



## Book Reviews

### **BORDERLANDS THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE ADDENBROOKE'S ENVIRONS, SOUTH CAMBRIDGE, BY CHRISTOPHER EVANS WITH DUNCAN MACKAY & LEO WEBLEY**

*Cambridge, Cambridge Archaeological Unit Landscapes Archives: New Archaeologies of the Cambridge Region (1) 2008. 212pp, 108 b&w figs inc some col plates, 50 tables, ISBN 978-0-9544824-7-3 pb (£25)*

*Borderlands* is the first volume dedicated to the archaeologies of the Cambridge region and its appearance marks the 85th anniversary of Cyril Fox's *The Archaeology of the Cambridge Region*. For its time Fox's study of the Cambridge region was ground-breaking when archaeological knowledge was linked to geography and patterns of data. It was the innovative distribution map which underpinned Fox's 1920s survey where stray-finds and earthworks as 'scattered evidence' were shown as dots on previously blank maps. Eighty five years on and the knowledge base of the landscape south of Cambridge has dramatically changed with an explosion of data which have the potential to radically transform knowledge about prehistoric settlement and landscapes in the border zones. Principally, but by no means solely, new knowledge of the South Cambridgeshire 'border country' has largely come about through the results of developer-funded projects and reporting on these is the main aim of *Borderlands*. We are reminded that there 'simply is/was far more "past" out there'. Getting to grips with this new knowledge is a major challenge but by presenting it within a landscape framework of enquiry, *Borderlands* takes up this challenge head on.

*Borderlands* describes the results of numerous individual site interventions (small and large-scale, old and new) across a wide study area. Their analysis is presented as an unified working programme of research where a landscape perspective is key. There is a lot of detailed information presented here and by situating interpretation within the 'active framework of landscape', emergent patterns of land-use start to appear as working models. In this *Borderlands* is a direct successor to Fox's work but crucially it highlights the growing importance and indeed, increasing *necessity* of the construction of regional archaeologies to understanding the bigger picture. In summary the 'projects' reported in this volume collectively demonstrate a greater population density of later prehistoric and Roman settlement in this wider study area than has previously been realised. Alongside this are hints of both continuity and reorganisation of land-use which are likely to reflect complex and different scales of interaction with place and landscape throughout the later prehistoric and Roman periods. Although the main substance of the volume is a comprehensive account of the major sequence uncovered within the environs of Addenbroke's Hospital (at Hutchinson's) the authors demonstrate that its significance can only be fully drawn out through wider enquiry.

*Borderlands* comprises four main chapters. Chapter 1 frames the impetus for broader enquiry and reviews past work at the Addenbroke's site. Here the significance of Mary Cra'ster's rescue work in late 1960s is brought into focus as it places Addenbroke's firmly on the archaeological map. The work of John Alexander as a constant presence in the archaeology of the Cambridge region is also acknowledged and appropriately the volume is dedicated to him. In this chapter we are also introduced to the historiographic approach taken to the datasets and it is this which drives the working analytical and interpretative approaches of the entire volume.

Chapter 2 is a comprehensive account of a six-month period of related site investigations during 2002-03 at the Hutchinson site: an enormous area of c. 3 ha northwest of Addenbroke's Hospital was eventually investigated. Here evidence for varied activities and settlement dating to the later Bronze Age through to the Middle Saxon periods were discovered. The key phases at Hutchinson are however the Iron Age/Roman Conquest-Period micro-landscapes which are characterised by field systems, enclosure, freestanding buildings, a cemetery and a Roman kiln site. We are told that 'teasing out the interrelationships of these two phases – distinguishing what the Conquest meant in the local landscape represents the crux of the site'. These palimpsest landscapes clearly contribute to a bigger picture exemplar as the site's 'borderland' location relates to sites situated at the northern limits of the later Iron Age, Aylesford-Swarling zone. A huge amount of pottery for the Later Iron Age and Roman Conquest periods (273.3 kg) was found and this, alongside the discovery of kilns, are key datasets which suggest the dynamics of changing land-use for this transitional period when specialised production sites, probably servicing different kinds of settlement across the wider landscape, preceded the emergence of regional production centres in the later Roman period. These slight but significant hidden local histories provide important evidence contributing insights into the apparent varied processes of Romanisation taking place at the grass-roots level.

In Chapter 3 we are shown how the principal sequence discovered at Hutchinsons fits into a wider landscape context. Here the results of the greater environs survey - the Addenbrookes/Trumpington Meadows evaluation survey - are discussed. This survey, which extended over 200 ha west to the River Cam and comprised multiple projects over many years, involved a variety of techniques: trial trenching, geophysical surveys, fieldwalking and aerial plotting (alongside drawing in the results of a single metal-detector at work). It is clearly an ongoing project: at the time of reporting up to 20 new 'sites' have been discovered. One of the key discoveries is a rich Conquest period cremation

burial at Clay Farms. The burial is unusual with its assemblage of imported fineware vessels alongside items of worked animal bone and bits of metal objects and shares similarities with other high status burials now found in the south-east. This, alongside emergent evidence for a greater density of Roman period land-use at Addenbokes and Longstanton, suggests much greater population densities in the countryside around the walled town that became Roman Cambridge than previously realised. The environs survey also suggests that geology and topography are determining factors for settlement during the later prehistoric and Conquest periods but in some places a sense of continuity could be detected from at least the later Bronze Age. It is also suggested that parts of this landscape were organised in such a way that some areas could well have been colonized early in the 1st millennium BC and others contested during later periods although the exact character of the later Iron Age is still far from clear. At what point and indeed whether the landscape was purposely zoned and managed requires further enquiry. But the Addenbroke's/Trumpington environs survey area is situated at the southern head of the River Cam at a crucial 'pinch-point' in the landscape where three major tributaries of the Cam divide and provide a likely central point for various communities to meet. How these riverside 'communication corridors' developed and where and how people are spread across this inland/off river landscape zone - the South Cambridge claylands - are key questions with major socio-cultural implications for understanding the operating 'fabric of the land' in the past.

In Chapter 4 Chris Evans reflects on the broader lessons this mega survey project has to offer. An emergent picture providing some insights into the potentially varied status of different landscape zones and interfaces between these zones from the first millennium BC right through to the Roman period is taking shape. It is clearly just the beginning and while the Addenbokes/Trumpington environs area will doubtless see future development and so more archaeological work, the massive database now at hand is a major foundation for future targeted research. Crucially he suggests that the formalization of the results of evaluation-led fieldwork, where a determined sampling methodology is employed, emerges as a key contributor to 'a new kind of archaeological practice'. Alongside this, of course, is the challenge of the successful dissemination and synthesis of such a wide range of data.

In *Borderlands* Chris Evans with his co-authors present a persuasive case that 'enquiry towards pattern', as exemplified in this volume, can demonstrate that the results of developer-funded archaeology alongside an imaginative and skilful reappraisal of key archival resources, have a major contribution to landscape research. In a nutshell, serious study of the 'border country' has the potential to radically alter perceptions of places which historically became more focal (eg, Cambridge town itself). The foundation blocks for future enquiry have been laid.

This well-conceived volume sets a standard and is a major contribution to the archaeology of the county. It demonstrates the value of continuous engagement of a community of active professional and amateur archaeologists working in a particular region over many years. And it shows us how our best regional archaeologies could be constructed. *Borderlands* reads well. It is well produced with clear and handsome illustrations. The use of insets (as mini-reports) presenting the results of archival data also works well. A second companion volume to expand on this series is due for publication soon. This first volume has more than demonstrated its worth as a direct successor to Cyril Fox's work some 80 years ago and it will be interesting to see how this changing picture of Cambridge's prehistoric and Roman archaeology evolves.

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*The views expressed in this review are not necessarily those of the Society or the Reviews Editor*