



# Museum Matters

## Newsletter of Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd

Spring 2023 Issue 59

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### Highlights and Happenings; From the Chairman

**Y**ou are, I hope, reading this issue of the Newsletter on a delightful spring day in the closing days of March with your thoughts turning to Summer. I'm writing my contribution with the temperature of 6 degrees outside and the lunchtime forecast of 5-10 cm of snow in southeast England across the next few days. I make this comment to raise how matters, be they of the weather or otherwise, can quickly change and especially so with technology.

One of the benefits of your annual subscription is that we inform and entertain you with Talks. Recently driven by Covid we introduced Talks by Zoom out of necessity. The Organisation Committee ably managed by our vice chairman Paul Salvidge has a dilemma; what is the future role of technology and how we offer our talks. We have over the winter had four talks; to remind you they were:

November – Richard Bale's excellent presentation on **Roman Life - Gladiators**

January – Simon Coxall and his eye opening reveal of what is on our doorstep with **"Uttlesford – the Little Shire"**

February – Mark Lewis followed on from his 2021 talk with the stimulating **"The world of Art Deco"**

March – Liz Huxley took us up hill, down dale and along the coastline with her fabulous photographic collection of **"Scottish Wildlife – The Highlands and The Islands"**

Thanks to all four Speakers that took us through the Winter.

Looking forward we have a number of options:

- Purchase and use expensive equipment at live audiences that are simultaneously Zoomed to a much wider audience.
- Winter Zoom and summer in the Parish rooms.
- Vary the use of venues based on the needs of the presenter such that far away speakers don't need to travel to us
- Promote our talks so we grow an audience beyond Saffron Walden, nay even around the world!

Let Paul Salvidge or myself know your views by email at ; [salvidge@uwclub.net](mailto:salvidge@uwclub.net) or [keitheden@aol.com](mailto:keitheden@aol.com) or ring 07774 986400

On a final note, we had a great Christmas Party so thanks to all those who came and to those who prepared and served the food and wine. Those who enjoyed the evening will tell you so, to those who couldn't make it please ensure you have the date in your diary for this year as soon as it's published.

## Curator's Column;

### Varnishing Bread and other activities

On a recent grey and wet weekend, I found myself venturing into bread-making for the first time, in a quest to create a 'medieval loaf' for display in our forthcoming Feeding the Family exhibition, which examines the history of dining from Roman to recent times. The recipe I selected, from a modern book of medieval recipes, was for a bread made from a mix of wheat and barley flour, very similar to the traditional medieval coarse bread known as 'maslin'. This was usually a blend of wheat and rye flour or barley and rye, but I added extra salt (as a preservative), baked it a little longer than recommended and left it out to dry thoroughly for some days. Then varnished it. Two coats of clear matt, thickly applied to seal the porous surface. Two weeks on, and the loaves still look good as new, but I will be making extra supplies and freezing, ready to thaw out and varnish if the originals show signs of deterioration. This is nothing to the fun which Charlotte has had making other replica foodstuffs, as you will be able to see for yourselves.



Meanwhile the transfer of the archaeological metal finds to the new low-humidity store at Shirehill is almost complete, assisted by volunteers Joanne Pegrum and Noah Burns. It is hard not to get distracted into researching some of the older collections coming to light after years hidden at the back of shelves, and a few of these will feature in the exhibition or maybe a future Object of the Month. The pewter beaker shown here is one of these. It was purchased for 10 shillings (50p) from a Saffron Walden dealer named as 'Hagger the Broker' in 1891 and is described in the register as "a Pewter drinking Mug or Pot without handle, rudely engraved with effigy of the King (Charles I?) crowned and riding upon a horse with other devices representing trees &c. early 17th century work." The decoration, which is difficult to photograph, is engraved in a dashed, rocking line by a technique known as 'wrigglework' and is characteristic of this period. There is a stylised tree on the side, clearly not botanically-accurate but with some sort of rounded fruit or nut shown among the leaves. This combination of a king triumphant on horseback and a tree (with acorns?) suggests that the monarch represented may in fact be Charles II, who famously took refuge in an oak tree to escape Parliamentarian soldiers after the Battle of Worcester in 1651. If so, the beaker would date to the Restoration of 1660 or soon after – a Royalist sympathiser's way of celebrating the return of the monarchy after the austerity of the Commonwealth.

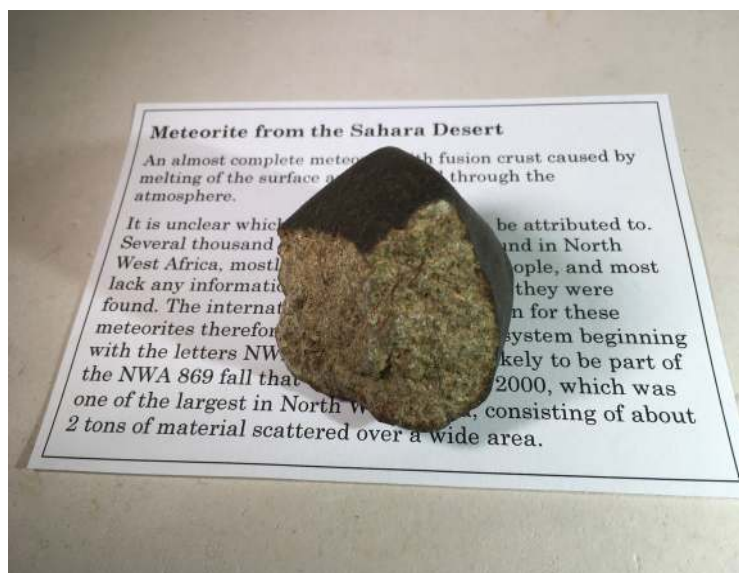
## The Year Ahead

We have a very full programme this year, and our leaflet for April – September is about to go to print. Meanwhile work on the development project awaits a couple of decisions from our Council regarding one of the surveys to be undertaken, after which I hope we can press ahead. There will be a ‘new look’ for the Museum’s website too later in the spring.

## Natural Sciences: Sarah Kenyon

**A** local historian has solved the mystery around C. Baron. She writes “Charles Baron was one of the town worthies in the early 18 hundreds who was very interested in gardening and all matters scientific as was the vogue then for gentlemen of social standing and money. He was a boot and shoe maker listed in 1841 in the Market Place but this would have been his shop. He can certainly be found in the census from 1811 to 1841. He developed the double hollyhock but as he was not interested in commercialising it this was taken over by William Chater. I have always imagined that he could have lived somewhere in the region of what is today 22 East Street or at least he might have had a garden there because a plaque on the side wall of the front garden above a blocked-in doorway has the inscription C B 1822”. Three Saffron Crocus plants in the Museum herbarium are from the garden of C. Baron. I hope that by looking at a later census I can confirm where he lived and the location of his garden.” Thank you for this valuable information.

Thanks also to the verge representatives who helped check special roadside verge sites after the “autumn” full width cut. Circumstances made this difficult. The cut was delayed until November, heavy snow covered the sites and then it was time for Christmas and New Year festivities! Many marker posts have gone missing or been damaged since work last took place in 2019. New posts and plaques are finally being installed by Essex Highways to mark the verges properly. However, it is very sad that the Highway Rangers service has been cut. The Rangers did excellent work at the special verge along the wall of Audley End House. This verge is the largest site for Lesser Calamint in Uttlesford. It was cut three times a year to control scrub and nettles and the cuttings were removed to stop the soil being enriched by extra nutrients. The service will be missed and ways to continue management of the verge are being explored.



March 2023 is meteorite month. Read more about this in the Object of the Month for March section beneath on page 8.

To celebrate the centenary of the fall the Museum’s cast of the Ashdon meteorite is on display in the Great Hall until Friday 14 April together with more meteorites from the collection of a local geologist. These rocks from space include meteorites that landed in Africa, Greenland, North America and Russia. You can also see pieces of rock ejected from Mars and the Moon which landed on Earth as meteorites.

More information about the meteorite fall in Ashdon has been provided thanks to Ashdon Village Museum, the Essex Rock and Mineral Society and the Geologists’ Association. A booklet about the Ashdon meteorite is on sale at the Museum reception for £3.

## Natural Sciences: James Lumbard

### Saffron Walden Rocks

At the time of writing, plans are well underway to purchase and install a new information panel for the geology display in the Museum grounds, which includes 'glacial erratic' boulders, dragged to the area from hundreds of miles away by the Anglian Ice Sheet 450,000 years ago. The largest boulder was found in the old Acrow works (now Huws Gray/Ridgeons) off Ashdon Road in Saffron Walden. We hope by the time you read this that the new panel will be installed, looking much more weather-proof and resistant to damage! Glacial erratics can also be seen at the 'Gibson Boulders' – the overgrown mound at the corner of Margaret Way and Gibson Gardens off the south end of Saffron Walden High Street.

### Lost Language of Nature art commission

Janetka Platun, our commissioned artist had a very successful series of workshops with pupils at Joyce Frankland Academy in Newport with backgrounds including Ukrainian, Polish, Chinese, Bangladeshi and Irish. Janetka has produced a final artwork and has also compiled a sizeable digital archive of sound and video recordings which we are excited to receive and explore. We plan to host a celebration evening for the commission where we can recognise the students' contributions and thank our funders, Essex Cultural Diversity Project and SWMS, and to share our successes with the local press.

### Lost Language lives on

Since the end of the special exhibition in October 2022, a mini-exhibition has moved around the Museum, from Curiosity Corner in November, to the 'sandpit area' on the back wall and, in March, to the Your Stories area at the far end of the Great Hall. There are still postcards to add your story, superstition, rhyme or colloquial name for any wildlife that forms a part of your daily life, or just anything that you remember from grandparents or nursery rhymes.

### New wildlife habitat



Thank you to our grounds maintenance colleagues for the construction of a new log pile in the area behind the castle, adding to the stag beetle loggery that was already there. The wood for this latest log pile comes from several trees that were made safe after storms last year. Hopefully this new habitat will provide shelter for bugs, small mammals and even reptiles or over-wintering amphibians, and we are looking forward to seeing it develop as a habitat.

### Documenting the archaeology collections

Work began in October to transfer data from a very large collection of metal detected finds spanning 20 years of work by a local enthusiast. This hugely varied collection is fully identified by the original collector including ages and images of the items, which range from Bronze Age axe heads through to 17th-century coins. The project will transfer the collector's information and images to 'Modes', the Museum's digital database, and ensure that each item in the collection is assigned a unique 'accession number' to help identify it from other similar items.

The most recent work has been on coins collected at Stagden Cross near High Easter from the Late Iron Age and Roman periods. This Late Iron Age coin has a horse rider on the reverse, and the front (obverse) has the head of 'Jupiter Ammon'. This is the Roman god Jupiter shown with curled ram's horns, a tradition taken from the important Egyptian god Ammon who was usually shown with horns.



Ammon's curled horns are also the inspiration for the name of fossil ammonites.

### Collections research

We look forward to welcoming back Dr Daniel Field, Strickland Curator of Ornithology at the University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge, to view the Museum's study skin collection, following his first visit in February 2022. We hope that the Museum's collection can contribute to his and his students' research, and that his knowledge will highlight more hidden gems in our collection.

### Spring flowers

The pots at the Museum entrance show that spring is on its way. Winter aconites are flowering yellow, daffodils are well into their growth and bluebells are showing their first leaves. Blue anemones are in flower to the right of the main entrance next to the ramp, and to the left behind the cycle rack Muscari are bursting into bud too. Purple crocuses and the odd snowdrop are a wonderful welcome to the castle grounds near the pedestrian entrance from Church Street.



### International reach

We seem to be receiving more online object identification requests, especially from the USA, in recent months. The latest was the calcaneus (heel) bone from a white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*). Recent research has estimated that this deer has the heaviest aggregate weight (biomass) – the number you would get from adding the weight of every single white-tailed deer together – of all land mammals worldwide, at 2.7 million tonnes. The next heaviest is wild boar, at 1.9 million tonnes.

## Collections Officer, Human History : Jenny Oxley

### World Cultures Gallery

In recent weeks we have been doing preventative conservation work behind the scenes in our world cultures gallery, to reduce the chance of moth infestation over the Spring.

We've been removing organic items for freezing, as well as hoovering the floor of the big walk-in Oceania and Melanesia case to remove debris which pests can feed on.

We surprised a few visitors when they spotted us inside the display case!



### Is this Mary Queen of Scots' Glove?

One of the “star” objects in our human history collections is this 16th century glove which is thought to have been worn by Mary Queen of Scots.

It is a gauntlet style glove, which would have been worn on the left hand. It is made from kid leather, which has been decorated with coloured silk and elaborately embroidered with silver wire with gold lace additions. The design, which is repeated on both sides of the gauntlet, includes roses, foliage and trees as well as a bird with a long tail which is pictured in flight.

The glove is lined with bright crimson satin, a narrow band of which is turned outwards, and forms a binding on to which is sewn gold lace and there are small silver spangle pendants fastened on to it. The opening at the side of the gauntlet is connected by two broad bands of crimson silk, now much faded, each decorated at the edges with silver lace.



It has been commented that the glove has been altered and that the pieces hanging from the wrist were a later insert in keeping with 17th century fashions, which we hope to explore further with experts.

This glove is thought to have been given by Mary on the day of her execution (8th February 1587) to Marmaduke Dayrell who was Master of the Household, Clerk of the Avery at Fotheringay Castle as a token for his “faithful devotion to her Highness’ service.” The glove remained for a long time in the possession of the Dayrell family. It was initially loaned to the Museum in 1837 by Frances Dayrell of Shudy Camps Park, Cambridgeshire which is close to Haverhill, before it was later donated to the museum.

## Object of the Month

December 2022

'Love Letter' beadwork panel

chosen by Alice Lodge

December's Object of the Month has been chosen by Alice Lodge, Project Assistant, Greater in Spirit, Large in Outlook project, Epping Forest District Museum & Saffron Walden Museum.

Epping Forest District Museum (EFDM) has recently been granted a generous Arts Council England grant to produce a major exhibition of around 300 ethnographic objects connected to the Buxton family.

The Buxton collection was donated to EFDM by the family of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, 3rd Baronet, grandson of noted abolitionist Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, 1st Baronet. We wanted to combine the work of the Buxton family as well as explore the cultures of the countries that they visited.

EFDM will be working closely with Saffron Walden Museum to collaborate on their Ethnographic collections. Here at Saffron Walden Museum we hold one of the largest World Cultures collections in Essex, making our collaboration with this project significant. The objects acquired by the Buxton family include items from New Zealand, Australia, East and West Africa, India and the Pacific Islands. This brilliant opportunity will allow both museums to work directly with community groups such as the Ethiopian History Society and the Ngati Ranana London Māori Group as well as numerous other community organisations.

The object Alice has chosen from the Saffron Walden Museum collections for this month's Object of the Month is this 'Love Letter' beadwork panel which contains coded messages. Made by the Zulu people in the late 19th century in South Africa. These were traditionally given to female lovers; each colour represented a different message. Modern love letters of this sort now contain images rather than colours to signify something of importance.

For more about the GSLO project here:

<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/museum-world-culture-collections-project/>

February 2023

Eider Duck

Chosen by James Lumbard and Charlotte Pratt

This month we're celebrating the Lost Language of Nature project, putting the finishing touches to this common eider.

James and Charlotte have cleaned its plumage, repainted its beak and feet, and refreshed its base.

Eider ducks are famous for their soft downy feathers which help keep them warm in freezing conditions. 'Down' comes from the Old Norse word 'dúnn', the word for the fluffy feathers of young birds and the same feathers which insulate adult birds. The wild ducks can be



Image of the 'Love Letter' beadwork panel © Saffron Walden Museum



'farmed' sustainably for their down feathers, which are taken from the nests once chicks have fledged. This down is used to make traditional eiderdown pillows and quilts.

In the UK, eider ducks are sometime called St Cuthbert's duck or Cuddy duck, according to the belief that St Cuthbert's holiness protected Farne island and its population of eider ducks.

Saffron Walden Museum wants to hear your stories about wildlife and nature in your life, or that you know from parents and grandparents, to help create more interesting, relevant and diverse displays in the future. Fill in a postcard in the Museum to join in or search online for '**Lost Language Saffron Walden Museum**'.

**March 2023**

**The Ashdon Meteorite**

**Chosen by Sarah Kenyon**

One hundred years ago, on 9 March 1923, a meteorite came from space and landed at Ashdon in north-west Essex. The fall was witnessed by a thatcher called Frederick Pratt who was working in a wheat field at Ashdon Hall Farm. He heard a 'sissing' sound and looked up to see 'the earth fly up like water'. Later he dug up the stone from a depth of two feet with another farm worker called Curven. Frederick took it to the police station in Saffron Walden, then to his vicar in the village of Wendens Ambo. Reverend Francis W. Berry purchased the meteorite and donated it to the Natural History Museum where it was investigated by the Keeper of Minerals George T. Prior. He classified it as a stony chondrite meteorite. It contains minerals feldspar, pyroxene and olivine, white specks of nickel-iron and other minerals from which the solar system formed 4.5 billion years ago.



Chondrites are by far the most abundant class of meteorites, but they are also the most interesting, as they are thought to have been formed at the same time, and from the same stuff, as the inner rocky planets of our Solar System. They contain a mixture of fine-grained crystalline and glassy materials, and there are several different types, but they are all characterised by the presence of 'chondrules' – tiny, near-spherical beadlike objects about a millimetre in size. Chondrules are named after the Greek word chondrus, meaning grain, and are only found in meteorites. There is no scientific consensus on how chondrules were formed but they are thought to have once been molten droplets in space, formed at very high temperatures, which solidified and aggregated into asteroids.

The Ashdon meteorite is 12cm x 9cm x 6cm in size and weighs 1.27kg. The smooth face of the meteorite was melted by the heat generated as it travelled through the Earth's atmosphere from space. This plaster cast was made in 1926 using a mould of the original meteorite. To celebrate the centenary of the fall the Museum's cast will be on display during March.

A special display on the Ashdon meteorite will be coming to Saffron Walden Museum from Sunday 12 March to Friday 14 April. A booklet on the Ashdon meteorite will be available from 12th March from the museum gift shop.



## Learning and Outreach News: Charlotte Pratt

February half term saw a return to our individual children's craft events as the activity packs are no longer required for social distancing. It was great to have a good turn out for both days of activities which were inspired by the temporary exhibition "Bone Black, A Brief history of Colours". Visitors had the choice of making a very cheerful rainbow mobile on the 14th, or a spinning colours wheel on the 15th. Both activities require high levels of painting concentration from our young participants and I think its safe to say they were the quietest craft activities I have ever run!



Outside our children's crafts we have been trying to offer more to our adult visitors, with a Christmas marbling workshop in December and a life casting workshop in January. Both sessions were well received with participants all leaving with pieces they were really proud of with requests for feature adult craft activities from some participants.

Our big news is that the Museum will be holding its first open call art exhibition this year! The Uttlesford Open 2023, will open to the public on Saturday 22nd of July. The exhibition aims to showcase artistic talent from across Uttlesford. Open to anyone, from complete beginners to seasoned professional, the exhibition will give local artists the chance to have their work exhibited in the historic museum building, which is reputed to be the oldest purpose-built local museum in the country.

Artists, aged over 18 who are living, working, or studying in Uttlesford or within 20 miles of Saffron Walden Museum are invited to submit artworks on the theme of "A Sense of Place: People, Places and Landscape of Uttlesford". Entries must be made online via email, and will open on the 3rd of April and close at 11.59 p.m. on 20th of May 2023, and for this artists just need to submit good digital images of their artworks. Entry fees for The Uttlesford Open 2023 are £10 for a single piece of work and £15 for two. Concessionary rates are available.



After the closing date, a panel of judges will select the paintings, sculptures, textiles, ceramics, prints and photographs that will go on display in July at Saffron Walden Museum. The artworks will be judged on both their artistic merit and their response to the theme. Unsuccessful submissions will still be displayed digitally.

Any members of the Museum society who would like to enter the exhibition are very welcome to do so, and can visit <https://www.swmuseumlearning.com/uttlesfordopen23> to find out more.

## Volunteer News: Wendy-Jo Atter & Jenny Oxley

### Ann Holloway honoured at Community Heroes Awards Ceremony

**P**ictured front and centre is our valued volunteer Ann Holloway. She along with 26 other recipients, were awarded with an Uttlesford District Council Community Achievement Award, for their outstanding contribution as volunteers in their communities. Their achievements were recognised at an evening of celebration on the 5 January.



Cllr Heather Asker, Chair of the council, who presented the awards, said: "These wonderful volunteers are often unsung heroes who go above and beyond for their local communities and play a huge part in what makes Uttlesford such a special place. I would like to congratulate all those who received an award and thank them for their dedication and hard work."

Cllr Petrina Lees, Chair of the Community Achievement Awards Working Group which decides the awards, added: "We are extremely fortunate to have so many people in Uttlesford who give up their time for others. This awards event is really important as it highlights what a vital contribution volunteers make to our lives every day - the value they bring to their communities is inspirational."

## Tony Carter's Retirement

Tony Carter retired in February from his casual contract after 18 years working for the Museum. Tony joined us initially as a casual, then 'acted up' as Security Officer when the postholder (Bruce Tice) went on secondment to the Council for other work. Tony eventually took on the role permanently for a number of years, before stepping back from full-time work (at which point Stefan became Security & Premises Officer).



Tony (second from right) has remained on a casual contract, acting as a 'backstop', stepping in when we've had a sudden and unexpected staff shortage or have needed someone to invigilate contractors at short notice.

Thank you for your service Tony. We will miss you, but I'm sure you will pop in and visit us still.

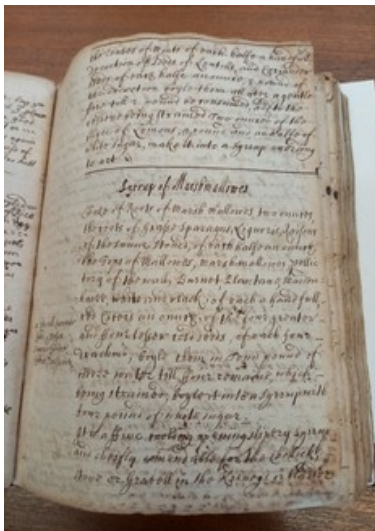
## Exhibitions and Upcoming Events:

**Upcoming Exhibition: Feeding the Family**  
Saturday 1 April - Sunday 2 July 2023

The history of food preparation and food serving from Roman times to present day.

In recent weeks we've been researching the history of food for our upcoming exhibition.

Recently, Jenny visited The Gibson Library, in town to look through 18th century cookbooks, one associated with Elizabeth Lindsay from 1766 and a later 18th century cookbook, associated with Lofts Hall.



Charlotte has been busy creating replica food for the exhibition using dental alginate to take casts of real food to get the right shapes and sizes and then painting the cast versions up to look realistic for the displays.

# Museum Society News

## Treasurer/Membership

Sadly, Catherine Peacock has needed to step back from the position of Membership Secretary so, for a while, I am afraid you must put up with me wearing both hats. That is, unless you know anyone who would like to volunteer. I would love to hear from them.

### Membership

- Membership subscription is a minimum of £15 a year and includes,
- Newsletters sent to members three times a year.
- Unlimited free entry to the museum during opening hours – and children get in free, but Special Events may attract a charge.
- A programme of evening talks with wide ranging subjects, currently delivered via Zoom during winter months and live during the other part of the year
- Private viewings before the opening of special exhibitions for you and your guest,
- An Annual Winter Social Evening, with a museum quiz trail.
- Annual General Meeting – Attend and vote; have your say in how the Museum Society is run.

You should have received the usual reminder that subscriptions for the year to 31 March 2024 are due on 1 April 2023. The minimum subscription is £15 per person but any extra is always welcome and will be used wisely. Membership cards were sent out with these reminders. If you received notification by email, please remember to print and complete your own card as you will need to show it when visiting the museum. In the absence of a membership card the desk volunteer will request an entrance fee.

If you are not able to print your card, please ask me for one. I keep a small stock of printed cards for members on email but without printers and expect to be at the talk on 17 April with spare cards. If this is not convenient, and is requested, named cards can be left at the welcome desk in the Museum.

### Data Protection

Oh dear – more administration coming shortly! As it is nearly five years since we first asked you to confirm your personal details and preferred methods of contact, I will need to ensure that our records are up to date. When requested, please reply promptly to save us having to issue reminders. Thank you.

*Christine Sharpe*

## Reports on Talks

**Monday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

**Gladiators in Roman Life**

**Speaker; Richard Bale**

**A**fter so many films and dramas about Roman gladiators, Richard spoke about how they really lived and died, and covered the two representations of left-handed gladiators in Saffron Walden Museum

**Monday 9th January 2023**

**'Uttlesford "The Little Shire" - a Landscape Archaeology Approach'**

**Speaker, Simon Coxall**

**S**imon's talk was based upon his Masters Dissertation of 2017, a study of the Uttlesford Hundred, the old Saxon division of north-west Essex. He used clues from the landscape, old documents, aerial photography, Lidar scans of the landscape, and fieldwork and some excavations in revealing the history of our area.

These notes are an interpretation and summary of his talk.

The landscape is based upon chalk, incised with a network of valleys draining northwards, unique in Essex as all other rivers drain southwards. A typical cross-section of the valleys, in early history, would have seen a flat base with a stream flanked by meadows, and these would have produced 2 or 3 crops of hay each year, compared to only one on higher grasslands. The edges of the meadows would have had roadways following the valleys, with the lower slopes of lighter soils above the road easily ploughed. The higher slopes have heavier

clays, difficult to cultivate before iron tipped ploughs became available, and on the flat hilltops woodland would have survived because it was too difficult to clear, but produced a valuable supply of timber and wood. This was all fertile land, and this was one of the richest Hundreds in Essex in 1086.

The place name, “.....denu” was common, with as many in Uttlesford as, roughly, in the rest of Essex combined. It has origins in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century and means something like ‘long curving valley’; so this was the land of the Denu folk, living in places with modern ‘den’ placename endings – e.g. Walden, Debden, Wenden, etc. Other placename endings to look for are ‘hōh’ = ridge; ‘lēah’ = clearing; ‘mere’ = pool.

The chalk streams provided a good water source, with meres or ponds along them, and shallow riffles as fords. There were Newport Pond, and The Broad Mere at Wicken Bonhunt, for example. But there could be a shortage of water in summer, making ponds and springs or wells important. There are a large number of moated farmsteads in this area, and the moat was a water source in such times of need.

Trackways and roads can be traced through the area, with 2 Roman roads, one at Chesterford following the even older Icknield Way, Stane Street to the south (the old A120), and a route south from Chesterford making a T junction there along the Cam valley heading towards Newport and then London. This was a borderland between powerful tribes to the east west and north, making it an important communication hub. Not all of the old roads have survived to modern times, even as footpaths, with a lost Roman road from Chesterford to Radwinter, crossing through Little Walden. Right-angle bends on modern roads indicate where a road has been lost, which would have continued straight on at a former junction.

There is generally a continuity of settlements, but ‘Thunors Clearing’ has been lost, the village of Thunderley now represented only by the Hall of that name, again set in a valley with a meadow bottom and tracks leading west and then north.

The area around the junction of the modern Sparrows End Hill and London Road made a good case study. The oldest roadway here was the riverside lane which Simon Coxall calls ‘Abbey Lane’ passing through modern Sparrows End Farm along the riverside to the Abbey Farm, crossing the modern grounds of Audley End house (then meadow land), to Duck Street Farm, and then to Springwell. At the Norman conquest the Mandevilles obtained a right to hold a market at Walden, and built the castle, and also built new more direct roads from Springwell to Walden, and Walden to Sparrows End, where a ford across the River Cam, the Uttles Ford lay. This road was called ‘Porteway’ running a bit south of modern Sparrows End Hill, and crossed the river roughly behind the second house south of the modern roundabout. Simon Coxall calls this ‘Black Swan Ford’, because that house used to be a public house of that name, ‘The Black Swan.’ Surrounding field patterns shown by crop marks indicate a landscape of fields older than 1146, which were cut by the Porteway, showing it to be later. The Abbey Lane did not cut across fields and followed their boundaries. Both routes have now of course disappeared, replaced by later roads.



*Drawing by Tony Morton based on Simon Coxall's original  
Map Base "© [OpenStreetMap](#)"*

The origin of the name ‘Uttlesford’ has been much debated. One suggestion is ‘Udda’s Ford’ named after a person. A suggestion from the audience pointed out that this might have been pronounced as ‘Utha’, in the Welsh manner, as incoming Saxons would later have thought of the natives as Welsh, and they did have a continuity with Romano-British people .

Another possibility is 'Urteil Ford' from Old High German meaning a judicial decision. This place is central to the Valley network of the Little Shire and could have been a Place of Assembly at this key crossing point of the river.

A fascinating glimpse into history, with thanks to Simon Coxall.

**Tony Morton**

**Monday 13 February : 8:00 pm :**

**The World of Art Deco.**

**Speaker Mark Lewis**

**M**ark spoke to us in November 2021 when he gave us an outstanding talk on 'Art Nouveau'. The term 'Arts Decoratifs' (later shortened to Art Deco in the 1960s) was coined after the Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes (International Exhibition of Modern and Industrial Decorative Arts) held in Paris in 1925.

Further research;

there is a wealth of information about Art Deco on the world wide web.

An overview is provided on Wikipedia at - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art\\_Deco](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_Deco)

The Victoria and Albert Museum has a collection of art deco objects to see at-

<https://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/art-deco>.

The Royal Institute of British Architects has a page about art deco buildings here -

<https://www.architecture.com/explore-architecture/art-deco>

**Monday March 6 : 8:00 pm :**

**Scottish Wildlife-The Highlands and Islands.**

**Speaker; Liz Huxley.**

**A** photographic tour around scenic Scotland, showcasing the species of birds and mammals which are most characteristic of this beautiful country, from the mountains to the coast.

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