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Newsletter

Essex Society for Archaeology and History



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Philip Crummy, MBE

Phillip Wise

Philip Crummy, the doyen of Colchester archaeology and the former director of the Colchester Archaeological Trust, was awarded an MBE in the recent New Year's Honours List.

Philip's contribution to the archaeology of Roman Britain since the late 1960s has been outstanding and unparalleled in modern times. He became the director of the Colchester Archaeological Trust in 1970 and remained in post for an unprecedented 52 years. Philip was at the forefront of the major urban excavations in Colchester during the 1970s and 1980s and ensured that irreplaceable information about the first capital of Roman Britain was preserved. This work formed the basis of the twelve volumes of Colchester Archaeological Reports, an exemplar of archaeological publishing at the time and still standard works for the study of Roman Britain in this county and abroad. These academic works were supported by the long running publication of an annual magazine 'The Colchester Archaeologist', which presented new discoveries to a general audience.

Since 2005 Philip has taken the lead in the research and interpretation of the Roman Circus. He was the first to recognise the significance of the discoveries within Colchester's Victorian military garrison and identify the site as a circus. He masterminded the relocation of the Trust's headquarters to the site and the creation of a visitor centre at Roman Circus House. He remains active in promoting the Roman Circus as an essential part of Colchester's visitor offer, thereby contributing to the town's success as a heritage tourism attraction and raising its international profile.



In addition Philip has written numerous academic papers and popular articles on the archaeology of Colchester for more than fifty years. These include, for example, his contribution to 'Colchester, Fortress of the War God', a comprehensive assessment of the town's archaeology published by English Heritage in 2013. His accessible account of Colchester's Roman archaeology 'City of Victory' first appeared in 1997 and proved so popular that a second edition was produced four years later.

The high regard in which Philip is held by his archaeological peers was recognised in 2006 by the publication of a festschrift in his honour. Two years later the University of Essex also recognised his achievement with the award of an honorary doctorate.

Philip Crummy, MBE

(Photo: PAS, © Colchester Archaeological Trust)

Last Word on... Thames Barges

Needless to say, this short piece is not the last word on Thames Barges. Rather it's a recommendation to listen to the Radio 4 programme 'Last Words' for 8th March 2024 which you can find on BBC Sounds www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001wy0h and which has an obituary of Jim Lawrence. Jim was born in 1933 and died 21st January 2024, aged 90, he was one of the last Thames barge skippers working under sail. He became a barge master at just 18 and went on to set up a successful sail making business in Essex, he was also an accomplished musician. The obituary is well worth a listen if you didn't catch it when it was first broadcast, to hear Jim talk about his life and sing is very evocative.

Re-wilding in Essex

Michael Leach

Members may be familiar with the re-wilding of the Knepp estate in West Sussex, a decision that was taken to overcome the problem of land which required unsustainable quantities of artificial fertiliser to produce a barely commercial return. This radical change has been an outstanding success, in spite of the almost universal scepticism of farmers in the immediate neighbourhood. Up till now, a similar problem with intractable clay was faced by a 200 hectare farm north of the M25 between Epping and Waltham Abbey – land that was densely glutinous in winter, and hard as concrete in summer. Though converted to arable cultivation during the Second World War, it has never been efficient food-producing land. Up till recently, much of the land was used for growing Christmas trees and for grazing ponies, neither of which are regarded as edible (in the UK at least), so the argument that re-wilding this land will result in the loss of useful agricultural land is not valid.

The farm has recently been purchased by Nattergal, a company co-founded by one of the initiators of the Knepp project, for promoting re-wilding. It is supported financially by a biodiversity net gain payment. In spite of its present degraded state, there are vestiges of ancient woodland, ponds and overgrown hedges which will assist the process of returning it to a more natural state. It will also benefit from Epping Forest close by to the south, as well as the Copped Hall and Warlies estates which lie east of Waltham Abbey. This will offer a large enough area for biodiversity to flourish on this heavily built-up metropolitan fringe. A further advantage is that, by improving the ability the land to trap water in revived ponds and wetlands, the risk of flooding to the urban areas to the south should be reduced.

References: *The Guardian*, 31 July 2024

Library Committee - Update

The Library Committee continues its work and a list of books recently acquired for our Library, either through gifts or purchase, are set out below. Remember if wish to suggest a book for acquisition, please contact the Committee's secretary Paul Sealey paulsealey@gmail.com

In suggesting a book you might bear in mind the criteria that the Committee uses to guide its decisions which you can find in the February 2023 newsletter available on the ESAH website.

Recent Acquisitions

Amkreutz, L.W.S.W. and van der Vaart-Verschoof, S. (eds), 2022. *Doggerland: Lost World under the Sea* (Totnes: Sidestone Press). £35.00

Doggerland is the name for the submerged prehistoric landscape in the North Sea. Essex, as a county bordering the North Sea and with its own significant submerged landscape along the coast, and this is a useful work of reference. Its relevance is underlined by the recent dredging to consolidate Clacton beach has brought to light a wealth of prehistoric material from the sea bed, including a variety of axes.

Knight, M., Ballantyne, R., Brudenell, M.J., Cooper, A., Gibson, D., and Robinson Zeki, I., 2024. *Must Farm Pile-dwelling Settlement: Volume 1. Landscape, Architecture and Occupation* (Cambridge: Macdonald Institute for Archaeological Research) ISBN 978-1-913344-15-3 £45

The publication of the remarkably well-preserved late Bronze Age settlement at Must Farm in Cambridgeshire. Such is the level of preservation and the clear association of a range of artefact types with individual houses, the site has become, and will remain, an essential work of reference. Naturally Essex sites feature in the discussion.

Rotherham, I.D. and Moody, J.A. (eds), 2024. *Countryside History: The Life and Legacy of Oliver Rackham* (London: Pelagic Publishing) ISBN 9781784273163 £49.99

This book is a collection of essays exploring the life and work of Oliver Rackham, a specialist in woodland and landscape history. Essex features prominently, as Rackham worked extensively in the county and there are specific chapters on his Essex work in general and on Hatfield Forest in particular.

In addition to the above, Sue Liddell contacted the Library Committee to ask if all or any of her late husband's (Bill Liddell) collection of Essex related books would be of interest for the ESAH Library. The committee reviewed the list and in fact the majority were already in the library, but that still left quite a number of books which the committee felt would be useful additions to our Library and which are listed below. Sue kindly gifted the books to the Society and members of the committee collected them from her home in Suffolk and deposited them with the University Library staff to add to the ESAH Library.

The Making of the English Landscape - W G Hoskins

Man and the Natural World - Keith Thomas

Essex Crime and Criminals - Harold Priestley

Rubens Corner - Spike Mays

Highways and Byways in Essex - Clifford Bax

Mehalah - S L Baring Gould

Meagre Harvest - A F J Brown

Audley End - William Addison

Unknown Essex - Donald Maxwell
Forgotten Thameside - Glyn H Morgan
Tales from the Saxon Shore - S L Bensusan
Essex Pie - T M Hope
Tribute to an Antiquary Marc Fitch - Emmison and Stephens
The Smugglers Century - Harvey Benham
The History of the Countryside - Oliver Rackham
The Best of Essex - E V Scott

Woodford: A Pictorial History - Peter Lawrence and Georgina Green
The Theydon Garnon Charter of 1305 - Richard Harris
Conservation in Essex. No 5 Shopfronts
A History of Ilford Hospital since the Reformation - Sheila Mary Atter
On the Home Front Barking and Dagenham in WW2 - Tony Clifford, Kathryn Abnett & Peter Grisby
Two Essex Poets - Fredrick Vansan & Mervyn Linford
Poetic Licence: An Essex Garland - Tony Kendall
Sutton House - National Trust
Continuity and Change in Epping forest - C A Baker, P Moxey & P Oxford

Pamphlets

Harwich Humour: Poems H G Allen
Borough of Colchester - Case for Having a Charter
Trees in Essex No 2 Farmland Planting
A Ghost Hunters Guide to Essex - Jessie K Payne
Notes on Romford Town centre c1908 - London Borough of Havering Public Libraries Dept

ERO Publications

Essex Homes
Ingatestone Hall in 1600
Georgian Essex - Nancy Briggs
Wivenhoe Park and John Constable - Michael Sommerlad

A glimpse of events in Coggeshall in the last quarter of the 17th century

Michael Leach

Joseph Bufton of Coggeshall was involved in the cloth trade, at least initially as a woolcomber. Nothing is known about his education but, though it was probably basic, he emerges from his 'diaries' as literate, well read, and an assiduous recorder of local events. These were recorded in notebooks and on the blank pages of old printed almanacks, probably twenty seven volumes in all, of which eleven have survived. His 'diaries' included details of parish baptisms, marriages and burials, summaries of funeral sermons and religious works that he had read, anecdotal and humorous stories, business accounts, family matters, and records of events in Coggeshall. In the modern sense, the term 'diary' is something of a misnomer, as he wrote almost nothing to about his personal views or feelings – the term 'commonplace books' might be a better description of this material. This note will only cover some of the events specific to Coggeshall which were recorded by Bufton – a discussion of the wide range of other material in the 'diaries' will be published elsewhere.

February 1678

A 'small bullock' was roasted on Shrove Tuesday on Church Green by Abram Emming. He was probably the Ab Emming - comber, alehouse keeper and drummer - who was buried 'soldier-like' in the following year. There are no other entries to indicate if this was an annual event.

April 1680

A fire at the kiln at the Gatehouse. The Gatehouse was a local farm and this kiln would have been in use for malting, as hop drying only took place during the few weeks of the September harvest. At this period, kilns were sometimes dual purpose, moving on to malting once the brief hop harvest was finished. It is not surprising that kiln fires were quite commonplace in these timber-framed buildings containing much inflammable material. In September 1644 Josselin had noted in his diary 'wee heard of divers hopkills (sic) burnt down'. Bufton noted another kiln fire at Hovills in May 1693 – this would also have been drying malt, though May was right at the end of the malting season.

October 1679

Robert Giggins walked backwards from Colchester to Coggeshall. There may have been an appetite for such bizarre tests of endurance, perhaps inspired William Kemp's 'nine day's wonder' in which he performed a morris dance all the way from London to Norwich in 1599.

September 1680

Fire in a yard drying teasels. Teasels were grown locally and dried for use in raising the nap, part of the finishing process applied to locally made cloth. These teasels differed from the common teasel which still grows in the wild in Essex, and had a cylindrical rather than a conical, flower head. They do not appear to have naturalised after the collapse of the local woollen industry at the beginning of the nineteenth century, as they are not listed in the later Essex floras.

September 1684

A wagon carrying twenty people from Coggeshall to Stourbridge fair overturned, killing four of the women passengers and resulting in broken bones in another four or five. This fair, of medieval origin, was probably the largest annual fair in eastern England and was held on the peripheries of Cambridge. It dealt in a wide range of commodities, including hops and cloth. Bufton noted that the wagon was 'empty' so the occupants were probably intending to purchase, rather than to sell, products.

July 1688

A whale was seen near Maldon, many visited, some said it was not a whale, but it swam away before it could be killed. A London contemporary partially contradicts this account, noting that 'a whale of great bignes is taken in the Thames neere Maldon in Essex'.

September 1692

An earthquake was noted, causing alarm but no specific damage. It was very brief, perhaps only a minute's duration according to the London correspondent who added 'what Controvercy God intends further with us is only known to himselfe'. It was generally assumed that such events augured punishment or disaster, though Bufton added no such gloss to his observation.

March 1697

Fighting cocks were brought to Coggeshall carried in linen bags or cloths. This popular 'sport' which provided an opportunity for placing bets was not made illegal until 1835 in England and Wales. The birds had long sharp blades attached to their lower legs to enhance the damage that they inflicted on their opponents.

References

Dyce, Rev. A (ed) 1840, *Kemp's Nine Daies Wonder*, Camden Society, xi.
Kerr, R J & Duncan I C (eds) 1928, *The Portledge Papers: 1687-1697*, London
Macfarlane, A (ed) 1991, *The Diary of Ralph Josselin 1616-1683*, Oxford

March 1686

The mealmen first came to Coggeshall, selling flour at a shilling for 15 pounds (or 14 pence for 14 pounds 'with the bran taken out'). This was a significant event, indicating the appearance of the middleman who purchased wholesale from the mill, and then retailed (at a profit) in the local market. This would have been much more convenient for the miller who could sell his flour in bulk, rather than retailing it in numerous small quantities to local individuals coming to his mill. It is interesting that there was already a distinction (and a price difference) between white and wholemeal flour.

June 1689

Casting of the church pond at a cost of 50 shillings for 6 men for 2 days, and their beer. The term 'casting' usually implied draining a pond in order to harvest the fish, and the significant labour cost here suggests that there must have been an accompanying commercial benefit. If the purpose of this event was merely to clean the pond it would probably have been described as 'scouring' rather than casting,

February 1693

A bonfire at the Crown for the election success of the local squire Honeywood over Eliab Harvey. An abundance of candles were lighted for joy. Bufton also records other events which provided an excuse for general celebrations and numerous bonfires – February 1689 when an effigy of the Pope was burnt – April 1689 for the coronation - July 1690 for victory in Ireland (the battle of the Boyne) – May 1692 for victory over the French at sea. Bonfires seem to have been a popular form of general celebration, and The Portledge Papers record a good number in London on appropriate occasions.

Roman Collections at Colchester – New Research

Glynn Davis, Senior Collections and Learning Curator at Colchester Museums

The Roman archaeology collections of Colchester Museums have been recognised as being of national significance since 1998 when they were awarded Designated status by the Museums and Galleries Commission (now Arts Council England). Since the appointment of Glynn Davis as the Senior Curator in 2016, there has been a concerted effort into creating new research partnerships and collaborations to shine new light on these important collections. These initiatives offer the potential to reveal further information about life (and death) in both Colchester and Britain. There are several collaborative research projects currently being undertaken.

The Colchester Vase Re-Considered

This year is the culmination of four years' work into the re-assessment of one of Colchester's most important Roman objects – the Colchester Vase. Two recently published papers in the journal *Britannia* argue that the Vase is not an 'off-the-shelf' pot with a later inscription referring to named gladiators being added, but that the inscription is contemporary with its manufacture. In other words, the Vase is a commissioned piece recording a real combat between actual gladiators at Colchester.

The Colchester Vase is now on tour as part of a partnership touring exhibition with the British Museums, 'Gladiators of Britain'. This major exhibition opened at the Dorset Museum & Art Gallery in January 2025, and will go on to Northampton, Chester, and Carlisle before returning to Colchester Castle Museum in May 2026.



The Colchester Vase is now seen as being a souvenir of a real event in Colchester (Colchester City Council: CIMS).



Roman Face Pot and cremation, Jarmin Collection, Colchester (Colchester City Council: CIMS).

All that remains

In 2020 Colchester Museums were successfully awarded a match-funded grant from Arts Council England's Designation Fund to undertake the project 'Decoding the Dead'. This innovative work would re-assess Roman cremation burials in the museum's historic collections. In partnership with Professor Hella Eckardt at the University of Reading and Durham University's Department of Archaeology, isotope analysis was undertaken on the petrous bone (a small bone in the ear), for 21 individuals. Most recently these petrous bone samples have been re-analysed by Durham to conduct lead isotope analysis - the first such analysis to be undertaken on Roman cremated remains from the UK. Combined with the previous strontium isotope analysis, it will help narrow down where these individuals were likely to have been born in the Roman Empire. A case in point is the occupant of the Colchester Vase. The new analysis would suggest it is now more likely that this individual grew up somewhere in the Mediterranean as opposed to a region of Britain. Most recently the Museum has been successful in applying for a Collaborative Doctoral Award to the South, West and Wales Collaborative Scheme. In partnership with the University of Reading and Cranfield University we will be supporting the successful PhD candidate, Morwen Thomas, in undertaking the project 'All that remains: reframing the importance of human cremations in understanding life in ancient Colchester - the original Romano-British capital'. This doctoral study will build on the innovative research of 'Decoding the Dead'.

A Veneer of Empire

The project 'A Veneer of Empire: Decorative Stonework in Roman Colchester' is a collaborative project between Colchester Museums and two leading specialists in Roman Stonework, Dr Penny Coombe and Dr Kevin Hayward. Work involves examining a huge collection of polychrome marble that was excavated at the former site of Kent Blaxill in Colchester High Street in the 1950s. This collection is the largest of its kind from anywhere in Roman Britain, representing over fifteen coloured stones sourced from across the Empire. Its re-assessment will have major implications for understanding the physical make-up of the Roman town and the economics of the Roman stone trade in the northwest provinces.

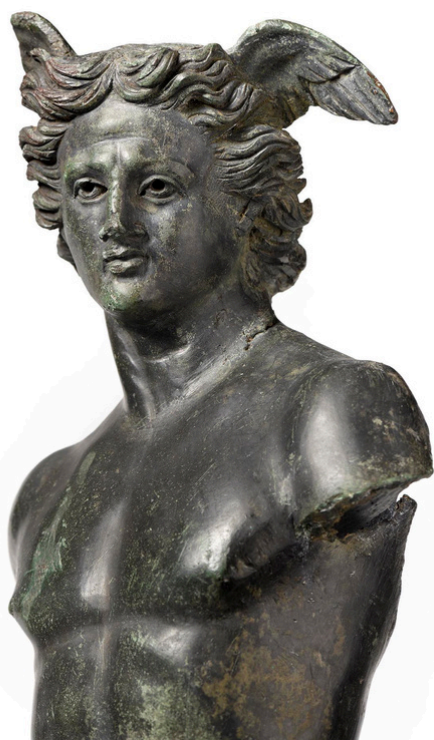


Fragment of settebasi marble (from the Island of Skyros, Western Aegean), Kent Blaxill, Colchester High Street (Colchester City Council: CIMS).

REMADE (Roman and Early Medieval Alloys Defined)

Colchester Museums is one of 16 partners supporting the 'Roman and Early Medieval Alloys Refined' project, led by Future Leaders Fellow Dr Peter Bary at the University of Reading. This ambitious project is the first UK-wide chemical analysis programme for Roman and Medieval copper alloy artefacts, looking to transform our understanding of patterns of recycling mixing, alloying, choice, trade, and identity. This project offers Colchester Museums the unique opportunity to have high quality chemical analyses using a dedicated MP-AES laboratory (Microwave-plasma atomic emission spectrometry) to better understand some of our most significant objects and collections. These include star objects such as the Gosbecks Mercury and important site assemblages such as the metalwork from the Lexden Tumulus and the Roman settlement of Sheepen.

We are also a lead partner in supporting Andrea Mobs, a PhD candidate at the University of Reading, in researching Roman coffins in Britain. Andrea has undertaken X-ray Fluorescence (XRF) analysis, as well as sampling for chemical analysis, of all the Roman coffins and lead urns, or *ossuaria* in the Museums' collections. Her initial work has already revealed notable results such as the *ossuaria* being made of pewter, a tin-lead alloy, as opposed to pure lead. This chemical analysis of lead is some of the first to be undertaken in forty years and the results will be of national and international importance.



The Gosbecks Mercury, Colchester (Colchester City Council: CIMS).

Beauty, Health & Hygiene in Roman Colchester

This project is a collaboration with finds specialist Nina Crummy to undertake new research into the Museums' extensive collection of cosmetic and surgical instruments, many of which are unpublished. This work has been instigated by the untimely death of Ralph Jackson, former curator at the British Museum, who was an authority on medicine, doctors, and disease in the Roman World.

In support of this research, Colchester Museums have also hosted placement student Katie Munby from the University of Reading. Katie is currently undertaking her PhD at the British Museum, studying their collection of copper-alloy statuettes within Greece and Rome Department. At Colchester she has undertaken a review and scientific analysis of Roman mirrors, of which Colchester Museums hold the largest examples of complete types from a single site. Katie has been analysis the metallic content of the mirrors including X-ray Fluorescence (XRF) analysis. It is hoped these objects can also be sampled by the REMADE team to reveal further insight into their manufacture.



Selection of replica instruments from the 'Doctor's Grave', Stanway, Colchester (Colchester City Council: CIMS).

Contextualising Roman Coinage from Camulodunum

The Museum has been successful in being awarded a second Collaborative Doctoral Award, by the Collections & Communities in the East of England (CC-EE) consortium. In partnership with Dr Philippa Walton at the University of Leicester, the successful doctoral candidate will deliver the project 'Contextualising Roman coinage from Camulodunum: an exploration of economy and identity in Britannia's first capital'.

This ground-breaking research will present a holistic overview of Roman coinage recovered from Colchester for the first time, using 9,749 coins held in Colchester Museums as its core collection. Alongside data from the Portable Antiquities Scheme and excavation reports, it will explore the function of coinage in Camulodunum throughout 400 years of Roman rule. There will be a particular emphasis on analysing how different communities engaged with coinage in their everyday lives, while also exploring the meaning and resonances of money in Colchester today.

The successful candidate will start the project in October 2025.

An Essex Dialect Dictionary by the Rev. Mr Edward Gepp

By Michael Leach

It is a rare treat to find delight in the pages of what could well be a dry work of reference. This work, now a century old, openly reveals the humour and enthusiasm of its compiler, Edward Gepp (1855-1929) as well as the patient sleuthing of this dedicated human observer, which had been spread over 17 years. His introduction, where he sets out his purpose and his modus operandi for gathering Essex dialect, illustrates something of the measure of the man. He wrote:

'Dialect speech is a shy game, not to be hunted down as one hunts plants and birds and insects. It must be approached with cunning. It must not be obvious, save to chosen folk, that one is on the hunt. Patience and an ever open ear alone prevail. And even so, many words do not come. But when they come, and are securely noted down, what noble prey!'

Gepp admitted his advantages in this hunt. He was the vicar of the rural parish of High Easter from 1903 to 1916, an enquiring and educated man who was in close contact with many of the inhabitants of a largely agricultural community. His patch, as he noted, was remote from railways and main roads – of the latter, not a single one crossed his parish, and he dismissed the nearest railway (five miles away, at Great Dunmow) as an insignificant branch line.

It is clear that he felt that too many philologists had dismissed dialects as merely the result of linguistic corruption, or uncouth speech. Gepp sets out his wares as an evangelist, being convinced that some words were survivors of forms that had long since become extinct elsewhere, and that much could be learnt from identifying and recording them. He recognised too that vocabulary did not recognise county boundaries, and sometimes words were specific to even small areas of Essex (such as the parishes around High Easter). Other dialect variants he recognised as being regional rather than specific to a local area or county. This still applies to some extent, of course. I remember taking a car-load of what I would call 'hardcore' to a tip in Sheffield. On asking where to put it, I got a very puzzled response because there it is known as 'rubble'. 'Hardcore' is something quite different, and not usually discussed with a total stranger in the hearing of others!

There are other strengths to Gepp's Dictionary. He was influenced by the compilers of the New Oxford Dictionary which had commenced in 1888 and was by then nearing the completion of its V and W sections. The NED set out to provide the earliest dated literary examples of each word that was included. However, as Gepp pointed out, this was often not possible for dialect words which usually lack a printed literature so, as an alternative, he provided a sentence showing how the word would have been used in contemporary conversation.

Not surprisingly, Gepps found that *'the old speech, though still it holds on tenaciously enough in corners, is generally shrinking under the influence of the Elementary School and of free intercommunication'* – something he deeply regretted, and which had motivated him to make a record of what could be recovered. He undoubtedly did a useful job of recording the dialect words that were still in use locally. But to me the particular joy of his Dictionary comes from his extensive analysis of the particular Essex grammar, pronunciation and forms of speech which had strong resonances with the voices of some of the very elderly men that I remember when I first came to Ongar in 1971. Many that Gepp had heard were noted down vividly, such as the splendid rebuke, Git along, ye nasty 'lil spinnick, don't I'll ha' th' guts out a ye. My other memory of those years, also mentioned by Gepp, is the widespread use of village nicknames in that elderly generation. One life-long resident had always been called 'Stitcher Marriage', the result of a fight in his early childhood in the village school. The resulting damage to his clothes was noted by the teacher who commented 'You oughta get that stitched up, my lad'. His brothers had also reached adulthood with nicknames which stuck with them for the rest of their lives.

I am sorry that I failed to make any records of what I heard, even though I soon realised that their speech was quite distinct from the estuarine accent of the younger generation. An elderly former wheelwright spoke about the 'rooks' that were nesting at the bottom of his garden, and Gepp's pronunciation glossary shows that this long 'oo' was one of the characteristics of spoken Essex. I was also aware of a few regional words still in use – 'paigles' for cowslips and 'tiffing about' to describe messing around, or wasting time – by implication at the expense of his employer! I also came across 'puggling' which meant clearing out a ditch or drain. But I suspect that, over the last half century, even these few remaining relics of local dialect must have disappeared completely.

A specific county dialect dictionary seems to be a virtual impossibility, as linguistic variations cannot possibly respect county boundaries. Many of the words listed by Gepp probably enjoyed a much wider distribution than the county of Essex, and while few – as he admitted in his publication – were specific to a much smaller areas of the county. A few of the words he included seem to be either playful or pronunciation variants of common words - 'obstinacious' for obstinate, 'rheumatiz' for rheumatism, and 'noc'late' for inoculate, for example. There were others that were perhaps (or have subsequently become) very widely used - 'parky' for chilly or looking unwell, 'paddy' for angry, and 'poach' for trampling pasture land into mud. He included numbers of alternative names for common plants and insects, as well as terms related to now obsolete rural crafts and agricultural practices. Though most of these were undoubtedly dialect, it is now difficult (or impossible) to know which were specific to Essex, or to a much wider area.

Leaving these considerations aside, the delight of this work comes from Gepp's obvious enthusiasm for his subject, his keen ear for the old Essex accent, and his sympathetic connection with the individuals that he observed. He clearly appreciated their natural reserve and shy humour, recorded in a conversation he had had with a parishioner about Gepp's father who had preceded him as vicar:

An old High Easter man, a polite, kindly old man ... remarked, in further conversation "A ollus liked owd Mus' Gepp." "And I hope me too" I said. A pause, a long pause; then, with a twinkle, an expanding grin "Ain't got nawth'n agin ye." And with that I was well contented.

This was an exchange, perhaps, which says a great deal about Gepp himself, and is reinforced by the closing remark at the end of his text:

One remark more. I imagine the quite just question of some of our readers, why crowd these pages with so much that is trumpery stuff, the sayings and doings of the merely inconsiderable? Well, I like to do it. I want the book to be in some sort of picture of our people, not as a fiction might make them, but as they are. Here is what twenty years collecting has brought me, and I will put it all in. Petty stuff or not, of scientific value or not, it has one merit; it is genuine. This the sympathetic reader will recognise, and with that I am content.

There are many such delights for the observant reader.

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- Halliwel, J O, 1847, *Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words*, London (11th edition of 1889)
- Transactions of Yorkshire Dialect Society, 1917, pt xix, vol. 3, pp,13-39

A few examples from Gepp's Essex Dialect Dictionary

BANGLE: to knock about. "The wind's bangled them trees proper". !7C, to flap

BIG: pregnant. "What, they goin' to be married? Why, she ain't big yet." A sad reflection on local morals by an old gossip. 16th to 18th C – Coverdale, Shakespeare, Addison

GLOUT: to scowl

LIMB: a mischievous person, by ellipsis for "limb of Satan". Devil's limb and the like occur from the 10th C. "To play limb" with a thing is to make havoc of it.

MEETINGER (meetner): a dissenter. First record 1810. In the mouth of a churchman (however nominal) the word expresses strong contempt. "He never was n' good; ain't on'y a d---d owd meetner." The form "meetner" is no more complimentary, but perhaps less forcible; but local intolerance is unrestrained.

OLD: used in a curious random fashion. Used in a curious random fashion; it expresses familiarity as an epithet of personal names (owd Bob, owd Charley); or disapprobation, as in "they owd sparrers has played hemp o' my peas". Often it is a mere otiose epithet: "I see they owd booy's a-chasin a owd cat up and down the owd hopput". Absurd combinations result: "Mother's got another owd baby, that's an owd girl this time".

TISICK (tizzick): to have a tickling cough. "He kep on a tizzickin' all night."

The historiography of Essex dialect records

Interest in specifically Essex dialect dates back to an article by Daniel Copsey, a Braintree schoolmaster, who published a short list of local words in the Monthly Magazine of 1814. A year later, the same magazine published a page of further contributions by H. Narbal (who has defied identification). Charles Clark (1806-1880) who owned a private printing press in Great Totham, took an active interest in local dialect. He published two old verses written in dialect, *An Essex Calf's Visit to Tiptree Races* and *The Trip to Tiptree, or A Lover's Triumph*, in 1839 and 1842 respectively, and added a glossary of Essex words to the first of these.

James Orchard Halliwell (1820-1889), antiquary and literary scholar, published in 1847 his two volume dictionary of archaic and provincial words and included in his county preface a fifteenth century poem by the vicar of Maldon, and another verse from one of Charles Clark's publications. The dictionary itself contained a number of words which he believed to be specific to Essex – though he himself had no particular connection with the county. Some of these had been gleaned from the Monthly Magazine article of 1814, and others had come from two informants, the Rev W. Pridden, vicar of Broxted, Essex, from 1839 to 1846, and an unidentified Edward T. Hill. He may well have used some of the surprising number of glossaries of county dialect words which were printed in the course of the nineteenth century. One for Essex was published by John Gray Bell in 1851 without identifying the compiler.

Next in the field was Richard Stephen Charnock (1820-1905) whose interest in Essex came from a number of 'pedestrian tours' through the county during which he was struck by the 'peculiarity of the local dialect'. He was a solicitor, presumably of adequate wealth and sufficient spare time to publish a number of books on place and personal names, as well as a guide book to Spain. His glossary, published in 1880 used a number of printed sources (mainly those of Charles Clark and J. O. Halliwell) and also attempted an etymology of some of the words. A later reviewer in the Transactions of the Yorkshire Dialect Society noted rather sourly that he was 'quite unqualified for the undertaking'. However he did print a list of the sources he had used, and an annotated copy of his book, with pencilled notes and corrections, shows that it was carefully used by the Rev. Mr Edward Gepps when compiling his own dialect dictionary four decades later.

The Mistley Torc: A new acquisition for Colchester Museums

By Philip J. Wise

This exceptionally rare find was made by a metal detectorist in October 2019 on farmland at Mistley, near Manningtree in north Essex (Treasure Case: 2019 T1143). It is a fragment of a gold neck ring, or torc, comprising one terminal (or end) and a length of twisted metal which represents probably less than half of the original hoop. The surviving terminal is round in cross-section and tapers slightly before it joins the twisted hoop. Four longitudinal cuts have been made into a bar to create an X-shaped cross-section and the bar has then been twisted. The edges of a number of the twists are dented, probably due to damage whilst the object was in the ground. The torc is now very distorted; the terminal has been straightened out and there are three bends within the hoop. The break in the twisted hoop is very sharp and is therefore likely to be modern. The total length of the surviving fragment is 147 mm (5¾ inches) and it weighs 33.39g (1.18 oz.).

The object dates to the Middle Bronze Age, around 1300-1100 BC. This type of neck ring is found in the south of England, including in East Anglia with three examples known from Norfolk: at Great Dunham, Trunch and Ashill. The Mistley Torc is remarkably similar to the East Cambridgeshire Torc, said to be the heaviest and largest torc ever found in Britain and Ireland, which was recently stolen from Ely Museum. Gold metalwork from the Bronze Age is rare from Essex, and there are no previously reported finds of torcs on the Portable Antiquities Scheme database. The Mistley Torc would therefore appear to be related to a group of finds with a distribution further north in the East of England.

The acquisition by Colchester Museums of the Mistley Torc was made possible by grants from the Essex Society for Archaeology and History, the Friends of Colchester Museums and the Manningtree Local History and Museum Society. It is planned to put the Mistley Torc on display in Colchester Castle Museum in due course.



The Mistley Torc (Photo: PAS, © Colchester City Council: CIMS)

ESAH Events for 2025

We have arranged a number of events for this year. Details given as TBC here will be updated ASAP. **We are very happy to receive expressions of interest for those events which are not yet finalised - we will contact you when more is know.** We will send details of parking etc, to those who book.

Saturday 11 May, 2pm. £10. Visit & tour of Hill Hall and Theydon Mount church.

Meet 2pm at Hill Hall, Theydon Mount, Epping, CM16 7QQ

Saturday 29 June, 2pm. Free. ESAH AGM at Prittlewell Priory. Followed by tea and tour.

All details TBC.

Tuesday 26 August, 2pm. £5. Guided walking tour of Galleywood Common (racecourse).

Meet 2pm at Galleywood Heritage Centre, The Common, Off Margaretting Rd, Galleywood, Chelmsford, CM2 8TR

Saturday 1 November, 10am-4pm. £10. Annual Archaeology & History Symposium.

Includes lunch and tea/coffee. Christ Church, 164 New London Rd, Chelmsford, CM2 0AW. A mixture of archaeology and local history speakers.

Please email/write to the Excursions Secretary to book (howard000brooks@gmail.com). **Payment: Online as before.** Let us know if you require account details. Please give event reference and number of bookings (e.g. HAR 2). Alternatively: send a cheque to Hon Sec's Colchester address.

PLEASE NOTE: If you pay online you must tell us otherwise we won't be expecting you.

The visits on the Society's programme are open to members and associate members only. Non-members attending may not be covered by insurance.

The Society can accept no 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.

Membership

Subscriptions are due 1st January each year as follows:

Single Member - £25

Family Membership - £30

Student - £15

Associate Member - £15

Institutions - £25

Associate Institutions - £25

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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.