



Colchester Archaeological Group NEWSLETTER

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Sunday's diggers at Fordham

Notes from the Chair

There was a touch of *Deja vu* in the air as I sat down to start writing this winter's "Notes from the chair." For, like last December, we are once again facing increased restrictions because of the Coronavirus. The upside this time, is that we are all (I hope) double vaccinated and boosted, so should be better protected and less likely to become ill.

As you will be aware, the lecture series continues on Zoom, we had hoped to go back to live lectures at Circus House but it was considered safer to stay online for the time being. I'm pleased to say that attendances have remained high and would, once again like to thank Christine Piper for booking the speakers and Tim Dennis for hosting them, along with the weekly, Thursday Zoom chat sessions (It has been suggested the good doctor should be up for an honour, Master of the Keys perhaps?).

The Fordham dig has continued, despite the sometimes challenging conditions and we are about to finish on Sunday the 19th of December for a winter break. There are a couple of areas that refuse to stop giving us more information and surprises, so I expect we will not be quite finished with Phase two until well into the new year.

Jonathan Oldham, our site supervisor has, once again, put an enormous amount of time and work into the dig this year so I would like to thank him on behalf of CAG and (quickly changes hats) Fordham Local History Society for all he has done for us.

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In September CAG hosted an event for the Young Archaeology Club at Fordham hall, with pot washing, metal detecting, finds analysis and ground penetrating radar, we had around thirteen youngsters of varying ages and it was a great success, they were all thoroughly engaged for nearly four hours. Thanks to those that came along and helped, I think we should do more of these events in 2022.

CAG treasurer Geoff Lunn has been invited by CAT, on occasion this year to the old Essex County Hospital site to do some metal detecting, the site has yielded some amazing finds so far, I suspect there will be a major exhibition at Circus House in the future.

Tim Dennis has travelled far and wide this year with his new MkII (?) ground penetrating radar setup, it has proven to be very useful and I'm sure it will feature throughout 2022.

During the year exploratory work has continued beyond the current Fordham dig, with several very promising sites identified from Bronze Age through to medieval, there will be no shortage of things to investigate when time and landowners allow.

In 2022 CAG looks set to continue to thrive, the interest and involvement of its members shows no sign of waning and our locale continues to supply us with more to research and investigate, I just wish I was forty years younger!

Mike Hamilton-Macy Chairman.

CAG Secretary

Ellie Mead retired as CAG secretary this year due to long term ill health. Ellie was presented with flowers at her home by Mike, Geoff and Sue just before Christmas to thank her for all her hard work, enthusiasm and dedication both as CAG secretary and generally for the group over many years. A sentiment we all echo. Sue Keen has now taken on the responsibility as secretary.

A Landscape Archaeology Study Day

There was a good turnout for the study day held in the Hawkins Room, of St Botolphs Church on Saturday September 21st. The tutor was Richard Hoggett, an experienced landscape archaeologist who has spent many years working for local authorities in East Anglia and is now freelance. He concentrated on the practical aspects of Landscape Archaeology, i.e. how to go about it, as well as a bit of theory and why we do it. His website address is <http://www.richard-hoggett.co.uk/>

The day consisted of four parts with breaks in-between for discussion and lunch

1: Reading the Landscape. 2: Prehistoric and Roman Landscapes. 3: Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Landscapes .4: Post-medieval and Modern Landscapes

As a result of the increased interest in this subject the Landscape Archaeology Group was set up. Please see article on page ??

Many thanks to Anna Moore for organising



A brief report on the Lecture Series

At our July Committee meeting this year, one of the items discussed was whether to make a small charge for the 2021-2022 lecture series as we were not going to be holding them at Circus House.

Although the Zoom lectures were successful and well attended, the logistics and workload involved in the administration for charging for them has proven to be more challenging than expected, so it was decided that the second half of the lectures in 2022 will be free of charge.

We apologise if this may seem a little unfair to those that paid for the first half in 2021 but it was deemed the best solution. Those that have already paid for the 2022 half will be refunded.

On behalf of the CAG Committee.

Mike Hamilton-Macy. (Chairman)

The Monday evening Lecture series started on October 4th on Zoom with our Annual General Meeting. Followed by talk on the Roman Roads Sub Committee by Geoff Lunn

On October 11th the subject was Fish traps on the Blackwater Estuary by Kevin Bruce, Dengie Hundred Historian. This included items from his historic collect of photographs and his many years investigation.

October 18th saw us go off in a different direction with British Airships and the Golden Age of Airship Travel by Alastair Lawson Chairman and Trustee of the Airship Heritage Trust. This included the crash of the Zeppelin at Little Wigborough in 1916. A number of members were able to show off their pieces of Zeppelin collected by their relatives at the time. Kevin Bruce was also able to provide a photo of R101 crossing the Dengie Peninsular. Possibly the last flight before it crashed in France?

October 25th. The Decline of Late Roman Coinage 4th-5th Century. Roger Barrett, Essex Coins. A personal history of a lifetime collecting coins.

November 1st. From the Fertile Crescent to Freston by Professor Tristan Carter, Dept. of Anthropology, McMaster University, Canada. The theories on the Origins of Farming and its introduction to Britain. This included an update of a dig at Freston (Suffolk) which he has been undertaking.

November 8th. The Early Medieval Eye & Insular Art by Dr Carol Farr, Research Fellow, Institute of English Studies, University of London. Insular art is defined as the art of the British Isles and Ireland between, roughly, the years 600 and 900. This covers the medieval period and understanding complex illuminated manuscripts.

November 15th. The Archaeology of Orford Ness a military experimentation site culminating in the atomic bomb. by Angus Wainwright a National Trust Archaeologist. Orford Ness is now in the hands of the National Trust and we were given a history of the site and an update on their approach to preserving some of the buildings and others which will be left to nature. During the discussion afterwards there were recollections of the site by members who had worked there,

November 22nd. Metal Detecting finds from Fordham. Mike Hamilton-Macey, unfortunately Martin Weaire who was to co-host was unavailable so Geoff Lunn stepped up. This lecture covered the finds discovered outside the Fordham Hall dig area.

November 29th. The Mezora Cromlech: Two Centuries of Archaeological Adventures. By Jose Nicolas Balbi (Argentina) and Isabella Leone (Italia). Nicolas is no stranger to the group having dug with us in the past. Nicholas gave his lecture from his present location in Patagonia and Isabella joined us from Italy. The Mezora Cromlech is in North Morocco and is the most southern stone circle discovered so far. Its star alignment is being investigated by Nicholas and Isabella with some success.

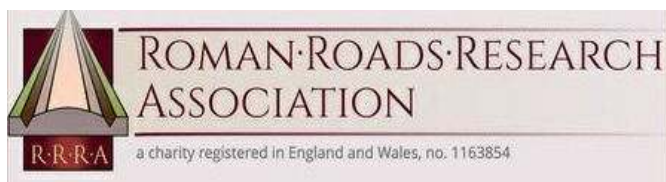
December 6th. The Christmas Party at Roman Circus House had to be cancelled, but at the last minute was replaced by Tim Denise explaining how to use Google maps plus and Lidar as investigation tools

All Lectures are on Zoom and can be viewed on YouTube at

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIlaGNwd5ytHKPF5qYPyYaQ0rJDMtiTNX>

Roman Roads Research Association Lecture

In October Geoff Lunn gave a lecture on Zoom to the Roman Roads Research Association* on the work being undertaken by the CAG Roman roads group on roads around Colchester. This can be seen on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-M75_v2BFQ)



*The Roman Roads Research Association was formed to advance knowledge of the Roman road network and promote the study of Roman roads and Roman heritage throughout the British Isles. Now in their fifth year, they are about to launch their Journal, Itinera. Their website is: <http://www.romanroads.org/> they also have a facebook page.

Fordham Excavation (Phase 2, FH16) Progress Report Jonathan Oldham (September 2021)

The excavation of the Open Area, where the topsoil was removed in April 2016, is nearing completion. The footprint of the main building within the Open Area is quite clear, being an oblong structure orientated east-west, which appears to consist of three main rooms, with a porch or portico projecting from the middle of the south side. The Open Area was subdivided into 5m squares to aid locating Features and Layers; AB being the NW corner, EB the NE corner, EK the SE corner, and AK the SW corner.

The east room floor, east wall robber trench, and south wall robber trench were excavated by the end of 2019, and are mainly located within Areas DE, DD, DC. The apse at the north end of the east room was excavated in the early days (mid 2015 to mid 2016), and lies mainly within Area DC. A disturbed linear area, marking the line of the water pipeline runs through the middle of the east room. The pipeline extends south to the bathhouse, along the eastern side of the 'courtyard', and north beyond the apse to a small tank (wood and clay lined).

The central room floor, south wall robber trench (F436), eastern internal wall foundation (F435), and north wall robber trench F521) were excavated by the end of 2019. The eastern internal wall foundation (F435) lines up with the west end of the apse wall robber trench (F6). The west room with hypocaust (F515) is visible to the right, and fairly central to the central room lies the oval grave cut (F409) for the Early Medieval (Anglo-Saxon) child burial).

The west room excavations were begun in the late autumn 2018, and have only recently been completed, after the removal of vast amounts of mortar rubble that filled the space of the hypocaust. The southern part of the hypocaust (south of the modern field drain) was excavated by the end of August 2019.



The area north of the modern field drain was largely completed by the end of 2019, just leaving the final cleaning of the floor foundations and the removal of an east-west baulk (F467) at the very north end of the room. Reduced working time during the last two years slowed activity considerably, so it was not until late July 2021 that the east-west baulk was completely removed, revealing a north wall robber trench (F588) and wall foundations (F598), and pilae locations on the floor surface (F500).

Currently, the area north of the north wall robber trench is being excavated to reveal the extent of the stoke hole (F599) for the hypocaust. The stoke hole appears to be contained within a rectangular area (F514), which had wooden sides (indicated by iron nails found 'in situ' at regular intervals along the edges), and may have had a tiled roof (indicated by several layers of roof tile fragments within the area). The stoke hole itself contains at least two distinct layers of tile fragments in addition to a loamy fill with charcoal. The uppermost tile fragment layer (F597) was clearly separated from the second layer (which contained fragments of painted wall plaster; a yellow design on a white background) by the loamy fill.



A flue channel (F573) was cut into the hypocaust floor, though no evidence of it was found passing through the north wall. The last seven carved bone plaques were found within the flue channel, and a majority of the plaques were found at the north end of the hypocaust, either amongst the mortar rubble backfill or on the floor surface.

Outstanding work.

Completion of excavation of the stoke hole and the features abutting the north wall robber trench.

Completion of excavation of a significant mass of tile fragments and opus signinum in Area CB. This material may have originated from the adjacent apse at the north end of the east room.

Complete TS recording of some features on the floor surfaces that may have been overlooked, such as areas of burning, and of some features of the porch/portico area.

It would be satisfying to complete tracing the line of the ditch (F565) that lies beneath at least one layer of cobbling. The ditch was located along the east end of the south side of the building, and again on the east side of the building, though the northern end of it is very unclear and seems to be becoming complicated.

Complete excavation of the large slot through the trench in Trench T. The slot is designed to give profiles of the trench, the north-facing profile being recently drawn. The situation is complicated by the fact that the trench is very deep and has reached the water table. After drawing the side profiles, the sides of the slot will be stepped outward for safety reasons.

Additional digging may be undertaken to trace a potential line of postholes along the trench.

Completion of excavation of Trench P to provide an east-facing section of the east-west ditch for drawing. To reduce the time and effort required, a broad slot is being dug along the west edge of the Trench, rather than removing all of the triangle of ditch fill. Very few finds have been forthcoming, none of which appear to be helpful in dating the ditch.

Roger is supervising the recording of CBM fragments, training two more diggers in the techniques required last Sunday. More detailed analysis of tegula fragments awaits.

There are a large number (about 50) of soil samples that require wet sieving, and they are currently stored on site. Thirty soil samples have been wet sieved (2019 and early 2020), and some are being picked through, with about half of them yet to be done.



Roman Roads Group Report Winter 2021

Geoff Lunn Dec 2021

Despite the best efforts of the global pandemic, some slightly less than helpful landowners, and a rather poor summer (weather-wise at least), the Roman Roads Group has managed to make yet more discoveries, (and create yet more unanswered questions of course), albeit largely using desk based techniques from the comfort and safety of our own homes. We had planned to do more geophysics along the putative road from Iron Latch Lane, but this fell foul of farming activities (farming must alas take precedence if we are all to eat I suppose), and plans to capture cropmarks and thermal images of buried features over the summer using drones were completely thwarted by the weather – cropmarks stay hidden if it keeps on raining!

Despite all of this, we managed to identify a possible continuation of the RR from Iron Latch Lane northwards from the area around Smallbridge Hall (thanks to some sharp eyed scrutiny of Google Earth aerial photographs by Kenneth Dodd and friends in Long Melford), heading towards Long Melford, and which could prove to be a credible alternative route between the two Roman centres of Long Melford and Colchester, rather than the slightly sketchy route proposed by Ivan Margery (RR322) via Great Horkesley. As always much more research required, including some outdoor activities hopefully next year. I should also mention that Ken also spotted what looks very much like cropmarks associated with a Roman farmstead or villa complex very close to the route. We are keeping this under wraps for the time being at the request of a cautious, but also rather excited landowner.

Roger Cook also organised a very pleasant few days extending the excavation reported last time in Stonemore Wood near Ingatestone, which was supported by various members of CAG, including yours truly. A new trench

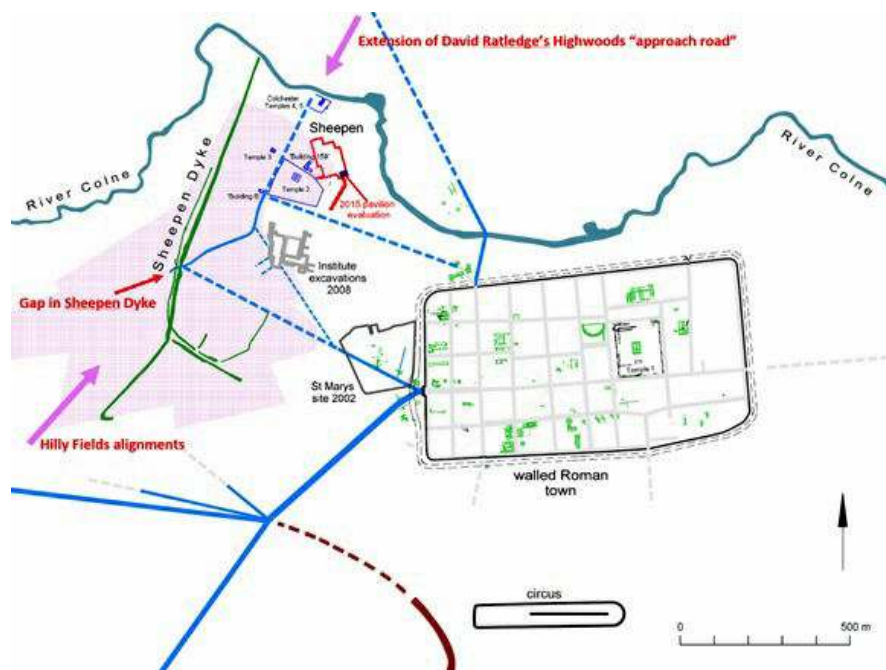
across part of the suspected Roman road and its associated ditch has revealed a distinct area of gravel metalling, which tapers out to natural before revealing what looks like a shallow ditch running parallel to the road. We all look forward to seeing Roger's report in the coming months on what looks likely to be an as yet undocumented Roman road.

As many of you will know, I was asked by the committee of the Roman Roads Research Assoc. to give a talk via Zoom last October on the "Roman Roads Around Colchester". If anyone is interested in seeing the talk by the way, it is now possible to do that on Youtube using the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-M75_v2BFQ All of the talks from the RRRR from this season are also available for all to view by visiting their website at www.romanroads.org – well worth checking out as there is a lot of very interesting stuff there.

It was a great honour for myself and the CAG Roman Roads Group to be invited to give the talk, which was designed to be an overview of a typical amateur group such as ours (and there are lots more of them dotted about the country) concerned with research into Roman Roads in their local area, and how our group in particular goes about doing that. My aim therefore was to give folks a flavour of what we get up to, but also to raise some questions which would hopefully lead to discussions and feedback after the talk. I am happy to report that I have had a lot of very interesting feedback since then, and anyone watching the talk will note that the discussion period after the talk lasted nearly as long as the talk itself, so all in all a successful evening I think.

Whilst preparing for the talk (which pretty much took over my life for a few weeks!), I started to make some very interesting observations regarding a possible Roman road which looks like it may have formed a "northern bypass" of the Colonia. As I stressed at the time, this rather tenuous conclusion was based almost entirely on observations made in the last two or three weeks leading up to the evening of the talk, so it was all a bit hurried and unfinished in terms of "proper" research. Nonetheless I decided to press on with presenting my findings as I felt that it would give quite an accurate insight into the way we work in the CAG RRG, and hopefully would stimulate some discussion. If you are interested in knowing more, then please watch the video, and please do let me know if you have any further thoughts.

Briefly, based on the discovery last year by David Ratledge of a very prominent road-like earthwork in Highwoods Park (see last summer's newsletter), I have been tracing possible routes for this road and came



across a lot of interesting documentary evidence for a possible route to the north of Colchester Roman walled town, including extensive geophysical surveys by Tim Dennis near St. Helena School. I could not help wondering if this might have something to do with the closure of the Balcerne Gate late in the C3rd, at a time when Britannia broke away from Rome for around 10 years. One can imagine the newly self-proclaimed emperor of Brittania (Carausius) wanting to stamp his authority perhaps by having the monumental archway to Claudius demolished, and a new primary gate for the Colonia created on the north side of town. This is all very conjectural of course, but there is a lot of evidence there which needs further investigation, not least of which is some "on the ground" activity to investigate the Highwoods earthwork.

The Roman Roads Group meets once every two or three months (online by Zoom these days), and is open to all member of CAG. If anyone would like to join us (no previous knowledge of roads, Roman or otherwise, necessary!) please let myself or any member of the committee know and we will make sure you get an invitation.

Geoff Lunn Dec 2021

Landscape Archaeology Group

Anna Moore

For about ten years, a small group of CAG members have been studying the prehistoric cropmarks of the Middle Stour Valley, between Bures and Wormingford. Our investigations culminated in a booklet, *The Stour Valley; A Prehistoric Landscape**, produced in 2014 and although we have continued as a group since then, we feel that it has now run its course and the time is right for a change in direction.

Accordingly, a new group, the Landscape Archaeology Group has been formed to widen our study, both chronologically and geographically. The aim of the LAG will be to learn how to 'read' the history of the landscape by examining the topography, settlement patterns, field systems, buildings (and cropmarks of course) and hopefully reach some conclusions about how our local landscape has arrived at its modern appearance. We will do this by a variety of methods, some desk-based, some by observation (boots on ground), so if you are interested, there will almost certainly be a task to suit you. The future direction of the group has yet to be decided but, for instance, you might want to work on your own local parish or join with a number of other people to investigate a wider area of several parishes.

At the moment our meetings are via Zoom, If you are interested in joining the new group, or would just like to sit in on the Zoom meetings, let me know and I will send you a link closer to the time.

Anna Moore (annaemoore@btinternet.com)

** Still available to buy at £3 + p&p via the website <http://caguk.net/publications/>*

CAG's Prehistoric Cropmark Study Group

Sally Bartrum reminisces

As CAG's Prehistoric Cropmark Study Group evolves into CAG'S Landscape Study Group it seems an appropriate time to reminisce about its early days and some of its achievements during the 10 years the group was active.

Following CAG's excavation of the Tudor Hunting Lodge and of the Brick Kiln in Wormingford, and as a result of a detailed study of the history and archaeology in the parish coordinated by CAT's Howard Brooks and largely carried out by CAG members in 2010 -11, Wormingford resident Andrew White and other CAG members considered that the large number of diverse prehistoric cropmarks on both sides of the River Stour in Wormingford, and the 3 Bures parishes deserved greater study.

Following much preparation Andrew invited CAG Members to a meeting at Wormingford Crown on 16 February 2012. At this and subsequent meetings the main areas of interest were clearly defined and each area allocated to Andrew White, Anna Moore, Carol Wheeldon, Ellie Mead, Mark Curteis and Sally Bartrum to research and produce reports. The then CAG Chairman Philip Cunningham, John Mallinson, Francis Nicholls and Don Goodman also attended most meetings. (The Reports can be found on the CAG Website <http://caguk.net/sample-page/prehistoric-landscape-of-the-stour-valley/> with all sources identified).

The reports with details of our research, together with Carol's fabulous original painted illustrations were passed to CAG's Publication Committee and culminated in the publication of 'The Stour Valley: A Prehistoric Landscape' booklet published in December 2014. It's an excellent booklet and testament to the professional skills of that Committee.

During the initial period of research the Group met regularly at The Crown. Two excavations were carried out (in atrocious winter weather) of a clearly defined and unusual monument on land belonging to Mr Cowlin. Although no artefacts were found, testing of excavated material dated it to the early Neolithic. Members often met up to walk throughout the study area to discuss how the monuments shown by the cropmarks related to the surrounding landscape and to discuss possible intervisibility between them.

The most memorable of these site visits occurred in December 2013 when Andrew, Francis and Sally gathered at the western end of the pair of linear cropmarks which cross the field known as Metlands to witness the sunrise at the Winter Solstice. It was a beautiful clear frosty morning and the very first sighting of the sun rising over Lodge Hill aligned perfectly with the (almost) parallel cropmarks. As the sun gained height and its light flooded across the field birds roosting around the Mere rose singing into the air... it was, all agreed, a life changing moment!

An early morning walk timed to view the sunrise was organised for the winter solstice in 2014, and every year until Lockdown prevented it in 2020. These events were attended by many CAG members who wished to witness the event themselves. Sadly each year our wishes were thwarted by cloudy and overcast skies, but the full English Breakfast we enjoyed at the Crown afterwards somewhat made up for it.

With the publication of the booklet in 2014 the main aim of the Group was achieved, however we continued to meet regularly at The Crown. During 2015 and 2016 several promotional talks were given to local History Groups, WEAs, and during a site visit to Lodge Hills as part of the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Forum. A notable achievement during this time was undertaking flights in a light aircraft in 2014 and 2019 to take our own aerial photos of areas of interest. In addition, a large number of aerial photos of north east Essex and part of south Suffolk from other sources were collated by Philip Cunningham and Anna Moore. These form the CAG Collection of Aerial Photos which are now available to all CAG members. For a copy, please e-mail enquiries@caguk.net

In 2017 when Andrew took a break from leading the Group and chairing meetings, Sally took over some parts of his role. Our meetings became increasingly informal. Ellie continued to take the minutes and by some magic produced accurate concise records of all that was important. We were joined Tim Dennis and Geoff Lunn who introduced us to new ways to use Google Earth, LIDAR, 3D modelling and much more.

Without pressure to produce reports members turned to more hands-on activities. Tim with other members of the group carried out geophysical surveys of two sites with impressive results. Several sessions of 'Practical Archaeology' took place at Little Ropers including making string from stinging nettle fibre, hand modelling and decorating Neolithic style pots and Early Bronze Age beakers. The Gestingthorpe History Group kindly fired our first efforts with great success in their medieval kiln and we attempted to 'Bonfire Fire' our second attempts, somewhat less successfully! The best of our pots were used for experimental cookery; by dropping red hot stones into them to bring water to boiling point, we managed to boil an egg. We also cooked meat directly on to large stones in the fire itself, and some of us ate the results!

During 2019 several eager 'new' members joined the Group. At a meeting in early March 2020 suggestions to extend our study area and to include other landscape features of archaeological and historical significance were met with enthusiasm. Unfortunately within days Covid, social distancing and lockdowns made it impossible to move forward in the proposed way. As a result of this enforced hiatus it was deemed an appropriate time to say a fond farewell to CAG's Prehistoric Cropmark Study Group, and to welcome the new opportunities CAG's Landscape Archaeology Group (LAG) will offer (see the accompanying article in this newsletter on p.8).

Ingatestone Roman Road investigation - continued

Roger Cooke

In the last CAG Newsletter, the background story into the possible existence of a Roman road near Ingatestone was detailed. With the permission of the landowner two test pit's sites were planned to investigate this possibility. This article describes what was found!!

Two test pits 1m square were excavated, Test Pit 1 was located in the centre of the perceived road (closest to the camera) and Test Pit 2 over one of the "roadside ditch". The excavated material layers were kept separate to enable correct ordering of backfill, minimising environmental damage.

Once the woodland leaf litter and woodland floor had been removed, there was an obvious difference when comparing the underlying layers in the test pits. The ditch test pit consisted of a yellow/brown clay, whilst the road test pit had a large number of pebbles embedded in a brown soil. This layer was half sectioned. The section consisted of pebbles in a brown soil-like matrix. This was 15 - 20cm thick. Beneath this, was the same yellow brown clay found in the other test pit.

The pebbles were not however compacted as you might expect if used by traffic as a road way.



The pebbles and “soil” from the half section were sieved and separated, to determine the ratio of material. The volume was roughly 50/50.



Road

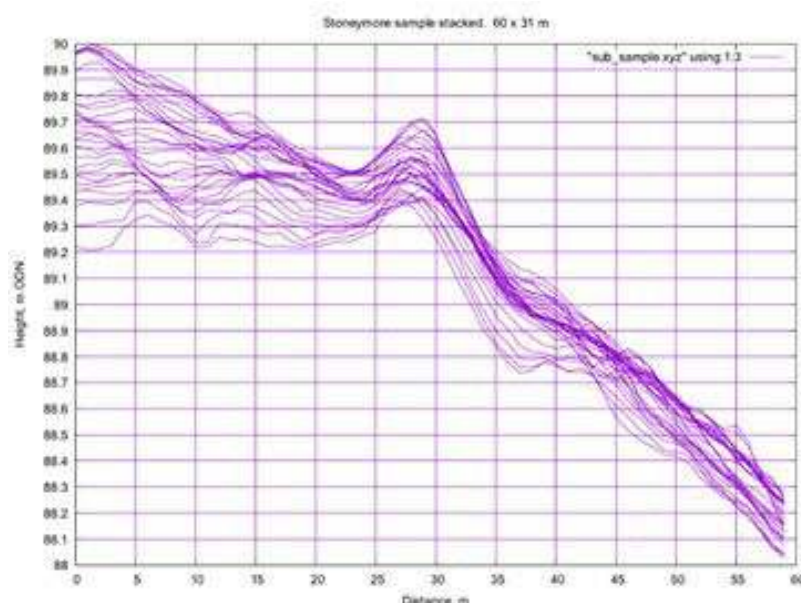


Roadside Ditch

The sieved pebble layer produced two finds, a flint bladelet and a piece of iron slag. The finds within the “metalling” showed this layer is not natural, and the material was transported to this location. There was no direct dating evidence relating to the roman period.



At the conclusion of this phase of the dig, the exposed test pit surfaces were covered, and material back filled in the correct layer order as it was extracted.



Subsequently, Tim Dennis supported the investigation by performing a resistivity survey around the two test pits. This was successful but limited by the tree and tree roots in the area. The results supported the view that we were excavating over the linear feature. Tim Dennis additionally performed an analysis of the LIDAR data and created a superimposed plot of all long-axis tracks across a sample strip. This shows (left) the fall of the ground surface right with a raised peak feature with a trace of ditches either side, particularly to the higher ground.

Love Tokens

Francis Nicholls

*There was a crooked man who walked a crooked mile.
He found a crooked sixpence against a crooked stile!*

From the 14th to the 19th century lovers often used to confirm their affection for one another by way of a token. It had to be an item of value yet affordable.

Thus a silver sixpence became one of the most popular choices.

To make the coins unusable as money, the two faces were smoothed down to remove the minted inscriptions. In some cases, a heart or a knot was then carved onto the coin. Occasionally a small hole was bored through to make a pendant.

They were then deliberately bent, almost always twice.

The man would give the token to his sweetheart as a sign of love and his intention of marriage. She would wear it as a pendant or carry it in her purse as a demonstration of her loyalty.



But love often went awry and the token would then become an unwanted piece of evidence of past promises. If you lived in the country, the easiest way of disposal was to throw it somewhere like the middle of a field or in a ditch...or maybe against a crooked stile!

Judging from the number of them found in fields throughout Britain, it does beg the question as to how many brides reached the altar still holding onto their love tokens!

The lost Manor Hall of Great Fordham, found?

Mike Hamilton-Macy

Parish boundaries in England began to be established from around the 8th century and were set by around 1180, they then stayed virtually un-altered until the 19th century.

The areas that manors covered were a little more fluid however, the manor of Little Fordham, for example seems to have been mostly in Aldham but crossing the River Colne into Fordham. The original Bouchiers Hall in Aldham was previously known as Little Fordham Hall.

At the time of the great survey in 1086 there was only one parcel of land that was quoted as being "held as a manor" in Fordham; this almost certainly became the manor of Fordham Hall as it was the largest and is recorded as having a mill.

The manor of Argenteins, now known as Archendines, seems to have been established some time later in the 13th century.

The manor of Great Fordham, also known as Much Fordham or Fordham Magna, though is something of an Enigma. It's often recorded during the 16th to 19th centuries as the "manor of Great Fordham and The Frith". The Frith is sometimes referred to as "The Frith estate" and is where Frith, (Thrift) farm was established in the 16th century.

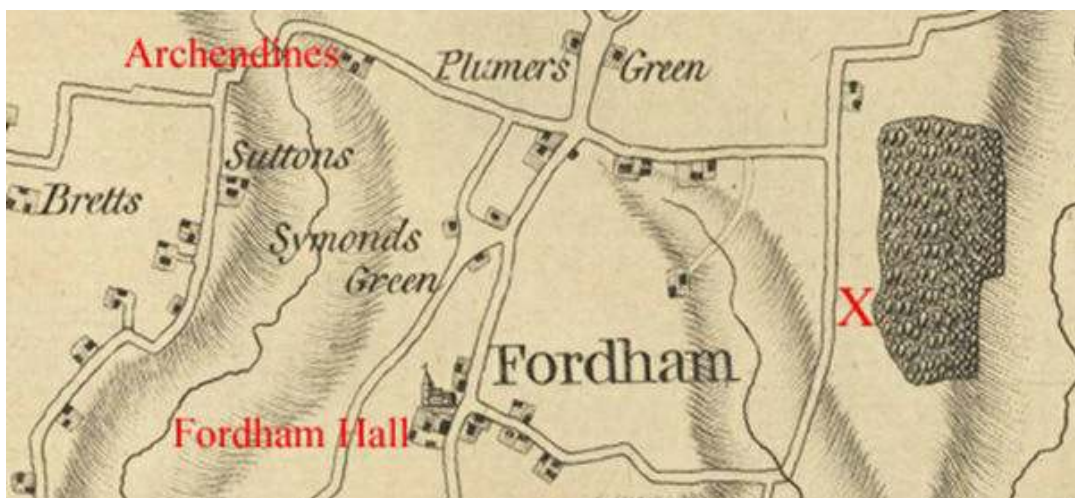
To date, I have found no information about Great Fordham manor prior to 1539 Apart from a court record listed in the National Archive for 1514, but the manor was probably established in Norman times along with Argentines. More research is needed.

The halls of Fordham hall, Little Fordham and Argentines still exist, albeit with later buildings replacing the originals but there's no trace of where Great Fordham hall was, we only know that the Great Fordham manor was "in the east and south" of the parish.

So...where was Great Fordham hall? I may have the answer to that question.

A few years ago when I started to look further afield from our dig site in search of other possible archaeological sites, I had a look at the historic environment records for Fordham.

Apart from all the timber framed buildings going back to the 13th century there was very little, but one record caught my attention, there was a "probable moated site" listed



1777 Chapman & Andre map with X marking the "moat" site.

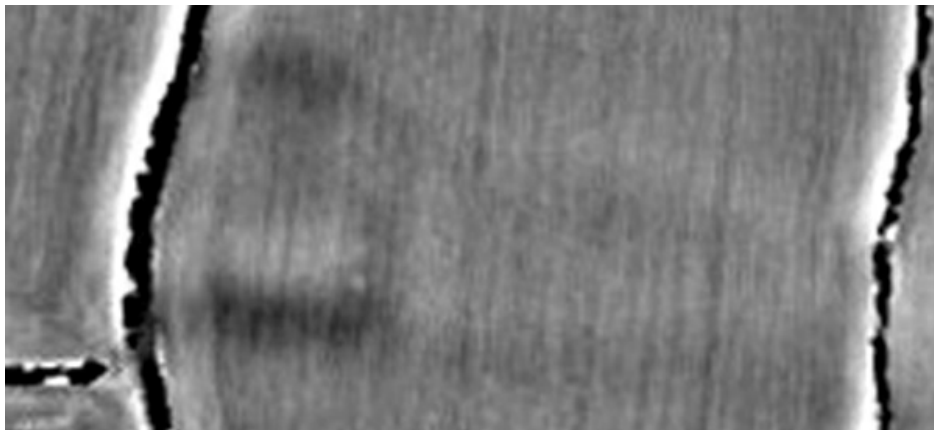
Now, as it turns out, I'd been looking at that area very closely for a while because there's a tangle of cropmarks there, see image below. The four parallel, diagonal lines are land drains.



Cropmarks on 2018 satellite image (enhanced), Fossetts lane to the left.

One of those upper, angled lines is an old field boundary which looks like it could have later been formed along the north side of the "moat", further south there's a long, wide mark that could be the opposite part, the east side, opposite the road however is rather more vague with what looks more like a building footprint than a moat. Interestingly, the ground undulates there with shallow troughs that match the north and south parts of the "moat". I decided to see how it looked on the LIDAR map.

The result was clearer, with an east side showing, forming a rough rectangle alongside the road but the north and south sides appear to extend eastwards across the field.



LIDAR image with "moat" alongside the road to the left, "tracks" heading to the right.

I had previously had a quick wander over the area to see if anything interesting was on the surface in the way of CBM and seen quite a lot of peg tile, so I assumed it was a medieval site or possibly just farmyard manuring.

After acquiring permission from the landowner, I did some metal detecting, looking for CBM and pottery whilst doing so. There wasn't much CBM other than the peg tile but I did find several pieces of Roman brick and tile, I treated this with a little scepticism as there's a Roman site nearby which it could have been robbed from. There was also some grey pottery sherds which looked Roman but early medieval pottery can look similar, so I've put the Romans on the back burner for the moment.

There was, though, some non-Roman/Saxon looking pottery which was quite coarse and crude with some pieces having a slip coating. The latest, partially glazed pieces looked Tudor.



I spent a couple of days metal detecting but didn't find anything particularly interesting.

Martin Weaire, however, only did an hour or so and found a Henry III silver coin from around 1250! - Don't you just hate that!

So, judging by the peg tile, pottery and coin, we probably have a site dating, very roughly from 1200 to 1600.

The next stage was to do a geophysical survey of the site; David and Aline Black have very kindly donated their magnetometry and resistance machines to CAG so I climbed on a steep learning curve and got to grips with the magnetometry process. I finally got the hang of it and managed to survey an area of 30 x 90m, this showed some interesting results; no obvious building footprints but there seems to be a lot going on there.

Curiously, the north part of the "moat" doesn't show up but the south does, unfortunately I ran out of time as the field was due to be drilled any day but I plan to extend the survey when time and the farming schedule allows. I expect this won't be until next summer when the wheat is harvested.



So, the question is, has the site of Great Fordham manor hall been found?

Quite possibly, it does tick some of the right boxes with the location, the finds and the time period.

Perhaps next year there will be a more definitive answer.

The Parish Boundaries of the Tendring Hundred Peninsular

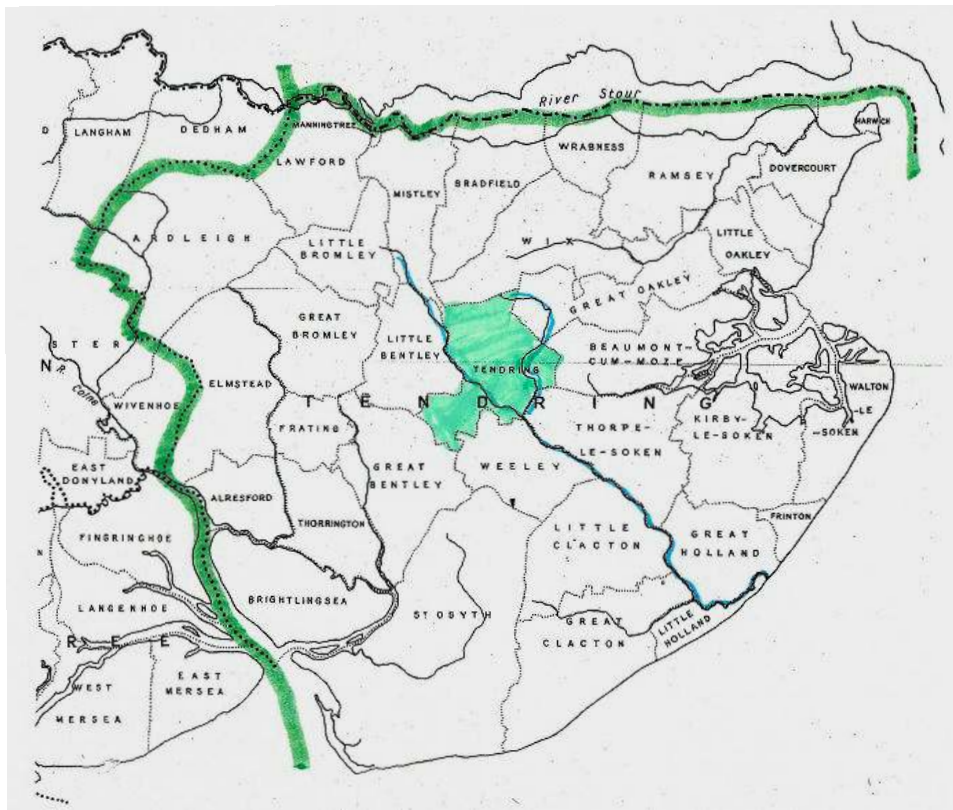
David Grayston. 7.1.2022

It is striking how the parishes of the peninsular seem to radiate out from the centre, based on the village of Tendring – perhaps with Little Bentley - particularly to the north and east.

Parishes that abut them join two more outer parishes and so on. See map. Mistley makes a particular effort to stay linked to Tendring from the River Stour, with just a 200m wide finger of land at its boundary with Tendring, almost at the point where the Saxon Moot met.

Given that the parish boundaries were at least of Anglo Saxon date; William 1 based his Domesday Book on these readymade divisions, why and when did the boundaries arise and why do they seem centred on the village of Tendring? We could credit them to the Anglo-Saxons and leave it there. However, East Anglia had been occupied for the previous 800,000 years by successive groups of immigrants. Fortunately the Old Stone (Palaeolithic) accounted for most of this time with intermittent, small populations of hunter-gatherers. They came and went with the glacial periods, following their prey animals and via a land bridge with Europe. These people would not have needed parish boundaries! This leaves us with only the last 8,000 years to account for. The Mesolithic hunted and gathered on the European mainland and the North Sea Plain, over Doggerland, for about two thousand years and then a change occurred which might account for the dividing up the Tendring Peninsular.

The New Stone Age people (Neolithic culture) arrived about 6,000 years ago with their own genotype. They had originated in the 'Fertile Crescent' of the Middle East – Turkey, Egypt and Iraq – where farming started a few thousand years earlier and progressed across Europe until entering Britain. These relatively sophisticated farmers



brought over their materials to continue agriculture and feed themselves. They had been used to working fairly light soils so were probably attracted to the heavy clay soils of south Essex and further inland or even the clays between Clacton and Harwich.

Why could the peninsular suit their agricultural needs? The answer may lie in the soil!

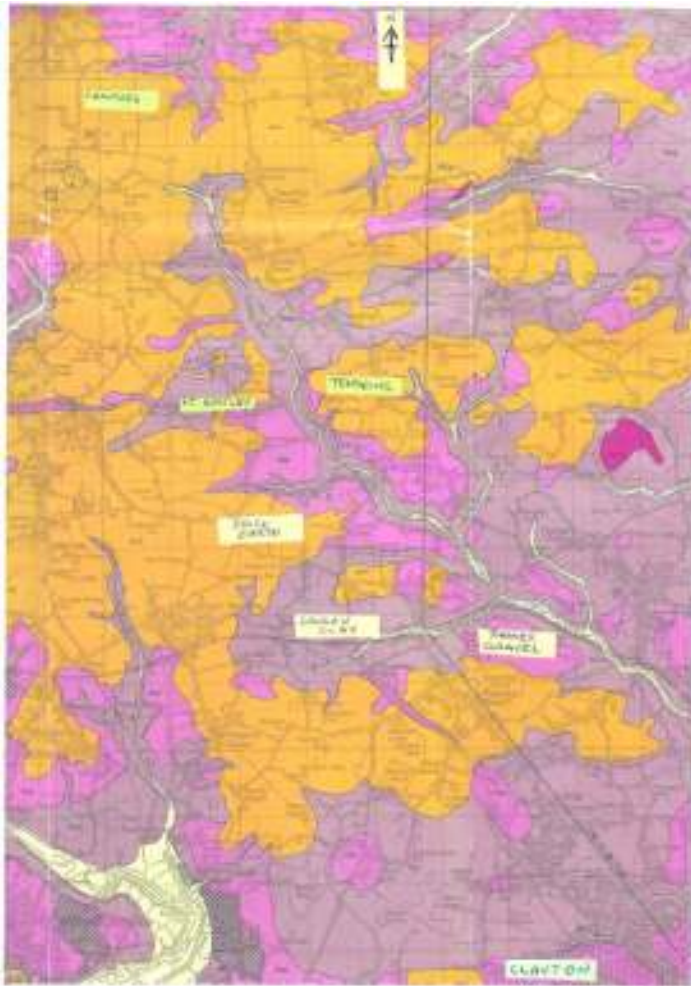
The Peninsular is unique in some ways. It has a deep base rock of London Clay (exposed at Walton-on-the-Naze cliffs and foreshore) which extends across south Essex and up into Suffolk. The early River Thames had flowed across the clay Peninsular and continued, past Clacton, across the North Sea Plain to the Rhine. It had deposited huge depths of sand and gravel en-route – our gravel pits. It had been joined near Clacton by the Medway from Kent. Then, 450,000 years ago, the ice sheet of the Anglian Glaciation came south, about as far as the present A12, diverting the Thames to its present course, leaving behind the gravel. The ice, which had not covered the Peninsular, melted and retreated, leaving behind a thick covering of boulder clay over much of north Essex, covering up the Thames gravels.

During the next, most recent ice age, the Devensian, the ice came as far south as north Norfolk and lasted about 50,000 years, finishing about 10,000ya. The prevailing tundra conditions allowed strong northerly winds to blow great quantities of fine dust and sand particles across the south. This is the loess soil (brickearth) of the Tendring Hundred which provides a fertile, light soil for agriculture and which still remains, not eroded away, above the 25m contour, to the north west of the peninsular.

It is this free draining soil, along with the Thames Gravel, that enable crop marks to show so well in the Tendring Peninsular, recording the soil working efforts of earlier cultures – Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages, the Romans and Saxons, etc.

The Peninsular is drained mainly by the Holland Brook, rising in Little Bromley and joining the sea at Holland. It is quite possible that the Neolithic immigrants used the river to gain access to the wooded interior. The coastal plain through which the river ran was low lying and heavy clay and could have been marshy, mosquito ridden and inhospitable. The countryside was wooded and following the river would take them to higher ground. The Holland River is meandering from Weeley to the coast and reaches the 10m contour at Crown Lane in Tendring. From there the contours became closer together. However, 15 metres uphill on either side would have brought Neolithic settlers to a large plateau (see map). This is the first point in from the sea with a large, flat areas of fertile, free working brickearth (loess) soil, above the 25m contour, free from disease giving mosquitoes. The plateau has abundant water supplies on the top.

Tendring and Little Bentley are both on the plateau, on opposite sides of the Holland Brook, between it and two of its tributaries although Tendring does occupy both sides of the Brook in the southwest. (first map). The plateau would have presented a large, ideal farming area, allowing settlements to develop and, with good diet and housing, a population growth. A tribal gathering place would have been needed for ceremonial events, trading, feasting and choosing partners for marriage from other groups to avoid inbreeding. One such causewayed



enclosure exists in the south of the Peninsular, on a ridge at St Osyth. It overlooks the sea and marshes and is sited on a free draining and fertile soil type with easy access to the River Colne estuary. Fertile plateaux are present in the north west of the peninsular in the Ardleigh area, accessible from the Stour so settlement could also have been from this direction. With the low sea levels in the Neolithic the rivers Stour, Deben and Colne could have appeared quite different, with their estuaries well out from the present coastline.

Both Tendring village and the Ardleigh area have large concentrations crop marks showing, through the ages, evidence of early man. Particularly conspicuous are the 4,500 - to 2,800 year old Bronze Age burial mound sites along with later Iron Age and crop marks of their field systems. I have flown over this remarkable peninsular photographing the abundant manmade and natural crop marks, from the Neolithic to date. The Bronze Age sites appear as 'ring ditches'; circles of green, growing crops within a ripening crop. These are, in the main, on the tops of the valley sides and were circular ditches, up to 20 metres diameter, creating a mound of soil forming a monument over the cremated remains, buried at the centre. A disused quarry by Tendring Brook (NE tributary of Holland Brook) has yielded Palaeolithic hand axes and flint tools while a ceremonial Henge site lies to the NNW of the Tendring's church.

Back to the Neolithic.....

It was the Neolithic people who were the first farmers, with a fixed abode, and it was they who would need to

mark out their property, fields and eventually their territories. Prehistoric field boundary ditches, curses monuments, hut compounds, enclosure, track ways and monuments can still be seen from the air. Territorial boundaries, then as now, would have incorporated the above along with streams and other topographical features.

Given the desirability of the area an outward expansion from Tendring would have been necessary once a group had reached its optimum size; clearing woodland, creating new fields and territories until this process repeated itself – Little Bentley or SW Tendring might have been early expansion areas. There would also have been pressure to expand as the soil became less productive with continuous cropping. The Neolithic were here for 1,500 years so had ample time to consolidate.

When the Beaker people (Bronze Age) arrived, with their own DNA, the Neolithic were gone within a few hundred years, possibly due to the plague. The DNA of the plague bacteria, yersinia pestis, has recently been found in bone samples of the Beaker people.

They, the Yamnaya, originated in the Russian Steppe and carried a new disease which, perhaps, wiped out the Neolithic. Invaders to an area would arguably use the existing infrastructures of the displaced or integrated people thus consolidating boundaries, roads and occupation areas. The Colchester Archaeological Group is currently researching the possibility that Roman villa estates were the origins of the parishes. I suggest that the boundaries could go back a few stages further. Either way, early settlement from the interior, at Tendring, could account for the radial pattern of the Parish Boundaries.

The Woman of Domesday

Mike Hamilton-Macy

Back in the July 2021 newsletter I wrote a piece entitled "The Vikings of Fordham and Essex" and in my researches I discovered that one of the Fordham landowners was not only a Viking but also probably female. Up until then, it had not occurred to me how many female property owners there might have been in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Another article beckoned.

So, I started wading, yet again, through the Domesday entries for Essex looking for likely women landowners, some were easy to find as they were entered as: "Wife of..." "Widow of..." "...a free woman" "Queen..." "Countess..." and in one case "Two girls".

The others took rather longer because it meant finding out which were female Saxon/Scandinavian names and which were male, fortunately there are common components in the names which point one generally in the right direction, so as I worked further through the entries it became easier.

A few caveats first.

There are a few entries which are worded in such a way as to make interpretation difficult, I have excluded those.

There are probably errors and accidental omissions.

There are multiple entries for some of the names, for example there are ten entries for Edeva, one says "Edeva the fair", another "Edeva, wife of Edward" with the remaining eight just "Edeva".

I think it's unlikely that we'll ever know how many individuals make up the ten entries, but it will be somewhere between one and ten!

For clarity, one hide is one hundred and twenty acres and a virgate is thirty acres.

Onward.

Apart from the Fordham entry, I believe there are at least two other ladies who were of Scandinavian extraction and they are: Tovi, who owned a house in Colchester and Sylvi, who held a manor of 2.5 hides and 31 acres in Fryerning along with Topi, also Viking and presumably her husband or brother.

On the subject of couples, there are at least two examples of Saxon named women marrying Viking men: Wulfeva, wife of Fin and Aelgyth, widow of Thorsten.

There are four entries for "a free woman", whose properties range from holdings of thirty acres at Horsham Hall, a manor in Messing, land of one hide and 3 virgates and a manor of 1.5 hides in Sturmer.

"Two girls" are listed as owning eighty acres in Chelmsford.

I have found fifty-six female entries in Essex, assuming they are all separate individuals but only two of those still owned land in 1086:

Edeva, wife of Edward still had her 0.5 hide in Chafford hundred, but the remaining nine Edeva entries all lost their lands which amounted to 18 hides, including four manors, I imagine she/they were not best pleased.

Suprisingly, Wulfeva acquired the manor of five hides and fifteen acres in Latchingdon, is she the same person in Colchester who was dispossessed of a house and twenty five acres in two separate plots? Either way she seems to have bucked the trend and come out ahead.

I'll not list all the entries, just finish with a few locals and notables.

"Bricteva of Stanway" had eighteen acres...in Stanway.

Leofeva had one hide less five acres in Aldham.

Countess Aelfeva had three houses in Colchester.

Aelgyth, widow of Thosten had five manors, with land of very nearly four thousand acres!

Finally: Queen Edith wife of Edward the Confessor had manors in Little Chesterford, Little Bromley, Wix, Rivenhall and Colchester.

Queen Edith died in 1075 after a long illness, widowed, and dispossessed but she was buried with her husband in Westminster Abbey, the funeral was arranged by King William.

It's strange how things go around, land and property ownership amongst women was not unusual in Viking and Saxon culture but that changed dramatically over the following centuries, in Georgian and Victorian times when a woman married, all her land and property automatically transferred to her husband. Fortunately we live in more enlightened and balanced times.

Colchester's Young Archaeologists' Club meet again and embark on a project

Barbara Butler

Although we met up with members at Roman Circus House in the summer, the first official meeting of the Young Archaeologists' Club was in September.

We welcomed many new members to the event organised by Colchester Archaeological Group. CAG members and YAC volunteers, Gillian Brown, Barbara Butler and Hilary Cairns assisted with the varied activities which were organised by Mike Hamilton-Macy, Geoff Lunn, and Tim Dennis.

YACs and their parents were able to study vintage maps of the village which showed the two fields nearby, made available to them for the day. They learned skills, such as find washing and identification, using Roman and medieval artifacts found in the village.



GPR at Fordham



Metal detecting



Pot washing and finds processing

For those joining Geoff Lunn for metal detecting in a field, the time was only too short. Geoff said he would not usually dig up the section of a plough which one young YAC located, but it was important to do so on this occasion and was taken home as a souvenir of the day. One new member was so engaged with metal detecting, that he started to save up his pocket money and bought his own device with his savings and as much birthday money as relatives could afford.

Tim Dennis adapted his Ground Penetrating Radar device to facilitate the YACs to use it. The young people were able to steer the converted golf trolley, with a computer screen attached, across the field. The GPR equipment was adapted to allow the young people to watch the image on the computer screen as they steered the equipment.

The morning was such a success; the members are still talking about it.



Designing a mosaic



Designing a logo

We met in Colchester Castle in October, where we studied the development of the building, from Roman Temple of Claudius to Norman Castle and present museum. We had an object identification and handling session.

We also launched our funded project, in Colchester Castle. It is part of the English Heritage "Shout out Loud" scheme, specifically designed for young people to explore a local story which is "from the ordinary to the extraordinary." Colchester museum assistant and tour guide, John McCabe, shared his research of the Colchester martyrs with us for our project.

We are exploring the fate of these people, whose martyrdom was documented and illustrated in Foxes Book of Martyrs. Our project is called "Caught in a Treacherous Tudor Web: the dark fate of some humble folk in Colchester." We will establish an online trail and interactive map to complete our project, and compare the extreme religious divisions then, to the diversity and tolerance in the town today.

At our November meeting, in Roman Circus House, the young people designed a logo for the project, which included spiders, webs, and Tudor Roses. These have been used for a symbol for the theme and mission statement.

With the changing 'rules' associated with the pandemic, our plans for the December meeting had to change. Roman mosaic expert Lawrence Payne visited us and gave the YACs such good instructions for designing a Roman mosaic, they were able follow them successfully. They also made mosaic stars to take home. Teas, coffees, and fruit juices were available from the café, together with freshly baked sausage rolls and mince pies.

Copy of a letter from the Council for British Archaeology send to our treasurer Geoff Lunn thanking CAG for a donation during the covid.



Council for
British Archaeology

14 September 2021

Dear Geoff

I am writing on behalf of YAC to thank you very much for your very generous donation of £300 from the Colchester Archaeological Group.

We are extremely grateful and please be assured that your donation will be put to very good use!

Thank you again for thinking of us, it is very much appreciated.

Kind regards

Rachel Arbury
Youth Engagement Assistant, Council for British Archaeology
92 Micklegate, York, YO1 6JX

Obituary Pat Brown



11/11/1924 – 9/10/2021

Pat Brown, who died in October, a few weeks short of her 97th birthday, was a mainstay of CAG for many years. She joined the committee in 1991 and served as Hon. Sec. from then until 2006, generously offering the big room at the back of her house in Lexden for meetings. At the same time, from 1993 to 2007, Pat arranged the Winter Lecture Programme and, with Hazel West, organised the summer and Christmas parties. From 2007 – 2014 she edited the Bulletin. Pat rarely missed a Monday evening lecture, where she always sat in the front row, scribbling away in her notebook.

Pat started a local branch of the Young Archaeologists Club, leading it until 2009, many of the young people going on to become adult members of the Group and some even becoming professional archaeologists.

Pat was a gifted teacher and taught archaeology up to 'A' Level for Adult Education and WEA. She was a hugely encouraging teacher and many current members of CAG were introduced to the subject and to the Group through her lively classes. Her great interests were Anglo-Saxon England and Old English and she contributed several articles on those subjects to the Bulletin, as well as leading trips to local sites such as West Stow and Sutton Hoo.

She also excavated with the Group, at the Great Tey Bronze Age and Iron Age sites (she was particularly pleased to find evidence of Anglo-Saxon occupation on the Bronze Age site), and in her eighties was still digging, by then at the Tudor Hunting Lodge in Wormingford.



Pat at Great Tey

On the occasion of the CAG's fiftieth birthday, in 2007, it was decided to award life membership to three members who had given outstanding service to the Group. Pat was the last of these three so in a way, her passing marks the end of an era. For the last few years of her life, Pat was confined to her home and unable to attend lectures and other events. She retained a lively interest in the Group however and was always keen to hear news of any activities and developments.

From Denise Hardy: For me personally Pat believed in me, where I didn't. She gently pushed me to do the A level Archaeological exam, where I was only there in her class to learn more about the subject. Then she nudged me into going to Birkbeck University to do my diploma. I personally owe a lot to Pat for laying down the knowledge of the theory of Archaeology. Nick also remembered how during the YAC class we dug up her garden with 1metre square test pits. Loads of them and the children enjoyed every moment.

From Barbara Butler: Pat recruited me to volunteer as an assistant leader for the Young Archaeologists' Club in 2006. The club met in the Charles Grey room at Colchester Castle. Pat had a loyal following among members, two of whom became volunteers. YAC volunteer leaders met up in Pat's house in Alexandra Road to plan the meetings. There were other members of Colchester Archaeological Group volunteering for the YAC at that time, although some dropped out and were replaced by Colchester museums' staff, who took the running of the club "in house". It was then Pat retired from leading the club. Pat's dedication to the YAC inspired loyalty among both volunteers and members. Lorna Webb (YAC from 2001 to 2005) writes on the YAC website alumni page: "I was really inspired by Pat Brown who was the Colchester Young Archaeologists' Club leader when I attended. She organised all the activities and trips and made the experience interesting and enjoyable." The close association and support of the CAG established by Pat, is still appreciated by the Colchester Branch of the YAC today. Six volunteer leaders are also CAG members.

CAG Collection of Aerial Photos

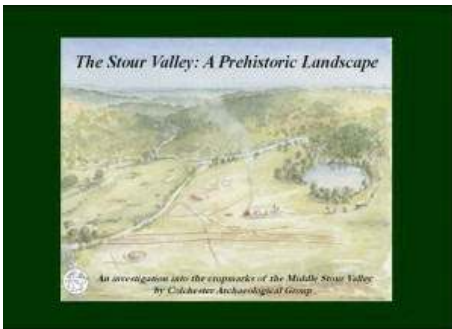


Cropmarks at Frating, photographed by David Grayston

CAG now has a collection of nearly 3000 digital aerial photos dating from the 1970s to almost the present day. The bulk of the images were taken by Ida McMaster between about 1970 and 1990, with many more from David Grayston and others. They cover mainly North-East Essex and South Suffolk and are particularly useful for identifying crop-marks. The list is fully indexed, by OS grid reference, parish and feature type. It is free to CAG members on production of a memory stick to copy it to. Please e-mail enquiries@caguk.net

CAG Publications

contact CAG Sales – sales@caguk.net Also available at Monday night Lectures



The Stour Valley: A Prehistoric Landscape.

A 40 page summary of investigations by CAG into the cropmarks of the Middle Stour Valley (Bures – Wormingford area). This covers evidence of a Neolithic Cursus, a Long Barrow and Bronze Age rings. Each section of the flood plain is covered in detail with maps, aerial images and explanations. £3.00 plus p&p.

The Lost Mansions of Marks Hall – From Demolition to Discovery.

The story of the CAG Archaeological dig at Marks Hall. 26 colour pages. £5.00 plus p&p.

The Lost Tudor Hunting Lodge at Wormingford

The story of the excavation of a Tudor Hunting Lodge on the Essex/Suffolk border. A4, 24 pages, fully illustrated throughout in colour. A4, 24 pages and fully illustrated throughout in colour. ISBN 978-0-9503905-2-9. £2.00. plus p&p. LIMITED STOCK

The Red Hills of Essex

The Survey of Essex Salt making red hills by CAG published in 1990 is still a key reference book for anyone studying this subject. 100 pages, £5.00 plus p&p.

The full set of four publications can be ordered for £10 plus p&p.

All publications are in stock. Sorry not available on Amazon

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On-line publications found on our website

caguk.net/publications

Survey of World War Two Defences in the Borough of Colchester by Fred Nash, CAG and Essex County Council, Project report 2007. On-line edition 2020

The original Report is now divided into five downloadable pdf files:

- (1) Prelims and Contents
- (2) Introduction, History to Appendices Site Grading and Inventory and map of Defence sites,
- (3) Section A: Sites Records SMR 8913-10961
- (4) Section B: Site Records: SMR 10962-20511
- (5) Section C: Site Records SMR 20512-21159

The report of the Middle Bronze Age burials and Anglo-Saxon ditch excavations by the Colchester Archaeological Group in 2003-5 at Teybrook Farm, Great Tey. by Laura Pooley and Howard Brooks.

Also found on our website the annual CAG Bulletins from 1958 to 2016

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Notices

Membership fees. Single member £12.00. Student member £4.00. Joint members £20.00

[A copy of the 2021/22 Membership renewal form can be found on the CAG website](#)

GDPR act. For a copy of our Data protection policy please contact the Membership secretary,
membership@caguk.net