

Archaeology of Bunwell

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Introduction

The archaeology of Bunwell cannot adequately be covered if one strictly adheres to finds made within the modern boundaries of the parish. Sites and artefacts found in the surrounding villages have a relevant part to play in the story, and some of these will therefore be included in order to give a fuller picture of the history of Bunwell itself. Most of the village appears within the confines of the 1:10,000 scale Ordnance Survey map TM 19 SW, and it is finds and sites within this boundary that will be considered when discussing its prehistory. Unfortunately the heavier boulder clay soils of South Norfolk do not lend themselves to revealing crop marks of underlying features on aerial photographs, so we have to rely largely on field-walking and metal detecting finds for ascertaining ancient sites in the area.

When the writer found his first Roman coin and some pottery shards in the village in 1962 he was told by the then curator of Norwich Castle Museum (the late R. Rainbird Clarke) that there were unlikely to be many early sites and artefacts within the area as it lay on the heavy boulder clay soil. This was then assumed to be largely unoccupied before Late Saxon times. How wrong this assumption has proved to be. We now know of finds and sites from practically all the periods of British prehistory in Bunwell and the surrounding villages, and from them I hope to conjure up a picture of what sort of life our village ancestors may have had.

The Stone Age

The first evidence of man in Bunwell consists of a large Palaeolithic worked flint flake found near Banyards Hall and dating from some 40,000 or more years BC. Because this artefact (and a similar one from Hargate at Carleton Rode) bear evidence of scratching due to glacial action, it cannot be certain that the makers actually resided in the area. The same cannot however be said of a flint scraper of similar date recovered from farmland next to the Village Hall in 2006. This was in unworn condition and proves man was treating animal skins in the area as far back in time as that. At this time the way of life was a pattern of hunting and gathering along the main river valleys. The wild animals hunted were not only a source of food, but provided skins for clothing and shelter, and bones to make needles, spear points and other implements. Woodland edges would have provided additional food including wild fruits, nuts and edible roots. Such people hunted wild horse and deer, as well as smaller animals such as fox, hare and birds, and other animals now extinct in the landscape.



Figure 1, Palaeolithic Scraper Found near Bunwell Village Hall

The first real evidence of actual occupation takes the form of worked flint blades, flakes and cores of the Mesolithic period, dating from about 10,000 BC to circa 4000 BC. These are found in the lighter sandy soils near the river Tas where hunter-gatherers would have periodically visited to hunt, fish and gather vegetable foods, and probably lived in temporary camp sites made from organic materials.

Occupation or periodic visiting continued throughout the Neolithic period (or New Stone Age) which dates from about 4000 BC to circa 2,350 BC. This was a time of many changes, marked above all by the establishment of farming. A few local finds of flint axes (both chipped and polished), and one flint chisel, show that early man was felling trees in the area and utilising them for human usage. Cleared woodland was then utilised as fields in which to grow crops of einkorn, emmer wheat and vegetables. Farm stock would have included cattle, pigs, sheep and goats, whilst additional food came from hunting red and roe deer. Most local fields (especially on the lighter soils) will yield to the diligent searcher a flint scraper or two from the Neolithic or subsequent Bronze Age, indicating that animal hides were being processed into clothes etc. Flint borers for making holes in leather have also been found locally, as have notched flint flakes for the shaping of arrow shafts. The occasional find of a leaf-shaped (or later barbed and tanged) flint arrowhead confirms the hunting aspect of local life at the time. Several contemporary 'hammer stones' (pebbles utilised in the production of flint implements) have also been found in Bunwell and neighbouring villages to prove the local production of such tools.

The Bronze Age

With the advent of the Bronze Age the evidence for settled local life becomes more apparent. The earliest metal artefact from Bunwell is the butt end of an Early Bronze Age copper flat axe found in 2004 near the former Prince of Wales public house on Bunwell Hill. This dates from between circa 2,350 BC to circa 1,500 BC and indicates again that tree felling (or at least wood working) was taking place nearby. From the Middle Bronze Age (circa 1,600 to circa 1,000 BC) we have scattered finds of flint implements such as a 'slug' knife, and many scrapers, as well as metal objects in the form of palstaves (an early type of axe), spears and rapiers from surrounding villages. There is the likelihood also that burial mounds, or barrows, existed in the

village together with their related cremation urns, but these would have long ago been destroyed by ploughing. An unfinished stone perforated mace head fragment from near Eagle Farm points to ceremonial rituals taking place at the time. Traces of their hut dwellings will have long ago been destroyed by modern ploughing. The Late Bronze Age (up to about 700 BC) sees increasing amounts of finds locally, together with traces of permanent occupation sites.

On the Banyards Hall estate a small hoard of Late Bronze Age metalwork was discovered in 1981 and subsequently donated to Norwich Castle Museum. Although hoards of this date are relatively numerous in Norfolk, the Bunwell hoard is an unusual assemblage and contained some pieces then unique in the County. It comprised two socketed axes (one fragmentary and containing within it a scrap bronze fragment), a socketed hammer, two fragments of a socketed gouge, a socketed palette knife of a previously unseen type, a socketed barbed spearhead and a conical terminal. This hoard was probably hidden in the 9th century BC, either for safekeeping or as a ritual deposit. In 1985 the writer discovered the missing fragment of the broken axe and donated it to Norwich Castle Museum to complete the hoard.



Figure2, Late Bronze Age hoard from Banyard's Hall Estate

A much larger hoard of similar date was found in Carleton Rode near Kendall Lodge in 1844. Another theory on the deposition of such hoards, particularly where broken objects and scrap metal are present, is that they were hidden for safekeeping by travelling metal-smiths and for some reason never reclaimed.

At Banyards Hall recent fieldwork has discovered a large area of contemporary occupation debris including hand-made rusticated and flint-grogged pottery shards, fragments of bronze tools and fire-crackled flints, all just a short distance away from the hoard site. A complete socketed axe was also discovered in this same area in 1964 by Mr. T. Mickleburgh whilst engaged in chopping-out sugar beet. This site continued into the later Iron Age period and scatters of iron slag there also indicate that smelting was taking place. Wheel-turned Iron Age pottery shards and the odd early Roman coin point to the site being abandoned during the 1st century AD, perhaps as a result of the Boudican revolt of 60 AD?

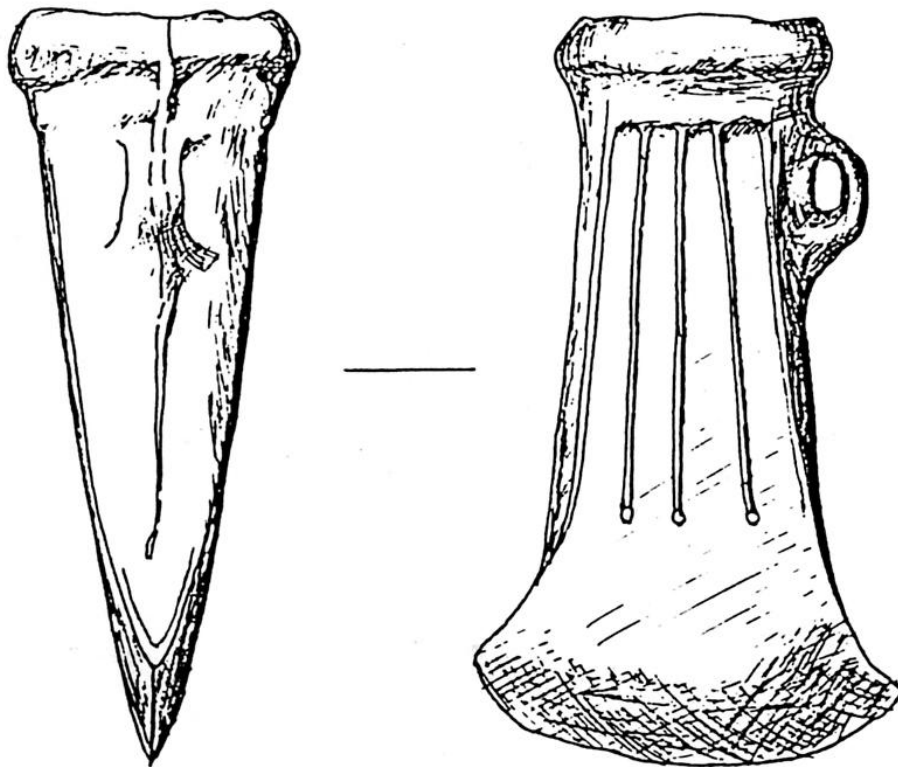


Figure 3, Late Bronze Age Socketed Axe Head from Banyard's Hall Estate¹

Scatters of fire crackled flint on local fields are a common occurrence, sometimes, as above, associated with occupation debris, whilst others appear unrelated to any obvious settlement. Theories abound as to their date and usage. These mainly show a particular pale blue/grey colour which penetrates to the core of the flint and therefore prove they have been heated to a very high temperature in a fire and then transferred (by wooden tongs ?) to a pot or other container of water. This would have enabled the water to be brought to boiling point without the fabric of the container coming into direct contact with any flames, an important cooking tip when contemporary hand-made pottery would not have withstood such direct contact. Some small areas of burnt flints associated with black soil are thought to have been pits in which water was warmed by the inclusion of heated stones to form a primitive sauna, and to date

¹ Drawing copyright of Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service

from Neolithic times until the early Iron Age. These might have been roofed over by a large tent not unlike the more recent sweat lodges of the North American Indians. The writer has seen one of these in section in the bank of Bunwell Beck near to the ford at Brock's Corner, where its pit shape filled with black soil and burnt flints was clearly visible. Larger scatters of small burnt flints may be the evidence for ancient corn drying, especially in the Iron Age and Roman periods.

Small areas containing fragments of hand-made rusticated or flint-grogged pottery shards are increasingly turning up locally due to field-walking ; most seem to indicate hut sites, perhaps used for one or two generations only. They appear to cover the transition from the Late Bronze Age into the Iron Age as some have both hand-made as well as wheel-turned pottery fragments, and one in nearby Tibenham yielded a complete iron smithing-hearth bottom proving that the capability to forge iron was available in the local area prior to the Roman invasion.

When the by-pass was constructed in Bunwell in 1967, in order to avoid the double-bend on the B1113 near the church and school, many unworn shards of Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age pottery were picked up from the spoil heaps as well as later beaker fragments from the Iron Age. These are the first indications that the area of the church had been settled prior to its construction, but not the last.

The Iron Age

Iron Age metalwork in the form of brooches has also been found in Bunwell. Indeed one fragment from Little Green proved to be of a previously unknown type and has now been officially named the "Bunwell type" by the British Museum. This and another 'dragonfly' type brooch from the same area date from the 5th to 3rd century BC. A similar brooch to the latter was found recently just outside the parish boundary at Hargate in Carleton Rode and was associated with scatters of animal bone and pottery indicating settlement and farming. Burnt daub from this site also indicates that at some time the wattle and daub buildings they lived in were burnt down.



Figure 4, 'Bunwell Type' Iron Age Brooch
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No Iron Age coins have yet appeared in Bunwell, but two gold quarter staters of the Iceni tribe have been found on different sites in Carleton Rode (one by the writer who donated it to the British Museum as they did not have an example at the time), together with at least one gold stater from Tacolneston. Odd Iceni silver coins have been found in Carleton Rode and Tacolneston, the latter village producing a hoard of these to metal detectorists just to the north of Cheney's Lane in 1993. Most of the Iron Age sites are on the lighter soils in the village, no doubt because the clearance and primitive ploughing methods of the time proved easier here than on the heavier boulder clay areas. No doubt small fields of emmer wheat, spelt and barley were planted, and livestock such as cattle and sheep reared for milk, meat and hides. Perhaps the first domesticated dogs roamed the village with their masters then? Either way the Iron Age undoubtedly saw field and ditch systems being created that must have laid the foundations for many of our present fields and meadows.

A pre-Roman trackway (later Romanised) is known from Hargate to New Buckenham and beyond, but its route through Bunwell is unknown as nothing definite has yet been traced through and to the east of the village. Where it passes over New Buckenham common the raised 'agger' (the metalled surface) of the later Roman road is clearly visible either side of the modern B1113 road to this day. The current four-cross-ways on the common also marks the site where a Roman road joins it from a northerly direction. This ran from at least Morley near Wymondham, where its route to New Buckenham is traceable as crop marks on air photographs, as well as by long lengths of hedgerow and traces of the 'agger', especially near Bury's Hall in Carleton Rode. One can imagine chariots coming through the village as two elaborate enamelled terret rings (rein guides) from Iceni times have recently appeared in Carleton Rode (and one near Haugh Road, Banham). These and the coins mentioned previously indicate wealth in at least some of the local residents.

The Roman Period

With the Roman period we have many more sites recorded, and a much better idea of what was happening can be deduced from the hundreds of related finds from local fields. This is mainly due to the increasing use of metal detectors in the hands of responsible individuals who report their finds to the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service for the benefit of current and future researchers. Any find unreported is a piece of the jigsaw of our past lost forever, so any reader who chances upon an item from the past in the Bunwell area is urged to report it for recording, however trivial it may seem to them.

There would not have been a sudden change from Celtic occupation to Roman occupation – more a gradual acceptance of Roman ways and goods by the indigenous Celtic people. This would have led to better farming methods, improved dwellings and the increasing use of goods imported from other areas in Britain as well as the continent. The village would have almost certainly felt the arrival of the Roman military in the 1st century AD, especially so after the failed Boudican revolt of AD 60 when troops were sent in to subjugate the remaining local population. Tantalising evidence of this locally is perhaps the hoard of Iceni coins buried at Tacolneston (no doubt in the hope of later recovery) as well as very early Roman brooches and a coin of Julius Caesar minted in 46 BC from the Hargate area of Carleton Rode. The latter was perhaps a lucky keepsake in some legionary's pocket? These and other early

finds tend to come from the area of the Tas valley, perhaps indications of the lines of roads or trackways through the various native occupation sites, or maybe it was the less wooded and thus more passable terrain of the area? A more ominous item found near the ford below Peris Hall in 1995 is an iron slave shackle with one link of the chain still attached. Were Bunwell residents carted off into slavery following the revolt?

There is a large Romano-British site at Little Green, Bunwell: another on the valley slope below Quaker Farm. There are other extensive settlements just outside the village boundary at Hargate, Carleton Rode, to the west of Church Farm, Carleton Rode, Forncett St. Mary (just above Bunwell Beck), Tacolneston (near Story's Lane), and Tibenham (near Old Hall Farm). Another extensive settlement site straddles the parish boundary to the north of Eagle Farm. All, or most, of these have produced pottery or other finds of the pre-Roman period proving the continuance of usage from the Iron Age to (in most cases) the end of the Roman rule in the early 5th century AD.

The commonest finds are pottery shards, mainly of utilitarian grey and brown wares. No evidence of a local kiln has yet appeared but pottery was certainly being bought from known kilns situated in present day Morley near Wymondham. Distinctive pottery types also allow us to identify vessels from the Nene Valley, Oxford, and Colchester, Much Hadham and Huntingdon areas, including fine colour-coated wares with slip decoration. More exotic are the distinctive red glazed Samian ware vessels from France and Western Germany – the ‘posh’ table-ware of the period. Some fragments are decorated with raised motifs and figures, but the majority of local finds are plain. These include cups, bowls and dishes that would not look out of place on a modern table. A large portion of a Samian ware dish (not unlike a modern fruit bowl) was discovered at Little Green, Bunwell in 1966 bearing a potter's stamp showing it was made by a Roman potter named Banoluccus who operated in Lezoux in central France circa AD 150-180. What tales that item could tell if it could speak! Brought over the channel by galley to what market in England? Bought by whom and brought to Bunwell? What did they think as it crashed to the floor and broke? The same site, and others locally, have produced fragments of mortaria (mixing bowls) with their pebbly interiors designed for the crushing and grinding of food, also strainers (or perhaps cheese presses), as well as more mundane cooking and storage jars. Fragments of amphorae from Hargate and elsewhere show the importation and use of wine, and perhaps fish sauce, a particular delicacy of the time.

Coins are a common find to metal detector users in and around these areas of occupation and span the whole of the three and a half centuries of Roman occupation. As with most sites in Britain however the commonest finds are small bronzes of the 3rd and 4th centuries AD, and generally in bad condition due to the modern use of chemical fertilisers. However there have been finds of silver coins of the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, and a few of the later silver siliquae of the 4th century AD. A gold solidus is also recorded from Tacolneston. The only possible hoard locally is a plough-scattered assemblage found by metal detecting to the west of Church Farm in Carleton Rode in recent years.

Other metallic finds locally include many bronze brooches, the usual method of securing clothes in Roman times. These range from the ‘dolphin’ types of the early Roman period to plate, disc and other brooches of the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, some

originally elaborately enamelled and gilded, through to a magnificent 4th century bronze ‘crossbow’ brooch found near Tollgate Farm, Bunwell, in 1981. This showed traces of gilding as well as silver inlay. Two bronze perfume grinders from Carleton Rode hint at female vanity, as do tweezers, hair pins and other cosmetic items such as nail cleaners from local sites. Furniture studs, key handles, seal box lids, and spindle whorls give a glimpse of domestic life, whilst bronze steelyards and some lead steelyard weights show trading activity. Personal ornamentation is shown by finds of silver and bronze finger rings, most notably a gilt-bronze one from Little Green, Bunwell, its bezel bearing a carved intaglio depicting an eagle (perhaps a legionary’s ring?). A shale bead from near Eagle Farm also comes into this category, as do many fragments of bronze bracelets found in the Bunwell area, some of them obviously designed for children to wear.

The existence of religion, and the likelihood that Romano-British shrines or temples were part of village life then, can be deduced from a bronze votive axe from Old Hall, Tibenham, part of a statuette of a cockerel from Fornsett St. Mary, and a votive model and votive stand from Carleton Rode. More important however is the “Bunwell horse” discovered at Little Green in 1984 and currently on display in Norwich Castle Museum. This is a small bronze statuette of a strutting horse or pony decorated with the full ceremonial dress of a horse of the late 1st century AD. The late Norfolk archaeologist and Roman expert, Tony Gregory, wrote that there is no doubt such horse statuettes are commonly associated with shrines, probably with the worship of the goddess Epona. Indeed it is certain that horses were bred, or at least ridden, in the village as fragments of two rare Roman bronze prick spurs have come from the Hargate area of Carleton Rode just over the Bunwell boundary. Horses or ponies must therefore have played a major part in local Romano-British life, just as they did in the earlier Celtic period. A Roman period terret ring (rein guide) from a chariot found to the south of Carleton Rode church points to the continued use of such transport.

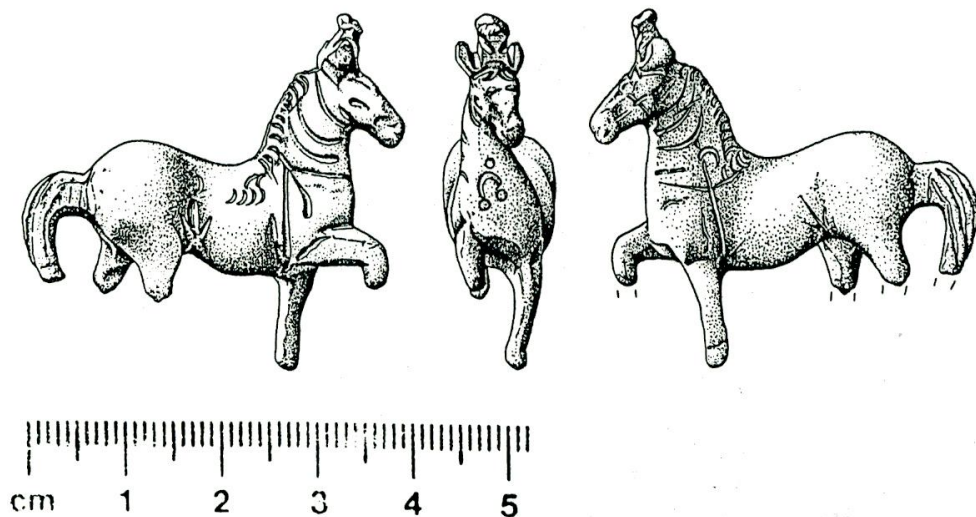


Figure 5, The ‘Bunwell Horse’ from Little Green²

² See Note 1

But what of the dwellings of Bunwell in this period? Because of the paucity of stone as a building material locally (except flint), any such usage would have seen this re-used by later settlers, so evidence today is hard to find. However a possible ‘opus signinum’ (cement with crushed tile inclusions) fragment is known from the Roman site at Little Green, and the odd piece of flue tile from Hargate and elsewhere hints at under-floor hypocaust heating being installed later in the Roman period. The main building materials used were undoubtedly wood, flint and mortar, and wattle and daub, with perhaps fired clay bricks being utilised at a late date. The absence of any tesserae from mosaics probably means we had no ‘rich’ villas locally, but villas there would have been in the native style, surrounded by fields and pastures. Near Story’s Lane in Fornsett St. Mary, pottery roof tile and Roman brick fragments have been found, but whereas they probably occurred on all or most of the Romano-British buildings at some date locally, their later re-use means few fragments have survived in the plough today to prove this. Continued recording of scattered pottery shards and coin finds etc. will all help to build up a picture of which areas were being farmed and settled in the village during Roman times.

As to food – there was probably a mixed farming economy based on wheat, barley and oats, with perhaps some vegetables such as beans. Cattle and sheep are likely farm animals (sheep bones are confirmed in Roman contexts near Tollgate Farm), and animal bones from Romano-British rubbish pits sectioned by field drainage at Little Green show evidence of butchering marks, proving their use as human food. These same pits produced part of a deer antler, perhaps hinting at the importance of hunting wild animals locally for food? More interestingly copious oyster shells from these same pits prove a trade with coastal areas and no doubt a taste for fish as well.

The Saxon Period

With the withdrawal of the Roman army from Britain in the early 5th century AD, Bunwell entered the so-called Dark Ages. Hints of the last vestiges of Roman rule are to be found in finds such as a late Roman belt-buckle fragment from Little Green, and two ‘amphora shaped’ strap-ends from nearby Fornsett St. Mary. These are all of a type thought to have been worn by military mercenaries at the very end of the Roman occupation. Perhaps our known sites fell into disuse and decay? More likely they suffered a gradual decline in upkeep and occupation until the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in the early 5th century heralded another chapter in the village history.

The Anglo-Saxon period lasted from the breakdown of Roman rule in the early 5th century until the Norman Conquest in 1066. Archaeologists and historians often further divide this period into Early Saxon (circa 450 – 650), Middle Saxon (circa 650 – 850) and Late Saxon (circa 850 – 1066), and this division will be followed when outlining the local finds and sites. The first Saxons are thought to have come initially as raiders before subsequently settling in the country. In most cases their rural settlement seems not to have been on former Roman sites, but locally we have many metalwork finds of the 6th century from in and around Roman dwelling areas. Of particular note are the items from the Hargate area of Carleton Rode where brooch fragments of several types have been found, as well as a pendant apparently formed from a large Roman Imperial coin, and about half of a gold decorated open-ended bracelet (found folded and perhaps re-used as a hair ornament). A probable burial site has come from Ash Lane, Carleton Rode, where two complete 6th-century bronze small-long brooches and a spiral silver finger ring indicate a ploughed-out female

inhumation. This site has also produced shards of contemporary grass-tempered pottery.

Early Saxon domestic pottery is however notoriously difficult to find as well as identify, so occupation areas usually have to be deduced from the metalwork finds. A large inhumation cemetery site is likely to the north of Cheney's Lane in Tacolneston, as significant amounts of Early Saxon metalwork have been found there by metal detectorists in recent years. In Bunwell itself not a trace of the Early Saxons was discovered until 1989. Then on either side of the by-pass near Villa Farm some fragments of pottery in the plough indicate that a site was probably wholly or partially destroyed by the building of the road in 1967. In 2005 six items of bronze metalwork were discovered near the former Queens Head public house. These comprised a complete early cruciform brooch of 5th century AD date with stylised horses head foot, four other brooch fragments and a late Roman bronze coin pierced and re-used as a pendant by the Saxons. Together with the Bronze Age/Iron Age finds from this area as described earlier, we now have an indication that Bunwell church was built, not in isolation, but more likely on an already revered and much used pre-Christian site. To add further to this supposition another complete 5th century AD brooch was found just north of the church in 2007. As this (as well as two other brooches from south of the church,) retained traces of the original iron attachment pins, it is almost certain they are from ploughed out burials and not casual losses. A more puzzling and seemingly isolated find was discovered on the Banyards Hall estate in 1992. This was part of the distinctive openwork foot ring of a bronze 7th-century Coptic bowl manufactured in Egypt. These are rare items indeed in Britain as only the rich could have imported them, most notably the occupant of the Sutton Hoo ship burial in Suffolk where a complete example was amongst the grave goods. Alas we do not seem to have 'Sutton Hoo 2' in Bunwell, but we must nevertheless wonder how the bowl fragment arrived at its find site.



Figure 6, Saxon Cruciform Brooches from near Bunwell Church

Middle Saxon finds are not commonplace, but distinctive grey-ware pottery shards (called 'Ipswich ware') have been found near Bunwell church, and also associated with occupation debris such as animal bones; a clay loom weight, a bronze strap-end, schist hones and burnt daub in the Hargate area of Carleton Rode. Near to the river

Tas in Tibenham a small scatter of silver Scaetta coins from both English as well as continental mints may indicate a small trading or meeting area of the late 7th/early 8th century. Old Hall Farm, Tibenham has also produced scatters of ‘Ipswich ware’ shards in the plough.

The Middle and Late Saxon periods overlap as one, and as we enter into the 9th and 10th centuries we see more and more finds as the population increased and farms we know today were either created or enlarged. A distinctive type of pottery known as ‘Thetford ware’ turns up increasingly and a ‘waster’ fragment from a Late Saxon ditch feature at Little Green in 1963 indicates almost certainly that a pottery kiln was situated nearby. As the area is now sealed under the current Industrial Unit there we may never know its exact location. At the same time a pit-like structure was revealed by land drainage here and subsequent excavation by the writer and Eric Thorburn produced large pieces of pottery from cooking and storage jars as well as an iron ‘sax’ knife. This may have been a cellered structure or just a rubbish pit associated with a nearby framed rectangular building with wattle and daub walls. Either way the flimsy nature of such dwellings can be ascertained by the burnt daub recovered indicating it’s destruction by fire at some time.

Another distinctive pottery type is called ‘St. Neot’s ware’. This has a soapy feel and a coarse shelly fabric. Shards of this have occurred here and elsewhere locally showing trade from that area of Cambridgeshire. There must have been a wealthy person at Little Green at some stage in the period as metal finds include a decorated bronze sword pommel. Other metal items were a distinctive type of bronze disc brooch decorated with a strange backward-looking beast, strap-ends, and a hooked tag that served as a dress-fastener. Similar hooked tags have been found on a site at Tibenham, and this has produced bronze strap-ends with niello and silver-wire inlay and a distinctive type of Scandinavian style animal decoration. The importance of this site is underlined by the finding of a bronze stylus (writing implement) here. As literacy would have been rare at this time, it indicates the presence of the dwelling of a high status person.



Figure 7, Late Saxon Disc Brooch from Little Green

Whether the Vikings also lived locally poses a tantalising question. A complete Viking style trefoil brooch of the late 9th century and two silver finger rings of Viking style have been found in Tibenham (one decorated on the bezel with interlaced animal ornamentation was declared Treasure Trove in 2004 and bought by Norwich Castle Museum where it was placed on public display). More likely it reflects contact and trade with the Vikings or with those making and selling Viking influenced

metalwork, but who knows? A Viking imitation of a silver halfpenny of Alfred the Great is also recorded from near the former Forncett railway station, and a possible Late Saxon discoidal silver ingot or weight was found in 2005 near Bunwell church. This latter may represent a quarter of an 'eyrir', the Viking-age unit of weight of 25g/26g. It was subsequently pronounced Treasure Trove in 2006 and donated to Norwich Castle Museum by the writer (as finder) and the landowners (Easton's of Bunwell) in lieu of reward.

A pottery spindle whorl from Bunwell shows domestic weaving was taking place. Bone was often worked into combs etc. at the time, but the only find locally is a bone pin from Hargate. Barley was probably the most important crop, but spelt, rye, wheat, hemp, flax and woad may also have been grown (note the name Flaxlands at Carleton Rode). Animals reared would have included pig, cattle, ox, sheep and goats. Horses would not have been eaten, but decorated stirrup mounts from Tibenham prove the importance of them as a riding animal.

Medieval Period

With the Norman invasion of 1066, Bunwell and the surrounding villages undoubtedly saw changes in land ownership and the development of estates such as those at Banyards Hall and Peris Hall. This early medieval period also leads us into the first documentary evidence for village life, and must therefore be left for later chapters in the book. Suffice to say archaeologically the continued recording of pottery shards and other medieval finds from the local fields and gardens will lead to a better understanding of the areas farmed and settled at the time, not to mention the identification of former house sites which have long ago been demolished and forgotten about. Norfolk was one of the most densely occupied areas of Britain in medieval times with King's Lynn a thriving port second only to London and Bristol, whilst Norwich was a thriving and important commercial town. No doubt Bunwell likewise shared in this prosperity and expanded accordingly?

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