



CLASP

Community Landscape &
Archæology Survey Project

NEWSLETTER

Website: www.claspweb.org.uk

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Local Heritage *initiative* March 2010, Issue 11

From your Organising Committee Acting-Chairman

By the time you read this, Spring should be making itself apparent. It has been pointed out that this year the seasons have returned to their normal pattern after 15 years of Spring moving progressively earlier: a different perspective for our recent concerns. Steve provides a different perspective for our local history by showing that the development of Roman villas in our area directly reflects global shifts of power and huge changes in the Empire of which we were a small part. Fascinating stuff! Elsewhere you can read about CLASP funding needs, past projects, plans for the coming seasons, and activities of CLASP member organisations. Thanks, as usual, to Tony Johns for editing and producing this newsletter.

Jeremy Cooper

From the Secretary of the Organising Committee

Since the last newsletter we have been pleased to welcome the Friends of Alderton Monuments (FOAM) as a new member society. For those of you not conversant with the local geography Alderton is a small village situated to the south of Towcester. This project is led by Derek Batten and involves the investigation of what is best described as a castle mound with exciting developments! Basically this is the discovery of a stone built Norman castle during last year's excavation. Hopefully they will be 'digging' again this year. Once this is confirmed details will be circulated if there are any opportunities for CLASP members to participate. Some of you may remember the when this site featured in Time Team.

At the time of writing we still await news of the results of the Daventry

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Planning Appeals to establish what projects will be going forward there. CLASP will then need to establish details of full planning applications that will undoubtedly be submitted thereafter to ensure that we are satisfied with the archaeological protection and also that there is a role for CLASP in the subsequent archaeological investigations. Our colleagues at Towcester District Local History Society are still keeping a close watch on the proposed developments.

Again at the time of writing we are keeping our fingers crossed to hear whether our bid for a grant from the WNDC Stronger Communities Fund through Northamptonshire Communities Foundation will be successful. This bid is for in excess of £11,000 to fund the purchase of a gradiometer (magnetometer) and associated training. The application was first heard at the Foundation Panel on the 12th February but a decision was deferred for a month as they require further information from us on the wider benefits to the community. If this is successful hopefully things will move fairly quickly thereafter with the purchase of the machine followed by initial training of about six volunteers. The intention will then be to 'cascade' training to more members. Anyhow let's not go too far until we have the money!

Dave Hayward

The View from the Archaeological Director

Since the last newsletter very little actual new field work has been undertaken or initiated. Part of the reason for this is the emphasis in recent months has shifted to trying to find more sources of core funding. Our hope is to acquire sufficient financial resources to progress our search for a more permanent archive to replace our present accommodation which will be subject to a change of ownership in the short to medium term. We also wanted to try and take advantage of an unexpected opportunity to obtain some geophysical equipment to enhance the fieldwork capability of CLASP membership. Central to the first initiative is the effort to explore a potential bid for a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and matched funding possibilities with other funding partners. The process is neither easy nor fast and will probably take several months depending on how many problems are encountered or set

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backs are suffered. However this doesn't mean that the range of current or future fieldwork is to be curtailed indefinitely and in fact several opportunities are currently being planned.

Specifically these are associated with further investigative field walking surveys of sites in Tiffield and Gayton which are being planned for the spring and test pitting at Weedon that looks like it will be scheduled for Easter time. Should our application be successful to the WNDK Community Fund for a Bartington magnetometer, we would hope to undertake extensive geophysical surveys at these sites and at Bannaventa both in the 'posting station' itself and in the surrounding environs. Next summer we also hope to return to Barn Close, Harpole, to continue the excavation of the cellar like structure partially excavated last year and possibly to undertake a ground penetrating radar survey of the west wing or central range. A large scale field walking and geophysical survey to characterise settlement associated with Lactodurum (Towcester) is also being planned to start next autumn by the Towcester & District Local History Society. It will be interesting to see whether the settlement distribution has a similar development to that already analysed at Banaventa (Whilton Lodge). Several meetings have and are to be held at Towcester Town Hall to help volunteers to identify the different types of Roman pottery fabrics common in the area. Anybody wishing to become involved should contact Gina Boreham (01327 352687) for further information.

Our ongoing comparative survey of the pottery and coin assemblages from the settlements already investigated is now capable of confirming the chronological framework previously outlined for Whitehall Farm and the surrounding villa economies. The importance of this general settlement chronology lies in the way it explains the archaeological context that spurred the origin and particular development of the villa complexes in the enclave surrounding Whitehall Farm and how untypical of Roman Britain the findings appear to be. It also attests to the subsequent economic performance of these estates through the succeeding period of occupation at a level of detail rarely seen anywhere else in the province. Understanding the story of these late villas ultimately enables us to profile and characterise this type of settlement and will inform the basis of our future views of 'Romanization' within the locality. This is of particular importance as the villa complexes identified here are the

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predominant mechanism for demonstrating the type of Roman experience enjoyed by the people living in the area.

Most of our settlements' origins lie in the late Iron Age and we can show this is the normal initial development of many sites in the locality. This demonstrates that the intensive exploitation of the landscape was essentially pre Roman. However in the early Roman period these farmstead and associated field systems undergo reorganisation and development during the late 1st to early 2nd century AD. This layout and sophistication of these settlements is then enhanced by a further period of rising prosperity. This can be observed through the subsequent explosion in growth during the 2nd to 3rd centuries AD as witnessed by the sheer quantity of material culture consumed in this period and retrieved in the course of the excavation and other fieldwork. One can also confirm it is now very apparent that earlier assumptions concerning the advent of the villa phase at Whitehall Farm are correct and we should be firmly linking all villa development to the major political and social upheavals of the Gallic Empire in the last quarter of the 3rd century AD. These devastating Germanic invasions that affected the Rhineland and Gallic provinces in the mid 3rd century with the major incursion of 276 AD resulted in between 60 and 70 of the largest cities and their hinterlands being destroyed in those provinces.

Not only did the military collapse on the Rhine have a devastating impact on urban life in the north western provinces but it must also have been extremely destructive and ruinous to the industrial and agricultural base of those territories. The strategic response was based on a dual approach with the construction of a new system of defence in depth and state sponsored commercial initiatives attempting to revitalise the countryside. However, well established large scale industries such as wool and textile must have been severely disrupted at this time as was the cultivation of grain. The dislocation would have been immense and sufficient to encourage more peaceful provinces like Britain to attempt more imaginative ways of meeting the challenge for supplying the clothing and essentials of life of their fellow citizens on the continent. It can be demonstrated that large numbers of villas in northern Gaul were abandoned probably because of these troubles whilst at the very same time British villas located particularly along the Jurassic limestone spine of

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the south west and the Midlands such as those identified in our locality appear to be conceived and begin to flourish approximately at this time. This indicates a situation where we see a 'flight of capital' from the stricken areas if not the actual relocation of the owners themselves. I am unsure whether the construction of villa complexes in our locality were part of a centralised response to the economic troubles of the 3rd century and this remains to be established. However in general it must reflect part of an organised and extensive commercial opportunistic response to meeting the economic challenges and industrial requirements of the north western provinces of the empire. A trading situation that became common place by the mid 4th century as reliance on Britain's grain production and fleet in the reign of the emperor Julian demonstrated.

An exciting link supported by our own findings is that all these villa estates were planted in the locality within a limited timescale covering less than a generation. In addition to our general chronology we can show our locality had a hierarchy in size, distribution and Romanization of the villas. The archaeological profiles of these settlements display close structural, economic and cultural relationships similar to those one would expect with large centralised estates called 'latifundia' in the historical texts. This taken in conjunction with the perceived shift in the agricultural practice certainly at Whitehall Farm and probably also at its neighbouring settlements from a mixed farming economy towards the rearing of sheep and wool production, as well as the strong cultural links indicated by the continental material culture available at the site from this exact period, emphasises the bond between our locality and the north western provinces. The development of wool production in a more settled provincial background such as existed in our locality with its excellent communication links would make sound commercial sense in trying to meet the broader needs for raw material and finished goods for the textile industry of Northern Gaul.

Both the coinage and pottery assemblages from Whitehall Farm and the surrounding enclave suggest that this period of prosperity based on a continental trade system continued until circa 340 AD. The collapse of the trade was probably initiated by the death of Constantine II in the social and economic upheavals caused by the civil wars fought between the heirs of Constantine; a

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state of affairs that culminated in the usurpation of Magnentius (350-353 AD) and the assimilation of the Roman Empire by Constantius II, the last remaining son of Constantine, after the former's defeat. It was a change of political circumstances that probably heralded the break up of the large privately owned 'latifundia' into either state run operations or a series of smaller independent estates as their landlord paid the price for supporting the losing imperial faction. Historical texts relating to this period mention wholesale confiscation of property among the hapless provincials.

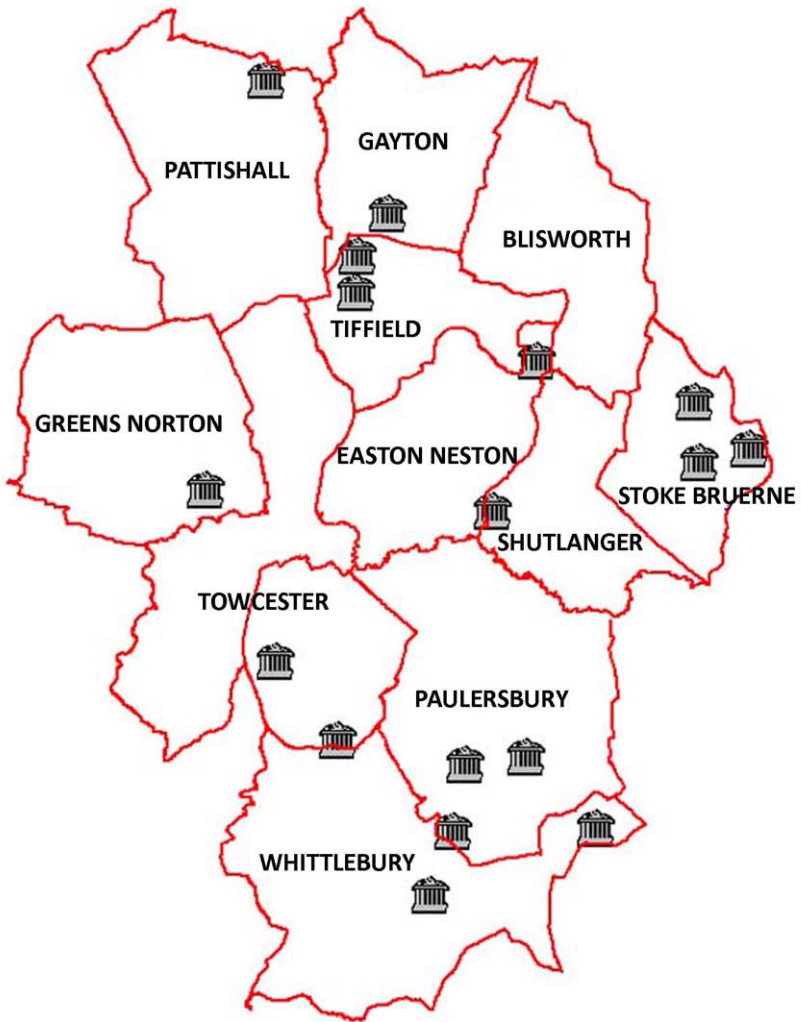
Henceforth local estates would have been managed to meet the needs of the state or a more limited agricultural horizon based upon on local and possibly regional farming requirements. Interestingly for Whitehall Farm this is exactly the era in which we see the construction and replacement of the large and well appointed bathhouse with more modest bathing facilities on a scale that reflects the new economic realities and priorities affecting the estate. However, we can also demonstrate that many of the more modest villas continued to be reasonably prosperous well into the Valentinianic period (364-378) of the late 4th century. This is a condition which persisted to a degree into the early fifth century as indicated by the number of coins from the House of Theodosius which appear on most of the sites in the locality. The continuity of occupation in the locality is obviously further illustrated by the existence of the Post Roman timber hall at the centre of the estate which survived into the mid 6th century AD at Whitehall Farm although most likely such activity represented an increasingly less productive scale of subsistence agriculture.

Steve Young



A rare 4th century gold coin from fieldwork undertaken by NNPAST

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kilometres

Proposed Towcester area Roman settlement survey

FUND-RAISING

Our Vision:

We believe that CLASP's community-based approach to archaeology is at the forefront in the UK and, as the recession reduces the amount of development and thus the amount of developer-funded archaeology, likely to come to greater prominence in the next few years.

The Way Forward:

The Trustees have been investigating possible sources of funding to move forward in a number of areas. What follows briefly describes current efforts. Any member who has other suggestions to offer is very welcome to contact one of us.

The Archives:

The single largest issue concerns the future home of our growing archives in the outbuildings at Whitehall House (not the farm) at Nether Heyford – the Whitehall Villa Project Archive is presently held separately on Whitehall Farm, unconnected to the house. Our overall objective is to find a permanent location that will provide safe and appropriate storage while also providing access to the archive for members of the wider community wanting to improve their understanding of the heritage of our community.

Heritage Lottery Fund:

Thanks to our membership of the Milton Keynes Heritage Association we had an opportunity to talk to an HLF Advisor and have filed an initial expression of interest. Working with Stephen Young we are developing a formal application for a grant of £50k to enable us to lease premises for three years. This requires us to consider and articulate our plans to provide access to the archives as well as for reaching out to local communities with exhibition material and the development of presentation material that can be linked to aspects of the National Curriculum as we look forward to greater engagement with our communities and especially the young.

We are not yet clear how we would move beyond that three year period and are considering whether we might find other sources to approach. Suggestions and contacts would be very welcome.

West Northants Development Corporation Stronger Communities Fund

As the Secretary of the Organising Committee, Dave Hayward has mentioned in his contribution to this Newsletter that we currently have a bid to this Fund, through the auspices of the Northamptonshire Community Foundation, for in excess of £11000 for the purchase of a gradiometer.

Tony Kesten, Trustee (tony.tk@live.co.uk)

Towcester & District Local History Group

The British Museum uses the statue of a Roman female head, given to the British Museum by Sir T. Fermor-Hesketh Bt of Easton Neston, to introduce the Roman section of the museum and of their web site. It is believed that the head was found in the vicinity of one of the areas proposed for the planned expansion of Towcester, and so the building developments could disturb important archaeology. Members of the Towcester and District Local History Society (TDLHS) are concerned that there could be other discoveries to be made. As a consequence, Georgina Boreham is developing a plan for practical archaeology for TDLHS and CLASP members in the Towcester area and surrounding districts. The project will run under the supervision of Stephen Young. The new knowledge will add to that held by CLASP on its data base.

Four TDLHS members joined CLASP members in Field Walking on 6th March 2009, twenty helped wash the 4,895 sherds on July 13th, sixteen members helped with sherd sorting on 26th October and on 18th January 2010 in



Towcester Town Hall
Stephen Young, the

Project Leader, taught 24 TDLHS

and CLASP members how to classify grog tempered Roman pottery according to the system described in the “Raunds Area Survey” (see picture below). After practising on several bags of sherds we were given bags to take away and classify for our homework. The event was organised by myself and Rod Conlon.

Gina Boreham

Norton Northampton Portable Antiquity Search Team

Norton Portable Antiquities Search Team continues to assist CLASP in its endeavours to research the Village area for its Roman and other

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archaeological artefacts. In liaison with the Finds Liaison Officer of the Portable Antiquities Scheme and CLASP's Director, our metals-sensing group has re covered a significant number of Roman coins and small metal items related to that army of occupation's settlement here. This activity occurred on several sites; the searches, all under the supervision of Stephen Young, giving the Team much satisfaction.

The commencement of 2010 was crowned by an illustrated lecture by Sam Moorhead of the British Museum, on the use, values and dispersal of Roman coins, by their users. This was accompanied by Stephen Young's résumé of the archaeological findings at Whitehall and Bannaventa. Members of CLASP who attended this event, together with local landowners and Team members, enjoyed the occasion.

We also hope to mount an exhibition of finds in Norton during the coming September.

Rev 'd Francis Rodriguez, Secretary

Bugbrooke History Society

We are starting to compile our second book of historic photographs of people and places in our village. The first book, going up to the 1950s, was published and sold out a year ago and the new edition will continue from this date. It is expected that it will be published before Christmas this year. There are still copies of the following books for sale: 'Bugbrooke History 2000 BC to 2000AD', 'Gleaners to Graduates, a history of education in Bugbrooke' and 'Ahead of His Time, the life of the Bugbrooke 'Wireless' Headmaster, Frank Wright'.

2010 is the 100th anniversary of Frank Wright gaining his Licence from the Post Master General to Operate a Wireless Transmitter . We are planning to commemorate this occasion at the Primary School in the summer term. Further details about this and the availability of the books may be obtained from myself.

Alan Kent (tel: 01604830518)

Harpole Heritage Group

The group had a three day excavation in Barn Close during last August. 20 People took part from within the CLASP group including members of NNPASt with their metal detectors. Test pits were dug and a trench 20 metres x 1 metre were taken out to reveal a ditch and some interesting pottery. The square from 2008 was opened up to a 6 metre square, digging down to reveal 5 courses of a stone wall which is thought to be a cellar. It is planned to dig again this year when it is hoped to find out what it is. 62 coins were found over the site and 162 other small finds including a Fibula. All those who helped were thanked and the group hope to see the CLASP group again in the autumn.

Harpole Heritage also celebrated 10 years during 2009 and has arranged to have a Map Information Board erected near to Harpole Turn and showing the amenities in the village. An exhibition held during October was well attended and showed what had been achieved during the 10 years. On display were members' own collections, photographs and many archive items as well as a number of Harpole family histories.

Jennifer Smith, Secretary

Contacts for Events listed

Organisation	Contact	Tel
Norton, Northampton PAST	Francis Rodrigues-Veglio	01327 872030
Weedon Bec History Society	Julia Johns	01327 341729
Flore Heritage Society	John Smith	01327 340387
Brington History Society	Andrew Shaw	01604 770668
Harpole Heritage Group	Jennifer Smith	01604 831294
Whitehall Farm Roman Villa Landscape Project	Brian Culling	01327 340504
Towcester & District Local History Society	Gina Boreham	01327 352687
Bugbrooke History Society	Alan Kent	01604 830518
Daventry Local History Group	Angela Adams	01327 704928
Blisworth Heritage Society	Diana Burgoine	01604 858406
Friends of Alderton Monuments	Derek Batten	01327 811304

Table of Events for CLASP Groups

Date	Time	Event	Location	Group
Meet every 2 months. See www.bugbrookelink.co.uk/history or contact Alan Kent, tel: 01604 830518				Bugbrooke History Society
March 11	7.30 pm	'Discovering Faxton's Lost Churches'	Methodist Chapel, School Lane	Harpole Heritage Group
March 15	8.00 pm	'Henry Chichelle, Local made Good'	The Reading Room, Great Brington	Brington History Society
March 17	7.30 pm	Research Evening for May Day Exhibition	URC Church Room, Foundry Place	Daventry Local History Group
March 29	7.30 pm	'The Lost Villages of Northamptonshire'	Chapel Schoolroom, New Street	Weedon Bec History Society
April 7	7.45 pm	'Wall Paintings in Northamptonshire Churches'	Chapel Schoolroom, Chapel Lane	Flore Heritage Society
April 8	7.30 pm	'Northamptonshire Mail during WWII'	Methodist Chapel, School Lane	Harpole Heritage Group
April 19	7.30 pm	'Salsey Forest'	Chapel Schoolroom, New Street	Weedon Bec History Society
April 19	8.00 pm	'The Lost Villages of Northamptonshire'	The Reading Room, Great Brington	Brington History Society
April 21	7.30 pm	'English Heritage in the East Midlands'	Daventry Town Council Museum	Daventry Local History Group
May 1	TBA	May Day Exhibition	TBA	Daventry Local History Group
May 5	7.45 pm	'Ashby St Ledgers'	Chapel Schoolroom, Chapel Lane	Flore Heritage Society
May 13	7.30 pm	AGM & Martin Heath of BBC Radio Northampton	Methodist Chapel, School Lane	Harpole Heritage Group
May 19	TBA	Outing,	TBA	Daventry Local History Group
June 2	7.45 pm	A Visit to Ashby St Ledgers	Ashby St Ledgers, meeting point TBA	Flore Heritage Society
June 16	7.30 pm	AGM followed by 'Those Coaching Days'	Daventry Town Council Museum	Daventry Local History Group
July 21	7.30 pm	Research Evening for October Exhibition	Daventry Town Council Museum	Daventry Local History Group

Friends of Alderton Monuments

It is hoped to continue with the excavations at The Mount ,Alderton from 19th July to 6th August. This is dependant upon Grant Monies being available from various sources. Volunteers to help with the work will be needed as last year. Contact myself if interested by phone (01327 811472) or email: derek.batten@virgin.net

Derek Batten

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE

The Deadline for the next issue is Sunday night, August 14th.

Contributions to Tony Johns, 7 Eton Close, Weedon, Northants, NN7 4PJ or by email: tony@tonyjohs.co.uk. Please supply any photographs or drawings to accompany articles as separate files. Resolution around 250 - 300 dpi. Tel contact: 01327 341729