Statutory Consultation Response

About me:

Name: Faith Marchal (Dr)
Address: [redacted]

Email: [redacted]
I am responding as an individual; I am also secretary of *Brumfelda*, Broomfield's local history group.

1. How would you describe your interest in Norwich to Tilbury

- ☐ Local resident
- ☐ Local interest group member – Brumfelda (Broomfield's local history group)

2. Section A – North Norfolk

No comments on this area

3. Section B – Mid Suffolk

No comments on this area

4. Section C and D – Babergh, Tendring and Colchester

Q.8 and Q.9: Great Horkesley, Aldham, Langham and indeed Dedham Vale – an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, recognised internationally thanks to the paintings of John Constable -- are areas where the power lines are proposed to be underground. From what I understand, however, before construction can even begin, the land in question must be completely cleared to a width of 40 – 65 metres to enable the installation to proceed, and ***the area in question would be fenced off***.

It is hard to see how construction of underground cabling would NOT despoil and cause great harm to the nature of this part of the Essex countryside, including the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, in the long term. Indeed, the construction process itself could result in access to affected sections of Essex's best known long-distance footpath, the Essex Way, and to other public footpaths – ***all public rights of way*** – in the surrounding area being blocked altogether for several years, not to mention the restrictions on land use after the underground installation is complete.

Surely the only way to avoid such wholesale destruction would be to have an offshore solution.

5. Section E – Braintree

Q. 10 and Q.11 There are several places in this section where the aforementioned long-distance footpath, the Essex Way – noted for providing the best of the Essex countryside to walkers – will be criss-crossed by unsightly pylons, potentially spoiling some of the most attractive views in our county. These areas include land east of Great Leighs, towards Fuller Street , and between Fairstead and White Notley. I see that the only underground section proposed in this Section is where it crossed the lines of other unsightly pylons, near Fairstead. This is relatively high ground, so the additional pylons will be visible for many miles around.

Worryingly, these sites also include land just east of Coggeshall – arguably one of central Essex's most attractive towns, and home to dozens of ancient buildings including Paycocke's House (National Trust). There are already pylons to the south and west of the town, so why spoil one of the few remaining vistas to the east and north? Further to the west and south of Coggeshall lie the Cressing Temple Barns, a very short distance north of the proposed route of over-ground pylons. These historic barns date back to the 13th century and were built by the Knights Templar. They are among the oldest and largest wooden structures of their kind in all of Europe and some of the few remaining Templar buildings in England – and the type of pylons suggested would be in full view of these iconic landmarks.

6. Section F – Chelmsford

Q.12 This is of course where the proposed route of the pylons affects me the most, as they would sit only a field and a half behind my house and garden, spoiling the view not only from my house but from *all* the houses on [redacted] including many new ones built at the western end of [redacted] near its intersection with Chignal Lane. Many more houses have also been built in Broomfield north of Hospital Approach, and between Woodhouse Lane and Little Waltham. No doubt the proposed addition of a chain of 50 metre high pylons in their sightlines will be felt very keenly by recent property buyers. Construction also continues on still more houses accessed from the west end of [redacted] The cost of these and indeed all new-build houses in the Chelmsford area is considerable, their value likely to be substantially decreased when and if these pylons are built. Even older semi -detached houses on Woodhouse Lane are selling in the region of £500,000 each.

Some years ago, the area to the north and west of the built-up Broomfield village was identified as the 3rd (out of nine) most important areas in the parish for protection from development. I quote from p. 15 of Broomfield's *Community Landscape Character Assessment* of 2010: 'As the highest land in the Parish, it offers good views eastwards, towards the village and beyond and it can be seen clearly from the other side of the Chelmer Valley. As the current settlement sits comfortably in the gentle 'dip' of the valley, the views are not obstructed by buildings . . .' and yet this is exactly where the pylons are proposed. It stands to reason that if such high ground offers such good views, then anything built on it – such as 50-metre high pylons! -- can also be easily viewed, from miles away. The average mature oak tree is only 20 – 40 metres tall, so the pylons would dwarf Bushy Wood.

Photo 1: Land north and west of Broomfield towards the Pleshey Plateau, including [redacted] Dragonsfoot (top centre – light green field), and Bushy Wood (top left), land across which you are planning to route the pylons, spoiling this valued landscape. *Photo © CED Marchal*

I strongly object to the destruction and harmful desecration of such attractive rural landscape vistas and the compromising of local public footpaths, bridleways, parts of the Essex Way already

mentioned, and the Saffron Trail (another long-distance path within Essex that runs north – south between Saffron Walden and Southend). The footpaths in this area, north of [redacted] and west of the more settled areas of Broomfield Parish have been well used by walkers for generations, with their use intensifying dramatically during the Covid-19 pandemic and continuing well after restrictions were lifted. They, together with [redacted] itself, remain in frequent use today.

We understand from having attended the consultation event at Chelmsford City Racecourse on 27 April that Footpath 5, running north from [redacted] to Pylon TB148, near Bushy Wood, has been designated as a Permanent Access Point for the maintenance of that particular pylon. It makes me wonder whether anyone from the National Grid has actually been to see it. This footpath has been used for many generations and is thought to have been the ancient Green Lane between Priors (then owned by Jericho Priory, Blackmore) and Pleshey, to the north. It is a narrow but well-used path. Some years ago, the path had become impassable due to excess seepage from the newly built lake at Scravels. Therefore, to maintain the right of way, Essex County Council built a bridge to cover the worst affected area. This bridge measures only 104 cm wide, and is intended only for pedestrian use – see Photo 2. Many sections of the path remain muddy, however, especially after rain, and the churning up of the path from frequent use. See Photo 3. Clearly it is **unsuitable for motor vehicles**, including maintenance vehicles. Furthermore, widening the path to provide access for maintenance vehicles would necessitate the destruction of the many large trees that line either side of the path, especially at its southern and northern ends – see Photo 4 – thus harming the very nature of this popular path as well as opening up the view of the pylons to the north towards the Pleshey Farmland Plateau, the highest elevation In all of Broomfield, as previously mentioned. There are also inspection chambers at intervals along Footpath 5 for the waste systems that serve numbers 1 and 2 Priors Cottages, and Sunnymede Cottage, all on [redacted]

Photo 2: Bridge on Footpath 5, looking north

Photo 3: Footpath 5 – looking north. Taken May 2024

Photo 4: Beginning of Footpath 5, looking north from [redacted]

However, I also strongly object on the grounds of the potential destruction of a historic site which has been the subject of considerable archaeological research since 2012. This work – which included field walking and geophysical surveys -- explored the location of what had long been thought to be a Roman villa in a field known as Dragonsfoot, just northeast of Bushy Wood – see Photo 1. Much of the Roman brick and tile within the fabric of Broomfield's 12th century parish church will almost certainly have been taken from this site. Over the years, hundreds of Roman coins, brooches and

other metallic finds have been discovered there and well catalogued, some of which are on display in Chelmsford & Essex Museum. More recently, field walking and various forms of geophysical surveys undertaken by trained archaeologists have clearly identified the location of the Roman building – **which is NOT a Roman villa but almost certainly a Romano-British temple** -- as well as four features which may have served as votive pits. **This alignment of pits and temple makes this site possibly unique in England.** We referred to our findings in last year's consultation response but you seem to have paid not a bit of attention to this. Our findings from this research were written up and published in December 2023, a copy of which is included with this response. See especially pp. 20ff.

Your proposed line of pylons will cut straight through this field, with one pylon proposed within metres of the temple itself (Pylon TB147). Placing the cabling underground would almost certainly destroy any remaining archaeological evidence, so **the only viable solution to this dilemma is offshore**.

What is also truly disturbing is that Broomfield Parish Council, and I personally, wrote about this work in our responses to the non-statutory consultation of 2023, and yet none of the information we provided appears in the consultation documents of April 2024**. Specifically, the Preliminary Environmental Report Volume 3, Technical Appendices 3-4, Section 3.7.84-87 – pp 705 ff – contains inaccurate, out of date, incorrect information.** This is what your document has to say:

> ***3.7.86*** *The site of a Roman villa with hypocaust has been identified in a field to the east of Woodhall Farm (6099). The site of the building is indicated by a finds scatter recovered during fieldwalking comprising brick, flue tile, tile, plaster, a Colchester type brooch, 11 coins, bracelet fragments and pottery sherds including samian, and Castor and Oxford wares. This site is located at Dragonsfoot Field 40 m north of a draft Order Limits access road and approximately 250 m west of the settlement of Broomfield, just south of Patridge Green. The site is of evidential and historical value and is of medium value.*

You appear to have made your assessment from the Heritage Gateway entry from **1993** (Heritage Environment Record 1013). However, this is over 30 years old! As you can see, there is mention of some 11 coins. In fact, we know from metal detectorist Mike Cuddeford that over the years he has discovered over 550 coins and some 140 other metal objects dating from the entire Roman settlement period in Dragonsfoot, all fully documented. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, **the Preliminary Environmental Report quoted above takes no account of the more recent archaeological investigations reported on last year and the harm that construction and access to pylons over such sites will cause in the short, medium and long terms**.

I had had high hopes when someone from the National Grid contacted me last year for further information about the more recent archaeological research mentioned above. I suggested they consult Broomfield Parish Council's own very detailed response, and I also provided contact details of landscape archaeologist Simon Coxall, with his permission, but this information does not appear to have been acted upon at all.

One might well ask, what was the point of the non-statutory consultation when its findings have clearly not been taken into account?

Q.13: It is not clear why, when on your website you are obviously promoting Sea Link, an off shore solution has not also been proposed as an alternative to intrusive, out-dated pylons. Nor for that matter is it clear why shorter pylons are not offered as a possible alternative, such as the T-pylons promoted elsewhere on your website and successfully used, it seems, in other parts of the country. It seems to me that with so much off-shore green energy being generated off East Anglia's shores – surely worth a round of applause – that an offshore solution has not been mentioned or apparently even considered in this consultation exercise. That is inexcusable as the public have the right to be informed of all options. Shame on you!

Let's place the mechanics of energy delivery as close to the source of that energy as possible – to the offshore wind farms! Let's see our seas as a solution, not a barrier, to delivering net zero by 2050 or, ideally, even sooner.

Looking further south than Broomfield's immediate surrounds, the pylons would also adversely affect the handsome rolling landscape that can be viewed from Writtle, Hylands Park – often described as 'the jewel in Chelmsford's crown' – and Ingatestone, while also obstructing the St Peter's Way long distance footpath.

Section G Basildon and Brentwood

Q.14: The proposed siting of the pylons in this section appear to abut the Essex Wildlife Trust's reserve near Langdon Hills, which would adversely affect the enjoyment of visitors and the wildlife therein.

Section H: Thurrock

No comments on this section.

General considerations

What I have found appalling, misleading, and downright irresponsible, is the lack of comparative information concerning alternatives to the old-fashioned, outdated pylons proposed for the Norwich to Tilbury route. These include underground cabling, and my preferred option, an undersea solution. The costings you have provided are incomplete, for a start. For instance, I could not find mention of the thousands of pounds of compensation which will need to be paid to property owners thanks to the inevitable devaluation of their properties -- many in the Chelmsford area being of relatively new build -- nor mention of the impact of taking so many acres of prime agricultural land out of production.

The difficulty of finding useful information, however, makes one think this is actually a deliberate ploy on your part, intended to baffle and frustrate prospective readers, and actually dissuade them from responding at all. It was quite by chance that I discovered the paragraphs quoted in my response to Q.12-13, above – p.705 (or 714 if viewed online) of a document totalling over 2000 pages – and this was one document alone of over 40 on your website!

The visualisations we viewed at the consultation event were clearly based on computer modelling, and possibly Google Earth technology. It is hard to imagine that anyone from the National Grid has actually ever ***visited*** the areas being affected, in order to assess the real, visual impact of the pylons

on the landscapes, and the harm it will do to local wildlife, not to mention the blight on the lives of those of us who live here.

The name says it all: most of the electricity generated off our East Anglian shores will not be distributed within East Anglia at all, but towards London, and yet East Anglia is considered 'okay' for the National Grid to run roughshod over this part of the country through the harmful construction of such ugliness.

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH: an offshore solution is the only way to avoid such harmful, long-term damage to East Anglia's most iconic landscapes.

Submission ID: S03A54984

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Some years ago, the area to the north and west of the built-up Broomfield village was identified as the 3rd (out of nine) most important areas in the parish for protection from development. I quote from p. 15 of Broomfield's Community Landscape Character Assessment of 2010: 'As the highest land in the Parish, it offers good views eastwards, towards the village and beyond and it can be seen clearly from the other side of the Chelmer Valley. As the current settlement sits comfortably in the gentle 'dip' of the valley, the views are not obstructed by buildings . . .' and yet this is exactly where the pylons are proposed. It stands to reason that if such high ground offers such good views, then anything built on it – such as 50-metre high pylons! -- can also be easily viewed, from miles away. The average mature oak tree is only 20 – 40 metres tall, so the pylons would dwarf Bushy Wood. National Grid plc have repeatedly been informed of this, in the process of both non-statutory and statutory consultations.

I strongly object to the destruction and harmful desecration of such attractive rural landscape vistas and the compromising of local public footpaths, bridleways, parts of the Essex Way, and the Saffron Trail (another long-distance path within Essex that runs north – south between Saffron Walden and Southend). The footpaths in this area, north of [redacted] and west of the more settled areas of Broomfield Parish have been well used by walkers for generations, with their use intensifying dramatically during the Covid-19 pandemic and continuing well after restrictions were lifted. They, together with [redacted] itself, remain in frequent use today.

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However, I also strongly object on the grounds of the potential despoilation of a historic site which has been the subject of considerable archaeological research since 2012. This work – which included field walking and geophysical surveys -- explored the location of what had long been thought to be a Roman villa in a field known as Dragonsfoot, just northeast of Bushy Wood. Much of the Roman brick and tile within the fabric of Broomfield's 12th century parish church will almost certainly have been taken from this site. Over the years, over 500 Roman coins, and many other brooches and other metallic finds have been discovered there and well catalogued, some of which are on display in Chelmsford & Essex Museum. More recently, field walking and various forms of geophysical surveys undertaken by trained archaeologists have clearly identified the location of the Roman building – which is NOT a Roman villa but almost certainly a Romano-British temple -- as well as four features which may have served as votive pits. This alignment of pits and temple makes this site possibly unique in England. I and others have referred to our findings in each and every National Grid plc consultation exercise, but they seem to have paid not a bit of attention to this. Our findings from this research were written up and published in December 2023.

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Despite earlier representations from me and others, National Grid plc appear to have made their assessment from the Heritage Gateway entry from 1993 (Heritage Environment Record 1013). However, this is over 30 years old! As you can see, there is mention of some 11 coins. In fact, we know from metal detectorist Mike Cuddeford that over the years he has discovered over 550 coins and some 140 other metal objects dating from the Roman settlement period in Dragonsfoot, all

fully documented. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the Preliminary Environmental Report quoted above takes no account of the more recent archaeological investigations reported on last year and the harm that construction and access to pylons over such sites will cause in the short, medium and long terms.

General considerations

What is most disappointing is the lack of comparative information concerning alternatives to the old-fashioned, outdated pylons proposed for the Norwich to Tilbury route. These include underground cabling, and my preferred option, an undersea solution. The costings that National Grid plc have provided are incomplete, for a start. For instance, I could not find mention of the thousands of pounds of compensation which will need to be paid to property owners thanks to the inevitable devaluation of their properties -- many in the Chelmsford area being of relatively new build -- nor mention of the impact of taking so many acres of prime agricultural land out of production.

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A Dragonsfoot Story

Discovering Roman Broomfield

Produced by *Brumfelda*,

Broomfield's local history group

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Autumn 2023

This volume has been produced by *Brumfelda*, Broomfield's local history group.

We would be happy to hear of any inadvertent omissions, so that we can correct them in any future editions. You can do this by emailing us at: brumfeldahistory@gmail.com

Dragonsfoot field, Broomfield, with field walkers, August 2015.
Courtesy of Ros Mercer

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A Dragonsfoot Story

Introduction

This is the story of a field. The field in question is on the highest ground in the parish of Broomfield, Chelmsford, Essex, rising some 60 metres above sea level. It sits astride a watershed draining into two river systems, the Can to the west and the Chelmer to the east. From the field, one can enjoy views for miles across both river valleys to Highwood and beyond to the southwest, and to the hills of Danbury to the east.

Dragonsfoot from the air.
©2008, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky

Situated a few hundred metres northwest of Church Green, Broomfield, the field has been known for generations as 'Dragonsfoot'. It used to be comprised of two fields, called Hither Dragonsfoot and Further Dragonsfoot[1], but over time they were combined to make one larger field, roughly triangular in shape.

With a name like that, there must be a reason, or at least some sort of explanation for it. Legend has it that the field got its unusual name due to the striking resemblance between the shape of a slight depression in the field and the shape of a dragon's footprint. It is also possible that the name may have originated in early medieval times when the Christian church, seeking to deprecate so-called 'pagan' sites, associated them with dark forces such as dragons and the like.

Dragons and the legends surrounding them help to demonstrate the power of the human imagination when the realities of a situation cannot be easily explained, or where those realities are simply too mundane to lend credence to the point of the legend in the first place.

Fragment of grey-ware pot rim. *Courtesy of Ros Mercer*

[1] This is according to the tithe maps of 1846, mentioned in Kettle, B.M. (1965, p. 264), 'The Broomfield Dragon', in *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*, Vol. 1, Part 4 {Third Series). Colchester: published by the Society at the Museum in the Castle. .

Local legends too have their place, as we will explain later. What we *do* know is that the Romans were at Dragonsfoot. We know this thanks to the quantity and variety of finds discovered there which can be dated directly to the period of the Roman occupation.[2] During the past sixty years or so, Dragonsfoot has yielded significant quantities of Roman plaster – some with paint fragments – mortared brick, roller-stamped flue tiles, potsherds, pieces of Samian ware, fragments of hypocaust, and oyster shells.

Inscribed multifaceted ring, about two centimetres in diameter.
Courtesy of Mike Cuddeford

As well as building materials and other domestic items, for over thirty years metal detectorist Mike Cuddeford has found and carefully documented over 550 coins dating from throughout the Roman occupation, as well as some 140 other metal objects including rings, brooches, and spoon handles.

Dolphin brooch, about three centimetres in length, 'reconstructed' with missing pin.
Courtesy of Mike Cuddeford

Most are now in the possession of Chelmsford & Essex Museum. Some of these finds, such as the dolphin brooch pictured here, are on display there.[3] Others have also been mentioned in an entry of a national database, Heritage Gateway, under the title 'East of Woodhall Farm' – although Dragonsfoot is not mentioned specifically by name. [4]

[2] Kettle, B.M., p. 264

[3] This was as at a visit to the Museum in August 2023. For data protection and other reasons, the Museum does not include the name of the finder of the various relics on display, nor the exact location of such finds. Our thanks to Mike Cuddeford for providing these photos, as well as access to his detailed spreadsheet itemising the hundreds of his finds over the years.

[4] See https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk. The Heritage Environment Record (HER) number is 1013.

Formation of Brumfelda – Broomfield's Local History Group

Fast forward to the twenty-first century. Local historian, the late Ken Searles, had in 2006 [5] published a comprehensive multi-volume work, *Buildings of Broomfield*. He later said that there was at least one other building that was *not* in his book, suggesting that it would be interesting to investigate Dragonsfoot because of the quantity, quality and variety of Roman finds the field had yielded over the years. The presence of so many finds on the field's surface indicated that there must have been a Roman building of some kind, but it was unclear what type of building it might have been. Previous archaeological excavations in central Chelmsford – which during the Roman occupation was called Caesaromagus – and in the nearby villages of Chignal St James and Springfield had revealed the presence of numerous Roman structures including villas, temples, race tracks, and so forth, so it seemed likely that Dragonsfoot might well be the site of another such structure.

In summer of 2012, Ken met with Parish Councillor John Blake, Neil Wiffen from the Essex Record Office, Lyn Collins and other interested people to discuss investigating Dragonsfoot in a more systematic way, through organised 'field walking'. At that meeting the late Anne Haward and John provided a 'show-and-tell' session, showing examples of the Roman finds they had discovered on Dragonsfoot's surface over the years. It was decided to form a local history group, focussing initially on the Roman period of Broomfield's history. Plans were made to undertake a structured field walk of Dragonsfoot in October of that year. In the meantime, Nick Wickenden kindly hosted a visit to the Chelmsford & Essex Museum in September 2012, providing a behind-the-scenes look at items in the museum's storage, with examples of the kinds of finds the field walkers might encounter.

To help put the fledgling group on a more 'formal' footing, announcements were made in the *Broomfield Times*, the village's quarterly magazine, and to the Broomfield & District branch of the U3A. Discussions were then held to discuss how and when investigations of Dragonsfoot might proceed. Over the course of meetings between August 2012 and March 2013, an informal local history group started to take shape, with volunteers taking on the roles of Secretary (Robin Marchal) and Treasurer (Janet Woods). The group called itself *Brumfelda*, after the Anglo-Saxon name for Broomfield, mentioned in the Domesday Book.

To further inform the investigative process, and to help the group identify which finds might be important, a series of talks were held, delivered by local experts including archaeologists, historians, metal detectorists and geologists. One such talk was delivered in November 2013 by Ashley Cooper, a farmer, historian and writer from Gestingthorpe in northeast Essex, who spoke about his father's discovery and

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[5] This is according to the records at Broomfield Library, where a printed copy can be seen for reference. The complete multi-volume set can also be found on the website of Broomfield Parish Council, at **https://broomfieldessex.co.uk/broomfield-buildings-people/**

the subsequent research into a Roman villa discovered on their farm. A group visit to Mr Cooper's farm and museum was also arranged for the summer of the following year.

We also needed to determine a systematic way of recording just what finds were found, and exactly where. Such a process would help to determine the density of the finds that had found their way to the surface, and identify where more detailed investigations might take place. With the help of other specialists, we made lists of the kinds of finds that might be revealed besides the 'ordinary' brick and tile. These included oyster shells, painted plaster, fragments of red Samian ware, grey ware pottery, hypocaust components, and glass.

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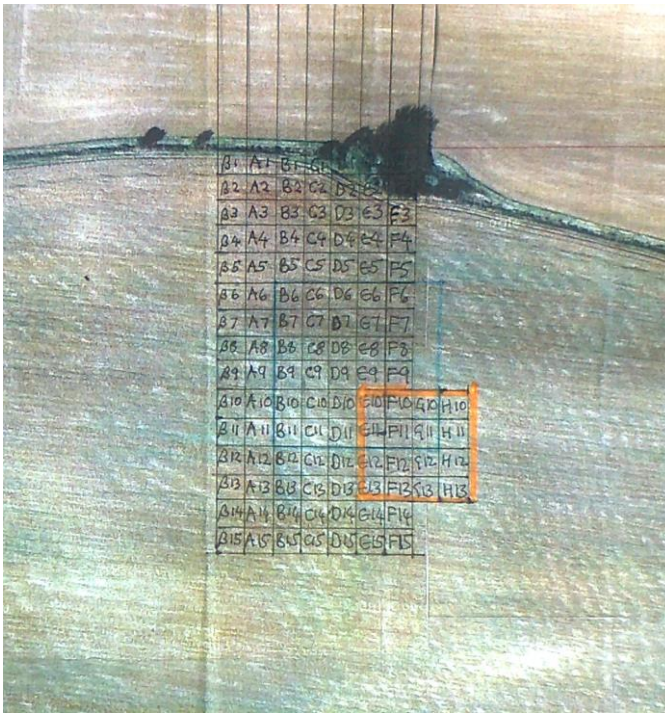
The field walking begins

Obviously such systematic investigations would need permission from Dragonsfoot's farmer. Negotiations had already taken place, and the farmer had granted permission to carry out organised field-walking at the most convenient times in the agricultural year.



Dragonsfoot grid plan – an early version.
Courtesy of John Blake.

The first field walk took place as planned in October 2012. Neil and John gathered together some twenty people who took part. Led by John, Dragonsfoot was measured out and divided into a grid pattern comprised of squares, each 10 metres by 10 metres, in columns identified by letters from left to right (west to east) and rows numbered from 1 to 15 from top to bottom (north to south). Thus, each square could be identified precisely, e.g., A15, E2, etc. Because of the curvature of the northernmost field edge, however, some columns didn't start with number 1, but perhaps 2 or even 3.

This system meant that each volunteer could be allocated a particular square or squares to 'walk', seek out finds, and document their location. Recording the quantities of finds in this way would be useful in identifying specific areas for subsequent, more detailed investigation.

Using 100-metre-long measuring tapes, canes, coloured cords and tent pegs, the squares to be field-walked that day (or days) were marked out at the start of each session to help identify exactly what should be walked – a time consuming process which became more efficient as time went on and our experience grew.

A recording system was also devised, and clear plastic freezer bags were provided so that as field walkers collected their findings, they could label their bags with the relevant square they had examined. They could then take their finds home, clean, measure and weigh them, and then record them on log sheets devised with the help of specialists at Chelmsford & Essex Museum. The intention behind this activity was that by collating the various log sheets, gradually a picture could be built up of where the highest density and variety of finds were located.

Later in the year, the field walkers displayed their finds in the Village Hall, labelled by grid square, so that everyone could get a first-hand look at the kinds of items that had been found, and where.

Display of finds, Village Hall, December 2012. *Courtesy of Ros Mercer*

Then, in 2013, using global positioning system (GPS) technology, we established a Ground Data Point (GDP), on the edge of the field. However, we did not have surveying technology available for every field walk. A problem soon emerged: how could we re-locate that Ground Data Point, from which we could calculate the starting point for each session *without* such surveying equipment, particularly after gaps of several months or in some cases as long as a year?

Neil and Robin searching for the Ground Data Point, August 2014.

Because our field walking sessions had to align with the agricultural year, we could not leave any markers in the field itself. Since the previous session, Dragonsfoot might have been ploughed, a crop sown, grown and harvested. Add to that the popularity of the public footpath that runs along the top (north) end of Dragonsfoot, from where our grid numbering began. We built small cairns beside the main footpath, hammered coloured tent pegs or metal spikes into the ground alongside the footpath, tied ribbons in the adjacent hedgerow – indeed anything that would mark out where that year's field walking had begun and concluded. Children tend to kick at stones, and hedges are trimmed from time to time as well – and of course grass and weeds were quick to cover our tracks. One way or another, however, including hands and knees searching, we managed to resume searching where we'd previously left off.

We also had to ensure our squares were indeed square, without the assistance of modern surveying technology, which can assess accuracy of measurements down to the millimetre. Between us, we remembered that, where right-angle triangles are concerned, the square of the hypotenuse (the long side) is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides. Thank you, Pythagorus! Luckily, the calculator programmes on our mobile phones had square-root functionality. Measuring the

diagonals as well as the four sides helped to ensure that our squares were at least square enough, or -- as they used to say -- 'close enough for government work'.

Robin, Lyndall, Tim C and Tim L, with muddy boots, January 2017.

We cannot mention the field walking process without also mentioning the impact of the weather! In the late summer and early autumn sessions, after harvest but before crop-sowing, the going was quite straightforward. Volunteers, happy to be out in the sun, enthusiastically compared their various finds with other field-walkers.

However, when field walking took place in the winter or early spring, or in the rain – as it did several times between January and March 2017 – it was a very different experience indeed, reserved for the hardy few!

Field walking in the fog, January 2017

Over several field walking sessions, we made some stunning finds, as our investigations moved eastward. As well as hundreds of large pieces of Roman brick and tile, some of which are pictured here, we found the base of a small pot, fragments of incised pottery, oyster shells, and even a small chunk of Roman plaster with fragments of paint still clinging to it after nearly 1700 years. Some of the smaller, more interesting finds we discovered are on the back cover of this booklet.

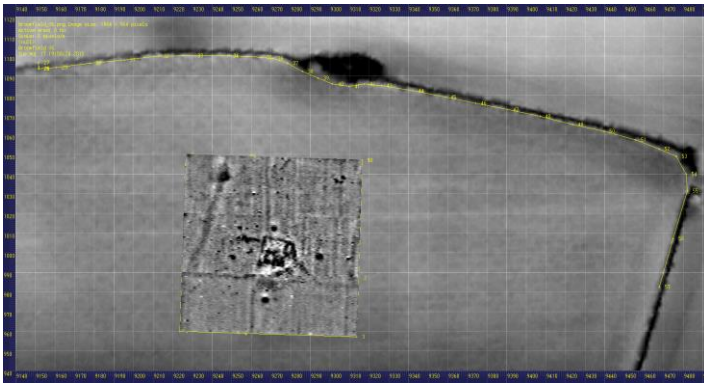
Large chunks of Roman brick and tile

Some members of Brumfelda were unable to take part in field walking, for various reasons. To ensure they could be involved in the process, we arranged a session at Broomfield Village Hall on 25th August 2016, where members could play an active part examining various finds the field-walkers had collected earlier, and then cleaning, weighing and recording them on the log sheets provided. More than twenty people took part in that session.

Through the 'looking glass': what lay beneath

It was all well and good collecting and recording what we could find on the surface of Dragonsfoot. It soon became obvious, however, that various modern technologies could provide further information by, literally, looking beneath the surface of the field. These technologies included magnetometry and resistivity. Magnetometry is a means of detecting buried walls, pits, silted ditches, hearths and kilns, and works by detecting disturbances in the magnetic field, which are then plotted onto a ground plan to produce a map of buried features. Resistivity sends electric currents through the soil, and the resistance to such currents is measured and plotted onto a ground plan. Electrical currents pass more readily through moist mediums than dry ones, with high resistance according across buried stone walls.[6]

Both techniques rely on taking readings at regular intervals across the field's surface, resulting in a computer-generated image of the survey findings. Viewers of the *Time Team* series may recall that these techniques go by the collective term 'geophys', short for geophysical surveys. Geophysical instruments can detect buried features where they contrast with their surroundings, helping to create a 'map of subsurface archaeological features'.[7] Features such as building foundations, roads, and so forth can be revealed in this way. That said, it can sometimes be difficult to determine exactly what lies beneath, since fallen rubble, drainage trenches and many centuries of agricultural activity can disguise other features. Nevertheless, geophys had to be the next step, as it could help us understand just what we were looking for beneath the surface of the field.



Magnetometry image from March 2015.
Courtesy of Tim Dennis.

In early 2015 we engaged the services of Dr Tim Dennis, then at the University of Essex's Computer Science and Electronic Engineering department, who that spring carried out the first of several geophys surveys on Dragonsfoot. The findings clearly indicated the presence of a building of some sort which closely aligned with the slight depression towards the north end of Dragonsfoot. Coincidentally, this was also where the highest concentration of interesting finds had been discovered

[6] Kemble, James (2009), pp. 27-28, *Prehistoric and Roman Essex*. Stroud, Glos.: The History Press.
[7] From an information panel at the Vindolanda Roman archaeological site, near Hexham, Northumberland, visited December 2022.

through the field walking process. The geophys surveys also revealed four round features located outside the building's perimeter that looked as though they might have been post-holes or possibly votive pits used for some rite or other. Again, it was hard to be certain of their purpose or function.

Having also sought the views of Mark Curteis and Nick Wickenden of Chelmsford & Essex Museum, their view was that the building Dragonsfoot appeared to be of 'high status', with what seemed to be an apse shape at the eastern end of the building. This suggested the possibility of a temple or perhaps even a very early Christian chapel.[8] This was in contrast with Kettle's findings some fifty years earlier which had suggested the presence of a Roman villa.

Based on these early findings and theories, we had also hoped to involve Dr Carenza Lewis from Cambridge University's archaeology department in a proposed digging of two or three test pits, or if possible, a full-scale excavation. We explored possible sources of funding, including Heritage Lottery Grants, with communications flying back and forth for some time. However, it transpired that permission to dig in Dragonsfoot would not be forthcoming in the foreseeable future so, in the meantime, we carried on field walking.

Early in 2018, a small group of us met to sort through the many finds amassed over the years, identifying items of particular interest which were boxed up and taken to Chelmsford & Essex Museum in July for further study and/or analysis. There were six boxes of finds, all labelled by the relevant grid square, one of which contained specific finds that we hoped might form the core of a permanent display at Broomfield Village Hall.

[8] From unpublished meeting notes taken 16 July 2015 at Chelmsford & Essex Museum, and from an email dated 9 September 2015 from *Brumfelda's* Secretary to Carenza Lewis, University of Lincoln (formerly of Access Cambridge Archaeology, Cambridge University – and former *Time Team* presenter)

Next steps, and making sense of the archaeology

In August 2019, local landscape archaeologist Simon Coxall began his involvement with *Brumfelda's* Dragonsfoot investigations. Between 26 August and 1 September he carried out a series of geophys surveys across a wider area of Dragonsfoot, confirming the location of the presumed temple, which measured approximately 13 metres square. Some of the wall structures appear to have been damaged somewhat, which was hardly surprising given the field's many centuries of agricultural use. The geophys surveys also provided evidence of ridge and furrow ploughing, typical of the medieval period.

More geophys in progress – Simon and Robin

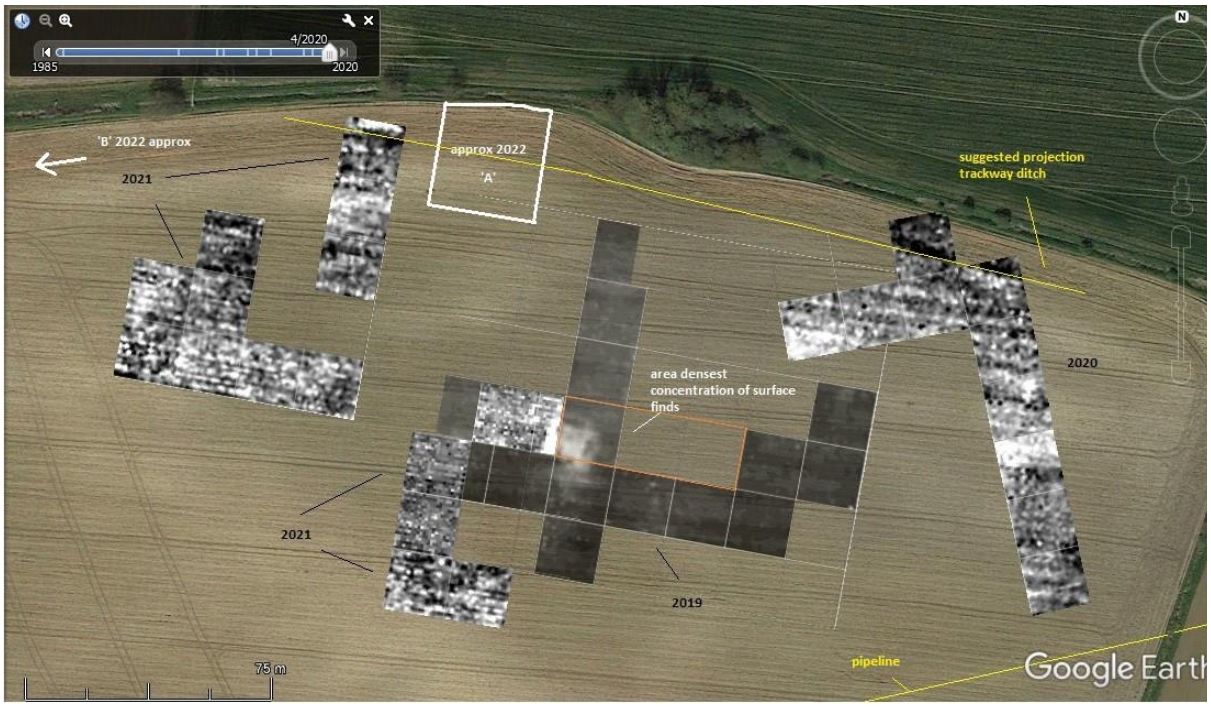
Simon's extensive research, along with the dates and locations of some of the early coins found at Dragonsfoot, indicated that there was most likely not a settlement as such, but a stand-alone structure. Taking account of what had been found at sites of similar age, Simon summarised as follows: 'there appears a range of evidence supporting the fact that Dragonsfoot represents a ritual and temple site that had an active life ranging from the Late Iron Age (LIA) to the end of the Romano-British (RB) period', in other words, a span of some five hundred years – albeit perhaps intermittently.[9] We began to get a much better impression of the kind of building that had existed there, thanks to Simon's research and comparisons he made between the Dragonsfoot site and other Romano-British temple sites in Essex and beyond. Simon also suggested that the shallow depression in Dragonsfoot might also have been the site of a spring, which would have provided crucial water to the temple's users.

In a postscript to Simon's initial report, submitted a few days later, he wrote that, in contrast with the largely rectangular field systems elsewhere in the parish, Dragonsfoot's unusual shape 'supports arguments for its boundaries being either established prior to the Romano-British period and preserved throughout it, or left as open rough grazing or woodland until after its close, when it was adopted as arable in the medieval. The presence of the temple site and particularly the recovery of Iron Age coins and artefacts by metal detecting appear to suggest the former is

[9] Coxall, S. (18 September 2019). *Broomfield Dragons Foot field: Resistance Survey and associated landscape analysis.* Unpublished at the time of writing.

more likely. This, then, suggests a Late Iron Age /Romano-British origin for its current field boundaries.'

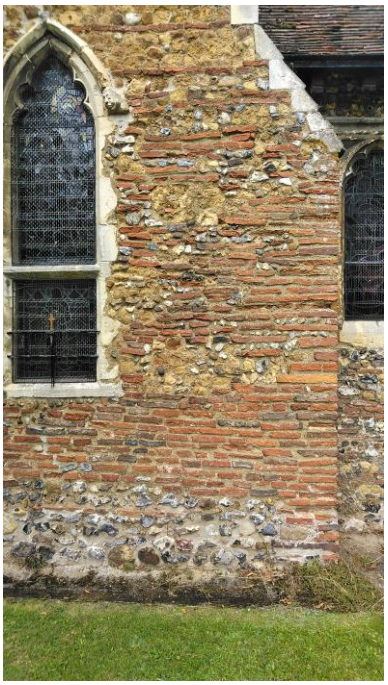
Then, in 2021, Simon carried out further extensive geophys surveys revealing the position of a possible track way of unknown age and, through crop-marks, the location of a possible Late Iron Age or Romano-British farmstead towards the narrowest point of the field.



Results of combined geophys, showing possible trackway. *Courtesy of Simon Coxall*

From one place of worship to another? The Dragonsfoot legend

The legend of Dragonsfoot – not to mention its dragon! -- has served to connect this particular field with Broomfield's parish church of St Mary with St Leonard for many years, though it is impossible to say just how many years. Geographically, Dragonsfoot and the parish church on Church Green are linked by an ancient public footpath known as New Barn Lane, which is well-used by walkers today. The church, with its possible Saxon origins, may have stood on Church Green in one form or another for well over one thousand years.[10]



Roman brick and tile in the south wall of Broomfield's parish church

In 2007, Anne Haward had written, in *A history of St Mary with St Leonard, the parish church of Broomfield, Chelmsford*, that Dragonsfoot had long been known as the site of a Roman building of some kind. As mentioned earlier, she herself had collected a range of Roman finds from the field for some fifty years.

The legend goes something like this. It seems that when the Norman builders of St Mary's began their task, they wanted the site of the church to be in the north of the parish. Very likely drawing on B. M. Kettle's earlier report, Haward wrote, 'The Roman tiles are a reminder of the story still related fifty years ago. The plan had originally been to build the church at the top of New Barn Lane. However, every night a dragon moved the stones down to the green. Finally the villagers gave up and built the church where it stands today. In the field at the end of New Barn Lane, called Dragon's Foot in the tithe maps, there is a depression, now somewhat ploughed out but still deep enough to be a dragon's footprint. This was the site of a Roman building which still yields numerous hypocaust tiles and bricks, so the story is a delightfully muddled memory of the Saxons trundling cartloads of Roman bricks down to the green on the orders of their new Norman masters.'[11] Another local publication, *Country Stile*, makes the claim that in Dragonsfoot 'once stood a Roman villa -- pieces of tile are still ploughed up occasionally.'[12]

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[10] There is a possibility that the church 'started life as the chapel for the Anglo-Saxon lord of the manor of Broomfield Hall', but this cannot be definitively confirmed without further archaeological survey(s). See Wiffen, N. (2019, p. 6). People and Stone, vol. 1: *'and the bishop expressed his approval': a brief archaeological history of Broomfield Church to Chancellor's restoration of 1968-71.* Broomfield, Essex, UK: PCC of St Mary with St Leonard.

[11] Haward, A., 2007. Her account is available online at https://stmarybroomfield.org/a-history-of-st-mary-with-st-leonard-in-broomfield-chelmsford/

[12] *Country Stile*, 2nd edition 2008, p. 6

Among the materials making up the fabric of the earliest surviving walls of the Norman-built parish church are significant quantities of Roman brick and tile – a very early example of recycling used building materials. This seems to have been quite common practice: 'In Medieval and later times villas were heavily plundered for their stone and brick, with the result that over a hundred churches in the county contain reused Roman building materials in their structure.'[13] It seems that as early as 1871, renowned architect and Chelmsford city father Frederick Chancellor visited the church, and suggested that the entire south wall may also have been Roman, although he later changed his mind. However, according to Kettle, a Mr Innes became the first to document the presence of Roman building materials in Dragonsfoot as recently as 1950. Therefore it is actually quite difficult to date the legend's origins with any degree of accuracy. Might it even have been a mid-20th century legend? We may never know!

If Roman buildings are known to have been 'heavily plundered' for their building materials, then it stands to reason that bricks and tiles from Romano-British temples would also have been re-used. One thing we *can* be reasonably sure of is this: assuming that the finds in Dragonsfoot *do* indicate the presence of such a temple, then the Roman materials in Broomfield's parish church will have come to that centuries-old place of worship from another, yet more ancient, place of worship.

[13] Rodwell, W., and Colchester Borough Council (1976, p. 23). *Roman Essex,* 2nd edition. Colchester, Essex: Vineyard Press Ltd.

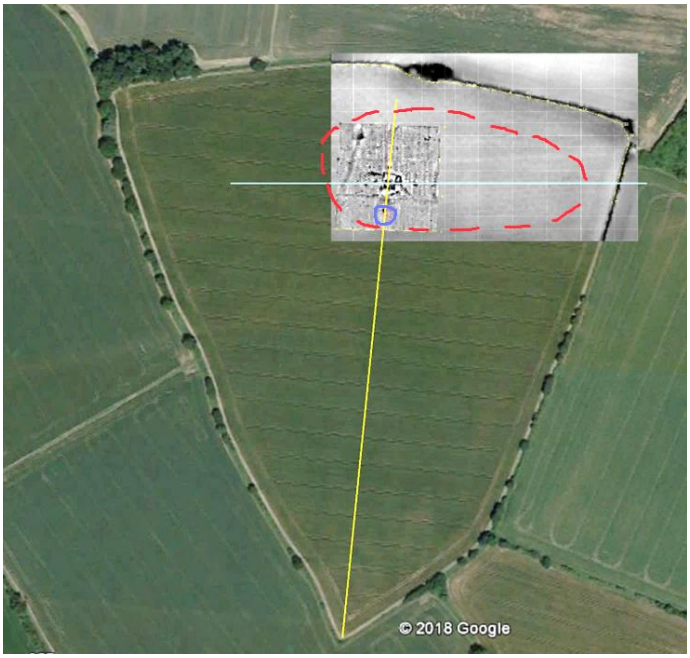
The questions that still remain

Over several years of investigations, and thanks to the findings of both modern geophys technologies and the expertise of the archaeologists we have worked with, we now know much more about Dragonsfoot than we did at the start of this process of discovery. However, there are still questions that remain unanswered.

For example, referring to the magnetometry image earlier in this booklet, what could explain the presence of the four apparent pits around the outside of the temple structure? Might they have been votive pits? Would there have been a clear relationship between the pits and the temple?

In his report of September 2019, Simon had explained that it was hard to be sure: 'They may pre-date or post-date the temple; they may or may not be contemporary with the active life of the temple. Their positioning, however, suggests both pits and the temple structure were "aware" of each other's existence.' Further analysis of the positioning of the pits, as though the temple were not present, suggested two things: 1) a very close orientation towards the alignment of sunrise and sunset at the time of the spring equinox (albeit in 2019!), and 2) an orientation towards the pointed tip of the field which from ground level is not easily visible from the temple site.

The positioning may be pure 'happenstance', but 'taken collectively, this evidence supports a hypothesis that the placing of these pits involved elements of design . . . its relevance remains the most difficult to define. It may possibly have been intended to contribute to the defining of an area of sacred space and/or express a relationship with the water courses around the field meeting at this point.'



Orientation of the pits around the Romano-British temple site, possibly unique in England.
Courtesy of Simon Coxall

He further suggested the site as having some archaeo-astronomical and perhaps hydrological significance, but concluded that it would require further, more extensive excavation to cast a brighter light on these hypotheses.

In 2021, Simon added that, to his knowledge, 'the pits outside the Dragonsfoot temple's sides *are not encountered elsewhere to date*.'[14]

Romano-British temple foundations at Vindolanda Roman Fort, near Hexham, Northumberland

This apparent uniqueness among other Romano-British temples suggests that what we have discovered might actually be of *national* significance. How exciting it would be to have that confirmed! So far, however, none of us has been able to see the temple's actual foundations.

Excavations at other Roman sites, such as the Roman Fort at Vindolanda, near Hexham in Northumberland (pictured here), provide tantalising glimpses of what still lies beneath the surface of Dragonsfoot. We know too, from programmes such as 'Digging for Britain', that entire towns and cities from the Roman occupation of Britain may yet lie undiscovered. [15] However, until and unless permission is given to carry out a full-scale excavation, it remains impossible to know just how the Dragonsfoot temple compares with other such structures.

As we have seen, there are also hints of an ancient trackway running across the northern part of Dragonsfoot, and it would be fascinating to know just how it relates to the temple site. Might there also be a relationship to Main Road, Broomfield, which itself follows the path of the ancient Roman road that runs from Chelmsford to Braintree and beyond?

Might there be an undiscovered archaeological feature that points to a connection between Dragonsfoot and the site of the Roman villa excavated at nearby Chignal St James? Or perhaps the Roman sites in Springfield? At present, we can only make 'informed guesses' based on what has been learned from detailed archaeological excavations at other Romano-British sites.

[14] From Simon's email to Robin Marchal, dated 30 September 2021 (italics added).

[15] For example, the *'Digging for Britain'* episode broadcast on 21 August 2023 (BBC4), described the surprising discovery of an entire Roman town in the Mendip Hills, approximately 60 miles south of Bristol, on the intended pathway of electrical cables. A survey which had been expected to take a matter of weeks has resulted in over two years of detailed excavations – so far.

So, for the time being, the legend persists, questions continue to arise, and the agricultural cycle of ploughing, sowing, and harvesting continues – at least for now. On Dragonsfoot's surface, pieces of Romano-British evidence continue to emerge.

Finds discovered within a 2-metre square during the last scheduled field walk, September 2022. *Courtesy of Robin Marchal*

It remains for others to take this project forward at some point in the future,[16] discovering exactly what lies beneath.

We wish them well!

[16] Coincidentally, at the time of writing (Autumn 2023), the National Grid are proposing to erect a chain of 50-metre-high electric pylons linking Norwich and Tilbury, with one pylon situated on Dragonsfoot itself, only metres away from the temple site whose uniqueness, as has been suggested, could be of national importance.

Acknowledgements

We would not have begun this project without the curiosity, initiative and enthusiasm of John Blake, Neil Wiffen, Lyndall Collins, the late Tim Collins, Robin Marchal and of course the late Ken Searles who first suggested this project.

We thank everyone, *Brumfelda* members and other local residents and visitors, who took part in one or more of the field walking and geophys sessions that took place during this project. You know who you are. We couldn't have amassed the sheer quantity and variety of finds without your help. It was good fun in the sun, not forgetting the sheer slog in the fog! We also thank Dragonsfoot's owner, whose permission enabled us to carry out the field walking and geophys sessions.

Broomfield geologists Ros and Ian Mercer provided helpful context concerning the building materials in the parish church of St Mary with St Leonard, as well as the underlying geology of Dragonsfoot. See Ian's 2019 volume *Church Materials – a Deep History in Walls*, the third in the *People and Stone* series published by the Broomfield Parish Church Council.

As the project progressed, we benefited enormously from the archaeological and technical expertise of Tim Dennis and, latterly, landscape archaeologist Simon Coxall. We thank them wholeheartedly for their geophys imagery and, in Simon's case, for use of his detailed interpretive analysis of what was found over a period of ten years.

The text of this booklet was written by Faith Marchal. Lyndall Collins, Robin Marchal, Neil Wiffen, John Blake and Simon Coxall provided useful feedback and suggestions. Faith also took many of the photographs. Those taken by others are attributed in the relevant captions.

Many thanks go to Gerald Dale for his technological assistance in putting together the illustration on the front cover. The temple illustration is an artist's impression of a somewhat larger temple, the foundations of which were excavated in Caistor St Edmund, near Norwich. Reported by the BBC in September 2020, the image is credited to 'Jenny Press/Caistor Roman Project'.

Roman tile fragments, reunited, found September 2014

Incised tile, found September 2014

Pot base, found January 2017

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