

Digging deep to discover secrets in village gardens

By Matthew Gooding

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Hundreds of villagers attended an exhibition to discover the artefacts found buried beneath their homes.

Meldreth Local History Group staged the exhibition at Meldreth Village Hall on Sunday to mark the end of their project, *Understanding our Past: Exploring the hidden history of Meldreth*.

A poster on each of the 32 test pits was displayed, together with the finds from each pit. Two films of the project, one made by Tim Gane of the History Group and the other by students at Melbourn Village College, were shown throughout the day.

Kathryn Betts, secretary of the group and one of the exhibition organisers, said: "We were absolutely delighted to be able to welcome so many people to the village hall on Sunday.

"The exhibition was a wonderful way to mark the end of our project and not only gave us the opportunity to share the results of the project, but also gave visitors an opportunity



■ Meldreth archaeology exhibition

to view and handle the test pit finds."

The group worked closely with Dr Carenza Lewis, from Cambridge University's Cambridge Community Heritage team throughout the project, and Dr Lewis, former presenter of Channel Four's *Time Team*, gave a speech to attendees.

She revealed an item originally believed to be a pilgrim's badge is actually one half of a hinged mirror case. It is an exact match for one found in Billingsgate in London and dates from the late 14th century.

Dr Lewis said: "You should be really proud of the huge amount of work, energy and effort that has gone in to this project. You can now reconstruct your place in history from digging tiny little fragments from your gardens, and I wonder what is still out there."

The project was backed by a Heritage Lottery fund All Our Stories grant.

→ For more on the finds, visit www.meldrethhistory.org.uk