



NEWSLETTER

August 2024

Letter from the Editor

Hello everyone! Welcome to the August Newsletter.

This edition features a brief summary of our work at Copped Hall so far this summer as well as the date for our upcoming WEAG Members dig. There is a reviews of our recent Prittlewell burial lecture and part 2 of Essex Islands

WEAG Members dig dates: Aug 24th –Sep 1st

Details on page 2

Next year's lecture program is on page 2



Andrew Madley and John Avis preparing the archaeology room

What's on locally?

For information on museum and local historical societies visit.

<http://www.weag.org.uk/events/whats-on-locally>

Recommended Exhibition

The Princely Burial "The Prittlewell Prince"

This is a permanent display and was the subject of one of our most recent lectures and is reviewed in this newsletter.

Entry is free.



**SOUTHEND
MUSEUMS**
CENTRAL MUSEUM
Victoria Avenue
Southend-on-Sea
Essex
SS2 6EW



Opening Times

Monday: Closed
Tuesday: Closed
Wednesday: 11-5
Thursday: 11-5
Friday: 11-5
Saturday: 11-5
Sunday: 11-5
Bank Holidays: Closed

WEAG CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Lecture Program

We plan to run a mixed program of in-person and zoom lectures and where possible hybrid meetings. All meetings are on the second Monday of the month at 7.30 at Woodford County High School for Girls, (WHCS) unless otherwise stated.

For Lecture Meetings shown as 'Zoom', the Zoom details for that meeting will be circulated to WEAG members a few days before the meeting. Non-members are welcome to join in the Zoom meetings (for a £2 contribution).

Lectures are accessible via Zoom at 7:15pm

Contact membership@weag.org.uk for more details.

2024-25

Sep 9th Robin Denslom. The Romans at the Battle of Teutoberg Forest (WCHS)

Oct 7th Gary Ford. Living with the White Horse: Excavations at Three Ridgeway Hillforts (Zoom)

Nov 11th Tom Cromwell. Excavations at a Roman Villa (WCHS)

Dec 2nd Short talks by members

Jan 13th Mike Parker Pearson. Aspects of Stonehenge (WCHS)

Feb 10th Ian Jones. Roman Pisa (WCHS)

Mar 10th AGM and talk from WEAG President Harvey Sheldon

Apr 14th Georgina Green. Sir Charles Raymond of Valentines and the East India Company, or: Shipwrecks! (WCHS)

May 17th Sam Lucy. East Anglia in the 4th and 5th Centuries AD (WCHS)

Jun 9th Ken Crowe. Victoria County History of Essex update (Zoom)

Copped Hall excavations 2024. Taster Weekends and forthcoming members dig.



Another good year for the WEAG and The Copped Hall Trust Archaeology project (CHTAP). Student bookings were very high, so much so that we had to add an extra weekend. The focus of the archaeology this year has been on the construction and demolition features of the retaining wall and associated features, these have produced some interesting results which

Melinda demonstrating Resistivity survey techniques.

we will investigate further during the forthcoming nine day WEAG members dig. We also put in a trench by the standing loggia to investigate the internal walls of the west wing. These have produced mixed results suggesting that the internal walls were probably of a much shallower foundation than the

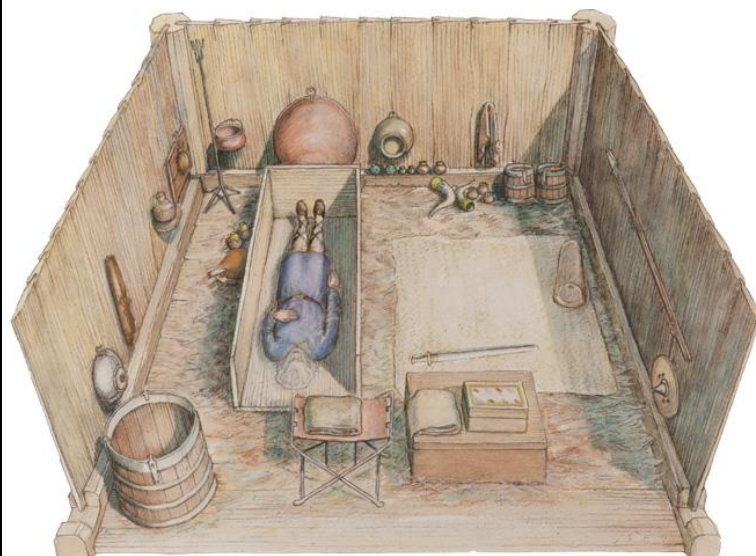
external walls. Further work will also be carried out in this trench during the WEAG dig as foundations found on the southern part of the east wing appear to be from a different phase of construction, suggesting as we have long expected that the range of rooms along the east wing was built in several phases. Along with that already mentioned the main focus of the WEAG dig will be on the staircase (at least two) associated with the retaining wall on the change of level, the three paths along its base built over a number of centuries. Work will also continue in the trench at the top of the change of level to investigate possible paths and garden features we have seen in this year's geophysics. Up at the Georgian house, WEAG is working with the CHT to update the displays in both the upstairs and downstairs display rooms. WEAG would like to again thank the CHT for their continued invaluable support. Work on the finds will

continue over the winter in our third floor room. I hope that many of you will be able to take part in the excavations. We are also looking for help to man the rooms on Open Day, engaging with the public and telling the



story of Copped Hall and WEAG. If any of you would like to help with finds processing etc. over the winter months please don't hesitate to contact us, we had a good season of work on the finds last year and with the new room now available this should make the work even more profitable. Looking forward to seeing many of you soon. Lee J on behalf of WEAG & CHTAP.

The WEAG team Grace, Sue and Theresa explaining wet sieving and environmental finds to the students.



The Prittlewell Princely Burial

Our April lecture was "**The Prittlewell Prince: an Anglo Saxon royal tomb**" by *Ken Crowe*. Ken was formally Curator of Southend museum and is the author of a number of books on the area. Ken gave us a talk on the "The Prittlewell Prince" as the burial was to become known. The early Anglo-Saxon burial was discovered by MOLA in 2003, during archaeological mitigation at Prittlewell,

The burial chamber of The Prittlewell Prince.

north of Southend-on-Sea. The excavations were carried out ahead of a road-widening scheme. Earlier excavations had indicated Anglo-Saxon burials in the area as well as a number of other discoveries of archaeological interest across multiple periods.

MOLA's excavation revealed a timber lined room (chamber). The first to be excavated to modern archaeological standards, this Saxon Princely burial has allowed thorough academic scrutiny and produced unparalleled results. The burial chamber was of wooden construction with lavish furniture. Ken went on to talk us through some of the more astonishing finds; rare copper-alloy vessels hung on hooks on two walls, and numerous rare drinking vessels and buckets of glass metal and wood were found as were weapons and a lyre well enough preserved to produce a highly accurate modern replica, a unique iron folding stool, and the remains of a small box



containing a silver spoon and other personal items. Two gold crosses found on his eyes have resulted in conversations about the Prince's religious beliefs and have been used by some as an aid to his probable identification. These artefacts would have acted as symbols of the elite occupant's status and as provisions for the afterlife.

If you wish to read more about this fascinating subject two books are available.

The first is a full account of the excavations produced by the MOLA team and the second contains all of the specialist reports.

The Anglo-Saxon Princely Burial at Prittlewell, Southend-on-Sea Sue Hirst and Christopher Scull. Museum of London Archaeology 2019.

The Prittlewell Princely Burial: Excavations at Priory Crescent, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, 2003: 73 (MoLAS Monograph) 2019. Lyn Blackmore et al.



Essex Islands Part 2: Roman



Five principal island groups

1. The Walton Backwaters
2. The Mersea Group
3. The crouch and Blackwater group
4. Essex Archipelago
5. Canvey Group

In our last article we looked at some of the more interesting prehistoric features to be found on Essex islands. In this article we will concentrate on the Roman period. Of all the Roman sites to be found on the numerous Essex islands the

one that probably springs to mind for most people is the Mersea Barrow. This is a flat-topped conical mound 7m high, 35m in diameter at the base and 5m at the top on the eastern side of the island. It was excavated by Hazzelden Warren on behalf of the Morant Club in 1912. The mound contained the cremated bones of a male aged c.35–45 in a globular glass vessel. The vessel had been placed inside a square lead box made of five pieces of lead cut from a larger sheet and joined together without solder and a lid of two oak boards. This ossuary then sat inside a brick built cist chamber. Modern scientific tests carried out in the early 2010s revealed new



Mersea Island Barrow

evidence that would have astounded its early

excavators. The bones were anointed with a mixture of pine resin and frankincense but no other grave goods or furniture were found. The new dating suggests that the mound was constructed and the internment took place in the Antonine period (c140-190). The finds can be seen at Mersea Museum.

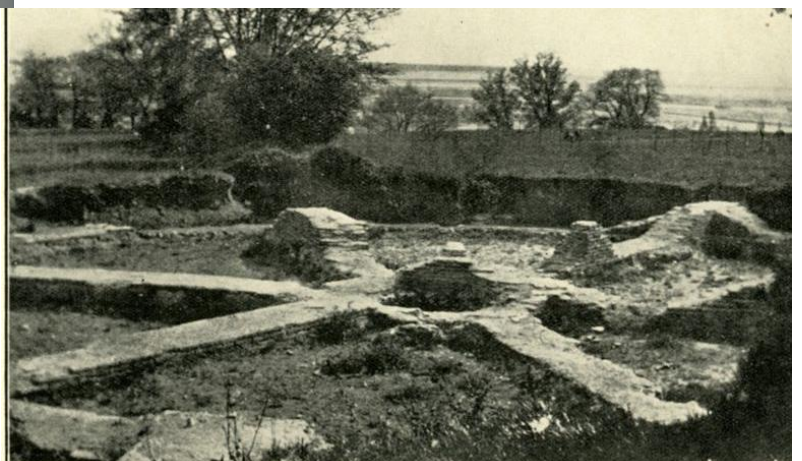
The island was once home to an even more impressive burial mound, known as the Wheel Tomb. This tomb, on



Cremation and glass vessel from Mersea Barrow.

the western side of the island was destroyed in the 1960s. This monument was of a type that was based on the mausoleum of Augustus in Rome and as such would have been one of the most impressive burial monuments in Roman Britain, a statement of power clear to all saw it. Also in West Mersea is one of the largest

West Mersea's wheel tomb



known Roman villas in Essex. Its vast footprint sits under the church, its graveyard and a number of surrounding buildings and roads. Several of its pavements have been discovered over the years, which allow us to plot the basic layout of the villa. Roman coins have also been found on Ray Island and it is believed that the Roman road from the mainland to Mersea crossed Ray. On Cobmarsh Island, also a few hundred yards off the Mersea coast, Roman pottery has been found including a copy of a Samian bowl made of Hadham Ware.

A hoard of about 657 antoniniani was discovered at East Mersea in about 1980 with the latest coins being in the range of 270 to 274. The burial of coins seems to have been more common in periods of unrest or uncertainty. The 270's was a difficult time in eastern England; because of civil war in the Roman Empire and the forming of the Gaelic Empire, serious raiding occurred along the East coast. On a local level the amphitheatre at Colchester also fell out of use at this time. A number of hoards of this date have been found in Colchester. Over a hundred years ago, one or possibly two, hoards of this date were found although the precise find spot is not known. Also over 6,000 antoniniani were found in three pottery vessels at Gosbecks in 1983, the latest coins dating to between AD 270 and 274. In 2010 the Hyderabad hoard was discovered in the Colchester barracks of that name. The hoard is made up of 1,247 antoniniani found inside a small grey-ware pot. A date of AD 271 for its deposition is suggested by a coin of Victorinus (269-271). Mersea is experiencing similar troubles to those of her powerful neighbour (approx. 7miles).



Mosaic from Mersea Villa

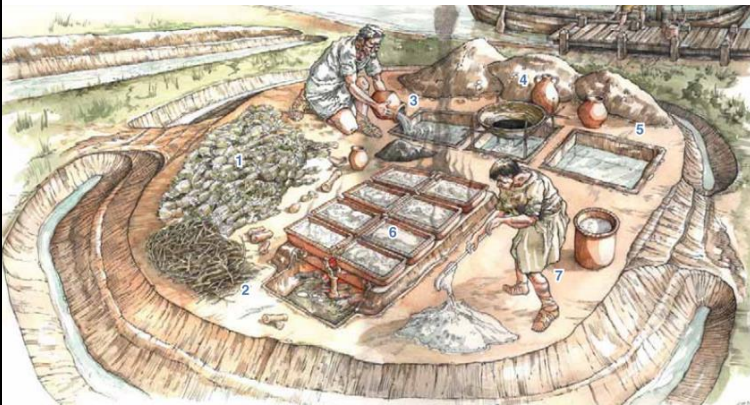


Illustration of Roman Salt production

Foulness was also once home to two large Roman burial mounds, one thought to have been destroyed in the 1880s the other, at Little Shelford in the south-west of the Island, was excavated in the 1890s. This consisted of a cemetery where cremation urns were recovered, some with evidence of human remains. It now sits deep in the heart of an MOD firing range (so is little accessed!). Archaeological excavation of the site has revealed that farming, fishing and in particular the

cultivation of oysters was taking place, but it would appear the production of salt was the main industry in this area at this time. The pottery excavated gives us a date for occupation of

the late first century AD. The site appears to be abandoned circa 280-230 AD due to the flooding caused by rising sea levels. The local Heritage Centre also houses a good collection of Roman pottery and coins from various sites across the island. Salt production was also important on Canvey Island and fantastic results were

achieved in the 1993 excavations on the Leigh Beck Marsh by the Rochford Hundred Field Archaeology Group led by our late former colleague Dr Neil Faulkner. Also worthy of note are the causeway to Osea Island and the remarkable survival of the Roman fortlet on Upper Horse in the Thames.

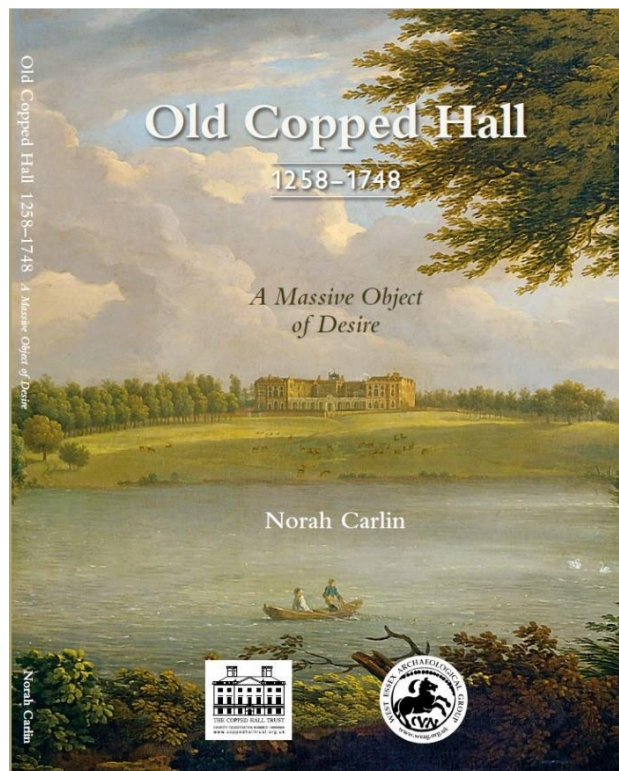
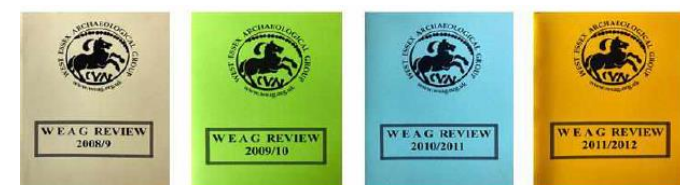
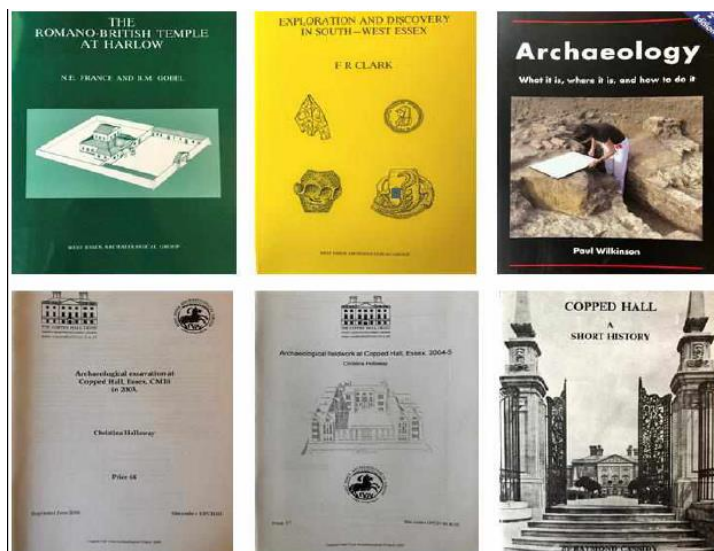
Lee Joyce and Claire Hooper



Roman fortlet on Upper Horse Island

BOOK SALE

	RRP	Special Offer Price
Old Copped Hall from 1258 to 1748	£25.00	£20.00
The Romano-British Temple at Harlow	£ 7.00	£ 3.50
Exploration and Discovery in South West Essex	£ 7.00	£ 3.50
Archaeology – what it is and how to do it	£ 9.50	£ 8.50
Copped Hall Report 2003	£ 4.00	£ 2.50
Copped Hall Report 2004 / 5	£ 7.00	£ 2.50
Copped Hall – A Short History (Cassidy)	£ 2.50	£ 2.50
Annual Review 2008/2009	£ 0.50	£ 0.50
Annual Review 2009/2010	£ 0.50	£ 0.50
Annual Review 2010/2011	£ 0.50	£ 0.50
Annual Review 2011/2012	£ 0.50	£ 0.50
Wanstead Park – Revealed (DVD)	£ 3.00	£ 1.50
Wanstead Park – Living Park (DVD)	£ 3.00	£ 1.50
The Wanstead Archive (DVD)	£ 3.00	£ 1.50



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