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Newsletter

Essex Society for Archaeology and History



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Copy for the next issue should be sent to the editor at the above address by no later than 4th July 2023.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Society or its officers

The illustration on the front cover is John Jervis, 1st Earl of Vincent.

The Earl of St Vincent by Lemuel Francis Abbott, 1795

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From the President

Nick Wickenden

I watched 'The Detectorists Christmas Special' as I imagine many of you did. It is written and performed brilliantly, creating an idyllic, tranquil but absorbing view of the hobby. It is titillating for those of us who live in Essex to hear mention of the A414, the Colchester FLO and 'Danbury', although the 'Colchester Ware' pot was nothing of the sort. It is easy for us to find fault with little things like that, and the lack of recording, but the truth is that the public do have a great appetite for all things archaeological and buried treasure. A friend of mine was pleased as punch to receive a replica 'Colchester Ware' pot recently as a birthday present.

Of course the idyll is not always genuine. One remembers the thousands of Celtic and Roman finds and votive offerings looted from the Roman temple at Wanborough in Surrey by nighthawks in the 1980s. A former museum colleague in the south of the county refused for years to even see bona fide metal detectorists bringing their finds in, as illicit diggings had left such a bad taste in his mouth.

Nevertheless the metal detector was the answer for many people with a genuine love of active participation in local history, once they had been deprived of their previous route - that of participating in amateur excavations. Many, myself included, happily spend summer season after summer season camping, barbecuing, drinking, getting sunburnt, listening to the radio, emptying elsans, making friends, and yes, of course, digging. The Essex Archaeological Society contributed, helping university lecturers such as Philip Rahtz. The bubble burst sometime around 1970, perhaps at Winchester where Martin Biddle persuaded the Ministry of Works and later the Department of the Environment to fund professional excavations. Units up and down the country followed, including at Colchester and Chelmsford. Although I generalise and some excellent amateur groups are still active today, the battle between the amateurs/detectorists and the archaeologists/curators was set. I would like to think both sides are now at ease with each other, although I remember giving talks to metal detecting societies not so long ago and watching finds hurriedly stuffed into pockets once they realised who I was!

Getting your dig mentioned in 'Current Archaeology' was always exciting, and still is. We have Andrew Selkirk to thank for that. It is interesting how a handful of individual people have always had such inspiring influence. As an aside, I remember being told how David Attenborough's interests were nurtured by a school visit to Leicester Museum. Wow!!

Television was another route to follow, starting the 'Animal, Mineral, Vegetable' chaired by Glyn Daniel (later to become the Disney Professor of Archaeology at Cambridge) and featuring the indomitable Mortimer Wheeler, morphing later into the long running 'Chronicle'. I remember still the sight of Mortimer Wheeler, standing up in a Land Rover, grinning and twirling his moustache, being driven along the banks of Maiden Castle! Later still, of course, it morphed again into 'Time Team' (now resumed online). In between there was Tony Gregory, shirt buttons undone to the waist, Michael Wood, the pin up Catherine Hills, fresh from digging at Song Hill, Neil Oliver, and now we have the pink haired Dr Alice Roberts. It brings us full circle, when Alice excitedly messaged on social media to look out for her brief cameo on 'Detectorists'.

The big finds such as Sutton Hoo, the Staffordshire Hoard, and more recently the late 4th century 'Trojan War' mosaic in Rutland will always create peaks of interest. Who remembers going to the Tutankhamun exhibition at the British Museum? I still have my catalogue.

So long may the public interest in archaeology continue. It may, with any luck, protect a few more degree courses in archaeology from closing. Mackenzie Crook is doing a great job, balancing life as an archaeologist and metal detectorist. Do carry on, Andy! And I for one look forward to Indy's next installment on the big screen, whip and hat in hand!

Library & Archive Committee Update:

The Library Committee continues its work and a list of books recently acquired for our library, either through gifts or purchase, is included below.

Come and join us!

We are seeking new members for the Library Committee, which meets three times a year & is a friendly group which oversees the development and maintenance of the Library and liaises with Essex University where our library is housed. The Committee is currently looking for 2-3 additional members, if you are interested please contact the Committee Secretary Paul Sealey paulrsealey@gmail.com

Recent Library Acquisitions:

Last, J., 2022. *Marking Place: New Perspectives on Early Neolithic Enclosures* (Neolithic Studies Group Papers 18) (Oxford: Oxbow Books)

This volume is the first overview of the current state of knowledge of Neolithic causewayed enclosures since the publication in 2011 of the monumental study of the topic *Gathering Time* (also in our library) which revolutionised our understanding of the chronology of these archetypal Neolithic monuments. The book comprises reports on recent development led fieldwork, academic research and community projects. It is particularly relevant for our Society as it includes the first account of the newly discovered and excavated causewayed enclosure at Harlow in a paper by John Powell entitled 'Gathering time for Harlow'.

Bradley, R.J., 2022. *Maritime Archaeology on Dry Land: Special Sites along the Coasts of Britain and Ireland from the First Farmers to the Atlantic Bronze Age*. (Oxford: Oxbow Books)

This book considers a range of special Neolithic and Bronze Age coastal sites and how they can be interpreted, it emphasises the important role of enclosed estuaries in trade and exchange. It is of general relevance to our understanding of later prehistory in Essex, and one of its 'More Detailed Studies' covers the Greater Thames estuary, taking in a number of Essex sites.

Barnes, G. and Williamson, T., 2022. *English Orchards: A Landscape History* (Oxford: Windgather Press)

Williamson, T. and Barnes, G., 2021. *The Orchards of Eastern England: History, Ecology, and Place* (Hertford: University of Hertfordshire Press)

These two books consider the historic importance of orchards in the landscape the first from a national, the second from a regional perspective including examples from Essex. Michael Leach wrote about Essex orchards with particular regard to cherries (which are once again a popular crop in the county's few remaining 'pick your own' farms) and orchards, apple orchards in particular were in the recent past an important part of the landscape in the Chelmer Valley and the north-east Essex. *The Orchards of Eastern England* was reviewed in *Essex Journal* 57, No 2

Atherton, M., 2021. *The Battle of Malden: War and Peace in Tenth Century England* (London: Bloomsbury Academic Publishing)

This book provides a wide-ranging introduction to what is, after Beowulf, one of the most significant Old English poems. It covers the background to the text, the characters who figure in it and its social and economic context. The book was reviewed in the Spring 2022 edition of *Essex Journal*.

Biddulph, E., Foreman, S., Hayden, C., Poole, C., Smith, K., and Stafford, E., 2021. *London Gateway: Settlement, Farming and Industry from Prehistory to the Present in the Thames Estuary: Archaeological Excavations at DP World London Gateway Port and Logistics Park, Essex, and on the Hoo Peninsula, Kent* (Oxford Archaeology Monograph 31) (Oxford: Oxford Archaeology)

This companion volume to *London Gateway: Iron Age and Roman Salt Making in the Thames* (also in our Library and included in a review article in *Essex Archaeology and History* 9 Fourth Series) reports on excavations in advance of the logistics park for London Gateway Port and, on the south side of the estuary, the creation of habitat compensation on the Hoo peninsular. It provides an account of human activity in the marshes and estuary from later prehistory to modern times and will be reviewed in a future edition of *Essex Archaeology and History*.

Rippon, S.J., 2022. *Territoriality and the Early Medieval Landscape: The Countryside of the East Saxon Kingdom* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press)

This book investigates the way small early folk territories evolved into the administrative units recorded in Domesday, across an entire kingdom - that of the East Saxons (broadly speaking, what is now Essex, Middlesex, most of Hertfordshire, and south Suffolk). A wide range of evidence is drawn upon, including archaeology, written documents, place names, and the early cartographic sources to provide and account of the nature and development of the East Saxon Kingdom. It was reviewed in *Essex Journal* 57, No 2 and will also be reviewed in a future edition of *Essex Archaeology and History*

Goodwin, G., 1888. *A Catalogue of the Harsnett Library at Colchester* (London: Richard Amer)

Nick Wickenden noticed a copy of the following in the Trinity Bookshop in Colchester:

This is of particular interest because it came from the library of a Colchester artist and scholar and member of ESAH, the late John Bensusan-Butt (1911-1997), and bears many annotations in his own hand.

Crowe, K.L., 2022. *Gold and Garnets: the Broomfield and Prittlewell Princely Burials* (People and Stone 4) (Broomfield: Parochial Church Council of St Mary with St Leonard and the Parish Church of Broomfield)

The book is a popular and accessible guide to these two important Anglo-Saxon graves in Essex with excellent illustrations.

Jolliffe, G. (ed.), 2022. *Celebrating Historic Stebbing: Essays to Mark Twenty-Five Years of the Stebbing Historical Society* (London: Independent Publishing Network)

This book will be reviewed in a future edition of *Essex Journal*.

Thornton, C.C., and Eiden, H. (eds), 2022. *The Victoria History of the Counties of England. Essex. Vol 12. St Osyth to the Naze: North-East Essex Castle Parishes. Part 2. The Soken: Thorpe-le-Soken, Kirby-le-Soken and Walton-le-Soken* (Martlesham: Boydell and Brewer and The University of London Institute of Historical Research)

The book comprises the history of a major part of the Essex coastline in Tendring Hundred before the development of seaside resorts from the mid-19th century onwards (the resorts were covered in VCH Essex Volume XI, to which this is the second part of a companion volume). It includes analyses of how the economy of the coastal communities from agriculture through fishing to smuggling was moulded by proximity to the sea. There is a major exploration of the history of the Soken, a significant area of special legal jurisdiction (a liberty or soke) and of administrative and social organisation. The Soken was owned in the Middle Ages by the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's Cathedral, London, and later passed to lay owners, notably the Catholic-leaning Darcy family of St Osyth priory, the Savage family, and the Earl's of Rochford and their descendants. Additionally, it includes the first full modern accounts of the large parishes of Kirby-le-Soken, Thorpe-le-Soken, and Walton-le-Soken (later the site of the seaside resort of Walton on the Naze). Before the Norman Conquest these had once formed a large 'multiple' estate owned by St Paul's Cathedral, and only gradually developed into separate parishes and manors over the course of the Middle Ages. This book will be reviewed in future edition of *Essex Archaeology and History*.

Want to suggest a book for the Library?

The Library Committee decides which books are acquired for our library, and members of the Society may wish to suggest a book for acquisition. Any suggestions should be sent to the Committee's Secretary, Paul Sealey (paulrsealey@gmail.com)

In suggesting a book you might bear in mind the criteria that the Committee uses to guide its decisions:

- 1) Books which relate directly to the archaeology and/ or history of Essex; an example in the latest list of acquisitions would be Rippon, SJ, 2022. *The Territoriality and the Early Medieval Landscape: The Countryside of the East Saxon Kingdom*
- 2) Books on a particular topic/theme which include Essex related material; an example in the latest list of acquisitions would be Last, J (ed), 2022. *Marking Place: New Perspectives on Early Neolithic Enclosures*
- 3) Books which consider a wider geographical area, which include Essex data and which are particularly pertinent to our understanding of the archaeology and/or history of Essex; examples in the latest list of acquisitions would be the two Orchard volumes
- 4) Books which may or may not include Essex data, but which provide important comparative material; an example from the list published in the last newsletter would be Gerloff, S, 2010. *Atlantic Cauldrons and Buckets of the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages in Western Europe with a Review of Comparable Vessels from Central Europe and Italy*. Whilst that book included significant objects from Essex its primary importance is in the comparative data and wider context it offers.
- 5) Last, but not least, since members of our Society have access to the general collections of the University Library, we try not to duplicate books which are in the University Library. That said we do acquire for the Society's library books which the University Library had, but which we judge that a Library devoted to the archaeology and history of Essex should not be without. An example in the latest list of acquisitions would be Thornton, C.C, and Eiden, H (eds), 2022. *The Victoria History of the Counties of England. Essex. Vol 12. St Osyth to the Naze: North-East Essex Coastal Parishes*.

What's it all for?

Our Library contains many significant works of reference acquired over the Society's long history and a salutary reminder of just how important the long-term maintenance and careful curation of our Library is, comes from one of the volumes in the list of recent acquisitions above:

'This book is unusual because so many of its primary sources are a century or more old. ... Less published information dates from recent years. In most cases this is because the all-important deposits along the coast are inaccessible today. ... Any review of their archaeology has to be based on books and articles that were published a long time ago, ... Many of the original finds have been lost, and others were inaccessible at the time of writing.

Most studies of prehistoric archaeology are limited to recent publications. They usually feature books or articles published in the last twenty years. This is reflected in university reading lists and by the policies of librarians who may well discard early material., whether or not it is available online. It is common practice in the sciences, but it also happens in the humanities. This is especially unfortunate since archaeological fieldwork often destroyed the evidence on which printed accounts were based. This review of unusual sites along the coast typifies the problem. ... it provides a new interpretation of some very old evidence. Its existence is easily forgotten. The half-life of archaeological information is becoming shorter and important knowledge is lost along the way.'

Bradley, R.J., 2022. *Maritime Archaeology on Dry land: Special Sites along the Coasts of Britain and Ireland from the First Farmers to the Atlantic Bronze Age*. p147

Admiral Sir John Jervis, Earl of St Vincent (1735-1823)

By Michael Leach

Much has been written about this national hero who won a moral boosting victory when heavily outnumbered by a Spanish fleet off Cape St Vincent in 1797. At the age of thirteen he had run away to sea and he spent much of the next half century under sail. During this time, he experienced the woeful inadequacies and corruption of the naval supply and repair facilities, exemplified in 1795 by his experience at the Gibraltar dockyard where he was forced to return to sea to re-caulk and replace spars, leaving him vulnerable to attack from enemy ships. Promoted to full admiral in 1795, he became First Lord of the Admiralty in 1801, and the Peace of Amiens in the following year provided him with the opportunity to build on the reforms of his predecessor, though inevitably he encountered strong opposition from those who had benefitted from the long-standing corruption, particularly from the crucial timber merchants. So called 'robber bolts' were not unknown in boat building or repairs, where the head was hammered in on one side of a structural joint, and a blind nut on the other side, with no connecting rod linking the two.

While at sea, he recognised that regular drills were an essential part of making the navy an efficient fighting force, and vigorously defended the principle of prize money as an incentive. Though he had a reputation for unbending severity in suppressing mutiny, he championed better food and clothing for his men, transformed the naval medical services and improved the standards of ship hygiene. An example of his efforts to improve the diet of seamen was his interest in a project to use vegetables – principally potatoes and parsnips - which had been dried in Kent hop kilns and packed into barrels. A cask was sent out to Australia and, on arrival, proved to be palatable with only a superficial growth of mould which was thought to be due to insufficient drying of the barrel before packing. However, the Board of Admiralty was reluctant to depart from the standard well-trying diet of hard tack, salt beef and dried peas, and decided that lemon juice (which took up less room) should be provided in preference to other vegetables as antiscorbutics.

When not at sea, he served as an MP for three separate constituencies consecutively between 1783 and 1794, and then sat in the Lords after the award of his peerage in 1797. Through his marriage he acquired the estate of Rochetts near Brentwood after the death of his father-in-law in 1784, and considerably enlarged the house by adding an east wing with a dining room, a drawing room and a long columned arcade, connecting the two side pavilions, where he could exercise in foul weather – pacing the quarter deck, perhaps? He was in a hurry to complete this in six months, though the unnamed architect insisted that this was impossible using conventional building methods. The problem was solved by using timber framed construction, covered externally in mathematical tiles to give it the appearance of brickwork. Unknown elsewhere in Essex, this system mimicked the headers, stretchers and gauged arches of fair-faced brickwork, and became popular in parts of south east England, supposedly dating from the imposition of the brick tax of 2s 6d per thousand in 1784. However, the economics are not easy to understand, as tiles 'by whatsoever names [they] are called' were taxed under the same legislation at 3s per thousand. At Rochetts, it seems that the choice was driven by the client's insistence on speedy completion of the project. The house, much altered by later nineteenth century alterations, was badly damaged by fire in 1975, and it is not known if any of this unusual cladding survived the inferno.

For a man of considerable reforming energy, it is not surprising that this included the management of the estate at Rochetts and that his activities here came to the attention of the agricultural reformer, Arthur Young when he was collecting information for his report on Essex farming for the Board of Agriculture. It is apparent that St Vincent was familiar with the details of soil on his estate, and had views about the crops that would best thrive on it. He was growing wheat, barley oats, beans, tares for soiling (i.e. ploughing back as a fertiliser), cole for feeding, clover, potatoes, turnips and swedes, and was planning to try out cabbages. He was ditching and draining his previously exhausted land, and manuring it with lime, bank and ditch earth, and dung obtained from the nearby barracks at Great Warley, with considerable improvement to its fertility. He employed a man whose sole job was spudding docks, nettles and thistles on the grassland.

Young regarded St Vincent as 'an excellent farmer' and, when referring to his enthusiasm for land drainage, noted 'What a spectacle! to see this gallant veteran, after carrying the glory of the national flag to so high a pitch, sit down in health and spirits to the amusements of agriculture, and entering with vigour and intelligence into the minutiae of the art!' He kept 28 cows of the long-horned variety, and 150 sheep of which 50 were his favoured breed of Southdowns.

St Vincent died at Rochetts in 1823. He was described as stubborn, impetuous, quick tempered and inflexible, with a strong belief in efficiency and discipline, though there was a softer side to his nature which was revealed in his efforts to champion decent standards of food and hygiene for his naval crews. These qualities enabled him to effect major reforms in the naval establishment in the teeth of much opposition from long-standing vested interests in the dockyards and supply chains.

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Repair of the Harwich treadwheel crane

By Michael Leach

Most visitors to Harwich will have seen this unique survivor, listed Grade 2*, originally situated on the quayside for use in unloading ships, but dismantled and reassembled in its present position in 1932 when the docks were sold off for development. Once common in Britain, this crane is the only surviving example. Previously thought to date from 1667, dendrochronology shows that it was extensively rebuilt following the destruction of its predecessor in the severe winter storm of 1744/5. Not surprisingly for an exposed timber frame structure, there is much evidence of subsequent repairs during its working life in the nineteenth century. The original boarded roof was replaced with pantiles when the building was relocated in 1932. Both treadwheels were reconstructed in 1970, and the jib was replaced in 2000.

While carefully leaving in place as many of the earlier patchwork repairs as possible, further essential work has recently been required and has now been completed. Extensive underpinning was required as the 1932 reconstruction had relied on an un-reinforced concrete slab which had broken its back, and was preventing the treadwheels from turning. Various repairs to the timber frame were required, including a new softwood cill plate on the south side. The roof timbers also needed work in places, and the pantiles were replaced where necessary, and screw-fixed to prevent wind lift.

Perhaps the most interesting and challenging job was the semi-circular roof over the jib. Lead or sheet zinc was considered, but thought to be too grand for such a utilitarian structure. Research at Chatham Dockyard revealed a historic precedent for using sail cloth impregnated with pine tar on similar structures. Though this technique has long been forgotten in this country, the tradition has continued in Sweden, from where technical advice, and the necessary supplies of pine tar, were obtained.

The apsidal roof was first boarded with rough sawn larch, then primed with the Swedish pine tar, thinned with white spirit (one part to ten). The underside of the sailcloth was treated in the same way, then laid on the boards with folded and stapled laps. Two coats of warmed pine tar were applied to the surface, followed by a dusting of charcoal. After six months, another coat of pine tar, followed by a dusting of sand will be added, and this process is to be repeated every few years.

Sources

The SPAB Magazine, Summer 2022

The Mayor's Watch: a recent acquisition by Colchester Museums

By Philip J Wise. Heritage Manager, Colchester & Ipswich Museums

In April 2022 an early 19th-century gold pocket watch came up for auction at Cheffins sale room in Cambridge. What made this watch especially interesting were its Colchester connections, as both its maker and original owner were closely associated with the town. Consequently Colchester Museums, with the support of the Friends of Colchester Museums, placed a bid which was successful. The watch is a full hunter, in which an outer case completely surrounds the watch itself. The gold-coloured dial has Arabic numerals, and hour and minute hands. The watch movement is signed 'Hedge Colchester' and the case has the hallmarks for London, 1805. The inside of the outer case is engraved, 'THIS WATCH BELONGED TO WILLIAM SPARLING SOLICITOR THREE TIMES MAYOR OF COLCHESTER DIED 1815'.



The 'Hedge' who made this watch is Nathaniel Hedge IV (1735-1821), a member of the prominent Colchester family who were associated first with the manufacture of cloth in the town and later, for over a hundred years, with the making of clocks and watches. Nathaniel Hedge IV was the eldest son of Nathaniel Hedge III (1710-1795) and his wife Sarah Smorthwait. His parents had married at Alresford, near Colchester, in 1733 when Sarah was already pregnant. Sarah was the daughter of the clockmaker John Smorthwait (1675-1739) and Nathaniel Hedge III had become her father's apprentice in 1728. After John Smorthwait's death, Nathaniel Hedge III acquired his business and in due course this passed to the younger Nathaniel. This Hedge had two shops, one after the other, in Colchester's High Street and in 1807 went into partnership with a fellow clockmaker Joseph Banister (1778-1875) who bought him out in 1818. The 'Mayor's Watch' was made relatively late in Hedge's career when he was already 70 years old.

William Sparling (d. 1816) was a Colchester solicitor and a prominent political figure in the town. As a young man Sparling was alleged by two women to be the father of their illegitimate children. He later married Mary Tills of St Osyth and the couple and their five children lived at 7 East Stockwell Street. Sparling was mayor in 1805 and again in 1813. The watch was therefore either purchased by or presented to him during his year of office. There are however two inaccuracies about the watch's inscription; firstly, Sparling was mayor twice not three times and secondly, he died in 1816 not 1815 according to his tomb in the churchyard of St Martin's, Colchester. The inscription must therefore have been added after Sparling's death by someone, possibly a member of his family, who was ill-informed. Before this latest acquisition there were only two watches made by Nathaniel Hedge IV in the Colchester Museums' collections - one with a very elaborately decorated gold case and the other with a case of pinchbeck, an alloy of copper and zinc. Both of these watches are dated 1775, considerably earlier in Hedge's career than the 'Mayor's Watch' which is also distinguished by having a plain gold case.

Repton's map of Roman Essex

By Michael Leach

John Adey Repton (1775-1860) was the eldest son of Humphry Repton, the better known landscape designer. Though stone deaf from birth, he was pupilled to a Norwich architect, and at the age of twenty one was engaged by the architect John Nash who found use for his detailed knowledge of Gothic architecture. Four years later, offended by Nash's failure to give him credit for assistance with his Corsham Court project in Wiltshire, he joined his father to work on the architectural side of his landscape design practice. After his father's death in 1818, he remained at Hare Street, Romford, until his mother's death in 1827 when he moved to Springfield, Chelmsford, where he spent the rest of his life. In spite of his severe disability, he travelled in Europe between 1821 and 1822, advising on improvements to various estates in Holland and Germany, including that of Prince Pückler-Muskau in Silesia. An entry from the prince's account of his tour of England in 1828-9 records 'Repton's son' saying 'a great deal' about Paul Methuen's contribution to the Corsham landscape, suggesting that he had overcome his disability to a remarkable degree.

Though John Adey continued to accept architectural commissions (including St Mary's, Rivenhall, in 1838, and Holy Trinity, Springfield in 1842) his interests were distinctly antiquarian, with numerous contributions to *Archaeologia*, *The Gentleman's Magazine*, and the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*. On 13 October 1847 he exhibited 'A Manuscript Essay and A Map of the Roman Roads, Camps, and Villas in Essex' at a meeting of the British Archaeological Association. The 'manuscript essay' seems to have been a critical evaluation of the various reports and observations which had been published by other contributors to these journals and elsewhere.

According to a report in the *Essex Standard* of 23 February 1838, it was the Chelmsford Philosophical Society that had commissioned John Adey to make this map which was presented to the society, together with a manuscript essay which was probably similar to the critical evaluation which he subsequently read at the British Archaeological Association's meeting in 1847. Presumably both the essay and the map found their way to the governor's parlour in the old county gaol in Moulsham (the first home for the society's museum collection) and then to the purpose-built premises (on the west side of New Bridge Street) in 1842. A recent search has failed to locate either the map or the essay, so they were probably mislaid or discarded in one of the museum's relocations. Christy's 1920 article on Essex Roman road research only refers to the British Archaeological Association's printed report of the 1847 meeting, and makes no mention of the map, so presumably the map and the manuscript had already been lost when Christy compiled his bibliography.

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The advance of the chicken

By Nigel Brown

In the Summer 2022 newsletter Michael Leach wrote a short note highlighting research on the domestication of the chicken, which indicates domestication took place between 1650 and 1250 BC in Thailand. I thought readers might be interested in the latest research on the arrival of domesticated chickens in Europe a topic covered in an article published in *Antiquity* last August (Best et al 2022; regular readers will hardly need reminding that our Library has a complete run of *Antiquity* since the journal's foundation in 1927).

The research was based on 23 new radiocarbon dates on chicken bones from early contexts. Many of the dates turned out to be much later than their stratigraphic context suggested, showing how easy it is for small bones to move through a stratigraphic sequence. Complete skeletons are generally more reliable, but the chicken burial from Winklebury hillfort, long thought to be Iron Age, turned out to be post-medieval. On the other hand, an Iron Age date for the chicken skeletons from Weston Down and Houghton Down was confirmed. It appears that chickens were present in Italy by the eighth century BC and not much later in the Balearic Islands, it's likely they were transported along trade routes throughout the Mediterranean. Chickens were moved into central Europe, France and southern Britain in the sixth to fifth centuries BC, it took another thousand years or more before they were present in the wetter colder parts of Europe, Ireland, Scotland and Scandinavia (Best et al 2022, 876).

Nowadays chickens are an ubiquitous (its estimated the world population may be around 70 billion), short lived (average age of slaughter about 42 days) source of meat and eggs. Its easy to forget they are striking handsome birds, but it seems that is how they were viewed in prehistoric Europe. None of the Iron Age chicken burials show evidence of butchery; the cockerel from Houghton Down may have been over 2 years old, whilst the hen from Weston Down was a mature specimen with a well healed leg fracture, suggestive of human care. So, it seems that these birds were valued, but not primarily as a food source.

Sources

Best, J.*et al.*, 2022. 'Redefining the timing and circumstances of the chicken's introduction to Europe and north-west Africa', *Antiquity*, 96 No. 388, pp868-82

The Thames tunnel between Essex & Kent

By Michael Leach

In 1798, Ralph Dodd (?1756-1822), an engineer many of whose projects failed or were never completed, published his proposals for a tunnel under the Thames linking Tilbury to Gravesend. He put forward convincing arguments for the economic benefits to the adjoining counties in an illustrated 28 page report. A survey had shown that most of the proposed route through the Thames substrata was chalk, apart from a band of clay at the Essex end, making the construction of a 16 foot diameter tunnel, lined with brick or stone, a relatively straightforward proposition. The Thames was 66 feet deep at its deepest point, and the apex of the tunnel would be between 20 and 30 feet below the bottom of the river bed. He cited various tunnels for canals and mining operations which had already been successfully constructed, such as the Sapperton canal tunnel in Gloucestershire which was over two miles in length. A review of his pamphlet in the Monthly Review in 1799 noted that Dodd's proposal was short on technical detail, making it difficult to assess the merits of his plan. It also pointed out that he was, in addition to being its engineer, the active financial promoter of the project.

The same journal also carried a separate review of a pamphlet entitled Observations on the intended Tunnel beneath the Thames: showing the many Defects in the present State of that Projection. The reviewer noted that 'Mr Dodd has here met with a severe opponent, who attacks him at all points.' Surprisingly the author was not an engineer, but Charles Clarke (?1761-1840) who, though trained as an architect, spent his entire career as a clerk in various government ordnance offices. His architectural interests seem to have been largely antiquarian, as the result of which he was elected a member of the Society of Antiquaries in 1796. One strand of his criticism of Dodd's tunnel was the differential pressures on its walls from the different strata of clay and chalk through which it passed. The critic was of the opinion that a vertical walled tunnel with an arched roof would be more stable than a tubular one. Reasonably enough, he stated that it was difficult to judge the feasibility of Dodd's proposals, and that further evaluation was needed. It is doubtful if this ever happened, as fund raising for the construction of Dodd's tunnel had been completed by January 1799 (£30,000 in £100 shares) and necessary Act of Parliament obtained by July of the same year. The estimated cost of construction was just under £16,000, and compensation for the Gravesend and Tilbury ferry owners on completion had been agreed.

A start was made on sinking a preliminary shaft in September 1799 but was repeatedly frustrated by flooding of the borehole just to the west of Gravesend town. Eleven months then elapsed before advertisements appeared in the press inviting contracts for sinking a ten foot diameter shaft to a depth of 140 feet, noting that the company itself would be responsible for keeping the construction site free of water. However, it must have become apparent that the pumps operated by a horse gin were completely inadequate to cope with the inflow. It was perhaps this problem which led to serious disagreements between Dodd and the company. Though it was claimed that these had been resolved by October 1800, it was not until April 1801 that contracts were invited for the erection of a steam engine house at Gravesend to provide a more effective source of power for the pumps.

A further five months passed before tenders were invited for building workshops, a stable and eight workmen's cottages at Gravesend. Progress, however, seems to have been very slow, and in March 1802 the company was still seeking 'miners, well diggers and others' to sink a nine foot diameter shaft to a depth of 140 feet. By September progress was halted by a new problem. Although the flooding had now been controlled by continuous steam-powered pumping, this was at the expense of lowering Gravesend's water table, and had caused many of the local domestic wells to dry up. At this point there was another serious disagreement between Dodd and the company. An unspecified remedy was found, and by the end of the month the shaft was 40 feet below the lowest point of the river bed (suggesting that it had reached a depth of approximately 100 feet).

Problems continued to haunt the project and in October 1802 the engine house was seriously damaged by fire, and repairs were not completed until February 1803. With the pumps out of action, the shaft must have rapidly flooded again and this, together with the project's glacial progress over the previous three years, may have been the death knell for the project which had been officially abandoned by July 1803. By that date, it is likely that the pontoon bridge linking Tilbury Fort with Gravesend had been completed and, though this was primarily to facilitate troop movements, it may have provided an additional discouragement to the tunnel builders and their investors. It was to be another four decades before the Marc and Isambard Brunel succeeded in completing a shorter tunnel under the Thames between Rotherhithe and Limehouse, a project which took fifteen years and was beset with numerous problems and financial over-runs, ultimately costing well over £600,000. Though Dodd might have benefitted from the more favourable strata for his project, he had failed over three years to complete even the first of the two vertical 140 foot shafts which were the necessary preliminaries for tackling the much more challenging task of boring horizontally under the river bed.

Dodd was certainly enterprising, but a number of his other enterprises were also over-ambitious or ill considered. While struggling with his Thames crossing, he had embarked on building a canal to link Gravesend with the Medway near Rochester, involving the construction of a two mile tunnel under the North Downs. This too was abandoned in 1803 and was later restarted to be completed under different hands in 1824. Another of Dodd's unsuccessful projects was the bridge in Springfield Lane, Chelmsford where he abandoned an existing plan for cast iron structure on brick piers in favour of a suspension bridge. This was completed in 1820 but there were immediate concerns about its safety, and an independent survey concluded that its survival was 'very problematical'. The iron founders that Dodd had employed were obliged to guarantee to rebuild the bridge if it collapsed and, though it did not do so, major reconstruction was required in 1825 to make it safe.

Though Dodd's plan for a Thames tunnel failed, the idea of linking Tilbury to Gravesend re-emerged in the 1870s and 1880s in connection with a number of proposals to link southeast England with the Midlands by railway. The one that came closest to being built was the Tilbury Gravesend Tunnel Junction Railway, which obtained the necessary Parliamentary powers in 1882. Though construction was never started, and the project being officially abandoned in 1885, similar plans were revived shortly after the First World War with the aim of stimulating job creation and regional development, as well as providing a freight railway line which avoided London. After 1921, a tunnel between Purfleet and Dartford was seen as a better option, being shorter and passing through more predictable geological strata. From 1924, Essex and Kent County Councils actively lobbied the government for the crossing to be constructed, and jointly promoted legislation in 1930 and 1937. By 1936 the project had morphed into a road tunnel and, though a pilot tunnel was finished in 1938, the road tunnel itself was delayed by World War II and the subsequent post-war austerity, and was not opened to traffic until 1963.

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The Ruin of all Witches: Life & Death in the New World

By Michael Leach

This is the title of a new book by Malcolm Gaskell, a narrative account based on a combination of historical research and imaginative reconstruction. Its main focus is the witch trials of the 1640s in Massachusetts, but also concerns William Pynchon who had grown up in a well-connected family at Springfield near Chelmsford. He was educated in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, though he does not appear to have attended university. In 1630, seeking religious freedom, he set sail for the New World in the *Ambrose*, part of the Winthrop fleet, initially settling in the area between Boston and Dorchester and served the Massachusetts Bay Company as treasurer. He was active in the fur trade with the native Americans and the writer wonders how equitable these dealings were, quoting the diplomat Sir Edward Hoby's chilling observation that it was lawful for a Christian to take away anything from infidels.'

Six years on, Pynchon moved 100 miles west to establish a remote community, which he named Springfield after his former English home, and where he quickly established a dominance in the fur trade, as well as in the affairs of the town. There were many accusations of witchcraft in the new settlement with some of Pynchon's servants claiming to be victims, and it is difficult to imagine that Pynchon, who had been appointed a magistrate, was not involved in the resulting persecutions. Pynchon himself was to be the cause of a bitter religious controversy. In 1650, his book, printed in London and entitled *The Meritorious Price of Our Redemption*, challenged (amongst other matters) orthodox Calvinist teaching by arguing that Jesus did not die to redeem the sins of mankind, and that he did not suffer the torments of Hell after his crucifixion.

In the storm that followed, the public hangman was ordered to burn all copies of the book, and Pynchon was obliged to publicly recant his heretical views. He and his wife returned to England in 1652, initially lodging in Hackney with relatives until he was able to acquire an estate in Wraysbury, Buckinghamshire, where he continued to publish religious writings till his death in 1662.

The recently published book only touches lightly on Pynchon but provides a considerable amount of detail about the persecution of witches in New England.

Sources

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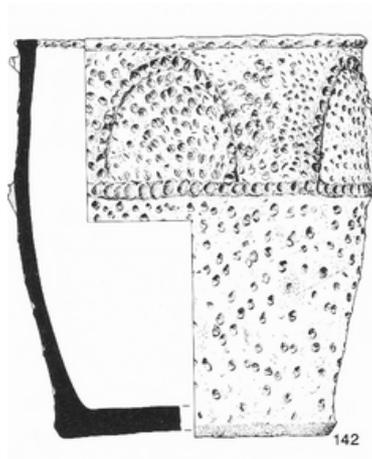
Women, Children, and Men: making prehistoric pottery and salt

By Nigel Brown

I went to the Bronze Age Forum in Cambridge last November and amongst the wide range of interesting lectures was one on finger impressions on Early and Middle Bronze Age pottery by Meredith Laing (Laing, 2022a). By collating data on modern finger size Laing was able to establish the average size of finger tips for children, women and men. Through meticulous measurement of finger impressions on prehistoric pottery from the east of England including Middle Bronze Age Ardleigh style urns, famous for their profuse use of finger impressed decoration, she has been able to indicate who was involved in making these remarkable pots. Vessels from the large Middle Bronze Age cremation cemeteries at Ardleigh, Brightlingsea and White Colne were included in her study. As I've spent so much time studying that pottery (Brown 1995, 1999, 2008) it was fascinating to learn that the range of finger-tip sizes present indicates that the pottery was made by women and children working together. As Laing (2022a,368) notes,

'The large size of the Ardleigh-style urns suggests a developed understanding of the properties of clay and manufacturing techniques necessary for structural integrity of such large vessels. This is unlikely to have been within the grasp of very young children, and so suggests manufacture of these large urns was the work of several individuals: older more physically able people forming the urns and mixed age groups decorating them. The urns exhibiting different impression widths on the exterior suggest a child worked with or under the supervision of an older person (either an older child or adult) whilst applying their fingertip decoration.'

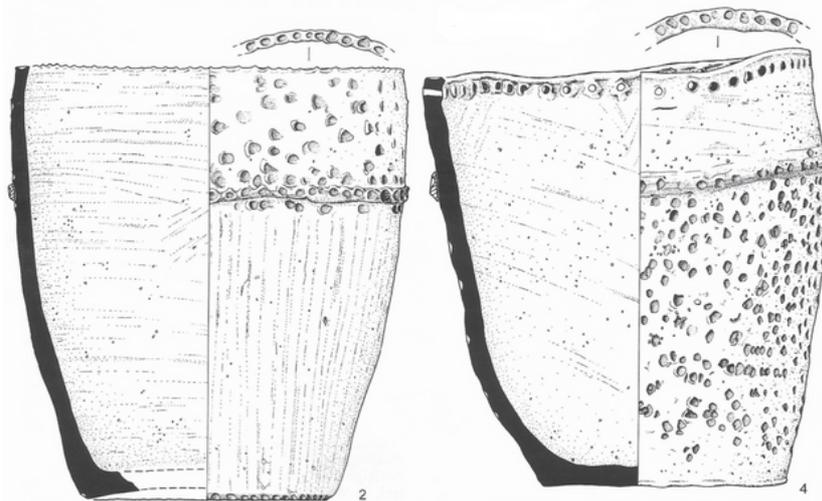
Laing has identified some instances of two people being involved in the decoration of a single pot such as this vessel from White Colne (Brown 1999, fig 75, 142)



'...where the impressions on the applied horseshoe 'handles' are considerably larger than the impressions on the pot surface within and around the 'handles', indicating they were applied by someone with larger fingers, and so probably older than the individual(s) who decorated the pot surface. The dimensions of the latter are consistent with having been made by a child of five years or under.' (Laing, 2022a, 363).

It seems that children as young as 4 or 5 may have been involved, gradually learning the skills to become potters themselves, in some cases they appear to have had quite free reign which goes some way to explaining something which puzzled me; why on some pots decorative schemes were quite crudely executed, such that '... in some cases the ability and or desire to execute even simple patterns seems to be lacking.' (Brown 1999, 82). It seems to be a case of what we might now call learning through play, making finger impressions in all that soft clay must have been good fun.

The way these pots appear to have been used and were deposited may ‘...imply that the decoration carried some meaning.’ (Brown, 1995, 127). Perhaps that is most apparent in the way that pots deposited together often appear to have opposed decorative schemes, most striking is a burial at Ardleigh which contained two pots, as the excavator noted ‘just gently touching’ (Erith 1960), one of which had a finger impressed exterior and a plain rim, the other a finger impressed rim and plain exterior. There are a number of similar instances amongst the burials from Brightlingsea, such as the pair below, one with finger impressions below a horizontal cordon the other with them above a cordon.



As Laing notes (2022a, 368) ‘... contributions to decorative repertoires were encouraged and valued. A fired and decorated pot becomes integrated into the community through its use, and any visual or other meanings and ideologies attached to it. The artistic efforts of children would have been as visible and integral to the community as that of adults.’

Laing (2022b) has also studied finger marks on briquetage, the coarse pottery used in the manufacture, from Iron Age sites in the Lincolnshire fenland and the Essex Red Hills. In this case her study examined fingerprints rather than the size of finger impressions and has shown that ‘...during the Middle and Late Iron Age the fingerprints found on briquetage are almost exclusively from adult males’ (Laing 2022b, 89). A variety of evidence indicates that salt making was a seasonal activity of the late summer and early autumn, at marshland sites away from domestic settlements, Laing’s work suggests groups of men carried out this seasonal work. One wonders whether that was just another part of the working year, or whether groups of men looked forward to an annual trip to the coast to make salt.

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Event Notice:

William Byrd (c. 1540-1623)

St Peter & St Paul Church, Stondon Massey

30th June - 4th July 2023

Celebrating the life and music of the great Elizabethan composer who lived in semi-retirement at Stondon Massey

Friday 30th June. 7:30pm

The Life and Times of William Byrd: A Local History

A talk by Andrew Smith

Sunday 2nd July. 3:00pm

William Byrd Commemorative Service

A service to celebrate the 400th anniversary of his death

Tuesday 4th July. 8:00pm

William Byrd Anniversary Concert: Patronage and Persecution

The Stondon Singers give their annual concert on his anniversary day

Please visit: www.williambyrdfestival.blogspot.com

ESAH Events for 2023

Saturday 18th March, 2:30pm. St Osyth Church. £10

Church Square, St. Osyth, Clacton-on-Sea, CO16 8NU.

A film show, followed by a talk on the church, and tea/coffee and cake. Price includes a donation to the church.

From church website: St.Osyth is just off the main B1027 from Colchester to Clacton. The Church is not obvious at first- in the village centre behind houses. However, if you follow the sign to the Priory/Point Clear at the crossroads you will find the church to your left in Church Square where there is limited parking. More parking is available in Clacton Road, Spring Road and down Warren Farm Lane by the phone box.

Friday 21st April, Southend Museums, Time TBC. £8

Beecroft Art Gallery, Victoria Avenue, SS2 6ER.

We will have a talk on the Prittlewell Prince, after which we can walk around the galleries and examine the exhibition by ourselves. Tea and cakes afterwards.

Access and parking: 'We are located on the A127 just off the main junction between the A127 and A13Museum and is brown signed off main both roads. Closest parking is at the Beecroft Art Gallery (previously Southend Library) car park just off Great Eastern Avenue (off of Victoria Avenue). It is pay and display. Alternative car parking is available at The Victoria Shopping Centre (SS2 5SP) just off the A127 and A13 junction.

Friday 12th May, 11:00am. Harwich, cost TBD (minimum £10)

Muster at 11 at the Halfpenny Pier Visitor Centre at the quay. CO12 3HH.

A walking tour of several historic sites including Christopher Jones' house, the treadwheel crane, and the town gaol (as a minimum), plus the Museum.

Saturday 10th June, 10:00-16:00. Chelmsford Museum. £10-15

EIAG is hosting the **East of England Region Industrial Archaeology Conference**.

PLEASE NOTE: email Jane Giffould to express an interest in attending & Jane will forward further details (jgiffould@aol.com).

Saturday 17th June. AGM at Broomfield Church. Free

Please let us know if you will be attending. Tea/Coffee.

Except for June 10th, please email/write to the Excursions Secretary to book (howard000brooks@gmail.com). **Payment: Online as before.** Let us know if you require account details. Please give event reference and number of bookings (e.g. HAR 2). Alternatively: send a cheque to Hon Sec's Colchester address or you can pay cash on the day.

PLEASE NOTE: If you pay online you must tell us otherwise we won't be expecting you.

The visits on the Society's programme are open to members and associate members only. The Society can accept not liability for loss or injury sustained by members attending any of its programmed events. Members are asked to take care when visiting old buildings or sites and to alert others to any obvious risks. Please respect the privacy of those who invite us into their homes.

Your Photographs Needed!

Council is arranging for three pop-up banners to be made for use at exhibitions, meetings, and conferences. These will replace our current display boards which are very large and very heavy.

Consequently, we require high-quality photographs of local historic buildings, archaeological sites, monuments, and objects, historic landscapes etc.

Photos of any of our members visiting the above would be ideal too!

To avoid copyright problems it would be ideal if these photographs came from members, rather than the internet. If your photograph contains another member please ensure they are happy for the photograph to be used before sending it.

Please contact Hon Secretary with any offers at: howard000brooks@gmail.com

Request for help with the Joseph Sim Earle Collection

We have been contacted by Dunia Garcia-Ontiveros of the Society of Antiquaries (SA) of London. They have a collection of fifty-six boxes containing prints of Essex and Suffolk buildings, church monuments and portable antiquities collected by a former Fellow of the Society, Joseph Sim Earle, and bequeathed to SA in 1912.

SA proposes to digitise and catalogue the collection, and were wondering whether our members might be willing to help in a voluntary capacity. There are two strands here:

First, if anyone would like to be involved in the scanning in at the SA offices in Burlington House (travel at your own expense). Please forward your name and email to Hon Secretary (below), and I will forward to Dunia at SA. Some training on scanning may be provided.

Second, when the scanning is complete, SA proposes to share images of the digitised prints and drawings in the hope that ESAH members may be able to use local knowledge and expertise to provide more information on the buildings, monuments and antiquities depicted.

More detail on this stage will be provided in due course.

Howard Brooks

howard000brooks@gmail.com

(three zeroes between the names, not letter Os)

Membership

Subscriptions are due 1st January each year as follows:

Single Member - £25

Family Membership - £30

Student - £15

Associate Member - £15

Institutions - £25

Associate Institutions - £25

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The Society's Publication and Research Fund (PRF)

This Endowment Fund supports the publication of articles in the *Transactions* of the Society as well as Occasional Papers. It is also available to support research consistent with the Society's objectives. As an endowment fund, only the interest earned from it can be used to provide such support. The amount of the Fund is in excess of £50,000 and we continue to seek further donations.

Donations for this Fund, or the to Society's General Fund where the capital can also be used in support of the Society's objectives are welcome.

Donations should be made payable to the 'Essex Society for Archaeology and History' and could attract Gift Aid.

Please address all enquiries to the Hon. Treasurer, Bill Abbott at 13 Sovereign Crescent, Lexden Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 3UZ or bill.abbott@btinternet.com

DATA PROTECTION ACT

In order to run the Society it is necessary to keep paper and electronic records of members' names and addresses. It is the Society's policy to keep members' names, addresses, telephone numbers and subscription status only. This information is disclosed to no one, inside or outside the Society, other than those officers and members of Council who need it in order to run the organisation.

Members do have the right to refuse to allow any information about them to be stored on a computer, and they should let me know if this is their wish. However, we hope that this note will reassure members that the very limited information held about them is secure and will not be used for any purpose other than the efficient running of the Society. Anyone requiring further details can contact Howard Brooks or Victoria Rathmill.