

BLACKWATER ESTUARY FISH TRAPS MONITORING SURVEY

PROJECT SUMMARY

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The Essex tidal estuaries are the site of a number of timber-built fish traps, their distribution being particularly dense in the Blackwater estuary where six sites have been identified through the work of local archaeologists and aerial reconnaissance. The Blackwater examples are Saxon in date (Strachan 1998) and comprise large and complex monuments, comprising numerous wooden posts in various alignments, along with wattle-work (sails and rods) and basketry. This project aims to publish a paper on the more recent works on these sites in the county journal *Essex Archaeology and History*, with a digital research archive made accessible via the *Archaeological Data Service* website.

Previous studies have included limited ground-based survey (Strachan 1998, Heppell and Brown 2008), photographic survey, visits by local archaeologists, aerial photographic reconnaissance (Strachan 1998 and Saunders *in press*) and detailed survey of a complex of traps at Collins Creek (Hall and Clarke 2000). A series of field survey visits were made by ECC FAU during the period 2006-08 to further record new exposures and assess the impact of ongoing erosion of estuarine silts at the Collins Creek and Pewet Island fishtrap structures. These visits established that significant erosion was indeed in progress, with substantial and hitherto unexposed parts of the traps actively being uncovered and other parts being damaged or destroyed altogether.

The recovered information adds to the understanding of these and other fishtraps in the Blackwater estuary and provides measurable data with which to assess the nature and rate of erosion taking place in this inter-tidal environment. Additionally, a number of methodological lessons have been learnt that are of benefit to the improved investigation of such monuments in the inter-tidal zone. The results of the 2006-8 fieldwork, a comparison with the earlier results, along with consideration of the issues of erosion, research and management in/of the inter-tidal zone will be considered in the publication.

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|------------------------------|-----------------|---|
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| Heppell, E. and Brown N. | 2008 | 'Rapid Coastal Zone Survey and beyond; research and management of the Essex coast, UK' <i>Journal of Wetland Archaeology</i> 8 24-50 |
| Saunders, H. | <i>In Press</i> | <i>The Essex Mapping Project</i> East Ang Arch Monograph |
| Strachan, D. | 1998 | 'Inter-tidal stationary fishing structures in Essex: some C14 dates' <i>Essex Archaeology and History</i> 29 274-284 |