Cambridgeshire Antiquarian Society

AUTUMN CONFERENCE 2026

Saturday November 7
University Faculty of Law,
Sidgwick Avenue, Cambridge CB3 9DZ

Programme

9.00 Venue open Displays, book stalls. Tea and coffee will be available on arrival.

10.15 **Welcome** *Simon Stoddart President CAS*

Morning session *Chair: Catherine Hills*

10.30 **Fenscapes**: **a new perspective on 5,500 years of agricultural history in the fens** Neal Payne *McDonald Institute*

The rich archaeological record of plant and animal remains from the Fens of Eastern England provides a valuable opportunity to investigate past agricultural practices and how those practices manifest in the archaeological record. As part of the ongoing Fenscapes project, we present a newly-compiled large-scale dataset comprising over 1.3 million archaeobotanical and zooarchaeological remains from across the Fens. Using this resource, we explore patterns in agricultural practice from the Neolithic onwards, while also considering how archaeological practice - including recovery strategies and recording frameworks - structure the patterns observed.

11.00, **Iron Age farms and Roman fields: further excavations on the claylands of Cambourne** Matt Brudenell *Cambridge Archaeological Unit*

This talk presents recent excavations at West Cambourne, where Middle Iron Age enclosures and Romano-British field-system ditches were uncovered on the claylands. The findings are considered within their wider archaeological and topographic context, showcasing a densely occupied and highly developed settlement landscape.

11.30 **Roman Waterbeach: another inland port?** Graeme Clarke *Oxford Archaeology*

Between 2019-2022, Oxford Archaeology excavated 18 hectares of remains at the former Waterbeach Barracks and Airfield. The principal phase of activity relates to a major Romano-British settlement whose foundation was probably driven by its situation near to the juncture of Akeman Street and the Old Tillage canal. Many of the key feature groups and finds groups can be linked to the processing of agricultural produce or pottery manufacture to support this assertion. Therefore, can we characterise this site as another inland port for the provisioning and transit of goods to major population centres?

12.00 **Departing *Duroliponte*: excavations at Mount Pleasant, Cambridge, and the Roman period Castle Hill to Arrington road and defensive system of Cambridge** Craig Cessford *Cambridge Archaeological Unit*

Excavations by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit at Mount Pleasant represent one of the largest modern investigations of the Roman period settlement on Castle Hill, Cambridge. Although located on the edge of the settlement, they revealed the probable mid-first to mid-third century boundary of the settlement, the Castle Hill to Arrington road, the mid-fourth century defensive ditch around the settlement and a previously unknown second defensive ditch. Other significant discoveries include a number of burials, intriguing deposits of human and animal bone, two buildings, an altar, fragments of columns and a cauldron.

12.30 **The Burwell Beast: investigating an Aurochs** Rita Pedro and Tess Townend *Pre-Construct Archaeology*

In August 2026, evaluations by Pre-Construct Archaeology (PCA) at Burwell, Cambridgeshire, identified a significant animal bone group (ABG) within peat deposits adjacent to a palaeochannel at the Fen edge. Expansion of the trench revealed a largely complete, disarticulated skeleton provisionally identified as an aurochs (*Bos primigenius*). The skeleton was recovered in a broadly anatomical arrangement, with no clear evidence of butchery. Aurochs are generally considered to have become extinct in Britain by the end of the Bronze Age. Therefore, this specimen represents a potentially significant contribution to the study of British aurochs, offering opportunities to investigate its morphology, body size, pathology and depositional history.

1.00–2.00pm Lunch

Afternoon session *Chair: Simon Stoddart*

2.00 **Late Bronze Age and Iron Age flint from Wandlebury** Zach K Markin

Worked flint from Wandlebury has not been given the attention it deserves as evidence of prehistoric activity on site

2.15 **Archaeologies of craft explored through macrolithics and ceramics from Bronze Age Shippea Hill** Libby Stone

This project proposes an approach to craft focused on human sensory experiences of bodily engagements with materials, to mitigate the unknown ontological conditions of past worlds. I argue that archaeologies of craft must narrow their scale of analysis to focus on bodily conditions. To this end, I combine wear analysis and sensory archaeology to work with a sample of macrolithics and ceramics from Bronze Age Shippea Hill. Overall, I argue that the contingency of humanist ontology requires archaeologies of prehistoric craft to focus on human sensory experience of bodily conditions.

2.30 **'A crown to the illustrious dead': ongoing work on bucket burial in early medieval Cambridgeshire** Lily Pencliffe *Dept Archaeology, Cambridge*

This presentation will position the practice of burying buckets in Cambridgeshire in the context of research into bucket burial across Europe in the fourth to seventh centuries AD. This combines new finds with re-examination of antiquarian excavations, highlighting the mechanisms through which ideas and objects might be coupled and uncoupled from the time of their deposition to the present day.

3.00 **A Civil War hoard from Thorney** Richard Kelleher*, Fitzwilliam Museum.*

In 2024 a hoard of 1,658 coins, dating to the 1640s, was discovered in a residential area of Thorney. This paper discusses the find in the context of the civil war in the region, patterns of hoarding in England in this period and highlights the incidence of defaced coins in the hoard.

3.30 **Reports from small grant holders**

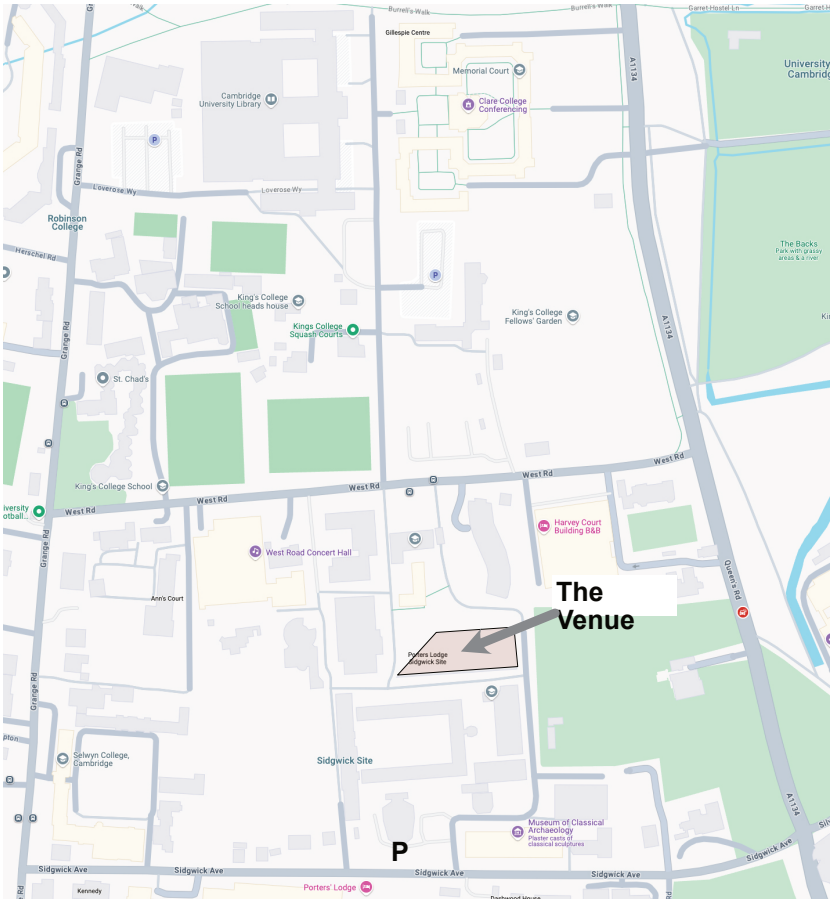
The Waterbeach Lode and the North Walsham Canal *Rosalyn Burgess,*

The Waterbeach Lode stands as a relic of past landscape where water transport was far more important than roads. The North Walsham Canal was constructed in 1825, opened in 1826, and is a supposedly unique canal in the Norfolk area. Despite their possible age differences both these waterways reflect the changes and industrial developments of the agricultural landscape.

Bedford Level developments, 1653-1839 *Nicholas James*

The Society supported four studies of the Bedford Level. The first completed research on the Great Dyke. The second was of the Hardwicke Earls' letters about conditions in 1765-1819, with particular attention to the Eau Brink Cut. The third investigated engineering in 1713-1813, including rebuilding the Denver Sluice and responses to flood. The fourth showed that the familiar legend about development of the Hundred Foot Washes is probably deeply misleading.

4.00 **Close of conference**



Parking

Parking is usually available on the Sidgwick Site, but **please note: it will not be possible to enter Sidgwick Avenue from Queens Road**.

If using public transport, there is a U1 bus from Eddington (West Cambridge) at 09.49 (alight West Road, near the UL). In the opposite direction, the most convenient bus is the U2 from Addenbrooke's (dep.09.30) and Cambridge Railway Station (dep 09.44): alight at Silver Street.