

COMBRETONIUM AND BRETtenham.

BY REV. H. COPINGER HILL.

The earliest pages of the Registers of Brettenham, dating from 1584, are exceedingly well written—copied probably from either a previous book or notes—as the arrangement and writing of the various entries are so elaborately done. William Camden (1551–1623), when exploring for his great work, probably visited Brettenham and inspired the then Rector, Humphry Munnings, to illustrate a full page in connection with the visit, and also a similar one with an eulogy on his predecessor in the benefice, the Rev. M. Briggs (1579–1597).

The writing and decorative work is rather faded, but has come out fairly well in a photograph by the Rev. J. W. Sayer, of Elmswell; that of the Rector was, however, not quite so successful. The Rev. G. F. Hodges, late Rector, has sent the full description of it.

“At the upper part of one of the pages of our earliest Registers is an effigy of our first Reformed Rector, Martin Briggs. He is represented as habited in a surplice or alb (with close-fitting sleeves) which reaches to his feet. The eyes appear to be open, though the hands are joined together as in prayer. The head is resting on a closed book and the feet upon a large globe. Above the figure is a scroll, issuing from his mouth, bearing these words, “Certamen bonū decertavi; cursum consumavi: fidem servavi: Deinceps &c.” On the front slab of the tomb are the words “Novissimum huic viro pax.” Immediately below the tomb there is as follows, “Upon the life and death of Mr. Martin Briggs late Parson of ye parishe whose labour and godlynes well deserved ye memory”

“The feilde is foughte
The race is runne
The faithe is kepte
The crowne is wonne.”

Below the above are the following 24 lines:—

“While Martin liv'd, his quiet soule was vex'd
With Gebal, Ammon, and with Kedarmis:
Nowe warres are ceaste, and Martin takes his rest
With holy Anngelles and with Cherubines.
While Martin liv'd, his patēnt feete did runne
The sandie waye of scorned povertie - - -

Now pains are paste, and Martin's time is come,
 Of swete-harte's-easing Victorie - - -
 While Martin liv'd, the ploughe did never lie,
 On Barraine soile, - What labour Martin loste!
 Loste to the worlde, but not to him, for why
 A thousand joyes doe now requite his coste.
 While Martin liv'd, why what, is Martin dead?
 Not so, but wear'd with this worlde's offence,
 Upwardes againe his heav'n-borne soule is fledde,
 With gladde and cheerful face, retired hence.
 And there good Martin lies in Abram's bedde,
 His fadinge life turned to eternitie - -
 With robes of joye and Royall mantel spreadde,
 Crown'd with an Amaranth'an canopie.
 ffarewell, the jewell of this little towne,
 Though livinge here, fewe did him so esteeme,
 Sooner the walles uprear'd of rotten Combreton
 Than suche a one shall here againe be seene."

Beneath the above is

"He restes in heav'n this blessed man,
 We left behind, Lord, Where—and whan.

I spoke of him as the first Reformed Rector, and so I believe he was, but it is right to say that his predecessor, John Kempston, was appointed in 1552. Still, I very much doubt if *he* was "Reformed" (G.F.H.)

Some of these verses appeared in E.A. Notes and Queries, New Series, II., p. 296. The Rev. M. Briggs was buried May 21, 1597. Another reference has "12 Calends of June (1597) pastor fidelissimus migravit ad coelos."

SIGNS OF COMBRETONIUM.

The discovery of Roman occupation anywhere in East Anglia is of importance, as of late nothing of much interest has come to light. When finds are made in the vicinity of a Roman road—and that one of the main roads arteries it is bound to suggest or teach something. Pointing N.W. due N. and N.E. from Colchester are three roads of which, in a way, comparatively little is accurately known.

In the Antonine Itineraries, Nos. V. and IX. belong to East Anglia, the former may have some connection with the N.W. and N. roads—the latter seems clearly to point to a main road with V. Icenorum as its objective. Somewhere along it lie Combretonium and Sitomajus, two cities, Stations or Colonies whose situations, at present are doubtful. Combretonium from Camden's time

has been located by similarity of name at Brettenham (Hitcham and Brettenham are neighbours); but, as nothing, beyond an almost obliterated camp to S.W. of Brettenham Church, with a few "finds" denoting Roman occupation has been found there it has been given up. At Burgh and Clopton to the East, a strongly made camp having been uncovered, etc., this was deemed to be Combretonium—although its "backers" allow that the mileage from the crossing of the Stour at Ad Ansam, 6 miles from Colchester, is quite wrong according to the Itinerary. The supporters of this theory place Sitomajus at Dunwich, but confess that the mileage here is very much astray—as too, from Dunwich to V. Icenorum.

Having followed out the Peddar Way from its entry on the N. with Suffolk, as far South as Hitcham (Brettenham), where all trace of this road seemed to vanish on the direct line N. and S., I was led to explore the ground here on either side of the route very carefully and found many traces of Roman occupation in both these parishes, culminating in the excavation of the outbuildings (?) of a large house, the many finds from their nature suggesting an owner of substance. Starting again on the Peddar Way, its route can be followed on the ridge between Bildeston (E.) and Kettlebaston and Monks Eleigh (on the West). Running due E. from Bildeston Church is a very straight piece of road (of decidedly Roman make)—more particularly so from the E. of Bildeston town in the direction of Bricet to Barking and Needham to cross the Orwell or Gipping at Needham Market, climbing up the hill behind Bosmere (water) by Coddenham and communicating thus with Burgh.

Starting back to the ridge by Bildeston Church, there are indications in two places of camps, etc.

If we allow that Combretonium is somewhere in Hitcham or Brettenham, the mileage from Ad Ansam, i.e., 15 (Iter. IX), agrees. (Ad Ansam has been generally supposed to be Stratford St. Mary, but as the Peddar Way is making direct for Nayland this may not be so). From Brettenham to Burgh—Combretonium to Sitomajus, 22 miles are required. This will not be too much, considering the route suggested above.

The main road to Venta Icenorum (see Codrington, page 185, 3rd Edition), if it be that to N.E. along the present Ipswich and Norwich Road, crosses the Gipping at Sharnford Causeway near Blakenham Church—even if the road via Bricet made for this same crosses the mileage would not differ much from the distance required.

From Burgh (Sitomagus to Caister St. Eds.) (Venta I.) the mileage again—via Eye on to the direct road from Sharnford crossing, or via Harleston—a central route, will practically agree, i.e., 32 miles.

From the many minor roads, agrarian or vicinales, in the neighbourhood of Hitcham and Brettenham, one is led to dub Combretonium as distinctly a Colonia as distinct from a city or station. It is the first piece of level ground, of suitable extent, etc., for agricultural purposes, after leaving Colchester.

As regards the characteristic straightness of Roman roads, the route between Hitcham and Bildeston Church interests. The soil here is, now-a-days, very heavy clay and water-logged. On mounting Balls Hill the road inclines backwards and forwards W. and E. in stretches of 1,000 feet lengths 5 times; on descending the hill to cross the Bret at Chelsworth, it does so in 3 similar stretches, though of greater but even lengths.

Mounting the hill by Chelsworth Park it seems to bear to the W. to avoid some extremely wet districts before recovering the line somewhere N. of Polstead. This piece of the road I am now exploring, but should welcome any information or remarks that may be helpful in carrying out the work.

The further exploration of the Peddar Way southwards will take time, being some many miles from my home, and the route suggested by me eastward to Burgh will have to wait.

SITE ON BRICKHOUSE FARM, HITCHAM.

Excavation work on this farm in the Autumn of 1926 was delayed by a bean-crop that proved so poor as to be hardly worth carting, and when cut was left till the last. The haulm was so lengthy and loose that it was practically impossible to clear the necessary space for work.

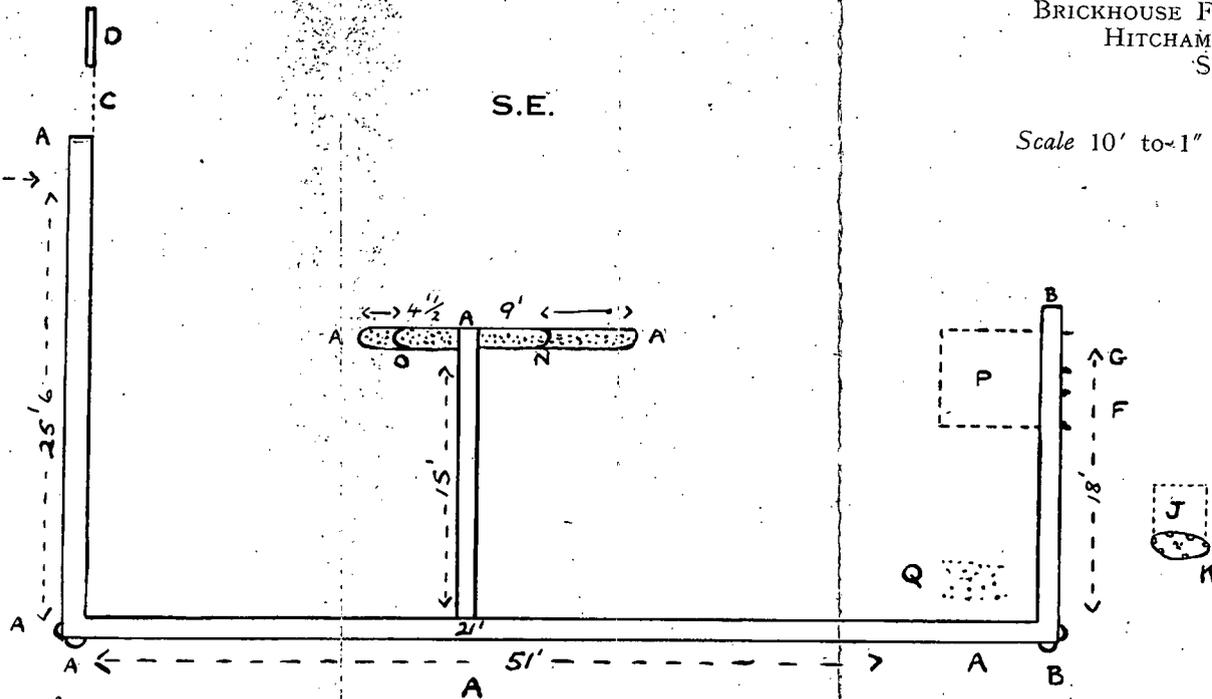
However, four men helped me to begin in October, and as the walls were only just below the surface, they were soon located and uncovered. It was evident from the start that the plough had interfered with them for many generations, and, within living memory, tumbril loads of material had been carted away.

Facing S.E., with the ground sloping away to the E., and further off to the S., the site (200-ft. up) was on a level piece of heavy clay 150–200 yards from Peddar Way. A base length of 57-ft. was first uncovered, exposing a flint wall 2-ft. wide, varying in depth from 9-in. to 12-in. At the E. end a wall at right angles was 25½-ft. long, then missing for a few feet, to show again only 9-in. wide for another 4-ft. On the W. a parallel wall was only 18-ft.

BRICKHOUSE FARM,
HITCHAM,
SUFFOLK.

OCT., 1926.

Scale 10' to 1"

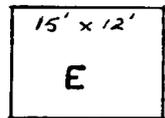


Ground slopes W. to E.
Foundations 12" below surface.
Soil = clay, heavy.

N.W.

- AA = Walls, 2' wide of large flint.
- B = Walls, 2' 6" wide, of small stones on surface rammed.
- CD = Wall missing, to show again at D but then 9" in width.
- E = Surface of small rammed stones.
- F = Projecting stones 2' apart. Between, a hearth or fire.
- G = Projecting stones 2' apart.
- H = Water-worn small stones cemented.
- I = ? 3 steps down to hole for ox.

- J = Square open hearth.
- K = Oval shaped hearth, picked out with flints. Ditto in centre. 7' 4 1/2" long, 4' 9" at widest, 3' 6" narrowest.
- L = Midden pits and refuse heaps.
- M = Hollow in hedge.
- N = Surface of rammed small stones.
- O = Ditto.
- P = Signs of ditto.
- Q = Ditto.



HEDGE

long. There were no signs of mortar amongst the flints, which were carefully laid on a levelled base. Commencing from the E. the stones were of larger size than elsewhere, and at 21-ft. a wall ran due S.E. parallel to the other walls for 15-ft. (this difference in size of the flints was noticeable on the E. wall also). From this wall the remaining 30-ft. of the base wall was topped with smaller stones which seemed to have been rammed; and in the corner at the W. end a flooring of similar rammed work was on a level with the top of the wall, but did not exist inwards sufficiently to claim to be a floor. At the end of the middle wall a short piece of foundation walling was uncovered $4\frac{1}{2}$ -ft. E. and 9-ft. Westward, with signs of rammed work again. On the inside of the W. or outer wall were similar small stones. Nowhere on either side of any walls were fragments of roof tiles, etc., found—in fact nothing was picked up. On the outside of the W. wall almost at its end were a few stones projecting from the main wall, forming two openings, 2-ft. wide, with a foot between the pair, that nearer the base shewing signs of fire ashes, etc. A clearance shewed a hollow space into the wall, roughly about 9-in. deep, giving a few bones and of pottery mixed with ashes. The other opening was blank. 8-ft. away to the W. of this outer wall was a large open hearth; and immediately on the N. side a space had been picked out with large flints, 7-ft. by $4\frac{1}{2}$ -ft. long: 4-ft. 9-in. at its widest, and 3-ft. 6-in. narrowest, with a few large flints in the centre. This was covered with ashes and burnt earth—the whole was a regular oval—but unfortunately a meddlesome intruder one evening disturbed most of the stone (photograph taken before disturbance) and there was nothing left but to sift the ashes, etc. The finds were—2 keys, another ring key (bitt missing), pieces of 2 knives, roe-deer horns, and one or two fragments of dark pottery. Was this an “ustrina”?

At the end of the E. side 21-ft. away was a pathway or flooring of water-worn pebbles, in cement, but only 8-ft. in length by 3-ft. wide. At the S. end was a collection of refuse heaps and pits which yielded quantities of shells (oyster, mussel, cockle, and snail), pottery sherds of various kinds, bones, nails, glass, etc.

Further S. some flint work which seemed to suggest 3 steps downwards led us to continue digging, and we unearthed the skeleton of an ox (*bos longifrons*) about 4-ft. 6-in. down.

In the field N. of this site the plough ran into a road roughly made of stone, broken tiles, and bricks, leading towards our site. A hedge intervening—excavations on the line of road on the site showed at once a space 15-ft. by 12-ft. of small stones rammed, with a level surface, but no more trace could be found on the line

to the site or elsewhere. Below the road in the hedge is a large hollow almost opposite the centre wall of the site.

The road referred to in the reverse direction bends W., and in another field where it crosses has been found by the plough and a "cist" grave uncovered. Mole ploughing here this month (March) may be productive, and possibly the big house is there, as the site uncovered suggested outbuildings or workshops. At the bottom of the hill, on the E. side of the site, is a peculiar enlargement of the ditch for 800 feet—commencing from a well or spring. This well, when cleaned out, produced nothing. Five narrow and regular hollows jutting out from the ditch into the flat meadow are at present unexplained.

CHIEF FINDS :—

Iron. Key $3\frac{1}{2}$ " long 1" bitt, hole at end of handle

Key, $1\frac{3}{4}$ " bitt (part of handle covered with bronze and patterned).

Ring-key, $1\frac{1}{2}$ " in all, finger shaped handle (1 " by $\frac{3}{4}$ " stem worked.

Two nails bent at right-angles to form a hook.

Nail snatched for use as a catch. Ring, 1 " by $3\frac{3}{4}$ ", oval.

Hold-fast for flue-tile or window glass.

Knife-piece of $3\frac{1}{4}$ " by $1\frac{1}{2}$ " with tang. Another piece, fragment of window and other fragments of glass, blue frit.

Roe-deer horn, $7\frac{1}{2}$ " long; smooth pointed, sawn at base; 2 other pieces.

Skeleton of ox, (boslongifrons), teeth of horse, deer, ox, pig.

Bones of ox, horse, birds, rabbit skull.

2nd brass of Maximianus; another undecipherable.

Denarius of Trajan (Imp Traiano Ger Dac P M T R P Cos in v. g. order

Vi PP) Spqr optimi Principi

ARAB(ia) A D Q (uisita)

Pottery, etc., slab of roof tile, $6\frac{1}{2}$ " by 9" with diamond pane pattern.

Mortaria, fragment 20" in length, buff; 3 patterns, one in white, early make.

Roof tiles showing slots for interlacing, etc.

Flue tiles, 2 sizes, rough scored and one patterned from stamp or die (see Brit. Mus. Cat., page 126, No. 139).

Fragments with glaze.

Samian (Drag: shape 30, 2 cent.) Potter's mark. ALBUCI and variety of pieces.

Black-buff, red glazed Buff jugs, reeded handles.

An early handle, large ollas with very thick rims

Rim of small jar with leaf-slip.

Piece of roof-tile full width with semi-circles at base.

Piece of a hone: brooch, bracelet.

Nine stone balls of varied size. Tesselated flint. Burnt ditto.