



# Grahame Clark, the Fenland Research Committee and prehistory at Cambridge

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## Note

This document has been re-formatted for presentation on the World Wide Web. Copies of this document may be obtained from the author's homepage on the World Wide Web.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.arch.cam.ac.uk/~pjs1011/>

## Acknowledgements

It was a great pleasure and privilege to meet and work with the many individuals who made this thesis possible; the chapter on sources tells of their varied help. In particular, I wish to thank Dr Christopher Chippindale, Professor Sir Grahame Clark, Mr Peter Gathercole, Mr David Hall, Mrs Suzanne Johnston, Mrs T. C. Lethbridge, Mr Roderic Long, Mrs Rachel O'Leary, Mr John Phillips, Professor Stuart Piggott, Dr Jane Renfrew, Ms Julia Roberts, Dr Jim Secord, Mrs Loren Reed Smith, and my Supervisor, Dr Paul Mellars. Each contributed in important ways and I am most grateful.

This thesis is my own work. Where reference has been made to other research this is acknowledged in the text and bibliography.

I have exceeded the word limit because the subject required a detailed survey of sources and the production of a bibliography, included as an appendix, that pushed it over the normal word length.

I dedicate my thesis to the two Canadians who encouraged me to come to Cambridge, Dr William E. Taylor Jr and Dr Bruce G. Trigger.

## Introduction: Research Questions

The Fenland Research Committee occupies a mythical presence in local academics' minds. It exists just beyond the range of living memory. Very little is known as to how it was founded, its day-to-day goals and activities, who was originally involved, or even what the Committee published. Who were the core members? What was the Committee's original purpose and what was its agenda?

How did the Fenland Research Committee's research affect British archaeology? Did the Committee's activities affect the methods, goals, assumptions and definitions used in prehistoric archaeology? How did the work of the Committee affect the establishment of archaeology as a subject at Cambridge? These basic questions had to be answered and these questions were only answerable if I could find the proper sources.

Unfortunately, there was no bibliography for the Committee and I therefore constructed one. [Clark \(1934\)](#) gave a preliminary bibliography in his report on the Committee's activities for the *Irish Naturalists' Journal* and Phillips listed publications in his [1951](#) review of the Committee's accomplishments. However, neither of these sources is complete. A thorough bibliography, which I have produced, is found in [Appendix A](#).

## Thesis Outline

The first Chapter details the results of my search for sources. I identify available material, and list where ‘the remains’ of the Committee can now be found. This section is intended to provide a guide, so that future researchers can easily locate where Fenland Committee documents are deposited. Following this, I discuss how I reconstructed the Committee’s bibliography. The founding of the Committee and the activities of key archaeological members are described in Chapter 2. The Committee would not have existed without the Godwins’ fascinating research and the technique of pollen analysis had a deep effect on archaeological thinking. I discuss the Godwins’ accomplishments and contributions to Committee work in Chapter 3. An analysis of the published work of the Committee and its relationship to archaeological definitions form a central part of my thesis under Chapter 4. My conclusions give evidence for the development of prehistoric archaeology as a subject at Cambridge University.

# Chapter 1

## Sources

### The ‘Remains’

In order to find possible archives for the Fenland Research Committee, I consulted Dr John Alexander, Dr Robin Andrews (who worked on the pollen reference collection at Cambridge), Dr Robert Chapman (for information on the location of the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia’s correspondence), Dr Christopher Chippindale and the Archaeology and Anthropology Museum Catalogues, Professor Sir Grahame Clark, Dr John Coles (who suggested that I concentrate on finding Gordon Fowler’s material, which I did), Miss Mary Cra’ster, Mrs Glyn Daniel, Dr Charlie French, Mr Peter Gathercole (who had suggested this topic of research to me), Mr David Hall (of course), Professor Sylvia Hallam, Mr Bill Holliwell (Archivist for the British Sugar Company), Mrs Suzanne Johnston (Clare College Archivist), Miss Caroline Lawes (Information Technician at the Botanic Gardens), Dr Elizabeth Leedham-Green and the University Library Manuscripts, Mrs Linda Linsley (Secretary to the Head of Plant Sciences), Mr Roderic Long (Sedgwick Museum), Professor Stuart Piggott, Dr S. J. Plunkett (Keeper of Archaeology at Ipswich Museum), Mrs Jill Rayment (Assistant Librarian for the Wisbech and Fenland Museum), Dr Jane Renfrew, Ms Julia Roberts (Cardiff student studying history of archaeology), Professor Peter Salway, Dr Colin Shell, Ms Alison Taylor, Dr David Wilson, King’s, Trinity, Selwyn, Peterhouse, and Downing College Libraries and Archives, and Professor Richard West (who wrote DEAD in red ink after every Committee member’s name except Clark and Piggott’s). Although these people were enormously interesting to meet or correspond with, I reluctantly came to the conclusion that Dr Chris Evans was correct when he said to me, “There are no archives for

the Fenland Research Committee”.

Because of financial and time constraints, I was not able to check the Archives of the Royal Geographical Society, the Society of Antiquaries of London, the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments for England, the Linnean Society of London, the Bristol University Spelaeological Society, English Heritage, the Baden-Powell Quaternary Research Centre, the Ashmolean Museum, the Bodleian where Crawford’s material is sealed, or the three trunks of Reid-Moir’s papers available at Ipswich Museum. I will follow up these possible sources when my finances permit continued research.

Most fortunately, on April 5, 1994, Professor Stuart Piggott granted an interview to discuss the founding of the Fenland Research Committee. Shortly after, on April 20, and again on July 12, 1994, Professor Sir Grahame Clark kindly agreed to discuss at length the Committee’s history. These interviews were extremely informative and provided valuable personal insights about the Committee’s activities. In addition, Julia Roberts, a MPhil. student in archaeology at Cardiff, offered me the transcripts of her February 2, 1994 interview with Professor Piggott. Many of the quotes included in the following thesis are taken from the Roberts’ interview.

On June 17, 1993, Professor Sir Grahame Clark donated the Committee’s Minute Book and Collected Papers to Professor Martin Jones and the Cambridge Department of Archaeology. “I don’t want to saddle you with this kind of thing and I would not take it amiss if you discard it,” wrote Clark (Minute Book: Letter to Jones, June 17, 1993). Jones gave me this invaluable material in July 1994. With Shell, Hall, and Zutshi’s co-operation, I will soon be able to catalogue and deposit the Minute Book and Papers at the University Archives. Among the correspondence are letters from Crawford, Seward, C. F. C. Hawkes, the Linnean Society, the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, the Botanic Gardens, and, very importantly, lists of participants. The Minutes and the Secretary’s reports give a wonderfully detailed view of the Committee’s month by month activities and accomplishments.

Clark wrote, in the Minute Book, that the Committee’s first meeting occurred on Tuesday, June 7, 1932, at 8 o’clock in the Upper Parlour of Peterhouse. M. C. Burkitt, Major G. E. Fowler (transport manager at the Ely Beet-sugar Factory) and T. C. Lethbridge were delegates to the Committee from the Cambridge Antiquarian Society. J. Reid Moir and Clark represented the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia. Dr and Mrs Godwin, W. A. Macfadyen, a Foraminifera specialist working at the Sedgwick Museum, E. J. A. Kenny who had recently completed the Classical Part II Tripos at Trinity, and C. W. Phillips were also present. C. S. Leaf, a First World War veteran

who had suffered ‘shell shock’ (Clark, in conversation, 1994) and who had the year before discovered the now famous Burnt Fen site, and A. G. (Bertie) Brighton, the young, recently appointed Curator of the Sedgwick Museum, were elected in absentia.

In an effort to trace biographical information for these original members, I began by contacting Cambridge colleges. Phillips’s college, Selwyn, where he had been a Fellow, has little information concerning his life or career. The University Archives has nothing. However, in his autobiography Phillips (1987: 156) mentioned that his son graduated from Cambridge in 1965 and took a position at the Greater London Council’s map collection. Fortunately, John Phillips is now the Curator and when I rang, suggested that I came to London to read Phillips’ unpublished memoirs. In his memoirs, Phillips discussed Cambridge 1920s–1930s archaeology in a somewhat more relaxed manner than in his published material and provided interesting insights into the era. I have suggested to the Phillips’ family that they deposit the Memoirs at the University Library.

The Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology has some of Phillips’s correspondence, including a letter to Louis Clarke in 1935, requesting financial support for the Welney excavation that was sponsored by the Committee to investigate Romano-British settlement of the Fen. Clarke, who joined the Committee in October 1932, gave £10, which documents Piggott’s (in conversation, 1994) observation that Louis Clarke was “always good for a fiver”. The Museum also has on file ten photos of the Welney excavations. According to Grahame Clark (1938: *xv*), the second 1936 season of excavations at this site was postponed owing to flooding.

At their seventh meeting (October 27, 1934), the Committee members decided to place archaeological finds at the ‘University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology’. Consequently, artefacts and field notes from the Committee’s excavations at Plantation Farm (Burnt Fen), Peacock’s Farm, Mildenhall, Stuntney, and Car Dyke (Cottenham) are in the Museum. Some pottery from the 1936 Isleham Fen excavation was removed from its box by Cra’ster and cannot be located. However, Shell (in conversation, 1994) has the notes from the Isleham work and has listed the contents of five boxes of finds that are in the Museum store-room. The Isleham excavation was quickly discontinued when “it became clear that no stratigraphical results could be obtained” (1937c: *xv*).

M. E. and H. Godwin were key founding members of the Committee. Professor West has taken great care to preserve, collect, and deposit H. Godwin’s papers at the Clare College Archives. These Archives include original copies

of H. Godwin's 1938 report to the General Board of the Faculties 'On The Development of Quaternary Research in the University', and his 1938 address to the British Association in which he discusses his Fenland research. Also included is a bibliography of the Godwins' Fenland publications.

At the first Committee meeting, the members resolved to obtain "a set of 6" maps for the area of the Fenlands for the purpose of record" (Minute Book: June 1932) and at the second October meeting, it was decided to keep these maps at the 'Library of the University Museum' (Minute Book: October 1932). I have found no Committee maps at our Museum. When the Committee was reconvened after the Second World War, Crawford (1946 letter from Minute Book) wrote to Clark, "All my Fen material perished in the Blitz". Since Crawford was the Committee's main supplier of maps, it is possible that some of the Committee's work was lost during the war. When Salway, of Sidney Sussex College, briefly assumed responsibility for editing 'The Fenland in Roman Times' in the early 1960s, he received nothing from the original Committee (Salway, in conversation, 1994). Hall inherited only a few empty maps that he threw away.

However, the Committee's index cards have survived and were found at the Museum catalogued with the Breckland Research Committee. I have re-catalogued these as Fenland Research Committee material. Quite remarkably, S. J. Hallam who was involved with the production of 'The Fenland in Roman Times', has written me from Australia that she had acquired and saved two of Phillips's original Romano-British maps.

T. C. Lethbridge was an original member of the Committee. According to Gathercole, Lethbridge's wife lives somewhere in Girton. A close friend, Rachel O'Leary, and I spent a day searching Girton and eventually found a delightful woman who asked us in for tea and offered us a trunk of fifty-year old papers. Amongst these papers were all of Fowler's original, handwritten drafts, including Part III of the 'Fenland Waterways' that he never published, the report, drawings, and photos of an unpublished excavation in the Fens, and an unpublished statement to the infamous 'Fen Research Company' that briefly searched for the lost 'King John's Crown Jewels' in the 1930s. Two letters from Darby seeking editorial advice from Fowler and a short manuscript that appears to be part of a draft for Darby's 1940 'The Medieval Fenland' were also found. There is considerable correspondence from and to C. F. Tebbutt who joined the Committee in 1938 and letters to Leaf and Kenny. It is obvious that Kenny, Leaf, Fowler, and Lethbridge were close friends before the Committee began. With Mrs Lethbridge's permission and with the permission of the Darby family, and with Zutshi and Shell's support, I will soon sort, identify, catalogue, and deposit this material

at the University Library.

Mrs Lethbridge also offered me her husband's unpublished memoirs from the 1920s and 1930s that contain enormously entertaining portrayals of Louis Clarke, Fox, Ridgeway, Wordie, McKenney Hughes, Burkitt, and Chadwick (among others).

The Sedgwick Museum of Geology's 'Dead Files' contain correspondence from and to Grahame Clark, Brighton, Professor O. T. Jones, Macfadyen, Fowler, Swinnerton, and Black, all members of the Committee in the 1930s, and King, who joined and became President at the first post-war meeting in 1946. Jones, Brighton, and Macfadyen, very active and important Committee members, corresponded regularly about Committee investigations. Consequently, this material gives evidence of vital academic debate. Clark (in conversation, 1994) considered Professor Swinnerton's participation and knowledge of geomorphology indispensable, and the Sedgwick correspondence documents Swinnerton's involvement.

The Sedgwick Museum also has a 'Fenland Foraminifera: Fenland Research Committee' file that contains additional correspondence between Jones, Seward, Clark, and Fowler, as well as Macfadyen's original Foraminifera analyses for the Committee. Macfadyen's reports for Plantation Farm (Burnt Fen), the investigation of the Godwins' samples from St Germans, Wood Fen, Poplar Farm, Whittlesey, and the Swansea Docks, the analysis of Phillips's material from the Welney Washes, and numerous reports done for Fowler are included in this file. Roderic Long is willing to have some of this material catalogued for the University Library.

The only publication by the Committee, 'The Fenland Survey Exhibition: Early Maps and Air Photographs', was printed in an edition of 300 copies of which 150 were sold at an exhibition at Heffer's Art Gallery from January 29 to February 12, 1934. The only copy I have seen is preserved at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

## The Bibliography

The informal nature of the Committee makes it difficult to produce a definite bibliography with clear boundaries. I compiled the list found in Appendix A from several sources, including Macfadyen's publications found in his Sedgwick Dead File, the Godwins' bibliographies, Clark's 1934 and Phillips's 1951 lists, Darby's bibliography obtained from Glasscock, Hall and Coles's 1994 'Fenland Survey: An Essay in Landscape and Persistence', Phillips's (1970)

‘The Fenland in Roman Times’, and the Committee Minute Book. The Minute Book is the ultimate guide. If the item is mentioned as Committee work in the Minutes, I include it in the final Bibliography.

For example, Darby, who joined the Committee shortly after he received the first Cambridge Ph.D awarded in Geography, is mentioned by both Clark (1934) and Phillips (1951). However, I do not include Darby’s 1934b ‘The Fenland Frontier in Anglo-Saxon England’ or his 1935 report to the British Waterworks Association ‘The History of the Drainage of the Fens’, because neither article is noted as Fenland Committee work within the Minutes. The Minute Book records that Darby was elected to membership along with his Tutor from St Catherine’s, the geographer J. A. Steers, on February 11, 1933. At the next meeting, Darby volunteered to produce a seventeenth century map of the Fens. Some of this work was published as ‘Fenland Cartography’ in the Fenland Exhibition Survey in 1934. Both Phillips (1951) and Clark (1934) include Phillips’ Lincolnshire surveys as publications associated with the Committee. However, in his unpublished memoirs, Phillips states that this work, well under way when the Committee started, was solicited by Crawford. In addition, these articles are not recorded as Committee publications within the Minutes. Lethbridge and Fowler’s excavation of the Southery Fen skeleton is also included in Clark’s 1934 bibliography. This find, published in 1931, was an inspiration for, rather than a product of, Committee work. Once again this publication is not mentioned in the Minute Book. All items listed in Appendix A are referred to in the Minutes.

With these valuable sources I am now able to address such questions as: who were the members; what was their agenda; did their thinking change during association with the Committee; and how did this affect the definition of prehistoric archaeology and the development of prehistoric research at Cambridge during the 1930s?

## Chapter 2

# The Fenland Research Committee

### The Committee's Status

Seeking official sanction, shortly before the Committee was formed, “advances were made in the first instance to archaeological societies, the Cambridge Antiquarian and the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia, both of which have a certain territorial interest in the area” (Minute Book: June 7, 1932). Thompson (1990: 67), in his recent history of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, states that the Committee requested to be allowed to operate under CAS auspices in May 1932, “to which the Society agreed provided there was no financial commitment . . . it [the committee] was an entirely independent organization”.

In a 1946 letter to Clark, in which he discussed the reconvening of the Committee, C. F. C. Hawkes advised, “Best stress the non-University character of the F.R.C., otherwise they’ll say very soon Cambridge University did this, which would be too bitter after your experience in setting up the research project!” (Hawkes, November 8, 1946 letter, Minute Book). The Committee was never a Cambridge University project and always occupied an undefined position. Its ‘liminal’ nature was obvious from the beginning.

The Committee did not secure storage, work, and meeting space for at least two years. When requesting space, Professor Seward, the Head of the Botany School and President of the Committee, found that the University Offices did not want to be involved because “the Committee is not definitely attached to any Department” (Seward, Fenland Foraminifera: Fenland Research Committee File). Consequently, Seward wrote to Geology Professor O. T. Jones,

suggesting that some Department, “yours, mine, or Archaeology” temporarily take responsibility (Seward, November 27, 1933 Jones letter, Fenland Foraminifera: Fenland Research Committee File). In his subsequent letter to the University Buildings Syndicate, Seward stated, “The Committee is an independent body not attached to any Faculty . . . [members] are exceedingly keen and much work is being carried on . . . we require some space at once” (Seward, November 27, 1933 Marshall letter, Fenland Research Committee File). A year later, Seward finally obtained the ‘Small Laboratory’ at the Botanic Gardens.

The Committee met biannually throughout the 1930s, and twice during the 1940s, remaining free of institutional control until it dissolved and was re-created, in 1948, as the Sub-department of Quaternary Research under Dr Godwin as Director. Coincidentally, Godwin became responsible to the Heads of the three Departments that Seward had suggested in his 1933 letter to Jones—Botany, Geology, and Archaeology.

## The Committee’s Archaeological Purpose

“It was being increasingly realized that major archaeological problems could only be solved with speed and efficiency by co-operative effort,” wrote Phillips (Memoirs: 234). “It was a small beginning but we needed a broad front,” Clark (in conversation, 1994) recently observed. “A remarkable revitalisation was becoming manifest in British archaeology where professionals and amateurs were becoming acutely aware of the great advantages that could follow integration with the natural sciences” (Godwin 1978: 7). As his first entry in the Minutes, Clark (Minute Book: June 7, 1932) stated, “The desire to form a committee for Fenland research was first voiced by archaeological workers who sadly felt the lack of essential geological, botanical & zoological knowledge”. This committee was “to be known as ‘The Fenland Research Committee’ with the investigation of the History of the fen deposits as its aim and object” (Minute Book: June 7, 1932).

“The stimulus to fresh advance came . . . in the expansion of ecological ideas, particularly of dynamic succession, in adoption of the techniques of pollen analysis, and finally in the whole concept of Quaternary research” (Godwin 1978: 45). According to Godwin, it was this expansion of new ideas and techniques that persuaded Clark that it was possible to move from the analysis of surface finds to a stratigraphic approach. In his first popular sketch of the Committee’s work, published in the *Irish Naturalist’s Journal*,

Clark (1934: 144) wrote, “with the aid of modern techniques it is now possible to learn from [Fenland geological deposits] the sequence of climatic and geographical changes . . . which formed the background to the existence of prehistoric man and provide the modern investigator with a delicate chronological scale against which successive cultures may be dated”. As will be discussed more fully in Chapter 3, establishing a chronological sequence of cultures was the Committee’s primary archaeological goal.

## The Membership

Included in Appendix B is a list of members, found in the Macfadyen Dead File, compiled by Clark after the Committee’s second meeting in October 1932. At the bottom of the page is the announcement of the Committee’s first sponsored enterprise, an excavation at Plantation Farm, Burnt Fen, beginning October 27, 1932.

From studying the Minute Book, which gives an accurate account of who did what for the Committee, it becomes clear that there was a very small, consistent group of core participants who did the archaeological work.

In the following section, I describe the contributions of the archaeologists involved. I also discuss Fowler’s and Warren’s combined archaeological and geological work. Because I am primarily interested in the effect the Committee’s work had on the definition of archaeology, I do not investigate Seward’s, Jones’, Macfadyen’s, Brighton’s, Black’s, Swinnerton’s, or Hanley’s considerable bureaucratic and intellectual accomplishments, or Darby and Steers’ geographical interests.

## The Principals<sup>1</sup>

### Stuart Piggott<sup>2</sup>

“You had no money?” I said to Piggott. “What would we have spent it on?” he asked. “And you were so young,” I continued. “We were all so young,” he replied (Piggott, in conversation, 1994). He was 23 when Clark invited him to join the Committee in order to identify the pottery found at Runcton Holme and Peacock’s Farm. Piggott (1935, 1936) published pottery reports for the Peacock’s site and for the Committee’s “Essex Coast sub-committee” that was headed by that “splendid amateur, Hazzie Warren” (Piggott, in conversation, 1994).

“I was determined as a schoolboy to do archaeology, although it didn’t exist as a subject at all, of course then, the only Chair of Archaeology was in Edinburgh and I had no means of getting a training . . . so what I did was take a chance . . . going as general assistant to the Museum at Reading” (Quoted with Julia Roberts and Piggott’s permission, Roberts’s interview: 1994). Upon leaving grammar school at 17, he took the Museum job for 10s (50p) a week. Piggott (1989) recently observed that the few, rather poorly paid, positions existing in archaeology during the 1920s were at museums, with Reginald Smith at the British Museum, and Fox and Wheeler in the National Museum of Wales. In addition, the archaeologists at the British Museum were employed to catalogue material, not to excavate. In his interview with Roberts (1994), Piggott notes, “I don’t think old Reggie excavated at all,” and Hawkes dug only while on leave. Wheeler and Fox also used their holidays for excavating (Roberts, in conversation, 1994).

Shortly after beginning work at Reading, Piggott was invited to help the Curwens excavate the hillfort in the Trundle in West Sussex. “Excavations were then not only rare, but strictly private and personal affairs, and I enthusiastically accepted,” Piggott (1989: 23) writes in his recent autobiographical sketch. “The Trundle was decisive—I made the friendships with my fellow-diggers Charles Phillips and Grahame Clark that would lead me into the new archaeology beginning at Cambridge,” Piggott (1989: 23) states.

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<sup>1</sup>Except for Clark who was completing his Ph.D, none of the men involved (Crawford, Hawkes, Piggott, Phillips, Lethbridge, Kenny, Leaf *et al*) had a formal education in archaeology and none except for Hawkes and Crawford had ever had paid positions.

<sup>2</sup>I define ‘principals’ as those participants who consistently ran the Committee and directed the excavations. Only Clark and Phillips qualify. However, I include Piggott because he intimately knew the Committee’s activities and graciously shared his knowledge in an April 5, 1994 interview.

## Charles Phillips

In 1925, “gainful employment in archaeology was very limited,” Phillips (1989: 35) has observed. Although attracted to archaeology as a child, “archaeological studies other than Classics were still in an embryonic state” and active pursuit required private means (Phillips’ Unpublished Memoirs: 141). Most boys from his Royal Masonic School went into business, and he was not encouraged to study with the new Board of Archaeology and Anthropology by his Selwyn College tutor. Instead he accepted a History Exhibition, and upon graduation, found work as a history lecturer and coach for Ordinary Degree students.

From his Memoirs and autobiographical work, Phillips (1989: 35–36) appears to have felt alienated by the “habitues of the Downing Street Museum” and had a “dislike of the local archaeological situation”. Although a renowned Classical, Scythian, and Russian scholar and linguist, Disney Professor Minns was minimally interested in prehistoric or local archaeology. In addition, Phillips felt the Cambridge Antiquarian Society was a “closed circle difficult to penetrate” (Memoirs: 143) and responsible for unscientific archaeological work. Undercurrents of dissatisfaction are not mentioned by Thompson (1990) in his history of the CAS. However, Phillips reported, in his Memoirs, active criticism of this Society during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Phillips was more favourably impressed with and influenced by his participation in the Bristol University Spelaeological Society. Here he met medical students and natural scientists working as a team who carefully and systematically recorded and evaluated their finds with co-operative effort.

In 1929, Phillips became acquainted with Clark following a meeting called to establish an alternative to the Cambridge Antiquarian Society.<sup>3</sup> This was a fortunate meeting for Phillips, since Clark “had a proper status in the official world of archaeology at Cambridge and was already a well known figure in the Museum . . . through him I was admitted to a group of teachers, pupils, and others who met mid-morning in the Museum for tea and conversation” (Memoirs: 182). Among the people who had tea together were Lethbridge, Leaf, Tebbutt, and Clarke, along with Clark and Phillips, all future members of the Committee.

In 1927, Crawford enlisted Phillips as one of his ‘archaeological ferrets’, suggesting that he revise the state of Lincolnshire’s field archaeology and maps.

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<sup>3</sup>This meeting had been organized by N. Teulon Porter, a member of the Society. Neither Clark nor Phillips were impressed and neither joined. There is some correspondence from Porter to Fowler, concerning extinct waterways, among the papers in Lethbridge’s trunk.

By the time he was elected Treasurer for the Fenland Committee in October, 1932, Phillips had “received a large amount of air photographic cover of the central Fenland from Crawford for use in my Lincolnshire survey. I could not fail to see the evidence of farmsteads, fields, connecting droveways, and extinct waterways . . . over many areas from which the peat had been removed by modern cultivation” (Memoirs: 237). A buried landscape could now be observed. The progressive disappearance of peat “had begun to reveal the Roman pattern of settlement once more” (Memoirs: 237).

As founding member of the Committee, Phillips stressed the importance of air photography, the possibility of co-operation with the RAF, and the need to obtain a set of 6” and 2” Ordnance maps of the Fenland. He and Crawford, when Crawford first attended in June 1933, suggested that the Committee aim for the production of one sheet of Romano-British survey per annum. At the same meeting, Phillips, Crawford, Hawkes, Fowler, and Clark, set up a sub-committee to investigate the Roman occupation of the Fens. Phillips successfully completed two 2” mosaics for Gedney Hill and Nordelph by 1935. He helped with the Plantation, Peacock, and Mildenhall work and directed the Welney excavation of a Romano-British site. Phillips published three short articles with the Committee, all concerned with Roman settlement.

## **Grahame Clark**

During the 1930s, Clark was a focused, serious, ambitious, determined young man, committed to his childhood hobby, prehistoric archaeology. Some describe him as aloof, cold, and driven. “As an undergraduate I had already been a passionate connoisseur [of flints] for more than a decade, a result, perhaps, of having attended boarding schools from the age of seven, each of them situated on chalk downs . . . rich in flint industries,” Clark (1974: 35) has remarked. As I have discussed elsewhere, even as a very young man, Clark was a recognized lithics expert, often called upon to examine flint remains (Smith 1993b). Matriculating in 1926, he achieved First Class Honours in the Archaeology and Anthropology Section A Tripos, concentrating on north-western European prehistory, a specialization specifically set up at his request (Faculty Board Minutes, October 7, 1928). Clark then chose to become one of the very few research students (along with Leakey and Hencken) in the Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology. Upon hearing of his decision to pursue a Ph.D in prehistoric archaeology, Clark’s guardian approached Minns to inquire about employment possibilities. He was promptly told that Clark had no employment future (Clark, in conversation, 1994). Although Clark’s

long-term financial prospects were more secure than either Phillips or Piggott's, "he was temporarily worse off than I was" writes Phillips (1989: 35) because he had not yet received his inheritance.

"The whole affair was the individual result of Grahame Clark's fanatical pertinacity" stated Piggott (personal correspondence, 1994) of the origin and functioning of the Committee. Here, Piggott was referring to Clark's essential role as a keen organizer. As Secretary, Clark arranged and set agendas for meetings, took minutes, kept members informed, corresponded on behalf of the committee, sought new members, and made appeals for funds. He was quick to include the necessary important and financially secure people, and had an ability to spot talent and use it. He was an astute administrator, who felt that the Committee should always dine together to encourage informal accord. These dinners, arranged before the business session of the meetings, were not for enjoyment alone but to assure the smooth running of Committee activities. Clark always thought in terms of getting things done. He realized from the beginning that only a few core members would be active participants. Certainly, he was the key archaeologist, who directed the archaeological portion of the Committee's excavations and quickly published the results.<sup>4</sup> Godwin (1938b: 11) remarked, in his speech to the British Association, "[Clark] was [the one] really responsible for organizing and pushing through most of the [archaeological] field work". His intellectual contributions at Cambridge are immense and will be discussed in Chapter 4.

## The Archaeological Supporting Cast

### O. G. S. Crawford

On March 23, 1933, the Director General of the Ordnance Survey nominated Crawford to represent the Survey on the Committee. "In all phases of the Committee's archaeological work . . . Crawford was a tower of strength," wrote Phillips (1951: 263). His most important contribution was to organize and prepare by direct photography from 6" maps, sheets on the scale of 1 to 31,680 that were "of great value in plotting the information gained from air-photographs" (Phillips 1951: 263). Crawford is kindly remembered by Phillips (Memoirs), Piggott (in conversation, 1994), and Hawkes. Piggott (1989: 22) called him "my archaeological godfather". Phillips (Memoirs: 172)

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<sup>4</sup>The information for this paragraph was gathered during interviews granted by Professor Sir Grahame Clark on April 20, 1994 and July 12, 1994.

stated, “He was the most important influence in my life as an archaeologist.” And Hawkes (1989: 48) wrote that it was Crawford who encouraged his interest in field archaeology. None of the three would have pursued archaeology without his support.

### **C. F. C. Hawkes**

Having just taken a position at the British Museum as a 2nd-class Assistant Keeper, Hawkes, who knew Phillips, Piggott, and Clark well, joined in 1932 to help with the Romano-British sub-committee. He published one article as Committee work, a study of the Iron Age and Roman evidence of settlement at Runcton Holme, Norfolk. Hawkes regularly attended meetings and in 1933 wrote an encouraging, sympathetic letter to Clark, stating that he had enjoyed the Committee’s lively discussions of climatological evidence. In this letter and in subsequent letters, he debated Roman pottery classification. At the April 27, 1935 Committee meeting, Hawkes gave a “brilliant, if confused” description of the pottery found at Mildenhall Fen during Clark’s investigation of that site (Minutes: April 27, 1935, Eighth Meeting). In his letters, Hawkes did indeed appear to be ‘brilliant, if confused’.

### **E. J. A. Kenny**

Kenny, a founding member, who had achieved Honours in his Classical Tripos at Trinity in 1931, regularly attended meetings and excavated, on behalf of the Committee, a Roman causeway that was abruptly interrupted by a roddon at Nordelph (Kenny 1933). This road had been traced by Fowler and Kenny in 1931. When Kenny found evidence of a bridge and ford, the Committee had its first conclusive proof that roddons had been active waterways in Roman times. In addition, in 1938, Kenny helped Godwin draw and survey the extinct waterway at Poplar Farm. In this study, Godwin re-evaluated Fowler’s theory of roddon formation. Darby also mentioned Kenny in the 1939 Preface to ‘The Draining of the Fens’, thanking him for “comments on the manuscript and helpful suggestions” (Darby 1940b: *xiii*). According to Godwin (1978: 82), Kenny eventually received a Ph.D but there is no further information about him at the Museum, University Library, or Trinity.

## **T. C. Lethbridge**

As Honorary Director of Excavations for the Cambridge Antiquarian Society for over thirty years, Lethbridge was an important local figure in archaeology, specialising in Anglo-Saxon remains found in the Fens. Although a founding member of the Committee and a close friend of Kenny, Leaf, F. C. Tebbutt, and Fowler's, he attended irregularly, did not participate in sub-committees, and does not appear to have been very involved. He is mentioned in the 1939 Minutes, as helping with the British Association's visit to Peacock's Farm in 1938, and published a section on Anglo-Saxon archaeology in Darby's 1938 edition of 'The Cambridge Region'.

In 1931, Lethbridge had reported a skeleton found in Southery Fen, dated to the Bronze Age by her biconical jet bead bracelet ([Lethbridge 1931](#)). This short article is remarkable because it includes a separate section by Fowler detailing the geological setting and a report by Sayce identifying the skeleton as female. This work implies that Lethbridge would have appreciated the value of the Committee's interdisciplinary approach when it began in 1932. As mentioned above, Phillips remembered that Lethbridge, Leaf, Tebbutt, Clarke, Clark, and others (including Haddon) met daily for tea prior to the Committee's formation. Lethbridge may well have been one of the original "archaeological workers, who sadly felt the lack of essential geological, botanical & zoological knowledge" and hence became a founding member of the Committee (Minutes: June 7, 1932).

Godwin ([1978](#)) recalled that there was quite a lot of discussion about the Southery skeleton during Committee meetings and that it was eventually named 'Nancy'. In 1933, he did pollen analysis of the Upper Peat at the Southery site and established a stratigraphic correlation with Plantation Farm.

## **C. Fox, E. H. Minns, L. C. G. Clarke, M. C. Burkitt, C. S. Leaf**

Cyril Fox was elected during the second meeting (October 15, 1932) apparently as an honorary member as he did not attend meetings or participate. Clark, Phillips, Piggott, and Hawkes greatly admired him, feeling that 'The Archaeology of the Cambridge Region' had laid the foundation for their Committee work. In this book, Fox had recorded a wealth of evidence from the Fens on distribution maps, indicating favourable conditions for occupation during the Neolithic and Bronze Ages but unfavourable conditions for Iron

Age and Anglo-Saxon settlement. Phillips (1951) suggested that Fox's documentation of recurrent Fenland occupations and abandonments motivated Committee members to search for an explanation by looking at land and sea level changes.

Minns and Clarke were invited as representatives of the Department and Museum. Clarke was particularly well liked and generous to members of the Committee. Minns graciously offered the Committee dinner at Pembroke (Piggott, in conversation, 1994) but was not otherwise involved.<sup>5</sup> C. S. Leaf, one of the founding members, described by Piggott as an "eccentric amateur" (in conversation, 1994), discovered the Plantation Farm, Burnt Fen site that became "the first considerable enterprise undertaken by the Committee in the Autumn of 1932" (1951: 263). He did not attend meetings after 1934, but continued to publish his own archaeological work for the Cambridge Antiquarian Society.

Burkitt, who had taught prehistory without pay for several years for the Board of Archaeology and Anthropology, was promoted to University Lecturer, a paid position, when the Faculty was instituted in 1926. At this point, Burkitt was the only person, besides Childe, hired specifically to teach prehistory in Britain. He has been described as a brilliant lecturer (1989: 138) who greatly contributed to the Museum collections (Chippindale, in conversation, 1994). As Secretary to the Faculty Board, he had considerable bureaucratic power. Burkitt was one of the founding Committee members, representing the CAS, but did not contribute to Committee research.

## J. Reid Moir

In 1909, Reid Moir claimed to have discovered humanly flaked flints or "eoliths" of sub-Crag, pre-Paleolithic age in Ipswich. Until his death in 1944, he continued to publish evidence for a Pliocene human presence in England. For decades, he was the predominant and most controversial member of the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia and represented this organization at the Committee's first meeting in June, 1932. Reid Moir did not regularly attend meetings and was not active on the Committee after the first year. His influence in the Prehistoric Society considerably waned after 1935. A full study of his life and career will soon be published by S. J. Plunkett, Keeper of Archaeology at the Ipswich Museum (Plunkett, in conversation, 1994).

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<sup>5</sup>Three boxes of Minns' papers have been preserved at the University Library. Although I found nothing pertaining to the Committee, there is lengthy correspondence from A. M. Tallgren and a few letters from Childe, that I have passed on to Peter Gathercole.

# The Archaeological Geologists or ‘Amateur Quaternary Scientists’<sup>6</sup>

## Gordon Fowler

Locally, Fowler is pleasantly remembered. “Oh! Fowler! Fowler was great fun!” (Mrs Lethbridge, in conversation, 1994). He was an enormously energetic man who was interested in archaeology, geology, and botany, “the most enthusiastic collector of objects and information you could possibly have wanted” (Lethbridge Memoirs: 72). Many suggest that it was through him that the Committee began. Major Gordon Fowler “was to act as catalyst and bring a number of workers from different disciplines to work on Fenland problems,” wrote Phillips (Memoirs: 238). “He succeeded in linking up and co-ordinating workers in different branches of science, and they have now formed themselves into a Fenland Research Committee,” commented Wordie (1934: 38) during discussion following Fowler’s 1934 presentation to the Geographical Society. In this discussion, he had described four types of extinct waterways identified during years of Fenland residency.

Fowler was the one man who knew everyone. He had been a member of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society since 1928 and had published archaeological work in its Proceedings. As evidenced by the correspondence from the Lethbridge trunk, by 1929, he was well acquainted with Lethbridge, Leaf, and Kenny. In addition to knowing these archaeological workers, the Sedgwick Museum Dead Files and the Sedgwick Fenland Research Committee File contain letters from Fowler written to Jones, Brighton, and Macfadyen prior to the formation of the Committee. These letters suggest that he had good working relationships with these men before they joined the Committee. For example, on May 30, 1931, he wrote to Jones to thank him for the “valuable diagrams and notes” (Fowler May 30, 1931 Jones Letter: Sedgwick Fenland Research Committee File). They appear to have been discussing roddon sedimentation. In May 1932, Fowler wrote a letter to Brighton, asking him to thank Macfadyen for the Foraminifera slides (Fowler, May 31, 1932 Brighton Letter: Sedgwick FRC File). It was from Macfadyen’s work that Fowler concluded that the roddons were produced by flooding of tidal rivers.

There are also a few letters to and from Darby (the noted historical geographer who was a Committee member), preserved in the Lethbridge trunk, pertaining to revisions of Darby’s work during the early 1930s. In his Preface to the first edition of *The Medieval Fenland*, Darby (1940b: *xviii*) wrote,

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<sup>6</sup>This is Shell’s term.

“Major Gordon Fowler read through the manuscript . . . too, I have had the benefit of his important publications on Fenland topography.” Darby thanked Fowler again in the Preface to the 1940 edition of ‘The Draining of the Fens’.

As transport manager for the Ely Beet-sugar Factory, Fowler was required to collect beets promptly from local farmers by using the waterways. He therefore had an intimate knowledge of the Fens and the people who lived there (Clark, in conversation, 1994). “He was very widely known” (Godwin 1978: 46), on good terms with the local drainage authorities, gave lectures at village gatherings on Fenland archaeology and geology, and could always be counted on to recruit labour or gain permission for Fenland research projects (Clark, in conversation, 1994). “Few new [archaeological or geological] discoveries failed to come to his notice. When a site he had visited seemed to merit closer attention telephone calls would inform the members . . . and next day with gum- boots, spades and peat-indifferent clothing a small party would rendezvous at some agreed point,” remembered Godwin (1978: 46).

During the course of his work as Transport Manager, he had “noticed meandering banks of silt locally known as roddons, which formed a connected system . . . [and] rose a number of feet above the surrounding levels” (Phillips’ Memoirs: 238). When viewed from the air and plotted on maps, they appeared to be artificial or natural drainage courses running from higher ground. In 1932, Fowler (1932: 212) published the first of several articles in which he stated that the “roddons evidently represent the natural drainage of the Fens” and that their raised position was due to differential shrinkage.<sup>7</sup> The discovery of an extinct water system “is much the most important geological discovery round Cambridge within the last generation,” commented Wordie (1934: 38). It should be realized that his work (Fowler 1933a, 1934) of “mapping and transfer to the six-inch Ordnance Survey map was done under fearfully daunting field conditions, walking every yard of the ancient rivers on his own two feet (one of them ersatz at that)” (Godwin 1978: 81).<sup>8</sup> The recovery and documentation of the Fenland’s waterways was Fowler’s “very special

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<sup>7</sup>This explanation was later disputed by Godwin (1938b) who found that roddons had not suffered shrinkage and that the surrounding peat was wasting away rather than merely compacting. Fowler helped Godwin during this investigation and agreed with the new conclusion.

<sup>8</sup>Both Godwin and Hall mention that Fowler had lost part of a leg in W.W. I. However, Mrs Lethbridge assures me that he had both legs, but false teeth. “One evening Fowler dropped in to Sunday supper. During the meal I got up and went to the sideboard to get him another drink. There was a dreadful crunching noise under my foot. ‘What the devil’s that?’ I asked. ‘It’s my new false teeth,’ replied Fowler. ‘They were too tight and uncomfortable, so I put them on the floor’ ” (T. C. Lethbridge’s Unpublished Memoirs, The Ivory Tower: 73).

contribution to Fenland research,” concluded Godwin (1978: 81).

## S. Hazzledine Warren

This “splendid amateur”, well respected for his research on Clactonian lithic finds and archaeological collections (Piggott, in conversation, 1994), headed the Committee’s investigation of the geology and archaeology of the Essex Coast (Warren et al. 1936). “I was always impressed when in his company with his intimate knowledge of the coast,” wrote Clark (January 1, 1937 Letter to Jones, Sedgwick FRC File). In this same letter, Clark noted that Warren had made detailed “stratigraphical observations” and that the Committee was fortunate to have “Warren’s statements as to the nature and situation of the [submerged] surface” of the Essex Coast, (Clark January 1, 1937 Letter to Jones Sedgwick FRC File). Warren also published an extensive description of the geological deposits of the Lea Valley in a joint report with the Godwins, Clark, and Macfadyen which investigated the Mesolithic artefacts found at Broxbourne (Warren et al. 1934). Warren had been one of the most vocal critics of Reid Moir’s findings on eoliths. Throughout the 1910s, he consistently argued that eoliths were the result of natural forces, a view that triumphed when Reid Moir eventually died.

## Conclusion

Several generalizations about the Committee’s archaeologists can be drawn from the above information. Involvement in the Committee did not promise employment and archaeology was not a profession. “There weren’t any professional archaeologists, well Childe was, but he was the sort of remote and strange scholar everyone respected and no-one understood—it [archaeology] was [in practice] run by people like the Curwens [and Alexander] Keiller” who were respected men of means (Piggott, Roberts’s interview: 1994). The core archaeological workers who excavated for the Committee, Clark, Phillips, Piggott, Kenny, and Hawkes were young. Furthermore, Phillips, Piggott, and Clark were not financially secure. They had all been told that they had no employment future in archaeology.

In the late 1920s, archaeology did not usually involve excavating. The pattern of employment in archaeology was “centred on museums” (Piggott 1989: 24) but museum staff were employed to maintain collections, not to dig. “Let us remember . . . that excavations were rare and sporadic,” and privately funded

(Piggott 1963: 3). Piggott jumped at the chance to be included in the Curwen (father and son) team at the Trundle because there were so few opportunities. Clark and Phillips also benefited from working at the same site. “In my own case I learned the basic skills of excavation on the chalk downs of Sussex under Dr E. C. Curwen, a medical practitioner of Hove who applied methods perfected by the legendary General Pitt Rivers” Clark (1989b: 50) has recently written. “The Curwens were careful excavators and excellent instructors,” stated Phillips (Memoirs: 164).

Most work in the late 1920s and early 1930s was either field archaeology or flint collecting. “It was field archaeology, embodied to so many of us in the person of O. G. S. Crawford, that saw its great and characteristically English development at this time,” wrote Piggott (1963: 3). Crawford “set up a personal network of young people whom he used to call his archaeological ferrets, he was in the course of map revision, and when he wanted some entries checked and he knew someone reliable, he’d send you the maps and say ‘Do go and have a look at so and so’ ” (Piggott, Roberts’s interview: 1994).

Most of the Committee members would be considered amateurs today. Only one, Hawkes, had recently obtained a museum position in archaeology. None of the participants, Hawkes, Crawford, Lethbridge, Leaf, Burkitt, Kenny, Phillips, Piggott, Fowler, or Hazzledine Warren had formal educations in archaeology. Only Clark would be seen as professionally trained by today’s standards. He was finishing his Ph.D, one of the first awarded by the new Faculty Board at Cambridge.

Yet they all describe an exciting and fulfilling time. “Yes, it was a risk, but I’m glad I took it,” states Piggott (Roberts’s interview: 1994). “It is surprising that it [archaeology] took off . . . it start[ed] becoming a subject,” during the 1930s, he continues (Piggott, Roberts’s interview: 1994). “In England in 1932, my concern with archaeology grew rapidly,” wrote Phillips in his Memoirs. With the founding of the Fenland Research Committee, “we were moving into high gear” (Phillips Memoirs: 234). In his interviews, Clark remembered with considerable excitement the year 1931, when a harpoon was dredged up from the Leman and Ower banks. “The recent discovery of a magnificent and typical Maglemose harpoon in the North Sea . . . has done much to confirm our belief that the culture definitely extended to eastern England,” wrote Clark (1932: 115) in *The Mesolithic Age in Britain*. The find “supports the view that in Maglemose times much at least of what is now the southern part of the North Sea was dry land” (Clark 1932: 115). Here was a “vivid reminder of the geographical changes that had taken place since early in Postglacial times” (Clark 1972: 4).

Clark feels he has passed through three phases in his study of prehistory. The first phase was typologically oriented, exemplified by his dissertation work, *The Mesolithic Age in Britain*. The recovery of the Maglemosian harpoon “ushered in the second or ‘Quaternary research phase’ during which the emphasis was to rest on recovering archaeological material in its geological, botanical, and zoological context” (Clark 1972: 4). This phase is characterized by Clark’s involvement with the Fenland Research Committee.

## Chapter 3

# The Godwins' Contributions

### The Godwins

Sir Harry Godwin and Mrs M. E. Godwin were intellectually and bureaucratically vitally important to the Committee. Both were young and well respected scholars. M. E. Godwin had a London B.Sc. degree in botany with subsidiary geology at Nottingham University College and later taught biology. H. Godwin had achieved a double First Class Honours in the Cambridge Natural Sciences Tripos and, in 1925, obtained one of the first Ph.Ds awarded by the University Board of Research Studies. In 1927, he was appointed Senior University Demonstrator in the Botany School. By 1932, he was already deeply involved in ecological research in Wicken Fen, studying succession and deflected succession of Fenland vegetation. In 1931, Sir A. G. Tansley had suggested to M. E. Godwin that she begin research in pollen analysis. “The method had been worked out by the great leader of Swedish geology, Lennart von Post, although all accounts in English were due to his pupil, Erdtman,” writes Godwin (1985: 155). Erdtman, however, was not helpful, and the Godwins were left to develop experimentally an ability to prepare, identify, and count samples. They also began to solve the problems of using a pollen spectrum to indicate forest composition, taking into account differential preservation and production, time of flowering, and transport factors. In addition, they studied local influences, concluding that successional conditions may obscure the effects of climatic changes and noted that archaeological data could prove chronologically useful when reconstructing forest sequences (Godwin 1934a, Godwin 1934b). “It seems, therefore, particularly desirable that the post-Boreal story of development of the British forests should be directly linked to as many independent time indices as possible, whether geological,

climatic or archaeological,” writes Godwin ([Godwin 1934b](#): 352).

As founding members, the Godwins attended all meetings, participated in all excavations, worked on the Essex Coast sub-committee, organized the Committee’s 1934 analysis of a spear-head found in Methwold Fen, and conducted extensive independent research for the Committee on roddon formation, peat stratigraphy, vegetational history, and land and sea level changes. Most importantly, they demonstrated how pollen analysis could be a viable and applicable technique for interdisciplinary explorations. The Godwins’ pollen analytical work successfully provided archaeologists with a relative climatological time scale for their finds. This indispensable technique allowed the Committee’s members to use a stratigraphic-geological approach to archaeology.

Several references in the Minute Book point out the contributions made by the Godwins to the establishment and successful functioning of the Committee. They were especially adept at recruiting valuable members. During the first meeting, “It was decided that Dr Godwin approach Dr Seward with a view to securing his services as President” (Minute Book: June 7, 1932). A. C. Seward, Professor of Botany at Cambridge from 1906 to 1936, was a renowned palaeobotanist, and H. Godwin’s friend. Fortunately for the Committee, Seward was a Trustee of the Sladen Fund of The Linnean Society of London. Correspondence in the Minutes suggests that he was helpful in obtaining grants from this organization to support the Committee’s excavations. H. Godwin also attracted one of his Ph.D students, M. H. Clifford, to the Committee in 1934. Clifford was a palaeobotanist who specialized in the analysis of macrofossils such as roots, twigs, and rhizomes, and who worked with the Godwins on their excavations at Peacock’s Farm and Mildenhall Fen, and with H. Godwin at the Wood Fen and Woodwalton investigations of peat stratigraphy. Clifford’s Ph.D fieldwork on Fenland postglacial vegetational stages is mentioned in the November 14, 1936 Minutes, when the Committee voted him £5 toward his expenses.

Apparently it was the Godwins who attracted two other close associates, H. H. Swinnerton, Professor of Geology at Nottingham, and the Sedgwick Professor of Geology, O. T. Jones. “As he [Jones] was a member of my own college, night after night we sat together at dinner and a Fenland problem habitually lasted through coffee, and the trip home” ([Godwin 1978](#): 46). Godwin ([1978](#): 46) suggests that Jones exercised a “watchful and benevolent geological supervision” over the Committee’s research.

The Godwins’ intellectual and research activities are continually referred to in the Minutes. In the following section, I will detail the results of some of

their important excavations. Plantation Farm and Peacock's Farm will be discussed in Chapter 4.

## The Excavations

### St Germans

At the Committee's third meeting, "Drs Godwin and Macfadyen discussed the St Germans section [and] The Secretary and Dr Godwin demonstrated the Plantation Farm site" (Minute Book: February 11, 1933). The St Germans study was an investigation of a series of peats, silts, and clays exposed during construction of a sluice. Macfadyen and the Godwins (1933: 170) note that "the present papers [are] introductory to the investigations of the committee on the geological and palaeo-ecological side". They applied a "statistical microscopical examination" of pollen content to the peats to obtain a sequence of pollen percentages that, along with micro-fossils such as salicoid grains and fern spores, indicated local vegetational successions (1933: 168). "The recognition of the local successions as controlling pollen composition [of lowland peat] is of extreme importance," the Godwins (1933: 177) conclude. However, the extremely high percentage frequencies of *Tilia* pollen from the lower peat beds correlated well with evidence from Germany, indicating an Atlantic age for the basal deposits. The authors were therefore able to assign the Fen deposits to Blytt and Sernander's post-Boreal climatic periods.

### Methwold Fen

In 1934, the Godwins and Clark (1934: 398) publicly requested that "anyone finding bronzes or antiquities of any kind in the area of the Fenland ... in natural deposits" immediately communicate with the Committee. The Committee "is not desirous of obtaining specimens, but is most anxious to obtain knowledge" (1934: 398). With Fowler's help, a Bronze Age spear-head had been recovered from Methwold Fen, and the Godwins had fortunately been able to obtain a sample of the peat from beneath the site. By studying tree pollen indices, fern spores, and macrofossil remains such as mosses, the authors could suggest that the area had been covered by shallow water prior to the Bronze Age. "In this case it seems likely that a great increase in wetness of the fens accompanied the Boreal-Atlantic transition," the Godwins et al. (1934: 398) concluded.

## Wood Fen

On May 14, 1935, a special session of the Committee was held to meet “Dr Niels Nielsen, Secretary to the Royal Danish Geological Society” (Minute Book: May 14, 1935). Nielsen came specifically “to make contact with members of the F.R.C.” (Minute Book: May 14, 1935), and to describe the interdisciplinary bog exploration he was directing on the west coast of Denmark. Following this discussion, Dr. Godwin detailed the investigations he had made with M. E. Godwin and Clifford on the development of Wood Fen. He “illustrated how the new techniques [of pollen analysis] enabled him to modify Skertchly’s interpretation of the buried forests of the Fens” (Minute Book: May 14, 1935). The authors were able to “demonstrate convincingly that the buried forests result[ed] from a normal cycle of vegetational succession” rather than catastrophic events as argued by Skertchly (Minute Book: May 14, 1935).

## Woodwalton

“The most important work of the year was that devoted to the stratigraphy of the Fen deposits [at Woodwalton] by Dr H. Godwin and Mr M. H. Clifford,” reports Clark (1937a: *xv*) in the Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society. Godwin and Clifford presented the preliminary results of this research at the Committee’s tenth meeting. The Fenland Research Committee, “has for its object the elucidation” of the Fenland’s “complex history of climatic alteration, marine transgression and regression, and of vegetational evolution . . . which is of importance not only intrinsically, but in relation also to the post-glacial history of the adjoining margin of western Europe, to the history of human settlement in Britain, and to the theory of peat stratigraphy and vegetational history” Godwin and Clifford (1938: 324) explain in their introduction to their study. The authors found evidence of a succession from alkaline open water to a community of fen sedges, succeeded by a birch carr and fen wood. Within the carr, there was indication of acidic raised bog. At some sites, this succession had been interrupted by fresh water during the deposition of a Fen clay in the near-by tidal zone. A dryer period resulted after the end of marine conditions. The authors concluded that an initial dry phase “at the Boreal-Atlantic transition corresponded with a late Tardenoisian culture horizon. Peat formation became general in the fens in the Atlantic period, and the fens became wooded in the Neolithic . . . The succeeding period in the Fens began with ‘A’ Beaker culture and during the Bronze Age they were dry,” becoming wet again in the Iron Age (Godwin

and Clifford 1938: 405).

## Conclusion

From this intensive decade of research, Dr Godwin (1938a: 404) concludes: “Thence it [is] clear that the phases of lower peat, fen clay, upper peat and upper silt [can] be accepted as broad major divisions across the whole of the southern part of the Fenland”. As can be seen from the above, Godwin attempted to demonstrate a correspondence between lithology, stratigraphy, and time in order to date archaeological finds relatively. However, this correspondence has recently been questioned and re-evaluated by Fenland scholars, as new study shows that the sequences of peat and clay are not simple divisions that apply broadly across the southern Fenland (Hall and Coles 1994). “Lithology does not reflect the time of deposition but the sedimentary environment,” Hall and Coles (1994: 16) find.

It appears that Godwin’s sequence and its dating were not easily or unambiguously accepted by the original Committee members either. There is evidence in the Minutes of considerable debate. After Godwin and Clifford’s presentation of the Woodwalton results, Clark records in the Minutes: “In the discussion which followed these important communications the question was raised of the exact contemporaneity of the clay layers found in Wood Walton Fen and in the Fens to the East of Ely separating an upper and lower peat bed” (Minute Book: May 16, 1936). At the following meeting, on November 14, 1936, “several speakers contributed their views on the correct correlation between the sequence of events between the fen basin and the Essex coast” (Minute Book: November 14, 1936). This discussion centred around the correct dating of the buttery clay. In a letter written to Macfadyen shortly after the May 16th meeting, Jones remarked, “The last meeting of the Committee was interesting; it seems to be dawning on people that a bed of buttery clay may be diachronic when traced over wide areas” (Jones, May 27, 1936 Letter to Macfadyen: Fenland Foraminifera: Fenland Research Committee File). Godwin’s (1938a: 404) statement that “the phases of lower peat, fen clay, upper peat and upper silt could be accepted as broad major [chronological] divisions” was a controversial conclusion.

In 1938, Godwin presented his first proposal for the development of an institute of Quaternary Research at Cambridge University. Quaternary research “aims to establish a valid scheme of world events through and since the ice-age, in which the results of botany, zoology, geology, archaeology, climatology,

geography and related sciences have been correlated . . . It is always the combination of these activities which really advances knowledge. . . The work of the Fenland Research Committee since 1932 illustrates the nature and value of such co-operative work. It has met with wide approval [and] it would be invaluable to have such workers in one institution” (Godwin 1938b: 1–2). Godwin then suggests the cost: £2,500 yearly which would pay for 4 research assistants, a laboratory attendant, clerical and counting assistance, travelling expenses, laboratory rent and light, material, and salary for the Director. “Towards the end of 1938, the three University Faculty Boards of Biology ‘A’, of Archaeology and Anthropology and of Geography and Geology gave support to [my] memorandum” (Godwin 1985: 203) but the prospect of war shelved the scheme until 1948, when Godwin was appointed Director of the new Sub-department of Quaternary Research.

# Chapter 4

## Grahame Clark

### Introduction

In this section, I analyse the published work of the Committee, to ascertain the effect Committee involvement had upon prehistoric archaeology at Cambridge. I look for evidence of change in how the Committee participants viewed and practised archaeology by comparing papers published throughout the decade. For this type of analysis, a large set of published material is needed. Of the two principal archaeologists on the Committee, only Clark consistently published. Phillips's excavation of a Roman settlement at Welney Washes, an extensive investigation involving contributions from Macfadyen, Clark, Fowler, and Jones, was unfortunately never completed due to flooding. His three very short reports listed in the Bibliography do not provide a sufficient data base for analysis. The other archaeologists associated with Cambridge, Minns, Clarke, Burkitt, and Lethbridge,<sup>1</sup> did not conduct research or publish with the Committee. Kenny, Piggott, and Hawkes, who printed a few important items, were not associated with Cambridge. The intellectual effect Committee involvement had upon Phillips, Piggott, and Hawkes will be investigated when I examine the development of prehistory in Britain as Ph.D research.

Grahame Clark's work forms the intellectual link between the Fenland Research Committee and prehistoric archaeology at Cambridge. To understand the effect Committee involvement had upon his definitions, methods, and

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<sup>1</sup>According to the Faculty Board Minutes, Lethbridge occasionally lectured for the Faculty during the early 1930s. As mentioned previously, Burkitt was University Lecturer in Prehistory. Minns primarily taught in the Department of Classics. Clarke, as Curator, did not give courses.

goals, it is first important to review his conception and approach to archaeology prior to the beginning of the Committee. This will provide a basis for comparison.

## The Clark Publications<sup>2</sup>

### Early Work: ‘The Mesolithic Age in Britain’

As I have discussed elsewhere (Smith 1993b), *The Mesolithic Age in Britain*, is characteristic of Clark’s early work. At this point in his career, Clark defined archaeology as, “the study of past distribution of culture-traits in time and space, and of the factors governing their distribution” (Clark 1933b: 323). His goal was “the recognition and definition of artefactual assemblages distinct from those ascribed either to the previously defined Palaeolithic or Neolithic Stone Ages” (Clark 1972: 1). In *The Mesolithic Age in Britain*, Clark accomplished this by studying the spatial and chronological distributions of British assemblages in great detail. He was aware that he must use every possible line of evidence because the industries he studied were surface finds “only on the rarest occasions found in any kind of stratigraphical context” (Clark 1932: 19).

Clark used exacting typological analyses and distributional mapping to establish chronological relationships between British assemblages and Continental and Scandinavian finds. He argued for the presentation of a wide range of evidence when attempting to classify and date Mesolithic industries. It was important to consider the “character of the industry” rather than “selected types” (Clark 1932: 111). Clark studied presence or absence of tool types, state of preservation of artefacts, percentage of different artefact types present, material and technique used in the manufacture of the tools, associated finds, and archaeological remains from the vicinity, before stating his results. Thus, he supported his typological analysis with many types of evidence. Several lines of inference were always used to enhance each conclusion.

Clark’s typological analyses were based on two assumptions. He assumed that artefacts could be arranged in evolutionary sequences by studying subtle changes in attributes such as shape. Of two harpoons found in Yorkshire, Clark (1932: 17) wrote “technically the harpoons are more evolved than those

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<sup>2</sup>The remainder of this chapter contains excerpts from an earlier work (Smith 1993b), along with some new material.

from the Maglemose station of Svaerdborg, comparing more closely with those from Kunda of rather later date". Here, he was emphasizing evidence of links between British Mesolithic assemblages and the western Baltic. He also assumed that an assemblage automatically indicated a culture and that a culture was the same as a people. Two types of microlithic industry, a broad blade, non-geometric and a narrow blade, geometric, had been discovered in the Marsden area. "Thus, whereas the non-geometric folk almost invariably utilized rather a poor whitish to pale grey flint, the geometric folk employed, to a very large extent, a smooth semi-translucent brownish flint" (Clark 1932: 26).

In *The Mesolithic Age in Britain*, Clark used the invasion and migration of new populations to explain the diffusion of artefacts. More general changes in assemblages were also attributed to invasions. However, broad shifts from Upper Palaeolithic to Mesolithic or Neolithic cultures were caused by larger climatic and environmental factors. "The drastic [post-glacial] environmental changes playing upon human cultures of relatively simple character, were conducive to developments of far-reaching importance," Clark (1932: 6) wrote. "The Mesolithic Age as a whole is demarcated from the Upper Palaeolithic by a great geological and climatic divide" (Clark 1932: 6). In 1932, Clark was aware of environmental variables. However, he did not attempt to document or clarify climatic and environmental effects upon prehistoric culture until he had access to the Fenland Committee's expertise.

## **The Fenland Research Committee Papers**

Clark's changing framework of ideas can thereafter be tracked by his several contributions among the FRC publications.

### **Plantation Farm**

The purpose of this excavation was "to study post-glacial changes of environment in relation to man", and to establish the stratigraphical context for the Early Bronze Age (Clark 1933a: 266). According to correspondence in the Sedgwick Dead Files, Clark had begun working on the Plantation Farm site prior to the founding of the Committee. As the Committee began, there are several letters to Jones, requesting equipment and advice on how and where to make borings. These borings were necessary to verify and complete the "section of the sandhill & the fen deposits through which it protrudes" (Clark December 2, 1932 Letter to Jones: Fenland Foraminifera: Fenland Research

Committee File). With this evidence, Clark produced sectional diagrams, illustrating the site's stratigraphy and the positions of the finds.

From study of the stratigraphy, Clark saw that occupation of the sand-hill had begun after a few inches of the upper peat had formed, and the Godwins' analysis of aquatic plant pollen implied that the hillock had been surrounded by a shallow swamp. Clark concluded that the sand-hill, as a dry island in a swamp, must have been a very desirable location for occupation.

The Godwins concluded from their pollen analysis that the lower layer of peat began to form in the Late Boreal, when the floor of the southern part of the North Sea was covered by fens. It was during this period that the Maglemosian harpoon referred to in the previous chapter was lost off the Norfolk coast. The authors also found evidence that following the formation of the lower peat, a subsidence of land levels occurred during the Atlantic climatic phase when the area was covered with tidal estuarine silts. Re-elevation of the land followed, permitting the formation of the upper peat during the Sub-Boreal.

The Plantation Farm site report consisted of several distinct sections. Jackson, the Manchester Museum faunal expert, presented an analysis of the animal bones recovered from the excavation. Macfadyen added an account on Foraminifera found in the clay. Kennard provided a report on the non-marine mollusca found in the channel cut into the semi-marine silts. Both Kennard and Macfadyen's results corroborated the Godwins' conclusion that a subsidence and re-elevation of land had occurred. The Godwins' suggestion that the upper peat layer had been formed during the Sub-boreal climatic phase was used to support Clark's typological analysis dating the artefacts to the early Bronze Age. Combining all these reports, Clark used the convergence of several lines of investigation to reconstruct a history of the human occupation of the site and of the geological, geographical, climatic, and botanical changes of the Fenland.

## **Peacock's Farm**

"Before dinner a preliminary report on the excavations at Peacock's Farm was presented to the Committee by the Secretary and by Dr Godwin" (Minute Book: October 27, 1934). From their excavation trenches, Clark and the Godwins obtained flints that corresponded to the early Bronze Age level at Plantation Farm. Neolithic 'A' pottery was found in the lower peat below the Bronze Age surface. A typical Tardenoisian core was discovered with other worked and calcinated flints in a well-defined black band below the Neolithic

‘A’ pottery. The stratigraphy was very clear. “The recovery of Early Bronze Age , Neolithic ‘A’ and Late Tardenoisian remains in vertical stratigraphical succession in one section is unique,” Clark *et al* (1935): 297) observed. And, in another place, Clark (1935a: *xxix*) wrote, “This is . . . the first time that a vertical succession of these cultures has been obtained in one section in England”.

In the site report, Clark discussed the typological affinities of the microlithic industries excavated from the lower peat. He used information about micro-burins from his dissertation to help establish these affinities. “The typical method of micro-burin and microlithic production indicated by the debris show quite clearly that we have to deal with a Tardenoisian culture,” Clark *et al* (1935: 304) observed. The forms of microliths “indicate a fairly advanced stage of this culture” because specialized forms occurred in the assemblage (Clark *et al.* 1935: 304). As in *The Mesolithic Age in Britain*, Clark assumed lithic forms evolved, that they could be arranged in an evolutionary sequence by comparing morphological changes, and that specialized were later than unspecialized forms.

A full picture of the environmental setting of the site became clearer when M. H. Clifford’s report on plant remains, the Godwins’ report on pollen, and A. S. Kennard and C. Oldham’s results of mollusc shell studies were combined with Clark’s typological analyses. During the Mesolithic, a period of relative geological stability, a cross-over of falling pine and rising alder was evident in the woodlands and the site was surrounded by open water or swamp. During the Neolithic ‘A’ horizon, the climate may have been becoming warmer and the area drier. By the Early Bronze Age, after a period of submergence, willows and reeds grew near the settlement.

The team had reconstructed a history of the human occupation and of the general geological, geographical, climatic, and botanical changes of the Fensland in which the people lived. At the end of the report, Godwin presented a synthesis that hypothesized botanical, geological, and archaeological correlations and attempted to set the archaeological remains in an environmental context.

## **Mildenhall Fen**

In March 1935, Clark began investigating a site in Mildenhall Fen with the help of students from the Cambridge University Field Archaeological Society. According to Clark (1935b: 133) the purpose of the Mildenhall excavation was to establish “a further correlation between the natural history and the human

settlement of the fens". A concurrent goal was to study "the mutual relations of the invasive and the indigenous folk" of the west Suffolk area during the later Bronze Age (Clark 1936c: 29). Clark used attributes such as form and the presence or absence of various types of decoration to classify the excavated pot sherds. He constructed a distributional map of Deverel-Rimbury finds to show that the Mildenhall excavation was peripheral to the major areas of "primary diffusion" of the Deverel-Rimbury pottery types (Clark 1936c: 29).

Although several of the pottery types excavated had strong affinities to Deverel-Rimbury, Clark found that one type was unusual. Because of its stratigraphic location he concluded it was contemporary with other Late Bronze Age sherds from the site. Labelling this type 'Mildenhall ware', Clark suggested that it illustrated a native tradition. The contrasting pottery types found suggested evidence of contact and some degree of continuity between indigenous and invasive peoples (Clark 1936c: 49).

The Godwins and Clifford's report on plant remains recovered from the peat confirmed Clark's typological analysis. The Godwins suggested the predominance of alder indicated increased dampness. Settlement in the Shippea Hill area seemed "to have been terminated by the onset of damp conditions" (Clark 1936c: 32). "It is evident . . . that by the Late Bronze Age man had been forced to abandon the low-lying fen [where the Shippea Hill sites had been found] for settlement and had been driven to higher ground," where the Mildenhall site was located (Clark 1936c: 49).

## The Stuntney Hoard

The last report Clark and Godwin produced with the Committee, published in 1940, investigated a Bronze Age founder's hoard stored in an alder tub found in the peat. The contents of the buried hoard from Stuntney Hall were "at first glance as of the Late Bronze Age", Clark (1940): 59) observed. Wishing to date the contents more closely, he used the manner of establishing relative chronologies that he had used earlier with lithics. The hoard was found in an area peripheral to the "carp's tongue sword" complex of south-east England, a complex introduced by invaders in the eighth century B.C. Clark classified the hoard's ribbed palstaves into four main classes and mapped the distribution of each class. "The distribution of the ribbed palstave certainly suggests that it is to some extent complementary to, and therefore, likely to be contemporary with the 'carp's tongue sword' complex," Clark (1940: 60) concluded. He could then hypothesize a more exact date for the hoard, assigning it to the later half of the late Bronze Age.

Combining this typological analysis with Godwin's study of peat and clay stratigraphy, Clark and Godwin (1940: 71) concluded: "the Late Bronze Age horizon (1) is some distance over the surface of the Fen-Clay, (2) lies above a layer indicative of drier conditions (3) falls close to the pollen zone VII–VIII".

## Conclusion

In some ways, Clark (1933b: 232) continued to consider archaeology to be "the study of past distribution of culture-traits in time and space, and of the factors governing their distribution" during his association with the Committee. This is especially evident in his study of Mildenhall pottery types when he used a distributional map to demonstrate the extent of Deverel-Rimbury pottery and again in 1940 when he compared complementary distributions of Bronze Age artefacts.

In this research, Clark used typological analyses similar to those used in his earliest studies. In both the Fenland papers and his 1932 dissertation, he classified artefacts according to morphological differences, mapped the differing classes to establish their distribution, and assumed that complementary distributions implied contemporary cultures. As in earlier work, Clark equated an assemblage with a culture and a 'folk', seemed to assume that lithic and pottery forms evolved from simple general ancestors to more complex descendants and continued to arrange forms in an evolutionary sequence by comparing morphological changes.

However, in practice, Clark was redefining archaeology. Archaeology became excavation. It was no longer the study of surface finds. In striking contrast to his earlier work, his major Fenland investigations involved intensive digging. "The crux of archaeology is excavation, since it is from the soil that archaeologists have to obtain the bulk of their documents" (Clark 1989b: 66). Archaeology was not just typological analysis. It was now also based on a stratigraphic-geological approach that was "the hallmark of the Fenland Research Committee" (Godwin 1978: 88). This was most evident in the Plantation and Peacock's Farm excavations, where despite severe difficulties with flooding, deep successive trenches were cut to establish stratigraphic relationships. When Clark wrote *The Mesolithic Age in Britain*, distributional mapping of surface finds was one of the few methods he could use to establish relative dates. In all the Fenland reports, Clark was able to correlate his typological and mapping results with botanical and climatic evidence.

Clark's choice of subject also dramatically shifted. He became well acquainted with natural events and their relevance to dating archaeological

sites. For example, the withdrawal of ice sheets was indirectly important to archaeology as a result of changes in fauna, climate, vegetation, and sea levels. As the ice receded, sediments were left in distinctive successive layers, or varves, and sections of varves from separate locations had been correlated, establishing a geochronology (Clark 1936b: 4–7). In addition, during his association with the Committee, Clark (Clark 1936b: *xii*) had “many talks” with Godwin about post-glacial alterations in climate and environment. These alterations had been documented by vegetation, faunal and marine studies and it was known that northern Europe had undergone a cycle of warm/dry and warm/damp climatic phases called Pre-boreal, Boreal, Atlantic, and Sub-boreal. As a result of extensive pollen analysis, Scandinavian scientists had developed a general forest succession and had correlated this information with land, sea, and climatic changes (Clark 1936b). This information and the terms, Pre-boreal, Boreal, Atlantic, and Sub-boreal were continually used by Committee members.

The Godwins had explained in the Plantation Farm report that the Blytt and Sernander climatic periods had recently “been closely correlated, especially in Sweden, with post-glacial forest history, with the Baltic lake periods, with de Geer’s geo-chronology, and with the chief phases of archaeological development”. As Godwin (1978: 24) later wrote, “In the period before absolute physical means of dating were available, the importance of such a background means of correlation and reference was immense.”

In *The Mesolithic Age in Britain*, Clark had used environmental factors to explain shifts from Upper Palaeolithic to Mesolithic cultures. By 1936, when he published *The Mesolithic Settlement of Northern Europe*, environmental change explained variations between assemblages as well as between prehistoric periods. Instead of invasion or migration, environment was the important independent variable. For example, the appearance of woodworking equipment in assemblages was a reaction to the spreading forests and decreasing tundra. The Maglemose was a forest adaptation culture. The homogeneity of Maglemose assemblages over northern Europe “can only be explained on the basis of the geographical changes” of spreading Fenland between Britain and Scandinavia (Clark 1936b: 124). Tardenoisian assemblages, found almost exclusively on sandy soils, were used as an example of geological determination of human settlement.

Although it is not completely clear why Clark’s thinking changed so dramatically between 1932 and 1936, it is possible that his experiences with the Fenland Research Committee predisposed him to consider environmental factors rather than diffusion and invasion as causes for assemblage change.

As the decade proceeded, the team continued to take advantage of new pollen and natural science analyses to produce a broad, contextual picture of the climatic, geological, floral, faunal, and geographic circumstances that formed the background for the Fenland's prehistoric peoples. During this time, the Committee began to provide information on lifeways. It produced evidence for what food was preferred, what wood was relied upon for fuel, and what weather and changing climates had affected people's lives. The researchers learned that the Peacock's Farm residents ate pig, bred oxen, and burned alder and oak in their fires (Clark et al, 1935). At Methwold Fen, where the Bronze Age spear-head had been found, the inhabitants would have endured "a great increase in wetness of the fens" (Godwin et al. 1934: 398). By the later Bronze Age, because of increased dampness, the Peacock's Farm had been abandoned and people had chosen to settle on higher ground (Clark 1936c).

With this information, prehistoric Britons were no longer pictured as little men endlessly knapping microliths, producing micro-burins as by-products, and dropping debris in patterned ways. As documented elsewhere, (Smith 1993b), this increased knowledge was one of the many influences that led Clark (1939: 1) in *Archaeology and Society* to re-define archaeology as "the study of how men lived in the past".

# Chapter 5

## Conclusion

With the founding of the Fenland Research Committee, there appears to be evidence for the formation of “a community of scientists” who worked closely together, had similar goals, and were establishing means to disseminate and institutionalise their views. Historians of science, such as W. Coleman (1985: 68) argue that such a community must be present before a new academic subject can be fostered within a university setting. In keeping with Coleman’s idea, it is clear that Hawkes, Phillips, Piggott, and Clark knew each other well. As mentioned by Phillips in his *Memoirs*, many of the Committee’s archaeological workers, including Lethbridge, Clarke, Clark, and Leaf shared morning tea at the Museum. “You all seem to have met up regularly,” observes Roberts. “Oh yes, we all knew each other, we were all friends . . . or enemies,” replies Piggott (Roberts’s interview: 1994).

These workers had joined the Committee because they uniformly felt “the lack of essential . . . knowledge” (*Minute Book*: June 7, 1932). They were united by their stated desire to benefit from interdisciplinary explorations. They all understood the value of a co-operative effort. As mentioned above, Lethbridge (1931: 360), in the interdisciplinary investigation of the female Southery skeleton, used Fowler’s geological knowledge and identification of an extinct river to prove that the woman had been drowned, “carried down by this [extinct] river, dropped among the sedges”. Phillips (1932) had used Swinnerton’s (1931) geomorphological knowledge of the Lincolnshire coast to substantiate his argument that the Romans had operated a ferry across the Wash. When studying post-glacial deposits, Swinnerton had found that the Wash coastal areas had been sheltered from the North Sea in the Roman era. Phillips suggested, therefore, that a Roman road that appeared to run into the Norfolk sea had actually been connected by ferry to Lincolnshire. In addition, while excavating for the Bristol Spelaeological Society during

the late 1920s, Phillips had co-operated with several specialists, including Jackson (animal bones), Kennard (mollusca), and Malby (charcoal), all of whom became members of the Committee. Kenny (1933) consulted Fowler and H. Godwin during his excavation of the Roman road at Nordelph. Their expertise on roddon formation was essential to Kenny's final conclusion that a bridge had been constructed during Roman times over an open waterway. As shown above, Clark (1934: 147) made thorough use of botanical, geological, and zoological information to correlate "events of natural and of human history".

It was during their close participation as fellow members of the Fenland Research Committee that Clark, Phillips, Hawkes<sup>1</sup>, and Piggott had the opportunity to engineer their 1935 take-over of the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia (Piggott, in conversation, 1994). Piggott mentioned this connection again to Roberts. "With the Research Committee, I was always going over to Cambridge and talking to Grahame Clark and we frankly decided to take-over the P.S.E.A. and make it into the Prehistoric Society" (Piggott, Roberts's interview, 1994). According to the Roberts' interview, Piggott had decided that it would be better to take control of a society that already existed than to start from scratch.

The new Prehistoric Society provided the young foursome and like-minded colleagues with one of Coleman's required elements for discipline formation. As stated above, a community of scientists needs a means to disseminate their views through publication and instruction. The means to both publish and instruct were instituted by 1935. In that year, Clark became Honorary Editor of the Society's new Proceedings, a position he retained for 35 years. In his assessment of Clark's work, G. Sieveking (1976: *xvii*) has commented, "it was as a result of the transformation of the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia into the Prehistoric Society . . . that a platform was made available in Britain" for the publication of evidence from the natural sciences. The content of the Proceedings changed, now stressing national, interdisciplinary concerns. Writing in the *Archaeological Journal*, 'J.B.W.P.' (1936: 295–297) noted the predominance in the new Proceedings of articles which discussed "aspects of archaeology in which physiographical changes have played a determining part". Clark often solicited articles from specialists other than archaeologists. In 1936, the zoogeographer P. Ulyott, explained how a study

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<sup>1</sup>It is not commonly known that Hawkes was deeply involved in the take-over. However, Phillips (Memoirs: 250) writes that Hawkes had an "avowed intention to work for changing [the P.S.E.A.] to a wider foundation" and was "active among the rank and file" for this purpose. Phillips notes that Burkitt, also a member of the Committee, approved of the plan. Childe, however, was reluctant.

of the distribution of flatworms could be used to date relatively the separation of England from the Continent. P. G. H. Boswell, a geologist, was invited to be the Society's second president in 1936 and his presidential address argued the case for continued co-operation between geology and archaeology.

During the late 1930s, in his editorial notes and in the section 'Current Prehistory', Clark (1936a, 1937b 1937c) often discussed the usefulness of geological, botanical, and zoological evidence to archaeological interpretation. He used the Proceedings to describe and publicise new advances in technique which had emerged from the Fenland Research Committee's work. In 1936, he began to publish some of the research conducted by the Committee, such as the Warren et al. (1936) Essex Coast report.

The headquarters of the Prehistoric Society were effectively moved from Ipswich to the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in 1935. The reform movement went further in 1936 when, writes Phillips (1987: 52), "a clean sweep was made of the Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer". Phillips became Honorary Secretary, retaining that position until 1946. Membership in the Society increased sharply, doubling the 1934 number by 1938, "a marked jump given the virtual standstill in the PSEA membership since 1920," writes Chapman (1985: 19). With Clark as Honorary Editor, the Proceedings of the Society quickly became a major vehicle of communication amongst prehistoric archaeologists in the United Kingdom. Clark (1985: 12) states, "the fact that [the] Proceedings were edited for some four and a half decades in Cambridge . . . put us in the position to publish some of the most original work of generations of young prehistorians". The complete story of the 1935 transformation of the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia to the broader, more nationally based Prehistoric Society, including discussion of the importance of the new subject matter published in the Proceedings, is presented by Chapman (1985), Clark (1985), Phillips (1987), Piggott (1963), and Smith (1993).

During the 1934 season of Phillips, Clark, and White's (later Mrs. Clark) excavation of the long barrow at Skendleby, Burkitt, then Secretary to the Cambridge Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology, journeyed down to observe the work. "I think that the purpose of Burkitt's [visit] . . . was to enable him to judge how far the new people who were appearing at Cambridge such as Grahame Clark and myself could any longer be excluded from the official side of archaeology in the University," writes Phillips (1987: 48).

Shortly after, Phillips was invited to join the Faculty Board of Archaeology and Anthropology and began to attend the Faculty and Appointments

Committee meetings.<sup>2</sup> Although influence is difficult to document because decision-making processes were not recorded in the Appointment Committee Minutes, I suspect that this new position gave Phillips some influence over decisions related to appointments and acquisition of property. However, he was not hired to give lectures for the Faculty and therefore did not attend the Faculty Board's meetings where the most important Faculty business was transacted.

At the Faculty Board meeting of October 16, 1934, Burkitt noted, "After some discussion it was agreed to ask Dr Grahame Clark to give a short course of lectures on Mesolithic Europe in Lent term for the fee of ten guineas." Lecturing gave Clark the opportunity to present his views on cultural sequences within their environmental context. In the preface to *The Mesolithic Settlement of Northern Europe*, Clark (1936b: *ix*) wrote, "the subject matter for the book was covered in a course of lectures . . . during Lent Term". In his review of this book, Armstrong (1937: 68–69) observed that Clark's conclusions were "immensely strengthened by the synchronisation of independent researches by geologists, biologists, archaeologists, and botanists. The book is a striking example of what can be achieved by co-operation of this nature." At the beginning of *The Mesolithic Settlement of Northern Europe*, Clark (1936b: *xi*) stated, "From my association with the Fenland Research Committee at Cambridge I have experienced directly the extreme value of a co-operative approach to the problems of post-glacial history".

The following year, "The Board approved an arrangement by which Dr Grahame Clark should give a course on geochronology and climatic history," (Faculty Board Minutes: July 19, 1935). It appears from the Minutes that this subject matter had not been previously taught. By then, Clark was giving 44 hours of "lecturing and teaching" on subject matter closely related to his research with the Committee (Faculty Board Minutes: July 19, 1935).

In 1936, he was appointed Faculty Assistant Lecturer, his first paid, full-time, official position. In the Faculty Minutes, Clark was described as having "given valuable lectures . . . and also provided instruction on the practical side in fieldwork and excavation" (Faculty Board Minutes: June 8, 1936). From 1937 to 1939, "Archaeology with the selected area Europe" was listed as one of three selected area options available for Tripos papers, along with Anthropology of Africa and India (Cambridge Historical Register Supplement

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<sup>2</sup> There are two Minute books preserved at the University Library. The Faculty and Appointments Committee Minutes records the minutes of the Faculty and Appointments meetings that were held once a year to discuss positions and acquiring space. The Faculty Board Minutes records the minutes of the Faculty Board's meetings, held approximately every two months to discuss curriculum and all other Faculty affairs.

1931–1940: 399-401). It would appear that Clark was one of the principal lecturers for this option. By 1939, Burkitt (Faculty Board Minutes: June 8, 1939) noted, “Dr Clark’s subject is central to the work of the Archaeological side of” the Archaeology and Anthropology Tripos.

Teaching became one of Clark’s major concerns and he immediately attracted students. “The development of postgraduate research in prehistoric archaeology at Cambridge had to wait on the provision of undergraduate teaching,” Clark (1989b: 6) recently observed. “The Cambridge faculty was the only one in Britain producing a flow of honours graduates in prehistoric archaeology” (Clark 1989a: 53). During the thirties, archaeology and anthropology was Section ‘A’ of a one-part Tripos that was generally taken over a two-year period. Clark noted that the number graduating from Section A sharply increased after his appointment (1989a: 52).

As Clark stated, the Faculty and Appointments Committee Minutes records dramatic increases in student enrolment throughout the thirties, suggesting that Archaeology and Anthropology had become an exciting option. Since Section A was a combined Anthropology and Archaeology Tripos, it is difficult to ascertain if the students enrolled were specifically attracted to Clark’s teaching and subject matter. The most popular selected area option listed in the Register for Tripos from 1937 to 1939 was African Anthropology, perhaps due to the presence of Evans-Pritchard. However, Faculty Board Minutes described Clark as “a capable and enthusiastic teacher whose value has been well appreciated by his students” (Faculty Board Minutes: June 8, 1936). Charles McBurney (1976: *xii*), who joined Section A in 1935, writes, “The intellectual climate, as I recall it, was one of new ideas characterized everywhere by an atmosphere of excitement and optimism. Discussion and criticism indeed abounded . . . rendered fruitful by important new discoveries and often spectacular developments in method and technique.” In 1928, there were seventeen students enrolled in Section A, in 1934, forty one, and by 1939, sixty (Faculty and Appointments Committee Minutes: November 10, 1939). In 1935, Minns noted that the quality and quantity of students was very satisfactory. This is the first time that teaching is mentioned in the Faculty and Appointments meetings and coincidentally the first time that Clark was present as a Faculty Board member (Faculty and Appointments Committee Minutes : November 7, 1935).

Seven students (Thurstan Shaw, J. Desmond Clark, Bernard Fagg, John Brailsford, John Hamilton, H. G. Wakefield, and Charles McBurney) who graduated between 1935 and 1939 “went on to pursue archaeology as a profession” (Clark 1989b: 52). Among these, J. Desmond Clark, who was awarded First Class Honours in 1937, was one of Clark’s first students. In an auto-

biographical sketch, Desmond Clark (1989: 139) writes, “For me, Grahame’s emphasis on palaeo-ecology has been all important since, without an understanding of the habitat of any prehistoric group, it is impossible to begin to understand their behaviour”. In his tribute to Grahame Clark, McBurney (1976: *xiii*) states, “From you [Clark], we began to hear . . . of new and exciting developments quite outside the scope of the classic text-books of the day. Outstanding among these new topics were the growing fields of Post-Glacial and environmental studies based on the then new and rapidly growing techniques of pollen analysis . . . exemplified as near at hand as Peacock’s Farm and in the activities of the Fenland Research Committee”.

The results of the Fenland Research Committee’s work provided a new cognitive base for teaching prehistoric archaeology at Cambridge. It also provided a training ground for future professional archaeologists. According to Clark (1989b: 42), “a special weakness of the teaching provided for Section A” was that, except for himself, the lecturers were not engaged in excavations. To remedy this, in 1935, Clark proposed that the Cambridge University Field Archaeological Society, described in the Faculty Minutes as a group “wholly run by undergraduates” (Faculty Board Minutes: April 28, 1936), become associated with the Committee “for the purpose of assisting with excavations” (Minute Book: January 24, 1935). An agreement was then drawn up, signed by J. C. Mossop (St John’s), J. K. St Joseph (Selwyn), Rainbird Clarke (St John’s), and T. G. E. Powell (Jesus), representing the student archaeologists. Most of the work for the Committee’s Mildenhall report (Clark 1936c) was done by volunteers from the Archaeological Society, and members are recorded as attending the lecture segment of Committee meetings.

In 1936, the Cambridge University Field Archaeological Society wrote the Faculty asking for official recognition (Faculty Board Minutes: April 28, 1936). By this time, Clark was Honorary Vice President. All four of the above students found employment and professional success, St Joseph as Director of Aerial Photography in Cambridge, Clarke as Curator at Norwich Castle Museum, and Powell as Rankin Lectureship in Prehistoric Archaeology at Liverpool. John Bromwich, who in 1936 requested to submit a study of the ‘Population and Economics of the Southern Fenlands’ as a Tripos requirement and who later contributed to *The Fenland in Roman Times* (1970), is also mentioned as being Clark’s student at this time (Faculty Board Minutes: October 20, 1936).

According to Coleman’s suggestions, a community of scientists needs material and institutions to form a discipline. There is considerable evidence in the Faculty Minutes that the Board was expanding its facilities to deal with the level of enrolment apparently attracted, at least in part, by the new

prehistoric subject matter being presented by Clark. This stress upon obtaining teaching and library space contrasts with the emphasis, in the Faculty Board Minutes from 1928–32, upon adding rooms for Museum collections only. After 1935, the need for additional facilities for students was regularly discussed.

In the 1935 Faculty Appointment meeting, Minns announced that rooms in the old Law School had been solicited for teaching purposes (Faculty and Appointments Committee Minutes: November 7, 1935). In 1936, Clark raised the question of the new library and was assured that it would soon be staffed. By 1937, there was a note in the Minutes stating that the Library was now “working well under the charge of Rishbeth”, the new librarian (Appointment Book: November 10, 1937). It was also suggested in the Minutes that Section A was understaffed and in 1938, Daniel, who had achieved a First in Section A in 1934 and finished his Ph.D in June 1938, was asked to give a course on megalithic tombs of Europe. By 1938, “the problem of space” was becoming acute and permission had at last been obtained “from the University to issue an appeal for funds to extend the buildings up to the Botany School” (Faculty and Appointments Minutes: November 10, 1938). This period of growth was arrested by the Second World War. In 1941, Wordie noted in the Minutes that Clark, Daniel, Phillips, Haddon, Trevor, and Paterson were “absent from Cambridge on National Service” (Faculty and Appointments Minutes: November 10, 1941).

When the Committee was briefly reconvened following the War, the new President, the geologist, W. B. R. King, “noted with satisfaction three important developments affecting the Committee: 1) The recognition accorded by the University to the work of the Vice-President, Mr Gordon Fowler, through the award of an Honorary M.A. 2) The constitution of a Sub-department of Quaternary Research under Dr Godwin as Reader 3) The agreement in principle to set up a Curatorship in aerial photography in the University” (Minute Book: December 4, 1948).

By the late 1940s, Clark was beginning to excavate Star Carr and soon to become Disney Professor of Archaeology at Cambridge, Piggott had replaced Childe in the Abercromby Chair of Archaeology at Edinburgh, Hawkes had been appointed to the newly created Chair of European Archaeology at Oxford, and Phillips had taken Crawford’s position as Archaeology Officer to the Ordnance Survey. When remembering the thirties, Piggott (1963: 5) writes, “Young and irreverent persons in Cambridge, with like-minded and contemporary friends and colleagues elsewhere were . . . making the first conscious and concerted effort to professionalize prehistory”. At Cambridge, this ‘professionalization’ rested on a new knowledge base developed by Clark during

participation in the Fenland Research Committee. By late 1940s, the young and irreverent had institutionalized themselves.



# Appendix A

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# Appendix B

## Fenland Research Committee Membership

This list of members is reproduced from the one in the Macfadyen Dead Files.  
It is undated, but its content shows it was compiled in late 1932.

Wyman Abbott	Peterborough
D. F. W. Baden-Powell	Hinksey Hill, Oxford
H. L. Bradfer-Lawrence	North Wootton, Lynn
A. G. Brighton	Sedgwick Museum, University of Cambridge
M. C. Burkitt	Grantchester
J. G. D. Clark	Peterhouse, Cambridge
L. C. G. Clarke	Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology, University of Cambridge
Lt-Col. J. E. E. Craster	Cambridge
O. G. S. Crawford	Ordnance Survey, Southampton
Wing-Commander F. P. Don	Cambridge
Curtis Edwards	Curator, Wisbech Museum, Cambridgeshire
Major G. Fowler	Ely, Cambridgeshire
Dr Cyril Fox	Director, National Museum of Wales
Dr & Mrs H. Godwin	Cambridge
F. Hanley	Department of Agriculture, Cambridge
C. F. C. Hawkes	Department of British & Medieval Antiquities, British Museum
Dr Wilfrid Jackson	University Museum, Manchester
Professor O. T. Jones	Sedgwick Museum, University of Cambridge
A. S. Kennard	Beckenham, Kent
A. Kenny	Trinity College, Cambridge
C. Leaf	Cambridge
T. C. Lethbridge	Shelford, Cambridgeshire

Dr W. A. Macfadyen  
Reid Moir  
C. W. Phillips  
Dr A. C. Seward  
Professor Swinnerton  
F. M. Walker

Sedgwick Museum, University of Cambridge  
Ipswich, Suffolk  
Selwyn College, Cambridge  
Downing College, Cambridge  
Nottingham University  
Manea, Cambridgeshire

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<sup>1</sup>This writer is identified only by initials; I have not been able to trace the name they stand for.