

Historiography & Fieldwork: Wyman Abbott's Great Fengate Ring-Ditch (a Lost Manuscript Found)

By CHRISTOPHER EVANS and GRAHAME APPLEBY¹

This paper presents findings within Wyman Abbott's long-missing notebooks and other allied archival sources relating to his Fengate fieldwork during the early decades of the 20th century. Largely focusing upon its monuments, we here publish a manuscript concerned with his extraordinary, multiple-interment 'great' ring-ditch which is otherwise known from a paragraph's description in Hawkes and Fell's Antiquaries Journal paper of 1945. Not only do these sources contribute to the further reconstruction of Fengate's renowned Bronze Age landscape, but, it is argued, the centralised multiple-lineage interment evident at his main ring-ditch site may well reflect upon the social organisation which also gave rise to Pryor's equally 'special' Flag Fen platform.

Wyman Abbott's findings of prehistoric artefacts in Peterborough's Fengate quarries during the early decades of the 20th century appropriately feature in the archaeological history of southern Britain. He first published his material in *Archaeologia* of 1910 (with an overview contribution by R. Smith of the British Museum). Thereafter, in 1922, a further summary of his results (this time authored by E.T. Leeds) appeared in the *Antiquaries Journal*. Hawkes and Fell's appraisal of Abbott's Early Iron Age pottery was published in the same journal in 1945¹. As promoted by Leeds, the impact of Abbott's researches upon Britain's prehistoric artefact studies has certainly been considerable. The fact that Fengate can lay claim to three pottery types is essentially down to him. Firstly there is the later Neolithic 'Peterborough Ware/phase' generally and, more specifically, the 'Fengate-style sub-type' itself (Smith 1956). Beyond this, Abbott's Early Iron Age pottery – originally assigned as Hallstatt-type by Leeds and subsequently fundamental for the 'A-phase' of Hawkes's 'A, B, C System' – was recognised in Cunliffe's 'Fengate-Cromer style-zone' (Cunliffe 1968; 1974).

Abbott's renown has also subsequently accrued in

relationship to the post-1960s rescue phase of Fengate's fieldwork, particularly Pryor's vast and duly celebrated landscape-scale excavations of its Bronze Age field system (and the Cat's Water Iron Age settlement) during the ensuing decade (Fig. 1). The archaeology of Fengate's broader fen-edge environs achieved even greater prominence with the discovery of the remarkable Flag Fen later Bronze Age platform (Pryor 2001) and, consequently, the entire Fengate/Flag Fen complex has become considered something 'special'.

Abbott's findings were fully acknowledged and summarised within the Fengate volumes (Pryor 1974, 29–30); however, given the paucity of detailed plotting of his material, he was held almost to be something of a failed salvage archaeologist, his finds, by necessity, being treated *en masse* due to their apparent lack of provenance (Gibson in Pryor 1980, 234–45; cf. Pryor 2001, 7–9; see for instance Taylor in Lawson *et al.* 1981, 113). Widely cited in these various Fengate studies, among the most renowned of Abbott's findings was a massive Bronze Age ring-ditch, whose documentation up to now has consisted of only a single paragraph in Hawkes and Fell's paper (1945, 190; see below). Having now located the bulk of Abbott's records, the account of this monument can be detailed. The significance of these sources is not just a matter of historiographic curiosity. While reflecting a more general interest in earlier fieldwork practices (eg, Evans 1988; 1997; and Evans *et al.*

¹ Cambridge Archaeological Unit, Dept. Archaeology, University of Cambridge, Downing St, Cambridge CB1 3DZ

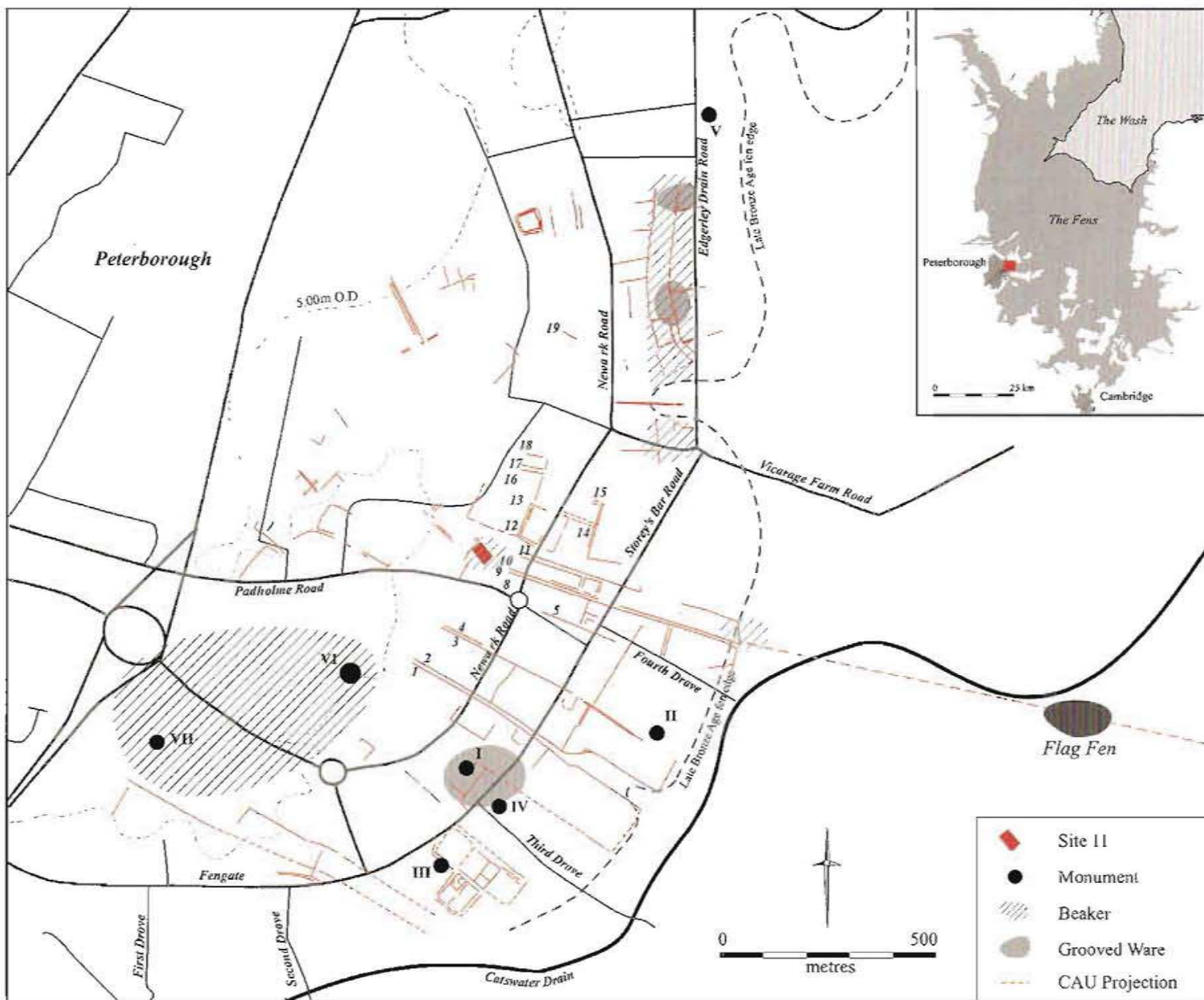


Fig. 1. (opposite)

The Fengate field system: essentially based on Pryor's *Flag Fen* volume plan (Pryor 2001, fig. 1.4), this reflects amendments arising from post-1999 investigations and Rog Palmer's cropmark-masterplan of that same year (Pryor 2003, fig. 60). Resulting in quite a new and expanded Fengate landscape, its implications and background are fully detailed in *Fengate Revisited* (Evans *et al.* forthcoming a)

2006), our concern here is avowedly 'presentist'. What is described was clearly a remarkable Bronze Age monument, and one without direct regional parallel. As such (and suggestive as it is of centralised burial rites), it may well reflect upon the social organisation that gave rise to the equally 'special' Flag Fen platform. This will be the theme of this paper's final section.

NOTEBOOK ARCHAEOLOGY

In contrast to the legacy he spawned, Abbott himself only ever generated seven published pages in national

journals concerning his 30 years of fieldwork (Abbott & Smith 1910). His 'voice' has been missing from all that his efforts inspired, due both to his specific place in the academic/disciplinary production of the day and to the fact that his primary records have been lost for more than half a century. In other words, the Abbott we have has been constructed by 'others', these very much being a museum-based nexus (variously Smith, Leeds, and Hawkes & Fell). In the course of background researches for a volume concerned with Fengate's archaeology (Evans *et al.* forthcoming a), four of Abbott's notebooks were unearthed in the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (Fig. 2). Although only accessioned in 1998 (cat no. W11/1/1-7), these must have been donated to the Museum as part of the 1973 Abbott bequest. They can, moreover, be further augmented by Abbott's letters to Leeds from the period 1909-37, which are held in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Both are a rich source of detail for Fengate's archaeology. The handwritten notebooks provide a finding-by-finding gazetteer-type chronicle. Appearing to have been composed/transcribed shortly

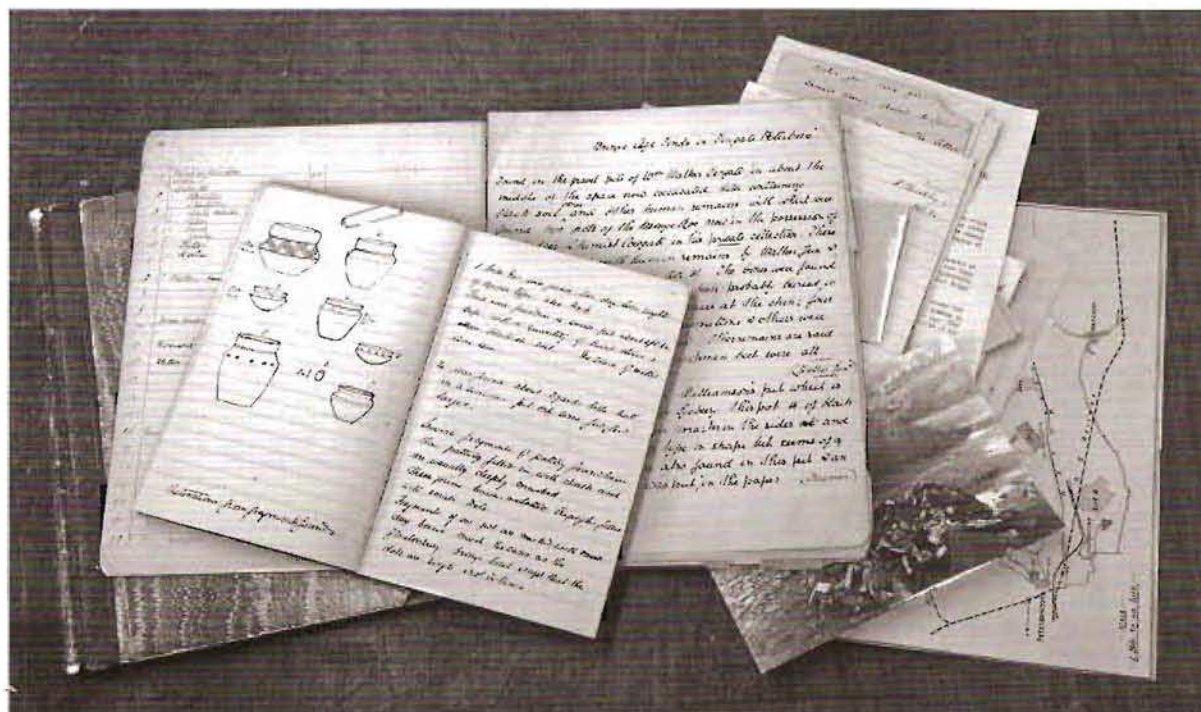


Fig. 2.

Abbott's notebooks (Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology; photograph: D. Webb)

after their respective fieldwork, they are not a direct or daily 'in-field' record. Though they contain illustrations of specific pottery vessels and other finds, and sketch sections of selected pits, they do not include site plans or any mapping as such. This being said, Abbott's main 'sites' are enumerated within the notebooks by red pencil highlighting, which suggests that he did, indeed, plot his material. Aside from providing a site-specific sketch-plan (discussed below), in further confirmation, the Leeds archive includes a hand-rendered map showing the location of a number of Abbott's major findings (Fig. 3). Moreover, in one of his letters to Leeds, Abbott writes concerning the loss of his maps:

I have not been able to get any paper into shape yet as *the detailed plan I had in the pre war days has been lost in the many wanderings of my belongings during the war*, and the loss ties me up very badly as all my notes relate to numbers on the plan (20/05/1921; emphasis added).

Beyond this, in his 1922 Fengate paper, Leeds further admitted to having access to an area-wide plan:

The site, as seen when set out on a rough plan is so confused that it is impossible to say that any special portion of it was occupied exclusively at one period. The recorded finds of the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, with the exception of one particular section of the Neolithic material, seem to be *distributed indiscriminately over the whole area without rhyme or reason* (Leeds 1922, 220; emphasis added).

The latter statement is crucial: Abbott's material was thought to be 'distributed without rhyme or reason' (see also Hawkes & Fell 1945, 189). Certainly, given the techniques available to him, Abbott's plotting was coarse, but the key point as to why Fengate's finds were not plotted in the many papers arising from Abbott's researches is that their focus was primarily upon artefact studies (ie, building typologies) and that his work did not result in the kind of discrete (sub-) site delineations that were then expected (and could be coped with)². In other words, Abbott was (if inadvertently) generating the type of multiple-period landscape palimpsest that has really only begun to be tackled over the last 40 years, arguably starting with Muckley in the late 1960s.

Fengate's findings were shown in detail on the 1927 Ordnance Survey (OS) map; having 14 findspots indicated within an area of only c. 30 ha (Fig. 3), it had far more 'points' shown than either Stonehenge or Standlake, Oxfordshire (see below). While generally reflective of the regard in which Abbott's material was held, this may well attest to the specific influence of O.G.S. Crawford, who was appointed the Survey's first Archaeology Officer in 1920 and was obviously familiar with the Fengate finds (eg, Crawford 1912). In their preparation of the 1927 map, the Survey's fieldworkers would have visited Peterborough and probably interviewed Abbott in the compilation of their record cards³. Comparing Abbott's various archival sources and the OS's indications shows the latter to be quite an accurate representation of his findings.

The Ashmolean archive map which Abbott gave to Leeds probably dates to 1921 (Fig. 3). Abbott's letters from that year indicate that he sent a number of sketches and photographs of his pots, as well as pit sections, presumably in anticipation of Leeds's 1922 paper (a notation on the map is dated 1920). The map, furthermore, seems to have been tailored to Leeds's immediate needs and, whilst it shows Abbott's major Neolithic and Bronze Age findings (eg, his Entry No. 32 Beaker burial in the centre with its Beaker sketched in the bottom left-centre, and the No. 14 biconical urn in the right margin), his Iron Age material was not marked. Aside from indicating the main quarry pits in which he worked (Tebb's, Williamson's, Walker's, and Rippon's), the map shows the location of Abbott's great ring-ditch (bottom

Fig. 3.

Abbott's Mapping. *Top*: 1927 OS map of Fengate, with area of Abbott's map shown in grey-tone. *Bottom*: Abbott's Fengate sketch map of c. 1921 (Ashmolean Museum), bounded by Padholme Road in the north, Fengate in the south & the line of the Car Dyke to the west ('C.D.'). The location of a number of his major findings can be identified as follows: 1) Saxon inhumation cemetery (on loose sketch plan in notebook & discussed in letter to Leeds); 2) possible ring-ditch or barrow with associated human remains & half a palstave (Entry no. 47); 3) Beaker burial (Entry no 32; Clarke 1970, no. 645); 4) Biconical urn (Entry no 14; Leeds 1922, fig. 13); 5) the 'great' ring-ditch; 6) Beaker found 1916 (un-numbered in notebook; Leeds 1922, fig. 5); 7) contracted Bronze Age burials (Entry no 69; n.b. location differs from OS map, on which these are indicated close to the 'Round House' on Padholme Road); 8) 'Cinerary urns' (Entries no. 38/40; Leeds 1922, figs 8-11)

centre-right) and the line of the Roman Car Dyke canal across the top ('C.D.'). It also annotates 'Fen'. The latter indicates how the quarry-site landscape was envisaged by Abbott (as beside the wetland, when in reality it was many of hundreds of metres inland from the prehistoric marshes) and accounts for his statements concerning its 'Glastonbury-like' qualities (see Evans *et al.* forthcoming a).

A précis of Abbott's civic career that appeared in *The Peterborough Citizen* of 24 April 1928 mentioned that he was a 'pupil of the late Mr T.J. George, Curator of Northampton Museum, by whom his early interest in archaeology was fostered'. George (1869–1920), a fellow of the Geological Society and author of the 1902 *Victoria County History's* account of the County's prehistory, was a founding member of its local archaeological field group in 1899 ('The Northamptonshire Exploration Society') and, over the next decade, undertook a series of small-scale excavations. These were apparently of a fairly poor standard, involving only limited recording and planning (Moore 1980, 16–17)⁴.

Abbott's prime influence was, however, provided by Leeds, and their life-long friendship and working partnership represents a singular amateur/professional collaboration (see Hudson 1981 and Levine 1986 on this theme generally and Evans 2007 on lingering antiquarianism). Abbott (1887–1972), who became an eminent Peterborough lawyer and eventually an alderman of the city, was clearly mentored and academically promoted by Leeds (1877–1955), who was the son of a renowned amateur palaeontologist and had been raised near Fengate, at Eyebury. Leeds studied classics at Cambridge and was appointed as Assistant Keeper to the Ashmolean Museum in 1908. Upon his graduation, he served with the Malay civil service in China (see Harden 1956). On returning home for a period of extended convalescence due to illness, he started investigating Eyebury's gravel pits, first publishing papers on its Jurassic crocodyliforms⁵. It was at this time that his archaeological interests took root and, aside from working on an Anglo-Saxon cemetery in Northamptonshire, he excavated three barrows at Eyebury between 1910 and 1914 (Leeds 1910; 1912; 1915; see also Hall 1987, 32). We should be aware that at that time any 'amateur/professional' distinction was not the rigid divide it has become since. Abbott's discoveries were carried in *The Times* (21/06/1920 & 28/04/1924) and he independently exhibited his findings at the Society

of Antiquaries of London (Abbott & Smith 1910, 333). Elected a Fellow of that society in 1926 (being proposed by Peers and supported by Leeds, Clapham, Wheeler, and Bushe-Fox amongst others) and member of the Fenland Research Committee (Smith 1997), he was certainly not an 'unconnected' fieldworker.


A GREAT RING-DITCH

The detail which the notebooks provide concerning Abbott's fieldwork is fully discussed in the forthcoming *Fengate Revisited* volume (Evans *et al.* forthcoming a), as are also a number of broader themes which they reflect upon (eg, 'pots-/peoples-as-types' and the practice of a 'typed' archaeology generally). Our concern here is therefore with the extraordinary ring-ditch that he investigated in 1919–21, which has subsequently become known through Hawkes and Fell's description:

It is then interesting at the outset here to note that the sepulchral remains recorded from the site include, slightly to the north-east of the main Iron Age occupation-area, in the first place about 20 inhumation-burials of the Early Bronze Age, disposed in and along an oval ring-ditch, 10–11 ft. wide, 6 ft. deep, and enclosing an area of 38 by 28 yds., and in the second place, intermingled with the inhumations in and along the same ring-ditch, about 130 cremation-burials, one with four bucket-urn fragments of the Late Bronze Age; also, at the east end of the oval was the contemporary crematorium (1945, 190).

Alongside the notebooks, Cambridge Museum's archives also has a draft manuscript by Abbott: *An Account of the Excavation of a Burial Place at Fengate, Peterborough, Northants.*, which he obviously intended to submit to The Society of Antiquaries of London for publication (Fig. 4)⁶. Some 85 years on, given the renown of the monument, it still warrants full reproduction below (including the author's editorial amendments and 'instructions'). We also fortunately have another source for this monument, as Abbott wrote concerning it in five letters to Leeds during the period from August 1920 to November of the following year; the first of these letters being accompanied by a sketch plan (Fig. 5).

<p>An Account of the excavation of a Burial Place at Fengate Peterborough Northants.</p> <p>The site of this discovery is a gravel promontory of rising ground to the East of Peterborough and east of where the River Nene runs into the fens and on the. The site being on the northern side of the mouth of the River Nene as this originally ran into the former fens. The ground has a mean O.D. level of 10ft. The subsoil is gravel which is of an average depth of 10 feet and above this overlying reddish loamy soil about 2 – 3 ft. in thickness.</p> <p>The land has been cultivated for centuries and all surface indications of any human habitation have been destroyed.</p> <p>From remains found in the area it appears quite certain that this land was continuously occupied from Neolithic to Rom- Early Iron Age times Remains found in the immediate district prove quite conclusively that the site was occupied in Neolithic times through the Bronze Age and into the first stages of the Early Iron Age times</p> <p>1</p>	<p>and again in the 3rd and 4th centuries of the Roman occupation and it may be during the whole of the period from Neolithic to Roman times.</p> <p>The site is particularly</p> <p>This is probable by reason of the position of the site which is the just east of the first crossing place of the River Nene before this river enters the actual fens and consequently the promontory would be a natural station to protect the ford. Further any tribe or people coming invading from the east and entering the Wash could come by boat to this point and could here establish a "bridge head" on the promontory and provided they were masters of the water would only have to protect themselves on the north western side where the site is linked up by a narrow neck of land to the "mainland".</p> <p>During In the years 1919 – 1920 while excavations for excavations for gravel was being dug in the a trench was exposed and removed and at first the significance outlines could not be obtained.</p> <p>It was eventually found that a trench Subsequent working disclosed a V shaped trench with a width of 12ft taken 1ft below the surface of the surface soil and</p> <p>2</p>
<p>X In the case of No. [blank] the two bodies appear to have been buried together at the same time as the bones were mixed and altho in position were difficult to separate.</p> <p>No. [blank] There was an instance of two burials having been buried one above another with about 6 inches of soil between the two burials)</p> <p>3</p>	<p>a depth of 5 – 6 feet which formed a complete oval the internal diameter being 90 feet from north to south and 84 feet from east to west. The trench was sharply V shaped in section and did not appear to show any signs of having been used. It was filled with dark reddish brown to black soil and in no instance did the sides or bottom of the trench seem appear to have been trodden down or mixed with the surrounding gravel.</p> <p>In the trench itself were app- an and including a small area about 3 feet in width on the inner side of the trench were approximately 28 buria inhumations and 80 cremations. In every case the inhumations were contracted burials buried in a contracted position.</p> <p>There was no particular system of burial and the bodies were at sometimes buried at the bottom of the trench and at others quite near the surface soil. In two one case two bodies were placed together with the feet of the lower skeleton above under the legs of the other. X [continues opposite page]</p> <p>The bodies appear to be those of all sexes and ages.</p> <p>4</p>

 <p style="text-align: center;">5</p>	<p>The pair skeletons in each case appeared to have been placed on a "grave" floor which was slightly raised at the head and feet with a hollow for the hips. There were In only one instance was there a floor or covering of cornbrash and pebbles had been placed over the whole burial. These were all stones under 6in in diameter and appeared to have been collected from the gravel.</p> <p>In no other instance was there any other trace of stones marking the site of a burial or of anything of the type of a cist. The only two skeletons</p> <p>The only remains actually found with the skeletons were two small Kimmerage shale studs. These Both These were found separately each each being under the head of a skeleton near the lower portion of the head. From this position it might be contended that they were used as ear studs or as fasteners for clothing or caps.</p> <p>No other remains of any description could be definitely allocated to any burial altho numbers of worked flints were found in the area these were not particularly</p> <p style="text-align: center;">6</p>
<p>numerous in the trench and might be found equally in any portion of the soil.</p> <p>In no single instance was any burial found outside the clearly defined area of the trench but as stated before the burial area intruded as much as four three feet into the inside portion of the ground enclosed by the trench.</p> <p>In addition to the burials the trench contained at least 80 cremation burials.</p> <p>The method of burial being similar in practically every instance.</p> <p>A small circular hole was dug about usually 3 - 4 feet deep and 2 3 ft - 2½ft. wide into which the calcined bones were put found.</p> <p>In every case the bones were calcined very white and very fragmentary in very small fragments and always mixed with black soil containing charcoal and wood ashes. In two instances it appeared that the hole had been burnt and the surrounding earth was a reddish brown from fire.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">7</p>	<p>Careful search was made for urns but only one was found which could be saved and that is very fragmentary Fig. (Description).</p> <p>In four other instances the cremated ashes appeared to have been placed in urns but the urns were of such poor material that when found they were nothing more than mud.</p> <p>The cremated burials were intermixed scattered over practically the whole area of the trench and frequently not more than 4 feet apart and sometimes as many as 6 were found in a trench 6ft x 14ft. The cremations were also mixed amongst the inhumations and and although it was certain that there was no instance of a cremation being in any instance above a 2222 inhumation or vice versa it is quite impossible to state which was that either was the earlier and it would appear that the both customs of burial had been practiced at the same time.</p> <p>At times the cremated ashes seemed to have been scattered over a floor area of 7 x 4ft roughly 7ft x 4ft and mixed with the ashes was always the dark soil with charcoal and wood ashes.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">8</p>

<p>It was noticed that there were fewest cremations on the northern side of the circular trench.</p> <p>At the p222 [blank] side of the trench were found two elliptical floors about 4ft 6 below the surface and measuring approximately 9ft x 5ft which appeared to have been used crematoria. In the centre of each floor was a layer of black soil cremated bones and wood ash 1ft 6in in thickness and which tapered off gradually towards the sides of the crematoria and made the actual areas difficult to define.</p> <p>No remains whatever were found in this black soil other than the burnt bones but small objects may have been missed as the powdery dust made the working difficult and the workmen were like sweeps after a few hours very little work in the black soil.</p> <p>It is regretted that the work site was not more carefully excavated but the opening of the trench occupied a considerable time and the writer could not be always present to supervise the work men when burials were found much less go through</p> <p style="text-align: center;">9</p>	<p>each hole of cremated ashes as should have been done.</p> <p>The nearest parallel to the find appears to be the report of the excavations at Stanlake Oxon reported in the proceedings of this society in the year 1857 by Mr J G Akerman and Stephen Stone.</p> <p>A close comparison of the two finds leads one to the conclusion that they date is the two burial grounds are the 22-22 same date and probably work of the same people and probably the same date.</p> <p>This fact is further borne out by the pottery which altho meagre in this instance is almost identical with what is reference in the Proceedings of the Antiquaries.</p> <p>The presence of the barbed arrowhead and plain bronze ring at Stanlake also would appear to agree with the date of the two Kimmerage shale studs found at Peterborough.</p> <p>Parallels of these studs may be instanced at</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[manuscript ends]</p> <p style="text-align: center;">10</p>
<p>The pottery taken alone would indicate a date between the mid latter part to the end of the Bronze Age in this country and 222 one might suppose as a date for the cemetery from approx 222-900 1000 – 750 BC.</p> <p>The skull bones of a certain number of the skeletons have been examined and by [blank] and his report on them is as follows.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">11</p>	

There are clearly discrepancies between Abbott's manuscript and Hawkes and Fell's account of the monument. These are detailed in Table 1.

Any confusion within Abbott's recording must in part relate to the conditions under which he worked, which he outlined to Leeds in July 1921:

The pits taken out by the men [ie, 'quarry-men'] are, as a rule, two yards by five and the general average appears to be two skeletons and three cremations per pit. It is most difficult just now to be able to collect clear details, as the ground is extremely hard, and I do not get time to

superintend the diggings myself, and *many of the facts have to be gathered from the workmen* (29/07/21; emphasis added)⁷.

Another letter to Leeds later that same year hints at the strain that Abbott evidently felt in being responsible for Fengate's archaeology (while still being otherwise employed full-time elsewhere):

I am afraid that when I wrote last I was very much troubled over my Fengate cemetery as I found I had lost touch with the details as they are muddled and crowded. Your letter came as a

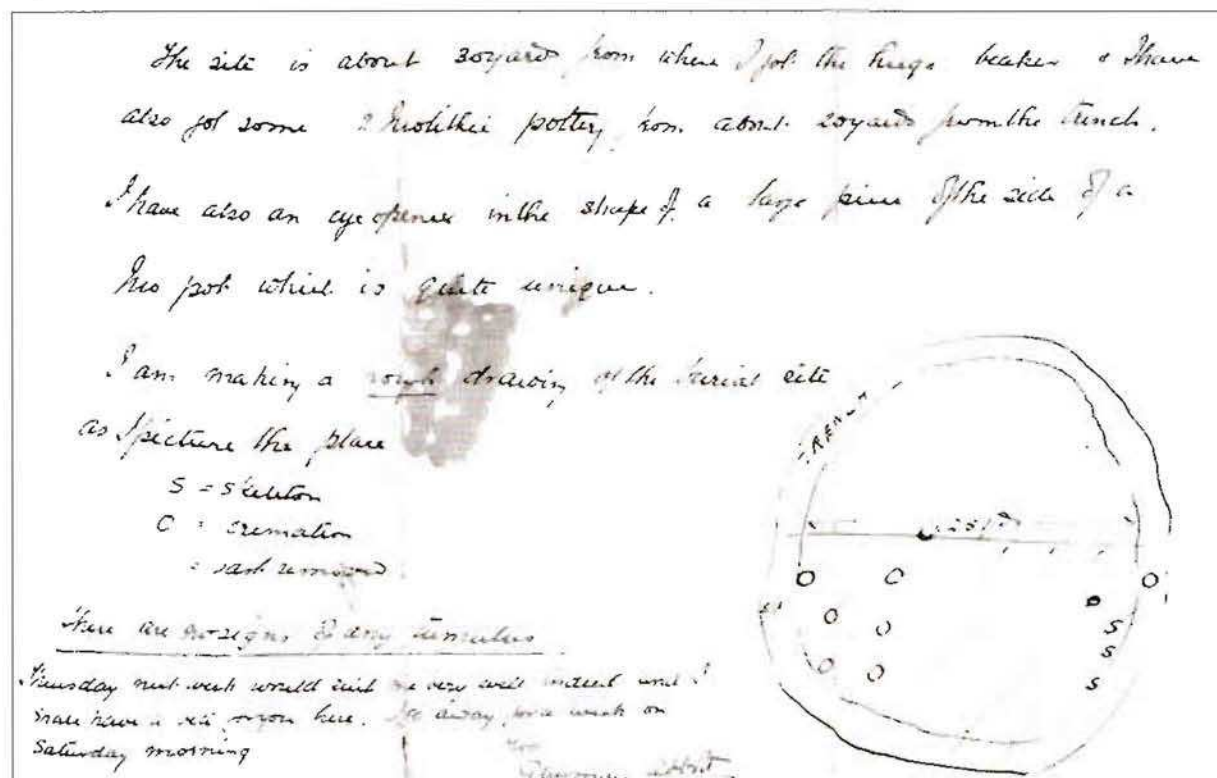


Fig. 5.

Abbott's sketch map of the ring-ditch in a letter to E.T. Leeds (13/08/1920; Ashmolean Museum)

TABLE 1: COMPARATIVE SOURCE STATISTICS

	Enclosed interior		Ditch		No. of cremation deposits	No. of inhumation burials
			Width	Depth		
Abbott Mss.	90 x 84 ft		12 ft	5-6 ft	80	28
	(27.40 x 25.60 m)		(3.66 m)	(1.52-1.83 m)		
Hawkes & Fell 1945	38 x 28 yd		10-11 ft	6 ft	130	20
	(34.8 x 25.60 m)		(3.00-3.35 m)	(1.83 m)		

The cremated burials were scattered over practically the whole area of the trench [ie, ditch] and frequently not more than 4 feet apart and sometimes as many as 6 were found in a trench [ie, cutting] 6ft x 14ft (emphasis added).

There are aspects of Abbott's record that could lead one to question facets of the monument's interpretation. In a letter to Leeds (that with the accompanying sketch plan, indicating the ring had an internal diameter of 25 yds; Fig. 5), he emphasised that it was not a tumulus – not a barrow – and he usually referred to it as a 'burial ring'. Yet, contra this,

its many interments did not apparently extend beyond 3–4 ft (c. 0.90–1.20 m) of the ditch's interior berm, which could indicate that some manner of mounding or, at least, an internal bank was present (the cremation deposits, though, also evidently occurred within the ditch). The recovery of either 20 or 28 inhumation burials in such a situation is unparalleled⁹. Even more extraordinary is the sheer quantity and apparently complete ring-encirclement of its cremation deposits. A number of Early–Middle Bronze Age ring-ditches have recently been excavated within the region, many accompanied by 20–40 interment cremation cemeteries. Although upwards of a third of these are usually associated with Deverel–Rimbury urns, these are confined to only a sector of their monuments' circuit – the south/south-east in the case of those excavated within the River Great Ouse environs (Fig. 7.4, 7.5 & 7.8; eg, Evans & Knight 2000; 2001). In other words, they do not occur in such numbers as in Abbott's Fengate ring, nor right around their circumferences (Abbott, though, does mention that there 'were fewest cremation on the northern side of the circular trench'). In this case, Abbott's findings must either markedly break with the precedent of subsequent regional pattern or are grossly exaggerated. They rely, after all, on the accounts of quarry labourers and, in the end, all we have is plan-documentation/-plotting of nine cremations (Fig. 5) in an area where 80/130 such interments are claimed. The unease this gulf inspires is fundamental to the entire notion of *record-as-truth*; however, just because something was, effectively, 'undocumented' (ie, not plan-mapped) does not necessarily make it a falsehood.

Said to be 3–4 ft deep (0.91–1.22 m), Abbott's cremation pits were considerably deeper than those usually found (unless he was measuring from the level of the topsoil). The sceptical could query whether some within the ditch-berm were actually the remains of burnt revetment posts; however, Abbott's description of the small fragments of white calcined bone within their fills (and his assertion that only two were in situ pit-pyres; Evans 1997) is sufficiently precise to imply accuracy. It is also worth noting that while sherds from an urn were only found with one, in four cases he notes that the situation of the cremated remains indicate that they had been urned, but that given the poor quality of their vessels only 'mud' survived. Abbott also describes two distinct crematoria 'floors', extending over 9 x 5 ft (c. 2.75 x

1.50 m) and occurring some three-quarters of the way down the ditch's profile. Rather confusingly, immediately beforehand he separately relates another occurrence of cremated ashes scattered over a floor area of 7 x 4 ft (c. 2.15 x 1.20 m); this, though, seems to imply a different interment rite rather than an *in situ* firing.

There is a paucity of citation within Abbott's manuscript. Aside from mentioning parallels for the ear studs with two of his inhumations in Mortimer (1905), his only reference is to the Stanlake site, which had apparently been provided by Leeds:

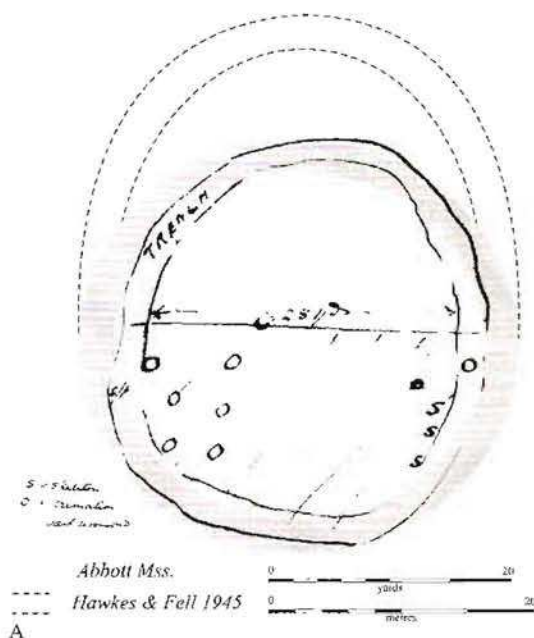
I am returning your two plates of the Stanlake [sic] Cemetery, which are most interesting. The Cemetery I have discovered in Fengate is an exact parallel both in measurement and shape, and apparently the only difference between the two is that I have found a number of burials in addition to cremation. Further the pottery I have found is exactly similar to that shown on the plates (Abbott/Leeds correspondence 20/08/21).

While perhaps reflecting no more than the initial status of this draft, his lack of referencing also surely relates to the fact that Stanlake provided the only other example of unmounded circular burial monuments: *ring-ditches* (Akerman & Stone 1857; see also Bradford 1942; Catling 1982)¹⁰. At Stanlake, between the later half of September and early October 1857, Stone test-excavated ten such circles, with one yielding 80 cremation deposits distributed across its southern half (Fig. 6.D). Arguing that they dated to 'a very early period, long before the effects of Roman civilization', and dismissing the defensive and stockholding capacity of these 'circular trenches', its authors continued:

If the areas inclosed within them are, as may be conjectured, tabooed spots, consecrated to

Fig. 6. (opposite)

The Ring-ditch's configuration: A) The monument as reconstructed from dimensions in the Abbott manuscript and the Hawkes & Fell paper respectively; B) *The Peterborough Advertiser* account (14/08/1920); C) Top of title-page of the pencil-version of Abbott's manuscript (n.b. rough thumbnail plans in left corner; Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology); D) The Stanlake ring-ditch (Akerman & Stone 1857, pl. ix)



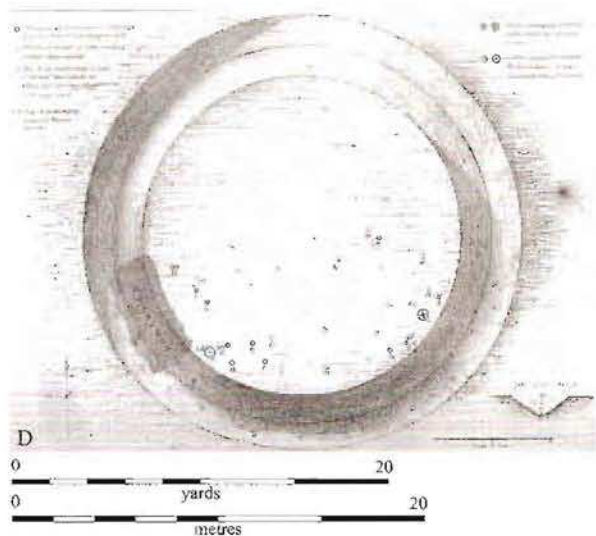
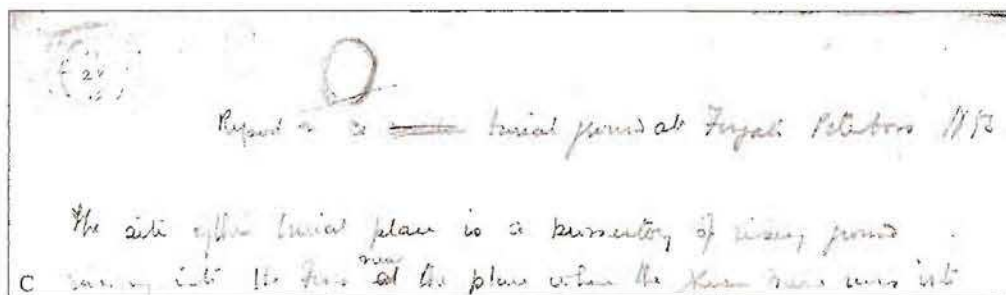
Discovery of 2,500 B. C. Skeletons.

Bronze Age Invaders at
Peterborough.

Place of Sepulture Revealed by Mr.
G. Wyman Abbott.

Interesting developments have taken place in the discovery illustrating the earliest burial customs of great Britain made by Mr. G. Wyman Abbott, of Prims Gate, Peterborough, in the neighbourhood of the Ouse within the past few weeks. Certain other important objects have been found.

About 25 yards north of the earlier bar it were found three small holes, about 2ft. 6in. deep, and 2ft. square, all within a circumference of six yards. In each of these holes had been placed the armatured salter of a human being, but no remains were found other than a few pieces of flint. At a later date, when excavating soil close to where the first skeleton was found, a man came across a few pieces of bone, which were taken to Mr. Wyman Abbott. The pieces of



The interesting point about the discovery is that it shows that at the same time, presumably about 2,500 B.C., both burial and cremation were in practice, and that this site probably marks what was a family or tribal burial ground, which was surrounded by a circular moat. It may even have been fenced round. Maybe the whole burial ground was covered at one time with a mound, which, through many years of agricultural activity, has been worn away. But this is hardly regarded as being probable.

The flints found consisted of the usual neolithic scrapers, flakes and cores, which appear to have been roughly thrown into the grave at the time of the burial as funeral offerings, or possibly some burial rite of the time.

The skeletons are probably those of early bronze age invaders, who came to this country from the continent in search of copper, and who, in fact, formed an out-post trading settlement on one of the main roads along which copper was brought from Ireland to the continent.

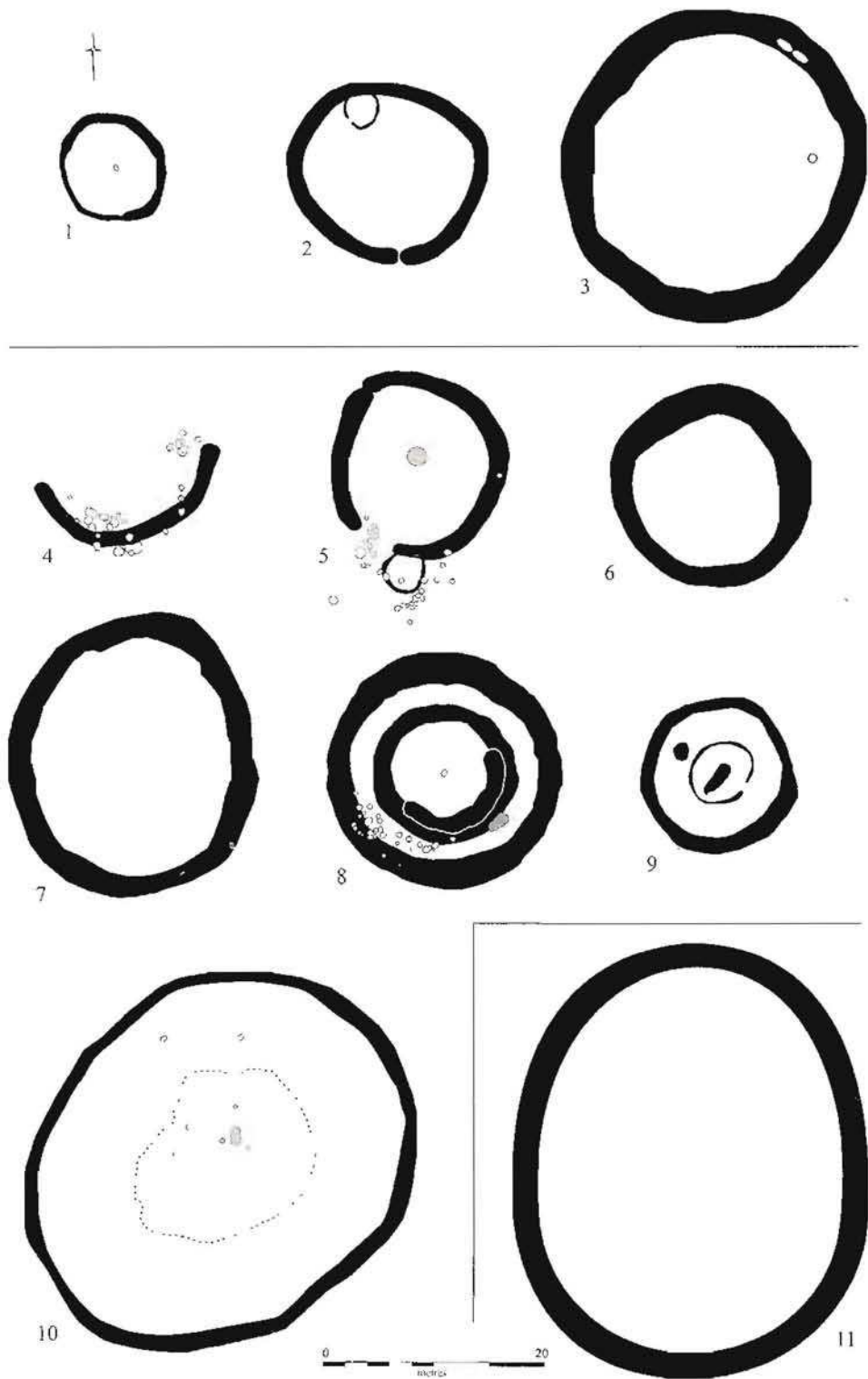


Fig. 7. (opposite)

Fengate's monuments and regional examples (with inhumation burials shown in grey-tone and cremation deposits open). Fengate: 1) The Third Drove ring-ditch (after Cooper 1998); 2) the Car's Water henge/ring-ditch (after Pryor 2001, fig. 3.9); 3) the Storey's Bar Road barrow/ring-ditch (Pryor 1978); 4–6) Colne Fen, Earith ring-ditches (Evans, *et al.* forthcoming b); 7–9) Barleycroft Farm ring-ditches (Evans & Knight 2000); 10) Over 'pond-barrow'/ring-ditch; 11) Maximal reconstruction of Abbott's ring-ditch (as based on Hawkes & Fell's 1945 dimensions; see Fig. 6.A). Of these monuments, measuring 31.00 x 37.50 m, only the Over 'pond-barrow' (no. 10) would come close to rivaling Abbott's Fengate ring-ditch. Yet its circuit was of more minor proportions (1.50 m wide and 0.75 m deep) and, aside from its crouched central inhumation burial, it only attracted seven secondary cremation burials. With two of the latter associated with Collared Urns, & the monument as a whole pre-dating a Middle/late Bronze Age settlement enclosure, it seems to be of earlier Bronze Age attribution.

religious rites, further research may possibly render this apparent ... The facts elicited by what has already been effected shed a new light on the sepulchral usages of our primitive forefathers, and will probably lead to discoveries in other localities hitherto not suspected to conceal such interesting remains. They help also to dissipate a very common error among antiquaries, namely, the belief that the graves of the ancient inhabitants of Britain were generally protected by tumuli, a helief founded on the description given by Tacitus (Akerman & Stone 1857, 370).

They went on to postulate that such tumuli might only relate to chiefly burials and the 'graves of the lowly and unhonoured' may not have been so marked (*ibid.*). Of course, the occurrence of both inhumation and cremation burials in the Fengate 'ring' could, theoretically, have undermined such reasoning and, in this capacity, a surprising omission within Abbott's manuscript is any mention of Leeds' discussion of 'mixed' burial practices in connection with his Eyebury barrows (see Leeds 1915, 125).

The Fengate sources provide few indications concerning how Abbott would have interpreted the monument; however, developing upon the theme of Peterborough's hridgehead location in relation to mainland Europe, its coverage in *The Peterborough Advertiser* of 14 August 1920, 'Discovery of 2,500 B.C. Skeletons' ('Place of Sepulture Revealed';

Fig. 6.B) offers some insights, albeit in a generic invasionist mode:

The interesting point about the discovery is that it shows at the same time, presumably about 2,500 B.C., both burial and cremation were in practice, and that this site probably marks what was a family or tribal burial ground, which was surrounded by a circular moat ... The skeletons are probably those of early bronze age invaders, who came to this country from the continent in search of copper, and who, in fact, formed an outpost trading settlement on one of the main roads along which copper was brought from Ireland to the continent.

FENGATE MONUMENTS – A LATER PREHISTORIC POLITY?

Abbott's ring-ditch was located in the fields just north-west of Pryor's later Padholme Road sub-Site (TF 210009896; Figs 1.VI and 3.VI). In order to understand its sheer scale and degree of difference, Fengate's other four identified monuments need to be appreciated. More fully appraised and outlined within the forthcoming *Fengate Revisited* volume, these include both Pryor's Storey's Bar Road ring-ditch/barrow (with only a single Collared Urn-associated cremation within its interior and two inhumations in its circuit; Figs 1.I & 7.3; Pryor 1978 and see Evans & Pollard in Pryor 2001, 25–6) and a putative later Neolithic henge dug at the Car's Water in 1990 (Figs 1.II & 7.2; Pryor 2001, 38–47). Though without any accompanying interments (and lacking direct dating evidence), the latter may well have been a Bronze Age ring-ditch, as the circuits of such monuments are now known to occur in 'interrupted' form (see, for instance, Fig. 7.5). In 1992, a c. 20 m diameter ring-ditch was exposed at the Cambridge Archaeological Unit's Depot Site; only trench-investigated during evaluation fieldwork, no burials were recovered at that stage. During later trenching, however, a single inhumation burial was encountered within its ditch (Fig. 1.III; Evans & Pryor in Pryor 2001, 16–27; B. Robinson, pers comm.). Finally, in 1998, a 9 m diameter ring-ditch was excavated off Third Drove which enclosed the cremated remains of a single older child/young adult set within a pit in its centre (Fig. 1.IV & 7.1; Cooper 1998). While not

directly dated, this is presumed to be of later Bronze Age attribution¹¹.

To these four monuments should to be added another entry, the *Herdsmen's Hill* barrow, which was quarried away in the early years of the 20th century. Located at the northern end of Fengate's 'edge' environs (Fig. 1.V), Leeds considered it an outlier of his Eyebury barrow group and related that his father had collected fine lithic tools from it (Leeds 1912, 82, fig. 2; see also Leeds 1956, 85)¹². Abbott, in his notebooks, more fully described this previously destroyed monument:

Neolithic or Bronze Age Burial at Newark near Peterborough

This tumulus formerly called "Herdsmans Hill" was situated on gravel land just on the edge of what was skirted fenland and was used lately as a refuge in high floods. The tumulus was about [blank] ft long [blank] ft wide & [blank] ft high & was composed of loose top soil deep in places and the rest gravel from the surrounding gravel land. When this was removed about 1900 for gravel a large knife dagger and a spear head were found at the bottom of a "pot hole" and also a perforated axehead was found near the same place but it is not quite certain if they were found together. Two extended skeletons were also found one at the north & the other at the south side of the mound near the road with head to south but nothing was noticed with either of these. No bones were found [in bones] to show any cremated interments & no pots of any description were noticed.

This mound was dug out by workmen who were very careless & who were not looked after, & so many things may have been overlooked & lost (W11/1/1, pg 10).

In his notebooks, Abbott variously recorded six isolated inhumations (plus a skull-finding) scattered throughout the quatties, some of which might well have been monument-related. Indeed, in Walker's pit he apparently exposed a semi-circular 'trench', 16 yds in length (c. 14.60 m), 6 ft deep (c. 1.80 m) and 12 ft (c. 3.65 m) across. Having animal bones, half a palstave, and what, from an accompanying sketch, appear to be decorated Collared Urn or Beaker sherds,

this might well have also been part of the circuit of either a ring-ditch or a barrow; human bone also apparently occurred in association with it (Fig. 1.VII and 3; W11/1/1; Entry no. 47)¹³.

As is apparent from Figure 1, Abbott's great ring-ditch would seem to have been part of a three-monument alignment along with the Third Drove 'ring' and the Storey's Bar Road ring-ditch/barrow (I, IV, & VI). This would have run roughly parallel with the line of Pryor's Ditch 1/2 Padholme Road driveway which, based on the frequency of inhumation burials along it, may have originally been the Fengate system's prime axis (the north-eastern Ditch 8/9 drove perhaps later assumed this status with its eastward linkage to Flag Fen created by the construction of the Power Station timber alignment; Pryor 2001 and see Evans *et al.* forthcoming a). Given its inhumations, in all likelihood Abbott's ring-ditch would have been of earlier Bronze Age date. Although in the manuscript (and his letters to Leeds; eg 29/07/1921) he stressed the apparent contemporaneity of the two burial rites, the cremations would surely have dated to the Middle/late Bronze Age, a Deverel-Rimbury attribution being consistent with the soft and poorly preserved quality of those few pottery sherds recovered. The span of this monument and Fengate's field system would thus be broadly comparable: its origins probably lay in the early 2nd millennium, with its ditches generally being maintained until the 12th–13th centuries BC (Evans *et al.* forthcoming a; Yates 2007, 89 argues for the Beaker origins of Bronze Age field systems).

Other barrows and ring-ditch settings are known within the wider environs (see Hall 1987, 60, fig. 43 concerning the 'Catswater' barrow-field; Pryor 2001, 74–80 for Northey's monuments, and Healy & Harding 2007 on wider Nene Valley distributions); recently a henge and two round barrows have been excavated at King's Dyke West, Whittlesey (Knight 2000) and a major barrow cemetery has been identified in the Nene Washes just to the west, with two-barrow outliers in the fields both immediately north and south of it (see Evans *et al.* forthcoming a). The point here is that the Fengate landscape does not seem particularly distinguished by its monuments: their densities and range/types are comparable to the other lowland reaches of the main rivers debouching into the Fens and their adjacent fen-edge environs (see Pryor & French 1985 for the Welland and Evans & Hodder 2006 a & b, Evans & Knight 2000 & 2001,

and Evans *et al.* forthcoming b for the Great Onse). Yet there can be no denying the extraordinary character of the later Bronze Age Flag Fen platform (Pryor 2001), and this is only enhanced by the recent discovery of the broadly contemporary timber 'crannog' nearby at Must Farm (Knight 2008)¹⁴. Coupling this with the ritual deposition of metalwork along the Power Station site causeway/timber alignment approaching Flag Fen (see Coombs in Pryor 2001, chapter 10), and the fen-edge spear-and-sword hoard at Bradley Fen, Whittlesey (Gibson & Knight 2006; see also Bradley 2007, 214, fig. 4.14), all this can only be considered 'special'. Admittedly, there are facets of Barleycroft/Over's Bronze Age landscape along the lower reaches of the River Great Ouse that come close to rivalling it (Evans & Knight 2000; 2001; see also Bradley 2007, 194, fig. 4.7). Nevertheless, the Flag Fen/Whittlesey basin seems to have been markedly different, to the point that it could, in fact, even be thought of as some manner of place-specific, *later prehistoric polity*. By this is simply meant the authority to mobilise and co-ordinate a broader 'community of builders' and, with it, the forging of wider group identity than the immediate face-to-face community (see, for instance, Evans & Knight 2001).

A pressing issue is whether there is anything in Fengate's archaeology that 'announces' this, and if Flag Fen (*et al.*) was actually a direct expression of the cultural landscape of its immediate fen-edge. Certainly there are facets of Fengate's field system that seem distinct: specifically, the scale and regularity of its droveways from which a substantial hinterland population – requiring the seasonal movement of their stock through the 'edge's' field system – could be inferred. Yet no great density of contemporary settlement has been found within the area of Fengate's fen-edge *per se* and furthermore, it is now known that generally comparable field systems of the period extend across much of the region's low gravel terraces, at least within the area of the south-western Fens (Yates 2007; Bradley & Yates 2007). Therefore, there seems to be no ready, immediate-landscape answer to convincingly explain the Flag Fen 'phenomenon'.

In fact, an answer might lie in negative evidence (based upon the cumulative results of decades of fieldwork). That is, in the almost complete absence of formal cremation cemeteries. None was encountered during the course of Pryor's Fengate campaigns or in any fieldwork there since (collectively now amounting

to over 16 ha of open-area excavation); nor have they been found within the Whittlesey quarries¹⁵. This is in direct contrast to the results from both the Eye and Barleycroft Farm investigations, where 12- and 14-interment 'flat' cremation cemeteries have been excavated, and Barleycroft/Over and Colne Fen, Earith, where three such cemeteries have been dug associated with ring-ditches (Evans & Knight 2000; Evans *et al.* forthcoming b). With their sequences initiated by inhumation burial, the latter have between 22 and 35 secondary cremation burials (Figs 7.4, 7.5 & 7.8). While their 'small monument' form/elaboration displays considerable variation, there is certainly a general 'type' consistency to these monuments and their accompanying cemeteries (though not all the lower River Great Ouse environs ring-ditches were mortuary-related and some seem to have served solely as group-territorial markers; Evans & Knight 2000). Crucial is the point that neither of Fengate's two definite ring-ditches, nor its putative Cat's Water henge, appear to have attracted such cemeteries, the Storey's Bar Road monument only having one Collared Urn cremation and the fully excavated Third Drove ring-ditch having only its single, central cremation burial. This must beg the question of just where, during the Middle/late Bronze Age, Fengate's dead were interred. Though it is conceivable that (in a similar manner to that postulated elsewhere for the Iron Age) they were deposited in the fen marshes from the Flag Fen platform, this is an argument that cannot readily be evaluated.

It is, indeed, the scale of its cremation cemetery that really distinguishes Abbott's great ring-ditch. Barrows have been excavated in Eastern England of comparable size and inhumation numbers, the most obvious example being the triple-circuit Beaker barrow at Barnack, involving 22 inhumations (and only one cremation). The external diameter of its outer ditch was *c.* 50 m (internally *c.* 43 m across; Donaldson 1977; Last 1998). Yet, whether it is Abbott's 80- or 130-cremation figure that is accepted, this monument's cemetery was clearly remarkable and it could suggest a degree of centralised interment practice. If so, this may well reflect on the character of the Flag Fen platform and the obvious authority that must have co-ordinated its construction and use, and as such, be directly pertinent to the 'polity model'. If, as has been suggested, the lower River Great Ouse's ring-ditch cemeteries were familial-lineage-based

(Evans & Knight 2000; 2001), then the much greater number of the Abbott-monument's interments could attest to multiple-lineage burial rites and, arguably – by the 'maths' – might reflect the amalgamation or interfacing of two to four lineages. What, after all, lies more at the heart of polity formation than, if not the breaking, then at least the subversion of immediate kinship-lineage rights to larger group ends? How this authority established itself, be it through the control of specifically local resources and/or metalwork production (possibly swords; Evans 2002), cannot be known as such. Nonetheless, the amassed evidence from the Flag Fen basin, particularly its mass metalwork deposition, certainly suggests a *ritually expressed basis of power* (see, for instance, Bradley 1998; Pryor 2001, 427–31).

Finally, with regard to *historiography and fieldwork*, generally there are few areas of Britain that did not see a degree of 'antiquarian' fieldwork which will invariably frame our present-day efforts. This is more than just a matter of vague 'legacy', but involves an *active framing context*. This, in fact, is the unifying theme of a series of forthcoming Cambridge Archaeological Unit volumes, of which *Fengate Revisited* will be the first, to be followed by Mucking's prehistoric and Roman phases. Indeed, a major issue arising from these volumes (specifically the latter) is, the question of when the publication of past fieldwork becomes a matter of historiography, as to opposed to just 'backlog'? Arguably this matter turns upon the issue of record (see, for instance, Barrett 1987), and the point at which the time between the period of excavation and a site's analysis/publication is sufficient that original records cannot be presented at face-value or to a modern standard without extensive explanatory context, be it the Edwardian era or the 1960s/70s (the death of a project's director/prime investigator, also, obviously being a significant factor). By this definition, the cusp of historiography potentially comes much closer to our present.

In relationship to Fengate's archaeology, close scrutiny of the Abbott sources – despite their obvious shortcomings – is not just a matter of by rote 'general background': they have implications that lie at the heart of the interpretation of its landscape. To understand (in our times) the area's sequence is as much a matter of fully engaging with the context of what has been done before, as what confronts us in the ground today (and also more general/conceptual site genealogies; eg, Evans 1998). This is an arena

wherein the tenets of sound practice and a post-structuralist ethos find overlap, as, to borrow Foucault's phrase, we invariably 'dig beyond origins'; after the fact and the efforts of others, we invariably *re-read* landscape (and the past).

Acknowledgements: The gestation of this paper, and our 'take' on Fengate's archaeology generally, has greatly benefited from long mulling over with many individuals; foremost must be Francis Pryor and Maisie Taylor, but also included should be Richard Bradley, Mark Edmonds, Charly French, Kasia Gdaniec, Rog Palmer, Josh Pollard, Ben Robison, and Marie Louise Stig Sørensen. We are also grateful for the input of colleagues at the Cambridge Archaeological Unit, among who must be listed Emma Beadsmoore, Matt Brudenell, David Gibson, Mark Knight, and Gavin Lucas. The text has greatly benefited from the critical edge (and 'pens') of Sam Lucy and Jo Wilson; its graphics attest to the formidable skills of Andrew Hall, with Dave Webb having done the studio photography.

Our access to archival materials has been facilitated by Megan Price, Chris Gosden, Arthur MacGregor, Alice Grayson (Searchroom Supervisor, Kendal Records Office/Clare Fell Archive), Imogen Gunn (Documentation Assistant, Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, University of Cambridge/Abbott Archive), and Alison Roberts (Antiquities Collections Manager & Curator for Prehistoric European Collections, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford/Leeds Archive); we are grateful that both museums have allowed us to here reproduce illustrations from their archives. In Peterborough Museum, we must thank Rebecca Casa Hutton for access to SMR/HER entries and reports, and also Glenys Wass for museum-archive searches. Jacqueline Minchinton, the Records and Resources Management Officer for Northampton Museum & Art Gallery, kindly provided us with details of the career of Thomas George.

Though to negative result, Graham Deacon, David Field, and Dave McOmish of English Heritage aided searches to attempt to retrieve what records Abbott might have provided the Ordnance Survey, and we are grateful for Christopher Taylor's OS insights. Bernard Nurse, Librarian of The Society of Antiquaries of London, kindly provided information concerning Abbott's election to that institution.

Endnotes

- ¹ Clare Fell seems to have done the bulk of the latter's research, apparently holding discussions with Abbott and producing a manuscript prior to World War II. With Fell then in wartime service, Christopher Hawkes apparently wrote the paper based on her draft.
- ² Although developing markedly during the early decades of the last century, Abbott's weak illustrative documentation of his researches would have been perfectly acceptable within the context of most later 19th century archaeological practice (Evans 2007; see Evans 2004 concerning archaeological 'graphic literacy' generally). In fact, his map has an uncanny resemblance

to that produced by Frank Curtis, a local amateur who, in the 1960s, excavated and recorded sites in the area of Norfolk's Wissey Embayment (Healy 1996, 3-4, 11-29, eg, plate III)

A letter-indication by Abbott to Leeds concerning the public presentation of his Fengate ring-ditch results to the Society of Antiquaries of London tells of the display and accreditation dynamics of the day, primarily the tactile provision of artefacts and the use of magic lantern slides:

I shall hope to be free on the 14th January and shall do my best to get away. What do you suggest as exhibits on that day other than the lantern slides. I can bring a reasonable amount, but I don't want to carry all the fragile pieces about London if it can be avoided and the large pots are rather bulky and cumbersome (Abbott/Leeds Correspondence 16/11/1921).

In the end, this evidently proved an instance of good intentions and Leeds, instead, apparently read papers by Abbott concerning 'Further discoveries near Peterborough' and 'Where did the beaker folk land' (as noted in *The Antiquaries Journal* 1922/2, 175).

³ Preparing the 1969 *Peterborough New Town* RCHM volume, Christopher Taylor (formerly of the Royal Commission) apparently interviewed Abbott; however, he reports that Abbott (then in his early 80s) had very little memory of his Fengate fieldwork and could offer no real insights (pers. comm.). The review of Abbott's findings undertaken for that volume therefore had to largely draw upon the 1920s OS record cards; unfortunately, searches suggest that these have since been discarded.

⁴ Confirmation of a linkage with the Abbott family is provided in his account of the finds from Hunsbury Camp, in which it was noted that a loomweight from the hillfort had been lent to the Museum by J. Wyman Abbott, 'our' Abbott's uncle (George 1917, 37). From 1904 Abbott was listed as being a member of the Northamptonshire Natural History Society and Field Club. His connection to George, and thereby Hunsbury, may have influenced his attribution of Fengate's Early Iron Age wares to 'Late Celtic' times, based on a familiarity with Hunsbury's La Tène curvilinear ornament. Obviously Glastonbury offered another parallel, albeit also mistaken.

⁵ Aside from being a major scholar, Leeds was an accomplished field archaeologist and his excavations were generally of a very high standard. Yet he was apparently without any disciplinary mentor. Seemingly self-taught, his understanding of fieldwork techniques and stratigraphy must essentially derive from his familial legacy. Not, in effect, serving any kind of fieldwork apprenticeship, Leeds' background connected him to the 19th century 'tap-root' of the excavation process: the understanding (and depiction) of geological stratification. In his posthumous volume, *The Leeds Collection of Fossil Reptiles from the Oxford Clay of*

Peterborough, he commemorated and wrote of his father's achievements with great sensitivity:

He [Alfred Leeds] could observe accurately and honestly: he could mentally collate his observations; he could tenaciously argue the inferences that he had thereby been led to draw ... But with all this he could not put his knowledge on paper. It is quite impossible to conceive of him sitting down to compose a long and detailed report on a recent discovery. A two-sheet letter of widely spaced writing was the most he could perpetrate, giving no more than the simplest details. That is why so much of his garnered knowledge appears under other names (1956, 95-6).

These sentiments suggest that Leeds' relationship with Abbott (10 years senior) held echoes with that between him and his own father.

⁶ On the manuscript's final page, citing Stone's Standlake 1857 paper in that Society's *Proceedings* (when he probably, in fact, must have meant Akerman and Stone's *Archaeologia* report of that same year), Abbott writes of his paper as appearing in the proceedings of this society. Note, also, that stuck within the same notebook as this manuscript is another, loose, three-page-long pencil written account of this same site, 'Report on a Burial Ground at Fengate, Peterborough'. Much shorter and less detailed than the main manuscript, it seems an earlier rough draft. Having a thumbnail sketch plan of the 'circle' in its upper title-page margin (Fig. 6.C), it will be further discussed below in relationship to the monument's dimensions.

⁷ During the course of the Haddenham project the similarly mauled remains of an Iron Age enclosure that had been partially quarried-out in just such a manner was excavated. Its pockmarked plan allows us to appreciate the difficulties of Abbott's work (Evans & Hodder 2006b; figs 6.16 & 6.17).

Abbott apparently offered the quarry-men a 'tip' of a few shillings for their finds (see Pryor 1997, 7). He and Leeds were not the only local collectors of quarry artefacts and, in his notebooks, Abbott recorded that two Bronze Age pots from Walker's pits had been sold to a Mr Bodger, a chemist on Cowgate; Messrs Hill, Shortacre and Dr Walker MD are also mentioned as collecting and buying local finds. The latter, whose impressive collection is now housed in both the Peterborough and Wisbech Museums (Middleton 1990), was apparently the Leeds' family doctor (Leeds 1956, 86).

⁸ The shorter pencil-written account describing this monument (see Note 6 above) does not particularly clarify this matter. Saying that the ditch was 10-14 ft across, it clearly states that the monument's circuit had an internal diameter of 28 yds and, shown in Figure 6.C, a measured thumbnail-plan in its upper margin depicts it as a complete circle. Yet beside it are two even rougher sketches showing it as ovoid and the word 'circular' has been scratched out from its title. This version provides no

figures whatsoever for the number of burials; as late as July 1921, in a letter to Leeds, Abbott related that he only had 'records of at least thirty cremated burials' (29/07/1921; Ashmolean Museum)

Following the 1920s record cards, the 1969 RCHM volume gives the ring-ditch's dimensions as 85 x 115 ft (1969, 7; no. 20), which could imply that Hawkes and Fell drew upon whatever source-information Abbott supplied to the OS.

- ⁹ It could, in fact, be questioned whether some of these inhumations were actually of Saxon attribution. However, on the basis that they were buried in a 'contracted position' and that the only accompanying grave-goods were the shale ear studs, this is most unlikely.

- ¹⁰ In his 1910 *Archaeologia* paper Abbott demonstrated familiarity with a range of site reports, such as those produced by Pitt Rivers and descriptions of the site of Glastonbury. What would have been an obvious inclusion was Pitt Rivers's Handley Barrow 24. Having a low mound and despite being only 7.00 m in diameter (with a penannular ditch), the General excavated 52 cremation deposits exterior to its southern sector (1898; Barrett *et al.* 1991, 214–19). Yet, as a *mounded barrow*, Abbott evidently held that it did not provide a basis of direct comparison.

In the context of archaeological documentation (ie, 'record-as-truth'), the laxness of Abbott's documentation as opposed to Pitt Rivers's (despite both sharing legal backgrounds or, at least, experience in the case of the General) could argue against any judicial basis of *archaeological* proof (cf. Evans 2007); there would be no court in the world that would accept Abbott's records as 'truth'.

- ¹¹ Although of somewhat suspect attribution (and, if really a monument, then certainly one of a quite different categorisation), theoretically Pryor's Site 11 Neolithic 'mortuary enclosure' should also included within this listing (Pryor 1988; 1993).

- ¹² There is also a single-page account by Abbott concerning this monument within the Ashmolean Museum's Leeds archive. In it he records the depth of 'the soil' (ie the barrow's mound) as being 'from 3ft 6" to 5ft (this may account for a grave). The workman have an idea that the top soil had been put on top of the mound to make a safe place for cattle in time of floods, so clearly the extra depth was noticed'. Otherwise, this statement essentially reiterates what was in his notebooks, except for noting that the artefacts had apparently been recovered by quarry-workers; Leeds senior had presumably acquired the pieces from them.

- ¹³ Abbott appears to have assembled his notebook entries from loose sheet notes and the sheet describing this 'site' survives in the Cambridge Museum Abbott archives. Again, there are discrepancies in the feature-sizes between its two text-sources. While this could also derive from subsequent quarry exposure, much more significant for this would-be monument's interpretation (and, once more, indicating a degree of basic

inaccuracy/imprecision), on the record sheet Abbott notes that human skull fragments occurred close to the palstave within its ditch. On the Leeds/Ashmolean map the location is further annotated 'in trench number of prob[.] contracted skeletons found many years ago here'; no mention of human bone occurs within the notebook entry. Equally, whilst the sheet-record has two 'thumbnail' section sketches, neither appeared in the notebook account.

- ¹⁴ The notebooks also include the original account of a piled, Early Iron Age timber construction (associated with human remains) found within the bed of a palaeochannel in the London Brick Company Yard No. 1 in Fletton, on the south side of Peterborough (W11/1/3). This is essentially the same as that given in the *Victoria County History* for Huntingdonshire (Burkitt *et al.* 1926, 212–3) and Abbott's Woodston and Fletton findings were fully summarised within that volume (Northamptonshire's, where Fengate then occurred, was published in 1904 and, therefore, did not include Abbott's material). Abbott, indeed, was cited as a full co-author of Burkitt and Fox's text of the County's 'Early Human Occupation'; however, as is clear in their note 1 (*ibid.*, 193), Abbott did not actually write any of the text but was so accredited because his unpublished researches were so extensively drawn upon.

- ¹⁵ Evaluation fieldwork by Northamptonshire Archaeology at Stanground South, south of Peterborough (and Fengate) recently exposed a major 'flat' cremation cemetery adjacent to the fen-edge (Taylor & Aaronson 2006). Over a c. 4.00 m length of c. 2.20 m wide trench 19 cremation deposits were exposed. Of these, only three were excavated (two being urned). Based on the cemetery's trench-exposure, a total population of 25–30 interments would have to be anticipated. Otherwise, the largest Bronze Age cemeteries found to date in eastern England were both 'flat': King's Hill, Broom, Bedfordshire (44; Cooper & Edmonds 2007) and at Papworth Everard, Cambridgeshire (53; R. Mortimer pers. comm.); see Robinson 2007 for a review of the evidence for Bronze Age cremation practices in East Anglia.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbott, G.W. & Smith, R.A. 1910. The discovery of prehistoric pits at Peterborough and the development of Neolithic pottery. *Archaeologia* 62, 332–52
- Akerman, J.Y. & Stone, S. 1857. An account of the investigation of some remarkable circular trenches, and the discovery of an Ancient British cemetery, at Stanlake, Oxon. *Archaeologia* 37, 363–70
- Barrett, J. 1987. The Glastonbury Lake Village: models and source criticism. *Archaeological Journal* 144, 409–23
- Barrett, J., Bradley, R. & Green, M. 1991. *Landscape, Monuments and Society*. Cambridge: University Press
- Bradford, J.S.P. 1942. An Early Iron Age settlement at Stanlake, Oxon. *Antiquaries Journal* 22, 202–14

- Bradley, R. 1998. *The Passage of Arms*. Oxford: Oxbow
- Bradley, R. 2007. *The Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*. Cambridge: University Press
- Bradley, R. & Yates, D. 2007. After 'Celtic' fields: the social organisation of Iron Age agriculture. In C. Haselgrove & R. Pope (eds), *The Earlier Iron Age in Britain and the Near Continent*, 94–102. Oxford: Oxbow
- Burkitt, M., Fox, C. & Abbott, G.W. 1926. The early occupation of Huntingdonshire. *The Victoria County History of Huntingdonshire*, 193–215
- Catling, H.W. 1982. Six ring-ditches at Standlake. In H.J. Case & A.W.R. Whittle (eds), *Settlement Patterns in the Oxford Region: excavations of the Abingdon causewayed enclosure and other sites*, 89–102. Oxford/London: Council for British Archaeology Research Report 44
- Clarke, D. 1970. *Beaker Pottery of Great Britain*. Cambridge: University Press
- Cooper, A. & Edmonds, M. 2007. *Past and Present: excavations at Broom, Bedfordshire, 1996–2005*. Oxford: Oxbow
- Cooper, S. 1998. *A Ring Ditch at Third Drove, Fengate, Peterborough*. Cambridge: Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit Report 153
- Crawford, O.G.S. 1912. The distribution of Early Bronze Age settlements in Britain. *Geographical Journal* 40, 184–97
- Cunliffe, B. 1968. Early Pre-Roman Iron Age communities in eastern England. *Antiquaries Journal* 47, 1–44
- Cunliffe, B. 1974. *Iron Age Communities in Britain*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul
- Donaldson, P. 1977. Excavation of a multiple round barrow at Barnack, Cambs. 1974–1976. *Antiquaries Journal* 57, 197–231
- Evans, C. 1988. Monuments and analogy: The interpretation of causewayed enclosures. In C. Burgess, P. Topping, C. Mordant & M. Madison (eds), *Enclosures and Defences in the Neolithic of Western Europe*, 47–73. Oxford: British Archaeological Report S403
- Evans, C. 1997. The excavation of a ring-ditch complex at Diddington, near Huntingdon, with a discussion of second millennium BC pyre burial and regional cremation practices. *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* 85, 11–26
- Evans, C. 1998. Constructing houses and building context: Bersu's Manx roundhouse campaign. *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 64, 183–201
- Evans, C. 2002. Metalwork and 'Cold Claylands': Pre-Iron Age occupation on the Isle of Ely. In T. Lane & J. Coles (eds), *Through Wet and Dry: Proceedings of a conference in honour of David Hall*, 33–53. Lincolnshire Archaeology & Heritage Report 5/WARP Occasional Paper 17
- Evans, C. 2004. Modelling monuments and excavations. In S. de Chadarevian & N. Hopwood (eds), *Models: The third dimension of science*, 109–37. Stanford, California: University Press (Writing Science Series)
- Evans, C. 2007. 'Decline and objects': nineteenth century antiquarian culture and the project of archaeology. In S. Pearce (ed.), *Visions of Antiquity: The Society of Antiquaries of London 1707–2007*. *Archaeologia* 111, 266–305
- Evans, C., Edmonds, M. & Boreham, S. 2006. 'Total archaeology' and model landscapes: excavation of the Great Wilbraham causewayed enclosure, Cambridgeshire, 1975–76. *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 72, 113–62
- Evans, C. & Hodder, I. 2006a. *A Woodland Archaeology*. Cambridge: McDonald Institute Monograph/The Haddenham Project Volume I
- Evans, C. & Hodder, I. 2006b. *Marshland Communities and Cultural Landscape*. Cambridge: McDonald Institute Monograph/The Haddenham Project Volume II
- Evans, C. & Knight, M. 2000. A Fenland delta: later prehistoric land-use in the lower Ouse reaches. In M. Dawson (ed.), *Prehistoric, Roman and Saxon Landscape Studies in the Great Ouse Valley*, 89–106. Council for British Archaeology 119
- Evans, C. & Knight, M. 2001. The 'Community of Builders': The Barleycroft post alignments. In J. Brück, (ed.), *Bronze Age Landscapes: tradition and transformation*, 83–98. Oxford: Oxbow
- Evans, C. with Beadsmoore, E., Brudenell, M. & Lueas, G. forthcoming a. *Fengate Revisited: further fen-edge excavations, Bronze Age fieldsystems & settlement and the Wyman Abbott/Leeds Archives*. Oxford: Oxbow/CAU Landscape Archives Series: Historiography & Fieldwork
- Evans, C. with Appleby, G., Lucy, S. & Regan, R. forthcoming b. *Process and History: prehistoric and Roman fen-edge communities at Colne Fen, Earith*. Cambridge: McDonald Institute Monograph/The Archaeology of the Lower Ouse Valley Volume I
- George, T.J. 1917. Early man in Northamptonshire, with particular reference to the late Celtic period as illustrated by Hunsbury Camp. *Northampton History Society & Field Club* 19, 18–19, 29–38
- Gibson, D. & Knight, M. 2006. *Bradley Fen Excavations 2001–2004, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire*. Cambridge: Cambridge Archaeological Unit Report 733
- Hall, D. 1987. *The Fenland Project, Number 2: Cambridgeshire Survey, Peterborough to March*. Cambridge: East Anglian Archaeology 35
- Harden, D.B. 1956. Edward Thurlow Leeds, 1899–1955. In D.B. Harden (ed.), *Dark-Age Britain: studies presented to E.T. Leeds with a bibliography of his works*, ix–xiv. London: Methuen
- Hawkes, C.F.C. & Fell, C.I. 1945. The Early Iron Age settlement at Fengate, Peterborough. *Antiquaries Journal* 100, 188–223
- Healy, F. 1996. *The Fenland Project, Number 11. The Wissey Embayment: evidence for pre-Iron Age occupation accumulated prior to the Fenland Project*. Gressenhall: East Anglia Archaeology 78
- Healy, F. & Harding, J. 2007. A thousand and one things to do with a round barrow. In J. Last (ed.), *Beyond the Grave: new perspectives on barrows*, 53–71. Oxford: Oxbow
- Hudson, K. 1981. *A Social History of Archaeology*. London: Macmillan
- Knight, M. 2000. Henge to house – post-circles in a Neolithic and Bronze Age landscape at King's Dyke West, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire. *Past* 34, 3–4

- Knight, M. 2008. Recovering past environments. In *Institute of Field Archaeologists Yearbook & Directory 2008*, 23–5
- Last, J. 1998. Books of Life: biography and memory in a Bronze Age barrow. *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 17, 43–53
- Lawson, A.J., Martin, E.A. & Priddy, D. 1981. *The Barrows of East Anglia*. Norwich: East Anglian Archaeology 12
- Leeds, E.T. 1910. Communication on objects from a Bronze Age tumulus at Eyebury, near Peterborough. *Proceedings of the Society Antiquaries of London* 23, 283
- Leeds, E.T. 1912. Excavation of a round barrow at Eyebury, near Peterborough. *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London* 24, 80–94
- Leeds, E.T. 1915. Further excavations in round barrows near Eyebury, Peterborough. *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London* 27, 116–55
- Leeds, E.T. 1922. Further discoveries of the Neolithic and Bronze Ages at Peterborough. *Antiquaries Journal* 2, 220–37
- Leeds, E.T. 1956. *The Leeds Collection of Fossil Reptiles from the Oxford Clay of the Peterborough*. Oxford: Blackwell
- Levine, P. 1986. *The Amateur and the Professional: antiquarians, historians and archaeologists in Victorian England, 1838–1886*. Cambridge: University Press
- Middleton R. 1990. The Walker Collection: a quantitative analysis of lithic material from the March/Manea area of the Cambridgeshire Fens. *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* 79, 13–38
- Moore, W.R.G. 1980. Northampton Museum and T.J. George. *Northamptonshire History News* 45, 14–17
- Mortimer, J.R. 1905. *Forty Years' Researches in British and Saxon Burial Mounds of East Yorkshire*. London, Hull & York
- Pitt Rivers, Lt-Gen. A.H.L.F. 1898. *Excavations in Cranborne Chase Volume IV*. Privately printed
- Pryor, F. 1974. *Excavation at Fengate, Peterborough, England: the first report*. Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum Archaeological Monograph 3
- Pryor, F. 1978. *Excavation at Fengate, Peterborough, England: the second report*. Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum Archaeological Monograph 5
- Pryor, F. 1980. *Excavation at Fengate, Peterborough, England: the third report*. Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum Archaeology Monograph 6
- Pryor, F. 1988. Earlier Neolithic landscapes and ceremonial in lowland Britain. In J. Barrett & I.A. Kinnes (eds), *The Archaeology of Context in the Neolithic and Bronze Age: recent trends*, 63–72. Sheffield: J. Collis
- Pryor, F. 1993. Excavations at Site 11, Fengate, Peterborough, 1960. In W.G. Simpson, D.A. Gurney, J. Neve & F. Pryor, *The Fenland Project Number 7. Excavations in Peterborough and the Lower Welland Valley, 1960–1969*, 127–40. Cambridge: East Anglian Archaeology 61
- Pryor, F. 1997. *Peterborough East: a guide to curation in an area of outstanding archaeological importance*. Peterborough: Fenland Archaeological Trust for English Heritage
- Pryor, F. 2001. *The Flag Fen Basin: archaeology and environment of a fenland landscape*. Swindon: English Heritage
- Pryor, F. 2003. *Britain BC: life in Britain and Ireland before the Romans*. London: HarperCollins.
- Pryor, F. & French, C.A.I. 1985. *Fenland Project, Number 1. Archaeology and Environment in the Lower Welland Valley*. Cambridge: East Anglian Archaeology 27
- Robinson, I. 2007. *Middle Bronze Age Cremation Practice in East Anglia: continuity and change in cemetery form and development*. Unpublished MPhil. Dissertation, University of Cambridge
- Royal Commission on Historical Monuments 1969. *Peterborough New Town: a survey of the antiquities in the areas of development*. London: HMSO
- Smith, I.F. 1956. *The Decorative Art of Neolithic Ceramics in South East England and its Relations*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Institute of Archaeology, London
- Smith, P.J. 1997. Grahame Clark's new archaeology: the Fenland Research Committee and Cambridge prehistory in the 1930s. *Antiquity* 71, 11–30
- Stone, S. 1857. Account of certain (supposed) British and Saxon remains ... *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London* 4 (1856–9), 92–100
- Taylor, E. & Aaronson, J. 2006. *Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation at Stanground South, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, September–December 2005*. Northamptonshire Archaeology Report 06/35
- Yates, D.T. 2007. *Land, Power and Prestige: Bronze Age field systems in southern England*. Oxford: Oxbow