



A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

This is the first newsletter since the merger of Mid Anglia and East Anglia in 2012. We aim to publish the newsletter twice a year in March and September.

We'd really like contributions from our members whether professional or volunteer. We're sure there are plenty of really interesting projects going on in the region that members would love to hear about. And we'll be making sure we include items about projects that we've given grants towards: in this Issue you can read the latest news about the Jigsaw Project which has received a grant from CBA East.

We'll include a section on forthcoming CBAE events and other activities in the region that might be of interest to our members.

But don't just wait for the newsletter. Visit our website www.archaeologyuk.org/cbae/ or follow us on twitter <https://twitter.com/CBAEast>,

Please let us know if you have any suggestions for the newsletter or for events or activities. Even better if you can offer help with organising an event.

Finally – please let us know if you are happy to receive your newsletter and other correspondence by email

Contact us: cbaeast@archaeology.org

In This Issue

Hunting for Huntingdon's past – Aileen Connor tells us about the latest forage into a medieval town in Cambridgeshire

Jigsaw, Cambridgeshire – Jo Richards reports on this ambitious five year long county wide community project

Burres Mount Motte, Essex - Dr Carenze Lewis has been digging into the history of this impressive monument with volunteers

Norton Henge, Hertfordshire - Keith J Fitzpatrick-Matthews recounts the fascinating story of Norton Henge and how a community project has been helping to reveal it

Forthcoming Events – CBA East events coming up

News – TORCs YACs and Wikis!



Hunting for Huntingdon's past

Aileen Connor, Oxford Archaeology East



Huntingdon has been subject to numerous small digs over the years, but it is only with recent regeneration that some large areas of the town have been available for excavation. This year we've had a chance to look for the elusive Roman Ermine Street and delve into life on the edges of the thriving medieval town.

Whilst our search for the Roman Road has so far proved inconclusive there is no doubt about the activity in the medieval period.

Evidence for occupation outside the town defences started as early as the 11th century, and continued right into the 14th. Three properties were discovered, each with a distinctly different character. The central property was mainly given over to massive, deep pits, challenging for the modern archaeologist; a high water table meant constant pumping and bailing, but presumably even more so for the people

who first dug them. It's likely these were industrial, possibly for tanning or dyeing – we've got plenty of environmental samples and early indications are that preservation is quite good so we hope to get some interesting finds from them. The property closest to the town may have been the site of an Inn, since here were the remains of a possible stable, as well as a yard, a blacksmiths hearth and a large number of pottery jugs. Perhaps most unusual and intriguing were the remains of three skeletons including a newborn baby and two adults!



Amongst the finds were some personal items including a finger ring, a dagger chape (below), thimbles, bone pins, toggles and knife handles. Whilst we weren't able to invite the public onto the site during the excavation we did join forces with Huntingdon Library and the Cromwell Museum (possibly the smallest museum in the Eastern region?) to put on exhibitions and talks, and for those who wanted to get their hands on the archaeology we ran pot washing sessions at our offices near Cambridge.



Jigsaw Cambridgeshire is an HLF funded project that aims to set up archaeology groups in every parish in Cambridgeshire, it's a tall order! Jo Richard's tells us how just two of the new groups are getting on.

The Warboys Archaeology Project held their first meeting on the 1st October 2012 and, in the words of Roger Mould, the WAP leader, "it's been an exciting and very interesting, first year". Currently eleven strong, the group decided to start working on the Neolithic Period. "We hoped to gain an understanding of the terrain, the changes in the environment, how people progressed from hunter-gatherer to farmer and how they lived, traded and adapted as their environment changed", a pretty big challenge! With their aim and area decided the group produced a terrain model at a scale of 1:25,000 using information from the Fenland Project and contour data from Ordnance Survey mapping to recreate the ancient rivers (roddons) and landscape. One of the problems with producing such a model is, of course, the difficulty of

knowing how much erosion has occurred, but covering the terrain with trees and recording the roddons does give a good feel of what the terrain would have looked like. The model is located in Warboys library and can be seen when the library is open.

The next step is to survey the parish 'we were trained in the noble art of resistivity survey.Mike Fortune from the Huntingdon U3A kindly spent an afternoon advising and training the group on using the Plane Table and since then we've been working towards surveying an area of Warboys close to the church."

Meanwhile in Ramsey, new group RamArc are working on a timeline and have been get hands-on with the Jigsaw artefact collections. Training in field-walking will take place later in the summer and the groups aims to photograph Ramsey Abbey's 'Lady Chapel', and make a display of this work for the public library. Jo Richards, Jigsaw Community Archaeology Officer.



EXCAVATIONS AT MOUNT BURES MOTTE, ESSEX

Dr Carenza Lewis

In August 2011 archaeological excavations on an earthen mound at Mount Bures were funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of the Managing a Masterpiece project. More than 70 members of the public from the local area excavated 40 square metres on the summit of the motte and nine smaller trenches in fields and properties nearby, under the direction of Access Cambridge Archaeology (University of Cambridge) led by Dr Carenza Lewis, well-known from C4's *Time Team*.

The mound at Mount Bures is a Scheduled Ancient Monument of national importance (SAM Essex 20674). It is adjacent to St John's Church, on high ground overlooking a tributary of the River Stour. No contemporary documents survive, but the mound has been assumed to be a medieval castle mound or 'motte', despite its height (10m) and lack of visible bailey.

The excavations on the summit show that it was lightly used in the medieval period, probably as a lookout post: there was no evidence that there was ever a structure on the motte summit. Just seven sherds of medieval sandy wares (c. 1100-1400 AD) were recovered despite sieving nearly all of the spoil through a 10mm mesh. This suggests that the motte was not permanently, or even regularly, manned.



The mound was built as a series of tiered concentric circular layers, getting smaller as it increased in height. Worked flint found in these fills was interpreted as residual, but no other dating evidence was found in any but the very uppermost levels of the mound summit. Bronze Age (1500-800 BC) pottery and notable quantities of fire-cracked flint were found in two trenches at the foot of the mound, raising the possibility that it may have originally been a prehistoric burial mound.

Adjacent to the churchyard perimeter south of the church, a 1m² test pit produced sherds of medieval sandy ware, associated with a large post-hole or pit cutting through a floor and a possible hearth. A large sherd of Thetford Ware



suggests the floor of this domestic building may predate the Norman Conquest. It seems likely that this was a medieval hall/church complex of late Anglo-Saxon or very early Norman date. If the mound is indeed of prehistoric origin, then it may have been this which attracted the hall and the church to the site. A second test pit on the west side of the churchyard produced several sherds of pottery dating to 1100-1400, giving tentative support to the suggestion that a bailey attached to the mound followed the line of the present churchyard. Further excavation would be needed to prove this one way or the other.

The medieval hall/church complex at Mount Bures was isolated within a mainly dispersed settlement landscape, although test pit excavations showed that a small hamlet did build up nearby in the high medieval period. The latter continued in existence into the later medieval (post 14th century) period, but there is no evidence for continuation of domestic activity around the church or any use of the motte summit at this time. It seems likely the mound went out of use in the later 12th century, when many unlicensed fortifications were demilitarised on the orders of Henry II.

Further information on the 2011 excavations at Mount Bures including the excavation report can be found at www.arch.cam.ac.uk/aca/mountbures

NORTON HENGE: EXCAVATIONS 2010-13



*Keith J Fitzpatrick-Matthews
(Archaeology Officer, North
Hertfordshire District Council)*

A Community Archaeology Group was formed in 2006 to research the archaeology of the historic parish of Norton (now part of Letchworth Garden City). Important prehistoric remains are known and have been variously excavated since 1957 in and around the Blackhorse Road industrial estate. The discovery of an unusually narrow cursus at Nortonbury and a ring ditch close to it hint at the types of remains that are still to be found.

At the instigation of the writer the Group has been investigating a possible henge monument in Stapleton's Field to the east of Blackhorse Road. The monument is the most prominent feature visible on aerial photographs and as geophysical



anomalies. It had previously been described as a “double ring ditch” with a ‘kerb’ between the ditches, although kerbed barrows and ring cairns are not otherwise known in the region. Rather, it looked like a henge, as the inner ditch was horseshoe-shaped.

The first trench was excavated in 2010 and showed the site to be unexpectedly well preserved, with organic rich deposits at its centre surviving to an unknown depth. The second season of work located the inner ditch, and showed that the henge had a complex history. A massive posthole was also found close to the centre of the monument. By now it was clear that it was most likely a henge, albeit one of unusual type: with a circular outer ditch, and a secondary inner ditch. Ceramics associated with it placed its construction and use within the Neolithic, but the lack of Beaker pottery was especially puzzling.

A forty-metre square trench was opened in July 2012 revealing much of the henge in plan. In the centre was a squarish platform of rammed chalk, carefully flattened and made level on top, and the entrance (a gap of some three metres in the chalk bank) lay on the east side. There is now a considerable volume of ceramic and lithic material from the henge deposits, including flint tools.

A small evaluation of the outer ditch was carried out at Easter 2013. It proved to be almost 5 m wide and about 1.5 m deep with a collection of possibly deliberately deposited animal bone at the base of the

primary silt along with fragments of Peterborough-type Ware and lithics. Puzzlingly, a radiocarbon determination from one of the bones gave a date of 1910±45 bp (Cal AD 1-230: IHME 2085), which is not borne out by the archaeology: there is Roman activity on the site, but it is securely stratified above the infilled ditch, so contamination must be suspected.

The henge occupies a level shelf on the hillside, an unusual location for which there must have been overriding reasons, which were perhaps connected with its orientation, its entrance facing precisely due east. This would have given a view of the eastern horizon along the line of the equinox sunrises. At the same time, it includes the springs feeding the River Ivel, in the valley bottom, towards which the Nortonbury cursus is known to run.

Three phases of activity can be identified: Initially the outer ditch and an internal chalk bank were built. Middle to Late Neolithic ceramics (but not Grooved Ware) were found, which perhaps indicates a date before 2800 BC. This early monument appears to belong to so-called ‘formative henge’ tradition. A secondary ditch was then dug inside the bank. Grooved Ware and Peterborough-type Impressed Ware pottery (but no Beaker material), suggest a date in the second quarter of the third millennium BC for this ‘classic’ henge. Finally a cremation burial of a child, and a sub-square pit containing a complete but crushed pot of unusual form: . It appears to be a transitional form between Grooved



Ware and Collared Urn types and perhaps therefore dates from around 2400 BC.

The lack of material from the later third millennium, apart from this one unusual vessel, suggests that activity on the site had effectively ended by the time these two late deposits were made. They might therefore represent closure deposits of some kind. The cremation burial was placed close to the entrance and it is tempting to suggest that it was intended to transform the henge from a monument for activities carried out by the living into one associated with the dead, or to pollute it by a previously inappropriate association with death. Stapleton's Field then became the focus for a number of burial mounds.

Norton Community Archaeology Group is conducting its final season on the site this summer, after which post-excavation analysis can begin in earnest. It is clearly an important and unusual site with the potential to transform our understanding of the late Neolithic in the region.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

“Bury St Edmunds in 1295” with Abby Antrobus -3rd November 2013 at 2pm. Members only, there are limited places so please book by email to cbaeast@archaeologyuk.org or by post to Aileen Connor c/o Oxford Archaeology East, 15 Trafalgar Way, Bar Hill, Cambridge CB23 OAP

AGM – 10th May 2014 - Details will be in the next Newsletter and on the web site

September 2014 Conference: Romans in the East of England: Details to be announced

NEWS

CBA Community Archaeology Bursaries Project - funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund through its Skills for the Future programme, with additional support from English Heritage, Cadw and Historic Scotland. This project is enabling the CBA to offer year-long workplace learning bursaries designed to equip would-be community archaeologists with the skills, experience and confidence to work with voluntary groups and communities.

There are two placements in the Eastern Region: Claire Bradshaw is with the Norfolk Historic Environment Service, and Kelly Davies is with Suffolk County Council

TORC - provides information relating to careers, training, courses, professional development, public involvement and fieldwork for archaeology in the United Kingdom. Also a directory of organisations involved in archaeology in the UK. The TORC service is an activity of the Archaeology Training Forum, run by the Council for British Archaeology, and supported by English Heritage. <http://www.torc.org.uk/>



Young Archaeologists Club - YAC branches are a network of local groups where young people up to the age of 17 can get involved in hands-on activities on a regular basis. Across the eastern region there are YAC groups in Bury St Edmunds, Cambridge, Colchester, Fenland, Peterborough Hatfield, Norwich and St Albans <http://www.yac-uk.org/>

Support YAC - On October 20th 2013 'The New YAC Dolls' are running the Yorkshire Marathon: a team of six members of staff from the CBA are taking part in the corporate relay to raise money for YAC! Please Sponsor The New YAC Dolls to help secure the future of the Young Archaeologists' Club. <http://www.justgiving.com/newYACdolls>

Wiki Loves Monuments – is an annual worldwide competition is designed to bring together people who value their local historic environment with amateur and professional photographers alike to capture images of the world's historic monuments. www.wikilovesmonuments.org.uk

CBA East Committee stalwarts Tim Harper and Jon House joined a discussion-based weekend forum in York in March 2013 where local archaeological and historical societies came together to explore common issues and share good practice. Now the CBA is inviting everyone to take part go to <http://new.archaeologyuk.org/future-of-societies-forum>

JOIN US

You can join National CBA www.archaeologyuk.org and opt to include CBA East in your membership package or you can join CBA East alone for just £5 a year by completing the details below and sending a cheque or completing a standing order for your bank to: Adrian Cole, Treasurer CBA East, 19 Lordship Lane, Letchworth, Herts SG6 2BJ

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