



Colchester Archaeological Group NEWSLETTER

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Socially distanced fieldwalking in Fordham

Words from the Chair

Another year beckons and I find myself starting it in the unexpected position of Chair of Colchester Archaeological Group.

At the time of writing, late October 2020, I had been in the position for a little over three weeks having been vice chair for only the previous year. The latter was a role, I was assured, would not require a great deal of work, just a matter of filling the seat, as it were.

What I was not told until nearly a year later, was that the vice-chair was expected to replace the outgoing chair at the end of their three year stint! So, although I'm probably the least knowledgeable and least experienced amateur archaeologist CAG has ever had as chair, I accepted the challenge. I like a challenge, which is just as well, for most of 2020 has been challenging in the extreme and, again, at the time of writing, it looks like the better part of 2021 will be as well.

Despite the Coronavirus, CAG has still continued to function with the Fordham dig re-started, albeit on reduced numbers.

Sub groups are still researching and meeting on Zoom. The addition of bi-weekly Zoom meetings for discussions and chat on current items of interest is normally well attended.

The winter programme of lectures still going ahead, again, on Zoom with attendances of fifty to sixty in October.

Some field work was also done in a number of locations, including field walking, geophysical surveying, metal detecting and generally looking over sites of potential interest.

I spent 2020's lockdown getting my "daily exercise" by stomping around the fields of Fordham, where I live, tracking down possible new Roman sites and working on the site of Thrift farm, more on that later.

Before closing, I must mention a few people:

Christine Piper, your previous chair, for steering the ship through the last three years in an efficient and professional manner and continuing her role as lecture organiser. Jonathan Oldham for his constant, continuing hard

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work on behalf of the Fordham dig, to keep it running. Tim Dennis for enabling the numerous Zoom meetings we now enjoy. Alan Chaplin for the Newsletter and web. All the members of CAG who make it what it is.

As it looks as though we will be enduring a difficult start to 2021, the group is alive and well despite these challenging times and, I have no doubt, it will continue to thrive.

Keep engaged, keep watching and keep safe.

Mike Hamilton-Macy.(Chair CAG)

Lectures now on Zoom

As Autumn approached and the pandemic showed no signs of ending, we started our first zoom lecture programme. Over the summer we had a trial run which went well. We invited several of the speakers so they could see how it was all going to work. Over the Autumn we regularly get 50 – 60 people logging on. Dr Neil Faulkner was our first speaker and apart from a few sound glitches where people had left their mics on all went well. We are now all versed with the ways of zoom and each evening ends with a Q & A session. We were hoping that by January we would be able to meet up again but as we are in the middle of wave number 2 with the more stringent restrictions likely to be with us for some time it is not to be. All the speakers for the Spring programme have agreed to host their talks virtually. You will notice we have had to make a couple of changes as Jess Tipper has moved on to a new job and Roger Barrett has withdrawn due to ill health. I am pleased to say we have filled the gaps. Aldous Rees, who some of you may know as a former member of the SVCA group, is going to talk about Medieval Graffiti. Paul Burns is filling the final gap with a talk on the Isle of Arran. Paul lives in Glasgow so in normal times he wouldn't have been able to get to us. We have also added an extra lecture at the end of the programme so we can have the talk from Lawrence Northall who was going to speak to us in the autumn. Each of the talks is then recorded and after some editing by Tim they are uploaded onto our YouTube channel. This allows members to watch at their leisure and is proving popular. To date there have been 331 views. Here hoping that the next time I write will be to say we can all meet up again back at Roman Circus House.

Weekly meeting on Zoom

The Weekly meeting on Zoom hosted by Tim Dennis continue to be popular with ten to twelve members dropping in to discuss various topics that they have uncovered and to exchange ideas. The meeting normally take place on Tuesday's and Thursday's afternoons at 4.00pm and all members are welcome. Contact Tim to receive the Zoom link.

Field Work Report

Work has slowly continued at the Fordham Hall site. Digging has been restricted to six members on site between lock-downs. A rota had to be drawn up to give those who wanted to a chance to get their hands dirty. It had been hoped that this phase of the excavation would have been finished this year, but as so little could be achieved due to the pandemic and the weather we will be carrying on well into next year.

The Final Report of the Great Tey Excavations by the group in 2003-5

This was the subject of John Mallinson's CAG's Lecture on zoom in November.

Published on-line this year 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.

It has been written by Laura Pooley and Howard Brooks with information supplied by Pauline Skippins and members of CAG with contributions by Stephen Benfield, Hazel Martingell, Jacqueline McKinley, Pip Parmenter and Adam Wightman, figures by Howard Brooks, Laura Pooley and Emma Holloway illustrations by Emma Holloway.

This is the final and definitive report of the excavations and makes 50 pages of text, illustrations and tables that makes interesting reading for those that were there and those who were not members during that dig. It is available to download or read from the CAG website under publications.

Many thanks to those who were involved and helped to produce this report. It is often forgotten the time it takes once the final shovel full has been returned to the ground that the work starts the collecting of information, cataloguing and identification of finds and then recording them, drawing illustrations, site plans and sections, looking up references and contacting specialists where necessary. Then to put all this information into one standard report format and submit it for approval and publication.



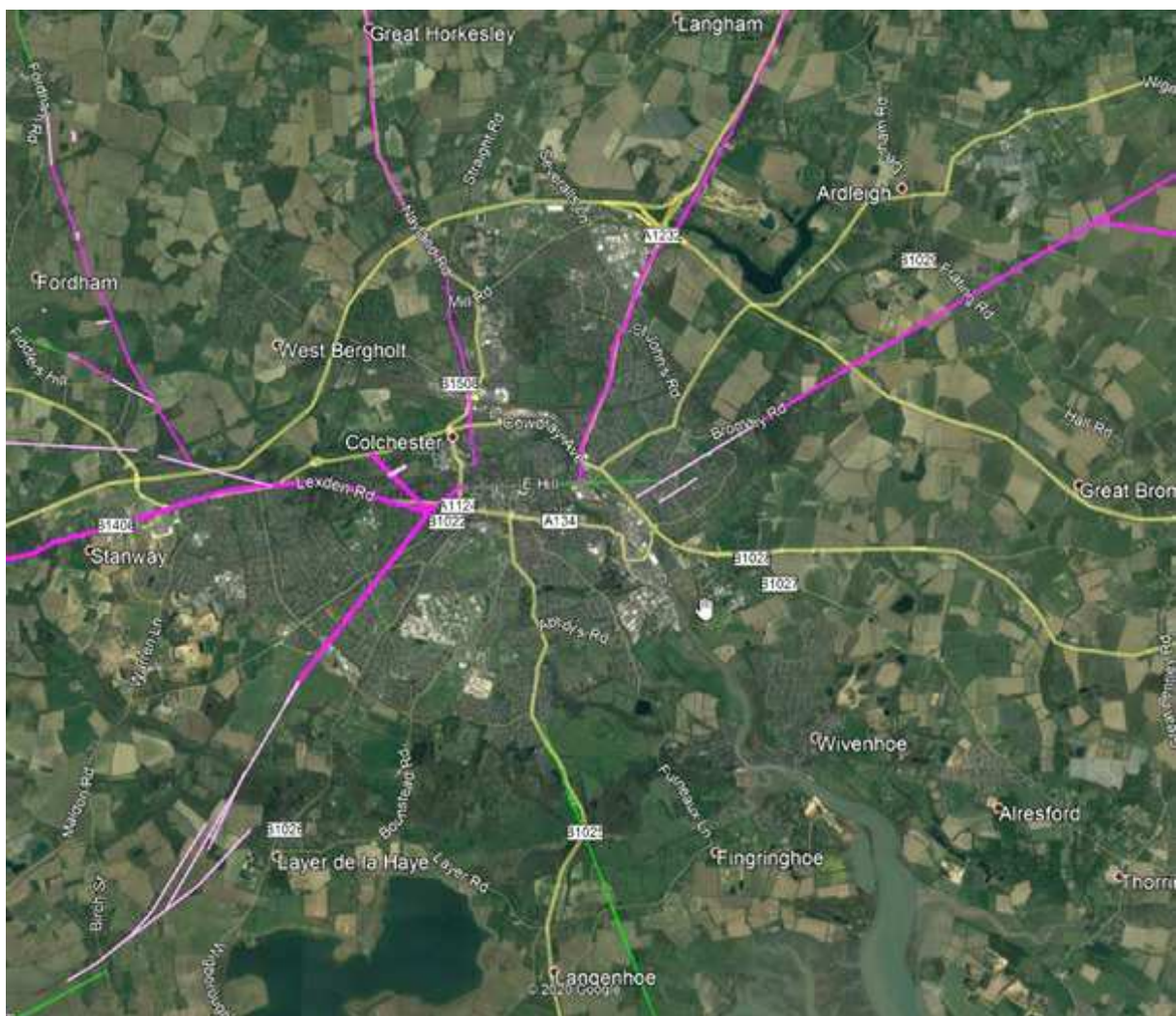
Roman Roads Group Report Winter 2020

Geoff Lunn, Dec 2020

Despite all of the various restrictions of the current Coronavirus pandemic, I am pleased to report that the Roman Roads Group has managed to continue to meet regularly (online via Zoom), and also to carry out some limited outdoor activities, whilst observing the relevant rules at the time regarding social distancing etc.

At the last RRG meeting, I was able to inform members that the first draft of the long awaited “Roman Roads Around Colchester” base map was now complete (see below). The map has been created as a Google Earth overlay file (kmz) which can easily be distributed by email etc, to members and other interested parties. The map is complete as far as is known to myself and the group, and follows the simple map key presented below. Some work is still to be done to tidy things up, and members were encouraged to check the map and feedback any comments or observations (comments from CAG members also welcome), especially in their particular areas of interest.

We have also agreed that a hard copy printout would be created once all comments and feedback have been received and the map updated as necessary using the Ordnance Survey as the underlying map for printouts. The map can be made available to any member of CAG who would like a copy.



Part of the “Roman Roads Around Colchester” map overlaying Google Earth

Roman Road map key:

- Known Roman Road (Margary, Coddington, etc) (**dark pink**)
- Suspected Roman Road (unproven but convincing evidence) (**light pink**)
- Assumed Roman Road (no traces but convincing arguments for there having been an RR here, eg following a route named “Street” (**light pink 30% opacity**))
- Area where traces of RR can be seen (Google Earth, Aerial Photo, Lidar) (**dark pink 30% opacity**)
- RR Extensions – extend a known or suspected RR to see where it goes (**bright green 30% opacity**)

I feel sure that all of our readers will be aware that the A12 between London and Colchester (and beyond) largely follows the old Roman Road from Londinium to the Colonia, and then on to Venta Icenorum (Caistor St. Edmunds near Norwich), known affectionately to Roman road aficionados as “Margary Route 3”. Various members of the RRG have been looking again at one particular stretch of this ancient route where it crosses the River Stour and Dedham Vale, at Stratford St. Mary. The name “Stratford”, meaning the “Ford on the Roman Road”, is a bit of a giveaway, but strangely enough, the exact crossing point on the river, and the route through the valley appear to be unknown. Stratford is also claimed to be a possible location of Ad Ansam, which is recorded in both the Antonine Itinerary and the Peutinger Table, which are ancient written records of Roman Roads throughout the empire.

Various members of the RRG have been hard at work studying, mapping and geophysically surveying around Stratford, and meeting some very pleasant local landowners and historians along the way, and we believe that we are getting close to being able finally to accurately define this ancient route. More about this in a future newsletter, but in the meantime, below is an aerial photo taken from Jim Pullen’s drone during the summer showing a vivid cropmark of our Roman road pounding across a field alongside the A12 near the Four Sisters interchange at Holton St. Mary.



Earlier in 2020, I noticed a cropmark on Google Earth that has always been there, and which had already been noted as a possible Roman road in CAG Bulletin 17 in 1974, but which I and others had always assumed to be a pipeline or a buried cable. What was different this time though was that I was also looking at the Lidar overlay, and that showed quite clearly that the “pipeline” looked remarkably Roman Road like, and was emanating from a point on the outskirts of Colchester where Rex Hull had found what he took to be evidence of a Roman Road some decades ago. This intriguing route heads north from Colchester and gets very close to the Roman Villa site at Fordham, before disappearing without trace somewhere near Wormingford. Since then Fordham local Mike Hamilton-Macy has been doing lots of field walking along the route, joined at times by Tim Dennis, myself, and Jonathan Oldham to do some geophysics. I have to admit that we still have not proved definitively that this is a Roman road, but we are all convinced that it is, and recent finds by Mike and new member Martin Weaire at the crossing point over the River Colne have made us all the more convinced. There is still quite some work to be

done to determine what it is that we have found when the weather improves, and crops etc. allow us access to the sites again, so watch this space for future updates!

Finally, the Roman Roads Group has recently become an affiliate member of the Roman Roads Research Association (RRRA), which is a group of like minded chaps based up north somewhere and who are doing sterling work in revealing hitherto unknown sections of Roman Road across the whole country. The RRRA publish a quarterly online newsletter which is available to all members of our group, and have a website with a wealth of information on British Roman roads. The next RRRA newsletter will feature a section on RR's in our area, with some contributions from our group. Their website is at www.romanroads.org and one of their members (David Ratledge) has a very interesting site at www.twithr.co.uk which uses Lidar to trace RR's. Worth a visit if you have an interest in these ancient routes.

A Coin for our Times?

Geoff Lunn

Whilst investigating the area where our new northern Roman road appears, from cropmarks, to cross the River Colne, myself, Mike H-M and Martin Weaire have found a number of interesting Roman artefacts, one of which is a rather badly degraded, but nonetheless legible, coin of Allectus. Allectus is a little known Roman ruler who was in power between 293 and 296 AD, but I feel that he is of particular interest to us Colcestrians, especially at this time of turmoil surrounding our relationship with the greater Europe. For Allectus was a usurper, a breakaway ruler of Brittania and part of northern Gaul, having murdered his predecessor Carausius who had declared himself emperor of Britain some years earlier.



Our Coin, an Aurelianus of Allectus, verified by Mark Curteis.

During this period known as the "Crisis of the Third Century", two coin mints appeared in Brittania, one was in London, and the other, denoted by mintmark "C" is believed to have been at Colchester. There is some dispute about this between numismatists, but the consensus of opinion is that Colonia Clavdia Vitricentis (modern Colchester) was the home of the second mint in Brittania. I hope that you can see the small "C" in the exergue of our coin below (the area below the deity on the reverse of the coin), which would appear to indicate that this coin was probably minted in our home town, some 1700 years ago.



.A "Very Fine" version of the same coin

To compare the European Union with the Roman Empire is a little unfair of course, but it seemed so much of a coincidence that we had found a coin made in Colchester during a period of similar political turmoil all those years ago that I felt it needed to be brought to your attention

Interestingly, this little breakaway “Northern Empire” did not last long. The soon to be “Emperor” Constantius I, father of Constantine the Great, came over to Britannia in 296AD and defeated Allectus in a bloody battle. History has a habit of repeating itself, but let’s hope no more bloody battles!

Geoff Lunn, Dec 2020

Government redefines treasure to increase protection for archaeological finds

Extracts from a press release from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and Caroline Dinenage MP. Published 4 December 2020. For full text go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-redefines-treasure-to-increase-protection-for-archaeological-finds>

For the first time, the official treasure definition will not be based solely on the material qualities of an artefact. Changes will make the treasure process more transparent and efficient for museums and the public.

More of the most important archaeological finds will be protected for the public under plans to develop a new definition of treasure, Culture Minister Caroline Dinenage announced.

The move is one of the biggest changes to the Treasure Act since it came into effect nearly 25 years ago.

Under the existing definition, objects are designated as treasure if they are found to be over 300 years old, made of gold or silver or found with artefacts made of precious metals. Once officially identified as treasure, artefacts become the property of the Crown and are available for acquisition by local or national museums to go on public display.

However this historic view of treasure, which stretches back to the medieval period, does not capture the full extent of important finds reported to the scheme in the twenty-first century. The growing popularity of metal detecting since the inception of the act in 1996 has brought to light an increasing number of finds from Roman Britain that do not meet the current treasure criteria because they are often made from bronze and not precious metals. Some items of national importance have been lost to the public or at risk of sale into private collections.



*the Birrus Britannicus (6.5cm tall) also known
as the Chelmsford hoody*

An example is an exceptionally rare Roman figurine wearing a cloak known as the Birrus Britannicus (*see picture*) would also have been lost to the public. The figurine was found near Chelmsford in 2014 but, despite being an extremely unusual example of a British character being depicted in Roman portable art, the artefact's copper alloy composition did not meet the current definition of treasure. Due to a deferred export licence delaying the sale, Chelmsford City Museum were able to raise the funds to purchase the figurine to display for the local community.

Under the new plans announced today, a new definition will be developed to ensure that major finds can be designated as treasure if they are historically or culturally significant. This will be the first time the official treasure

definition will not be based solely on the material qualities of an artefact. This will allow local and national museums to acquire more objects of national importance for public collections.

Finders, landowners, museums and members of the public were invited to comment on the proposals in a consultation and their views informed the government response published today. The changes will bring the treasure process into line with other important legislation to protect cultural heritage and collections, including the listing process for historically significant buildings and the export bar system.

A specialist research project running next year will inform the new definition and there will be opportunities for detectorists, archaeologists, museums, academics and curators to contribute to options in development.

As a result of the public consultation, the government will also introduce new measures to improve the experience of the treasure process which include a new time limit to streamline some stages of the process, limiting the number of times the Treasure Valuation Committee can review a case and developing a mechanism to return unclaimed rewards to museums.

Also see <https://culturalpropertynews.org/uk-changes-treasure-act/>

The Search for another Roman site in Fordham

There was always speculation that the Roman Fordham Hall site/building is a lot smaller than expected and that there may have been other associated buildings in the area.



The areas of interest either side of Fossetts Lane

Working on information passed by a Metal Detectorist who had found Roman coins in a field, east of Fossetts Lane an area about half a mile north from the Fordham Hall site, briefly mentioned in his introduction. Mike Hamilton-Macy investigated the field and undertook a basic field walk and observed a number of pieces of CBM (Ceramic Building Material) and shards of a mortaria and grey ware on the surface. These he recorded and plotted (pic 2). With Tim Dennis they then undertook a magnetic resistance survey and examination of LIDAR plots and google maps of the area there looks like traces of road leading to the site.

Below is Mike's report on the East field. Which is followed by Neil Shorts report: A Fieldwalk on the West field completed by V2P members in October.

North section of field opposite Housefield cottage, Fossetts Lane

Mike Hamilton-Macy

Field walked on mornings of 24th to 27th inclusive, March 2020.

Site location: TL93841 28386.

Site area: 189m E/W x 223m N/S, approx. 42,700 square metres.

Weather conditions: Bright and sunny with a strong northerly wind on all days.

Ground conditions: Dry, cracking light clay with last year's stubble, self-sown crop and weeds.

Visibility of ground surface: Varying between approximately 10% and 90%.

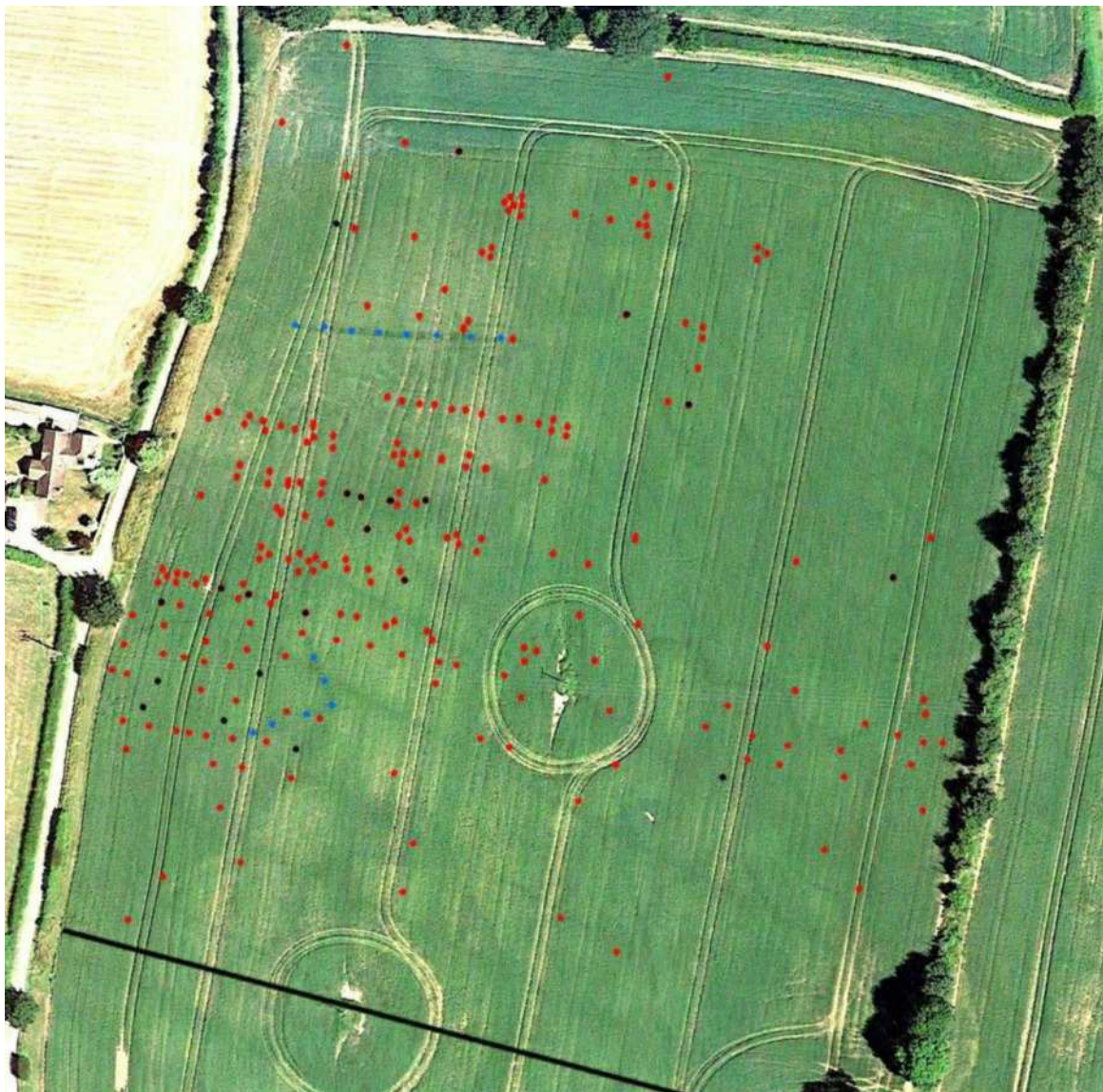
Method: Due to time constraints a coarse walk of the field was undertaken, walking along sight lines viewing a width of around five metres.

Finds were noted on a satellite image and numbered with a description of the find, finds off centre of walking line were noted on the walking line so the appearance of E/W straight lines of finds are false.

Finds were noted as Roman if it was clear they were or probably were, sub 20mm square or so fragments were not noted.

All pottery finds were retained, a small selection of better brick, tile and box flue samples were retained.

Almost all finds were plough worn.



Plan of the East field with finds overlaid on a lightened satellite image, shown true north, east = right of image:

Red spots = CBM.

Black spots = pottery.

Blue spots = lines of possible relevant crop marks.

Black line = southernmost limit of walk.

Hedge/ditch on east side = parish boundary.

Non-Roman finds:

A spread of peg tile covered the same area of Roman finds and slightly beyond.

One piece of modern glass on the far eastern edge.

Four pieces of 19th-20th century brick on the eastern half of the field.

Fragments of old. Soft red land drain on the eastern half of the field.

Fragments of later, pink, fluted land drain on the eastern half of the field.

These latter two finds have probably been dragged up by the modern land drains visible in the diagonal crop marks. (As, no doubt, some of the Roman finds have also been).

Seven, small fragments of coarse, glazed pottery dotted over the site.

Roman finds:

Tile: Fair quantity of 20mm to 30mm, some clearly tegular, no obvious pieces of imbrex, some possible.

Brick: Modest amount, between 30mm and 40mm, mostly with blue/grey core.

Box flue: Modest amount, corner pieces and keyed fragments.

Pottery: Two different pieces of mortaria, several rim sherds of various thickness, a little grey ware, a few pieces of buff/grey thicker sherds and two sherds which could be worn samian ware.

Items not found:

Shell of any kind, bone, worked or not, coins, other metal (apart from one, small, handmade nail that could be from Roman to 19th century), early glass.

Conclusions:

It appears clear that there has been Romano/British activity on the site in, at least, the 3rd to 4th century as the mortaria sherds appear to be 4th century Oxfordshire ware and a grey rim sherd looks like Alice Holt which was found locally in the late 3rd and 4th centuries.

The detectorists that alerted us to the site stated they found 4th century coins on one side of the field and 2nd century on the other, it's possible that the thin cluster of finds on the east side might represent the earlier, 2nd century Roman site.

Two pieces of possible Roman tile and a piece of tegular were found on the other side of the hedge on that side so it's possible that the earlier phase continues into the next field, across, what is now, the parish boundary.

If the peg tile and few pieces of glazed pottery are indicative, it would appear that there was also a later building on the site.

The way forward:

Geophysical surveying of the area directly opposite Housefield Cottage is the obvious next move, one might say essential.

I acquired permission to walk the field from Peter Lofthouse who farms it but I'm not sure he actually owns it as Kings Farm is right next to it, I will have to check this before we proceed further.

Summary of the V2P Fieldwalk on the West Field at Fossetts Lane

11th October 2020

Neil J Short

The Villa to Parish (V2P) Group within CAG was set up to address the challenge of confirming a correlation in location between Roman settlement sites and those of early medieval church and/or manorial sites within the NW quadrant of the Borough of Colchester. In the Spring of 2020, several potential sites of interest had been identified, with field-walking considered required to confirm the likely nature (size/type) of each site. Unfortunately, in March 2020, as planning for field-walks began the world changed and through the summer there remained little opportunity to continue with our plans.

At the recent V2P (Virtual) Meeting on the 7th October however, Mike Hamilton-Macy identified and described several potential field-walk opportunities with the Fordham Parish. This offered the V2P Team an opportunity for a 1st Fieldwalk before winter. The window of opportunity to field-walk was short, with weather, crop planning and the continued and it seems ever present threat of Covid restrictions all impacting the timeline. With a couple of days' notice a small team gathered on a cool, with "bracing breeze", day on a large field in Fordham, specifically to the west of Fossett's Lane.

The plan for the day, through time and resource limits, was to undertake a sparse filter of an area of the field identified by Mike as containing material from a range of ages, from roman to modern. Single flagged poles at



Overlay of finds on the west field

either end of the interest area marked walk direction and small differing coloured squares offered markers for roman, possibly roman and “more modern” finds of material (largely CBM or modern equivalents). All pottery found, of any considered age, was collected.

After more than a couple of hours a halt was called. The area walked had delivered a wide selection of roman CBM, including tesserae and hypocaust material. For the roman period, pottery finds were mostly of “standard” grey ware fabric. All collections material was taken away to be further examined in due course. Further reviews of the area, both detecting and drone imagery are planned. Whilst the overall quantity of material was not large there would appear to be enough to suggest habitation (at least a building of some sort!). Anyway, a good 1st V2P walk, let’s all hope for more, although it may not be until next year.



Tim Dennis at work with his magnetometer on the west field

17th Century Lead Money Token - Owner found!

Francis Nicholls

Building work has been taking place at Church Green, Coggeshall during 2020. The spoil heaps have been regularly examined with the aid of a metal detector.

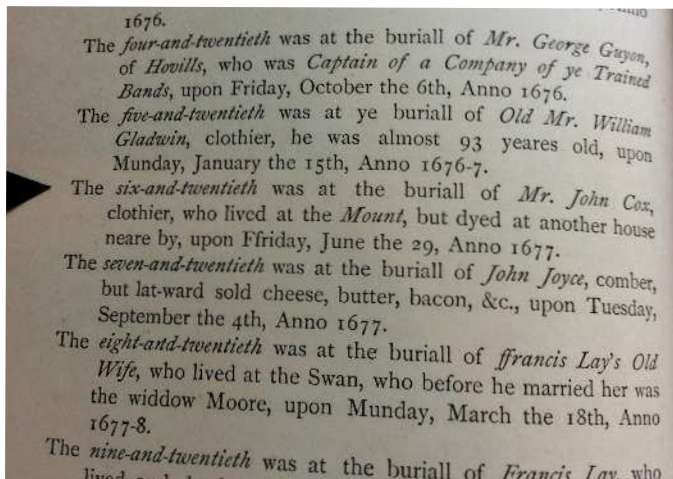
In June, a lead money token, with clear markings was uncovered. It is an unusual find, in that it not only has initials but also a date. With a geometric pattern on one side, the other side shows clearly:

I.C (for I.C, read J.C)* 1668

*(The letter 'J' really only came into the English language during the 17th century).

Beaumont's History of Coggeshall lists burials of people from 'notable families' during the mid 17th century. In 1677, the burial of John Cox is noted.

John Cox was a wealthy clothier, who like many other traders of that time, issued money tokens in lieu of actual money. It kept the labourers waiting until Saturday afternoon before changing their week's tokens for hard cash! It also made sure that they were inclined to give a full week's work without skiving off during the six previous days!



The final piece of evidence that the token was probably issued by Cox, comes from an old map of the town. He lived at a large property called The Mount. At that time the Mount Estate included the land where the token was found some 400 metres to the North.

I think that we can fairly say that we have almost certainly found, if not the owner, at least the issuer of the lead token.

Three Decades of Fieldwalking in Tendring: A Cautionary Tale David Bain

I became involved in field-walking around 1982 by degrees after finding flint artefacts gardening and in a field behind my home in the Holland Brook valley near Thorpe Station.

Subsequently this 20 acre field has been visited every winter up to present and thousands of worked flints have been found of all prehistoric periods. The number of finely worked pieces is only a small proportion compared to the waste debitage, but much of that also shows signs of being used with retouch and other modification. The fluctuation of their appearance on field's surface is most notable. The emergence and re-submergence of much of the stone component is one of the mysteries. It is governed by weather conditions, with a combination of rain and frost being important factors. Sometimes the field appears quite stony and at other times relatively stoneless. The soil is loamy brickearth, I believe this was more favoured by our ancestors than heavier London Clay near surface.

Cultivation has changed in the last decade or so with less ploughing and greater reliance on “minimum cultivation” with harrows and even sowing into the previous crop’s stubbles. Both reduce the soil turnover and emergence of flints. Sowing into such light cultivation largely precludes field-walking, though recently I have found drainage harrowing at 20 yard intervals, akin to mole-draining, that does produce turned material worthy of examination.

The personal, human element in finding material is noteworthy. Generally my searching focus can only last just over an hour at a time. I have never tried having a break and resuming. Often the best pieces seem to be spotted early in session or last thing. While this may seem coincidental, the frequency is uncanny and I suspect it is connected to perceptual issues, being relaxed yet still having an alert concentration level. I generally go out alone and only once or twice crossed other fields in an organized line of others, as usually employed in field-walking surveys. Light conditions can be factor, including when too bright, shadows can complicate a clear view. Given my re-walking the same field many times the main concentrations of flint scatters are well known. This is complicated by a multi-period range and possibility of at least some of older material has been reused – eg Palaeolithic flakes being re-sharpened in later prehistoric cultures. Trying to record on a grid I have found too complex and ultimately seemed to add little & muddy hands often make impractical! The most memorable finds’ locations have not been lost, though in this age of GPS this device could be employed. It is notable that two notable pieces sometimes lie side-by-side, though not always matching in chronology e.g. clear Mesolithic and Neolithic artefacts together. The coincidence of finding similar shaped objects on same day and not on others is also odd. Sometimes “core days” ie chiefly blade cores, other times blades and another scrapers. Non-standard pieces have been increasingly noticed, including working on “natural” flint pebbles lacking a tell-tale bulb of percussion, that is usually the main initial feature of a worked flint. There can be a problem of later plough/edge damage sometimes complicating interpretation of authentic “retouch”.

Non-flint parallel finds are few on this site: really old pottery is surprisingly rare and only small, amorphous fragments. Apart from occasional horseshoes metal is hardly encountered. The local farmer is wary of metal detectorists but tolerates a single “flinter”!

I have looked at other fields locally to get some sense of comparison but only two have been seriously repeatedly explored at Beaumont with Red Crag also outcropping, prehistoric cropmarks [that my home field seem to lack] and patterned ground [Ice Age polygons]. The second site is two miles up Holland Brook on the Thorpe-Weeley boundary and has produced all periods of flintwork including notably Upper Palaeolithic. It is now largely closed with minimum cultivation and frequent rape sowing often within stubble.

Finally caution should be offered over getting too bitten by field-walking and heaven forefend a collecting bug! Do find a supervisor/mentor [preferably professional] to keep one on the straight-and-narrow if one is not part of a regular overseen group.

A History of Thrift Farm, Fordham

Mike Hamilton-Macy

My interest in Thrift Farm came about during researches as part of the Villas to Parish (V2P) group. On discovering the Chapman Andre map of Essex published in 1777, I was struck by how much the parish of Fordham has changed in the last 250 years and was inspired to write a talk for Fordham Local History Society, it was entitled:

“Fordham, now you see it, now you don’t, a history of disappearance and change.” A longish title for a talk I know but there it is, the talk was given in January 2020.

The talk was divided into numerous sections i.e. roads, houses, pubs, wells, church and chapels etc. and finished with farms, the last one on the farm list was Thrift Farm.

By the way the parish of Fordham (up to 1949 when the boundaries were changed significantly) has lost at least 20 farms!

As you can see on the 1777 map (picture 1), Thrift Farm is at the end of a lane which is still referred to as Thrift Lane and was a public road, maintained by the borough council up until at least 1879 when the council discussed whether to continue to maintain some minor roads.

Another interesting thing about this map is that Thrift Farm is actually named, yet other large farms aren’t, even the manor halls of Archendines and Fordham hall are not noted, curious.

Thrift Farm’s history is long and it has changed much over time, including its name; it was originally called Frith Farm.

It first becomes a farm sometime between 1539 and 1575, within those dates I have found two references to it as being a farm.

An undated one from “Proceedings in Chancery” during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, where it’s referred to as “a farm called Fordham Frith” in relation to an unpaid rent claim.

The second is also from her reign in 1575 where the farm is described as “A capital messuage”.

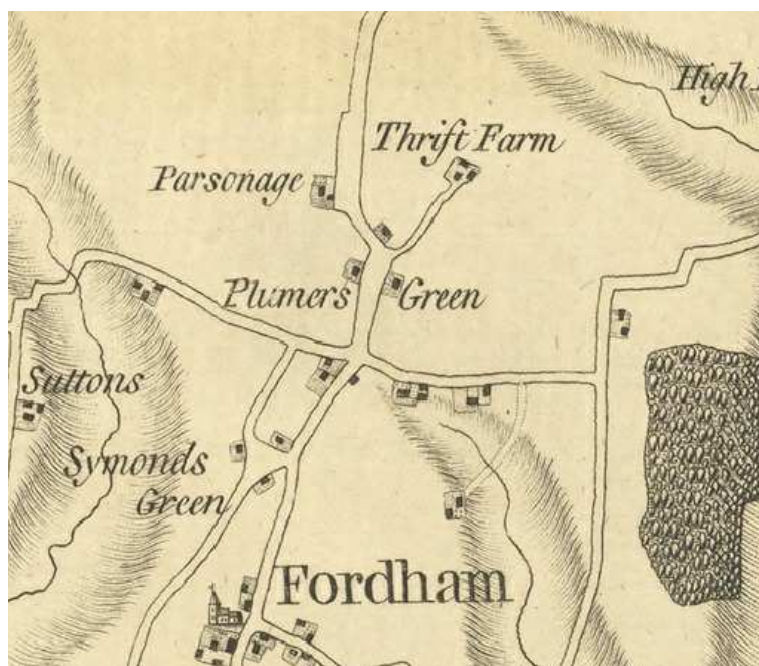


Fig. 1. 1777 map

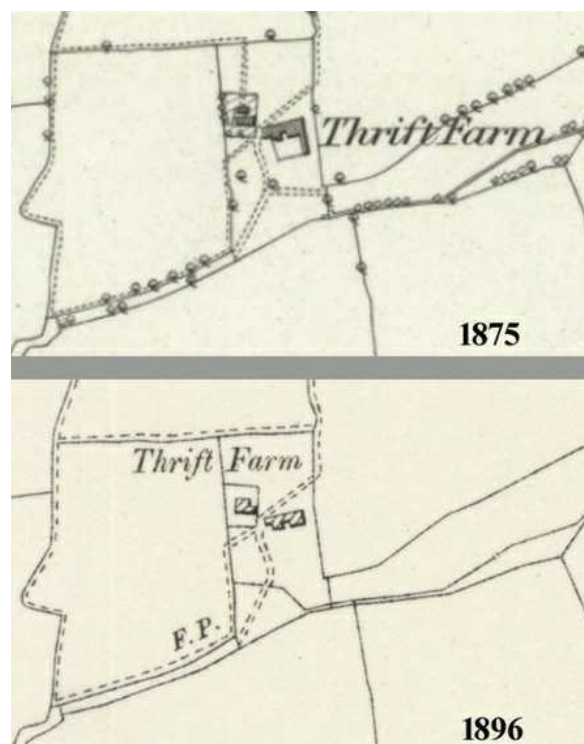


Fig. 2.

A messuage is a house with outbuildings and land for its use, capital; in this case means it was of a high status. The four manors of Fordham have changed hands, been combined, split into two, resold and generally traded umpteen times since the Norman Conquest and in 1539 Henry VIII "presented" the two manors of Fordham Hall and Archendines along with "a pasture call Fordham Frith" to Thomas Culpepper who was a court favourite at the time.

Sadly, his popularity was short lived and he only had the property in his possession for three years because he lost his head in 1542, in the very real sense!

It was alleged that he had been romantically involved with Henry's fifth wife Catherine Howard; she was also beheaded in the same year.

The manors and the "Frith estate" were then passed to John Abell who may well have built up the farm, assuming Thomas Culpepper hadn't.

There are earlier references to "The Frith", from British History On Line where it states that in 1395 there were 121 acres of valuable woodland in The Frith.

But the earliest reference I have found so far is from the "Feet of Fines" book for Essex when during the reign of Henry III in 1227 "Fordhamfrid" is mentioned.

The origins of the site almost certainly go back another two hundred, maybe even seven hundred years because Frith is a Saxon word.

A Frith or Frith yard is an area of cleared land, possibly enclosed, generally beside but occasionally in woodland. Frith also has other meanings in different contexts, usually it means peace or sanctuary but other writers suggest it might also have something to do with a kind of kinship.

Friths are often on higher ground with a spring nearby, Thrift farm sat on higher ground in the north of the village and there is still a natural spring which rises within 50 metres of where the house once stood.

Now back to 1777, from here on the house and farm yard are shown on the ordinance survey maps of 1805, 1876 and 1896, the latter two are shown in fig.2.

During these times we know who was living on the farm because of the censuses. In 1841 William Bibby and his wife Ann were living there, (Fig.3.) he is listed as an agricultural labourer (note: still working at 73!).

So this means at some point previously, the owner has moved out and the property is now being rented to the farm workers, this was a high status residence remember.

Fifty years later and on the 1891 census (Fig. 4.) the Taylor family is living there; Joseph is also an agricultural labourer.

It also says on the 1891 census that the Taylors are living in the "manor house" and the land was being "farmed off hand" which means the owner of the farm was not living on site.

Thrift	1	William Bibby	73	1	Edg. Lab. f	1	
	1	John D.	65	1		1	

5	Thrifts Farm Mannerthorpe Farm of 1000	1	Joseph Taylor	Head	M	76	Agricultural Labour
			Sarah	Wife	F	74	
			Stephen	Son	S	24	
			Eliza	Daughter	S	24	
			John	Son	S	14	
			William Bacon	Traveller	Wid	77	Expects 3 Nov 60 Ref

Fig. 2 and 3.

Shortly after 1891 the owner seems to have tried to let the farm but a month later all the livestock and working horses were sold. (Fig.5.) Perhaps the new tenant just wanted the land and sold the animals. At some stage the farm must have been sold; I have yet to find records for this.

Essex Standard 6.10.1894

**ROCHFORD'S AND THRIFT'S FARMS,
WORMINGFORD AND FORDHAM.**

Mr. C. M. STANFORD conducted the sale of the live and dead stock of these Farms on Sept. 23, when there was a fair attendance, and good prices were realised, considering the times. The prices and buyers of the chief lots of horses were as follows :—

	Gns.
Captain, bay gelding.....	Mr. J Page 23½
Short, dark bay gelding.....	Mr G. Barrow 18
Bowler, black gelding.....	Mr. Tawell 15
Diamond, bay mare.....	Mr. Collins 15½
Boxer, bay gelding.....	Mr. S. F. Barrett 15

Mr. G. Barrow purchased home-bred heifers at £7, home-bred steers at £7.7.6, and three heifers at £5 per head. A young black sow was sold to Mr. G. Hume for £4.7; a black-and-white sow to the same buyer at £4.7; and eleven shoats to Mr. Lucas at 31s. 6d.

East Anglian Daily Times 28.8.1894

WORMINGFORD AND FORDHAM, NEAR COLCHESTER.

TO be Let, in portions, Rochfords and Thrift Farms as under:—

Rochfords, Wormingford and Fordham— House, Premises, and Land	A. R. P. 164 1 0
Thrift Farm, Fordham—House, Premises, and Land	49 0 11
Arable Field, Fordham, adjoining Worm- ingford Grove	35 3 11
Enclosure of Arable Land in Worming- ford and Fordham, close to Jenkin's Farm	24 0 0
Arable Field, opposite last portion	14 0 10
Ditto, abutting on road between Jenkin's and Newhouse Farms	21 1 31
Arable Field, adjoining last enclosure ..	23 2 10

For Particulars, apply C. M. Stanford, Estate Agent,
Colchester.

Fig. 4 and 5.

Then on the 1901 census the farm is listed as unoccupied and on the 1911 census (Fig. 6.) it was not mentioned at all.

	Shrift Farm Kumber's Green		1		Turner as wife m	21
24	Total of Schedules of Houses and of Towns with less than Five Rooms	24	1	1 - 2	Total of Males and of Females..	11 14

Fig. 6.

When we look at the next Ordinance Survey map of 1920 (fig 7.) you can see that the house is now shown as an un-hatched rectangle, as are part of the barn/outbuildings. As I understand it, this means the building(s) are derelict.

By 1967 the house and outbuildings have disappeared entirely with just the farmyard boundaries still in place, but sometime between then and 2000 the boundaries are ploughed over.

On the 2005 satellite image (Fig. 8.) all that's left is a dark cropmark feature of where it once stood.

The spring mentioned earlier rises to form a pond in the round, wooded area at the lower centre of the picture, a small stream then runs eastwards from it.

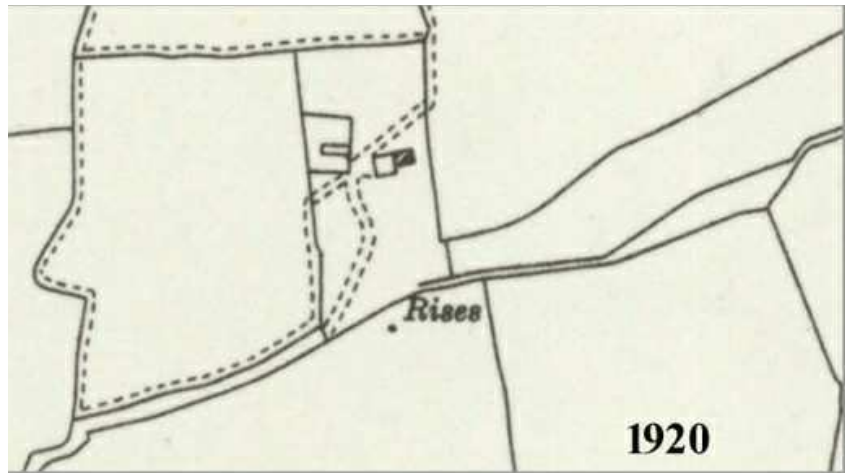


Fig. 7. 1920 map.



Fig. 8. 2005 satellite image

As to the layout of the farmyard, the early maps of 1777 and 1805 show three and four buildings respectively on the site. It could be argued that the 2005 satellite image also suggests three buildings, but the finds evidence to date suggests only two distinct patches where buildings stood.

The house appears to be formed of two close but separate buildings that were subsequently connected between 1875 and 1896. It's possible that the map makers showed them further apart than they actually were for clarity. Perhaps the one, previously unconnected, was a service building for the high status residence.

Back to the present and my recent investigations of the site during 2020's first lockdown.

I contacted the landowner, Mr. Robert Davidson and obtained permission to do some field walking and metal detecting. I have been lucky, to date, in that all the land owners I've dealt with locally have been co-operative and even actively interested.

I spent weeks walking backwards and forwards, noting, sampling and collecting finds and came to the following conclusions.

The house was almost certainly timber framed, loads of handmade nails were found, some very large but there was a distinct lack of a singular brick type, just a few odd random forms.

The house had a peg tile roof; there are hundreds if not thousands of tile fragments in a very localised area.

The out building(s) seem to have had pan tile rooves; these were likely to have been thatched originally.

The house had square patterned, leaded light windows, small junction pieces of lead were found.

At least one of the floors was laid with very small and crudely handmade, yellow brick paviors laid on edge, most likely in a herringbone pattern. There was no trace of mortar on any of them so it's likely they were laid dry, directly on compacted clay.

There is evidence that there were a number of upgrades in the nineteenth century, some salt glazed drainage pieces were found and numerous cast iron guttering fragments were spread over a wide area, along with pieces of domestic cast iron ware.

Aside from iron there was not a great abundance of metal finds, the most notable were:

Three military tunic buttons from the 56th regiment of foot and two from other regiments.

Five thimbles, one of which is decorated silver, 17th to 18th century.

Thirteen coins dating from 1734 to 1862, the most interesting being a George III 1820 silver groat.

A 17th century brass buckle.

Three brass crotal bells.

A 16th to 17th century, S shaped swan headed belt hanger.

And the earliest metal find, a pierced copper alloy, mid to late 16th century dress button.

The last two pictured below. (Fig.9.)



Fig. 9.

The ground surface of where the house stood was littered with all kinds of pottery sherds, mostly, as one would expect, from the 19th century but there were good examples from the entire occupation period. What became clear is that prior to the 19th century the domestic pottery was of a higher standard, lending weight to the previous high status of the property.

The identified pottery types are:

Tudor green ware 1539 – 1600.

Harlow/Metropolitan slip ware 1539 1600.

Oxidised earthen ware 1539 – 1900.

Glazed, red earthen ware 1550 – 1900.

Westerwald stone ware 1539 – 1900.

Staffordshire, hand pressed, combed slip ware 1675 – 1770.

Salt glazed stone ware 1539 – 1900.

Jackfield ware 1713 – 1900.

Cream/Queen's ware 1750 – 1900.

Transfer ware 1750 – 1900.

Wedgewood basalt ware 1768 – 1900.

Yellow ware 18th century – 1900.

You'll notice that a number of types start at 1539, this is because it's the earliest date possible for the house to have been built, so it's unlikely that any meaningful amounts of these types would have been deposited sooner. Equally, I have ended all types by 1900 as the property was unoccupied by or before 1901.

Two pottery types stood out, apart from the ubiquitous Victorian, blue transfer ware of course!

The first was the Staffordshire combed slip ware, although this is quite crudely hand pressed and patterned it seems to have been very fashionable, I found over thirty sherds from several different dishes.

The second was the Westerwald stoneware, again, there were numerous sherds from different forms including at least three chamber pots dating from the 18th century, these were posh potties indeed!

A selection from three types below.

All the metal and pottery finds were found in or on the surface of the plough soil so it's likely there are earlier remains below it.



Fig. 10. Harlow, 11. Staffordshire and 12. Westerwald stoneware

Although the Frith area most likely has Saxon origins, nothing from this period has been found so far. However, there was one item I found which turns up on sites from the Roman period onwards and that is quern stone made from volcanic rock.

The piece found is identical in texture, colour and style to the six pieces found on several other Roman sites in the parish, interesting!

Then, as I was having my last look over Thrift Farm before the maize crop made any further investigations impractical, I found a definite piece of Roman brick..... watch this space!

Mike Hamilton-Macy.

Recommended by members

Wuffing Education Study Centre



The Centre runs study days on archaeology and related subjects, specialising in medieval Britain, Ireland, Europe, and Scandinavia. Their courses normally take place at Sutton Hoo but are currently being presented online via Zoom and usually take place on Saturdays, occasionally Fridays. This autumn's subjects include:

The Battle of Assandún and Its Memorial Minster

Trees, Woodland, and Timber in Early Medieval England: Literature, Landscapes, and Material Culture

St Edmund's Day Special – Bury St Edmunds: The Abbey and the Antiquaries.

For more information and prices, see <https://wuffingeducation.co.uk/>

Or contact them at Wuffing Education, 4 Hilly Fields, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 4DX

Book Review

If you come across any local publication that may interest our members and are happy to recommend please let the editor know

Recently published by Boydell & Brewer of Woodbridge and recommended by Anna Moore:

A HISTORY OF THE COUNTY OF ESSEX XII

St Osyth to the Naze: North-East Essex Coastal Parishes. Part 1: St Osyth, Great and Little Clacton, Frinton, Great Holland and Little Holland

Edited by CHRISTOPHER C. THORNTON and HERBERT EIDEN

The nine Essex parishes lying in a coastal district between St Osyth and the Naze headland at Walton encompass a number of distinct landscapes, from sandy cliffs to saltmarshes, recognised as environmentally significant. The landscape has constantly changed in response to changing sea levels, flooding, draining and investment in sea defences. Inland, there was an agriculturally fertile plateau based on London Clay, but with large areas of Kesgrave sands and gravels, loams and brickearths. Parts were once heavily wooded, especially at St Osyth.

The coastal area has produced significant evidence of early man and was heavily exploited and settled in pre-history. The medieval settlement pattern largely conformed to a typical Essex model, with a complex pattern of small villages, hamlets and dispersed farms, many located around greens or commons.

The downside of this large comprehensive volume is its price. But for those with a particular interest in the area it should however be available at local libraries.

Price: £95.00,

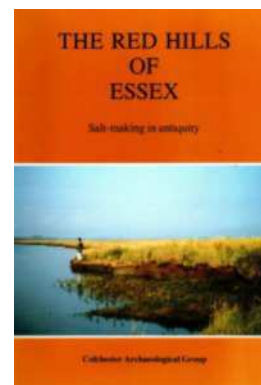
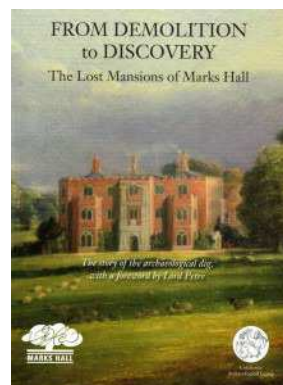
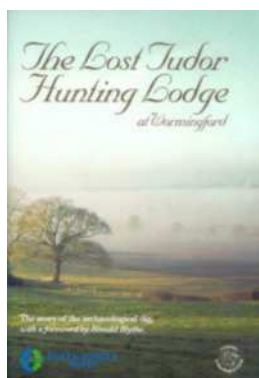
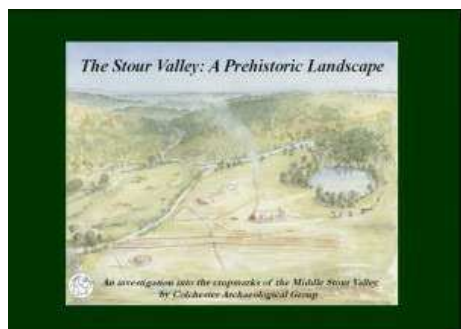
Published July 2020, 978 1 90435 649 3

18 colour illus.; 102 b/w illus.; 446pp, 30.5 x 20.8cm, HB Victoria County History



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

On-line publications found on our website

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:
caguk.net/publications

- (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.
(See page 2 of this Newsletter)

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

Lectures for 2021 on Zoom

Members will be sent a “link” to Zoom before each Lecture

11th Jan	Colchester and the Ivories of Roman Britain Stephen Greep Archaeologist and Chair of the Roman Finds Group
18th Jan	Colchester's Iron Age & Roman Defences Howard Brooks CAT Archaeologist
25th Jan	Archaeology of Fulham Palace Alexis Haslam Community Archaeologist
1st Feb	Godric Colchester's forgotten Colchesterian Professor Adrian Hutson
8th Feb	Archaeology of Anglesey Abbey Anthony Haskins, Project Officer Oxford Archaeology East
15th Feb	Neolithic Remains of the Isle of Arran Paul Burns, Post Grad Research Student at Glasgow University
22nd Feb	Medieval Graffiti case study on Winchester with comparisons to North Essex area Aldous Rees
1st March	Update on the Post Excavations work at Court Knoll Jo Caruth, Project Manager with Cotswold Archaeology
8th March	Searching Mersea: Oral histories as a tool of coastal Archaeology Lawrence Northall, CitiZan Community Archaeologist

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Notices

Membership fees. As agreed at the AGM the membership fees from the 31st March 2020 will be: Single member £12.00. Student member £4.00. Joint members £20.00

[A copy of the 2020/21 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