

Radwell

'Radwell Only'

The sign from the A507 (the former Great North Road) to the village reads 'Radwell Only': the community lies on a single street running west from here. Radwell Lane passes under the A1 motorway, crosses the River Ivel and stops at the parish boundary on the west side. The parish is a curious reversed-L shape, the area to the northwest being part of Stotfold in Bedfordshire (Figure 1).

The northern part of the western boundary follows the line of the Roman road between Baldock on Sandy. It turns west on an alignment continuing that of Newnham Road, which still existed in 1822. Lidar reveals a bank on the boundary here, which may be medieval, like that forming the northern boundary of Norton, recorded in 1007 as *Stodfaldes dic* ('Stotfold Dyke'). It travels west until meeting the River Ivel, where it turns to the south along the stream. It leaves the river just south of Nortonbury Lane, crossing the Roman road to follow a track forming the northern edge of Bygrave at this point. Passing Ivel Grange, it turns more to a north-northwesterly direction before reaching the top of the ridge, descending in the centre of a dry valley, to meet the Cat Ditch west of Manor Farm in Newnham. It follows the stream to a point west of Caldecote, where after following a field boundary for a short distance, it then follows a footpath to rejoin the Roman road.

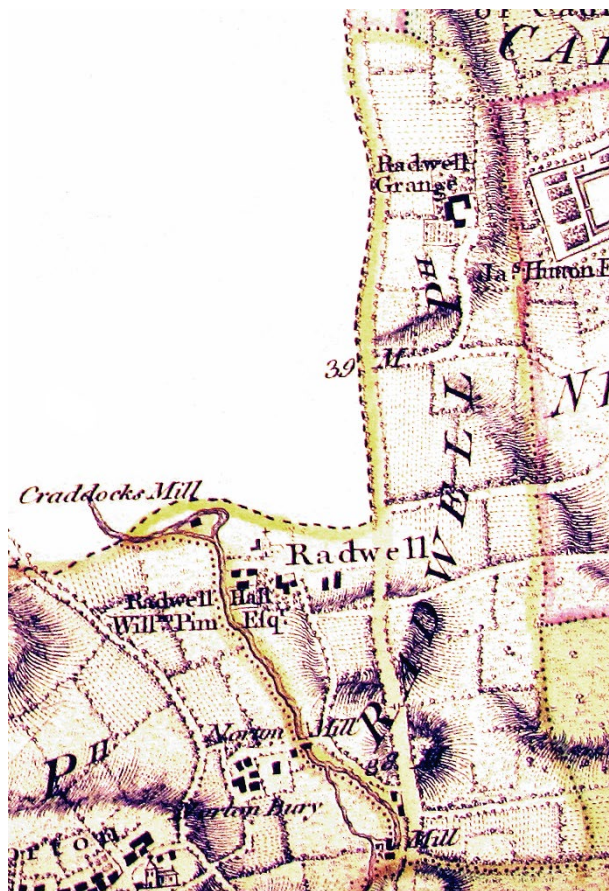


Figure 1: the parish as shown by Dury and Andrews in 1766

Placenames

Radwell is first mentioned as a place in Domesday Book, where it is spelt *Radeuuelle*. The name contains *readan*, 'red', and *welle*, 'a spring'. An earlier mention of the name, in estate bound for Norton attached to a charter of 1007, has *readen wylles heafdon*, 'the red spring head', referring to the Ivel Springs (*Radwellesheved* in the fourteenth century), outside the parish. Although the water is not red, the underlying silts in the riverbed have a reddish-purple tint, which must be the origin of the name.

There are no other settlements in the parish. The only other names analysed by the English Place-Name Society are *Rygewey* from 1540 (probably the name of the main road, which follows a ridge above the valley of the River Ivel) and Bury Farm. The farm name is not recorded before 1676, although *le bery gate* is mentioned in 140 and a field called *pe Berie close* is found in a church terrier of 1638. It is the usual Hertfordshire dialect term for a manor house rather than the Old English *burh*, 'fortified place'.

The Society also records three field names. Dane Field (*Danmad* in 1540 refers to a nearby mead or meadow) contains Old English *denu*, 'a valley', with the typical Hertfordshire shift of Old English *-e-* to *-a-* before a nasal. Ridge Field is probably associated with the *Rygewey* already mentioned, while Church Close is self-explanatory.

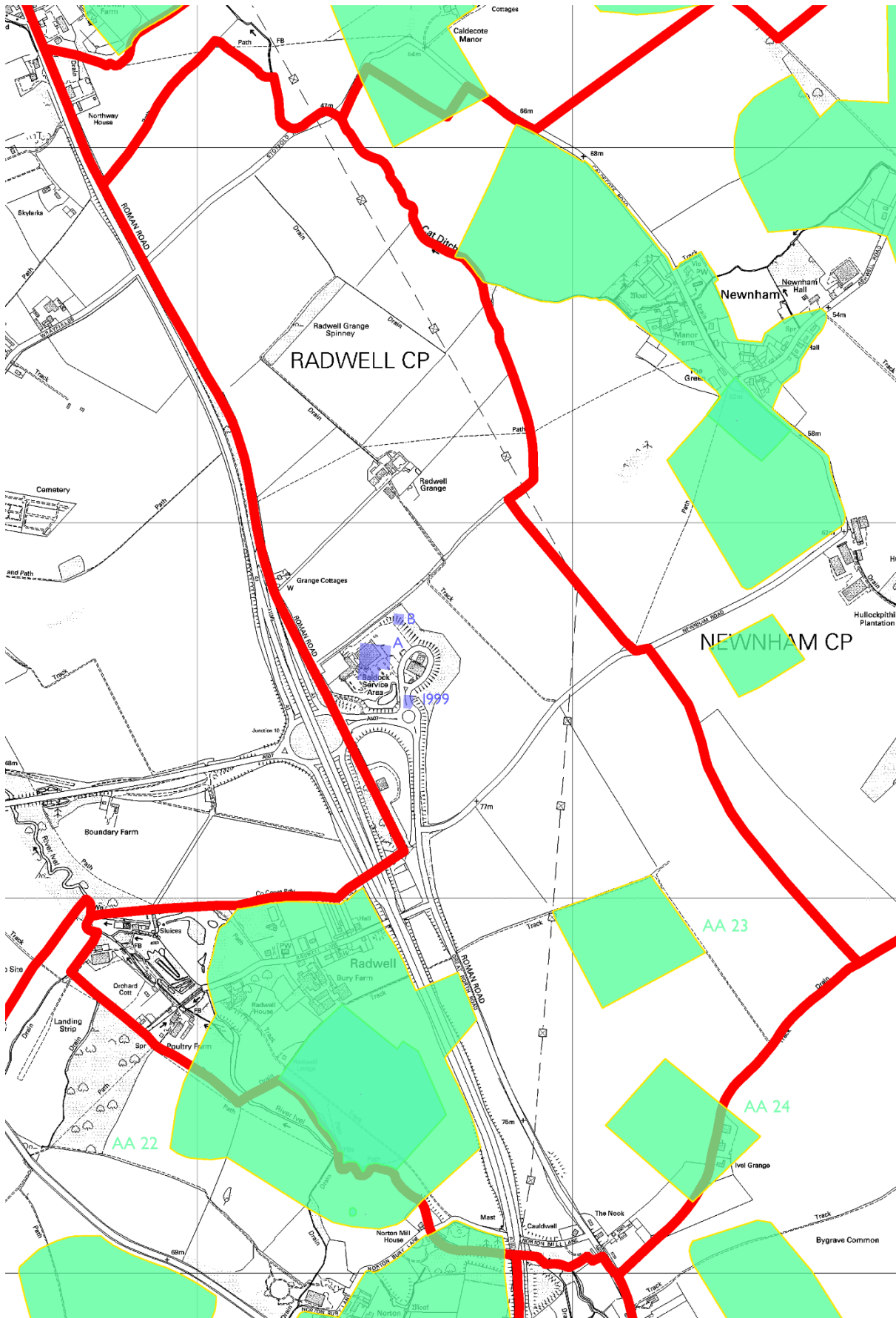


Figure 2: Radwell in the twenty-first century; Archaeological Areas are shown pale green and the excavation trenches at Baldock Services in pale purple (Crown Copyright, used with permission)

Radwell Grange is shown on Dury and Andrews's map of 1766, but the origin of the name is not known. The house is a Listed Building, with a possibly C16 timber-framed core and a mid-seventeenth-century main range, extended and altered in the nineteenth century. Use of the term Grange often implies a monastic origin. Although there is no documentary evidence that this was the case here, it may have been founded for a bailiff of St Albans Abbey, whose Prior was Lord of the Manor from 1433 to 1538.

The name of the River Ivel is not recorded in any medieval documents from Hertfordshire. The charter of 1007 simply refers to it as *þære ea*, 'the stream', as if its name were unknown to the compiler of the bounds. It is first recorded as a river-name in Bedfordshire about 1180 when it was written *Givle* (Old and early Middle English *Gi-* was pronounced *Yi-*, which is how it was written in later Middle English). The name is found earlier in a probably mid-seventh century document, the Tribal Hidage, as that of a Mercian subject people, the *Gifla* (it gives a dative plural *Gifla*, 'from the *Gifla*'). It also underlies the village names Northill (*Nortgiuele* in Domesday Book) and Southill (*Sudgiuele*), three kilometres west from the river, so their name must derive from the Old English folk name. However, the name is not Old English but Brittonic, the branch of Celtic spoken in Britain and the ancestor of Modern Welsh. The ancient name would have been **Gabljā*, 'the forked'; *gabl* means 'fork' in Welsh (*-f-* is a *-v-* sound), while **-jo-* is a suffix used in forming placenames. The name developed into Ivel because the *-j-* in the final syllable changed the *-a-* in the first, a phenomenon that is known as *i-affection* in the Celtic languages and *i-umlaut* in the Germanic. The change of *Gi-* to *Yi-* is an Old English sound-change.

The manor

Domesday Book records two manors in *Radeuuelle*: one of four hides held by Adam son of Hubert de Rye from the Bishop of Bayeux, the other of two hides held by Roger from Peter de Valonges. After Adam's death, his brother Eudo Dapifer inherited his lands, and when he died in 1120, his sister Albreda inherited. She was the wife of Peter de Valonges, so the two portions were united.

The manor descended through his great-granddaughter Gunnora's husband, Robert FitzWalter. He was one of the leading barons in the rebellion against King John in 1215 and a supporter of Louis VIII of France, proclaimed King of England in June that year. Louis's support waned after John's death in 1216. He was defeated at the Battle of Sandwich on 24 August 1217 and forced to sign the Treaty of Lambeth on 11 September. He renounced his claim to the English throne, recognising the infant Henry III as king. Rebels like Robert FitzWalter were granted amnesty, allowing the family to keep its manors, including Radwell. The FitzWalters enfeoffed a sub-tenant before 1386. The family perhaps allowed their interest to lapse when Elizabeth FitzWalter, an infant aged only 18 months, inherited in 1431. By 1438, the manor was held by John Barre and by 1453 was owned directly by the Crown.

A subtenant, Simon FitzAdam of Hatfield, was recorded in 1254. His grandson John appointed a priest in 1304, dying that year: the lord of the manor has always held the advowson of All Saints Church. The family continued to hold it until it was conveyed to John Frey in 1433; he alienated to St Albans Abbey, which retained it until Dissolution in 1538.

The manor house

The present manor house is known as Radwell House, the core of which dates from the sixteenth century. It was built in a half-H plan at a time when the red brick it uses was expensive. It probably dates from after the grant of the manor in 1540 to Ralph Rowlett, whose family held it until 1571. Later roughcast has altered the appearance of the post-medieval house to a nineteenth-century structure. There is an eighteenth-century wing added to the east side, and itself extended in the nineteenth century, and an early- to mid-nineteenth century extension to the west.

The church

The parish church is small, as befits a community that has always had a tiny population. It is dedicated to All Saints, one of only nine churches in the county with that dedication. Most descriptions state that the building is mostly of nineteenth-century date following restoration in 1882 (when the roof and south porch were replaced, and the vestry added). However, the mid-fourteenth-century chancel arch is a better guide, with much of the original masonry surviving throughout the building, visible since the removal of concrete render (Figure 3). The south door is also late fourteenth-century in date.



Figure 3: All Satins' Church, Radwell

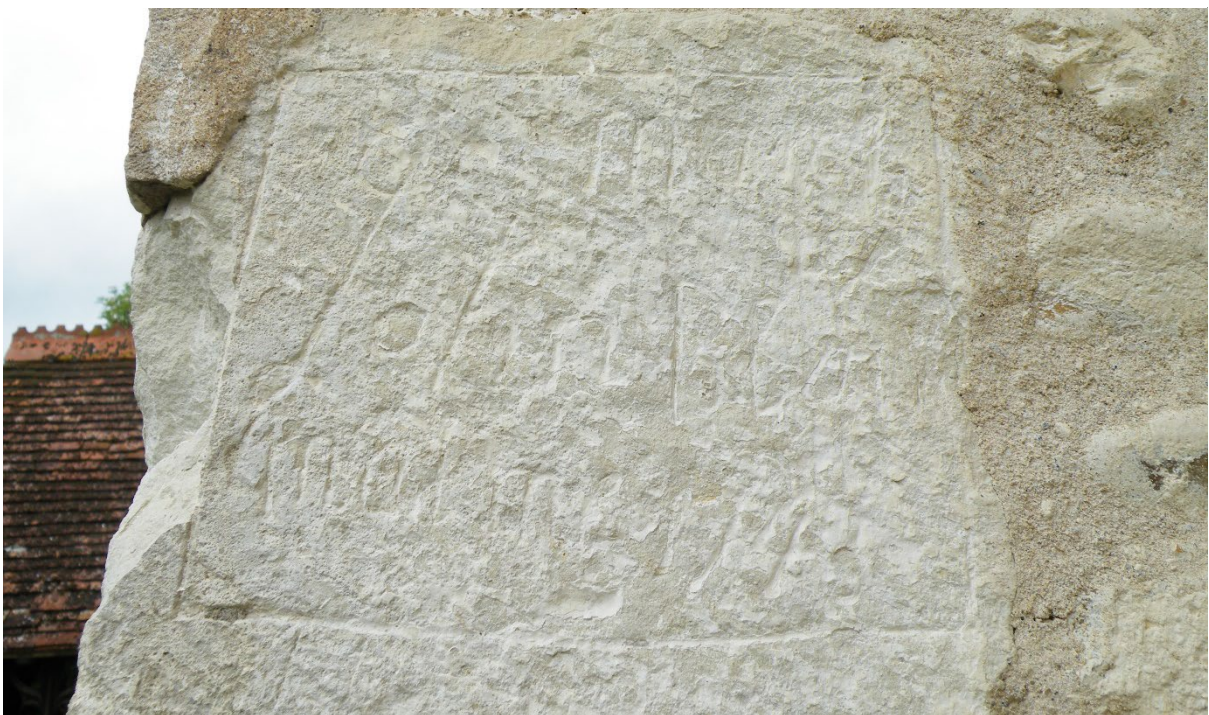


Figure 4: graffiti written by John Blackman on 9 March 1743

The walls are mostly of clunch and ferruginous sandstone rubble with brick repairs, which appear to date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The many mass-dials and pre-Reformation graffiti scratched into the masonry confirm its broadly later medieval origin. The east window dates from the fifteenth century.

Graffiti scratched into a quoin at the east end of the nave reads *9 march | Iohn Bla | kman me 1743* (Figure 4), again demonstrating a date earlier than the nineteenth-century restorations. A bellcote with a broached copper spike was probably added when the roof was replaced in 1875. It is not known if there was an earlier bellcote in this position. However, it stands above the western bay of the nave, which was separated off during the early sixteenth century, suggesting that there was a space here for bellringers.

The first rector to be mentioned in documents is Baldricus from 1218, showing that there must have been an earlier church in the village. Nothing is known of its form as none of the surviving elements of the church date from this period unless the nave walls are earlier than the fourteenth century.

There is a good group of monuments inside the church. That to John Parker, who died in 1595, shows him, his wife and son kneeling; he is dressed in black with gold trimmings, his wife wears blue and their son black and gold, all with elaborate ruffs of the period. Mary Plomer's (1575-1605) shows her seated, holding a swaddled baby whose pillow is a skull; she died in childbirth, aged 29 (Figure 5). Below her are her ten other children, six boys to the left and four girls to the right, all kneeling and facing a lectern in the centre. Her widower Sir William Plomer (died 1625) is shown kneeling in an arched recess. Both monuments are attributed to William Wright, who made examples that survive in the churches at Abbots Langley, Berkhamsted, Lilley, Meesden and Sawbridgeworth, St Albans (St Michael's) and Watford.



Figure 5: the monument of Mary Plomer

The origins of the community

Prehistory

Radwell lies to the north of the dense concentration of Neolithic monuments found in what has been called the Baldock Bowl. None of the monument types found there – cursus, henges, hengiform monuments, flint mines and settlements – have been identified in the parish. However, lithics (flint artefacts) broadly datable to the third millennium BC were found during fieldwalking in 1999 on the site of the Baldock Services. Two small pits excavated that year contained sherds from at least three Beaker vessels, datable broadly to the period 2200-1800 BC.

Ring ditches seen on aerial photographs, representing the ploughed-out remains of round barrows have been identified in a field to the east of the A507 (Archaeological Area 23; HHER 1355, 1687 and 1723; Figure 6). They may be contemporary with the pits containing Beaker pottery excavated to the northwest; they may also be slightly earlier or later. One of them (HHER 1723) has traces of a horseshoe-shaped feature to the north-east of the centre, but it is impossible to know if this is contemporary with the burial mound, earlier or later. It resembles Late Neolithic houses identified at



Figure 6: Archaeological Area 23, showing ring ditches and other features (base image from Google Earth Pro)

Norton Henge in 2013, so it could be part of an earlier settlement, as could some of the ditches seen nearby.

Three more ring ditches can be seen in Archaeological Area 24 defined to the north of Ivel Grange (Figure 7), with three more to the south of the parish boundary. Although not included in the Historic Environment Record, this appears to be evidence for another barrow cemetery. As with AA 23 to the



Figure 7: Archaeological Area 24 (base image from Google Earth Pro)

north, other visible features may or may not be contemporary. In particular, there is a ditched trackway and a ditch with a right-angled corner that are more likely to be of Roman date. However, stretches of curvilinear ditches, including three-quarters of an oval enclosure with a broad ditch, may be prehistoric in origin.

The excavations carried out in January and February 2000 by the Cambridge Archaeology Unit on the site of the Baldock Services revealed good evidence from the Late Bronze Age (Figure 8). A shallow ditch crossed the site from southwest to northeast in excavation Area A and was surrounded by

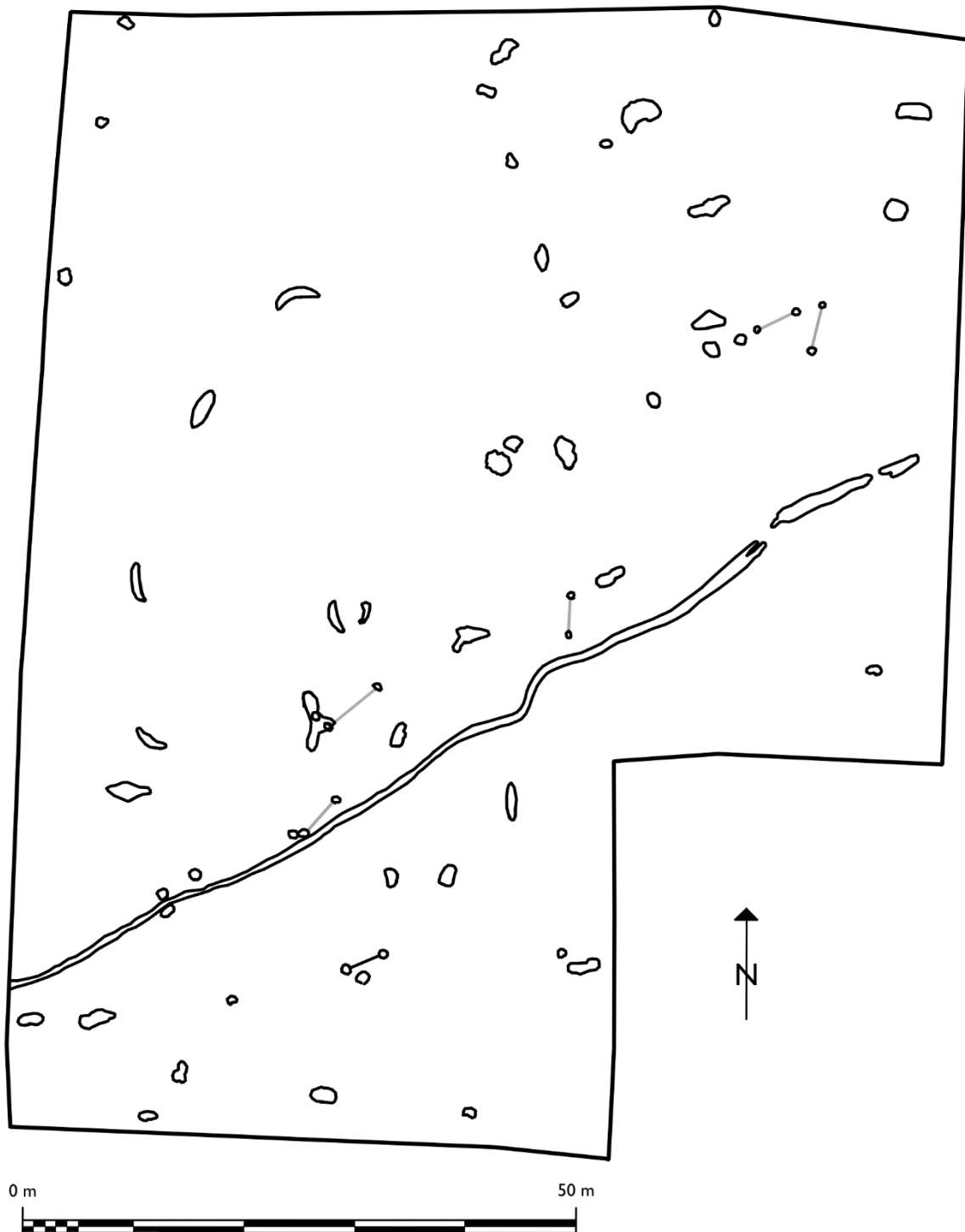


Figure 8: Late Bronze Age settlement evidence from Baldock Services (after N Armour 2000 Investigation of the Archaeological Landscape at MSA A1/A507, Radwell, Hertfordshire, Cambridge Archaeological Unit Report 363)

postholes and small pits (including cooking-pits). It climbed the slope to the top of a low ridge, where it was recut several times and made more elaborate by the digging of gullies. It broke into discrete segments in this area. There may have been a bank on its north side. A kink in the ditch may show that it avoided an existing feature of some kind, although no evidence survived to show what it might have been. It falls into the general category of 'ranch boundaries', a Late Bronze Age system of division in upland areas.

Six sets of paired posts between 3.0 and 5.1 m apart appear to have been structures of some sort. All were close to pits that were perhaps associated with their functions. Some contained Late Bronze Age potsherds and one included hazelnut shell and molluscs indicating a dry, open environment. There was a hearth in Area B, but ploughing had destroyed all traces of any associated building. A nearby pit contained further hazelnut shell fragments.

A line of eight pits was identified to the southeast of the area of occupation. One contained five sherds of extremely abraded Post-Devererl-Rimbury pottery, datable to the Late Bronze Age. Although interpreted by the excavators as being contemporary with the settlement, the worn pottery and local analogues for pit alignments suggest a Middle Iron Age date (about 400-100 BC). A bank may have been constructed to the north from material removed in digging the original pits and reinforced later by chalk from seven pits dug in a cluster also north of the alignment.



Figure 9: features east of Baldock Services (base image from Google Earth Pro)

Satellite photographs show further anomalies to the east of the services (Figure 9). There appear to be stretches of linear ditches, a subrectangular enclosure and small features. None is diagnostic, making it impossible to suggest a date. However, they are close to the Late Bronze Age activity at Baldock Services and may show additional contemporary use of the ridge for settlement and agriculture.

There is another zone of activity to the north of Radwell Grange that is also probably prehistoric rather than later. It includes a ring-ditch, although it surrounds a square enclosure that is perhaps early medieval in date, so this may not be a Bronze Age feature. There are also some sinuous ditches, with a subrectangular enclosure attached to the south side of one, with a second ditch running from its southern edge. It may be an Iron Age farmstead or an enclosure for holding livestock during transfer between fields. The most intriguing marks are a cluster of pits to the north of these ditches, which

resemble Early Iron Age sites such as Jacks Hill (Graveley) and Aldwick (Barley). The site could be contemporary with the later phases at Baldock Services.



Figure 10: cropmarks north of Radwell Grange (base image from Google Earth Pro)

Romano-British

There is good evidence of what was happening in the Roman period. A large villa complex together with boundary ditches belonging to its associated fields has been known for many years. The main habitation area consists of two buildings at right angles to each other on the east bank of the River Ivel. The main dwelling was probably that at right angles to the river and this dual arrangement is found elsewhere. There are traces of a third building south of the second villa. It may have been a bathhouse for the complex, to judge from finds of flue-tiles found on the site.

Field ditches and a trackway stretch away from the dwellings up the slope to the north-east. Where the track met the main Roman road, beyond the AIM, a cluster of pits can be seen on aerial photographs. They may be associated with the occupancy of the villa. There are also two sets of foundations in the enclosures north-east of the house. Each building measures about 12 m by 30 m and at least one of them is aisled. They were perhaps field barns.

It has been protected as a Scheduled Monument (number 1016308) since 2 February 1976. The Scheduled area includes some of the enclosures surrounding the villa complex, extending up the hill to the north-east of the buildings. The villa was officially discovered from the air in 1960 by J K St Joseph and has been imaged frequently since. It occupies low-lying ground close to the River Ivel, at the foot of a slope running down from the north-north-east. The river appears to form the eastern boundary of the known complex. However, the land to the west has been pasture since the late medieval period. It is less susceptible to producing cropmarks than the arable to the east, so the estate may have extended across the river.

Earlier finds had been made on the site by Margaret MacFarlane, the assistant curator of Letchworth Museum, in 1955 and again in 1957; the initial discovery was of pottery and roofing tile, either side of the footpath. A pupil from Letchworth Grammar School had also picked up similar material in the general area. In 1957, the owner of the site, Mr Northern, reported having seen crop marks in the

wheat but did not report it to the museum until after the harvest and a site visit revealed more tile and pottery (described as being of 'a late date', although this is not explained further). Following ploughing on 4 October 1957 to a depth of 9-11 inches (0.23-0.28 m), another visit was made, with most finds coming from the lower field to the west of the footpath. This time, the pottery included samian ware, which ceased to be available locally by the end of the second century AD. Miss MacFarlane concluded that although the best Roman material came from close to the River Ivel, it was "too near the River to be at all suitable for a dwelling". Although a list was produced to accompany the file note, it is missing from the Museum archives. The finds, however, survive in the collections of North Hertfordshire Museums Service; that from 1955 is Accession Number 1955.38 (some of which is marked Field I, some RAD u), while that from 1957 is Accession Number 1957.86. A small collection of tile and pottery marked R75 is accompanied by a label dated 20 February 1975 and gives a grid reference of TL235354. The circumstances in which this material was recovered are not known.



Figure 11: cropmarks of the villa, photographed from a microlite during the dry summer of 1996 (© Richard Meredith-Hardy)

In October 1976, a small group of material was brought to Letchworth Museum for identification by a local metal detectorist. It comprised a Romano-British copper alloy buckle (Accession Number 1976.1153), a bronze coin of Claudius II (AD 268-70), with Victory on the reverse, and two bronze coins of the House of Constantine (second quarter of the fourth century). All were found on or near the site of the villa. When informed that he had committed an offence in detecting on a Scheduled Monument, the finder undertook not to do so again.

Following the enquiry, Gil Burleigh, Keeper of Field Archaeology at Letchworth Museum, wrote to David Sherlock of the Department of the Environment, pointing out that there had been detecting on the field in August 1976 with the permission of the landowner. As a result, Miss I Drayton of the Department of the Environment wrote to the landowner pointing out that he had been sent a formal notice of the Scheduling of the villa site earlier that year and that the agreement with the detectorist contravened Section 6(2) of the Ancient Monuments Act (1931).

Another group of objects from the site was brought in by the same detectorist in January 1977. The finds were identified as a coin of Claudius II (268-70) with victory on the reverse, a coin of Carausius (287-93), a cententionalis of Constans or Constantine II (AD 348-61), a strip of copper alloy (possibly

from a harness fitting, Accession Number 1978.123) and a small lead weight (Accession Number 1978.124). All the finds were donated to Letchworth Museum. On 1 February 1977, Gil Burleigh wrote to Miss Drayton, explaining that the detectorist had again brought in objects that he had detected from the villa site. The finder alleged that all the finds were made on the field surface and recovered without digging for them.



Figure 12: the villa landscape in 2007 with positions of buildings marked in red (base image from Google Earth Pro)

In October 1977, the part of the Scheduled Monument in the ownership of Mr Meredith-Hardy (the area to the west of the farm track and north of the footpath linking it with the iron bridge across the River Ival) was cleared of trees and scrub so that it could be cultivated. Gil Burleigh visited the site on 18 October and retrieved a piece of tegula and noted some large fragments of clunch on the field surface.

On 4 September 1997, a Mr Alan Greening of Hertford donated a collection of tile to Letchworth Museum, which he had found 15 m to the north-east of the iron footbridge across the River Ival earlier in the summer. In 1998, a Mr Taylor of Stotfold donated two pieces of Roman tile to Letchworth Museum (Accession Numbers 2002.12.1-2), which he had found on the site on 23 August of that year. In September 2002, a Mr Sharpe of Letchworth Garden City found roof tile, the base of a Much Hadham bowl, two sherds of samian ware, the rim of an Oxfordshire colour-coated bowl, oyster shell and a fragment of "carved ivory" (Enquiry LET.2241). The finds were picked up to the southeast of the known buildings. More material was found and reported to Letchworth Museum in September 2003 by a Mr Aldridge of Letchworth Garden City (Enquiry LET.2238); it included four sherds of a painted whiteware bowl, tesserae, the base of a Hadham ware flagon and an 18th-century sherd. This material appears to have come from the very southeastern end of the field.

Locals undertook informal fieldwalking on the villa site during the late summer and autumn of 2011 after it had been ploughed. They reported seeing detectorists on more than one occasion, walking away from the site. They gave two groups of material to the Museum Service; more finds are known to have been removed by locals without record.



Figure 13: the site photographed by the R.A.F. on 13 June 1947; elements of the villa landscape are visible, as are periglacial fissures close to the A507 (the A1M was not built until the 1960s)

A Mr Potts of Radwell claimed in 1995 that local folklore tells of an excavation on the site in the nineteenth century. During this, a mosaic floor was discovered. There is nothing to confirm this story; given that there seems to have been no prior knowledge of the site when the first Roman material was recovered from it in 1955, it seems unlikely that an otherwise unrecorded excavation has taken place there.

The site has been severely damaged by illegal metal detecting, which has removed an unknown number of coins and other metalwork. Ploughing has also brought up elements of masonry, showing that despite the Scheduling of the villa, it continued to be denuded of material, including parts of the foundations, well into the twenty-first century. With almost none of the metalwork recorded and subsequently dispersed among private collectors (either the detectorists themselves or later purchasers), a significant element of the story of an outstanding site has been destroyed.

The most problematical object that may be associated with the Radwell villa is a marble head of Roman date (). Its existence was first known to archaeologists when it appeared for sale in an advertisement in *The Citizen* (the local paper in Letchworth) of 23 February 1995 for Robert Room, a Bedford auction house. It was on the front of the sale catalogue of 3 March 1995. The sculpture had been found in a cottage outhouse late in 1994, after the tenant, a Mr Harold Guest, moved into sheltered accommodation. Although sold to a private buyer at the auction, a sale to North Hertfordshire Museums was agreed, and it was transferred to the Museums' ownership in 1995. It is now on display in the entrance to North Hertfordshire Museum in Hitchin.



Figure 14: the villa estate based on data from many sources, showing a complex, multi-period landscape (base image from Google Earth Pro)

Mr Guest had been living in the cottage for around 20 years and the previous tenant, a Mrs Leaves, had been there a short time. However, the tenant before her, a Mr George Calvert, had taken up occupancy in the 1920s or early 1930s. He worked on the Radwell estate from about 1917. At the time it was owned by a Mr Doggett and later a Mr Jakes. It was sold in 1952 for £20,000. Mr Calvert ploughed the fields with Suffolk punches, of which he was the keeper; he was also responsible for maintaining the ditches and even dredging the River Ivel on occasion. The significance of these details is that the head was covered in two shades of green, blue, yellow and brown paint as it had been used for cleaning paintbrushes. Conservators at the University of Cambridge analysed the paint and determined it to be of a type used in the 1920s and 30s, and not later. Mr Calvert was therefore likely to have been responsible for using it as a brush cleaner.

The head is 236 mm high, 156 mm wide and 187 mm deep, carved from Carrara marble (although not of the best quality) and is of first century AD date. There is some damage, especially on the left side of the chin, the nose and the left cheek, the latter appearing to derive from abrasion such as ploughing. It is three-quarters life-size and is the portrait of a young man, closely resembling a



Figure 15: marble head found in Radwell, depicting Germanicus, heir-apparent of the Emperor Tiberius between AD 17 and 19

portrait head, believed to be of Germanicus (15 BC-AD 19), from Bosham (Sussex), although at a slightly older age. Germanicus was the older brother of Claudius, who became emperor in AD 41, following the assassination of Germanicus's son Gaius (Caligula). He had been the heir-apparent of Tiberius until his death – rumoured to be by poisoning – in AD 19.

Although the provenance of the sculpture is not secure – it has been thought to be an object acquired during a European Grand Tour during recent centuries – its association with the villa is circumstantially likely. Its quality indicates continental manufacture rather than British and a possible parallel is found in various early first-century portrait heads found in the western Empire. As well as British examples, there is a 'family group' of Claudius from the so-called Domus Romana, a high-status house in Rabat, Malta, that may have been the official residence of the governor of the island. The group has detachable heads, suggesting that they would be replaced with more up-to-date likenesses and even discarded when family members such as Gaius (Caligula) fell from favour. If the head is an official portrait, it is unlikely to have been made or presented to anyone after Germanicus's death in AD 19.

Assuming the provenance to have been one of the fields of the villa estate at Radwell, as seems the most plausible solution, the status of the object raises questions about the nature of the site. If such portraits were official gifts, to whom might it have been made? It would pre-date the construction of the villa, but we know nothing about the immediately pre-Roman occupation of the site. It is possible that what became a grand residence like those of northern Gaul during the later Roman period was already home to an aristocratic family in the decades before the Roman conquest of AD 43. This head closely parallels another of Germanicus from Bosham, close to the royal palace at Fishbourne in Sussex. Might the head have been a gift from the Emperors Augustus or Tiberius to a local ruler, whose base was at Radwell?



Figure 16: cropmarks in the northern corner of Radwell, extending into Caldecote parish and probably connected with the multi-period site at Newinn in Hinxworth (base image from Google Earth Pro)

The landscape of the villa is complex and multi-period, with overlying ditched enclosures. The estate perhaps extended north into Stotfold, where part of a rectilinear field system that must extend into Radwell has been identified (HHER 2441). Most intriguing is a pit alignment, visible between the villa and the motorway. Later ditches have obliterated part of it, but it seems to define a zone to the west, down to the River Ivel. A late Middle Iron Age date (perhaps second century BC) is likely for this

feature, which could indicate that the development of this landscape as an elite zone began long before Roman interest in Britain.

Other Roman sites are known in the parish. A rectangular enclosure, probably attached to a trackway running southwest to the main Baldock to Sandy road, is known in the south (HHER 4471; Figure 7). The site was probably a farmstead or, possibly, a religious compound. To the north, a complex of cropmarks extends through Caldecote into Hinxworth (Figure 16). It must be associated with the site at Newinn, excavated by Dr Arthur Waddell in 1911 and perhaps first discovered in 1724. The publication by Percival Westell was made some years after Dr Waddell's death and is an inadequate account of the site, delving into unlikely speculation (much of which perhaps derived from the excavator's notes). The excavation uncovered the cemetery of a Late Iron Age and Romano-British community (HHER 1412 and 2078). Some of the cropmarks probably belong to part of the settlement.



Figure 17: cropmarks southwest of Radwell Grange (base image from Google Earth Pro)

Some obscure cropmarks southwest of Radwell Grange may also show part of the Roman landscape of the parish. They include one side of what appears to be an oval enclosure, plausibly of Late Iron Age date, and the right-angled corner of a more probably Roman farmstead as well as part of a ditch that appears to enclose the earlier oval feature.

Early medieval

No definitely early medieval sites have been identified in the parish. It is not unusual not to find occupation and burial grounds in Hertfordshire as it was an era of more limited use for the durable material culture that archaeologists need for dating. Sites of this era also rarely produce cropmarks as their features were often shallow and many have been destroyed by later ploughing. Nevertheless, this was a critical period when many of the foundations for modern England were created. Older sites that were occupied during the Roman period were mostly abandoned – although not always immediately after the end of Roman rule – and some wealthy families fled their estates. Something like this may have happened to the owners of the Radwell villa. The few contemporary sources state that some fled rebellious Saxon mercenaries in the east, either to the highlands in the west or overseas to Brittany. These were the people who probably spoke Latin as their first language, rather than the Brittonic spoken by peasants.

The new overlords, of Germanic descent, had little use for the buildings of the Romano-British aristocracy, which were allowed to decay or robbed for useful building materials. However, their landed estates, with the unfree peasants who worked them, were of greater interest. Although the first Saxons had been settled as mercenaries for the British, they were primarily farmers. The second wave of settlers brought people whose main interest was in what they could grow on land more fertile than the coastal areas they had left.

The lack of legal metal detecting in Radwell has meant that the occasional pieces of early medieval metalwork – mostly jewellery and coins – found elsewhere in North Hertfordshire are lacking here. Perhaps some of the metalwork removed from the villa site was of this date: we will never know. However, there is one cropmark, northwest of Radwell Grange, that may be from the later part of this period. It is a little over 20 m square, with right-angled corners and an entrance in the centre of the southeastern side. In front of this entrance stands a square arrangement of pits. A small ditch partly blocks the gap. Inside the enclosure is a ring, while a more substantial ring ditch surrounds the complex.



Figure 18: square enclosure southwest of Radwell Grange (base image from Google Earth Pro)

This monument appears to belong to a class only recently recognised by Gil Burleigh and John Blair. North Hertfordshire Archaeological Society excavated a similar site at Coombe Bottom (Kelshall) in 1977, while Oxford Archaeology East excavated a second example west of Royston in 2019. While Coombe Bottom yielded no dating material, the Royston enclosure has a radiocarbon determination on caprid bone of 1307 ± 24 bp (SUERC-90152, which calibrates to 660-770 Cal AD at 2σ , with a 95.4% chance of the date falling in that range). John Blair has recognised a third site at Limlow Hill (Litlington, Cambs) from aerial photographs, and this now makes a fourth.

Their function is enigmatic, although John Blair has compared them with square shrines, known elsewhere, and dated to the Middle Saxon period (AD 650-850). There is nothing about these four sites to suggest a Christian function, unlike the shrines. By contrast, the closest comparisons are with larger rectangular enclosures at Slip End (Ashwell) and Hinxworth, where they are part of earlier,

Romano-British pagan religious sites. Intriguingly, the Slip End site is close to the Cat Ditch, like the Radwell enclosure.

The West Saxon kings united most of England in the early decades of the tenth century, and we can think of this as the start of the Middle Ages proper. The kingdom had a developed and centralised bureaucracy, and regulations about how to run local government were promoted during the same century. The various manors that are recorded in Domesday Book were perhaps formalised at this time, many becoming parishes. The existence of two separate manors in Radwell in 1066 suggests that two principal estates were united into a single unit in the twelfth century. The two elements were perhaps separated along the line of the Roman road.

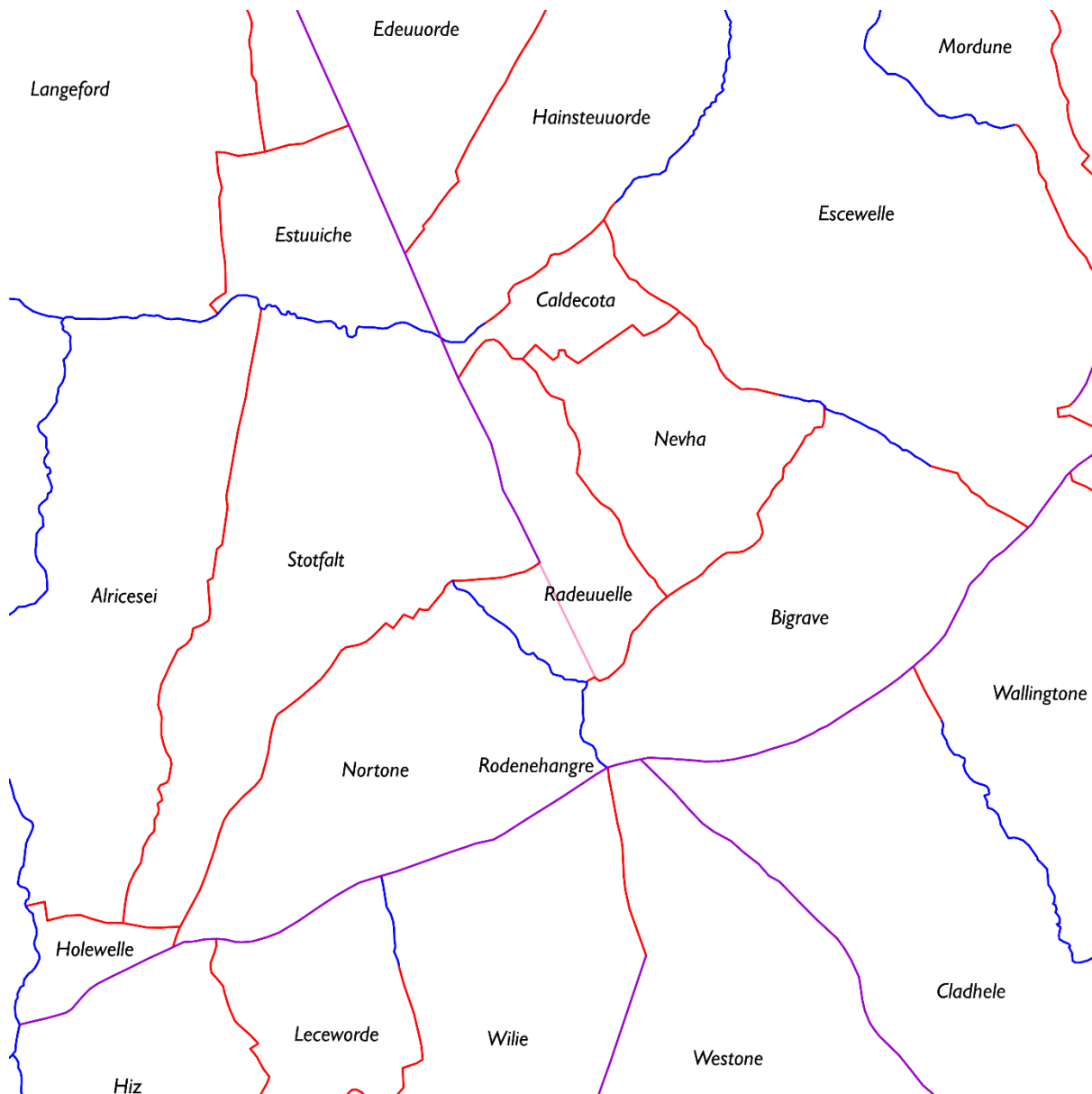


Figure 19: parishes in the Radwell area as recorded in Domesday Book (blue lines show boundaries following watercourses, purple lines follow Roman roads)

A map of the parish system as it developed during the Middle Ages (Figure 19) raises questions about how the boundaries developed. As already noted, the shape of Radwell is strange and gives the impression that it has lost a part to Stotfold. An alternative could be to assume that the two halves in Domesday book were formerly separate estates either side of an older boundary that followed the Roman road. In this way, a block of medieval parishes – Arlesey, the Cadwell element of Holwell, Stotfold, Norton (including the lost *Rodenhanger*) and Radwell west of the A507 – may have formed

an early territory. To the east, Caldecote, Radwell east of the A507, Newnham, Bygrave and Ashwell make another ancient block. The watercourses along the northern boundary of the two blocks (the Rivers Ivel, Cat Ditch and the stream from Ruddy Spring) and the Roman road to the south (the Icknield Way) define a unit whose edges are composed mainly of natural and pre-medieval features.

The more artificial boundaries of the eastern part of Radwell are marked by ditches visible on aerial photographs (evident, for instance, in Figure 16 in the north of the parish and included in HHER 17060, farther south). The ditch continues across the narrow neck of Caldecote that meets the A1 to the boundary with Hinxworth but no further. Perhaps the manor of Caldecote acquired this small piece of land from Radwell to give the community access to the main road. It could also suggest that Hinxworth lay outside the area belonging to this block of land, it being part of the statelet of the *Gifle* in the early medieval period, being brought into Hertfordshire later. Its incorporation perhaps happened when the county was created in the second decade of the tenth century.

Domesday Book

The evidence of Domesday Book, compiled in 1086, has been invoked as evidence several times in the preceding discussion. The two manors were of unequal size: the more substantial, held by Adam from the Bishop of Bayeux, was taxed on four Hides of arable, the smaller, held by Roger from Peter de Valognes, on two. Each manor had a mill, one worth 8s to its lord, the other 6/8d (40 p and 33 p, respectively). One of these can probably be identified with Radwell Mill, now a private house (Figure 20). The location of the other is unclear, although historic maps and Lidar enable a suggestion to be made.



Figure 20: the historic Radwell Mill is now a home in a picturesque location

The Ordnance Survey map of 1898 (surveyed 1897) shows the parish boundary running not along the present course of the River Ivel but along what is now a mostly dry channel (Figure 21). It follows this to a point where a tributary from the southwest meets it, then along a series of straight lines until rejoining the river. Lidar reveals that this 'ditch' widens to a pond-like feature upstream of its



Figure 21: Lidar overlay on the 1898 25-inch Ordnance Survey map, showing parish boundaries in red

confluence with the tributary and that a small group of indeterminate earthworks lies beneath the trees in this area (Figure 22). This location is plausibly the site of the second mill. That both mills lie in the part of Radwell west of the Roman road is not a serious objection: manors were primarily tenorial and fiscal entities, not territorial, and it was common for manors to include parcels not contiguous with the main holding.

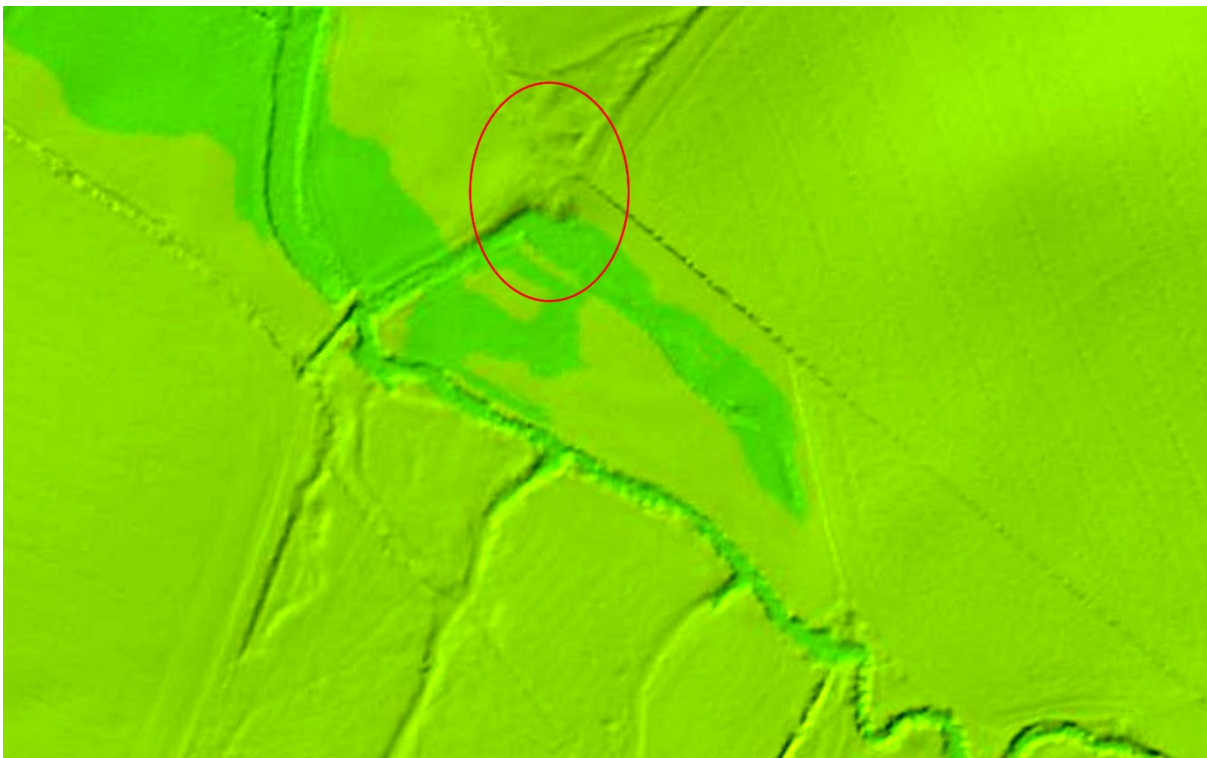


Figure 22: Lidar plot highlighting the possible second mill site

The manor held by Adam had a population comprising eight villeins, four *cottarii* and four slaves. Multiplying these sixteen adult males by a factor of five gives a total population for this manor of 80. Adding in the figures for the other manor – five *bordarii* and two slaves – brings the total to 115, a remarkably large number. For this reason, Radwell has sometimes been claimed to be a shrunken settlement, but, as the HHER (1813) notes, there is no physical evidence for this. As Domesday Book was a record of manors, not villages, it probably means that the households lived in dispersed communities spread throughout the parish.

Adam's holding was taxed at 100 shillings (£5) in 1086; its value had been only 40s (£2) when acquired, probably in 1070. However, at the time of Edward the Confessor's death in January 1066, it had been worth £10. What caused this reduction in assessment is unclear. One possibility is that the transfer from lay hands to ecclesiastical brought about a more favourable reassessment, perhaps even a discount. No value is given for Roger's holding; this is probably an oversight rather than evidence that the two manors were taxed as a single unit.

It could be suggested that the smaller manor – if it can be identified with the southwestern part of the parish – was the descendant of the villa estate. The Roman dwellings lay on land belonging to Radwell Bury in the post-medieval period, so they may have been included in the demesne land in 1086. If this could be accepted, it would provide a remarkable link in land tenure between antiquity and the Middle



Figure 23: a mass-dial on the southwest quoin of the church, showing numbered hours of the day

Ages.

Overview

There is a great deal of archaeological evidence from Radwell, despite it being a small parish. It covers human history from the Late Neolithic (third millennium BC onwards), allowing a general assessment of land-use over the centuries. For the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages, the Roman period and the

later medieval period onward, we can identify at least some of the places where people were living. The usual post-Roman gap remains, although there is a tantalising hint that a ritual site of a type only found locally existed in the north of the parish. There is also an intriguing possibility that the medieval



Figure 24: the River Ivel on the western edge of the parish

estate, based around Radwell Bury, was a direct successor to one of the most magnificent Roman villas known in Hertfordshire or Bedfordshire.

There has never been a large village in the parish. Its unexpectedly large population at the time of Domesday Book can hardly have lived in cottages surrounding Radwell Lane. There may instead have been numerous small groups of farms dispersed through the landscape, their locations now lost.

Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews
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