

## Portway

At the Cambridge end of Melbourn, near Portway, traces of a rectangular earthwork were found, but by 1923 all that could be seen was a small portion of a ditch (fosse) and rampart (vallum). First recorded in 1868 the evidence suggested that it formed a 200 yard rectangle and was surrounded by a vallum to the east.

Various artefacts have been found near here, the most spectacular when a farmer ploughing deep for sugar beet in 1933 found an obstruction. It turned out to be a Roman quern, top and bottom stones complete. The stones lay compactly together as though they had been carried there carefully.

It was suggested that the earthwork was constructed at the time of the first Roman advance into the district, but there is no evidence to support

*Roman querns found when a farmer was ploughing close to Portway in 1933. They were a primitive form of hand-mill for grinding corn and consisted of two flattened circular stones; the lower stone was often shaped with a rim and would have had a wooden or metal pin in the centre which passed through a hole in the upper stone; the worker poured grain through the hole with one hand, turning the upper stone with the other by means of a peg fixed into the side. These were used before the invention of windmills and watermills. The Old English word is cweorn.*



that the work is Roman and its purpose is unknown. However, to the east of it there was a Roman cemetery probably in use in the 1st century and definitely in the 2nd. First century pottery of coarse ware from this site is in the British Museum.



*These Roman Flagons which would have been used to serve wine and drinks at the table were found near Portway and are from the 2nd century. These were probably products of a major pottery industry in the Roman Verulamium area (St. Albans) which specialised in producing white flagons. They were widely sold across south east England.*

*If Melbourn had a Roman fort, as has been suggested, it may well have looked like this – a wooden fort built on top of a rampart (vallum). The reduced vallum would have been seen near Armingford Crescent in 1868*

*The Samian ware bowls below were common, fine table ware used for dining. Mass produced in their hundreds of thousands at centres in central France, they were distributed across France, Britain and Germany around AD 70–230.*

