

Burgh: The Iron Age and Roman Enclosure

by Edward Martin

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Summary

The Burgh enclosure is situated in south-east Suffolk, a few miles north-west of the town of Woodbridge. It is the largest Iron Age fortification in Suffolk and is the only certain Iron Age site in the county that is still visible at ground level. The bivallate enclosure is roughly rectangular and encloses an area of 7 ha. It is divided into two halves by a sunken lane and is partially occupied by Burgh Church.

The site has witnessed three periods of excavation: by V.B. Redstone and the Woodbridge Field Club in 1900-1901; by the late J.D.W. Treherne c. 1947-1957; and by E.A. Martin for the Department of the Environment and Suffolk County Council in 1975. This report combines the results of all three of these excavations.

The earthwork was probably built in the first century BC by people using hand-made Iron Age pottery. Following a destruction horizon dated to c. AD 15-25 there is a marked increase in wheel-made 'Belgic'-

style pottery, much of it showing close connections with *Camulodunum* (Colchester), together with a range of Gallo-Belgic imported wares. The first century AD saw the construction of an inner enclosure of about 1 ha in the north-west corner of the original earthwork. This is thought to be pre-Conquest in date, though there is a slight chance that it might be an early Roman construction. Part of this inner enclosure was deliberately flattened c. AD 60, however occupation of the site continued well into the fourth century with indications of a villa with a hypocaust and tessellated floors. In the Late Saxon period a church was built within the earthwork, an event possibly connected with the translation of the remains of St Botolph from his ruined monastery at Iken on the Suffolk coast.

Finally an attempt is made to place the Burgh in the context of Iron Age Suffolk as a whole and to explore the later settlement history of the area in relation to Burgh.

I. Introduction

I. Introduction

(Fig. 1)

The Burgh enclosure (Suffolk Site and Monuments Record No. BUG002; TM 224 523) lies in the fields surrounding St Botolph's Church in the extreme north-west corner of the parish of Burgh, close to the boundary with Clopton parish and 3½ miles north-west of the town of Woodbridge (Fig. 1). The parish of Burgh probably takes its name from this earthwork, being derived from Old English *burh*, *burg*, meaning 'a fortified place' (Smith 1956, I, 58). The enclosure is situated, at a height of 20-40 m OD, on the edge of a plateau overlooking the low-lying meadows which flank the River Lark. The soils of the area are calcareous pelosols (Hanslope series) overlying chalky till (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

The site is first mentioned in 1819 when it was identified as a 'Roman station' (Cromwell 1819, II, 51). At the end of the nineteenth century the Rev. J.J. Raven of Fressingfield erroneously equated the 'Roman camp' at Burgh with the place called *Combretoivium* in the Roman *Antonine Itinerary* (Raven 1895, 28; 35; Raven 1897); *Combretoivium* is now thought to be the large Roman settlement near Baylham Mill in Coddendam (Rivet and Smith 1979, 313-4). Raven's work seems to have inspired the setting up of the Woodbridge Field Club, which carried out the first recorded excavations at Burgh in 1900-1901. Further excavations were carried

out c. 1947-1957 and in 1975. All of these excavations will be considered in more detail later in the report. The site was scheduled as an ancient monument in 1960 (Ancient Monument No. Suffolk 100).

In an unpublished manuscript Mr J.D.W. Treherne of Otley recorded two items of local folklore concerning the site:

'Both church and field are associated with legends, one is that of a golden calf buried somewhere close by, while the other is that of a spectral dog, the Gally Trot, which is said to haunt the vicinity of the church. The former story is very popular in the neighbourhood and if any of the local inhabitants come and watch me dig they invariably ask if I am 'digging for the golden calf'. Many have dug for it in their youth.'

The spectral dog is first mentioned as early as 1823 by a local expert on mythology and dialect, Major Edward Moor (1771-1848) of Great Bealings House, who recorded the following information (Moor 1823, 141-2):

'Gally Trot. This is the name of an apparition, or caecodaemon, that has sorely frightened many people in the neighbourhood of Woodbridge. It sometimes assumes the shape of a dog; and gives chase to those whom alarm impels them to run. Its appearance is sometimes as big as a bullock — generally white — and not very definable as to outline. Its haunts are more particularly at a place called Bath-slough, meaning a slough or bog in the parish of Burgh. But the place in question is not in, or very near that parish, nor is there any slough. I can make nothing of the name; nor much of the story, though I have heard it related by more than one person who had suffered from the apparition.'

The golden calf story was also recorded by V.B. Redstone of Woodbridge (Redstone 1908, 16):

'To this day the natives of the two villages, Burgh and Grundisburgh, maintain that within the field...there lies buried a golden calf.'

II. The Earthwork

(Fig. 2)

The Burgh earthwork is a double banked and ditched enclosure, roughly rectangular in plan and measuring 290 × 240 m, enclosing an area of 7 ha (Frontispiece and Fig. 2). The north-west and north-east corners occupy high ground, the land slopes between these two points into a small valley occupied by Drabs Lane, which bisects the enclosure. The land also slopes, though more gradually, towards the river, with a steep scarp down to the B1079 road.

Part of the interior of the enclosure is occupied by St Botolph's Church and its graveyards, the rest of the site lies in ploughed fields. The banks of the enclosure are now only visible along the north-east and south-east sides, where they stand to a maximum height of about half a metre. Most of the earthwork is, however, visible from the air as crop or soil marks (the plan of the earthwork on Figure 2 is based on crop-mark evidence). There is no evidence, however, for the south-east corner of the enclosure: the B1079 road cuts through this area to

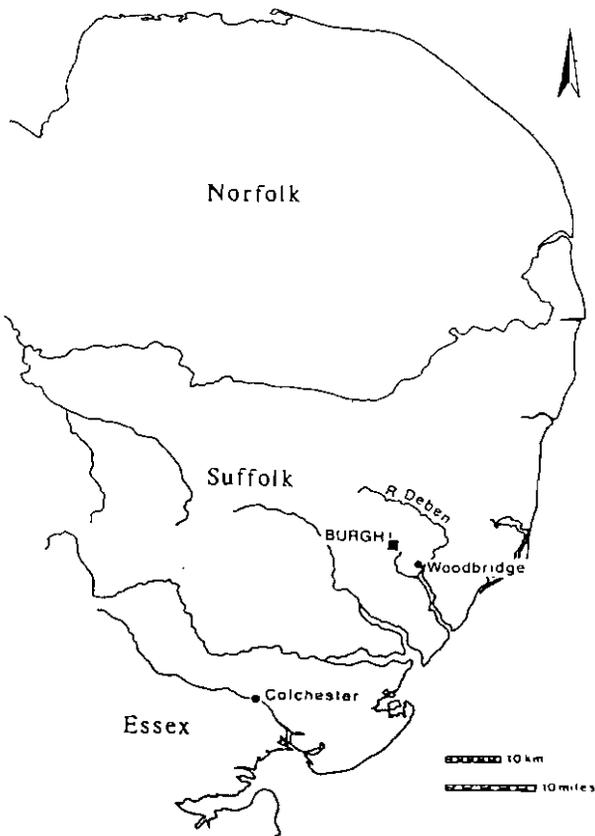


Figure 1 Location map.

4. The Zoological Evidence

I. The Human Bones

1975 excavations
by C.B.Denston

A human skull was recovered from Layer 0132 in Feature 0004. The remains consisted of fragments of a cranium, which have been reconstructed as much as possible (Pls II and IV).

Sex: ?Male
Age at death: 20-30 years

The specific features used in determining sex were not very convincing where this cranium was concerned. Posteriorly, the external protuberance and nuchal crests were not very strongly developed. Anteriorly, the supraorbital ridges were prominent with large frontal sinuses, and rounded superior margins of the orbits. Mastoid processes were neither large or small. Measurements of the cranium were too few to be worthwhile, so the cranium has been assigned tentatively as male.

No teeth were present but parts of the maxilla were available for study. Tooth sockets, those from the medial incisor round to the first molar of the left half of the maxilla, were intact. All the sockets displayed evidence of extensive periodontal disease, the teeth from the two right incisor sockets, and that from the first left premolar

socket lost antemortem. Abscess cavities had formed in the sockets of the first right premolar, the second left premolar and first molar, the infection burrowing out into the lateral surface of the maxilla in each case.

The remains are now housed in the Department of Physical Anthropology, University of Cambridge.

II. Animal Bones: Summary

1975 Excavations
by R.T.Jones, J.Sly, M.Beech and S.Parfitt

A total of 3117 bone fragments were examined, the bulk of which came from a deep Iron Age pit (0004). Analysis of the bones included: condition and preservation; species identification and relative importance; age determination; metrical analysis; anatomical representation; fragmentation patterns; gnawing; butchery and pathology.

The ovicaprid (sheep/goat) and cattle (*Bos* sp.) bones were the most abundant species identified, with pig (*Sus* sp.) and dog (*Canis familiaris*) representing the less common domestic animals. The wild mammal species identified were: red deer (*Cervus elaphus*); hare (*Lepus* sp.) and fox (*Vulpes vulpes*). Ten bird bones were identified, which included bones from raven (*Corvus corax*); duck (*Anas* sp., possibly domestic) and crane (*Grus* sp.).



Plate IV Human skull at the base of Feature 0004, restored.

Species	Pit (0004)			Postholes Scoops Slots						Roman		Unassigned		Total	
	Group 1		MNI	Group 2		Group 3		Group 4		Group 5		n	%	n	%
	n	%		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%				
Cattle	535	19.7	20	1	6.25					5	14	17	19.1	638	19.5
Ovicaprid	692	22.9	61	1	6.25	1	50			8	22.2	14	15.7	716	22.9
Goat	5	0.2	2	1										5	0.1
Pig	178	6	22							1	3	5	5.6	184	5.9
Horse	51	1.7	2											51	1.6
Red deer	2	0.07	1							3	8.3			5	0.2
Large Artiodactyle	757	25.5		11	68.75					9	25	24	27	801	25.7
Small Artiodactyle	577	19.4		2	12.5	1	50	3	60	7	19.4	19	21.3	609	19.5
Dog	5	0.2	1											5	0.2
Fox	3	0.1	1											3	0.1
Dog/Fox	2	0.07								2	5.5			4	0.1
Hare	2	0.07	1											2	0.06
Duck	4	0.1	1											4	0.1
Raven	4	0.1	1											4	0.1
Crane	1	0.03	1											1	0.03
Unknown Bird	1	0.03												1	0.03
Unknown Mammal	100	3.4		1	6.25			2	40	1	2.8	10	11.2	114	3.7
Total	2969			16		2		5		36		89		3117	

Table 5 Summary of vertebrate species represented at Burgh (1975 excavations).

Analysis of the ovicaprid bones (mainly sheep) revealed that they were small, slender animals typical of the Iron Age, and similar to modern-day primitive sheep like the Soay. The ageing analysis suggested that some lambs died within their first year, with probable culling of other animals as they reached their optimum meat weight. The older sheep would have provided wool and possibly meat and manure.

The Iron Age cattle from Burgh were also of relatively small stature, with an estimated height at the shoulder of c. 1.08m. A few young animals were present but the majority were over two years of age at death. In addition to being a food source, the cattle may also have been raised for milk and work purposes.

The full report on the animal bones appears on microfiche.