



Colchester Archaeological Group NEWSLETTER

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There are always those who don't take things seriously

Words from the Chair Summer 24

Members of CAG have been very busy so far this year and that trend looks likely to continue.

We still have the dig at Fordham of course and after the worst digging autumn/winter we've had since the dig started in 2015, it has been up and running for the last few months.

Having said that, the frequent rain is still causing us problems.

The more recent project to un-earth a possible Roman road in Highwoods that approaches Colchester from the north east is throwing up tantalising possibilities but the woodland and it's carpet of bluebells means restricted and sporadic access to the site.

Our newly acquired magnetometer was used for a training session for some members a few months ago and has since been used "in anger" on the Jaywick golf course in the search of prehistoric and possible Roman occupation.

The Landscape Archaeology sub-group are now focusing their efforts on the Elmstead area as opposed to multiple projects from individuals; I suspect our magnetometer will get a run out there in due course as well.

A brief pylon update, we have been in contact with Dr. Richard Hoggett from the Historic Environment Record and sent details of the Fordham dig and the other sites in that area for inclusion on the HER list and website. It is hoped that National Grid will, at last, take notice and not place pylons on top of them!

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On a happier note, we had the Young Archaeologist Club members at Fordham Hall again in June and much fun was had with pot restoration, finds washing, the ever popular metal detecting and new for this year, bone analysis, numbers in the club are increasing, as is their enthusiasm!

We will be hosting them again at the dig on the 14th of September; I might need a lie down afterwards!
Mike Hamilton-Macy, Chairman.

Events

The visit to Canterbury on 26th January 2024

by Neil Short

I joined around 30 other CAG Members on a day trip to Canterbury, Kent (or as it was in Roman times, Durovernam Cantiacorum). The gods were with us on the day with a perfect blue sky and a not too cool temperature.



The initial target for the trip, as identified by our excellent organiser, Lucy Jack, was the Roman House Museum. This Museum is as described, a small Museum built above the remains of a Roman house (or houses). The finds within cover the wider Canterbury area but the house rooms on the lower floor, one with hypocaust and with sections of mosaic, offered a first real view of Roman Canterbury.

The Museum was administratively the groups' starting point for the trip, with the advantage of being only a 5mins walk from our drop off (and collection) point.

Following time at the Museum however, it became a free day for each to do whatever they wished to in Canterbury. Therefore, the remaining text within covers my personal tour of historic Canterbury. Upon



leaving the Museum, the obvious next target was Canterbury Cathedral. Founded in 597 by Augustine, an Abbot from Rome and tasked with delivering Christianity to the "Anglo Saxons", the Cathedral was totally rebuilt from 1070 to 1077 following a fire in 1067. Well enough of textbook history.

Unfortunately, our visit clashed with a University Graduation Ceremony, which closed access to the Nave. However there remained much to see in the magnificent architecture, together with significant internments, including King Henry IV and the Black Prince.

On leaving the Cathedral my walking tour took in the Beane House of Art and Knowledge which contained beautiful Anglo-Saxon finds, including the Canterbury Pendant (c 650AD). (Right) Onwards to Westgate, the largest surviving medieval gate in Britain (18m/60' tall, built in 1379) and on past Canterbury Castle (Norman and covered in scaffolding) before reaching Dane John Park, home of the "Roman Mound". This is thought to be a 1st/2nd C AD Roman burial, later used as a Civil War gun emplacement and windmill site.





Finally, a passing glance of the medieval walls of the city (largely 14th C replacing Roman 2nd C builds) before arriving back with just enough time for a coffee and sandwich. All in all, a great day at a great place to visit...

Comment: I was made aware that certain members on the trip (no names of course) managed to do little other than to find lunch following the Roman Museum. Oh well...

CAG Trip to Bury St Edmunds and West Stow Anglo Saxon Village with Rendlesham Revealed Exhibition on 15th March 2024 by Lucy Jack

Initially there were too few to merit booking a bus, however mini. Many had opted to drive given the vicinity, and our Hon Sec Sue kindly sorted everyone into cars.

First stop Bury St Edmunds - 17 of us enjoyed a guided tour of the cathedral. Our guide told us the story of St Edmund, 9th century King of East Anglia, killed by Danish invaders in 869. The original Patron Saint of England until 1348 – his demotion by Edward III not popular with our guide! Despite the name of the town, his whereabouts are a bit of a mystery.

His burial place became a shrine and developed into the Abbey of St Edmund, the 4th largest church in medieval Europe (over 500 ft long in 1240). A site of pilgrimage with a powerful and wealthy monastic



community, until the dissolution when the Abbey was demolished. Apparently when the shrine was plundered his body was missing.

Our guide suggested that the monks had moved his body to London, but we heard another theory that he is buried in the monks' cemetery, under the tennis courts in Abbey Gardens. (ref "Edmund – In Search of England's Lost King" by Dr Francis Young). It is consecrated ground and permission from our current King to excavate has been refused.

Reminiscent of Richard III found under the Leicester car park? Maybe one day archaeological investigation will solve the mystery.

The Abbey precincts included a church for the townsfolk which was developed over time and became St Edmundsbury Cathedral in 1914 but was only completed late in the 20th century. Light and bright with some stunning stained-glass windows, it is well worth a visit.

Along with some rare books from the Ancient Library (founded in 1595) and other treasures, on display in the crypt is "The Bury Cross". Another intriguing story.

After World War II a 12th century walrus ivory cross appeared under mysterious circumstances in a bank vault in Zurich and was acquired by the New York Metropolitan Museum. Experts have identified the Abbey of St Edmund as its place of origin. What an interesting journey and history it could speak of!



The Bury Cross replica



After lunch a few more members (total 25) met us at West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village, site of an archaeologically excavated settlement, part of which has been reconstructed on the footprint of the original thatched houses. We enjoyed wandering around the village and getting a feel for Anglo Saxon life.

Each house is different to test ideas on building techniques. The sunken house shows older ideas about people living in a pit with roof that came down to the ground – very dark and damp! Later models test the idea that the pit was below the floor and have walls of split oak planks or wattle and daub.

The museum displays finds from the site, adjacent cemetery and other Anglo Saxon burials from the local area. The

main attraction for us was the special exhibition on the recently completed excavations at Rendlesham, site of the long-lost royal settlement and the richest place of its time known in England, which was served by the burial ground at Sutton Hoo (source Rendlesham Revealed by Suffolk Council Archaeological Service). Bede mentions that Swithelm, king of the East Saxons was baptised (between 655 and 663) in Rendlesham, residence of King Aethelwold of East Anglia. But the exact location eluded archaeologists and historians, until investigations following reports of illegal metal detecting in 2007 led to discovery of the foundations of large timber hall. Many of our members were involved in the excavations, concluding in the Rendlesham Revealed project publication in 2023. The exhibition displays some of the 6th and 7th century high status objects, gold coins from the Continent and garnet and gold filigree jewellery reminiscent of the Sutton Hoo treasures.

The first English gold coins were struck in the mid 7th century – some have been found at Rendlesham and may have been minted there. Later in the 7th century gold coins were replaced by lower value silver pennies and, as elsewhere in England at this time, there was a dramatic increase in the number of coins in circulation. Activity reduced dramatically in the early 8th



century and the royal residence was abandoned. International trade and production moved to coastal ports such as Ipswich.

Many thanks to all the drivers and to Sue for sorting us out.

Visit to Southend Central Museum, on 3rd May 2024 by Lucy Jack

The Prittlewell Princely Burial

19 of us enjoyed an introductory talk from lead curator Rob Sharp and tour of the permanent exhibition on the earliest dated Anglo-Saxon princely burial in England. Prittlewell is an ancient settlement, now dominated by its "south end" on the coast. Close to Prittle Brook and cut by the railway line, a Roman and Saxon cemetery with up to 43 burials was excavated in 1923. These included high status female graves with some beautiful jewellery also on display. In 2003 MOLA was commissioned to investigate any surviving remains before a road widening scheme. They discovered a collapsed burial mound over a wooden chamber tomb containing human remains in a coffin and surrounded by high-status grave goods, including an ornate copper-alloy bowl found hanging in its

original position on the wall. Scientific dating puts the burial probably in the AD 580s-590s.



The burial chamber



The Box fragments

My favourite finds are two stunning rare blue glass vessels and our only fragment of Anglo-Saxon painted wood from a box decorated in red and yellow pigment. The box contained a Byzantine silver spoon with graffiti of 3 owners BRITI, FABI and ROMN.

There were not enough human remains for DNA analysis but from the length of the coffin, position of a gold belt buckle and presence of weapons it is understood that the body was of a young man. The gold belt buckle is similar to examples found at Sutton Hoo but there are fewer jewelled objects, weapons and armour, specifically the absence of a helmet associated with kingly burials. Significantly,

two gold-foil crosses probably placed on the eyes are understood as Christian symbols at a time when most Anglo-Saxons were still pagan. These are also unique in the UK.

Our "Prince" has been identified as part of the family of the King of the East Saxons such as King Sledd's brother Seaxa. (Source "The Prittlewell Princely Burial" MOLA Monograph 73, 2019)



Our own princely ceremony was held after lunch to celebrate Roger's birthday!

In the afternoon we were able to visit the museum's temporary exhibition on Romans in South Essex. Particularly impressive is a wooden (wishing?) well from Wickford (impressive alliteration too!) which held leather shoes, horses' heads, coins and statues, including one of Venus.

Southend Museum is easy to visit, right next to Southend Victoria train station and with the art gallery next door. Many thanks to the enthusiastic staff who gave us the talk, tour and room for lunch free of charge.

Our next trip was a tour of Flag Fen and Peterborough Museum's Must Farm exhibition on 5th July – a report to be published in the next newsletter.

Congratulations

Jose Nicolas Balbi, one of our members was elected President of SEAC-EAA (Archaeology and Cultural Astronomy in the European Association of Archaeologists) in March this year. (www.facebook.com/EAA.archaeology)

Many of you will know Nicolas from the dig at Fordham, or from past lectures, we wish him well in this prestigious position. He hopes to be back in Colchester in September to catch up on Fordham and friends



Lucky Members



A number of our members were lucky in the ballot for digging at Sutton Hoo which is being televised by Time Team. Here are two of them at the dig.



CAG Lecture programme 2024/25

Christine Piper

I am pleased to say the lecture programme for 2024 – 2025 is now complete. I therefore wanted to let you know about the talks coming up before Christmas to whet your appetite. As with last year some of the talks will be in person at Roman Circus House and some will be online only and bookable via Eventbrite please check programme for details.

We open the programme with a lecture from Sue Howlett on Medieval Colchester using evidence from pre-reformation wills. Sue is a retired WEA lecturer (BA English and MA History), and her hobby is now transcribing and, in some cases, translating local and other wills, mainly from the late 15th century.

This is followed by an introduction to the application of dendrochronology with reference to local examples by Dr Martin Bridge. Honorary Lecturer UCL Institute of Archaeology and partner Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory.

CAG member Graham Shuttlewood will talk to us about another group he is involved with AGES Archaeology & History Association. Which is a small group operating within Castle Point and based in Hadleigh, Essex. Over the summer they have been doing test pitting in the area and he will update us on their findings as well as an overview of the group itself.

Our lectures then move to online and we start with a lecture about somewhere that couldn't be further away from Colchester if it tried Easter Island. Professor Sue Hamilton Professor of Prehistory UCL will talk about Re-making Rapa Nui (Easter Island), Archaeology's Polynesian narrative.

There has been a lot of news coverage recently about the subject of our next lecture and I am pleased to announce Richard Parker from the Norton Disney History & Archaeology Group will give us a talk on the Dodecahedron they discovered which featured on Digging for Britain. Get your thinking caps on for ideas on what it might have been used for.

Thomas Cromwell spoke to us a couple of years ago and he returns to give us a lecture on finding

Romans in Rutland. Whilst we can only dream of finding such a high-status mosaic at Fordham I am sure we will see some similarities.

Our penultimate lecture for the Autumn is given by Graham Keevill Archaeology Consultant, The Old House project site is a Grade II* 'building at risk' near Maidstone in Kent. St Andrews (former) chapel is a 'sleeping beauty' that has stood empty for around 50 years. St Andrews has a colourful and fascinating history; it has housed a relic of St Andrew, was owned by Tudor poet Thomas Wyatt, and acted as a local post office in the 20th Century.

We finish the autumn season with a lecture from David Rudling Academic Director Sussex School of Archaeology on the Roman Villa at Bignor. The villa houses some world-class mosaic floors and is situated in the heart of the South Downs National Park. For those of you who have dug at Fordham, Bignor has a piscina which appears to match the one we found.

All events online are booked via Eventbrite. Please remember to allow plenty of time to log on the events use Zoom and it has a tendency to schedule it's updates just when you least need it which can be frustrating. I speak from experience.....

The full programme of lectures and dates will be sent out to everyone over the summer. I hope you enjoy the lectures and see everyone soon.

Fordham Excavations update

Jonathan Oldham, Site Supervisor 25/06/2024

After a winter of discontent, we have sprung into action on site with the onset of less wet weather in late April. A small, dedicated group has made good progress in recording the ceramic building material (CBM) from the Phase 2 excavations during the monsoon season. They have recorded a large amount of material from two large piles of rubble sacks filled with CBM fragments, and have found some interesting material, including a variety of signature grooves on tegulae and on floor tiles, and some half box flue tiles (an early design soon abandoned).

Now that the weather has become drier and the soil water table has fallen, it is possible to trowel and sieve the soil. Mike H-M continues to work in Trench 7 (at the NW corner of the Phase 2 open area), uncovering several more post holes in the central area, and finding pot sherds along the eastern edge. Anna spent a number of days drawing a plan of the line of imbrex fragments (F3) along the north side of Trench 7. A little work has been done in Trench 4 (at the NE corner of the Phase 2 open area), where a patch of dark soil with artefacts has been uncovered in the SE corner of the east extension trench.

The two slots across the Roman ditch crossing the south end of Trench 8 have been completed and both sections drawn. Further east along the ditch, within the north edge of Trench 1, a line of large



bones have been found in the upper fill, including part of a horse pelvis. Trowelling along the east side of Trench 1, particularly Area 1B, have revealed two possible features showing as patches of darker, less stony soil, and a line of loose stones indicating the presence of a modern field drain. Several interesting finds have come from this area, including several pot sherds that are probably Iron Age, some fragments of vitrified CBM, and part of a crucible (probably Iron Age). Further west, a large oval patch of dark soil shows up amid orange clay, though it has yielded very few finds to date. These initial finds indicate that there is the potential for some interesting developments in the months ahead.

Landscape Archaeology Group (LAG)

Anna Moore

A few months ago, LAG members decided that, rather than each member investigating different areas, we would try to find a joint project we could all take part in; the idea being that by researching a single parish in-depth, we would be able to construct a template by which other parishes could be studied. However, we are a geographically rather widespread group (Harwich, Layham, Salcott, for instance) so finding a parish which would be accessible to all presented our first challenge. The parish of Elmstead was suggested as not only is it fairly central and quite large but has many elements that make it an interesting study, e.g. many pre-historic cropmarks, navigable waterways, three medieval manors, access to the River Colne, an area of marshland.



Known cropmarks and findspots in and around Elmstead. Sue Keen

Our plan is to produce a series of outline maps showing the changes in the landscape from the earliest times we have evidence of (probably) post-glacial to the present day. Research subjects will include archaeological evidence (cropmarks, finds and reports), habitation, routes, trade, farming, industry, ritual and religion. We will not be restricted by parish boundaries as these are relatively recent and in fact have changed a great deal over the last couple of centuries and fortunately for us, these are well documented.

We made a good start by walking several of the footpaths in and around the parish to get a feel of the landscape and we have had several meetings to discuss future plans. Unfortunately since then, some members of the group have had to step back from the project due to other commitments but hopefully this is temporary and we should start meeting again soon.

The sort of questions we are now asking include:

- Are Sixpenny and Tenpenny Brooks spring fed or natural drainage?
- Given the topography, where are the early Mesolithic and Neolithic trackways likely to be routed?
- Is there any signs of neolithic or bronze age occupation?
- Is there any evidence of iron age occupation/field systems/trackways?
- If so, where do we consider the likely location?
- Is there any evidence of roman roads?
- Are any roman roads overlaying the earlier tracks?
- Is there any evidence of roman occupation in the parish?
- Any evidence of Saxon occupation?
- Any evidence of early medieval activity?
- What are the implications of the Domesday Book records
- Do we have information on the earliest dates for the significant buildings? Existing or recorded.
- Can we identify early trackways/droeways linking marshland, farmsteads and to outlying villages/Colchester.?
- Can we identify any specific field boundary patterns eg irregular, straight sided, narrow, woodland, assarted, open, deer park, common, etc?
- Can we identify woodland areas and history?
- Any evidence of marshland reclamation?
- Any evidence of a wharf?
- What do we know about the power, status and resulting tenurial structure?
- What, if any, impact do we think the two plague episodes had?



Interesting cropmarks in a field next to Elmstead church

Alongside the Elmstead project, LAG members are looking at other areas and we are always open to suggestions of related subjects of interest to follow up.

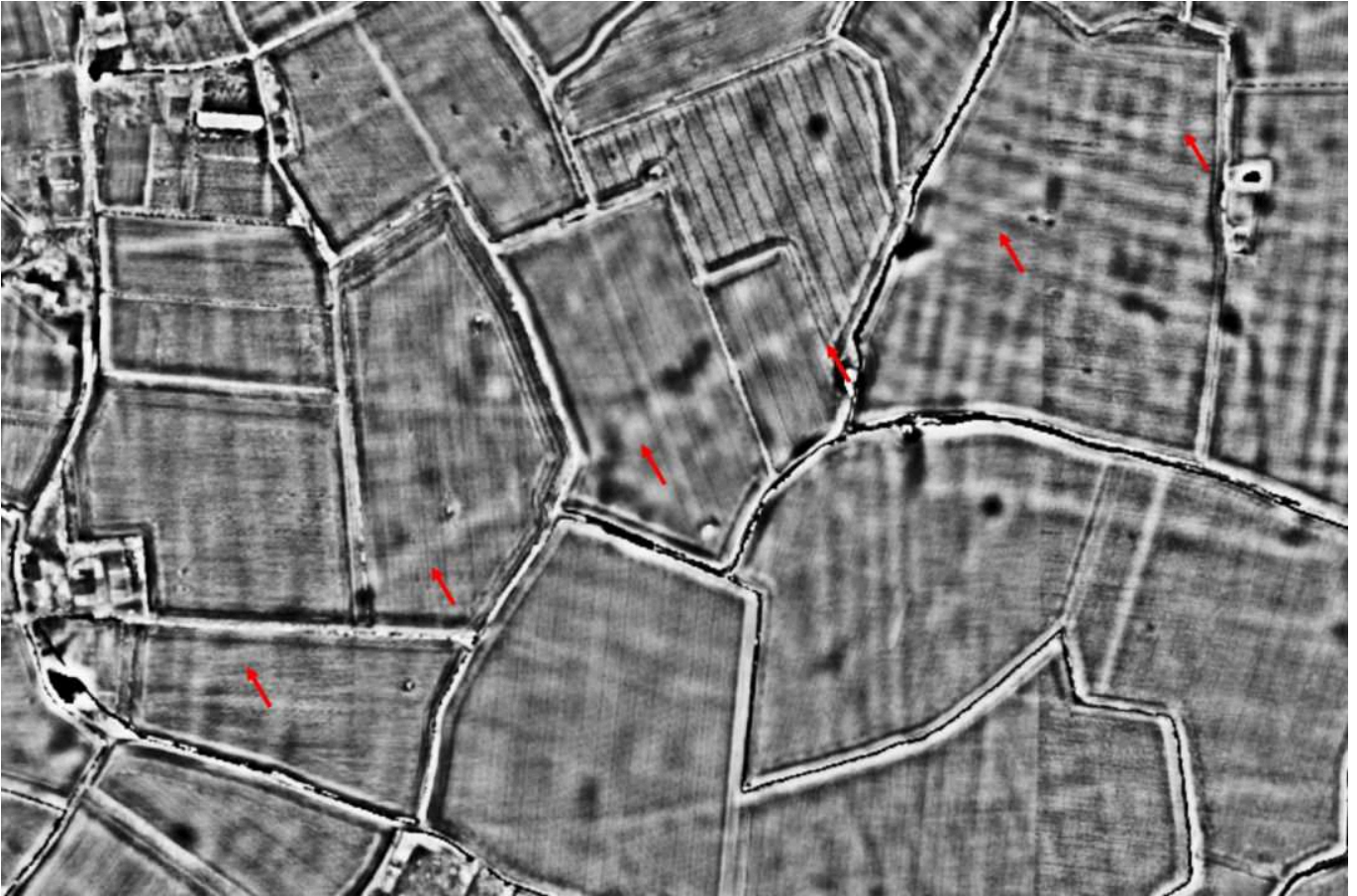
If anyone would like to join the LAG, please contact us via enquiries@caguk.net

Roman Roads Group Summer 2024

Geoff Lunn July 2024

Some observations on the Roman road between Mistley and Colchester

The Roman road between Mistley and Colchester is a well known feature in our local landscape these days, known affectionately in our area as the “Via Mistley” it is one of the straightest sections of Roman road in East Anglia and has been investigated on various occasions in the past by CAG and others. In recent times, a spur was identified using Lidar which branches off the Via Mistley in the vicinity of Ardleigh and heads first to Horsley Cross Street and then onwards towards Wix, where traces disappear, but one can confidently assume that it would have eventually found its way to Harwich, passing close to the large Roman villa at Little Oakley on its way.



Enhanced Lidar view of Via Mistley near Little Bromley

I had the good fortune to visit a recent excavation by Colchester Archaeological Trust at the western end of the road near Crockleford Heath, where the straight alignment appears to end, and the road descends the steep slope into the valley of Salary Brook before again largely disappearing from the record. No trace of the road was found by the CAT archaeologists despite them placing an exploratory trench right across the trajectory of the road, and a similar absence of evidence had been encountered by another professional archaeology company a few years ago when surveying in advance of a new housing estate. There are suggested traces of the roadside ditches on aerial photos of the school playing field of what is now Colchester Academy, but otherwise no trace can be seen of the road beyond Crockleford Heath.

Whilst observing the road on Google Earth and Lidar, it occurred to me that the road does not in fact head towards Colchester Roman town, but if one extends the line of the road westwards, it heads directly for Gosbecks, and would have arrived within a couple of hundred metres of the Roman temple and theatre there. So was the road actually joining Mistley with the late Iron Age site of Camulodunum at Gosbecks, rather than the Colonia which became the walled town of Colchester? I then turned my attention to the route of the modern Bromley Road at Crockleford Heath, which follows the Roman road for about 1500m

before deviating from the alignment and descending via a deep curved cutting to a modern bridge over Salary Brook. The cutting immediately reminded me of other Roman cuts such as those around Silchester, and of course our own very large cutting in Highwoods, which we have yet to prove as being Roman, but seems likely to have been made by them. There are again faint traces of roadside ditches in cropmarks heading from the Salary Brook bridge towards East Bridge where the modern road crosses the Colne and heads towards the Roman East Gate. So is it possible that the Roman road was diverted at some point in its history to connect Mistley with the Colonia rather than Camulodunum? As far as I can ascertain, there are no traces left of Roman crossing points on the River Colne either at East Bridge or on the way to Gosbecks, nor are there traces of a possible road between the Colne and Gosbecks, so it all started to look a bit inconclusive.

However, I had noticed last year when studying Iron Age and Roman survey alignments that the site of the late Iron Age oppidum of Camulodunum lay at an angle of almost exactly 60 degrees east of True North from the centre of Roman Londinium. (60 degrees being the angle formed by two sides of an equilateral triangle and very easy to construct on the ground with pegs and rope). So, what would happen if I extended the straight line of the Via Mistley westwards over a distance of 100km or so? This is a relatively simple and accurate thing to do on modern computer maps, including Google Earth, and to my astonishment, extending the Via Mistley eventually took me along the line of Whitechapel High Street and straight to Aldgate in London. Whitechapel High Street is of course the start of the Roman road from Londinium to Colchester Colonia, known as "The Great Road" and recorded by Ivan Margary in his book "Roman Roads In Britian" as route 3A, and which forms a large part of the A12 today. Extending the alignment further took me all the way to the Iron Age Thames crossing at ancient Thorney Island, where we now find Westminster Abbey and is reputed to have been a very sacred place to the ancient Britons.

So, was the Via Mistley built along an ancient alignment of 60 degrees between Central London and Mistley, and at some point rerouted towards Roman Colchester at the Salary Brook crossing? These are just observations made by myself and which could all be pure coincidence of course. But it doesn't stop there.

There has been very little evidence of Roman and IA occupation found at Mistley – perhaps it has all been eroded into the River Stour? This makes it a bit difficult to define a measuring point for other alignments, but if I use the point at which the Via Mistley would have met the south bank of the modern River Stour, I find that it sits at an almost exact angle of 60 degrees west of True North, all the way to Long Melford Romano British Settlement.

Finally, you may remember the lost Roman road route discovered by myself and the Roman Roads Group a year or two ago, which runs between Long Melford and Holton St. Mary on the A12. It has been suggested that this road was in fact making its way from Melford to Mistley, although the last section between Holton and Mistley has yet to be found. That part of the Stour now forms a deep water dock and one can imagine that that may also have been the case some 2000 years ago, and this could be a reason for the existence of the roads and alignments?

My final observation concerns that long lost Roman road at Holton St. Mary. The existence of the road was originally suggested by a drone image showing a cropmark of a clear "spur" heading off the Roman "Great Road" and heading initially towards Holton village. This cropmark is only visible for about 250m as it passes under the modern A12, whereupon it promptly disappears under the Four Sisters Farm complex, and doesn't really reappear in any convincing way until it gets to Shelley Hall some 3.5km further on. However, using the cropmarks of the spur, which are quite clear in some aerial photos, I was able to project a line on Google earth in the exact direction of the spur, to see if it formed a significant angle to north (it doesn't), but also to see where the Roman surveyors were heading when they laid out the survey lines at the start of the road construction. You've probably guessed it – the spur aligns perfectly (to within a fraction of a degree) on Long Melford Romano British settlement, where the 60 degree alignment from Mistley also finds its way. Beyond Holton, the lost Roman road does not follow the alignment exactly, but weaves its way across the countryside keeping mostly to the high ground and avoiding obstacles such as streams and the like, but it never deviates by more than about 1.5km from the alignment along its total length of 24km.

As I always say, this may all be coincidental, but there is a growing amount of evidence across Britannia which suggests that the Romans, and possibly the late IA Britons before them, were using sophisticated surveying techniques to lay out and build their roads. If that really is the case, it would seem that Mistley and its Roman road somehow formed part of that survey network.

Fordham Bone Analysis, Phase 1&2

Mike Hamilton-Macy

After a bit of a pause due to personal circumstances last year, I have, again, been wading through the thousands of pieces of bone that have emerged from the site from its start in mid-June 2015 up to the official end of phase 2 in the end of March 2022.

A few interesting trends seem to have emerged in terms of animal species consumed and what bones are present or missing from the site so far.

As well as the expected, cattle, pigs, sheep and poultry there's a fairly high percentage of deer, mostly red deer with some roe deer.

As deer would not have been domestically reared, it lends some weight to the idea that the site might have been some kind of hunting lodge/entertainment establishment. The latter might also explain the very high number of ladies bone hair pins found!

As a reminder, there is a traditional Roman bathhouse with another three rooms a little to the north. The current thinking is that we have a reception room, summer and winter (with hypocaust) dining rooms and a possible covered colonnade between them and the bathhouse.

Pretty much all the major limb bones from the larger animals have been smashed, this is not surprising as the marrow within the bone would have been used for soups and stock etc.

Almost all the whole bones found are foot bones; again, this is not surprising as they are very nearly all solid so not worth cracking open.

There are some bones that are notable by their absence or rarity.

Ribs: as domestic animals have between 16 and 28 ribs each, one would expect that there should be hundreds of fragments of them, but there aren't that many. In particular, given how large adult cattle and red deer ribs are, this is surprising.

Vertebrae: as above, excluding the sacrum and tail bones, there are between 26 and 29 vertebrae per animal, but most of them seem to be missing.

Scapula/pelvis: while quite a few bits of scapula have been found, the same cannot be said of pelvis, it is far less common, even though they are several times larger than the scapula.

Skull: large skull pieces are, again mostly absent.

Tail: to date, I don't seem to have found a single piece of tail vertebrae.

Sacrum: given their size in cattle, deer pigs and sheep etc. this bone is missing completely from the collection, with one, very notable exception!

You will recall that the dig started after a lead (lined?) coffin with an adolescent female within was found by detectorists way back in 1984. There was also a younger child buried above and a little to one side of that. During the phase one period in trench G (bathhouse area) a few pieces of human skull and the right half of a mandible were found.

It was assumed that these were plough scattered bones from a disturbed burial or possibly something a little darker!

About four years ago on a visit to the site by Adam Whiteman to peruse some of our bone finds, he spotted a few human metatarsals (the longer bones in the middle of the foot) in one of the bags. This sparked my interest in doing the bone analysis for the dig.

What was interesting and ultimately useful was that there was a left and right pair of the 5th metatarsals; (on the left of the picture) they are quite different from the other metatarsals and easy to recognise.

Over the last month I have found a few dozen more human bones, up until now (27th of June) we have a slightly damaged but complete sacrum, more foot



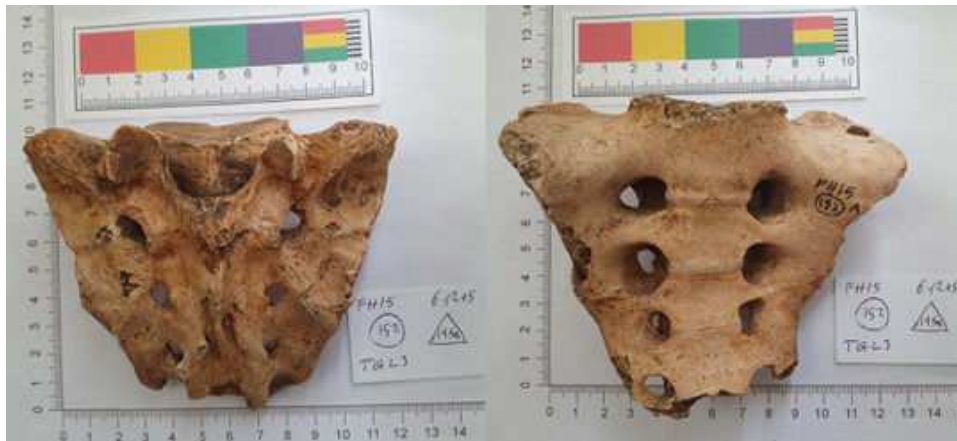
bones, finger bones, femur, tibia and radius pieces, a few bits of rib and a complete clavicle (in two pieces).

But amongst the most recently found human bones in the collection was a third 5th metatarsal

This obviously means that there is more than one body that has been disturbed!

To corroborate this, there are two pieces of left hand radius, one a little smaller and showing considerably more wear than the other.

The sacrum below also shows signs of wear and or disease.



All of the human bones found so far have come from the southern end of the bathhouse trench; the bathhouse was robbed of its usable building material and then back filled at some point later for cultivation.

So it seems there must have been a least two bodies buried close to the bathhouse for the bones to get dragged on top of the bathhouse remains.

But would the Romano British have buried their dead so close to a bathhouse?

Could they therefore be later burials?

There was, after all, a 6th century Saxon burial in the middle room north of the bathhouse.

I think we will have to do a bit more carbon dating to find out.

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Looking Back

As the CAG library was being reorganised earlier this year surplus publications were made available to take away after the lectures on an Monday night. This proved to be popular with members present. I found the publications I took away interesting and came across articles and information that you do not normally find.

Special offer

for readers of the *Colchester Archaeologist*

to launch their new version of
the chariot race mould-blown beaker

a hand-made reproduction based on the example from Colchester
is being made available to readers

by Mark Taylor and David Hill, Glassmakers

at £11 each — usual price £16 each
(including post & packing) (including p & p)



To support the Colchester Archaeological Trust, Mark Taylor and David Hill, who make a magnificent range of free-blown reproduction Roman glass vessels, have made a generous offer to donate £2 to the Trust for every beaker purchased in this special offer. These superb lightweight beakers are directly based on originals found in Britain and on the Continent. They are in a pale blue-green glass, made entirely by hand and blown into three-piece moulds, with ground rims. These beakers make a beautiful addition to any display as well as being tactile, informative and fascinating ornaments. This is **not an offer to be missed — and it helps the Trust as well!**

Please make all cheques payable to Colchester Archaeological Trust Ltd: send your order, with cheque for £11 per item required (inclusive of postage and packing), to Mark Taylor and David Hill, Glassmakers, Unit 11, Project Workshops, Lains Farm, Quarley, Andover, Hampshire SP11 8PX. Orders will be despatched direct from the workshop as soon as they are received, and will be sent individually boxed. (Catalogue sent on request.)

— new reproduction available from February 1998
Offer ends 31st December 1998

Spoiler Alert!
There's one
on display at
Roman Circus
House

This one took my eye from other research during the year from the *The Colchester Archaeologist*, No.11 1998. Page 20. Making roman glass.

Did anyone out there buy one of the reproductions at the time? Do you still have it?

A Mysterious Structure in Birch Woods Revealed (?)

John Moore

During the 'Members Evening' in October 2023, part of the Winter 2023/24 Lecture Series, I showed a photograph of a mysterious concrete structure in Birch Woods together with a map of its location, and asked members if they had any idea of what it might be?



The structure



The location on the current OS map

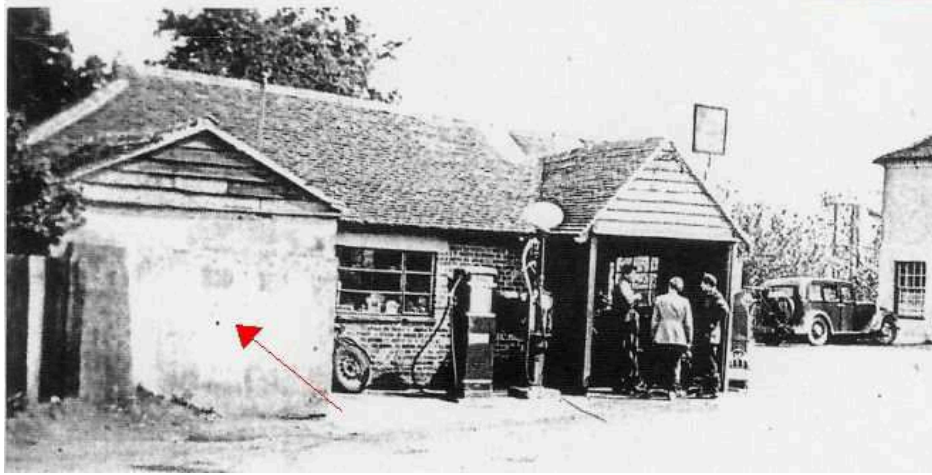
I received a few ideas, which I set out to investigate. But before I reveal the results of my investigations, I think it would be instructive if I detail the rather convoluted way in which I became involved with this structure.

It really all began nearly 20 years ago in late 2004, when CAG became involved in an Essex County Council project to record all remaining World War II structures in the Borough of Colchester (part of a County-wide project that had started in 1994). Under the direction of Fred Nash, the then County Military Archaeologist, I was one of a small group of CAG members who spent nearly two years investigating the remains, helped in no small part by the 'Wartime Contraventions', held by Essex County Council (a sample is shown below). This is a listing of most of the defence sites built on private property in Essex

Location.	Description of Works.	Serial No.	Name & address of owner.
Garden of The Stores, Layer-de-la-Baye.	High wire fence.	MS/50/2060	M. Hilderton, The Stores, Layer-de-la-Baye.
2 Fields on Field Farm, Layer-de-la-Baye.	High wire fence.	MS/50/2070	Mrs. H. Green, Field Farm, Layer-de-la-Baye.
Field occupied by Mr. Goodey, Layer-de-la-Baye.	High wire fence.	MS/50/2071	- Goodey, Layer-de-la-Baye.
Layer Hall, Layer-de-la-Baye, (field adj. Cross House).	2 slit trenches clearing field of fire, desert wire.	MS/50/2083	E. Fudge, Layer Hall, Layer-de-la-Baye.
Red brick wall, Layer-de-la-Baye.	<u>Subot mortar position, Schilling's defence post, slit trenches, desert wiring.</u>	MS/50/2084	Mrs. H. Green, Hill Farm, Layer-de-la-Baye.
The Cross House, Layer-de-la-Baye.	Sandbagged defence post, desert wire.	MS/50/2085	Miss Reed, Cross House, Layer-de-la-Baye.
Part of Wick Farm, Layer-de-la-Baye.	Sandbagged defence post, desert wire.	MS/50/2086	E. Leman, Wick Farm, Layer-de-la-Baye.
Land at rear of The Stores, Layer-de-la-Baye.	2 slit trenches, desert wire.	MS/50/2087	M. Hilderton, The Stores, Layer-de-la-Baye.
(1) Pasture and garden H. of Histon House, High Road, Layer-de-la-Baye. (ii) Pasture and garden next to G.S. School.	(i) Slit trenches, <u>subot mortar position, desert wire.</u> (ii) desert wire.	MS/50/2088	E. Allen, High Road, Layer-de-la-Baye.
(i) Arable field (ii) Pasture field (iii) Arable field. Wooded Farm, Alberton.	3 sandbagged defence posts, desert wire.	MS/50/2089	Mr. J. Hilderton, Wooded Farm, Alberton.
At rear of Smithy Alberton.	Desert wire.	MS/50/2089	L. Archer, The Gate House, Alberton.

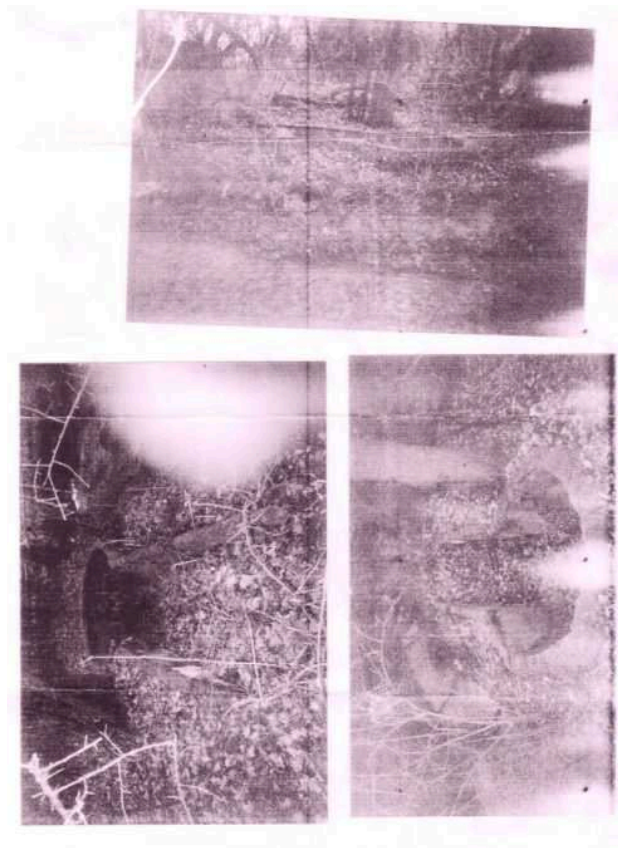
during the war which contravened any planning act which they would have had to abide by in normal circumstances. It does not include defence sites built on public land, or any 'ad-hoc' structures built mainly by local units of the Home Guard.

Part of my research area was Layer-de-la-Haye, and it was there that I encountered John Morse, long-time proprietor of the Forge Garage. During WWI a pill-box cum defence post had been erected there, attached to the garage, which was still in position during WWII. This structure has now been demolished, but Mr Morse was able to supply a photograph from 1952, which shows it still in place at that time (arrowed).



He was a fund of knowledge about the history of Layer, and I gave him my contact details in case he could supply any further relevant information.

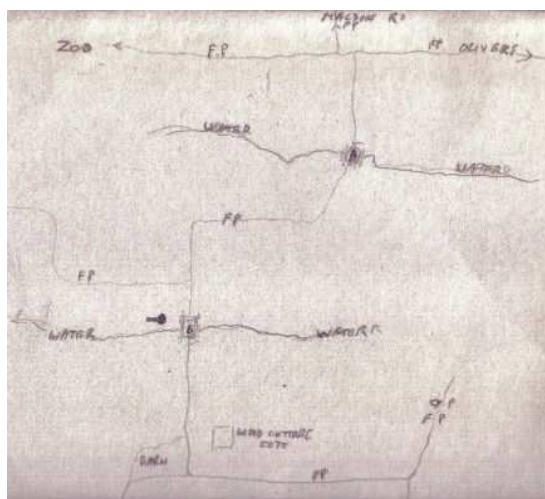
Fast forward 19 years to October 2023. An envelope came through my letter box, containing an A4 photocopy of three images (below) and an accompanying note from John Morse saying "*can you cast any light on these?*"



The short answer was "*No*". As you can see the images were virtually impossible to identify, so I visited John Morse to obtain further information. Apparently in 2003 a couple of Layer residents were walking in Birch woods when they came across the structure. They photographed it, showed the photographs to John

Morse who in turn photo-copied them - and then proceeded to forget all about them! However, whilst spring-cleaning the garage in September 2023 he discovered the photo-copy and decided to send it to me.

Fortunately he was able to give me the contact details of the couple who took the original photographs, and they gave them to me, together with a sketch map giving directions to the structure (all shown below).



The structure is 'key-shaped', lower left

I located the structure on the first of several visits, which I undertook either on my own or accompanied by Anna or Tim Dennis. I took my own series of photographs.

Suggestions from CAG members for the structure had been:

1. Something connected to a watermill which had been built across the stream adjacent to the structure, some 20 feet away.
2. A sheep dip.
3. A WWII spigot mortar gun emplacement.
4. A WWII light anti-aircraft gun emplacement.



The structure in Birch Woods



A sheep-dip



A WWII spigot mortar emplacement

Research into number 1 revealed that the mill was demolished in the early 1800s, before the invention of modern concrete in 1824. Moving on to numbers 2 & 3 I found that there were indeed structures roughly comparable in shape. However, they were much bigger than the structure in Birch Woods, as can be seen below. Number 4 sounded promising, but I was unable to find an appropriate image.

However, I did favour a WWII connection, not least because the rough concrete used in the construction resembled concrete I had encountered in the WW2 project. In November 2023 I therefore decided to contact Fred Nash, now retired, which could only be done using Place Services, Essex County Council, as an intermediary. Having waited nearly three months I finally received a response from Fred in the first week of February 2024:

“The structure in Birch Woods is most likely to be a World War II ‘rifle pit’. They were for soldiers to lie down in to hide from advancing troops, and be able to sit or kneel to shoot at them.”

Apparently, such structures were not an integral part of the defensive line and were therefore not formally recorded. They were constructed mainly by local Home Guard units in places that they considered to be of strategic importance. I am happy to accept this interpretation, and I assume that the site was considered strategically important as it was close to a bridge carrying a track over the adjacent stream. Bridges were always a cause for concern should an invasion occur. Unfortunately, no-one from the local Home Guard Unit is alive today to provide any further information.

My final thought was to see if any wartime aerial photographs of the area existed. Last year, Historic England released a large number of images from the United States Army Air Forces Collection and, lo and behold, in 1944 a series of photographs were taken over Layer-de-la-Haye, and the area of the structure is shown below left. Hill Farm is in the centre of the picture, and the arrow pointing to the site of the structure also points to the north. This image can't be used to view the structure (if it did indeed exist at the time) as it is just in woodland, and anyway it would be too small to be seen from this distance. What it does reveal, however, is that the local area was in general less densely tree-covered than it is today, as is confirmed by the current Bing maps satellite view, shown below right.



This finally marks the end of my research, but if anyone wishes to investigate further, I will give them any assistance that I can.

The 1797 Heavyweights

Francis Nicholls

In 1797, the counterfeiting of coins in Britain had become such a common practice that copper coins, particularly pennies, were being regularly melted down to make lightweight forgeries.

A solution was proposed by Matthew Boulton of the Birmingham Mint, that new pennies should contain their true value in copper.

He also suggested they should have a raised border to avoid coin wear



Boulton was subsequently awarded a contract to supply 480 tons worth of pennies, to be struck at his revolutionary steam-powered coin press in Birmingham.

The value of copper in 1797 meant that each penny weighed exactly one ounce (28.3gm), over ten times heavier than a current 1p (2.3gm)!

The resulting heavyweight coin, with its portrait of George III and its raised rim, soon became known as the 'Cartwheel Penny'.

Shortly after their introduction, things started to go wrong! Copper prices rose substantially throughout the year and the pennies began to weigh more than their metal value.

The hitherto stable price of copper then began to fluctuate and any ideas to size the coins to their true value became impracticable. As a result, the big penny was only ever minted in 1797.

Despite that, over 43 million Cartwheels were issued and they have become popular with collectors

Two Cartwheel pennies were found side by side, using a metal detector, in a roadside field north of Coggeshall, close to the site where the ringleader of the infamous Coggeshall Gang was discovered hiding in 1848.

It's just possible that they could have been part of the loot!

Colchester Young Archaeologists' Club go out and about

Barbara Butler

When Colchester YAC were in Colchester Castle and explored the "Tudor Web Trail" for our project, one of them was filmed saying: "I think the best part was when we walked round and saw everything. I liked going in the town hall where the memorial was."

With that in mind, we started 2024 with a repeat visit to Colchester Castle. This time the group explored the vaults of the podium of the Temple of Claudius and brought one of their Aquila games to compare with the one which Alex Jones designed. The copy of the original game, laid out as it was found, is to be found in the reconstructed doctor's or druid's grave in the museum.

The club has had a large collection of fossils donated, which we are gradually dating with our "Fossil Fun Quiz." These fossils have been placed in freezer bags with "dates" such as "Miocene" on them and "contents" such as "coprolite". YAC volunteer and CAG member Jill Hamblin encouraged the children to work out which animal might have excreted our example of coprolite. Their favourite candidate for producing this relic was an early form of badger. CAT archaeologist Tabitha gave the young people instruction on flint napping and they



Flint napping

used soap (Imperial Leather was the best match for wooden spatulas on flint) to make the shapes of flint tools. Roman Circus House was very fragrant during this session. The children also drew flint tools with volunteer Gillian.



The oldest game in the world

After a training day in York for YAC volunteers, I gave a short picture show of various techniques for making cloth in ancient times. A guide colleague had kindly donated a whole "raw" fleece, some carding boards and spinning equipment. It was good to see young Jack carding the wool smooth, for Esther to spin it into yarn. Esther learned to knit with volunteer Gillian Brown and borrowed the knitting needles Gillian had brought. Most of the young people produced pieces of cloth woven from yarn on card, which they took home to complete.

The knitting needles were returned at St Botolph's Church Hall in April, where we met to play a variety of games including our favourite Aquila. A graphic artist, who volunteered his time, laid out "Will the Barrow Survive"



Will the Barrow survive game



St Botolphs Priory



Expert help on Walton beach



*A Megalodon tooth
found at Walton*

a game devised for the Young Archaeologists' Club by Mike Corbishly, and published in the Colchester Archaeologist. A couple of these games were printed A3 size on card and played with dice and cowrie shells. Volunteer Pawel described the game he brought in as "the oldest game in the world" (mancala). This was very popular as was the Hieroglyph game. We had a break from playing games to explore the priory outside. The young people stood on the sites where the columns had been. These and the extent of the priory church had been marked out in concrete and pebbles after Colchester Archaeological Trust excavated the site in 1999.

We managed to access the beach at the Naze as the tide was receding for our beach combing and fossil hunting session. Before we descended to the beach, our expert explained to us the importance of this SSSI, how this part of England was once joined to the continent and, as the coasts eroded, more fossils and evidence of past eco-systems were exposed, from the Essex and Suffolk coast, the near continent and further afield. We also discussed the evidence of early man, which had been found along this section of the Essex coast. The young people had brought fossils they had found to be identified and dated by our expert. Before we went down to the beach, we looked at the displays, maps and timelines in the visitor centre and our expert gave the young people fossil shells he had found to take home. Although they had these, not one young archaeologist went home without finding something and they made a point of thanking us and our expert for arranging such an enjoyable session. Finds included fossilised whale bones, sharks and megalodon teeth and fossilised tree bark in London Clay sediment.

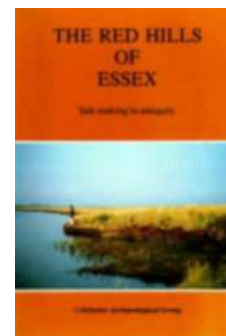
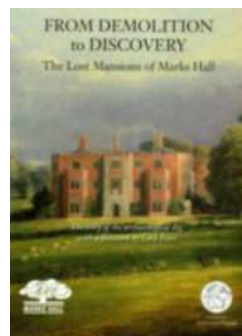
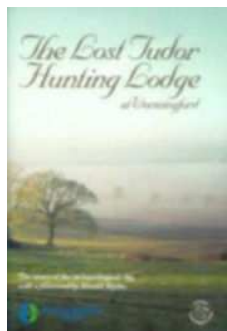
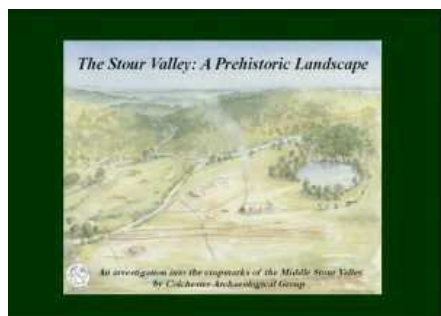
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The CAG Annual AGM is on Monday 7th October 7.30pm at RCH

The 24/25 Winter Lecture Programme
can now be found on the CAG website: www.caguk.net

CAG Publications

contact CAG Sales – sales@caguk.net



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.

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 from our website:

- (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 Brook

Four of the Citizen reports on the Mersea Island Discovery Programme are now available to read or download (PDF):

1. Survey of intertidal remains adjacent to scheduled ancient monument 1013832 Tudor Blockhouse East Mersea, Essex. O.Hutchinson & D.Newman. September 2022
2. The intertidal archaeology of Monkey Beach Mersea Island, Essex Coastal and Intertidal Zone Archaeological Network Report. O.Hutchinson. September 2022
3. A mid-Saxon structure in the intertidal zone at Point Clear, River Colne, Essex O.Hutchinson & D.Newman. September 2022
4. A large mid-Saxon timber structure in the intertidal zone Sea View, Mersea Island, Essex Coastal and Intertidal Zone Archaeological Network Report. O.Hutchinson. September 2022

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



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Notices

Membership fees. As agreed at the last AGM the membership fees from the 1st October were: Single member £15.00. Student member £10.00. Joint members £25.00

Membership renewal forms will be emailed out before the next AGM

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

The Editor welcomes articles of interest to members on archaeology and local history for inclusion in the Newsletter. Our next issue is due in January 25. Please submit your articles or items of interest by the end of November to alanchaplin2@sky.com

Please feel free to share copies of this newsletter with like-minded friends and associates