

**Howard Park and Howard Garden,
Letchworth Garden City, Herts**
Archaeological Desk Based Assessment



Keith J Fitzpatrick-Matthews

North Hertfordshire District Council Museums Service
Archaeology Report 35

2008

**Howard Park and Howard Garden,
Letchworth Garden City, Herts**
Archaeological Desk Based Assessment

Keith J Fitzpatrick-Matthews

Contents

Metadata

Title: *Howard Park and Howard Garden, Letchworth Garden City, Herts: archaeological desk based assessment*

Author: Keith J Fitzpatrick-Matthews (Archaeology Officer, North Hertfordshire District Council, keith.matthews@north-herts.gov.uk)

Derivation: First revision

Origination Date: 11 April 2008

Reviser(s): Keith J Fitzpatrick-Matthews

Date of last revision: 8 May 2008

Version: 1.1

Status: Final version

Summary of Changes: Illustrations added; corrections to errors in the text; additional text; spelling check

Circulation: North Hertfordshire District Council, Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Record, Letchworth Library

Required Action: Scan for errors

File Name/Location: h:\kmatthew\My Documents\Parishes\Letchworth\Howard Park\Desk Based Assessment 2008.doc

Approval: Not required

Table of Contents

Contents.....	i
Metadata.....	i
Table of Contents.....	i
Figures in the text.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Introduction.....	1
Letchworth Garden City.....	1
Geology.....	1
Topography.....	2
Historical data.....	2
Placenames.....	3
Archaeological data.....	5
General.....	5
The immediate vicinity of the site.....	5
Sites recorded in the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record.....	5
HER 0353.....	5
HER 1289.....	6
HER 1450.....	6
HER 1451.....	6
HER 5620.....	6
North Herts Museums Records (not also in Herts HER).....	7
655 and 691.....	7
Press cutting 1910 (source unknown).....	7
Letter from Fred Cole to A W Brunt, 5 December (before 1929).....	7
Listed Buildings.....	8
Listed Building 161862: 21-29 and 24-30 Hillshott.....	8
Listed Building 161889: The Free Church.....	8
Listed Building 161891: Mrs Howard Memorial Hall.....	9
Listed Building 161892: The Garden City Heritage Museum.....	10
Listed Building 161905: 2-42 Rushby Mead.....	10

Listed Building 161906: 86-144 Rushby Mead.....	11
Photographic evidence.....	11
Documentary evidence.....	12
Cartographic evidence.....	13
The site inspection.....	15
Howard Park.....	15
Description.....	15
Interpretation.....	18
Howard Garden.....	19
Description.....	19
Interpretation.....	21
Discussion.....	22
The archaeological potential.....	22
The impact of redevelopment.....	23
Sources consulted.....	24
Cartographic.....	24
On-line.....	24
Unpublished.....	24
Bibliography.....	24

Figures in the text

Figure 1: Location map (1:25,000).....	1
Figure 2: Solid geology.....	1
Figure 3: Topography of the study area (1:25,000).....	2
Figure 4: <i>Sestertius</i> of Claudius, AD c 41-50.....	6
Figure 5: As of Trajan, AD 101-2.....	6
Figure 6: Norton Way North railway bridge, 2007.....	6
Figure 7: Newspaper cutting (source unknown), dated 1910.....	7
Figure 8: The Free Church, 2008.....	8
Figure 9: Mrs Howard Hall (then known as The Leys), c 1996.....	9
Figure 10: The 2004 extension to Mrs Howard Hall, 2008.....	9
Figure 11: The First Garden City Heritage Museum, 2008.....	10
Figure 12: Houses in Rushby Mead (north end), 2008.....	10
Figure 13: Houses in Rushby Mead (south end), 2008.....	11
Figure 14: Howard Park in 1912 (from Miller 1995, 91).....	11
Figure 15: Norton Way South in 1913, photographed from the new railway bridge (from Miller 1995, 40).....	12
Figure 16: The paddling pool in 1933 (from Miller 2002).....	12
Figure 17: The Pixmore Way swimming pool in 1913 (from Miller 1995, 95).....	12
Figure 18: Letchworth on Dury & Andrews' map of 1766 (the site is outlined in green).....	13
Figure 19: The First Edition Ordnance Survey one-inch map (1834), enlarged to 1:50,000 and showing the National Grid; the site is outlined in green.....	13
Figure 20: The Second Edition Ordnance Survey one-inch map (1893), enlarged to 1:50,000 and showing the National Grid; the site is outlined in green.....	14
Figure 21: The Third Edition Ordnance Survey one-inch map (1920), enlarged to 1:50,000 and showing the National Grid.....	14
Figure 22: The Ordnance Survey six-inch (1:10,560) map (1925).....	15
Figure 23: The small garden at the junction of Birds Hill and Norton Way South, 2008.....	15
Figure 24: Birds Hill car park seen from Rushby Mead, 2008.....	16
Figure 25: Howard Park public toilets from the south-east, 2008.....	16
Figure 26: The embanked nature of Norton Way South, along the western edge of Howard Park (looking south).....	16
Figure 27: The paddling pool, looking north, 2008.....	17
Figure 28: The Howard Memorial, 2008.....	17
Figure 29: The children's play area from the south, 2008.....	17
Figure 30: The Garden City centenary memorial, 2008.....	18
Figure 31: The bronze plaque recording the donation of a commemorative oak to the town by Belgian refugees in 1913.....	18
Figure 32: Pix Brook from Pixmore Way, looking north, 2008.....	19
Figure 33: Howard Garden Over Sixties' Club (left) and Bowls Club (right), 2008.....	19
Figure 34: The tributary of Pix Brook, which crosses Howard Garden, looking east-north-east, 2008.....	20

Figure 35: Sappho by Thomas Maclean (from Miller 2002).....	20
Figure 36: The memorial plaque to Charles F Ball (1870-1933).....	21
Figure 37: The Ball Memorial Gardens.....	21

The cover shows a painting of Howard Park and Mrs Howard Hall c 2000 by Christina D Haggio, kindly supplied by Ros Allwood of North Hertfordshire District Council Museums.

All Ordnance Survey maps are reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.

North Hertfordshire District Council OS Licence Number LA 078794 2004.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Keith Gayner (North Hertfordshire District Council) for commissioning this project and for reading the first draft of the report; Steve Geach (NHDC Countryside Service) for also reading the first draft; the staff of Letchworth Library; Ros Allwood (NHDC Museums) for providing a photograph of the painting reproduced on the cover.

Introduction

This assessment of the archaeology of Howard Park and Howard Garden was commissioned on 10 April 2008 by Keith Gayner of North Hertfordshire District Council as part of a Stage 2 submission for Heritage Lottery Funding. The study area is bounded to the west by Norton Way South, to the North by Birds Hill, to the east by Rushby Mead and to the south by Pixmore Way.

This report is based purely on existing documentation in the public domain, personal knowledge of the site and its surroundings from the early 1960s to the present, and a detailed site inspection undertaken in April 2008. No original fieldwork was undertaken beyond the site inspection and no original documents held in archives outside North Hertfordshire Museums Service were consulted.

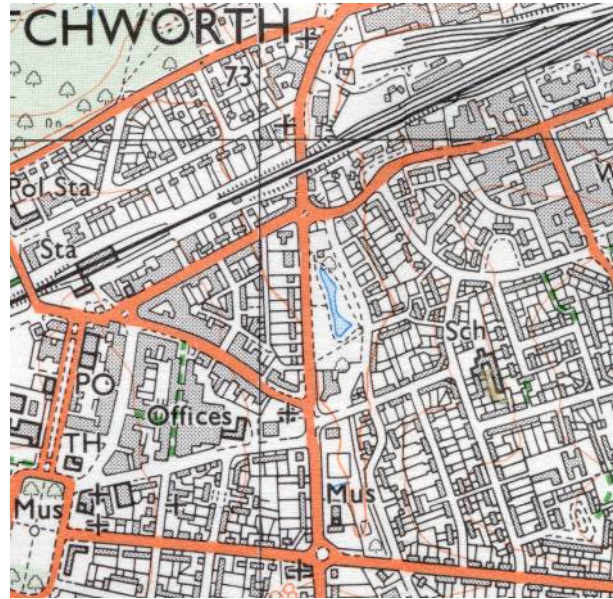
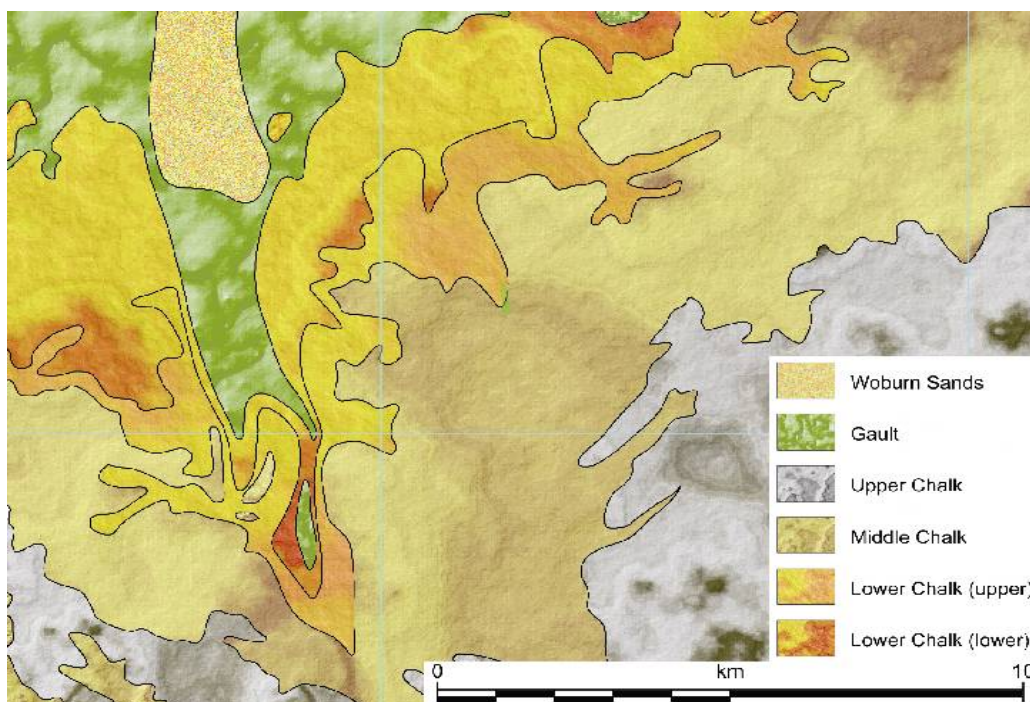


Figure 1: Location map (1:25,000)

Letchworth Garden City

Geology



**Figure 2: Solid geology; the study area is outlined in green
(after Hopson et al. 1996)**

Letchworth Garden City lies on deposits of Cretaceous chalk, the Lower Chalk formation in lower-lying parts of the town and Middle Chalk on the higher ground (Figure 2). The study area straddles the boundary between the two. The element of the Lower Chalk found in this area has been termed Grey Chalk, occasionally overlain by a thin deposit of Plenius Marl. The former contains frequent marine fossils, especially of pycnodontine oysters, while the latter appears to have formed in shallow waters with an abundant macrofaunal fossil assemblage (Hopson *et al.* 1996, 34). These are likely to be the deposits underlying the north-western part of the study area. Above them, the Middle Chalk is represented by Melbourn Rock, an off-white chalk with few fossils (Hopson *et al.*

1996, 43). This is the deposit underlying the south-eastern part of the study area. The Lower Chalk and Grey Clay are impervious and their outcropping at the foot of the hills to the south-east cause springs to form; one of these, Pix Brook, and its tributaries, flows through the centre of Letchworth Garden City and forms the eastern boundary of the study area (Miller 2002, 27).

During the Quaternary, the valley of the Pix Brook was occupied by a river draining south from the Midlands via Stevenage in a palaeochannel known as the Stevenage Channel. The initial advance of the Anglian ice sheet (beginning around 480,000 BP) was through this valley, which was gradually broadened to the west, forming the Hitchin Gap. An early retreat of the glacier left a proglacial lake south of Letchworth Garden City, but the site remained under the glacier (Hopson *et al.* 1996, 100). The ice sheet was up to a kilometre thick and eroded as much as 70 m or so from the former land surface. Deposits left after its retreat have been classified in the Thames Catchment subgroup of the Britannia Catchments Group (McMillan 2005, 98).

In parts of the valley of the Pix Brook, deposits of a neogene calcareous tufa have been observed (for instance, at Norton Common). It is deposited above the till deposits around three metres above the stream and contains species of mollusca known to have been extinct by about 4000 BP (Hopson *et al.* 1996, 110). It is not known if these deposits are present in the study area.

Topography

Letchworth Garden City is generally level, with the Weston Hills to the south-east, the Hitchin Gap to the west and the Bedfordshire Plain to the north-west. The low plateau occupied by the town is cut by the valley of the Pix Brook, in which the site lies (Figure 3). The sides of the valley provide the gentle slopes seen in roads approaching Howard Park and Garden: Station Road, Leys Avenue, Gernon Road, Pixmore Way, Hillshott and Birds Hill. Side valleys are the source of further tributaries, one of which approaches the study area from the south-west. Others may once have flowed through the hollow now occupied by Birds Hill to the north-east and through a slighter valley running from the south-east across Ridge Road and Hillshott, to join Pix Brook in the area of Hillshott car park.



Figure 3: Topography (heights in metres above Ordnance Datum)

Historical data

Letchworth Garden City was founded in 1903 as the world's first Garden City, a new town based on principles first propounded by Ebenezer Howard in *Tomorrow: a peaceful path to real reform*, published in 1898. The First Garden City estate was pieced together by purchasing land from fifteen separate owners, but at the time of its acquisition, the site lay within the Letchworth Hall estate, owned by the Alington family (Miller 2002, 23 Figure 9). In 1907, a Local Government Board Order amalgamated Letchworth, Willian and Norton parishes for civil purposes and in the following year, another Order made Letchworth a formal Civil Parish (Christie 1912, 118).

At the time of acquisition, the parish boundary between Letchworth and Willian followed the course of the Pix Brook, as shown on the Second Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1896 (Figure 20) and the Tithe Awards for Letchworth and Willian. Dury and Andrews' map of 1766 (Figure 18), however, shows the parish boundary somewhat further east, along the line of a lost road from the centre of Willian to Baldock Road and along Dunhams Lane, suggesting that it may have been altered in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. Letchworth parish was administered as part of Hitchin Rural District Council, which had been formed in 1894 to replace the Hitchin Sanitary District.

Letchworth was an obscure Hertfordshire village first recorded in Domesday Book as *Leceworde* (Morris 1976, 20.7: the spelling is an attempt to render an Old English name into Norman French, the -d- representing -ð-, for which no French equivalent existed). It was held by a William of Letchworth from Robert de Gernon in 1086, who was one of the jurors who swore for Broadwater Hundred at the Domesday Inquisition (Christie 1912, 120). William also held land at Ayot St Peter,

Graveley, Chells, Woolwicks (a lost site to the north-west of Stevenage), Little Wymondley, Wallington, *Summersele* (Hyde Hall), *Sapeham* (a lost site in Edwinstree Hundred) and *Bordesdene* (Bozen in Braughing). William of Letchworth was clearly a wealthy individual and he may have been the father of the William de Montfitchet who held the manor early in the reign of Henry I (1100-1135) (Chauncy 1700, 154). Before the Conquest, it had been held by Godwin of Souberie (Soulbury, Bucks), about whom nothing further seems to be known.

Letchworth was assessed to pay tax on ten hides (about 48.6 ha (1200 acres)) of arable, a huge assessment and larger than the extent of the parish in 1903, when it was calculated as almost 1000 acres. Presumably, parts of the manor were lost to its neighbours and became incorporated into their parishes. One such possible change was noted above. There was land sufficient to employ seven plough-teams and all seven were present, showing that the land was worked to capacity; two of the plough-teams were in demesne (on the lord's land). There was meadow sufficient for half a plough-team, pasture and sufficient woodland to provide pannage for a hundred pigs. It is possible that the meadow lay in the vicinity of the site at Howard Park. The male population was recorded as seventeen (nine villeins, two freeholders, four cottagers, a slave and a priest), which indicates a total population of fewer than eighty people. Like most of the land in England, the value of the tax the king could raise from it had declined to £6 from its assessment in January 1066, when it would have paid £8.

The historic focus of the village, as recorded on maps from the eighteenth century, is around the church and Letchworth Hall, on Letchworth Lane. The church dates from the early twelfth century (Duckworth 1910, 140) but must be a replacement for an earlier structure (Burleigh *et al.* 1990, 3), as a priest is recorded in the village by Domesday Book and a ninth-century copper alloy clasp, probably from a missal, was found in the churchyard in May 1930 (Westell 1935, 350).

In 1278, half a fee was transferred to the Knights Templar (Christie 1912, 122), whose nearby market town at Baldock had been established in the 1140s, but following the dissolution of the order in 1312, all its possessions were granted to the Knights Hospitaller (Johnson 1976, 18).

The Montfitchet family held the manor throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; Richard, who held it under Richard I and John was appointed Sheriff for Essex and Hertfordshire by King John (Salmon 1728, 175). The manor was in the hands of Edmund Barrington of Chesfield in 1428 and by the middle of the century, the family had leased the manor to Thomas Hanchet of Bedford (Christie 1912, 121). The manor was subsequently sold to John Hanchet, who disposed of it in 1547 to Thomas Snagge, from a local family (Chauncy 1700, 155; Johnson 1976, 19). Thomas's grandson and namesake was elected Speaker of the House of Commons on 12 November 1588, but retired to Marston Mortaine (Beds). In 1597, William Snagge sold the manor to Rowland Lytton of Knebworth, Sheriff of Hertfordshire, who was responsible for rebuilding Letchworth Hall in the early seventeenth century. The Lyttons retained the manor until 1796, when Richard Warburton Lytton sold it to John Williamson, a baker from Baldock. Through his daughter, the manor passed to the Alington family, who sold it to The First Garden City Limited in 1903 (Miller 2002, 31).

None of the secondary sources consulted mentions anything directly relevant to the site. Changes in manorial tenure occasionally coincide with periods of church building and the like, but in areas remote from the village centre, they are unlikely to have had any effect. The major exception, of course, is the construction of Letchworth Garden City after 1903 and this is when Howard Park and Howard Gardens were created.

Placenames

Howard Park appears to have received its name following a visit by the Worshipful Company of Gardeners, who gave it its name on 31 May 1905 (Chastney-Parr 1989, 9; Miller 2002, 37). Described by *The Citizen* of 22 September 1906 as a "*rather repelling and gruesome site*", it was cleared and enlarged in February 1930 (*The Citizen* 28 February 1930, quoted in the library's Local History Guide). Howard Garden seems originally to have been regarded as part of Howard Park, although the Howard Garden Bowling Green was laid in 1931, when the clubhouse was also built, and the Howard Garden Bowling Club was founded in 1937 (Chastney-Parr 1989, 4; Local History Guide, Howard Garden and Howard Garden Bowling Club).

Pix Brook does not appear to have any early recorded forms and the name first appears on the First Garden City Ltd Estate Plan of 1906 (Local History Guide, Pix Brook). It is unnamed on the early county maps; Pixmore Farm is shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1834 as New Farm, but had acquired its later name by the Second Edition in 1893. It later became core of Letchworth Hospital in 1914 (Local History Guide, Pixmore Farm). A field name Pickmore Close is

recorded in the Tithe Award for Willian, of c 1840, and is assumed to derive from Pix Moor (Local History Guide, Pixmore Way). There is a Pix Farm in Hemel Hempstead, the name first recorded as *Pixe* in 1603 (Gover *et al.* 1938, 42), and the name may be related. There does not appear to be an obvious connection with Old English *pīc*, 'pointed tool, pick', and no other Old English words seem appropriate as an etymology. However, Middle English *pīche* (Electronic Middle English Dictionary 2001), '?fish-trap', from Old French *poche*, 'small bag', is more likely and would attest to the former clean water of the brook.

Rushby Mead is recorded as the field name Rushy Mead on the Letchworth Tithe Award of c 1839. Rushy refers to the reeds growing beside the Pix Brook, which formerly widened into shallow pools at this point. The present form of the name is first recorded in the May Day Guide of 1907, in an advertisement for proposed new houses, although road building did not begin until 1909 (Local History Guide, Rushby Mead). Hillshott is not evidently an ancient name. It is first recorded as the name of a new estate in the programme for a drive in 1908 (Local History Guide, Hillshott).

This area may be part of an unnamed field in a terrier of Glebe land dated 28 June 1638 described as "*the field abutting east vppon Willyan Common east and vppon the lands of John Waller west*" (anon 1898, 185).

Archaeological data

North Hertfordshire is a district with an exceptionally rich archaeological heritage. In part, this is a reflection of its predominantly rural character, which has allowed the survival of field monuments into recent centuries and the formation of crop marks over buried sites during dry summers. However, it is also a reflection of the fertility of the local soils and the mildness of the climate: at the time of Domesday Book in 1086, the parishes of what is now North Hertfordshire District were amongst the wealthiest in England, second only to Norfolk. It has evidently been a location conducive to settlement and agricultural exploitation for millennia.

General

As Letchworth Garden City was not founded until 1903, there is no urban historic core earlier than the twentieth century. The three villages that were incorporated into the town are all remote from the town centre, which was located close to the Hitchin to Cambridge branch line of the London and North-Eastern Railway on what had formerly been agricultural land.

Although it is reasonable to suspect that the Letchworth Garden City estate contains the same density of archaeological sites as the surrounding areas, much of it was developed at a time when little or no interest was taken in archaeological remains and such discoveries as were made are poorly recorded. Typical of this is a press cutting from c 1910, which reports that "*Human bones were also unearthed while making the ornamental lake at the bottom of the new North-road*". This may well refer to the discovery of human remains during the initial widening of the Pix Brook through Howard Park (a photograph of 1912 (Miller 1995, 91) shows the original pool).

Unlike Hitchin, with its important collection of Lower Palaeolithic tools, little early prehistoric material has been found in Letchworth. The earliest significant site is the extensive Neolithic and Early Bronze Age occupation site at Blackhorse Road, east-north-east of the town centre. This was extensively excavated by John Moss-Eccardt of Letchworth Museum between 1957 and 1973 and the results have been published (Moss-Eccardt 1988). To the west-north-west lies the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age site of Wilbury (or Willbury) Hill, an originally palisaded enclosure strengthened around 700 BC and eventually an open settlement. This, too, has seen some excavation, most notably by Erik Shimon Applebaum in the 1930s and again by John Moss-Eccardt in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Applebaum 1949; Moss-Eccardt 1964; 1988). A number of Roman occupation sites have been discovered, most notably in the Sollershott West/High Avenue area, but also at Hawthorn Hill, Caslon Way and Norton village. These remain largely unpublished or inadequately published. Early medieval sites and finds are rare, with only the cemetery at Blackhorse Road definitely of this date (Moss-Eccardt 1971). A site spanning the Central and High Middle Ages was excavated at Kristiansand Way in 1988 (Matthews & Burleigh 1989).

The immediate vicinity of the site

For the purposes of the present study, an area up to 150 m outside Howard Park and Howard Garden were examined for the presence of known archaeological sites, monuments and finds. Those recorded in the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record are generally located to within one to ten metres; occasionally this accuracy cannot be achieved. Those in the Museum records not so far added to the Historic Environment Record are generally not recorded to an accuracy of greater than ten metres and occasionally, the record is so vague as to be difficult to assign even to a kilometre grid square. The guiding principle has been to err on the side of caution: if it is considered likely or probable that a discovery relates to within 150 m of the outside of the site, it is included.

Sites recorded in the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record

HER 0353

A group of worked flints, identified as Neolithic, was found in the garden of 51 Gernon Road. They are accessioned to North Herts Museums (8639). They form part of a wider spread, with others of the same character from 31 Gernon Road (HER 0352) and the garden of Letchworth Museum (HER 0357, 2280 and 2281). This accession number had been deleted from the museum catalogue.

HER 1289

A group of flint tools (an arrowhead and a flake) was found “in Norton Way” by Miss E Sheppard of 331 Norton Way South and one “in Letchworth” by a Mr D Watts, although the grid reference given by the Historic Environment Record indicates Rushby Mead or Hillshott. There are accessioned to North Herts Museums (6893 and 7073); according to museum records, they were donated on 24 October 1935 and 9 October 1935. The differences between the two catalogue entries at Letchworth Museum raise doubts that these finds really derive from the same locations.

HER 1450

A bronze coin (a *sestertius*) of the Roman Emperor Claudius (AD 41-54) was found in the garden of 88 Ridge Road and was donated by a Mr W J Paul to Letchworth Museum on 1 March 1935 (Figure 4). It is accessioned to North Herts Museums (6965). It weighs 25.55 g. The obverse is inscribed TI CLAUDIVS CAESAR AVG PM TR P IMP and the reverse SPES AVGVSTA, with S C in exergue and Spes advancing left with a flower in her right hand and raising her skirt with the left. There is a poorly struck countermark to the right of Spes reading



Figure 4: Sestertius of Claudius, AD c 41-50 (actual size)

[NC]APR, for *Nerua Caesar Augustus Probauit* (Nerva Caesar Augustus proved [it]). These details enable it to be identified with an issue of the Rome mint, probably before AD 50, type RIC Claudius 99 (Sutherland 1984, 128), endorsed as genuine in the reign of Nerva (AD 96-98).

HER 1451

A bronze coin (an *as*) of the Roman Emperor Trajan (AD 98-117) was acquired by Letchworth Museum from a J W Walker on 20 October 1931 and reported as being found “near Pixmore Institute” (Figure 5). It is accessioned to North Herts Museums (6092). The obverse is inscribed [NE]RVA TRAIAN AVG GER PM and the reverse TR POT COS IIII PP SC, with Victory walking left holding a palm and shield inscribed SPQR., enabling it to be identified as an issue from the Rome mint of AD 101-2, type RIC Trajan 434 (Mattingly & Sydenham 1962, 275).



Figure 5: As of Trajan, AD 101-2 (actual size)

HER 5620

The railway bridge at Norton Way North is recorded as an archaeological monument of the industrial era, although it is under one hundred years old. It has brick piers and iron girder construction, and was built in 1913 by the Great Northern Railway and The First Garden City Ltd. It replaced an earlier cattle creep a short distance to the west, serving the now lost Archway Road (Miller 2002, 51). It forms one of the main routes across the railway line, which bisects Letchworth Garden City and is thus an important route through the town. It also gives the first view of the study area when approaching from the north side of the town.



Figure 6: Norton Way North railway bridge, 2007

On the west pier of the bridge is an inscribed sandstone plaque recording its erection. It is badly weathered, especially on the right side, although most of the inscription can still be read. It does not appear to have been recorded previously. It reads:

THIS BRIDGE AND APPROACH [ROAD]
WERE CONSTRUCTED AD 1913 [BY THE]
GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY [LTD]
THE COST WAS JOINTLY DEFRAYED B[Y]
HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY Co[UNCIL,]
HITCHIN RURAL DISTRICT Co[UNCIL,]
LETCWORTH PARISH Co[UNCIL,]
GREAT NORTHERN RAILWA[Y LTD AND]
FIRST GARDEN CITY LIMIT[ED]
DEDICATED AS A PUBLIC [...]S HIGHWAY TO [...]
[...]THE RO[...]C[...]AL[...]Y ON[...]
[T]HE [...] HERTFORDSHIRE] COUNTY COUNCIL

The history of the railway is well known and recorded elsewhere; there is little need to repeat it here as it is not germane to the present study. Nevertheless, it forms a visual boundary to the area and the few crossing points, such as this bridge, focus traffic into specific parts of the town.

North Herts Museums Records (not also in Herts HER)

655 and 691

Coins of Roman emperors from Victorinus to Honorius (AD 269-423) were found at 198 Rushby Place and reported to Letchworth Museum in 1955. They were retained by the finder and there is no record of their total number or precise identifications. They probably derive from a late fourth- or early fifth-century coin hoard; the early fifth century was a period of massive hoard deposition as the money supply to the Roman Diocese ceased and coin use came to an end (Esmonde Cleary 1989, 139).

Press cutting 1910 (source unknown)

In a file labelled L10 (Letchworth: Norton) held by the Archaeological Service of North Hertfordshire Museums is a press cutting pasted to a piece of light card (Figure 7). Headlined *An Interesting Discovery*, it deals largely with the discovery of burials during sewer construction “near Norton Common”. However, it also mentions the discovery of a cremation burial during the excavation for the gasometer and of human bones “unearthed while making the ornamental lake as at the bottom of the new North-road”. As only one ornamental lake was built around this time, that in Howard Park, which was later redeveloped as a paddling pool, this must refer to human burials on the site.

Letter from Fred Cole to A W Brunt, 5 December (before 1929)

In a file labelled L5 (Letchworth Garden City: local correspondence) is a letter to Percival Westell, curator of Letchworth Museum, from the secretary of First Garden City Limited, dated 6 December 1930, attaching a letter from Fred Cole of Seattle to A W Brunt dated 5 December of an unspecified year (Brunt's own account of it (Brunt 1942, 22) as being written in 1930 must therefore be in error). Only the first page of the letter survives, but it includes the following description:

AN INTERESTING DISCOVERY.—While excavating for sewers, etc., near Norton Common, the workmen came on what has every appearance of having been a burial ground of a very early date. The remains are in too advanced a state of decomposition to learn much from them, but everything seems to point to a hasty burial after a battle, as horses and men have been buried in large pits; and from the finding of parts of stirrups, etc., amongst the horse remains, it appears that the horses were buried in harness. Horses and men were not buried in the same pits. Many of the men were cremated and the ashes buried in urns. From the appearance of the remains of the urns one is led to believe that they were made from local clay and were baked while the cremation was taking place, as they are very soft and scarcely baked through in places. All iron-ware has been transformed into mere masses of oxide of iron. Near one of the urns a small piece of ornamented hammered and turned metal has been unearthed. It appears to be of very hard brass and is in excellent preservation. Near the site for these burial pits, remains have been unearthed which point to a Roman residence having been near, as a quantity of pottery was found, and there is evidence of open sewers. The surface water draining into the open trench is almost black in places, having most probably come through a layer of soil heavily charged with organic matter. As this part of the Estate is developed, other finds of interest should be made. While excavating for the gasometer another burial vase was discovered, deep down in the chalk. Human bones were also unearthed while making the ornamental lake as at the bottom of the new North-road.

Figure 7: Newspaper cutting (source unknown), dated 1910

"There is no truth to the story that anything was destroyed, in fact when we came across a burial trench I sifted the ground and that is where we found most of the coins and arrow heads... Another was on Norton Way South about the bottom of Leys Avenue, and over on the Park side. At the back of Parkers Office was a fruitful spot, especially for pre Roman specimens."

The mention of a 'burial trench' and the location on the Park side "about the bottom of Leys Avenue" is perhaps related to the press cutting above; the finds "behind Parkers Office" probably relate to the construction of the swimming pool at the south end of Howard Garden in 1908. The range of materials included *"flint axe heads, some crude and some highly polished; a large number of arrow heads in stone and a large spear head, unpolished; bronze axe and arrow heads, Roman spurs in silver and many nearly whole pieces of pottery and glass. There were probably over a hundred coins, largely Roman, some in gold."* However, it is not possible to say which materials were found on a specific site.

Listed Buildings

The following descriptions are based on the Listed Buildings records. Parts are reproduced *verbatim*, although details have been checked on the ground and corrections made where necessary. Some background historical information has also been provided.

Listed Building 161862: 21-29 and 24-30 Hillshott

Listed Grade II on 7 September 1979 and built in 1912 by Robert Bennett and Wilson Bidwell (Pevsner 1977, 228). The development consists of grouped terraces for workmen on standard plans developed for the Howard Cottage Society. Splayed outbuildings link Nos 29 and 30 with Nos 31 to 43 (odd) Ridge Avenue, which form part of the same scheme. One and a half storeys, one window each, with symmetrical façades variegated by the juxtaposition of large and small gabled dormers. Tiled roofs with brown brick ridge stacks. Roughcast walls. Small dormers with weather-boarded gables. Two and three light casement windows with glazing bars and tile labels. Some large gables with labels extended as strings. Ground floor with 3 light splayed bay windows with cornices. Recessed, segmental-arched doorways with tile labels and boarded doors. One storey linking ranges with gabled entrances flanked by segmental-headed, 3-light windows. Original colour scheme retained with cream walls and windows, and green doors, window sills and pipework. Included for group value.

Listed Building 161889: The Free Church

Listed Grade II on 7 September 1979 and built in 1923 by Barry Parker to replace a Hall originally built in 1905 and opened in June 1924 (Figure 8; Pevsner 1977, 227; Chastney-Parr 1989, 5). Classical style with Greek cross plan form, giving a large internal space. Welsh green slate low-pitched roofs. Brown brick with red brick dressings and wooden modillion cornice carried round the open pediments of the four arms of the building. Architraved sash windows with flat gauged brick arches, dressings and glazing bars. Main east front with three-bay arcaded entrance approached by steps. This is the most important of the post World War I buildings in Letchworth Garden City, representing a radical change in style and materials from the informal Arts and Crafts idiom to a more formal classicism. The building cost £8,200 and seats eight hundred people. A plan to create a one-way system around the church via a new link road between Gernon Road and Leys Avenue that would have left it on a traffic island was abandoned after representations to the Secretary of State for the Environment in the early 1980s.



Figure 8: The Free Church, 2008

Listed Building 161891: Mrs Howard Memorial Hall

Listed Grade II on 7 September 1979, it was built in 1905-6 by Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin. It was the first public building in Letchworth Garden City, erected as a memorial to Ebenezer Howard's first wife, Elizabeth (Lizzie) Ann, who died on 7 November 1904 (Miller 2002, 87). The composition is a smaller scale version of Edgar Wood's Church of Christ Scientist at Victoria Park, Manchester (Chastney-Parr 1989, 6; Manchester Evening News 2003); Woods was a noted Arts and Crafts architect heavily influenced by Art Nouveau styles (Roberts *et al.* 2008). It was extended to the north-east by an L-shaped wing of similar style in 1907. Two storeys, deliberately set at a bold angle to Norton Way South and Hillshott. A symmetrical entrance front in a distinctly eclectic manner with projecting gabled bays flanking the higher central range. Hipped tiled roofs with free Tudor brick chimney shafts. Roughcast walls. Gabled bays partly tile-hung with large decorative wrought-iron end ties. Five-light, central dormer window below eaves of central range. Three plain windows with loops above in gables of projecting bays. Entrance with moulded brick surround and segmental arched doorway with double doors. Interior with exposed Queen Post roof and inglenook with elliptical brick arch to the north-west in an recess off the main hall. The extendible classroom/clubroom with its diagonally set platform is an early example of multi-use space in a public building. A flat-roofed extension was added later (in the 1960s?) and was not in keeping with the original design (Figure 9); it was not counted as part of the listed structure. Following many years of semi-dereliction, the building was restored and the flat-roofed extension replaced by a wing in identical style to the original by North Hertfordshire District Council in 2004 (Figure 10).

It quickly became a focus for cultural activities, with a library opening on Whit Monday (4 June) 1906, partly funded by a £5 donation from Howard Pearsall (Miller 2002, 87). It was owned by the Howard Hall Association and run by its committee, all male residents for longer than six months and aged over 21 being entitled to vote for it (Chastney-Parr 1989, 7).



Figure 9: Mrs Howard Hall (then known as The Leys), c 1996



Figure 10: The 2004 extension to Mrs Howard Hall, 2008

Listed Building 161892: The Garden City Heritage Museum

Listed Grade II* on 7 September 1979 and built in 1906-7 by Barry Parker (Pevsner 1977, 228) as an office in an East Anglian vernacular manner for the Parker and Unwin firm (Figure 11). Originally planned to be double the present size with a drawing office and private suite as a 'mirror image' of the present building. The original scheme, however, was modified when Raymond Unwin left Letchworth for Hampstead in 1906. Two bay hall (former drawing office) with a solar wing (partner's office) at the north end, giving an L-shaped plan. A squint window permits a view of the hall from the solar. One and a half storeys.



Figure 11: The First Garden City Heritage Museum, 2008

Thatched roof with decorative ridge and brick stack. Half hipped solar wing. Roughcast walls. Two, three and four light windows (oriel windows at rear with transoms) with artificial stone surrounds (thought to have been designed by Cecil Hignett), leaded lights and thatch eyebrows. Recessed entrance with double doors. Hall/studio with unplastered painted brick walls and open timber roof. Office/solar with copper-hooded, arched fireplace and cruciform window with stained glass representing the Four Seasons by Hesman of Harpenden. An extension of two storeys was added in 1937 by Barry Parker in similar style at the south end as living accommodation; a further addition was made to the south in 1976 for the Garden City Heritage Museum, which opened in 1977 (Chastney-Parr 1989, 3).

Listed Building 161905: 2-42 Rushby Mead

Listed Grade II on 7 September 1979, the group was built in 1911 by Robert Bennett and Wilson Bidwell to a layout by Raymond Unwin (Figure 12; Pevsner 1977, 228; Miller 2002, 63). Grouped workmen's cottages in 4 terraces built for the Letchworth Cottages and Buildings Limited, taken over by the Howard Cottage Society Limited. Typical of the best of Garden City housing and a model for all subsequent work. One and a half storeys, one and two windows each. Each terrace symmetrical but of varying design depending on the



Figure 12: Rushby Mead (north end), 2008

arrangement of the dormer gables. Tiled roofs with brick ridge stacks. Roughcast walls. Gabled and flat-topped casement dormers. Nos 34-42 with projecting gabled end bays to terrace; bay at north end is tile-hung. Two light casement windows with glazing bars and tile labels. End bays of Nos 34-42 with splayed bay windows to ground floor. Recessed doorways with segmental arched lintels and labels; No 42 entrance with hood carried over bay window. The original paintwork specification of cream walls and windows, and green doors has been maintained throughout.

Listed Building 161906: 86-144 Rushby Mead

Listed Grade II on 7 September 1979, the group was built in 1911 by Robert Bennett and Wilson Bidwell, again to a design by Raymond Unwin (Figure 13; Pevsner 1977, 228; Miller 2002, 63). Grouped workmen's cottages in 7 blocks of 2, 4 and 6. Built by the Howard Cottage Society Limited. The best of the early cottage layouts in which Bennett and Bidwell used their standard house types to particular advantage in an imaginative layout which exploits the picturesque quality of the street as advocated by Unwin in his then recently published *Town Planning in Practise*. One and a half storeys. One and two windows each. Irregular design of façades varied by use of large gabled bays. Tile roofs with brick ridge stacks. Roughcast walls. Gabled dormer casements with weather-boarded gables. Two, three and four light mullioned casements with glazing bars; some first floor gable windows with tile labels extended to form strings. Recessed doorways with tile labels. The original paintwork specification of cream walls and windows, and green doors has been maintained throughout.



Figure 13: Rushby Mead (south end), 2008

Photographic evidence

Historic photographs show the early undeveloped appearance of Howard Park, with its hand dug ornamental lake created before 1910. They tend to show a very rural scene, with children fishing or paddling. The photographs appear rather staged (in the early twentieth century, cameras were still something of a novelty) and they are clearly intended to emphasise the idyllic nature of the early Garden City. There do not seem to be any photographs showing the area before the Park was dedicated in 1905, which makes it very difficult to judge the extent to which Pix Brook had to be widened to create the lake.

Photographs from 1912 (Figure 14) and 1913 (Figure 15) show that a small canopied structure with four supporting columns, a pyramidal tiled roof and possibly wooden seats stood roughly on the line of the path that now runs from Norton Way South towards the paddling pool and the Howard Memorial. It has not been possible to locate any documentary information about this structure, which appears to have been part of the layout of Howard Park from an early date.



**Figure 14: The ornamental pond in 1912
(from Miller 1995, 91)**

This same structure is also shown on the Ordnance Survey 6" map of 1925 (Figure 22). However, it does not show on The First Garden City Ltd's *Map of Present Development* in 1906, when the lake is clearly depicted. The shelter was presumably constructed at some point between 1906 and 1912, and later removed for the construction of the present park layout (and especially the Ebenezer Howard Memorial) in 1930. It was therefore not connected with the original designation of the site as a park in 1905.

There are photographs showing the paddling pool from its early years through to the present day. Like photographs of the ornamental pond, some of them raise suspicions of being staged (such as Figure 16), but the paddling pool certainly remained a popular place for children to play in summer months well into the 1960s, when the swimming pool on Norton Common began to publicise bacterial counts in both the swimming pool and the paddling pool, to the detriment of the latter (*personal recollection*). This may in part have been responsible for the refurbishment of the paddling pool by the Urban District Council c 1970.

There are also photographs of the town's first swimming pool, that stood where the Ball Memorial Gardens are today and which was fed from the Pix Brook. This led to the growth of algae in the water during the summer months, which would build up until a weekly flushing of the pool and refilling with fresh water.

Documentary evidence

With a project such as this, there is little time to identify or examine original documents. Moreover, there are not likely to be many with a direct bearing on the site before the foundation of



Figure 15: Norton Way South from the new railway bridge in 1913 (from Miller 1995, 40)



Figure 16: The paddling pool in 1933 (from Miller 2002, 121 figure 98)

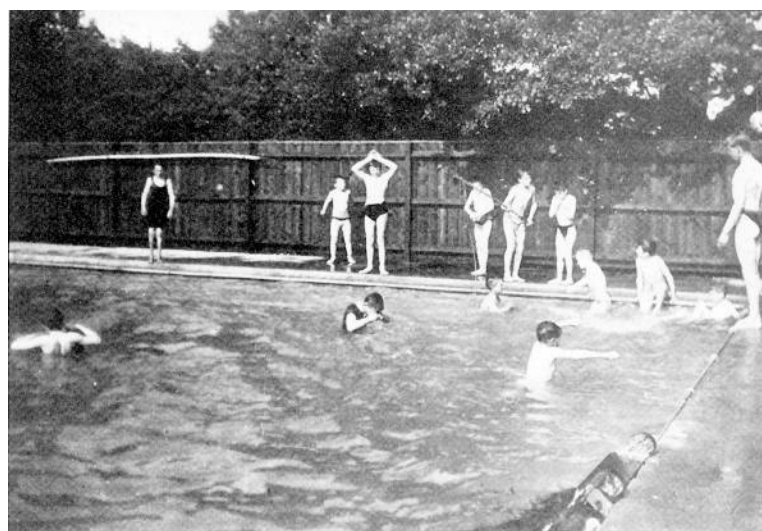


Figure 17: The Pixmore Way swimming pool in 1913 (from Miller 1995, 95)

Letchworth Garden City. The following assessment of the evidence is therefore based entirely on secondary sources.

The development of Howard Park is relatively well recorded in the local press and although there is some confusion over the precise date at which it was designated as such, it is clear that it has been a formal park since the spring of 1905 (Chastney-Parr 1989, 9; Miller 2002, 37). The Howard Memorial was dedicated on 19 October 1930, two years after Howard's death; its location was perhaps determined by the recent cosmetic improvements to the area, including the initial concreting of the paddling pool (Chastney-Parr 1989, 9).

The Howard Garden Over Sixties' Centre opened in September 1953 (Chastney-Parr 1989, 4), following an appeal launched in 1951 by the Letchworth Old People's Welfare Committee. The Committee had been formed in 1942 and had previously met in The People's House and the Free Church hall (*Insight* Spring 2002). The original centre was enlarged in 1960, 1965, 1970 and 2001, the latter as a result of a successful application to the National Lottery's Charities Board.

The Ball Memorial Gardens were the site of the Garden City's first swimming pool, paid for by Christie Miller and opened by Sir Ralph Neville on 27 June 1908 (Figure 17; Brunt 1942, 22; Chastney-Parr 1989, 4; Local History Guide, Swimming Pool). It measured 75 × 40 feet and was open May to September. The pool closed when the new open air lido opened on Norton Common in 1935 (Miller 2002, 121).

Cartographic evidence

A number of historic maps have been consulted for this exercise, the earliest of which is that published by Dury and Andrews in 1766 (Figure 18). This shows the whole of Hertfordshire at a scale of 1.95 inches to the mile (1:32,492) and was the earliest large scale survey of the entire county to be published.

Like most early maps, it shows the topography by means of hachures and shading, and although it is generally reckoned to be largely accurate, its field boundaries appear to be simplified. Moreover, it is evident that their depiction of Pix Brook, like other minor streams, shows wobbles that are merely conventionalised.

An attempt to locate the site on this map shows that the brook is placed slightly too far to the east (Figure 18). Interestingly, the parish boundary does not conform to its nineteenth-century boundary along the brook. It is not clear if this is a result of an error on the part of the map makers or if the boundary was changed after 1766.

The First Edition Ordnance Survey One Inch map (scale 1:63,360) was surveyed between 1780 and 1834 and published in 1834 (Figure 19); it is the first accurate survey to have been made of the whole of England and Wales and is invaluable in showing the condition of the land before the transformations brought about by railway development.

As with Dury and Andrews' map, the topography is shown by means of shading, with no means of determining absolute heights. This perhaps exaggerates the character of the Pix Brook valley, which is by no means as sharply defined as this map suggests.

The only roads shown in the vicinity of the site are Icknield Way to the north, Spring Road to the west (and it should be noted that it extends only as far as a barn and not to Icknield Way) and Baldock Road to the south. It may perhaps be assumed that the landscape around the site was purely agricultural at this date.

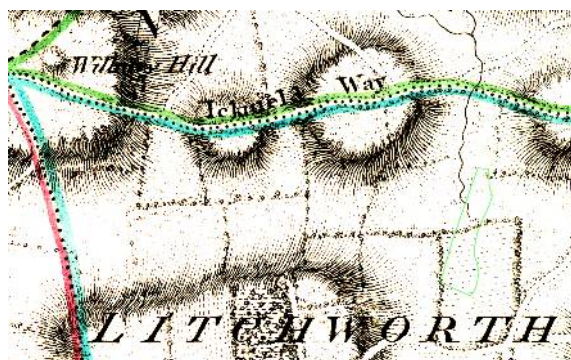


Figure 18: Letchworth on Dury & Andrews' map of 1766; the site is outlined in green



Figure 19: The First Edition Ordnance Survey one-inch map (1834), enlarged to 1:50,000 and showing the National Grid; the site is outlined in green

This map shows the Pix Brook in its correct location, although it does not follow its present, culverted, course precisely. The northern part of the site is part of a narrow band of woodland extending eastwards from Wilbury Hill along the southern side of the Icknield Way, turning south to follow the western bank of the Pix Brook. This follows the parish boundary of Letchworth, with Norton to the north and Willian to the east.

The field boundaries are incomplete on many First Edition Ordnance Survey one-inch maps and this appears to be the case here. There is what may be a small enclosure occupying roughly the central part of the site, but it is difficult to separate this from the depiction of the Pix Brook; conversely, it may be the pool shown on later maps.

The Second Edition, surveyed in 1893 and published in 1896 (Figure 20), shows additional details (such as parish boundaries and the new railways) and was the last mapping of the area before Letchworth Garden City was founded in 1903. This shows that the band of trees running east from Wilbury Hill had been removed and that only the northern part of the site had remained wooded.

The depiction of topography remains conventionalised, but is improved over the First Edition. The valley of the Pix Brook appears much shallower, giving a more accurate impression of its character.

The road pattern remains as on the First Edition, although the barn to which Spring Road led has been removed (perhaps as a result of the construction of the railway) and the road extended north (through a cattle creep) to meet Icknield Way, as it still does. It should be noted that there is no cattle creep in the position of the later Archway Road, north-north-east of the site. However, the 1880 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map (not reproduced here) does show the cattle creep, suggesting that it was considered too unimportant to show at the one-inch scale.

For the first time, the tributary of Pix Brook that runs north-east across Howard Garden is shown on a map; it is not clear if it was a new channel dug to improve drainage in the shallow valley or if it had simply been overlooked by earlier cartographers.

The Third Edition, surveyed in 1912-20 and published in 1920 (Figure 21), shows the early development of the Garden City, by which time Howard Park had already been created. This edition marks a radical departure from earlier editions in terms of mapping style, which was brought about by the growth of motor car use in the early decades of the twentieth century. For the first time, colour is used both to show the classification of roads and to mark areas of woodland and watercourses.

A further improvement in mapping is the use of contours to depict topography rather than the conventional hachures used by earlier cartographers. Absolute heights in feet above sea level (as defined at Liverpool) are now shown.

This map makes it clear that the site lay at the centre of the first two decades' development of the Garden City. This perhaps explains why it was chosen to be designated as a public park at an early date in the town's history. At this time, Norton Way was the principal entry route into the town centre, the central part of Broadway and the eastern part of Pixmore Way not yet having been constructed. It was the first road to be built in the Garden City, early in 1904, which it was named North Road; the present name was adopted before 1907 (Local History Guide).

The new railway bridge on Norton Way North is shown, as is the ornamental lake on the site of what was later to become the paddling pool. However, Pix Brook is still shown as forming the eastern boundary of Howard Park and had evidently not yet been culverted.

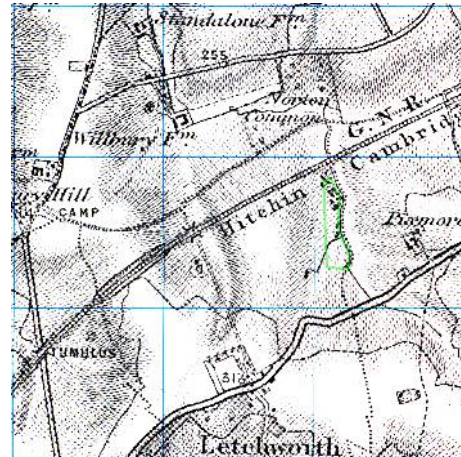


Figure 20: The Second Edition Ordnance Survey one-inch map (1893), enlarged to 1:50,000 and showing the National Grid; the site is outlined in green



Figure 21: The Third Edition Ordnance Survey one-inch map (1920), enlarged to 1:50,000 and showing the National Grid

The Ordnance Survey 6" map of 1925 (Figure 22) shows a Club covering most of what became the bowling green in 1931 and an n-shaped lake to the south of the Pix Brook tributary. The swimming pool at the south end is clearly marked and the Pix Brook is shown as open throughout its length (except where it passes beneath Pixmore Way, Hillshott and Birds Hill). In Howard Park, the ornamental pool that is now the paddling pool is shown in its original state; it was evidently much the same size and shape as the paddling pool, although there was an island at the southern end, where the lake became broader.

The tributary approaching Pix Brook from the south-west is shown on the 1906 *Plan of Present Development* and the Ordnance Survey Second Edition 1" map, but is not present on Dury and Andrews' map of 1766. It is culverted to the west under Norton Way South, continuing south-west beneath Pixmore Way and Meadow Way. Although the hollow south of the Pix Brook tributary that crosses Howard Garden is now dry, the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of 1880 and the 1925 six-inch map show that in 1880 and 1925, it was the site of a body of water. It may also be present on the First Edition one-inch map (Figure 19). Unlike the ornamental pond created to the north in 1906, there is no indication that this was anything other than a natural body of water.



Figure 22: The Ordnance Survey six-inch (1:10,560) map (1925)

The site inspection

An inspection of the site was carried out by the writer on 16 and 17 April 2008, with photographic records. The walks-through were conducted in dry sunny weather and were restricted to recording the visible features of the site and its immediate environs. The results are more qualitative than quantitative but aim to provide an accurate record of site's physical characteristics in early 2008. Interpretations are based on deductions from observations made during the walks-through, personal knowledge of the site extending back to the early 1960s and documentary research.

Howard Park

Howard Park forms the northern part of the study area, north of Hillshott, which cuts it into two roughly equal parts and which forms the southern boundary of Howard Park and associated features. The eastern boundary is formed by Rushby Mead, the northern by Birds Hill and the western by Norton Way South, all early roads in the Garden City. The Park occupies some 5.3 ha (13 acres) and was inaugurated as a formal garden on 15 April 1905, receiving its name Howard Garden on 31 May of the same year (Chastney-Parr 1989, 9; Miller 2002, 37).

Description

The northern end of the site is occupied by a small formal garden partly enclosed by a low broken concrete slab wall to the north-west (by the roundabout at the junction of Station Road, Birds Hill and Station Road), with a bench outside it facing the roundabout, and an electricity sub-station behind a wire fence to the north-east at the junction of Rushby Mead and Birds Hill (Figure 23). It is not known if this garden, which was laid out in its present form c 1970, has a formal name. Before the present layout was created, there was a small brick structure in the south-



Figure 23 The small garden at the junction of Birds Hill and Norton Way South, 2008

eastern corner of the garden, which may have been a urinal and the precursor of the present Public Conveniences (*personal recollection*). On the north side of Birds Hill, facing these, is Howard Park Corner, a curved group of shops with accommodation above designed by Cecil H Hignett and built in 1921-2 (Chastney-Parr 1989, 11).

South of the formal garden and electricity sub-station is a small public car park, operated by North Hertfordshire District Council, with spaces for 38 vehicles and known as Birds Hill Car Park (Figure 24). The entrance to the car park is from Norton Way South and the exit to Rushby Mead. It is edged with low wooden fencing to the east and south, and by metal crash barrier fencing to the north and west, reinforced at the boundary with the electricity sub-station. Short stretches of hedge are maintained either side of the entrance from Norton Way South. A number of rectangular patches of asphalt resurfacing suggest that excavations have been carried out in recent years, perhaps related to services for the Public Conveniences to the south as no archaeological investigations are known to have been conducted here.

Immediately south of the car park is a pale brown brick single-storey building, providing one of the town's two public toilets (Figure 25). It is of two builds, the shorter, eastern section being later in date. It has gable ends facing east and west, with entrances to the Gentlemen's and Disabled toilets on the east end and to the Ladies' on the south side; another door at the east end of the south wall has a metal grille over it and presumably gives access to the pumping equipment (it has hazard warning signs about hydrochloric chemicals), while at the east end of the north wall is a wide double door that presumably allows the pumping equipment to be installed and removed. The building dates from the late 1960s; the extension to house the pump is probably not much later.

South of the toilets, the sunken nature of Howard Park becomes apparent, where Norton Way South and Rushby Mead are



Figure 24 Birds Hill car park seen from Rushby Mead, 2008



Figure 25: Howard Park public toilets from the south-west, 2008



Figure 26 The embanked nature of Norton Way South, along the western edge of Howard Park, looking south, 2008

visibly embanked (Figure 26). There is also a noticeable slope down from west to east, towards the lowest part of the garden, occupied by the paddling pool, a sinuous and mostly narrow concrete structure (Figure 27). The concrete was replaced in the 1960s, when a group of stepping stones across the narrowest part were removed (*personal recollection*). The pool is around 0.25 m deep, although there was no water in it at the time of the walks-through. At the southern end of the paddling pool is a hexagonal concrete fountain, with copper piping forming a single vent at the top of a spike in poor condition, much altered from its original appearance (Figure 16 shows it c 1933). There are signs warning users not to climb on it. A line of replacement concrete running from the edge of the pool to the fountain suggests a repair to the pipe feeding the fountain later than the 1960s. To the south-east, there is a low rectangular structure with a pipe feeding the pool; this was added in the late 1960s (*personal recollection*). The drain is at the northern end of the pool, where a sheet of perforated stainless steel prevents leaves and other rubbish from clogging the drains.



Figure 27: The paddling pool from the south, 2008

East of the narrowest point of the paddling pool is a curved brick wall, forming a semicircular monument, with a stone memorial plaque at the centre reading *EBENEZER HOWARD FOUNDED THIS TOWN 1903* (Figure 28). The memorial was unveiled in May 1930, two years after Howard's death (Miller 2002, 130). Opposite the memorial, leading west, is a set of steps with low brick walls and pillars with low pyramidal capstones at each end, with a flagged path leading to an identical set of steps onto the embanked Norton Way South. This was clearly intended to be the major axis of the Park from the time of its installation.



Figure 28: The Howard Memorial, 2008

To the east of the Howard Memorial is a children's play area, with modern play equipment, including swings, several themed climbing frames and a rocking horse, enclosed by a low wooden fence (Figure 29). The equipment is surrounded by bark chippings designed to minimise injury to children if they fall. Enclosed playgrounds of this type date mostly from the 1980s and 1990s and the play equipment is largely of 1990s and 2000s style.



Figure 29: The children's play area from the south, 2008

At the southern end and the south-western end of the paddling pool are two more sets of steps with low brick walls and pillars of identical design to the steps east of the narrowest part of the pool. Both sets of steps give access to a pathway between Rushby Mead and Norton Way South.

Between the path and the paddling pool is a small circular stone (or synthetic stone) plaque set into a double ring of stone setts (similar to those used to create pseudo-antique road surfaces) laid in the grass (Figure 30). It records the centenary of the Garden City in 2003 and quotes words of Ebenezer Howard, reading “*Town and country must be married, and of this joyous union will spring a new hope, a new life, a new civilisation.*” EBENEZER HOWARD. Letchworth Garden City Centenary 1903-2003”. The lettering is incised and painted; after only five years, it is already in poor condition and there is nothing to draw attention to its presence.



Figure 30: The Garden City centenary memorial, 2008

South of the path crossing Howard Park is a square area of tarmac, possibly laid for roller skating or a similar activity. To its west is a mature oak tree, to the west of which stands a bronze plaque recording its dedication to the town by the 3000 or so refugees who were settled here following the German invasion of Belgium in 1915 (Figure 31). Many lived in Burnell Rise, Campers Square and Campers Road, to the west of the town centre, which in consequence became known for a while as ‘Little Antwerp’ (Miller 2002, 98). The tree was planted on 25 January 1915 (Chastney-Parr 1989, 9). The plaque reads “THIS OAK HAS BEEN PRESENTED TO THE PARISH COUNCIL OF LETCHWORTH IN GRATEFUL RECOGNITION OF THE GENEROUS HOSPITALITY RECEIVED BY BELGIANS DURING THE GREAT WAR. DECEMBER 1918”. There are a number of irregular undulations in the grass in this area that do not appear to be archaeological in origin.



Figure 31: The bronze plaque recording the donation of a commemorative oak to the town by Belgian refugees in 1918

South of the tarmac area is the recently refurbished Mrs Howard Memorial Hall, described above. East and south of the hall is a public car park with 97 spaces, known as the Howard Hall Car Park. This has hedgerows to Hillshott on the south and Rushby Mead on the east; entry is via Hillshott and exit via Rushby Mead.

Interpretation

Howard Park is a narrow area of grassy parkland with some trees (mostly to the east and south) and a long irregular concrete paddling pool running for around half of its length at the lowest point. The present landscape of the Park is basically that of a redevelopment of 1930, although there have been changes at both the northern and the southern ends, with the construction of new car parks, new public conveniences and an electricity sub-station; the Mrs Howard Memorial Hall has also undergone alteration and extension, with the 2004 extension replacing a less sympathetic 1960s build. The paddling pool has also been altered slightly in its details. Its leasehold was acquired by Letchworth Urban District Council in 1934 (Miller 2002, 121) and in December 1948, the council was offered the freehold of the land in return for the payment of relevant legal fees (Miller 2002, 155).

Howard Garden

Description

Pix Brook follows the entire western edge of Howard Gardens and occupies an artificial cut up to two metres deep in places (Figure 32). To the north, it is culverted beneath Hillshott and Howard Park, while to the south, it is culverted beneath Pixmore Way. Where it is met by a tributary approaching from the south-west, there is also an area of concrete reinforcement of the banks. Elsewhere (including along the tributary), the banks are partly formed from the exposed roots of the trees planted along the top and there is evidence for erosion of material behind the root systems.

The northern part of Howard Garden is occupied by the Howard Garden Bowling Club, established in 1931, when the green was laid and the clubhouse built (Figure 33; Chastney-Parr 1989, 4), although a date of 1937 has been given for the foundation of the club (Local History Guide, Howard Garden Bowling Club). The clubhouse is a single storey building facing south, apparently of wooden construction in four bays with irregular weatherboarding below three sets of four six-panelled casement windows and a double door to the second bay. It has a hipped slate roof and a brick chimney to the rear of the second bay. To the right (east) is a weatherboarded shed with a simple boarded door, one twelve-light casement window to the left and a pitched tiled roof.



Figure 32: Pix Brook from Pixmore Way, looking north, 2008

The Howard Garden Over Sixties' Centre consists of a single storey brick building of five unequal bays, with central door beneath a clock in a gabled pseudo-dormer and a hipped roof with tall brick chimney stack to left (Figure 33). The windows consist of twenty (5×4), sixteen (4×4), sixteen and sixteen lights. The building has been extended to the rear (north). There are extensions to the north and north-west, also in brick with hipped roofs and a gable with weatherboarding facing Norton Way South, where the main entrance is now located.



Figure 33: Howard Garden Over Sixties' Centre (left) and Howard Garden Bowls Club (right), 2008

To the south of the buildings is an area of mown grass and flower beds and, south of that, the bowling green, a flat area of well-maintained grass with a well around its edge, used for the game of lawn bowls. This area is also noticeably beneath the level of Norton Way South, like the Park to the north, the road continuing to be embanked to the junction with Pixmore Way.

South of the bowling green, the site is almost bisected by a band of conifers, following the northern bank of a tributary of the Pix Brook. This tributary is also culverted beneath the path that passes to the east of the bowling green. Set in a shallower cut than the main course of the stream, there is greater encroachment onto the banks by a variety of shrubs and weeds as well as the band of trees apparently planted to mark its course. Erosion of the banks is a greater problem, with water undermining the root systems of a number of trees. To the north-east, the stream enters a narrow circular concrete culvert, which was partly clogged with dead leaves and partly with rubbish at the time of the survey.

On the south-western side of the bowling green is the First Garden City Heritage Museum; the Listed structure has been described above. Originally established by North Hertfordshire District Council, the Museum is now owned and run by Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and focuses on the history of the town since 1903 in contrast with Letchworth Museum, which is more concerned with the natural history and archaeology of the entire district of North Hertfordshire.

To the south of the tributary stream is a sunken area of light woodland, corresponding to the pond shown on maps in 1880 and 1906. It is not clear when the pond was drained; it may be suggested that this happened during the construction of Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin's offices to the west (now the First Garden City Heritage Museum), although it does not impinge directly on the building.

On the southern edge of the hollow is a plinth marked simply SAPPHO (Figure 35). This was the site of what was for many years the only public statue in Letchworth Garden City, a bronze of the Greek poetess of the eighth century BC by the sculptor Thomas Nelson Maclean (1845-1894). It was originally known as *Our Sappho*, but since its donation to the Garden City in 1907 by Isabelle Linnell (1870-1958), the sister of Maclean's widow, it has been known simply as *Sappho*. It is not known why Maclean chose the subject, although he did produce a number of bronzes on Classical themes and was influenced by the work of Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema; Isabelle Linnell is believed to have been lesbian, which perhaps explains her reason for donating the statue to the town. The statue has been stolen on two occasions, firstly in 1995 and again in May 1998, on the latter occasion following an item about it in the national lesbian magazine *Diva* that raised the issue of the statue's potential importance to writing a history of lesbian and gay presence in the early Garden City (Maughan 1998). It has not so far been recovered (Miller 2002, 96). The statue was originally sited on Lytton Avenue in 1907, moved to Broadwater Avenue some time before 1914 and was eventually moved to this location, overlooking the Ball Memorial Gardens, in July 1936; the plinth was set up in March 1939 (Chastney-Parr 1989, 4).



Figure 34: The tributary of Pix Brook, which crosses Howard Garden, looking east-north-east, 2008



Figure 35: Sappho by Thomas Maclean (from Miller 2002)

The Ball Memorial Gardens were established in 1936 in memory of Councillor Charles Francis Ball (1870-1933), first Chairman of Letchworth Urban District Council (Chastney-Parr 1989, 4). They consist of a slightly sunken formal garden, three steps down from the path, with low box hedges partly surrounding geometric flower beds, the whole surrounded by crazy paving (Figure 37). At the northern end, a bronze plaque records that

“THIS GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE WAS PROVIDED BY DONATIONS FROM CITIZENS OF LETCHWORTH AND PERSONAL FRIENDS IN MEMORY OF COUNCILLOR CHARLES FRANCIS BALL, C.B.E., J.P. IN GRATITUDE FOR SERVICES RENDERED TO THE TOWN AND COUNTY” (Figure 36).

Interpretation

Howard Garden is rather different in character from Howard Park to the north. Although a public open space acquired by Letchworth Urban District Council in 1919 (Miller 2002, 121), its northern part is occupied by community premises, including the bowls club and an over-60s centre. The Ball Memorial Gardens are more secluded and intimate than other parts of the site and appear to be used more as a short cut and dog walking area than for recreation.



Figure 36: The memorial plaque to Charles F Ball (1870-1933)



Figure 37: The Ball Memorial Gardens

Discussion

Howard Park and Howard Garden are well-established urban open spaces. Although there was considerable change to their layout during the first four decades of the twentieth century, there has been no significant change since then and they are the locations of mature buildings set amid mature vegetation. Nothing in their landscape, apart from the Pix Brook, is suggestive of an earlier origin.

Nevertheless, there is considerable evidence for more ancient activity from discoveries reported principally during the first half of the twentieth century. Roman coins found nearby are part of a general spread across the Garden City estate. Although on their own they do not provide any real evidence for the nature of nearby activity (be it settlement, industrial, religious or burial), they attest to the extensive nature of that activity. A number of occupation sites have been discovered in the town, which indicate that its fertile soils were exploited by farmers who presumably sold their produce at the nearby market town of Baldock.

Similarly, the flints are part of a general scatter of prehistoric lithic material. However, this is more restricted in its distribution (focusing principally on Gernon Road) and is probably evidence for Neolithic activity of unknown character on the east-facing slope overlooking the Pix Brook. This would date to the period 4000-2000 BC. Sites of this period are generally uncommon, although the excavations carried out by Letchworth Museum at Blackhorse Road between 1957 and 1973 revealed occupation of this date and hint at the likely nature and extent of the Gernon Road site.

More difficult to gauge are the reports from the newspaper cutting of 1910, which clearly describe discoveries in both parts of the site but which give no clues about the possible dates of the remains uncovered. These are partly amplified by Fred Cole's undated letter, which refers to the area "behind Parker's Office" (i.e. the site of the former swimming pool, now the Ball Memorial Garden) as being a good source of prehistoric material. This may refer to more flints related to the Gernon Road scatter, but as the letter refers also to bronze metalwork, the possibility of Bronze Age or Iron Age material having been found should not be overlooked.

The human remains in the vicinity of the paddling pool are impossible to date on current evidence. However, it is likely that the initial excavation of the ornamental lake removed only those burials directly beneath it and that more burials have survived beyond its edges. The discovery of human remains is always an emotive issue and it is one where a number of legal constraints exist. Disused burial grounds cannot be ignored during development work and the human remains must be removed under license. That they were recognised as human strongly suggests that the remains were not cremated, which means that they are unlikely to date from the Bronze Age; however, they could date from any period from the Neolithic onwards until the church took control of burial in the tenth century AD. Nevertheless, the position close to the former parish boundary is suggestive of an early medieval cemetery, particularly of the pagan period (fifth to seventh centuries AD); the parallel with the small cemetery discovered by John Moss-Eccardt at Blackhorse Road (Moss-Eccardt 1971) is suggestive.

The archaeological potential

The potential of the site lies in a number of areas. The known archaeology of the surrounding area indicates that nearby prehistoric activity dating to the Neolithic is likely to extend at least onto the southern part of the site. There is also the possibility of Bronze Age or Iron Age discoveries; a Bronze Age date is perhaps more likely, given the geology of the site, which lies in an area of former wetlands, which were often a focus for Late Bronze Age (c 1140-750 BC) activity. Similarly, the extensive Romano-British activity attested across the Garden City means that there is a strong possibility of Roman period remains on the site, although its low-lying character suggests that it is unlikely to be domestic. The likelihood of discovering further human remains on the site is high; if they are of early medieval date, as suggested above, they would represent a rare class of monument in North Hertfordshire.

Other forms of archaeological remains may exist and have simply not been recorded through the discovery of diagnostic datable material. In particular, the likelihood that nearby Romano-British occupation was preceded by Iron Age occupation of identical character should be noted. The deposits underlying the topsoil are part of the floodplain of the Pix Brook and may well be waterlogged. As already pointed out, such deposits were a focal point for Late Bronze Age activity, but they are also likely to favour the preservation of organic materials that usually decay on dry land archaeological sites. Such deposits can yield important information about past environments through the preservation of plant macrofossils (including leaves) and microfossils (including pollen).

Finally, the archaeology of the Garden City as a monument in its own right should not be overlooked. While remains of recent date are not generally considered in developments of this nature, the international significance of Letchworth Garden City makes the careful recording of remains from its early years an important element in preserving the archaeology of the site, if only by record.

In summary, the archaeology of the site includes or is likely to include:

1. Neolithic activity, known from flint scatters (c 4000-2000 BC)
2. Potential Late Bronze Age remains in waterlogged deposits (c 1140-750 BC)
3. Potential Romano-British occupation (AD c 43-411).
4. Undated human remains (possibly early medieval, AD c 450-700).
5. The early to mid twentieth-century landscape of the Park and Garden.
6. Deposits of palaeoenvironmental interest that may exist in the vicinity of the Pix Brook.

The impact of redevelopment

Redevelopment of the site will impact on the archaeological remains in a number of ways, the size of the impact being dependent on the scale and nature of the redevelopment. Some potential impacts may be mitigated in the design of the works, while others are unavoidable. In the latter category are the human burials in the vicinity of the paddling pool in Howard Park. Any landscaping or other work involving ground penetration in this area has a significant likelihood of disturbing human remains, which needs to be managed carefully (not least in terms of public relations).

Other aspects of the redevelopment will have a less serious impact in terms of legal constraints. Even so, any ground disturbance may destroy otherwise irreplaceable archaeological remains and an opportunity should be afforded for the recording (and salvage excavation, if necessary) of any remains exposed in this way.

Sources consulted

Cartographic

Dury, A & Andrews, J 1766 *A topographical map of Hartford-Shire, from an actual survey*. London: A Dury

Ordnance Survey 1880 1:2500 Southampton: Ordnance Survey

Ordnance Survey 1925 *Herts 7 S.E. 1:10,560*. Southampton: Ordnance Survey

On-line

Manchester Evening News 2003 *First Church of Christ Scientist – Edgar Wood building*. http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/entertainment/days_out/s/63/63559_first_church_of_christ_scientist__edgar_wood_building.html Last visited 11 April 2008

Electronic Middle English Dictionary 2001 <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/> Last visited 17 April 2008

Roberts, D, Stone, S, Canniffe & Crompton A 2008 *Continuity in architecture*. <http://www.msa.mmu.ac.uk/continuity/> Last visited 11 April 2008

Unpublished

Local History Guide, Letchworth Garden City Library. Typescript notes: Howard Garden, Howard Garden Bowling Club, Howard Hall, Howard Park, Rushby Mead, Rushby Place, Swimming Pool

Bibliography

Anon 1898 Letchworth. *Herts Genealogist & Antiquary* **3**, 185-7

Applebaum, E S 1949 Excavations at Wilbury Hill, an Iron Age hillfort near Letchworth, Hertfordshire. *Archaeol J* **106**, 12-45

Brunt, A W 1942 *Pageant of Letchworth 1903-14*. Letchworth Garden City: Letchworth Printers Ltd

Burleigh, G R, Matthews, K J & Went, D 1990 *The church of St Mary the Virgin, Letchworth: an archaeological investigation*. Letchworth Garden City: North Hertfordshire District Council Museums (Field Archaeology Report **2**)

Chastney-Parr, R ed. 1989 *Letchworth Garden City Society town trail*. Letchworth Garden City: Letchworth Garden City Society

Chauncy, H 1700 *The historical antiquities of Hertfordshire*. London: Ben Griffin

Christie, M E 1912 Letchworth. In: Page, W ed. *The Victoria History of the County of Hertford, volume three*. London: The University of London Institute of Historical Research, 118-124

Duckworth, G H ed 1910 *Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England): an inventory of the historical monuments in Hertfordshire*. London: H.M.S.O.

Esmonde Cleary, S 1989 *The ending of Roman Britain*. London: Routledge

Hopson, P M, Aldiss, D T & Smith, A 1996 *Geology of the country around Hitchin: memoir for 1:50 000 Geological Sheet 221 (England and Wales)*. London: H.M.S.O.

Howard, E 1898 *Tomorrow: a peaceful path to real reform*. London: Swan Sonnenschein

Johnson, K 1976 *The book of Letchworth: an illustrated record*. Chesham: Barracuda

Matthews, K J & Burleigh, G R 1989 A Saxon and early medieval site at Green Lane, Letchworth. *Herts Past* (26), 27-31

Mattingly, H & Sydenham, E A 1962 *The Roman imperial coinage Volume II: Vespasian to Hadrian*. London: Spink & Son

Maughan, C 1988 Sappho of... Letchworth? *Diva* (May 1998), 30

- Miller, M 1995 *The archives photographs series: Letchworth Garden City*. Trowbridge: Chalford
- Miller, M 2002 *Letchworth: the first Garden City*. Second edition. Chichester: Phillimore
- Morris, J ed 1976 *Domesday Book 12: Hertfordshire*. Chichester: Phillimore
- Moss-Eccardt, J 1964 Excavations at Wilbury Hill, an Iron Age hillfort, near Letchworth, Herts. *Beds Archaeol J* **2**, 34-46
- Moss-Eccardt, J 1971 An Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Blackhorse Road, Letchworth, Hertfordshire. *Beds Archaeol J* **6**, 27-32
- Moss-Eccardt, J 1988 Archaeological Investigations in the Letchworth Area, 1958-1974: Blackhorse Road, Letchworth; Norton Road, Baldock; Wilbury Hill, Letchworth. *Proc Cambridge Antiq Soc* **77**, 35-104
- Pevsner, N 1977 *The buildings of England: Hertfordshire*. Second edition, revised by Bridget Cherry. Harmondsworth: Penguin
- Salmon, N 1728 *The history of Hertfordshire; describing the county and its ancient monuments*. London
- Sutherland, C V H 1984 *The Roman imperial coinage Volume I: 31 BC-AD 69*. Revised edition. London: Spink & Son
- Westell, W P 1935 Bronze objects found in Hertfordshire. *Antiq J* **15**, 349-1