



# Colchester Archaeological Group

## NEWSLETTER

Registered Charity No. 1028434

July 2019 No. 002



### The Walking tour of Sudbury

led by Pam Pudney, Saturday June 29th.

We met on Market Hill, Sudbury on one of the hottest days of the year. Pam then gave us a brief history of Sudbury from its Iron Age and Saxon roots up to today, Pam also talked of the painter Gainsborough and his connection with the town. The group then were guided around the town with Pam pointing out places of interest and some of the older Medieval and Georgian properties, including the weavers cottages. We passed Gainsborough House, soon to be closed for refurbishment for two years. On the way we passed the water meadows still owned by the Freeman of Sudbury. The group then arrived at St Gregory's church, where we were given a talk by one of its historians about its famous resident Simon of Sudbury,

Simon Sudbury born in Sudbury 1316, died in London 1381. His brief CV includes being Chaplain to Pope Innocent VI, Papal Nuncio, Bishop of London, Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Chancellor of England. However this did not save him as during the peasants revolt lead by Wat Tyler and John Ball, priest of Colchester. Simon was dragged by the mob from the Tower of London and beheaded, his head then put on a spike on London Bridge. Simon's body was eventual taken to Canterbury for burial, however his head was returned to his family in Sudbury.

When the talk finished the group were taken to see his part-mummified head which is kept locked away in a darkened side room behind a glass screen. It is not normally on show to the general public. (See page 11)

The walk finished and we all thanked Pam for its organisation and all the work that must have been done to put together the interesting details of Sudbury.

Members Events	1	Roman Roads Group	4	Using Google Maps	9
Future Events	2	Villas to Parishes	4	Simon of Sudbury	11
Field Work	3	Young Archeaogists	5	Publications	12
Cropmarks Group	3	The Fordham skeleton	5	Committee & Notices	12
		Roman Burials	7		

## **CAG weekend away 10th to 13th May 2019**

38 members joined a coach in Colchester for a weekend away in South Wales. We had very good weather. We broke our outward journey at Avebury and visited the stone circle and the manor. We stayed by the beach at Aberavon, where many of the group took sunset walks. We visited St David's Cathedral and Bishop's palace on the Pembroke Coast and Pembroke castle. A highlight of our visit was to the Dolaucothi gold mines where we all took tours of the mines, first exploited by the Romans. At Carmarthen we discovered the remains of an amphitheatre and the site of Merlin's oak. We stopped at Hughenden Manor, home of Disraeli on our homeward journey.

A longer version of the report can be found on the website.



Mark Davis at Dolaucothi

## **Successful Winter Lecture season 2018/19**

We have had a really successful talks programme last winter. The first two talks in January brought in the highest numbers with 91 for The History of Stained Glass Windows and 90 for James Canton's talk on Ancient Wonderings. Overall we averaged an attendance of 81 people. Since October the total number of people attending the talks comes to 1,228 with the overall average attendance being 68. This year's season of Lectures is now on the web site.

## **CAT Mercury Dig**

In January and May this year members of the group volunteered to be interpreters or guides to the general public visiting the CAT dig site at the Mercury Theatre on their open days. This was a very interesting experience as the steady stream of people who came along to look had plenty of questions for us and were impressed by what they could see. There will be a talk from Adam Wightman about the dig in the new year.

## **Members annual Summer party**

The annual Summer Party for members took place at Roman Circus House on Tuesday July 9th, 31 members gathered and spent a pleasant evening socialising and "catching-up". This was followed by the traditional raffle. A big thank you to all those who helped to organise this event.

## **Fordham Dig Site Visit for Members and Friends**

The site was visited by The Fordham History Group on Tuesday 16th July. The Group was given a detailed talk on our progress and a tour of the site. The site visit for CAG members will be on Tuesday 23rd July. Meet at the Old Barn opposite Fordham Hall at 7.15pm. Where you will be met and led to the site. Limited parking is available for those with access needs on site. For more details email: [c.piper624@hotmail.com](mailto:c.piper624@hotmail.com).

## **Future Events**

### **Monday Evening 29<sup>th</sup> July: Beeleigh Mill Visit**

Parking is limited at the Mill so I suggest if possible you car share. The postcode of the mill is Maldon CM9 6LL. Once you have found Abbey Turning drive all the way down passing a no entry sign and you will see the small car park ahead of you. More energetic members may like to park in Tesco's car park and walk along the towpath alongside the canal to the Lock at Beeleigh Falls. Just before the lock take the footpath through the wooded area around the weir pool crossing the timber bridge and carry on to the Mill.

### **Friday 9th August: All-day coach trip to Cambridgeshire**

We will go straight from Colchester to Cambridge, where we will stop at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. Among items on view is a 1.8 million year old stone tool from Olduvai Gorge; other highlights include a large collection of objects from the voyages of Captain James Cook and a comprehensive collection of material from Anglo-Saxon Britain. For anyone who prefers not to visit the MAA, the Fitzwilliam Museum and Art Gallery is about ten minutes walk away. We will spend the morning in Cambridge and after lunch drive to Elton Hall, a baronial hall which has been home to the Proby family since 1660. We will have a guided tour of the house, which

incorporates work from the 15th, 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, and has an exceptional collection of art and books. There will also be time to enjoy the restored Victorian Garden and, of course, the tea-shop.

Please note: The Hall is not suitable for wheelchairs, mobility aids or pushchairs. There are several flights of steps, which may be a problem for visitors with walking difficulties. There is limited visitor seating within the Hall.

The coach will pick-up at the top of East Hill, Colchester (outside Greyfriars) at 9.00am. We will aim to leave Elton Hall between 4.15pm and 4.30pm, arriving back at Colchester around 6.30pm. The cost is £34.00pp which includes a tip for the coach driver but not lunch or other refreshments.

*A booking form can be found on the website*

## **A talk from Professor Nicolas Balbi at Roman Circus House Tuesday 13th August**

The ruins of a sacred Inca site in the Andes and its relationship with another temple in present day Argentina and Peru. RCH 7.30pm. Cost £4.00.



Professor Nicolas Balbi

## **FIELD-WORK REPORT**

### **Fordham site update**

Excavation continued at the site over the winter period when the weather allowed. It has progressed to the north of the site which we believe, so far, to be the extent of our building. The layout continues to show a complex structure which has seen a numbers of major rebuilds in its life. So far we have recorded over 1,000 small finds and over 3,500 bags of general finds from the site.

## **PREHISTORIC CROPMARK STUDY GROUP**

The PH Cropmark Study Group continues to meet every 6 weeks approx. Our next meeting is on 10 July.

New Study Area: the Group's progress studying the eastern section of the Stour Valley is ongoing.

DVSVP Undergrounding Surveys: During April several members of the group volunteered to help DVSVP to survey power lines in the AONB.

On 24 May (a beautiful day!) 3 members of the group joined Richard to walk around Bowdens to have a picnic and ascertain what, if anything, could be seen on the ground. Visible differences in a cereal crop appeared to correlate to marks on NMP and GE and may be worth surveying by drones.

Next meeting: Kenneth Dodd has asked to come to our meeting at the Crown (new CAG member) to share the results of research he's been doing into cropmarks in the Long Melford area. His research is very much at the same stage as ours...i.e. using GE and drone images to id likely prehistoric features in the landscape. As facilities at the Crown made it difficult for everyone to view his images he invited us to go to the Long Melford Heritage Centre for our next meeting on 10 July.

Practical Archaeology: on 17th July we plan to meet at Ellie's to make pots outside in more authentic surroundings than our last session. We'll then arrange to meet at a later date to fire the pots in 'bonfires'.

## **ROMAN ROADS GROUP**

Daniel, a French student under the guidance of Tim Dennis, has now plotted the location of almost 450 aerial photographs taken last summer. The job of cataloguing the photographs is ongoing.

At the last RRG meeting, Francis Nicholls made a presentation outlining progress with the research that he has been doing on the Via Devana between Colchester and Cambridge. Some new clues as to the possible route of the Via Devana between Haverhill and Colchester have come to light by studying aerial photographs, Google Earth, and Lidar. A conclusion at this stage seems to be that the Via Devana between Cambridge and Haverhill was probably a military road, between Haverhill and Colchester it may have just been a commercial route that was probably based on existing Iron Age tracks and probably not metalled in the way that a military road would have been. It is also possible that the road took various parallel routes in order to take in the various farmsteads and



Tim Underwood also made a presentation on his research into evidence for Roman roads in the Stour Valley and around the Sudbury area. Tim has found a number of suspected Roman roads which are either already documented, or there are strong clues as to their existence. It seems likely that there was a network of lesser roads in the area, in addition to the higher status military roads in much the same way as is suspected along the route of the Via Devana

[illegible]

The 4th meeting was held on the 8th July at Roman Circus House, 12 members attended. In addition, Dr. Jess Tipper, Archaeological Advisor at Colchester Borough Council was present.

The Dropbox database for the V2P activity is now up and running. Sam Rowley will administer the Database on behalf of the Group. Members may view the database for information which they can download, but they can not upload their own work. Members will send their results to Sam who will then save them into the Dropbox database.

The Group are looking at possible field walk targets. John Mallinson has offered with confirmation and prioritisation of the field walks.

For more information on the V2P Group contact Neil Short: [njs.int@btinternet.com](mailto:njs.int@btinternet.com) or Geoff Lunn: [geoff.lunn@ntlworld.com](mailto:geoff.lunn@ntlworld.com)

## Colchester Young Archaeologists Club

Colchester Young Archaeologists Club now has 32 members with some more enquiries and potential applications to join. Four of our volunteer leaders are also members of Colchester Archaeological Group. Three are retired teachers. One is a teacher at a mid-Essex school. An employee of Essex County Council is currently applying to become a volunteer. We now have three sixteen-year-olds who are DBS checked and have successfully passed the requirements of the British Council of Archaeology to become assistant leaders for the Club. One of them has been doing work experience and volunteer work at Roman Circus House.

Our recent activities include digging with Colchester Archaeological Group at Fordham in May. We have also completed an A1 size mosaic, from rough tesserae found at Fordham. This was designed by one of our members. We also invited archer Mark Bloom and his assistants to talk about Roman and medieval equipment and archery techniques.

An archaeology day is planned for the 20th July, when the Young Archaeologists Club will have a meeting. With our volunteers, young and old we will be taking part in the event, to promote the Club and demonstrate many of our activities.

We hope to join Colchester Archaeological Group at Fordham again on 21st September for some more digging experience. All our volunteers and members very much appreciate and value the continued support of Colchester Archaeological Group. Thank you. *Barbara Butler*

## Excavation of the Skeleton at Fordham

**Christine Piper**

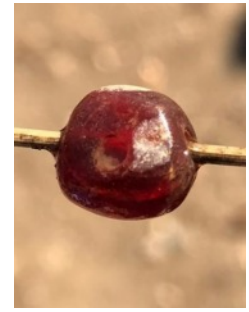
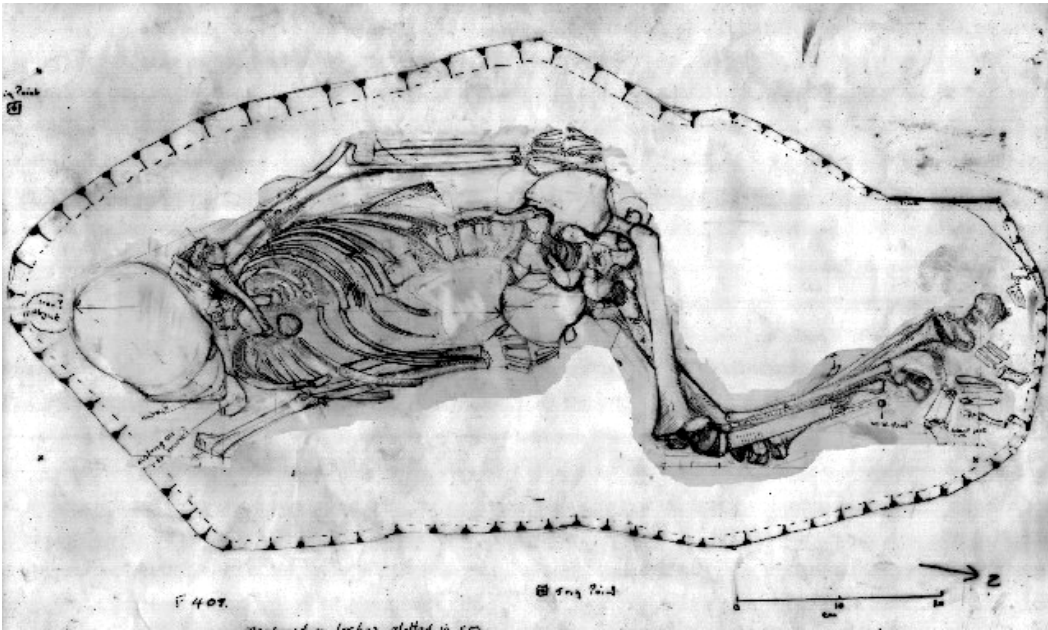
Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> August 2018 just an hour left before the end of digging for the day not convinced I had the edge of the feature I was digging I decided to explore a little more. Imagine my surprise when the top of a skull appeared just below the surface. As I cleaned away more of the soil a small section of the skull fell in. Looking into the hole I could see that the skull was intact. At this point I called over the rest of the diggers to ask advice which at this stage was do nothing cover it up and we will reconvene next week.



During the week there were various emails flying backwards and forwards on what the next stage should be and what it could mean. I then received an email to say the police had been called and a forensic policeman would be coming to site on the Sunday to investigate. He duly turned up around 10am and confirmed the skull was human. He then said he would need to see more of it to determine if there was any sign of misdeed. He also said he would have to take the skull away. Needless to say I wasn't very happy about this but started to clear away the soil. Throughout the day the friendly policeman and I discussed the amount of Roman material around and how unlikely it would be that it was a recent burial. After many phone calls and clearance from the coroner he confirmed that it was an archaeological find and of no interest to the police and left for the day.

.It would be October before the next phase of excavation could take place. In the meantime the flints above the skeleton had to be drawn plotted and slowly removed. When the process was finally completed the business of discovering if the skeleton was complete or just a skull could continue. We also concluded that the skull was that of a child as it was very small. The main area of discussion was the position of the skeleton in the dig i.e. bang slap in the middle of the villa, also as more of the skeleton began to reveal itself it's orientation. The skeleton was on a north south alignment with the head to the south. All of this pointed to a pagan burial. Over the next few weeks it became apparent that we had a complete skeleton on our hands. The grave cut showed the grave had been cut through an existing floor level. As I exposed more of the bones it became apparent that we had the whole skeleton





The small amber bead (enlarged)

Composite drawing of the Skeleton and grave-cut. Original drawing by Penny Richards

and that it was a flexed burial. I was also on the look out for grave goods there was no sign of any pots but I was lucky enough to find a small amber bead near the skull. Around the feet area I came across a few hobnails prompting the suggestion that the body was buried with shoes on.

The next task was to slowly remove and label all the bones. Unfortunately, over the interim months the skull had deteriorated as the bone was so thin. Taking into account the size of the bones, teeth and condition of the skull we have estimated that this was a child burial with an estimated age of 6. Our suspicion is that it is a female but this has yet to be confirmed. Once the bones had been removed one of the smaller ribs was sent for radiocarbon dating. During the cleaning process a second amber bead was found. We were successful in our application to CARD a scheme to allow community groups to apply for free testing. The results are back and our skeleton has been dated to 550AD – 570AD.

## The Roman Burial Area

Frank Lockwood

The burial area at Fordham, found in 1984 (*see CAG bulletin 27, 1984, p32*) is situated to the east of the building outside a possible boundary ditch system and is contemporary to the Roman occupation period. In the present day there is a track way east of the ditch that leads down to the River Colne from the village of Fordham, it follows a stream that is fed by springs to the north.



Two photographs of the excavation: Photo 1. Looking west, showing the roughly north south orientated lead lined coffin, a roughly east west child's burial and a possible amphora burial.



Photo 2. If this were indeed an amphora burial then it would suggest an infant of less than one year old.

This area fits perfectly with the Roman convention that burials took place outside of Roman boundaries of occupation and often along roadways. It is tempting to imagine that these features may not have substantially changed from the Roman period.

### **Christianity and the Burial Area**

More certainly there would have been adoption of Christianity through the early to mid 4th C. in some form at Camulodunum and is also evidenced from an excavation at Fordham. In 1984 a Roman lead lined coffin was discovered by metal detectorists and subsequently excavated by Mark Davis of the Colchester Museum. The lead lined coffin had a roughly north south orientation but the excavation also revealed a later child's burial, which had a roughly east west orientation. This illustrates an adoption of Christianity. Unfortunately a more accurate dating of these burials has not been attempted from the 43-410 date given, as it has not been possible to inspect any of the associated grave goods. But it does suggest a change in lifestyle and attitudes through the Roman occupation period of the site. It is hoped that further excavation in the future of this burial area will provide much more valuable information.

Ref: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284273472\\_Infant\\_Death\\_and\\_Burial\\_in\\_Roman\\_Italy\\_Journal\\_of\\_Roman\\_Archaeology\\_24\\_2011\\_99-120](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284273472_Infant_Death_and_Burial_in_Roman_Italy_Journal_of_Roman_Archaeology_24_2011_99-120)

## **Some local Google Earth cropmarks from last year's heatwave**

**Geoff Lunn May 2019**

The heatwave of summer 2018 produced some spectacular cropmarks around the UK, as was widely reported in the national press, and the area around Colchester was no exception. Anyone who has viewed the excellent aerial images available on Google Earth (GE) will know that cropmarks, parchmarks and all manner of other ancient earth-markings can show up extremely well if caught at the right moment in the season. What is perhaps not so well known is that the Google Earth "App" also allows one to view historic imagery dating back to around 2000 (when Google first started grabbing satellite images of the earth's surface), and in some cases as far back as 1945. This can be an incredibly useful tool for archaeologists, allowing us to view the ground in great detail over a period of years, often revealing data of archaeological significance not previously seen before.

I have chosen a few cropmark images captured (and sometimes enhanced for clarity) from Google Earth in our region, which I believe were hitherto unknown (however, willing to be proved wrong on this), to demonstrate the power of this free resource.

Image 1 and 2 were discovered whilst researching for the Roman Villas to Parishes (V2P) group. I was looking on GE around known ancient churches and found these cropmarks purely by chance. As far as I know, from checking the Pastscape and Heritage Gateway websites, neither cropmark is known in the historical record.

Whilst out walking around the Little Tey area, with my trusty iPhone in my hand for reference (the GE app works amazingly well on most modern smartphones), I spotted the faint but well defined cropmark below. I immediately headed over to the exact location (there being a convenient footpath leading straight there) and noticed a very slight curve in ground level across the double ditches. (Image 3.) With the expert help of Tim Dennis, we were also able to tease out the ground contours using Lidar. Tim was able to create a 3D model of the ground (see <https://skfb.ly/6DDsN>), which showed beyond all doubt that there was at some time a mound there, most likely with a double ditch. I am reliably informed that it looks a lot like a Neolithic long barrow. (Image 4.)





Image 1: A possible double ditched enclosure near Aldham. Note the various other marks are likely to be old field boundaries (51.895143°N, 0.782942°E)



Image 2: Unidentified rectangular cropmark reminiscent of a Roman military enclosure, near to Colchester Zoo. ( 51.863157°N, 0.836786°E)

I have now taken to checking GE wherever I happen to be, if time allows (I recently spent some time in Yorkshire visiting relatives – what a treasure trove of cropmarks they have up there!), and whilst out walking with my wife Jude, I spotted the cropmark below at Withermarsh Green near Stoke by Nayland. The cropmark shows up as a section of an ellipse which covers quite a large area (the enclosed area is approx. 500m wide at its widest point). The cropmark happens to be on a promontory overlooking the Stour Valley, bordered on either side by the Brett and Box Valleys; an excellent vantage point for anyone wishing to see possible aggressors from virtually any angle. I have to say that I got a bit over-excited, thinking that it must be the remains of an Iron Age hill fort! Since then I have explored various theories as to what it might have been. Probably not a hill fort, as it is just too big, so maybe a deer park? (Image 5) Well that too seems unlikely based on research by both John Moore of CAG, and Martin Owen, a knowledgeable friend of mine who lives quite close by. It remains a mystery.



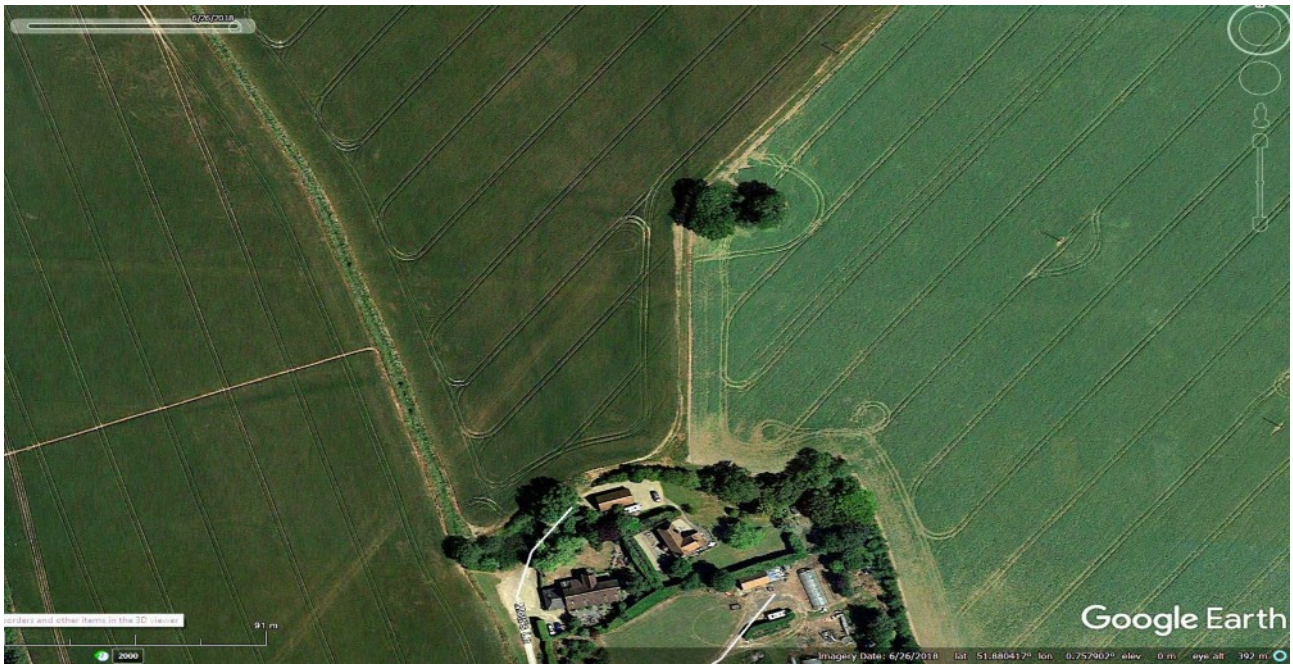


Image 3: Possible double ditched Neolithic long barrow near Little Tey. (51.880467°N, 0.757597°E)



Image 4: The Neolithic long barrow shown on Lidar (courtesy Dr. Tim Dennis)

Once again, Tim Dennis was able to create some impressive 3D renderings of the “feature” as it too also shows up on Lidar (see <https://skfb.ly/6GlsI> ). I hope that one day we will have the opportunity to do a field walk over the cropmark, and maybe shed some light on exactly what it was. Until then, if anyone has any ideas I would be very pleased to hear from you.

**The Google Earth App can be downloaded for free at:-**

[https://www.google.com/intl/en\\_uk/earth/versions/](https://www.google.com/intl/en_uk/earth/versions/) (Google Earth Pro is best).

*Historic imagery can be found by clicking on the date in the bottom left corner of the image, or by selecting the drop down menu >View>Historical Imagery. The date slider should then appear at top left. (Note that currently historic imagery cannot be accessed on mobile devices)*





Image 5: Elliptical enclosure ditch near Withermarsh Green (Stoke By Nayland). (Centred on 51.991508°N, 0.923381°E)

Anyone interested in viewing features on Lidar can do so at [www.lidarfinder.com](http://www.lidarfinder.com). Note that Lidar currently does not cover the whole of the UK. Tim Dennis also has his own Lidar tools.

Historic records of cropmarks and other archaeological features can be searched at:-

<https://www.pastscape.org.uk/>

<https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>

### Additional information from Tim Dennis.

Below: A slide of the Stanway enclosures area alongside Maldon road, looking east, which he took in 1982 while on a flight with his brother. (This is near Geoff's Image 2)





## Simon of Sudbury



Recently a recreation of Simon's head was undertaken by using skeletal detail taken from his part-mummified skull. Forensic artist Adrienne Barker from the University of Dundee employed state-of-the-art reconstruction techniques to recreate Sudbury's facial features and complete a series of 3-D bronze-resin casts of his head. These casts were revealed on 15th September 2011 in St Gregory's church, 630 years after Simon's death

Reproduced from: <https://www.stgregorychurchsudbury.co.uk/simon/>  
Simon Recreation © T5Cambridge

## A Recent find from the Fordham site



. A carved bone plaque, possibly the side of a box?

# CAG PUBLICATIONS

## **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.

## **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*

**Contact CAG Sales – [sales@caguk.net](mailto:sales@caguk.net)** Also available at Monday night Lectures

## COMMITTEE

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Please use the contact emails above and mark for the attention of specific committee members.

## Notices

**Membership fees.** As agreed at the AGM the membership fees from the 31st March 2019 will be: Single member £12.00. Student member £4.00. Joint members £20.00

GDPR act. For a copy of our Data protection policy please contact the Membership secretary, [membership@caguk.net](mailto:membership@caguk.net)