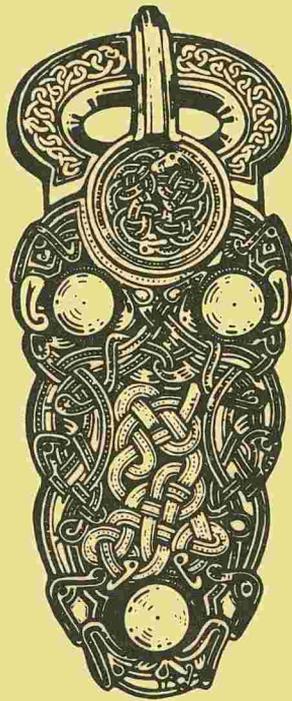


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THE SUFFOLK EXCAVATION INDEX

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INTRODUCTION

SINCE 1978 THE National Archaeological Record (N.A.R.) of the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (R.C.H.M.E.) has been compiling an Index of archaeological excavations. There are four main objectives to this project:

- 1 to compile a list of archaeological excavations in England.
- 2 to locate the original documentary and visual archive from each excavation.
- 3 to locate the finds from each excavation.
- 4 to indicate excavations for which a report has been published.

The Index now holds over 25,000 records nationally, a figure which includes 784 records for Suffolk. An outline of the nature and purpose of the Suffolk Excavation Index was published in the Newsletter of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History (No. 27, Autumn 1988). The Index was compiled between April 1988 and March 1989, one of the last counties to be tackled, and used the Sites and Monuments Record held by the Suffolk Archaeological Unit (S.A.U.) as a starting point, which provided around 70 per cent of the excavations listed. Additional material was discovered by research in museums, archaeological publications, and by contacting individual excavators.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF EXCAVATIONS (Fig. 29)

The distribution of excavations across the county may be explained by at least two factors. It is partly the result of individual archaeologists working within a locality, but also reflects the landscape. There are obvious concentrations in the north-west, the Fen and Breckland areas, and in the south-east of the county, chiefly along the main river valleys and on the sandlings where areas of lighter soil have provided ideal settlement conditions.

In the Forest Heath District, the work of Grace, Lady Briscoe, T.C. Lethbridge, and Col. T.C. Kelly (U.S.A.F.) accounts for well over fifty excavations. In the Ipswich and Coastal Districts the density of excavations results from the interest taken initially by Ipswich Museum since the turn of the century, and subsequently by the Suffolk Archaeological Unit. The redevelopment of Ipswich town centre during the past twenty years accounts for the concentration of excavations there. Bury St Edmunds, by contrast, has only twenty-one recorded excavations, nearly half of which took place within the Abbey, since opportunities arising from development here have been slight. The considerable number of excavations in Mid-Suffolk, largely in the parishes of Rickingham, Hinderclay and Wattisfield, were almost entirely the work of Basil Brown.

PERIODS AND TYPES (Table I)

A breakdown by period of the excavations in Suffolk is shown in Table I, and the percentages can be compared with national average figures obtained through the Excavation Index project.

EXCAVATED SITES IN SUFFOLK

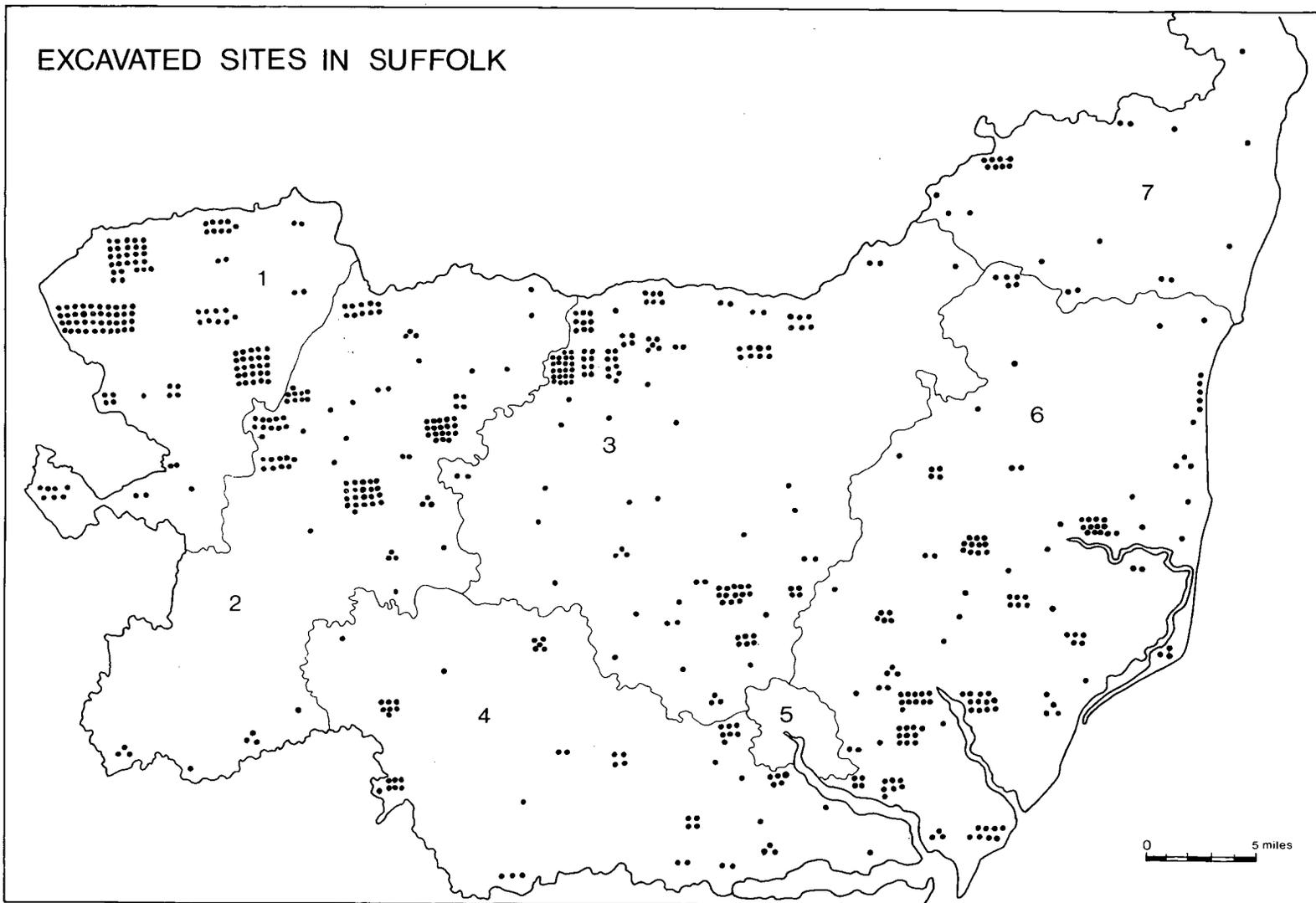


FIG. 29 - Distribution of excavations in Suffolk by District. The districts: 1 Forest Heath; 2 St Edmundsbury; 3 Mid-Suffolk; 4 Babergh; 5 Ipswich (with 98 excavations); 6 Suffolk Coastal; 7 Waveney.

SUFFOLK EXCAVATION INDEX

TABLE I. PERCENTAGE OF EXCAVATIONS BY PERIOD

<i>Period</i>	<i>Suffolk</i>	<i>National Average</i>
Prehistoric	0.9	1.4
Palaeolithic	5.0	1.0
Mesolithic	4.0	2.0
Neolithic	6.0	5.1
Bronze Age	14.7	19.8
Iron Age	12.5	10.4
Roman	31.3	36.7
Early Medieval	19.8	9.8
Medieval	25.3	26.7
Post Medieval	6.1	13.2
Unclassified	8.7	8.3

N.B. The percentages do not add up to 100% as some excavations are multi-period, hence there are more periods than excavations.

For the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic, the Table shows Suffolk to be above average. There are two Palaeolithic sites of national importance: Hoxne (excavated in 1860, 1896, 1924, 1934, 1951, and by John Wymer in 1971–78) where chipping floors and numerous palaeoliths have been recovered, and High Lodge, Mildenhall (excavated in 1920, 1963–67, and 1988) which has yielded evidence of some of man's earliest activity. The chrono-stratigraphic sequence obtained by Jill Cook (Cook 1989, 74–76) for the Quaternary Section, British Museum, suggests that High Lodge may be one of the earliest archaeological sites in Europe.

The number of excavated sites producing Bronze Age material is noticeably lower than the national average, with 115 recorded. The majority of these are round barrow or ring-ditch sites, and it is noted below that Suffolk suffered its fair share of barrow-diggers in the 18th and 19th centuries. The S.A.U. has begun to balance this early opportunism by excavating fourteen Bronze Age burial sites since 1974. A few settlements have also been investigated.

Iron Age figures show a slight increase over national levels. Suffolk has no Iron Age hill-forts and only two fortified enclosures have been recognised, at Barnham (excavated 1978) and at Burgh by Woodbridge (excavated 1900–01, 1947–57, and 1975). Other excavations have taken place on settlement sites, chiefly along river valleys, with some on the heavier clays of Mid-Suffolk, for example around Wattisfield.

The highest percentage of excavated sites belongs to the Roman period, again following the national trend. Interest has been concentrated on 'urban' settlements such as that at Coddensham (twelve excavations), Hacheston (seven excavations), Icklingham (eleven excavations), and Pakenham (*c.* fifteen excavations). Pottery kilns of this period have a wide distribution throughout Suffolk, being found near market centres and in rural locations. Individual farmsteads make up the majority of Roman sites recorded in Suffolk, with *c.* twenty villa excavations.

For the Early Medieval period (*c.* A.D. 450–1066) the figures for Suffolk soar to twice the national average. Some of the early Anglo-Saxon sites are well known, such as the cemeteries at Sutton Hoo (nine excavations), Snape (five excavations), and Lackford (six excavations). Settlement sites at West Stow and Brandon also have been extensively excavated in recent years. Ipswich has been the focus of attention for the later Anglo-Saxon

period, with opportunities arising for forty-nine sites to be investigated, most of them by the S.A.U.

The number of Medieval excavations in Suffolk is comparable with the national average. A quarter of the excavations relate to Ipswich, with several in Bury St Edmunds, but otherwise not much work has been undertaken in the Medieval towns of Suffolk. The bulk of excavations relating to the Medieval period were on rural sites. Of 740 moated sites in the county, only twenty-one have been excavated. Abbeys and priories have received more attention, with thirty-three excavations recorded. There have been seven excavations at castle sites (Clare, Eye, Bungay, and Framlingham), sixteen at church sites, and thirteen pottery kilns have been excavated.

By contrast, few excavations have recorded post-Medieval material, and a third of these were in urban contexts in Ipswich. Several industrial sites have been dug, including brick and tile kilns (Botesdale, Wattisfield and Elveden), clay pipe kilns (Redgrave and Halesworth), and pottery kilns (Wattisfield and Hacheston).

DATE OF THE EXCAVATIONS (Fig. 30)

The earliest recorded excavation in Suffolk took place in 1728 when barrows at Warren Hill, Mildenhall, were investigated. Other 18th-century excavations were an Anglo-Saxon inhumation recovered from a barrow excavation at Bloodmoor Hill, Gisleham in 1758; a Roman mosaic from Redcastle, Pakenham, excavated in 1764; and between 1772 and 1786 investigations were made at Bury St Edmunds Abbey.

Throughout the 19th century barrow-digging proved to be the most enticing antiquarian pursuit, with twenty-eight openings recorded for the first half of the century; Sir Thomas Gage at Risby (1815) and Sir Henry Bunbury at Warren Hill (1820) were among the earliest. Roman antiquities also held some appeal, and in 1823 Sir William Middleton excavated at Baylham Roman Villa, which is part of the *Combretovium* site. Also notable was the unusual Roman burial chamber discovered by the Rev. Professor J. Henslow at the Eastlow Tumulus, Rougham, in 1843-44.

During the second half of the 19th century, antiquarian interests became more widespread, and as a reflection of this the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology was established in 1848. The first excavations recorded under the auspices of the Institute were at Clare Castle by J.B. Armstead, and by H. Sharpe on the Roman baths at Dover Farm, Ixworth, both in 1848. References in the earliest volumes of the *Proceedings* suggest that sites were being investigated throughout the county. The emphasis was still perhaps on barrows. In 1862 barrow-diggers at Snape led by S. Davidson discovered an Anglo-Saxon boat burial, anticipating Sutton Hoo by nearly eighty years, while Canon William Greenwell opened at least five barrows during his stay in the county during the 1860s. It is worthy of note that the Victorians also developed an interest in their earliest ancestors, the first Palaeolithic excavations in Suffolk being carried out by J. Prestwich at Hoxne in 1860.

A local antiquary of considerable enthusiasm, Henry Prigg of Bury St Edmunds, was archaeologically active between about 1860 and 1880 and, perhaps inspired by Greenwell, he excavated at least eleven sites in the county. He investigated *inter alia* a Roman settlement and cemetery at Ingham, Roman pottery kilns at West Stow Heath, Anglo-Saxon cemeteries at Lackford and Cavendish, and medieval skeletons and the Hospice of St Saviour at Bury St Edmunds. Two of Prigg's notebooks have been discovered recently among Major Kilner's papers in the Suffolk Record Office, and include sketch sections, plans, and drawings of finds (Pl. XII).

In the early part of the 20th century Reid Moir, working from Ipswich Museum,

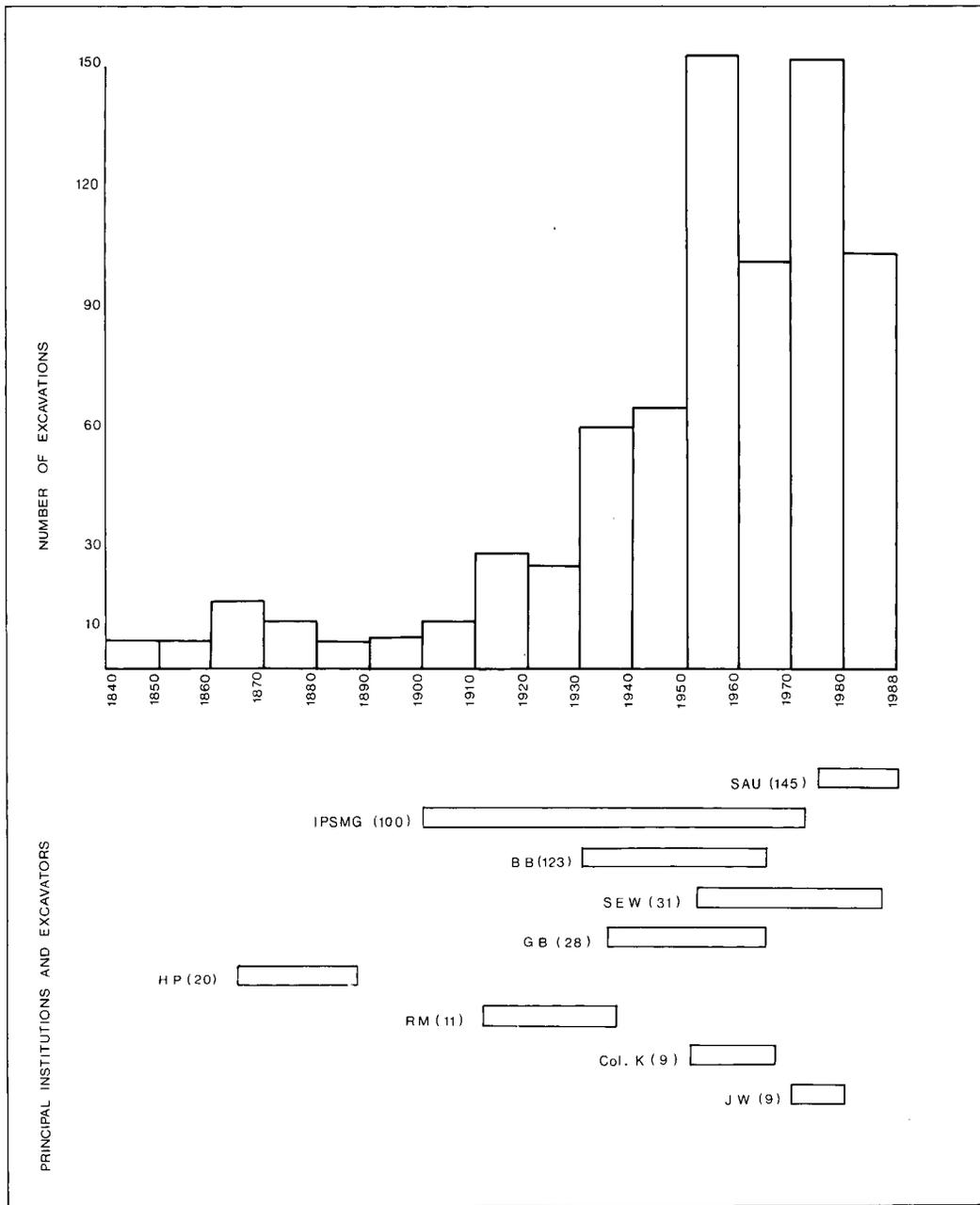


FIG. 30 - Number of excavations by decade since 1840, and principal institutions and excavators.

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|-------|-----------------------------|-------|-------------|
| SAU | Suffolk Archaeological Unit | HP | Henry Prigg |
| IPSMG | Ipswich Museum and Gallery | RM | Reid Moir |
| BB | Basil Brown | Col.K | Col. Kelly |
| SEW | Stanley West | JW | John Wymer |
| GB | Grace, Lady Briscoe | | |

undertook a number of excavations, of which eleven are recorded and more suspected. His obsession with the Palaeolithic period and flint implements aroused considerable national interest, although his interpretations and the authenticity of some of the flints are now questioned. His work, however, led to the formation of the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia, the fore-runner of the Prehistoric Society. Reid Moir's work also saw the start of Ipswich Museum's involvement with excavation. He and subsequent curators and assistants (e.g. Maynard, Smedley, West, and Owles) undertook 100 excavations between them, 13 per cent of the total recorded for the county. This figure could be increased if all the sites excavated by Basil Brown between the 1930s and 1960s were included, amounting to 123 excavations, but it is not always possible to say under whose auspices this work was carried out, as Brown devoted his life to investigating sites, sometimes on the Museum's behalf, sometimes on his own. Almost half the recorded excavations in Mid-Suffolk were by him, and his best known investigation was at Sutton Hoo (1938-39).

T.C. Lethbridge worked in the Forest Heath District in the 1930s. Details of several previously unknown excavations were unearthed from his notebooks at the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, and at least seven excavations were undertaken by Lethbridge in Suffolk, particularly on Anglo-Saxon sites. Grace, Lady Briscoe, was another tireless fieldworker in Forest Heath, between 1945 and 1965; details of twenty-eight excavated sites were discovered amongst her diaries deposited with the S.A.U. Col. Kelly from U.S.A.F. Lakenheath dug a further nine sites during his posting there in the late 1950s and 1960s.

Moyses Hall Museum, Bury St Edmunds, has been responsible for few excavations, and these, a dozen in all, were the work of the curator A.R. Edwardson in the 1950s and 1960s. During this period excavation was still an *ad hoc* response to individual problems. The Ministry of Works funded excavation at such sites as the Brightwell Barrows (Gilyard-Beer 1953-54), West Stow Anglo-Saxon village (Evison 1957-61, West 1965-72), and Framlingham Castle (Coad 1969-70). Several local societies were keen to undertake practical work at this time. One enthusiastic but short-lived group, established in the early 1960s, was the Felixstowe Archaeological Movement, which employed a scientific approach to excavations, and published their own journal. Unfortunately, no trace of their finds or documentary archive has been discovered.

Since 1974, Suffolk County Council has become increasingly involved with archaeology, and the S.A.U. was established as part of the County Planning Department. The Unit has excavated widely on sites of all periods, and conducted 145 excavations, 40 per cent of them in Ipswich, between its foundation in 1974 and Easter 1989.

LOCATION OF FINDS AND ARCHIVES

One of the aims of the project has been to trace the whereabouts of all excavation finds and archives. A surprisingly high percentage has survived for Suffolk, with finds from 71 per cent of excavations and written records from almost 75 per cent being located. Ipswich Museum, Moyses Hall, and the S.A.U. hold most of the finds, whilst some are at the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, the British Museum, and in local museums such as Aldeburgh and Mildenhall. Some finds and archives are still in the hands of individual excavators. Records that have not been traced relate chiefly to early excavations.

Publishing the results of an excavation, an onerous task, has not been a major achievement amongst Suffolk archaeologists, with only 30 per cent of excavations having a final report. However, a published reference of some sort exists for 66.5 per cent of the

excavations recorded. For many others, the only information is to be found among unpublished archives.

MICROFILMING

The N.A.R. undertakes the microfilming of excavation archives which are of national importance, at risk, or unpublished, and one of the functions of the Excavation Index is to locate appropriate records for the microfilming programme. The expanding collection of excavation and non-excavation records on microfilm, housed by the N.A.R., is available for public consultation.

A project to catalogue Basil Brown's archive, organised jointly by Suffolk County Council and R.C.H.M.E., was completed in 1989. The original archive relating to Sutton Hoo was bequeathed to the British Museum by Basil Brown, while the remainder is divided between S.A.U. and Ipswich Museum. R.C.H.M.E. has microfilm copies of all but the Sutton Hoo material, and holds prints of all the negatives, including some personal photographs retained by Brown of Suffolk's most famous archaeological excavation.

USING THE INDEX

The database created by the Excavation Index is a national archaeological resource, suitable for many national or local research purposes. It is computerised, which makes it a flexible tool, allowing information to be retrieved from any combination of fields in the record (e.g. location, excavator, period, site type). Enquiries may be made by personal visit, or by letter or telephone, to: the National Archaeological Record, R.C.H.M.E., Fortress House, 23 Savile Row, London, W1X 2JQ (tel. 071-973-3148). On-line searching of the Index is possible via a computer terminal in the N.A.R. Library at Fortress House, and staff are available to assist enquiries. This service is free. A wide range of catalogue and printout options is available, for which a nominal charge is made.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Cook, J., 1989. 'High Lodge, Mildenhall', in 'Archaeology in Suffolk 1988', *Proc. Suffolk Inst. Archaeol.*, XXVII, 74-76.

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