



Letter from the Editor

Hello everyone! Welcome to the December Newsletter.

Wishing you all a very merry Christmas. This edition features a brief summary of our work at Copped Hall this year, part 3 of Essex Islands and a note about our Christmas get together.

From the archive
WEAG at work 2008-9



What's on locally?

For information on museum and local historical societies visit.

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

Recommended Exhibition



Opening Times

Daily: 10.00–17.00
(Fridays 20.30)

Tickets Adults from £22

Camel caravans crossing desert dunes, merchants trading silks and spices at bazaars – these are the images that come to mind

when we think of the Silk Roads. But the reality goes far beyond this.

Rather than a single trade route from East to West, the Silk Roads were made up of overlapping networks linking communities across Asia, Africa and Europe, from East Asia to Britain, and from Scandinavia to Madagascar. This major exhibition unravels how the journeys of people, objects and ideas that formed the Silk Roads shaped cultures and histories.





WEAG CALENDAR OF EVENTS



Lecture Program

We 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, (WCHS) 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

Jan 13th Mike Parker Pearson. Aspects of Stonehenge (WCHS) 'The Rudge Lecture is open to the public and free of charge - please tell friends and family'

Feb 10th Ian Jones. Roman Pisa (WCHS)

Mar 10th AGM and talk from WEAG President Harvey Sheldon (WCHS)

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

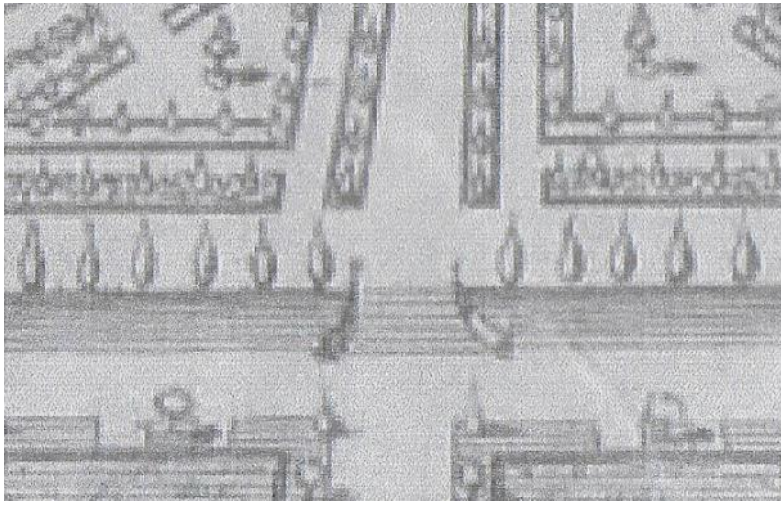


Archaeology at Copped Hall 2024

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 were investigated further during the nine day WEAG members dig and subsequent Sundays. 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 these internal walls were of a much shallower foundation than the external walls found on the southern part of the east wing, suggesting, as we have long suspected, that the range of rooms along the east wing was built in several phases. The main focus of the WEAG dig was on the staircases (at least two) associated with the retaining wall on the change of level, and the three paths along its base built over a number of centuries. Work also continued 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. During the excavations we uncovered some wonderful finds, including a large number of medieval floor tiles associated with the house in the 14thc. However perhaps the most useful find of the summer was a clay tobacco pipe, this was recovered from one of the lowest levels investigated and gives us good dating evidence for the construction of the first of our two staircases and possibly also for the terracing of the garden. The pipe is of a well-known high-status type with a distinct makers mark. The mark is in the shape of a gauntlet and this was the symbol of the Gauntlet family who were regarded as among the finest pipe makers in the country and were bought by members of the nobility such as the Marquis of Hertford. Pipes made by the Gauntlet





Close up of staircase (2) from 1735 Farmer drawing and students excavating the same.



family were in high demand and this meant that soon their pipes were being imitated by other makers right down to the bowl shape and use of their mark. These imitation pipes, of which ours is one, were being made in London by at least one maker and have been recovered from a number of sites in the capital as well as being regularly recovered from the Thames.

The fact that these pipes are copies does not mean they are not of a high quality similar to the original and the fact they are present on a high status site



like our should not be a surprise as they have also been recorded at Nonsuch Palace where they are dated to circa. 1660.

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.

Lee Joyce

Message Board

WEAG Walks.

It has been a number of years since WEAG has had an organised walk. Once a regular feature of the WEAG calendar these seem to have fallen by the wayside. We are thinking of reviving the WEAG walk if there is enough interest. Vicky has suggested kicking off with a 3-5 mile walk starting from Copped Hall one Saturday in Jan or Feb. Let membership@weag.org.uk know if you are interested.

Membership Renewal

Vicky has also asked to remind everyone that subs are due on 1 January. If you don't have a standing order set up could you please arrange to make a bank payment. Alternatively Vicky will be at the January meeting if you wish to pay subscriptions directly to her. (Details are in the membership form online)

Construction of the M11

We have had a request from a PHD student at UCL Bartlett School of Architecture who is studying the construction of the M11. She is looking for anyone who took part in WEAG's work on the site in the early 1970s or has any memories of the project. If you can help please contact membership (details below) or phone a member of the committee and we will pass the information/ details on.



Christmas get-together



At our December meeting we enjoyed our annual WEAG Christmas Party. A lovely spread was brought by the members, sweet and savoury and more than we could ever hope to consume, along with some great bottles of 'plonk.' As every year we also had our bookstall where members could purchase second hand books at a very reasonable price.



As has become the custom in recent years all the talks were given by group members on subjects of their choosing. The first talk was given by Lee, who gave an update on this year's excavations at Copped Hall and all the progress that has been made.

Our next speaker was Odette. She talked about the re-discovery of 'King Harold's Battle Axe' in the collections of Epping Forest District Museum and shared how it is now on display and can be seen free of charge at the Museum in Sun Street, Waltham Abbey, (EN9 1EL) Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 10am to 4pm.. If you want to read more the axe was also featured in November's issue of Current Archaeology.



Allestree Fisher then talked about the Regina tombstone in South Shields. He talked about the origins of Baratis, a Palmyrene who set up the tombstone and Regina a freed slave, and his wife, who came from Hertfordshire. The tomb stone is noteworthy because,



along with the standard Latin Text is a Palmyrene inscription. To round of the evening's entertainment Alex then gave out some quizzes which were enjoyed by all!



Essex Islands Part 3: Medieval

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 the Roman history of the many islands along the Essex coast. In this article we will move forward in time to the medieval. Among the most productive early Saxon endeavours was the large scale fishing carried out

along the intertidal waters. Recent erosion has

revealed extensive remains of a number of Saxon fish traps some of them still surviving at several hundred meter long.

The largest group of these so far discovered are at Collins creek, either side

of Pewet Island and examples have been found at other sites on the Blackwater Estuary. They all date from the 7th – 9th century.

These large fishing weirs (kiddles) would funnel the fish into the traps at the end, these could be collected once the tide had gone out. Wattle appears to have been used both to make the uprights of the weir and as

panelling to form the walkways. Almost identical coastal fish traps on the Foulness and Maplin Sands were in use until the sands were purchased for use as a test range by the

War Office/War Department in 1914. Examples of these have also been found at both East and West Mersea.



Large pile from the causeway, now preserved in Mersea Museum

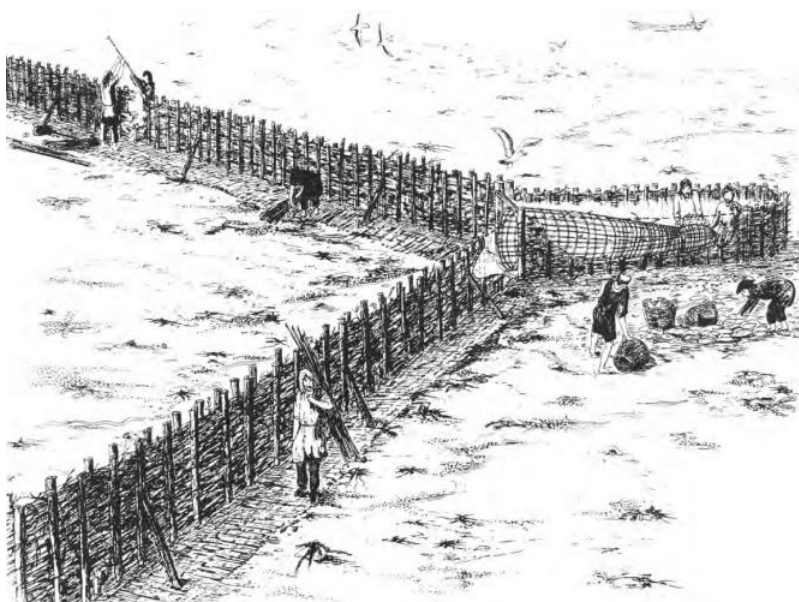


Illustration of Kiddles in use. Above. Multiple rows of timbers forming the southern arm of the Pewet Island Fishtrap. Below.



Mersea's most obvious Saxon feature is the islands causeway, half a mile long and until 1978 believed to be Roman, known to the locals as The Strood. The Strood, itself an Anglo-Saxon word, has now been positively dated to 684 – 702AD using dendrochronology on a number of large piles discovered when a water

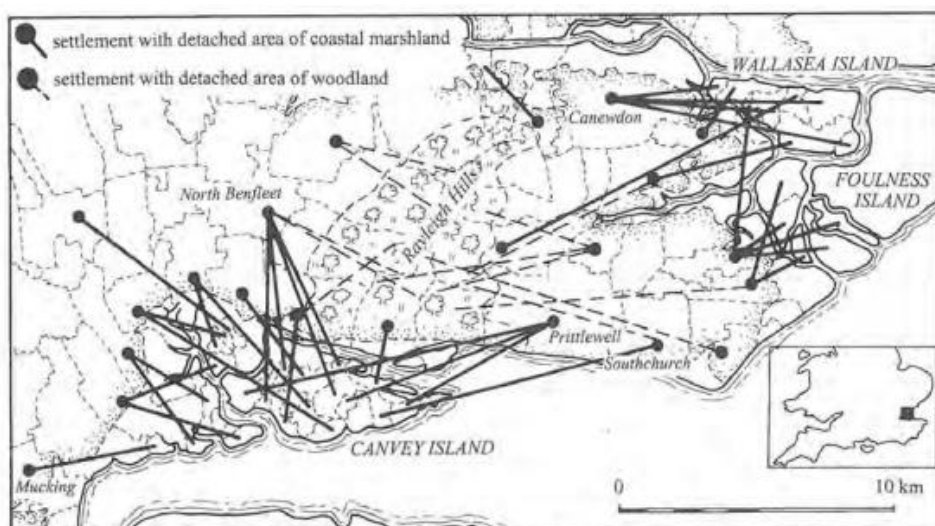
pipe trench was dug along the centre of the causeway. During the Roman period sea level was much lower (around 6ft) and the island was almost certainly entered slightly further to the west across what is now Ray Island.

After more than 50 years of peace the Vikings again began raiding having already attacked the Kent coast and Ipswich, Swain Forkbeard turned his attentions to Maldon a Royal Burgh and Mint. On the 9th August 991 the Vikings made camp on the easily defendable island of Northey. The next morning they attempted to cross the causeway to the mainland but due to its narrowness Ealdorman Byrthnoth was able to hold them off with only a few men. After discussions shouted across the channel, Byrthnoth allowed them across to form battle lines. The exact size of either army is not precisely known but sources suggest it was somewhere between 3000 – 4000 on each side. Fighting for a time was very tight until Brythnoth was killed and a number of his leading men left the battlefield. The contemporary poem the Battle of Maldon is our best historical source for this and one of its main points seems to be to shame the men who left the battle. The fleeing of these men turned the battle decisively in the favour of the Danes who although victorious took such heavy losses that they barely had enough men to relaunch their 93 ships and did not sack the town of Maldon. Viking raids did however continue until 1016 when the Danish Viking Canute became King of England.

A number of Essex islands are below sea level and therefore needed man-made defences. The first recorded reference to sea walls on Foulness Island was in “The Charter Rolls” for 1271 AD. Foulness was originally shared between five mainland parishes: Rochford, Sutton, Little Wakering, Shopland, and Little Stambridge, all in the Rochford Hundred. The same pattern of land ownership existed on the other Essex islands, as the picture below shows Canvey was held by nine different mainland parishes. This mainly continued into the 19th century (making finding the inhabitants on the census records a bit of a challenge!) The inhabitants had to pay tithes to those parishes on whose land they dwelt, this lasted until all the Islands’ tithes were commuted to money payment in 1847.

During the medieval period many Essex islands were populated by shepherds and fishermen. Essex marshland sheep were prized as a source of dairy produce, in particular cheeses. Some arable farming also took place, but Foulness was well known for its dairy produce. The marshlands were ideal for grazing sheep and therefore cheese, meat and ewe’s milk were in plentiful supply. Sheep’s milk was available only in summer, as it was believed that if milking continued into autumn the ewes would have difficulties conceiving. In 1594 John Norden described the Rochford Hundred, in which Foulness lay, as yielding ‘milke, butter and cheese in admirable abundance: and in those partes are the greate and huge cheeses made, wondred at for their hundreds and thicknes’. The cheese had long-lasting properties and was used extensively on ships.

Statue of Byrthnoth at Maldon



It was probably somewhat similar to modern day hard sheep cheeses such as Pecorino. The rich marshland grazing was also used for the fattening of livestock, particularly during the summer months, before being taken to



London for slaughter. The sheep also provided wool for the wool trade which was at its height in England during the medieval period. The decline in dairy farming and the rise of arable agriculture had begun by the middle of the sixteenth century, and appears to have been largely due to changing fashions in food, with dairy produce (in particular sheep's milk) dropping in the social scale in favour of meat consumption. This resulted in an increase in population as the islands moved to arable farming.

The oyster fishing industry was also well established in the medieval period, stretching back to before Roman occupation. The industry continues to this day and evidence of the oyster beds can be seen on several Essex islands.



Pewit Island, Oyster beds

The Broomway at Foulness, takes its name from the 400 or so brooms that were formerly placed at intervals of between 30 and 60 yards on either side of the track, thereby indicating the safe passage on the hard sand that lay between them and was the only access to the island until a road bridge was built over Havengore Creek in 1922. Leaving the mainland at the Waking stairs and ending five miles later at Fisherman's head at the east of the island, a number of paths known as headways branch off to landing points in-between. It is said that the Broomway was first used by the Romans, but the first documentary reference dates to 1419 and its first appearance on a map is the Nordon map of 1594. Allegedly "the deadliest" path in Britain, the Broomway is thought to have killed more than 100 people over the centuries; it seems likely that there were other victims whose fates went unrecorded. Sixty-six of its dead are buried in the churchyard. The Broomway traverses vast sand flats, when the tide goes out at Foulness, it goes out a great distance, revealing sand packed hard enough to support the weight of a walker. When the tide comes back in, though, it comes fast – galloping over the sands quicker than a human can run. Disorientation is a danger as well as inundation: in mist, rain or fog, it is easy to lose direction with shining sand extending in all directions. Nor are all of the surfaces that you encounter reliable:

there is mud that can trap you and quicksand that can swallow you. But in good weather, following the right route, it can feel nothing more than a walk on a very large beach.



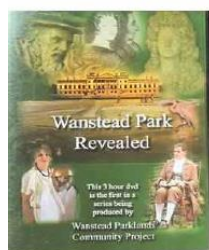
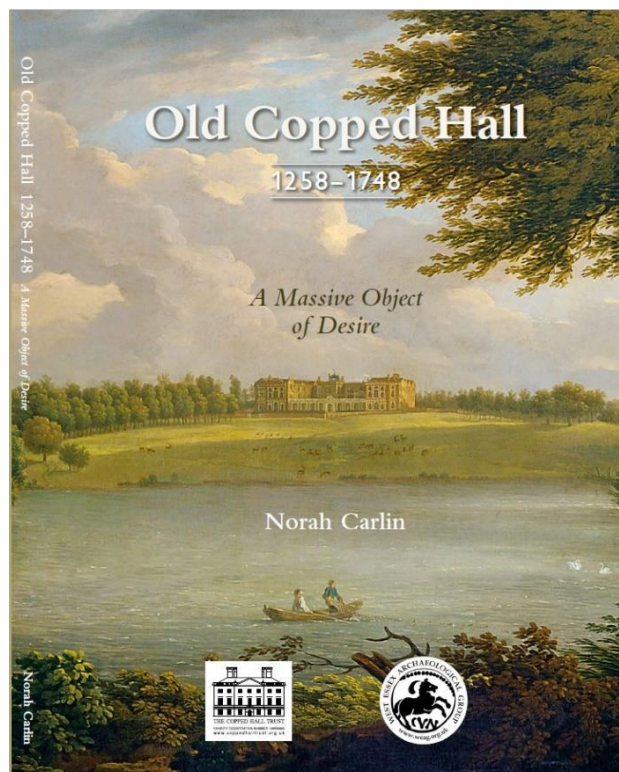
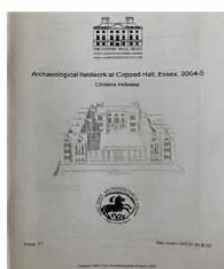
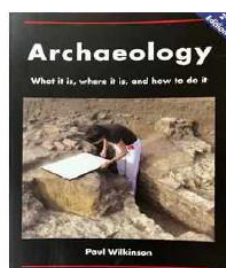
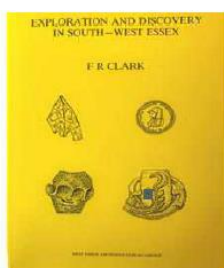
Recent archaeological excavation (2001-03) has established that high status occupation existed on Foulness from the fourteenth-fifteenth century. There appears to have been three major building phases on the Island the first in the mid-16th century. The church on Foulness was rebuilt in the Tudor period and this likely accounts for the creation of the Broomway.

Lee Joyce & Claire Hooper.

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



Contacts

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