

RECENT ARCHAEOLOGY

SEDGEFORD HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROJECT 2001: SIXTH INTERIM REPORT

by Sophie Cabot, Gareth Davies and Rik Hoggett

Despite restrictions at the time of the Foot and Mouth disease outbreak, the 2001 summer season was highly successful. Our excavations and fieldwork continued apace and we greatly increased our range of on-site courses in archaeology, developing close links with the University of East Anglia's Continuing Education Department. We also continued our tradition of public lectures, site tours and open days, and the season ended with a conference on 'The Origins of the Anglo-Saxon Church', the proceedings of which are currently being prepared for publication. During 2001, members of the team gave papers at the Society for Medieval Archaeology's Conference in Cardiff, the Interpreting Stratigraphy Conference, York, and the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) Education Conference, also in York, as well as to local societies and educational groups.

Boneyard and Reeddam

Work continued on the main excavation site (see previous interim reports in *Norfolk Archaeology*) and further Mid-Late Anglo-Saxon settlement and cemetery areas were excavated in the original Boneyard trench. Targeted investigation and re-investigation of certain areas consolidated work from previous seasons, clarifying a number of stratigraphic relationships which had not previously been understood and linking different areas and phases of the site.

Newly excavated features include a shallow pit, and north-to-south drainage gullies at the western extent of the excavation area, all corresponding with features excavated further to the south in previous seasons. On the lower slope of the original excavation area, three more burials were excavated: two coffin burials, with brackets *in situ*, truncated an earlier shroud burial. The latter was further truncated by a north-to-south drainage gully. The area to the west of these burials, where structural features were excavated in 1999–2000, may in fact have been burial-free. It is hoped to clarify this issue in 2002, and link the burial sequence from this point to the northern extent of the Reeddam excavations.

In the Reeddam trench the final Saxon burials were lifted, and a number of Iron Age features beneath them were discovered and excavated. These include gullies and post-holes dated by pottery, as well as pits and a ditch terminus. Combined with other finds of Iron Age material in this area in the past, we are confident of occupation at the base of the Heacham river valley at this point, possibly associated with a roundhouse. All of the Iron Age features were cut into natural sands. The Reeddam trench has now been closed down.

A new excavation area was opened to the west of the existing Boneyard trench, almost tripling its size. The heavily disturbed plough soil was removed by machine and metal-detected, before hand excavation continued throughout the season. It is expected that this area will provide further settlement and cemetery evidence, but its main purpose is to relocate trenches dug in 1958 and correlate them with our own.

With regard to post-excavation, phasing of results up to and including the 2000 excavation season is now complete. Results will need to be adjusted in the light of further excavation, but the basic sequence shows three main phases of cut features, the first of them truncated by burials; the second and third phases appear to post-date burial activity, and may be contemporaneous in places. Where there are stratigraphic relationships between cut features, the impression is that occupation and burial activity slowly moved upslope over time. The refinement of pottery dating from the site has used the ratio of Ipswich ware (23%) to Thetford ware (61%) to suggest that all the 'secure' contexts fit within the approximate period AD 750–950. Future analysis will examine the changes in the pottery assemblages from the various phases defined.

Specialist analyses

In addition to the ongoing pottery analysis, a number of specialists undertook research projects in 2001 on material from the main excavations. Full specialist reports by all of these teams are available from the project, and their findings are summarised below.

Metal and bone finds

The majority of the 'small' finds date to the 8th and 9th centuries and, as such, compliment the pottery analysis. The Sedgeford artefacts' closest parallels are from the Mid-Late Saxon site at Brandon, although a lack of variety in our assemblage may reflect a lesser role for metal and bone items. A possible link with the Mid-Late Saxon site at Flixborough, Humberside, may be suggested by the presence of safety-pin brooches with ring-and-dot decoration, as this class of brooch appears to have a very limited distribution.

Archaeo-environmental

Plant macrofossils and other remains recovered by environmental sampling on Boneyard indicate that cereal grains are present but on the whole chaff is not, suggesting that grain processing took place elsewhere. Fish bones occur in small quantities, as do weed seeds, but overall assemblages represent normal dry land conditions. No highly differentiated feature assemblages have been observed.

Zooarchaeology

Research to date indicates that sheep-rearing at Sedgeford was largely for wool production, with the majority of bone being from sheep over two years old. Cattle are also represented in some quantity, although pig is much rarer. This reflects the historic agricultural tradition in the area. Wild game, although present, is very rare and does not appear to be a major element of diet. Fish and shellfish are increasingly well represented over time, but also remain a minor element.

Palaeodietary

As part of ongoing Ph.D. Research at the University of Bristol, bone collagen and bone cholesterol was recovered from human bone samples from the Boneyard site. Analysis of the relative quantities of different isotopic variants in these samples has shown that there was no unusually high marine component in the subjects' diet. It has also shown no significant differentiation, which might reflect status, within the population in terms of access to different protein foods.

Osteological

In 2001 our on-site research team started a five-year research project, embracing specific research into the physical anthropology and health status of the Sedgeford population, but also incorporating research into burial practice: for example, initial study has been undertaken on burial orientation, and grave furnishings and groupings. By incorporating traditional and empirical human bone-recording methods with anthropological studies we hope, over the coming years, to dispense with the traditional boundaries between different elements of osteological research. The next step for the team is to work closely with the site post-excavation team, discussing changing artefact assemblages by stratigraphic phase. This can start in earnest when our current main excavation work is finished, hopefully in 2002 or 2003.

Other excavations

It has always been SHARP's intention to place all of its excavations into wider spatial contexts, initially at the level of settlement foci but ultimately at 'parish' level. 2001 saw two smaller excavations attempting to incorporate previously disparate data into the wider spatial context of the shifting Mid-Late Saxon settlement focus.

Chalkpit

A small excavation took place in the field containing a disused chalk pit 100m to the west of the Boneyard. This is in an area known to have contained features of interest in the past, including an Anglo-Saxon oven excavated by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit ahead of pipe laying in 1991. Trial trenching concluded that while archaeological features were present, they were too deeply buried, too unclear in nature and devoid of dateable material to provide a useful research focus at this time. However, the pipe trench itself was relocated and partially excavated, allowing us to integrate results in other archaeological reports with our own.

Reeddam II

A 35m x 1.5m trench was opened over extant earthworks 100m west of the existing Reeddam excavation, to provide further evidence regarding the construction of the medieval reed bed and the neighbouring track. Although waterlogging made work difficult in the lower end of this trench the results were promising, and further work will be carried out in 2002. Features identified so far include a large ditch, thought to be medieval, and a number of cobbled or 'made-up' areas which may relate to the creation of the reed bed. The reed bed acts as a *terminus post quem* for the Mid-Late Saxon settlement activity: this work has confirmed that this 'dating horizon' extends further west, towards the medieval settlement focus around the parish church.

Documentary and non-invasive work

As usual, although the focus of work remains the Anglo-Saxon site at Boneyard, SHARP and others have continued to research medieval and later occupation of the parish. The Smithdon Hundred Local History Forum conducted a program of fieldwalking in the Eaton area, west of the village. This marks the beginning of ongoing research, and is being combined with research in the archives for this lost hamlet. Publication is expected in the annual Smithdon *Miscellany* during summer 2002.

SHARP conducted further geophysical survey in the churchyard of the parish church, providing better-than-ever outlines of the demolished Chancel and North Transept. It was also possible to suggest that the lack of solid chalk underlying the eastern end of the church had been responsible for the collapse of the eastern end of the Chancel. Documentary research on wills relating to St Mary's provided fascinating information about the pre-Reformation interior. A number of images and altars are mentioned, as well as four Gilds operating in the church between 1417 and the Reformation. The documentary work on West Hall Manor, reported on previously, has also been concluded this year.

The results of the 2001 season have been more fully published in SHARP's annual Interim Report. Copies of this report are available online at <http://www.sharp.org.uk>, as are details of how to become more involved with the Project's work.

MEDIEVAL SEAL MATRICES FROM NORFOLK, 2001

by Andrew Rogerson and Steven Ashley

This paper is the fourth part in a consecutive annual catalogue of medieval seal matrices to be published in this journal. As usual, impressions of all the matrices contained in this catalogue are available for study at Norwich Castle Museum.

The catalogue is divided into sections headed thus: official secular, official religious; personal seals with arms; personal seals with names; personal seals with mottoes; with initials only; without inscription; illegible. As far as possible, entries are in alphabetical order.

The organisation of the catalogue entries is as follows. Material, overall shape of matrix. Shape of die, and size. Central motif. Surrounding inscription (and translation). Parish name and SMR number. Any reference or supporting information.

The inscriptions of the impressions have been rendered as faithfully as possible, with illegible letters thus: Inferred letters have been put in square brackets. Some spaces have been added to make the reading clearer. There is no full stop added after the inscription to avoid confusion with any dot contained within the inscription itself.

Official secular seals

1. Copper alloy, hexagonally faceted conical handle with collared pierced bent trefoil terminal. Circular, 25 mm. Within a cusped border (double trefoil springing from lower cusp) and under a crown, black-letter legend on two lines: hundre.de / Fourhwe (Hundred of Forehoe). Surrounding legend, · S: regis: in: comit: norff: (Seal of the King in the County of Norfolk). Found at Albrighton, Shropshire.¹ (For a discussion of earlier finds of Norfolk Hundred seals see Ashley and Rogerson 1998).

Official religious seals

No seal matrices in this category were reported this year.



Fig. 1. Impressions taken from seal matrices. 2: Gresham. 12: Wicklewood. 13: Hevingham. 17: Ormesby St Margaret. 35: Quidenham. Scale 1:1



Plate 1. Obverse and reverse of re-used Papal Bull. 2: Gresham. Scale 1:1

Personal seals with arms

2. Lead, flat, Papal Bull, re-used by engraving one side, the heads of St Peter and St Paul visible on the other, post-1145.² Circular 38mm. Surface damaged along line of original attachment cord for Bulla. *Barry of six on a chief three lozenges* on a shield flanked by two pairs of dots or ?leaves. Inscription on two concentric lines:
+ [.....]GILLVM ROBER[.....]ILI WALTERI
...]BASIGI AM MIA[...
(Seal of Robert son of Walter; inner line of inscription meaning unknown). Gresham 33821. NCM 1999.122.2. Fig. 1. Plate 1.

Personal seals with names

3. Lead, flat with pierced lug on reverse. Pointed oval, bent, 32 x 20 mm. Fleur-de-lis. + S' ALICE : WEGE (Seal of Alice Wege) Aldeford 33640.
4. Lead *seal* matrix, flat with rib and unpierced lug at top on reverse. Circular, diam. 28mm. Eight-petalled flower. +S' BAIE FIL' SILVESt (Seal of Bartholomew son of Silvester). Bate was a pet-form of Bartholomew (Reaney and Wilson 1991, 31). Bintree 36686.
5. Lead, flat with un-pierced lug on reverse. Pointed oval, 32 x 19 mm. Ear of wheat. +[S] EDVSA·PECOC (Seal of Edusa Peacock). Letheringsett with Glandford 35957.