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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

This is the first newsletter since the merger of Mid Anglia and East Anglia in 2012. The newsletter will be published bi-annually in March and September.

We invite contributions from professional archaeologists and amateur groups for articles on work undertaken in their area or group. Recipients of grants from CBA East will be asked to pen a few lines on their research or archaeological activities.

News and information on forthcoming events for our CBA East group as well as links and information on other local society. Reports on events held during the year will also featured.

You can also follow CBA East on our website www.archaeologyuk.org/cbae/ which has various links to information and forms. Please let us know via the website if there are any suggestions for events would like to see.

We can also be followed on Twitter @CBAEast or have a look in your web browser at <https://twitter.com/CBAEast>, where you can find current thoughts and information between CBA groups, archaeologists and our followers.

ERMINE STREET DIG HUNTINGDON 2013



Oxford Archaeology East has just finished a 13 week excavation in advance of the new Huntingdon Town Link Road between Brampton Road and Ermine Street. The work was carried out on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council and Huntingdonshire District Council.

The excavation lies within the parish of St John, close to Ermine Street (a Roman road) and the lost churches of St Andrew's and St Michael's were somewhere nearby.

Initial investigations in 2011 found that the southern half of the new road was already disturbed by old quarry pits so no further investigation was done in this area. In the northern part of the route, particularly close to Ermine Street, we found good evidence for medieval (11th to 15th Century) settlement and hints of earlier activity too (Prehistoric, Roman



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and Anglo-Saxon). This is the area (between Ermine Street and the Barrack Brook) that we returned to for the main excavations.

As I'm sure you know there is always plenty left to do in the post ex phase but we certainly have evidence for several phases of activity. Our earliest finds are a few prehistoric flint flakes followed by a little more activity in the Roman period (as the site is adjacent to a Roman road this should be no great surprise). We had a little false excitement early on, believing we had the remains of the Roman road running through the site, but this now seems less likely, so just a few fragments of pottery, building materials and a solitary ditch are all we have of Roman date.

The main event is the medieval period, activity clearly started in earnest around the conquest but really got into full swing in the 12th-14th centuries when the land was divided into three properties each of which appears to have a different character. The central area was mainly given over to massive pits, and since the water table was consistently high this meant constant pumping and bailing. The purpose of the pits is not particularly clear – they could be tanks 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 evidence from them. The other two properties

also contained pits, but these were much shallower and there were a wide variety of other features including the remains of floors, ovens, a blacksmiths hearth, timber buildings – possibly a stable, a cobbled street or yard and the remains of three skeletons including a newborn baby and two adults.

As well as large assemblages of pottery (70 kg), animal bones (50kg), and a variety of other finds including an early post-medieval finger ring, a dagger chape, thimbles, bone pins, toggles and knife handles and evidence for antler working.

The site wasn't suitable for public visits sadly but during the excavations we had a changing exhibition and fortnightly talks at the Cromwell Museum in Huntingdon and a changing exhibition of photographs in Huntingdon Library. We also blogged on the local "Shape Your Place" <http://huntingdon.shapeyourplace.org/> web site and invited the people of Huntingdon to volunteer as "pot washers". Other events associated with the dig were a family archaeology event and a public talk was held at the Library. All of which have proved very successful.

Article provided by Aileen Conner

Oxford Archaeology.



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Jigsaw Cambridgeshire is working with two new groups on the fenland edge in Huntingdonshire.

The Warboys Archaeology Project is a sub-group of Warboys History Society. The group held its 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 with the aim of understanding what life would have been like for those first people originally settling into the area. 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. It was to be the first attempt to trace the human journey in an area, centred on Warboys, from Sawtry in the West, Somersham in the East, Abbots Ripton in the South and Chatteris in the North. To help our understanding the group decided to produce a terrain model of the area of interest at 1:25,000 using information from the Fenland Project data for the ancient rivers

(roddons) and Ordnance Survey mapping for present-day contour data. One of the problems with producing such a model was, 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.

"With the spring came the next project which involved being trained in the noble art of resistivity survey. The previous week Mike Fortune from the Huntingdon U3A kindly offered and 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."

A new Jigsaw Archaeology Action Group has started in Ramsey. RamArc has begun working on a timeline for the Ramsey area and



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have spent several artefact-handling sessions looking at the Jigsaw teaching collection. A competition was run at the Abbey College to design a logo for the group, and RamArc will be trained by Jo and Jemima later in the summer to carry out field walking. They will also photograph the arcading of Ramsey Abbey's 'Lady Chapel' during the school summer holidays, and make a display of this work to display in 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) located adjacent to St John's Church, on high ground overlooking a tributary of the River Stour. Although no contemporary documents about the monument survive, the mound has been assumed to be a medieval castle mound or 'motte', despite being unusually high (10m) and lacking any visible bailey.

The 2011 excavations on the mound summit indicated that it was used lightly, at most, in the medieval period, probably as a lookout post: the absence of any cut features or walls make it doubtful that there was any structure on the motte summit. Overall, there were very few archaeological finds: 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. Bronze Age (1500-800 BC) pottery and notable quantities of fire-cracked flint were found in two trenches at the foot of the mound, and it is considered possible that the mound may have been of prehistoric origin, possibly a burial mound.

More evidence was found for the construction of the mound, which was built as a series of tiered concentric circular layers, which reduced in diameter as it increased



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in height. These layers were mostly made up of local sandy gravel sub-soil which was stabilised by a retaining doughnut-shaped ring of turf or clay around the perimeter: each load of spoil tipped into this ring was carefully levelled before the next was added. 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.

Most evidence for medieval occupation was found adjacent to the churchyard perimeter south of the church, where a 1m² test pit produced several sherds of medieval sandy ware, associated with a large post-hole or pit cutting through a floor with evidence of burning, probably a hearth. The discovery of a large sherd of Thetford Ware suggests the floor of this domestic building may predate the Norman Conquest. Taken together, 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 also on the west side of the churchyard also 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



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NORTON HENGE: EXCAVATIONS 2010-13



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

In the late 1950s, a new industrial estate was developed at Blackhorse Road in the historic parish of Norton (now part of Letchworth Garden City) and important prehistoric remains were recorded both in the industrial area and in the farmland to its east. The excavations continued intermittently from 1957 to 1973 but it is clear that there is a great deal more to discover in the area. For instance, during the construction of Kristiansand Way in 1988 and Cade Close in 2010, further prehistoric features were discovered. In the farmland, the discovery of an unusually narrow cursus at Nortonbury and a ring ditch close to it hint at the types of remains that might be found in this area.

Following the formation of a Community Archaeology Group in 2006, specifically to research the archaeology of the historic parish, the writer compiled a list of ten archaeological research topics. The prehistoric remains east of Blackhorse Road were highlighted as important, particularly features visible from aerial photographs and as geophysical anomalies in Stapleton's Field. The most prominent feature in the survey 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, so Norton Community Archaeology Group has been investigating it since 2010 to find out more about its date and character.

The trench excavated in 2010 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, which cut through the soil deposits in the centre of the monument and also into the dumped chalk that formed the denuded bank. A massive posthole was also identified close to the centre of the monument. By this stage, its identification as a henge was more likely, albeit one of unusual type: it appears to have



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had a circular outer ditch, its inner ditch was a secondary feature and the ceramics associated with it all placed its construction and use within the Neolithic. The lack of Beaker pottery was especially puzzling.

A forty-metre square trench was opened in July 2012 to show much of the henge in plan. The centre was occupied by a squarish platform of rammed chalk, carefully flattened and made level on top, while it became apparent that the entrance to the monument lay on the east side, where there was a gap some three metres wide through the chalk bank. 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, when a JCB was used to cut a section across it. It proved to be almost 5 m wide and about 1.5 m deep and at the base of the primary silt was a collection of animal bone that appeared to have been deliberately deposited. There were also 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.

Activity on the henge can be divided into three principal phases. The earliest phase included the construction of the outer ditch and a chalk bank inside it, separated from it by a berm of around six metres. It is associated with Middle to Late Neolithic ceramics but not Grooved Ware, which perhaps indicates a date before 2800 BC. The early monument appears to belong to so-called 'formative henge' tradition. A second phase can be recognised by the secondary ditch inside the bank, which produced a small quantity of Grooved Ware and Peterborough-type Impressed Ware but no Beaker material, suggesting a date in the second quarter of the third millennium BC. This created a classic henge. A final phase is represented by a cremation burial, evidently of a child, and a sub-square pit containing a complete



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but crushed pot of unusual form: the fabric resembles Grooved Ware, the decoration resembles Beaker styles (although the lower body is plain) and it has a heavy collar. 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.

FORTH COMING EVENTS

Anglo-Saxon Conference

14TH September 2013, St Edmunds Cathedral Lecture Room, Please see our web site for booking forms and booking details.

Bury St Edmunds Street Names

3rd November 2013 at 2pm.
Members only, there are limited places so please book online on the website.

AGM – 10th May 2014

Venue to be announced

2014 Conference on Roman England.

Venue to be announced

Please keep looking at the website for additional events in 2014.

ADDITIONAL REMINDERS

Due to changes at CBA York regarding the membership subscription collection, York no longer includes subscription to the regional groups. This needs to be paid directly to the regional group.

Please find below the membership and standing order forms if your membership has lapsed.