



Society News

The Bulletin of the Enfield Archaeological Society



Background research isn't all dull. See p. 7 for an account of one of Forty Hill's more colourful characters.

2 Forthcoming Events: EAS

16 January: Southgate before World War 1
13 February: Algeria: Nomads, Merchants and Oil Barons
13 March: Roman Enfield
17 April: Excavations & Fieldwork of EAS 2008 & AGM

3 Other Societies

4 Society Matters

5 Meeting Reports

19 October: London Cemeteries

6 Book Review: Middlesex Tales of Mystery and Murder

7 Will Shelton: The Highwayman of Maidens Bridge

8 Lower Palaeolithic Handaxe from Grange Park, Enfield

9 Fieldwork Report: Elsynge Palace 2008

12 Pastfinders News

Society News is published quarterly in March, June, September and December

The Editor is Jeremy Grove

Meetings are held at Jubilee Hall, 2 Parsonage Lane, Enfield (*near Chase Side*) at 8pm. Tea and coffee are served and the sales and information table is open from 7.30pm. Visitors, who are asked to pay a small entrance fee of £1.00, are very welcome.



If you would like to attend the EAS lectures, but find travelling difficult, please contact the Secretary, David Wills (Tel: 020 8364 5698) and we will do our best to put you in touch with another member who can give you a lift.

Forthcoming events

The full lecture programme for 2008, organised by Tim Harper, is as follows. You should also find a programme card enclosed with this newsletter.

16th January

Southgate before World War 1

Graham Dalling

Over the last two years, Graham has given us lively and fact-filled talks on Enfield and Edmonton in the late Victorian and Edwardian period – this year he will complete his ‘trilogy’ by talking about the last of the three boroughs which combined to become the modern London Borough of Enfield in 1964. Based on past experience we can expect a fascinating talk with plenty of discussion to follow.

13th February

Algeria: Nomads, Merchants and Oil Barons

Ian Jones, EAS

Algeria is the least-known part of North Africa today as for the last 25 years it has been closed to European visitors. But now its astonishing archaeological and architectural heritage can once again be visited. This talk concentrates on its pre-Roman and especially its spectacular Roman remains. These include Lambesis, the fortress of Africa’s only legion, the III Augusta, with its associated civil settlement and Timgad, the most fully excavated example of a Colonia I have seen. Its towns flourished thanks to olive oil and grain and included the delightfully sited Djemila and the seaport of Hippo Regius, episcopal seat of Augustine, the greatest of the early fathers of the church.

13th March

Roman Enfield

Dr Martin Dearne, EAS

One of the most important contributions the EAS has made to archaeology is its long-running investigation of Enfield’s Roman settlement. Martin has been pulling together the results from this work and other sources of

evidence, and recently published a paper on the subject in a monograph on Roman London published in honour of our president, Harvey Sheldon. At very short notice he gave an unbilled talk on this subject to the Society in November 2007 when another lecture was cancelled – by popular demand here is a second chance for those who missed it, or who would like to hear about this important topic again.

17th April

The Excavations & Fieldwork of Enfield Archaeology Society 2008

Preceded by Annual General Meeting

15th May

Prescot Street, E1: Excavations and Roman Cemetery

Guy Hunt, LP Archaeology

19th June

The Geoffrey Gillam Memorial Lecture With Edmonton Hundred Historical Society

18th September

Kensington Palace & Excavations 2008 Tim Bradley, Preconstruct Archaeology

16th October

Prehistoric London Archaeology Jon Cotton, MoL

13th November

Waltham Abbey Excavations 2008 Peter Huggins, Waltham Abbey Historical Society

December - Christmas Break.

No Lecture

Meetings of other Societies

EDMONTON HUNDRED HISTORICAL SOCIETY
7.45 for 8pm, Jubilee Hall, Enfield, unless otherwise stated

21 January
A brief history of Pantomime
Marlene McAndrew

10 February
7.30 pm Charity School Hall, Church St, Edmonton
The buildings and people of the Lea Valley Industries
Reg Smith

20 February
2 for 2.30 pm, Jubilee Hall
2,000 years of Valentines
David Groen

18 March
A.G.M. and Yet More London Suburbs
Graham Dalling

16 April
The Intimate Theatre
Geoff Bowden

HENDON & DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
7.45 for 8.00pm Avenue House, 17 East End Road, Finchley

13 January
An exploration of the Western Desert of Egypt
Nicole Douek

10 February
The building of the Underground
Tony Earle

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION NORTH LONDON BRANCH
7.45 for 8pm, Jubilee Hall, Parsonage Lane, Enfield

13 January
Germany since 1945: from Division to Reunification
Professor David Stevenson (LSE)

10 February
Call Scotland Yard: Whitehall 1212
Maggie Bird

10 March
Supermac: Macmillan and the Tory Party from Baldwin to Thatcher
Richard Thorpe

LONDON & MIDDLESEX ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
6 for 6.30pm, Terrace Room, Museum of London

8 January
Hospitallers and Templars in Greater London and Beyond
Pam Willis – Curator, Museum of the Order of St John

19 February
(6.15pm) AGM & Presidential Address

12 March
Forging the Railway – Archaeologists Investigate Stations, Viaducts and Railway Works
Andrew Westman, MoLAS

14 March
11am Museum of London Docklands, £8/£10s
LAMAS 46th Conference of London Archaeologists
See page 6 for details

16 April
Friends in the City: The Quakers in 17th & early 18th century London
Dr Simon Dixon

WEST ESSEX ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP
7.45 for 8pm, VI Form Unit, Woodford County High School, High Road, Woodford Green

9 February
Museums and Archaeology
Hedley Swain – Museums, Libraries & Archives Council

10 March
(7.30pm) AGM followed by Presidential Address
Harvey Sheldon – Birkbeck College

14 April
The Archaeology of the Fens
Tim Reynolds – Birkbeck College

WALTHAM ABBEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
8pm, Parish Centre, Abbey Gardens, Waltham Abbey
(please note new venue)

29 January
Your Victorian Ancestors
George Smith

26 February
Dead Horses, Smithy Shoes, Stinking Mud – A History of Tanning
Les Capon

26 March
Puddephatt Memorial Lecture – The Memorials in the Abbey
Grenville Weltch

SOCIETY MATTERS

Membership subscriptions – due 1 Jan

Please remember these fall due for renewal on 1 January 2009, irrespective of when you joined the society, unless you joined after 30 September 2008.

Please send the enclosed Renewal Form, together with the appropriate sum, to the Secretary, David Wills, 43 Millers Green Close, Enfield, Middlesex, EN2 7BD.

The rates are again unchanged from last year:

Ordinary Members:	£ 9.00
Joint Memberships:	£13.00
Junior Members:	£ 4.50

Please note that Joint Membership is defined as any number of named persons residing at one address and receiving a single copy of Society News.

New members who joined the Society after 30 September 2008 need take no action, as their subscriptions are valid until 31 December 2009.

Please note that it is necessary to have current valid membership of the Society before taking part in any excavation or fieldwork, in order to provide adequate insurance cover.

We are able to send bulletins by e-mail, so if you would prefer to receive yours by e-mail only (thus saving paper, stamps, the rainforest etc...) please tick the box on the subscription form.

Flint Artefacts Belonging to Geoffrey Gillam – Can Anyone Help ?

Along with large paper and photographic archives passed to the Society both before his sad death last year by Geoffrey and subsequently by his family are around 400 flint artefacts.

Whilst work on the paper and photographic material will take some time, the flintwork has already been shown to Jon Cotton at the Museum of London and it is hoped that we will be able to present it to the museum as it includes much material evidently dredged from the Thames in the nineteenth century, some of it of inherent importance.

However, there is some uncertainty as to how Geoffrey acquired the material and establishing that might reveal more about its ultimate origins and so its significance.

We know that a few pieces are twentieth century fake flint artefacts by a man called George Glover (faking to sell to collectors was not uncommon in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, though we know little about this man – if you know anything about him please get in touch).

But we suspect that the rest (genuine flint artefacts) could have once been in a private collection (particularly one known as the Corner collection) and might have been bought by Geoffrey when it was auctioned off in lots, perhaps in the 1940s.

If any member, perhaps from casual conversations with Geoffrey, can shed any light on where he acquired the material, or recalls him mentioning the Corner collection, would they please contact Martin Dearne on 0208 807 7079 or at martin.dearne@tesco.net.

Meeting Reports

London Cemeteries

19 October: Dr Ken Worpole

Dr Worpole started out as an English teacher before spending 20 years working in social policy. Working for Demos in the 1990s he helped produce the report *People, Parks and Cities* on the future of British parks. They did not look at cemeteries, but a crisis was growing as money for cemeteries, and space in them was running out, leading to people being buried away from where they had lived, a loss of choice, and a huge increase in cremations to 72%, the highest rate in Europe. Further work looking at cemeteries was commissioned. This sparked Dr Worpole's interest, and since he and his wife have spent 5 years visiting and photographing cemeteries in ten cities around Europe.

An average English cemetery contains 5,000 burials. Re-use used to be quite common until a new law was passed requiring that people would be buried in perpetuity. In all cultures burial grounds tends to become sacred – and often are established around previous cemeteries. People seem to want to make a statement in the landscape – which is why Dr Worpole is worried that if we lose our cemeteries we will lose this sense of process. He has in fact become a 'convert' to the idea of burial as a result of his research, having previously favoured cremation.

In Britain burial has an association with our ornamental landscape tradition – our cemeteries being kept rather like our gardens. This makes an interesting contrast with France, where there seems to be a deliberate separation from the landscape, with higher walls and less concessions to nature, though the result is still atmospheric. Other interesting contrasts were with a Dutch Jewish cemetery – these tend to be visited only for a burial, rather than being a place sanctuary as in the English Christian tradition, and Haarlem Cathedral in which each flagstone is a tomb – of course church burials were also common in England until the 17th-18th century.

There are walls round some English cemeteries, especially prestigious ones, such as the magnificent seven London cemeteries of the 1840s, including Highgate, and also the very beautiful Protestant cemetery in Rome, where Keats and Shelley's heart are buried. Here burials only take place at night.

The most memorable cemetery Dr Worpole visited was 70 km from Rome at Chevetry. Here there are Etruscan tombs dating from 700BC designed as a town, with streets, houses, doors and rooms. The bodies were placed in alcoves. This 'City of the Dead' is more a European tradition, in contrast with the British tendency to look to nature – other examples can be found in Genoa and at Pere-Lachaise in Paris, which even has its own distinct districts.

There has been a big move recently in Europe to regard cemeteries as art galleries and list great works – some sculptors did their best work in cemeteries. Britain has so far not been much involved with this, as this tradition is less strong here.

The 'crisis' facing British cemeteries has involved existing cemeteries filling up, with no ability to renew them, and a lack of money to maintain them. There had been a failure to think through how cemeteries were going to be kept up, and legislation is now being changed to help tackle the problem. Another, earlier, example of decline is the encroachment on urban churchyard cemeteries, resulting for example in tombs at Jhons in Hackney becoming marooned in the middle of the shopping street. The newest cemeteries are very functional, and there is little distinction in crematorium architecture, with a few exceptions such as Golders Green.

New ways of thinking are needed. For example the Woodland Cemetery in Stockholm was created in a former quarry. At the entrance is a single giant granite cross set in a rolling open landscape of hills and copses. The graves are set further back amongst the trees and the modest headstones are subject to strict design rules.

In some European cemeteries, there is a policy of re-interment after a fairly short period – 20 years in Bologna, as little as 7 years in Austria.

One area in which Britain is ahead is in national or green burial – typically in former set aside land or woodland, with no permanent grave marker. For example at Colney Wood near Norwich, where the lease requires the land to return to public access in 100 years.

Dr Worpole's talk was enjoyed by one of our largest audiences of the years. Whilst not specifically archaeological, its consideration of how societies have used and interacted with the landscape, and developed symbolic structures within it, are familiar approaches to many with an interest in archaeology.

JEREMY GROVE

LAMAS 46th Annual Conference of London Archaeologists

Saturday 14 March 2009: Wilberforce Lecture Theatre, Museum of London Docklands

EAS members may be interested to note that talks include John Kent's excavations at South Mimms Castle, as well as Romans in Brentford, excavations at Prescott Street, a medieval tidal mill at Greenwich, the gardens at Chiswick House, London's Playhouses, Hampton Court Palace and St Paul's Cathedral, plus sessions on work in the City in 2008 and on recording iconic buildings.

Cost, including afternoon tea, is £10.

Ticket applications should be addressed to Jon Cotton, Early Department, Museum of London, 150 London Wall, EC2Y 5HN (jcotton@museumoflondon.org.uk). Tickets can also be bought online via PayPal at www.lamas.org.uk. Postal applications should enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope, and cheques should be made payable to LAMAS.

Note that the venue this year is not the Museum of London lecture theatre, as this is being re-developed, and that capacity is limited to 146.

Book Review

MIDDLESEX TALES OF MYSTERY AND MURDER

By Mike Hall

Some time ago the Society was provided with a review copy of this book. This collection looks at assorted fragments of the history of Middlesex. It ranges from Caesar's Camps, correctly identified as an Iron Age temple and Saxon Burial ground, to the Trident crash at Staines in 1972. The various tales are attractively, if at times briefly, told with explanations for the mysteries usually being given and the romantic elements generally consigned to legend.

Sometimes romance overpowers research as in the 'Tunnels under Tottenham,' where he reports all the well-known tales of tunnels heading hither and yon including the famous one in Edmonton running for half a mile from Weir Hall to Bury Street. The prosaic explanation that these are Tudor or in one possible case in Edmonton, late Medieval drains, is nowhere alluded to despite the reference to a discovery in Tottenham early in the 20th century where a passage was described as, ".....too uninviting and the smell was too obnoxious." There is also no attempt to consider the sheer labour and expense of such projects, or their total pointlessness!

Enfield is featured once when he re-tells the story of the alleged discovery of the lead cross, originally from King Arthur's grave in Glastonbury, in the grounds of Forty Hall Museum. He gives a good account of the ultimately tragic affair and mentions press interviews given by Geoffrey Gillam and his demonstration of how easy it would be to fake a cross. What he does not do is give Geoffrey credit for putting together the likely train of events. Nevertheless it is a good summary of material otherwise only available to interested readers in newspaper files or back issues of the Society Bulletin.

In general the book is a fascinating read, especially some of the murders, but keep a large salt cellar handy!

I.K.J.

WILL SHELTON: THE HIGHWAYMAN OF MAIDENS BRIDGE

By Neil Pinchbeck

In 2008, the EAS carried out mitigation excavations in Forty Hall, close to Maidens Bridge, as a result of unauthorised minidigger trenches cut to repair a road drain inside the boundary of the scheduled ancient monument centred on the site of Elsyng Palace. A report of these excavations will appear in a future bulletin.

Ahead of the excavations themselves, historical research revealed a fascinating past for Maidens Bridge and its environs.

In 1992, the Museum of London Archaeological Service recorded post holes, lithics and ceramic sherds thought to represent late Neolithic/early Bronze Age occupation beneath the new hall of Forty Hill School. Recent EAS investigations of an extension to the school hall, and our excavations in Jesus Church meadow (*see Pastfinders report, p. 12*) are indicating the exciting prospect of significant activity around a brook crossing here in prehistoric times. From the alignment of its known sections, the Roman road Ermine Street will have crossed the brook here, and local historians have long asserted a Saxon origin for the name 'Maegdene Brycg'. However, first records of a bridge belong to 1484 and the reign of Richard III. It was this bridge which served Elsyng Palace and probably survived until 1759 when parish records record it impassable.

New on-line research in the archives of the Humanities Research Institute revealed that this bridge was also the backdrop for someone who must rank as one of the most colourful characters of the area's history.

William Shelton was a native miscreant of Enfield whose 'modus operandum' was to frequent the Kings Head in Enfield Market in the evening of market day. He would mingle amiably with the market traders to ascertain who had had a good day. If any of these were foolhardy enough to betray that they would be making their way home north into Hertfordshire, via Forty Hill and Bulls Cross, Shelton would suddenly remember a previous engagement and leave the company.

Later, as the unfortunate trader came to the bottleneck formed by Maidens Bridge, he would be confronted by a sinister figure in black mask and cloak mounted on a large black horse and commanded to "Stand and Deliver!"

This became so regular that Shelton was arrested and indicted, only to be acquitted for lack of evidence.

If anything, this only served to enhance his reputation and on the evening of 10th June 1732 a panic-stricken Tom How erupted into the tap room of the Kings Head with the news that Shelton was outside. All of the frightened traders resolved to leave their money in the safe keeping of the Landlord. How himself deposited £6 that he was carrying for his master James Miller.

Fortified with "Dutch Courage" and with only a few shillings in his saddlebag, How eventually set off northward for home with his companion, Ben Johnson. Sure enough at Maidens Bridge the sinister figure appeared, and with the customary formula, relieved the two of their small change.

Shelton was again arrested and sent for trial at the Old Bailey. Shelton's self-conducted defence was a shambles. His alibi was that at the time of the robbery, he was at Broxbourne in the company of his former employer, Brigadier Franks. Summoned to the witness stand, this Gentleman not only denied all knowledge of the prisoner at the time in question but also added the accusation that he had previously stolen his watch. The last straw came when Thomas How claimed to be a childhood friend of the prisoner and able to identify him by his voice. The jury believed him and on 6th September, Will Shelton was found guilty of Highway Robbery and sentenced to hang, thus ending the career of the Highwayman of Maidens Bridge.





A Lower Palaeolithic Handaxe From Grange Park, Enfield

By Martin J. Dearne

The subject of this note was submitted for identification to the London Borough of Enfield Museums Service on 24/07/2008 by its finder, Mr. Stanley Sanders of Landra Gardens, Grange Park and following initial identification by Jan Metcalfe of the service, the author was asked to advise further on its significance and recording and subsequently undertook the drawing and photographic recording of the item and sought a specialist opinion on it from Jon Cotton of the Early Department, Museum of London.

It was found by Mr Sanders in the rear garden of his house when rotivating a former lawn area to create a vegetable garden and is a cordate or sub cordate bifacial hand axe (Length 9.8 cm; Width 7.0 cm; Maximum Thickness 3.9 cm; Weight 259 grams) with a modern chip to its tip. It has an asymmetrical profile, especially at the butt end, one face of which retains much cortex (the original surface of the flint nodule it was made from) interrupted by a single deep basal flake scar and is battered. It is made from moderate quality opaque black and brown flint with grey brown spots and much ?river cobble cortex and has a well developed patina (a white colouration that develops immensely slowly on exposure to the atmosphere), but only on the thickened face.

The author is grateful to Jon Cotton for confirming that this is a Lower Palaeolithic handaxe belonging to OIS (Oxygen Isotope Stage) 9 or 10 of the marine record, broadly equating to the terrestrial (Clactonian and) Acheulian worked stone industries (very approximately 350,000 BP (before present)).

Based on the research of the late Geoffrey Gillam, Lower Palaeolithic or possibly Lower Palaeolithic worked stone has previously been recovered at 12 spots in Enfield including the Hedge Lane gravel pit, Griffith's Pit, Bush Hill Park and Forty Hill. However, the abraded nature of many of these finds indicates that most are likely to be in secondary contexts (i.e. are not where they were originally dropped), having been deposited as part of gravel terraces by the glacial melt water proto Lea river at the end of the last Ice Age. As the present find spot lies on these gravel terraces this is almost certainly true of it as well and it probably ultimately originated much further north in England.

The author and the EAS are grateful to Jan Metcalfe for inviting them to study this find and to Jon Cotton for his specialist opinion. We and the Museums Service would particularly like to thank Mr Sanders for recognising the potential significance of his find, seeking professional advice about it and generously allowing it to be fully recorded and contextualised and then donating it to the Museums Service who hope to display it at Forty Hall in due course.

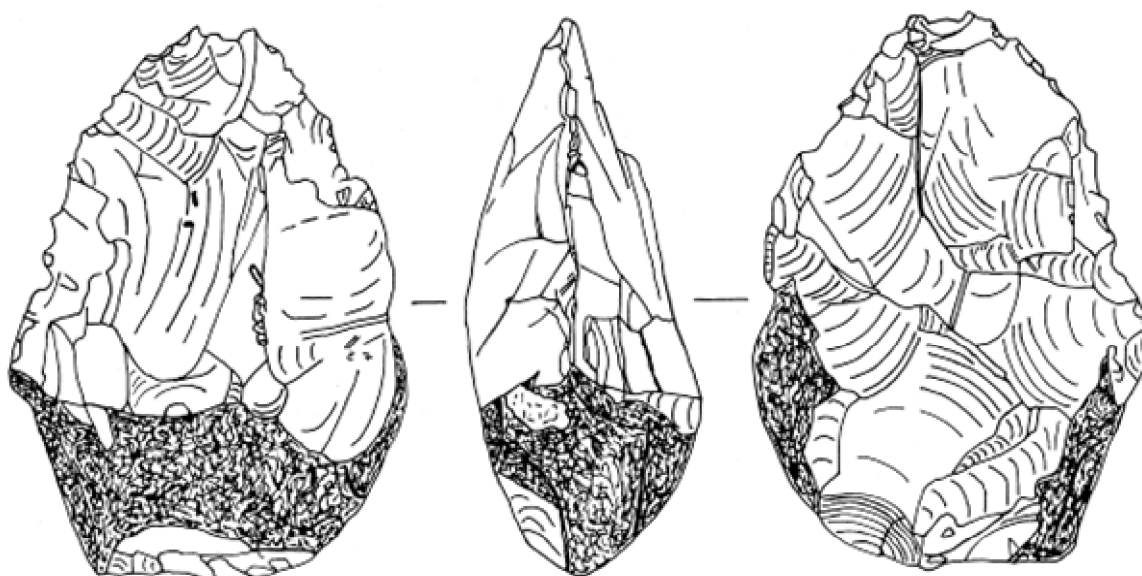


Fig. 1: The Handaxe

Elsyng Palace 2008

(Site Code ESY08)

By Martin J. Dearne

Continuing work at Elsyng Tudor and earlier palace in the grounds of Forty Hall turned this year from excavations tied to the requirements of tree planting works, which had effectively limited them to two narrow zones crossing the east side of the courtier's palace/Tudor outer courtyard north east to south west (i.e. the zones occupied by the site's Lime tree avenues) to research driven excavation. (For earlier work see previous bulletins; earlier excavations are marked on Fig. 1 by site code and trench number or 'P' for test pits)

Excavation 2008

The big question that had gradually been emerging was how much we could rely on the geophysical surveys undertaken in the 1990s to show us the plan of the outer courtyard and so, with the permission of English Heritage and the support of the borough, 2008's National Archaeology Week excavation examined one of what seemed to be the clearest suggestions of a palace structure at the northern side of what, again from geophysical data, seemed to be the outer courtyard.

On the 18th – 20th July we cut two 1.5 m wide trenches at right angles to each other, Trench 1 being north-south and 10 m long, and the only partly excavated Trench 2 being 8.5 m long (Fig. 1). We were met with a sea of gravel!

Gravel dumped to form paths is a feature of the site, but this was natural, undisturbed gravel deposited by the vastly larger version of the river Lea that existed at the end of the last Ice Age. It held some interest geologically as one could trace the entirely undisturbed peri-glacial deposit, heavily stained yellowy brown, and above it a mixed horizon where brickearth (which usually lies above the gravel because it represents a later peri-glacial riverine deposition phase) had got mixed with it in strong currents.

But of archaeology there was none, but for an amorphous cut that may have been no more than an eighteenth century planting pit and one modern ?drainage channel.

Finds similarly were sparse in the extreme – a ?Mesolithic microlith (tiny chipped stone point) took centre stage and added to the thin scatter of these known from the site, while the pottery only included one sherd of London Area Post Medieval Redware (PMR) of c. 1580 – 1900, two chips and a sherd of London Area Early Post Medieval Redware (PMRE) of 1480 – 1600 and three small body sherds of Coarse London Type Ware (LCOAR) of 1030 – 1200.

Quite clearly here at least the geophysical survey had not been showing up the palace but an outcrop of natural gravel where locally it rose above the level of the brickearth which elsewhere on the site covers it. So a major re-evaluation of what we thought we knew about the plan of the palace was needed.

Aerial Photograph Interpretation

However, since the excavation that has been made much easier by the discovery on the internet by John and Neil Pinchbeck of aerial photographs taken in the extremely dry summer of 2006 which actually show, as parch marks in the grass, the northern range of the courtyard we had been looking for. We have been searching vainly for years for aerial photographs that show anything significant but the best we had come up with were a few confusing lines seen at ground level. In 2006 though (the one year ironically that we were excavating up at Forty Hall and not on the palace site in high summer) conditions were so dry that, especially when the photographs were computer enhanced by John, the entire plan of the north part of the courtyard had been visible when a commercial organisation had photographed it.

Not only does this show that the northern edge of the courtyard lay further south than the geophysics had suggested, but that it was parallel to the gatehouse which we confirmed the position of in 2007 (giving a much more rectangular courtyard than that which geophysical evidence had indicated; and the lack of rectangularity had always been a bit mystifying as by the Tudor period rectangularity ought to be expected). Indeed, one end of the range revealed by the new aerial evidence, though of course it will have to be confirmed by excavation, coincides with the brick surface we excavated exposures of in 2006 and 2007 and, as was speculated when it was originally found, it now seems that this is one of the floors within that range.

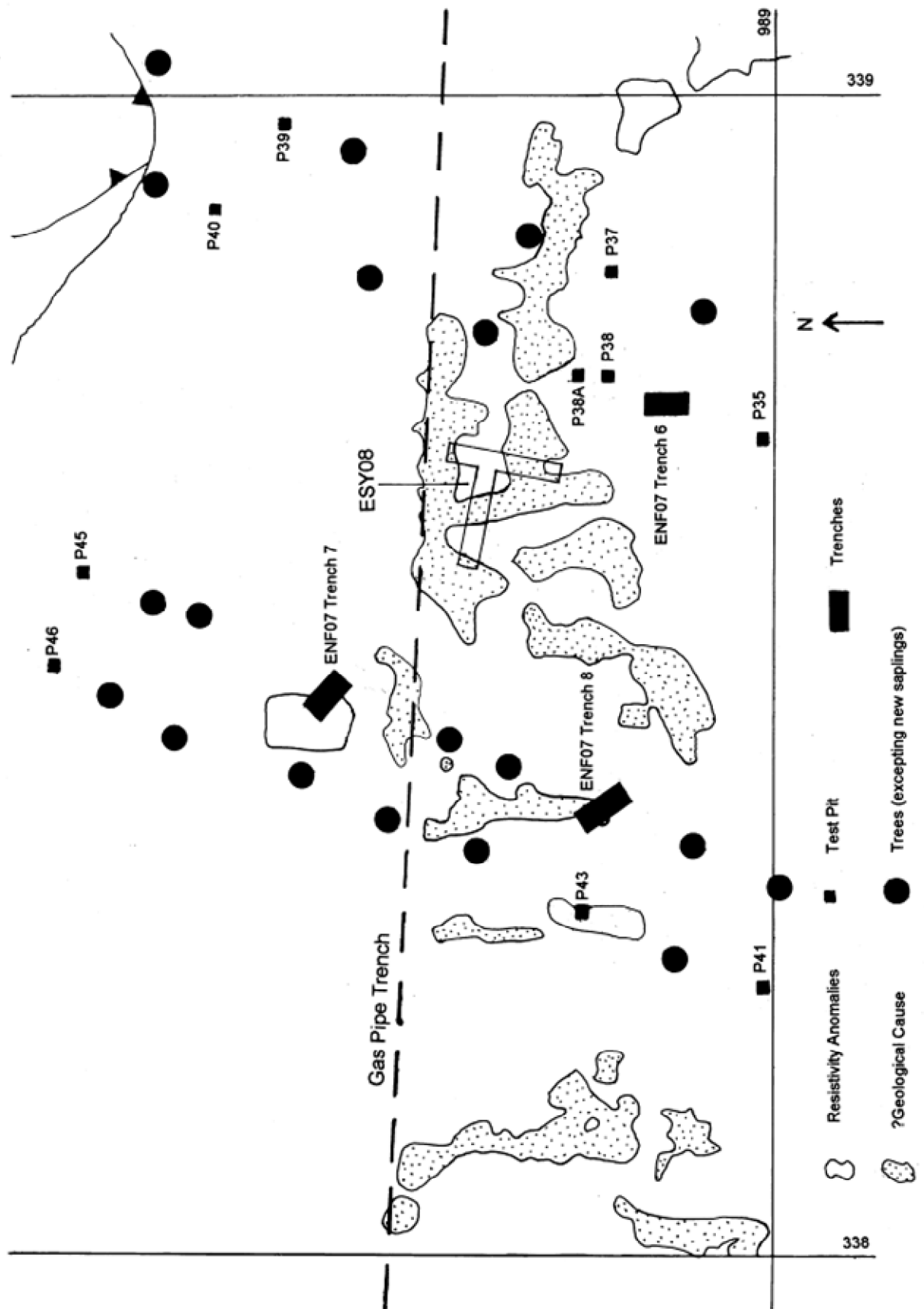


Fig. 1: Trench Location in Relation to Previous Work and Geophysical Anomalies (1:500)

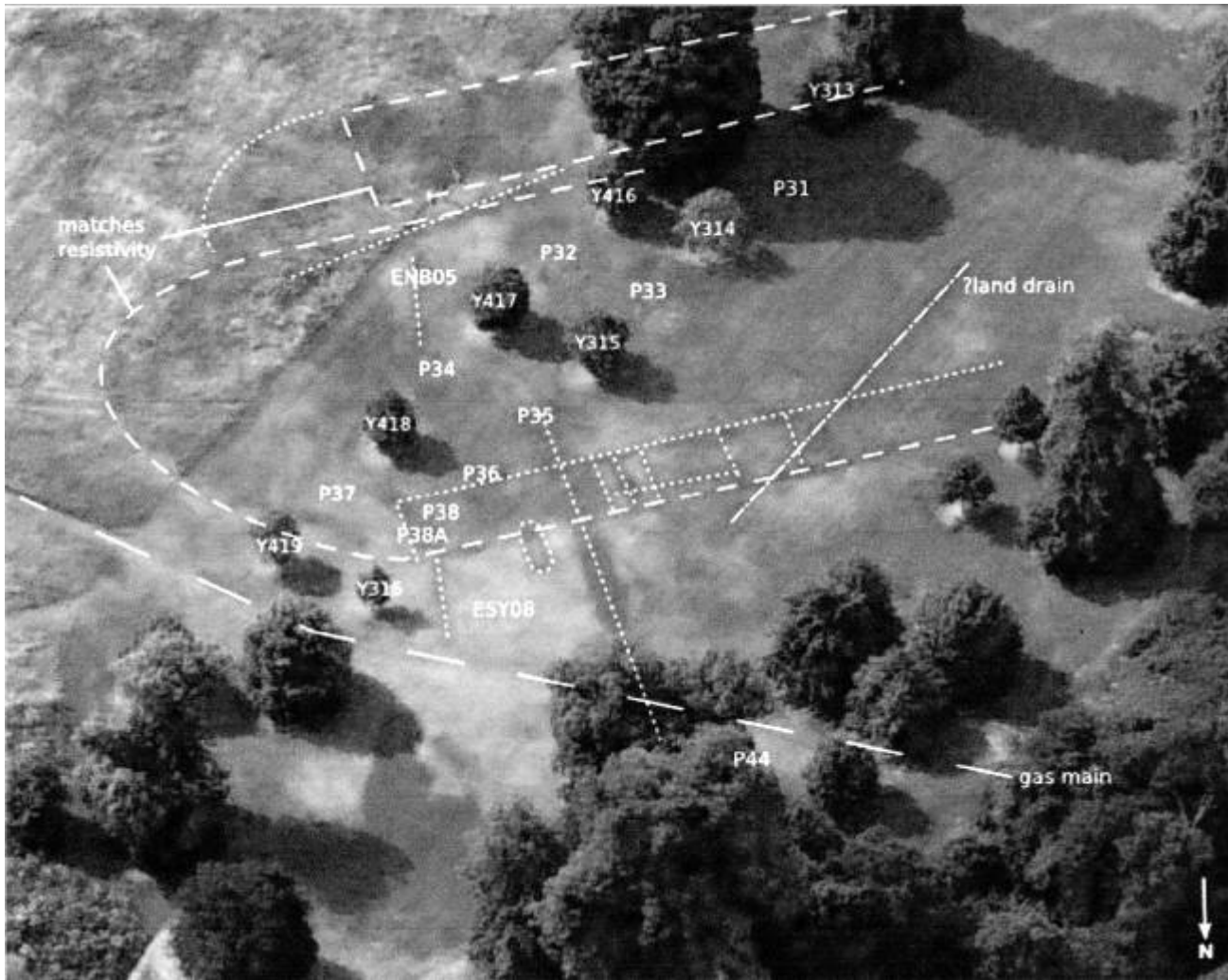


Fig. 2: The New Aerial Photo Evidence as Enhanced and Annotated by John Pinchbeck

(P represents a previous test pit (the brick surface was found in P38 and P38A and also in ENF07 Trench 6 on Fig. 1); Y are tree positions; ESY08 is this year's excavation site; ENB05 was the 2005 excavation in which a large arched brick drain was found; dotted lines are the new aerial features; the short dashed lines are the new presumed outer limits of the courtyard (though still in part reliant on geophysical evidence) including the confirmed gatehouse at the top)

Conclusions

Re-evaluation of the whole site plan (only part of which has been clarified by the aerial evidence) will now continue and there may be other false geophysical evidence to deal with yet, but clearly from the negative evidence of the sea of gravel and the positive of the parch marks we have a far better idea of the outlines of this part of the palace to guide future excavations than we have ever had before.

As ever thanks to all the excavation crew who toiled through thunderstorms to do a professional job of methodical excavation and recording despite knowing that there was nothing to find, and particularly to Neil and John for their work on the aerial photographs.

PASTFINDERS NEWS

News of the Excavation and Fieldwork Group



In October I was asked by Broxbourne Council to conduct a 'Ghost Walk' around the site of Theobalds Palace in Cedars Park. This seemed like an excellent opportunity to weave some of the history of the site into tales of its darker and more sinister side. Expecting a turn out of perhaps a dozen or so brave souls on such a cold dark Autumn evening I must confess I was quite unprepared for the gathering of between 150 and 175 people who turned up on the night! Families with grand parents and children armed with twinkling torches hung onto my every word and the evening went off without a hitch, despite the numerous health and safety issues of such a large number of people being assembled in pitch darkness. Alas no one saw any ghosts but there is always next year!

A week later members of the Pastfinders Excavation team were back at the park helping local volunteers to uncover a dump of building material which contained a number of fragments of dressed stonework. The stone which had originated from demolition of William Cecil's Theobalds represented parts of window, door surrounds and cornice. Some pieces once cleaned revealed carved masons marks and amazingly a date of 1579 which corresponds with the construction phase of the palace. (A feature article with photographs will follow in a future bulletin.) The dressed stonework was recorded in situ, photographed, then removed by tractor trailer to a safe location in the park. It is possible that some of the dressed stone originated from a large window in Old Palace House nearby which was burnt down in 1968, and which incorporated original windows from Theobalds.

We were called into action once again in October when the opportunity arose to sift through a large quantity of spoil excavated during construction of an extension to Forty Hill School. As this location is known to have revealed evidence of Prehistoric settlement in the recent past we were puzzled that no archaeological conditions were attached to the building work.

Ignoring the virgin brick earth we concentrated our efforts on the top soil and plough soil and were rewarded with pieces of burnt flint, struck flakes of flint from tool working and what may be a fragment of Neolithic pot, but looks like an old dog biscuit! Although it doesn't sound much, these finds represent evidence of our prehistoric

ancestors hunting and perhaps settling close to the stream we know today as Maidens Brook.

We hope to reveal further evidence of Neolithic occupation on this site with the excavation we are currently undertaking close to Jesus Church in advance of the annex soon to be built at this location. Quite a number of enthusiastic diggers turned up to help us excavate a 6x4 metre trench on a cold wet November morning. The trench had been set out and the top turf layer had been stripped the previous afternoon by machine which meant we were able to get stuck straight into the archaeology. A thin layer of top soil cleaned down to a layer of redeposited brick earth mixed with plough soil. This material was probably laid down when the foundations were dug for an annex to the church in the 1920s. Initial finds included a complete clay pipe bowl (19th century) a decorated piece of bellermino salt glazed stoneware (17th century) and brick and tile possibly related to the demolition of nearby Sparrow Hall, a ?17th century building demolished prior to the building of the church in 1835. (A later 19th century building known today as Sparrow Hall stands to the south of the site.)

After a lot of hard trowelling we were rewarded by a quantity of burnt flint, quite a number of flint waste flakes, small flint tools and microliths which were recovered from this layer. Heavy rain the first weekend turned our trench into a sad and timely reminder of the conditions at Ypres and the Somme 90 years earlier. A full report on this excavation will no doubt appear in a future bulletin. All that remains as always is to wish all our members the compliments of this Yuletide season, to thank all our diggers who have helped with our excavations this year and of course our members who have attended lectures and purchased raffle tickets, which helps support the work of your Society.

MIKE DEWBREY

EAS Fieldwork



If you would like to be involved in our busy programme of excavation and other practical activities, contact Mike on 01707 870888 (office number) for more details.