

Letters

'DRUID'S TEMPLE' DISCOVERED?

THANK YOU for publishing the excellent article by Lesley and Roy Adkins (*LA* 5 no. 10, 255-7) concerning myself and token potsherd found during excavations at Beddington a few months ago. I was convinced at the time of placing this token in our 'dig' that, due to the strata being undamaged by ploughing, the site would be properly excavated one day, but never in my lifetime ... How wrong can one be?

In 1725 the renowned Dr William Stukeley visited Navestockside (TQ 5697) and 'discovered' an 'alate' (winged) Druid's Temple. Navestockside is quite near my home and I have often walked the adjacent footpaths but found no trace of a temple.

This subject has puzzled historians for many years. Despite it being, in 1725, an immense earthwork (otherwise Stukeley would not have visited the place on many occasions, written extensively on it, and etched an engraving which showed a large circular earthwork with a wing-like earthwork attached to it), when members of the Royal Society visited Navestockside in the 1880s, no trace of the temple was found. It had completely disappeared in the space of 150 years.

In more recent times, Dr Rudge and other interested historians visited Navestockside in an attempt to solve the mystery. They called in at the village pub - *The Green Man* - where some locals told them of earthworks in a nearby wood. The earthworks were old gravel workings. So the mystery continued until quite recently.

When the M25 was being constructed through this part of Essex, I kept a watching brief as the machinery progressed, noting areas where ancient pottery, etc., was turned up. One day one of the surveyors informed me that he had noticed slight soil marks in the field to the rear of *The Green Man* at Navestockside. He had seen them from the air.

Following this information I visited the field, but could see nothing from ground level. Last April when the field was harrowed prior to being sown, I was surprised to see large black soil marks showing when I visited the field. I immediately drove over to the micro-light airfield a few miles away where I spoke to Mr Phil Lee, a professional aerial photographer, who agreed to photograph the field as soon as possible.

One week later I received 20 proof photographs of the field, which most clearly revealed a large circular earthwork abutting upon the village. I have since walked the site, and now that the peas are quite high the outer ditch stands out clearly in shadow. From the rear of the pub car park, one can see on the field's horizon a large 'U'-shaped depression - it is the outer ditch as it swings round towards the village.

Of course I may be wrong. It may not be Stukeley's temple. What is positive - it is a large earthwork which, during some period in the village's history, was levelled off on the village side, leaving half in the field. No doubt, now that this matter has been brought to light, the mystery will be solved.

Incidentally, several Navestockside residents have been complaining to Essex County Council about the pilots of the micro-lights 'snooping' into their back gardens affecting their private lives. It must have been Phil Lee solving that mystery. They may now have more snoopers, only this time at ground level.

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HARROW HEDGEROW SURVEY

CHRIS CURRIE gives good reasons for modifying the previous approach to hedge dating (*London Archaeol* 5 no. 10, 263-9), but

I suggest that his method of averaging the species count for an estate may give deceptive results, particularly if the purpose is to gauge the date of the estate.

The northern part of Pinner, including Oxhey Lane Farm, had been assarted by the early 16th century and there was a high correlation between the areas of named fields in the 1547 survey (note 28) and mapped fields of the 19th century, and I suspect a similar history and correlation for the neighbouring Grim's Dyke. Yet Currie's averaged hedge count gives a "creation ... between about 1700 and 1817".

Could it not just be that some hedges are older than others, and that the differences point to changes within, or even of, the estates? The boundaries and areas of some, possibly all, of the estates have varied since Tudor times, the tendency being for them to enlarge and incorporate acreage previously subject to different forms of management. Even Copse Farm probably includes hedgerows older than itself.

Currie rightly points out that the hitherto rigid formula requires modification, while illustrating the dangers of comparative study. It is important to regard the hedges individually, and not to hazard the findings by averaging what may be a recent grouping or regrouping of estate hedges.

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PATRICIA A. CLARKE

This letter is published as representative of a number we have received on this subject - Editor.

Chris Currie replies:-

My thanks to Pat Clarke for showing an interest in the *Harrow Hedgerow Survey*. I wonder, however, if she has not misunderstood my main point, which is that documentary sources, hitherto unpublished, show that hedges were often planted containing more than one species. It is implicit in the Hooper formula that all hedges start life as single-species entities. Yet my research shows this is clearly not the case.

I apologise if my article gave Pat the impression that I was trying to date "estates" in Harrow. I nowhere made that a statement of my intention. In fact, the captions to all the figures refer to land units in terms of **areas**, the farm name being no more than a locational convenience. Only on Copse Farm did I make a point of looking at the hedges surviving from Messeder's map of 1759 as a composite group. My source for the dating of that area was clearly stated as the *VCH*.

On the matter of averages, again I must stress that this was a convenience expression only. I also gave the species range and intended no preferential note should be made of the averages. The figures are given in this form because it would be tedious to publish individual hedge counts, not to mention prohibitive in terms of cost and space to the magazine. Besides, their relevance is purely academic in the light of my previous researches, particularly those of documents, which make all "figures" rather dubious anyway.

I recognise the popularity of hedge-dating with local groups because of the minimal financial outlay required and so I accept that an article that calls the exercise into question will be unpopular. Hedges have much to contribute towards a study of past landscapes, but I do not think we can go on looking for definitive dates unless the method is seriously revised.

Incidentally, before anyone notices that some of my numbered "boundaries" do not contain hedges, I must stress that my captions refer to **boundaries** that have survived from the 1817 enclosure map. These were all visited, but only those with proper hedges on them were used in the survey.

I hope this reply clears up Pat's misinterpretation of my work. I had thought my intentions were clear. I hope I have now resolved any ambiguity I have unintentionally created.