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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 1st July 2021.

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 the 'Green Lady'. A late 14th century painting from St. Osyth's Priory, Clacton, Essex. © Colchester Museums

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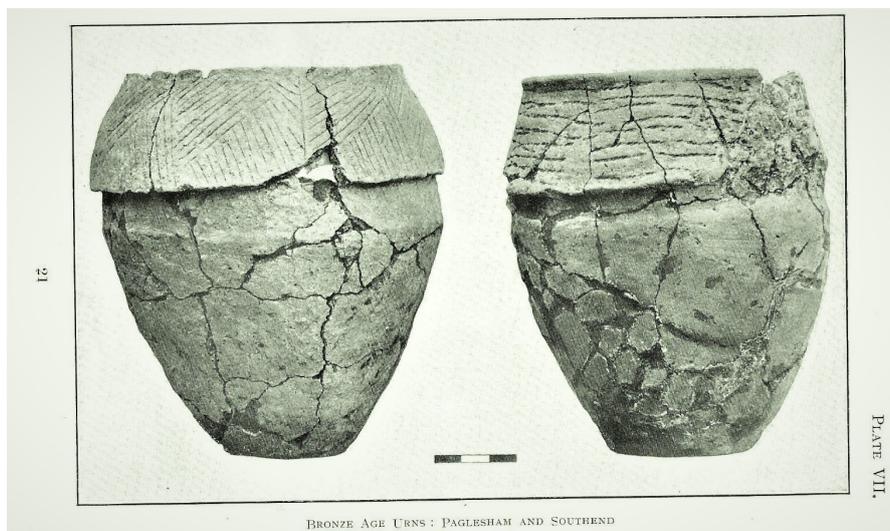
From the President

Nigel Brown

I hope you all had as good a Christmas and New Year as these strange and difficult times allowed. As I write disruption still continues and the pandemic has reached a new intensity, but with the vaccination programme underway it seems reasonable to hope that, during the course of this year, we may return, if not to normality, then at least something approaching it. We have a full programme of events planned and trust that they will proceed, though, sadly for the second year the March visit to Miss Wilmott's Garden has had to be cancelled, we aim to rearrange that visit for 2022 and hopefully it will be third time lucky. Of course they may be other alterations due to Covid regulations and we will keep you informed of any changes.

On a positive and optimistic note from this year our Society has assumed responsibility for Essex Journal, and the first issue published under our auspices will be distributed to members in late Spring. From now on our newsletter and the Essex Journal will alternate through the year; our intention is that the newsletter will appear in late Winter/early Spring and in the Summer, the Journal in late Spring and late Autumn. As part of those changes our newsletter will be circulated in digital format. This is the first of our newsletters to be so distributed, it is also the last that will have a president's piece by me, my three-year term of office comes to an end at this year's AGM, and 'From the President' in the Summer newsletter will be by my successor.

In fact, I'm feeling in something of an elegiac mood since 2021 marks the fiftieth anniversary of my first becoming actively involved in the archaeology of this County (something those of you who know me may find hard to believe, it's easy to be fooled about my true age by my boyish good looks). In 1971 I went to work on rescue excavations being carried out by Southend Museum during brickearth extraction at North Shoebury. Quite appropriate since my interest in archaeology had been kindled during childhood by Southend Museum, whose main displays were then housed in Prittlewell Priory. Regularly playing in Priory Park, entry to the museum being free I could wander in and out frequently and became enthralled by the great age and strangeness of the objects on display which came from places familiar to me. To quote a book I bought three years before I started to be actively involved in archaeology, the museum is a place '... in which anyone with a lively interest in his homely environment may at some point find information and stimulus, and a hint of new methods of understanding' (Wheeler 1968, 5). To this day I'm a firm advocate of free access to museums, something perhaps best expressed by Robert Graves' mum, who in the British Museum, told him '...with bright eyes that all these wonderful things were ours. We looked at her astonished. She said: "Yes, they belong to us as members of the public. We can look at them, admire them, and study them for as long as we like. If we had them back at home, we couldn't do better. Besides they might get stolen"' (Graves 1929).



Strange and ancient objects from familiar places; this pair of Early Bronze Age collared urns from Paglesham and Southchurch were prominently displayed in Prittlewell Priory. The image is a copy of Plate VII from William Pollitt's *Southend before the Norman Conquest* published in 1953 as *Southend Museum Handbook* no 7. I bought a copy in the late '60s for 1/6d, it's a remarkable piece of scholarship, a fluent account of the archaeology of south-east Essex, which first introduced me to the detail of archaeological evidence.

Looking back over those fifty years and considering how difficult things were in the '70s archaeology is in a much better state now than it was then. There are of course problems, though many of those arise from an embarrassment of riches, something which appears to be a perennial problem (Brown 2018, 162); the declining numbers of local authority archaeological staff and the pressures they face is a concern, and as I mentioned in our last newsletter proposed changes to the planning system may undermine archaeological and other historic environment provision. Most recently a proposal to cut the funding of university archaeological courses is being considered; an astonishing idea which shows little understanding of the intrinsic educational worth such courses, the economic importance of archaeology, or the emerging shortage of professional archaeologists. Even so the extent and quality of fieldwork and the discoveries made over the last fifty years are remarkable which, coupled with conceptual developments, mean that issues then thought intractable can be addressed. I find the study of archaeology as fascinating now as I did in 1971 and '...during the past few years great progress has been made in the understanding of almost every period of the past, and in the application of new scientific techniques to the solution of its problems. Archaeology, in fact, is as lively as ever' (Wood 1968, 18).

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News

British Association for Local History

Their new series of local history lectures starts 25th February.
You can sign up to their newsletter and book onto lectures online.

ESAH members are entitled to a discount which will reduce your admission fee to £3.00 from £5.00 with the code: **F-23240N**

Obituaries

Ernest Black has passed away a couple of weeks ago. Ernest was a long-standing member of the Society and a contributor to *Essex Archaeology and History*. A full obituary will be published in a future edition of *Essex Archaeology and History*.

Membership Renewals

Hon. Membership Secretary's Notice

On 1st January all subscriptions for 2021 became due.

For members who have not already set up a standing order, please send £25.00 (associate/student £15.00, family £30.00) to the Hon. Membership Secretary, Martin Stuchfield, Pentlow Hall, Pentlow, Essex, CO10 7SP. Please make cheques payable to the *Essex Society for Archaeology and History*.

Many thanks to all those members who have completed Gift Aid forms. Any UK tax-paying member can enable the Society to reclaim tax on their subscription.

Complete and send in the form that can be obtained directly from martinstuchfield@pentlowhall.uk

News

We welcome as new members..

Alan Simpson of Witham
Anne Squire of Whittlesford, Cambridgeshire
Ben Cowell of Newport
Brian Bridge of Chingford
Brian Challis of Woodford
Charles Trollope of Fingringhoe
Clive Potter of Great Totham
David Grayston of Frinton-on-Sea
Derek Turnidge of Abington, Cambridgeshire
Geoffrey Ball of Saffron Walden
Geoffrey Speller of Buckhurst Hill
George Courtauld of Colne Engaine
Geraldine Wilden of Galleywood
Gordon Brown of Earls Colne
Grasham Gassor of Chipping Ongar
Janet Ambrose of Ilford
Jennifer Austing of Earls Colne
John Patten of Malton, North Yorkshire
Jonathan Lindridge of Witham
Karen Dennis of Billericay
Keith Hodgson of Harlow
Linda Haywood of Bishopsthorpe, York
Laurence Tobin of Colchester
Lynn Haseldine Jones of Woodford
Marion Scantlebury of Hatfield Heath
Maureen Scollan of Witham
Martin Emeny of Westcliff-on-Sea
Martin Green of Dartford, Kent
Martyn Fall of Stambourne
Neil Bresler of Maldon
Neil McCarthy of Brentwood
Patricia Croxton-Smith of Hadstock
Patricia Wakeham of Bermondsey, London
Royston Jones of Lyme Regis, Dorset
Sarah Raybould of Little Witham
Shirley Durgan of Chelmsford
Susan Homewood of Lewes, East Sussex
T Beales of Barking
Tony Benton of Upminster

More early falconry!

By Howard Brooks

I was intrigued to read Nigel Brown's interesting piece on the Anglo-Saxon gold ring from Uttlesford, bearing an image of falconry, and of the sparrowhawk bone from the Roman villa at Great Holts (Boreham) in the Summer 2020 Newsletter (Number 191).

I remember an anecdote of the former curator of Colchester Museum, David Clarke, that whenever colleagues were discussing a particular rare find, he would find himself saying 'well, we have two of those in Colchester' (or words to that effect). I'm afraid the same may be true of the sparrowhawk bone from Boreham. In 2005, Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) excavated the foundations of a very substantial structure at the Royal Grammar School site, in whose grounds (to the west of the Roman town) are a major Roman road junction and a concentration of significant Roman burials (the famous Facilis and Longinus tombstones were found 110m and 170m to the west). The structure resembles the 'square within a square' layout of a Romano-Celtic temple, except that in this case the inner structure was a hollow hexagon 5.2m wide inside a square structure 9.2m wide. This is best described as a 'temple-tomb' since it includes elements of both temples and tombs. But of relevance to falconry, the bone study by Julie Curl of the Norfolk Archaeological Unit showed that one of the six cremation burials within the temple-tomb contained the bones of at least one sparrowhawk, and at least four other juvenile raptors. Interestingly, this was not the burial at the centre of the temple-tomb, but one of the five peripheral burials.

Of course, it is always possible to interpret finds in a number of different ways - the falcon bones may be present for purely 'ritual' reasons. But a possibility here is that the tomb contained the burials of a family group, one of whom was a falconer. Whether the unknown principal person buried at the centre of this imposing monument was the falconer, or whether it was one of the family or retainers, is difficult to say (I have personal experience of an Arab court, and although the Sheikh was the falconer, it was someone else who carried the falcons around on his behalf).

What is most striking here is that a traveller heading towards the Roman town through what is now Lexden would have passed a series of imposing funerary monuments displaying not a monotone Roman character, but rather the multi ethnicity of the Roman Empire with its many religions and beliefs, and the falconer's tomb may give us a glimpse of the hobby or pastime of a rich local person buried perhaps in the 3rd century. The final twist is that the principal burial here was probably female. We only have to think of Boudicca to recall the high status of women in Roman Britain, but is this really evidence of lady falconers in late Roman Colchester?



Ben Holloway of CAT holding the falcon bones from the Roman cremation burial, with Keo the falcon on his left arm (thanks to Colchester Zoo) © CAT

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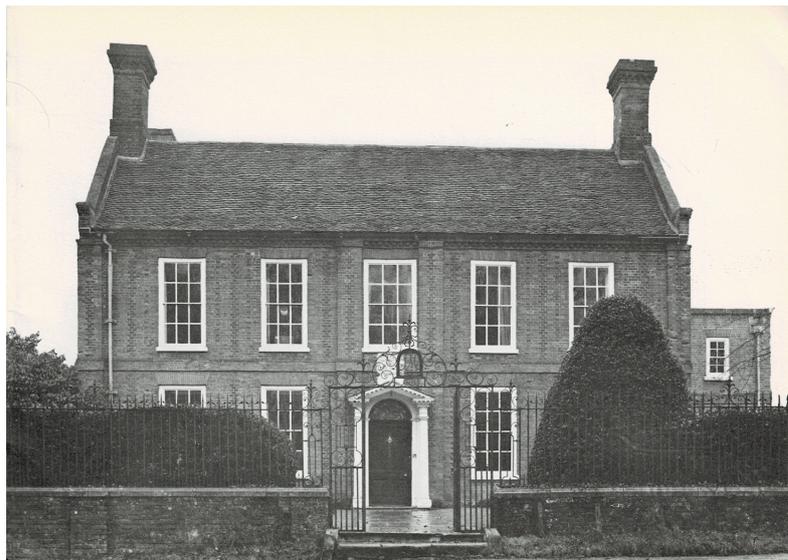
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Sir James Thornhill's work at Halstead, Essex

By Michael Leach

The Reverend William Holman of Halstead, who died in 1730, will be familiar to most members as an early and assiduous collector of material for a history of Essex, a resource which was to be extensively used by later county historians, including Philip Morant. His surviving notes, now in Essex Record Office, are largely devoted to genealogy, heraldry and manorial descents. Though Holman's best hand is very clear, many of his notes must have been made for his own use, as they are on poor quality paper and are quite difficult to read. An idle glance through the printed transcript for his own parish of Halstead noticed a surprising note in a brief description of Blue Bridge House.

On the pilasters [sic] of the brick walls, facing the highway and round the court are fixed several artificial trees of hammered work representing ... [text unfinished]. At the bottom of the garden is a neat summer house the roof adorned by a Flora done by the exquisite hand of Sir James Thornhill. Next this is an artificial wall built for the ripening of grapes, sooner than ordinary, by a fire kindled in the foundations. On the other side of the road is a small pond with curious terrace walks about it which affords a charming sight to travellers.



It might seem surprising to find the eminent Sir James Thornhill, grand baroque decorative painter and creator of the Painted Hall at the Royal Naval College at Greenwich, at work in a remote Essex garden. However the owner of Blue Bridge House was John Morley (1656-1735), the butcher and extremely well connected land jobber. His first patron was Sir Josiah Childs, director of the East India Company and his later clients included Robert Harley, prime minister and future earl of Oxford, and his son Edward (the future second earl). He was a close friend of Matthew Prior the poet, and mingled with the social circles of other literary figures such as Alexander Pope and John Day. Godfrey Kneller painted his portrait in 1716. These contacts gave him access to the inner circle of cultural life in London. In particular, Morley's connection with the Harleys must explain the link to Sir James Thornhill. Morley's contemporaries claimed that he was instrumental in arranging the marriage of Edward Harley to Henrietta, the heiress of the Duke of Newcastle in 1713. Part of Henrietta's inheritance was Wimpole Hall in Cambridgeshire, though the duke's will was contested and not resolved until a private Act of Parliament was obtained in 1719. This enabled Harley to embark on extensive improvements to the mansion, including a commission to Thornhill in 1721 to decorate the chapel, completed in 1724. While at Wimpole, Thornhill also painted the interior of a summer house (no longer extant).

Holman, as a fellow Halsteadian, would have known Morley well, and there would seem to be no grounds for doubting the historian's account. Though Holman provided no date for the work, Thornhill was knighted in 1720, suggesting that this might be the earliest date for the commission. Morley's close link with Edward Harley (further demonstrated by their joint tour of Scotland in 1725), as well as the latter's employment of Thornhill, must surely explain the decoration of the Halstead summer house. It is curious that this work does not seem to have been recorded in any of the standard county histories, though presumably the summer house and its decoration have long since disappeared.

The six inch OS map surveyed in 1876 shows a small detached building, possibly a summerhouse, just to the southeast of the Blue Bridge House, but by 1896 this had been incorporated into the main house. However, according to Norman Scarfe, the summerhouse was destroyed by bombs in World War II, though he does not cite his evidence for this statement. Adrian Corder-Birch has confirmed that two high explosive bombs fell in the paddock at Blue Bridge House on 25 August 1940, one of which did not explode. The report did not mention damage to property, so if there was any it was probably relatively minor. No images of Thornhill's work in the Halstead summerhouse have been found, but there are a number of his sketches of Flora (with or without Zephyrus) for other projects. These show her in fore-shortened baroque splendour, reclining in varying degrees of *deshabillé* on a bank of clouds, supported by putti – definitely not the more traditional, fully clothed, pink cheeked innocent, surrounded by flowers!

The other point of interest in the account of Blue Bridge House is the reference to what must have been an early Essex example of a flue, or heated, wall. These were built with an internal cavity rising the full height of the wall, and heated by burning straw stuffed into the space, or by the circulating flue gases from an external furnace or fireplace. Hot smoke found its way via a serpentine route up the inside of the wall, to exit at the top through a gap in the coping, or a standard chimney pot. This form of heating was much used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, before the invention of the process for manufacturing the cast iron pipes required for circulating hot water through a glasshouse. Few seem to have survived, perhaps due to the inherent weakness of such a wall.

Philip Miller's *Gardener's Dictionary* of 1748 provided a detailed description of how such a wall should be constructed and maintained, and similar works referring to heated walls were published into the early decades of the nineteenth century. What is not clear is when this type of wall was invented, or whether there are any survivors in Essex. An early nineteenth century example that I have seen in Sheffield walled garden betrayed its original purpose with a series of blocked arched fireplace openings on the outer wall, and an inner skin built almost entirely in stretcher bond. On the inner face, a few bricks had fallen out, revealing a sooty twelve inch wide cavity within, bridged at different levels with Yorkstone slabs. This suggests that any two foot thick garden wall with an inner face in stretcher bond should raise suspicions that it was built as a heated wall. In another example (also partly collapsed) the inner, but not the outer, face of the external wall was in rat-trap bond, presumably to provide a smoother surface inside the flue to facilitate the removal of the inevitable build-up of soot within the cavity.

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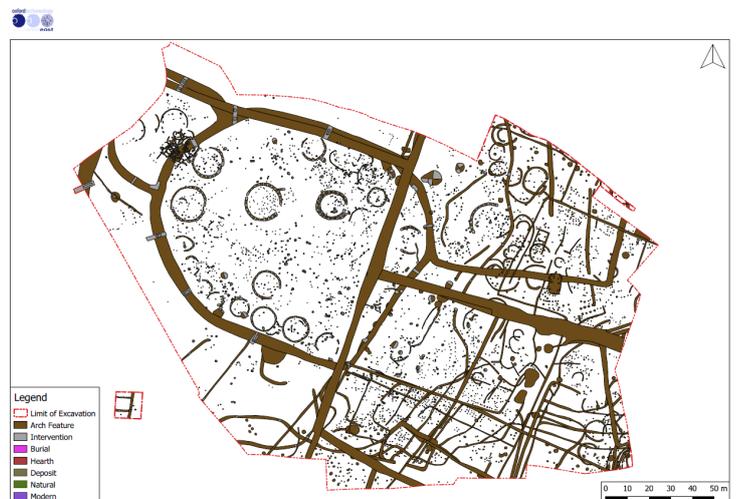
Tye Green, Cressing, Essex: An Iron Age village with evidence of Boudiccan reprisals?

By Maria Medlycott

Two weeks after Oxford Archaeology East began an excavation on a site south of Braintree, the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown hit. They continued to work throughout the growing pandemic. The four-hectare area was investigated for Countryside Properties with RPS Consulting, ahead of residential development. Initial stripping of the topsoil revealed the remains of a large late Iron Age settlement built on a prominent ridge overlooking the Brain Valley. From an early stage of the fieldwork, stratigraphic and artefactual evidence suggested that the settlement was of some importance within the region during the late Iron Age and early Roman periods.

A large defensive enclosure was dug in the late 1st century BC, within which remains of over 17 roundhouses were located alongside other semi-circular structures representing screens or wind breaks. Several of these smaller structures are associated with hearths, with artefacts including a tiny crucible, fragments of copper tap slag and a lead casting sprue. The substantial enclosure ditch and the roundhouses themselves were clearly built to impress; many of the roundhouse gullies are over 0.5m deep and would have enclosed buildings of some size (up to 15m in diameter). The enclosure itself has an avenue-like entrance leading up to the enclosure, aligning with the central roundhouse within, which hints at its prominence within the local landscape.

Following the Roman conquest of AD 43, the settlement continued to expand, with an enlargement of the main enclosure and an increase in activity to the east of the enclosure. At some point during the later 1st century AD, the main enclosure was cleared, while a number of the larger roundhouses were burnt down. It is difficult to be certain prior to further analysis, but there is potential that this represents evidence for reprisals on local important families following the Boudiccan uprising. Alternatively, and somewhat less dramatically, this abandonment of the main enclosure could represent the local elite moving to nearby villa sites and the Tye Green settlement devolving into smaller farmsteads.



Excavation plan © Oxford Archaeology East.

New enclosures were constructed outside the Late Iron Age enclosure, and these became the main settlement focus during the 1st and 2nd centuries. Features include the remains of two granaries, one of which is atypical in form, being constructed of 12 large posts (c 0.8m in diameter) with the charred post remains surviving in the base of several of the post pits. The structure has more similarities to medieval granary stores than a Roman building. It is located at the entrance to the enclosure and could have been built as a storage for grain taxes.

One of the more intriguing aspects of the site is a discrete area at the western end of the original enclosure, which sees activity throughout the life of the settlement and beyond. Here, a mix of intercutting gullies and pits truncate an infilled section of the original enclosure ditch. These pits and gullies contain assemblages currently interpreted as feasting deposits, including large amounts of animal bone and oyster shell, alongside numerous votive offerings.



Bronze cockerel figurine
© Oxford Archaeology East.

In total the discrete area has produced over 100 brooches ranging in date from the 1st century BC to 3rd century AD, ten Iron Age coins (including a gold stater), dozens of Roman coins, hairpins, beads, finger-rings and a copper alloy cockerel figurine. The assemblage is yet to be analysed by specialists but initial interpretations include the potential for a link to the Cult of Mercury, the Roman god of communication and commerce, among other things. The gully features themselves could represent the remains of a multiple variations of a shrine built over two centuries, suggesting that the area was held in special regard by its inhabitants well into the mid-Roman period. Comparisons can be made to the late Iron Age village shrine at the Airport Catering Site, Stansted Airport which continued to receive offerings into the Roman period, long after the shrine and the village had been abandoned.

Assessment work will be ongoing for the next year but we can already see that the site has produced one of the most significant assemblages of late Iron Age pottery from Essex in recent years, along with the important metalwork assemblage. The site has also been filmed for next year's Digging for Britain BBC TV series, so stay tuned for further details.

Thanks are due to Patrick Moan, Senior Project Manager for Oxford Archaeology East for supplying this report. All images are © Oxford Archaeology East.

Essex seen from elsewhere

By Michael Leach

a) St Martin's, Colchester.

Closed in 1953, it was stripped and blacked out in 1957 for use as a theatre, very much to the detriment of its external appearance. This project failed, as did various other proposals for civic and cultural uses, and in 1995 it passed into the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. It has recently been sold to the Antiochian Orthodox Church for use as a place of worship, so will return to its origin function after a rather tortuous and somewhat neglected history. It remains Grade II* listed.

b) Convent of the Missionary

Franciscan Sisters at Bocking is to close down. It consists of a C18 house and a linked complex of 1898-9 buildings designed by J F Bentley, the architect of Westminster Cathedral. These are described by James Bettley as a fine and original composition. The sanctuary fittings were designed by the same architect. A recent attempt to upgrade the chapel to Grade II* listing failed and it will doubtless be a challenge to find a new and appropriate use for these buildings.

c) St Mary's, Wanstead.

For some time, the future of this magnificent C18 church of 1787-90 by Thomas Hardwick (built to match the splendours of the adjoining Wanstead House) has been in doubt. Recently a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of £72,500 has been obtained to support the PCC delivery of a business plan, and for further engagement with the community. The church retains many original fittings, and the chancel is dominated by a vainglorious monument to Sir Josiah Child, a director of the East India Company (and the first patron of John Morley, whose summerhouse at Halstead is described elsewhere in this newsletter). There is a large wooded churchyard with an unusual and elaborate stone watching hut of 1831, built to house a sentry to deter body snatchers.

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Transporting Books

By Michael Leach

Over the years, I have come across references to transporting books (and much else!) in barrels. A recent reminder came from the excellent new biography of Dr Thomas Plume (1630-1704). After his death, his bequest of books was packed into barrels at his two Kent residences to be sent to their new permanent home in Maldon in Essex. Anyone who has had to move numbers of books will know how remarkably heavy they are. As even a substantially loaded barrel can be rolled with relative ease by one man, this would seem to be an excellent and practical way of transporting them. However rectangular books do not fit neatly into a tapered cylinder, and the act of rolling the barrel would be very damaging to any volumes that were not tightly packed. Presumably a good quantity of packing material would have been stuffed between the books and the side of the barrel to prevent damage in transit or (in the words of antiquarian booksellers) they would have reached their destination seriously “bumped”. Does anyone know what material was used for this?

The Influenza Scourge at Sible Hedingham

By Adrian Corder-Birch

The recent Coronavirus has led to some historians looking back at previous similar pandemics. We are aware of the Black Death of 1348 and the Plague of 1665, but there were also terrible plagues in 1563, 1593, 1625 and 1722. In 1918-19 there was the ‘Spanish Flu’ pandemic, which was the worst international outbreak of influenza ever recorded and killed millions worldwide. Over 200,000 lives were lost in the UK, where the peak was during October and November 1918.

During the last few months we have become used to daily statistics, but these were not available in 1918, partly as a result of reporting restrictions in some European countries towards the end of the First World War. Available sources include burial registers and the occasional newspaper report, but the latter are mainly found after the end of the war. One Essex village badly affected by the ‘Spanish Flu’ was Sible Hedingham and the following is quoted from the ‘Halstead Gazette’ of 20th December 1918:

‘The influenza scourge has been very prevalent in the village and district and many deaths have taken place, casting shadows over many homes. Particularly sad, however, is the sequence of deaths in a circle of friends, that would, had they lived, been the principals in a wedding ceremony. Arrangements had been made by a young couple named Albert Boreham, aged 24 years, living at Washlands Farm, with his parents and employed by Mr. J. C. Goodchild and a young woman named Margaret Boreham of High Street Green, to be married at the parish church. The banns had been published and it was arranged that a young friend named Ernest Everitt should be best man and a sister of the bride, Minnie Boreham, bridesmaid. The wedding however had to be postponed owing to the illness of the bride and very soon other members of the proposed wedding party were attacked. Unfortunately death took place in three cases, Miss. Minnie Boreham, who was 17, dying on November 22nd and Ernest Everitt who was 25, passing away on November 25th. Soon after these sad occurrences the intending bridegroom was taken ill and he too never recovered and passed away on Monday last. The intended bride, we are pleased to state, is better, but three out of the proposed wedding party of four have passed away. Since the late Rector of the parish, the Rev. W. R. Warburton, was buried in September, there have been 28 burials in the parish churchyard, 18 taking place in one week and five in one day. The normal number is from 12 to 16 in twelve months.’

My own family in Sible Hedingham did not escape and this resulted in another very sad story. My uncle, William Dan Corder (1886-1970) was one of the first seven men in Sible Hedingham to volunteer for service when he joined the Essex Regiment in August 1914. By December 1915 he had transferred to the Royal Engineers and served in France for two years. Unfortunately he was shot in 1918, necessitating an operation in a military hospital to remove the bullet, which delayed his return home. When he eventually arrived in Sible Hedingham at the end of November 1918 he was informed, that his fiancé, Bessie Turner had died a few days earlier of the ‘Spanish Flu’. This was a great personal tragedy following which he never married.



Sible Hedingham Church, around 1918.

Bessie Turner (1888-1918) was born at Colne Engaine, the only child of John and Ellen Turner. After leaving school, Bessie was employed as a maid by the Misses Webster at The Bays, Sible Hedingham, where she died on 22nd November 1918 aged 30 years. Her sudden illness and death at the home of her elderly employers caused them great distress. Eleanor Webster died 3rd July 1919 aged 80 and her elder sister, Elizabeth Amelia Webster died 7th March 1920 aged 85 years. They were generous benefactors to many good causes in Sible Hedingham and built the Webster Almshouses in 1884. John and Ellen Turner celebrated their Diamond Wedding on 30th May 1947 and William Corder died 15th November 1970 aged 83 years. Bessie Turner was buried in Earls Colne Churchyard where her father was verger and church clerk for 22 years. Although her abode was recorded as Sible Hedingham she was not included in the statistics for the village.

The Rev. Welby Russell Warburton was buried on 10th September 1918 aged 61 years. One of those officiating was Bishop Edmund Powell of Castle Hedingham. During the interregnum at Sible Hedingham, Bishop Powell conducted another nine burials before the end of the year, including three on 26th November and another three on 29th November. Other officiating ministers included the Rev. Steward Fisher of Liston who conducted seven, the Rev. George Monson, minister of the Congregational Chapel at Castle Hedingham six and the Rev. James Grinnell of Sible Hedingham Baptist Church one. In November 1918, two were conducted by the Rev. Edward Gibson, who was rector of Stock for 37 years until 1914 and later assisted at Castle and Sible Hedingham. He died very soon afterwards on 7th December 1918 aged 74 years. Among the burials conducted by Bishop Powell, was that of Minnie Boreham on 26th November and Ernest Everitt on 29th November. The funeral of Albert Boreham on 19th December was conducted by Rev. Fisher.

Bishop Powell also participated at the funerals of the Rev. George Samuel Wilson at Upper Yeldham and the Rev. William Paxton Thorp at Great Maplestead both during December 1918. The burial registers for other nearby villages during 1918 indicate that they were not hit quite so badly by the flu epidemic as Sible Hedingham.

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Apotropaic Plants

By Michael Leach

There has recently been much interest in the tradition of hiding objects within buildings, or making special marks on their surfaces, to ward off evil, or to protect from fire. A note in a recent *SPAB magazine* shows that the humble houseleek, *Sempervivum tectorum*, which is drought resistant and grows well on roofs without any soil, has a long history of being planted for its protective value. This property was noted by William Bullein, rector of the Suffolk parish of Blaxhall from 1550 to 1554, who wrote 'old writers do call it lovis barba, Jupiter's beard, and held an opinion superstitiously that in what house soever it groweth, no lightening or tempest can take place to doe any harme'. This belief had a long history and lingered on into the twentieth century when it was considered that misfortune would accompany anyone who failed to take the plant with them when moving to a new home. The houseleek is not native to Britain, does not self propagate easily, and most surviving roof examples are believed to have been planted deliberately. It was valued by herbalists for its mild therapeutic properties.

It is not clear how strong this tradition was in Essex. Gibson, in his *Flora of Essex* of 1869, noted only thirteen occurrences in the county. Trimen and Dyer's *Flora of Middlesex* of 1869 recorded a few examples, mostly growing on walls rather than on roofs. As a plant that would have retained moisture in its root system, it might not be regarded favourably by modern owners of historic roofs, but it has a long life if left unmolested. It would be interesting to know if there are any surviving Essex examples.

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SPAB Magazine, Autumn 2020

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David Clarke and the 'Green Lady of St Osyth'

By Philip J. Wise

In March 2001, the late David Clarke, former Curator of what was then the Colchester and Essex Museum, wrote to the author regarding a medieval wall painting known as the 'Green Lady of St Osyth' after the colour of her dress. Clarke thought it might be helpful to put on record the background to the story of the acquisition of the 'Green Lady' by the museum although, in fact, he had previously published an account in the *Essex Journal* in 1987. This is, however, rather formal in tone unlike the letter which reveals something of its writer's personality and it is therefore felt to be of interest to present an extract here. Before coming to the letter itself, it is necessary to provide some background information on the 'Green Lady'.

The fullest study in print of the 'Green Lady' appeared in 1997, in an essay by Dr Pamela Tudor-Craig on the artistic context of the Wilton Diptych. The 'Green Lady' was originally part of a decorative scheme at Park Farm, a hall house at St Osyth dating back to c. 1350. It was associated with at least two other paintings of human figures, including the Virgin painted on wood. The latter formed part of a wooden screen with a door opening set between a large room and a smaller side room. The paintings are dated to the late 14th century and it has been suggested that they decorated a private chapel created for the abbot of St Osyth following his promotion, including the granting of the right to wear a mitre, by the pope in 1397. The paintings first came to the attention of scholars in 1918 when the Virgin was acquired by the Colchester and Essex Museum. At that time Park Farm was a working farm; in the 1911 Census it was the home of Wilson Blyth, his wife, nine children and a domestic servant. According to a Blyth family descendant, Wilson and his wife used the decorated room as their bedroom.

Later, in 1954, Park Farm was acquired by Somerset de Chair (1911-97), a former MP, art collector and author, as part of the St Osyth Priory estate. De Chair removed the wooden screen (or 'archway' in Clarke's letter) and the Green Lady in about 1966 to the gatehouse of St Osyth Priory where he installed them in one of the bedrooms. David Clarke takes up the story:

"I first saw the Green Lady when I was invited [to] St. Osyth Priory by Somerset de Chair. It was then on the floor and it appeared that he had removed it from Park Farm and intended to re-erect it in the Priory along with the archway to improve its visitor attraction. He wanted us to return the wooden panel, which, of course adjoins the archway. I feel very strongly that things in public care should stay there, and advised the [Museum] Committee that if the whole lot was returned to Park Farm and some form of trust was established, we should do it, but not otherwise.

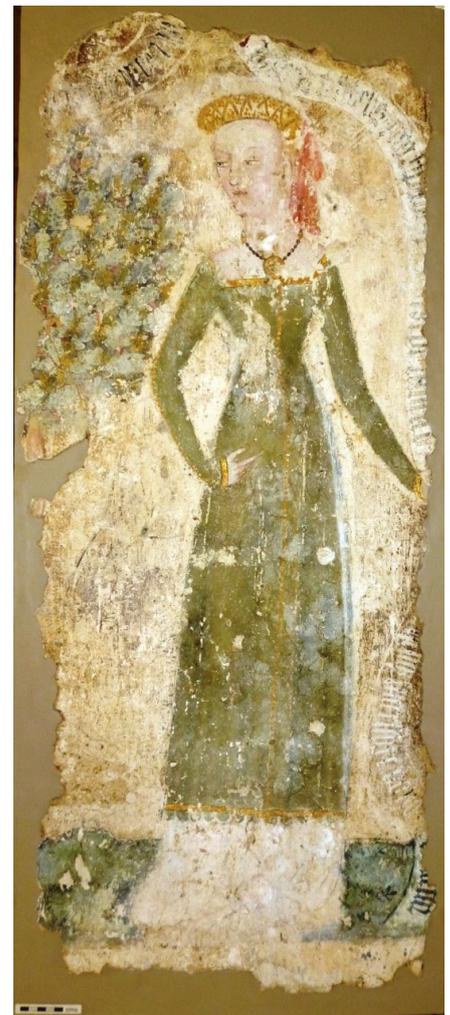
There the matter rested until one day [in 1984] I noticed the sale at the Priory. Time was short, and we got there on a Friday. I had said to Mark (Davies) that it would be awful if the painting was sold. We bought a catalogue (£10) and trailed round the house. The Rich family portraits we could of course do nothing about. But in the very last room was the green lady, nailed into the partition. The catalogue said merely 'English School', though it transpired afterwards that the provenance was known. From then on it was all systems go, as the sale was the following week. I was very lucky to be able to get various promises, and I can't remember if Mark did the bidding or if someone else did. Next day we had to get it out of the wall, which was an awful job, as it was fixed with 6-inch nails.

The Institute of Archaeology kindly offered to consolidate the plaster, and removed the heavy backing. ... Lady Wedgwood (Pamela Tudor-Craig) was very interested ... we went out to Park Farm and saw photos of the other paintings, and how the panel, arch and plaster had originally been arranged. We felt that the remaining paintings did not justify exposing while the farm was still in use...'

The Green Lady, the Virgin and Park Farm are still awaiting full publication in which all the sources of evidence, both architectural and historical, are brought together. As a result, several mysteries remain. Where the paintings created at the time Park Farm was built or were they added later? And, as Clarke noted at the end of his letter to the writer, 'who owned Park Farm c 1400 and could afford a first class artist'? Lastly, who is 'The Green Lady of St Osyth'?

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Colchester Museums

George Buckler (1811-1886): A new discovery about the author of *Twenty-Two of the Churches of Essex*

By James Bettley

Michael Leach wrote a perceptive piece on George Buckler's *Twenty-two of the Churches of Essex* in the ESAH Newsletter, Winter 2013, prefaced with the little that was known of Buckler's life and work. A chance discovery in the ledger of the Braintree builders William and S. C. Parmenter that was recently acquired by the Essex Record Office with the help of the Friends of Historic Essex (A15342, D/F 88/4) – that Buckler was the architect for the National (now Primary) School at White Notley – led me to see what more might now be known about Buckler, given the wider availability of online resources and, in particular, the British Newspaper Archive.

Michael wondered, perfectly reasonably, why Buckler showed an interest in Essex given that 'he was born and lived all his life south of the Thames in Bermondsey and Kennington'. This turns out to be not quite true. Although the censuses for 1851 and 1861 do indeed show that he lived in Kennington (in 1861 at 2 York Place, the address given in the dedication of *Twenty-Two Churches*, dated December 1856), an advertisement in the *Essex Herald* on 30 September 1851 and the *Chelmsford Chronicle* on 3 October, repeated weekly to 7 November, announced that 'Mr George Buckler, architect, surveyor, & land surveyor, has an office at his Residence, Hill House, Shenfield, Brentwood, for the practice of his profession in its various branches'. In the same paper, on 23 March 1855, he announced that he was moving to Ingatestone. In between, the *Essex Standard*, 26 July 1854, carried an announcement of the birth of a son on 23 July (baptised Frank Walter George at Shenfield on 17 August).

Buckler first showed his interest in Essex churches by writing a letter to the *Essex Herald*, 25 May 1852, commenting on a report on the reopening of Mucking following restoration that had appeared the previous week. In his letter he wrote that he had seen the church 'in a state of ruin' in 1850, and concluded by saying that 'if this account... prove acceptable... I may be induced occasionally to bring before your notice other points of interest in the churches of this county.' He needed little inducement. Starting with the *Essex Herald* of 8 June 1852 and the *Chelmsford Chronicle* of 11 June, and concluding in November 1855, Buckler wrote a series of long letters published in both papers on a total of 41 churches. These formed the basis for *Twenty-Two Churches*, published initially in parts (advertisement in the *Essex Standard*, 25 April 1856), and as a complete book in December (review in *Essex Standard*, 12 December 1856).



White Notley Primary School © James Bettley

Obviously the letters (which were not illustrated) covered more churches than were published in the book, including two, Cranham and Widford, that were completely rebuilt later in the century. Conversely, the book includes four churches (Colchester St Runwald, Stanway All Saints, Stanway St Albright, and Little Braxted) that appear not to have been the subject of letters. That takes the total number of Essex churches about which Buckler wrote to 46. Perhaps he was hoping to publish a second volume.

Michael recorded Buckler's contributions to meetings of the Essex Archaeological Society, but although he was not a member by the time the first volume of the Society's *Transactions* was published in 1858, the *Essex Standard*, 19 November 1852, lists him as one of the members of the Provisional Committee of the nascent Society. By 1856, as we have seen, he had moved back to London, and in 1861 the census gives his occupation as clerk in HM Office of Works; and a note in the ERO, D/P 183/6/8, describes him as 'Architect in the Board of Works' in 1872. We can only assume that he was unable to make a go of 'his profession in its various branches' in Essex.

Only the school at White Notley has yet come to light as a building he designed. (The museum at Wisbech, 1846-7, said in the listing description to be by George Buckler, is credited in the recent Cambridgeshire volume of the Buildings of England to his elder - and, it must be said, much more talented - brother John Chessell Buckler.) His name appears in the press in connection with the Ingatestone Building Society (*Chelmsford Chronicle*, 29 October 1852), in an advertisement for the sale of building ground in Brentwood (*Essex Herald*, 4 July 1854), and on a couple of occasions as an expert witness in disputes relating to buildings (*Essex Standard*, 22 September 1854; *Chelmsford Chronicle*, 17 November 1854). An enclosure map of 1854 in the Essex Record Office (Q/RDC 47B; copy in the National Archives, MAF1/996) is also his work. But taken together these do not provide evidence of a flourishing practice, and salaried employment back in London must have seemed a safer way of providing for his growing family.

Buckler did not lose all interest in Essex buildings, because between August 1864 and March 1865 he wrote a series of twelve letters to the *Essex Standard* on the topic of Colchester Castle, in particular arguing that it was a Roman structure. This culminated in a book, *Colchester Castle: a Roman building*, published in 1876 in time for the visit to Colchester of the Royal Archaeological Institute, in the course of which the eminent antiquary J. H. Parker pronounced Buckler 'insane': 'for a modern architect, like Mr Buckler, to say it was Roman was childish nonsense' (*Essex Standard*, 11 August 1876). Either Buckler or his publisher, Benham & Harrison, seem to have taken the view that any publicity was good publicity, and quoted Parker's remarks in advertisements for the book (*Essex Standard*, 25 August 1876).

Price 5s., Cloth, Lettered, with Illustrations,
COLCHESTER CASTLE
A ROMAN BUILDING.
By GEORGE BUCKLER.
THIS Book shows that the Castle is NOT NORMAN.
At the Meeting of the Royal Archæological Institute
it was spoken of as a Book by a modern and living
Architect who is so insane as to suppose that the Castle is
Roman. Mr. Jenkins was to be excused for supposing it
to be Roman, but for a modern Architect, like Mr. Buckler,
to say it is Roman, is childish nonsense. (Vide *The Essex*
Standard, Aug. 11, 1876, page 3, col. 5.) [1716
Colchester: BENHAM & HARRISON, 15, High Street.
London: SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, & Co., Stationers' Hall Court.

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Buckler retired from the Office of Works in 1876 and devoted the remainder of his life to 'antiquarian and literary pursuits', in particular Colchester Castle, producing supplements to his 1876 book in 1877, 1879 and 1882, in response to his critics. When he died suddenly on 2 September 1884, at the age of 74, the *Essex Standard* reported that 'with the death of the late Mr George Buckler there disappears, we fear, one of the last of the believers in the Roman origin of Colchester Castle' (11 September 1886). Many in Colchester preferred to think that the Castle was Roman and not Norman. He bequeathed the results of his researches, in the form of 'a voluminous manuscript', not to Colchester but to the British Museum (now British Library, Add MS 33210-33212, Add MS 33213 A-D).

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Avenues of Discovery

By Nigel Brown

Mentioning 'Goodbye to All That' in my president's piece, reminded me that whilst at university in the late '70s I'd looked up a German publication of a large Late Bronze Age hoard from eastern France. It had been discovered and subsequently published, during the First World War.

I was surprised that such a thing could happen in the midst of such a terrible war, but on reading Graham Clark's *Archaeology and Society* I soon learnt the reason. In a chapter on 'Avenues of Discovery' Clark has a sub heading 'War' noting with very dark irony; 'War is another form of human activity which brings antiquities to light incidentally, though conditions for observation are seldom ideal. Modern total war is more favourable because it involves increased disturbance of soil.' He goes on to say 'Even the trench warfare of 1914-18 yielded its quota of finds. On the German side the recovery of archaeological finds in the course of military activity was organised on an official basis. When discoveries were made in the field they were automatically reported to General Headquarters, who saw to it that museum authorities behind the lines were informed and given every facility for investigation.' (Clark, 1969, 55).

On the British Side things were rather more ad hoc, Clark cites the example of Captain Francis Buckley who collected, and subsequently published, palaeolithic flints recovered from the parapets of trenches. Locally here in Essex, one of our most important Early Bronze Age burials was revealed in 1914 by soldiers digging trenches in Rochford. Recording conditions were not ideal and the British army lacking any formal mechanism for reporting such discoveries, it is fortunate that Colchester Museum was able to purchase the finds from the burial (which included amber beads some covered with gold foil) from a local collector for £2.

Perhaps the most long-lasting archaeological impact of the First World War came through the widespread use of aerial photography for military reconnaissance, which revealed the enormous potential of air photographs for archaeology. After the war aerial photography began to be extensively applied to archaeological investigations. In this country the use of aerial photography in archaeology was particularly championed by O. G. S. Crawford, who had served in the Royal Flying Corps carrying out photographic reconnaissance. In the 20's Crawford demonstrated the archaeological potential of aerial photography, in the pages of the *Illustrated London News*, the *Observer* (Hauser, 2008, 79) the book *Wessex from the Air* (written with Alexander Keiller) and the journal *Antiquity* which he founded in 1927 (our Society has full run of *Antiquity* in its library).

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Clark, G. (1969). *Archaeology and Society*. Barnes and Noble Everyday Handbooks, paperback reprint of the 1957 revised edition

Hauser, K. (2008). *Bloody Old Britain: O.G.S. Crawford and the archaeology of modern life*. Granta

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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.

Programme of Meetings 2021

Wednesday 17th March - **Cancelled**

Tour of Miss Willmott's Garden, Warley Place, Brentwood. Miss Willmott was an outstanding gardener, the first woman invited to serve on an R.H.S committee. Her famous garden fell into ruin after her death in 1934 and is being restored by the Essex Wildlife Trust. Millions of daffodils still bloom in the spring.

Wednesday 14th April

'Clock, Beer, and Bad Water - a Walk along Stoneham Street, Coggeshall' with local historian Trevor Disley.

Friday 28th May

Nick Wickenden, recently retired from Chelmsford Museum, will lead us on a walking tour of Pleshey and its Castle.

Saturday 26th June

Annual General Meeting. Special Collections Room, Albert Sloman Library, University of Essex.

Wednesday 14th July

Paul Sealey, for many years head of Archaeology at Colchester Museum, will pick his favourite exhibits in the museum and explain their provenance and significance.

Saturday 6th November

Annual Symposium at Chelmsford. Speakers will include Sophia Adams of Glasgow University who will talk on the Havering Hoard and Martin Astell of the Essex Record Office.

Saturday 13th November

Essex Industrial Archaeology Group (E.I.A.G). Annual meeting at Chelmsford. Speaker: Dr Catherine Pearson - the Frederick Roberts archive of industrial history - Marconi and Hoffmann.

Please note: Covid regulations may force the cancellation or postponement of these events.

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.

It is very important that the Society can keep in communication with you regularly. Quite apart from the present crisis, but also in the future when news will be distributed electronically. **If you have an email address will you please email it to our Membership Secretary, Martin Stuchfield, at martinstuchfield@pentlowhall.uk**