WRITTLE TIME TEAM: Young archaeologists aid Cambridge University research

FIND: Bronze age coins in 2009

HISTORY IS UNEARTHED

Writtle was up to late medieval times more important than Chelmsford and is on the route to a hunting lodge first used by King John.

Montpeliers Farm is reputed to be the birthplace of the Anglo-Norman who eventually became King of Scotland, Robert the Bruce.

A 20ft wide Roman road under the ford at Lawford Lane is the site team's biggest find.

Remains of wooden posts indicate a Stonehenge-style pagan worship site.

Evidence of 17th century ammunition indicating camp or practice area during Cromwell's Civil War.

Britain's first colour photographs confirmed taken in Writtle before the Great War by brother Thomas Hadlow using red, blue and violet potato-starch method.

HOLE LOT OF EXCITEMENT: Amelia Bozman and Hollie Hadley dig deep in the grounds of Writtle Junior School in search of objects that may give clues about the site's past

Pupils dig deep in bid to reveal village’s past

By Peter Walker

ASPIRING archaeologists as young as four helped unearth prehistoric artefacts beneath Writtle for the University of Cambridge.

More than 50 young people dug six ditches across a village thought to date back some 6,000 years and was once more populated than Chelmsford.

Ex-Time Team digger Dr Carenza Lewis, who added a professional touch to the fifth annual two-day excavation in partnership with Heritage Writtle, said the discoveries were “interesting”.

Medieval pottery was discovered beneath Lawford Lane for the first time, while fish scales possibly 2,000 years old, were found at The Green.

“What is so interesting about the medieval material is that it dates back from 600 years after the Black Death,” said Dr Lewis, who adds she has mysteriously never found Anglo-Saxon pottery in Writtle.

Devastated

“While a lot of villages we look at have been badly devastated by the Black Death, it seems Writtle, like much of Essex, survived because it wasn’t so overpopulated.

“But we have also found with Writtle from the late-medieval and Norman material, it is appears to have been founded as a settlement some time after 1100 AD.

“William De Ferrers and Ormiston Rivers Academy GCSE students chipping away on the first day while Writtle Junior School, whose children unearthed Roman pottery, hosted the second.

“Those students here are at the heart of what is genuine research, discovering how this place developed and answering really key questions, all of which is then incorporated into our data,” said Dr Lewis.

In 2001, a metal detector-wielding group of friends started scanning the village’s fields and discovered Roman

WHERE THEY DUG

The Green
St Johns Green
Rose & Crown pub garden
Two gardens in Bridge Street
One garden in Lawford Lane
One garden in The Green
One in Writtle Junior School
One garden in Priory Road

roads, before forming Heritage Writtle.

In 2009 the group teamed up with the University of Cambridge’s Currently Occupied Rural Settlements Project (CORSIP) to collect data.

Fast-forward five years, and the digs’ most notable find includes Mesolithic flint, dating back to the Stone Age – yet this particular site is kept secret to avoid metal-shaving night hawks.

CORSIP has now dug 52 test pits across a village which after the Battle of Hastings boasted a population of 1,000 males compared with just 35 in central Chelmsford.

But once a bridge was built over the latter settlement’s flood plains the tables turned.

The young people’s discoveries, including scores of Victorian coins, were turned back to the university for specialist examination where the GCSE students spent the day on Friday.

Heritage Writtle’s Gordon Ingram, who saw the dig initially cancelled due to snow when scheduled for Easter, said: “We are interested in anything we find. I just hope we find stuff that further opens up our understanding of the village.”

William De Ferrers science teacher, amateur archaeologist and head of the school’s gifted and talented scheme, David Stamp, said: “The problems our students have in face is doing the maths, how to dig down deep and how to identify each find.

“This is a real professional job for our students.”

William De Ferrers student Lucas Caroli, 14, said: “I’ve always been interested in archaeology and as a kid it was always something I wanted to do. For as young as I can remember I was digging my own holes in the garden.”

TEAM EFFORT: Rosie Baker, Lucia Carini, TV’s Carina Lewis, Ruth Champion and William Harland-Hackenschmidt silt earth during the digs

DIGGING DEEP: Billy Headland sifts the earth in search of artifacts

TREASURES: Nathan Chambey, Gordon Ingram and Stanley Ruakin

Serious Injury

Compensation Specialists

• Work Accidents
• Road Accidents
• Medical & Dental Negligence Claims

Specialist Aftercare

“Call our specialist team now.”

Rapid Solicitors

Call us for a free chat.

0845 225 0905

www.rapidsolicitors.co.uk

An ISO 9001 Quality Assured Firm

Consulting offices throughout the region - Free home visit - Lines open 24/7

STILL No Win No Fee

EC8-EO1-42

essexchronicle.co.uk