



Colchester Archaeological Group NEWSLETTER

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Being shown around the brickworks at Bulmer

Words from the Chair Summer 2025

I start this piece with the good news that we have filled the committee vacancy of vice chair. Hurrah!

Mark Curteis, late of Chelmsford museum and our metals expert, agreed to join us earlier in the year.

We also have a volunteer to replace Geoff Lunn as treasurer, Paul Goodall, a regular digger at Fordham, has stepped up to the mark. Many thanks the Mark and Paul.

As you will probably know our next season's lectures are ready, thanks, as usual, to Christine Piper for once again filling all the slots with an interesting mix of speakers.

The Fordham dig is now in its eleventh year, digging has been made difficult by the long spell of dry weather but the rain in the last week will hopefully improve things, some interesting news will be forthcoming.

Still on Fordham, CAG member Jan Lamb arranged a visit to Colchester museum's storage facility to try to identify the lead coffin lining that was found in 1984. The museum said they had three lead coffins with no accession numbers, no idea where they came from or who owned them.

It turns out that the "three" are all parts of one, ours from Fordham!

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Not only that, the badly crushed skeleton of the adolescent girl that occupied it was still in position on the base. We will be trying to sort out official ownership and do some research on it.

The young archaeologists descended on us, as usual, in May to engage in various archaeological activities.

Thirty one of them! This is double the number we had last year and excellent news, if a tad overwhelming at the time. One of the activities put on was magnetometry and we surveyed a 30 x 60 metre area.

The results were quite interesting, so much so that we are going back to increase the surveying area. Results and interpretations will be published in the next newsletter.

Thanks to all.

Mike Hamilton-Macy, chairman.

Events

Trip to Bulmer Brick and Tile Collections (between Halstead and Sudbury), Saturday 7th June 2025

Lucy Jack

Who knew bricks were so interesting?! Or brickyards could be such an attractive historical setting?! Peter Minter can tell you all about the history of a building by looking at the bricks. Now in his 90's, he has spent his whole life at the Bulmer brickyard and was taught by brickmakers born in the 1800s, passing down the old hand-making techniques. His father took over the brick works in 1936, though they had been there for hundreds of years. Visiting is like going back in time, the earliest evidence dates from 1450 and they have a collection of archaeological finds including some very beautiful, worked flints, showing evidence of human activity a lot earlier. Our members advised that they might show the flints to Adam Wightman for detailed identification.



Part of Bulmers Flint Collection

Despite the heavy rain forecast, 17 intrepid CAG members gathered on site and were honoured to be shown around by Peter and his son Tony. The business is family-run, with Tony's brother and own sons now involved, so into the fourth generation. They are full of interesting stories about the specialist restoration projects they supply for conservation organisations such as the National Trust and English Heritage, many churches and private buildings such as Layer Marney Tower. Their (London Bed Eocene) clays fire to a range of reddish colours and are used across the whole country. They also make chimneys and other clay shapes such as decorative plaques and copings specially for each particular job, over 150 kinds each year.

Experimental Roman Archaeology

Tony told us of a research project making Roman tiles with the UCL Institute of Archaeology and Ashley Cooper of neighbouring Gestingthorpe Roman Villa, which we visited later. They are taking clay from the surface level of the seam which runs at an angle down to a nearby tributary of the river Stour. Peter told us the Roman brick and tile makers would have used that clay, i.e. the silts built up by that stream and its flood plain. The brickyard has gradually moved, following the seam as the clay has been

used. Tony commented that despite the many different types of clay throughout the Empire, there must have been a standard method of working it, as there is a particular consistency and texture to Roman tiles. However, he told us that he had not seen anything else in the country like the bricks used for the Pharos at Dover, which are very early and probably made in Gaul. This had been confirmed by the Institute of Archaeology academics. The team are experimenting with different starting processes to get an idea of the Roman method, using 6 complete tiles (including unusual white ones we saw later) from Gestingthorpe Roman Villa as the finished product and working backwards – experimental archaeology in action.



Tony and Peter Minter showing members elements of Brick production

Brick dating

Peter and Tony can tell the age of a brick by its size and shape. As we know, Roman bricks are thin, but Peter also told us that they were made for a specific purpose e.g. for a corner, indicating a controlled system of building. Saxon brick makers used a different method recognisable by the visible striations in the clay. Saxon bricks are also very thin and seem to have been made to tie in with whatever other building material was available. They also tend to be curved, as at up to 2 inches thick they bend when dried in the sun. As techniques developed, bricks became thicker, to about 2 inches in Tudor times. From about 2.25 inches, roughly from Tudor times onwards, they could incorporate a frog (insert to help drying and save clay) without causing curvature. Sizes were not standardised until Victorian times. For restoration at Bradgate Park (birthplace of Lady Jane Grey), Tony told us they had made 4 different sizes of bricks for the different faces of the building.

Peter told us how he had attended the first site meeting for the Hampton Court Palace restoration. Standing on the roof between two chimneys with the lead architect and team, he had picked up two of the bricks that had been taken down and caused a stunned silence when he declared that one was original Tudor and the other was a Victorian copy! Three years later a survey of every chimney had been completed, and they were able to begin work.

Clay craft

When asked to match existing historical brick work, they try to use the making methods of the period. We learned that once excavated, it is important to let the clay rest before using it, similar to seasoning timber. When suitably rested, the clay is flooded overnight so the platelets open up, holding the right amount of moisture to make it workable. Grey clay is more plastic and yellow is sandier; depending on the project they can use a blend of clays, and the look of the brick is also affected by how much sand it's rolled in and the type and colour of the sand.

Firing techniques also affect the look and weatherability. Primitive firing techniques, such as in clamps, mean that not everything was fired to the right temperature. Tony noted that this was not such an issue in the Roman



Examples of Bulmers range of brick and tile they produce



Above: Bricks of many colours



Right: The Hack rows

period as buildings were mostly rendered, but became a problem in Tudor times when brickwork was shown as the exposed face. They are repairing many Tudor buildings where the weathered face has disintegrated, and Tony posed the conundrum - do they match the light coloured i.e. under-fired brick or use darker i.e. stronger facing-bricks which would change the look of the building?!

Kiln complexities

Before reaching the kiln, the bricks are laid out to air dry in "hack rows" on the "hack stead" – Saxon words. We walked the length of the long, roofed rows, some stacked 5 or 6 bricks high. The drying process is weather dependent; during the summer they expect to have 60-80,000 bricks drying at a time. Hot weather can cause too much shrinkage and in full sun the bricks must be covered, or they crack. Of course, if they get too wet they just turn back to mud! 90% of them are dried until they are tough enough to handle but some destined for older restorations might be picked up and distorted to match a particular project.

We were shown into a striking "beehive draught" kiln made of 60,000 bricks. It has seven fires around the outside, the heat is drawn up to the domed roof and down through the bricks to escape through the floor cavity. Tony told us that the designer/ bricklayer had visited Brunelleschi's dome in Florence and drew inspiration from the Coliseum in Rome! Apparently, the Roman audience of close to 60 thousand could egress in 20 minutes, as the stairways double in size each level they descend! The kiln is fired about once a fortnight and only when it is full – it holds 8000 bricks and other shapes. Their position is important as only a fifth at top temperature will go dark, a deep purple, the rest a red/orange colour. The temperature reaches about 1150 degrees centigrade at the top and 900 at the base, the minimum required for firing. We could see that some of the brick lining has turned to glass at these high temperatures. The burn takes 3 days and requires people to monitor it day and night, initially watching for steam from the chimney. "Watersnooking" (ejection) takes place at up to 300 degrees, then the fires are built up to increase the temperature for firing.



Being shown inside the Kiln

The whole process is clearly very complicated and requires teamwork and constant supervision of every aspect. With a staff of 24, Tony told us they have a huge wage bill and cash flow is a difficult business. While they have 4 or 5 projects constantly in the pipeline, future orders are uncertain. Of the 3 orders he had received that week, he estimated that 2 will take 3-5 years to generate income. No wonder there are so few historical brickyards! They are an important resource for restoration and conservation work, in demand throughout the country.

I have not even touched on how all their efforts can be ruined by poor bricklaying. Or the importance of the mortar. Or the damaging cost of scaffolding which takes up a large share of budgets for conservation projects.

I don't know how they have the time, but they are also farming (about 150 acres) a high percentage is managed for wildlife. Fortunately, they have a like-minded neighbour in Ashley Cooper. The Roman Villa on his farm at Gestingthorpe is just a couple of fields away to the northwest. You can read about our exciting visit that afternoon in the next instalment of this newsletter.

Autumn lecture programme.

Christine Piper

You should all have received the autumn lecture programme by now hopefully it will be another good season of talks and there will be something there for everyone. We start the programme with a talk on the dig that was undertaken between 2021/22 at Westcombe Park Maldon. A multi-period settlement spanning the Bronze Age and Iron Age. **Rob Cullum, lead archaeologist on site, said:** *"Whilst post-excavation analysis is currently being undertaken in order to establish the precise date of the settlement, the longhouses are thought to represent a rarely seen building type in the British Bronze Age, where the primary building type is generally thought to be the roundhouse. The only contemporary parallels known are from Scandinavia."*

Our next speaker needs no introduction Adam Wightman is going to talk to us about the excavations inside the south gate with the intriguing title Roman Engineering, A mysterious bear and the demise of the Theatre Royal. If there is time Adam will give us an update on the hospital excavation.

It is always good to hear about local museums. Margaret Stone will guide us round the museum at Brightlingsea and how it came into being. I am sure you are all avid watchers of Digging For Britain and were enthralled by the dig that took place at Sizewell C and specifically the coin hoard that was discovered. 300 silver coins were found in a lead 'pasty' dating from the 11th century. Alex Bliss from Cotswold Archaeology will tell us more about it.

Out talks then transfer to Eventbrite up until Christmas. The first of these is about the dig at Stalbridge in Dorset at the home of 17th Century scientist Robert Boyle. Boyle was a founder member of the Royal Society alongside Isaac Newton, Christopher Wren & Robert Hooke. The Chemists amongst you will know about Boyle's Law which describes the inverse relationship between the pressure and volume of a gas when the temperature and number of gas particles are kept constant.

When I contact speakers, I ask them to let me know their job title so I can put it on the programme info. Our next speaker had the following response *'My official title is Professor of Infectious Diseases at the University of Birmingham, Gresham Professor of Physic, and Chief Scientific Adviser, Food Standards Agency'* Unfortunately this was far too long for the amount of space I had available, so we just went with the Gresham part. From his job title alone, this feels like it is going to be an interesting talk from a fascinating person.

We then move to Stratford to hear about a dig on a late medieval tannery which will explore evidence of leather production, from horncores to oak bark, parasite eggs to tanning pits. Harry Platts from Pre-construct Archaeology will give us the talk.

We end 2025 with a look at a mere 14,000 years of natural and human-induced landscape change in the Wantsum Channel Kent. Alice Dowsett is a Senior Geoarchaeologist for Archaeology Southeast. A geoarchaeologist is an archaeologist specializing in the application of Earth science principles and techniques to understand the archaeological record. They study the formation, alteration, and transformation of sediments and landscapes to reconstruct past environments and human interactions with those environments.

A reminder that the entrance fee for the Roman Circus House has gone up this year and is now £4. The price for Eventbrite talks remains the same at £3 as there is an administration fee of £0.96. If you know of anyone who might be interested in one or all of the talks, please spread the word newcomers always welcome. Look forward to seeing you all in October.

Full lecture programme can be found on the website

Fordham Excavations update

Jonathan Oldham, Site Supervisor, 21/07/2025

The Fordham digging team have been revelling in the sunny summer weather, and are making steady progress with the excavation of Trench 1 in particular. The gazebo has been put to good use over the last few weeks, with everyone appreciating a bit of shade during the breaks.

At the north end of the building, more work was been done in the east extension of Trench 4 (NE corner of Phase 2 open area), where the cobble surface has been uncovered extending east for most of its length (about 5m). The extreme southern edge of an occupation layer abuts the cobbles, and has been dug out revealing quite a lot of pot sherds of various forms.

A slot was cut through the northern end of Trench 4 and shows that the cobble layer extends eastward below a layer of yellow-brown silt. So there appears to be a fairly extensive cobble surface to the east of the building. This finally completes the excavation of Trench 4.

No further work has been done in Trench 7 (at the NW corner of the Phase 2 open area) since the end of January.

At the beginning of this year we were working on the drier soil in Trench 2 (beside the south fence of the excavation area), trowelling the surface below the plough soil to look for features. The diggers found a lot of CBM fragments, some pot sherds (including a second cluster of decorated Samian sherds (Fig. 1)) and nails within the grey silt clay of Layer 055.

Mike H-M has continued working in Trench 2, cleaning and levelling the surfaces to show the different bands of soil (yellow orange clay and grey silt loam) more clearly.

Two linear mottled orange clay bands (F064, F065) running along much of the length of Trench 2, more or less parallel to the fence line, have been investigated by a north-south Exploratory Slot 9 (ES09). The west facing section of the slot has been drawn, as has the east facing side of F064 (slightly different from the west facing side), and plans of the two features. F065 is a field drain cut with a terracotta drain pipe at the bottom, whereas F064 is more enigmatic, being a 1.5m plus deep trench with nothing apparent at the bottom!



Fig. 1 Second assemblage of Samian pot fragments from Trench 2

Much of recent work has been focussed on Trench 1, once it dried out in March. Several areas have been trowelled to level the surface and to see if any features are appearing. Areas 2C, 2D and 3D in the middle of Trench 1 are where most of the work has been done. Quite a lot of small pot sherds and iron nails have been found in these areas, plus some CBM, though only Area 2C is showing signs of a dark feature at the west edge.

The south end of the 1984 coffin excavation trench in Area 3B, which was full of water, dried out eventually. By mid-May, the north end of the feature was dry enough to begin trowelling, and a small number of finds

were discovered (some small pot sherds, several nails, several small lumps of lead and a couple of small fragments of bone). More recently, the excavation became quite exciting with the discovery of a fairly large (200mm diameter) black dish, apparently 'in situ' in the north-east corner of the cut (Figs. 2 & 3), and a mass of broken glass at the north-west corner. Unfortunately, the black dish is in a delicate condition, though it was swathed in plaster of Paris bandages and successfully block lifted. It has been photographed and a plan drawing of its location has been made. The broken glass fragments (all very small and numbering in the hundreds) have been lifted and washed in preparation for being sorted according to thickness. Some shards are very thin and curved, whereas others are quite chunky, such as one might expect from a glass bottle.



Fig. 2 Black dish 'in situ' at north-east corner of the 1984 coffin excavation trench



Fig. 3 Close up of black dish 'in situ' at north-east corner of the 1984 coffin excavation trench

The other item of interest was a visit on Thursday, 8th May, by Jayne Cage, a lecturer at Suffolk One and occasional digger, with two groups of A level Forensic Science students. They came to experience and to practice digging (12 in the morning and 15 in the afternoon). They trowelled along the upper layer of the Roman ditch along the north side of Trench 1 where they all had the opportunity to find material, including bone. One student found a Samian sherd, several pieces of a mortaria and a copper alloy decorative terminal from a piece of furniture all in one small area. Unfortunately, it would appear that most of them are unlikely to take up digging, as they seem to be more interested in forensic laboratory work.

A new innovation is the establishment of a field wet sieving station over the old Trench L, a deep pit now filled with discarded recorded CBM rubble. Mike Hamilton-Macy kindly provided a stainless steel kitchen unit for the stand, and Roger Cook made a wood frame to hold the mesh. Jonathan Oldham has been able to wet sieve eight soil samples to date, using his experience from post-excavation work with Cotswold

Archaeology at Needham Market, starting with an ash sample from the bottom of Trench T, which proved very easy. A further three ash samples were wet sieved, yielding quite a lot of cereal grains in the flot. In addition, four soil samples from Phase 2 have been successfully sieved, despite having a fairly high clay content. The advantage of the warm weather is that all of the sieved soil sample residues (and the flot) were air dried outside, and were finished off in the cabin. However, the downside is that there has been virtually no rainfall to replenish the water supply in the water tank fed by gutters around the cabin roof, which then limits how many samples can be washed.

The number of diggers has continues to be variable, and we have had four newcomers, including a father and son (doing the work for his DoE award), who come at irregular intervals.

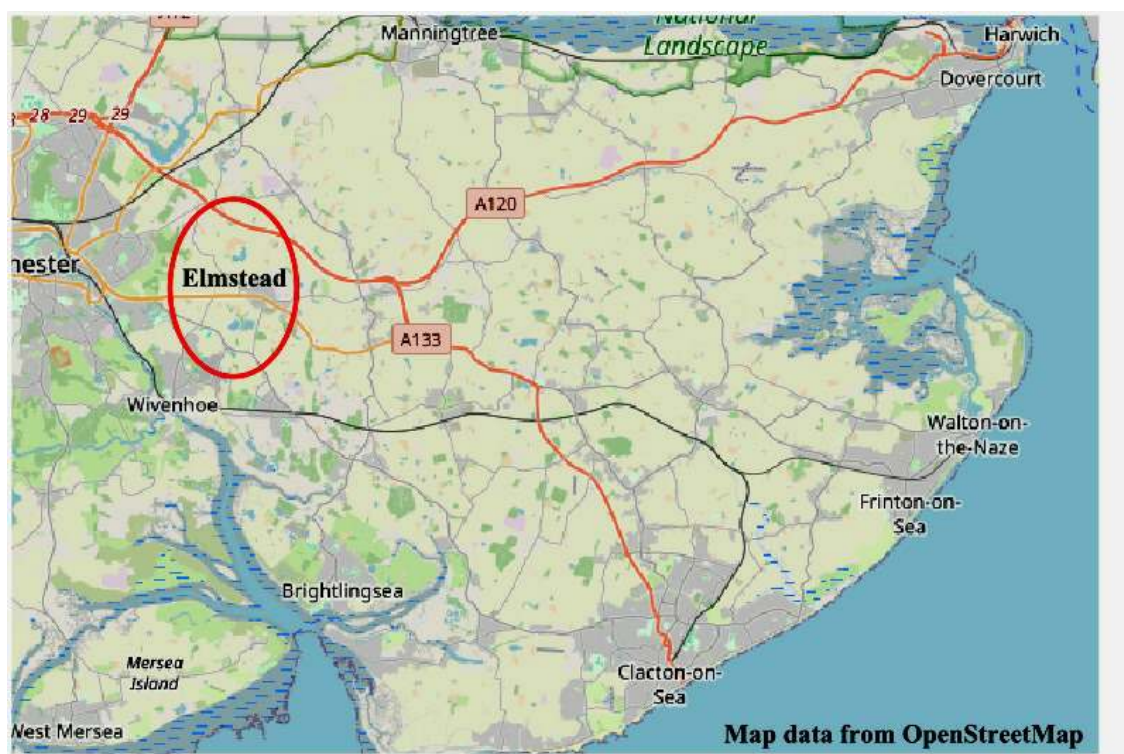
Landscape Archaeology Group (LAG)

Anna Moore

For the last eighteen months, the Landscape Archaeology Group (LAG) has been concentrating its efforts on a joint project to research the landscape of the parish of Elmstead. The project is now drawing to a close and a number of reports are in production; these will be placed on the LAG page of the CAG website (<https://caguk.net/landscape-archaeology-group/>) as and when they become ready.

An Introduction to Elmstead and Elmstead Market

Elmstead is situated about three miles to the east of Colchester on the Tendring Peninsula and was a parish in the ancient Tendring Hundred.



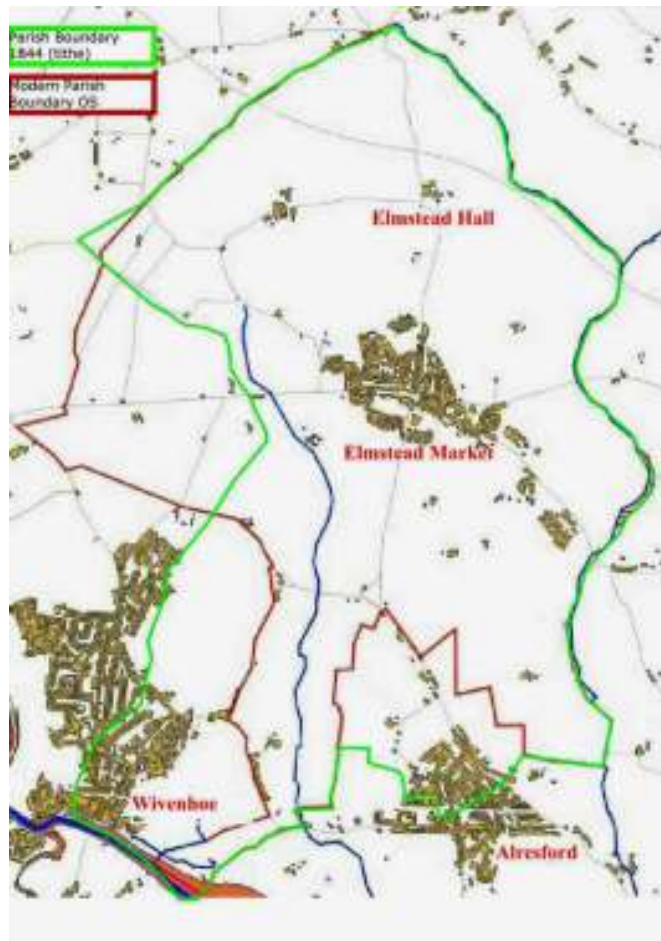
Geology and soil.

The bedrock geology is Thames Group, clay, silt and sand. Sedimentary bedrock formed between 56 and 33.9 million years ago. The superficial geology is Cover Sand, lay, silt and sand. (British Geology Survey)

The soil type is classified as 'slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage', moderate to high fertility. (Hallett, S.H., Sakrabani, R., Keay, C.A. and Hannam, J.A. (2017) Developments in Land Information Systems: Case studies in land resource management capabilities and options. Soil Use and Management. doi: 10.1111/sum.12380.)

Placename and Parish Boundary

The first recording of the place name is as '*Elmsteda*' in Domesday meaning 'elm-tree place' (*elm*=Old English elm, *stede*=Old English place). The name almost certainly refers to Elmstead Hall, the original manor of the parish, where presumably one or more elms grew in a largely treeless (or at least elm-less) landscape. The later settlement of Elmstead Market grew up alongside the road from Colchester to the coast which must have always been a busy thoroughfare.



The modern Parish Boundary is mushroom-shaped, with a narrow strip of land leading down to grazing marshes and the River Colne.

The eastern boundary follows the Bromley Brook (which becomes the Tenpenny Brook) and then veers west towards Alresford; the western boundary roughly follows the north-east to south-west line of Salary Brook but at a distance and on higher ground. Parish boundaries however are not fixed and Elmstead's has changed many times over the years. The early changes are difficult to research as the boundaries are not recorded on any maps before the mid-nineteenth century, but the comparison between the modern OS map and the Tithe map of 1844 shows the gains and losses over the last 180 years; a large part of the south-east of the parish has been lost to Alresford; on the western side, a big chunk has been gained from Wivenhoe Park but the expansion of Wivenhoe town has led to the loss of a large piece of land including much of the river frontage and the grazing marshes. This would seem to be a large loss of grazing land in such a heavily agricultural area, however, in 1844 only 11% of the 3598 acres of the parish was being used as pasture and meadow, the rest being arable, woodland or other uses.

When parishes were first formed, their boundaries tended to follow features in the landscape, and this can be seen in Elmstead on the eastern side (Tenpenny Brook) and on the western side (the ridge above Salary Brook), while later boundary changes were more likely to follow field edges and appear more jagged (the southern area around Alresford).

For other items on Elmstead's landscape archaeology, go to the CAG website <https://caguk.net/landscape-archaeology-group/> where you will find articles on Prehistoric and Roman Elmstead, Medieval Elmstead, Transport and Routes and the evidence for a Roman Territorium.

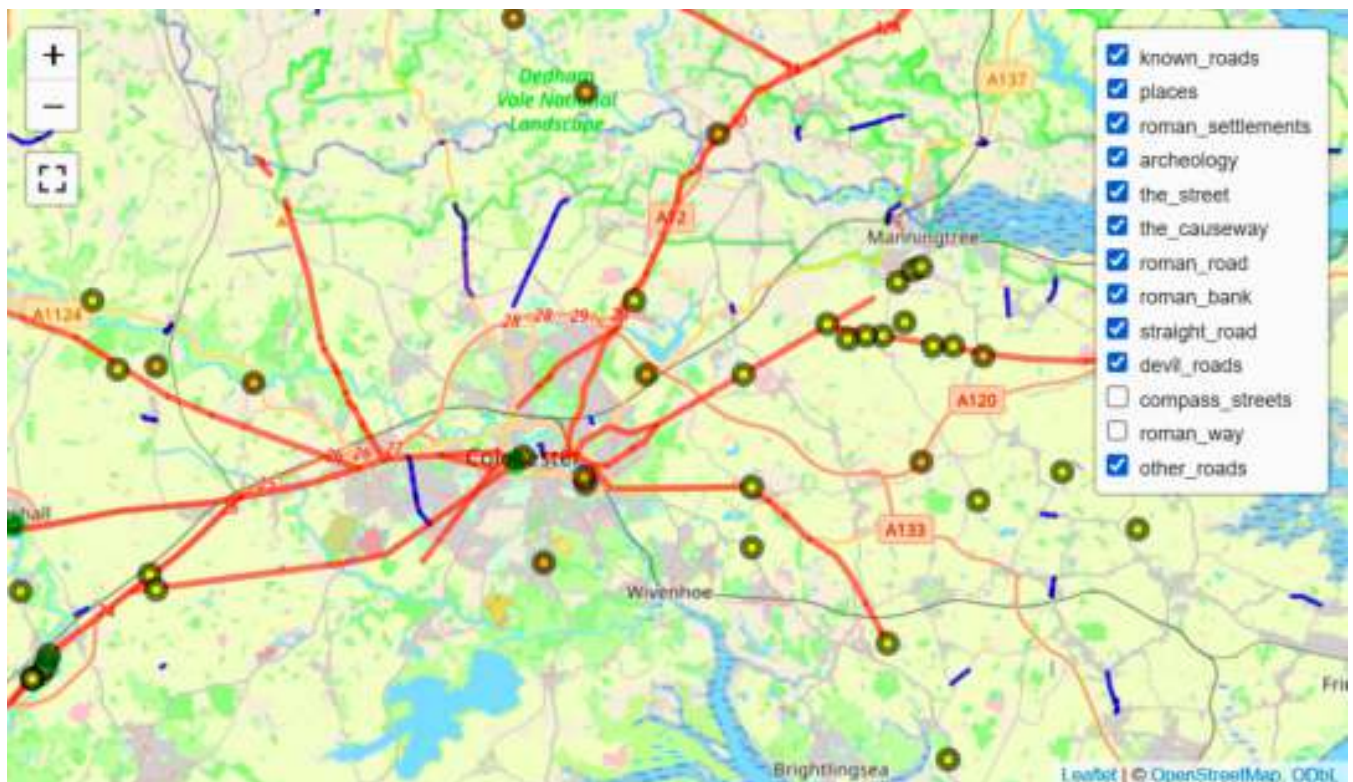
Roman Roads Group

Geoff Lunn

As most of you will know, sadly I felt it necessary to step down as chair of the Roman Roads Group a few months ago. This was due in part to me feeling that I had taken the group as far as I could, having led it for about 7 years, but also I had been offered the opportunity to lead a new regional group for the Roman Roads Research Assoc, to map and document all of the known (and as yet unknown RRs) in E Anglia. This project has been running now for about 5 months, and I thought it would be interesting to share some of our progress with you.

We have about 40 members of the new group (R3A-East), including a few members of the CAG Roman Roads Group, and these come from all over E Anglia and in some cases beyond. We already have a preliminary map of RRs in the region, thanks to a long term project by the chair of the RRRR, Mike Haken, based on Ivan Margary's book "Roman Roads in Britain", and also more recent research by David Ratledge (www.twithr.co.uk) using Lidar to trace lost sections of road, plus the copious notes from the OS surveyors reports from when the OS Map of Roman Britain was being produced back in the 1970's (now held by the RRRR in digital format).

I have also been working closely with the Essex HER on finding ways to extract relevant HER records for analysis by the group. This has led to us creating another map (with the help of a computer wizard from Kings College London) showing all of the records in their correct grid locations as you can see below.



You will notice that there are quite a few targets following the known RR from Ardleigh via Horsley Cross Street towards Harwich, and the hope is that other lines of targets may reveal unknown RRs as we develop the algorithms. One of the things that I had hoped to do before standing down as chair of the RRG was to create an accurate map of Roman Roads around Colchester, but I never managed to achieve this largely because of the complexity of roads in our area (as you can see from the map above). I am now hopeful that with the help of the RRRR group I will be able to finally create this map.

The R3A-East group now has a database of Roman Roads covering Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambs, Herts, and part of NE London, where members are uploading observations about RRs in their area, or area of interest. These files will gradually be assessed by senior members of the group and added to the gazetteer and map if agreed to be correct. At some point in the future when we feel that we have a sufficiently accurate and complete map, it will be made available, with a supporting gazetteer of information on each road, on a dedicated web page which will be accessible to all. It is hoped that this site will become the go-to site for accurate and up to date info on RRs and will be used by public and professionals alike. The East of England project will then be rolled out across the whole of the UK. via other dedicated geographical groups.

If anyone in CAG would like to get involved in this project we would be very happy to have you on board, and it is not necessary to join the RRRA as CAG have affiliate membership. Please just let me know and I will add you to the list.

Finally, I hope that the CAG Roman Roads Group can be revived by someone who is willing to take the reins as there is still much work to be done on roads around Colchester, and it would be a pity to lose the momentum built up by members over the last few years.

Geoff Lunn July 2025

Wot no lamps?

Mike Hamilton-Macy

One of the many questions we have regarding the Roman dig site in Fordham is why, after ten years of excavation, haven't we found a single classic Roman, ceramic oil lamp, not a sherd from one.

Even though the site, apart from a possible lull in the mid/late third century, was in use throughout the Roman occupation of Britain, nothing!

It was whilst at a large re-enactor's trading market that my eyes were opened; on a stall specialising in Viking artefacts I saw a conical, baseless glass vessel and enquired about it.

It was a reproduction of one found at a Viking site dated to circa 900CE and thought to be either, a mead glass or an oil lamp. Pictured below.



As Alan Partridge would say "A-haaaa!"

I have subsequently been Googling away and discovered that glass oil lamps were in use throughout Europe from around 300BCE onwards.

They are known to have been used singularly and in chandelier form, see below.



Byzantine glass lamp.



Roman glass lamp.



*"Eastern Mediterranean"
Chandelier style.*



I have also found two medieval depictions of hanging glass lamps in artwork.

I have heard and read of several ways these glass lamps were used; some say they were part filled with water, the theory is if the lamp falls the water will put the flame out... hmmm! The liquid oil is just as likely to do that!

There's also the issue of how do you keep the wick from sinking into the water?

Time for some more experimental archaeology!

As they used to say on Blue Peter, "Here's one I made earlier."



The copper wire gizmo keeps the wick in the centre and out of the water (although I put just a little too much water in!). A disc placed on the mid wire ring would enable you to fit a much longer coiled wick on it, allowing it to be drawn up as required.

Enough of guesswork and experimentation, back to what we have or have not found.

So the next question is have we found any glass oil lamps?

Answer, possibly, but as glass is easily recyclable, they would have been melted down and made into something else when no longer in use.

John Shepherd, our Roman glass expert is doing the glass analysis for the Fordham site and when I asked about glass lamps he said that some of the many small glass fragments we have found could easily have come from glass oil lamps.

The post Roman recycling of the site glass into something else, i.e. beads, is quite likely as the Saxons, and later Vikings that entered Britain after Roman rule originally used ceramic or metal tallow lamps as below.



Basic ceramic tallow lamps.



Reproduction Viking tallow lamps with cloth wrapped around ceramic stud for a wick.



Reproduction iron lamp based on one found at West Stow dated 450-600CE..

On the subject of metal oil lamps, the Romans also used them; most of the bronze ones I have seen are quite ornate, in the shape of feet seems to have been a particular favourite! See below.

Again bronze is easy to melt down so any metal lamps that were left behind or broken would have been recycled.



As the Fordham site appears to have been of a high status it would be fair to assume that they could afford to buy and fuel glass oil lamps.

But what of the rooms or areas that the slaves/servants used or occupied? I can't see them being furnished with glass oil lamps. They almost certainly used basic, open topped tallow lamps. Small amounts basic tallow lamp debris could easily be missed amongst the massive amount of pottery sherds we have found.

Myself and other CAG members visited Hill Farm in Gestingthorpe in June, what a fascinating site and a great museum. Whilst talking to Ashley, the owner, we were comparing his site with Fordham; I told him that we had found no oil lamps. It turns out neither had he! Hill farm has been excavated over a twenty year period and they have not found a single ceramic oil lamp.

More research has revealed that Roman oil lamps, ceramic, bronze or glass, were not common in Britain as a whole anyway. This is because the olive oil they used would have been expensive to import and burn. I suspect that most of the olive oil that did make to our shores was probably used for human consumption.

So the upshot of all this is that we, and Ashley, haven't found any ceramic oil lamps for a good reason; they were mostly not used in this country!

Mystery solved, possibly!

Mike Hamilton-Macy.

The original East Donyland Church

Alan Chaplin

Acknowledgement: This article is based on a paper found in the 1926 Essex Archaeological Society Transactions Vol XIX, part II. by the Rev. G. Montagu Benton, M.A. F.S.A. on the history and demolition of St Laurence's Church, East Donyland in 1838.¹

The church can be found on the Andre & Chapman map of 1777 It appears on the 1890 map as "the site of". There is an 1801 sketch of the church by Captain Sauders which unfortunately has been difficult to reproduce here but confirms the shape of the building on the 1777 map.



Andre and Chapman 1777



Ordnance survey 1890's

In 1838 the original church was demolished it being too small and in need of some attention. In 1844 a new modern octagonal church was built to replace it in the centre of Rowhedge on Church Road. Some brasses and monuments were saved and placed in the new church. The original 15th century font was purchased by the Rev. F. Curtis in 1840 and can be found in St. Leonards on the Hythe Church, in Colchester.

Today the site is the East Donyland Municipal burial ground found beside the road from Colchester to Fingringhoe². It is well looked after and is being used for modern burials, at some point it had been extended to the east. There is a low mound or raised area in the west where the church would have stood. The mound is



The Mound



The view of the site from the east



Google Maps with church site marked

surrounded by a few trees and some old graves. This would make an interesting area for a dig one day.

From the article we know that the demolished building was sold to a local builder in about 1844. In 1926 the local school master, Lieut. E. E. Howell, M.C. kindly undertook a dig on a portion of the original site. He reports that there was no sign of the foundations but some stone paving of the nave and a leger stone were discovered. Also, some red and yellow paving tiles were unearthed. Excavations were hampered by recent burials it was reported. The Nave is recorded as being approx. 38ft X 20ft. (11.5m x 6m).

The area around the burial ground seemed to have succumbed to gravel extraction and I could not make out any sign of the Tumules marked on earlier maps.

It should be noted that the Church was close to East Donyland Hall, so this will give food-for-thought to those who are "Church, Manor Hall, Roman Villa, triangle theorists," There are some records of small Roman finds in the vicinity⁴ Also Fingringhoe Church under a mile away was observed to have septaria and some Roman tiles used in its construction in Essex County Council, Historic Buildings and Conservation³ esdm report (2007). In the CAG Newsletter, July 2021, p8. by Francis Nicholls: Two historical theories on the roman road from Colchester to Mersea are put forward one of which passes the Church.



The original font now in St. Leonards on the Hythe

References:

1. The 1926 Essex Archaeological Society Transactions Vol XIX, part II. By the Rev. G. Montagu Benton, can be found in the CAG Library at RCH. And on-line.
2. The East Donyland Municipal burial ground is owned and managed by East Donyland Parish Council.
3. The report can be found at: https://llws-colchester.esdm.co.uk/LLFiles/2914/full_2914.pdf
4. Wessex Archaeology. WA Heritage: Fingringhoe and Middlewick Ranges Assessment: Ref 68560.01, 2008.

A Note on the Naming of Pubs

Penny Richards



The fruit and flower of the service tree.

There are a number of Pubs particularly in the South East called the Chequers; a local term for the fruits of the Service Tree, (*Sorbus torminalis*) whose name derives from the Latin *Cerevisia* meaning beer. It's fruit is a favourite with wildlife like the wood pigeon, whose gut softens its seeds for propagation.

The cultivation of this tree is recorded by Pliny the Elder and Virgil as valuable for the making of tools and mechanical devices. The fruit was used to flavour beer and softener for making sweets that tasted like dates. Something to look out for in wet sieving?

The tree prefers a clay soil and is no longer common but can be found in ancient woodland.

For more information go to:

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/british-trees/a-z-of-british-trees/wild-service-tree>

Obituary

Aline Black

By David Black

I am sad to report that Aline, one half of the geophysics team that carried out surveys at Fordham, Wormingford and numerous other local sites, died on 15th January at the age of 88.

When Aline retired in summer 1998 Philip Crummy of CAT suggested to her that she might like to help out Peter Cott who was attempting to carry out a magnetometer survey of Gosbecks. At that time the magnetometer belonged to the museum – so every time he wanted to use it it had to be collected from the museum and then taken back at the end of the day – a task that Peter found time consuming, not least because he lived near Braintree. It wasn't long before I retired and joined the team to help out. There was still plenty to *do* – Gosbecks was a huge site to survey and by now we were both smitten by geophysics.



Aline, David and Peter Cott at Gosbecks

When Peter Cott died in 2005 he left us his resistance meter - so we thought we had better get on with it. Set out below are just some of the sites we worked on.

Cunobelin's Farmstead (to the west of Gosbecks) 2003

Cog Abbey 2005

Little Ropers Farm 2006

Heddingham Castle 2007

Lodge Hills, Wormingford 2009 a long running CAG dig

Cowlin's Field 2011 became a major CAG dig

Fordham "Cow Field" 2013 - seemingly a never ending CAG dig

Six months with Colchester Young Archaeologists' Club

Barbara Butler

Our year with Colchester YAC began in January, when we met at Roman Circus House. We started to move our records and resources from the cupboard we used on the first floor to the little office by the entrance. The following weeks, Colchester Archaeological Trust staff kindly provided a lockable cupboard and assembled a trolley cupboard for us, to go in the little office.

We have welcomed another volunteer to our team, which has allowed us to further clear our lengthy waiting list.

Typically, our meetings start with the identification, dating and handling, if appropriate, of the finds members have brought in to show us, followed by an illustrated talk along a theme, accompanied with refreshments. It is



Find identification, dating and handling



YAC members create cave paintings



A YAC learns object drawing

inevitable members get our Aquila boards out, and some prefer to play that and other board games we have, to joining in the craft activities we organise. Our January, February, March and April meetings were at Roman Circus House.

In May an unprecedented number of members came to Fordham for archaeological activities organised by Mike and Sue of Colchester Archaeological Group, many of them potentially joining the club for the first time.



Magnetometry at Fordham



YAG at Fordham addressed by Mike



Flints found at Fordham



Fossil sponge and objects metal detected at Fordham



Flint tool found by YAC member on Suffolk coast

There were fewer members at our June meeting at St Botolph's church hall, where we took the opportunity to study the priory ruins in more detail than we were able to last year. Although we have now cleared our waiting list, according to the meticulous records of our membership secretary, some potential new members have only joined us for one meeting. Some members have been with us for a few years, and we hope they will become young volunteers.

One of our former young volunteers who is studying archaeology at university and has been excavating in Egypt as part of his course. We will arrange for him to come to one of our meetings at Roman Circus House to talk to us about his experiences.

Barbara Butler 2nd July 2025

CAG LIBRARY – ROMAN CIRCUS CENTRE

A key safe has now been installed so that members can access the library during the week.

Location – The library is located on the stage with the key safe being on the wall adjacent to bookcase 6 (no 1 bookcase is the first one you come to by the stairs).

How to use the key safe – Please obtain the master key from the Centre's entrance desk.

Roman Centre's Opening Hours:

Summer Tuesday to Friday 10am – 4pm (April to September)

Winter Tuesday to Friday 11am – 3pm (October to March)

If you wish to visit the library out of these hours, the Trust's building is open Monday to Friday 8.30am – 5pm. You will need to obtain the master key from the first-floor office.

The library will be open as normal on lecture evenings.

Please take care when unlocking and locking the bookcases' roller shutters, and always return the master key.

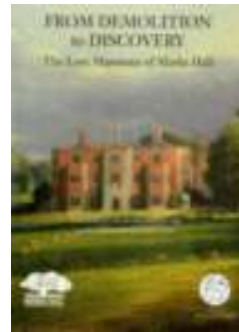
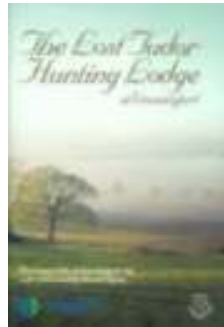
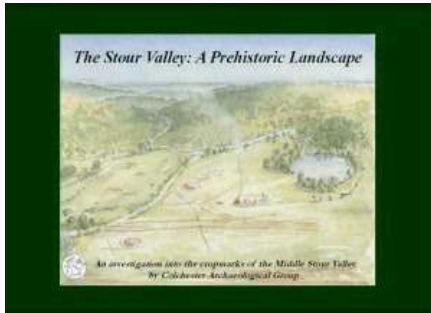
Instructions on how to use the library are located in bookcase 6 and on the CAG Website.

Please make use of this excellent resource AND ENJOY!

Jan Lamb - Librarian

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 Citizan 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 26. Please submit your articles or items of interest by the end of November 25 to alanchaplin2@sky.com

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