

**GENERAL MEETING OF THE ESSEX  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, HELD AT  
COLCHESTER CASTLE ON THURSDAY,  
THE 19th APRIL, 1900.**

G. ALAN LOWNDES, ESQ., M.A., PRESIDENT, IN THE CHAIR.

The Secretary read the Annual Report, and the Treasurer's Financial Statement was laid before the meeting, and the same were approved.

It was resolved that the thanks of the meeting be accorded to the President, Vice-Presidents, Council and officers for their services during the past year, and that they be re-elected, with the addition of Sir M. E. Grant-Duff, P.C., G.C.S.I., C.I.E., F.R.S., of Lexden Park, Colchester, as a vice-president, and the Revs. L. N. Prance, M.A., F.S.A., and A. F. Curtis, M.A., as members of the Council, the one to fill a vacancy and the other in the place of Mr. J. F. T. Wiseman, who, having removed to a distant county, was unable to attend the meetings of the Council.

A vote of thanks was passed to Mr. James Round, M.P., for the use of the Castle Library.

It was resolved that Mr. Douglass Round, Mr. Charles Benham, and Mr. P. G. Laver be appointed the Society's representatives on the Museum Committee of the Corporation of Colchester.

Mr. Miller Christy made some interesting remarks on two incised slabs (*see ante* p. 1), and Mr. J. H. Round read a note upon Fyfield church (*see ante* p. 104).

The following candidates were elected members of the Society :—

**ON THE NOMINATION OF—**

**GRANT-DUFF**, Sir M. E., P.C., G.C.S.I., C.I.E., F.R.S., ) Mr. H. Laver  
Lexden Park, Colchester.

**BIRMINGHAM CENTRAL FREE LIBRARY.** )  
**CHEATHAM'S LIBRARY**, Hunt's Bank, Manchester ) **M. G. F.** Beaumont.  
**SYMONS, FRANCIS RANFORD**, Lexden Road, Colchester. )  
**FOWLER, R. C.**, Record Office, Chancery Lane, **W. C.** ) **Mr. J. H. Round.**

In the afternoon a large party, by brake and cycle, proceeded to West Bergholt and thence, under the direction of Mr. H. Laver, F.S.A., traced an ancient rampart running from the Bergholt Road down to the river Colne, and onward through and beyond Lexden Park.

On their arrival at Lexden Park, the visitors were welcomed by Sir Mountstuart Grant-Duff, who accompanied the Society through his beautiful grounds, and on returning to the house the company was entertained at tea by Lady Grant-Duff.

Mr. Laver read the following paper :—

#### ANCIENT RAMPART THROUGH LEXDEN PARK.

"When last I addressed this Society, about two years ago, on the earthwork between Newbridge on the Colne and the Roman river near Stanway Hall, I was able from various authorities to show that it was known by the name of Grymes Dyke; and I was also able to suggest the probable period of its construction and the object for which it was raised. In the present instance I fear I shall be unable to give you much information on any of these points. I can neither give any special name by which this earthwork has been known nor who were the people that raised it, nor can I give any satisfactory theory as to why it was erected. That there was some very good cause for the enormous amount of work the raising of this bank would have entailed there can be no doubt. It may have been for defence, or it may have been a road of Roman making, starting as it does from a point—the end of Bluebell Grove—where the old road, possibly the British road, from Camulodunum to Verulamium passed.

It has been stated that this trench formed the eastern boundary of British Camulodunum, a conclusion arrived at when the Royal Archaeological Institute visited Colchester some years ago. But this erroneous idea must have been formed, not by examination of the locality, but by reference to maps only, aided probably by the description of the site of British Camulodunum by the Rev. Henry Jenkins in vol. xxix. of *Archaeologia*, which must have been misread and misunderstood from want of knowledge of the site.

In referring to this paper by the Rev. Henry Jenkins in *Archaeologia* it must not be supposed that I mention it with the wish for any member of this Society to accept it as any authority for the correctness of the theory as to the position of British Camulodunum. On the contrary I think it is in every respect incorrect and misleading.

The facts adduced are distorted beyond recognition to suit the reverend gentlemen's theories; and this was, unfortunately, not the only case in his writings, as a similar distortion occurs in his description of Colchester Castle as a temple of Claudius.

In a note on page 245 of his paper in *Archaeologia*, is an example of his making facts and theories accord. In speaking of the name Vent Field, he says Venta was a place where the Britons convened



ANCIENS RAMPARS

0 100 200  
SCALE OF FEET

Sketch looking Northward

Showing Section Line A, B, & C, & D

Counterscarp  
thrown down to middle ditch

or met in their several states; and then from this definition of the term *Venta* (which is not the correct explanation of the term), he argues that the gravel pit known as King Coel's Kitchen, being situate in a field called *Vent Field*, was a British theatre, and that it was from this British theatre the ominous sounds were heard, before the destruction of Roman *Camulodunum*, as recorded by *Tacitus*.

I mention this simply as an example of the distorted facts of which this most mischievous and misleading paper is full.

*Vent Field* means, as any Essex person would know, the field in the angle of two or more roads. '*Vent*' is simply synonymous with the word '*want*,' as in the term '*a three-want way*'; or '*want*' in this sense may be, and is probably, a corruption of the word '*vent*,' arising probably from the habit Essex people have of transposing the letters '*v*' and '*w*.'

In the plan which I have placed in your hands, you will find I have described this trench as '*An Ancient Rampart through Lexden Park to Bergholt Road*,' and in the absence, as I have said before, of any special and well known designation, this must be our name for it. But in this description of it I propose reversing the direction and beginning my remarks from the *Bergholt Road* end, from which we started.

In turning out of *Bergholt Road* into the lane, marked *Baker's Lane* on the plan, a depression will be observed on the right hand; this is all that remains of the ditch, the lane running on what is left of the earthwork, which is continued to the south, the lane, at the turning, crossing from the rampart to the ditch side. For the next three fields towards the railway it forms their boundary on the east, and is much more perfect, although the outer edge of the ditch has been levelled. It is then cut through by the railway, and continues fairly perfect past the *Lodge Farm*, and from thence to the river exists only as traces, but these are easily followed; crossing the river, the remains are readily found up to the high-road. Until about 1836 this portion was almost perfect, but *Mr. Preston*, who was then rector of *Lexden*, destroyed it by levelling both bank and ditch.

It was the same gentleman who built the extremely ugly church and rectory-house we now see, and from these we may quite understand that he had not sufficient taste to appreciate any beauty in the diversity and irregularities of the surface this mound produced.

If we follow on the same line and cross the road into *Lexden Park*, we shall find the bank running along the brow of the hill. In the greater part of its course through the park the trench is absent, as, from the steepness of the hill, it was not required.

Outside the park the trench and bank are somewhat overgrown with trees, and this part, from the park fence to the end where it joins the earliest London road, is known as Bluebell Grove. The bank here is gradually being levelled by the plough, but no effort, fortunately, is made to fill the ditch.

The London road from Colchester to the east end of Bluebell Grove is not very apparent, but many more signs of it were to be seen years ago. Its course, however, may be easily traced by excavations across its track, and I was informed by an old man who worked for Miss Knight, that he helped remove many loads of large stones from the remains of this road. A footpath exists to the south, and on looking over the stile it will be seen to run over a raised bank towards Pretty-gate Lane. This is the continuation of the road from the direction of Colchester. If we were to follow this raised bank we should reach the Straight Road on Lexden Heath, and standing on the bank there, and looking backwards towards Balcerne Gate, in every part of this line traces of the old road are to be found.

We will now retrace our steps, returning to the Bergholt Road end of this earthwork, where we started from. At this point I can find no traces on the northern side of the road, but there are reasons for supposing that this rampart continued in this direction, that is, towards the north, probably into the Causey at Horkesley, for in one field near the brook there was, a few years ago, a hard road remaining, and this was in the direct line of this rampart towards the Causey.

There is nothing in the appearance of this earthwork incompatible with the supposition that it might have been a road, in fact there is much in favour of this idea; at the same time we cannot be sure it was not raised for defensive purposes, and its position, parallel to, and inside Grymes Dyke, both having their ditches to the west, strengthens this idea, as does also the appearance and size of the bank in the first field adjoining Bergholt road, where it has been to some extent thrown down. The remains here appear to indicate that it was much larger than at any other part of its course and that it might possibly be a portion of a camp built for the defenders of this line of trench. Unless the plan of an earthwork can be fully made out, it becomes sometimes, in this county, extremely difficult to say for what purpose it was designed, as there has been very often so much obliterated by the plough and other agricultural operations that you cannot be sure how much of the original work is apparent and how much has disappeared. And in this one now under consideration, perhaps, if we could see more of

it, that is, of parts now destroyed, we might find that many of our ideas of the purpose and plan would have to be considerably modified.

It has been stated that the Moat farm was originally a Roman block house or fort for the protection of this road, it may be that this view is correct, but it is quite as likely the moat was made at a much later date. But so little is known of these moated houses, of which there are so many in Essex, that it will be as well not to attempt to assign a date for its construction.

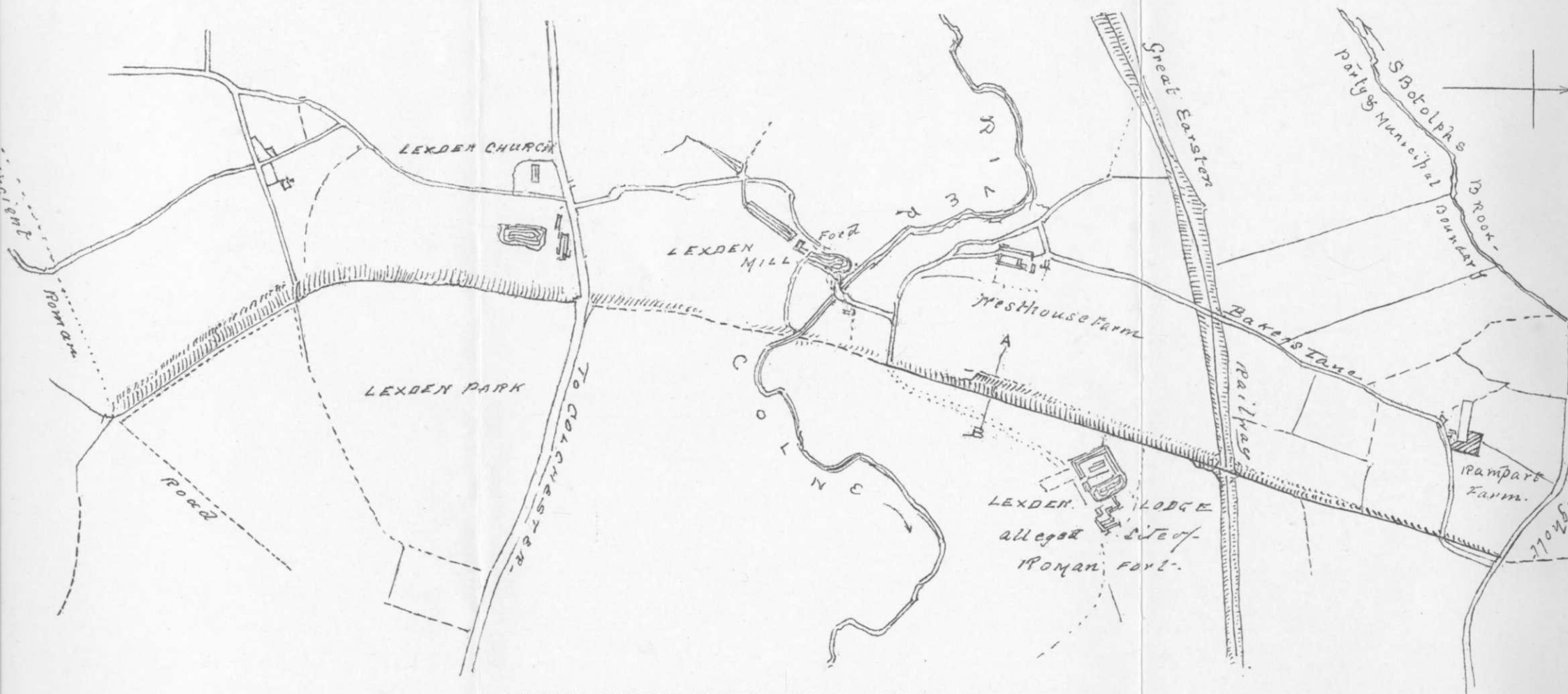
Earthworks in the past have been very much neglected by antiquaries, a fact much to be regretted, as we have no remains from earlier ages which can do more to illustrate the history of a district than the banks, mounds, and trenches which occur so frequently in many parts of this country, and which are more than gradually disappearing in all directions. If we have done but little to-day in assigning a date and so on to this fine earth-work we have just visited, we shall at least place on record its condition at the present time, for the use of future students.

The accompanying plan,<sup>1</sup> kindly made for me by Major Bale, from the six-inch Ordnance Map, will give a correct idea of the course and length of this fine earthwork. The dots placed near the river indicate where only traces of the bank are to be found.

The sketch, also by Major Bale, of the bank, ditch, and counterscarp, at the point marked by a line from A to B on the plan, will serve to shew what appearances are presented by this earthwork, where the remains are in a fairly perfect condition."

Before the party dispersed hearty thanks were accorded to Mr. Laver for his paper, and to Sir Mountstuart and Lady Grant-Duff for their kindly welcome.

<sup>1</sup> The Society is indebted to Mr. Laver for kindly supplying the blocks for the reproduction of Major Bale's plan and sketch. Ed.



ANCIENT RAMPART THROUGH LEXDEN PARK TO BERGHOLT ROAD.

Scale 6in. to Mile.