some ancient kilns near Cambridge*', *PCAS* 36, 1899, CAS


¹⁴ Hughes, T. (1901) '*On The Potter's Field At Horningsea, With A Comparative Notice Of The Kilns And Furnaces Found In The Neighbourhood*', *PCAS* XLIII, CAS

1901

It wasn't until the spring of 1901 that it was proposed that CAS should undertake systematic excavations on the site at War Ditches and so the work was commenced in the autumn of 1901 under the direction of Professor Hughes.

In December of 1901 a CAS excursion took place, to visit the excavations being undertaken by the society, taking place at the War Ditches. Another similar excursion took place a couple of months later in February 1902 and was guided by Professor Hughes. Professor Hughes and his helpers continued the excavations and investigation at the site which he began in 1893.

i. Professor Frederick Roland George Heaf



Cambridge University Digging Club was an undergraduate club formed around 1902 and surviving until around the start of World War I. The War Ditches site became a favourite training ground for these excavators. Professor Frederick Roland George Heaf claimed, in a short life story he wrote later in his life, that he founded Cambridge University Digging Club with Professor T. McKeney Hughes as President and Miss Alice Taylor (later Mrs. Widdicomb) as secretary.
(Picture: The HEAF Family Archive Resource)

By 1902 the Cambridge University Digging Club had been formed and it was members of this club that assisted Hughes in these latest excavations of the site.¹⁵

In February 1902 Hughes published a short report of his latest findings at the site in *PCAS*. Titling the report '*Excavations in the War Ditches, Near Cherry Hinton*'¹⁶, dropping the word 'dyke' and coining the name 'War Ditches' for the area of the site. In this report Hughes stated that he had received confirmation of the local use of the name 'War Ditches' but does not go on to say specifically who from. The site has, at least, been known as the War Ditches ever since.

These continued excavations were to yield new and important information about the great ditch which had been initially compared to the great defensive dykes of the region and was thought to be quite straight, pointing towards the center of the reservoir, but it was discovered, as excavations continued, that the great ditch was beginning to curve round to the east and its depth was varying with one of the new sections being 12 ft deep compared to the originally discovered, in 1893, sections which were 15ft.

With the continued excavations came more finds and skeletons, along with some items not previously seen. One of the most interesting new discoveries was of several similar small pit-like features consisting of burned clay, charcoal and half-baked bricks, within the ditch fill, which were interpreted as small ovens or fireplaces.

¹⁵ Congress of archaeological societies in union with the Society of antiquaries of London. (1903) '*Earthworks*', Harrison & Sons

¹⁶ Hughes, T. M. (1902) '*Excavations in the War Ditches, Near Cherry Hinton*', *PCAS* XLIII, CAS

i.



Samian Ware was not made in Britain but was imported by the Romans. Often a site which is known to date within the Roman period is socially classed depending in part on whether any Samian has been recovered. It is also useful in dating the use of a site.

Samian ware is a kind of bright glossy red Ancient Roman pottery, also known as terra sigillata although definitions vary somewhat. It was first made during the first century AD and production ceased around the mid third century, having been the dominant type of fine pottery for most of this period, found all over the Empire and beyond. The main centres of production were in Gaul and Germania.

The greatest amount of pottery was found above the top level of these ‘furnaces’, with a *‘large proportion of thin black, red, and white ware with bands or circles painted on or produced in slip in high relief, while others were ornamented with rings or triangular groups of dots, also in high relief.’*¹⁷ It was noted that for all the amount of this better kind of pottery there was still an almost entire absence of Samian ware. It was suggested that it was an indication that Roman art still survived, but that the importation of distinctively Roman objects had ceased at the site, again giving dating evidence that there had been Romano-British activity at the site.

The skeletons discovered during these latest excavations were quite different from the apparently carefully buried, possibly Saxon burials uncovered in 1893/1894. These latest skeletons, one from 10 feet down in the great ditch and one on the other side of the roadway, appeared to have been badly treated, with one skull missing and the legs doubled back upon the body of another one. It was clear by this more measured excavation that these particular skeletons had not been carefully buried in the partly filled ditch, it seemed that they had been left in the ditch, exposed and that they were only covered, eventually, by natural weathering and infilling of the ditch, suggesting a more macabre event having taken place at the site or close by.

The opportunity to carry out more carefully measured excavations of the site meant that Hughes was able to excavate fragments of pottery in the lower layers below the skeletons, which helped give clearer dating evidence for the stages of the ditch filling in and for the skeletons within it.

One of the new discoveries on the site during the 1901 excavations was that of the first recorded piece of metalwork, when a plain bronze fibula was found. Hughes stated that at that time the fiddle-shaped brooch was not like any Roman or Saxon specimen that had so far occurred in this district, and, like the pottery, suggested that it belonged to an age when the Romanized British still kept up the general types they had learned from the Romans.

A short while later in 1902, Hughes published a lengthier report of his activities at the *‘War Ditches, Near Cherry Hinton, Cambridge’*¹⁸. This report more fully details the

¹⁷ Hughes, T. M. (1902) *‘Excavations in the War Ditches, Near Cherry Hinton’*, PCAS XLIII, CAS

¹⁸ Hughes, T. M. (1902) *‘The War Ditches, Near Cherry Hinton, Cambridge’*, PCAS Vol. 10, CAS

background to finding the site, how the excavations were carried out, the finds from the site and subsequent new theories for the site itself.

Hughes describes again, in this latest report that the first published notice of the archaeological discoveries on the site appeared anonymously in the *Cambridgeshire Weekly News* of May 5, 1893. Hughes is seemingly unaware of the earlier mention of the discovery of several 'large' skeletons that appeared in the *Cambridge Chronicle* in 1854.

He says that he had found out the identity of the writer of the 1893 newspaper article. It was a Mr W R Brown who, it seems, was something of a local historian and had done much to preserve the record of interesting local facts and objects within the county. It has proved very difficult to find out much about Mr Brown, he did publish a book around 1895 of *Local Tales around Cambridge*¹⁹ but this contained nothing relating to the War Ditches site.

Hughes then states: "*The name War Ditches was given on the authority of Mr Brown, who said that he had heard it applied to the ancient ditch of which the older inhabitants informed him that they recollected traces still in existence near the Reservoir. I also learned by enquiry that the name was known by the older people, but my information was not of much value as the discovery and the name had been a good deal talked about before I began to make enquiries as to what the place was called.*"²⁰

Hughes does continue by saying: "*At the present time there is nowhere any indication of the War Ditches on the surface of the ground, and we must consider the possibility that the local the traditions and names were suggested by what was observed during the construction of the Reservoir and the opening of Caius College Chalk-pit.*"

I have searched many older records from terriers, land surveys, college records and such like and have not yet come across the name of 'War Ditches' within any of these. This is not to discount that it may well have had this name locally but its first known published use is 1894 and it is, at least, well in use thereafter.

It is clear that the construction of the Cambridge Waterworks reservoir, in the mid-1800's, and the opening up of the pit for the use of Caius College around the same date, along with the interaction of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society brought to light the previously unrecognized ancient remains.

It was also noted by Hughes that there had been a comparatively recent levelling of the ground around the site: "*looks as if there had been on the completion of the Reservoir a great levelling of the ground, after which agricultural operations kept filling up any inequalities that were caused by the settling down of the consolidated debris in the ditch.*"²¹

¹⁹ Brown, W.R. (aka 'Urbs Camboritum') (c.1895) *Leaflets of Local Lore*, Private

²⁰ Hughes, T. M. (1902) *The War Ditches, Near Cherry Hinton, Cambridge*, PCAS Vol. 10, CAS

²¹ Hughes, T. M. (1902) *The War Ditches, Near Cherry Hinton, Cambridge*, PCAS Vol. 10, CAS

Again, Hughes goes on to note further local information: *“I learned from Mr William Beales, who farmed the land near the Reservoir, that the ditch ran through the north side of the Reservoir. I also heard incidentally that “Christians’ bones” were found when the pipes were being laid along-side the farm roadway from the Waterworks to the Reservoir, but as the exact spot was not known, the workmen may have crossed some of the graves, which as we shall see are not uncommon here, or may have found human bones in the great ditch.”*

People who lived, owned and worked the site, and the inhabitants of the local village may have, for years previously, been aware of the ancient nature of the site and who knows how much archaeological material had in the past been recovered and not reported or recorded.

Hughes was certainly thorough and efficient in his investigations of the site, not only by excavating in difficult circumstances with industrial work taking place all around but he followed up local information and searched the records of the Waterworks Company. In the report he also states that: *“The deeds in the possession of the Waterworks Company, which by the kindness of Mr W. W. Gray I have had an opportunity of examining, although they furnish much interesting information respecting the common land and proprietors at different times, do not throw any light upon the War Ditches.”*

I have also spent many hours going through the Waterworks Company (now Cambridge Water) deeds and records and have also found a lot of interesting information about the local area, land use and owners but again no reference or any clues as to the War Ditches or the use of the ancient site.

Hughes comments on how small a part of the site had been explored during the excavations and investigations in 1893-1894 and 1901, saying that much more work could be undertaken to discover more about the true nature of the site. He states: *“It merely gives as accurate an account as may be of what has so far been actually seen, with a statement here and there of impressions, and hearsay information, gained during the progress of the work, which may help future explorers.”*

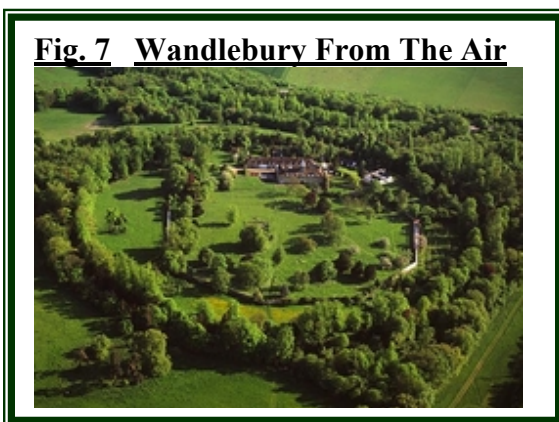
In discussing further the implications that the Roman Road/possible dyke may have once continued towards the site Hughes states: *“Whether or not this bank and fosse represent an ancient road or is as is most probable, was one of our East Anglian dykes afterwards modified somewhat and used as a road, its occurrence increases the importance of the earthwork recently discovered on the top of the hill above Cherryhinton.”*²² Suggesting a link, of some kind, between the War Ditches site and this linear feature now referred to as the Roman Road. Even with no conclusive evidence as to the true nature of the Roman Road and even if it did not extend towards the War Ditches site, it is still very likely to have had some use in relation to the site at some point in the past.

²² Hughes, T. M. (1902) *The War Ditches, Near Cherry Hinton, Cambridge*, PCAS Vol. 10, CAS

On this interesting and still unresolved possibility Hughes provides yet further local information: *“A workman informed us that his father had spoken to him of a narrow belt upon which the crops indicated a deeper moister soil running from the south side of the Reservoir across the fields in the direction of the Worsted Lodge [The Roman Road/dyke] earthwork. He added that in certain conditions of crops and seasons he had himself frequently seen it clearly marked across the hollow, pointing out to us the exact line.”*

However, the new excavations carried out by Hughes showed that the great ditch discovered on the site was not straight as first thought but that it was curving steadily round and looked as though it passed beneath the reservoir. Hughes says that this new discovery stirred up memories of some of the oldest inhabitants of the village, producing further information but he does not detail this any further within this report which is a shame.

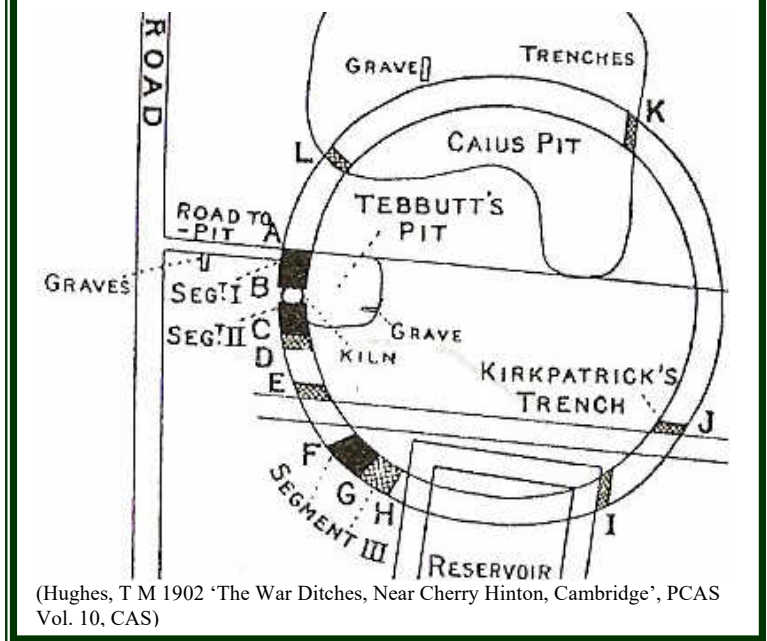
The changing direction of the great ditch led to a re-think of its type and use. Hughes estimated the size and position of the great ditch on the assumption that it was circular, like Ring Hill, Wandlebury, and Arbury Hill Forts.



Hughes stated that the assumption proved to be correct, having been able to trace several parts of the ditch proving a circular monument. He goes on to claim that the diameter of this circle measured from the outside of the fosse is 500 feet. That of Belsar's Hill is 880' x 750', of Arbury is 900', Wandlebury 1000', Ring Hill 1700' x 1300', WallburyCamp 1970' x 1450'.

Theses 1901 investigations also showed that the fosse itself was about 15 feet broad across the top. The sides curved downwards so as to be nearly vertical for the last 4 feet. With the strong added suggestion that there was a bank on the inner side of the ditch, constructed from the material dug out during the construction of the ditch.

Fig. 8
The War Ditches Site c. 1902

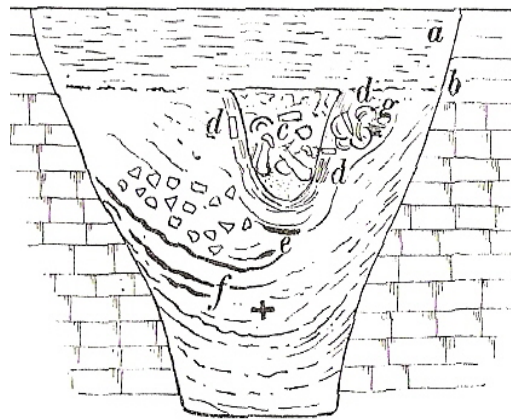


(Hughes, T M 1902 'The War Ditches, Near Cherry Hinton, Cambridge', PCAS Vol. 10, CAS)

Again, numerous skeletons were discovered during this excavation including a number of skeletons about 8 feet down in the ditch which were lying stretched out in the length of the fosse.

In the middle layers of the ditch, Hughes and his team found some of the most interesting remains, which gave clues to the activity and use of the great ditch. They found traces of fires in the form of pits that had been dug into the layers of chalk and earth which had half-filled the ditch.

Fig. 9
Section across the ditch
in the III Segment.



(Hughes, T M 1902 'The War Ditches, Near Cherry Hinton, Cambridge', PCAS Vol. 10, CAS)

There was evidence of fires having been lit at the bottom of these pits along with burnt earth, burnt stones and some larger stones which appeared to be built into a kind of oven. At places along the ditch sections that they excavated, it appeared that the fires had been lighted all along the bottom of the ditch for 12 feet or more and the fires were not all at one level with evidence of successive fires having been lit one upon the other. To explain this interesting discovery Hughes was told, by Mr Barker of Bourn, who was assisting this part of the excavation, that it was "*still common when troops are camping out, as it is easier to keep the fire alight in this way and more convenient to make use of it for cooking purposes.*"²³

²³ Hughes, T. M. (1902) 'The War Ditches, Near Cherry Hinton, Cambridge', PCAS Vol. 10, CAS

Hughes summarised his 1902 War Ditches report by saying that: “*The "War Ditches" are thus proved to be a circular entrenchment 1666 feet in circumference, constructed upon the flat top of the spur of the Gogmagogs above Cherryhinton. There is evidence that the whole hill top was occupied by settlements the household refuse from which is scattered through the soil all over the ground and occurs also in the debris which fills the fosse.*”²⁴

The artifacts excavated were of great interest as, at the time, there was no other recorded site that produced such an assemblage. Hughes states that there was only one example of a commonly found item, usually found on Roman and Saxon sites and that it was surprising as that one artifact, which was the brooch, was of an unusual type.

He also noted that not a single coin had been picked up over the whole area, which again was unusual considering how common coins were in the district associated with Roman remains. Laborers did however tell Hughes that a great number of coins had been found on the field a short distance to the east. This is still shown today on the CHER²⁵ (Cambridge Historic Environment Record) but is still hearsay – none of the coins have been seen or heard of since.

Hughes again discusses the lack of Samian Ware discovered on the site. Hughes explained that the lack of Samian Ware found on the site indicated that the site was probably later than the start of the Roman occupation of Britain. He said that the scarcity of the Samian on site did not indicate the social status of the people occupying the site as having been poor because such an abundance of highly decorated slip ware was excavated. It simply meant that Samian was no longer on the market at the time of the occupation of the site which was consistent with the view that at the period of the later occupation of the great ditch site the Roman troops had been withdrawn and commercial relations with southern Europe had practically ceased.

There was a small amount of evidence found, during the excavations in 1901 which indicated practical use of the nearby water. Two pieces of worked bone, perhaps used in net making, along with the bones of a large pike were found in one of the small trenches excavated. This would link in nicely with the usual activities of a fen edge settlement, which in those days Cherry Hinton and the site on Lime Kiln Hill was.

The animal bones excavated on the site appeared to be mainly food remains rather than managed livestock, although there was the occasional find of dog remains. The animal bones found included young ox, horse, sheep, goats and pig. No traces of poultry or wild animals were found. Additionally, it was noted, by Hughes, that no layers of oyster shells occurred and these were generally discovered around Roman stations, which was one idea for the use of the site.

Although it was clear from the great quantity of finds that displayed everyday life over a very long period, Hughes’ excavations at this time were confined almost entirely to the

²⁴ Hughes, T. M. (1902) ‘*The War Ditches, Near Cherry Hinton, Cambridge*’, PCAS Vol. 10, CAS

²⁵ CHER Number: 04841

line of the great ditch so remains which might be expected on the site such as settlement remains, structures, boundaries were not explored in any detail. There had been just a couple of small tentative excavations made along the north and north-east side of the Caius Pit in which some shallow ditches had been found containing Roman type pottery. Hughes noted also that there were several such ditches seen in the earlier excavations of 1893, along the sides of the road to Mr Tebbutt's chalk-pit and near the kiln. He goes on to say: *"These are like the ditches found round the several dwellings in all the rude agricultural settlements of this district, from the bronze age to that of the Romanized Britons and Teutons, who frequently seem to have followed their ancient habits of life long after they had adopted all the domestic appliances of the Romans."*²⁶

Many graves were found both inside and outside the great ditch, which suggested that there may have been a considerable cemetery spread over the top of the hill. At least one of the skeletons exposed was only partially excavated, close to the north edge of Caius Pit, with the skull being taken to the Archaeological Museum and the other bones left in the grave.

There were, Hughes states, three distinct groups of skeletons discovered. Firstly, the skeletons found low down in the ditch beneath the layers of late Roman occupation. It was proved with these skeletons that the parts of the body were separated before the ligaments had altogether decayed and the bodies had not been carefully buried in graves. This indicates some kind of terrible event happening at the site or close by, around the time or soon after the great ditch earthwork was constructed.

Secondly, there were the skeletons found in shallow graves all over the site, inside the ditch and in the ground around. The remains didn't seem to be oriented in any particular direction, but they had been carefully laid out, full length, in the graves suggesting a more ordered cemetery. Hughes suggests that these burials belonged to the Romanised British settlement on the site.

Finally, there were the skeletons of children in the upper part of the great ditch. It appeared that they had been disposed of during the period of the occupation of the great ditch (or fosse) as the fireplaces occurred above and below them. They were placed without much care in shallow depressions and covered over with the soil chalk debris. Here again one could say this indicates some dreadful event occurring on or near the site, perhaps a massacre or battle but as the skeletons at this level were of children it could suggest some other practice taking place.

In summing up Hughes describes how there was a deep circular fosse made by a pre-Roman people, who piled up the chalky material dug out from the construction of the great ditch on the inside of the ditch to form an inner bank. As the crumbling material from the sides of the ditch fell in, it filled the bottom of the ditch to depth of about 4 feet. He writes how these people didn't have much pottery only some coarse quality pottery of no big variety, along with a few flint tools such as scrapers which were found as well as flint flakes.

²⁶ Hughes, T M 1902 'The War Ditches, Near Cherry Hinton, Cambridge', PCAS Vol. 10, CAS

Hughes then says how there was then a period during which bodies of all ages and sexes were thrown into the ditch with little or no care which could possibly indicate a massacre or some such terrible event, or even of a time when the residents used the neglected ditch to throw their dead into. He suggests that these people may well have been pre-Roman invaders of Britain.²⁷

Hughes then finishes by describing how the ditch was then gradually filled up by debris deliberately thrown into the ditch and by natural process of weathering. There was much refuse in the ditch of people who occupied the fosse from time to time which it seemed to a long time to accumulate. This part of the history of the great ditch is difficult to assign a date to as every group of objects excavated was in some respects exceptional. Some of the course pottery found is identical with that excavated from the local village of Horningsea where work seems to have carried on to Romano-English times.²⁸

The last occupation of the War Ditches seems to be later than the distinctively Roman period but earlier than the Saxon or Danish period. Hughes suggests that we should refer it to the Romanized natives who were in this district largely of Teutonic origin.

Whilst researching Hughes' activity at the War ditches site, I discovered this incidental but insightful newspaper report in a Cambridge Newspaper dated 1902:

*“Professor T. McKenny Hughes was summoned for riding a bicycle on the footpath at Cherry Hinton. P.C. Sanford said when he stopped him the defendant then began to complain and said the police would be doing better if they were moving the horses and carts on the road as they were a great nuisance. There was no traffic about at the time. The Chairman said the defendant was hardly setting a good example and would be fined 3s 6d and 6s 6d costs.”*²⁹

In a PCAS report written by Hughes in 1906 on Arbury, Cambridge, he compares some fireplaces found at Arbury to those found in the War Ditches giving a suggestion of a link between the two sites of at least date and use.³⁰

During 1907 the quarrying at the site was continuing but with the interest and importance of the archaeological remains growing, the quarry men working at the site had been warned to watch out for any traces of archaeological remains as they worked. This time a forewarned quarry man had noticed a piece of bone sticking out of the ground he was working and so stopped immediately and contacted Professor Hughes. Hughes was unable to go and investigate the find due to other commitments so he in turn asked Rev Walker to investigate in his place.

²⁷ Hughes, T. M. (1902) *The War Ditches, Near Cherry Hinton, Cambridge*, PCAS Vol. 10, CAS

²⁸ Hughes, T. M. (1902) *The War Ditches, Near Cherry Hinton, Cambridge*, PCAS Vol. 10, CAS

²⁹ Mike Petty (2008) *Cambridgeshire News Index 1902*

³⁰ PCAS. No. XLIV. P.452.

So, in February 1907 Rev F G Walker gathered up some tools and went to the site to begin the work and appeared to have quite enjoyed himself in spite of a temperature 8 degrees below freezing point. He supervised the excavation of several more skeletons that had turned up on the site just outside the ditch. The skeletons were, again, examined by Professor Macalister and Dr Duckworth, who pronounced that they were pre-Roman. No coins or metal were found with the skeletons but one of the skeletons had a small Roman pot in the crook of the right arm.

In May 1908 Reverend Walker gave a lecture, which was illustrated by lantern slides, of what he had discovered during his investigation in place of Hughes. The report of this was published in *PCAS*.³¹

Interestingly in his 1908 presentation Walker says that '*most of the members of the Society will know the place where these graves were, for they no longer exist, the quarrying operations having destroyed them.*' Showing not only continuing quarrying work going on at the site but also indicating, perhaps, regular visits from members of CAS to the site or at least, regular reporting of activity at the site being given to the society.

Walker states that the newly discovered skeleton was outside of the great ditch and was buried in a grave - indicating again that there was once a sizable cemetery upon this hill - and as previously discovered on the site, this skeleton had, amongst other pottery remains, a Roman type pot in the crook of its elbow. Walker states that the pot was identical to a couple of pots he had excavated from a purely Roman burial in Godmanchester which were on loan in the Archaeological Museum. This skeleton also had fragment of a pot placed around its head.

Walker said he then pointed out to the quarry men possible positions of other graves and asked them to work carefully around these spots. He does not say what lead him to suggest the spots for possible graves, which would have been interesting as it had been stated previously by Hughes that the site had been subject to leveling which in turn would have flattened out any remaining earthworks so therefore it was thought that no earthwork indications remained above ground. Perhaps the leveling hadn't occurred where Walker was looking and there may still have been some indication by the topography of the ground, perhaps there were signs from crop marks or perhaps the site was sufficiently stripped of its topsoil at this point and Walker could see indications of grave cuts in the colouring of the chalk.

k.

Rev F G Walker (c. 1860-1936) Graduated at Trinity College, Dublin, 1883, ordained Truro 1886. He had various curacies including Godmanchester and Comberton. He began excavations for CAS at Godmanchester and dug there and various other sites across Cambridgeshire on their behalf - including some of the Cambridgeshire Dykes. He was Secretary of CAS 1908 and injected great enthusiasm into the society and increased membership dramatically. He left in 1913 to become Organising Secretary to the Egypt Exploration Fund, the war caused him to return to pastoral work. He was an Honorary Member of CAS from 1913.

³¹ Walker, F. G. (1908) '*Skeletons Recently Found At The "War Ditches," Cherryhinton*', *PCAS* Vol. 12, CAS

Fig. 10 Walker's Investigations at the War Ditches

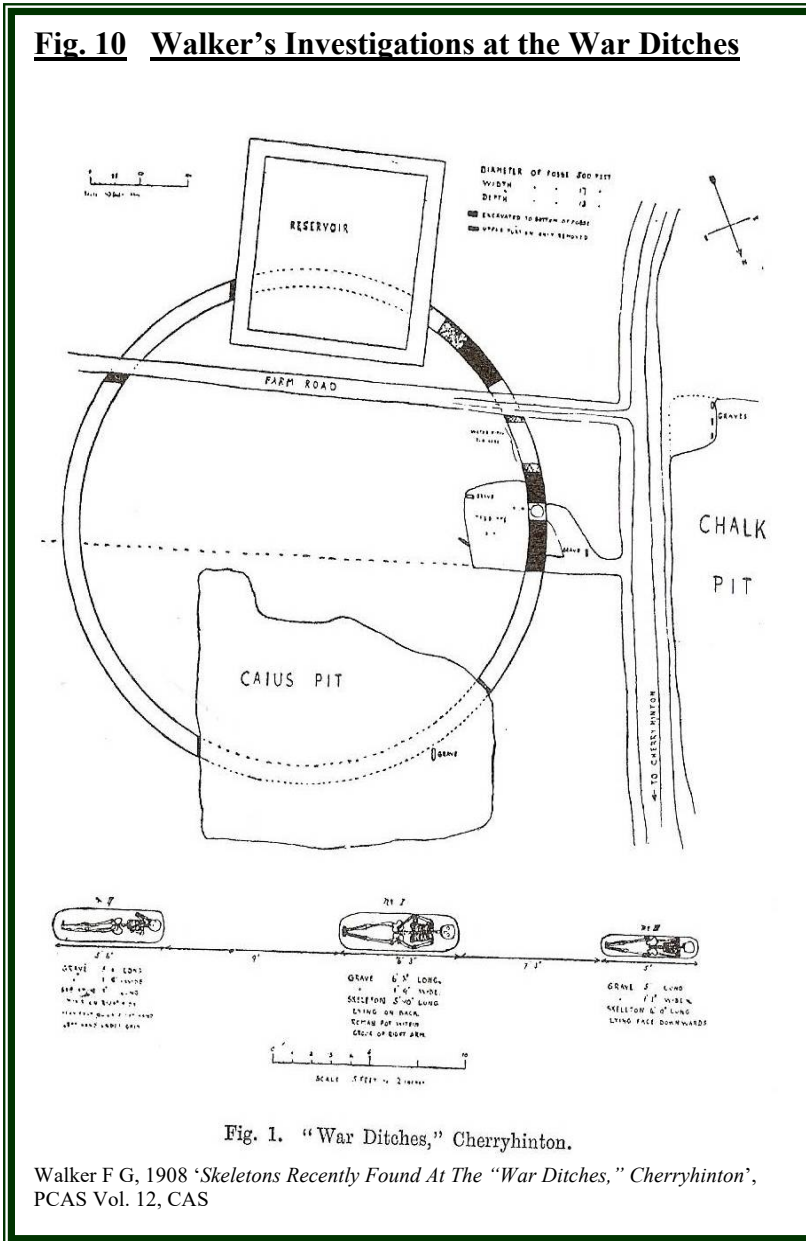


Fig. 1. "War Ditches," Cherryhinton.

Walker F G, 1908 'Skeletons Recently Found At The "War Ditches," Cherryhinton', PCAS Vol. 12, CAS

In the May of 1907, Walker was informed that the quarry men had found another skeleton in one of the spots he had indicated. The skeleton was excavated but this time there were no traces of any artefacts with it but it did appear to be buried within a grave.

Within a month on June 1st 1907, a quarryman came to Walker to say that he had discovered a third skeleton, again in the spot where Walker had suggested there may be a burial. Again, this skeleton appeared to have been buried within a grave but had no artefacts with it.

The three skeletons were pronounced pre-Roman Anglian type by Professor Macalister and Dr Duckworth and were similar to many that were discovered in and near the War Ditches during Hughes' 1902

excavations.³²

In the 1908 PCAS annual report, it is suggested that the circle of the War Ditches should be completely opened out³³ however, there were only a couple of small incidental investigations or finds at the site proceeding this and it was believed that no major excavations took place again at the site until after the First World War.

³² Walker, F. G. (1908) 'Skeletons Recently Found At The "War Ditches," Cherryhinton', PCAS Vol. 12, CAS

³³ PCAS. (1908) 'Annual Report 1908', PCAS Vol. 13, CAS

The site of 'War Ditches' had become well known enough and established in the history and archaeology of the area that it was now beginning to find its way into more and more general publications and was being used as a case study and example for many. And the name 'War Ditches' even though it suggests more than one ditch, grew to represent just the one large circular ditch on the site.

In Hughes' 1909 publication '*Cambridge County Geographies*' he writes
*"To the time of tribal expansion before the arrival of the Romans we must refer those vast entrenchments which crown the high ground along the principal routes into the county such as Ring Hill near Audley End just over our boundary, Wandlebury on the Gog-Magogs, the War Ditches by Cherryhinton, Arbury near Histon, and Belsar's Hill near Willingham. These great circular camps consist of one or more banks of earth with a ditch, or ditches, outside, and, when strengthened by a stockade, or palisade, must have been difficult places to storm."*³⁴

I found, in the records of the Duckworth Laboratory, housed at the Leverhulme Centre for Human Evolutionary Studies, it appears that another skeleton was discovered and reported from the site as a W. Futter has an entry as a donator of a skeleton from the War Ditches, in the record. It is not known who this is, he may have had the skeleton for a while and decided to hand it in, perhaps he was a member of the Digging Club or more likely a quarry worker and maybe had uncovered the skeleton during industrial activity on the site.

Fig. 11 Looking South on Lime Kiln Hill, as the War Ditches is quarried away c.1908



The Chalk Quarry, Norman Cement Works

(Hughes T M & Hughes M C, 1909 '*Cambridge County Geographies CAMBRIDGESHIRE*', CUP)

³⁴ Hughes, T. M. & Hughes, M. C. (1909) '*Cambridge County Geographies CAMBRIDGESHIRE*', CUP

In the PCAS annual report of October 1911, it states: *“During September the Secretary excavated another skeleton-the eighth-from the pre-Roman cemetery near the War Ditches on Cherry Hinton Hill. It is that of a young woman about twenty years of age. In the left-hand had been placed a hen’s egg for the purpose, according to an ancient custom, of providing sustenance during the journey from this life to the next. The broken egg-shell was found and is preserved.”*³⁵ The secretary of CAS in 1911 was Rev Walker, so he had obviously retained an active interest in the site and was still keeping an eye open for opportunities to excavate there. The finding of an eggshell was interesting. Eggs have long been associated with rebirth and fertility and they have been found, most commonly, with the grave goods of Anglo-Saxons. The report goes on to state: *“The Excavation fund is well worthy the attention of members. Many most interesting sites close to Cambridge need investigating, the only hindrance being want of sufficient money.”*

In his 1913 report to PCAS³⁶ on the Roman Pottery Kilns at Horningsea, Walker makes a startling suggestion. He claims that *“One fragment of this kind of grooved jar was found by Professor Hughes at the War Ditches, Cherryhinton. One can say without much hesitation that the large jar also found by Professor Hughes at the War Ditches, now in the Archaeological Museum at Cambridge, came from the Horningsea kilns, because the sherd now shown, which I took from kiln 5, both from its outside and inside markings, might be a piece of that very vessel.”* This is quite a claim and still needs to be carefully tested. If it were true and accurate it would be a very important discovery and would firmly link the War Ditches site with Horningsea. It does however, at present, seem too unlikely to be true.

Also in the 1913 PCAS Annual Review³⁷ a note was made for the Excavation Fund Appeal stating: *“The ‘War Ditches’ near Cherryhinton have been explored only partially; at least two-thirds of the circle of the camp remains untouched, as well as the cemetery belonging’ to this pre-Roman settlement. Rich finds ought to be the reward of patient investigation on this site.”* This showed a continuing interest in the site and a desire to continue excavations at the site. However, we have no record of any further excavations at the site other than in the PCAS report³⁸ of 1915 which states: *“A grant of £5 from the Excavation Fund was made to the Cambridge Digging Club, to assist in the expenses of exploring the War Ditches at. Cherry Hinton. The Club worked at the Ditches during the Lent and Easter Terms, and kept a systematic record of all things found or observed.”* This is certainly interesting as it shows that some excavation took place around 1914/1915 and that the Digging Club were involved with this, but I have so far been unable to trace the records that are mentioned in the report. One wonders what they

³⁵ PCAS. (1912) ‘Annual Report Monday 16th October 1911’, PCAS Vol. XVI, CAS

³⁶ Walker, F. G. (1913) ‘Roman Pottery Kilns At Horningsea, Cambridgeshire’, PCAS Vol. LXIV, CAS

³⁷ PCAS. (1913) ‘Annual Report, Appendix I’, PCAS Vol. LXIV, CAS

³⁸ PCAS. (1915) ‘Report Of The Council, November 29th 1915’, PCAS Vol. XX, CAS

discovered and where exactly on the site they excavated but unless their records can be found we will never know.

In one of the very last reports by Hughes to PCAS he writes about Dr Dale's visit to Cambridge in 1722-1738³⁹. Hughes notes that Dr Dale mentions the site of Wandlebury and its ramparts but that it is curious that he doesn't anywhere mention the site of the War Ditches (all be it possibly known by another name), suggesting that the traces of the War Ditches may not then have been open or visible in 1722 onwards.

Professor Hughes died in 1917 and many were quick to pay him great tributes. No more work, as far as we know was undertaken at the War Ditches site until a few years after the First World War.

³⁹ Hughes, T M. (1917) *'Dr Dale's Visits To Cambridge, 1722-1738'*, PCAS Vol. LXVIII, CAS

Continuing Rescue, The War Ditches 1921 - 1963

1921

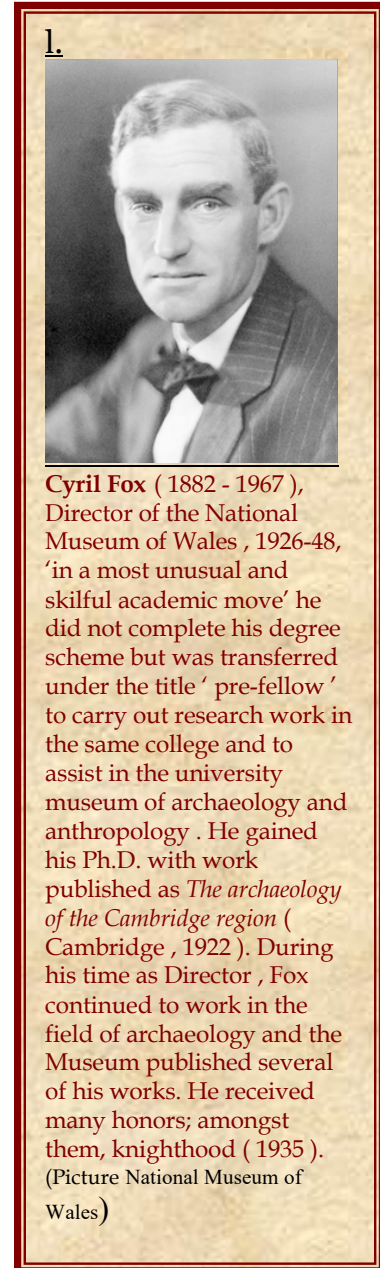
In the early part of 1921 CAS decided that excavation of selected sites, which had been discontinued during the war, should recommence. An attempt at determining the date of the Cambridgeshire Dykes was recommended along with further exploration at the War Ditches⁴⁰ but archaeological activity at the site of War Ditches didn't seem to take place until late 1930.

Cyril Fox undertook the task of investigating the Cambridgeshire Dykes and wrote in his report for *PCAS*⁴¹ in 1922 that there was justification in Hughes theory that the Roman Road/possible dyke had once continued across the hills towards the War Ditches site.

Cyril Fox went on to write the first comprehensive book on the archaeology of Cambridgeshire⁴² which was published in 1923, in which he writes the War Ditches firmly into the history of Cambridge.

Fox describes War Ditches as an Iron Age site and states that no Bronze Age remains were found at the site. He goes on to say that burial at the site survived the Roman conquest and suggests that a re-occupation of the hill fort in the middle of 1AD by Icenian people could have taken place. In summarising the evidence gathered from the skeletons found at the War Ditches dating around 1AD, Fox stated that it suggested a massacre occurred at the site.

In discussing some pottery types from across the county Fox mentions that he found a rudely made bowl of light red clay at the War Ditches. It is not clear how much Fox participated in excavations on the site or indeed if excavations had yet recommenced after the war, in any form.



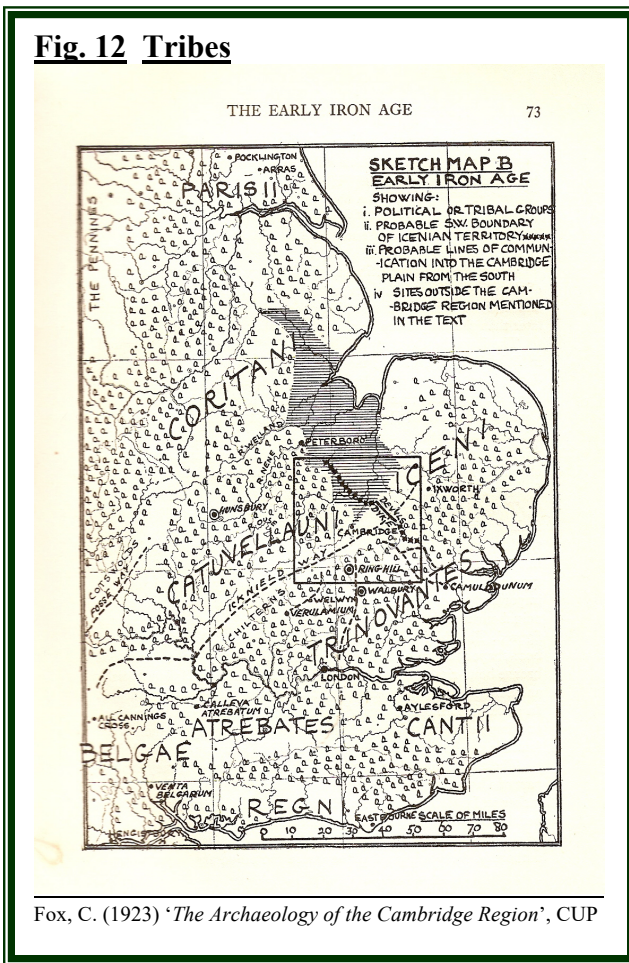
⁴⁰ PCAS. (1921) 'Annual Report, 1920-21', PCAS Vol. XXIII, CAS

⁴¹ Fox, C. (1922) 'Excavations In The Cambridgeshire Dykes', PCAS Vol. XXIV, CAS

⁴² Fox, C. (1923) 'The Archaeology of the Cambridge Region', CUP

Fox writes that the War Ditches was the only hill fort in the county that had been adequately examined and that at the time nothing was known of the part in which these hill forts of the county played in the tribal or racial war of the age or of their relation, if any, to the county's defensive dykes.

It had been nearly twenty years since Hughes reported on the rarity of the Roman artefacts found in the upper part of the War Ditches but Fox stated that since then the study of such pottery had made great advances and that he was confident that an earlier date could be assigned to the finds, than that which Hughes had given. Fox goes on to say that because of the date of the material found within the War Ditches, it offered a unique opportunity to display how slow the process of Romanization could be in certain circumstances.



Fox mentions in his book that three of the skeletons from the War Ditches are set up in the Anatomical Museum, Cambridge.

After the publication of his book, Fox continues important work in recording the county's archaeology and history. He begins the process of producing the Ancient Monuments Record which was the forerunner of the Historic Environment Record (HER) used today to record finds and sites across the country. He includes an entry for the War Ditches in 1930 which states: *"The ringwork has been entirely levelled. The filled-in fosse is full of Early Iron Age and Roman remains. Unexplored portions are shown on the map which accompanies this; and unauthorized digging should not be permitted, nor should the extension of the adjac. lime pits (now disused), in these two spots, they are now arable fields."*⁴³

The map which accompanied this entry has not been found. It shows that people were becoming more aware of the protection of such monuments and that by 1930 the lime pit industry on the site had ceased. The chalk quarrying on the site, however, continued.

⁴³ Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum Archives. *Ancient Monument Forms Box 35 G11/5/1*

There naturally appears to be another gap in investigations taking place at the War Ditches during the Second World War. We do not see another written report on the site until 1949. Although the records at Leverhulme Centre for Human Evolutionary Studies show that a skeleton was donated to the Duckworth Collection in 1943 but it doesn't state by whom.

In 1949, a report on *Further Excavation at the War Ditches* appears in *PCAS*⁴⁴, Written by T C Lethbridge. He begins his report by praising Hughes as a fore thinker in the field of archaeological work but says that the late Professor's works on the War Ditches gave them a good run for their money. Lethbridge says that Hughes was responsible for a faulty conception of the site and monument which has since featured in most works dealing with Iron Age Britain since. He goes on to say that Hughes created a plausible idea of the War Ditches being a completely circular hill fort and gave it a name which probably never belonged to it. Lethbridge states that it was highly improbable that anyone knew of the existence of the great ditch, since the time it was filled in, until it was rediscovered by the quarrymen centuries later, and that the name was apparently only given to the site by the quarrymen on account of the numerous skeletons which were unearthed.

I believe Hughes did a reasonable job of investigating local knowledge and archives and he did make it reasonably clear that it was difficult to be certain any such name was attributed to the site but that was what had stuck since his investigations had taken place, not least because Hughes names the site as such in his subsequent publications.

It becomes clear from Lethbridge's report that excavations had resumed upon the site of the War Ditches by at least 1939. He states that there had been a threat of the complete destruction of the remaining part of the site by quarrying work taking place in the Great Chalk Pit, which means that although the lime kiln industry had since ceased the quarrying of the valuable chalk had

m.



T C Lethbridge (1901-71)

Lethbridge was educated at Wellington College, before attending Trinity College, Cambridge, Cambridge University at the age of eighteen, where he discovered an interest in archaeology. Once he had completed his degree, he began working as a voluntary digger for Louis Clarke, the curator of the Archaeological Museum in Cambridge. Although he had a private income, Lethbridge became the keeper of Anglo-Saxon antiquities at the museum. He was Director of Excavations for CAS 1925-57. He remained in Cambridge until 1957, bored with what he called "the academic trade-unionism" that existed within his profession. During this time, he wrote a series of books about Early Medieval Britain. These, however, are generally eclipsed by the much more famous and controversial series of books he wrote at his home, *Hole House*, in Branscombe, Devon between 1961 and his death in 1971. Lethbridge claimed there is a link between the length of a pendulum and the object being doused for.

⁴⁴ Lethbridge, T. C. (1949) 'Further Excavations At The War Ditches', *PCAS* Vol. XLII, CAS

not – or that it had at least been resumed by the late 1930s. This advancing quarrying had created a threat that needed to be dealt with urgently before the entire site of War Ditches was destroyed. Lethbridge notes that he was involved in some trial excavation work

n.



Dr Grahame Clark (1907-95) was born in Bromley and educated at Marlborough and Peterhouse, Cambridge. He spent his entire working career at Peterhouse save for his work in air photo interpretation for the RAF during the Second World War. For this period, he served as a Squadron Leader. He became a fellow of the British Academy in 1950, Disney Professor of Archaeology two years later, head of the archaeology and anthropology department in 1956 and Master of Peterhouse from 1973 until 1980. During his career he most famously studied the Mesolithic of northern Europe, excavating at Star Carr between 1949 and 1951, work which remains highly significant in our understanding of the period. He also wrote general works on world prehistory intended for a wide audience and encouraged archaeologists to more closely examine the economic factors relevant to past societies, characterised in his book *Prehistoric Europe: the economic basis* (1952). He was also editor of the *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* and its President between 1958 and 1962. He was made a CBE in 1971 and knighted in 1992.

(Picture: Fagan, Brian. (2001) Grahame Clark: An Intellectual Biography of an Archaeologist)

carried out in the summer of 1939 before the war halted further action. He says the excavation was carried out with voluntary labour by various members of the University & undergraduates and that Dr Grahame Clark collaborated with him in deciding the method of working the site and had also recruited much of the labour.

Although in his report Lethbridge confirms that much of Hughes' earlier work and conclusions were sound, it was the discovery by this new excavation, that apparently disproved Hughes' statement that the War Ditches was a completely symmetrical fort. Lethbridge claimed that Hughes had come to this conclusion in the first place by linking up the sections of the ditch that he had explored and had deduced the existence of a circular earthwork without actually proving it was truly circular by excavation.

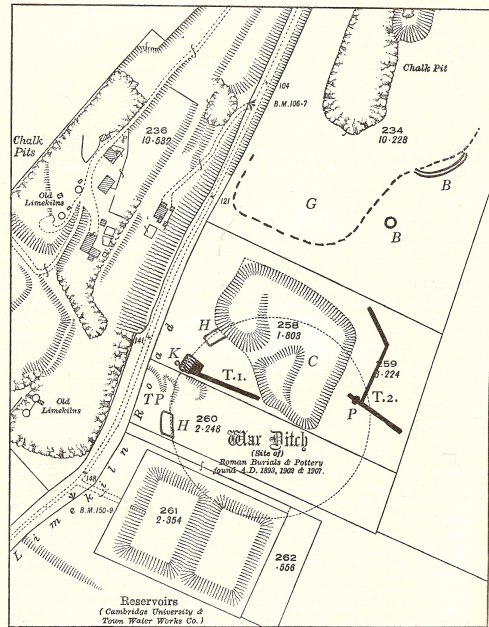
Lethbridge began his investigations by opening trial trenches on the East of Caius Pit and was expecting to come upon the other side of the great ditch coming through. But no ditch was observed. All that was found at the point where the ditch was expected to have circled around, was a pit covered with Romano- British rubbish. This was a great surprise and totally changed the nature of what was represented by the great curving ditch. It also brought into question the validity of Hughes' earlier work, along with throwing considerable doubt on the interpretations put on Hughes's results by later writers.

Lethbridge explains that without being absolutely certain that the ditch had just been missed by his trial trenches, he said if it did exist further out to the eastward side it would have had to be a considerable distance off, changing the idea of it being precisely circular or it would be a circular ditch with very large interruptions in it.

Lethbridge suggests that the pit discovered in its place could possibly have been part of the early stage in the construction of a circular

camp but that there was no proof of this. Lethbridge then states: “*I think we have demonstrated here that the earthwork as deduced by Hughes does not exist, and that what remains is either an unfinished work or something of a different character.*”⁴⁵

Fig. 13 Lethbridge’s Excavations at War Ditches



(Lethbridge, T. C. (1949) ‘Further Excavations At The War Ditches’, PCAS Vol. XLII, CAS)

Lethbridge noted the great quantity of Romano-British debris all over the site, firming the theory that the site was once a Romano-British settlement of some form or other. In addition to the Romano-British debris on site, a single, small Anglo-Saxon square-headed brooch was found in the trenching on the eastern side.

Lethbridge decided to test Hughes’ results obtained from the great ditch where it was known to exist, and he also hoped to recover a sequence of Early Iron Age deposits.

A section was duly excavated by Lethbridge and the team, on the western side of the chalk pit, which confirmed a lot of what Hughes had reported about the ditch itself.

This new section clearly showed that the ditch had slowly filled in, to begin with. Many animal bones, mostly the foot and ankle bones of sheep were within these

first layers. There was also a considerable number of flint flakes and some worked flint tools, such as scrapers, along with some small pieces of Bronze Age, probably Beaker phase, pottery. Although Lethbridge says that Hughes had also found some Bronze Age pottery in the lowest levels of the ditch it may still have been that these clues could only show that the ditch was dug through soil which had contained debris from a Bronze Age settlement once upon the site, but Lethbridge thought it unlikely.

The ditch had a primary silting of about 9 inches upon which was a layer of ash and lumps of charred wood. It was in and on this burnt layer that the team found human skeletons which appeared to have been affected by the fire. In one case the skeleton was so badly affected that the head, arms and legs had been burnt off. Lethbridge suggests that this body may have been burnt in the ditch where it lay. A few feet away from this burnt skeleton were more charred human remains including fragments of a skull and another skull 6 feet further away.

⁴⁵ Lethbridge, T. C. (1949) ‘Further Excavations At The War Ditches’, PCAS Vol. XLII, CAS

Lethbridge then suggested that the skeletons Hughes had similarly discovered and had said he thought were buried with fires built upon them at a later stage, was wrong and that this idea didn't fit in with what the new excavations were showing. Lethbridge adds that the evidence they had discovered pointed to some kind of massacre that had taken place at the site sometime before Roman occupation. And whomever the conquerors were, they had thrown the smoldering bodies and remains into the ditch of the earthwork.

After this layer, upon what appeared to be a temporary land surface, a pottery kiln was discovered which proved that Romano-British pottery was being produced on the site. Burials were also uncovered at this level including a skeleton with a bronze brooch dated 1st Century AD, just within the Roman period.

Hughes had recovered many traces of pottery-making from his sections, but no actual kiln of a complete kind. The kiln Lethbridge excavated was less elaborate than those explored at the Horningsea site which seemed to have links with the War Ditches site, it was lined and 'roofed' with clay and had a central clay pier to support the clay roof, which was really the floor of the kiln. Lethbridge states that the kiln appeared to date from the time when Belgic pottery forms were giving place to more definite Romano-British ones probably in the third quarter of the first century A.D. Lethbridge also notes that *"the kiln is of interest, as it gives an idea of what kind of pottery was being baked in the neighbourhood perhaps a century or so before the Horningsea kilns were in operation."*⁴⁶

In summarising Lethbridge remarks how puzzling the finds in the primary fills of the ditch were when considering that the ditch had not been circling around on the east side as it was expected it would. He even goes on to suggest that it seemed possible that they were, in fact, dealing with a ditch of a long barrow, which had been completely levelled at some point past. It seems that they took the time to explore this idea but abandoned it when no further evidence for this could be found. Lethbridge notes the lack of post-holes discovered, especially as they cleared a considerable area on the east side of the site. Post-holes would have perhaps indicated proper protection of the ditch by means of a palisade as well as an inner bank, which might have been expected with a circular hill fort monument, apparently adding to Lethbridge's theory that Hughes had not found a circular hill fort and that the feature could have been something else or just unfinished.

Lethbridge concludes by saying that it appeared that there was sufficient evidence to suggest that the War Ditches was an unfinished work of the Bronze Age. He then adds: *"After this report was written..., all the topsoil on the east side of the chalk pits has been removed to prepare for the extension of the Great Pit. The trace of a ditch apparently of no great depth is now clearly visible. The track of this ditch extends somewhat further eastward than the line indicated by Hughes. It is about twelve ft. wide, with an entrance on the east side, and is not continuous. There is therefore a strong suggestion that the earthwork was never completed."*⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Lethbridge, T. C. (1949) 'Further Excavations At The War Ditches', PCAS Vol. XLII, CAS

⁴⁷ Lethbridge, T. C. (1949) 'Further Excavations At The War Ditches', PCAS Vol. XLII, CAS

The exact course and timing of Lethbridge's excavations in and around 1939, which were not written up until his 1949 report for *PCAS*, are not clear. There were most certainly excavations that took place on the site from 1949, whether because of Lethbridge's report appearing and kick-starting the interest, or perhaps the war being over and work was being resumed at the site, particularly as the site was still being quarried away, or even that work carried on piecemeal since around 1939, remains unclear.

1949-1951

The next published report on War Ditches doesn't come out until 1962 when Mr D White publishes a report on the excavations he had carried out at the site in 1961-62 which is looked at shortly. However, he then publishes a second report in *PCAS* in 1963 which is a write-up of the 1949-1951 excavations at the site called '*Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1949-51*'⁴⁸

In this report White, rather than discussing the actual earthwork of the War Ditches, describes the Roman-British structures and features within the site. White tells us how Lethbridge discovered the site in the summer of 1949 when the quarry workers had cleared the topsoil from the area in the course of their work. White sheds a little more light on the timeline of the exploration of the site by telling us that Lethbridge had started the work on the site in 1949 but that the more extensive work wasn't started until later that year by Mr Dauncy (of Birmingham University) who directed the excavations. The work was then continued by Mr Houlder (a member of the Cambridge Archaeological Field Club) until the work was finished on the site in 1951. In 1962 White began looking at the records from these excavations of 1949-1951, which were held at the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology (now Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum).

In this report, White describes the concentration of Romano-British structures that were explored at the site but he does not discuss, in any detail, the nature of the great ditch surrounding these features or its relation to these features. It appears that a settlement site was uncovered within the perimeter of the great ditch. The information was drawn from a large post-hole complex, a large pit, several drainage ditches and a well, which lead to the conclusion that there was a farmstead dating from the second to fourth century AD.

Interestingly, White states that this settlement lay slightly to the west of the entrance of the Iron-Age Hill Fort of War Ditch. This is something to note as no-one has previously suggested or mentioned anything about an entrance through the great ditch, if there was one or more, or where it may have been, in any of the other previous publications on the site. It is also worth noting that White calls the War Ditches an Iron Age Hill Fort despite Lethbridge's report claiming the site was probably Bronze Age. White could have been ignoring Lethbridge's findings and opinions or was going on the wealth of wider publications that had come out since Hughes' work, that frequently called the site an Iron Age Hill Fort. As White was concentrating on findings within the perimeter of the great ditch he seems, perhaps, to have not questioned this.

It is important to remember that White was writing this report from the site notes of 1949-1951.

The main features which White notes were on the site in the last excavation were the large pit and the Iron Age hill fort which was in the north-eastern and eastern parts of the

⁴⁸ White, D. A. (1963) '*Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1949-51*', *PCAS* Vol. LVI, CAS

area. Again, an interesting note as it is contrary to Lethbridge's claim that the ditch was absent on the eastern side.

White reports that the remaining features on-site were shallow and had been badly damaged by the quarrying work when the bulldozer removed the topsoil. He tells us how much damage had occurred to the site due to this industrial work, he says that there was complete removal of part of the well and that the postholes apparent on the site had been very badly truncated leaving only the very bases with just a few inches of each. Any floors that could have been associated would have been completely destroyed, the damage to this important archaeology cannot be underestimated and when we consider just how much more could have been known and investigated on the site had the damage not occurred it is such a pity. It is very likely that there may have been many more discrete features to be interpreted, which could have given us so much more important information.

Fig. 14 Excavations at War Ditches during 1949-1951

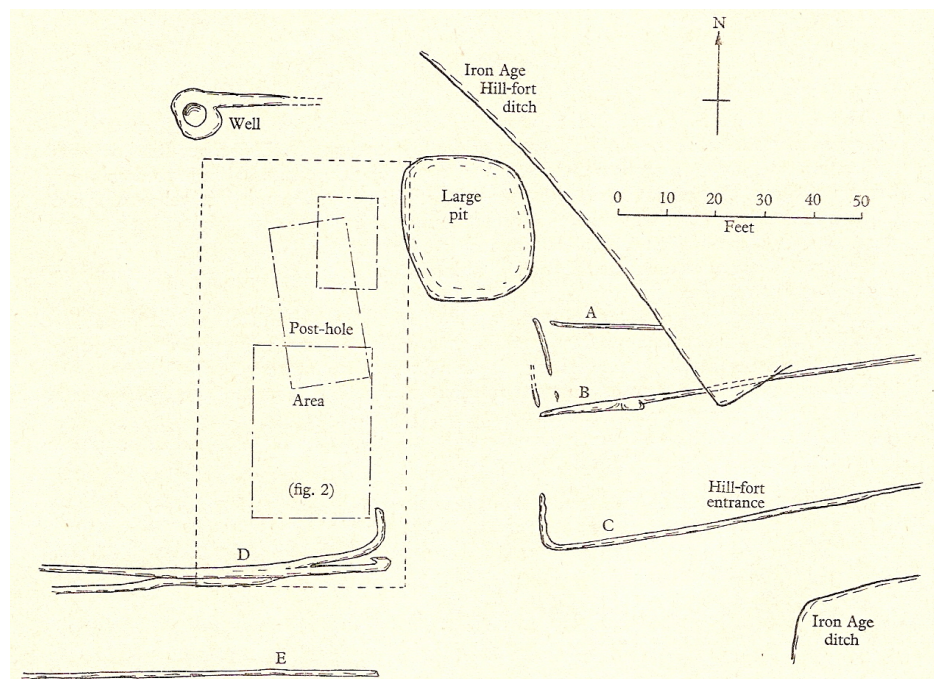
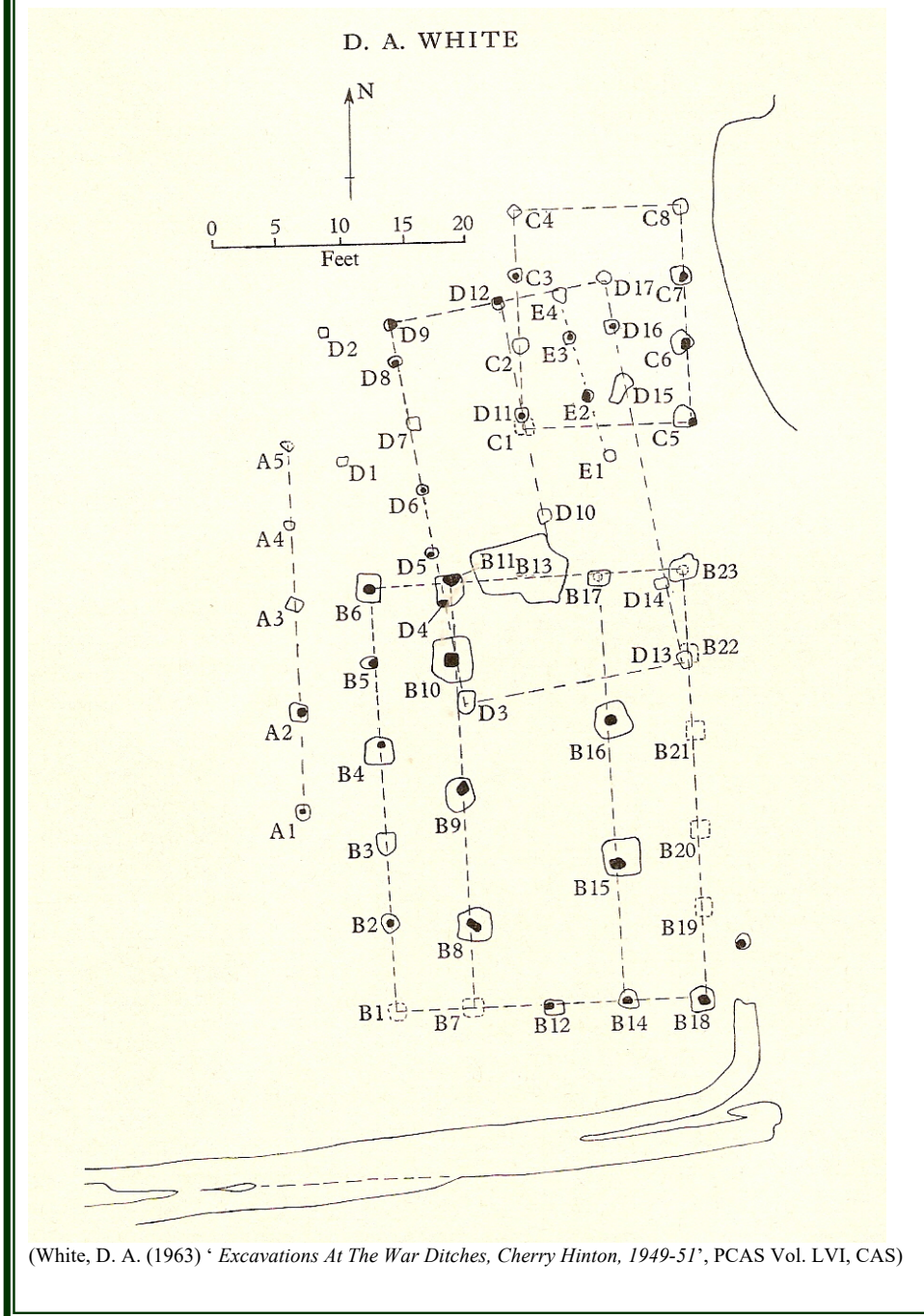


Fig. 1. General plan of site.

(White, D. A. (1963) 'Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1949-51', PCAS Vol. LVI, CAS)

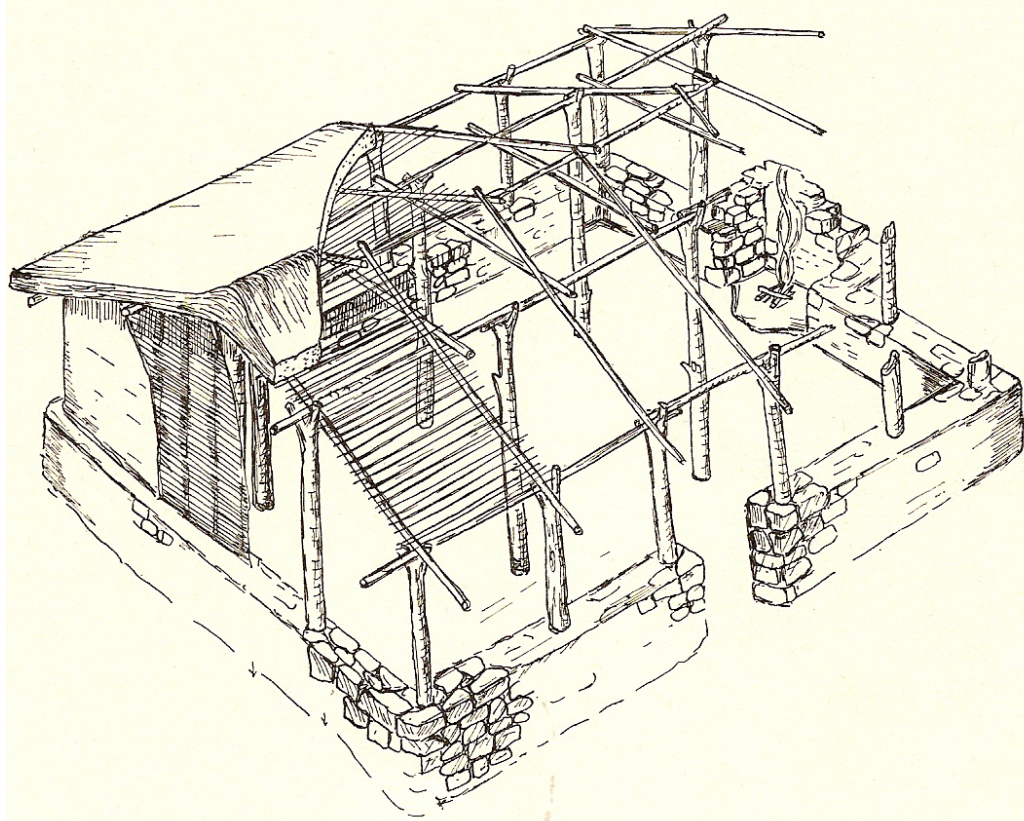
White suggests that the posthole formations on site conformed to a pattern which suggested buildings. He says that there were at least two buildings on the site which, from material excavated within the postholes, dated the buildings to around the second century AD.

Fig. 15 **Detail of Post-Hole Complex**



From the configuration of dark spots within the postholes White suggests that rather than shaped timbers, the wooden uprights were built with tree trunks. One of the buildings could have been quite large, measuring 25 by 35 ft. White goes on to suggest various ways in which the buildings could have been constructed and considers the design and architecture of such structures.

Fig. 16 **Reconstruction of Building B**



(White, D. A. (1963) 'Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1949-51', PCAS Vol. LVI, CAS

Along with the postholes giving clues to timber being used in the possible buildings, White notes the nearby large pit or quarry from which is likely the source of building stone for the walls of the buildings. We know that the high-quality chalk (clunch) from this site was used for buildings in the area since at least the medieval period, it would make sense for it to have been utilized from much earlier times and this would have been another reason why this site was so highly prized. It is noted that the excavators make no mention or comment of wattle and daub and there are no tiles reported on any part of the site, so an assumption is made that the buildings would have been thatched.

White explains that the feature numbered B (in Figure 16 above), is a shallow hollow, partly outside a hut. When excavated it was found to contain a great amount of burned earth and thus may possibly represent the hearth of the house, in which case a chimney (as shown in Fig. 16) is possible. The position of the door was not certain and there may well have been internal walls in the hut but no traces of any were found. The presence of a large amount of burnt debris from deposits of the Antonine period suggested that this building was burned down in the middle of the second century A.D.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ White, D. A. (1963) 'Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1949-51', PCAS Vol. LVI, CAS

Just to the north of this hut were more postholes representing the foundations of a rectangular building 18 by 13 ft and its general shape would, of all the buildings, most resemble a barn. There was also evidence of foundations for another building represented by a series of post-holes but they were the most incomplete. They seemed to show the outline of a building 32 ft. long and 18 ft. broad and had the appearance of a dwelling rather than a barn.

White discovers that the well (shown in Figure 14), which was described by Mr Houlder, was 3 feet in diameter and excavated to a depth of forty-two feet, indicating that it was much deeper than that. It was filled with rubble, apparently thrown in deliberately. Nothing resembling a primary deposit was found, probably because they didn't excavate to its base. The well was perfectly circular and vertical-sided and had steps cut in two opposing vertical rows that were arranged alternately so that a descent could be made straddle-wise. At the mouth, the sides expanded sharply at a depth of two feet to a diameter of about seven feet at the surface of the chalk. Around the mouth were a few small stake holes as of a hurdle fence. A shallow runnel, one foot three inches wide, ran to the east but faded out after twelve feet, indicating a path to the well.

White reports, from Houlder's description, that *"From near the bottom of the excavated portion of the well came a large deposit of early Antonine Samian. Many of these sherds showed signs of intense burning, a feature shared by much of the coarse ware from the well. Especially noticeable was the burnt handle of a flagon which had a few fragments of clinker adhering to it. There seems little reason to doubt that the well fell out of use during this period and was purposely filled in then. This view is further strengthened by the discovery of fragments of an Antonine Samian vessel, from the top 2 ft. of the well deposit. The sherds from the well filling can thus reasonably be dated to the years A.D. 140—70."*⁵⁰ And he goes on to suggest that the well and the buildings are contemporary.

White then describes the pit that was found (as shown on Figure 14) saying it was a large oval feature, which had a very irregular floor with a maximum depth of about 5½ ft. There was a ramp within it, leading from the base to the top, and White goes on to say that a possible reason for cutting the pit may have been to obtain chalk blocks for building or burning of lime. He notes that there was debris, much of it burnt, dating to the Antonine period –again like the well material - in the bottom level of the pit.

White reports that later, two rubbish pits were dug into the primary rubble; third- and fourth-century pottery were thrown into these holes but, since they were dug into an earlier layer, the later pits are contaminated with Antonine pottery. He states that a section of the whole pit is omitted from his report, since a great deal of the upper layers were removed before serious excavation started.⁵¹

⁵⁰ White, D. A. (1963) 'Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1949-51', PCAS Vol. LVI, CAS

⁵¹ White, D. A. (1963) 'Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1949-51', PCAS Vol. LVI, CAS

Finally, White gives a word about the ditches (shown in Figure 14), saying that no significant finds of pottery from these features had been preserved and it seemed impossible to date them more accurately. He does, however, suggest that there may be a connection between these ditches to the buildings as they seemed to follow some of the alignments of the buildings but he does add “*Whether this constitutes dating evidence for these features is still open to doubt, especially since many Roman native sites on the Fenland seem to have been constructed without any master plan or semblance to a rectangular order.*”⁵²

White concludes his examination of the site notes from 1919-1951 by saying: “*Rectangular buildings indicated on the site, replace the traditional round Iron Age dwelling, in the early decades of the Roman period. In the more out-of-the-way districts, the transition takes place at a later date than in the developed urban areas. Rectangular structures occur at Park Street and Lockleys in the last quarter of the first century whereas in Somerset round dwellings exist up to the second century.*”⁴ *This latter state of affairs may hold true in Cambridgeshire for two reasons; first, the relative backwardness of the indigenous Icenian natives, and, secondly, the halt of natural development caused by the suppression of the Boudiccan revolt. There seems little reason to doubt that the area of the War Ditch was continuously inhabited from the Flavian Period onwards; however, the construction of the farm in the Antonine period c. A.D. 130—if this represents the first Romanization on this site—comes at a very late date indeed. But the pottery sequence from this area shows conclusively that the farm was first occupied in this period.one is forced to refer to the present site as a farmstead..... Cherry Hinton stands on the border of two provinces of Roman Britain: to the south lies Essex and a countryside studded with villas, very different from the Fenland to the north, characterized by small farms and villages.*⁴ *By their nature the structures at the War Ditch seem to belong to the Fenland settlements, for, although the site is raised over 100 ft. above the low fens, the farmstead at Cherry Hinton should be interpreted as typical of the large number of farms that must have existed in the Roman Fenland.*”⁵³

While White discusses, the comparative examples of pottery on other sites – including examples like those found at Hadrian’s Wall, he does not mention any of the skeletons which were found during the 1949-1951 excavations but for which there is a record in the archives of the Duckworth Collection, which records seven sets of complete or partial human remains being deposited at the collection by the Archaeological Field Club. This record also notes a further deposit of remains in 1952.

⁵² White, D. A. (1963) ‘*Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1949-51*’, PCAS Vol. LVI, CAS

⁵³ White, D. A. (1963) ‘*Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1949-51*’, PCAS Vol. LVI, CAS

Loosely recapping the interpretation of the site so far, we know that from the work carried out, in the main, by Hughes between 1894-1908, he believed at first that he had discovered a large, linear ditch similar to the great Cambridgeshire dykes. With his later investigations, he finds that the ditch is curving around and eventually concludes that the War Ditches is a circular hill fort monument. This in turn leads to its comparison and suggested link with Wandlebury not far to the southeast. A selection of skeletons were found on the site over the course of the investigations, some appear to have been badly treated by mutilation and burning which leads to the suggestion that the War Ditches site saw at least one, possibly two violent events. The site is dated from the Iron Age with a re-occupation during the 1st-4th centuries AD by Romano British people.

Piece meal excavation takes place on the site until the next large excavation carried out by Lethbridge and associates which takes place in 1939 when the site is still being quarried away by industrial activity. Lethbridge claims that the northeastern side of the circular ditch was not there, and discredits Hughes' claim that the monument was perfectly circular, saying instead that the feature was an unfinished work and could be something of a different character altogether, concluding by saying that the War Ditches was an unfinished work of Bronze Age construction.

From White's account of the excavations that took place in 1949-1951 at the site, he does not get involved with the debate or write anything much about the ditch itself and instead compiles the information from the site notes of the time to describe the Romano-British settlement which was discovered within the enclosure of the War Ditches, concluding that during the excavations of 1919-51, which were also carried out by Lethbridge and others, a settlement site which included buildings, smaller ditches, pits and a well were discovered, suggesting a Romano-British farmstead and settlement upon the site.

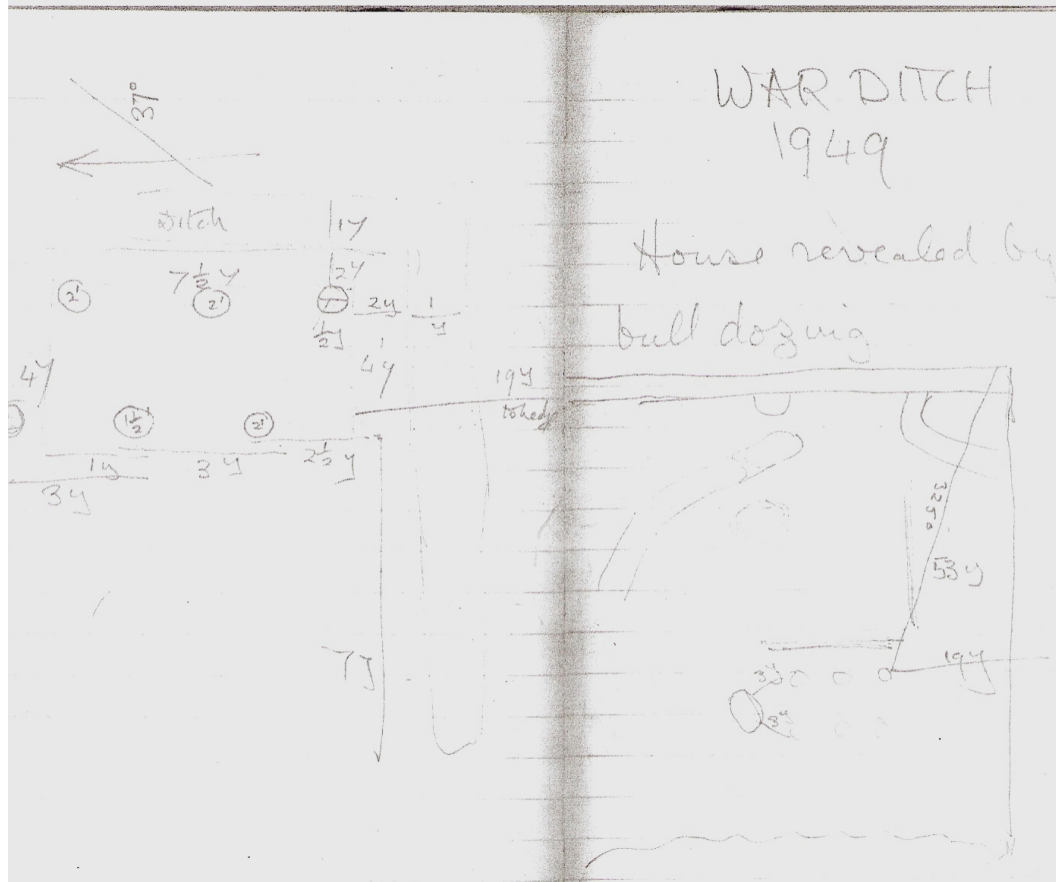
In reviewing much of the original excavation notes and plans from the 1949-1951 excavations myself, I have been able to draw a few more things worthy of note which White left out of his report of the excavation.

In re-examining the records and data held at the Archaeology & Anthropology Museum there were unfortunately no excavation notes held earlier than 1949 - which includes the 1939 investigations by Lethbridge or Hughes' earlier work, none of these excavation notes have been found anywhere yet. However, the field notes of excavations at the site, made by the team, mainly from the Archaeology Field Club, from 1949 onwards make interesting reading.

There is a field notebook by Dr Lachlan⁵⁴ who had excavated the site during this period, in which he records a hand sketch of the site showing the great ditch on the east side where Lethbridge before had not found it - bringing into doubt the quality of Lethbridge's earlier excavation work at the site and most certainly, his claim that the ditch on the eastern side didn't exist.

⁵⁴ Cambridge Archaeology & Anthropology Museum Archives (1949) Box 40 W08/1/5 Field Note Book "West Row Villa" 1949 Dr Lachlan, Skeletons Inc. War Ditch.

Fig. 17 **Dr Lachlan War Ditch 1949**



(Box 40 W08/1/5 Field Note Book "West Row Villa" 1949 Dr Lachlan, Skeletons Inc. War Ditch. Camb Arch & Anth)

I then discovered the original excavation notes of the 'Early Iron Age Ditch' by the Cambridge Archaeological Field Club (CAFC) during 1949-1951⁵⁵. These notes are signed by Houlder, 1956. The writer states that after removal of the topsoil on the site in 1949, this did actually reveal the ditch as defined by Hughes, confirming Hughes' theory and discrediting further not only Lethbridge's interpretations but also his excavation techniques. However, it would appear that Lethbridge was involved in these new investigations and would have had to reappraise his earlier work and explain why he had not seen the ditch previously.

In re-examining the original records from 1949-1951 which White had looked at in 1962 and written a summary report on, it is clearly stated by Houlder, in the AFC record notes, that once this larger area of topsoil had been removed the War Ditches was revealed to be a large roughly circular ditch as defined by Hughes who in his earlier excavations had investigated three segments of the ditch and had probed with a metal rod the circular

⁵⁵ Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum Archives, *Cambridge Archaeological Field Club Records. Box 31 G03/7/3*

shape of the earthwork. It was proved to be about 500ft in diameter from the outer edges of the ditch, as Hughes had suggested.

This removal of the topsoil had revealed traces of the overlaying Romano-British settlement and led to the 1949-1951 opportunity to explore the settlement area more thoroughly. Houlder states that the only entrance known was at the east side, marked by a gap 48ft wide within the main ditch, which at this entrance point, the terminuses at either end of the ditch turned outwards to the east forming 2 parallel ditches which were about 15ft wide and were traced right up to the boundary of the site. It was not resolved how much further the entrance ditches went.⁵⁶

It was noted during these excavations that there were indications in some places along the excavated sections of the great ditch that it appeared unfinished. This was represented by large chunks or bosses of chalk remaining unexcavated towards the base of the ditch along with varying differences in the size of some of the excavated segments of the ditch.

One would express some caution here as the excavations were not always carried out by experienced excavators and it was done in a piecemeal fashion on weekends where the weather would allow. It is not impossible that the full extent of the sections were not excavated and that they may have been undercut in places. This is noted by Hughes saying that the average width of the ditch was 15ft in places but that other sections later excavated close by Hughes, appeared to be only 12 ft wide. Having said that, one would hope that someone was responsible for checking such work along the way and that the results from these excavations would show a more or less accurate picture of findings, but we know that it wasn't always the case. There could also be other explanations for the chalk bosses within the ditch, other than being an indication of an unfinished work, we cannot be sure of the quality or accuracy of the excavation, so it could be these large chunks of chalk had fallen into the ditch or perhaps they could represent an earlier/original construction of a double ditched earthwork, one can think of numerous explanations but without being sure of the presented excavation results we cannot make any clear conclusions.

Houlder notes that further indications for a lack of coordination in construction or in finishing the earthwork were suggested by the lack of postholes representing a timber palisade, rampart revetment or gateway as was expected to be part of such Iron Age hillforts at the time. Again, caution is to be used with this suggestion, as the true nature and type of such sites across the country and beyond were still being discovered in the 1940s-1950s. The apparent lack of postholes and indications of a gateway does not necessarily mean that the earthwork was unfinished and keeping in mind the piecemeal fashion of excavation at the site in part by inexperienced diggers is still worth taking note of.

Houlder states that the discovery of an isolated human tibia at the base of one of the ditch sections, in 1949, was one of the only suggestions that the construction of the original ditch was cut short by an attack on its intending defenders and he says that although this

⁵⁶ Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum Archives, *Cambridge Archaeological Field Club Records. Box 31 G03/7/3*

would be a good suggestion as to the unfinished nature of the ditch as a whole it is an otherwise an unsupported piece of evidence. A prehistoric date is given, 3rd or 4th century B.C., to the construction and possible attack of the great ditch from fragments of pottery found in the primary fills of the ditch which were excavated in 1949. Furthermore, the 1949 excavations found no evidence of habitation on the site from this period except for food debris in the ditch, so Houlter suggests that the Bronze Age Beaker sherds found by Lethbridge, along with the flints, were probably best explained as having come from some earlier feature and context.

As new excavations of the ditch sections continued from 1949 it was discovered that some Iron Age pottery was in the lower fills of the ditch and that it became more frequent as the layers got a little higher. Houlter explains that although the site may lay unoccupied for some duration after its initial construction and possible attack, there were good indications for the site being reoccupied by the Belgae, whom it seemed attempted a re-fortification of the ditch, as was suggested in one of the excavated sections. The occupation was ended, it appears, by the deliberate slighting of the vallum and a massacre⁵⁷. This theory was confirmed by the thick layer of heavy chalk rubble which also contained much charcoal and which was thrown into the ditch at this point and was not only confirmed by these 1949 excavations but was also seen by Hughes and Lethbridge in the earlier excavations. With the addition of the burned and charred skeletons excavated just below this layer, it all indicated an important, dreadful, event having taken place at the site in the late Iron Age period.

Houlter then explains that there seemed to be a relatively short lapse in occupation of the site until its final occupation by a Romano-British homestead which was represented in the form of postholes of a building at the east side of the site, with small palisade trenches crossing over the then completely filled great ditch, accompanied by a well and on the western side a kiln of late 1st-century date dug partially into the side of the great ditch.⁵⁸

Houlter makes a good attempt at trying to place the sequence of events at the War Ditches into the wider context saying that the need for constructing the hillfort in the first place, around the 3rd century B.C., was probably due to a hostile band, whom it appears caught the defenders short. Houlter suggests that the hostile element could have been the Marnians who were arriving in the country around this period, particularly noted around Wessex where there was further evidence that such hillforts were widely being rebuilt or constructed. Houlter gives Ladle Hill Hillfort as a direct example of an unfinished hillfort and apparently very similar to War Ditches. He also states that some Marnian burials had been excavated from Newnham in Cambridge.

Houlter suggests that the ditch was extensively silted up, by a natural process, for at least the next two centuries until the site's occupation by the Belgae. Their subsequent clear massacre, Houlter says, could be attributed to a last stand on the borders of Icenian territory by the Belgae against a Claudian invasion. He does say that it could be however an earlier massacre, perhaps between the Belgae and Iceni as there was a silting up of

⁵⁷ Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum Archives, *Cambridge Archaeological Field Club Records. Box 31 G03/7/3*

⁵⁸ Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum Archives, *Cambridge Archaeological Field Club Records. Box 31 G03/7/3*

about 2 feet from the time of the massacre and the arrival of Romano-British settlement on site which seemed quite a long gap.⁵⁹

O.

Belgae:

The Belgae were a group of tribes living in northern Gaul, on the west bank of the Rhine, in the 3rd century BC, and later also in Britain. They gave their name to the Roman province of Gallia Belgica, and later, to the modern country of Belgium. Based on the development of imagery on coins, it seems likely that, by the time of the Roman conquest, some of the tribes of south-eastern Britain were ruled by a Belgic aristocracy or were Belgic influenced culturally.

Marnian:

200s BC - The Marnians invaded, conquering via the Rivers. Their initial settlements around here were around the Fens. The hill-fort at Narborough was built against them. A Marnian has been found buried in Shouldham with his sword. The wheel-pins of a chariot, the ultimate Marnian status symbol, have been found at Marham in Norfolk. Their state became known as the Icenii tribal kingdom.

P.



Ladle Hill is a unique example of an 'unfinished' hillfort on the site of an earlier Bronze Age settlement. It shows features which would not be seen in a completed work e.g. marking-out trenches, partly dug sections of ditch and untidy spoil heaps.

The 1949-51 excavation diary of the Cambridge Archaeology Field Club (CAFC) also contains interesting, previously unpublished information which helps explain the sequence of events during this excavation and the finds made.⁶⁰

The 1949-1951 excavations at the War Ditches site were conducted by members of the CAFC on Sundays, as and when people could make it and when the weather permitted. The excavations were carried out in a piecemeal fashion but with some direction. The main ditch of the supposed Iron Age hillfort was marked out in five places where they intended to excavate sections across it and they named the sections A1 –E1, unfortunately, I have been unable, yet, to find a plan for the site showing where each of these sections was placed around the ditch. The club members were to go up and excavate when they had the time to fit it in, they were also to keep their own records of their progress with the idea that at the end of the excavation of these segments, the main section drawings and recording would be a joint effort between them all. This satisfied at least one of the objects of the field club, as it was their aim to be able to encourage people and give people the opportunity to work on such sites which they may not ordinarily get the chance to do.

⁵⁹ Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum Archives, *Cambridge Archaeological Field Club Records. Box 31 G03/7/3*

⁶⁰ Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum Archives, *Box 32 G03/7/2 Excavation diary 1949-51 War Ditches. C.A.F.C*

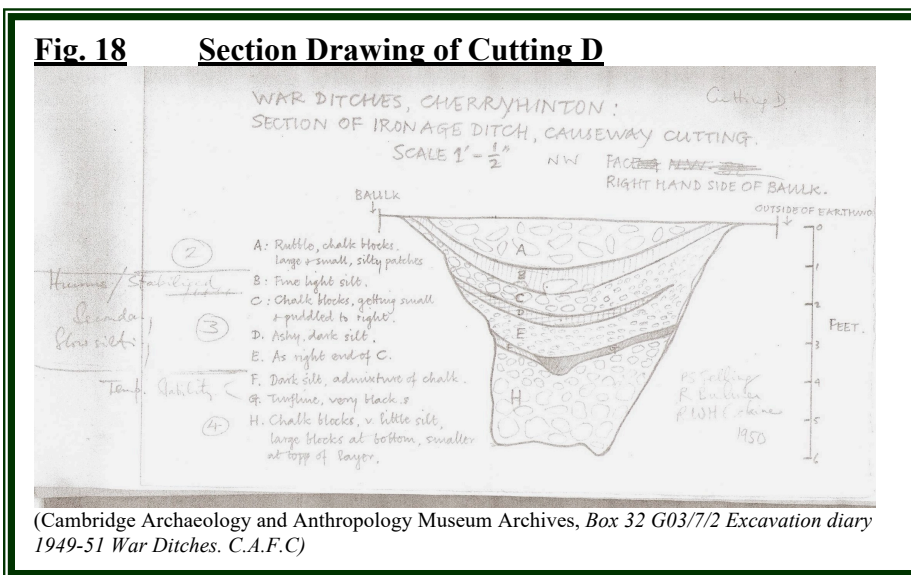
At the beginning of the 1949 excavation, which had started in May, the plan was to start excavating the five sections marked out across the main ditch. By the end of the May term (June) three of the sections had been completed, one had never been started, and the remaining one, it is stated, was “a sad case of faint heartedness” presumably excavation of it was not finished at all.

Towards the end of term, a sixth section (E11) was started in the ditch by Mr M F Howard and the boys from the Leys School. They intended on excavating this section over the summer whilst the members of the field club were away. The diary notes, that they took several more months than that, however, to finish excavating this new section.

Section A1 was backfilled once it was finished, whereas sections C1, E1, E11 were fenced around to allow for safety whilst people came to visit the site and view the excavation work.

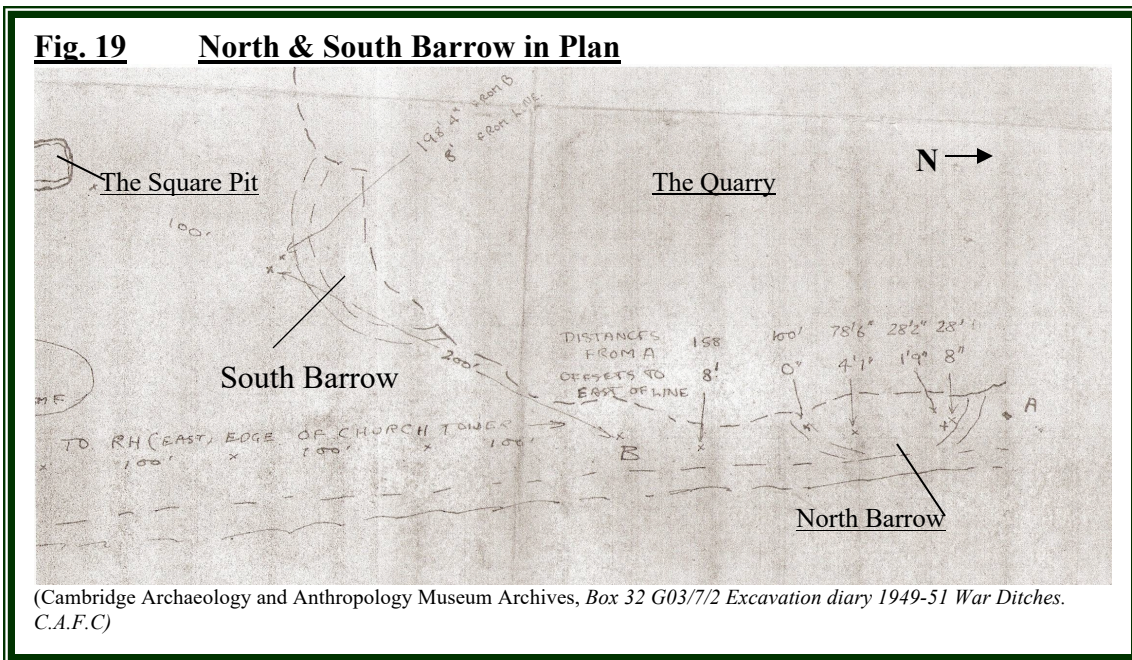
As the excavation of the ditch was taking place Mr A H A Hogg surveyed the site, plotting features he could see on the ground, which included many small ditches. In the meantime, Mr T C Lethbridge discovered some features on the site which he claimed to be post-holes and which he set about excavating. The diary states that although these findings began great discussions on possibilities, they could not be clear until further work was carried out to clear the surface of the site properly. During the long vacation term of 1949, it is said this clearing work was started.

From July 13th – July 30th 1949 (long vacation term) a short period of excavation took place on-site by any of the members of the field club that happened to be staying in Cambridge for the holiday. Mr K D M Dauncey from Birmingham University, Department of Archaeology, was invited by the field club to come to Cambridge and direct this part of the excavation as it was a much more ambitious area that they wanted to tackle. This time the Great Ditch was to be left alone as the field club were confident that they could deal with that easily themselves if they wanted to do more on that.



As the chalk was still being quarried for industrial use, this was a great cause for concern as to the impending destruction of the site, the field club decided that it was important to look at the edge of the quarry and around for any other possible archaeological features that hadn't been recorded and that may get lost.

The diary records that one segment of a Bronze Age barrow had previously been noted at the edge of the quarry and with careful searching they discovered another one further to the north, it presented as a ditch section at the edge of the quarry cliff face, which they were able to trace its return a short way along indicating, that like the one noted already, half of the barrow had been quarried away. These barrows were named the South Barrow and North Barrow respectively.

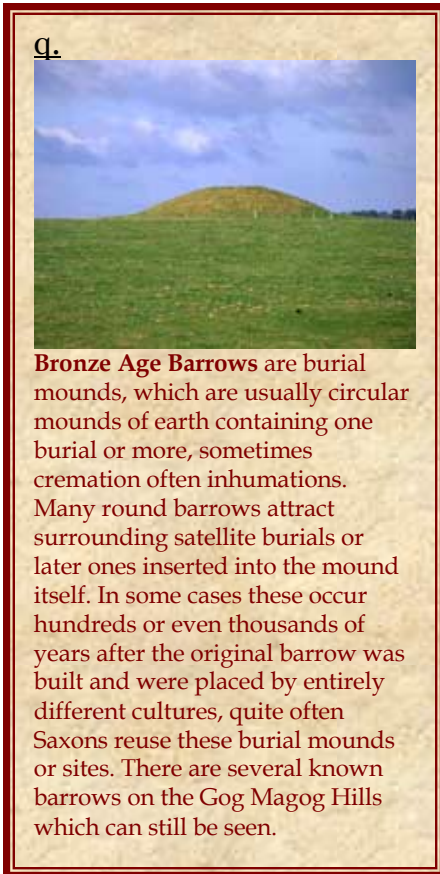


The club placed a section through the remaining barrow and came upon a skeleton accompanied by a spearhead and some pottery. It was clear from the position of this burial that it was a secondary interment of a later Saxon date. This caused the excavators to extend their investigations and look more carefully at what was going on. When they extended the section over the barrow, they then discovered three more Saxon burials along with their grave goods. One burial is stated as that of an old woman, completely crouched, with grave goods of a knife in a leather sheath, a comb, buckle and a strap end. The next burial is noted as that of a young girl and was accompanied by grave goods of a small black pot by the head, 4 beads and 1 silver wire ring. The final Saxon burial was described as having a supposed sword with it, but it is stated that, in Mr T C Lethbridge's opinion, the sword was in fact a bedstead which apparently was a type fairly frequent in late Saxon cemeteries.

Given their discoveries in the newly found North Barrow the field club decided that they would take a better look at the South Barrow as well. They excavated a section across what remained of this barrow but did not find any secondary Saxon remains there. It may

be that there had been some on the side since quarried away. As for the remains of any original burials, if there were any, there was no sign. The field club noted that if there had been they too would have probably been quarried away in the past. There were however signs of burning and some animal bone in the secondary silting of the South barrow.

The conclusions drawn from excavating these two features were that they were most likely to have been Bronze Age barrows, although no dating evidence had come forth from them to support this but by their nature and style it was most probable and they would have been quite flattened by Saxon times, which brought along the secondary interments.



An insightful sentence as to the task of the field club in the coordination of the work of the quarrymen is found in the excavation diary notes on Wednesday 20th July 1949; “Foreman of the chalk quarrying causing trouble about passage of lorries. Nonsense.”

Further to the south, after cleaning the area on the ground there, an unusual feature was discovered. The cleaning back had revealed a square shaped enclosure in the form of a ditch with rounded corners and no break anywhere within the ditch. It measured about 25’ square, with the ditch being 1’ deep and 3’ wide. Two sections were excavated into the enclosure ditch, but nothing was found apart from one piece of course pottery of which no date could be given. Again, the problems caused by the industrial quarrying activity on the site previously were noted as such a shallow extend of the feature remained and any inclusion of finds within could have been re-deposited there by the former disturbance.

The final explorations of the summer vacation period were concluded by investigating the area where postholes were recently discovered and partially excavated by T C Lethbridge. The explorations revealed several more postholes than were first seen by Lethbridge and they noted that with their further investigations, Lethbridge’s postholes were much larger than had been first thought. It seemed that Lethbridge had only actually excavated the fine silt in the center of the posthole which would have represented the position of any post, he had failed to actually excavate the chalk rubble post-packing and therefore the actual extent of the original cutting of the post-holes.

Once plotted onto a plan the postholes seemed to form at least two different sets of holes and it is well noted in the excavation diary that there may well have been many more postholes, as the diggers could only explore those which they had had time to uncover.

The ones they did get a chance to look at in the four days they had left on site, were excavated and recorded. Pottery excavated from these postholes was said to be Roman though it was noted that some pieces looked rather Belgic. They called the area containing the post-holes the 'house area' giving confirmation that they believed that the postholes were probably related to a building structure that once stood on the site. The excavation diary records that, the posthole area was bounded on the south side by a double ditch turning to the north and that the diggers excavated two sections within this ditch. It does not say what the results from these two sections were.

There is a note of a small pit being excavated within the post-hole/house area which it was observed, contained: *'plenty of Roman pottery'* and a mention of presumed plough scratching marks on the ground to the east side of the 'house' area. The note in the diary states that *'no particular task can be said to have been finished; that it would have to be done by the field club in the winter months, and possibly at a later date with Mr Dauncey in charge.'*

A note of amusement for people living in the village of Cherry Hinton today is that the diggers, during the summer vacation, adjourned to the Robin Hood & Little John pub for lunch occasionally but one note in the excavation diary states that they went to the Red Lion for a change and that it was *"more satisfactory than the Robinhood & Little John"*

In addition to those members of the field club and others, taking part in the summer excavation of 1949, the diary notes that on Sunday 24th July they had a visit from four Danish archaeologists who were going to enjoy an afternoon picnic at the site.

Excavation began again on the site, after the summer vacation discoveries, from the Michaelmas term 1949 to the May term 1950. The main goal of the field club was to utilise their weekend digging sessions at the site to follow up the discoveries made during the summer. The North barrow was chosen to be investigated first as it was felt this was most under threat from the quarrying work.

The continuation of the excavation of the north barrow was worthwhile in producing a further two skeletons of Saxon date, one having grave goods. In addition, this more thorough excavation of the north barrow also revealed additional associated features. One of these features was a shallow pit which contained some well-struck flints and the other feature was a pit that seemed to be contemporary with the construction of the barrow and may have been for the purpose of burial itself. It was proved, upon further clearing of the area around North Barrow, where the original central Bronze Age burial would have been expected to lay, that it had indeed been quarried away some time previously.

By this further cleaning and stripping of the topsoil around North Barrow, the team were able to follow the course of the barrow ditch and a further three secondary Saxon burials were discovered. Two of these burials were lying across a World War II Home Guard weapons pit and had been cut through by the pit. There was now a total of nine Saxon burials and only two of them had no grave goods. There was still a good deal to be excavated and understood about North Barrow, but limits and time led the team to turn

their attention back to South Barrow instead, with the hope that more could be done on North Barrow at a later date.

The same clearing back of the area took place at South Barrow and the team, was able to place some sections through its ditch. They retrieved some Bronze Age Beaker pottery and a cinerary urn. The team also discovered two more pits around South Barrow one of which contained a flint scraper. Regarding the surrounding barrow ditch, they noted a sharp cornered indentation where the ditch widened at one point.

During the Lent and Easter terms of 1950, in addition to investigating the barrows further, the team started work on further investigating the square enclosure previously discovered. The diary notes that they set about completely excavating the whole enclosure ditch of this enigmatic feature which they state provided no dating evidence of note and saying that the feature was still unexplained, and a possible answer may only be obtained by a comparative study.

Mr Dauncey began the direction of the post-hole area, for the first five days of the Easter term 1950, continuing the work on this area previously started. As more scrape cleaning was carried out around the area several more features showed up these included more post-holes and surrounding ditches, of which the double portion on the south side was most notable. On the East side, a system of features began to emerge consisting of narrow slots of which they could not decide the exact nature until more work on the area was done. They proceeded with planning the post-holes during this time.

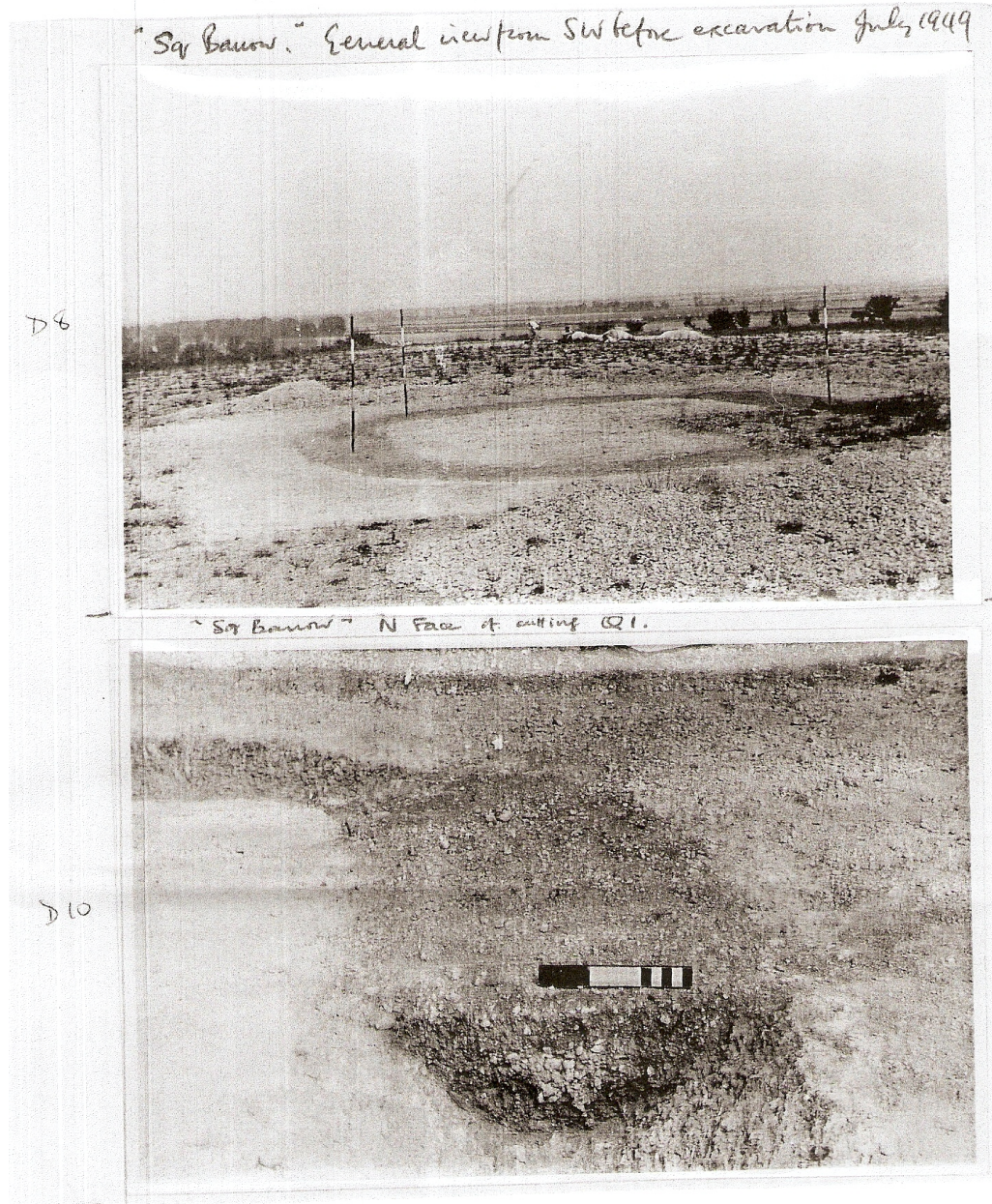
One of the main problems at this time was a real lack of available labour as the exams were about to take place. The team that was working at the site were able to do some further investigations of the 'slot system' that had shown up by planning it and they tied up any recording work that needed doing on the postholes etc. they also rapidly excavated the remaining portions of the North and South Barrows.

During the May week of the Easter term in 1950, Mr Dauncey came back to oversee the excavation of the slot area and its recording. The team then set about excavating the square pit which lay just inside the Iron Age Ditch to the north of the posthole area. Only one quadrant was started but the bad weather called an early halt to this features excavation. In addition to the bad weather, the team had discovered that the square pit was much deeper than they had expected it to be, with a complicated stratigraphy. So, this feature was left to be excavated more fully during the Long Vacation Term 28th – 30th July 1950.

However, once the long vacation term had begun, the continuation of the excavation of the square pit was abandoned in favour of scraping back the whole of the southern area of the site. The team wanted to do this to make sure that they had seen and recorded the real edge of the posthole complex. In doing so the team discovered a few more features that hadn't been seen before. These included several isolated postholes and a ditch on the north side parallel and corresponding to the ditch on the south side (which was a channel

running into a well). Also discovered were some smaller pits, all these new features were planned so that they could be found again for any future excavation.

Fig. 20 **The Square Feature, July 1949**



(Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum Archives, Box 32 G03/7/2 Excavation photographs 1949)

During Easter term and in June 1950 the boys from the Leys School had helped again by clearing out the small ditch that ran across the entrance causeway of the Iron Age ditch.

The next entry in the excavation diary takes us to the Michaelmas Term 1950. The first entry is for Sunday October 15th, when, it is stated, the weather was cool, clear and sunny and that there were 16 people present including five visitors.

The excavations at the site continued with a new cutting being made into the Iron Age ditch (The Great Ditch) at the north side of the causeway by Mr Bulmer and Mr Gelling. This was an interesting section of the great ditch as it showed signs, within the infilling, of the continuation of one of the Romano British slots across it, along with another one at right angles running north with what looked like a posthole within it. As they continued excavating this section of the great ditch it was noted that the stratigraphy was complicated and that there appeared to be an unexcavated bulk or boss of chalk near the surface, there were many bones found within the section and the edges of the great ditch were almost vertical, particularly on the south side at the causeway edge.

The small ditch which lay across the south side of the great ditch causeway was cleaned up after its, the diary states, '*depredation by the Leys boys*'. Showing that inexperienced and unsuitably unsupervised digging at the site took place upon occasion.

The small slot which cut over the great ditch was excavated on the east side of the great ditch and proved to be very shallow and couldn't be traced into the great ditch with any certainty.

The square pit which was only partially excavated before being abandoned in the summer was cleaned up and it was discovered that it was not just one pit. It appeared there was one pit within two others. It was decided to start excavating the east half of the southwest quadrant to gain a clearer picture of what the pit/s represented. The team found medieval pottery within the top silting of the pit/s and further scrape cleaning was done. As it was excavated considerable amounts of pottery were found in all layers.

There was a shortage of tools as the diary states '*The tool crisis was resolved by Dr Clark who brought more*'. The site also continued to receive a steady stream of visitors which included Lethbridge still showing an interest.

On Sunday 22nd October the diary states that the turnout was excellent with 25 people at various times, along with a great number of non-combatants promising to help with digging the following week. More visitors came to visit the site including Professor Garrod (the first female Professor at Cambridge – Archaeology).

Still more scrape cleaning was undertaken on the site which was useful as it showed up many features that hadn't been seen before. In this new wave of cleaning, a long slot began to appear at the extreme south-west corner of the posthole area, lying parallel to the double ditch. Postholes were found in association with it.

A week later excavation was begun on the slot at the south side, work was continued on the double ditch and a start was made on a pit in northwest corner – the inner 'structure'

proved to be much deeper than the outer 'packing' with several small stake holes around the edge.

On Sundays through November 1950, work continued on examining the pit in the southwest corner of the square pit, which proved to be quite circular and a posthole was discovered at the south side of the square pit. A short while later another posthole was discovered on the west side of the square pit. Interestingly the northwest pit proved to be a well with steps cut into it, going down indefinitely. In the meantime, a human femur was found alone in a chalky rubble layer just below the top filling in Cutting D of the great ditch.

Work on the site during Michaelmas Term drew to a halt almost completely by Tuesday 14th November as the weather had deteriorated. Only the well continued to be steadily excavated downwards.

From the Lent Term 1951, no detailed diary was kept. The notes state that the well had been dug to about 21ft but they still hadn't reached the very base of it. The square pit contained quite complicated inner pits which it states were investigated and recorded, whilst the rest of the area within the great ditch was scraped cleaned.

Over Sundays during the Easter Term 1951, scrape cleaning was started in a new area at the northeast corner of Caius Pit where Mr Hoggs' survey showed some slots. The new cleaning showed that the south slot had many more slots deeper within it. It was then decided to carry out a new survey, independent of Hogg's survey, as so few of his survey pegs could be found. It was found that the whole area was riddled with small features. In addition, the well was taken down to a depth of 33ft.

Sunday 20th May 1951, gives us the last diary entry saying that cutting D in the ditch is finished with a shallow part at the east end of the cutting that had no finds. A human skull was also found in this cutting, from just behind the half section between south wall and the bulk, just above primary silting. It finishes by saying that no work on the well or new area is done. As this is the last diary entry it would seem likely that this could have been the last day of digging, we have however a reference to Houlder continuing to direct excavations on the site until at least 1955, as shown by a note on a list of finds.⁶¹ It is not entirely clear how consistent the excavations were during this period. The next record we have of excavation at the site is in 1957 when Mr Barfield carries out some further investigations due to continued quarrying work at the site which was revealing more features whilst destroying them.

⁶¹ Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum Archives, Box 32 G03/7/6

1957-1961

In 1957, Lethbridge publishes his well-known book *Gogmagog: The Buried Gods* in which he concurs that “*There seems to be little doubt that the fort, a nearly true circle, with entrance on the east, was laid out during the first phase of the Iron Age.*” He goes on to describe it thus “*But disaster overtook the project and it was never completed. I have found burnt skeletons and charred woodwork thrown into it. There seems little doubt that work was still being carried out when the place was stormed. The workers were killed, the piles of wood for the revetments and stockades burnt and everything tumbled back, still glowing, into the ditch. It was never begun again. By the time of the Roman Conquest it was almost entirely silted up and tile filling used for the construction of pottery kilns and burials.*” He also notes that since his report in PCAS in 1949 there had been more archaeological investigations at the site, but the results had not been published.⁶²

The sequence of events, of people involved in excavating at the site and what they discovered, gets more and more unclear as we try to understand who was doing what and when between 1951 -1961. From extracts of correspondence⁶³ between Mr Barfield and, it seems, Mr Houlder, it is clear that Barfield excavated at the site from at least 1957 to around 1961. The following extracts from this correspondence give some idea of what happened during this time.

A note dated February 1957, states that within the last term, quarrying on the site had reached the limits of the circular ditch and that the machines had exposed the filling of the ditch for about 50 yards along the quarry face. The parts of three skeletons were disturbed in the process. Barfield says that since then he had been trying to rescue what he could. The area exposed contained three trenches previously dug by the Field Club in 1951 and part of the small defence ditch in front of the entrance (perhaps referring to the World War II weapons pit). Barfield describes how he tried to get more dating evidence out of the primary fills of the ditch but had no success, other than some pottery from the bottom of the entrance ditch. He did collect some pottery from higher up within the ditch which he says he was easily able to correlate with the sections from the previous excavations. He also found a small bronze ring with one of the skeletons.

Within the collection of letters, there is mention of an unpublished report, written by Barfield on his excavations of 1957, which has not yet been traced.

Barfield dug three trenches – numbers one and three he says he was able to plot but number two was difficult as it was in a chaotic part of the quarry with industrial quarry work going on all around him. He states that whilst writing up his report in 1957, the quarrying had recommenced in the area of the ditches and that the quarrying had cut right across the well, previously noted in other excavations at the site, lowering its mouth by about 13 feet.

⁶² Lethbridge, T. C. (1957) ‘*Gogmagog: The Buried Gods*’, Routledge & Kegan Paul

⁶³ Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum, *Archives Box 32 G03/7/6*

In Oct 1957 Barfield visited the site to find that an area of topsoil had been removed by the quarry workers, stripping the soil down to chalk, which in turn revealed a clear, new section of the ditch along with some pits and post-holes. Barfield remarked that he would probably limit the investigations to a couple of the pits and to drawing a plan of the new features. He also states that Mr Howard and some boys from the Leys School were continuing to dig at the site at weekends when they could. It seems they rarely keep records of their work, so the situation of trying to understand the progress of excavations at the site gets even more confusing.

In one of the letters⁶⁴ Barfield mentions another unpublished report produced by him, of new discoveries in 1958 along with plans of the site, again these items have not yet been traced.

From 1957-58, Barfield discovered a rectangular plan of six post holes similar to which was found previously on site further to the north. The postholes were all about 2ft square and 2 ft deep, containing a few sherds of early Roman pottery. He investigated a ditch which was about 10 inches deep from the bulldozed surface and which also contained a few sherds of Roman pottery and had a posthole in the SW arm of the ditch. This indicated clear signs that the whole area within the great circular ditch had been used as a settlement of some kind at least since the Romano-British period. The great ditch may have been almost silted up by this time, but it is likely there would have been some sign of it upon the ground. As nearly all excavations on the site tended to be on the inside area of the circular ditch or actually within the ditch itself, it means that a really clear picture of how widely spread this Romano-British settlement was is hard to say, it could well be that it extended beyond the bounds of the main circle of the ditch and that there is still much more to be discovered in the fields immediately around the War Ditches site.

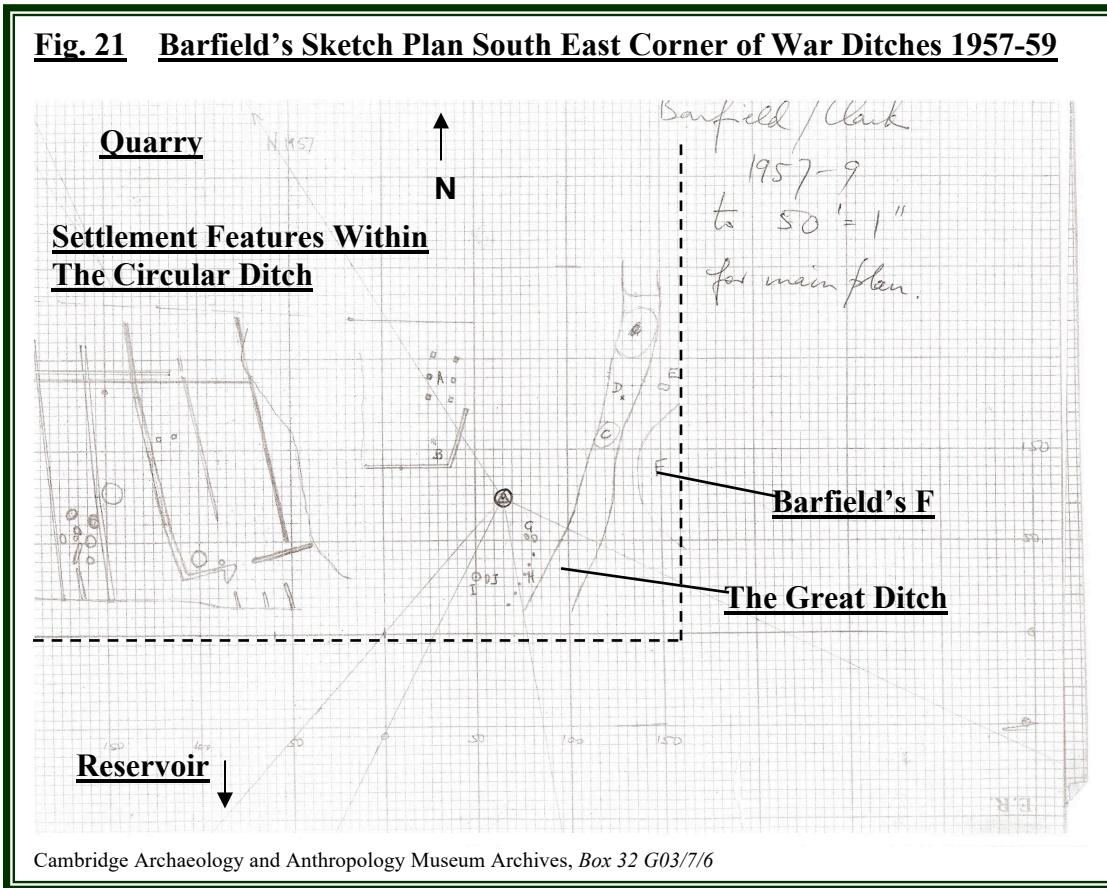
In the great circular ditch fill Barfield found a concentration of Belgic pottery and animal bones within the first few inches of the ditch fill. The human remains were found at the bottom of the upper chalk fill layer within the main ditch which was stratigraphically the same position as the human remains that he had found in 1957. He states that between the previously dug sections of EI and EII, was where he discovered some human skull fragments, again in the upper chalk layers.

Barfield noted a 'figure of eight' shaped depression which was about 4 inches deep, it had a heavily burnt chalk surface inside and contained a large amount of burnt clay fragments and many sherds of a Roman pot of the same clay. He says it seemed to have been a kiln but most of it had been bulldozed away. This was another good indication that pottery production was occurring at the site, during the Roman period.

He notes another shallow pear-shaped depression with a heavily burnt chalk surface inside but no trace of pottery firing and a filling of dark earth, so Barfield suggests it could have been a cooking place. In addition, he finds two shallow pits containing a few Roman sherd and animal bones.

⁶⁴ Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum Archives, *Box 32 G03/7/6*

He notes the top of a well 5ft in diameter with Roman pottery in the top fill and foot holes cut in the sides but does not say if this is the same well as previous excavations have seen or if it is a newly discovered and unexcavated well. He then says that the quarry has dug away all up to the fence and the line of the ditch.



A line of six postholes all 1ft. 6inches diameter but only 3 inches deep were noted next to and inside of the great ditch. Barfield suggests these were probably only the very bottom remains of a line of postholes within a former rampart, there were no finds from the fillings. This is the first indication seen that the great ditch could have had a palisade and is a very important discovery, helping to create a better picture of what the War Ditches would have looked like and adding information to help the interpretation of the site.

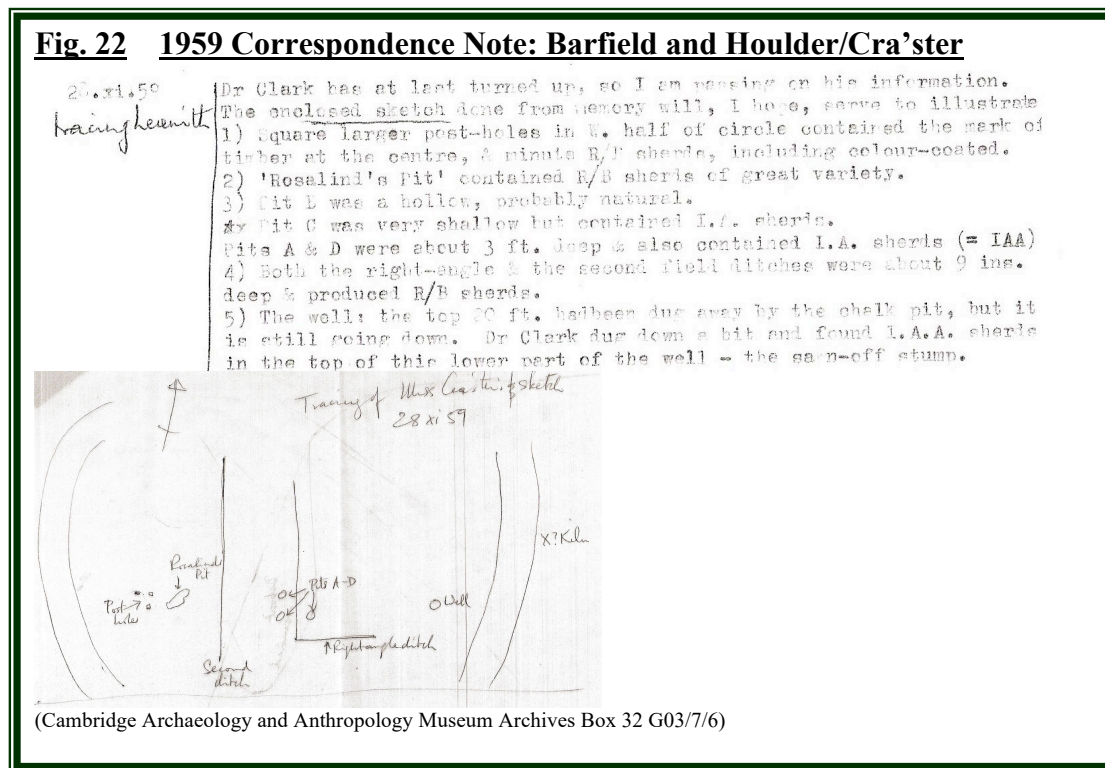
Barfield also noted a very unusual depression in the chalk (Barfield's F – see Fig.22), of which only part had been uncovered by bulldozing. He states that it was 3 ft deep at its deepest point and contained brown earth filling which only had a few sherds of Roman pottery near the surface⁶⁵. He particularly notes that at the nearest point to it the main ditch narrows considerably as if it had been dug later. This is quite significant as whatever this feature may have been it certainly looks as though the great ditch respects it, indicating that it was there before the ditch was constructed. The fact that a few sherds

⁶⁵ Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum Archives, Box 32 G03/7/6

of Roman pottery were found near the surface is not sufficient evidence of a date for the feature. If, as already indicated by the finds from the Great Ditch, dating to at least the Iron Age, it could be expected that this newly discovered feature would date from the prehistoric period. As an initial theory, it could well be a Bronze Age burial feature, like those already discovered a short distance north within the quarry area in the earlier excavations.

In 1959 there is a record of correspondence with Miss Cra'ster⁶⁶ (again it seems to be by Houlder) which states that there are plans of the soil marks on the two further stripped areas. The whole of the area on the side of the lane away from the reservoir had now been stripped. The two planned areas shown fitted on to Barfield's plan of 1957 and took it up to the northwest ditch segment where Hughes and Lethbridge had dug. The letter noted that Dr Clark, of Fulbourn, had done a certain amount of digging in the pits and postholes uncovered by the bulldozer in the last two years. These features mostly produced Romano British sherds along with a bit of Belgic pottery. Whereas one of the pits on the 1958 plan, produced a few Iron Age sherds, not Belgic and the other features investigated by Dr Clark had nothing but Romano British sherds. There were notes saying that the well contained Iron Age sherds, one of which had a rim with finger-tip impressions on the top.

For 1959 there is a correspondence note (see Fig. 22), which gives some more information about the site. Note its first comment that "Dr Clark has at last turned up, so am passing on his information."



⁶⁶ Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum Archives, Box 32 G03/7/6

L.



Lawrence Barfield (1935-2009) had an interest in archaeology from a young age and as a school boy excavated a Medieval Manor site at Hamper Mill. He came to Cambridge in October 1955 to Magdalene College to read Archaeology and Anthropology under Graham Clark and Glyn Daniel. It was during his Cambridge years that Lawrence turned definitively to the prehistoric archaeology of the Western Mediterranean and particularly, in time, to his life's work on the Neolithic and Copper Age of Northern Italy.

(Lawrence Barfield, Atacama Desert, (1958) 2009 Antiquity)

By January 1960 Barfield writes that he has now got various oddments which are publishable, which include sections of the postholes of the Roman building and of the shallow holes of the ditch palisade. He says he has also drawn and written up a large collection of Belgic pottery from the top of the ditch, which is important for the dating of the ditch, again these items have still to be traced. He adds that there was another skeleton from the middle ditch fill⁶⁷. Barfield's excavated skeletons were deposited in the Duckworth collection.

Then in the final letter from Barfield, dated June 1960, Barfield notes that the fact that two of the fragments of skull which he excavated, fit together, one which is burnt and the other un-burnt. He said that it raises a lot of questions and supports the idea that the bodies were thrown into the ditch in a pretty decayed state. He says that he still has a few details that are worth publishing and mentions a theory in which James Dyer suggests that the War Ditches is a boundary earthwork. A boundary earthwork, is at its simplest, an earthwork which marks the limit or boundary of an area or piece of land, one could say that

War Ditches does do this by its nature anyway but this theory could have some weight if we are to consider the possibility that the War Ditches is part of a wider complex, perhaps linking to a possible dyke or marking out the terminus of a dyke/routeway. These ideas certainly link in with the ideas and suggestions that Hughes had given regarding the connection between the site and the 'Roman Road', however, so much more research and understanding of the wider area is needed before any assumptions can be made. It is clear that the War Ditches has a clear purpose of its own, within the space it occupies.

In 1960 several published reports and articles about other local sites, mention the similarity between the pottery discovered on these sites and the pottery found at the War Ditches. The other sites included; A Roman well in Coldham's Lane, just north of Cherry Hinton, Cambridge⁶⁸, Jesus Lane, Cambridge⁶⁹ and Cambridge Road, Godmanchester.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum Archives, Box 32 G03/7/6

⁶⁸ Wilkerson, J. C. (1960) 'Pottery From a Roman Well in Coldham's Lane, Cambridge', PCAS Vol. LIII, CAS

⁶⁹ Hartley, B. R. (1960) 'Notes On Pottery From Some Romano-British Kilns In The Cambridge Area', PCAS Vol. LIII, CAS

1962

Within the correspondence archives of 1962 one note states that “*Mr White is digging in the main ditch – the southeast segment, just south of the entrance where Mr Howard did a dig. That is all that is left now, the area of Barfield and Clarke’s plan has been dug away. White has got quite a useful set of Belgic/ Romano British pottery, nearly all from roughly the bottom of the upper filling.*”⁷¹

White is the next person to publish a report on the War Ditches⁷² where we can pick up a clearer picture of events, according to White, at the site mainly from around 1961 - 1962. It is the first account to be published since Lethbridge’s 1939 report.

White begins by telling us the state of the site in 1961:

“In the area of the hill-fort the chalk had been dug down to a depth of approximately 15 ft. The whole of the northern half of the main ditch had been removed, whilst the quarry now extended to the south-west and the south-east quadrants of the hill-fort, where the mechanical excavator had dug up to the ditch. Caius Pit had been left as an island in the middle, while Tebbutt’s Pit and Lethbridge’s trench remained as a peninsula on the western edge of the quarry. The only part of the interior of the hill-fort left was that under the Cambridge Water Works Reservoir to the south.

Caius Pit appeared to be a whole mass of ‘ditches’; these however were places where the excavator had cut tangentially to the line of the Pit. In the south-west part of Caius Pit a fine section of the hill-fort ditch was to be seen. While this portion of the main ditch was being cleared away by mechanical grab in April 1962, a human skeleton was dislodged from a rubble and ash layer.....A small area of the surface chalk inside the hill-fort was also left in the south-western corner of the quarry; this contained remains of Romano-British occupation. In the south face of the quarry, the section of a field drainage ditch discovered in 1959 could still be seen. In the south-east face of the chalk-pit was a longitudinal section of the hill-fort ditch, in the northern part of which the entrance of the fort still remained, although the ditch on the south side only of this entrance could be traced. Finally the stump of a well already discovered in 1958 remained in the south-east corner, although the top 15 ft. had been removed by the excavator.”⁷³

White then tells us that there were some small-scale excavations carried out from November 1961 to November 1962, which he took part in. A section was cut across the main hill-fort ditch in the south-east corner of the quarry. The south entrance ditch was also sectioned, the south-west corner was examined and a further 15 ft. of the well was cleared out.

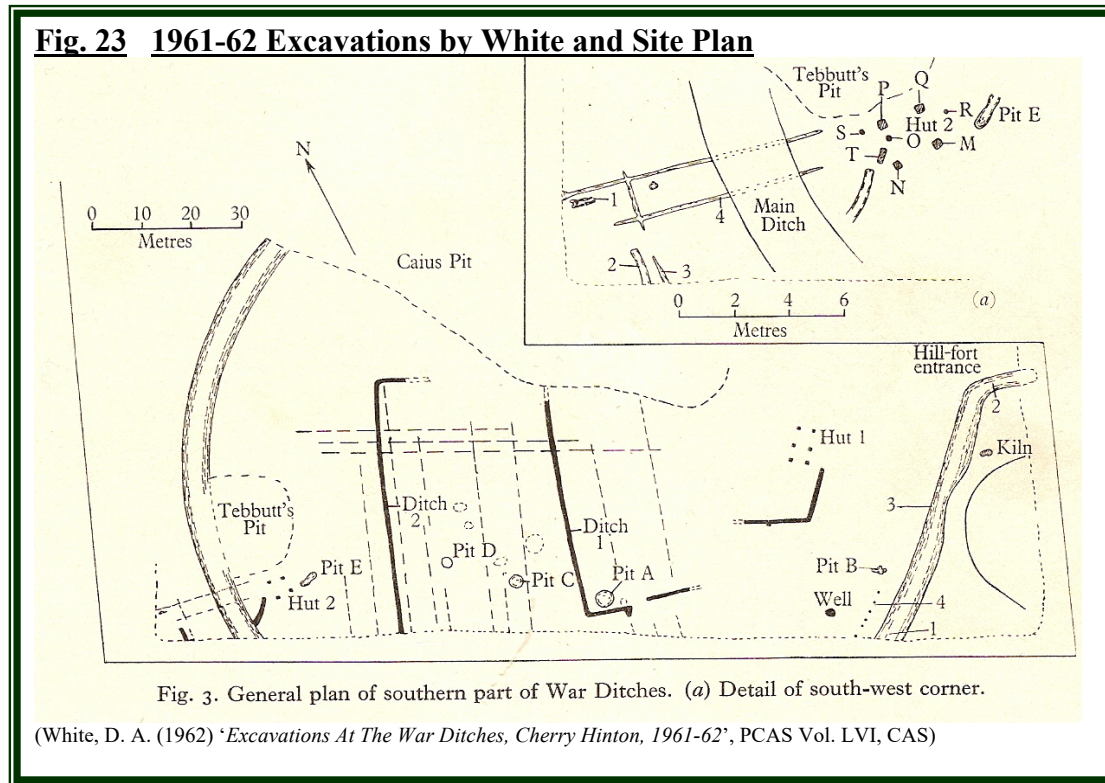
⁷⁰ Green, H. J. M. (1960) ‘*Roman Godmanchester*’, PCAS Vol. LIII, CAS

⁷¹ Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum Archives, Box 32 G03/7/6

⁷² White, D. A. (1962) ‘*Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1961-62*’, PCAS Vol. LVI, CAS

⁷³ White, D. A. (1962) ‘*Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1961-62*’, PCAS Vol. LVI, CAS

During this time the great ditch was excavated in three separate sections, in the southeast corner of the site. It was found that the dimensions of the ditch were not all the same within each section excavated.



One section was cut in the southwest corner, by the south boundary fence (no. 1 on Fig. 23), another section was cut where the ditch meets the entrance causeway (no. 2 on Fig. 23) where the bottom of the ditch at this point was found by Mr Howard to be an irregular system of 'steps', with some areas of which were less than 2m below ground level. The last of the sections, were excavated halfway between section no.1 and section no.2 (no. 3 on Fig. 23), at this point the ditch narrowed considerably, confirming what Barfield had noted in his investigations previously, that this section of ditch seemed to be respecting another feature (Barfield's F, see Fig. 22).

White gives a thorough description of section no.1 but there is not much detail concerning the other two sections excavated. He begins by describing the dimensions of section no.1 and continues by describing and explaining the various deposits within the ditch section from the base upwards.⁷⁴

He tells us that at section no.1 it was shown that the ditch was 5.5 m. wide and 4.0 m. deep. After a primary silting fill of about 1m deep there was a thin layer of humus, which White suggests, was probably produced by grass growing in the ditch during the period

⁷⁴ White, D. A. (1962) 'Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1961-62', PCAS Vol. LVI, CAS

of Iron Age occupation, he goes on to add that due to the thinness of the layer, it indicates that the phase of habitation it represents must have been short in duration.

It was above this layer that the thick deposit of rubble and charcoal, including some Iron Age pottery sherds, were found. White goes on to suggest that this apparent destruction layer represented debris from the rampart of the hillfort, which, it seems was thrown in from the inside of the ditch compound, with the fragments of charcoal being the remains of the wooden palisade.⁷⁵

Above the burnt deposit lay a layer of rubble and humus about 0.75m deep, which seemed to be more fall from the ramparts to the west. After which came a turf line which extended all over the section and probably represented the first century A.D. ground level in the ditch this was followed by a thin layer of small chalk rubble and then a filling containing a large number of animal bones and potsherds thrown into the ditch from the first century A.D. settlement. The excavation of this section then showed, that at some time later in the second century A.D., a hard chalky fill was laid over the ditch which White suggests was to cover the ditch completely and to enable the whole of the area to be utilized as arable land.

White neatly summarizes the activity of this section of the great ditch thus;

“The examination of the ditch has indicated the existence of three phases on the site:

(1) The period of the construction and use of the hill-fort and its subsequent destruction.

(2) The period of the layer when the ditch, although silted, could still be seen and used as a rubbish tip.

(3) The period after the ditch had been completely filled and levelled.”⁷⁶

About 2 m. from the western (inside) edge of this main ditch section a posthole was found by White. This posthole seemed to represent one of the palisade postholes previously noted by Barfield (Fig. 24, no. 4 & Fig. 25, no. 13) it was 35cm in diameter and only 10 cm. deep when excavated. It would be easy to see how the previous work carried out before 1957 could have missed any of these postholes along the ditch sections excavated, simply due to the varying depth scraped away by the quarry work, with only about 10cm depth remaining these postholes could have been wiped away quite easily in other areas of the site. It had been noted previously by Lethbridge (1949) that post-holes would have perhaps indicated proper protection of the ditch by means of a palisade as well as an inner bank, which might have been expected with a circular hill fort monument, the apparent lack of these postholes lead to Lethbridge's saying that Hughes had not found a circular hill fort and that the feature could have been something else or just unfinished.

The discovery and excavation of this posthole by White, and the line of postholes alongside the ditch in which this posthole seemed to fit by Barfield (1957) are very significant. It not only adds credence to what Hughes had thought about the War Ditches being a hillfort but also brings into fresh debate whether the War Ditches were a finished

⁷⁵ White, D. A. (1962) 'Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1961-62', PCAS Vol. LVI, CAS

⁷⁶ White, D. A. (1962) 'Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1961-62', PCAS Vol. LVI, CAS

construction or not. As previously stated Houlder (1949-51) noted, that further indications for a lack of co-ordination in construction or in finishing the earthwork were suggested by the lack of postholes representing a timber palisade, rampart revetment or gateway as was expected to be part of such Iron Age hillforts at the time. In his report White remarks, of the War Ditches palisade, that it would seem that there was a possible similarity of the defensive system with that of Wandlebury II.^{77, 78}

Fig. 24 Section no.1 Through The Great Ditch, Showing Palisade Posthole

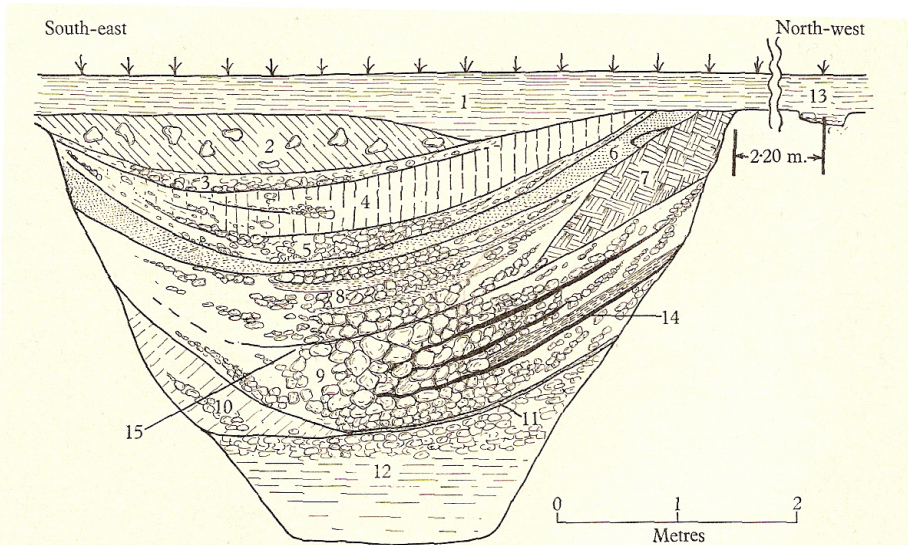


Fig. 1. Section of hill-fort ditch in south-east section looking south-west. KEY: 1, topsoil; 2, hard chalky fill; 3, small rubble band; 4, humus deposit of Phase II; 5, small chalk rubble; 6, turf line; 7, cemented chalk layer; 8, heavy rubble and humus bands, little burning; 9, heavy rubble and charcoal bands; 10, rubble fill; 11, thin turf line; 12, primary silt; 13, post-hole of palisade; 14, heavy ash band; 15, position of skull (skeleton, Pl. III c).



(a) Main hill-fort ditch, looking south-west. (Scale divisions: 9 in.)

(White, D. A. (1962) 'Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1961-62', PCAS Vol. LVI, CAS)

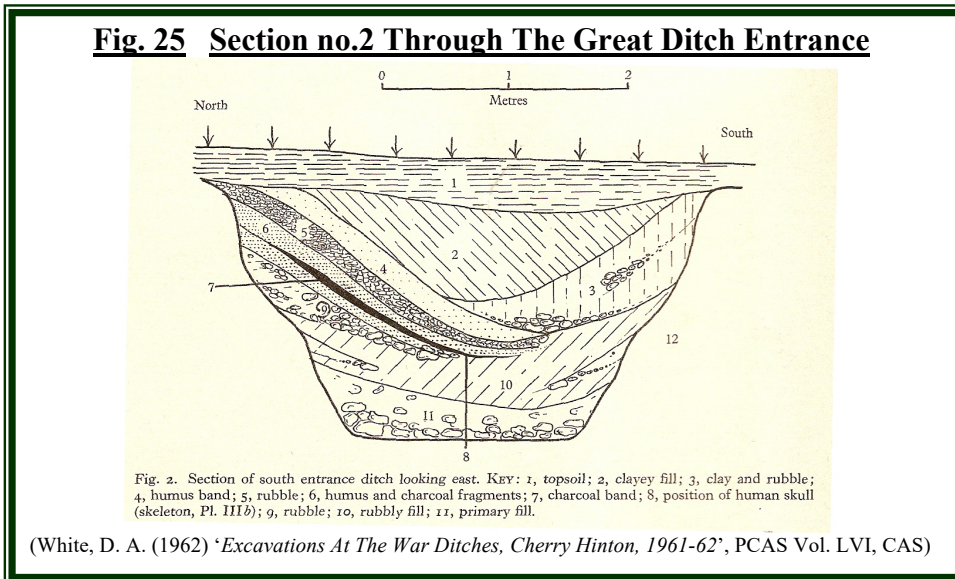
⁷⁷ White, D. A. (1962) 'Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1961-62', PCAS Vol. LVI, CAS

⁷⁸ Hartley, B. R. (1956) 'Excavations at the Wandlebury Iron Age Hill Fort', PCAS p. 7, fig. 4 c (left-hand palisade).

White reports that after the Long Vacation of 1962 that much of the rubble from the sides of section no. 1 had fallen in and when it was visited in October 1962, a human skull was noted lying amongst the fallen rubble (Fig. 25, no. 15). A shaft was cut into the side of the trench to retrieve the skeleton. The skeleton lay in the heavy rubble in the main burnt deposit and was thus associated with the destruction of the defences.⁷⁹

At the War Ditches entrance, White notes how the edge of the quarry had taken a diagonal cut across the south entrance ditch and the adjoining part of the main ditch. This was then cleaned back to the east side of the main ditch by White and the team of excavators. It seemed that this part of the ditch had either been already excavated before in past excavations at the site or it could have been badly damaged by the mechanical grab. Within this part of the ditch, which was explored in 1961, another skeleton was discovered along with some Iron Age pottery but due to the damage to this part of the ditch, these finds were unstratified.

White describes how some reasonable stratigraphy seemed to still exist down on the north side of the entrance ditch and the layers excavated here included the rubble (Fig. 25, no. 5) and the charcoal and rubble destruction bands 6 and 7; the southern half of the trench was a blank. In layer 6 a complete skeleton of an adult female was found (Fig. 26, b). White goes on to say that *“She was put into the ditch lying flat on her back with the head tipped over to the left. The left arm was drawn up to the head and the left foot brought into a crouched position. The most surprising thing is the right leg, which was thrown out below the left leg at a very unusual angle, and is evidence for the body having been left about for some time before burial. The woman was slung into the ditch presumably head first from the right. After removing the skeleton a bone ring or toggle was found by her right foot. Probably this was used for her clothing, but since she was thrown in a dishevelled state, we can say nothing of its probable use or position on the body.”*⁸⁰



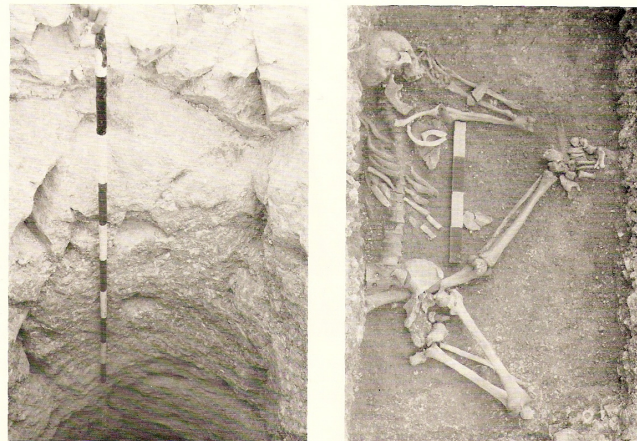
⁷⁹ White, D. A. (1962) 'Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1961-62', PCAS Vol. LVI, CAS

⁸⁰ White, D. A. (1962) 'Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1961-62', PCAS Vol. LVI, CAS

A clearer section was cut across the entrance ditch, which was about 2.1 m. deep and 4 m. broad (Fig. 24, no. 2). However, nothing was found within this section, except a few bones from layer 6 (Fig. 25). Layer 7 was a charcoal band which had been previously found all over the site and seemed to be contemporary with the destruction of the hillfort; 8 marks the position of the skull of the female, already mentioned above. White remarks that the striking thing about this section was the comparative absence of rubble; with layers 3, 5, 9 and 11 being the only rubble layers in the section.

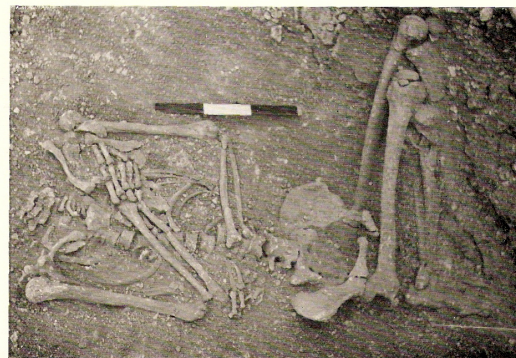
A small amount of extra investigation was carried out around the entrance area. White describes how some trenches were dug along the sides of the entrance ditch, with the aim of obtaining its plan. In addition, a cut was put in the field to the east but it revealed no traces of the entrance ditch. White believed that the ditch must have terminated under the thick hawthorn hedge separating the quarry and field. A proton-magnetometer survey was carried out in this part of the field but didn't locate any archaeological features. White remarked how the War Ditches entrance looked similar in form to that found at the Caburn hill-fort¹ in Sussex.⁸¹

Fig. 26 The Well and Skeletons, Excavated in 1961



(a) Well, showing foot-holds. (Scale divisions: 9 in.)

(b) Female skeleton in south entrance ditch. (Scale divisions: 10 cm.)



(c) Skeleton in main ditch section. (Scale divisions: 10 cm.)

(White, D. A. (1962) 'Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1961-62', PCAS Vol. LVI)

⁸¹ White, D. A. (1962) 'Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1961-62', PCAS Vol. LVI, CAS

In his report White then tells us more about the well that is situated in the southeast area of the site. White begins by telling us that the well was found in 1957 (Fig. 24) and that it had 5.7m of chalk removed to start with. He says that the well was rediscovered in the 1962 excavations by Dr Clark, who used a crowbar to probe for its position. White does not mention any other well on the site but there must have been another well excavated, as Houlder's notes from 1949 (previously discussed) described a well which was 3ft diameter and about 12 meters deep. By looking back at the notes and records we can see that at least two wells have been discovered and excavated within the War Ditches site.

The first well was noted by Houlder in 1949; it was excavated to about 12 meters and has been described earlier. Houlder suggested that the well was contemporary with the Romano-British settlement in the area (see Fig. 15). This well is the one shown on Figure 14, just to the north-east, inside of the entrance ditch.

When the digging was recommenced in July 1950, Houlder notes the top of a well 5ft in diameter with Roman pottery in the top fill and foot holes cut in the sides but does not say if this is the same well as had been previously excavated or if it was a newly discovered and unexcavated well. There is then another note saying that in November 1950, the northwest pit proved to be a well with steps cut into it, going down indefinitely. The notes go on to say that the well was steadily excavated downwards. By 1951, the notes state that the well had been dug to about 21ft (6.4 meters) but that they still hadn't reached the very base of it. It would seem that this well was the one White describes in his 1962 report and which is shown in Fig. 23. This well is just to the southeast, inside the entrance ditch.

White writes how this well contained Iron Age pottery and had foot-holes in the side of its wall, which is how the first well had presented. A bone knife handle, oyster shells and a large number of flints were excavated from the well that White describes. Again, this well was not excavated to its base as it was just too deep down but White does note that despite the scarcity of the Iron Age of pottery on the site, it was probable that the well was filled with soil containing disturbed Iron Age material.⁸²

White tells us that work was carried out in the southwest area of the War Ditches in 1962. The area was scraped clean, and this revealed two long shallow marks about 20 cm. deep which were running from west to east (Fig. 23, no. 4 on insert), crossing the main ditch, White interprets these marks as a ridge and furrow plough system which he says had been found elsewhere on the site. White then describes some of the other similar lines across the site and tells us that Roman sherds had been found in several of them, but they were of a small number and poor quality and can give no idea of the probable age of the ditch. White suggests that this was a whole field system that was superimposed on the hill-fort ditch, which must have been filled in by that time.

⁸² White, D. A. (1962) 'Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1961-62', PCAS Vol. LVI, CAS

White adds that just close to the two long shallow marks described above, a skeleton was discovered (Fig. 23, no. I, on insert), this was outside the War Ditches and in a similar position that some of the very first recorded skeletons were found upon the site by Hughes in 1894.

White then tells us that the kiln, which had first been examined by Dr Clark in 1957, had been damaged by the bulldozer and almost entirely removed by 1961. It was a dumbbell-shaped kiln and was similar to the one Lethbridge had found on the other side of the quarry in earlier excavations. As far as dating the kiln White says that only the presence of a couple of sherds with horizontal, Belgic-type rilling give any dating evidence. And he adds that a pot with this type of decoration had also come from Lethbridge's kiln.

White concludes his 1962 report by noting the close similarity between the sherds of pottery from the site at Wandlebury and those found at the War Ditches he remarks that it could be an indication that both hillforts were built by the same cultural group, possibly subjects of the chieftains of the Iceni but he says that it seems unlikely that the War Ditches and Wandlebury, only a few miles apart, were occupied at the same time. He goes on to say that the pottery gave no indication of which was the earlier and that there was only one small shred of evidence as to which of the two hillforts is the later. He states: *"Assuming that both Wandlebury and the War Ditches were equally suitable sites for Romano-Belgic occupation, the settlers are more likely to have made their farm on the clearer site of the more recent hillfort, rather than resort to clearing scrub covering the older, abandoned fort. No 'Belgic' pottery has been found at Wandlebury, hence one may conclude that War Ditches is the later fort"*⁸³

White summarizes his interpretation of the War Ditches thus: *"The War Ditches were never completed before they were overrun, the palisades burned and the ramparts slighted. There is strong evidence of a considerable slaughter of the defenders, who were then slung into the ditch by the workmen engaged in destroying the fort. Although with only six skeletons from the War Ditches available for study, any conclusions about the defending force are only tentative—the absence of adult warriors does seem surprising and the composition of the force defending War Ditches is not what one would have expected. Possibly the warriors may have been killed in an earlier battle leaving desperate women and youths to make a last stand at Cherry Hinton. The date of the battle would appear to be some time between the mid second century before Christ and the first decade of Roman rule in Britain, more probably later in this period than Wandlebury. On available evidence it is not possible to be more precise."*⁸⁴

He pauses to argue a point made by Fox⁸⁵ in his 1923 book which details some information about the War Ditches. White disputes Fox's suggestion that the site was refortified by 'Belgae' who subsequently suffered a 'second massacre'. He says that no evidence of a refortification was found by him in the section dig in 1962, and that Fox's evidence seems difficult to understand. He explains by saying that Wandlebury, a

⁸³ White, D. A. (1962) 'Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1961-62', PCAS Vol. LVI, CAS

⁸⁴ White, D. A. (1962) 'Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1961-62', PCAS Vol. LVI, CAS

⁸⁵ Fox, C. (1923) 'Archaeology of the Cambridge Region', Cambridge

completed double-ditched hillfort with far superior construction to that of the single incomplete ditch at the War Ditches was never occupied by the 'Belgae'. White suggests that Fox's theory appears to have been based on finding 'Belgic' pottery from the rampart debris in the ditch, but he argues that this could simply indicate that workmen using pottery of that type had been engaged in slighting the ramparts of the hillfort, which would confirm a later date of construction for the War Ditches.⁸⁶

White finalises his report conclusion of War Ditches by saying that "*The site was subsequently resettled by Romano-Belgic folk who used the hill-fort ditch as a rubbish tip. To this period belong the kiln and burials found by Lethbridge.² The date of this phase is almost certainly the latter half of the first century A.D. Eventually the ditches were entirely filled in and the area used for agriculture. On the evidence of the 'Samian' sherd found in ditch I and the flagon neck from the south-west corner, a date at the beginning of the second century A.D. can be assigned provisionally to this phase. Finally, no typical third century fragments have yet been seen by the author, and it is possible that the Roman occupation of the site had ended by then. The details of this period will be better known when the Romano-British material now lying in the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology has been published as a sequel to this paper.*"⁸⁷

The human remains from White's excavations in 1961-62 went to the Duckworth Collection and the other finds are now held in Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. However, there never was a sequel to his report published as he suggested there would be. White did a good number of detailed notes on the pottery as an appendage to his report, which at some point in the future should be analysed and researched further.

The archaeological investigations at the War Ditches site seem to halt completely after White's 1961-62 excavations. The quarry work also ceased, and the site was left to grow wild. The damage to the archaeology had been done and what of it, that could be, was saved by these industrious people venturing out to work alongside the mechanical grab and they grabbed all they could. Naturally the notes, records and collection of artifacts has been somewhat patchy over the years, much has gone astray leaving us with a complicated jigsaw of the archaeology carried out by the archaeologists, to piece back together once more to make a coherent tale of events up on Lime Kiln Hill and the ancient site of War Ditches. In effect we now need to understand not only the ancient site but also the adventurous characters that went there over the last 120 years to dig and record the past.

On 15th October 1963, Lethbridge appears on the scene again when he writes a letter to Miss Cra'ster, who it seems, wanted information on the post war excavations at War Ditches, by 1963 Lethbridge had moved to Devon. His letter makes interesting reading, and it is worth relaying some of it here as it adds important information in the understanding of some of what took place at the War Ditches excavations during the post war excavations.

⁸⁶ White, D. A. (1962) 'Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1961-62', PCAS Vol. LVI, CAS

⁸⁷ White, D. A. (1962) 'Excavations At The War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1961-62', PCAS Vol. LVI, CAS

Lethbridge begins by saying:

"Dear Miss Cra'ster,

This is rather a business. The story was as follows: After the war Grahame Clark wanted a job for the field club and asked me to hand over the site [War Ditches] to them. I did not supervise it but helped occasionally. The whole idea was to bring Dauncey who at that time a... to be the 'young hopeful'.

I later regretted very much what happened for there was a most interesting Saxon cemetery in part of a large barrow on the ditches. This was examined and at the same time a crystal ball was picked up on the floor of the pit below the barrow.

I am afraid I handed over my notes on most of them.

There was an interesting a... of post holes packed with ind... beaker sherds and such like no... squared posts. I imagine ..was a kind of aisled house. There was another just outside the ditch on the Cambridge side near the road. As far as I know this was never examined.

I saw two important pieces of Iron Age pottery found. Both were pie crust types. One was handed to de havrro.. who was going to look up parallels and lost it. The other was found on the floor of the ditch by some school-boys working in connection with the field club.

These two pieces really dated the unfinished fort.

The whole thing was a masterpiece of misdirected energy.

Someone must have the plans and sections made during the Dauncey, Houlder phase and they are important for they clearly showed the unfinished character of the whole affair.

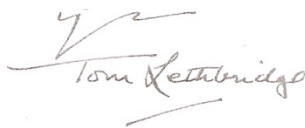
There must have been plans of the Saxon barrow & burials & the objects should be in the museum.

There was another complication which as far as I know was not satisfactorily cleared up.....some series of post holes may have been something to do with military activity during the first war.

I don't know what should be a... with all this. If it could all be brought together it probably tells more about the occupation of this particular fort than most. But it is in such a mess that it is hard to see how it can be put together. If it was pulled together and all reports published at once the old and the new, it would be of considerable value. It isn't the kind of thing I am any good at.

Try it on Grahame Clark, he got us in this pickle and may be able to think of a way out of it.

I will hang on to these papers till I hear again"⁸⁸



Tom Lethbridge

⁸⁸ Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum Archives, Box 40 W08/3/3 1963

Rediscovery, The War Ditches 1999-2008

In her 1999 book on Cambridge archaeology, Alison Taylor suggests that the fort at War Ditches may well have originated during the Bronze Age, due to the Bronze Age sherds of pottery found in the ditch there and the fact that there were at least two Bronze Age burial mounds at the site⁸⁹ she also states that Early Iron Age sherds were rioted in the lowest levels of the ditch and were perhaps derived from occupation before the ditches were dug.

Of the pottery, Taylor gives some discussion saying that at the War Ditches decorative tableware was manufactured in the first century AD, perhaps by potters who moved here from factories producing similar wares in Central Gaul. The same types of pot were also being made in the Fishbourne and St Albans areas, indicating a migration of potters in the early years of the Conquest to satisfy a new market for Romanised wares. She remarks that products like those excavated from the kilns at the site had a regional distribution, stating that the furthest distance their sherds are reported being, are from Snape in Suffolk, about sixty miles away. Taylor notes that on a different part of the site, a small, circular kiln that was excavated, probably also belonged to the first century AD. and that the pottery produced here was in forms reminiscent of Late Iron Age predecessors and unlike the obvious Roman forms. Taylor suggests that these potters may have been using Roman technology to provide for traditional local tastes, and they may themselves have been local potters who were learning new techniques.⁹⁰

Taylor goes on to say that the War Ditches which had a circular plan, defensive bank and ditch and that its position on top of a chalk spur overlooking fens to the north and the broad valley of the Cam to the east make it an important location for defence, trade and burial monuments. Taylor then states that the War Ditches has been totally destroyed by quarrying. This was a view held by many after the White excavations in 1963, particularly as the quarrying at the site didn't halt until the 1980s. With these factors, the view has, since at least the late 1970s, been that the War Ditches site had been completely destroyed by the continued quarrying.

The quarry business halted at the site in the 1980s and from that time the site was left as a spectacular open quarry, which although officially private property, had been used by many local people as a place to dog walk, visit and play. The many lumps and bumps of the surface level proved a popular attraction for motorbikes and cycles and the quarry edges, with some stomach-churning sheer drops, had in places a slight slope enough for those daring enough to tackle. The use of such a natural playground by the local people had in turn earned the site some new nicknames in particular places. For example, the steepest slope in the southeast corner of the site which connected the base to the top of

⁸⁹ Taylor, A. (1999) '*Cambridge The Hidden History*', Tempus

⁹⁰ Taylor, A. (1999) '*Cambridge The Hidden History*', Tempus

the quarry edge was called by young locals ‘Superman’. In addition to the use by people, the resulting abandonment of the site also allowed the wildlife and fauna to flourish and the site is part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in recognition of the species present which have fascinated botanists for many years.

Fig. 27 Lime Kiln Hill Chalk Quarry from south east corner upon cliff edge (at the top of ‘Superman’ slope, looking north west)



In their 2002 report on investigations at Arbury Camp⁹¹ Evans and Knight note that the status of War Ditches, ‘*which has now all but been quarried away*’ is particularly relevant when making comparisons between the sites. They go on to state that “*The War Ditches certainly cries out for a full reappraisal. If the accepted interpretation stands then it would prove to be quite unique (ie a relatively small, perfectly circular, Middle Iron Age enclosure). Yet in the light of Lethbridge’s findings, the possibility of its first phase being either a henge or even huge ring-ditch-like Bronze Age settlement enclosure cannot be dismissed.*”

In 2004, C. French, investigating Wandlebury writes⁹² that War Ditches would justify a reappraisal to be able to answer whether it is either a twin or precursor site to the site at Wandlebury. He also suggests that there may have been an extensively exploited and integrated Bronze Age landscape in which the Iron Age enclosures, such as Wandlebury and War ditches, subsequently developed.

⁹¹ Evans, C. & Knight, M. (2002) ‘*A Great Circle: Investigations at Arbury Camp*’, PCAS Vol: XCI, CAS

⁹² French, C. (2004) ‘*Evaluation Survey And Excavation At Wandlebury Ringwork, Cambridgeshire 1994-7*’, PCAS Vol. XCIII, CAS

Although no excavations had taken place at the War Ditches site since the early 1960's interest in the site continues and War Ditches is still mentioned in published works and used as a comparison or example. However, the few published accounts of the excavations and details of War Ditches we have do not give a full and detailed picture of the site and are contradictory at times. So much about the site has been missing or not been clear and this has made any comparison of War Ditches to other sites tentative.

In 2008 War Ditches made a firm reappearance in the stage of Cambridge archaeology. Several things happened, coincidentally, at around the same time. Evans, Mackay and Webley of Cambridge Archaeology Unit (CAU) published their book '*Borderlands*'⁹³ in which a chapter is devoted to War Ditches after looking at some of the unpublished archives held at the Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum, leading to some of the previously unpublished details to finally get published. At the same time, some local boys playing at the disused site discovered some human remains and handed them into the Museum. This led to a re-examination of the site which in turn resulted in the discovery of a sizable section of the War Ditches being found, intact and not completely destroyed, at the site. In addition, in 2008, serendipitously, the whole site was purchased by the Wildlife Trust and work was to begin on landscaping the site to make it an accessible nature reserve. These things all occurred independently but worked perfectly in bringing War Ditches firmly back into people's minds and the Cambridge archaeological landscape. The rediscovery of War Ditches ultimately led to new excavations at the site in 2009.

For their 2008⁹⁴ publication, which contained a chapter about War Ditches, the CAU team carried out some research of the archives held at the Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum and reassessed some of White's publications. They discovered the notes that suggested the great ditch was indeed a true circle and the notes that made Lethbridge's work debatable. The authors computer-scanned the various plans in the archives and overlapped them to create a composite 'master', which included showing the line of the ringwork's northeastern circuit where it crossed straight over Lethbridge's eastern 1939 trenches, where he didn't locate it.

In explaining the apparent omission of the northeastern quarry results and the ringwork's complete ditch circuit in White's 1964 publications, the authors suggest a reason for this could have been because White had been a student of Lethbridge and that the knowledge of the ringwork's circuit had been 'politely' suppressed by White to maintain Lethbridge's reputation. The authors go on to say how these personal and private cover-ups have left the true nature of the site unclear for many years.

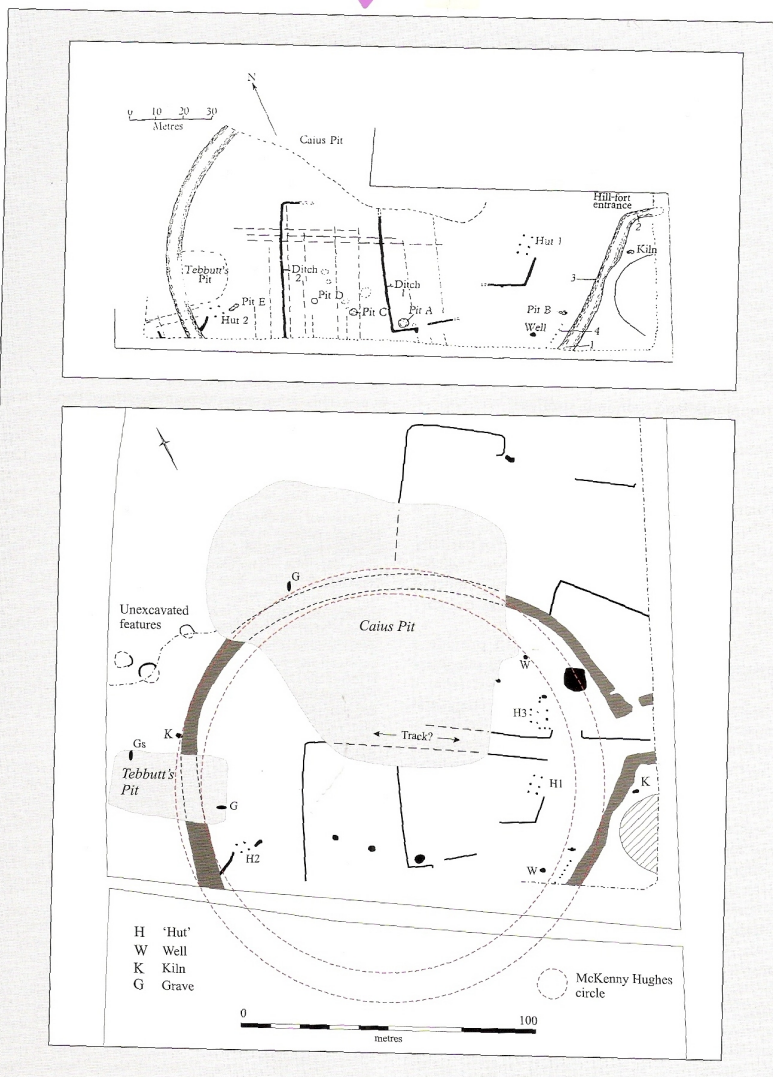
⁹³ Evans, C. Mackay, D. & Webley, L. (2008) '*Borderlands: The Archaeology Of The Addenbrooke's Environs, South Cambridge*', Cambridge Archaeology Unit

⁹⁴ Evans, C. Mackay, D. & Webley, L. (2008) '*Borderlands: The Archaeology Of The Addenbrooke's Environs, South Cambridge*', Cambridge Archaeology Unit

The authors go on to summarise some of the material in the archives and discuss some of the findings from White's excavations.

Fig. 28 Computer-scanned Layovers of Various War Ditches Plans

War Ditches – The Reconstructed: Top, White’s plan of the ringwork’s southern interior (with top-left corner detailed inset of the site’s southwestern quarter omitted; 1964a,fig. 2); below the Roman settlement as reconstructed (note that skeletons and ‘fireplaces’/kilns occurring within the ringwork’s grey-toned circuit have been omitted).



(Evans, C. Mackay, D. & Webley, L. (2008) 'Borderlands: The Archaeology Of The Addenbrooke's Environs, South Cambridge', Cambridge Archaeology Unit)

In attempting to overview at least the site’s Roman occupation, the authors suggest that the ditch boundaries of the period did not fall on a single alignment but that they seemed to be a coherent network of paddocks across at least 2.5 ha. By combining the Field Club archives and White’s plan the authors go on to suggest that the overlying settlement was

arranged along either side of northwest-southeast oriented trackway, and possibly even at a cross-roads as, they say, the ditch layout also hints of a return-line routeway.⁹⁵

They state that clearly the unpublished portions of the War Ditches archives still warrant further research and full presentation, and that the importance of the War Ditches should not be overlooked. They go on to conclude by saying that: “*McKenny Hughes had it right from the outset: a unique near perfectly circular (150 m dia.) Early/early Middle Iron Age ‘fort’*. Now, with full confidence, it can take its place alongside *Wandlebury and Arbury — all (near-) perfectly circular and seemingly of the same approximate date (Evans & Knight 2002)*. Their form is unparalleled elsewhere and to have three such ‘great’ ringworks cluster together does seem to tell of some ‘special’ socio-cultural expression, a perceived need for defence and/or a ‘declaration of territory’ claim.”⁹⁶

In July 2008, two long bones (human leg remains) along with some Roman pottery were discovered by some boys playing at the Cherry Hinton Chalk Pits on Lime Kiln Hill. They handed the finds in to the Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum. I was then contacted by the museum and after some discussion, I agreed to go and investigate the site further to see if there were any further remains. The boys had said that they found the remains in the southeast corner of the site. I collected the bones from the Archaeology Office in the Downing Street site and took them to them to my colleagues at the Oxford Archaeology Office in Bar Hill, Cambridge.

I made a preliminary visit to the site in August 2008, upon which the discovery was made of a small open pit in the southeast corner of the site at the top of the quarry edge and cliff face. This pit was next to the steep slope known as ‘Superman’ and had been dug out and played in by local youths. It was here that the latest remains had been found.

Upon inspection, there were many pieces of pottery and some bone lying loose in the pit and all down the slope further pieces of pottery were discovered lying loose and unstratified. It was clear from inspection that the pit had been dug into an archaeological feature. I noted that it was exposed and in urgent need of protection, particularly as the feature was eroding down the slope and was also in danger of further damage from the elements and destruction from children playing in the pit.

I bagged up the finds I had collected from the site and immediately took them to show my colleagues, Richard Mortimer and Mark Hinman, who were also interested in the area, for their comment and to tell them of the discovery. A second visit was then made to the site a couple of weeks later to show them the pit, we made a further collection of material, gathered from that which was scattered and lay about. It was clear from the quality and quantity that this was definitely from an archaeological feature and not just stray finds. The position in which the pit was placed appeared to be within a section of what I believed to be surviving remains of the Great Ditch of the War Ditches, which was

⁹⁵ Evans, C. Mackay, D. & Webley, L. (2008) ‘*Borderlands: The Archaeology of The Addenbrooke’s Environs, South Cambridge*’, Cambridge Archaeology Unit

⁹⁶ Evans, C. Mackay, D. & Webley, L. (2008) ‘*Borderlands: The Archaeology of The Addenbrooke’s Environs, South Cambridge*’, Cambridge Archaeology Unit

previously thought to have been completely destroyed. It was also clear how urgent the need was to protect the site.

Fig. 29 Lime Kiln Hill Chalk Quarry from south east corner upon cliff edge (next to and at the top of ‘Superman’ slope, facing north west) Showing the pit which had been dug into a remaining portion of the War Ditches



Michelle Bullivant, 2008 (Suzanne Bullivant in picture)

Mark Hinman accompanied me to present the findings to the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, (which Hinman and I were members on the council of) as the CAS had had a long-standing association with the site.

It just so happened that the Wildlife Trust had purchased the entire site at the same time as this new discovery, so after several more site visits and negotiations, permission to excavate and investigate in the area of the new discovery was given. It was decided that the excavation should be undertaken by Oxford Archaeology East for whom Hinman and Mortimer worked at the time.

The tale of the War Ditches site will be continued with the information gleaned from the latest excavations and more detail will be added to its interpretation and analysis as the

reports are written for this latest excavation. There is still a great deal to understand and interpret at the site and the surrounding area.

Recommendations

One thing is clear from all that have attempted to reference War Ditches when investigating other sites and that is that War Ditches needs a full and in-depth appraisal and pulling together of information.

Since the site was last excavated by archaeologists there have been many comments made about the War Ditches in reference to other Iron Age hill forts and in reference to the similar pottery types found at other sites. Only four published accounts of the excavations at the site are widely available and of those, only three are usually touched upon, mainly because Hughes' first report didn't name the site 'War Ditches', calling it a dyke instead, often leading to this report being overlooked. There is, as I have discovered, a huge amount of material available to help us understand not only more about the site itself but also about those who excavated there and what has been discovered over the years. Much of the raw data is incomplete or piecemeal but there is a wealth of information that is important to better understand the site. It is certainly a sizable task to try and sort it all out into a workable, clearer form but I hope that this report has gone some way to achieving that task.

It is certainly clear that much more work is also needed on understanding the landscape in which the War Ditches is situated. The relationship between Wandlebury is an obvious topic to look at but the comparison and possible relationship between other hillfort sites such as Arbury and Ladle Hill would be of great benefit. In addition, understanding the less obvious links between smaller features and other immediately local archaeological sites will prove worthwhile.

I have correlated all the information and details as best I could, given the time and funding constraints. I will continue to carry on the research of the War Ditches and my recommendations for further investigations, perhaps by others, includes:

Continuing to make sense of the archives we now know about, dissecting them further and producing a clear as possible picture of what was found and when. Further determined work in hunting out all possible lost records of excavation and archaeological investigations at the site may well provide more answers to the scheme of works undertaken and perhaps uncover details about other features recorded but since quarried away.

Re-examining all human remains, where known, from the site using the modern techniques we have available today. Looking at stature, to understand the claims made of the first recorded skeletons discovered. Human bone analysis should be used for all

skeletons uncovered on and around the immediate area of War Ditches to provide more important detail for dating, age, sex, diet, disease and lifestyle. Tracing all the remains may be difficult but it seems that the majority of them were given into the Duckworth Collection which is now housed at the Leverhulme Centre for Human Evolutionary Studies in Cambridge.

Duckworth Collection Contact Details:
Leverhulme Centre for Human Evolutionary Studies
University of Cambridge
Fitzwilliam Street
Cambridge
CB2 1QH
duckworth@human-evol.cam.ac.uk

Some human remains may still be stored at the Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum.

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology
Downing Street
Cambridge
CB2 3DZ
241@cam.ac.uk

Re-examining and re-interpreting all the pottery, where known, from the site using modern techniques and with the advanced knowledge we now have of some pottery types. A good amount of the pottery is stored at Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum.

Re-examining and re-interpreting all other finds from the site including those from the Bronze Age barrows and secondary Saxon interments. Some of these are stored at Cambridge Archaeology and Anthropology Museum.

All remains, artifacts and features should be compared to sites locally, nationally and internationally.

Further investigation should be carried out at the site to determine as best possible what remains of the great ditch and any other features in the immediate area. An assessment of the potential threat to any remaining features should be made and appropriate action taken to interpret and preserve such remains.

Thorough wider area research should be carried out to better understand the local landscape in which the War Ditches is situated. Comparisons to Wandlebury and other known local hillfort features should be undertaken and attempts made to correlate the Wandlebury archives in order to gain a better picture of the relationship between these two sites and others in the county and beyond.

In addition, War Ditches should be considered in relation to, amongst others:

The Babraham Road excavations in 1998-99

Little Trees Hill, possible causeway camp on the Gog Magog Downs

Wandlebury

Natural surrounding features such as Giant's Grave, (the large natural spring pool at the base of the hill).

Surrounding routeways and roads.

The prehistoric sites at Fulbourn Hospital, The Hutchinson site at Addenbrookes.

Further research should be carried out to continue this paper. Understanding not only the archaeology of the site but also the interactions and stories of the people who have subsequently excavated at the site.

In addition, further research should be carried out to cover the lime, chalk and cement industries on the site, along with site owners and land uses over the centuries. More research is also needed on the use of the site during the First and Second World Wars, with particular reference to the Red and Blue Army manoeuvres of 1912.

These are just a few of the main areas which I believe should ideally be covered with future research on the site.

This report should be seen as a correlation of unpublished and published material and the beginning of understanding the War Ditches site as a whole. Much more research, time and determination is still needed to thoroughly clear up the tangle of disjointed notes, excavation records (where they can be found) and finds. Once this is made more understandable it will make the job of looking at the wider landscape and comparison to other sites and similar features more credible and accurate.

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