

## Active Archaeology and Me – A Small Highlight of My First Year

As a starting context, I must state that from an early age I have held a great enthusiasm for history and archaeology. My involvement in this field was, however, heavily impacted by my school careers advisor some 50 years ago who suggested my future would be better served by concentrating on core subjects offering greater career potential. For the best part of the next 50 years my life centred on physics/science and military aerospace. The career was enjoyable but the “itch” remained. Some 13 months ago my mind and finances confirmed and delivered retirement. Within a couple of weeks I had made contact with CAG, joined and made my way to the dig site at Fordham.



I'm was not sure what to expect so I guess I was somewhat surprised that I was allowed to have a go at trowelling from day one, albeit in a region I was get to know well – the east end “cobbled zone”. With no great expectation re finds the first weeks and months were devoted to the clearance of soil (well let's call it mud) from around a cobbled surface. Finds were found, pot sherds and animal bone and even an exciting (assumed) Roman nail before, on a bright summer July day, my limited life in archaeology was transformed by my first real “quality” find; a real “Time-Team” moment.

The find was located following removal of an initial cobbled surface to look for another surface below. The area had recently been assessed through metal detecting and a number of metal targets (specific material unknown) were identified.

Mid-morning and my wonderful find was made – the white marker at bottom right in the site/trench photograph at above left. The find was an Iron Age coin, so much better than the “common or garden” Roman ones found at the site. To be precise, it was a Cunobelinus “Severed Head” bronze unit with a Sphinx on one side and a figure carrying a severed head on the other. Further excitement was delivered as the coin was minted in Colchester in the period 20-40AD. My pictures from the site on the day at right (with a “to-hand” scale item), “formal” picture below (care of Frank Lockwood).



I still to this day remain excited by the find; indeed it may, of course, be the best I'll ever find. What was achieved however was strong reinforcement of my enjoyment and interest in active archaeology, something I hope to continue for a long time...

*Neil*