



ANNUAL BULLETIN VOL. 31 1988

After the Red Hills: Salt Making in Late Roman, Saxon and Medieval Essex	P M Barford	2-7	(3-8)
Winsleys, High Street Colchester	John Bensusan-Butt	8-11	(9-12)
Mount Bures, Essex: Recent Work	James Fawn	12-15	(13-16)
Cropmark of a Medieval Church at Stoke by Clare, Suffolk	Ida McMaster	16-25	(17-26)
The Angel Inn, Colchester	Richard Shackle	26-29	(27-30)
Seal Matrix from Colne Engaine	Richard Shackle	29	(30)
Neolithic flint from Birch, near Colchester	P S Spencer & N J Dennis	30-36	(31-37)
Note on the Cropmark of a possible Salt Road near Great Braxted, Essex	Ida McMaster	36	(38)
Obituary: Ewart Russell		36	(38)
Winter Lectures 1987 – 1988		37-47	(39-51)
Minutes of AGM – October 1988		48-49	(51-52)

This copy has been scanned from the original, and has been reformatted in a different font.
Page numbers in brackets refer to the original edition, and should correspond with those given
in the Bulletin Index

*No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted
without the prior permission of CAG.*

Please apply in writing to the Honorary Secretary at the following address:

*Honorary Secretary
Colchester Archaeological Group
c/o 27 Alexandra Road
Colchester
Essex C03 3DF*

Mount Bures, Essex: Recent work

James Fawn

In the past the group has investigated several sites belonging to different periods in the Mount Bures area. In particular, Late Iron age settlement features have been found in Middle Field, Hall Farm and have been reported previous issues of the Bulletin (*McMaster and Fawn, 1981, 1982 and Fawn 1983, 1984, 1985*).

1) A Pipe-line survey

In March and April 1986, the Anglian Water Authority laid a pipe from a pumping station in the valley of the River Stour to a new reservoir on the hillside above the valley. The course of the pipe-line is displayed in figure 1, which also shows the locations of previous excavations carried out by the Group. The Marks Tey-Sudbury railway line forms the eastern boundary of Middle Field, and at the north-east corner a bridge (*BR No. 16/889*) carries the railway over a farm track running east-west.

The pipe-line approached the field from the east, passed through the arch of the bridge, and then ran south-south-west across the field. It crossed the southern boundary into the next field and continued up the hillside until it reached the reservoir.

The course of the pipe-line was walked from the end of the pumping station drive where it meets the B1508 Colchester-Bures road to the point where it crosses the Bures-Chappel road about 150m. south of the Thatchers public house. A few weeks before the installation of the pipe, a strip of plough-soil about 7m. wide and about 30cms deep was removed by machine along the entire route so that the surface of the underlying sub-soil was available for a fairly leisurely inspection. The pipe in lengths of about 5m. was laid in a trench cut by machine along the strip. The trench was excavated progressively to take each length of pipe and was back-filled shortly afterwards so that only about 10m. was open for inspection at any one time.

Neither the sub-soil surface nor the trench was excavated clearly enough to provide a really satisfactory exposure and it is possible that several archaeological features were missed. The promising areas were trowelled, but only three proved to be of interest, all in the Middle Field, as follows:

a) The Railway Bridge (TL93 90783224) - The bridge lies within the area "a quarter of a mile south-east of the Mount," where the contractor for the construction of the railway discovered an Iron Age burial vault in 1849 (*Roach-Smith, 1852*). The precise position of the vault was not recorded and several unsuccessful attempts have been made in recent years to relocate it, by excavation and by examination of the documentary evidence (*Fawn, 1983*). The pipe trench in the cart-track beneath the bridge, parallel to and 30cms from the north abutment, has now allowed a section through a hitherto unavailable area to be examined.

In the pipe trench there was no sign of a soil disturbance attributable to the 1849 vault excavation. According to the report of the discovery the vault was found during the deepening of a ditch. Two drainage ditches run parallel to and on either side of the railway embankment. The flows are carried in a culvert under the cart-track and the back-fills of the trenches originally dug to take the culverts were visible in the section of the pipe-trench but they showed no indication that they had been extended for the 1849 investigation of the vault as was stated in Roach-Smith's report.

The area immediately west of the bridge was considerably disturbed, evidently as a result of previous trenching for the installation of a high tension electricity cable which, like the new water pipe, also ran under the bridge but near the south abutment. If the vault was beneath the bridge or just to the south-west of it the presence, of two public utility trenches in the restricted area makes the chance of further discoveries slim. However, the burial may well be elsewhere in the vicinity which therefore remains an area of interest.

b) An Iron Age Ditch or Pit (TL93 90723291) - During previous excavations in Middle Field an Iron Age ditch system has been found (*McMaster and Fawn 1982*). A dark area of disturbance was observed in the stripped area before the pipe-trench was dug and a rapid excavation unearthed several fragments

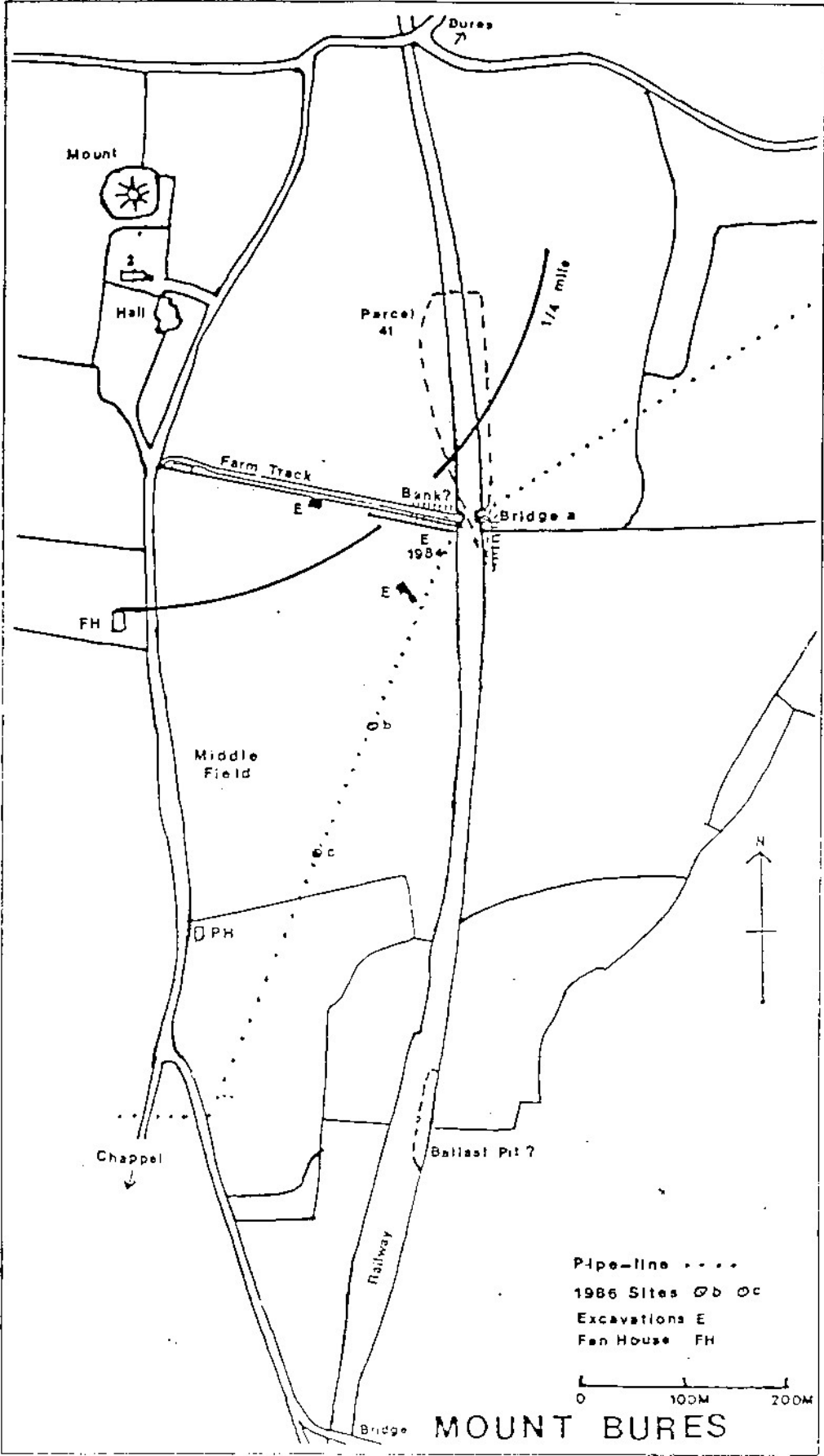


Figure 1.

of grey Late Iron Age pottery which appeared to be of a similar date to that found in the earlier excavations. Among them was a white base sherd, form CAM 113 (*COLEM Acc. No. 5.1989*, which includes the pottery from the earlier excavations). The new find area, about 2.0m. x 1.1 m., was some 130m. from the latter and, if part of the same system, shows that the site was extensive. Aerial photography would seem the obvious means for further investigation. So far, apart from part of the Iron Age ditch system already excavated, photographs have revealed only the cropmarks of the field drainage system.

- c) A Bronze Age Pit (TL93 90633188)**- A second dark area in the pipe-line strip not far from the southern boundary of Middle Field was first half-sectioned and then completely excavated as a shallow round bottomed hole with a diameter of 0.9-1.0m. and a maximum depth of 0.25m. It appeared to be the base of a pit which, with the addition of the plough depth, would have penetrated about 0.55m. below the modern ground surface. Just beneath the stripped surface, i.e. at about 0.4m. beneath the modern surface, seven fragments of pottery were found (*COLEM Acc. No. 6.1989*).

Mr. Nigel Brown of the County Archaeological Section has kindly provided the following assessment of the sherds.

"Seven base and body sherds of prehistoric pottery, probably all from a single pot, were recovered from the bottom of a small pit. The sherds are tempered with coarse flint and occasional quartz grits. There is an irregular row of finger impressions around the lower walls where the base has been joined to the body of the vessel. The exterior of the body sherds shows signs of vertical finger wiping. The pottery seems likely to derive from a flat based Class 1 jar (*Barrett 1980*) probably of the Late Bronze Age."

This discovery is not the first evidence of Bronze Age activity at Mount Bures. In 1974 the group partially excavated a round barrow ditch in the valley of the Stour below the Middle Field site and aerial photographs have revealed cropmarks of others in the valley (*Holbert and McMaster 1975, McMaster 1975*). However, the barrow appeared to belong to a date rather earlier in the Bronze Age than the Middle Field pit. The purpose of the latter (if it was a pit) remains obscure. Aerial photography may again be able to provide further information.

2) Documentary Evidence

Two items of evidence concerning the Iron Age burial vault have recently come to light and should be recorded.

- a) Saffron Walden Museum**- As stated in a previous report (*Fawn 1983*), the then Rector of Stanway, the Reverend Henry Jenkins, had possession of some of the finds from the vault in 1849, including an andiron which is now displayed in the Colchester and Essex Museum, and was aware of the circumstances of their excavation.

A letter in the Colchester Museum (under Roman, Gt. Chesterford file, Mr Maynard to Mr Wright, 16.2.1909) indicates that some of Jenkins' letters, 1849 to 1856, were in Saffron Walden Museum in 1909 and were being studied in common with many other papers by Mr Maynard, the then Curator there. Mr Maynard's letter indicates that some of the Jenkins letters referred to the vault in some detail and so it is possible that they may contain the location of the vault.

Mr L.M. Pole, the present curator of the Saffron Walden Museum, has very kindly arranged a search for the Jenkins correspondence, to no avail. It is quite possible that the letters are no longer there as Mr Maynard gave no indication that the Museum owned them. They may, of course, no longer exist.

- b) Essex Record Office, Colchester**- Two andirons were found in the vault but only the one in the Colchester Museum is now known. It was presented to the museum in 1870 by Reverend Jenkins (*Fawn 1983, 28*), and from its appearance (the bronze terminal on one of the horns is missing) seems to be the first one found, as shown in Figure 1 in the report (*Roach-Smith 1852*).

Among the papers of William Wire, the Colchester antiquarian who had some dealings in antiquities, in the Essex Record Office, Colchester branch, there is a letter which contains the following extract:

Temporary Accession C60. "Wire volumes and papers not identified in E.A.S library catalogue."

November 22nd 1852,

"Do you ever see Mr C Roach-Smith's *Collectanea Antiqua* as I have the offer of a corresponding fire-dog to figure in that work plate X, Vol 2 and found with it. If you find a ready sale for antiquities in general, no doubt I can supply you with very many although I have nothing by me at this time, having sold to one person nearly £20 worth during the course of this year before those in hand were sent up."sic

Yours obt.
William Wire

Mr Purdue.

The letter shows that, at the time of writing, the second andiron was in the possession of someone unknown who was willing to transfer it to William Wire who was offering it to a Mr Purdue. Whether this chain of transactions was followed through is not revealed in the correspondence as subsequent letters make no mention of the andiron. However, it is interesting to know that the artefact was recovered in satisfactory enough state to be a saleable item in 1852. What happened to it and to some of the other items found in the vault is a matter for conjecture. After 140 years, are they still treasured in a private collection?

References

- Barrett J C (1980)** *The Pottery of the Later Bronze Age in Lowland England*. Proc. Prehist. Soc. 46, 297-308
- Fawn A J (1983)** Iron Age Ditches at Mount Bures - Third Report, *C.A.G. Bull.* 26, 23-28.
- Fawn A J (1984)** Mount Bures, 1984, *C.A.G. Bull.* 27, 24.
- Fawn A J (1985)** Mount Bures, 1985, *C.A.G. Bull.* 28, 6.
- Holbert P R and McMaster I (1985)** A Ring Ditch Excavation at Mount Bures, Essex, *C.A.G. Bull.* 18, 9-11.
- McMaster I (1975)** A Further Four Years Aerial Survey 1970-1974, *C.A.G. Bull.* 18, 16.
- McMaster I and Fawn A J (1981)** Late Iron Age Ditch at Mount Bures, *C.A.G. Bull.* 24, 26-28
- McMaster I and Fawn A J (1982)** Iron Age Ditches at Mount Bures - Second Report, *C.A.G. Bull.* 25, 6-15
- Roach-Smith C (1852)** Roman Remains found at Mount Bures, near Colchester. *Collectanea Antiqua*, 2, 25-36