

A Life in Norfolk's Archaeology

1950–2016

Archaeology in an Arable Landscape

Peter Wade-Martins

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Front Cover picture: A montage of two images: excavating an Anglo-Saxon post-hole building (Fig.17.2) and squashed and plough-damaged cremation urns at Spong Hill, North Elmham (Fig.17.4) prior to subsoiling and further ploughing for potato and root crops. Agriculture is the greatest threat to archaeological evidence in the East Anglian landscape. There were relatively generous government grants available in the 1970s and 1980s to rescue a small selection of sites like Spong Hill from cultivation. But it is difficult to envisage how such slow painstaking work, conducted to research standards over ten years, plus the conservation of the finds and the highly complex computer analysis which followed, could be funded now. Today, support for rescue archaeology is largely dependent on developer funding: a system from which the farming industry is largely excluded.

Usually the only record we have of plough-damaged sites like Spong Hill comes from aerial photography and surface finds brought in by metal detectorists and fieldwalkers for identification. But there are so many items coming in now that the county's identification service finds it difficult to identify them all. Nevertheless metal detecting is transforming our understanding of Norfolk's past.

Back cover picture: The author at Burgh Castle after the public access works had been completed in 2012 (Courtesy *Eastern Daily Press*).

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In memory of two great archaeologists:

John Hurst (1927-2003),

Inspector of Ancient Monuments, who did so much to promote the study of medieval settlement archaeology and to encourage the formation of the Norfolk Archaeological Unit

and

Philip Barker (1920-2001),

Extra-mural lecturer in archaeology, who developed open-area excavation into a fine technique through his work at Wroxeter Roman city and Hen Domen motte and bailey castle.

They both provided real inspiration for a budding young archaeologist.



Going
12 inches
down

Heavy cultivation with the Challenger 1

An advertisement published in the Farm Implement and Machinery Review for August 1953 showing the Fowler 'Challenger 1' 50-horse-power Diesel Crawler 'Going 12 inches down' with a three-furrow plough. It was the 1950s which saw the arrival of powerful diesel tractors which started to do so much more damage to archaeology on arable land

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Acknowledgements

This has been a life in archaeology in which so many people have been involved in different ways, and it is difficult to single out just a few to thank in particular. I am indebted to all friends and colleagues mentioned in this book. The period from 1972 to 1991 was one we, as a relatively young and close-knit group of idealistic archaeologists, explored together to discover what was possible and what we could achieve. It was all new ground, and unknown territory lay ahead. There seemed to be no limits on how far we could go, and, luckily, government policy and national guidance on good planning practice just about kept in step, and it was all quite magical. We were riding on the crest of a wave generated by the fathers of the RESCUE movement, of which we were proud to play a part. We also had the kindly support of senior officers and members of the County Council at a time when 'budget cuts' were not yet on the agenda. As I say in the text, these were indeed the 'golden years' to be in field archaeology.

The second part of the book was more of a personal journey. It describes the wonderful opportunities the trustees of the Norfolk Archaeological Trust gave me to demonstrate how a modern county archaeological conservation trust could play a major role in site protection and in opening for public enjoyment a range of properties which would not normally be accessible. I do hope that this is only the beginning and that the momentum can be retained so that we can go further in catching up with the far greater achievements of wildlife conservation movement. In truth there is still a long way to travel.

Unless otherwise acknowledged, the aerial photographs reproduced here were taken by Derek Edwards, and his skills are apparent in his fine pictures. The staff of the current Historic Environment Record at Gressenhall: Heather Hamilton, Alison Yardy and Julia Richards were extremely helpful in retrieving and scanning the many photographs from the Gressenhall archive, and Sue White has performed miracles computer enhancing the pictures.

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Abbreviations

- CBA Council for British Archaeology
- CEAS Centre of East Anglian Studies at UEA
- *DAFT Dereham and Fakenham Times*
- DCMS Department of Culture, Media and Sport
- Defra Department of the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs
- DNH Department of National Heritage
- DoE Department of the Environment
- DoT Department of Transport
- EAA East Anglian Archaeology regional monograph series
- *EDP Eastern Daily Press*
- EH English Heritage
- ESA Environmentally Sensitive Area farmland conservation scheme
- FLO Finds Liaison Officer
- GPS Global Positioning System
- HER Historic Environment Record, replacing the SMR
- HES Historic Environment Service
- HLF Heritage Lottery Fund
- HLS Higher Level Stewardship Scheme for farmland conservation
- MAFF Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
- MPP Monuments Protection Programme
- NAHRG Norfolk Archaeological and Historical Research Group
- NARG Norfolk Archaeological Rescue Group
- NASAC Norfolk Archaeological Services Advisory Committee
- NAU Norfolk Archaeological Unit
- NCM Norwich Castle Museum
- NFU National Farmers Union
- NHMF National Heritage Memorial Fund
- NIAS Norfolk Industrial Archaeology Society
- NMMP Norfolk Monuments Management Project
- NMS Norfolk Museums Service
- NPS Norfolk Property Services
- NRC Norfolk Research Committee
- PAS Portable Antiquities Scheme
- RCHM Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments (of England)
- SMR Sites and Monuments Record, later to become the Historic Environment Record (HER)
- UEA University of East Anglia (Norwich)
- UPD Updated Project Design
- YOP Youth Opportunities Programme

Norfolk Firsts

- First county archaeology conservation trust, 1923
- First county wildlife trust (The Norfolk Naturalists' Trust), 1926
- First county fledgling Sites and Monuments Record, 1933
- First systematic research-based fieldwalking project (on the Launditch Hundred), 1967
- First government post-excavation grant (for North Elmham Park), 1971
- First county archaeological unit, 1973
- First county air photographs library, 1973
- First full-time county air photography officer, 1973
- First comprehensive county barrow survey (which later became a part of a regional barrow survey), 1973-76
- First county to actively support and encourage legal metal detecting, c. 1975
- First comprehensive county ruined churches survey, 1976-91
- First fully developer-funded urban excavation outside London (from Anglia TV), 1979
- First county to have a 'county from the air' book of aerial photographs, 1987
- Possibly the first county with a strong Structure Plan policy which ensured that the development of sites of archaeological importance (scheduled or not) would only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, 1988
- First comprehensive Monuments Management Project incorporating all earthworks of schedulable quality, 1990
- First comprehensive county-wide survey of known earthworks in grassland, 1994-2000
- *First County Standards for Field Archaeology*, 1998

(with apologies if any of these claims should prove to be inaccurate)

'It is increasingly clear that industrialised agriculture, employing ever larger tractors pulling bigger ploughs, is truncating buried archaeology at accelerating rates. Plough damage remains the single most destructive agent of archaeological evidence in Britain, and continues to occur on an annual basis effectively unnoticed and un-monitored at a national scale

If nothing is done to manage the ongoing impact of agricultural damage it is likely that within the next 30 years we will see the majority of the rural archaeology of Britain hopelessly compromised

.... if we continue to look the other way as agricultural plant gets larger and the industrial production of root crops, for instance, increases, we will only have ourselves to blame for the devastation of the buried record of the human past that even now barely survives in the ground.

It is essential that we increase public-awareness of the fragility of the buried and invisible archaeological resource if it is to be afforded the same degree of protection that is applied to aspects of the living natural environment.

To face this challenge we have to identify those areas most worthy of preservation, emphasise and make more implicit the link between the human past and the natural world, a world in which the status of archaeology matches that of the living natural world, a world in which humanity is not only contributing to the destruction of the natural environment but is also a key component of the environment. To achieve these aims we will have to adopt novel new approaches and work in new partnerships with farmers, communities and government institutions absorbing rather than rejecting change.'

(Powlesland 2015, 113 and 117)

Time line of key events most of which feature in the Book

- 1739/75 Publication of F. Blomefield's *Towards a Topog. Hist. of the County of Norfolk*.
- 1813 The earliest known rescue archaeology on barrow burials at Sporle with Palgrave.
- 1843 Publication of R. Ladbrooke's *Views of the Churches of Norfolk*.
- 1844 Publication of Rev. Richard Hart's *The Antiquities of Norfolk: A Lecture*.
- 1846 Founding of the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society.
- 1908 Inaugural meeting of the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia.
- 1923 Norfolk Archaeological Trust formed as a limited company.
- 1924 Norfolk Archaeological Trust bought its first historic building.
- 1926 Norfolk Naturalists' Trust also formed as a limited company.
- 1932 The original Fenland Research Committee was formed.
- 1933 Norfolk Archaeological Trust bought the earthworks of Binham Priory cloisters.
- 1933 Rainbird Clarke started the Norfolk card index of archaeological sites and discoveries.
- 1934 Norfolk Research Committee established.
- 1935 The Prehistoric Society was formed out of the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia.
- 1935-48 The first Norfolk barrow survey organised by the Norfolk Research Committee.
- 1946 The RAF created the first vertical aerial photograph cover of Norfolk.
- 1948 The Snettisham Treasure discovered after deep ploughing.
- 1957 Publication of Keith Allison's Norfolk survey of deserted medieval villages.
- 1959 Norfolk Research Committee excavations at Warham Camp.
- 1959 Destruction of Grenstein deserted medieval village earthworks.
- 1960 Publication of Rainbird Clarke's *East Anglia*.
- 1960-c.1980 John Owles at Witton documented the level of plough damage on farmland.
- 1962 Norfolk Research Committee Thetford Castle excavations where the trench collapsed.
- 1962 Destruction of Thuxton deserted medieval village earthworks.
- 1962-71 King's Lynn Survey excavations.
- 1963-64 Thuxton deserted village excavations.

- 1964 Thetford Brandon Road large-scale excavations of Anglo-Saxon town.
- 1965-66 Grenstein deserted village excavations.
- 1965-89 Excavations by 'Excavatores Brantunae' of Brampton Roman town.
- 1967-71 Launditch Hundred thematic fieldwalking project.
- 1967-72 North Elmham Park excavations.
- 1970 Foxburrow Farm, North Elmham, Bronze Age hoard excavated.
- 1970 The Paddocks, Swaffham, salvage excavation of Anglo-Saxon cemetery.
- 1970 Norfolk Industrial Archaeology Society founded.
- 1970 Meeting in Barford, Warwickshire, triggered the start of the 'Rescue' movement.
- 1971 Launch of RESCUE at the large London Senate House public meeting.
- 1971 Letter in *The Times* started government funding for writing excavation reports.
- 1971 Launch of the Scole Committee for Archaeology in East Anglia.
- 1971-78 Norwich Survey excavations
- 1972-81 and 1984 Spong Hill Anglo-Saxon cemetery excavations.
- 1973 Start of the Norfolk Archaeological Unit as a county field archaeology service.
- 1973 Start of the Norfolk aerial photography flying programme.
- 1973-75 Second Norfolk barrow survey.
- 1973-75 Bergh Apton and Morningthorpe Anglo-Saxon cemeteries excavated.
- 1974 Norfolk Archaeological Unit moved into the east wing of the Gressenhall workhouse.
- 1974 Norfolk Archaeological Unit converted Rainbird Clarke's card index into the SMR.
- 1975 Norfolk Archaeological Rescue Group founded.
- 1975 Publication of East Anglian Archaeology No. 1.
- 1975-76 Tasburgh hedge counting project.
- 1976 Discovery from the air of the defences of Brampton Roman town.
- 1976-91 The Fenland Survey followed by the Fenland Evaluation Project.
- 1977 Destruction of three late twelfth-century houses at 28-34 Queen Street, King's Lynn.
- 1978 Article by Barbara Green and Tony Gregory on metal detecting in *Museums Journal*.
- 1978 Norfolk County Council took over the Norfolk Archaeological Unit.
- 1978 Debate about metal detecting boiled over at a Norfolk Museums Committee meeting.

- 1978 The Crowther national survey of attitudes towards metal detecting.
- 1979 Norfolk Archaeological Unit took responsibility for Norwich excavations.
- 1979 First fully developer-funded excavation on Anglia TV Cattle Market site in Norwich.
- 1979 The 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act passed.
- 1980 Start of the CBA. STOP campaign against use of detectors on all archaeological sites.
- 1980-90 Barton Bendish parish survey.
- 1981 Publication of the regional barrow survey covering four counties.
- 1981 Norwich St Martin-at-Palace Plain excavation revealed Norman house.
- 1980-82 Thetford, Fison Way, demonstrated the beneficial use of detectors on excavations.
- 1983 The National Heritage Act set up English Heritage formed in 1984.
- 1983 Review of the state of barrow preservation in the county.
- 1983 Publication of *Digging under the Doorstep* on Norwich excavations.
- 1984 Norfolk Archaeological Trust received the centre of Caistor Roman town as a bequest.
- 1984 The first computer arrived at Gressenhall to digitise the SMR.
- 1985-86 Ground-breaking metal detector survey of scheduled Roman temple site at Caistor.
- 1986-2001 English Heritage Monuments Protection Programme.
- 1986 Start of MAFF's Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) Scheme.
- 1987 Publication of first edition of *Norfolk from the Air*.
- 1987 Formation of the Federation of Norfolk Historical and Archaeological Organisations.
- 1987-91 Large-scale excavations prior to the Castle Mall development, Norwich.
- 1988 County Structure Plan provided protection for scheduled and unscheduled sites.
- 1988 Alan Carter, Director of the Norwich Survey, died.
- 1988 Norfolk Museums Service bought Spong Hill collection from landowner.
- 1989-92 Norwich Southern Bypass excavations of Bronze Age and Anglo-Saxon burials.
- 1990 PPG16 made archaeological assessment and recording a key part of development.
- 1990 British Museum's excavation of the Iron Age gold and silver torcs at Snettisham.

- 1990 Publication of a complete fieldwalking survey of Hales, Heckingham and Loddon.
- 1990 Start of the Norfolk Monuments Management Project.
- 1991 Organisation of field archaeology in Norfolk re-structured in response to PPG 16.
- 1991 Start of Countyside Stewardship Scheme managed by Countryside Commission.
- 1991-95 Fenland Management Project.
- 1992 Norfolk Archaeological Trust bought the Roman suburbs at Caistor Roman town.
- 1992 NARG and NRC amalgamated into a new NAHRG.
- 1993 Publication of the first edition of the *Norfolk Historical Atlas*.
- 1993 Caistor Roman town formally opened to the public.
- 1994 PPG 15 applied the principles of archaeological assessment to historic buildings.
- 1994/95 Annual number of planning consultations referred to Gressenhall reached 1,547.
- 1994-96 English Heritage Monuments at Risk Survey (MARS).
- 1994-96 Breckland Archaeological Survey.
- 1994-2000 County earthworks survey.
- 1995 Norfolk Archaeological Trust bought Burgh Castle Roman fort.
- 1995 Some barrows finally scheduled by English Heritage following the 1973-75 survey.
- 1996 Passing of the 1996 Treasure Act.
- 1996 New Five-year Development Plan for archaeology in Norfolk Museums Service.
- 1996 Discovery from the air of the full outline of the Roman fort at Saham Toney.
- 1997 Start of the Portable Antiquities Scheme by the British Museum.
- 1998 MAFF introduces archaeology conservation payments into Breckland ESA scheme.
- 1998 Publication of *County Standards for Field Archaeology in Norfolk*.
- 1998-99 Millennium Library excavation on site of Norman Borough, Norwich.
- 1998-99 Time Team filmed excavations at Reedham, Thetford and Bawsey.
- 1999 Seahenge excavated at Holme-next-the-Sea.
- 1999 P.W-M retired from Norfolk Museums Service and became Norfolk Archaeological Trust's first Director.
- 1999 Air photography flying programme brought to a close.

- 2000 Norfolk Historic Buildings Group formed.
- 2000 Story broke that the NAU, created in the 1991 restructuring, was deeply in the red.
- 2002 Publication of East Anglian Archaeology No. 100.
- 2002-04 Norfolk Archaeological Trust bought St Benet's Abbey.
- 2002 Norfolk Archaeological Trust bought Binham Priory gatehouse and precinct wall.
- 2003 Publication of the county earthworks survey.
- 2003 Norfolk Archaeological Trust bought Bloodgate Hill, South Creake, fort.
- 2005 Limited protection for old grassland introduced under the EU Common Agricultural Policy regulations.
- 2006 The Norfolk Archaeological Unit transferred to Norfolk Property Services as 'NPS Archaeology'.
- 2007-08 Repairs to Binham Priory gatehouse and precinct wall.
- 2009-10 Improvements to public access at Burgh Castle.
- 2009-12 Excavations at Caistor for the Roman town research project.
- 2012 Norfolk Archaeological Trust bought Dunston Field, Caistor Roman town.
- 2012 Integrated geophysical and metal detector surveys of Dunston Field.
- 2012-14 Heritage Lottery Fund paid for repairs at St Benet's Abbey.
- 2013-14 Norfolk Archaeological Trust and Holkham Estate worked to conserve Castle Acre Priory precinct walls.
- 2014 Andrew Rogerson was honoured with a volume of essays: *Landscapes and Artefacts*.
- 2015 English Heritage divided into Historic England and English Heritage.
- 2016 Norfolk County Council cancelled plans to cut the artefact identification service.
- 2016 Norfolk County Council deleted the post of County Field Archaeologist at end of December 2016.
- 2016 NPS announced in December that it will close down its archaeology contracting team by March 2017.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This is very much a personal journey through a life which has been involved with the archaeology of Norfolk from my first visit to the Roman town at Caistor as a small boy, then later working as a young volunteer in the Castle Museum and on Rainbird Clarke's excavations at Warham Camp in 1959 through to my retirement as Director of the Norfolk Archaeological Trust in 2014. The story covers three distinctive periods: my early voluntary work and research up to 1973, as County Field Archaeologist from 1973 to 1999 and then as Director of the Norfolk Archaeological Trust up to 2014. These years covered a period of extraordinary change in British archaeology. In the early years *field* archaeology had not yet become a recognised profession; few people were active, and there were very limited measures to protect the historic landscape. The situation is now so transformed that it seems worth putting on record what one person has witnessed over this period of remarkable change.

My father, who was born in 1887 and lived until he was just over 80, once said that he had seen a complete transition in the countryside from the horse to the tractor in his lifetime and he could not believe that change could go any further. How wrong he has proved to be, and I am sure field archaeology will grow and change again just as much as it has over these 50 or so years. The signs are all very hopeful.

Whatever else happens, it is important that we protect and preserve as much as possible for the future after we have lost so much of our archaeology since the Second World War, both in the countryside and in the towns. We need to take more care of what we have left than we did from the 1950s through to the 1980s. There is no doubt that protection of the cultural heritage is now improving. In the towns and villages planning procedures can now ensure some control over the removal of archaeological deposits. In the countryside new conservation measures under Europe's Common Agricultural Policy do safeguard the archaeology better in arable areas to some extent, but not enough. It is too early to know what difference the vote to leave the European Union will make. Whatever happens, many more sites still need *legal* protection, and sub-soiling of unscheduled sites under cultivation is now the biggest problem. This is where the damage continues unseen, unrecorded and unchallenged. We must watch closely to see what changes there will be following our departure from the European Union.

The growth of evidence from metal detecting since the late 1960s is quite astonishing, and it is giving a whole new group in society an opportunity

to be involved in archaeology as never before. Metal detecting in particular is democratising people's involvement in the past, and transforming our understanding of the historic landscape. Better awareness can only help to protect what we have left. The past is very precious, and there is still much to do to ensure some of it survives.

Chapter 2: The Early Years

A farming background

After my parents married in 1941 they decided not to wait until the war was over before having a child, and I was born on 23rd February 1944 in Norwich Hospital. My mother (1901-1981) was Eileen Frazer-Allen, the daughter of Rev. David Frazer-Allen (1868-1923), the rector of Lyng, where she grew up in Lyng rectory. When my mother talked about her childhood I had a strong impression that being a rector's daughter in a village before the First World War was a fairly lonely existence. Edwardian custom created a strong social divide between those in the wooded grounds of the rectory and 'the parishioners' in the village. Later, she went off to Barts Hospital in London to become a nurse, and her younger brother, Archie, left for the colonies to farm near Mombasa in Kenya. Sadly, he was killed when the tractor he had borrowed from a neighbour caught fire. Their father died suddenly aged 56 in 1923, and his grave is close to the south wall of Lyng church. The organ in the church is dedicated to his memory. My mother returned to Lyng to be with her mother, Agnes, but they had to move out of the rectory because the Church of England provided no housing for widows. They were offered the use of the Mill House in Lenwade by the Sayer family, who ran the animal feed mill there, and she stayed in the Mill House until Agnes died in 1939.

My father was Ernest Martins (1887-1970), but he later changed his name to Wade-Martins, reviving an earlier family name after a bank mix-up when money was paid into the wrong account. He farmed at Clay Hall Farm Great Witchingham until he retired and married my mother in 1941 when they moved to a cottage in Mattishall. He often talked fondly about the flock of breeding sheep he had kept at Clay Hall, and also with great sadness about a fine herd of pigs he had built up until they caught swine fever. They all had to be slaughtered without compensation, and because his men refused to help he had the heart-breaking job of shooting them all himself. He often talked about having to shoot the pigs as his way of coping with the agony of it all. He had fought at Ypres, and he once told me that when he was issued with a uniform there was a bullet hole in the jacket. But, like so many men who had fought in the First World War, he would never talk about his time in the trenches.

Growing up on a chicken farm

My parents started married life at 'The Hollies' on the Welborne Road, Mattishall, and then in the early 1950s they built their dream bungalow further down the road towards Welborne which they called 'The Elms'. At The Hollies my father quickly established a chicken business to produce first-cross laying hens from Rhode Island Red and Light Sussex breeding stock, the purpose being to create prolific layers of brown eggs (*Figures 2.1 and 2.2*). That was before the days of hybrids which later replaced the old-fashioned breeds and their crosses. My parents gave up the chicken business, called Martins & Co. (Norfolk) Ltd, after the incubator house burnt down, but it was probably the right moment to do so anyway with the arrival of the hybrids and industrialised chicken farming with hens in battery cages.

We lived nearer to the neighbouring small village of Welborne than we did to Mattishall, and I was privileged to witness there the last flickering of a way of life much of which went back centuries. A neighbouring farmer, Harry Norton, only used horses. Harvest was cut with tractor-pulled binders (Culpin 1938, 166-177), and later seeing the first combine harvester working in the area was a memorable experience. Electricity and running water had not yet arrived. In the little shop and post office customers were served by an old lady, actually called Olive Leamon, who had only a paraffin lamp. Water was drawn from wells in the cottage gardens. There was an old wheelwright and carpenter, but the blacksmith had just closed. The pub, called the Horse Shoes, flourished although it was serving a tiny community. The names and trades of the local families, like the farmers called Norton, Curson, Howard, Kerridge and Tooley, the blacksmith called Doy and the wheelwright called Neve, are all there recorded in the pre-war county directories. Sadly, the pub and shop went long ago.



2.1. Father, dressed as usual in thick cord breeches, heavy woollen socks and a flat cap, while feeding his Light Sussex chickens.



2.2. P.W-M helping father to mend a chicken run.

I was taken daily to a small private school in Quebec Hall just to the north of Dereham, and my parents tried hard to avoid the state school system, although I sensed that it cost them more than they could really afford. Judging by the school photo, Quebec Hall had about 40 children (*Figure 2.3*). All I do recall about the school now is standing in rows for assembly listening to the two ladies (in the front row in the picture) playing Chopin to us on the piano. It was nevertheless great fun helping my father with his chickens at the end of the school day.

A first taste of archaeology

At about the age of six I was sent as a boarder to the Town Close Preparatory School between the Ipswich and Newmarket Roads in Norwich. My first taste of archaeology came early when with a school friend, Gerald Townsley, we were taken by his mother to see the Roman town at Caistor St Edmund just to the south of Norwich. We hid from the farmer and walked over the main field, which was still then being ploughed, and picked up pottery which I kept for years afterwards. From that moment there was no turning back; I knew what my career would be, and years later I was able to repay my debt to the site after I took on the



2.3. A school group at Quebec Hall c.1949. P.W-M is fourth from the right in the front row. The two ladies who ran the school are in the centre. This is the only known photograph of the school which closed in the 1960s.

management of the Roman town for the Norfolk Archaeological Trust. After Town Close, education led inevitably into the public school system and to Bloxham just south of Banbury in Oxfordshire.

Bloxham School, 1957-62

My time at Bloxham from 1957 to 1962 was not particularly enjoyable, and when you don't enjoy something you don't remember it well. But I do remember that as a prefect I assiduously avoided dishing out 'points' which could lead to a beating, a system of punishment which seemed degrading and unnecessary. The high moments were starting and running the school Archaeological Society and organising an excavation in 1960 on the Tadmarton Road near to the Quarry Crossroads in a meadow where nothing had previously been recorded, although a Roman cemetery had been found in the ironstone quarry nearby before the war. Below a deep layer of topsoil we came straight onto the foundations of a substantial Roman building. The excavation was published in the school magazine, *The Bloxhamist*, Vol. LXVII, No. 479 (June 1961) and LXVII, No. 480 (November 1961), and in *Cake and Cockhorse: The Magazine of the Banbury Historical Society* (Wade-

Martins 1961) and details are held in Oxfordshire's Historic Environment Record (PRN 4984).

The *Illustrated London News* regularly featured public schools, and it was Bloxham's turn in the 7th May 1960 issue. Amongst the many posed pictures of boys appearing uncharacteristically studious was one of a meeting of the Archaeological Society with us all around a table looking at Roman pottery probably collected from fieldwalking at Swalcliffe Lea a few miles away (Figure 2.4).

For my A-level Geography dissertation I found immense pleasure doing a landscape study of Bloxham parish relating it to the pre-enclosure landscape with its ridge and furrow system which had been drawn conveniently as an underlay on



2.4. A very posed photograph published in *The Illustrated London News* for 7th May 1960 of a meeting of the Bloxham School Archaeological Society in Oxfordshire examining pottery collected from a nearby Roman settlement at Swalcliffe Lee.

the Enclosure map. (There is a reference to the dissertation in the *Victoria County History* volume IX as footnote 1.) The inspiration for this came from reading and re-reading in the school library W.G. Hoskins' *The Making of the English Landscape* (1955). All boys when they left were given a presentation book, and I chose *The Making of the English Landscape* which was signed by every boy in 'Wilson House', and it is still a treasured possession. The other book I devoured was Richard Atkinson's second edition of *Field Archaeology* (1953) which explained brilliantly the techniques of fieldwork at the time. The opening paragraph of the chapter on 'The Publication of the Evidence' resonated always with me after that:

The importance of publishing proper reports of archaeological research, and especially of excavations, cannot be too strongly emphasised. For, as has already been said, the excavation of a site involves its destruction; once excavated, the evidence cannot be reconstituted except from the records made by the excavator. Failure to publish these records, therefore, is as much a crime against science as the deliberate suppression of a newly discovered historical document.

So, it was quite a shock to realise after he died in 1994 that Atkinson had himself left a major backlog of unpublished excavations, particularly at nationally important monuments like Stonehenge and Silbury Hill.

Academically Bloxham was not that good, and some teaching, particularly for the juniors, was lamentable. No boys from my year went straight on to university. This may explain why I left with only one A-level, in Geography inevitably, and had to go to Norwich Technical College for two years from 1962 to 1964 to take fresh exams, this time in zoology and botany. It was not an easy time when I clearly needed to move on.

A volunteer at Norwich Castle Museum

Meanwhile, in the holidays attending meetings of the Norfolk Research Committee in the late 1950s and early 1960s which were held regularly in the schoolroom at the Castle Museum was wonderful. It was a multi-disciplinary organisation run by the museum's curator, Rainbird Clarke (*Figure 2.5*), and it was a source of pleasure and wonder to attend and listen to the Norfolk personalities of the day, such as Dr Calvin Wells talking about his research on human bones, Charles Green on his excavations on the Roman forts at Caister-on-Sea and Burgh Castle, Charles Lewton-Brain on his flint collecting in West Norfolk, Hallam Ashley on his photography of historic buildings and Tony Baggs on Norwich.

Rainbird Clarke did much to promote archaeology to the public, and I felt very privileged to attend the luncheon in Jarrold's shop in Norwich to launch in 1960 his book *East Anglia* (1960) in the Thames and Hudson 'Ancient Peoples and



2.5. Roy Rainbird Clarke, known to everyone as 'Rainbird', curator of Norwich Castle Museum, secretary of the Norfolk Research Committee and originator of the county card index which became the Sites and Monuments Record in the 1970s.

Places' series. This quickly became standard reading at the time. He took part in Anglia Television's 1962 'Once a Kingdom' series, and he wrote the Archaeology section of *Norwich and its Region*, published to coincide with the visit of the British Association for the Advancement of Science to Norwich in 1961 (Clarke 1961).

Another real pleasure was travelling to Norwich by bus from Mattishall to work as a volunteer in the museum where large numbers of cremation urns excavated by Guy Knocker from the Illington Anglo-Saxon cemetery in 1949 were to be stuck together. Working behind the scenes in the museum sticking pots in sand trays was a thrilling experience. The smell of that glue will live with me always.

Warham Camp excavations, 1959

The first excavation I took part in was Rainbird's trenching of the defences at Warham Camp for the

Norfolk Research Committee in 1959 to look for dating evidence from under the inner bank (*Figures 2.6 and 2.7*) and from the fill of the outer ditch. My mother, bless her, paid for me to stay in a B&B in Little Walsingham, and it was a great experience taking part in the project. I dug the trench into the inner bank and found hand-made flint-gritted pottery in the old topsoil under the bank, but unfortunately the sherds were not distinctive enough to date the fort with any precision. Perhaps more important was the discovery on top of the bank of a foundation trench to hold upright timbers and post-holes forming a palisade and fighting platform (*Figure 2.8*). I felt very honoured to help Rainbird with the site photography, and several of my pictures were used in the report later written by Tony Gregory and published years later in *East Anglian Archaeology* (Gregory 1986d).



2.6. An aerial view taken by Mike Page in 2006 of the Iron Age fort, Warham Camp, situated on the eastern slopes of the Stiffkey valley in north Norfolk. This is surely the finest prehistoric monument in the county. None of the three present entrances look original, and there are signs of a causeway across the valley leading to a now-lost western entrance in the valley bottom removed by the straightening of the Stiffkey River.

Ashill Roman enclosure and West Acre Saxon cemetery, 1961

Then followed small-scale excavations at the Ashill Roman enclosure, probably a first-century fort (Gregory 1977), and at the West Acre Early Saxon cremation cemetery in 1961 (unpublished). West Acre was the first time I had the opportunity to see really severe plough damage, with the shattered cremation urns sitting only partly below ploughsoil, a bit like Spong Hill in the 1970s.

Thetford Castle excavations, 1962: a near-death experience

At Thetford is an Iron Age fort remodelled as a Norman motte and bailey castle, and Rainbird excavated the outer defences in 1962 in the hope of finding dating evidence from the original bank and ditch (*Eastern Daily Press (EDP)* 19th September 1962). The trench was cut through the sandy fills of the ditch, 3.3 metres deep,



2.7. P.W-M, wheelbarrow in hand, working in the trench cut into the inner bank on the Norfolk Research Committee's excavations at Warham Camp in 1959.



without any shoring, with potentially fatal consequences. We reached the bottom of the ditch, which proved to be wide and flat-bottomed (Gregory 1992), and it was a real miracle that nobody was injured when the whole trench collapsed just after we had climbed out for a coffee break (Figures 2.9 and 2.10). As we sat we watched it just fall in. But for that coffee break, I would certainly have been instantly killed. There was never any explanation from Rainbird as to why he thought shoring at that depth in that sandy

2.8. Post-holes and a slot cut into the top of the inner chalk bank at Warham Camp for a palisade and fighting platform (R20).



2.9. The early stages of the Norfolk Research Committee's deep trench cut through the outer Iron Age ditch at Thetford Castle in 1962 (M4).



2.10. A lesson for all archaeologists who do not shore up the sides of deep trenches: the Thetford Castle trench collapsed just after we had climbed out for a coffee break (M37).



2.11 P.W.-M and Susanna Everett on the North Elmham Park excavations in 1969.

soil was unnecessary, but I don't ever remember him going down into the trench himself. Two years earlier, in 1960 he had dug a narrow unshored trench even deeper, to just over 5 metres into chalky loam at the Thornham Iron Age enclosure without any problems (Gregory 1986a), but taking such risks, even by the safety standards of the day, was unacceptable.

Report writing

It wasn't apparent to me then that while Rainbird had the time to excavate in his holidays away from the museum, his museum duties did not seem to permit him time to write up his excavations which lay unfinished at his untimely death at the age of 49 in 1963. The same applied to Charles Green, Guy Knocker and Ernest Greenfield and others when they were excavating at this time for the Ministry of Works. The Ministry's payments covered the excavation but no more, so these early government-funded excavators were all left stranded when they came to writing up quite major projects. Years later in the Norfolk

Archaeological Unit we drew up a programme of report writing funded by the Department of the Environment and then English Heritage to clear up this whole backlog in a series of volumes of East Anglian Archaeology which we completed eventually in 1997 (p.247-249).

Chapter 3: Excavating Deserted Medieval Villages

Destruction in the countryside

The 1950s and 1960s were an awful time to be growing up in the countryside if you were at all aware of the historic environment. Agricultural engineering had reached a stage with the development of the diesel engine which enabled tractors to plough deeper and bulldozers to level uneven ground (*Frontispiece*). The exposure of the Snettisham Treasure of gold and silver torcs in 1948 and 1950 in a field which was being deeply ploughed with a tractor for the first time should have been a warning of what was to happen all over the arable areas of Lowland Britain (Clarke 1956, 21-28). Government grants for improving farmland by removing hedgerows and ploughing up long-established grassland made destruction commonplace. Progress in farming technology was way ahead of the archaeological profession, which did not start to catch up until the 1970s. Old meadowland and heath was being levelled and ploughed everywhere without a murmur of complaint from archaeologists because in practice there were none to take notice outside museums and universities. It wasn't just important monuments which suffered; often it was just small pieces of landscape which disappeared, such as a bank representing an old common edge or a hollow way, each of which had their own story to tell. The examples which follow of the loss of two fine deserted villages at Thuxton and Grenstein were commonplace at the time. The most that Rainbird Clarke could do was fill in record cards of discoveries reported to him and mark up a set of six-inch maps he kept in drawers in the Castle Museum's committee room outside his office and then pass on details to the archaeology section of the Ordnance Survey in Southampton. He started doing this at the suggestion of O.G.S. Crawford, the Ordnance Survey's Archaeology Officer (Daniel 1965; Green 1986), and years later these record cards became the core of the new Norfolk Sites and Monuments Record which we developed in the 1970s (p.165-166). Meanwhile, in the 1950s and 1960s anyone who was archaeologically aware must have felt helpless, as I did, while watching post-war redevelopment, without record, of our urban centres.

Thuxton deserted village excavations, 1963-64

Levelling of the village earthworks

My own sense of despair about damage to the countryside was focused on the site of a deserted village at Thuxton not far from home. I found the earthworks

of part of the village and moated manor site in pristine condition in 1960 as recorded on vertical RAF air photographs taken in 1946 (*Figure 3.1*). But in 1962 the hedgerows were removed and the earthworks were all levelled and cultivated, leaving soil marks showing where banks and buried medieval clay buildings had been. The village was not scheduled, and the destruction was government-funded and all perfectly legal. While the farming profession was trying to claim that their members were the custodians of the countryside, the need for much stronger conservation measures to control their activities was all too apparent. The memories of what happened at Thuxton certainly motivated me in later years to give conservation a high priority whenever the opportunity arose.

After levelling, the fields where the village earthworks had been were only lightly cultivated, so I could spend the summer of 1963, thanks to the kindly farmer, mainly alone digging on one of the house sites which showed as a clay rectangle on the surface. The buildings of a medieval village on these East Anglian boulder clay



3.1. The fine RAF vertical aerial photograph taken on 31st January 1946 of the eastern end of Thuxton deserted medieval village showing the main east-to-west street with toft boundary ditches running back from either side and to the east the moated manor site with its outer earthworks all intact up until 1962 (RAF ref: 3 G/ TUD/UK52 5098).

soils had never previously been excavated, so it was not clear what the evidence might be. I had been on the excavations at Wharram Percy deserted village in Yorkshire run by John Hurst, the Ministry of Works medieval period inspector at the time (1927-2003; obituary *The Guardian* 13th May 2003), and that training was a real help. John was a towering figure in the world of medieval settlement and medieval pottery studies, and he was a great inspiration. Wharram was the training ground for a whole generation of medieval archaeologists, where John had developed the concept of open-area excavation on village sites, derived from Axel Steensberg's work in Denmark, where areas were opened without trenches or box cuttings. This technique was taken to new levels of achievement by the great Phil Barker (1920-2001) with his excavations from 1960 to 1988 at the motte and bailey castle at Hen Domen in Montgomery and with his 1966-90 excavations on the later levels of the Roman town at Wroxeter. So, I applied the same approach at Thuxton with John's enthusiastic encouragement. My philosophy throughout my excavating career was to dig to see what was there and not to be focused on the need to answer academic questions which has a built-in danger of creating a blinkered view of the evidence. I owed much to John for his support in the years which followed.

Air photography from a Tiger Moth

The Thuxton soil marks were so clear on the ground, that it seemed worthwhile recording them from the air. The local flying club were willing to take me up in a two-seater Tiger Moth with open cockpits, and it was really thrilling, with the air rushing past, to see the outline of the village laid out below (*Figure 3.2*). The old RAF verticals and my recent pictures helped enormously in site interpretation and in the planning of the two seasons' of excavation on the village area which followed. These pictures also showed the layout of the outer enclosure of the moated manor after destruction with clay outbuildings ranged around a farmyard (*Figure 3.3*), just as depicted on a late sixteenth-century map of the main manor house at Longham (*Figure 4.5*).

Excavating medieval peasant houses

It gradually became clear in that first year that the medieval houses would be extremely difficult to define and understand because they appeared to be built with clay walls and clay floors similar to the boulder clay sub-soil. Flints were used only sparingly as foundation courses. Otherwise the walls could only be identified as lines of chalk-speckled clay. The edges of flint-cobbled yards *between* the buildings often provided the best evidence for the outlines of the buildings themselves. There was obviously a limit to what one person with a spade, trowel



3.2. Aerial photograph by P.W-M of the levelled and plough-damaged village earthworks at Thuxton in 1963 with the east-to-west street, toft boundary banks and the rectangular clay soil marks of medieval peasant houses and outbuildings. Compare this with the earthworks in Figure 3.1. The straight thin lines show where field drains had just been inserted (TG0408/ABU/slide).

and wheelbarrow could do alone in one summer, with some help from friends who came for a while, but I did expose the plan of one house showing what could be found by gentle open-area excavation.

In the next summer, after the field had been lightly ploughed and sown with barley, I came back after harvest, this time with Ministry of Works funding under the auspices of the Deserted Medieval Village Research Group. The funding was available as part of an initiative organised by the Group to excavate examples of medieval peasant houses threatened with destruction in different parts of the country. The aim was to build up a picture of house types in each region, as explained by John Hurst in a paper he had written on deserted medieval villages in *Recent Archaeological Excavations in Britain*, in which many of the well-known archaeologists of their day had written chapters on their recent research (Hurst 1956, 269-270). This splendid book represented the peak of archaeological activity in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

The Medieval Village Research Group brought in Lawrence Butler (1934-2014) to supervise the excavation. A team of locally-recruited workmen did much of



3.3. Aerial photograph by P.W-M of the moated manor site at Thuxton in 1964 after ploughing of the outer earthworks which revealed the rectangular shapes of clay outbuildings around the outer courtyard. Compare this with the earthworks in Figure 3.1. The layout is similar to that of the moated manor as depicted on a sixteenth-century parish map of Longham in Figure 4.5 (TG0408/D/AEH3).

the digging. Lawrence was a kind and gentle man, and together we developed techniques to expose and record the front part of another toft on the north side of the village street. This revealed the plans of two adjacent houses, again with chalk-speckled clay walls built directly on the medieval ground surface and surrounded by flint-cobbled yards and outbuildings, all dating to the late fourteenth century. Fine air photos of the excavated toft were taken by the wonderful larger-than-life Wing Commander Ken Wallis (1916-2013) from his autogyro which he built himself and flew from his airfield nearby at Reymerston (Figure 3.4). This was the machine he later flew in the 1967 James Bond film ‘You Only Live Twice’.

Understanding peasant houses

How to visualise the construction of the clay walls was a problem. Was it a form of cob in which the clay was built up between timber shuttering or was it blocks of clay (‘clay lump’) as widely used in the area in the nineteenth century? Research



3.4. Aerial photograph by Wing Commander Ken Wallis from his autogyro of the excavation of Thuxton Toft 2 from the west in 1964 with the shapes of two medieval peasant houses showing as flat clay rectangles outlined by the surrounding cobbled yards (TG0408/ADK/-).

by John McCann published long after we had finished excavating showed that there is no documentary evidence for the use of clay lump before the late eighteenth century (McCann 1987 and 1997). At the time we looked for traces of breaks in the clay walls which might suggest the divisions between the clay blocks but that was not easy. Malcolm Atkin also considered the excavation evidence for medieval clay buildings in Norwich in 1991 and he favoured the cob option, there being no clear evidence for the post-Roman use of clay lump in the region (Atkin 1991). Adam Longcroft reviewed the evidence in 2004 and concluded that the question of how these clay walls were built should remain open until further peasant houses could be excavated (Longcroft 2004). So there is room for further debate, and there is a need for another excavation of a deserted village not already damaged by cultivation.

The finds included whetstones from Norway and lava querns from the Rhineland, and the few metal finds showed a reasonable level of prosperity on these heavy clay soils. The report was not published in *East Anglian Archaeology* until 1989; meanwhile Lawrence was excavating at Faxton deserted village in Northamptonshire from 1965 to 1967 and having an active academic career as a

lecturer in medieval archaeology at Leeds University (Stamper, Stocker, Rees and Richards 2015). The Faxton report was never published, although it was apparently finished in draft. We did, however, finish the Thuxton report eventually (Butler and Wade-Martins 1989), but lessons still had to be learned about trying to write up important excavations on a shoestring.

Thetford Anglo-Saxon town excavations, 1964

Large-scale excavation of the Saxon town

While waiting for the harvest to be removed from the field at Thuxton in 1964 I joined the excavations just starting at the Anglo-Saxon town at Thetford being run by Brian Davison for the Ministry of Works close to the Brandon Road. Thetford in the tenth and eleventh centuries became a relatively large and prosperous town before it declined during the Middle Ages. This decline left areas of the Anglo-Saxon town undisturbed for several hundred years, but after the war Thetford saw extensive development as part of London's 'overspill' programme. In the 1960s the Borough Council and London County Council announced that this programme was to be accelerated with further housing estates to the south of the river. The only answer was large-scale machine stripping of topsoil to reveal the thousands of Late Saxon pits, ditches and post-holes cut into the sand and filled with darker soil. Over three seasons three acres near the Brandon Road were machine stripped, although excavation was not easy because many of the features were difficult to see and just as difficult to excavate in the dry sandy sub-soils. An important collection of plans of mainly Late Saxon timber buildings was nevertheless recorded, and it was all a remarkable experience and a very useful contrast to digging on the heavy boulder clays at Thuxton.

Susanna Everett

With my little green Austin A35 van I was asked one day to pick up two young ladies from Thetford station who were joining the team. One of them was Susanna Everett. We got to know each other quite well planning the post-holes, and there was one particular line of holes (at the north end of a Building B on Fig 56 of the excavation report!) which Brian Davison made us draw time and again before he was entirely satisfied. We kept in touch after that and married in 1970 (*Figure 2.11*).

Birmingham University, 1964-67

In the autumn of 1964 I went to Birmingham University to read Ancient History and Archaeology and I set out with my head full of the latest thinking about excavation methods and the extra-ordinary benefits of air photography as a method of reading and understanding the historic landscape. But then, I had the

biggest culture shock of my life discovering that none of my fellow students had done any excavating or had studied an air photograph. The Department offered no teaching in archaeological method, and the grinding lectures in classical history, Greek sculpture and Greek vase painting nearly finished me. For a country lad to be stuck in the centre of a large industrial city was no fun either. The only saving factor was that the History Department had just appointed Philip Rahtz (1921-2011), described by Mick Aston in his Foreword to Philip's autobiography, *Living Archaeology* (2001), as 'a giant in British archaeology'. Philip had a remarkable excavation record, and he kindly allowed me to attend his lectures and seminars which were always stimulating. He was also fun. To hear at first hand about his excavation of the royal palaces at Cheddar was an experience not to be missed.

Two-week trips to Orkney each June to excavate a Pictist and Norse settlement at Skaill on Deerness with fellow students under Peter Gelling (1925-1983), who lectured on Anglo-Saxon and Viking archaeology, were enjoyable. Peter excavated with Birmingham students for two or three weeks each year at Skaill from 1963 up until 1981, and he died two years later in 1983. Simon Buteux and others have since produced an excellent account of the excavation from the rather incomplete records Peter left behind (Buteux 1997). It appears that the archive was hardly adequate for its day, especially as Skaill was run as a student training excavation. It was the only formal training in fieldwork offered to Birmingham archaeology students during their three-year course.

Grenstein deserted village excavations, 1965-66

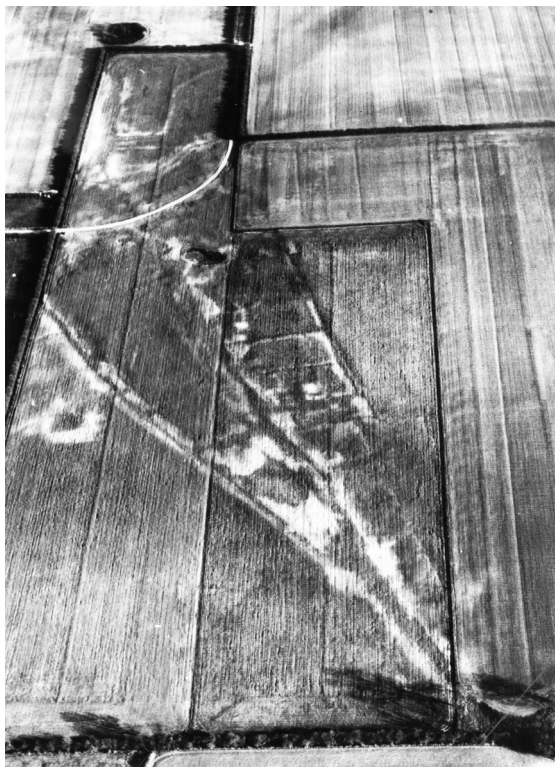
Thuxton had taught us quite a lot about the structural evidence for medieval villages in the region, and John Hurst was willing to fund another excavation in the summer of 1965. We chose Grenstein (spelt Greynston in pre-nineteenth-century documents) within Tittleshall parish where the earthworks had been levelled in 1959 (*Figure 3.5*). Again it was on boulder clay, so the Thuxton experience would help with interpretation. A Ministry of Works grant was organised through the Deserted Medieval Villages Research Group, and at the age of 21 I was to be paid to run my first publicly-funded excavation.

Landscape change since the Middle Ages

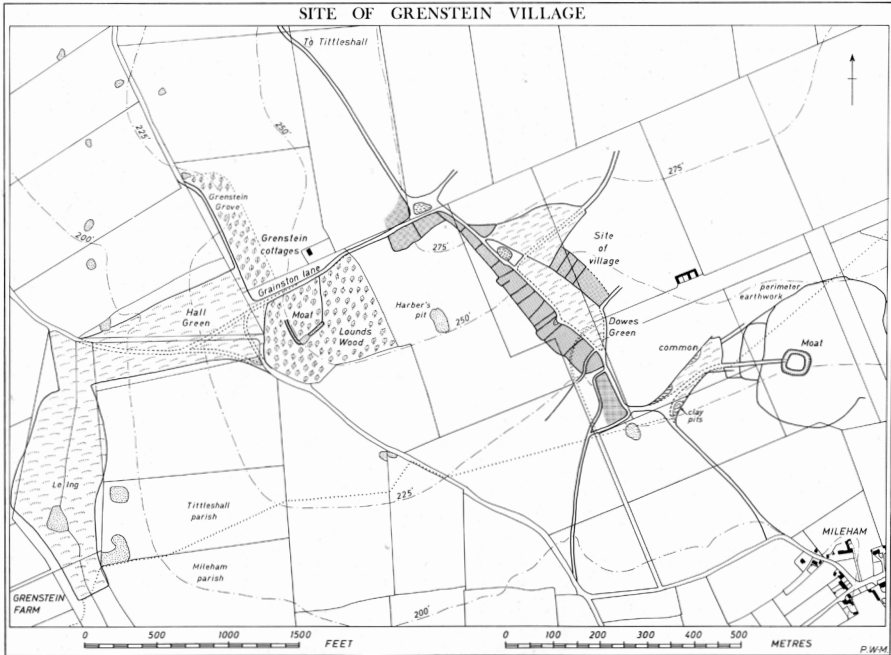
One of the pleasures of working on Grenstein was that there was a fine series of maps in the Holkham Estate archives, dating from 1596 to the nineteenth century showing how the medieval landscape had gradually been removed. By 1596 the village which stood around Dowes Green, previously called Greyston Green, had been deserted, but the open fields around that were only gradually replaced between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries by large enclosed fields. In the early

nineteenth century Doves Green was enclosed, and then before the 1880 first edition of the six-inch Ordnance Survey map these enclosures were also swept away by the Holkham Estate to be replaced by the present-day geometric pattern of fields with their dead-straight hedgerows. Locating the details of the medieval landscape by using the old maps, air photographs and surviving archaeology was very rewarding. The village lay on a south-facing slope mainly around a triangular green with a pond for watering livestock at the top (narrow) end (Figures 3.6 and 3.7). The surface pottery suggested that the village had started as a small settlement in the eleventh century around a crossroads to the north of the green and then spread down the hill and around the green in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The village was gradually deserted in the fifteenth century. It became clear later that this sequence reflected very similar patterns of village expansion and decline around other village greens in the area, but, unusually for a village of this size, there was no church.

Around the green 26 tofts could be identified. Close by, there were two moated manor sites, Greynston Manor (now obscured in Lounds Wood) and Caley's Manor.



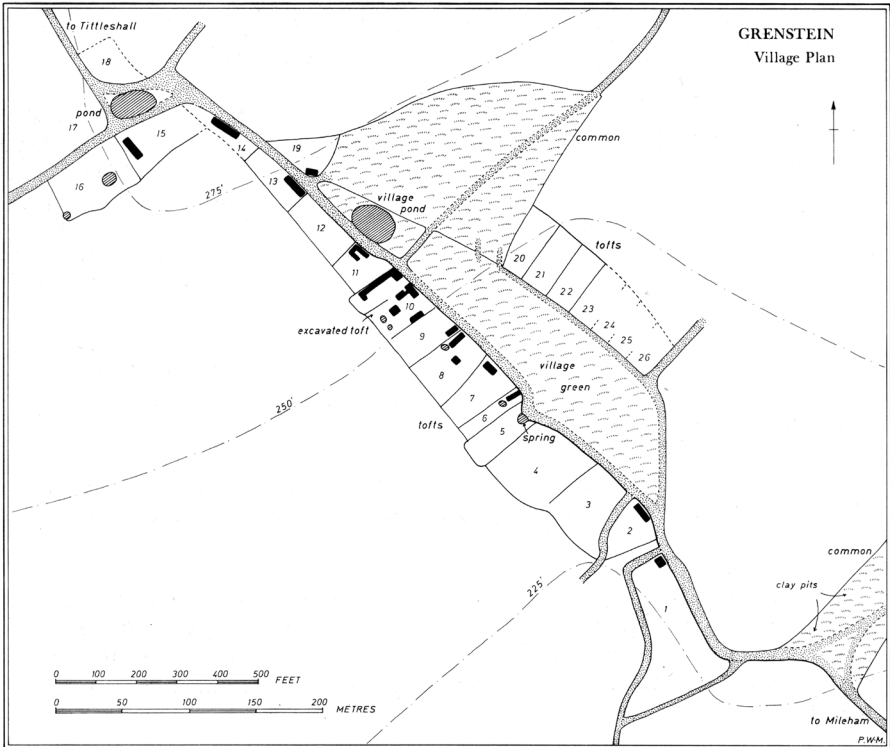
3.5. Aerial photograph by J.K. St Joseph in 1960 of Grenstein deserted medieval village taken from the north after the bulldozing and ploughing of the village earthworks the previous year. There was a triangular village green with a pond at the narrow end nearest the camera and a row of tofts, some with visible clay buildings along the western side of the street which ran down that side of the green (Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography AAQ60: copyright reserved).



3.6. An outline plan, based on cropmark, soil mark and earthwork evidence, of Grenstein village and the two moated manors plotted against the background of the modern landscape.

Stripping a complete toft

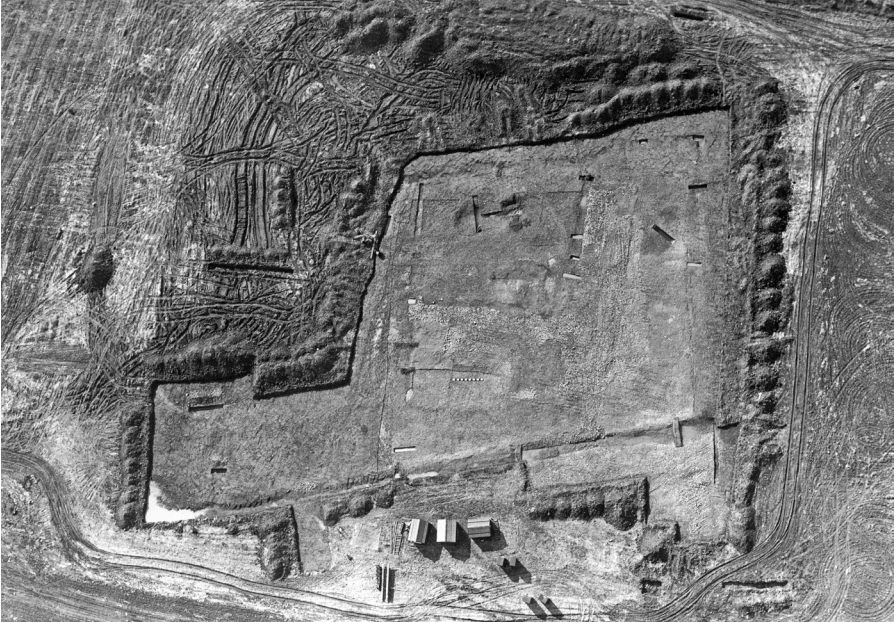
In those days student diggers were recruited mainly by advertising in the Council for British Archaeology's *Calendar of Excavations*, and a substantial number of volunteers turned up and had to be housed somewhere. The answer was to borrow a pair of very derelict cottages from the adjacent farmer. We cleaned them out, fastened plastic fertiliser bags over the windows, installed chemical toilets and these cottages became our home for the duration of the excavation. Visits to the Royal Oak pub at Mileham made the evenings more tolerable. A gang of mainly older farm workers was taken on through the Labour Exchange to do the heavier work after the ploughsoil had been removed with a machine. Their foreman was 'Willow' Walpole from Mileham who had been renowned as a batsman in his youth. Janet Escritt, who had been on the Wharram Percy excavations, was the Assistant Director and Susanna was the Finds Assistant. But, shortly before we started, the weather turned incredibly wet, making the machine movement of soil a nightmare. The area around the excavation became such a mess that one



3.7. A more detailed interpretation plan of the village showing the clay buildings seen mainly on Figure 3.5.

picture of our topsoil removal was used a few years later in error by Professor Maurice Beresford when he was lecturing on deserted villages as an illustration of site destruction! We put him right on that.

We chose a toft to excavate opposite the centre of the village green (Toft 10) where subsequent documentary research showed some tofts were occupied until the fifteenth century (Figure 3.8). After the ploughsoil was removed we found that the plough had largely slid over the flint-cobbled yards without doing too much damage but had cut deep into the higher clay floors. Of the house itself only a depth of 50 mm of the floor remained, and the rest was already a part of the ploughsoil. This explained why the soil marks of the buildings often showed up so well on air photographs. The outlines of the flint-cobbled yards were therefore crucial in locating the buildings, but finding the internal building details was hard. For weeks the

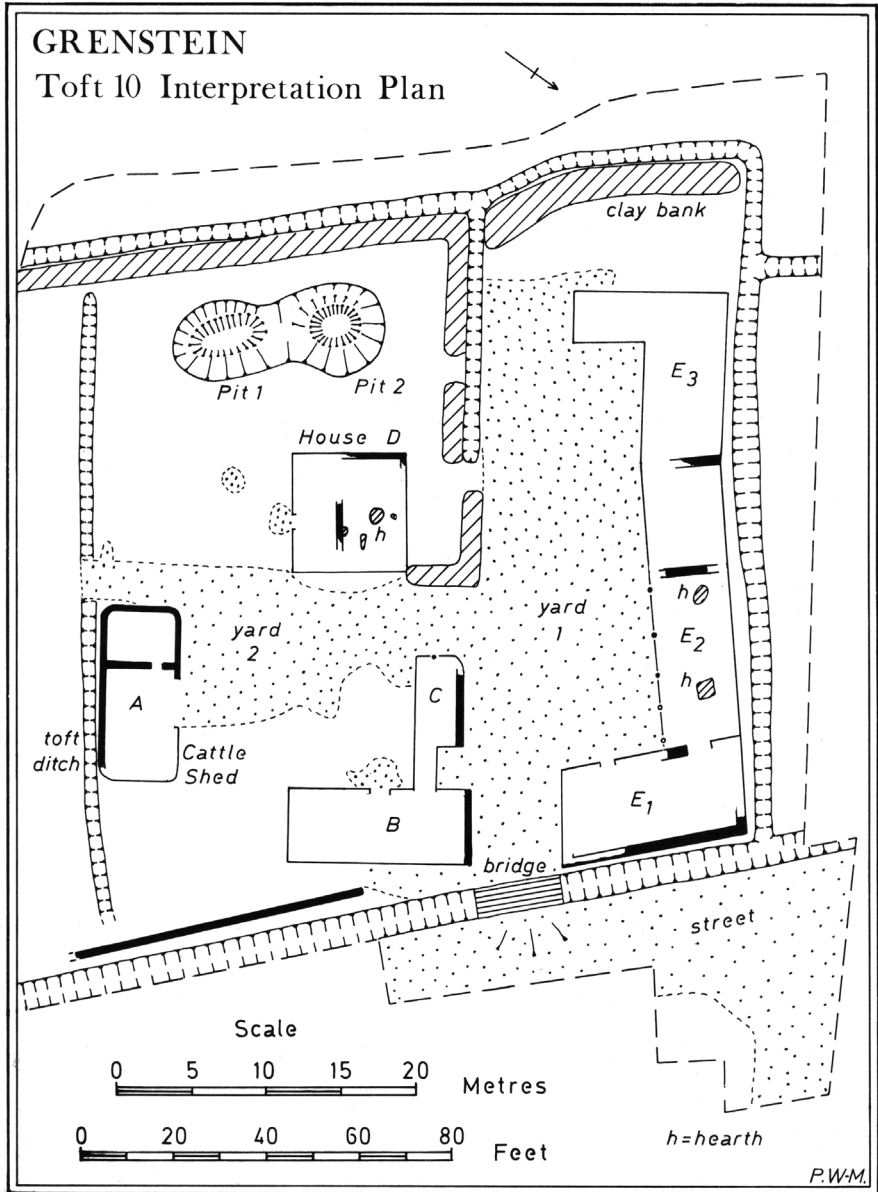


3.8. A vertical aerial photograph by Wing Commander Wallis of the excavated Grenstein Toft 10 at the end of the 1965 season. We painted a wheeling plank black and white in feet as a scale for this picture (TF9020/F/AED6).

volunteers trowelled the flint cobbles and scraped the surfaces of the clay floors without complaining. The walls, where they could be seen, showed up as lines of chalk-speckled clay or, occasionally as larger flints forming a foundation course. We developed the use of hoes for the workmen in place of trowels which made scraping the clay surfaces easier and quicker. The men we employed had spent most of their lives on local farm work and so they were very familiar with the use of hoes for thinning out young sugar beet plants, or ‘choppen out’ as they called it.

None of this would have been possible without the kindness and forbearance of Richard and Rosamund Butler-Stoney of Burwood Hall, Mileham, who let us take over much of their field during those two very wet years and entertained us all every Sunday for supper.

At the end of the first season we had the plan of the whole toft (*Figure 3.9*). There was an entrance bridge over a deep ditch which drained the western side of the green. The bridge led into two cobbled yards with outbuildings on all sides, and towards the back the house was set within its own separate fenced area. In



3.9. An interpretative plan of Toft 10 with the house, yards and outbuildings around cobbled yards approached over a bridge from the village street, orientated as in Figure 3.8.



3.10. *Building A, the best preserved of the Grenstein clay outbuildings, interpreted as a cowshed because of the wide doorway. The building showed up simply as a clay rectangle defined by the chalk-speckled line of a clay wall to the left and by cobbled yards and a short line of larger flints to the right (BBV9).*

this there had presumably been a garden and at the back were two large pits, one apparently kept free of rubbish and probably used for collecting drinking water. At the bottom was the base of a pottery jug to scoop up the water. The best-preserved outbuilding, which we called Building A, had a wide entrance indicated by a cobbled spread in the floor, so it may well have been for cattle (*Figure 3.10*).

The finds

The material from above and under the cobbled yards dated this final phase of the toft probably to the early fifteenth century, a hundred years later than Thuxton. While we had recorded the complete plan of a working farm, the plough damage to the buildings was so severe that it was difficult to identify the details of their plans or how they were used. The metal finds were more plentiful than they had been at Thuxton. There were lots of horse shoes, showing that horses were used more than oxen. Many pieces of lava quernstone from the Rhineland and ragstone whetstones from Norway showed what a large volume of North Sea trade there had been in these commodities. A distribution map of lava quernstone fragments built into Norfolk churches indicates that these were entering the county mainly through the port of Great Yarmouth rather than King's Lynn (Ashley, Penn and Rogerson 2011, Fig 1). The lava quernstones and the animal bones showed that it had been a mixed arable/livestock farm, and sheep bones were the most numerous, along with horse, cattle and pigs (*EDP* 29th December 1965).

Although we returned for a second season in 1966, we did not have the resources to excavate earlier layers in sufficient detail to make that worthwhile. The report recommended that the next excavation of a deserted village should be on a site which had not yet been plough-damaged, and that the resources available should be sufficient to excavate the early layers. The report was published in a volume of *East Anglian Archaeology* in 1980 along with my subsequent fieldwork on the medieval villages of Launditch Hundred (Wade-Martins 1980). Since then there has been no attempt to excavate any further medieval villages in the region on any scale large enough to understand a medieval toft. It is difficult to see where resources would anyway now come from under the current system where the larger contracts for rescue archaeology are usually won by a process of competitive tendering. Even machine-dug evaluation trenches would tell you relatively little and be very damaging. The very slight and fragile evidence for medieval villages in this area, where there is no suitable building stone, can only be understood by very slow and careful open-area excavation.

Surveys of other deserted villages

My work on deserted villages was not limited just to Thuxton and Grenstein. Following a lecture on both sites I gave to a joint meeting of the Norfolk Research Committee and the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society, Keith Wade and I tried to widen public interest in the subject by writing a guide to the seven best-preserved sites in the county with a 1:500 plan of Pudding Norton, the most complete of all of them. This was published in the Norfolk Research Committee's *Bulletin* in 1967 (Wade-Martins and Wade 1967).

Postscript: A nostalgic return to Thuxton

After we closed the 1964 excavations at Thuxton I didn't return to the field until May 2017: a gap of 53 years. The site was just one continuous barley field with not a weed in sight. A ditch, with banks liberally sown with cowslips, runs through the middle of the field, perhaps as a nod towards modern farm conservation. And elsewhere there are new hedgerows and woodland belts, but while the landscape looks partly restored, the 1960's damage to the archaeology and the historic landscape can never be reversed.

Grenstein, on the other hand, has been down to grass for a while under a Countryside Stewardship scheme, but even here there was too much cultivation in the intervening years for much worthwhile archaeology to remain.

This all makes the few village earthworks we still have left a very special resource.